

The geography of voting behaviour: towards a roll-call analysis of England's reformed electoral map, 1832-68

This paper uses a constituency-led analysis of voting in the Commons between 1832 and 1868 to examine the diversity of party labels in the reformed UK electoral system, provide a four-nation analysis of MP behaviour in the division lobbies, and explore the political effects of the 1832 Boundary Act.¹ It has evolved from the work that I've been doing to develop the History of Parliament and Eggers and Spirling dataset of UK parliamentary divisions, the first ever comprehensive digitised record of the 20,262 parliamentary divisions that took place in the Commons between 1836 and 1910. I started doing this work for my forthcoming book, which is the first monograph to offer a detailed analysis of the 1832 Boundary Act. I had a specific question that I wanted to answer for the book, which I'll discuss in the final part of this paper: what impact did the substantial redrawing of England's electoral map in 1832 have on the formation of governments, decision-making in the Commons and the evolution of party between 1832 and 1868? I'd done some basic analysis of party labels and voting in the Commons as part of my earlier attempts to answer this question, but I wanted to make use of this new dataset to complete a more comprehensive investigation. As well as providing an opportunity for the kind of detailed global structural analysis of the electoral system that I was immediately concerned with, I think this incredible dataset has the potential to be developed into a major research tool for historians trying to understand the relationship between Westminster, the reformed electoral system and nineteenth-century UK politics and political culture. But small steps first. I'll use the first part of this paper to introduce the revisions and extensions that I've made to the division list dataset, before using the revised dataset to provide a four-nation overview of voting in the Commons between the first and second Reform Acts. This analysis will focus on voting in major confidence motions, and three key policy areas that defined Westminster politics between 1832 and 1868 – free trade, electoral reform and the reform of the Church. I'll then turn my attention to England's constituency system to give a taste of how I've been using the dataset to analyse England's reformed electoral map.

This paper draws from the techniques of roll-call analysis, which have been developed by political scientists and historians, in the British context at least, since the 1960s. As a quantitative method it is more commonly associated with examining the American legislature (hence the 'roll-call' name), but major work has been done on the voting records of the Commons between 1832 and 1868. Due to the vast resources required to create a comprehensive set of voting records, previous work has generally focused on analysing individual parliaments, and usually only a specific set of votes. It has also focused primarily on measuring partisanship and party discipline at Westminster, either by comparing the voting records of MPs against party labels, using scaling methods to identify the political positions of individual MPs, or comparing MPs' votes against the activity of prototypical party whips in the Commons.² Eggers and Spirling's recent analysis of voting behaviour in the Commons

¹ I would like to thank Dr Philip Salmon and Dr Kathryn Rix for their comments on an early version of this paper, and the latter for very kindly providing me with images of MPs voting in the lobbies and contemporary quotations on the neutralising impact of double-member seats.

² For the first technique see: J. Lowell, 'The Influence of Party on Legislation in England and America', *Annual Report for the American Historical Association* (1901), i. 321-544; D. Beales, 'Parliamentary Parties and the Independent Member', 1810-1860', in Robson, R. (ed.), *Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain* (1967), 1-19; Hugh Berrington, 'Partisanship and Dissidence in the Nineteenth Century House of Commons', *Parliamentary Affairs* (1968), xxi. 338-374; D. Close, 'The Formation of a Two-Party Alignment in the House of Commons

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between 1836 and 1910 (which utilised their new dataset) applied the latter technique, and suggested that Ian Newbould's conclusions on party discipline in the Commons during the 1830s (whose work was based on the former technique), and the observations of a number of qualitative studies covering the entire period hold true. While 'party' organisation at Westminster was very gradually assuming some of its twentieth-century characteristics, between 1832 and 1868 government authority continued to rely on 'cohesive, yet mutable, party connection[s]' in the Commons. These connections, as will be reaffirmed in this analysis, could quickly break down if an opposition identified sufficient weakness among a government's supporters to turn a policy question into an issue of confidence – a tactic that remained the general method of bringing down a government throughout the period.³

Comparatively less attention has been paid by roll-call analysis to the links between constituencies and voting habits in the Commons. Work completed by a number of historians on William Aydelotte's pioneering dataset of votes for the 1841-1847 parliament linked constituency size (according to its electorate) and a constituency's socio-economic profile to the behaviour of MPs. Aydelotte, and later Cheryl Schonhardt-Bailey, both observed a clear correlation between a Conservative MP's decision to support free trade or protection in 1846, and the economic interest of his constituency. They also revealed that boroughs with large electorates were more likely to favour politically and economically liberal policies between 1841 and 1847, whereas MPs returned for distinctively rural, small boroughs and counties were most zealous in their advocacy of agricultural protection.⁴

between 1830 and 1841', *English Historical Review*, 84, 331 (1969), 257-77; Newbould, *Whiggery and Reform*, 17-23; 'The Emergence of a Two-Party system', 25-31; 'Whiggery and the Growth of Party', 137-56. For the second technique see: W. O. Aydelotte, 'Voting Patterns in the British House of Commons in the 1840s', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (1963), v. 134-163; Idem, *Study 521 (Codebook). British House of Commons 1841-1847* (1970) Iowa City, IA, Regional Social Science Data Archive of Iowa; J. Bylsma, 'Party Structure in the 1852-1857 House of Commons: A Scalogram Analysis', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (1977), 617-635; J. Bylsma, 'Political Issues and Party Unity in the House of Commons, 1852-1857: A Scalogram Analysis', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Iowa, 1968; R. G. Watt, 'Parties and Politics in Mid-Victorian Britain, 1857-1859: a Study in Quantification', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Minnesota, 1975; V. Cromwell, 'Mapping the Political World of 1861: A Multidimensional Analysis of the House of Commons', *Legislative Studies Quarterly* (1982), vii. 281-297; C. Schonhardt-Bailey, *From the Corn Laws to Free Trade* (Cambridge MA, 2006). For the third technique see: A. C. Eggers & A. Spirling, 'Party Cohesion in Westminster Systems: Inducements, Replacement and Discipline in the House of Commons, 1836-1910', *British Journal of Political Science*, 46 (2014), 571, 573-8. For an alternative method see: J. Coohill, *Ideas of the Liberal Party: Perceptions, Agendas and Liberal Politics in the House of Commons, 1832-52* (2011), 113-203.

³ Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, 128-31; Newbould, *Whiggery and Reform*, 17-23; 'The Emergence of a Two-Party system', 25-31; 'Whiggery and the Growth of Party', 137-56. Also see, Parry, *Rise and Fall of Liberal Government*; Mandler, *Aristocratic Government*, 157-99; Brent, *Liberal Anglican Politics*; Hilton, *Mad, Bad*, 513-24.

⁴ W. Aydelotte, 'Constituency Influence on the British House of Commons', in W. Aydelotte (ed.), *The History of Parliamentary Behaviour* (New Jersey, 1977), 225-46; C. Schonhardt-Bailey, 'Ideology, Party and Interests in the British Parliament of 1841-47', *British Journal of Political Science* (2003), 581-605; C. Schonhardt-Bailey, *From the Corn Laws to Free Trade* (Cambridge MA, 2006); I. MacLean 'Interests and Ideology in the United Kingdom Parliament of 1841-7: An Analysis of Roll Call Voting', *Contemporary Political Studies*, 1 (1995), 1-20; I. MacLean, *Rational choice and British politics - an analysis of rhetoric and manipulation from Peel to Blair* (2001), 45-56; G. Cox, *The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the development of Political Parties in Victorian England* (1987), 148-150. The only other examples of constituency based roll-call analyses have been provided by Cox, who utilised Aydelotte and Bylsma's datasets to suggest a correlation between cross-party dissent and MPs that relied on cross-party splits at elections, and Eggers and Spirling, who revealed that MPs who were returned unopposed, or that represented Irish and Welsh constituencies, exhibited the poorest

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These findings can be combined with the party label analysis completed by a number of historians to offer a basic bird's eye view of how MPs from the four nations and certain types of constituency might have behaved at Westminster between 1832 and 1868. As the late Angus Hawkins noted, 'deeply ingrained differences' in electoral culture across the four nations produced markedly different national outcomes at each general election during the period.⁵ In England the Conservatives returned majorities between 1837 and 1852, and Wales was a Conservative stronghold aside from 1832 and 1865. In Scotland Whig-Liberal candidates enjoyed fairly consistent success, and Ireland returned a majority of Repealers, Liberals and Whigs at every election aside from 1859.⁶ Within each nation particular types of constituency could differ from national trends. In Scotland and Ireland Conservatives derived most success from the counties. In England, Conservative, Liberal-Conservative and Protectionist MPs prospered in the counties, boroughs with fewer than 500 voters and some larger historic boroughs where an established Anglican elite existed.⁷ The variety of English Whigs, reformers, Liberals and radicals who proved willing to associate with the Whig leadership of the Commons in the 1830s, and the increasingly distinctive Liberal leadership from the late 1840s, are known to have derived considerable success from boroughs enfranchised in 1832 and ancient boroughs with large electorates.⁸

I – Unpacking the data

To extend this understanding of the United Kingdom's reformed electoral map, and the impact that it had on the voting habits of MPs at Westminster, I've been expanding and developing the open access 1836-1910 Eggers and Spirling dataset of parliamentary divisions, which was published in 2014 and revised in 2015.⁹ The original Eggers and Spirling division dataset was compiled from the History of Parliament's 2009 digitisation of the 20,262 votes contained in the *House of Commons Divisions Lists, 1836-1910*. It was developed as part of a relational database, which linked MPs via a unique ID to their parliamentary speeches, and some basic information regarding their constituencies, election dates and parliamentary offices. The database was turned into a basic web application (which is rusty, but still almost useable), which allowed you to view all of this data, but little else.¹⁰ The History of Parliament has also used the Eggers and Spirling dataset to develop its Voting and Division Explorer, which allows users to view every vote by an MP between 1836 and 1910, compare these votes with five other MPs and provides a record of an MP's voting attendance. While these web applications present as a starting point for how this dataset might be developed in the future, they did not allow for

levels of voting attendance: Cox, *Efficient Secret*, 57-59, 148-165; A. C. Eggers & A. Spirling, 'Electoral Security as a Determinant of Legislator Activity, 1832-1918: New Data and Methods for Analyzing British Political Development', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 39 (2014), 593-620.

⁵ Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, 177-214.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 177-214; K. T. Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland, 1832-1885* (1984), 257-341.

⁷ B. Coleman, *Conservatism and the Conservative Party in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1988), 102-05; Stewart, *Conservative Party*, 215-16; Parry, *Rise and Fall*, 338-41; Jenkins, *Robert Peel*, 90-91; MacLean 'Interests and', 1-20. Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, 181-82, 189-94; CRAGOE; HOPPEN.

⁸ Parry, *Rise and Fall*, 193-94, 339.

⁹ The original dataset is available here: http://andy.egge.rs/eggers_spirling_database.html

¹⁰ <http://hansard.herokuapp.com/>

Figure 0.5 - Voting in the Commons

Top: 'The Division Lobby, House of Commons', *Illustrated London News*, 5 Dec. 1857

Bottom Left: official Division List, 31 January 1840, *House of Commons Divisions Lists, 1836-1910*

Bottom Right: excerpt of digitised 31 January 1840 Division List



THE DIVISION LOBBY, HOUSE OF COMMONS: TAKING THE VOTES.—(SEE NEXT PAGE)

Numbr. 18.

41

Veneris, 31^a die Januarii, 1840.

Her Majesty's Government.—Motion made, and Question put,—“That Her Majesty's Government, as at present constituted, does not possess the confidence of this House.”—(Sir John Yarde Buller.)
—The House divided: Ayes 287, Noes 308.

AYES.

Acland, Sir Tho. Dyke (Devon.)	Clive, Hon. Rob. Henry (Salop)	Gaskell, Jas. Milnes
Acland, Tho. Dyke (Somersetsh.)	Cochrane, Sir Thomas John	Glabstone, W. E.
Alders, Lord Viscount	Codrington, Christopher W.	Glynne, Sir Stephen R.
Afford, Lord Viscount	Cole, Lord Viscount	Goddard, Ambrose
Alaeger, Captain	55Cokesham, John C. (Kilmarn.)	60Godson, Richard
Archbuthnot, Hon. Hugh	Compton, Henry Combe	Gordon, Hon. Capt. (Aberdeen.)
Archiehall, Mervyn	Conolly, Edward	Gore, Ormsby J. R. (Carnarvon.)
Ashley, Lord	Cooper, Edward Joshua (Sligo)	Gore, Ormsby W. (Salop)
Ashley, Hon. Henry	Corney, Hon. Henry	Goulburn, Rt. Hon. Henry
10Attwood, Wolverley (Greenw.)	60Carterton, Philip	110Graham, Rt. Hon. Sir James
Attwood, Matthias (Whitehav.)	Cresswell, Creswell	Granby, Marquis of
Bage, William	Crofts, Sir George	Grant, Hon. Colonel (Elginsh.)
Bagot, Hon. William	Cripps, Joseph	Grant, F. W. (Inverness-shire)
Bailey, Joseph (Worcester)	65Dalrymple, Sir Adolphus	Greene, Thomas
15Bailey, Joseph, Jun. (Sudbury)	Dalrymple, Sir Adolphus	115Grimwithe, Thomas
Baillie, Colonel (Fife)	Darby, George	Grimston, Lord Viscount
Baker, Edward	Darlington, Earl of	Grimston, Hon. Edward H.
Baring, Hon. Francis (Thetford)	Douglas, Sir Charles E.	Hale, Robert Blagden
Barclay, John	Douro, Marquis of	Halford, Henry
20Barrington, Lord Viscount	Dowdeswell, William	120Hamilton, Charles John Baillie
Bateman, Sir Robert	70Duffield, Thomas	Hamilton, Lord Claud
Bell, Matthew	Dugdale, William Stratford	Harcourt, Geo. Gran. (Oxford.)
Bentinck, Lord George	Dunbar, George	Harcourt, Geo. Simon (Bucks.)
Blackburne, Ireland	Duncombe, Hon. W. (Yorksh.)	Hardinge, Rt. Hon. Sir Henry
25Blackstone, William Seymour	Duncombe, Hon. A. (E. Retford)	125Hawkes, Thomas
Blair, James	80Dungannon, Lord Viscount	Headstone, Sir Wm. (Hants)
Blackmore, Richard	Du Pro, George	Hennessy, G. Walker (Devizes)
Blamford, Marquis of	East, James Buller	Henniker, Lord
Blennerhassett, Arthur	Easton, Lord Viscount	Hepburn, Sir T. B.
Bolton, Henry George	Eaton, Richard Jefferson	130Herbert, Hon. Sidney
Bolling, William	85Egerton, Wm. Tatton	Herries, Rt. Hon. John Charles
Bradshaw, James	Egerton, Sir Philip	Hill, Sir Rowland
Bramston, Thomas William	Elliot, Lord	Hillsborough, Earl of
Broadley, Henry	Ellis, John (Newry)	Hinle, John Hodgson
35Broadwood, Henry	Farnham, Edward Basil	135Hodgson, Fred. (Barnstable)
Bruce, Lord Ernest	90Feilden, William (Blackburn)	Hodgson, Richard (Berwick)
Bruges, W. H. Ludlow	Fielden, John (Oldham)	Hogg, James Weir
Buck, Lewis W.	Fector, John Minet	Holmes, William (Berwick)
40Buller, Sir Jn. Yarde (Devon.)	Feltham, Edward	Hope, Hon. Chas. (Lanithewes.)
Burlett, Sir Francis	95Filmer, Sir Edmund	140Hope, Henry T. (Gloucester City)
Burroughes, Henry N.	Fleming, John	Hope, Geo. W. (Weymouth)
Calcraft, John Hales		Hotham, Lord
Cantilupe, Lord Viscount		Houldsworth, Thomas
Cartwright, William Ralph		Houston, George
45Castlereagh, Lord Viscount		145Hughes, William Bulkeley
Chaumay, Auran (Whitby)		Hurt, Francis

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	VU
mp.id	mp.name	mp.name	mp.fna	Election	Constituency	Constituency GIS	d5373-31 Jan. 1840
3552	Mr George Alfred N Muskett	George	G		St. Albans		0
3448	Mr Edward Ellice	Ellice	Edward	G	St. Andrews District		0
3585	Mr William Tyring/ Praed	William	B		St. Ives		1
3177	Captain William Cr Chetwynd	William	G		Stafford		0
2049	Mr Robert Farrand Farrand	Robert	G		Stafford		1
2504	Mr William Bingha Baring	William	G		Staffordshire North		A
3179	Mr Edward Mannir Buller	Edward	G		Staffordshire North		0
2999	Hon. George Anson Anson	George	G		Staffordshire South		0
2655	Viscount Ingestre (Ingestre Chetwynd-Talbot)	George	G		Staffordshire South		1
1703	Sir George Clerk	George	B		Stamford		1
3553	Marquess of Charle Granby	George	G		Stamford		1
3180	Lord Archibald Pro Dalmeny	G	G		Stirling District		0
2362	Mr George Ralph A Abercromby	George	P		Stirlingshire		0
3394	Mr Henry Marsland Marsland	Henry	G		Stockport		0
3183	Mr Thomas Marsla Marsland	Thomas	G		Stockport		1
2821	Mr William Taylor Copeland	William	G		Stoke-upon-Trent		1
3184	Mr John Davenport Davenport	John	G		Stoke-upon-Trent		1
1885	Lord John Russell	Russell	John	G	Stroud		0
3262	Mr George Julius P Scrope	Poulett	G		Stroud		0
3580	Mr Joseph Bailey	Bailey	Joseph	B	Sudbury		1
3188	Sir John Benn Wals Walsh	John	B		Sudbury		1
3190	Lord John Hennike Henniker	G	G		Suffolk East		1
3397	Sir Charles Broke V Vere	Charles	G		Suffolk East		1
3399	Mr Robert Rushbroc Rushbrooke	Robert	G		Suffolk West		1
3586	Mr Harry Spencer V Waddington	Harry	B		Suffolk West		1
2405	Mr William Thomp Thompson	William	G		Sunderland		1
3556	Mr Andrew White	White	Andrew	G	Sunderland		0
3400	Mr Richard Alsager Alsager	Richard	G		Surrey East		1
3557	Mr Henry Kemble	Kemble	Henry	G	Surrey East		1
1344	Mr William Joseph Denison	William	G		Surrey West		0
3558	Hon. George James Perceval	George	G		Surrey West		1
1918	Hon. Charles Comg Cavendish	Charles	G		Sussex East		0
3559	Mr George Darby	Darby	George	G	Sussex East		0
2567	Earl of Arundel and Fitzalan-Howa	Henry	G		Sussex West		1
2178	Lord John George I Lennox	John	G		Sussex West		0
1444	Hon. William How Howard	William	G		Sutherlandshire		A
3197	Mr John Henry Vivi Vivian	John	G		Swansea		0
2226	Captain Edward He A Court (Ashe)	Edward	G		Tamworth		1
1664	Sir Robert Peel	Peel	Robert	G	Tamworth		1
3198	Mr Edward Thomat Bainbridge	Edward	G		Taunton		0
2381	Mr Henry Labouch	Labouchere	Henry	G	Taunton		0
3401	Mr John Rundle	Rundle	John	G	Tavistock		0
2701	Marquess of Tavist Russell	William	G		Tavistock		0
3402	Mr William Dowde Dowdeswell	William	G		Tewkesbury		0
3199	Mr John Martin	Martin	John	G	Tewkesbury		1

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the kind of geographical roll-call analysis of the UK electoral system that I wanted to complete. As a result I started digging into the original voting data in the Eggers and Spirling database, which contained an individual database of votes for every Parliament convened between the January 1835 and January 1910 general elections. These individual databases were based on the same format as William Aydelotte and Valerie Cromwell's digitised datasets for the 1841 and 1859 Parliament, and also used some of the data from these datasets. They included a record of almost every MP in each Parliament and how they voted in every division to around 98% accuracy, an MP's birth and death dates and his party labels, as defined retrospectively by F.W.S Craig's *British Parliamentary Election Results*.¹¹ While the types of statistical analysis that I wanted to perform on these voting records was much less complex than that completed by political scientists such as Eggers and Spirling (the work presented here has been completed primarily with Microsoft Excel and QGIS), I knew that I needed to add a considerable amount of new data to each set to achieve what I had in mind.

To ensure that the voting data discussed here is as accurate as possible I've 'cleaned' the original voting data to ensure that the votes discussed in this paper are 100% accurate. Where available I've also added contemporary records of 'pairs' and absences to each parliamentary vote analysed in this paper.¹² In addition to this data cleaning process I've created an additional dataset for the 1833-4 Parliament and added a number of missing divisions to the dataset for the 1835-7 Parliament. The absence of divisions between 1833 and 1836 in the original Eggers and Spirling dataset occurred because it only included votes that took place following the official publication of parliamentary divisions on 22 February 1836.¹³ Prior to this, lists of divisions were published unofficially by the press, but were often unreliable and incomplete, with records only existing for significant divisions and often only for the 'Ayes' or the 'Noes'. These caveats granted, the repeated efforts of MPs to issue public corrections to erroneous newspaper reports and the national prominence granted to the reporting of parliamentary affairs during the 1830s means that for votes on confidence measures, or major issues (such as Irish policy, retrenchment, the corn laws, the ballot and church reform) relatively accurate voting records do exist for most major votes. Thus far, I've added 27 major divisions between 1833 and 1836 to the Eggers and Spirling dataset. When available these figures include published pairs – when two MPs from an opposing side of a division both agreed to absent themselves from a division if one, or both, could not attend. The divisions I've recorded between January 1833 and February 1836 are for votes known to have

¹¹ For example: the original Eggers and Spirling dataset recorded 562 of the 573 MPs that voted in the 23 May 1837 division on church rates. The History of Parliament scanned divisions lists recorded all 573 votes.

