

NOTES

THE REBUILDING OF CEELY HOUSE, AYLESBURY: SOME NEW EVIDENCE

The private account book of Sir Thomas Lee (1687–1749), 3rd baronet, of Hartwell covering the years 1736 to 1749¹, though it consists principally of household and garden expenses, also includes a good many miscellaneous items, of which the most unusual is the following entry dated 5 February 1747/8:

Gave two men for bringing from Aylesbury some Relicts belonging to the Grey Friars found there in an Howse of Mr Register Bells in pulling down a Cieling [£100 02 0]

'Mr Register Bell' is Hugh Barker Bell (1717–1766)², who became deputy registrar of the archdeaconry of Buckingham in 1740 and was afterwards joint registrar. Readers of the impressive study of the County Museum buildings in Church Street, Aylesbury, and their occupiers by John Chenevix Trench and Pauline Fenley³ will recall that he is credited with rebuilding Ceely House in its present form. The same study identifies the original house, now concealed behind its Georgian facade, as the fifteenth-century brotherhood house of the Fraternity of Our Lady.

This new piece of information confirms both conclusions, for in the first place it indicates that extensive works were in progress at Mr Bell's house at the relevant period and in the second place it reveals that objects connected with pre-Reformation Catholic piety were found concealed in the house. Sir Thomas, whose penchant for antiquities was evidently known to Bell, assumed that the 'Relicts' were connected with the former

Franciscan Friary at Aylesbury, but it is equally – if not more – likely that they belonged to the Fraternity, or to the parish church. Either way it is surely significant that they were hidden in this particular building.

In one respect only is the new evidence at variance with the conclusions of the study and that is the precise year of the rebuilding, which in the light of dendrochronological evidence Chenevix Trench and Fenley ascribe to 1755–6. But they make it clear that dendrochronology in fact produced two possible dates, the other being 1746–7, and that the choice of the later one was based on probability. Bell's first wife had died in 1749 and he is known to have remarried to a well-to-do widow at some date between 1753 and 1759, when their first child was born, lending extra plausibility to 1755–6 as the date for an expensive new undertaking of the kind. However, it now looks as if the earlier date is the correct one.

It would be interesting to know what the relics were and what became of them.

Hugh Hanley

REFERENCES

1. Buckinghamshire Record Office, D/X 1212/3.
2. His date of death is erroneously given as 1776 in the article cited in footnote 3.
3. 'The County Museum Buildings, Church Street, Aylesbury', in *Records of Buckinghamshire*, 33 1991 (published 1993), pp. 1–33.

THE JOURNEY TO WORK IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE 1921-1971

This note highlights findings drawn from an analysis of some statistics gleaned from the Censuses of Population. They include, for 1921, figures for commuting to London from Buckinghamshire which can be compared with data from other counties in the south-east. A fuller account, published separately in a working paper¹, includes detailed tables, maps and references. This separate publication is an initial result of a project that aims to assemble and digest statistics for Buckinghamshire from the Censuses since 1801².

Buckinghamshire's relationships with London, in the last eighty or more years, have been dominated by commuting. The number of those who lived in one area and worked in another can also be used to define the degree of interrelationship between parts of the county in the same period.

The 1921 Census was, the Registrar General claimed, the first occasion when statistics of workplace had been collected in a census anywhere in the world. A question asked for the address of each person's place of work. The results were then tabulated by local authority district. At that date, there were twenty-two such areas in Buckinghamshire. There were two areas with a high percentage of males with no fixed workplace: Aylesbury RD and Marlow UD. The Aylesbury RD figure included 2571 RAF personnel at Halton (if they were excluded the RD's percentage would have fallen from 37.5% to 3.4%). At Marlow 13.5% had no fixed worked workplace. A similar percentage of its males were occupied in transport and there could well have been significant numbers of Thames bargemen in this figure.

Male employment was most localised in the case of those living in Wolverton, Aylesbury MB and Wycombe MB. In all three towns less than 10% of occupied males travelled out of the town to work. Buckingham MB, Bletchley UD and Chesham UD also had low levels of outflow. In contrast, Slough, Beaconsfield, Eton, Newport Pagnell and Linslade UD's all had over 30% of their occupied males travelling out of the town to work. In the period 1921-1951, mobility grew and, in almost every case, there was a progression in the degree of work outflow. On average, the proportion working in the town of their residence halved. In Aylesbury, for instance, the outflow increased from 9% to 18%, and in Beaconsfield from 25% to 52%. The increase in outflows was even greater from the rural districts. On average, the percentage outflow grew

three times, in the case of Aylesbury RD from 15% to 42%. This provides statistical evidence of the suburbanisation of the countryside and an indication of the localised conditions existing in 1921.

