

ART. XVIII. – *The Parliamentary Elections at Barrow-in-Furness, 1885-1886.*
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THE 1885 Parliamentary election at Barrow is best remembered as being the town's first as a separate constituency, and for the fact that it ended with the disqualification of the Liberal victor, David Duncan, on petition by his Conservative opponent, H. W. Schneider. An irresistible irony was that Schneider had twice before, at Norwich and Lancaster, been unseated for election malpractice.

This is the episode briefly outlined in Dr Marshall's *Furness and the Industrial Revolution* and in Mr Barnes' *Barrow and District*. Yet there was another story connected with the 1885 election. O'Leary in *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices in British Elections* comes near to it when he states that Sir James Ramsden was invited to stand for the Liberals, but that he declined the honour and Duncan was nominated in his place. In fact Ramsden was adopted as the Liberal candidate on 10th March 1885 and was regarded as such for over five months. In response H. W. Schneider was prevailed upon to stand for the Conservatives, his candidacy being announced within a few days of Ramsden's declaration. The stage was thus occupied by the two most influential names in Barrow's short history. Although the 1885 General Election did not properly begin until the autumn, at Barrow a shadow contest went on throughout the summer until, on 5th September, Sir James Ramsden announced his retirement. It was another four weeks before the Liberals adopted Duncan, and his contest with Schneider was in reality the *second* campaign. This article intends to explore the drawn-out saga of Barrow's first parliamentary election from the early rumours of candidacy in January 1885 to the inquest on Duncan's disqualification, which did not close until the summer of 1886.

Before 1885 Barrow was part of the huge North Lancashire constituency which covered Lancaster, Chorley, Blackpool, Furness and the surrounding countryside. It was a safe Tory seat, much to the chagrin of Barrow Liberals who regarded the town as their stronghold. In May 1879 and again in October 1884 the predominantly Liberal Town Council petitioned Parliament to grant an individual seat for Barrow. The second request was granted and a separate constituency was created under the terms of the 1885 Redistribution of Seats Act.

In the New Year of 1885 Gladstone's Liberal government was expected to fall at any moment and a general election was widely anticipated. As early as January the secretary of the Liberal Association, A. L. Garnett, had to deny that Sir James Ramsden would automatically become the party's candidate.¹ The rumour was strong enough, however, for Joseph Richardson, editor of the *Vulcan*, to suggest that the nomination be offered instead to the Cavendish family. Richardson predicted that Ramsden would divide the Liberals and allow the minority Tories a chance to win an unrepresentative victory.² Other commentators had similar misgivings. In the *Barrow Herald*, 'Pro Bono Publico', a prolific writer on local politics, noted that John Fell, at a Dalton meeting, had spoken of how a few Tories were attempting to foist their candidate Ainslie on to the North Lonsdale constituency: "how very applicable the whole of his remarks would be if

applied to Sir James Ramsden, whom in certain circles it is intended to endeavour to thrust on the constituency of Barrow".³

By 1885 there were enough independently minded Liberals in Barrow who regarded Sir James Ramsden's position as overbearing and undemocratic. Joseph Richardson, no friend of Ramsden but a Liberal in sentiment, struck a sensitive chord when he wrote that the adoption of Ramsden as if by divine right would be: "an antiquated and obsolete custom of a bygone age, which would arrange it all on the drawing room carpet of some local grandee".⁴ Richardson was not far short of the mark when he later remarked that "no sooner was the statue erected than Sir James' popularity began to wane".⁵

Not all the opposition to Ramsden, however, was based on personal motives. The radical wing of the party regarded Sir James as being too conservative in his beliefs to justify their support. An unusual indication of the preference of Liberal activists was given in an account of a lecture on Proportional Representation at the Liberal Association. To test the scheme a mock election was held and on the first ballot sixteen voted for John Fell, whilst Ramsden could only tie for second place with Garnett at five votes each.⁶

Yet despite the rumblings within the party, the authority and prestige of Ramsden, crucially supported by Fell, won the day. In late February both the Liberal Association and the Liberal Club proposed him as the party candidate, and on 10th March 1885 the General Council endorsed his nomination.⁷ Almost immediately the *Barrow Herald* urged Liberals to rally behind Sir James, but their internal differences refused to heal and they dominated events throughout the summer.

