
Background migration: the Irish (and other strangers) in mid-Victorian Hertfordshire

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Abstract

Relatively few Irish had settled in Hertfordshire by the time of the 1851 census. Those that did were older, more skilled, less residentially segregated, and more likely to be married to a local person than were the Irish-born in London and other large cities in Britain. The Irish-born in Hertfordshire were also less skilled and less intermarried than were county residents born in Scotland, Wales and Yorkshire. All of these migrant groups were very rare in rural areas of the county and very few of the migrants were involved in agriculture, despite the passage of large numbers of Irish harvesters through the county each year.

Introduction

In the early nineteenth century the Irish knew Hertfordshire and Hertfordshire knew the Irish. Hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of Irish harvest migrants passed through the county each year. The experience was not always mutually agreeable. In 1830, for example, it was reported that

The town of Barnett has for some days been the scene of much distress, from the accumulation of poor Irish detained there, deprived by bad weather of employment as hay-makers. The generosity of Mr Byng, and other gentlemen, who have subscribed liberally for their relief, had hitherto kept them quiet, but the ordinary distributions were this day discontinued. The consequence was much disappointment on the part of the Irish, and at five o'clock yesterday nearly 2,000 met together, and surrounded the premises of a gentleman, residing in Hadley, demanding an order for bread, and threatening vengeance in the event of a refusal.... The cry of 'Bread or blood' was then raised, and the neighbouring shops were immediately broken into, the property scattered, and the lives of the proprietors threatened.¹

The local gentry raised a force of two hundred, captured the ringleaders and drove the rest from the town. But that was not the end, since 'the violence of the country people against the Irish was as great, that much exertion was necessary to save them from their anger. As it is, it is thought that many of them must be seriously hurt.'² On a lighter note, just a few years later Thomas Newcome, rector of Shenley, near Barnet, and J.M. Winter, a local J.P., replied to the

1 'Irish distress in England', *Dublin Mercantile Advertiser*, 28 June 1830.

2 'Irish distress in England', *Dublin Mercantile Advertiser*, 28 June 1830.

Poor Law Commissioners that ‘hundreds of Irish, with wives and babies, (and to ly-in sometimes, and to lie about, and lie in every sense,) come at hay-time’.³

Few of these harvest migrants seem to have stayed in Hertfordshire. In 1841 the published census returns recorded only 526 persons of Irish birth residing in the county, and in 1851 not many more, just 628. The Irish-born in Hertfordshire were only a tiny fraction of the Irish living in England, not quite 0.2 per cent in 1841, closer to 0.1 per cent in 1851. The Irish-born were also a rarity in Hertfordshire: there were only three to four Irish-born per thousand inhabitants in both 1841 and 1851. Although the English residents of the county may have seen many Irish pass through, very few had Irish neighbours.

This study takes a closer look at the relatively few Irish-born in Hertfordshire. It will be shown that they represent what might be called the ‘other Irish’ in mid-Victorian Britain. A long tradition of research, discussed in the following section, has used the manuscript enumerators’ books from the 1851 census (and subsequent censuses) to investigate various aspects of Irish communities in the cities of Britain. This work has been focused, and rightly so, on the urban poor, many of whom had just escaped the ravages of famine in Ireland. The census schedules made it possible to see where the Irish lived, with whom they lived, and what they did to make a living. Yet few studies have strayed much beyond the cities to examine those of Irish birth who lived in the small towns or in the countryside of Britain.⁴ There were not nearly so many of them. In 1851 most of the Irish-born in Britain lived in just a handful of cities, notably London, Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow. In all, four-fifths of the Irish-born resided in cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants. That few Irish migrants had settled in the English countryside is itself significant. In Ireland the vast majority of the population lived in the countryside and what skills it had were agricultural in nature. Moreover, southern English agricultural wages were more than double the level prevalent in Ireland and farm employment was probably more regular during the year.⁵ It may thus be interesting to have a closer look at those Irish men and women who did settle in rural England.

3 *Report from His Majesty’s Commissioners for inquiring into the administration and practical operation of the Poor Laws*. BPP 1834 XXXIII, appendix B, 224a. On Irish harvest migration see J.H. Johnson, ‘Harvest migration from nineteenth-century Ireland’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 41 (1967), 97–112; B.M. Kerr, ‘Irish seasonal migration to Great Britain, 1800–1838’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 3 (1943), 365–80; C. Ó Gráda, ‘Demographic adjustment and seasonal migration in the west of Ireland’, in L.M. Cullen and F. Furet eds, *Ireland and France* (Paris, 1981), 181–93; and A. O’Dowd, *Spalpeens and tattie hokers* (Blackrock, 1991).

4 Exceptions here are D.M. MacRaild, *Culture, conflict and migration* (Liverpool, 1998); Y. Shimizu, ‘A study of family structure of Irish immigrants in Scotland at the late nineteenth century’, *St Andrew’s University Bulletin of the Research Institute*, 32 (2006), 29–58; Y. Shimizu, ‘A study of family structure of Irish immigrants in England and Wales at the late nineteenth century’, *St Andrew’s University Bulletin of the Research Institute*, 3 (2007), 1–46 (the articles by Shimizu are in Japanese).

5 Evidence given to the English poor law commissioners shows rural wages in Hertfordshire of 10 to 12 shillings per week (*Report Poor Laws*, appendix B, 217a–227a). Bowley’s estimates for weekly wages in Ireland, taken from evidence to the Irish poor enquiry, are from 3s. 8d. in Connaught to 5s. 4d. in Ulster: A.L. Bowley, *Wages in the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century* (Cambridge, 1900), 50. In 1830, returns for wages across Irish counties showed a range from 8d. to 12d. per day, which would be 4–6 shillings per week: *Report of the Select Committee on the State of the Poor in Ireland*. BPP 1830 VII [Cd.], p. 64.

Studies of the Irish in mid-Victorian Britain have generally taken as their reference population the Irish elsewhere, in other British cities, in America, or in Ireland itself. Here the Hertfordshire Irish will also be seen in these contexts, but they will, in addition, be compared to other migrant groups in Hertfordshire, notably those people who were born in Scotland, Wales and Yorkshire. This article thus represents a small step towards 'four nations' history.⁶ (Throughout the article Yorkshire will, for convenience, be treated as a 'nation'. Although some from Yorkshire, as well as some from other parts of England, may regard this as only right and proper, our purpose is to take Yorkshire as a source of English migrants more or less the same distance from Hertfordshire as was Wales.)

