

THE RUISLIP 1891 CENSUS - Suburbanization begins in Northwood

by Robert Trease

A Ruislip population census has been performed every 10 years since 1801, apart from 1941. Ruislip parish at the time of the 1801 census is thought to have covered much the same area as the Ruislip described in the Domesday Book over 700 years earlier in 1086.

Although part of Ruislip parish was transferred to the new parish of Holy Trinity Northwood in 1854, that part continued to be considered part of Ruislip for census purposes and, when Ruislip-Northwood Urban District Council was formed in 1904, it used the same Ruislip boundaries as those used for census purposes. However it should be noted that part of modern day Northwood has developed across the border in Hertfordshire and is not included within Ruislip.

Accordingly, population changes to the same tract of land that formed the ancient parish of Ruislip can be monitored every 10 years from 1801 to 1931. As can be seen from Chart 1, the population size remained relatively stable until 1891 when the first signs can be seen of an increase that gains rapid momentum over the next 40 years.

After 1841 Ruislip was subdivided for census purposes into the districts of Ruislip (including North Ruislip), Eastcote and Northwood. Chart 2 shows the population totals given for each of these districts in the census returns from 1841 to 1891.

Most of the 1891 population increase was attributable to Northwood where the population more than doubled in size but there were also increases in both Ruislip, which grew by 6% (from 694 to 733), and Eastcote, which grew by 12% (from 504 to 565). It can also be seen that, although there had been fluctuations in previous years, the population had remained relatively stable over the 50 years prior to 1891.

The reason for the significant population increase in Northwood was the arrival there of the Metropolitan Railway on the 1 September 1887. On the 25 May 1885 the railway had been extended from Harrow to Pinner (which undoubtedly had an impact on neighbouring Eastcote) and, when the extension from Pinner to Rickmansworth was planned, it was decided to create an intermediate stop near where the line crossed Green Lane in Northwood. The station was initially a 'halt' where the passenger had to ask the driver to stop. A local newspaper article at that time commented that not a house was to be seen from the platform at Northwood (so the name Green Lane seems very appropriate, although it possibly originally meant that the surface was grass).

An analysis of the 1901 Ruislip census by RNELHS is underway which will examine in more detail the impact of the Metropolitan Railway on Ruislip as a whole. In the meantime a preliminary examination of the Northwood 1891 census has been carried out.

Although taken only three years and seven months after the railway arrived, the 1891 census clearly indicates that the station had presented an opportunity for property development as can be seen in Table 1, which compares the 1891 housing and population figures for Northwood with those for 1881. Families had already moved into over 40 new houses, new development was proceeding apace with a further 11 completed houses awaiting occupants and a further four under construction. It also indicates that female newcomers outnumbered males and that the new households were much larger than before as they had caused the average size to increase from 4.21 to 5.12 persons.

Houses built in this first wave of development before 1891 can still be seen in Northwood. The type of house built depended upon the road in which it was to be built.

