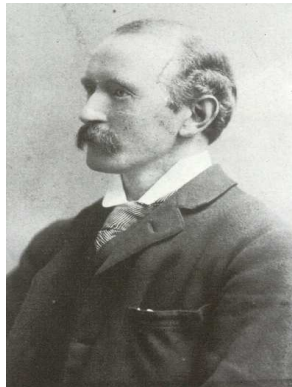


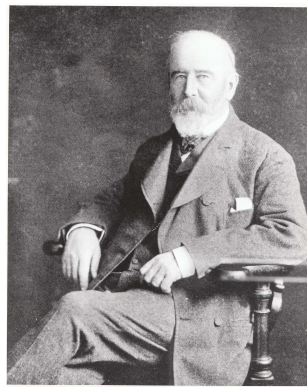
David Lloyd George and the National Library of Wales

Liberals, Lloyd George and the Library

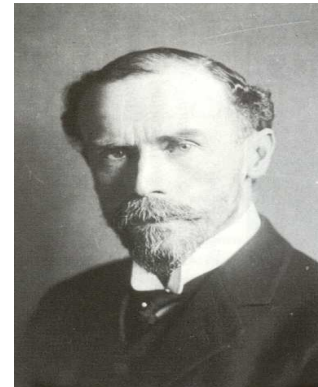
Liberals were prominent in the long campaign to establish the National Library of Wales, almost from the start. The agitation for a national library formed part a social and political movement towards increasing Welsh self-consciousness and the desire to create institutions to embody it. A national library was first seriously proposed at the National Eisteddfod in Mold in 1873, where a committee was established to work towards establishing it. In 1891 Thomas Edward Ellis, one of the leading figures of the Cymru Fydd movement, revived the campaign for the library and the committee.



Thomas Edward Ellis



Stuart Rendel



John Herbert Lewis

Another leading Liberal, Stuart Rendel, Liberal MP for Montgomery 1880-94, leader of Welsh MPs and later a peer, also fought for the library and eventually donated the site for a library building in Aberystwyth. Perhaps the most influential figure, however, was John Herbert Lewis, MP for the Flint Boroughs 1892-06, Flintshire 1906-18 and the University of Wales 1918-22. He used every available occasion in debates in the House of Commons to advocate the establishment of a national library and later became Vice-President of the Library. In 1903 the Conservative government relented and finally granted Wales its desire, leading the way to a competition between Welsh towns for the location of the Library (and its sister institution, the National Museum).

Lloyd George was in favour of Aberystwyth as a location. He was also, in his position as Chancellor of the Exchequer, in a position to give the infant Library a crucial government grant. 'What's the use of being a Welsh Chancellor of the Exchequer', he said in private in February 1909, 'if one can do nothing for Wales?' The Library was granted £4,000 per annum, and £500 a year for two years to catalogue manuscripts.' Herbert Lewis was of the opinion that the National Library of Wales owed more to Lloyd George than to any other

person'¹. Lewis wrote to Lloyd George to thank him, adding 'The Library will be, at, I hope, some distant date your literary mausoleum'.

(No government funds, however, were forthcoming for the building, which had to rely on donations: construction started in 1911, according to a design by Sidney Kyffin Greenslade, and was not completed until 1937.)

Lloyd George in the National Library

The National Library of Wales *is* in one sense Lloyd George's mausoleum: it is one of the main centres for Lloyd George documentation in the world. Only the Parliamentary Archive of the House of Lords surpasses it in size and importance of collection. The Library is also a centre of research on Lloyd George. John Graham Jones, one of the most prolific contemporary Lloyd George scholars, is the head of the Welsh Political Archive in the Library. His guide entitled *Lloyd George papers at the National Library of Wales and other repositories* was published by the Library in 2001, and his collection of articles on Lloyd George and Wales, *Lloyd George and Welsh liberalism*, was published by the Library in 2010.

Academic and popular interest in Lloyd George continues unabated: Ffion Hague has published a book on his women², Lord Hattersley on his political life³. Both came to the Library to research and to speak about their work.

The National Library of Wales is one of the most varied repositories among national libraries and the sources on Lloyd George stored there range across a wide variety of material and media.

Manuscripts and archives

Although the Parliamentary Archive of the House of Lords holds the largest collection of Lloyd George manuscripts and archives - the diaries and letters, bequeathed by Lloyd George to Frances Stevenson in 1945 - the National Library contains seven important groups of papers, most acquired between 1982 and 2000. They are especially important for the early period of Lloyd George's career.

