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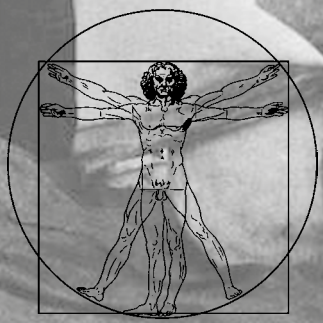

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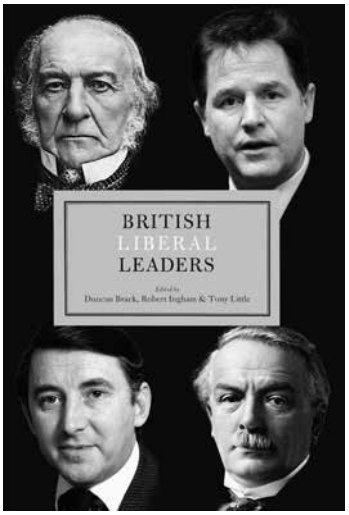

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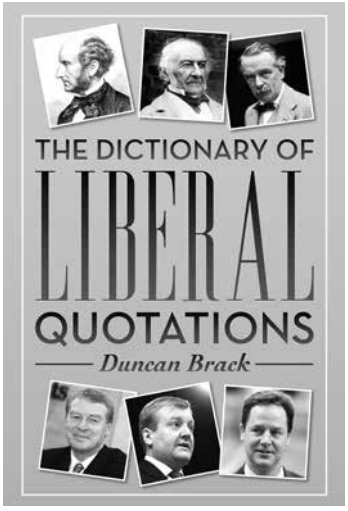

'A liberal is a man or a woman or a child who looks forward to a better day, a more tranquil night, and a bright, infinite future.' (Leonard Bernstein)

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Liberal Democrat History Group

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

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

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Liberal History News
Winter 2022–23

Editorial

Welcome to the winter 2022–23 edition of the *Journal of Liberal History*, the third we have published in the new smaller format. We hope readers like the new size; we'll be giving you an opportunity to provide feedback through a reader survey later in the year.

In this issue we're introducing a new feature, suggested by the *Journal's* Editorial Board: a short article, part of a new series on 'Introduction to Liberal History'. We're aware that not all of our readers are specialists in Liberal history, and we hope they appreciate the addition of 'primer' articles on key periods, personalities, policies and approaches. We open the series with an article on the New Liberalism. Suggestions for other topics are very welcome.

Finally, those subscribers without standing orders who subscribed before summer 2022 and didn't renew their sub last autumn are now overdue for renewal – see the letter included with this issue.

Duncan Brack (Editor)

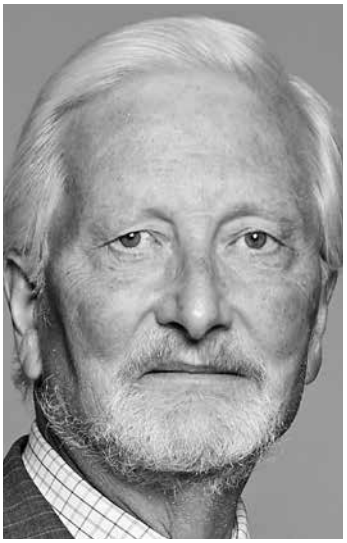
Obituary: Nigel Jones (30 March 1948 – 7 November 2022)

Nigel Jones, Liberal Democrat MP for Cheltenham 1992–2005, died on 7 November 2022.

Nigel Jones and Cheltenham were ideal partners. It is one of the small minority of constituencies that clearly identify with a single town. Even more significant is that there has been a Cheltenham constituency continuously since the 1832 Reform Act. Jones, born and bred in the town, had a considerable electoral advantage in such a constituency. His parliamentary work, and his time as a County Councillor for a Cheltenham ward, not only ensured a high regard for him personally but also helped to entrench a Liberal Democrat vote in the town which has ensured that the party has consistently been the leading force on the borough council, even when the Liberal Democrats nationally have been struggling. That party identity was also demonstrated by the election of Martin Horwood as Liberal MP in 2005 following Jones' retirement. It also, by extension, encouraged the strong 'Remain' vote there in the 2016 referendum.

In the early 1970s Jones married Alexis Rogers and they both played key roles in reviving the Cheltenham Young Liberals. At the 1979 general election he was well established in the party and was selected to take over as Liberal candidate from a distinguished surgeon and explorer who lacked a background in Cheltenham. Jones pursued a strong community politics strategy and was one of the few Liberal candidates who increased the party's vote share at that election. Following the election and faced with marital breakdown, he made the decision to take a position in the Gulf within his IT speciality and stood down as Cheltenham candidate. His ex-wife continued to be active in Liberal Democrat politics and became Liberal Democrat leader and thus in turn, with the party's majority, Leader of Cheltenham Borough Council. Whilst abroad Jones married Katy Grinnell with whom he had a son, Sam, and twin daughters, Amy and Lucy.

When the Cheltenham Liberal Democrats began preparing for the 1983 general



election they were faced with internal tensions and decided to resolve them by inviting Richard Holme, then the Liberal Party's president, to become their candidate. Holme regarded Cheltenham as a winnable seat and accepted the invitation. Despite bringing national resources with him, he failed to win in 1983 and again in 1987. Nigel Jones had become active again in Cheltenham in the mid-1980s and he and Katy had both won seats on Gloucestershire County Council in 1989 so, when Holme was created a life peer in 1990, the way was open for Jones to return. The value of having a local candidate with a council base was demonstrated when he gained the seat at the 1992 election.

The 1992 election in Cheltenham was notable for the Conservatives' brave adoption of a black barrister, John Taylor, despite the reprehensible objections by some leading local Conservative Party members. Potentially this presented a delicate problem, but Jones and the Liberal Democrats pursued an honourable campaign, regularly condemning racism. Some Conservative commentators, looking for scandal, suggested that Jones had emphasised that he was born in Cheltenham – unaware that he had also done so in every previous campaign.

Arriving in Parliament, Jones uniquely used his entire secretarial allowance on staff in the constituency rather than on a Commons office. If this implied that he was going to be a 'backbench' MP, such an assumption was proved wrong by the huge number of his contributions to debates and questions shown in *Hansard*, and by the succession of spokesmanships he took on, including local government and housing, science and technology, consumer affairs, trade and industry and international development and sport.

The effects of five years of solid constituency work and his enhanced local profile, including being a long-term football commentator on the town's local radio, were shown by a four-fold increase in his majority to 6,645 in 1997. In that year a campaign he had fought from his maiden speech came to fruition, and trade union rights at GCHQ, removed by Margaret Thatcher, were restored and its relocation shelved.

Some two and a half years into that parliament, on 28 January 2000, came the traumatic event that will always be linked with Nigel Jones. A constituent, Robert Ashman, with severe mental problems, whom Jones had helped over some time with his legal disputes, paid one of his many visits to Jones' constituency surgery. Suddenly Ashman produced a Samurai sword and attacked Jones. His friend and colleague, Councillor Andrew Pennington, who was assisting at the surgery, intervened and tried to drag Ashman away. In the process Pennington was repeatedly and fatally stabbed. He was posthumously awarded the George Medal for his bravery. Jones managed to escape and went for help. Ashman was eventually found unfit to plead and spent eight years in a secure hospital. Jones required fifty-seven stitches in his hand and suffered long-term effects from a severed tendon. Although, following this attack, and the murders of Jo Cox and David Amess, security at MPs' surgeries has greatly increased, it is unlikely that it would have prevented the Cheltenham attack, given that the assailant had attended on a number of earlier occasions.

Jones refused to be cowed by this experience and he contested the general election a

year later, being re-elected with just a slight reduction in his majority. However, in 2002 he began to suffer heart problems. These continued and, after a number of heart attacks, he was persuaded that he should stand down at the next election, in 2005. It was a tribute to his personal work and the embedding of Liberal politics in the town, that he achieved the somewhat unusual trick in Liberal and Liberal Democrat history of his successor, Martin Horwood, retaining the constituency for the Liberal Democrats.

On the nomination of his party leader, Charles Kennedy, he became a life peer in 2005, taking the title Lord Jones of Cheltenham. Recently, in the light of his health problems he was permitted to contribute to Lords' sessions virtually, through which he was well able to remain effective with short and pointed questions to ministers. His Chief Whip and later Leader in the Lords, Dick Newby, said of him that: 'He was a diligent attender and a real pleasure to work with', and that: 'He was a mild-mannered man but had very deep convictions which he held with a passion'.

Newby also commented warmly on Jones' wry sense of humour. Another of Jones' interest was indicated by being the very convivial chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Beer Group. Nigel Jones is also possibly the only parliamentarian to have been honoured by play stopping for a minute's applause at a match at his local football club.

Nigel Jones died at home several days after undergoing elective heart surgery. Perhaps the most succinct and neutral summary of the man came from the late veteran biographer of MPs, Andrew Roth: 'Clear-minded, practical and egalitarian.'

Michael Meadowcroft

Liberal Party Candidate Election Photos

In an effort to build a comprehensive parliamentary candidate portrait database, *Journal of Liberal History* subscriber Graem Peters is tracking down old election addresses of Liberal Party candidates.

The project aims to preserve a photographic record of candidates that can be widely viewed and freely used. Virtually every Liberal candidate will have produced one election communication that would have contained a portrait. Liberal Party HQ, however, did not collect these portraits of their candidates, so any that still exist will either be in libraries or in the possession of relatives or old Liberal Party members. Many portraits that were reproduced by local newspapers at the time only exist as low-quality images and are restricted by media copyright.

If you have any old Liberal candidate election communications with a portrait, either scanned or in hard-copy form, please email graempeters@hotmail.com.

A typical candidate photo: Patrick Furnell, Liberal candidate for East Grinstead at the 1959 election

Letters to the Editor

The Two Davids (1)

To give the label '1986 Liberal Assembly fiasco' to the debate on Liberal defence policy (report of fringe meeting on 'The Two Davids: Owen versus Steel, *Journal of Liberal*

History 115, summer 2022) is misleading at best, but in reality is very inaccurate and insulting to the democratic way in which Liberal policy was (and by and large still is) determined.

The Conference Committee accepted for debate an amendment to the defence policy motion – thereby producing an excellent debate – which was carried by some 25 votes – close, but nevertheless a clear decision. This was an example of the Liberal Assembly at its best.

James Moore's report implies that the party hierarchy should have 'fixed' the debate so that it gave Owen and Steel the decision they wanted. However, the party has always emphasised that our policies are determined democratically by our members (i.e. those who attend our conferences) so he should know that 'fixing' is unacceptable. The subsequent attempts by the party's leadership to rubbish the outcome was a shoddy, disgraceful performance, not in any way in keeping with our party's ethos.

Just one more point, for the sake of historical accuracy: James Moore's report does not in fact mention who moved the amendment but in his letter on the topic (*Journal of Liberal History* 116, autumn 2022), Michael Meadowcroft says that: 'contrary to the meeting report, it was Simon Hughes who moved the key amendment'. This was not the case; Simon summed up the debate on the amendment, but for some reason, Roger Hayes, who was chair of the Conference Committee, insisted that I should move it.

John Smithson

The Two Davids (2)

Reading the latest issue of the *Journal of Liberal History* (116, autumn 2022), I was more impressed by Michael Meadowcroft's short obituary of David Chidgey than by his long rambling letter which contained at least two mis-statements.

First, that I 'didn't even like his party', which he justifies with a reference to page 135 of my autobiography *Against Goliath*. Anyone reading that can see I referred there specifically to the Liberal Party Council (subsequently and thankfully abolished!). Second, that some of my speeches were written by others. Not true; while the late Richard Holme had much regular and appreciated input, the end text was always my own.

Only two things need to be remembered about Mr Meadowcroft's contribution to Liberal history: 1) He was elected MP for Leeds West in 1983 and defeated four years later, having ignored all advice to nurture his constituency instead of touring the country at weekends with his views. 2) That having opposed the creation of the Liberal Democrats he set up the supposed Liberal Party with himself as leader from 1989 to 2007 during which he destructively supported candidates against sitting Lib Dem MPs and failed to get any – including himself – elected.

David Steel

Trevor Wilson

Trevor Wilson's (Obituary, Journal of Liberal History 116, autumn 2022) *The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914–1935* is an interesting, and unusual, case of an author making a point of correcting his readers over their assumptions about his book.

In a new preface to the paperback edition in 1968 he referred to his allegory in 1966 of the Liberal Party as an ailing man run down by a rampant omnibus in the shape of the First World War. 'The allegory' he wrote, 'appears to have made its point too well'. He had originally thought of writing an account of Liberal decline from 1918 onwards but on reflection thought 1914 a better starting point. But 'for a book like this the starting point is not of paramount importance.' He never intended to argue that the war was the main cause of decline: 'This book, though it has a number of theses, has no overall thesis at all. Its object is to tell a story.'

Martin Pugh

Liberals and the Boer War

Those Liberals MPs who opposed the Boer War sometimes experienced uneasy relationships with their constituencies and local parties. **Brendon Jones** examines one particular case.

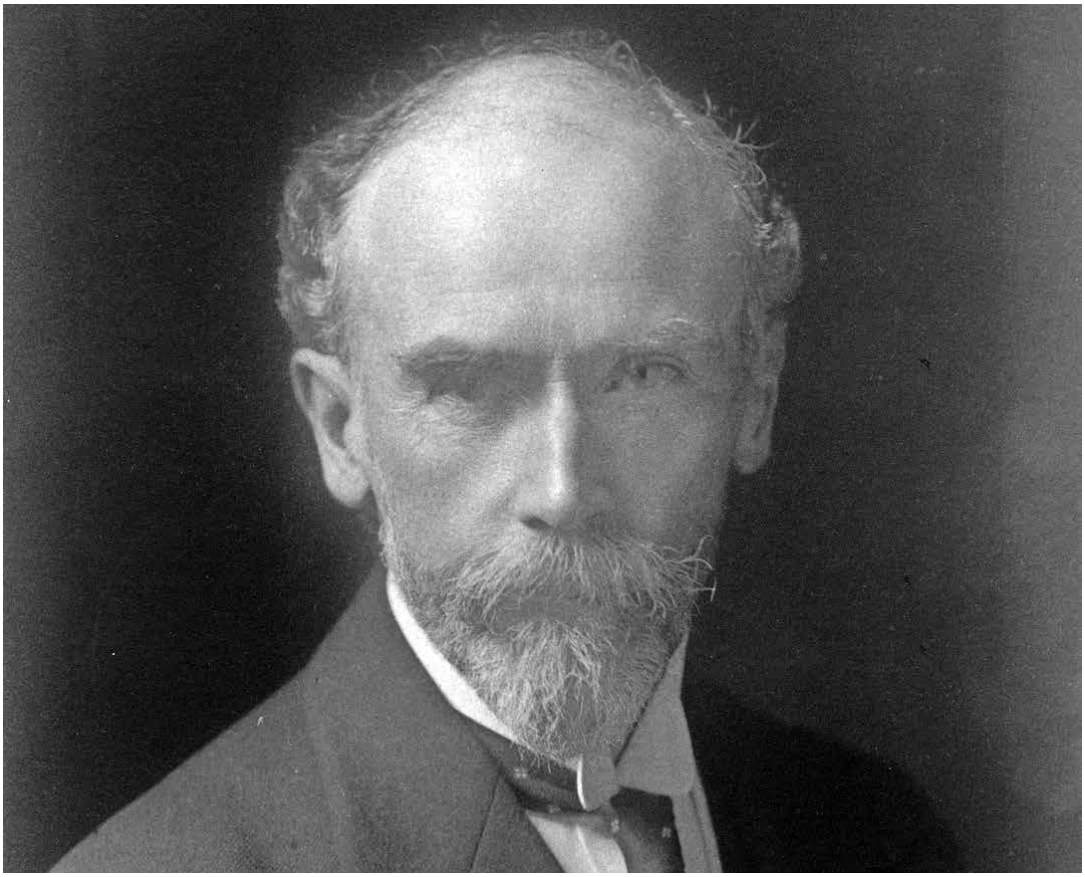
John Herbert Lewis and the South African War 1899–1902

This article will focus on the relationship between a member of parliament, his constituency and his local party. The impact that the latter have on the MP's political attitudes will receive particular attention.

In the months before the 'Khaki' election in October 1900, Herbert Lewis, the MP for Flint Boroughs, experienced strong pressure from both his constituents and his local Liberal Association owing to his early opposition to the South African War. These pressures contributed to an initial modification of his viewpoint which continued to change even after the pressures had been removed following his re-election.

Following a career in local government, including being the first chairman of Flintshire County Council from 1889 to 1893, Herbert Lewis was elected as Liberal MP for Flint Boroughs at the 1892 general election. His career in local government had brought him into close contact with Liberal politicians nationally, especially the young Welsh radicals David Lloyd George and Tom Ellis. Arriving at Westminster he firmly allied himself with the radical wing of Welsh Liberal MPs, playing a prominent role in the 'Revolt of the Four' in 1894 and the Cymru Fydd movement. This strengthened his friendship with Lloyd George who exerted a strong influence on him.[1] Following the fall of the Rosebery government in 1895, Lewis, having retained his Flint Boroughs seat, continued to agitate on Welsh issues and remained close both politically and personally to Lloyd George which would play a key part in his opposition to the South African War.

Lewis opposed the South African War throughout. Tim Erasmus,[2] in an unpublished PhD on Lewis's life, discerned a distinct change in his attitude towards the South African War when it ended. This change did not suddenly manifest in June 1902: it gradually evolved during the course of the whole war. Initially Lewis concentrated his attacks on the failures of the Unionist government, which he argued had caused the hostilities. In parallel, he condemned the war in principle, stressing the cost and suffering it would produce whilst militating against social reform at home owing to its high financial cost. By focusing his criticism in this way, Lewis aroused opposition from public opinion and the Flint Boroughs Liberal Association. This prompted a major crisis in late July 1900, with Lewis threatening not to stand as the candidate at the subsequent election. Though this was resolved, he stressed that he would never fall in with the dominant view within the association that had



Sir (John) Herbert Lewis, photographed by Walter Stoneman, 1921 (© National Portrait Gallery, London)

supported the annexation of the Boer Republics by the British. Yet during the 'Khaki' election he accepted the need for annexation, falling in line with the prevailing sentiment within the Liberal Party, whilst stressing that he believed in the Empire but wanted it to be the symbol of justice and fairness. He also criticised the poor supply of British troops in South Africa to underline his patriotism. This obvious change was the result of earlier pressure Lewis had experienced combined with the pronounced pro-war sentiments of the electorate and Unionist attacks on his unpatriotic stance. Having secured re-election, Lewis like many other Liberal opponents of the war shifted his criticism to the means that the British sanctioned to prosecute the war – notably the 'scorched earth' policy and the introduction of concentration camps. He also expressed concern at the increasing financial cost of the hostilities. By the end of the conflict in June 1902, Lewis had again revised his viewpoint, asserting that, although the war had caused great cost and suffering, it had been conducted through methods which accepted the conventions of waging war with due regard for the rights of opponents and civilians.

From the outbreak of the war Lewis was in an invidious position. Whilst there were pockets of opposition to the war in Wales, these were mainly confined to the rural Nonconformist areas, with public opinion largely supporting the war in its early stages. These pro-war sympathies were enhanced by the English language press, which elevated the contribution of Wales to the conflict. The constituency of Flint

Boroughs consisted of eight small boroughs – Caergwrle, Flint, Holywell, Mold, Overton, Caerwys, Rhuddlan and St Asaph – situated within the anglicised county of Flintshire in north-east Wales. The majority of the population was engaged in heavy industry, mining, quarrying and chemical production. This ensured the war received strong support within the constituency, as it was the anglicised industrial parts of Wales which responded most readily to imperialism. The campaign at the 'Khaki Election' of October 1900 is instructive in the historical debate around the extent to which jingoism played a role in individual election campaigns.[3] Henry Pelling has noted that Flint Boroughs was far from a safe seat with the social character of the constituency resulted in a small majority for the Liberals.[4] In the light of jingoistic, pro-war public opinion Lewis moderated his viewpoint and attempted to divert attention from the war to a whole range of issues, including social reform and temperance reform. He also laid great stress on his own patriotism expressing support for annexation and criticising the poor supply of British troops in South Africa. Lewis recognised that to take what would be conceived by the electorate as a 'Little Englander' stance could be an electoral liability and electoral expediency produced a modification in his stance.