The choice of Hertfordshire has, in the first instance, been one of convenience. Thanks to the diligent and careful efforts of many local historians and the entrepreneurship of the Centre for Regional and Local History at the University of Hertfordshire, an easily useable transcription of the 1851 census enumerators' books for the county is available on a single compact disc.⁷ That said, Hertfordshire is arguably representative of the swathe of largely rural counties that stretches across the south of England. While it had several towns, none of them had as many as 10,000 inhabitants. The county had regions that reflected a variety of economic activities. Part was almost purely agricultural; part had significant pockets of rural industrial activity, most notably straw plaiting and straw hat making; part was within metropolitan London's orbit.⁸

One feature of Hertfordshire, and of much of southern England, that deserves emphasis is that it was an area of net out-migration. In 1851 there were 44,109 adults who were born in Hertfordshire and living elsewhere in England and Wales as against 34,170 adults who were born elsewhere and living in the county.⁹ Hence the individuals born in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Yorkshire who are the subject of this article were swimming against the stream. It will be suggested that, relative to the major flows of long-distance migration in the mid-Victorian United Kingdom, they formed a part of a sort of background migration comparable to the cosmic microwave background radiation in the universe. This migration was at a very low level, was probably very old, and may have looked the much the same from any direction.

The historiography of the Irish in Britain

The literature on the Irish in mid nineteenth-century Britain is large and has been ably summarised by a number of authors.¹⁰ This work has drawn on a wide variety of sources:

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- 6 H. Kearney, 'Four nations history in perspective', in H. Brocklehurst and R. Phillips eds, *History, nationhood and the question of Britain* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2004), 10–19.
 - 7 N. Goose ed., *The Hertfordshire census 1851: family history edition* [CD-ROM] (Hatfield, 2005).
 - 8 N. Goose, 'Introduction', in D. Short ed., *An historical atlas of Hertfordshire* (forthcoming).
 - 9 Census of Great Britain, 1851, Part II, Population tables, BPP 1852-3 LXXXVIII, Pt I, ccxc–ccxcvi.
 - 10 D. Fitzpatrick, "'A peculiar tramping people": the Irish in Britain, 1801–70', in W.E. Vaughan ed., *A new history of Ireland, V, Ireland under the Union, I, 1801–70* (Oxford, 1989), 623–60; B. Collins, 'The Irish in Britain, 1780–1921', in B.J. Graham and L. Proudfoot eds, *A historical geography of Ireland* (London, 1993), 366–98; G. Davis, 'The Irish in Britain, 1815–1939', in A. Bielenberg ed., *The Irish diaspora* (Harlow and New York, 2000), 19–36; D.M. MacRaild, *Irish migrants in modern Britain 1750–1922* (Houndmills, 1999). E. Delany, *Demography, state and society* (Liverpool,

newspapers, national and local government documents, workhouse admission registers and the deliberations of poor law authorities, parish registers and other records of the Catholic church. But one source, the manuscript census enumerators' books, has been particularly prominent since its use was pioneered in the late 1950s by the historical geographer Richard Lawton in his study of the Irish in Liverpool.¹¹ Lawton was particularly concerned with where the Irish lived and what they did for a living. Subsequent work, partly under the influence of Michael Anderson's study of Preston, has also been concerned with the structure of the households in which Irish migrants lived.¹²

There has been a steady stream of studies based, at least in part, on the census enumerators' books. In addition to Liverpool and Preston, this work has dealt with the Irish in Bradford, Greenock, Leeds, London, Cardiff, Dundee, Paisley, York, Bristol, Birmingham, Stafford, and districts in Lancashire and Durham.¹³ Most researchers have used the 1851 census, though some have also drawn on the 1861 and 1871 censuses in order to examine questions of mobility, both social and residential.

What has been learned? The Irish in mid-Victorian Britain were, as Fitzpatrick has put it, 'over-represented among the unskilled and semi-skilled workers, under-represented among

2000), ch. 1, places Irish emigration in the context of general theories of migration as well as surveying briefly the literature. For an older overview see G.O. Tuathaigh, 'The Irish in nineteenth-century Britain: problems of integration', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Ser., 31 (1981), 149–73. A. O'Day, 'Revising the diaspora', in D.G. Boyce and A. O'Day eds, *The making of modern Irish history: revisionism and the revisionist controversy* (London and New York, 1996), 189–215, sets the Irish in Britain in the context of the larger emigration from Ireland. For a now somewhat dated bibliography, see also M. Hartigan and M. Hickman, *The history of the Irish in Britain, a bibliography* (London, 1986).

- 11 R. Lawton, 'Irish immigration to England and Wales in the mid-nineteenth century', *Irish Geography*, IV (1959), 35–54. Colin Pooley has also studied the Irish in Liverpool: 'The Irish in Liverpool circa 1850–1940', in M. Engman ed., *Ethnic identity in urban Europe* (Aldershot, 1992), 71–97.
- 12 M. Anderson, *Family structure in nineteenth century Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1971). Anderson's study was not concentrated on the Irish in Preston; there just were a lot of them in the town.
- 13 C. Richardson, 'Irish settlement in mid-nineteenth-century Bradford', *Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research*, XX (1968), 40–57; R.D. Lobban, 'The Irish community in Greenock in the nineteenth century', *Irish Geography*, VI (1971), 270–81; W.J. Lowe, 'Household structure and overcrowding among the Lancashire Irish', *Histoire Sociale*, IX, no. 19 (1977), 45–58; T. Dillon, 'The Irish in Leeds', *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, CXIX (1973), 1–28; C. Richardson, 'The Irish in Victorian Bradford', *The Bradford Antiquary*, XLV (1971), 294–316; L.H. Lees, *Exiles of Erin: Irish migrants in Victorian London* (Manchester, 1979); C. R. Lewis, 'The Irish in Cardiff in the mid-nineteenth century' *Cambria*, VII, no. 1 (1980), 13–41; B. Collins, 'Irish emigration to Dundee and Paisley', in J.M. Goldstrom and L.A. Clarkson eds, *Irish population, economy and society* (Oxford, 1981), 196–212; F. Finnegan, *Poverty and prejudice: a study of Irish immigrants in York* (Cork, 1982); D. Large, 'The Irish in Bristol: a census enumeration', in R. Swift and S. Gilley eds, *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London, 1985), 37–58; W.J. Lowe, *The Irish in mid-Victorian Lancashire* (Bern, 1989); J. Herson, 'Irish migration and settlement in Victorian Britain: a small town perspective', in Swift and Gilley eds, *Irish in the Victorian City*, 84–103; C. Chinn, "'Sturdy Catholic emigrants": the Irish in early Victorian Birmingham', in Swift and Gilley eds, *The Irish in Victorian Britain* (Dublin, 1999), 52–74; F. Neal, 'Irish settlement in the north-east and north-west of England in the mid-nineteenth century', in Swift and Gilley eds, *Irish in Victorian Britain*, 75–101; J. Herson, 'Migration, "community", or integration? Irish families in Victorian Stafford', in Swift and Gilley eds, *Irish in Victorian Britain*, 156–89; F. Neal, 'The foundations of the Irish settlement in Newcastle upon Tyne: the evidence in the 1851 census', in D.M. MacRaild ed., *The Great Famine and beyond: Irish migrants in Britain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Dublin, 2000), 71–93.

skilled and professional people'.¹⁴ That is, they were poor. They generally lived in close proximity to others of Irish ancestry, leading to the formation of largely Irish neighbourhoods. Their housing was often of poor quality and situated near the industrial establishments at which they found work. Many were young and single, and lived as lodgers, often with other Irish people. When they married, they also tended to choose partners who were also Irish.

