

platform party, including me, was forced to flee and our car was stoned as we left.

‘My father combined his parliamentary duties with his business interests, as was common in those days, but was also a conscientious constituency MP. I worked in his office for a time and remember him dealing with casework and holding surgeries in Cornwall. His nickname in the House was “Honest Tom”. I can remember seeing the fireworks to celebrate the end of the War in Europe from the House of Commons Terrace. My father was delighted with Labour’s victory in 1945. Bumping into Churchill in the House shortly afterwards, the deposed Prime Minister said “you’re not such a fan of me now, Horabin!”

‘My father was always a radical, and I think he joined the Liberals because they were the people he tended to mix with before the War. He was close to Clement Davies, but in Parliament he also became friendly with Labour MPs such as Nye Bevan, Jennie Lee and Harold Wilson. W. J. Brown, who became the Independent MP for Rubgy, was another friend who helped in the by-election. My father was never ambitious to achieve high office in any party. He was more interested in achieving results than in gaining position for himself. I think he left the Liberals because he thought Labour were more likely to implement the radical policies in which he believed, given that they were in power. He was offered a peerage in 1947 or 1948 but refused. In those days there were no life peerages and my father didn’t want to pass a title on to his eldest son without the backup of financial independence.

‘He was part of the “Keep Left” group, which included Bevan. They used to meet in our London home. When he left the Liberals, my father decided not to contest North Cornwall again as he didn’t wish to oppose old friends. He stood in Exeter in 1950 for Labour, but his

‘My father was always a radical, and I think he joined the Liberals because they were the people he tended to mix with before the War.’

political career had effectively been ended by the plane crash in Romney Marsh in which he broke a leg and was badly burned. He was wheelchair-bound for a year and never physically robust thereafter.

‘The crash was not due to engine failure, as stated in your article, but to negligence on the part of BOAC. The flight crew lacked experience of the route being taken, from London to Bordeaux. They had not been supplied with the relevant maps and made a series of bad decisions when poor weather conditions forced them to seek an alternative place to land. They nearly got all the way back to Manston but the pilot did not appreciate how little fuel was left. Four of the five members of the

flight crew as well as four of the eleven passengers were killed.

‘My father sued BOAC for £11,000 loss of earnings and the case came to court in 1952. The company claimed that, under the Carriage by Air Act 1932, their liability was limited to £3,000 unless “wilful negligence” could be proved. The jury failed to reach a verdict and my father was forced to accept the lower level of compensation. He would have preferred to fight on, but couldn’t afford to do so. His death, in 1956, was directly attributable to the nature of the burns he suffered.’

Mary Wright is the daughter of Tom Horabin. Robert Ingham is a historical writer, and Biographies Editor of the Journal.

BEVERIDGE IN PERSON

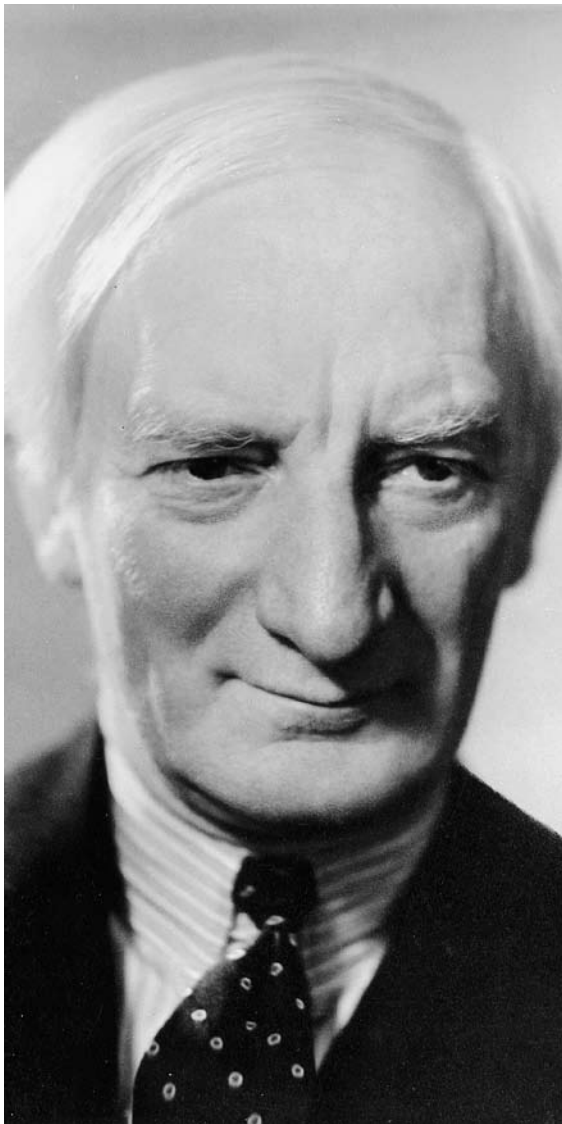
IN ISSUE 34/35 of the *Journal* (spring/summer 2002), a biography of Ivor Davies was published, written by his son, John Davies. The following was found amongst Ivor Davies’ papers.

