

**Lord Lexden**

Conservative peer and historian

**In a carefully researched and lively account, Andrew Liddle finally sets the record straight on Winston Churchill's attitude to Scotland**

## Cheers, Mr Churchill! Winston in Scotland

By **Andrew Liddle**  
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In death, as in life, Winston Churchill has his detractors, as well as his admirers. North of the border there are many who believe that he felt contempt for Scotland and its people.

Scottish nationalists love to depict him as a ruthless English foe, who sent in tanks to suppress disorder in Glasgow in 1919. This myth has now found its way into school syllabuses. It is not effectively challenged because so little serious work has been done on Churchill's real attitude to Scotland. Even after a thousand biographies, there are still fresh discoveries to be made.

Andrew Liddle, a political consultant and writer in Edinburgh, seeks out the truth in this carefully researched study. Excellent use is made of the Churchill papers, other unpublished records and the detailed political reports which filled the newspapers of the time.

In 1908 Churchill was sent packing after two years by the electors in his Manchester seat. At 34 he was the youngest cabinet minister

since Pitt, and one of the great successes of Herbert Asquith's Liberal government, having defected from the Tories four years earlier.

He found refuge in Dundee, where in 10 years he built up a seemingly impregnable majority of 15,000. He described it as "a life seat and cheap and easy beyond all

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experience". That turned out to be a very rash comment.

Dundee was famous for jute and drunkenness. Low wages were paid to most of the city's workforce as they turned jute from Bengal into sacks and rope. Much was spent from inadequate

incomes on drink. Dundee had more pubs than bakers. Drunkenness accounted for more law-breaking than all other crimes in the city put together.

Liddle argues that Dundee's poverty had a deep effect on Churchill. It contributed greatly, he writes, to the "commitment to progressive social change"



**1908 Dundee** Winston Churchill is heckled by suffragettes

which made Churchill, along with David Lloyd George, a founder of the welfare state before the First World War. No trace of hostility to Scotland can be found in his years as Dundee's MP.

He was thrown out of his "life seat" in a sensational election exactly 100 years ago. His nemesis was an extraordinary figure, Edwin (known as Neddy), Scrymgeour, whose "soul was on fire for God" and

for the extinction of alcohol. In November 1922 he became the first, and last, prohibitionist to be elected to the House of Commons. Dundee, a city of many drunks, turned to him for salvation.

Though stunned by defeat, Churchill praised Scrymgeour as a man who stood for "the orderly conceptions of democratic reform action". He left Dundee without bitterness, expressing sadness at the "awful contrast between one class and another" to be found there.

Liddle's greatest discovery is Churchill's support for fundamental constitutional change in the United Kingdom. Speaking in Dundee in October 1913 he said: "I prophesy that the day will most certainly come when a federal system will be established in these islands which will give Wales and Scotland control, within proper limits, of their own affairs."

This speech needs to be given a prominent position in the history curriculum in Scottish schools. No one hostile to Scotland could possibly have made such a statement.

Andrew Liddle has done a great service in correcting gross errors about Churchill and Scotland in this lively, attractive book. 🍷

