

INTRODUCTION

I William Clive Bridgeman

The best short appreciation of Bridgeman is that of *The Times* obituary. This was certainly inspired, if not written, by the editor, Geoffrey Dawson — a close friend, but also an experienced and knowledgeable political commentator. The assessment is therefore both well-informed and acute. Though obviously fulsome, this is significant as homage by a leading publicist of a style of Conservatism which Bridgeman had helped to establish in the 1920s.

Viscount Bridgeman ... was an admirable type of the English country gentlemen who have for centuries played an important part in Church and State. His abilities, which were of a high order, were sometimes underrated by those who could not penetrate behind his modesty and his engaging humour. He was in fact a good scholar, an experienced politician, and a most industrious administrator, who patiently mastered every detail of the questions with which he had to deal. His interests and sympathies were wide, and he did much, in his full and busy life, for the Church, for education, especially in rural districts, for the Navy ..., for agriculture, of which he had a practical knowledge, and for sport, particularly for his favourite game of cricket. He was a man of strong and settled convictions, but his patience and courtesy never deserted him in controversy. His temperament was imperturbable, his judgement extraordinarily sound and balanced. His influence with his own party was great, while his political opponents knew that they would always find him fair and considerate. Few men in public life can have had a larger circle of devoted friends. Certainly he was one of the most popular figures in the House of Commons of his time....¹

On the paternal side he was descended from the Bridgeman Earls of Bradford, owners of large estates in the Welsh Marches and West Midlands, and of the seventeenth-century country house at Weston Park, near Shifnal, Staffordshire. During the seventeenth century the family had included a Bishop and a Lord Keeper; in the eighteenth century, when the Weston estates were inherited, Members of Parliament. The diarist's father, John Robert Orlando Bridgeman,

¹ *The Times*, 15 August 1935. This obituary is the chief published source for Bridgeman's life; he has no *Dictionary of National Biography* entry. Bridgeman's widow wanted Dawson to write her husband's biography, but when he retired from *The Times* he was too ill to be asked to undertake the task: see Foreword of 2nd Lord Bridgeman's unpublished life of his father, hereafter cited as R. Bridgeman, 'Life'.

was the third son of the 2nd Earl of Bradford. After extensive travels in Europe and the Near East in the 1850s, John followed an elder brother into the Church. From 1859 he was Rector of the family living at Weston-under-Lizard, a short distance from and part of the extended household of Weston Park.

In the maternal line William Bridgeman's descent was from the youngest brother of Clive of India. Through Robert Clive's influence and money, William Clive became a Shropshire M.P. and owner (though not the resident) of the Leigh Hall estate near Minsterly, Shropshire. His son and grandson were likewise absentee landlords. The latter — a second William Clive — was vicar of Welshpool and Archdeacon of Montgomery. After the early death of his wife his only child, Marianne Caroline, was brought up with the assistance of an unmarried sister-in-law, Ellen Tollet, a member of London literary circles.

Marianne Clive married John Bridgeman in 1862. William Clive Bridgeman, their only surviving child, was born in 1864. The family circumstances were not strictly those of the landed gentry; rather, from both parents and from a childhood at Weston Rectory, Bridgeman's early influences were largely clerical, with his mother especially instilling a firm sense of Christian duties. Nevertheless, proximity to Weston Park gave full access to the sports and other pursuits of country-house life, and as prospective heir of Archdeacon Clive and Ellen Tollet as well as of his father, Bridgeman was assured an independent income. There appears to have been no expectation that he would take Holy Orders. His education followed that of his father, to Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge. Eton made the stronger impression, with his housemaster, Edmond Warre, as his chief mentor — with considerable influence upon his subsequent political character. Of Warre, Bridgeman later recalled that

... the essence of his teaching & training of his pupils was the insistence on two maxims for one's conduct through life — one never to push oneself, the other to be always ready to take up any duty which could be called patriotic.... [H]e impressed upon us a contempt for the gift of eloquence. We ... were always led to think of action as the only thing that counted. The result was that his pupils never thought it worth while to cultivate the art of oratory or the practice of debate — and I for one have never been able to get out of my head a profound suspicion of eloquent people, or the feeling that to be so eloquent they must always be saying many things in which they do not believe.²

