

in that but I recall John Pardoe commenting that, whilst Jeremy was endlessly briefing about the tour and the wellingtons they should bring, there was no mention of what they were actually going to say, though John admired his impromptu speeches on the nation's beaches. And that tended to characterise his whole approach to politics – it was a series of fascinating dramas.

One of those was the aftermath of the February 1974 general election. Jeremy without consulting anybody dashed to London to meet the prime minister, who had just lost the election. The first I (as chief whip) knew of this was a report on the Saturday lunchtime car radio news whilst I was touring my constituency branches to thank them. Bloch says I drove to London – no I flew and got there by evening, talked with Jeremy and in fact drove him to the back entrance of Number 10 on Sunday evening for a second meeting after our Sunday lunchtime meeting with Jo Grimond and Frank Byers (leader in the Lords). We all raised objections but agreed he should probe Ted Heath further on electoral reform. At the Monday meeting of the parliamentary party Bloch describes Jo Grimond as 'speaking in favour of a coalition'. That is potentially

misleading. Jo was as firmly against propping up Heath as the rest of us, but he was perturbed by some of the arguments against coalition in principle which he said were nonsense. It was his stern warning on that issue which coloured my own later judgments on the Lib–Lab pact and indeed the formation of the Cameron–Clegg coalition. It is doubtful whether Jeremy was ever offered any specific cabinet post – certainly it was not discussed.

I question Bloch's assertions on two other points. Firstly, he suggests, as regards the speakership issue in the summer of 1965, that Jo Grimond may have fancied the position himself at some time in the future. I have never thought that was the case: the truth is that the matter was badly handled because the MP for Cardigan, Roddy Bowen, did not come clean and say he would accept the deputy speakership. Had we known that, we might as well have supported him for Speaker. Secondly, he claims that Jeremy offered Ludovic Kennedy a peerage in 1967 and that thereafter Kennedy defected to the SNP. Both are wrong. Ludo was a constituent of mine at the time; he never joined the SNP – merely supported their winning candidate in the Hamilton by-election. Some years later I tried to persuade him to stand in West Edinburgh with the promise that if he failed to win I would nominate him for the Lords. He declined, but never suggested he had been offered a peerage before. Of course when I became leader there was a queue of people who thought they had been promised peerages by Jeremy, and some undoubtedly had been – that was part of his style.

Bloch also records correctly that Jeremy hankered after a peerage himself. Certainly Thorpe bombarded every successive leader on the subject, but the author is a bit unfair to describe Paddy Ashdown's refusal to nominate him as the party being unwilling to forgive him. There was rather more to it than that. Following his acquittal at the famous trial for conspiracy to murder Norman Scott (which is well covered in this volume), the party executive was keen to pursue Jeremy for the return of £20,000, which was part of the Hayward election donation which had been used in his attempts to suppress Scott. I was appalled at this suggestion and argued that we had suffered quite enough bad publicity. The party president and the chairman agreed the matter should be dropped on the clear understanding that Jeremy would play no further part in the party's hierarchy: in other words, no peerage. I and each of my successors stuck to that.

On the matter of Norman Scott, the author tells me that he never spoke to him in view of the many differing accounts he has given of his relationship with Jeremy. Bloch has however spoken to others of Jeremy's liaisons leaving all of us who thought we knew him well astonished at his recklessness. The book – which is a rattling good read – is indeed also an intriguing and valuable study of the extraordinary high-wire behaviour of a public figure; none of which should allow us to forget his charismatic leadership.

David Steel was a Liberal/Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament from 1965 to 1997 and Leader of the Liberal Party, 1976–88.

Pioneering study of Welsh Liberals

Russell Deacon, *The Welsh Liberals: the History of the Liberal and Liberal Democratic Parties in Wales* (Welsh Academic Press, 2014)

Review by **Dr J. Graham Jones**

THIS FINE VOLUME is the latest in a spate of authoritative works regularly produced by the enterprising, Cardiff-based Welsh Academic Press,

run by Ashley Drake, ever since 1994. For the first time ever, we have a comprehensive, substantial study of the Liberal Party (later the Liberal Democrats) in Wales

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from the ground-breaking 'cracking of the ice' general elections of 1859 and 1868 right through until the fourth elections to the National Assembly for Wales held in 2011. The author, Professor Russell Deacon, an established academic teacher, has published widely on Welsh political and administrative history in the twentieth century, is an expert on devolution, and is the author of the important, pioneering volume *The Governance of Wales: the Welsh Office and the Policy Process, 1966–1999* (Welsh Academic Press, 2002).

Russell Deacon has spent close to a full decade immersed in this major scholarly enterprise. He has certainly mastered the extensive scholarly literature in the field. He has also displayed considerable initiative and tenacity by holding some fifty personal interviews with the party's most prominent leading lights in Wales, its local activists and many of its organisers over the last sixty years. The work is also much strengthened by the author's personal interest and active involvement in Welsh Liberal politics over many years, a commitment which has informed and supported his scholarly work. Somewhat disappointing, however, is the relative lack of use in the study of archival and documentary

source materials – with the notable exception of the extensive records of the Welsh Liberal Party set up, primarily by Emlyn Hooson, back in 1967. It is a shame that much more extensive use was not made of the records of local and constituency Liberal associations in Wales (of which many exist) and the rich personal archives of politicians like Lloyd George, his politician children Gwilym and Megan, T. E. Ellis, D. A. Thomas, Clement Davies, Roderic Bowen, Emlyn Hooson and Alex Carlile. Their use would have enriched considerably the quality and depth of the author's analysis.

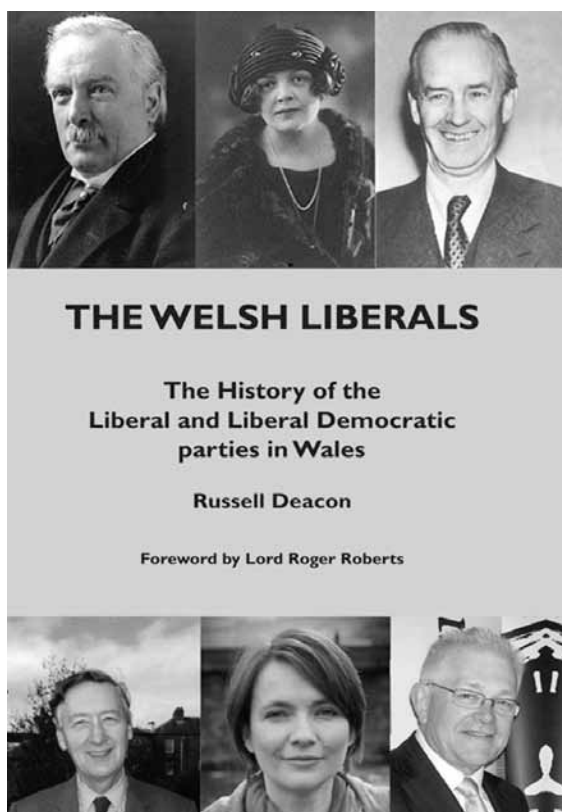
The text is divided into eight discrete chapters. These are considerably fuller and more informative from 1945 onwards, a period in which, it is clear, the author feels much more comfortable and in control. (For the years up to 1922, we have, however, the still authoritative, major work by Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics, 1868–1922*, first published in 1963, and now in its fourth edition [1991].) A major asset of the present work is that the text is divided throughout into short, digestible sections, easily read and appreciated by different categories of readers, scholarly and lay alike. The study excels when the author analyses different elections in Wales and their campaigns. Especially gripping are the large number of lively, well-researched pen portraits of so many Liberal politicians and local party activists which appear throughout the volume. Their contribution and influence throughout the years are thus easily appreciated by the readership.

A major theme of the early chapters is the formation of the South Wales Liberal Federation and the North Wales Liberal Federation, and the (ultimately futile) attempt to merge them together, primarily by the stalwarts of the enterprising *Cymru Fydd* movement from 1886. There is much valuable material here on the leading Welsh Liberal politicians of this period, among them T. E. Ellis, D. A. Thomas, Stuart Rendel, A. C. Humphreys-Owen, Samuel T. Evans, J. Herbert Lewis and the youthful David Lloyd George, the last-named elected to parliament (by a wafer-thin eighteen votes) at just 27 years of age following a hotly contested by-election campaign in

the Carnarvon Boroughs in April 1890. Due attention is devoted, too, to a trenchant analysis of the key political themes of this period – the campaign for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Welsh church, educational reforms, the land question, temperance, and an element of administrative devolution for Wales.

As Deacon clearly demonstrates, Liberal dominance of Welsh political life was nigh on monolithic by the time of the general election of January 1906 when only one division in the whole of the principality – the second Merthyr Tydfil seat captured by Keir Hardie for the Labour Representation Committee – was held by a non-Liberal MP. There was not a single Conservative MP in all of Wales, a result later repeated in the general election of 1907. This overwhelming dominance was also exercised over local government in Wales. Of considerable interest, too, is the coverage given to Welsh Liberal women during this period, among them Margaret Haig Thomas (the daughter of D. A. Thomas MP, and his successor as Lady Rhondda in 1918) and Winifred Combe Tennant, a Neath-based party stalwart and one of many Liberal women wholly entranced by slavish devotion to Lloyd George.

This pattern had been wholly transformed by the time of the general election of 1924 when no more than forty Liberal MPs were returned in the whole of the UK, and in Wales the party had dramatically very quickly retreated to its rural bastions in the north and west. No Liberal MPs remained in the industrial and mercantile south of the country. But Wales still remained a Liberal stronghold especially post-1945 when, of the twelve party MPs re-elected, seven represented Welsh constituencies. The Welsh Liberal casualties in the general election of 1951 were the left-wing, near Socialist radicals Lady Megan Lloyd George (Anglesey) and Emrys O. Roberts (Merioneth). Just three Liberal MPs remained in Wales – the party leader Clement Davies (Montgomeryshire), Roderic Bowen (Cardiganshire) and Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris (Carmarthenshire) – all with marked right-wing, middle-of-the-road tendencies. Russell Deacon evaluates competently the political leanings and



the contributions of each of these important political figures.

Seminal themes analysed in the later chapters of the book include the formation of the Welsh Liberal Party in 1966, the marked revival of party fortunes in the 1980s in the wake of the 'Alliance' and subsequent merger in 1987 with the SDP. The author rightly focuses on the performances of Gwynoro Jones for the SDP at the Gower by-election of 1982 and Felix Aibel for the Liberals in the Cynon Valley by-election of 1984. In the new dawn of devolution, the party won six seats in the first elections to the National Assembly for Wales in 1999. Among the victors were Jenny Randerson (now a distinguished Liberal peer), Peter Black and Mike German. The party was given the groundbreaking opportunity to participate in a coalition government with the Labour Party at Cardiff Bay in October 2000. When Jenny Willot rather sensationally captured Cardiff Central by a wide margin in the general election of 2005, it gave the party an opportunity to extend its influence outside its key rural core areas of Ceredigion, Montgomeryshire and Brecon and Radnor.

All of these themes are well analysed by Professor Deacon in a composite volume which will certainly prove of great interest to a wide range of disparate readers.

But, somehow, the over-arching key question – why the Liberal Party so dramatically lost ground in Wales, as elsewhere, after the First World War – is not really tackled head-on, and the various contributing factors have, in consequence, to be teased out of a largely factual and descriptive account.

The book contains a large number of well-chosen photographs which complement admirably the main text, and the volume has, as ever, been produced to the highest standards by the Welsh Academic Press (although, unfortunately, there are rather too many printing errors). But it is undoubtedly a major contribution to the history of the Liberal Party during the modern period and will complement several other recent works in the same field of study. It is also highly likely to encourage and stimulate further academic research in this area for which it will serve as a solid and durable foundation. This book will surely stand the test of time for a long while. One can but, however, quibble, as so often, at the substantial cover price of £60. Is a more reasonable paperback edition in prospect? I do hope so, and soon.

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

This article argues that the Liberal Party's poor performance in the 1945 election, and the low incidence of tactical voting against Conservative candidates, suggest that 1945 was more than just a reaction against Conservative rule. Instead, many voters appear to have been positively attracted to the identity which the Labour Party projected, as the only party which grounded its promises of social reform in a vision of a planned economy. Dr Sloman is also the author of 'Can we conquer unemployment?: the Liberal Party, public works, and the 1931 political crisis', *Historical Research*, vol. 88, issue 239 (February 2015), pp. 161–84.

Dr Sloman's impeccably scholarly and lucid study in the present volume considers the formulation and application of economic policy within the British Liberal Party from the all-important 'We Can Conquer Unemployment' general election of 30 May 1929 until the party's steady revival under Jo Grimond in the mid-1960s. As befits a study which began its life as a groundbreaking University of Oxford DPhil thesis, it is certainly exhaustive, encompassing full use of Liberal Party records and publications, the personal papers of a large number of Liberal politicians, newspapers and journals, parliamentary papers, and the vast secondary literature on the subject. All these highly disparate sources have been welded into a coherent, highly stimulating analysis. This volume analyses with much competence the diverse intellectual influences which shaped British Liberals' economic thought up to the mid-twentieth century, and highlights the ways in which the party sought to reconcile its progressive identity with its long-standing commitment to free trade and competitive markets.

From about 1990 onwards, the Liberal Party has attracted a considerable scholarly literature, both substantial published monographs and unpublished dissertations, after its sad relegation to third-party status, really since the general election of October 1924. Dr Sloman's monograph is a major contribution to the literature because of its focus on the response of Liberal politicians to economic questions and their policy making. The attention is unquestionably valid. Although the

The economic policies and initiatives of the Liberal Party

Peter Sloman, *The Liberal Party and the Economy, 1929–1964*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford University Press, 2014)

Review by **Dr J. Graham Jones**

FOLLOWING A POSITIVELY brilliant career as an undergraduate and postgraduate student at Oxford University, Dr Peter Sloman is currently Herbert Nicholas Junior Research Fellow in Modern British History at New College, Oxford where he teaches British history since 1815 and supervises numerous undergraduate dissertations in this field of study. He also contributes extensively

to the teaching of the first-year 'Approaches to History' and second- and third-year 'Disciplines of History' papers. His other main research interests include electoral sociology and the politics of the welfare state.

His journal publications include 'Rethinking a progressive moment: the Liberal and Labour parties in the 1945 general election', *Historical Research*, 84 (2011), pp. 722–44.