

# Journal of Liberal

# HISTORY



## Five Liberal women

Alan Mumford

**Five Liberal women and politics**

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Ed Davey and Layla Moran

**Old heroes for a new leader** Lib Dem leadership candidates' historical heroes

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Alistair Lexden

**Lloyd George and an Anglo-Irish centenary** Government of Ireland Act 1920

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J. Graham Jones

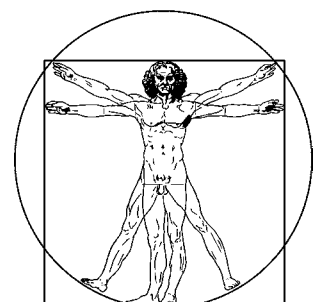
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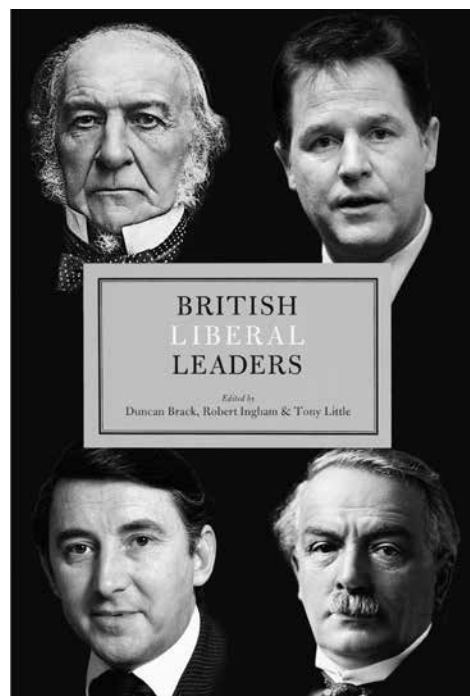
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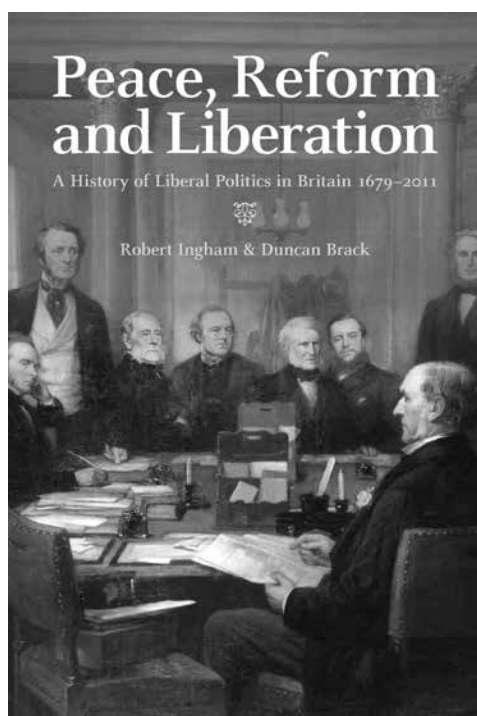
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The Liberal Democrat History Group promotes the discussion and research of  
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For more information, including historical commentaries, details of  
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# Liberal History News

## Summer 2020

### Editorial

Welcome to the summer 2020 issue of the *Journal of Liberal History*. As with the spring issue, we apologise for the late arrival of this issue, a consequence of the disruption to editing and printing schedules caused by the coronavirus epidemic. All being well, we should be back on schedule from the autumn issue, due out in September.

As the Liberal Democrats face their fourth leadership election in five years, this issue opens with the results of our traditional request to the candidates to tell us about their historical heroes, a series we have run since 1999. This year we have not only published their pieces but, together with party HQ, we organised an online history hustings, where Ed Davey and Layla Moran introduced their heroes, and discussed them and aspects of Liberal Democrat leadership with our interview panel. You can watch the history hustings at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DazZgfCxEtY>.

I hope you enjoy this article, and all the others, together with our archives report and book reviews – and stay safe and healthy.

*Duncan Brack (Editor)*

### Gladstone and slavery

*Journal of Liberal History* readers will have noticed, in early June, the decision by the University of Liverpool to rename a building named after former prime minister William Gladstone due to his perceived links to the slave trade.

It is likely that we will return to this topic in future issues of the *Journal*, but in the mean time we reprint here the statement released by Gladstone's Library at Hawarden on 11 June.

#### Black lives matter: statement from Gladstone's Library

At the core of our being, we at Gladstone's Library believe that Black Lives Matter. We also believe that if it is the democratic will, after due process, to remove statues of William Gladstone, our founder, we would not stand in the way. Nor, we think, would Gladstone himself – who worked tirelessly on behalf of democratic change. This is why we believe that what matters is how we live today, our values, our democratic process and political involvement. William Gladstone whose politics were strikingly different to his Tory father's politics and values, was the first British politician to lead a left-leaning government and to institute dramatic democratic changes when he introduced the secret ballot, universal education and a foreign policy based on freedom and liberty and not the aggrandisement of Empire.

Gladstone's Library, and we should add the Gladstone family, have continued to uphold and promote those liberal values. As a Library we are building our programme around the Gladstonian themes of democracy, human rights and freedom of belief – and we do not mean by simply looking back at history but by reading 'the

signs of the times' and working for a more democratic, humane and tolerant society. The Library, aware of John Gladstone's plantation-owning past, a number of years ago instituted a scholarship for research into historical and contemporary slavery.

We have been asked a lot today what we think about the renaming of Gladstone Hall in Liverpool. In many ways this statement answers this; we have had no contact from the University recently but we read that it was a democratic decision; so, to us the decision seems right and proper. Gladstone stood for change and so do we.

William Gladstone's record of public office was one of almost unequalled service. He was the driving force behind the emergence of the Liberal party, he was a humanitarian, one could even celebrate him as one of the founders of the modern concept of human rights. He was passionate about education for all rather than just the elite. He was quick to defend the oppressed whether in Italy, Ireland, Bulgaria or Armenia. It is a career that is worth celebrating but we memorialise it best by being politically involved, humane and tolerant.

Of course, it is undeniable that William Ewart Gladstone's father, John Gladstone, in common with many successful British merchants in the early nineteenth century, owned land in the West Indies and South America that used slave-labour. He received £106,769 in compensation at the time of the abolition of slavery. William

## 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](http://www.liberalhistory.org.uk) or [www.facebook.com/LibDemHistoryGroup](https://www.facebook.com/LibDemHistoryGroup) or follow us at: [LibHistoryToday](https://twitter.com/LibHistoryToday).

### June

*30 June 1917:* Death of Dadabhai Naoroji. He became the first Indian professor of mathematics and served as Prime Minister of Baroda in the 1870s and was three times President of the Indian National Congress. Naoroji first visited England in 1855 and returned in the early 1880s. He was chosen to fight Holborn for the Liberals in the general election of 1886. He lost but secured nomination for Central Finsbury and at the election of 1892 gained the seat from the Tories by five votes, becoming the first non-white person to be elected to parliament. Although he lost his seat in 1895 his influence both in the UK and India was and remains considerable.'

### July

*10 July 1765:* George Grenville is forced to resign as Prime Minister. Grenville's relations with King George III, which were never good, collapsed in early 1765. The King blamed Grenville for riots in London and sought to replace the government but failed to find a candidate. Sensing the King's weakness Grenville imposed humiliating conditions on the King but in doing so turned George into an implacable foe. Less than a month later, with the help of his uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, and the Whig grandee the Duke of Newcastle, George turned the tables on Grenville with the appointment of Newcastle's protegee the Marquess of Rockingham. Grenville left office with his reputation enhanced but the king's hatred meant that Grenville never held office again.

### August

*21 August 1946:* Liberal Party headquarters announces that the party executive has adopted a plan to secure a Liberal majority at the next general election with 600 candidates backed by 600 active associations. The plan called for organised associations to create 'starter' associations in derelict seats, with March 1947 as the deadline for achieving this target. By the time of the Liberal Assembly of 1947 it was reported that over 500 active associations existed compared with only 200 eight months earlier.

himself received nothing. Yes, in 1833 William did speak in the Commons in favour of compensation for slave owners. It was his first speech in the Commons and he was still in thrall to his father. By 1850, he was a changed man and in Parliament he described slavery as 'by far the foulest crime that taints the history of mankind in any Christian or pagan country'. He had changed. Towards the end of his life he cited the abolition of slavery as one of the great political issues in which the masses had been right and the classes had been wrong. He thought it was a taint on national history and politics. His change was a move towards a profound commitment to liberty and perhaps this quote exemplifies his shift: 'I was brought up to hate and fear liberty. I came to love it. That is the secret of my whole career.'

Liberty today means counter-ing racism, sexism and intolerance wherever we see it. That is where our energy should be exerted. That would be truly Gladstonian.

At the Gladstone Library we can always get better. We remain absolutely committed to progress and education, and we will actively seek to improve everything that we do through democratic and open

conversation with our community in its widest sense.

*Peter Francis & Charlie Gladstone*

Entrance to the Roscoe and Gladstone Halls at the University of Liverpool.



# Old heroes for

**A**S WE HAVE in each of the Liberal Democrat leadership elections other than the first, in 1988 (which took place before the History Group had been formed), in July the Liberal Democrat History Group asked the two candidates for the Liberal Democrat leadership to write a short article on their favourite historical figure or figures – those that they felt had influenced their own political beliefs most, and why they had proved important and relevant. We placed no restrictions on their choices: they could choose anyone they wanted, whether a Liberal or not, and they were free to choose more than one if they liked.

At the end of their two articles, we include a list of all previous leadership contenders' historical heroes.

## **Ed Davey – Paddy Ashdown**

Liberals are not meant to have heroes, but I can't help it. I don't genuflect before grand or celebrity figures, but re-reading speeches or learning of the noble deeds of Liberals can move me the way opera or acts of military valour can have others dabbing a misty eye.

I love Gladstone for his insistence that: 'the sanctity of life in the hill villages of Afghanistan among the winter snows is as inviolable in the eye of Almighty God as can be your own'.

Or Asquith for, in the midst of unimaginable wartime stress, ignoring press opprobrium to visit German prisoners of war to demand their good treatment.

That instinctive determination to defend the vulnerable is what, I believe, makes us Liberals.





# a new leader

Hard choice though this is, my Liberal hero is more recent: Paddy Ashdown, for whom I still grieve.

As a new member of staff in 1989, what surprised me was how wonderfully Paddy treated youngsters like me. He had a reputation for being brisk – even brusque – but I discovered that was a front. I perched, as the party’s chief economics adviser, in what felt like a tiny garget atop the old Whips’ Office. Here I would receive hand-written notes thanking me for a piece of work, and I’ve kept them all. Whether eating, chatting or indeed drinking with junior staff at conference, Paddy was like the dedicated officer with his troops. He inspired loyalty and hard work in equal measure.

Paddy’s stories only added to his mystique and magnetism. A young colleague was startled to find a note on his desk from Paddy one morning: ‘Call me on my car phone at 5.57am.’ It wasn’t so much the earliness as the preciseness of the hour that startled. Another note, upon Paddy assuming the party’s leadership, read simply: ‘Please remove David Steel’s dead animal from my office.’ It was a buffalo skin presented by Chief Buthelezi.

Sure, Paddy could be a task master, but even then I found him immense fun. Many a Monday morning my phone would bark into life: ‘Edward, come to my office now, please.’ From Paddy’s mouth ‘please’ became a command. Once before him I’d find he’d read some article over the weekend extolling a new economic policy that he wanted to adopt. And I’d spend a good thirty minutes dissuading him of some crazy, ill-thought-through fancy.

My biggest disagreement with him came after I’d been elected in 1997, when he was determined to cling on to his pre-election plan with Tony Blair for close working relations with Labour – despite that strategy having been devised for a balanced parliament, not for

a Labour majority of 167. Brilliant as he was, he couldn’t persuade parliamentary colleagues or the wider party that Lib-Labbery worked in this context, for it would have hitched us to policies we disagreed with without influence to change them.

Ironically, during the five days of coalition negotiations in 2010, it was Paddy and me who tried to convince Nick Clegg and co not to rule out coalition with Labour, despite the numbers being difficult to make work.

It was Paddy who first drew me to the party. All politicians have their causes, and for me it was the environment and education. Paddy made the green agenda a core strand of our identity when most MPs thought this a peripheral, even cranky, cause. I was hooked, and would like to think that my recently announced plan to decarbonise capitalism is one Paddy would have embraced with vim and verve.

I’m an economist by training and so I appreciated deeply that Paddy was, fundamentally, so economically literate. He took over a party that had been a little corporatist in its thinking but Paddy reconnected the party to its liberal roots, asking what a policy meant for the individual. He emphasised Mill’s idea of the power of education to unlock human potential. Without Paddy I’m not sure we would have had such ground-breaking Lib Dem achievements in government as the pupil premium, a development of his policy of a penny on income tax to improve education.

Finally, though a Liberal to his core, he sought to bring others into the Liberal tent. I took inspiration from Paddy when I called for a national government to deliver a people’s vote. How he made the Liberal Democrats a big enough tent for MPs of other parties to join us should be our inspiration.

If elected leader, I will build on his legacy. Paddy, I miss you terribly.



## Layla Moran – Shirley Williams and Richard Feynman

Being asked to pick just one of the huge number of people I have found inspirational is almost impossible. From Charles Kennedy to Marie Curie and, more recently, Greta Thunberg, there is a plethora of activists through the ages that have inspired movements, challenged the status quo and effected change and progress.

That said, I've whittled it down to two people who have most affected me and my work and personal life.

Shirley Williams is an outstanding role model. Once described as potentially the first female Prime Minister, she would have been a much better one than the women we actually had! A Labour MP for fifteen years and a minister for most of that, she was one of the Gang of Four who founded the Social Democratic Party in 1981 – a year before I was born. She was the first person elected to Parliament under the SDP label, in the Crosby by-election later that year.

She served as President of the SDP throughout its lifetime, and in 1987 was one of the foremost campaigners for merger with the Liberal Party to form the Liberal Democrats. Later, she led the party in the House of Lords.

Throughout her career she stood for social justice and liberal values. She persevered in an environment dominated by men. In an interview in 1975, she mentioned that: 'the great day will come where no one in television ever asks you about women in politics, and then we will really have got equality'. Although we still have some way to go, at least the 2019 election saw the highest number of woman MPs elected – and our own parliamentary party, for the first time ever, has a majority of women.

She was an internationalist to her core. Her greatest and most consistent political involvement was over Europe. In 1971 she was one of the sixty-nine Labour MPs who voted, against a three-line whip, for Britain to join the European Economic Community, and Labour's hostility to Europe – which we saw again under Corbyn – was one of the main reasons for the SDP break-away.

But it is her style as much as her beliefs that led me to nominate her as my hero. She is one of the very small number of politicians who ordinary voters addressed by her first name. She combined intellect with passion and personal warmth, and showed that all three can change minds. Of all the members of the Gang of Four, she was the one that Labour moderates who



stayed behind most missed, and the one who most attracted recruits to her new party.

My second inspirational hero is Richard Feynman, an American physicist whose lectures were one of the reasons I decided to study physics at university. He worked on quantum mechanics and particle physics; he pioneered the field of quantum computing and introduced the concept of nanotechnology. In 1965, along with two others, he won the Nobel Prize in Physics.

He wasn't overtly political, though he held liberal views, and very progressive ones at that. But he is not without controversy. He was often seen as a bit of a maverick in his approach and his humour could be cutting and sometimes offensive. He said some controversial things about women that I'd have enjoyed debating with him – though he also conceded that women do suffer discrimination and prejudice in physics, so I think I'd have won that debate. He also worked on the Manhattan Project – the development of the atomic bomb – during World War Two.