At Eton Bridgeman developed an enthusiasm for sport, especially cricket for which he played against Harrow, and became a member of 'Pop' (the Eton Society) and captain of Oppidans. Throughout his life he maintained a strong attachment to the school, revisiting it often, becoming Chairman of the Old Etonians and the London Committee of the Eton Mission, ritually attending the annual Eton *versus* Harrow match at Lords, and taking great pride in being made an Eton Fellow and member of the Governing Body in 1929. As First Lord of the Admiralty he was for Lord Esher an exemplar of the best product of the school — of a character 'so well tempered that more adroitly sharpened intellects recoil from the contact', able to 'saturate the House [of Commons]

2 Bridgeman to Lord Esher, 30 April 1928, Esher papers, 5/62.

with the becomingness of the Eton manner'.³ If being an Etonian was one of Bridgeman's marked characteristics, another was his implicit confidence in the products of all the great public schools — a belief that they would naturally possess qualities of honesty, disinterestedness, responsibility, and attachment to principle and propriety, as against the 'cleverness', opportunism, trickiness and self-advertisement which too often marked those in public life who had been denied the benefits of such schooling.⁴

Academically Bridgeman was above the average, entering Cambridge in 1884 with an open classical scholarship. There he again played much cricket, for college and university, and in mainly old Etonian company was a member of dining clubs and the Amateur Dramatic Club. But he also joined a 'Cambridge Association for Promotion of the Purity of Life', helped at a Sunday school, and obtained a high second class in the Classical Tripos.

Bridgeman was, then, a well-rounded character with social and sporting interests but also serious intellectual, moral and religious concerns. Under Warre's influence he spent a short period as a master at Eton, but declined an offer of a permanent post. Family suggestions for a career included the civil or diplomatic service, and the Bar. However, Bridgeman's own long-term preferences were, firstly, to become a country gentleman. The Leigh Hall estate, extended under his grandfather to some 1,800 acres with a rental of about £1,600 per year, had been left to him in trust until he married. Over the next few years he laid plans for building a house on the property, and becoming its first resident landlord for over two centuries.

Secondly, Bridgeman determined upon entering Parliament. There was never any question about his political allegiance. The Clives and Bridgemans had both followed Pitt in 1794. The Bradford earldom was a Tory creation. The 3rd Earl, John's brother, held household offices in successive Conservative governments from 1852 to 1886; his wife Selina was the Lady Bradford who attracted the elderly Disraeli's romantic attentions. On at least one occasion Disraeli had tea at Weston Rectory. John Bridgeman's Conservative attachment was uncomplicated: 'I cannot understand how, standing where I do, and being what I am, a child of the soil and a clergyman of the Church of England, I could be otherwise'.⁵

In origin, William's Conservatism was as natural. His first formal attachment, in 1886, was as a Knight Harbinger of the Primrose League at Weston. Three years later he obtained an unpaid assistant private secretaryship with Lord Knutsford, Colonial Secretary in the Unionist government. Such positions were at that time a familiar means of acquiring useful experience and contacts. The office work was undemanding, occupying only the mornings while Parliament was sitting. Living at his great-aunt Tollet's house, the lease of which he inherited after her death, Bridgeman was able to become a 'man about town', in-

3 Reginald, Viscount Esher, *Cloud-capp'd Towers* (London, 1927), p. 31.

4 For a particularly good example, see Bridgeman to Maxse, 14 July 1916, below pp. 108–9. Bridgeman was also a Governor of Shrewsbury School for 33 years, and Chairman of Governors for 18 years.

5 R. Bridgeman, 'Life', p. 117b.

terspersed with frequent country-house visits, shooting and hunting excursions, and a great deal of cricket, for Shropshire Gentlemen, the M.C.C., I Zingari, and numerous lesser teams. He also looked for a constituency. In the event it took him sixteen years to enter Parliament. The difficulty was absence of a patron willing to sponsor him for a winnable seat — the Bradfords and the ministers he served having their own sons to accommodate — or to press his claims adequately upon the Conservative Central Office. From the start his ambition was to become a Shropshire M.P., his first political speeches being for the member for Oswestry. But when no vacancies occurred in that county, he stood for North Worcestershire in 1892 and Mid-Derbyshire in 1895. At the 1900 general election the Central Office failed even to find him a constituency.

