

Kissing Your Sister

A history of the

OXFORD UNIVERSITY



LIBERAL CLUB

1913-1993

by

James Rattue

Kissing Your Sister
a history of the
Oxford University Liberal Club
and its successors
1913-1993

on the occasion of its eightieth anniversary

Dedicated to All Souls of the faithful departed
of the Liberal Clubs of Oxford University
past
present
and future.

by James Rattue

© James Rattue

Original edition 1993

This edition published by the Umbra Press, 2022

Contents

Introduction	7
1. The Last Edwardians (1913-34)	8
2. Out of the Ashes (1934-39).....	12
3. The Great Generation (1939-50)	14
4. Zenith (1950-66)	19
5. The Fall of Gormenghast (1966-73)	25
6. The Church Militant (1973-83)	32
7. The Church Triumphant (1983-87)	35
8. Eddies in the Ebb Tide (1987-93)	40
Afterword	43
Appendices: the Liberal vote in Oxford Central & North Wards; Photos; List of Officers	44

Abbreviations

AV	Alternative Vote
CSU	Central Student Union
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
GM	General Meeting
JCR	Junior Common Room
LMH	Lady Margaret Hall
LPG	Liberal Party Group
LPO	Liberal Party Organisation
NUS	National Union of Students
OG	<i>Oxford Guardian</i>
OS	Organising Secretary
ORSS	Oxford Revolutionary Socialist Society
OSAS	Oxford Students' Alliance Society
OSLS	Oxford Students' Liberal Society
OUCA	Oxford University Conservative Association
OULA	Oxford University Liberal Association
OULC	Oxford University Liberal Club
OULD	Oxford University Liberal Democrats
OULS	Oxford Union of Liberal Students
OUSDC	Oxford University Social Democratic Club
OUSLD	Oxford University Social & Liberal Democrats
OSU	Oxford University Student Union
OxWab	Oxford West & Abingdon
R&P	Russell & Palmerston Club
SCR	Senior Common Room
SRC	Student Representative Council
STV	Single Transferable Vote
UULS	Union of University Liberal Societies
ULS	Union of Liberal Students

Introduction

I did not begin so ambitious as to attempt a history of the Liberal Club. Arriving as a new member of OUSLD in 1988, I was injected into a web of frankly quite violent enmities which nobody seemed willing entirely to explain. The effort to discover, and relate, what had happened in those years of strife and pain bore lurid fruit in a pamphlet I called *The Leperous Distilment*, which covered the period 1986 to 1991. If anyone *really* wants more details of that dire episode, they should consult the tomelet concerned. The work was bad, but opened glimpses into ill-lit vistas which I was keen to explore. The result of that enquiry, curiously titled *Towards the Sound of Stuffing*, is, I know now, so laughably wrong that ask me and I will claim the fairies wrote it.

Something must be said about source material. There are three uncatalogued deposits in the Bodleian, which I have christened University Archives I, II and III. The first, located at the mysterious 'H Floor Grille', relates to the refounded OULC of 1919 – membership book, ledgers and kitchen accounts. The second consists of the Proctors' files, running from 1953 to the late 1960s, mainly election leaflets, termcards and posters; the University Offices also hold a confidential file, which probably concerns the Proctors' involvement in disputed elections. The third is a Secretary's file from 1970 to 1978, scrupulously gathered in ring-binders. The Bodleian has also saved all the University journals, the *Oxford Guardian* and some *Fringes*, but this clearly leaves a lot of gaps. In allowing me access to their memories and papers to fill these up, I am enormously in the debt of: Brian Ashmore MBE; His Honour Judge John Baker; Duncan Brack; James Forder; Philip Goldenberg; Professor G. Patrick Henderson; Julian Holt; Professor Graeme C. Moodie; Professor Ian Morison; David Penwarden; Jonathan Pugh; Dr Michael Steed; Mark Stephens; John Stobbs; Anthony Walton, QC; Philip Watkins; Lord Basil Wigoder. Thanks is also due to Malcolm Baines for permission to quote from his thesis; to David Rundle for discovering the earliest University archive; to the staff at OUSU for their help in examining the archives there; and to the Bodleian staff, for tolerance and understanding while mining from the bookstacks vast heaps of ore for me to refine down into a few scant nuggets of Truth.

The history of the OULC reflects not only that of the Liberal Party as a whole, but also the social changes which have largely transformed Oxford, and I hope it will be of interest not just to Club members, but to those of other political persuasions and anyone with a general concern for these things. In members, three are the things I aim to inspire: knowledge of the past, comparison with the present, aspiration for the future.

James Rattue
This Feast of St Neot
31st July 1993

For some time past it has been felt that a large and representative club is needed for those members of the University who hold Liberal and progressive opinions.¹

With these words was christened the Oxford University Liberal Club, probably the first specifically political university club in the country. It was not the first Liberal organization, however. As well as the Russell and Palmerston, of course, there was also the Liberal League, which was in existence around 1903-4, founded ‘in defence of Free Trade’. One of the Secretaries was Raymond Asquith, then a Fellow of All Souls.² The League was possibly intended specifically for the run-up to the General Election, for it had certainly disappeared by the time the Club was founded; or it may have been linked to the national Liberal League, part of the vogue then current for ‘National Efficiency’.

The declaration of intent above shows the motives behind the origins of the Club. ‘Large and representative’ – these had been the very reasons why the Russell Club was founded. ‘Large’ meant no more than 150 undergraduates, which was the declared upper limit, and the Club was still, for a while, less prestigious than the R&P. One of its founder members was Victor Gollancz, then a left-wing Liberal and socialist publisher-to-be; but he still concentrated on the R&P, becoming its Secretary in Michaelmas 1914.³ Yet the Club was no doubt an asset at a time when the Liberal Government was reliant on Irish support and not as confident as it had been.

Part of the process of founding this sort of organisation was scraping together a fund. Lewis Harcourt epitomised the figure of the Whig grandee. He never held the highest political offices, though other Harcourts did, and remained the archetypal backstairs string-puller; in 1910 he ‘arranged’ for the illegitimate Harry Waechter to inherit his father’s baronetcy in return for a £30,000 donation to Harcourt’s baby, the new Museum of London. Harcourt agreed to pay £25 of the £600 the Club needed, and may have helped drum up support elsewhere; it is a shame that we do not know of any other donors. At any rate the infant Club had the most influential of connections.⁴

The structure of the Club had both familiar and surprising aspects. There was a President, Secretary and a Treasurer, and committee members were responsible for organisation and political work, all commonplace enough. What would be less familiar to its modern counterparts was the social element. The OULC was very much a gentleman’s club, modelled on the great London clubs whose members were the fathers, grandfathers and elder brothers of Oxford undergraduates, and, if its roots were in common ideology, its activities centred on providing a pleasant social environment for members. The Club’s premises, consisting of a club room, dining room and library, were at the corner of George Street and Cornmarket; this was presumably where the

1. Bod. MS Harcourt dep. 443 fo.170. 2. Bod. GA Oxon b 146. 3. Bod. MS Harcourt dep 443 fo.168; RD Edwards, *Victor Gollancz: A Biography* (1987), p.67, 87. 4. F Sheppard, *The Treasury of London’s Past* (1991), pp.33-4; Bod. MS Harcourt dep. 443, fo.167.

£600 had gone. The rooms opened in Trinity 1913, from 11am to 11.45pm, and played host to the twice-termly speaker-meetings. The membership fee was 10/- per term. Most astonishingly of all, the practice of black-balling was used to exclude potential members who might prove undesirable. Nor was all this unusual. The New Reform Club's facilities of bath room, bridge room and meal service were described as 'the usual club premises' in 1920.¹ This made the OULC a far more permanent institution than the loose dining clubs like the R&P, the Chatham or the Carlton. We can almost smell the pipe smoke and hear the rustling of morning papers.

This grandeur availed the Club little in the First World War, however. In the first place, the departure of so many undergraduates to the trenches turned Oxford into a virtual ghost town. In October 1914 an anonymous doggerel appeared in *Isis/Varsity*, then edited by the Liberal Victor Gollancz:

I stand amazed: I'm feeling dazed!
Reigns everywhere seclusion?
Have cap and gown en masse gone down
Or is it my delusion?²

Mere disruption was severe enough, but the ideological turmoil in the Liberal Party itself was fatal. Supporters looked in horror as a Government run by Liberals pursued the war by compromising each and every Liberal principle: free trade, free press, free speech, free conscience. The unshakeable confidence, even arrogance, of pre-war Liberals was broken, and with it the Club appears to have been broken too. It was still operative in 1915, but by 1919 Gilbert Murray, Professor of Greek and an active Liberal, was talking of its having to be 'revived'.³

The Club for which Murray was attempting to drum up support was founded 'in order to support the policy of the Free Liberal Party' - those Liberals who scorned co-operation with the Tories, the Asquithians, tattered embodiment of a bedraggled Nonconformist Conscience. It does not seem to have differed significantly from its prewar incarnation, although from Michaelmas 1919 the Club rooms were re-established at 106 St Aldates. The President was Nevile Beechman of Balliol -or 'the usual college', as *Cherwell* bitchily referred to it - and one of the joint Secretaries was Philip Rea, a Christ Church exhibitioner, who later inherited the family barony and became Liberal Chief Whip in the House of Lords during the 1950s. The Club was inaugurated by ex-Prime Minister Asquith, bearer of the torch of true Liberalism, in a speech at the Town Hall on November 15th. The following year the Club returned the favour with a celebratory meal following Asquith's re-election to parliament.⁴

The 1919-20 accounts revealed how precarious finances threatened to be. The initial appeal for donations had drawn money from some very highly-placed people, including four knights and five lords. The most generous donor, Lord Cowdray, gave £50. Over the following year the OULC received donations from members (including

1. Bod. GA OXON b146. 2. Edwards *op.cit.* p84. 3. Bod. GA OXON b146. 4. *ibid.*

dons such as Gilbert Murray and F.W. Pember, Warden of All Souls), £37/6/6 from the Eighty Club, and £100 from the Liberal Central Association. Yet the end-of-year profit was only 11s6d.¹

Almost immediately the reassembled OULC split. There is no source for Brian Harrison's statement that the Labour Club grew out of a secession from the Liberals in 1919, but over the Christmas vacation and the first half of 1920 there were no fewer than 63 defections – something like a half of the Club's total membership.² The Labour secession might explain some of this loss, but more likely is the foundation of the New Reform Club. A Club for Coalition Liberals was being mooted in May 1920, and one of those 'several leading' OULC members who were turning against Asquith was Gerald Howard, son of the MP for Sudbury. The Tories' Carlton Club was strongly in support of the split, and a week later the New Reform was said to have over a hundred members.³

Lloyd George was its Honorary President. Its first officers were all from Balliol, its premises at 129a High Street, Winchester House. It aimed to include 'all those who are in liberal sympathy with the efforts of the present government in solving the great problems of reconstruction'; and by 1922 it was arguing that the pre-war partisan divisions were obsolete, and that new parties should emerge, representing 'reactionaries', 'revolutionaries' and 'a central body of opinion'. Its *Lloyd George Oxford Magazine* was already faltering within a term ('The New Reform Club petitioned for it to be discontinued. We are glad to be able to print something good about the New Reform Club'⁴), but the Club survived at least until Hilary 1925, long after the two Liberal Parties had joined together once more.⁵

The OULC persisted, but like the national Liberal Party it seemed to be dining out on the capital of the past. In Hilary 1921, Secretary Geoffrey Wrangham chaired a meeting with Sir Donald Maclean MP: 'Mr Wrangham ... said that he could not remember Mr Gladstone. No Liberal has ever dared to say that before.'⁶ Nevertheless, we are told that the OULC was strongly entrenched in Oxford in the '20s - though not by any contemporary source which I have been able to chase down. There was a vote condemning the General Election result of 1924 in the Union, largely forced through by the OULC which resulted in its membership doubling, and the Liberals were strong enough to produce one Union President in 1925, OULC Secretary Robert Bernays (MP for North Bristol 1931-45, latterly as a Liberal National), and three in 1928, Aubrey Herbert, Stopford Brooke⁷ and Dingle Foot (Dundee MP 1931-45, and later a Labour minister).⁸ As early as 1920 there were study groups examining hot political issues.

1. University Archive I: statements ledger fo. 65-6,77, 96-7; accounts ledger. Other donors included Herbert Samuel, two members of the Rea clan, the publishers Fisher Unwin and Sir Algernon Methuen, and the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, CP Scott. Early members included Aldous Huxley. 2. *Ibid.*, membership book; B Harrison, 'Oxford and the Labour Movement', *Twentieth Century British History* 2:3 (1991), p.246. There was a round of expulsions in June 1921, when 28 members were thrown out, but this may have been simply a matter of the Club tidying its books. 3. *Isis*, 12.5.20, p.8; 20.5.20, p.7. 4. *Cherwell*, 1.2.21., p.27. 5. Bod. GA Oxon b 146. 6. *Cherwell*, 15.2.21, p.61. 7. He was candidate for the hopeless seat of Guildford at the same time: *Isis*, 24.10.28. 8. D Waller, *The Oxford Union: Playground of Power* (1984), p.50.

Among the upper classes, at least, the 1920s were a decade of liberty. Atheism became *de rigueur*; people even began to talk about sex. In 1920 the University bowed to the principles of the 1918 Representation of the People Act and admitted women undergraduates as full members. Women OULC members did not have access to all the Club's facilities, and accordingly they only paid a third of the full fee, but they were enthusiastic enough. By June 1921 a third of the membership was female, and LMH was the second strongest college, with 12 members to Balliol's 13. However women were still kept at arm's length. It may look impressive that the Club had women Secretaries as early as 1921, but they dealt only with the four womens' colleges; and, while men came in to pay their fees individually, ladies commonly deputed one of their number to do it.¹ At least Oxford was no longer quite a 'homosexual society' in which 'girls never impinged upon our lives at all'.²

In some places and in some matters liberty would not go very far. At the Oriel College of 1924, AJP Taylor found his fellows from grammar schools 'counted for nothing and led a sort of underground life', while Asquith was regarded as 'a dangerous revolutionary'. A Communist friend of Taylor's at Merton, Ieuan Thomas, had his books burned twice and his wardrobe four times in a term; he was eventually forced out. Years later Taylor challenged a Merton don about the matter: the reply was 'Thomas only got what he deserved'.³

By the late '20s the hostile said that 'it is not to-day expected of any man of ability that he should sink with the Liberal ship when there is a chance of political rescue'⁴ and by 1931 the ex-President Edward Marjoribanks was Tory MP for Eastbourne. The Secretary of the Club admitted to Archibald Sinclair in 1933 that 'we are not connected with any party',⁵ and such life as the Liberals possessed seemed little to do with it. The Oxford University Liberal Association, a dons' group formed to fight elections and ensure that MAs registered as voters in the University seat, resolved in 1924 that representatives of the OULC should attend meetings 'to ensure more effective co-operation in the future'. This seems never to have happened, and by 1931 the Association was unable even to find a candidate to fight the seat. It appears to have fallen into abeyance not long after.⁷ Even had the Club showed many signs of life the available media might not have detected them. Both undergraduate organs, *Isis* and *Cherwell*, gave the impression that the University, Union, Colleges, dons and all, was run by the Drama Society. *Isis* was proud of its 'anti-club' stance. *Cherwell* described itself as 'the anti-political Oxford review', and its style of 'journalism' was even more selective, arch and camp than that of its rival. The graduate-oriented *Oxford Magazine*, when it noticed undergraduate clubs at all, concentrated on the academic and ecclesiastical. The Labour Club was well-publicised in 1929-30, but this was largely due to its own efforts, which dried up the following year.

1. *Isis*, 29.11.22, p.91; University Archive: accounts ledger, 12.5.1921. Three Somerville girls paid via Miss Vaughan, ten St Hugh's members through Miss Holt. 2. R Boothby, *Recollections of a Rebel* (1978), p.24. 3. AJP Taylor, *A Personal History* (1983), p.68. 4. E. Wertheimer, *Portrait of the Labour Party* (1929), p.132. 5. MD Baines, 'The Survival of the Liberal Party 1929-59', Oxford DPhil thesis, 1991, pp.24-5. It is possible that Marjoribanks was not President of the OULC at all, but of the Lacrosse Club whose officers also appeared in *Cherwell* – they had the same initials! 6. OULA minute book, Bod. MS Top Oxon e431, pp.11, 25-7.

It may have been disorganization that brought in the first female President, Honor Balfour. Her memory was long to endure: she became an object of some pride, and in the 1940s was one of the Club's honorary Vice-Presidents. This may, however, have resulted from her later fame as a rebel against the wartime electoral truce, for there is no indication that she managed to revitalise the Club. We do not even know exactly when her term of office was. Jo Grimond was a virtual contemporary, and his memoirs, for what memoirs are worth, make no mention of Oxford politics at all. 'I could find no Liberals at all', Ms Balfour commented many years later. 'A few of got together and we formed the OULC. ... We had no money and there were very few of us. I'm not sure we did much good.'¹

It is autumn 1934 and the leaves are falling. Is there anything left for Liberals to believe in? Two fresh undergraduates at Oxford think so, and are determined to, and they rope in a third who is prepared to have a go. In their imaginations they bear salvation.

2. Out of the Ashes

For some years now, the OULC had lost its rooms and old grandeur (as had all the Clubs), and some renewal was long overdue. In the 1935 election the Party was reduced to a Parliamentary strength of 21 (or 25 counting Lloyd George's family), and was suffering continued erosion to Left and Right like an isolated headland. On arriving at Oxford, Raymond Walton encountered only one Liberal of any note, James Brown of Balliol, and membership had fallen to below a hundred.² This compared to 484 and about 300 for the Labour and Communist Clubs respectively in 1932.³

The first of the undergraduate triumvirate of 1934 was Frank Byers, later MP, Chief Whip, Chairman of the LPO and Leader in the House of Lords; secondly, Raymond Walton, in working life to be a judge; and third the surprising figure of Harold Wilson. Wilson stood slightly apart from the others. His main ethical influence was his Congregationalist faith, and he and wife Mary were later married in Mansfield College chapel by the Principal, that longstanding Liberal Nat Micklem. He was deeply alienated by the only meeting of the Labour Club he attended, where 'Marxist public school products ...rambled on about the need for a socialist revolution'; and in Hilary 1935 he was 'drafted' on to be Liberal Club Treasurer, with Byers as President and Walton as Secretary.⁴ Frustratingly, we cannot be sure about dates even now. Wilson and his biographers place the Triumvirate in 1935, when all three were first-years, but Walton became President only in Michaelmas 1936. The *DNB* places Byers's Presidency in 1937, which can hardly be right!

