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*The Economic Development of a County Town during the
Industrial Revolution: Aylesbury, 1700 – c.1850*

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own original work and does not include any examples of plagiarism. The dissertation does not exceed the word limit of 15,000 words.

This dissertation makes extensive use of primary sources, some of which I have collected myself and some machine-readable datasets provided to me by others.

Sources that I collected data from:

Aylesbury Baptism Registers 1700-1855.

Baptism Registers of every parish in Buckinghamshire, 1813-20 (this was done as employment on behalf of Dr Leigh Shaw-Taylor, and I am grateful to him for permission to use the data).

Sources that Mr Tom Nutt of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure had collected data from, which he kindly allowed me to use:

Chelmsford Baptism Registers 1760-1840.

Sources that Dr Leigh Shaw-Taylor of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure had collected in electronic format, which he kindly allowed me to use:

Buckinghamshire Posse Comitatus, 1798.

Published census tables for 1811, 1821, 1831, 1841 and 1851.

Census Enumerators' Books for Buckinghamshire, 1851 (my thanks also go to the Buckinghamshire Family History Society for making this data available for research within the Cambridge Group).

Chapter 1 - Introduction

In the considerable debate on the English ‘Industrial Revolution’, the role of urbanisation and economic change in towns has received detailed consideration. Although the general consensus now is that towns were themselves “part-agents, as well as part-products, of the economic and social changes that constituted the twin phenomena of urban and industrial revolution in England,”¹ the question of what specific role towns played in industrialisation has not been answered satisfactorily. Three important reasons for this are that a definition of what exactly constitutes a ‘town’ remains undecided and, secondly, that the many different types of urban settlement which have been identified allegedly showed different characteristic features during the industrialisation process. Thirdly, a lack of adequate evidence has led to unsatisfactory conclusions.

One of the major categories of urban settlement which has received attention is the ‘historic county towns’ of England. In this investigation, Aylesbury, the county town of Buckinghamshire, is considered in the light of new evidence. Volume II of the recent ‘The Cambridge Urban History of Britain’, which covers the period 1540-1840, contains considerable discussion of county towns. Here, Joyce Ellis claims that “what was new in the early nineteenth century was the gap that had opened up between the biggest regional centres and the traditional county towns.”² This statement immediately raises the question of how one should classify towns in a logical and uniform manner. Definitions of a ‘town’ and its sub-categories will be discussed in due course, but for now it is sufficient to state that Ellis’ argument is that ‘regional centres’ such as Manchester and Birmingham eclipsed the ‘traditional county towns’ such as Aylesbury and York. Her explanation is that: “as the long-sustained rise in real incomes, which had underpinned widespread urban growth in the later 17th and early 18th centuries, died away, many historic county towns and regional centres found that their rate of population growth began to fall well below the national average.”³

For Ellis, being ‘left behind’ meant that the county towns’ population growth lagged behind that of the average urban settlement, and also that of the country as a whole. In this sense, she is clearly right. Ellis admits that very few of the county towns actually fell in size between 1700 and 1840, but their share of England’s total population began to fall in the eighteenth century.⁴ Borsay rightly points out that: “the principal reason why country dwellers migrated to towns, and did so in large numbers, was the attractive employment opportunities available. This was indicative of the

¹ Corfield (1982), 1.

² Ellis, in Clark (2000), 703.

³ Ellis, in Clark (2000), 678.

⁴ Ellis, in Clark (2000), 678.

generally buoyant and expanding nature of the urban economy.”⁵ Thus population statistics are powerful evidence of the levels of economic development in a town. If a town’s population was stagnant or growing extremely slowly, it is unlikely that it provided these ‘attractive employment opportunities’, and in turn it seems probable that its economy was largely traditional and not developing along industrial or ‘modern’ lines.

However, the starting point of this investigation is that the changing *occupational structure* of a town gives a more nuanced indication of its economic development. When used carefully, occupational data can lead to a sophisticated analysis of a settlement’s economic status and development. To take a single example, improving transport systems are a recurring theme in the study of industrialisation, as with roads, rivers, canals and eventually railways opening up, towns were increasingly well-networked and this tended to benefit their economic situation. A town’s changing transport links are easy enough to trace, and an analysis of Aylesbury’s occupational structure at strategic points should reveal what effect transport developments had on the town’s economy.

This study sheds light on more general debates which concern historians in this field. These can be divided into four main areas, with the first concerning the relationship between a town and its hinterland. It is important to remember that towns were not isolated entities – they existed within important hinterlands, and the latter should not be forgotten when tracing the economic development of a town. Chalkin claims that in the early eighteenth century Aylesbury was one of “about 12 bigger centres (in the South-East) that had commercial hinterlands with a radius of 20 or 25 miles,”⁶ but with county-level data available for 1798, 1813-20 and 1851 the relationship between Aylesbury and its hinterland can be examined over a longer period.⁷

Secondly, there has been much debate over the existence and nature of the ‘urban hierarchy’ in this period. This topic is intrinsically linked both to the point discussed above, concerning a town’s position within a wider economic framework, and also the definition of a ‘town’, which has in turn received significant attention. The idea behind an ‘urban hierarchy’ is that there were several categories of town which can be ranked in terms of their importance within a network made up of the urban settlements in a region or country. The problem inherent in this is how to classify both a ‘town’ and also the various steps which make up the hierarchy. At present, most historians take a one-dimensional approach, and classify settlements according to their populations – for

⁵ Borsay (1990), 8.

⁶ Chalkin, in Clark (2000), 60.

⁷ My thanks go to Leigh Shaw-Taylor for making this data available to me.

example, 2,500 inhabitants and 5,000 inhabitants have both been given as thresholds for town status. The difficulties with this crude approach immediately become clear though, as historians have not reached agreement concerning either the number of inhabitants that constitutes a town, or the qualifications for the various upper rungs of the hierarchy, such as ‘regional centres’ and ‘industrial towns’. The current approaches are clearly not satisfactory, and this study investigates whether occupational factors would provide a useful addition to the process of classifying towns, and whether it is appropriate to think of towns as part of an ‘urban hierarchy’.

Thirdly, occupational data can be used to illustrate the wider cultural and social changes taking place in portions of this 150-year period. Peter Borsay has argued for an ‘Urban Renaissance’ taking place in provincial town between 1660 and 1770, and this raises several questions concerning the changing occupational structure of towns. For example, much of Borsay’s work concerns the role of the gentry, and the involvement of this group in the economic and social life of a town was complex, ranging from inspiring shopkeepers to cater for their fashionable whims, to causing the construction sector to boom as major buildings were re-built or re-fronted. The shopkeeping and building sub-sectors are ones which are easily traceable in occupational data, allowing us to test whether the ‘Urban Renaissance’ is detectable in the data and, if it was, whether it was limited to the period which Borsay claims it was.

Lastly, tying all of these themes together should allow a picture of Aylesbury’s position in the ‘Industrial Revolution’ to materialise. There has been significant debate over the timing and existence of this process of industrial change – the term ‘Industrial Revolution’ has become too ingrained in our collective vocabulary to discard completely, but it must be recognised that such terminology is potentially misleading. The implication is that there was a swift process of total change, but occupational data concerning Aylesbury and its surroundings should reveal how this town fitted into the ‘traditional’ framework’.

This dissertation consists of six further chapters. Chapter 2 explains the sources used, their advantages and disadvantages, and the methodological issues involved in using occupational data. Chapter 3 contains a case study which demonstrates the strength of the sources on which the subsequent analysis is based, and chapter 4 explores Aylesbury’s specific role as a county town, both in relation to other ‘normal’ towns in Buckinghamshire, and also Chelmsford, the county town of Essex. Chapter 5 attempts to identify the similarities and differences between urban and rural settlements in Buckinghamshire, and chapter 6 places the patterns which emerge in context by examining Aylesbury’s occupational evolution between approximately 1700 and 1850. Finally,

chapter 7 provides conclusions to the questions raised by this investigation, with a discussion of its implications.