A further factor which pushed Lewis to moderate his stance was pressure from his Liberal association. Most local Liberal associations were dominated by imperialists who stressed the need for the war. This was the case in Flint Boroughs. It is clear from Lewis's diary and from letters that he wrote, combined with the strong opposition which his anti-war opinion generated, that the association was controlled by an elite whose views were imperialistic and pro-war. In this context, the prominent Welsh Liberal MPs [5] who opposed the war, including Lewis, were placed in a difficult position vis-à-vis their core Liberal supporters in their constituencies, with their pro-Boer position also placing them in the minority within the Liberal Party nationally. Whilst they found themselves less isolated in the later stages of the war when attention focused on the conduct of the war, particularly the 'scorched earth' policy and the introduction of concentration camps on the Rand which provoked revulsion throughout Wales, in the period before the annexation of the Boer Republics and the 'Khaki Election' they faced a difficult relationship with their local Liberal associations. This placed pressure on Lewis which was a factor in him moderating his position.

From the outbreak of the war to the 'Khaki' election: October 1899 to September 1900

Herbert Lewis opposed the South African War from its outbreak in October 1899. This stance placed him in a difficult position in his constituency, where public opinion was jingoistic, and with his local Liberal association which was controlled by an elite whose views were imperialistic and supportive of the war. This invidious situation revealed itself at the first public meeting that Lewis addressed in the constituency after the outbreak of the war. This was held in Mold on 27 November 1899 to inaugurate a fund to aid the widows, orphans and dependents of British soldiers in South Africa. A jingoistic attitude was prevalent, with the local newspaper, the *County Herald* (a staunchly Liberal newspaper), including reference to local bands playing God Save the Queen and Rule Britannia before the meeting commenced. At the conclusion of Lewis's speech, Soldiers of the Queen was played. A large Union Jack was prominently displayed on the platform with a number of smaller ones decorating the rest of the hall.

In such circumstances Lewis delivered a careful speech, ensuring that he did not condemn the war outright but concentrated on its consequences, noting in his diary: 'Did my best to make them realise what war meant.'[6] Clearly Lewis recognised the isolated position he was in and attempted to gain support by stressing the suffering the war would produce

rather than his personal opposition to it. Initially he criticised the level of allowances paid to families, noting, 'the highest scale of allowance was not even sufficient to cover rent in a large town, whilst there were many others whose allowances would be much smaller.'[7]

Herbert Lewis opposed the South African War from its outbreak in October 1899. This stance placed him in a difficult position in his constituency, where public opinion was jingoistic, and with his local Liberal association which was controlled by an elite whose views were imperialistic and supportive of the war.

Without generous support from the public this would mean the workhouse or starvation for thousands of women and children. He expressed the hope that the British public would be broadminded enough to extend their sympathy to those South Africans who had been bereaved. Lewis warned against expecting the war to end quickly. Lewis, recognising the jingoism on display at the meeting, stressed that the Boers must not be successful in the long term. Lewis also made reference to the horrors of the war to emphasise the impact it would have. He feared, 'They saw perhaps too much of one side. They heard and read about the enthusiastic crowds cheering their troops to the transports, and they heard of brilliant victories won in South Africa. There was another side to the picture as well. There was the weeping crowd in Pall Mall, enquiring after the killed and wounded, and there were ghastly scenes upon the battlefield.'[8] He concluded by urging everyone to make a sacrifice for the cause whilst ensuring that other causes which needed their support did not suffer, citing the example of two Flintshire colliers who had recently lost their lives attempting to provide for the safety of their colleagues; this heroism was also important.

The reserved speech delivered by Lewis contrasts sharply with that of Thomas Parry, a prominent member of the Flint Boroughs Liberal Association. He stressed the virtues and importance of the British Empire and defended the need to make sacrifice and contribute to the fund which was to be set up in strongly jingoistic terms, arguing: 'there could be nothing nobler than the way in which the reservists had responded to the call of duty and in many instances left comfortable situations to serve their country. … Their duty was to support these men and their dependents, and to provide for the wives and families Tommy Atkins had left behind.'[9] The expression of such imperialistic and pro-war sentiments by a leading local Liberal indicated the potential for conflict between Lewis and the local Liberal association.

At few weeks later, on 29 December, Lewis addressed a Liberal meeting at Flint town hall with Lloyd George and Henry Broadhurst, the Lib-Lab MP for Leicester, who was also a strong opponent of the war. In contrast to the meeting in Mold, he attacked the war more freely, criticising the government's failures in the months before its outbreak and attacking the government's conduct of the war. It should be stressed that, whenever he attacked the war, Lewis was careful not to criticise the British army but rather the government and therefore defended his attacks on the war by arguing: 'It could not be denied that the Liberal Party, even those members of it who, like many Conservatives, were most bitterly opposed to the war, had acted with patriotism. But they had a right, indeed it was their constitutional duty to criticise those points in the conduct of the war which called for criticism.'[10] Lloyd George supported Lewis in his criticism of the war and its conduct – focusing on the government's failures and not the army – which underlines how close their positions were. The approach appeared to work and despite concerns that there would be opposition at the meeting Lewis noted in his diary, 'The meeting was very successful.'[11]

This approach was essential. Within Wales, support for the war flourished in its early stages with numerous attempts to stress the contribution of Wales to the war. Flint Boroughs was no exception and Lewis became increasingly aware in the early months of 1900 that public opinion within the constituency supported the war. J. Morgan, a leading Flintshire Liberal, in correspondence with Lewis described the patriotic attitude which dominated in Mold noting: 'I have never seen war fever take so strong a hold of the people, who by this time are practically unanimous on the subject. There are few of what are called "pro-boers" amongst us of course but they may be counted on one hand'.[12] The popularity of the war was also made explicitly clear to Lewis on 18 May 1900 owing to the relief of Mafeking and the celebrations that occurred, which he described in his diary as 'people in the streets wild with delight.'[13]

Opposition from the Flint Boroughs Liberal Association to Lewis's public expressions against the war and its conduct also became more apparent. In March 1900 it was decided at a meeting of Liberal councillors and aldermen from Flintshire to remain quiet on the war since 'There was yet an enormous gulf between sections of the Party as to the policy of the war.'[14] In April, Lewis addressed a private meeting of the association on the subject of the war and noted after in his diary, 'Spoke my mind freely about the Transvaal War. Delegates from different boros. spoke to the strong prevalence of the feeling in favour of the war.'[15] Later in the same month he attended a supper given by Samuel Smith, the Liberal MP for the Flintshire County constituency, along with twenty other prominent Liberals, and again expressed concern in his diary at their attitude towards the war noting, 'Nearly all are more or less jingo. Militarism has got hold of our people in the most outstanding way. The light of Gladstone, Bright is quenched in with the darkness.'[16]

In early June Lewis received a letter from Morgan which enclosed one from a local party member in Caergwrle, J. Speed, who stated, 'I have been asked by several voters about Mr Lewis's opinion on the war. I am afraid if he speaks out too much against it he will lose his seat if there is an Election this year.'[17] Morgan offered his own opinion to Lewis that the advice was sound as people were supportive of the war. Consequently, it was important that Lewis played down his opposition as he was 'convinced that much of the ground won during the last seventy years is being gradually overrun by the enemy.'[18] This correspondence underlines the genuine concern that existed among the rank and file Liberals in the constituency that Lewis's opposition to the war and the divisions it had produced between Lewis and the Liberal leadership in the local association could cost the party the seat at the next general election.

These various insights into public opinion, combined with the views amongst the Liberal membership and leadership, acted as the catalyst which provoked Lewis's decision not to recontest Flint Boroughs. He conveyed the reasons for his decision to Harding Roberts, the secretary of Flint Boroughs Liberal Association. He was clear that he could not fight the next general election on the lines that the local association would want, noting:

> What I have heard from many quarters during the last four months, has convinced me that there is little or no hope of retaining the seat on the lines on which I could contest the constituency. It will be impossible to be silent about South Africa during the election and I cannot speak on that subject without expressing views which are, I have been assured, distasteful to a large portion of the Liberal Party in the constituency'.[19]

He stressed that he would not be able to fall in with pro-war sentiment as this would be against his conscience but he recognised this was necessary to hold the seat and so he had decided to stand down as the candidate for the next general election.

In response to Lewis's decision, a meeting of the association was held on 30 July. Lewis made a statement expressing his opposition to the war and his refusal to accept the prevailing views which favoured the annexation of the Transvaal and Orange Free State by the British. Despite obvious differences, it was decided to reselect him as candidate. Lewis confided to his diary that the expressions of general support, kindness and loyalty which he received made him reverse his decision not to stand, but he 'told them plainly annexation was not just'.[20] An insight into the views of Liberals within Flint Boroughs following the meeting is given in a letter which Lewis received from the Rev. John Owens, a Calvinistic Methodist minister in Mold. Initially Owens insisted it was imperative to the Liberal cause in Flint Boroughs that Lewis remained as candidate. Addressing the question of the problems which the war had created, he recognised, 'a real number of Liberals have a different attitude from yourself. … No doubt the real majority think that 'annexation' is the only solution'.[21] However, Owens assured Lewis he would receive widespread support and loyalty among Liberals whether they agreed with his views on South Africa or not.

Despite the expression of support for Lewis and his decision to recontest the constituency, it was obvious from his formal letter of acceptance to Harding Roberts that there were still serious differences on the South African War. Lewis remained clear that he could not accept annexation of the two Boer Republics by the British but was willing to modify his stance slightly, maintaining: 'I recognise annexation under the circumstances as inevitable, but I cannot agree for a moment with the general belief that the settlement will be lasting. … I feel I would rather be taken out of Parliament

Herbert Lewis in 1894, from T. Marchant Williams, *Welsh Members of Parliament* (Daniel Owen & Co., 1894); watercolour portraits by Will Morgan (National Library of Wales, Creative Commons Public Domain 1.0)

for life than sign the death warrant of the independence of two free peoples'.[22] Lewis stressed his thanks for the loyalty shown at the meeting but was concerned at how the bulk of public opinion would see his views. He recognised that, if they handled the situation carefully and avoided the topics which divided them, they could hold the seat. This was exactly what Lewis did during the 'Khaki' election, diverting attention whenever possible from the South African War whilst combining it with a changed stance which included acceptance of annexation when required.

Lewis was also aware of organisational problems within the local party. The Rev. John Owens, in his letter following the Flint Boroughs Liberal Association's meeting on 30 July, had referred to 'matters besides the war which militate against our success.'[23] He emphasised the lack of organisation in Flint Boroughs maintaining, 'I would not have touched upon this matter, but I feel it a duty. The Liberals are not well officered, in fact things are in a bad state. The representation yesterday was a comparatively weak one as regards personnel equal in this respect to our M. meeting'.[24] He suggested Lewis visit each district and address the local Liberals at meetings not made up of just officers but a more wide-ranging representation. He was sure that there were men not currently officials who were equal to those who were and consequently changes could be made. Whilst he assured Lewis that Mold was sound, he expressed concern about Caergwrle, Holywell and Bagillt concluding, 'If we lose the Boroughs next time we shall do so because there is no life in our organisation'.[25] This was not a problem confined to Flint Boroughs: 'All over Wales the structure of local Liberalism in the constituencies after 1895 shows a consistent picture of disintegration of organisation and morale'.[26]

These organisational difficulties, combined with his awareness of support for the annexation of the Transvaal and Orange Free State amongst Liberal activists in the constituency, meant he still lacked enthusiasm for standing as candidate again. In reply to a letter from Frederick Llewelyn-Jones, a leading Holywell Liberal, who had written both to thank Lewis for consenting to stand and to pledge his own support, Lewis stated he was standing out of a sense of duty and would be willing to stand aside for a more suitable candidate if one could be found.[27] Lewis wrote to Herbert Gladstone, the Liberal chief whip, in similar terms a few days later making the plea that Liberal Headquarters help to find a new candidate for the seat. The party nationally would not accept the plea, with R. H. Davies replying that it was impossible to consider another candidate for Flint Boroughs who could be successful. It appears the comments he received from the Liberal Party nationally, combined with the loyalty and support which the Flint Boroughs Liberal Association had pledged to him, convinced Lewis of the necessity of him standing again.

By the late summer of 1900 an early general election appeared increasingly likely. In such a contest in Flint Boroughs, the Unionists would undoubtedly exploit the South African question in an attempt to weaken the Liberals by exposing the internal divisions that existed within their ranks on the issue. As Lewis had assured Harding Roberts when formally agreeing to stand once more, 'You may take it for granted that our opponents will compel us to fight on that issue and from their point of view they will be perfectly right'.[28] This, combined with weak Liberal organisation, ensured that the prospects for Lewis and the Liberal Party in Flint Boroughs were far from good.

Lewis combined a defensive position, stressing his belief in the Empire and concern for the British troops in South Africa, with an offensive one, attacking the failures of the Unionist government around the conflict.

The 'Khaki' Election: September–October 1900

During the 'Khaki' election campaign, Lewis expressed views about the South African War that indicate a clear change had occurred in his position. Although he attempted to divert attention from the war, the Unionists concentrated on the issue, insisting that Lewis had acted unpatriotically. In the light of this, Lewis combined a defensive position, stressing his belief in the Empire and concern for the British troops in South Africa, with an offensive one, attacking the failures of the Unionist government around the conflict. Despite his earlier statements, he accepted the need for the annexation of the Transvaal and Orange Free State. By modifying his stance for electoral expediency, Lewis secured re-election with a substantially increased majority.

A joint meeting of the Flintshire and Flint Boroughs Liberal Association was held in Mold on 22 September 1900 to formally adopt Samuel Smith and Lewis as candidates for the respective constituencies. In their acceptance speeches, both candidates attempted to play down the differences which existed between Liberals on the conflict. Smith tried to dispel rumours which were circulating about differences between himself and Lewis and expressed the hope 'that if they returned him to Parliament they would not leave out his younger colleague, Mr Lewis. His views and Mr Lewis' were identical upon all substantial questions.'[29] Lewis also stressed that Liberals would not be divided on the war, noting: 'All sections of the Party were absolutely united on this question, and for all practical purposes they must be united, because now the war was over the issue was really a dead issue.'[30] He emphasised that the Unionists were utilising the issue to try to secure electoral victory. From the outset of the campaign Lewis expressed views which diverged from the statements he had made when agreeing to recontest the seat. Not only did he argue that there was no value in discussing the war, but he also accepted the annexation of the two Boer Republics.

He maintained this in his election address. Initially he addressed the question of annexation insisting that since, 'The South African War is virtually over – the annexation – once and for all – of the two Republics to the British Empire is now an accomplished fact from which there must, and can be no going back'.[31] In what was probably an attempt to stress his own patriotism by criticising the government whilst praising British troops, he stated that: 'The deplorable want of knowledge, foresight and judgement displayed by the government in connection with that War has resulted in needless loss of life, suffering and expense. Their ungrateful treatment of our brave, untiring and uncomplaining soldiers, who have returned home "broken in our wars" is not worthy of a great nation.' [32] He also criticised the government for using the war which was now practically over to gain electoral victory. He limited his discussion of the war in his election address whilst addressing domestic issues at length. In particular he stressed his support for social reform, notably the introduction of Old Age Pensions, Workingmen's Compensation and temperance reform. Lewis clearly intended to divert attention from the war.

In contrast, his Unionist opponent, Lloyd-Price, devoted the vast part of his address to the war, maintaining that it had been forced on Britain and that annexation was the only possible solution to avoid further war later. In a veiled attack on Lewis he insisted that, 'The duty of every true Briton during the war was to show a bold and united front for his Country and we can only deplore the presence of that spirit which unhappily has manifested itself of wishing success to our enemies and confusion to his own country'.[33] The Unionists intended to exploit the pro-war sympathies within the electorate by concentrating on the war and Lewis's previous opposition to it. This was made clear early in the campaign at Holywell on 24 September when Lloyd-Price delivered a major attack on Lewis's lack of patriotism. He observed: 'I may say that Mr. Lewis has not shown himself quite

as loyal to his country as he might have been. He has shown a disposition to sympathise with the enemies of his country.'[34] He insisted that Lewis was wrong to oppose the war as this merely encouraged the enemy and caused more bloodshed in South Africa. MPs such as Lewis should feel ashamed and apologise. The campaign run by Lloyd-Price is instructive vis-à-vis the debate that has raged about how far the Unionists exploited patriotism, jingoism and the war in their election campaigns.[35] The Unionists certainly played on it in Flint Boroughs and Lewis was forced to address it as part of his campaigning.

Lewis answered the charges made the following day at a meeting in Holywell. He began his speech with a statement which stressed his belief in the Empire in strongly patriotic terms:

> I know something about this great Empire of which we are proud to form a part. I have visited different parts of the Empire. I have travelled in them and I have studied in them. I have been in distant parts when it has stirred my blood with pride to see the old Union Jack flying – but I want that flag to fly above justice and liberty everywhere. I want that flag to be a symbol of freedom and of hatred of oppression in every part of the world.[36]

As these were his views, he dismissed the attack of disloyalty, particularly as he knew the electors would not allow their minds to be instilled with such poison. Unionist pressure had forced Lewis to address the war and to express strongly jingoistic sentiments. Despite Lewis's claims, Lloyd-Price returned to the attack on 27 September. He reiterated his previous claims, although he did accept that he had offended Lewis by his comments and would apologise if Lewis could 'explain away the fact of his writing a letter sympathising with a pro-Boer meeting in Liverpool on the 30th of May last'.[37] As a consequence of this further attack, throughout the rest of the campaign, when addressing the war, Lewis incorporated a defensive stance with an offensive one. Initially he would dismiss the charge that he was unpatriotic, before attacking the Unionist government's failures. He would refer to the future in South Africa by stressing the need for annexation followed by a settlement based upon conciliation.

Lewis cited examples of his own concern for the welfare of British soldiers in contrast to the government's indifference. At Bagillt on 29 September, he criticised the poor supply of troops, mentioning evidence which he had heard as a result of his work on the House of Commons Army Contracts Committee arguing that, 'If they sent their young men to fight they were in honour bound to supply them with all necessary comforts and clothe and feed them well'.[38] Lewis was attempting to stress his own patriotism by taking up issues which concerned those fighting the war and their families. Moreover, Lewis charged the government with using the army to secure political victory at home. At Flint on 1 October, he argued that parliament had been dissolved to allow the government to capitalise on recent success in South Africa to secure a further term in office.

Throughout the campaign Lewis stressed that it had been right to annex the Boer Republics to the British Empire, a course of action he had insisted he would never be able to support previously. He supported annexation at a speech in Holywell on 25 September and again two days later in a speech in Mold arguing, 'The two republics must be incorporated with and annexed to the British Empire.'[39] Whilst he accepted annexation as the logical conclusion of the war, Lewis was careful to maintain that it was necessary to treat the Boers in a conciliatory manner to ensure a lasting peace. At Mold, when he accepted the need for annexation, he also argued that: 'everything that was possible should be done to heal those cruel wounds which the war had caused on both sides … he could only hope … that they would see South Africa at peace not only because it was dominated by force of arms,

but also because there was brotherly sympathy between race and race'.[40] He returned to this theme at a meeting in Holywell on 29 September. Lewis's support for annexation with caveats was undoubtedly the consequence of the earlier pressure he had experienced, combined with electoral pressure and the need to minimise the differences that existed between himself and Liberals in the constituency.

