Before the boroughs

In the beginning there was chaos. And, for a considerable time afterwards - it could be argued until today, really - chaos continued.

In 1674 London's population was around a half million. It was well over seven million by 1913 - and most of the boom came in the nineteenth century when industrial-isation and empire made London the hub of vast wealth and epic squalor.

London grew so rapidly that a seemingly contradictory problem of a lack of governance combined with a mesh and mish-mash of commissions, ecclesiastical entities, royal charters, the corrosive self-interest of the City of London Corporation and so much more besides meant Londoners were sinking beneath problems the capital was simply incapable of fixing. It was a system of custom, convention and duty - but it failed to do its duty to the challenges of London on its path to becoming a world class city.

Who governed London?

The flippant answer would be nobody, at least until the mid 1800s - and even then "governance" would grossly overstate what passed as administration of the capital.

London was overseen by - or smothered beneath - 250 acts of law, administered by 300 different bodies which were enforced (or not) by around 10,500 commissioners. Compare those 10,500 largely unelected worthies with the 1,832 councillors elected in 2018 to administer a capital millions larger, and overseeing far more widespread, more complex services.

There was no overarching body governing London. And here it should be clarified that by London, I do not mean Greater London as we currently understand it, stretching from Uxbridge to Upminster and Cockfosters to Coulsdon. At the start of the nineteenth century there was almost no such construct as "London": the bulk of the capital - north of the Thames, west of the Lea - was part of the county of Middlesex.

There was, very loosely a Middlesex County Council, but in the main the county was responsible for the administration of law, via Quarter Sessions. The county was divided into Hundreds, of which Fulham's Hundred was Ossulstone - literally St Oswald's Stone; a marker on the edge of Mayfair, not far from the gallows of Tyburn in Hyde Park.

The Ossulstone Hundred stretched from Brentford to Bow and from Finchley to Fulham. Because the vast majority of Middlesex lived in the Ossulstone Hundred, in turn it was divided into administrative sections and Fulham was within the Kensington division.

The Hundred Quarter Sessions were presided over by Justices of the Peace whose powers were, essentially undefined and so largely open to their own interpretation. These Quarter Sessions were the municipal government of the county: they dealt with all manner of subjects now the responsibility of London's boroughs and, loosely, therefore Justices of the Peace were councillors - except that the administration was by court rather than council and committee meetings. The Quarter Sessions dealt only with what we would now call civil law; the central criminal court at the Old Bailey was responsible for administering justice to law breakers.

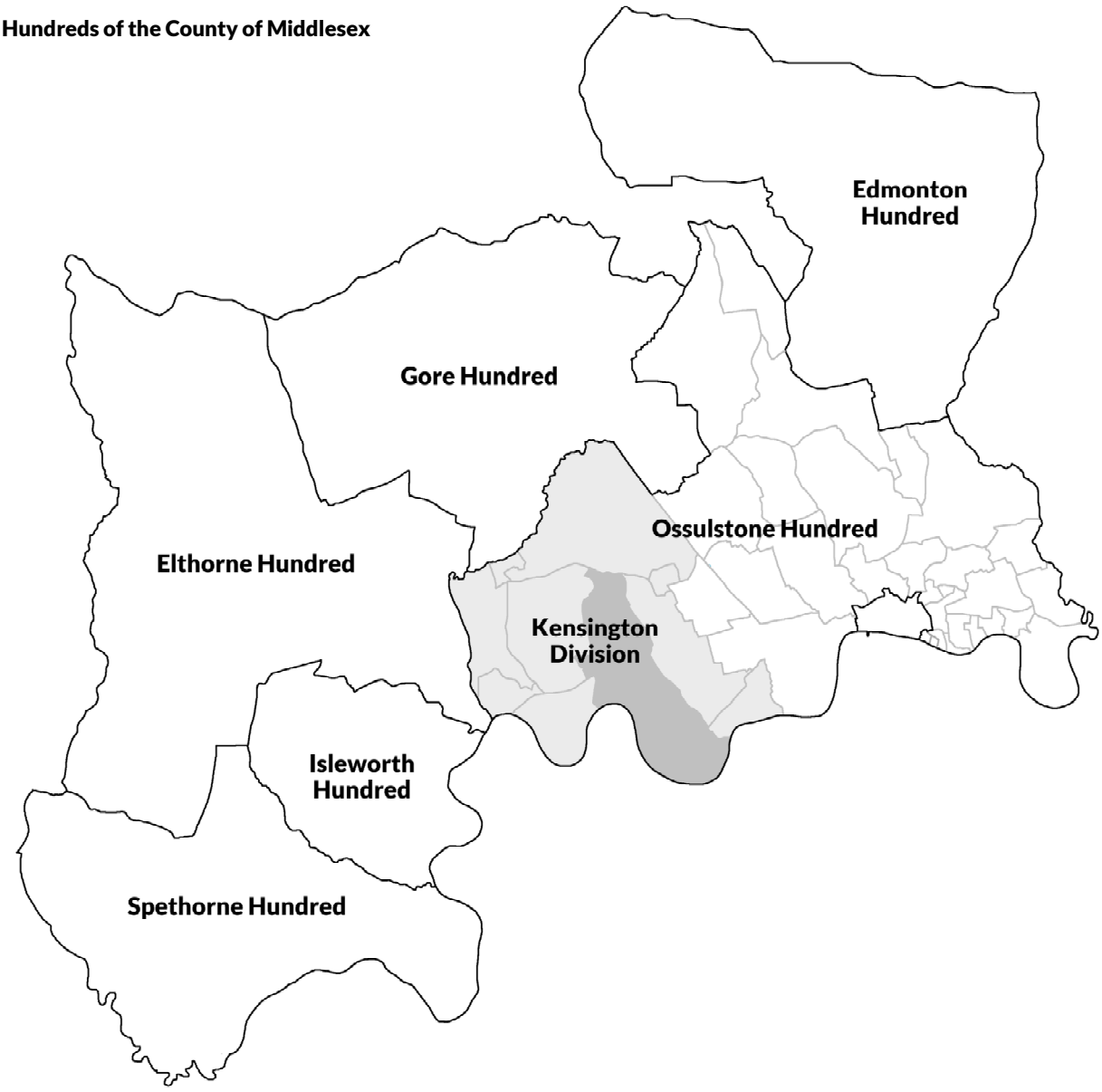
Nonetheless, JPs were still responsible for enforcing the peace, ensuring the administration of the Poor Law, maintaining bridges and highways, the Labour Code and the regulation of production and distribution. As Harold Hazeltine in "One Hundred Years Of The Quarter Sessions" wrote:

"This multiplicity of duties did not make for efficiency, and the lack of efficiency was most felt in urban districts like Middlesex. Largely for this reason, the Middlesex Justices failed to keep the peace in and around London, failed to deal adequately with the problem of the pauper and the vagrant and neglected their duties in respect of the maintenance of highways."

