Joseph Chamberlain and the Birmingham Town Council, 1865–1880

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Of all the mayoralties within modern British municipal history, none is more celebrated than that of Joseph Chamberlain at Birmingham from 1873 until 1876, often considered to have set a new model for the role and duties of local government. Associated with the changes being made to the physical environment of the town, there were profound changes in the make-up of Birmingham’s town council and the balance there between Chamberlain’s allies and sympathizers and his opponents. Using methods taken from social network analysis, the approach here investigates the roll-call records of the Birmingham town council. This not only enables the discovery of networks of voting, but also shows the wider identity on council of those individuals comprising these networks and how they were changing over the period.

KEYWORDS Joseph Chamberlain, Birmingham, municipal government, Liberal party, voting networks, network analysis

Over the period 1865–80, a group of modernizing reformers gained control of the town council of Victorian Birmingham, and, associated with this takeover, a transformation of the town itself began. At the centre of this reforming coterie was the imposing and charismatic figure of Joseph Chamberlain (1836–1914). With Birmingham as his power base, Chamberlain became a hugely influential figure at the heights of national political life in Britain, staying so for over thirty years. Within Birmingham itself, Chamberlain’s circle not only claimed responsibility for fundamental changes to the physical structure of the town, but also claimed to have provided an early template for what later became expected of all municipal government. Chamberlain did not, and could not, have wrought

1 Chamberlain’s life has attracted numerous biographers: Alexander Mackintosh, Joseph Chamberlain; an Honest Biography (1914); James L. Garvin and Julian Amery, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, 6 vols (1932–69); Peter Fraser, Joseph Chamberlain: Radicalism and Empire,1868–1914, (1966); J. Enoch Powell, Joseph Chamberlain (1977); Denis Judd, Radical Joe: A Life of Joseph Chamberlain (1977); Richard Jay, Joseph Chamberlain: A Political Study (Oxford, 1981); Peter T. Marsh, Joseph Chamberlain: Entrepreneur in Politics (1994); Travis L. Crosby, Joseph Chamberlain: A Most Radical Imperialist (2011).
such an impact in Birmingham without wide support in the town and on Birmingham’s town council.

The general social make-up of the members of Birmingham’s town council over this period has previously been the subject of research, and there exist biographies of some of Chamberlain’s most prominent Birmingham associates. But the extent of Chamberlain’s council allies and the identity of most of those who backed him there have remained unexplored. Expanding research into the full scope of Chamberlain’s allies and wider support base on council has motivated the analysis that follows.

The local Birmingham Liberal Association was founded in 1865 (not long after the 1859 dating of the beginning of the Liberals as a party) and the Liberal Party organization is often cited as the decisive element driving Chamberlain’s rise to power within Birmingham’s political scene. It may, however, be misleading to ascribe arguments based upon modern models of disciplined political organizations to the nascent local political parties of the mid Victorian period. Vincent emphasizes that, in the 1860s and 1870s, the Liberal Party was a ‘largely unorganized community of sentiment called a party’, and Cook warns that the Liberals were ‘… unrecognizable from the unified, disciplined parties of the twentieth century. It was less a party in the modern sense than a loose alliance of groups of many shades of political opinion … From the beginning the Liberal Party was an uneasy coalition’.

As elsewhere within provincial Victorian Britain, Birmingham had long accommodated those seeking social and political reform: Birmingham’s ‘Radicals’ had long-standing historical roots within the town. Leighton argues that, by the 1860s, differences of opinion and emphasis were becoming evident within Birmingham’s radicalism: these differences have never been reconciled and are still familiar in political discourse to this day. One major strand held that the liberty of the individual and the inevitable corruption, inefficiency, and abuse of power and misuse of authority by closed political bodies, required that government everywhere, whether central or local, be kept to the absolute minimum. In Birmingham, a group holding to this strand of thought (‘Old’ Radicals), calling themselves the ‘economy party’ and for a time marshalled by Alderman Joseph Allday, had held sway on the town council up to the late 1860s: their practical policies were dedicated to reducing municipal influence by minimizing the local rates burden imposed by local government. However, a soon-to-be-dominant alternative group of

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2 E Peter Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons: Ideal and Reality in Nineteenth-Century Urban Government* (Edward Arnold, 1973); Linda J. Jones, ‘Public Pursuit of Private Profit? Liberal Businessmen and Municipal Politics in Birmingham 1865–1900’, *Business Hist.*, 25 (1981), 240–59.

3 For example, John Bright, Jesse Collings, and George Dixon: see Bill Cash, *John Bright: Statesman, Orator, Agitator* (2012); Jesse Collings and John L. Green, *Life of the Right Hon. Jesse Collings* (1920); and James Dixon, *Out of Birmingham: George Dixon (1820–1898): Father of Free Education* (2013).

4 Finer warns that the modern historian looking back at Victorian society is akin to ‘Alice stepping into the world behind the looking-glass’ (Samuel E. Finer, *The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick* (1952), 216); and Vincent sees the Victorian political scene of the 1860s as ‘a raft of superficiality and cant floating on an ocean of brutality and corruption’ (John Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party, 1857–68* (Pelican, 1972), 13).

5 Vincent, *Liberal Party*, 33.

6 Chris Cook, *A Short History of the Liberal Party: The Road Back to Power* (Basingstoke, 2011), 2.

7 Denys Leighton, ‘Municipal Progress, Democracy and Radical Identity in Birmingham, 1838–1886’, *Midland Hist.*, XXV (2000), 115–42.

8 See James Alexander, ‘The Major Ideologies of Liberalism, Socialism and Conservatism’, *Political Studies*, 63 (2015), 983–5.

9 Leighton, ‘Municipal Progress’, 118.
reformers held to a very different set of ideas. Far from minimizing local government’s role in the affairs of its citizens, this alternative strand of ideas held that it was necessary and even morally required that municipal government take a leading role in the social and physical transformation of local urban society. Now termed ‘the civic gospel’ and heavily preached, at least in its Birmingham-based manifestation, on revivalist platforms and by Nonconformist Christian-social teachings delivered from the pulpits of Birmingham’s Dissenting chapels, this doctrine put forward an interventionist and expansionist creed aimed at nothing less than the moral uplifting of urban society.\textsuperscript{10} Even the most disadvantaged and wretched would be raised and succoured through public environmental and health regulation, municipal improvement, and the expansion of local civic and public amenities and opportunities. Joseph Chamberlain’s feet were firmly in this camp, labelled ‘New’ Radicalism.\textsuperscript{11}

When the Birmingham Liberal Association was founded in 1865, both these strands of ideas remained extant in Birmingham and both ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Radicals, fundamentally opposed, became part of the new Association. As both friends and opponents of what would be Chamberlain’s policy plans were Liberal Party adherents at this time, the Liberal Party label and Liberal Association membership prove, as will be demonstrated below, unreliable and even misleading in identifying Chamberlain’s friends and foes on the town council. Indeed, many of Chamberlain’s bitterest foes were fellow Liberals, while some Conservatives can be found among his close supporters.

Before attaining his central place in the political history of Victorian and Edwardian Birmingham, Joseph Chamberlain had been a highly successful brass-screw-making industrialist. He was first returned for the Birmingham town council in November 1869, and soon after, in November 1873, he became mayor, retaining the mayoralty for 1874/5 and 1875/6. In 1876, he resigned as mayor to become one of Birmingham’s members of parliament, until 1914. During his mayoralty, Chamberlain headed a process which municipalized Birmingham’s local water and gas companies, reconstructed the roads and sewers, plotted the destruction of the town’s central slum district and replacement by a new grand commercial redevelopment (the Birmingham Improvement Scheme), and accomplished a myriad of municipal improvements, both big and small. Bunce provides a contemporary paean for the transformation achieved for Birmingham:

All that was then wanting is now provided: public buildings, parks … baths, libraries, educational institutions, common schools; the streets are thoroughly drained, perfectly kept, and well lighted … and the pebble pavements … are replaced with stone or asphalte or brick; the wretched midden system has well nigh disappeared, and intelligent and cleanly methods of dealing with excreta have been substituted for it; the sewage no longer pollutes the streams but is employed to fertilize the land; courts and houses are carefully inspected, with the consequent removal of causes of diseases; the gas, cheapened to the lowest point, is in the hands of the Corporation; and the water supply … is constant and unrestricted, alike to the poorest as to the wealthiest dwellings in the town.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} Asa Briggs, \textit{History of Birmingham}, 2 (Oxford, 1952); Derek Fraser, \textit{Power and Authority in the Victorian City} (1979), 101–4; Tristram Hunt, \textit{Building Jerusalem: The Rise and Fall of the Victorian City} (2005), 513–59; Andy Green, ‘The Anarchy of Empire: Reimagining Birmingham’s Civic Gospel’, \textit{Midl. Hist.}, XXXVI (2011), 163–79.

\textsuperscript{11} Leighton, ‘Municipal Progress’, 116.

