

SPALDING : SOME ASPECTS OF POPULATION CHANGE 1851-1881

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A glance at the census figures for Spalding shows that during the first half of the nineteenth century the number of people more than doubled, from 3296 in 1801 to 8829 in 1851. In contrast, in the second half, there was a levelling out at around 9000, with minimal change. By studying the 1851 to 1881 enumerators' returns for individual streets, a very different picture emerges. In fact some parts of the town experienced a marked increase whilst others showed a decrease.

The most striking area of change was the Spring Street/Gardens, Cross Street, Henrietta Street, St. Thomas's Road district. Here Spalding's first 'housing estate' developed (Figs. 1 & 2), although in the absence of planning regulations it was not really so in the modern sense. In 1851 only St. Thomas's Road and Green Lane existed, but by 1881 building along them had greatly expanded. The other streets were built from new and by 1881 the area made a compact whole which, although not yet complete, was a totally new feature of the town's development.



Fig. 1

Henrietta Street

The advantages of the new area included its location fairly close to the town centre and its nearness to the railway station (opened 1848). However, land must have been available for sale at a reasonable cost and so building began in the late 1850s, continuing until World War 1 with some later infilling. Expansion westwards was limited by the railway line to Holbeach (opened 1858) and northwards by Winsover Road.

The first houses were erected on Spring Gardens, followed by Henrietta Street in the 1860s, with Spring Street and Cross Street in the 1870s. By 1881 these were fairly well built up and expansion along St. Thomas's Road had virtually reached the Grammar School (opened 1881). Green Lane had also grown westwards towards the railway line and building on Havelock Street had just begun.

Some of the earliest dwellings in the area were built at the corner of Green Lane and Cross Street in the unusual form of a three storeyed terrace. They could only have been built for rent, but the experiment was not repeated as all the remaining dwellings were two storeyed. Sizes and styles varied greatly according to the individual tastes and resources and some very substantial houses were built. The end result was an attractive variety which gave the area its distinct character.

