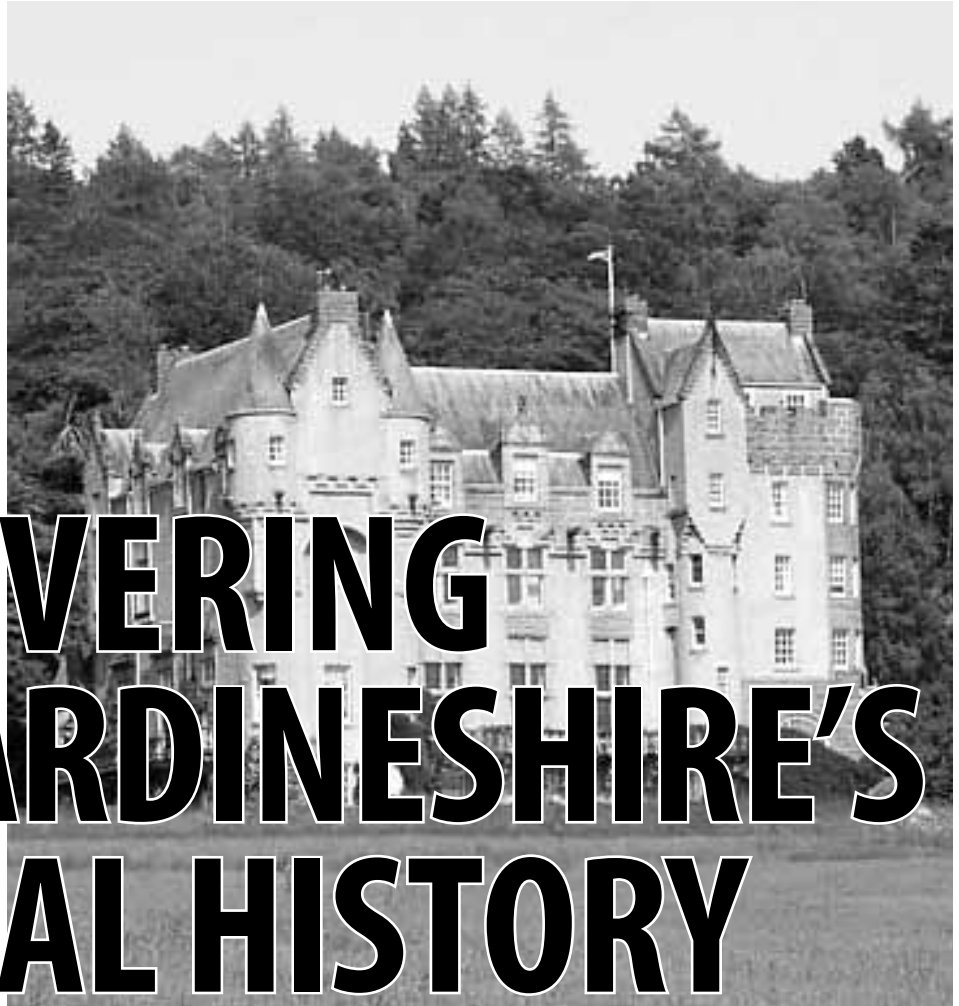


Liberal Heritage

Dr Alexander (Sandy) S. Waugh continues the *Journal's* series in which well-known Liberal Democrats take a look at the Liberal heritage of their own locality.



DISCOVERING KINCARDINESHIRE'S LIBERAL HISTORY

KINCARDINESHIRE (AKA The Mearns), with an area of 380 square miles and a population of 45,501 (2001 census), is situated in North-East Scotland between the North Sea and the mountains which rise to over 2,500 feet. It is bounded on the south by Angus (aka Forfarshire), on the north and west by Aberdeenshire and on the north-east by the City of Aberdeen. Although generally coastal and rural, with the traditional economic activities including fishing, farming, forestry and tourism, since the advent of North Sea Oil many of the coastal and inland urban communities have experienced substantial increases in population from commuting both to Aberdeen and offshore. This, together with a necessary expansion of community and leisure facilities and services, continues to sustain local prosperity. Kincardineshire ceased to have its own county

council in 1975 and since 1996 has been within the jurisdiction of Aberdeenshire Council for local government purposes, although it retains its identity as a Lord Lieutenancy and for registration and postal purposes. There are currently fifteen councillors for Kincardineshire wards, elected by STV, in 2007, for five-year terms: seven Liberal Democrats, four Conservatives and four SNP.

