

LONDON ELECTORAL HISTORY – STEPS TOWARDS DEMOCRACY

1.10 SHORT SUMMARY: PROTO-DEMOCRACY

This short summary explains the case for naming the electoral experience of Londoners between 1700 and 1850 as ‘proto-democracy.’

Proto-democracy is a term newly coined by this project for application to eighteenth-century London.¹ It indicates an extensive but not universal popular participation in the official electoral process, undertaken with full debate to choose public representatives to serve in Parliament or local government office for a specified term. The reference to proto-democracy should not be taken to imply that the later coming of complete adult suffrage was inevitable. Nor that full democracy was or is a perfect culmination of history. But these developments within eighteenth-century London did constitute steps, however winding the pathway, which eventually led to democracy.

The concept of proto-democracy is thus vital to highlight an under-appreciated truth about Britain’s mixed constitution before reform in 1832. Some constituencies were undoubtedly oligarchic, where political participation was confined to the few, and sometimes to the very few.² These were the scandals upon which the political reformers concentrated their polemical fire. But there were also a number of large popular constituencies, where the state of play was quite different. Their alternative experiences are known in outline but have been insufficiently appreciated. Across eighteenth-century London in particular, there was a political culture of electoral participation which was not confined purely to elections for parliament but which extended to a startling range of elections for civic and parochial positions. This participatory world was so intensive and sustained that it deserves the name of proto-democracy.

To substantiate this claim, a new database has been compiled that documents some half a million surviving records of ‘voting acts’ across London between 1700 and 1850. Therein are the details of all named

electors, their addresses, their occupations or livery companies, as well as their individual electoral choices.³ And the database would have been yet fuller, had full records survived for all the contests that are known to have taken place within the metropolis in this period.⁴ The tally of half a million voting acts is therefore a minimum. It should be noted, however, that these aggregates refer to the number of voting acts, not the number of voters. Some of these individuals went to the polls in successive elections (and their voting careers can be traced accordingly),⁵ while electors in multi-member constituencies (like Westminster and the City) were entitled to more than one vote apiece.⁶

1.10.1 Components of proto-democracy: cross-class participation

There are three big components to be highlighted about the proto-democratic experience of metropolitan London's voters. But one clear limitation should be noted immediately. The political world in this period was publicly and officially a male province, as the British political system remained before 1869, when some women gained the vote in local elections, and before 1918, when most women gained the vote in parliamentary elections, and 1928 when all women did so.⁷ In the eighteenth century, the female interest was theoretically held to be subsumed into that of the male householders, in their capacity as husbands and fathers. Behind the scenes, and sometimes in front of them too, some women did play active roles as campaigners and influence-brokers. Publicly, however, they were excluded. 'The right to vote is the much admired and envied liberty of an Englishman. Women, infants, idiots, and madmen are absolutely disqualified from the exercise of the privilege', as a commentator noted in 1789,⁸ not intending to be controversial.

Female exclusion was a matter of valid concern for later reformers. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, it was the shared maleness of the political world that eased the possibility of cross-class interaction, as happened in London. It would have been much more difficult had the gender barriers been under challenge as well. So the shared cross-class nature of voting is one key component.

Over the period from 1700 to 1850, there were simply very many more elections, for many more posts, within the expanding area of metropolitan London than hitherto appreciated by historians. The LEH has found evidence relating to 873 contested elections at all levels of

politics within metropolitan London between 1700 and 1852 (shown in section 8) – and that total necessarily excludes contests for which no evidence has survived.

Participation in such events, whilst clearly not an everyday occurrence, was therefore a ‘live’ experience for many individuals. Indeed, those men who had valid electoral qualifications had many different occasions to cast a vote.⁹ For a start, the sprawling metropolitan area of ‘greater’ London contained four large parliamentary constituencies. Between 1700 and 1832, there were the cities of London and Westminster, the first returning, exceptionally, four MPs and the latter returning two. South of the river Thames, there was also the borough of Southwark (two MPs); and to the north, the county of Middlesex (two MPs). Electors in multi-member constituencies were not obliged to use all their votes. That gave considerable scope for tactical decisions. Hence voters could either support candidates for all the seats in contention (in the London constituency an elector could cast up to four votes; in the other constituencies, up to two) or they could, in the eighteenth-century term, ‘plump’ for just one, thus in effect voting negatively against the rival candidates.