Chapter 2 - Methodological Issues

Studies of occupational structures have been numerous in recent decades⁸, but at the outset several points should be made about such investigations. First, historians persist in using sources such as trade directories and probate records, which are severely problematic and can lead to dangerously skewed interpretations. Both of these sources offer only limited coverage of the social and occupational spectrum – for example, trade directories do not record the vast majority of agriculturalists, and probate records only exist for those rich enough to make a probate necessary, thus excluding a large proportion of the lower classes. Secondly, there is an abundance of good occupational data which has, until now⁹, remained largely untapped. For example, baptism registers provide a rich source of occupational data which have received limited attention to date, but they will feature prominently in this investigation. Thus it seems puzzling that historians persevere with the problematic sources listed above.

Thirdly, existing studies utilising occupational data have often led to problematic conclusions because the classification systems used have generally been clumsy and illogical. For example, the classification scheme which Armstrong uses in his study of York¹⁰, which has subsequently been adopted by Raven in his Chelmsford investigation¹¹, is a blunt analytical instrument because of the presence of a ‘handicraft’ category. This is essentially a residual category for occupations which did not fit neatly under any of the other headings, and Armstrong admits that the category includes jobs as divergent as bakers, booksellers and clock makers.¹² This is hardly conducive to accurately charting the occupational structure of a town because, unsurprisingly, Raven finds that the vast majority (between 75% and 79%) of Chelmsford’s business community fell into this ‘handicraft’ category in the first half of the nineteenth century.¹³

However, a superior system has recently been developed by Tony Wrigley¹⁴, and this scheme, dubbed the ‘PST system’, will be used throughout this investigation. This breaks the occupational spectrum into three: the primary sector representing the extraction or growth of natural produce, the secondary sector containing manufacturers and ‘makers’, and the tertiary sector which

⁸ See, for example, Clark (1981); Armstrong (1974); Raven (2003); Lindert (1980); Stobart (2004); Green, in Corfield and Keene (1990).

⁹ Leigh Shaw-Taylor and Tony Wrigley have recently commenced on an ESRC-funded project at the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, entitled ‘Male Occupational Change and Economic Growth in England 1750-1851’, which will make much more extensive use of occupational descriptors in various eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources.

¹⁰ Armstrong (1974).

¹¹ Raven (2003).

¹² Armstrong (1974), 45.

¹³ Raven (2003), 50.

¹⁴ Wrigley (2004), chapter 5.

is more commonly known as the service sector. Examining a settlement's occupational structure in terms of the three main sectors – primary, secondary and tertiary – gives a good general picture of the type of economy in operation. In a primitive, under-developed economy the primary sector dominates, while the transformation into an industrialising economy engenders a large secondary sector. In turn, modern, advanced economies are normally characterised by a dominant tertiary sector. These three stages, and the strength of using this 'PST' system, can usefully be illustrated by looking at the current occupational structures of several countries.

Table 2.1 – the current occupational structures of several countries, using the 'PST' system

Country	Primary sector (%)	Secondary sector (%)	Tertiary sector (%)
Afghanistan	80	10	10
Cameroon	70	13	17
China	50	22	28
Romania	41	27	32
Brazil	23	24	53
Malaysia	14	36	50
Australia	5	22	73
United Kingdom	1	25	74

Sources: The CIA World Factbook¹⁵

Afghanistan's economy is relatively primitive, while the significant secondary sector in countries like Malaysia indicates an incomplete level of development. The dominance of the tertiary sectors in Australia and the UK suggests fully-developed, 'modern' economies. To think of the three stages as being distinct would be unrealistic, but it is certainly clear that this system gives a snapshot of the nature of the economy being studied. When examined over time, it can give a good indication of the way in which that economy is changing and developing. In addition, the 'PST' system provides a logical and extensive set of sub-sectors which allow detailed study of the progress, stability or decline of individual economic fields, such as textiles and transport.

Although parish registers have been used extensively in genealogical and demographic studies, the occupational data they contain has rarely been used in a systematic manner. Gibbs, in his 'History of Aylesbury' written in 1885, claimed that the parish registers for Aylesbury were 'a poor and scanty reference'¹⁶. More generally, Lindert has claimed that 'a government directive in 1812 instructed parish clerks to use a new standardised form starting in 1813, a form requiring that

¹⁵ There is no reason to think that the CIA is an unreliable source of basic economic data. All data taken from: www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook.

¹⁶ Gibbs (1885), 1.

ages but not occupations be recorded. By 1815 almost all parishes had complied, ending the availability of occupational data in the parish registers.’¹⁷ However, Gibbs was misguided and Lindert is simply wrong. After Rose’s Act ‘for the better regulating and preserving of parish and other registers’ was passed in 1812, registers were indeed printed in a standardised form from 1813.¹⁸ One of the fields which had to be filled in was the occupation of the father of each baptised child – on the contrary, then, baptism registers in the post-1813 period are a rich source of occupational data.

However, there are two key issues stemming from the sources which require some arithmetical gymnastics to convert the data into a consistent and useable form. Firstly, in baptism registers and the militia lists ‘labourers’ were not differentiated between the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. Labourers form a large percentage of the events recorded in this investigation, and to assume that everyone described merely as ‘labourer’ was an agricultural labourer would be nonsensical. A degree of manipulation is required, to allocate appropriate proportions of ‘labourers’ between the primary and secondary sectors, and this can be achieved by making use of the 1851 census, which distinguished between agricultural labourers and general labourers. Two possible approaches have been considered here, and these are illustrated for Aylesbury in table 2.2. The first is to assume that secondary labourers formed a constant fraction of the secondary sector over time, and the second is to assume that the split of agricultural and non-agricultural labourers was constant over time. The raw data from the 1851 census reveal that general labourers made up 18.0% of all males aged 20 or over in the secondary sector, and that 65.6% of the male labourers aged 20 or over were agricultural.

Table 2.2 – splitting ‘labourers’ by different methods for Aylesbury, with baptismal data derived from a ten-year period centred around 1851

Method	Primary sector (%)	Secondary sector (%)	Tertiary sector (%)	Total number in all three sectors
Method one	20.6	51.3	28.1	908
Method two	21.4	50.5	28.1	908

Sources: Aylesbury baptism registers for 1846-1855

¹⁷ Lindert (1980), 698.

¹⁸ Gibbs (1885), 363.

It is reassuring to see that both methods produce very similar results – indeed, when any decimal points are rounded up or down both methods give a split of 21%, 51% and 28% between the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors respectively. However, method one – assuming that the percentage of secondary labourers as part of the secondary sector was constant at 18.0% over time – is a more satisfactory procedure because it does not eliminate the changes which might have occurred if the proportions of workers employed in agriculture and industry changed over time. Method two would mask such changes, because if the proportion of workers in the primary sector changed over time, the associated number of agricultural labourers would remain constant on the basis of figures derived from the 1851 census. All of the subsequent data produced has been adjusted using method one. Part of this study investigates the situation in Aylesbury and other towns compared to more rural areas in Buckinghamshire, but here there was the possibility that splitting ‘labourers’ from rural areas on the basis of the ‘secondary sector’ method derived from Aylesbury data would be unsuitable. One might assume that in more rural areas a higher proportion of agricultural labourers would distort the figures, yet, using the 1851 census for the whole of Buckinghamshire, it was found that there were 2,058 general labourers out of a total of 11,455 males 20+ in the secondary sector. This means that 17.97% of the secondary sector *for the whole county* was made up of general labourers, and shows the underlying assumption made, which will be used throughout this dissertation, to be an extremely strong one. The same cannot be said for method two, because when the whole county is considered agricultural labourers represent 86.5% of male labourers aged 20 or over, compared to 65.6% in Aylesbury.

