

Sources for Earlier Village History

Using the Censuses from 1851 to 1901 to Study Philcote Street In Deddington

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The purpose of this study is to find out what can be learned about society simply by using the enumerators' returns for the censuses. In the end, it will be part of a complete study of Deddington township, a task too great for this module. For this module, I shall just be looking at one street, Philcote Street from 1851 to 1901.

Philcote Street Today

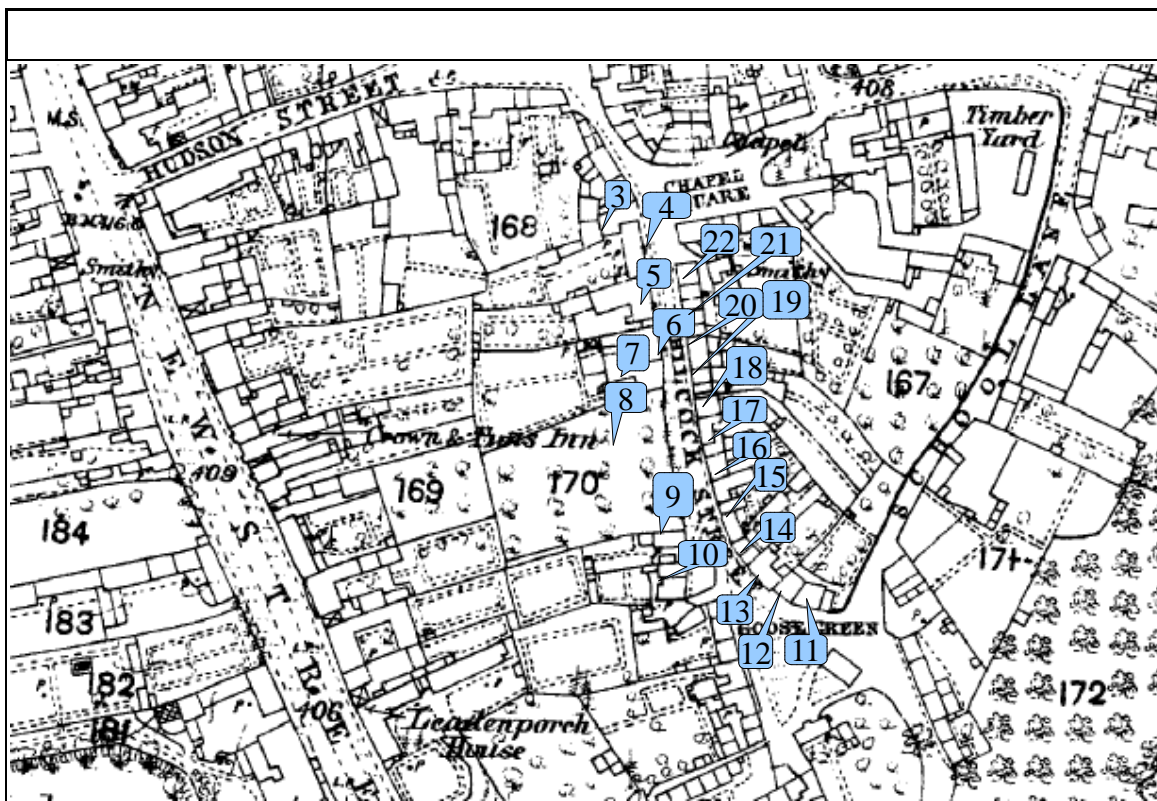


Fig 1: Philcote Street in 1881

Philcote Street runs from Chapel Square southwards to Goose Green and thence to St Thomas Street. In 1881, it looked like this on the Ordnance Survey 6 inches to the mile map.

Over more than one hundred years, there has been little change in the layout of the buildings. Many of the small cottages have, however, been knocked together to make more substantial habitations, as can be seen from the new map below. The figures in Fig 1 are references to the numbered photos, included below, of the present day buildings.

