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Full transcript

TO THE
FREE AND INDEPENDENT
ELECTORS
OF
HORSHAM

Gentlemen,

The time will shortly arrive when you will be called upon to exercise your free discretion in the choice of a fit Person to represent your Public and Private Interests in a REFORMED PARLIAMENT, and I trust that I shall not be deemed presumptuous in aspiring to the high honor of having those important Interests confided to my charge.

I have fortunately claims on your confidence beyond the mere profession of future Service. I have laboured in the Public Cause to the best of my ability; I have sat in parliament ever since the Ministerial Measure of Reform has been in agitation; never during the longest debates to which it gave rise have I in any instance quitted my Post from fatigue, or any other cause; and if I look with honest Exultation to the success of a measure to which I gave my humble, but hearty, support, it is because I am impressed with the full Conviction that the valued Institutions of our Country are strengthened by it; and that new Vigor is imparted to that form of Government which has been the boast of Englishmen, and the Admiration of the World.

You are told that your Borough is again free! I ask, who has struggled with unabated ardour to render it so? I ask, who are more to be confided in as the protectors of your Rights, than those who were not to be induced by sordid motives to abandon them? ---It is not my intention to deal in professions; to cajole --- to flatter --- to deceive.--- I make no professions, *but I will do my duty to those who confide in me*; a closer connection with you will impose new duties on me which I will discharge with zeal and fidelity. In *my public trust* I will follow the same course I have hitherto pursued, and support, as I have always done, every measure that I believe in my conscience to be calculated to increase the Sum of Public happiness.

I have the Honor to be,

GENTLEMEN,

Your obedient humble Servant

EDWARD BLOUNT

Bryanstone Square,
29th June, 1832

Further Research

Address by Edward Blount June 1832

Mr Edward Blount was the Duke of Norfolk's private auditor and he had stood for Steyning MP in 1830 and 1831. Following the 1832 Reform Act there was no seat at Steyning so he had to find somewhere else - Horsham. Although living in London he made the Kings Head his campaign headquarters and had Mr Dewdney Stedman as his agent. Stedman also worked for the Duke. Blount was supported by the Whigs in Horsham with the exception of the Hurst family although Robert Hurst (the opposition and an independent candidate) could also be considered a Whig in his political views.

Unfortunately the grip that the Duke had on Horsham was still considerable and his agents managed to prevent over fifty of Mr Hurst's supporters getting the vote. His committee intimidated small tradesmen and others not to vote for Hurst by threatening eviction or loss of jobs. Among those on this committee were W. Watkins, W Thomas, J Commerall, J Platt, J Shelley, B Fox, C Hunt, T Sanctuary.

Nomination day was the 10th December. There were bands and processions through the town with the "white boys"; men to act as stewards for both parties to look after voters and generally keep order. Outside the town hall both men were proposed and seconded and then each spoke to the crowd. A show of hands was then called for by the bailiffs and was declared in favour of Mr Hurst. A poll was demanded by Mr Blount and was arranged to take place on the next two days from 9am to 4pm.

At the poll the voter had to come forward, his name found in the register and then he was asked who he voted for and it was written beside his name. The number of votes was posted up every hour and by early afternoon Mr Hurst was leading by 114 votes to 74. When Mr Blount saw he could not win he gave up the contest. Soon afterwards not knowing this his band was still parading around the town until someone told them all was lost.

This was the first election following the 1832 Reform Act. Prior to 1832 **two** candidates were sent to parliament from Horsham and were in the hands of the two big landowners in Horsham, Lady Irwin and the Duke of Norfolk. Other wealthy people owned land but not enough to make a difference. In 1807 Lady Irwin died and her nephew sold all her land to the Duke so he had a monopoly in Horsham. He either sent candidates to Parliament who would vote how he wanted or he sold the right to who ever was willing to pay for the privilege. In the 1830's this was about £6,000. Horsham because of this was considered a rotten borough. In the last election before 1832 neither candidates even came to Horsham and were elected with no festivities for the people. The band went round the Town playing the dead march with black armband on as everyone was so disgusted

On the 1st August 1832 the Reform Act was passed. The vote was now extended to any man who held a house of the annual value of £10 and had lived in the borough for at least a year, paid the poor rate and not received parish relief. This increased the number of voters in Horsham from less

than 100 to around 250. Also Horsham could now only send **one** representative to Parliament and that representative had to have an income of £300.00 a year. A party was held in Horsham to celebrate the passing of the Act and 3,300 people sat down to a meal and fireworks in the cricket field near North Parade and the richer folk had a dinner in the evening.

Resources:

Albery W 1927 *A Parliamentary History of Horsham 1295-1885* Longmans, United Kingdom

Albery W.1947 *A Millennium of Facts in the History of Horsham and Sussex 947-1947*

Knight, J. 2006 *Horsham's History Volumes 1,2,3* Horsham Museum Society

Neale, K 1975 *Victorian Horsham The Diary of Henry Michell 1809-1874*