

LIFE WITH LL

Even today, more than thirty years after its appearance, *Life with Lloyd George* (1975), by A. J. Sylvester, Principal Private Secretary to David Lloyd George from 1923, remains a valuable and unique source of information for students of Lloyd George, his life and times – particularly the so-called ‘wilderness years’ of the last phase of his life – and for those interested in his family. **Dr J. Graham Jones** examines the preparation, publication and impact of the book, drawing on extracts from Sylvester’s diaries between 1931 and 1945.



OYD GEORGE

ALBERT JAMES Sylvester (1889–1989) served as Principal Private Secretary to David Lloyd George from the autumn of 1923 until Lloyd George's death in March 1945.¹ A native of Harlaston in Staffordshire and the son of a relatively impoverished tenant farmer, he perfected his shorthand and typing skills by attending evening classes when still in his teens, while he spent his days as a clerk at Charrington's breweries. In 1910, like so many of his generation, he moved to London to seek his fortune, holding a variety of jobs before in 1915 securing appointment as a stenographer in the office of M. P. A. Hankey (later Lord Hankey), who at the time was Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence. In 1921 he left Hankey's employ to become Private Secretary to Lloyd George, still Prime Minister of the post-war coalition government. A short spell under Conservative premier Andrew Bonar Law preceded his return to work as PPS to Lloyd George for an unbroken twenty-two-and-a-half years. Sylvester was thus in a unique position to view Lloyd George's public and private life throughout the so-called 'wilderness years'.

Very early in his career A. J. Sylvester realised that he was in

an immensely privileged position. By nature he was a compulsive, habitual note taker, a practice much facilitated by his proficiency in shorthand. From about 1915 onwards he took to recording in some detail the seminal, often momentous events which he witnessed at close quarters. Sometimes he kept a diary. He went to great pains to record the moves which led to the selection of Stanley Baldwin, rather than Lord Curzon, as Conservative leader in the spring of 1923, and he chronicled in some detail the tempestuous course of Ramsay MacDonald's first minority Labour government of 1923–24.

During these years, however, his diary keeping was at best spasmodic; there were lengthy periods during which no diary entries were made. Some years afterwards, however, newspaper proprietor Sir George Riddell (later Lord Riddell) impressed upon Sylvester that his unique status and position demanded that he should record in detail the events which he was privileged to witness. It was an argument, buttressed by many others, which the devoted PPS readily accepted. Consequently from 1931, Sylvester's diary is more or less continuous for the next fourteen years. It is an extremely valuable record of all that Lloyd George and his

immediate family did and said. Originally, Sylvester kept his diary in a group of relatively small notebooks with black covers, which he crammed with shorthand. Only members of his closest family were fully aware of the nature of their contents and the secrets which they contained.

The detail of the diary is amazing. It became A. J. Sylvester's practice to write up his diary late at night as his last task before retiring to bed. This was an undertaking which could be achieved at great speed because of his use of Pitman's shorthand, which also provided the diarist with an element of security. His mastery of shorthand enabled Sylvester to record speeches, debates and conversations fully verbatim. So, too, did he note the gist of the numerous telephone conversations which he had and even the small-talk which took place during meals in the Lloyd George household. This penchant for minutiae sometimes extended to noting what Lloyd George's guests wore, ate, drank and smoked. Inevitably much of the information which Sylvester recorded in his diaries was highly personal and private. It would seem that, as he made his meticulous record of all he saw and heard in Lloyd George's milieu, Sylvester displayed no inclination of making

A. J. Sylvester and
Lloyd George

it available to the world. It was simply his own private record.

Lloyd George died on 26 March 1945. Within days of the old man's death, his widow Frances, now the Dowager Countess Lloyd-George of Dwyfor, made it clear to Sylvester, the ever-loyal, utterly discreet employee for more than two decades, that she had now resolved to dispense with his services. Although the terms given to Sylvester were by any standards exceptionally generous – he was given a full three years' salary as severance pay, and he also inherited the sum of £1,000 under the terms of Lloyd George's will – the course of events still came as a complete shock to him. Any hope which he could reasonably have had of being kept on by Frances to collaborate with her in perpetuating Lloyd George's good name and memory (in particular by assisting in the researching and writing of a full biography), and in working with her on the massive archive of papers which Lloyd George had bequeathed to her in his will, had been cruelly dashed. For the first time in his life, at fifty-five years of age, A. J. Sylvester, a proud man, was unemployed. Consequently, the latent antagonism between him and Frances, which had existed from the beginning, was unleashed. As long as Lloyd George, a notoriously difficult man, lived, and both Frances and Sylvester remained in his employ, they were forced to work in harmony to preserve the peace and mollify the old man. The harsh course of events of the spring of 1945, however, meant that Sylvester subsequently felt no loyalty whatsoever to the Dowager Countess, although he still felt some affection for the Lloyd George family and he certainly showed no inclination to bring Lloyd George's name and reputation into disrepute.

