THE ROBERTSON WATT CONNECTION

In his County History of Aberdeen and Banff, published in 1900, William Watt wrote,

"Education may accordingly be regarded as the most distinctive of the industries of Aberdeen, and the yearly output of disciplined minds as the most important of its products…..

……and thus it is as true today as it was five or six generations ago, that the 'natural ingenuity' of the inhabitants is 'improved by education,' at once accessible and effective, along the whole line from the elementary to the higher academic stages; and that the shires of Aberdeen and Banff continue to send far more than their proportionate number of men into the learned professions and the higher grades of the public service throughout the empire."

William Watt had observed this process directly, via the remarkable achievements of his brothers-in-law, the sons of Charles Robertson, blacksmith and ironmonger, and brothers of his second wife Marjorie. Their own three sons were just completing their university education with successful careers still ahead of them. This article mainly tells the story of the Robertsons, using appreciations and obituaries written at their time. It is significant that many of these writers had lots to say.

Marjorie Mary Watson Robertson, aged 25, picture taken by George Washington Wilson on 4th January 1875, 17 months before her marriage to William Watt

Marjorie Mary Watson Robertson, William Watt's second wife and the mother of his three sons, came from an impressive Aberdeen family.

Her seven brothers all attended Aberdeen Grammar School, six of them at the old school buildings in Schoolhill and one, the youngest, at the new buildings in Carden Place. Four went on to Aberdeen University, including Croom Robertson (Professor of Mental Philosophy and Logic at University College London, founding editor of the journal *Mind,* and friend and walking companion of Leslie Stephen – father of Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf), two senior members of the Indian Civil Service (one of whose sons became an Oxford don, personal history tutor to the future Edward VIII and Principal of the University of Birmingham) and Alexander Robertson, Aberdeen's first Public Librarian who oversaw the setting up and opening in 1892 of the Public Library on Rosemount Viaduct, with the support and attendance of Andrew Carnegie.

7 of her 10 Watt grandchildren had Robertson middle names in memory of their grandmother, whom none ever met. An 8th grandchild became a Robertson by marrying Marjorie's great nephew, Hamish Robertson. This article describes her many family relationships including :

- Daughter of Charles Robertson and Marjory Laing
- Sister of seven Robertson brothers and three sisters
- Wife of William Watt
- Mother of Edward, George and Theodore Watt
- Aunt of Sir Charles Grant Robertson
- Great Aunt of Hamish Grant Gordon Robertson
- Grandmother of ten Watt grandchildren, including Donald Elmslie Robertson Watt

Marjorie was born on the 7th of November 1849, the tenth of 11 children of Charles and Marjory Robertson (nee Laing). Her father was born the son of a blacksmith in Leith but moved to Aberdeen where he ran a successful business as an ironmonger with premises in Park Street.

Marjorie's mother died aged 51 in 1861, when Marjorie was 11, her health probably exhausted by 11 pregnancies. Charles lived to be 91 and outlived 9 of his children.

Marjorie had three sisters, who probably had the job of looking after their father at the family home in Ferryhill Place, until two of them married and left home.

Marjorie married William Watt, a widower with a 5 year old daughter Jeannie, on the 30th of August 1876, when she was 26 years old, in a ceremony at Ferryhill Place, witnessed by her brother George Croom Robertson, aged 34 and by that time established as Professor of Mental Philosophy and Logic at University College London. They

honeymooned in Paris and started married life at 134 Crown Street, before moving to 27 North Albert Street, next to the side entrance of the Grammar School.

Photograph of Marjorie Watt, the reverse side of which shows that it was taken in the studio of the noted French society photographer Pierre Petit at 31 Place Cadet, Paris, most likely when she was on honeymoon with William Watt.

William and Marjorie's first child, Edward William Watt, was born almost exactly a year later on 25th August 1877, followed by George Robertson Watt in 1879 and Theodore Watt in 1884.

George, Edward and Theodore Watt in 1887/88

Marjorie lived for only four years after that, dying on 21st June 1888, aged 39, from an ovarian tumour and renal abscess. Her sons were aged 10, 9 and 4 when she died. William died 28 years later in 2006.

William and Marjorie are buried, with headstones facing each other across a path in the South-East Corner of Allenvale Cemetery in Aberdeen, next to a circle of trees.

CHARLES ROBERTSON (1808-1899)

Charles Robertson, was born in Leith, the son of a blacksmith, but early in life moved to Aberdeen where he started in business as an ironmonger in Park Street. He was for long a member of the Hammermen Incorporation, filling the office of Boxmaster for several years, and taking an active interest in the affairs of the Incorporation. He was a well-known member of the Congregational body. Originally he was a member and office-bearer of the Frederick Street Congregational Church, first under the ministry of Rev. Mr Penman, and afterwards of Rev. Mr Wallace. This Church was afterwards removed to Dee Street and was ultimately merged in Blackfriars Street Congregational Church – later Skene Street Congregational Church. He was for a time superintendent of the Sunday School, and otherwise identified himself actively in all Congregational work. He interested himself keenly in all local and Imperial affairs but was never moved to take any prominent part in public life. For a considerable time he lived in quiet retirement. He had a large family. Four of his sons were Mr Charles Robertson, eldest, of the Bengal Civil Service who died in 1898; Mr John Grant Robertson, also of the Bengal Civil Service, who died in India; the late Professor Croom Robertson; and Mr A.W. Robertson, Public Librarian, Aberdeen.

From Charles Robertson's obituary in the Daily Free Press

On 6th December 1832, Charles married Marjory Laing in Aberdeen. He was 24 and she was 22. Between 1833 and 1853, Marjory gave birth to 11 children. She died 8 years later at 87 Fountainhall Road, on 10.1.61, her 51st birthday. Their children were :-

Charles Robertson, named after his father and grandfather, born 18.9.33, died 24.3.98, aged 64.

Anne Robertson, born 4.12.34, died 13.1.95, aged 60
Peter Robertson, born 21.7.36, died 9.12.53, aged 17
William Robertson, born 13.3.38, died 21.2.08, aged 69
John Grant Robertson, born 10.2.40, died 29.2.93, aged 53
George Croom Robertson, born 10.3.42, died 20.9.92, aged 50
Helen Fox Robertson, born 14.11.43, died 3.6.96, aged 52
Margaret Smith Robertson, born 25.4.45, died 5.3.88, aged 42
Alexander Webster Robertson, born 1.7.47, died 14.11.11, aged 64
Marjorie Mary Watson Robertson, born 7.11.49, died 21.6.88, aged 38
Henry Robertson, born 24.10.53, died 4.12.86, aged 33

Charles Robertson senior died on 29.1.99, aged 91, having survived all but two of his children. When his wife died in 1861, he was 52 and would live another 38 years.

His eldest daughter Anne was then aged 26. She did not marry and died in 1895 aged 60. His second daughter Helen was aged 17. She married a doctor, Robert Milne, in 1871, when aged 27, had three children and died in 1896, aged 52. The third daughter Margaret was aged 15. She did not marry and died in 1888, aged 42. His fourth and youngest daughter Marjorie was aged 11. She married William Watt, a widower with a 5 year old daughter, in 1876, when aged 26. They had three sons, Edward, George and Theodore, who were 10, 9 and 4 when she died aged 38 in 1888.

The 1880s saw four early deaths in the Robertson family : Croom Robertson died in 1892, aged 50; Henry died in 1886, aged 33; Margaret died in 1888 aged 40; Marjorie died in 1888 aged 38.

In 1899 Theodore Watt recorded these deaths in his diary

Aunty Maggie, died March 5th 1888
Mamma, died June 20th 1888
Uncle George, died September 20th 1892
Aunt Caroline, died May 9th 1892
Aunt Ann, died January 13th 1895
Aunty Milne, died June 3rd 1896
Uncle Charles, died March 24th 1898
Grandpapa, died January 29th 1899

It seems likely that Anne and Margaret, who were both spinsters, lived with and supported their father during his long old age, while Helen and Marjorie married and had families of their own. Helen lived long enough to see her three children reach adulthood, while Marjorie did not. But when she died in 1888, her sons had their grandfather, two aunts, four uncles and thirteen cousins on their mother's side of the family.

Theodore Watt, aged 3 in 1887, the year before his mother died,
with a Robertson aunt (? Anne ? Maggie)

CHARLES ROBERTSON

Charles Robertson, named after his father Charles Robertson, was born in Aberdeen, and received his elementary education at the Trades School, whence he passed to the Grammar School, then presided over by Dr Melvin. Leaving the school in 1849, as dux and gold medallist, he entered Marischal College as first bursar. During his

undergraduate career he took a distinguished place in every branch of the curriculum, and on graduating in 1853 he won the Town Council gold medal for general distinction, the Boxill Mathematical prize, and the Lord Rector's prize. For a time he was engaged in teaching in England, and while so engaged he prepared for entering the East India Company's service, the prospect of which was for the first time by open competition. In the first list of candidates appointed under the competitive system, Charles Robertson had the fifth place. Joining the Bengal Civil Service, he rose step by step, holding various responsible positions, his last office being that of Secretary to the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces. On his retirement after completing his full term in India, he received a strongly-worded memorandum recognising the value of his services.

