

BRUCE, WILLIAM NAPIER (1858 - 1936), educationalist and lawyer

Name: William Napier Bruce
Date of birth: 1858
Date of death: 1936
Parent: Nora Bruce (née Napier)
Parent: Henry Austin Bruce
Gender: Male
Occupation: educationalist and lawyer
Area of activity: Education; Law
Author: James Frederick Rees

Second son of the **1st lord Aberdare**, **Henry Austin Bruce**, and Nora, daughter of Sir William Napier. He was born 18 January 1858 at Duffryn, Aberdare. He was educated at Harrow and Balliol College, Oxford, where he graduated (1880) in the Honour School of 'Litterae Humaniores.' In 1883 he was called to the Bar from Lincoln's Inn and three years later entered upon his long career as an assistant commissioner in the Charity Commission under the Endowed Schools Acts. His duties enabled him to become thoroughly acquainted with the problems of secondary education in England and Wales. It was natural, therefore, that he should be appointed secretary of the Commission on secondary education which collected evidence under the chairmanship of James Bryce in 1894-5; when the details of the Welsh Intermediate Education Act of 1889 were being worked out, Bruce was the representative of the Charity Commissioners at the conferences of the several joint education committees of Wales and Monmouthshire. When the educational side of the Charity Commissioners was transferred in 1900 to the Board of Education he became an assistant secretary; in 1903 he was appointed a principal assistant secretary of the Board.

Until his retirement in 1921 he continued to exercise great influence on the development of secondary education, especially in the schools established under the Education Act of 1902. He was chairman of the departmental committee on the organization of secondary education in Wales (1919-20); this committee reported in September 1920, recommending *inter alia* the setting up of a national council, the chief function of which should be advisory and deliberative.

Bruce served as member of the departmental committee on Welsh in the educational system in Wales (1925-7). In 1929 he succeeded **Lord Kenyon** as pro-chancellor of the University of Wales. As vice-chairman under lord Haldane of the royal commission on Welsh university education (1916-18) he was well acquainted with the problems of the federal university, and he presided with unflinching tact over its inner councils and with natural dignity on all its public occasions. *The Life of General Sir Charles Napier* (London, 1885) and *Sir A. Henry Layard: Autobiography and Letters* (London, 1903), which he edited, were his chief publications. Bruce was made a C.B. in 1905 and a C.H. in 1935. He died at Bath, 20 March 1936.

Author

Sir James Frederick Rees, (1883 - 1967)

Sources

Percy E. Watkins, *A Welshman Remembers. An autobiography, etc.* (Cardiff 1944)

T. I. Ellis, *The Development of Higher Education in Wales* (Wreccsam 1935)

The Times, 21 March 1936

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [William Napier Bruce](#)

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