Different interpretations have been put on these facts. Fitzpatrick has emphasised the transience of the Irish in Britain. Not only did they move about within Britain, many considered residence in Britain only a staging post for emigration to America. Fitzpatrick's interpretation has not gone unchallenged. Joe Lee has questioned the underlying evidence, while Mary Hickman has challenged what she calls the 'segregation/assimilation model' on which she claims it is based.¹⁵

One might also suggest the limitations of the literature that draws on the census-based studies for other reasons. First, as noted above, it neglects the small minority of Irish immigrants in Britain who lived in small towns or in the countryside. Whilst not nearly so numerous as the Irish in London, Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow, this Irish-born population is likely to have been different from the urban poor. Second, the studies that have drawn mainly on the 1851 census are likely to be heavily influenced by the distress migration from Ireland in the late 1840s. Of course, the fate of those fleeing the famine is of interest in itself, but it might well distort any attempt to draw conclusions about the nature of Irish settlement in Britain in the more normal times before the famine, and in later decades as well.

This paper will cast light on the minority of Irish-born outside the big cities. It will also suggest that they may better represent some older pathways of migration to Britain.

The Irish (and other strangers) in Hertfordshire

In 1851, householders in England were required to record their birthplace, both the county and locality. For those born in Ireland, Scotland and Wales, all that was required in the birthplace column was the larger entity. Any information on county or place of birth, which is available for three-eighths of the Irish entries, was a bonus. A few of the localities given were difficult to locate, due to variant spellings or the existence of several places with the same or similar name.

Not all of the Irish-born were retained for analysis. (Similar procedures were used for those born in Scotland, Wales and Yorkshire.). Of the three groups excluded, two were not migrants in the usual sense. First, there were a small number described as visitors and

14 Fitzpatrick, "'A peculiar tramping people'", 639.

15 J.J. Lee, 'The Irish diaspora in the nineteenth century', in L.M. Geary and M. Kelleher eds, *Nineteenth-century Ireland: a guide to recent research* (Dublin, 2005), 182–222; M. Hickman, 'Alternative historiographies of the Irish in Britain: a critique of the segregation/assimilation model', in Swift and Gilley eds, *Irish in Victorian Britain*, 236–53.

travellers. The visitors included an 18 year-old needlewoman coming to see a widowed coal dealer in Baldock; a 70 year-old widow visiting an army captain and his family in Hertford and the Marquis of Sligo, his wife and infant daughter staying with the M.P. Henry Baillie near St Albans. A handful of travellers, not gypsies but people in transit, were staying in various towns. The second group excluded were students, among whom were 16 attending Christ's Hospital School in Hertford, five attending St Edmund's College in Standon, and two at the East India College near Ware. It is possible that some of the visitors, travellers and students were resident elsewhere in Hertfordshire or elsewhere in England, but the assumption here is that most were not.

The third group excluded were those who were Irish only by accident.¹⁶ Their parents were British, as often were some of their siblings, and had obviously spent some time in Ireland, usually for professional reasons. The steward at Ashridge House, near Berkhamsted, had three young children born in Dublin. A captain in the Royal Engineers had a son aged 17 born in Derry and one aged 15 born in Suffolk. An Inland Revenue officer had three children in Ireland, then one each in Shropshire and Hertfordshire. Only one of Lady Louisa Clinton's daughters was born in Ireland. Some of the accidental Irish were from humbler circumstances. A Chelsea Pensioner and his wife, both native to Hertfordshire, had had two children in Ireland and then one in Berkshire. None of these individuals could be counted as Irish in any meaningful sense.

There were probably many more accidental Irish, Scots, Welsh and Yorkshiremen and women among adults, but they are difficult to pick out. Consider the case of a coachman, aged 29, who was born in Ireland, married a woman of Irish birth and had a child there. He would seem to be quintessentially Irish and would be counted as such if in 1851 he and his family were not living in Hatfield in the household of his father, a stud groom born in Norfolk. Both were probably in the employ of the Marquis of Salisbury at nearby Hatfield House. This coachman's Irishness most likely comes from his father's previous employment at some landed estate in Ireland, and hence he has been excluded from the analysis.

Altogether visitors, students, and 'accidental Irish' made up 11 per cent of the Irish-born in Hertfordshire. They were even more numerous among the three other nations, accounting for 17 per cent of the Scots- and Welsh-born and 19 per cent of the Yorkshire-born. These groups have been excluded from the analysis that follows.

One sort of visitor to Hertfordshire was unlikely to show up in the census. Each year, as noted at the start of this article, large numbers of Irish workers passed through the county to assist in bringing in the hay and cereal harvests, but census day, the 30th of March, was too early to capture them in the enumerators' books.¹⁷

16 Herson ('Migration', 160) notes the presence of these 'accidental Irish' in his study of Stafford.

17 See W.A. Armstrong, *Farmworkers in England and Wales. A social and economic history 1770-1980* (London, 1988), 51ff; C. Yamamoto, 'Two labour markets in 19th century English Agriculture', *Rural History*, 15 (2004), 89-116.

Table 1 Four nations' migration to Hertfordshire, 1851

	Recorded in 1851 as born in...		Migration rate per million 1841 population in native region
	Total	Excluding visitors, students & 'accidental'	
Ireland	659	586	72
Scotland	492	407	156
Wales	219	181	199
Yorkshire	446	361	227

Note: The migration rates are based on the figures excluding visitors, students and 'accidentals'. These totals are taken from the enumerators' books; the published census report gives totals of 628 for Ireland, 440 for Scotland, 217 for Wales and 424 for Yorkshire (*Census of Great Britain, 1851, Population tables, II. Ages, civil condition, occupations, and birth place of the people*, Vol. I, BPP 1852-3, LXXXVIII, ccxc).