A similar problem, although numerically less significant, arises from the use of the term ‘servant’ in the baptism registers. Again, it is unclear whether the individual was an agricultural servant or a domestic servant, and therefore whether they belonged to the primary or tertiary sector respectively. A similar supposition was used, so that it was assumed that the proportion of domestic servants within the tertiary sector remained constant over time. The number of ‘expected’ domestic servants can be calculated using data from the 1851 census for Aylesbury, and the remainder of ‘servants’ will be assumed to be agricultural servants and will therefore be transferred to the primary sector. According to the 1851 census, 5.4% of the tertiary sector in Aylesbury were domestic servants, but in Buckinghamshire as a whole domestic servants made up 11.1% of the tertiary sector. This is not unexpected, as the vast majority of workers in the tertiary sector would be concentrated in towns rather than rural areas, and so in percentage terms the domestic servants in towns would be ‘diluted’ by the large number of other tertiary sector employees. In rural areas, where there were country estates which would have employed several servants, domestic servants formed a higher proportion of the tertiary sector. In light of this, it makes sense to adjust the

proportion of ‘servants’ in the raw data to take account of this difference between urban and rural areas.

There are further problems with using parish registers. First, it must be remembered that baptism registers simply did not apply to the entire population. Clearly, only fathers had their occupations recorded and this effectively limits this study to men aged approximately 20 and above. Secondly, there was no law to compel parents to have their children baptised at church, and a significant minority would have worshipped at a Non-conformist or Roman Catholic chapel. Although Non-conformists had to marry according to the rights of the established church from 1754, they did not have to have their children baptised in an Anglican church, and so the coverage of Anglican baptism registers is incomplete. Thirdly, baptism registers could potentially be biased by occupationally differential fertility, but Wrigley and Schofield have shown that this was not the case.¹⁹

Fourthly, before 1813 it was not a requirement for the father’s occupation to be entered into the baptism register. However, a surprisingly large number of diligent parish clerks did in fact supply this data. Occupational recording was much more common in northern England than the south²⁰, but it is still fortunate that occupational data is provided in Aylesbury’s baptism registers between 1700 and 1780. The fifth problem is that where occupations were recorded before 1813 they were not *universally* recorded. When a child was illegitimate, the father’s name and occupation were not normally recorded. In other cases, the father’s name was listed but with no stated occupation. In both these cases the entry is effectively useless and must be discounted, but in the latter case the question of consistency must be raised. If the father’s occupation was given for only 80% of baptised children who were legitimate, can we trust the reliability of the occupational data? It is possible that those of lower status were more likely to have their occupations omitted. If so, this would obviously give a misleading view of Aylesbury’s occupational structure. Using such data would introduce a bias. Since strict standards must be enforced, in this investigation baptismal data has been discounted unless the father’s occupation was stated for at least 95% of legitimate baptised children in each decade – this ensures that any possible bias will be minimal. Although this reduces the length of the ‘useful’ data to between 1710 and 1740, it ensures that the figures derived from the data are reliable.

¹⁹ Wrigley and Schofield (1981), 89-96.

²⁰ Personal correspondence from Dr Leigh Shaw-Taylor.

The sixth problem is that it is potentially problematic to use baptismal data for the period after 1836. This is because from 1837 the business of registration of births, deaths and marriages was centralised and placed in the hands of civic officials, controlled by the Registrar General. There was a widespread panic in 1837 to baptise previously un-baptised children. Consequently, the number of children baptised in Aylesbury rose from 128 in 1836 to 223 in 1837, and fell back to 127 in 1838. The analysis of the occupational data for Aylesbury in the 1830s in table 2.3 clearly shows that 1837 was anomalous in terms of occupational structure as well. The distinction is particularly noticeable in the primary and secondary sectors. The primary sector accounts for close to 30% of the workforce in the two longer periods (1831-1836 and 1838-1840) but this falls to 22.7% in 1837. With regard to the secondary sector, just under half of the workforce was employed here in the two longer periods, but this rises to 57.5% in 1837. This is not simply due to small total numbers giving a distorted impression for a single year, as between 1838 and 1840, 341 baptisms were recorded and this is not overwhelmingly higher than the 212 recorded in 1837. On the basis of this, all data for 1837 has been discounted and data for the 1830s in fact comprises figures for 1831-6 and 1838-40.

Table 2.3 – percentages of adult males in each sector in Aylesbury in the 1830s

Period	Primary sector (%)	Secondary sector (%)	Tertiary sector (%)	Total number of people with an occupation specified
1831-1836	29.9	48.3	21.8	868
1837	22.7	57.5	19.8	212
1838-1840	28.9	49.4	21.7	341

Sources: Aylesbury baptism registers from the 1830s

There is also the possibility that from 1837 onwards the baptism registers may not be representative of the general population, as the number of baptised children fell away from this point onwards. However, there is nothing in the data to suggest that baptismal data from around 1840 onwards were in any way unrepresentative of the population as a whole, and so 1837 is the only year for which data must be removed. We must now consider whether the six problems outlined above constitute a fundamental obstacle to using baptismal data to determine the occupational structure of Aylesbury between around 1700 and 1850. The most effective way of establishing how much distortion these problems introduce is by comparing baptismal data with data from the 1851 census. The latter may be taken as the ‘gold standard’ for occupational information on individuals in this period, and a comparison between the two sources should

therefore determine whether the former can be considered a reliable source of occupational data. Table 2.4 gives such a comparison, with the age range for the census set at males aged 20 and over to preserve rough comparability with the fathers in the baptism registers. It is reassuring to see that baptismal data for a ten-year period around 1851 produces an occupational structure which is extremely similar to the produced from the 1851 manuscript census. The biggest divergence is just three percentage points which leaves little doubt that the problems explained above, and the subsequent measures taken to minimise their impact, means that the baptism registers can be seen as a reliable and accurate source of occupational data for Aylesbury.

Table 2.4 – proportions of adult males in each sector in 1851, drawn from two data sources

Source	Data restrictions	Primary sector (%)	Secondary sector (%)	Tertiary sector (%)	Total number in all three sectors
Baptism Registers 1846-1855	Fathers of legitimate children	21	51	28	908
Census Enumerators' Books 1851	Males aged 20+	22	48	31	1515

Sources: Aylesbury baptism registers for a ten-year period around 1851; the 1851 manuscript census

The second main source to be used is the Buckinghamshire Posse Comitatus of 1798. This provides an extremely useful link between the baptismal data from 1710-1740 and that between 1813 and 1820. At the height of the invasion scare in February 1798, constables had made a return of all males aged between 15 and 60 years old in Buckinghamshire, and what services they could provide in the event of military mobilisation. Essentially, this meant that all men in this age group were recorded along with their occupation, except those who were already serving in a military capacity and groups deemed to be ineligible e.g. Quakers and the infirm. The main posse did not record occupations of the female population but this is consistent with the data derived from baptism registers, thus providing a snapshot of Aylesbury's occupational structure between the two periods of baptismal data. As Beckett states: 'it remains the nearest source available to an occupational census of the county as a whole until the official census returns of 1841.'²¹

This brings us to the censuses, which began in 1801. The 1801-31 censuses recorded only a limited amount of information, consisting mainly of the number of people in each area along with

²¹ Beckett (1985), xviii.