Wilson was a diligent Treasurer, if not an ideologically committed one. Walton organised what college secretaries existed to be organised, and Wilson kept the

1. J. Grimond, *Memoirs* (1979); interview with Honor Balfour, 1999. 2. A. Morgan, *Harold Wilson* (1992), pp.36-7. Morgan's figure of 105 seems to be a misreading of the *Oxford Guardian* 24 (15.6.37), p.3, which gives the previous year's total as 110. Membership in 1935 was probably even below that. 3. MP Ashley & CR Saunders, *Red Oxford* (1933). 4. H. Wilson, *Memoirs 1916-64: The Making of a Prime Minister* (1986), pp.32-4, 35-6.

subscriptions they sent him in a suitcase under his bed. Somehow he succeeded in paying off the Club's debts of £60-70 when the Hilary receipts were only £50, and regretted that this magical ability had left him by the time he reached the Treasury.¹ After that term he began concentrating on academic work and drifted out of politics.

By the end of the Triumvirate's second term, stability had apparently been restored, and public signs of that stability were returning. The first was the *Oxford Guardian*. This modest, 12-page, A5 journal deliberately echoed that great Liberal organ, the *Manchester Guardian*, and displayed, in contrast to the Party at large, a fierce sense of partisanship. In its pages all hint of co-operation with the Tories or Labour was utter anathema; instead the stress in Raymond Walton's first address to the Club as President was all on individualism and freethinking.² In the first issue the production of a Club tie was announced. It depicted a pheonix reborn from its own ashes; which seemed an appropriate symbol. The substantial part of the Guardian's revenue came from advertisements, one of the firms being Hall's, the Liberal-supporting printers who were to serve the Club for twenty years. James Brown, 'a brilliant orator', became President of the Union in 1937;³ and from Michaelmas 1936 a Club library was established, with the Librarian one of the Senior Officers.

The sense of dynamism was near-tangible. Membership almost tripled over the year 1936-37 to 305,⁴ and a high proportion of that membership was active. The aristocratic Rufus Noel-Buxton, a rather wild Balliol Liberal who used to lead a band of inveterate masochists cross-country running on the Wantage Downs, resigned from the Presidency during Trinity 1937, and 133 members voted in the election to replace him. It was perhaps the sense of a fresh and vibrant organisation which attracted female students to the OULC: in Trinity 1937 seven of the twelve candidates for Committee were women. In terms of style, the *Oxford Guardian* was nothing if not ferocious – a ferocity born perhaps of an awareness of the parlous state of the party nationally – and it mercilessly mocked and assaulted Tory and Labour with the same puritan zeal. Individualism, Free Trade and the League of Nations were the shibboleths of this cult; roasted hard by failure it was in no mood to compromise. In 1942, President Verney addressed potential members in the same blistering, and even elitist tone:

Liberalism is a spiritual movement which seeks to translate into politics that liberal spirit which all lament is so lacking ...Liberals are a privileged class ...We have risen in our political thought above the mere desire for material satisfaction for ourselves. We are not victims of fear ...the development of the individual is our aim. The state or the class does not come first.⁷

In Michaelmas 1938 the OULC opposed Quintin Hogg and supported Dr Lindsay, Master of Balliol, in the famous Oxford by-election, and by 1939 the Guardian was firmly anti-Chamberlain. The war for which the Club was steeling itself would prove enormously disruptive, and yet, in the long run, a cause of tremendous strength.

1. Wilson *op.cit.*, 36. 2. *OG* 1 (12.10.36), p.4. 3. Prof. GP Henderson, pers. comm. 4. *OG* 24 (15.6.37), p.3. 5. Prof GP Henderson, pers. comm.; *OG* 17 (27.4.37). 6. *OG* 16 (9.3.37). 7. University Archive II.

3. The Great Generation

For some few, the disruptions of World War Two came at once. George Grey, the President that dark autumn, was absent virtually for the whole of the term, but the Club muddled by somehow.¹ The large influx of recruits forced the services to delay calling enlisted undergraduates until they were twenty, but this still took great numbers of students out of circulation. By about 1942, the University was down to something around a third of its usual level of residents, and the shadow of war flowed through the Colleges, darkening the city with blackout curtains. John Stobbs, later President, fire-watched in the Union, and looked forward to the free breakfast he would receive at the café opposite come the morning.² Into the apertures left by departing men, women students moved. By Michaelmas 1942, six of the thirteen Committee members, and three of the four Senior Officers, were women,³ and from 1940 to 1945 there was one female President per year. That level was unprecedented and has never been repeated.

The Club's publications were equally disrupted. At first the *Guardian* 'still appeared occasionally', but, before long, became 'a war casualty'. Eventually the *Liberal Review* replaced it in Michaelmas 1941; its appearance was erratic, but after Michaelmas 1943 it became a journal produced by Oxford Liberals for the Union of University Liberal Societies, which showed quite how disorientated the other Liberal Clubs must have become.⁴ The Club was left without a published voice until after the guns ceased.

But beneath the disorganisation there was creative ferment. While OUCA, the Labour Club and the Democratic Socialist Club⁵ were 'in the doldrums', OULC was 'seething with expectation' at the sort of world which would emerge from the war. On 16th October 1942 Lord Samuel addressed the Club on 'The World After the War'; and the other speakers that term all came from the Left of the Liberal Party – Wilfred Roberts MP, Geoffrey le Mander MP, and William Beveridge. Study Groups were held to look into current (especially international) issues.

By 1943 'the electoral truce was telling on the fortunes of the Club',⁶ but ideologically Oxford, and Oxford Liberals, seemed to be at the centre of the world. In Hilary Beveridge was elected Master of University College, and nailed his political colours to the mast by accepting a Vice-Presidency of the Club. An ex-OULC official whose partisan allegiance was becoming more ambiguous, but whose presence must still have been a fillip, was Beveridge's 'plump young red bow-tied sidekick' at Univ, Harold Wilson. In November Honor Balfour came within seventy votes of winning

1. *OG* n.s.1 I (26.4.46), p.3. 2. Unless otherwise stated, the account of the wartime OULC is taken from Brian Ashmore and John Stobbs, pers. comm. 3. Ashmore papers. 4. *OG* n.s. I 2 (8.5.46), p.3. After the war *Liberal Review* became the *University Guardian*, the name again indicating how much Oxford dominated the UULS. 5. The 'OUDSC' was formed in 1940 when the Marxist-run Labour Club voted against support for Finland, and was disaffiliated by the Party. The minority split away; the first President was Tony Crosland, Roy Jenkins was Treasurer, and the first meeting was addressed by AJP Taylor (Taylor *op.cit.*, 151; S. Crosland, *Tony Crosland* (1982), p.12). OUCA was intellectually bankrupt, and did not revive until the late 1940s, when Margaret Roberts was a driving force (H Young, *One Of Us* (1989), pp.20-27). 6. *OG* n.s. I 2 (8.5.46), p.3.

Lord Samuel's old seat at Darwen as an Independent Liberal. The Club was heavily involved in Radical Action, the party's left-wing pressure group, whose membership included Honor Balfour and John Stobbs. Its founder, Lancelot Spicer, was 'a frequent visitor ...to speak and liaise.'² The guns of Oxford Liberalism were still firing as loudly as before the war, but now in the name of a Liberal future, rather than a negative attack on the political oligarchy. To the rhythm of those guns it felt the tides of the globe were running. By the autumn of 1946, Philip Fothergill, chief backroom-boy at the LPO, could reassure Liberals that 'a generation ago the University intelligentsia were Socialist. Today they are decisively Liberal.'³

Perhaps this was true; but whatever the support in principle, in practice people still preferred rather to vote for a conservative, bureaucratic Labour Party than take the leap of imagination and risk Liberalism. The Liberals hit the brick wall of defeat with all the weight of their hopes and confidence crushing up behind them. Yet the OULC simply altered gear, shifting back to the negative Liberalism of the 1930s. With the Press calling for the Party to be wiped out as a baroque irrelevance, with post-election euphoria pushing the Labour Club's membership to 1500,⁴ there was nowhere left to go. For the next few years ideological debate centred on defending the Party's very existence, and anyone who suggested cooperation with others was liable to excommunication. Even fraternisation was suspect. In 1947 Sylvia Stratford-Lawrence earned the *Guardian's* icy curses for over-close association with certain Tories.⁵

But those who were staffing the OULC were not likely to desert it; for they had already seen off Hitler. The great majority of its officers for the next four years were those who had returned from wartime service to complete degrees or who, like Julian Holt, entered the University on truncated courses after their demob.⁶ On one level were the grandees who returned fairly briefly to assume High Office. Of this class was the ex-OULC President, Basil (later Lord) Wigoder who became President of the Union for 1946-7; James Comyn, and Godfrey le Quesne, who were also Presidents at various times. Liberals were not alone - Tony Crosland followed the same career pattern.⁷ On another level were all those who plunged themselves back into the life of the Club; almost every president from 1945 to 1949 had seen war service of some kind.

The importance of the wartime experience of command and discipline can hardly be overestimated. 'Recruitment was planned', according to Brian Ashmore, 'with all the detailed thoroughness of a military campaign'. In Michaelmas 1945 the Club was organisationally very disrupted; nine colleges languished without College reps.⁸ Next term this was down to three. It ought to be stressed that OULC, along with the other political clubs,⁹ had a system of termly membership levies, a hangover from the antediluvian social-club days of the 1910s and 20s. There was some movement away from this in the early 1960s,¹⁰ but the system lasted for some years more. Its result was wildly fluctuating membership, and a lot of work for the clubs.

1. C. Cook, *A Short History of the Liberal Party* (1984), p.126. 2. Graeme C. Moodie, pers.comm. 3. 'From Now On We Fight', *The Liberal Magazine*, Sept. '46, p.387. 4. Harrison op.cit., p.248. 5. *OG* n.s. III 2 (31.1.47), p.2. 6. Pers.comm. 7. Crosland op.cit., p.12. 8. Baker papers. 9. Ashmore papers. 10. *Cherwell*, 17.5.61.

At some point between 1943 and 1945 the OULC Librarian was demoted and a new post of Organising Secretary was set up. The OS ran the recruitment campaigns. An encouraging letter from the President was sent to each college Secretary who was expected to fill up the form on the back with names; and certainly by the late 1940s the system was perfected. For then, 'if a freshman had not been contacted by his college Liberal representative within three or four days of coming up, that would be most unusual.'¹

Year after year the unceasing campaign steamrolled forward. In Michaelmas 1946, membership was 327. At the end of Trinity 1947 it stood at about 450; Ashmore's term as OS saw it rise to 644.² The campaign did not peak until the end of the decade, when the membership total stood on the brink of a thousand.

The other services offered by the Club also began to thrive. The Librarian might have been demoted, but the Library survived, a modest affair available for a quarter of an hour each weekday, in the Club offices over the shoemaker's at 6 Turl Street. The office itself was manned for longer, and was also open on Saturdays.³ There was a strong link into the Union; this was not surprising at a time when, if still just a 'talking-shop', it was nonetheless a very grand one, the proving-ground for future MPs. On Standing Committee with John Stobbs in 1941 were James Comyn (already mentioned), Kenneth Jones (ex-Union Treasurer), and the Indian prince IJ Bahadursingh (ex-Union President); non-Liberals included Roy Jenkins and Michael Foot.⁴ OULC was almost as effective a resource of support for a potential Union officer as was OUCA, for 'in theory the Union was not political; in practice we all knew where our loyalties lay.'⁵ The shame was that these able Liberals stood little chance of ever becoming MPs. Robin Day, Organising Secretary and then Union President, came close, for instance, but not close enough.

Things were worse for the women, who could speak in Union debates only at the sufferance of a specific vote. As the stability of the Club increased, the proportion of female officers fell accordingly. The story of Elizabeth Graham was instructive. She was possessed of 'a brilliant political brain - charming, tactful and persuasive. We were certain that she had a great future as an MP.' It was a surprise to all when she married Peter Kirk, son of the Bishop of Oxford and a mediocre President of OUCA, and vanished into the role of a politician's wife.⁶ The loss of Liberal women is one of the untold tragedies of the party's lean years.

Social events were more uplifting. By 1947-8 the annual Club Garden Party had been inaugurated, and in Michaelmas tea-parties were held in individual colleges for both members and non-members. As well as being the term for garden parties, Trinity was the cricket season. The first Club cricket matches came in 1947, against OUCA and Goring. The following year there were no fewer than six, three against local villages, the Labour Club, OUCA, and the Pressed Steel Works at Cowley. It seems to

1. Interview with Philip Watkins, 5.9.92. 2. *OG* n.s. II 1 (11.10.46), p.11; *OG* n.s. V 1 (9.10.47), p.7; Ashmore papers. 3. Ashmore papers. 4. John Stobbs, pers.comm. 5. Watkins interview. 6. Brian Ashmore, pers.comm.

have been a suggestion by John Stobbs that sparked off the tradition of the May Morning Liberal breakfast, with members paddling down the Cherwell to listen to the dawn carols from Magdalen Tower, followed by a rather boozy snack afloat. A humble occasion at first, it later blossomed. At Anthony Walton's suggestion, the *Guardian* was revived in Trinity 1946, and Walton enjoyed an arm's length reputation as its mordant Union correspondent, 'Skunk'.¹

Ideologically the Club stayed generally on the Left; the party's adoption of co-ownership at the 1948 Assembly in Blackpool was welcomed enthusiastically.² There was some division between Left and Right, as was to be expected - James (later Judge) Pickles, Treasurer for three terms, was a regular complainant that the Liberal Party was not encouraging radical ideas - but in general there was no serious factionalism.³ That some elections were not as pure as they might have been was shown by the General Meeting at the end of Trinity 1947, when, to the disappointment of some, canvassing for Club elections was banned and measures were instituted 'to deal with people who voted more often than was normally considered decent'.⁴ Most presidential elections were not, it appears, even very strongly contested. Some influential figures, such as the Frankenberg brothers, John and Peter, seem to have played the role of consensus-builders who would decide on likely presidential candidates and sound out opinion, in a catalytic rather than a sinister manner. Peter was 'an unofficial whipper-in ... you never knew what he was up to until you saw the result', and John Stobbs felt his own unlooked-for Presidency arose from this process: himself as 'figurehead' with Secretary Merrill Brady doing most of the actual organisation.⁵

But the Great Generation had a deeper contribution to make than this. Firstly came the OULC's increasing links into the hierarchy of the Party. The Club's first two delegates to the Party Assembly were sent to Buxton in 1937, and more representation was gained through the general delegation allotted to UULS. In 1945, Pamela Brisbane, Arnold Hever and Henry Palmer were among a delegation from the Club which presented a (fairly extreme) paper on how the party should fight the election to the LPO;⁶ and the apex of the Club's influence possibly came in 1947. John Frankenberg conceived the idea of a concise Club policy statement which could be used as an aid in recruiting. A committee of members across the ideological spectrum was set up (it included Frankenberg, John Stobbs, Long, and Baker, Pat Furnell (an ex-Tory), Henry Palmer, James Pickles and Anne Glyn-Jones), and its results worked their way into a Statement to the London Assembly, ostensibly on behalf of UULS. This consisted of amendments to replace the party policy on international affairs and economics: the first section passed, partly due to the support of Beveridge, though there was a reaction and the economics amendment fell. By 1950, the OULC President, in an astonishing development, sat on Party Council *ex officio*, thanks to the good offices of its Chairmall, Lady Violet Bonham-Carter - a position of unparalleled influence.⁷ The

1. Pers.comm.; *OG* n.s. III 2 (9.5.47), p.21. Pers.comm. 2. Stobbs papers - editorial from unidentified 1948 edition of *OG*. 3. *OG* n.s.III 2 (31.1.47), p.11. 4. *OG* n.s. V 1 (9.10.47), pp.7-8. 5. pers.comm. 6. *OG* 21 (25.5.37); A Watkins, *The Liberal Dilemma* (1966), p.42; *OG* n.s. III 1 (21.14.47), p.2; *OG* n.s. IV 2 (9.5.47), p.1. 7. Watkins interview; Graeme C. Moodie, pers.comm.

Club's discussion groups and thinktanks provided a service which the party was in no state to provide for itself.

Under the aegis of UULS 'commando raids' were organised when the party fought by-elections, or often where seats were simply thought promising. The country presented a doleful prospect of 'a wasteland of derelict constituencies', and the descent of OULC on the chosen 'victim' had beneficial effects for donor and recipient alike. Ruined constituency parties received a revitalising kick from ex-servicemen and women¹ who knew how to organise people, while younger Club members gained useful experience. Bernard Dann, OULC President-to-be, wrote an account of his own raid into Buckingham in the summer of 1947 for the *University Guardian*. His first soapbox speech in Stoke Hammond drew a single-figure audience, but turnout rose to 50 as word got round the neighbouring villages. A local would act as warm-up, followed by a UULS member, and the performance culminated with the candidate. UULS would then distribute leaflets and attempt to persuade people to subscribe to *Liberal News*. Fifteen such meetings were held; at the LMS Railway Works in Wolverton, shift workers were subjected to a whole day of rolling speeches. Bradwell, Wolverton and Newport Pagnell were all canvassed.³

The candidate in Buckingham was John Long, OULC President in 1944. On several occasions Brian Ashmore contested his home seat of Penrith; Brian Law was chosen candidate for High Wycombe while he was still President, and the Club canvassed on his behalf; The movement from University Club to party hierarchy was probably as true at other universities as at Oxford, but Oxford was dominant in UULS and therefore nationally. It became a factory producing candidates for seats, captains for constituencies wrecked, beached or becalmed, officials for the gaunt central machine. This was only natural; for Liberal representation in the councils had withered to nothing, the constituencies were rotting, the Parliamentary party was divided, shuffling, apologetic and backward-looking. The universities were the only living element in a moribund party. It might not be hyperbolic to suggest that there were three things that saved the Liberal Party. First, the sentimentality of the Tories in propping up Liberal MPs; second, Philip Fothergill and the grim fighters of the LPO; and third, the Liberal Club at Oxford University.

