

DUNDEE'S G

On 25 November 1885 Edmund Robertson (1845–1908) won a seat in the House of Commons as Liberal MP for Dundee. He represented Dundee for twenty-three years, standing for re-election eight times and sitting in Parliament under seven different Prime Ministers through a period when there was much division among the Liberals in Dundee.¹ He held the post of Civil Lord of the Admiralty from 1892 to 1895 in the government of Gladstone and then Rosebery and was Secretary to the Admiralty from 1905 to 1908, when Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was Prime Minister. Regrettably ill health forced his early retirement from the House of Commons in 1908 and, following his elevation to the peerage as Lord Lochee of Gowrie, he served out the remaining three years of his life in the House of Lords. **Anne Newman** tells the story of his life.



GRAND OLD MAN

Robertson was by all accounts a man of great talent, integrity and humility, as his obituary in the *Dundee Year Book* 1911 exemplified: 'this singularly gifted man received no help from patronage ... he owed everything to his own perseverance and energy'. He was remembered as a man of a very kindly and affectionate nature, with a penetrating intellect.² Unfortunately, however, he never cultivated the art of saying less or more than he thought and his plain speech and hatred of self-advertisement and circumlocution 'retarded his promotion.'³ This article attempts to reconstruct an image of Edmund Robertson, gleaned from newspaper reports of his speeches, and to describe the man who earned the affectionate title of Dundee's 'Grand Old Man'.⁴

A village schoolboy with a passion for education

When standing for election for the first time, Robertson's passion for education and good humour were evident when he addressed the voters of the 'Intellectual Ward' as he termed them. He expressed his belief in free education, emphasising how 'one result of the education imparted under the Act had been the decrease of juvenile crime' and that as 'the State had made education

compulsory it ought to provide the means for it.'⁵

Edmund Daniel Robertson was born on 28 October 1845 in the schoolhouse at Kinnaird, Perthshire, where his father was the parish schoolmaster for over thirty years. Edmund was the eldest of the five children of Edmund (senior) and Ann Robertson, both of whom lived all their lives in Perthshire, Edmund senior being from a humble family from Middle Dalguise in the Tay Valley. Edmund Robertson received all of his elementary education from his father and it is said that it was here that he gained a solid 'grounding in the Liberal principles to which he adhered tenaciously during his life'. Although Robertson was a self-made man 'he never forgot the debt which he owed to his father' and is reputed, on the eve of entering Parliament, to have sent a letter to a meeting of Liberals held in the Kinnaird school stating 'I am glad you are going to meet in the old schoolroom, which to me is associated with so many profound emotions. My first instructor in Liberalism, and in everything else, was my father.'⁶

The scholar

The young man with a great passion for knowledge proceeded to St Andrew's University where he matriculated in the 1863–64 session. Robertson's achievement

in higher education was remarkable, exemplifying his dedication to attaining knowledge at the highest level. The philosopher John Stuart Mill recognised Robertson's talent and gave his special commendation in 1865 that Robertson be awarded the Rec-torial Prize for the best essay on a philosophical subject.

Robertson won a scholarship to enter Lincoln College, Oxford where he completed a second BA, gained First Class Honours in Classical Moderations (1868) and in Literae Humaniorum (1870), won the Oxford University International Law Prize (1869), and was elected a Fellow of Corpus Christi College (1870). In 1871 he successfully competed for the Vinerian Law Scholarship, and graduated with an MA in 1874.

The barrister, the academic, the teacher

Robertson went on to win a scholarship to Lincoln's Inn, delivering his obligatory Tancred student oration in Latin. He was called to the Bar as a barrister of Lincoln's Inn in 1871 and, selecting the Northern Circuit for his practice, he quickly gained a reputation as an excellent counsel and eloquent speaker. He was examiner in English Constitutional History at London University, 1877–82, and Public Examiner in Jurisprudence, Oxford, 1877–79. He was appointed Reader on Law

Edmund Robertson, Lord Lochee of Gowrie (1885–1908) – from the *Dundee Year Book of 1911*, reproduced courtesy of Dundee City Archives.