their sex and age group, although limited occupational data was provided in 1831. However, from 1841 onward the administration of the census passed to the Registrar General and his team of enumerators. The censuses of 1841 and 1851 were the first to be conducted along ‘modern’ lines – by census enumerators distributing householders’ schedules, collecting the information, and then copying the data into pre-printed books. More detailed information was now required and occupational data was requested. This information was then assembled and categorised to form numerous tables, which historians have examined and puzzled over ever since. However, the original 1851 census enumerators’ books are available in machine-readable form for Buckinghamshire.²²

There are three main benefits in using a machine-readable form of the ‘manuscript census’ rather than the published census books. Firstly, and most importantly, by using a database program such as Microsoft Access the data specifically for Aylesbury, or any other settlement, can be drawn out. This is not possible when working with the published census, which provides only registration district and county-level data for Buckinghamshire. This allows detailed analysis of a single settlement, and also comparison between different settlements. Secondly, using a database search function means that occupational data can be filtered to only include males who were aged 20 or over. This decision was taken to preserve comparability with the baptism registers, which comprise the main source of data in this investigation. It is reassuring to see in table 2.5 that altering the census age range makes very little difference to the occupational structures which emerge. The percentage of working males varies between 20% and 21% in the primary sector, between 48% and 49% in the secondary sector and between 30% and 32% in the tertiary sector. With so little variation, at least at this ‘PST’ level, the decision to only include males who were aged 20 or over should not be seen as overly contentious. Thirdly, by the time the data had reached its tabulated form in the published census it had been transcribed, simplified and manipulated several times, often rendering it of limited use. It is advantageous to have the data in its most disaggregated form, as this allows an examination of very specific sub-sectors within the occupational classification system.

²² My thanks go to the Buckinghamshire Family History Society for making this data available for research within the Cambridge Group.

Table 2.5 – proportions of adult males in each sector in Aylesbury in 1851, according to different age ranges in the 1851 Census Enumerators' Books

Census age range	Primary sector (%)	Secondary sector (%)	Tertiary sector (%)	Total number in all three sectors
15-50	21	49	31	1370
15-55	21	49	30	1467
15-60	21	48	31	1557
20-50	20	49	31	1209
20-55	20	49	31	1306
20-60	21	48	31	1396
25-50	20	48	32	949
25-55	20	48	32	1046
25-60	21	48	32	1136
20+	22	48	31	1515

Sources: 1851 CEB database

However, although there are a huge number of positive features to the three sources which will be employed in this investigation, there are potential problems which arise from the use of occupational descriptors *per se*, regardless of where they are drawn from. One of the most persistent worries is that multiple employments were such a common feature of the early modern economy that it is impossible to classify people into meaningful groups. However, Leigh Shaw-Taylor has recently shown that by-employment was much less widespread in southern England during the eighteenth-century than was previously thought.²³

A second doubt over the use of occupational descriptors arises when it is suggested that people changed their occupations too frequently for the descriptors to actually represent a meaningful indication of economic activity. However, Phillips has shown in a study of early nineteenth-century provincial towns that there was a considerable degree of longitudinal consistency. In short, there was a tendency for the bulk of men examined to claim identical occupational titles for the whole of their working lives.²⁴ Even when minor changes in terminology appear to change an individual's occupation, the nature of the coding system which will be used here (see below) is conducive to ironing out these alleged alterations in nomenclature. The evidence presented by Phillips also goes some way to allaying the third doubt, that individuals often 'bent the truth' when giving stating their line of work, in order to inflate their social status. Of the occupational changes that were recorded in Phillips' study, many would have been due to life cycle occupational mobility – for example, the descent into poverty in later life would change someone's

²³ Shaw-Taylor, from the same unpublished manuscript.

²⁴ Phillips, in Corfield and Keene (1990), Table 11.1, 190.

occupation to 'pauper'. Clearly this is an insufficient basis on which to cast doubt over the use of occupational descriptors. It cannot be claimed that social self-aggrandisement did not take place, but on this evidence it was not sufficiently widespread to deter us from drawing confident and effective conclusions from the occupational data.

In some cases it is more useful to look at absolute numbers than percentages, as sharp changes in absolute numbers in one sector can sometimes lead to misleading alterations in percentages in another sector. However, because the data are derived from different sources, the absolute numbers differ significantly and so are not comparable unless they are standardised. The standard unit of measurement is not important; all that matters is that each data set can be adjusted so that a standardised format is produced. The standard unit of measurement was taken to be the number of adult males recorded in one decade in the baptism registers, therefore the data from the militia lists and also the census required some manipulation. Thus in 1798 the figures were altered to conform to the estimated number of baptisms for a ten-year period around this date, as the Posse Comitatus data set was smaller than the expected number of events for a decade of baptismal data. From the 1830s onwards the baptismal data also had to be inflated, because after 1837 the use of Anglican baptism registers declined. In this case the method explained above would not be appropriate, so the figures were altered on the basis of population changes, taken from the censuses of 1821, 1831, 1841 and 1851. It was then assumed that the ratio for the pre-1837 period of baptisms recorded in the registers to population recorded in the census would continue to be the same for the post-1837 periods, when the actual number of baptisms declined. The number of baptisms recorded in the 1830s and 1840s could then be inflated on the basis of calculated population growth and the ratio determined above. Similarly, the number of events recorded in the 1851 manuscript census was inflated using the same ratio and the population total given in the same census, and multipliers were then produced for each data set to standardise the data and allow trends in standardised numbers to be used in this investigation. This assumes constant birth rates, which clearly is not realistic as birth rates increased significantly during this period, from 31.65 in 1716 to 39.48 between 1813 and 1820, for example.²⁵ However, the only figures available are from Wrigley's national investigation. Applying these to a specific settlement would not take account of its specific age structure and consequently any alterations made to the raw data could be misleading.

On a practical level, this investigation will analyse occupational data in ten year periods where available (clearly this is not possible for the 1798 Posse Comitatus and the 1851 census) so that mean percentages can be taken for the whole decade. This will reduce the level of 'noise'

²⁵ Wrigley et al (1997), 614.

which can give a misleading picture, although it will not remove it completely as Aylesbury's population was not sufficiently large for this to be the case. The data points when charting the occupational evolution of Aylesbury will therefore be the 1710s, 1720s and 1730s (from baptism registers); the 1798 Posse Comitatus; 1813-20, the 1820s, 1830s and 1840s (from baptism registers); and the 1851 census. On the basis of the argument outlined in this chapter there is no reason to think that the three sources are not highly comparable, and the steps outlined above should ensure that the data will be presented in such a way that effective conclusions can be drawn.

Chapter 3 - Trade directories

As explained in the previous chapter, trade directories have often been used in studies of occupational structures²⁶, and it was suggested that they are unsatisfactory as a source of occupational data. A single example will suffice to emphasise this point, and one of the most recent studies to utilise trade directories will be taken – namely Raven’s study of Chelmsford between 1790 and 1840.²⁷ It is fortuitous that baptismal data are available for the pre-1813 period for Chelmsford, and therefore a brief study of the county town of Essex in the first half of the nineteenth-century will form a case study to highlight the weakness of trade directories as a source of occupational data. Raven begins his investigation with a breakdown of the occupational data from the 1841 census, utilising Armstrong’s classification system. This has already been shown to be problematic, because of the presence of the ‘handicraft’ residual sector. Raven goes on to profile Chelmsford’s ‘business community’, using data derived from trade directories for the years 1797, 1826 and 1839. It is perhaps revealing that the two tables – data from the census and then data from trade directories – are on separate pages. Table 3.1 shows the two data sets together, and this helps show some severe problems inherent in using trade directories to reconstruct occupational structures.