In 1921, the nature of these outflows varied from area to area. Slough, Beaconsfield and Eton were, even in 1921, located within the London commuter belt. Linslade was little more than an administrative anomaly, given its close ties across the river with Leighton Buzzard. Wolverton was remarkably dominant over its neighbours. It drew 20.4% of Newport Pagnell UD's occupied population, 10.1% of Newport RD's and 4.3% of Bletchley UD's. The first of these figures may have been one of the highest outflows from a 'free-standing' town to another in the country.

The detail contained in the Censuses can be illustrated by reference to Aylesbury in 1921. The town had 5,146 persons who both worked and lived there. 122 travelled out to the Aylesbury RD, 57 to other places in the county and 326 to places outside the county (119 of this last figure worked in London). The town drew 828 workers from its rural district of whom 89 came from Wycombe RD and a smaller number from the RD's of Amersham, Wing and Winslow. Only 96 workers came from other areas in the county; 377 were recorded as living elsewhere. In 1921, no figure is given for the number travelling from, or to, Wycombe MB. In 1951, 33 Aylesbury residents were recorded as working in Wycombe MB and 45 people travelled in the reverse direction. In percentage terms, these numbers were very small, only 0.33% of Aylesbury's occupied population worked in Wycombe and 0.23% of Wycombe's in Aylesbury (by 1971 these percentages were to grow to 0.68% and 0.25%, and the total numbers were by then 130 and 70). These were still low figures and pointed to the separateness of different parts of the county.

