

Sources for the Study of the election of Sheffield's first Labour Member of Parliament, 1909



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Front cover illustrations – extracts from election fliers.
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 105 L)

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Introduction

This booklet lists sources available within Sheffield Libraries Archives and Information for the study of the by-election in Attercliffe in 1909 which resulted in the election of Sheffield's first Labour Member of Parliament, Joseph Pointer.

It is not a detailed history of the subject; it merely points the reader who wishes to carry out their own research to what is available within Sheffield Libraries and Archives. In addition this *Study Guide* provides examples of the sorts of information that may be available for most 19th, 20th and 21st century Parliamentary elections.

Adding to our collections

Sheffield Libraries and Archives seeks to preserve information about events in our city's history. If you have photographs or personal papers that may be worth preserving please consider safeguarding them for current and future generations by placing them in the care of Sheffield Libraries and Archives. It is only through the generosity of individuals and organisations that we are able to have a complete record of important events in the history of Sheffield and the nation. We are interested in photographs, flyers and posters, minutes of meetings etc. For advice on record keeping and the facilities we offer please contact Peter Evans, Archives & Local Studies Manager (pete.evans@sheffield.gov.uk or 0114 203 9397).

At the turn of the 19th century Sheffield was represented by Liberal and, occasionally, Conservative Members of Parliament. This was to change in the early years of the 20th century, when the emerging Labour Party began to take support from the Liberals. As the century progressed and everyone over the age of 21 became eligible to vote, the Labour Party support in the city was assured.

Sheffield's first Labour MP, Joseph Pointer, was elected in 1909 in the Attercliffe by-election. By that date there were almost 30 Labour Members of Parliament.

Shortly after the general election of 1906, Batty Langley, the Liberal MP for Attercliffe, began to suffer from serious ill-health and his resignation was constantly expected. This would have caused a by-election in Attercliffe.



Batty Langley, Liberal MP for Attercliffe
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: Picture Sheffield S10729)

The Labour Representation Committee (LRC) which had refrained from opposing him was determined to put a candidate in the field against any Liberal adopted to succeed him. G H B Ward, Labour's indefatigable secretary, wrote to several possible candidates.

Batty Langley refused to resign until April 1909 and by then Labour in Attercliffe was unprepared for the by-election.

There were four candidates at the by-election: Joseph Pointer stood as a Labour candidate; S King-Farlow (Conservative), Richard Lambert (Liberal) and A Muir-Wilson (Independent Tariff Reform candidate).

The candidates, left to right Joseph Pointer, S King-Farlow, Richard Lambert and A Muir-Wilson
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: Picture Sheffield t01204 and MP 105)



Labour in Sheffield 1903-1909

The Sheffield Labour Representation Committee aimed to 'secure the election and maintenance of independent representatives of the industrial classes in the House of Commons ...'

Sheffield Labour Representation Committee rules, 1903, revised 1906
(Sheffield Archives: MD3354)

SHEFFIELD
Labour Representation Committee.
— — — — —
RULES AND CONSTITUTION.

I.—Objects.

- (a) To secure the election and maintenance of independent representatives of the industrial classes in the House of Commons, and on local administrative bodies.
- (b) Raising funds for such purposes.
- (c) To provide the workers with means of education on Labour questions, and to keep an oversight on all matters affecting the interests of Labour.

No Labour candidate stood in any constituency in the general election of January 1906. In Attercliffe the sitting member, the Liberal Batty Langley, was returned. The Sheffield LRC confined itself to addressing a series of questions to the candidates. Their answers were recorded in the press and pasted in the minute book of the Executive Committee.

The subscription books of the Attercliffe Independent Labour Party record members names and the amount they paid in subscriptions. The extract below shows Joseph Pointer paid this weekly subscription of 2 shillings 2 pence in October 1903.