Table 3.1 – Raven’s picture of Chelmsford’s occupational structure in percentage terms

Sector	1797	1826	1839	1841 census
Modern manufacturing	0.0	1.1	2.2	1.0
Agriculture	1.6	1.8	1.6	9.3
Building	6.8	4.2	5.4	11.9
Transport	1.1	0.0	1.9	1.5
General labour				12.9
Domestic service				3.6
Public service and professions	12.7	13.9	13.3	7.7
Handicraft (residue category)	77.8	78.8	75.6	51.8

Sources: Raven’s trade directory data²⁸; the 1841 census²⁹

First, the total absence of any data for ‘general labour’ and ‘domestic service’ exposes the social and occupational bias of the trade directories, as they would not include any record of such categories, which would invariably have constituted a significant proportion of the workforce. Secondly, Raven admits that ‘the directories tended to limit inclusion to concerns involved in

²⁶ To name just a few: Raven (2003); Hann, in Stobart and Raven (forthcoming, 2005); Ellis, in Clark (2000); Corfield and Kelly (1984); Shaw and Coles (1995).

²⁷ Raven (2003).

²⁸ Raven (2003), 50.

²⁹ Raven (2003), 47.

secondary and tertiary activities'³⁰, and this becomes painfully obvious when the percentage of workers in agriculture allegedly rises from 1.6% in 1839 to 9.3% by the time of the 1841 census. The significant under-representation of agricultural workers in trade directories is one of the main reasons why directories are simply incompatible as a source of occupational data with the censuses. An alleged drop of around 25% in the 'handicraft' sector between the 1839 trade directory and the 1841 census makes any attempt at comparison totally nonsensical.

Table 3.2 – Chelmsford's occupational structure according to data from baptism registers, using the Armstrong/Raven categories, in percentage terms

Sector	1813-20	1820s	1830s	1841 census
Modern manufacturing	4.1	4.8	3.6	1.0
Agriculture	17.8	15.0	8.1	9.3
Building	11.6	11.1	11.1	11.9
Transport	3.0	3.9	5.7	1.5
General labour	10.7	11.8	12.4	12.9
Domestic service	0.8	1.2	2.3	3.6
Public service and professions	7.1	3.9	6.6	7.7
Handicraft (residue category)	44.9	48.3	50.0	51.8

Sources: Chelmsford baptism registers for 1813-1840; the 1841 census³¹. Data for Chelmsford has already been adjusted according to the same methods employed for the Aylesbury data (explained in the previous chapter) but with the data for the assumptions taken from the 1851 published census for Essex rather than Buckinghamshire, to ensure consistency in the investigation.

Raven concluded that Chelmsford's occupational structure was becoming more varied and that this suggests economic dynamism. Yet this is probably an artefact of the sources used, because as Raven notes trade directories became more specific and varied in their terminology over time.³² However, when occupational data from the Chelmsford baptism registers³³ are examined, a very different picture emerges. Table 3.2 shows baptismal data for the period 1813-20, the 1820s and the 1830s, alongside Raven's data from the 1841 census for Chelmsford. The census figures are for male occupations only, and this preserves comparability with the baptism registers. Although the classification system used is unsatisfactory, the baptismal data give a far clearer assessment of Chelmsford's occupational evolution – the progression from the 1830s baptism data to the 1841 census is close and wholly believable in most cases. There are three apparent anomalies, in the 'modern manufacturing', 'transport' and 'domestic service' categories. Unfortunately, Raven's coding system is not sufficiently explicit to allow an exact comparison in this exercise, and this

³⁰ Raven (2003), 50.

³¹ Raven (2003), 47.

³² Raven (2003), 52.

³³ My thanks go to Mr Tom Nutt for making this data available to me.

inevitably accounts for some of the discrepancies – for example, the term ‘modern manufacturing’ is too vague to be sure that the coding is exactly the same for both data sets. In addition, the domestic service sector is clearly growing over the first half of the nineteenth-century, and so a figure of 3.6% is not implausible. One would expect domestic servants to be under-represented in the baptism registers because they were generally young, and therefore more unlikely to be producing children. Yet this apparent increase in the number of domestic servants who were marrying and producing children presents an interesting finding, which echoes the trend identified by Peter Kitson in his study of Bedfordshire.³⁴

In general, the simultaneous weakness of trade directories and strength of baptism registers as sources of occupational data are all but undeniable from tables 3.1 and 3.2, and the highly comparable relationship between baptism registers and the census bodes well for this investigation. It is now time to examine the occupational structure of Aylesbury between 1700 and the midpoint of the nineteenth-century, and the arguments presented over the last two chapters should inspire a high degree of confidence in the data on which subsequent analysis will be based.

³⁴ Kitson (unpublished dissertation), 264-268; in addition, a personal correspondence from Dr Kitson.

Chapter 4 - Aylesbury as a county town

The first factor to be examined is Aylesbury's specific status as a county town. Were there any particular features of county towns which set them aside from other large towns? The question can be answered by using a two-stage approach. In the first respect, Aylesbury will be compared with Chelmsford, the county town of Essex, over the period 1813-1840, which should allow any specific trends of county towns to be identified through a comparison of the full occupational structures of the two towns, derived from baptismal data³⁵. In the second stage, Aylesbury will be compared with other towns in Buckinghamshire, as county-wide data for both 1798 and 1813-20 are available.

Table 4.1 gives a full breakdown of the occupational structures of Aylesbury and Chelmsford for a sizeable part of the early nineteenth-century, based on baptismal data. Chelmsford presents a special case in that it was a garrison town, and therefore all military occupations have been removed from this analysis to preserve comparability. Figure 4.2 shows that while Aylesbury's three main sectors are remarkable for their lack of change, Chelmsford presents a more varied case. Given that Essex and Buckinghamshire were both rural counties it is perhaps surprising that the primary sectors of their respective county towns differed so much, but it can be seen that the interplay between proportional change, absolute change and population change is significant here. In proportional terms, the primary sector in Aylesbury consistently formed around 30% of the adult male workforce, while in Chelmsford the figure fell from 20.0% in 1813-20, to 17.7% in the 1820s and down to 10.4% in the 1830s. The slack was taken up by the secondary sector in Chelmsford, which grew from 53.2% in 1813-20, to 58.8% in the 1820s and up to 62.2% in the 1830s. Initially this is suggestive of an emerging industrialising economy, but a close examination of the figures reveals that there is no 'modernising' or heavy industry in Chelmsford at this time – there are very minor traces of iron and steel work, but certainly nothing of any substance which could be compared with the industrial towns of northern England. Nevertheless, Chelmsford's economic development is noticeable in comparison with Aylesbury, and this may well be connected to the transport developments occurring in each town. The Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation opened in 1797, while the Aylesbury canal only opened in 1814. This time lag is paralleled in the levels of change exhibited in the occupational data, with significant change beginning approximately two decades later in Aylesbury than in Chelmsford. However, without later data and a more wide-ranging examination of transport developments in towns this hypothesis is somewhat speculative.

³⁵ Again, my thanks go to Mr Tom Nutt for allowing me to use the Chelmsford baptism data.

