

# POPULATION MOVEMENTS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORKING CLASS SUBURBS 1801-1851: THE CASE OF NOTTINGHAM

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## **Introduction**

It is generally accepted that the demographic growth of the industrialising towns and cities during the first half of the nineteenth century was dependent upon an inflow of population from the surrounding rural areas. During the second half of the nineteenth century the inhabitants of those, by now, maturing industrial settlements began to be grouped into socially segregated residential areas.<sup>1</sup> An earlier school of urban historians explained this in terms of the middle classes moving out to newly built suburbs.<sup>2</sup> This was not quite the case in Nottingham.

Until 1845, with the passing of the general enclosure act, the growth of the town's population was contained because the commons and commonable lands, which all but surrounded the built-up area of the old town, were not available for development. This is a well known aspect of Nottingham's history and need not be dwelt upon further.<sup>3</sup> However, partly because of the land famine, a number of industrialised villages situated beyond the municipal boundaries, such as Radford, Lenton, Hyson Green and Sneinton, began to form and grow during the first half of the nineteenth century. Effectively they can be seen as working class 'overspill' suburbs of the old town. The basic argument of this paper, therefore, is that the first stage of suburbanisation in Nottingham was essentially a working class one.

Although the point will not be explored in any detail here, it is worth noting that Nottingham's upper class suburbanisation did not take place until the second half of the nineteenth century. The first stage of that movement (apart from limited activities in the Park) had to wait until after the enclosures when the Arboretum was laid out and the upper classes began to move into what had previously been the Sandfield and what was to become the All Saints' parish.<sup>4</sup> This was followed in the 1870s by extensive upper class residential development in the Park.<sup>5</sup> Such house building activities took place between the old town and the industrialised suburban villages. So it was that the social ecology of Nottingham by the end of the nineteenth century had taken the form of distinct pockets of working class and upper class residential development, with some of the working class parts lying further out from the town centre than upper class parts.

This latter aspect of Nottingham's history has been outlined here only to stress the point that if we are fully to understand the growth patterns and structure of the mature industrial town, we have to understand what was happening during the first half of the nineteenth century.

By drawing on data available in the Registrar General's **Annual Reports of Births, Deaths and Marriages in England** for the years 1841-51, the printed volumes of the decennial censuses for 1801-51 and the unpublished enumerators' returns for the 1851 census, the aim of this paper is to explore the relationship between migration into Nottingham during the first half of the nineteenth century and the growth of these industrialised suburban villages in the Registration District of Radford (i.e. Radford, Lenton, Hyson Green and Sneinton). Three points should be made here. First, unless otherwise stated Nottingham and Radford are defined according to registration district boundaries. Second, the data on census enumerators' returns are based on a sample taken from every tenth household in Nottingham and every fifth household in Radford.<sup>6</sup> Third, little quantitative data from that source, or the printed volumes, directly answers the questions we would like to be answered. The statistics, therefore, are guides to trends, rather than precise quantitative measurements.

### **Population growth in Nottingham**

Let us turn initially to the overall population growth of Nottingham and Radford between 1801 and 1841. During these forty years the population total of Nottingham increased from 28,861 persons to 53,091, whilst that of Radford went from 3,831 to 22,473.<sup>7</sup> Thus in 1841, although Radford contained less than half of the population of Nottingham, the district had grown at a considerably faster rate (by 487 per cent compared to 84 per cent respectively). We do not have the information to apportion the causes of these two rates of growth between in-migration and natural increase (that is the increase of births over deaths). But we do know by how much each population grew between 1801-11, 1811-21, 1821-31 and 1831-41. This information is displayed in Table 1. If we assume that the percentage growth of population in England and Wales between each census represents the rate of natural increase in the country as a whole, and if we further assume that rates of natural increase between the census in Nottingham and Radford were the same as those for England and Wales, we can make some estimates of the breakdown of growth by natural increase and net migration in the two areas.<sup>8</sup> We can illustrate the technique with an example. Between 1801 and 1811 the overall population of Radford grew by 1,873 to 5,704. The population of England and Wales grew during the same period by 14 per cent. Had Radford's population grown at the rate experienced by England and Wales as a whole (i.e. its assumed rate of natural increase) then by 1811 it would have reached a population of 4,367. But in reality it did not. It had a population 5,704. The difference, 1,337 is assumed to be the result of net in-migration during the decade. By applying the technique to each inter censal period between 1801 and 1841, we find that Radford's total growth of 18,642 contained 13,544 net migrants (or 73 per cent of its overall growth). Nottingham's overall growth of 24,230, in contrast, contained, on a net basis, only 357 migrants (or only 1.5 per cent of its overall growth).