¹² For example: including the pairs recorded in the *Morning Post*, 25 May 1837, added an additional 42 votes to the 23 May 1837 division on church rates, increasing 'voting' numbers from 573 to 615. Future development will need to use MP start and end dates to calculate absence accurately in every division, and incorporate the History of Parliament's more recent revisions of voting data. This data still need a lot of cleaning though ☹.

¹³ K. Rix, "Whatever passed in Parliament ought to be communicated to the public": reporting the proceedings of the reformed Commons, 1833-50', *Parliamentary History*, 33:3 (2014), 453-74; idem, "The House divided": the creation of a second division lobby for the Commons in 1836', *History of Parliament Blog*, January (2019); *House of Commons Divisions Lists, 1836-1910* (London, 1936).

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Table 1 – 26 Feb. 1835 division on the amendment to the address by country and constituency type
(Ayes = pro-Peel)

	Noes	Ayes	Absent	S	Vote Cont	Total	%Noes	%Ayes	%Absent	%S
England	212	231	25		-19	468	45.30%	49.36%	5.34%	0.00%
County	53	79	10		-26	142	37.32%	55.63%	7.04%	0.00%
Borough	159	148	15		11	322	49.38%	45.96%	4.66%	0.00%
University Seat		4			-4	4	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Ireland	62	41	2		21	105	59.05%	39.05%	1.90%	0.00%
County	39	23	2		16	64	60.94%	35.94%	3.13%	0.00%
Borough	23	16			7	39	58.97%	41.03%	0.00%	0.00%
University Seat		2			-2	2	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Scotland	33	17	2	1	16	53	62.26%	32.08%	3.77%	1.89%
County	13	16	1		-3	30	43.33%	53.33%	3.33%	0.00%
Borough	8			1	8	9	88.89%	0.00%	0.00%	11.11%
Borough District	12	1	1		11	14	85.71%	7.14%	7.14%	0.00%
Wales	7	19	6		-12	32	21.88%	59.38%	18.75%	0.00%
County	4	12	1		-8	17	23.53%	70.59%	5.88%	0.00%
Borough		1	1		-1	2	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%
Borough District	3	6	4		-3	13	23.08%	46.15%	30.77%	0.00%
Grand Total	314	308	35	1	6	658	47.72%	46.81%	5.32%	0.15%

been recorded with high reliability and represent around 15% of all divisions for which there is individual-level data.¹⁴

The second major addition to the dataset has been the inclusion of election and constituency level data for each MP for every Parliament between the first two Reform Acts. This includes an MP's election type (general, by-election, petition), his constituency, country, historic county, county division, the number of members his constituency returned, his constituency area and type (borough, county, borough district or university seat), his constituency franchise, the type of boundary change that took place in 1832 and a range of electoral registration data for each constituency at each election.¹⁵ In addition, all of this data has been geocoded so that voting records can be rendered visually in map form using geographic information system [GIS] software such as ARCGIS or QGIS.¹⁶ At a basic level, this constituency data (or different combinations of it) can be mapped against any parliamentary vote in the dataset. For example, Table 1 contains a breakdown of voting in the 26 February 1835 division over the amendment to address, which hastened the end of Robert Peel's first short-lived Conservative ministry. It reveals how English and Welsh MPs voted in the minority for Peel, thanks largely to strong support from the counties, whereas Scottish and Irish MPs helped secure the majority against him (although Scottish county MPs bucked their

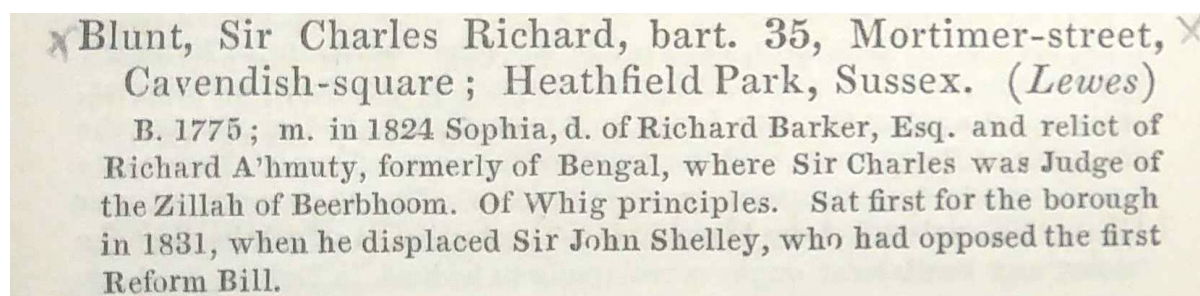
¹⁴ R. Gooch, *The Book of the Reformed Parliament* (1834) recorded the votes of 116 divisions in the 1833-4 Parliament

¹⁵ Monmouth Boroughs and Monmouthshire have been categorised as Welsh constituencies consistently with M. Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales, 1832-1886* (2004).

¹⁶ I have assigned a county and individual constituency geocode to each constituency. The county codes are for a UK county shapefile set that I've compiled using the English, Welsh and Scottish county shapefiles on Vision of Britain, and Irish county shapefiles provided by Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland and Ordnance Survey Ireland. Each English, Welsh and Scottish constituency has its own individual constituency code that relates to shapefiles available on Vision of Britain. Unfortunately, shapefiles for individual Irish constituencies between 1832 and 1868 do not yet exist.

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Figure 1 – Entry for Sir Charles Blunt, MP for Lewes, in *Dod's Parliamentary Companion* (1835)



national trend by voting with Peel). These figures are also adjusted to account for absent MPs, of whom a disproportionate amount represented Welsh boroughs.

The third addition to the dataset is contemporary party label data for each MP at each election, compiled primarily from *Dod's Parliamentary Companion*, a pocket guide to the UK Parliament published annually since 1833. *Dod's* contained an entry for every MP which included basic biographical and electoral information, the policies he supported and if known, some form of party label [see Figure 1]. These party labels, which changed from Parliament to Parliament (and sometimes from year to year) were collected from press accounts of election addresses and speeches, and personal questionnaires and correspondence with MPs.¹⁷ Importantly, 'party' in *Dod's* sense was used as shorthand to identify the 'political principles' of a member rather than his membership of a party organisation, as the term is more commonly employed in modern usage.¹⁸ I have verified the party labels provided for each MP in *Dod's* against rival parliamentary companions (of which there was a flourishing market until the late 1830s), and contemporary newspaper lists of election results (which were broken down by a variety of party labels) in order to gain the most accurate party label for an MP at the time of his election. When a party label provided by *Dod's* conflicted with contemporary sources I have tried to establish the most accurate label by consulting public election addresses and election speeches.¹⁹ In order to avoid anachronism in a process fraught with categorisation difficulties, I have only deviated from *Dod's* party labels where clear errors occurred.

The errors that I have found in *Dod's* can largely be accounted for by the quick turnaround for each volume of *Dod's* ahead of a new Parliament, the fluid nature of party labels during the period, particularly during times of political turmoil, and simple human error. In addition, from the 1852 election there was a clear Anglo-centric bias in *Dod's* which failed to account for the subtlety in party labels adopted by Irish MPs. This followed the formal attempt to establish an Independent Opposition party in Ireland from 1851, and the nominal use of the label 'Liberal' by Irish MPs from 1857, who continued to profess independence from the English definition of the Liberal party but did not define themselves under the Independent Opposition. I have used contemporary election sources and secondary literature to categorise

¹⁷ 'Autobiography of five hundred members...', *History of Parliament*, London (facsimile of original held at Yale); Coohill, *Ideas of the Liberal Party*, 19-45

¹⁸ *Dod's Parliamentary Companion* (1835), 79.

¹⁹ In the rare instances when an MP was not included in these volumes his party label has been compiled from contemporary sources or *Dod's Electoral Facts, 1832-1868*.

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Table 2 – Party Labels (broadly categorised) for MPs returned at each general election, 1832-65

Party Label	1832	1835	1837	1841	1847	1852	1857	1859	1865
Repealer	35	28	26	18	31	3			
Conditional Repealer	1								
Independent Opposition						48	12	1	
Liberal (Independent)							16	25	19
Chartist					2	1			
Advanced Liberal							3	5	9
Radical	21	34	31	26	22	11	7	7	5
Whig-Radical	11	5							
Reformer	123	140	99	70	34	24	6	8	3
Reformer (Protectionist)					1				
Liberal		1	34	67	167	183	316	283	315
Liberal (Protectionist)					2	1			
Whig	206	118	105	72	47	33	11	12	8
Whig (Protectionist)					1	1			
Whig-Liberal Administration*	37	34	31	21	8	4	3	3	
Liberal Conservative			3	2	9	24	49	65	51
Liberal Conservative Administration*									
Liberal Tory					1	1	1		
Moderate Whig		5	1						
Moderate Reformer	50	39	15	3		1			
Conservative (Free Trade)					66	40			
Conservative Administration*		5	1	1		1	1	1	1
Conservative	141	230	288	353	64	120	223	239	247
Moderate Reformer (Protectionist)					1				
Conservative (Protectionist)					168	145			
Tory				4	1	1			
Tory (Protectionist)							2		
Protectionist					11	6			
No Party Label	33	19	24	21	18	7	6	5	
Total MPs returned	658	658	658	658	656	655	654	654	658

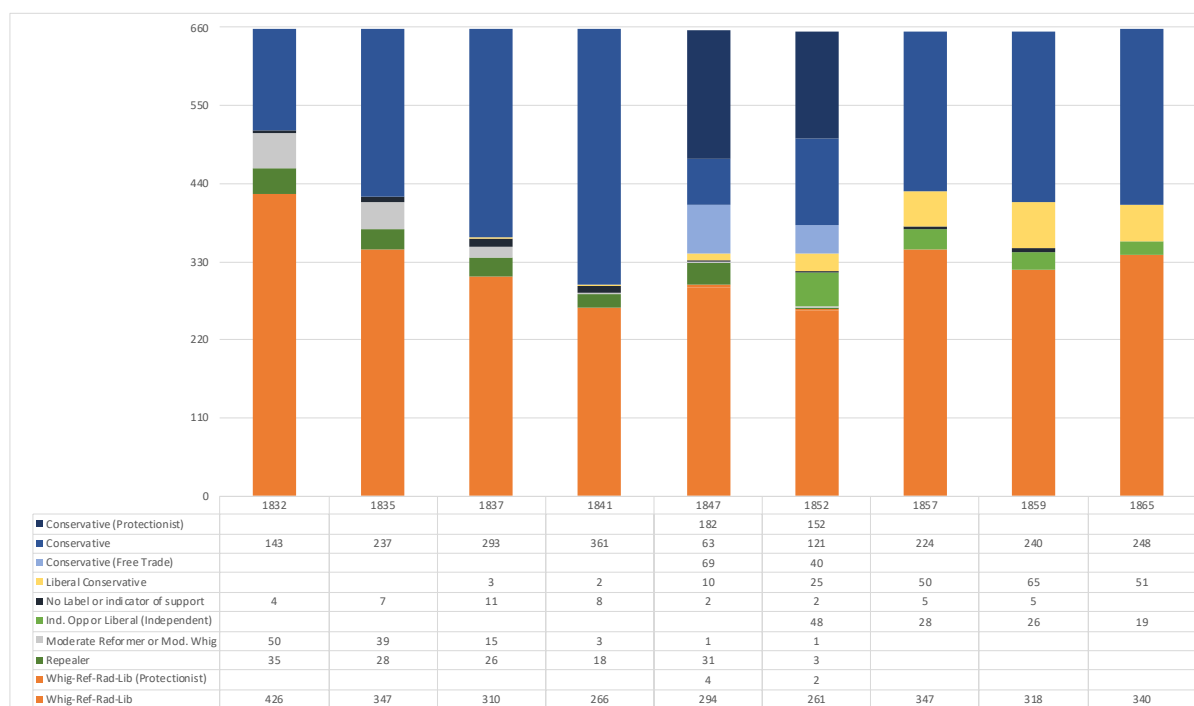
MPs who fall into the former category as Independent Opposition and the latter as Liberal (Independent).²⁰

Until at least 1847 *Dod's* ascribed no party label to a notable minority of MPs, which usually reflected a deliberately independent stance on behalf on an MP even if he was known to support policies associated with specific party labels. In every edition, too, multiple variations of the same party label were commonly deployed and there was sometimes considerable conflation of multiple party labels, such as in 1833 when one MP defined himself as holding 'Whig principles inclining to Conservatism', and another 'a reformer, of whig, inclining to radical opinions'. To account for this my party label dataset contains extended labels for every MP, a broad categorisation of party labels that takes into account crossover between two distinct labels [see Table 2], and a stricter categorisation that groups MPs as Conservative, Liberal Conservative, Moderate Reformer, Whig-Reformer-Radical-Liberal, Repealer, Independent Opposition and Liberal (Independent), aside from between 1841 to 1852 when support for free trade is also indicated [see Figure 2]. I have also used MP party labels to categorise MPs in a three way-split according to their likely support for a Whig-Liberal administration. MPs with no party label and who did not indicate their support for a particular administration in their extended description in *Dod's*, as well as those who deliberately defined

²⁰ On the independent opposition see: Hoppen, *Elections, Politics, and Society*, 257-331; 'Tories, Catholics, and the General Election of 1859', *Historical Journal* (1970), 48-67; J. H. Whyte, *The Independent Irish Party 1850-9* (1958); R. V. Comerford, 'Conspiring Brotherhoods and Contending Elites', in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland* (1989), 415-430. There is a difficulty of terms here. For the purposes of this dataset 'Liberal (Independent)' are Irish MPs distinct from the faction of up to 120 English 'Independent Liberals' thought to be under the stewardship of T. E. Headlam in 1858: P. M. Gurowich, 'The Continuation of War By Other Means: Party and Politics, 1855-1865', *Historical Journal* (1984), 609.

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Figure 2 – Party labels (stricter categorisation) for MPs returned at each general election, 1832-65



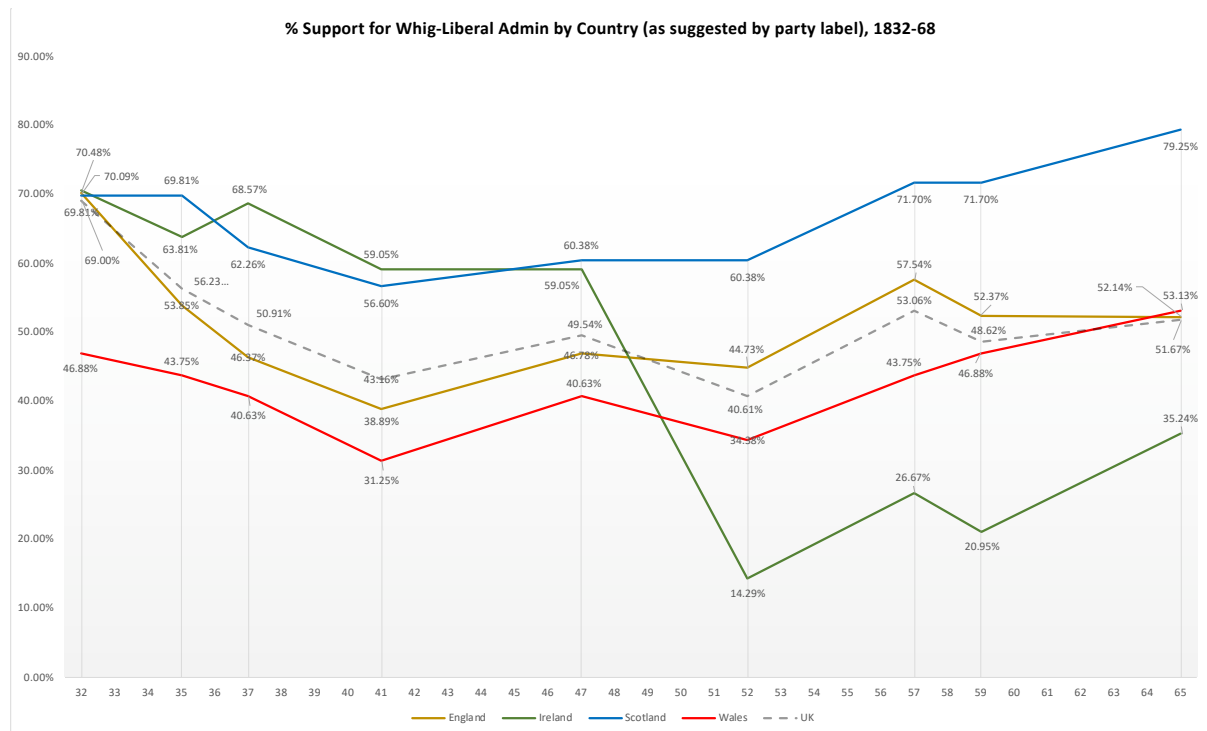
themselves ambiguously as moderate reformers, Liberal Conservatives, Independent Opposition, or Liberal (Independent) were placed in an ‘unclear’ category.

As we can see in Table 2 *Dod’s* party labels varied significantly across the political spectrum and period. For instance, labels such as reformer and Whig were eventually supplanted by Liberal, and others emerged and fell out of vogue due to the prominence of particular campaigns at certain elections. At the 1847 election references within party labels to an MP’s stance on the corn laws (free trade or protection) also led to a multiplicity of unique combinations – with support for agricultural protection even being signified by a handful of Liberals, reformers and Whigs. When these broad labels are collated more strictly [see Figure 2] they can be used as a basic indicator for where power lay in the Commons after each general election. Notably, in 1847 and 1852 Liberal Conservatives or MPs who continued to use the Conservative label but had supported the repeal of the corn laws in 1846, appear to have held the balance of power. Likewise, in 1859 Liberal Conservatives and Irish independent Liberals appeared to have had the power to make or break a potential Conservative or Liberal ministry.

These various party categorisations can then be evaluated alongside the division and constituency-level information discussed above. Figure 3 uses party labels to suggest a four-nation breakdown of support for Whig-Liberal administrations at general elections between 1832 and 1865. Aside from in Ireland after 1852, this chart correlates with the observations of previous historians about the state of party support during the period. It suggests that Wales did not return a Whig-Liberal majority until 1865, and that Whig-Liberals were in the minority across all English constituencies between 1837 and 1852. Scotland and Ireland proved remarkably similar in their support for Whig-Liberal administrations until diverging at the 1852 election, when Scotland became increasingly pro-Whig-Liberal. The election of 47 Independent Opposition MPs in Ireland at the 1852 election accounts for the initial reduction

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Figure 3 – Predicted support for Whig-Liberal government using party labels at general elections 1832-1865



in explicit Irish support for a Whig-Liberal government in 1852.²¹ While the Independent Opposition had dwindled to 12 MPs by 1857, that year's general election saw a huge growth in successful Irish candidates who were associated with their local Liberal parties but actively declared independence from 'either of the parties who have held the reins of government' at Westminster, as MP for County Tipperary, Laurence Waldron, stated in his 1857 election address.²² This strain of Liberal independence continued at the 1859 and 1865 elections, and, as the next section will demonstrate, was far from nominal.

Although Figures 2 and 3 can be used as basic indicator of parliamentary opinion, both charts rely on a considerable simplification of party labelling to offer a suggestion as to how each election might have provided a Commons majority. The categorisation of party labels in Figure 3, for instance, considers all Liberal Conservative MPs returned during the period to have not been supportive of Whig-Liberal administrations. However, in reality many of these MPs offered their tacit support to the Russell and Aberdeen ministries that were formed in 1846 and 1852 and would often vote with the Liberal Palmerston and Russell administrations thereafter. This is just one example of why party labelling, on its own, is insufficient to understand where power lay in the nineteenth-century Commons. The process is inherently fraught with categorisation difficulties and when MPs are reduced into three-way or even five-

²¹ Walker acknowledged that Irish Liberal MPs that 'still advocated an independent parliamentary role' from 1859 but designated them Liberals as 'they did not form a coherent group'. His tabulation of Independent Opposition MPs from 1857 is also based on behaviour in the division lobbies *after* the 1857 election, whereas my labels are based on what MPs declared in their public statements during the election: B. M. Walker, *Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland* (1978), xiv.-xv; Cornerford, 'Conspiring Brotherhoods', 417. Hawkins's analysis, which uses labels in *Dod's* does not account for Independent Opposition MPs or Independent Liberals: Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, 205.

²² *Tipperary Free Press*, 3 Mar. 1857

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Table 3 – 26 Feb. 1835 division on the amendment to the address by party label (Ayes = pro-Peel)

Party Label	No	Aye	Absent	Total	% No	% Aye	% Absent	Speaker
Repealer	28				100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Radical	32	1	1		94.12%	2.94%	2.94%	0.00%
Whig-Radical	5				100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Reformer	108	21	11		77.14%	15.00%	7.86%	0.00%
Liberal		1			0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Whig	95	15	8		80.51%	12.71%	6.78%	0.00%
Moderate Whig	1	3	1		20.00%	60.00%	20.00%	0.00%
Administration (Melbourne)	32			1	96.97%	0.00%	0.00%	3.03%
Moderate Reformer		33	6		0.00%	84.62%	15.38%	0.00%
Administration (Peel)		6			0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Conservative		224	6		0.00%	97.39%	2.61%	0.00%
No Party Label	13	4	2		68.42%	21.05%	10.53%	0.00%
Grand Total	314	308	35	1	47.72%	46.81%	5.32%	0.15%

way groupings, party labelling can offer a misleadingly simplistic impression of how party operated during the period.

