

Further Reading

Historians and the Conservative Party

Vast amounts of literature have been written about the political life of the nineteenth century, but the development of political parties throughout the period has been less fully covered. Aspects of Conservatism have been referred to in many books, but no continuous study of the character, personalities, policies and organisation of the party has been attempted - or at least, not at a level which is meaningful to the student at 'A' Level or in the first year in Higher Education.

There are valuable and generally reliable histories of political parties, notably *The Growth of the Party System* by Ivor Bulmer-Thomas, and *British Political Parties* by Robert McKenzie, which are useful for some aspects of the subject. The nearest to a continuous history is Robert Blake's *The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill*, which does not purport to be a comprehensive analysis of the party's history, but nonetheless is a fascinating book to read, not least because of the parallels it draws with more recent political circumstances. Two other short, but stimulating, works are Frank O'Gorman's *The Emergence of the British Two-party System, 1760-1832* and Eric Evans' *Political Parties in Britain, 1783-1867*, which differ on their view of the extent of party activity in the early period.

The general works on the nineteenth century, such as E.T. Woodward's *The Age of Reform* and R.C.K. Ensor's *England 1870-1914*, are useful volumes for reference, as are the books of Asa Briggs and Donald Read in the eleven-volume *A History of England* series produced by Longman. However, for more detailed scholarship, it is the biographies and specialised works which are invaluable. In particular, Gash on Peel, Blake on Disraeli and Robert Rhodes James on Lord Randolph Churchill, throw an illuminating light not only on the persons of whom they write, but on the attitudes and policies of other personalities of the day. H.J. Hanham's study of *Elections and Party Management*, and the works of Paul Smith and E.J. Feuchtwanger on Disraelian Conservatism offer interesting and penetrating analyses of their chosen areas.

Much of the material on Conservatism in the nineteenth century has been written by people who greatly admired their subjects, the obvious example being the massive study of Disraeli by W.F. Monypenny and G. Buckle, once described as 'a quarry and a classic'. It was a sympathetic study, as many older biographies tend to be. It is therefore stimulating to read the work of Bruce Coleman on *Conservatism and the Conservative Party in the Nineteenth Century*, for his judgement is not clouded by any bonds of sentiment towards the party, and he writes as one who sees its *raison d'être* as being primarily to defend the self-interest of its members and to hold back social progress and change.