Because the Justices were failing in these fairly critical areas of administration, parishes more activist in nature, or perhaps just more beset by the consequences of the failures of the "higher-ups" began agitating, applying directly to parliament for charters enabling them to, for example, establish night watches - which in turn became parish constabularies, long before Robert Peel established the Metropolitan Police.

The parishes were the second string in the historical bow of local administration, just as district councils are now the lower tier of local government in much of England beyond the cities and urban conurbations. Each parish - the parish of Fulham covering all of what is now Hammersmith and Fulham - had a vestry, administered by Vestrymen and usually presided over by the parish priest.

The Hundreds of the County of Middlesex



Again, the vestries emerged more through convention and custom than by legislation - and their duties primarily concerned the administration of the Poor Laws: the acts of parliament that provided for those who had fallen on woefully hard times, long before there was a welfare state.

The vestries ran into difficulties at the turn of the nineteenth century - roughly the same time as the Hundred of Middlesex did - though for quite different reasons. Whereas the Hundred was failing because it simply couldn't cope with the demands of a rapidly growing city, the Poor Law had effectively bankrupted most vestries because the Napoleonic Wars had produced wave after wave of unemployed and disabled soldiers.

This in addition to the needs of the longer-term poor overwhelmed the very limited provision vestries were able, or willing, to provide. Remember that vestries (and therefore ratepayers) had to raise their own funds for the poor and fiscal prudence was, to put it mildly, a preoccupation amongst those who were tithed to fund it.

One of the many nineteenth century steps along the road towards democratic local government in London was to strip the vestries of their poor law responsibilities (leaving them with remarkably little to actually do) and create two new bodies responsible for the most disadvantaged: elected Poor Law Guardians and Poor Law Unions - clusters of parishes that combined to run workhouse.

Whether these new bodies were any more effective than the vestry at administering the Poor Law is not the point: what is significant is that government was at last beginning to sort out the cobbled-together mess and actually legislating to create bodies with defined roles and responsibilities. In so doing, the church was at last - slowly - being excised from its role as the principal provider of grassroots local government.

Even so, vestries were not abolished until 1900 and Poor Law Guardians until 1929. Fulham Workhouse became Fulham Hospital and then an NHS Hospital after the Second World War and then rebuilt as Charing Cross Hospital.

In any event, the Dickensian portrayal of a Workhouse as a uniformly brutal, oppressive and terrifying means of subjugating children is a little wide of the mark. Without wishing to imply that these institutions were a vaguely appropriate way to provide for the poorest, the workhouse, in Fulham at least, was the last refuge for the destitute to receive medical attention and food. It was as benevolent an institution as the powers that be could muster in Victorian England.

As well as the Hundred and the Vestry there were other bodies, today regulated such as the Westminster Commission of Sewers, responsible for mains sewers throughout London but not secondary or sanitary sewers connecting homes to the mains. Then there were water companies which drew their supplies untreated from an increasingly foul and polluted Thames.

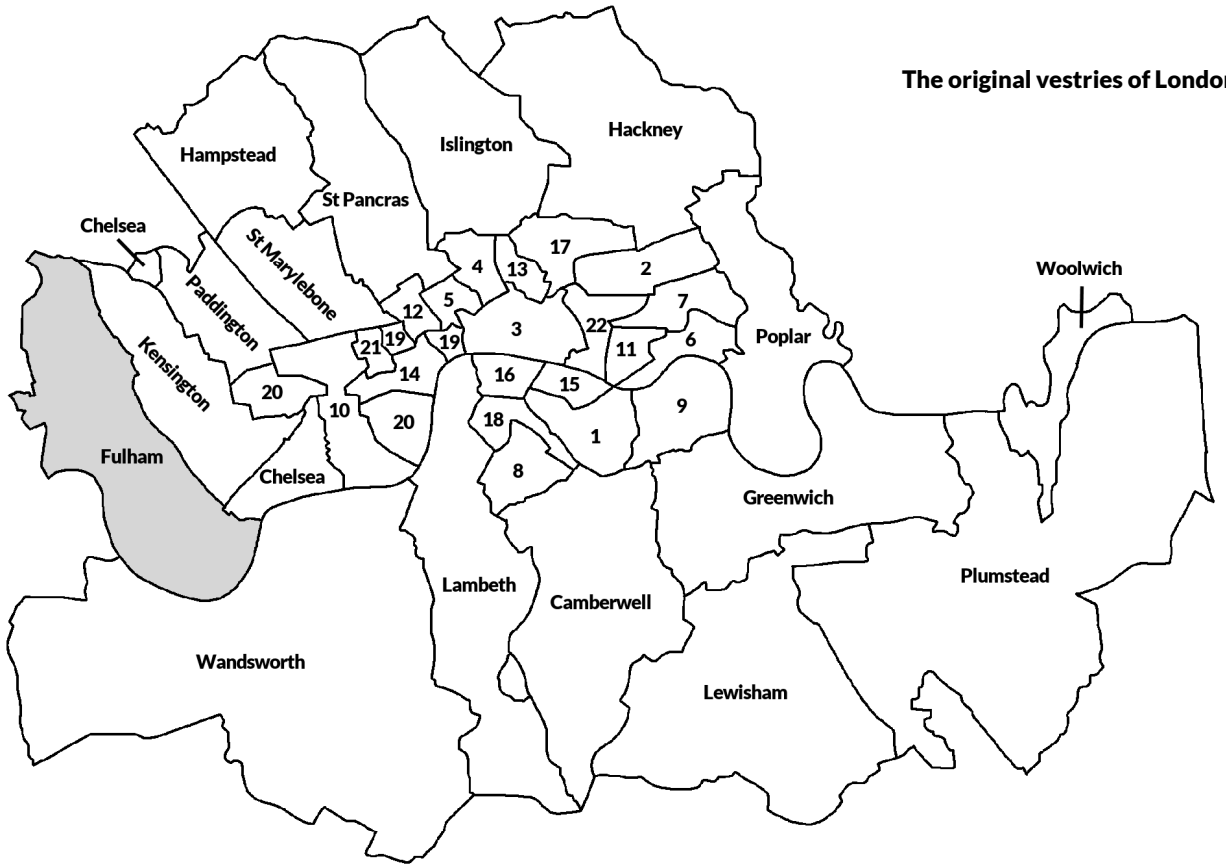
Problems of a rapidly growing capital

Earlier I described how the rapid growth of London led to the breakdown of the Ossulstone Hundred as the effective provider of municipal governance. What were the critical problems that exposed this incapacity?