The date is February 15th 1949, and in some plush location a group of ex-Presidents gathers for a photograph. They are Anthony Walton, John Frankenberg, Arthur Mildon, Henry Palmer, and Honor Balfour, and behind the camera is the man from the *Tatler*, in whose pages the photograph is subsequently published.⁴ Unlike the party it represented, the OULC and its glittering stars were part of the social scene. There could be no greater symbol that it had Arrived.

1. Elizabeth Graham led the 'raid' on Cumberland North, her 'ancestral territory' - Brian Ashmore, pers.comm. 2. B Dann, 'On the Highways and Hedges of Buckingham', *University Guardian* autumn 1947, pp.7-9. 3. Julian Holt remembers the candidate as Keith Kyle, but this does not seem to have been the case. 4. Anthony Walton, pers.comm.

4. Zenith

By the late 1940s the Great Generation had established a set of procedures which had brought the Club to unprecedented heights. This structural impetus was to run for almost twenty years (with one blip) under its own momentum, almost regardless of the people who captained the ship. The Liberal Club was an oiled machine which spouted steam and turned its pistons and needed only to be fed and diligently tended. But its officers did not let it down; there was 'no comparison' between the 'position of a bumbling, amateur constituency association and the Liberal Club at Oxford.'¹

As Organising Secretary Robin Day had helped raise the membership of the OULC to between eight and nine hundred, but even this was not the summit. The dashing and brilliant Jeremy Thorpe was not going to miss the opportunity for the membership to pass a thousand under his direction, and to tip the balance he created ten Honorary Members who, when counted in the total, just made up the difference.² This figure was surpassed again by Thorpe's successor, Philip Watkins. In November 1951 the total stood at 1175, easily beating the 960 of OUCA and 600-or-so of the Labour Club.³ Was the machine unstoppable?

The wartime generation departed; the consequence was increased competition for office and tighter internal stability. At the end of Michaelmas 1951 there were 27 candidates for ten seats on Committee; 19 stood for eight places five years later. 'We had', says Philip Watkins, 'to beat them back at times.'⁴ With so large a membership, elections required formidable organisation on their own, especially when, as was the case, the officers were elected separately from the Committee. Posters giving the names of candidates were displayed on all college noticeboards, and, by tradition, the ballot box was held open for six hours. The Returning Officers also had to be vigilant. Watkins was forced to overturn one early-'50s poll owing to 'mismanagement' by the successful candidate, Timothy Brunner, and make a report to the Proctors who, as the University's disciplinary officials, saw to it that the Clubs who bore its name stuck to their own rules.⁵

As for institutional stability, the great majority of Presidents in these years had been Senior Officers first: if we include the Senior Officerships of the Liberal Party Group too, the proportion rises to 81%. To be elected Secretary was the most secure stepping-stone to the Presidency: 60% of Presidents had been Secretary beforehand, as opposed to 10% who were Treasurer and 4% Organising Secretary.⁶ Very often the Secretary would succeed directly into the Presidential chair; this happened in every election from Michaelmas 1958 to Michaelmas 1959, from Trinity 1961 to Trinity 1962, and from Hilary 1963 to Trinity 1964. But only two people plodded their way through all four officerships in succession, Philip Watkins and Ronald Cohen.

The '50s and early '60s were not an age of innovation. The one new factor was the Liberal Party Group, specifically for initiated Liberals and thus with a very

1. Watkins interview. 2. Watkins interview. The exact figure was 1004. 3. Watkins papers. 4. *Ibid.*, University Archive II: election posters. 5. Watkins interview. 6. These figures were probably higher, but the lists of officers shows there are a lot of gaps in this period.

restricted membership. It concentrated on discussing policies and examining issues; it played think tank to the Club's steamroller. It was certainly not in existence in 1946 or thereabouts,¹ and as the first officers we know of appear in 1951 it must date to the 1948-50 period. Nine of its officers were content to move to lower positions in the Club, while none made the journey in the opposite direction, so it is a fair guess that LPG activities were seen as subordinate to and dependent on those of the parent organisation. Occasionally an unsuccessful candidate for the OULC Presidency took over the Chairmanship of the LPG as a consolation. This was the case with Theo Rabinowicz at the end of Hilary 1957, and Roger Billings a couple of terms later. Billings returned at the end of Hilary 1958 and won the Presidency then.² The relationship between Group and Club was shown by the voting figures. In Trinity 1961, 188 people voted in the OULC election; only 27 in the LPG one.³

There was little enough opportunity for women members. There was one unparalleled moment in 1949 when all three main political clubs were headed by women. The Liberals had Anne Chesney; the Labour Club Shirley Summerskill, daughter of the cabinet minister Dr Edith Summerskill; and OUCA Margaret Roberts, of course.⁴ But from 1950 to 1965 just over 10% of the known officerships were held by women, as opposed to 32% during the war (1940-45) and 19% in the later '40s. A high point was probably Michaelmas 1959, when Marjorie Williams was President and the Committee contained four women. Incidentally, Williams defeated in her election Robert Morris, winner of the Balliol Misogynists' Prize for 1959. The two were later engaged!⁵

The shining machine that was the OULC continued to have its lines softened by a full programme of social events, especially during Trinity Term. David Penwarden recalls that he 'began' the annual Ball in 1955, but it was in existence several years earlier, when it was considered 'very swish indeed'. Penwarden may, however, have been responsible either for reviving the event or moving it from the Cadena Restaurant, next to the passage to the Union, to the even more sumptuous surroundings of the Randolph Hotel.⁶ In Philip Watkins's time there were thrice-termly lunchtime speaker-meetings at Long John's near the railway station. The summer programme in 1953 was punishing for Liberal fun-seekers:

12th May, Social at Arlosh Hall (near Manchester College) with three-piece band.

16th May, Victorian evening punt party.

30th May, Barbecue punt party.

5th June, Summer Dance at the Forum Restaurant, with music from 'Reg

Crowhurst and his Rhythmic Serenaders'.

6th June, Garden Party at Mansfield.

The Garden Party was first held in 1948. Mansfield was also the venue in 1954 when, for 2/6, non-OULC members could enjoy the multifarious delights of a fashion show,

1. John Baker, pers.comm. 2. University Archive II. 3. Cherwell, 3.6.61; 7.6.61. 4. Watkins interview. 5. University Archive II; *Cherwell*, 17.10.59. 6. David Penwarden, pers.comm.; Watkins interview.

fortune-teller, treasure hunt, hoopla, bowls, croquet and pony rides.¹ John Stobbs's May Morning Breakfast had, by the early 1950s, ascended to become 'one of *the* social events; other clubs tried to emulate us, but somehow they never succeeded'. Crowds would attend the slightly inebriate punting in the hazy dawn to the faint accompaniment of Latin drifting across the meads from Magdalen.² Over-enthusiasm became a problem when, in 1961, four Liberals, including one Senior Officer, were arrested for attempting to advertise the 'Liberal Spring Ball' with the aid of several buckets of paint and Donington Bridge.³

Successful as OULC was, its supremacy over the other Clubs was short-lived. By 1959 Liberal President Charles Frieze was aiming for a membership of between 1250 and 1500, while OUCA claimed 2000 and the Labour Club 1400.⁴ The Club was still a powerful link into that greater repository of prestige, the Union, though not as exclusively so as had been the case not long before. But prominent Liberals still ascended to the supreme glory. Jeremy Thorpe became Union President in 1950 after a reportedly dazzling performance against his Tory opponent, William Rees-Mogg. Rees-Mogg made 'one of his pious, platitudinous speeches full of good works' while Thorpe, in his turn, imitated a duchess opening a Tory bazaar.⁵

Thorpe virtually had only to appear to be acclaimed; merer mortals had to resort to other measures. Paul Foot, later leading light of the SWP, was a good left-wing Liberal, and also one of the most shameless hacks the Club ever produced. He was the OULC's External Relations Officer in Trinity 1959, dipped out for a term's determined canvassing, and was elected President by the toss of a coin after he and Philip Cowen both scored 63. In Trinity 1960 Foot was defeated for the Union Presidency. Despite a complete lack of journalistic experience he accepted the editorship of *Isis* as an insurance against losing again, caused a lot of fuss thereby, and promptly lost after all. He finally succeeded in Hilary 1961, by a margin of fewer than forty votes.⁶

In political terms the Club was just as active. Its speaker-meetings presented a spiky, heterogeneous selection of public figures. Regular attenders included Gilbert Murray and other Liberal dons; the exiled Spanish ambassador, Salvador de Madariaga, who lived nearby and who was always amenable; Party grandees such as Lady Violet Bonham-Carter; and LPO officials like Sir Arthur Comyns Carr. David Penwarden managed to rope in John Arlott and the Bishop of Johannesburg for his term.⁷ The OULC President's position on Party Council enabled the Club 'quite shamelessly to badger people to come'; the great set-piece debates in the Union with party leaders attending would be expected to draw hundreds, and 'the quality and variety of our speakers' was the Club's great selling-point which would be used to attract members in the first place.⁸

In the earlier part of this period there was little sense of division along factional or ideological lines. 'The OULC itself had very little ideology, being largely a shop-window for Liberal ideas of all kinds.'⁹ As the extraordinary stability of the

1. University Archive II. 2. *Ibid.*; Ashmore papers; Watkins interview. 3. *Cherwell*, 18.2.61. 4. *Cherwell*, 10.10.59, 14.10.59. 5. Watkins interview. 6. University Archive II; *Cherwell*, 23.11.60; 4.3.61. 7. Watkins papers; David Penwarden, pers.comrn. 8. Ian Morison, pers.comrn. 9. David Penwarden, pers.comm.

hierarchy shows, the issue in internal elections was competence, and people were not normally voted in for their opinions. When Jeremy Thorpe re-founded¹ the old Russell & Palmerston Club in 1950, however, this provided some source of dissension. Firstly, from the point of its style, there was a restricted membership of eighteen, and admission was by invitation only; ‘the critics said the test was whether you were socially acceptable’. The R&P even had a Chaplain (Nat Micklem, President of Mansfield) and ritually passed the port. It was supposedly confined to confessing Liberals but this seemed from the outside to include ‘Whig grandees and socialites.’² Secondly, its enclosed and select personnel seemed to form ‘a kind of apostolic succession’ around the charismatic Thorpe. Thorpe appeared to move almost effortlessly from office to office and honour to honour: by the end of his second year he had been President of the OULC, the Law Society *and* the Union, and disagreements both within the R&P and the Club centred on Thorpe’s personality and his unwillingness ever to tell anyone what he was doing. Philip Watkins claims ‘there was no connection’ between the R&P hierarchy and that of the Club, but this is not *quite* true. Seven of the thirteen R&P members in Hilary 1951 were Club officers at some point, while the following term, all four of the Club’s officers were members.³

In Hilary 1955 David Penwarden founded the Cobden Club as a radical rival to the R&P, dedicated to Free Trade, Site Value Taxation and contesting Labour seats. Penwarden believes that candidates in internal OULC elections ‘often had backing’ from either Club, though there is no direct evidence remaining. There was however a close link between the Cobden and the Liberal Party Group, and throughout 1955 it was members of the Cobden who dominated the OULC - Quintin Iwi, Norman Hale, Bryan Ellis, Alan Share. Any divisions could not have been too deep, though, for Penwarden was himself later elected to membership of the R&P, and had friendly relations with its President, Conrad (now Lord) Russell.⁴

By the mid-1950s the Liberal Party was beginning to drag itself from its electoral trough; beginning to be powered by other engines than the Universities. Still for now, the 1955 General Election saw several generations of the OULC flying the tattered banner: Penwarden in West Ham, Thorpe in North Devon, John Frankenberg in Nuneaton. The West Ham campaign showed that media-manipulating publicity stunts were no modern invention. Penwarden’s election agent ‘dressed as a pavement artist and spent two sunny Saturday mornings seated in the main street displaying Liberal election slogans and a wide variety of caricatures’.⁵ The greatest demonstration of the importance accorded to OULC by the national Party had come in 1951 when Liberal leader Clement Davies was teetering towards accepting Churchill’s offer of a seat in the Cabinet. Philip Watkins sent a telegram congratulating his ‘continued independence’ and pledging ‘unwavering loyalty’. Davies cited this in an emotional speech announcing his decision to reject the offer: ‘the Liberal Club at Oxford ... over a

1. David Penwarden, pers.comm. 2. The R&P was certainly deceased by 1924 but there may have been evanescent revivals. Anthony Walton recalls ‘the Russell Club - it was not Liberal and all sorts of Tory grandees were members. We met principally to listen to Isaiah Berlin and drink mulled claret’, pers.comm. 3. Watkins interview; David Penwarden, pers.comm. 4. Watkins papers. 5. University Archive II; David Penwarden, pers.comm. 6. D. Penwarden, ‘West Ham to Westminster’, *OG Mich*, ’55, p.3.

thousand young men are behind me.’¹ The Club’s strength was a proof of the Party’s continued relevance, something that could be held in the face of a disbelieving world. Along with CULC, its Cambridge cousin, the OULC continued to control UULS. Philip Watkins’s campaign for the Chair-ship was managed by a left-wing Oxford Liberal who was also a member of the Labour Club – a certain Rupert Murdoch.²

In local politics the Club was also active. The eastern area of the city was the object of its endeavours, and Philip Watkins recalls ‘standing on the tables and haranguing the members of the East Oxford Liberal Club, who hadn’t really the slightest interest in being harangued by undergraduates’. It was only later, however, that Club members became candidates themselves, always in hopeless Labour ‘rotten borough’ seats. In 1965 Michael Steed, then a postgraduate at Nuffield, was asked to stand in South Ward; while unable to stand himself he did rope in a Nuffield colleague, Alan Beith, and the ex-OULC President Will Pinching.³ A tradition followed this precedent, which reached a peak in 1989 when four students stood.⁴

* * * * *

I was brought up as a Liberal. I *am* a Liberal. Who do I vote for now? - I’m a farmer. If I vote Conservative they’ll ruin me. If I vote Socialist they’ll ruin the whole country. If I vote Liberal they’ve got no darned policy at all. Voting Liberal is about as satisfying as kissing your sister.

Arthur Street, ‘*Any Questions?*’ 1952

By 1959 - the dawn of the Grimond age, the era of Orpington Man, for Liberals that strange, hallucinatory brightness which promised redemption and triumph - by then this was no longer true. Yet the Club was not happy. Between 1959 and April 1961 membership declined to 400 - about level with the Labour Club but still, said President Lister, ‘a relatively weak position.’⁵ The Club suddenly found its navel of consuming interest. In his Presidential campaign of 1959 Paul Foot attacked ‘the general aura of mediocrity the Club managed to convey’, and Christopher Mott was gloomy too. He felt the Club could hardly tackle its inbuilt lack of high-profile national speakers, but its poor handling of the press and top-heavy constitution could be dealt with. Mott’s efforts to reform the constitution, however, came to very little in the end.⁶

The Club’s publications showed the strain. In November 1959 it was announced that a ‘newspaper’ would be set up, and this turned out to be a revamped version of the *Oxford Guardian*.⁷ Since the early 1950s, the *Guardian* had abandoned

1. Watkins interview and papers. Gilbert Murray, that old Liberal Club stalwart, advised Davies to merge the Party with the Tories (Baines Thesis, 71). 2. Watkins interview. 3. *Ibid.*; Michael Steed, pers.comm. 4. In 1973 Oliver Elphick was County candidate in Marston; Neil Hickman and Stephen Postle District candidates for Wood Farm and Temple Cowley. Those four in 1989 were: Amanda Brown (Blackbird Leys); Vivienne Long (Littlemore); Jonathan Pugh (Temple Cowley) and Oliver White (New Marston). 5. *OG* Jan 61. p.4; M Brahams, ‘No Impact’, *OG* Apr ‘61, p.4. 6. Brahams, op.cit; C Mott, ‘The OULC -why it must be reformed’, *OG* Hilary ‘62, p.6; C Hewlett, ‘Whither?’, *OG* Trinity ‘62, p.2. 7. *Cherwell*, 11.11.59.

the Club newsletter format, becoming a somewhat turgid journal of ideas. In the '30s and '40s the philosophy had been leavened with sketches and satire; now it was so heavyweight as to be virtually leaden. Circulation was calamitously low. The new incarnation trumpeted its editorial independence of the OULC, and was supposed to be thrice-termly; only one edition ever appeared. The *Guardian* re-emerged in November in its old format. In Trinity 1961 the paper was turned down as the official newsletter of the ULS in favour of *Scaffold* – which was also produced by OULC members.¹

The editor, Carol Hewlett, outlined the *Guardian*'s problems in Trinity 1962. During the 1960 intermission the editorial board had been dissolved, leaving only the Editor and the Business Manager. As publication was now only termly, it was impossible for an editor to build up any house style. The paper's identity was compromised by being tailored to the Party organisations which subscribed to it; widening its appeal beyond Oxford was impractical, while distributing it free to all OULD members removed its market *within* the University. Next term the layout was glossier but essentially the same. Malcolm Brahams despondently concluded that 'Liberalism lost its appeal in Oxford as soon as it ceased to look like a lost cause.'²

In that respect, help was unfortunately at hand. By 1963 the height of the Liberal revival was fading, and, as if by magic, the OULC was on the rise again. During his time, says Ian Morison, 'the OULC certainly enjoyed a standing in the University ... which belied the Party's standing nationally', and membership figures began to recover. In his report at the end of Trinity 1966, Donald Hamilton declared 'it has been particularly gratifying to see the past upward trend of membership take the Club to a figure above a thousand.'³

Elections being strongly contested was nothing new; and occasionally people would transgress against the swordline-strict procedures. In Hilary 1961 the Chair of the LPG, a certain Stephen Hawking, no less, was defeated for the Club Secretaryship by David Coombes of Brasenose. The Returning Officer had arrived an hour late, and 15 of the 26 voters in that hour had come from Brasenose. In fact, four of the five Brasenose candidates were successful, and the Election Tribunal decided Coombes was guilty of 'unsystematic canvassing'.⁴ Jim Cousins was cleared of canvassing in 1964, and in March 1966 similar allegations were made against the successful Presidential candidate. Personation meant not one but two elections had to be overturned at the end of Trinity that year, and the Senior Proctor convened a meeting of all the ex-Presidents in residence, who met in the Union President's office to choose the next incumbent.⁵

Hitherto ideological disagreements had been between gentlemen (of whichever sex), but from the early 1960s they became more rumbustious. The Club's collective mind again seethed with life and ferment. Unhappy at the supposed domination of the Club by the Left, Aidan Marlow stood for Secretary in Trinity 1960 at the head of a slate of twelve Christ Church candidates, along with Anita Tiarkis from St Hilda's. Unfortunately one of their number, Chris Skeate, was unwise enough to admit that 'most of us are not true Liberals, but are dissatisfied with the smug

1. Hewlett, op.cit. 2. Brahams, op.cit. 3. Ian Morison, pers.comm.; University Archive II. 4. *Cherwell*, 23.11.60; 26.11.60. 5. *Cherwell*, 2.3.66; Ian Morison, pers.comm.

arrogance of OUCA and the extremist ideas of Oxford socialists'. This was taking 'realignment' too far, and their defeat was ignominious!¹

More common was division on the Left. The ex-Secretary, Mike Mann, left the Party late in 1962, arguing that it was easier for left-wingers to put their ideas across to 'the staid, conservative leadership of the Labour Party than to attempt to press them on the middle-class, however idealistic, rank-and-file of the Liberal Party'.² Even for those whose Liberalism was more important to them than being left-wing, like Jim Cousins, the 1964 Council elections marked the death of the hopes Jo Grimond had nursed into bloom. The only course, he stated, was to rely on action on the ground, not only on laws or policies, and thus would 'the Liberal Revolution' be achieved.³ A year later, Cousins was to be found leading a breakaway from the OULC, about which we have sadly few details, on the grounds that the Club had 'lost its purity of purpose';⁴ he is now Labour MP for Central Newcastle. Other mid-'60s OULC left-wingers, like Tony Greaves, gravitated towards what was to become known as 'community politics' and away from the old-style radicalism of Free Trade and the attack on Privilege. George Kiloh moved into the Young Liberals and led them during the heyday of the 'Red Guard'. All this still followed classic patterns, though, and superficially little had altered since the late 1940s; but before many years were to pass the subterranean currents of change would burst forth and both Club and University would undergo convulsions which would change them forever.