Party labelling is better used in conjunction with voting records as a means of identifying shifting levels of unity in the Commons, and how particular issues could come to define or split groupings of MPs. Continuing with the example of the February 1835 division on the amendment to the address, Table 3 breaks the vote down by party label, revealing fairly high levels of cross-party support for the Peel ministry among 'Reformers' and 'Whigs' and a high level of abstention among 'Moderate Reformers'. While other MPs voted as would be expected for their party label, around 15% of the MPs described as reformers and 13% described as Whigs voted with the Conservative ministry. Individual examples of these MPs underline the extent to which the 1835 Parliament proved a moment of flux in terms of many MPs' post-reform political identities, the utility of fluid party labelling as a means of securing cross-party support at elections, and the continued prevalence of eighteenth-century notions of independence within the Commons after 1832. Importantly, nineteen of the 41 MPs who offered cross-party support to Peel in 1835 were associated at Westminster with the Derby Dilly, a group of MPs under the leadership of Sir James Graham and Lord Stanley (later the 14th earl of Derby). These MPs had split from the Grey ministry during 1834 over the issue of Irish Church reform with most eventually joining the Conservatives, but some re-joining the Whig-Liberal ranks.²³ During the 1835 election, these MPs still identified as Whigs or reformers in public, and refuted charges of Conservatism or 'Toryism'. For instance, Harry Verney (1801-1904) advised the *Morning Chronicle* in January 1835 that he had been returned for Buckingham in 1835 'on Liberal principles ... I am not a Tory'.²⁴ Uneasy with the direction of the Whigs under the leadership of Viscount Melbourne, in their public statements these MPs, and most of the other Whigs or reformers who supported Peel in February 1835, tended to refuse a 'factious opposition' to the incumbent Conservative Peel ministry.²⁵ As MP for South Shields, Robert Ingham (1793-1875), confirmed this was fully in keeping with the conventions

²³ Stewart, *Conservative Party*, 376.

²⁴ *Morning Chronicle*, 12 Jan. 1835; Stewart, *Conservative Party*, 374.

²⁵ See *Newcastle Journal*, 13 Dec. 1834; J. Owen, 'Young, George Frederick (1791-1870)', *HP Commons, 1832-1868*. For another example see: H. Miller, 'Buller, Edward (1800-1882)', *HP Commons, 1832-68*.

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Table 4 – Voting by English borough MPs in 26 Feb. 1835 division on the amendment to the address
(Ayes=Pro-Peel)

Boundary Change Type	Noes	Ayes	Absent	Vote Cont	Total	%Noes	%Ayes	%Absent
Multiple parish/Clause 5	36	40	1	-4	77	46.75%	51.95%	1.30%
Unchanged Borough	29	35	2	-6	66	43.94%	53.03%	3.03%
Extended to include modern town	58	49	9	9	116	50.00%	42.24%	7.76%
All English ancient boroughs	123	124	12	-1	259	47.49%	47.88%	4.63%
New borough	36	24	3	12	63	57.14%	38.10%	4.76%
Electorate Size	Noes	Ayes	Absent	Vote Cont	Total	%Noes	%Ayes	%Absent
0-299	19	19	2	0	40	47.50%	47.50%	5.00%
300-499	25	29	2	-4	56	44.64%	51.79%	3.57%
500-999	47	49	5	-2	101	46.53%	48.51%	4.95%
1,000-1,999	31	31	4	0	66	46.97%	46.97%	6.06%
2,000-2,999	8	9		-1	17	47.06%	52.94%	0.00%
3,000-4,999	13	8	1	5	22	59.09%	36.36%	4.55%
5,000-9,999	8	2		6	10	80.00%	20.00%	0.00%
10,000+	8	1	1	7	10	80.00%	10.00%	10.00%
All English Boroughs <3,000 voters	130	137	13	-7	280	46.43%	48.93%	4.64%
All English Boroughs >3,000 voters	29	11	2	18	42	69.05%	26.19%	4.76%
All English Boroughs	159	148	15	11	322	49.38%	45.96%	4.66%
UK Wide	314	308	35	6	657	47.79%	46.88%	5.33%

of the previous Parliament, as he only intended to offer the same opposition to the Peel ministry as 'Sir R[obert] Peel gave to Lord Grey's administration'.²⁶ Some MPs, such as John Eardley Wilmot (1783-1847), MP for Warwickshire North, were in the process of shifting party allegiances completely, but deliberately deployed the label 'reformer' to secure support of both local parties at 1835 election.²⁷ While others such as MP for Berkshire, John Walter (1776-1847), simply saw no contradiction in identifying themselves as 'a reformer' while also stating that they 'neither oppose[d], nor support[ed]' the Peel ministry.²⁸

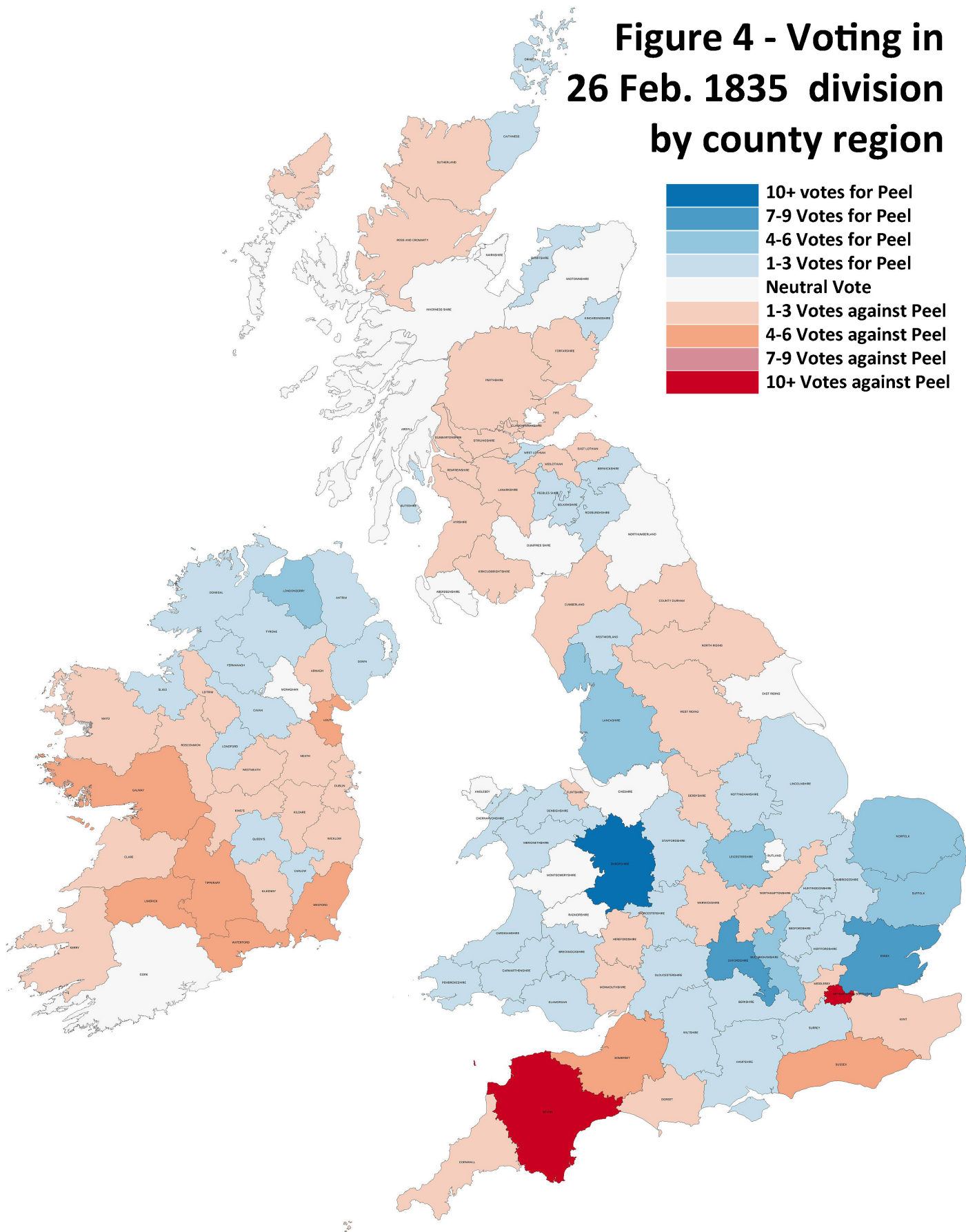
The February 1835 division can then be broken down by constituency type and region to identify patterns in voting among certain cohorts of MPs. When English borough votes are broken down by the type of boundary change in 1832, as in Table 4, there was a majority of 310 for Peel's Conservative ministry among MPs returned for English boroughs with unchanged boundaries and those thrown into their surrounding parishes by the 1832 Boundary Act. However, their influence from the perspective of the English boroughs was outweighed by a combined anti-Conservative majority of 21 across newly created boroughs in 1832 and those that had been extended to include their modern town. As Table 4 also shows, when the size of English borough electorates is considered, the anti-Peel majority across all English boroughs relied heavily on the 42 MPs who represented constituencies with an electorate with over 3,000 voters. The remaining 280 English borough MPs, when taken as a cohort, proved fairly evenly split over their support for Peel's Conservative administration.

²⁶ *Durham Chronicle*, 9 Jan. 1835.

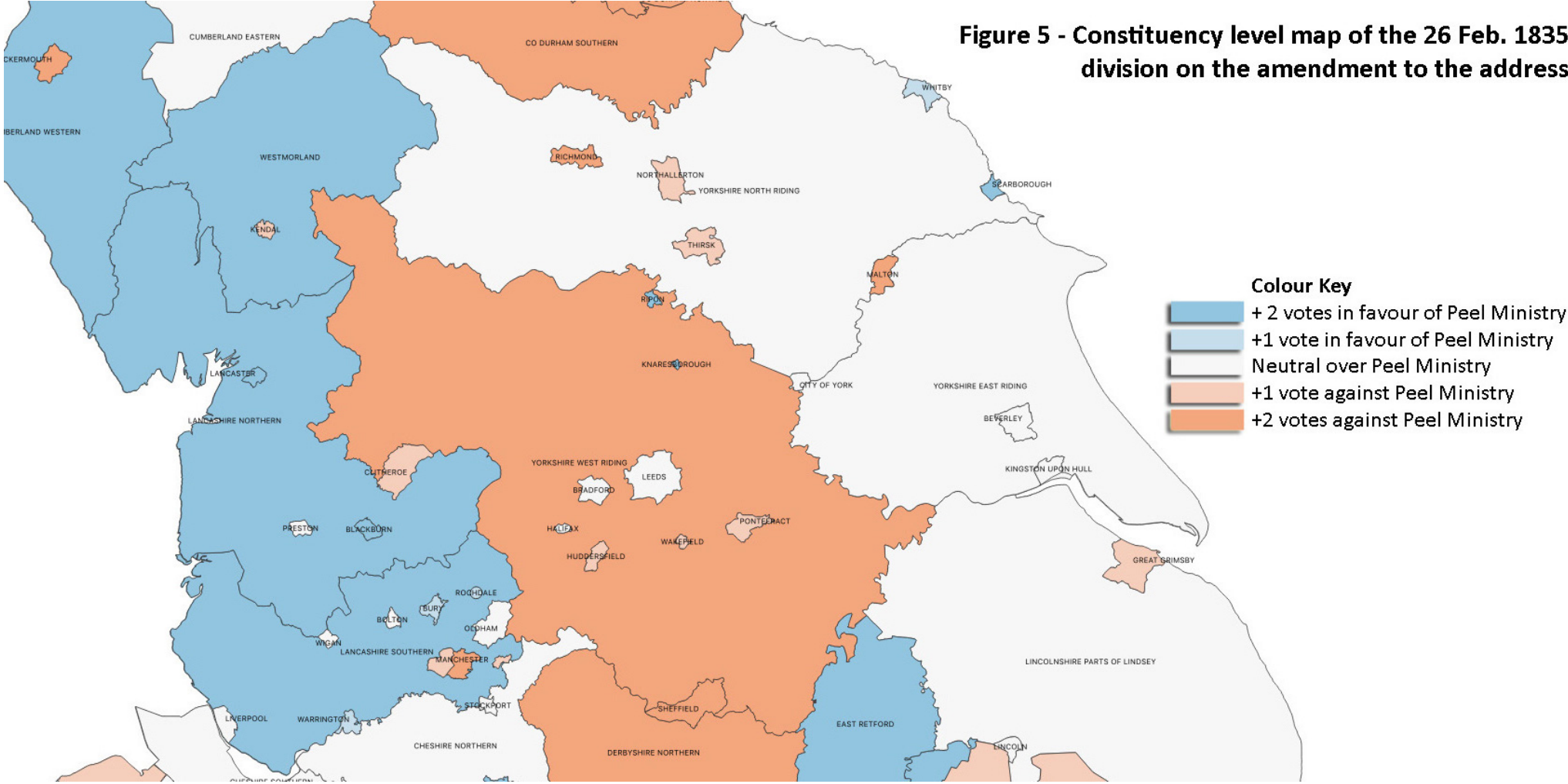
²⁷ H. Miller, 'Wilmot, Sir John Eardley Eardley (1783-1847)', *HP Commons*, 1832-68.

²⁸ *The Times*, 17 Jan. 1835.

**Figure 4 - Voting in
26 Feb. 1835 division
by county region**



**Figure 5 - Constituency level map of the 26 Feb. 1835
division on the amendment to the address**



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Table 5 – 26 Feb. 1835 division – Most influential county regions [UK] (Ayes = pro-Peel)

5 most anti-Peel counties	Noes	Ayes	Absent	Total Seats	Vote Cont	% Pro Peel	% Anti-Peel	% Absent
Shropshire		12		12	-12	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Essex	1	9		10	-8	90.00%	10.00%	0.00%
Oxfordshire	1	8		9	-7	88.89%	11.11%	0.00%
Leicestershire		6		6	-6	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Lancashire	9	15	2	26	-6	57.69%	34.62%	7.69%
5 most pro-Peel counties	Noes	Ayes	Absent	Total Seats	Vote Cont	% Pro-Peel	% Anti-Peel	% Absent
Metropolitan Boroughs	15		1	16	15	0.00%	93.75%	6.25%
Devonshire	17	5		22	12	22.73%	77.27%	0.00%
Sussex	11	5	2	18	6	27.78%	61.11%	11.11%
Waterford	5			5	5	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Galway	4			4	4	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%

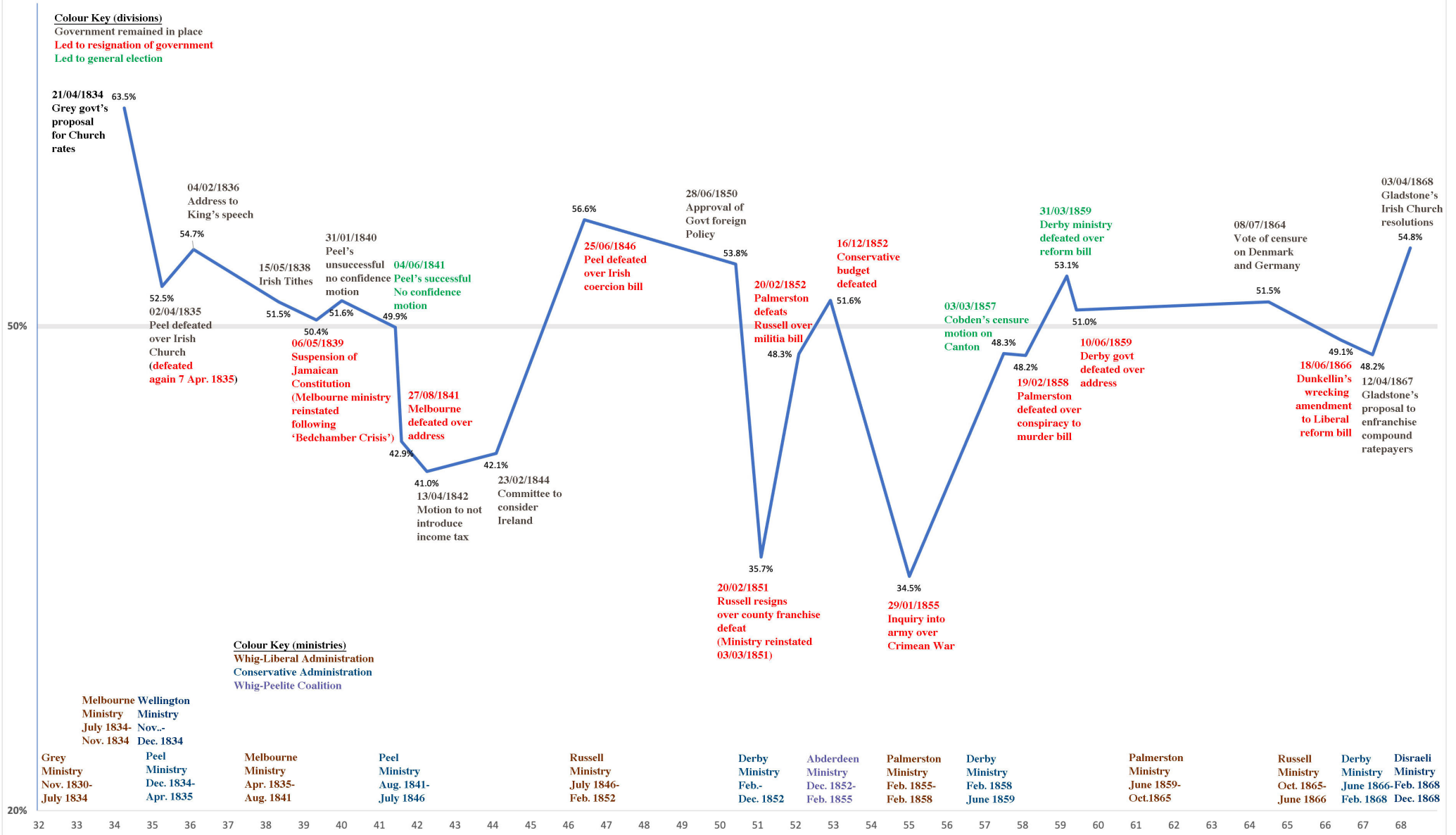
We can then expand this analysis to identify the most pro-Conservative and anti-Conservative county regions in the Commons.²⁹ Table 5 shows that Shropshire was the largest contributor to the Conservative minority in February 1835, with all 12 of its MPs offering their confidence to the Peel ministry. By contrast, the metropolitan boroughs (which have been grouped separately to their historic counties of Surrey and Middlesex) and Devonshire, which returned 16 and 22 MPs respectively contributed a majority of 15 and 12 votes to the anti-Peel majority. Figure 4 is a map of these UK county regions that visualises the same data. County regions in blue provided a majority for Peel, with those contributing the largest Conservative majorities in darker blue. County regions that returned a neutral vote are coloured white, such as Northumberland whose ten MPs voted evenly 5:5 for and against the Peel government. County regions that delivered an anti-Peel majority are colour graded from light orange to dark red, with the darkest red providing the highest number of seats to the eventual anti-Peel majority. Figure 5 is a map focused on Lancashire and Yorkshire showing the same data but at a constituency level. A dark blue constituency (such as Lancaster) indicates that both of its MPs voted against Peel. A white constituency returned a neutral vote, either because both its MPs cancelled out each other's votes (such as Leeds) or none of its MPs voted (such as Pontefract and Oldham). And a dark orange constituency (such as Yorkshire West Riding) indicates that both of its MPs voted against Peel. A light blue or light orange constituency indicates a single vote for or against Peel respectively, either because one member was absent or because it was a single-member constituency (such as Salford).

II – Confidence and policy: the four-nation context

The rest of this paper draws from an analysis of 50 votes in the Commons between 1833 and 1868 covering 24 major divisions, and a set of votes on three policy issues: the corn

²⁹ I use the term 'county region' instead of 'county' in this analysis as three traditional counties (Middlesex, Surrey and Yorkshire) have been modified from their historic bounds in keeping with the Vision of Britain GIS 1851 census registration county shapefiles for England. In these 'County Regions' Yorkshire's MPs are separated into the county's three traditional ridings and the Metropolitan Boroughs as defined by the 1832 Boundary Commissioners (Finsbury, Lambeth, London, Marylebone, Tower Hamlets, Westminster) are considered separate to Middlesex and Surrey. Greenwich (which was not considered part of the metropolitan boroughs by the boundary commissioners in 1832) remains part of Kent.

Figure 6 - % support for Whig-Liberal Administrations in major divisions, 1832-1868 [UK]



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laws, the ballot and the abolition of the compulsory church rate in England and Wales. The first and largest group of votes is a set of key divisions and confidence votes that made, and broke, the 15 different ministries that governed the UK between the passage of the 1832 reform legislation and the dissolution of Parliament in 1868.³⁰ These votes are detailed in Figure 6, which also provides a timeline of governments between 1832 and 1868 and the percentage of support for Whig-Liberal administrations (or opposition to Conservative administrations) in each vote.