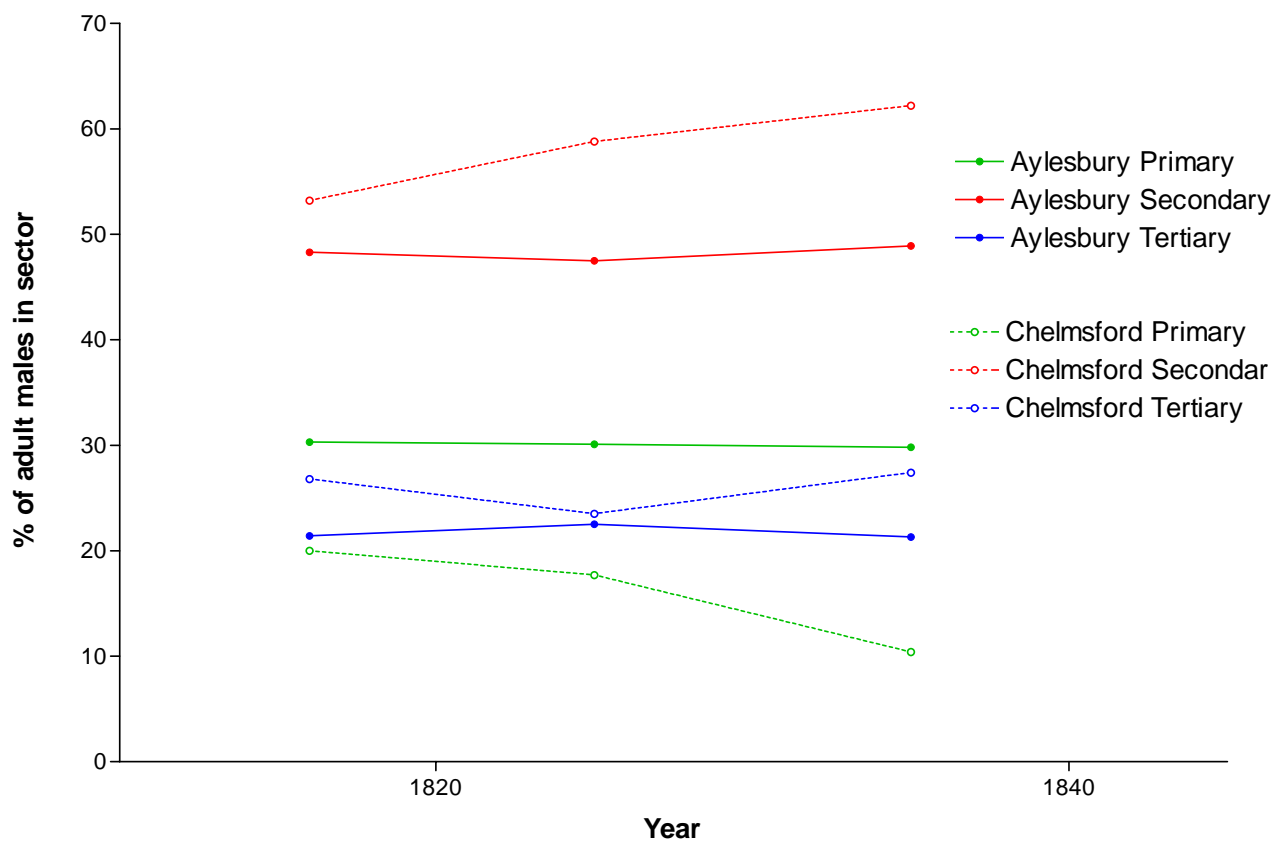
Table 4.1 - A comparison of two county towns' occupational structures, in percentage terms

	1813-20 Aylesbury	1813-20 Chelmsford	1820s Aylesbury	1820s Chelmsford	1830s Aylesbury	1830s Chelmsford
PRIMARY	30.3	20.0	30.1	17.7	29.8	10.4
Agriculture	29.0	17.8	28.7	15.0	27.8	8.1
farmer	1.6	0.4	0.2	0.8	0.7	1.1
farm labourer	27.1	17.0	28.1	13.9	26.9	6.2
Estate work	1.0	1.2	1.1	2.3	1.7	1.7
gardener	1.0	1.2	1.1	2.3	1.7	1.7
Forestry	0.3	1.0	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.6
Mining	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
SECONDARY	48.3	53.2	47.5	58.8	48.9	62.2
Food and drink	4.7	5.6	6.0	4.2	5.2	6.9
baker	1.6	2.0	2.1	1.3	2.2	2.4
butcher	1.5	1.9	2.6	2.1	2.1	4.0
Clothing and footwear	12.9	10.4	13.5	11.9	15.1	15.6
tailor	4.8	3.8	4.3	5.1	5.9	6.9
boot and shoe making	8.2	5.3	9.1	6.2	9.2	8.1
Building and construction	11.0	11.6	7.0	11.1	7.4	11.1
carpenter	5.0	7.0	3.0	5.1	2.9	3.1
bricklayer	3.8	2.1	1.9	2.9	2.9	3.0
mason	0.8	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3
plasterer, painter	0.4	0.5	0.4	1.8	0.4	2.5
Textiles	0.8	0.2	1.1	0.0	1.5	0.1
cotton	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
wool	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.0
silk	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0
linen	0.2	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.6	0.0
Leather, bone and hair	1.9	2.3	1.6	3.1	1.2	2.8
Woodworking	1.1	3.4	1.9	3.8	1.2	3.1
joiner, cabinet maker	0.1	0.0	0.7	2.2	1.0	2.0
Instrument making	0.1	0.8	0.2	1.0	0.0	0.1
clock, watch maker	0.1	0.8	0.2	0.8	0.0	0.1
Gold, silver, jewellery	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.3
Printing and publishing	0.2	1.4	0.8	1.2	2.0	1.8
Vehicle making	0.8	0.4	1.1	0.5	1.6	1.8
wheelwright	0.8	0.1	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.9
Pottery, glass, brick making	0.7	0.1	0.3	0.7	0.1	0.2
pottery, earthenware	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
brick and tile making	0.5	0.1	0.3	0.7	0.1	0.2
Non-ferrous metals manufacture	1.9	1.8	1.7	2.6	1.3	1.8
Iron and steel	2.0	2.1	2.6	2.2	1.8	1.8
blacksmith	2.0	1.0	2.6	1.7	1.6	1.1
Engineering	0.5	1.0	0.4	2.2	0.9	0.8
Gunmaking	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.4
Chemical industries	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Gas, coke, water	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Furniture and furnishing	0.1	0.8	0.1	0.7	0.0	0.6
Rope making	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0
Straw and rush	0.9	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.7
Minor manufactures	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Secondary, general	8.7	10.7	8.6	11.8	8.8	12.4

	1813-20 Aylesbury	1813-20 Chelmsford	1820s Aylesbury	1820s Chelmsford	1830s Aylesbury	1830s Chelmsford
TERTIARY	21.4	26.8	22.5	23.5	21.3	27.4
Transport	3.2	3.0	4.0	3.9	4.1	5.7
road	2.8	3.0	2.8	3.9	2.4	5.4
rail	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
inland water	0.2	0.0	0.8	0.0	1.2	0.0
Trading and dealing	4.0	3.3	4.6	2.7	3.2	2.1
food and drink	0.7	0.9	0.6	1.0	0.7	0.3
textiles and clothing	2.1	1.8	1.7	0.9	1.3	1.2
Retailing	2.7	5.1	3.8	4.6	3.7	4.4
shopkeeping, grocer	1.6	1.4	1.5	1.3	1.8	0.9
Provision of food, drink, lodging	3.4	6.6	3.1	4.8	5.3	5.0
Public service	1.0	1.5	0.6	1.7	0.6	1.2
inland revenue, customs and excise	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.8	0.2	0.4
local and parish government	0.8	1.1	0.5	0.9	0.3	0.8
Professions	3.9	4.7	2.9	1.7	1.3	4.0
law	1.4	1.6	1.9	0.6	0.3	1.2
medicine	1.1	1.1	0.5	0.2	0.7	1.1
clergy	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.3
teaching	1.1	0.3	0.5	0.0	0.2	0.2
Clerical, secretarial, administrative	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.7
Domestic service	1.3	0.8	1.2	1.2	1.2	2.3
Entertainment	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Service occupations	0.8	0.3	1.4	0.9	1.4	1.1
barber	0.5	0.3	0.9	0.6	1.1	1.1
Banking and financial services	0.0	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.8
Titled, and property owners	0.9	0.7	0.3	1.4	0.0	0.2

