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THE POLITICAL CAREER OF SIR CHARLES DILKE spanned over forty years, from 1868 until 1911. In the first half of that period, from 1868 to 1886, he was M.P. for Chelsea, making a name for himself as an advanced radical, flirting with republicanism in the early '70s, winning a place in Gladstone's second government in 1880, and joining the Cabinet as President of the Local Government Board in 1882. He was very interested in trades union affairs and working-class issues generally, and became chairman of a royal commission on housing which was one of the Government's responses to the growing public concern about social conditions that was a feature of the 1880s. His personal friendship and close political alliance to Joseph Chamberlain was a further asset, while his handling of the negotiations with the Opposition over the Redistribution Act, which he successfully steered through the Commons in 1885, added to his political stature. Thus by the time Gladstone's government fell in June 1885 Dilke was regarded by many, including it seems Gladstone himself, as his most likely successor as leader of the Liberal Party and a future prime minister.¹

In July of 1885, however, he was cited as co-respondent in a divorce case. The public allegation of misconduct was a very serious matter, and the result of the subsequent legal proceedings and the very bad legal advice which Sir Charles received was to make him appear in the eyes of the public as an adulterer. He was not offered a post in Gladstone's third government which was formed in February 1886 while the case was pending, and he lost his seat for Chelsea at the general election in July.² Thus political disaster accompanied social ostracism, and Sir Charles Dilke's political career seemed to be at an end.

However, in 1892 Dilke returned to the Commons as M.P. for the Forest of Dean, retaining his seat for nearly twenty years until his death in 1911. This period has received little attention from historians, though it was longer than his time as member for Chelsea, and he seems to have played in these years a significant part in national politics. His official biographer, his niece Miss G. Tuckwell, concentrated on his rise to power and his period in office, while the more recent biography by Roy Jenkins similarly has relatively little to say about the last half of Sir Charles' political life.³ It is the aim of this paper to redress the balance, not by an assessment of his achievements on the national stage, but by an examination of Sir Charles' relation-

1. The standard biographies of Sir Charles Dilke are S. Gwynn and G. Tuckwell, *The Life of the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles W. Dilke* (2 vols. London, 1917) and Roy Jenkins, *Sir Charles Dilke, a Victorian Tragedy* (London, 1958).
2. The divorce had no apparent impact on the result, for the swing against Sir Charles was less than that against Liberal candidates in other London seats.
3. Gwynn and Tuckwell, *Dilke*, II. 264-535; Jenkins, *Dilke*, 371-418.

ship with his constituency and the foundation upon which the second half of his career was built.

Evidence for this latter period is not easy to find. The principal source is Sir Charles' own papers which he left to his niece and which she used to write the biography, subsequently placing them in the British Museum in 1938. However, it is clear that these papers have been very thoroughly sorted and much has been destroyed. For example, Dilke wrote an autobiographical memoir in which he quotes from many letters and papers which appear no longer to survive, though whether he destroyed them after writing the memoir, or whether Miss Tuckwell considered them not worth keeping it is impossible to say. She certainly destroyed some material, and in particular it seems that neither Dilke nor his niece considered that constituency correspondence was worth preserving. Some does survive, however, because it also relates to other subjects in which he was interested. He was concerned about the political balance of the magistracy, asking parliamentary questions and pressing the Lord Chancellor to reduce the Conservative predominance on the bench. Consequently he kept some correspondence from the Lord Chancellor about the appointment of Forest of Dean Liberals as magistrates.⁴ Generally, however, the Dilke papers do not say a lot about his relationship with the Forest of Dean, for which we must turn to local sources.

