

Appendix V

EDGWARE LOCAL POLL (1927)

In the late 1920s the issue of **amalgamation of local government districts** was an important subject of discussion among councillors and residents of authorities to the north-west of London. For example, Appendix U records the outcome of a local poll in Harrow Weald on this very subject.

Edgware held a Parish Meeting on 5 July 1927 in the Council Schools to consider two rival schemes for the future of Edgware. In addition to parish councillors and the clerk, Major Cartwright (Chairman of Hendon Rural District Council) and 80 to 90 parishioners were present. The first scheme considered was in the form of an application from Hendon RDC, in conjunction with Wealdstone UDC, for a merged authority with Urban Powers. The second proposal was an application from Hendon UDC to amalgamate with the Parish of Edgware. Although approval of either scheme by the Meeting could not be considered binding on any enquiry on the matter, it was felt that a strong indication from the parish would be highly influential.

After presentations by speakers, discussion and questions, Mr. B.F. Stack proposed and Mr. E.H.L. Wright seconded the following motion:

That this meeting support the application of the Hendon Rural District Council in conjunction with Wealdstone Urban District Council for Urban Powers.

On a show of hands the motion was defeated by 49 votes to 13. Mr. W.H. Purchase proposed and Mr. England seconded an alternative motion:

That this meeting support the application of the Hendon Urban District Council to amalgamate with the Parish of Edgware.

On a show of hands the motion was passed by 46 votes to 15. At this point parish councillor Cllr. G.R. Mann, supported by Messrs. Stack, Temple, Hughes and Rendell, demanded that a poll be taken. The date of the poll was fixed for 15 July 1927.

In an article in its last issue before the poll, the *Hendon and Finchley Times* devoted considerable space to discussion of the rival schemes and provided mapping etc. No doubt in an effort to be helpful, the paper also printed a specimen ballot paper that indicated that voters would be able to vote 'Yes' or 'No' to the two individual proposals (thus mirroring the voting arrangements at the Parish Meeting) rather than choosing directly between one scheme or the other.

The article continued: "Electors should be careful to place their crosses immediately opposite the respective questions in the spaces provided for the answers. Obviously more than one 'Yes' or 'No' will invalidate the vote. There should be one 'Yes' and one 'No' only." This statement, if it is to be believed, meant that any voter who might wish to oppose *both* motions would be spoiling their paper if they voted 'No' to each question.

The result of the poll was recorded in the Minutes of Edgware Parish Council, and by the *Hendon and Finchley Times* (with the addition of the electorate and ballot paper figures) as follows:

Electors: 860
Ballot papers issued: 315
Ballot papers rejected as spoilt: 7
T'out: 36.6%

Proposal	For	Against
The Hendon RDC / Wealdstone UDC scheme	167	18
The Hendon UDC scheme	<u>122</u>	1
	45	

These figures — giving a small majority in favour of the Hendon RDC scheme — are very difficult to interpret. Adding together the four reported figures gives: $167 + 18 + 122 + 1 = 308$. This number is *exactly* the same as the recorded number of valid ballot papers. Yet the *Hendon and Finchley Times*' article had strongly suggested that each elector would have *two* crosses to make on each paper, making the maximum number of *crosses* in the poll equal to 616. It is possible that upon attending the polling station electors discovered that the press article was misleading and that they were permitted to use *one* vote only. If so, the vast majority chose to use it by declaring themselves in favour of one scheme or the other.

In retrospect it seems reasonable to comment that a straight choice between the two schemes would have led to easier interpretation, then and now, of the wishes of the Parish. Any voter opposed to *both* schemes would then have to make a *conscious* decision to spoil their ballot paper.

The poll therefore overturned the decision of the Parish Meeting of 5 July. However, there was correspondence to the *Hendon and Finchley Times* that pointed out that the poll had been conducted using a *Register of Electors* that had been compiled in 1926. Consequently many new residents were not qualified to vote and it was speculated that this affected the result. It came as little surprise, therefore, that a further Parish Meeting was requisitioned on the matter and this took place in the Council Schools on 16 January 1928. The agenda was:

To take a vote, on the basis of the new Register of Voters, on the question whether to support the proposal of the Hendon Rural District Council or the proposal of the Hendon Urban District Council, in the matter of the impending re-adjustment of Local Government areas.

There was an attendance of 45 to 50 Ratepayers, in addition to parish councillors, at the Meeting. Members of the Edgware and District Ratepayers' Association moved a motion that the meeting be adjourned for three weeks. The Chairman ruled the motion out of order. Association members then moved a second motion that the Meeting was of the opinion "that the two parishes of Edgware and Little Stanmore should in any event remain together." This motion was also ruled out of order,

On a show of hands to support the Hendon Rural District Council scheme 1 person voted in favour and 10 against. On a second show of hands to support the Hendon Urban District Council scheme 13 people voted in favour and 0 against. A poll was demanded by Mr. Purchase but this was later withdrawn.