

## **PATTERNS OF MIGRATION OF TEXTILE WORKERS INTO ACCRINGTON IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY**

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The inclusion of detailed information on place of birth in the census returns of 1851 has enabled many people to study general patterns of migration towards expanding industrial centres during the first half of the nineteenth century. However, to date, there have been few attempts to look at the patterns for specific occupational groups. A study of the cotton manufacturing and calico printing industry in Accrington in 1851 not only reflects the attractive power of the growing town for unskilled workers, within a relatively restricted locality, but also the wider catchment area for skilled and professional groups, (particularly within calico printing) many of whom came from other places associated with the industry.

Calico printing was established in Accrington before 1807. By 1851 there were five works in the town employing approximately 1,200 hands. There were also twelve integrated cotton spinning and weaving mills employing 1,380 hands.<sup>1</sup> These mills produced the calico cloth which was used in the calico printing industry. In the early 1850s there began a period of more rapid expansion in the town's industry as witnessed by the construction of new cotton mills and engineering works whose employees later in the decade far exceeded the numbers engaged in calico printing. Nevertheless in 1851 the industrial structure of Accrington was largely dominated by calico weaving and printing.

The town is covered by the 1851 census enumerators' returns for the townships of Old Accrington and New Accrington.<sup>2</sup> The townships were adjacent, and for most non-local government matters, were considered by the inhabitants simply as 'Accrington'. Therefore for the purpose of analysis the census enumerators' reports were combined. Information from this source included:

- (a) the place of birth of all members of a household
- (b) the age of all household members
- (c) the 'relationship to head of household' information giving a positive family structure
- (d) a detailed description of occupations.

This listing is the basis for showing the patterns of movement of the heads of household by assuming that birthplace is a surrogate for place of origin. In some cases the progress of families towards the town can be plotted by noting the birthplaces of children. But in no case is it possible to determine the total number, or duration of, intermediate residences. Also where heads of household were single men or where there were no children in a household either because of childless married couples or because of elderly married couples whose children had left home, it was not possible to identify any movements between place of birth and place of 1851 residence.

Information from the census returns on occupation is very detailed and indicates the vast range of skills and specialisations that comprised the cotton industry. A total of 127 different occupational descriptions were identified. This information also emphasises the diversity of occupational status within the industry, ranging in this example from unskilled labourers to large employers.

Because the intention was to ascertain differences, if any, in the migration patterns of professional, skilled and unskilled workers, the occupations were arranged into three appropriate socio-economic groups (SEG). These are a modification of Anderson's ten SEG definitions.<sup>3</sup> These modifications are shown below.

**Table 1. Definition of socio-economic groups (SEGs).**

Anderson's definitions		Accrington cotton workers	
	SEG		SEG
Professional + managerial	I	professional, managerial, supervisory	I
Clerical	II		
Trade	III		
Higher factory	IV	skilled	II
Artisan	V		
Lower factory	VI	unskilled	III
Labourer	VII		
Hand-loom weaver	VIII		
Unclassified	IX	excluded	
Not employed	X	excluded	

**N.B.** On the assumption that wages paid were appropriate to skills, lists of occupations and wage rates for 1849 and 1852 were used as a guide to place occupation within socio-economic groups.<sup>4</sup>

The group which has been designated professional, managerial and supervisory includes occupations such as 'master engraver', 'print works superintendent' and 'designer to calico printer'. Manufacturers were included also, one of whom described himself as a 'Turkey red dyer'. Occupations in the group composed of skilled workers in the industry include 'block printers', 'block cutters', 'mule spinners' and 'power loom overlookers'. Mechanics and millwrights are also included. The unskilled workers are mostly described as 'labourer at colour shop', 'labourer to

engraver', labourer at madder breaking' (a dye used in calico printing) or are employed as specialist machinery attendants such as beamers, rovers or twistors etc.

In 1851 Accrington had a population of 10,376 with 2,057 heads of household. A total of 823 heads of household (40.00%) were employed in the cotton industry. Of these 823 heads of household, 44.71% were in calico printing.