Although Lewis addressed the South African issue in terms that were likely to gain him electoral support, the major part of his campaign speeches focused on domestic and local issues, in an obvious attempt to divert the electorate's attention from the war. He addressed the war at the beginning of his speeches. Beyond this he argued that, since the war was practically over and annexation an accepted fact, there was little value in concentrating on the conflict during the campaign; attention should be devoted to the issues which would dominate in the future. He stressed support for social reform, particularly the introduction of Old Age Pensions and Workingmen's Compensation. He also emphasised Welsh issues, notably temperance reform, disestablishment and the removal of educational bars from Nonconformists. In addition, Lewis concentrated on local matters, alluding to his attempts during his eight years in parliament to promote local industry and help all constituents.

Throughout the war, Lewis's position mirrored that of Lloyd George, and the 'Khaki' election campaign was no exception. In his campaign in Carnarvon Boroughs, Lloyd George also stressed social reform, Welsh issues and what he had gained for North Wales, whilst attempting to avoid the question of the war. Lloyd George would dispose of the issue of the war at the outset of his speeches, expressing concern for the British troops who suffered owing to Unionist neglect, and then attack the Unionists' attempt to use the army and the war to win the election. Lloyd George regularly stressed that the government was using the war to cover for a lack of constructive policy at home and, given the war was nearly over, it was important that the electorate concentrated on the issues that would forge the peace.

Prominent Liberals in Flint Boroughs expressed their support for Lewis and echoed his views in regard to the war in an attempt to show that the party was united on the issue after previous divisions. At Bagillt on 29 September, Samuel Davies JP underlined the strong support which Lewis could rely on from party members. He attacked Lloyd-Price for the statements he had made maintaining:

> There was a great deal made of the war as an election cry. They were all spoken of as pro-Boer, but they all honoured the soldiers who so manfully fought and sacrificed their valuable lives in the Transvaal, and no one felt more than Mr. Lewis for his fellow countrymen there.[41]

Thomas Parry, whose views on the war had contrasted sharply with those of Lewis earlier in the conflict attended a meeting in Flint on 1 October to express his allegiance to Lewis.[42] The impression of unity which these statements created was particularly important in the light of Unionist attacks on Lewis and the pro-war sympathies of the electorate.

Polling took place in Flint Boroughs on Saturday 6 October. Lewis secured 55.5 per cent of the votes cast, on a turnout of 88.6 per cent, polling 1,760 votes to Lloyd Price's 1,413. Not only had he won, but he had also more than doubled his previously precarious majority to 347. This result was the consequence of several factors: Lewis's previous record as MP; the modifications he had made in his stance towards the war; the statements he made concerning the future development of the Empire and the position of British troops in South Africa in contrast to Unionist failures; and the important role he devoted to domestic and local issues. Undoubtedly Lewis's previous constituency record was a particularly significant factor in his re-election. This, along with the fact that Lewis had modified his stance on the war, were highlighted in an editorial in the *County*

Herald.[43] The 'Khaki' election had marked a significant shift in Lewis's position on the war driven by party and electoral pressure.

From the 'Khaki' election to the end of the war: October 1900–June 1902

Having secured re-election, Lewis continued to oppose the war. He increasingly concentrated his attacks on the financial cost of the war and the means by which it was conducted. This changed stance is underlined in Lewis's parliamentary contributions during the 1900–01 session. He delivered several informed, intuitive and humane speeches asking the government numerous questions about expenditure on the war and its conduct. These brought Lewis into the mainstream opinion of the Liberal Party which, under Campbell-Bannerman's leadership, opposed the means by which the war was conducted, notably the scorched earth policy and the introduction of concentration camps in the period from the election through to the conclusion of the war. By the ending of the war in June 1902, Lewis expressed views that indicate a further revision in his position. Although he emphasised the cost and suffering the war had produced, he maintained that it had been waged through humane methods.

Lewis articulated his concern about the growing expense of the war at a Liberal soirée held at Flint town hall on 14 November 1900 to celebrate his election victory, noting in his diary that he 'spoke chiefly on South Africa'.[44] He criticised the government's failure to recognise the gravity and probable length of the war, referring to the recent announcement that parliament would meet early in December to provide further supplies for operations in South Africa. During the general election campaign, the public had been assured by the government that the war was practically at an end. However, as with previous official estimates on the cost and duration of the war and the number of troops needed, events had proved them false. Lewis observed that, 'estimates on the probable cost of the war cast curious reflection on the want of knowledge, foresight and judgement displayed throughout by the government.'[45] Owing to the government's inadequate preparations, estimates had increased until the House of Commons had voted a total of £66 million, which was expected to rise to £100 million, although the ultimate cost was unknown. Between 10,000 and 15,000 Boers were still in the field fighting and showing no sign of yielding. Consequently the war was likely to continue for several more months, which would demand even greater financial commitment. Lewis's concern at the expenditure of £2 million a week on the war, which he stressed was 'on average five shillings a week per family in the United Kingdom',[46] was linked to his support for social reform.

Turning his attention to who should bear the cost of the war, Lewis forcefully attacked the mine owners and financiers of South Africa. He argued that, since Rhodes and his friends shared a considerable portion of the blame for the war, they should bear some of the cost. He cited the case of a prominent mineowner who had threatened trouble if the mines were taxed to cover the cost of the war. He feared that the South African financiers around Rhodes possessed such vast influence over the government and public opinion that they might prevent the taxation of the mines. However he expressed the hope 'that the taxpayers of this country would let it be known, with no uncertain voice, that a war which had cost Great Britain ten thousand lives, wounds and sickness to forty thousand men … was not going to result merely in the addition of another storey to the palaces in Park Lane'.[47]

In his first speech of the new parliamentary session, during a debate concerning the Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill, Lewis condemned the 'scorched earth' policy which had been adopted to defeat those Boers who remained fighting. Initially he referred to the Proclamation which had been issued on 14 December by Lord Roberts, the commander in chief in South Africa. Roberts had noted

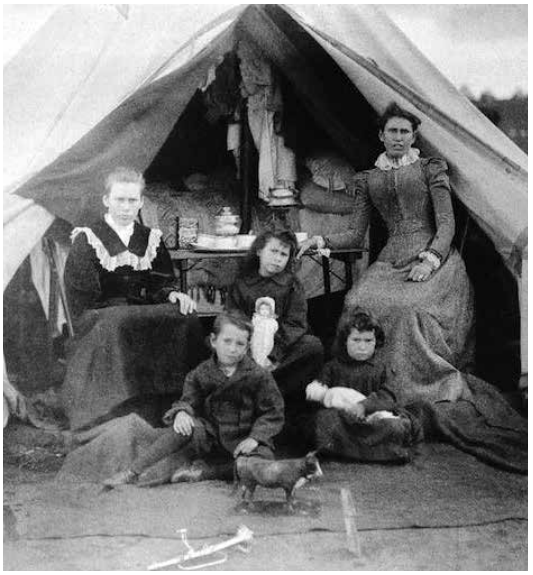
that it was only in the area occupied by the Boer army under the command of Botha that war was still being prosecuted. In all other areas it was degenerating into operations carried out by small and insignificant numbers of men. Roberts intended to end this by laying waste to large areas of the country by burning farms and breaking dams. It was argued that, by placing great suffering on the burghers and their families, this would ensure that the guerrilla warfare being practised would end. Lewis questioned this policy asking, 'Is the burning of farms, the breaking of dams and the devastation of the country to be continued until at last we shall be able to call it a peace when we mean a desert?'[48]

In a broader attack on the large financial cost of the war Lewis criticised the intransigent position of the British. He cited examples of letters exchanged between Botha and Lord Roberts which revealed that the British would only contemplate the unconditional surrender of the Boers. With regard to the Boer leaders, he referred to a despatch of 28 September which had maintained that the concession allowed to those burghers who surrendered voluntarily – that they would be sent out of the country – would not extend to those who had taken a prominent political or military role in the war. Lewis recognised that there could be no hope of a negotiated settlement if the British did not adopt a less intractable stance noting, 'Under circumstances of that kind, and if the terms of these proclamations are to be adhered to, it is practically impossible to hope to deal with the leaders at all'.[49] He attacked several aspects of the war's conduct before concluding with a general plea of a humanitarian nature: 'We gain absolutely nothing by enforcing such provisions as these, and I trust for the sake of the honour and credit and the good name of this old country the government will carry on the war in future as it should be carried on between civilised powers, and that women and children, as far as possible and consistent with the cruel necessity of war, be spared all this lamentable suffering of which our eyes have been witness within recent months'. [50]

As with Lewis's comments a few weeks earlier in Flint, this speech is of importance to understanding his changed attitude to the war. It is noteworthy that his concluding statement appears to accept the necessity for war, which his views earlier in the war would not have permitted. Rather than rejecting the war entirely, this shift in viewpoint had prompted Lewis to attack the methods the government had adopted to wage the war just as he had criticised the financial cost of the war in November and the poor supply of British troops during the election campaign.

Lewis's concern about the increasing expenditure on the war was expressed on two further occasions during the 1900–01 parliamentary session. On 22 February 1901, he questioned the chancellor of the exchequer on the growing cost of the war, and in early June he delivered a speech in a debate on the Supply-Army Estimates attacking the government's contempt for the House of Commons. An allotment of £9,550,000 was under discussion when Lewis observed that, if the Commons 'examined the Estimates for other Departments they would find the Votes properly classified under sub-heads and letters, and they would also find the amounts taken for different items definitely stated. In this particular case they were asked to vote £9,550,000 with their eyes absolutely shut'.[51] The Commons should protest and insist on more information. During the spring of 1901, Lewis also drew attention to a theme he had addressed during the election campaign:

In his first speech of the new parliamentary session, during a debate concerning the Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill, Lewis condemned the 'scorched earth' policy which had been adopted to defeat those Boers who remained fighting.



Left: Bloemfontein concentration camp (© National Archives UK, OGL v1.0). Right: a Boer family in a tent in a concentration camp. As many as twelve people would be kept in a tent of this type.

the supply and treatment of troops in South Africa. On 21 March, for example, he questioned whether the troops were to be supplied with a sufficient amount of flannel underclothing as winter was approaching in South Africa.

Lewis' most forceful attacks on the conduct of the war revolved around his opposition to the concentration camps which the British had set up to intern Boers from the areas which the army had cleared. Emily Hobhouse, who had visited South Africa on behalf of the South African Women and Children Fund to investigate conditions among the Boer civilians detained in the concentration camps, related to many Liberal politicians the conditions she had witnessed on her return to Britain. She was introduced to Lewis in June 1901[52] and provided him with valuable first-hand evidence which allowed him to contribute several informed attacks in the Commons in June 1901 on the appalling conditions in the camps and the inhumane treatment of those interned within them. Lewis questioned the secretary of state for war on 13 June about the high mortality rate in the camps and a few days later raised the question of medical provision for the sick and sanitary arrangements for the inmates. He also asked on 18 June that the government consider establishing new camps with good water supplies available. Lewis also highlighted the plight of women in the camps who were separated from their children, asking for them to be reunited.

Lloyd George was also prominent in the campaign against the concentration camps raising similar points to those which Lewis had stressed. He moved a motion on 17 June to allow the Commons to debate the high mortality among women and children in the camps. During the debate Lewis delivered a speech which encapsulated several of the themes he had already pursued regarding the camps. Initially he explained why the Boers would not be separated from their children and allow them to go to hospital by quoting from Emily Hobhouse's experiences. Lewis noted that in March the Commons had been informed that families in the camps were contented. These statements contrasted sharply with Emily Hobhouse's description of the camp at Kimberley: 'It is the smallest in area I have ever seen. The tents too close together, and the whole enclosed in an 8 feet high barbed wire fencing, which is

supposed to be impregnable and cost £500. Sentries at the gate and walking inside; no nurse; an empty unfurnished marquee, which might be a hospital; overcrowded tents, measles and whooping cough rife; camp dirty and smelling; an army doctor, who actually knows little of children's ailments; fuel almost none.'[53] Lewis also stressed his concerns for children who lacked the strength to endure life in the camps and he believed that 'to keep these camps going is murder to the children'.[54]

Lewis dismissed the government's argument that the camps were needed for expediency. Looking to the future he argued, 'I would venture to say, looking at these 40,000 children in the camps, that we are only sowing the seeds of discontent, and then we may reap a terrible harvest. Someday … a nation will grow up which will remember all these inequities.'[55] He also cited two examples to show that the camps were not defensible from a financial point of view either. In one case, twenty iron rooms had been constructed costing on average of £125 each. Secondly, a number of women had asked to be moved from the camps to live with their own relatives who were willing to pay the expense. Having listed his detailed criticisms of the camps, Lewis concluded with a humanitarian appeal:

> I appeal to the Government for the sake of the little children who are passing away like so many faded flowers in South Africa, for the sake of the parents who have to see them sick and dying before their eyes, to give their attention to this matter. The only effect of the present policy is to madden and exasperate the enemies of this country. They will be enemies to all eternity unless we reverse this policy.[56]

These determined attacks on conditions and the treatment of internees in the concentration camps can be associated with Lewis's changed outlook towards the war. As with his condemnation of the 'scorched earth' policy, he had not questioned the necessity of the war but rather the methods by which the British government were prosecuting it.

In the national context, by concentrating his criticism on the conduct of the war rather than its causes and principles, Lewis moved closer to the outlook of the centre of the Liberal Party and its leader Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. The majority of Liberal MPs opposed the 'scorched earth' policy and the camps and accordingly supported Lloyd George's motion on 17 June. During the debate Campbell- Bannerman repeated his statement 'When is war not a war? When it is carried on by methods of barbarism in South Africa'.[57] Evidence also suggests that, by focusing their attacks on the conduct of the war, Lewis and the other Welsh Liberal MPs who opposed the war mirrored the position of Welsh Liberalism and rallied revulsion amongst Nonconformists. By the summer of 1901, Lewis's views on the war clearly were no longer in the minority in respect of the Liberal Party nationally and of Welsh public opinion.

The culmination of Lewis's changed stance concerning the war came in a speech he delivered in June 1902 at a service in Rehobeth Chapel in Holywell to celebrate the ending of the war. Although he condemned the loss of life and the use of war as a means to settle international disputes, he endorsed the policies that the British had employed during the war. This represented a complete reversal from the position he had taken since the 'Khaki' election. He began by referring to the human costs of the war and the large loss of life, which he hoped all would learn from for the future, as war was not the means to settle disputes when arbitration was available to avoid this human cost. He then referenced the methods that had been used to prosecute the war arguing, 'this war, terrible as it has been, had been, perhaps, conducted with more humanity on both sides than any great war of which we had had experience'.[58] This viewpoint diverged sharply from the attacks he had delivered on the 'scorched earth' policy and the concentration camps. He also alluded to the government's

generous behaviour towards the Boers noting, 'their country had been devastated but it was now to be built up again, the farms restored, the stock replaced, and that upon the earliest possible terms.'[59] This prompted him to conclude the Boers were entering as 'co-partners into an Empire which with all its faults and failings … was perhaps the best, the justest and fairest in the world.'[60]

There are a number of possible explanations for this change. He had noted in his diary on 2 June 2 that there was 'great rejoicing on the conclusion of Peace'.[61] Given Lewis's strong Nonconformist Christian outlook, he was undoubtedly promoting conciliation at a service celebrating the end of the war. He also would also have wanted to move the debate forward towards other domestic priorities with the war over. His diary entries for the period were increasingly focusing on his opposition to the Education Act and his work around the promotion of temperance. That said, it is clear that a distinct change had occurred in his outlook and, whilst these views are inconsistent with Lewis's previous statements, they do not represent a sudden change but rather the culmination of a gradual development.

Conclusion

Lewis's career during the South African war demonstrates the difficult position an MP can be placed in when his views diverge from those of his local party and public opinion in his constituency. Evidence shows that Lewis's opposition to the war changed substantially during the war. Until the 'Khaki' election in October 1900, he attacked the failure of the Unionist government to avert war, whilst emphasising that the conflict would produce great cost and suffering and retard social reform owing to its cost. During the election campaign, owing to pressure from his local Liberal Association, public opinion and Unionist attacks on his previous statements, he moderated his viewpoint, stressing his patriotism by accepting the need for annexation of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, expressing concern for the poor supply of British troops, and attacking the government for attempting to use the war to secure political victory. In the period after his re-election, the change in Lewis's position continued. He concentrated his attacks on the methods the British utilised to prosecute the war against those Boers who continued to fight, focusing on the 'scorched earth' policy and the concentration camps whilst continuing to note the financial cost of the conflict. By the end of the war, he had again revised his viewpoint and accepted the methods the British had pursued to conduct the conflict.

There is clear evidence of the pressure Lewis experienced from within the Flint Boroughs Liberal Association to modify his stance in the early months of the war, with Lewis even threatening not to recontest the seat. He received support from key activists, which undoubtedly made him reconsider his position and agree to stand again, but it also led him to modify his stance on the war to include acceptance of annexation, a course of action he previously stated he could never accept or champion, to ensure that the Liberals in the seat were united on an issue the Unionists would seek to exploit. Public opinion in Flint Boroughs also had a bearing on his change of viewpoint, as he could recognise a jingoistic electorate in a marginal seat, and the modification of his views was undoubtedly in part a result of electoral expediency. Finally, Lewis's close personal and political friendship with Lloyd George would have had a bearing. The two were closely associated during the war and it is significant that Lewis's position on the conflict mirrored that of Lloyd George and changed in a similar way. The career of Herbert Lewis during the South African War clearly shows the complex relationship between an MP, his local Liberal association, public opinion and the important influence of his friendship with Lloyd George.

Dr Brendon Jones completed a PhD at the University of Manchester, focusing on 'Manchester Liberalism

1918–1929', under the supervision of the late Dr Peter Lowe, to who this article is dedicated. He has also been a Liberal Democrat councillor and head of office for Andrew Stunell, the former MP for Hazel Grove.