The most important of these is the Brynawelon group, consisting of letters and notes by Lloyd George to his wife Margaret and their two daughters (until 1900 Margaret spent most of her time at Criccieth). They are a most valuable source for his early career, when he was an ambitious young local politician, and are naturally very personal in character.

The largest of the collections, which reached the Library only in 1989 and was not much used by historians before then, belonged to William Lloyd George,

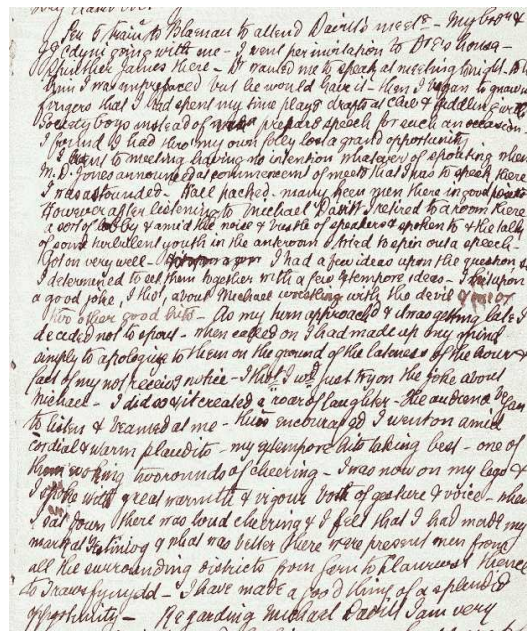
¹ David Jenkins, *A refuge in peace and war: the National Library of Wales to 1952*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002, p.138.

² Ffion Hague, *The pain and the privilege: the women in Lloyd George's life*, London: Harper, 2008.

³ Roy Hattersley, *Lloyd George: the great outsider*, London: Little Brown, 2010.

David's younger brother. The two had a close relationship. William was also a solicitor, and crucially generated funds to support Lloyd George and his family. He also acted as David's political agent in the Caernarfon Boroughs. The collection includes Lloyd George's diaries from 1878 to 1888, interesting both personally and politically, but consists mainly of letters from Lloyd George to William written between 1886 and 1943 (most predate 1917).

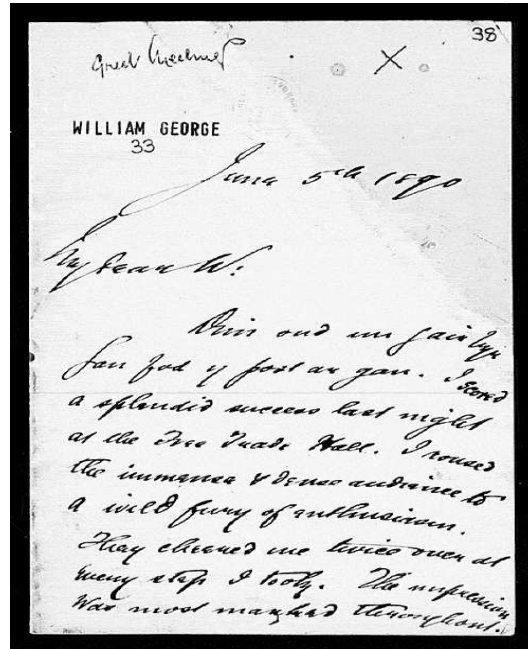
Here is an extract from the diary (12 February 1886) in which Lloyd George records his first important political speech:



“By train to Blaenau [Ffestiniog] to attend Davitt’s meeting ... I went to meeting having no intention of spouting when MD Jones announced ... that I was to speak there. I was astounded. Hall packed, many keen men there in good position. However, having listened to Michael Davitt I retired to a room, a sort of lobby, and amid the noise and bustle of speakers and spoken to and the talk of some turbulent youth in the anteroom I tried to spin out a speech. Got on very well. I had a few ideas upon the question so I determined to set them together with a few extempore ideas. I hit upon a good joke, I think, about Michael wrestling with the devil, and one or two other good hits. As my turn approached and it was getting late I decided not to speak; when egged on I had made up my mind simply to apologise to them on the ground of the lateness of the hour and the fact of my having not received notice. I thought I would just try on the joke about Michael. I did so and it created a roar of laughter. The audience began to listen and beamed at me. Thus encouraged I went on with cordial and warm plaudits, my extempore bits taking best, evoking two rounds of cheering. I was now on my legs and I spoke with great warmth and vigour both of gesture and of voice. When I sat down there was loud cheering, and I felt I had made my mark at Ffestiniog and what was better there were present men from all the surrounding districts from

Garn to Llanrwst and thence to Trawsfynydd. I have made a good thing of a splendid opportunity."

