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Leeds Parish Church Vestry Meetings (1828). The Vestry was an important site of pre-1835 Leeds politics, as Liberals excluded from the Corporation were able to take control of various committees elected by ratepayers at Vestry meetings


The Cracker and Other Explosions Which Have Gone Off During the Election (1832). Collection of newspaper cuttings from The Cracker

G.S. Bull. Letter to Thomas B. Macaulay, a Candidate for the Representation of Leeds (1832)

John Foster [printer, at the Leeds Patriot office]. Rules and Regulations of the Leeds Radical Political Union (1832)

Michael Thomas Sadler. Reply to the Two Letters of John Elliot Drinkwater Esquire and Alfred Power Esquire, Factory Commissioners (1833)


Richard Oastler. Four Open Letters to Edward Baines, Esq., M.P. On “Slavery in Yorkshire” – i.e. the Horrors of Child Labour (1835)


Leeds Acts of Parliament: 1842 – 1901. Includes the important ‘Improvement Act’ of 1842, which granted the Council significant municipal powers (previously controlled by the Improvement Commission, officers of which were elected at Vestry meetings)

Thomas Morgan. Reform of Parliament by an Expansion of Suffrage (1851). Morgan was agent to the Leeds and West-Riding Liberal Registration Association

‘An Elector’. The Late Leeds Elections: The Case Stated (1857)

Edward Baines Jnr. Speech at the Inaugural Meeting of the Bramley Reform Association (1865)

Edward Baines, Esq., M.P. Speeches on the Extension of the Franchise: 1861 – 1865 (no date)

W. Ridley. Map of the Borough of Leeds Shewing the Five Parliamentary Divisions (1885)


Local and Family History Research Guides

19th-century Leeds Politics

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Please note:
Items marked * require ID to view.
PTS = Publication of the Thoresby Society
General Leeds histories

Secondary sources on 19th-century Leeds politics
- Stephen Barker. ‘Joseph Barker and the Radical Cause,’ in PTS, 2nd Series, 1
- ‘Improvements in early Victorian Leeds,’ in PTS, Volume LIII
- ‘The Leeds Churchwardens,’ in PTS, Volume LIII
- ‘The Leeds Corporation, c.1820 – c.1850,’ in PTS, Volume LIV
- ‘The Politics of Leeds Water,’ in PTS, Volume LIII
- ‘Poor Law politics in Leeds, 1833 – 1855,’ in PTS, Volume LIII
- Simon Gunn. ‘Civic Space in Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester’ (1999)
- *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle-Class: Ritual and Authority and the English Industrial City, 1840-1914* (2008)
- D.G. Paz. ‘William Aldam, backbench MP for Leeds, 1841-1847: national issues versus local issues,’ in PTS, 2nd Series, 8

Primary sources on 19th-century Leeds politics

19th-century political cartoons, handbills and prints
- Large and mixed collection of satirical cartoons on Leeds candidates for parliamentary elections between 1832 and 1885, with the main focus on 1868 – 1880. For more information, see the Secret Library blog: https://secretlibraryleeds.net/collections/political-cartoons/
- Handbills and circulars for pre-1832 Yorkshire elections – e.g. ‘Invitation presented to John Marshall, Esq.,’ in relation to Marshall’s candidacy at the 1826 parliamentary election.
- Including also a selection of satirical verse pieces – for example ‘Election Ballads, No.4,’ by ‘Wheat Ear’ – likely from the 1880 parliamentary election
- Selection of prints and sketches showing crowds acting in demonstration for and against political questions of the day – including the 1832 Reform Bill

The Sparks Collection*
- 14 volumes of documents, manuscripts, memoranda and newscuttings relating to Leeds Town Council proceedings, elections and departmental activities (1876 – 1889). See also F.R. Sparks, *Memories of My Life* (1913)

Local newspapers (all bound and single copies are *)
- See also – volume 15 of the Bell Newscuttings, on ‘Elections: 1832 – 1865’ and De Morgan’s Weekly (1880), published by John De Morgan, who was a candidate in the 1880 parliamentary election for Leeds.

Poll books
- Leeds Poll Books (1832 – 1868). These books show which candidates voters voted for – a requirement until the introduction of the 1872 Secret Ballot Act

Books and ephemera
- *Suppression of Vagrancy: Resolutions of a Vestry Meeting of Leeds* (1818)
- Richard Carlile. *Disputes between Reformers of Leeds* (1821)