

Sir William Gladstone, Bt

Descendant of the great Liberal prime minister who, as Chief Scout, reached out to deprived areas

SIR WILLIAM GLADSTONE, Bt, who has died aged 92, had a varied career that included being a schoolmaster, Chief Scout and Lord Lieutenant of Clwyd; on top of that his extensive interests included bird watching, landscape gardening, painting landscapes in watercolours, and shooting.

Gladstone maintained that he had lived his life within institutions, admiring how they survived by subtle evolution and playing a significant part in the changes himself. He had a lifelong interest in history and wrote of the various institutions in two books, *People in Places* (2013), and *Family, Friends & Fervours* (2015).

The son of an Eton housemaster, he spent much of his life in teaching, of which he wrote: "In my opinion there is no more useful, fascinating and rewarding (though not in the financial sense) profession." He relished "helping a stream of young individuals to grow up as sensible and civilised members of society".

Nowhere did Gladstone apply this philosophy with more energy than with the Scouts. He became Chief Scout in 1972, serving until 1982. Finding the organisation outdated, fixed in its ways and lacking popular appeal, he set about modernising the movement, retaining "the essential and original philosophy while sensibly coming to terms with modern life".

He put emphasis on youth involvement and community affairs, and was credited with fostering a libertarian attitude. He was particularly successful in uniting scout organisations across the globe and, in the spirit of Robert Baden Powell,

career. He was an attentive pupil and enjoyed rowing on the river.

Leaving school in the middle of the Second World War, he joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in 1943, seeing action in the Indian Ocean, mainly in destroyers. In 1946 he went up to Christ Church, Oxford, where he read History and attended the lectures of Hugh Trevor-Roper, Charles Stuart and Steven Watson.

After two terms teaching at Shrewsbury, where he wrote a history of the Shropshire Yeomanry (published in 1953), he became an Eton beak in 1951 under the inspired and liberal headmastership of Robert Birley, teaching history, serving as "river master" and reorganising the Cadet Corps as a voluntary body.

He was then, from 1961 to 1969, head master of Lancing, where his mission was to give both masters and boys greater scope and responsibility. The governing body wanted him to improve the school's academic standards, while the president of the Old Boys' Association impressed on him the need to enforce short hair and good manners.

In a decade of student revolt, Gladstone balanced discipline with freedom and was pleased that a tolerant regime worked better than a more restrictive one might have done. During his time at Lancing he invited Field Marshal Montgomery and John Betjeman to speak, but another guest, John Wyndham, proved "over-fortified" and fell over.

In 1968 Gladstone succeeded his father as seventh baronet, taking up residence at Hawarden Castle, the family home on the Welsh Borders that had come to the family through

Catherine Glynne, wife of WE Gladstone. In 2009 the younger Gladstone paid tribute to his illustrious forebear in a book entitled *Gladstone - A Bicentenary Portrait*.

Gladstone served on Flintshire County Council from 1970 to 1974 and was closely involved with the Church in Wales as chairman of its representative body. In 1977 he became chairman of the World Scout Committee, serving until 1981.

As Lord Lieutenant of Clwyd from 1985 until 2000 he arranged many royal visits to the county and during one, in May 1976, the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh lunched at Hawarden. He enjoyed working with volunteers and dedicated professionals, recalling: "It opened attractive opportunities and the hard and sometimes difficult work which it involved was amply recognised and rewarded, especially perhaps by the interesting people one met from all walks of life."

When he was appointed KG in 1999, he suggested, with typical modesty, that the Queen may have given him the honour to "say goodbye to the way Queen Victoria had treated my great grandfather", who was pointedly not given the Garter, or "to acknowledge the service of some other members of my family since those days". He later wrote *The Purpose and Foundation of the Order of the Garter*.

In 1962 William Gladstone married Rosamund Hambro, a niece of Cecil Beaton. She survives him with two sons and a daughter. His elder son Charles, born in 1964, succeeds him in the baronetcy.

Sir William Gladstone, Bt, born October 25 1925, died March 29 2018



developing scouting in deprived areas.

Erskine William Gladstone was born on October 29 1925, son of Sir Charles Gladstone, 6th Baronet, and his wife, Isla (née Erskine-Crum). He was the great-grandson of WE Gladstone, who served four terms as prime minister between 1868 and 1894. The family originated in Lanarkshire and the baronetcy was created in 1846 for John Gladstone of Fasque, Kincardineshire, father of the Liberal prime minister.

Young Willie got the best out of Eton, where he started his scouting

Gladstone as Chief Scout, painted by Juliet Pannett for the Scout Association

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