**Table 1 Population growth, 1801-41**

	Population	% increase England & Wales	Population increase if at same rate as England and Wales	Presumed migration
<b>Nottingham</b>				
1801	28,861	-	-	-
1811	34,253	14.0 (1801-11)	32,901	+1,352
1821	40,415	18.1 (1811-21)	40,453	-38
1831	50,680	15.3 (1821-31)	46,801	+3,879
1841	53,091	14.3 (1831-41)	57,927	-4,836
<b>Radford</b>				
1801	3,831	-	-	-
1811	5,704	14.0 (1801-11)	4,367	+1,337
1821	7,348	18.1 (1811-21)	6,736	-612
1831	16,568	15.8 (1821-31)	8,509	+8,059
1841	22,473	14.3 (1831-41)	18,937	+3,536

**Source:** **British Parliamentary Papers**, 1852-3, LXXXVII pt. II. p.603. **Population tables. Part II.** Ages, civil conditions etc., and inmates of workhouses, prisons etc. Vol. II England and Wales continued, Divisions VII-XI; Scotland; islands in the British Seas, p.603.

The Nottingham result is a surprising one. We would have expected a much higher proportion of in-migrants. To an extent we can use the more refined data available from the Registrar General's Reports for the 1841-51 decade to gauge the reliability of the assumptions we made for the 1801-41 period. During the decade 1841-51 the population of England and Wales grew by 12.6 per cent. The Registrar General's Reports provide us with the total figures of births and deaths in Nottingham and Radford between 1841 and 1850. On the basis of these figures Radford's population grew through natural increase by 13.8 per cent, during this period. But for Nottingham it was only 5.4 per cent. In other words, between 1841 and 1851 the rate of natural increase in Radford was similar to the rate of population increase in the country as a whole. That gives us confidence in the soundness of our assumptions used in the 1801-41 period and so for our conclusions. We can have much less confidence in our assumptions during that period for Nottingham. During the decade 1841-51 Nottingham had a much lower rate of natural increase than the growth rate of the country as a whole. If that pattern held good for the years between 1801-41, then the volume of migration into Nottingham will have been underestimated quite considerably. Nonetheless the estimated discrepancy between the net rates of population moving into Nottingham and Radford is so great that we are forced to admit that migration was a much more powerful factor accounting for the growth of Radford than for Nottingham. To an extent the 1841-51 data bear out this point: during this decade Radford's population grew by 5.3 per cent through net migration compared to Nottingham's 4.6 per cent.

## Origin of migrants

We turn now to ask about the birthplaces of those migrating into Nottingham and Radford. The printed data from the 1851 census provide some help as well as presenting a major problem. According to the census, 58.4 per cent of the population of the Borough of Nottingham (an area somewhat smaller than that of the Registration District) aged twenty and over had not been born there.<sup>9</sup> Although this was a relatively low figure compared with say Liverpool (77.4 per cent of the adult population was migrant in 1851) or Manchester (72.2 per cent) it is still nonetheless higher than might have been expected from the discussion in the previous section.<sup>10</sup> We have already accepted that our estimates of migration into Nottingham are understated. But we have also stressed that our figures are **net** not **gross**. In 1851 the adult population of Nottingham could have contained both a relatively low population of **net** migrants and a high proportion of resident adult migrants, provided that during the first half of the nineteenth century there had been a substantial **gross** exodus of population from Nottingham of those born in the town. We shall subsequently go on to argue that that was indeed the case and that there was a substantial movement of Nottingham born people into Radford.

Unfortunately the printed volumes of the 1851 census do not provide us with information about the numbers of adults living in Radford who were born there, so that no direct comparison can be made with Nottingham *vis a vis* the proportion of migrants residing in both areas. What we can do, however, is to draw up a table based on the counties of birth of the adults in the two Registration Districts provided in the printed volumes.

We can see from the Table that nearly 80 per cent of the adults in Nottingham and over 85 per cent of the adults in Radford were born in Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Derbyshire.<sup>11</sup> As the boundaries of Leicestershire and Derbyshire are in close proximity to Nottingham, it can be argued that the migrants generally travelled only relatively short distances. It can also be argued that there were proportionately more of these short distance migrants in Radford than Nottingham.

By turning now to the enumerators' schedules and examining the places of birth of the household heads, we are for the first time able to compare the proportion of migrants in Nottingham directly with those in Radford.<sup>12</sup> In Nottingham 58.8 per cent of heads were migrants compared to 84.5 per cent in Radford. This provides us with supporting evidence of the greater impact, at least proportionately, of migration in Radford than Nottingham. We can also appreciate the scale of movement of population from Nottingham to Radford. Of all the migrant household heads in Radford, 29.4 per cent came from Nottingham.