5. The Fall of Gormenghast

Perhaps each generation believes it witnesses points of symbolic rupture which mark the transition from one mental world to another; perhaps different institutions in a society have different sets of such points. If this is so, Oxford in the 1960s was far in the rearguard of the disintegration of Britain's *ancien regime*. The Liberal Club does not seem to have been closely involved with provoking those changes in its environment, but it was deeply affected by them.

A little revolution of its own engulfed the Club in 1966/7. Firstly, the post of Secretary was virtually abolished, and for four years was elected not by the members but by the Committee. Even then the Secretary's duties were relegated to taking minutes, and one was often not felt to be necessary at all.⁵ It was also in 1966 that the national *Guardian* saw fit to challenge the name of the Club's own journal, which was accordingly changed to the less establishment-sounding *Fringe*.⁶ Most importantly, the chaotic elections of 1966 convinced activists that reform was needed to avoid the sort of college-slate personal contests that had come to characterise internal elections, and

1. *Cherwell*, 1.6.60; 4.6.60. 2. M. Mann, 'Why I am Leaving the Liberal Party', *OG* Mich. '62, pp.5-6. 3. J Cousins, 'The End of the Beginning - or low tide for radicals', *OG* May '64, pp.10-11. 4. Ian Morison, pers.comm. 5. Interview with Philip Goldenberg, 11.4.1993; University Archive II, termcards. 6. M. Rathbone, 'Ten Years of *Fringe*', *Fringe* Sept. '76.

at the end of Hilary 1967 the first contest was fought on a new, restricted franchise based on attendance at meetings. The turmoil affecting the Labour Club at the time was doubtless a consideration: it had split owing to the irreconcilable tensions between a right-wing Committee and a left-wing activist body which controlled meetings. Such entryism in OULC had to be avoided.¹ At the end of her Presidency, Anthea Brown claimed that the 'electoral restrictions' had caused a heavy fall in membership, and in November *Cherwell* reported that the OULC had suffered 'another sharp decline',² in common with the other Clubs. But in his address to new members that same term, President John Grey still claimed a membership of over a thousand - if not a *voting* membership.³ Recruitment methods were being revolutionised by the innovation of Freshers' Fair, which was definitely in existence by 1968, though I have not been able to discover the exact time of its origin. This 'Universitisation' of recruitment had the obvious effect of eroding the network of college-based social contact on which all the Clubs relied, and possibly contributed to the decline in membership across the political board.

Other changes were deeper. Look at the Liberal Club of generations prior. In the OULC's early years a high proportion of its members - all its first officers, for example - were Exhibitioners or equivalent, and so presumably from the social *milieu* to which such privileges were usually allotted. Many Club officers emerged from a traditionally Liberal political and social background which was only cut off in the 1920s and '30s, leaving a whole generation of children who inherited their Liberalism with their nanny-administered milk. Thus Raymond and Anthony Walton were brothers; Julian Holt a member of a great Liberal shipping dynasty with an MP in his lineage. Ann MacFadyen was the daughter of Sir Andrew, Liberal Treasurer from 1937 to 1950; and therefore probably related to Sir Eric MacFadyen, President of the Union in 1902 and Liberal MP for Devizes, who was in turn the son of the Rev. J. A. MacFadyen, Liberal Congregational minister and late of Mansfield College. A late example of this phenomenon was Paul Foot; his uncle Dingle was Club Secretary and then MP, his grandfather Isaac an MP before that. Jo Grimond's son Andrew was Secretary of the LPG in 1958; his daughter Grizelda was at St Hugh's in the early '60s. Mark Bonham-Carter followed other notable Asquiths and became a member of the OULC before the War. Sir Felix Brunner, father of the Timothy who caused Philip Watkins trouble in the early '50s, appears in the membership list of 1921,⁴ and another Brunner was Liberal candidate for South Bedfordshire in 1955; the Brunners were in turn connected with the Liberal Monds, and Alfred Mond was the first postwar President of the Union in 1919; Sir Alfred was a Liberal MP and founder of ICI.

These sorts of family links were mirrored in the environment of Oxford itself. There were plenty of Liberal dons, like Nat Micklem (who later became Party President, as his father had been) and the collaborators of *The Unservile State* and the Oxford Liberal Group.⁵ Liberal advertisers in the *Oxford Guardian* included not only Hall's the Printers, but also a chemist's firm in the Cornmarket, presumably the Oxford

1. Goldenberg interview; *Isis*, 29.11.67 - letter from Roy Fox. 2. University Archive II, her report; *Cherwell*, 22.11.67. 3. *Fringe*, Mich. '67 p.3. 4. University Archive I, membership book. 5. A. Cyr, *Liberal Politics in Britain* (1988), pp.66, 79.

Drug Company. Their advert read 'we supply the cures for most ills. The cures for the remainder will be obtained from a Liberal Government. Join the Liberal Club.'¹ The *Oxford Mail* was also sympathetic to Liberalism, and in 1945 it gave Graeme Moodie and Henry Fairlie a weekly column.² When the last Liberal national newspaper gave up the cause in the mid-'50s, the *Mail* advertised its sympathies in the *Oxford Guardian* in an attempt to snap up its marooned readership.

Finally, until the late 1960s the Club inherited a good deal of folklore, handed down from generation to generation, which provided some sense of continuity with the past. There was a wealth of ex-officers, or ex-MPs and officials who had connections with the Club, who could return as speakers and pass on the history that way. Frank Byers's entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* suggests that his term as President was a favourite story of his; so it may have been through him that the mid-'60s members came to hear of Harold Wilson's stint as Treasurer, and, with much publicity, to elect the Prime Minister an Honorary Member. In 1965 Christopher Mott and Richard Littlejohns, then graduates, began compiling a history of the OULC (no copies of which are known), and were able to chase down past officers of the Eighty Club, and several of its ledgers in the attic of the East Oxford Liberal Club.³ So continuity in that historical sense was still considerable. But the chemist's shop had been sold by the late '40s, and Hall's finally ceased its long association with the Club in Hilary 1955.⁴ Before many years the Club's personnel was beginning to change too. Fewer members became active as a result of principles inherited from relatives, and were instead drawn in by the Grimond revival of the late '50s and early '60s. Michael Steed was one such new entrant from a non-Liberal home; Philip Goldenberg joined the Party during the Marylebone by-election of 1963.⁵ New generations of little Liberals would arise only from new liaisons, like those between Hannan Rose and Anthea Brown, or Helen Rushworth and William Wallace.

The old Liberal sub-culture which had nourished the OULC was dying, and for some it was none too soon. In 1957 the anonymous 'Politicus' had alleged in the *Oxford Guardian* that the Party was in 'thralldom' to its main supporters, 'elderly lower-middle-class Nonconformists', a constituency 'which is Liberal only in name and which continues to support the Liberal Party for the most conservative of reasons.'⁶ Now it was elbowed aside. The Club, too, which had helped to keep the Liberal Party afloat in the dark days, found itself overtaken by a ward which had outgrown it. Symbolically OULC was one of the first Party institutions to adopt the new house colour of orange, decided on by the Liberal Publications Department in 1962/3.⁷ Dynamic logos and orange flashes appeared on the termcards in place of the time-honoured University arms.

From the Liberal institutions there was slow withdrawal, as the Universities assumed less importance in the Party's life. 'The Party still took us seriously' (seriously enough, for instance, for Jo Grimond to inform them, just before he stepped

1. Brian Ashmore, pers.comm.; Kelly's Directory for 1943. 2. Graeme C. Moodie, pers.comm. 3. Ian Morison, pers.comm.; Bod. MS Eng c.2009 fols. 75-81. 4. University Archive II. 5. Goldenberg interview. 6. 'After Carmarthen, " OG Trio. '57. 7. Michael Steed, pers.comm.

down as leader, how damaging it would be for them to press ahead with a plan to invite Adolf von Thadden, leader of a German neo-Nazi party, to speak)¹ but this was not reflected in any formal arrangements. The President's seat on Party Council was long gone, and there was even a retreat from the ULS. Far from controlling it, the OULC held aloof from it, and was regarded as 'slightly weird' by other University societies. Manchester University became the driving force in Liberal student politics.² Even social events were wound down; such things as Spring Balls and garden parties were no part of the Club's life after the mid-'60s. The time was fast approaching when an officership of the OULC and the Union would no longer be enough to ensure a parliamentary candidacy before a wrecked constituency association staffed by demoralised, deferent peasants. Soon even Oxford graduates would have to fight their way up through local councils like everybody else. The meritocratic society advanced by all those '40s and '50s Oxford Liberals who had entered the Law, journalism, academia or industry rather than politics was eroding the very privilege which had helped win the Club its pre-eminent position.

It was not the Club's fault that its one practical blow for Liberty during these years came to nothing. A remnant of its archaic privileges was its right of corporate nomination to the membership of the National Liberal Club, whose rules did not admit women members. A group of plotters nominated a certain OULC member, Hilary Wright, giving her address as 'care of the Oxford Union' (a college would have been a giveaway) in 1967. The NLC Secretary's enquiry as to the Wright person's gender elicited the reply from Philip Goldenberg that their membership would be in full accordance with 'the rules of the Club' - which was true (he says) only in a technical legal sense. The story of Miss Wright's subsequent arrival at the National Liberal Club brandishing her membership card, and her speedy expulsion therefrom, reached the national newspapers. Philip Goldenberg also recalls that this took place the day before a Club luncheon held in honour of Jeremy Thorpe, who was amusedly indulgent about the incident as was his wont.³

Oxford University in the 1960s was a vast, barnacled hulk of an institution. It was also a powerful one. As well as its generations of alumni, as well as the great weight of its name, its teeth were sunk deep into the flesh of the city as a whole. Councillors for wards with a high student or don population were commonly dons themselves, and up until 1974 the University had by right no fewer than six members of the council to represent nothing more than the *idea* of the University itself. At the head of the structure sat the two Proctors, whose power over what amounted to most of the city centre was beyond question. Their deliberations were secret; no injunction could make them justify their decisions; elected by the MAs, for their term of office they were all but unaccountable. Their authority, though archaic, was no matter of ritual.

Perhaps the admission of women to full membership of the Union was the bugle-call of the far-distant forces of change. It took over three years, though, from the first vote to the final one in 1963 when the requisite majority was achieved.⁴ In

1. *Oxford Mail* 26.1.67. 2. Goldenberg interview; information from Lawrence Fullick. 3. *The Daily Express*, 23.3.67; Goldenberg interview. 4. *Cherwell*, 28.11.59; 4.2.61; 24.11.62; 9.2.63.

February 1961 a tolerant pair of Proctors began negotiations with the JCRs aiming at introducing a Student Representative Council,¹ which was inaugurated a couple of months later. Thereafter, however, the various Proctors set their teeth against the culture of Beatles, *Lady Chatterley* and Vatican Two, and made themselves more or less offensive.

More or less, because some Proctors were more amenable than others. One of the less liberal, for instance, was Godfrey Bond of Pembroke, a ferocious Ulster Protestant and not the best person to deal with sensitive matters of discipline.² He and his colleagues did not smile at Philip Larkin's suggestion that sex had begun in 1963, and pitted themselves against the fleshpots of modernity. There were several *causes celebres* of undergraduates being rusticated or even sent down for sins of the flesh.³ Occasionally there were outbreaks of cooperation, as in 1966 when the Proctors announced that they would consult with the SRC each Trinity over the annual Proctors' Memorandum,⁴ but generally the line was hard. In Michaelmas 1962 a number of publications, *Mesopotamia*, *Isis*, *Oxford Circus* and even *The Oxford Tory*, were all censored, and five years later *Cherwell* was actually banned. A long row with the City Council in the mid-'60s occurred after the Proctors summarily barred all undergraduates from parking cars within a mile of Carfax, a decision taken without consultation with anyone, and which was reversed after pressure from the Council. In 1967 an SRC request for an enquiry into disciplinary structures was dismissed out of hand.⁵

By the late 1960s the mood of confrontation had intensified, inflamed by events in the wider political culture. The general atmosphere of turmoil had its effects on the dons, too: a tutor of mine recalled that the Balliol SCR, then under the Mastership of the Marxist historian Christopher Hill, was so radically divided between those favourable and those hostile to the endless demonstrations that the two camps virtually gave up communicating.⁶ The last such deep convulsion in Oxford had been the Tractarian crisis of the 1840s. Yet the refusal to grant the SRC rights of representation continued, and in protest a number of University societies declined to register themselves with the Proctors. One of these was the OULC, although its relations with the Proctors on an institutional level had previously been smooth. Mike Flanagan, the Secretary in Michaelmas 1968, was fined for the transgression.⁷

Student radicals were not enamoured of orthodox politics. Paul Foot, now one of the revolutionary Left's more prominent spokespeople, returned to his old stamping-ground to enthuse the stamping crowds. Hilary Wainwright, a scion of an old West Riding Liberal family, who became the Club's External Relations Officer and Secretary of the LPG in 1968, found herself questioning her inherited assumptions.