In the years before 1914 there was a flourishing local weekly press which provides much information about politics. In addition to the 5 papers published in the Forest itself, 3 in Gloucester covered Forest news, which occasionally appeared also in the Cheltenham papers. Altogether they represent a range of opinion from radical to diehard conservative and their lengthy reports of political meetings and speeches, leading articles on local affairs, and gossip columns on local politics provide with the Dilke Papers and the biographies the basis of this study.⁵

The constituency which Sir Charles Dilke won in 1892 had been established when Gloucestershire was divided up into single member seats by the 1885 Redistribution Act. The Forest of Dean was in many ways a contrast to the rest of Gloucestershire. It was a safe Liberal seat, electing a Liberal at every election from 1885 until 1918, and despite its rural appearance and scattered small towns and villages it was a predominantly industrial division. The basis of the Liberal domination was the miners' vote, and there were a number of other industries which increased the working-class character of the electorate. In round figures there were 11000 electors, of whom 3000 or so were miners. Associated with mining was metalworking, of which the Lydney tinsplate works of R. Beaumont Thomas was the most important enterprise, and the dense network of railways and wagon ways which carried away the coal also employed considerable numbers. Along the Severn estuary there were docks and small ports, mostly declining, and in a wide arc round the Forest itself farming and smallholding were the main source of employment.⁶

The miners had their own local union, the Dean Forest Labour Association formed in 1886, and appointed as their agent G.H. Rowlinson who continued to hold this position until 1918. He was a Primitive Methodist lay preacher, a county councillor from 1889, and a staunch and

4. Herschell to Dilke, 28 Sept. 1893, 16 Oct. 1893, Dilke Papers, British Library Additional Manuscript 43915, f. 119; Loreburn to Dilke, 23 Apr. 1906, *ibid.* 43919, f. 52.

5. For further discussion of the local press in Gloucestershire and its value as evidence see J.R. Howe, 'The Political History of the Parliamentary Constituencies of Cheltenham, Gloucester, and the Cirencester and Tewkesbury Divisions of Gloucestershire, 1895-1914' (Bristol M.Litt thesis, 1977), 9-13, 69-70.

6. For further details of industry in the Forest, see C. Hart, *The Industrial History of Dean* (Newton Abbot, 1971).

active Liberal, neatly symbolising the basis of Liberal support in the division. That support was well organised by the local party which was established in 1885. Previously it had been 'the custom for a few county gentlemen to practically settle the question (of candidate); as an act of grace they latterly invited a few representative inhabitants of the Forest of Dean'. Following the creation of the new division a series of meetings culminated in the formation of the Forest of Dean Liberal Association with a fully democratic structure on the lines made familiar by the Birmingham Liberal organisation in the late 1870s.⁷ Liberals in each polling district met annually to choose 5 representatives as well as local officers. The local representatives formed the Forest of Dean Liberal Council, originally of 100 members. This was soon increased to 400, or 20 representatives from each polling district.⁸ The polling district meetings were held annually in January, and the annual meeting of the Council was usually in March, when a small executive committee and the constituency officers were elected.

The main function of the Association seems to have been the support of the candidate. Sir Charles Dilke attended the polling district meetings every January addressing his supporters on the issues of the day; he spoke at the divisional annual meeting, and he came again for about a month every September to supervise the party's activities in the registration of electors.⁹ At a time when the compiling of an electoral roll was very much dominated by party considerations Dilke's personal interest and acknowledged expertise on electoral law was a considerable asset. Such was his detailed knowledge of the division and his electors that he claimed after the registration of 1899 to have made an estimate of the strength of the two parties which was almost exactly borne out by the result of the General Election in 1900.¹⁰ The party organisation also took part in local elections, although Dilke himself was not strongly in favour of involving national politics at a local level, at least until 1902 when the Education Act caused him to change his mind.¹¹ It seems that the party did not have to concern itself with fund raising, and unlike Liberal Associations in other Gloucestershire seats does not seem to have had any financial worries.¹² In the absence of direct evidence, it seems likely that Dilke financed the party. He certainly supported the Liberal organisation in the neighbouring Tewkesbury division with £100 a year for some years,¹³ and he can hardly have been less generous to his own supporters. When, after his death, there were suggestions that the miners might run their own candidate, one of the arguments used against this was the cost in view of the fact that trades union funds could not be used to support political activity,¹⁴ which again implies that Sir Charles Dilke had carried the financial burden, possibly sharing it with some of the wealthier local Liberals.