But his real inspiration to me was the way in which he viewed the world. He famously said: 'I am smart enough to know I am dumb'. His appetite for knowledge was driven by an insatiable curiosity. He was known for his creativity and humour, and his ability to explain complex problems in a way which anyone could understand.

I've taken learnings from Feynman's approach with me into my political career. In an age when everyone strives for absolute certainty, I try to challenge my own assumptions by seeking opposing views – which helps with both creativity and grounded decision-making. I'm not afraid to try new approaches and embrace change. And the art of taking a complex problem, explaining it and genuinely

Previous leadership candidates' heroes	
<b>1999 (Journal of Liberal History 23)</b>	
Jackie Ballard	David Penhaligon, Nancy Seear
Malcolm Bruce	David Lloyd George
Simon Hughes	David Lloyd George, Nelson Mandela
Charles Kennedy	Roy Jenkins
David Rendel	William Wilberforce, Nancy Seear
<b>2006 (Journal of Liberal History 50)</b>	
Menzies Campbell	Roy Jenkins, Jo Grimond
Simon Hughes	David Lloyd George, Nelson Mandela
Chris Huhne	David Lloyd George
<b>2007 (Journal of Liberal History 57)</b>	
Nick Clegg	Harry Willcock, Vaclav Havel
Chris Huhne	David Lloyd George
<b>2015 (Journal of Liberal History 87)</b>	
Tim Farron	William Beveridge, Simon Hughes
Norman Lamb	John Maynard Keynes
<b>2017 (Journal of Liberal History 96)</b>	
Vince Cable	Roy Jenkins
<b>2019 (Journal of Liberal History 103)</b>	
Ed Davey	Paddy Ashdown
Jo Swinson	Anita Roddick

engaging people in solving it, is as valuable to politics as it is to science.

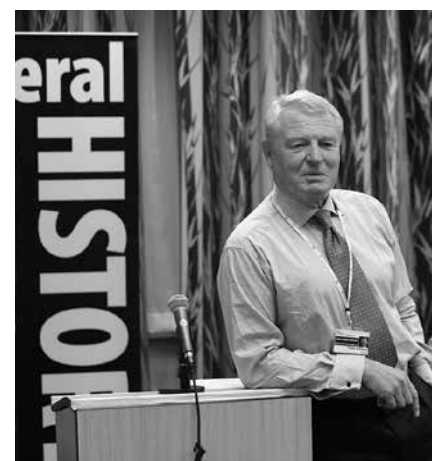
Both of these inspiring people have shaped who I am today and my values. The boldness of Shirley Williams in standing up for what she believed, winning people over through both keen intellect and emotional intelligence, and the creative thinking and charisma of Richard Feynman: these qualities are missing from the party right now, but they are desperately needed for us to cut through the noise and win back voters. I believe that's what I can offer.

## Think history

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

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

We'd like to do more, but our activities are limited by the number of people involved in running the Group. We would be enormously grateful for help with any of the activities mentioned above, or anything else you've wanted us to do but we aren't! If you're interested in getting involved, contact the Editor, **Duncan Brack** ([journal@liberalhistory.org.uk](mailto:journal@liberalhistory.org.uk)) – we would love to hear from you.



## Women Liberals

Alan Mumford analyses the influence of five leading women in the Liberal Party in the early twentieth century.

# Five Liberal women

**I**N THE EARLY weeks of September 1905 three leading Liberals, Grey, Haldane and Asquith met near a Scottish fishing village, Relugas, which gave its name to a compact between the three. They agreed that they would only serve under Campbell Bannerman as prime minister if he took up that position from the House of Lords.

When Balfour resigned and Campbell Bannerman was invited to form a government, complex discussions, largely led by Asquith, ensued. Charlotte Campbell Bannerman, his wife, ambitious for her husband, had previously influenced him to reject the idea of becoming Speaker, and instead to stand for the leadership of the Liberal Party. In his final discussion with Asquith on 6 December 1905, Campbell Bannerman said that he wished her (Charlotte) 'to be the final arbiter'.<sup>1</sup> She told him that he should stand firm and refuse to go the Lords. Campbell Bannerman accepted this view: The Regulas compact collapsed.

Men then generally saw wives of politicians as of low intelligence and minimal political sense: they were useful for social entertaining. The five women discussed here represent change in the overt influence of women in politics and specially in the Liberal Party in the twentieth century. Charlotte provided a benchmark: did the wives and mistress of two prime ministers have influence? The two daughters developed independent political careers and public recognition – but how significant were they?

### Margot Asquith

Margot could scarcely have been more different from Charlotte except in their devotion to their husbands. She dazzled in dress and conversation. In July 1892 Margot Tennant joined in her brother's campaign to be elected as an MP. Asquith spoke in support of him. Margot commented on one speech 'Although a thin speech it was magnificently delivered.'<sup>2</sup> This was the

first of many occasions in which she praised his speeches – though never again suggesting they were thin in content. Not initially in love with Asquith, she came to adore him after their marriage in 1894. Gladstone, in a characteristically portentous letter said that 'you have a great and noble work to perform. It is a work beyond human strength.'<sup>3</sup> Asquith's political friends foresaw, correctly, that as a political hostess, her vivid conversational engagement with people could lead to political problems. Some argued subsequently that the hectic and extravagant social life into which Margot took Asquith was disadvantageous to him.

The Asquiths were emotionally constipated (except in Asquith's letters to women) whereas Margot was orally incontinent. Margot was not concerned about Asquith's women friends until he became entranced by Venetia Stanley. There was no one in her circle who captured in detail her conversation, in which she favoured indiscretion and truthfulness (as she saw it). Margot was not the female equivalent of the view that a gentleman never gives offence unintentionally. She wrote, 'how I wish I had discretion with less candour'.<sup>4</sup> She was always noisily adherent to Asquith's political views but was indiscrete in her views on other people. She is usually described as witty, though contemporary records of this are not available. Her biographer is so distrustful of the witticisms attributed to Margot that she includes none of them in her biography.<sup>5</sup>

One of those witticisms is frequently quoted as the essence of Lloyd George: '... he can't see a belt without hitting below it.'<sup>6</sup> The first problem about this is that the *Oxford Dictionary* implies that Violet Bonham Carter identified Lloyd George as the target. In fact, she explicitly avoided saying this. She actually reported Margot as saying about 'one of my [Violet's] Father's colleagues who shall be nameless: "he can't see a belt without hitting below it".'<sup>7</sup> A second issue is that Violet was speaking 'from

# men and politics

my remembered store',<sup>8</sup> not her diary or other source. Margot did write in 1933, 'I do not think it was Mr Lloyd George's intention to hit below the belt, – he never perceived a belt': a more subtle characterisation.<sup>9</sup> A final addition to suspicion about this quotation is found in Violet's diary for December 1916 about her father: 'He will hit always 3ft above the belt at least'.<sup>10</sup> So, Violet's 'remembered store' has created what maybe a mythical quotation, now permanently attached to Lloyd George.

## *Political issues*

Margot was initially opposed to Gladstone's Home Rule Bills: however, 'Events have proved that I was entirely wrong.'<sup>11</sup> On South Africa, she was divided between support for Asquith's position and an emotional tie to the Boers. While she eventually supported his action to cut the powers of the Lords, she objected to the speeches of Lloyd George and Churchill as they attacked the peers. Asquith's original initiation of the Old Age Pensions Act is not referred to in her autobiography, nor are Lloyd George's subsequent social insurance policies. The struggles over increased expenditure on the Navy are referred to largely in terms of the personal struggles between Churchill and McKenna on the one hand and Lloyd George on the other.

She supported and may have influenced Asquith's reluctance to reunifying Liberals after 1916. She approved Asquith's approach on the general strike of 1926 and gave vigorous support to the attempt to eject Lloyd George. Like Asquith and Violet, Margot opposed women's suffrage, and women politicians. She was no torch bearer for women – rather a torch extinguisher in her comments about them. Yet she constantly expressed political views as if they were as valuable as those of men.

As war grew closer in 1914, Margot received information about cabinet discussions and potential resignations but offered no views on

whether it was right to take military action. She strongly opposed conscription in 1915 in letters to ministers. She disliked the coalition of 1915, hysterically regretting the destruction of the cabinet.

Violet's view of her stepmother's politics was 'her passion for politics was a strange aberration, for – paradoxically – politics was her blindest spot. She often judged politicians astutely but she had not the smallest grasp of any political or economic problem.'<sup>12</sup>

## *Margot's influence on Asquith*

Asquith wrote 'there can never have been a politician who owed more than I have done to the wise counsels, the unfailing courage and the ever-vitalising companionship of a wife.'<sup>13</sup> He gave no examples of her counsel. One successful influence was to change the name she used

Margot Asquith  
(1864–1945)



## Five Liberal women and politics

for him from Herbert (common she thought) to Henry. (She had changed from Margaret to Margot).

Roy Douglas wrote that Margot 'appears to have exerted significant influence over the career of her husband.'<sup>14</sup> The Brocks wrote that Asquith often disregarded 'specks of gold in the dross of her advice.'<sup>15</sup> Eleanor Brock in the *Dictionary of National Biography* asks what influence Margot had, but does not answer the question. The main biographers of Asquith (Spender and Asquith, Jenkins and Koss) make no comments about her influence.

There are two reasons to suspect the assertion she had influence. The first is that Asquith thought women were vessels largely incapable of exercising sensible and rational thought on issues. The second is specific to Margot: Asquith would have had every reason to suppose that her uncontrolled indiscretions would make it too dangerous for him to consult her. Perhaps it was the noise created by her conversation and letters that encouraged some to believe that she must have influenced him. Her autobiography, diaries and letters imply by the absence of comment that she may not have tried. She did claim to have joined with Margaret Lloyd George in influencing the creation of a Ministry of Munitions. Clearly, she did not speak to Asquith directly, because when Lloyd George gave her praise for her role in this suggestion her husband was surprised. Her reaction is revealing: 'Well, I didn't worry you, as wives with ideas are often boring.'<sup>16</sup> But her claim is contradicted by other information (see Margaret Lloyd George later). The biographers of Asquith and Lloyd George make no reference to this claim of responsibility. Her own biographer offers inconsistent views on her influence, saying first that she was never able to influence Asquith but later giving an example where she did, on the question of Chinese labour.<sup>17</sup> On most major issues – Relugas, the formation of Campbell Bannerman's cabinet, House of Lords and Budget, the war, the coalition of 1915 and the crisis over the War Committee in 1916, taking a peerage in 1926 – she was a recorder not an influencer.

She was violently opposed to Lloyd George going to the War Office on Kitchener's death, but had no influence on the decision. In fact, it led to 'the first acute political difference we have ever had and now we can't speak hardly on politics.'<sup>18</sup>

Asquith responded impatiently to her complaints about Lloyd George. Asquith revealed to Violet his reaction on some occasions: 'I have sometimes walked up and down that room until I felt as tho' I were going mad. When one

needed rest to have a thing like the *Morning Post* leader flung at one, things more controversially put even than by one's colleagues.'<sup>19</sup>

She thought in 1915 that Asquith should show a little more drama and colour, but there is no indication that she actually spoke to Asquith – there was certainly no change in his behaviour. When Lloyd George communicated his ideas about a war committee Margot wrote 'I had never heard of these proposals'.<sup>20</sup> Asquith decided to proceed for his usual weekend away from London. Margot unsuccessfully tried to persuade him not to go. In fact, he was brought back by his political secretary, Bonham-Carter. She had some influence on Asquith's involvement in politics after December 1916, supporting his refusal to accept a subordinate position under Lloyd George as Lord Chancellor.

Her recording of late-night discussions usually in her bedroom and at least once in her bath produced no change of mind or actions different from those which Asquith had already decided. Asquith had told her before their marriage that he did not want a wife who was an enthusiastic partisan on his side of politics. That was, however, what he got with volatile and voluble Margot, but she did not influence him.

### *Other relationships*

Her attempts to influence occurred elsewhere. The number of her interactions with other politicians and particularly with Liberal ministers was astonishing at least for the twentieth century. She wrote to ministers telling them what to do. In 1910 she advocated a general election in telegrams to the chief whip and her husband. She did not accept the arguments in favour of conscription in 1915 and wrote several times to her favoured ministers. The most bizarre letter was a long defence of Haldane to the editor of a paper which attacked Liberal ministers: 'But I think you are quite right to attack Henry. Go on calling him a lazy man. The only men you must not attack are our generals.'<sup>21</sup> Later she tried to persuade Crewe to influence Asquith to save Haldane at the formation of the coalition.<sup>22</sup>

Margot had a low opinion of Churchill. She thought him entirely driven by ego. Before 1916 she unfavourably compared him to Lloyd George, who was prepared to listen rather than to deliver a set of speeches with no interaction with others (particularly herself). Following Asquith's fall in December 1916, she developed and maintained for the rest of her life a violent antipathy to Lloyd George. She was infuriated by the description of Lloyd George as 'the man who won the war'. In 1933 she wrote 'for personal reasons it is difficult for me to write about

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Mr Lloyd George.’ She then spent four pages on him.<sup>23</sup>

Before the great betrayal, her view of him had been changeable. On 29 November 1910, she sent him the most extraordinary letter criticising his speech: ‘Don’t when you speak on platforms arouse what is low and sordid and violent in yr. audience; it hurts those members of it that are fighting these elections with the noblest desire to see fair play.’ The reason was ‘they lose us votes’.<sup>24</sup> Lloyd George made a scathing response and Margot had to apologise. She advised him in friendly terms on Marconi, and on the naval budget. But after 1916 she saw him as a liar, an ingrate and destroyer of the Liberal Party.

#### *Margot as a writer*

Margot was the first prime minister’s wife to write an autobiography and the Brocks describe her as ‘an opinionated egoist, often inaccurate, the victim of flattery, and occasionally prone to fantasy’.<sup>25</sup> Her version of what Asquith said contains at least two levels of potential inaccuracy – whether Asquith was accurate about his own and other’s statements, and whether Margot captured what he said with any precision. (Asquith’s accounts to Venetia Stanley were at least his direct version). There are different versions of events in her diary and her autobiography. There were complaints then about the indiscretions and personalisation of people and issues in her autobiography and later books. Of course, it was the revelations which made the autobiography a best seller. Now the revelations seem very mild.

#### **Margaret Lloyd George**

There are no observable similarities between Margot Asquith and Margaret Lloyd George except they were both married to Liberal prime ministers. Margaret married in 1888 at the age of 22; Margot had been 30 on her marriage. Margaret was the daughter of a small farmer in North Wales; Margot, a daughter of a rich industrialist. Margaret led a very active social life in London with upper-middle-class politicians and other rich guests. Margaret was always more dedicated to life in Wales. This was the source of early and constant complaints by Lloyd George about the solitary unsupported life he led.

Margaret was penny pinching in both Criccieth and Downing Street, unlike Margot’s extravagance on her homes and clothes. Nor did Margaret provide the record of her husband’s activities that Margot did through her diary and autobiography. Margot’s clamorous talk had no echo in Margaret’s style. Margot’s

**Margaret provided a loving relationship which continued to exist at some level throughout their lives together, despite Lloyd George’s notorious infidelities, including a long-standing affair with Frances Stevenson.**

dutiful attentions to her stepchildren were later complemented by her devotion to her own two children: Margaret’s focus on her five children was evidenced by her frequent absences with them in Criccieth.

Lloyd George in advance of his marriage to Margaret wrote to her in 1885 or 1886: ‘My supreme idea is to get on. To this idea I shall sacrifice everything – except I trust honesty. I am prepared to thrust even love itself under the wheel of my Juggernaut if it obstructs the way.’<sup>26</sup> Margaret’s protestations in 1940 that she was devastated in 1889 when Lloyd George sought and accepted candidature for the Caernarvon Boroughs constituency, that she had expected to be marrying only an ambitious lawyer, is contradicted by this letter.