Ramsden was alone in the field barely three weeks before being joined by "an old colleague", H. W. Schneider.⁸

Schneider had been the Liberal M.P. for Norwich and for Lancaster, but was twice unseated for irregular election practices.⁹ He resented the fact that these disqualifications denied him a knighthood and that they caused the Liberal Lord Hartington to decline Schneider's help in the 1868 General Election. Nevertheless Schneider remained in the Liberal camp until February 1880, when at Kendal he surprisingly announced himself to be a convert to Conservatism. The *Ulverston Mirror* caustically referred to the turncoat "Herr Schneider"¹⁰ and even the *Vulcan* (temporarily out of Richardson's hands and at that time a committed Tory journal) was less than enthusiastic:

"Deserted by my erring flock,
I'm left out in the cold.
I'll try to find a shelter
In the good old Tory fold.

Alas, I fear no more I'll sit
Within the Commons pen,
Unless, in a forgetful fit,
They let me in again."¹¹

Although the *Barrow Herald* suggested that a background figure was behind the stirrings of Tory activity in the town in April 1883, Schneider had little contact with the Barrow Conservatives.¹² Indeed, in 1885 it was not certain whether they would be inclined to field a candidate. The party Chairman, Major Strongitharm, was of the opinion that Ramsden should be given a free run, out of respect for his past endeavours

for the town. Others, however, saw it as the party's duty to oppose any Liberal candidate. As for Ramsden's patronage of the town, Cllr. Bradshaw made a telling point that was later repeated by Schneider: "no doubt he (Sir James) had dipped his hand into his purse, and also into the purse of the Duke of Devonshire (laughter)".¹³

Yet the Conservatives realized that no ordinary candidate would be able to match Ramsden's standing and exploit the unease within the Liberal camp. Schneider thus became their only realistic choice and when a petition was placed before him urging his participation he readily agreed. The *Vulcan* noted Schneider's eagerness to enter the fray and the rapid disappearance of ill health which had been troubling him for some time: "it appears that Mr Schneider has taken a fresh lease; the very ghost of Jemmy entering St. Stephen's (Westminster) has brought more vitality back to the Grand Old Man than all the Cockles Pills were able to accomplish".¹⁴ Despite the traditional courtesies declared by both candidates, no one doubted for a moment the keen personal rivalry which existed between Barrow's leading City Fathers.

James Ramsden had been associated with Barrow since 1847, as an official of the Furness Railway and then as a civic designer and a shareholder in many local industries. In 1867 he was appointed the town's first mayor and five years later he received a knighthood. Henry William Schneider came to Furness in 1839 as a speculator in iron mining; together with Richard Hannay he founded an ironworks at Hindpool and later became a director in the Barrow Steelworks. He was made a town alderman in 1867 and was Barrow's third mayor from 1875 to 1878.¹⁵

Ramsden and Schneider had therefore many qualities and interests in common. Both were energetic and shrewd businessmen as well as being authoritarian public figures. They served together on several company boards, they were part of the entrenched Aldermanic establishment on Barrow Council and both had a considerable personal stake in the well-being of the town's commerce. Yet between them was a sharp, if largely unspoken, rivalry – a natural consequence of two men being lionized in the one town at the same time. Barrow's Establishment was more of a business association than a gathering of friends, and there is little evidence to suggest any real warmth between the likes of Devonshire, Ramsden, Schneider and Wadham.¹⁶ Ramsden, rooted to Barrow throughout his career, possibly regarded the more cosmopolitan Schneider as something of a carpet-bagger. Schneider certainly envied Ramsden his knighthood, and despite tactful remarks to the contrary his candidacy was undoubtedly a personal response to Ramsden's selection by the Liberals.

