

**THE POLL BOOK FOR THE COUNTY
OF DORSET, IN THE ORDER IN
WHICH THE VOTES WERE TAKEN
IN THE DIFFERENT DISTRICTS, AT
THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1857**

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The Poll Book for the County of Dorset, in the Order in Which the Votes Were Taken in the Different Districts, at the General Election of 1857 by Various

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VARIOUS

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COUNTY OF DORSET,

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OF
1857.



WITH ANALYSIS OF THE DORSET COUNTY POLLS OF 1857 AND 1881;
AND AN INTRODUCTORY ARTICLE, BY THE EDITOR OF
THE "DORSET COUNTY CHRONICLE."

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INTRODUCTION

TO THE

POLL BOOK OF DORSET COUNTY ELECTION, 1857.

In placing on permanent record the details of the recent struggle which ensued in the County of Dorset at the General Election of 1857, it is proper to explain that the County is one which has always been characterised by its Conservative strength. Being the second Poll Book that has been published in a County which, throughout the long period of a quarter of a century now elapsed since the passing of the Reform Bill, has experienced only two political contests, the present publication may well be deemed, not merely interesting and important, but essentially desirable for preserving the history of local opinion.

We are enabled, however, to go back a quarter of a century farther in reference to Dorset County Politics, and, in the first instance to present, by way of starting point, an analysis of the poll for the County of Dorset of the 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, and 20th of May 1807, which will show the state of parties in the county at that time, viz. :—

DORCHESTER. May 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, and 20, 1807.	Total.		Pitt.		Portman.		Banks.	
	Offered on the Poll.	Rejected.	Voters in- clusive of Plumpers.	Plumpers	Voters in- clusive of Plumpers.	Plumpers	Voters in- clusive of Plumpers	Plumpers
Division.								
Blandford	535	33	212	5	137	37	160	1
Shaftesbury	529	36	304		273	178	223	7
Dorchester	489	50	349	1	190	87	246	
Sherborne	505	38	317	2	261	148	204	1
Bridport	644	42	344		322	229	297	7
	2502	199	1526	8	1183	729	1130	16

In like manner we present a similar analysis of the Contest immediately preceding the recent Election, which took place so far back as the end of 1831, and from which time up to the present the Conservative ascendancy had never again been disturbed :—

INTRODUCTION.

Days of Polling.	CANDIDATES.		DAILY MAJORITY.		GROSS MAJORITY.		Number Polled Daily
	Ashley.	Ponsonby.	Ashley.	Ponsonby.	Ashley.	Ponsonby.	
First Day September 30	243	271	...	28	...	28	514
Second Day October 1	449	245	204	...	176	...	694
Third Day October 3	488	488	...	50	126	...	918
Fourth Day October 4	211	309	...	98	28	...	520
Fifth Day October 5	187	164	...	27	1	...	801
Sixth Day October 6	98	95	...	3	...	1	188
Seventh Day October 7	56	67	...	19	...	13	123
Eighth Day October 8	41	35	6	7	78
Ninth Day October 10	49	84	15	...	8	...	83
Tenth Day October 11	24	23	2	...	10	...	46
Eleventh Day October 12	13	16	...	3	7	...	29
Twelfth Day October 13	29	18	11	...	18	...	47
Thirteenth Day October 14	26	12	14	...	32	...	38
Fourteenth Day October 15	20	25	...	5	27	...	45
Fifteenth Day October 17	24	15	9	...	36	...	39
Gross Total.....	1847	1811					3658

The contrast to any one perusing the two records, is striking in the extreme. The Election of 1831, took place in the fall; that of 1857 in the spring. The rival Candidates of the former year, daily dismissed their rival adherents with assurances of hope or complaints of injustice, amidst autumnal storms which warned them, they said, that their dismissal would be the greatest kindness. The interest during the lengthened contest flagged and waned down to Zero; and then, again, as the decisive moment drew nigh, roused and lashed itself into furious excitement. Lord Ashley's supporters, with flags and banners, from Bridport, occupied the crown of the hill. The Reformers, with brickbats and bludgeons, overpowered and drove them from their position. Four hundred of the mounted Yeomanry of Dorset interposed and formed a line betwixt the combatants; and afterwards escorted the noble lord, girt with the sword and spurs, and mounted on horseback, in his ride through the town, in the midst of which ceremony their presence was required elsewhere, to protect the Sheriff and his assessors, assaulted by the mob, for their rejection of the spurious votes of the Ponsonby party. Flags, banners, music, and treating, and all the ancient concomitants of Elections being prohibited by Act of Parliament, in 1857, we have reason to congratulate ourselves on having arrived at times of comparative political tranquility.