I had come up against more than enough Liberal 'party stooges' and, in the Oxford Union, aspirant stooges, to realise they were not unique to the 'other

1. *Cherwell*, 11.2.61. 2. Goldenberg interview. 3. The College authorities complied with this campaign, especially in the women's colleges, whose governors felt girls had to be shielded from distractions to 'prove' themselves: Ruth Deach, Principal of St Anne's, 'Conversation Piece', Radio 4, 12.4.93. 4. *Cherwell*, 25.5.66. 5. *Ibid.*, 1.12.62. 6. For the record the tutor was the Rev. Canon Dr P. Hinchliff. 7. Goldenberg interview; *Cherwell*, 27.11.68.

parties'. They were bred in large numbers by parliamentary politics itself.¹

Seeking 'more direct and effective forms of democracy than simply Parliament' she moved over to revolutionary socialism. For a while the Oxford Revolutionary Socialist Society was the most powerful influence in University politics, and from its total of a thousand in 1967 the Liberal Club's membership fell to 177 in Michaelmas 1970.² The LPG staggered on until it finally gave up the ghost over Christmas 1970. In August 1968 the Proctors were besieged by the ORSS while electing the new Fellows of All Souls, and the Left's point of view was consistently put by *Isis*, which sent reporters to Vietnam³ and displayed Che Guavara on the front cover. After the Sorbonne riots, the University wavered and set up the Hart Committee to look into relations with the undergraduate population. Its report, while dressed up in conservative language, in fact mounted to a radical attack on the secrecy of the Proctors and a plea for student involvement in the government of the University.⁴ There was a further episode of procrastination until March 1970, when the Clarendon Building was occupied by demonstrators, and the Proctors finally admitted the representative rights the SRC was demanding,⁵ setting about dismantling much of their own authority. The end of their powers of censorship was like the start of the 17th-century Commonwealth. Alternative Prospectuses, 'underground' publications like the lewd *Oxtail* flourished, and *Cherwell* blazed something of a trail for the tabloids in its exposure of the female form. OULS Social Secretary Martyn Copus finished a letter to President Austerberry in 1972 with 'eternally yours, peace and Durex'.⁶

The Club underwent this transition to a new world only after a period of intense turbulence about which little can be discovered. The election at the end of 1967 had been subject to either malpractice or incompetence, and a discrepancy in the accounts meant that the ledgers had to be sent to the Proctors with a recommendation that the current account be frozen. In Hilary 1968 there were no reps, and presumably therefore no members, in Jesus or Lincoln, and in Michaelmas 1969 Corpus, Lincoln, Merton and Worcester were similarly denuded of Liberals. From Trinity 1968 the chain of termcards in the first batch of records breaks down. Late OULC President Guy Harkin became Union President in 1970, but one of his predecessors in that position alleged that the Club had declined from its powerful position of only a few years before, and had wound up as 'a small, introverted and ineffectual little clique'.⁷

In Hilary 1970 the Club renamed itself the Oxford Union of Liberal Students, dropping the 'University' tag to which it no longer had title. The disorganisation was such that we only know Jennifer Shepherd was President that term from her signing an official letter, and from a later statement that the then President was a woman. From then until Trinity 1971 the Club was 'literally struggling for survival' according to Alan Sherwell, who as Treasurer stated that the finances were 'best described as interesting'. Open season was declared on the Constitution, and after two hundred

1. H. Wainwright, *Labour: A Tale of Two Parties* (1987), introduction. 2. University Archive III. 3. *Isis*, 6.11.68, p.6. 4. *Ibid.*, 9.10.68, p.9; 14.5.69. 5. *Cherwell*, 14.3.70. 6. University Archive III. 7. D. Wallers, 'Joining Up the Dots', *Isis*, 11.10.69, p.7.

amendments were submitted the whole thing was rewritten wholesale during the spring of 1971. Even at the high point of the national Liberal revival in Michaelmas 1974, eight colleges were without reps, and there were only 25 new members. Yet internal stability was restored fairly quickly: from 1971 to 1973 all the Presidents had served as senior officers first.¹

The OULS fell in with the radicalism endemic in the atmosphere. After the Liberal Party expelled the Young Liberals' chairman, Louis Eaks, over the organisation's policy towards South Africa, President Andy Popper wrote to David Steel to elicit an article on apartheid for *Fringe*. There was scorn for budding manifestations of social democracy as made flesh by the rebel Labour MP, Dick Taverne. Stephen Cheshire was quite uncompromising and a bit unkind in 1972: 'Mr Taverne is not', he wrote to Steel on the Club's behalf, 'in any way a Liberal. Support for him by the Liberal Party would mark the Party as seeing itself as a dumping-ground for political rejects'. In 1974, Robert Boden, Paul Seddon and Eileen Simkins (an OUSU candidate) all appear on a list of students supporting the hunt saboteurs which somehow found its way into the files.²

The membership figures as assembled by Alan Sherwell look comparatively healthy for what were very fallow years for Liberals - 150 in Hilary 1971, 143 in Trinity (term, not college!), and 196 in Michaelmas. The Presidency went uncontested until Hilary 1972, but from then on the usual sort of personality-oriented, college-based factionalism was common. In that term, the election result was contested by ten people, although Jeff Broomfield, acting as an Electoral Tribunal, 'could only detect the usual degree of management of voters, organised write-ins, college block voting and advance knowledge of the result', and consequently 'could only report a fair election'! It was no coincidence that the two strongest colleges in terms of OULS membership were the candidates' own. The editor of *Fringe*, Mike Hilton, advised members not to vote in the election of Trinity that year in order to tone down the Club's divisions.³

The long-term presence of the Exeter don Dermot Roaf as Chair of the local Party probably oiled relations between itself and the OULC, and the City Liberals often commissioned the students to perform certain services; usually conducting surveys on matters such as road repairs or facilities for disabled people, which could then provide the basis for local campaigns. The new radicalism of 'community politics' was evidently making itself felt. (Incidentally Dermot Roaf's gentlemanly habit of never voting for himself caused problems in 1973, when he lost North Ward to a Conservative called John Patten, by one vote: although it must be admitted that this story is of folklore status!)⁴.

For a couple of years the University calmed somewhat, but the era of barricades, banners and breasts was not yet quite over. Late in 1973 the socialist-run SRC held direct universal elections to legitimise itself, and finished with a non-partisan left-wing President and an Executive of assorted Socialists and Communists. On the 6th of November the Examination Schools were occupied by demonstrators who began a sit-in. Wearily the University agreed to recognise this nascent Oxford University

Student Union,¹ and the reorganisations of 1974 swept away its medieval representation on the City Council.

Everything had changed. There was suddenly a new focus of political activity far more congenial to the politically-sound than the aristocratic, formal Union, which thereafter became for many years largely the playground of factions within OUCA. The ancient authorities of the University had buckled in to popular pressure. The Liberal Club was smaller and tighter, and there could no longer be a distinction between the committed core and the non-partisan mass. For all its collegiate institutions and archaic ritual, Oxford was now a modern University.

6. The Church Militant

The inaugural year of OUSU was one of confusion and disorder. The first election to the Executive in Hilary 1974 produced a group of four moderate ‘Democrats’, three Occupation supporters, and a solitary Liberal, Dave Roberts; the new President, Gareth Daniel, was also a ‘Democrat’.² There was a further interlude of violence, with clashes between students and police at the Clarendon Building and an attack on the Indian Institute. The divisions on and resignations from the Executive soon made a second election necessary.

This was the OULS’s chance. In 1973 the Liberals had swept the board in East Ward, electing three candidates to the City and one to the County Council.³ MPs Beith, Ross, and Freud had already ridden to victory the tide of another Liberal revival, and in 1974 OUSU succumbed to its lesser waves. Liberal control of the Executive was not, however, altogether successful. Within two terms all four Liberals on it had left, including Social Secretary Mark Loveland after a disastrous party, and Treasurer Tom Williams over allegations of mismanagement.⁴ They had achieved nothing very much, and even in their 1975 election publicity OULS seemed apologetic, remaining content to list a few very modest results and to argue ‘Liberals played a decisive role in producing these small successes’.⁵ It appeared that Oxford’s enthusiasm for radicalism had quickly blown itself out.

And OUSU brought with it its own difficulties. From the start there was a view that its very existence was of dubious value. In 1972 Paul Harris argued that a student union would be ‘a vast bureaucratic machine’, centralised, inefficient, and destructive of the informal relationships between Colleges and JCRs.⁶ Within a couple of years the split had hardened to the point where ‘community politicians’ were castigating ‘student politicians’ as reactionaries, while the latter saw the former as revolutionary ideologues.

1. *Cherwell*, 8.11.73. 2. *Ibid.*, 23.1.74. 3. Margaret Butler was City and County Councillor; her colleagues were David Pratley and Vera Gibbs. 4. *Cherwell*, 19.2.75. 5. OUSU elections file. 6. University Archive III; *Fringe*, Oct ‘72.

A GM defeated the Committee's proposal to put forward a candidate for the OUSU Presidency in 1975; and in Hilary 1976, after a term in which all three senior officers of OULS were pro-OUSU, the result in the bitter election for Chair fought between Tamara Goriely (pro-city politics) and Peter Brook (pro-OUSU) was challenged on several fronts.¹

The Electoral Tribunal decided to re-run the election, having found that the voting list had at one point been removed from the polling room. Brook's subsequent victory did not prevent Goriely from presenting a motion amounting to the Club's dismemberment to the next GM. This drastic 'solution' was avoided by establishing three separate organisations – the O.U. Young Liberals (city politics), the Liberal Studies Group and the University Liberal Action Group (student politics), all under the aegis of OULS, or OSLS as it now renamed itself. With relief Mark Rathbone reported at the end of Hilary 1977 'at least we've avoided any major splits this term, which must rank as a significant achievement in itself'. Once tempers had cooled the tripartite division lost a lot of its point, and before 1979 it had disappeared.²

In any case, by then the tide of revival had long since ebbed. In 1976 all three Liberal councillors for East Ward were defeated, and the only Liberal on the OUSU Executive, Jayne Almond, joined Labour.³ Repeated efforts to capture OUSU by proxy came to nothing. The candidacies of Simon Sedgwick-Jell, the Independent Libertarian who enjoyed the formal support of OULS in 1976; of Progressive Mark Rathbone in 1977; of the 1976 joint Liberal-Labour-Broad Left slate; all foundered on the impregnable walls the Tories had built for themselves. By Christmas 1976 the OSLS membership was well below a hundred, and the GM of Trinity 1977 attracted only fourteen attendants.⁴

In terms of the measurements we employed earlier the Club was entering a period of instability.⁵ From 1974 to 1983 well under half the Presidents or Chairs had been senior officers first, and all the last four in that period emerged from the lower ranks of the Committee. This was only to be expected when the pool of active members was so low. In Michaelmas 1980 there were supposed to be about fifty 'activists' out of a membership which was close to 250 (comparatively healthy, for reasons which are a mystery); but Duncan Brack claims there were not usually more than about a dozen 'main activists' at any one time. The founding of the Social Democratic Club had a slightly depressive effect, as some members left to join that new organisation.

Political arrangements required some changes in the structure. The 'Joint Committee with the Social Democrats', consisting of four members of each Club, was established around Michaelmas 1981, and there were also joint election planning committees when appropriate. In Hilary 1981 a fourth officership was constituted, the General Agent, which was intended as something very much like the old Organising Secretary, but which swiftly degenerated into leaflet-deliverer and publicist. The abolition of the Secretaryship was flirted with. In a brief fit of extremism, the Club

1. *Ibid.*, issues of *Fringe*, Hilary '75; letter from Sue Owen to Tim Bick, 6.12.75; *Fringe* 8.3.76.

2. *Ibid.*; Duncan Brack, pers.comm. 3. University Archive III : *Fringe*, Trinity '76; *Cherwell*, 15.10.76. 4. *Fringe* Trinity '77. Ms Benazir Bhutto was a member at this time. 5. My account of the 1979-83 period is mostly drawn from an interview with Duncan Brack (13.2.1993) and papers made available by him.

voted in Trinity 1980 to get rid of the Chair altogether, and instead elect a 'co-ordinator' each week to chair meetings, but the move failed to secure the necessary majority. As GMs were held once a week anyway, one might have thought there was already enough democracy for anybody.

Throughout the early 1980s; ideological divisions in the OSLS were not especially bitter, but still deep and unmistakable. The split between 'student' and 'community politicians' had faded for a while to be replaced by a more straightforward Left-Right distinction, the Left, confusingly enough, championing the cause of OUSU this time.¹ The Left – which included figures such as Duncan Brack, Adrian van Klaveren and Martin Horwood – was based around two institutions. The first was the Anarcho-Trotskyite Dining Society, founded in Trinity 1980 by the 'self-appointed Grand Vizier', John Inkipin. Its tone was light-hearted but its stance was clear enough: 'opposition to the capitalist lackeys and imperialist running-dogs led by the Ayatollahs King and Bye'. David Bye was an ex-Chair, while Graham King had a finger in the several pies of OUSU, OSLS and Central Ward and was sceptical about the Progressive Alliance, the official OSLS approach to OUSU elections. Gradually the Anarcho-Trot developed into a less partisan grouping and is currently entering its fourteenth year of existence.² The second institution was *Cringe*, a satirical take-off of the official *Fringe*, which first emerged in Trinity 1981.

Elections were naturally affected. At the end of Trinity 1980 the ubiquitous Graham King stood for Chair in favour of distancing OSLS from Labour; and Brack felt compelled to oppose Ian Gambles for Hilary 1982, feeling Gambles was uninterested in OUSU. Maria Leek was elected for the autumn term of that year, on a specific undertaking to reduce the influence of the Left, and the 'Arrangements Committee' dragged Bob Bunting back into the Secretaryship to ensure they had some input. On Martin Horwood's election *Cringe* rejoiced that 'the Old Guard are back on top'.³ According to James Forder the phrase 'Arrangements Committee' was 'a derogatory nickname for the ruling establishment ...usually employed by those who had just failed to be elected to a Club officership in explaining why',⁴ but it does seem to have been used by the Left themselves.

The story of the Progressive Alliance deserves to be told in detail. In 1979 the Conservatives won the OUSU elections for the fourth time in succession. That year's executive contained a Labour member, a Liberal (Lesley Riddoch) and a 'Silly Party' member from St Catz, who was not especially silly but was anti-Tory. From their cordial relations grew the idea of the Alliance - though similar notions had been mooted at an Extraordinary GM late in 1978. In Hilary 1980 the Tory hegemony in OUSU was finally broken; Riddoch was elected President and Labour's Morag McDermott Deputy President. A set of simultaneous by-elections enabled the Progressives to take control of the Executive.

1. John Hemming (ex-candidate for Birmingham Yardley and at this time known for some reason as 'the Monk of Magdalen') was still regarded as a left-winger despite being a fervent community politician. 2. James Forder, pers.comm. 3. 'There are already too many Soggies in the Society, and one of their number will be President next term' - John Inkipin to Adrian van Klaveren, 22.5.81 (Brack papers). 4. Pers.comm.

Brack, the Campaign Manager, was a leading light of the effort to set up a separate Progressive organisation. Generally the Labour Club feared this would lead to their losing control, while sceptics like Graham King mistrusted Labour's 'ambition to establish ...an empire within OUSU akin to that once ruled by the Tories'. By 1981 these pressures were at boiling point, and during the election of that year, a complex affair with five slates (Progressive, Tory, proto-Bernardistas, Corpus Independents and Centre Democrats, a Tory/Liberal grouping), it emerged that the Centre Democrats had forged ballot papers in five colleges, the guilty parties being Graham King, the incongruous figure of John Inkipin, and the Returning Officer, Leslie Bloom. It was the first scandal that began the slow staining of the Student Union.

The election was rerun in Trinity Term. At the Progressive selection meeting, the Left of the Labour Club cynically voted for all the most right-wing candidates, and Brack felt compelled to fix the slate to ensure there was at least one Labour candidate on it. The alliance promptly blew apart. In disgust the OSLS Chair, Brent Smith, helped set up an Independent Liberal - Social Democrat slate (which included Suzanna Taverne, daughter of Dick), and the path was made ready for the victory of the Bernardistas, pranksters led by a colourful reprobate called Bernard Hughes who now emerged in all their lurid and alcoholic colours.

OSLS's day-to-day life went on much as usual. *Fringe* continued to be printed once a term along with the weekly newsletter, though the appearance of termcards was erratic from time to time. The tradition of community campaigns was beginning to die out, as Clive Hill found cause to complain in Trinity 1979; the Club struck good radical postures – the 'Agitate, Educate, Liberate' slogan appeared proudly on the *Fringe* cover beneath a picture of Lloyd George (how horrified the Asquithians of 1919 would have been!), while Martin Horwood furnished the Michaelmas '82 termcard with a cartoon of David Steel threatened by an OSLS monster sporting a CND badge – but despite this little enough was achieved in practical terms. There were normally about ten OSLS people in the ULS delegation at the Party Assembly, but no special status was accorded them.

Once upon a time the Club had been a motor powering the Party out of the doldrums; now the favour was to be returned. In 1981 Dermot Roaf finally battered through to win North Ward from the Tories. The following year the SDP candidate, Ian Maclean, almost quadrupled the Liberal share of the vote to make the long-awaited breakthrough in Central Ward. All at once an invigorating breeze was blowing, and the OSLS was on the edge of the wide, airy uplands, it seemed.

7. The Church Triumphant

It was the best of times.

Although not unconquerable, as it had seemed in 1981, throughout the mid-1980s the SDP-Liberal Alliance captured the idealism of a generation. It seemed innocent, untouched by the failures of the past. It enabled students to feel like

revolutionaries without having to approve of violence. And the Tories delivered the less radical denizens of Oxford over to it by destroying themselves in academia.

God knows the weather was not set fair at first. In particular, Liberals who had been involved in the Progressive Alliance resented being bounced into a new one with the SDP, whose policies were as yet a matter of conjecture, by what seemed to be those very people who had so disliked the linkage with Labour. In 1981 John Inkipin confessed to his concern about 'the "Social-Democratic-Alliance-at-any-price-itis" which is prevalent in OSLS and the Liberal Party'.¹ But the logic was inexorable: given the alliance at the national level, to have remained apart in Oxford would have seemed perverse. David Penwarden entered heartily into the Alliance spirit: on returning to Oxford and finding the local Liberals a little 'cranky', he helped set up the area SDP himself.² Oxford West (as it was) remained a predominately SDP seat thereafter.

OUSDC took some time in getting itself organised, but the Alliance itself soon had an effect on Oxford politics. In the election for OUSU Secretary in 1979, John Hemming had won 12.9% of the vote for the Liberals; standing in the SDP interest for the same post in 1982, Sarah Reid polled 33.2%.³ The effect was the same in the local council sphere, where the Alliance became fair challengers in both main student wards.

So far as there was an issue which divided OSLS from OUSDC it was the Union. The last real Liberal Union President had been Mike Austerberry in 1973 (Benazir Bhutto, though a Club member, was never at all active in it). With OUSU's eyes fastened covetously on the Union buildings for its own, and with rumours flying that the Union might actually go bankrupt, for Liberals to be active in it was not politically correct. The SDP generally found the Union environment more congenial, which could cause friction. In 1983, for instance, it was alleged that Bernard Hughes, ex-OUSU President and leader of the Bernardistas, and other right-wingers had arrived at the Alliance's selection meeting before the OUSU elections to support their Union-based friends in the SDP, such as Andrew Shaylor.⁴ *Cherwell* very possibly exaggerated this incident, but Mark Stephens believes the Union was 'the main cause of division within the SDP'. OUSDC had other difficulties. Charles Marquand and Roland Rudd stood in its elections in Michaelmas 1982, declaring that 'politics is boring' and aiming to model the Club on OUCA.⁵ Luckily for the future of the Alliance they were not successful. In general, though, OUSDC was quiet and relations with OSLS were more than cordial.

In terms of ideology, OSLS was producing less steam than it had; yet the principles were there, and 'community politics' loomed large among them. When the OUSU Executive interviewed Mark Stephens in 1985 he 'explained why he had always wanted to be responsible for Health and Welfare, in the course of which Michael Meadowcroft's [the ardent community-politics MP] name was dropped - not for the first time'.⁶ Elsewhere the touching naivety which was part of the Alliance's charm emerges: 'Sarah [Reid] spoke in favour of co-opting a Tory in place of Helena

1. Brack interview and papers; Mark Stephens, pers.comm. Much of the account of this period is drawn from Mark's information. 2. Pers.comm. 3. OUSU elections file. 4. *Cherwell*, 11.2.83. 5. *Ibid.*, 19.11.82. 6. OUSU Executive minutes, 11.3.85

[Djurkovic] as we didn't have a Tory on the Exec. ...Bridget [Ansell] said their co-opting anything other than an Alliance person would make a mockery of OUSU elections.'¹ Similarly, in autumn 1984 the Alliance stood no candidate in an OUSU by-election because it felt it was already over-represented!

