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politics as a whole. It illustrates how political spin and 'false news' have been around for well over a century and were part and parcel of most political campaigns. We can see, for example, from first-hand examples the campaigning rhetoric that the Liberals were using against the Labour Party that linked them directly to the chaos evolving in the Russian Revolution.

The book indicates that, as well as being a key campaigning figure, Margaret also played a central role in a 'ceremonial, waving the coalition government flag sense'. As such, she was certainly the most political of the prime ministers' wives in the UK in the twentieth century. So, why didn't she become an MP herself? O'Brien also deals with some of the speculation around this in the penultimate chapter of the book.

As the title of the book indicates, this narrative is centrally about the 'campaigns' of Margaret Lloyd George through the correspondence with her private secretary, the Rev. J. T. Rhys. As a result, although you do get a clearer indication of her own personal political drive and motivations, particularly in the final chapters of the books, this is not a book that provides the reader with Margaret's thoughts about her husband or any other political or royal figures to any great extent. This is not a 'tell-all, revelations and scandal text': it is a detailed and valuable

account of not only how the first interwar coalition government sought to campaign for the Lloyd George side but also how one of the most 'forgotten figures' – Margaret Lloyd George – demonstrated that it was far from being solely a man's world.

When I wrote *The Welsh Liberals* in 2014, there was very little material available on the role of Liberal women in politics in Wales. This book would have been an invaluable source and would have helped balance some of the historical record that often portrays Welsh politics as almost totally excluding females prior to the

1980s. Therefore, those seeking a more balanced view of history will find this a fascinating and detailed read. There is also a pictorial element to the book, with many relevant photographs and some examples of the written material that O'Brien used as the central source for this book.

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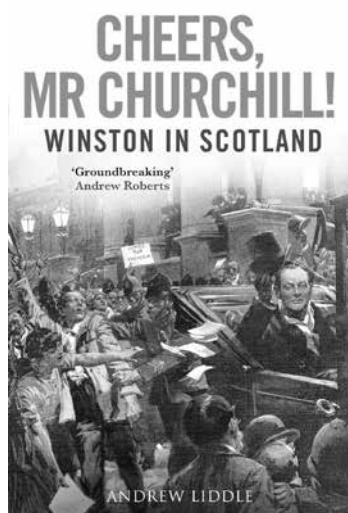
Churchill in Scotland

Andrew Liddle, *Cheers Mr Churchill: Winston in Scotland* (Birlinn, Edinburgh, 2022)

Review by **Ian Cawood**

AFTER HIS DEFECTION from the Unionists over Free Trade in 1904, Winston Churchill had been made a junior minister, following the Liberal landslide of 1906. With his gift for self-publicity, he had quickly been spotted by Asquith and was appointed as President of the Board of Trade in April 1908. Under the terms of a long standing convention, in order to enter the Cabinet Churchill had to seek re-election from his constituency in Manchester North-West,

which was by no means a safe seat. Seen as a traitor to the Unionist cause, the Conservatives put up the hard-right William Joynson-Hicks as an opponent and defeated Churchill, risking his political future. Immediately after the sensational result was known, the Dundee Liberal Association telegraphed Churchill and offered him the candidature in the east Scottish city. In this way, Winston Churchill began an association with Dundee that would last until his defeat in the general



election of 1922 which in turn contributed to his return to the Unionist fold in 1924.

That Churchill's Liberal years saw him having to engage with a distinctly Scottish political culture is one of the few aspects of his much-studied life that has been largely overlooked. Now Andrew Liddle, an Edinburgh journalist and former spin doctor for the Scottish Labour Party, has published a book that seeks to put a spotlight on Churchill's relationship with Scotland in the early part of the twentieth century and Scotland's relationship with the man chosen by a 2002 BBC poll as the greatest Briton in modern history.

