

# EMPLOYMENT TRENDS IN A VILLAGE; EAST FARNDON 1777-1911

by Alan Langley



People's occupations were first recorded in a census in 1841 and this practice has continued. Consequently the results can be studied over the period till the last census currently available, 1911. By looking at the census results for a whole community, in this case, East Farndon, it is possible to see how the Victorian period was one of great change in a community's way of life. Most Northamptonshire villages also have a militia list from the late eighteenth century, listing the names and occupations of men aged 18 to 45 liable to serve. East Farndon has such a list from 1777. Many men were exempt from serving, such as clergy, parish constables and fathers of three or more legitimate children. The list only contains 36 names; however, their occupations do give some insight into a pre-census era. The occupations of 1777, in fact, give evidence of an industry which had ceased to exist by 1841. The occupations of the 36 men in 1777 are as follows:

Servant	10	Shoemaker	2
Farmer	6	Blacksmith	1
Weaver	6	Miller	1
Comber	4	Tailor	1
Labourer	2	Shepherd	1
Baker	2		

It is the weavers and combers who are a reminder of a lost industry. That 10 out of 36 (44%) were working in the worsted trade shows that it was very important to the area at that time. There may well have been men over 45, and therefore not liable to serve in the militia, also employed in a similar way. There is also a process between combing and weaving, namely spinning. This work was largely carried out by women, so it is fair to assume that many Farndon women were also engaged in the wool trade. In 1790, a Farndon woman was accused of embezzling a pound of

jersey, which shows that the trade was still going on by that date.

There were cloth manufacturers in Northamptonshire in the years round 1770, centred on Kettering and Long Buckby. However, although East Farndon is in that county, Market Harborough is so much nearer and more accessible that it would benefit the workers in Farndon if they only had to send their work that short distance. Nichols, in his 1798 history, tells us this about Market Harborough:

*"In the present day, a considerable manufactory of tammies, shalloons, plain and figured lastings, &c. employs a great number of poor families in this town and neighbourhood. Several hundred pieces of tammies, shalloons, &c. and a large quantity of yarns and jerseys are brought weekly to the market. These are bought up, and sent to merchants in London, Coventry, and Leeds, &c. who employ factors for that purpose. It is computed that in some years 30.000l (£30,000) has been returned in the article of tammies only."*

Tammies, shalloons and lastings were types of worsted, aimed generally at the lower end of the market. The list of the householders of Harborough in 1791 (included in Georgian Harborough by J.C. Davies) includes 16 involved in the textile business – combers, weavers, staplers, factors. However, Nichols's information may have been getting out of date by 1798. *The State of the Poor* by Sir Frederick Morton Eden in 1795 reports that in Kibworth Beauchamp, "There was formerly a tammy manufactory, which is now nearly laid aside".

Of Kettering, he says that woollens are the chief trade: "but since the war, business has considerably declined; for 1s. work, a spinner is now paid only 8d. A

man, who could earn in the woollen business, 14s. a week three years ago, cannot now get more than 7s. About 400 men from Kettering have entered the militia, and nearly as many have enlisted in the army". The wars against France began in 1793 and continued on and off till 1815, with disruptive effects on trade. The towns of Yorkshire were also becoming more industrialised in their production of woollen goods; added to this was the increasing availability of cotton from Lancashire at lower prices, again the result of the introduction of machines. Tammies and shalloons were no longer sought after in the same way.

If the workers of East Farndon sent their products to Harborough, they also will have suffered. William Harrod, in his *History of Harborough* (1808) copies the exact words of Nichols above, but precedes the passage with, "About twenty years since" (instead of "In the present day") and adds at the end of the paragraph, "These were halcyon days!". There can be no doubt, therefore, that the weavers and combers of East Farndon would have had to look to other forms of livelihood.

The population of Farndon in 1801 was 279, a figure not reached again till the 21st century. It may have been as large or even larger at the time of the militia list in 1777. The village's fields were enclosed in 1780-81 which may have made difficulties for tenants of small arable plots, if most of the parish was now turned over to pasture. If the collapse of the local worsted industry, with its large force of outworkers, is added to this, it's no wonder that the population declined, as people migrated to where the work was. The population in 1811 had gone down to 251; then it stabilised at 250 in 1821, 1831 and 1841.