Indeed it was clear from the outset that the personalities of the two candidates would dominate their contest. Party considerations were at a minimum. Despite the *Barrow Herald* optimistically declaring there to be six times as many Liberals than Conservatives in Barrow, the reform party was moribund.¹⁷ A Liberal Club, established in 1877, had disappointed as a political organization and it was only when a separate Liberal Association was formed in 1884 that a system of ward parties was begun. The Conservatives were even less prepared for a serious political campaign. They had a Beaconsfield Club, but it served more as a centre for social relaxation than as a focus for political activity. Both parties operated only at general elections since municipal contests were largely devoid of partisan feeling. Barrow had been ruled from the eighteen-sixties by an "industrial junta" composed of representatives of the Railway-Steelworks Syndicate.¹⁸ A slow erosion of their predominance was noticeable in the 1880s, especially in 1882

when John Fell only narrowly defeated Benjamin Townson in a Council election for the Mayoralty. The *Barrow Herald* accurately reported that "fifteen Furness Fells" had overcome "thirteen Barrow Townsons" in a country versus town contest where the votes had divided almost precisely according to profession.¹⁹ The emerging opposition were shopkeepers, such as "Honest Bob" Loxham, the indefatigable hunter of abuses, publicans such as John Morgan, and tradesmen such as Councillors Comber (tailor) and Whittam (general carrier). We must not over-estimate the effect or the intentions of these men, but their presence emphasized an independence which was indicative of loose party organization.

The role of political education and distribution of propaganda was accepted by the local press rather than the rival parties. The *Barrow Herald* declared itself quite openly to be a Liberal paper and the freshly launched *Barrow News* did likewise.²⁰ Both carried regular doses of character assassination, designed to label Schneider as a turncoat and to suggest that he was being used by the Conservatives only to reduce the size of their humiliation. Typical of the style was an electoral Alphabet where

"S stands for Schneider, who is equally noisy,
T stands for Treachery, Trickery, Tory".²¹

In reply Schneider had only one voice, but the voice belonged to Joseph Richardson. A previous article in these *Transactions* has described Richardson's career and his violent opposition to Sir James Ramsden.²² Yet for many years Richardson had shown no particular attachment to Schneider. In 1875, in a series of Shakespearean couplets describing local personalities, he had reminded Schneider of his past indiscretions with:

"Obsequiously lament the untimely fall, of
virtuous (!) Lancaster".²³

Schneider's brusque manner in Council debates had also come in for harsh comment; in 1884 Richardson suggested that the success of Loxham in Ramsden Ward was a public rebuke for Schneider who had regularly dismissed Loxham's questioning of Council finance.²⁴ As late as January 1885 Richardson was writing of the need for "we Liberals" to find a strong candidate acceptable to all sections of the party.

When Ramsden was chosen, however, Richardson immediately turned to Schneider, not out of any love for the Tory cause but because "in comparison with Sir James he is by far the better man". Readers of the *Vulcan* were left in no doubt that Schneider could hardly have failed to be so appraised. Sir James was "a fame-hunting, position-hunting, money-craving, tyrannical, slave-driving and domineering individual . . . There's scarcely a schoolboy in the Borough who does not know more about the political world than he does".²⁵ Sir James was caustically labelled "Jemmy Weasel" and Richardson's antagonism reached a level of personalized comment which would be rejected even in today's supposedly more combative society.

Given such feeling it was not surprising that the *Vulcan* and its Liberal rivals indulged in a fierce campaign to discredit the other side. Richardson condemned the *Barrow News* as a sycophantic publication "ever anxious to puff up the ruling jingoes";²⁶ the *Barrow Herald* retorted that the *Vulcan* editor was one "who obtains his popularity by gross personalities and slanderous inuendoes".²⁷ It must be said that both insults carried a strong element of truth.

The rival candidates were more restrained, partly from convention and partly from a reluctance to commit themselves to a full campaign. Although Gladstone's government resigned in June 1885 a caretaker administration headed by Lord Salisbury prevented there being a summer election. Ramsden and Schneider were thus manoeuvred into a waiting brief; chances of direct conflict were rare. From January to November 1885 they each attended six out of twelve Council meetings, but only once did they appear together. Ramsden was especially subdued, rarely doing more at meetings than introduce speakers and move the vote of thanks. To the *Vulcan* he was "the Silent Candidate" and it was John Fell who was the spirit behind the Liberal campaign: "Sir James is nobody in this election. Mr John Fell has to fight for him, speak for him, fiddle for him, send out circulars for him, and do the general bottle-washing".²⁸