Sources: Migrants: N. Goose ed., *The Hertfordshire census 1851: family history edition* (Hatfield, 2005); 1841 populations: B.R. Mitchell and P. Deane, *Abstract of British historical statistics* (Cambridge, 1962), 6-7, 20.

There was no need to take a sample of the Irish-born in Hertfordshire since there were not that many of them, and there were even fewer natives of Scotland, Wales and Yorkshire. Table 1 shows both the total number of individuals recorded as being born in Ireland and the number excluding the three categories discussed above. All of the four nations' migrants together made up only 1 per cent of the county's population.

Although there were more migrants from Ireland than from the other nations, the Irish were not actually more inclined to migrate to Hertfordshire. As shown in Table 1, relative to their home populations, the Irish were only half as likely as the Scots and only a third as likely as natives of Yorkshire to move to the county. (Here we use the 1841 populations, rather than the famine-influenced 1851 populations, as the relevant pool from which migrants were drawn.)

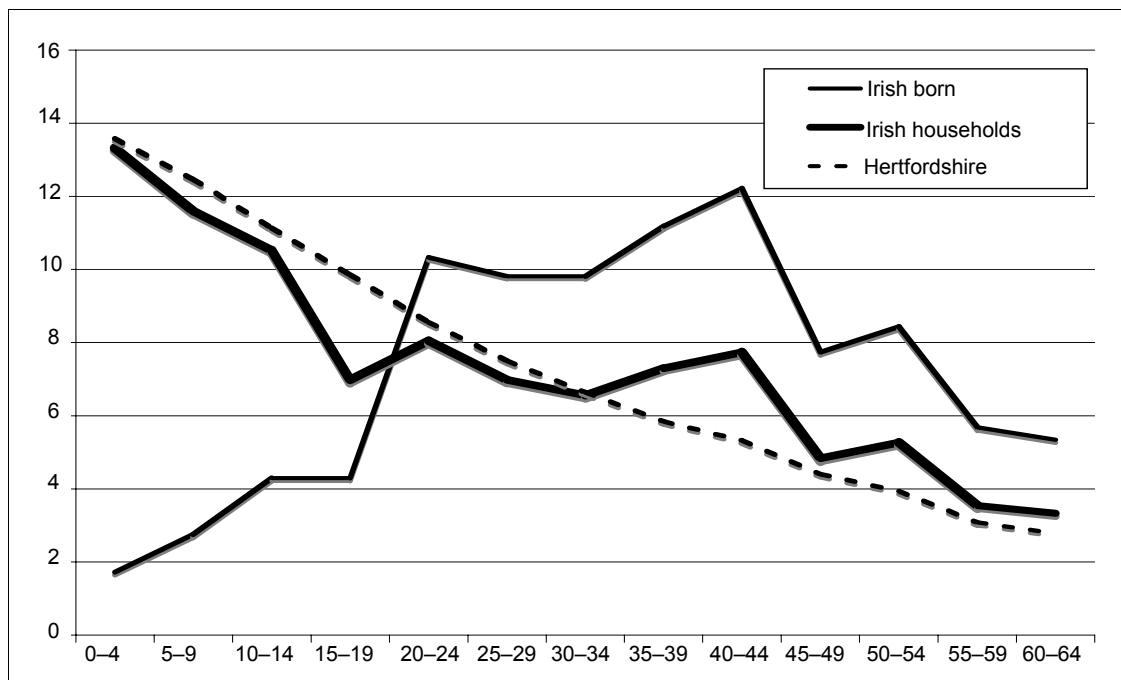
The Irish in Hertfordshire seem to have been a relatively aged and fairly well-established population. There were few children: only 13 per cent of the Irish-born (after excluding visitors, students and the 'accidental' Irish) were less than 20 years of age. This is comparable to the share of the young among the Welsh- and Yorkshire-born. Among the Scots there were even fewer young people, only 9 per cent. Even so, the share of children is very low. In 1851 45 per cent of the English population was under 20 and in Hertfordshire it was 47 per cent.¹⁸

The relative absence of the young is to some extent the result of not counting the English-born children of these migrants. Figure 1 shows the age distributions of the Irish-born in Hertfordshire, of the Irish-born with their English-born children, and of the Hertfordshire population as a whole. Even adding back in the English-born children leaves the Irish-born with fewer children. The low number of children might have been the result of recent immigration by young unmarried Irish men and women. Yet for a recent immigrant

18 B.R. Mitchell and P. Deane, *Abstract of British historical statistics* (Cambridge, 1962), 12.

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Figure 1 Age distributions, 1851



Notes: 'Irish Households' contain Irish-born parents and their Irish- and English-born children.

Sources: Irish-born and Irish households: see Table 1; Hertfordshire: *Census of Great Britain, 1851, Population tables, II. Ages, civil condition, occupations, and birth place of the people*, Vol. I, BPP 1852-3, LXXXVIII, 162, 165.

population there seem to be fewer people in their late teens and 20s than would be expected in the total population, though this may be due in part to some of the English-born children of Irish parents residing outside the family home at this age and thus escaping notice as being of Irish descent. This is particularly the case since Irish migrants tended to be concentrated in these age groups: over 65 per cent of the emigrants recorded at Irish ports in 1851-1855 were between the ages of 10 and 30.¹⁹

The census returns give few indications of Fitzpatrick's 'mobile' Irish. A handful were described as 'tramp labourers' or 'tramps'. To these might be added some of the 22 paupers, in or out of the workhouses, and some of the seven Irish-born who were in gaol on the day of the census. Lodging has sometimes been taken as a sign of transience, though it could also be a longer-term living arrangement.²⁰ Of the adult Irish-born in Hertfordshire more than half were heads of households or lived with heads of household and less than a third were lodgers. However, as Table 2 shows, the other nations were even more settled. Very few migrants from Scotland, Wales and Yorkshire were lodgers, and fewer of them were to be found living in institutions like the workhouses or the county gaol.

¹⁹ Census of Ireland, 1851, Part VI, General Report, BPP 1856 LIII, iv.

²⁰ B. Trinder, *The market town lodging house in Victorian England* (Leicester, 2001), esp. 37-42 for the Irish.

Table 2 Residential status of migrants to Hertfordshire, 1851

	Irish %	Scots %	Welsh %	Yorks %
Head or living with head	54	69	70	73
Lodger	32	13	4	8
Servant	8	17	24	16
Institutional	6	1	2	2
Total	100	100	100	99
Observations	586	407	181	361

Note: The percentage columns may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Source: See Table 1.

