attendant on it.' This remark is typical of a book that is as easy going as the character it depicts.

At the same time as telling his tale, Cecil does find time to explore Melbourne's deeply cautious political outlook. He took a sceptical view of grand reform schemes put forward by various interests, once remarking, 'When in doubt what should be done, do nothing.' He may have mistrusted reform, but he was ready to accept it when he judged it necessary in order to achieve his most abiding aim, the preservation of order and tranquillity. On occasion his concern for order led to mistakes, such as his heavy-handed treatment of the Tolpuddle Martyrs – one of the few features of his career to come in for criticism by Cecil – but it also led him to change his mind in favour of an extension of the franchise, and it motivated his constant efforts to chart a middle course between the radical and conservative pressures on his government from 1835. Like Gladstone later, though less frequently and far more reluctantly, his conservative ends sometimes led him to employ reforming means.

Unlike Gladstone he got on extremely well with Queen Victoria. Ascending the throne at just eighteen, she looked to her Prime Minister as her principal source of advice and guidance on the execution of her duties. Nor was it all strictly business; they became very close friends who met several times a day as much as a means of mutual support than because of any need to attend to matters of state. Indeed, Victoria became so reliant upon him, and as a result so prejudiced against his political opponents, that Melbourne had to work hard to educate her out of her antipathy to Peel and the Tories. In the end though, it was Melbourne rather than the Queen who had the harder time adapting to the drastic change in their acquaintance that inevitably followed the collapse of his government in 1841.

With narrative history now very much back in fashion it is hardly surprising that David Cecil's novelesque and sympathetic study of Melbourne should now be republished. Whilst it may be rather too hagiographical by modern standards, it is nonetheless welcome as one of the surprisingly few biographies of the man currently in print.

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The most complex character

Antony Lentin: *Lloyd George and the Lost Peace: From Versailles to Hitler, 1914–1940* (Palgrave, 2001)

Reviewed by **David Dutton**

The main problem with this book is its title. It is not, as the reader might have suspected, a systematic survey of Lloyd George's attitude towards the problems of the peace settlement between the signing of the Treaty of Versailles and the fall of France two decades later. It consists in fact of a collection of six essays, four of which deal with various aspects of the 1919 settlement itself. Furthermore, earlier drafts of all but one of the essays have already been published, and the author himself wrote a monograph on Lloyd George, the peace settlement and the seeds of the next war almost twenty years ago. Is there, then, much to be said to justify the present volume?

The answer is an emphatic 'yes'. It is precisely because Antony Lentin has devoted the majority of his academic career to trying to get to grips with this most slippery of biographical subjects that his latest book may be read with such profit. What we have is a perceptive and insightful study of the complex Welshman, which at times borders on the psychoanalytical but which rarely fails to convince, such is the author's rapport with the subject of his enquiries. The analysis of the relationship between Lloyd George and Lord Cunliffe over the negotiation of the reparations settlement is particularly persuasive, and represents a significant modification of accepted historical wisdom. Lentin probably takes us nearer to a genuine understanding of what Lloyd George was seeking to achieve during the peace negotiations than has been reached by any other author. The British Prime Minister rejoiced in what he had done in the Versailles settlement, but was fully aware of the work which remained to be tackled. He would probably have endorsed General Smuts' conclusion that 'the real work of peace will only begin after this treaty has been signed'.

A continuous narrative, covering the whole period from 1919 to 1940, might have made it easier to make sense of the two final and still somewhat bizarre episodes examined in the last two chapters of this book – Lloyd George's visit to Hitler in 1936, and his response to the fall of Poland in 1939, and the possibility of a compromise

peace when the war turned against Britain in the spring of 1940. It must, of course, be admitted that such a narrative would be difficult to construct, for in the years after the end of his premiership in 1922 Lloyd George's attention was understandably directed away from international affairs and towards the domestic problems of the British economy and the Liberal Party. That said, Lentin shows that Lloyd George was in no sense Hitler's dupe. All the same, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he misjudged his man. There were aspects of Hitler to which Lloyd George was instinctively drawn, not least because Hitler was enacting in Germany some of the social and economic policies which the Welshman had unsuccessfully urged upon the National Government in Britain. But to suggest that, had Lloyd George rather than Neville Chamberlain been in power in the late 1930s, some sort of Anglo-German understanding would have been arrived at, presupposes that Britain could, in anything other than the very short term, have lived in harmony with a Nazi Germany rampant and unrestrained in continental Europe.

There is plenty here to stimulate the reader, though at the end of the day he may still decide that Lloyd George will forever escape the conclusive grasp of historical comprehension. As his long-term secretary, A. J. Sylvester, once put it, 'his character is the most complex I have ever known'.

