

LIBERAL HISTORY NEWS

SPRING 2011

Liberal History News

is a regular feature in the *Journal* (except in special themed issues), reporting news of meetings, conferences, commemorations, dinners or any other events, together with anything else of contemporary interest to our readers. Contributions are very welcome; please keep them concise, and accompany them, if possible, with photos. Email to the Editor on journal@liberalhistory.org.uk

Lloyd George Society weekend school, 2011

The annual weekend school of the Lloyd George Society took place on 18–20 February at the Hotel Commodore in Llandrindod Wells, where members of the Society enjoyed talks and presentations on politics, economics and history. **Graham Lippiatt** reports.

This year's programme featured two contributions which touched directly on the life and times of David Lloyd George, as well as a review of Welsh Liberal history by Professor Russell Deacon whose book, *The Welsh Liberals: The History of the Liberal and Liberal Democrat parties in Wales* is to be published later this year by Welsh Academic Press.

Andrew Green, the Librarian and Chief Executive of the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, gave a presentation about the history and work of the National Library that included details of the collections in the Welsh Political Archive containing many papers relating to David Lloyd George and his family.

The National Library is also the repository for the Welsh Film and Television Archive and Andrew Green showed some fascinating film of Lloyd George and his family

at Criccieth as well as footage of LG, accompanied by his daughter Megan and his son Gwilym, on his controversial visit to meet Hitler at Berchtesgaden in 1936. The home movie style film was shot by LG's long-time private secretary, A J Sylvester. Equally important, Andrew Green showed a clip from the famous silent film completed in the last months of the First World War, *The Life Story of David Lloyd George*. The film, which was suddenly and mysteriously withdrawn before its first screening, was believed to have been lost forever but was rediscovered in 1994 among material belonging to Viscount Tenby, LG's grandson.

The National Library represents a wonderful resource to students of Welsh political history with many materials available online and a number of digitisation projects, such as one of many Welsh local newspapers, being completed – visit www.llgc.org.uk to find out more.

In the afternoon session of the School, members were treated to a talk about, and later a showing of, the award-winning documentary, *Dwy Wraig Lloyd George* (The Two Wives of Lloyd George) by Catrin Evans, the film's producer. The revealing documentary, a Tinopolis production for S4C, was the culmination of years of research by Ffion Hague for her book, *The Pain and Privilege: The Women in Lloyd George's Life*, published in 2008. Among the highlights was the first television interview ever with Frances Stevenson's daughter, Jennifer Longford, now a Vice-President of the Lloyd George Society.

More information about the Lloyd George Society can be found at its website, www.lloydgeorgesociety.org.uk.

Records in Essex

The records of the North-East Essex Euro-Constituency Association for the 1984 Euro election have been deposited with the Essex Record Office, Wharf Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 6YT. (Tel: 01245 244606, www.essex.gov.uk/ero). Report by **Stewart Rayment**.

They have been given Accession Number A12987 – catalogue reference D/Z 575. This comprises minutes, letters (the seat was contested by the SDP, whose prospective candidates were asked about 'open joint selection') and the like. Certain (membership) records may only be viewed with the consent of the depositor.

ERO has a fair amount of Liberal and Lib Dem material in its archive, including minute books and newspaper cuttings from the nineteenth century in relation to some Liberal Associations and Colchester Liberal Club, microfilm of election scrapbooks from 1900, 1906 and 1910 and some documents going back as far as the 1840s.

There is also a significant amount of more contemporary material, particularly *Focus* leaflets from Southend's Chalkwell Ward (Southend was an early exponent of this kind of campaigning) and also the press cuttings book of Maldon Young Liberal Association from 1968 to 1977 on microfilm – which is just as well, for they are probably otherwise lost. (It is good practice to deposit such materials with County Record Offices for that very reason.)

Details of what papers relating to the Liberal Party and Liberal Democrats are in the archive can be accessed at the link: http://seax.essexcc.gov.uk/all_results.asp?intSearchType=12.

Identity cards and Harry Willcock

The reference in your website 'On this day' (21 February) to the abolition of UK identity cards in 1952 prompts one to recall the case of Harry Willcock (1896–1952) who was the last person to be prosecuted for refusing to produce his identity card. By **Sandy Waugh**.

While driving in London on 7 December 1950, Willcock was stopped by a police constable and instructed to present his identity card at a police station within 48 hours. He refused, saying: 'I am a Liberal and I am against this sort of thing'. He was then prosecuted under the 1939 National Registration Act, convicted and fined ten shillings (the equivalent of about £13 today).

Although he lost his appeal, Lord Chief Justice Goddard spoke out against the continued use of compulsory identity cards. Thereafter, Willcock led a campaign against identity cards and when they were abolished, in response to the Lord Chief Justice's comments and the campaign, hundreds of cards were posted to him to auction for charity.

A former councillor and magistrate in Leeds and a Liberal candidate (1945 and 1950) in Barking, he died on 12 December 1952 (less than ten months after identity cards were abolished) while debating at a meeting in the National Liberal Club in London. His last word before his death was reported to have been 'freedom'.

Journal of Liberal History 17 (winter 1997–98) contained an article about Willcock and the abolition of identity cards; this issue is freely available on the History Group's website at www.liberalhistory.org.uk.