After his return from India, Mr Robertson whose keen appreciation of the great works of ancient literature had been enhanced with years, resumed his active connection with the Hellenic Society, which continued in Edinburgh under the auspices of Professor Blackie. In describing one of the meetings, Blackie himself mentions as a feature of it that "Charles Robertson showed fruits of accurate scholarship that would have satisfied the most dainty-toothed Oxonian".

A typical occasion is thus described by Miss Stoddart – "There was a Hellenic meeting to read the first part of 'Agamemnon', and Professor Charteris, Dr Walter C. Smith, Sherrif Nicolson, Dr Hutchison Stirling, Mr Charles Robertson, and others were present; two lady members took part; and the rites followed their prescribed course – the reading, supper, toasts of the Hierophant and the Desponia, and songs from the Professor and Sherrif Nicolson." When a few years ago the Hellenic Society resolved to or present Professor Blackie with an address and silver cup recording their sense of his great services, Mr Robertson, as one of the original and still active members, was chosen to make the presentation, and acquitted himself of the task with admirable tact and grace. Such were among the employments of the theoretical leisure of a still very active life.

Mr Robertson was married to Miss Isabella Simson, youngest daughter of the late Rev. Henry Simson of the Free Church, Chapel of Garioch. Mrs Robertson died soon after their return from India in 1886. Charles Robertson died in Edinburgh in 1898, aged 64. They had no children.

JOHN GRANT ROBERTSON

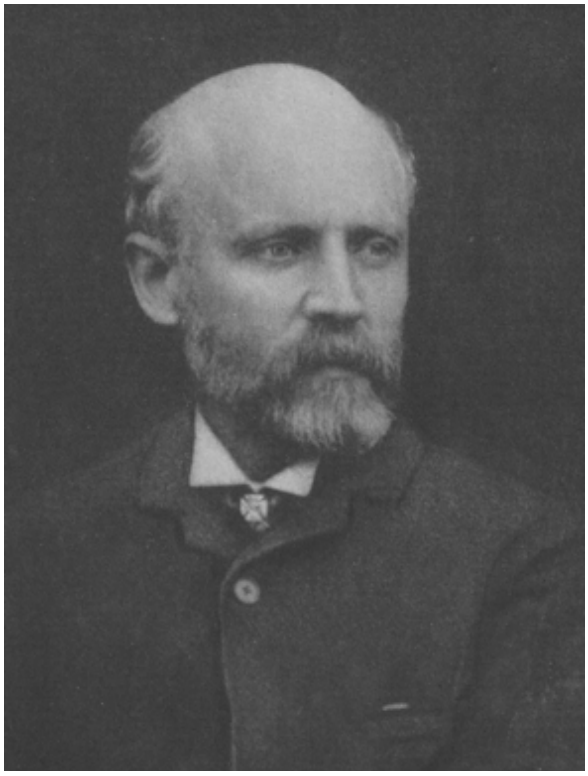
Following his brother Charles, who was seven years older, John Grant Robertson entered the Indian Civil Service, after coming tenth in the entrance competition. However, he died in India, aged 33, which left his wife Isobel, aged 27, to bring up their three young children after returning to England.

Isobel was the youngest daughter of the Rev. P. Grant, Minister of the Small Isles in the Presbytery of Skye. She had left Scotland to join her brother in India and it was there

that she met and married John Grant Robertson. One of her three children, Charles Grant Robertson, features later in this account. (see below)

Portrait of John Grant Robertson, possibly posthumous

GEORGE CROOM ROBERTSON



Note : Known throughout his life as “Croom Robertson”, Croom was the married surname of one of his father Charles Robertson’s two sisters.

The life of George Croom Robertson is described below by Alexander Bain, the first Professor of Logic at the University of Aberdeen, with a special appreciation by Leslie

Stephen, founding editor of the Dictionary of National Biography and father of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell.

George Croom Robertson was born in Aberdeen on 10th March 1842. His father, Charles Robertson, is still living. Two elder brothers Charles and John, obtained admission to the Indian Civil Service in the earliest years of the competitive appointments. The eldest is now retired from the service and is one of his brother's executors; the second died in India. A younger brother, Alexander, is Librarian of the Aberdeen Public Library.

During the earliest years of infancy, George was constitutionally delicate, and partly on this account, and partly not to stimulate a brain that already gave signs of unusual activity, he did not commence his education until he was six years of age. He was sent first to a Dame's school, where he mastered the alphabet and learned to read in an astonishingly short time. After a few weeks of this elementary training, he was transferred to the school maintained by the Incorporated Trades, then under the charge of Mr Rodger, a teacher of some note in his day and a fine specimen of the schoolmaster of the olden type, being as thorough and exact a teacher as he was a strict disciplinarian. The subjects taught were reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, English composition, and Bible knowledge under the guidance of the Shorter Catechism.

Having spent four years under this regime, he went on, at the age of eleven, to the Grammar School, where the principal topic was Latin, to which were added English (chiefly history) and the elements of Greek. George proved so apt a pupil that, not only did he carry off prizes (some of them firsts) at the several annual examinations, but, at the end of the fourth year, while there was still a year of the usual curriculum to run, he gained by competition the second bursary at Marischal College and University, which, accordingly , he entered as a student in November 1857. The first winter was occupied with Greek under Prof R.J. Brown, then an elderly man but a not inefficient teacher; Latin, under Robert Maclure, a man of fair schoolmaster type, with the genius of translation. At the end of the session, Robertson carried off the second prize in Greek and stood eighth in Latin.

At this point occurred the great revolution in the Aberdeen Colleges, by which they lost their individuality and were transformed into one institution, the United University of Aberdeen. As there were duplicate professors in all the Arts subjects, the elder of the pair was superannuated and the work carried on by the younger. The winter session 1860-61 was the first under the new system, with this qualification, that students who had commenced their courses in the separate colleges were allowed to finish under the regulations previously in force in each. In Robertson's case, all that remained obligatory was to attend the Moral Philosophy Class of Professor Martin, the former Marischal College Professor, now retained in the United University. The new programme of subjects included, for the first time in Aberdeen, a separate chair of Logic, attendance on which was to be compulsory only on students now entering the United University.

Robertson attended it voluntarily; and this was the first occasion of my coming into contact with him. He took a high place in the examinations, and at the same time distinguished himself in the class of Professor Martin. He took the M.A. degree with highest honours in April 1861; his leading subjects being Classics and Philosophy.

In October of the same year, there were instituted the Ferguson Scholarships, value £100 a year for two years, open to graduates of all the four Scottish Universities. One of the two was for Classics and Mental Philosophy combined. Robertson competed for this and was successful. Robertson at once availed himself of the fund at his disposal to pursue his studies on a very wide scale. The winter of 1861-62 was spent by him in London, where he attended selected classes in University College; one being Professor Masson's senior class of English Literature, in which he gained the second prize. He also attended Malden's Senior Greek, and the Chemistry class of Professor Williamson.

In July 1862, he proceeded to Germany, his first resort being Heidelberg, where he stayed eight weeks; his principal occupation being mastering German. However, it was to Berlin that he looked for the fullest scope to his curiosity in the wide domain of philosophical and other learning. He reached the German capital on the 24th of September, and remained until the latter end of March – a period of five months, which included the winter semester at the University. He attended two classes of Trendelenburg – one in Psychology, four hours a week; Du Bos Reymond, Physiology, five hours a week; Althaus on Hegel, one hour a week; Bona Meyer on Kant, two hours a week. He paid frequent visits to Dorner, and afterwards kept up a friendly correspondence with him and with Trendelenburg. He also saw Lepsius at his house, and, on leaving, was presented by him with a copy of his Royal Dynasties of Egypt. *He maintained at the same time a sedulous course of reading, devoting himself more especially to Kant.*

Leaving Berlin, he made a tour of Eastern Germany on his way to Gottingen, which he reached on the 17th of April 1863, remaining there two months. He attended Lotze on Metaphysics and Rudolf Wagner on Physiology. With both these he had subsequent correspondence and obtained from Wagner a letter of introduction to Broca in Paris, to which he now directed his course. He arrived on the 24th of June, and remained until the 10th of September - a very busy time, but details are wanting.

He was recalled to Aberdeen by the intimation of a vacancy in the Examinership in Philosophy, which he failed to obtain. He now remained at home, devoting himself to philosophical study. It was during the year following his arrival that I obtained his assistance in revising The Senses and the Intellect *for a second edition. He elaborated a number of valuable notes from his German studies, such as the addition made to the handling of the muscular sense. Also for* The Emotions and the Will *he contributed the* Classifications of the Feelings *prevalent in Germany, those of Kant, Herbart, and their followers; and in other ways aided in the revision. After bringing out the second edition of*

*the two volumes,T*the Senses and the Emotions*, I was occupied for some time in preparing a manual of Rhetoric. For this he compiled the classification of the* Species Of Poetry and Versification*. He, likewise, co-operated with me in making a search of Aristotle's* Rhetoric *and Qunitilian's* Institutes*. The result, however, was disappointing; extremely little could be discovered in either for adaptation to a modern manual.*

In September 1864, he was appointed teaching assistant to Prof Geddes, and shared with him the work of his Greek classes. He performed the same duty for session 1865-66. The remuneration was £100 a year, and no duty was required during the seven months' vacation. He was able, therefore, to devote himself largely to philosophical work. In 1864, he wrote an article on German Philosophy for the British and Foreign Evangelical Review, which appeared in the July number. He also wrote an article on Kant and Swedenborg in Macmillan, for May, the same year.

