

THE YEAR

The last twelve months or so have seen a major resurgence of interest in the iconography of Charles James Fox (1749–1806), the great eighteenth-century Whig politician, orator and statesman.

It coincides with a vigorous campaign to rehabilitate the reputation of George III (reigned 1760–1820), popularly thought of as the ‘mad King’ who lost the American colonies. That cruel and inaccurate portrayal belies the King’s significant role as a patron of the arts, science and architecture during a period of extraordinary advancement in manufacturing and technology, as well as the development of the arts. **David Wilson** looks at how Fox is commemorated in stone – in busts, statues and monuments.



Figure 1. Bust of Charles James Fox by Joseph Nollekens RA, signed and dated 1 March 1796. National Portrait Gallery, London. Private Collection; © Hilary Chelminski.

R OF THE FOX

George III's achievements have been much overshadowed by the extravagant and profligate behaviour of his eldest son, later Regent and in due course King George IV. Charles James Fox is credited by many historians (and was certainly regarded by George III) as the prime influence on the Prince and as being responsible for leading the young George into a dissolute life of debauchery and excess, which soured forever the Prince's relations with his father. This recent interest in Fox has been greatly encouraged by the permanent display, since 2003, of a magnificent eighteenth-century white marble portrait bust of him by the great sculptor Joseph Nollekens RA in the new Regency galleries at the National Portrait Gallery (Fig. 1) and by a project, undertaken with support from English Heritage, to re-landscape Bloomsbury Square in London, the site of Richard Westmacott RA's posthumous statue of Fox. These developments are a prelude to celebrations to be held in 2006 to mark the bicentenary of Fox's death on 13 September 1806.

Fox combined a long political career, spanning thirty-five years, with an unconventional lifestyle: he cohabited for many years with the famous courtesan, Elizabeth Bridget Cane (commonly called Mrs Armitstead) whom he subsequently married in secret in 1795,

only revealing the marriage to his family and friends in 1802 (Fig. 2).

Fox is remembered for his opposition to the war with the American colonies, and his support for the campaigns for Parliamentary reform and the abolition of slavery. Fox held junior office in the early 1770s and subsequently was Britain's first Foreign Secretary (in 1782, in the cabinet headed for a few months by the Marquess of Rockingham). Thereafter, apart from two relatively brief periods when he was in the cabinet (as Foreign Secretary, for most of 1783 and in the eight months before his death in 1806), a combination of personal grudges and his increasingly radical views became a barrier to his reappointment to high office, and most of his career was spent in opposition to the government.

Although, through his eloquence and determination, he rose to become the leader of the 'official' Whig opposition in the House of Commons, his own temperament was his downfall. It found expression in his support for the French Revolution and his opposition to the war with France and to various measures (such as the suspension of habeas corpus in 1794) enacted by a fearful British government against its own citizens, some of whom were suspected of plotting insurrection. There were numerous disputes with George III, especially over Fox's relationship with the King's unpopular son George, Prince of

Wales (who had himself been a former lover of Mrs Armitstead and who was regularly with Fox at the racecourse and gambling tables). In 1788, during the temporary illness of the King, and without a care for the prospects of his political faction in the Commons, Fox argued for the automatic Regency of his friend the Prince of Wales, thus denying the right of Parliament to debate anything regarding the Prince, and in the process destroying his party's credibility as the defender of the rights of Parliament. These matters and a number of other instances where Fox allowed his passions to rule his intellect, secured for him a place in the political wilderness, a landscape of which he was the chief cultivator. Despite his long parliamentary career, Fox's total time in office was only five years, including his three periods as Foreign Secretary that totalled less than two years.

Fox's political arch-enemy, William Pitt, died in 1806, having held the premiership almost continuously from 1783 until his death, with only one break between 1801 and 1804. Only then was a 'Ministry of all the Talents' given the seals of office and George III, recognising that Fox was now the only great statesman alive, acquiesced in Fox's appointment as Foreign Secretary and the real head of the government under the nominal premiership of Lord Grenville. Fox was, however, by then ill with dropsy, and died

