

**LORD LEXDEN OF LEXDEN IN THE COUNTY OF ESSEX AND OF STRANGFORD  
IN THE COUNTY OF DOWN - ALISTAIR BASIL COOKE OBE (K55-63)**

Born on 20 April 1945 in Colchester, Essex, he is a political historian who has spent most of his career in the central organisation of the Conservative Party. A graduate of Peterhouse, Cambridge, he taught and researched modern British and Irish history at Queen's University, Belfast.

He spent most of his career (1977-97) as a senior official in the central organisation of the Conservative Party. He was political adviser to Airey Neave, the Party's Spokesman on Northern Ireland, from 1977 to 1979, developing a commitment to the maintenance of the Province's union with Great Britain which led in later years to a number of publications, some of them under the aegis of the organisation Friends of the Union, established by Ian Gow, of which he became chairman. He spoke frequently at meetings in Britain and Northern Ireland in the 1990s in defence of moderate unionism. It remains among his principal political interests. He has been chairman of a small charity, which makes grants to disabled former members of the security forces. He is president of the Northern Ireland Schools Debating Competition, and has recently expanded its activities by instituting an annual essay prize.



Alistair Cooke was Deputy Director of the Conservative Research Department (CRD) from 1985 to 1997 with responsibility for its day-to-day work and the practical fulfilment of its strategic objectives. Before and during general election campaigns he had full charge of the briefing material supplied to candidates, equipping them with detailed information about the Party's policies and manifesto commitments. From 1988 to 1997 he was also Director of the Conservative Political Centre (CPC), established by Rab Butler, to enable members of the Party at large to participate, through a nationwide discussion programme, in the making of Party policy. For this purpose he was assisted by a small dedicated team in the production of discussion papers, the organisation of seminars, lectures and residential courses, and the publication of pamphlets, which he edited in addition to the CRD's substantial output of publications. He will shortly become chairman of the CPC's successor body, the Conservative Policy Forum.

He was awarded his OBE on 31 December 1987 for political service.

Between 1997 and 2004 he was General Secretary of the Independent Schools Council. He acted as their principal representative in discussions with government ministers and officials, and oversaw the Council's briefing of the media on issues relating to independent schools. He chaired a committee of senior head teachers and education experts which led to the creation of the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), which now inspects ISC-member schools on terms agreed with government. He negotiated arrangements for the introduction of a new system of teacher induction in independent schools, following legislation by the last government. He secured acceptance of the case for the retention of charitable status by independent schools in detailed talks with Tony Blair's No 10 Strategy Unit, which preceded controversial legislation after he had left the ISC. His experiences made him a vigorous advocate of both the need for closer partnership between state and independent schools, and of changes in the state system to enable its schools to conduct their affairs more independently. He is a strong supporter of this government's education reforms.

He is now a consultant to the Conservative Research Department and editor of its written work. He has written quite extensively (though by no means exclusively) about the history of the Conservative Party, and edited a vast amount of material - manifestos, policy documents, pamphlets and seven volumes in the Research Department's series of Campaign Guides - for the Party over the last twenty-five years.

He launched his most recent book, *A Gift from the Churchills: The Primrose League 1883-2004*, at the Carlton Club at the end of July 2010. He published *Tory Policy-Making: The Conservative Research Department 1929-2009* in November 2009. He is the author of *A Party of Change: A Brief History of the Conservatives* and *Tory Heroine: Dorothy Brant and the Rise of Conservative Women*, both of which were published in 2008. They followed



a history of the Carlton Club (2007) which led to his appointment as the Club's official historian and archivist. He is historical consultant to the Conservative Party Archive.

He has reviewed history books for *The Daily Telegraph*, for the Northern Ireland magazine *Fortnight*, and for academic journals. He is an obituarist for *The Times*, and a regular contributor to its letters page where he has appeared some 100 times in the last twenty years; he has had a similar number of letters published in *The Daily Telegraph* for which he has reviewed history books. He is also a contributor to *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

On 19 November 2010 it was announced that he had been made a Conservative Life Peer in recognition for his career in education, authorship and politics. He becomes only 3rd OF to be awarded a peerage. From 10 January 2011 he will be known as Lord Lexden, of Lexden in the county of Essex and of Strangford in the county of Down.

He lives in a large library in Pimlico, London surrounded by royal and political memorabilia.

### **His publications include :**

#### **As Author**

- A Gift from the Churchills: The Primrose League 1883-2004 (July 2010)
- Tory Policy-Making: The Conservative Research Department 1929 - 2009
- The Carlton Club 1832-2007 (with Sir Charles Petrie)
- The Governing Passion: Cabinet Government and Party Politics in Britain 1885-86 (1974 with John Vincent) - a detailed study of the first Irish Home Rule crisis
- Making Unionism Positive (with others)
- A Party of Change: A Brief History of the Conservatives; forward by David Cameron (2008)
- Ulster: The Origins of the Problem
- Ulster: The Unionist Options (1990)

#### **As Editor of Historical Studies**

- The Ashbourne Papers 1869-1913 : a calendar of the papers of Edward Gibson, 1st Lord Ashbourne 1974 with Anthony Malcomson)
- The Conservative Party: Seven Historical Studies 1680 to the 1990s (1997)
- A Conservative Party Leader in Ulster: Sir Stafford Northcote's Diary of a Visit to the Province, October 1883
- The Conservative Research Department 1929-2004
- Ireland and Party Politics, 1885-87: An Unpublished Conservative Memoir

#### **As Editor of Party Publications**

- The Campaign Guide, Seven Volumes, 1987-2005
- Collected Speeches: Margaret Thatcher, John Major and David Cameron
- Conservative Political Centre: 120 pamphlets, 1988-97
- Politics Today, published twelve times a year by the Research Department, 1986-97

**Below are some of the articles he has contributed to the Blue Blog on the Conservative Party website:**

- [22nd February 1806 - William Pitt the Younger is buried](#)
- [10th March 1832 - The beginning of the modern Conservative Party](#)
- [18th December 1834 - The Tamworth Manifesto is published](#)

- [17th November 1883 - The Primrose League is founded](#)
  - [29th January 1886 - Salisbury's first Government ends and Unionism is born](#)
  - [3rd March 1905 - The Ulster Unionist Council is launched](#)
  - [11th November 1918 - World War One ends](#)
  - [14th December 1918 - Lloyd George wins a landslide election victory](#)
  - [28th November 1919 - The first female MP takes her seat](#)
  - [21st January 1924 - The end of Stanley Baldwin's first government](#)
  - [4th November 1924 - Baldwin is appointed Prime Minister for the second time](#)
  - [7th February 1974 - Ted Heath calls a snap election](#)
  - [28th March 1979 - Thatcher wins a crucial vote in the Commons](#)
  - [11th April 1979 - Margaret Thatcher's election manifesto is launched](#)
  - [20th April 1979 - The first week of the General Election campaign ends](#)
  - [27th April 1979 - The General Election campaign enters its third week](#)
  - [3rd May 1979 - Britain gives Margaret Thatcher her mandate](#)
  - [4th May 1979 - Margaret Thatcher becomes Prime Minister](#)
  - [29th December 1986 - Harold Macmillan dies](#)
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