In the summer of 1866, a vacancy occurred in the Chair of Mental Philosophy and Logic in University College, London. After an abortive attempt on the Chair of Philosophy in Webb's College, Manchester, Robertson became a candidate for this vacancy. His chief rival was Dr James Martineau, whose cause was espoused with great energy by one section of the Council, while another section, under Grote's leadership, favoured Robertson. The leading incidents of the struggle are given with official exactness by himself in his life of Grote in the Dictionary of National Biography. The elections took place in December and he opened his class in January 1867.His residence, henceforth was London.

Not long after being appointed to University College, he conceived the project of a work on Hobbes, for which Grote gave him every encouragement, and wrote to the Duke of Devonshire to procure for him access to the MSS, preserved in the family seats. As commonly happens, this design proved more laborious and protracted than was first imagined. In addition to the labour that might naturally be counted upon, an unexpected difficulty was encountered in connexion with Hobbes's mathematical writings. It seems that in Molesworth's edition these were very carelessly edited. In order to do justice to the hot and lengthened controversy between Hobbes and Wallis, Robertson had, at considerable pains, to resuscitate his mathematical knowledge and trace out the sophistical reasonings of Hobbes through all the disguise that his ingenuity enabled him to put on.

One portion of his research on the biographical part appeared in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, and the completing section of the biography, together with a survey on the writings, came out in the volume in Blackwood's Philosophical Classics*. Although this work was not executed on the scale originally projected, it preserved the most important part of his labours, and is duly appreciated by students of philosophy. His enlarged purpose would have included more copious reference to the great contemporaries and*

precursors of Hobbes, whom he had studied with no less care, and to whom he might have done justice in other forms had he been longer spared.

For his elementary lectures at the College, he prepared with all due painstaking, courses of Logic, deductive and inductive, systematic Psychology, and Ethical Theory. All through his career, his attention was nearly equally divided between the elaboration of philosophical doctrines according to their most advanced treatment, and the history of philosophy both ancient and modern. The summer courses at University College, which were adapted to the requirements of the M.A. degree at the University of London, generally took him into fresh ground – the ancients and the moderns alternately – and were the occasion of a special study of the original authorities. His accumulated stores of historical material were thus very great, as his publications from time to time made manifest. A few more years of active vigour would have enabled him to leave a monument of the history of philosophy second to none. His doctrinal clearness was a notable and pervading characteristic of all his expositions of foregone thinkers.

He gave some carefully prepared popular lectures at Manchester, Newcastle and the Royal Institution, London. One subject was "The Senses"; another "Kant", on whom he gave a course of four lectures at the Royal Institution in 1874. Other topics of popular lecturing were "The Characteristics of English Philosophy", "The History of Philosophy, as preparation for Descartes, and Locke".

From 1868 to 1873, and again from 1883 to 1888, he was Examiner in Philosophy in the University of London. His examination papers are sufficient proof of his efforts to do justice both to the subjects and to the fair expectations of candidates. He also acted as Examiner in the University of Aberdeen from 1869 to 1872, and from 1878 to1881.

He was engaged by Dr Findlater, editor of Chamber's Encyclopaedia, to furnish contributions to that work. When the Messrs. Black projected their new edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica they invited Findlater to become their editor. He declined the task and suggested a choice between Thomas Spencer Baynes and Robertson. When Baynes entered on the work, he engaged Robertson as a contributor in Philosophy. The articles actually written by him were Abelard, Analogy, Analysis, Association, Axiom, Hobbes.

On the death of Grote in 1871, he had the principal share in editing the Posthumous Work on Aristotle, which occupied him the autumn and winter of that year. From the distinctness of the MS, this was in one respect not a difficult task, although involving a considerable expenditure of time in revision. What chiefly made it toilsome and anxious was a want of exactness on Grote's part, through some defect of vision, in entering the numerical references to the text. Every one of these had to be carefully verified from the originals. The result was a masterpiece of correct editing; and the work as thus brought

out will deserve to be ranked as an edition princeps of Grote's monograph on the Stagirite.

The death of Grote brought out the fact that he had left to University College the sum of £6000 as an endowment to the philosophy chair. Mrs Grote, who was entitled to the life interest, surrendered the amount in 1875, two years before her death. In the year of the publication of Aristotle, 1872, Robertson married Caroline Anna Crompton, daughter of Justice Crompton. She was in every sense a helpmate, having the same views on the higher questions of life, and being an earnest labourer in the public questions that he also had at heart. She was likewise of service in his official wor, when his strength became barely equal to its routine.

Robertson was a member of the Metaphysical Society of London, which flourished for several years and drew together a remarkable mixed assemblage of philosophers, politicians, and ecclesiastics. He contributed a paper on the 13th of May, 1873, on "The Action of so-called Motives". This paper was reprinted in MIND, vol. vii., p567., and is one of our best handlings of the Free Will question on the basis of a critical examination of the verbal improprieties that obscure the issue.

In 1880, when I resigned the Logic Chair in Aberdeen, he was by general concurrence my destined successor. So much was this felt by aspirants to the office, that, until he declared his resolution on the subject, no other candidate entered the lists. Only after he made up his mind to remain in London was there an open competition.

Following the lead of John Stuart Mill, he threw himself zealously into the movement on behalf of women, and was for some years an active member of the only committee for women's suffrage to which Mill ever gave his name as President. Although in the winter of 1877-78 he, with several other members of the committee, withdrew from the movement, he never ceased to watch its varying fortunes with interest. Later on, he promoted the introduction of women into the Colleges, and saw the operation of mixed classes, as it originated in University College and was gradually extended into other educational institutions. In his own class, female students were latterly in the majority.

Twelve years before his death, his fatal malady began to show itself. On discovering the serious nature of the attack – calculus in the kidney, - he set himself to work to parry its advances by every form of precaution and self-denial that his skilled advisers and his own experience could suggest; being aided by the unremitting devotion of his wife. How such a malady could have got possession of him at the age of thirty-eight, it is needless to speculate. This much we can pronounce, after the event, that the strain of his intellectual application from early years was excessive. His persistent labours were aggravated by a fervour of manner which, though raising his value as a public teacher, involved a nervous expenditure that even a naturally healthy system could not well afford.

During sessions 1883-4, 1886-7, and part of 1887-8, he had to employ substitutes for his teaching work, He had given in his resignation in April, 1888; but the Council declined to accept it, until he should have the relief of another session by means of substitute. He finally resigned on the 7th May, 1892.

He threw himself with the utmost zeal into the business management of the College, first as a Member of Senate, and latterly as the Senate's representative on the Council. Not long after his appointment, Grote learned with great satisfaction that he was highly esteemed among his colleagues in the Senate for his judgment and energy in business matters.

In 1874, I broached to him the founding of a Quarterly Journal of Philosophy; explaining my notions as to its drift, and asking his opinion of the project. My desire was that he should be editor in the fullest sense of the word; and, on that condition, I undertook the publishing risks. After full consideration, he approved of the design, and accepted the editorship on the terms proposed to him. The subsequent steps necessary were to obtain the concurrence and approbation of active workers in the field. The amount of encouragement was such as to decide us in organising the work for speedy publication.

It was at first thought that it might be brought out in the course of the following year, 1875; but as it could not be ready in the beginning of the year, it was finally arranged that the first number should appear in January, 1876. Robertson bore the brunt of the requisite preparations for the start; settling the plan and arrangement of the numbers, procuring the requisite pledges of articles in advance, and drafting the programme. It was his happy inspiration that gave the title, which commended itself at once to everyone. Our earliest success was the series of papers on Philosophy in the Universities, Robertson himself supplying the account of the University of London.

It was of course a prime object of the journal to keep the English reader au courant with foreign publications in the philosophical field – both set treatises and periodicals. The editor spared no pains to procure contributions of this nature, and took it upon himself a large part of the burden of applying the desideratum. Indeed, in every department of the work of the journal, it is unnecessary to say that he had always the lion's share. Now that he is gone, it is a satisfaction to think that, besides contributing largely to the review of novelties from every corner, and expounding the great historical names of the past, he communicated his most advanced reflexions upon many leading questions in psychology, philosophy and logic. It is perhaps unnecessary for me to say more, considering that the result is accessible, and that the collective body of contributors have recently given expression to their estimate of his merits. It would, however, be an omission on my part not to express the deliberate opinion formed on sixteen years' experience, that I regarded him as, in every point of view, a model editor.

I am saved from much that would be necessary to do justice to this sketch by the publication in the Spectator of a notice by Robertson's most intimate friend, Mr Leslie Stephen. (NOTE : The father Of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell) In point of exactness of appreciation and felicity of statement, it would be vain in any one to rival the delineation thus afforded. The readers of MIND cannot but be grateful for its reproduction in full.

"I hope that you will permit me to say a few words about the late Professor Croom Robertson. I had the great happiness of an intimate acquaintance with him during the later years of his life, and can mention some facts which ought, I think, to be known to all who may have been interested in his work.

Every serious student of philosophy is aware that Professor Robertson was an accomplished metaphysician and psychologist. I do not suppose that there are more than two or three living Englishmen whose knowledge of those subjects is comparable to his for range and accuracy. He had given up his whole life and energy to such studies from very early years, and whatever he did, he did thoroughly.

