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INTRODUCTION

BRADFORD PAPERS

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Bradford Papers (D4211)

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Summary

The Bradford papers, 1888-1998, consist of c.10,000 documents and comprise 16 PRONI boxes. The archive was deposited by Toby, the son of the late Mr Bradford in February 1999. The collection has been fully listed and covers the political, professional and literary career of Roy Bradford, and the political career of his wife Hazel.



Early Life And Professional Career

Roy Hamilton Bradford was born in the Ligoniel area of North Belfast, on 7 July 1921, the son of a primary school teacher, Joseph Hamilton Bradford, Rockcorry, Co. Monaghan, and Isabeal Mary (née McNamee), Donemana, Co. Tyrone. The Bradford family moved to Belfast from Monaghan after the First World War, and eventually settled at 'The Links', Dunmurry on the outskirts of Belfast. Bradford was educated firstly at Ligoniel Public Elementary School, and secondly at the Royal Belfast Academical Institution. He then spent a year in Germany for health reasons before returning to Ireland to study at Trinity College, Dublin, where he gained a First Class Honours Degree with a Gold Medal in the Languages, attaining fluency in French and German.

On graduating from Trinity in 1942, he joined the armed forces. His fluency in French and German made him a natural for Army Intelligence, and he was stationed in France, Belgium and Germany. After the war he conducted army broadcasts in Germany before returning to England in 1947 to join the BBC. His first radio broadcast was a commentary on the annual UCD-Trinity Boat Race for RTE in April 1942. This was followed by a commentary on a boxing contest in the National Stadium, Dublin, with another young aspiring broadcaster, Eamonn Andrews. In 1950 Bradford moved to London where, aside from insurance and restaurant interests, he worked as a writer and broadcaster for the BBC and ITV. He had several short stories published in the London Evening Standard, and in 1960 published his first novel *Excelsior*.

Bradford was president of the Northern Ireland European Movement from 1987 until his death in 1998. In 1981, he published his second and most critically acclaimed novel, *The Last Ditch*. His last work, *Rogue Warrior of the SAS*, a biography of Lieutenant-Colonel R.B. 'Paddy' Mayne, was published in 1987. In the 1980s and 1990s, Bradford wrote a weekly column for the Belfast Newsletter.

Towards the end of the 1950s and early 1960s, Bradford's involvement in television escalated and he featured as a reporter on ITV's 'This Week'. In this capacity, Bradford appeared in a number of programmes relating to the European Community and became popularly regarded as an expert on the subject. This expertise was to pave the way for his eventual involvement in Northern Ireland politics. An invitation by the Unionist Party HQ in Belfast to write a pamphlet on Ulster and the EEC, brought about relationships with influential members of the Ulster Unionist Party.



Political Career

Roy Bradford was not a 'career politician' and only entered politics, quite unintentionally, in his mid-40s. Twice in the early 1960s, Bradford tried to gain a nomination for a Westminster seat but on both occasions was narrowly defeated. The first was for South Belfast, where Rafton Pounder defeated him by a few votes, and the second was for North Down, where he was again narrowly beaten by George Curry. His involvement in Stormont politics was purely accidental. Having contested two nominations for a Westminster seat, he was prevailed upon by the Unionist Party 'bosses' to fight the Victoria seat against Labour Party candidate and sitting MP, David Bleakley, in the November 1965, election. Few people gave him much chance of defeating the Labour man and the operation was regarded primarily, as a holding one, to maintain the Unionist vote in the area. There followed a hectic campaign in which Bradford wrote a pop song about himself and publicised the Ulster Covenant signed by his father in 1912. In the election, Bradford was returned as a 'liberal unionist' Stormont MP for the Victoria seat, which he held until the suspension of Stormont in 1972.

He rose rapidly through the Unionist Party ranks at Stormont, becoming Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education, 1967. In 1968, Bradford was made Unionist Party Chief Whip; Minister of Commerce, 1969-1971; and Minister of Development, 1971-1972.

With the suspension of Stormont, Bradford remained a prominent figure within the Ulster Unionist Party, and strongly criticised the British Government's initial handling of Direct Rule. By late 1973, he was being tipped by many in the media as the next leader of the Ulster Unionists.

With a new political initiative in 1973 in the form of the first Northern Ireland Assembly, Bradford was returned as a Unionist member for East Belfast. The following year he was appointed head of the Department of the Environment, in the Power-Sharing Executive, which arose out of the Sunningdale Agreement of December 1973. Bradford was a leading figure in the liberal camp that followed Brian Faulkner into talks with the SDLP, in an effort to secure some form of political power-sharing.