Margaret provided a loving relationship which continued to exist at some level throughout their lives together, despite Lloyd George’s notorious infidelities, including a long-standing affair with Frances Stevenson. There were eventually two separate households, Margaret in the house she owned in Criccieth and Frances in Lloyd George’s house Bron-y-de, in Churt. Frances after the earliest years never appeared in Criccieth, whilst she disappeared through the back door at Bron-y-de if Margaret or other family members visited. Margaret provided the public appearance of a happy marriage, important to Lloyd George’s constituents and his general public image and did not try to divorce him, which would have ended his political career.

Margot’s opinion of Margaret was characteristically acid ‘a little woman inferiorly dressed with no distinction of appearance’.<sup>27</sup> She described her as ‘a very homely, intelligent, little servant of a woman with a heart of gold and no ambition of rise in her’.<sup>28</sup> (Margaret’s opinion of Margot is not known.) Margaret provided something much more: Lloyd George described her as having ‘a woman’s susceptibility with a man’s brain’; Hague thought this was intended as a compliment.<sup>29</sup>

Lloyd George at a celebration of their Golden Wedding in January 1938 offered a description of their two personalities. He had lost none of his verbal dexterity: ‘We have lived together in perfect harmony for fifty years. One of us is contentious, combative and stormy. That is my wife. Then there is the other partner, placid, calm, peaceful and patient. That is me’.<sup>30</sup> The description is close to being accurate – but in reverse.

#### *Contribution to politics*

Margaret provided a new dimension to the role of a politician’s wife, unique at this time.



Margaret Lloyd George (1864–1941)

Unlike Margot, a decorative adornment at Asquith's meetings, Margaret was active in direct campaigning, initially in Lloyd George's constituency. She was Lloyd George's contact with his constituents and spoke at meetings in North Wales and eventually further afield in England. Her contribution to sustaining the Liberal Party in Wales was extraordinary for a woman at that time. In support of one of Lloyd George's secretaries as a Liberal candidate in a by-election in 1921, she delivered fifty-eight speeches in a fortnight.<sup>31</sup> In 1918 and 1931 she took on the full responsibility of representing Lloyd George in his constituency. She worked hard to secure the Liberal nomination for daughter Megan in 1928 for Anglesey, and in the successful general election in 1929.

In 1908 she stood for the Executive Committee of the Women's Liberal Federation in Wales. 'I can help to rouse the women to support both the Government and the great cause of their own enfranchisement.'<sup>32</sup> She became president of the North and South Wales Women's Liberal Federation and first councillor and then chairman of the Criccieth Urban District Council.

She was a strong advocate of temperance, a significant issue for Nonconformist Liberals. There are no indications of her views on other Liberal issues such as free trade or the welfare provisions that Lloyd George introduced. Her views on the right of women to vote changed slightly from an early belief in the principle, through antagonism to militant

suffragettes, towards eventually agreeing that women should have the vote. She did not think women in general were suited for the House of Commons (just like Margot Asquith but less stridently), nor should young marrieds have a political career. This is not surprising in terms of her own priority for family in relation to her marriage to Lloyd George.

### *Influence on Lloyd George*

Hague writes 'He might turn to another woman for romantic love, but it was Margaret he consulted on political matters'<sup>33</sup> but provides no evidence. Her son Richard and daughter Olwen claimed that as prime minister Lloyd George consulted with her and usually took her advice but gave no examples. Yet, Richard also said she never interfered in political affairs.

A review of some of the major issues in which Lloyd George was involved suggest that Margaret had little influence at the time on the Marconi affair, entry to the First World War in 1914, formation of the coalition in 1915, Lloyd George's ascension as prime minister in 1916, or the Maurice Affair. For nearly all these events Margaret was actually in Wales. His move to the Ministry of Munitions in 1915 was 'against the wishes of his wife and Uncle Lloyd.'<sup>34</sup>

In 1909 she decided to attend court with him as he denied any sexual relationship with a Mrs Edwards. Their son Richard claimed that his mother told him that Lloyd George was actually guilty, and that she stood by him not because of his potential political contribution but because she felt obliged to help her husband in grave trouble. Whatever her motivation, here was Margaret's major contribution to the Liberal Party – the survival of Lloyd George to carry out his improvements to the lot of poor people (putting aside a not specifically Liberal contribution in helping to win the war).

As a direct recipient of Lloyd George's views in so many letters, Margaret is a more reliable source than Margot's version of Asquith's conversations. She received boastful letters about his success – but did not have the obsessive interest in political matters that Frances Stevenson shared with him.

There are few published letters from her, and little evidence of her influence. Nor are there exciting revelations of conversations with or letters to politicians as with Margot. One significant example is that in late June 1920 Lloyd George's plan for fusion between his liberals and some Conservatives was rejected by Liberal ministers. In discussion with Beaverbrook, 'He regretted the decision. Dame Margaret Lloyd George who came with him, rejoiced. She



never liked the Tories and never failed to say just so.<sup>35</sup> This however is clearly an example of her disagreeing with Lloyd George after the event rather than proving influence before it. Margaret opposed Lloyd George's original intention to write his war memoirs in 1922. There is no indication that he asked for or was given any contribution by Margaret to those memoirs.

Margot and Margaret were both active politically, though in significantly different ways. Margaret broke the mould by being a direct participant not just an observer.

Margaret was made Dame of the British Empire in 1919 in recognition of her service to charity for Welsh soldiers during the First World War. Margot who had done nothing of substance, became Countess of Oxford and Asquith in 1925 on the elevation of Asquith to an Earldom.

### Frances Stevenson

Frances, born in 1888, was the daughter of a lower-middle-class London family. Unusually for a woman, at that time, she took a degree, and became a schoolteacher. Lloyd George and his wife Margaret decided that Megan, their youngest daughter, needed additional educational support and Frances, because she spoke French (and perhaps because she was very pretty), was chosen by Lloyd George to provide this.

Involvement with Lloyd George continued after Megan no longer needed her because he began to give her secretarial and research work. They fell in love and their passionate affair continued from its fruition on the 21 February 1913, a date they identified as their 'marriage', which was in effect bigamous. She was 25 and Lloyd George 50. She became his private secretary as chancellor and prime minister – the first female private secretary to a PM. His early interest may well have been sexual – Lloyd George is believed by some to have been the most libidinous prime minister since Palmerston – but it became in addition an extremely effective working relationship.

She was a willing partner in an unequal relationship, on his terms, which meant no divorce and no scandal. Her diary<sup>36</sup> and the letters they exchanged<sup>37</sup> show the depth of love between them. She was attractive not only in her looks but in her soft well-spoken non-competitive manner (although Lloyd Georges' daughters in later life took a much harsher view of her). They married in 1943 but their earlier relationship was never revealed publicly until Frances described it in her autobiography.

Margaret Lloyd George did not challenge the 'two household' arrangement in Criccieth and Churt. Her children, especially Megan, were less accepting. They descended on him in 1932 to reveal that Frances had another lover, Colonel Tweed, one of Lloyd George's political advisers. The family was aware that Frances in 1929 had given birth to a baby, Jennifer, much loved by Lloyd George with whom she spent a great deal of time. Whether Lloyd George or Tweed was the actual father is not an issue for this article. Lloyd George accepted an earldom in 1945 in his extreme old age, so Frances became Countess Lloyd George.

Many historians and biographers have criticised Lloyd George's morals in taking a mistress twenty-five years younger than himself. No attention has been paid to the other moral issue. While Frances said, about their informal contract in February 1913, that it was totally contrary to the values and upbringing she had had, she said nothing about the conflict of morals involved in taking Lloyd George away from his wife. Instead she provided excuses for herself and her lover through criticisms of Margaret.

### Political issues

While often present at political discussions with Lloyd George, there are no records of her contributing. Her published diary starts on 21 September 1914, after the dramatic events around Britain's decision to join in the war against Germany. Her autobiography in part makes up for

Frances Stevenson  
(1888–1972)



## Five Liberal women and politics

this omission and particularly records her views on how, when and why Lloyd George decided to support Britain's decision to support France and Belgium against Germany. The diary was a record of Lloyd George's activities, beliefs, successes and obstacles.

One of the few political issues on which we know her views occurred before her involvement with Lloyd George; she was a suffragist. We do not know, for example, whether she believed it right that Britain should enter the war in 1914, nor whether she thought the coalition governments of 1915 and 1916 were appropriate answers to the problems of the time. We learn of some of the intensity of feeling Lloyd George developed about conscription – but no view is offered by Frances. She thought that Asquith was ineffective but recorded Lloyd George's hesitation about becoming prime minister.

We know nothing of her views on the objectives Lloyd George had at the post-war conferences she attended with him. She thought Lloyd George had done a dramatic and eventually successful job on the peace treaty over Ireland in 1921. Did she believe in home rule or this version of it? We have no idea whether she thought either the politics or the economics of his 1920's policies were right.

### *Influence on Lloyd George and others*

Unlike Margaret, Frances had no public political role. Hattersley wrote that she never aspired to influence Lloyd George's attitude towards great issues.<sup>38</sup> However, A. J. P. Taylor wrote that 'After protestations of love, he would turn to great affairs, initiate her into state secrets and – most skilful of all – appeal for her advice.' He also writes 'later on she was Lloyd George's principal adviser in the years when he had hoped to return as leader of the Liberal Party or even perhaps as National prime minister.'<sup>39</sup> John Campbell wrote that she was 'a great consolation to him in years of political frustration but she also had political influence.'<sup>40</sup> Enhanced claims about her influence appear in Hague's book: '... he relied on Frances' judgment when it came to politicians and statesmen.'<sup>41</sup> Frances's granddaughter Ruth wrote, 'it was not that he allowed her opinions to affect his own view of a man, but he liked to hear her views.'<sup>42</sup>

Frances herself contradicts these views: 'He may have given the impression he was open to argument. My conclusion is that at no time was it possible for me to influence Lloyd George. ... Influencing others, he was himself impervious to influence. ... Once he had made up his mind no one could move him.'<sup>43</sup> She wrote to a friend on 7 August 1935 that she was 'profoundly

unhappy' about Lloyd George's Council of Action campaign. 'But it is hopeless trying to influence him. He has had his own way for so long that it would take a far stronger person than myself to attempt the job, and even then, they would probably be broken in the process. I've been bruised enough.'<sup>44</sup>

Since presumably Taylor had read all the diaries, he was best placed to prove influence. His failure or inability to do so has led to the inaccurate picture used by other writers, again unsupported by evidence. A review by the author of this article of her record of attempts to influence him on political issues, shows a total of twenty – over thirty-three years. This does not show him appealing for her advice, or that Lloyd George relied on her judgement. Amongst the few important examples, in March 1916 she said that people were asking why he was not turning Asquith out. 'I think he ought to speak his mind. Otherwise I tell him he will be classed with the rest of Cabinet as a body of failures.' She records Lloyd George 'pondering' this.<sup>45</sup> When Aitken and Carson 'suggested he should take over, he had said no. ... I pointed out to him that in the event of his being offered the Premiership he would be bound to accept – he could not refuse to do his best to save the country.'<sup>46</sup> He floated the idea of a War Committee of three to run the war: 'I told him that I do not think the Committee of three idea a good one.'<sup>47</sup>

In February 1917, Lloyd George was back to considering his position and talked of taking a rest: 'I tell him he must not think of taking a rest until the War is over.'<sup>48</sup> In 1925 the Liberal organisation asked for money; Frances responded, 'they have misused what money they had, and cannot raise any more, so what is use of you giving them more, which will only go the same way?'<sup>49</sup>

In June 1940 she advised Lloyd George (unsuccessfully) to accept an offer from Churchill to join the cabinet as his patriotic duty. Sylvester reported Frances, '... had told him [Lloyd George] categorically that he had done absolutely nothing to help his country in this War.' Lloyd George said, 'A damned lie.'<sup>50</sup>

Frances assisted Lloyd George with his speeches, but we do not know what this involved. In May 1932, he asked: 'Write me your frank and candid view about 1. the general line, 2. any argument, simile or phrase. You know what decisive value I attach to your judgement.'<sup>51</sup> Frances indeed did advise him on the content, and he ignored her comments.

On the question of whether he should accept an earldom, she told him, '... if you

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are doubtful about it why not send a telegram refusing that would be an end to the matter.<sup>52</sup>

#### *Her writing*

Frances produced a book, on the personalities involved in the conferences after the Great War. It was published anonymously 'by one who knows'.<sup>53</sup> Inevitably she emphasises Lloyd George's towering presence and influence.

Her letters showing the deep love she had for Lloyd George perhaps demonstrate that other people's love letters can produce a feeling of queasiness amongst wider readers. The diaries are well written, the product of an organised mind without the violent slapdash comments seen in Margot Asquith's writings. The diaries and her autobiography give no real insight into Frances herself (unlike Margot's).

#### **Violet Bonham Carter**

Violet was born in 1887, the only daughter of Asquith's first marriage. A Lady three times: when her husband Maurice Bonham Carter was knighted; as the daughter of Asquith when he became an earl; and finally and belatedly, in 1965, she became a life peer, as Baroness Asquith of Yarnbury – the Asquith element a final obeisance to her father.

Unlike any previous prime minister's daughter, she campaigned with Asquith from 1910 onwards. Churchill described her as Asquith's 'champion redoubtable', basing this on her extraordinary work on Asquith's behalf in 1920 at Paisley, which created more national attention than Margaret Lloyd George's speeches in 1918. Her attachment to her father (competing with Margot) was intense and for her the party was always Asquith's Liberal Party. There is remarkably little in her diaries about her relationship with Margot: Violet was rational and careful, Margot emotional and indiscrete.

In 1915 she married Maurice Bonham Carter (Bongie), Asquith's private secretary. There is little reference to discussion with him about political matters. They had four children; she declined opportunities to stand for parliament in order to look after them, the natural decision at that time. The published photographs of Violet show a severe countenance: only one shows her smiling. She generally looks as if something unspeakable had occurred to her – possibly a thought about Lloyd George.

Her personality was 'patrician'; BBC recordings reveal her upper-class voice with modulated emphases literally unheard today. This gave distinction to her on platforms, and in radio and television discussions after 1945. She

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was never afflicted by self-doubt about why her opinions were of importance. Roy Jenkins wrote that she was: 'the most effective woman orator I have heard'.<sup>54</sup> Her description of the choice in the 1922 general election 'between Lloyd George, suffering from St. Vitus's dance, and Bonar Law suffering from sleeping sickness' captured them brilliantly.<sup>55</sup>

She achieved several firsts as a politician – her platform support for her father, selection as the first woman president of the Liberal Organisation in 1945, the first woman governor of the BBC, the first woman to deliver the Romanes Lecture in June 1963 and the first woman to speak at the Royal Academy dinner in 1967.

#### *Political issues*

Violet's views were wholly influenced by her father's, including opposition to votes for women, until the 1930s when she made her own choice about how to handle the resurgence of Germany and the threat of Hitler. In October 1938 she described appeasement as being for 'peace at any price that others can be forced to pay'.<sup>56</sup> There is no indication at any time of great interest in social reform. Her only comment about the Beveridge Report was that it had been widely praised and gave fragile hope.

One problem for Liberals from 1918 was any substantial definition of what they actually intended to achieve in politics, with the exception of Lloyd George's policies and campaigns leading up to 1929. There is no record of Violet's views on these. Her letters on the General Strike deal not at all with the issues involved, but only with vituperation about Lloyd George.