My own knowledge only enabled me to appreciate his acquirements within a comparatively small circle; but whenever I applied to him for advice or information, I was surprised afresh by the fulness of his knowledge. He had always considered for himself any question that I proposed to him and knew what was to be found about it in previous literature. My own experience was confirmed by those who were better judges than I could be. It was impossible to consult him without being struck by his command both of history of past speculation and of the latest utterances of modern thinkers. His judgments, whether one accepted them or not, were at least those of a powerful, candid, patient, and richly stored intellect.

He has not, indeed, left much behind him to justify an estimate which will, I think, be accepted by all who knew him. His excellent monograph upon Hobbes, and a few articles, chiefly critical, in MIND, are, I fear, all that remains to give any hints of his capacity. For this want of productiveness there were, unfortunately, amply sufficient reasons.

Robertson was, in the first place, conscientious almost to excess as a worker. As editor he could not bear to leave undone anything which was necessary to secure the utmost possible precision. He would not write till he had considered the matter from every possible point of view and read everything at all relevant to his purpose. As editor of MIND he expended an amount of thought and labour upon the revision of articles which surprised anyone accustomed to more rough-and-ready methods of editing. Besides correcting misprints or inaccuracies of language, he would consider the writer's argument carefully, point out weak places, and discuss desirable amendments as patiently as the most industrious tutor correcting the exercises of a promising pupil.

Contributors were sometimes surprised to find that their work was thought deserving of such elaborate examination; and it often seemed to me that he could have written a new article with less trouble than it took him to put into satisfactory shape one already written, with which, after all, perhaps he did not agree. He never reviewed a book without thoroughly making himself master of its contents. He applied, as I have reason to believe, the same amount of conscientious labour to the discharge of his duties as Professor.

His work in the two capacities absorbed, therefore, a great proportion of his disposable energy. So conscientious a worker was naturally slow in original production. He would not slur over any difficulty in haste to reach a conclusion. Robertson, indeed, like most of us, had some very definite opinions upon disputed questions, and belonged decidedly to what is roughly called the empirical school. But, whatever his views, he was always anxious to know and to consider fairly anything that could be said against them. Had he ever been able to give a full exposition of his philosophical doctrines, the last accusation that could ever have been brought against him would have been that of hasty dogmatism. He might have failed to appreciate the opposite view; but the failure would not have been due to any want of desire to understand it thoroughly.

He was always anxious that MIND should contain a full expression of all shades of opinion. Whether he succeeded in this is another question. An editor can open his doors, but he cannot compel everyone to enter. I can only say, from my own knowledge, that he did his best to secure the co-operation of the men from whose views he most decidedly dissented.

There was, however, a cause for want of productiveness more melancholy and more sufficient than those of which I have spoken. When I first knew Robertson, he told me that he was preparing a book upon Hobbes. It would have included an estimate of the whole philosophical movement of the seventeenth century. He had gone into all the preparatory studies with his usual thoroughness. He had examined the papers preserved at Chatsworth; and had at his fingers' ends all the details of the curious and obscure controversies in which Hobbes was engaged with the mathematicians as well as with the philosophers of his time.

When I wrote for the Dictionary of National Biography a life of Hobbes, which was in substance merely a condensation of Robertson's monograph, supervised by Robertson himself, I was astonished by his close acquaintance with all the minutiae of the literary and personal history of the old philosopher. Unfortunately that monograph was itself only the condensation of knowledge acquired with a view to his larger work. He was obliged to abandon the original scheme by the first appearance of a cruel disease from which he was ever afterwards a sufferer. He had to submit to painful operations, which severely tried his strength. Though temporary relief might be obtained, he lived under the

constant fear of renewed attacks, and was forced to observe the strictest regulations for the sake of his health.

It was not surprising that his labours took up all his strength; but, on the contrary, surprising that he had the strength enough to do what he did. Seldom free from actual pain, or, at least, discomfort, and never free from harrowing anxiety as to future suffering, he struggled on, doing his duty with the old conscientious thoroughness. He was forced more than once to seek the help of colleagues and friends, always, I need not say, cheerfully given; but he did all that man could do with a really heroic patience. I have sat with him when he was ill in bed from the effects of a panful operation, and in his periods of comparative ease. He was always the same – cheerful, often in high spirits; delighting in talk of all kinds; keenly interested in all political and social questions, as well as in his more special studies, and yet by no means averse to mere harmless gossip; while always a most affectionate zeal on behalf of his personal friends, and of his own and his wife's relations.

A man so tormented might have been pardoned for occasional irritability. I will not say that Robertson never showed such a weakness, but I can say conscientiously that I have never known a man in perfect health and comfort who showed it less. On the very rare occasions in which a little friction occurred between him and some of his acquaintances, I was especially struck by his extreme anxiety to say and do nothing which was not absolutely necessary in self-defence, and to guard against being hurried into unfairness by any loss of temper or personal sensibility.

I shall never know a more just or fairer-minded man. I always looked forward with pleasure to an interview with him, sure to return on better terms with men and things, with quickened interest on important questions, and with the refreshing sense that I had been in contact with a man of vigorous understanding, and utterly incapable of any mean or unworthy prejudice.

During Robertson's severe trials, his wife's society had been an inestimable support. Of her, I will only say that she was a worthy companion in a heroic life, that she soothed his sorrows, shared all his interests, and did all that could be done to secure his happiness. Recent losses in her family and his own had inflicted wounds, taken with the usual courage. In the early part of the year, a heavier blow was to come. Mrs Robertson was pronounced to be suffering from a fatal disease, of which there had, indeed, for some time previously been ominous symptoms.

She died on 29th May last, patient and courageous to the end, having in her last illness made every possible arrangement for her husband's future life. Robertson bore the heaviest sorrow that can befall a man in a spirt of quiet heroism, of which, to speak fittingly, one should use the language rather of reverence than of admiration. He had resigned his editorship and his professorship, steps which his wife had seen to be

necessary. He did not, however, abandon his intellectual aspirations. He spent the summer with his relations, and had sufficient power of reaction to be planning employment for his remaining life.

I heard from him not long ago that he intended, upon returning to London, to get to work on Leibnitz, in whose philosophy he had long taken a special interest. But his constitution was more shattered than he knew. There was to be no more work for him. A slight chill brought on an illness which was too much for his remnant of strength. He died peacefully and painlessly on 20th September, within four months of his wife.

Robertson's friends know what he has been to them. They cannot hope fully to communicate that knowledge to others. But it seems to me hardly fitting that such a man should be taken from us without some attempt to put on record their sense of the noble qualities which are lost to the world.

Whatever the limits imposed upon him by the circumstances I have mentioned, few men, if any, have done so much in their generation to promote a serious study of philosophy in England. But those who knew him feel more strongly now the loss of a dear friend. No more true-hearted, affectionate, and modest nature has ever revealed itself to me; and if anything could raise my estimate of the quiet heroism with which he met overpowering troubles, it would be his apparently utter unconsciousness that he was displaying any unusual qualities in his protracted struggle against the most trying afflictions."

Main article by Alexander Bain in MIND : a Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy. Vol II, No 5, 1893.

ALEXANDER WEBSTER ROBERTSON

The life of Alexander Webster Robertson is described below in his obituary in the Aberdeen Daily Journal following his death on 14th November 1911. He was the last surviving member of the immediate family of Charles Robertson and Marjory Laing.

The deceased gentleman was a son of the late Mr Charles Robertson, merchant, Aberdeen, and a brother of the late Professor George Croom Robertson. He received his early education at the old Grammar School, and afterwards entered on a University career. He was student of exceptional brilliance (M.A. 1866), and gained prizes in English Literature, Greek, Logic, Moral Philosophy, Christian Evidences and Chemistry. Later he gained the Blackwell prize for an essay on "A comparison of the University systems of Scotland and Germany, with an appreciation of their respective merits". Soon after leaving the University he devoted himself specially to the study and practice of bibliography, and was for years assistant University Librarian at Marischal College. Early on he directed his attention to the growth of free libraries at mansion-houses throughout the north, and in connection with this class of work it is of interest to note that, at the command of Queen Victoria, he catalogued a very interesting private library at Balmoral Castle, and was engaged on the work at the time of her Majesty's death. By King Edward's orders, Mr Robertson completed the task and the catalogue was afterwards printed for private use. In 1875 he arranged and catalogued the valuable library, numbering about 5000 volumes, belonging to the late Lord Sempill of Craigievar. In 1880-81 he did similar work in connection with the Anderson Free Library, Woodside

and in 1881-82 was engaged by the Duke of Fife to select, arrange and catalogue his library at Duff House, numbering about 15,000 volumes.