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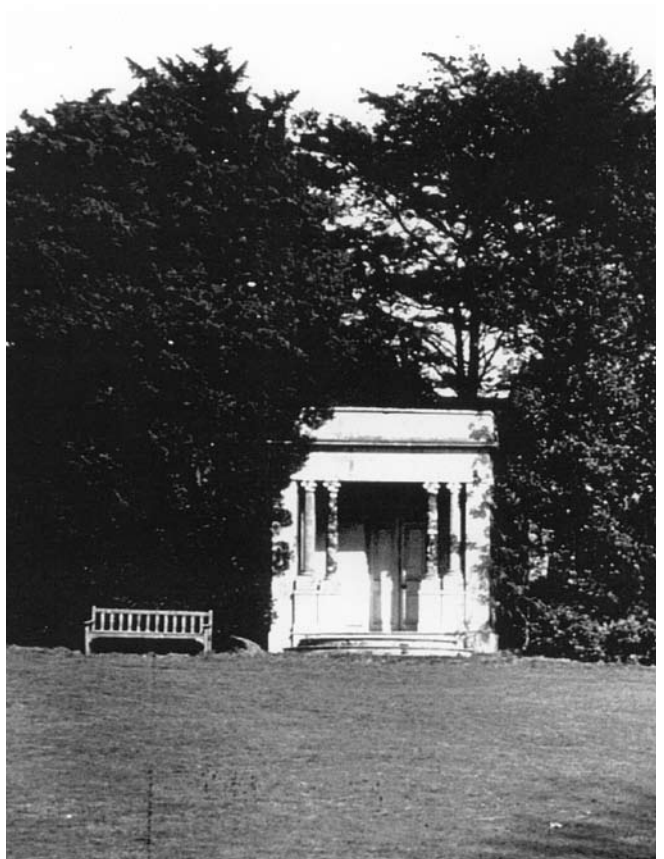


Figure 2. Mrs Armitstead, engraving after Sir Joshua Reynolds PRA, National Portrait Gallery, London.

Figure 3. Mausoleum at Wentworth Woodhouse, Yorkshire, dedicated to the 2nd Marquess of Rockingham.

Figure 4. Nollekens' statue of Charles Watson-Wentworth, 2nd Marquess of Rockingham in Garter Robes, with the plaster replica bust of Fox in the background, in the Mausoleum at Wentworth Woodhouse.

Figure 5. Fox's neo-classical temple at St. Anne's Hill, Chertsey, as it appeared in 1974. Photograph courtesy of Knight Frank.

within months of taking office. Ironically, he was buried beside Pitt in Westminster Abbey.

Fox's association with Rockingham and his deep and lifelong friendship with the Marquess's heir and nephew, the fourth Earl Fitzwilliam, led to the commission of Nollekens' bust of Fox. Modelling of the bust probably started in 1789 and the marble was completed in 1791. The bust had been intended for a temple of political friendship at Wentworth Woodhouse in Yorkshire, the ancestral home of Rockingham, to whom the temple was dedicated by Fitzwilliam (Fig. 3). Rockingham had also briefly held the premiership between 1755 and 1756, during which time he secured the repeal of the infamous Stamp Act, the much despised measure that taxed the legal transactions of the Americans (and other colonists) who were nevertheless denied representation in Parliament. The temple (the work of the architect John Carr of York) is described in both the estate accounts and in correspondence as a 'mausoleum', although Rockingham (who died in July 1782 after only three months in office) was not, in fact, buried there, but in York Minster. The temple, owned by the Fitzwilliam Wentworth Amenity Trust, is open to the public for part of the year.

Nollekens' full-length statue of Rockingham in the temple is not surrounded by his ancestors, but by eight busts (many by Nollekens) of friends and political allies, including Fox, Lord John Cavendish (Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Rockingham government) and Edmund Burke, the politician and political philosopher and writer, who at one time had been Rockingham's Private Secretary. The busts were removed from the temple some time ago to a private collection, and replaced with plaster casts (Fig. 4). Fitzwilliam's temple of political friendship was a sort of Whig cabinet, reflecting the cabinet presided over by Rockingham in the early months of 1782 and of which Fox, Fitzwilliam and Cavendish were

members. Ironically, the friendship of Fox and Burke terminated irretrievably in 1791 following their irreconcilable differences over the French Revolution (which Burke deplored), and a serious breach occurred in the relationship between Fox and Fitzwilliam when, in 1794, the latter and a number of other senior Whigs defected and went over to the government, leaving Fox to preside over a disaffected and demoralised 'rump' opposition whose effectiveness was fatally damaged. Fitzwilliam was then appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland by Pitt, but was not a success.

