

JOHN SUTTON LIBERALISM AND TOWN PLANNING

Slum housing and town planning were two of the principal concerns of the renewed Condition of England debate in the period 1880–1914. They were an important element of the reforms which were put on the statute book by the Liberal government during the period 1908–1914. **Michael James** examines the contribution of Cllr John Sutton Nettlefold, Chairman of Birmingham's Housing Committee 1901–11.



NETTLEFOLD, AND THE EARLY TOWN PLANNING MOVEMENT

AS A LIBERAL Unionist member of Birmingham City Council between 1898 and 1906 and an Independent member between 1907 and 1911, Chairman of its Housing Committee between 1901 and 1911 and one of the leading members of the early town planning movement, John Sutton Nettlefold was notable for his belief that housing and town planning were inseparable areas of social policy and that if a lasting solution to slum housing was to be found then statutory powers of town planning were essential. Despite this (unique) contribution to pioneering town planning, Nettlefold is arguably the least remembered member of this movement. This article attempts to remedy this lack of estimation and to examine the nature of Nettlefold's ideas, both as a Birmingham City councillor and as a national campaigner.

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As Professor Denis Hardy has explained in this journal,¹ the principles of the pioneer British town planning movement were an important part of the series of

reforms of the Liberal government of 1908–1914. One of the most important, though not one of the most remembered, advocates of this movement was the Birmingham City councillor, John Sutton Nettlefold.

Nettlefold was the member for the Edgbaston and Harborne ward of Birmingham City Council from 1898 until 1911, standing for election six times. He first won the seat (as a Liberal Unionist) on 28 November 1898 at a by-election and was returned (again as a Liberal Unionist) at the elections on 1 November 1900 and 2 November 1903. He was treasurer of the Midland Liberal Unionist Association and remained a Liberal Unionist until 1904, when he broke with the party over their adoption of a policy of tariff reform. He declared that he was committed to free trade and joined forces with the Liberal Party on that issue, though he was re-elected to represent the Edgbaston and Harborne ward in the elections on 1 November 1906 and 1 November 1909 as an Independent. He also stood for election as an Independent in the new Harborne ward on 1 November 1911, but was

not elected. In the elections of 1898, 1900 and 1909 he was unopposed, in the election of 1903 he was opposed by an Independent Labour Party candidate and in the election of 1906 he was opposed by a Liberal Unionist candidate.²

From 1901 until 1911 Nettlefold was chairman of the council's Housing Committee. The setting up of the committee was a direct result of an investigation into the condition of Birmingham's slums by the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* in 1901. The newspaper sent out a special correspondent, J. C. Walters, to report on the subject and his articles led to a sustained demand for reform, culminating in a debate in the council on 19 June 1901 in which it was decided, by thirty-two votes to thirty, to set up a Housing Committee to take over from the Estates and Health Committees all of the council's powers exercised under the Housing Acts.³ Nettlefold was not just a Birmingham figure; during his time on Birmingham City Council he was also chairman of the Association of Municipal Corporations and a member of the Garden City Association. Further, he was related by

John Sutton
Nettlefold
(1866–1930)

marriage and by shared social concerns to the Chamberlains.

These positions and connections gave him a great deal of executive power and influence, which he used to great effect to develop Birmingham's housing policy and to campaign nationally for the introduction of statutory powers of town planning. He set out his very distinctive ideas in a series of books, pamphlets and speeches, all of which were forcefully and robustly argued in clear and compelling prose.⁴ This article explores these contributions to Birmingham and to the Liberalism of the Edwardian era.

Nettlefold's background and political outlook

Nettlefold was born in Highbury, London on 2 May 1866. He was the fourth son of John Nettlefold (1826–78), screw manufacturer, and his wife Frances, née Wyman (1834–1907). His family were Unitarians and he was educated at Amersham Hall School, Caversham, a boarding school for Nonconformists. In 1878, at the age of twelve, he came to live in Birmingham and on leaving school he joined the family business, the screw-making firm of Nettlefold and Co., at Broad Street, Birmingham. After being with the company for three years he took charge of their steel works at Rogerstone, near Newport in Monmouthshire. On 14 September 1891 he married, at the Church of the Messiah, Birmingham, Margaret Chamberlain (1871–1949), the eldest daughter of Arthur Chamberlain, JP, of King's Norton, Birmingham, niece of Joseph Chamberlain (1836–1914) and cousin of Neville Chamberlain (1869–1940). Subsequently, he resigned his post at Rogerstone to become managing director of Kynoch Ltd, a firm of ammunition, nail and wire manufacturers of which his father-in-law was chairman. He was also for a considerable period chairman of Thomas Smith's Stampings Ltd and a Director of Henry Hope and Sons Ltd, companies which were part of Birmingham's metal industry.⁵