The most obvious was the sanitation (or lack thereof) of London; with uncontrolled cesspits instead of underground sewers; raw sewage, industrial and farm waste being dumped straight into the Thames; and those unregulated water companies drawing this same, untreated Thames water for public consumption with little to no treatment to clean it.

These practices would, in and of themselves, have continued unabated were it not for the Great Stink of 1832, which made it impossible for parliamentarians attempting to work in the Thames-side Houses of Commons and Lords to ignore the problems of sewerage in the capital. More significant, though, were the Cholera epidemics that ravaged London in 1831, 1848 and 1853 (with influenza and typhoid outbreaks in between).

The original vestries of London



1. Bermondsey
2. Bethnal Green
3. City of London
4. Clerkenwell
5. Holborn
6. Limehouse
7. Mile End Old Town
8. Newington
9. Rotherhithe
10. St George Hanover Square
11. St George in the East
12. St Giles
13. St Luke
14. St Martin the Fields
15. St Olave
16. St Saviours
17. Shoreditch
18. Southwark St George the Martyr
19. Strand
20. Westminster
21. Westminster St James
22. Whitechapel

Although it took a while to disprove the theory that Cholera was an airborne disease spread by miasma (bad air) and demonstrate a clear link between drinking water contaminated by sewage, this was another critical - arguably necessary - step towards serious, defined and powerful municipal governance. After all, a miasma, floating around nebulously would be impossible to tackle.

But if these terrible diseases were caused by bad water, and that bad water was in turn created by human unsanitary practices - well, that was something humans could fix if they organised themselves. The breakthrough in identifying the cause led to a Royal Commission led by Edwin Chadwick, who would go on to become London's first Commissioner of Sanitation and preside over a Board of Health - he would commission Joseph Bazalgette to build London's revolutionary sewer network.

But, as with the bankruptcy of the vestries leading to the creation of Poor Law Guardians, this was a piecemeal response to a specific problem rather than a thought-through, comprehensive plan for London. It is an unfortunate feature of London's history that it has never benefited from a thought-through, comprehensive and fully-implemented plan. Even Abercrombie's Greater London Plan of 1944 was never completed - some might say thankfully given the post-war obsession of brutalist architecture and prioritising motorways over pedestrians. Elsewhere in this book we look at some of the damage this plan did to Hammersmith and Fulham.

The second reality of the growing city the middle and upper classes could avoid - even those with escapist villas in rural Putney, Wimbledon and Ealing was the state of the place: the lack of pavements, the unsurfaced roads; the potholes their carriages couldn't avoid; the state of their dresses and suits from the unavoidable filth outside after stepping out in the rain. The destitute, the vagrants and the beggars were easier to ignore but not to hide.

But the third driver of change - the decisive one - was political. The Tory Party had been in government pretty much from 1774 to 1830 with very brief Whig Party interludes, from William Pitt the Younger through Spencer Perceval, the Earl of Liverpool, George Canning and the Duke of Wellington.

The Tories of course were not blind to the rapid expansion of London and the problems accompanying it. But a mixture of indifference and division over how best to respond (perhaps, too, an appreciation of how daunting a task unravelling the mesh of bureaucracy would be) somewhat paralysed them. But then again these were conservatives: they believed in preserving the status quo, not upending the applecart.

The failure of government to act decisively led to shocking inequality, terrible abuse of the poorest, a wretched physical environment, rampant corruption and, inevitably therefore, a political backlash from the London electorate that, once manifest, led to rapid change.

When, in 1846, Tory Prime Minister Robert Peel forced the repeal of the Corn Laws through parliament he split his party. While the Corn Laws had no direct relevance to the evolution of London government (they were essentially measures within an agriculture bill principally affecting Ireland) they were indirectly significant for two reasons.

First, the Tory Party split that these laws caused enabled a lengthy period of Whig-Liberal government far more sympathetic to reform, and with the political strength and longevity to deliver it.

Second, the Anti-Corn Law League that campaigned so effectively against Peel's policy was arguably Britain's first mass protest movement - certainly one of the most effective. Citizens, many of whom had been emancipated in the Great Reform Act of 1832, were finding their voice, and finding how to use it effectively. Protest was becoming better organised and more confident, despite disasters like the Great Chartist Demonstration of 1848. The new voters began to use their heft to press for change.

So from the late 1840s London gradually became a largely Liberal city because the Liberals were seen as the party to radically improve conditions and overwhelm the vested interests blocking change.

Yet despite their commanding majorities in the House of Commons, the Liberals didn't find it easy to introduce comprehensive reform of London. The principal reason for this was not the Tory opposition in parliament - it was Tory opposition from the City of London.

The City of London - had been governed by its own corporation since medieval times. But its influence extended far beyond the square mile. It had been designated a "county corporate" to Middlesex - that is, it was able to exert huge influence over wider Middlesex without any reciprocity: no body or subject in Middlesex beyond the City could attempt to tax the hugely wealthy city or compel them to contribute to the needs of wider London.

To attempt to neuter The City, the Liberals established a Royal Commission in 1853. Royal Commissions would

become a favoured tool of successive governments to attempt to reform London: there were similar inquiries in 1893, 1921 (the Ullswater Commission), and 1957 (the Herbert Commission). The first Royal Commission on the Corporation made thirty two recommendations, almost none of which were implemented, with most of the handful that were being minor.

One that was of great significance was the establishment a Metropolitan Board of Works, though its jurisdiction did not extend to the City. The Corporation agreed to contribute to the Metropolitan Board without representation upon it, as well as to attend to certain structures and highways beyond its borders: the maintenance of Tower Bridge for example. To the extent that this first Royal Commission did not see its proposed reforms of the City adopted it was a failure. To the extent it laid the foundations for the establishment of the Metropolitan Board of Works - the forerunner of the London County Council - it was a significant step towards municipal governance of London.

