PREFACE

It is generally recognized that Henry Howard Molyneux Herbert, fourth Earl of Carnarvon, figured prominently in Conservative politics during four decades of the second half of the nineteenth century. It is remarkable, therefore, that it is more than eighty years since the only biographical work on him, Sir Arthur Hardinge's *The Life of Lord Carnarvon*, was published. As one historian has recently remarked, '[This work] is all we have'.[1] The three-volume set well summarizes Carnarvon's achievements but suffers from a number of defects. After his death, his second wife, Elsie, commissioned the work, determined (as she wrote in the Preface) to 'endeavour faithfully to portray the character, thoughts, words and deeds of one who amidst the shifting sense of politics, held honour to be the soul of public and private life; it seeks whilst presenting the facts to hurt no feelings'.[2] As the self-appointed guardian of her husband's reputation, she was concerned to show him in the best possible light. Carnarvon's contemporaries, whose writings contained references to his political career, often received detailed letters from the Countess, pointing out factual errors and unwelcome criticism and demanding changes in the text. The correspondence with Sir Charles Gavan Duffy after the publication of R. Barry O'Brien's book on Parnell,[3] to which the former had contributed a chapter on Carnarvon's secret meeting with Parnell in August 1885, is a good example. Duffy's criticism of Carnarvon's attitude towards the Irish question was strongly challenged by Lady Carnarvon.[4] She was also 'less than helpful' in allowing Gwendolen Cecil access to her father's correspondence with Carnarvon when she was writing Salisbury's biography.[5]

Sir Arthur Hardinge, a career diplomat, had been Salisbury's personal secretary when the latter held the combined posts of Prime

[1]M. Bentley, *Lord Salisbury's World: conservative environments in late-Victorian Britain* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 326.

[2]Hardinge, I, p. viii.

[3]'The Carnarvon controversy', in R. Barry O'Brien, *The Life of Charles Stewart Parnell* (London, 1899), II, pp. 58–95.

[4]Lady Carnarvon to Duffy, 5 Sept 1898 and Duffy to Lady Carnarvon, 12 Sept 1898: CP, BL MS 60828, fos 99–102, 125.

[5]H. Cecil, 'Lady Gwendolen Cecil: Salisbury's biographer', in Lord Blake and H. Cecil (eds), *Salisbury: the man and his policies* (Basingstoke, 1987), p. 70.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960116309990054 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Minister and Foreign Secretary in 1885. Although he never knew Carnarvon closely, he would no doubt have met him on visits to Hatfield and at the Foreign Office.[6] Hardinge was chosen as the original author by Lady Carnarvon. Progress on the commission was slow because of his other commitments, so, in March 1922, she decided to become more closely involved with the project, though Hardinge had by this time produced a full and lengthy draft. Elsie was not happy with the result. She told him:

> The fact is, our past conversations and correspondence show that we are looking at the work from different angles. My mind is wholly set on biography – as perfect a picture of a man as can be achieved. The side which appeals to you is the historical and political one; and to compress into a two or three volume work the amount of matter which the two conceptions involve is not, I fear, a practical proposition.

She suggested, therefore, that Hardinge should deal with some special subjects, such as military and naval matters, defence, and freemasonry, and the rest would be left in her hands, according to the original agreement, 'to edit, alter and reduce in length and add the biographical portion, for which I propose to obtain the help of some members of my family'.[7] The book would be published with their joint names on the title page. Hardinge was happy to agree to this arrangement.

The book, published in 1925, was based on the extensive correspondence and papers, official and private, that Carnarvon meticulously preserved at Highclere. Part of the collection was presented by Lady Carnarvon to the Public Record Office (now The National Archives) in 1926 and by the sixth Earl of Carnarvon in 1959 (reference TNA PRO 30/6). Other Herbert family papers containing Carnarvon material were bought by the Hampshire Record Office in 1991 and further papers were deposited at the Somerset Archive and Record Service between 1981 and 1989. The vast bulk of the papers, however, was bought by the British Library in 1978, having been purchased at Sotheby's on 24 July of that year. This collection included the diaries: these, long regarded as lost, were found, along with other papers, in 1976 at Pixton, Somerset, the home of Aubrey Herbert, Carnarvon's elder son by Elsie. This discovery was made by Professor John Vincent of Bristol University, with the help of one of his students, the late Mrs John Montagu. The British Library deposit consists of 344 volumes, including the diaries. The latter amount to

[6]Sir A. Hardinge, *A Diplomatist in Europe* (London, 1927), pp. 78, 86.

