Acknowledgements

This book explores how the Scottish Conservatives, who had opposed devolution and the movement for a Scottish Parliament during the 1990s, attempted to mobilise politically following their 'wipe out' at the 1997 general election. Cast to the geographical and institutional margins, senior Tory Party strategists in Dumfries and Galloway, a former stronghold for the Conservative Party in Scotland, worked from the assumption that they had endured their own 'crisis' in representation. The material consequences of this crisis included losses of financial and other resources, legitimacy and local knowledge for Tory activists based locally. This book ethnographically describes the processes, practices and relationships that Tory Party activists enacted during the 2003 Scottish and local government elections. Its central theme is that, having asserted that the difficulties they faced constituted problems of knowledge, local Conservatives became 'banal' activists. Believing themselves to be lacking in the data and information necessary for successful mobilisation during parliamentary elections, local Tory Party strategists attempted to address their knowledge 'crisis' by burying themselves in paperwork and petty bureaucracy. Importantly, such practices have often escaped the attention of anthropologists and other scholars of activism because they appear everyday and mundane and are therefore less noticeable. Bringing them into view analytically has important implications for socio-cultural anthropologists, sociologists and other scholars interested in 'new' ethnographic objects like activism, bureaucracy, democracy, elections and modern knowledge practices.

The ethnographic research on which this book draws was conducted in Dumfries and Galloway between September 2001 and July 2003 while I was studying for my PhD in Social Anthropology at the University of Edinburgh. Financial support for this research was provided through a Pre-Dissertation Fieldwork Grant (no. 6747) from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. An Overseas Research Students (ORS) Award coupled with a Social Sciences Overseas Studentship from the University of Edinburgh made pursuing this study financially possible for me, as did a number of small grants from the Newby Trust, the Sir Ernest Cassell Educational Trust and the Sir Richard Stapley Educational Trust. Furthermore, this research began in the context of

an MSc degree, which I commenced with the support of a British Chevening scholarship funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth office. I also thank the Arkleton Trust, which, in awarding me the David Moore Memorial Award in 2000, gave both financial support and a welcome vote of confidence in my research during its early stages. I thank all of these funding bodies, organisations and charitable trusts for their support.

I remain indebted to many individuals and organisations – both within and outwith Dumfries and Galloway – that helped me during my fieldwork. As is often the case in ethnographic research, they are too numerous to name here. However, I want to make particular mention of the staff and students at the Crichton Campus of the University of Glasgow who provided me with a warm welcome when I arrived in Dumfries and were important in facilitating my early networking throughout the region. I would also like to acknowledge the help I received from the friendly and approachable staff at the Boundary Commission for Scotland and at Dumfries and Galloway Libraries. Finally, this book would not exist without the cooperation and support of the dozens of activists, staff and volunteers with whom I worked in the two Conservative Party Associations within Dumfries and Galloway: the Dumfries Constituency Conservative Association (DCCA) and the Galloway and Upper Nithsdale Conservative Association (GUNCA).

Parts of this book have been presented at conferences, seminars and workshops in Bristol, Cambridge, Chicago, Edinburgh, Keele, London, Manchester, Montreal, San José, Surrey and Washington DC. I am grateful for the feedback and constructive criticism I have received from colleagues. In addition, an earlier version of Chapter 4 was published in the journal *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* (PoLAR) (Smith 2006) after being awarded an Honorable Mention in the 2005 Student Paper Prize Competition run by the Association of Political and Legal Anthropology, and parts of Chapter 6 were published in the *Journal of Legal Anthropology* (Smith 2008). I thank Annelise Riles and Narmala Halstead, both editors of these journals at the time, and several anonymous reviewers for constructively engaging with my research. I also want to thank Natasha Maw and Laurie Taylor from BBC Radio Four's *Thinking Allowed* programme for taking an enthusiastic interest in my work. Their show based on my fieldwork was broadcast on Wednesday 24 August 2005.

I have now held a number of postdoctoral fellowships during which I have been able to set aside time to re-draft my PhD research as a book monograph. These have included: a Postdoctoral Fellowship (PTA-026-27-1102) funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), which I held at Edinburgh (2006–7); the Sociological Review Fellowship at Keele University (2007–8); and an Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH) Postdoctoral Fellowship, again at Edinburgh (2008). I also held an Early Career Fellowship funded by the Leverhulme Trust (ECF/2008/0125) in the School of Government and Society at the University of Birmingham (2008–10). I am grateful to all of these funding organisations for their financial support and to the following individuals in particular, who have assisted me along the way: Caroline Baggaley,

Michaela Benson, Francesca Bray, Sarah Green, John Holmwood, Charles Jedrej, Susanne Langer, Susan Manning, Rolland Monro and Anthea Taylor.

I would like to acknowledge the tireless support of my PhD supervisors, Dr Iris Jean-Klein and Dr Jonathan Hearn. Both were sources of inspiration before and during my fieldwork but especially after my return. I have benefited greatly from the many discussions I had with them and for the help they provided me in bringing this study to fruition. Taking on the supervision of my PhD midway through my fieldwork, Iris played a particularly pivotal role in keeping my research on track. At Manchester University Press, Tony Mason was an enthusiastic advocate for this project right from the start and has been an affable interlocutor ever since. Jennifer Howard also provided valuable assistance, as did Sarah Hunt. I am also indebted to an anonymous reader of my manuscript and to Laura Jeffery, who read it and encouraged me. Their constructive criticism has greatly improved the book, although the usual caveats apply: I alone am responsible for any failings or mistakes within the text.

Carrying out ethnographic research in a sparsely populated region of Scotland proved almost impossible without access to private transportation. This was a formidable challenge for an impoverished PhD student. For helping me to overcome such difficulties, and for providing enormous amounts of moral, logistical and other kinds of support throughout my fieldwork (often at very short notice), I am indebted to my parents-in-law Ted and Andrena Thompson. As Hunter S. Thompson (no relative, of course!) once noted (1994: 13–14), when studying politics one finds ‘unexpected friends on both sides’ and I would like to particularly acknowledge the many conversations I have had with Ted, usually after dinner on a Sunday night. As a long-time member and supporter of the Labour Party, Ted’s perspective on local politics always struck me as insightful and refreshing and I believe this research was greatly improved by his valuable counterperspective on the local Conservative Party. I would also like to acknowledge the support of other members of my family, back home in Australia and here in the United Kingdom: Brian Degenhardt, Georgina Smith, Lachlan Smith and my mother, Jane Smith. Sadly, my father Thomas George Smith (1948–96) did not live long enough to see me complete my education in the United Kingdom let alone write this book. If he is looking down on us now, I hope he is pleased with the results.

Finally, I would like to express my love and deepest gratitude to my wife, Rachael Thompson, for her patience and support, as well as our daughter, Ciara. I never anticipated that two such wonderful people would make my coming to Dumfries so much more worthwhile and ultimately change my life.