Mr GLADSTONE

Carlton House Terrace, and the mind of a statesman

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WHEN I WAS ORIGINALLY invited to deliver this lecture, my first thought was that it might be entitled 'Gladstone and the British Academy: An Unexplored Connection'. But since Gladstone died in 1898, whereas the Academy was not founded until four years later, there was, in a formal sense, no such connection to explore, and it is only now, as the Academy extends into this building, 11 Carlton House Terrace, that a direct link has finally been established between that individual and this institution. Accordingly, part of my remit today is to say something about this house, for it was Gladstone's London residence long before it became the Academy's home. Yet this is not the only claim that Gladstone has on our attention, for a significant component of his exceptional political standing, and a major theme throughout his long life, was his remarkable power of mind; and it is with what I venture to term the Academy-like aspects of his commanding intellect that I shall also be concerned this afternoon: in particular his many and varied connections with higher education, his abundant writings and publications, and his passion for books and libraries. Gladstone may not have lived long enough to see the establishment of the British Academy, but throughout his life he embodied many of its values and espoused many of its causes, he would surely have been sympathetic to its foundation, its aims and its purposes; and he would have been especially pleased that, with the generous support of the Wolfson Foundation, his home had eventually become the Academy's home.

Some Gladstonian counterfactuals

In support of those propositions, I'd like to begin by inviting you to join me in some fanciful but suggestive counterfactual historical speculation. Let us suppose that Mr Gladstone had not died in 1898 at the age of 89, but instead had lived on for another five years, expiring in 1903 at 94. What would have been the consequences of this extra, late-life addition and extension – both in general terms and more specifically as regards the Academy? The first consequence is that had he survived these few extra years, Gladstone would still be the longest lived British Prime Minister there has yet been, surpassing all three of those who have subsequently overtaken him: Churchill, who made 90; Harold Macmillan, who reached the same age; and James Callaghan, whose 93 years constitute the current record. Moreover, since Gladstone was born in the early 19th century, when life expectancy in Britain was much lower than it is today, it could be argued that in real terms, he was older when he died than Churchill, Macmillan and Callaghan would later be. And the length of his life, far beyond the allotted span of three score years and ten, serves to remind us that if you wanted to make a major impact on and in the 19th century then, like Carlyle or Tennyson or Queen Victoria herself, it helped if you survived to a great age, which gave you more opportunity to accomplish more things than most people were able to do – and of that extended opportunity, Gladstone availed himself to the full.

A second consequence of Gladstone's extra, hypothetical longevity is that he would have outlived Queen Victoria, of whose age and reign, as Roy Jenkins once noted, he was almost as much the symbol and the epitome as she was herself. It is, of course, an understatement to say that for most of the time when their lives overlapped in the conduct of public business, their relations were not cordial; and during the 1890s, Victoria treated the man who by then had an unassailable claim to be regarded as her greatest subject with scant regard or consideration. 'The Queen', she wrote, on his final resignation as her Prime Minister in 1894, 'would gladly have given Mr Gladstone a peerage, but she knows he would not accept it': a remark of stupendous ungraciousness, made all the worse by the clanging, ironic repetition of 'glad'. And when, four years later, the Prince of Wales attended Gladstone's state funeral in Westminster Abbey, the Queen, unfailingly hostile to the very last, telegraphed her son to inquire what precedent he had followed, and whose advice he had sought. To his great credit, the prince replied rather splendidly that he knew of no precedent and that he had taken no advice. But suppose instead that Gladstone had outlived his sovereign? What would *his* reaction have been to the passing of the gas-lit Gloriana? What entry might he have confided in his diary? How would he have reconciled reverence and religion – and the sense of relief he would surely, but guiltily, have felt at her passing? It sounds like the sort of competition that the *New Statesman* used to run, and here is my entry on Gladstone's behalf: 'The Queen is dead. All praise be to God.'