Most of the Irish-born in Hertfordshire thus seem to have been reasonably well settled in the county. What did they do? The stated occupations of the immigrants were coded according to the HISCO system and the broad distribution of occupations is shown in Table 3. (HISCO is a classification system for occupations that was developed to facilitate cross-national comparisons of social mobility.) In addition, the wealthy—landed proprietors, fundholders, proprietors of houses, and others—have been included. Although they did not hold jobs as such (and are thus not classified by HISCO), they represented a small but significant stream of migrants. The unskilled category includes street sellers of one sort or another.²¹

One thing that is obvious from Table 3 is that the occupational structure of all of the migrant groups were quite different from that of the county as a whole. The shares of migrants in high status occupations—independently wealthy, professional, government and commercial—were twice as high or more than the share of these occupations in the entire population.

That said, half of the Irish-born were still in the classic low-skilled jobs often held by immigrants. Labourers of one sort or another were by far the largest individual occupation, though they accounted for less than a quarter of all those for whom an occupation was recorded. Domestic servants made up somewhat less than 10 per cent. Hawkers accounted for just over 10 per cent. The prominence of the latter suggests that itinerant retailing in Hertfordshire may have become a minor outpost of London, where over 10,000 Irish made their living by street selling.²²

The other half of the Irish-born in Hertfordshire was quite diverse. There was a surprisingly large number of professionals of one sort or another. Five per cent of the Irish-born were involved in some form of government service. Most of these migrants were likely to have

21 The HISCO system also excludes those described as almspersons, paupers and vagrants (like gentlemen, retirees and others not active in the labour market they receive a code of '-1' instead of a five digit occupational code). There were more of these from Ireland though not disproportionately so. In any case most of the people so described were under 20 or over 60. For information on the HISCO system see the History of Work Information System site maintained at the International Institute for Social History (URL: <http://historyofwork.iisg.nl/> [14 Feb 2009]).

22 Lees, *Exiles*, 96–7.

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Table 3 Distribution of migrants by occupation

	Irish %	Scots %	Welsh %	Yorks %	Herts %
Independently wealthy	3	6	5	3	1
Professional and managerial	14	18	21	21	7
Government	5	2	2	3	2
Commercial	15	19	9	9	7
Skilled	13	33	23	31	23
Unskilled	50	22	40	33	60
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Observations	346	285	104	206	42,073

Source: Irish, Scots, Welsh and Yorks: see Table 1; Herts: *Census of Great Britain, 1851, Population tables, II. Ages, civil condition, occupations, and birth place of the people*, Vol. I, BPP 1852–3, LXXXVIII, 162–5.

been brought into the county by an employer such as the army, the police or the Inland Revenue. (The absence of any significant military installations in Hertfordshire certainly kept down the numbers of Irish and Scots, who were greatly over-represented in the early nineteenth-century army.)²³ But most of the professionals either chose Hertfordshire or were chosen by it. This would have been the case for the teachers, clergymen, land agents and surveyors. What is truly remarkable is the number of doctors who were Irish-born, 17 of them, 5 per cent of the occupied Irish-born. They were roughly 15 per cent of the doctors practising in the county. This small ‘brain drain’ from Ireland seems to have flowed out along various paths in so far as it is possible to trace the careers of these doctors. Six appear in the matriculation records of Trinity College Dublin. Another four had medical degrees from Scottish universities. Two served as military doctors before arriving in Hertfordshire.²⁴ The makings of a religious community among the Irish in Hertfordshire are not evident in the census returns: among the Irish-born were a curate and a minister, but no priests.

The Irish-born practised a great variety of skilled trades. The most common were tailoring and shoemaking. There were seven tailors including one ‘tailor and draper’ and six shoemakers, including a ‘master shoemaker’ and a ‘broguemaker’. In addition to the carpenters, bricklayers and painters, the more unusual occupations were silversmith, clockmaker and dolls eye maker. Among commercial activities in which the Irish-born were engaged, there were a publican, a tea dealer and beer seller, a commercial brewer, a corn dealer and grocer, and a clothier.

²³ E.M. Spiers, ‘Army organisation and society in the nineteenth century’, in T. Bartlett and K. Jeffery eds, *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996), 335–57, especially the table at 337.

²⁴ G.D. Burtchaell and T.U. Sadleir eds, *Alumni Dublinenses: A register of the students, graduates, professors and provosts of Trinity College in the University of Dublin (1593–1860)* (new edn, Dublin, 1935); *A catalogue of graduates who have proceeded to degrees in the University of Dublin, from the earliest recorded commencements to July, 1866; with supplement to December 16, 1868* (Dublin, 1869); *London & provincial medical directory* (London, 1852–5).

Although Irish migration into Hertfordshire was more diverse and less concentrated among the unskilled than was Irish migration to Britain's industrial cities or the Hertfordshire population itself, it was still distinctive by comparison to the other immigrant groups. As shown in Table 3, the share of unskilled workers was much lower among migrants from Scotland, Wales and Yorkshire. There were also large differences in the composition of this group. Where domestic servants accounted for less than a quarter of the unskilled Irish-born, they were 59 per cent of those born in Scotland, 71 per cent of those born in Yorkshire and 83 per cent of those born in Wales. Hawkers, over 20 per cent of the Irish unskilled, were essentially absent from the other migrant groups. Agricultural labourers were also much less prominent. The number of general labourers was only kept up in the case of Scotland by a cluster of railway labourers.

Although the share of government workers was lower among the other migrant groups, the share of those with professional and managerial occupations was even higher than it was for the Irish-born. If Ireland was relatively prominent in supplying doctors to Hertfordshire, Yorkshire's specialities were teachers and clergy and Scotland's were land stewards and farm bailiffs.

One occupation that very few of the Irish, or of the other nations', migrants seem to have taken up was straw plaiting and straw hat making. This trade accounted for about a quarter of those with recorded occupations in south-west Hertfordshire, yet there were only a handful of migrants among them.²⁵ Migrants seem to have brought their own skills rather than learning them *in situ*.

How did the Irish get to Hertfordshire? This is a difficult question for the census to answer but there are certain clues. One thing that can be said is that the answer is likely to involve many different individual stories. Although there were large swathes of the county that had no Irish-born residents, the areas where there were numbers of Irish showed little evidence of obvious residential segregation.²⁶ The names of migrants and their reported origins within Ireland do not suggest the sorts of chain migration characteristic of many of the industrial towns. Partial evidence on where the Irish-born came from in Ireland is given in Table 4. As noted above, the place of origin at county level was only recorded for 37 per cent of the adults. These individuals came from all over—only county Leitrim was unrecorded—but were primarily from the south of Ireland. The counties that were clearly over-represented were Dublin and Cork, perhaps because the migrants may have come from southern Ireland's two largest cities and were disproportionately urban in origin, or perhaps because individuals only noted their port of embarkation for England.

