

which is placed firmly in the context of recent historiography, illustrates the ways in which an interdisciplinary study can enhance our understanding of the role and influence of the female hostess in the complex world of elite political culture during the late-Victorian period. As such, it sheds not only new light on the high-Victorian salon, a subject which has received relatively little scholarly attention hitherto, but also on the influence of affluent and privileged women on social change during the late-Victorian period. Moreover, as a welcome addition to the growing body of recent research on members of William Gladstone's family (which includes Ros Aitken's, *The Prime Minister's Son: Stephen Gladstone, Rector of Hawarden*, 2012), Kenneth Brown's *The Unknown Gladstone: The Life of Herbert Gladstone, 1854–1930* (2018) and several of the unpublished papers presented at the Gladstone Conference,

held annually at Gladstone's Library at Hawarden), it also, inter alia, provides additional insights into the personality, politics and private life of William Gladstone himself. In this latter context, Weliver's monograph complements, in many respects, Ruth Clayton Windscheffel's excellent interdisciplinary cultural and intellectual study, *Reading Gladstone* (2008). However, at £78.99 per hardback copy, this important book is probably beyond the purchasing power of both scholars and the general reader, and the publishers should give serious consideration to the production of a paperback edition.

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Lloyd George and money

Ian Ivatt, *The Financial Affairs of David Lloyd George* (Welsh Academic Press, 2019)

Review by **Vernon Bogdanor**

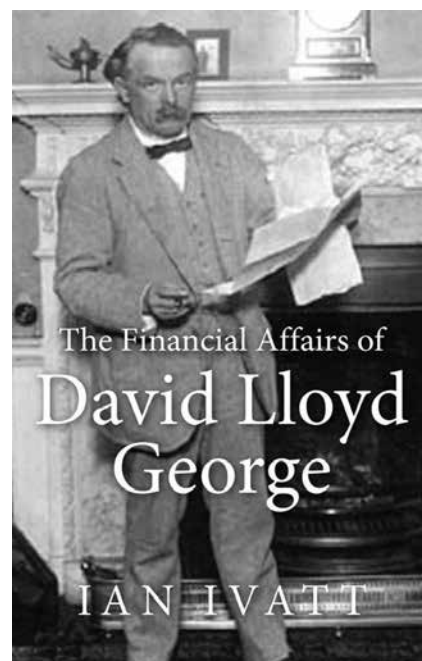
MUCH HAS BEEN written about Lloyd George's love affairs, but hardly anything on his financial affairs, which were far less successful. He started work at the age of 15 as a trainee solicitor's clerk, earning 15 shillings a week – around £40 in today's money. Elected as the youngest MP in the Commons in 1890, twenty-one years before the payment of MPs, and fifteen years before he could enjoy the salary of a cabinet minister, he had to finance himself even to the extent of providing for his travel expenses between London and his Carnarvon Boroughs constituency. Some money was available from the profits of the family legal firm, and his uncle also gave some help. There were, in addition, fees from occasional journalism. Still, he was for many years in some financial difficulty. In 1907, he was offered an allowance from Liberal

Party funds, but, to his credit, turned it down. 'I am not', he said, 'going to accept charity from the Party'. But at his death in 1945, Lloyd George's estate was worth £139,855 – around £6.5 million in today's money. How did he do it? That is the question which Ian Ivatt, a retired tax accountant, seeks to answer in what is the first serious study of Lloyd George's finances.

Lloyd George loved to exaggerate the poverty of his early circumstances. His uncle, Richard Lloyd, who looked after him following the early death of his father, ran a boot repairing business employing three or four paid assistants, and was actually one of the better off in the small Welsh village of Llanystumdwy, near Criccieth. Lloyd George used to tell the story of how he and his siblings had to share an egg every Sunday, but his brother never remembered 'any such dramatic performance

taking part in any meal of ours'. In this, as in other areas of his life, Lloyd George was a fine romancer. Indeed, it is not too harsh to say that no statement of his should ever be accepted unless corroborated from at least one other source.

