

intelligence, principle, vision and warmth, can secure huge change for the better. Jenny is survived by much loved Peter, son James, daughter Eleri, and three grandchildren.

Her legacy for Liberalism and Wales will for certain outlive us all. In Wales, if you seek Jenny's monument, look around the museums, listen to the music and the Welsh language and read the words. And remember her.

Jenny cariad, roedd neb fel yr chi. There was no one like you. ■

Simon Hughes was MP for Bermondsey & Old Southwark 1983–2015. He is now Chancellor of South Bank University.

History Group on Bluesky

For many years the Liberal Democrat History Group has published daily 'on this day in Liberal history' posts on Twitter/X (@LibHistory-Today); we also use this account to post news of our meetings and publications. We are now also publishing the posts on Bluesky (@libhistorytoday.bsky.social) – please follow us there. ■

Corrigenda

In Alan Mumford's review of Robert Harris's book, *Precipice* (*Journal of Liberal History* 125, winter 2024–25), the statement that Asquith wrote more than 600 letters to Venetia Stanley is incorrect: the number should have been 550. ■

Letters to the Editor

Ramsay Muir

I am a great admirer of Ramsay Muir and I have just about all of his political publications. Probably more than anyone, he saved the Liberal Party from disintegration in the 1930s. By trade he was an academic historian. After a distinguished academic career he ended up as Professor of Modern History at Manchester University but he resigned his chair in 1921 to concentrate full-time on Liberal politics. He was a prolific writer and one of the founders of the influential Liberal Summer School in 1921. He was the key figure in the streamlining of the party organisation in 1936 and was the main author of the preamble to its constitution – which has survived with minor updating to the present day. He was successful only once in his eight election contests – for Rochdale in the short 1923–24 parliament, but, like many academics, was not a particular success in the very different debating chamber.

Recently, in the course of researching the background to Middle East political history I came across a booklet reproducing a 'Ramsay Muir Memorial Lecture' given at Cambridge University in 1956, and published by the Ramsay Muir Educational

Trust. Further research produced references to a number of other memorial lectures in the 1950s and early 1960s but nothing later. Nor does the Trust figure on the current register of charities. Can any of our readers throw any light on either the lectures or the Trust, and particularly when either ceased operating? ■

Michael Meadowcroft

Declaration of Arbroath

William Wallace's splendid article on 'The Origins of Liberalism' (*Journal of Liberal History* 124, winter 2024–25) notes Rainsborough's 1647 argument that 'every man that is to live under a Government ought first by his own consent to put himself under that Government'. This notion of government by consent is one of the foundation stones of Liberalism and its origins can be traced even further back. Notable among its antecedents is the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320. This was a plea to the Pope for support from Scottish nobles who held that their country was being oppressed by Edward II of England.

The Declaration states that 'the due consent and assent of us all

have made (Robert the Bruce) our Prince and King'. However, it continues: 'Yet if he should give up what he has begun, and agree to make us or our kingdom subject to the King of England or the English, we should exert ourselves at once to drive him out as our enemy and a subverter of his own rights and ours, and make some other man who was well able to defend us our King.'

No divine right, then, and kingship is made conditional on assent and continuing consent. It is made clear what that consent depends on: 'It is in truth not for glory, nor riches, nor honours that we are fighting, but for freedom.'

The 1320 Declaration of Arbroath is a remarkable mediaeval precursor of a significant element of Liberal thought. Although it is not a wholly Liberal document, its explicit statement that government is by consent and for the purpose of maintaining an idea of freedom still informs our thinking, 705 years after it was written. ■

Nigel Lindsay

Recordings of Liberals

In answer to York Membery's enquiry about recordings of H. H. Asquith and Gladstone (Letters, *Journal of Liberal History* 124, winter 2024–25) could I recommend the two CD set produced by the

British Library in 2004, 'Voices of History'? It is a gem and the first three tracks are Gladstone, Asquith and Lloyd George.

The party decided in 1909 to widen the message by making recordings of the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer to be distributed and played at local meetings. Lloyd George is quite flatteringly expansive, and seems to get more 'Welsh' as he goes on. For me the star is Asquith, speaking with perfect patrician articulation, in the rhetorical style of the day. I am sure there may be a trace of a Leeds accent somewhere, but it is well overlaid with Edwardian gilding. Interestingly, although Lloyd George was the noted orator, he is harder to hear than Asquith.

Despite Asquith's pioneering use of sound recording, he forgot that the recording continued when he had finished, so it ends with a *sotto voce*: 'Will that do?'