She was interested after 1945 in the possibility of a deal with the Conservatives to ensure the success of some Liberals. She stood for Wells in Somerset in 1945 unsuccessfully, and more contentiously for Colne Valley in 1951; she lost again. There her long friendship with Churchill meant he encouraged the local Conservative Association to withdraw and he spoke at one of her meetings. She probably lost more Liberal votes than she gained from Tories. Martell, a prominent Liberal said, 'Her blatant pro-Tory attitude enraged many in the party who had hitherto held her in the highest respect and destroyed the public belief in our independence.'<sup>57</sup> Churchill offered Clement Davies the Liberal leader a cabinet post in 1951. Violet was the only one of thirteen Liberal Executive members to support acceptance of this offer. Violet would have accepted the junior post Churchill would have offered.

She opposed the Conservative government's adventure on Suez in 1956. After 1945



Violet Bonham Carter  
(1887–1969)

she strongly supported the association of countries in Europe. Her strong moral views were reflected in a speech when the Labour government introduced control of immigration, on 29 February 1968. 'Only once before ... have I seen the honour of this country so flagrantly violated and betrayed.'<sup>38</sup>

Like all Liberals she was interested in electoral reform: neither Conservatives nor Labour were interested in cutting their own throat. The split in the Liberal Party between Asquithians and supporters of Lloyd George in the 1920s was replicated in some ways from 1945–55 when Violet spoke for traditional Liberalism and antipathy to her party's Radicals, led by Megan Lloyd George. She helped keep the flame of liberalism alive – although it was low and guttering towards extinction for most of her life after 1945.

### *Influence*

The only occasion on which she tried to influence her father was in 1911 when she intervened with Asquith on behalf of Lord Aberdeen, her friend Archie Gordon's father, who was Lord Lieutenant in Ireland and wanted to remain there; he did.

She recognised in 1915 in a letter to Bongie that there was a problem with Asquith's style of leadership in the war: 'I have felt sometimes lately as if his clutch hadn't got in – as if the full force of his mind wasn't in it.'<sup>39</sup> There is no indication that she made this point to her father. She

agreed with his rejection of the Lloyd George proposal of a new War Committee in December 1916. She also supported the idea of removing Lloyd George from the party over his stance on the General Strike. There is no evidence on whether Asquith discussed with her either his decision to resign as leader in October 1926, or his decision to accept an earldom.

Her long opposition to Lloyd George, always more personal than ideological, after December 1916 was a contributory factor to the split thereafter between the two factions of Liberalism.

She approved of Archie Sinclair as Liberal leader but had no particular influence on him. She influenced Clement Davies over the desirability, or otherwise, of peacetime conscription, where it is clear she changed his mind from being opposed to being in favour.

Born into a world where women were not politically entitled, she demonstrated through her involvement from around 1910 that a woman could have overt political influence, rather than the influence that they might exert through domestic contact. Her impact was not so much on the decisions of other politicians, but in continuing to demonstrate that there was a Liberal Party which was still just about alive.

### *Relationships*

Violet wrote, the day after her wedding, 'you – who have always meant *everything* to me – since I can remember & are still the *closest* the most passionately loved of all human beings to me'. The letter was to her father, not to her new husband.<sup>60</sup>

The other major relationship was antagonistic – with David Lloyd George. She disliked some of his inflammatory speeches around the Budget and the peers in 1909 and 1910. Her primary opposition to him was of course generated by what she perceived as his total disloyalty in helping to supplant Asquith in 1916. She gives no record of any substantial meetings with him – only lunches and dinners, until an accidental encounter on a train, in December 1923, where she obviously experienced, at least partially, Lloyd George's capacity to seduce a listener. She assessed him 'having no fidelities he also has no rancours – no embarrassment at meeting people with both' an obvious comparison with herself.<sup>61</sup> But she never accepted that Lloyd George should be leader of the Liberal Party and wrote in 1926 that it would be 'impossible to serve a Party that half believes in Lloyd George'.<sup>62</sup> She supported those attempting to bring Chamberlain down in 1940 and then encouraged her Liberal

colleagues to choose Churchill as prime minister.

From 1945, Clement Davies was leader of the Liberals in the Commons. Her published material on him is almost entirely disparaging, but unpublished letters revealed by his biographer show that she had a higher opinion than the edited letters indicated.<sup>63</sup> Family relationships continued, first through her son-in-law Jo Grimond, whom she admired, and her son Mark, whom she supported vigorously in his two campaigns to be elected in Torrington. Her relationship with Megan Lloyd George is covered later.

Her view of Grimond's successor, Jeremy Thorpe was favourable because of his 'vitality, & colour & passionate zest'.<sup>64</sup>

She enjoyed lunches and dinners with J. M. Keynes but gives no reference to his views on economic policy.

Like her father she distrusted newspapers and newspaper owners; she regarded Beaverbrook as the quintessence of evil – a view on which she was by no means alone.

She does not seem to have engaged with (the few) other female politicians except for Megan Lloyd George. They were on opposite wings of the Liberal Party and were in public conflict occasionally, however there was no continuous bitterness. There was one major relationship not at all political: Venetia Stanley was her greatest friend until she decided to marry Edwin Montagu, who had been a protégé of Asquith and a frequent visitor at Downing Street and the Asquiths' holiday homes. Violet wrote an excoriating letter to him criticising his decision to force Venetia into the Jewish religion. Her claim not to have known about the passionate relationship between her father and Venetia is a tribute to her adoration of her father, not to the accuracy of her memory. Jenkins' acceptance of her denial is odd. He was persuaded by her to remove some comments about her father in his biography, but he reinstated them in later editions.

#### *Her writing*

Her diaries and letters are colourful, explicit and most often accurate. The editors, her son Mark Bonham Carter and later Mark Pottle chose to give most emphasis in their editing to the inclusion of material on political matters. It is none the less surprising how little there is about personal relationships after 1914, until the resumption of the diary when Mark was involved in military action.

Before her marriage her most serious relationship was with Archie Gordon; she got

engaged to him on his death bed. The diary then was formed for several years through letters written to him, as if he were still alive.

Her admiring book on Churchill contains an often-quoted account of their first meeting, where she said Churchill described himself as a glow worm.<sup>65</sup> This is questionable – there is no reference to this in her diary, nor in her subsequent account to her father.

#### **Megan Lloyd George**

Megan was born in 1902 and her childhood and teenage experiences centered around her father's position as first a cabinet minister and then prime minister. In 1928 she said, 'I've had politics for breakfast, lunch, tea and dinner all my life'.<sup>66</sup> When Lloyd George became a minister in 1905 her family was enabled to lead a middle-class life. Her mother brought her up as a Methodist and throughout her life she prayed every morning. She had more formal schooling than Violet, but in 1911, the fateful decision was made to give Frances Stevenson a temporary summer job to improve Megan's education.

She was an excellent speaker. Price claims 'her ironic wit, and her ability to coin memorable phrases formed her reputation' – but gives no examples.<sup>67</sup> Frances Stevenson and A. J. Sylvester agreed that she was clever 'in a certain kind of way but so self-centered'.<sup>68</sup> Frances also said of her, 'She was not a normal woman. She had this mixture of sex and religion'.<sup>69</sup> Frances was of course biased, but is difficult to find more positive statements about her except references to her charm. She was described by Jo Grimond, Violet and her own friends as being lazy. She did not even attend committees on her own political interests.

#### *Political issues*

The 1928 Act extending the vote to younger women provided the means for her direct involvement in politics. She secured the nomination for the Liberal Party at Anglesey in that year and was elected in 1929. Lloyd George certainly helped in the process of getting her selected, but she owed even more to her mother then and at the general election. She survived some antagonism as a woman and both gained and lost votes as the daughter of Lloyd George. She had not made any mark in the House of Commons before the general election of 1931. She was more prominent in the country because she was a Lloyd George and because there was a diminishing number of Liberal MPs. She was an effective broadcaster on radio and television (an opportunity not available to earlier

**She was an excellent speaker. Price claims 'her ironic wit, and her ability to coin memorable phrases formed her reputation' – but gives no examples. Frances Stevenson and A. J. Sylvester agreed that she was clever 'in a certain kind of way but so self-centered'.**



## Five Liberal women and politics

political women). She had occasional positions of responsibility for example, as the president of the Women's Liberal Federation of Wales, and during the war she sat on committees where she was able to push, though unsuccessfully, for equality for women in terms of wages.

Like Violet she defined herself as the successor to her father, or at least the radical Lloyd George in 1929 and 1935. She wanted to get rid of the right wing of the party and recognised in November 1957 that she was 'too left for the modern Liberal taste'.<sup>70</sup> Always centred on Wales, she led the campaign to get a Welsh parliament in the 1950s, and for recognition of the Welsh language; she sought equal pay for women and pressed the interests of agriculture. Her most significant achievement was to lead the successful campaign for equal compensation for women and men for injuries during the Second World War. She was anti appeasement.

In 1949 the Liberal leader, Clement Davies, made her deputy leader, a rather grand position for a party, in reality of ten MPs, but significant for a woman. She supported nearly all of the Labour governments' measures from 1945 to 1951. She saw Labour bills on National Insurance and the National Health Service as inherited from Liberal pioneers.

After she lost the election in 1951, she declined to return as candidate for Anglesey, and instead joined the Labour Party in 1955: 'in the changed situation of today, it is only in the Labour Party that I can be true to the radical tradition.'<sup>71</sup> Lloyd George had forecast that 'Gwilym will go to the right and Megan to the left eventually.'<sup>72</sup> Gwilym became a cabinet minister in Conservative governments; Megan, a Labour MP but never held a government post. (She had declined an offer to join Churchill's wartime government.)

### *Influence*

Megan's influence on Lloyd George was most dramatically evident during the Norway debate in May 1940. Dingle Foot, who was with her, wrote in an obituary that 'she rushed to persuade him to speak after Chamberlain's call on his friends'.<sup>73</sup> In the two parliaments from 1945 she wanted to keep the Liberal Party as radical – a term she preferred to left wing – but was unsuccessful. Perhaps not surprisingly, Frances' diaries do not show Megan as attempting to influence Lloyd George: Sylvester's accounts do. Megan supported Lloyd George's decision not to take Churchill's offer of a cabinet seat in May 1940.<sup>74</sup> But did she influence the decision or merely agree with it? There is nothing available on whether she was consulted on or agreed



Megan Lloyd George  
(1902–1966)

Lloyd George joining the cabinet later, or the offer of the embassy in Washington. It seems likely that Lloyd George avoided discussing the possibility of accepting an earldom with her in 1944, which she opposed later. (Unlike Violet she did not like using her title.)

There is too little material available to assess her influence properly. She kept no diary, wrote few papers or letters that survive and acquired a biographer who gave tremendous detail about her love affair but much less about her political life.<sup>75</sup> The absence of her own materials is not remedied by accounts from other people – she is rarely referred to in contemporary diaries, biographies and autobiographies.

### *Relationships*

The most important relationship for Megan was obviously with her father, both personally and politically. Yet Sylvester claimed, 'although she adored Lloyd George, she adored her mother more.'<sup>76</sup> Lloyd George was occasionally infuriated by her lateness and, as he saw it, occasional unwillingness to give full priority to him. He criticised her for not speaking more in the House. There is no record of her disagreeing with him on politics (unlike Frances). Hague says that there were differences in politics but neither quotes nor gives references for this claim.<sup>77</sup>

She had friendly relationships with other women MPs – mainly Labour. She seems to have had no relationships with Tories other



than Thelma Cazalet Keir, and that was a friendship rather than any kind of political association. During the war, her closest Labour association was with Herbert Morrison, who tried to draw her later towards his party, as did Attlee. Her friendship with Barbara Castle (perhaps including dancing the cancan together) did not last.

Clement Davis was an ineffective leader of a fissiparous party and certainly had a difficult time with Megan. Her relationships with him and the other Liberal leaders were on the chilly side partly because of her radicalism and partly because they found her untrustworthy with anything involving work. Jeremy Thorpe saw her as a mentor. She encouraged him to join the Liberal Party.

With Violet Bonham Carter (also the fifth child of a prime minister) she had a contentious relationship. Yet Megan wrote: 'If she had only known no one could sympathise more than I could with her as a prime minister's daughter'.<sup>78</sup> They had different views on the nature of Liberalism, particularly Megan's view on the total undesirability of any kind of association with the Tories, unlike Violet. In 1950 Violet blamed Megan for the party's troubles.<sup>79</sup> It is, however, interesting that Violet refers to Megan only eight times in her published diaries.

Megan met Philip Noel Baker, a Labour MP, in the 1920s and became his mistress in 1936. As with Lloyd George, her career would have been terminated if this was known. He wrote 554 letters to her that have survived. Her letters to Noel Baker have disappeared, so we have only his version of their relationship, and the letters published by Mervyn Jones focus mainly on their love not on politics. He promised to marry her early on but would not divorce his wife. When she died in 1955, he reneged, unlike her father who kept his promise to Frances despite Megan's bitter opposition.

She apparently had no discussions with Keynes – not even over lunch or dinner as Violet did. Admittedly this could have been difficult after Keynes published his savage review of Lloyd George in 1933.

She discovered, probably in 1920, the nature of her father's relationship with Frances Stevenson (unlike Violet's stated ignorance of her father's obsession with Venetia Stanley). She became a bitter antagonist of Frances and did everything she could to make life uncomfortable for her. We have a small amount of evidence on this from Sylvester, rather more from Frances, and none at all directly from Megan. So, the reports of Megan talking to other people about the relationship and threatening to

bring it out to public attention are those given by Frances: it would seem odd that Megan should even threaten, as Frances claimed, to end Lloyd George's political life. She was angry about the prospect, let alone the actuality of Lloyd George's wedding to Frances. The feud continued, again as narrated by Frances, long after Lloyd George's death. Bitterness probably comprised three elements, personal betrayal because of her early relationship with Frances, anger at seeing her mother hurt, and competitive adoration of her father. Her Christian piety did not extend to even superficial forgiveness. She left no direct female legacy: there were no Liberal women MPs from 1951 to 1986, and no female leader until 2019.

### Influence and significance

In 1906, 399 Liberal MPs were elected. In 1955, the nadir, there were 6 Liberal MPs. In part, this story of five women is obviously associated with this declining trajectory. Women continued to be patronised and disparaged in all fields of life. In the political context the significance of these women has to be assessed against what was possible. Were they constrained by the conventional view about women? Margot Asquith spoke with vehement intensity against women's suffrage yet behaved as someone entitled to influence politics. However, she was married to a man who believed women had no contribution to make and wanted none from her. It is important to look at the reasons why she failed to exercise influence on others, where she was strongly affected not only by sexism but also by the effects of her personality. The comparison with the Campbell Bannermans is instructive: unlike Asquith, Campbell Bannerman wanted advice and Charlotte delivered it in a way acceptable to him.

Margaret Lloyd George provides a different picture. Unlike Margot she was interested in direct interaction with ordinary people and demonstrated at least to people in Wales that she could speak publicly and organise voters. Frances Stevenson had neither the noisy but private role of Margot, nor the public role of Margaret. Nor are the claims for her as an influencer of Lloyd George well founded.

The Act of 1918 giving votes to many women and, in addition, opportunities to become MPs opened a new world for Violet Bonham Carter and Megan Lloyd George. Megan was enabled to become an MP when first entitled in 1929. Violet put her children before serious interest in becoming an MP. Both provided examples, in Violet's case primarily

**Like Violet she defined herself as the successor to her father, or at least the radical Lloyd George in 1929 and 1935. She wanted to get rid of the right wing of the party and recognised in November 1957 that she was 'too left for the modern Liberal taste'.**

## Five Liberal women and politics

after 1945, of women who could give articulate promotion of Liberalism especially through radio and TV. Their prominence gave a misleading impression of their influence. Their importance was not in developing Liberal policies or influencing a husband or father but in being significant female figures in a shrunken Liberal Party. Both Violet and Megan acquired early notice as daughters. Megan was the sole Liberal woman MP from 1929 to 1951; there was no successor for thirty-five years. They never gained the influence that their names suggested. It may be that Megan, though not Violet, was inhibited by her father's success – but not because she was a daughter rather than a son. Twentieth-century sons of prime ministers – Law, Baldwin, Churchill and Macmillan – were faded reminders of their fathers.

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## Ireland

On 22 April, Alistair Lexden was due to speak a dinner given by the Political Committee of the Reform Club in London, on the centenary of the Government of Ireland Act 1920. This is the address that he would have delivered.

# Lloyd George and an Anglo-Irish centenary

**T**HIS YEAR MARKS the centenary of the Government of Ireland Act 1920, which brought into being arrangements to provide for home rule (as devolution was then known) in Ireland, a major constitutional change for which Irish Nationalists had clamoured for nearly forty years through their Members of Parliament, who dominated the representation of Ireland at Westminster between 1880 and 1918. Violence had erupted sporadically as a consequence of the lack of progress towards the Nationalist goal.

Implacable opponents had thwarted it: Unionists, whose numbers and zeal were particularly formidable in Ulster, then an economic powerhouse of the entire United Kingdom. Backed steadfastly by the Conservative Party – known at this stage as the Unionist Party to underline its support – their resistance to home rule had brought Ireland to the verge of civil war in 1914 with the organisation of a paramilitary force ready to fight those who might seek to impose home rule on them. Yet just six years later they accepted it – and achieved great success in the first home rule elections in May 1921. A remarkable volte-face had occurred.

Unionists were won over by the new form which the familiar proposal took in 1920. Earlier versions, brought forward by the Liberal Party in 1886, 1893 and 1912, had provided for a single home rule parliament in Dublin. The 1920 scheme incorporated a second one in Belfast, equal in power and authority to the legislature that would sit in Dublin, with jurisdiction over six of the nine counties of the Province of Ulster. In this way Northern Ireland was called into existence as a new constituent element of the United Kingdom, dividing an island which, as a part of the United Kingdom – though not in ancient, medieval or early modern times – had always been one country.

What pleased the Unionists enraged their opponents. In 1920, the partition of Ireland was

widely denounced as a truly monstrous deed. Since then, all Ireland's subsequent misfortunes have often been attributed to it, in Britain as well as in Ireland itself. Tony Benn called it 'a crime against the Irish people'.

Inevitably, partition brought no relief from the bloody strife and turmoil into which the country had been plunged in 1919 by a brutal Republican campaign, whose aim was to sever all links between it and Great Britain and so secure the objective of the Sinn Féin Party, which had superseded moderate Irish Nationalism, with its goal of home rule, at the 1918 general election. Indeed, the security situation got much worse as the legislation that was to become the Government of Ireland Act went slowly through parliament between February and December 1920; it deteriorated still further in Northern Ireland the following year when its home rule institutions came into being, as the IRA stepped up its campaign in an attempt to overthrow them.

Britain's name was blackened by police and army reprisals undertaken indiscriminately in revenge for merciless IRA attacks on them. These reprisals, to which the British government turned a blind eye, are recalled vividly by three words: Black and Tans, as the hastily recruited police reinforcements in hastily improvised uniforms came to be known. They have achieved an enduring infamy. The latest academic research is unlikely to make much difference to the entrenched popular view, but it should be noted that Dr D. M. Leeson concluded in *The Black and Tans*, published in 2011 by the Oxford University Press, that instead of being regarded as 'the dregs of society or brutalised First World War veterans' they should be seen as 'ordinary men acting under extraordinary pressures.' New research continues to alter the perspectives in which the highly contentious events of 1920 should be seen.

Violence subsided everywhere after 1923, but it was never to be permanently eradicated. In

## Lloyd George and an Anglo-Irish centenary

the territory placed under the Northern Ireland parliament by the 1920 Act, there would be no lack of Republicans in each successive generation prepared to take up arms with the aim of ending the partition of Ireland. The most recent attempt, which began in 1969, lasted nearly thirty years. If an opinion poll were conducted in Britain today on the issue, it would almost certainly show much support for the view that Ireland should never have been partitioned.

Is there any good reason, a century on, to commemorate the Act which created that widely deplored partition?

The abundant criticism heaped on the 1920 Act as the agent of partition has obliterated the most important fact of all about it: that it was a vital staging post on the road to the settlement that Lloyd George devised at the end of the following year with the leaders of Irish Republicanism, which gave them independence as a Dominion within the British Empire. A successful overall settlement had to take this form in order to secure sufficient support in both Britain, which would not in 1920–21 accept an independent republic outside the Empire close to its shores, and Ireland, where both Republicans and Unionists, locked in mutual antagonism, had to be accommodated.

Through the 1920 Act, Lloyd George reached agreement with the Ulster Unionists; without it, he could not have gone on to secure agreement with the Republican leaders of Sinn Féin in 1921. The six counties of the new Northern Ireland had a clear Unionist majority (which is why the opponents of Unionism pressed strongly for the inclusion of the entire nine-county Province of Ulster where no such majority was assured). Unless the balance of political beliefs changed, or a British government abolished the Northern Ireland parliament – eventualities that seemed inconceivable in 1920 and remained so for many years, though not for ever – Unionists could be certain that they would remain part of the United Kingdom and outside an independent Irish state, to which they were irrevocably opposed.

As a result of home rule in a partitioned Ireland, Ulster Unionists now had what they needed for their constitutional security, and Lloyd George had met the most important demand of the Conservative majority at Westminster, on which his coalition government depended. Many (though by no means all) Conservatives were prepared to consider yielding ground politically to Irish Republicans for the sake of peace and stability (as long as a republic was not conceded); none of them was prepared to contemplate the sacrifice of the pledge



of support given to the Ulster Unionists in the 1918 Conservative election manifesto, itself the reiteration of a long-standing alliance.

The Republican response was predictably fierce. The IRA, then as later the armed wing of Sinn Féin, launched a murderous assault on Northern Ireland; Sinn Féin itself tried hard to bring Northern Ireland within the ambit of its Dominion under the settlement of December 1921. Lloyd George gave a marvellous display of political guile as he kept alive Republican hopes of a united Irish state without destroying the terms he had settled with the Ulster Unionists through the 1920 Act. This was indispensable for success.

He spoke warmly about the Council of Ireland to be set up under the 1920 Act as a bridge to a swiftly reunited Ireland when Unionists and Republicans agreed on its composition (they never did); he established a Boundary Commission, which he encouraged Republicans to believe would transfer so much territory to their new Dominion from Northern Ireland that the latter would collapse, while playing down any such prospect in discussion with Unionists.

'The Kindest Cut of All'

Welsh Wizard: 'I now proceed to cut this map into two parts and place them in the hat. After a suitable interval they will be found to have come together of their own accord – (aside) – at least let's hope so; I've never done this trick before.' (*Punch*, 10 March 1920)

Such guile was to command a good deal of approval some seventy-five years later when practised by Tony Blair in the negotiations which led to the Belfast Agreement in 1998. He was praised for ‘constructive ambiguity’. Lloyd George deserves similar commendation. He rarely receives it. It is hard to believe that without him and his superb political skills – which no other member of his government could match – a settlement would have been reached which extricated Britain from an armed struggle that had badly damaged its reputation at a cost of some 1,300 lives (estimates vary), and established a new Dominion which, after a short though brutal civil war, was able to evolve peacefully into a Republic in under thirty years without serious British or Ulster Unionist resistance.

It was a formidable achievement which would be much more clearly recognised today if Northern Ireland had prospered politically (and economically too). Was it not obvious in 1920, as it is now, that in a deeply divided society, riven by the hatreds of centuries, no good would come of vesting all devolved political power in the hands of Unionists to the complete exclusion of their opponents? It was a question that no one at Westminster seems to have faced squarely. Such forebodings as existed were quickly smothered. Matters were not helped by the Republican commitment to the overthrow of the new dispensation by force. For years thereafter, virtually all the opponents of the Unionists were content to exclude themselves from participation in the government of Northern Ireland, and to parade its shortcomings as evidence of the need to destroy it.

In these circumstances, the almost complete extraction of the Westminster government from the internal affairs of Northern Ireland for the next fifty years was the exact opposite of what was required. No bar whatsoever existed

to continuing involvement. Section 75 of the Government of Ireland Act 1920 stated that: ‘Notwithstanding the establishment of the parliament of Northern Ireland . . . the supreme authority of the parliament of the United Kingdom shall remain unaffected and undiminished.’ The Westminster government controlled nearly 90 per cent of Northern Ireland’s revenue and well over half its expenditure.

Nevertheless, over the years British prime ministers ignored Westminster’s power to promote good government in Northern Ireland under Lloyd George’s 1920 Act. Lloyd George himself put it around that north and south would soon come together again (even though the Ulster Unionists insisted during the passage of the Act that there would be no reintegration), leaving a profound influence on British policy which has grown, rather than diminished, with the years (it can be found readily in Whitehall today). Until forced by civil unrest to take action in the late 1960s, Lloyd George’s successors happily disregarded their undoubted supreme authority over Northern Ireland, a place which too many of them found utterly unappealing and refused to think about, irresponsibly compounding the province’s problems. If they had used their power successfully, then the reputation of the 1920 Act, which played a vital part in a peace process a century ago, would today stand much higher, and no one would doubt the case for commemorating it.

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## Archive sources

Dr J. Graham Jones lists the archival sources held at the Parliamentary Archive at the House of Lords of potential interest to students of the Liberal Party

# The Parliamentary Archive at the House of Lords

**T**HE PARLIAMENTARY ARCHIVES is the official archive of the House of Commons and House of Lords (UK Parliament).

In 1999, the House of Lords Record Office adopted the subsidiary title of Parliamentary Archives to better represent the department's role as custodian of both House of Lords and House of Commons records. In 2006 the name was officially adopted.

## The Beaverbrook papers

The Beaverbrook papers contain correspondence and a variety of papers, photographs and other images, maps and a few artefacts covering every aspect of the life and work of Lord Beaverbrook, politician and newspaper proprietor, from 1869 to 1972. They include general social and political correspondence and papers in England and in Canada covering Beaverbrook's early years in Canada including his financial dealings (BBK/A), his constituency correspondence as an MP, much detailed correspondence and papers on the Empire Crusade (BBK/B) and also special correspondence with prominent people including politicians, some artists and writers (BBK/C).

## Papers of Henry Bouverie William Brand, 1st Viscount Hampden

Consists of the papers of Henry Brand, Speaker of the House of Commons from 1872 to 1884. The papers comprise firstly a series of approximately 400 original letters or drafts and copies of letters to and from Brand, with occasional memoranda, written between 1855 when Brand was appointed as a whip, and 1892. The second main

series of papers consists of thirteen manuscript diaries, as well as five complete transcript copies. These begin just before Brand's election as speaker and conclude on his retirement from the chair; they span only the sessions of parliament and contain scarcely any reference to his private life. Also included in the collection is a printed book of Brand's decisions, recording rules and points of orders extracted from various parliamentary sources and compiled by Edwin Gordon Blackmore, Serjeant at Arms, House of Assembly, Adelaide. The diaries, even more than the letters, are never indiscreet, but they include brief comments on individual debates and speakers, assessments of his own performance – which often show how he reached particular decisions – and remarks on related subjects such as parliamentary agents or official reporters.

## Papers of Sir Percy Harris

The Rt Hon Sir Percy Alfred Harris, 1st baronet (1876–1952) was a Liberal MP, chief whip and deputy leader of the Liberal Parliamentary Party.

Diaries, correspondence, press-cuttings, photos, literary and miscellaneous papers relating to the life and work of Sir Percy Harris, from 1900 to 1951.

## Correspondence and papers of Sir William Allen Jowitt (1885–1957), Earl Jowitt

William Jowitt entered parliament in 1922 as Independent Liberal Member of Parliament for the Hartlepoons, although he lost his seat in the general election of 1924. In 1929 he was returned to parliament as Liberal member for

Preston, but was then controversially made attorney general in the Labour government, winning his seat a second time as a Labour member. He continued to serve as attorney general in the 'national' government of 1931, and was consequently expelled from the Labour Party. Defeated at the general election of 1931, he resigned his office and resumed his practice at the Bar.

Jowitt was readmitted to the Labour Party in 1936, and in October 1939 he was returned unopposed as member for Ashton-under-Lyne. During the war he served as solicitor general, paymaster general and minister for National Insurance. In 1945 he became lord chancellor in the Labour government, with the title Baron Jowitt, of Stevenage. On relinquishing the office of lord chancellor on the election of the Conservative government in 1951 he was created an earl. From 1952 until November 1955 he served as leader of the Opposition in the House of Lords.

Records of William Jowitt, lawyer, politician and author, including correspondence with colleagues and acquaintances, transcripts of speeches on legal or political issues, newspaper cuttings relating to his career and associated printed items. Also included is a small amount of personal material such as family correspondence.

## Bonar Law papers

Andrew Bonar Law was born in New Brunswick on 16 September 1858, of a Scottish mother and Irish father, who was a Presbyterian minister of the Free Church of Scotland in Canada. In 1870 an aunt took Bonar Law back to Glasgow where he started a career in business, but he always entertained political





Rolls containing Acts of Parliament in the Parliamentary Archives at Victoria Tower, Palace of Westminster (photo by Jeroen – <https://www.flickr.com/photos/-jvl-/6397121215>, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=64956123>)

ambitions and finally entered parliament as Unionist MP for the Blackfriars division of Glasgow in 1900. He lost the seat in 1906 but quickly found another, safer seat in Dulwich. He rose rapidly through the ranks of the Unionist Party and, following Joseph Chamberlain, became a leading spokesman on tariff reform. He became leader of the Unionist Party in 1911, and subsequently served as secretary of state for the Colonies in 1915, chancellor of the exchequer 1916–1918, leader of the House of Commons 1916–1921, and finally, with Beaverbrook's backing, prime minister in 1922, after the fall of Lloyd George. When he died in the following year, he left all his papers to Beaverbrook in his will.

The Bonar Law papers provide a great deal of interest, particularly in relation to the Unionist Party and Unionist opinion between 1911 and 1923, as virtually all prominent Unionists wrote constantly to their leader at that time. Major topics covered include party organisation, tariff reform, the Irish question, the conduct of the war, relations with the Coalition Liberals and post-war home and foreign policy.

The first seventeen series consist of family, personal and business correspondence and papers from about 1881. The family correspondence includes: letters from his aunt Janet Kidston, from his children, their teachers and tutors, and from personal friends and letters of sympathy on the death of his wife (1909), his mother (1914), and his two elder sons, James and Charles, both of whom were killed in action in 1917. The business papers contain: two early notebooks of business expenses (1881–94), a diary of a business trip to Belgium in 1889, and various other account books and correspondence relating to Bonar Law's investments in the General Life Assurance Company, General Accident Insurance Company, Royal Securities Corporation (Beaverbrook's company), and Clydesdale Bank, amongst others. Four series contain miscellaneous personal papers including some photographs, domestic account books, the children's school reports and one bundle of papers relating to the administration of Bonar Law's estate, 1924–30. Finally, there is one series of correspondence and papers relating to his rectorship of the University of Glasgow, 1914–22.

### Lloyd George papers

David Lloyd George was born in Manchester on 17 January 1863, and eighteen months later, on the death of his father, his mother moved back to her native home in Caernarvonshire, settling in Llanystumdwy, near Criccieth. Lloyd George first entered parliament in 1890 as Liberal Member of Parliament for the Carnarvon Boroughs, a seat he held for almost fifty-five years; and he never forgot his Welsh origins. He was created Earl of Dwyfor, Viscount Gwynedd, only three months before he died (on 26 March 1945).