In his early years, Lloyd George involved himself in various get-rich-quick schemes, most of which collapsed ignominiously. From 1892, he speculated on gold in Argentina, an enterprise veering on the fraudulent. No gold was discovered, and in the words of Lloyd George's brother, the gold mine turned out 'to be a mere illusion of the Patagonian desert'. The story has been told in greater detail in the first volume of John Grigg's biography. More notorious was the Marconi affair of 1913, in which Lloyd George and other ministers acted disreputably by purchasing shares in the American Marconi Company at a time when the government, as he well knew, was awarding the tender for erecting wireless stations across the empire to the British Marconi Company. The two companies were, admittedly, separate entities, but the British company controlled the American and a rise in the shares of the former, a likely consequence of the government contract, would be likely to have a favourable effect on the shares of the American company. In any case, the chancellor of the exchequer had no business to be



General Election 2019: Disappointment for the Liberal Democrats

After crushing defeats in the 2015 and 2017 elections, the Liberal Democrats entered the 2019 general election with high hopes, only for them to be dashed once again. Discuss what went wrong with **Professor Andrew Russell** (Head of Politics, Liverpool University) and **James Gurling** (former chair, Liberal Democrats' Federal Campaigns and Elections Committee).

Postponed from the cancelled Liberal Democrat spring conference in March, this meeting will now be held online.

Time and date to be confirmed; provisionally, a weekday evening in July

Details will be announced on our website (www.liberalhistory.org.uk) and via our email mailing list (to sign up, fill in your details at <http://bit.ly/LDHGmail>)

gambling in shares. The dubiousness of the transaction was, perhaps, somewhat compensated for by the fact that Lloyd George lost money on it – also perhaps by the fact that leading Conservatives, such as Balfour, Chamberlain, Hicks-Beach and Selborne, had been involved in similar transactions unacceptable by modern standards. The story, however, has already been told in great detail in Frances Donaldson's book, *The Marconi Affair*, published as long ago as 1962, in G. R. Searle, *Corruption in British Politics, 1895 to 1930*, published in 1987, and in Grigg's biography. Ian Ivatt does not really have very much to add.

It is not clear that Lloyd George really needed the Marconi money in 1913. For, in 1908, his promotion to the chancellorship had led to an enhanced annual salary and a grace and favour house – 11 Downing Street. This enabled him to afford private schools for his children and the costs of their university education in an era before student grants or maintenance.

As prime minister, Lloyd George established a political fund, eventually worth between £3 and £4 million – worth roughly between £130m and £170m in today's money. The fund was held in the form of a trust, but it

was in practice under Lloyd George's sole control. Much of it was built up through the sale of honours. There was a tariff: knighthoods for £10,000, baronetcies at £30,000, peerages at £50,000 and sometimes more. By the time Lloyd George left office, nearly 100 baronies had been awarded, 294 knighthoods, around 25,000 Order of the British Empire awards and 90 peerages. Lloyd George, indeed, had little respect for the peerage, naming his outside lavatory in North Wales, his 'house of lords', and amusing his guests by saying in the middle of a conversation that he had to go to the house of lords for a moment! Prime ministers had, of course, in effect sold honours before, and were to do so again, though more discreetly and not on so large a scale. The Liberals were, admittedly, in a difficult financial position in the 1920s, since unlike the other two parties, they could not rely on institutional sources of finance from business or trade unions. But the Fund was not a party fund. It was instead earmarked for Lloyd George's personal use and for the provision of expenses of Liberal candidates sympathetic to his policies, which were not always those of the party. Some of the money was used for Lloyd George's policy inquiries in the

1920s, inquiries which led to the bold Keynesian programme put before the voters in the 1929 general election – an intellectually impressive programme though electorally unsuccessful.

After his premiership ended in 1922, Lloyd George had two major sources of finance. The first was fees and royalties from journalism and war memoirs, the second was profits from his various horticultural and farming experiments in the properties he purchased at Churt in Surrey in 1922, and Ty Newydd, a mansion between Criccieth and Llanystumdwy, which he purchased in 1939.

Ian Ivatt has found an interesting subject, but, though worth telling, it is a bit thin to sustain a book, and there is some padding in the form of additional material on Lloyd George's political career, much of which is already known. And it has to be confessed that the story of Lloyd George's finances does not make for exciting reading. Nevertheless, this is a valuable addition to the ever growing library of Lloyd George studies.

Vernon Bogdanor is Professor of Government, King's College, London. His books include Beyond Brexit: Towards a British Constitution, published earlier this year by Tauris.