The attendance of the Prince of Wales at Gladstone's funeral is a vivid reminder that relations between the two of *them* were much more close and cordial than those between Gladstone and his sovereign. In some ways, this was in defiance of what might have been expected: the Queen and Gladstone ought to have got on, since they were dutiful and high minded, they were devotees of both Prince Albert and Sir Robert Peel, and each in their own

Figure 1.
An 1859 portrait of William Gladstone by G.F. Watts OM. On loan from the National Portrait Gallery, it now hangs on the main staircase in No. 11 Carlton House Terrace.

way were quintessential Victorians; whereas the Prince of Wales was idle, ill-educated, a gambler and a philanderer, and dogged by public scandal – hardly recommendations in Gladstone's eyes. But in practice, relations between the two men were warm and cordial: perhaps because Gladstone empathised with the prince as another man who had felt the powerful allure of sexual temptation, and also because, like the prince again, he had over many years incurred and endured the Queen's unrelenting displeasure. All of which suggests – and here is my third counterfactual consequence – that had Gladstone lived long enough to witness the early years of the reign of King Edward VII, he would surely have been one of the founding members of the Order of Merit, which the new monarch instituted in 1902. Unlike the peerage that the Queen believed he would refuse, the OM carried no title, and this might have tempted Gladstone, who would thereby have set the original precedent for those subsequent Prime Ministerial OMs: Arthur Balfour, Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, Clement Attlee, Harold Macmillan, and Margaret Thatcher. And imagine the pleasure the cartoonists would have taken in Gladstone's appointment. They would have depicted him with an exaggeratedly high wing collar, and with the Order of Merit around his neck; and the caption in honour of the figure who had long been known as the Grand Old Man would have written itself: the GOM – OM.

This brings me to the final, and more local, counterfactual consequence that there might have been if Gladstone had lived an additional five years. For 1902 not only witnessed the establishment of the Order of

Merit, but also the founding of the British Academy. Among the original Fellows there was one former Prime Minister (Lord Rosebery), and one future Prime Minister (Arthur Balfour), both of whom combined public affairs with the life of the mind in a way that Gladstone himself did (and both of whom had been pallbearers at his funeral). From the outset, the Academy has always sought to recognise outstanding exemplars of what used to be termed 'liberal and literary culture', and two more of the original Fellows of the Academy could be exactly so described: John Morley, who was also a founding member of the Order of Merit and Gladstone's biographer; and James Bryce, who was one of Gladstone's later Cabinet ministers, and who became an OM in 1907. They were later followed, both as OMs and as FBAs, by Sir George Otto Trevelyan, by H.A.L. Fisher and by Roy Jenkins. All of them were in their way Gladstonians, in the sense that they were liberal statesmen, that they contributed to literary culture, and that they believed it important that politicians should be active and influential in both fields of endeavour. All this suggests that if Gladstone himself had lived to 1902, he would not only have been one of the first of the OMs, but also a founding Fellow of the Academy. Nor is this just fanciful, retrospective speculation. 'Had Mr Gladstone been alive', George Prothero wrote to James Bryce when the establishment of the Academy was being actively discussed, 'it can hardly be doubted that he would have been on our first list.'

11 Carlton House Terrace

But while it was too late for such recognition to have been anything other than hypothetical, there is now a real and substantial connection between the Academy and Gladstone, for No. 11 Carlton House Terrace, into which the Academy has recently extended from No. 10 next door, was Gladstone's London residence between 1856 and 1875. He was not its first occupant, for the Terrace is at the southern extremity of the great scheme of metropolitan improvement, sponsored by the Prince Regent, later King George IV, and designed by John Nash, which extends all the way from Regent's Park, via Regent Street, to the very edge of the Mall. The first phase of the work concerned the northern end of the plan, and it was only during the late 1820s and early 1830s, when Gladstone was a young man attending Eton and Oxford, that Carlton House Terrace was constructed as part of the second phase, on land previously occupied by Carlton House, which had earlier been the London residence of the Prince Regent. But when he became King in 1820, George IV moved along the Mall to Buckingham Palace, Carlton House fell into disrepair, and it was demolished to make way for the range of buildings that stand to this day.