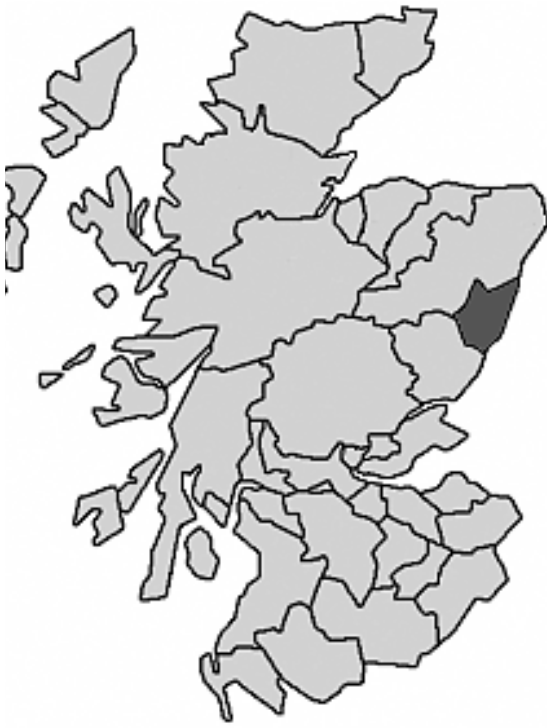
Kincardineshire, since becoming a sheriffdom (county) in the twelfth century, has played a significant role in Scotland's history. In 1296 King John Balliol wrote a letter of surrender from the now entirely ruined Kincardine Castle to Edward I of England after a short war which marked the beginning of the Scottish Wars of Independence. The inland Castleton of Kincardine, in the south of the county, was the original county town, until that status was transferred to the coastal Stonehaven, sixteen miles south of

Kincardine Castle, a nineteenth-century manor house. The remains of the earlier keep are located nearby.

Aberdeen, in 1600. After Charles II was crowned at Scone, in Perthshire, in January 1651, the Honours of Scotland – crown, sceptre and sword of state – were taken for safety to the coastal Dunnottar Castle, two miles south of Stonehaven. Thereafter, the castle was besieged by Cromwellians from September 1651 until its surrender in May 1652. However, in the meantime, the regalia had been smuggled out of the castle and hidden beneath the pulpit in the nearby Kinneff parish church, thus being spared the fate of the English regalia during the Cromwellian interregnum. The Scottish crown, sceptre and sword of state (now in the Crown Room of Edinburgh Castle) were thereafter represented in the heraldry of Kincardineshire.

Thirty years ago, as the local prospective Liberal candidate, I was consulted by BBC Scotland – then filming a dramatisation of Lewis Grassic Gibbon's novel, *Cloud*

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Howe – about the 1929 general election in Kincardineshire that featured in the novel. Unfortunately, I said that the local Liberal colours were then red and yellow whereas, as I was soon told after the episode was broadcast, they were green. From this stemmed my determination never again to be caught out about Kincardineshire's Liberal history, especially as the continuity of such is underlined by many family relationships.

Inverbervie, Kincardineshire's only Royal Burgh, was represented in the constituencies of Aberdeen Burghs in 1708–1832 and of Montrose Burghs in 1832–1950. Otherwise, Kincardineshire was a constituency of its own in 1708–1918; was part of Kincardine and Western Aberdeenshire in 1918–1950; and, including Inverbervie, part of North Angus and Mearns in 1950–1983, of Kincardine and Deeside in 1983–1997, and has been part of Aberdeenshire West and Kincardine since 1997.