If we assume that between 1801 and 1851 Radford received on a net basis 14,729 migrants (13,544 [1801-41] + 1,185 [1841-51]), and if we also assume - on the basis of the birthplace of household heads - that some 30 per cent of them were born in Nottingham, then between 1801 and 1851 at least 4,400 were Nottingham born. Such a figure represents 15 per cent of the town's population.

**Table 2 Birthplaces of inhabitants, aged 20 and over in Nottingham and Radford 1851**

Place of Birth	Nottingham %	Radford %
Nottinghamshire	65.0	68.9
Leicestershire and Derbyshire	14.6	17.4
Rest of England and Wales	15.5	11.5
Scotland	0.7	0.5
Ireland	3.3	1.2
Elsewhere	0.9	0.5

**Source:** **British Parliamentary Papers**, 1852-3, LXXXVIII, pt. II. **Population tables. Part II.** Ages, civil conditions etc., and inmates of workhouses, prisons etc. Vol. II England and Wales continued, Divisions VII-XI; Scotland; islands in the British Seas, p.603.

Such a figure fits in well with the argument advanced earlier that a substantial number of Nottingham born people left the town and their places were taken by those born outside. That a majority of adults in the town were migrants in 1851 is thus compatible with low net in-migration.

### Age profile of migrants

We need to say something about the age of migrants when they moved into Nottingham or Radford. There is nothing we can say about that for the period before 1841, but we can say a little for the period 1841-51. The argument is, however, somewhat tortuous. It is based on a comparison of the population of the two areas broken down by age groups and presented in the Registrar General's Report of 1849 and the 1851 printed census volumes. Thus we have for Nottingham and Radford the populations for 1841 and 1851 given in five yearly age bands (-4, 5-9, 10-14, etc): see Table 3.

Those in the under five age band would have graduated to the 10-14 band by 1851; those from the 5-9 age band would have graduated into the 15-19 age band by 1851; etc. For convenience we shall call these 'graduating age bands'. Where there is no migration each graduating age band would be expected to be smaller in 1851 than 1841. The loss would be accounted for by mortality. But if there is an **increase** in the graduating age bands (that is to say of the numbers of 20-24 year olds in 1851 is **greater** than the numbers of 10-14 year olds in 1841) then the increase can only be accounted for by net in-migration.

In applying this approach to Nottingham we find that in 1841, there were 5,954 persons aged under five in the town. In 1851 there were 6,513 persons aged 10-14. This must mean that on a net basis between the censuses at least 559 persons who had moved into Nottingham were aged under 14. Furthermore there were 5,443 inhabitants aged 10-14 in 1841 in the town; in 1851 there were 6,134 persons aged 20-24. This must mean that between the censuses at least 389 persons aged between 10 and 24 moved into Nottingham. By adding these

**Table 3 Population increases by age cohort, Nottingham and Radford 1841-51**

<b>Nottingham</b>						
Age range in 1841	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29
No. in 1841	6,195	5,954	5,745	5,443	5,235	4,453
Age range in 1851	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39
No. in 1851	5,896	6,513	6,134	5,026	4,026	3,694
Difference 1841/51	-299	+559	+389	-417	-1,193	-759
<b>Radford</b>						
Age range in 1841	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29
No. in 1841	3,214	2,878	2,581	2,112	1,892	1,757
Age range in 1851	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39
No. in 1851	3,008	2,908	2,609	2,019	1,764	1,649
Difference 1841-51	-206	+30	+28	-93	-128	-108

**Source:** **Eighth Annual Report of Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages in England**, HMSO, 1849, p.228; **British Parliamentary Papers**, 1852-3, LXXXVIII, pt. II. **Population tables. Part II.** Ages, civil conditions etc., and inmates of workhouses, prisons etc. Vol.II England and Wales continued, Divisions VII-XI; Scotland; islands in the British Seas, p.533.

two figures of net migration together we can argue that between 1841 and 1851 at least 948 of the town's in-migrants were aged under 25. As earlier calculations have indicated that, on a net basis, 2,465 people came into Nottingham during the decade, we may estimate that perhaps 39 per cent of them were under 25.

If we undertake a similar exercise for Radford we find that the 1851 age group of 15-19 (2,908) was only 30 more than the 1841 5-9 age groups; and that the 1851 20-24 age group (2,609) was only 28 more than the 1841 10-14 age group. Thus we can assume that at least 58 of the migrants into Radford between 1841 and 1851 were aged under 25. On the basis that Radford received on a net basis some 1,185 migrants during the decades, we can assume that at a minimum only 2.5 per cent were aged under 25.