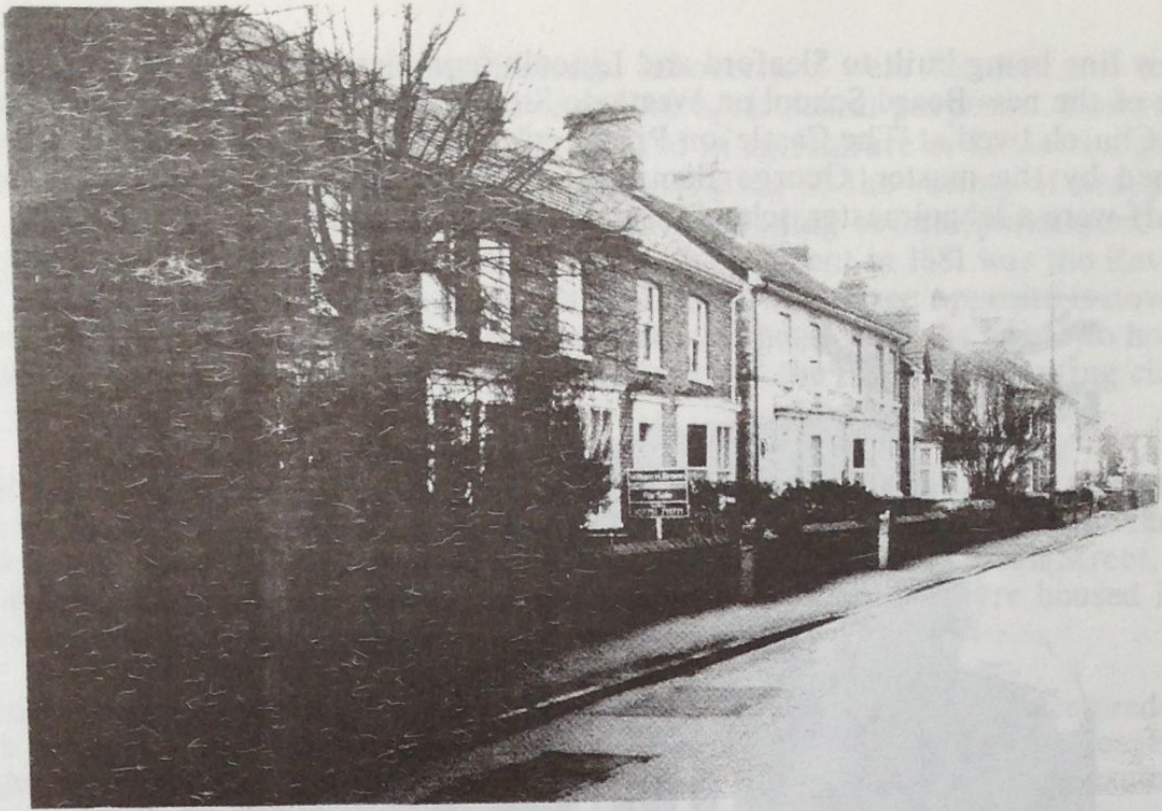


Fig. 2

St. Thomas's Road

The majority of the new residents were lower middle class except on Cross Street and included a significant number of retired people, with the means to purchase or rent the new houses. This may be a reflection of the prosperity of the area during the 'Golden Age Of Agriculture' which continued into the 1870s. In Spring Gardens, for instance, 45.5% of householders were listed as 'retired' or 'annuitants' in 1881, as were 50.0% in Henrietta Street and 51.7% in Spring Street. They included a number of farmers, no doubt drawn to an urban life on retirement.

A second area of expansion in the period was Pinchbeck Street, as it was then called. In 1851 it was built up on the west side as far as Stepping Stones Lane (now King's Road), with mainly small houses, an inn, the Spread Eagle, the Independent Chapel and the British School (now the Masonic Hall). The east side had more open space, but contained the then largest private house on the street, immediately north of the Peacock Inn. Way out, near the present junction with West Elloe Avenue, lay the Union House (workhouse). There were only 21 households with a total population of 100. Occupations were varied, but most of the householders would have regarded themselves as middle class.

By 1881 the scene had changed considerably, with buildings stretching along the length of the street as far as the railway crossing. Most of the expansion was northwards from the junction with Stepping Stones Lane and continued to be middle class. There were now 48 households with 195 inhabitants and some of the new houses were of considerable size. These included Mercia Lodge, an attractive building occupied by George Barrell, an aptly named wine and spirit merchant, Elm House, the home of Henry Caulton who farmed 300 acres and Charnwood, occupied by the Rev. J.C. Jones and his family.

In the newly built area the middle class aspirations of the occupants were demonstrated by the numerous 'villas' named in the census (Figs. 3 & 4). They were more frequent on the east side of the street and included Peacock Villa, Elton Villas, Castle Villas, and so on. There was, however, a Hames Terrace which housed a working class enclave and was situated on the east side, just beyond Charnwood. Occupants included an agricultural labourer, a road labourer, a charwoman and two general labourers; 13 out of the 48 householders were retired.

The presence of the waterworks on Pinchbeck Road is indicated in the census by 'Waterworks House' occupied by an 'engine driver', John Dobson. They were built in the early 1860s and provided local water, but by 1881 better quality supplies were piped in from Bourne. Other interesting residents included William Wright, a railway engineer, who was probably associated

with the new line being built to Sleaford and Lincoln (completed 1882) and George F. Church, the headmaster of the new Board School on Westlode Street, the first state school to be erected in the town. Mr. Church lived at 'The Castle' on Pinchbeck Road in 1881. The Union House (workhouse) was governed by the master, George Bemrose, and his wife Rebecca was the matron. Other resident staff were a schoolmaster, schoolmistress, nurse and porter.



Fig. 3

Charnwood



Fig. 4

Pinchbeck Street - Villas

Hawthorn Bank also experienced a considerable amount of building between 1851 and 1881 when the population increased from 113 to 257 and the number of households nearly doubled, from 28 to 52. Most of the new building took place at the northern end of the road between St. John's Church and Winsover Road and the predominantly agricultural population of 1851 was transformed into a much more varied one by 1881.

In 1851 15 householders out of 28 were agricultural labourers, 3 were farmers and one was the 'Proprietor of a steam engine' almost certainly used for agricultural purposes. However, by 1881 only a quarter of the householders (13 out of 52) worked in agriculture as labourers, gardeners or market gardeners and there were 2 farmers. Of the remaining 37 the variety of occupations was considerable, although railway workers were dominant, including several platelayers, a guard, a porter, an engine driver and a ticket collector. The leading resident in 1881 was the Rev. Augustus Moore, vicar of the recently built (1875) St. John's Church (the Vicarage opposite is now a nursing home). He, together with John Stimson, grocer and seed merchant, were the only two householders to employ resident domestic servants in 1881. The majority of the rest were working class people, as in 1851.