After the Conservative defeat of 1892 and consequent loss of his secretaryship, Bridgeman accompanied a Bradford cousin on a world tour. From his father he had early acquired a taste for foreign travel, and had already visited Switzerland, Germany, France, Italy and the Low Countries; later travels included Spain, Tangier, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt. In the Conservative Cabinets of the 1920s, he had more experience of other countries than most of his colleagues — though his knowledge of foreign languages remained weak. The 1892–93 tour was to South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and China, Japan, Canada and the United States. One purpose of the trip was to build upon the interests he had developed at the Colonial Office. But he everywhere seems to have gained a poor opinion of colonial politicians. His admiration was reserved for the Japanese, partly one suspects because of their aristocratic social and political system. In addition, ‘as far as the Christian virtues can be inherent in nature, they are to be found in the nature of the Japanese’; they seemed ‘to possess all the good points of the Eastern world in combination with the manliness and energy of the West’.⁶ This respect for the Japanese was to be significant at the 1927 Naval Conference.

In 1895 Bridgeman married Caroline Beatrix Parker, daughter of the 1st Duke of Westminster’s Land Agent. Her grandfathers were the 6th Earl of Macclesfield and Archbishop Longley of Canterbury; one of her brothers became chaplain to Archbishop Lang of York, and later Bishop of Pretoria. Her ecclesiastical strain reinforced Bridgeman’s interest in Church and other good causes, while her pronounced sense of public responsibility exerted a strong influence on him and their family. In a letter of 1925, to be read by his wife if he did not survive a serious medical operation, he gave special emphasis to this aspect: ‘your high standard of duty which has kept us up to the mark, as far as we have been able to do it’.⁷ Such common statements in Bridgeman’s letters to his wife as — ‘I owe everything I have been able to do very largely to your encouragement, advice & love’ — were evidently more than the conventional remarks of an affectionate husband. Moreover, Caroline Bridgeman became a public figure in her own right. Though reserved and rarely at ease with individuals, she was a formidable committee member and an effective speaker. Her early work included hospital committees and the Women’s Unionist and Tariff Reform As-

6 ‘Observations on Japan’, 1893, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 202.

7 Bridgeman to C. Bridgeman, 3 December 1925.

sociation, of which she became national vice-chairman. During the Great War she worked in Shropshire and London for the Women's Land Service Corps. She became a member of the Church Assembly's House of Laity in 1925, and in 1930 of the Archbishops' Commission on Church and State. In the interwar period she was prominent in the Conservative party organization, as chairman of the women's section and as a council and executive member of the national Union, of which in 1926 she became the first woman chairman. As a party organizer, her advice was respected by Bridgeman's colleagues; in Baldwin's resignation honours in 1924, she received a D.B.E. After her husband's death, she took his place as a B.B.C. governor, was a council member of the Queen's Institute of District Nursing, and from 1942 to 1947 was vice-chairman of the House of Laity. She died in 1961.

The Bridgemans had three sons. All went to Eton and followed their father as captain of Oppidans — a rare achievement giving great family satisfaction and receiving commemoration at Eton. The younger sons became the third generation to continue to Trinity College, Cambridge. The education of the eldest, Robert Clive, later 2nd Viscount Bridgeman (1896–1982) was interrupted by the Great War, during which he served with distinction in the Rifle Brigade. He remained in the army, rising to the rank of Colonel, serving in France in 1940, and becoming Director-General of the Home Guard. From 1951 to 1969 he was Lord-Lieutenant of Shropshire. Geoffrey John Orlando Bridgeman (1898–1974), after military service in the Great War, became an eminent eye surgeon and was a R.A.M.C. brigadier in the Second World War. Maurice Bridgeman (1904–80) joined the Anglo-Persian Oil Co. in 1926, was a senior civil servant at the Ministry of Economic Warfare and Ministry of Fuel and Power from 1939 to 1946, and chairman of the British Petroleum Company 1960–69, receiving a knighthood in 1961.