Montrose burghs

The burghs' MPs were Whigs, Radicals and Liberals until 1931 and Liberal Nationals thereafter. Two of its MPs had UK reputations. Dr Joseph Hume, after representing other constituencies, was the burghs' Radical MP in 1842–1855. He was the self-appointed guardian

of the public purse and caused the word 'retrenchment' to be added to 'peace and reform'. He was successful in challenging the old anti-trade union combination laws and the law prohibiting the export of machinery, and also campaigned against flogging in the army, the impressment of sailors and imprisonment for debt. John Morley, a Liberal Cabinet minister in 1886, 1892–1895 and 1905–1914, having lost his original constituency (Newcastle-upon-Tyne) at the 1895 general election, was elected for the burghs at a by-election in 1896 and served until created Viscount Morley in 1908. His *Life of Gladstone* (1903) was dedicated to 'The Electors of Montrose Burghs'. He also wrote biographies of Cromwell, Burke, Voltaire and Cobden, helped the passage of the 1911 Parliament Act through the House of Lords but resigned from the Cabinet in opposition to the declaration of war on Germany in 1914. Robert Harcourt, elected at the 1908 by-election and serving until 1918, was a younger son of Sir William Harcourt, a Liberal Cabinet minister in 1880–1885, 1886 and 1892–1895 and a younger brother of Lewis (Loulou) Harcourt, a Liberal Cabinet minister in 1907–1916. No Liberal contested Montrose Burghs after 1929, although a former Liberal, Tom MacNair, unsuccessful Labour candidate in 1945, was thereafter Liberal candidate for Banff in 1964.

Kincardineshire in Scotland; and as it was in 1859.

Kincardineshire

One of the county's earlier Whig MPs (in 1797–1806) was Sir John Stuart who was an early patron of James Mill, whom he took to London in 1803. Thus when James' son, John was born in 1806 he was given the middle name Stuart in recognition of such early patronage and support. After William Gladstone's father, John Gladstone (1st Baronet from 1846) bought Fasque in inland Kincardineshire in 1829, the then Tory MP, first elected in 1826, was opposed at only the 1832 general election. When he retired in 1865, the election was contested by Sir Thomas Gladstone (2nd Baronet), Conservative and James Nicol, Liberal who was elected and served until his death in 1872. As William Gladstone wrote in his diary, 'Tom has made what is called a mess of it'. The prime minister's descendants inherited Fasque and the baronetcy, and, when canvassing in 1983, I secured the support of his great-grandson, the late Peter Gladstone for my candidature.

After 1872 Kincardineshire was represented by three other Liberals. General Sir George Balfour (from 1872) was a son-in-law of Dr Joseph Hume (see above). John Crombie (from 1892) was related by marriage to the Wason family which provided Liberal MPs for South Ayrshire, Clackmannan & Kinross, and Orkney & Shetland in 1885–1921.

Arthur Murray (from 1908) was a brother of Alexander Murray (The Master of Elibank), Liberal Government Chief Whip in 1910–1912.

Kincardine and Western Aberdeenshire

Arthur Murray, a Lieutenant Colonel, was returned unopposed as a Coalition Liberal for the new constituency in 1918, re-elected as a Liberal in 1922 and defeated in 1923. (Sir) Charles Barclay-Harvey, Conservative, elected in 1923, was re-elected in 1924, defeating James Scott, the new Liberal candidate. However, in 1929, James Scott regained the constituency for the Liberals. He was PPS to Sir Archibald Sinclair (Secretary of State for Scotland) for a few months before the 1931 general election when he was defeated by Barclay-Harvey who was re-elected in 1935 against Arthur Irvine, the new Liberal candidate. The 1935 campaign marked Jo Grimond's active entry into Liberal politics. He spoke at a meeting in Johnshaven on the Kincardineshire coast.

Just before the 1929 general election there was a Liberal Bazaar in Banchory (seventeen miles inland from Aberdeen and my Kincardineshire home town since 1975) to raise funds to buy a car for the local Liberal agent. The patroness was the Marchioness of Aberdeen, wife of a former Liberal Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and Governor General of Canada. She was also a sister of Edward Marjoribanks, 2nd Lord Tweedmouth (from 1894), Liberal Government Chief Whip in 1892–1894 and a Liberal Cabinet minister in 1894–1895 and 1905–1908, and mother-in-law of John Sinclair (Lord Pentland from 1909), Liberal Secretary for Scotland in 1905–1912.