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Keeper of the Liberal Flame

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John Davies is the eldest son of Ivor Davies, born in 1941 and educated at the universities of Oxford and Sheffield, recently retired from the Publishers Association where he was Director of the Educational Publishers Council, the Council of Academic and Professional Publishers, the Serial Publishers Executive, the Copyright Licensing Agency and the Publishers Licensing Society

1 Edinburgh University Personality Series No. 11 – Ivor R.M. Davies in *The Student*, 1 February 1938, p 161.
2 Reported in *The Bulletin* (Aberdeen) July 1937.
3 Election addresses: Oxford 1938, Central Aberdeenshire 1945, West Aberdeenshire 1950, Oxford 1955, 1959, 1964.
4 Profile of the Rev. Roderick G Davies in *The Christian World*, 16 May 1940, p. 3.
5 e.g. lead feature in *Glasgow Weekly Herald,* 5 December 1936: 'The Milk Muddle' by Ivor R.M. Davies, p. 8.
6 Ian Bradley – 'Oxford 1938 – the first 'War' vote' – *The Times*, 27 October 1978, p. 16.
7 Ivor R M Davies, *Trial By Ballot* (London, 1950), pp. 143–44.
8 Quoted by Tom Harrisson, co-founder of Mass Observation, in *Picture Post*, 5 November 1938.
9 'Recount Drama ends Darwen Contest' in *Northern Daily Telegraph*, 1943.
10 'Central Aberdeenshire – Result of Poll' in *Huntly Express* 27 July 1945 p. 3.
11 See article by Robert Ingham, 'Donald Johnson – the last Liberal Imperialist', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* 25, Winter 1999–2000, p. 31.
12 Reviewed in *Times Literary Supplement* 23 June 1950 p. 383, *Truth* 18 August 1950 p. 167, *The Economist* 19 August 1950, *The Press and Journal* 13 May 1950, and elsewhere.
13 Ivor Davies: obituary in *The Bookseller* by John Davies, 5 December 1986, p. 2240.
14 'Mr Davies adopted for Oxford', *Oxford Mail*, 7 June 1952.
15 'City Tory majority slashed', *Oxford Times*, 16 October 1964 p. 28.
16 'Mr Ivor Davies to stand for Oxford City Council', *Oxford Mail* 28 February 1953.
17 Oxford City Council Liberal election address, Wolvercote Ward 1970.
18 *Our Olive* (Oxford 1989) p. 95.
19 Bernard Levin, writing as Taper in *The Spectator*, September 1961.
20 'Ivor Davies – the Man for Oxford', *Liberal News* General Election Campaign edition 1964, p. 1.
21 'A royal reward', *Oxford Mail*, 1 November 1984 p. 7.
22 'Man of influence for four decades', *Oxford Mail*, 3 December 1986 p. 2. There was no obituary in *Liberal News*.

Bibliographical Note: *At their deaths in the late 1980s, Ivor and Jean Davies left behind them a significant collection of press cuttings, election literature and other documents related to their political activities. These have been drawn upon for this article and, where attributed and relevant, some of them are cited in the footnotes. The content of the article, however, also owes much to eyewitness observation and conversations within the family and with friends of the subject over many years.*

'Let us open to them the door of the House of Commons'

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be displayed. Till we have done this, let us not presume to say that there is no genius among the countrymen of Isaiah, no heroism among the descendants of the Maccabees.

Sir, in supporting the motion of my honourable friend, I am, I firmly believe, supporting the honour and the interests of the Christian religion. I should think that I insulted that religion if I said that it cannot stand unaided by intolerant laws. Without such laws it was established, and without such laws it may be maintained. It triumphed over the superstitions of the most refined and of the most savage nations, over the graceful mythology of Greece and the bloody idolatry of the northern forests. It prevailed over the power and policy of the Roman Empire. It tamed the barbarians by whom that empire was overthrown. But all these victories were gained not by the help of intolerance, but in spite of the opposition of intolerance. The whole history of Christianity proves that she has little indeed to fear from persecution as a foe, but much to fear from persecution as an ally. May she long continue to bless our country with her benignant influence, strong in her sublime philosophy, strong in her spotless morality, strong in those internal and external evidences to which the most powerful and comprehensive of human intellects have yielded assent, the last solace of those who have outlived every earthly hope, the last restraint of those who are raised above every earthly fear! But let not us, mistaking her character and her interests, fight the battle of truth with the weapons of error, and endeavour to support by oppression that religion which first taught the human race the great lesson of universal charity.