There was so much to do. With success in both OUSU and the Council, the question of which area should be the top priority opened up divisions, though never anywhere near as bitter as in the mid-70s. 'When I arrived', says Mark Stephens, 'I was told you got involved either with OUSU or with Central Ward'. As he had been an agent in Michael Meadowcroft's seat of Leeds West, he chose the latter. Frances Thirlway's allies referred to the community politicians as 'Turd Streeters' because of their concentration in Lincoln College, but the main effect was just 'debates about concentration of effort'. James Forder admits to being 'never really one or the other'.² With further electoral success, however, the membership became less interested in ideology; and such rifts as existed were healed when the two chief personalities, Thirlway and Stephens, were running-mates in the 1986 OUSU election. Individuals stood little chance as the winds of ideological fashion blew back and forth. Poor Councillor Michael Hart was to be found in 1983 'prostrating himself in humility before the serried ranks of the Anarcho-Trot Dining Society' on being asked to attend the left-wing group, signing himself 'A Trew Freind of Liberty -X'.³ By 1985 *Cringe* was calling him 'the last of the Whigs' (as indeed he is).

With its membership of about 120, becoming a power-broker in OSLS was not hard if you were determined. Nobody was better at it than Frances Thirlway. On failing to be elected Chair against Mark Stephens, she took up the position of Publications Officer with control over the newsletter, while her partner Stuart Weeks became Membership Secretary. Next term she was not only elected but her Balliol faction secured eight of ten places on the Committee. As Chair she cut the number of General Meetings so that only the Returning Officer - herself - would know who had been nominated! Luckily it was all good-natured, and rivalry never degenerated into rift.

For the first time, the Club had, in OUSU, a means to put its principles into practice. The first Alliance victory was in 1984, but it was not plain sailing by any means. Firstly, so many posts were elected by Alternative Vote that the Alliance landslide was not really deserved: Labour had come substantially ahead on first preference votes.⁴ Secondly, OUSU Council was clogged with Committee Chairs which had become political appointments. Thirdly, President James Dickinson and Deputy President Sarah Reid (both SDP) saw their election as a vote for a 'non-party' OUSU and were a little distant from the Liberals on the Executive; hence such suggestions as co-opting Tories! In that respect later administrations were happier. Matthew Taylor (later a Cornish MP) began his Presidency as a Social Democrat and became a Liberal in the Summer; his Deputy, Helena Djurkovic, was always a Liberal. Frances Thirlway and Mark Stephens were not only both Liberals but they

1. OUSU Executive minutes, 4.3.85. 2. An issue of *Cringe* now in Frances's possession; James Forder, pers.comm. 3. Brack papers. 4. OUSU elections file.

won on first preferences – he gained 38.1 %, she 40.9%.¹ They were all a little more partisan than Dickinson and Reid.

Bullying and besieging the University authorities as in the '60s was no longer necessary, as they now seemed quite amenable to anything OUSU suggested. The 1982-4 Labour Presidencies had concentrated on winning more representation for students on University bodies, and securing agreement to the idea of a CSU building to replace OUSU's poky office (in 1986, Matthew Taylor reported that the Proctors were in favour of a CSU but knew little about the issue!²). The Alliance administration carried on both campaigns. James Dickinson concluded tortuous negotiations over a site in Frewin Court, getting the University and the JCRs each to fund half the cost;³ however this fell through because of the property boom, and Mark Stephens negotiated the current site from the University itself. The first administration also set up the 'housing bank', a list of rented accommodation for students. The scheme required such detailed supervision that various Accommodation Officers refused to administer it and the Executive had to do it on a rota basis.⁴ In the end the Bank was farmed out to the JCRs. There were other activities: Taylor used a report by Stephens to persuade the University to make representations to the Government opposing benefit changes (Taylor had good relations with the University generally; the minutes often refer to his informal chats with the Vice-Chancellor and so on), and Stephens made the Welfare Officership a sabbatical post. Frances Thirlway was interested in specific services such as the provision of rape alarms for students.

The non-party line pursued at first led to constitutional reforms which amounted to a self-denying ordinance for the Alliance. The voting system for the Executive was changed completely over to STV so that the Alliance would not get such undeserved majorities. The President's right to vote on Executive was abolished and the number of Committee Chairs with votes in Council was reined in, to encourage appointment by merit rather than political colour. To a degree the pressure for reform came from outside. Wadham JCR (or Student Union as it calls itself), realising, now that Labour had lost, that the AV system was quite unfair really, threatened disaffiliation unless the voting system was altered.⁵

The shadow of a grocer's daughter fell as long and dark over Oxford as over the rest of the country. When she was invited to a dinner at All Souls, the prospect of the Pillager-in-Chief being guest of honour at the grandest and most prestigious High Table in the world mobilised student opinion more than the disruptions of the 1960s ever had. On 7th December 1984 about a third of the whole student body turned up to the demonstration organised by OUSU, and got charged at by a jumpy and irritable police guard for their pains. There were about 30 arrests. All but one or two of the cases collapsed in court, and Sarah Reid was 'heavily involved' in arranging legal help and costs. The Liberal Councillor for Central Ward, Michael Hart, proposed that the City Council hold an inquiry into the demonstration, and the report, though delayed

1. OUSU elections file. 2. OUSU Executive minutes, 2nd Week Trinity 1986. 3. OUSU Council minutes, 8.3.85. 4. OUSU Executive minutes, 1986-7. 5. *ibid.*, 10.5.85.

by a year, was highly critical of the police action.¹

Having shown its displeasure of Margaret Hilda Thatcher, Alliance Oxford proceeded to humiliate her. For it, the world's most powerful institution of learning, to drape a doctor's gown over the shoulders of the Angel of Destruction as a badge of honour would be to approve her assaults on all those other, weaker universities who had not the same wealth or authority to defend themselves. As Congregation gathered in the Sheldonian in their plumage of black and red, James Dickinson gave the views of OUSU, and Michael Hart spoke for those dons who opposed the award of Honorary D.C.L.² The consequence was that the girl from Somerville was rejected by the institution that had so bred her, an astonishing slap in the face.

It was surely no coincidence that 1983/4 was when the fortunes of the Tories began to collapse in Oxford. It may have been that the attacks on university funding on the government's part drove dons and conservative-minded students into the arms of the Alliance. The late '60s are always characterised as the heyday of student radicalism, but were they so? In 1968 *Isis* found that, excluding non-voters and don't-knows, 42.5% of students supported the Tories;³ yet in 1984 their vote in Central Ward slumped from 32.2% to 18.7%, and they lost North Ward never to recover it. The nadir was not reached until 1991, when Simon Hoare, the disgraced OUSU Welfare Officer (which is another story), polled less than 5%.

Labour were not taking the Liberal-SDP hegemony lying down. OUSU Council was their organ, since the Committee Chairs gave them an inbuilt majority. The three parties all organised 'lines' on policy for the Council (the Alliance had a joint line) and at first there was no chance of motions of which Labour disapproved getting through. Early on James Dickinson was condemned for making remarks to *The Observer* which appeared to lack commitment to political campaigns.⁴ During the 1985 election count, Helena Djurkovic, who had stood against Matthew Taylor for the nomination and had an awkward relationship with him, decided to pull out; Dickinson halted the count until she was dissuaded, and for that Council condemned him, though he was exonerated by the Electoral Tribunal: Mark Stephens describes it as 'like being thrown to the lions'.⁵ Taylor was shrewd enough to use the Third World First Executive member, Emma Haygarth, to propose motions. Stephens was challenged at first by Council over a procedural matter when Fel Spector (later Labour OUSU President) moved no confidence in him.⁶ However, he was protected by good relationships with the JCR Presidents, and he and Thirlway stopped producing the Alliance 'line'. The Tories got bored with theirs, and Labour consequently gave up too. As a result Council lost much of its partisan heat. Despite its successes, OSLS was becoming less well organised. There was no stability in terms of the officerships, and by 1985 *Fringe* was so irregular in appearance it had assumed the reputation of the phoenix. 'Occasionally' a social event made a profit.⁷ The Liberal Lunch was a useful mechanism: held on Thursdays in the Old Tabarders Room in Queen's, it was where

1. OUSU executive minutes, 7.10.85. 2. *Cherwell* 18.1.85. 3. *Isis* 21.2.68. p.3. 4. OUSU Council minutes Hilary '84-Trinity '85. pp.60-61. 5. OUSU elections file. 6. OUSU Council minutes, 1st Week Michaelmas '86. 7. James Forder, pers.comm.

the Club hustings took place. A mass sandwich-making session may not sound impressive, but it kept the Club's various groups in social contact in a way which did not happen later – to rather damaging effect.

Nobody saw the approach of the counter-revolution. OSLS and OUSDC entered the 1987 OUSU elections with as much confidence as they ever had, and the victory of the 'Oxford Reform Association' under Eleanor 'Tea Bag' Gray was entirely unexpected. Although, after ORA's Deputy President resigned, the Alliance's Louise Goss-Custard was first co-opted and then elected in his place, the Liberal-SDP rule of Oxford was at an end, for the time being.

8. Eddies in the Ebb Tide

OSLS and OUSDC merged well ahead of the national Parties in Hilary 1987, after a mild campaign which resulted in a vote of 89% in favour in OSLS, and 64% in OUSDC. A splinter of the latter persisted for several years after the national Merger, under the various Presidencies of Tamara Finkelstein, David Rundle, Martin Mitchell and Iain King, although the tradition of dual membership continued and to some extent OUSDC's very existence was a by-product of the divisions within OUSLD. It finally gave up in Trinity 1990, and blew its remaining funds on a party.¹

It would be a mistake to interpret the crippling factionalism of the next few years as simply a reflection of the national divisions between pro- and anti-mergerites, though this was how younger members often viewed it, and the protagonists usually characterised themselves in such terms. But in reality the main difficulty was that of some individuals bypassing the Club's normal procedures. The first of the factionalised elections was indeed a pro- and anti-merger contest (or at least that was how it was regarded), between Evan Harris² (SDP, pro) and Jonathan Pugh (Liberal, anti), but subsequent battles were not so clear. They centred mainly on the personality of Tom Winnifrith (Liberal, pro-merger) and the candidates who enjoyed his support. In Michaelmas 1987 Paul Bromfield (Liberal, pro) defeated Winnifrith, who then won the election of Trinity 1988 against Sally Prentice (SDP, pro). In Hilary 1989 the election was fought between Oliver White (SDP) and Ralph Ward-Jackson (Tory/Winnifrithite); in Trinity, between Jon Rule (Liberal/Winnifrithite) and Lynn Anthony – who had not been a member of any party before joining the SLD. Winnifrith built up an electoral machine which, at its strongest in Trinity 1989, was capable of winning not only the Presidency but also half the Executive. The lack of the old OULC rules against canvassing allowed him actually to man the door of the polling room that term, distributing sheets to his voters telling them how to place the candidates in order. Winnifrith was broadly supported by others, notably Evan Harris, who since early 1987 had become chief organiser for Central Ward elections. He was involved in several scandals, including repeated rows with councillors who suddenly discovered FOCUS

1. *Cherwell*, 25.5.90. 2. And Lib Dem MP for OxWAb, 1997-2010.

leaflets being delivered which they had not even seen; persuading two opponents to resign from local party positions, each on the basis of the fictional promise of the other that they would do so; and the infamous OUSUgate affair, in which the counting system of the 1989 OUSU election was changed by petition of the Democrat 'campaign team' after polls had closed. Harris himself described this as 'the masterplan' to defeat Labour. He and other Club figures, such as Nick Stanton (OUSU Executive officer and Vice-President 1986-8) and Mark Mitchell (NUS delegate and OUSU Executive officer 1988-90), as well as Tom Winnifrith, were implicated in the events following OUSUgate, most notorious of which – though the actual culprit was never conclusively revealed – was the forging of the Labour OUSU President's signature on a fax sent to national newspapers.

It was all good knockabout stuff, but alienated loyal OUSLD/OULD members who felt morality had some role to play in politics. Furthermore, by helping to make OUSU appear the playground of petty politicians the Club contributed to its decline, and to its own steep loss of influence within it. In 1989 Paul Bromfield came very close to becoming President without the need for electoral chicanery. The following year Mark Mitchell came fifth with 9.1% of the vote. This cannot be put down simply to the national Party's problems, as the rise of Independents in OUSU shows. In 1990, an Independent candidate won over 20% of the vote; in 1991 two Independents captured almost 40%, against the Liberal Democrat Beki Sellick's 13%. These 'anti-party' candidates were easily able to cut away the support of a Club regarded as just another bunch of squabbling politicians, and in 1993, with no Liberal Democrat standing, Independents together won 70% of the vote, toppling the Labour supremacy.

In by-elections, though, OULD could still hold its own, winning what was virtually a straight fight with Labour for an Executive post in Michaelmas 1990. SLD or Liberal Democrat candidates also did better in group-elections where the impact of Independents was less. It was customary to put forward three candidates for the eight seats on the OUSU executive, and five for the twelve-member NUS delegation, aiming (after Hilary 1988) to get two and three elected respectively. In 1988 and 1989 this was achieved, but the strange slate concocted by an alliance of OULD, OUSDC and the largely phantom Oxford Students Liberal Movement in 1990 was badly defeated and only two candidates were elected. This was a trough, for the following year three OULD candidates succeeded and two had near misses, and improvement was steady in subsequent years.

The local council elections were a contrasting tale of virtually continual success, for which Evan Harris has to take much credit: he was a tireless campaigner, however difficult working with him could be in other respects. By the mid-1980s the verdant villas of North Ward formed a Liberal stronghold, but Central Ward was still marginal. In 1985 Dr Michael Hart won a county seat by almost 130 votes; the next year Labour won by about 50. The Liberal victory of 1987 was won by a mere seven votes, and in 1988 the ex-OSLS Chair Frances Thirlway lost to Labour by 250. Hart broke the pattern in 1989 by a victory of almost 500, and subsequently Liberal Democrats were elected by margins of 60 and 400. Finally, Labour waged a series of disastrous campaigns and were undercut on the Left by the Greens. In 1992 a fourth victory turned Central Ward into a Liberal Democrat-*Green* marginal.

The Club itself was less happy. In contrast to earlier eras, there was great institutional instability. Of the 13 Presidents from merger until Trinity 1991, only five had been Senior Officers; one, Eddie Rich, who became Acting President after the resignation of Lynn Anthony, was a first year just finishing a term as Treasurer (only his second term at the University), while another (myself) became President without even serving on the Executive. Election turnouts, boosted in 1989 to levels of about 70 by the atmosphere of factionalism, fell to below ten in Trinity 1990; and, after the members signed up by presidential candidates Anthony and Winniffrith lapsed, membership in that term fell to 65, possibly the Club's all-time nadir. Most of the members who had ever been active were either finalists, had drifted away, were alienated, or associated with the mismanagements of the past. It was only determination that kept that year's new intake (and there were few enough of them - only about ten had been recruited from a healthy 'interested' list of 250 or more) from giving up too.

In Michaelmas 1990 the situation began to improve; that term's intake more than doubled the membership. Trouble did not immediately dissipate: the prevailing paranoia over the influence of Evan Harris caused a titanic row at the end of the term. A new Constitution was adopted in Trinity 1991, as two terms before it had been discovered that the old one had never been properly adopted, and it was months before any General Meeting was quorate enough to amend it. In terms of membership and stability the Club soon found itself back in much the same position that it had occupied for several years: that is, not much of either, though at least it was still going.

This may partly reflect a shift in the University's political culture away from parties. Independents in OUSU were one part of this trend; and another was the way in which attitudes to Europe became decisive in the Union. Plenty of OULD members were involved in the federalist Reform Club, and in 1993 the Union Presidency was won by its candidate, Katherine Wade, past Liberal Democrat member of the OUSU Executive. By the end of that year, the anti-federalist Campaign for an Independent Britain was bigger than all the other political clubs save OUCA.¹ Oddly this situation had an echo in the early 1960s, when OULC members had organised to prevent the Moseleyites taking over the pro-European Strasbourg Club.²

There was a period in the 1980s when it looked as though women were at last coming into their own in the Club. In the term Michaelmas 1982 three of the four Senior Officers were female; from 1982 to 1985 and 1988 to 1991 there was a woman President per year; and OSAS established a Women's Officership. For the three years 1990 to 1993, all the Liberal Democrat OUSU officers were women, partly because of the general conviction that women stood a better chance of being elected.³ But despite the efforts of some of its incumbents, the main virtue of the Women's Officership was that it ensured that there was at least one woman on the Executive. Sally Prentice and Lynn Anthony took it as an insurance for not winning the Presidency, while Kate

1. D. Hannan, 'Keep Right On', *Oxford Today* v:2 (Hilary 1993), pp.46-7. 2. *Cherwell*, 3.2.61.

3. Carol Garbutt, OUSU Women's Officer 1989-90; Beki Sellick, Executive officer 1990-91; Sally Illman, defector from the Democratic Conservatives briefly in 1990; Sadie Maskery, Executive Secretary 1990-91; Katherine Wade, NUS delegate and Executive officer 1990-92; Jenni Cooke and Rachel Ward, Executive officers 1992-3.

Williams was Women's Officer in her Finals term! It was largely a phantom post, and by Trinity 1993 there were no women on the Executive at all.

The matter of finance saw little innovation in recent years, although sponsorship underwent something of a renaissance in the form of local businessman Peter Boizet, who fortuitously combined a pizza-house empire with a commitment to Liberalism. The SDP had created in OxWab a local party whose wealth profile was far and away above most constituencies, and the Association would sometimes be called upon to distribute largesse: thus in Trinity 1990 it paid off the Club's debts as incurred in the dislocations of Michaelmas 1989.