7. The origins of the organisation were described by the secretary J. Cooksey when he received a presentation to mark his retirement in 1912: *Gloucester Journal*, 28 Sept. 1912.

8. Hence the custom of referring to such organisations as the Liberal Hundred (or Four Hundred, etc.).

9. Reports of the meetings and his attendance at the Revision Courts, which decided disputes about registration, appeared regularly in all the local newspapers.

10. Speech by Sir C. Dilke at Newent: *Glouc. Jnl.* 5 Jan. 1901.

11. Speech by Sir C. Dilke to Forest of Dean Liberal Council: *Glouc. Jnl.* 24 May 1902.

12. Unfortunately there seem to be no press reports of the party's financial situation, except in 1914 after Sir Charles' death when the situation was 'satisfactory': report of A.G.M., *Glouc. Jnl.* 6 June, 1914. For the financial problems of the Gloucester Liberal Association see *Annual Report 1910*: Gloucester City Library local collection, N 13.38. For Cheltenham see remarks by the treasurer at the Liberal Association A.G.M.: *Cheltenham Free Press*, 22 Feb. 1902.

13. Memorandum by R.A. Hudson, 17 July 1903, Herbert Gladstone Papers, B.L. Add. MS. 46021, f. 9; report of annual meeting of Tewkesbury Liberal Council: *Glouc. Jnl.* 30 July 1898.

14. Speech by G.H. Rowlinson: *Glouc. Jnl.* 12 Aug. 1911.

The party drew its support from a wide cross-section of society. Among its leaders were miners' representatives like their agent Mr Rowlinson, and Mr G. Barnard who was for some years President of the Labour Association was a Liberal vice-president. The Rev. S.J. Elsom, Baptist minister of Yorkley, was secretary of the Free Miner's organisation, and also a county councillor, member of the School Board, and J.P. The Honorary Secretary of the Liberal Association from 1891 to 1912 was John Cooksey, owner and editor of the *Dean Forest Mercury*, and agent for Sir Charles at the 1900 General Election. R. Beaumont Thomas succeeded his father, the well-known Richard Thomas, in control of the family's steel business, developing the Lydbrook and Lydney tinplate works. He was a county councillor from 1889, first chairman of Lydney R.D.C., Honorary Treasurer of the Liberal Association 1895-6, and thereafter its President until 1903. However, he went to live in South Wales in 1897, and in 1903 resigned the presidency having become a Tariff Reformer and he eventually joined the Unionists and campaigned vigorously for them in Lydney in the elections of 1910 and 1911.¹⁵ He was succeeded as President by Sir William Wedderburn, a retired Indian Civil Servant of Scots family who bought a landed estate at Meredith near Gloucester. He was a county councillor 1904-12, a J.P. and deputy lieutenant. He was Sir Charles' honorary agent in 1906 and 1910, and remained President until his death in 1918. Other landowners who supported the Liberal party were the Price family, with their estate at Tibberton in the north and at another residence at Pen Moel near Chepstow. Mrs W.E. Price was one of the first members of local society to entertain Sir Charles when he came to the division, winning his gratitude and friendship.¹⁶ When her son grew old enough to take an active part in politics he stayed with Sir Charles at the Speech House for the autumn campaign, and spoke and worked for him at the election of 1910. Another social class was represented in the Liberal leadership by Mr Smale, who was a nonconformist draper and grocer. He was party treasurer from 1899 until his death at the age of 82 in 1904.