In 1884, after the adoption by the citizens of the Public Libraries Act, Mr Robertson was appointed public librarian of Aberdeen, and from the first the wisdom of the selection made by the Library Committee was amply justified. Possessing ripe experience and an actual love for the work, the new librarian was a master of the necessary method to begin with. He was a member of the Library Association of the United Kingdom, and for several years in succession was elected a member of the Council Board. He had strenuous work to do at the outset, for the library had to be organised and arranged from the foundation. It was carried on in the Mechanics' Institute in Market Street until 1892, when the new buildings in the Viaduct were completed, and Mr Robertson was mainly responsible for determining the nature and extent of the accommodation required and fitting up the library. The result was a model establishment from the start. On his suggestion, the ingenious indicators were installed, and proved an immediate convenience to readers. He was mainly instrumental in securing for the library many valuable volumes, and in particular the extensive collections for Dr A. Cruickshank, Dr G. Edmund and his own distinguished brother, Professor Croom Robertson. When Mr Robertson retired from the librarianship in 1900 he left the library in a completely organised and efficient condition, with a stock of more than 50,000 volumes, carefully selected to meet the requirements of every class of the community. It ought also to be mentioned that by his careful and judicious management he had the pleasure, before he resigned, of seeing the library entirely free of the incubus of debt by which it had been burdened. On the occasion of his demitting office, the Public Library Committee unanimously adopted a special minute expressing indebtedness to him and high appreciation of his services to the library. Mr Robertson was an occasional writer, and he contributed two papers to the Aberdeen Philosophical Society. While resident in Banchory he took for long an active part in the work of the Liberal Association of the district.

Mr Robertson was one of a family of distinguished brothers, including the late Mr Charles Robertson, who was dux of the Grammar School in 1849, and after a distinguished career at college passed into the Indian Civil Service fifth on the list in 1856; Mr John Grant Robertson, who passed into the same service tenth on the list in 1861; and Professor Croom Robertson, the eminent scholar and thinker. It is of interest to note that the late Mr Charles Robertson was the principal founder of the Croom Robertson Fellowship in the Aberdeen University in memory of the professor. The fellowship is one of the most important in connection with the University.

Mr Robertson married a daughter of the late Provost Wood, Banff, by whom and a daughter he is survived.

Aberdeen Daily Journal

Alexander Robertson and his wife Eliza Wood, who married in Aberdeen on 21st August 1895. They had one child, a daughter, Dorothy Anne Robertson.

Alexander Robertson was Aberdeen's Public Librarian when the new library buildings on Rosemount Viaduct were opened on Tuesday 5th July 1892 in the presence of Mr Andrew Carnegie, Scottish-American millionaire and benefactor of libraries, his new Burgess ticket tied to his silk hat with a broad red ribbon. Mr Carnegie was called upon to address the gathering and to declare the library open. This he did congratulating Aberdeen on its forward thinking in providing a suitable home for its Public Library and declaring that Education and Free Libraries were the only guarantors of a peaceful, progressive and law-abiding society.

In the evening the Librarian Mr Robertson, provided two brakes so that all twelve of his staff could go for a drive up Deeside. On the way they stopped at Banchory House and gave three hearty cheers for Mr and Mrs Carnegie, who were staying there as guests of Lord Provost Stuart, en-route for their summer residence at Loch Rannoch.

Prior to the opening Mr Robertson had prepared a Manual, which contained plans of all three floors with details of the facilities in each Department. Over 10,000 copies were distributed gratis among the citizens and other interested parties, the cost of the whole being "defrayed by means of advertisements issued with the text".

From 1884 to 1899 Aberdeen's Librarian was Alexander W. Robertson, the son of an Aberdeen merchant and an Honours Graduate in Classics at Aberdeen University.

Several ambitious young men, trained by Mr Robertson, went on to become Chief Librarians in other towns in Scotland and England.

To the consternation of the Library Committee, Mr Robertson tendered his resignation in November 1899. He was only 52 years old but wished to devote his time to study.

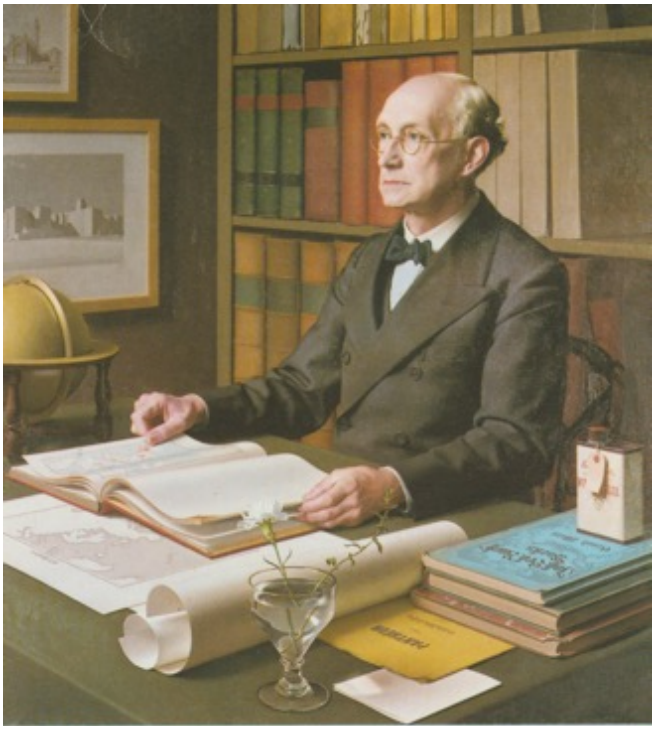
THE OTHER ROBERTSON BROTHERS

Peter Robertson, the second son, died in Aberdeen aged 17 in 1853, having attended the Grammar School from 1849-51.

William Robertson, the third son, was a Chief Engineer with P&O and died in Aberdeen in 1908, aged 69. On 13th August 1872, aged 34, he married Mary Menzies Anderson, aged 21, with whom he had 3 sons and 2 daughters, and then 8 grandchildren, all Robertsons.

Henry Robertson, the 7th son, died in 1886, aged 33. He married Eva Christine Joss in London. They had two sons, both Robertsons.

SIR CHARLES GRANT ROBERTSON



This portrait of Sir Charles Grant Robertson is now on display in the Modern Portraits Gallery of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. The globe in the background of the picture and the map of Europe and the atlas under Sir Charles's hands are reminders of the atlases he produced of the British Empire and Modern Europe; while the carnation in

the wineglass and the tin of weedkiller standing on some books of music, including a Bach Mass, draw attention to Sir Charles' hobbies of gardening and music.

On the 3rd of June 1937 he attended the wedding in Aberdeen of Marjorie Mary Watt, daughter of Lord Provost Edward Watt, and Hamish Grant Gordon Robertson in the unusual position of being both an uncle of the groom and a cousin of the bride's father. It is not known on which side of the aisle he sat.

The following account of Grant Robertson's life comes from the University of Birmingham Historical Journal.

I first met Charles Grant Robertson across the examiner's table. I was the victim. There were two other examiners at my viva, but Grant Robertson asked nearly all the questions and (to my great relief) himself answered most of them before I could get in a word. This was typical of him. It was also typical that I went away both chastened and inspired by his running commentary on my thesis, and feeling that, had the examiners given me the doubtful privilege of re-writing it (which, mercifully, they did not), I should have profited mightily by his criticisms. I formed the opinion then, which many people have since confirmed, that he must have been a superlatively good history tutor during his period of nearly thirty years as an Oxford don, before he turned in 1920 to be the extremely effective administrator of a sprawling provincial university.

Many who subsequently achieved eminence as an academic or in public life came under the tutelage of Grant Robertson at Oxford, and though a tutorial hour or a consultation with him rather tended to take the shape of a monologue, nobody complained about this, for he was as well as a great talker, incisive and constructive, and anything but a bore. He was a Fellow of All Souls College for nearly fifty-five years, but only the least tolerant members of that Society of intense individualists ever resented the extent of his contributions to conversation at Table or in Common Room, although it made him the occasional target of academic wit.

Two junior dons, for instance, were passing by All Souls on their return to their respective Colleges after a festive evening. An intermittent rumbling sound emerged from a grating in the College wall (here a new heating plant or similar piece of apparatus had recently been installed). "What's that?" exclaimed the one. "Oh!" replied his companion, speaking very deliberately, "Only Grant Robertson – thinking".

Grant Robertson's reputation as a talker preceded him to Birmingham, where he proceeded to enhance it, despite some formidable competition, for this was the Birmingham of Ernest de Selincourt, of William Ashby, of Granville Bantock, of Gilbert Barling, of John Henry Lloyd and other giants of those days. "An intimate acquaintance" in Birmingham is quoted (by Vincent and Hinton in their "The University of Birmingham – its History and Significance," published in 1947) as alleging that "His critics say he talks

too long and too much, though they have to admit that he is never dull. One suspects that their criticism, for which there is some justification, is coloured by a tinge of jealousy."

Vincent and Hinton add, also with justification, that "His range of interest was wide. History, economics, law, geography, literature, modern languages (in which he read French, German and Italian easily) as well as Greek and Latin, came within his orbit, and he was keenly interested in painting and music." His impact upon the scholars and businessmen of the hard-boiled but by no means philistine Birmingham of the nineteen-twenties was considerable. He was prepared to lecture at short notice on Civic Art, on Citizenship, on the Celtic Revival, on Religion and the Totalitarian State and many other equally diverse topics.

When I called on him upon my arrival to take up my appointment as Reader in Modern History at the University of Birmingham, he talked to me for half an hour principally about Birmingham's water supply, its excellence and (if you lived in the right part of the city) the softness, and kindliness to shavers of the water. He explained to me at length exactly why this was. He went into chemical analysis and municipal politics. He did not, on that occasion, mention either the Department of History or, indeed, the University, at all: I departed from this interview with my mind broadened, but somewhat dazed. It was not long afterwards that I evolved the technique of sending to my Vice-Chancellor a brief memorandum of the points I needed to discuss with him whenever I asked for an interview, to ensure that he would get round to these points when we met. This technique worked very well, but in the meantime I had acquired from him an encyclopaedia of information comparable only to what the Walrus imparted to the Carpenter.