For some, the high political narrative surrounding this timeline will be familiar. The period began with the triumph of pro-reform forces at the 1832 election and an almost unbroken nine-year stretch of Whig-Liberal governance under Earl Grey and then Viscount Melbourne. These Whig ministries were punctuated by Robert Peel's short-lived Conservative ministry of 1835, whose defeat in a series of votes between February and April 1835 was key in establishing 'parliamentary government' as a constitutional orthodoxy.³¹ In practice, this meant that from 1835, if an incumbent government was defeated in a vote of confidence they resigned or called a general election (as in 1841, 1857 and 1859), following which the newly elected Commons could vote out the incumbent government if the parliamentary arithmetic allowed (as in 1841 and 1859). The Whig government led by Viscount Melbourne from 1835 was eventually defeated by a resurgent Conservative party under Robert Peel at the 1841 election, who split the Conservative party over his decision to repeal the corn laws in 1846. The Conservatives only formed three brief governments over the subsequent twenty-two years (1852, 1858-9, 1866-8), which were dominated by the two Whig-Liberal administrations of Lord John Russell (1847-52 & 1865-6), the Whig-Peelite coalition under Lord Aberdeen (1852-55), and two governments led by Viscount Palmerston (1855-58, 1859-65). Palmerston, whose brand of Liberal patriotism secured the first Whig-Liberal majority for two decades at the 1857 general election, probably proved the most effective at marshalling the various groups of radicals, reformers, Whigs and Liberals who eventually coalesced under the Liberal party umbrella by 1859. The period ended with the passage of the 1867-8 reform legislation, which was introduced by a minority Conservative government led initially by Lord Derby, and from 1868 Benjamin Disraeli. During 1868 Disraeli's government was defeated repeatedly by an increasingly confident Liberal opposition under the leadership of William Gladstone but remained in place while the final aspects of the Conservative reform legislation made their way through Parliament.

As we can see in Figure 7, after the extensive cross-party voting over the Grey ministry's moderate proposals for the reform of Church rates in 1834 (which has been included in this set of votes as an example of fraught nature of Commons discipline towards the end of the Grey ministry), major episodes of cross-party voting only began to have an impact on a government's ability to secure the confidence of the Commons towards the end of Robert Peel's second Conservative ministry. The Peel government's resignation following their defeat over the Irish coercion bill in June 1846 was due to the votes of protectionist Conservatives, who had opposed Peel's decision to repeal the corn laws earlier that year. The subsequent Russell ministry resigned twice, first in 1851 after it was defeated by Repealers, radicals,

³⁰ This includes the Wellington caretaker ministry of Nov.-Dec. 1834 while Peel was on holiday.

³¹ For an in-depth discussion of parliamentary government see Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, 99-153.

Figure 7 - Dissent from Party Label in Major Votes 1832-68 (raw seats)
(excluding Moderate Reformers, Liberal Conservatives, Independent Liberals, Independent Opposition and MPs with no party label)

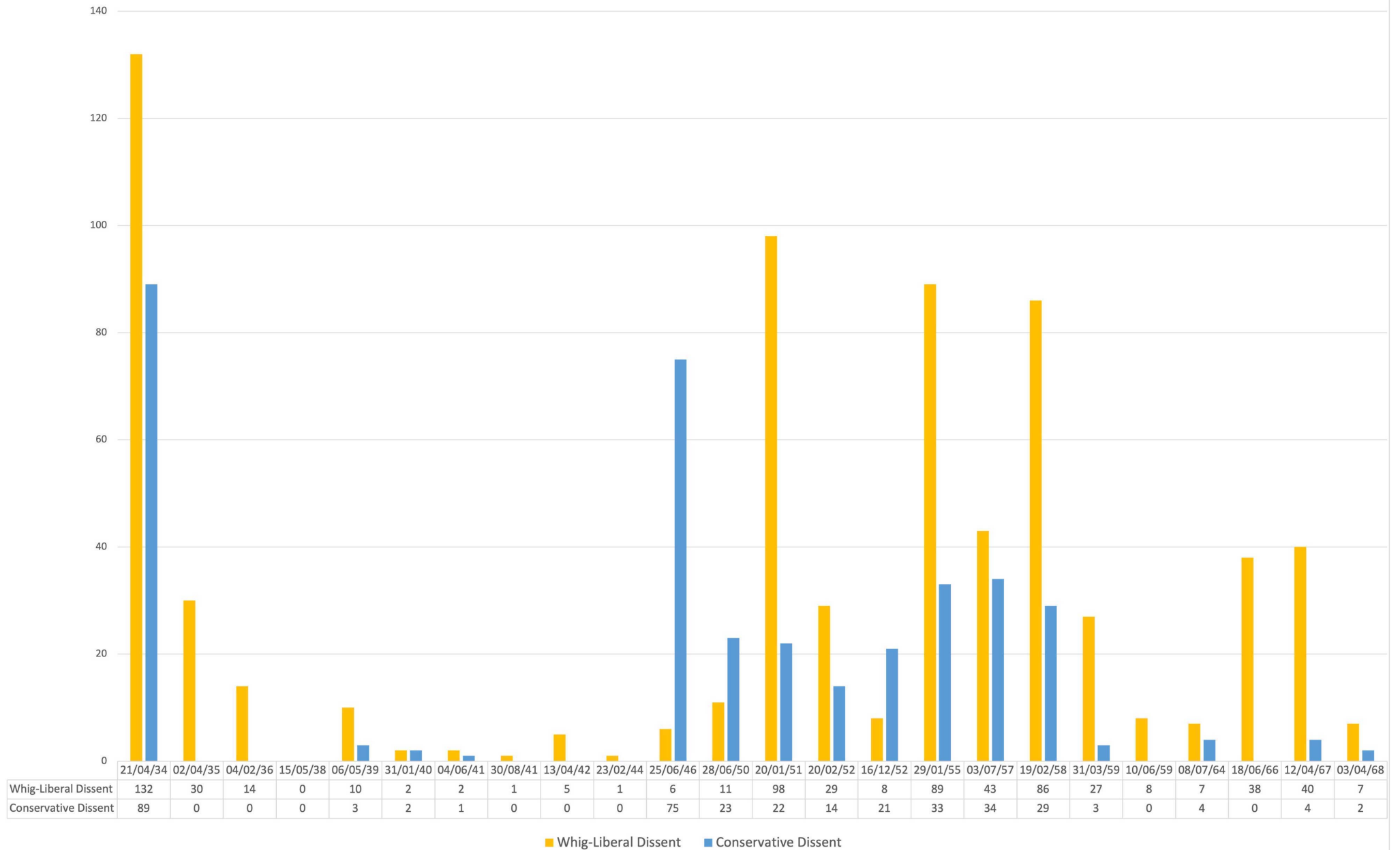


Figure 7.1 - Voting by Moderate Reformers and Liberal Conservatives in Major Divisions, 1832-1868
(includes 'Moderate Whigs' and 'Liberal Tories')

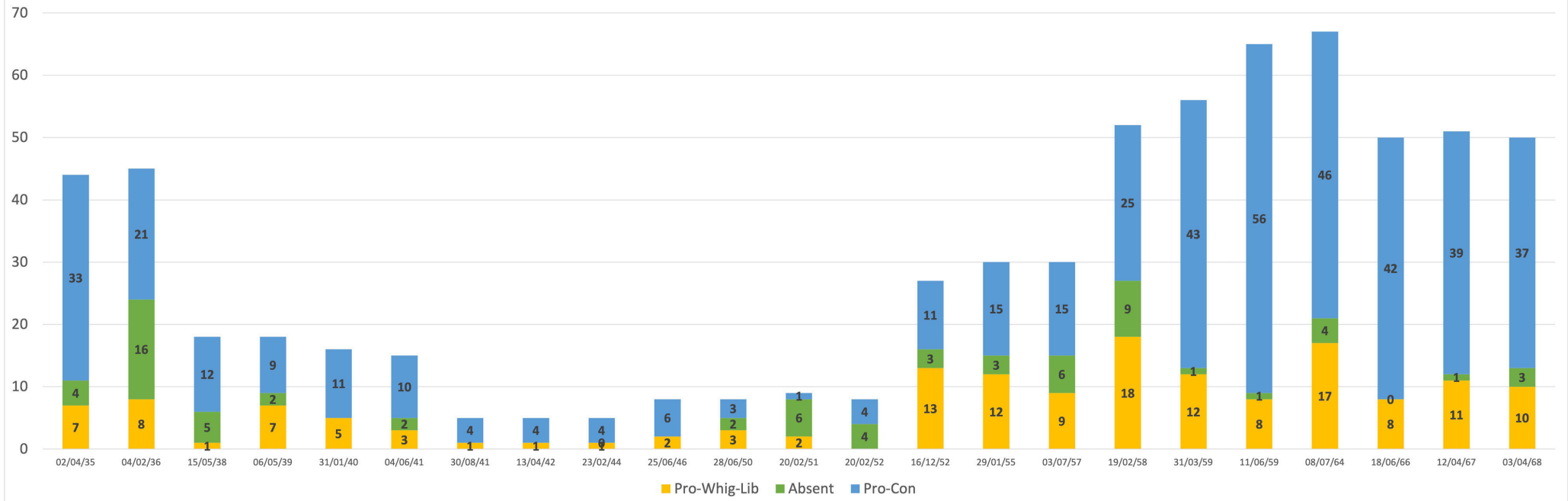


Figure 7.2 - Voting by Independent Opposition, 1852-65

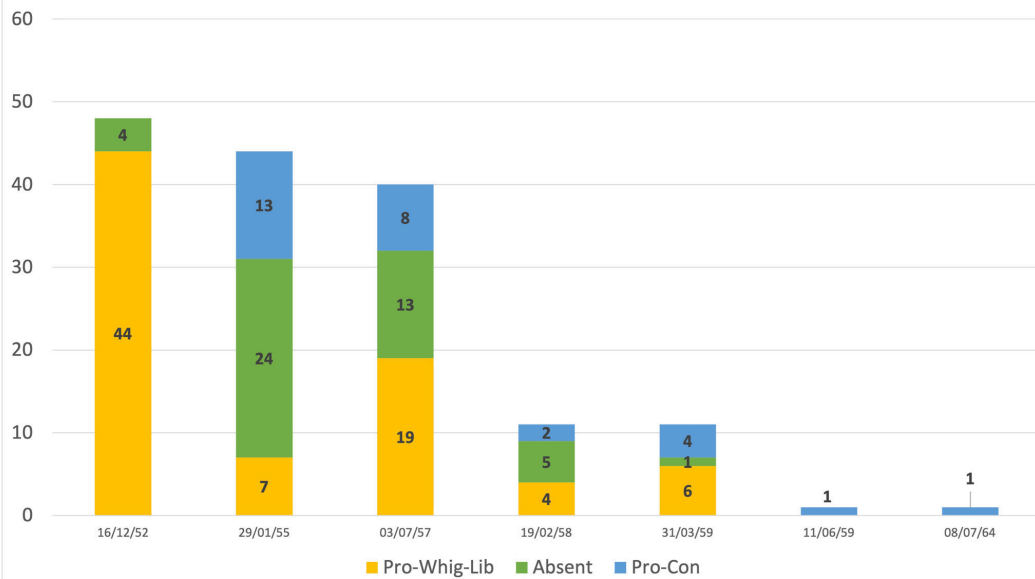
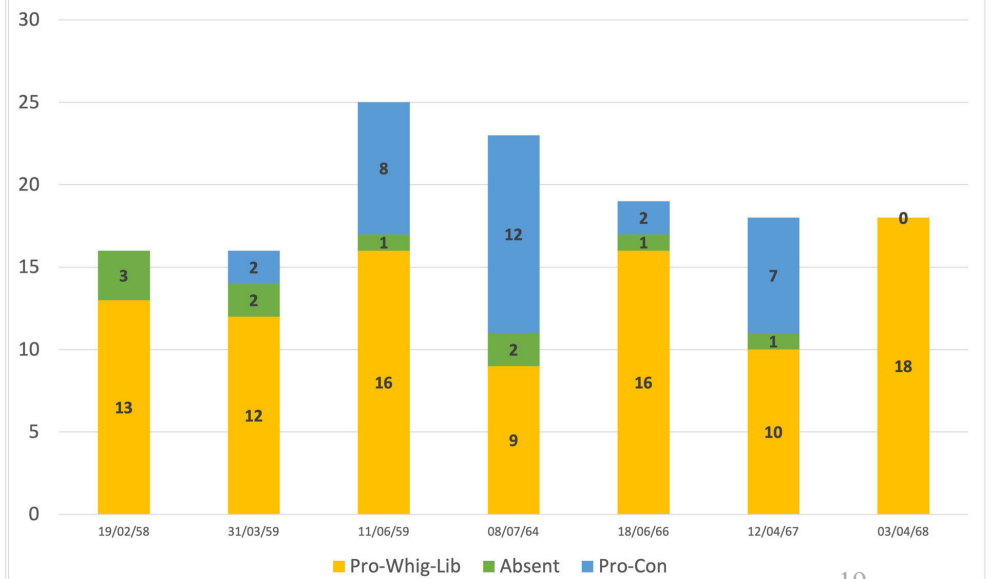


Figure 7.3 - Voting by Liberal (Independent), 1857-1868



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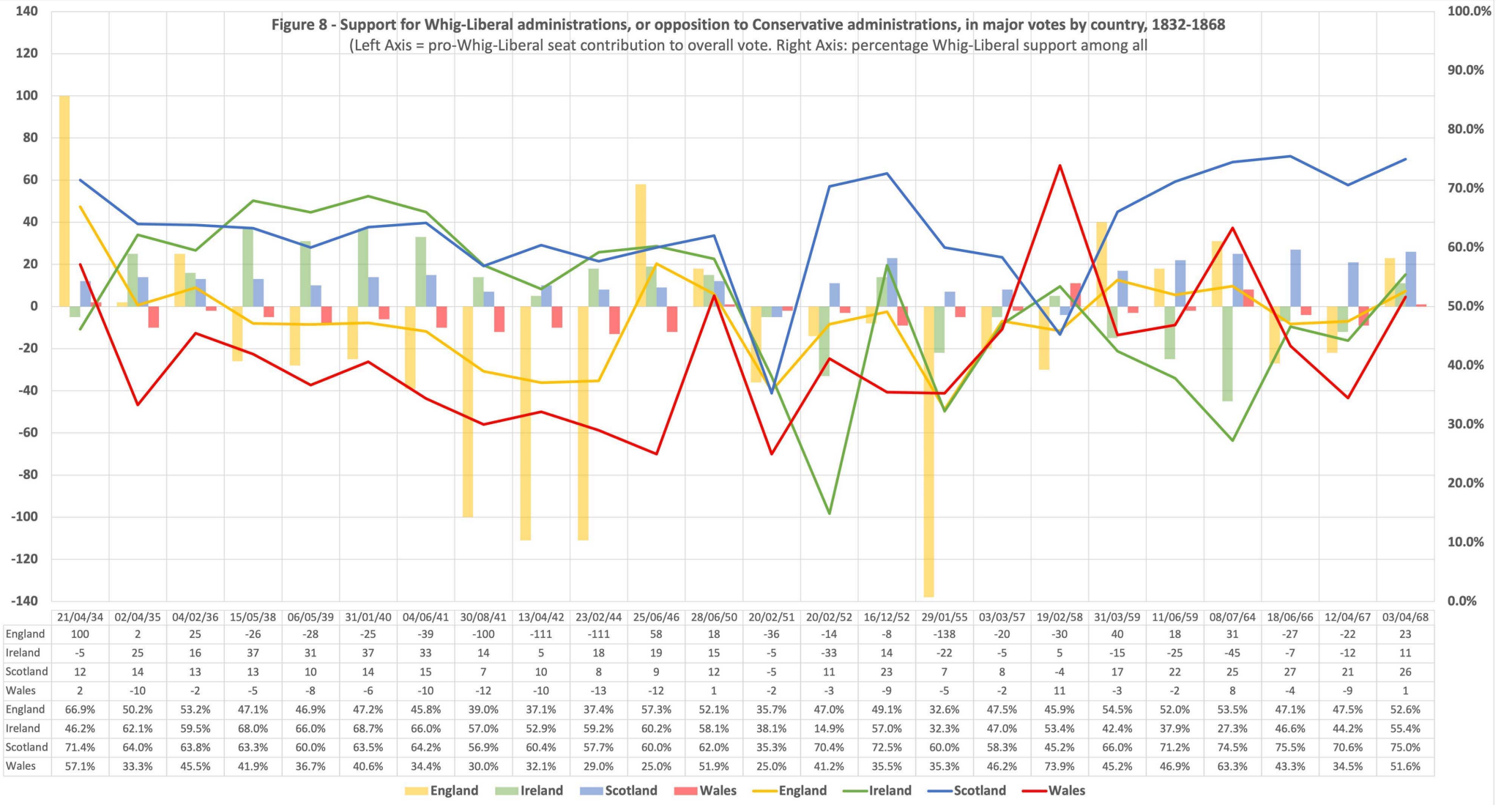
Liberals and reformers seeking a more advanced reform of the electoral system than the government was willing to concede, and then in 1852 after defeat by a coalition of Conservatives and disgruntled Repealers and Whig-Liberals (including Palmerston) over the government's proposed reforms to the militia. A failure to muster the votes of free trade supporting Conservatives and Liberal Conservatives (see Figure 7.1) proved crucial to the resignation of the Derby ministry over their budget in December 1852, and the Aberdeen coalition was forced to resign in 1855 after Conservatives and discontented Liberals and radicals voted against the government's management of the Crimean war. A similar coalition of radicals, Liberals and Conservatives combined to defeat the first Palmerston administration over foreign policy in 1857 and 1858, and moderate Liberal and Liberal Conservative opposition to the Liberal reform bill of 1866 proved decisive to the resignation of the Russell ministry, as well as Gladstone's failed attempt to wrestle parliamentary authority from Disraeli during 1867 over the franchise clauses of the Conservative reform bill.

The relative significance of the four nations to each of these major divisions can be seen in Figure 8. This chart contains two sets of data, which are colour coded yellow for England, green for Ireland, blue for Scotland and red for Wales. The bars indicate the number of seats each country's MPs contributed to the overall vote in each division. A positive bar reflects a Whig-Liberal majority in any vote, and a negative bar reflects a Conservative majority. The lines indicate the percentage of Whig-Liberal support in each division for all MPs in attendance of each division.

Interestingly, despite occupying 71% of seats in the Commons, English MPs only controlled the parliamentary arithmetic in this set of votes intermittently after the 1835 election. The clearest instance of this was during the 1841 Parliament when the 276 English Conservative MPs effectively controlled the Commons. This meant that the eventual downfall of the Peel ministry in 1846 was thanks almost entirely to a loss of confidence in his government among English protectionist MPs. English MPs also proved dominant again in determining the 1855 vote over the Crimean war that brought down the Aberdeen coalition, the 1857 and 1858 votes of no confidence in the Palmerston ministry, and in rejecting the 1859 Conservative reform bill. Scottish MPs proved consistently supportive of Whig-Liberal governments, aside from in 1851 and 1858 when there was a majority of Scottish MPs for radical-led motions of no confidence in the Russell and Palmerston administrations respectively. As a combined force Scottish and Irish MPs were crucial in underpinning parliamentary support for the Whig Melbourne ministry from 1835 until June 1841, when an anti-Whig majority of 49 English and Welsh MPs outnumbered a pro-Whig majority of 48 Scottish and Irish MPs by a single vote.

Welsh MPs, as per their party labels, returned fairly consistent anti-Whig majorities, with notable exceptions in 1858 and 1864 when they offered majority support to Liberal administrations in votes predicated on Palmerstonian foreign policy, first over the Orsini affair and then in opposition to the Conservative vote of censure over the government's unwillingness to enter the Second Schleswig War. And, perhaps most notably, in the aftermath of Great Famine, the 1850 Irish Franchise Act and the Russell ministry's anti-Catholic 1851 legislation on ecclesiastical titles, from 1851 Irish MPs proved a constant thorn in the side of Whig-Liberal governments and oppositions. Irish MPs, including Liberals and independent Liberals (see

Figure 8 - Support for Whig-Liberal administrations, or opposition to Conservative administrations, in major votes by country, 1832-1868
 (Left Axis = pro-Whig-Liberal seat contribution to overall vote. Right Axis: percentage Whig-Liberal support among all)



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Figures 7.2 & 7.3), proved particularly willing to oppose the Palmerston ministry between 1859 and 1865, and it was only Gladstone's 1868 resolutions on the disestablishment of the Irish Church that secured a return to majority support for Liberal policy among Irish MPs, including all those who had been returned as independent Liberals since 1865. In fact, Gladstone's 1868 Irish Church resolutions were a rare instance (in these major votes) of a Whig-Liberal majority across all four nations and underlines the realpolitik of his subsequent declaration to 'pacify Ireland' following the 1868 general election.³²

The additional sets of votes used in this paper relate to three specific policy areas – free trade in corn, the ballot and the abolition of church rates in England and Wales. They were chosen because they offer a basic indicator as to the economic, political and religious fault lines in the Commons between 1832 and 1868, and because they were discussed and voted on consistently across successive Parliaments. All three policy demands started the period as radical causes but experienced differing fortunes. Initially a demand of radicals, most reformers and some Whigs during the 1830s, the corn laws were repealed by Peel's Conservative ministry in 1846, following several years of extra-parliamentary campaigning by the Anti-Corn law league, and counter-campaigning by protectionist societies, as well as famine in Ireland. Following repeal, protectionist MPs, seeking the reinstatement of the corn laws, were returned in large numbers at the 1847 and 1852 elections, but the primacy of free trade as a commercial policy was ultimately established by a series of votes during November and December 1852, which led to the resignation of the protectionist-backed Derby ministry.