Figure 4.2

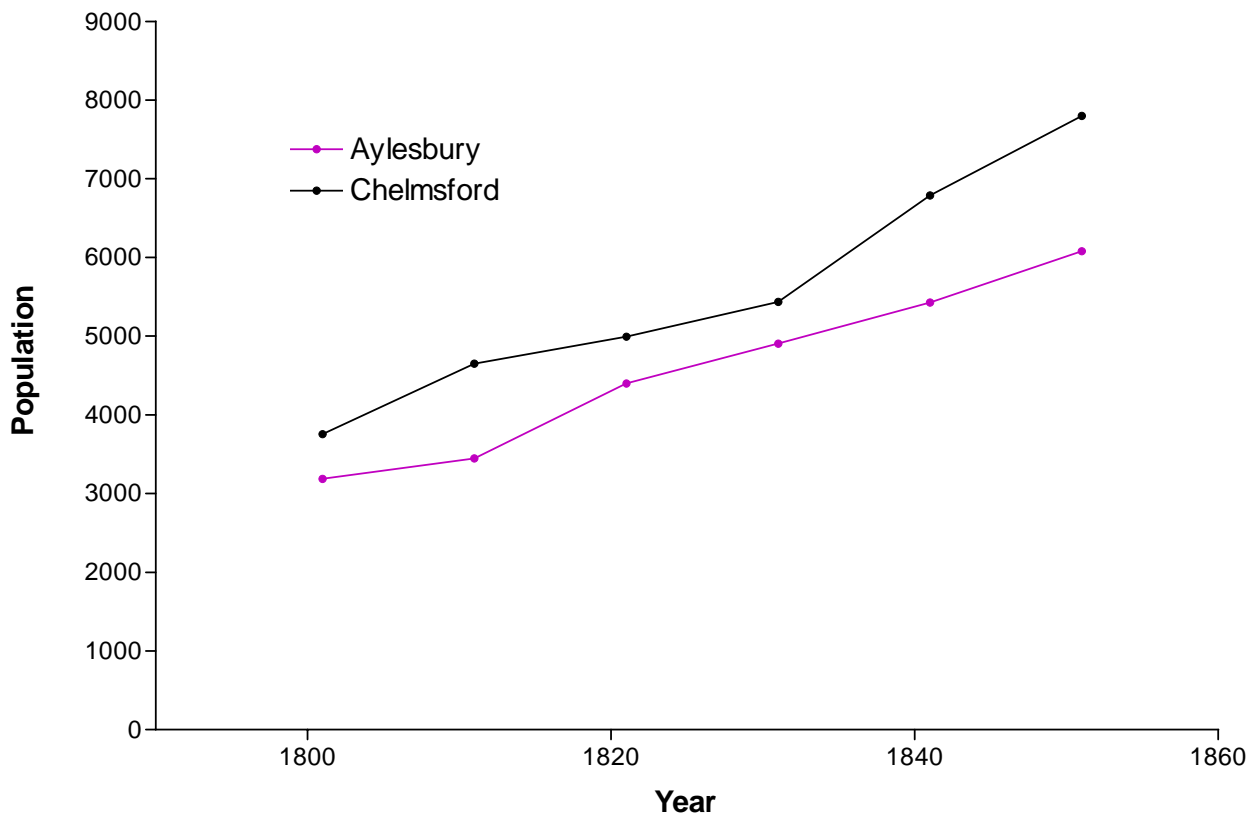
Aylesbury and Chelmsford 1813-1820, 1820s and 1830s



The steep relative decline in Chelmsford's primary sector between the 1820s and 1830s, from 17.7% to 10.4%, can be explained both by absolute decline and by population trends. Figure 4.3 shows the population increases in both Aylesbury and Chelmsford over the first half of the nineteenth-century, and it can be seen that the population of Chelmsford accelerated significantly faster than that of Aylesbury from around 1830 onwards. Therefore the significant drop in the standardised number of workers in the primary sector in Chelmsford was amplified in percentage terms because of the swiftly increasing population of the town.

Figure 4.3

Population growth in Aylesbury and Chelmsford from 1801 to 1851



Sources: Published censuses 1801-1851

Rather than an increase in the level of heavy or 'modernising' industry within the secondary sector which might be indicative of an emerging industrial economy, it is the traditional handicrafts which were thriving in Chelmsford. For example the clothing and footwear sector constituted between approximately 10% and 15% of the adult male workforce, and woodworking consistently represented at least 3% of adult male workers in this period. However, Chelmsford's tertiary sector was consistently larger than that of Aylesbury, and by the 1830s it formed 27.4% of Chelmsford's

adult male workforce, compared to just 21.3% in Aylesbury. This was largely due to the former's geographic position as a significant thoroughfare. The proportion of adult males employed in the road travel sector in Chelmsford testifies to its importance as a transport route between London and Colchester, Harwich, Suffolk and Norfolk,³⁶ with the percentage rising from 3.0% in 1813-20, to 3.9% in the 1820s and up to 5.7% by the 1830s, compared to 4.1% in Aylesbury by this latter point. One factor to consider with regard to the tertiary sector is the military presence in Chelmsford – although this sector has been excluded for the purposes of comparison, it seems that the significant garrison presence in the 1813-20 period increased the demand for tertiary products. Between 1813 and 1820, soldiers were recorded 161 times in the Chelmsford baptism registers and the tertiary sector stood at 26.8% in this period, but with the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 this figure fell to 27 during the 1820s, and there was a concurrent fall in the tertiary sector to 23.5%. With the annual 'rate' of soldiers falling from 20.1 to 2.7 and the tertiary sector declining so dramatically, it is hard not to conclude that the two were intrinsically linked.

Perhaps because of the large numbers of wealthy visitors to Chelmsford (for road transport was still relatively expensive at this point) and its status as a social centre, or possibly because of the town's close proximity to London, the range of services and goods on offer to people was arguably superior to the situation in Aylesbury. Stobart lists nine occupations which he classifies as 'luxury tradesmen'³⁷, and the Chelmsford baptism registers show evidence of eight of these (only a goldsmith is lacking) compared to six in Aylesbury. Retailers were also well-established earlier in Chelmsford than in Aylesbury, with 5.1% working in this sector in the Essex county town in 1813-20, and only 2.7% in the county town of Buckinghamshire in the same period. Again though, there is no real expansion in this sector, which is surprising given the county towns' statuses as fashionable cultural centres. It is suggestive of either stagnation, or increasing variety within the same number of retailers in each town. Hann, in his recent study of retailing in towns, finds that: 'in the 1790s the most complete provision was found in county towns and higher order market centres, much as Christaller's conception of a central place hierarchy might predict. By the 1840s, though, the urban system had been recast as towns that had failed to industrialise saw their position in the hierarchy and their traditional relationship with rural hinterlands undermined by competition from their more dynamic neighbours.'³⁸ The lack of expansion in sectors such as retailing and innkeeping in both of these county towns would fit with this characterisation, and it seems that Aylesbury and Chelmsford could well have been 'left behind' because of their failure to industrialise.

³⁶ Raven (2003), 50.

³⁷ Stobart (2004), 156.

³⁸ Hann, in Stobart and Raven (forthcoming, 2005).

