

## **The rise and fall of David Lloyd George**

### **Winning the peace**

Hampered already by being the radical Liberal leader of a Conservative-dominated government, Lloyd George was limited even further by the heavy demands made upon him in the field of foreign affairs.

In January 1919 he was among a host of politicians from dozens of countries who travelled to Paris to take part in the big postwar peace conference held at the Palace of Versailles. Along with Vittorio Orlando, the prime minister of Italy, Georges Clemenceau of France and Woodrow Wilson, president of the United States, he was a member of the Big Four, the group of statesmen who dominated the conference.

These men, and hundreds of others, crammed inside Versailles' Hall of Mirrors, were faced with an almost impossible task. How heavily should Germany be punished for causing the war? And what would be the future shape of Europe?

Their efforts were bitterly attacked, sometime after the conference ended, by Lloyd George's perennial critic, the Cambridge-based economist John Maynard Keynes. But many historians now feel that the peacemakers in general, and Lloyd George in particular, did a rather good job.

Prof Margaret MacMillan: "I'm not saying that the peace settlement in Europe was perfect. I'm not saying that the German treaty was perfect. But I think it was a good deal less imperfect than people like John Maynard Keynes, the great economist, for example, said.

"What Lloyd George did, and I think this was important, was try and bring the different players together – the French and the Americans and to a lesser extent the Italians – and get them to compromise and I think he did play an important part in it. He kept negotiations going."