The introduction of the secret ballot at parliamentary elections (which was eventually introduced in 1872) was a consistent demand of radicals, most reformers and some Whigs and Liberals throughout the period. As a public campaign (which held that secret voting would eliminate corrupt practices, and illegitimate influence in elections) the ballot probably reached its popular zenith in the aftermath of the 1837 election. Fading as a popular single-issue during the 1840s, it was revived as a demand of radicals and some Liberals in the 1850s, but as one historian has stated, by the 1860s the campaign for the ballot appeared to have 'succumbed to the forces of neglect and indifference', as well as the general acceptance (even among some advanced Liberals) that voting was a public rather than a private act.³³ The nonconformist demand for the abolition of compulsory church rates in England and Wales was another issue that was voted on regularly throughout the entire period. While Commons majorities could generally be secured for the abolition of church rates from 1856, a successful Conservative rearguard campaign in favour of their retention (and opposition to their abolition in the House of Lords), meant the compulsory church rate remained in place until 1868. While local custom meant that the enforcement of a compulsory church rate in England and Wales was effectively abolished in many areas prior to 1868, the church rate issue remained a defining cause for most Whig-Liberals who saw abolition as a core requirement of religious freedom in a future, secular liberal state. For most Conservatives (and many moderate Whigs even until 1868) the defence

³² P. Sewter, 'Gladstone as Woodsman', in R. Quinault (ed.), *William Gladstone: New Studies and Perspectives* (2016), 162; M. Veldeman, 'To pacify Ireland: an impossible mission for 'the Grand Old Man'', *Equivalences* (2005), 73-83.

³³ Kinzer, *The Ballot Question in Nineteenth-Century English Politics* (1982), 1.

Figure 9 - Support for corn law reform by country, 1832-1852

(Left Axis = pro-free trade seat contribution to overall vote. Right Axis: percentage free trade support among all MPs who voted in the division)

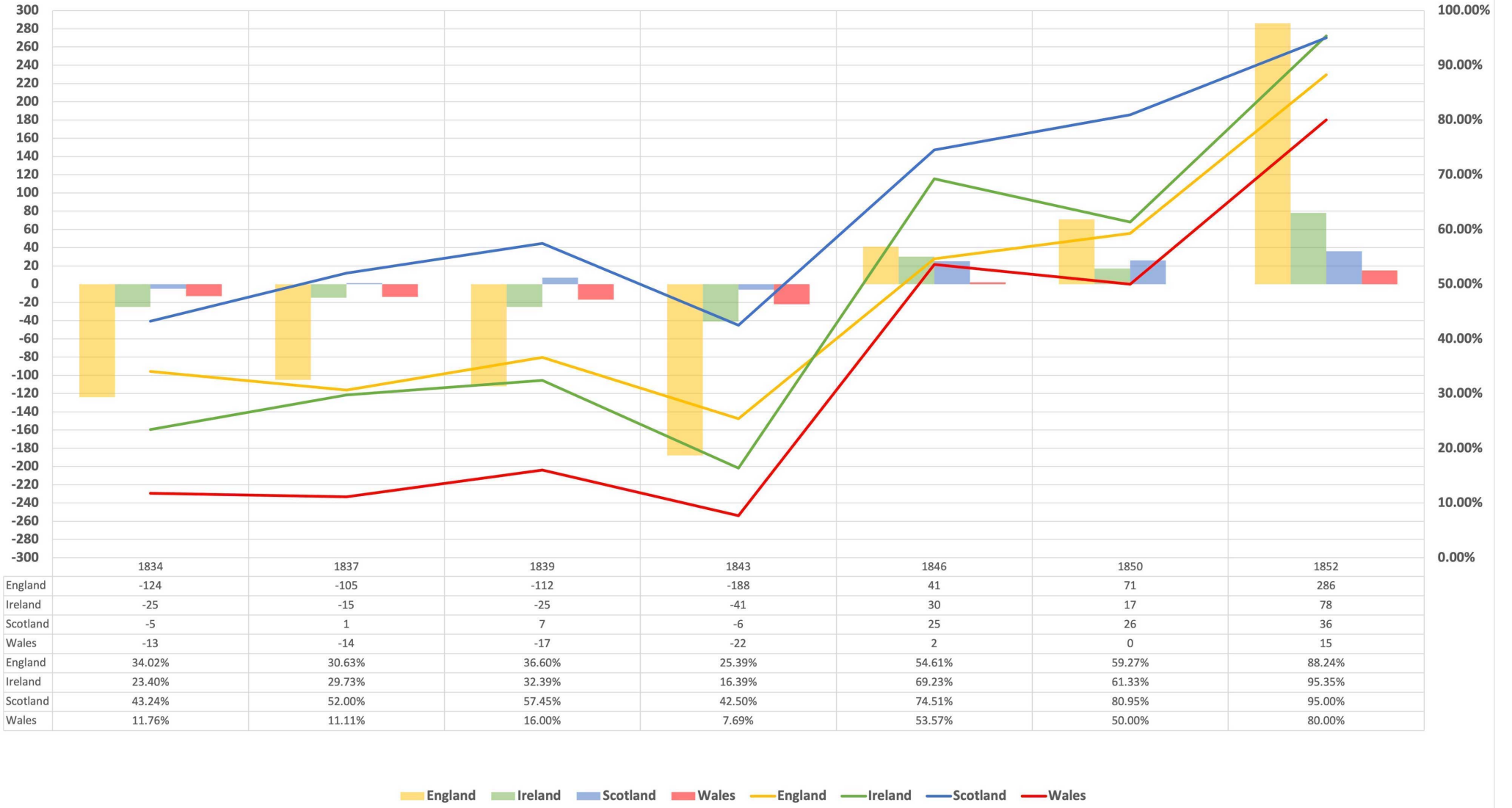


Figure 10 - Support for the ballot in major votes by country, 1832-1868

(Left Axis = pro-ballot seat contribution to overall vote. Right Axis: percentage support for ballot among all MPs who voted in the division)

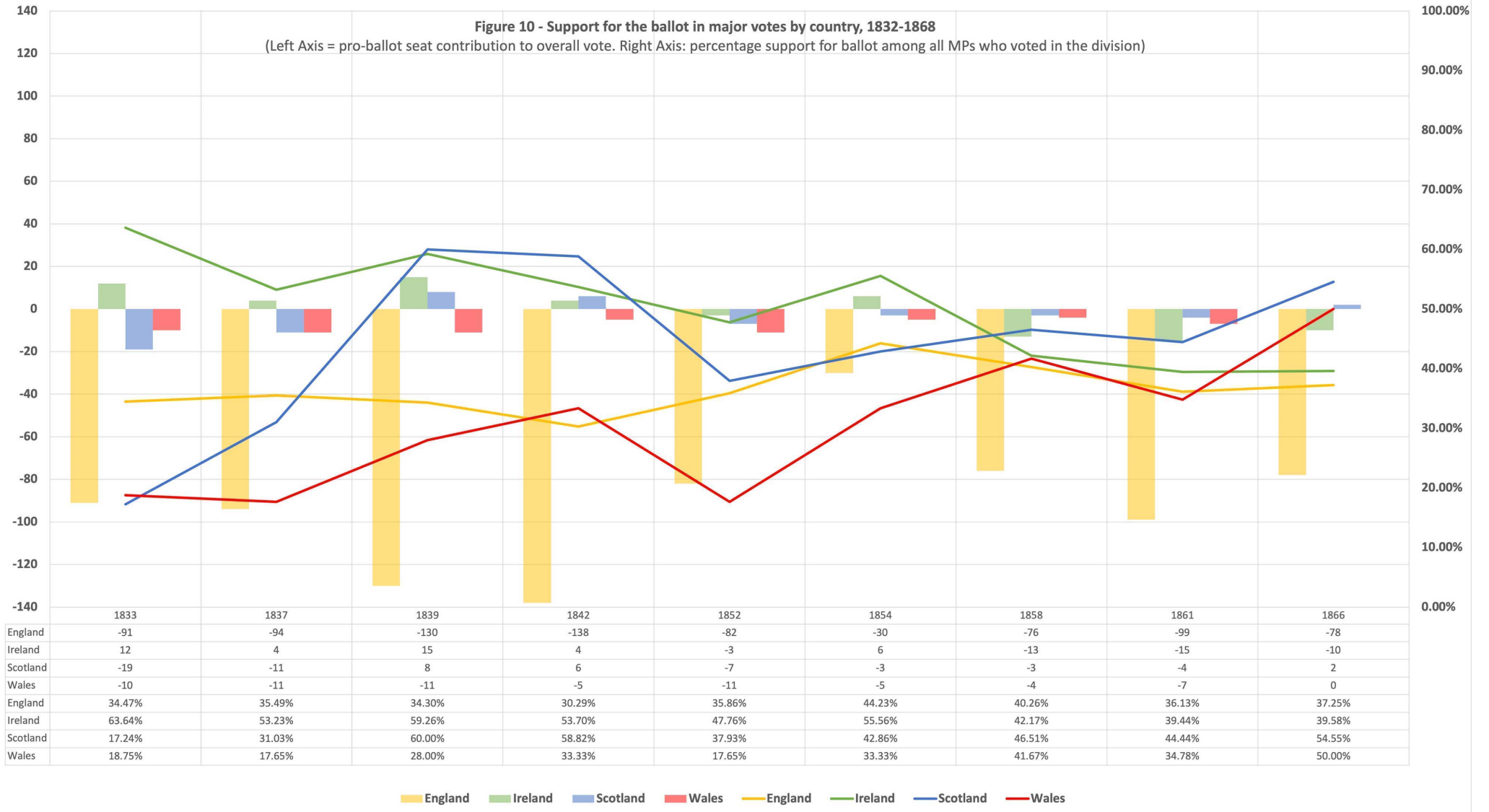
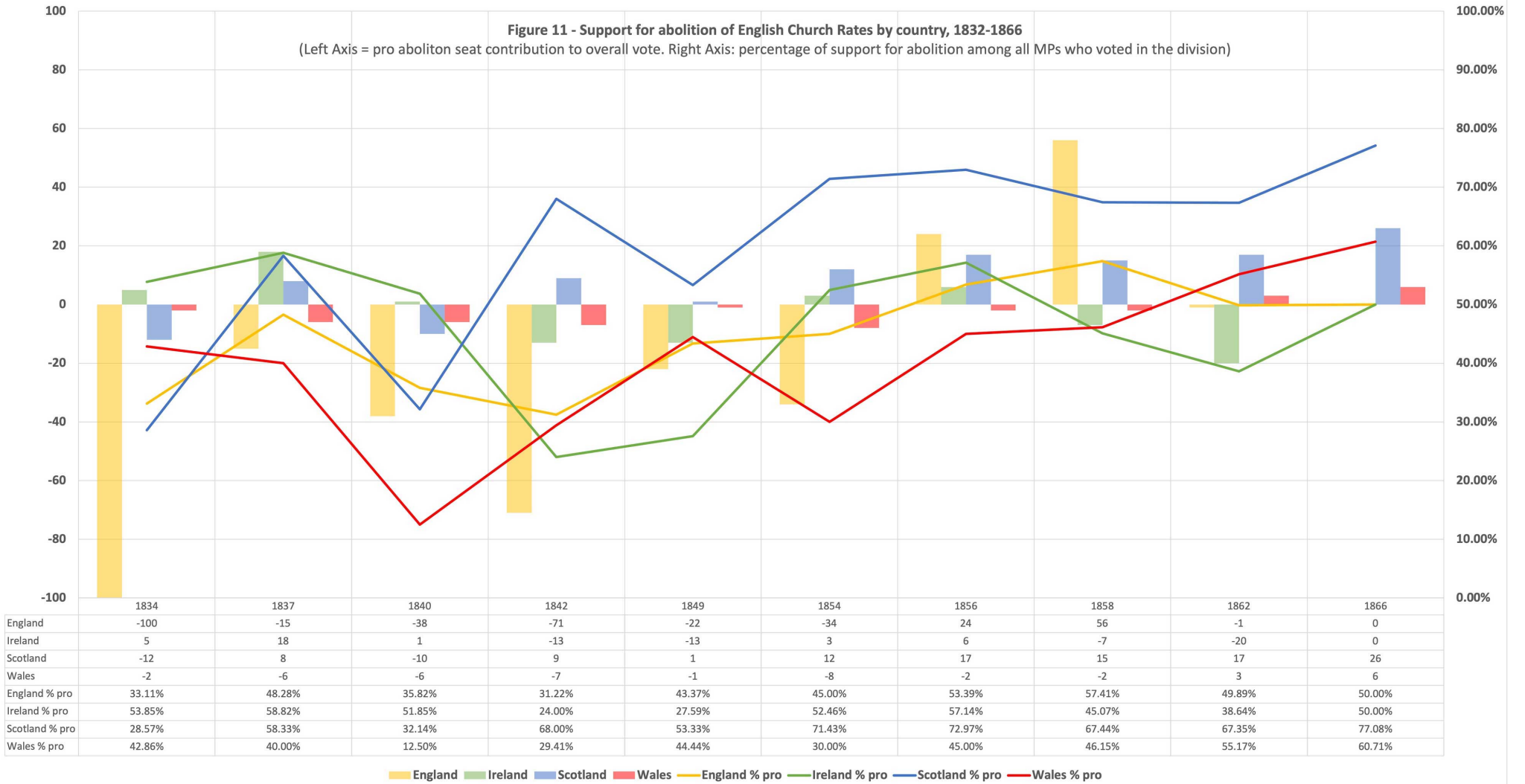


Figure 11 - Support for abolition of English Church Rates by country, 1832-1866

(Left Axis = pro abolition seat contribution to overall vote. Right Axis: percentage of support for abolition among all MPs who voted in the division)



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of the church rate was seen as essential to warding off future disestablishment and maintaining the Anglican state.³⁴

Figures 9-11 provide a record of voting over these three issues across the four nations between 1832 and 1868. These charts need to be read carefully as an *indication* rather than an absolute reflection of opinion in the Commons over time and come with two caveats. The first is attendance rates. I've selected a vote for each Parliament on each issue based on those with the highest attendance rates. However, attendance fluctuated in these votes, and while most of those displayed here were voted on by a large majority of MPs, some, in particular votes on Church rates between 1840 and 1847, were in a thin house. As I need to limit the number of graphs I present here, I'll indicate in my analysis when attendance distorted a vote. The second disclaimer is that the precise issues voted on in the divisions over free trade in corn and the abolition of church rates were not always votes on the same question. The support for the abolition of church rates detailed in 1834 is actually a radical minority against the Whig government's proposals to replace church rate income with a central tax, and subsequent proposals (including Gladstone's successful compromise solution on the issue in 1868) differed in detail in terms of the method of abolishing Church rates. Likewise, the votes used to reflect support for free trade in corn must also be read carefully. The divisions used between 1834 and 1839 were not explicitly votes for corn law repeal, but rather radical motions for reform or the reconsideration of the corn laws. And the corn law vote that I've chosen to use in November 1852 was over a carefully worded, moderate Whig motion tabled by Palmerston praising the existing commercial system. This vote was given reluctant support by many protectionists but opposed by a slim minority of hardline protectionists that were willing to re-impose the corn laws instead of just settling for a fiscal package of agricultural relief, which Disraeli subsequently proposed in his failed December 1852 budget.

All three policy areas tend to underline the sheer numerical weight of English MPs and suggest that more often than not a Commons majority over any particular policy reform usually required majority support from English MPs. The sheer number of English MPs opposed to the ballot meant motions in favour of secret voting never really had any chance of success throughout the period. There was a slim, but numerically significant, English majority in favour of free trade in corn from 1846, and the relatively small swing in opinion among English MPs over the abolition of Church rates between 1854 and 1856 led to the first Commons majority over the issue. The exception to this rule was the 1866 vote on Church rates, when Irish and English MPs were split evenly and Scottish and Welsh MPs returned decisive majorities in favour of abolition.

Scottish MPs were the most supportive of free trade throughout, providing the only majorities on the issue prior to 1846. From 1841, too, Scottish MPs were well in advance of their counterparts in their support for the abolition of English and Welsh Church rates, and from 1856 maintained some of the highest attendance rates of the four nations in votes on a policy that did not impact Scotland. After 1839 and 1842 when there was a Scottish majority for the ballot, Scottish Whig-Liberals proved less emphatic over their support for the issue, and Scotland's slim majority of 2 for the ballot in 1866 can be attributed to poor attendance as only

³⁴ J. P. Ellens, *Religious Routes to Gladstonian Liberalism* (1994).

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22 of Scotland's 53 MPs voted in the division. Welsh MPs consistently demonstrated the largest levels of opposition to free trade, and until 1866 the ballot. And, unlike English, Irish and Scottish MPs, who had switched to support for the abolition of Church Rates by 1856, Welsh MPs did not deliver a majority for abolition until 1862. This switch in support among Welsh MPs correlates with the increasing electoral success from 1859 of a Liberal nationalist rhetoric identified by Matthew Cragoe, that placed religious equality at the forefront of its political identity.³⁵

Irish MPs returned minorities against corn law reform until 1846, when they demonstrated the largest swing in opinion towards free trade of the four nations. Until 1850, however, Irish MPs demonstrated markedly poorer attendance levels than their English, Scottish and Welsh counterparts on the issue. Until the late 1850s, the reverse can almost be said about Irish support for, and attendance of votes on, the ballot. Irish MPs generally returned slim majorities in favour of the ballot prior to 1858, when Irish Conservative MPs began to out-attend pro-ballot Liberals and independents on the issue. Poor attendance among Irish liberals and liberal independents in the 1858 and 1862 divisions over the English issue of church rates (and a very high turnout from Irish Conservatives in both divisions) was also crucial to the Irish majority against abolition in both instances, which in 1862 was crucial to the overall Commons majority against abolition. When considered together, low Irish Liberal attendance over Church rates in 1858 and 1862, poor Irish support for the second Palmerston administration, a lack of Irish support for the Liberal reform proposals in 1866 and 1867 and the success of Irish church disestablishment in 1868, underlined the centrality of ensuring the attendance and co-operation of Irish Liberal MPs for securing the passage of Liberal legislation at Westminster. The Welsh switch in the 1860s over church rates, and a need to cement consistently high levels of support for liberal policies among Scottish MPs, also demonstrated the importance to prospective Liberal governments of appealing to the liberal nationalism of the non-English nations in order to break the stranglehold that English Conservative MPs could exert on the Commons if their numbers were high enough. It is to England that I turn for the final part of this paper.

III – England's reformed electoral map

In the final part of this paper I'm going to introduce you to some of the ways that I've been using the dataset to analyse England's reformed electoral map. As I mentioned earlier, I began developing this division data as a tool for better understanding the impact that the changes to parliamentary boundaries and the redistribution of seats in 1832 had on the balance of power in the reformed Commons. Of all the four nations it was England whose electoral map underwent the most dramatic transformation in 1832. As well as establishing a new system of voter registration and voting qualifications for every geographic borough and county, the 1832 reform legislation redistributed 141 English seats across the UK and redrew the boundaries of 204 of the 256 English constituencies that returned MPs after 1832 [Figures 13

³⁵ Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity*, 44-45.

Figure 13: Reformed English boundaries

Divided county: Northamptonshire became two double member counties (Northamptonshire North & South)

Multiple Parish/Clause 5 borough: Droitwich was extended from 2.7 to 37.4 square miles into its surrounding parishes

New borough: boundaries like Sunderland's were established to include 'all the kindred interests of the town and the neighbourhood'

Extended to include modern town: Bridgewater's boundaries were extended to include the modern town and sufficient space 'to last for a century'.