In 1831 there were 15 days' polling:—On the first day 514 votes were polled—243 for Ashley, and 271 for Ponsonby—the majority on the first days' polling was consequently 28 in favour of the latter. This seems to have put the friends of the Conservative candidate upon their mettle; for 449 votes out of 694 were given the next day for Lord Ashley, leaving Mr. Ponsonby only 245, and inclining the balance in his opponent's favour, to the extent of 176 of a majority on the gross poll as it stood on the evening of the second day. The efforts made by the supporters of the other party to recover their lost ground, continued to be manifested and maintained throughout the whole five succeeding days, when they actually attained, one day after another, majorities of 50, 98, 27, 2, and 12, diminishing Ashley's advantage over them at the end of the fifth day's polling to a single vote; at the end of the sixth day establishing their own candidate in a majority of one; and at the end of the seventh day in a majority of thirteen. Next day, however (the 8th), their advantage was lowered to seven of a majority; and although they twice afterwards, on the 11th day and on the 14th, obtained three and five as majorities on the day, never did they recover the majority

upon the gross poll; and yet it was a marvellously close run, this long protracted and hardly contested struggle realising for Lord Ashley, only a majority of 36, on a gross poll of 3658 votes! One in every hundred!

The lamented death of the Right Honourable George Banks having occasioned, towards the expiration of the last Parliament in 1856, a vacancy in the County representation, Mr. Henry Gerard Sturt, at that time one of the Dorchester Borough members was returned unopposed, as the only man to be found on that melancholy emergency, whose opinions harmonised sufficiently with those of the other Conservative members to be associated with them on behalf of the County. Meantime, some changes had taken place in the proprietorship of large landed estates within the County, though none had occurred in the sentiments of the Tenant Farmers who were their occupants, and who alone legitimately exercise the franchise. Nevertheless a crusade was commenced in the form of Christmas and other parties, for the purpose of influencing the voices or securing the favor of tradesmen and other voters, not usually the guests of the Aristocracy. And although no contest had been attempted, when there actually existed a vacancy in the County, through the actual demise of one of the sitting members—no sooner had Lord Palmerston thought proper to dissolve the Parliament, on the pretended vote of want of confidence in Ministers, into which he had construed Mr. Cobden's Chinese motion, than the Honble. William Berkeley Portman, son of Lord Portman, Lord Lieutenant of Somersetshire, came forward, backed by the whole range of the Digby, Rivers, Westminster, Ilchester, and Portman estates, proclaiming the "Independence" of Dorsetshire on behalf of the Whigs, notwithstanding that the three old members united together in a joint address in offering themselves for reelection, and there was to all appearance no desire existing any where for a change; in fact, no vacancy despite the dissolution. It has been alleged that letters indicating how the tenantry were to vote, were shown round amongst them from their various landlords. However that may be the unexpected issue of the contest which took place on the 3rd of April, 1857, was as shown in the subjoined analysis:—

—	Voted for 3, viz.:				Voted for 2, viz. —						Plumpers for			Respective Position of the Candidates on the Poll.				No. Polled.	
	Se.	Se.	Fl.	Se.	Se.	Se.	Fl.	Fl.	St.	Fl.	St.	P.	Se.	Fl.	St.	P.			
	Fl.	Fl.	St.	St.	Fl.	St.	St.	P.	P.	P.	P.	P.	Se.	Fl.	St.	P.			
BRAMINSTER, Booth 1	87	6	13	2	2		2	2	6	11	1		1	118	102	118	116	160	253
Booth 2	72	4	3	1	1	1		1	1				137	80	81	77	147	221	
Booth 3	93	9	9	6	4			1	9			3	118	115	127	110	154	254	
Booth 4	125	9	5	14	1			1	3	2	3	1		87	157	146	150	121	251
BLANDFORD	90	16	3	7	4	1	23	1	1	4	4		6	98	146	115	112	152	258
PORTLAND	85	3	6	4				1	5	42			4	104	92	100	142	164	246
DORCHESTER, Booth 1	119	16	49		1	1	1	6	19	7	1	7	2	99	139	217	184	191	309
Booth 2	176	15	22	3	3	2		5	11	1	1	7	4	67	200	239	213	119	317
SHAFTESBURY	106	8	1	9	3		14	1	1	6	1	1	3	169	141	121	126	208	323
SHERBORN, Booth 1	63	10	1	7	3	1	6	1	2	4			4	86	90	80	81	116	188
Booth 2	31	29	3	3	1	2				3			1	118	66	65	43	158	194
STURMINSTER, Booth 1	101	10	1	12	1	7	31		1	3	12		6	37	174	114	130	95	232
Booth 2	50	17		13		63				4	3		1	115	146	67	68	212	266
WAREHAM	139	15	15	3	2	1	3		11	8	3		2	133	168	182	168	188	335
WIMBORNE, Booth 1	155	2	9	9		2	1	2		26			30	68	169	168	233	115	304
Booth 2	183	2	27	10	2		3	3	2	10	1	1	11	76	201	220	244	130	331
Totals	1675	173	167	105	28	16	152	25	71	132	28	20	77	1628	2177	2159	2197	2430	4271