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to the Council of Legal Education, and became Joint Examiner in Jurisprudence and Legal Constitutional History at the University of London, and in Roman and International Law to the Inns of Court. He became a Professor of Roman Law at University College, London for several years and of Common Law at the Inns of Court. In 1886 St Andrew's University conferred an LLD upon Robertson in recognition of his academic achievements. He was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1895 and made a Bencher of Lincoln's Inn in 1898. His reputation as a barrister spread internationally, and he became one of the very few British barristers ever allowed to plead in an American Court of Law.⁷

Robertson's academic achievements were well known when he faced his Dundee constituents (who were predominantly from working-class backgrounds) for the first time. The *Dundee Courier and Argus* assured its readers, however, that their prospective Member 'though comparatively young' had 'business experience ... sufficiently wide to correct that tendency to academic subtleties and that proneness to the hair-splitting of the schools only too often found characterising distinguished scholars and university dons'.⁸ An active member of the Reform Club (which was founded by Liberals and remained the party's headquarters until the late 1880s) Robertson contributed regularly to the *Daily News* and expanded his growing journalistic expertise by contributing several articles on legal and constitutional subjects to the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. He was also the author of *American Home Rule: A Sketch of the Political System in the United States* published in 1887.

The politician

At the time that Edmund Robertson decided to enter the political world, the population of Dundee was growing at an enormous rate and the Liberal Association

(formed in 1877) encountered many challenges. Dundee was in fact the largest constituency in Scotland at the time.⁹ On a personal level, Robertson had to overcome the considerable debate about the necessity or otherwise of local candidates and he was seen by some as 'not truly local, a carpetbagger'. However, the voters of Dundee soon learned that he had grown up and received his early education in the area and Robertson rose to the challenge and 'charmed an audience of 3,000 at the Kinnaird Hall' with his outspoken profession of the Liberal faith and excellent oratory skills.

Support from John Leng (editor of the *Advertiser* at the time and later political colleague of Robertson's) no doubt sealed the Dundee approval. In fact the *Advertiser* reported that: 'Mr Robertson showed a disposition not only to march forward in the van of progress, but also such a grasp, a knowledge, and capacity for dealing with public questions that it was delightful to listen to him. His speech, in fact, was a political education.'¹⁰ The *Advertiser* also assured the voters that Robertson had a 'thorough acquaintance with the theory and practice of law' and that he had recently represented local investment interests in the American Courts when he acted as counsel for the Oregonian Railway Company in 1888 when the company was brought before the High Courts of the United States.

Robertson's address for the 1885 election featured the reform of the land laws, the adjustment of taxation, the abolition of the game laws and temperance legislation. Robertson (who belonged to the radical section of the Liberal Party) saw himself as a servant of his constituents and many of his addresses to the electors of Dundee contain examples of his firm undertaking to increase the involvement of ordinary people in decisions directly related to their everyday lives. He believed in reform of local government to 'include representative govern-

ment for Counties' with 'enlarged powers' to deal effectively with 'the regulation of the liquor trade, the utilisation of vacant spaces, the reclamation of common lands, sanitary improvements and other matters affecting the social well-being of the community.'¹¹

However, where the issue of the disestablishment of the Church of Scotland was concerned he was more circumspect. The standard radical line at the time was to favour disestablishment, but Robertson (a moderate churchman) seemed to avoid openly saying he was in favour. He assured the voters that 'there was no man more strongly opposed than he was to the interference of the State in any way with religious affairs' and that 'disestablishment in Scotland was one which must be settled in harmony with the wishes of the Scottish people.'¹²

Dundee in the late nineteenth century was a working man's constituency, and foremost in Edmund Robertson's mind, as he faced his first election, was his concern for the working class. He was in favour of Board of Trade certificates of competency being granted to men in charge of steam engines and boilers and drivers of locomotives and traction engines to protect the safety of the public. He was in favour of the establishment of public Courts of Inquiry into the cause of sudden and accidental deaths in Scotland and for relatives of deceased persons to have the 'liberty to cross-examine witnesses on the subject'. He believed that shipwrecked seamen should be paid their wages up until the time they were landed back in the country; and he saw the overwork of railway workers as 'not only cruel but a source of danger to the travelling public'.