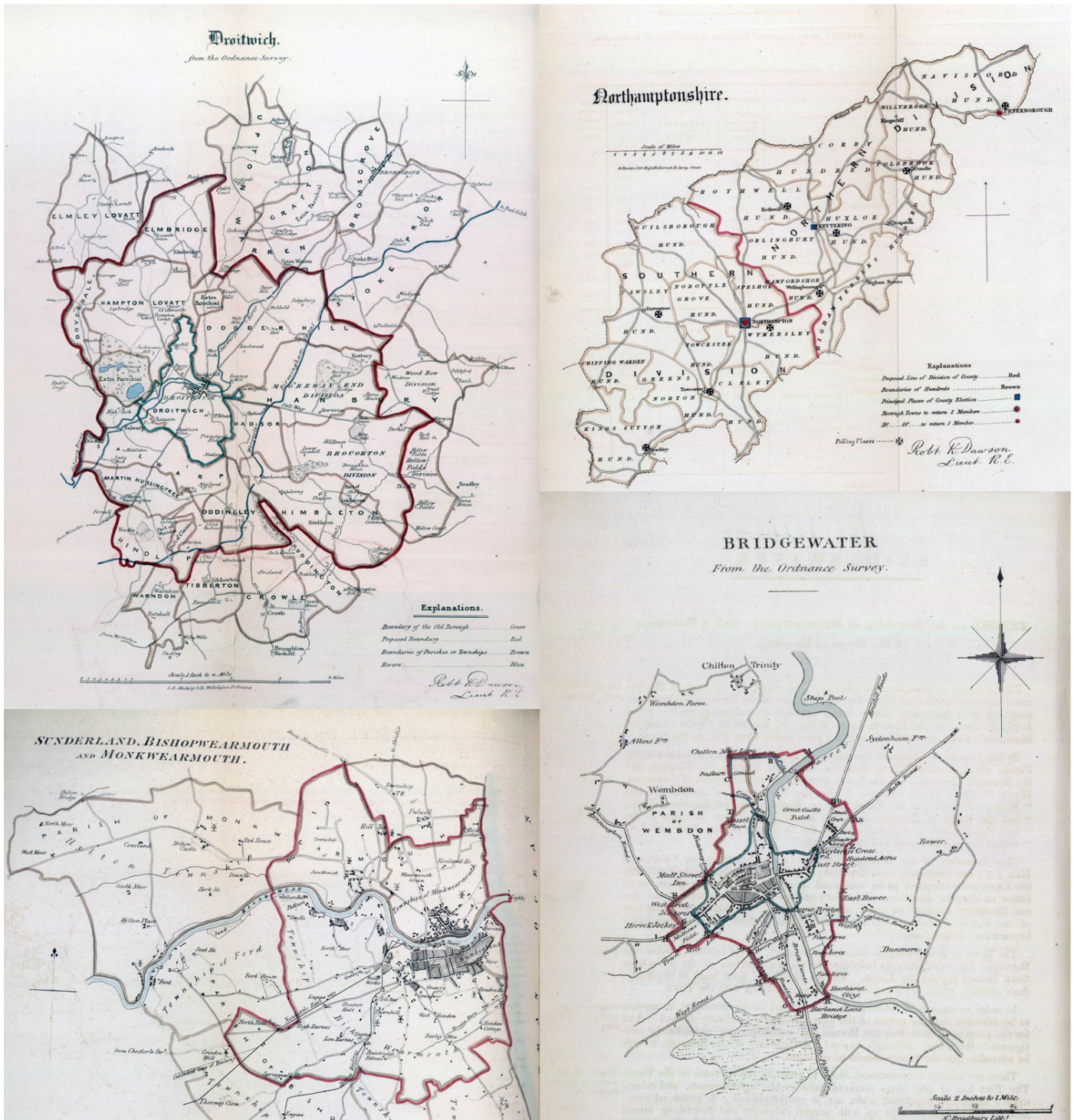


Figure 14 England's Reformed Electoral Map

Boundary Change Key

Unchanged County

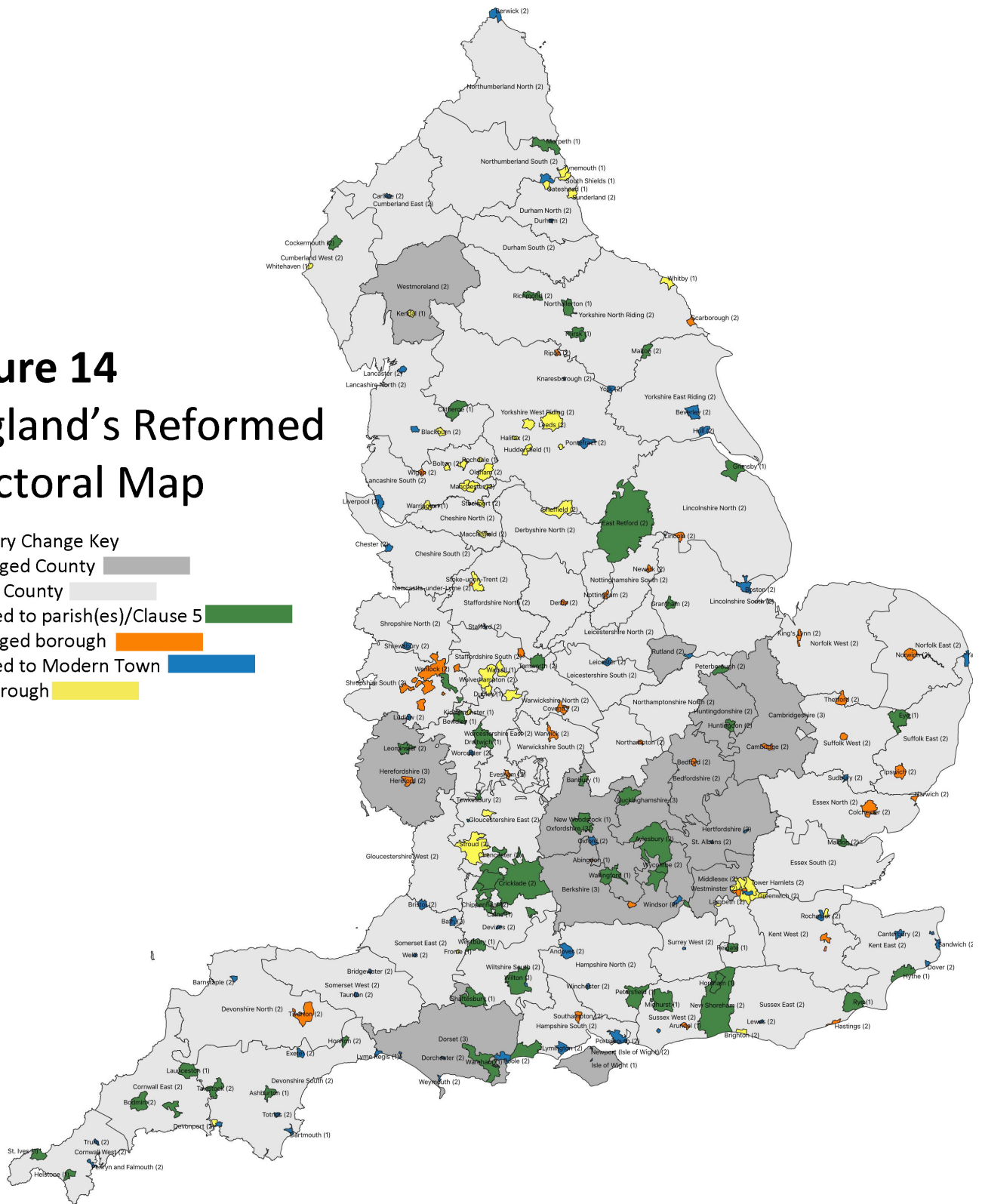
Divided County

Extended to parish(es)/Clause 5

Unchanged borough

Extended to Modern Town

New Borough



The geography of voting behaviour: towards a roll-call analysis of England's reformed electoral map, 1832-68

Table 6 – England's reformed constituency system and its boundary changes in 1832

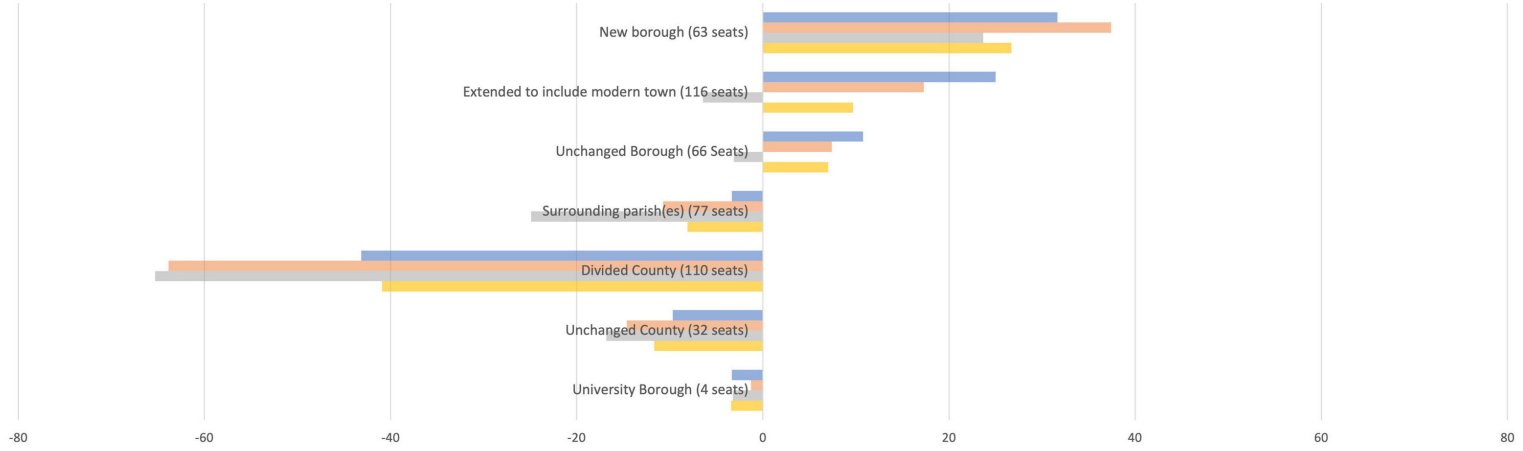
England's reformed constituency system (1832)	Single Member	Double Member	Three Member	Four Member	Constituencies	Total Seats
County	1	60	7		68	142
Unchanged county	1	5	7		13	32
Divided county		55			55	110
Borough	52	133		1	186	322
Extended into surrounding parish(es) or Clause 5	29	24			53	77
Unchanged borough	2	30		1	33	66
Extended to include modern town or associated population	2	57			59	116
New borough	19	22			41	63
University Borough		2			2	4
Grand Total	53	195	7	1	256	468

& 14]. These extensive changes to England's electoral map were conceived broadly by the Grey ministry of 1830-32 as a means of rebalancing the representation of the nation's economic, social and political interests in the Commons, and in the process infusing the constitution with popular, but not democratic, legitimacy. The rotten boroughs of the unreformed electoral system were replaced with a set of 41 new English boroughs intended to provide a legislative voice to the varied commercial, manufacturing and shipping interests associated with England's unrepresented towns and cities such as Manchester, Birmingham and Sunderland. These new commercial influences were to be balanced via an almost equal number of new county seats, which were distributed to 55 newly divided double-member counties and seven three-member counties. These members were to provide for a re-legitimised representation of the landed, agricultural and aristocratic interests in the Commons.

The 1832 Boundary Act also led to a dramatic extension in the parliamentary limits of 49 ancient English boroughs, such as Droitwich whose area was increased from 2.7 to 37.4 square miles. These boroughs were intended to complement the four 'Clause 5' boroughs (New Shoreham, East Retford, Cricklade and Aylesbury) that had been thrown into their surrounding parishes or hundreds in the decades prior to 1832 as a punishment for corruption. For moderate cabinet members of the Grey ministry in 1832, such as Viscount Palmerston, these 49 boroughs were seen as a means of counterbalancing the increased influence of the resident, but not necessarily property owning-£10 householder in the boroughs, and further increasing the influence of voters supportive of political issues connected with the agricultural and landed interests. The boundaries of a further 59 English boroughs were extended so that they included the modern community associated with the city or town that shared the borough's name, as well as space for up to a century's worth of future urban growth. 33 further boroughs remained unchanged as their existing boundaries already met these criteria. These two latter sets of boundaries were intended to focus borough electorates around their legitimate political communities, allowing for the representatives of populous boroughs such as Liverpool and Bristol to better represent their various commercial and popular interests. They were also to allow for a much larger group of less populous English towns and cities, whose MPs were to act as a mediating force between the landed and commercial interests, while also representing respectable, public opinion in the Commons.³⁶

³⁶ Parry, *Rise and Fall*, 72-93; P. Salmon 'English Reform Legislation', *HP Commons 1820-32* (2009), 381-9, 397-1, 404-12; M. Spychal, "'One of the best men of business we had ever met': Thomas Drummond, the boundary commission and the 1832 Reform Act", *Historical Research* (2017), 543-66; M. Spychal, 'Constructing the electoral map: parliamentary boundaries and the 1832 Reform Act' (PhD thesis, University of London, 2017). For an alternative interpretation of the intentions behind these changes see D. C. Moore, *The Politics of Deference* (1979).

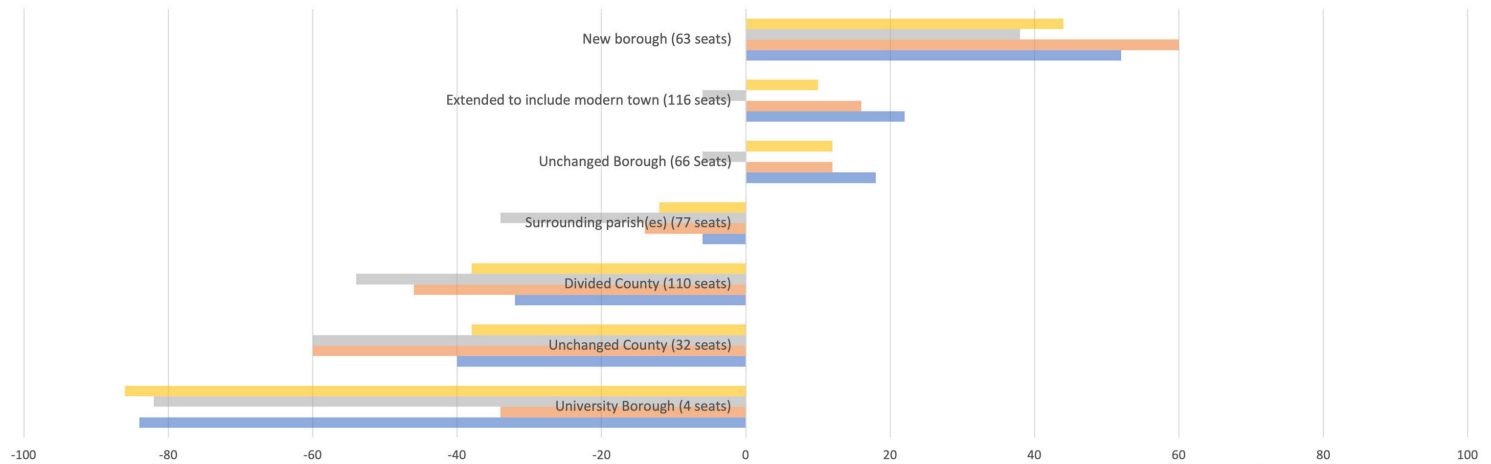
Figure 15.1 - Average vote contribution of each English constituency type, 1832-68



	University Borough (4 seats)	Unchanged County (32 seats)	Divided County (110 seats)	Surrounding parish(es) (77 seats)	Unchanged Borough (66 Seats)	Extended to include modern town (116 seats)	New borough (63 seats)
Whig-Lib Govt Support	-3	-10	-43	-3	11	25	32
Free Trade	-1	-15	-64	-11	7	17	37
Ballot	-3	-17	-65	-25	-3	-6	24
Church Rates (abolition)	-3	-12	-41	-8	7	10	27

Whig-Lib Govt Support Free Trade Ballot Church Rates (abolition)

Figure 15.2 - Relative vote contribution of each English constituency type, 1832-68
(if each type of constituency type returned 100 MPs)

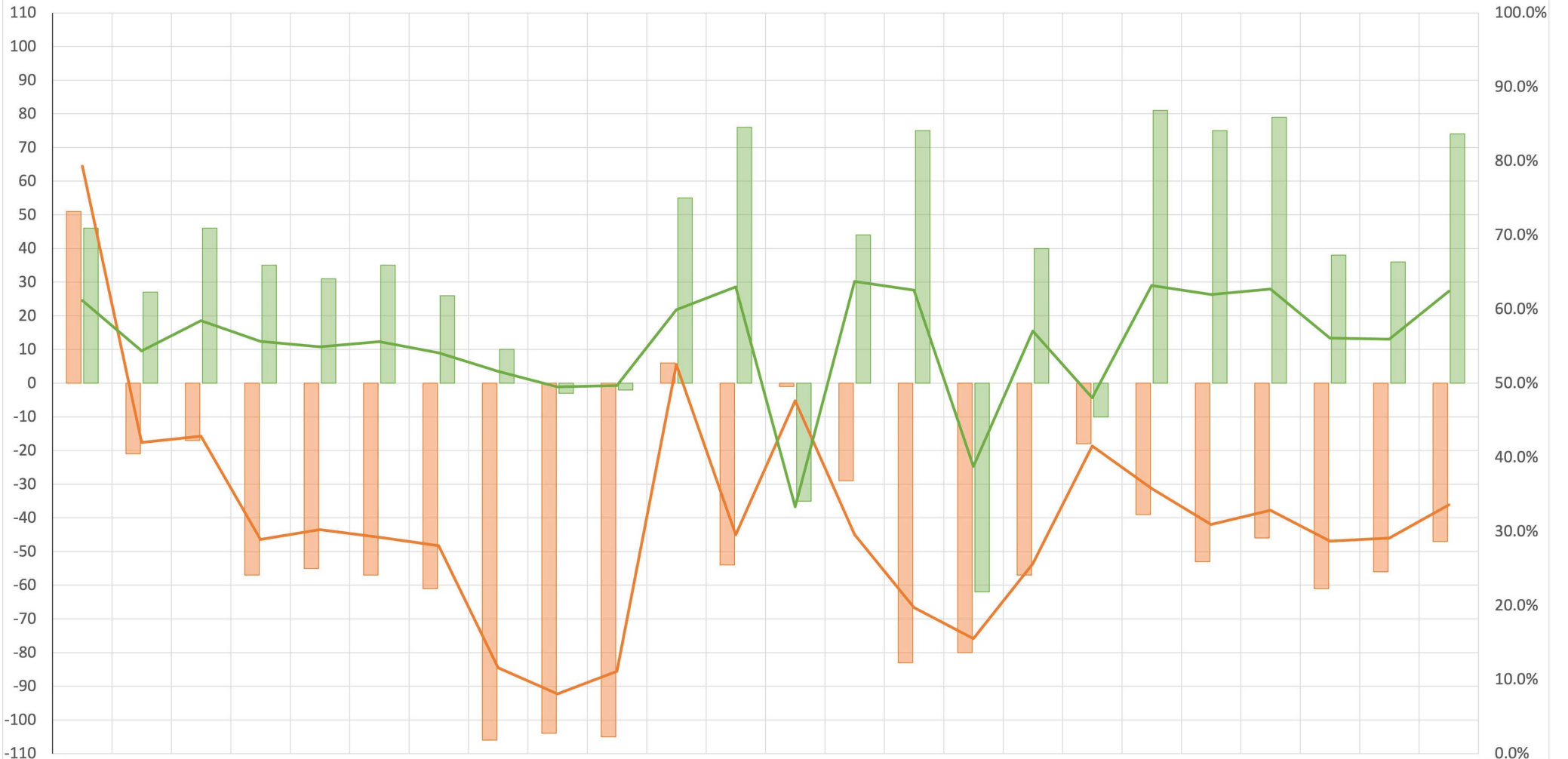


	University Borough (4 seats)	Unchanged County (32 seats)	Divided County (110 seats)	Surrounding parish(es) (77 seats)	Unchanged Borough (66 Seats)	Extended to include modern town (116 seats)	New borough (63 seats)
Church Rates (abolition)	-86	-38	-38	-12	12	10	44
Ballot	-82	-60	-54	-34	-6	-6	38
Free Trade	-34	-60	-46	-14	12	16	60
Whig-Lib Govt Support	-84	-40	-32	-6	18	22	52

Church Rates (abolition) Ballot Free Trade Whig-Lib Govt Support

Figure 16 - Support for Whig-Liberal administrations in major votes English Boroughs and Counties, 1832-68

(Left Axis = pro-Whig-Liberal seat contribution to overall vote. Right Axis: percentage Whig-Liberal support among all)



	21/04/34	02/04/35	04/02/36	15/05/38	06/05/39	31/01/40	04/06/41	30/08/41	13/04/42	23/02/44	25/06/46	28/06/50	20/02/51	20/02/52	16/12/52	29/01/55	03/03/57	19/02/58	31/03/59	11/06/59	08/07/64	18/06/66	12/04/67	03/04/68
Counties	51	-21	-17	-57	-55	-57	-61	-106	-104	-105	6	-54	-1	-29	-83	-80	-57	-18	-39	-53	-46	-61	-56	-47
Boroughs	46	27	46	35	31	35	26	10	-3	-2	55	76	-35	44	75	-62	40	-10	81	75	79	38	36	74
Counties	79.3%	42.0%	42.9%	28.9%	30.2%	29.2%	28.1%	11.6%	8.1%	11.1%	52.5%	29.5%	47.6%	29.6%	19.7%	15.5%	25.6%	41.5%	35.8%	30.9%	32.8%	28.7%	29.1%	33.6%
Boroughs	61.2%	54.3%	58.5%	55.6%	54.9%	55.6%	54.1%	51.6%	49.5%	49.7%	59.9%	63.0%	33.3%	63.8%	62.5%	38.8%	57.0%	48.0%	63.2%	62.0%	62.7%	56.1%	55.9%	62.4%

Counties Boroughs Counties Boroughs

Figure 17 - Support for corn law reform in English boroughs and counties, 1834-1852

(Left Axis = pro-corn law reform seat contribution to overall vote. Right Axis: percentage corn law reform support among all MPs who voted in division)

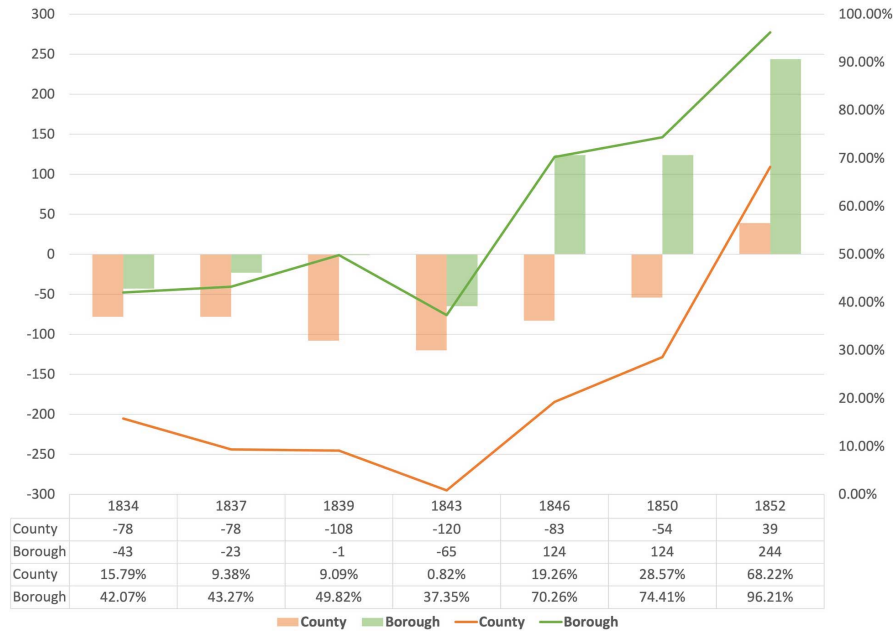


Figure 18 - Support for abolition of English Church Rates in English boroughs and counties, 1832-1868