Albert Street, too, was an area of expansion during this period. It was named after the Prince Consort and was initially an offshoot of Holbeach Road close to the busiest part of the port. In 1851 there was no Commercial Road and Holbeach Road began at the top of High Street, extending northwards along the east side of the Welland. Most of the people then were housed in terraces and a good example still remains dated 1843.

Altogether there were 114 people living in 29 households in 1851. Occupations were predominantly manual, with nearly half the heads of households working either on the land or at sea, 8 of the 29 were agricultural labourers and 6 were listed as 'wives' or 'wives of mariners', presumably with husbands away at sea.

By 1881, however, the population of the street had risen to 207 living in 50 households. This indicates further building, extending away from the river. A terrace of the period, dated 1873 (Fig. 5), still exists today on the north side. The street surface would be of hard-packed earth, like most of the roads away from the town centre at that time: it was not made up until a century later.



Fig. 5

Terrace Dated 1873

Of the 50 householders in 1881, 11 worked in agriculture, although only 3 of these were listed as agricultural labourers: the others were mainly farmers or 'gardeners', the latter being probably little better than labourers. There was one poultry breeder, William Massey. The agricultural connection was, therefore, still in evidence, as was the maritime association, despite the decline of the port. However the latter was more tenuous than in 1851, with only one active mariner and 2 mariners' wives listed. The remaining householders had such a variety of occupations that it is not possible to generalise, but the majority still remained in the working class.

The most notable decrease in population between the two years was in Double Street where numbers fell sharply from 354 in 1851 to 187 in 1881, although the number of households actually increased, from 61 to 77 over the period. The cause was probably associated with the decline of the lodging houses for which the street was notorious in the mid-century. They were they houses of ill-repute, inhabited by the dregs of society, in the most appalling conditions.

However, after 1851 they began to be regulated under police control. The worst were closed down and minimal standards were applied to the rest so that by 1881 the situation had considerably improved. By then, in Double Street, only three remained, the Nag's Head, the Crane and the Loggerheads, with a total of 38 lodgers at the time of the census 22 of whom were at the latter.

The population remained mainly working class throughout the period, but there was some admixture of middle class people engaged mainly in trade. Indeed, there remain today some substantial houses, notably the Limes and the Sycamores near the junction with Herring Lane.

More significant, though was a steady decline in the population of the commercial heart of the town, notably in Broad Street, Hall Place, Market Place and the Sheep Market. Here there was a general decrease in resident population from 743 in 1851 to 605 in 1881. At the same time the number of households fell from 125 to 109.

Since then, in fact, the depopulation of the central area has continued so that by the early 1980s only 18 households were left. This trend has been characteristic of the central parts of most towns since the nineteenth century. In the bigger cities people moved to the pleasanter suburbs as transport improved, but in the case of Spalding it was probable that more apprentices and shop workers preferred to live at home rather than 'over the shop' under strict supervision and either walked or cycled to work. Since this was the zone of commerce it was overwhelmingly lower middle class, with the majority of householders engaged in trade.

On Monday last the first stone of the Butchers' Shambles about to be erected in this place [Stamford], was laid in which were deposited some coins of His Majesty's reign. The following is a copy of the inscription on a brass plate which was attached to the stone. "The foundation stone of this Shambles was laid by James BATSON, Esq. May or on the 4th day of March, 1805."

Stamford Mercury, 8 March 1805

The gas lights in Stamford afford a great treat to the public, and for the beauty of effect exceed the highest expectations that had been formed. The London tradesmen who are now attending the Fair, declare they have not anywhere seen so brilliant and powerful a light. - The success of the arrangements is highly honourable to the engineer, Mr. GRAFTON.

Stamford Mercury, 18 March 1825

Amongst other mischief done by the exceedingly high wind on Sunday afternoon, we regret to state that the beautiful elm known for a century past as 'EMLYN's CLOSE Tree' on the hill at the north side of Stamford was split in two, and 50 foot of the main stem brought to the ground. This fine tree, from its situation and great growth, was a conspicuous object from nearly all parts of the neighbourhood, and was visible from Boston, a distance of 36 miles.

Stamford Mercury, 19 January 1827

Last week in digging in what is called the Abbey Close near Torksey, near Gainsborough, a stone coffin was found; and close besides it, an urn or jar, containing two birds, but which when exposed to the air immediately decomposed. Several portions of a window not above an inch and a half broad, containing coloured glass, were also found, which probably formed part of the ancient Priory.

Stamford Mercury, 21 January 1825