The first M.P. for the Forest of Dean, elected in 1885, was Mr T. Blake of Ross-on-Wye, just outside the division. Born and bred in Ross, he had tried a number of jobs, being a draper's assistant, a pupil teacher and then a post office clerk for 14 years, but in 1857 he set up in business as an accountant and estate agent, and rapidly amassed a considerable fortune. He was able to retire from business in 1870 to devote himself to public service, and he was exceptionally generous to local charities, giving almshouses, a library, and a public park to Ross. He was a county alderman, J.P., and a Guardian. He was a Baptist lay preacher, and built the Ross Baptist Chapel (costing £3,700). He stood unsuccessfully for parliament in 1868 as an advanced Liberal, and sat for Leominster from 1875 to 1880. He won the Forest in 1885, and, as a Gladstonian Liberal, in 1886, but ill health compelled him to take the Chiltern Hundreds in 1887. He remained a Liberal and a staunch supporter of Sir Charles Dilke, acting as his honorary election agent until he died in 1901.¹⁷

15. Some interesting correspondence survives among the Dilke papers, concerning Beaumont Thomas' suitability to be a J.P. The Lord Chancellor objected to appointing him because he had been involved in a riot during the 1892 campaign, when he and a number of 'roughs' drove the Conservative candidate from the platform at a meeting in Lydney. See Dilke Papers, B.L. Add. MS. 43915, ff. 119-20.
16. The incident is mentioned by M.P. Price in his autobiography: *My Three Revolutions* (London 1969), 210.
17. He had been invited to stand by 'the miners and others'. At the selection meeting three candidates were considered, Major Price of Tibberton and J.W. Probyn, another local gentleman, as well as Blake. Biographical details from obituary, *Glouc. Jnl.* 6 Apr. 1901; W.R. Williams, *Parliamentary History of the County of Gloucester* (Hereford, 1898); remarks by Mr Cooksey, *Glouc. Jnl.* 28 Sept. 1911.

To replace Blake the Liberal Association approached a number of potential candidates, including Sir Charles Dilke who on this occasion refused. Four men made speaking tours of the division after which the Liberal Council met at Littledean and chose G.B. Samuelson as its candidate. He was a young man (born in 1863), the son of Sir Bernhard Samuelson, a Middlesborough industrialist who had been M.P. for Banbury and for North Oxfordshire. G.B. Samuelson had failed to gain Tewkesbury in 1885, and in 1886 also failed to hold the seat of his brother when the latter retired as M.P. for Frome. He succeeded in winning the Forest with a large majority in 1887, but he then took a very hostile attitude to the Miners' Eight Hours agitation, and it quickly became clear that the Liberal Association was unlikely to re-adopt him.¹⁸ Meanwhile Sir Charles Dilke had become President of the Association, and it became known that he was now willing to stand for Parliament. In his unpublished autobiography Sir Charles tried to show that he had been strictly fair in his dealing with Samuelson, and that the initiative had come from the local party after Samuelson had 'virtually told the miners in the Forest of Dean that he would not stand again'.¹⁹ Eventually he wrote formally to confirm his withdrawal in December 1890 and the Forest Liberals then invited Dilke to become their candidate. Local reaction was mixed. While John Cooksey, editor of the *Dean Forest Mercury*, was an enthusiastic supporter of Dilke, in Gloucester the *Journal*, another Liberal paper, expressed doubts about the way Samuelson had been treated and the haste with which Dilke had been invited.²⁰ Sir Charles, however, warned the Forest Liberals that their action would produce considerable opposition and he delayed his answer to give them time to reconsider. There followed widespread national comment, and the constituency was bombarded by leaflets and pamphlets attacking his morality in the interests of 'social purity'. His supporters retaliated with pamphlets asserting his innocence, and the local Liberals remained unanimous and enthusiastic in his support. In June 1891 he therefore accepted the candidacy.²¹

Just a year after he became candidate Dilke fought his first Forest election. He campaigned vigorously on a strongly radical platform; on the other side there were virulent attacks over the divorce scandal. His implacable opponent W.T. Stead of the *Pall Mall Gazette* came to Gloucestershire and virtually took over a local paper to campaign against him. Despite rumours of nonconformist doubts, Liberal meetings were enthusiastic while Conservative speakers had a hard time. At several of their meetings resolutions in favour of Dilke were carried, while at Lydney the local Liberals led by Beaumont Thomas took over the platform while a large threatening crowd pursued the Conservative speakers to the railway station. The poll was a triumph for Sir Charles who was elected with an increased Liberal majority.²² He was to remain as M.P. for the Forest for nearly twenty years until his death in January 1911.

