

ernment. 'Nobody can suppose', wrote Mill, 'that it is not more beneficial to a Breton, or a Basque of French Navarre, to be brought into the current of the ideas and feelings of a highly civilised and cultivated people – to be a member of the French nationality, admitted on equal terms to all the privileges of French citizenship, sharing the advantages of French protection, and the dignity and prestige of French power – than to sulk on his own rocks, the half-savage relic of past times, revolving in his own little mental orbit, without participation or interest in the general movement of the world. The same remark applies to the Welshman or the Scottish Highlander, as members of the British nation.'

The argument would hardly be

put in the same terms today, but it illustrates the general point – and in this context it is interesting to note how the Spanish regions have come to terms with their current status, how they are building relationships with EU structures, how regional government has diminished, not increased, the pressures for independence – and how some regionalist parties (e.g. *Convergencia i Unia* in Catalonia) are becoming more liberal. But more nationalists tended to lean in the direction of rhetoric over blood and race – a simplistic and illiberal answer to the problems of a complex world.

Notes:

- 1 See Graham Watson, 'Scottish Liberals, Scottish Nationalists and Dreams of a Common Front', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* 22 (Spring 1999).

early days in Australia were marred by a series of gaffes and misunderstandings, but his patronage of local writers and artists and his readiness, on occasion, to defy protocol won the admiration of some. As governor and commander-in-chief his real power was limited, though the position was not entirely ceremonial. He helped arrange for the participation of New South Wales contingents in the Boer War and calmly dealt with an outbreak of bubonic plague in the colony in 1900. His most significant political act was to refuse, with Chamberlain's backing, a dissolution of the state parliament in 1899 in the knowledge that William Lyne was in a position to form a government. The creation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1900 left Beauchamp in a difficult position. He went on leave in October on half-pay and did not return.

In 1902 Beauchamp married Lady Lettice Grosvenor, sister of the Duke Westminster, and prepared to throw himself into British politics. But the Unionists' move after 1903 towards the policy of tariff reform alienated a life-long free trader. Not surprisingly, he was received with enthusiasm into the Liberal ranks. He was known to be wealthy and influential and had the reputation of being a model landlord. Beauchamp soon became renowned for his hospitality. His receptions at Halkyn House in Belgrave Square became a highlight of the social season for Edwardian Liberals.

Beauchamp was Captain of the Honourable Corps of Gentlemen-at-Arms in 1906–07 and His Majesty's Steward, 1907–10. But his promotion to Asquith's cabinet in June 1910 as Lord President of the Council came as a surprise. 'Beauchamp a cabinet minister!' proclaimed a Tory who had known him well at Oxford. 'I don't know why, but this strikes me as inexpressibly funny.'¹

In the absence, before December 1916, of cabinet minutes, it is not easy to determine the nature of Beauchamp's contribution to the turbulent political years before the outbreak of the First World War.

Biographies

William Lygon, 7th Earl Beauchamp (1872–1938)

David Dutton

Though he has not left an enormous mark upon the historical record, William Lygon, Earl Beauchamp, occupied an important position in Liberal politics for more than two decades. For much of his career he was obliged to grapple with the intractable problems of Liberal decline.

Lygon was born in London on 20 February 1872, the elder son of Frederick Lygon, sixth Earl Beauchamp, and his first wife, Mary, daughter of the fifth Earl Stanhope. Educated at Eton, he succeeded his father as Earl Beauchamp on the day before his nineteenth birthday in 1891, and shortly after going up to Christ Church, Oxford. He thereby inherited 5,000 acres in Worcestershire.

His interest in public affairs quickly became apparent and he be-

came Mayor of Worcester in 1895, at the age of just twenty-three. With his high Anglican background he was a natural adherent of the Unionist party. Even so, most observers – and Beauchamp himself – were surprised when the Unionist Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, offered him the governorship of New South Wales in 1899. He was still only twenty-seven years of age. This rather imaginative appointment proved only partially successful. His

Such evidence as there is suggests that he was rather overshadowed inside a cabinet of political heavyweights such as Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, Edward Grey and R.B. Haldane, as well as Asquith himself. He was, judged one colleague, except on 'office questions' a 'silent member of the Cabinet'.²

That observer's judgment had only marginally changed by March 1915, as Beauchamp neared the end of his ministerial career: 'Beauchamp is a nonentity of pleasant manners, a good deal of courage, and a man of principle, but with no power of expression.'³ Asquith himself placed him in the lowest category in the ranking list of his ministers which he drew up for the amusement of his youthful confidante, Venetia Stanley.⁴

With some show of reluctance on his part, Beauchamp was moved to the post of First Commissioner of Works in November 1910.⁵ In this position he proved to be a useful committee man while more colourful figures occupied the political limelight. In April 1912 he sat on a cabinet committee to deal with the wave of strikes in the transport system and in December 1913 he chaired the Central Land and Housing Council, designed to advance Lloyd George's Land Campaign.