It was said in Birmingham that, when in full voice, Charles Grant Robertson could be halted by one person only, and that was his mother. This remarkable lady, who lived with him in Birmingham to the great age of ninety-three, vigorous and clear-minded to the last, would break in on him with "Now Charles, you've talked enough!" and in the pause that followed would start to draw out the hitherto silent guest or guests. She exercised a marked influence on him and he consulted her on all matters of importance.

"She had," writes her daughter, "a very strong but gentle personality. She was deeply interested in education and felt that that it was of the greatest importance to give her children the best that she could find. In many ways she was in advance of her time. She had a great love of literature and was a gifted writer in her younger days." A daughter of the manse, she spent all her early years in the western Highlands, residing on the island of Eigg, off the coast of Skye, her father being "Minister of the Small Isles".

She went out to India to marry, her husband (who was also a Scot) being in the Bengal Civil Service. He died there at an early age, leaving her with three small children, of

whom Charles was the second. She is remembered with affection and respect by all who knew her in Oxford and in Birmingham and her son owed much to her. She died on 26th December 1939.

He was sent by his mother to Highgate School, and from there he went to Hertford College, Oxford, with an open Scholarship. As an undergraduate he rowed for his College. His academic career was brilliant and honours and recognition came quickly. He won the Stanhope Prize in 1891 with a first in literae humaniories in 1892 and another in Modern History in the following year, he was elected to the Fellowship of All Souls in 1893, remaining a Fellow for the rest of his life.

He was appointed a Tutor in Modern History at Exeter College in 1895 and was Senior Tutor in Modern History at Magdalen College from 1905 to 1920. He was Junior Proctor and became a member of the Hebdomadal Council. He was active in organising and running the School for Officers at Oxford toward the end of the first World War. He thus played a prominent part in the community life both of Oxford University as a whole and several of its most important Colleges during his thirty years as a don.

He served as Domestic Bursar of All Souls from 1897 to 1920, and after his retirement from Birmingham again consented to act as Domestic Bursar in 1939, when his fellow historian, E.L. Woodward, went into the Foreign Office at the outbreak of war. Grant Robertson served in this capacity throughout the difficult wartime period of scarcities, introducing a regime of rigorous austerity on the Fellows and the guests they were permitted to entertain at strictly-rationed intervals, and he finally handed over the office to yet another historian E.F Jacob, who returned from Manchester to All Souls in 1945.

Deeply as Birmingham is indebted to Sir Charles Grant Robertson, and conscious as it is of the indelible mark his eighteen years as Principal left upon the University, his first and last love was undoubtedly Oxford. He wrote a "History of All Souls College" (1899) in the College Histories series. He was steeped in the traditions of Oxford and its life was his life. Yet there was nothing cloistered about him; for he added to all this his tastes and the experience of a man of the world. He travelled widely in his younger days, and pursued a successful clandestine career as a novelist, under the pseudonym of "Wymond Carey" in the midst of writing his more serious and academic historical works.

Unlike many of his contemporaries at Oxford, Grant Robertson always kept abreast of the times. He did not remain the "typical late-Victorian or Edwardian or even neo-Georgian don. His interests were as wide at seventy as they had ever been, and were, indeed, expanding all the time. In 1932 he acted as chairman of a National Cinema Enquiry Committee, and his acceptance of film as a serious and important new medium of dramatic expression, popular entertainment and public influence, came early. All his life he had been drawn to everything that had to do with the theatre.

He never married, but he was anything but a misogynist. Indeed, in his early days at Oxford he had something of a reputation as a ladies' man, enhanced (or even, perhaps, engendered) by the somewhat Schnitzleresque tone and content of the series of dialogues and sketches of Oxford life which he contributed to The Oxford Magazine and The Westminster Gazette during the nineties, and which were collected together into a little volume entitled "Voces Academicae" (published in 1898 with a delightful frontispiece drawn by his sister Isobel, now Mrs Nevill).

In "Voces Aacdemicae" he poked fun at bookworms and hearties, bluestockings and chaperones, and was decidedly not on the side of either the angels (unless they turned up in the dialogues as "U.P.Cs" – Undergraduates' Pretty Cousins) or of the Proctors. It was perhaps with the mild wickedness of "Voces Academicae" in mind that a "V>P>F>D" (Very Proper Female Don) – as he would have called her – when admonishing her charges always to visit the male dons in pairs when seeking their advice or guidance, is alleged to have added: "but in the case of Mr Charles Grant Robertson, you had better go in threes!"

It was singularly appropriate that this wise and by no means unworldly don should have been assigned to Edward, Prince of Wales (now Duke of Windsor), as history tutor when the latter went up to Oxford in October 1912. The Prince regarded Sir Herbert Warren, the president of Magdalen, where he was in residence, as both a snob and a bore, and (in some recently published reminiscences) says that "The famous Rev. Lancelot Ridley Phelps, later Provost of Oriel College, talked to me voluminously and no doubt from vast erudition on political economy, while pressing on me the dullest books ever written," but he appears to have got along very well with Grant Robertson and asked to be allowed more time with him.

From him, the Duke records succinctly, "I acquired some grounding in Napoleonic history", but Grant Robertson himself used to tell of the occasion (it was in November 1913) when the then Prince of Wales was summoned at short notice to Windsor to meet the Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary, who was paying an official visit. The Prince resented this interruption during term to his beagling, his dinners at the Bullingdon Club and other Oxford activities, and he exclaimed to his history tutor "Who is this chap, anyway?" Refusing to accept this as a purely rhetorical question, Grant Robertson took down the appropriate genealogical tables and treated the Prince to a disquisition upon exactly who the Archduke was, and how this had come about, to all of which the heir to the throne replied only with a faintly disguised yawn, and departed for Windsor in anything but good humour. But things turned out better that he had expected, for the "Archduke was a wonderful wing-shot, and, at Windsor, standing beside my father. I watched him pulldown the pheasants down out of the sky…"

The honour of CVO was conferred upon Grant Robertson in 1914, when the Prince of Wales went down from Oxford, an Oxford to which he and most of his fellow

undergraduates – for reasons not entirely unconnected with the fate of that same "chap" – would not be returning.

Grant Robertson, who was already over military age in 1914, remained at Oxford throughout the war, and when Sir Oliver Lodge, the first Principal of the University of Birmingham, retired in 1919, was appointed as his successor. He was just turned fifty and was at the height of his reputation as a don and as an historian. He took up his duties in Birmingham in 1920, but it was not until 1927 that the offices of Principal and Vice-Chancellor were combined and he became Vice-Chancellor as well, In 1928 he was knighted.

A distinguished historian, succeeding a distinguished scientist, he tried to strengthen Birmingham on the side of the humanities without at the same time exhibiting any bias against the greatest possible further development of the University in the pure and applied sciences, and in medicine. He was particularly zealous in increasing the size and scope of the University library; he founded a Joint Standing Committee on Research; he as a leading figure in the negotiations with Lady Barber which led to the setting up of the Barber Trust and the foundation of the Barber Chair and Institute of Fine Art at Birmingham.

Above all, he was chairman of the Executive Board which brought into existence the new Birmingham Hospitals Centre adjoining the University buildings at Edgbaston, with the University Medical School, removed from its old cramped quarters at Mason College in Edmund and Great Charles Streets, as an integral part of it. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the new Medical School were opened in the summer of 1938, just as Grant Robertson retired after completing eighteen years of office at Birmingham, and the Barber Institute was completed less than a year later. It was singularly fortunate for Birmingham, and largely due to the drive and the negotiating and administrative skill of Grant Robertson, that these two important projects were carried through before the outbreak of war in September 1939 brought an end to all similar building schemes for a long time to come.

Much more could be written concerning Grant Robertson at Birmingham and of his able and effective representation of the University on the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the British Universities, of which he acted for several years as chairman, but in an Historical Journal it is perhaps most fitting that special attention should be paid to his status as an historian and to his historical writings – the most important of which were completed before he went to Birmingham in 1920.

It was not until his final retirement in 1945 from all active office that he produced any important new contributions to historical scholarship. His little book on "Lord Chatham and the British Empire" appeared in 1946, and his article entitled "The Imperial Problem in North America in the Eighteenth Century" written in 1947 was published in March

1948, a few weeks after his death. In both he sought, with all his customary lucidity and skill, to evaluate the results of recent historical research and the various "new views", that had been propounded on both sides of the Atlantic since he first published his "England under the Hanoverians" in 1911.

As far as can be ascertained Grant Robertson's first historical publication was his Stanhope Prize Essay on "Cesare Borgia" (1891). This was a spirited if somewhat derivative attempt to give Cesare his just historical due. Next came "The Rise of the English Nation (B.C. 55-1135 A.D.), published in 1894 as the first volume in "The Oxford Manuals of English History," edited by C.W.C.Oman. His only incursion into purely medieval history, it made no claim to be based upon original research, but was a short workmanlike summary, and was to be used with appreciation and profit by generations of students.

His "History of All Souls College" (1899), appearing almost at the same time as his "Voce Academicae" in lighter vein, was a much more substantial work, and exhibited to the full his attitude toward Oxford's traditions and history – a deep veneration for all that was worthwhile, tempered by the ability to laugh at eccentricities and to pillory excesses, whether of religious zeal or of worldliness, in architecture or in academic discipline. The carefully-chosen and very effective illustrations to this book showed Grant Robertson's regard and feeling for visual presentation.