1 K. O. Morgan, 'Lloyd George's Flintshire Loyalist: The Political Achievement of John Herbert Lewis', *Journal of Liberal History*, 57 (Winter 2007–08).
2 Timothy P. Erasmus, 'Herbert Lewis and Welsh Radicalism: A Study in the Political Career of John Herbert Lewis (1858–1933) with Special Reference to the Period 1892–1906', PhD thesis (University of Wales, 1988).
3 R. Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class* (London, 1972) argues that the October 1900 'Khaki election' was not largely dominated by jingoism and patriotism, which has been refuted by P. Readman, 'The Conservative Party, Patriotism, and British Politics: The Case of the General election of 1900', *Journal of British Studies*, 40 (1), pp. 107–145. The Flint Boroughs campaign indicates that Lewis had to modify his stance owing to support for the war from the electorate and the attempts by the Unionist candidate to emphasise the war and Lewis's opposition to it.
4 H. Pelling, *Social Geography of British Elections 1885–1910* (London, 1967) p. 357.
5 The prominent Welsh Liberal MPs who opposed the war included David Lloyd George (Carnarvon Boroughs), John Herbert Lewis (Flint Boroughs), Bryn Roberts (Caernarvonshire Eifion) and Arthur Humphreys-Owen (Montgomeryshire).
6 Lewis's diary, 27 Nov. 1899, National Library of Wales, Lewis Papers B12.
7 *County Herald*, 1 Dec. 1899.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 *County Herald*, 5 Jan. 1900.
11 Lewis's diary, 29 Dec. 1899, National Library of Wales, Lewis Papers B12.
12 J. Morgan to Lewis, 7 Mar. 1900, North East Wales Archives, Flintshire, John Herbert Lewis Papers D/L/137.
13 Lewis's diary, 18 May 1900, National Library of Wales, Lewis Papers B13.
14 J. Morgan to Samuel Smith, 13 Mar. 1900, North East Wales Archives, Flintshire, John Herbert Lewis Papers D/L/138. Samuel Smith was Liberal MP for the Flintshire County constituency.
15 Lewis's diary, 18 Apr. 1900, National Library of Wales, Lewis Papers B13.
16 Lewis's diary, 20 Apr. 1900, National Library of Wales, Lewis Papers B13.
17 J. Speed to J. Morgan, 9 Jun. 1900, North East Wales Archives, Flintshire, John Herbert Lewis Papers D/L/137.
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31 *County Herald*, 5 Oct. 1900.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
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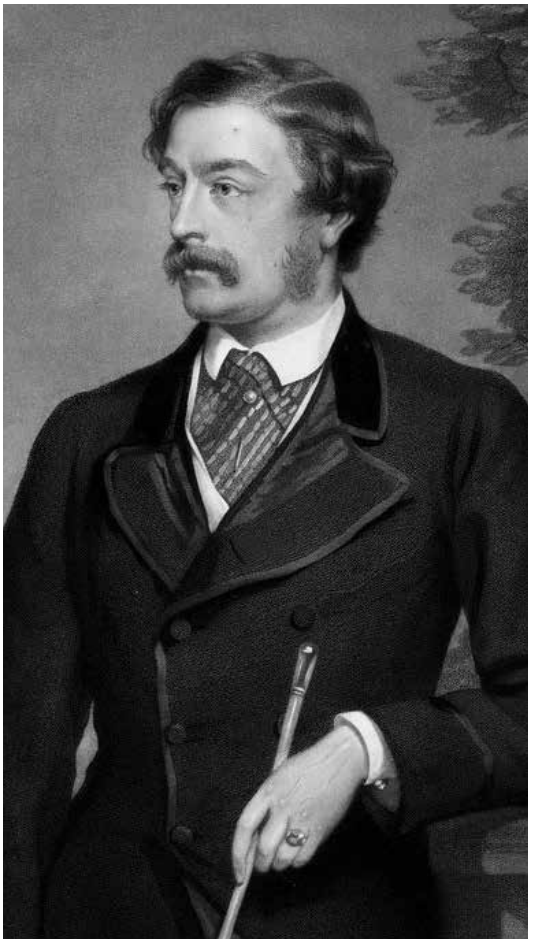
Concluded on page 33

Friends and families

Hugh Gault traces the political careers of two aristocratic neighbours in the late nineteenth century.



Sefton and Derby: Politics, Principle and Opportunity

The Molyneux and Stanley families were neighbours on the outskirts of Liverpool up to 1980, with the eastern-most point of the Molyneux estate at Croxteth only a few hundred yards from the western edge of the Stanley one at Knowsley. A path through the appropriately named 'Little Wood' connected them.[1]

The history of the Sefton, or Molyneux, family stretches from Robert de Molyneux in 1125[2] to the death of the 7th Earl in 1972 and his wife in 1980. They had no children, and the title became extinct. The main family home at Croxteth Hall (see photograph) was subsequently opened to the public, and the grounds surrounding it became a country park for the people of Liverpool.

The Derby, or Stanley, family remains extant, and the current Earl of Derby is the nineteenth. Their estate at Knowsley remains private, although Knowsley Hall itself, like many stately homes in private hands, can be hired for weddings and other purposes.[3]

In the two brief paragraphs above lie many clues to the differences between the Stanley and Molyneux families. While both families had been prominent in public affairs for hundreds of years, the dominant story of the Molyneux family was of being at odds with the established order. Often this was about religious difference, but not always; and as there were several landed families in Lancashire that were known to be Catholic, the Molyneux/Sefton dynasty were not exceptional in this regard.

Thomas Stanley on the other hand became the 1st Earl of Derby in 1485, ennobled by the new king, Henry VII, after the Battle of Bosworth Field. Thomas Stanley's second marriage to Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond in 1472 made him stepfather to her son Henry Tudor, the future king, but for most of the subsequent Wars of the Roses he fought on the opposite (Yorkist) side. Yet his support of the Yorkists was not unwavering even then, and could never be taken for granted, for he exercised discretion from time to time and his endorsement was never inevitable. He seems to have finalised his eventual switch to the Lancastrians only when he could be certain of Henry Tudor's victory.[4]

By contrast it would be almost another 300 years before an Irish earldom was conferred on the Molyneux family by George III in 1771.[5] The title Charles Molyneux (1748–1795) took, or at least his wife Isabella Stanhope (1748–1819) chose, was Maryborough, a very Protestant appellation (only 'Williamville' might have been more so) in an attempt to distance the family from their Catholic background and return to royal favour. His son, the second Earl in the Irish peerage, William Molyneux (1772–1838), was created Baron Sefton by William IV in 1831.

A Molyneux had fought with Henry V at Agincourt, and another had been one of the keenest Royalists during the Civil War. The latter's brother Sir Caryll, the 3rd Viscount Molyneux, found himself outlawed by parliament and subsequently was one of the accused in the Manchester treason trial of 1694. An informer John Lunt had accused eight prominent Lancashire men, including Sir Caryll Molyneux, of involvement in a Jacobite plot to restore the exiled James II to the throne. Lunt's story was readily believed by William III's government because it fitted their assumption that many Lancashire Catholics were closet Jacobites. Lunt claimed that Molyneux held a meeting of Jacobites at Croxteth Hall in June 1690, though Molyneux was already under house arrest by the authorities who feared an invasion from Ireland. Largely because of the difficulty of capturing Lunt, it would be 1694 before the case came to court. It soon collapsed, partly

Left: Edward Henry Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby, photographed by William Walker,1867 (© National Portrait Gallery, London)

Right: William Philip Molyneux, 4th Earl of Sefton, by George Sidwell Sanders, Henry Graves & Co, Sir Francis Grant, 9 June 1865 (© National Portrait Gallery, London)

because Lunt had fabricated the plot and was himself being held on other charges, partly because it was unlikely that such a crass operator who knew little of Lancashire would be given such a mission, and partly because some of Lunt's accusations were demonstrably erroneous, not least in terms of timing.[6]

In the fifteenth century, the Molyneux family quarrelled with the Stanleys over control of Liverpool, to the point where it threatened to become an armed feud. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, the 15th Earl of Derby, Edward Stanley (1826–1893) counted the 4th Earl of Sefton, William Molyneux (1835–1897) among his few friends. While as neighbours and near contemporaries it made sense for their relationship to be cordial, there were many reasons why it might be more superficial and distant than it proved to be.

Personal affiliation and political differences

Few sons of prime ministers become major politicians in their own right; even fewer rescue the family estate (in this case Knowsley) from the indebted and parlous condition in which their predecessor had left it. Edward Stanley the 15th Earl achieved this partly by good management, condemning those who had frittered away the generous provision handed down to them, especially his father, the 14th Earl of Derby, who had been Tory prime minister three times in the middle of the nineteenth century. But the 15th Earl was also fortunate in new railway companies paying to lay tracks across his land in the 1870s. He stood out from his Derby predecessors and successors (even down to the current 19th Earl) in choosing to close down the horse-racing operation that had proved such a drain on the estate's resources in previous years.

Politically the 15th Earl followed his father's recent Tory allegiance and, perhaps reluctantly for he sympathised with the Whigs on several issues, started on the Tory benches in the Commons.[7] In 1858, Lord Stanley (as he then still was) joined his father's second cabinet, initially if briefly as colonial secretary, and four months later as the first secretary of state for India having guided the Government of India Bill through the Commons.[8] The government fell the following year and with it Stanley's chance of becoming governor-general of India, the post he really coveted and which his father had used as an inducement for him to join the government in the first place.

Stanley's next cabinet post was at the Foreign Office, starting in 1866 in his father's last government. This appointment lasted twice as long as had his time at the India Office, for he remained Disraeli's foreign secretary in 1868

Croxteth Hall, April 2019 (© Hugh Gault)

after his father's death. After the government's defeat in that year's general election, he was in opposition for the next six years before returning as foreign secretary in 1874.

It was during the subsequent four years that the 'Eastern question' was to the fore once again with a crisis in the Balkans. Turkey's massacre of Bulgarian Christians had led Russia to invade Turkey, threatening British interests in the Mediterranean. Derby resisted another war with either Russia or Turkey, despite Disraeli's views. In March 1878 Derby indicated at cabinet that he would definitely be resigning, leaving it to Disraeli to decide (with Lord Northcote) when the House of Lords should be informed and when his seals of office should be returned to Queen Victoria.[9] Derby's resignation speech to the House of Lords on 28 March, and the Earl of Beaconsfield's (Disraeli's) reply, are both circumspect. Derby did not explain his reasons in detail for 'it is not in the interest of the State [that they] should be made public', adding that while his cabinet colleagues also sought to maintain peace in Europe, he differed from them in how best to achieve this: 'We agree as to the end, but unhappily we differ as to the means'. Both he and Disraeli made it clear, though, that there was no breach between them, and their personal relationship remained as strong as ever. It seems that Derby had objected to the Congress of Europe going ahead and 'a dispute … not … of form or of words, but … involving a very substantial reality'.[10] In other words, and reading between the lines, Derby judged a breach of international law could or would result if the Congress of Europe took place and, while he won his point through resignation, he recognised that the party price might be heavy.[11] His entry in the Oxford DNB asserts that 'His own party never forgave him for holding them back from the brink of war'.

Derby had threatened to resign over a similar issue the previous January, withdrawing it two days later when his concerns had been heeded, but the option of resignation had been in his mind for some time, for, in March 1877, he had recorded that he wanted to leave the government before Disraeli retired. He had no illusions that he would be long remembered: 'I have read and seen enough to know that no politician is long missed, and that there is more vanity than patriotism in thinking one's services indispensable.'[12]

Sir William Philip Molyneux, the 4th Earl of Sefton, was in the Lords for forty-two years from 1855. Before this, he had served in the Crimea in the Grenadier Guards, initially as an ensign before retiring as a captain in 1858 when already an Earl. This military career was another marked difference between Sefton the Whig and Stanley the reluctant Tory. To the extent that he focused on politics at all, Sefton was less interested in national politics than in those that affected Liverpool and Lancashire, where he was lord lieutenant until 1895, two years before his death. His county interests included local elections, for example the December 1868 election in North Lancashire where he was optimistic about Spencer Compton Cavendish (1833–1908) retaining the seat he had held since 1857. In Sefton's view Cavendish (then Lord Hartington and later the 8th Duke of Devonshire) would first have to tone down his more radical pronouncements, some of which frightened Sefton, but if that was done Sefton was content to 'obey orders'.[13] In the event Hartington lost the seat in the December 1868 election – as did several other Lancashire Liberals. In 1880, however, the Liberal Party won the general election that year and Sefton wrote to Cavendish to congratulate him.[14]

Sefton was in the House of Lords for almost six years before his first speech, when he responded on behalf of the Whigs to Queen Victoria's address at the opening of parliament on 5 February 1861. Much of his response was formulaic, but he hoped that any errors he made would be 'attributed to my inexperience of public affairs, rather than to any wish on my part to obtrude my opinions unnecessarily on your Lordships' notice'. He also referred to the return of 'the noble Earl opposite [Stanley's father the 14th Earl of Derby] restored to health'.[15]

By contrast Stanley was committed to both local and national affairs. He was chair of the Liverpool magistrates and sought to improve housing conditions in Liverpool. In June 1871, for example, Stanley (by then the 15th Earl of Derby) chaired a meeting to promote a limited liability company that would develop new sites in Liverpool and refurbish and improve existing court housing (labourers' dwellings).[16]

Another marked difference was in their personal styles. Sefton lived in and for the moment and two of his sons, the 5th and 6th Earls, continued his sporting obsessions, particularly shooting and fishing, with frequent trips to Abbeystead, the family hunting estate near Lancaster that the 4th Earl had built. Stanley was a more reflective character, as evidenced both by keeping a daily diary for more than forty years and in its contents, often weighing up the pros and cons and revealing his real opinions on people and topics. Few politicians of cabinet rank find the time, even if they have the inclination, to confide their detailed record of contemporary events to a diary and that he should do so was even more unusual in Derby's day. Yet Derby's diaries cover his political life from 1849.[17] His judgements of people are frequently illuminating, for even when he writes of friends such as Sefton or Charles Darwin, he is alive to their less attractive aspects. He could of course be candid because these were views recorded in his diary not expressed publicly, and even if they might become known in the future, he must have thought that his balanced and judicious approach was both appropriate and defensible.

Derby appreciated Sefton's chattering 'away in his boisterous, good-natured fashion', perhaps dismissing the less attractive aspects as defence mechanisms of the reticent and shy.

In September 1884 Derby spoke to Earl Granville, the Liberal leader in the Lords, about the claims of three candidates for a vacant Garter post:

> Sefton stands first on this list: Kimberley and Rosebery the other two. … [Granville] complained of Sefton being unpopular in Lancashire, where it is said he makes none but Conservative magistrates. This I do not believe, and told Granville so, but Sefton's unpopularity is a fact. It is caused by his loquacity, his somewhat swaggering manner, and occasional fits of temper: added to which he will seldom make speeches on public occasions, though when he does they are very good.[18]

Yet Derby appreciated Sefton's chattering 'away in his boisterous, good-natured fashion', perhaps dismissing the less attractive aspects as defence mechanisms of the reticent and shy.[19]

In the later diaries Derby frequently writes dismissively of the limited abilities of many of his fellow members of the House of Lords, as he does too of those who were seeking his financial and charitable support – often inappropriately and sometimes fraudulently in his view. Eminent people such as the writer Anthony Trollope, a fellow committee member of the Royal Literary Fund, whose tendency to take offence and blustering arrogance Derby found insufferable, was accepted to have virtues as both an entertaining novelist and enlightened administrator. Derby was ready to praise those who he felt deserved it, whatever their role, and his loyalty and even temper must have made him an agreeable employer, often granting long-standing employees pensions out of his own pocket or tiding them over difficulties.[20]

Sefton was Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire from 1858 until 1895 but in the final two years the power to create magistrates was removed from him, allegedly because of a pro-Unionist bias.[21] This is at odds with the record the 15th Earl of Derby had made in his diary twenty years before as he and Sefton walked back together from church in August 1874: 'Talk also of magistrates: Sefton gives himself much

credit for refusing all appeals to make them from political partisans and I believe he may say this with truth'.[22] Sefton underlined this position when he responded in the Lords on 5 June 1893 to the action removing his ability to create magistrates:

> During the 35 years of his Lord Lieutenancy he had never made a single appointment on political grounds, and since 1870 he had never nominated or refused to nominate a County Justice on political grounds. He did not think any noble Lord would say that if he had occupied a similar position he would have complied with the Chancellor of the Duchy [of Lancaster]'s request, and he doubted very much whether the right hon. Gentleman himself ever imagined for one moment that he would lend himself to such a transaction. [The Chancellor's] letter was a courteously worded, but formal notice to quit. It might be possible to find or create some better authority than the Lord Lieutenant for the appointment of Magistrates; it might be desirable to do away entirely with the "great unpaid" and to appoint Stipendiary Magistrates in every Petty Sessional Division; but surely it was undesirable that the appointments to the Lancashire County Bench should again be used for political purposes as undoubtedly they were before 1870.[23]

The 15th Earl of Derby had recently died and Sefton lamented the impact on Lancashire, as well as himself:

> He missed that evening the assistance – and Lancashire will miss the advocacy – of the noble Earl who so lately led the Liberal Unionist Party in their Lordships' House. Lord Derby had been Chairman of Quarter Sessions in Lancashire for many years. That noble Lord knew Lancashire well, and noble Lords on both sides would admit that no bettor opinion and higher authority could be quoted on a subject of this kind. In Lord Derby's last letter to him – probably the last letter the noble Earl ever wrote, or, rather, dictated on any county or public question – he condemned the [Chancellor's action]. All who had appointments in their gift, all who had responsibilities so often and so erroneously called "patronage" occasionally made mistakes which unfortunately it was not in their power to correct. He claimed no exemption to that rule. … He appealed to his noble Friend the Leader of the House – he appealed to the noble Lords who sat beside him – to use their influence … [and] … prevent a very great wrong being done to a great county.[24]

This was Sefton's second speech in the House of Lords, thirty years after his first, and that he made it at all (for it was his final one as well) demonstrated how strongly he felt the injustice as if he was "the black sheep of Lords Lieutenant". As important in his view though was the impact on Lancashire.

Derby first becomes a Gladstonian Liberal

Resigning from the cabinet over a matter of principle, as Derby had done, was less unusual in 1878 than it is today, but it was still exceptional. However, it did not necessarily herald the even more remarkable step Derby was to take two years later. That Derby and Sefton sometimes confided in each other, despite the apparent differences in their political allegiances, is clear from the above, but in early 1880 Sefton encouraged Derby explicitly towards the Liberals. In mid-January he asked Derby to meet the leader of the Liverpool Liberals and by March had encouraged Derby to support the Liberal candidates in the Lancashire county election.[25] By the end of March 1880, Derby was providing financial assistance as well as moral support, putting up £3,000 alongside Sefton's £2,000 and thereby covering between them half the cost of the contest.[26] Also in March 1880, Derby's steps towards the

Liberals moved out of the realm of confidential debate into the public sphere. That month Derby had written to Sefton about the forthcoming general election, and specifically the conclusion Derby had reached that he could no longer support the Conservative Party (particularly, and perhaps most tellingly, over foreign relations), for he judged their policy of neutrality 'an evasion of public duty'. Consequently, he assured Sefton, he had 'no choice except to declare myself, however reluctantly, ranked among their opponents'. Derby may have been in a somewhat fevered state, in effect revoking his recent history of Tory loyalty, but it is also clear that he knew what he was doing and had chosen his confidante Sefton as the messenger. Sefton was a Liberal Party grandee after his lengthy time in the Lords, but he was by nature a Whig landowner rather than a political conspirator. Nevertheless, he could hardly refuse the opportunity he had been handed, for Derby had added, 'you may make any use of this letter that you please'. Three days later, on 15 March, Derby's letter to Sefton was published in *The Times*.[27] Derby's letter was significant primarily as an indication of the way sentiment was moving, not least for appearing at the start of Gladstone's campaign. This is noted by Hanham,[28] with Mitchell describing it as a guarded endorsement of the Liberals.[29]

Once the election was won, Derby was wooed by the Liberals but he was not prepared to transfer his allegiance until the end of November 1882, when he was enticed into Gladstone's cabinet as colonial secretary (having been persuaded to switch from the India Office, his original preference). It is claimed in Derby's entry in the DNB that one civil servant referred to the colonial secretary as 'dawdling Derby', while another lamented his 'constitutional feebleness'. What such comments may illustrate though is the contrast between Derby's careful and considered judgement of the many challenges he faced (particularly in South Africa) and the precipitate rush that the imperial mindset may have expected as of right. As late as May 1884, Derby accepted Gladstone's offer of a vacant Garter post, having previously turned down the same offer from Disraeli on his cabinet resignation in 1878.[30]

A Liberal at heart but pragmatically a one-nation Conservative …, Derby had served both the Tory and Liberal parties in three of the highest offices of state in the Victorian era. His friend Sefton had been an ally, the 'figurehead of Liverpool Liberalism' … and responsive to Derby's request to broadcast Derby's dissatisfaction with the Tories in 1880, enabling his change of party and his subsequent contribution to a Liberal cabinet.