Robertson's dislike of the Tory party was greatly enjoyed by his prospective electors, especially as he entertained them with witticisms such as that: 'He thought the education of the Tory party should be made free, and it certainly should be made compulsory.' However, this humour turned to anger when he spoke

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of Tory landlords replacing dissenting farmers at the end of their leases with 'Established Churchmen'. 'Landlord terrorism', as he termed it, operated 'just as much in political elections as it would do in any election on church affairs'. His concern for the well-being of the ordinary people was no better summarised than in his beliefs on higher education, where he dissented from the view that 'it was a middle class affair which might be left to the middle classes'. He believed that: 'The question of higher education was a matter of great importance to the working classes, whose sons would be deprived of the chance of appointments in the Civil Service if the means of obtaining higher education were put beyond their reach.'

Although Robertson chose an academic route for his own education he felt strongly about technological education, believing that: 'It was essential that working men should be fully instructed in the principles of the sciences applicable to their particular industries. This was necessary, not as a gratuity to the working classes, but as a means of self-defence against growing foreign competition.'¹³

With regard to land rights, Robertson was very clear about 'rights in land which the public possessed having, during the last twenty, thirty, or forty years, been taken away' and was strongly of the opinion that 'restitution of those rights should be obtained', emphasising that when there was 'no prescription in regard to Royal rights, he thought there should be no prescription in regard to the rights of the people'.¹⁴

The November election of 1885 saw 14,610 of the 17,420 registered voters for the constituency of Dundee record their vote. At this time Dundee was a two-member constituency and the Liberals ran two candidates, both of whom were elected. C. C. Lacaita topped the poll with 8,261 votes and Edmund Robertson ran a comfortable second with 7,187 votes.¹⁵ But Robertson had

entered politics at a turbulent time. Within a little over six months from his introduction to the political world, he had again to face the electors as the parliament that assembled on 12 January 1886 was dissolved in June.

Irish Home Rule was the contentious issue for the election of 1886, and both Robertson and Lacaita adhered to Gladstone's conversion to a Home Rule policy, though there was a Liberal split over the issue at this time.¹⁶ Robertson wanted an Irish Parliament to settle the Irish land question and to be in control of the police.¹⁷

Robertson went on to win his Dundee seat in the elections of 1892 (twice – the second time unopposed when he contested the seat on his appointment as a minister), 1895, 1900 and 1906. When Lacaita resigned in 1888, Sir John Leng combined with Robertson to dominate Dundee elections until 1906 when Leng retired. Robertson again won the election in 1906, but this time with the moderate Labour candidate Alexander Wilkie.

The minister

During his time in parliament Robertson gained a reputation for his effective rhetoric, especially on issues such as education in Scotland and reforms that would improve the conditions of working men. During his period as Civil Lord of the Admiralty (under First Lord of the Admiralty, Earl Spencer) Robertson worked tirelessly to shorten the hours of the workmen in the Royal Dockyards. He is said to have been the only critic at the Admiralty whom Lord Fisher could not dominate. He was an ardent politician, keenly interested in every move of the political game. Direct and businesslike in all his ways, he was very intolerant of circumlocution, and for this reason he is said not to have been altogether *persona grata* to Mr Gladstone. On the other hand, he is believed to have had considerable influence with Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.¹⁸

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Apparently considered 'in the best and most honourable sense of the word ... a favourite of the King'¹⁹ (Edward VII), he became a member of the Privy Council in 1906.

The election of 1895 saw Edmund Robertson and John Leng speaking passionately about the 'maintenance of popular control over aristocratic influence and the destruction of class privileges', and again the main issues were Home Rule, complete religious equality and local control of the liquor trade.²⁰ One of the journalists of the time went as far as to say that:

Beer and the Bible have been wont in former times to play an important part in English politics, but not until this occasion have they been seen in close alliance in this part of the country, engaged side by side against the popular cause, and in support of monopoly and privilege. The ministers wished to preserve their kirks and stipends; the publicans were concerned about buttressing their whisky casks and retaining their licenses.²¹

It becomes apparent, when reading the speeches delivered by Edmund Robertson to his Dundee electors, that he was a man of considerable tolerance and sensitivity. In October 1896 both Robertson and Sir John Leng spoke at considerable length to their constituents in a meeting held in the Gilfillan Memorial Hall. Robertson opened his remarks with the observations that:

I never before saw a meeting of ours graced by the presence of so many ladies ... I attribute their presence in these large numbers to the success of the newly founded Ladies' Liberal Association of Dundee. I am sure we all hope that that success may be continued, and that under the energetic leadership of the ladies who have taken command it may go on and prosper, and be a tower of strength to Liberalism in Dundee and district.²²

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However, it would appear that his tolerance did not extend to women having the vote. When facing the voters again in 1900, both Leng and Robertson were asked by the Dundee and District Women's Liberal Association whether they were in favour of women's suffrage and of women being returned as members of local governing boards. Whilst Leng was in favour on both counts, Robertson stated that he could not undertake to vote in favour of any of the female suffrage bills yet introduced but he was in favour of women being returned to public boards.²³

The election of 1900 was dominated by the South African war, probably the most significant international incident during Robertson's time in Parliament. Both Leng and Robertson spoke at length to their constituents about the war.²⁴ Robertson severely criticised the Tories for hastening a war by 'blundering diplomacy' and having soldiers suffer because of 'mismanagement at home' including refusing, at an early stage of the war, mounted men offered by the colonies, believing that mounted men were not needed in South Africa. Soon after, the British government learned that all the Boers were mounted. Robertson characterised this mistake as 'unparalleled imbecility'.²⁵

He admitted that he was deeply troubled by knowing that he was bound to vote for the supplies necessary to bring the war to a speedy conclusion. However he: 'regarded war as the most horrible calamity that could befall a nation ... he had seen with horror the reports of speeches and of sermons exalting and magnifying war ... telling the people it brought out the nobler qualities of human nature ... But he considered that the invasion of British territory left him no alternative but to defend the territory ...' and 'there could be no result but the restoration of British paramountcy ... He wanted a settlement that would reconcile the devotion and loyalty of all races in

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South Africa, and must not be the establishment of a hateful ascendancy of one race over another.'²⁶

Reform of the army was one of Robertson's great passions. The war gave him the opportunity to convey his ideas at length to his constituents, pointing out that the army was not administered as a 'business institution' as the navy was. He believed the military needed to become more scientific. What most concerned him was 'the barrier by which we shut out competent men from the army' which he saw as 'the most ignoble and vulgar that can be devised, because it is the barrier of money'.²⁷ The obstacle to army reform, in Robertson's opinion, lay in the belief of the Tory Government which, 'calmly admitted – in the House of Commons – that no young man could be an officer in a cavalry regiment unless he was in possession of a private income of at least £500 a year'.²⁸

The election of 1900 also saw Robertson supporting old-age pensions and the abolition of the sale of alcoholic drink to children. On the former, Robertson emphasised to his constituents that the old-age pension scheme must be 'an all-round one, without discrimination of sex. The women must have it as well as the men'.²⁹ He also spoke about desired changes to the Teachers' Superannuation Act, being of the opinion that the pensions provided to existing teachers were inadequate and that women should have the option of retiring at the age of fifty-five. The Liberal team was again returned to parliament with Robertson polling 7,777 votes and his friend and colleague Sir John Leng receiving 7,650 votes. The total registered electorate was 18,655 and, of these, 13,024 exercised their franchise.³⁰

Return to power

In January 1906 Edmund Robertson, Dundee's Grand Old Man, again came before his constituents seeking to be part of the

new Liberal government under fellow Scot, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. Robertson spoke of his passion to have his Homestead Bill passed through Parliament. This bill 'proposed to declare that a certain necessary minimum of a working man's household furniture and effects should be sacred from the process of law, and not liable to seizure or sale for any cause'.³¹

Free Trade was the main issue of the election and Robertson appealed to Dundee to vote for those candidates who were 'willing to support the only Government that could make Free Trade safe and kill Protection'.³² Much was spoken about the national debt, which had increased mainly due to the war, and of the need to reduce the burden of taxation. When Robertson won his seat for this last time he topped the poll with the highest vote ever recorded in the city, 9,276 votes. The total number of voters who went to the poll was 16,031 out of a total electorate of 19,492.³³

When Campbell-Bannerman formed his new ministry Robertson was appointed Secretary to the Admiralty; Lord Tweedmouth was First Lord of the Admiralty. Robertson's main ministerial role was to deal with naval business in the Commons, which placed him at the heart of political controversy at a time when the UK's foreign and economic policy was still underpinned by the strength of the Royal Navy. He answered questions in the Commons on a regular basis and was responsible for carrying the Navy Estimate through Parliament, for which he required all his legal skills to master a complex and intricate brief.