[7]Lady Carnarvon to Hardinge, 14 March 1921: Herbert Papers, Hampshire Record Office, 75 M91/514/3.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960116309990054 Published online by Cambridge University Press

sixty volumes, which follow in almost unbroken sequence from 20 June 1852 to 6 June 1890[8] and cover most of Carnarvon's adult life (Add MSS 60887–60934). They give a full picture of Carnarvon's political, social, and literary life and provide a valuable record of Cabinet meetings during his time in office. Although Hardinge quoted extensively from the diaries, he was necessarily selective and the quotations do not do justice to the richness of the entries themselves.

The Carnarvon diaries take their place alongside those of a few other Conservative Cabinet colleagues, particularly Derby, Cranbrook, and Northcote. Carnarvon was well aware of both the intended and unintended consequences of a Cabinet minister keeping a diary. During a holiday at his retreat at Portofino in North Italy, in 1888, he wrote:

> I have read through since we came here Lord Ellenborough's diary. It ought never to have been published whether as regards the Cabinet secrets which it freely gives, or as regards himself. He never can have intended to give to the world the reflections on himself, as to the office he held or which he desired to have – nor could he have intended that the remarks which he makes on other persons could all be given out without reserve. It shows the risk of leaving papers behind one – and yet this is what I have done: for I shall leave a great mass both public and private.[9]

It is likely that Carnarvon wished to place on record his version of events in order to justify his subsequent actions. During the 1880s, with an eye to the future, he began to trawl through his diaries. On 2 November 1882 he wrote, 'I spent a considerable part of the day in looking over and destroying old correspondence [. . .] as they went into the waste paper basket they reminded me of things passed away for ever'; and, near the end of his life, in October 1889, he started to sort through the letters of previous generations of his family. Intriguingly, there is a diary entry for 2 January 1884 that simply states, 'I have destroyed, having first read over, some parts of my Journal, a painful task', giving no indication of where or why the excisions were made. There is some obvious evidence of the large-scale physical removal of sections of the diary for a number of consecutive entries: for example, in late 1877 and early 1878, when Carnarvon was about to resign from the government over the Eastern Question. For the most part, however, his periods in office, which altogether totalled six years and eight months, are fairly well represented. The most complete years are those dealing with the struggle over the Reform Bill, 1866–1867,

[8]The years 1854 and 1855 are missing.

[9]Diary, 22 April 1888. Ellenborough's *A Political Diary, 1828–1830*, edited by Lord Colchester, was published in two volumes in 1881. Ellenborough was Lord Privy Seal and President of the Board of Control during these years.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960116309990054 Published online by Cambridge University Press

his participation in the second Disraeli ministry (particularly 1874 and 1875), the manoeuvres over the Franchise Bill 1884, and Carnarvon's period as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 1885–1886. Little remains for the years 1872, 1873, 1876 (the only two entries of any significance for that year have survived only because they are written on the verso of family correspondence), 1880, and 1882. The many excisions from the diaries were probably made by Lady Carnarvon. For instance, in one of the pages of the diary for 1881 she had written, 'I have gone through this volume and extracted a few pages. The travels may at any rate remain'.[10] However, Carnarvon was an inveterate memorandum writer and these fill many of the gaps; he also described, on mature reflection, important events in which he participated.

The selection from the diaries that follows represents approximately one-third of the total entries. The editor has omitted the majority of entries that deal with domestic and day-to-day routine happenings. It was considered important to include details of Carnarvon's political activities, whether in or out of office, that throw light on his relations with colleagues, particularly in the years 1879 and 1884. The entries vary considerably in length, some consisting of a line or two, others covering several pages. Where the names of individuals appear only as initials in the original text, they are reproduced here in full wherever possible. It is hoped that this edition of the diaries will be of great interest both to the general reader and to researchers of nineteenth-century political and social history.

[10]Diary, 3 January 1881.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960116309990054 Published online by Cambridge University Press

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960116309990054 Published online by Cambridge University Press



Frontispiece: Earl of Carnarvon, *Whitehall Review*, 16 February 1878, shortly after resigning from the Government.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960116309990054 Published online by Cambridge University Press