\textsuperscript{12} John T. Bunce, \textit{History of the Corporation of Birmingham}, (Birmingham, 1885), xxvii. Bunce, editor of the Liberal-supporting Birmingham Daily Post, was a friend and strong partisan supporter of Chamberlain.
At this local urban micro-political level, and with Birmingham firmly in mind, Chamberlain can be seen at this time as a modernizing politician: eager for change, improvement, and reform. This contrasts with Chamberlain’s later parliamentary political stances, as MP and cabinet minister, on matters such as Irish Home Rule and the Boer War, and with the ‘histrionic jingo imperialism’ that is attributed to many of his associates. In 1886, Chamberlain was prominent as one of the instigators who decisively split the national Liberal Party into two diverging parts over William Gladstone’s policies backing Home Rule. Separating from the ‘Gladstonian’ Liberals, Chamberlain helped form the new breakaway Liberal Unionist Party which, at times, commanded a formidable parliamentary bloc of around seventy seats. Eventually, from 1895, the Liberal Unionists formally joined forces with the Conservatives, though Chamberlain continued to provide politically controversial proposals that shook the merged Conservative-Unionist party, including over imperial trade policy. Serious ill health intervened in 1906, when he was seventy, and Chamberlain died in 1914.

Even as his national profile rose, Chamberlain’s connections with Birmingham stayed rock solid. He remained on the town council as alderman until 1880 and as a Birmingham MP until his death. In general elections between 1886 and 1914, Chamberlain’s Liberal Unionists were never returned for fewer than five of Birmingham’s seven parliamentary constituencies, while traditional, Gladstonian Liberals won none. On the town council, Joseph’s brother Richard quickly followed Chamberlain as councillor, alderman, and mayor, and the presence of various in-laws, relatives, and personal friends among the intermarried Chamberlain, Kenrick, and Martineau families persisted there for decades. Joseph Chamberlain’s close, Birmingham-based colleagues Jesse Collings, William Kenrick, and Joseph Powell Williams all followed him into parliament, as did his brother Richard Chamberlain and both of Joseph’s sons: Austin Chamberlain (1863–1937) rose to be chancellor of the exchequer and Neville Chamberlain (1869–1940) was prime minister from 1937 to 1940.

Moore maintains that, for the period of the 1870s, Liberalism at the local political level was an ‘astonishingly diverse’ political force, so much so that no English town can claim to be ‘typical’. The presence and rise of a political force as compelling and powerful as Joseph Chamberlain in Birmingham certainly marks the town out as notable and even special, but the wider generalities of Birmingham’s local political history and urban development at this time can be seen elsewhere. Leeds, for example, also had an influential Old Radical ‘economy’ party on its town council which was eclipsed in the 1870s by New Radical Liberals wedded to a version of the municipal gospel; and Leeds also witnessed gas municipalization, new sewage and water provision, and an extensive range of civic improvements, funded and encouraged through its town council.

In any event, any success in transforming Birmingham attained within the era of Chamberlain’s council tenure was not, and could not, of course, have been achieved by

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13 Jay, Chamberlain, 328.
14 Ian Cawood, The Liberal Unionist Party: A History (2012).
15 James R. Moore, The Transformation of Urban Liberalism: Party Politics and Urban Governance in Late Nineteenth Century England (Aldershot, 2006), 11). This makes moot the extent to which Birmingham’s experience in the 1870s can be said to display ‘exceptionalism’, a view of Birmingham associated with Ward: Roger Ward, City-State and Nation: Birmingham’s Political History, 1830–1940 (2005).
16 Hunt, Building Jerusalem, 313–80.
17 Fraser, Power and Authority, 51–77.
him alone. What was required on the town council was a sizeable, loyal, and like-minded group of members to support commonly held ideas and which could steer required policies into effect: that support would have to be much wider than Chamberlain’s relatives and family friends on council alone could provide. The central research focus of this paper is the analysis of the membership and growing importance of Chamberlain’s group of reliable allies on the Birmingham town council over the period 1865–80.

**Birmingham town council**

The charter of incorporation that established the authority of the corporation, municipal borough, and town council of Birmingham dates back to 1838. The town’s local electoral wards were required to fill forty-eight seats on the Birmingham town council, elected by the eligible burgesses of the borough. Originally, ten wards returned one councillor each and three others returned two each, but in 1873 an overdue rearrangement created sixteen wards, each returning a single councillor annually. Each councillor was to serve for three years, one-third retiring in November, possibly to stand again. To complete the council, sixteen aldermen, who each served a six-year term, were to be chosen from among the members, and from the council total of sixty-four members, a mayor would also be selected annually.

Electoral reform of the franchise increased the total of eligible voters for Birmingham’s annual municipal elections from around 9500 in 1861, to about 48,000 in 1869, and then, in 1880, to about 74,600 (including around 10,000 women not enfranchised for parliamentary elections). The secret ballot, only introduced in 1872, also changed the style typical of English elections and helped increase the small number of contested ward elections.

As explained, for the period from around 1850 up to the late 1860s, Birmingham’s municipal town council polity was controlled by the dominant, if informal, ‘Old’ Radical grouping of town council members calling themselves the economy party or ‘economists’; the economy party imaginatively labelled their opponents on the council the ‘extravagant party’. Bunce, staunch Chamberlain supporter and historian of the Birmingham corporation, describes this time as one of torpidity and inaction by the town council and displays a degree of partisanship in characterizing this economy party group as one whose ‘ideas of local government were embodied in the one desire to keep down the rates’. No doubt, a straightforward self-interested rates-minimizing platform would have been attractive to some Birmingham rate-paying burgesses and councillors, but underlying Radical libertarian desires to keep government small, and deep suspicion of authority and authoritarian power were by no means foreign to Liberal thought.

Such sentiments may be found reflected in the life histories of a number of economy party supporters, for example, that of James Guest and Joseph Allday.

Although there is no reliable or even informal list of the individual adherents to the economy party, that this group was led and motivated, up to 1860, by the extraordinary figure of Joseph Allday (1798–1861) and backed by Allday’s ragbag collection of ward-based Ratepayer Protection Associations, is undisputed.

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18 Also sometimes known as the ‘Woodmen’ after the Woodman Inn on Easy Row (demolished in 1964) used for meetings by this group.
19 Bunce, *History of Birmingham*, xxxii.
20 Vincent, *Liberal Party*, 29.
21 Roger Ward, ‘Joseph Allday: Scapegoat for Municipal Backwardness’, *Birmingham Historian*, 32 (2008).
and notoriety in Birmingham in the 1830s as proprietor of The Argus, a political (and muckraking) journal described as ‘scurrilous’, ‘ultra-Tory’ (sic) and a ‘receptacle of rancour, spite and calumny’. Libel and assault charges were brought against Allday, and he served a prison term following which he ultimately withdrew from journalism. Nevertheless, subsequently, while a Poor Law Guardian, he investigated and publicized abuse and corruption scandals within the local penal system, and Allday was returned as town councillor in 1849, becoming an alderman and an influential chairman of the important Finance Committee. Allday died in 1861, but, as will be shown, members of his circle of supporters continued to remain active and important within Birmingham’s town council.

Outside parliamentary contests, local organizations of the two traditional national political parties of the day were rare until the late 1860s, and until that time the labels ‘Liberal’ and ‘Conservative’ remain mostly absent in contemporary descriptions of municipal affairs. Only at Birmingham’s municipal elections of the early 1870s do such labels begin to be applied. To illustrate, in 1870 the Birmingham Daily Post began to attribute party labels at municipal election time, and this led to questions of the ‘propriety’ of this innovation. The catalyst for this change was the 1867 Electoral Reform Act and the expansion of the electoral franchise.

Liberals and the Liberal Caucus in Birmingham

The Birmingham Liberal Association was founded in February 1865, at a seventy-strong meeting in Birmingham’s Town Hall; before this, as the meeting was told, there had been no formal organization of the Liberal Party in Birmingham. The aims of the association, as moved at that inaugural session, would be threefold: (a) to maintain Liberal MPs in representing the Birmingham borough; (b) to assist in the return of Liberal MPs for the surrounding Warwickshire county; and (c) to promote Liberalism in government. All these original aims were directed at parliamentary objectives; municipal aspects were ignored. Before the 1867 Reform Act, Birmingham was a single parliamentary constituency which returned two MPs, each eligible voter having two votes. Following the Act, Birmingham (alongside Manchester, Leeds, and Liverpool) had to return three MPs, but voters were still restricted to only two votes each. Unless the Liberals properly organized themselves for the 1868 general election, this might lead to a pile-up of ‘wasted’ votes for two relatively popular Liberal candidates, potentially allowing a Conservative to creep in and steal the newly awarded third seat. Reputedly, this was the reason this odd restriction (known as the minority clause) was imposed: Birmingham had only ever once previously elected a Tory MP. The Liberal faction in Birmingham reacted by organizing the new Birmingham Liberal Association into what is considered Britain’s first local-based political machine, often called the Birmingham Liberal Caucus.

