# LONDON ELECTORAL HISTORY – STEPS TOWARDS DEMOCRACY

# 9 USING THE LONDON ELECTORAL DATABASE

The LED can be searched by Search by Election and either Candidates or Parish; and also by Voter Name. Simply use the drop down menus to select the Election and Parish of choice. Entering the name of the Voter will further refine the search.

The records that are returned can then be further refined by clicking on the Voter's first name. This move will display the candidates for whom the Voter(s) opted, along with any rate data if available.

To search by Election and Candidates or Parish, select the Election date and press search. A list of available Candidates is returned, along with parishes. Clicking on a Parish returns all the voters in that parish.

By clicking on up to two of the candidates (or up to four candidates in City of London parliamentary elections) and selecting 'filter' these results can be further refined, to display only those voters who cast votes for those specified candidates.

## Search

**Search by Election and (Candidates or Parish)**

Election:        Westminster, 1837 ▾

        Search

        Reset

**Search by Voter Name**

Election:        Westminster, 1837 ▾

Surname:         [                    ]

First Name:      [                    ]

Parish:          select... ▾

        Search

        Reset

**Poll Count (Total)**

        6327

**Candidates**

You may select up to two candidates.

    1.  ☐ Evans, George DeLacey (100)
    2.  ☑ Leader, John Temple (010)
    3.  ☑ Murray, George (001)

[ Filter ]

**Parishes**

    1. ST JAMES
    2. ST ANNE
    3. ST MARGARET AND ST JOHN
    4. ST GEORGE
    5. ST CLEMENT DANES
    6. ST MARY LE STRAND
    7. ST PAUL

Notes to display:

> Each tick box represents each candidate:
> 1 = Evans, 2 = Leader, 3 = Murray.

> Each candidate has a code:
> 001 = Murray
> 010 = Leader
> 100 = Evans

> Vote codes indicate the combination of candidates for whom an elector may have polled. So:

> If the voter chose only Murray, vote code = 001.
> If the voter chose Evans and Murray, vote code = 100 + 001 = 101.
> If the voter chose Leader and Murray, vote code = 001 + 010 = 011.
> If the voter chose Evans and Leader, vote code = 010 + 100 = 110.

**NB: Further search functions for the LED will be added progressively to the website.**

## 9.1 Absent names

The LED contains thousands of individual names of adult male Londoners. However, it is worth stressing once more that many of the men who lived and worked in the greater metropolitan area did not appear in the specific sources which have been used to make the LED.

Certainly, many famous individuals are to be found: the

aesthete Horace Walpole; the artists William Blake, Godfrey Kneller, and Joshua Reynolds; the composers Thomas Arne and George Frederick Handel; and the politicians Edmund Burke, John Wilkes, John Horne Tooke – and even the prime minister Lord North himself, polling for his coalition partner Fox in 1784.

But users will search in vain for eminent personages like the historian Edward Gibbon, who was but a lodger at his home in Bentinck Street. Similarly, Dr Samuel Johnson does not appear. Although the author of the celebrated apophthegm that 'a man who is tired of London is tired of life' lived just off Fleet Street, he was not a liveryman of the City, and so not qualified to vote. Nor, in a later generation, was that quintessential Londoner Charles Dickens to be found in the LED. He lived in a handsome house in Doughty Street in St Pancras (now the Dickens Museum). Yet by 1841 he had moved home and so does not appear in the only surviving marked register for Marylebone, which dates from that year.

Hence absence from the LED does not mean that a specific individual was not in London when other sources indicate that he was. While very numerous, the LED population relates specifically to voters under the particular conditions of the pre-1832 franchise and to local tax payers, as explained elsewhere in sections 2-3. Searches for specific individuals should therefore be undertaken by using as many possible contemporary sources as possible, in addition to the LED.

## 9.2 Duplicate names

Many users will be seeking information about people whose names are known; and there are many names to find. Yet it is worth stressing again that the size of the London Electoral Database is so great, containing so many individuals sharing common characteristics, that it is prudent to seek further evidence to establish for certain an individual identification – over and above simply a surname and forename alone, or even full name plus parish of residence.

The case of William Blake stands as a proxy for the problems. In St James' parish, Westminster, much can be discovered about a self-styled 'gentleman' of that name who lived in Berwick Street; someone of that address and status polled in 1774 and in 1784; a man of that address polled in 1780, and one also appeared in the rate book of 1784. Meanwhile, in 1790 another William Blake, an impecunious engraver by trade, lived in Poland Street, less than a quarter of a mile away. Their residences were so close that the two might well have met. But Blake, the artist, poet and engraver could not match, either in means or status, the 'gentleman' in Berwick Street. Within weeks of polling in the Westminster election of 1790, Blake the engraver had left Poland Street for Hercules Buildings in Lambeth, where he worked obscurely as an artist and engraver, producing work that would not sell. He is now recog-

nised as a supremely original poet and artist, whose life is much studied. Yet a researcher should not be tempted to attribute to that posthumously famous William Blake an earlier residence in Berwick Street. The presence of two identical names in the same parish is a repeated warning that entries in the LED need to be supplemented by other data, if available, when focusing upon lives of individuals.

Another straightforward name makes the same point. There were 40 voters in Westminster in 1788, sharing between them a wide range of occupations and places of residence, who simply gave their name as 'John Smith'.

Researchers should therefore study carefully to avoid false identifications by linking names that do not really relate to the same individual – and they should, equally, take care to look at all the possibilities of variant spellings etc. in order not to miss valid identifications that should be made. Hence contextual support material should always be sought, wherever possible.

## 9.3 Summary of LED linked tables

A final summary: the LED consists of a small number of linked tables, as shown in the following Table. The most substantial of these contain the entire poll and rate book data for the whole period covered by the project. Other tables act as lookups or reference tables in support of these main tables.

**Table 98 The LED tables**

| Table Name | Description | No. of Records |
|---|---|---|
| Poll Data | One record to describe each Poll Book entry | 338402 |
| Rate Data | One record to describe each Rate Book entry | 132972 |
| Poll | One record to describe each Poll Book | 54 |
| Rate | One record to describe each Rate Book | 32 |
| Candidates | One record to describe each candidate in a Poll | 218 |
| Dictionary | Lookup list of all the occupational categories used | 2234 |
| Sounds | Lookup list of all the Soundex values used | 23558 |
| Standard Surname | Lookup list of all the Standard Surname values used | 49465 |
| Livery Companies | Lookup list of all the Livery Companies referenced | 77 |

The relationships between the main and ancillary tables are demonstrated in the following entity relationship diagram.