First, he needed a new job, if not a new career. For three

years until 1948 he worked for Express Newspapers on a short-term contract with Lord Beaverbrook. At the same time he now felt relatively free to quarry his extensive diary material and the more modest personal archive of correspondence, papers and documents which he had carefully accumulated over the years, in order to piece together a semi-biographical volume about his former employer. This was eventually published as *The Real Lloyd George* by Cassell and Co. in the autumn of 1947.² This rather dramatic title was not reflected in the book's contents. Although it included a revealing account of Lloyd George's visits to Hitler at Bechtesgaden in the autumn of 1936 and some other episodes of interest, much of the volume consisted of domestic trivia. Above all, the portrait of Lloyd George which emerged from a perusal of the book's 322 hastily penned pages was distinctly unflattering. In his later years Sylvester's employer had become a soured, peevish and autocratic old man, increasingly cantankerous and ever more prone to vicious temper tantrums which deeply upset all those in his inner circle. Most of the sensational revelations about Lloyd George in the original diaries had been either omitted or toned down in the published work. Just one or two warts remained. Even so Frances Lloyd-George was incensed that *The Real Lloyd George* had seen the light of day before the 'official biography' of Lloyd George by Malcolm Thomson, a work which was then being prepared with her full approval and co-operation and unrestricted access to the papers in her sole possession.

In 1948 Sylvester's contract with Lord Beaverbrook came to an abrupt end, and he again found himself searching for remunerative employment. He failed, and spent the period of 1948–49 working as an unpaid assistant to the Liberal Party

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leader E. Clement Davies who was a personal friend and whose work on behalf of the party he greatly admired. During these months he drew on his savings, but such an arrangement could not continue indefinitely. When the Liberal Party hierarchy was unable or unwilling to create a paid position for A. J. Sylvester, and no other suitable position was available, he and his wife Evelyn moved from their home at Putney in London to Chippenham in Wiltshire, where he had already purchased a substantial piece of agricultural land during the war years. Here he was to remain until his death in October 1989, just over forty years later, farming on a fairly extensive scale, while retaining his avid interest in Lloyd George and in contemporary political life. He battled courageously to overcome the trauma of Evelyn's death in 1962 and a succession of serious health problems.

Lloyd George received a consistently bad press during the twenty years following his death, a practice which Sylvester himself had to some extent initiated with the publication of *The Real Lloyd George* in 1947, and which was perpetuated by Richard Lloyd-George (the second earl, who had been disinherited by his father) in his hostile biography published in 1960 and in works like Donald McCormick's *The Mask of Merlin*, published in 1963. More balanced Lloyd George biographies by Sir Alfred Davies (1947), Dr Thomas Jones (1951) and Frank Owen (1954), although arousing considerable interest and some acclaim, failed to stem the generally bad press which Lloyd George attracted. This trend was enhanced still further by the general works of historians like A. J. P. Taylor and Trevor Wilson. 'Lloyd George's reputation in 1966, therefore', wrote Kenneth O. Morgan, 'was at its lowest ebb.'³

From that point on, however, a dramatic transformation

took place, partly the result of the appearance of a spate of important publications which took a more detached, even sympathetic, view of Lloyd George (the work of historians such as Martin Gilbert, Cameron Hazlehurst, Robert Skidelsky and Peter Clarke), partly the outcome of the availability of a wide range of new archival sources. In 1967 the magnificent archive of papers which Frances had sold to Lord Beaverbrook became available to the public for the first time at the Beaverbrook Library; they were to be transferred to the custody of the Record Office at the House of Lords in 1975. These were the major source for the period after Lloyd George's assumption of the premiership in December 1916. Then, in 1969, the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth was able to purchase from the estate of Lady Megan Lloyd George (who had died in May 1966) a substantial collection of correspondence and papers running to almost 3,500 items which had been assembled at the Lloyd George family home at Brynawelon, Criccieth. Most of this priceless material had once been owned by Dame Margaret Lloyd George and included a run of more than 2,000 letters written by Lloyd George to her, spanning the period from 1886 to 1936.⁴ They constituted a vital new source for Lloyd George's early career and family life.