Carlton House Terrace extends from Admiralty Arch towards St James's Palace, and it is divided into the East and West Terraces, with the Duke of York's Column and Steps separating the two. It was conceived by Nash to provide extensive views of St James's Park for its residents, and to furnish a no less extensive backdrop to the park

Figure 2. *No. 11 Carlton House Terrace.*

itself. The buildings are in Neo-classical style, with an extended series of both Corinthian columns and Doric columns that adorn and support the frontage facing St James's Park. As soon as it was finished, the Terrace became one of the most fashionable addresses in London, redolent of money and glamour, aristocracy and plutocracy, and the 18 separate dwellings that comprise the whole of it remained largely in private hands, with the houses leased from the Crown Estate, until the 1930s. Among them was No. 11 Carlton House Terrace, which was built for the fourth Baron Monson, who lived here until his death in 1841. Thereafter, the house was occupied by William Crockford, the founder and proprietor of the fashionable gaming house that bore his name; and subsequently by the fourteenth Duke of Norfolk. They were, respectively, a nonentity, a gambler and a Catholic; but in 1856, the lease on No. 11 Carlton House Terrace was taken by Mr. Gladstone: he could scarcely be described in any of those terms, and here he and his family would remain for the best part of 20 years.

It was by no means his first residential encounter with this high-end part of London: in February 1840, not long after his marriage to Catherine Glynne of Hawarden, Gladstone set up his first London home just down the way, at 13 Carlton House Terrace. The previous occupant had been the recently deceased and grandly-titled dowager Marchioness of Cholmondeley, and the young Gladstone took over not only the house but also, by arrangement with her son, the furniture as well. It was, as Roy Jenkins noted, ever sensitive to the minute gradations of the British social hierarchy, 'a very grand house for a young MP of bourgeois origins, even one who had married into the upper squirearchy'. But although Gladstone was a commoner not an aristocrat, and thus a very atypical resident, he remained in this part of London, and much attracted to it, for the next 35 years. In 1847, he transferred to 6 Carlton Gardens, which his father made over to him, and nine years later he moved back to Carlton House Terrace, to No. 11, which was a bigger house than the No. 13 he had previously occupied. Here he stayed, until 1875, when he left this house, and this part of London, for good.

As it happens, the years from 1856 to 1875 saw Gladstone at the peak of both his financial security and his political power. During the early 1850s, he had been much concerned with freeing from debt the Hawarden estate in Flintshire for which he had become responsible on his marriage, and this he successfully accomplished. Moreover, he was almost continually in office, and this brought him an additional £5,000 a year. As a result, he lived well, adorning and embellishing this house by collecting paintings and porcelain, and purchasing books – of which more later. This private comfort was accompanied by public success. From 1859 to 1866, Gladstone was Chancellor of the Exchequer during the last governments of both Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell, crafting a succession of budgets that consolidated his reputation as the foremost finance minister of the 19th century, putting the Treasury at the heart of British government. And from 1868 to 1874, he was prime minister for the first of four terms, implementing a succession of reforming measures, including the disestablishment of the Irish Church, the Forster Education Act, the reform of the civil service, the abolition of purchase in the British army, and of religious tests in British universities. During these years, Gladstone had the use of 10 Downing Street, but he did not spend much time there, preferring (at considerable expense) to keep 11 Carlton House Terrace as his principal residence.