At the beginning of the twentieth century there was considerable pressure to expand and modernise the British navy, a programme which was commenced by Sir John Fisher (First Sea Lord) in 1904.³⁴ Pride of place in Fisher's plan went to the construction of *Dreadnought* battleships, which were far superior to the best vessels of the UK's acknowledged competitors, France, Germany,

Russia and the US. Ships of this sort were not cheap. The government's expenditure on the navy increased from £18.5 million in 1894/95 to £42 million in 1905/06, and expenditure on the army also increased over the same period.

The *Dreadnought* programme also inspired a European arms race, which suggested that further heavy expenditure would be required in future years to ensure that the 'two-power standard' was maintained. Since the 1890s, the UK had explicitly aimed to maintain a naval capacity superior to the combined strength of any two other navies in the world – which in practice meant the navies of France and Germany. Unless international diplomacy could somehow restrain the construction programmes commenced in those countries as a result of the Fisher reforms, significant extra military expenditure would be required. This would have to be financed from increased taxation, or a reallocation of existing expenditure commitments. The second of these options jarred with the Liberals' commitment to increased social expenditure; the first was also politically difficult, as David Lloyd George, in particular, was to find out.

On top of these difficulties, naval policy sat on the fault line in the Liberal Party between the imperialists, who were generally in support of a large Navy and commitments abroad, and those who preferred to see military expenditure reined in and foreign entanglements avoided. The 1904 Anglo-French treaty suggested to some, including Campbell-Bannerman, that the two-power standard might no longer be necessary, and that naval expenditure could be reduced; but it was the perfect issue with which the Conservative opposition could make mischief and divide the Liberal Party.

Robertson was pitched into this maelstrom of conflicting diplomatic, strategic and political pressures. In 1900 he had expressed a fairly conventional

belief in a strong navy to his constituents:

If they [the Conservative Government] maintained a proper policy and civility as part of their national manners, he did not see why the army should be increased beyond its present size. With a predominant navy they need care very little what the size of other armies was, and with a predominant navy they could make all other armies helpless.³⁵

In moving the Navy Estimate in 1907, however, he came across as a thorough anti-imperialist, trumpeting a reduction in spending, although acknowledging that increased spending would be required in future unless France and Germany decided to accept the UK's superiority and slow their own naval expansion programmes.³⁶ Changes to the deployment of the UK's naval forces, so that fewer ships were at sea, were also controversial. The significance of the debate was indicated by the intervention of the Prime Minister, forced to explain whether he agreed with the maintenance of the two-power standard, as commonly understood, and the Leader of the Opposition. Some Liberals backed Robertson to the hilt; others, such as Sir Charles Dilke, struck a noticeably more cautious note.

Robertson was not to come back to speak to his loyal supporters in Dundee for two years, his work as Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty taking up all his time. When he spoke on 26 November 1907 at the Gilfillan Hall, the reception was no more than cordial though there was some sympathy for the arduous responsibility he had experienced through his work at the Admiralty and the effect of the workload on his health. However, his rhetoric was still excellent as he spoke about the nature of his work.

The Admiralty, he explained, was responsible for about 128,000 officers and men on active service (not including the reservists),

and there were at this time 12,000 officers, men and boys from 'dockyard boys to Admirals' undergoing education of one form or another. Robertson emphasised that the Admiralty had to deal with 'a great many of what were called social problems' associated with the 30,000 dockyard workers (both skilled and unskilled). He explained how he and Lord Tweedmouth had 'divided the dockyard between them' and they 'allowed every trade and every section of a trade to send representatives to them to state their grievances.'