The bust of Fox, Nollekens' most famous production, has been described by leading experts as 'commanding' and as Nollekens' 'masterpiece in the Baroque manner'. As Margaret Whinney has pointed out, 'the flamboyance of Fox's character has been seized to perfection and the grossness of his physique has been emphasised rather than ignored. The swift turn of the head with the curls jutting from it, and the piercing eyes are all the more impressive against the bulk of the shoulders. Here is a man who could dominate the House of Commons, infuriate the Tories by the liberality of his views, and command the unswerving loyalty of his friends.'

Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia, was a great admirer of Fox and wished to acknowledge his friendly diplomacy during the Russo-Turkish war, which broke out in 1788. During the period of March to April 1791, in powerful displays of eloquence in the Commons Fox galvanised public opinion against the government and dissuaded Pitt from sending ships to secure the restitution to Turkey of the fortress of Oczakow and a small strip of land lying between the rivers Bug and Dniester, which had been seized by the Russians from the Turks. The grateful Catherine let it be known that she desired a marble bust of Fox. On learning this news, Fitzwilliam ceded the bust to Catherine (it is now in the Hermitage) and then com-

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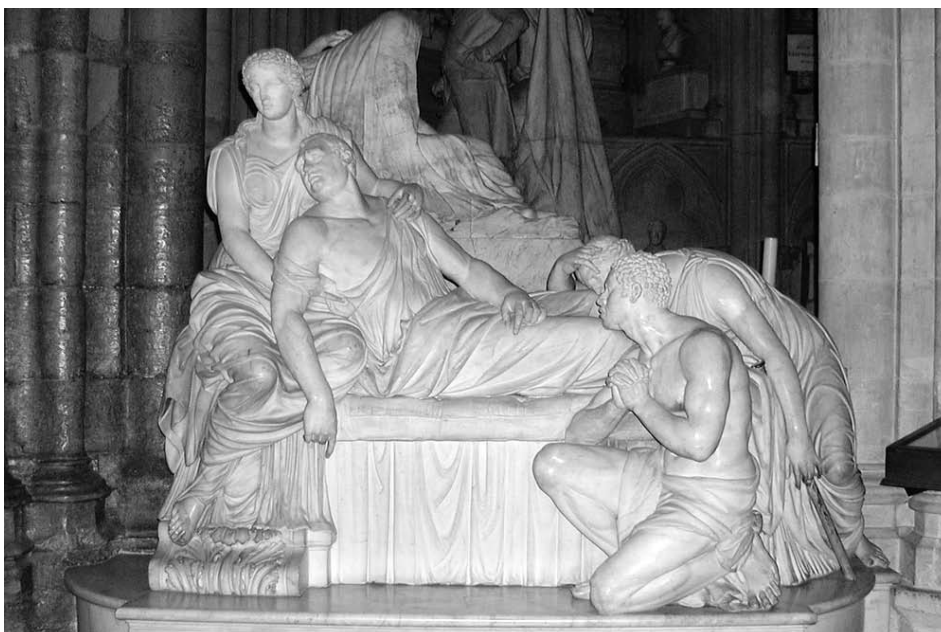
missioned a replica of the bust from Nollekens for the temple of political friendship at Wentworth Woodhouse.

A number of the close political associates of Fitzwilliam and Fox commissioned replicas of the bust. Some eleven are recorded, including the bust now in the National Portrait Gallery. That one was specifically commissioned from Nollekens by Fitzwilliam as a gift for Fox's partner, Mrs Armitstead, to whom it is inscribed. The gift seems to have been something of a 'peace offering' and reflected a rapprochement between Fox and Fitzwilliam following the latter's dismissal by Pitt from the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland in 1795. The bust was completed on 1 March 1796, when it was despatched to St Anne's Hill at Chertsey, the country home shared by Fox and Mrs Armitstead, where they were very happy together, became very keen gardeners, and where Fox enjoyed the life of a country gentleman and indulged his passion for classical literature. The bust stood in one of three niches in a small temple of friendship in the grounds of St Anne's Hill, that had been erected in 1794 and was dedicated to Fox's nephew (and intended political successor) Henry, third Lord Holland, with whom Fox and Mrs Armitstead were very close (Fig. 5). It was to St. Anne's that Fox retired after declaring in 1797 that he would attend Parliament no more. Over the years, and before Fox resumed his seat, St. Anne's became a place for entertaining Fox's political associates and friends including George, Prince of Wales.