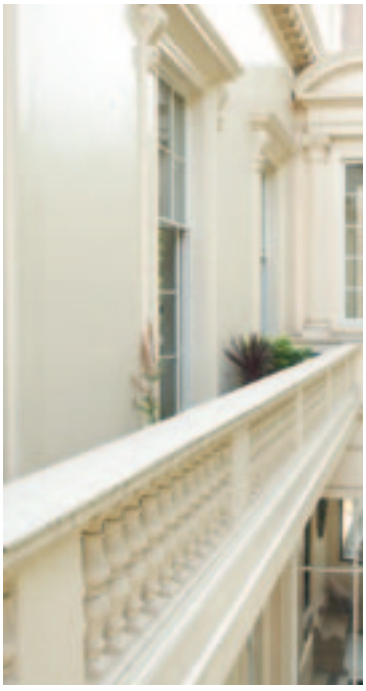

Figure 3.
After the defeat of the Government on the Reform Bill, in June 1866 a crowd of 10,000 assembled in Trafalgar Square, and marched in procession to Carlton House Terrace, shouting for 'Gladstone and Liberty'. Gladstone himself was not at home, and the crowd only dispersed after Mrs Gladstone had made an appearance on this balcony.

But Gladstone lost the general election of 1874, and his circumstances significantly changed. In the first place, he retired from politics and from the leadership of the Liberal Party, convinced that his public life was over, and determined to devote himself in what he believed would be his last few remaining years, to his academic and theological labours – of which (again) more later. In the second place, he concluded that without his ministerial salary of £5,000 a year, he could no longer afford to live in this grand house. Accordingly, during the next two years, he disposed of the lease to Sir Arthur Guinness, who was the head of the hugely rich Irish brewing family, and Conservative MP for Dublin, for £35,000; and he sold off the pictures, the porcelain and some of the books that he had collected during his London years. All this brought Gladstone nearly £50,000, or more than £2.5 million in today's values. The Guinness family retained the lease on No. 11 until the close of the Second World War, when it was taken over by the Foreign Press Association, who remained in occupation until the Academy moved in earlier this year.

There is no doubt that quitting this house in 1875 caused Gladstone great dismay and distress, not least because the move was physically exhausting, as the former Prime Minister did much of the donkey work of sorting and packing and carrying and loading himself. But it was not just the labour of leaving that pained and upset him.

Giving up No. 11 Carlton House Terrace was, Gladstone recorded, 'like a little death… I had grown to the house, having lived more time in it than any other since I was born; and mainly by reason of all that was done in it.' And much indeed had been 'done in it', including the taking and making of important and portentous decisions: 'Sir Arthur Guinness', Gladstone went on, 'has the chairs and sofa on which we sat when we resolved on the disestablishment of the Irish Church in 1868.' As always, Gladstone extracted a powerful moral lesson from such unhappiness and discomfort, and from what he saw as the compelling need to part with a much loved house and many of its familiar artifacts: 'I am amazed', he wrote, 'at the accumulation of objects which have now, as by way of retribution, to be handled, and dispersed, and finally dismissed.'

Eventually, Gladstone would relocate in London to 73 Harley Street, on which he took a 30-year lease in February 1876. Both geographically and sociologically, it was a considerable distance from Carlton House Terrace, and Gladstone never showed much affection for it, giving up No. 73 when he became Prime Minister again in 1880, when he took up full time residence at 10 Downing Street. From 1886 until 1892 he was once again in opposition, but he now repaired to the sylvan but suburban remoteness of Dollis Hill, between Willesden and Hampstead. Yet Gladstone retained an abiding affection for that part of London he termed 'the Carltons', and however necessary he had deemed it to be, he always regretted his 'departure from a neighbourhood where I have lived for forty years and where I am the oldest inhabitant.' Beyond any doubt, Gladstone was the most distinguished occupant of this house, and it provided him with his longest and happiest period of residence in London. Let us hope that the Academy's sojourn here will be at least as long, and no less happy.