Too much reliance should not be placed on these figures, but the discrepancy between Nottingham and Radford estimates of the proportion of migrants aged under 25 are so great that we must be compelled to admit that generally migrants into Nottingham were younger, on the whole, than those into Radford.

In this section we attempt to relate the migration patterns into Nottingham with those into Radford, drawing on data from the 1851 enumerators' schedules. If we take those household heads in Nottingham in 1851 born outside the town, and with at least one offspring living in the household, we find that in 63 per cent of cases the only or eldest child was born in Nottingham. On the assumption – clearly not valid in every case – that the eldest child in residence

on the night of the census was the only or first born child, we can argue that the majority of migrants into Nottingham either came in an unmarried state or before having a child.

If we examine comparable figures for Radford we find that only 41.7 per cent of migrant heads with at least one child in 1851 had a presumed eldest child born in Radford. The assumption to be made from this is that migrants into Radford were much more likely to have moved in as part of a nuclear family than was the case of those moving into Nottingham. Such a view correlates well with our earlier findings that migrants into Nottingham tended to be younger than those moving into Radford.

We have already demonstrated that a high proportion of Radford immigrants came from Nottingham. Radford was an overspill area for the town. Yet 48.5 per cent of Nottingham born heads in Radford, with at least one child within the family unit, had their only or eldest children born in Radford. In other words, Nottingham born immigrants were **more** likely to have their first child born in Radford than all migrants into Radford generally. Here we can detect a pattern of Nottingham born adults seeking accommodation in Radford before their first child was born.

If we take non-Nottingham born migrants with at least one child at home living in Radford, we find only 39 per cent had their only or first child born in Radford, i.e. a much higher proportion of such migrants moved into Radford as part of a family unit than was the case with Nottingham born heads. Of these non-Nottingham born migrant heads in Radford, 21 per cent had their only or first child born in Nottingham. This suggests a pattern of migrants moving into Nottingham before starting a family (whether or not they moved into Nottingham in an unmarried state, we do not know) having at least one child born in the town and then 'overspilling' into Radford.

But 40 per cent of non-Nottingham born migrant heads in Radford had their only or first child born outside of Nottingham or Radford. Twenty-seven per cent of such children were born in the same locality as the head. We do not know whether they came directly to Radford from their original birthplace or via some other locality.

## **Conclusion**

From this barrage of statistics certain trends appear. It would seem that Nottingham's growth in population during the first half of the nineteenth century – rapid though it was in terms of its earlier history – gained relatively little from net migration. Having said that, there are grounds for thinking that in Nottingham's case gross migration was considerably in excess of net. There was a substantial out-migration from the town, including a substantial proportion of Nottingham born persons, moving to areas like Radford, to find accommodation and start their families. Such an out-migration was somewhat more than offset, however, by an inflow into Nottingham of presumably younger single persons largely from the surrounding countryside.

Many of those moving into Nottingham came to seek work in the town, especially in the lace industry. Whereas 59 per cent of all household heads in Nottingham in 1851 were born outside the town, 63 per cent of heads who were lacemakers were born outside. Lacemaking was an expanding trade. Framework knitting by the 1830s was not. This may explain why in 1851 only 48 per cent of framework knitting heads had been born outside the town.

If there was an influx of young single migrants into Nottingham, this possibly accounts for the fact that in 1851 these were 0.41 lodgers per household in Nottingham compared to 0.25 lodgers per household in Radford. Sixty-two per cent of lodgers in Nottingham in 1851 had not been born in the town.<sup>13</sup>

Whereas 14 per cent of Nottingham households can be designated as upper class only 7 per cent of Radford households could have been so classified in 1851.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, whereas 19 per cent of Radford's heads were lacemakers and 16 per cent were framework knitters, only 7 per cent of Nottingham household heads were lacemakers although 16 per cent were framework knitters. These figures are consistent with the argument that there was a significant movement of either married couples with or without children belonging to the working classes moving into Radford.

