

## THE STANLEYS UP TO DATE

SHEILA TURCON

Russell Archives & Russell Research Centre / McMaster U.

Hamilton, ON, Canada L8S 4M2

TURCON@MCMASTER.CA

Thomas, Lord Stanley of Alderley. *The Stanleys of Alderley, 1927–2001: a Politically Incorrect Story*. Rev. ed. Altimcham, U.K.: AMCD, 2004. Pp. 192. £19.95.

Although the book is called *The Stanleys of Alderley*, the Stanleys have not lived at Alderley, the family home for 500 years, since 1934 when it was sold. Not long after, Penrhos, the family's property in Wales, left the family as well, sold in 1947. Naturally the author, who would have inherited these properties, laments not only these losses but the fire-sale prices—Alderley sold for £350,000 and is now estimated to be worth £100 million; Penrhos was sold for a mere £70,000 but then its owner, the author's cousin, was a homosexual and upon leaving the Navy decided it would be unwise to live at Penrhos because homosexuality was then a crime in Britain (p. 50). The author provides an appendix on the Alderley Settled Estate and his trials with the Royal Bank of

---

Canada when he inherited what was left (pp. 182–5).

Lord Stanley's path to inheriting his title was much more tortuous and full of tragedy than Bertrand Russell's inheritance of his earldom. Thomas's two older brothers, John and Martin, died at the same time in Penrhos just before it was sold when the cliff collapsed, weakened by old tunnels that they had dug chasing rabbits in their childhood. After that, two cousins, Edward and Lyulph, had to die without heirs before the title became Thomas's in 1971. The author blames them for losing, and losing easily, in the span of 40 years wealth that had taken nine centuries to accumulate. Lord Stanley also had some difficulty in taking his seat in the House of Lords (as did Bertrand), since proof was needed that no offspring with a better claim might appear (p. 9).

The author exhibits some of the same wit that makes Russell's writing sparkle. Lord Stanley sat in the House of Lords, although on different sides (Conservative vs. Liberal Democrat), with his cousin Conrad, Russell's youngest son. The two of them had rather different professions, Thomas a farmer and Conrad a university professor. He notes: "When on one occasion I said that he looked tired, he, as any academic would, said that he found getting his mind down to the level of his undergraduates very exhausting. I replied that trying to understand the minds of my sheep surely must be more exhausting" (p. 5). Another example of wit (which is frequent, particularly in the first part of the book) concerns his strict upbringing and the learning of rules. The rules were discarded until he joined the House of Lords when he found them "useful, if only to remember to put the milk in the cup first if sitting next to a life peer and last if next to an hereditary one" (pp. 14–15). Milk first or last has always been a mystery to me, and I'm afraid this remark does not help much!

Born in 1927, the author was brought up to believe "that it was a privilege to be a Stanley" although any arrogance because of superior lineage was not allowed by his father (p. 15). The author's mother was Lady Kathleen Thynne, the daughter of the 5th Marquess of Bath. The passages concerning Christmas visits to the family's very grand estate, Longleat, make fascinating reading (pp. 18–21). The book contains chapters on Lord Stanley's childhood (he was raised at Llanfawr near Penrhos), his career in the military followed by farming, his family, his hobbies and the House of Lords. It includes a family tree, a chronology from 1927 to 1999, and family photographs (the author bears more than a passing resemblance to his cousin Conrad).

This book provides much information on Russell's maternal family, moving the story forward from the period covered in *The Amberley Papers*, *The Ladies of Alderley*, and *The Stanleys of Alderley*. Russell favoured the Russell side of the family in his youth, but as he grew older, he writes in his *Autobiography*, he came to realize that he owed his "vigour, good health, and good spirits" (1: 35) to the Stanleys, traits he appears to share with his cousin Thomas.

---