

Liberal History News

Autumn 2020

Editorial

Welcome to the autumn 2020 issue of the *Journal of Liberal History*. We're now back on our normal printing schedule after the disruption caused by the coronavirus epidemic.

Our first main article this issue is an interview with Jo Swinson on her period as leader – the latest in the series of interviews we have conducted with every former party leader other than Charles Kennedy. We hope these interviews will prove of value to future students of Liberal Democrat history and of political leadership more broadly. We have also updated our comparative table of leadership performance to take account of the interim leadership of Ed Davey and party presidents Sal Brinton and Mark Pack.

Liberal Democrats are used to thinking of Dadabhai Naoroji as the first Liberal black or ethnic minority

MP (in the 1892–95 parliament), but as Amanda Goodrich demonstrates in her fascinating article, he was not – he was preceded by Henry Galgacus Redhead Yorke, who was Whig / Liberal MP for York from 1841 to 1848. The article focuses on him and his father, Henry Redhead Yorke, who was well known to historians of British radicalism as an English revolutionary radical from Derby in the 1790s – but in fact, he was a West Indian creole of African / British descent whose mother, Sarah Bullock, was a slave from Barbuda. Neither were identified at the time as of BME origin.

Our third main article considers the career of the second woman ever to be mayor of an industrial town – Meriel Cowell-Stepney, Lady Howard, who served as mayor of Llanelli in 1916.

This acts as a supplement to its author

Jaime Reynolds' article in issue 89 on the first Liberal women mayors; his work in bringing to light this hitherto largely unknown aspect of Liberal history is the kind of topic this *Journal* was established to encourage.

I hope you enjoy the articles, the meeting report and out book reviews – and stay healthy and safe.

Duncan Brack (Editor)

Liberal history podcasts

Mark Pack's 'Never Mind the Bar Charts' podcast series now has two episodes on Liberal leaders, based on discussions with *Journal* Editor Duncan Brack: on Jo Grimond (10 July 2020) and David Steel (19 August 2020). For the full list of episodes, see <https://www.nevermindthebarcharts.com>.

On This Day ...

Every day the History Group's website, Facebook page and Twitter feed carry an item of Liberal history news from the past. Below we reprint three. To see them regularly, look at www.liberalhistory.org.uk or www.facebook.com/LibDemHistoryGroup or follow us at: [LibHistoryToday](https://twitter.com/LibHistoryToday).

September

29 September 1956: Clement Davies steps down as Liberal leader, stating 'It is time that the tiller was placed in the hands of a younger man. Fortunately, I can step down knowing that there is a worthy successor waiting – one who has fully earned his master's certificate.' He is succeeded in November by Jo Grimond.

October

8 October 1924: A Liberal motion calling for a select committee of inquiry into the 'Campbell case' is passed in the Commons by 364 votes to 198, forcing Ramsay MacDonald's resignation as he chose to interpret the division as a vote of confidence. The following general election sees the Liberals lose three-quarters of their seats.

November

5 November 1909: The Liberal Party takes the extraordinary step of drafting a second Budget ('Finance (Number Two) Bill') on the assumption that the radical 1909 People's Budget, introduced principally to raise taxes for the Liberal governments social welfare programmes, is rejected. However, it decides a few days later not to present the alternative Budget, should the original one be rejected, as this would concede the right to decide on government finances to the House of Lords and the party is becoming increasingly focused on the constitutional question of the peers versus the people.