Although with the demise of *Fringe* publication commitments were light, amounting to just a newsletter, ironically the most persistent organ was not official but Jonathan Pugh's satirical *UPDATE*, which appeared weekly from 1987 to 1989 and erratically for a couple of years thereafter, whenever there seemed to be something worth jeering at. By Hilary 1989 the official newsletter was the A3 bi-weekly *Marginalia*; next term this was renamed *Another View* under another editor. Michaelmas witnessed the surfacing of an A4 leaflet entitled *Focus* on a couple of occasions, but then a gap ensued until *Democracy Incorporated* appeared in Trinity 1990. This was then 'privatised' as the weekly *Democracy Plc*, and finally metamorphosed into *AdLib*. This dizzying succession of titles showed how often the Club's stability stammered back and forth.

* * * * *

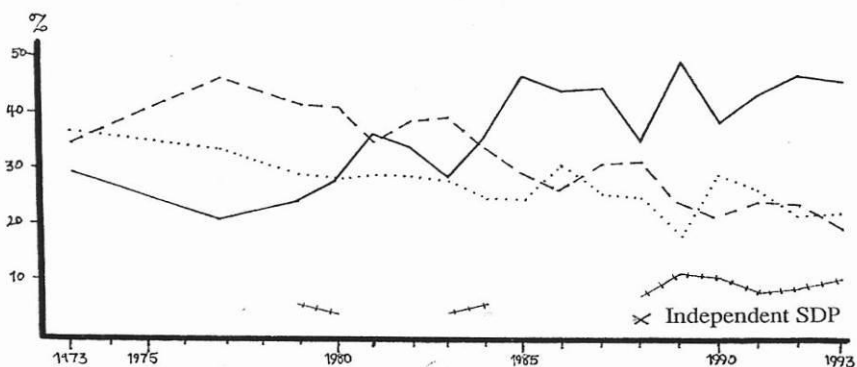
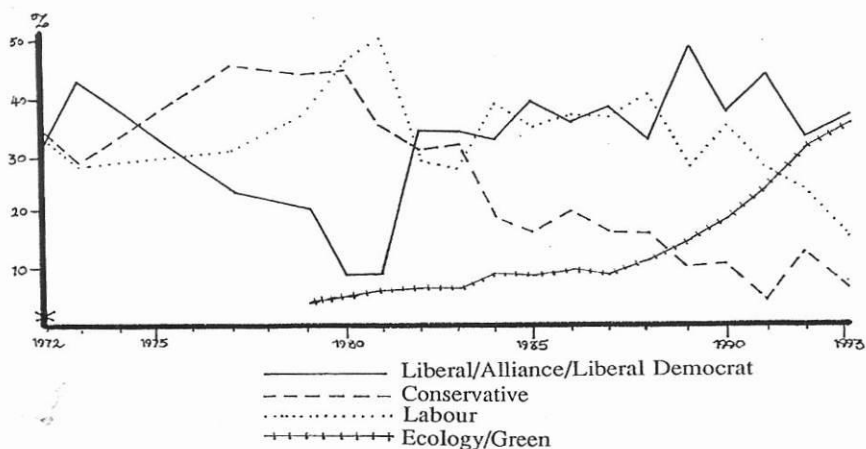
Afterword

It would be poetic to finish on some note of triumph or disaster, but the truth is never so tidy. In 1993 the OULD was still struggling to re-establish itself after the dislocations of recent years. The old feeling of continuity and a *modus operandi* which works largely under its own impetus were difficult to recapture. No officers remained who saw the Club in fully working order only half a decade before, and memories of its past importance had faded along with its links into the hierarchy of the Party as a whole. Past officers who have gone on to even grander things no longer maintained links with it, nor did they return to impress upon it its value. There were no examples left to follow. One reason for writing this narrative was to provide some examples.

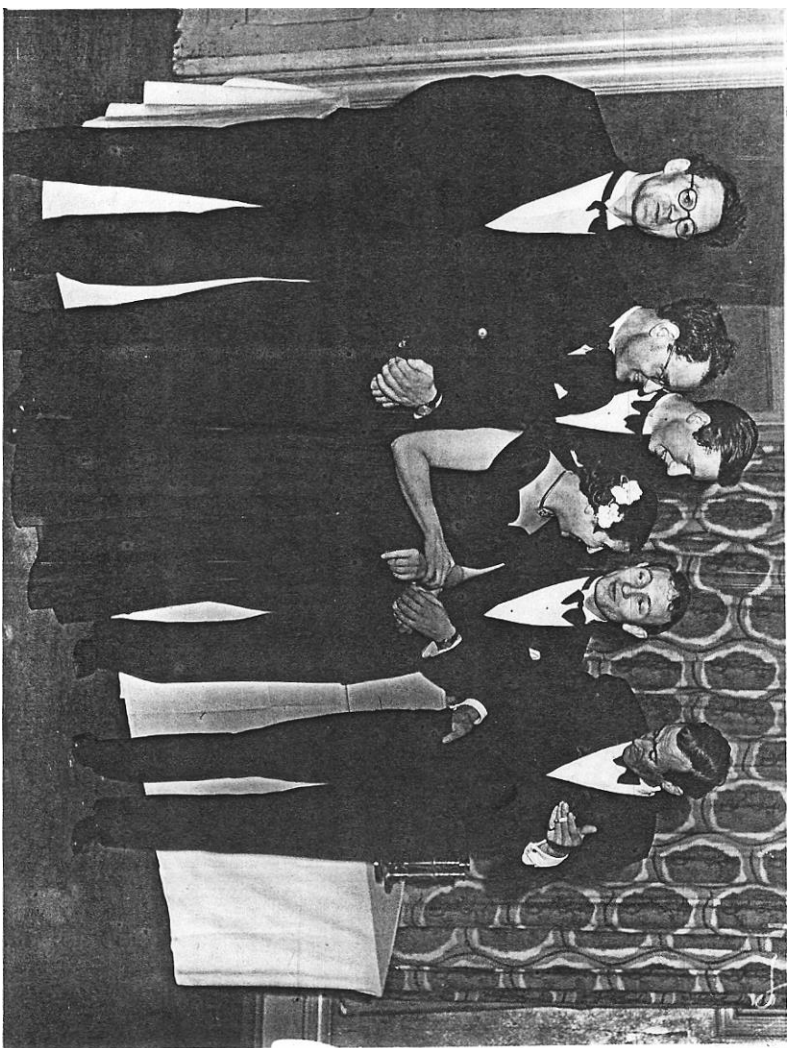
But does the Party need the Club at all? It was symbolic that it seemed it might be called again to come to its rescue after the SLD's trouncing in the 1989 Euro-Elections. In the spring of 1990 Tom Winniffrith was selected as Prospective Candidate in a fairly winnable seat, North Dorset. He made the claim to me that the Party was in so disorganised a state that the central officials would be hunting for students to stand in hopeless seats such as (!) Christchurch. My good friend Huw Webber had heard he might himself be foisted upon the derelict constituency of Ogmore as its candidate. By the time Winniffrith was forced by circumstances to withdraw some months later, the Party had very largely recovered, and his replacement was a local community campaigner. The hour had passed. The students would not be summoned.

But consider: Oxford is still, like it or not, at the hub of the country's governing class. Its products will go on to decide at least partly the nation's policy and philosophy of life. Some current students on looking about them may find this a scary prospect, but it is undoubtedly an opportunity. For three years of their lives the Club holds in its hands the future moulders of this country's mind. In what cast should that mould be? It is the Club's task to determine that it will be a liberal one, not only narrowly, by getting people into the Party, but also broadly, by encouraging them to share our ideals and beliefs. The Club's unique task is to inject liberalism into the nation's bloodstream.

In Liberalism's darkest days the Club not only survived but flourished thanks to the commitment and enthusiasm of those who ran it. There is surely no tide of time which holds it back from doing the same again.



The Liberal vote in Oxford Central (top) and Oxford North (bottom), 1972-1993



Present and past Presidents gather for *The Tatler* at a Liberal Club dinner in early 1947. From left to right: John Frankenberg, Arthur Mildon, Henry Palmer, Honor Balfour, Anthony Walton, Brian Law. Courtesy of Anthony Walton.



The rooms of the first Liberal Club – on the second floor.



The third set of Liberal Club offices, over what it still a shoemaker's at 6 Turl Street.

O.U. Liberal Club Elections.

I wish to nominate Mr John Bailey (Ex-Off)
for the office of Organizing Secretary
for the Hilary Term 1952

John Bailey.

Signed:- J.J. Thorpe (Trinity)
Ex President.
Peter A.R. Blaker
(New College).
Ex Treasurer.

Jeremy Thorpe's signature on a nomination form of 1951. Courtesy of Philip Watkins.



The quality of the photograph, alas, does no justice to the subject. The Liberal Democrat candidates for the 1991 OUSU elections. Beki Sellick (standing), Roger Giess, an almost invisible Katherine Wade, and James Moore.

OFFICERS OF THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY LIBERAL CLUB

	President	Secretary	Treasurer
T 1913	Mark Jackson (Magda1en)	?Robert Whyte (Balliol)?	George Allsebrook (Trinity)
H 1915	?John Pugh (Queen’s)?		
M 1919	Nevile Beechman (Balliol)	Basil Herbert & Philip Rea (Christ Church)	Roy Harrod (New)
H 1920	“	Arthur Rau (Wadham)	“
T 1920			“
M 1920			Arthur Rau (Wadham)
1920-21	?Edward Marjoribanks (Christ Church) Basil Herbert (Christ Church)		
H 1921		Samuel Blackman (Brasenose) & Geoffrey Wrangham (Balliol)	Alfred Woolley (Wadham) (served until end of year)
M 1921		Janet Vaughan (Somerville) & Samuel Blackman (Brasenose)	
H 1922			Benn Levy (University)
H 1923		Robert Bernays (Worcester) & Mary Somerville (Somerville)	
M 1923 -T 1924		Francis Cockbum (Keble)	
M 1924- T 1925		H.V. Lloyd-Jones (Jesus)	
T 1926		Dingle Foot (Balliol)	
1932-33	Honor Balfour (O.H.S.)	(1933) Stephen Bach (New)	(1933) J. Howard Black (Queen’s)
H 1935	Frank Byers (Christ Church)	Raymond Walton (Balliol)	Harold Wilson (Jesus)

	President	Secretary	Treasurer	Librarian
M 1936	Raymond Walton (Balliol)	Peter Twinn (Brasenose)	Alan Wood (Balliol)	Kenneth Brooks (Merton)
H 1937	Alan Wood (Balliol)	Rufus Noel-Buxton (Balliol)	Alexander Lamaison (Exeter)	Mary Stanley (L.M.H.)
T 1937	Rufus Noel-Buxton (Balliol)/ Peter Twinn (Brasenose)	Derek Tasker (Exeter)	Mary Stanley (L.M.H.)	George Henderson (Balliol)
M 1937	Eric Allison (Brasenose)	Richard Miles (Exeter)	Hubert Stapleton (Pembroke)	Thomas Galbraith (Christ Church)
H 1938	Derman Christopherson (Univ.)	Peter Stuart (Exeter)	Derek Gregg (Wadham)	Jean Crichton-Miller (O.H.S.)
T 1938	Peter Stuart (Exeter)	Rosamund Berridge (Somerville)	Donald Milton (Trinity)	Mervyn Evans (Hertford)
M 1938	John Wilson (Oriel)	Donald Milton (Trinity)	Peter Soskice (Balliol)	Margaret Brennan (O.H.S.)
H 1939	Peter Twinn (Brasenose)	Michael de L Wilson (Balliol)	Robert Shackleton (Oriel)	George Grey (Hertford)
T 1939	Robert Shackleton (Oriel)	George Grey (Hertford)	Diana Gloag (Somerville)	Arnold Goodwin (Oriel)
M 1939	George Grey (Hertford)	Mervyn Evans (Hertford)		
H 1940	Diana Gloag (Somerville)			
T 1940	James Comyn (New)			
M 1940	Kenneth Jones (University)			
H 1941	Basil Wigoder (Oriel)			
T 1941	Lewis Clarke (Jesus)			
M 1941	Madeleine Bishop (Somerville)			
H 1942	John Smith (St Catherine's)			
T 1942	Betty Evans (Westfield)			
M 1942	Douglas Verney (Oriel)	Daphne Park (Somerville)	Joy Williams (St Hugh's)	Marian Shackleton (St Hilda's)
H 1943	Daphne Park (Somerville)	Archibald Dunn (New)	Kenneth Fitze (Corpus Christi)	Peter Hackett (Magdalen)
T 1943	Archibald Dunn (New)	Godfray Le Quesne (Exeter)	Enid Frayne (Westfield)	Bernard Dann (Wadham)
M 1943	Kenneth Lamb (Queen's)			
H 1944	John Long (Queen's)	Henry Fairlie (Corpus Christi)		
T 1944	Alan Gibson (Queen's)			
M 1944	Keith Dewhurst (Trinity)	John Gilbey (Queen's)		
H 1945	Graeme Moodie (Queen's)	Sydney Hopewell (Queen's)	Anthony Walton (Hertford)	
T 1945	Pamela Brisbane (Westfield)			

	President	Secretary	Treasurer	Organizing Secretary
M 1945	Arnold Hever (Queen's)	Gitta Blumenthal (LM.H.)	James Pickles (Christ Church)	Henry Palmer (Queen's)
H 1946	Anthony Walton (Hertford)	Henry Palmer (Queen's)	"	John Baker (Wadham)
T 1946	Henry Palmer (Queen's)	Peter Wise (Wadham)	"	Patricia Ibbotson (Somerville)
M 1946	Anthony Seabrook (Oriel)	Margaret Newman (Somerville)	Patrick Furnell (Trinity)	Trevor Wilson (Balliol)
H 1947	John Frankenberg (Balliol)	Patrick Furnell (Trinity)	Trevor Wilson (Balliol)	Andrew Lloyd Morgan (Queen's)
T 1947	John Stobbs (Pembroke)	Merril Brady (St Hugh's)	"	Bernard Dann (Wadham)
M 1947	Patrick Furnell (Trinity)	Anne Glyn-Jones (LM.H.)	"	Brian Ashmore (St John's)
H 1948	Bernard Dann (Wadham)	Ann MacFadyean (Somerville)	Philip Shelburne (Corpus Christi)	Arthur Mildon (Wadham)
T 1948	Arthur Mildon (Wadham)	Elizabeth Graham (Somerville)	"	Geoffrey Hudson (St John's)
M 1948	Elizabeth Graham (Somerville)	1948-9 Francis Schuster (Magdalen)		Robin Day (St Edmund Hall)
H 1949	Brian Law (St John's)	Sheila Hawking (St Anne's)	Julian Holt (Corpus Olristi)	
T 1949	Keith Kyle (Magdalen)		"	
M 1949	Anne Chesney (Somerville)	Jeremy Thorpe (Trinity)	Michael Turner Bridger (Lincoln)	Michael Kyle (Exeter)
H 1950	Jeremy Thorpe (Trinity)	Mary Parry Evans (Somerville)	David Ferguson (Worcester)	Paul Bolitho (Exeter)
T 1950	John Edwards (Merton)	David Ferguson (Worcester)	Peter Blaker (New)	Cecil Baker (Magdalen)
M 1950	Michael Turner Bridger (Lincoln)	Cecil Baker (Magdalen)	Richard Blackmore (Wadham)	Philip Watkins (Brasenose)
H 1951	Richard Blackmore (Wadham)	John Stewart (Balliol)	Philip Watkins (Brasenose)	Jeffrey O'Riordan (Pembroke)
T 1951	John Thompson (St John's)	Philip Watkins (Brasenose)	David Stoneham (Brasenose)	Andrew Alexander (St John's)
M 1951	Philip Watkins (Brasenose)	Peter Hellman (St John's)		
H 1952	Andrew Alexander (St John's)	Alan Deyermund (Pembroke)	Peter Hellman (St John's)	John Collins (Queen's)
T 1952	Alan Deyermund (Pembroke)	John Collins (Queen's)	Bruce Burton (Jesus)	Ian Jowett (Queen's)
M 1952	Bruce Burton (Jesus)	David Worthy (Balliol)	Roger Broadhurst (Exeter)	Bruce Crammond (New)
H 1953	John Collins (Queen's)	Ann Bracken (St Hugh's)	Roger Booth (Jesus)	Richard Hoskins (Queen's)
T 1953	Richard Hoskins (Queen's)	Roger Booth (Jesus)	Brian Moughton (Brasenose)	
M 1953	Roger Booth (Jesus)	Clifford Joseph (St John's)		Elizabeth Parr (St Anne's)
H 1954	Clifford Joseph (St John's)	John King-Farlow (Christ Olurch)		
T 1954	Philip Lewis (Corpus Christi)	Robin Greig (Christ Church)		
M 1954	John King-Farlow (Christ Church)	Ruth Butterworth (L.M.H.)		
H 1955	Quintin Iwi (New)	Norman Hale (St John's)		
T 1955	David Penwarden (Keble)	Alan Share (Merton)		
M 1955	Alan Share (Merton)	Bryan Ellis (Jesus)		
H 1956	David Hilton (Queen's)	John Robinson (Keble)		