*Domestic service was one of the chief occupations in this period. The Rectory, for example, (now demolished) employed two live-in servants in 1911.*

The census of 1841 is our first chance to see a full account of the occupations of village residents. It is no surprise to find no combers or weavers. Out of the 74 people who are recorded with an occupation, 28 are agricultural labourers and nine are graziers; so 37 out of 74 (50%) are engaged in agriculture. There are trades catering for local people – for instance, three shoemakers, four tailors, two grocers, two bakers and a publican (there were two pubs, so maybe the other was between tenants). There are 12 servants; clearly an important source of employment. The total number of different occupations among the 62 people was 18.

The population in 1851 had declined from 250 to 238. Bob Hakewill has pointed out to me that the Harborough and Great Bowden census shows that 17 people were living there who had been born in Farndon (five of whom were in the workhouse). Migration from villages to towns in search of work was a nationwide phenomenon, of course, so the drift to Harborough fits that pattern. Within the village, agriculture still dominates: 29 agricultural labourers and 10 graziers. There are 81 people with an occupation (more than before but with a smaller population) and those working on the land make up a similar proportion to that of 1841 (48%). There are now three dressmakers (none in 1841) – perhaps a local business?

Year	Population
1801	279
1811	251
1821	250
1831	250
1841	250
1851	238
1861	242
1871	222
1881	223
1891	244
1901	204
1911	193

#### *Census figures for East Farndon 1801-1911*

In 1861 the population figure was marginally up at 242. The agricultural occupations reached their highest total in any census: 32 labourers, 16 graziers, two shepherds and a farm bailiff. This total of 51, out of the 94 with an occupation given, constitutes 54.2% of those employed. Among the newer occupations are now three bricklayers, two grooms, a coachsmith and a butcher.

The year 1871 saw the total population decline to 222. 75 people have occupations, of whom 36 (48%) were in agriculture. One new occupation is coal-dealer – surely he must have commuted into Harborough?

In 1881 there were 223 residents in the village, much the same as 1871. There was a surprising rise in the number working on farms, to a total of 47 out of 87 (54.6%), the highest percentage in that sector in any of these censuses. New occupations include three laundresses (a laundry had started up in the village), two painters and two builders. Perhaps more of the better-off villagers were having work done on their houses.



*These outbuildings on Farndon's Main Street were once used as a laundry. The 1901 census records four women as laundresses and it is most likely that they worked here.*

The population rose again at the 1891 census, back up to 244. Eighty people have occupations given, of whom 37 are in agriculture (almost 47%). The new occupations include a brewer (James Dulley of Harborough brewers Eady and Dulley), a printer and a staymaker. These three must all have commuted into Harborough to work. This was the pattern which would gather pace as the years went by.

A drop in the population had occurred by 1901, to the lowest figure yet of 204. Remember the number a hundred years earlier was 279. More were in work than at any census since 1861, 92 out of those 204. Those in agriculture made up only 31.5%, much lower than in previous years. There were many new jobs listed, most involving work in the town, not the village. Shop worker, factory worker, shirt machinist, bank accountant, railway carter - all these were new jobs for a new age. The 1841 census, as mentioned above, had 18 different occupations; 1901 has 44. This was a different world.

The last available census at present is 1911. The population declined further to 193, but there were still 89 people in work, in 52 different occupations. The 20 in agriculture only made up 22.5%, showing that this sector was clearly in decline as a source of employment. We have four cycle and motor workers now, as well as two company directors (the Coxes of R. & W.H. Symington), a company secretary (also of Symington's), an electrical engineer and a hunt secretary. The range of occupations (52 of them) marks a striking contrast with the 18 of 1841. Bicycles and now cars had made living at a distance from your job almost a normal experience. There were so many more types of work available and it was easier now to reach them. The table below shows the figures over the period from 1841 to this last available census of 1911.