Sir Charles Dilke was now a former Cabinet minister with a safe seat, not yet 50 years old, an acknowledged expert on matters of foreign, imperial, and defence policy; yet he never again held office. It is hard to believe that the divorce scandal was the only or even the main reason which kept him on the back benches. In 1892 it was probably Gladstone's attitude which was

18. Biographical details from Williams, *Parliamentary History; Who was Who 1897-1916*; and *Who was Who, 1941-50*.

19. Dilke Papers, Memoirs, B.L. Add. MS. 43941, ff. 106, 201.

20. Reports of meetings and leader comments: *Glouc. Jnl.* 21 Feb., 14 Mar. 1891. An indication of the local interest and involvement in these events is that large numbers attended all the meetings, nearly all of the four hundred or so Liberals entitled to attend.

21. Report of meeting and leader comment: *Glouc. Jnl.* June 1891.

22. The campaign was fully described in all the local papers.

crucial. In his memoir Dilke quotes from letters from Mr Schnadhorst of the National Liberal Federation suggesting that the party nationally had approved his candidature, and in 1889 Gladstone himself had written a rather tortuous letter which suggested he should return to politics at the end of the existing parliament.²³ By 1892, however, Gladstone had changed his mind and opposed Dilke's candidacy, so it is scarcely surprising that Dilke was not offered a post in his third government.²⁴ This might paradoxically have been an advantage for Sir Charles, for the government and party were far from united and the resignation of the ageing and deaf Gladstone early in 1894 following the defeat of the Home Rule Bill in the Lords only increased the problems. Rosebery was no more successful in holding the party together or giving it a sense of purpose. Political or institutional reforms like those of the early 1870s seemed not to be needed, the Lords prevented a solution of the Irish problem, while the new ideas of imperialism divided the party yet further.²⁵ Sir Charles Dilke, sitting on the back benches was well placed to lead a renewal of the impetus to social reform begun under his and Chamberlain's leadership in the early 1880s and lost following Chamberlain's defection to the Unionists, Gladstone's obsession with Home Rule, and Sir Charles' exclusion from politics after the divorce. Although the Liberal party did eventually move to a policy of social reform, Dilke did not benefit, partly for personal reasons and partly because of other policy questions.

On the personal side, the Rosebery government resigned following its defeat in the House of Commons when a vote of censure was carried against the Secretary of State for War, the so called 'Cordite Vote'. The Secretary thus censured was a quiet unimpressive and relatively little known Scots landowner, Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman. Few at the time could have expected that as a result of the feuds and resignations among the party's leaders he would within 4 years become its leader, or that he would eventually lead it to its greatest ever electoral triumph in 1906. But he did, and when he formed his government in December 1905 he had not forgotten that the most prominent of the handful of Liberals who had voted against him in the Cordite Vote was Sir Charles Dilke.²⁶

Such personal resentment might have been overcome had Sir Charles gained a strong position and allies within the party, but he did not. The major political debate in the late 1890s and early 1900s centred upon imperial and military matters, on which Sir Charles was an expert. However, his well-informed views and his persistent pressure for military reform and efficiency did not win the support of radicals, while on the other hand his deep involvement with trades unions and radical policies generally cut him off from Liberal Imperialists like Rosebery, Haldane, or Grey. Nor was the enthusiastic support of working men and the trades union movement much of an asset at a time when the Independent Labour Party was emerging, and the unions were taking a more independent political line.²⁷ Thus Sir Charles had no substantial backing within the Liberal Party, and, although there was speculation that he might

23. Dilke Papers, Memoirs, B.L. Add. MS. 43941, ff. 190, 209; Gladstone to Dilke 10 Aug. 1889, *ibid.* 43875, ff. 276-8.

24. Mr Jenkins (*Dilke*, 383-4) suggests that this change was caused by the impact of the Parnell divorce case which made Gladstone anxious to dissociate the Liberal party from adultery.

