

What happened in Barnet?

Adam Langleben, Barnet Labour councillor, has made a video which is circulating widely, which gives the impression that Jewish voters in Barnet have deserted Labour in droves. In the media he has reported that Jewish voters had told him “not this time”. According to him “every” Jewish household was the same. That man Corbyn is, apparently, to blame for Labour failing to win Barnet. Look at the election results and the picture of Labour failing as a result of Jewish voters deserting it looks questionable.

Analysing election results is notoriously difficult for the simple reason that the outcome is the result of individual decisions by thousands of people. What happened in Barnet? Labour lost 6 seats to the Tories and gained one from the Liberal Democrats. The Tories had 32 seats in 2014, Labour 30 and the Libdems 1. This became Tories 38, Labour 25 in 2018. First of all, let's look at the four wards in which Labour lost seats, and the one in which they won a seat, and compare the results with those in 2014.

West Hendon: three Labour losses.

2018			2014		
Churchus	LD	264	Bunting	Green Party	300
Don	Con ELECTED	2196	Emery J	LD	163
Green	Green Party	299	Emery P	LD	172
Khalick	Labour	2074	Green	Green Party	292
Langleben	Labour	2014	Hettiarachchi	Con	1488
Lees	LD	236	Ive	LD	163
Prager	Con ELECTED	2155	Kay	Labour ELECTED	1769
Richman	Con ELECTED	2130	Langleben	Labour ELECTED	1794
Slocombe	Labour	2076	Mann	Con	1459
Watson	LD	184	Murray-Leonard	UKIP	445
			Samuel	Green Party	307
			Slocombe	Labour ELECTED	1747
			Sodha	Con	1357
Total votes cast		13,628	Total votes cast		11,456
Labour votes		6164	Labour votes		5,310
Tory votes		6481	Tory votes		4,304

Labour had all three seats in West Hendon in 2014 but lost them all to the Tories in 2018. Votes cast increased by 2,172 in 2018. The Labour vote went up by an average of 284 for its three candidates. However, the Tory vote increased by an average of 725. The best placed Labour candidate was just 56 votes below the lowest placed Tory.

Brunswick Park : One Labour loss

2018			2014		
Depala	Con	2362	Beeton	LD	270
Enderby	LD	321	Ioniddis	Labour ELECTED	1944
Farbey	Green Party	443	Javes	Green Party	499

Hughes	LD	263	Levine	Labour ELECTED	1951
Levine	Labour ELECTED	2369	Otten	LD	168
Magoba	Labour	2184	Ritson	LD	218
Palmer	Labour	2293	Rowe	Labour	1820
Rutter	Con ELECTED	2517	Rutter	Con ELECTED	1899
Seger	LD	221	Savvides	Con	1742
Weeden-Sanz	Con ELECTED	2586	Tambourides	Con	1876
Total votes cast		15,559	Total votes cast		12387
Labour votes		6,846	Labour votes		5,715
Tory votes		7,465	Tory votes		5,517

Labour won two seats in Brunswick Park in 2014, the Tories one. In 2018 Labour lost one to the Tories. There were 3,172 extra votes cast. Labour's vote rose by an average of 377 per candidate, the Tories increased by an average of 382.

East Barnet: One Labour loss

2018			2014		
Bullen	LD	323	Aitken	Green Party	638
Byers	Con ELECTED	2429	Challice	Labour ELECTED	2108
Cohen	Labour	2399	Cohen	Labour ELECTED	1993
Cooper	Labour ELECTED	2509	Evangeli	Con	1894
Curati	Green	498	Giltinane	LD	173
Finlayson	LD	339	Pressland	Green Party	505
Pavanakumar	Con	2310	Rams	Con	1820
Pearce	Con	2365	Roberts	LD	194
Williams	Labour ELECTED	2509	Tambourides	Con	1873
			Umbo	LD	175
			Samuel	Green Party	307
			Varvarides	Green Party	576
			Williams	Labour ELECTED	2044
Total votes cast		15,681	Total votes cast		14,300
Labour votes		7,417	Labour votes		6,145
Tory votes		7,104	Tory votes		5,587

In 2014 Labour won all three seats in East Barnet, in 2018 it lost one to the Tories. The extra votes cast were 1,381 in 2018. Labour's vote increased by an average of 424 and the Tories by an average of 505. Labour lost its one seat by just 30 votes.

