

LETTERS

James Bryce

In *Journal of Liberal History* 66 (spring 2010) David S. Patterson, in his article on Emily Hobhouse, referred to James Bryce, who in 1914–15 led the UK investigation into German atrocities in Belgium, as a ‘venerable and respected scholar-diplomat’. The Rt Hon. Sir James Bryce, OM, GCVO, FRS (Viscount Bryce from 1914) was, of course, very much more than that.

After attending the High School of Glasgow (two years behind Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, nearly a century ahead of the undersigned, and where his father, Dr James Bryce, was a mathematics master in 1846–74), he attended the Universities of Glasgow and Heidelberg and Trinity College, Oxford. He was elected a Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford in 1862, called to the English Bar (Lincoln’s Inn) in 1867 and served as Regius Professor of Civil Law at Oxford in 1870–93.

He was Liberal MP for Tower Hamlets, London in 1880–85, and for Aberdeen South from 1885 until he was appointed Ambassador to the United States in 1907 when it was said, as from his *The American Commonwealth*

(1888), that he knew more about the US Constitution than anyone in the US. He served in four Liberal administrations, being Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office in 1886, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in 1892–94, President of the Board of Trade in 1894–95 (when he also chaired a Royal Commission on Secondary Education) and Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1905–07 (having been born in Belfast in 1838). He was responsible for a wide range of legislation including, appropriately, the 1886 International Copyright Act, wrote other books on history, democracy, international relations, jurisprudence, travel and biography, contributed the chapter on ‘Flora’ to his father’s *The Geology of Arran and Clydesdale*, participated in the Hague Tribunal in 1913 and was President of the Sir Walter Scott Club of Edinburgh in 1914–19. He also served on the Royal Commission on the Medical Acts, as President of the British Academy, as a Carnegie Fund Trustee for the Scottish Universities, had honorary degrees from thirty-one universities and found time to climb Mount

Ararat in 1876 (being later President of the Alpine Club in 1899–1901).

His younger brother, John Annan Bryce (who also attended the High School of Glasgow and thereafter the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh and Balliol College, Oxford), after a distinguished career overseas (during which he was a magistrate in Bombay and a member of the Legislative Council of Burma), was Liberal MP for Inverness Burghs in 1906–18.

As H.H. Asquith wrote, ‘If I was asked who among the persons directly or indirectly involved in politics in our time was the best educated, I would be disposed to single out James Bryce. No man in these days can take all knowledge for his province, but Bryce came as near to being what may be called a universal specialist as any of his contemporaries.’ More recently there have been significant references to James Bryce in Stephen Graubard’s *The Presidents* (Allen Lane/Penguin Books, London, 2004) in the Preface and the Appendix (‘Bryce’s and Tocqueville’s America – A Precognising of 20th Century America?’)

Sandy S. Waugh

Liberals and the left

In relation to the special issue of the *Journal of Liberal History* on Liberals and the Left (issue 67, summer 2010), Jo Grimond’s statement in Colne Valley in 1963 that he wanted to abolish the working class is typical. In a lecture he gave to a summer school for young Americans in July 1968 (which I organised at Westfield College, University of London), he made it abundantly clear that he considered the era of class-based politics in Britain to be over. The special interests he thought might then justify seeking separate representation were women, youth and ethnic minorities.

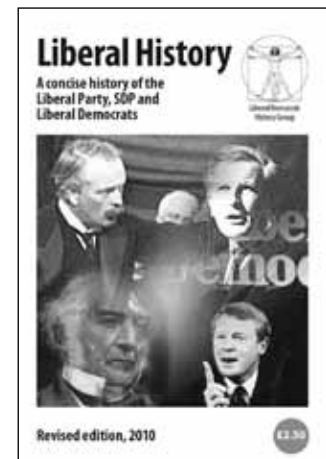
I think Matt Cole’s article suffers from concentrating on the period 1959 to 1964. I several times heard Jo formulate the objective of replacing the Labour Party between 1956 and 1959 (e.g. Cambridge University Liberal Club, spring 1959). After the relatively disappointing 1959 election result he was forced to retreat to the immediately doomed strategy of ‘realignment’. Most of my closest political allies joined the Labour Party in the early 1960s because whatever the virtues of Grimond’s ‘realignment’, it was not worth

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perpetual Tory rule. Many came back in the SDP in the 1980s. My attempt to square the circle was to radicalise the party's 1948 co-ownership policy to make it compatible with Labour's Clause IV (see the New Orbits pamphlet, *Controlling Interest*).

Foreign issues were of course important to Young Liberals pre-1965: Suez was my initial motive, others had done National Service in Kenya or Aden. Michael Steed happened to be in South Africa at the time of the Sharpeville massacre. Perhaps it was different outside Cambridge, but our anti-American demonstrations were against the Bay of Pigs invasion and I only kept the University Liberals in the local 'Hands Off Cuba' Committee by securing the latter's promise to do absolutely nothing during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

Peter Hain was much disappointed with the 1970 election result (Michael Steed took me to a meeting Hain convened) and probably led a further outflow of talent.