John Fell had helped to organize Barrow's first Council in 1867 but he did not become a member until 1875 when he was returned unopposed at Yarlside. Eight days later he was elevated to the Aldermanic bench and from 1882 to 1885 he served as the town's mayor. Fell was part of the Furness gentry but he was also a committed investor in Barrow's industries. He was an experienced and very proficient Liberal political manager and unofficially represented the Cavendish interest in the area.²⁹ There is no doubt that Fell could have gained the Liberal nomination at either Barrow or North Lonsdale in 1885 and his open support of Ramsden was crucial in defeating Sir James's opponents within the Liberal party.

Both Schneider and Ramsden were in less than robust health and although they remained very influential in the Council Chamber their days of close control were over. Significantly the argument concentrated on who had done most for Barrow, not who would do more in the future. It was a sterile debate. Ramsden's camp placed Sir James's guiding hand behind every Furness Railway venture, the *Vulcan* listed Schneider's personal gifts to various institutions and claimed that it was Schneider and Hannay's ironworks which had inspired the real growth of Barrow. Only once, in a speech to Roose miners, did Schneider allow his true feelings to surface. He explained that "he had ten times the claims to that honour (of being Barrow's first M.P.) than Sir James had". He remained quiet so long as Ramsden "was contented with having a handle to his name, or having a statue in his honour" but he could not let go unchallenged the Liberal propaganda. In a rare glimpse of class bias Schneider emphasized his role as a private investor, which made him superior to Sir James, "a man who was paid for his work".³⁰

A similar debate concerned which of the two men had done most for the working men of Barrow. Although the voting qualification still denied a vote to women, adult children living at home and many lodgers, for the first time there was a considerable working class presence in the electorate. Labourers, miners, engine drivers, pattern makers and similar tradesmen were among the 6,063 voters on the 1885 electoral roll;³¹ this number compared with 1,529 in 1880 and 831 in 1874.³² The Liberals emphasized their traditional links with the working man and attempted to label the Tories as having more sympathy with the former rural interests of North Lancashire than with the urban needs of the new Barrow constituency. Schneider took a more personal interest and at a meeting at Roose he spent a considerable amount of time describing his involvement in workers' housing, wage levels and friendly societies. However, his references to the Cornish colony at Roose as being "my own miners" was probably counter-productive.³³

Of course there was in 1885 no prospect of a genuine working-class candidate. John E. Marsh did advertise himself as "the Working Men's Radical Candidate" but his inadequate campaign was not taken seriously by the Liberal press nor the *Vulcan*.³⁴ The *Herald* regarded Marsh as a kite-flier for Schneider and accused him of being employed by a well-known Tory businessman.³⁵ Such charges were given credence when Marsh abandoned the contest soon after Sir James Ramsden had announced his retirement.

Ramsden and Schneider's sparring contest meandered through the summer of 1885 as both sides waited for a definite election date. At last the Queen's Speech in August provided a clear signal that a contest was imminent, but before the campaign could get into full swing at Barrow, Sir James Ramsden withdrew as the Liberal candidate. From the moment he had been chosen there was turmoil within the Liberal ranks. Schneider's entry into the fray was viewed with real concern by the party's management; a *Vulcan* report that John Fell had visited Belsfield and urged Schneider to stand down was never refuted. Neither was a report that a majority of Liberal Association executive members had abstained when a vote was taken on Ramsden's nomination.³⁶ Expulsions from the Liberal Club were threatened against those who had signed the Schneider petition, but that did not stop Liberal Councillors such as Robert Loxham and Ben Fish from appearing on Conservative election platforms.