Robertson also addressed his constituents about the establishment of the two-power standard. He stated his conviction that, although the necessary work to maintain the navy must be undertaken, he sought to 'appeal to other nations to agree to limit armaments, which were a terrible burden to the industry and a terrible reproach to the civilisation of civilised countries'. He expressed his deep sadness that the Hague Conference, on which Campbell-Bannerman had pinned his hopes, had failed in this respect and he saw this as a 'great blow to the progress of civilisation'.³⁷

But dissension in the audience from suffragette hecklers exemplified the beginning of a new era in politics, one in which Robertson was not to participate. He was definite in his objection to women being granted the right to vote but his objection seemed to be a procedural one, in that the issue of female suffrage could not be considered until a political party had raised it. He advised the suffragettes in the meantime to do the best they could to educate public opinion.

Sadly, the evening came to a close with a vote of no confidence in Mr Robertson being moved by Miss Annot Wilkie, a suffragette, who was possibly related to the city's other MP. She declared that 'the question of female suffrage was deep and serious, but Mr Robertson had treated it as if he had no heart and no feeling'.³⁸ The motion of no

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confidence was carried. Two days later, Edmund spoke probably for the last time as the Member for Dundee. This time Miss Wilkie used as part of her argument the fact that women in Australia had the right to vote (granted in 1895 in South Australia).

The *Daily News* summed up Edmund Robertson, the politician as:

One of the chief successes of this Liberal Ministry. No man on the Treasury Bench, not even Mr Asquith, answers questions in a more effective and business-like manner. When he speaks for his Department of the Admiralty (which includes the dockyards) in debate, he is always clear, sensible, and cogent ... Mr Robertson troubles himself very little about form. He is downright to the verge of bluntness, and plain-spoken to the verge of cynicism. He has no Parliamentary tricks. He treats the House of Commons as he would treat any other audience of intelligent and educated men, the students of the Inns of Court, or the electors of Dundee. The solemn plausibilities of the world, as Burke calls them, have little or no influence over Mr Robertson. There is no red tape about him, and no non-sense of any kind.³⁹

Reward: a seat in the House of Lords

On 25 April 1908, the Dundee Liberal Association met to discuss the political situation created by the sudden resignation of Edmund Robertson from the Ministry on his elevation to the peerage. The meeting was unanimous in expressing gratitude for Robertson's service. At the same meeting when discussion turned to selecting someone to succeed Robertson, a voice was heard to call 'Winston Churchill'.⁴⁰ In April 1908, Churchill had stood for the seat of Manchester Exchange and was unsuccessful. Immediately after the result was declared he received a telegram

from the Liberals in Dundee inviting him to be their candidate, as the sitting member was about to be elevated to the House of Lords. After thinking about it for a week or so Churchill decided to accept the offer.⁴¹

Was Robertson asked by the Whips to stand down in order to accommodate the return of Churchill? Why was Robertson suddenly elevated to the Lords? The truth behind Robertson's departure from Dundee may never be known. His work in the Admiralty had taxed his health and his style in managing the Navy had not been the subject of universal praise. The *Morning Post's* opinion on Mr Robertson being made a peer was that his:

Elevation to the House of Lords has caused considerable surprise in the Navy but we may assume that the title of Baron has been conferred for services to his party since the late Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty is not known to have advanced our naval efficiency.⁴²

But did he sacrifice his position in the House of Commons for the rising star of the Liberal Party? The sentiments expressed in the letter Robertson sent on his resignation to the President of the Dundee Liberal Association sum up the great sadness he must have experienced on what was to be the end of his political career:

My long political connection with Dundee comes to an end. How well I remember its beginning; how greatly I rejoiced in its continuance; how deeply I lament its termination no words of mine can adequately tell.⁴³

Although Churchill polled 2,200 fewer votes than Robertson had in 1906, he returned to Parliament, and to the continuance of his remarkable ministerial career.

The title that Robertson took (Lord Lochee of Gowrie) was in some ways indicative of the man. His love of the beauty of the countryside was symbolised in

Did he sacrifice his position in the House of Commons for Churchill, the rising star of the Liberal Party?

taking the name Gowrie from the beautiful Carse of Gowrie where he was born, and his dedication to the improvement of the working man's life was represented by Lochee, an area of the city he had served for twenty-three years.