From the late 1890s the family moved between their London house (in Harley Street, later Mansfield Street) and the newly-completed Leigh Manor. After his father died in 1897 and his mother settled at Torquay, Bridgeman became his own agent on the Leigh Hall estate, dealing directly with the tenant farmers and cottagers. He was not, however, a particularly successful manager, and his landed income needed to be supplemented. Later, until he obtained a ministerial salary, he earned a little from directorships, while his mother helped with election expenses. From 1895 to 1900 he was an assistant private secretary to Hicks-Beach, Chancellor of the Exchequer. For the first three years he was salaried and undertook much office work, but he reverted to an unpaid position on his election to the London School Board. He sat for Hackney as a Moderate and representative of the Voluntary Schools Defence Union, beginning an interest in public educational administration and especially Church schools which he continued as a backbench M.P. and resumed in the early 1930s. After school boards were absorbed into county councils, he became in 1904 a London County Council member for Marylebone, where he was also chairman of the Conservative Association. Continuing an involvement of his great-aunt's, he was also treasurer of the Florence Nightingale Hospital for Invalid Gentlewomen.

Despite this work there are indications of a sense of career frustration. He would have liked to have accepted an offer in 1897 of the private secretaryship

to Milner, just made High Commissioner of South Africa,⁸ but was restrained by family commitments. Later he showed interest in the bursarship of Eton and a City job. His failure to obtain the candidature at the Oswestry by-election of 1901, because of a prior claim by the Harlech family interest, was a further galling experience. However, he had by now so well established himself with the Shropshire Unionists that he obtained the candidature at a second by-election in 1904.

The Oswestry, or Western Division of Shropshire had been held by Unionists since its creation at the 1885 redistribution. It was a large rural constituency, containing only two small towns. However, its voters included some miners and railway workers and, equally important, as an area abutting the Welsh border it was one of only two English constituencies with a sizeable population of Welsh-speakers, almost all Nonconformists. With these components, during the 1900s the Liberals mounted an assault on Unionist dominance. This was part of a county-wide movement, co-ordinated by a former Liverpool businessman. As described by Bridgeman in a memoir of a Shropshire colleague, local politics were much embittered — with the ‘Radicals’ launching ‘a pronounced and violent attack on landlords and the system of land tenure’, and the Unionists retaliating with attacks on monied carpetbaggers.⁹ It was an atmosphere which bred accusations of electoral coercion and corruption. Further passion was added from 1903 by the national issues of tariff reform and ‘Chinese slavery’. Bridgeman lost in 1904, but retained the candidature and successfully nursed the constituency for the next election.

Further narration of Bridgeman’s career may be left to his diaries and letters, and where necessary to commentary. However, certain aspects of his political personality and position might usefully be highlighted. Having entered Parliament at the age of 42, his political advancement at first remained slow despite frequent contributions to debate. Even in the early 1920s, very few marked him for high office — and his attainment of this resulted from a party revolt which disrupted expected lines of promotion. Bridgeman did not readily impress: he was of short stature, rather rotund, with a rosy face; as a speaker he was naturally slow and rather halting, and deliberately plain; his manner was bland and unconcerned.¹⁰ Though certainly able, he was not clever and, having absorbed his Eton master’s dicta, was genuinely modest and unassuming. He also had, as his son puts it, ‘a streak of indolence which beset him whenever his conscience and devotion to duty did not overcome it’.¹¹ He was one of those whom Birkenhead and other defeated Coalition leaders found it easy to deride

8 Milner had been Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, and presumably knew Bridgeman through his Treasury work.

9 Walter Durnford (ed.), *Memoir of Colonel the Rt. Hon. William Kenyon-Slaney, M.P.* (London, 1909), p. 60. Bridgeman contributed the chapters on ‘Politics and the Platform’, ‘Politics and Parliament’, ‘Sport’, and ‘Shropshire’. The other source for Shropshire politics is J.F.A. Mason, ‘Parliamentary Representation’ in *The Victoria County History ... of Shropshire*, iii (London, 1979), pp. 345, 350–52.

10 For a useful journalist’s sketch, see A.P. Nicholson, *The Real Men in Public Life* (London, 1928), pp. 118–27.

11 R. Bridgeman, ‘Life’, p. 231.

in 1922 as 'men of second-class brains'.

