

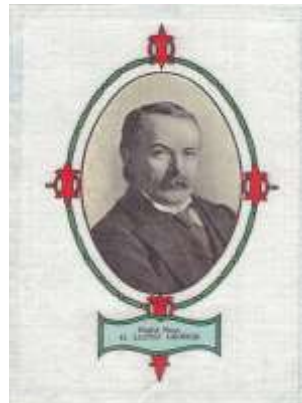
Chapter 11: Final Scenes

Joe's death was not the only tragedy to affect the Parkin family in 1918. On 19 November 1918, "Mr John Smith died".¹ On 30 December 1918, Mr W Smith committed suicide by cutting his throat. The next day, Cyril Smith came to live with John. John had a younger brother called Cyril and his father was called William. So, I had assumed that it was John's father who had committed suicide and, as a result, Cyril had gone to live with John and Olive.² But, it may not be the case that the person who died was John's father as, in the twenties, there was a William Smith living with John and Olive and I wondered if this would have been John's father. In addition, I presume his death would have been registered in Q1 1919 and there was no William Smith who died that quarter in Basford. There were two Walter Smiths though and one of these was buried on 1 January 1919. He was 55 years old, described as a banksman and he died in Morley Street in Kirkby in Ashfield.

Grandad always had an interest in politics although he did not speak particularly openly about his affiliations. What he was clear about, and this is something that was transmitted to me through my parents, was the democratic responsibility to vote. On 14 December 1918, he noted that there was a parliamentary election. He noted the results for each candidate as Sir Charles Seeley³, Lib 4,500; Geo H Spencer, Lab 11,000; and Capt H H Whaites⁴, Coalition 4,000.

From [other sources](#), it is clear that governing coalition led by Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, sent letters of endorsement to candidates who supported the coalition government. These were known as "coalition coupons" and this became the "coupon election". Coalition candidates won a total of 523 seats. Labour won 57 seats and non-coalition Liberals only 36. It was the first general election held on a single day and it was also the first general election in which women were able to stand as candidates and in which all men over 21 and all women over 30 could vote. It was also noted for dramatic results in Ireland with Sinn Fein winning 73 seats and the Irish Parliamentary Party only seven. The result of this was that a breakaway government was formed which declared Irish independence. This led to the Irish War of Independence and this was the last UK general election to cover the entire island of Ireland.

In grandad's constituency of [Broxtowe](#)⁵, Labour's candidate, [George Spencer](#), [won handsomely](#) with 11,159 votes. The Liberal candidate, Sir Charles Seely came second with 4,681 votes with the National Democratic (coalition) candidate, Herbert Whaite, third with 4,374 votes. George Spencer won three further election victories and continued to represent the constituency until 1929. Although Sir Charles Seely had previously been a Member of Parliament, he did not stand again for Parliament after this defeat.



*Top – silk card of David Lloyd George
Above – 1946 picture postcard of
Llanystumdwy the boyhood home of
David Lloyd George*

¹ It is pretty tricky trying to pin down how two John Smith's relate to each other as the name is so common!

² If this Cyril was John's brother, he would have been 23 at this point.

³ A misspelling of Seely.

⁴ A misspelling of Whaite.

⁵ Represented since 2019 by Darren Henry.



THE VOTER'S NIGHTMARE.

Above - 1918 Punch cartoon which shows the choices facing voters in the general election of that year
Overleaf - 1918 article in The Sphere about the 1918 general election