Nettlefold's career in business was a major factor in shaping his political outlook, giving him a strong belief in the Victorian ideals of thrift and self-help. But this Smilesian perspective

was moderated by a second, and equally powerful, factor, his Unitarian upbringing. Unitarianism is a form of Christianity that eschews doctrines, in particular that of the Trinity, emphasising instead the practical application of the teachings of Christ in the gospels, both in personal conduct and public affairs. In attributing Unitarianism as one of the formative influences on Nettlefold's political ideas, it is important to emphasise that it is not only a religion but also an ethic. It was in this latter respect that it shaped his outlook and ideas. Unitarians were, and are, heavily influenced by the Enlightenment ideas of reason and progress; the duty of the politician is to improve the condition of life of those less fortunate than himself. Nettlefold, together with Joseph and Neville Chamberlain, subscribed to this political creed, with its distinctive trait of combining belief in self-reliance and self-improvement and adherence to the civic philosophy known at the time and since as 'the civic gospel', the belief that local government should assume responsibility for improving the conditions of life of its citizens. Nowhere more so than in Birmingham, with its radical civic past dating from the formation in 1829 of the Political Union for the Protection of Public Rights by Thomas Attwood and a dozen Birmingham tradesmen, did the civic gospel take firmer root.

The successful implementation of the civic gospel in Birmingham was due principally to the work of Joseph Chamberlain. He came to Birmingham from London in 1854 at the age of eighteen to enter the screw-making business of his father and his father's brother-in-law. Although he attended the (Unitarian) Church of the Messiah in Ladywood, Birmingham in his early years in the city, he lost his faith in later life (after the death of his second wife) and it was his intense desire to improve the lot in life of the working class, rather than religion, which was the driving force behind his espousal of social reform. This sense of duty, although not of itself religious, derived from his Unitarian upbringing and it would continue to be the motivating force of his political life. He was elected to the St Paul's ward of Birmingham

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Town Council in 1869 and was mayor from 1873 until 1876, during which time he persuaded the council to adopt a series of far-reaching reforms. They comprised three measures: the municipalisation of gas, the taking over of the town's water supply and the Birmingham Improvement Scheme. Chamberlain believed that, as monopolies, gas and water should be controlled by elected representatives of the people. He further believed, correctly, that a municipal gas undertaking would be a profitable enterprise, earning considerable sums for the council whilst at the same time resulting in lower prices. The benefits of the municipalisation of the water supply were dramatic improvements in public health: with a purer water supply, death rates in Birmingham had fallen by the early 1880s to only a little above the national average. The Birmingham Improvement Scheme was a large-scale civic policy to rebuild its central district, involving the compulsory purchase of land by the council, the demolition of insanitary, dilapidated and narrow streets and their replacement by wide boulevards and commercial thoroughfares. It was a controversial scheme, which meant private dwellings being demolished and their inhabitants being rehoused in the suburbs.

Chamberlain's improvement scheme was a policy which Nettlefold would strongly oppose, though his own approach to housing was well suited to the general tradition of Chamberlain municipal dynamism in Birmingham and he was an enthusiastic disciple of Chamberlain in his desire to improve the quality of life of the citizens of Birmingham.⁶ In Volume 2 of the *History of Birmingham*, Asa Briggs writes that 'Nettlefold was the most important guardian of the Chamberlain tradition in the city'. He goes on to quote an observer writing in the *Birmingham Gazette* on 20 October 1909: 'Of all Mr. Chamberlain's disciples he [Nettlefold] is the only one who within recent times has shown what the Chamberlain traditions mean. He is an enthusiast, a masterful man, with an immense stock of driving power'.⁷ His Chamberlain quality of dynamism and his urge to get things done were directed to housing and town planning and it is to

these areas of social reform that we must now turn.