On occasion, Bridgeman consciously used this appearance and manner of a simple country squire to disarm political opponents. It is clear, however, that he was in fact a quietly impressive figure. When Birkenhead later observed Bridgeman as a Cabinet colleague, he 'admitted that he had completely under-rated him. His judgement was very good and he could always be relied upon to get the common sense view of the man in the street'.¹² One of Bridgeman's former chiefs in the whips' office encapsulated the commonest opinion: 'he was thoroughly sound & straight'.¹³ The other considered him

... a man of restricted intellect ... yet endowed with such a fund of robust common sense, a man of such integrity that I would have willingly entrusted the national fortunes to his care rather than to people like Simon or Birkenhead or L. G. who had ten times his capacity.¹⁴

Bridgeman was plainly thought by friends and associates to possess such qualities in an unusual degree. He was 'absolutely honest: men trusted him for they knew that he was influenced by no unworthy motive'; he had a 'hatred of all indirectness & hypocrisy', and showed 'wonderful loyalty to his colleagues'; he displayed 'frank straightforward dealing in all matters'.¹⁵ He was 'very shrewd', and had 'wisdom'.¹⁶ Others noted decisiveness, courage, and tenacity, displayed most notably in his deportation of Irish republicans in 1923 and worsting of Churchill in the cruiser crisis of 1925. He represented a 'rock ... to hold on to among the shifting currents of the professional politicians'.¹⁷

From his earliest election campaigns Bridgeman described himself as a 'progressive Conservative'. He was Conservative in defending traditional institutions, notably the Church and the House of Lords: during the 1911 Parliament Bill crisis his inclinations were diehard. He was, further, a strong Unionist, who throughout successive phases of the Irish problem believed that English interests had as much right to attention as those of the Irish. In particular, there were implications for British power: Home Rule threatened a 'danger of dismemberment of the Empire'. A positive belief in Empire, strengthened by early service at the Colonial Office, was displayed when as a new M.P. he made a speciality of defending Milner's South African policies. It was also central to his sceptical,

12 Reported in Davidson memo., c. 1927, in Robert Rhodes James, *Memoirs of a Conservative. J.C.C. Davidson's Memoirs and Papers 1910-37* (London, 1969), p. 202.

13 Fitzalan to G. Dawson, 17 August 1935, Dawson papers, 78/118-19.

14 Crawford diary, 25 August 1935, in John Vincent (ed.), *The Crawford Papers. The Journal of David Lindsay, twenty-seventh Earl of Crawford and tenth Earl of Balcarres 1871-1940 during the years 1892 to 1940* (Manchester, 1984), p. 564. Like Birkenhead's re-evaluation, this verdict contrasts interestingly with Crawford's view during the bitter period after the Coalition fall; see below, pp. 162.

15 Sir Cuthbert Headlam, and Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, to Lady Bridgeman, respectively 18 and 20 August 1935; Evan Williams to Bridgeman, 25 October 1922.

16 Headlam diary, 7 November 1925; Neville Chamberlain to Lady Bridgeman, August 1935.

17 Ernest Gowers to Bridgeman, 26 July 1921. See also J.C.C. Davidson to Lady Bridgeman, 17 August 1935: 'He was a rock in the sea of politics'.

tough-minded conceptions about foreign policy. In his first political speech, in 1890, Bridgeman declared that 'this is an age of federation and we must learn to look on our Colonial territory as part of England and thus arrive at some sort of federal alliance as would make war against us impossible'.¹⁸ In the 1920s he argued that peace would be better preserved by maintaining Britain's imperial power and interests than by trusting to the League of Nations and other nostrums of internationalist 'cranks', or by chasing a phantom of American goodwill.

It was largely as an imperialist that Bridgeman was attracted to tariff reform — the issue on which he first made an impact on national politics. But he was also a Chamberlainite because he considered tariff reform a powerful reinforcement to 'progressive' domestic policy: to help check or reverse rural depopulation, secure industrial employment, maintain wages, and reduce direct taxation. Bridgeman's prior identification with 'progressive' Conservatism was however with the Disraelian tradition — one which he still invoked in the 1920s as the 'practical answer to the nonsensical nostrums of the Socialists'.¹⁹ For him it meant piecemeal measures to alleviate the lot of the labouring population and promote their self-reliance, such as workmen's compensation and factory regulation (to which he felt particular commitment in the 1920s), provision of agricultural small holdings, and schemes of social insurance where not corrosive of individual thrift and voluntary effort.