The Metropolitan Board of Works

The Metropolitan Board, and local boards of works that finished off the vestries - at least in so far as their already pared-back role as providers of local government services (they still existed as ecumenical bodies) was established in 1855.

This was a flawed but important body: aside from building London's sewer system and the Westminster Embankment, locally it procured Wormwood Scrubs and Ravenscourt Park as metropolitan open land; it built Hammersmith Bridge and a stone Putney Bridge in place of the wooden Fulham Bridge. It also loaned the Fulham Board of Works a large chunk of the money it required to embank the river along the new Bishop's Park.

This is why, incidentally, if you ever visit Bishops Park and look at the insignia on the terracotta balustrades around the central enclosure, those coats of arms are not Fulham Borough Council's - they are those of Fulham's vestry, adopted by the Fulham Board of Works.

If the Liberal governments of Earl Russell, Viscount Palmerston and William Gladstone had hoped that the Act to Manage the Metropolis of 1855 would be the answer to London's problems, they were to be disappointed.

The Liberals remained intent on reforming the City of London despite, or because of, the failure of the 1853 Commission. In the absence of such reforms, they added to the responsibilities of the Metropolitan Board of Works, consolidating and incorporating the London Fire Brigade in 1866, regulating slaughterhouses (alongside household sanitation, slaughter-houses and piggeries were hotbeds of disease in London) in 1874 and providing improved dwellings for artisans and labourers in 1875. This was the first tentative expansion of the state into the provision of housing for the poor - the defining policy priority of the 20th century in London.

Without question the Metropolitan Board of Works began fixing London's infrastructure largely effectively, but its fundamental flaw was not its lack of ambition but that it was a body ripe for corruption from the outset. It was appointed rather than elected and with those expressing most keen an interest in being appointed to it being those seeking contracts from the new body. It held its meetings in secret. Scandal inevitably ensued.

A new political battlefield was also emerging - important because it affected the perception of the political parties for the first twenty years following the creation of the boroughs: centralism versus localism.

You might assume that the Conservatives were the party of centralised power and the Liberals the party of devolution given where these parties have tended to stand in more recent times. The reverse was actually true, principally because the Liberal Government was immensely proud of the Metropolitan Board of Works and viewed with intense suspicion any attempts to endow rival institutions with any level of power that may challenge it.

That Liberal opposition to giving the vestries any power maintained right the way through to the establishment of the boroughs: indeed, the only way the Conservatives got any Liberal support for establishing the boroughs was by asserting that they were the vestries in all but name.

Opposition to localism and devolution to neighbourhoods was an epic political misjudgement by the Liberals. Coupled to voter fatigue of the party's long period in government and the emergence of the Labour Party, it led to their rapid ejection from power at all levels just as the goal they had originally championed: the democratic enfranchisement of London, was achieved.

But we run ahead of ourselves somewhat. The Liberal government did appreciate that the Metropolitan Board of Works needed further reform but the expenditure of effort attempting to reform the City of London, a fading Gladstone administration and that resistance to decentralising power from the Municipal Board meant that further reform stalled.

The London County Council

From this moment the Conservatives became the champions of progress in London, initially not from within but through the emergence of the Metropolitan Municipal Reform Association: a right of centre grassroots pressure group. Their lobbying led to the Salisbury Conservative government legislating the Local Government Act of 1888.

This established the County of London with Fulham at its western extent. The act also re-established the vestries as the lower tier of municipal government in London. Hammersmith, which had been agitating to break away from Fulham, got its wish - the new vestries were not quite in the same form as the old.

The LCC covered what is now regarded as inner London: from Hammersmith and Fulham in the west; Highgate, Archway and Stoke Newington in the north; the river Lea and Woolwich in the east; and Sydenham, Dulwich, Streatham, Tooting and Putney in the south.

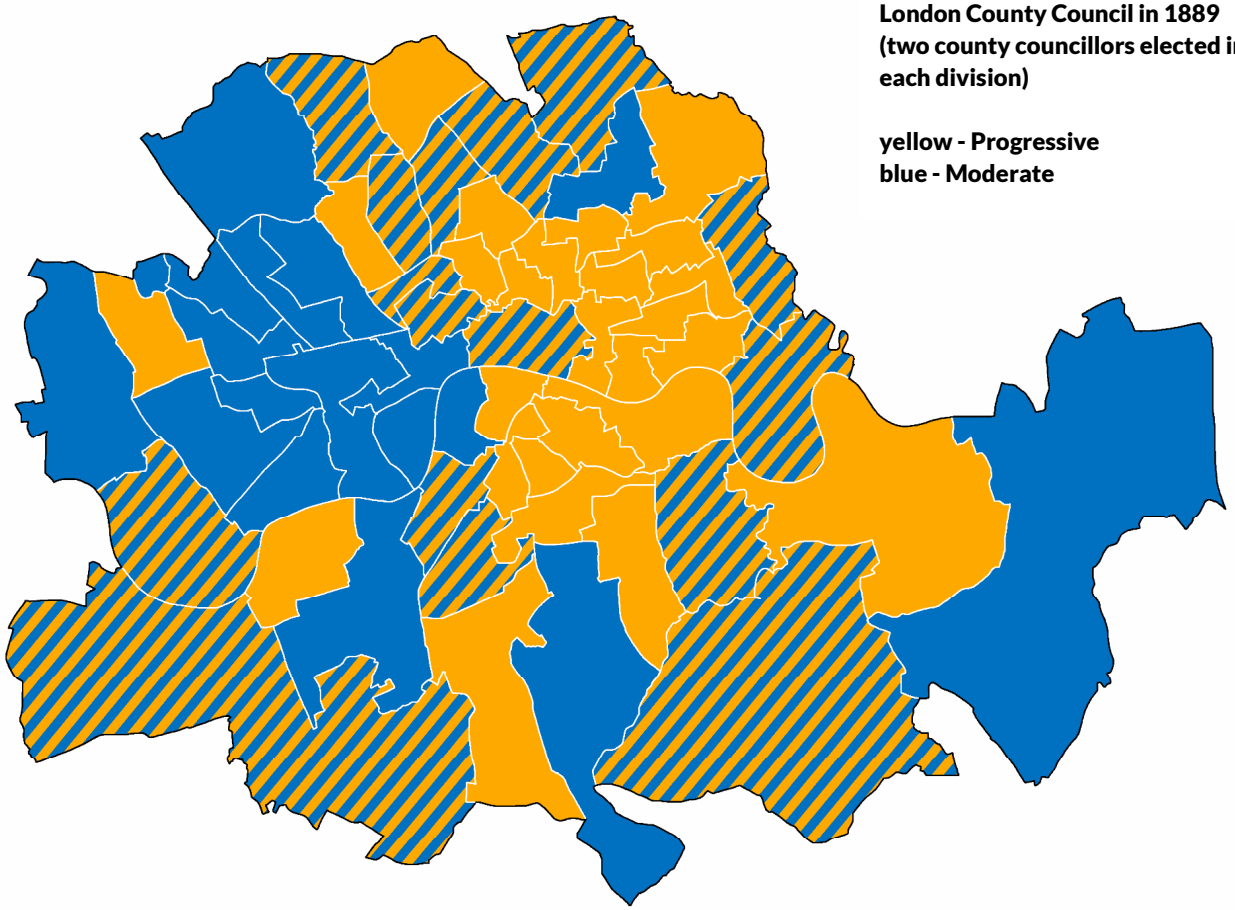
The intention of the Conservatives was always to reform the vestries at the same time as morphing the MBW into the LCC - it didn't happen because of that Liberal antagonism towards any body that might threaten the legitimacy of the central London-wide authority.