Attercliffe Independent Labour Party (ILP) subscription book
(Sheffield Archives: MD3356/1)

1903	Names		Oct	Nov	Dec	
			4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29	6 13 20 27	
31.61	J Smith	1/4				
32.62	A Foulds	2/3	1/-		1/6	2 6
33.63	J Pointer	2/3	2/3			
34.64	W A Norton	2/2	2/2			
35.65	A Bowen	2/7				
36.66	A Hindle					
37.67	Mr Bullock	1/3	1/3			1 5

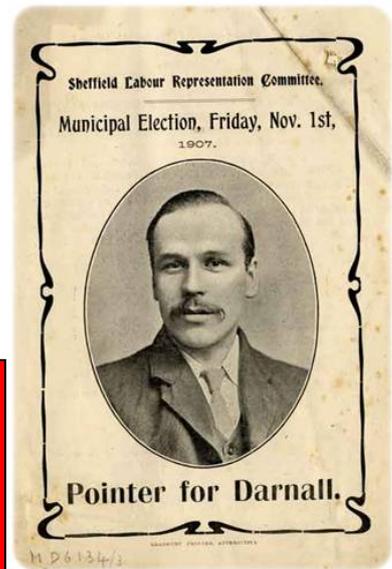
The Sheffield Guardian, an independent Labour newspaper, appeared for the first time in January 1906, at the time of the General Election. Extracts from the first number are shown here. It appears to have been the independent venture of John Penny and never had the whole-hearted support of the LRC. It was relaunched in 1912 under a new editor.



Front page of the first issue of the Sheffield Guardian, 1906 (Sheffield Local Studies Library: microfilm)

Several Labour candidates stood in Sheffield municipal elections at this time. Pointer stood as Labour candidate in the Sheffield municipal elections of 1906 and 1907 and was elected for Brightside in 1908. (There were already other Labour members in the City Council by that date).

Pointer's flier for Council elections, 1907 (Sheffield Archives: MD6134/3)



Pointer's election address for Council elections (Darnall ward), 1906 (Sheffield Archives: MD6134/2)

A 48 hour working week, pure milk supply, free school meals, free hospital treatment, free water supplies and better housing are some of Pointer's socialist pledges

The search for a Labour candidate for Attercliffe.

The by-election found Labour without a prospective candidate. Whoever stood as a Labour candidate required financial support to fight the election and (if elected) some support as a Member of Parliament (MPs being still unpaid in 1909). The candidate's trade union was usually the source of most of the financial support. In Pointer's case the union was the Patternmakers Association. The other possible sponsor was the ILP, of which Pointer was a member.

The Patternmakers were not forthcoming with permanent support. The ILP also declined to sponsor Pointer as an ILP candidate. Labour Members in Brightside actually wanted Herbert Smith, President of the Yorkshire Miners' Association, to be their candidate. He declined.

1/6/06
Mr Herbert Smith
Pres. Yorkshire Miners Assn
Dear Sir
The above Committee have been considering the question of a possible Candidate for Attercliffe Parliamentary Division of Sheffield, and your name has been mentioned as that of a possible Candidate. I am directed to write you upon the matter.
Would you kindly reply stating whether
I You would favourably consider an invitation to contest the above Division in the event of a General Election?
II Your Society would pay your Election Expenses?
III You would contest as a Labour Candidate only, and join the Labour Group in the House - ^{presuming your return} accepting the Whips of Messrs Henderson and Mischam, M.Ps, as also the leadership of ^{Keith} Kier Hardie, M.P.
I presume that action would be taken in the first instance by the local branches of your Association, and that you would run as a Miners' Federation Candidate.
My letter is quite official - was my two previous letters to which you have not replied - and there is no objection to your treating it as such.
In anticipation of your esteemed reply,
Believe me
Faithfully Yours
G.H. Ward

Would you reply stating whether your society would pay your election expenses ...[and] you would contest as a Labour candidate and presuming your return join the Labour Group in the House ... accepting the leadership of Kier Hardie, MP?

Above- Letter offering the nomination to Herbert Smith, President of the Yorkshire Miners' Association. Left - Smith's unsatisfactory reply (Sheffield Archives: LD1627)

I am not aware there is any vacancyIt must be clearly understood that, if I fight I shall fight under the rules of the Miners Federation of Great Britain but with the clear understanding that I shall be a Labour Member and nothing else.