Learning and intellect

Even among well-educated 19th-century British statesmen, Gladstone's association with British higher education was remarkably close. At Oxford University, he was president of the Union, and took a first both in lit hum and in mathematics and physics. He was a Student of Christ Church, an Honorary Fellow of All Souls, and he held an honorary doctorate of the university. From 1847 until 1865, Gladstone was one of the MPs for the Oxford University constituency, and for a time he worked closely with Benjamin Jowett, then a tutor at Balliol, steering through parliament the Oxford and Cambridge Act of 1854. In October 1892, he delivered the first Romanes Lecture at Oxford on the subject of medieval universities, and virtually his last public utterance was the reply he dictated, on his death bed, to a message of good will from what he described as the 'God fearing and God-sustaining University of Oxford'. 'I served her', he went on, 'perhaps mistakenly, but to the best of my ability. My most earnest prayers are hers to the uttermost – and to the last.' His name is commemorated in the Gladstone Professorship of Government, whose incumbent is supposed to be concerned with 'empirical politics' (whatever they may be); and also in the Gladstone Memorial Prize, which in 1936 was awarded for an essay on the appropriately Gladstonian subject of 'The State and the Railways in Britain, 1826-63', written by another precocious undergraduate who would one day become prime minister, and who was then known by his full name of James Harold Wilson

Oxford University provided both the foundation and much of the superstructure of Gladstone's extensive intellectual life, but by no means all of it, for his connections with the broader world of education and culture were exceptionally wide: indeed, unrivalled by any British statesman before or since. As befitted someone of Scottish ancestry, he was Lord Rector of both Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities. He was Professor of Ancient History at the Royal Academy, and he helped to found the *English Historical Review*. He was a Trustee of the British Museum for almost 30 years, one of the first Trustees of the National Portrait Gallery for a similar span of time, and a Trustee of the London Library. He was a member of the Political Economy Club, which he addressed as part of the celebrations marking the centenary of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* in May 1876. He bestowed peerages on the historian Lord Acton, and on the poet Lord Tennyson. He received an honorary degree from the University of Bologna during the year of its 800th anniversary; and in 1881 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. All this reinforces my earlier speculation (and George Prothero's conviction) that, had Gladstone lived until 1903, he would surely have been one of the founding Fellows of the British Academy.

Gladstone's sense of learning and education, culture and civilisation, was always European-wide; and it was underpinned by a prodigious linguistic ability, unrivalled in any politician since. By the time he left Eton for Oxford, he was already proficient in Ancient Greek and Latin, he was competent in French, and later became fluent, though Roy Jenkins thought it odd he never fully mastered the Gallic subjunctive, a construction to which he was much given in English. Later in life he also acquired German and Italian, he could get by in Spanish, and he even knew enough Norwegian to say a few words during a visit. Thus was Gladstone able to participate in the high culture of continental Europe: he corresponded with the German theologian, Ignaz von Dollinger, in his native tongue; he communicated with Guizot in French; and when he was given an audience by the pope, they conversed in Italian. This remarkable linguistic facility also gave rise to some richly comic Gladstonian occasions. In 1858, when briefly (and bizarrely) British Commissioner to the Ionian Islands, he delivered an oration to the local assembly in Classical Greek, which was word-perfect – but utterly baffling to his audience, who could only speak Italian. And in 1889, he attended the centenary celebrations of the French Revolution, making a speech in French from the top of the recently completed Eiffel Tower, which his audience, straining their ears a thousand feet below, cannot possibly have heard. Gladstone may have been one of the greatest orators of his age; but he also delivered an unusual

number of speeches which were either incomprehensible, or inaudible – or both.