Liberal division and inactivity could not be disguised even in the supportive columns of the *Herald* and *News*. By August there were rumours that Sir James was to resign, and such a decision seems to have been taken by the middle of the month. A letter from Cavendish to John Fell, dated 16th August 1885, discusses Liberal options "when Ramsden announces his retirement".³⁷ The official announcement was made in the press editions of 29th August; in an open letter Ramsden cited his reasons as being ill-health and a wish not to see Barrow's economy suffer from public confrontation between its two leading figures. The *Barrow News* praised Ramsden's decision for being "creditable alike to his judgement and his courage" (although some Liberals wished he had shown both a little earlier), and the *Herald* saw his withdrawal as a noble gesture of self-sacrifice in the best interests of the community.³⁸ Not surprisingly the *Vulcan* took a different view. Richardson had predicted in April that Schneider's candidacy would divide the Liberals and force Ramsden to retire, and he did not waste the opportunity to report:

"Foundering of the Weasel in the Political Bay of Biscay
Narrow Escape of Captain Fell from drowning."

Richardson poured scorn on Ramsden's statement, claiming that retirement was the only means Sir James had of avoiding defeat.³⁹

The contest between Ramsden and Schneider marked a watershed in Barrow's political history. They were both in a sense "yesterday's men", symbols of the optimism of the early eighteen-seventies rather than the more forbidding decade which followed. In the summer of 1885 the shipyard at Barrow had laid off hundreds of workmen and it was to this background of unemployment and industrial uncertainty that Ramsden and Schneider conducted their nostalgic campaigns.⁴⁰

For Schneider, his rival's withdrawal was a personal triumph. He rejected an appeal from John Fell to retire, sarcastically expressing surprise that it had taken the Liberals five months to realize the harm which the contest could have on Barrow's commerce.⁴¹ However, Ramsden's retirement proved to be the high point of the Tory campaign.

Ramsden's letter included one significant point: "My retirement will not be injurious to the Liberal Party in one important sense. It will free the contest from all personalities". The Liberals found themselves in a position to rally support behind a more national campaign, they lost their defensive tone and moved on to the attack. Schneider, on the other hand, was left uneasy, unwilling to wholeheartedly defend the Conservative programme and yet without a local target for his campaign.⁴² The Liberal press had accused Schneider of heading an unstable alliance of malcontents, and there was a strong element of truth in this charge. His supporters were local Conservatives, members of the Ratepayers' Association, Liberal defectors and personal followers. They were bound together by their hostility to Sir James Ramsden and when he was removed so too was a sense of purpose in the Schneider camp.

After a frustrating delay the Liberals introduced their new champion, David Duncan, to Barrow at the beginning of October. Several names had been canvassed and Duncan had flirted with the West Lothian constituency before he finally accepted Barrow's offer. Ramsden had been prepared to pay all Liberal campaign expenses and Duncan was obliged to do likewise now that he was the candidate; the exact definition of "all campaign expenses" was to cause acute problems at a later date.

Duncan was a Liverpool shipowner whose selection could not fail to remind Schneider of his disqualification at Lancaster when his opponent had been Edward Lawrence, another Liverpool shipowner. Duncan plunged into a hectic tour of ward meetings and open rallies, studiously avoiding local issues and emphasizing the national differences between the parties. Schneider was equally active but it was noticeable that the *Vulcan* sought to champion him as the natural local heir to the seat, in a manner ironically similar to the Liberals' original pro-Ramsden propaganda. There were the usual electoral disturbances. A Conservative meeting at the Drill Hall was disrupted by Liberal "camp followers" and Schneider took the remarkable step of naming four shipyard foremen as being the coordinators of mob action. In retaliation a speech by Duncan on Barrow Island was stopped by an organized Orange Lodge demonstration and police had to be brought in to restore order.⁴³ Despite such excitement an essential bite to the contest was missing with Ramsden's absence and polling day passed quietly. There was no repetition of the scenes during the 1880 election when Duke Street was over-run by "some hundreds of blackguards, whipper-snappers and mill girls"; on the same night there were anti-Tory riots at the Wellington Hotel in Dalton and police reinforcements were needed to restore order at Ulverston.⁴⁴

The election result of 24th November 1885 saw a close victory for Duncan.