It was characteristic of the pre-reform system that the franchises of these large constituencies were not standardised and were open to dispute at the margins. In Westminster and Southwark, all adult male rate-payers were entitled to vote, giving these areas a very sizeable electorate, while the voters in the parliamentary constituency of London were drawn from the membership of the City livery companies, as its guilds were termed, giving London a very broadly-based voting population of traders, craftsmen and professionals. Meanwhile, in Middlesex, it was the male freeholders with lands worth 40 shillings a year or more who were enfranchised. And their numbers were fast-growing in the early nineteenth century, as the intensification of building development, together with the inflation of land values, brought more and more men into the electoral fold.

Socially, the range of these potential voters was extensive in all four constituencies, including most men in the upper ranks, as well as large numbers of traders, dealers, and craftsmen who fell into the indeterminate ‘middling’ condition.¹⁰ In Westminster and Southwark, the electoral system was even more inclusive. The rate-paying qualification included a considerable number of relatively poor artisans and some labourers. Indeed, in late eighteenth-century Westminster the electorate amounted

to approximately 75 per cent of the adult *householders* (including many who rented as well as owned properties).¹¹ Many Westminster electors would have been disenfranchised in 1832, had not a special clause been incorporated into the Reform Act to allow all existing voters to retain their rights for the duration of their lifetimes.

Of course, it is worth recalling that, in this period, far from all parliamentary seats were contested. The importance of gaining support from the metropolis, however, meant that many eighteenth-century politicians looked hopefully at the various London seats, notwithstanding the cost of canvassing and the chance of rejection at the polls. In the years between 1700 and 1831, there were thirty general elections. Of those, there were contests on 14 occasions in Middlesex, 20 in Westminster, 23 in Southwark, and as many as 28 in London. There were also numerous by-elections. Some of those were fought with great energy, such as the famous 1788 contest for one of the two Westminster seats, when local issues such as the unpopular shop tax¹² were canvassed alongside the rivalry between the pro-government candidate, who supported the Prime Minister Pitt, and the opposition candidate, who favoured Charles James Fox and the opposition Whigs.

Turnout at all these contests is particularly difficult for historians to calculate. Since there was no formal system of election registration before 1832, there is no known total of potential electors against which the recorded number of actual voters can be compared.

Circumstantial evidence, however, suggests the unsurprising conclusion that, when contests were particularly heated, the turnout tended to be very high. In Westminster, there were two famous examples. At the general election of 1784 and the by-election of 1788, the supporters of Pitt's government strove mightily but unsuccessfully to oust the opposition Whigs and their leader Charles James Fox. In the exceptionally long 1784 poll, which lasted for 40 days, only electors, who were dead or absent from the constituency or determined to abstain, failed to vote.¹³

1.10.2 Components of proto-democracy: participation in civic as well as parliamentary elections

A second point of importance then follows. While parliamentary contests constituted one key component of the London electoral experience in this period, it was far from the only one. A striking discovery has been the sheer number and variety of elections at civic and parochial level.

These elections are hardly known to historians. But a systematic trawl through the eighteenth-century press and other contemporary sources has yielded much significant new information.

Metropolitan electors in different constituencies and on different occasions were invited to vote for urban office-holders, for county coroners, and for ward and parish officials: not every year, but from time to time. For example, there were 11 known polls for the post of Middlesex coroner in the years between 1700 and 1832; and it is likely that other polls were unreported (especially in the early eighteenth century). Meanwhile, the liverymen in London were particularly busy with annual opportunities for polling. There were elections for the posts of lord mayor and chamberlain, as well as for the sheriffs, the auditors, and the aleconners who checked the quality of beer sold in the City markets. Within the wards, there were elections for aldermen, common councilmen and civic officials such as the beadles. Even the largely honorific office of bridge master of London Bridge was frequently contested, as the two bridge masters held substantial cash balances which made the post attractive.¹⁴

Together the tally of 873 recorded contests comprise: 174 parliamentary contests across metropolitan London between 1700 and 1852;¹⁵ 93 contests for municipal posts in London between 1700 and 1832;¹⁶ 595 recorded contests for wardmote posts such as common councilman, alderman, or beadle over the same timespan;¹⁷ and the 11 contests within Middlesex for the post of coroner between 1733 and 1830.¹⁸

It should be noted, moreover, that the technical organisation of all these electoral contests was carried out not by the central government but by the relevant parochial or municipal officials who acted as returning officers. In the case of some of the most parochial contests (for example, to choose ward-beadles), it may even be that non-freemen householders and women were allowed to cast a vote, although the evidence remains unclear.