The availability of such sources made possible an array of exciting new publications. In 1971 there appeared in print the diaries of Frances Stevenson, edited by A. J. P. Taylor, honorary librarian of the Beaverbrook Library. In 1973 John Grigg published, to universal acclaim, his monumental *The Young Lloyd George*, the first instalment of a projected multi-volume biography which was substantially enriched by access to the correspondence at Aberystwyth.

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In the same year the availability of the same archive led to the publication of *Lloyd George: Family Letters, 1885–1936*, edited by Kenneth O. Morgan, a ground-breaking work which gave much wider currency to the riches of the Lloyd George Papers recently acquired by the National Library. (It should still be noted, however, that there are many valuable letters within the archive which have not been included in this volume.) A. J. P. Taylor also began to edit the correspondence between Lloyd George and Frances Stevenson, a work which eventually saw the light of day as *My Darling Pussy* in 1975.

All this activity, and the new, more charitable attitude to Lloyd George which had emerged as a result, clearly spurred A. J. Sylvester to consider making his own diary material available in print. He had published nothing of substance since *The Real Lloyd George* back in 1947, simply contributing occasional columns to newspapers and magazines and making a few radio broadcasts. He still felt deeply resentful that Frances Lloyd-George had deliberately prevented him from contributing in any way to the 'official biography' of Lloyd George written by Malcolm Thomson in 1948. Then, in 1967, Frances published her own autobiography, *The Years that are Past*, a somewhat cautious, guarded account of her long relationship with Lloyd George. Sylvester considered the book grossly over-romanticised, incomplete and sometimes factually inaccurate. He was at once spurred to action in defence of the good name of his 'old chief'. He opened up his old notebooks containing the shorthand diary material, some of which he had not looked at for more than forty years. Some of the contents he had more or less forgotten. Re-reading them came as a pleasant surprise to him.

In September 1971, Sylvester was approached by Colin

Cross and Observer Newspapers to consider the publication of extracts from his diaries as a single monograph. Cross, a native of Cardiff, educated at Portsmouth Grammar School and the University of Cambridge, was by the end of the 1960s a member of staff of *The Observer*. Ever since 1950 he had earned his living as a journalist and had travelled extensively in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. His published works included *The Fascists in Britain* (1961), *The Liberals in Power, 1905–1914* (1963), a biography of the first Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, *Philip Snowden* (1966), *The Fall of the British Empire, 1918–1968* (1968) and *Adolf Hitler* (1973). At a meeting between Sylvester and Cross at the former's home in September 1971, Cross soon became convinced that the diary material constituted 'the basis of an excellent book'. It was recognised from the outset, however, that the original diaries would have to be ruthlessly edited down to some 80,000 words, and The Observer Ltd. agreed to provide the ageing Sylvester with secretarial assistance to facilitate the task of transcribing some of the diary material which remained only in shorthand.⁵ He stubbornly refused the offer, determined to undertake all of the remaining transcription work himself. Before the end of the year, Sylvester had made contact with Lady Olwen Carey-Evans, by this time Lloyd George's only surviving child, and Owen, the third Earl Lloyd-George of Dwyfor. Both were immediately supportive, the earl enthusiastically commenting, 'your material is unique and ... you should make the maximum use of it'.⁶

Sylvester laboured away with the diligence which had characterised the whole of his working life, so that a full typescript transcript of all the diary material was available before the end of the following January. It was a task he found compelling: 'I

have just lived again through those periods of time and the events. I have found it all deeply interesting; it had been fun and fascinating. For it SPEAKS.⁷ Further meetings, which both men found very rewarding, took place between Cross and Sylvester at the latter's home, Rudloe Cottage, Corsham, in Wiltshire. Although both Colin Cross and his editorial colleagues at The Observer Ltd were immediately highly impressed by the quality of the diary material, the problem of its inordinate length was immediately apparent. The original typescript text produced by Sylvester ran to more than a million words, fully capable of filling more than half a dozen printed volumes! Drastic pruning could not be avoided.⁸ Several important considerations had to be borne in mind: the careful selection and editing of the material, the choice of the most suitable publisher, the financial arrangements, and the advance publicity for the book. 'I am enormously encouraged', wrote Cross enthusiastically to Sylvester, 'this book is going to be dynamite in several senses'. Noting that *The Observer* was anxious to publish gossip column paragraphs about Sylvester's life and the significance of the diaries, Cross went on, 'I think we need to watch this with care in relation to possible reaction from the Dowager Countess who must realise exactly what cat you have to let out of the bag.'⁹