25. The problems of the Liberal party in the late 1890s are discussed by P. Stansky, *Ambitions and Strategies, the Struggle for the Leadership of the Liberal Party in the 1890s* (Oxford, 1964); D.A. Hamer, *Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery* (Oxford, 1972); H.G. Matthew, *The Liberal Imperialists* (Oxford, 1973).

26. Gwynn and Tuckwell, *Dilke*, II. 423.

27. Sir Charles was involved in the Advanced Radical Section of the parliamentary Liberal party, but this was an incohesive and informal small group to coordinate parliamentary activities, not a pressure group within the party: see draft letter and TS. on radical organisation, in Dilke Papers, B.L. Add. MS. 43919, ff. 16, 24.

join the Campbell Bannerman government formed in December 1905, he was ignored. Several friends wrote to express their regret, but it was clear now that he would never again hold office.

As a back bench M.P., however, he was able to exert important influence in a number of fields. His constant pressure for army reform almost certainly helped to bring about the changes at the War Office instituted by the Balfour government in 1904, although he was not enthusiastic about the Haldane reforms of 1907. On matters affecting labour and trade union interests Dilke achieved even more. His Wages Boards Bill which he introduced every year from 1898 was adopted by the Labour Party in 1909 and formed the basis of Churchill's Trades Boards Act passed in that year. His activity was significant in persuading the Liberal leadership first to agree to reverse the Taff Vale decision, and then when they won the 1906 General Election to drop their own rather cautious proposals in favour of those put forward by the T.U.C. and the Labour Party, which were embodied in the Trades Disputes Act of 1906. His advice and assistance was always at the call of trades unionists in parliament, while outside he was a frequent speaker at union meetings and conferences all over the country.²⁸

Although Sir Charles Dilke was thus a national figure with widespread commitments, he did not neglect his constituency or his county. After the 1895 election he was the only Liberal M.P. for the whole of Gloucestershire and was therefore the natural link between all the local parties and party headquarters. He played a major part in establishing the Gloucestershire Liberal Council to co-ordinate party activities,²⁹ and he was in particular approached by constituencies seeking parliamentary candidates.³⁰ The county organisation also co-ordinated the Liberal campaign against the 1902 Education Act and helped to produce a record number of Liberal candidates for the 1904 county council elections. After 1906, however, his health declined and his activity seems somewhat to have reduced, although by then there were far more Gloucestershire Liberal M.P.s to share the leadership of the local parties.

Sir Charles Dilke was a devoted and popular constituency representative. His continuous support for the Miners' Eight Hours Movement was an obvious local interest, and he paid close attention to all legislation about coal-mines; but he also raised many other personal and local matters in parliament or with government departments. He pressed for the appointment of local Liberals and labour leaders to the bench; he raised problems of Forest school children with the Board of Education; in 1906 he questioned the Board of Agriculture about forestry policy; in 1909 he was pressing the Treasury for the exemption of the Free Miners from the new tax on mining royalties; in 1895 he had been thanked publicly for looking after local interests in the recent amalgamation of the Severn & Wye railway with the G.W.R.³¹

Sir Charles visited every part of his scattered division frequently and regularly. Every January he attended each polling district's annual liberal meeting, and he came to the party's two major meetings each year and the miners' gala at the Speech House every summer. He did another tour of the polling districts in the early autumn and came occasionally during the rest of the year too. Miss Tuckwell writes that he grew to know and love the Forest and its people, and it seems that the foresters came to know and love him.³² Certainly they voted for him

28. His activities are described rather briefly in Jenkins, *Dilke*, 371-418, and Gwynn and Tuckwell, *Dilke*, II, 264-534.