25 N. Goose, 'How saucy did it make the poor? the straw plait and hat trades, illegitimate fertility and the family in nineteenth-century Hertfordshire'. *History*, 91 (2006), 530–56. Here at 533.

26 Exceptions may be Queen Street in Hemel Hempstead, Butcherley Green Lodging House in Hertford, and Ballard Buildings in Watford. Though by no means a lodging house, one of the most concentrated Irish settlements in the county was Garston House, near Watford, where Henry Bachelor, a landed proprietor, lived with his wife, six children, brother and gardener, all of whom were Irish-born. Only the cook was born in England.

The Irish in mid-Victorian Hertfordshire

Table 4 Origins of the Irish-born within Ireland

	Adults	Adults
Leinster		79
of which county Dublin	34	
Munster		67
of which county Cork	38	
Ulster		26
Connaught		21
Total		193

Source: See Table 1.

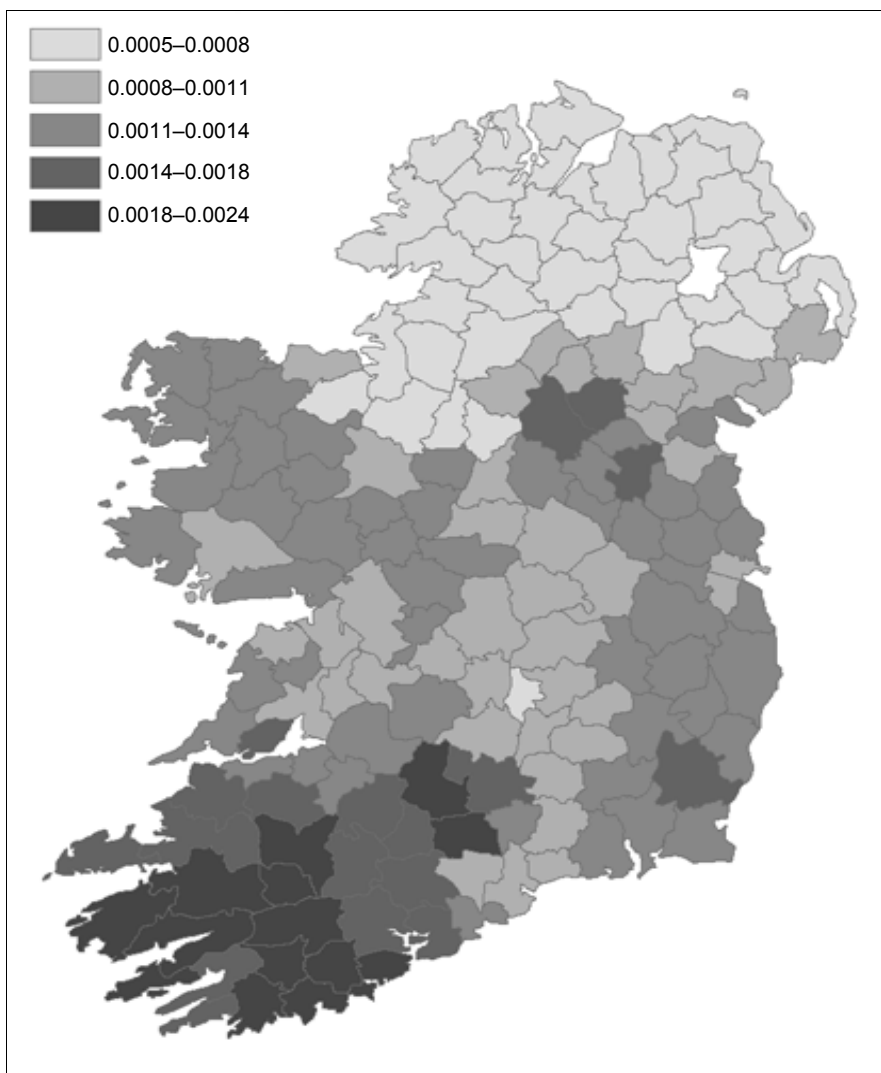
The origins of the Irish-born migrants can also be inferred from their names. Figure 2 shows the computed random isonymy between the Hertfordshire Irish and the Irish population as represented by the Index to Griffith's Valuation.²⁷ This comprehensive valuation of property in Ireland was carried out in the 1850s and early 1860s, and the names listed there were subsequently indexed by parish. The shading in Figure 2 represents the value of random isonymy for each Poor Law Union, which can be interpreted in a probabilistic fashion to mean that the areas with the highest values were the most likely population sources for the emigrant group. The analysis of names confirms that the Irish-born in Hertfordshire were likely to have come primarily from the south of Ireland, with the south west being the area of greatest concentration. That said, this Irish-born population does not really show any particular concentration by area of origin.

The occupations in the census give a few further clues about how the Irish-born got to Hertfordshire. As noted above, some were certainly transferred there by the army, the police or the revenue. There were a number of railway labourers—18 Irish, 14 Scots and 3 Yorkshiremen—but they were scattered over the county. This suggests that most were full-time employees rather than gang labourers engaged in major construction works. Some of the hawkers probably drifted in, if not directly from Ireland then from the large pool of immigrants in London, although it should be noted that there were not a lot of London- or Middlesex-born children of Irish parents in this group.

Over half of the Irish-born were either single or married to another Irish person (see Table 5). But a substantial minority arrived by marrying an English person, often a Hertfordshire native. Of all the adult Irish-born in Hertfordshire 29 per cent had an English spouse, most of whom were born locally. It may also be the case that many of the Irish-born widows and widowers had been married to English spouses, in which case the share of the Irish-born that may have settled in Hertfordshire by marriage might have been as high as 40 per cent. That said, the share of adult migrants from the other nations involved in 'mixed marriages' was

27 M.T. Smith and D.M. MacRailld, 'Nineteenth-century population structure of Ireland and of the Irish in England and Wales: an analysis by isonymy', *American Journal of Human Biology*, 21 (2009), forthcoming. This research was supported by the ESRC Research Methods Programme, grant no. H333250057.

Figure 2 Random isonymy: Hertfordshire Irish and Griffith's Valuation Index



Sources: Hertfordshire Irish: see Table 1; Griffith's Valuation Index: see M.T. Smith and D.M. MacRaild, 'Nineteenth-century population structure of Ireland and of the Irish in England and Wales: an analysis by isonymy', *American Journal of Human Biology*, 21 (2009), forthcoming.

even higher. The Scots stand out from the other nations in one respect. There were more Irish-, Welsh- and Yorkshire-born wives than there were husbands, but among the Scottish-born there were almost twice as many husbands as wives.

