



Political Wings: William Wedgwood Benn, first Viscount Stansgate

Alun Wyburn-Powell

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This is the first biography of Rt. Hon. William Wedgwood Benn DSO, DFC, first Viscount Stansgate, cabinet minister under MacDonald and Attlee, Air Commodore with active service in both World Wars, defector from the Liberals to Labour over his dispute with Lloyd George, and father of Tony Benn. Benn served in the army and RAF during the First World War (when he took part in the first parachute drop behind enemy lines at night) and in the Second World War he reached the rank of acting Air Commodore). His eldest son Michael, heir to the viscountcy, died on active service with the RAF, leaving his second son Tony to inherit the title and a seat in the House of Lords. Before his death, Tony Benn gave extensive interviews for this book. His brother, David has also provided interviews and material, as have other members of the family including Stephen Benn (now the third Viscount Stansgate). Extensive paperwork left by William Wedgwood Benn (now in the Parliamentary Archives) including his diary and unfinished, unpublished autobiography were all utilised in the construction of this biography. Alun Wyburn-Powell has managed to construct a biographical study of real force, weaving together snippets from Benn's own private papers with insights from his family and colleagues in order to create an authentic impression of Benn and the times in which he lived.

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