Derby left office in 1885 when Gladstone's government fell, though he maintained 'a real tie of loyalty to [Gladstone]'.[31] Indeed, up to this point Sefton and Derby had both supported the majority of Gladstone's proposals for, as Derby noted in his diary, Sefton called on him in February 1885 to outline the contents of a speech censuring recent Joe Chamberlain pronouncements that he intended to give in Liverpool. Derby persuaded him to tone it down so as not to cause a disturbance.[32] But later that year, at a dinner in honour of Sefton, Derby would himself speak about 'Chamberlain's new programme, not with approval …'[33] Nevertheless, Derby refused to rejoin the cabinet in Gladstone's new government in January 1886 over Home Rule and the re-creation of an Irish parliamentary body alongside that at Westminster.[34] Derby concentrated the remaining years of his life on Liverpool and on Liberal Unionist matters in the Lords. He was Liberal Unionist leader from 1886 to 1891 but 'in some ways he remained very much a Liberal' and thought coalition with the Conservatives 'out of the question'.[35]

He was no more than a reluctant ally of Salisbury, and was particularly negative about Salisbury's government, for even in his earlier days he had been a cautious Conservative. To his mind the Liberal Unionists were 'a device for separating Liberals from Conservatives, rather than Liberals from Liberals'.[36]

Towards Liberal Unionism

Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill for Ireland was defeated in the Commons in 1886, ninety-three Liberal MPs having voted against it. Gladstone called a general election and lost it to the Conservatives of Lord Salisbury. The Liberals had been split into 191 Gladstonian Liberals who, even with the support of 85 Irish Home Rulers, were outnumbered by 78 anti-Home-Rule Liberals and 316 Conservatives. Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Hartington had formed the Liberal Unionist party in 1886 but refused to join a coalition with the Conservatives:

> When Hartington asked Chamberlain his advice … Chamberlain was quite adamant in his refusal and was supported by Lord Derby who distrusted the Conservative leader. … Chamberlain and Derby also advised Hartington that the party should continue to sit with the Gladstonians, now on the opposition benches.[37]

It would be 1895 before the Liberal Unionists formally joined Salisbury's third administration – and by then Derby was dead. He had become increasingly sceptical of Liberal Unionism for he thought them focused solely on Home Rule and he was bored with this one-eyed approach.[38] In 1891 his co-leader in the Lords, Hartington, became sole leader when he became 8th Duke of Devonshire.

Although Sefton may have shared Derby's increasing dissatisfaction, they were among the twenty largest contributors to the discreet fighting fund that Hartington and his son-in-law Lord Wolmer established to meet the Liberal Unionist costs at the 1892 general election.[39] Sefton had given £1,000 and Derby £3,000, significant donors to the total of £131,785, more than double the fund's £60,000 target.[40] In the event less than £27,000 was spent on the general election itself, though nearly £67,000 had been expended in one Liberal Unionist interest or another. The rest was retained in Wolmer's 'secret' account until it might be required.

After his return to office in 1892, Gladstone's second Home Rule Bill was even more bitterly contested the following year. It was eventually forced through the Commons, but comprehensively defeated on second reading in the Lords by 419 to 41 on 8 September. 1893.[41] This date was not long after the withdrawal from Sefton of the right to create magistrates. It may be assumed that Sefton voted in the Lords majority, perhaps partly in memory of his friend Derby.

Conclusion

Derby's independence, and independent thought, comes through in the candour of his diaries, and he was always aware of his responsibilities as well as privileges as the largest Lancashire landowner. A Liberal at heart but pragmatically a one-nation Conservative like Disraeli, he had served both the Tory and Liberal parties in three of the highest offices of state in the Victorian era. His friend Sefton had been an ally, the 'figurehead of Liverpool Liberalism' Derby called him,[42] and responsive to Derby's request to broadcast Derby's dissatisfaction with the Tories in 1880, enabling his change of party and his subsequent contribution to a Liberal cabinet.

Hugh Gault is an independent writer and historian. His book, 1900 Liverpool Lives: The Threads That Bind*, was published in spring 2019.*

1 National Library of Scotland Ordnance Survey map Lancashire CVII.NW surveyed 1891, published 1894

2 *Victoria County History of Lancashire* (vol. iii), p. 73.
3 knowsleyhallvenue.co.uk – accessed 6 Dec. 2021.
4 Thomas Stanley (c.1433–1504) entry in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB).
5 J. J. Bagley, *A History of Lancashire* (5th edn., Darwen Finlayson, 1970), pp. 28–29.
6 Enid Lonsdale, 'John Lunt and the Lancashire plot 1694', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, pp. 91–106.
7 His father the 14th Earl had served in the Whig reforming ministry of Charles, Earl Grey (1764–1845), before breaking with them in 1834 over church reform and joining the Tories, first in Peel's government before becoming leader of the protectionist majority after the split over the Corn Laws and then prime minister himself. The 12th Earl had served very briefly in the Whig governments of Portland and Grenville but was mostly interested in horse racing. The 13th Earl was a lifelong Whig supporter.
8 James Olson and Robert Shadle (eds.), *Historical Dictionary of the British Empire* (Greenwood Press, 1996), p. 991 – accessed online 14 Feb. 2020.
9 John Vincent (ed.), *The Diaries of Edward Henry Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby (1826–1893) Between September 1869 and March 1878* (Camden Fifth Series, vol. 4; Royal Historical Society, 1994), p. 532 (diary entry of 27 Mar. 1878).
10 Derby's resignation speech in the House of Lords is at https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1878/mar/28/statement#S3V0239P0_18780328_HOL_6, as is Disraeli's reply – accessed 4 Jul. 2022.
11 See House of Lords debate (including speeches by Disraeli, the Whig and then Liberal leader Earl Granville, and Derby) at https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1878/apr/08/message-from-the-queen-army-reserve#S3V0239P0_18780408_HOL_18 – accessed 4 Jul. 2022.
12 Vincent, *Diaries 1869–1878*, p. 387 (diary entry of 30 Mar. 1877)
13 14 and 28 Jul. 1868 letters: Letter from William Molyneux, 4th Earl of Sefton to Spencer Compton Cavendish, Marquess of Hartington - Correspondence of Spencer Compton Cavendish, 8th Duke of Devonshire - Archives Hub (jisc.ac.uk); Letter from William Molyneux, 4th Earl of Sefton to Spencer Compton Cavendish, Marquess of Hartington - Correspondence of Spencer Compton Cavendish, 8th Duke of Devonshire - Archives Hub (jisc.ac.uk) – both accessed 14 Jul. 2022.
14 14 Apr. 1880, Letter from William Philip Molyneux, 4th Earl of Sefton to Spencer Compton Cavendish, Marquess of Hartington - Correspondence of Spencer Compton Cavendish, 8th Duke of Devonshire - Archives Hub (jisc.ac.uk) – accessed 14 Jul. 2022.
15 https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1861/feb/05/address-in-answer-to-her-majestys-speech – accessed 14 Jul. 2022.
16 Stanley was also a trustee of the National Portrait Gallery where he appears in fifty-seven pictures. They hold five images of Sefton.
17 They have been edited in four volumes by John Vincent. In addition to the 1994 one referred to above, the other three are: *Disraeli, Derby and the Conservative Party: Journals and Memoirs of Edward Henry, Lord Stanley 1849–1869* (Harvester, 1978); *The Later Derby Diaries: Home Rule, Liberal Unionism and Aristocratic Life in Late Victorian England* (University of Bristol, 1981); *The Diaries of Edward Henry Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby (1826–1893) Between 1878 and 1893: A Selection* (Leopard's Head Press, 2003).
18 Vincent, *Later Derby Diaries*, p. 699 (diary entry of 3 Sep. 1884).
19 Ibid., p. 831 (diary entry of 13 Feb. 1886).
20 For example, 2 Jan. 1884 diary entry regarding Scott, his head servant for the previous fifteen or so years, whose ill-health and that of Scott's wife had forced them to hand in their notice.
21 P. J. Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism: A Political and Social History of Liverpool 1868–1939* (Liverpool University Press, 1981), p. 510.
22 Vincent, *Diaries 1869–1878*, p. 178.
23 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series

4) vol. 13, col. 155–157 (5 June 1893) – reported in third person, as the Lords Hansard then was; accessed 14 Jul. 2022.

(Sefton was responding to the explanation and rebuttal that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster had given in the House of Commons on 25 Apr. 1893 for removing the power to create magistrates from him: Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 4) vol. 11, col. 1128–1130 (25 Apr. 1893) – accessed 14 Jul. 2022.)

24 Ibid.

25 Vincent, *Later Derby Diaries*, pp. 206 and 219 (diary entries for 18 Jan. and 12 Mar. 1880).

26 Ibid., p. 223 (diary entry of 31 Mar. 1880).

27 *The Times*, 15 Mar. 1880.

28 H. J. Hanham, *Elections and Party Management: Politics in the Time of Disraeli and Gladstone* (Harvester, 1978 (orig. 1959)), p. 289.

29 Dennis J. Mitchell, *Cross and Tory Democracy: A Political Biography of Richard Assheton Cross* (Garland Publishing, 1991), p. 156. Mitchell noted that the letter was also published in the *Manchester Guardian* on the same date (15 Mar.).

30 Vincent, *Later Derby Diaries*, p. 659 (diary entry of 1 May 1884).

31 Vincent, *Diaries 1878–1893*, p. 838.

32 Vincent, *Later Derby Diaries*, p. 752 (diary entry of 13 Feb. 1885).

33 Ibid., p. 818 (diary entry of 31 Oct. 1885).

34 Ibid., p. 831 (diary entry of 30 Jan. 1886).

35 Ibid., p. 838 (diary entry of 2 Jan. 1887).

36 Ibid., p. 839.

37 Ian Cawood, 'A distinction without a difference? the Liberal Unionist–Conservative alliance', *Journal of Liberal History*, 72, pp. 14–25; also, Ian Cawood, *The Liberal Unionist Party: A History*, (IB Tauris, 2012), pp. 14–16, 18, 20–24.

38 Vincent, *Diaries 1878–1893*, p. 838.

39 Lord Wolmer letter to Lord Hartington (by then 8th Duke of Devonshire), 5 Sep. 1892, clarifying that not all the funds had been expended in the July general election and the residue had been banked at Childs & Co. as 'Lord Wolmer's LU Account'. It is reprinted in full as an appendix to T. A. Jenkins, 'The funding of the Liberal Unionist party and the honours system', *English Historical Review*, 105, pp. 920–938. Wolmer and Hartington were the only two people who knew of this account.

40 Vincent, *Later Derby Diaries*, pp. 87–8 (diary entry of 20 May 1890).

41 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 4) vol. 17, cols. 563–649 (8 Sep. 1893). Though both Hansard and the following day's *Times* report the scale of the vote, neither list the votes of individual peers. Although this second bill allowed continued Irish representation in the Commons, it is difficult to think this was a reason for Sefton to change his previous view.

42 Vincent, *Later Derby Diaries*, p. 833.

John Herbert Lewis and the South African War 1899–1902

Continued from page 23

37 *Flintshire Observer*, 4 Oct. 1900.

38 *County Herald*, 5 Oct. 1900.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 *County Herald*, 5 Oct. 1900.

42 Ibid.

43 *County Herald*, 12 Oct. 1900.

44 Lewis's diary, 14 Nov. 1900 National Library of Wales, Lewis Papers B13.

45 *County Herald*, 16 Nov. 1900.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Hansard, Parl. Debs (series 4), vol. 88, col. 886 (15 Dec. 1900).

49 Ibid., col. 888.

50 Ibid., col. 890.

51 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 4), vol. 94, col. 1228 (6 Jun. 1901).

52 Lewis's diary, 15 Jun. 1901, National Library of Wales, Lewis Papers B14.

53 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 4), vol. 95, col. 620 (17 Jun. 1901).

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., col. 621.

56 Ibid., cols. 621–2.

57 J. Wilson, *Life of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman* (London, 1973), p. 349.

58 *County Herald*, 13 Jun. 1902.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 Lewis's diary, 2 Jun. 1902, National Library of Wales, Lewis Papers B6.

Lloyd George

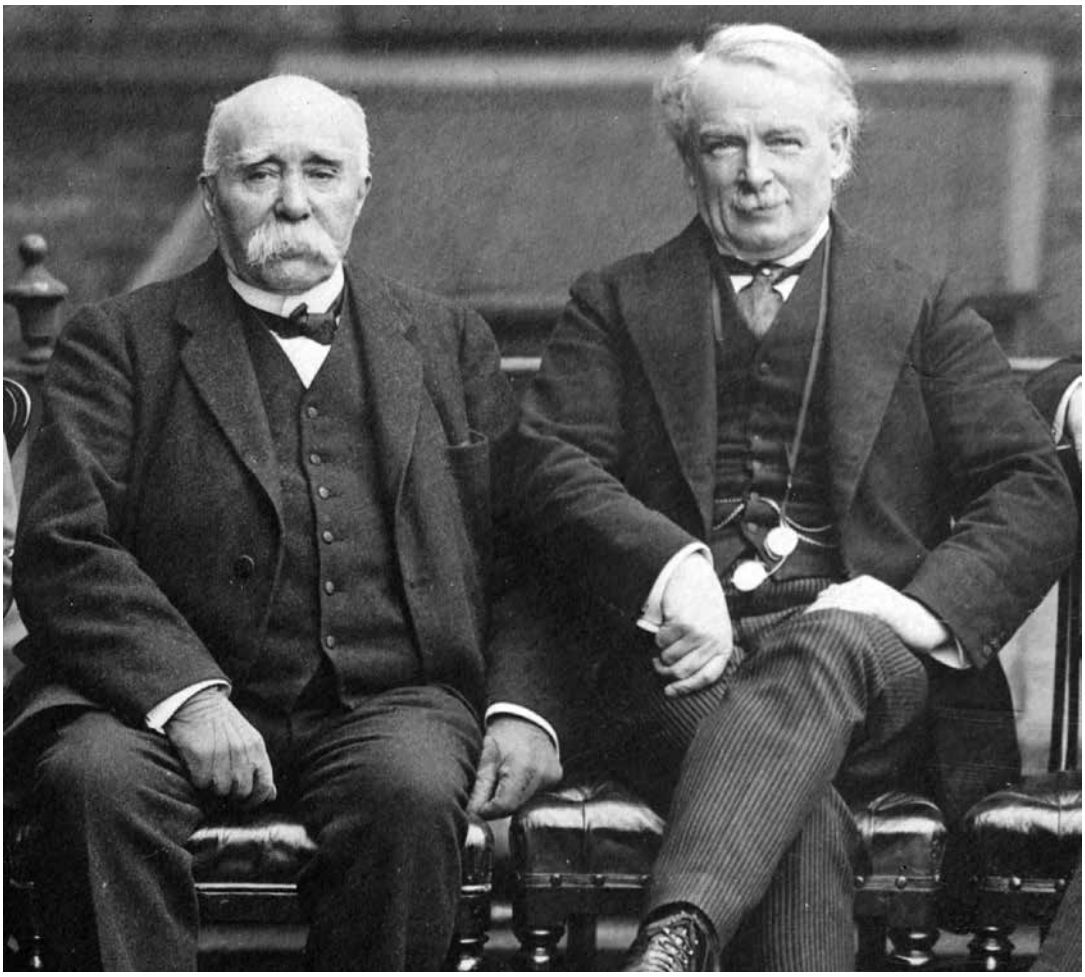
Kenneth O. Morgan analyses the record – so far largely overlooked – of Lloyd George's interest in France and French policy.

Lloyd George's French Connection

The career of David Lloyd George has inspired a multitude of historical studies of an immense range of themes and, indeed, of quality. Yet there is still an overall imbalance. In the vast majority of cases, authors focus on domestic politics, the launch of programmes of welfare reform, the triumphs of the People's Budget and the comprehensive defeat of the House of Lords, labour issues, the settlement of the Irish question, the making and unmaking of coalitions, and the domestic affairs of Wales. Yet, remarkably, his concern with international affairs, save perhaps for the very specific episode of the Paris peace conference of 1919, has received comparatively less attention, despite Lloyd George's massive legacy for the world today, as the contemporary frontiers of Europe amply demonstrate. For some years he was central to the making of world history. The distinguished Canadian scholar, Michael Fry, is one of the relatively few who have attempted a synoptic treatment, in his two-volume *Lloyd George and Foreign Policy*, and it is a major pioneering enterprise.[1]

One theme that has attracted much historical interest is Lloyd George's concern with Germany, from his highly influential visit to the Reich in 1908 to examine German schemes of national social insurance, through the First World War as prime minister, and its complex aftermath, down to his advocacy of a kind of appeasement culminating in his catastrophic visit to meet Hitler at Berchtesgaden in 1936.[2] In those twenty-two dramatic years, the full range of Lloyd George's inspired insights and tragic misjudgements are both on display. Yet to some extent this emphasis on his connections with Germany is misleading. It was in fact another European great power that claimed his attention and emotional sympathy for most of his career. This was his connection with France, and it is this centrally important, yet in some ways underestimated, theme on which I shall concentrate here. David Lloyd George was no insular isolationist, Little Englander or Welsh nationalist. He was, most times, the embodiment and the standard-bearer of the Entente Cordiale as few other British statesmen have been over the years, and which seems now currently totally forgotten.

There are several aspects to this, all of them of importance. First, Lloyd George had an abiding sympathy for the French revolutionary tradition from 1789 onwards. He felt that France was the most democratic country in Europe and a natural ally for Britain. He thus participated in the traditional Liberal admiration for France, from the days of Charles James Fox in the 1790s onwards. But, unlike many British liberals, he linked this with high personal regard for the talents of Napoleon Bonaparte. It was a reflection of his hero-worship of great men throughout the ages, demonstrated by his view of Julius Caesar, Oliver Cromwell, Abraham Lincoln and other dominant historical figures. In later life, during a busy visit to Paris, he went out of his way to take little Jennifer to the Invalides to see Napoleon's tomb.



French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau (1841–1929) and British Prime Minister David Lloyd George (1863–1945) (Bain News Service, ca. 1919)

But his regard for France over other nations was visible from his earliest days. In the time of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–1, the 8-year-old David can be found taking upon himself the role of the French radicals against the Prussian Junkers in his boyhood games.

Secondly, while he was not a great reader of novels, easily the one that had the most powerful impact on him was Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. It contained, he said, more insight into social hardship and inequality than any other book he ever read. 'It gave you a vivid picture of the underside of life. All the wretched and sordid details of the troubles of the poor – troubles that could be lessened.'[3] By all accounts, his copy of Hugo's work in his private papers is heavily annotated. In later life, Alexandre Dumas' aroused similar enthusiasm, but that raised different themes. Hugo, by the way, was a hero for Welsh Liberals at this time, for his inspiring leadership of the International Peace Society, in which Henry Richard, MP for Merthyr, was an officeholder.

Third, France was by far his favourite holiday destination. He much enjoyed Antibes and Cannes (where he and Margaret celebrated a famous golden wedding anniversary in 1938). Favourite was always the Côte d'Azur and

especially Nice. Though the point can be exaggerated, Margaret seldom cared to stray far from her native Caernarfonshire, which left Lloyd George and male friends to enjoy looking at pretty French women making their slow way along the Promenade des Anglais.

Fourthly and most important, his sympathy for French people and culture was reinforced by the most important person in the last thirty years of his lift, his secretary-cum-mistress, Frances Stevenson, brought in to tutor Megan Lloyd George in French shortly before the First World War. Frances was herself a quarter French and a further quarter francophone Belgian. She spoke French fluently and thus provided an insight into French culture which Lloyd George would otherwise never have gained. Frances's fluency in French was valuable for the prime minister at the Paris peace conference. In return, she rejoiced in Lloyd George's popularity in France and his easy relations with French people, unlike the stiff English with their suspicion of foreign languages, contrasting with the bilingual Welsh-speaking premier.[4] All these factors, political, cultural and personal created an important nexus of sympathies.

This attachment to France as a nation showed itself very early in Lloyd George's political career. This emerged during the Fashoda crisis with France in the Sudan in 1898 when the British army (among them the youthful Winston Churchill) vanquished the local forces of the Mahdi at Omdurman. Lloyd George, at the age of 35, made a speech full of perceptive judgement.[5] Britain should not quarrel with France, 'the only country in Europe with a democratic constitution'. On another imperial issue, Lloyd George had no complaint with the French sympathies with the Boers in the South African war in 1899, since he was equally opposed to the war himself.