The Dowager Countess was clearly in the forefront of Sylvester's mind, too, at this time and central to his calculations:

My approach to the whole project is: I thought that my massive and vital material would be incapable of being published for many years, if indeed at all. Now, however, the chief obstacle to publication has been removed by the fact that the Dowager has published her own memoirs, and an edited edition of her diaries.

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I feel that I have a duty to provide a more balanced picture for history than that provided by the Dowager.

It is fascinating: it is written at the time from my own knowledge: it is dynamic! I have the most amazing evidence.

LG is the genius; with some of his warts, his great and fascinating personality looms large.

My desire is to put Dame Margaret and the family in their rightful place and perspective. Dame Margaret was LG's foundation: his ROCK AND HIS REFUGE: she kept him in public life: she could have brought him crashing at any moment; but always she remained loyal to him. It was always 'to the "old gell" he went in the end'. I know: I was there.¹⁰

The enterprise was soon to receive the enthusiastic support of both A. J. P. Taylor and David Jenkins, the Librarian of the National Library of Wales. It was agreed that the royalties from the sale of the book should be divided on a 70:30 basis between Sylvester and Colin Cross. Public interest was stimulated by the news that the publication of *Family Letters*, edited by Kenneth Morgan, was now imminent. The Sylvester camp hoped that the appearance of his diaries should precede the publication of the Morgan volume, but such an aspiration was unrealistic.

By the high summer of 1972 it was agreed to aim for a volume of about 110,000 words, to be published some time during the following year. The book was to include an introductory general essay of about 10,000 words by Colin Cross on Lloyd George, to be followed by some 100,000 words of annotated extracts from Sylvester's diaries.¹¹ In the following October, a contract was signed between Sylvester and Macmillan publishers (rather than Chatto and Windus, who had also been sent the material for consideration).

Macmillan were prepared to pay a royalty advance of £1,500, a substantial sum in 1972, and to pay a royalty rate of 17½ per cent (rather than the customary rate of 12½ per cent) on any sales in excess of 4,000 copies. It was then anticipated that the volume might sell for £4.95, that a sale of some 2,500 copies to libraries was guaranteed, and that some copies would sell in the USA.¹² During the winter of 1972–73 Colin Cross worked at breakneck speed in preparing the volume for the press and drafting the introduction and explanatory notes.

In December 1972 the Dowager Countess Lloyd-George of Dwyfor died at her Surrey home. Shortly afterwards A. J. Sylvester wrote to Lady Olwen Carey-Evans confirming that the planned publication of his diaries was indeed going ahead:

It is likely to be dynamic. It will seek to present another and a balanced view compared to that presented by the Dowager and destroy the image which she has endeavoured to build up for herself in the eyes of the public. Thus, I hope that Dame Margaret and her family will be seen in a very different and in their true light. I am very sorry personally that the Dowager has died. I should have been very pleased for her to have read what I have to say.¹³

A few weeks later, in the wake of the publication of the pioneering volume *Lloyd George: Family Letters*, he participated, together with Kenneth O. Morgan, W. R. P. George, and A. J. P. Taylor, in a St David's Day broadcast on the BBC. This gave him an opportunity to underline Dame Margaret's sterling assets, 'the outstanding qualities of one of the greatest ladies I have ever known':

I then explained how LG hated letters: how difficult [it] was in getting him to deal with them;

and how surprised I was that in those days he wrote so many.

In recent years I have felt concern about the way the late Dowager has behaved towards the family, and particularly towards Dame Margaret, in her books and in her TV appearances. She has built up an image of herself which she wishes the public to believe: I know that this is wholly untrue. Whatever I do will be to present another view, in which I hope Dame Margaret will stand out as THE one person who, by her loyalty and devotion to a difficult husband, was ever his tower of strength and THE one to whom he always went in times of stress and real trouble. But for her LG would have been out on the political flagstone with his mistress, and the country would have been poorer, and history changed.