Did this remarkable array of academic talents, interests and connections make Gladstone an intellectual in politics, by which I mean someone who brought formidable powers of mind to bear upon the great public issues of the day? There can be no doubt that it did, for much of his published work took the form of interventions in contemporary political debate: including his early writings on the relations between the church and the state of 1838 and 1841; his *Remarks Upon Recent Commercial Legislation* of 1845, soon after he had resigned as President of the Board of Trade; his denunciation of the Kingdom of Naples as 'the negation of God erected into a system of government' in 1851; his unfinished article, from the middle of that decade, on 'the declining efficiency of parliament'; his *Chapter of Autobiography*, published soon after the 1868 election, which defended his recent change of position on Irish Church disestablishment; his pamphlet against the Vatican decrees of papal infallibility of 1874; his polemic against the Bulgarian atrocities of two years later; and his books defending his policy of Irish Home Rule which he published in the late 1880s and early 1890s. All of these works were written to justify positions and policies that Gladstone had often only recently taken up; but although to his opponents they seemed self-serving and opportunistic, they were also buttressed with a formidable array of learning in history, theology, economics and political economy, that no other politician in his day could rival.

This prodigious output attests to the remarkable power of mind that Gladstone brought to bear on the conduct and business of politics. But while the length, scale and variety of these interventions were relatively unusual, intellectuals in British politics are far from rare. During the last half century alone, any such list would certainly encompass Quintin Hogg, Ian Gilmour and Norman St John Stevas on the right, and Harold Laski, Richard Crossman, Tony Crosland and Roy Jenkins on the left. Much less common is the politician as public intellectual: someone with such a varied and expert range of interests, and such a broad hinterland, that he (or she) can speak and write on a wide range of issues with an authority which owes more to intrinsic mental powers than to political stature. Indeed, such figures are so rare that no politician gets extended treatment in *Absent Minds*, Stefan Collini's brilliant study of public intellectuals in modern Britain. But Gladstone was not only an intellectual in politics, but also an intellectual in public. For the best part of 60 years, he engaged in extended discussion and debate with scholars across Europe, about theology, Classical studies, history, economics and literature; he reviewed iconic works by Tennyson, Lecky and George Otto Trevelyan; he wrote extensively for such journals as *The Nineteenth Century*, and the *Contemporary*, *Quarterly* and *Fortnightly Reviews*; and he also contributed several articles to the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

But these were merely diversions from the main tasks of Gladstone's intellectual life. One of his abiding scholarly interests was Joseph Butler, the 18th-century theologian and Bishop of Durham: Gladstone began serious work on him in 1845, and half a century later, he published his two volume edition of Butler's writings, along with an extra subsidiary study. Another intellectual passion was Homer, on whom Gladstone published his three-volume *Studies on Homer and the Homeric Age* in 1857, in which he struggled to reconcile the works of the Greek poet with the teachings of Christianity; and across the next 30 years there would be another four bulky tomes on the same subject. A third interest was Dante, whom Gladstone began to read in Italian during the 1830s, and to whom he turned again from 1874 onwards. His published work consisted mainly of translations, but there was also, in 1845, a stinging review dismissing what he regarded as the feeble attempt made by Lord John Russell to render Dante in English — surely the only example ever of one future prime minister rebuking another for his bad translation from Italian into English. Together, Gladstone's work on Butler, Homer and Dante constituted a unique contribution to the public culture of Victorian England and 19th-century Europe, and it was fittingly recognised by *The Times* in a leading article in January 1883:

> There is no reason why our premiers should continue to be students of Dante and Homer; and we do not predict any very disastrous results if they cease to do so; but all the same, a little sweetness and light will have gone out of public life and a precious element will have been lost when our chief statesmen scorn poetry and stick to Blue Books

Books and libraries and Wolfson

Gladstone's remarkably varied intellectual endeavours were based on correspondingly wide reading. From an early age, books were an essential part of his life, and from 1825, while at Eton, he began to keep a diary, which he continued systematically until 1894 and spasmodically for another two years. It was primarily what he described as 'an account book of the all-precious gift of time', in which he set out and justified every waking hour of every day; but as a result, it contains details of everything that Gladstone read: indeed, the first entry begins 'Read Ovid…'. Thereafter, Gladstone read widely across a broad spectrum of subjects: in European literature, for example, he ranged from Shakespeare to Molière among dramatists, and from Sir Walter Scott (his favourite) to Emile Zola (the most deplored, but read, nevertheless) among novelists. Across 70 years, Gladstone devoured more than 21,000 works by over 4,500 authors, which means that by a substantial margin, he must have been the best read British prime minister there has ever been; and not even Harold Macmillan, who as a publisher read for work as well as for pleasure, could seriously compete.