In a letter to William on 5 June 1890 Lloyd George reports a feat of oratory on a much larger stage, the Free Trade Hall in Manchester:



"Dim ond un gair byr gan fod y post ar gau. [Just a word before the post closes.] I scored a splendid success last night at the Free Trade Hall. I aroused the immense and dense audience to a wild fury of enthusiasm. They cheered me twice over at every step I took. The impression was most marked throughout. The people seemed to be beside themselves with delight. During the delivery of my peroration a profound silence prevailed; when it happened to be broken by some hot fellow who couldn't restrain his enthusiasm there was immediately a 'hushing' through the building and when I sat down there was a sight never to be forgotten – the whole audience rose in a body and frantically waved their handkerchiefs for several minutes and the greatest possible confusion prevailed despite the energetic efforts made by the Chairman in the interests of law and order.

As regards voice and gesture I never spoke half as well. I had absolute command of myself and my audience from the very start. Cassie[?] said, "You have made your reputation in England with that speech."

Only nine days later, on 14 June, Lloyd George gave his maiden speech in House of Commons, on a government bill to compensate the holders of liquor licences that were not renewed by the licensing authorities.

Printed material

The National Library is a legal deposit library and holds unequalled print collections - books, journals and newspapers - on Wales and the other Celtic countries. It therefore holds a host of printed items by and about Lloyd George. The Library is in the process of digitising many of the Welsh collections and placing the digitised texts on its website for all to read.

The 'Welsh Journals Online'⁴ project reproduces many periodicals published in Wales in the 20th century, including the *Welsh History Review*.

MICHAEL DAVITT, DAVID LLOYD GEORGE AND
T. E. ELLIS: THE WELSH EXPERIENCE, 1886*

We must work for bringing together Celtic reformers and the Celtic peoples. The interests of Irishmen, Welshmen and Crofters are almost identical. Their past history is very similar, their present oppressors are the same and their immediate wants are the same — riddance from landlordism and ampler opportunities for developing their own genius and their own powers.¹

Thus, in February 1886, wrote Thomas Edward Ellis (soon to be nominated as the Liberal candidate for his native Merioneth) to his close associate, D. R. Daniel. The view that the Celtic nations faced common foes and oppressors, and shared common needs and characteristics, was one which gained widespread currency in Wales and elsewhere during the late nineteenth century.² In no area did the parallels of the Welsh and Irish experiences seem more striking than in the case of the land question. In both countries, the fundamental difficulties of insecurity of tenure, unacceptably high rents, land hunger and land exhaustion were ever more keenly felt, while government legislation had proved hopelessly inadequate. From the autumn of 1879, the deep-rooted social tension and glaring lack of rapport between landlords and tenants (admittedly far more pronounced in Ireland than in Wales) had been sharply intensified by the advent of a disastrous agricultural depression and concomitant deep-rooted and widespread rural misery, the product of an international slump in the

* As always, I am most grateful to Professor Kenneth O. Morgan for much valuable assistance in the preparation of this article.

¹ National Library of Wales (hereafter referred to as NLW), D. R. Daniel Papers 302, Ellis to Daniel, 17 February 1886.

² See John Davies, 'Wales and Ireland', *Planet*, 95 (October–November 1992): 7–16, for a stimulating analysis.

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This article by J. Graham Jones⁵ quotes the *North Wales Chronicle*'s report of the Blaenau Ffestiniog meeting:

“We will do him the credit of saying that he certainly was the most eloquent, and spoke with more telling effect than any of the other speakers. His oratory was worthy of a better cause; but he is decidedly a favourite with the people”.

A second digitisation project, 'Historic newspapers and journals', covers the 19th and early 20th century. Its results will be available in 2013 and will reveal much hidden material of relevance to Lloyd George's early career and times.

Graphic material

The National Library has hundreds of thousands of graphic images, including nearly 6,000 framed paintings and large collections of prints, drawings, posters and postcards, as well as some 600,000 photos.

⁴ <http://welshjournals.llgc.org.uk/>

⁵ 'Michael Davitt, David Lloyd George and T.E. Ellis', *Welsh History Review*, vol. 18, 1996-97, p. 450-82.

The outstanding Victorian photographer of Wales was John Thomas, a native of Lampeter who lived in Liverpool and travelled extensively throughout Wales taking pictures of individuals and landscapes⁶. He took this superb early photograph of Lloyd George:



John Thomas, Lloyd George, 1890 (?)