William Harris (briefly a town councillor) became secretary of the association, and along with his successor, Francis Schnadhorst (even more briefly also a councillor),

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22 Thomas T. Harman and Walter Showell, Showell’s Dictionary of Birmingham (Birmingham, 1885).
23 Birmingham Daily Post (hereafter BDP), 14 Oct. 1861, 19 Oct. 1861.
24 Moisei Ostrogorski, Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties, 2 vols (1902), I, 161–2.
25 BDP, 2 Nov. 1870.
26 Ibid., 18 Feb. 1865.
instituted the changes through which this local political machine was to evolve through into the 1870s. The Birmingham Liberal Association acquired a complicated pyramidal structure, overseen by a small management committee with powers which, designedly or not, Chamberlain and his allies were more than capable of exploiting.²⁷ Crucially, the pyramid’s base required individual municipal wards each to have their own ward-level Liberal Association. In pursuit of its first aim, the Association would ensure the election of three Liberals within the new three-member-two-vote Birmingham multi-member constituency by telling the members and supporters of each ward Liberal association for which combination of two of the three Liberal candidates to vote. Liberal support would be more evenly spread over the three Liberal candidates, minimizing the chances that other parties could steal a seat: the ‘vote as you are told’ system. Three Liberals were duly elected at the 1868 General Election.

Once the machine was operating after 1868, there then existed a formal Liberal Party presence in every ward, available to organize for the annual municipal elections and to motivate the continuous year-on-year interest and activity of grass-roots, street-level Liberal support in Birmingham. The gradual emergence of the familiar Liberal versus Conservative labels, previously largely absent within the wards and on the town council, followed.

**Chamberlain’s friends and Chamberlain’s foes**

Joseph Chamberlain was on Birmingham’s town council for a decade, being first returned for St Paul’s ward in November 1869 and then, after his three-term spell as mayor from November 1873, remained on council as alderman until May 1880. Despite John Bright’s striking declaration that ‘… as the sea is salt everywhere, so Birmingham is Liberal wherever you test it’,²⁸ Liberals did not totally monopolize the local polity and, given the presence of Old Radicals in the party and on council, Chamberlain could not even count upon those calling themselves Liberals to support his programme. As explained, for Birmingham at this time, party label, even when displayed, is an unreliable guide to Chamberlain’s potential allies on the town council.

Background biographical detail can provide guidance to some of Chamberlain’s supporters on council. Notably, there were blood relatives and in-laws of the Chamberlain²⁹, Kenrick³⁰ and Martineau³¹ families on council, part of an intimate extended clan of mutual support, bound by social ties and mutual beliefs. Among those who sat at one time or another on council alongside Joseph Chamberlain were: Joseph’s brothers Arthur Chamberlain and Richard Chamberlain; Joseph’s brothers-in-law William Kenrick and

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²⁷ Ostrogorski, *Democracy and Organization*, I, 166–7; Trygve R. Tholfsen, ‘IV. The Origins of the Birmingham Caucus’, *Hist. Jnl.*, 2 (1959), 161–84.
²⁸ BDP, 2 Nov. 1875.
²⁹ Chamberlain’s family followed Joseph Chamberlain to Birmingham from their native London following their profitable investment in the screw-making business, and became entrepreneurial investors in numerous industrial projects there.
³⁰ The Kenrick family enterprise and fortune centred on a metal hardware-manufacturing firm in West Bromwich founded by Archibald Kenrick in the eighteenth century. In 2015, the firm is still manufacturing, specializing in locks and security devices (R. A. Church, *Kenricks in Hardware: A Family Business 1791–1966* (Newton Abbot, 1969)).
³¹ The Martineau family were active in the legal and medical professions as well as in industry, and has provided five mayors for Birmingham. Since 1851, Thomas Martineau’s Birmingham-based legal partnership (with Arthur Ryland, Thomas’s mother’s first cousin) has grown to become, today, the firm of SGH Martineau, an influential global international law firm.
Thomas Martineau; and Robert Francis Martineau, brother to Thomas Martineau. The Kenricks and the Chamberlains were intermarried to an extraordinary degree: Joseph Chamberlain’s first two wives, Florence Kenrick and Harriet Kenrick, both of whom died tragically young, were themselves first cousins; Joseph’s brother Arthur married Louisa Kenrick, who was Florence’s twin sister; and William Kenrick, Harriet’s brother, married Mary Chamberlain, Joseph’s sister. Thomas Martineau married Emily Kenrick, elder sister of the twins Florence and Louisa. Beyond familial connections, a wealth of commonalities bound this group, including shared commercial interests in industry and banking, shared Unitarian beliefs and other social links. All were Liberals and, when required, followed Chamberlain to join the Liberal Unionists after the break with the Gladstonian Liberals.

On the other side, Chamberlain faced Birmingham town council members who can be seen, shown by biographical and contemporary records, as Chamberlain’s political opponents. John Sadler and William Brinsley shared the leadership of the Old Radical economy party in opposition to Chamberlain’s policies, and this was noted by the local press: ‘when Mr. Allday died the leaders of [Allday’s] party … became Mssrs. Sadler and Brinsley,’ and, on Sadler’s retirement, ‘the ability with which he formerly conducted the affairs of the party which acted under his guidance …’ was recorded. John Sadler was to become mayor as late as 1871, and, strikingly, his mayoral election victory over Arthur Ryland was the sole contested mayoral election on council between 1865 and 1880. The antagonism between Sadler and Chamberlain and his supporters is shown by a bitter public correspondence which arose when Chamberlain became candidate for mayor in October 1873. Sadler accused Chamberlain of ‘stupidity’, ‘deception’, and ‘political inaccuracy and recklessness of speech’. Chamberlain’s supporters responded that Sadler used ‘scurrilous abuse’ and ‘duplicity’ and had been ‘long in the habit of trusting to his imagination for his facts’.

William Brinsley, while humbly describing himself on the census as a ‘grocer’, was a large-scale wholesale trader, general investor, and rentier, and admitted annual trading returns of £12,000–£14,000; he was successful enough to bequeath £20,000 to Birmingham charities. He was councillor, alderman, and on the Watch Committee for lengthy periods from 1855: ‘Mr. Brinsley attached himself to a party which made rigid economy its first consideration [which] brought him into sharp conflict with the progressive band of reformers whom Mr. Chamberlain rallied to his side’. From reports

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52 Alice Kenrick (1845–1940), another sister of Emily, married solicitor Charles Gabriel Beale (1843–1912), thrice Lord Mayor of Birmingham, 1897–1900.
53 As early as 1855, Joseph Chamberlain, William Kenrick, and Thomas Martineau are recorded together as members of the Edgbaston Debating Society (Louis Creswicke, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain (1904), 33). The Chamberlains, Kenricks, Martineaus, Arthur Ryland, and Jesse Collings were all members of the Nonconformist Unitarian sect at the Church of the Messiah on Broad Street. The inaugural meeting of the Birmingham Educational League in 1869 included Joseph Chamberlain, Jesse Collings, William Kenrick (and his father Timothy Kenrick), and Arthur Ryland. Among the first directors of the Lloyds Banking Company Ltd were Joseph Chamberlain, Arthur Ryland, Timothy Kenrick, and J. A. Kenrick: Thomas Martineau was the bank’s solicitor.
54 Except Arthur Chamberlain who, pointedly, broke with his brother over free trade policy.
55 BDP, 10 Oct. 1872.
56 Ibid., 14 Aug. 1906.
57 Ibid., 10 Nov. 1877.
58 Ibid., 1 Oct. 1873.
59 Ibid., 2 Oct. 1873.
60 Ibid., 24 Oct. 1879.
61 London Times, 15 Aug. 1906.
of members and attenders of Allday’s Ratepayer Protection Society meetings, and from information on those consistently supporting Allday on council in earlier years, the identities of some other of the economy group may be inferred and some were still members of council after November 1865, when the period of this study begins. These members include Thomas Aston, John W. Cutler, John Gameson, and George Goodrick.

Birmingham’s town council in every year, however, numbered sixty-four members, and a total of over 150 different individuals sat on council over the period considered. Biographical detail and contemporary comment would be able to reliably identify only a small number of Chamberlain’s supporters and could uncover only even fewer of his better-documented opponents.

As outlined above, Liberal and Conservative party membership or adherence cannot be relied upon to identify loyalties among the Birmingham councillors of the time. Such labels were by no means invariably carried or declared by council members and, even when determined,42 cannot be relied upon to determine loyalties between Chamberlain’s friends and foes on council. This is straightforward to demonstrate. John Sadler himself remained a member of the Birmingham Liberal Association until his death. Thomas Aston, one of Allday’s economists, was also a Liberal Association member, even though in 1873 his electoral support was noted as coming from Conservatives (and ‘publicans and Catholics’) and his election was contested by a fellow Liberal.43 William Rolason, also a member of the Liberal Association, but ‘vigorously supported by the Tories’, stood unsuccessfully against a fellow Liberal in 1874.44 A number of other members of the Birmingham Liberal Association, including John Carter, Edward C. Osborne, Thomas Prime, and Michael Maher (Jnr), it will be shown below, voted consistently in opposition to the Chamberlain group’s positions on council.

The Conservative label similarly proves an unreliable indicator of allegiance. The tactical struggle over the policy to be pursued with regard to sewage treatment in 1871 was a pivotal moment as an early battle won in the takeover of the council by Chamberlain’s group. In the long-drawn-out sewage policy debates which stretched over the summer months of 1871,45 Chamberlain found able allies in two long-serving council members, Thomas Avery and Henry Hawkes, who, with Chamberlain, spearheaded the decisive debates that wrested control of sewage policy away from council’s economy-party-dominated Public Works Committee. But Thomas Avery was a steadfast Conservative, albeit never an economist, who ‘invariably supported … Liberal policy on council’ and believed ‘wealth can always take care of itself, but poverty cannot …’.46 Avery led the speeches of appreciation of Joseph Chamberlain’s achievements in Birmingham on the latter’s resignation from council.47 Henry Hawkes was a veteran radical of the turbulent Birmingham political scene of the 1830s and 1840s and had even been, for a spell, president of the Birmingham Liberal Association, but after thirty years on the council (including as mayor), Hawkes resigned to become town coroner in 1875 and eventually

42 Conservatism sometimes declared itself in oblique forms, including as the Birmingham Working Men’s Liberal-Conservative Association and as the Labour Representation League.
43 BDP, 3 Nov. 1873.
44 Ibid., 3 Nov. 1874.
45 Bunce, History of the Corporation, 126–39; Leslie Rosenthal, The River Pollution Dilemma in Victorian England (Farnham, 2014), 57–90.
46 BDP, 19 Feb. 1894.
47 Ibid., 26 May 1880.
stood, unsuccessfully, as Conservative candidate for parliament.\textsuperscript{48} There were, therefore, on Birmingham’s town council, those labelled Liberals opposed to Chamberlain’s policies and those labelled Conservatives supporting them.

With crucial biographical information on the vast majority of the members of the town council being scant and sometimes misleading, in order to identify Chamberlain’s most loyal supporters and his staunchest opponents, the core of this paper concentrates on an analysis of the voting records of members inside the Birmingham town council. Such an approach has the distinct advantage of using direct evidence of consistent backing among council members given to particular sets of proposals. Conclusions drawn can then be based on the actual behaviour of the council members, and in a place where this mattered — in the council chamber. Brief biographical information is also presented for all highlighted councillors in the Appendix.

**Method and data**

The minutes of the Birmingham town council assiduously record ‘For’ and ‘Against’ voting lists that allow the following exploration of voting networks. Town council sessions lasted from November to October for each year, and the newly collected data analysed here covers sixteen annual town council sessions, from 1865/6 to 1880/1, inclusive.\textsuperscript{49} All sixty-four councillors and aldermen could vote and about 150 different individual members of the council on the voting lists were recorded over the entire sixteen-year period.\textsuperscript{50} For each member, a database was constructed showing whether the member voted and, if so, which binary choice (‘For’ or ‘Against’) the member made on the motion (or on a choice of candidacy for a committee or mayoral vacancy). Over the entire period there were 272 roll-calls included; the largest number of roll-calls within a single annual session was thirty-six and the fewest was five.

The data-set as explored here uses the approach of social network analysis, viewing social networks as a series of ‘nodes’ (objects, people) interconnected by ‘vertices’ (links or ties or edges).\textsuperscript{51} For the Birmingham town council, individual council members are the nodes in the network and the links between nodes carry measures of the strength of the voting relationship between the members.\textsuperscript{52} This relationship between each pair of council members is measured by the ‘degree of voting agreement’ revealed by the mutual voting behaviour of the two members in the pair. If both Person A and Person B vote on a particular issue (Proposal X), and they vote the same way — either both ‘For’ or both ‘Against’, then they are in agreement: if both in the pair vote and vote in

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 28 Sept. 1891.

\textsuperscript{49} *Birmingham Town Council Minutes*, Birmingham City Archives, Birmingham Central Library, BCC.

\textsuperscript{50} All proposals/motions are treated with equal weight, no matter how seemingly trivial. The database is restricted to roll-calls with at least forty members of council present and where the minority vote numbered at least five. Only the final roll-call on any individual motion, after any amendment, is included in the database.

\textsuperscript{51} Derek Hansen, Ben Shneiderman, and Marc A. Smith, *Analyzing Social Media Networks with NodeXL: Insights from a Connected World* (Burlington MA, 2010).

\textsuperscript{52} The sizeable annual turnover of councillors and other reasons leave much missing data in the database, which precludes using forms of cluster analysis seen in other studies of parliamentary processes: L. Kaufman and P. Rousseauw, *Finding Groups in Data: An Introduction to Cluster Analysis* (Chichester, 1990); John Hoadley, ‘The Emergence of Political Parties in Congress, 1789–1803’, *American Political Science Review*, 74 (1980), 757–9; Royce Carrol and Keith Poole, ‘Roll Call Analysis in the Study of Legislatures’, in Shane Martin, Thomas Saalfeld, and Kaare Strom (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Legislative Studies* (Oxford, 2014), 163–24.
opposing lobbies, then they are in disagreement: if either Person A or Person B is absent, 
or not at that time on council, or does not vote, neither agreement nor disagreement is 
recorded and the data becomes ‘missing’. The ‘degree of voting agreement’, showing 
the strength of the link between Person A and Person B, is the straightforward metric: 
proportion (percentage) of occasions when both voted, that they voted in agreement. 
The visualization tools of social network analysis used here provide straightforward 
graphical representations, and figures showing the resultant networks of nodes and ver-
tices and the interlocked networks can then be searched for evidence of groupings with 
particularly high commonality of voting behaviour. This commonality will be taken to 
indicate ‘systematic’ voting, revealing any sub-groups and networks within the council. 

The degree of voting agreement for any pair of members may be calculated over any 
arbitrarily chosen time period required: possibly for single year sessions or, alternatively , 
for the data pooled over a number of annual sessions. If annual council sessions are 
taken separately, then some of the sixteen years have too few council voting roll-calls to 
produce convincing evidence, but, at the other extreme, pooling the data for the entire 
sixteen years into a single whole fails to show networks developing over time and may 
miss fine detail and short-lived allegiances. 

The results presented below are restricted to just four periods of time, each period 
pooling the data from four annual sessions of council business. This is a pooling of the 
data over the sixteen years which provides a reasonable series of pictures of the council’s 
progress, gives adequate numbers of roll-calls each time, and reduces the large amount 
of information to be assimilated. The four four-year periods are: 

(a) November 1865 to October 1869: the four years before Joseph Chamberlain 
first entered council (in November 1869) to show the situation on council 
pre-Chamberlain; 

(b) November 1869 to October 1873: the four-year period of the rise of 
Chamberlain on the town council, between his entry to the council up to 
his first session as mayor; 

(c) November 1873 to October 1877: covering Chamberlain’s mayoralty, begin-
ning in November 1873; and 

(d) November 1877 to October 1881: the period after Chamberlain’s mayoralty 
(including following his resignation in May 1880). 

With sixty-four council members, even a single council session year would produce 2016 
possible one-to-one pairings or links. For pairs of council members mutually on council, 
all links will, ignoring missing data or formal problems of division by zero, have some 
degree of agreement, which can range from zero per cent (where the pair always vote 
differently when both vote) to 100 per cent (where the pair always vote identically when 
both vote). So to be convincing that, rather than mere chance, some linkages and voting 
correspondences may be due to some more fundamental ‘agreement of view’, the degree 
of voting agreement must, crucially, be measured over a sufficiently number of voting 
ocurrences, and must be high enough, to exclude with confidence the likelihood of being 
due to mere common chance. To these ends, two criteria are utilized: 

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53 Other organizations of the data over time periods were (quite laboriously) examined, and no substantial and/or 
defensible revisions to the general conclusions below arise from such re-organizations. 
54 For a fully connected network of N nodes the number of links will be L=(1/2)N(N−1).
(i) the pair of council members in the link must have both voted on the same motions at least twenty-five times over the four-year period concerned; and
(ii) the link must display at least a 0.85 (85 per cent) degree of agreement.

Only one-to-one pairings (links) satisfying both criteria are retained. If it were that voting behaviour was purely independent and unconnected between the voters, observing a link satisfying both criteria would occur very rarely, expected about once in every 1500 links. In fact, there emerge large numbers of such occurrences in the data, many more, given the number of one-to-one pairs, than would be reasonable had the individuals been voting independently. The implication is, therefore, that when links survive the application of the two criteria, some coordination or commonality of interest exists between the two individuals in the linked pair.

The results are presented separately for each of the four four-year council session periods. Beyond applying the stated criteria to the council voting data, no other biographical information is used to produce these results.

November 1865 to October 1869: ‘Before Chamberlain’

The pooled data from the first four-year period, 1865/6 to 1868/9, contains only a bare scattering of voting links between members that pass the two critical criteria. On Figure 1, the links surviving indicate that, to emphasize, for example, Ryland voted on at least 85 per cent of at least 25 occasions identically to Phillips, and Phillips voted on at least 85 per cent of at least 25 occasions identically to Wiggin: but that one or other or both of the two criteria did not hold between Ryland and Wiggin. In truth, the configurations of Figure 1 barely deserve to be called ‘networks’, but, however, this bare-bones result usefully serves to underline the substantial changes that will be observed for later periods after Joseph Chamberlain joins the council.