The allocation of the 823 heads of household into socio-economic groups is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Heads of household employed in cotton industry by socio-economic groups.**

	total	as %	no. of occupations
Professional etc.	52	6.32	26
Skilled	402	48.84	38
Unskilled	369	44.84	63
Total	823	100.00	127

The specialisation within the industry may be considered an influencing factor on migration, and particularly on the choice of destination. The complexity of this specialisation indicates that even unskilled occupations (albeit lower paid than skilled occupations) were still highly specific and could influence an individual's choice of destination.

The birthplaces of the groups are mostly within the region of England comprising Lancashire south of the river Lune, the West Riding of Yorkshire and north east Cheshire. This is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Birthplaces of heads of household by socio-economic groups.**

	Born Lancs., W.R. & N.E. Cheshire		born elsewhere		total no.	%
	no.	as %	no.	as %		
Professional etc.	48	92.31	4	7.69	52	100.00
Skilled	380	94.53	22	5.47	402	100.00
Unskilled	355	96.21	14	3.79	369	100.00
Total	783	95.14%	40	4.86%	823	100.00%

Of the forty persons, of all groups, who were born elsewhere, two of the professional group came from Carlisle and two (a 'manufacturing chemist' and a 'Turkey red dyer') came from France. Sixteen of the skilled workers came from other parts of England, from places as far apart as Carlisle and Mitcham, Surrey. (These two places were, incidentally, calico printing towns). Four came from Ireland, one from Scotland and one from Gibraltar. Nine of the unskilled workers came from towns and villages in the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire, four came from Ireland and one was born in Wales.

The distribution of professional and skilled workers are mainly to the N.E. and S.E. of Accrington (up to fifteen miles) with a less distinct distribution to the N.W. (up to thirty miles). The distribution pattern for

unskilled workers is weaker in that birthplaces are clustered within a ten mile radius with the N.E. and S.E. pattern much less clearly defined. Investigation into the reasons for the N.E. and S.E. distribution indicated that it followed a pattern similar to the distribution of calico printing and cotton mill sites throughout Lancashire and N.E. Cheshire (Table 4 and map).

**Table 4. Distribution of heads of household employed in calico printing in Accrington, born in calico printing towns.**

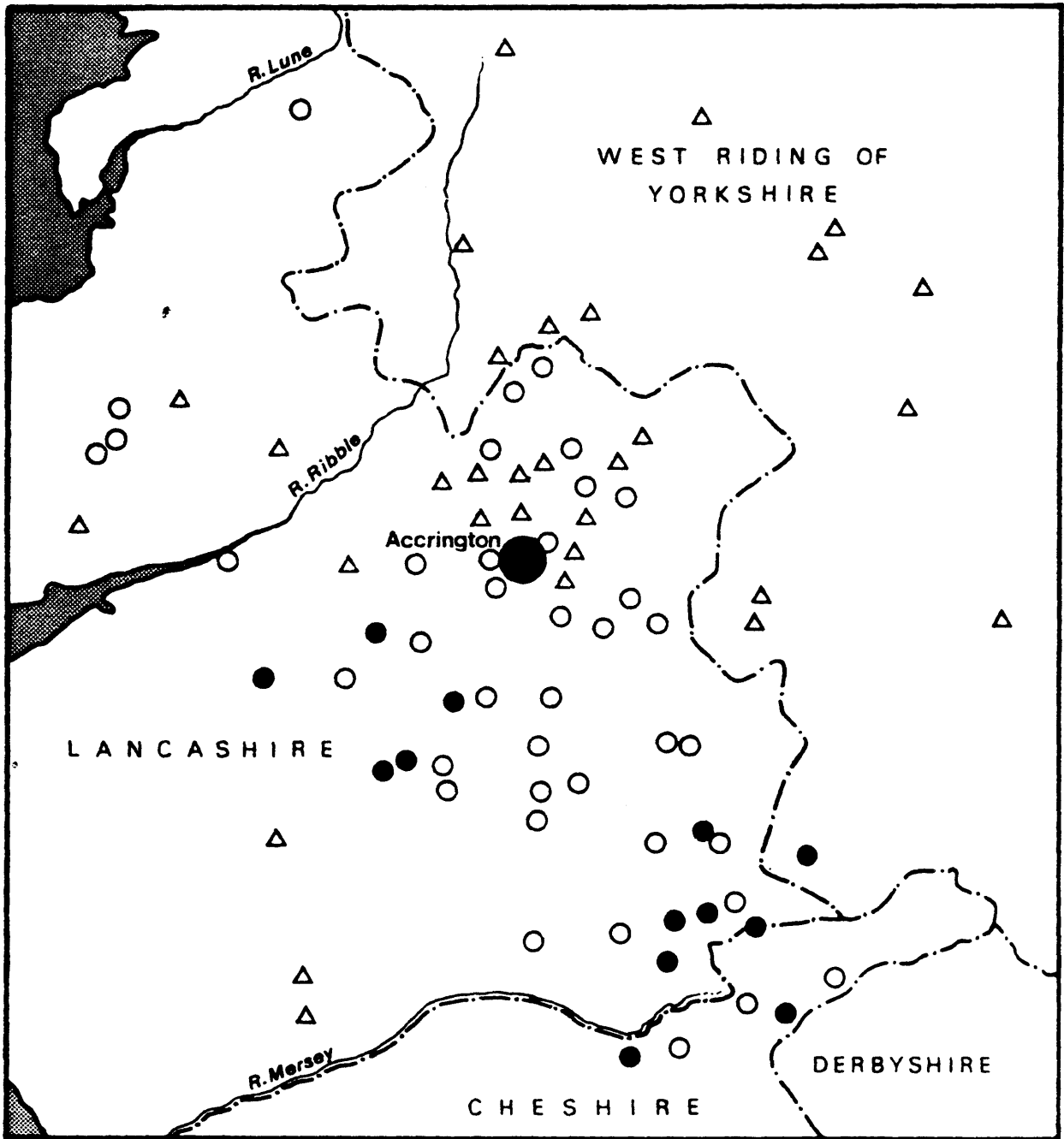
Group	calico printing workers <sup>1</sup>	born in calico printing towns	(2) as % of (1)
	(1)	(2)	
Professional	13	10	76.92
Skilled	191	115	60.21
Unskilled	164	80	48.78