As for LG himself, with all his private entanglements which would have crushed most men, with amazing audacity, he handled successfully the most momentous issues, thus making him an even greater man than ever – an amazing achievement. Then, he was a genius.¹⁴

Interest in Lloyd George had been much stimulated by the publication of *Lloyd George: Family Letters* and by the knowledge that the publication of John Grigg's pioneering *The Young Lloyd George* was now imminent. When Grigg's book did indeed appear in the summer, Owen, the third Earl Lloyd-George of Dwyfor, expressed to Sylvester the view that Grigg had 'made an absolutely first-class beginning of what I clearly believe will be a masterpiece: he was certainly working on it long enough!'.¹⁵ (John Grigg had in fact spent the whole of the 1960s undertaking the research for this first volume.)

Owen Lloyd-George, Lady Olwen Carey-Evans and Jennifer Longford (daughter of

the recently deceased Dowager Countess, born in 1929) all took a keen and supportive interest in the progress of Sylvester's pioneering volume. The Earl offered Cross and Sylvester the use of his extensive photograph albums to illustrate the diaries. He had inherited from his uncle Gwilym Lloyd-George, 1st Viscount Tenby, who had died in 1967, many albums dating mainly from the 1930s and covering many of Lloyd George's trips to deliver speeches in various parts of the UK. Some of these also featured Sylvester.¹⁶ By the end of October 1973 the complete text of the diaries was ready to be delivered to the publishers. The original diaries had been pruned substantially in the rigorous editorial process. 'It is such a pity that such a lot of fascinating material will be left out', wrote Sylvester to Lady Olwen, 'and this is just sacrilege, but it cannot be helped.'¹⁷ In fact a great deal of material had been cut out in the editorial process: all repetitive material was eliminated, general political accounts and descriptions of Sylvester's private life with his family were banished from the text (with the exception of a handful of brief extracts) and trivia, too, was removed from the edited version.

Interest was increased still further by A. J. P. Taylor's revelation that he planned to edit and publish the correspondence between Lloyd George and Frances held at the Beaverbrook Library as part of the Lloyd George Papers, and by repeated conjecture that Councillor W. R. P. George of Criccieth was preparing a volume on his uncle's early life, to be based on the huge archive of papers which he had inherited from his father Dr William George (Lloyd George's younger brother) who had died, aged almost 102, in January 1967. These included a magnificent run of no fewer than 3,292 letters from Lloyd George to his brother and a

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host of other riches. These were carefully guarded at Garthcelyn, Criccieth; other writers, John Grigg among them (much to his intense annoyance), were banned from consulting these treasures. (They did not eventually come into the public domain until 1989 when they were purchased by the National Library of Wales.¹⁸)

During 1974 the editors insisted that *Life with Lloyd George* had to be reduced still further in length, and Colin Cross faced the unenviable task of again editing the text by eliminating further passages. A. J. Sylvester reluctantly approved these eleventh-hour changes, painful though they proved. By December 1974, however, the final page proofs had been corrected and a detailed index compiled. After a succession of minor hiccups, plans were finalised to launch the book on 20 May 1975. On 30 March *The Observer Magazine* published an article by Colin Cross on the Sylvester diaries – to whet the appetite of the British reading public, and at the same time to mark the thirtieth anniversary of Lloyd George's death. The articles included brief extracts from the diaries and ran to five and a half pages in the magazine: three and a half pages of text and two of pictures. The cover of the magazine carried the same picture as the dust-jacket of the final published volume. By the middle of April copies of the book had arrived at Macmillan's warehouse at Basingstoke, and a delighted A. J. Sylvester was the proud owner of six complimentary copies. Further free copies were sent to Lady Olwen Carey-Evans, Owen, the third Earl Lloyd-George of Dwyfor, and Jennifer Longford. Just before publication extracts from *Life with Lloyd George* were also published in the *Liverpool Daily Post* and the *Western Mail*. As he sent Lady Olwen her complimentary copy of the book, Sylvester wrote as follows:

When you have read it I should value enormously your candid reaction including your criticisms. What is in the book is what was written at the time: it is a pen picture of just what happened: you play an important part and will know the truth of what I have written: it was in events in which I played my part: an impossible position, because I was always between so many fires. But I have always felt, after many years of close observation, and I will never cease to proclaim, that the woman who made LG great and preserved his national and international image, was Dame Margaret, who was his rock and his refuge, and not, as she claimed, his self-confessed Mistress, with her other and secret lover. That story is told by Colin Cross with delicacy, taken from the diaries. The facts are given: the reader is left to judge.¹⁹

Lady Olwen was considered by Sylvester and Colin Cross to be 'by far the best living witness' to the events recorded in the diaries. Her opinion and reaction were thus eagerly awaited. They also wondered whether they would receive any response from Muriel Stevenson, Frances's younger sister (to whom she had always been very close), and by 1975 'the best witness' 'from the other side'. They regretted that delays on the part of Macmillan meant that the volume had failed to appear during Frances's lifetime, and feared that the British reading public would assume that its publication had deliberately been delayed until after her demise – which was certainly not the case. They also looked askance at the eventual publication price of £7.50, which had escalated as a result of increased printing costs and other overheads, but they still remained convinced that the original print-run of 3,000 copies would be sold quickly.²⁰

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The final product was a handsome hard-bound volume running to 351 pages. The published diary entries were divided into sixteen chronological chapters with occasional explanatory sections and footnotes. The volume also included fifteen attractive photographs, most previously unpublished, a short introduction by Colin Cross and a detailed index. The launch party at Macmillan was a great success. Although her advancing years prevented Dame Olwen from attending, both Owen Lloyd-George, the third earl, and Lloyd George's biographer John Grigg (formerly Lord Altrincham) were present. Sylvester delivered a sprightly, amusing address and began to consider the future custody of his own extensive archive of papers. The book was certainly much more revealing than *Life with Lloyd George* back in 1947, but was not in any sense sensational or likely to cause offence. 'Your diary is a major historical source', wrote John Grigg appreciatively following the launch, 'and I was glad, indeed, to hear that there is no question of your destroying what has not been published.'²¹

At the launch party A. J. Sylvester felt obliged to explain to the assembled guests why he had changed his mind in relation to publication:

What fired me to publish was the publication in 1971 of the diary of Frances Stevenson, Lloyd George's mistress and eventually his second wife. She and I were good colleagues for more than twenty-five years. But she entirely changed her personality when she became the countess. Her account of Lloyd George in her autobiography and her diaries is incomplete, over-romanticized, and in parts incorrect and false.

She wanted to put across a sympathetic public image. For example, she wrote that in those days it was not 'done' for unmarried women to have

children, and that was why she had none. In fact at that date she was already the mother of Lloyd George's daughter.

Another example: Frances Stevenson stated that in 1926 Lloyd George's wife and children sent him a letter demanding that he should dismiss her from his secretariat; and that he replied with 'a terrible letter' offering a divorce.

Mr Sylvester, who handled all Lloyd George's affairs, public and private, believes that no such correspondence took place. He allows that Lloyd George may have caused Miss Stevenson to think it had.²²

It was reported in the press that Sylvester, who would be eighty-six years of age the following November, 'positively crackled with energy' as he told his audience that Lloyd George was 'the greatest man I have ever known, and I knew them all'. He lavished praise on Colin Cross for his work in editing the diaries for publication: 'It was like trying to get thirty-six gallons of beer into an Imperial pint mug.'²³ The press reviews were generally highly complimentary and appreciative, particularly those by John Grigg in the *Times Literary Supplement* for 30 May 1975 and Lord Boothby in the *Guardian* the previous day. In an admirably judicious review, Lady Antonia Fraser, while recognising that there was 'much ... of sheer political interest in this diary', rightly emphasised that the book had impressed her because it had 'less to do with the archival side of politics than with the human, the very human, side of it all.'²⁴ In the *Church Times*, Martin Fagg applauded Sylvester who 'seem[ed] to have got everything down. ... But he was not just a walking tape-recorder. He registers times, meals, expressions, dress, mannerisms. His book is a deep enrichment of the LG archive.'²⁵ Members of the Lloyd George family greeted with relief what they regarded

as a much-needed corrective to the view of Lloyd George pro-pounded by Frances in her 1967 memoir, *The Years that are Past*, and in her 1971 diaries. Both of these works, they felt, had presented a sugary, idealised view of the author's relationship with Lloyd George and had shied away from discussing the many skeletons in the family cupboard, not least the affairs in which both actors had engaged. With the publication of Sylvester's volume, Dame Margaret, they felt convinced, had now been restored to her rightful place in history.

In late June of the same year A. J. Sylvester was taken on a week's tour of north Wales by his daughter Maureen and her husband. It was a highly-valued opportunity to renew his links with many members of the Lloyd George clan. On the return journey Mr David Jenkins, Librarian of the National Library of Wales, sacrificed his Sunday morning to provide the family group with a tour of the Library: 'It was a thrilling experience: it was a joy for me to see just where one day my manuscripts will be kept in safe custody for the benefit, I hope, of history. For LG was a very, very great man.'²⁶ A few months later there appeared the volume *My Darling Pussy*, a selection of the letters between Lloyd George and Frances Stevenson, again edited by A. J. P. Taylor. Sylvester, predictably, was unimpressed by the book: 'I am surprised that so distinguished a historian should have made so many misstatements and mistakes; they are vitally important.'²⁷ Dame Olwen Carey-Evans, too, was, claimed Sylvester, 'shocked at the publication of these letters from her Father, SOLD by Frances Stevenson and for publication, as she says, for filthy lucre. Frances Stevenson betrayed LG.'²⁷

By October 1975 1,680 copies of *Life with Lloyd George* had been sold, and Sylvester began

to enjoy a modest income (and much publicity) from its sales. An approach was made to Penguin to consider the publication of a paperback edition, but this eventually came to nothing.²⁸ But sales of the original book continued to be buoyant, and by 1978 it was difficult to find a new copy in a bookshop.

A. J. Sylvester eventually survived until 1989 – within a month of his hundredth birthday. During the years following the publication of *Life with Lloyd George*, Sylvester, encouraged by its reception, became something of a national celebrity, appearing fairly often on television and radio programmes, and winning an array of prizes and awards as a competitive ballroom dancer, a new hobby which he had taken up after 1964, following his enforced retirement from the bench. It was most unfortunate that his plan to publish a full-length autobiography, upon which he was actively engaged almost to the end of his exceptionally long life, sadly never came to fruition.

Even today, more than thirty years after its appearance, A. J. Sylvester's *Life with Lloyd George* remains a valuable and unique source of information for students of Lloyd George, his life and times and for those interested in his family. Sylvester's unflinching closeness to Lloyd George throughout the so-called 'wilderness years' of the last phase of his life underlines the importance of the work. In this respect, his only rival was Frances Stevenson. Moreover, by the 1970s he felt more able to speak out than in 1945–46 when he wrote *The Real Lloyd George* during the period immediately following Lloyd George's death. In *Life with Lloyd George* its subject, at times at least, comes through as an increasingly mean, unpleasant and rather vindictive individual. Even so, the constraints of space imposed by the publishers, and the necessity to leave out some highly

personal and sensitive material, mean that much of importance has still been omitted from the final published volume. In the full, original diaries Sylvester is rather crude and frequently critical of Lloyd George, especially from 1935 onwards. Certainly, the dedicated researcher should still make the journey to the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth, where the full typescript texts of the diaries are held. It would prove a highly illuminating and rewarding experience.

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- 1 A helpful, brief account of A. J. Sylvester's life and career is now available in John Grigg's article in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 53 (Oxford, 2004), pp. 566–67. See also J. Graham Jones, 'Keeper of Secrets', *Journal of Liberal History* 44 (Autumn 2004), pp. 24–29. A much fuller account by the same author is available in J. Graham Jones, "'Keeper of Secrets": Albert James Sylvester CBE (1889–1989)', *National Library of Wales Journal* Vol. XXXIII, no. 2 (Winter 2003), pp. 169–99. There is also much helpful material in Colin Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George: the Diary of A. J. Sylvester, 1931–45* (Macmillan, 1975), pp. 11–18 (introduction to the volume).
- 2 J. Graham Jones, 'The Real Lloyd George', *Journal of Liberal History* 51 (Autumn 2004), pp. 4–12.
- 3 Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Lloyd George and the historians', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, Session 1971, part 1 (1972), p. 72.
- 4 J. Graham Jones, *Lloyd George Papers at the National Library of Wales and other Repositories* (National Library of Wales, 2001), p. 9.
- 5 National Library of Wales (hereafter NLW), A. J. Sylvester Papers, file D8, Colin Cross to Sylvester, 15 September 1971.
- 6 *Ibid.*, Owen, third Earl Lloyd-George of Dwyfor, to Sylvester, 5