Duncan	2,958
Schneider	2,612
Liberal Majority	346 Turnout 92%

Once success was assured, "Pro Bono Publico" admitted that the Liberal vote had been split and he estimated that Schneider had received about one thousand personal votes.⁴⁵ Barrow had its Liberal M.P. but the *Herald*'s response was one of relief rather than triumph. The *Vulcan* was in no mood to accept the result gracefully. A headline announced "Barrow's Disgrace" that so many voters "have not yet learned the virtues of common gratitude". A mournful poem later urged "Give Back Barrow to Oak Lea" (Schneider's local residence):

“Oh! She’s gone and he’s now sad and lonely,
For he loved her both fondly and true.
She’s gone and eloped with a stranger
Who has promised her true friend to be –
But when she’s aware of her danger,
She will gladly return to Oak Lea.”⁴⁶

One cannot attempt any analysis of the election result at this distance. Would Schneider have defeated Ramsden? Did Liberals return to the fold when Duncan became the candidate or did others reject an offcomer and turn to Schneider? However, Joseph Richardson made one comment on the voting which had an immediate relevance: “the politics of a far larger number than Mr Duncan’s majority are circumscribed by a quart of beer”.⁴⁷

The 1885 General Election was the first to be held under the stringent rules of the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act of 1883.⁴⁸ Treating, bribery, personation, excess spending and payment for conveyances to take voters to the polls were among a host of traditional election tactics to be outlawed. Rumours of a Barrow petition surfaced very quickly. A letter to the *Vulcan* in December 1885 said that “several influential gentlemen are very busy trying to frighten people and shut up their mouths”.⁴⁹ Schneider could not be so easily deterred and in that month he lodged a petition which charged the Liberals with bribery, treating, over-spending and intimidation.⁵⁰

The *Barrow Herald* complained that “Mr Schneider is taking his defeat badly”.⁵¹ There seems to have been genuine surprise in the Liberal camp since election day had passed off very quietly. Indeed the only incident was the publication of a placard which accused the Tory government of stopping naval orders at the shipyard. This seems to have been the first instance of the “shipyard scare”, a traditional election tactic at Barrow ever since. We must not be too surprised, however, at the competitiveness of Victorian politics. Then, as now, it was not a pastime for the thin-skinned; in 1874 a Conservative candidate for North Lancashire was described by the Liberal Election Secretary as “deaf, has a softening of the brain and his father is a Roman Catholic, the latter should tell with the majority of Conservatives”.⁵² Despite their outrage, the Liberals were initially confident that Schneider’s charges would be refuted. Duncan’s son wrote to the M.P. from Lincoln’s Inn Fields on the 15th December with a favourable comment on Schneider’s advocate,⁵³ but Duncan regarded the charges as “baseless” and informed Fell that if they were so proved “I shall do my best to sue him (Schneider) for deformation of character”.⁵⁴ On 15th January Duncan wrote that Sir Henry James in the Reform Club had assured Duncan that the offering of refreshments to party workers was permitted by the new legislation.⁵⁵ He added, however, the first open criticism of Garnett, the Liberal secretary, whom Duncan accused of slackness. It was probably a crucial weakness of Liberal organization that John Fell, as Mayor and potential Returning Officer, had to reduce his work for the Liberals once the election was officially announced.⁵⁶

Nevertheless when the petition was heard at Barrow in March 1886 the Liberal press was confident of success. The *Herald* accused Schneider of involving the town with a novelty which would be more suited elsewhere, “say Norwich or Lancaster”.⁵⁷ The hearing soon dismissed the more sensational charges but attention was focused on the availability of refreshments in the Liberal offices. Schneider’s counsel claimed that his

client's resolution not to treat had cost him the election, and he compared "the cold, inhospitable and dreary committee rooms of Mr Schneider" with Duncan's rooms, "this land flowing with coffee and pork pies".⁵⁸ As he listened to the case Duncan became pessimistic and his instinct was proved correct when on 23rd March 1886 the three judges ruled that the Liberals had not limited refreshments to party workers only, and that they had made no reasonable attempt to do so.⁵⁹ Under the new Act this was a serious enough offence for them to disqualify Duncan and order a fresh election.