However, even among the surviving ten named individuals and three groupings shown (of a total of eighty-one members present on council over this period) the figure includes many who were prominent among Birmingham’s political elite of the time. The largest grouping on Figure 1, containing six members, George Dixon, Arthur Ryland, Henry Wiggin, John Webster, Brooke Smith, and Thomas Phillips, form a distinguished assembly, including four mayors of Birmingham and two future MPs. Beyond their voting patterns, all six display biographic details which would place them within the circle around Chamberlain, with common Nonconformism and commercial banking interests featuring

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This is a consequence derivable from probability theory. A pair of individuals making independent binary decisions purely randomly, say by tossing fair coins, would be expected to make identical decisions (both F (For) or both A (Against)) in one-half of the occasions where they both vote, and the degree of agreement arising by chance between the two would be expected to settle down at 0.5 (50 per cent) over a series of such votes/tosses. The greater the number of votes/tosses in the experiment, the closer to this expected value would the actual outcome be expected to settle. For the two criteria above to hold, of the 25 mutual votes required, 21 or more (85 per cent) would have to be FF or AA rather than FA or AF. The Binomial Theorem tells us the probability of this is around 0.0006 (6 times in 10,000 series of 25 votes) for a pair of voters acting independently (and each voter voting 51 per cent of the time for F) and we would see only one or two such occurrences in all the results below. (The 51 per cent arises because, in this data, unlike heads or tails in fair coin tossing, F votes were recorded about 51 per cent of the time: over the 16 years 6,459 votes cast were F (51.4 per cent) and 6,104 were A (48.6 per cent)).
Central to this group is George Dixon, sometimes called ‘the third man of Birmingham’ (eclipsed only by Joseph Chamberlain and John Bright); Dixon’s short stay on the town council included his mayoralty for 1866/7 and ended when he took one of Birmingham’s parliamentary seats in 1867. Dixon shared with Chamberlain the founding and leadership of both the Birmingham Education Society and the National Education League.57

Arthur Ryland, ‘prince among solicitors’, had first been on the town council in 1854 and was mayor in 1860/1. He had multiple social links with Joseph Chamberlain, was legal partners with Chamberlain’s brother-in-law, Thomas Martineau, and they shared Unitarian church membership. (Sir) Henry Wiggin, major industrialist and metal manufacturer, knighted in 1892, had been a council member from 1861, including being mayor in 1864/5: from 1880–92 he was first a local Liberal MP and then followed Chamberlain as a Liberal Unionist MP. Thomas Phillips, a wine merchant and director of the early Midland Bank, had been mayor in 1844 and was also a Unitarian. The remaining two members of this six-man grouping, John Webster and Brooke Smith, were both long-established council members, founder members of the Birmingham Liberal Association in 1865, and had well-documented social and commercial ties with Chamberlain’s circle.

The remaining four named members in the other two detached pairs of Figure 1 have voting records much more closely aligned with each other than with the six-man group discussed above. None were friends of Chamberlain’s group. Sadler has already been noted as one of the leaders of the group opposed to Joseph Chamberlain, and John Cornforth was described as a supporter of Sadler’s party and one who ‘did not take cordially to the new regime which is associated with Mr Chamberlain’s connection with the council’.58 The final link on Figure 1 connects Thomas Prime with John Hinks. Prime,

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56 Birmingham saw the founding of both the Midland Bank and Lloyds Bank, two of the giant ‘Big Five’ banks that dominated British commercial banking for a century. Dixon, Joseph Chamberlain, Kenrick, Ryland, and Brooke Smith were directors in the early Lloyds Banking Company. Webster, Phillips, and Ryland were directors of the nascent Birmingham and Midland Bank. Brooke Smith, Phillips, and Webster will reappear in later periods. After 1869, Dixon was an MP and Ryland and Wiggin became too irregular as attenders to meet one of the criteria.

57 Dixon, George Dixon.

58 BDP, 11 Apr. 1888.
Leslie Rosenthal

mayor in 1869/70, was a long-term council member and Birmingham Liberal Association member, but is associated with Allday’s economy party. Similarly, Hinks was also a ‘staunch Liberal’, but is quoted as believing council expenditure must be kept down and promised ‘… he should act always on a principle of strict economy’. The pair remained equally closely aligned in their voting patterns in the next period, but still intriguingly unconnected, on our criteria, with groups around either Chamberlain or Sadler.

As noted, only ten council members appear in Figure 1 for this period immediately before Chamberlain’s entry. Compared to what we will see for the next periods, the voting networks derived for 1865/6–1868/9 are sparse and basic, and it would be premature to conclude much about any general ‘partisanship’ that might exist on the Birmingham town council at this time. Nevertheless, the few voting connections that do arise from the network analysis are clearly by no means out of line with inferences from available biographical information.

There was a substantial turnover of members on the Birmingham town council between the four-year period 1865/6–1868/9, and the next period, 1869/70–1873/4. A new influx of councilmen provided new names and voting patterns, and included Joseph Chamberlain as councillor for St Paul’s ward from November 1869.

November 1869 to October 1873: ‘Chamberlain’s rise’

The second four-year period of 1869/70–1872/3 shows a much more extensive and complex pattern of voting allegiances on the Birmingham town council. As shown in Figure 2, the analysis collects a large number of members into three voting groups. The largest is a seventeen-strong group including Joseph Chamberlain and many of his known supporters. A second large grouping of ten members is centred on John Sadler and William Brinsley, and includes, as will be demonstrated, a number of council members identifiable as opponents of Joseph Chamberlain on the council. John Sadler himself was elected mayor in the middle of this period, in November 1871, so his influence cannot be doubted. A third group of four members, not aligned to either of the other groups, also exists. These groupings as a whole contain thirty-one of the total of eighty-seven named members of council who served over this period. There has emerged, it is clear, a partisan structure within the council.

The large seventeen-man Joseph Chamberlain-connected group constitutes a complex-looking network, with many interlinked voting associations between its members. There are now some ‘usual suspects’ among the councillors, including Joseph Chamberlain’s brother Arthur Chamberlain, Jesse Collings and William Kenrick, all of whom, to be blunt, it would be surprising not to see in the grouping with Joseph Chamberlain. Thomas Phillips and John Webster, noted as likely Chamberlain supporters for the first period, also reappear here. A number of the other members appearing alongside Chamberlain in this network in Figure 2 played notable roles in Birmingham’s civic history. George Baker, ‘one of Chamberlain’s band of men’, was Chamberlain’s

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59 Ibid., 14 Feb. 1885.
60 Ibid., 11 Nov. 1865.
61 Some prominent council members of this four-year period, including Thomas Aston, Ambrose Biggs, William Brinsley, Jesse Collings, and George Braithwaite Lloyd do not appear here.
62 Society of Friends, Annual Monitor (1911).
replacement as mayor in 1876 and will reappear in future Chamberlainite groupings alongside his brother, fellow councillor John Edward Baker. Henry Manton had been mayor for 1861/2 and remained a council member for over fifty years from 1852 until his death in 1903. Henry Horne Ellaway came on the council in 1870 and he, too, will reappear in a later period, before retiring in 1883 and dying in 1887.

Within this large group around Chamberlain there are also names undeservedly absent in histories of Birmingham at this time. Indeed, if the importance and centrality of an individual in the network is judged by the number of connections or links involving that node or individual (its ‘degree’), then the group’s most central member is not Joseph Chamberlain but James Deykin, who we will see as equally well connected within the Chamberlain-connected faction in both the following periods. James Deykin was a key element driving and supporting the Chamberlain policies on the Birmingham improvement scheme and for the municipalization of the water company; but he died early, accidentally drowned in Aston Reservoir, his promising political career cut short. William Shammon is another member very well connected within Chamberlain’s group in this period and the next. Shammon was said to have ‘lent all the support he could to the municipal and parliamentary work of Mr. Chamberlain’; he followed Chamberlain from the Liberals to the Liberal Unionist cause, and was rewarded by Chamberlain calling him a ‘most loyal friend and fellow-worker’. Two more individuals, Thomas Griffiths and Edmund Tonks, were active on council and are also well connected in this network, but they remained on the town council for only relatively brief periods. The prickly ex-Radical Henry Hawkes also appears in the network, and this large seventeen-man group around Chamberlain is completed by less prominent councillors: solicitor (and fraudster) Charles Henry Edwards, Peter Parry, and the former Chartist James Whateley, each of whom appear once only in these voting network figures.

63  *BDP*, 5 Jan. 1894.
64  Ibid., 10 Jan. 1894.
As well as the network containing Joseph Chamberlain, Figure 2 also shows a sizeable, ten-man, voting network of Old Radical, economy-Liberal, and Conservative council members connected with John Sadler and William Brinsley. This group was certainly not sympathetic to Joseph Chamberlain or his policies, and the differences in voting patterns between this ten-man economy-Liberal group and the seventeen-man Chamberlain-Liberal group can be highlighted. Within Chamberlain’s seventeen-man group the average degree of agreement for voting identically with Joseph Chamberlain himself, is 85.2 per cent: within the ten-man Sadler-Brinsley-connected group the average degree of agreement for voting identically with Chamberlain is 24.7 per cent. Taking John Sadler as the centre of his ten-man group, the average degree of agreement between Sadler and the rest of his group is 86.3 per cent: for the members of the Chamberlainite group, the average degree of agreement with Sadler’s voting record is only 26.8 per cent.

