

a part. He at least accepted their choices as adults and did not stand in their way, even when Florence decided to become a nun. While Morley could not endorse Johnson's criminality, he did not abandon his family, providing a home for Johnson's children in 1907–11; Morley may even have played a behind the scenes role in Johnson's early release from prison in 1912. Morley certainly did not replicate the harsh treatment he had received from his own father.

Morrison's book provides a fascinating glimpse of Morley's home life and his family relationships, making good use of the Morley papers in

the Bodleian Library, Oxford; and it is a powerful reminder of the importance of seeing leading politicians in the context of their entire life and experiences. However, the concept of 'liberal parenting' that Morrison seeks to explore is problematic. Morrison does not clearly define what the key elements of 'liberal parenting' were, or how these might have been distinct from 'conservative parenting' or 'socialist parenting'; nor does he compare Morley's parenting with that of other prominent Liberals. This makes it difficult to judge how typical Morley was and whether his attitudes were widely

shared amongst Liberals. 'Liberal parenting' may just be the term that Morrison uses to define what Morley did, rather than a distinctive attitude to parenting that was part of living one's life as a Liberal in Victorian Britain. In that sense, this short book should be seen as suggesting further important areas for research, rather than as conclusively demonstrating the significance of 'liberal parenting'.

**Ian Packer is Associate Professor in History at the University of Lincoln and the author of *Lloyd George, Liberalism and the Land* (2001) and *Liberal Government and Politics, 1905–15* (2006).**

# Letters to the Editor

## Michael Steed

I last heard from Michael Steed about three years ago when he wrote to me, outraged by the errors in the report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse.

He had been to Rochdale at the time of Cyril Smith's first adoption as Liberal candidate for the 1972 by-election, and knew that the filed police enquiry into him had been since seen by more than one DPP and that they had always agreed that there was insufficient evidence to proceed against Smith. I thanked him for his continued good wishes and commiserated with his declining health. He is a great loss, not just to the Liberal Democrats but to the country.

David Steel (Lord Steel of Aikwood)

## Uxbridge

Barry Standen's article on the 1972 Uxbridge by-election brought back memories of that campaign and of the late Ian Stuart. I remember staying with a stalwart called Sid, who had been a councillor for three years when many Liberals were swept wholly unexpectedly on to councils in the 1962 aftermath of the Orpington by-election. I have heard tell that the then local government officer, one Michael Meadowcroft, was rung up more than once to hear the words: 'We've taken control of the council. What do we do now?'

I campaigned for Ian at that by-election delivering thousands of leaflets called 'Impact' because Ian didn't like the name Focus. It rained most of the time. Barrie didn't mention that many of us went to the Labour

candidate Manuela Sykes' election meetings and pointedly took off our coats and turned them inside out (turncoat), as she had done to Hugh Foot when he deserted the Liberals for Labour. She was not happy.

Barrie is not correct in his tale about the candidate being hung upside down from a railway bridge to paste up election posters. It was his youngest son being held by his older brothers!

Incidentally, Ian had discovered by accident that a mixture of glue and size brushed on to *both* sides of a poster made it almost impossible to remove. Those posters, albeit somewhat faded, remained on the bridge for many years.

Mick Taylor

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A Liberal Democrat History Group evening meeting

# The 1847 Financial Crisis and the Irish Famine

The Irish famine of the 1840s remains the worst humanitarian crisis in the UK's history. Within six years of the arrival of the potato blight in Ireland in 1845, more than a quarter of its people had died or emigrated. Lord John Russell's Whig government's response to the crisis has been widely criticised – but in reality their options were highly limited by the concurrent financial crisis and their lack of a parliamentary majority.

Speakers: **Dr Charles Read** (Faculty of History, University of Cambridge and author of *The Great Famine in Ireland and Britain's Financial Crisis* (2022)) and **Liam Kennedy** (Emeritus Professor of History at Queen's University, Belfast). Chair: **Baroness Kramer**.

**7.00pm, Monday 29 January**, following the AGM of the History Group at 6.30pm.  
Violet Bonham Carter Room, National Liberal Club, London SW1A 2HE.

*Those unable to attend in person will be able to view the meeting via Zoom. Please register for online access via the History Group website (<https://liberalhistory.org.uk/events/>). For those attending in person, there is no need to register.*

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A Liberal Democrat History Group fringe meeting

# Greening Liberalism

## The history of Liberal and Liberal Democrat environmental thinking

How and when did environmental policy become important to British political parties, and to the Liberal Party, SDP and Liberal Democrats in particular?

Speakers: **Professor Neil Carter** (York University) and **Baroness Parminter**. Chair: **Keith Melton** (Green Liberal Democrats).

**8.15pm, Friday 15 March**

Meeting Room 4, Novotel York Centre, Fishergate, York YO10 4FD.

*This is a fringe meeting at the Liberal Democrats' spring conference. You do not need to be registered for the conference to attend the meeting.*