Clearly, not every liveryman troubled to cast his vote every time. And not every post was contested every year. The amount of political activity was a matter for the local population to establish. National politicians, whether in or out of office, might try to encourage their supporters to take action on various issues; but the extent of canvassing and lobbying depended upon those within the constituency, who also had their own issues at stake. Hence there were periods when personal and party strife was keen, as well as periods when the lines of party

demarcation were relatively more blurred. But, putting all the evidence together for the prolonged period from 1700 to 1850, it can be shown that the City of London electorate faced a contested election approximately once a year. That made it the much most active and experienced electorate to be found anywhere in the country.

Other constituencies within the metropolitan areas could not match that. Nonetheless, their range of elections was still impressive. Overall, aggregating the evidence of parliamentary and local government contests, it seems likely that during the period from 1700 to 1850, approximately 500,000 men within the metropolis as a whole went to the polls on different occasions, casting between them, in the multi-member constituencies with multiple votes at each election, over a million votes. This indicated, for those within the system, a participant civic culture.

Open voting underlined the importance of personal commitment. Voters were required to cast their votes in the full gaze of the public, who gathered to witness the process. Elections were thus community events. It is true that the system might become corrupted, with electors intimidated and pressurised either by employers, by landlords, or by the surrounding crowds. But the principle of open voting was affirmatory: a freeborn Englishman should not fear or hesitate to 'own' his choice before witnesses. The right to vote was a trust, to be exercised with pride.

As a system, open voting was adopted in many countries. In Britain, it lasted until 1872, when at the insistence of reformers the secret ballot was introduced. Elsewhere, it had an even longer life. It continued until 1896 in parts of the United States, until 1900 in Denmark, until 1918 in Prussia, and in Hungary, remarkably, until 1938.

Historians certainly benefit from the era of open voting, since the poll-books were commonly published after contested elections.¹⁹ Thus an individual's choice was recorded for posterity,²⁰ as well as for the political groups and parties, who used these sources to organise their canvassing in following elections. That the poll books were published at all was an obvious pointer to the fact that this information was important to contemporaries.

Yet it is worth recalling that such public evidence reveals only the public deed. People's secret beliefs at the time of voting remain unknown. One striking example exists in the case of James Moody, a shoe-warehouseman. He supported the artisan London Corresponding Society, which advocated a full adult male franchise, and played an

active role as secretary of the radical campaign committee. Publicly, therefore, Moody voted for John Horne Tooke. His political friends would expect no less. But Moody had a secret. Official records, examined long after his death, reveal that he was, clandestinely, a paid informer for the government, providing regular briefings on the radical campaign.²¹ Historians cannot therefore know for sure whether Moody supported the radicals and yet betrayed his cause for money or some other motive, or whether Moody was a supporter of the status-quo who infiltrated the radicals in order to undermine them, or whether Moody was an opportunist with no real convictions either way.²²

Nevertheless, people's electoral choices recorded unequivocally their public stance, whatever their private thoughts and feelings. Voting for one candidate rather than for another imposes a clarity of decision-making that is more precise and definite than the customary prevarications and obfuscations of ordinary life. Moody was thus self-declared, under the system of open voting, as a convinced radical. And the sum of many people's private cogitations were aggregated to produce a clear electoral verdict, both at civic and parliamentary level. Historians can then analyse individual and collective decisions – and any combination in between.

1.10.3 Components of proto-democracy: taking elections seriously

Significantly, then, the third point to note is precisely the combination of the collective and the personal that applied to the eighteenth-century process of polling. Each individual had his moment of glory. He came to the polling booth, gave his name and address (if a rate-payer or freeholder) or his livery (if a liveryman) and announced his voting choice. If his qualification was challenged, he would wait until his right was confirmed in the local rate-books or livery listings.²³ Furthermore, there were no tests of literacy or of political knowledge. All that was needed was a valid qualification; and then each vote counted the same as every other vote.

