



Broken Heartlands is a political road trip through ten constituencies that tell the story of Labour's 'red wall' from Sebastian Payne an award winning journalist for the Financial Times. The red wall formed the foundation of Labour's vote in the Midlands and the North of England but these places backed Brexit and then dramatically turned Conservative for the first time in living memory at the 2019 election redrawing the electoral map in the process. While Brexit and the unpopularity of opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn are factors there is a nuanced story explored in Broken Heartlands of how these northern communities have fared through generational shifts struggling public services deindustrialisation and the changing nature of work. Featuring interviews with people from the red wall and the viewpoints of major political figures from both parties Payne explores the role these social and economic forces decades in the making have played in upheaving the political landscape. The scale of the change and challenge is clear from the book which incidentally chimes with changes among my own family members who answer to the demographic which Payne identifies as crucial to the change:

Middle class and wealthy Southern Labour party that offered nothing substantial to their Northern voters whilst in power and offers no hope whilst out of power. It was like the author wanted a particular story but only looked for things that fitted that, Started out that the working class were backing Cons but then kept saying it was because these seats were middle class that they went Con, So flawed but nicely written and as the writer says he wanted focus on those areas and it does that. Originally from the North East himself Payne set out to uncover the story of the red wall and issues that turned the seats blue, Broken Heartlands: A Journey Through Labour's Lost EnglandI grew up in Grimsby but left 20 years ago: It was a solid Labour seat then and I am amazed the Tories won the seat in 2019, English Sebastian Payne's 'Broken Heartlands' is a personal journey through the so called 'Red Wall' by one familiar with the area from birth: It is made up of sketches of various seats in the Red Wall most of which fell to the Conservatives at the 2019 election (Coventry North West being the exception), Essentially it is an attempt to answer the question of why these historically safe Labour seats turned towards the Conservative Party in 2019: The actors in the political drama are sought out and interviewed; not only the new and old MPs but also figures such as Alan Johnson Ian Lavery and even Tony Blair. Alongside these figures local people are also interviewed giving both a high and low level idea of what might have happened: Having lived in Grimsby for a while it was interesting to read about changes there: Payne writes with an engaging style mixing travelogue with political analysis I want to see some of the places he describes, Payne describes Battersea and Putney as though they had both been won by Cameron's Party in 2010 when Putney was a notable gain of the 2005 election, Similarly when Payne lists the Red Wall seats won by the Tories in 2017 he omits Stoke on Trent South: I would suggest that Sir Keir Starmer buy enough copies for all the Parliamentary Labour Party! English Payne has produced a very interesting book, He travels (mostly) through the North of England talking to people at all levels of society. Successful and failed candidates from 2019 activists former Labour grandees and ordinary joes and Joans. English This was a interesting read but oddly biased. Skirted around the racism issue completely. After reading

this it makes sense. Hard to see SKS having much appeal to Grimbarians. There are however a few issues which mar the book. There are a few awkward sentences. On the whole though this is a book well worth reading. Patterns emerge especially with a smug liberal.