Miners' Offices,
Barnsley,
July 2nd 1906 190
Dear Sir
In reply to your letter of 1st inst & your previous letters, I say that I am not aware that there is any vacancy in the Attercliffe Division at present, & when there is, of course, it will be for my Society to decide who shall be the Candidate so far as this Society is concerned. I don't know what you mean with regard to the name tactics as Mr Wain foreshadowed sometime ago, because it must be clearly understood, if I fight, I shall fight under the Rules of the Miners Federation of Great Britain, but with the clear understanding that I shall be a Labour Member & nothing else.
Yours faithfully
Herbert Smith
G H B Ward Esq
Park Farm
190 Cricket Rd
Sheffield

Election fliers: Liberals

The Liberal's hoped to retain their historic hold in Sheffield by fielding Richard Lambert



Above and below - election fliers, 1909 (Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 105 L)

The Tories

The official Conservative candidate, King-Farlow, was opposed by a local man of extreme views, Arnold Muir-Wilson, standing as an Independent Conservative. His ideas were imperialist and pro-protection. The official Conservatives were furious at his intervention.



Votes for Women

The National Women's Social and Political Union (NWSPU) was also campaigning in Attercliffe in 1909, by seeking the support of the four candidates for their views.

Extracts from circulars issued by the National Womens Social and Political Union
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 105 L)

Telegraphic Address: "Wospolu, London." Telephone No. 2724 Holborn.
(Three lines).

NATIONAL WOMEN'S SOCIAL & POLITICAL UNION.

Offices - - 4, CLEMENTS INN, W.C.

Founder and Hon. Secretary—Mrs. PANKHURST. Hon. Treasurer—Mrs. PETHICK LAWRENCE.
Joint Hon. Secretary—Mrs. TURE. Organising Secretary—Miss CHRISTABEL PANKHURST, L.L.B.

VOTES FOR WOMEN.

To the Electors of the Attercliffe Division of Sheffield.

Mr. R. C. Lambert says :

I am in favour of giving the Parliamentary Franchise to Women, provided it is given upon a thoroughly democratic basis.

Mr. J. Pointer says :

I am an advocate of immediate Adult, Man and Woman Suffrage, but as a step I would support the Women's Enfranchisement Bill.

Mr. A. Muir Wilson says :—

I am in favour of granting the same electoral privileges to women as men with regard to all Elections, Parliamentary or otherwise.

Mr. King-Farlow has not made any definite statement, but informs us that he is in sympathy with the movement.



MRS. PANKHURST ON THE BOX

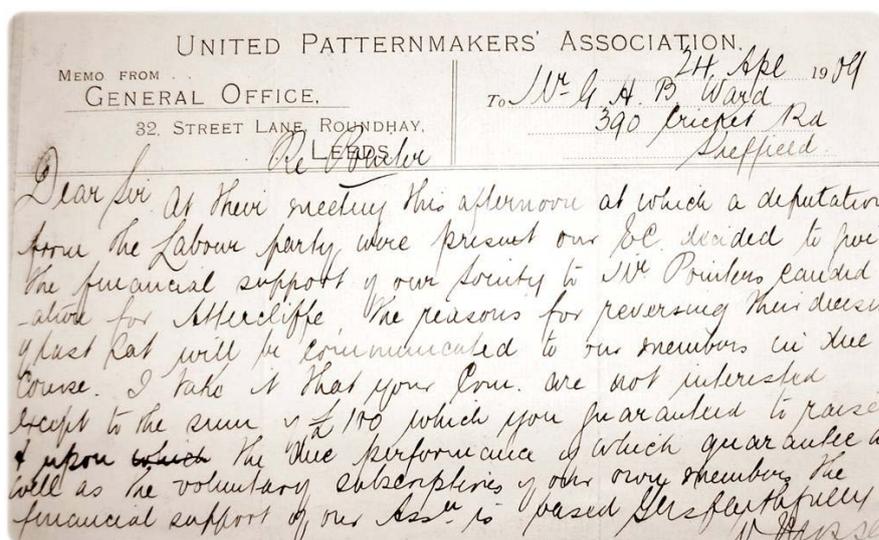


(Above left) Mrs Pankhurst during the by-election and (above right) extract from Votes for Women flier, 1909. The Liberal Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith cries 'Boo hoo! I thought no girl could shoot straight'
(Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 105 L and Sheffield Archives: MD3359)

The Attercliffe By-Election 1909 - The Labour Candidate

The minutes of the Executive Council (as well as those of the Delegate meetings) of the Sheffield Labour Representation Committee (LRC), prior to Pointer's standing for Attercliffe in 1909, concern the negotiations to obtain for him the financial sponsorship of the Patternmakers Society, of which Pointer was a member.