T 1956	John Robinson (Keble)	Dorothy Findjohn (St Hugh's)		
M 1956	Sarah Myers (St Hugh's)	John Cohn (Christ Church)	Theo Rabinowicz (Queen's)	Tom Crowther (Keble)
H 1957	John Cohn (Christ Church)	Tom Crowther (Keble)		
T 1957	Tom Crowther (Keble)	Graham High (Corpus Christi)		
M 1957	John Crossley (Keble)	Sylvia Hargreaves (St Hugh's)	Michael Lloyd (Hertford)	David Franks (Brasenose)
H 1958	Sylvia Hargreaves (St Hugh's)	Tony Luesby (Lincoln)		
T 1958	Roger Billings (Exeter)	John Mitton (Brasenose)		
M 1958	John Mitton (Brasenose)	David Franks (Brasenose)	John Greaves (University)	Stephen Desch (Magdalen)
H 1959	David Franks (Brasenose)	Marjorie Williams (L.M.H.)	Charles Frieze (Queen's)	Philip Cowen (Corpus Christi)
T 1959	Marjorie Williams (L.M.H.)	Charles Frieze (Queen's)	Philip Cowen (Corpus Christi)	Robin Young (Brasenose)
M 1959	Charles Frieze (Queen's)	Robert Morris (Balliol)	Michael Buckley (Christ Church)	David Crossley (Keble)
H 1960	Paul Foot (University)	David Crossley (Keble)	David Allen (Balliol)	Michael Falchikov (Oriel)
T 1960	Philip Cowen (Corpus Christi)	Michael Falchikov (Oriel)	Janet Langdon (St Hilda's)	Janet Henshall (L.M.H.)
M 1960	Michael Falchikov (Oriel)	Brian Cookson (Keble)	Mark Slater (Keble)	John Howe (Merton)
H 1961	Nigel Lister (St Peter's)	John Howe (Merton)	Tony Maybery (St Catherine's)	Malcolm Brahams (Balliol)
T 1961	John Howe (Merton)	Malcolm Brahams (Balliol)	Philip Chadwick (Hertford)	Ted Carder (Corpus Christi)
M 1961	Malcolm Brahams (Balliol)	Christopher Mott (Christ Church)	Ted Carder (Corpus Christi)	Paul Tyler (Exeter)
H 1962	Christopher Mott (Christ Church)	Paul Tyler (Exeter)	Peter Selman (Queen's)	Turlough O'Brien (Trinity)
T 1962	Paul Tyler (Exeter)	Mike Mann (University)	Terence Bamford (University)	Garth Pratt (Corpus Christi)
M 1962	Peter Selman (Queen's)	Garth Pratt (Corpus Christi)	Ian Beesley (St Edmund Hall)	Prue Hyman (Somerville)
H 1963	Garth Pratt (Corpus Christi)	Richard Littlejohns (Keble)		
T 1963	Richard Littlejohns (Keble)	George Kiloh (Christ Church)	Eric Martin (Keble)	Jeremy Beloff (St Catherine's)
M 1963	George Kiloh (Christ Church)	Jeremy Beloff (St Catherine's)	Hannan Rose (Pembroke)	David Belcher (Christ Church)
H 1964	Jeremy Beloff (St Catherine's)	Jim Cousins (New)	Andrew Davies (Keble)	Alan Cowan (St Edmund Hall)
T 1964	Jim Cousins (New)	Alan Cowan (St Edmund Hall)	Nick Fogg (St John's)	Josh Bamfield (Pembroke)
M 1964	Will Pinching (St John's)	Ian Morison (Lincoln)	Patrick Mitchell (Wadham)	Helen Rushworth (St Anne's)
H 1965	Ian Morison (Lincoln)	Charles Scanlan (Balliol)	Marshall Eagle (St Catherine's)	Judith Coles (Somerville)
T 1965	Charles Scanlan (Balliol)	Helen Rushworth (St Anne's)	Richard Sherrington (St John's)	Ronald Cohen (Exeter)
M 1965	Helen Rushworth (St Anne's)	Marshall Eagle (St Catherine's)	Ronald Cohen (Exeter)	Gordon Beever (Pembroke)
H 1966	Alan Butt Philip (St John's)		Gordon Beever (Pembroke)	Ronald Cohen (Exeter)*
T 1966	Ronald Cohen (Exeter)		Peter Ellis Jones (St Edmund Hall)	Peter Redmond (St Catherine's)
M 1966	Donald Hamilton (Balliol)		Ken Addison (St Peter's)	Philip Goldenberg (Pembroke)
H 1967	Ken Addison (St Peter's)		Lawrence Impey (Brasenose)	Anthea Brown (St Hugh's)
T 1967	Anthea Brown (St Hugh's)		Clive Manison (University)	Dave Wightman (St Peter's)

M 1967	John Grey (Magdalen)	Paul McHugh (Oriol), ‘Sec.’	Donald Brims (Keble)	Duncan Greenland (Brasenose)
H 1968	Donald Brims (Keble)		Paul McHugh (Oriol)	John Overton (New)
T 1968	Roger Clarke (Hertford)	Diana Hall (St Hilda’s), ‘Sec.’	Paul Cavadino (Balliol)	Joe Mounsey (New)
M 1968	Paul Cavadino (Balliol)	Mike Flanagan (Pembroke), ‘Sec.’		
H 1969	Stephen Walkley (New)	Gillian Filtness (St Hugh’s), ‘Sec.’		
T 1969	Guy Harkin (Hertford)			
M 1969	Mike Flanagan (Pembroke) / Mike House (Exeter)		Mike House (Exeter) / John Anderson (Hertford)	Michael Keating (Pembroke)
H 1970	Jennifer Shepherd (St Hilda’s)		David Newbury (Keble)	“
T 1970	Michael Keating (Pembroke)			
M 1970	Andy Popper (Oriol)		Alan Sherwell (Queen’s)	Neil Hickman (Worcester)

* Henceforward the titles ‘Organizing Secretary’ and ‘Secretary’ appear to have been used interchangeably, while occasionally they seem to refer to two separate individuals within one term. Here the names are given as in the records.

OFFICERS OF THE OXFORD UNION OF LIBERAL STUDENTS

	President	Secretary	Treasurer
H 1971	Neil Hickman (Worcester)	Alan Sherwell (Queen’s), ‘OS’ ‘Sec.’	John Fryer (St Edmund Hall) / Ian Clark
T 1971	Alan Sherwell (Queen’s)	Stephen Postle (St John’s), ‘OS’	Deborah Sander (Somerville)
M 1971	Stephen Postle (St John’s)	Mike Austerberry (Worcester), ‘OS’	Stephen Cheshire (Queen’s)
H 1972	Mike Austerberry (Worcester)	Caroline Hey (Somerville), ‘OS’	Glyn Jones (Worcester)
T 1972	Glyn Jones (Worcester)	Gordon Kirk, ‘Sec.’ / Oliver Elphick (Exeter), ‘OS’	Stephen Cheshire (Queen’s)
M 1972	Stephen Cheshire (Queen’s)	Mike Ross (Keble), ‘OS’	Anthony Stumtan (Queen’s)
H 1973	Oliver Elphick (Exeter)	Anthony Sturman (Queen’s), ‘Sec.’ / ‘OS’; Paul Ryder (Worcester), ‘OS’	Paul Harris (Lincoln)
T 1973	Anthony Sturman (Queen’s)	Andrew Seager, ‘OS’	Martyn Copus (Trinity)
M 1973	Paul Ryder (Worcester)	Richard Pyne (Keble), ‘OS’	Robert Boden (Oriol)
H 1974	Richard Pyne (Keble)	David Croft (Magdalen), ‘OS’	“
T 1974	“	Chris Bamber (St Edmund Hall), ‘OS’	John Rossington (Worcester)
M 1974	David Croft (Magdalen) / Robert	Liz Sharpe (St Hugh’s), ‘Sec.’ / Francis Cave (Magdalen), ‘OS’	Paul Robinson (Hertford)

	Boden (Oriel)		
H 1975	Paul Seddon (University)	Nick St Aubyn (Trinity), 'Sec.'	Chris Goldthorpe (University)
T 1975	Francis Cave (Magdalen)	" 'OS'	David Pannick (Hertford)
M 1975	Tim Bick (Lincoln)	Kathy Bell (St Hilda's), 'Sec.'	"
H 1976	Ewan Ferlie (Balliol)	Henry Tinsley (Wor), 'OS'	"

OFFICERS OF THE OXFORD STUDENTS' LIBERAL SOCIETY

	Chair	Secretary	Treasurer	
T 1976	Peter Brook (New)	Jayne Almond (St Hilda's)	Henry Tinsley (Worcester)	
M 1976	Henry Tinsley (Worcester)	Ewan Ferlie (Balliol)	Jill Rutter (Somerville)	
H 1977	Mark Rathbone (Worcester)	David Ashcroft (Magdalen)	Stephen Hey (Lincoln)	
T 1977	Stephen Hey (Lincoln)	"	Helen Goodman (Somerville)	
M 1977	Helen Goodman (Somerville)	Crispin Owen (Christ Church)	Alistair Wilson (Wadham)	
H 1978	Sam Howison (Wadham)	James Cornford (Lincoln)	Robert Wakeley (Mansfield)	
T 1978	Nick Amor (Magdalen)		Aidan Langley (Exeter)	
M 1978	David Powell (Queen's)	Jeremy Shaw (Queen's)	Rachel Hetherington (Somerville)	
H 1979	Rachel Hetherington (Somerville)		Nick Sandford (Merton)	
T 1979	Jeremy Shaw (Queen's)	John Inkpin (Merton)	Nick Sandford (Merton)	
M 1979	David Bye (Exeter)			
H 1980	Jon Inkpin (Merton)	Alan Campion (New)	Arnold Gibbons (Keble)	
T 1980	Lynda Powell (St Catherine's)	Brent Smith (Pembroke)	Peter Cooper (Trinity)	
M 1980	Peter Cooper (Trinity)	Guy Le Fanu (Balliol)*	Phil Jones (Hertford)	
	Chair	Secretary	Treasurer	General Agent
H 1981	Patrick Forbes (Pembroke)	Ian Gambles (Balliol)*	Mark Thomas (St Anne's)	Chris Clement-Davies (Magdalen)
T 1981	Brent Smith (Pembroke)	Neil Schofield (Christ Church) *	Ian Gambles (Balliol)	James Aitchison (Keble)
M 1981	Neil Schofield (Christ Church)	Bob Bunting (University)	Ivan Sefton (Christ Church)	Stuart Knowles (University)
H 1982	Ian Gambles (Balliol)	"	"	Julian Ware (Oriel)
T 1982	Adrian Van Klaveren (St John's)	Dickon Abbott (Lincoln)	Alison Provost (St Hilda's)	Liz Mayer (Hertford)
M 1982	Maria Leek (Exeter)	Bob Bunting (University)	"	Julia Brookes
H 1983	Martin Horwood (Queen's)	Julian Ware (Oriel)	"	Andrew Myers (University)

T 1983	Mary Pring (Somerville)	Andrew Myers (University)	Bridget Tomlinson (St Peter's) (abolished)
M 1983	Dave Brown (Merton)		
H 1984	Tim Pitt-Payne (Worcester)		
T 1984	Helena Djurkovic (Pembroke)		
M 1984	Mark Stephens (Lincoln)	Jeremy Rintoul (Henford)	
H 1985	Frances Thirlway (Balliol)		
T 1985	James Forder (Keble)	Karl Jagdis	
M 1985	Martin Downs (Brasenose)		
H 1986	Clifford Darton (Lincoln)		
T 1986	Ian Garrett (St Catherine's)		
M 1986	Neil Kitchener (Queen's)		
H 1987	Dan Maldoom (Lincoln)		

OFFICERS OF THE OXFORD STUDENTS' ALLIANCE SOCIETY

	President	Secretary	Treasurer	Women's Officer
T 1987	Adrian Taylor (Trinity)	Colin Paine (Keble)	Jonathan Pugh (Christ Church)	
M 1987	Evan Harris (Wadham)	Jackie Watson (Somerville)	Paul Bromfield (Pembroke)	Tamara Finkelstein (Balliol)
H 1988	Paul Bromfield (Pembroke)	Kate Williams (St Hugh's)	Nick Bamforth (Worcester)	Vivienne Long (Somerville)

*for these three terms the Secretaryship was abolished and the Membership Secretaries, whose names are given here, performed its tasks.

OFFICERS OF THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY SOCIAL AND LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

	President	Secretary	Treasurer	Women's Officer
T 1988	Clare Gibbons (St Hilda's)	Nick Bamforth (Worcester)	Mark Mitchell (University)	Sally Prentice (Somerville)
M 1988	Tom Winnifrith (Hertford)	Jonathan Pugh (Christ Church)	"	
H 1989	Kate Williams (St Hugh's)	Roland Combley (Magdalen)	Martin Mitchell (L.M.H.)	Diana Kettle (Jesus)
T 1989	Oliver White (Brasenose)	Jon Rule (University)	Stephen Knight (Exeter)	Kate Williams (St Hugh's)

M 1989	Jon Rule (University)	Phil Porter (Jesus)	“	Lynn Anthony (Jesus)
--------	-----------------------	---------------------	---	----------------------

OFFICERS OF THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

	President	Secretary	Treasurer	Women's Officer
H 1990	Lynn Anthony (Jesus)/ Eddie Rich (Wadham)	Gerard Byrne (Jesus)	Eddie Rich (Wadham)	Carol Garbutt (Magdalen)
T 1990	James Rattue (Balliol)	Huw Webber (St Hugh's)	“	none
M 1990	Roger Giess (Keble)	Sam Best-Shaw (Exeter)	“	none/ Sadie Maskery (Keble)
H 1991	“	Jack Newsome (Westminster)	Anthony Wright (Brasenose)	Michelle Church (Brasenose)
T 1991	James Moore (Christ Church)	Peter Rothery (University)	“	“
M 1991	Michelle Church (Brasenose)	Stephen Shepherd (Queen's)	“	(ceased to be a Senior Officership)

	President	Secretary	Treasurer
H 1992	Peter Rothery (University)	Ian Glen (Exeter)	Graham Hinton (St Edmund Hall)
T 1992	James Sanderson (Christ Church)	Angus Ritchie (Madgalen)	“
M 1992	Ian Glen (Exeter)	Paul Martin (St John's)	“
H 1993	Angus Ritchie (Magdalen)	Jeremy Thorp (Christ Church)	Richard Kirby (L.M.H.)
T 1993	Mark Egan (University)	Julian Glover (University)	Dominic Mathon (Christ Church)
M 1993	Aidan Thompson (Magdalen)	Gordon Woods (St Johns)	Nick O'Brien (St Johns)
H 1994	Andrew Sweeting (University)	Alan Renwick (Merton)	Alex Cameron (St Johns)
T 1994	Gordon Woods (St Johns)	Maxie Haddow-Allen (St Annes)	“
M 1994	Richard Renaut (St Annes)	Eugenia Loe (St Johns)	Alan Renwick (Merton)
H1995	Liz Truss (Merton)	Laura Davies (Somerville)	Ed Brand (Keble)
T 1995	Alan Renwick (Merton)	Roger Crouch (St Hugh's)	“
M 1995	Nick John (University)	Chris Turner (Worcester)	“
H 1996	Roger Crouch (St John's)	Eva McEvoy (New)	Tim Ward (University)
T 1996	Senay Boztas (Exeter)	Tamsin Lishman (St Hilda's)	Joel Bellman (University)
M 1996	Tim Ward (University)	“	“
H 1997	James Chard (L.M.H.)		
T 1997	Andrew Hazelwood (L.M.H.)		
M 1997	Neil Carberry (L.M.H.)		

H 1998	Philip Reicherstorfer (Mansfield)	Alison Hughes (Somerville)	Tim Cooper (St Edmund Hall)
T 1998	Alison Hughes (Somerville)		
M 1998	Kate Treleaven (Exeter)	Nina Percival (Wadham)	Ben Riley (Green)
H 1999	Jane Blumer (St Hilda's)	Dave McCobb (Keble)	Dave McCabe (Balliol)
T 1999	Nina Percival (Wadham)		
M 1999	Lucinda Johnson (St Hilda's)	Daniel Maudsley (L.M.H.)	Sheree Helliwell (St Hugh's)
H 2000	Nicholas Graham (Christ Church) / Jennifer Joslin (Christ Church)	Anna Sabine (Wadham)	Aron Rachamin (Magdalen)
T 2000	Laura Davies (Keble)	Sonia Sodha (St Hilda's)	Adam Killeya (Balliol)
M 2000	Daniel Griliopoulos (Magdalen)	Priya Agravat (St Hilda')	"
H 2001	Adam Killeya (Balliol)	Robin Gray (St Benet's)	Philip Thompson (St John's)
M 2001	Robin Gray (St Benet's)	Vivienne Raper (Mansfield)	Chris Hanretty (St Anne's)
H 2002	Philip Thompson (St John's)	Tom Wainwright (St John's)	Trista di Genova (St Edmund Hall)
T 2002	Chris Hanretty (St Anne's)		
M 2002	Louise Radnovsky (Univ)		
H 2003	Christopher Williams (Som)		Tom Wainwright (St John's)
T 2003	Tom Wainwright (St John's)	Samuel Parr (Queen's)	Steve Harper (Corpus)
M 2003	Dave White (Wadham)	Senthuran Bhuvanendra (Oriol)	Tom Lavercome (University)
H 2004	Steve Harper (Corpus)	Jonathan Bochenski (Regent's Park)	Jackie Wilson (Somerville)
T 2004	Tom Lavercome (University)	Frederik Herzberg (Merton)	"
M 2004	Jonathan Bochenski (Regent's Park)		Frederik Herzberg (Merton)
H 2005	Kate Mieske (Wadham)		
T 2005	Frederik Herzberg (Merton)		John Colgan (Queen's)
M 2005	Joseph Chick (Corpus)	Amy Jones (St Hugh's)	"
H 2006	Sam Rowlands (Worcester)	Julian Naden Robinson (Christ Church)	Chris Stanley (St Catherine's)
T 2006	John Colgan (Queen's)	Jonny Wright (Trinity)	Vish Navani (Worcester)
M 2006	Julian Naden Robinson (Christ Church)	Rachel Harriott (St Catherine's)	George Boss (Worcester)
H 2007	Chris Stanley (St Catherine's)	Joseph Ammoun (St Edmund Hall)	Katherine Wall (L.M.H.)
T 2007	Alex Worsnip (St Anne's)	"	Sean McMahon (St Edmund Hall)
M 2007	Katherine Wall (L.M.H.)	Martin Nelson (L.M.H.)	"
H 2008	Joseph Ammoun (St Edmund Hall)	Grace Weaver (Corpus Christi)	Laith Dilaimi (Magdalen)
T 2008	Martin Nelson (L.M.H.)	Mark Mills (St Edmund Hall)	Katherine Wall (L.M.H.)
M 2008	Johnny Medland (Queen's)	"	Hengameh Ziai (St John's)
H 2009	James Schneider (Trinity)	Peter Sloman (Queen's)	"

The Oxford University Liberal Club and its successors make up probably the oldest student party-political society in Britain. Based on documents, interviews and reminiscences, this history traces OULC's story from its Edwardian origins to 1993 - its first 80 years. One day someone will update it ...