It was ironic that Robertson should end his political career in the 'House of Landlords' as he often termed it. However, it was a sign of the humility he possessed that he never used his title, continuing to be referred to as Edmund Robertson.⁴⁴ On his retirement he wrote a letter to the people of Dundee;⁴⁵ while justly claiming that he had 'stood faithfully by the Liberal principles to which Dundee has ever been attached' he acknowledged the debt he owed them for giving him his career in the House of Commons and humbly recognised that 'my success from first to last has been mainly due to the cheerful and determined energy of the working men'.

Robertson made only one speech in the Lords, on 24 November 1908, defending the naval policy that he had administered.⁴⁶ After that, it seems, ill-health took its hold. Dundee's Grand Old Man died at Canterbury on 13 September 1911 and is buried in Holywell Cemetery, Oxford.

Thus ended a romance of real life, in which the studious reader discerns the irresistible power of merit and legitimate ambition. From humble life rich in high ideal Edmund Robertson toiled successfully to reach lofty positions in the service of the nation.⁴⁷

Anne Newman is a descendent of Edmund Robertson's family; her great grandmother was his cousin. She was a member of the Australian Democrats for many years and was a senior lecturer in Special Education and Literacy at the Australian Catholic University in Melbourne; she now pursues her new career as an artist. Anne would also like to thank Robert Ingham, Biographies Editor of the

- Journal, for suggesting the idea for the article and for his advice and patience.
- 1 Jackson, J.M. (ed.), *Third Statistical Account of Scotland: City of Dundee*, 1979.
 - 2 *The Pelican Record*, Oxford University, 1911, pp. 24–26.
 - 3 Ibid.
 - 4 *The Dundee Advertiser*, 1906.
 - 5 Ibid., 7 October 1885
 - 6 *Dundee Year Book*, 1911.
 - 7 Ibid.
 - 8 *Dundee Courier and Argus*, 26 November 1885.
 - 9 Ibid., 8 September 1885.
 - 10 *Dundee Advertiser*, 22 September 1885.
 - 11 Ibid., 23 September 1885.
 - 12 Ibid., 7 October 1885.
 - 13 Ibid., for all quotes above.
 - 14 *Dundee Courier and Argus*, 8 September 1885.
 - 15 *Dundee Advertiser*, 26 November 1885.
 - 16 A splinter party, the Liberal Unionists (who wanted Ireland to remain a part of Britain), led by Joe Chamberlain was formed.
 - 17 *Dundee Advertiser*, 28 September 1900.
 - 18 *The Pelican Record*, Oxford University, 1911, pp. 24–26.
 - 19 *Dundee Year Book*, 1908.
 - 20 *Dundee Advertiser*, July 1895.
 - 21 Ibid.
 - 22 Ibid., 2 October 1896.
 - 23 *The People's Journal*, 29 September 1900.
 - 24 *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 25 September 1900.
 - 25 *Dundee Advertiser*, 1 October 1900.
 - 26 Ibid., 28 September 1900.
 - 27 *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 25 September 1900.
 - 28 Ibid.
 - 29 *Dundee Advertiser*, 26 September 1900.
 - 30 Ibid., 3 October 1900.
 - 31 Ibid., 5 January 1906.
 - 32 *Dundee Advertiser*, 5 January 1906.
 - 33 Ibid., 16 January 1906.
 - 34 *The Millstone: British naval policy in the Mediterranean, 1900–1914* by Geoffrey Miller is an excellent reference on this topic. The entire text can be read at www.manorhouse.clara.net/book3/index.htm
 - 35 *Dundee Advertiser*, 1 October 1900.
 - 36 *Hansard*, 5 March 1907, cc. 654–716 for the whole debate.
 - 37 *Dundee Advertiser*, 26 November 1907.
 - 38 Ibid., 26 November 1907.
 - 39 *Daily News*, January 1894, quoted in *The People's Journal*, 16 September 1911.
 - 40 *The People's Journal*, 25 April 1908.
 - 41 Patterson, Tony, *A Seat for Life* (Dundee, Scotland: David Winter & Son, 1980).
 - 42 *Morning Post*, 17 April 1908, *Times* 17 April 1908.
 - 43 *The People's Journal*, 25 April 1908.
 - 44 *Dundee Year Book*, 1911.
 - 45 *The People's Journal*, 25 April 1908.
 - 46 *Hansard*, 24 November 1908, cc. 41–49.
 - 47 *Dundee Year Book*, 1911.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

If you can help any of the individuals listed below with sources, contacts, or any other information — or if you know anyone who can — please pass on details to them. Details of other research projects in progress should be sent to the Editor (see page 3) for inclusion here.