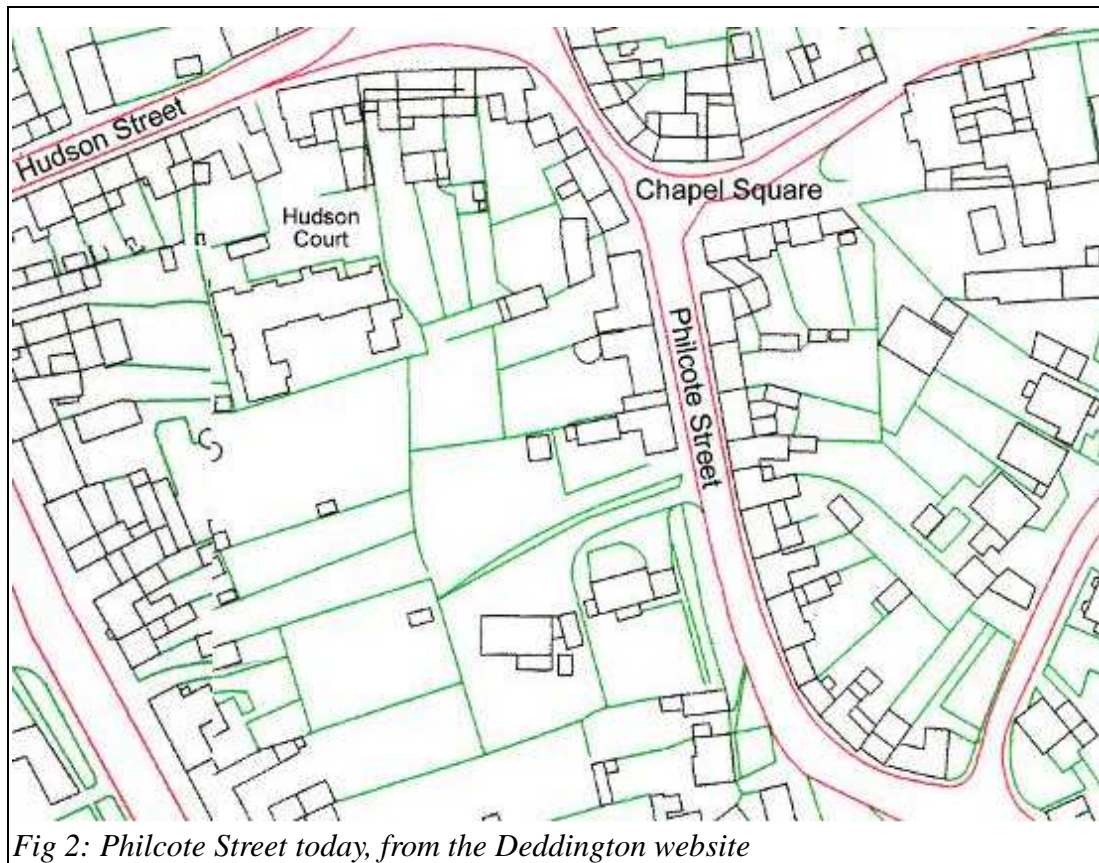


Fig 2: Philcote Street today, from the Deddington website



Fig 3: Buildings now used as garages behind the first house at the NW corner of Philcote Street

Given the number of households in the nineteenth century, it is possible that these were at some time dwellings, although equally they could have been workshops.



Fig 4: Substantial double fronted house at NW end of street

Although the frontage shows evidence of alteration and repair, the 1881 map does indicate that this was one dwelling.



Fig 5: The second house

The windows have been much altered, but, again, the 1881 map shows a single dwelling.

The 1881 map shows the house in Fig 6 joined onto that above. The garage, a twentieth century addition, may well have been a workshop.



Fig 6: The last house in the terrace

The houses in Figs 7 and 8 have been built in the orchard marked on the 1881 map. They are substantial, and reflect the social changes that have taken place in Deddington in the last 40 years.



