

Alan Vincent Gandar-Dower's Brothers

Eric Leslie Gandar Dower (1894 – 4 October 1987) was a Scottish Unionist Party politician and businessman. He was educated at Brighton College, like his elder brother Leonard, and at Jesus College, Cambridge, and trained for the stage at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, touring with a number of theatre companies.

Eric established Aberdeen Airport and pioneered Scottish Air Lines between Aberdeen and Edinburgh, Glasgow, Wick, Thurso, Kirkwall, and Stromness, as well as the first British/Norwegian Air Line between Newcastle and Stavanger in 1937. He served as a Flight Lieutenant in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve from 1940 to 1943.

Following the War, he was elected as Conservative Member of Parliament for Caithness and Sutherland at the 1945 general election with a majority of just 6 in the tightest ever three-way marginal: just 61 votes separated him from the third-placed candidate, Liberal Party parliamentary leader Archibald Sinclair. Sinclair had acted as Secretary of State for Air during World War II and could not spend much time in his constituency, Britain's northernmost mainland seat.

Eric had based his 1945 election platform on serving as a wartime MP until the end of the conflict with Japan. His election address stated, "If I am returned I shall resign when Japan is beaten and stand again at the by-election which will follow, so that you can decide whether you wish me to continue as your representative in peace" and followed this up with an eve-of-poll "special message" stating, "Note - Gandar Dower, if elected, has pledged himself to resign at the end of the Japanese war and to stand again at the resultant by-election."

In his victory speech at the declaration, he said, "Don't regard me as a Unionist. I am a member of the National Party until the end of the Japanese war, when you will then have a chance again to put me in or out." After the war ended on 14 August 1945, Gandar Dower did not resign, but pledged to do so "later". On 14 February 1946, he announced that he would shortly be resigning his seat but later withdrew the resignation.

On 28 December 1946, Eric offered to resign in the New Year, citing the marriage of his Private Secretary as a reason, but he withdrew this resignation on 11 February, citing the "rumours and cross-rumours" in the press which had been caused by his announcement, and how they "have been damaging to the Unionist cause." On 30 June 1947, *The Times* reported, "With the forthcoming fusion of the Caithness and Sutherland Conservative Associations it is certain that there will be no by-election in this constituency. Backed by the unanimous support of both associations, Mr. E.L. Gandar Dower, the Conservative MP for Caithness and Sutherland, will hold his seat probably until the next General Election."

At a 15 September 1948 meeting of his local Conservative Association, he attempted to bring matters to a head by calling on the association to renominate him as the Conservative candidate for a by-election that he now intended to trigger. He was overwhelmingly defeated, with only 8 members voting for him to follow through with this course of action and numerous members expressing their dissatisfaction. In response to this, he declared that he would be standing at the next general election as an Independent, and from 3 October 1948, he withdrew from the Conservative whip. On 12 December 1948, the Caithness and Sutherland Conservatives selected David Robertson to replace Gandar Dower. In the event, Gandar Dower decided not to seek re-election at all, and he retired at the 1950 general election.

Kenneth Cecil Gandar-Dower (31 August 1908 – 12 February 1944) was a leading English sportsman, aviator, explorer and author. Born at his parents' home in Regent's Park, London, Gandar-Dower was the youngest son of independently wealthy Joseph Wilson Gandar-Dower and his wife Amelia Frances Germaine. Two of his elder brothers, Eric and Alan, served as Conservative Members of Parliament.

Kenneth attended Harrow School, where he played cricket, association football, Eton Fives and rackets and, with Terence Rattigan, wrote for *The Harrovian*. He then received a scholarship to Trinity College, Cambridge in 1927 to read History, gaining an upper second. More important, he won athletic blues in billiards, tennis and real tennis, Rugby Fives, Eton Fives and rackets. In addition, he edited *Granta* magazine and chaired the Trinity debating society.

Kenneth became a leading tennis player, competing in a number of tournaments throughout the 1930s, including Wimbledon and the French Championships. He was nicknamed "The undying retriever" for his ability to run large distances during matches. At the 1932 Queen's Club Championship in London he had his greatest tennis success when he defeated Harry Hopman in three sets. Newspaper reports stated that he "had Hopman perplexed with his unorthodox game and the number of astonishingly low volleys from apparently impossible positions."

Kenneth also won the British Amateur Squash championships in 1938 and continued to play cricket competitively throughout the 1930s. He also twice won the principal trophy in Eton Fives – the Kinnaird Cup – in 1929 and 1932, and was in the defeated pair in the 1931 final. He caused a reputation for himself in real tennis through his tactic of getting to the net as quickly as possible and volleying everything in sight. This was frowned upon by traditionalists and it was considered that he "disrupted the game for a while".

In June 1932, with minimal flying experience, Kenneth entered the King's Cup Air Race and "soon became one of the most colourful aviators of his era", making one of the first flights from England to India.

In 1934 he led an expedition to Mount Kenya and the Aberdare Range in an attempt to capture a Marozi, a spotted lion rumoured to exist. While he failed to capture or photograph a marozi (which remains undiscovered), Gandar-Dower did find three sets of tracks believed to be marozi and discovered that locals differentiated marozi from lions or leopards. He spent 1935 and 1936 in the Belgian Congo and Kenya, where he climbed active volcanoes and produced a definitive map of Mount Sattima.

Kenneth returned to England in 1937 with twelve cheetahs with the intention of introducing cheetah racing to Great Britain. After six months' quarantine and six months' adapting themselves to the changed climatic conditions at Harringay and Staines stadia, the cheetahs began to race at Romford Greyhound Stadium, disproving the belief that greyhounds were the fastest animals in the world, as the cheetahs were able to clip seconds off almost every greyhound record, including the best time for 355 yards, which was 20.75 seconds until broken by cheetah Helen, who covered the distance in 19.8 seconds.

However, cheetah racing ultimately failed as the cheetahs were not competitive enough with no interest in pursuing the hare and could not negotiate tight bends. Kenneth also caused uproar at the Queen's Club when he brought a male cheetah into the bar on a leash.

He was also a successful author, writing about his adventures. His titles include:

- *Amateur Adventure*, based on his flight to India, was published in 1934. In a contemporary book review, *Flight Magazine* wrote that Gandar-Dower "produced an amusing record of his adventures ... that nearly everyone will recommend their friends to read."^[15]

- *Into Madagascar*, published in 1943, is a history/travelogue, in which he reports that the nineteenth century Malagasy monarch Queen Ranavalona I had "a passion for sewing her subjects up in sacks and making use of the first-class facilities offered by her capital in the matter of vertical drops."^[16]
- *The Spotted Lion*, published in 1937, recorded Gandar-Dower's search for the marozi through Kenya. *The Spotted Lion* has been credited with bringing the marozi to the attention of the world.^[17]
- *Abyssinian patchwork: an anthology*, written in the mid-1930s but not released until 1949, covered the mistreatment of Ethiopians under Italian Fascism.^[18]
- *Inside Britain* and *Outside Britain* were co-written in 1938 with James Riddell. Satires, they are described as having "much gentle irony and are occasionally clairvoyant in their political speculation."^[1]

At the outbreak of World War II Kenneth was in the Belgian Congo photographing gorillas. Returning to England, he then worked on the Mass-Observation project with Tom Harrisson before being hired by the Government of Kenya to improve its public relations with the native inhabitants, producing a number of works that the government considered "excellent".¹ Later he acted as a war correspondent, covering campaigns in Abyssinia and Madagascar, travelling vast distances by bicycle and canoe. At Tamatave in eastern Madagascar he came under heavy fire, leaping from an amphibious vessel carrying a bowler hat, a typewriter, and an umbrella.

On 6 February 1944 Kenneth boarded the SS *Khedive Ismail* at Kilindini Harbour at Mombasa, bound for Colombo. While approaching Addu Atoll in the Maldives, on 12 February 1944, the vessel was attacked by Japanese submarine I-27. Struck by two torpedoes, the *Khedive Ismail* sank in two minutes, with a death toll of 1297, Gandar-Dower among them.

Gandar-Dower's obituary in *Wisden* stated that "he was one of the most versatile player of games of any period." A wealthy man, Gandar-Dower left over £75,000 in his will.

Leonard Francis Gandar-Dower (1890-1917) Was a 2nd Lieutenant in the 2nd Bn. Hon. Artillery Company and killed in action on 3rd May 1917. He is commemorated on the Arras Memorial.

Ronald Willie Gandar-Dower (1892-1963) Was High Sheriff of Bedfordshire in 1933 and lived at Clifton House, Shefford.