The socle (base) of the bust was inscribed with a quatrain extolling the virtues of Fox, written by his friend and brother-in-law, the satirist and poet Richard Fitzpatrick. The quatrain reads:

A Patriot's even Course he
steer'd,
Mid Factions wildest Storms
unmoved;
By all who mark'd his Mind
revered,

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By all who knew his Heart
beloved.

While apparently posthumous, these lines were actually added to the socle in Fox's lifetime and were most likely intended as an expression of the popularly perceived qualities of Fox, not least his title, 'Man of the People'. This was earned in Fox's election campaign of 1780 for the seat of Westminster, when he invited his friend, Georgiana, the dazzling Duchess of Devonshire, to join him on the hustings. Fox was magnificent, whipping up the crowd with speeches about the rights of the British people, Parliamentary reform and the consequences of royal tyranny.

In 1802 Nollekens completed a new bust of Fox, commissioned by Francis, fifth Duke of Bedford, for his Temple of Liberty at Woburn Abbey, which was intended to honour Fox as the great champion of civil liberty and justice and the opponent of tyranny and oppression. The 1802 bust, in which Fox is portrayed with short hair in the manner of a Roman Republican, was accompanied in the Woburn temple by busts of Fox's political associates (also made by Nollekens). The second bust is thought to have been reproduced in Nollekens' studio at least fifty times in marble and many more times in plaster, possibly reflecting the cult that grew up around Fox. This second bust of Fox and Nollekens' posthumous bust of Pitt were frequently exhibited as a pair.

John Kenworthy-Browne has commented that, 'as an expression

Figure 6. Statue of Charles James Fox, by Richard Westmacott RA, Bloomsbury Square, London.

Figure 7. The restoration of Bloomsbury Square, London, under way in 2003, with Charles James Fox looking north toward Russell Square and the statue of his friend Francis, 5th Duke of Bedford.

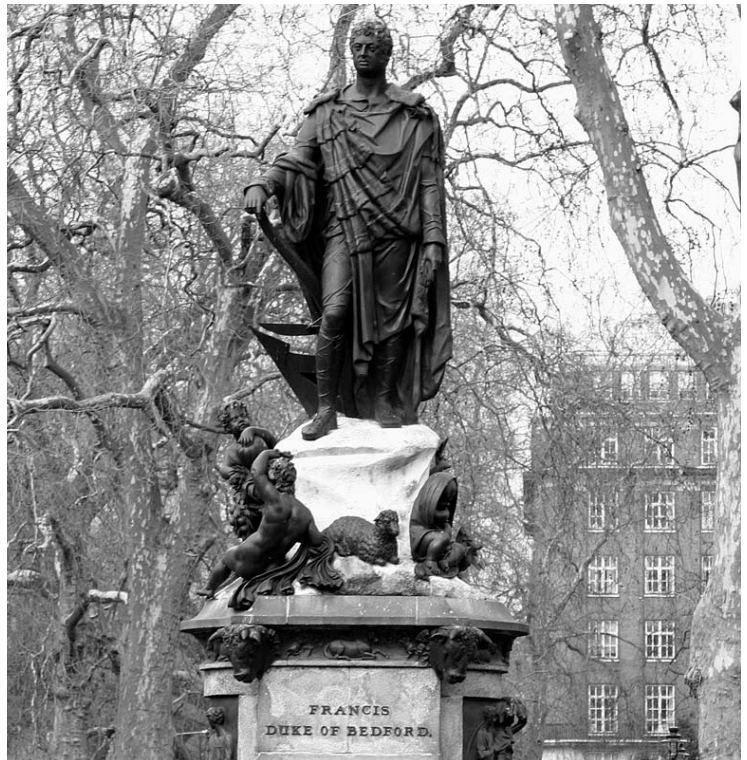
Figure 8. Monument to Charles James Fox, Westminster Abbey, by Richard Westmacott RA.

of Whig liberalism a Temple of Liberty was not new: the Gothic temple at Stowe had originally been so described. But in 1800 such a fane [temple or shrine] must necessarily be associated with the French Revolution. Of the Revolutionary aims, *liberté* came first. There was a temple dedicated to Liberty at Nantes in 1790 and doubtless others elsewhere.' Nicholas Penny has also pointed out that such temples were 'not an uncommon type of garden building in the eighteenth century' but that the temple at Woburn was unusual, not only because it had been brought indoors (forming a part of the main structure of the house), but because it honoured not Liberty in general, but Fox, its human and living embodiment.

Following his death, Fox's friends joined together to raise the money to pay for his funeral in Westminster Abbey, to pay his debts and provide a pension for his widow. A committee, comprising a number of his close political associates, was formed to erect a monument and a statue, and its members (who included Earl Fitzwilliam and Richard Fitzpatrick) all contributed very generously, as did George, Prince of Wales, whom Fitzwilliam described (some seven weeks after the death of Fox & has not recovered his spirits since'. The committee chose Richard Westmacott RA as the sculptor for both commissions.

A bronze statue, completed in 1814, was eventually unveiled in June 1816, after a long search for an appropriate site. In the end, the committee agreed that the statue should be located in Bloomsbury Square on land donated for that purpose by John, sixth Duke of Bedford, the brother of Francis, the fifth Duke (Fig. 6). The statue of Fox is positioned on the north end of the square facing north so that the great man can look directly down Bedford Place to the statue (also by Westmacott) of his dear friend Francis, Duke of Bedford, which had

Figure 9. Statue of Francis, 5th Duke of Bedford, by Richard Westmacott RA, Russell Square, London.



been placed, facing south, at the south end of Russell Square (Fig. 9). Francis had been one of the noble Lords who remained faithful to Fox when many senior Whigs, no longer able to support Fox's opposition to the war with France, deserted him and went over to the government in 1794. To the intense grief of his friends, not least Fox, the Duke died suddenly in 1802 following an operation.

Westmacott's statue of Fox was admired by the press, the critic in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1816 commenting: 'Dignity and repose appear to have been the leading objects of the artist's ideas ... the likeness of Mr Fox is perfect and striking ... This statue, and the statue of the late Duke of Bedford, by the same artist [Westmacott], at the other extremity of Bedford-place, form two grand and beautiful ornaments of the Metropolis.' Mrs Fox recorded in her diary of 30 June 1816: 'Went afterwards to Bloomsbury Square to see the statue of my angel which is magnificent and simple just as I could wish, but I do not like its being placed there. If it could not be placed in Westminster it should have been on this dear Hill [St Anne's] which he so

much loved. It was a melancholy sight, God knows ...'

The year 2003 saw refurbishment works at Bloomsbury Square in London. They included extra protection for the statue by the reinstatement of railings around the plinth and some radical pruning of the foliage adjacent to the statue so as to expose it more fully for public view. This, incidentally, has helped to fulfil one of the benefits intended by those who erected the statue, namely that Fox should be able to gaze upon his friend Francis, fifth Duke of Bedford in nearby Russell Square (Fig. 7).

The work on Bloomsbury Square happily coincided with the *Save our Sculpture* campaign, an initiative of the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association, which is intended to help the public identify and protect sculptures at risk and to increase public awareness of the wealth of public sculpture throughout Britain. One of the most evident examples of the cultural output of nineteenth-century Britain is its public sculpture, of which there are possibly as many as 15,000 examples, ranging from sculptural reliefs on buildings through political and imperial heroes to war

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Figure 10.
Statue of Fox
by EH Bailey
RA. © Palace of
Westminster.

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British Library, Additional Manuscripts 58955, f. 53 (Fitzwilliam's correspondence with Lord Grenville on the death of Fox); 51476–51507 (Mrs Fox's Diary, 1806–1841); and 38678, f. 187 (Bailey's statue of Fox).

memorials. English Heritage's involvement with the London Borough of Camden in the restoration of Bloomsbury Square, including the associated work to assist the public visibility of Westmacott's statue of Fox, is very welcome. Some further works of tree pruning are to be undertaken, but money also needs to be raised to clean the statue.

Westmacott was also the sculptor commissioned by the committee to produce the monument to Fox in Westminster Abbey (Fig. 8). The monument was not unveiled until 1822, largely due to delays occasioned by alterations to the Abbey as part of the preparations for the somewhat theatrical coronation of George IV. The critic in *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction* for February 1823 commented that 'the head of Mr. Fox is admirably executed, the likeness good; and those generous and magnanimous feelings which predominated in the expression of his countenance, strongly portrayed'. The monument has been stated by Margaret

Whinney to be 'probably Westmacott's masterpiece, and has a greater composition of nobility than any monument in St. Paul's. Fox, the great Whig, dies in the arms of Liberty, while Peace bends, mourning, at his feet.' The famous slave kneels in front, gazing at Fox who had spoken strongly in favour of his liberty. It is a most impressive work. The great Italian neo-classical sculptor, Antonio Canova (of whom Westmacott was a pupil in the early 1790s) once commented that he had never seen any work which surpassed Westmacott's figure of the slave on the monument.

Before the monument was installed, a controversy arose over the length and content of its inscription. One draft was composed by Fox's close friend Charles (Earl) Grey. Mrs Fox was shown Lord Grey's lines, but reluctantly rejected them: 'Alas! What Inscription can tell the hundredth part of the virtues of his heart and mind or of his benevolence to Mankind, no words can do it'. In her view, the

lines were 'fitter for a paragraph in history than for an inscription for a Monument' and in her diary Mrs Fox, truly upset at causing any offence to Grey, wrote: 'I am afraid my not liking it as well as many of my friends do may hurt Lord Grey which will give me real pain to do but ... I am more than ever convinced that the name only is the best to have on the monument ...' Westmacott solved the dilemma himself, by producing a pedestal with insufficient room for a lengthy inscription. The inscription, in stark contrast with the magnificent statuary above, merely states Fox's name and dates of birth and death. Mrs Fox saw the monument in November 1822. In her diary entry for 14 November she wrote: '... afterwards to Westminster Abbey to see the Monument parts of which I like very much. I think upon the whole it is beautiful, but it is ill placed and rather too low ...'

The subject of Fox iconography cannot be left without some mention of the representation of

the statesman in Parliament, which was, after all, his spiritual home. St Stephen's Hall in the Palace of Westminster contains the white marble statue of Fox sculpted by E. H. Bailey RA in 1855, after being offered the commission by HM Commissioners of Fine

Arts (Fig. 10). The price was £1,000. The statue was completed and erected in the year of its commission and was favourably commented on by the critic in the *Art Journal* of that year. In its treatment of the head and face of Fox, it closely follows the model-

ling of the earlier (1791) bust of Fox by Nollekens, with its long hair and curls.

David Wilson is Director-designate of the Wordsworth Trust, Centre for British Romanticism, Cumbria. He has researched and published widely on eighteenth-

and nineteenth-century sculpture and pictures. He is currently editing the diaries and papers of 'the anonymous Republican' Thomas Hollis (1720–74) on whom he has already published extensively. He can be contacted through the Wordsworth Trust at d.wilson@wordsworth.org.uk.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

If you can help any of the individuals listed below with sources, contacts, or any other information — or if you know anyone who can — please pass on details to them. Details of other research projects in progress should be sent to the Editor (see page 3) for inclusion here.

Hubert Beaumont MP. After pursuing candidatures in his native Northumberland southward, Beaumont finally fought and won Eastbourne in 1906 as a 'Radical' (not a Liberal). How many Liberals in the election fought under this label and did they work as a group afterwards? *Lord Beaumont of Whitley, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW; beaumontt@parliament.uk.*

Letters of Richard Cobden (1804–65). Knowledge of the whereabouts of any letters written by Cobden in private hands, autograph collections, and obscure locations in the UK and abroad for a complete edition of his letters. (For further details of the Cobden Letters Project, please see www.uea.ac.uk/his/research/projects/cobden). *Dr Anthony Howe, School of History, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ; a.c.howe@uea.ac.uk.*

Cornish Methodism and Cornish political identity, 1918–1960s. Researching the relationship through oral history. *Kayleigh Mildren, Institute of Cornish Studies, Hayne Corfe Centre, Sunningdale, Truro TR1 3ND; KMSMilden@aol.com.*

Liberal foreign policy in the 1930s. Focusing particularly on Liberal anti-appeasers. *Michael Kelly, 12 Collinbridge Road, Whitewell, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim BT36 7SN; mmjkelly@msn.com.*

Liberal policy towards Austria-Hungary, 1905–16. *Andrew Gardner, 17 Upper Ramsey Walk, Canonbury, London N1 2RP; agardner@ssees.ac.uk.*

The Liberal revival 1959–64. Focusing on both political and social factors. Any personal views, relevant information or original material from Liberal voters, councillors or activists of the time would be very gratefully received. *Holly Towell, 52a Cardigan Road, Headingley, Leeds LS6 3BJ; his3ht@leeds.ac.uk.*

The rise of the Liberals in Richmond (Surrey) 1964–2002. Interested in hearing from former councillors, activists, supporters, opponents, with memories and insights concerning one of the most successful local organisations. What factors helped the Liberal Party rise from having no councillors in 1964 to 49 out of 52 seats in 1986? Any literature or news cuttings from the period welcome. *Ian Hunter, 9 Defoe Avenue, Kew, Richmond TW9 4DL; 07771 785 795; ianhunter@kew2.com.*

Liberal politics in Sussex, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight 1900–14. The study of electoral progress and subsequent disappointment. Research includes comparisons of localised political trends, issues and preferred interests as against national trends. Any information, specifically on Liberal candidates in the area in the two general elections of 1910, would be most welcome. Family papers especially appreciated. *Ian Ivatt, 84 High Street, Steyning, West Sussex BN44 3JT; ianjivatt@tinyonline.co.uk.*

Liberals and the local government of London 1919–39. *Chris Fox, 173 Worpleston Road, Guildford GU2 6XD; christopher.fox7@virgin.net.*

The Liberal Party in the West Midlands from December 1916 to the 1923 general election. Focusing on the fortunes of the party in Birmingham, Coventry, Walsall and Wolverhampton. Looking to explore the effects of the party split at local level. Also looking to uncover the steps towards temporary reunification for the 1923 general election. *Neil Fisher, 42 Bowden Way, Binley, Coventry CV3 2HU; Neiltfisher@aol.com.*

Recruitment of Liberals into the Conservative Party, 1906–1935. Aims to suggest reasons for defections of individuals and develop an understanding of changes in electoral alignment. Sources include personal papers and newspapers; suggestions about how to get hold of the papers of more obscure Liberal defectors welcome. *Cllr Nick Cott, 1a Henry Street, Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE3 1DQ; N.M.Cott@ncl.ac.uk.*

Life of Wilfrid Roberts (1900–91). Roberts was Liberal MP for Cumberland North (now Penrith and the Border) from 1935 until 1950 and came from a wealthy and prominent local Liberal family; his father had been an MP. Roberts was a passionate internationalist, and was a powerful advocate for refugee children in the Spanish civil war. His parliamentary career is coterminous with the nadir of the Liberal Party. Roberts joined the Labour Party in 1956, becoming a local councillor in Carlisle and the party's candidate for the Hexham constituency in the 1959 general election. I am currently in the process of collating information on the different strands of Roberts' life and political career. Any assistance at all would be much appreciated. *John Reardon; jbreardon75@hotmail.com.*

Student radicalism at Warwick University. Particularity the files affair in 1970. Interested in talking to anybody who has information about Liberal Students at Warwick in the period 1965–70 and their role in campus politics. *Ian Bradshaw, History Department, University of Warwick, CV4 7AL; I.Bradshaw@warwick.ac.uk*

Welsh Liberal Tradition – A History of the Liberal Party in Wales 1868–2003. Research spans thirteen decades of Liberal history in Wales but concentrates on the post-1966 formation of the Welsh Federal Party. Any memories and information concerning the post-1966 era or even before welcomed. The research is to be published in book form by Welsh Academic Press. *Dr Russell Deacon, Centre for Humanities, University of Wales Institute Cardiff, Cyncoed Campus, Cardiff CF23 6XD; rdeacon@uwic.ac.uk.*

Aneurin Williams and Liberal internationalism and pacificism, 1900–22. A study of this radical and pacifist MP (Plymouth 1910; North West Durham/Consett 1914–22) who was actively involved in League of Nations Movement, Armenian nationalism, international co-operation, pro-Boer etc. Any information relating to him and location of any papers/correspondence welcome. *Barry Dackombe, 32 Ashburnham Road, Ampthill, Beds, MK45 2RH; dackombe@tesco.net.*