Fig 7: Late 20th century house



Fig 8: Late 20th century houses



Fig 9: House set at right angles to road south of the old orchard

Although this side of the house is built of local ironstone, the rear extension is of brick, probably Victorian. The pitch of the roof indicates that it originally had a welsh slate roof, and therefore dates from the middle of the 19th century. The tie-bar is evidence either of subsidence or poor quality foundations.



Fig 10: Last house on west side of Philcote Street

In Fig 10, there is a much altered mid-Victorian cottage. The chimneys have been removed, and plastic soffits and rainwater goods have replaced the originals. It also appears that the right hand side is an extension. The condition of the boundary wall suggests that it has always been a single dwelling.



Fig 11: Last house on the eastern side from the south



Fig 12: Same house from the south west

These two photographs show a building which is now two separate residences. It is highly likely that the frontage in Fig 11 was originally two, but the rendering has effectively made it impossible to see blocked in doors, etc.



Fig 13: Double fronted cottage

The next house, to the north, has a steeply pitched roof, signifying that at one time the roof was thatched.



Fig 14: Number 3

Just to the left of the right hand downstairs window there is a vertical line of mortar, suggesting a filled in doorway. The evidence from the 1881 map is that this was once two very small cottages.



Fig 15: Two small cottages

These are two cottages. Entrance to the first is through the white door; the dark door accesses the second. It is not clear on the photo, but there is a slight bump in the roof line that confirms this.



Fig 16: Two cottages knocked into one

The evidence that this was two houses is the roofline, showing that the chimney and the white door marked the end of one; the stone under the window to the left of the door shows that this would have been the original entry to the second cottage.



Fig 17: Double fronted cottage

There are no signs that this has been two dwellings.



Fig 18: One small and one double fronted cottage

This gives an idea of how small some of the cottages must have been.



Fig 19: Later cottage with welsh slate roof

Unlike the other houses on this side of the street, which almost certainly had thatched roofs, this one was slated. The stone is weathered, and, again, the tie-bars may indicate a poor build quality.



Fig 20: Two single fronted cottages

The entry to the cottage on the right is through the white door marked “5”. The bend in the roof ridge shows that they were, and are, two separate houses.



Fig 21: Superior house with limestone quoins

This was almost certainly built as a single unit. There are no signs of doors being blocked in, and the roof line is continuous. That it is being sold by Savills is a sign that it has been gentrified.



Fig 22: End house at NE of street

This seems to have the vestiges of a door opening just to the left of the present white door. What the extension to the left is for is uncertain.

Philcote Street is today an attractive row of ironstone cottages generally excellent maintained. The current (2010) Electoral Roll records 22 households with 38 electors, a figure that, unlike the census returns, does not include anyone under the age of 18.

The Census Enumerators' Data

The census enumerators' returns are a summary, house by house and street by street, of the data collected from the heads of every household. The households were given a census number, but were