A note on Lord Beveridge

I first met William Beveridge when I was but four years old. Immediately after the Second World War, my father, an avid Liberal, was released from the Royal Air Force to fight the Parliamentary constituency of Central Aberdeenshire. We were travelling north on the ‘Flying Scotsman’ when we were told that Beveridge was also on the train and would like to meet us. We were ushered along from the third-class

carriages to the first-class section. In the corner of his more opulent apartment sat a bespectacled, white-haired man with a pile of papers on his knee. My father introduced me: ‘John, this is Sir William Beveridge’. My subsequent conversation with him was inevitably limited, but I left with the impression that I had been in the presence of a very important old man.

Beveridge was himself a high-flying Scotsman. Born not in the country of his ancestors but in Rangpur, India, he was a child of empire, from a family sufficiently well off financially to send him to Charterhouse School and to Balliol College, Oxford, where he proved to be a brilliant scholar. A spell at Toynbee Hall in London awakened his social conscience. He



William Beveridge
in 1938

became a dedicated Liberal and a recognised expert on unemployment insurance. As such, he participated vigorously in the radical reforms of the early twentieth century, but, with the rise of the Labour Party and the decline of the Liberals, he moved back to the groves of academe, first as Director of the London School of Economics and then as Master of University College, Oxford.

In 1941, he was recalled by the Coalition Government to supervise the production of the report on *Social Insurance and Allied Services* that made his name as a household word. He became Member of Parliament for Berwick-upon-Tweed. When we met him in 1945, he alighted at that station to embark upon an unsuccessful defence of this seat in the House of Commons.

In semi-retirement, he chose to return to Oxford, settling at Staverton House in Summer-town to the north of the city. Here our paths crossed again. My father had been the Liberal candidate in Oxford at the 'Munich by-election' in 1938 and was in the 1950s reinstated as the candidate for the constituency. Beveridge was an important backer, much in demand for chairing meetings, providing picture opportunities, opening fetes and Christmas fairs. Regular visits were made to Staverton House.

There were large numbers of other visitors, too, from the many walks of life that Beveridge had inhabited. Some were not always entirely welcome. Beveridge was a man of consensus; he did not relish confrontation. I recall that on one occasion his wife Janet said: 'I am afraid that you will find us rather out of sorts today. That silly ass Bertie Russell has been here, arguing with William and upsetting him' – a somewhat peremptory dismissal of the Nobel Prize-winner, generally acknowledged to have possessed one of the finest mathematical and philosophical minds of his generation.

I still have the last Christmas card sent by Lord Beveridge to my parents, in 1960, shortly after Janet had died. Inside the card, over the simple signature of 'William Beveridge', is a photograph of him looking skyward. Opposite that is printed a sonnet by Samuel Butler, which Beveridge recalled copying on its first appearance in the *Athenaeum* magazine in 1902.

Beveridge died in 1963. The choice of this poem as his nunc dimittis is a curious and intriguing one. Butler, like Bertrand Russell, was an avowed atheist. In these verses, he dismissed the grand expectations of after-life enshrined in Christian and classical religion. Lofty poetic concepts of heaven and hell are similarly rejected. The Greek title of the piece, 'Μέλλοντα Ταύτα' (which may be broadly

translated as 'The whole future' or 'All that is to come') must be regarded as ironic. Death is portrayed as mere oblivion. The only hope of immortality lies in the remembrance of our actions and words by those still living on earth. All in all, this is an unusual and slightly controversial message to convey, particularly at Christmas. Beveridge's visions belonged strictly to this world.

Christmas 1960

I hope that you will care to have this Christmas card, the last to be of a long line of such greetings that Janet and I sent to our friends. The good wishes that I send with it will continue so long as I do, even though the cards have stopped.

Samuel Butler's sonnet is printed as I copied it out on its first appearance in the *Athenaeum* of January 4th, 1902.

Μέλλοντα Ταύτα

Not on sad Stygian shore, nor in
clear sheen
Of far Elysian plain, shall we
meet those
Among the dead whose pupils
we have been,
Nor those great shades whom
we have held as foes;
No meadow of asphodel our feet
shall tread,
Nor shall we look each other in
the face
To love or hate each other being
dead,
Hoping some praise, or fearing
some disgrace.
We shall not argue, saying "'Twas
thus' – or 'thus',
Our argument's whole drift we
shall forget,
Who's right, who's wrong, will
be all one to us,
We shall not even know that we
have met.
Yet meet we shall, and part,
and meet again,
Where dead mean meet, on
lips of living men.

Samuel Butler, 1902