Historians of the Young Liberals do not give enough emphasis to the Union of Liberal Students. In 1962 societies in both Cambridge and Oxford were created, with over 1,000 paid members (though many were social members, or politicos from the other parties) and our voting strength at the Llandudno Assembly was significant. We secured the reference back of the draft transport policy, which in our view wrongly endorsed the Beeching Plan for the railways.

I'm sure there is a connection to the years Peter Hellyer describes. He wonders where are today's Red Guards. Surely the SDP bureaucratized everything in order to tame 'Liberal anarchism'?

Dr Peter Hatton

The 2010 election: missed opportunity

While John Curtice (*Journal of Liberal History* 68, autumn

2010) has identified the geography of the Liberal Democrat failure in the election of 2010, he has missed the failure of policy and tactics. Nick Clegg made the party attractive to many voters but his appeal was very general: he failed to give voters a sufficiently specific and urgent reason for voting Liberal Democrat.

The crucial stage was the second leaders' debate on foreign affairs, when Gordon Brown, questioned about the war in Afghanistan, indicated that he was willing to fight further wars in the Yemen and in Somalia – but was not challenged by either Clegg or Cameron. This was Clegg's opportunity to denounce the failing war and advocate withdrawal from Afghanistan, a policy that would have attracted many voters from Labour and the Conservatives.

His failure was no surprise. Under Charles Kennedy the party had acquired a *distinctive* stance, including its opposition to the Iraq war, but this was steadily thrown away under his successors and by the party's foreign policy spokesmen, Ed Davey and Michael Moore, who tamely endorsed Labour–Tory support for the Afghan war.

The Liberal Democrat failure in 2010 was thus one of judgement and policy, and perhaps, of political courage.

Dr Martin Pugh

The Gower primary of 1905

In his excellent account of the elections of 1910 (*Journal of Liberal History* 68, autumn 2010), Mark Pack refers fascinatingly to the 'open primary' held in the Gower constituency in November 1905 to decide on the Liberal candidate. I hope I may venture a comment, since the only account of it that I know of in print is my own very first article, published (alas!) 51 years ago, in a totally obscure publication probably unknown to any other living reader.

The primary arose because of the moribund nature of

the Gower Liberal Association, which met on 19 August 1905 for the first time for five years: it discovered that both its chairman and treasurer were actually dead! The sitting Liberal MP was standing down and there was no candidate. Intense local bickering between different areas in the constituency then led to the contest for the candidacy between T. Jeremiah Williams, a wealthy Morrington tinplate owner, and Jay Williams, a highly suspect financier of local origins.

Jeremiah (despite his name) won comfortably, 14 districts to 7; 165 'delegates' to 110; and 2,801 votes to 2,251, but the primary left much bad blood. It certainly distracted the Gower Liberals over voter registration, and helped towards Jeremiah's defeat in the general election two months later, by yet a third Williams, Labour's John (a miners' agent who had considered running in the Liberal primary himself!). At least, though, the rejection of Jay Williams was fortunate, since he was later imprisoned for forgery.

The Gower primary was unique in Welsh political history. But it may have been a symptom of weakness rather than vitality amongst local Liberals, as they geared themselves up to confront the challenge of the working class.

Kenneth O. Morgan

Samuel Morton Peto and his relatives

As from Robert Ingham's review in the *Journal of Liberal History* 68 (autumn 2010) of Adrian Vaughan's *Samuel Morton Peto – A Victorian Entrepreneur* (2009), Sir Samuel (created a Norfolk Baronet in 1855) was the father of Ann Peto who married James Alexander Campbell (the elder brother of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman) in 1854. Ann's bridesmaid was a former school friend, (Sarah) Charlotte Bruce, and that was when Henry (as best man)

first met Charlotte, whom he married in 1860.

Thus Henry (CB) and Charlotte first met six years before their marriage and not in the year of their marriage, as stated by Roy Hattersley in his error-strewn short biography, *Campbell-Bannerman* (2006). The Peto family was represented by Sir Samuel's eldest son and heir, Sir Henry Peto (2nd Norfolk Baronet from 1889) as a family pall-bearer at CB's funeral in Meigle, Perthshire on 28 April 1908.

The Campbell Adamson descendants of Sir Samuel and Ann Peto and James Alexander Campbell continue to own and occupy most of the Stracathro Estate in Forfarshire (Angus) which CB's father purchased in 1847. Hugh A. Campbell Adamson of Stracathro and his elder brother, James S. Campbell Adamson of the nearby Careston, are the nearest living relatives of CB.

James Alexander Campbell – whose daughter-in-law, Mrs Morton Campbell, acted as CB's hostess after he became a widower in 1906 – was a Conservative MP in 1880–1906. Sir Basil Edward Peto (created a Devonshire Baronet in 1927), a younger son of Sir Samuel by his second marriage, was Conservative MP for Devizes in 1910–18 and for Barnstaple in 1922–23 and 1924–35, although the whip was withdrawn from him for a few months in 1928. Major Basil Arthur John Peto, a younger son of Sir Basil, was Conservative MP for King's Norton, Birmingham) in 1941–45. Sir Basil's grandson, Sir Christopher Henry Christopher Peto (3rd Devonshire Baronet from 1971) was Conservative MP for Barnstaple in 1945–50.

Dr Sandy S. Waugh