We should, perhaps, note here that Chapman had argued that superior working class houses were built in the Radford area, although Hawkesley – the nineteenth century Nottingham engineer, social enquirer and reformer – stressed that many of the houses in Radford were little better than some of the worst slums in the old town.<sup>15</sup>

One of the characteristics of the maturing industrialised towns of the nineteenth century was the development of suburbia. In Nottingham the first manifestation of this was, as we have argued here, the development of working class rather than upper class suburbs. There was an attempt in the 1830s to develop the Park as an upper class suburb, but this largely failed.<sup>16</sup> The working class overspill suburbs were essentially the result of the land shortages in the old town brought about by the failure to enclose the commons and commonable lands. The subsequent enclosure of those lands resulted in some working class suburban development in the Meadows and St Ann's. But the upper class development on the old Sandfield (between Parliament Street and the Forest) took place between the old town and Hyson Green, Lenton and the industrial village of Radford. When the upper class development of the Park took place in the 1870s that too took place between the old town and Lenton and Radford. So it was that the social geography of Nottingham at the end of the nineteenth century took the form of pockets of residential development based on class, rather than in the form of bands with the highest social groupings living further from the town centre than the lowest. The nineteenth century geographical distribution of social structure in Nottingham was thus more complex than some of the simpler models of nineteenth century urban growth provided by geographers would suggest.



## NOTES

1. For discussion of this see H. Carter, **The study of urban geography**, 1972, especially chapters 2 and 9.
2. L. Mumford, **The city in history**, 1966, pp.554-61.
3. For example, R.M. Butler, 'The common lands of the Borough of Nottingham', **Transactions of the Thoroton Society**, LIV, 1950; J.D. Chambers, **The making of modern Nottingham**, Nottingham Journal, 1945, chapter 2 pp ; R.A. Church, **Economic and social change in a Midland town**, 1966, pp.162-92.
4. See R. Smith, **The process of inner city housing regeneration: a micro study**, Trent Papers in Environmental Studies No.1, Trent Polytechnic, pp.15-20.
5. K. Brand, **The Park Estate, Nottingham**, Nottingham Civic Society, N.D., especially pp.25-9.
6. The use of the census enumerators' book is well documented. See in particular E. Higgs, **Making sense of the census: the manuscript returns for England and Wales, 1801-1901**, HMSO, 1989 and E.A. Wrigley (ed), **Nineteenth century society: essays in the use of quantitative methods for the study of social data**, 1972.
7. **British Parliamentary Papers**, 1852-3, LXXXVI, **Population tables. Part 1**. Numbers of the inhabitants in the years 1801, 1811, 1821, 1831, 1841 and 1851. Vol II England and Wales continued, Divisions VII to XI; Scotland; islands in the British seas; appendix; ecclesiastical divisions of England and Wales, pp.32-3.
8. This was a technique employed by E.M. Sigsworth, 'The City of York', **Victoria County History of the County of York**, (ed) P.M. Tillott, University of London, Institute of Historical Research, 1961, p.225.
9. **British Parliamentary Papers**, 1852-3, LXXXVIII, pt.II. **Population tables. Part II**. Ages, civil conditions etc., and inmates of workhouses, prisons etc. Vol. II England and Wales continued, Divisions VII-XI; Scotland; islands in the British Seas, p.605.
10. **British Parliamentary Papers**, 1852-3, LXXXVIII, pt.II. **Population tables. Part II**, p.664.
11. These figures, of course, include those born in Nottingham and Radford. For convenience we shall refer to all persons aged 20+ as adults.
12. For a more detailed study of household and family structures in Nottingham in 1851 see R. Smith, 'Early Victorian household structure: a case study of Nottinghamshire', **International Review of Social History**, XV 1970, pp.69-84.
13. Smith, 'Victorian household structure', p.73.
14. For definition of social class used in this sense see, Smith, 'Victorian household structure', p.72.
15. S.D. Chapman, 'Working class housing in Nottingham during the industrial revolution', **Transactions of the Thoroton Society**, LXVII, 1963, pp.
16. Brand, **The Park Estate**, p.9-13.

## Editors' Note

With regret we note that Roger Smith died in a motoring accident earlier this year. At the time he was in the process of revising this article for publication. Unable to finish this task we are happy to publish the author's initial version as a tribute to his work. In his revision Professor Smith had intended to point out that in comparing local or regional trends with those of the country as a whole, not all will parallel the national experience. Indeed, in the mid-nineteenth century, for example, both Nottingham and Radford experienced higher mortality rates than England and Wales as a whole, with Nottingham higher than Radford. Equally, fertility in Radford was at a higher level than in Nottingham (Smith, 'Early Victorian household structure', pp.77-8). However, the methodology adopted by Professor Smith is clearly useful in exploring the structural components of demographic change in the nineteenth century and as such could usefully be applied to other communities or alternatively at a broader regional level (see for example, R. Lawton, 'Urbanization and population change in nineteenth-century England', in J. Patten (ed), **The expanding city**, 1983, pp.179-224; R. Lawton, 'Population', in J. Langton and R.J. Morris (eds), **Atlas of industrializing Britain 1780-1914**, 1986, pp.10-29).