At the same time, the London crowds, whether electorally qualified or not, attended contested elections in some numbers as public witnesses, marking these events as ones of communal note. Posters and handbills were circulated. There were new-minted election songs, and speeches from the candidates, as they stood on the hustings. This rich electoral material was often printed and circulated in prints and handbills. It was therefore not surprising that the election atmosphere was often carniva-

lesque. Women were found amongst the crowds, as well as men who were not voters. All present cheered or jeered the election speeches. When George Lamb was a candidate in Westminster in 1819, his oratory was drowned, wittily, by incessant ‘baaing’ from his opponents. People sported election ribbons in the colours of their favoured candidates, and drank at the hostelrys sponsored by the rival parties. And, when the result was announced, the supporters of the victors sometimes chaired the successful candidates in a celebratory procession.

Upon occasions, indeed, the crowd’s impact could be positively intimidating. Notorious election riots were, however, the exception rather than the rule. In Westminster in 1788, ‘a great body of Irish chairmen, Welsh porters ... armed with sticks and bludgeons’ were said to have threatened bystanders, who would not cheer for the opposition candidates. But that was a signally hostile account and probably exaggerated. There was only one case when the crowd impeded the proper conduct of the poll. In Westminster in 1741 an unruly mob ‘threw ... dirt, stones, sticks, dead cats and dogs’ at the tellers and the candidates. The election was declared void – interestingly, not on the grounds of public disorder, but because the high bailiff, as returning officer, had summoned troops to the hustings.

Thus the pre-reform constitutional system had its own special characteristics but its electoral processes were not as chaotic and certainly not as devoid of serious meaning as critics later claimed. Accusations were sometimes made, in the heat of the moment, alleging that some or all of the candidates had resorted to bribery and ‘treating’ (offering drink). Such tactics were, however, not really feasible in the large metropolitan constituencies, with electorates running into the thousands. Another charge was that tricksters fraudulently impersonated dead or absent electors. However, that was easier said than done, given that all voters presented themselves to local officials, who checked any queries, in front of the witnessing crowds. The few individuals who were detected as voting illegally were prosecuted at law. Moreover, the entire results could be challenged and rechecked by a Parliamentary committee, as happened after the Westminster election in 1784. But, significantly, very little malfeasance was detected. In that case, after a very close process of cross-checking by Fox’s political opponents, only few hundred votes out of many thousands were ruled to be invalid; and Fox kept his seat.²⁴ Indeed, only rarely did an eighteenth-century scrutiny actually change the electoral result.

During the whole period from 1700 to 1832, there was but one attempt

within the metropolis at reinterpreting the rules of voting and that attempt was eventually ruled as unacceptable by Parliament. It occurred in Middlesex in 1802, when campaigners for the wealthy radical Sir Francis Burdett tried an ingenious manoeuvre to broaden the franchise. A newly established co-operative milling company in Isleworth, known as the Good Intent Society, issued shares to 374 share-holders. These men were mainly poor labourers and plebeian ‘mechanics’. They voted for the radical candidate, who won the contest.

But there followed a challenge by the defeated candidate. Parliament undertook a scrutiny and ruled that such shares did not constitute the equivalent of freehold property. Instead, they had been created purely to gain electoral advantage. Hence the tactic was deemed to be illegal, under the terms of a long-established law against the sub-dividing of properties purely to create more electors. So Sir Francis Burdett lost his seat after all.²⁵ It should be noted, however, that this episode was not a case of under-cover corruption. Instead, it was an overt tactic, probably invented by a too-ingenious lawyer, and it failed because its partisanship was too blatant.

Overall, then, the eighteenth-century electoral process was informed by a serious political intent. Needless to say, not every individual, when voting, was fully informed of all the fine details. That proviso holds true in any political system, even the most democratic.

However, the eighteenth-century metropolitan electorate was sufficiently engaged to provide handsome turnouts for a large number of elections over a long period of time. Their activism included not only the more glamorous competitions for parliamentary seats, but also a string of mundane local contests for local office. In particular, the stirring Middlesex campaigns of John Wilkes in the 1770s established a vital principle, within Britain’s unwritten constitution, that the electorate rather than Parliament had the final say in deciding who was elected.²⁶ And whenever (only rarely) the Middlesex principle has been re-tested, it has been upheld by determined voters in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²⁷ (It may be noted, however, that whether elected members actually take their seats still depends upon their compliance with current parliamentary admissions procedures).

Such civic commitment was shared across a wide social range, bonding adult males in a cross-class political culture. In the queue at the polls were to be found, shoulder by shoulder, politicians and aristocrats (other than those with titles who sat in the House of Lords), bankers and

plutocrats, professional men and publicans, builders and brokers, plus multitudes of shopkeepers and artisans, and a not insignificant number of labourers, porters, and servants. Their neighbours who were not electors might well be among the crowds at the poll. The non-enfranchised were still considered as part of the local community. Yet, by the same token, such people (women and the poor) lacked any direct input in resolving the issues, party rivalries, and occasional ideologies at stake in these elections.²⁸

In other words, the electors were closer to the levers of power within their constituencies than were the very poor; and the electors had regular opportunities of expressing choice between rival candidates, as electors in democratic systems do today. The elections were thus meaningful to those who voted, however obscure such contests may later seem to historians.

1.10.4 London's proto-democratic civic society

Bolstered by this evidence of London's participatory (male) political culture, long before parliamentary reform in 1832, it was feasible for radical reformers to call for the application of a full adult male franchise. They had seen that voters outside the ranks of the elite could take a sustained and meaningful interest in politics. A few bold visionaries even argued that women too should have the vote.

London was thus a prime test case for reformers. As its population and geographical extent continued to expand mightily in the early nineteenth century, it became a notorious grievance that the men, both rich and 'middling', who lived in the newly-urbanised areas outside the four established constituencies were all excluded from voting. At the same time, proto-democratic London provided a reassurance. When worried traditionalists expressed fears that even a modest extension of the franchise, as proposed in 1832, would lead to social anarchy, the reformers were able to point, conversely, to the responsible behaviour of the existing London voters. Thomas Babington Macaulay did that explicitly in December 1831. In one of his celebrated speeches in favour of reform, he stressed that the London constituencies, far from being wild hotbeds of extremism, were 'famed for the meritorious quality of their MPs and their constituents' readiness to support that merit'.²⁹

Democracy was not yet a mainstream possibility. The British political tradition was one of oligarchic constitutionalism, with a highly

unsystematic constitution before 1832 to boot. Yet the variegated franchise incorporated a significantly popular dimension in the few large ‘open’ constituencies: Norwich, Bristol, and, above all, the four constituencies close by Parliament in the heart of the metropolis - Westminster, London, Southwark, and Middlesex. Their electors were participants in a civic culture not of democracy, but of *proto-democracy*.

Notes

- ¹ This essay on Proto-democracy, reporting upon the London Electoral Database project, began as a conference paper in Tokyo, Japan, and has been published in Japanese translation: see <http://hdl.handle.net/2065/29918> for P.J. Corfield, *Britain and modernity? Three essays* (Waseda University, 2009). A brief summary is also provided by P.J. Corfield, ‘Running for Office’, *History Today*, 62 (May 2012), pp. 3-4.
- ² The best introduction to the unreformed electoral system is F. O’Gorman, *Voters, patrons, and parties*.
- ³ It greatly extends the material originally published in the WHD.
- ⁴ The greatest gap is that of the 23 parliamentary electoral contests that are known to have taken place in the borough of Southwark between 1700 and 1832, and there are also lacunae for many local elections, which are known only by the voting totals.
- ⁵ For record linkage with reference to returning voters in a sequence of Westminster elections, see P.J. Corfield, E.M. Green and C. Harvey, ‘Westminster man: Charles James Fox and his electorate, 1780-1806’, *Parliamentary History*, 20 (2001), pp. 157-85.
- ⁶ It may be further noted that, in a few cases, a substantial individual might qualify for the vote in more than one constituency, by dint of qualifying under each local franchise. An elector was then entitled to vote in each constituency for which he was qualified. The extent to which such electoral pluralism did or did not occur within metropolitan London can now be tested by record linkage within the LED.
- ⁷ Women rate-payers were admitted to the franchise in urban elections, under the Municipal Corporations Elections Act, 32 & 33 Victoria, c. 55 (1869). Women aged 30 years and over were allowed to vote in parliamentary elections, under the Representation of the People Act 7 & 8 George V, c. 64 (1918); and the franchise was extended to all women aged over 21 under the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act, 18 & 19 George V, c. 12 (1928).

