

GREAT HASELEY THROUGH THE AGES

1841 TO 1851

This analysis is taken from the 1841 and 1851 census documents and is the interpretation of the author alone. Any errors or omissions are accepted as his responsibility and the whole document is prepared on behalf of the Great Haseley History Group.

INTRODUCTION to Great Haseley.

Great Haseley parish has a character that is enriched by several good-quality stone-built houses from the 17th and 18th centuries. These are complimented by many earlier one and two storey cottages of limestone rubble with elm timber-framing and brick dressings. Larger houses also exist, such as the 18th century Church Farm House. Great Haseley Manor House is located close to the Church and nearby Tithe Barn, suggesting a medieval manorial siting. Most cottages in Great Haseley were attached to Little Haseley Court up to the 1950's, when they were bought by resident families.

By 1801 there were 115 houses and a population of 608 in the parish. Growth was highest in Great Haseley itself and in 1841 reached a peak of 577 in 106 houses. By 1981 this had become 575 in 209 houses and by 2011 it was 511 in 216 houses. In the 21st century the proximity to the M40 and London made the village highly attractive to outsiders, and increased house prices dramatically.

POPULATION AND HOUSING

How many were there?

In 1841 Great Haseley (excluding Rycote, Latchford and Lobb) had a population of 577, split between females and males on a 52 to 48% basis, in 106 households. By 1851 this had reduced to 558, with a similar split between females and males, but now in 123 households.

Where did they come from?

In 1841 there were 38 people born outside of Oxfordshire (6.6%). This increased to 71 by 1851 (12.7%). The advent of the railways obviously improved mobility and the Oxford to London road was close by as was the road to Thame, which had been an important route since the Middle Ages.

What was the focus?

The census enumerators in 1841 identified 26 trades in Great Haseley, covering 135 of the population. By 1851 the identified trades had increased to 48, embracing 375 people. By far the largest workforce was the one supporting agriculture. Agricultural labourers numbered 78 in 1841. This grew to 123 by 1851.

Children

The position of children in the village changed much over the decade, bearing in mind the pronounced poverty and the need to get employment and bring revenue into the family. In 1841 there were 104 boys (5 to 18), with 8 working as assistants in cordwainer or tailor families and one 11-year-old boy employed as an agricultural labourer. Of the 100 girls (5 to 18) only two were employed (as servants). There were also 84 children under 5. This was an indicator of the change coming. No child was enumerated as a scholar.

By 1851 the situation was very different. 29 boys (5 to 18) out of a total of 76 were employed. 12 out of 91 girls were employed and there were 65 children under the age of 5.

By this time there were 126 listed as scholars, and although girls had to pay towards their education, for boys it was free. The Curate, William Birkett, built a girl's school in 1843 next to the boy's school (founded in 1841) on Back Way. In 1854 about 60 pupils over 5 were attending each school.

A Congregationalist chapel was built in 1839 and around 1846, the Bishop considered protestant dissent to be rife in Great Haseley. Up to 55 people attended the Congregationalist Chapel in 1851, with support from several of the larger farmers. An Anglican Sunday school continued through the 19th century though a Congregationalist Sunday school suffered from local opposition.

HASELEY HOUSE

Dramatic Changes.

In 1841 Haseley Manor House had 3 male and 2 female servants in residence but no other occupants.

By 1851 Haseley House enjoyed a complete revival with the arrival of The Honourable Hugh Hammersley and his family during the early part of the decade, with his first wife Philippa Mary Ann Phillips. Hugh is listed as Esquire and Magistrate and was earlier the Deputy Lieutenant of Oxfordshire. In 1851, 4 of his 8 children (6 born in Great Haseley) were schooled at home by a governess, Emily Mills. The household had a butler, cook and 4 nurses, a groom and 3 maids (5 being from nearby Oxfordshire villages).

THE RECTORY

An important position.

In 1841 the Rectory, with about 2 acres of land in the centre of the village was occupied by William Birkett as parish Clerk, with his wife, Mary and his five children. They were supported by 3 servants and had living with them three independent persons, all under the age of 20.