Not surprisingly, Gladstone was an avid collector of books, as well as an avid reader of them, much of his private spending was devoted to this end, and across his long lifetime, he amassed a personal library in excess of 30,000 volumes. In 1853, he began to build an extension at Hawarden that became known as the 'Temple of Peace',

and which was, essentially, his library and study. There were two desks, one for Homeric work, the other for everything else; and for the next 44 years, this would be Gladstone's inner sanctum, where in splendid isolation – though not necessarily in peace – he would pursue his vast and eclectic range of reading, write his letters and pamphlets, articles and books, and carry on, as recorded in his diary, his endless battle for the victory of activity over time, of endeavour over mortality. The Hawarden library was at the very centre of Gladstone's life; and although he was in many ways a richly comic figure, this means he could never have been the butt of the sort of jokes told against Richard Nixon's unfortunate and unlettered Vice President, Spiro T. Agnew, of whom it was once observed that when *his* library was burned down, *both* of his books were destroyed – and he hadn't finished colouring the second one in.

But what was to happen to all these books after Gladstone, who recognised that endeavour would not in the end prevail over mortality, was gone? In 1894, the same year in which he retired from the premiership and the Commons, and also gave up systematically keeping his diary, Gladstone's thoughts turned once again, in what we might describe as his main retirement project, to what he should do with his books, which were too many to be easily or perpetually accommodated, even in a house as large as Hawarden. He had first turned his attention to this matter when he attended the funeral of the Anglican divine, Edward Pusey, in Oxford in 1882, when the idea of a library based around Pusey's books was suggested and, indeed, later realised. After the funeral, Gladstone returned to Hawarden, convinced that his books, too, could form the basis of a library: partly because he had more of them, on a greater range of subjects, than Pusey had collected; and partly because he had always been a supporter of libraries (hence his friendship with Andrew Carnegie) which he once described as 'a vital spark, to inspire with ideas altogether new'.

From that moment, Gladstone toyed with the idea of a library based on his private collection, and he sought advice from friends and colleagues. Some suggested giving the books to the Bodleian in Oxford, as a testimony to his lifelong devotion to the university; others urged donating them to the London Library, of which he had been a leading and active trustee. But Gladstone took the view that his library should go to a location that was not already well provided with books, and he eventually settled on his home village of Hawarden: partly because it was within easy reach by rail of Manchester and Liverpool; and partly because it was situated in North Wales, an area more renowned for its mountains and its castles than as a centre of learning. Initially, the library was housed in what was known as the Tin Tabernacle, built of corrugated iron three quarters of a mile from Hawarden, to which Gladstone – by now in his mid eighties – moved many of his books in a wheelbarrow. It was named, somewhat obscurely, after St. Deniol, a local saint, and following Gladstone's death in 1898, the present Library was constructed as the national memorial to him.

It was wholly appropriate that a prime minister, who attached such importance to the life of the mind should be commemorated in perpetuity by a library, which he had conceived and created, and to which he had not only given his books but also a handsome and substantial endowment. But what exactly was the library for? There were some who believed it was no more than an implausibly self-deprecating display of self-aggrandisement – and as such the precursor of those American presidential libraries where the cult of personality is so unbridled that, as one observer once remarked, if the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, Massachusetts, is just this side of idolatory, then the Lyndon Johnson Library in Austin, Texas, is emphatically the other side. But Gladstone had no such self-indulgent or self-regarding intention, for his aim was to create a library and residential facilities for scholars and visitors, so that people 'not only of Christian denominations but of all religions, not only for all religions but for people of any ideology' could read and learn and ponder and discuss 'solidly and seriously for the benefit of mankind'. That remains the library's mission to this day: informed by Gladstone's powerful belief that knowledge, thought and reflection are essential to the proper and responsible conduct of public business; and

Figure 4. *The Wolfson Auditorium in No. 11 Carlton House Terrace – possibly the room in which Gladstone held meetings of the Cabinet*

appropriately (if belatedly), the St Deniol's Library has recently been re-named the Gladstone Library.