The interrelationship between housing and town planning

Nettlefold's contribution to the early town planning movement was unique in one respect: more than all the other pioneers he saw town planning as the way of achieving better housing for the working class. For him, housing and town planning were not separate areas of social policy but part and parcel of one unified approach to finding a solution to the contemporary working-class housing problem – slums.

Housing figured large in the renewed Condition of England debate after 1880, which centred on the fact that, despite over half a century of economic growth and of a general rise in living standards, many parts of Britain were still characterised by slums, poverty and higher than average morbidity and mortality rates. The reason for the continued prominence of these conditions was the spectacular growth of British towns and cities in the nineteenth century. In 1851 the population of the United Kingdom was 22,259,000, 50 per cent of which lived in towns and cities; by 1901 these figures had risen to 38,237,000 and 77 per cent respectively.⁸ In other words, during the second half of the nineteenth century the numbers of United Kingdom citizens living in towns and cities rose from just over 11 million to nearly 29 million. This rapid urbanisation had a dramatic effect on the living conditions of the working class, leading to overcrowded and insanitary housing and high densities of population. Several surveys revealed that by the beginning of the twentieth century nearly one-third of the urban working class lived in, or very close to, poverty.⁹ This state of affairs was not without serious consequences for the nation. In 1899, on the outbreak of the Boer War, one-third of potential recruits for the army were found not to meet its (scarcely exacting) standards for active service.¹⁰ In 1917, when British men were medically examined en masse for military service, it was discovered that 10 per cent were totally unfit for military service, 41.5 per cent had 'marked

disabilities', 22 per cent had 'partial disabilities' and only a third were in a satisfactory condition.¹¹ These were revelations which shocked complacency.

In 1884 a Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes had been set up and their report in 1889 had led to the passing of the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890. That measure was largely a consolidating enactment, bringing together all the housing legislation dating from the 1850s. Part I of the Act provided local authorities with powers for the wholesale clearance of slums, though they were obliged to rehouse their inhabitants and to compensate the owners; Part II contained legislation enabling local authorities to compel landlords to maintain their dwelling-houses at their own expense; Part III permitted local authorities to purchase land in order to build working-class dwellings or to convert suitable buildings for this purpose. Based largely on the provisions of Part II, by the end of the nineteenth century a distinctive model of working-class housing reform had come into being: the clearance of slums in, or near to, city centres and the rehousing of their inhabitants on the outskirts of cities.

Nettlefold set his face firmly against this model. He had his own distinctive scheme for remedying the housing problem of the time – one that was radical though not socialist, involved a degree of intervention by local authorities, and was interwoven into the emerging concept of town planning. That scheme consisted of four major elements:

- rejection of large-scale slum clearance in favour of dealing with unfit houses on an individual basis;
- rejection of municipal house building;
- development of low-density housing, located on the outskirts of cities, but with good transport links to the city centre; and
- relaxation of the building bye-laws, which he believed unnecessarily inflated building costs.

The essential principles underlying Nettlefold's template were set out in his 1907 book, *A Housing Policy* and his 1908 book, *Practical Housing*. They extended to existing suburbs

and to the building of new suburbs and they were very distinctive from the increasing state intervention on socialist lines that would come to dominate British housing policy in the twentieth century.

In relation to existing suburbs, he did not favour redevelopment schemes because of the expense that they imposed on ratepayers and because they encouraged landlords to neglect their properties in the expectation of a redevelopment scheme and compensation. Instead, he supported dealing with unfit houses on an individual basis, thus avoiding the public expense of compensation whilst placing the financial burden of ensuring that houses were fit for human habitation on the landlords. In his 1907 book he illustrated what could be achieved by this method with some very professional 'before and after' photographs. Moreover, he rejected municipal house-building as a solution to the contemporary housing problem, primarily, he felt, because local authorities were able to build comparable houses at the same rents as the private sector only if they were subsidised by their ratepayers. Municipal housing, Nettlefold maintained, amounted to charity on the rates.

It is in relation to the development of new suburbs that we see most dramatically Nettlefold's radicalism. He was much influenced by the two strands of the early town planning movement – the garden city and the planned suburb based on the German concept of the town extension plan. (In town planning, as in the other parts of the Liberal reform programme of 1908–14, German influence was often considerable.) Both strands had their origins in the industrial villages built by wealthy and philanthropic Victorian manufacturers, the best known examples of which are New Lanark, built by Robert Owen (1771–1858), Saltaire, built by Sir Titus Salt (1803–1876), Port Sunlight, built by Sir W. H. Lever later first Viscount Leverhulme (1851–1925), and Bournville, built by George Cadbury (1839–1922). These villages possessed two particular characteristics: very low-density housing and generous community facilities – a school, an almshouse, a community centre and a recreation ground. As a solution to the nineteenth-century

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housing problem, their contribution was no more than a drop in the ocean. Their value lay in the inspiration that they provided to the pioneering town planners, including Nettlefold.

