

Reviews

nationalists come together in valuing raw feelings and emotion over cold empirical analysis' (p. 113) – though the progressive left has not followed the communitarian right in preferring authoritarian government to democracy.

'If liberalism is to be preserved as a system of government, we need to understand the sources of these discontents' (p. 141). Fukuyama stresses that liberalism and state intervention are not incompatible, and that state support for disadvantaged groups is a necessary aspect of democratic government. He acknowledges the delicacy of reconciling liberalism's inherent universalism with the limitations of nation states and national identity; he argues for a stronger emphasis on citizenship and the social contract between citizens and the state as a means of creating 'a positive liberal vision of national identity.' (p. 137) Above all, he argues for a reassertion of reason, moderation and tolerance as governing principles in defending the superiority of liberal democracy to its discontented alternatives.

Political ideas spill back and forth across the Atlantic. Fukuyama provides a pocket guide to current American ideological conflicts, with references to their links to comparable European debates. Both the American progressive left and the libertarian and communitarian versions of the illiberal American right have

close ties to groups within the UK and across the European continent, feeding political movements as they raise and fall. This book will help the defenders of liberalism, now embattled, to understand where their opponents are coming from – and hopefully therefore to defend liberal principles more vigorously.

William Wallace (Lord Wallace of Saltaire) studied at Cambridge, Cornell and Oxford, taught at Manchester, Oxford and the LSE, and has researched and published on British foreign policy, national identity and European international politics. He is currently Liberal Democrat Cabinet Office spokesman in the Lords.

Liberal women in Devon

J. Neville, M. Auchterlonie, P. Auchterlonie and A. Roberts (eds.), *Devon Women in Public and Professional Life 1900–1950: Votes, voices and vocations* (Exeter University Press, 2021)

Review by Mark Egan

THIS IS A well-written and impressively researched series of essays on eight women, prominent in civic life in Devon during the first half of the twentieth century. Each of the women was active in politics, medicine and teaching, the voluntary sector or rural life: some were active in more than one area. The authors' intention is to assess how the women contributed to public, professional and civic life in the county and to what degree a rural county, distant from London, reflected developments in the women's movement nationally. This aim is certainly achieved. As well as chapters on each of the women, there are engaging introductory and concluding

chapters which pull together the various themes from the essays to discuss what these stories can tell us about women in civic life after enfranchisement.

Some of the women covered in this book were active Liberals and their stories will be of particular interest to readers of this *Journal*. The first essay deals with Eleanor Acland (1878–1933). Acland should be a familiar name for anyone interested in Liberal history. Eleanor's husband was Francis Acland, a Liberal MP for most of the period from 1906 until his death in 1939, whose forebears included numerous politicians. Their son, Richard Acland, was also a Liberal, who went on to found the wartime Common

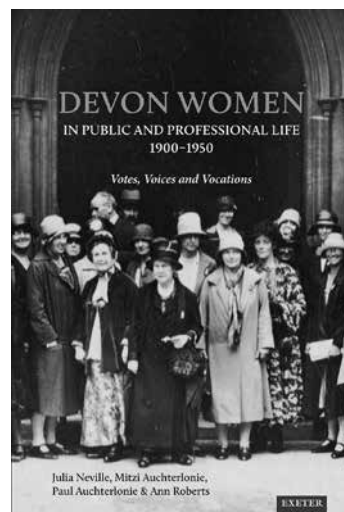
Wealth party. Eleanor's political career began shortly after her husband was elected to parliament, when she became a prominent suffragist. In 1913 she was instrumental in founding the Liberal Women's Suffrage Union, which aimed to ensure that anti-suffrage candidates were not selected by the Liberal Party. It has been suggested that she was offered a Liberal candidature in 1918, but she worked instead with her husband to help him retain Camborne. From 1919 she took on prominent roles in the Women's National Liberal Federation, becoming its president in 1929.

