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SHEFFIELD HALLAM

Sheffield Hallam must be one of the most sophisticated constituencies in the country. In the 1997 General Election records were broken here. In particular, the Liberal Democrats, in gaining the seat for the first time from the Conservatives, recorded their highest rise of share of vote anywhere: 20.6 per cent. One of the reasons for this must be tactical voting, for Hallam also witnessed the fourth worst Labour change anywhere, a drop of 5 per cent.

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The only other seat where this pattern was even nearly repeated was also in Yorkshire, and also a Liberal Democrat gain: Harrogate and Knaresborough.

Many people regard Sheffield as the archetype of an industrial and working-class city. Such an impression is encouraged by the most common travellers' views of the city, from the M1 as it passes the east end of the town with its huge Meadowhall shopping centre on the site of a deceased steelworks, or from the city centre with its tower blocks climbing from the myriad of hills. However, as is the case of many British towns, there is a sharp divide between the west end of Sheffield, historically upwind of industry, dirt and smoke, and the classic east end areas. In Sheffield the middle-class residential area which serves England's third-largest city is situated almost entirely within the city boundaries. The Hallam division was held by the Conservatives up to and including 1992 (their last seat in South Yorkshire), and has one of the highest proportions of professionally qualified people of any constituency in Britain.

South-western Sheffield, from the bohemian university area of Broomhill through Ecclesall and Fulwood out to the fringe of the Peak District at Dore and Totley, is a leafy neighbourhood of outstanding residential quality. There are many dark-stone mansions standing solidly among the wooded hills, and only some of them are now broken up into flats and bedsits. Further out can be found modern semis and detached houses in great numbers, as Sheffield's professional and managerial groupings gather together in as concentrated a pattern of residential segregation as may be found in Britain. Nearly 80 per cent of those in work here are in middle-class occupations.

The Conservatives were uncomfortably aware of the destruction of their last 'middle-class' seats in places like Liverpool and Manchester, where Withington was held in 1966 but is easily won by Labour now. The way to finish off the Tories in Sheffield was to vote for the party which had already come to dominate the council representation in Hallam, the Liberal Democrats; and the well-educated Labour supporters living here took the hint in a major way, as Richard Allan ousted Sir Irvine Patnick by over 8,000 votes.

1991 Census:

1997 Gen. Election:

% Own Occ	78.3	LD	23,345	51.3	+20.6
% Loc Auth	9.5	C	15,074	33.1	-16.5
% Non-white	3.1	Lab	6,147	13.5	-4.9
% Prof/Man	59.3	Ref	788	1.7	
% Non-manual	80.1	Oth	125	0.3	
		LD maj	8,271	18.2	

Member of Parliament

Richard Allan, by winning **Sheffield Hallam in 1997**, became the first ever non-Conservative MP for the constituency—ignoring the Conservative Sir Peter Roberts, who won as a ‘National Liberal’ in the 1950s—since the seat’s creation in 1885. **A chauffeur and personnel manager’s son, born in 1966, educated at Oundle School, Pembroke College, Cambridge, and Bristol Polytechnic, initially an archaeologist, he worked in information technology in the NHS from 1991 to 1997.** Though sounding routinely

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progressive on social policy and seemingly the beneficiary of Labour tactical voting, he was on election keen to identify himself as the only 'Opposition' MP in the whole of South or West Yorkshire. Fringe-bearded and of erect bearing, he backed the total ban on hand guns in 1997 but put down an amendment to ensure compensation for the debts of gun clubs. He was appointed to his party's home affairs team in 1997.

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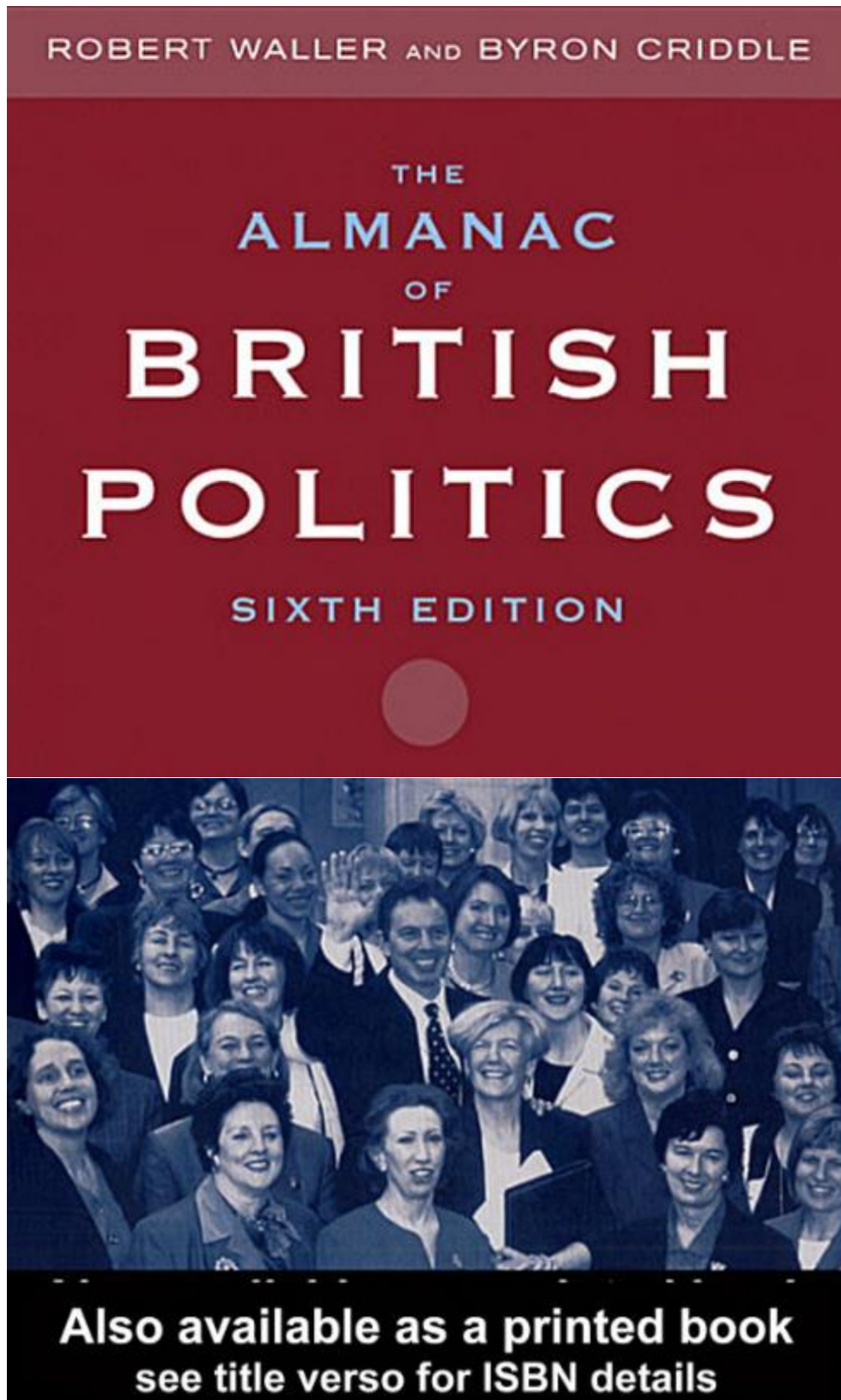
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