In 1851 William Birkett had been elevated to the position of Rector. The Rectory, which has 14th/15th century origins, was in need of major repairs. The end result was that in 1846 the architect George Gilbert Scott RA (of St Pancras Station and the Albert Memorial fame) proposed dismantling the building, apart from the Hall, and rebuilding it reusing the original materials. William Birkett met the cost with a mortgage. William resided with his wife, Mary, a son and two daughters, a coachman, footman, cook and three maids.

William was supported as Rector by William John Dry, as Curate.

TRADES, CRAFTS and RETAILING

An explosion of skills.

From 1841 to 1851 saw a dramatic increase in skills in Great Haseley village. More were in service at Haseley House (The Manor) and the Rectory, 7 lace makers had appeared along with a miller, 2 butchers and 2 basket makers; there were increases in existing trades with now 3 bakers (up from 1), 5 gardeners (up from 1), 4 blacksmiths (up from 2), 8 masons (up from 4) and 9 cordwainers (new shoemakers) (up from 3). However, grocers reduced from 3 to 2 and carpenters stayed constant at 4. This upsurge in output had obviously found outlets in places such as Thame that provided increased demand for goods during this period. The masons (and the Cooper family, in particular) were finding business in the Oxford Colleges and the end result was increased family income and a consequent reduction in poverty.

In 1841 John Terry ran the Black Prince as publican. Others ran the Plough, Crown, Straggler and George. This number was far exceeded in the previous century when sheep drovers used more than 12 places serving alcohol as they wound their way to markets in Thame or Oxford.

By 1851 a sub post office was operational, run by John Terry, who also provided a carrier service to Oxford.

It is remarkable that the trade of blacksmith became a Hurst family domain from the 17th through to the 20th centuries. As a blacksmith Ann Hurst aged 68 in 1851 employed 2 others.

In 1841 John Billing was a land surveyor and his son Gabriel Billing was a machine maker. The Haseley tower mill was run by John as owner-occupier. Gabriel was to take it over later in the 19th century before it was leased to the baker, William Cross. By 1851 John Billing was 76 and a widower, still working as a land surveyor, Gabriel was 34, a machinist, married to Sophia and employing an 18-year-old apprentice machinist, Isaac Russell.

The importance of Agriculture.

In 1839 the Haseleys were two thirds arable compared with Latchford and Rycote, which had most of the land under grass. The main farms within the Parish were Haseley Court and Stone's Farm in Little Haseley, In Latchford were Lobb, Charity, Latchford House and Jointers Farms. Rycotelane Farm was held of the Earl of Abingdon. Great Haseley had Peggs Farm, run by John Atkinson and employing 12 men and 4 boys and Church Farm, run by John Shrimpton and employing 16 men. The names of Shrimpton, Atkinson and Cooper featured strongly for many years, up to the present time, as farmers and also as wheelwrights, innkeepers, stonemasons, carpenters and grocers in the village. This stability of ownership and the fact that farm sizes changed little during the nineteenth century helped stabilise farming through a period of agricultural depression.

Great Haseley's inclosure in 1822, however, probably increased local poverty by removing cottagers traditional grazing rights.

The position of a pauper.

In 1834, Great Haseley parish became part of the newly created Thame Poor Law Union. Poor rates were collected from parishioners, with exemptions for those suffering poverty. Although the census of 1841 did not enumerate any paupers this changed drastically by the census of 1851 when 5 people were identified just as paupers and 33 as paupers more specifically stated as being former agricultural labourers or farmers. What is striking is the fact that many paupers were living within unrelated households. It appears they were not expected to go to the Thame Workhouse but to remain in the village. More than likely this was to keep their labour available for the peaks of farming demand.

In 1841, out of 78 enumerated as Agricultural Labourers, 12 were over the age of 65 and one was 87. By 1851 most Agricultural Labourers over the age of 60 would be shown as paupers and were therefore in receipt of payments from the parish and allowed to retire from an exhaustive trade.

Unusual classifications.

In the 1851 census two persons were lucky to be shown as annuitants, one was noted as independent and one noted as having no occupation. One person was a Registrar of Births and Deaths and probably worked in Thame or Oxford. A son of the Rector (Augustus Henry Birkett) was enumerated as a Master of Arts from Oxford University. The 1851 census was a more elaborate affair than that of 1841, which did not even include the actual parish of birth; however, the enumerator had to rely on the information given by the head of the household that could well have hidden the fact that a son was actually a grandson to an unmarried daughter.