How did the men and women of Hertfordshire find Irish spouses? Some hints might be found in the occupations of the husbands in these 'mixed marriages', which are summarised in Table 6. Mixed marriages are defined as those in which one spouse was from Ireland, Scotland, Wales or Yorkshire, and the other spouse was from Hertfordshire or a neighbouring county. Note first that the Irish-born husbands with local wives were less likely to be

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Table 5 Civil status of immigrants, 1851

	Irish %	Scots %	Welsh %	Yorks. %
Married person				
Both non-native	18	20	9	14
Husband non-native	12	23	19	20
Wife non-native	17	12	27	26
Widows	10	6	4	4
Widowers	4	3	1	5
Solitaries	39	37	39	30
Total	100	101	99	99
Observations	500	356	157	312
'Mixed marriages'				
minimum	30	34	46	46
maximum	43	43	52	56

Notes: 'Non-native' means not born in Hertfordshire; 'solitaries' were those living alone. The minimum estimate for 'mixed marriages' is the sum of the 'husband non-native' and 'wife non-native' rows; the maximum estimate also includes widows and widowers. The percentage columns may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Source: See Table 1.

unskilled than were the English-born husbands with Irish-born wives.²⁸ Given that the Irish population was more unskilled than that of Hertfordshire, one would expect just the opposite. But the same contrast was also the case for mixed marriages involving people from Scotland, Wales and Yorkshire, places in which the skill mix was more similar to that in Hertfordshire. Marrying into Hertfordshire may thus be related to greater geographical mobility among skilled workers.

The reason why the Hertfordshire husbands with Irish-born wives were less skilled may have to do with the military connections of these men. There were several officers, but also five Chelsea Pensioners, as well as one Greenwich Pensioner, with Irish-born wives. They may have acquired their wives while serving in Ireland. One suspects that this may also have been true of other English labourers. Many of these men were over 40 and could have had a passage through the military when younger. The unskilled Irish with English wives, though far fewer, also tended to be older men who could possibly have done military service. It should be remembered that during and after the French wars more than a third of the army was Irish-born. One suspects that there would have been more mixed marriages involving men in uniform had there been any large barracks situated in Hertfordshire.

It is much easier to explain how the wealthy and the professionals, who were particularly prominent among Irish husbands, found their wives. Well-to-do families often had branches on both sides of the Irish Sea, and London and other venues of sociability created a marriage

²⁸ Note as well that in the case of the Irish, but not the other groups, the husbands in unmixed marriages were the most likely to be unskilled.

Table 6 'Mixed marriages'

	Irish %	Scots %	Welsh %	Yorks %
<i>Non-native husbands, native wives</i>				
Independently wealthy	2	9	7	5
Professional and managerial	23	19	30	24
Government	10	4	3	5
Commercial	19	11	20	11
Skilled	21	52	33	43
Unskilled	26	6	7	13
Total	101	101	100	101
Observations	62	81	30	63
<i>Native husbands, non-native wives</i>				
Independently wealthy	6	5	0	1
Professional and managerial	8	13	23	23
Government	12	3	0	1
Commercial	10	3	7	6
Skilled	28	47	40	49
Unskilled	36	29	30	18
Total	100	100	100	98
Observations	78	38	43	77

Note: The percentage columns may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Source: See Table 1.

market of UK dimensions.²⁹ Men who served the wealthy—coachmen, grooms, gardeners and butlers—may have freeloaded on their masters' mobility, giving them more chance of entering into a mixed marriage.

Among Irish husbands those involved in commercial activity were also prominent. While men in this group probably did not have the ready-made connections of the elite, they had the wealth to pursue opportunities more broadly and to set up in England. Among the English husbands skilled tradesmen were relatively more prominent. These individuals may at some point have taken advantage of the relative scarcity of skilled labour in Ireland. Finally, there were the hawkers. Here, as noted already, the point of contact was likely to have been the large Irish community in nearby London.

Some implications for migration with the United Kingdom

It is striking how the characteristics of the Irish, Scots, Welsh and Yorkshire men and women in Hertfordshire resemble those of the Londoners in Armstrong's study of Canterbury.³⁰ The

29 A.P.W. Malcomson, *The pursuit of the heiress: aristocratic marriage in Ireland 1750–1820* (Belfast, 1982).

30 W.A. Armstrong, 'Some counter-currents of migration: London and the South in the mid-nineteenth century', *Southern History*, 12 (1990), 82–113.

London-born were older, were generally involved in 'mixed' households, and were more likely to have higher status occupations or have independent means. They were also spread fairly evenly across the town.

These results suggest that underlying the large and well-known movements of people within the mid-Victorian United Kingdom—the flows into London and the industrial towns—there were a variety of low-level streams of long-distance migration, a sort of background migration.³¹ There were movements of elites and their servants, of government officials, and of professionals, some of which could also result in 'mixed' marriages. Others who could move relatively easily were shopkeepers and merchants. Further down the social scale service in the military or movements of skilled labourers could occasionally lead to mixed marriages.

It should be kept in mind that all of this background long-distance movement did not amount to that much. Only 3.7 per cent of Hertfordshire's population was born outside the south-east of England. As Keith Snell has recently emphasised, settlement and marriage were profoundly local in this period.³² What has been highlighted here are a few of the ways that strangers could have come to reside in rural and small town Britain.

Even in these underlying streams of migration the Irish seem to have participated less. As was shown in Table 1, the Irish rate of migration to Hertfordshire was much lower than that from Scotland, Wales, and Yorkshire. Moreover, few British people moved to Ireland. In 1851 the share of the Irish population born in Britain or in some foreign country was less than 1 per cent.³³

Some implications for the history of the Irish in Britain

One minor implication of this study of the 'other Irish' in Britain is a methodological point. The Hertfordshire evidence suggests that as a measure of Irish migration to Britain the census totals for the Irish-born are a slight overestimate. Three categories probably merit exclusion. Two should be non-controversial: students, and visitors and travellers. These were people who were, for the most part, temporarily in Britain and not likely to have been economically active. The other category is the 'accidental Irish', those whose parents were English but who just happened to have been born in Ireland. These would have been people who almost certainly regarded themselves as English. How much of an overstatement might be involved in counting these categories? On the heroic assumption that Hertfordshire was representative of Britain, the visitors and travellers, students and accidental Irish probably amounted to just under 10,000 people, a little bit more than 1 per cent of the 727,000 Irish-born in Britain. Thus, one should probably not make too much, at least for the 1851 census, of Fitzpatrick's observation that a 'considerable but unknown

31 D. Baines, *Migration in a mature economy: emigration and internal migration in England and Wales, 1861–1900* (Cambridge, 1985), 220–7.

