Pdf30 Summary Introduction to new scholarly website
www.londonelectoralhistory.com

LONDON ELECTORAL HISTORY, 1700-1850 –
STEPS TOWARDS DEMOCRACY

Launch date: 21 October 2013 –
with official launch party 3 February 2014

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Note: A two-volume limited edition printed version
of all LEH website texts and tables
is published by Bristol Academic Press (Dec. 2013),
entitled
Elections in Metropolitan London, 1700-1850:
Vol. 1, Arguments and Evidence (pp. 1-481)
Vol. 2, Metropolitan Polls (pp. 482-863)
by: Edmund M. Green, Penelope J. Corfield and Charles Harvey

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George Scharf, 'The Election at Westminster, 1818' © Museum of London

This massive scholarly website, created by **Charles Harvey**, **Penelope J. Corfield** and **Edmund M. Green** brings for the first time into the historical spotlight the metropolitan electorate from the years 1700-1850. These voters led the way in popular political participation – in an exact reverse of the inactivity of England's notorious rotten boroughs.

Not only does this website document and explain the full extent of electoral activity in London, both before and after electoral reform in 1832, but it defines the voters' role as 'proto-democratic'. In other words, their developing tradition of constitutional participation, in the era of open voting when electors announced their choices publicly, paved the way for the later extensions of the (adult male) franchise and eventually to full democracy.

Users of the website will certainly include scholars of electoral, political, social, urban, and economic history but the website is simultaneously available

for all researchers interested in the general history of metropolitan London as well as the many members of the general public who seek genealogical information about named individuals. A Twitter feed advertises the website and provides updates about its use. And, over time, it is planned to expand the website features, in the light of interactive responses from users.

In detail, the *London Electoral History* website contains three central elements. The first consists of over 70 text files (120,000+words), which between them contain a complete analysis of London's eighteenth-century psephological history. An important constituent component of the LEH is a full account of the systems of classification that are used to place individual voters within their electoral, civic, social, and economic context.

The second major component of the website is the substantial new relational database: the London Electoral Database (LED). It allows users to access some 340,000 records of voting behaviour for all elections within metropolitan London (for which individual voting records survive) between 1700 and 1850; plus all available details of individual rate-payer's rateable status, drawn from 133,000 rate book records. In general, this resource focuses upon London's solid citizens of the 'middling sort' but the breadth of the eighteenth-century franchise means that a number of small craftsmen, labourers, servants, and other relatively humble 'plebeians' are also featured.

A third feature of the LEH consists in its compilation of all Metropolitan Polls. It reveals the summary results for 873 contested elections across London between 1700 and 1852. These polls related to all levels of politics, from parliamentary to civic, including as many as 595 local ward elections within the City of London. Most of these public contests (such as those for minor civic positions, like the two bridge masters of London Bridge) were previously completely unknown. But now, thanks to long hours of detective work, they are collated in full and published for the first time.

Collectively, the LEH website and London Electoral Database offer a significant revision to existing interpretations of the oligarchic constitution of Georgian Britain. Alongside the 'high politics' of court and parliamentary circles, there were a handful of open constituencies with large electorates. The metropolitan London electorates were the most massive and the most regularly polled. Together, they created a new tradition of 'proto-democracy'.

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