CHART 1 - Ruislip (old parish boundaries) population 1801 - 1931

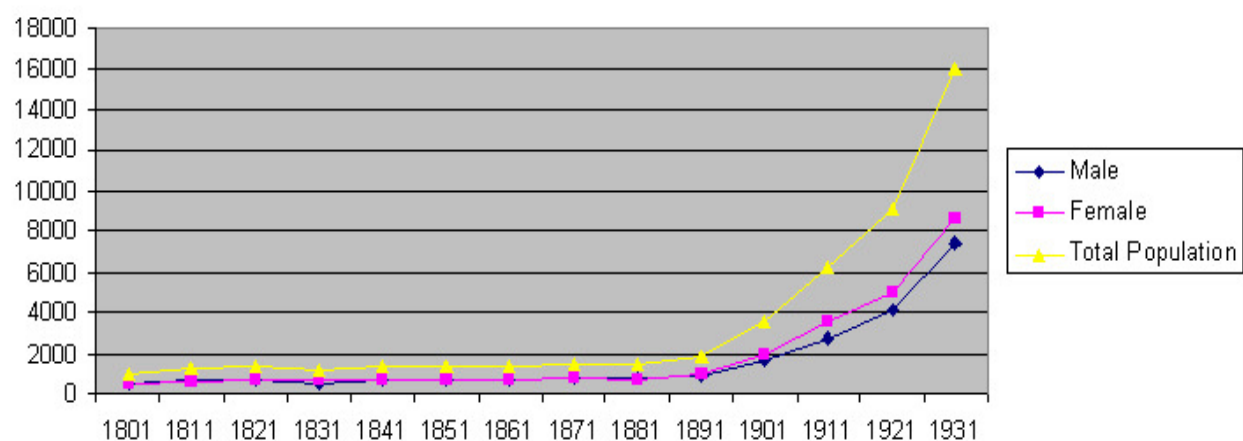


CHART 2 - Ruislip population by enumeration district

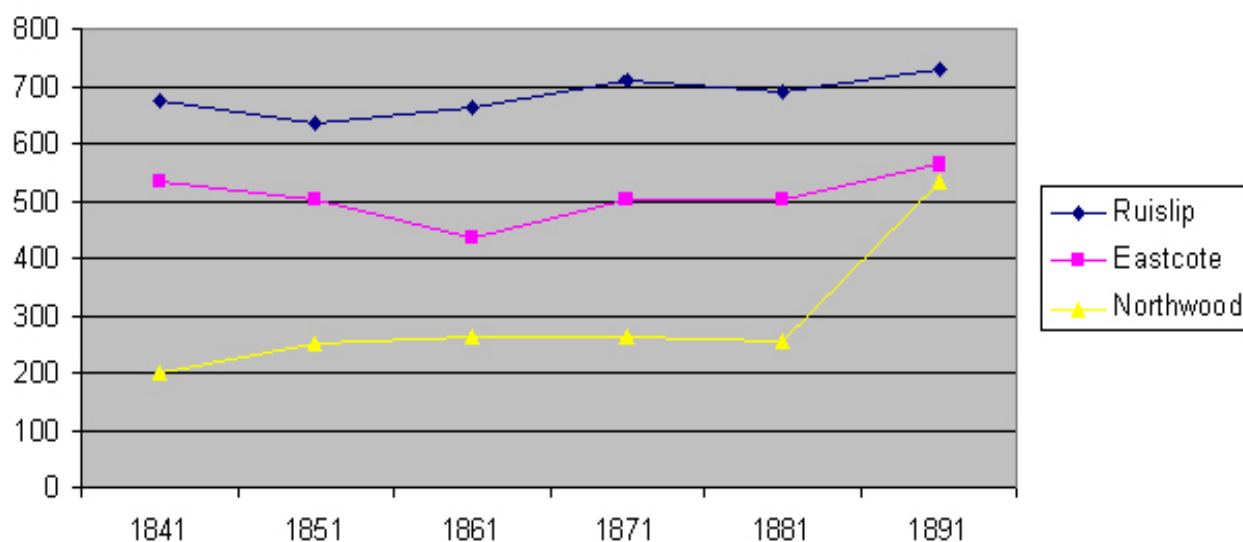


TABLE 1 - Northwood census - Houses and Households in 1891 compared with 1881

Census	Houses			Households				Male/Female Ratio
	Occupied	Unoccupied	Being built	Number	Males	Females	Average Size	
1881	60	2	None	61	142	115	4.21	1.23
1891	102	11	4	105	262	276	5.12	0.95

For example, large houses were built in Green Lane for wealthy Victorians and given imposing names such as 'Claremont' and 'The Gables'. Fig. 1 is a modern photograph of 'Oaklands', Green Lane. In 1891, the occupants of 'Oaklands' were John Allen, a retired building contractor, head, his son John E Allen, building contractor, 33, his son's wife, a young grandson and three young granddaughters. The household also comprised an entourage of servants, only one of whom had been born locally, including a governess, a cook, a housemaid, a nurse and a gardener with his wife. 'Oaklands' subsequently become offices for Ruislip Northwood Urban District Council.



