
BIRCH, EVELYN NIGEL CHETWODE, (Baron Rhyl of Holywell) (1906-1981), Conservative politician

Name: Evelyn Nigel Chetwode Birch
Date of birth: 1906
Date of death: 1981
Parent: Florence Hyacinthe Birch (née Chetwode)
Parent: James Frederick Noel Birch
Gender: Male
Occupation: Conservative politician
Area of activity: Politics, Government and Political Movements
Author: John Graham Jones

Nigel Birch was born on 18 November 1906, the son of General Sir Noel Birch and his wife Florence Chetwode, of 11 Kensington Gore, London SW7. He was educated at Eton and spent his early career as a stockbroker. By the age of 33 he had accumulated a personal fortune in the region of £45,000, mainly in the gilt edge market, which enabled him to retire and devote his time to the study of politics. He had been a partner in Cohen, Laming and Hoare. He served in the Territorial Army even before the 1939-45 war, and in the King's Royal Rifle Corps and the General Staff during World War Two; he gained the rank of lieutenant-colonel. He was awarded an OBE in 1945. He was the Conservative MP for Flintshire, 1945-50, and, following the redistribution of parliamentary constituencies, West Flintshire, 1950-70.

Birch at once made his mark in the Commons speaking mainly on foreign affairs. He held the following offices: Under-Secretary for Air, 1951-52, Parliamentary-Secretary to the Ministry of Defence, 1952-54, Minister of Works, 1954-55, Secretary for Air, 1955-57, and Economic Secretary to the Treasury, 1957-58. He published in 1948 *The Conservative Party*. In 1955 he had been appointed a privy councillor. In 1958 he resigned, together with Peter Thorneycroft, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Enoch Powell, a fellow minister at the Treasury, following a dispute over policy. He never held ministerial office again, partly due to the personal animosity between him and Harold Macmillan (whom he had notably attacked in the infamous Profumo debate), and to his failing eyesight.

He was on all sides hailed for his outstanding ability, the quality of his mind and his sharpness of his tongue which enabled him to intervene in many parliamentary debates with great effect. Birch was obsessed by the need to win the political battle against inflation, and he was also much interested in foreign affairs and defence. Following Macmillan's resignation as Conservative Party leader in 1963, Nigel Birch was one of the strongest supporters of the campaign to ensure that Lord Home should succeed him, and he made a point of travelling to the annual party conference to press his views upon his parliamentary colleagues.

He served as a director of the London and Manchester Assurance Co. Having previously farmed in Flintshire, Birch built up a small estate worth some £60,000 in Hampshire. He was elected president of the Johnson Society in 1966, and was created a life peer in 1970, taking the title of Lord Rhyl. His hobbies included reading history, gardening, shooting and fishing.

He married the Hon. Esmé Glyn, daughter of the 4th Baron Wolverton on 1 August 1950. There were no children of the marriage. His addresses were 73 Ashley Gardens, London SW1, and Holywell House, Swanmore, Hampshire.

Nigel Birch died on the 8th March 1981.

Author

Dr John Graham Jones

Sources

Who was who?

Etholiadau'r Ganrif / Welsh Elections 1885-1997 (Talybont 1999)

Welsh Hustings - 1885-2004 (Ammanford 2005)

Dod's Parliamentary Companion

The Times, 10 March 1981

Further Reading

NLW Archives: [Parliamentary Election 1959 West Flint. Your Conservative Candidate Nigel Birch](#)

Wikipedia Article: [Nigel Birch, Baron Rhyl](#)

Additional Links

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