Events 'on the ground', compounded by a deteriorating security situation, caused an upsurge in violence which quickly overtook this political initiative. Bradford's ministerial career and the entire Sunningdale Agreement was dealt a fatal blow in February 1974, when Prime Minister, Edward Heath, called a 'snap general election' at the height of the miners' strike, providing an opportunity for hard-line Unionists to demonstrate the strength of anti-power-sharing sentiment. Under the banner of the United Ulster Unionist Council (UUUC), they annihilated the ill-prepared and unorganised Faulknerite Unionists, winning 11 of the 12 Northern Ireland seats. Bradford as the only member of the Executive to stand for election for the North Down seat as an 'Ulster Unionist Pro-Assembly' candidate was beaten by UUUC candidate, James Kilfedder (see also the Kilfedder papers D4127). This was another

nail in the coffin of the Executive, which would ultimately collapse under the weight of the Ulster Workers' Council Strike.

Bradford was openly criticised by other members of the Executive for publicly expressing concerns about Sunningdale, and in May 1974, when the loyalist Ulster Worker's Council called a strike in an effort to bring down the power-sharing Executive. He made repeated demands for the Executive to hold negotiations with the loyalist strikers. Bradford later told his friend, the Dublin author and former editor of The Irish Times, Tim Pat Coogan, that during 'the last days of the power-sharing executive, two men [known Loyalist paramilitaries] came into his office in Stormont, to clarify their position'. Bradford twice offered his resignation to Faulkner, before he 'very shortly thereafter... decided that he could no longer support the Executive and resigned. The pack of cards collapsed almost immediately' ('Ireland On Sunday' 18 April 1999). The Sunningdale agreement and the power-sharing Executive faltered and fell in the face of deteriorating conditions surrounding the strike.

In June 1974, Bradford resigned from Faulkner's Unionist grouping and reverted to the Ulster Unionist Party (often referred to as 'the Official Unionist Party'), under Harry West. Bradford's high profile political career effectively ended with this decision. For almost fifteen years, Bradford maintained a low profile within the party. This ended with his election to the North Down Borough Council in 1989, culminating in his being elected Mayor of North Down in 1995.

Bangor Ulster Unionist councillor, Marion Smith said of Bradford, that 'He was the most gifted man with words, a born raconteur. When he stood up in the council chamber, he was listened to' ('Irish News' obituary, 7 September 1998). Following his death on 2 September 1998, Sunday Independent columnist, Barry White, wrote that 'Fun is a characteristic never associated with unionism and that is why Roy Bradford never made it into the top rank' ('Sunday Independent' 6 September 1998).

Bradford was a keen golfer and a member of the Noise Abatement Society. He was sworn of the Privy Council of Northern Ireland in 1969. In Who's Who, 1996, Bradford listed his recreations as golf and architecture, and he was a member of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club (St Andrew's).



Hazel Bradford

While studying at Trinity College Dublin, Bradford met his future wife, Hazel Elizabeth Lindsay, daughter of Capt W. Lindsay, whom he married on 29 December 1945, in the McCracken Memorial Church, Malone Road, Belfast [see D4211/9/]. Hazel was born in Belfast and brought up in Bray, Co. Wicklow, in the Irish Republic. She was educated at Victoria College, Belfast, and eventually obtained a First Class Honours degree from TCD, in Modern History and Political Science.

In a letter to his parents, following his demobbing in 1947 (the letter was inside an envelope containing his father's last will and testament [see D4211/9/4/5]), Bradford informed them it had taken him 'just over twenty seven years to write', and that he had come to the realisation that 'outside of his family there isn't really anyone who cares a button what happens to Roy Bradford'. He then went on to 'humbly' thank his mother and father for 'all the years that you've worked and cared for me since I was a little boy'.

Roy Bradford's election victory for Victoria prompted the Bradfords to leave their London home of nineteen years in October 1966, for Arkeen, Carnalea, in Co. Down. Upon returning to Northern Ireland, Hazel Bradford joined the Ulster Women's Unionist Council, eventually to become its president and also Executive Chairman of the Ulster Unionist Party. Hazel Bradford did not hold political office until relatively late in her life, but nonetheless made a significant contribution to the organisation of the Ulster Unionist Party. She was also a member of the South Eastern Education and Library Board; governor of ten schools and colleges; a member of the Health and Safety Agency; a Director of the Ulster Orchestra and a trustee of the Ulster Museum.



The Archive

Unfortunately, there are large gaps within the archive, especially those which relate to constituency correspondence. In an election campaign address of 14 February 1969, referring to his own electoral promises, Bradford stated [see D4211/2/2/3] that 'none of the 17,000 letters I have received has gone unanswered', however these letters are conspicuous by their absence from the collection. Access restrictions apply to the archive, with the correspondence section, D4211/1, closed for fifty years. The minutes section, D4211/3, the personal papers section, D4211/9 and the papers relating to the Peace Talks, D4211/4, are all closed for thirty years from the terminal date.