The idea of the garden city was first described by Ebenezer Howard (1850–1928) in his 1898 book, *Tomorrow: a Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, which was reissued in 1902 as *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*.¹² He envisaged a network of such cities within a radius of 40 miles of London. They would be built on large rural estates purchased by trustees and designed to combine the advantages of town and country without the disadvantages of either. Their principal features would be: a coordinated arrangement of residential, business and pleasure areas, with only about a sixth of the land being devoted to urban uses, a maximum number of houses per acre of ten, ample open spaces and cheap transport between the various parts of town. In 1899 the Garden City Association was founded to further these aims, but in the event only two garden cities were ever built, Letchworth and Welwyn, the idea losing favour to that of the New Town.

The concept of the town extension plan derived from Germany and was made known in Britain by Thomas Cognall Horsfall (1841–1932) in his 1904 book, *The Improvement of the Dwellings and Surroundings of the People: the Example of Germany*. It was this strand that was the more relevant to the development of Birmingham's suburbs. Its decisive features (no more than ten houses per acre, a plentiful supply of open spaces, adequate amenities and good transport links to the town centre) bear a striking similarity to those of the garden city, and in a speech to a conference arranged by the Garden City Association on 25 October 1907 Nettlefold described town planning as 'the application of the Garden City idea to existing cities and their suburbs'.¹³ There was, however, one crucial difference between the two strands: garden cities would be built on land acquired and owned by independent garden city associations, whereas town extension schemes would be prepared by local authorities and built by private builders on municipally owned land.

Nettlefold's ideas on town planning were shaped to a large extent

Nettlefold's scheme was neither socialist nor laissez-faire. It involved the purchase of land by councils who would lease it to private builders for them to build houses to rent. By restricting the number of houses per acre the value of the land, and consequently the rents charged, would be kept to a minimum.

by Horsfall's writings. A whole chapter of *A Housing Policy* is allocated to *The Example of Germany*. In order to see Horsfall's ideas in practice, in August 1905 he led a deputation from Birmingham City Council to visit a number of towns in Germany: Berlin, Cologne, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Mannheim, Stuttgart and Ulm. The final report of the visit, of which Nettlefold was the author and which was presented to the council on 3 July 1906,¹⁴ was a document of seminal importance, locally and nationally. It argued for the provision of healthy, cheap and cheerful houses on the outskirts of the city, a relaxation of the by-laws and new statutory powers to enable the planning of all undeveloped land within the city boundaries. In presenting the report, Nettlefold took the opportunity to emphasise the close relationship between health, housing and town planning: '[t]he home of the individual is the most important factor in the prosperity of the nation, and the strength of the Empire. We can, if we will, arrange wholesome surroundings for every Birmingham adult, and, even more important, give every Birmingham child light and fresh air which is so essential to its healthy development'.¹⁵

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The expansion of Birmingham in the period 1891–1911 presented Nettlefold with ample opportunity for translating his ideas on town

planning into policy. Not surprisingly, he was a strong advocate of the Greater Birmingham which occurred during this period. The biggest step in this direction was taken in October 1908 when the council set up a Boundaries Committee, with Nettlefold as its chairman. In its report of February 1909 it proposed a massive extension to Birmingham's boundaries, so that its area would increase three-fold to 40,000 acres and its population would rise to 850,000, to make it the second largest city in England. The committee's proposals formed the basis of the Greater Birmingham Bill, which, after a lengthy passage through parliament, received the Royal Assent in May 1911.¹⁶

A particular opportunity for the application of his ideas arose in the case of the development of the Moor Pool Estate on fifty-four acres of land in Harborne, two miles from the centre of Birmingham. In 1907 Harborne Tenants Ltd was established to promote the erection, cooperative ownership and administration of houses on this land and at the same time the Harborne Society was formed, Nettlefold being appointed as its chairman. A local firm of architects was appointed to develop the site, 500 houses being built at a density of 9.25 houses per acre. This development must be distinguished from town planning. It was an alternative to housing built by enlightened employers, such as George Cadbury. The occupiers were co-partners, as well as tenants, of Harborne Tenants Ltd, co-partnership being a widely practised idea at the time. The tenants purchased shares in the company and the company owned the houses. Dividends were paid to the tenants, giving them a stake in the success of the venture.