The first four years at Westminster were devoted to local Welsh politics. The Boer War brought him into wider national and international politics when he stood out as 'pro-Boer' and attacked the war. In December 1905, when Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman formed a Liberal administration, Lloyd George was appointed to the cabinet as president of the Board of Trade, a post which he retained until 1908, when he was appointed chancellor of the exchequer by the new prime minister, Herbert Henry Asquith. The resignation of Admiral Fisher in 1915

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forced Asquith to reconstruct the government on a coalition basis and admit the Conservatives. In the new administration, Lloyd George became minister of munitions. After the accidental death of Kitchener, Lloyd George was appointed to the position of secretary of state for war in June 1916, a post which he held only for five months. There was undoubtedly widespread uneasiness at Asquith's conduct of affairs, particularly in the Conservative Party. Asquith was manoeuvred into resigning on 5 December and was replaced two days later by Lloyd George. He was supported by the leading Conservatives, but the most prominent Liberal ministers resigned with Asquith. He resigned from the premiership in 1922.

This collection comprises the political papers of David Lloyd George. Note that for correspondence, the names of correspondents given for individual letters are often as written on the original letter: the full name of the correspondent will be found at sub-series level.

The papers are arranged in nine sub-fonds: LG/A contain papers up to 1905; LG/B are papers created when Lloyd George was president of the Board of Trade, 1905–08; LG/C when he was chancellor of the exchequer, 1908–15; LG/D when he was minister of munitions, 1915–16; LG/E when he was secretary of state for war, June–Dec 1916; LG/F when he was prime minister, 1916–22; LG/G consists of the papers created following his premiership, 1922–45; LG/H are press cuttings; and, LG/I contains personal correspondence and papers, including notes for speeches.

The papers have been indexed and calendared in full until the end of 1922, after which the catalogue rapidly falls into file listing and even box listing only. The documents have generally been arranged according to types of correspondence and papers. The types of correspondence are: semi-official, special (usually of ministers and prominent officials), foreign, general, and cabinet notes. The papers have been separated into semi-official and cabinet papers, domestic and foreign general papers and lastly speeches and

biographical notes. These headings have been modified to suit circumstances; A, F and G have no 'semi-official' sections, and 'secretariat' sections have been added to F and G.

### **Papers of Sir Patrick Joseph Henry Hannon MP (1874–1963)**

Sir Patrick Hannon had a varied career in industry, agriculture and politics. He served as Unionist MP for Moseley, Birmingham 1921–50.

Papers including political, business and personal correspondence, minute books of the British Commonwealth Union and minutes of the Carlton Club Political Committee, diaries and notes.

### **Press cutting books of David Marshall Mason MP (1865–1945)**

David Marshall Mason was elected MP (Liberal) for Coventry in the second general election of 1910, retaining the seat until 1918. He unsuccessfully contested the Chislehurst Division of Kent in 1918, the Romford Division of Essex in 1922 and 1923 and the Barnstaple Division of North Devon in 1929. He was elected MP for Edinburgh East in 1931 as a Liberal supporting the National Government, but he lost the seat in the 1935 general election and in 1939 he joined the Liberal National Party. Mason was an associate of the Institute of Bankers and also the founder and chairman of the executive committee of the Sound Currency Association.

The press cuttings, taken from national and local newspapers, are almost entirely concerned with Mason's political career and his views on currency reform and other political and economic matters. There is a separate volume for the 1923 general election which includes the election addresses of Mason and his opponents at Romford and two original letters.

### **The political papers of William Mather Rutherford Pringle MP**

William Mather Rutherford Pringle (1874–1928) was a Liberal politician and a supporter of Herbert Asquith.

The papers reflect all aspects of William Mather Rutherford Pringle's political career from 1900 onwards. They include papers and leaflets on elections, letters from notable politicians, such as Asquith, Lloyd George and Walter Runciman, and papers and press cuttings concerning Pringle's parliamentary activities. There are also some of Pringle's letters to his wife written when he was away on political business. There are a considerable number of papers concerning the internal affairs of the Liberal Party in the 1920s. The 'Miscellaneous Speeches and Articles' reflect some of Pringle's literary, as well as his political, interests.

### **Letters to Sir Miles Mattinson, MP**

Sir Miles Mattinson unsuccessfully contested elections in Carlisle (1880) and Dumfries (1885 and 1886) for the Conservatives, before becoming MP for Walton, Liverpool in 1888. In 1884 Randolph Churchill was leading an attack on the leadership of his own party, the Conservatives. This dispute became most heated during his time as chairman of the National Union of Conservative Associations (15 Feb – 3 May and 8 May – 31 July 1884). However, a compromise was reached. He served as chancellor of the exchequer and leader of the House of Commons from July 1886 until 22 Dec 1886. On that day he resigned, due to his objections to the amounts spent on the army and navy.

Letters to Sir Miles Mattinson from 1884 to 1896. Correspondents include Lord Randolph Churchill (MAT/1/1–6) and Speaker William Court Gully – Liberal MP for Carlisle, 1886–1905, and speaker of the House of Commons from April 1895 to 1905 – (MAT/2/1–3). There are also letters regarding Mattinson's appointment as recorder of Blackburn and his candidature for an unspecified post in 1896.

### **Papers of Herbert Louis Samuel (1870–1963), 1st Viscount Samuel**

Herbert Louis Samuel was the son of Edwin Louis Samuel (died 28 March 1877), by Clara (died 1 November 1920), daughter of Ellis Samuel Yeats.

He was born on 6 November 1870, at Liverpool; educated at University College School, London, 1884–1888, and Oxford (Balliol College) 1889–1893; MA; Hon Fellow 1935; Hon DCL Oxford 1935; MP (Liberal) for Cleveland Division of Yorkshire 1902–18 and for Darwen Division of Lancashire 1929–35; parliamentary under-secretary of state for the Home Department 1905–9; privy councillor 21 November 1908; chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 1909–10; postmaster general 1910–14; president of the Local Government Board 1914–15; again postmaster general and chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 1915–16; home secretary 1916, and again 1931–32; chairman of the Select Committee on National Expenditure 1917–18; president of the Royal Statistical Society 1918–20; British special commissioner to Belgium 1919; high commissioner for Palestine 1920–25 and also commander-in-chief there 1922–25; chairman of the Royal Commission on the Coal Industry 1925–26; chairman of the Liberal Party Organisation 1927–29; chairman of the Liberal Parliamentary Party 1931–35; Liberal leader in the House of Lords 1944–55; president of the Royal Institute of Philosophy, 1931–59. He was created, 8 June 1937, Viscount Samuel, of Mount Carmel, and of Toxteth, in the City of Liverpool.

The Samuel papers cover his life and career from his childhood until the year of his death. Lord Samuel took care so far as possible to preserve both the personal and political letters, and also the papers which he received, intact. In addition, he kept drafts and copies of his own letters and made a practice of writing notes concerning any important events in which he had participated at the time when they occurred. The principal gaps in the collection at the House of Lords Record Office (apart from the papers concerning Israel and Jewish matters, deposited in the Israel State Archives) are departmental papers (few of which Lord Samuel retained) and cabinet papers which, with a few exceptions (see SAM/A/30, SAM/A/41, SAM/A/48, SAM/A/55, SAM/A/81, SAM/A/87, SAM/A/89) he returned to the Cabinet Office.

### **Papers of William Wedgwood Benn, 1st Viscount Stansgate**

William Wedgwood Benn was MP (Liberal) for St George's Division of Tower Hamlets, 1906–1918, and for Leith, 1918–27. He was MP (Labour) for North Aberdeen, 1928–31, and for the Gorton Division of Manchester, 1937–42. He served as a junior lord of the Treasury, 1910–14; chairman of the National Relief Fund, 1914; privy councillor from 8 June 1929; secretary of state for India, June 1929–Aug 1931; vice-president of the Allied Control Commission for Italy, 1943–44; and, secretary of state for Air, 1945–57. On 12 Jan 1942 he was created Viscount Stansgate of Stansgate in the County of Essex.

The papers of William Wedgwood Benn, 1st Viscount Stansgate contain political papers (ST/1–284), personal papers (ST/285–292), printed material (ST/293), and, photographs (ST/294).

### **Papers of Frances Stevenson (1888–1972)**

Frances Louise Stevenson was secretary and mistress to Lloyd George. She became his second wife in 1943.

The papers of Frances Lloyd George (Frances Stevenson) include correspondence, diaries, her autobiography, photographs and other material relating to her life with David Lloyd George.

Frances Stevenson preserved all the letters she received from Lloyd George, and after a while she managed to retrieve hers to him as well (he would have thrown them away otherwise), so that a reasonably full picture of their private lives survives. Lloyd George often wrote to Frances on any scrap of paper which happened to be handy, frequently in haste, sometimes early in the morning, or when in bed; his notes are usually undated, except perhaps for the day of the week, and sometimes almost illegible (years later, Frances looked them over and dated some from memory and therefore not always accurately). Apart from the love letters, the letters contain all Lloyd George's private hopes and fears and opinions about political events as they occurred: about people; about party politics and

struggles within the Liberal Party. There is valuable political commentary from Frances too. Detailed information can also be found about Lloyd George's personal relationships, about his health, and later in the 1920s and '30s about the writing of his memoirs. For the period of the Second World War there are a very few (but interesting) letters on the conduct of the war. Naturally, there are long gaps in this correspondence, particularly after 1932 when Lloyd George and Frances were more often together. These gaps can often be filled by Frances's private diary. Frances Stevenson/6 contains the Stevenson–Lloyd George correspondence as gathered together and arranged by A. J. P Taylor for the publication *My Darling Pussy*.

Frances's diary, 1914–37 (FLS/4), fully complements the letters. Like all busy diarists with good intentions, Frances did not always maintain the diary. She made her entries at the end of the day, sometimes in large desk diaries, sometimes in notebooks, and sometimes on loose sheets of lined exercise paper. Much of the diary is recorded in Lloyd George's own words, and like the letters, is a valuable commentary on events as they happened. Together, the diary and the letters give the reader a very good insight into the complex character and personality of Lloyd George.

Through her position as an influential political secretary, Frances came into contact with many notable public figures and there are occasional letters from such as Lord Beaverbrook, Admiral Lord John B. Fisher, Francis Young. She accompanied Lloyd George to the Versailles conference of 1919 and Frances Stevenson/3 contains four shorthand notebooks from this era.

Frances kept quite a number of personal letters, mainly from friends; some love letters from admirers, including William Hugh Owen to whom she was engaged, 1915–18, and Stuart Brown, who also wanted to marry her. There are also correspondence and papers relating to the Lloyd George Memorial Appeal; correspondence and press cuttings of obituaries and articles about Lloyd George, some of them by Frances herself; and some

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notes for a novel which she never finished. There is also some correspondence with the Lloyd George family, including childhood letters from Megan.

Finally, there are typed drafts of Frances's published autobiography *The Years That Are Past* (London, 1967), and proofs of 'The Letters of David Lloyd George', selected by Frances, but never finally published.

### Papers of John St Loe Strachey (1860–1927)

This collection contains the political and literary correspondence of John St. Loe Strachey (1860–1927), journalist, editor and proprietor of *The Spectator*. The Strachey papers give an insight into the political and social atmosphere, particularly within the Unionist Party, from the turn of the twentieth century until the General Strike of 1926.

### Papers of Henry Graham White MP

Henry Graham White was MP for East Birkenhead, 1922–24 and 1929–45. He was assistant postmaster general, 1931–32 and president of the Liberal Party, 1954–55.

The papers, 1918–63, of Henry Graham White comprise political papers and correspondence including constituency and election material, papers concerning Liberal Party organisation, draft bills, committee reports and memoranda on topics such as unemployment benefit and old age pensions. There are papers on White's interests outside parliament, including the British Council and the Eleanor Rathbone Trust. There are also papers regarding White's campaign on behalf of German internees during the Second World War.

### Records of the House of Lords: Journal Office: Peers' elections

The House of Lords Act, 1999, removed the automatic right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords. An amendment to the House of Lords Bill, tabled by Lord

Weatherill and accepted by the government, enabled ninety-two hereditary peers (out of a total of some 750) to remain until the House was fully reformed. The ninety-two were made up as follows: forty-two Conservatives; twenty-eight crossbenchers; two Labour; three Liberal Democrats; fifteen office holders and two royal office holders – the Earl Marshal (the Duke of Norfolk) and the Lord Great Chamberlain (the Marquess of Cholmondeley) each with a central part in the state opening of parliament. Peers who wished to stand for election registered with the clerk of the parliaments. The fifteen office holders were elected by the whole house. For the hereditary peers standing as party representatives, the electorate consisted of their fellow hereditary peers from the same party. Between November 1999 and November 2002 vacancies through death were filled by runners up on the list of those elected. Provision was made under House of Lords Standing Orders for by-elections to be held when a hereditary peer died after the end of the first session of the new parliament (i.e. 7 November 2002).

HL/PO/JO/27/1 contains records of the House of Lords: Journal Office: Peers' elections.

HL/PO/JO/27/2 contains records of the House of Lords: Journal Office: Peers' by-elections.

### Lithograph: *Hopeless Outcasts*

A political cartoon depicting seven men standing outside in the snow next to a gate labelled 'Liberal Union'. All are wearing ragged clothes, and some do not have shoes. William Gladstone begs from another man (Lord Hartington, leader of the Liberal Unionist Party?) in front of the gate.

### Lithograph: *The Fall of the Rebels*

A political cartoon depicting Queen Victoria and various Conservative politicians as angels with feathered wings. Below them are William Gladstone and other members of the Liberal Party, also with wings. Queen Victoria holds strings which are attached to

Gladstone. Gladstone clutches a piece of paper labelled 'Home Rule'. Two winged heads, one of which is Randolph Churchill, blow onto Gladstone. The air is labelled 'Manifesto' and 'Speech'.

### Lithograph: *The Home Rule Leap*

A political cartoon depicting two men on horseback falling off a cliff. One of the men is William Gladstone. He is riding a white horse labelled 'Liberal Party'. The other man rides a horse with glowing eyes labelled 'Dynamite'. He appears to be strangling Gladstone.

### Lithograph: *A Moonlight Flitting*

A political cartoon depicting the result of the general election which concluded on 31 July 1886 and resulted in William Gladstone's Liberal Party losing power. The cartoon shows Gladstone moving out of 10 Downing Street with his possessions. He is holding a box of rolled up papers which include the 'Home Rule Bill'. He is accompanied by other politicians including Charles Parnell. Two men stand outside the moving van, trying to figure out how to move a trunk labelled 'Unfulfilled Promises'.

### Contact details

Email: [archives@parliament.uk](mailto:archives@parliament.uk)

Phone: +44 (0)20 7219 3074

Post: Parliamentary Archives, Houses of Parliament, London SW1A 0PW

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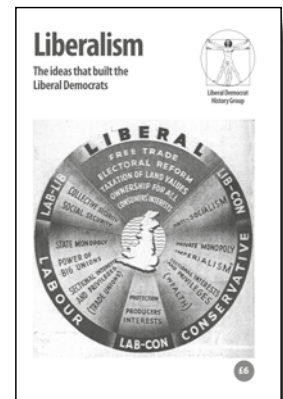
*Dr J. Graham Jones was formerly senior archivist and head of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. He is the Archive Sources series editor for the Journal of Liberal History.*

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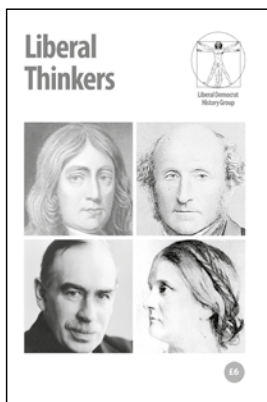
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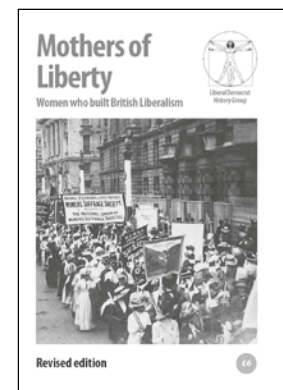
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# Letters to the Editor

## Robert MacLennan (1)

Bob MacLennan was one of my dearest friends over nearly sixty years. Ever since we first met in Columbia University, New York, in 1962 (shortly after the Cuban crisis) we kept in constant touch; I always found him a man of great kindness, wise judgment and deep personal loyalty. It was a great regret that our common membership of the Select Committee on the Constitution was cut off by his final illness.