For the members of this ten-man Sadler-Brinsley group, biographic evidence also indicates opposition to Chamberlain’s cause at this time. Sadler, Brinsley, and Cornforth have already been seen as associated with Joseph Alliday’s economy party, and Sadler and Cornforth form one of the pairs on Figure 1 for the first period, 1865–9. The remaining seven form a collection of greater or lesser prominence on the town council, but includes some other men of stature in the town. James Guest, who was a councillor from 1860 until 1871, was an important figure for Birmingham, and had earlier played a major role in the Radical agitation for an end to the duty on newspapers and similar publications. Guest had even spent a principled spell in gaol for the cause of press freedom and an end to press censorship: he now supported low local taxes generally, and declared he would: ‘... always vote for the least expenditure compatible with the exigencies of the borough ...’. Joseph Taylor and Henry Sarsons were both commonly viewed as Conservatives. Michael Maher (Jnr) who had ‘the support of Mr. Brinsley the publicans, and the Catholics and Irish of the town’ and Joseph Wadhams, said to have ‘never voted on the extravagant side’, were prominent in support of the alcohol-based trades, for which the town council’s licensing role was important. (Temperance formed an important plank for a number of Chamberlain’s supporters in line with widespread Nonconformist tenets.) The group is completed by Ephraim Gooch and John Thomason, a ‘consistent advocate of economy’. Maher, Gooch, and Thomason, like Sadler, were Liberal Association members. This ten-man group around Sadler and Brinsley forms, it is clear, the core of what may be considered an economy party and Old Radical group on the council at this time.

Figure 2 also shows a final group of four members, Hinks, Prime, Osborne, and Barker, who form a third, separate, network of voters tending to vote in tandem with each other. On average, this group vote in agreement with Chamberlain on 54.9 per cent of occasions and with Sadler 61.9 per cent of the time: among themselves the average is 83.8 per cent. This four-man intermediate group can be classified neither as Chamberlain’s friends nor as his enemies. Hinks and Prime have already featured in Figure 1 and form one of the (politically intermediate) pairs there. The remaining two were also well-established council members. Edward Corn Osborne was a member for thirty years, until 1882.

65 Ibid., 25 Oct. 1865.
66 Ibid., 14 Feb. 1887. Taylor is quoted as saying: ‘They call me a Conservative ... I am proud to be called one’.
67 Ibid., 1 Nov. 1882.
68 Ibid., 13 Nov. 1873.
69 Ibid., 3 Apr. 1871.
70 Ibid., 13 Apr. 1892.
and had been offered, but declined, the mayoralty: he played an important compromise role in the council’s defining sewage debate wars of the early 1870s. Stephen Barker also served on council for nearly twenty years, and, though a successful and wealthy industrial entrepreneur, was not a prominent member on council.

The voting analysis conducted for this period of Chamberlain’s rise on council shows the membership of Birmingham’s town council forming divisions which can be seen in turn as backing, opposing, and unaligned to Chamberlain. The next period will show an even more dominant position held by Chamberlain’s group.

**November 1873 to October 1877: ‘Chamberlain’s mayoralty’**

The third four-year period, 1873/4 to 1876/7, includes the critical time of Chamberlain’s spell as mayor of Birmingham between November 1873 and June 1876, at which point he resigned the mayoralty to take up Dixon’s Birmingham parliamentary seat. Figure 3 graphs the pattern of voting networks on council derived from the voting records of members for this period. Of major interest, there now emerges a large and expanded (twenty-two-man) group of members voting in line with Joseph Chamberlain and allies, and a quite depleted, now only five-man, group of members associated with Sadler and Brinsley. Two further separate minimal pairings satisfy the voting criteria, and these have voting preferences that are much closer to the Sadler-Brinsley group than to Chamberlain’s, but not enough to form an allowable link. The partisan structure within the council has certainly persisted, with a fracturing, perhaps, of the opposition’s cohesion, and an increase in the relative dominance of Chamberlain’s group.

The large Joseph Chamberlain group consists of about one-quarter of the total of eighty-five named aldermen and councillors who spent any time on council over this four-year period. Eleven of these individuals were also part of the Chamberlain group for the previous four-year period. Ten names are new, and one (Stephen Barker) was part of the intermediate group.
in Figure 2 above.70 Again, central roles within this network are played by William Kenrick, George Baker, William Shammon, and James Deykin.71 Included in the new names are some from Chamberlain’s family circle who became influential on council and will reappear in the networks below. Chamberlain’s brother, Richard Chamberlain, joined the council in 1874, and he was to stay for twelve years until 1886, including as mayor for 1879/80 and 1880/1, before becoming a Liberal, then Liberal Unionist, MP. Robert Francis Martineau was elected to council in 1874, to remain as councillor and alderman until 1909, arriving on council two years ahead of his younger brother, (Sir) Thomas Martineau.

Other new members first appearing in this period will also appear later in Chamberlain-connected networks. William White, the Quaker philanthropist, first elected in 1873, became an influential figure, becoming mayor for 1882/3, and is often cited as a major mover in the Birmingham Improvement scheme. Also destined to reappear are John Edward Baker elected in 1872, brother to fellow Quaker George Baker and William Perkins who spent a total of seventeen years on council. Others within this network played active and important roles on council, notably Dr Alfred Barratt, central to Chamberlain’s sanitary and health policies, and Samuel Edwards who would become Lord Mayor for 1900/1. Ralph Heaton, also a long-serving council member, is distinguished as a council member among Chamberlain’s allies, despite being described by the local media as a ‘staunch Conservative’.72 The remaining two councillors newly appearing in Chamberlain’s network here served only short periods: Alfred Arculus died suddenly in 1875 and Arthur Holden stayed only for a single session, from 1874.

While the group around Chamberlain has prospered compared to the earlier period, the opposition Sadler-Brinsley group has dwindled to five members. Cornforth and Thomason remain alongside Sadler and Brinsley themselves as part of this five-strong group, and the group is completed by John Lowe, a ‘Tory stalwart’ and mainstay of the Conservatives in Birmingham in the late 1870s.74 The remaining two separate linked pairs of individual members on Figure 3, Carter and Osborne, and Sarsons and Taylor, although failing the criteria necessary to link up formally with the Sadler-Brinsley group, display voting agreements which put them much closer to the Sadler-Brinsley group than to Chamberlain’s. Of these four, the pairing of Sarsons and Taylor has appeared earlier. Regarding the final orphan pairing of Osborne and Carter, Alderman Osborne has also appeared earlier, but John Carter was another Old Radical, Liberal-economy-party veteran, whose council membership reached back to the Allday era; he retired from council in 1878, ‘out of harmony with changed conditions’.75

Chamberlain’s loyal party grouping can be seen to have persisted into and through Chamberlain’s period as mayor of Birmingham, becoming more dominant. For the fourth period, we will see the continuation of this process and the total disappearance of any opposition group.

70 Of the six in the Chamberlain group in Figure 2 who are missing from Figure 3, Phillips died and Hawkes, Griffiths, Parry, and Webster retired from council. Whateley narrowly missed any 85 per cent link criterion.
71 The relatively peripheral position of Joseph Chamberlain and Jesse Collings in the network may be due to their extended leaves of absence from council following the death of Florence Chamberlain.
72 BDP, 20 Nov. 1891.
73 The pairing of Cornforth and Sadler shows the unique distinction of presenting a 100 per cent identical voting agreement over 28 roll-calls for this period.
74 Stephen Roberts and Roger Ward, Mocking Men of Power: Comic Art in Birmingham 1861–1911 (Birmingham, 2014), 44.
75 BDP, 16 Feb. 1905.
November 1877 to October 1881: ‘After Chamberlain’

The final four-year period takes us slightly beyond the time of Joseph Chamberlain’s presence on Birmingham council, and serves to underline the continuing dominance and influence of those with whom, it has been shown, he was closely associated. For this period, as shown on Figure 4, the network analysis has discovered only a single network of voting concordances that satisfy the criteria set.

The single nineteen-man group emerging is composed entirely of allies of Joseph Chamberlain and supporters of his policies. Ten of the names within this group have already been identified as associates of Joseph Chamberlain and appear in earlier networks with him, and include Richard Chamberlain, William Kenrick, James Deykin, George and John Edward Baker, and Robert Francis Martineau. Of the new names, four are of particular interest. Joseph Powell Williams was a close confidant of Joseph Chamberlain and played a notable political role both locally and nationally. In Birmingham, Powell Williams orchestrated the finding of funds for the town’s urban renewal and, as MP for South Birmingham for eighteen years after 1885, supported and backed Chamberlain in parliament. (Sir) William Cook was mayor in 1882 and was briefly Liberal MP for Birmingham East (1885–6), and is viewed as central in pushing through the scheme to clear and redevelop the slums of central Birmingham. (Sir) Thomas Martineau, part of the Chamberlain-Kenrick-Martineau family social network, was to be thrice mayor of Birmingham: he joined the council in 1876 to sit alongside his brother Robert Francis Martineau.