Nettlefold and the introduction of statutory town planning

A wider application of Nettlefold's beliefs, in particular those in the town extension plan, would require legislation. There was extensive support for such legislation and Nettlefold played a leading role in the campaign to persuade the government of the day of the need for the enactment of a Town Planning Bill. On 13 June 1907, at a meeting of the Planning Committee of the

Association of Municipal Corporations, it was resolved that a Town Planning Scheme, which had been prepared by a Special Committee led by Nettlefold, be adopted and presented to the government.¹⁷ The scheme was cautious. Its key provision granted local authorities powers to prescribe the number of houses per acre which could be erected on land in their areas, a provision, of course, which went to the heart of Nettlefold's thinking. The scheme went on to provide that local authorities would be given powers to determine the width of new streets and dedicate land adjoining those streets as open space. They would be able also to compulsorily purchase land in order to develop their districts, subject to compensating the owners of such land. Significantly, the scheme granted only limited powers to the Local Government Board, by contrast to the bill which emerged from the board and which eventually became law. Clearly, the scheme was drafted in the image of Nettlefold.

On 7 August 1907 a deputation from the Association of Municipal Corporations, led by Nettlefold, gave a presentation on the scheme before the (then) prime minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and the (then) president of the Local Government Board, John Burns.¹⁸ Nettlefold took the opportunity to set out what he saw as the essential principles of town planning: restriction on the number of houses per acre and development of new districts as a whole along the lines of the German town extension plan, rather than in 'penny numbers'. The deputation was received enthusiastically by Campbell-Bannerman and by Burns, though Burns insisted that the legislation be based on a government-drafted bill, rather than on the Association of Municipal Corporations' scheme. The Housing, Town Planning, etc. Bill was introduced into the House of Commons in March 1908, but opposition in the House of Lords prevented it being passed in that session. It was reintroduced in the following session and it (eventually) became law in December 1909.¹⁹

The town planning provisions of the 1909 Act, contained in Part II, were a limited measure. Powers were granted to local

authorities to plan undeveloped land within their boundaries, but not land already developed. As was the case with most of the housing and public health legislation of the nineteenth century, the act was permissive not compulsory: i.e. it was left to the discretion of local authorities as to whether or not they used their powers under the act. The critical feature of the new statutory scheme was its complex procedure (contained in the Town Planning Procedure Regulations (England and Wales) of 1910²⁰), which placed every stage of the planning process, from the local authority having to obtain permission to prepare a scheme to submission of the final version of the plan, firmly in the hands of the Local Government Board. As a result the act was little used, Birmingham being one of the few local authorities to show any enthusiasm for it. For Nettlefold, as for many in the early town planning movement, it was a great disappointment. In his 1914 book, *Practical Town Planning*, he concluded bitterly that, 'if those responsible ... had intended to make the Act unworkable, they could not have adopted a more effective method'.²¹

Nettlefold's legacy

After losing his seat on Birmingham City Council in 1911 Nettlefold's life came more and more to be dominated by illness. He did not hold public office again, though he undertook a considerable amount of charitable and philanthropic work in Birmingham and its surrounding area. He died in Barnwood House, a private mental hospital in Barnwood, Gloucestershire on 3 November 1930. In a sense, these later years were something of an epilogue, but they should not be allowed to obscure the substantial achievements, local and national, of Nettlefold's public career.

Those achievements were threefold: his writings and speeches, his work as a Birmingham councillor and his campaigning for statutory powers of town planning. His writings are a legacy of his thinking on contemporary housing and planning issues and, in themselves, they amount to as substantial a contribution to the early town planning movement as any of its other

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members. Two of his books, *Practical Town Planning* and *Garden Cities and Canals*, were published as companion volumes in 1914, after he had left public life. In *Practical Town Planning* he proposed a number of amendments to the 1909 Act and to the 1910 Regulations, the most important of which were the removal of the obligation to obtain the permission of the Local Government Board before preparing a town planning scheme, the extension of the act to existing suburbs and the replacement of the Local Government Board by a new government department to oversee housing and town planning. All of these recommendations would be implemented by the 1919 Housing, Town Planning, etc. Act, often referred to as Addison's Act, after Dr Christopher Addison, who, as the first Minister of Health, was responsible for steering the measure through parliament.