Commuting to London can be documented from

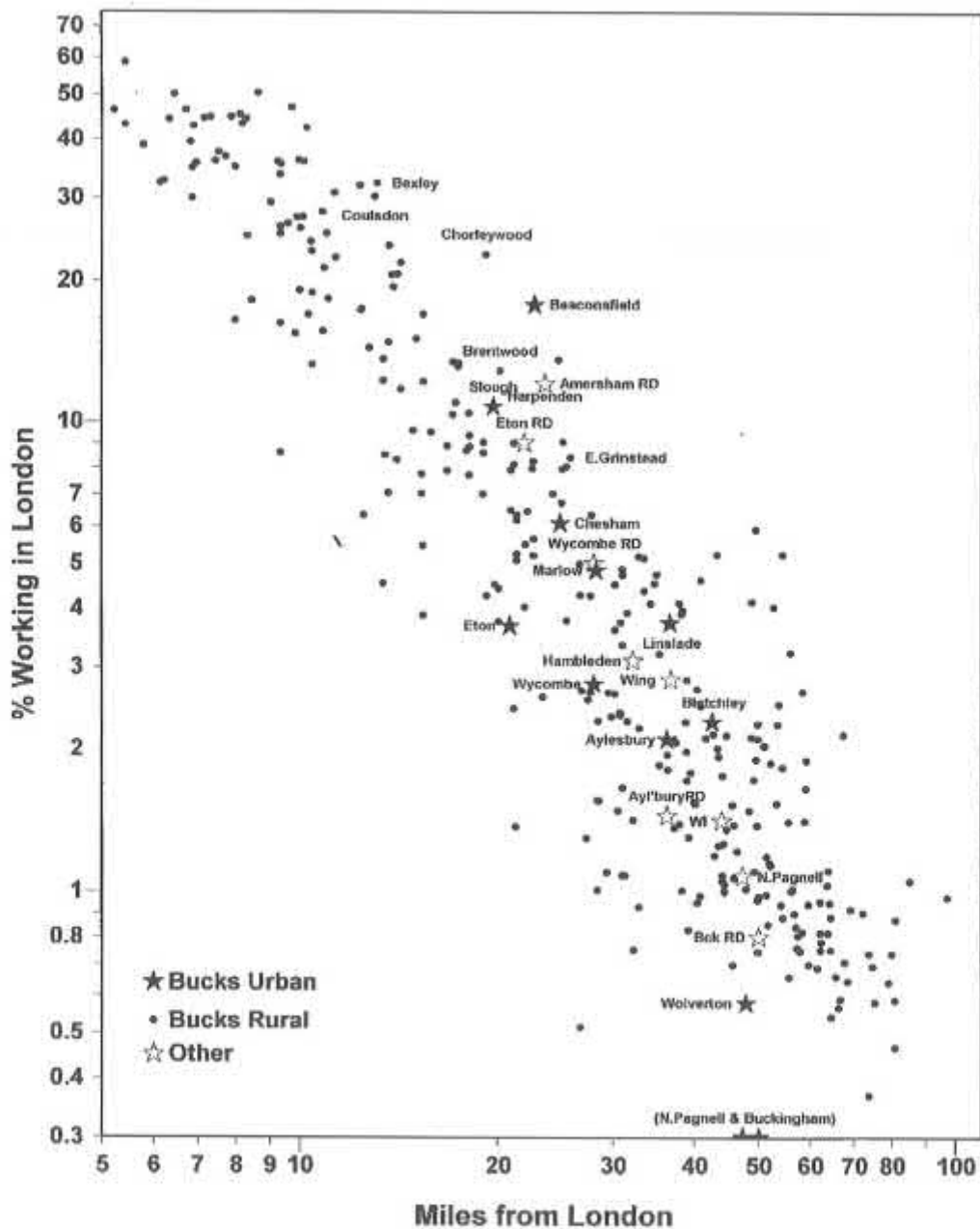


FIGURE 1 1921, relationship between % occupied population working in London (vertical scale) and crow-fly distance to Charing Cross (horizontal scale). Both scales expressed logarithmically. Each local authority area shown by a symbol. Excludes holiday resorts. Only Buckinghamshire, and a few other, districts are named. Buckingham MB and Newport Pagnell UD had no recorded London commuters. (On the diagram Winslow RD is indicated as W1 and Buckingham RD as Bck).

the figures in a way that so far has not been possible from railway ticket issues. Three main conclusions can be drawn from the data. They reveal the special nature of the Edwardian settlements of Amersham-on-the-Hill, Chesham Bois, Beaconsfield, and Gerrards Cross. By 1921, all four were already established with high percentages of their occupied populations working in London. They had been attracted there by various means. The Burke's estate in Beaconsfield was advertised in 1910 as having 'a most convenient situation immediately adjoining Beaconsfield station'. Beaconsfield was comparable to Chorleywood, and both places had a far higher percentage of commuters to London than was the norm for places at a similar distance from the capital (Fig.1). In this respect they outpaced Brentwood and Harpenden, perhaps the nearest equivalent towns elsewhere. In all the local authority districts of the county, the proportion of workers who were London commuters was closely related to distance from the capital. In this respect, places in Buckinghamshire were very little different from those elsewhere in the south-east of England (Fig.1). In detail, local variations can be best understood as deviations from a general relationship. The 38 London commuters from Linslade UD were, relative to the number from Leighton Buzzard, almost twice as numerous as a percentage of the occupied population. Proximity to the station, and housing for a more affluent class, explains this difference. Wolverton, as a specialised 'industrial encampment', sent far fewer commuters than its distance from London and its size would have suggested (36 rather than approximately 100).

The pattern established in 1921 was remarkably similar to that which existed in 1951 and 1961. In Beaconsfield's case, 17.8% of the occupied population worked in London in 1921, 12.2 % in 1951 and 16.2% in 1961. Comparable figures for Amersham RD were 12.1%, 14.6% and 15.9%. Marlow's figures were 4.8%, 3.6% and 3.6%. Only from Slough, where the town's evolution into an important industrial centre achieved momentum after 1921, did commuting to London fall in relative terms, from 10.8% in 1921 to 4.0% in 1961. The total number of London commuters did, of course, grow considerably over the period 1921-1961: for instance, 293 to 710 from Beaconsfield, 243 to 680 from Chesham, 276 to 640 from Wycombe MB, 1176 to 3920 from Amersham RD, and 1120 to 2890 from Eton RD. However, 5.0% of the county's

total occupied population worked in London in both 1921 and 1951. In 1961 the figure was 5.5%.

The role of the railway in changing Buckinghamshire from an agricultural county into an active daily part of a wider Metropolitan region has yet to be fully documented. The figures above provide a small insight into the story. The influence of London on Buckinghamshire has taken many forms. It might be argued that many of those gentry, merchants and professionals who bought land in the county, and who worked in London prior to the development of the railways, were the first commuters. In effect most were the owners of a second home in the county. The actual use of the railways, rather than their physical development, is a subject on which it is to be hoped the railway historians will throw more light. At present, we can only quote anecdotal examples of such commuting. The extent to which, in 1912, according to the *Daily Telegraph*, the 'unsophisticated natives', who 'gazed from their gardens and copses and pasturelands in open-mouthed astonishment at the sight of the Galatea Pullman coaches on the Metropolitan Railway',³ expressed similar surprise at regular London commuting has to be a matter of speculation.

REFERENCES

1. Thorpe, David, 2002, *The Journey to Work in Buckinghamshire 1921-1971*, Historical Statistics, Research Paper No 2, Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society and Bucks Local History Network.
2. The first of these documents is Thorpe, David, 2002, *Buckinghamshire in 1851 - An introduction to and initial assessment of the evidence of the Census Enumerators Books (as published on CD-ROM by the Buckinghamshire Family History Society)*, Historical Statistics, Research Paper No 1, Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society and Bucks Local History Network. It is to be followed by *The Population of Buckinghamshire Parishes 1801-1991*, Historical Statistics, Research Paper No 3, Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society and Bucks Local History Network.
3. *The Daily Telegraph*, April 29th, 1910.

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