The first election of the London County Council took place in January 1889. Although the hope of Lord Roseberry, appointed the first chairman of the council, was that its members would not divide along party lines, two groupings quickly emerged.

"Moderates" was the title taken by its Conservative members; "Progressives" described the fairly broad tent of Liberals and radicals. The Trade Unions were beginning to agitate for a true party of the working class but the formation of the Independent Labour Party was still four years off.

That protracted battle for the hearts and votes of the working classes would destroy the Progressive Party in London and, whilst the two parties of the left fought over the same voters, they enabled a long period of Moderate-Municipal Reform administration of London - something discussed more in the following chapter.

Fin de siècle London was very much a Liberal city, though they were very much stronger in East London than the west.



Result of the first election to the London County Council in 1889 (two county councillors elected in each division)

yellow - Progressive
blue - Moderate

in de siècle London was very much a Liberal city, though they were very much stronger in East London than the west. Nonetheless, in the inaugural LCC election, Fulham elected a Progressive County Councillor: James Beale, alongside a Moderate: Robert Germaine. Hammersmith, much more conservative a district in its early days, elected a Moderate: Andrew Arter, and an Independent Moderate: Robert Cramp.

London wide the Progressives ran County Hall for the next eighteen years, and this in another major reason why the Liberals were reluctant to pursue any meaningful further devolution to the vestries: it would represent a diminution of their power. They were proud of the LCC - their creation, even if it had needed the Conservatives to enact the legislation setting it up. It was simply not in their partisan interest to give power away.

The partisan argument was, of course, the exact reverse for the Conservatives. Overhauling the vestries and giving them much more significant power would at least give them representation, if not power, in parts of London where they were powerless at county level.

In 1895 the Liberals returned to power, initially under Gladstone once again but soon thereafter Lord Rosebury. Their attempts to further modernise London's government again foundered over their attempts to reform the City of London; again through a Royal Commission with a tighter remit to amalgamate the city and county of London. Rosebury, who prior to becoming Prime Minister had been the first leader of the London County Council in 1887 championed amalgamation:

"The present arrangement by which a comparatively small district in the centre of London is detached from London and held aloof cannot be maintained. The object of parliament and of reformers must be that the city should be united with London as soon as possible and with as little friction as possible. Of all London reforms I lay infinitely the most stress on this, because each can supply what the other lacks, because so many reforms are contingent on it, and because you cannot have a complete municipality without it."

This second Royal Commission recommended what the Liberal Government wanted but failed because in 1895 the Conservatives returned to power and binned the plans.

The London Metropolitan Boroughs 1900



The Liberals had failed for a third time to reform the City and were entirely uninterested in reforming the vestries. In contrast the re-elected Conservatives were entirely uninterested in reforming the City but were very interested in reforming the largely ineffective, woefully inefficient, unwieldy and oftentimes corrupt vestries.

Which is exactly what they did.

The Vestries

The re-establishment of vestries as providers of limited local services was an example of the ridiculous in place of the sublime. Hammersmith had long been lobbying aggressively to split from the Fulham vestry, which Fulham opposed - but Hammersmith got its way. They were to a degree democratic in that there would be seventy two "elected" vestrymen serving three wards apiece.

The vestries were not successful in the least because they had far too many members to be effective. The egos of vestrymen far outstripped any notion of efficient work; vestry meetings lasted for hours and accomplished little. The vestries carried out some modernisation such as the laying of wooden pavements, some limited town planning as local neighbourhoods developed and expanded, and some very limited sanitation inspections. But both local vestries became renowned for their profligacy, as the West London Observer article following this introduction reports.

The Municipal Reform Association was organising in favour of Conservative-Moderate candidates with the aim of pressing Lord Salisbury's Conservative government to enact legislation creating elected municipalities.

On 1st March 1899 Arthur Balfour, the Leader of the House of Commons, introduced the London Government Bill, which created twenty nine Metropolitan Borough Councils within the county of London. As A.D. Harvey wrote in History Today in 2009:

"All the rhetoric of the Progressives on the London County Council about being the municipality of London, simply ignored the civic pride and community-consciousness of the municipal activists who were actually responsible for the greater part of local government affairs in the metropolis."

And, while the Conservatives played down the reform of vestries into boroughs to attempt to limit Liberal Party opposition to the plans, what the 1899 London Government Act did was to bestow far more prestige on the municipalities: mayors with chains of office, councillors with robes of office, grand town halls in place (in some cases) of rented out halls for meetings, or cramped vestry rooms; coats of arms and maces in which were vested the authority of the councils to make decisions.

The boroughs also provoked great pride in the areas they served - far more so than the vestries had - or indeed the current larger London Boroughs ever have.

So, with the Progressives in control of the LCC but the Moderates organising themselves as champions of the municipalities, the first election to the twenty nine new Metropolitan boroughs was set for Thursday 1st November 1900.

On that day the story of the boroughs of Fulham and Hammersmith began.

The West London Observer
Saturday April 9, 1887

The Fulham Scandals

Serious complaints are heard of the waste of time in the unseemly squabbles which so frequently occur at the meetings of the Vestry.