At first the Patternmakers refused. Pointer travelled to London to obtain support from headquarters, as recorded in the minutes of the Delegate Meeting of Sheffield LRC on 20 April 1909, and a resolution to make a fresh appeal to the Patternmakers "to accept responsibility for Councillor Pointer's nomination and to make a loan ... from their fund". This was carried unanimously.



Memorandum from the United Patternmakers' Association recording their decision to give financial support to Pointer, April 1909
(Sheffield Archives:LD1629 page 231)

With just nine days to go before polling and at an adjourned meeting, held at 8.30 p.m., a telegram was received from the Patternmakers pledging financial support. The telegram read "Executive have decided to finance Pointer. Go in and win." Arrangements were hastily made that night to organise the campaign and hold open air meetings.

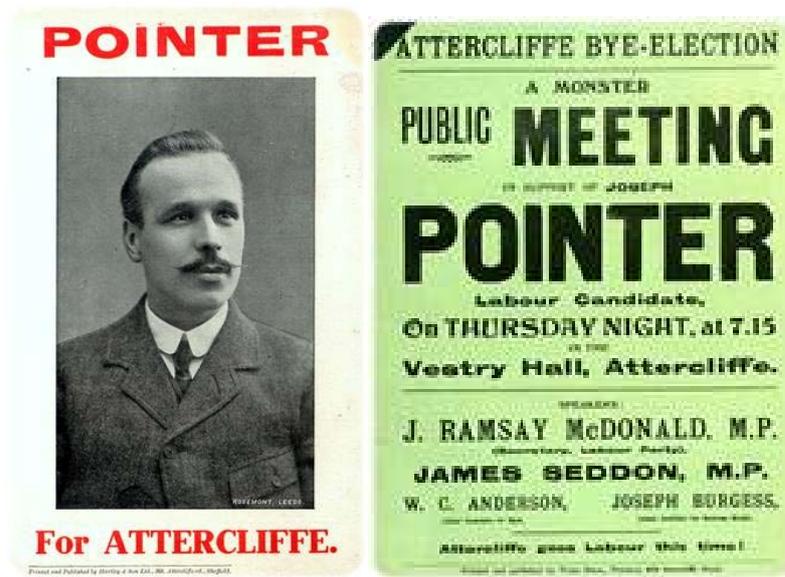
The Labour Election Campaign

The Attercliffe Elector
*(Sheffield Local Studies
Library: MP 105 L)*

The Attercliffe Elector.



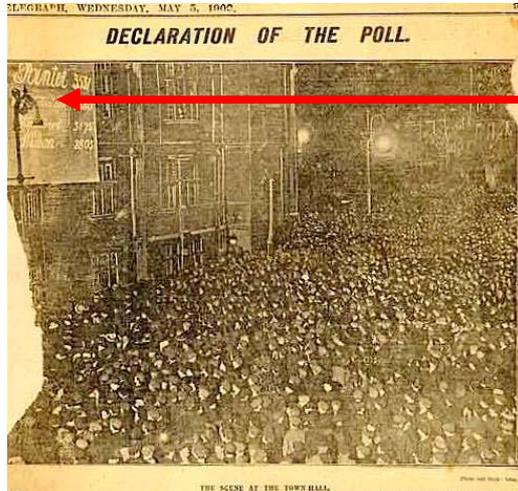
Copy of the news sheet "The Attercliffe Elector" giving election news, times of meetings, etc. As it was a by-election, all the well known Labour figures of the day were able to turn up in force to support Pointer, for example, Ramsey Macdonald, Kier Hardie, Arthur Henderson and Willie Anderson.