The table clearly shows the main trends: a larger proportion of the population with paid employment (this was mainly because younger men and women went out to work and earned their keep rather than helping their parents at home or in their work); a much wider range of jobs; more than halving the proportion of those in work who were working in agriculture. The table

**Employment in East Farndon 1841-1911**

	<i>1841</i>	<i>1851</i>	<i>1861</i>	<i>1871</i>	<i>1881</i>	<i>1891</i>	<i>1901</i>	<i>1911</i>
Number in employment	74	81	94	75	87	80	92	89
..as % of total population	28.9	34	38.8	33.8	39	32.8	45.1	46.1
Number of different occupations	18	20	24	23	26	32	44	52
Number employed in agriculture	37	39	51	36	47	37	29	20
..as % of those employed	50	48	54.2	48	54.6	46.3	31.5	22.5

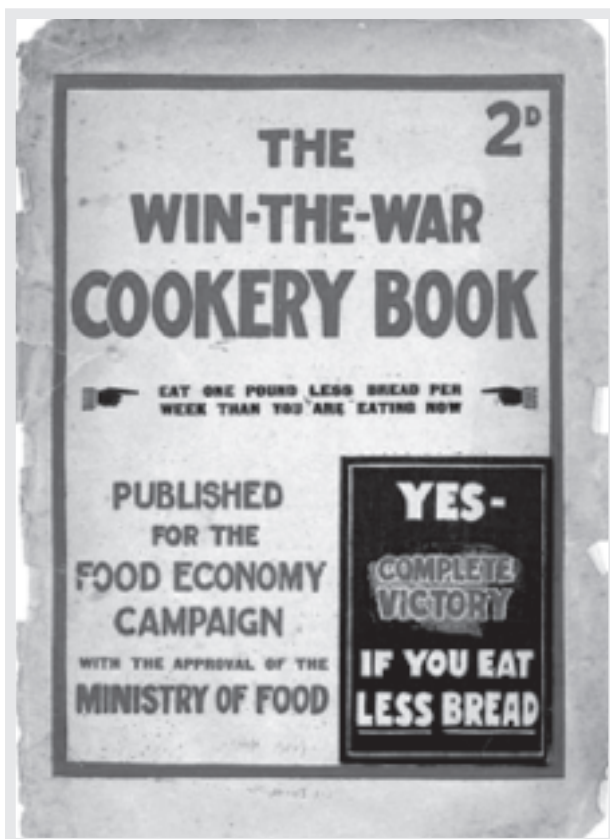
also seems to suggest that 1841 and 1871 were the least prosperous for the village.

The period since 1777 had seen the complete demise of the textile industry, which provided work at home for so many villagers. For a long period after that, there was little else apart from agriculture and domestic service; the overseers of the poor gave out many small sums and some people had only the Union Workhouse in Harborough left to resort to. The 1851 census gives 'pauper' as the 'occupation' of 9 village residents. These were not years of plenty, but by the 20th century, many were able to cycle to work in the increasing range of factory and shop employment in town. The village's population declined considerably through the period, from 279 in 1841 to 193 in 1911. It reached its lowest in 1921 and then climbed steadily back up, reaching over 300 for the first time in 2011. Not many of those 2011 residents worked in the village, except perhaps from home. Commuting has become the norm,

especially as there are no shops, no pub and no school in the village. The change is one from a self-contained and largely self-sustaining community to one which comes close to being a dormitory village, a pleasant place for retirement or to return to after work.

For the use of the Militia Lists and information about the textile trade in Northamptonshire, I am indebted to Wendy Raybould. Her article "Textile Manufacturing in Eighteenth-Century Northamptonshire" in "Northamptonshire Past and Present" (2015), the annual Journal of the Northamptonshire Record Society, as well as her online thesis "Open for Business: Textile Manufacture in Northamptonshire, c. 1685-1800", have been invaluable in helping me understand the industry and encouraged me to look across the county boundary to Harborough.

## HISTORY'S ODD SHORTS



Cookery book, 1917.

## JOHN FROST IN EARNEST

### 18 DEGREES IN THE MIDLANDS

Severe frost was experienced generally throughout the country on Friday night, and telegrams on Saturday indicate that skating prospects are good.

A Spalding telegram states that 11 degrees of frost were recorded in the Lincolnshire Fens, and as the frost continues, keen skating is expected to commence on Sunday.

At Market Harborough, Leicestershire, where usually low readings are generally registered, 18 degrees of frost were experienced.

*The South Wales Daily Post, 4th February, 1899*