Barclay-Harvey's appointment as Governor of South Australia caused a by-election in March 1939 when, with Arthur Irvine again the Liberal candidate, the new Conservative candidate, (Sir) Colin Thornton-Kemsley was elected with a majority of 5.9 per cent. In 1938, as an office-bearer in the Epping (West Essex) Conservative Association, Thornton-Kemsley had attempted to secure the association's repudiation of its MP, Winston Churchill. Given that the

Conservative Central Office was thought by Churchill to be behind these manoeuvres, the reward of an apparently safe seat for Thornton-Kemsley is a logical extension of such an accusation. In later Conservative literature the cover-up was to refer only to his being 'one of [Churchill's] principal supporting speakers in four General Elections'. (Sir) Arthur Irvine, who joined the Labour Party in 1943, was Labour MP for Liverpool Edge Hill from 1947 and Solicitor General in 1967–1970. His death caused the by-election in March 1979 which was won by David Alton, Liberal.

The constituency's marginal status was confirmed in 1945 when Thornton-Kemsley was re-elected with a majority of 3.2 per cent against John Junor, the new Liberal candidate, thereafter *Sunday Express* Editor and knighted in 1980 by courtesy of Margaret Thatcher.

North Angus and Mearns

Thornton-Kemsley won the first general election in the new constituency in 1950 and remained as its MP until 1964. Until 1964, the Liberals only fought the seat once, in 1950, Tom Adam achieving third place. Thornton-Kemsley contested four general elections in the new guise of 'Liberal Unionist' although, like most other such 'allsorts' candidates, he had no previous Liberal or Liberal National connection. Indeed, when a number of genuine Liberals attended the inaugural local Liberal Unionist Association meeting, they were 'asked to leave'.

However, with an upsurge in Scottish Liberal activity and fortunes in the early 1960s, the local Liberals were fortunate in securing as candidate Ken Barton, a North Angus farmer related to the Lubbocks by marriage and also a son-in-law of Lord Boyd Orr, winner of the 1949 Nobel Peace Prize. Thornton-Kemsley having retired, the new Tory candidate in 1964 was Alick Buchanan-Smith, who was elected with 49.3 per cent against 34.0 per cent for Ken Barton. Although Ken Barton retained second place in 1966, the Liberal vote slumped thereafter, in part due to SNP intervention. John Grimond was in fourth place in 1970 with 11.5 per cent, J. C. Hall took third place in February 1974 with 15.1 per

cent, Malcolm Bruce (MP for Gordon since 1983) took fourth place in October 1974 with 9.9 per cent, and there was no Liberal candidate in 1979.

Kincardine and Deeside

Buchanan-Smith was the Conservative candidate for the new constituency in 1983, and I was the Liberal/Alliance candidate, seeing a resurgence in local Liberal credibility with my vote of 29.4 per cent. Nicol Stephen, my agent in 1983, was then Liberal/Alliance candidate in 1987 and established the seat's marginal status with a Liberal/Alliance vote of 36.3 per cent. Buchanan-Smith's death caused a by-election in 1991 and saw the election of Nicol Stephen as Liberal Democrat MP with a vote of 49.0 per cent. He was defeated in 1992, with an adverse swing of 13.5 per cent and the election of George Kynoch, Conservative. Nicol (Lord Stephen from 2011) was subsequently an MSP in 1999–2011, Scottish Liberal Democrat Leader in 2005–2008 and Deputy First Minister of Scotland in 2005–2007.

Aberdeenshire West and Kincardine

Sir Robert Smith (3rd Baronet) was the Liberal Democrat candidate for the new constituency in 1997, when a notional swing of 8.3 per cent against George Kynoch, Conservative secured Sir Robert's election. He was re-elected in 2001, 2005 and 2010. He is a grandson of Sir Robert Workman Smith (1st Baronet), Conservative MP for Central Aberdeenshire in 1924–1945, and a distant cousin of the late Alick Buchanan-Smith. He was an early member of the SDP, has twice served on Aberdeen University Court and, when elected in 1997, was a local councillor and Vice-Chairman of the Grampian Police Board.

Sandy Waugh joined the Scottish Liberal Party in 1951. His has a doctorate in Scottish Church History, is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and a member of the Liberal Democrat History Group. In 2008 he published privately A Scottish Liberal Perspective 1836–2008 – A Centenary Commemoration for Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman 1836–1908.

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