

SIR ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR, THE LIBERAL PARTY AND THE ABDICATION OF EDWARD VIII

Sinclair's instincts were sound, even if he never quite succeeded in imposing his strategy.

Martin Pugh was Professor of Modern British History at Newcastle University until 1999 and Research Professor at Liverpool John Moores University 1999–2002. His latest book is The Pankhursts (Allen Lane, 2001) and he is currently completing a book on fascism in Britain between the wars.

1. See Keith Middlemas and John Barnes, *Baldwin: A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969); Philip Ziegler, *King Edward VIII* (London: Collins, 1990); Frances Donaldson, *Edward VIII* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974); a revisionist approach is Susan Williams, *The People's King: the True Story of the Abdication* (London: Allen Lane, 2003).
2. For some indiscretions see Cambridge University Library: Templewood Papers RF3, p. 16; Ziegler, *King Edward VIII*, p. 209; Barnes and Middlemas, *Baldwin*, p. 979.
3. Churchill College Cambridge: Duff Cooper Papers 2/26, Abdication Diary, 16 November 1936.
4. House of Lords Record Office: Samuel Papers A/101, Lord Salisbury to Herbert Samuel, 16 November 1936; Samuel to Salisbury, 16 September 1943.
5. Kenneth Harris, *Attlee* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), 132–33.
6. *Daily Worker*, 4 December 1936; *Los Angeles Times*, 18 November 1936.
7. *Daily Mail*, 4, 5, 7 December 1937; *Daily Express*, 4, 7 December 1936.
8. *Times*, 5 December 1936; Barnes and Middlemas, *Baldwin*, p. 1011; Lymington to the King (draft), 7 December 1936, Hampshire CRO, Lymington

- Papers F250; Philip Murphy, *Alan Lennox-Boyd: A Biography* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1999), p. 48.
9. Martin Gilbert, *Winston Churchill Vol. V 1922–1939* (London: Heinemann, 1976), pp. 812–16.
 10. PRO CAB127/157/18–19, 'King Edward VIII Notes by Sir Horace Wilson'.
 11. PRO PREM 1/457, Cabinet meeting Notes, 4 and 5 December 1936.
 12. PRO PREM 1/457, Cabinet meeting Notes, 4 December 1936.
 13. *Daily Express*, 4 December 1936.
 14. *Times*, 5 December 1936.
 15. *Times*, 5 December 1936; *Daily Express*, 5 December 1936.
 16. PRO CAB127/157.
 17. Gerrard De Groot, *Liberal Crusader: The Life of Sir Archibald Sinclair* (London: Hurst and Company, 1993), pp. 11–22.
 18. Gilbert, *Winston Churchill*, pp. 820–21; Michael Bloch, *The Reign and Abdication of Edward VIII* (London: Cape, 1990), p. 181.
 19. Bernard Wasserstein, *Herbert Samuel: A Political Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 80, 185, 397–98.
 20. Bloch, *The Reign and Abdication of Edward VIII*, p. 109.
 21. Lloyd George to Megan Lloyd George, 9 December 1936, in K. O. Morgan ed., *Lloyd George: Family Letters, 1885–1936* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973), p. 213.
 22. *News Chronicle*, 3 December 1936.
 23. *News Chronicle*, 5 December 1936.
 24. *News Chronicle*, 7 December 1936.
 25. *News Chronicle*, editorial 7 December 1936.
 26. *Hansard*, House of Commons Debates, 318, 10 December 1936, c.2188–89.
 27. De Groot, *Liberal Crusader*, 124.
 28. Notably in December 1938 at the Duchess of Atholl's by-election in West Perth and Kinross.

in February 2003 he was interviewed in the House of Lords by Dr Russell Deacon.

How did you come to fight Cardigan?

I had been a Cardiganshire Liberal for a long time before I went into national politics. I'd won a council seat in 1952 and got really active with the Welsh Liberals in the mid-1960s. In 1966 Roderic Bowen lost the seat and so I stood in the selection contest to become the next Liberal candidate. I only received four votes; the executive who voted for Huw Lloyd Williams was also full of his friends and relatives. Later on I also went for the Meirionnydd seat, which was then a Labour–Liberal marginal. Once again I lost. This was a real pity as I felt that I could have won that seat back for the Liberals. Instead they chose I. E. Thomas who put us into third position behind the Nationalists. I ended up fighting Brecon & Radnor. The seat was almost derelict in terms of Liberal supporters: they hadn't had a candidate there for twenty years. It was there that I helped build up the constituency and won almost 20 per cent of the vote. This planted the seeds for Richard Livsey's victory fifteen years later.