By this stage he was regarded as being on the radical wing of the party and in January 1914 presented Asquith with a letter signed by Hobhouse, McKenna, Runciman, McKinnon Wood, Simon and himself opposing Churchill's extravagant estimates at the Admiralty.⁶ With the approach of European war he was among the group of about seven ministers who hesitated over the declaration of hostilities. 'All agreed we were not prepared to go into war now, but that in certain events we might reconsider our position, such as the invasion wholesale of Belgium.'⁷ This group lunched at Beauchamp's house, which was conveniently close to Westminster, on 2 August to discuss their position. The following day, after the cabinet had discussed the formal statement to be made by the Foreign Secretary, Asquith an-

nounced that, with regret, he had received the resignations of John Morley, John Burns and John Simon. Beauchamp 'leaned forward and asked to be included'.⁸ In the event he, along with Simon, withdrew their resignations when Asquith pointed out that, should the cabinet break up, the only result would be to allow the Unionists to enter the government.

Beauchamp now returned to the post of Lord President to fill the vacancy created by Morley's resignation. In the early months of the war Asquith gave serious consideration to his appointment to the forthcoming vacancy for the Viceroyalty of India, knowing that he would relish the ceremonial side of that position. When, however, a coalition was formed in May 1915, the necessity to make room for Unionist ministers made him an inevitable casualty. He himself regarded Churchill as the 'primary cause of trouble', believing that the First Lord should be the first victim of the governmental reconstruction.⁹

As the demands of war threatened to encroach ever further upon traditional Liberal principles, Beauchamp became President of the Free Trade Union in 1916 in succession to Arnold Morley. Once Lloyd George became Prime Minister, he moved increasingly into a position of opposition to the government and he was sympathetic to Lord Lansdowne's call for a compromise peace.¹⁰ This strand of Liberalism suffered grievously in the general election of December 1918, but Beauchamp, with his seat in the upper chamber, provided a source of stability and continuity in the party's fortunes during the difficult decade of the 1920s, becoming the party's leader in the Lords in 1924 in succession to Viscount Grey. In this post he campaigned tirelessly. In the 1929 election campaign he was the party's most travelled speaker. He was particularly active at the party's annual conferences in the second half of the decade.

With the Liberal Party still deeply divided – notwithstanding the apparent reconciliation of Lloyd George

and Asquith in 1923 – he sought the role of conciliator, though with only limited success. While Beauchamp reconciled himself to Lloyd George's effective takeover of the party after Asquith's retirement, many other Liberals did not. An attempt to patch up differences with Walter Runciman led to a particularly blunt rebuff from the latter's wife. Beauchamp recorded his exasperation:

I came to see you at your request. I was advised not to come by those who know you. In your home to which you had invited me, you entertained me to an hour and a half of studied insolence such as I have never experienced in a varied life. You took advantage of the fact that you were a lady to whom I must speak with respect in her own house. I hope I may never have such an experience again. I am afraid we must disagree as much on the principles of hospitality as we do on our ideas of what Liberalism means.¹¹

Like many other Liberals he faced the 1929 general election with some optimism. But the result, in which the party secured 23.4% of the popular vote but only fifty-nine seats in the House of Commons, came as a bitter disappointment. He sought consolation in taking the Chancellorship of the University of London in succession to Lord Rosebery.

In 1931, however, Beauchamp's political career came to an abrupt end. He resigned all his appointments and public offices, except for the Lord Wardenship of the Cinque Ports which he had assumed in 1913, and went to live abroad. But for a crisis in his private life, he might well have received high office in the National Government formed a few months later. (His successor as leader of the Liberal peers, the Marquess of Reading, emerged as Foreign Secretary.) Though the matter was not widely publicised at the time, it is clear that Beauchamp was threatened with divorce and criminal proceedings which would reveal his homosexuality. His accuser was his own brother-in-law, 'Bend'or', the eccentric second Duke of Westminster.¹²

The Labour MP Hugh Dalton confided the truth of the matter to the privacy of his diary:

On Thursday night I dined with Ponsonby at the House, and he told me all about the sad case of Lord Beauchamp, who has had a persistent weakness for footmen, and has been finally persuaded by Simon and Buckmaster to sign an undertaking not to return to England. The King didn't want a scandal because he was a Knight of the Garter!¹³

Thereafter Beauchamp lived a somewhat pathetic peripatetic existence. According to one account he told his children that suicide was the only way out.¹⁴ He hoped that the arrival in 1936 of a new king, Edward VIII, with supposedly enlightened views, might enable him to end his exile.¹⁵

It was not to be. He died of cancer in New York on 15 November 1938. His wife had died in 1936, but he was survived by two of his three sons and by four daughters. His title passed to his eldest son, who had been elected as Liberal MP for Norfolk East in 1929 and who held junior office in the National Government. Perhaps Beauchamp's most lasting legacy was the assumed por-

trayal of his family tragedy in Evelyn Waugh's novel *Brideshead Revisited*.

Notes:

1. J. Vincent (ed.), *The Crauford Papers* (Manchester, 1984), p. 159.
2. E. David (ed.), *Inside Asquith's Cabinet* (London, 1977), p. 121.
3. David, *Inside Asquith's Cabinet*, p. 229.
4. M. and E. Brock (eds), *H.H. Asquith: Letters to Venetia Stanley* (Oxford, 1982), p. 452. In Asquith's private code Beauchamp was, rather dismissively, styled as 'Sweetheart'.
5. To make way for Lord Morley who was anxious to leave the India Office.
6. Beauchamp and others to Asquith, 29 January 1914, cited in R.S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill: Young Statesman 1901-1914* (London, 1967), pp. 676-77.
7. J.A. Pease, diary 2 August 1914.
8. David, *Inside Asquith's Cabinet*, p. 180.
9. M. Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill 1914-1916* (London, 1971), p. 454.
10. D. Dutton (ed.), *Odyssey of an Edwardian Liberal* (Gloucester, 1989), p. 54.
11. Beauchamp to H. Samuel, 17 December 1928, enclosing letter to Mrs Runciman, Samuel MSS A/155/vii/43.
12. G. Ridley, *Bend'Or, Duke of Westminster: a Personal Memoir* (London, 1985), p. 173.
13. B. Pimlott (ed.), *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton 1918-1940, 1945-60* (London, 1986), pp. 148-49.
14. K. Young (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart 1915-1938* (London, 1973), p. 223.
15. N. Smart (ed.), *The Diaries and Letters of Robert Bernays, 1932-1939* (Lampeter, 1996), p. 257.

The numerous collections now held include several of potential interest to Liberal Democrat party historians. Indeed, the first collection of any size to be received, in 1933, was the archive of the nineteenth-century polymath and Radical MP, *Thomas Perronet Thompson* (1783-1869).

Born in Hull, the son of a wealthy local merchant and banker, this extraordinary man enjoyed several different careers. He graduated in mathematics at Queen's College Cambridge in 1802, and then had periods in the navy and the army. Close family connections with William Wilberforce led to his appointment in 1808 as governor of Sierra Leone, from where he was recalled in apparent disgrace within two years, having tried to change too much too fast. He rejoined the army, and was involved in disastrous campaigns in the Gulf (including the evacuation of Ras-al-Khyma in July 1820), leading to his court martial.

Returning home, he threw himself into Radical politics, met Jeremy Bentham, and made the first of many contributions to *The Westminster Review*. Inheriting his father's fortune in 1828, he spent most of it on his life as a political journalist (he immediately bought *The Westminster Review*) and Radical politician. His two most significant publications, pamphlets on *The True Theory of Rent* and *Catechism on the Corn Laws*, appeared in 1826 and 1827.

In the 1830s he took up the cause of Catholic emancipation, and his pamphlet on the subject quickly sold 40,000 copies. He was a strong supporter of the Reform Act of 1832, and soon sought a more active political role by standing for parliament himself, winning a by-election for Hull in 1835 as a Radical, in which capacity he was one of only six MPs to sign the original People's Charter in 1837, calling for a wider franchise and parliamentary reform. He also became active in the Anti-Corn Law League, and following victory in 1846 was publicly praised by Richard Cobden for his support. In 1847 he won Bradford for the Radi-

Archives

Liberal and Related Archives at the University of Hull

Brian Dyson, Hull University Archivist

The University of Hull's Brynmor Jones Library (BJL) has been collecting political archives and manuscripts ever since the foundation of the university, initially a college of London University, in 1928. It literally started with one item, a John Stuart Mill document donated by Professor Harold Laski of the London School of Economics.