(Left Axis = pro abolition seat contribution to overall vote. Right Axis: percentage of support for abolition among all MPs who voted in the division)

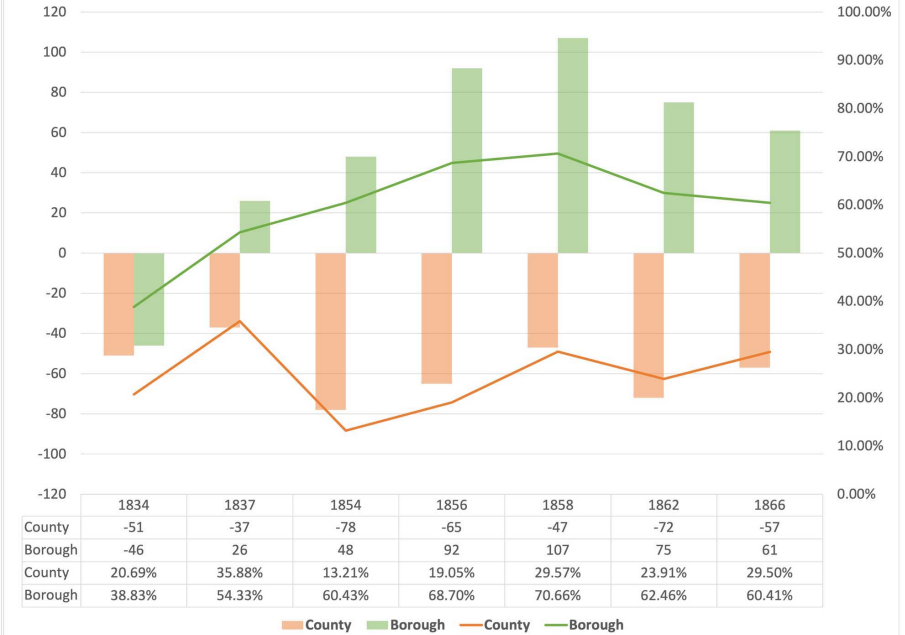
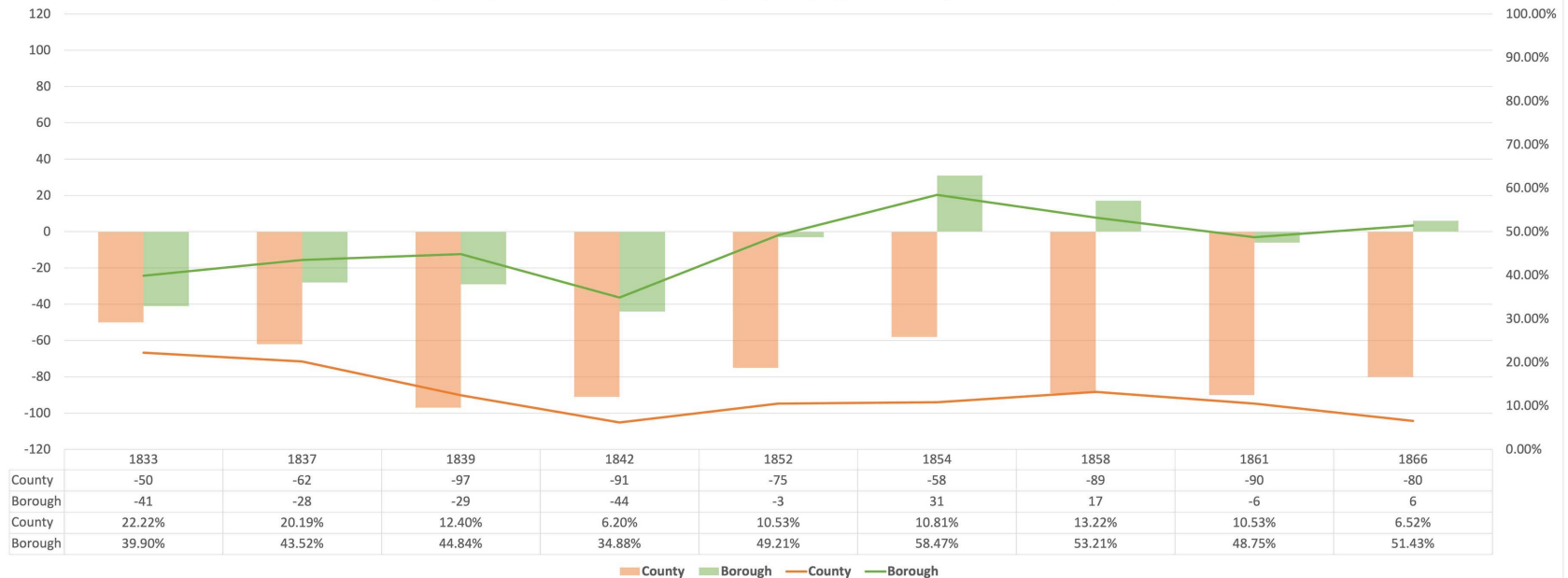


Figure 19 - Support for the ballot in English boroughs and counties, 1832-1868

(Left Axis = pro-ballot seat contribution to overall vote. Right Axis: percentage support for ballot among all MPs who voted in the division)



The geography of voting behaviour: towards a roll-call analysis of England's reformed electoral map, 1832-68

How did these Whig intentions for the reformed electoral map pan out then? Figure 15.1 provides an overview of the average vote contribution of each type of English constituency in major confidence and policy divisions between 1832 and 1868.³⁷ While this graph does not reflect how voting habits in these constituencies changed over time, for most categories of constituency it offers a fairly accurate indicator as to how their MPs would have voted in a division on each issue during the period. The counties and boroughs extended to their surrounding parishes provided the primary source of support for Conservative governments and the policy status quo throughout, while new borough MPs were the most important sources of support for Whig-Liberal governments and liberal policy reform. The categories of constituency that exhibited the most change over time, as we'll see below, were the boroughs extended into their modern town and those with unchanged boundaries. But in general these boroughs tended to provide moderate levels of support to Whig-Liberal government and liberal policy reforms (aside from the ballot). Figure 15.2 indicates the average vote contribution that each English constituency type would have delivered on all four policy areas, if each type of constituency had returned 100 members to Parliament. This chart is useful for comparing how partisan each constituency type was. So while the University seats only returned 4 members, these MPs were by far the most conservative (with a small 'c') type of MP. MPs for unchanged counties were fractionally more conservative than those for the divided counties, and those that represented boroughs extended to their surrounding parishes were moderately conservative. New boroughs were by the far the most liberal members, and all other ancient borough MPs as a cohort were moderately liberal.

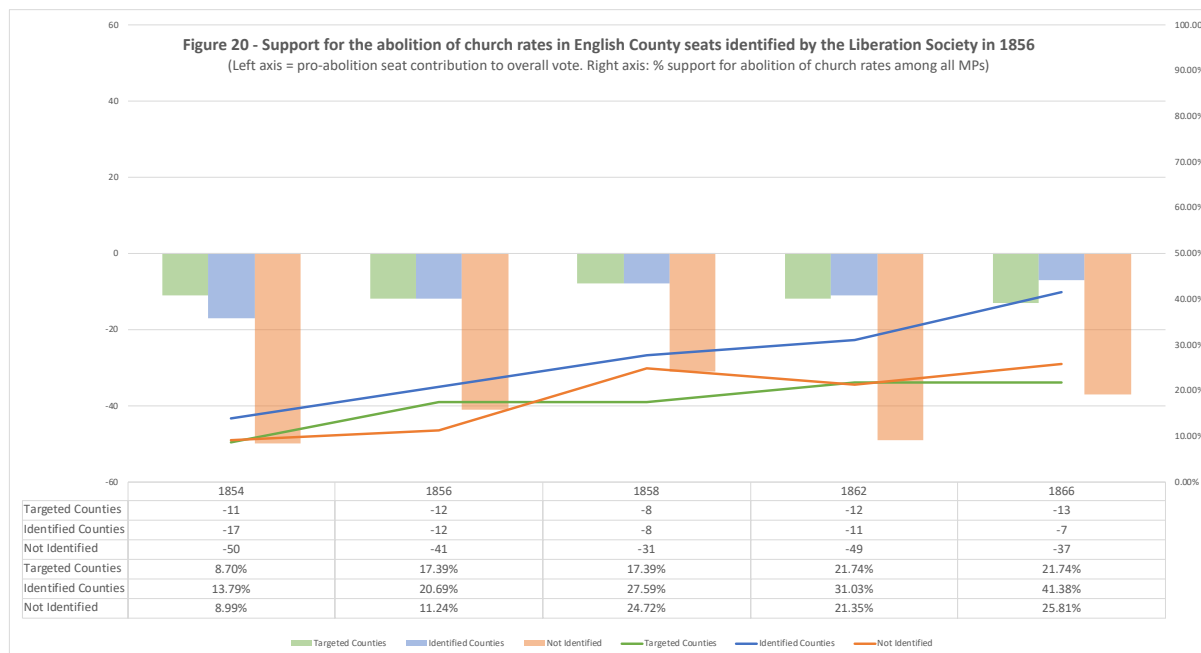
If we dig a little deeper into how the English counties voted over time [figures 16-19], we can see the extent to which the English counties became the bulwarks of the Conservative party and the landed and agricultural interests after 1832. After providing almost unanimous opposition to free trade in 1843, when the corn laws were repealed in 1846 around 80% of English county MPs opposed the measure. And in 1850 around 70% of English county MPs continued to seek a return to agricultural protection. Welsh county MPs matched this behaviour, but Scottish and Irish county MPs switched to support for free trade in 1846. While only 30% of English county MPs were willing to support a return to agricultural protection in November 1852, they overwhelmingly supported a package of fiscal compensation for the agricultural interests, with around 80% supporting Disraeli's failed December 1852 budget and an almost identical minority opposing Gladstone's Peelite free trade budget a year later.³⁸ Much to the dismay of Whig politicians who had designed the reform bill, such as Lord John Russell, opposition to free trade, and thus association with the landed and agricultural interests, provided the major focal point for Conservative party identity by the late 1830s.³⁹ However, without the rallying cry of agricultural protection, support for Whig-Liberal administrations

³⁷ The Whig-Liberal government confidence score uses 1832 party labels, and a major division from each of the subsequent Parliaments that had very low dissent and very high turnout. Party labels have been used in 1832 as no 'straight' partisan division took place during the Parliament.

³⁸ For the sake of brevity this division was not included on the charts in this paper.

³⁹ Russell, who had been one of the chief architects of the 1832 reform legislation, informed the Commons in 1854 of his regret that the 1832 Reform Act had done 'too much to divide the country in a way in which it was not divided before ... into opposite camps according as the districts [constituencies] might be connected with land or trade', *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, cxxx. (13 Feb. 1854) cc. 498.

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among county MPs increased gradually from a low of around 8% in 1842 to 34% in 1868. This correlates with a Conservative preoccupation, and gradual Whig-Liberal ease, with evidence of the increasing influence of suburban voters in county elections by the mid-1850s. That said, even those county MPs who were willing to support the Palmerston, Russell and Gladstone administrations after 1855 were firmly on the moderate side of the Whig-Liberal spectrum. From the 1840s onwards only three in ten English county MPs [Figure 18] were willing to support the abolition of church rates and barely one in ten lent their support to the ballot [Figure 19].

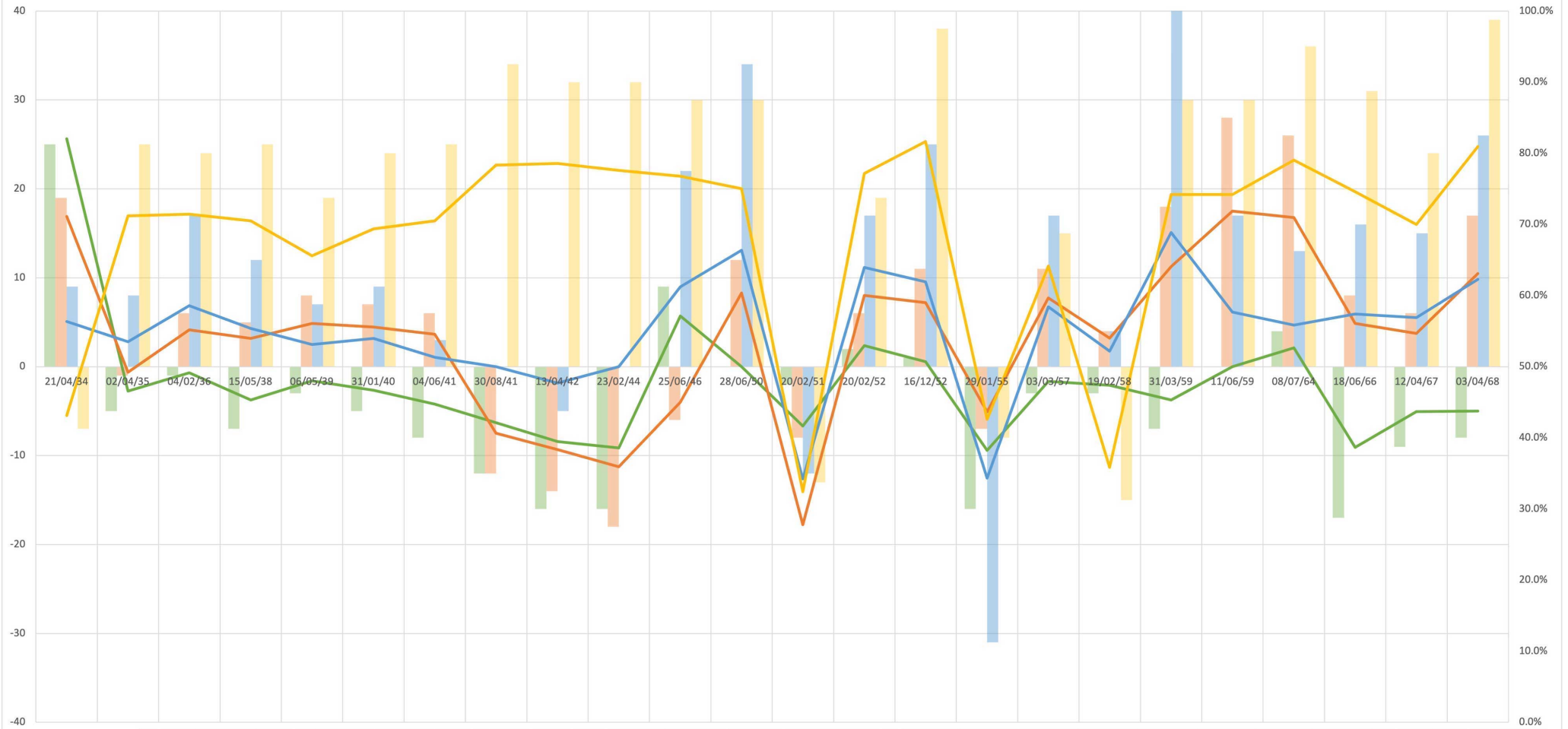
The question of support for church rates in the English counties also offers one example of how this dataset might be used to measure the impact of extra-parliamentary campaigning on MP behaviour. As J. P. Ellens has observed, in January 1856 the Liberation Society identified 25 counties that, due to the changing religious demographics revealed in the 1851 census, might be expected to return 'religious liberty candidates' willing to support the abolition of Church rates. As a result, the Liberation Society commissioned election agents from June 1856 to focus on the registration of Dissenting voters in eleven of these 25 counties, in the hope that newly registered dissenting county voters might 'overpower their opponents at the elections'.⁴⁰ As Figure 20 suggests, however, this extra-parliamentary activism may actually have had a negative impact on rates of support for the abolition of church rates among MPs in the eleven targeted counties. By 1866 MPs for these counties were less supportive of abolition than their counterparts. From an almost equal starting point in 1854, MPs in the non-identified counties were slightly more supportive of abolition by 1866, and the MPs who represented counties identified by the Liberation Society, but were not targeted by their election agents, exhibited the largest increase in support for the issue.

Although less partisan, as a cohort English borough MPs tended to support Whig-Liberal administrations, and increasingly cancelled out the pro-Conservative English county vote by the 1850s and 1860s in confidence divisions [Figure 16]. The only occasions when

⁴⁰ Ellens, *Religious Routes to Gladstonian Liberalism*, 136.

Figure 21 - Support for Whig-Liberal administrations in English boroughs according to 1832 boundary changes, 1832-1868

(Left Axis = pro-Whig-Liberal seat contribution to overall vote. Right Axis: percentage Whig-Liberal support among all voting MPs)



	21/04/34	02/04/35	04/02/36	15/05/38	06/05/39	31/01/40	04/06/41	30/08/41	13/04/42	23/02/44	25/06/46	28/06/50	20/02/51	20/02/52	16/12/52	29/01/55	03/03/57	19/02/58	31/03/59	11/06/59	08/07/64	18/06/66	12/04/67	03/04/68
Surrounding parish(es)	25	-5	-1	-7	-3	-5	-8	-12	-16	-16	9	0	-2	2	1	-16	-3	-3	-7	0	4	-17	-9	-8
Unchanged	19	-1	6	5	8	7	6	-12	-14	-18	-6	12	-8	6	11	-7	11	4	18	28	26	8	6	17
Modern Town	9	8	17	12	7	9	3	0	-5	0	22	34	-12	17	25	-31	17	4	40	17	13	16	15	26
New borough	-7	25	24	25	19	24	25	34	32	32	30	30	-13	19	38	-8	15	-15	30	30	36	31	24	39
Surrounding parish(es)	82.1%	46.6%	49.2%	45.3%	48.0%	46.7%	44.7%	42.1%	39.5%	38.6%	57.1%	50.0%	41.7%	52.9%	50.7%	38.2%	47.9%	47.4%	45.3%	50.0%	52.6%	38.7%	43.7%	43.8%
Unchanged	71.1%	49.2%	55.2%	54.0%	56.1%	55.6%	54.5%	40.6%	38.3%	35.9%	45.0%	60.3%	27.8%	60.0%	59.0%	43.6%	59.6%	54.0%	64.1%	71.9%	71.0%	56.1%	54.7%	63.1%
Modern Town	56.3%	53.5%	58.6%	55.4%	53.1%	54.0%	51.3%	50.0%	47.7%	50.0%	61.2%	66.3%	34.2%	63.9%	61.9%	34.3%	58.4%	52.2%	68.9%	57.7%	55.9%	57.4%	56.9%	56.9%
New borough	43.1%	71.2%	71.4%	70.5%	65.6%	69.4%	70.5%	78.3%	78.6%	77.6%	76.8%	75.0%	32.4%	77.1%	81.7%	42.6%	64.2%	35.8%	74.2%	74.2%	79.0%	74.6%	70.0%	81.0%

Surrounding parish(es) Unchanged Modern Town New borough Surrounding parish(es) Unchanged Modern Town New borough

Figure 22 - Support for corn law reform in English boroughs, 1834-1852

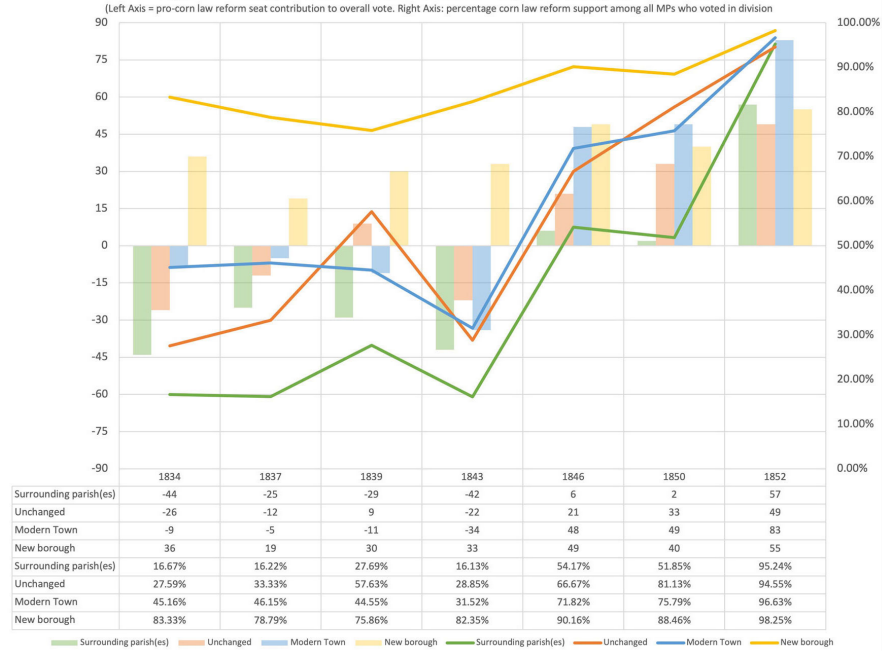


Figure 23 - Support for abolition of English Church Rates in English Boroughs, 1832-1866