Liddle's journalistic experience is evident in the quality of the writing. There are vivid pen portraits of Churchill in moments of despair, magnanimity and resignation which may be unfamiliar to those accustomed to

Churchill's depiction as a pugnacious and resilient bulldog. Liddle's engagement with political history in its fullest spectrum also shines through. Although particularly interested in demonstrating Churchill's sincere commitment to improving the lives of ordinary people, Liddle is no doctrinaire left wing historian. He offers the reader the perspective of almost all the politicians and activists who we encounter. Figures such as the fanatical Edwin Scrymgeour, the Scottish prohibitionist who stood against Churchill in every one of the six elections he fought in Dundee until he finally defeated him, come across as complex, principled characters. Scrymgeour's relentless battle with the brewing industry cannot be easily explained to a 21st century readership – especially to a Scottish one where the alcohol industry now stands triumphant as one of the chief sponsors of almost aspect of cultural life in the country, even while levels of Scottish alcoholism still exceed those of most other western European nations – but Liddle succeeds in eliciting admiration for the only MP to be elected on a prohibitionist platform in Britain's history and explaining how temperance was a crucial feature of Scottish radicalism long into the twentieth century.¹

Nevertheless, there are places where it would have been wise for Liddle to have

supplanted his focus on personality with a little greater appreciation of the social and cultural context of the events in both Dundee and beyond. The electoral culture, about which we hear so much, changed significantly between 1908 and 1922, generally due to the expansion of the electorate and particularly because of the enfranchisement of women. There is a dramatic shift from the confrontational and frequently violent campaigns which Liddle describes Churchill fighting in pre-war Dundee to the post-war culture of press battles and public courtesy, yet this passes largely unremarked.² Similarly, the decision of most Liberal and Unionist politicians such as Asquith, Bonar Law and Baldwin to avoid mocking and dismissing Labour opponents, for fear of exacerbating the class conflict which led to the violence on the streets of Glasgow in 1919 ought to have been noted as it has been ably described by the contributors to the 2013 collection, *The Aftermath of Suffrage*.³ Not least because Churchill failed to take the same approach, frequently treating Labour and Communist opponents with equal disdain, and using language such as 'the foul baboonery of Bolshevism' to condemn both the Soviet regime and those on the left who showed any sympathy with the new regime in Russia.⁴ Lloyd George complained

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that, unlike the more pragmatic approach of his Conservative and National Liberal colleagues, Churchill had ‘Bolshevism on the brain’ and it was thus his shift to the right, in contrast to the national shift to the centre ground of politics, which contributed to his defeat in 1922.⁵

As a journalist, Liddle may also have appreciated the services of a good sub-editor who would have asked him to avoid repeating certain facts – we are told recurrently that Churchill was MP for Dundee for fourteen years, that he fought six elections in the city and that he regarded Dundee as a ‘life seat’. There is also a degree of repetition in Liddle’s style of introducing the episodes which comprise most of the chapters. We usually meet a figure alone, waiting, walking or travelling, which enables Liddle to paint a pen portrait of the figure, their state of mind and the fate which awaits them. When used initially to describe Churchill waiting in Dundee’s Caird Hall for the constituency result in 1922 which he finally lost to Scrymgeour, he effectively conveys Churchill’s state of apathetic resignation, but the approach does become a little wearing when, by chapter 25, we are told of the mood of the Dundee councillor who proposed giving Churchill the freedom of the city in 1943 (which the then Prime Minister controversially turned down). As an

academic historian, part of me recoils from any attempt to ascribe emotions to these real people, to treat them like characters in a (rather tortuous) fictional narrative. I can forgive this in Churchill’s case, as his correspondence, mainly to Clementine, has been unsurprisingly well conserved and does contain much detail as to his emotional condition. To claim that Councillor Blackwood was ‘anxious’ and ‘uneasy’ when he tried to persuade Dundee’s council to grant the honour to Churchill, however, does seem an attempt to fill a historical text with questionable invention.

Nevertheless, this is a highly readable account of an overlooked period of British political history during which, if one reads between the lines of Liddle’s text, a modern political culture emerged which has, at least until the takeover of Britain by the cabal of Oxford Tories in 2010, proved remarkably resilient.

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- 1 See also T. A. Stewart, “‘Vote as You Pray’ – The Success of the Scottish Prohibitionist Party in Dundee during the Interwar Period’, *International Journal of Regional and Local History*, 13:2 (2018), pp. 105–17
- 2 J. Lawrence, ‘The Transformation of British Public Politics after the First World War’, *Past and Present*, 190:1 (2006), pp. 185–216.
- 3 J. V. Gottlieb and R. Toye (eds), *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender and Politics, 1918–1945* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
- 4 W. Churchill at the Mansion House, 19 February 1919, quoted in R. Rhodes James (ed.), *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches 1897–1963*, vol. 3, 1914–1922 (Chelsea House Publishers, 1974), p. 2670.
- 5 George Riddell’s diary entry for 11 April 1919, quoted in R. H. Ullman, *Britain and the Russian Civil War, November 1918–February 1920* (Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 153.

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