Garden Cities made an original, if rather eccentric, contribution to the garden city debate by explaining how the idea could be developed on a national scale. Nettlefold, disillusioned by the 1909 Act, felt that the only way to see his views put into effect would be by building a network of garden cities linked by an improved canal network, which he argued would be cheaper than extending the railways. Drawing on the research of the Royal Commission on Canals, 1906–9, the book contains a wealth of statistics in support of its arguments and illustrates Nettlefold's grasp of technical detail. But its catholicity was in vain; only two garden cities were ever built in Britain and it would be over fifty years before the country's canals were rejuvenated and then as a form of tourism, quite unrelated to the development of new towns.

Primarily, Nettlefold was a man of action. As chairman of Birmingham City Council's Housing Committee, he used his powers to get things done for the good of the citizens of Birmingham. As chairman of the Planning Committee of the Association of Municipal Corporations, he showed that he could be as effective on the national stage as he was in Birmingham. To have played a crucial and distinctive part in persuading the (then) prime minister and the (then) president of the Local Government Board

of the need for local authorities to be given statutory powers of town planning in order to improve the housing conditions of their working-class citizens was no small achievement.

The First World War put an end to Nettlefold's model of housing reform – private building in the suburbs, cheap transport between the city centre and the suburbs, compelling owners to repair their properties and town extension plans. By the outbreak of war in 1914, this policy had by no means solved Birmingham's housing problems. On 20 October 1914 a special committee on housing, appointed in July 1913 with Neville Chamberlain as its chairman, reported that 'a large proportion of the poor in Birmingham are living under conditions of housing detrimental to both health and morals'.²² Following the passing of Addison's Act of 1919, the emphasis of housing policy shifted to the building of council houses, financed by a Treasury subsidy to local authorities to cover the difference between the capital costs and the rental income from tenants, over and above a penny rate. The act also provided for a subsidy of £150 to be paid to private builders. Nettlefold's idea of co-partnership housing also went out of fashion, as the poorest were no longer able to afford the level of rents required to provide investors with a return and to cover maintenance costs.

Nettlefold lost his seat on Birmingham City Council in the year when the Greater Birmingham Act came into effect. The act presented the council with the opportunity to implement their newly acquired powers. It would be Neville Chamberlain, however, who undertook this task, he having been elected to the council in 1911 and shortly afterwards appointed to the chairmanship of its (new-formed) Planning Committee. He oversaw the submission of five planning schemes to the Local Government Board, all of which were approved. The efforts of Nettlefold and Chamberlain ensured that statutory town planning took root in Britain. Given that few local authorities outside Birmingham showed any interest in Part II of the 1909 Act, it is no exaggeration to say that without their efforts statutory town planning might not have

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- 1 *Journal of Liberal History* 52, Autumn 2006.
- 2 These facts are based on two sources: the lists of councillors published in the *Birmingham Daily Post* following each of the elections in question, and supplied by the Birmingham Libraries and Archives Service; and information contained in 'Councillor J. S. Nettlefold, J.P.', *Egbastonia*, vol. xxvii, March 1907, No. 310, pp. 324–329. The election dates are verified by the City Council minutes. In 1909 the City Librarian wrote to Nettlefold requesting election literature; the letter was returned annotated 'No literature issued'. This response, together with the absence of newspaper reports of a contest in the Egbaston and Harborne ward, seems to indicate that he was unopposed. The list of councillors published in the *Birmingham Daily Post* after the 1909 election include him under the heading of 'Liberals, etc.', a list which

