

# KEY TO WEBSITE FILM, LONDON ELECTORAL HISTORY

## People/illustrations (alphabetically):

*Sir Francis Burdett, 5<sup>th</sup> baronet* (1770-1844): leading political reformer from a landowning background who married into the wealthy Coutts banking family. He was MP for Middlesex from 1802-4 and 1805-6. After losing that seat in 1806, he switched to become MP for Westminster from 1807-37. In his old age, he joined the Conservatives. Depicted: by Sir Thomas Lawrence.

*Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire* (1757-1806): renowned Whig political hostess, daughter of the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Spencer and first wife of William Cavendish, 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire. At the 1784 Westminster election, she canvassed publicly for the Whig candidate, Charles James Fox, gaining notoriety for that and for her unconventional private life. She is memorialised in numerous biographies and in the film *The Duchess* (dir. S. Dibb, 2008). Depicted: by Thomas Gainsborough; and satirised by Thomas Rowlandson as kissing plebeian electors in 1784 Westminster election to demonstrate ‘the Devonshire, or Most Approved Method of Securing Votes’.

*Thomas Cochrane, 10<sup>th</sup> Earl of Dundonald, styled as Lord Cochrane* (1775-1860): swashbuckling naval hero and controversial political reformer. Amidst a notably variegated career, he was MP for Westminster from 1807-1818. Cochrane was one model for C.S. Forester’s *Horatio Hornblower* novels and for Patrick O’Brian’s dashing naval hero Jack Aubrey, enjoyably filmed in *Master and Commander: the other side of the world* (dir. Peter Weir, 2003). Depicted: by Peter Edward Stroehling.

*Charles James Fox* (1749-1806): pertinacious Whig reformer and renowned parliamentary orator. From a wealthy family of political insiders, Charles James Fox spent most of his own long career in opposition. He was MP for Westminster from 1780-4 and 1785-1806, where he built up a following as ‘Man of the People’. He died when (briefly) holding office in the Ministry of All the Talents, which legislated to abolish the British slave trade. Depicted: by Karl Anton Hickel.

*Rev. John Horne Tooke* (1736-1812): unconventional radical from a London commercial background, who contested Westminster unsuccessfully in 1790 and 1796. In 1794, Horne Tooke (with other radical leaders) was tried for

High Treason but acquitted. In 1801-2, he became MP for the pocket borough of Old Sarum but was ousted after fresh legislation debarred clergymen from sitting in the House of Commons (a prohibition not repealed until 2001). Depicted: in engraving after portrait by Thomas Hardy.

*William Pitt the Younger* (1759-1806): prime minister, parliamentary orator, and war-time leader. From an elite background and trained in politics by his prime minister father, William Pitt the Elder, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Chatham, the Younger Pitt supported moderate reform in the 1780s but by the 1790s had moved to conservatism, though without using that political label. In 1788 he spent heavily in an unsuccessful attempt to oust Fox as MP for Westminster. Depicted: by Gainsborough Dupont.

*Francis Place* (1771-1854): radical organiser and social reformer. From a modest London artisan family, later becoming a successful master tailor, Place was a back-room organiser, notably leading in 1806 the grass-roots Westminster Committee. Place supported the extension of the franchise; universal education; birth control; and trade unionism, his greatest success being the campaign to repeal the Combination Laws (achieved 1824). Depicted: in early nineteenth-century print from portrait by Daniel Maclise.

*Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (1751-1816): playwright and Whig politician. Born in Dublin to a famed literary family, Sheridan wrote the scintillating stage hits *The Rivals* (1775) and *School for Scandal* (1777). As opposition Whig MP in 1787, he spoke brilliantly to urge the impeachment of Warren Hastings for corruption. But, by 1806-7 when Sheridan became MP for Westminster, he had subsided into the alcoholic haze that led to the sobriquet 'Sherry'. Depicted: in engraving after portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

*Sir Robert Walpole, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Orford* (1676-1745): Whig politician and first 'prime minister'. From a Norfolk gentry family, Walpole gained a fortune and a title from politics, while seeking to promote prosperity and stability. His government passed the City Elections Act (1725), increasing the rights of London's Court of Aldermen over the 'lower' Common Council; but could not curb the lobby-power of London's commercial and financial interests. Depicted: in eighteenth-century engraving after portrait by unknown artist.

*John Wilkes* (1727-97): flamboyant campaigner for free speech, franchisal reform, and voters' rights. Expelled from parliament for seditious libel, he won in Middlesex four times between 1768 and 1774, before being admitted as MP (1774-90), asserting the electorate's ultimate power to choose. Wilkes served as London's lord mayor in 1774; and, shedding his radical stance over time, enjoyed the lucrative post of City chamberlain, 1779-97. Depicted: in

etching of Wilkes and Liberty, ‘drawn from the life’ by William Hogarth.

**Quotations (alphabetically):**

*All Human Life is There* – paraphrase of the well-known declaration made on 20 Sept. 1777 to James Boswell by Dr Samuel Johnson (1709-84): ‘No, Sir: when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford’. Johnson had earlier remarked on 2 April 1775 that: ‘I think the full tide of human existence is at Charing-Cross’.

*London, that Great Cess Pool* – from *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), the first Sherlock Holmes story by Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930): ‘London, that great cesspool into which all the loungers of the empire are irresistibly drained’.

*Merry London* – the phrase alludes to traditional popular festivities, notably on Mayday with the crowning of a May Queen (or nowadays a May King): for example, such revels were witnessed in May 1557 at Fenchurch Street, City of London. Today, in a revived tradition dating from the early twentieth century, a May Queen of All London Festival is held annually at Hayes Common, Bromley.

*Modern Babylon* – a description from Benjamin Disraeli (1804-81), in his novel *Tancred: Or, the New Crusade* (1847): ‘London is a Modern Babylon’.

*The Pantomime and the Masquerade* – the words come from an appreciative litany on London’s endless variety, penned by essayist Charles Lamb (1775-1834) in a letter to William Wordsworth, dated 30 Jan. 1801: ‘The lighted shops of the Strand and Fleet Street; the innumerable trades, tradesmen and customers, coaches, wagons, playhouses; all the bustle and wickedness round about Covent Garden; the very women of the Town; the watchmen, drunken scenes, rattles; life awake, if you awake, at all hours of the night; the impossibility of being dull in Fleet Street; the crowds, the very dirt and mud, the sun shining on houses and pavements, the print-shops, the old book-stalls, parsons cheapening books, coffee houses, steams of soup from kitchens, the pantomimes – London itself a pantomime and a masquerade ...’

**Other Visuals/ in sequence as shown:**

*London Bridge*, in detail from *Panorama of London* (1647) by Wenceslaus Hollar.

*Panoramic View of London in 1751*, by T. Bowles – viewed from Pool of London, with St Paul's Cathedral (centre) and Westminster Abbey (back L).

*Four Paintings of an Election (1755-8): An Election Entertainment; Canvassing for Votes; The Polling; Chairing the Members*, by William Hogarth.

Detail from print of *The Polling*, showing the process of open voting, by William Hogarth.

*City of London's Mansion House*, in rare eighteenth-century print showing the high attics (later removed).

*Westminster Bridge* (1797), engraved by T. Tegg, from painting by Edward Dayes.