An instance of the kind occurred only at the last ordinary meeting. There was a running fire of words which culminated in the adjournment of the meeting until Saturday, to dispose of the remainder of the business on the agenda. This mode of conducting the affairs of an important parish ought not to be allowed to continue. Some steps really must be taken to prevent a repetition of those outrageous scenes, which tend to lower the dignity of the Vestry, and to bring local management into contempt.

It is just that mode of dealing with parochial affairs which enables those who are endeavouring to cast ridicule upon our present system, to urge upon Parliament to sweep it away, and institute one more in accordance with their views. It also tends to throw doubt upon the capabilities of Fulham to run alone.

The Vestry has had a separate existence a little more than twelve months, which is surely a sufficient time to enable the members to understand one another. But their proceedings and noisy disputes would lead to an impression that the very opposite is the case. There are not now any alien members of the Vestry. All the members represent one parish, having the same interests to serve, and therefore should be united for the common good of the whole body of ratepayers. They are not in the same position as they were when Fulham was united to Hammersmith.

In those days displays of hostility were natural, but not excusable. The Board of Works was composed of two contending parties, each looking with sharp eyes after the interests of the particular parishes which they represented and, in their eagerness to resent some apparent injustice words of an angry nature oftentimes flowed fast and furious. But with the single Vestry no conflicting interests exist.

It was for the purpose of obtaining an exclusive control over their own affairs that the idea of a separation suggested itself to those who were dissatisfied with the union. They wanted House Rule, and succeeded beyond all expectation in obtaining that desirable arrangement.

The Vestry is in full possession of Home Rule, and yet the internal arrangements are not proving satisfactory. Is it because the Chairman is impotent and unable to curb the glowing impetuosities of particular members?

We believe this interrogatory does not apply to the Vicar. The Rev. Mr. Fisher is an excellent Chairman, and as a rule he possesses sufficient power, combined with dignity and influence, to repress the outbreaks of extravagance which, unfortunately, are becoming the rule and not the exception. But Mr. Fisher cannot always be in his place to preserve order. There are times when a substitute is required to take the chair. It does not follow, we are afraid, that the substitute is equal in command to the original.

It is no use mincing words. A strong Chairman is required for the Vestry, and unless one is found in the absence of the Vicar the scenes which are a scandal to the parish and to local management may be expected at any meeting. For the credit of the parish it is unfortunate, because its financial affairs are improving. Notwithstanding the great amount of talk at the Vestry, members have succeeded in reducing the rates not, perhaps, to any appreciable extent, but of sufficient amount which will show to the constituency that the management of affairs under Home Rule has been, so far, beneficial to the parish. It is therefore unfortunate that this improvement should be endangered by the action of certain members, who appear unable to restrain their conflicting emotions. Probably if the action of the Vestry is again suspended the constituency may be heard upon the subject. The remedy is in the hands of the ratepayers, who may be inclined to send those gentlemen about their business, and replace them with others whose talkative powers are not so great. In the meantime, a strong Chairman, in the absence of the Vicar, should be found to preside over the Vestry.

The West London Observer
Friday May 21, 1897

Fulham Vestry Election

A SWEEPING MODERATE VICTORY

In splendid weather, the annual Vestry battle, not exactly of a Greco-Turkish kind, however, was waged in the borough of Fulham.

In all there were 23 vacancies to be filled up, and there were 49 candidates. The only ward in which there was not a poll was the Town ward, a "bloodless fight" having resulted in the election of Messrs. Charlesworth, Humphrey and H.W. Williams, who are fortunate in making their debut on the Vestry without a struggle.

Polling was from eight o'clock in the morning until eight in the evening, Mr. Arthur Robinson being the returning officer.

The contest was between Moderates and Progressives only in all the wards except the Sands End ward, where three Independent Labour Party candidates sought Vestry honours as well as Moderates and Progressives.

There was a plentiful supply of election literature. The Moderates made a point of announcing that, with a Moderate majority on the Vestry, the rates were reduced by 6d in the pound.

This brought forth the following manifesto from the Progressives:- "Ratepayers beware. The Moderate candidates are attempting to deceive you in order to snatch your vote by stating that they have saved you 6d in the £, or equal to £13,050 during the last year. This is an absolute falsehood, as the following figures, taken from the Vestry's accounts, show:-

Half year ending March 1896 - Amount required, £89,470

Half year ending March 1897 - Amount required, £40,650

A counterblast from the Moderates was to the following effect:- "Five Pounds Reward - if any useful Radical, and he would be very useful just now, would like five pounds reward, let him disprove the statement that the rates were reduced 6d in the £ - that is to say, for the year ending March 1896 they were 6s 11d in the pound; for the year ending March 1897 there 6s 5d. in the pound - reduction 6d.

When proof is produced the author may apply for payment to any of the Moderate candidates, or to Mr. J.S. Cooper, the Conservative Registration agent at the office: 6 Shorrolds Road. Vote only for Moderates."

A lesson in "Radical Arithmetic" was also issued and it was stated "They may rage and fume and shout and bluster and fib, but however much they pervert the truth the fact remains that your rates were reduced."

In the addresses of the Moderates it was also stated that "the greatest issues were involved in the present election. If Hammersmith succeeds in securing separation from the Fulham Union, an addition of over £100,000 will be made to the debt of the parish. The Progressives are now also trying to rush through the Vestry reckless and extravagant schemes which, if carried, would cost another £100,000 and mean still another 7d. in the pound addition to the rates.

We as Moderates are pledged to oppose these utterly ruinous schemes. The Moderates have also supported good wages and fair treatment to the Vestry workmen of all grades."

The Progressives circulated manifestoes to the effect that they would check extravagance, and it was mentioned that a sum amounting to nearly £800 per annum extra had been recently voted to increase the salaries of Vestry officials. They pledged themselves to promote the principle of direct and preferential employment of Fulham workmen by the Vestry, as also the payment of Trade Union rates of wages to all concerned; to support the establishment of swimming and washing baths; oppose the separation of Fulham and Hammersmith as, if this proposal were adopted, it would mean an enormous increase in the rates.

The programme of the London Reform Union was generally supported. In a handbill headed "The Truth about Poor Law Separation", issued by the Progressives, it was asked: "Who made application to the Local Government Board for separation?" and the reply given is "The Moderates!"

This is certainly a funny way of putting "the truth" about the matter. The Moderates of Fulham, it is very well known, have made no such application. As a matter of fact, the agitation for separation was started by members of the Hammersmith Vestry.

