

U DX83

Letter of W.E. Gladstone

1868

Biographical Background:

William Ewart Gladstone was born on 29 December 1809 and later became British Prime Minister on four separate occasions. His political career spanned over sixty years and also included serving as Chancellor of the Exchequer four times and gaining the distinction of being Britain's oldest Prime Minister aged 84.

In 1832, Gladstone entered parliament for the first time as a Conservative and as part of Sir Robert Peel's cabinet. Gladstone became a Peelite after the Conservative Party split and in 1859 the Whigs, Radicals and Peelites merged to form the Liberal party. Taking office as Chancellor, Gladstone was a staunch supporter of electoral reform and low public spending, a commitment which earned him the sobriquet 'The People's William'.

During his first tenure as Prime Minister (1868-1874), Gladstone introduced several reforms including secret voting and the Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. He was defeated in the elections of 1874 and stepped down as leader of the Liberal Party but was back in office as Prime Minister following the 1880 general election. His second ministry witnessed the passing of repressive measures in Ireland but also better legal rights for Irish tenant farmers and the passage of the Third Reform Act.

Gladstone became Prime Minister for a third time in 1886 but was defeated in the House of Commons over his proposed Irish Home Rule bill which resulted in a split in the Liberal Party. He formed his last government in 1892 and managed to get the Second Irish Home Rule Bill past the Commons although it was later defeated in the House of Lords. His opposition to increased naval expenditure led to his resignation as Prime Minister in March 1894 and he left Parliament in 1895. He died just three years later. He had become well known for his oratory, religiosity and liberalism as well as for his rivalry with the Conservative Leader Benjamin Disraeli and his poor relations with Queen Victoria.

Mr Mitchell was a prominent Liberal who lived in or near to Wigan.

Custodial history:

Donated by Prof. W.C.E. Higginson, University of Hull, 14 Dec 1972

Description:

This small collection contains one photocopy of a letter from William Gladstone relating to the possibility of standing for the South West Lancashire constituency.

Extent: 1 item

Hull History Centre: Letter of W.E. Gladstone

Related material:

Thomasson Family Papers [U DX163]

Other repositories:

St Deiniol's Gladstone Library, Hawarden, Flintshire

Letters of William Gladstone, Liverpool Record Office and Local History Service [Ref. 920 GLA]

Access conditions: Access will be granted to any accredited reader

U DX83/1	Photocopy of a letter: W.E. Gladstone to a Mr Mitchell of Ashton in [Makerfield] Politely declines to stand for the South West Lancashire constituency and suggests Mr Griffith's claims are stronger. Gladstone stood for this seat but lost, although he won the seat for Greenwich. 1 item	8 Aug 1868
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