

Cradle of Conservatism? Lancashire, Toryism, and the modern British Conservative Party

“Layers and Connections of the Political”

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Abstract

For historians of the modern British Conservative and Unionist Party, a central question has been the creation, reception, and adaptation of political traditions within modern democratic politics. Following the 2019 British general election, and the collapse of the ‘red wall’, this paper considers one distinct, spatially defined, longer strand of C/conservative imagination: Lancashire Toryism. Through an analysis of the material conditions of Lancashire, and the attendant intellectual culture surrounding the region, this paper examines the constituent components of what it meant to be a Conservative in North-West England in the mid-to-late 1800s.

By considering the construction and longevity of Lancashire Toryism, the community-based politics of Lancashire can be positioned as a corrective to the conception that Conservative attention in ‘the North’ waned in the face of electoral and social reforms, such the Third Reform Act (1884), and the campaign for women’s suffrage. In so doing, the papers extends the working definition of the much-used but loosely defined term ‘Lancashire Toryism’. Moreover, it also critically considers the question of the relationship between an increasingly centralised party and the regional Conservative associations and thus contributes an important perspective when considering the ways in which distinctive political traditions are created and adapted for Conservatives.

Author information

Adam Waddingham is a PhD candidate in the Department of History at The University of Manchester. Broadly speaking, his work asks this question: where did Brexit come from? Focusing on the historical reception of Euroscepticism within C/conservatism, he aims to explore how the concept of hostility towards the various forms of European organisation grew, adopting a particular case study of the North-West of England. Adam completed a Masters degree in Modern History (with distinction) at The University of Manchester in 2019. His thesis focused on the creation and longevity of 'Lancashire Toryism'. This followed his Undergraduate degree in History with Politics (with first class honours) with a thesis that focused on 'entryism' within regional politics.

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Wednesday, 23 June - Session 12 - **9,00-10,30 CET (Webex)** - Panel co-sponsored by the British Political Studies Association Politics and History Specialist Group – *The Conservative Party, Conservative Ideology and the Challenge of Change*

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