It was, therefore, with some sadness that I read Michael Meadowcroft's obituary ('Robert MacLennan (Lord MacLennan of Rogart)', *Journal of Liberal History* 106, spring 2020) which focussed less on his outstanding personal qualities but on petty wrangles between lower-league Liberals and SDP worthies in trying to work out a stable relationship between the two parties from 1987 onwards. The article contained an over-abundance of spiteful judgments – one Liberal lightweight apparently referred to dear Bob as 'bizarre', and 'an uptight, tortured-looking character', an ignorant, phrase, very painful for Bob's many friends who crowded into the 'actors' church' in Covent Garden for his burial and who respected his warm and humane qualities.

Important aspects of his career and character were thus omitted by the author – the influence of his mother on his early socialist principles, his important work on Giscard d'Estaing's convention to produce a new constitution for the EU, the importance of his constitutional proposals with Robin Cook which greatly influenced the Blair government as the article manages to mention (just eight words compared with paragraphs of tittle-tattle), his presence on the Constitution Committee. I had many conversations with Bob in recent years, sometimes along with former Labour comrades from Scotland, who all had great affection for him.

Mr. Meadowcroft characterises him as 'lacking in political judgement'.

There certainly was one example.

This was Bob's reluctant decision in 1981 to leave his political home – the Labour Party. One outcome, which he profoundly regretted, was Clegg's decision to ally with the Tories in the 2010 coalition and line up in the division lobby on behalf of austerity, with measures such as tuition fees, the bedroom tax and cutting disability allowances. Bob's conscience, committed to equality and the welfare state, rebelled against all that. May his soul rest in peace.

*Kenneth O. Morgan (Lord Morgan)*

## Robert MacLennan (2)

Michael Meadowcroft writes, in his obituary of Robert MacLennan, that 'Owen regarded David Steel's attempt to bounce the two parties into a single merged entity [immediately after the 1987 election] as unacceptable.'

That's not exactly as I remember developments. Throughout the two to three years before the 1987 election David Owen had worked to emphasise the differences between the allied parties, setting out demands without prior consultation either with leading Liberals or with many in the SDP. Defence was one the areas he chose to keep the parties apart – not only with his uncritical loyalty to the US–UK relationship and NATO, but also on the independent nuclear deterrent. I remember well a working group meeting to agree the speakers for a joint Alliance conference on defence, at which two of the four SDP participants (both close to Owen) insisted that Bill Rodgers could not be permitted to be one of the key speakers, as 'not sound'. The development of the idea of the 'social market', it seemed to me, was also part of Owen's determination not to be dragged into the soggy concepts of Liberalism.

When the 1987 election results were announced it was clear to a number of

us that Owen would again attempt to pre-empt any further moves towards merger by setting out impossible conditions, or ruling it out altogether.

We strongly advised David Steel to go public first, to avoid yet again having to respond to an Owen ultimatum.

Bob MacLennan was an honest man who attempted to find a reasonable compromise between Owen's intransigence, the views of the majority of SDP members that closer integration or merger was essential, and the Liberal Party. It is not surprising, therefore, that he came under such strain as he worked to achieve a compromise outcome that Owen was determined to prevent.

*William Wallace*

## Robert MacLennan (3)

'Exceptionalism' is, in relation to politicians, beginning to be used as a word to define an attitude of superiority in general, but also – in particular – an unshakeable belief that your own views are correct notwithstanding any irritating evidence to the contrary. Think Trump and the American Right, and our own Johnson and Cummings.

Liberals are sadly not immune from this deadly virus, as is apparent from Michael Meadowcroft's 'obituary' of Bob MacLennan in your issue 106, into which has been woven for the innocent reader Meadowcroft's exceptionalist view of the Liberal/SDP merger negotiations, in which he, Bob and I were all participants.

Bob was not the poor leader painted by Meadowcroft. He had total decency and integrity. His good judgment stands out from the pages of Roy Jenkins' autobiography, *A Life at the Centre*, with Roy ruefully reflecting that he should have followed Bob's advice more often. But he did lack the black arts and manipulative skills which others possessed (think Paddy!). And he certainly had strong emotions, which



is not uncommon among Highlanders. Additionally, he was shaped by his dreadful experiences of Labour infighting, which he wanted to ensure did not recur in the Liberal Democrats.

And a word about Meadowcroft. Liberalism, which he professes so strongly, is built upon open-mindedness, tolerance and generosity of spirit. Meadowcroft demonstrated this early in the negotiations, when he said to the Liberal team that, as its legal adviser, my only job was to draft, and I should be banned from speaking. He then, with a couple of acolytes, walked out towards the end of the negotiations and, when the new party was formed, set up a so-called 'Liberal Party' to oppose it electorally, with all the foreseeable adverse consequences to the Liberal cause under a first-past-the-post system. Exceptionalism of the highest order!

And so to a couple of key points on the Meadowcroft take on the merger negotiations.

Firstly, including a commitment to NATO in the preamble to the new party's constitution was of course illogical. But it was rooted in Bob's Labour experiences. Liberal parliamentarians reluctantly accepted it on this basis, not as – per Meadowcroft – a 'hawkish defence policy', but rather asserting multilateralism over Meadowcroft's unilateralism.

Secondly, Meadowcroft refers to Bob as insisting on incorporating too many of the features of the SDP constitution into that of the new party. The truth is that the old Liberal constitution was an anarchic shambles, which the Meadowcroftites loved using as a weapon for their own internal purposes.

This letter is not unbiased. Bob was a personal friend, for whom I had enormous respect and affection. In the traditional Jewish phrase, his memory should be for good – not for partisanship.

*Philip Goldenberg*

### Asquith and the Paisley by-election (1)

On the supposed conversion of Asquith to women's suffrage at the

Paisley by-election ('Asquith's return to parliament at the 1920 Paisley by-election', *Journal of Liberal History* 106, spring 2020) Hugh Gault observes delphically that: 'some have questioned Asquith's sincerity'.

I quoted his private opinion in 'Politicians and the Woman's Vote 1914–1918', *History*, lxi, October 1974. On Paisley Asquith wrote: 'There are about fifteen thousand women on the Register – a dim, impenetrable, for the most part ungettable element – of whom all that one knows is that they are for the most part hopelessly ignorant of politics, credulous to the last degree, and flickering with gusts of sentiment like a candle in the wind.' (H.H.A., *Letters from Lord Oxford and Asquith to a Friend*, 1933, 125–26). He went on to say of the male electors of Paisley: 'They are among the most intelligent audiences I have ever had.' Prejudice on this scale dies very hard.

*Martin Pugh*

### Asquith and the Paisley by-election (2)

The article on the Paisley by-election caused me to look at results in that constituency in a bit more depth and discover a sort of parallel with the other constituency featured in that issue – Northampton. It appears to have had an interesting radical past too!

Created in 1832, the seat was Whig-held until a by-election in 1836. That was contested by just two Radical

candidates. The winner, Archibald Hastie, held it until his death in 1857. The by-election was contested by a Radical and a Whig (who won) and was then held by a Whig or Liberal until 1918.

The depth of the 'radical' nature of the seat was emphasised by the fact that in twelve elections between 1836 and 1880 only once was there a Conservative or Unionist candidate. That was in 1868, when there were two Liberal candidates! Perhaps the Tories thought they could benefit from the split vote and come through the middle.

Liberals were unopposed in the other four elections subsequent to gaining the seat. Hastie was also unopposed in two of the five elections in which he defended his seat. In 1852, he was opposed by another Radical and in 1857 general election by a Whig (who won the later by-election) and a Chartist, who got four votes, but the most interesting result was in 1841 when he was opposed by another Chartist who polled no votes at all! There may well have been other cases since 1832 of a fringe candidate polling no votes but I do wonder whether this is the only case where an MP has been returned with 100 per cent of the vote in a contested election.

Certainly both Paisley and Northampton seem to have been bastions of Radical/Chartist activity. Perhaps there is another story here.

*Alan Sherwell*

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# Reviews

## Why did the SDP fail?

Patricia Lee Sykes, *Losing from the Inside* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Routledge, originally published 1989, republished 2018 as an e-book)

Review by **Michael Meadowcroft**

IT MAY SEEM rather perverse to be reviewing a book first published in 1989 simply because it is newly available as an e-book. It is, however, still an important book with a distinct, some might say idiosyncratic, view of the reasons for the demise of the SDP. Patricia Lee Sykes (Lee Collins now) is an American political scientist at the American University, Washington, who spent two years at Nuffield College, Oxford, studying British politics. Since her first edition in 1989 she has added an epilogue, and I have to declare an interest in that she conducted a long interview with me in the preparation of this final chapter.

In a number of respects the dust of the changes of the merger of the Liberal Party and the SDP and their consequences had not really settled enough to be analysed effectively. One effect of this is that she exaggerates significantly the potential role of the continuing Liberal Party I led for some time. She also suggests, erroneously, that I warned in advance that, without a satisfactory merger agreement, I would start a separate Liberal Party. This was never the case and the continuing party only came about when I and others realised, following the decisions on the merger, that a number of local parties had committed themselves to continuing whatever the national party had agreed and looked to a means of bringing them together. Inevitably, without representation at Westminster, it was a quixotic venture.

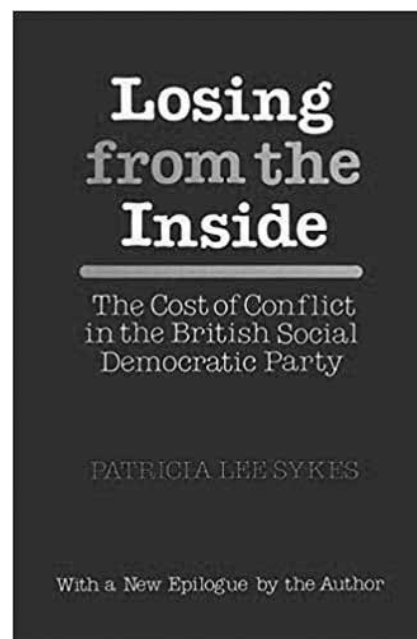
The essential heart of Collins' analysis, and the basis for the book's title, is that the SDP might well have been a young party but was not a 'new' party. Rather it had all the fault lines of the Labour Party out of which it essentially sprang, and it was these

that brought it down. Disagreements between leaders, embarrassing press releases, a lack of clarity on its essential philosophy, a constitution that attempted to keep safeguards in the hands of central officers – and particularly parliamentarians – whilst preaching the importance of member involvement and, in addition, the problem that it could not survive without the Liberal Party but could not survive with it.

Collins sets out carefully all the details of these inherent organic and seemingly irremediable problems and sets them alongside the polling evidence of the damage they caused. It is certainly circumstantially a powerful argument, though there are occasional times when the evidence is squeezed into her overriding thesis with some downplaying of other factors, such as the effect of the Falklands War. One key thread running through this book is the disruptive and ultimately malign role of David Owen. From the beginning he had a very different perception of the place and potential of a new party. What is more he saw himself as its natural leader, which, in fact, was the case but had to take into account other key factors, such as party unity, the necessity of holding party elections for the position and the opinions on him of the Liberal leadership. For the latter's inhibitions Owen had no time at all, not least because he had never wanted any truck with the Liberals, which he regarded as a incubus and a brake on his vision of the political potential of the SDP in its pure form. In a sense he was the SDP equivalent of Paddy Ashdown – for whom, incidentally, Owen had no time at all – but without Paddy's Liberal pluralism and love of argument.

All the way through Collins' narrative is David Owen's disdain for his colleagues in the Gang of Four, his electorally damaging impetuosity when he thought himself traduced, as for instance when, in 1986, David Steel leaked the conclusions of the Alliance's independent Defence Commission, implying that they would demonstrate a defeat for Owen's more hawkish defence line. The grandstanding outbursts of the two leaders led to the 1986 Liberal Assembly defeat for Steel's policy, immediately disowned by Owen and resulting in yet another decline in the Alliance's poll rating. Incidentally, Collins asks why Steel had not got an agreed and sustainable position sorted out with his party before the debate. The answer is that Steel rejected the opportunity. The party's policy committee met with him well in advance and offered him a conciliatory wording that was likely to go through the party assembly – a line which was essentially the same as had to be agreed after the debate – but David Steel rejected it: 'I'm going to go for the high wire act and confront the dissidents.' I remarked that with a high wire act it was important to know how to reach the other side.

A weakness of Collins' book is that she does not make sufficient distinction between Liberal, SDP and Alliance and all too often conflates them



into the jumbo title of 'Alliance' when there were often key nuances, for instance, in the differential poll performances of the two parties. However, her basic thesis is powerful. The SDP would only have been 'new' if it had unified the Gang of Four following its launch and if it had maintained an external unity and a solidarity of approach to leadership and electoral tactics. No democratic party could ever deliver all this – thus, to extent that the fine words of the SDP's launch about a new approach to politics weren't met in practice, so they led to a concomitant level of disillusionment in the public. In addition, to succeed and to maintain its initial high opinion poll rating, it would have needed the full agreement of the Liberal Party to a united approach to the 1983 and 1987 general elections. This was impossible to achieve and, in fact, the SDP from its beginning wholly underestimated the Liberals. It had imbibed the media's caricature of the party as a nice, folksy, diffuse and largely ineffective party, a view often purveyed by David Steel. How on earth the SDP thought that Liberal candidates succeeded in gaining and retaining thousands of seats on local councils and even managing to win any parliamentary seats against all the odds, I do not know; but certainly they were surprised by the toughness and political skills of their Liberal interlocutors.

Collins makes a powerful case that the SDP failed because it exhibited all the inherent faults of the Labour Party, albeit on different issues, that it had found sufficiently distasteful for many MPs to abandon. Perhaps it was inevitable, and it may be that political parties are incapable of avoiding such problems if they are to try and square the circle of assuaging the aspirations of a mass membership with convincing the electorate of its unity and seriousness of purpose.

*Michael Meadowcroft has been a Liberal activist since 1958; Liberal MP, Leeds West, 1983–87; elected Liberal Party President, 1987; political consultant in 35 new and emerging democracies, 1988–2016.*

## Who are the Liberal Democrats?

Tim Bale, Paul Webb and Monica Poletti, *Footsoldiers: Political Party Membership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Routledge, 2020)

Reviewed by **Duncan Brack**

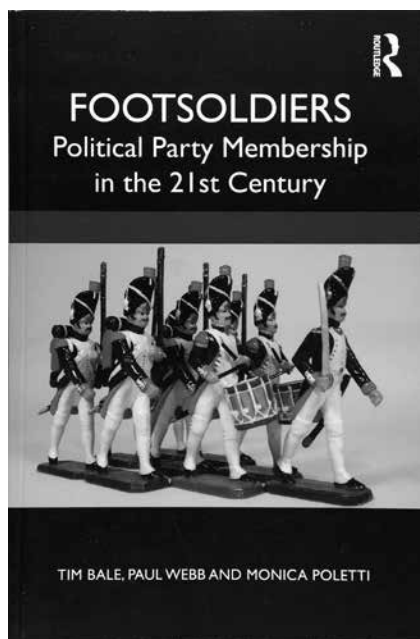
**V**ERY FEW OF the hundreds of books written each year on British politics ever consider in detail what political parties are really like. This matters: many, perhaps most, political journalists do not really understand who party members and activists are, what they want, and what makes them tick – which leads them to reach conclusions about what parties are likely to do, or should do, which are frequently completely misjudged. This tendency is magnified in the case of the Liberal Democrats, who are far less well studied, and less well understood, than the larger parties.