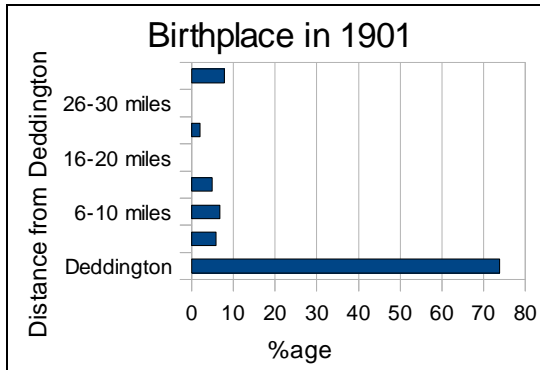
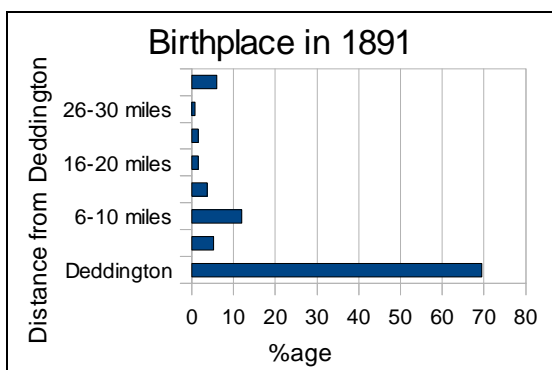
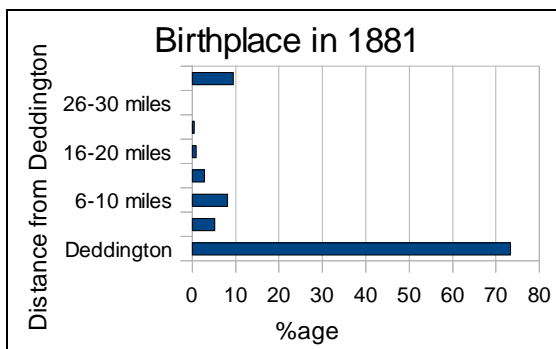
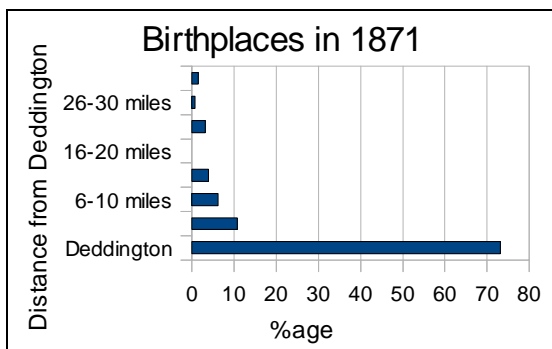
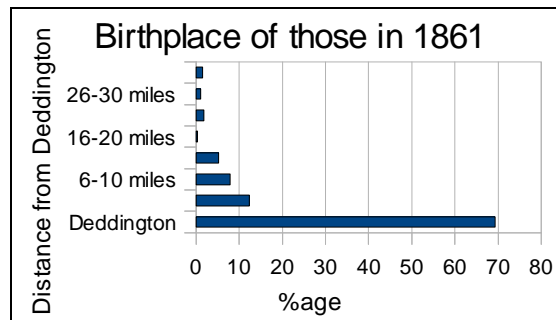
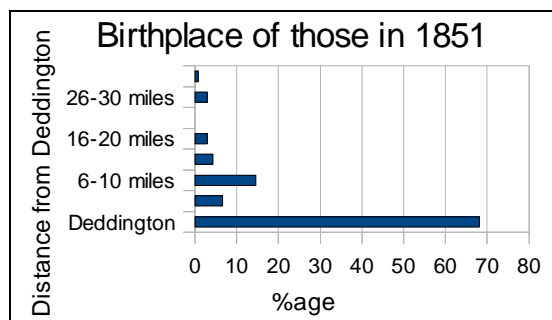
otherwise unidentified. Everyone in the house on the day of the census was identified by name, by age and by their relationship with the head of the household. In addition, their place of birth was recorded and if they worked what job or position they held. In 1891 and 1901, the number of rooms the household occupied was noted if it was less than five, an indication, perhaps, of the growing concern at the poor quality of housing for many working people.

There are some obvious problems in using this data. Street names changed or were spelled differently. Philcote Street was sometimes “Philcock Street” and sometimes “Philcot Street”. This is a minor problem. What is more of a difficulty is trying to determine which houses were actually in the street. In 1851, there were 30 households with 1 empty; in 1861, 61 households; in 1871, 30; in 1881, 47; in 1891, 30 and in 1901, 30. Clearly, the enumerators must have included households from neighbouring streets, such as Saturn Street, Satin Street and St Thomas Street which in fact are all the same street and lead from Philcote Street to the Oxford road.

As determining which houses were in Philcote Street as it is today is almost impossible, I have decided to analyse all the data recorded by the enumerators. This may not be an accurate street picture, but it does give one a sense of the period, especially if it is presented in percentage form.

Statistical analysis

Where do these people come from?