Two separate major issues strengthened still further his sympathies for the French republic at this early stage. One was the eventual outcome of the Dreyfus case, when the reactionary military and anti-clerical classes – which had claimed, on the basis of flagrant anti-Semitism, that Dreyfus had betrayed his country – were defeated by the massed forces of the French left, including Lloyd George's future partner, Georges Clemenceau. Secondly, there was the eventual disestablishment of the French Catholic Church, which afforded powerful encouragement to Welsh Nonconformists anxious to disestablish and disendow the *Eglwys Loegr*, the Church of England in Wales, finally to be achieved during the peace conference in 1919.

Lloyd George therefore came out very strongly in support of the Entente Cordiale with France in 1904. The various colonial difficulties in Africa and Asia he swept aside without criticism. In addition to his sympathy with French radical and revolutionary traditions, he also backed up France in its diplomatic tensions with Germany. His visit to Germany in 1908 made him fully aware of German hostility. to French foreign policy ventures, including Morocco. His *War Memoirs* applaud Francophile sentiments expressed by Liberals from Fox to Gladstone, and criticise the Francophobe inclinations of Liberal imperialists such as Rosebery, Grey – and also Asquith.[6] Thus, during the Agadir crisis of 1911, he strongly backed the French position in Morocco and startled his radical allies by his stern warning to Germany. In August 1914, he was thought of as head of the cabinet's peace party, but his background made it highly improbable that he would not support the primacy of the Entente Cordiale, and his eventual strong commitment was no surprise.

He had previously held only domestic posts at the Board of Trade and the Treasury, but the coming of world war naturally gave him a wider range of contacts in many different areas. When he went to the Munitions ministry in May 1915 in the first wartime coalition, he came into close and frequent contact with his French counterpart, the trade union socialist, Albert Thomas. He listened with care to his advice on such technical areas as the production of mortars. Effectively, he was nationalising

the munitions industry. Thomas, an ally of Jean Jaurès, made Lloyd George a war socialist and an apostle of central corporate control, and he worked ever more closely with colleagues in the Entente as a result. He also met up with Aristide Briand, another leading figure on the centre-left and several times prime minister. He had been the architect of Church disestablishment before the war. Later. they had much collaboration during post-war diplomacy. One of the attractions for Lloyd George was that he believed that Briand, a native of Nantes, was from Brittany. Briand delighted his Welsh comrade at one time by referring to the pair of them as 'we two Bretons'. Lloyd George was also 'much taken' by a remark of Briand's that 'war was too important to be left to military men.'[7]

Lloyd George's major contacts with French leaders, military and political, were more important still. Marshal Foch became his favourite of all the generals. Talking to his deputy secretary of the cabinet, Thomas Jones, he compared his own dealings with Foch with General Ulysses Grant's relationship with Abraham Lincoln during the American civil war, a bond of total trust. One serious error of the British premier was switching leadership temporarily to General Nivelle after Verdun, apparently on the grounds that Nivelle was a Protestant, but that was remedied in good time. One major point for Lloyd George was that Foch was his main weapon not against the Germans, but against more serious opponents, the British commanders, Haig and Robertson. After complex manoeuvres, Lloyd George succeeded in getting Foch made commander in chief in a united command on the western front. He liked Foch: he was an efficient commander – and also he fulfilled Napoleon's quality of being a lucky general. Lloyd George and Foch had a strong relationship, though it was disturbed when Britain's prime minister delivered critical judgements of Haig in front of the French commanders, Foch and Joffre. Foch especially disapproved of this.

Lloyd George made an exceptionally strong impression when he visited Verdun after the titanic battle there.[8] Speaking in the crypt of the citadel, in an emotional atmosphere he toasted the French nation three times. He spoke of France as the rock on which the German attack broke. The audience found his speech inspirational, even though some of them found Lloyd George's Welsh accent a little hard to follow. Lloyd George left at least one physical legacy in the town of Verdun – the Rue Lloyd George, which still exists. More importantly, I see Lloyd George's visit to Verdun as the high point of the Entente Cordiale in its 100-year history.

Clemenceau and after

By far Lloyd George's closest French relationship was with Georges Clemenceau, the prime minister of France during and after the First World War. It was a much better relationship than is often thought. Their first meeting back in 1910 was not a success, the Frenchman believing that Lloyd George's knowledge of world events was sketchy. But thereafter they worked closely and well together – Lloyd George pays warm tribute to Clemenceau's power of leadership in his *War Memoirs*.[9] Working with Clemenceau brought 'some of the most delightful memories'. He compared the latter very favourably with Poincaré, a stubborn Lorrainer and rabid nationalist. Of course, Poincaré and Clemenceau were bitter enemies, which helped relations between Lloyd George and the latter.

The two wartime prime ministers differed greatly in manner and temperament. Lloyd George was a master of ambiguity and seduction; it was said of him that 'he could charm a bird off a bough'. Clemenceau was far more belligerent and direct. He often settled quarrels with duels with sabre or pistol. He once defeated a political rival, Deschanel, in a sabre duel. Clemenceau shouted gleefully at his retreating opponent, 'J'avance, il recule,' followed by 'Monsieur is leaving us'. But Deschanel exacted terrible revenge later on when he defeated Clemenceau in the election

for the presidency in 1920. Clemenceau was also, far more so than Lloyd George, a man of culture and intellect. He was a close friend and patron of the great Impressionist artist, Monet, whose career he rescued in his later life. After his retirement in the early 1920s, he turned to write a thoughtful work on the life of Demosthenes.

Lloyd George and Clemenceau were similar in their approach to politics. Both were brilliant mavericks and casual in their associates. Both had dealings with the shady financier and arms manufacturer, Sir Basil Zaharoff. Clemenceau, like Lloyd George, began as a left-wing social reformer, working with socialists like Jaurès and Blum, though he became much more hostile to the trades unions later on as prime minister. During the war, each took his own path, and split his own party. Like Lloyd George in 1917–18, Clemenceau was a prime minister without a party. Each had close relations with the newspaper press. Lloyd George operated through friendly journalists and editors like Robert Donald and Lord Riddell, while Clemenceau owned his own newspapers as organs of opposition, writing the leading articles in a tiny bedroom in his house in Paris. Both scrambled out of financial scandals – Panama in Clemenceau's case, Marconi in Lloyd George's. And both had unorthodox relations with women. Clemenceau lived with a professor's wife. He is supposed to have passed a pretty girl in the Champs Elysees and to have murmured 'Oh, to be 70 again!'

Most notably, each liked the other's country. Lloyd George had great affection for France, as noted earlier. Clemenceau lived in the United States as a young man. during the civil war, and, like Lloyd George, was a great admirer of Abraham Lincoln. Woodrow Wilson, the third member of the triumvirate at Versailles, was a southerner from Virginia and thus less sympathetic to Lincoln; Lloyd George thought Wilson to be far inferior to his presidential rival in 1912, Theodore Roosevelt. Clemenceau was a student of Mill, married an American woman (unsuccessfully) and was the one conference leader at Paris who spoke both the main languages. Early in his career he was attacked for being too influenced by the English and was pursued with catcalls of 'Ah yes'. Even so, their partnership across the channel worked well for the wartime years.

They were in close agreement over the big questions – such as unity of command on the western front and bringing the Americans into the war. Both were happy with Foch as chief commander and thought him a better general than Pétain. But the peace conference became increasingly difficult. Lloyd George observed later on 'Well. We didn't do too badly. After all, I was sitting between Napoleon and Jesus Christ'. The Welshman had the difficult task of not alienating Germany unduly and keeping control of arrangements over national frontiers and financial reparations It was hard indeed to reconcile that with Clemenceau's national desire to ensure that France would not be invaded again as in 1870 and 1914, and sought territorial guarantees against the possibility of further German aggression. Clemenceau sought to annex the Rhineland; but Lloyd George strongly disagreed, and wisely so.

The turning point in the peace conference came early on, when Lloyd George produced his famous Fontainebleau Memorandum in February 1919 proposing a moderate settlement with Germany over frontiers and reparations.[10] Clemenceau sarcastically observed that it dealt only with issues which worried Britain such as freedom of the seas. Lloyd George retorted that was because his colleagues had no interest in naval power. Reparations, said Lloyd George, were like an indigestible meat pie – he liked the pie crust but disliked the meat beneath. As the peace negotiations went on, personal relations deteriorated. Clemenceau rejected Lloyd George's remarkable proposal for cancelling all war debts (which was also supported by Maynard Keynes). Lloyd George for his part, felt that the Frenchman treated Britain with less respect than he did the mighty United States.

For all that, Lloyd George did see, as Wilson did not, the need for an international guarantee for the security of France. Anglo-French talks dragged on without anything tangible emerging. The closest the two countries came, after Clemenceau's fall from power, was at the conference at Cannes in January 1922 when Lloyd George appeared willing to offer France a 'treaty of guarantee' to protect its territory. There was, however, a serious ambiguity as to whether this rested on an American guarantee as well, which was unlikely given the mood of post-war isolationism in the States. Even so, it was a powerful gesture by the British prime minister, the first such territorial guarantee since the Peninsular War in the time of Napoleon. It could have been an historic gesture which would have breathed new life into the Entente Cordiale.

The Cannes treaty was negotiated with Lloyd George's good friend, the new French prime minister, Aristide Briand.[11] Apparently successful, it collapsed on a total triviality. Lloyd George chose to offer Briand a round of golf, a game which Briand had never played. To the uninformed eye of this writer, the Cannes course is not a difficult one, but Briand's golf ball found bunker after bunker, and the journalists revelled in his embarrassment. The French thought their prime minister was being ridiculed; a crisis sprang up in the Paris newspapers. Briand had to return hastily to the French Assembly where he was promptly voted out office. The opportunity for giving military substance to the Entente had lapsed and it never returned. Briand gave way to the bitterly nationalist Poincaré, and prospects of a working Anglo-French relationship collapsed. Lloyd George did not like Poincaré. He was, so he told the newspaper owner, Lord Riddell, 'a fool'. Clemenceau had told him that 'Poincaré' meant 'not square' in French. At the subsequent international conference in Genoa in May, on which Lloyd George had pinned his hopes for a broad European settlement, a variety of international figures, including Walter Rathenau, Lenin and President Warren Harding worked to undermine the British premier's plans. Another obstacle was the ever-obstinate Poincaré, with his fierce nationalism and obdurate anti-socialism. He fiercely resisted Lloyd George's ideas over both German indemnities and the possible recognition of Bolshevik Russia. No viable concert of Europe would ever gain approval from that quarter.

After the peace conference in 1919, Lloyd George and Clemenceau diverged. The atmosphere between them had been poor ever since. In a prolonged dispute over Asia Minor, an enraged Clemenceau supposedly asked Lloyd George to choose between the sabre and the pistol to settle matters; wisely, the Welshman rejected both. There is nothing in Clemenceau's apartment in Paris to suggest that they ever knew each other. Their last meeting came in the summer of 1921 when Lloyd George was still in 10 Downing Street, on the brink of key negotiations with de Valera and the Irish republicans, whereas Clemenceau, no longer in office, was in Britain to receive an honorary degree in Oxford. Clemenceau angrily attacked Lloyd George for being an enemy of France. Lloyd George laughed and asked light-heartedly, 'Oh, is not that our traditional policy'.[12] (11). The moral might be not to try leg-pulling with an angry Frenchman. Some time later, journalists asked Clemenceau why he liked going on. holiday to La Vendée. He replied that there were no Lloyd Georges there – 'only Squirrels'. Yet, despite all these squalls, the years between 1916 and 1920 may reasonably be regarded as the high point of the Entente – certainly far better than relations between Churchill and de Gaulle in 1940 and 1945, let alone de Gaulle and Franklin Roosevelt.

Conclusion

After Lloyd George fell from power in 1922, his reputation, compared with that of Clemenceau, slumped. Clemenceau was honoured in France as 'Père la Victoire' and his statue erected in the Champs Elysées. Lloyd George's statue, by contrast, was not unveiled

in Parliament Square by Prince Charles until October 2007, even though professional historians, using L.G.'s private papers at the Beaverbrook library, finally released in 1957, had effectively restored much of his public reputation long ago. In the '30s, his view on foreign affairs, on both Germany and France had been erratic., culminating in his calamitous visit to Hitler in 1936 and his dubbing him 'the George Washington of Germany'.[13] He criticised the weakness of Neville Chamberlain and the French premier, Edouard Daladier in the Munich agreement in 1938, which sacrificed Czechoslovakia – though he was no more enthusiastic towards the Czech leader Benes: 'that little swine Benes' and 'the jackal of Versailles' being two of his descriptions.[14] In a wartime parliamentary debate in 1941, Lloyd George's unwise advocacy of a settlement with Germany led Churchill to deride him as 'old papa Pétain'. It was a great humiliation for Lloyd George now, compared with inspiring tribute to French heroism at Verdun. Pétain, who had in 1917 led the French army there in battle, was now seen as a fellow-travelling traitor. The glory of Verdun had been followed by the squalor of Vichy. Pétain dragged Lloyd George down with him.

There is little to say of the period after 1931. Lloyd George notoriously visited Hitler in 1936 but only visited France as a tourist, including to celebrate his golden wedding. Since his time, the Anglo-French Entente has not been noted for its cordiality, with President de Gaulle keeping Britain out of Europe for a decade, French attacks over the invasion of Iraq from Chirac and Dominique de Villepin, and finally the catastrophe of Brexit. At the present time, Britain has its most anti-French government for decades, while Frenchmen like President Macron and Michel Barnier have hardly been conciliatory themselves. Macron's gallant attempts to resolve the threat of war in the Ukraine in 2022 led a British cabinet minister to observe that here was a 'whiff of Munich' in the air. Perhaps after the resignation of the aptly named Lord Frost, matters will become less glacial. We need to revert to the warmth and understanding of the best of the Lloyd George years., to move away from the sentimental illusion of a 'special relationship' with the United States, and to rebuild our most enduring alliance in war and peace, one which we have inadvertently lost – the Entente Cordiale.

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1 See especially Michael G. Fry, *Lloyd George and Foreign Policy*, vol. i (McGill-Queens University Press, 1977).
2 E.g., Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Lloyd George and Germany', *Ages of Reform* (Tauris, 2011), pp. 79–92.
3 Frances Stevenson (ed. A. J. P Taylor), *Lloyd George: A Diary* (Hutchinson, 1971), p. 31 (14 February 1915).
4 Ibid., p. 64 (5 October 1915).
5 Speech at Haworth, 24 Oct. 1898, quoted in John Grigg, *The Young Lloyd George* (Eyre Methuen, 1973), p. 222, fn. 2.
6 David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, vol. i (Odhams, 1938), pp. 1 ff.
7 Stevenson, *Diary*, p. 118 (23 Oct. 1916).
8 See Ian Ousby, *The Road to Verdun* (Pimlico, 2003), p. 256.
9 Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, vol. ii, pp. 1602–9.
10 David Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties* (Gollancz, 1938), vol. i, p. 403ff.
11 Alfred Aubert, *Briand* (Chiron, 1924).
12 This is well described in David Robin Watson, *Georges Clemenceau* (Eyre Methuen, 1974), pp. 367–71.
13 *Daily Express*, 17 Sep. 1936. This article was written at the request of Lord Beaverbook.
14 A. J. Sylvester, *Life with Lloyd George: The diary of A. J. Sylvester 1931–45*, ed. Colin Cross (Macmillan, 1975), pp. 186ff.

Local elections

The Liberal Democrat performance in large cities in May 2022, by **Michael Meadowcroft**.

Lib Dems in the cities

Professor John Curtice provides an impeccable analysis of the 2022 local elections and indicates where the Liberal Democrats did well ('The Liberal Democrat performance in the 2022 local elections', *Journal of Liberal History* 116, autumn 2022). He sets out the performance in the various regions and in the social make-up of councils, but the one vital statistic that he omits is the party's lamentable performance in the big cities. The significant generic difference between these councils and the smaller boroughs and districts is the size of the individual electoral wards. Essentially, the larger the electorate the more difficult it is to win by sheer intensive local campaigning and the more significant is the party's core vote. In wards with 10,000 or more electors, Liberal Democrats need an opinion poll level of far more than the 10 per cent that was the average between the advent of Liz Truss as prime minister and her resignation. (The implosion of the Conservative Party

Councils with over 300,000 population

Council	*Population (2021 census)*	*2022 gains & losses*	*Total number of councillors*	*Lib Dem councillors*	*Av. electorate per ward*
Birmingham	1,144,900	+4	101	12	8,250†
Leeds	812,000	–1	99	7	16,500
Sheffield	556,500	0	84	29	11,000
Manchester	552,858	0	96	2	12,000
Bradford	546,400	–1	90	6	12,000
Liverpool	486,100	n/a	90	12	11,500
Bristol*	472,400	n/a	70	8	14,500
Coventry	345,300	0	54	0	12,500
Leicester*	368,300	0	54	1	12,000
Wakefield	353,300	+1	63	3	11,500
Sandwell	341,900	0	72	0	8,000
Wigan	329,300	0	66	0	10,000
Nottingham*	323 700	n/a	55	0	11,000
Wirral	320,300	0	66	6	11,000
Doncaster	308,100	n/a	55	0	12,000
Newcastle	300,200	+1	78	21	7,000
Total		**+4**	**1,193**	**107**	

* Unitary authority (the others are metropolitan boroughs)

† Birmingham has 32 single-member wards and 37 double-member wards; the figure is electors per councillor. Liverpool is going down the same route of largely single-member and thus smaller wards.

n/a: no elections in 2022

under Truss did not benefit the Liberal Democrats at all.) The table shows the pitiful state of Liberal Democrat representation on large councils and its poor performance at the 2022 elections.

We see that a quarter of the sixteen councils have no Liberal Democrat representation at all; three others have three or fewer councillors; and only four have a group in double figures. Looking at these latter four councils in more detail demonstrates that the position is even worse than these overall figures indicate. One would expect that, being relatively more successful, they would have a powerful city-wide presence; but, in practice, what prospects for expansion do they have? What one finds is depressing. In Birmingham, of the fifty-nine wards without party representation, one double-member ward is split between Labour and Liberal, but only one other can be regarded as marginal. In fact, apart from one further double-member ward, the rest have derisory votes.

Of the seventeen unrepresented Sheffield wards, only two can be regarded as marginal. In Liverpool, from the most recent (2021) figures, only one is marginal, leaving twenty wards with derisory votes, plus one with a respectable by-election result. In Newcastle, two are marginal, with fifteen derisory. What this indicates is the abject lack of a core vote in the country's major cities. As I know from my twenty-year experience in Leeds, without a much higher basic Liberal Democrat vote, the task of establishing a party presence, or of expanding an existing one, requires a huge level of sacrificial, financial and organisational commitment over a number of years. Essentially, unless one can hold seats relatively easily, it is impossible to expand without a much higher core vote. And without a powerful and noticeable municipal presence in these front-line cities, the prospect of developing a sufficient vote in four or more adjoining wards to win a parliamentary seat is remote.

The difference in task between the city with the largest wards and a rural county seat is shown in the experience of my former Leeds colleague, David Selby. In his final victory in Leeds, in 1987, he polled 3,092 votes to win the Armley ward; in 2017 he gained the Newtown ward for the Powys county council with just 369 votes. He is now a key member of a Liberal-Democrat-led Powys administration.