Joseph Pointer's election circular and handbill announcing an election meeting to be addressed by Ramsey Macdonald (Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 105 L)

Victory for Pointer

Pointer won by a narrow majority of 151 (though only 12,800 voted). He went on to retain the seat in elections in 1910 and became a Labour Whip in the Commons. He visited Trinidad on a fact-finding mission on behalf of the Labour Representation Committee in the Autumn of 1912. However he died in 1914 aged only 39 years.



Picture of the crowd at the Town Hall when the poll was declared (note the result flashed on the screen) and the results announced in the next day's Sheffield Daily Telegraph. The Telegraph was furious with Muir Wilson 'the wrecker' who had split the Tory vote.

List of documents, books, photographs and other items available at Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information

Newspaper reports, etc.

Relevant articles and features may appear in local newspapers. The main titles available at Sheffield Local Studies Library covering 1909 include: *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, *Sheffield Independent*, the *Star* and the *Sheffield Guardian*.

Archives of some national newspapers are available on the internet, notably *The Times* (<http://archive.timesonline.co.uk>) and *The Guardian* (<http://archive.guardian.co.uk>)

Photographs

Over 35,000 images from the Sheffield Local Studies Library photographic collection are available to search online at www.picturesheffield.com.

Political Parties

Attercliffe by-election: handbills, fliers and cuttings, 1909
(*Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 105 L*)

Darnall Ward Committee of Sheffield Labour Representation Committee, 1906 - 1909 (includes printed rules at front)
(*Sheffield Archives: MD 3354 (on microfilm A164)*)

Attercliffe branch of Independent Labour Party: Executive Committee minutes, 1903 - 1923
(*Sheffield Archives: MD 3355 (on microfilm A164)*)

Attercliffe Independent Labour Party subscription books, 1903 - 1906 and 1916 - 1922
(*Sheffield Archives: MD 3356/1-2 (on microfilm A164)*)

Attercliffe Independent Labour Party Building Committee minutes 1903 - 1905 and secretary's cash book, 1903 - 1904
(*Sheffield Archives: MD 3357/1-2 (on microfilm A164)*)

Schedule of open air meetings in Darnall Ward, planned for 1907 and names of speakers
(*Sheffield Archives: MD 3359 (on microfilm A164)*)

Handbills of Labour demonstration at the Corn Exchange, (speaker: Pete Curran), 4 Oct 1907
(*Sheffield Archives: MD 3360 (on microfilm A164)*)

Election handbills and cuttings relating to Pointer's campaigns: Darnall Ward, 1906 – 1907; Brightside Ward, 1908; Attercliffe division, 1910; cuttings relating to the declaration of poll, Attercliffe by-election, 1909
(*Sheffield Archives: MD 6134 (on microfilm A155-162)*)

Sheffield Trades and Labour Council Executive Committee minutes, 1903 – 1941
Sheffield Trades and Labour Council and Labour Representation Committee Delegates meeting minutes, 1904 – 1920
(*Sheffield Archives: LD 1625-1654*)

Papers relating to Pointer's visit to Trinidad and the West Indies as a representative of the Parliamentary Labour Party, on a fact finding tour, Oct 1912
(*Sheffield Archives: MD 6135*)

Sheffield Guardian supplement in memory of Pointer, died 14 Nov 1914
(*Sheffield Archives: MD 6136*)

Daily Independent obituary for Pointer, 20 Nov 1914
(*Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 2011 M*)

Photographs of Pointer, including signing the NWSPU petition for female suffrage, 1909
(*Sheffield Archives: MD 6137*)

Attercliffe Parliamentary election flier (Pointer), 1910
(*Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 2111 M*)

Letters regarding the candidature of Pointer, 1911
(*Sheffield Archives: MD 2190*)

Account of Pointer's political work in Sheffield, *The Making of Sheffield 1865 - 1914*, J H Stainton, 1924 (page 54)
(*Sheffield Local Studies Library: 942.74S*)

Sheffield Branch Independent Labour Party minutes, 1910 - 1923
(*Sheffield Archives: MD 3467-3470*)

Dictionary of labour biography: Sheffield connections
(*Sheffield Local Studies Library: 923.31 SQ*)

Sheffield Archives and Local Studies services collect and preserve original records and printed material relating to Sheffield and the surrounding area.

The information dates from the 12th century to the present and relates to Sheffield, South Yorkshire and north Derbyshire.

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