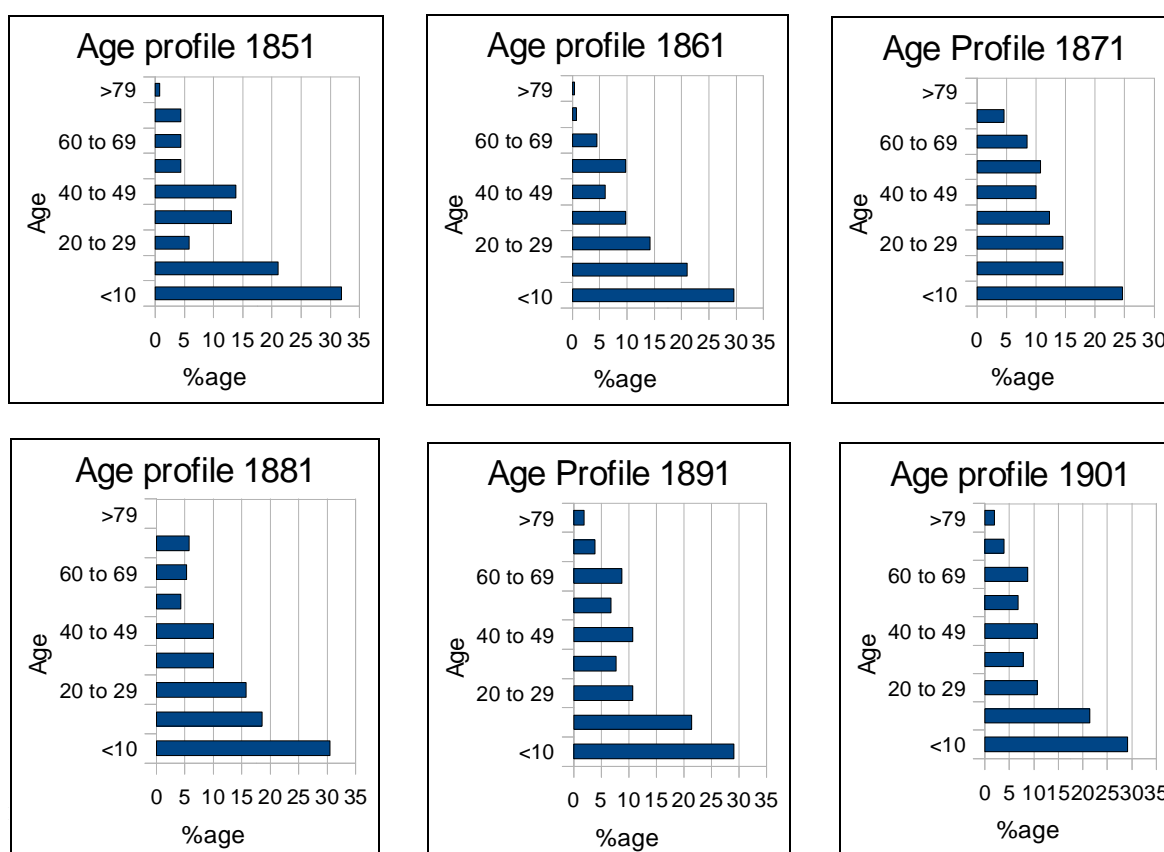
Unsurprisingly, almost 90% of people living in Philcote Street during the period 1851 to 1901 were born within ten miles of Deddington. The period was one of steady economic decline, especially in agriculture towards the end of the 19th century, so there was little to entice newcomers to the village. Moreover, travel was harder, and it seems likely that people found their future partners on their doorstep, and started their families in their birthplace.