If we examine the situation in London, we find precisely the same situation. In the thirty-two London boroughs, apart from the three stand-out boroughs – Kingston, Richmond and Sutton – where the Liberal Democrats have eliminated the Labour Party and have maximised the Liberal Democrat vote to gain and retain control, only two have representation in double figures: the adjacent Merton, and Southwark, the latter represented in parliament for twenty-seven years by Simon Hughes. In the whole of London, Liberal Democrats have just 152 councillors out of a total of 1,817 – and no less than 118 of these are in the three councils they control. Taking the same cut-off figure of 300,000 population as in the cities outside London, half of those fourteen London boroughs have zero Liberal Democrat representation and only Southwark has a group in double figures. The semi-proportional electoral system used for the Greater London Authority has enabled a party presence of two to survive, and Caroline Pidgeon has done a remarkable job of maintaining a Liberal Democrat presence, but a party cannot claim to be national, nor to be a serious political presence, with such minimal representation in its capital city, nor similarly in almost all of the country's major cities. Above all, it is the derisory votes in the vast majority of these electoral wards, along with its scores of lost deposits at parliamentary elections, that are an embarrassment.

It is significant that, in the recent party HQ mailing naming the top seven membership recruiters, none were in the big cities highlighted in this article and only one is Labour held. Unless the Liberal Democrats understand and accept its absence in these urban areas and apply themselves to establishing a clearly identifiable philosophical

position that attracts many 'movers and shakers', it has no chance of being able to challenge for any semblance of national political influence. In particular, it cannot pose a significant challenge to the Labour Party in its strongholds. It is rigorous thinking, plus the 'vision thing' and its application, that is needed, not Dr Pangloss.

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Introduction to Liberal history

In the first of a new series of short introductory articles, **Duncan Brack** reviews the New Liberalism, an important development in Liberal politics and philosophy.

The New Liberalism

The New Liberals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century made the case against laissez-faire classical liberalism and in favour of state intervention directed against impediments to freedom such as poverty, ignorance or disease. They saw individual liberty as something to be achievable only under favourable social and economic circumstances. The New Liberal programme came to underpin most of the legislative achievements of the 1906–14 Liberal governments and marked the party's transformation to social liberalism.

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The New Liberalism emerged at the end of the nineteenth century (the term was first used by the Liberal MP L. A. Atherley-Jones in 1889), largely as a reaction to the Liberal Party's failure, under W. E. Gladstone, to formulate an adequate response to the new social problems of industrialisation. Although radical pressure for 'constructionist' legislation – for example the free elementary education, graduated taxation and land reform of Joseph Chamberlain's 'Unauthorised Programme' of 1885 – had been growing for some time, Gladstone used great moral questions, such as home rule for Ireland, to steer the party away from the state-sponsored social reforms to which he remained firmly opposed.

The departure of most of the remaining Whigs, with Chamberlain, in 1886, after the split over home rule, Gladstone's retirement in 1894, and the disastrous elections of 1895 and 1900 opened the way to new thinking. Although living standards in general had risen throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, society was increasingly marred by the spread of slums, poverty, ignorance and disease, and the ending of the long mid-Victorian economic boom had removed the belief that economic growth would automatically solve such social problems. Just as the emergence of classical liberalism in the early and mid-nineteenth century was closely linked to the emergence of industrial capitalism, so the development of the New Liberalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries derived from this further evolution of economy and society.

The Oxford academic T. H. Green was the first of the Liberal thinkers fully to take this growing social inequality into

account. Green argued that the unrestrained pursuit of profit had given rise to new forms of poverty and injustice; the economic liberty of the few had blighted the life-chances of the many. Negative liberty, the removal of constraints on the individual, would not necessarily lead to freedom of choice for all; workers, for example, frequently had little if any choice of employer, and no real choice between working or not working, whereas employers had plenty of choice regarding their employees. The free market therefore often could, and did, lead to exploitation.

Green proposed the idea of *positive* freedom: the ability of the individual to develop and attain individuality through personal self-development and self-realisation. Since much of the population was prevented from such self-realisation by the impediments of poverty, sickness, unemployment and a lack of education, government was justified in taking action to tackle all these conditions. This was not a threat to liberty, but the necessary guarantee of it:

> Our modern legislation then with reference to labour, and education, and health, involving as it does manifold interference with freedom of contract, is justified on the ground that it is the business of the state, not indeed directly to promote moral goodness, for that, from the very nature of moral goodness, it cannot do, but to maintain the conditions without which a free exercise of the human faculties is impossible.[1]

Architects of the New Liberalism: David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill

In this extension of the role of the state, Green was in fact reflecting what was already beginning to be common practice amongst Liberals in local government; Green himself was an Oxford councillor, as well as an academic, and Joseph Chamberlain's Municipal Liberalism had showed how councils could run gas, water and sewerage companies to the benefit of the living standards of their citizens.

The members of the Rainbow Circle, a group of progressive politicians and thinkers who started meeting regularly in the early 1890s to discuss social and labour questions, provided much of the intellectual justification for the New Liberal programme. They included almost all of the major New Liberal writers, L. T. Hobhouse, J. A. Hobson, R. B. Haldane, Charles Trevelyan and Herbert Samuel, together with many of the leaders of the Fabian Society and the Labour Representation Committee founded in 1900. In 1896 the group established the *Progressive Review*, dedicated to

promoting a 'New Liberalism' based on 'a specific policy of reconstruction, the conscious organisation of society and an enlarged and enlightened conception of the functions of the state'.

Their creed was a self-conscious departure from the past; as David Lloyd George put it in 1908:

> The old Liberals used the natural discontent of the people with the poverty and precariousness of the means of subsistence as a motive power to win for them a better, more influential, and more honourable status in the citizenship of their native land. The new Liberalism, while pursuing this great political ideal with unflinching energy, devotes a part of its endeavour also to the removing of the immediate causes of discontent. It is true that man cannot live by bread alone. It is equally true that a man cannot live without bread.[2]

Although the Liberal government elected in 1906 drew its inspiration from many sources, including, importantly, Bismarck's social reforms in Germany (designed primarily to fend off the rise of socialism), New Liberal thinking came to dominate its programme, particularly after the elevation of H. H. Asquith to the premiership in 1908. Although Asquith himself, a student of Green's at Oxford, was not a consistent radical, his Cabinet contained several who were, notably Lloyd George, Samuel (from 1909) and Winston Churchill, and they had many supporters amongst the newer and younger MPs. The introduction of old age pensions and national insurance for periods of sickness, invalidity and unemployment, minimum wages for the miners, government grants for maternity and child welfare clinics, compulsory school meals, loans for local authority house-building, and the establishment of labour exchanges and trade boards and of the Development Commission to provide investment in those sectors of the economy which private capital failed to finance: all marked the acceptance of the New Liberal belief that however much one removed constraints upon individual liberty, there were some things that individuals could not accomplish by themselves – and therefore could not be truly free.

The budgets of Asquith and Lloyd George marked a similar redirection of fiscal policy, abandoning the Gladstonian notion that taxation was merely a necessary evil, and accepting that taxation and expenditure could become positive instruments of social policy. Asquith's 1907 budget not only raised taxation in aggregate, in order to pay for the planned social expenditure of the years ahead, but for the first time differentiated between earned and unearned income, raising taxation on the latter. Lloyd George's 'People's Budget' of 1909, which graduated the income tax structure more progressively, and introduced a new super-tax, higher excise duties and new taxes on cars, petrol and land – all designed to raise revenue for social spending (and higher military expenditure) – was perhaps the apotheosis of the New Liberal programme.

Tension inevitably existed between the New Liberals and the more orthodox Liberals who still supplied much of the party's rank and file; for many of them, New Liberalism seemed little different from socialism. Herbert Spencer in particular, in his exposition of social Darwinism, articulated the antipathy that many Liberals felt towards those who championed the state as an essential agent in achieving social progress.

Why, then, did New Liberal thinking come to dominate the government's programme so thoroughly? Three main reasons can be identified. First, because there was no alternative agenda on offer: Gladstonianism had clearly run its course, the Conservatives were split over tariff reform and the Labour Party had no distinctive programme of its own.

Second, because the New Liberal agenda met the requirements of the time. The living conditions of the working class, revealed in the poor physical conditions of Boer War recruits and the social surveys of Booth and Rowntree, and highlighted by campaigning journalists, were clearly bad enough to stimulate action of some kind. Many of the New Liberals had discovered the realities of poverty and destitution for themselves, through work in 'settlements' such as Toynbee Hall in East London. The programme was also supported by the more radical (usually Nonconformist) industrialists, concerned to see state investment in those sectors of the economy where private finance was lacking.

The third reason was entirely pragmatic: that in electoral terms the New Liberal programme worked. By and large the government's social and economic programme was popular; even the Conservatives accepted the irreversibility of much of its legislation, particularly old age pensions. The Liberal Party looked well placed to win the election due in 1915, had war not intervened.

This New Liberalism which was in so many ways so different from Gladstonian Liberalism can still be seen, however, as identifiably Liberal. While retaining a firm belief in liberty, it sought a wider definition. 'Liberalism', wrote Hobson in 1909:

> is now formally committed to a task which certainly involves a new conception of the State in its relation to the individual life and to private enterprise … From the standpoint which best presents its continuity with earlier Liberalism, it appears as a fuller appreciation and realisation of individual liberty contained in the provision of equal opportunities for self-development. But to this individual standpoint must be joined a just apprehension of the social, viz., the insistence that these claims or rights of self-development be adjusted to the sovereignty of social welfare.[3]

What the New Liberals did was to inject the concept of a community wider than the individual firmly into liberal thinking. The state was entitled to take action on behalf of the community as a collectivity, rather than merely on behalf of individuals as themselves. The New Liberals were quite clear, however, *why* they were advocating such collectivism: for the greater liberty of the individual. 'Liberals must ever insist', wrote Hobson, 'that each enlargement of the authority and functions of the State must justify itself as an enlargement of personal liberty, interfering with individuals only in order to set free new and larger opportunities … Liberalism will probably retain its distinction from Socialism, in taking for its chief test of policy the freedom of the individual citizen rather than the strength of the State.'[4]

More pithily, as Hobson's contemporary L. T. Hobhouse put it, 'Liberty without equality is a name of noble sound and squalid meaning'.[5] In this way the Liberals evolved from a classical to a social liberal party – unlike many continental European liberal parties of the time. Although the wartime split of 1916 prevented the party from being able to implement the New Liberal agenda further, its legacy can be seen in Lloyd George's 'coloured books', the innovative thinking of Keynes and Beveridge, and the welfare state that Labour governments created after 1945.

Duncan Brack is the Editor of the Journal of Liberal History *and co-editor of all the History Group's publications.*

1 Thomas Hill Green, *Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract* (Slatery & Rose, 1861).
2 A. Bullock & M. Shock (eds), *The Liberal Tradition from Fox to Keynes* (A. & C. Black, 1966).
3 J. A. Hobson, *The Crisis of Liberalism: New Issues of Democracy* (1909; reprinted Leopold Classic Library, 2016).
4 Ibid.
5 L. T. Hobhouse, *Liberalism* (1911; reprinted Echo Library, 2009).

Report

Working with Labour: The Liberal Party and the Balance of Power 1923–31

Conference fringe meeting (online), 11 March 2022, with Professor Philip Williamson and Michael Meadowcroft; Chair: Wendy Chamberlain MP

Report by **Joseph Walker**

Professor Philip Williamson (Durham University) opened the meeting with the proposition that the Liberal decline had not been inevitable, and that a Liberal recovery during the 1920s had been perfectly possible had things gone differently. He gave an overview of common explanations for the Liberal decline, including the impact of the First World War and the split between Asquith and Lloyd George. Yet he saw none of these as sufficient to explain the extent of the Liberal collapse. Instead, he attributed the real decline to the impacts of the first-past-the-post electoral system. Specifically, and perhaps counter-intuitively, he argued that what really hurt the Liberals was the fact that they held the balance of power in the House of Commons, both during 1924 and again from 1929 to 1931.

The triangle or the millstone?

Liberals of the 1920s regarded themselves as 'a middle party', but there were two competing visions of what this meant. In one, the party was positioned in a triangle with the Conservative and Labour parties – allowing the Liberals to retain power and influence, and even obtain government positions, within the context of a three-party system. Alternatively, the Liberals could be seen as placed between two millstones – Labour and the Conservatives – and hence at risk of being crushed. Until 1931, the idea of a permanent triangle of parties seemed conceivable, but it was the millstone version that was the longer-term reality.

Williamson argued that, even in the '20s, things were tending toward the millstone version of events because of the political pressures of the time. These included issues such as the huge expansion in the franchise that had happened in 1918; the political system was being remade and neither the Conservatives nor Labour were confident, even as late as 1931, that they could become enduring parties of government. They therefore had much to fight for, and political polarisation was a compelling option for them.

The Liberal collapse to a marginalised rump from 1935 onwards was not inevitable, according to Williamson. The Liberals possessed agency in this process, and they contributed to their own decline by being unable to sustain discipline, collective pragmatism, and tactical dexterity. The Conservatives and Labour were operating a tacit anti-Liberal alliance, and, after the 1923 election, they successfully manoeuvred the Liberals into the worst of all possible political worlds: voting against the Conservatives to allow Labour into office and then, nine months later, voting against Labour and causing another election. In so doing, the Liberals managed to annoy both wings of their own party: the anti-socialists and the progressives. Voters regarded the Liberals as the cause of instability, and they were left with just forty MPs.

Liberal strategies: back to basics vs modernisation

At this point, the party divided into two camps as it debated how to survive. Asquith's Liberals favoured a restatement of traditional Liberal values: peace, free trade, retrenchment (cutting public spending), and temperance. This view of pristine Liberal independence would offer negative opposition to both

the Conservatives and Labour, while waiting for voters to come to their Liberal senses.

Lloyd George had a different approach that focused on modernisation: remaking the party with new policies to address the new post-war problems. If Liberal policy could achieve relevance in this way, then the party could not be ignored or crushed. Between 1924 and 1928, a series of detailed policy reports on issues such as land, coal and power were released. These gained attention and widespread praise, even from Lloyd George's critics. In this context, the Asquith approach could not make headway.

Lloyd George was to spend the modern equivalent of £30 million trying to revive the Liberals. But what were his aims? According to Williamson, although the party fielded over 500 candidates in 1929, this was only so as to look plausible – to look as though the Liberals were aiming for a majority. The real aim was to gain the balance of power by winning about 100 seats, and then to work with whoever necessary in order to secure a Liberal future by achieving electoral reform. Had Lloyd George succeeded, the triangle arrangement would likely have become a permanent reality. Yet he was able to win only fifty-nine seats. This could only be seen as a delay to the inexorable progress of decline.

In March 1930, the Liberals cornered Labour into supporting electoral reform, in return for passing a vital trade union bill (and in the context of the political pressures of the great depression) – but this was only the alternative vote and not the proportional representation system that Liberals truly sought. Yet despite this watering down, Labour's National Executive rejected it, forcing Lloyd George into a desperate race to obtain electoral reform before the Labour government collapsed.

The Liberal anti-socialists vs the Liberal progressives

One of Williamson's most interesting observations was that Liberal problems were, counter-intuitively, magnified by the possession at various times of the balance of power. While holding the balance of power was exactly what many Liberals wanted, it was in practice debilitating, turning the Liberals into a lightning rod for political discontentment. By March 1931, Lloyd George had persuaded a weak Labour Party into a progressive alliance, but the price was the smothering of the distinctive Liberal economic radicalism of the 1920s, causing a new campaign for a Liberal revival based on free trade. In this situation, the party could not maintain cohesion and was simply torn apart.

Ambitious Liberal politicians (most notably of all, Churchill) were attracted to either Labour or the Conservatives, leading to defections. Meanwhile, a clear demarcation between anti-socialist Liberals on the one hand, and progressive Liberals on the other, became apparent (a division that arguably still exists within the current Liberal Democrats). By June 1931, the anti-socialists, who comprised maybe a third of the party, were essentially in alignment with the Conservatives. The rest were closer to Labour.

Labour had only agreed to the 1931 alliance because they could see that the Liberals were splintering – though this was postponed by the formation of the National Government, which saw the Liberals gain ministerial office even as it precipitated their end as a major party. However, the 'official' Liberal grouping within the National Government could not accept protectionist policies antithetical to core traditional Liberal values. They left the government in 1932 and were crushed in the ensuing 1935 election.

Problems within the Labour Party

The second speaker, former Liberal MP Michael Meadowcroft, took a rather different approach to the discussion. Focusing mainly on the earlier part of the period – 1923–24 – he identified problems inside the Labour Party as the main issue. He said that, in his view, if he were to stick tightly to

the topic of the meeting – 'working with Labour' – then it would be a very short discussion indeed as there had in reality been no cooperation with Labour at all. He also blamed the downfall of the Liberals on an oyster.

The popular version of the wider story is that the Labour leader Ramsay MacDonald had set out to kill the Liberals and had done so. Meadowcroft argued instead that MacDonald had intended to show that Labour could govern responsibly, and for his government to last for a much more significant period of time than in fact it did in 1924. The fact that it did not was blamed on the party whips.

The basic problem was that Labour, as newcomers both to government and, relatively, to parliament, simply did not understand the way things worked. In particular, they did not appreciate just how crucial the party whips were to managing any sort of cooperation with the Liberals. For example, Labour, which was not even the largest party in the House after the 1923 election, would regularly announce what it was going to do without first coordinating with the Liberals to ensure that they had enough MPs present to allow parliamentary business to continue. On many occasions, not enough MPs were present, meaning that the Conservatives could simply stop business continuing. Labour was not helped by its Chief Whip, Ben Spoor, who suffered from twin personal problems: recurrent malaria, first contracted during the First World War, and alcoholism. Spoor held his position from 1924 until his death in 1928, meaning that Labour's parliamentary business was not conducted well during this period.

Problems in the Liberals, and the little-known oyster theory

Meadowcroft also focused on the Liberal whips. He told the story of highly competent Liberal Chief Whip, Percy Illingworth, who, in 1915, ate a bad oyster that resulted in his death from typhoid fever. Then Liberal leader Asquith subsequently went through a series of unsatisfactory whips, before alighting on Vivian Phillips who, although he was competent, held a deep dislike of David Lloyd George. This contributed strongly to the split in the Liberal Party between Lloyd George and Asquith; Lloyd George is said to have commented that had Illingworth not died, then the problems between him and Asquith could have been entirely averted. Seen in this light, the entire demise of the Liberals can theoretically be pinned on an oyster.

A complete lack of Lib–Lab cooperation

Returning to Labour, Meadowcroft discussed other ways in which the party had been mismanaged, including MacDonald being hugely overworked by insisting on holding the position of Foreign Secretary as well as Prime Minister. Labour had also behaved badly by selecting candidates to stand against Liberals in Conservative-facing seats, thus risking splitting the anti-Tory vote, even as the Liberal and Labour parties were supposedly cooperating. One such action resulted in the loss of a Liberal seat at the Oxford by-election in June 1924. This severely damage trust between the two parties, and resulted in Lloyd George publicly accusing Labour of using the Liberals as an 'oxen' to drag their party along the rough roads of Parliament and then to slaughter them when they were no longer needed.

Although the final act that brought down Labour in 1924 was Conservative support for a Liberal motion for an inquiry into the Campbell case (the decisions by the government first to prosecute the journalist John Campbell for incitement to mutiny, and then to drop the prosecution), this had never been the Liberals' intention. The government foolishly declared that they would treat the matter as a vote of confidence, the Conservatives supported the motion and the Liberals could not then be seen to oppose their own motion. Meadowcroft's case was essentially that the Liberals had not intended

to bring down Labour, but that it happened because Labour and the Liberals were not well-managed enough to cooperate. The 1924 Labour government fell over what was in reality an insignificant procedural matter, and the subsequent election was a disaster for both Labour and the Liberals.

Discussion

The first questioner asked whether animosity toward David Lloyd George had been a major factor in limiting Liberal influence. Williamson argued that Baldwin had had a strong dislike of Lloyd George, while Meadowcroft pointed out that MacDonald 'had no problem with Liberals' since he had never been opposed by them personally in his Leicester constituency. Williamson concluded that the Lloyd George aspect was important, 'but could have been overcome if the political dynamics had been different.'