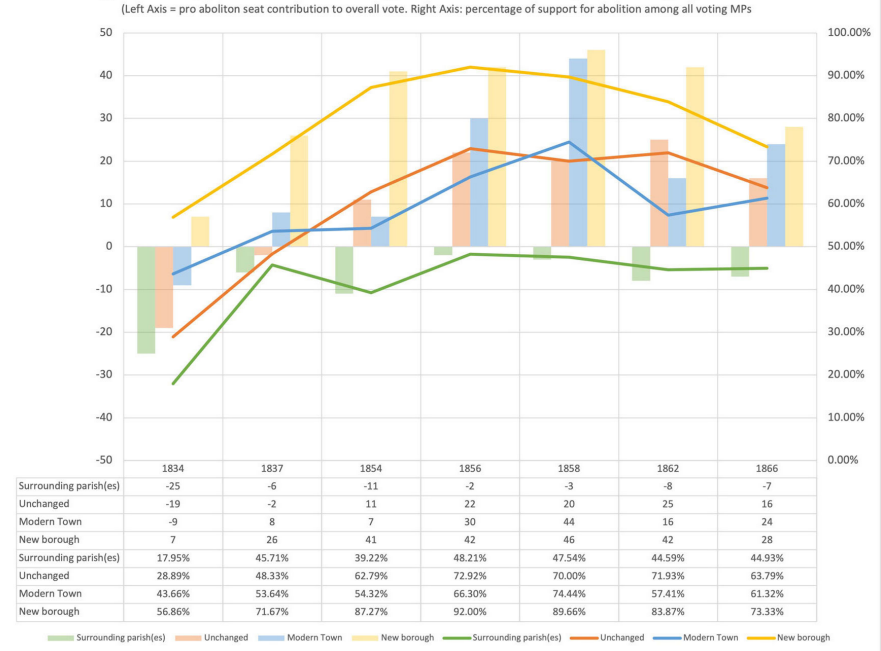
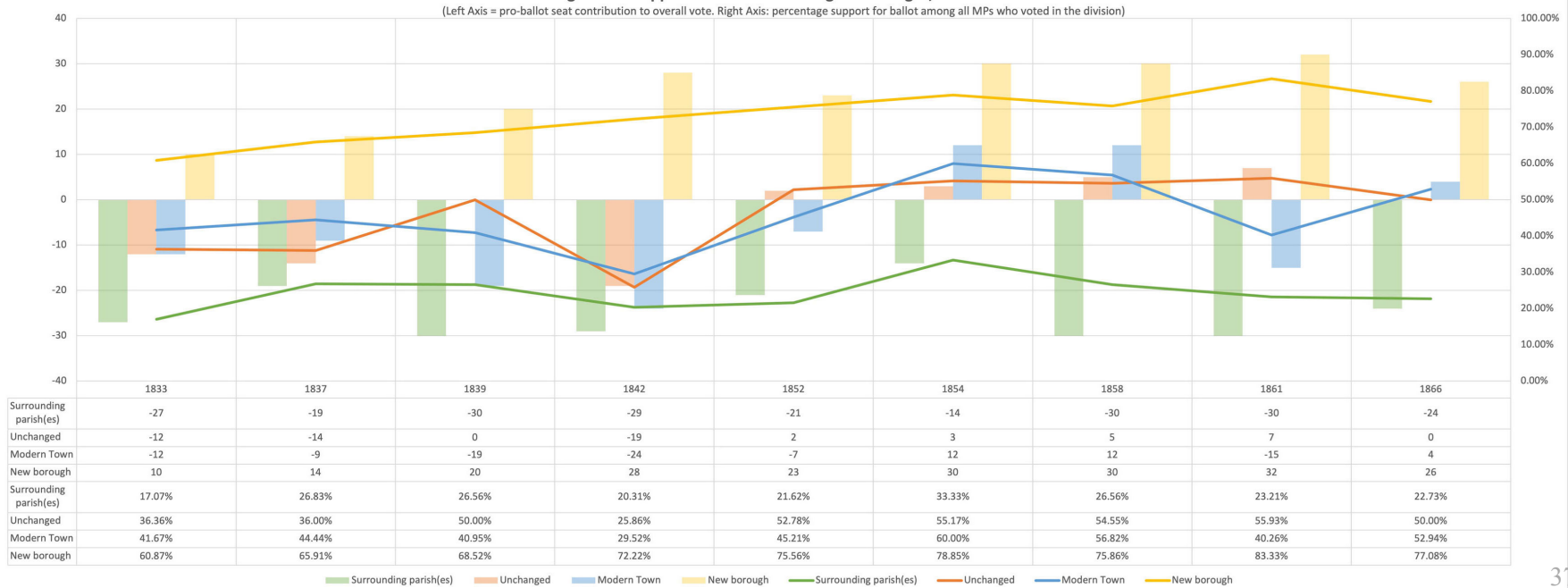


Figure 24 - Support for the ballot in English boroughs, 1833-1868



The geography of voting behaviour: towards a roll-call analysis of England's reformed electoral map, 1832-68

English borough MPs opposed Whig-Liberal administrations in confidence motions in sizeable numbers were in the radical-led rebellions against the Russell ministry in 1851, the Aberdeen coalition in 1855 and the Palmerston ministry in 1858. Free trade [Figures 17-19] supporting English borough members overwhelmed protectionist county MPs in votes on the corn laws from 1846, and from 1856 English borough MPs were able to secure English majorities for the abolition of church rates. From 1854, too, English borough MPs returned their first majority in favour of the ballot, although their levels of support for secret voting were never sufficient to counteract strong county opposition to the measure.

English borough MPs (who filled over half of the seats in the Commons) were a much larger group than English county MPs, and there was considerable variance in how different groups voted. Figures 21-24 detail how the four types of English boroughs established by the 1832 Boundary Act voted in confidence and policy divisions. The English boroughs that exhibited most change in their voting habits over time were those returned for boroughs extended to include their modern town or whose boundaries remained unchanged. These boroughs provided a small Whig-Liberal majority until after the 1841 election, and aside from in the radical-led rebellions of 1851 and 1855, proved an increasingly reliable source of support for Whig-Liberal governments after 1847. The 1841 Parliament proved the exception, when boroughs with unchanged boundaries in particular swung markedly behind the Conservatives. Interestingly, after providing strong Conservative majorities between 1841 and 1844, boroughs with unchanged boundaries were also the only English boroughs to deliver a small majority in favour of the Peelite Conservative leadership in June 1846.⁴¹ On policy, modern town and unchanged borough MPs tracked each other quite consistently across the entire period, both having switched to support for the ballot by 1852 and the abolition of church rates by 1854.

Aside from in the radical-led confidence motions of 1851, 1855 and 1858, which attracted very high levels of Whig-Liberal dissent, upwards of 70% of the 63 new borough MPs supported Whig-Liberal administrations throughout the period.⁴² As a group, new borough MPs were also by far and away the most radical, offering consistent majorities in favour of free trade, the abolition of church rates and the ballot. If we drill down to individual constituency level within the new boroughs, we get some stark examples of this. Table 7 provides a snapshot of England's ten most radical boroughs during the period, seven of which were new boroughs established in 1832. The numbers detailed in this table are from a basic policy scale that I've been developing that gives an indication of the partisanship of each constituency during the period. The scale gives each constituency a score of between -1 and 1 based on its support throughout the entire period for each set of policy votes discussed in this paper. For example, if a constituency's MP or MPs supported the abolition of church rates in all ten votes on the issue discussed in this paper (as was the case in the double-member Wolverhampton and single-member Salford) then the constituency received a score of 1. If a

⁴¹ By contrast to the English counties and boroughs extended into their surrounding parishes, whose high levels of protectionist dissent contributed significantly their majorities in the June 1846 vote of no confidence in the Peel ministry, only seven of the 39 Conservatives that represented unchanged English boroughs were unwilling to support the Peelite Conservative leadership.

⁴² 48.9%, 46% and 56.9% of Whig-Liberal MPs representing new English boroughs voted against the Whig-Liberal leadership in the major 1851, 1855 and 1858 divisions respectively.

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Table 7 – 10 most radical and conservative boroughs in England

Constituency	Seats	Boundary Change Type	Church Rates	Ballot	Free Trade	Average
Wolverhampton	2	New Borough	1.00	0.83	1.00	0.94
Salford	1	New Borough	1.00	0.78	1.00	0.93
Southwark	2	Extended to include modern town or associated population	0.80	0.78	1.00	0.86
Lambeth	2	New Borough	0.80	0.83	0.93	0.85
Ashton-under-Lyne	1	New Borough	0.90	0.78	0.86	0.84
Manchester	2	New Borough	0.75	0.78	1.00	0.84
Tower Hamlets	2	New Borough	0.60	0.94	0.93	0.82
Banbury	1	Extended into surrounding parish(es) or Clause 5	0.60	1.00	0.86	0.82
Derby	2	Unchanged Borough	0.70	0.83	0.86	0.80
Birmingham	2	New Borough	0.75	0.78	0.86	0.79

Constituency	Seats	Boundary Change Type	Church Rates	Ballot	Free Trade	Average
New Shoreham	2	Extended into surrounding parish(es) or Clause 5	-0.70	-0.83	-0.79	-0.77
Wallingford	1	Extended into surrounding parish(es) or Clause 5	-0.50	-0.67	-1.00	-0.72
Whitehaven	1	New Borough	-0.70	-0.67	-0.71	-0.69
Wenlock	2	Unchanged Borough	-0.50	-0.83	-0.71	-0.68
Oxford University	2	University Borough	-0.90	-0.83	-0.29	-0.67
Stamford	2	Extended to include modern town or associated population	-0.65	-0.67	-0.64	-0.65
Cambridge University	2	University Borough	-0.80	-0.78	-0.36	-0.64
Droitwich	1	Extended into surrounding parish(es) or Clause 5	-0.80	-0.67	-0.43	-0.63
Launceston	1	Extended into surrounding parish(es) or Clause 5	-0.70	-0.89	-0.29	-0.62
Great Marlow	2	Extended into surrounding parish(es) or Clause 5	-0.45	-0.67	-0.71	-0.61

Key to Scale Scores										
-1	-0.8	-0.6	-0.4	-0.2	0	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.8	1
MPs	MPs	MPs	MPs	MPs	MPs split	MPs	MPs	MPs	MPs	MPs
opposed	opposed	opposed	opposed	opposed	evenly on	supported	supported	supported	supported	supported
policy	policy	policy	policy	policy	all votes	policy	policy	policy	policy	policy
in 100%	in 90%	in 80%	in 70%	in 60%	across	in 60%	in 70%	in 80%	in 90%	in 100%
of votes	of votes	of votes	of votes	of votes	period	of votes	of votes	of votes	of votes	of votes

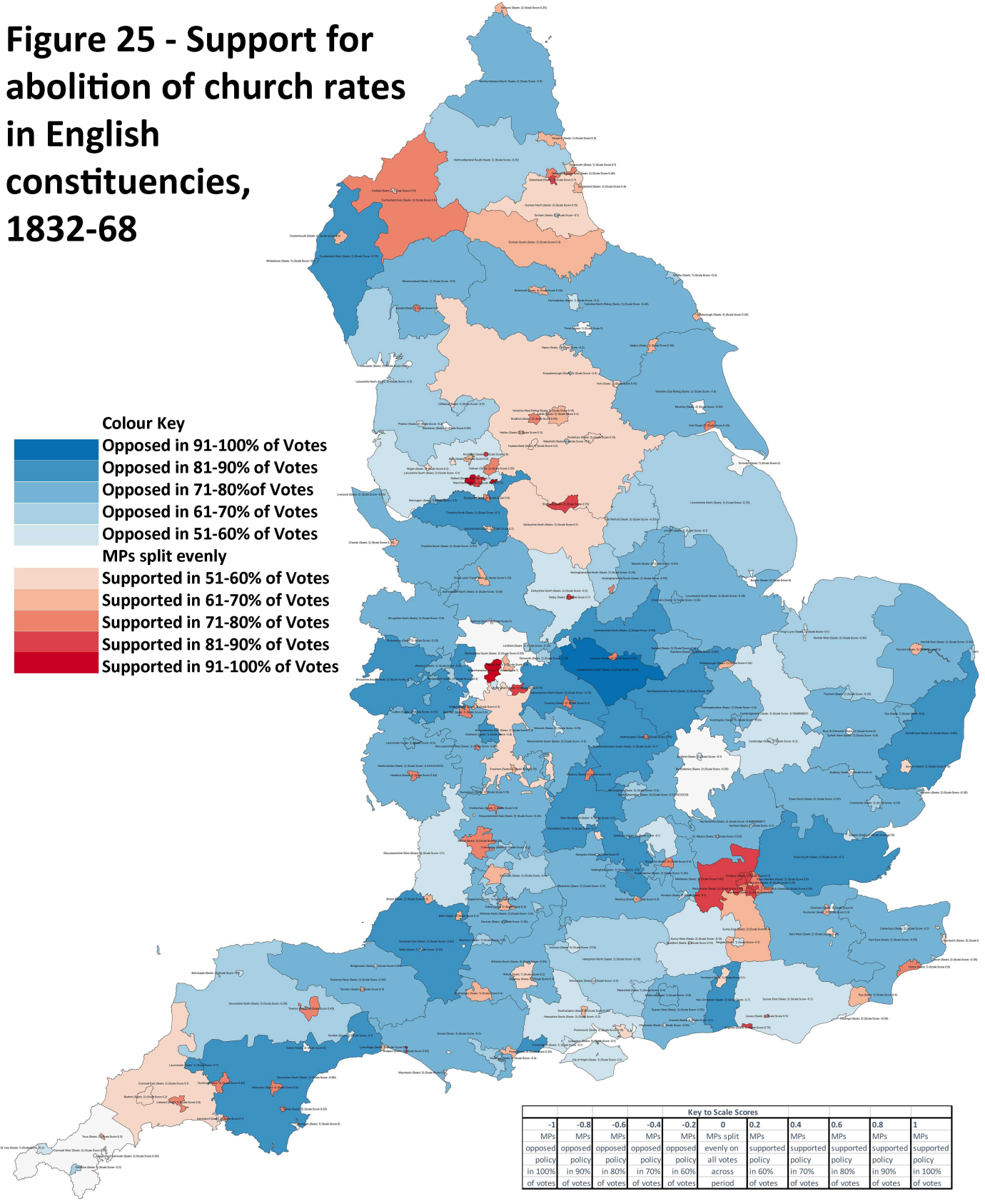
constituency's MP or MPs consistently opposed an issue, such as Wallingford, whose member opposed free trade in all seven votes on the corn laws discussed in this paper, it scored -1.

Figure 25 is a map of the church rate scale for all English constituencies colour coded from dark red to dark blue based on a constituency's support for the abolition of church rates between 1832 and 1868. If you zoom in on each constituency you can see its scale score. A score close to 0 in the scale indicates that a constituency was neutral over the issue over time, either because of swings in support for a policy among its MPs, the votes of a constituency's two MPs regularly cancelling each other out, poor attendance of a constituency's MP or MPs, or a combination of all three factors. The particular issue of representatives for double-member seats cancelling out each other's influence in the Commons was raised by a number of MPs and partisan commentators during the period. At the 1835 election in York (which scored 0.15 on the Church rate scale), the victorious reformer, John Charles Dundas, regretted that 'the representation of the city should be neutralised' by his return alongside a Conservative, John Henry Lowther.⁴³ And in Ipswich, which returned a Conservative and a Liberal at each election after 1847 and also scored 0.15 on the church rate scale, electors were called on to support a second Liberal candidate in 1865 in order that 'their votes might not be neutralised' in the Commons.⁴⁴

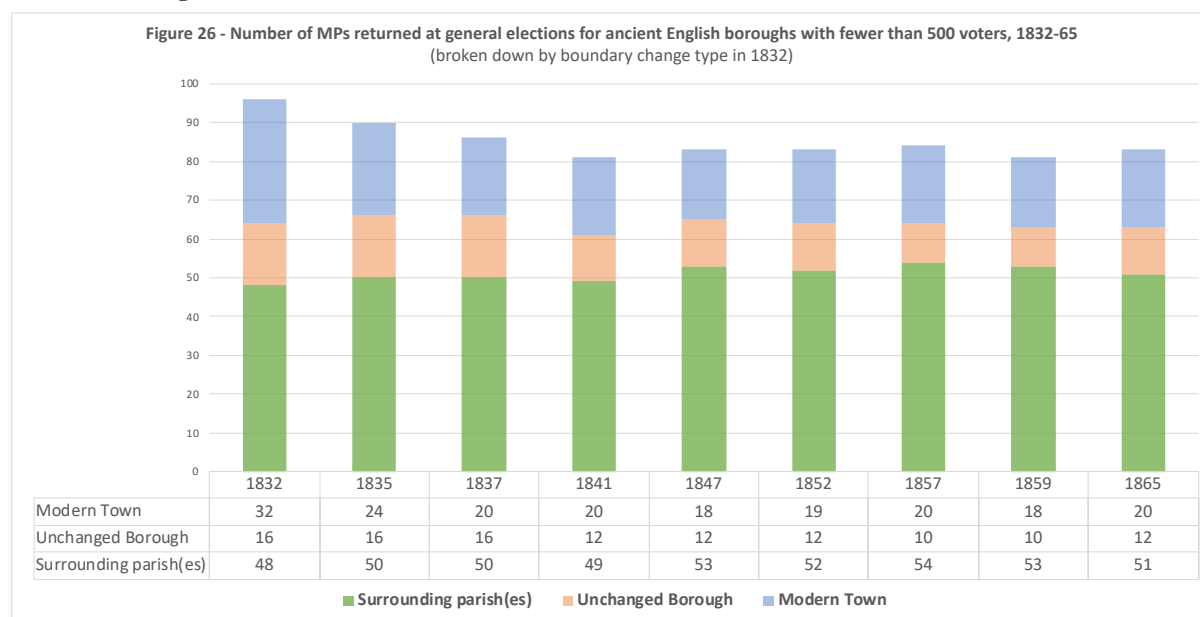
⁴³ *The Times*, 10 Jan. 1835; K. Rix, 'York', *HP Commons 1832-68*.

⁴⁴ *Suffolk Chronicle*, 15 July 1865; K. Rix, 'Ipswich', *HP Commons 1832-68*.

Figure 25 - Support for abolition of church rates in English constituencies, 1832-68



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In contrast to the new boroughs, the 77 MPs who represented the multiple parish and ‘clause 5’ English boroughs proved the most favourable to Conservative administrations and the legislative status quo. Figures 20-24 reveal that as well as generally voting against Whig-Liberal administrations, these MPs were consistent in offering the lowest levels of support to free trade, the ballot and the abolition of church rates, and during the 1865-8 Parliament were the only type of English borough to return majorities against the Liberal government’s reform legislation, the ballot, the abolition of church rates and the disestablishment of the Irish church. As well as allowing for a group of boroughs that purposefully contained a mixture of urban and rural voters, the creation of this set of boroughs in 1832 was the major contributing factor to the continuation of the sizeable group of ancient English boroughs with fewer than 500 registered electors after 1832. Boroughs with fewer than 500 electors returned at least 80 MPs at every election between 1832 and 1865. As should hopefully be evident from Figure 26, despite only constituting 25% of English borough seats, boroughs extended into their surrounding parishes contributed the lion’s share of MPs for boroughs with fewer than 500 electors throughout the period. As noted in my introduction, party label and voting analysis has previously observed the importance of these ‘small boroughs’ to Conservative electoral interest after 1832. What previous historians haven’t done, however, is make the connection that these ‘small boroughs’ were actually some of the largest in geographic terms. That the combination of small electorates and large boundaries proved crucial to the forces of conservatism in the reformed electoral system did not fail to escape the attention of Disraeli, however, who in 1866 understood that both factors been crucial in allowing ‘about ninety borough seats’ to be ‘appended to the landed interest’ since 1832.⁴⁵

IV. Conclusion

I hope this tour of my work on the Eggers and Spirling dataset has started to reveal the potential for how roll-call analysis, and this dataset in particular, might be better incorporated into

⁴⁵ Disraeli to 3rd Earl Grey, 2 July 1866: *Benjamin Disraeli letters, 1865-1867*, ed. M. Wiebe et al. (Toronto, 2009), ix. 91-92.

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nineteenth-century British parliamentary and political history. While I think some of these findings and trends are quite interesting in their own right, what should hopefully be apparent is that roll-call analysis needs to be seen as one step in a process for historians, rather than an end in itself. Digging into data such as this tends to confirm and add statistical specificity to the excellent instincts of previous historians, rather than reveal smoking guns for the researcher. And for those taking a quantitative approach (which can be somewhat time consuming) you have to be quite comfortable with that. However, when discernible trends in voting behaviour such as those exhibited in England's reformed electoral map do appear, the next step is to utilise more traditional historical methods to actually explain patterns and changes in MP behaviour. Blending the quantitative methods that I've been using here with a more traditional qualitative approach is really the only way to find out the extent to which structural aspects of the electoral system like parliamentary boundaries impacted on the voting behaviour of MPs. Or whether, in fact, a variety of other random structural, political and cultural factors actually just combined to create a false perception of uniformity in MP behaviour.

Moving away from the specific research questions presented here, I'd like to end with a collective call for future action. I think this dataset has amazing potential to be developed much further than it already has, into a bespoke system for researchers and the general user that connects and presents the data being generated by big research projects such as the History of Parliament and those covering petitions, electoral violence and pollbook analysis. As these projects are revealing, the pre-democratic mid-nineteenth century electoral system and political world was more participatory and vibrant than we had previously thought. How then does this tally with the notion of the unpledged independent MP and his actions in Parliament? How are other forms of extra-parliamentary political participation, such as petitioning campaigns, influencing hard votes in the legislature, or is there some form of firewall between political activity outside and inside of Westminster? Roll-call analysis provides one tool for mapping how much influence the UK's pre-democratic electoral and political culture had on the actions of MPs in Parliament, but it is only with future funding, time and resources that this dataset can really begin to achieve its potential.