By agreeable coincidence, one of the recent gifts to that library has been from the Wolfson Foundation, towards the creation of a seminar room that forms part of the Gladstone Library's recent redevelopment programme; and this is far from being the only connection between Wolfson and Gladstone. In 1960, one of the Foundation's first grants was towards the start-up costs of editing the Gladstone diaries; in 1995 the late lamented Colin Matthew was awarded the Wolfson History Prize for his biography of Gladstone which he had derived and developed from his introductions to the diaries; and in 2001 Roy Jenkins received a Wolfson History Prize for an oeuvre which included his own life of the Grand Old Man. And, to join up the other two corners of this triangle, the connections between the Wolfson Foundation and the British Academy are even closer: partly because both Colin Matthew and Roy Jenkins were Fellows of the Academy; partly through the partnership programmes which the Foundation has funded in Academy fellowships, readerships and professorships; partly through the support the Foundation gave to the refurbishment of No. 10 Carlton House Terrace when the Academy moved in; and now with a munificent gift for this new auditorium, commemorating the late Lord Wolfson, who was himself a Fellow of the Academy.

Epitaph

While preparing this lecture, I have often tried to imagine a meeting between Mr Gladstone and Lord Wolfson – an encounter in which, I feel certain, Lord Wolfson would have had no difficulty in holding his own. I am also confident that Lord Wolfson, although not wholly sympathetic to some of Mr Gladstone's more radical enthusiasms, would have conceded that in terms of sheer erudition, brain power and intellectual weight, he has had no equal among British prime ministers, before or since. Lord Wolfson might additionally have noticed that in his time, Gladstone's range of interests encompassed most of those for which the Academy stands today as the pre-eminent body representing the humanities and the social sciences: ancient and modern history, ancient and modern languages and literature, theology and economics, politics and government. To be sure, that leaves out law (but Gladstone could properly have said that he had made many laws in parliament), philosophy (but to Gladstone that was a subordinate branch of theology), and sociology and anthropology (but they were hardly established as major academic disciplines in his lifetime). Indeed, Lord Wolfson might have been so impressed by Gladstone's belief in the need to combine scholarship with statecraft that he might have urged the Academy to establish an annual Gladstone Lecture, held alternately at Carlton House Terrace and at the Gladstone Library, which should be devoted to exploring just these issues.

When Gladstone died, not in 1903 but in 1898, he was paid parliamentary tributes the like of which would not be lavished on any British prime minister again until the death of Winston Churchill 67 years later. Among the warmest and most perceptive was that of Lord Salisbury (himself no mean intellectual in politics), who for many years had been as determined an opponent of Gladstone as the Queen herself, but who on this occasion took a much broader view of the man and his achievements than did his sovereign. For Salisbury recognised that Gladstone possessed certain 'qualities that distinguished him from all other men', and when speaking in the Lords he drew particular attention to three of them: first, his 'transcendent intellect'; second, 'the great influence he was able to exert upon the thought and convictions of his contemporaries'; and third, his 'astonishing power of attaching people to him' in great causes and for noble purposes. That was a fitting epitaph to the most intellectual of all our great statesmen; and as the British Academy now takes up residence in the London house where Gladstone lived the longest, and which he loved the most, we might even conclude that his 'astonishing power of attaching people to him' is neither extinguished nor spent.

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