Gladstone, speaking in the 1890s on an original Edison phonograph, is quite difficult to hear, but the second part is much clearer and he certainly does not have an aristocratic or Liverpool accent. If anything he sounds more old-fashioned Scots.

There is also later on, a recording of Herbert Samuel talking about the British Mandate in Palestine and the possibility of a Jewish homeland. ■

Rev Robin Davill

Churchill at the Home Office

May I reply to several points in Dr Iain Sharpe's review of *Churchill the Liberal Reformer: the struggle for a modern Home Office* (*Journal of Liberal History* 124, winter 2024–25)? The reviewer's criticism of the title as being misleading is well made. I accept it. It is true that Winston Churchill did not make structural reforms of the Home Office. That would have been a formidable undertaking and he was there for only twenty months. I agree with the reviewer that WSC was a law-and-order minister (though I am not sure that I suggest anywhere that he was not: rather the contrary).

The reviewer's statement that: 'Marlor devotes much space to Churchill's approach to considering appeals for commutation of death sentences' suggests, perhaps, that the book overly dwells on a grisly subject. May I say that given the fact that this side of Churchill's work dominated his recall of the period (and given his mental anguish over his exercise of his ministerial discretion on capital cases), that less than the two of the book's thirty chapters on this dark and continuously running thread would have sold it short? The majority of Churchill's forty or so capital cases do not feature. I give plenty of space, however, to WSC's swift rescue from their death cells of women sentenced for killing their new-born

babies. Churchill's speed here (cutting through the red tape) was noted at the time. It is, I think, a moving story, worth recording.

Sharpe finds the book 'mainly based on secondary and published primary sources'. May I gently comment here that the accounts in the book are nourished by many hours of working through the copious buff Home Office folders at the National Archives and delving into the often fascinating 'CHAR' materials at Churchill College, Cambridge. True, the book draws plentifully on published memoirs, but where possible I have looked at the original material on which these are based. An example is regarding Lucy Masterman, the wife of C.F.G. Masterman, Churchill's parliamentary deputy in his Home Office period. Mrs Masterman's wonderful 1939 biography of her late husband uses, verbatim and at length, sections out of her diaries. As far as I know, I am the first writer to make direct use of the original diaries (they are at the Cadbury Research Library at Birmingham University). They reveal that Mrs Masterman made judicious cuts at certain points in her quotations. I found for example that she left out from her quoted diary entry of 8 December 1910: '[Churchill's] absolute insincerity on this whole matter [what to do about the veto power of the House of Lords] sickened [Lloyd] George very much.'

The reviewer states that he is 'sceptical of Marlor's contention that Churchill instituted a liberal outlook in the Home Office that lasted until the 1990s'. May I say here that I am careful to differentiate between the deadening stuffiness of the H.O. on the one hand and liberal reforming approaches within it on the other. When Diane Abbott was a Home Office graduate entrant in the 1970s, she found, as she remarks in her recent memoir, 'a premium on conformity'. That was there in Churchill's time in the weight given to 'precedent'. Abbott does, however, also mention that she found the H.O. genuinely meritocratic regardless of family background. Churchill worked on social fairness at the Home Office, as I stress in the book, including his appointment to a senior position on his staff of a working-class former child factory-labourer. As I mention, Liberal MP Josiah Wedgwood spoke in a parliamentary debate about 'the democratic forces that we now have at the head of the Home Office'. (Incidentally, my book makes much use of Hansard, a resource extraordinarily neglected by historians.)

I do not think that, as the reviewer suggests, my thesis of liberalism within the Home Office establishment between Churchill's day and the 1990s (remarkably still there in the Thatcher period) is undermined by Sir William Joynson-Hicks (Home Secretary in the 1920s) or

Sir David Maxwell Fyfe (1951–54). Maxwell Fyfe (later Lord Kil-muir) was a notorious right-wing hardliner on penal policy and it was on his watch in 1953 that the dreadful hanging of Derek Bentley occurred. But Maxwell Fyfe's attitude was not that of his department. It was not that of the permanent under-secretary at the time, Sir Frank Newsam (1948–57), who was reported to be 'gravely concerned' when Fyfe disregarded his advice and refused to reprieve Bentley. The previous permanent under-secretary, Sir Alexander Maxwell (1938–48), was also a liberal progressive regarding penal administration.