- includes Labour and Independent councillors.
- 3 The articles in question were republished in J. C. Walters, *Scenes in Slumland* (1902).
- 4 The most important of these writings are: *A Housing Policy* (Cornish Brothers, 1905); 'Housing Reform', lecture delivered in the Town Hall, Birmingham, Wednesday, 28 March 1906 (reprinted as an appendix to subsequent editions of *A Housing Policy*); *Practical Housing* (Garden City Press Limited, 1908); *Garden Cities and Canals* (The St. Catherine Press, 1914); and *Practical Town Planning* (The St. Catherine Press, 1914).
- 5 This paragraph is based on 'Councillor J. S. Nettlefold, J.P.', *Egbastonia*, vol. xxvii, March 1907, No. 310, pp. 324–29.
- 6 For an (extensive) discussion of Birmingham and the Civic Gospel see Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (Penguin Books, 1968), Ch. 5.
- 7 Page 143.
- 8 The absolute numbers are taken from the Registrar General's estimates for the home population of the United Kingdom (i.e. the number of people actually in the country). They are to be found in the Central Statistical Office's Annual Abstract of Statistics. The percentages are taken from Helen Meller, 'Housing and Town Planning' in Chris Wrigley, *A Companion to British Twentieth-Century History* (Blackwell, 2010).
- 9 Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London* (1889); William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890); and Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty, a Study of Town Life* (1901). The conditions revealed by these surveys confirmed the descriptions of the lives of the poor contained in a number of earlier and more populist publications, notably the Reverend Andrew Mearns's pamphlet, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (1883) and Octavia Hill's series of articles published in *Macmillan's Magazine* and *Fortnightly Review* between 1866 and 1875.
- 10 Gordon E. Cherry, *Town Planning in Britain since 1900: The Rise and Fall of the Planning Ideal* (Blackwell, 1996), p. 27.
- 11 E. J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), p. 137.
- 12 A facsimile edition was published by Routledge in 2003.
- 13 See *Town Planning in Theory and Practice*, pp. 13–20.
- 14 The report is published in the City of

- Birmingham Housing Committee Reports, Speeches, etc. 1906–7, which are available in the Birmingham Central Library Archives.
- 15 Nettlefold's speech is reprinted as Appendix X to *Practical Town Planning*.
- 16 The act is a Private Act and its official title is the Local Government Board's Provisional Order (1910) Confirmation (No. 13) Act, 1911.
- 17 *Scheme for a Town Planning Bill*, Minutes of the Meeting of the Council of the Association of Municipal Corporations, Thursday 13 June 1907, pp. 134–36.
- 18 *Planning of Suburbs*, pp. 207–19. Available in the Birmingham Central Library Archives.
- 19 9 Edw. 7, Ch. 44.
- 20 The Regulations are reprinted in Nettlefold, *Practical Town Planning*, Appendix IX.
- 21 Page 150.
- 22 *Report of Special Housing Inquiry Committee, Birmingham, 1914*, p. 2. Copies of the report are available in the Birmingham City Archives, which are situated in Birmingham Central Library.

THE LIBERAL PARTY, UNIONISM AND POLITICAL CULTURE IN LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY BRITAIN

A one-day seminar organised by Newman University College and the *Journal of Liberal History*
Saturday 10th November 2012, Newman University College, Birmingham

The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw major changes in British political culture. The gradual emergence of a mass electorate informed by a popular press, debates about the role of the state in social policy, Imperial upheavals and wars all had their impact on political culture. Political parties became more professional, labour more organised, regional identities sharpened.

To accompany this turmoil, a new political party, the Liberal Unionists, was formed to oppose Gladstone's policy of Irish Home Rule, splitting the Liberal family and causing a reappraisal of what it meant to be a Unionist.

The seminar will examine some of these key changes in political culture, against the background of the formation of the Liberal Unionists and the new political alignments this brought about.

Speakers:

- **Professor Robert Colls, University of Leicester** Political culture in Britain 1884–1914 (Guest Chair: **Vernon Bogdanor, Research Professor, Institute of Contemporary British History, King's College, London**)
- **Dr Ian Cawood, Newman UC, Birmingham** The impact of the Liberal Unionists, 1886–1912
- **Dr Matthew Roberts, Sheffield Hallam University** A terrific outburst of political meteorology: by-elections and the Unionist ascendancy in late Victorian England
- **Dr James Thompson, Bristol University** The Liberal Party, Liberalism and the visual culture of British politics c.1880–1914
- **Dr Kathryn Rix, History of Parliament Trust** Professionalisation and political culture: the party agents, 1880–1914
- **Dr James Owen, History of Parliament Trust** Labour and the caucus: working-class radicalism and organised Liberalism in England

The cost of the seminar will be £20 (students and unwaged £10), including morning refreshments and buffet lunch.

To register please contact:

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