In several of the wards vehicles were used by both Moderates and Progressives to convey electors to the poll. Red-white-and-blue rosettes were donned by the Unionists, whilst the Radicals wore yellow favours. A coal van paraded the Margravine ward in the interest of the Progressives.

In the early portion of the day polling went on very slowly and it was not until after five o'clock that matters brightened up. In the Baron's Court ward the recording of votes went on very quietly, the voters attending at a rate of about 27 per hour. In this ward the Moderates had a very easy victory, the Progressive candidates obtaining the lowest number of votes of any of the Vestry aspirants, namely Mr. Hodges, 30; Mr. Baxter, 26.

In the Margravine ward voting became brisk during the last two hours of the poll, and voters had to run the gauntlet of a number of canvassers, anxious to present them with the literature of the various candidates. A good number of spectators assembled opposite Everington Street School to watch the rush of lagging voters, and there was some amount of chaff carried on amongst the bystanders.

It is said that several voters arrived at the school a few minutes before eight o'clock and found the gate closed, and that a protest was lodged. At the station presided over by Mr. H. Tapp a little incident occurred which ought to be a caution to smokers. During the day a man, on arriving in the booth, threw up his arms and shouted out "Oh, I am on fire!" Mr. Tapp jumped up and found that the voter's waistcoat was on fire. This was caused through putting a lighted pipe in his pocket, but the fire was quickly put out without personal injury.

The largest number of electors went to the poll in the Lillie ward. Voting was carried on steadily during the day and there was a good influx of voters between six and eight o'clock. In the station at which Mr. Vere was the presiding officer a ballot paper was handed to a voter who asked what he had to do with it. He was directed to the instructions posted up. There is a direction that the paper shall be brought to the presiding officer so that he may see the official mark on the back. He interpreted this to mean there was a mark at the back of the booth because, on going to the rear of the booth he said "I can't see any mark".

The complete victory of the Moderates in Lillie ward came as a complete surprise to many people.

There was much greater activity in the Walham ward on the part of the Moderates at this election than there was last year. During the last hour of the poll voters arrived in quick succession and the outside agents of the candidates were kept busy in distributing polling cards showing electors how to vote.

In the Munster ward, as regards vehicles, the Moderates had a great advantage over the Progressives. All the candidates were out and about during the day. Messrs. Mellish, Matthews and Perks seemed to be particularly busy. In fact it was evident that they did not mean to lose the election if hard work would ensure their success.

A couple of coal trolleys, laden with a cargo of not particularly clean-looking individuals, paraded some of the side streets and cheered, but why they were doing so - and upon whose behalf - nobody seemed to know.

During the day a motor car belonging to Mr. Dewar made its appearance in Dawes Road, with Mr. J.H. Squires Jnr. as one of the passengers, and caused a good number of persons to assemble. Placards of the Moderate candidates for the Munster ward were fitted to the car.

The Progressives in the Hurlingham ward held a meeting on Monday evening, when one or two lively scenes were witnessed by the score or so of electors standing round the White Horse signpost adjoining Parson's Green. The candidates, Messrs. March and Earland, gave addresses which were - at times - attentively listened to.

Mr March made some observations concerning the action of the Moderates at the Vestry which evoked much discussion. Another meeting was held in the King's Road the same evening.

The ward was actively canvassed by both parties. The Moderates put in some hard work. Besides sending workers out for the purpose of distributing leaflets, they secured a large number of vehicles for the purpose of bringing voters up to the poll. There was some activity at the respective committee rooms, both of which were in Parson's Green Lane. Towards the close of the poll working men attended in good numbers to record their votes.

In the Sands End ward the electors must have felt a little bewildered when the ballot paper was prevented to them by the clerk at the polling station, for there were no less than nine candidates for three seats.

In the words of an official there was a good deal of rough play in the district.

The Progressives, Messrs. Garlick, Schofield and Davis, were much in evidence during the day in bringing voters up to the poll. The Moderates were none the less active in this respect. It cannot be denied that in locating their committee rooms opposite the Free Library in the Wandsworth Bridge Road, they secured an excellent position.

Messrs. Balsam, Busby and Silles had numerous conveyances at their disposal and they made full use of the opportunities thus placed before them. More than half of the voters taken to the Langford Road Board School were, to all appearances, working men.

Just about tea time, Mr. J.M. Squires, who was accompanied by two friends, drove round the district in a light blue jacket and cap. Carts and vans were the chief vehicles used by the Progressives. Lads and youths indulged in a little horseplay which, however, was promptly

stopped. The opinion has been expressed that had the Independent Labour Party abstained from taking part in the election at least one Progressive would have been returned.

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COUNTING OF VOTES

At the close of the poll the ballot boxes were conveyed to the Town Hall and the counting of votes was commenced at nine o'clock in the small hall, under the direction of Mr. A. Robinson.

The first procedure was the emptying of the ballot boxes and the sorting of the voting papers, a separate table being provided for each ward. The counting for the Baron's Court ward was finished first, Munster ward coming second.

There was some dismay amongst the Progressives when it became apparent that the Moderates would gain a sweeping victory. In the Hurlingham ward the poll was close between Messrs. Green and March, and the latter candidate demanded a recount of some of the votes.

The votes recorded in the various wards were as follows:- Baron's Court ward: 855; Margravine ward: 682; Munster ward: 599; Lillie ward: 1,061; Walham ward: 791; Hurlingham ward: 472; Sands End ward: 780; Total 4,740.