Acland identified herself as a progressive in politics and reacted positively to the prospect of the 1924 Labour government, which she felt drew most of its programme from the Liberals. Her attitude cooled subsequently, but she welcomed Lloyd George's political initiatives in the late 1920s, having earlier identified herself as a staunch Asquithite. An outspoken champion of the League of Nations, and a member of the Peace with Ireland Council (the publication of a report of her visit to Ireland in 1921, which commented adversely on the UK government's policy there, brought on a libel action which she successfully defended), she was also prominent in numerous civic organisations in Devon. She stood for parliament at Exeter in

1931, blaming her defeat on inadequate organisation. She died, aged 55, in 1933.

A 'born leader' and 'avowed feminist' who 'upheld Liberal principles throughout her life', the essay concludes by noting how many prominent works on Liberal history and women's suffrage fail to mention her. To that list could be added our own publications, including the *Mothers of Liberty* booklet, suggesting, perhaps, a continuing tendency to overlook the significance of the Women's National Liberal Federation and the influence of the women who led it.

Two other essays touch on the decline of the Liberal Party after the First World War. Clara Daymond is the only working-class woman in the book. Her husband, George, was a builder who became a borough councillor in Plymouth. Methodists and temperance activists, the Daymonds were Liberals and Daymond threw herself into a variety of civic causes as well as the women's suffrage movement. George Daymond had always stood for election as an independent, as did Clara when she was first elected in 1919. She was backed by the Plymouth Citizens Association, an organisation which emerged from the local suffragists' groups and was open to men and women. Initially intended to promote a new non-partisan politics, the Citizens Association (and similar



organisations in other parts of the country) became ways of bringing Liberals and Conservatives together to fight the Labour Party at local elections. In 1924, the Daymonds broke with the Liberals and joined the Conservatives. Nevertheless, Clara retained good relations with women Liberals across the county and, in the 1930s, her election campaigns were endorsed by local Liberals. That, in the view of the author, was because there was no distinction between the two parties in Plymouth at that time.

Politics did not play a major part in the life of Sylvia Calmady-Hamlyn, the third of the subjects of essays in this volume to have been an active Liberal. She was an agriculturalist who helped establish the Women's Institute movement in Devon. She described herself as a Liberal during the First World War but ten years later she had moved to the left and was talked about as

A Liberal Democrat History Group evening meeting

Forgotten Liberal Heroes: Sir Edward Grey and Richard Haldane

Sir Edward Grey served as Foreign Secretary and remains the longest-serving holder of the office. He maintained good relations with France and Russia at a time of great instability in Europe. When his efforts to avert conflict failed, in 1914, Grey persuaded a divided cabinet to support Britain's entry to the First World War.

Richard Haldane was Secretary for War and created the Territorial Army and the British Expeditionary Force. As Lord Chancellor after 1912 he pursued a series of judicial reforms. He was also a co-founder of the UK university system.

Both have a credible case for being regarded as Liberal heroes. But Grey's record has been strongly criticised in recent years and Haldane is largely forgotten.

Join **Thomas Otte** (University of East Anglia and author of *Statesman of Europe: A Life of Sir Edward Grey*) and **John Campbell OBE** (author of *Haldane: The Forgotten Statesman Who Shaped Modern Britain*) to assess these Liberals and their legacies.

7.00pm, Monday 30 January (following History Group AGM at 6.30pm)
Violet Bonham Carter Room, National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE. *Online participation is also possible: register via the History Group website at www.liberalhistory.org.uk*

a prospective Labour candidate in the county. She broke with the Women's Institute in Devon after criticising its leadership for being unduly dominated by Unionists.

The essays on Daymond and Calmady-Hamlyn provide further evidence of how the polarisation of British politics after 1918 led to many Liberals drifting away from the party, to the left or the right. Eleanor Acland may

well have done the same, had she not been so firmly rooted in the party. However, the most striking impression that this book leaves is of the vibrancy and interconnectedness of civic life in Devon during the period covered. It shows that many women (particularly middle-class and aristocratic women) were politically engaged, but not necessarily through political parties. This is an interesting

point to reflect on when so much focus is placed elsewhere on parliamentary elections and political parties as the basis for political activity.

Mark Egan is a longstanding member of the Liberal Democrat History Group, whose doctoral thesis was on the grassroots organisation of the Liberal Party 1945–64. He is currently interim CEO of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh.