

to leave a legislative legacy. Comparisons are flawed by the shift of context.

In the modern period, the most influential Liberals were not party leaders but probably Keynes (for post-war macro-economic management in the wake of the depression, and the creation of the International Monetary Fund) and Beveridge (for the welfare state proposals enacted by the 1945–51 Labour government). Beveridge subsequently became the party leader in the Lords, but attained that position because of his intellectual achievements rather than achieving things because of his position.

The same can be said of the only modern leader who can boast extraordinary and long-lasting legislative achievements: Roy Jenkins (whose chapter is written by his recent biographer John Campbell). As a liberal Home Secretary in a Labour government (1965–67 and 1974–76), Jenkins found government time to push through liberalising private members' bills – David Steel's abortion bill and Leo Abse's decriminalisation of homosexuality. On or near his watch, Britain ended hanging, abolished theatre censorship, eased divorce and extended licensing hours. He also introduced race relations and gender equality legislation that have done much to contain bigotry, if not yet put it on the run.

The most controversial assessments will inevitably be the ones with the least length of perspective, notably of the 2010 administration. I fear that the achievements of the Liberal Democrats in 2010–15 are too easily unpicked to rank with the great historical reforms. Five-year fixed-term parliaments and Steve Webb's pension reforms may stick, but it is hard to think of much else that is sufficiently embedded to endure. The Green Investment Bank is slated for privatisation. Renewable energy has been hit hard. The Tories have already made it clear that the 'snooper's charter' will go ahead. The emphasis on raising tax allowances rather than cutting income tax rates is Liberal Democrat-inspired, but cannot offset the impact of meaner in-work benefits. We held our finger in the dyke, but the dyke burst in 2015.

Nick Clegg admits the error over tuition fees, but the real

The book will be important reading for those interested in leadership and Liberal history.

argument is not over whether the Liberal Democrats broke a promise, but over that particular promise. The Tories broke their promise to raise green taxes as a proportion of total taxes, but who of their supporters much cared? By contrast, Cameron vetoed many easy and fair cuts from the fiscal consolidation because they were against his commitment to protect pensioner benefits, and the Tories would not win an election without their disproportionate support from pensioners. The error was to forget that the nearest thing to a party interest for the Liberal Democrats is people with higher education, since they are disproportionately likely to vote for the party.

Nor is it true to distance, as Chris Bowers' chapter does, Nick Clegg from the coalition negotiations. Although the policy platform – the coalition agreement – was negotiated by two teams neither of which contained the leader, the key trap into which the Liberal Democrats fell was a result of the allocation of ministers and departments, negotiated entirely by the party leaders. When Nick first offered me Energy and Climate Change, I pointed out that this contained one of two areas – nuclear – where the coalition agreement allowed the Lib Dems to abstain on an issue which went against party policy. I was aghast to find that the only

other department was Business, where the secretary of state was to be Vince Cable, and who would be responsible for tuition fees. Two embarrassments out of two was not a coincidence.

We all knew the history of smaller parties being hammered in coalition, despite the contra-example of Scotland. The coalition amounted to a gamble that we could turn a referendum on AV into reform, and our chance of that happening was thrown away by delay and the political mistake of tuition fees. With a real effort to pass the legislation, the referendum should and could have been held in the autumn of 2010. The Browne review of tuition fees reported on 12 October 2010, and from then on we were stuck. That said, AV is not a proportional system. It would have saved some Liberal Democrat seats at the 2015 election, but it would have given the Tories an even bigger majority.

The debate on whether the coalition was worth it will go on, but in my view the Liberal Democrats had little choice in 2010. We were always slated for a hammering in 2015, but our political mistakes made that denouement far more destructive than it could have been.

Chris Huhne was MP for Eastleigh 2005–13, and Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change 2010–12.

Authoritative new biography of 'the goat'

Travis L. Crosby, *The Unknown Lloyd George: a Statesman in Conflict* (I. B. Tauris, 2014)

Reviewed by **Dr J. Graham Jones**

ONE MUST BEGIN by asking the basic question of whether there is really a need for another new, full-length biography of David Lloyd George, already the subject of more than sixty different biographies (highly variable in quality and size) and other, more specialist studies. A striking revival in Lloyd George studies has been seen during the last decade – following a generally lacklustre, unproductive period during the 1990s. Authoritative volumes have been published by,

among others, authors such as John Campbell, Richard Toye and Ffion Hague, together with a large number of important academic articles in journals and other publications. As recently as 2010, Lord (Roy) Hattersley (the former deputy leader of the Labour Party and a prolific writer) published a substantial biography of Lloyd George (from the Little Brown publishing house). However one must recognise at once that this volume, written by Professor Travis Crosby, far excels Roy Hattersley's rather

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pedestrian, often substandard, derivative attempt.

Travis Crosby is Emeritus Professor of History at Wheaton College, Massachusetts in the United States. He is an accomplished political biographer, and amongst his many volumes are important studies on Joseph Chamberlain, W. E. Gladstone and Sir Robert Peel. Each of these was highly praised by its reviewers. To a large extent the author has made use of published, secondary sources for the present biography. He has read voraciously everything available in print relating to Lloyd George's career and life – as is obvious from the helpful, detailed footnotes which he has framed while composing the text. They are of enormous interest to everyone who is seriously interested in the story of Lloyd George, packed with additional information, full of fascinating detail, while a very good bibliography is also provided of relevant publications (see pp. 508–42 within the book).

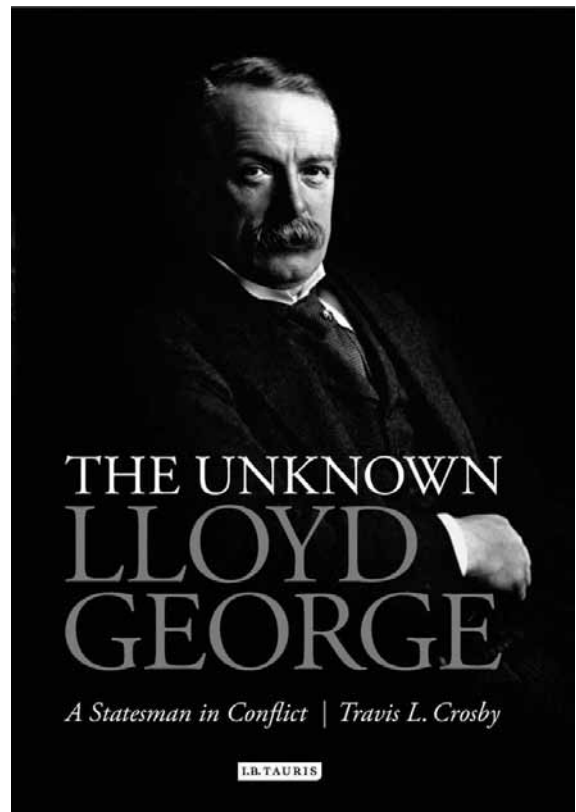
Some use has also been made of the Lloyd George Papers in the custody of the Parliamentary Archive at London and some of the Lloyd George archives deposited at the National Library of Wales, particularly those digitised by the institution during recent years, namely the papers of William George (1865–1967) (Lloyd George's younger brother), and Lloyd George's own detailed diary for 1886, a very important year in his history. (This would appear to strengthen the argument for digitising important holdings for the use of a scholar who lives and works in the United States.) Crosby has not, however, made any use of the seminal typescript diaries of A. J. Sylvester, Lloyd George's private secretary from 1923 until 1945 – a very full, all-important source for Lloyd George's years in the so-called political wilderness.

Indeed the coverage given to the years following Lloyd George's fall in the autumn of 1922 is relatively brief (pp. 334–83). Although Lloyd George was not in governmental office at that time, he remained a political and public figure of great consequence both within the United Kingdom and abroad, and his personal and family history (unconventional to say the least) is also very interesting. On the whole

Crosby is exceptionally fair to the different historical periods in Lloyd George's life, and he has achieved a good balance between Lloyd George's life as a politician and his unique, most involved personal life. The author's approach is well paced, balanced, and exceptionally fair throughout from cover to cover. The study's great virtue is the author's notable ability to place his subject in his wider historical and political background, fields which, it is clear, Travis Crosby has truly mastered. There are no important errors of fact or interpretation.

The author always underlines Lloyd George's innate virtues, his strengths and his political and international achievements, not least his lowly background and his upbringing within the little cottage of Richard Lloyd, the local cobbler at Llanystumdwy, a small rural village nor far from the town of Criccieth – a whole world away from London at that time (given late nineteenth-century travelling difficulties). Attention is given to his striking eloquence as a public speaker from his earliest, formative days in north Wales, and his role as the tireless, highly respected representative of Welsh Nonconformity. A full outline is given of his legislative achievements as president of the Board of Trade, 1905–08, and even more so as Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1905–15, together with his all-important service as a war leader when he exhibited distinct virtues and strengths in a number of different directions.

Even so, Crosby is fully aware, too, of Lloyd George's obvious personal weaknesses and defects, especially the way he treated his enduring, long-suffering wife Dame Margaret and his long, intimate relationship with his secretary Frances Stevenson extending over a full thirty years. He married her – eventually – in October 1943. Here, too, is noted his proverbial liking for praise and flattery from others, a tendency which had begun when he was a small boy on his uncle and mentor Richard Lloyd's knee. The author also pays attention to Lloyd George's well-attested lack of loyalty to his fellow politicians and indeed to the Liberal Party from 1916 onwards. He divided his party at that time and he created a split which lasted for many long, exceptionally painful years for Liberals.



It is suggested here that Lloyd George employed any means or tactic possible to cling to power until his fall in 1922. Full attention is given in the text to Lloyd George's imperialism, the subject of harsh criticism of him in our age today, and to his unfortunate ideas and activities during the 1930s, above all his exceptionally positive attitude to Hitler whom he praised highly, and his negative statements in public and in private almost throughout the Second World War when an obvious decline was most evident both in his physical strength and in his mental state.

During recent years an attempt has been made by historians to rehabilitate Lloyd George's good name, and Travis Crosby is fully sensitive to this trend and he tends, on the whole, to support it. The final impression is a favourable image of Lloyd George. Travis Crosby portrays LG not as an opportunist or an ideologue, but as an individual who thought matters through carefully, was pragmatic in his response to events and situations, and one who attempted to the utmost of his ability to solve problems without fail.

At the end of the day, after wading through 555 pages of lively text, endnotes packed with information, and a detailed, helpful index, the

reader discovers the true persona of the surprisingly human and fragile Lloyd George, a wholly enigmatic figure who so often sailed very close to the wind both professionally and personally, 'to be a surprisingly vulnerable man constantly in need of reassurance [which both Dame Margaret and Frances Stevenson, in their different, mutually complimentary ways, provided for him] who struggled to reconcile the competing demands of ambition and family' (publisher's press release). Travis Crosby's explanations for his subject's attitudes and actions are carefully thought out, and wholly reasonable and acceptable. Although there is little here that is wholly new to the Lloyd George specialist, the overall survey is always perceptively sharp, lucid and illuminating.

On the whole the author has succeeded in mastering well those Welsh aspects which are so crucial to Lloyd George's early life. He understands the central importance of disestablishing and disendowing the church in late-nineteenth-century Wales and the centrality of issues like the Llanfrothen legal case which gave an enormous fillip to Lloyd George's early career. He gives full attention to prominent Welsh individuals like Thomas Edward Ellis and Thomas Gee who are significant in an understanding of the young Lloyd George. Exceptionally gripping is the account of the courtship between Lloyd George and Maggie Owen and his fraught relationship with his parents-in-law Richard and Mary Owen, Mynydd Ednyfed Fawr, Criccieth. One possible weakness is that he does not, it would appear, fully appreciate the importance of denominationalism within the politics of north Wales. But, in sharp contrast to some historians, Travis Crosby pays attention to the Welsh aspects of Lloyd George's life even after the sudden collapse of the Cymru Fydd movement in 1896 and into the twentieth century.

A number of gripping, significant photographs, carefully selected by the author, are included in the volume and add much to the interest. I. B. Tauris has produced a very attractive volume which reflects great credit on its printers. It is a real pleasure to handle it. Before long the same press

will publish an authoritative new biography of Aneurin Bevan by Nicklaus Thomas-Symonds, a high-quality, balanced study which is sorely needed for this other elusive Welsh politician. And in the autumn yet another volume on David Lloyd George is anticipated from I. B. Tauris, namely *Lloyd*

George: a Life in Politics by Richard Wilkinson. These new studies will be eagerly anticipated by a large number of appreciative readers.

Dr J. Graham Jones was formerly Senior Archivist and Head of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Home rule and the Liberals

Pauric Travers and Donal McCartney (eds.), *Parnell Reconsidered* (University College Dublin Press, 2013)
Reviewed by **Eugenio F. Biagini**

THIS IS A major reassessment of one of the most influential leaders in the making of modern British and Irish politics, and particularly of the Liberal Party, which underwent one of its deepest and most dramatic transformations in response to the 1886 Irish home rule crisis. Charles S. Parnell received considerable historical attention in the run up to the first centenary of his death (1991), and since then he has been revisited by Paul Bew and Patrick Maume in 2011, but on balance remains – as his most recent biographers put it in their title – an *Enigma*. The editors and contributors to *Parnell Reconsidered* have done an excellent job in addressing some of the unresolved questions. These include the 'Meaning of Home Rule' (McCartney, chapter 1), his relationship with Gladstone (D. G. Boyce, chapter 2), Anna Parnell as a feminist (Margaret Ward, chapter 3), Charles S. Parnell's attitudes to religion (Travers, chapter 4), to the newspaper press (Felix Larkin and Myles Dungan, respectively chapters 5 and 6), and his attitude to the drink interest (Fionnula Waldron, chapter 7). Chapters 8 and 9 are devoted to more personal dimensions (with Pat Power writing about the Parnells' Paris link and McCartney writing about sexual scandals). Finally, in chapter 10 Travers explores the 'ne plus ultra' speech (in which Parnell declared that no one could impose limits to 'the march of a nation') and his final manifesto of 29 November 1890.

Taken together, these essays represent an important contribution

to the field, and are particularly welcome to scholars interested in Liberalism – whether of the British or the Irish variety. In the nineteenth century such a political creed was usually associated with demands for parliamentary reform and national self-determination, which the British Liberals had previously supported when demanded by patriotic movements in Greece, Italy and elsewhere. Would they not accept Ireland's plea for devolution? And, once a majority supported Gladstone in his attempt to 'pacify Ireland' through home rule, how solid were the bases of cooperation between the two parties, apart from the sentimental and emotional factors associated with the 'Union of Hearts'? In legislative terms, McCartney shows that there was a stable agreement on which Liberals and Nationalists could cooperate. In particular, although Parnell was disappointed by the 1886 bill because it did not offer sufficient autonomy to Dublin, he soon became a strong advocate of the retention of Irish MPs at Westminster. In other words, though the Irish leader had declared that 'no man [had] a right to fix the boundary of the march of a nation', McCartney concludes that, in practice, for Parnell 'that march ... could go into several different directions', including a more flexible Union, 'depending on unfolding circumstances' (p. 21). Boyce strengthens this point, showing how Parnell echoed Gladstone in identifying the Canadian confederation and Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy as examples of a stable

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