Hale: one Labour loss

2018			2014		
Ambe	Labour	2166	Cesar	Green Party	536
Barker	Labour	2347	Creighton	LD	297

Batt	Green Party	420	Davey	Con ELECTED	2178
Creighton	LD	355	Goodman	LD	335
Goodman	LD	397	Jacobs	LD	243
Gurung	Con ELECTED	3007	Jeanmaire	Labour	1994
Jacobs	LD	306	Lyons K	Labour ELECTED	2019
Jajeh	Con ELECTED	2999	Lyons R	Labour	1830
Simberg	Con ELECTED	3130	Rayner	Con ELECTED	2155
Velleman	Labour	1976	Simberg	Con	2010
Total votes cast		17,103	Total votes cast		13,597
Labour votes		6,489			5,843
Tory votes		9,136			6,343

In Hale in 2014 Labour had one candidate elected, the Tories two. In 2018 the Tories took all three. Labour increased its vote by an average of 548 per candidate, but the Tories increased theirs by an average of 931. There were 3,506 extra votes cast in 2018.

Childs Hill: one Labour gain

2018			2014		
Clarke	Labour ELECTED	2224	Ajakaiye	Labour	1408
Cohen	LD	1279	Cohen	LD ELECTED	1509
Ferguson	Green Party	406	Davies	LD	1198
Gearson	Con	2222	Grover	Con	1500
Palmer	LD	1126	Henry	LD	1222
Pate	Labour	2080	Marasco	Green Party	501
Patel	LD	876	Patel	Labour	1381
Ryde	Con ELECTED	2262	Ryde	Con ELECTED	1544
Young	Labour	1877	Smith	Labour	1463
Zinkin	Con ELECTED	2243	Zinkin	Con ELECTED	1536
Total votes cast		16,595	Total votes cast		13,262
Labour votes		6,181	Labour votes		4,252
Tory votes		6,727			4,580

Here Labour made one gain from the Libdems and the Tories maintained 2 seats. The winning Labour candidate's vote was almost 800 higher than the highest placed Labour candidate in 2014. Labour votes rose by 1,929, an average of 643. The Tory vote increased by 2,138, an average of 712 votes.

High Barnett

2018			2014		
Belandra	Labour	2386	Fletcher	Green Party	973
Cohen	LD	577	Gibson	LD	631
Lemon	Labour	2344	Harding	Labour	1209
Longstaff	Con ELECTED	2764	Haylett	Labour	1188

Macdonald	LD	581	Hooker	LD	705
Michaels	LD	481	Lawson	Green Party	826
Prentice	Con ELECTED	2792	Levine	Labour	1052
Rowland	Independent	471	Longstaff	Con ELECTED	2161
Teare	Con ELECTED	2605	Macdonald	LD	859
Trevethan	Labour	2604	Perry	Con ELECTED	2152
Wade	Green Party	328	Poppy	Green Party	922
Wicksteed	Green Party	425	Prentice	Con ELECTED	2171
Total votes cast		15,681	Total votes cast		14,300
Labour votes		7,334	Labour votes		3,449
Tory votes		8,161	Tory votes		6,484

In High Barnet, even though the Tories once again won all three seats, Labour's vote *more than doubled*. The lower Green vote only accounts for half of the increase. Labour was within two votes of winning a seat.

What happened and why?

There can be no doubt that the accusations of anti-semitism in the Labour Party have had a negative impact on its electoral results (I'll look at the national results in a separate article). But the picture painted by the media and opponents of Corbyn that Labour's lost seats were due simply to Jewish Labour voters refusing to vote for them is as yet unproven. Obviously to get a rounded picture you would have to look at all the results and the social composition of each of the wards in the constituency. The situation is far more complicated than the easy headlines suggest.

Labour's vote did not collapse as a result of Jewish voters abandoning support. In fact its vote *increased by 23,000* in comparison with 2014 though the percentage increase overall was just 1% because of the higher turnout. Even if Labour hoovered up the Green Party's lost 11,000 votes that only accounts for half of the increase.