The last three censuses show a marked increase in the number of people born more than thirty miles from Deddington. In some cases, these were children of couples who had left Deddington to seek a better life elsewhere, only to be forced by misfortune to return. Examples include the family of John Matthews recorded in 1881. John and his wife Eliza had both been born in Deddington, and their elder daughter, aged 8, was born in Bloxham. The two other children, however, were born in Milton Hoyland in Yorkshire. Had the family set off up north to find better work and then, disappointed, returned to their roots? They do not appear in later census records, which could mean either that they had moved on again or that they had moved elsewhere in Deddington. The Bakers (1891 and 1901) and the Blissés (1891) had both had one child in London before returning to Deddington and continuing to expand their families.

Lodgers, recorded in 1881 and 1891, came from all over the UK. Their status as lodgers suggests that they were on the move looking for work, as does the fact that they were only recorded in one census.

A white collar worker, James Stanley, a 62 years old builder's clerk born in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, was living with his wife, born in Hamble, Hampshire, and daughter, born in Handforth, Cheshire, in 1891. It is possible that as a qualified person he was able to move around the country in search of positions, and incidentally acquiring a wife and having a family.

The age structure



The most striking thing about these graphs is how large a percentage of the population of Philcote Street children were. Throughout the second half of the 19th century, a quarter to a third of the residents were under 10; half were under 20. This mirrors the age profile of a present day developing country, such as Peru. The difference lies in the older age groups. In developing countries, the percentage of each older age band tapers steadily to produce a pyramid effect; in Philcote Street, there is a sharp reduction in the age group 20-29, but after that the percentages stayed about the same until 50-59, after which they do taper down.

This can be explained by young active adults leaving home, either to set up home elsewhere in Deddington or to move elsewhere. This is particularly noticeable in 1851, when 20-29 year olds made up just 6% of the population. The 1840s had been a time of serious economic hardship, characterised by high grain prices and leading to Chartist unrest and middle class attempts to alleviate matters by repealing the Corn Laws. It also saw the chaotic and helter skelter development of railways, with the consequent demand for unskilled labour (although railway contractors were reluctant to employ farm workers, whose poor diet and living conditions meant that they had not got the requisite strength). Nonetheless, there were strong pressures on the young rural poor to leave home and, indeed, their area.

Occupations

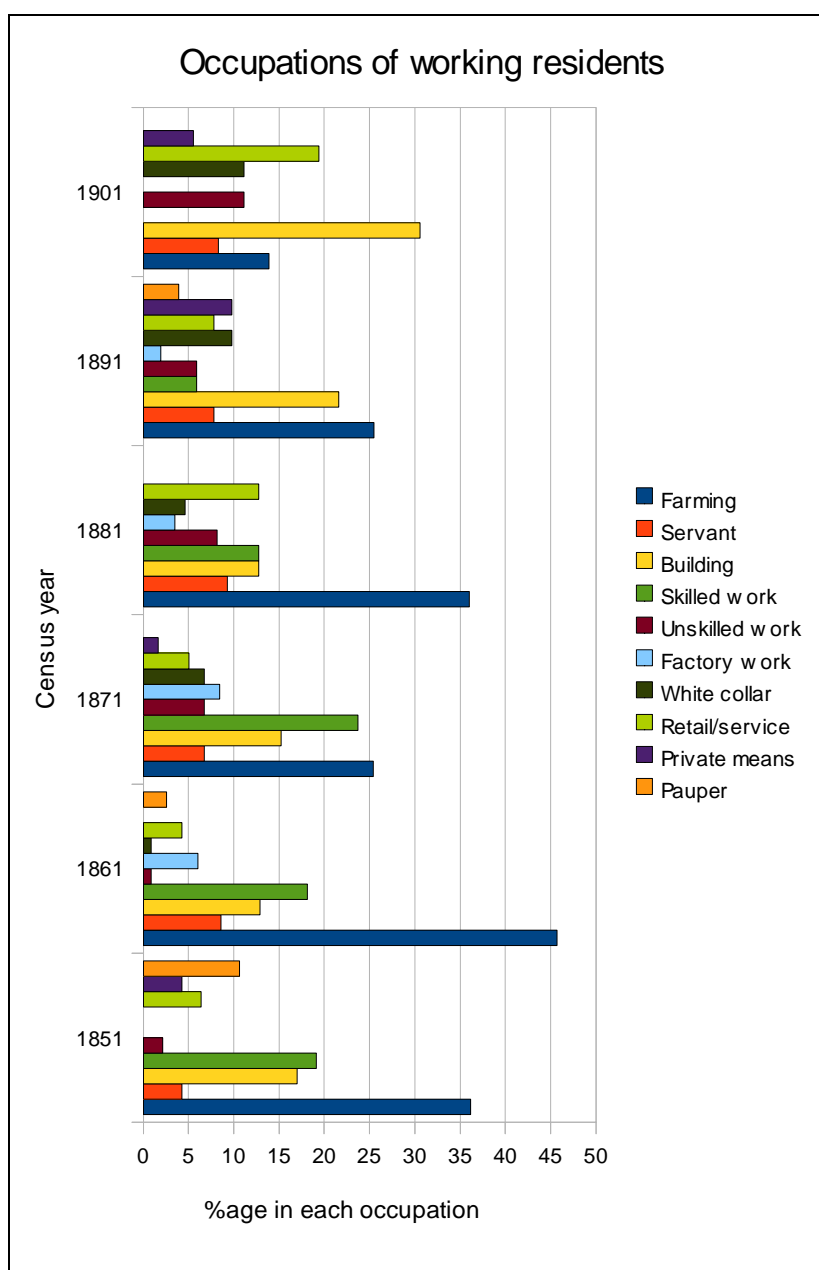
Categorising jobs and occupations so as to understand the economic reality of life in Philcote Street is not simple. For a start, there are a multiplicity of job titles, with one or two recorded in only one census year. This makes it almost impossible to compare different years or to spot trends. I have, therefore grouped them, trying to be consistent, thus making it easier to analyse changes.