<sup>1</sup> Does not include calico printing workers born in Accrington.

Of the eighty unskilled workers in calico printing born in calico printing towns, fifty-nine (73.75%) were born within ten miles of Accrington. They tended to migrate around Accrington in a circulatory manner. For example a labourer born in Church had his first child born in Accrington, then one born in Bradshaw (near Bolton), one in Accrington again, two in Haslingden, then a sixth and final child in Accrington. The remaining twenty-one unskilled workers were mostly from calico printing towns further afield to the South and East. Those calico printing workers born in non-calico printing towns and villages (eighty-four in total) were, with few exceptions such as individuals from Dublin, Liverpool and Norfolk migrants from the rural areas lying to the north and east of Accrington. Of these most were likely to have been economically distressed former hand loom weavers becoming absorbed into other mechanised, cotton occupations. 'From these districts many weavers went into the calico print trade as dyers, washers and labourers.'<sup>5</sup> It is significant that many unskilled migrants were from Lancashire and West Riding of Yorkshire rural villages and were present in Accrington in 1851 as 'dyers, washers and labourers'.

For the professional and skilled workers there is a distinctly different trend. During this period the calico printing industry was adjusting itself to many technological changes. Most important were the changes from block printing to machine printing and from natural dyes to synthetic aniline dyes. It was also subject to constant changes in fashion for materials, designs, colours etc. The industry also suffered much from financial speculators and imprudent investors.<sup>6</sup>

These adjustments and changes resulted in many financial failures of firms which by using hand block printing techniques were being rendered uneconomic and unviable by the competition of modernised firms using machine printing. These failures often precipitated movement of the workforce. These, particularly the skilled men, moved from their place to other similar places of work so that they could continue in their own oc-



- Town with calico and migrant
- Town with calico and no migrant
- △ Town with migrant and no calico

0 10mils

Distribution of calico printing towns and villages and places of origin of calico printing workers, 1851.

cupations. Examples of this are shown by the movement of a block printer, born in Salford, with four children born in Tottington, two born in Ramsbottom and one born in Accrington. The manager of a print works had one child born in Manchester, two in Stockport and one in Stubbins before moving to Accrington. All these towns had distinct calico printing in-

dustries during that period. Lengths of stay at one place varied, with up to five children born at one place. There is also documentary evidence that industrial action by block printers resisting the introduction of new techniques sometimes ended in wholesale lock-out and the subsequent movement of groups of workers.<sup>7</sup>

The picture is one of many skilled workers migrating in an effort to preserve their old skills in the face of competition from mechanised industry. The migration to Accrington could not always have been for higher wages. Accrington at that time was virtually ruled by the Hargreaves family of Broad Oak print works. 'The Master is owner of all the property and reigns like a king — gives very low wages', was one contemporary opinion.<sup>8</sup>

The association between closures and subsequent moves to Accrington is illustrated by two examples, firstly at Catterall, in the Fylde. A small calico printing works 'failed' in 1830. In 1851 there were eleven heads of household from Catterall living in Accrington and still employed in calico printing. The eleven were scattered throughout the town indicating an eventual dispersion over time. Secondly, at Ramsbottom, a calico printing works employing forty-nine hands 'failed' in 1850. In 1851 six heads of household from Ramsbottom were employed in calico printing in Accrington. With them were a further eight heads of household, born in Carlisle, but with children born in Ramsbottom. (It was from Carlisle a calico printing town, that the previous owner of the Ramsbottom works had originally migrated in 1846 accompanied by a group of skilled calico printing workers.)<sup>9</sup> This group of fourteen families were housed relatively close together and were mainly skilled workers.

Long distance migration to Accrington only amounted to a small proportion of total moves (7.69% or four persons in the professional group). However, those professional workers who moved to Accrington had a strong influence on the industry. Of the four persons, two were in the Carlisle/Ramsbottom group, the remaining two came from France. These highly skilled migrants were responsible for introducing innovations into the calico printing industry and much of the development of the modern industry in Accrington may be linked to their influence. This suggests that developments in an industry were not always spread by the diffusion of ideas in a contagious fashion, but that innovations could be transmitted over considerable distances by a single migratory move.

If one equates calico printing towns and villages with 'more advanced' communities the results of the study indicate some confirmation of the view Michael Anderson put forward that migrants born in more advanced communities were more likely to enter into the more secure and better paid jobs in a town.<sup>10</sup> But it is equally likely that calico printing workers did not always migrate for higher wages, but that there was a strong current of migrants who were seeking to retain their old skills, at whatever cost, in the face of technological change. They chose not to oppose change, nor to adapt to change but sought to employ their abilities and skills elsewhere.

It is clear that the nature of migration for all groups was affected by, and also influenced, the economic and industrial structure of Accrington and its dominance in the calico printing and cotton industry during a period of economic and technological change.

The inference is that each of the three groups of workers was affected differently, which in turn produced differences in migration patterns. These differences, for professional workers, were that they were closely involved in the technological development of the industry in addition to some individuals being adversely affected by the changes occurring throughout the industry. For skilled workers these were skills and traditions which were deeply affected by the changes and unrest in the industrial towns and so they tended to seek opportunities elsewhere within the industry. Finally, the unskilled workers were those who migrated to Accrington as a result of the economic distress in the rural areas of Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire and were drawn into the town seeking work within the developing calico printing and cotton industries.

#### NOTES

1. M. Rothwell, **Industrial Heritage, A Guide to the Industrial Archaeology of Accrington**, 1979, pp. 2-6.
2. Census Enumerator's Book 1851, Registrar's District, Accrington. PRO ref. H.O. 107 2250.
3. M. Anderson, **Family Structure in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire**, Cambridge 1971, p. 26.
4. Occupations and wage rates for 1849 were taken from G. Turnbull, **A History of the Calico Printing Industry in Great Britain**, 1951, p. 215. Average hours per day and wages paid at Broad Oak Printworks, Accrington in 1852 were taken from B. Hargreaves, **Recollections of Broad Oak**, 1882, p. 20.
5. A. Redford, **Labour Migration in England 1800-1850**, p. 41.
6. Turnbull, p. 70.
7. J. Graham, **A History of the Print Works in the Manchester Area**. First Published 1850, reprinted as a series of articles in **the Manchester Guardian**, 1894. On microfilm in Accrington reference library. Local History collection.
8. Turnbull, p. 71.
9. Graham, (material collected by A. Benyon, 1976).
10. M. Anderson, 'Urban migration in nineteenth-century Lancashire: some insights into two competing hypotheses', **Annales de Démographie Historique**, 1971. Reprinted as article in Unit 8. D301 Historical Data and the Social Sciences, Open University 1974 pp. 131-43.