32 K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and belonging: community, identity and welfare in England and Wales 1700–1950* (Cambridge, 2006).

33 *Census of Ireland, 1851, Part VI, General Report*, BPP 1856 XXXI, 646–9.

proportion of Britain's Irish population on census day consisted of visitors, lodgers, jobbers or harvesters awaiting passage home or overseas'.³⁴

The Irish-born in Hertfordshire were on average better off than the Irish-born in Britain's cities. In London two-thirds of the Irish men were unskilled labourers and less than 5 per cent were shopkeepers, professionals or independently wealthy.³⁵ In Hertfordshire the unskilled amounted to less than half and the latter category to somewhat over a quarter.

In Hertfordshire the Irish were more integrated. Even in the towns with the most Irish-born residents there is little obvious residential segregation, which was indeed unlikely given the small numbers. The Irish in Hertfordshire were often married into the local community. Of the married couples containing at least one Irish-born spouse, over three-quarters were mixed marriages. In this sense there does not seem to be much of an Irish community in Hertfordshire. In London, by contrast, there seems to have been little intermarriage. Although Lees found that 24 per cent of families had one Irish and one English spouse, she argued on the basis of other information that 'virtually all of the technically English spouses were second- or third-generation Irish'.³⁶ It is interesting, in this respect, that the only other case of extensive intermarriage in the literature is in York, where Finnegan found that two-thirds of couples involving at least one Irish partner were mixed (English-Irish) marriages.³⁷ York, as a destination for migrants, may have been more similar to Hertfordshire than to the industrial towns. The Irish-born in Hertfordshire may also have been better integrated because they had been there longer. Compared to the London Irish there were fewer children, fewer people in their 20s and early 30s, and more at all ages from the mid-30s upward.³⁸

The Hertfordshire Irish may actually be more representative of some older pathways of Irish migration to Britain. Some of the sorts of migration seen in Hertfordshire are likely to have been relatively more important in the pre-famine period. Elite migration is one case in point. But perhaps more important was migration mediated by military experience. The large numbers of English and Irish men who were drawn into the military during the French wars, then shifted around the two islands, was likely to have produced far more mixed marriages than were the much smaller numbers in the post-Waterloo army. How important could mixed marriages have been? Again, on the heroic assumption that Hertfordshire was representative of Britain, the total number of mixed marriages in 1851 may have been upwards of 20,000. This is not particularly large as a share of the Irish-born in Britain in 1851. But the people involved in mixed marriages were relatively old, which suggests that

34 Fitzpatrick, "A peculiar tramping people", 627. The inclusion of lodgers and jobbers here is peculiar. Many English residents were also lodgers. Moreover, lodging was not necessarily an indicator that an Irish-born person would be returning to Ireland. Jobbers may also have been permanently resident in Britain.

35 Lees, *Exiles*, Appendix B, table A.2.

36 Lees, *Exiles*, 153-4.

37 Finnegan, *Poverty and prejudice*, 6.

38 Lees, *Exiles*, Appendix B, figure A.1. The Irish in Hertfordshire also had a completely different gender profile than did the Irish in London. Men significantly outnumbered women overall and in all age groups from 15-24 to 45-54, almost exactly the opposite of the London pattern (Lees, *Exiles*, 49).

they would have been a larger share of the smaller numbers of Irish-born in Britain in the 1820s and 1830s.

It is worth noting, as a general point, how unfortunate it is that the studies based on the 1851 census, including this one, may be heavily influenced by the distress migration arising from the famine of the late 1840s. They are probably also influenced, to a lesser extent, by the boom in British railway construction during the 1840s. (Six to eight per cent of the migrants with recorded occupations were involved either in constructing or running the railways.) Although a number of researchers have gone on to look at the enumerators' books for later censuses, it is unfortunate that only Finnegan seems to have gone back to the 1841 census. Whilst the 1841 census may be less rich in the detail it gives with respect to age, family relationship, marital status and occupation, it does avoid the turmoil of the late 1840s.

Finally, this study of Hertfordshire confirms that previous researchers were right to look for the Irish in the cities.³⁹ There were large swathes of the county, particularly in the north and east, in which there was essentially no Irish presence. Of the 152 enumeration districts, 69 recorded no-one of Irish birth and 25 only one person. The same is true of migrants from the other nations, whose pattern of settlement is quite similar to that of the Irish. Even in Hertfordshire the Irish were concentrated in the towns. Just under half resided in ten towns, led by Hertford, Ware, Watford and Hemel Hempstead.⁴⁰

Very few of the Irish, or other four nations migrants for that matter, settled in the countryside. The number of immigrant agricultural labourers was tiny, and most of them resided in the towns. In the entire county there were just 33 Irish-born agricultural labourers and only 45 from all of the four nations. This was not enough to supply even one modest-sized parish. The parish of Bengoe, near Hertford, with a population of 1,519, returned 103 agricultural labourers, 23 farm labourers and 52 labourers.

There were only a few ways for the Irish-born males to settle in the Hertfordshire countryside. One was to marry in, as in 21 of the 67 cases recorded in the census. Another was to buy in, as did five landed proprietors. A third way was to be stationed there, like the two rural policemen. The fourth, and most common (23 cases), was to serve the local gentry, not only as maid, cook or gardener but as agent, steward, private tutor or governess. Finally, one could work on the land—just 12 cases, and here it helped either to be married to an Englishwoman or to be young and single.

Yet rural Hertfordshire was not unfamiliar with Irish farm workers, nor were the Irish unfamiliar with rural Hertfordshire. As noted above, large numbers of harvest workers came through each summer. Despite familiarity with Hertfordshire, and agricultural wages almost twice as high as those in Ireland, few of the Irish had settled permanently in the county, and

39 The Irish did come in large numbers to some rural mining communities, for example, that in Whitwick, Leicestershire: Snell and Ell, *Rival Jerusalems*, 253.

40 Hertford St John (35), Hertford All Saints (7) and Hertford St Andrews (11), Ware (40); Watford (36); Hemel Hempstead (35); Cheshunt (30); Hatfield (30); Hitchin (28); St Albans (25).

those only through the various pathways enumerated above. Irish agricultural labourers would have found it difficult to obtain permanent housing or jobs in rural Hertfordshire, not least because they would have been likely to displace natives onto local relief rolls.⁴¹ This excursion into the English countryside serves to highlight how selective and how limited was Irish permanent migration to Britain in the early nineteenth century.

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41 P.M. Solar, 'Poor relief and English economic development before the Industrial Revolution', *Economic History Review*, 48 (1995), 1–22.