



The Struggle for Democracy: Parliamentary Reform, from the Rotten Boroughs to Today

Roger Mason

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The town of Old Sarum, which contains not three houses, sends two members; and the town of Manchester, which contains upwards of sixty thousand souls, is not admitted to send any. Is there any principle in these things?' (Tom Paine, Rights of Man, 1791). Britain's voting arrangements prior to the 1832 Reform Act are almost unbelievable to us now. Only 12 per cent of men (and no women) had the vote, a single person controlled a rotten borough that returned two Members of Parliament (one of whom was the Prime Minister), and voting was in public, with landlords evicting tenants who voted against their wishes. In The Struggle for Democracy, Roger Mason tells the story of how we got from then to now. All major reforms are covered, such as Catholic Emancipation, further Reform Acts, the end of the House of Lords veto, and of course votes for women. This fascinating history offers a complete insight into the way we have voted from the beginnings of parliament through to the future of democracy.



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