- ⁸ John Simeon, *Treatise on the law of elections* (1789), p. 50.
- ⁹ The information in this and succeeding paragraphs is drawn from a wide array of sources, footnoted throughout the accompanying sections within this website.
- ¹⁰ On this, see P.J. Corfield, 'Class by name and number in eighteenth-century England', *History*, 72 (1987), pp. 38-61; reprinted in idem (ed.), *Language, history and class* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 101-30.
- ¹¹ In the early eighteenth-century, the proportion was probably smaller, although before the era of formal electoral registration, all these calculations remain inexact.
- ¹² See variously S. Dowell, *A history of taxation and taxes in England, from the earliest times to the present day* (1965 reprint), ii, pp. 190-1; P. Horn, 'Eighteenth-century shopkeepers and the shop tax, 1785-9', *Cake and Cockhorse*, 16/8 (2006), pp. 246-58; and I. Mitchell, 'Pitt's shop tax in the history of retailing', *Local Historian*, 14 (1981), pp. 348-51.
- ¹³ For details of these contests and the evidence for estimating turnout, see *WHD*.
- ¹⁴ See details in section 1.9.2 and n. 54 within that.
- ¹⁵ See section 8 Metropolitan Polls 8.1.1-9.
- ¹⁶ See section 8 Metropolitan Polls 8.2.1-5.
- ¹⁷ See section 8 Metropolitan Polls 8.3.1-26.
- ¹⁸ See section 1.9.2; and details in section 8 Metropolitan Polls 8.4.
- ¹⁹ See variously J.M. Sims (ed.), *A handlist of British parliamentary poll books* (Leicester, 1984); J. Gibson and C. Rogers (eds), *Poll books, c.1696-1872: a directory of holdings in Great Britain* (4th edn, Bury, 1994); and E.M. Green, 'New discoveries of poll books', *Parliamentary History*, 24 (2005), pp. 332-67.
- ²⁰ Voting patterns can be analysed with reference to the voters' places of residence and to the different occupational groups, since this information was stated at the polls. No information was required about a voter's marital status, however, so nothing can be said about the potentially different choices of widowers, married men, and bachelors.
- ²¹ Moody was a paid government informer, who used the alias 'Notary', no doubt in tribute to his secretarial skills: see J.A. Hone, *For the cause of truth: radicalism in London, 1796-1821* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 63-5, 81-2, 101, 134, 137-8, 141, 148.

- ²² Corfield, Green and Harvey, ‘Westminster man’, p. 178. The poorest artisans’ political behaviour thus confirmed the analysis made long before by E.P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (1963 and many later edns), *passim*.
- ²³ Contemporary accounts of the election proceedings make it clear that the rate books were available at the hustings and were consulted in the event of a challenge. In Westminster in 1784, there were even house visits to check some of the most hotly disputed claims.
- ²⁴ Charles James Fox (1749-1806) was MP for Midhurst (1768-80) and for Westminster (1784-1806). He was in opposition for many years, holding office only briefly in the Fox-North Coalition (1782) and the Ministry of All the Talents (1806). See L.G. Mitchell, *Charles James Fox* (Oxford, 1992); *ODNB*; and discussion in section 6.2.2.
- ²⁵ Sir Francis Burdett (1770-1844), elected as MP for Boroughbridge in 1796, was MP for Westminster 1807-37 and for South Wiltshire 1837-44. A gentleman-radical before 1832, he was twice imprisoned on political charges (1810, 1820); but after 1832 his views became progressively more conservative. See *ODNB*; and notes in sections 5.2.4 and 6.2.3.
- ²⁶ John Wilkes (1727-97) was elected as MP for Aylesbury in 1757 and 1761 but was expelled from Parliament, following his criticisms of the prime minister in 1763. Between 1768 and 1774, he stood four times for Middlesex, three times having his victory quashed until in 1774 his return was unopposed. See *ODNB*; and notes in section 5.2.2.
- ²⁷ Later test-cases were those of the atheist Charles Bradlaugh, returned five times for Northampton in 1880-5 before succeeding in taking his seat; and Tony Benn, who became Viscount Stansgate by inheritance in 1960 but won the right to renounce his title and remain in the Commons, after twice winning by-elections in his Bristol South-East constituency in 1961 and 1963. London also had its precursor of Bradlaugh in the case of Lionel Nathan de Rothschild in 1847, 1849 and 1857, who as a Jew declined to swear the oath on a Christian Bible but was allowed a revised oath in 1858: see section 1.9 n.33 and section 5.3
- ²⁸ The full election contexts are documented and explained elsewhere within this website.
- ²⁹ T.B. Macaulay, *Speeches of Lord Macaulay, corrected by himself* (1886), p. 34.