Fig. 1

In contrast, small houses were built in Half Mile Lane (later renamed Northwood High Street) for lower paid workers, and given names like 'Industry Cottage' (still so named), 'Temperance Cottage' and 'Perseverance Cottage'. Fig. 2 is a modern photograph of 'Norfolk Terrace' in Northwood High Street. In 1891, the occupants of 'Norfolk Terrace' included a railway clerk, a signaller, three carpenters, a carpenter's mate, two foremen, a bricklayer, two agricultural labourers, and two general labourers. Two of the cottages were occupied by families of seven persons. The 18 year old railway clerk appears to represent a new aspiring working class which had availed itself of the better education facilities, unlike his two brothers who worked as labourers.

As indicated above, a major change in the occupations of Northwood inhabitants was under way.



Fig. 2

Table 2 compares male occupations in 1891 with those in 1881 using Booth-Armstrong categories (to facilitate comparison with other census analyses). Key changes were :-

- The male working population had roughly doubled, and the building industry, which had been non-existent in 1881, was already on a par with agriculture as the predominant employment.
- The predominant male occupation continued to be unskilled labourer but, whereas in 1881 a labourer could only find employment in agriculture (as an Ag. Lab.), by 1891 he could also work in the building industry (as a Gen. Lab.). The total of 40 was unchanged but, as a percentage of the male workforce, it had fallen from 50% to 27% indicating that the workforce had become more skilled (and hence better paid).
- Many newcomers were well paid professional and business men who wanted gardening services. As a result the number of men working in the domestic services sector increased.
- The workplaces of the wealthier new residents were not in the neighbourhood so they did not bring new economic activity to the area as a direct result of their work.
- The number of farmers was unchanged.
- The number of blacksmiths had increased.
- Brick manufacture continued to prosper in the area. Constructions such as the railway bridge over Rickmansworth Road were made with local bricks.

- The merchants had gone, including William Woodward the sand merchant, Daniel Norton the timber merchant/land owner living at Northwood Park, his clerk, and two hay dealers.
- Edwin Nicholls, the only shopkeeper in Northwood, was now also a farrier as well as a grocer. The inevitable parade of shops was unlikely to be in Rickmansworth Road where he was, so maybe he was preparing for a career change.
- The two public houses, 'The Gate' and 'The True Lovers Knot' remained.
- Apart from a Post Office in Hallowell Road no new local facilities appear in the 1891 census but there may also have been a bakery as a baker's assistant born in Boulogne, France, is shown lodging at the Post Office.

Table 2 - Northwood Male Occupations (excluding visitors)

Census	Agriculture		Domestic Services			Manufacturing				Dealing		
	Farmer	Ag. Lab	Gardener Game Keeper	Butler	Coach- man Groom	Black- smith	Jeweller Silver- smith	Printer	Piano Mfr.	Agent	Lic'd Vict.	Grocer Other
1881	10	40	8	1	2	1				6	1	1
1891	10	29	22		3	4	2	1	1		1	5

Table 2 - Northwood Male Occupations (excluding visitors) continued

Census	Public Service and Professional					Mining	Building		
	Vicar	Teacher Librarian	Physician	Solicitor	Police- man	Brick- maker	Manager Clerk	Carpenter Plumber etc	Gen. Lab.
1881	1				1	6			
1891	1	2	1	5	2	8	7	21	11

Table 2 - Northwood Male Occupations (excluding visitors) continued

Census	Transport					Industrial Services			Total
	Traction Engine- driver	Plate- layer	Porter Errand- boy	Signal- man	Clerk	Stock Broker	Accounts Clerk	Insurance Clerk	
1881	1								79
1891		3	2	2	1	4	1	1	150

Note: In Table 2 above, persons classified under an occupation include assistants and those in training. For example, a solicitor's articulated clerk is included in the category 'solicitor', a blacksmith's apprentice aged 13, son of a blacksmith, is included in the category 'blacksmith'.

A similar comparison of the occupations of Northwood female inhabitants is shown below in Table 3. It can be seen that the number of 'working' women had more than trebled in size with those employed in domestic service accounting for nearly all of the increase.