Grant Robertson's reputation as an historian should and must rest primarily upon the series of important books he published in the twenty years between 1899 and 1918, beginning with the "History of All Souls College" and ending with the "Life of Bismarck". Several of these were works of collaboration, for he found it easy to work with other people and was himself very easy and stimulating to work with. The jointly written "The Evolution of Prussia"(1915), perhaps owes its best qualities to Grant Robertson, with his special knowledge of German history.

But it is inferior in style and incisiveness of judgment to "Bismarck" (1918), which is, in many ways, Grant Robertson's best book. Written and published during the war of 1914-18 it is a strictly fair and impartial study, comparing very favourably from this point of view with the sort of thing that leading German historians were producing at that same time – for instance, Friedrich Meinecke's lamentable "Die Deutsche Erhebung"(1914), which the latter may be said not to have lived down until he published his "Die Deutsche Katastrophe" (1946) in his old age.

Grant Robertson's "Historical Geography of the British Empire"(1905) and his "Historical Geography of Modern Europe"(1915), produced in collaboration with the cartographer J.G.Bartholomew, were also most timely and of great use to students, including the many people then newly taking a serious interest in modern history and foreign affairs

under the double stimulus of educational reforms and growing international tension. Grant Robertson was a pioneer in the then neglected field of historical geography.

His most successful contribution to historical studies from a publishing point of view was by no means his best book. This was "Select Cases and Documents to illustrate English Constitutional History," 1660-1831 (1904). Students of modern British institutions have many reasons to be thankful for this compendium of, and commentary upon, a large number of otherwise not very accessible documents, though it has been criticised for not being as clear as it might have been on such complicated matters as "General warrants", and it is undoubtedly true that Grant Robertson was more at home with the problems of political and diplomatic than of constitutional history.

From his earliest published writing in "Cesare Borgia" to his last article over fifty-five years later, Grant Robertson maintained a high level of quality as an historical craftsman, with an arresting turn of phrase and a gift for incisive and balanced judgement. He never failed to be readable, which can hardly be said of several of his contemporaries, He chose to be miscellaneous in his historical writing because he was interested in so many different things – Medieval England and Renaissance Italy, eighteenth century Britain and nineteenth century Germany, historical geography and constitutional documents, not to mention his history of All Souls College and "A Short History of Birmingham".

Outside the historical field his range as scholar was equally catholic. He spoke or wrote, among other things, on "Civic Art and the British Universities" and "Religion and the Totalitarian State". He lent his services early to the campaign for information and argument aiming to open the eyes of the British public to the evils and menace of National Socialism, contributing a pamphlet (on the Nazi Conception of History) to the "Friends of Europe" series and playing a leading part in persuading the British Universities, as a body, to boycott the Nazi-run celebration of the five hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the University of Heidelberg. He was staunchly critical of the policy leading to the Munich Settlement in an All Souls Common Room split from top to bottom by these events – in which several eminent Fellows of the College had played leading parts.

His four novels are now forgotten, as is the name Wymond Carey, under which he wrote them, but at least one of his historical romances, "The 101" (a story of intrigue and espionage at the Court of Louis XIV) had a considerable sale. The other two, "Monsieur M," about Sweden and Europe in the troubled days of Charles XII, and "For the White Rose" (a tale of Jacobites and Hanoverians between the '15 and the '45) are stirringly written and still very readable. He was less successful with his one attempt at a "modern" novel. Entitled "Love the Judge", this essayed the saga of a turn-of-the-century international financier and his lady friends in a manner faintly reminiscent of the Grand Babylon period of Arnold Bennett, and is rather heavy going. It lacks the sparkle of

"Voces Academicae" and the colour of "101" or of "Monsieur M". It made no ascertainable impact upon the Edwardian reading public.

Had Grant Robertson written less and researched more he might have produced fewer but rather more authoritative works, within a much smaller range, than he did. Advanced historical scholarship would perhaps have gained by this, but the ordinary students of history, the sixth-former, the undergraduate, the W.E.A. classman, the schoolteacher and the busy journalist and politician, would have been the losers. There is always room for the trained scholar who can popularise without vulgarising history, alongside the meticulous investigator who produces nothing but the fruits of his own basic research, and Charles Grant Robertson belonged definitely to the former class. In that class he stood high.

J.A.H., University of Birmingham Historical Journal, Vol 1, No 1, 1947

GEORGE ROBERTSON WATT

George Robertson Watt was the brightest of Marjorie Watt's three sons, as Dux of his class at the Grammar School and First Bursar in the University of Aberdeen Bursary Competition. His studies were interrupted, however, by bouts of a debilitating illness, most probably depression, so that he did not complete his studies at Aberdeen and graduated BA from Cambridge several years later in 1906. The account below was written by a colleague at Cambridge.

On the 11th of June 1908, George Robertson Watt (B.A. 1905) died at Darjeeling after a few days' illness. He came up to Emmanuel in January 1903, partly in the hope that change of air and scene might do something to restore his health, which had broken down several years before in the middle of what promised to be a brilliant career at Aberdeen University. Though it was necessary for him not to exert himself greatly, he

was able to take the Classical Tripos, Part I, in 1905, just missing a first class. He took up archaeology for Part II. And, though he was unable to be in Cambridge during the Lent term of 1906, obtained the only first class awarded in the subject that year. Soon after he was appointed Lecturer in Greek and Ancient History at Aberdeen University. He proved a successful and popular teacher, and early in 1908 was appointed Professor of English and Philosophy in the Presidency College, Calcutta. He was drawn to this work chiefly by the thought that the post would give him opportunities of influence in connection with native education, and sailed for India with high hopes in April ,1908. The doctors had assured him that there was no reason why his health should not be as good in India as at home. But the event proved otherwise; he collapsed almost as soon as he set foot in India and was never able to begin what he hoped would be his life's work. Watt was a man of much personal charm, of singularly simple and modest character, and of great abilities which, owing to his health, never obtained a fair field.

Emmanuel College Magazine, Vol XIX

After the long voyage to India, he arrived at Calcutta in late May 1908, to be met by John Horne, an Aberdeen Grammar School FP who had offered help in settling in. George's health broke down almost immediately, however, and he was transferred to the Eden Sanatorium in Darjeeling, possibly to escape the heat of Calcutta. On 11th June he was found dead with his throat cut. A headstone was erected in his memory later that year and photographed for the family some years later. His possessions were returned to Edward Watt in Aberdeen. His name was also added to William Watt's headstone in Allenvale Cemetery.

DONALD ELMSLIE ROBERTSON WATT

Donald Elmslie Robertson Watt, born on the 15th of August 1926, was the youngest grandchild of Marjorie and William Watt. The appreciation below was written by his St Andrews University colleague Barbara Crawford.

Donald Elmslie Robertson Watt was a giant among contemporary 20th century Scottish historians – the giant on whose shoulders we all stand in order to see further and understand better the small corner of Scottish history in which each of us labour.

For his amazing contribution to the study of Scottish medieval history was to order and classify the raw historical evidence into lists and biographies and categories and make these available for others to use.

I am not sure if he did this from a sense of altruism and duty because there was a very great need for such source materials to be made available. Or whether he did it because he enjoyed doing it. I never asked him, and if I had I do not think I would have received a very satisfactory answer. More probably one of Donald's flippant – or arch-responses which hid his own deepest personal feelings never revealing his inner motivations to the impertinent questioner.

The true answer was probably that he did it because he was good at it. For his merit was evident from the beginning of his education. He was Prizeman at Aberdeen Grammar School, then graduated with First Class Honours from Aberdeen University (after an interruption of three years while he served in the RAF), finally moving on to Oriel College, Oxford as a Carnegie Research Scholar. The thesis he wrote at Oxford was entitled "Scotsmen at Universities between 1340 and 1410 and their subsequent careers; a study of the contribution of graduates to the public life of their country", which was awarded the Hume Brown Senior Prize by the University of Edinburgh.

And there we have the seed corn of what grew and flourished over the next 50 years – the fascination with historical figures of the past, educated people who became the leaders of society, and who had had to move furth of Scotland in order to receive their University education – many of them to Oxford, where Donald himself had gone.

He moved back to Scotland, as most of his medieval clerks had done, and spent the whole of his academic teaching career here at St Andrews and was one of the founding members of the Department of Medieval History. But I do not intend to go into the full details of that academic career, as I am sure that will be done on another occasion. I wish to simply talk a little about his lasting impact in the field of Scottish medieval studies and his personal impact on us all here who knew him so well in many different ways.

The doctoral thesis was published as the "Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Graduates to 1410" – complete biographies, as complete as the sparse sources of the period would allow – of some 1100 Scots whose careers were central to an understanding of the history of this country in the Middle Ages. Few published history theses can have provided such a resource for future researchers to refer to – and all done of course in a pre-computer age.

Reference works and bibliographical studies continued to be Donald's chief published product, all of them as a result of indefatigable collection and cataloguing of documentary information, from printed or unprinted sources in the Vatican and many other European archives and libraries.

His "Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae Medii Aevi" is a compilation of the higher positions in the dioceses of the medieval Scottish church, listing the holders of the senior offices and every recorded piece of evidence pertaining to their official activities. It was first issued as a working draft, then 10 years later in 1969 was re-issued with all the myriad corrections, additions and emendations incorporated from many different sources and correspondents. A third edition, expanded from 385 to 503 pages, came out last year.

This sort of compilation is achieved only with collaboration and Donald's collaborative projects formed another whole industrial enterprise, resulting firstly in the production of the indispensable "An Historical Atlas of Scotland from c.400-1600", edited by a team of Scottish Medievalists, which took many, many years to bring to fruition. Donald managed the finances of that project with patience and good humour, and many of us here will remember the annual reports which he presented to the Scottish Medievalists Conference detailing in his inimitable style the labours undertaken and the frustrations which the editors experience in bringing this complex project to publication – and its succeeding revised edition.

But of course the most remarkable of Donald's scholarly achievements, and most triumphant result of his organisational talents was the new edition and translation of Walter Bower's Scotichronicon, the highly important medieval Chronicle of Scottish history, written in Fife in the 1440s and previously edited in Latin in 1759. As Directing Editor of the enterprise Donald cajoled 7 contributory editors into helping him with this truly daunting task. He retired early in order to undertake the co-ordination, standardisation and financing of the publication of 9 volumes between 1993 and 1998 followed by a 10th volume of his own selection of excerpts from the text – which became a best seller, not often achieved by translations of medieval chronicles.

Very few individual historians could match up to the exemplary editorial achievement, requiring not only utter dedication to the task, and scholarly exactitude and rigour, but a remarkable exercise in human relations management. I don't think that he fell out with any of his editorial team, at least I never heard that he did. To initiate and take on such a

project (which would make most historians quail at the thought), to have the vision to see how such a project could be carried through, to be able to organise a team and maintain impetus to completion, and to have the charm and persistence to raise the funds required for publication (from such bodies as the Keepers of the Quaich no less) is an astounding achievement, which Scotland in time will learn to fully appreciate, and for which the University of Glasgow did show its appreciation by awarding him the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters in June 2000.

So Donald was no reclusive scholar -although one of my favourite images is of him sitting at his desk in his upstairs study at home, quite visible to one driving down Hepburn Gardens into town. At all hours of the day or night, he could be seen there illuminated by lamplight or the setting sun, an icon of studious scholarship. But the cooperative projects reveal how effective he was at networking. And the most effective net was the Society of Scottish Medievalists of which he was a founder member in 1957 – well actually they called themselves the younger Scottish Medievalists at that time, although the younger was quietly dropped after some years.

This was the group which produced the Historical Atlas and many other collaborative projects in which Donald participated, and he missed very few of their Annual New Year meetings between 1957 and 2003. I was privileged to drive with him many times to Pitlochry and home again, enjoying his conversations, and his delight in communicating about the historical projects of the moment, teaching, publications, or the more scurrilous aspects of the Scottish historical scene.

On one such occasion – thinking no doubt about historical matters too much – I was caught speeding, entering Abernethy, from the west, where the fast road suddenly becomes a 30 mph zone and the police car lurked in Castle Law Drive. Well, I had to go through all the usual procedure of sitting in the police car and being breathalysed and I just gritted my teeth and let them get on with it to escape from the situation as fast as one can. When I returned to my car, Donald was sitting impassively there, and said to me as I got back in, grinding my teeth: "Ah well. These things will happen" – which is almost as profound a comment as you can make on these occasions, but perhaps the most judicious.

Indeed such imperturbability was one of Donald's most memorable characteristics. The storm may have raged about him but Donald remained composed, equable, always prepared, never caught short. In modern parlance he didn't lose his cool, and this was so even in the sometimes fraught atmosphere or hurly-burly of the University Senate, Faculty or Departmental meetings. In all of which he participated and contributed inimicably in his measured way, promoting the moderate and reasonable, and fully reasoned policies.

Perhaps this rare personal quality was due to his sense of proportion. The utter commitment to his scholarly profession never dominated to the exclusion of more precious priorities, for Donald knew what the important things in life are all about. His family and his home were his top priority, and the enjoyment of country and culture were his relaxation. Walking in his beloved Highlands, singing in the church choir, or dancing in the Highland Balls, (in the enjoyment of which we were privileged to share) in those ballrooms of Highland Victoriana at Blair Atholl and Taymouth Castle.

He was the most wonderful Highland dancer. This is another vignette which I will treasure – Donald in his plum velvet doublet and lace jabot dancing the reels with that sprung and buoyancy which Scotsmen innately seem to possess, and which leaves a galumphing Yorkshire tyke like me gasping in admiration.

This participation in Perthshire Balls was part of the country life at Drumcroy, the cottage near Trinafour, which Donald and Helen bought in 1972 and where they found refreshment and time to enjoy more practical aspects of life together like growing vegetables or decorating the cottage – or indeed fighting off the bulls and the cows.

At Easter they had a last walk together to a nearby stream and favourite sheltered spot called the Eye of the Wind. And that seems to me to be so appropriate a place for a man who was an oasis of calm at the centre of the storms of life.

Donald was my teacher, my colleague and my friend for over 40 years – and he was the same in all those relationships. He never wavered or fluctuated. He remained always reliable, always unchanging, in a changing world, always upright: and a third image in my mind (which you will all share) is the upright figure on the red bicycle making his way with dignity and panache – and the wave of the hand – through the town back home for lunch and the afternoon's batch of collating, transcribing and editing, through all seasons of the year.

He was indeed a Man for all Seasons and he will be very much missed. But his name will live among other luminaries in the annals of Scottish medieval history.

Barbara Crawford, 26th April 2004

HAMISH GRANT GORDON ROBERTSON

Hamish Robertson was the grandson of John Grant Robertson and nephew of Sir Charles Grant Robertson.

After qualifying in medicine in London, he joined the RAMC and served for several years in India. In 1937 he married Marjorie Mary Watt, the eldest daughter of Edward William Watt, Lord Provost of Aberdeen (See Wedding of the Lord Provost's Daughter).

Marjorie had begun studying medicine at Aberdeen University but gave it up and worked instead as a nurse at St Thomas Hospital in London.

They were second cousins, sharing Charles Robertson and Marjory Laing as great grandparents. Hamish's father was J.H. Robertson of the Indian Civil Service.

In 1939 he was posted to Hong Kong and went out there with Marjorie and their daughter Phoebe. He was a prisoner in Japanese hands from Christmas Day 1941 until the liberation in 1945. Marjorie and Phoebe were evacuated to Australia in 1940 and returned to Scotland in 1942.

On his return to the UK, Lt. Col. Robertson served in Ireland and in Edinburgh before being posted to the British zone in Berlin. He was later transferred to Hamburg, where he died in 1949 from bowel cancer.

Marjorie and Hamish Robertson

ROBERTSON FAMILY NAMES

William Watt of Aberdeen had ten grandchildren with the Watt surname via his sons Edward, who had three daughters and one son, and Theodore, who had five sons and one daughter.

7 grandchildren had Robertson as their second middle name, in memory of their grandmother Marjorie Mary Watson Robertson, the second of William Watt's four wives, and the only marriage to give him adult children. Neither William nor Marjorie lived long enough to know any of their grandchildren.

Theodore's children were :-

George Theodore Robertson Watt, born 24.11.12, died 27.4.41, aged 28
Dorothy Mabel Robertson Watt, born 3.4.16, died 9.8.97, aged 81
Ian Crombie Robertson Watt, born 13.3.18, died 4.4.18, aged 22 days
Alan Crombie Robertson Watt, born 22.9.19, died 15.3.89, aged 69
Harold Murray Robertson Watt, born 12.6.21, died 8.12.03, aged 82
Donald Elmslie Robertson Watt, born 15.8.26, died 18.4.04, aged 77

Edward's children were

Edward William Murray Watt, born 24.3.13, died 20.11.80, aged 67
Marjorie Mary Watt, born 27.3.15, died 18.7.73, aged 58
Alice Crombie Watt, born 5.9.20, died 14.6.95, aged 74
Elizabeth (Betty) Margaret Robertson Watt, born 12.4.23, died 24.12.12, aged 89.

In contrast, only two grandchildren had middle names after their maternal grandfather, George Murray, while three had middle names after their maternal grandmother, Mary Ann Crombie

On 3rd June 1937, William Watt's granddaughter, Marjorie Mary Watt, the eldest daughter of Edward William Watt, became Marjorie Mary Robertson by marrying her distant cousin, Hamish Gordon Grant Robertson. Marjorie's grandmother, Marjorie, and Hamish's grandfather, John Grant Robertson, were siblings.

In the next generation, Marjorie and Hamish's daughter Phoebe Helen Gordon Robertson, born on 4th May 1938 is the last surviving member of the family to have had the Robertson surname, until marrying Martin Christie in 1961.

Three of the next (fourth) generation had Robertson middle names.

Alice Crombie Watt, granddaughter of William Watt and middle daughter of Edward William Watt, married Alexander Robertson Taylor and gave the Robertson middle name to two of their four children, Rosemary Celia Robertson Taylor and Graham Michael Robertson Taylor. Theodore's second son, Alan Crombie Robertson Watt, named his daughter Alison Anne Robertson Watt.

Four of this generation have Murray as a middle name, and Murray is the only grandparent name to feature in the fifth generation, perhaps as a result of Edward William Murray Watt using Murray as his first name.

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