So Tim Bale, Paul Webb and Monica Poletti's *Footsoldiers* is very welcome. It represents the first in-depth study since the 1990s of the memberships of the UK's three main political parties, and the first ever to look six simultaneously – Labour, the Conservatives, the Scottish National Party, the Liberal Democrats, UK Independence Party and the Greens. Through a combination of membership surveys and in-depth interviews, including with me (all the interviewees' comments are anonymised, but I can recognise a couple of – fairly forthright! – quotes of my own), the book analyses members' social characteristics, attitudes, activities and campaigning, reasons for joining and leaving, and views on how their parties should be run and who should represent them. As the blurb says, 'at a time of great pressure on, and change across parties, this book helps us discover not only what members want out of their parties but what parties want out of their members'.

So what do we learn about Liberal Democrat members? In terms of total numbers, the Liberal Democrats, like Labour and the SNP, appear to have bucked the trend of seemingly inexorable decline in all parties' memberships that had been evident up until roughly the last decade. As readers of the *Journal*

of *Liberal History* will be aware, Liberal Democrat membership sank during the period of coalition government from about 65,000 to about 45,000, but then rose dramatically, in three big jumps – first, immediately after the 2015 catastrophe (as the book puts it, 'rather than leaving a sinking ship when they saw how badly the party had fared at the general election, a significant number of Liberal Democrat sympathisers decided they had to jump on board in order to steady it'), second (and the largest of the three) after the 2016 Brexit referendum, and third (though outside the time period considered by the book) over the local, Euro and general elections of 2019. A similar 'loser's bonus', as the book describes it, benefited Labour after 2015 and the SNP after the Scottish independence referendum in 2014, but for the Liberal Democrats it was also the outcome of a conscious effort, after 2012, to improve the party's membership recruitment and retention systems. The impact of these efforts can be seen in the fact that membership in fact stopped falling in 2014, before the end of the coalition, and was gradually edging upwards before the 2015 election – and it put the party in a much stronger position to capitalise on the 'loser's bonus' after the election and to retain the new members' loyalty in the years that followed.

So who are Liberal Democrat members? In both 2015 and 2017 the party was the most middle-class of the six parties surveyed, both in terms of members (86 per cent and 88 per cent in the ABC1 social classes, respectively) and in terms of voters (70 per cent and 72 per cent). Along with the Greens, Liberal Democrat members and voters are also the most highly educated, with 65 per cent of members, and 39 per cent of voters, having degrees in 2017 (the averages were 51 per cent and 26 per cent). In terms of gender, 32 and 38 per cent of members were women



in 2015 and 2017 (the lowest proportion of any of the ‘progressive’ parties – i.e. non-Tory, non-UKIP), but 52 and 47 per cent of voters were, almost exactly in line with the average for all voters. Members of all six parties were overwhelmingly white – 96 per cent on average, with, perhaps surprisingly, very little variation between them. Lib Dem members were fairly prone to join other organisations – particularly the National Trust, which no less than a third of party members belonged to in both 2015 and 2017. In 2017 *The Guardian* was the most favoured newspaper, though it was only read by 27 per cent of members, compared to 46 per cent of Labour and 51 per cent of Greens; at 17 per cent, a higher proportion of Lib Dems read *The Independent* than that of any other party.

Turning to beliefs and attitudes, party members assessed themselves as centre-left on the traditional left-right axis, less left-wing than Labour and Greens but actually not very different from UKIP (though Lib Dems moved more left in 2017, and UKIP more right). In terms of liberty – authority indicators, however, unsurprisingly these two parties were very different, with Lib Dems the second most liberal (behind the Greens, though not very different from Labour), and UKIP the most authoritarian. Combining these two axes into attitudinal clusters, the biggest group of Lib Dem members (43 per cent in 2015, 48 per cent in 2017)

could be placed within a ‘conventional centre’ grouping – which in this construct means slightly on the left, and more decisively on the liberal, side of the divides – triple the proportion of any other party’s members – with the next largest group (38 per cent in 2015, 36 per cent in 2017) in the ‘socially liberal left’ group. The authors point out that most party members tend to be more extreme – which for the Liberal Democrats means more ‘socially liberal left’ – than their voters, and I would guess most party activists are more extreme than the average members; I doubt many activists would describe themselves as centrist, so it’s interesting to see how many members do.

On views on austerity, party members switched decisively from just about thinking, in 2015, that public spending cuts had gone too far (48 per cent, as against 43 per cent thinking they were about right) to, in 2017, being convinced that they had (90 per cent against 9 per cent). Whether this was a function of party members changing their minds after the end of the coalition, or of the new members having different views, was not clear; probably both. On the Brexit question, again unsurprisingly, Liberal Democrat members were the most strongly in favour of remaining, in the EU, in

2015, and the most strongly supportive of joining the customs union and single market, in 2017.

Other chapters – too detailed to summarise easily here – look at why and how people join parties, what members do for their parties and why (the data bear out the image of hard-working Lib Dem campaigners – Lib Dems spent more time campaigning during the 2015 and 2017 elections than other parties’ members, and were notably more likely to have delivered leaflets in 2017), what members think of their parties, why they leave their parties, and how parties see their memberships (including as a source of funds, of campaigners and of ideas – with the risk, of course, that given sufficient influence within the party, members may saddle their parties with unpopular policies).

The book is not the easiest of reads – necessarily, it’s full of data and statistical analyses – but it is a fascinating insight into the memberships of political parties, and of comparisons between parties that have never been examined in such detail before. Highly recommended.

*Duncan Brack is the Editor of the Journal of Liberal History.*

## Ireland and the Liberals

James Doherty, *Irish Liberty, British Democracy: The third Irish home rule crisis, 1909–14* (Cork University Press, 2019)

Review by **Iain Sharpe**

IT SEEMS PARADOXICAL to say that the third Irish home rule crisis of 1912–14 has not received the attention it deserves from historians. After all, the difficulties encountered by Britain’s last Liberal government during this period have been central to the debate about the decline of the Liberal Party and the rise of Labour. The home rule episode is also intrinsic to the study of crucial years in Ireland’s path to independence. Yet, in the study of British history, the events around the

third home rule bill have often been regarded as a sub-plot of the wider political crisis of 1909–14, and at the same time overshadowed by the outbreak of European war in August 1914. And, in terms of Irish history, it has been relegated to a prelude to the more dramatic events from the Easter Rising of 1916 through to the Irish Civil War.

Fortunately, the last couple of decades have seen renewed interest in the third home rule bill, with a range of publications covering the subject.

Dermot Meleady's outstanding two-volume biography of the Irish nationalist leader John Redmond has rescued him from obscurity and gone some way towards rehabilitating his reputation. Other significant publications include Gary Peatling's *British Opinion and Irish Self-government* (2001), a joint biography of Redmond and the Ulster Unionist leader, Sir Edward Carson, by Alvin Jackson and an edited collection, *The Home Rule Crisis*, from Cork University Press in 2014, to which the author of the book under review was a contributor.

Dr Doherty's volume, based on his University of Southampton doctoral thesis, is welcome as a further contribution to the subject. Among its merits is that it is not just about Irish or British politics, but is a study of the interaction between the two. The author considers in turn the arguments advanced by British Liberals in support of home rule, the relationship between the leaders of the Irish party and the Liberal government, the activities of Liberal newspapers and grassroots activists, attempts to reach a compromise, and the pressure on Redmond from more hard-line Irish nationalists. He goes on to describe the climax of the crisis in 1914 and Redmond's ill-fated decision to support the British war effort, which contributed to the destruction both of his party and of his own reputation.

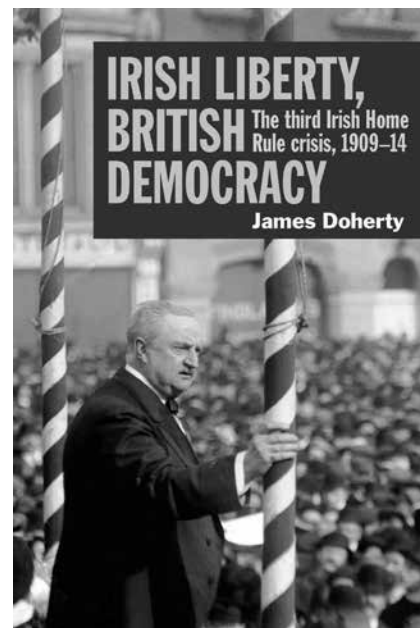
He continues the recent trend for rehabilitating Redmond's reputation. While the Irish leader has been judged harshly in Ireland as too emollient in the face of Ulster opposition to home rule, Doherty makes a convincing case that he exercised considerable leverage on the Asquith government and was trying to keep the door open for ultimate Irish unity. He defends Redmond's support for the British cause in the First World War and for Irish recruitment as a strategy that might have reconciled Ulster Unionist sentiment to Irish self-government had the Easter Rising and the eclipse of the Irish parliamentary party not intervened. It was a legitimate gamble that might have succeeded.

There is also original material on Liberal grassroots pressure on the government to support home rule

and stand up to Unionist resistance. (There can be a tendency among historians to assume that the Liberal rank and file were unexcited by Irish self-government and saw it as a diversion from other enthusiasms.) This included many public meetings and rallies held in Britain to support home rule – including eighteen in one evening in November 1913 according to *The Times*. It would be interesting to know how far these were motivated by enthusiasm for Irish self-government per se and how far by a desire not to let the Unionists thwart the Parliament Act. But the fact that such activity was happening is significant.

So there is much that is new and valuable in this book. Yet it has a serious weakness in its treatment of the Liberal prime minister, Asquith, and his government. It is as though Dr Doherty has decided from the start that this is a morality tale in which the Liberal government is cast in the role of villain, or at least as the willing servant of the arch villains – the Unionist opposition. Whenever Asquith's name is mentioned a pejorative comment is never far away, whether it be that he 'got things spectacularly wrong', was 'immersed in his own pleasures' or 'loftily remote', had 'superficial democratic convictions', or was guilty of 'less than honourable intentions', a 'policy of appeasement', 'virtual abdication of governance', 'pusillanimity', 'appeasement' and 'perfidy' etc. After a while this becomes wearisome.

The author makes an unquestioning assumption that the Liberal government's attempts to find a compromise with the Unionists can only be ascribed to ignoble motives. This leads him to present a distorted picture of the challenges and dilemmas that ministers faced in trying to get home rule enacted. It is only fair to say that he does not elide these out altogether. The perceived electoral unpopularity of home rule, the inflammatory language and unconstitutional tactics used by the Unionist leadership, including support for armed resistance in Ulster, and pressure on the king to refuse assent for the legislation all get a mention. But these are treated as incidental details to be acknowledged then passed over,



rather than as serious problems for the government.

The author writes of the Liberal government's 'impulse to collude with the Tories' and Asquith's 'collegial' attitude to Unionist leaders. This is a truly bizarre judgement given that he is discussing one of the most divisive and bitterly contested periods in British politics, which saw an unprecedented level of hostility between the two major parties. Far from colluding with the Tories, the Liberal government that had held office since 1905 had done an unparalleled job of thwarting them. It had kept the Conservatives out of office for a longer period than any time since the Great Reform Act of 1832, an achievement not to be eclipsed until nearly a century later by Blair's New Labour government.

The Liberals had defended free trade against Joseph Chamberlain's tariff reform crusade, introduced old age pensions and national insurance and, with the 1909 'People's budget', at last found a cause that enabled them to take on and defeat the House of Lords, which had previously been an immovable obstacle to progressive reforms. After two general elections, the Liberals managed to curb the upper chamber's power through the Parliament Act of 1911. This paved the way for the government to implement its commitment to home rule first adopted by William Gladstone a quarter of a century earlier. For their pains

## Reviews

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.*

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## Hampshire Liberals

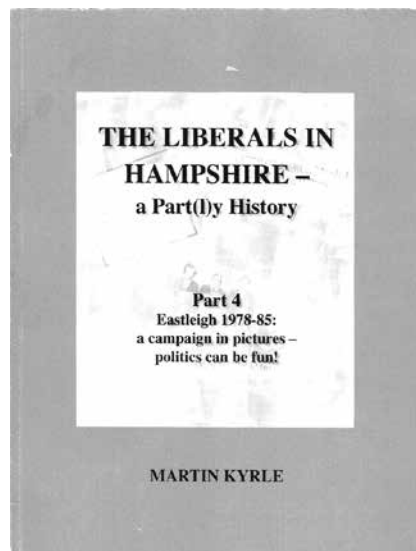
Martine Kyrle, *Liberals in Hampshire: a part(l)y history, Part 4, Eastleigh 1978–85* (Sarsen Press, 2020)

Review by Gianni Sarra

**T**HIS 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](http://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 Yuri 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.*

A Liberal Democrat History Group fringe meeting

# Liberals with a radical programme

## The post-war welfare state, Beveridge and the Liberal Party 75 years on

2020 marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the 1945 general election and the beginning of the creation of the post-war welfare state.

While the system of social security introduced after 1945 is often heralded as one of the greatest achievements of the Labour Party, its intellectual origins and design were primarily owed to Liberal thinkers and politicians stretching back over several decades.

Join us to discuss these issues with **Professor Pat Thane** (Birkbeck College) and **Dr Peter Sloman** (University of Cambridge).

1200 – 1250, Saturday 26 September

This fringe meeting will be held online as part of the the Liberal Democrat autumn conference, and will be open only to those who have registered for the conference.

methods were in place to prevent conflicts of interest, and the sort.

Like the previous parts of the series, Part 4 of *A Part(ly) History* is less of a comprehensive history – there is very little attempt made to analyse history or examine it in light of what we

know now, which can be jarring when someone like Cyril Smith is mentioned without comment – and more a contribution to the historical record. There are materials, anecdotes and unique insights into the local politics of the era that would have been lost without this

book, and hopefully every local party with an interesting story to tell has a Martin Kyrle in their ranks.

*Gianni Sarra is a PhD candidate, whose research focuses on political ethics, at King's College London.*

## Liberal History

**350 years of party history in 32 pages**

*The essential introduction to Liberal history. Available in print, Kindle and audio versions.*

Starting with the earliest stirrings of Liberal thought during the seventeenth century, this booklet traces Liberal history through the emergence of the Whigs, the formation of the Liberal Party, the ascendancy of Gladstone, the New Liberalism of Asquith and Lloyd George, dissension and eclipse by Labour, the decades of decline followed by successive waves of Liberal revival under Grimond, Thorpe and Steel, the alliance with the SDP and merger in 1988, and the roller-coaster ride of the Liberal Democrats, from near-obliteration in 1989 to entry into government in 2010 to electoral disaster in 2015 and the road to recovery thereafter. Up to date as of spring 2020.

- **Print version.** Full price £2
- Order via our online shop ([www.liberalhistory.org.uk/shop/](http://www.liberalhistory.org.uk/shop/)), or by post from LDHG, 54 Midmoor Road, London SW12 0EN (cheque payable at 'Liberal Democrat History Group').
- The booklet makes an ideal gift for new party members; a 50 per cent discount is available for **bulk orders** of 40 or more copies. Order via our online shop, as above.
- **Kindle version.** Price £2. Order direct from Amazon. This version up to date as of spring 2020.
- **Audio version.** Order direct from Amazon or Audible or Audiobooks or Apple Books. This version up to date as of summer 2018.