This attitude was underpinned by faith in the cohesiveness of the existing social order. For Bridgeman it was a duty to sustain and strengthen this social solidarity, as against the ill-intentioned, selfish or deluded — the Radical sectionalists, the socialist purveyors of class hatred, the strike leaders, the profiteers, the 'social sentimentalists'. Considered apart from such disruptive influences, the working classes and the Labour movement held no fears for him: he believed in the ultimate common sense, moderation and patriotism of the average working man, while experience taught that apparently intransigent Labour leaders eventually succumbed to base personal motive.²⁰ As a minister involved with industrial relations during a difficult period his natural sympathies lay with the employers; but he was hostile to capitalism divorced from a sense of social responsibility. He supported firm resistance to strikes; but he was no opponent of 'responsible' trade unionism. His preferred condition was industrial partnership, achieved through councils of employers and employees, and by a system of profit sharing. All depended on establishment of the right spirit of responsibility, trust and mutual respect. Here, as in other political issues, Bridgeman presupposed that an important contribution could be made by the Church of England.

In the 1920s Bridgeman was one of 'the only body of leading politicians in English public life for whom prayer was a reality'.²¹ He was a broad Churchman, neither doctrinaire nor 'ecclesiastically-minded';²² but if his religion was

18 R. Bridgeman, 'Life', p. 186a.

19 To Baldwin, 10 January 1927, below p. 201.

20 See Bridgeman's observations on trade unionists in Chapter 5.

21 Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Labour 1920–1924*, (Cambridge, 1971), p. 421.

22 See below, pp. 210–11.

unobtrusive, it was nevertheless integral to his politics. It was displayed not merely in defence of denominational education in the 1900s and the Welsh Church in the 1910s, or in recommendation of the Revised Prayer Book in the 1920s, but also in his efforts 'to introduce more Christianity into industrial life'.²³ For Wolmer (later 3rd Earl of Selborne) — himself no ordinary Churchman — Bridgeman had been 'all my political life the inspiration and example of the Christian gentleman in politics'.²⁴ In his diaries, Bridgeman felt no cause to stress his religion; but so that he should not be mistaken for a secularized politician, the Churchman has been introduced in this edition through other documents and commentary.

The final aspect needing emphasis is the relationship between Bridgeman and Baldwin. There is hardly any evidence about Baldwin's early life and little actually written by him even at the height of his career:²⁵ Bridgeman's diaries are one of the major sources for our knowledge of him. They probably met at Cambridge, where for two years they overlapped in Trinity College. They were certainly friends by 1906, when Baldwin (who had failed to win a seat) congratulated Bridgeman on his election success: 'I don't think any election has given me more pleasure than yours'.²⁶ Although Baldwin's own parliamentary and ministerial careers began later, in 1922 he became Bridgeman's superior at the Board of Trade. By 1923 they were close friends. They had similar personal tastes: they watched the Eton *versus* Harrow match together; both admired the novels of Mary Webb (many of which were set in Bridgeman's part of Shropshire). Bridgeman found in Baldwin the first leader of the party in whom he had felt real confidence (though he was not an uncritical admirer), and in 1923 and again in 1930–31 did much to ensure that Baldwin remained leader. For his part, Baldwin considered Bridgeman's friendship 'one of the best things in my life'.²⁷ Until perhaps 1931 Bridgeman was the most important of Baldwin's political intimates, being — in contrast to J.C.C. Davidson, Geoffrey Dawson, or Thomas Jones — a Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet colleague. Moreover, Baldwin remembered Bridgeman and his successor in the inner counsels, Edward Wood (Earl of Halifax), as the only leading colleagues who 'talked the same language' as himself.²⁸

In the late 1920s some speculated that if anything happened to Baldwin,

23 To Archbishop Davidson, 30 April 1921, below pp. 151–52.

24 Wolmer to Lady Bridgeman, 16 August 1935. See also Archbishop Lang, in R. Bridgeman, 'Life', p. 841: 'In all the able service he gave to the State he was never unmindful of his service to the Church. We can ill afford in these times to lose a man who kept true to this double service. Very few of them seem to be left.'