More interesting still was Labour's gain in Childs Hill. According to blogger *Broken Barnet* (Teresa Musgrove, a Labour member) this is a ward with 17% Jewish population. Why did the Labour vote increase by almost 800? The Labour candidate, Anne Clarke, was a leader of the Save Barnett Libraries campaign. Teresa Musgrove suggests that she was elected "because she is that rare thing: a candidate who has proved her worth by being steeped in local activism, deeply embedded in grassroots local issues and several local campaigns..."

There are other factors at play as well. *Broken Barnet* talks about the "changing face" of West Hendon. One of the issues in the ward was "the faux regeneration of the former West Hendon council estate: call it 'regeneration', call it social cleansing – the result in terms of political outcome is a radical realignment of old loyalties."

Broken Barnett suggests that Labour's record in opposition "has not been strong – or even memorable".

"Time and again their performance has been too low key, unclear, weak and poorly communicated to residents. Too many times the Labour group has failed to challenge the iniquitous agenda of the Tory administration, to fight with real passion, and well directed

strategy...The continual struggle to expose the damning truth about the performance of the Capita contracts has been left to Unison, and local activists and bloggers....A preference in favour of life in the centre of the party is partly to blame for this fatal inertia, as is a position out of step with the new energy within the Labour movement and the key policies of a hugely popular manifesto.”

“Take the fight against Library cuts: this should have come from Labour, not have been left to the group, Save Barnet Libraries, to pursue. Instead we saw the library lead in Labour actually take part in a bid to run one of the Tories new 'partnership' libraries: an excruciating blunder that horrified campaigners, and further alienated them from the Party”.

This reflects a wider problem at the national level. One of the lowest levels of support for Corbyn was amongst Labour councillors, many of whom have resisted breaking from New Labour's agenda. The absence of a struggle against the austerity agenda at the level of councils has not enhanced Labour's electoral fortunes, especially when some of their councils have implemented whatever is passed down from central government, without any campaign against the cuts. Too many Labour councils see themselves as mere administrators, managers.

Certainly the result in Childs Hill shows that where resistance is organised against attacks on public services then your electoral prospects are enhanced. The local Labour group does not appear to have been interested in mobilising opposition to the Tory council in defence of public services.

Anti-Semitism

So far as the issue of anti-semitism is concerned *Broken Barnett* refers to her own ward of West Finchley “which has a Jewish community of more diverse character than that of West Hendon”.

“One might expect there to be a higher level of Labour voters who would be upset by the antisemitism issue – yet this was retained for Labour, with an increased vote, despite the departure of veteran, and much loved, councillor Jim Tierney. Rabbi Danny Rich was elected in his place – he is a senior figure within the community of Liberal Judaism: hopefully voters found assurance in his candidacy, and voted accordingly.”

It is possible that Jewish voters who did not vote in 2014 did so in 2018 to 'punish' Labour. However, given the size of the increase of 38,000 in the Tory vote, and the fact that the Jewish population only comprises 15%, this increase can hardly have been comprised only of Jewish voters.

Generally speaking what are described as different ethnic 'communities' do constitute block votes. They do not vote according to their ethnicity or religion. They all have different political views across these communities. There is no single 'Jewish community' represented by the Board of Deputies. There are many and varied Jewish communities. There are class differences amongst them as with the population at large. There are differences amongst Jewish voters, some of whom believe that there is a definite campaign against Labour, exaggerate the scale of anti-semitism within the party. (See

[Anti-Semitism: real and counterfeit](http://martinwicks.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/antisemitism1.pdf)¹

The picture in Barnet is far more complex than editorial writers or politicians with an axe to grind are prepared to admit. Those local leaders who have tried to simply blame Corbyn for the fact that Labour did not win a majority on the council, are conveniently drawing attention away from their own responsibilities, highlighted by *Broken Barnet*.

Martin Wicks

May 8th 2018

Addendum

Overall vote 2018			2014	
Party	Vote	%	Vote	%
Conservatives	146,605	47%	108,774	41.7%
Labour	126,508	40.6%	103,429	39.6%
Greens	10,107	3.2%	21,193	8.1%
LD	27,472	8.8%	20,355	7.8%
UKIP	122		5,851	2.2%
Independent	471	0.2%	1,264	0.5%
Left Unity			107	
Women's Equality	497	0.2%		
Total votes cast	311,782		260,973	

1 <http://martinwicks.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/antisemitism1.pdf>