Of particular interest is the appearance here of Richard Cadbury Barrow, ‘... ardent supporter of the reforms [of] Mr. Chamberlain’, who eventually rose to become mayor in 1888/9. Barrow’s presence allows an explicit political connection to be made between Chamberlain’s reformers and the Cadbury-Barrow family, another of the great Nonconformist (here Quaker) industrial clans of Birmingham. Richard Cadbury Barrow

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76 Joseph Chamberlain did not record a vote on council for about a year before resigning in 1880.
77 BDP, 3 Oct. 1894.
had taken on the retail side of (his uncle) John Cadbury’s tea and cocoa business whilst John’s sons, Richard Cadbury (1835–99) and George Cadbury (1839–1922) took on the chocolate production side, soon steering the Cadbury Bros Ltd chocolate company to global celebrity. Barrow was only the first of a number of this family who joined the town council up to the 1990s, including his cousin George Cadbury, his sons Walter and Harrison Barrow, his second cousin William Adlington Cadbury, and his great-nephew George Corbyn Barrow.

There remain five further new names appearing in Figure 4: Lawson Tait, William Henry Dixon, George Marris, James Pattison, and Samuel Whitfield. These members proved to be less politically notable and active on council, though Lawson Tait was a remarkable individual and an important and pioneering surgeon.78

A number of lessons may be drawn from the voting analysis for this final period. Even as Joseph Chamberlain himself was withdrawing from Birmingham’s local political scene, his political allies and associates still formed a coherent, numerous and well-integrated bloc of voters on the Birmingham town council. Further, at this time, there can no longer be found a similar bloc of individuals voting in such an equally coordinated manner as to appear as an opposition.79

Conclusion

The analysis above has explored the voting data produced by the roll-call record of the Birmingham town council over the celebrated period covering the rise and mayoralty of Joseph Chamberlain. Associations between individuals’ voting records were calculated and straightforward filtering criteria were applied to produce a series of graphical images that show networks of co-dependent voting existing among the members of Birmingham’s town council. Further, but necessarily very brief, information on members mentioned is contained in the Appendix below and in the supplementary materials.

Strikingly, the results show a progression of images reflecting the emergence of a consistent and coherent voting bloc of members interpretable as constituting Chamberlain’s council allies. Alongside Chamberlain himself, there appear in this bloc the names of council members that would be expected from histories and biographies of the time to be his allies and supporters of his policies: to see names like Collings, Dixon, Kenrick, and Martineau within this group is both unsurprising and comforting. But the method has also identified a number of much less well-documented individual members who emerge as integral to the Chamberlain group, such as George Baker, James Deykin, Henry Horne Ellaway, Henry Manton, William Perkins, William Shammon, Brooke Smith, and William White. These individuals were consistent supporters of the cause and deserve wider notice, but they have not appeared prominently in the historical narratives. The method used has allowed others, too, to be identified as Chamberlain supporters, even though their support may have been even more obscure and fleeting, such as Alfred Arculus and Arthur Holden.

78 Tait was an innovative surgeon at the Birmingham Hospital for Women and an unyielding general controversialist, noted for ‘belligerent unorthodoxy’, ‘ruthless courage’ and (wonderfully) ‘want of respect for age and authority remarkable even in Birmingham’ (Obituary, British Medical Journal (1899), 1:1551).
79 Brinsley, Thomason, and Taylor were still council members but Sadler, Cornforth, Lowe, and Carter had retired.
Similarly, the analysis has also identified fierce opponents of the Chamberlain group. John Sadler and William Brinsley, known at the time as leaders of the opposition, properly appear alongside others to form a separate voting network, consistently voting in the opposing lobby to that of Chamberlain’s allies. This opposition group was no lightweight collection of members but included long-standing councillors and powerful aldermen and committee chairmen, such as John Cornforth, John Thomason, and Joseph Taylor. Again, the method used has been able to identify previously obscure individual members of this opposition network.

The analysis has deliberately concentrated upon and emphasized the identification of individual members of Birmingham’s town council whose voting patterns could be interpreted as putting them in one political camp or another. However, there are wider implications and lessons to be drawn from the findings, illustrative of the more general political scene in this era when the traditional British political parties were evolving into their more modern forms. The findings for municipal Birmingham fully reflect the views discussed above which hold that the emerging Liberal Party of the 1860s and 1870s was a loose and uneasy coalition of barely compatible (even incompatible) ideas and interests. The method used above can be easily applied to other municipal authorities of the same period; historical municipal records are widely available in city archives, and the opportunity opens up for the possibility of systematic comparative studies of the progress of provincial Liberalism in different British boroughs and municipalities.

As we have seen, of the two main voting blocs on the Birmingham town council of the 1870s, one of the blocs — that associated with Chamberlain — was sympathetic to the New Radical sentiments and contained mostly, but not exclusively, members of the Birmingham Liberal Association. The other bloc was a grouping of Old Radical, economy party sympathizers, along with conservative (and Conservative) elements: again, notably, including a number who were Liberal Association members. As the findings have shown, this split among the Liberals of Birmingham resolved itself by the late 1870s as Chamberlain’s group became more dominant and the Old Radical group dissipated. As research on the evolution of municipal level Liberalism in the 1870s continues to emerge from other locations, it seems likely that such a narrative will be seen to be common.

By 1880, the dominance of the Chamberlain Liberals within urban Birmingham and within the Birmingham town council might have seemed to be secured. But if the Chamberlain Liberals believed their victory to be complete and that they would retain permanent hegemonic control of Birmingham into the future, they would be quickly disillusioned. As early as the mid 1880s, the bitter ideological and parliamentary-level split between (Gladstonian) Liberals and the break-away (Chamberlainite) Liberal Unionists, rooted in attitudes towards Empire and Irish Home Rule, began to reach all the way down to Birmingham’s street politics and the Birmingham Liberal Caucus. Reflecting the Liberal split and the new institutionalization of ‘party’ on the town council, no longer did any single group dominate there, and in November 1890, the Birmingham Daily Post reported the structure of the council as: twenty-five Liberal Unionists; twenty-four (Liberal) Gladstonians; and fourteen Conservatives. The make-up of Birmingham’s town council had changed over this period as fundamentally as had the physical aspect of the city itself.

80 BDP, 3 Nov. 1890.
Appendix

Dramatis personae

This table gives dates and more detail on the Birmingham Town Council members included above, and lists those considered ‘Chamberlain’s Friends’, ‘Chamberlain’s Foes’, and the ‘Non-Aligned Group’. Where evidence exists, religious, political label and occupational information is included. (Angl, Church of England; Bapt, Baptist; Cong, Congregationalist; Meth, Methodist; RC, Roman Catholic; Unit, Unitarian). Further information on all members of the Birmingham Town Council over this period may be found in the supplementary material associated with this article.

Chamberlain’s friends

| Name            | See Figure | Town Council   | Belief   | Political Label | Occupation                                        |
|-----------------|------------|----------------|----------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Arculus, Alfred | 3          | Council 1873-75| Liberal  |                 | Glass maker Alfred Arculus & Co                   |
| (1825-75)       |            | Council 1862-92| Cong     | Conservative    | Weighing machines W and T Avery                   |
| Avery, Thomas   | 2, 3, 4    | Council 1867-10| Quaker   | Liberal         | Blacking maker Edward Baker & Sons               |
| (1813-94)       |            | Alderman 1868-92|          |                 |                                                   |
|                 |            | Mayor 1867/8, 1881/2 |      |                 |                                                   |
| Baker, George   | 3, 4       | Council 1872-82| Quaker   | Liberal         | Blacking maker Edward Baker & Sons               |
| (1828-1908)     |            |                |          |                 |                                                   |
| Baker, John Edward | 3, 4      | Council 1870-90| Liberal  |                 | Physician                                         |
| (1829-1909)     |            | Alderman 1886-90|          | Lib Unionist    |                                                   |
| Barrow, Richard | 4          | Council 1871-94| Quaker   | Liberal         | Tea dealer/merchant Barrow’s Stores               |
| Cadbury (1827-94) |          | Alderman 1878-94|          |                 |                                                   |
| Chamberlain, Arthur | 2, 3     | Council 1872-75| Unit.    | Liberal         | Industrialist Chamberlain & Hookham, Knoton      |
| (1842-1913)     |            |                |          | Lib Unionist    |                                                   |
| Chamberlain, Richard | 3, 4     | Council 1874-86| Unit.    | Liberal         | Merchant/Ironmonger Collings & Wallis. MP, Ipswich|
| (1840-99)       |            | Alderman 1880-86|          | Lib Unionist    |                                                   |
|                  |            | Mayor 1879/80, 1880/1 |  |                 |                                                   |
| Collings, Jesse | 2, 3       | Council 1867-86| Unit.    | Liberal         |                                                   |
| (1831-1920)     |            | Alderman 1875-86|          | Lib Unionist    |                                                   |
|                  |            | Mayor 1878/9 |          |                 |                                                   |
| Cook, (Sir) William | 4          | Council 1872-90| Liberal  |                 |                                                   |
| (1834-1908)     |            | Alderman 1882-90|          |                 |                                                   |
|                  |            | Mayor 1883/4 |          |                 |                                                   |
| Deykin, James   | 2, 3, 4    | Council 1869-85| Angl.    | Liberal         | Buttons/electroplating Deykin & Sons              |
| (1827-85)       |            | Alderman 1877-85|          |                 |                                                   |