- January 1972.
- 7 Ibid., Sylvester to Cross, 20 January 1972 (copy).
- 8 See the introduction to Colin Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George*, pp. 11–20.
- 9 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file D8, Cross to Sylvester, 11 February 1972.
- 10 Ibid., Sylvester to Lady Olwen Carey-Evans, 16 February 1972 (copy). See also *ibid.*, Sylvester to Owen Lloyd-George, 17 February 1972 (copy).
- 11 Ibid., Cross to Sylvester, 17 July 1972.
- 12 Ibid., Cross to Sylvester, 11 October 1972.
- 13 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers file C56, Sylvester to Lady Olwen Carey-Evans, 20 December 1972 (copy).
- 14 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers file C63, Sylvester to Dame Olwen Carey-Evans, 7 March 1973 ('Private') (copy).
- 15 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers file D12, Owen Lloyd-George to Sylvester, 9 August 1973.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid., Sylvester to Lady Olwen Carey-Evans, 30 November 1973 (copy).
- 18 Jones, *Lloyd George Papers*, pp. 32–46.
- 19 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers file C65, Sylvester to Lady Olwen Carey-Evans, 14 May 1975 (copy).
- 20 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers file D10, Colin Cross to Sylvester, 15 May 1975.
- 21 Ibid., John Grigg to Sylvester, 22 May 1975.
- 22 Cited in Philip Howard's account in *The Times*, 21 May 1975.
- 23 *Daily Telegraph*, 21 May 1975.
- 24 Antonia Fraser, 'Wizard bluff', *Evening Standard*, 3 June 1975.
- 25 Martin Fagg, 'Welsh charmer', *Church Times*, 13 June 1975. For further reviews, see *The Times*, 21 May 1975; *Daily Telegraph*, 21 May 1975; and the *Daily Express*, 22 May 1975.
- 26 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers file C96, Sylvester to Cledwyn Hughes MP, 10 July 1975 (copy).
- 27 Ibid., Sylvester to Mrs Sybil Hamilton, Leeds, 31 October 1975 (copy).
- 28 See the correspondence in NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers file D13.

Ed Randall in essence argued that any comparison between the Yellow Book and the Orange Book was not a fair one. The Yellow Book was based on substantial research, and had a single purpose – outlining the means for national recovery. The Orange Book had no money behind it, no shared goal or single theme in its creation. Instead Randall suggested the consideration of a third book, written in 1995 by Ralf Dahrendorf (*Report on Wealth Creation and Social Cohesion in a Free Society*) which he felt made a fairer comparison with the Yellow Book.

For Randall, the 1928 book reflected on national recovery, was the product of a commission, and demonstrated the richness of intellect to be found both inside and outside the Liberal Party. The Yellow Book was a high-water mark in the history of the party. It was written at a time when there was a failure of economic demand, a fundamental flaw in market societies, and it took courage to produce. The Yellow Book was something distinctive that the party could shout about. Randall suggested that this was not true of the Orange Book which was, instead, a product of the need for media attention and was timid in its selection of social and economic problems to address, serving as a reclamation rather than a renewal of Liberal thought. It looked back, whereas the Yellow Book looked forward.

Randall reminded his audience of the traditional Liberal theme of balance. As Locke said, humans were entitled to God's bounty and had a responsibility to share it: 'As much and as good should be left for what comes later'. In present times, Al Gore has argued that we are on a 'collision course with the earth' and that 'civilised human life as we know it will become impossible if the temperature continues to rise'. In other words, the market

The Yellow Book was something distinctive that the party could shout about. Randall suggested that this was not true of the Orange Book.

REPORTS

Yellow Book versus Orange Book: Is it time for a new New Liberalism?

Fringe meeting, 20 September 2006, Brighton, with Paul Marshall and Ed Randall; Chair (Lord) Wallace of Saltaire
Report by Lynsey Groom

THE YELLOW Book' (*Britain's Industrial Future*, 1928) and *The Orange Book: Reclaiming Liberalism* (2004) have both been seen as attempts to rethink the Liberal philosophy of their era. Written seventy-five years apart, how

do they hold up to comparison? William Wallace oversaw the lively debate in a packed room in Brighton between Ed Randall, Professor of Politics at Goldsmiths, University of London, and Paul Marshall, one of the editors of the *Orange Book*.