Huw Lloyd Williams lost Cardigan for the Liberals in 1970, and in 1972 I stood again for selection and was not opposed. I made sure that time that my friends were on the executive to support me. I was determined to rebuilt Cardigan as a Liberal seat. In 1973 I persuaded a large number of Independents to stand as Liberals. They took nine seats. Although the Independents still had the largest majority the Liberals were by far the largest political group in the county. They were the largest Liberal group in Wales at the time. We remained the largest political group on the council until I was defeated in 1992 – perhaps also the largest Liberal group in Wales for that period.

I was a Welsh nationalist and a Liberal as well. There was no need to join Plaid Cymru with those credentials.

INTERVIEW

Lord Geraint of Ponterwyd

Interview by **Russell Deacon**

Geraint Howells (1925–2004) was Liberal and Liberal Democrat MP for Cardiganshire (1974–83) and

Ceredigion & Pembrokeshire North (1983–92) from February 1974 to 1992. Ennobled as Lord Geraint of Ponterwyd in 1992,

How did you defeat Labour in the seat?

Cardigan is naturally a Liberal seat. It has an Independent tradition which means that the people there don't readily support either Labour or the Tories. In 1974 Elystan Morgan (the sitting Labour MP) was unpopular: he was seen as a traitor because he had moved away from Plaid Cymru (he'd left them in 1965). He was also against the Welsh School in Aberystwyth. I therefore got the Plaid Cymru supporters to back me in order to get him out. This pushed down the vote of the Plaid Cymru candidate, Clifford Davies, but gave me enough support to win the seat. The Cardigan Liberal campaign team also worked very hard to bring a Liberal back into the seat.

Why were you a Liberal and not a Welsh Nationalist?

I was a Welsh nationalist and a Liberal as well. There was no need to join Plaid Cymru with those credentials. Liberalism was in my blood and that of my family. My grandmother was nearly thrown off her farm for voting Liberal in the 1880s by the Conservative landlord. I never thought of being in any other party.

What happened after you were elected, in the 1970s?

In October 1974 Elystan Morgan tried to regain his seat but failed, and I increased my percentage of the vote. I could then concentrate on being an MP. One of the best things of the 1970s was the 1977 Lib-Lab Pact. I always supported the Pact, even though Emllyn [Hooson] was later in favour of ending it. I took up the agricultural spokespersonship partnering Labour's John Silkin, whom I got on really well with. I was able to persuade him to get the government to recognise the Farmers Union of Wales (FUW), which I had been a founder of. Roderic Bowen had always been against this idea – something that helped him lose the seat in 1966.

Although many in Ceredigion said they wouldn't vote Liberal

again, because we had supported Labour, they changed their mind in time for the 1979 general election, when I kept the seat with a smaller majority. In that election Emllyn Thomas, the Conservative candidate, came second with almost 30 per cent of the vote. Thomas had been general secretary of the Welsh Liberals in 1969, based in Aberystwyth, and was someone who I'd known well. He operated an office with a staff of two. The office flopped and Thomas lost his enthusiasm after a year. The result was that he later defected to the Conservatives and fought against me in 1979.

Also in 1979 we fought the devolution referendum. We worked very hard but knew that it was lost as the Conservatives had been using it to attack the government and we couldn't fight against that. We were too closely linked to them.

What happened in the 1980s?

In 1979, as a result of the fall-out from the Lib-Lab Pact and the referendum result, Emllyn [Hooson] lost his seat. I was then the sole Liberal MP in Wales. I was both the leader of the Welsh party and agriculture spokesman. It was very hard: you ended up speaking everywhere. I was glad, therefore, when Alex [Carlile] won Montgomeryshire back in 1983. It got even better in 1985 when Richard [Livsey] won Brecon & Radnor and there were then three Liberal MPs in Wales.

After the election had ended I pushed for the establishment of S4C (Welsh Channel 4). The Conservatives had gone back on an earlier promise to set it up. We put a lot of political pressure on them but it was Cledwyn Hughes (former Labour Welsh Secretary) who had the most influence.

The 1980s saw the arrival of the SDP in Wales. I was always a Liberal and I was keen that SDP members became Liberals. I therefore wanted the merged party to be called after its Liberal name but I lost when they called



Geraint Howells
(Lord Geraint
of Ponterwyd)
(1925–2004)

it the Social and Liberal Democrats. I was proved right, however, when the following year, 1989, we changed our name again to Liberal Democrats.

Why did you lose Cardigan?

I knew I had lost my seat, because my campaign team was weak. They thought that they'd win but I knew that in my heart that this wasn't going to be the case. Everyone seemed convinced we'd win except me. Cynog Dafis (Plaid Cymru) was able to more than double his vote from the previous election. My key supporters who had won the seat for me in 1974 had by then died off. The seat is winnable again for us though. Mark Williams has brought the vote back up; we'll get the seat back again.

What did you do then?

After going into the Lords I became Lord-in-Waiting to Her Majesty the Queen – the first Liberal to hold the position for a century. I am the Queen's representative for foreign heads of state. I have met President Moi of Nigeria and the Sultan of Brunei.

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