

THE REAL LLOYD GEORGE

Archive at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

- 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 will appear in the *National Library of Wales Journal* during 2006. There is also much helpful material in Colin Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George: the Diary of A. J. Sylvester, 1931–45* (London, 1975), pp. 11–18 (introduction to the volume).
- 2 National Library of Wales (hereafter NLW), A. J. Sylvester Papers A57, diary entry for 31 October 1944. When he came to edit his diaries for publication in the early 1970s, Sylvester still felt bitter about Frances's failure to keep her promise to him in 1945: 'She did nothing to keep this promise!' (Cross (ed.), *Life with Lloyd George*, p. 333).
- 3 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file D6, Sylvester to 'Miss Thomson', 17 May 1946 (copy).
- 4 Ibid., memorandum from Sylvester to Lord Beaverbrook, 15 May 1946. ('Confidential. Personal') (copy).
- 5 See the American readers' reports preserved *ibid.*
- 6 Ibid., memorandum from Sylvester to Lord Beaverbrook, 26 July 1946. ('Confidential and Personal') (copy).
- 7 Ibid., Sylvester to Miss Christine Campbell Thomson, 6 August 1946 (copy).
- 8 See e.g. the *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 December 1946.
- 9 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file D6, Thomas Jones to AJS, 23 December 1946; AJS to TJ, 29 December 1946 (copy).
- 10 Ibid., Sylvester to Lady Megan Lloyd George, 20 January 1947 (copy).
- 11 *Sunday Dispatch*, 26 January 1947. These provisional chapter headings were not all retained in the final published volume.
- 12 Ibid., 9 February 1947, p. 4; NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file D6, Rev. R. G. Hughes, Portmadoc, to AJS, 17 February 1947, and AJS to RGH, 21 February 1947 (copy).
- 13 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, Kathleen Harvey, South Shields, to AJS, 1 February 1947.
- 14 A. J. Sylvester, *The Real Lloyd George* (London, 1947), pp. 1–2.
- 15 See Sylvester's obituary in the *Daily Telegraph*, 30 October 1989, and Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Lloyd George and the historians', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* 1971, pp. 70–71.
- 16 Sylvester, *The Real Lloyd George*, p. 43.
- 17 Ibid., p. 293.
- 18 *Manchester Guardian*, 2 October 1947.
- 19 *Daily Telegraph*, 26 September 1947.
- 20 *News Chronicle*, 25 September 1947.
- 21 See NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file D6.
- 22 Ibid., Thomas Jones to Sylvester, 18 September 1947; Sylvester to Jones, 18 September 1947 (copy).
- 23 See Ruth Longford, *Frances, Countess Lloyd George: More than a Mistress* (Leominster, 1996), p. 82.
- 24 *Wiltshire Scene*, 5 October 1984.
- 25 Longford, *op. cit.*, pp. 158–59.
- 26 NLW, Frances Stevenson Family Papers, file FCG2/17, Constance Miles, Guildford, to Frances Lloyd-George, 4 February 1947.
- 27 Ibid., John P. Smart, Birmingham, to Frances Lloyd-George, 23 February 1947.
- 28 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file D6, J. E. Morris, Solicitor, Lincolns Inn, London WC2, to AJS, 17 January 1947; AJS to JEM, 20 January 1947 (copy).
- 29 Ibid., Frances Lloyd-George to Charles Eade, [February 1947]. The letter was published in the *Sunday Dispatch*, 18 February 1947.
- 30 Cited in Longford, *op. cit.*, p. 172.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file D6, Sylvester to Owen Lloyd-George (son of Richard, the second earl), 8 November 1947 ('Private') (copy); Sylvester to Lord Beaverbrook, 21 October 1947 (copy).
- 33 *Sunday Dispatch*, 18 February 1947. Letters sent to Frances concerning the publication of *The Real Lloyd George* and the serialisation of extracts in the *Sunday Dispatch* are preserved in NLW, Frances Stevenson Family Papers, file FCG2/17.
- 34 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file D6, AJS to E. P. Evans, 3 April 1947 ('Private and Confidential') (copy).
- 35 Frances Lloyd George, *The Years that are Past*, p. 213. Lloyd George had in fact left Sylvester the sum of £1,000 in his will in 1945. There is a copy of the will in the NLW, Frances Stevenson Family Papers, file FB1/1.
- 36 See Sylvester's obituary in *The Independent*, 30 October 1989.
- 37 *Sunday Dispatch*, 16 March 1947.
- 38 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file D6, Owen L-G to AJS, 19 October 1947.
- 39 Ibid., AJS to Owen L-G, 8 November 1947 (copy).
- 40 Ibid., memorandum from Sylvester to Lord Beaverbrook, 21 October 1947 ('Private and Confidential') (copy).
- 41 Cited in Longford, *op. cit.*, p. 159.
- 42 NLW MS 20,475C, no. 3165, Clement Attlee to Lady Megan Lloyd George, 4 September 1948 ('Confidential').
- 43 NLW MS 23,668E, ff. 174–76, AJS to Gwilym Lloyd-George, 22 January 1953 ('Private and Confidential').
- 44 Malcolm Thomson, *David Lloyd George: the Official Biography* (London, 1948), p. 9.
- 45 Ibid., p. 32.
- 46 NLW, A. J. Sylvester Papers, file C94, Sylvester to Dr Thomas Jones CH, 4 January 1949 ('Personal') (copy).
- 47 Ibid., Sylvester to E. P. Evans, 3 April 1949 ('Personal') (copy).

Gladstone's library under threat

by York Membery

Just about every modern US president established a grand library in their honour upon leaving office. However, the only such institution in Britain – the prime ministerial library founded by the Liberal leader and four-time premier William Gladstone – is under threat unless £500,000 can be found to undertake vital conservation work.

The St Deiniol's archive, in Hawarden, North Wales, houses one of the country's most important collections of books, dating back to the nineteenth century and beyond, and is the United Kingdom's foremost residential library. But unless essential

maintenance work is undertaken on the roof of the century-old library, the collection of some 250,000 historic and theological books, many of which are irreplaceable, could be put at risk. The cost of repairs and refurbishment is estimated at £1.3 million and while around half the money has been raised as a result of Lottery Heritage Fund and other grants, the library still faces a £500,000 shortfall.

This year therefore saw the public launch of the 'Gladstone Project' in a bid to raise the necessary money and safeguard the historic library for the nation. Charles Gladstone, the great-

great-grandson of William Gladstone and president of the Gladstone Project, inaugurated the appeal at St Deiniol's on 2 May 2006 and at the National Liberal Club in London on 3 May 2006. 'It is absolutely vital that we meet our target because without the money that we're trying to raise this unique collection of books will be profoundly compromised,' he said.

The main library is housed in an imposing purpose-built structure designed by the architect John Douglas which was opened in 1902. Commissioned following Gladstone's death in 1898 at the age of eighty-eight, it was designed to serve as a fitting repository for Gladstone's books and act as a lasting monument to the library's founder. It was paid for by a £40,000 endowment made by Gladstone, and a public appeal. Five years later, the Gladstone family funded the building of the twenty-six-bedroom residential wing – providing the 'inexpensive lodgings' and 'congenial society' that were central to their founder's vision – to create today's unique institution.

Today, however the historic fabric of the main library building is showing its age and is in desperate need of repair. 'While it was built to a high standard and has been conscientiously maintained, the repair and restoration work now needed cannot be funded from the annual maintenance budget,' said Mr Gladstone. Essential repair work includes the renewal of leadwork on roofs and gutters, stabilisation and repointing of high-level stonework, and replacement of the boilers and renewal of the old Victorian heating system.

Among the books at danger from potential water damage unless the conservation work is undertaken are the 7,000 pre-1800 volumes



in the closed access area, mainly concerning theology and church history. They include a rare copy of Erasmus's *Paraphrase of St John's Gospel* translated by the Tudor Princess Mary, and Gladstone's own annotated copy of the third edition of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Many of these items are so sensitive that they are locked away in a temperature-controlled room and can only be handled with gloves. The library's collection also includes some of Gladstone's Eton schoolbooks, containing caricatures of his masters, as well as a collection of Bibles translated into everything from Inuit to Blackfoot Indian.

The Gladstone Project – which will also fund much-needed improvements to the library's facilities which are designed to enhance its position as a centre for learning, debate, reflection and prayer – has the backing of high-profile supporters including the historian Lord Briggs and Loyd Grossman, a patron of the project. Lord Briggs, author of classics such as *The Age Of Improvement* and *Victorian Cities*, said: 'The library has one of the most important collections of books not just about Gladstone, but about nineteenth-century history generally, anywhere. People come from all over the world to view the collection – and I am fully behind this campaign. The library has a fascinating past and a promising future.'

Gladstone: The literary PM

Gladstone, despite the numerous demands on his time posed by a career in politics spanning sixty years, was a voracious reader. During the course of his life he is known to have read at least 22,000 books and to have bought some 32,000 – which form the heart of today's St Deiniol's collection.

Gladstone caught the book bug when, as a young boy, he was presented with a copy of *Sacred Dramas* by its author, Hannah More. He acquired more books at Eton and the collection really began to grow during his time at Oxford University. While at Eton, Gladstone, the son of a wealthy Liverpool merchant, developed the habit of making detailed annotations in the margins of books, registering his approval or disapproval of an author's ideas, using his own system of symbols and Italian words, of which 'ma' (but) is the most frequent.

In later life, Gladstone decided to make his personal library accessible to others. He thought his theological and other books would be of value to members of all Christian denominations but he wanted all students to have access to them. He also dreamt of creating somewhere they could stay and read and write in a scholarly environment.

The first step towards fulfilling his vision was taken in 1889 when two large rooms were erected, with six or seven smaller rooms to act as studies, near his Hawarden home. By then he might have been eighty but that didn't stop him from transferring his 32,000 books himself, helped only by his valet and a daughter.

The temporary building was only the start of realising his ambition to create a residential library. He endowed the library with £40,000 – indicating that this was to be his major bequest. And following his death a public appeal raised a further £9,000, allowing his vision to become a reality within a few years.

His great-great grandson Charles Gladstone believes St Deiniol's is a fitting tribute to the Grand Old Man, as he was affectionately known by his supporters. He said: 'The books of St. Deiniol's tell you more about the kind of man William Gladstone was than could any statue.'

York Membership is a contributor to BBC History and History Today among many other publications.

For more details on the Library: see: www.st-deiniols.co.uk.