Duncan was not eligible to stand for re-election but the petition result was not the end of the matter for him. From March until July 1886 there occurred an acrimonious correspondence between Duncan and Fell concerning the payment of costs arising from the petition hearing. Duncan rejected any responsibility for "the Disaster" and said that the supply of refreshments was ordered on the advice of Fell and Garnett.⁶⁰ He also suggested that the local Liberals failed to advise him of Schneider's character; "In many places refreshments were given but the candidates did not fight a local wild beast like yours at Barrow".⁶¹ Fell replied that it had been made clear to Duncan that Schneider was a man of short temper and that the Liberal candidate would have to pay for "the election itself or the *contingencies which might arise out of it*".⁶² In July 1886 Garnett presented Duncan with a bill for £400, which caused Duncan to question the agent's sanity, "seeing he was the cause of all the annoyance".⁶³

Meanwhile the re-election had taken place without Schneider's participation. He had served his purpose by denying Ramsden of the prize and had enjoyed the bonus of turning the tables on a Liverpool shipowner and Lord Hartington, who of course had supported the Liberal effort at Barrow. In any event he knew that he was unlikely to improve on his vote in November. By the spring of 1886 the Liberal Club and Liberal Association had been amalgamated and their reorganized party machine was in much better condition than had been the case in the previous year.

The 1886 bye-election was a muted affair. W. S. Caine, a former junior minister with extensive business contacts in the region, was chosen by the Liberals. He had certainly been quick off the mark, writing to Fell: "Would there be any chance for me at Barrow? I am very sorry to hear *this afternoon* that Duncan is cast out (by the hearing)".⁶⁴ Mr Gainsford Bruce stood for the Conservatives and was clearly defeated:

Caine	3,109
Bruce	2,174
Liberal majority	935 Turnout 87%

The Tory vote dropped from 46·9% in November 1885 to 41·1% in April 1886, indicating that Schneider had a personal vote of a few hundred. However, Gainsford Bruce was adopted only a few days before polling and his performance suggests that Barrow was much less of a Liberal stronghold than had been thought.

Of the main characters involved in this account only John Fell continued to have a lengthy association with Barrow after the 1885/6 elections. Richardson left Barrow in October 1886 to start a new business in London; Duncan and Schneider both died in 1887; James Ramsden survived until 1896, but his political involvement effectively finished long before then.⁶⁵ Caine's independence and his distinctive views on Ireland soon caused divisions among the Barrow Liberals. In 1890 he resigned his seat and was defeated in the subsequent bye-election by the official Liberal Candidate, one James

Duncan, eldest son of David Duncan!¹⁶ This morbid catalogue emphasizes the nature of the 1885 Election as the last act of Barrow's old political regime. The evidence suggests, however, that the popularity of both Ramsden and Schneider was far from being as comprehensive as suggested by the eulogies of contemporary commentators. John Fell seems to have had the political beating of them both, but his was a delicate balancing act – thoroughly Liberal, yet a Steelworks colleague of Schneider and having an eye to neutrality as Mayor of Barrow.

Where the 1885 and 1886 elections pointed the way to the future was in the size of the Tory vote. It was fitting that Barrow's first M.P. should have been a Liberal, but the town showed itself to be more equally divided than had been thought. In this respect it was not surprising Cayzer should win the seat for the Conservatives in 1892. One last point can be made. This examination of the internal party conflicts and the nature of the cross-party propaganda reminds us that intrigue and hyperbole are not the inventions of modern politics. The party system at Barrow may not have been particularly strong in the 1880s, but already the tendency for all political groups to turn their energies upon themselves was evident within the Liberals.