Further research shows that: -

- In 1881 only three households had resident servants recorded whereas in 1891 22 households had resident servants. Many had two or more resident servants and several, such as the family at 'Oaklands' employed four or more.
- Some women working as domestic servants lived in their own homes.
- Most domestic servants were not born locally. This indicates that too few women lived in the area to satisfy the growth in demand.

- The two female farmers were quaintly described as 'Farmeress'. Both were widows. One was Annie Woodman at Knowles Farm adjacent to the Grange at the western end of Green Lane, and the other was Selina Mold who is shown at Gatehill Farm (which can still be seen at the eastern end of Green Lane and northern end of Northwood High Street).

Table 3 - Northwood Female Occupations (excluding visitors)

Census	Agriculture		Domestic Service		Manufacturing		Dealing		Public Service and Professional	Total
	Farmer	Ag. Lab.	Gardener	Laundress Cook Maid Nurse	Needle-woman Dress Maker	Straw Plait Maker	Lic'd Vict.	Grocer Post Office	Teacher Governess	
1881		2	1	11	2	2	2		5	25
1891	2			61	3		4	3	6	79

Table 4 - Northwood Census - Persons with no paid occupation and Visitors

Census	Heads of Household		Wives	Children under 14		Children over 14		Others		Visitors		Total	
	M	F		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1881	1	5	38	56	29	3	8	1	9	2	1	63	90
1891	5	8	77	98	91	4	13	2	4	3	4	112	197

Table 4 analyses and compares the 1881 and 1891 returns for residents without paid occupations and visitors.

Male heads of household were expected to provide an income for their wives and families. The description 'unemployed' is not found in these censuses. Most lower-paid men did not have a pension so they worked for as long as they could. The wealthier new residents were more likely to have pension provision and be able to retire.

Wives of lower paid husbands performed, unpaid, the work that the wealthier new residents paid domestic servants to do, so even though they had no occupation

recorded, it would be misleading to say they did not work. When widowed, they normally continued to provide domestic services for their own family, and the children able to work provided the household income. In contrast, wives with wealthier husbands were more likely to have domestic servants to help them run their homes, and to have an independent income when widowed.

In 1881 three male heads of household over 70 were working, the oldest being 74, In 1891, despite the population doubling, this had increased only marginally to four males over 70, with the oldest being 77.

In 1881 only one male head of household was recorded with no occupation, namely a retired policeman aged 67, probably drawing a discretionary police pension, although another male with no occupation may have been absent when the census was taken. By 1891 this had increased to five male heads of household with no paid occupation :-

- Two retired policemen aged 53 and 58 (presumably on pensions from a young age)
- Walter Nash aged 48 'living on his own means' at the Grange
- John Allen aged 64, the retired building contractor living at 'Oaklands'
- A 27 year old born in Tours, France, living in Hallowell Road with his English born wife, her brother and a domestic servant. He states he is a 'retired farmer'.

In 1881 five female heads of household were recorded with no occupation. All were widows three of them living with working children and two of them with no apparent source of income. By 1891 this had increased to eight female heads with no paid occupation. The number of widows relying on their children to provide an income remained unchanged at three but there were now five widows 'living on their own means' and, of those, four employed resident domestic servants.

The arrival of the new well-paid residents, gave widows more opportunities to work as domestic servants. In 1891, three widows, two aged 68 and one aged 60, were working from their homes as 'charwomen', whereas in 1881 the only widow with paid employment was Ann Bourne, the beer retailer living at 'The Gate'.

Children under the age of 12 were supposed to be in full time education but many did not have occupation 'scholar' recorded. Some boys may have helped their father in his business and all children were probably available for paid casual work. There was a major imbalance between the number of boys and girls under the age of 14 in the 1881 census but this had almost vanished by 1891. The reason for this is unknown and may be just coincidental.

In summary, the 1891 census gives an insight into the early stages of the transition of Northwood from a scattered agricultural community without a village centre into an outer suburban residential area. By 1901 the population of Northwood had grown by a further 2000, and 400 extra houses had been built. An analysis of the impact that this had on Northwood and on the Ruislip area in general will be contained in the detailed 1901 census analysis when complete.

References

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