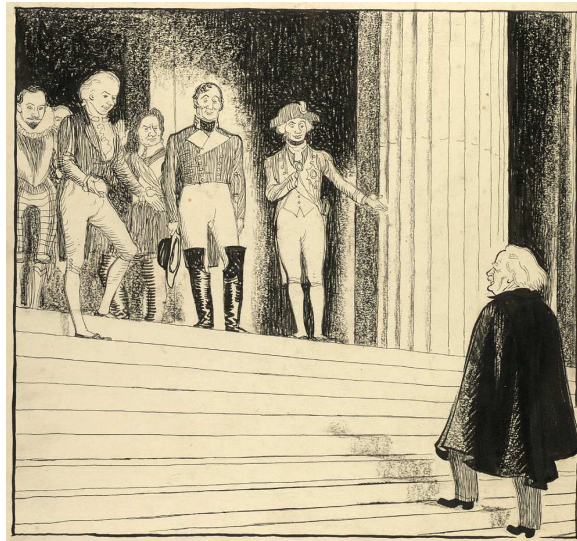
On 18 December 1901 in Birmingham Town Hall Lloyd George tried to address a crowd on an anti-Boer War platform and was shouted down with cries of 'Traitor! Traitor! Bloody traitor! Pro-Boer! Kill 'im! Kill the bloody traitor!' There was a riot and Lloyd George had to escape, dressed as a policeman. Police broke up the crowd and 40 people were treated in hospital. The National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations published some hostile postcards at the time, also in the Library's collections:



A more favourable cartoon in 1915 featured Lloyd George in his role as munitions minister in World War I: he sits in a go-cart, which he propels with his arms, the caption reading 'Ah! This is the way to develop your arms!' By his death in 1945 he had reached a state of apotheosis, at least according to

⁶ See Iwan Michael Jones, *Hen ffordd Gymreig o fyw / A Welsh way of life: John Thomas photographs*, Tal-y-bont: Y Lolfa, 2008.

the Barry-born cartoonist Leslie Illingworth, whose collection in the National Library has been digitised. He climbs the temple steps to join great British heroes, including Nelson, Wellington, Cromwell, Francis Drake and Robert Peel.



Films

The National Library houses the National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales, which holds several films of Lloyd George in his later years.

An amateur film from 1934, shot by Goronwy Moelwyn Hughes, a lawyer and later Labour MP for Carmarthen, shows Lloyd George at Brynawelon, Criccieth. A series of conferences was held at Lloyd George's homes at Brynawelon in Criccieth and Bron-y-de in Churt, Surrey during September and October 1934, to discuss Liberal Party policy, particularly Lloyd George's 'New Deal', to which leading thinkers of the day, including the economist J. M. Keynes, were invited to contribute.

A.J. Sylvester, Lloyd George's private secretary, filmed part of the visit made by Lloyd George and his encourage to Hitler's retreat at Berchtesgaden in September 1936. The party is entertained in the Book Room where they admire the tapestries and the panoramic view of the mountains from the window, before taking tea with Hitler and others. The Library holds Sylvester's typescript notes of this visit, the basis for a chapter ("The Hitler tea party") in his 1947 book, *The real Lloyd George*.

A Gaumont British News newsreel released on 20 October 1938, 'Lloyd George and his robot', shows Lloyd George urging the adoption of new farming techniques, such as those he introduced at Bron-y-De, his farm in Surrey. After his fall from office, Lloyd George took an increasing interest in farming, building up his small estate and employing more than 100 people at its height of production. His apples and the honey from his bees were successfully marketed under his own name. The new 'robot' rotatiller was a

project which excited him; it was also filmed, at about the same time, on amateur footage by A.J. Sylvester (this too is kept in the Archive).

The most extraordinary Lloyd George item in the Archive is undoubtedly the silent feature film *The life story of David Lloyd George*, made in 1918 and immediately suppressed. The film disappeared for 76 years, coming to light as part of a deposit in the Archive by Viscount Tenby. It was painstakingly restored by the Archive's conservator, John Reed, and is now available for sale as a DVD. The film, directed by Maurice Elvey for the Ideal Company, charts the life of Lloyd George from his childhood to the end of the World War I, using actors and hundreds of extras in studio and location scenes. Perhaps the most memorable use of the large cast is the re-creation of Lloyd George's address at the anti-Boer War rally at Birmingham Town Hall in 1901.

Andrew Green
Librarian
National Library of Wales
February 2011