Also worth mentioning is Philip Allen (later Lord Allen), permanent under-secretary 1966–72 (including under Roy Jenkins), another liberal progressive at the top of the Home Office permanent establishment. In my research into the Edward Woodcock case of 1910 I found in the file a 1948 memorandum written by Allen on the subject of a request by Winston Churchill, then Leader of the Opposition, to borrow material from the file to use in his contribution to a debate on the then Criminal Justice Bill. Woodcock had been reprieved by Churchill, contrary to all the advice given to him; several months later he hanged himself in his cell. Churchill in the 1948 debate used the Woodcock suicide to make his case for the

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31 A war against followers of a cult religion derived from Christianity, known as the Taiping rebellion.

32 See Angus Hawkins, *Parliament, Party and the Art of Politics in Britain, 1855–59* (Stanford University Press, 1987), esp. chs. 2–3.

33 White, *Inner Life*, p. 26.

34 H. C. G. Matthew (ed.), *The Gladstone Diaries*, vol. 5 1855–1860 (Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 201–2.

35 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 97, col. 122 (1 Mar. 1848).

36 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 144, cols. 1787–1809 (3 Mar. 1857).

37 Charles Greville, *The Greville Memoirs* (Longmans Green & Co., 1888), viii, p. 97.

38 White, *Inner Life*, pp. 26–8.

39 *Gladstone Diaries*, vol. 5, p. 202.

40 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 144, cols. 1913–19 (5 Mar. 1857).

41 *Gladstone Diaries*, vol. 5, p. 203.

42 Morley, *Life*, vol. i, pp. 627–8. The reference is to Garibaldi's campaign for Italian Unification.

43 *Gladstone Diaries*, vol. 5, p. 425; Philip Guedalla (ed.), *Gladstone & Palmerston being the Correspondence of Lord Palmerston with Mr. Gladstone 1851–1865* (Victor Gollancz, 1928), p. 111.

44 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 159, cols. 1892–1900 (13 Jul. 1860); the Radical J. A. Roebuck posed the question.

45 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 252, col. 1276 (4 Jun. 1880).

46 Ibid.

47 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 201, cols. 480–90 (10 May 1870).

48 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 201, cols. 515–522 (10 May 1870).

49 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 201, cols. 523–524 (10 May 1870).

50 H. C. G. Matthew (ed.), *The Gladstone Diaries*, vol. 9, 1875–1880 (Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 475–8.

51 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 252, cols. 1227–81 (4 Jun. 1880).

52 *Gladstone Diaries*, vol. 9, p. 535.

53 H. C. G. Matthew (ed.), *The Gladstone Diaries*, vol. 10, 1881–1883 (Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 55.

54 The debate is reported at Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 260, cols. 1451–1514 (29 Apr. 1881).

55 H. C. G. Matthew (ed.), *The Gladstone Diaries*, vol. 13, 1892–1896 (Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 128.

56 Hansard, Parl. Debs. (series 4) vol. 14, cols. 591–634 (30 Jun. 1893).

57 *Gladstone Diaries*, vol. 13, p. 256.

58 John Powell (ed.), *Liberal by Principle: The Politics of John Wodehouse 1st Earl of Kimberley, 1843–1902* (The Historians' Press, 1996), p. 210, letter to Lord Lansdowne. Powell cites evidence that 240 members supported the anti-opium cause, including Asquith, Campbell Bannerman and Gladstone.

59 Angus Hawkins and John Powell (eds.), *The Journal of John Wodehouse First Earl of Kimberley for 1862–1902* (Camden Fifth Series, 1997) p. 415.

60 *Gladstone Diaries*, vol. 13, p. 256.

61 For more details see John F. Richards, 'Opium and the British Indian Empire: The Royal Commission of 1895', *Modern Asian Studies*, 36/2 (May 2002), pp. 375–420, accessed 7/2/2025 via <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3876660>.

62 John Morley, *Life*, vol. i, p. 260.

63 Ibid.

Letters to the Editor

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retention of capital punishment. Allen's internal memo is scathing on Churchill's failure of logic. One may readily guess from the tone that Allen was an abolitionist. Home Office liberalism, I think it may be said, survived until the early 1990s, after which it was downhill all the way including (and especially) under New Labour.

The book argues that Churchill's 1910–11 reforms and philosophy regarding criminal justice are highly relevant to today, with its acknowledged prisons scandal, especially WSC's declaration to Parliament, cheered by progressive reformists, that how a state deals with offenders is 'an unfailing measure of the level of a state's civilisation'. With the

recent change of government the Justice Ministry has new ministers. These include Lord James Timpson, Minister of State for Prisons, Parole and Probation. Timpson's attitude is very much that of Churchill the Liberal reformer of 1910–11; perhaps there is progressive liberal hope in this field? ■

Duncan Marlor