29. Obituary of Sir C. Dilke: *Glouc. Jnl.* 28 Jan. 1911.

30. Cheltenham Liberals asked him about possible candidates, and he had been instrumental in bringing Russel Rea to Gloucester as Liberal candidate: see report of Cheltenham Liberal General Meeting: *Cheltenham Free Press*, 14 Jan. 1899; and speech by Sir C. Dilke: *Glouc. Jnl.* 13 Jan. 1906.

31. These examples are taken from correspondence in the Dilke Papers and references in the local press,.

32. Gwynn and Tuckwell, *Dilke*, II, 327.

loyally and his election campaigns were all filled with enthusiasm and resulted in huge majorities. His first contest in 1892 was ostensibly fought upon the national issues but in practice, as was noted above, the campaign took an extremely personal form. By the next election campaign in 1900 Sir Charles was well established, and his election address was brief and unusual. He mentioned only one topic, Army Reform, pointing out the Government's lamentable record and his own consistent advocacy of sweeping reform at the War Office. His opponent was left trying to defend the Government's own proposals but when he asked rhetorically who was best suited to put through such reforms his audience shouted in reply 'Dilke'.³⁴ In 1910 the Liberal election addresses were even shorter. In January Sir Charles merely promised to maintain 'Independent representation on the principles set before you when you first chose me as your member' and to uphold the rights of the Commons to determine taxation, while in December he described at rather greater length the recent activities of the House of Lords and the need to prevent the recurrence of obstruction.³⁵ At two elections, 1895 and 1906, no Conservative candidate could be found and Sir Charles was unopposed.

In addition to producing election addresses and other leaflets the candidates had a full programme of meetings, often two or three each night, so that every polling district was visited at least once. Even in January 1910 when he was ill Sir Charles visited every district, and the effort he made for the December election certainly hastened his death, which occurred just over a month later, on 26 January 1911.

'Not even the death of a monarch could have more stirred the feelings of the Forest community. The news seems to have paralysed everything.'³⁶ Tributes came from all sides. His Conservative opponent at the 1892 election, Colchester Wemyss of Westbury Court, now chairman of the county council and of the Lydney District council, referred to him as an old friend and said he had always willingly helped on any county matter on which he was consulted. 'It is well nigh impossible to conceive of a member knowing so much of his constituency and his constituents as Sir Charles did'. Mr Rowlinson, the Forest Miners Agent, described him as 'an earnest and faithful friend to the working men of this country' and 'in many respects the most influential representative of the cause of labour that ever sat in the House of Commons.' This paper has not attempted to justify such a claim, although a reassessment of Sir Charles' work from 1892 to 1911 is clearly overdue. It has rather attempted to justify other words written by Mr Rowlinson in an appreciation of Sir Charles Dilke: 'He did not live for himself; it was always others first. I never made an appeal to him for any case of need in vain. With regard to local matters, he seemed at the beck and call of nearly everyone. Nothing was too small or too large for him to undertake to assist any constituent, and oftentimes an avowed and lifelong political opponent. In a multitude of ways he did us service with his knowledge of affairs, his influence, his experience, his ability and work.'³⁷

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33. *Glouc. Jnl.* 29 Sept. 1900.

34. *Glouc. Jnl.* 6 Oct. 1900.

35. *Glouc. Jnl.* 1 Jan. 1910; *Citizen*, 1 Dec. 1910.

36. This and following quotations are from obituary and reports of tributes: *Glouc. Jnl.* 28 Jan., 11 Feb. 1911.

37. Letter from G.H. Rowlinson: Gwynn and Tuckwell, *Dilke*, II. 327.