- Farming: includes farmers, agricultural labourers, woodman and any other occupation that involved working directly on the land.
- Servant: this includes “servant” but also any other jobs involving domestic service, such as groom, as well as servile occupations that do not require the holder to live in, such as charwoman and washerwoman.
- Building: is more or less self-explanatory, although I have also included “builder's engine driver” and “builder's blacksmith”. I have also included labourer's if they clearly worked on building.
- Skilled work: includes the various types of shoemaker and other skilled work. I have counted here women's trades such as straw bonnet maker and dressmaker.
- Factory work: means the axletree factory.
- White collar: encompasses any non manual work, from solicitor's clerk to postman.
- Retail/service: includes shop workers and dealers, but also carriers.

The graph below shows the changing employment patterns in the last half of the 19th century. It demonstrates some very interesting trends, the most obvious being the steep decline in agricultural work. From its peak in 1861 at 46% of the working population, there was a steady decline in the proportion working on the land to just 14% in 1901. Anyone tracing their ancestry back to late 19th century Deddington, such as the captain of the Deddington bell-ringers, cannot be other than impressed by the stream of “Ag Lab” recorded against the occupation column. The decline reflects the general decline in agriculture in the 1880s and 1890s, together with the adoption of machinery which greatly reduced the number of people employed. An effect of this decline can be seen in the entry in 1901 for Thomas Miller. His occupation was recorded as “Shepherd retired – no work for years”.

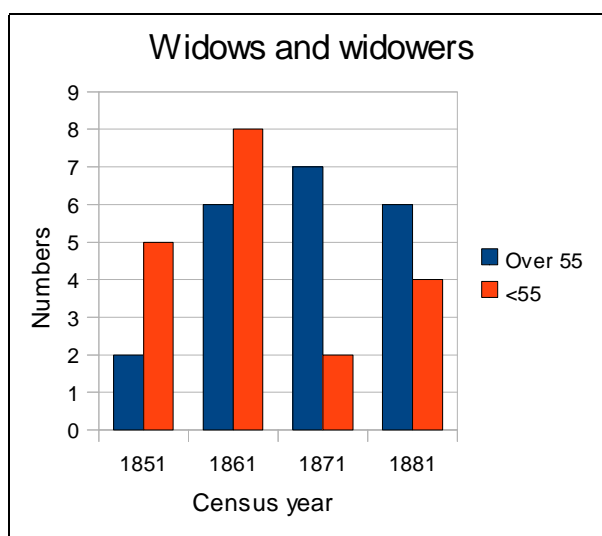
At the same time, there was an increase in the number employed in the building industry and in retail. The Franklin brothers had a large builder's yard, and built and repaired churches and church screens. It was probably here that Eli Satchwell, recorded in 1901 as a "builder's engine driver", worked.