Other questions focused on electoral reform. Did the Liberals only supported it because it benefited them? And when did the Liberal Party first support reform? The answer to this from Williamson was that the Liberals had supported a move away from first-past-the-post from the late nineteenth century. This raised a further question: why hadn't they implemented it when they had had the power to do so? The answer, again from Williamson, was that Lloyd George was ready to do so in 1917 but was persuaded not to by the Conservatives on the basis that changing the voting system was just going to be too difficult in wartime. Presumably, had Lloyd George seen what was to become of the Liberals after the First World War, he would have acted rather differently.

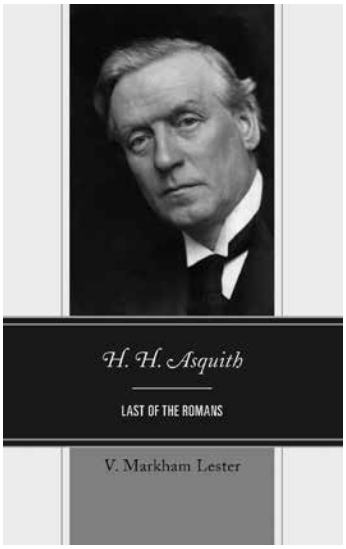
Joseph Walker is a member of the Liberal Democrat History Group executive.

Reviews

Asquith and his background

V. Markham Lester, *H. H. Asquith: Last of the Romans* (Lexington Books, 2019)
Review by **Katheryn Gallant**

Although H. H. Asquith was the longest-serving British prime minister between Lord Liverpool and Margaret Thatcher, he has not had many biographers. J. A. Spender and Cyril Asquith's two-volume biography, published in 1932 (four years after Asquith's death), verges on hagiography, as might be expected for a book written by (respectively) a friend and a son of the subject. Roy Jenkins' biography, published in 1964, although sympathetic to Asquith, has a far more spritely and accessible style. It was this book that first revealed to readers the existence of Asquith's letters to Venetia Stanley, which Jenkins extensively cited. This was despite the doubts of Asquith's devoted daughter, Lady Violet Bonham Carter, who was reluctant to publish the excerpts from her father's letters to the young woman who had been Lady Violet's best friend during her youth, but nevertheless gave Jenkins permission to do so. Stephen Koss's biography, published in 1976, although shorter than the Spender/Asquith biography and the Jenkins biography, was perhaps the most scholarly until now. The Koss biography was more nuanced than Jenkins', but not as well-written. George H. Cassar's Asquith as War Leader, published in 1994, is an extremely helpful monograph on Asquith's governance during the First World War, but it is not a biography that covers Asquith's entire career. Colin Clifford's *The Asquiths*, published in 2002, is also



useful, but it is a family biography. V. Markham Lester, an American historian whose field of study is Britain of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (as Koss was and Cassar is), has now put his hat in the ring of Asquith's biographers. Since historiography has developed since Koss, Cassar, and Clifford first published their books, a new full-length biography of Asquith is long overdue.

What this biography is best at is its portrayal of Asquith's early life. '[T]he influence of the City of London School on Asquith has consistently been understated,' Lester writes. 'He entered the school with no record of particular distinction. Seven years later he left the school a worldly, confident, well-spoken, disciplined student of proven academic distinction … He left London knowing much more of life than a schoolboy educated in the hothouse environment of Eton or Harrow. Decades later when Asquith became a political leader advocating the 'new liberalism' of social responsibility, he had a distinct advantage over many other British leaders. They could call upon their Oxbridge classical educations, but unlike Asquith few could also bring to bear memories of Mother Sumner's Tuck-shop or the hanging of the Five Pirates gang' (p. 19).

Lester continues, '[s]ome historians downplay Oxford's influence on Asquith thinking, particularly the role of two of his most important teachers, Benjamin Jowett and T. H. Green. They argue that either Asquith had for the most part already formed many of his ideas and goals or his ability to integrate these two professors' rival views demonstrates that neither teacher had much influence. Yet Asquith's later professional and political career mirrors so much of Jowett's and Green's teachings. This could hardly be coincidental' (p. 23). While 'Jowett instilled in his students the potential of the possible' (ibid.), 'Green urged his students to lead lives of service, so that their fellow citizens could realize their own human potential' (p. 24).

Lester posits that 'the key to understanding Asquith is to understand his unshakeable belief in the classic virtues of rational thought, eloquence, and self-control' (p. 6). Lester takes the epithet often given to Asquith, 'the last of the Romans', seriously. Asquith's youthful reading of Greek and Roman stoic philosophy while studying at the City of London School and Balliol College, Oxford, added to 'the evangelical influence as seeing all events as the will of God' that Asquith seems to have absorbed in his Congregationalist childhood, gave Asquith 'a fatalistic stoicism that would become his hallmark' (p. 25). Asquith's 'peculiar combination of pagan stoic philosophy and Christian belief in progress' helped him through 'some of the most difficult problems and challenges since the Napoleonic Wars: the constitutional crisis of the House of Lords, home rule for Ireland, women's suffrage, social reforms, and the challenges of the Great War' (p. 343).

'[I]f there is a consistent thread that runs through [Asquith's] life,' Lester writes, 'it was his desire to be a political leader who reflected classical ideals of virtue and character' (p. 7). 'Asquith's ability to control his emotions was largely made possible by the bifurcation of his personality', Lester continues. 'There was the public persona – disciplined, hardworking, ambitious, no nonsense, sober, nonconformist, and rarely expressing emotion. Then there was the private man – fun loving, kind, not so sober, and romantic' (p. 146). This bifurcation of personality, in this reviewer's opinion, could have had disastrous results

to Asquith's political career had Asquith been born a century later, with an inquisitive media and the influence of the #MeToo movement.

It is surprising that Lester barely mentions women's suffrage (four citations in the index). Not only does Lester neglect to include the Pankhursts or other prominent suffragettes in his biography, he also does not comment on the assassination attempt (via a thrown hatchet) on Asquith by the English suffragette Mary Leigh, which took place during Asquith's visit to Dublin in July 1912. (The hatchet did not reach its target: Irish Nationalist leader John Redmond, who was riding in the same carriage as Asquith, was slightly injured instead.)

Lester's treatment of Asquith's relationship with Venetia Stanley can best be described as guarded. It is as if Lester knew he had to touch on the topic of Asquith's letters to Venetia and his dependence on her, but Lester seems to be uncomfortable with the entire subject. Lester admits that '[it] can only be described as a romantic relationship' (p. 195) and that it 'evolved over the years into a deep attachment, if not love', but sees 'no historical significance in the question' of whether the Asquith/Venetia relationship became sexual. Lester writes that 'Michael and Eleanor Brock, editors of the Asquith correspondence with Stanley, are convincing in their assessment that Asquith "never became Venetia's lover in the physical sense, and it is unlikely that he even wished for this"' (p. 147).

Lester mentions in passing Asquith's post-Venetia friendship with Hilda Harrisson (Lester misspells the surname as 'Harrison') but does not bring up the rumours that Asquith may have been the biological father of Hilda's daughter (who would become the journalist Anne Symonds, grandmother of Carrie Johnson, wife of the current British prime minister, Boris Johnson). Nor does Lester write about the accusations that Asquith's behaviour towards young women would today be considered sexual harassment. Descriptions of Asquith's inappropriate behaviour towards young women can be found in recent books such as *Tangled Souls: Love and Scandal Among the Victorian Aristocracy* by Jane Dismore (The History Press, 2022) and *My Darling Mr Asquith: The extraordinary life and times of Venetia Stanley* by Stefan Buczacki (Cato & Clarke, 2016), which the *Journal of Liberal History* has reviewed (95, Spring 2017).

This book, although serviceably written at its best, is incomplete in its view of Asquith. It is a useful reference for the political events of Asquith's premiership. It also goes into some detail about Asquith's term as home secretary between 1892 and 1895 and his career as a barrister, especially during the period 1895 to 1905, when Conservatives were in power. It was previously unheard of for a former cabinet minister 'to return to the private practice of law' (p. 81), but Asquith, not being from a wealthy family, had to earn his living in an era when MPs were unpaid. (It was in 1911, during Asquith's premiership, that MPs first received a salary of £400 a year.) The chapter on Asquith's career after he was manoeuvered out of 10 Downing Street in December 1916 seems to be a bit summarily written. However, Lester does not delve much into the private side of Asquith's bifurcated personality: an in-depth look into Asquith's private life might modify Lester's thesis about Asquith's stoicism. Lester might have profited from a thorough reading of women's history focusing on late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, as well as during the First World War. The chapters on Asquith in Lucille Iremonger's *The Fiery Chariot: A Study of British Prime Ministers and the Search for Love* (Secker & Warburg, 1970), although written over fifty years ago, would be a start for deciphering the Asquith enigma: I noticed that Iremonger's book is not cited in Lester's bibliography. The search for a comprehensive biography of Asquith that equals or surpasses

Jenkins' scintillating writing continues.

Katheryn Gallant, a graduate of California State University, Los Angeles, is writing an alternative history novel that explores what might have happened had Asquith's letters to Venetia Stanley been published in 1915.

Liberalism and illiberalism

Francis Fukuyama, *Liberalism and Its Discontents* (Profile Books, 2022)
Review by **William Wallace**

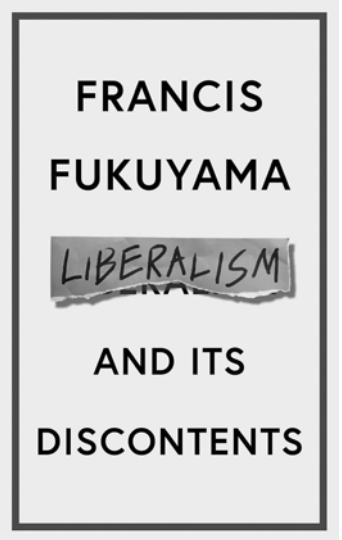
I had underestimated Fukuyama. I thought his first book, *The End of History*, was superficial. This book, his ninth, is clear, easy to read, short, and well grounded in recent philosophical and political debates on liberalism and illiberalism, primarily in the USA but also taking into account parallel debates and developments across Europe and beyond.

In 154 pages, he ranges from the founding ideas of liberalism in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries to contemporary intellectual and political conflicts. He notes the fault lines and hypocrisies in early expositions of liberalism, most strikingly in the Declaration of Independence's assertion that 'All men are created equal' while excluding women and slaves. 'The most fundamental principle of [classical] liberalism is one of tolerance' (p. 7). The most difficult values for classical liberalism to reconcile were liberty and equality. Limited government, the rule of law, respect for the scientific method and reasoned argument provided the foundations for liberal democracy and for liberal societies' long-term economic growth.

Most of the book is devoted to the attacks on classical liberalism since 1945, from both right and left. Von Mises and Hayek, and their followers in the Chicago School and elsewhere, 'denigrated the role of the state in the economy' (p. 19); neoliberalism prioritised economic and personal freedom to a point where it became hostile to state action. Reductionist assumptions about individual motivation resting entirely on self-interest excluded the importance of community and solidarity. Rawls' concern for 'the sovereign self' omitted the dimension of 'public-spiritedness', concern for others in shared communities.

If liberals on the right responded to the fascist state by going too far towards libertarian anarchism, critics on the left took the idea of the sovereign self into an ideology of identity and social oppression which left reasoned argument and tolerance behind. His summary of critical theory and its illiberal tenets is clear and persuasive; the insistence that liberal societies cloak informal structures of oppression fails to establish that alternative systems of government can better resolve such tensions. Marcuse, Foucault, Derrida and their followers have provided critiques of rationality that have undermined democratic and scientific debate and allowed for the emergence of conspiratorial theories about underlying power structures.

The illiberal right has in turn followed this critique of rationality, developing alternative conspiratorial theories on liberalism as hostile to nation, faith and community. Technological innovation, above all new media, have allowed non-evidential approaches to spread. 'Progressives and white



nationalists come together in valuing raw feelings and emotion over cold empirical analysis' (p. 113) – though the progressive left has not followed the communitarian right in preferring authoritarian government to democracy.

'If liberalism is to be preserved as a system of government, we need to understand the sources of these discontents' (p. 141). Fukuyama stresses that liberalism and state intervention are not incompatible, and that state support for disadvantaged groups is a necessary aspect of democratic government. He acknowledges the delicacy of reconciling liberalism's inherent universalism with the limitations of nation states and national identity; he argues for a stronger emphasis on citizenship and the social contract between citizens and the state as a means of creating 'a positive liberal vision of national identity.'(p. 137) Above all, he argues for a reassertion of reason, moderation and tolerance as governing principles in defending the superiority of liberal democracy to its discontented alternatives.

Political ideas spill back and forth across the Atlantic. Fukuyama provides a pocket guide to current American ideological conflicts, with references to their links to comparable European debates. Both the American progressive left and the libertarian and communitarian versions of the illiberal American right have close ties to groups within the UK and across the European continent, feeding political movements as they raise and fall. This book will help the defenders of liberalism, now embattled, to understand where their opponents are coming from – and hopefully therefore to defend liberal principles more vigorously.

William Wallace (Lord Wallace of Saltaire) studied at Cambridge, Cornell and Oxford, taught at Manchester, Oxford and the LSE, and has researched and published on British foreign policy, national identity and European international politics. He is currently Liberal Democrat Cabinet Office spokesman in the Lords.

Liberal women in Devon

J. Neville, M. Auchterlonie, P. Auchterlonie and A. Roberts (eds.), *Devon Women in Public and Professional Life 1900–1950: Votes, voices and vocations* (Exeter University Press, 2021)

Review by **Mark Egan**

This is a well-written and impressively researched series of essays on eight women, prominent in civic life in Devon during the first half of the twentieth century. Each of the women was active in politics, medicine and teaching, the voluntary sector or rural life: some were active in more than one area. The authors' intention is to assess how the women contributed to public, professional and civic life in the county and to what degree a rural county, distant from London, reflected developments in the women's movement nationally. This aim is certainly achieved. As well as chapters on each of the women, there are engaging introductory and concluding chapters which pull together the various themes from the essays to discuss what these stories can tell us about women in civic life after enfranchisement.

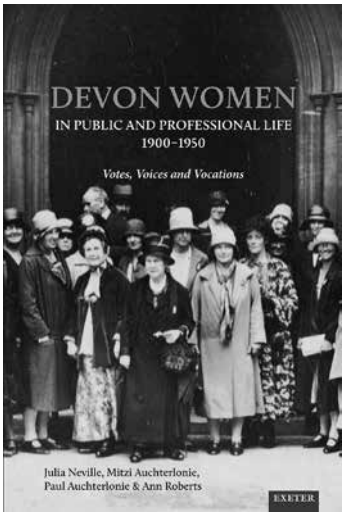
Some of the women covered in this book were active Liberals and their stories will be of particular interest to readers of this *Journal*. The first essay deals with Eleanor Acland (1878–1933). Acland should be a familiar name for anyone interested in Liberal history. Eleanor's husband was Francis Acland, a Liberal MP for most of the period from 1906 until his death in 1939, whose forebears included numerous politicians. Their son, Richard Acland, was also a Liberal, who went on to found the wartime Common

Wealth party. Eleanor's political career began shortly after her husband was elected to parliament, when she became a prominent suffragist. In 1913 she was instrumental in founding the Liberal Women's Suffrage Union, which aimed to ensure that anti-suffrage candidates were not selected by the Liberal Party. It has been suggested that she was offered a Liberal candidature in 1918, but she worked instead with her husband to help him retain Camborne. From 1919 she took on prominent roles in the Women's National Liberal Federation, becoming its president in 1929.

Acland identified herself as a progressive in politics and reacted positively to the prospect of the 1924 Labour government, which she felt drew most of its programme from the Liberals. Her attitude cooled subsequently, but she welcomed Lloyd George's political initiatives in the late 1920s, having earlier identified herself as a staunch Asquithite. An outspoken champion of the League of Nations, and a member of the Peace with Ireland Council (the publication of a report of her visit to Ireland in 1921, which commented adversely on the UK government's policy there, brought on a libel action which she successfully defended), she was also prominent in numerous civic organisations in Devon. She stood for parliament at Exeter in 1931, blaming her defeat on inadequate organisation. She died, aged 55, in 1933.

A 'born leader' and 'avowed feminist' who 'upheld Liberal principles throughout her life', the essay concludes by noting how many prominent works on Liberal history and women's suffrage fail to mention her. To that list could be added our own publications, including the *Mothers of Liberty* booklet, suggesting, perhaps, a continuing tendency to overlook the significance of the Women's National Liberal Federation and the influence of the women who led it.

Two other essays touch on the decline of the Liberal Party after the First World War. Clara Daymond is the only working-class woman in the book. Her husband, George, was a builder who became a borough councillor in Plymouth. Methodists and temperance activists, the Daymonds were Liberals and Daymond threw herself into a variety of civic causes as well as the women's suffrage movement. George Daymond had always stood for election as an independent, as did Clara when she was first elected in 1919. She was backed by the Plymouth Citizens Association, an organisation which emerged from the local suffragists' groups and was open to men and women. Initially intended to promote a new non-partisan politics, the Citizens Association (and similar



organisations in other parts of the country) became ways of bringing Liberals and Conservatives together to fight the Labour Party at local elections. In 1924, the Daymonds broke with the Liberals and joined the Conservatives. Nevertheless, Clara retained good relations with women Liberals across the county and, in the 1930s, her election campaigns were endorsed by local Liberals. That, in the view of the author, was because there was no distinction between the two parties in Plymouth at that time.

Politics did not play a major part in the life of Sylvia Calmady-Hamlyn, the third of the subjects of essays in this volume to have been an active Liberal. She was an agriculturalist who helped establish the Women's Institute movement in Devon. She described herself as a Liberal during the First World War but ten years later she had moved to the left and was talked about as

A Liberal Democrat History Group evening meeting

Forgotten Liberal Heroes:
Sir Edward Grey and Richard Haldane

Sir Edward Grey served as Foreign Secretary and remains the longest-serving holder of the office. He maintained good relations with France and Russia at a time of great instability in Europe. When his efforts to avert conflict failed, in 1914, Grey persuaded a divided cabinet to support Britain's entry to the First World War.

Richard Haldane was Secretary for War and created the Territorial Army and the British Expeditionary Force. As Lord Chancellor after 1912 he pursued a series of judicial reforms. He was also a co-founder of the UK university system.

Both have a credible case for being regarded as Liberal heroes. But Grey's record has been strongly criticised in recent years and Haldane is largely forgotten.

Join **Thomas Otte** (University of East Anglia and author of *Statesman of Europe: A Life of Sir Edward Grey*) and **John Campbell OBE** (author of *Haldane: The Forgotten Statesman Who Shaped Modern Britain*) to assess these Liberals and their legacies.

7.00pm, Monday 30 January (following History Group AGM at 6.30pm)
Violet Bonham Carter Room, National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE. *Online participation is also possible: register via the History Group website at* www.liberalhistory.org.uk

a prospective Labour candidate in the county. She broke with the Women's Institute in Devon after criticising its leadership for being unduly dominated by Unionists.

The essays on Daymond and Calmady-Hamlyn provide further evidence of how the polarisation of British politics after 1918 led to many Liberals drifting away from the party, to the left or the right. Eleanor Acland may well have done the same, had she not been so firmly rooted in the party. However, the most striking impression that this book leaves is of the vibrancy and interconnectedness of civic life in Devon during the period covered. It shows that many women (particularly middle-class and aristocratic women) were politically engaged, but not necessarily through political parties. This is an interesting point to reflect on when so much focus is placed elsewhere on parliamentary elections and political parties as the basis for political activity.

Mark Egan is a longstanding member of the Liberal Democrat History Group, whose doctoral thesis was on the grassroots organisation of the Liberal Party 1945–64. He is currently interim CEO of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh.