

contested the newly created constituency of Nottingham West, he did so not as a socialist representing the SDF but rather as someone firmly established in the radical tradition. He identified himself with Chamberlain, not Hyndman.

An examination of local politics, assessing the language socialist activists used, illustrates the way socialist activists were prepared to modify their previously published positions. Further, that the local political environment shaped the ways activists engaged both each other and

official Liberalism. Finally, it was not so much the 'non-revolutionary' character of the British workers which prevented their conversion from Liberalism to more assertive organisations. Rather, it was the close relations between official Liberalism, the miners, their unions, and especially Non-conformity which 'which created a formidable barrier that the socialists could not penetrate.' (185) This was not a case of working-class 'conservatism.' The relations between local Liberalism and socialist activists was an assertion of equality, not deference. Attention to the strained relationship between working-class activism, in its various forms, and the Liberal caucus, in its various parliamentary and urban and rural forms, show how the various questions of membership in various groups and their programmes were negotiated in the dynamic formation of political identities.

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in 1992 – one of only four gains for the party in that year's general election – is assigned particular significance as setting an example to other Cornish seats, though this does prompt the question of why gains in other parts of the country did not result in similar geographic concentrations of success. The answer in part is scattered throughout the book in the various references to Labour's failure in the early and mid twentieth century to establish itself firmly in Cornwall, leaving a much wider space in the political environment for the Liberal Party than elsewhere in the country.

More controversially, Ault suggests that the 1997 successes flowed from a strategic choice by the party: '[The Lib Dem] period of greatest electoral success has been since they abandoned equidistance in the mid-1990s. So, [the party's usual] search for an independent identity, however logical, may have been what was actually holding the party back.'

Conversely, a sense of a distinctive political culture in Cornwall is, Ault concludes, not much of a factor in explaining the Liberal Democrat successes. Feelings of geographic distance and separateness helped foster an anti-establishment mood which benefited a challenger political party, especially as, unlike in Wales or Scotland, it did not come with a nationalistic tinge which benefited a nationalist party. (The Cornish nationalists have never had anything close to the electoral success of the Welsh and Scottish nationalists.) But that was only a relatively small factor.

The character of key Liberal (Democrat) campaigners comes through as being more important, with Ault drawing many pen portraits of many of the party's MPs from the region, showing how in their many different personal ways they were nearly all something out of the ordinary. Moreover, there seems to have been something about Cornwall – perhaps its rural nature – which allowed such personal flair to flourish and gain political reward. It also, Ault suggests, was the sort of territory in which the Liberal and then Liberal Democrat emphasis on local issues could best flourish.

This seems to run slightly counter to the culture point and is a tension left mostly unexplored in Ault's book: is what is significant about Cornwall not its political culture directly, but rather that it is a culture which lets other factors be significant in ways that do not play out elsewhere? There is some evidence in support of this view in Ault's constituency

Cornwall: culture, character and campaigns

John Ault, *Liberal Democrats in Cornwall – Culture, Character or Campaigns?* (Create Space, 2015)

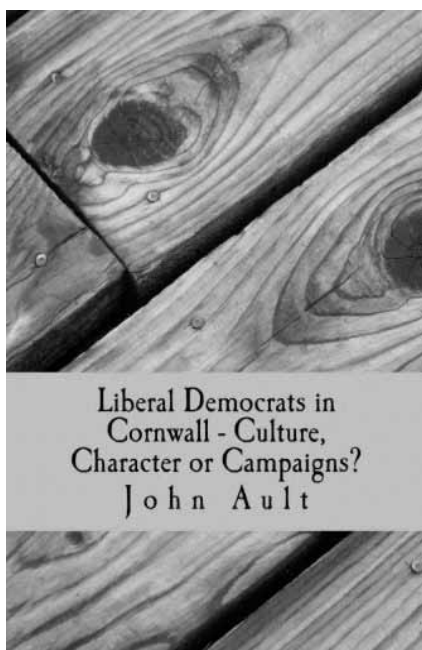
Review by **Mark Pack**

AN EXPANDED VERSION of the author's PhD thesis, John Ault's *Liberal Democrats in Cornwall* is a valuable addition to the relatively sparse number of detailed local histories of the Liberal Democrats. Given its academic roots, it is also much more rigorous in its research and sourcing than other local histories such as *A Flagship Borough: 25 Years of a Liberal Democrat Sutton Council*, *Southport Liberal Association: The first 100 years* or *The Liberals in Hampshire*. Moreover, by looking at a concentrated geographic area, yet one that is larger than a single local party, John Ault is able to provide rather more perspective on the questions of why Liberal Democrats prospered – at least until the

2015 general election – in the areas under examination.

As the title suggests, he tries out the three theories, culture, character and campaigns to explain why Cornwall remained a two-party Conservative–Liberal (Democrat) political system even when Labour was becoming one of the two main parties elsewhere. Cornwall was an area where the old Liberal Party survived better than in most places, and was then also the site of major success under the Lib Dems, including a major breakthrough in 1997 and culminating in the party winning all of the county's parliamentary seats in 2005.

In explaining the start of that run of success, the gain of North Cornwall



research, though it would be fair to conclude that it is more suggestive than conclusive and that it points to a Celtic-fringe rather than Cornwall-only phenomenon.

Turning to the third of Ault's putative factors – campaigning – he draws extensively on telephone surveys conducted in constituencies around the UK before and after the 2010 general election to set the Cornish 2010 results in context. Around 2,600 people were surveyed over thirteen constituencies, making the individual constituency results prone to significant margins of error but sufficient to draw more general conclusions. The constituency analysis gives a multifaceted result, both showing the importance of local campaigning intensity to Liberal Democrat results but also that in some areas in Cornwall the party outperformed for its level of activity, suggesting a wider regional (or, given what is said above, Celtic-fringe) effect.

Boris' Winston

Boris Johnson, *The Churchill Factor: How One Man Made History*

(Hodder & Stoughton, 2014)

Review by **Andrew Connell**

ANOTHER BOOK ABOUT Churchill; is there anything more to say? In identifying Churchill's refusal – backed by Archibald Sinclair in a walk-on role, but not by his 'former mentor' Lloyd George, 'dazzled' by the Fuhrer and now 'an out-and-out defeatist' – to

Given contemporary debates in the party about whether really intensive literature-based campaigning works, it is worth noting that Ault finds that delivering six or more pieces of literature a year outside of election time delivers results. His post-2010 surveys in a smaller sample of seats also give a hint of what was to nearly sink the party in 2015: the less the electorate focused on the contest as being a local choice between rival candidates (rather than a national contest), the worse the Liberal Democrats did.

As the book is an adaptation of John Ault's PhD, it shows its academic roots frequently. Often that is useful, such as in the range of reference sources given for further reading. The less specialist reader should also be aware that this also means the book moves relatively slowly at times when Ault goes through literature reviews. There are also enough typographical errors to be fairly noticeable, and occasionally they also obscure understanding – as with the reference to phantom Appendixes B, C and D for details of the telephone surveys. The typography also is functional rather than beautiful, though at least the generous line spacing leaves plenty of spaces for scribbled thoughts.

Overall, the verdict on Cornwall is that whilst it was campaigning which most propelled Liberal Democrat success, it worked best in tandem with popular and effective characters – and the environment in the Celtic fringe in general was the most receptive for this combination.

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negotiate with a seemingly irresistible, but irredeemably evil, Third Reich in the summer of 1940 as his supreme achievement, Boris Johnson is in accord with an historical consensus contested only on the far right.

But his Churchill is not only the hedgehog who knew one big thing; he is also the fox who knew many things. Egregiously intrepid, courageous, vastly energetic, farsighted and clear-thinking but unfailingly human, Boris's Winston had a unique historical impact that was 'colossal' yet benign. Rationally skipping between Conservative and Liberal parties while embodying the best instincts of both, he was progenitor and later creator of the welfare state (albeit 'heavily influenced' by Lloyd George); he turned the scales in World War I by pioneering the tank, and in World War II by forging the special relationship with the United States. Indeed, most of what is best about modern Europe, Africa and the Middle East can be attributed to Churchill; and what is worst to subsequent failures to heed his wisdom.

Not that Johnson's story is pure hagiography. Churchill is acknowledged to have been wrong about the Dardanelles, Chanak, the gold standard, India and the abdication. But even then he turns out not to have been really to blame. The return to gold was pressed upon him against his better judgement by the likes of Montague Norman, who should have known better; and in his quixotic championing of Edward VIII's right to marry Mrs Simpson and remain king he was ahead of his time. True, Churchill had personal flaws: he was self-indulgent and improvident; he could be inconsiderate and rude. But in the final analysis these were the flaws of the diamond, subsumed in the greatness of the man. If love is imagining that you know someone's faults but they just don't matter, here is a love story.

