



Down she came

After having survived about 150 years in the same spot, it seems rather a shame to have to cut it down, but for the sake of progress it had to go. The tree that used to stand at the end of Fittin Street in Midland, has now been reduced to little more than a stump and some sawdust, to the dismay of some local residents.

Staff photo

Bookworm

No literary masterpiece

by Shirley Whittington
The recent death of Lord Thomson of Fleet will undoubtedly stimulate interest in his only autobiographical work — *After I Was Sixty* — published by Nelson, one of Thomson's several publishing houses.

After I Was Sixty is described as "a chapter of autobiography," and deals with his awesome business history in Britain, which began in 1954.

He says that year was a bleak time in his life. His partnership with Jack Kent Cooke had dissolved, his wife had died, and he had lost a bid for a PC seat in the riding of York Centre.

He purchased the *Edinburgh Scotsman*, and immediately earned a reputation, even among the Scots, as a tight-fisted manager. He wasn't made to feel welcome in Scotland, even though it was his ancestral homeland, but he took

solace in the continuing growth of his Canadian empire, and in his villa in the Braid Hills district, which he filled with antiques.

A lightly publicized fact about the newspaper baron is his passion for antique rings. "Don't ask me why...they are beautiful and of course they have appreciated enormously in value."

Thomson merged two evening newspapers in Scotland, and makes this interesting comment on a two-newspaper town. "Two rival newspapers, each struggling to make ends meet...are not performing...as one healthy and prosperous one could."

He adds, "When a single newspaper takes over in that situation, it does not necessarily charge double for advertising, but it can at least safely raise its rate to cover...costs." Commercial television

was his next venture. Thomson contacted British brass and aristocracy. They all refused to support his TV venture, and he takes great glee in listing their names as doubters who turned down an opportunity to make big money.

"This was in fact, when he made his now famous remark about television ownership being 'a license to print money'. He admits that it may have been injudicious 'but it was certainly right, and weren't certain people sorry now they'd refused to join me!'"

The Sunday Times was the next triumph. Shaking his head over the British indifference to advertising, he successfully introduced the yellow pages.

"I still can't get over the antipathy to the art and skill of salesmanship, in Britain," he says. "Napoleon used to call the British a nation of shop-keepers, but that must have altered a long time ago."

Control of publishing, of periodicals and of books, followed. Near the end of his life, Thomson's empire stretched to include North Sea oil exploration, and a travel agency.

After I Was Sixty also proudly chronicles the meetings Thomson had with contemporary political leaders. He discussed wheat farming

with Krushchev, met Indira Gandhi ("Beautiful...cold, pre-occupied...") Golda Meir and Chou En Lail. He reports a remarkably tasteless exchange with President Nasser from whom he tried to buy an English language Egyptian newspaper. "You'll have to pay me for it," said Nasser. "You're not an Arab," said Thomson. "You're a Jew."

He reports that the remark "tickled Nasser greatly."

The Thomson empire now passes to his son Kenneth. In *After I Was Sixty*, there is evidence that Roy Thomson planned things carefully. "The business is now all tied up in trusts for future Thomsons, so that death duties will not tear it apart. With the fortune will go also responsibilities...the conditions of the trusts ensure that control of the business will remain in Thomson hands for 80 years."

Roy Thomson declares that his favourite reading is balance sheets, with crime and detective novels a second favourite.

After I Was Sixty reads like a balance sheet at times with its painstaking details of deals and offers and counter-offers. It's no literary masterpiece, but it's a fascinating account of 20 years in the life of a man who was not always beloved, but who was never lazy.

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We are not quite sure if we are having Summer or it Spring or Fall. The weather has not been too kind to our vacationers but one has to be grateful for the people who are in hospitals or rest homes, along with those that have to work during the summer months.

We almost feel as though the pickling season should begin any day now and of the great urge to put on a nice beef stew because of the cool weather. There is certainly no way that we are able to dictate to the weather man.

When we really think about not being able to direct all things that influence our lives it is gratifying knowing that even the best man or woman in the world is left out of some decisions that affect our destiny.

Our summer has been exciting with an unusual number of activities planned and executed by our various Service Clubs and Chambers of Commerce. The carnival like atmosphere has given everyone an opportunity to participate. It is a great time to meet old friends and neighbours.

Contact Centre is busy taking information about coming events for the Fall. If you are planning a happening let us know and we will list it in our files so that when people call in we will be able to have precise information for them. There are times when even we miss seeing an announcement in the local papers, and consequently it does not get listed with us.

Our volunteers have been just great. They have responded to our call for drivers and runners for Meals-on-Wheels. If you would like to help your call would mean a great deal to us.

Just a reminder to young Mothers that will be needing day care service for their children. We have several fine Centres, just give us a call at 526-9333 and we will give you full details.

We read with interest an editorial that suggested that we give serious thought to giving some of our time to serving our Community and its many Service Clubs, Churches, Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, Contact Centre. We agree that it is most rewarding to ones inner self. Try it, you will be surprised.

Contact Centre needs Volunteers today, we need you!

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