Aneurin Williams and Liberal internationalism and pacificism, 1900–22. A study of this radical and pacifist MP (Plymouth 1910; North West Durham/Consett 1914–22) who was actively involved in League of Nations Movement, Armenian nationalism, international co-operation, pro-Boer etc. Any information relating to him and location of any papers/correspondence welcome. *Barry Dackombe*. 32 Ashburnham Road, Ampthill, Beds, MK45 2RH; dackombe@tesco.net.

Cornish Methodism and Cornish political identity, 1918–1960s. Researching the relationship through oral history. *Kayleigh Milden*, Institute of Cornish Studies, Hayne Corfe Centre, Sunningdale, Truro TR1 3ND; KMSMilden@aol.com.

Letters of Richard Cobden (1804–65). Knowledge of the whereabouts of any letters written by Cobden in private hands, autograph collections, and obscure locations in the UK and abroad for a complete edition of his letters. *Dr A. Howe*, Department of International History, London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE; a.howe@lse.ac.uk. (For further details of the Cobden Letters Project, see www.lse.ac.uk/collections/cobdenLetters/).

Liberal foreign policy in the 1930s. Focussing particularly on Liberal anti-appeasers. *Michael Kelly*, 12 Collinbridge Road, Whitewell, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim BT36 7SN; mmjkelly@msn.com.

Liberal Party and the wartime coalition 1940–45. Sources, particularly on Sinclair as Air Minister, and on Harcourt Johnstone, Dingle Foot, Lord Sherwood and Sir Geoffrey Maunders (Sinclair's PPS) particularly welcome. *Ian Hunter*, 9 Defoe Avenue, Kew, Richmond TW9 4DL; ian.hunter@curtishunter.co.uk.

Liberal policy towards Austria-Hungary, 1905–16. *Andrew Gardner*, 17 Upper Ramsey Walk, Canonbury, London N1 2RP; agardner@ssees.ac.uk.

Liberals and the local government of London 1919–39. *Chris Fox*, 173 Worplesdon Road, Guildford GU2 6XD; christopher.fox7@virgin.net.

Political life and times of Josiah Wedgwood MP. Study of the political life of this radical MP, hoping to shed light on the question of why the Labour Party replaced the Liberals as the primary popular representatives of radicalism in the 1920s. *Paul Mulvey*, 112 Richmond Avenue, London N1 0LS; paulmulvey@yahoo.com.

Recruitment of Liberals into the Conservative Party, 1906–1935. Aims to suggest reasons for defections of individuals and develop an understanding of changes in electoral alignment. Sources include personal papers and newspapers; suggestions about how to get hold of the papers of more obscure Liberal defectors welcome. *Cllr Nick Cott*, 1a Henry Street, Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE3 1DQ; N.M.Cott@ncl.ac.uk.

SDP in Central Essex. Contact with anyone who had dealings with the area, and in particular as many former SDP members of the area as possible, with a view to asking them to take part in a short questionnaire. Official documents from merger onwards regarding the demise of the local SDP branches and integration with the Liberals would also be appreciated. *Elizabeth Wood*, The Seasons, Park Wood, Doddinghurst, Brentwood, Essex CM15 0SN; Lizawsea@aol.com.

Student radicalism at Warwick University. Particularly the files affair in 1970. Interested in talking to anybody who has information about Liberal Students at Warwick in the period 1965–70 and their role in campus politics. *Ian Bradshaw*, History Department, University of Warwick, CV4 7AL; I.Bradshaw@warwick.ac.uk

Welsh Liberal Tradition – A History of the Liberal Party in Wales 1868–2003. Research spans thirteen decades of Liberal history in Wales but concentrates on the post-1966 formation of the Welsh Federal Party. Any memories and information concerning the post-1966 era or even before welcomed. The research is to be published in book form by Welsh Academic Press. *Dr Russell Deacon*, Centre for Humanities, University of Wales Institute Cardiff, Cyncoed Campus, Cardiff CF23 6XD; rdeacon@uwic.ac.uk.