RESULT OF THE POLL

BARON'S COURT WARD

ELECTED

Mr. Parker (M)	320
Mr. Patterson (M)	318
Mr. Keen (M)	316
Mr. Pendlebury (M)	246

No change

NOT ELECTED

Mr. Hodgins (P)	30
Mr. Baxter (P)	26

MARGRAVINE WARD

ELECTED

Mr. Salmon (P)	311
Mr. Merry (P)	227
Mr. Cook (M)	224

Two Progressive gains

NOT ELECTED

Mr. Crick (P)	211
Mr. Jones (M)	211
Mr. Marchment (M)	203
Mr. M. King (I.M.)	187
Mr. Harrington (I.P.)	109

MUNSTER WARD

ELECTED

Mr. Perks (M)	331
Mr. Mellish (M)	318
Mr. Marriott-Matthews (M)	305

Two Moderate gains

NOT ELECTED

Mr. Kingham (P)	255
Mr. Cooke (P)	253
Mr. Terry (P)	248

LILLIE WARD

ELECTED

Mr. J.W. Barker (M)	550
Mr. Codrington (M)	531
Mr. R. Gibbs (M)	523
Mr. Cope (M)	506

Four Moderate gains

NOT ELECTED

Mr. Jordan (P)	455
Mr. Margrie (P)	448
Mr. Whiteley (P)	437
Mr. Abery (P)	422

WALHAM WARD

ELECTED

Mr. Cranfield (M)	475
Mr. Drew (M)	463
Mr. Hollyman (M)	424
Mr. Rowcliffe (M)	403

Three Moderate gains

NOT ELECTED

Mr. Palmer (P)	317
Mr. Rosevear (P)	313
Mr. Richardson (P)	298
Mr. James (P)	280

TOWN WARD

Messrs. Charlesworth, Humphrey and H.W. Williams (Moderates) were elected without a poll

HURLINGHAM WARD

ELECTED

Mr. Littleboy (M)	257
Mr. Green (M)	242

No change

NOT ELECTED

Mr. March (P)	214
Mr. Earland (P)	194

SANDS END WARD

ELECTED

Mr. Balsam (M)	361
Mr. Silles (M)	335
Mr. Busby (M)	312

Two Moderate gains

NOT ELECTED

Mr. Schofield (P)	263
Mr. Davis (P)	245
Mr. Garlick (P)	231
Mr. Johnson (I.L.P.)	152
Mr. Brill (I.L.P.)	151
Mr Norman (I.L.P.)	149

Loud cheers greeted the declaration of the poll. After a cry of "Gentlemen, order please", Mr. F.O. Drew remarked that although he was not himself the highest placed candidate in the particular ward he represented, yet he had been asked to propose a vote of thanks to the returning officer, Mr. Robinson. All who had been candidates, or had worked at the polling booths, were of one opinion that the arrangements made by Mr. Robinson were excellent. He had been strictly impartial and had done his duty so as to reflect credit on himself and Fulham who had appointed him. He begged to propose a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Robinson.

Mr. G.W. March said, in seconding the motion, he begged to echo the sentiments expressed by Mr. Drew. They were very much indebted to Mr. Robinson. He hoped he would live many years to preside at elections in the future and that he might have the pleasure of putting him on the top. (Laughter).

The motion was carried with acclamation.

Mr. Robinson, in reply, said they would have to excuse him that night saying much, for he was somewhat tired. He hoped he would have the pleasure of serving them on numerous occasions. He was sure he should always endeavour to do his duty to their satisfaction. (Applause)

AFTER THE VICTORY
MEETING AT THE CONSERVATIVE CLUB

After the declaration of the poll an impromptu meeting was held in the large hall of the Conservative Club, when the Moderate candidates were congratulated on their victory. Mr. J.W. Barker, who polled the largest number of votes, and headed the list in Lillie ward, was voted to the chair, and by request the successful candidates present supported him on the platform.

The Chairman thanked them for electing him in the Lillie ward. He should endeavour to do his duty to the best of his ability and he hoped to the satisfaction of them all. (Applause).

Mr. Easton moved a vote of hearty congratulation to the candidates on the success which had attended their efforts that day. He thought everyone was proud of the gentlemen whom Fulham was wise enough to select that day. Everybody must be satisfied that Fulham had done right for once this time, with one single unfortunate exception in the Margravine ward. The result in that ward ought to teach them the lesson that they would never win unless they were united. He was sure that was counter-balanced by the success they had met with elsewhere. (Applause).

Mr. J.S. Cooper most heartily seconded the motion, which was adopted with acclamation.

The Chairman, in briefly returning thanks, said he was in favour of Vestrymen working as amicably together as they possibly could. (Hear, hear).

Mr. F.O. Drew said he was quite sure that the successful candidates would not forget the Conservative Club, and the Radical Party would not forget also. He thought it was singular that their friend Mr. Barker should be in the chair that night. He was acquainted with work in stone, and he though he might prepare an epitaph to the dead radicalism of Fulham. (Laughter).

They had given it the death blow that night. Their opponents had tried to attack every single institution they held dear. If successful they would be running up the rates to an alarming extent. They tried to prosecute persons in an unfair manner, and to apply Acts of Parliament in the very strictest way. They had won this victory in the most marvellous manner.

Considering that this was looked upon as a Progressive part of London, he though that true progress was on the side of Conservatism. (Applause).

He could not sit down without tendering his thanks on behalf of his brother candidates and himself. Personally, he though a great deal of their success was due not only to the members of the Conservative Club and different organisations who had worked together, but especially their thanks were due to Mr. Cooper for the admirable manner in which he had engineered this whole business through. (Applause).

Mr Tom Groen said he could assure them that night that there was not a prouder man than he was. He did not take any credit to himself, but he had had - as they knew - individually one of the toughest fights at the election, and he gloried in their victory all along the line.

He thanked many friends for their kind assistance and good wishes. He was proud that in this tough fight he had managed to hold the flag aloft and had not lowered it to an able opponent. He was obliged to them, and hoped that this would be the fore-runner of greater victories in the future. (Applause).

Mr. R. Gibbs thanked them for the manner in which they had worked in the Lillie ward. They had received assistance from a great many present and he should like especially to mention Mr. Cooper. (Applause).

Mr. G. Mellish was next called upon, and in returning thanks said that while on the Vestry he should do the best he could in the interests of the Moderate Party and the ratepayers. (Applause).

Mr. Keen thought their fight in the Baron's Court ward had been somewhat farcical. One Radical candidate polled 30 votes and the other 26. He thanked them for their renewed confidence. Nothing gave him greater pleasure than to see Mr. Tom Green and Mr. Drew re-elected.

Mr. H.H. Busby, in returning thanks, said they had had a hard fight in the Sands end ward and he thanked them for the good work they had put in for the successful candidates.

Mr. Perks said he had worked on the principle. "If at first you don't succeed, try again." He had tried before, and that day he had been successful. He hoped the plant he had planted that day would blossom to their satisfaction. (Applause).

Mr. Cooper said he was sure that he wished to express heartfelt gratitude for the way they had recognised his efforts. He greatly appreciated their efforts. He had one object in life, that the Conservative cause should prosper in Fulham. (Applause).

Mr. J.G. Stabb remarked that this was a time for congratulation. Who, six months ago, thought they would capture six seats in the stronghold of Radicalism in the Lillie ward?