

Thomas Sutherland Brotherstone

An account of some of his life by his son Terry

I realise how little detail about my father's life before the war I gleaned from my mother (who died in 1982) ... and the years 1934-39 before the war do seem to be a particular gap.

He had known my mother, I think as her boyfriend, since their schooldays, and having, for reasons I never fully understood, fallen out with his parents (I suspect particularly his father) he spent a good deal of time at the flat in what was then Pitt Street (now Dundas St) where she lived from the late 1920s with her widowed mother, grandmother and two brothers.

I had always thought that his rugby-playing continued until much closer to the war than appears to have been the case.

I believe (but this is based on hazy memory) that, when war came, he was working for Bibby, the Liverpool merchant, and that the job would have remained available to him had he survived the war. I don't know whether he was actually based away from Edinburgh (though I now surmise that he probably did: they didn't marry until 1940) and have no letters from that period.

My mother did keep some letters which I have - but they are all from the period 1942-43 when he was stationed across the Atlantic, mainly in Canada and Brazil.

Amongst them however are some References from January 1934, when he had apparently applied to join the Colonial Service.

They don't provide anything like a CV, and mainly refer to his sporting prowess and good character.

Of possible interest is one by W.A. Robertson, Manager and Actuary to the Century Insurance Company, 18 Charlotte Square, to the effect that he had known my father for "something like three years" - i.e. since c.1931 - and that his sporting achievements show his leadership qualities. He does not say that he had been employed by the company, though it might be inferred that he had had some sort of relationship with it.

G.R.P. Lindsay of the Farmers' Supply Association of Scotland, 3 Wellington Place, Leith, writes: -

"I understand ... he is an applicant for an appointment in the Police or Customs of the Colonial Service. ... I consider he is both by education and training eminently qualified ... I have followed his career with much interest since he left school ... his character is beyond reproach, his actions at all times being guided by a very high sense of justice and fair play ... a young man of much promise ..."

The (famous) RHS rector, King Gillies, refers to his "high opinion, not only of his ability, but of his character, while he was a boy at school," and to his "valuable experience in business life since then". Then there's a bit on sport and, more ambiguously: "His progress was

satisfactory and in due course he obtained the Leaving certificate of the Scottish Education Department."

He clearly didn't get the Government job and this may relate to the story my mother told me - that the reason that, thanks to finance from some maiden aunts on her side of the family, I was sent to a "public" school was that my father had once applied for a job for which he believed he was well-qualified, but lost out to a less well-qualified candidate who had been to (I think she said) Fettes.

Another reference that might be of interest for other reasons is from the renowned Scottish fly-half, G.P.S. Macpherson, from 3 Albyn Place: -

"I have known Mr T.S. Brotherstone since he left school, where he had a most distinguished athletic career... I have frequently met him in connection with Rugby football, and have played with and against him and have had opportunities of forming an estimate of his value as a player and of his qualities as a member of a team.

"He has played with distinction as a forward in a number of International Trial matches and, I understand, has been selected as a Reserve for the International team. He has not perhaps the weight which one usually expects of forwards of 'international' calibre, but any deficiency in this respect is more than compensated by his liveliness, vitality & courage. In addition to his dexterity with hands & feet, he has in marked degree the resourcefulness, sense of co-operation & anticipation which are the attributes of 'class'. The game appears to him to be as much a contest of wits & schemes as of energy & courage.

"Apart from his qualities as a player, his attractive personality and balance make him a leader amongst his contemporaries and an asset to any team."

Terry Brotherstone
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