



# BEHIND THE BOOK

The politician and writer **Roy Hattersley** chooses the titles he has found invaluable while researching his new book

I have almost finished a biography of David Lloyd George, Prime Minister from 1916 to 1922, due to be published in 2010. Information from his public and private papers has been complemented by an extraordinary number of published memoirs, collections of letters and diaries.

◆ **More Pages From My Diary, 1908–1914** by Lord Riddell (London 1934). Biog. Riddell.

George Riddell, the proprietor of the *News of the World* and Lloyd George intimate, had already published *War Diary* and *Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After, 1918–1923* (both 1933) before this volume. His notes of conversations with just about every notable figure of the period are believed to be (unlike some modern political diaries) more or less honest revelations. In July 1914 a dinner party he attended was interrupted by a telephone call from General Sir John French, Chief of Staff of the Army, who wanted to know, if there was going to be a war, would Britain send an expeditionary force to France and, if so, who would lead it. The answer was yes, yes and you.

◆ **Politicians and the War, 1914–1916** by Lord Beaverbrook (2 vols, London 1928–1932). H. European War I. A highly personal account of how the author managed the campaign that ended Asquith's premiership. It omits to mention how Bonar Law (who would have been the hero of the tale if the position had not been occupied by Beaverbrook himself) misled Asquith about the intentions of the Tories within his coalition. Its analysis of the events is almost as prejudiced as the companion volume, *The Decline and Fall of Lloyd George: And Great was the Fall Thereof* (1963), which attributes the political demise

of 'the man who won the war' to his failure to espouse 'Imperial Preference'.

◆ **Life with Lloyd George: The Diary of A.J. Sylvester, 1931–45**, ed. Colin Cross (London 1975). Biog. Lloyd George. An intimate day-by-day account of Lloyd George's final years, by the man who had progressed from freelance shorthand writer to private secretary to the Cabinet Secretary and then the head of the elderly Lloyd George's still substantial private office. He lived through all the domestic traumas – Lloyd George's prostate operation at the time when he might have been asked to join or even lead the National Government, the discovery that Frances Stevenson had been unfaithful and the family's bitter opposition to Miss Stevenson becoming the second Countess. He spares his chief nothing.

◆ **My Darling Pussy: The Letters of Lloyd George and Frances Stevenson, 1913–41**, ed. A.J.P. Taylor (London 1975). Biog. Lloyd George. This is the product of Taylor's association with Beaverbrook. Jennifer Longford, Frances Stevenson's daughter, told me that it was Taylor who, by assiduous references to dates and places, convinced her that DLG was her father.

◆ **Lloyd George: Family Letters, 1885–1936**, ed. Kenneth O. Morgan (London 1973). Biog. Lloyd George. This gives a balanced picture of the home

life of a man who seemed genuinely devoted (if in different ways) to two women, both of whom he regularly betrayed.

◆ **Consensus and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Government, 1918–1922** by Kenneth O. Morgan (Oxford 1979). H. England.

A very good book with a title that encapsulates the author's view of Lloyd George's hopes for his four years as post-war Prime Minister. There is no doubt that he was by instinct in favour of coalition, which he thought was the best way of achieving his policy aims. But his definition of consensus was agreement around his own ideas. Morgan's clear affection for his countryman does not prejudice the quality of the most intellectually distinguished book in the Lloyd George library.

◆ **CB: A Life of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman** by John Wilson (London 1973). Biog. Campbell-Bannerman. There are first-rate biographies of all the prime ministers whose political careers overlapped with Lloyd George's half-century in the House of Commons. Wilson's Campbell-Bannerman gets a special mention because it was not until this year that I realised that the author had been Ambassador to Hungary when I was a minister in the Foreign Office. I stayed with him in Budapest. He wrote his splendid life of Britain's most underrated Prime Minister in his spare time.