Acknowledgements

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Notes and References

- ¹ *Barrow Herald*, 17.1.1885.
- ² *Vulcan*, 24.1.1885.
- ³ *Barrow Herald*, 31.1.1885.
- ⁴ *Vulcan*, 3.1.1885.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.6.1885.
- ⁶ *Barrow Herald*, 14.2.1885.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.2.1885 and 14.8.1885.
- ⁸ Schneider's euphemistic term when accepting the nomination.
- ⁹ J. D. Marshall, 'Corrupt Practices at the Lancaster Election of 1865', *Trans. L.C.A.S.*, liii.
- ¹⁰ *Ulverston Mirror*, 3.4.1880.
- ¹¹ *Vulcan*, 'The Lay of the Lost Sheep', 9.3.1880.
- ¹² *Barrow Herald*, 14.4.1883.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 21.2.1883.
- ¹⁴ *Vulcan*, 11.4.1885.
- ¹⁵ Details of Ramsden and Schneider from J. D. Marshall, *Furness and the Industrial Revolution* (Barrow, 1958), *passim*.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 410.
- ¹⁷ *Barrow Herald*, 21.2.1885.
- ¹⁸ J. D. Marshall and J. F. Walton, *The Lake Counties* (M.U.P., 1981), 125.
- ¹⁹ B. Trescatheric, *North-Western Evening Mail* article 5.1.1982.
- ²⁰ *Barrow Herald*.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 18.4.1885, 6.6.1885 and 17.10.1885. For the role of the press in the 1880 election in North Lancashire see P. J. Lucas, 'The first Furness Newspapers' (M.Litt., thesis, Lancaster 1971), ch. 5.
- ²² P. J. Lucas, 'Provincial Culture and "The Penny Brotherhood": the Case of Joseph Richardson', CW2, lxxviii, 187.

²³ *Vulcan*, 13.3.1873.

²⁴ See B. Trescatheric, *Barrow News* article, 23.4.1982.

²⁵ *Vulcan*, 21.2.1885.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.2.1885.

²⁷ *Barrow Herald*, 8.11.1884.

²⁸ *Vulcan*, 4.7.1885.

²⁹ Details from J. D. Marshall, *Furness and the Industrial Revolution*, *passim*.

³⁰ *Vulcan*, 26.9.1885. Although these remarks could have been made at any time during the previous summer, it is perhaps significant that Schneider continued to see Ramsden as his target even after the latter had withdrawn.

³¹ As shown by a cross-reference of *Roberts' Directory* of 1886 and the Electoral Roll for that year. Both available at Barrow Public Library, Reference Department.

³² *Barrow Herald*, 10.1.1880.

³³ *Ibid.*, 18.7.1885.

³⁴ *Vulcan*, 4.4.1885.

³⁵ *Barrow Herald*, 12.9.1885.

³⁶ *Vulcan*, 14.3.1885 and 18.4.1885.

³⁷ Lancashire County Record Office, Fell Papers, DDFe.

³⁸ *Barrow News*, 29.8.1885.

³⁹ *Vulcan*, 5.9.1885.

⁴⁰ Referred to by Barrow's New Mayor, Benjamin Townson, *Barrow Herald*, 28.11.1885.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 5.9.1885.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 26.9.1885 quotes a typical Schneider speech in which he seems to be declaring himself to be a Liberal in Tory clothing.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 24.10.1885 and 31.10.1885.

⁴⁴ *Vulcan*, 13.4.1880.

⁴⁵ *Barrow Herald*, 28.11.1885.

⁴⁶ *Vulcan*, 28.11.1885 and 16.1.1886.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.11.1885.

⁴⁸ C. O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices in British Elections 1868-1911* (O.U.P., 1962), ch. 6.

⁴⁹ *Vulcan*, 19.12.1885.

⁵⁰ Original Petition, Barrow Record Office, Ba/C Petitions, Box 1, D2.

⁵¹ *Barrow Herald*, 19.12.1885.

⁵² Barrow Public Library, Z2111/5 (Fell Papers). The comment was made by J. P. Rushton.

⁵³ Lancashire County Record Office, Fell Papers, DDFe, 15.12.1885.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.12.1885 and 18.12.1885.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Fell had received this advice from R. S. Wright, *ibid.*, 25.6.1885.

⁵⁷ *Barrow Herald*, 13.3.1886.

⁵⁸ Parliamentary Papers, 1886, lii, pp. 309-21.

⁵⁹ Lancashire County Record Office, Fell Papers, DDFe, letter to John Fell 22.3.1886.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Duncan to Fell, 27.3.1886 and 16.4.1886.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 16.4.1886.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 17.4.1886.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 26.7.1886.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.3.1886.

⁶⁵ Duncan obituary, *Barrow Herald*, 8.1.1887, Schneider obituary, *ibid.*, 12.11.1887, Ramsden obituary, *ibid.*, 20.10.1896.

⁶⁶ *Barrow Herald*, 1.7.1890.