25 The Bridgeman papers contain few Baldwin letters, and these are characteristically brief and uninformative.

26 Baldwin to Bridgeman, 21 January 1906.

27 Quoted in J.C.W. Reith, *Into the Wind* (London, 1949), p. 231.

28 Thomas Jones, *A Diary with Letters 1931–1950* (London, 1954), p. 207 (23 May 1936). See also Baldwin to Lady Bridgeman, 15 August 1935 — 'We looked at life from the same angle' — and the observations of Hoare: Lord Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years* (London, 1954), pp. 33–34.

Bridgeman might succeed him as Prime Minister.²⁹ This is implausible — whether as a likely outcome in view of the claims of Neville Chamberlain, Churchill, or Hogg, or as one which Bridgeman himself would have wanted. The interest lies in what obviously prompted the thought — the similarity between the two men. There was about Baldwin and Bridgeman the same understated manner, the dislike of eloquence, the projection of sincerity and frankness as a political style. There was the similar emphasis upon moral seriousness and service, the similar social concern and political outlook — an implicit agreement in most areas of policy. This similarity meant that Bridgeman did much to reinforce the tone of Baldwin's leadership.

The argument might be taken further. Bridgeman was not only Baldwin's senior in political and administrative experience; he had recent expertise and a long interest in a field which Baldwin was to make a speciality — labour relations and social doctrine. The Church meeting on industrial relations which Bridgeman asked Baldwin to address in 1917³⁰ is an important antecedent of Baldwin's speeches on industrial peace in 1925–26. In other respects Bridgeman was the genuine article — the gentleman farmer, the Churchman, the man of social ease, even the cricket enthusiast, all of which Baldwin presented himself as, but only imperfectly was. Bridgeman was perhaps not merely a contributor to, but a co-creator of 'Baldwinite Conservatism'; not only a colleague of, but a model for, the political character called 'Baldwin'.

II The Bridgeman Papers

Bridgeman may have acquired the diary habit from his father, who wrote detailed journals of foreign trips, including one made with his son in 1885. For William early diaries — kept daily from 1889 to 1902 — have survived. These consist largely of descriptions of family and social events, shoots, cricket matches, foreign visits and church services. There is little on his work at the Colonial Office or the Treasury, and not much more on general politics, electioneering, or his school board activities. On entering Parliament in 1906, however, he bought a quarto notebook bound in blue boards and half-leather, and began a 'Political Diary'. It remained exclusively political, but the entries soon became occasional and sometimes covered a long retrospect. When he obtained a second, similar, volume in 1918 he marked it 'Political Notes'.

The diaries do not seem to have been an *aide-memoire* or a means of political reflection: nor was Bridgeman the sort to collect material with the object of publishing an autobiography. The diaries appear quite simply to have been left for the interest of his family and historians. This does not mean that he intended to present posterity with any special interpretation; for him they were

29 Margesson, a Conservative whip, in John Ramsden (ed.), *Real Old Tory Politics. The Political Diaries of Robert Sanders, Lord Bayford 1910–1935* (London, 1984), p. 231 (13 March 1927); Headlam diary, 24 November 1927; Sir Alexander Mackintosh, *Echoes of Big Ben* (London, 1945), p. 110.

30 See below p. 119.

an unadorned record of events and observations. Bridgeman's unassuming nature and the modesty of his purpose — the absence of a conscious message or a clearly-conceived selection of material — is part of the value of the diaries, for by not making himself a leading character the diarist reports much important detail which more egotistical writers would have ignored. Nevertheless, Bridgeman was not — could not be — a mere recording machine; manifestly his own beliefs, loyalties, prejudices, and temperament affected everything he wrote. But here is another part of the diaries' value — that they uncover the attitudes of the Anglican gentry and of a more average Conservative opinion than that revealed in the most familiar sources, the papers of Balfour, Law, Baldwin, Churchill, Amery and the Chamberlains. Their further value, simply, is that of Bridgeman's repeated location in places where there were important things to record.

The first diary volume contains 283 pages, the second 261. The main text was written only on alternate (the right-hand) pages, the facing pages being left for occasional additions or later thoughts. In order to avoid any doubt about the completeness of the diary text, everything is printed here — even entries which add nothing (e.g. that for 1921) or which describe incidents for which Bridgeman left fuller accounts elsewhere.