The number of skilled tradesman also increased, showing that Deddington was large and 'open' enough for those with some initiative to find alternative work. It is also significant that alongside the manual workers in Philcote Street was a small but steady number of white collar workers – this was no working class ghetto. A final point is the rise and fall of factory workers during this period. This was because of the axletree factory, in what is now the British Legion Club, which made patented axles for high class carriages. This was founded about 1820¹ and was employing 24 men and 4 boys in 1851. It was closed when the owners sold the patent in 1895, which explains why there were no factory workers in 1901.



¹ <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=101855#s8>, Deddington, Trade and Industry

Pauperism, Widows and Widowers



The number of families where one of the parents under 55 had died is surprising, at least in the first four censuses. Given that most of the heads of households were poorly paid labourers, and that families were large, the loss of either parent could have been disastrous. To make the best of it, families pooled their resources. Two households in 1861 illustrate this.

A couple in their 20s, the Stilgoes, were looking after their 89 year old widower grandfather, who was also receiving poor relief, thus obviating the need for him to be admitted to the Woodstock workhouse. Martha Heritage, 72, had her single 36 year old son, a pattern maker, 42 year old widowed daughter, and three grandchildren, one of whom was working. In this way the worst effects of poverty were alleviated, as there were two wages coming in.

Those associated with a business fared better. Elizabeth French, wife of Richard French, carrier, in 1851, was widowed by 1871. She was the mother of 8 children, 5 under the age of 15, but by the time her husband died, only two adult sons remained at home helping her to run the business. She was still running it in 1881, after which there is no record.

Another reasonably well off widower was Robert Whetton, a farmer of 23 acres in 1851. He lived with his wife Elizabeth, his mother-in-law, sister-in-law and nephew. By 1861, his nephew was working as an agricultural labourer, presumably on his uncle's farm. 1871 revealed that Elizabeth had died, and that he had remarried, and, although his new wife, Annie, was 59, they had had two young children aged 8 and 6. They were sufficiently well off to employ a servant. On his census form in 1881, Robert proudly described himself as "yeoman farmer", indicating that he owned his land. Soon after this he must have died, because Annie lived with an older single female companion at least until 1901. She was "living on her own means", probably renting the farm lands to another farmer.

Mobility

The Whetton and French families, unusually, lived in Philcote Street for more than 30 years. The majority of the inhabitants appeared in only one or two censuses. The long residence of the Whettons and Frenches could be due to their owning their property. I suspect that the rest of the residents rented their houses, which might account for the short nature of their tenure. I have not

been able to prove this, although I hope to look at the 1910 rating valuation maps and ledgers.

Conclusion

Compared with today, Philcote Street would have been a much more noisy and lively. Inhabited by many large families with many young children, the street – at least in decent weather -would have been thronged with children playing out, relieved to escape the unbelievably cramped conditions in their homes.

As they grew older, many would have formed romantic attachments with their neighbours, leading to marriage and families. The vast majority of the inhabitants were born in Deddington, and sought their partners from the township.

As they reached working age, many of the more lively and ambitious would have left home and hearth to seek their fortune in the wider world. Late 19th century Deddington was not a prosperous place and offered very few opportunities.

Misfortune might force some to return to the relative safety of their families.

Sources

Census Enumerators' Forms for 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891 and 1901

Deddington Online

British History Online – Victoria County History – Oxfordshire – Parishes - Deddington