(Continued)
| Name                  | See Figure | Town Council       | Belief | Political Label       | Occupation                                      |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------------|--------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Dixon, George         | 1          | Council 1864-67    | Angl   | Liberal Lib Unionist  | Merchant, Rabone Bros Director, Lloyds Bank. MP, Birm., 1867-76 MP, Birm., 1885-98 Coal merchant |
| Henry (1814-95)       | 4          | Council 1876-79    | Angl   | Liberal Lib Unionist  | Solicitor, rentier and fraudster                |
| Edwards, Charles      | 2, 3       | Council 1880-93    | Unit   | Liberal               | Auctioneer/estate agent Edwards, Son & Bigwood  |
| Edwards, Samuel        | 3          | Council 1874-83    | Liberal|                      |                                                |
| Ellaway, Henry         | 2, 3, 4    | Council 1870-83    | Bapt   | Liberal               | Domestic hardware                              |
| Horne (1834-87)       |            | Council 1876-83    | Liberal|                      |                                               |
| Griffiths, Thomas     | 2          | Council 1869-73    | Unit   | Liberal               | Hollowware maker Griffiths & Browett Architect/journalist |
| Harris, William       | 2          | Council 1865-71    | Unit   | Liberal               |                                                |
| Hawkes, Henry         | 2          | Council 1846-75    | Angl   | Radical, Liberal, Conservative | Solicitor, Town Coroner |
| Heaton, Ralph         | 3          | Council 1870-84    | Angl   | Liberal               | Industrialist, minter                           |
| Holdens, Arthur       | 3          | Council 1874-77    | Unit   | Liberal Christian-Socialist | Hardware maker Archibald Kenrick MP, Birm., 1885-98 |
| Kenrick, William      | 2, 3, 4    | Council 1870-1914  | Unit.  | Liberal Lib Unionist  | Metalware maker George Marris & Son Chairman, Union Bank |
| Manton, Henry         | 2, 3       | Council 1852-1903  | Cong   | Liberal               | Lawyer Ryland & Martineau Knighted 1887         |
| Marris, George        | 4          | Council 1875-81    | Cong   | Liberal               | Cockfounder, publisher Martineau & Smith       |
| Martineau, (Sir)      | 4          | Council 1876-93    | Unit   | Liberal Lib Unionist  | Lawyer                                        |
| Thomas (1828-93)      |            | Alderman 1883-93   |        |                      |                                               |
| Martineau, Robert     | 3, 4       | Council 1874-1909  | Unit   | Liberal               |                                               |
| Francis (1831-1909)   |            | Alderman 1900-1909 |        |                      |                                               |
| Parry, Peter          | 2          | Council 1871-76    | Liberal|                      | Merchant                                       |
| Pattison, James       | 4          | Council 1875-81    | Cong   | Liberal               | Confectioner Pattison & Son                    |
| Perkins, William      | 3, 4       | Council 1866-83    | Cong   | Liberal               | Pawnbroker                                     |
| Phillips, Thomas      | 1, 2       | Council 1838-76    | Unit   | Liberal               | Wine merchant, Palmer & Phillips Director, Midland Bank. |
| Ryland, Arthur        | 1          | Council 1854-58    | Unit   | Liberal               | Solicitor, Ryland & Martineau Director, Lloyds Bank. |
| (1807-77)             |            | Alderman 1859-74   |        |                      |                                               |
|                       |            | Alderman 1850-58   |        |                      |                                               |
|                       |            | Mayor 1861-74      |        |                      |                                               |
|                       |            | Mayor 1860/61      |        |                      |                                               |

(Continued)
| Name                      | See Figure | Town Council | Belief | Political Label | Occupation                                      |
|---------------------------|------------|--------------|--------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Schnadhorst, Francis      |            | Council 1872 | Cong   | Liberal         | Political Organiser National Liberal Federation |
| Shammon, William          | 2, 3, 4    | Council 1871-94; Alderman 1893-94 | Angl   | Liberal Lib Unionist | Whip/saddlery maker W. Shammon & Sons |
| Smith, Brooke             | 1, 3       | Council 1861-76 | Unit   | Liberal         | Cockfounder, Martinneau & Smith Director, Lloyds Bank |
| Tait, R. Lawson           | 4          | Council 1876-85 | Liberal |                | Surgeon (FRCS) Birm. Hospital for Women |
| Tonks, Edmund             | 2          | Council 1870-73 | Liberal |                | Fancy metalwork William Tonks & Sons |
| Webster, John             | 1, 2       | Council 1843-46; Council 1862-74 | Liberal |                | Cottons merchant Messrs Webster & Co Director, Midland Bank |
| Whateley, James Thomas    | 2          | Council 1871-93 | Unit   | Chartist Liberal | Button manufacture Whateley and Rogers |
| White, William            | 3, 4       | Council 1873-100; Alderman 1883-1900; Mayor 1882/3; Council 1876-82 | Quaker | Liberal Lib Unionist | Copperplate Printer White & Pike Ltd |
| Whitfield, Samuel         | 4          | Council 1876-82 | Unit   | Liberal         | Brass bedstead maker Samuel Whitfield & Sons |
| Wiggin, (Sir) Henry       | 1          | Council 1861-71; Alderman 1865-71; Mayor 1864/65 | Angl   | Liberal Lib Unionist | Industrialist/ smelter Henry Wiggin & Co MP, E. Staffs 1880-85 MP, Birm.,1885-92 Knighted, 1892 “Gentleman”, MP, Birm., 1885-1904 |
| Williams, Joseph Powell    | 4          | Council 1877-90; Alderman 1883-90 | Cong   | Liberal Lib Unionist | |

Chamberlain’s Foes

| Name                      | See Figure | Town Council | Belief | Political Label | Occupation                                      |
|---------------------------|------------|--------------|--------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Aston, Thomas             |            | Council 1863-71; Alderman 1866-71 | RC     | Liberal         | Jeweller Thomas Aston & Son                     |
| Brinsley, William         | 2, 3       | Council 1855-78; Council 1879-93; Alderman 1865-78; Alderman 1893 | Conservative |                | Grocery trader, landlord, banking and tramways director |
| Cornforth, John           | 1, 2, 3    | Council 1858-77; Alderman 1871-77 | Angl   | Liberal         | Wire mill proprietor Birmingham Screw Co       |
| Cutler, John Walford      |            | Council 1852-71; Alderman 1859-71 | Angl   | Liberal         | Solicitor Wine Trade & Retail Brewers Society   |
| Gameson, John             |            | Council 1853-65; Council 1866; Alderman 1859-65 | Liberal |                | Cabinet maker                                   |
| Gooch, Ephaim             | 2          | Council 1866-75 | Liberal |                | Master jeweller                                 |

(Continued)
| Name                | See Figure | Town Council | Belief  | Political Label | Occupation                                      |
|---------------------|------------|--------------|---------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Goodrick, George    | (1803-94)  | Council 1842-44 | Quaker  | Liberal         | Rope maker                                     |
|                     |            | Council 1849-52 |         |                 | John Goodrick & Son                           |
|                     |            | Council 1853-83 |         |                 |                                                |
|                     |            | Alderman 1864-83 |         |                 |                                                |
| Guest, James        | (1806-83)  | 2            | Radical |                 | Stationer, publisher, bookseller              |
| Lowe, John          | (1812-99)  | 3            | Conservative |                 | Ironware merchant                             |
| Maher, Michael      | (1834-82)  | 2            | RC      | Liberal         | Solicitor                                      |
| Rolason, William    | (1818-1902)|             | Liberal |                 | Jeweller                                       |
| Sadler, John        | (1815-78)  | 1, 2, 3      | Liberal |                 | Hinge maker                                    |
| Taylor, Joseph      | (1817-85)  | 2, 3         | Conservative |                 | Leather tanning                               |
| Thomason, John      | (1811-92)  |             | Liberal | Lib Unionist    | Silver smith                                    |
| Wadhams, Joseph     | (1816-89)  | 2            | Conservative |                 | Hilliard and Thomason                         |

“Non-Aligned” Networks

| Name                | See Figure | Town Council | Belief  | Political Label | Occupation                                      |
|---------------------|------------|--------------|---------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Barker, Stephen     | (1821-89)  | 2, 3         | Angl    | Liberal         | Metals                                         |
|                     |            | Council 1867-86 |         |                 | Barker and Allen; Muntz Metal                   |
| Carter, John        | (1810-1905)| 3            | Liberal |                 | Canal boat builder                             |
|                     |            | Council 1851-78 |         |                 | Birmingham & Midland Boat Co                   |
| Hinks, John         | (1811-85)  | 1, 2         | Liberal |                 | Steel pen maker                                |
| Osborne, Edward     | (1809-86)  | 2, 3         | Liberal |                 | Bookseller & printer                           |
| Corn                 |            |              |         | Osborne’s Stationers |                        |
| Prime, Thomas       | (1797-1881)| 1, 2         | Meth    | Liberal         | Silversmith/plater                             |
|                     |            | Council 1843-48 |         |                 | Thomas Prime & Son                             |
|                     |            | Council 1849-77 |         |                 |                                               |
|                     |            | Alderman 1870-77 |         |                 |                                               |
|                     |            | Mayor 1869/70 |         |                 |                                               |
| Sarsons, Henry      | (1826-87)  | 2, 3         | Meth    |                 | Glassware maker                                |
|                     |            | Council 1871-83 |         |                 | Henry Sarsons & Son                            |