Bridgeman also wrote many letters to members of his family. These often contain substantial amounts of political comment, which supplement or fill gaps in the diaries. Whenever he and his wife were separated, he wrote to her at least once a day. Only a few such letters exist for the period before 1914, but many survive from that date onwards, when Bridgeman was kept in London on parliamentary and ministerial work while his wife was at Leigh. He also wrote often — sometimes twice weekly — to his mother at Torquay; the surviving letters mostly date from 1922 to her death in 1930. Bridgeman also wrote to his sons, though less frequently and mostly when he or they were abroad — for instance during the 1927 Naval Conference, or when Maurice went to the Middle East on oil business. In 1922 a family letter is explicitly copied into the diaries; otherwise there are only a few instances where their content coincides with that of a letter.

Family letters form the bulk of the Bridgeman papers. Despite keeping diaries, Bridgeman was not much of a collector of political papers (nor does he seem to have kept his wife's letters — at least, these have not survived). He used a secretary only for some ministerial business, preferring to write in long-hand; he kept few copies of his own letters, or of any memoranda. Also, in comparison with some other leading Conservatives, he did not preserve (or remove from his departments) many of the political and official letters he received. In effect the Bridgeman papers are mostly those collected by his family — by his wife and mother, and by his eldest son, who obtained the originals or copies of letters sent to his brothers, and also copies of some letters to other correspondents. In at least one case — letters to F.S. Oliver — the 2nd Lord Bridgeman obtained copies of originals which seem subsequently to have been lost.³¹

³¹ There are also a substantial collection of speech reports and other press-cuttings, and some papers and reports of committees. The rest of the collection comprises

The greatest part of the important political material from Bridgeman's family letters is printed here. Nevertheless a good deal has had to be omitted, and the letters he received are not printed. Some of these may be of interest to specialists. Where material of special value exists this is recorded in footnotes, as indication of the areas for which a visit to the Shropshire County Record Office might be desirable.

Further Bridgeman letters and memoranda have been found in the private papers of his colleagues and other associates. No systematic search was made: the collections consulted are the most obvious or best-indexed ones, a few where material of specific interest was expected, and others read by the editor for other purposes. There has been no effort to use the main body of Bridgeman's official papers, buried in hundreds of files at the Public Record Office.

In selecting letter extracts one principle has been to avoid duplication with diary entries, though letters *are* printed when they add substantially to important incidents. Normally material has been chosen which matches the concerns evident in the diaries, except in a few places where attention is directed to areas where historical work remains to be done.

diaries, letters and other papers of Bridgeman, Clive and Tollet forebears, and of Lady Bridgeman, together with the 2nd Lord Bridgeman's biography of his father.

EDITORIAL NOTE

The text has been reproduced as closely as possible to that of the original: abbreviations, ampersands and the deployment of capital letters have been retained, though the double quotation marks habitually used by Bridgeman have been replaced by single quotation marks. Obvious mistakes in punctuation, spelling or grammar (very few in number) have been tacitly corrected, but there has been no alteration of his prose style. One difficulty is that Bridgeman very often used a stroke of the pen which might be interpreted as a dash, comma or full stop; the choice has been a matter of editorial judgement.

Where only a date is given, this indicates a diary entry. Extracts from letters and other documents are distinguished by a description before the date.

Amendments or afterthoughts which Bridgeman occasionally added on pages facing the main diary text are either inserted into the entries at an obvious point, or printed at the end of the relevant entry. In all cases such addenda are distinguished by inclusion within square brackets; where possible confusion exists, a footnote records their relationship to the main text.

As some diary entries cover long periods, for which there are sometimes useful letters, the documents do not always appear in strictly chronological order. Where any confusion seems possible, clarification is provided in the notes.

The family correspondents are as follows:

| | | |
|----------------|---|----------------------------|
| C. Bridgeman | – | Caroline, Bridgeman's wife |
| M.C. Bridgeman | – | Marianne, his mother |
| M.R. Bridgeman | – | Maurice, his youngest son |
| R. Bridgeman | – | Robert, his eldest son |