However, there are several more specific details which can be identified in the comparison of the two towns, including a number of similarities which could be characteristic of county towns. Both have substantial levels of workers in the clothing and footwear industries (up to around 15%) which suggests that this sector was specifically the domain of larger towns and that inhabitants of the surrounding hinterlands were willing to travel into such settlements to purchase clothes and shoes – this will be confirmed for Buckinghamshire in the following chapter. In addition, both towns were clearly administrative centres, as there were a considerable number of men employed in public service in each town (between 0.5% and 2%, compared to between 0.1% and 0.5% in the rest of the two counties). The professions were also well-represented, with significant numbers of lawyers, doctors and teachers, meaning that the professions constituted between around 1.5% and 5% of the adult male workforce in these county towns, compared to between around 0.5% and 2% in the rest of the two counties. This ties in with the image of the county town as a service centre for its hinterland, but the overall image for both towns seems to be one of a persistently traditional craft economy running simultaneously as an administrative service centre – the main difference being Chelmsford's importance as a thoroughfare.

A second way to investigate the case of Aylesbury specifically as a county town is to compare it with other towns of various sizes in Buckinghamshire. With county-wide data available for both 1798 and 1813-20, it is possible to take a series of occupational snapshots for these settlements, and investigate what, if anything, set the county town apart from its urban counterparts. Defining a 'town' has consumed much of urban historians' time, but here very simple, crude, measures of town status will be taken so as not to get bogged down in debates on this topic – further discussion of this issue will be postponed until a later point in the investigation. The 1811 census was consulted for the populations of each settlement in Buckinghamshire, and if a settlement had over 2,500 inhabitants at this point – see table 4.4 for the exact figures – it was considered to be a 'larger town' (the terminology here is locally appropriate, as none of the towns of Buckinghamshire were 'large' relative to the rest of England). The second category – the 'smaller towns' – was therefore taken to be the market towns with populations below 2,500. The Index Villaris of 1680 is a comprehensive list of the market towns of England, and was consulted on this point – see table 4.5 for the exact composition of this category. Every other settlement not included in either of these categories was taken to constitute the 'rural areas' of Buckinghamshire.

Table 4.4 – The ‘larger towns’ in Buckinghamshire, according to a threshold of 2,500 inhabitants

Town	1811 census population
Aylesbury	3447
High Wycombe	4756*
Great Marlow	3963*
Newport Pagnell	2515
Buckingham	2584*
Chesham	4441

Sources: 1811 published census. Asterisked figures denote that these towns included more than one division in the census (for example, parish and borough) but consistency has been kept across all sources and figures so all data are comparable.

Table 4.5 – The ‘smaller towns’ in Buckinghamshire

Town	1811 census population
Amersham	2259
Princes Risborough	1644
Wendover	1481
Ivinghoe	1364
Beaconsfield	1461
Olney	2268
Stony Stratford	1488
Winslow	1222

Sources: 1811 published census, the Index Villaris of 1680

Table 4.6 gives a comparison of the basic occupational structures of Aylesbury and the five other ‘larger towns’ at the beginning of the nineteenth-century, along with a mean figure for the latter five towns. Several things are apparent from the comparison, not least of which is the larger tertiary sector in Aylesbury – 19.1% in 1798 and 22.7% in 1813-20, compared to 16.0% and 16.1% respectively for the ‘larger towns’. This emphasises the importance of the county town as an administrative and professional service centre, and also as the social centre for the fashionable élite whose desires were met in the county town and not in the ‘larger towns’ of Buckinghamshire, as occupations related to these roles – for example, innkeeping and public service – accounted for a large part of the difference between the sizes of the tertiary sectors. With the secondary sectors of Aylesbury and the mean of the other five towns almost identical at both points (49.4% and 48.4% respectively in 1798, and 47.5% and 47.8% respectively in 1813-20) it is the primary sector which differs significantly. It seems that agricultural functions were much more important to these ‘larger towns’, except for High Wycombe, where a booming chair-making industry engendered a very

large secondary sector. The proportion of carpenters, blacksmiths, tailors, bakers and butchers does not differ significantly between the county town and the five ‘larger towns’ at this point, but in the field of shoemaking the two do diverge – in 1813-20 8.0% of Aylesbury’s adult male workforce was employed in this area, compared with only 4.5% on average in the other five towns.

Table 4.6 - Basic occupational structures for the 'larger towns' in Buckinghamshire, in percentage terms

	1798 Aylesbury	1798 High Wycombe	1798 Great Marlow	1798 Newport Pagnell	1798 Buckingham	1798 Chesham	1798 Mean of other five
PRIMARY	31.4	27.3	41.0	41.4	39.2	34.4	35.6
Farmers	2.0	2.2	2.1	4.2	4.0	6.3	3.6
SECONDARY	49.4	55.8	39.2	43.5	45.1	53.9	48.4
Carpenters	3.2	2.8	3.9	2.6	2.8	4.1	3.3
Blacksmiths	2.2	2.3	3.1	2.1	1.6	2.9	2.5
Tailors	3.5	2.6	1.6	2.3	3.7	2.2	2.4
Bakers	3.5	1.0	2.1	3.4	2.5	2.9	2.2
Butchers	2.5	1.4	1.5	4.4	4.3	1.7	2.3
Shoemakers	5.3	4.3	4.5	4.4	4.3	5.5	4.6
TERTIARY	19.1	16.9	19.8	15.1	15.8	11.7	16.0

	1813-20 Aylesbury	1813-20 High Wycombe	1813-20 Great Marlow	1813-20 Newport Pagnell	1813-20 Buckingham	1813-20 Chesham	1813-20 Mean of other five
PRIMARY	29.8	18.5	45.2	43.6	37.6	47.5	36.0
Farmers	1.6	2.1	1.8	2.2	2.5	17.9	4.1
SECONDARY	47.5	67.6	39.7	40.3	41.9	36.3	47.8
Carpenters	4.9	3.1	6.1	5.7	3.8	5.1	4.6
Blacksmiths	2.0	2.0	1.3	2.5	1.4	2.8	1.9
Tailors	3.3	4.2	2.7	2.0	2.7	0.5	2.7
Bakers	1.6	1.8	2.0	2.2	0.9	2.8	1.9
Butchers	1.5	2.6	1.1	2.9	4.6	0.5	2.5
Shoemakers	8.0	3.1	6.5	5.1	3.5	4.6	4.5
TERTIARY	22.7	13.9	15.2	16.0	20.5	16.3	16.1

Sources: 1798 Posse Comitatus; Baptism Registers for 1813-20

However, the difference between the county town and the ‘smaller towns’ of Buckinghamshire is much wider, as table 4.7 clearly shows. Not only was the mean primary sector of these ‘smaller towns’ much larger than in Aylesbury – 47.9% compared to 31.4% in 1798 – but it actually grew in size between 1798 and 1813-20 in all but two of the eight towns under scrutiny, and in 1813-20 the two figures had widened to 56.1% and 29.8% respectively. With the mean secondary sector in the eight towns falling from 38.2% to 30.2% between the two dates, it is tempting to conclude that there was a certain level of de-industrialisation taking place at the

beginning of the nineteenth-century. Yet it was decreases in the proportion of workers in occupations such as tailors and shoemakers which made the difference, and the argument which seems most credible is that the provision of footwear was increasingly moving up the urban hierarchy to be absorbed by the county town in particular – this point will be further developed in the following chapter. The proportion of tailors does not rise in Aylesbury (although this may be skewed by the fact that the populations of larger towns were growing more quickly than in the smaller towns) and this raises the possibility that tailors moved even further up the urban hierarchy to London, or that it was increasingly becoming a feminised occupation. However, without a more systematic study on a larger scale such suggestions are purely speculative.

Table 4.7 - Basic occupational structures for the 'smaller towns' in Buckinghamshire, in percentage terms

	1798 Amersham	1798 Princes Risborough	1798 Wendover	1798 Ivinghoe	1798 Beaconsfield	1798 Olney	1798 Stony Stratford	1798 Winslow	Mean
PRIMARY	49.3	64.4	57.6	78.2	51.3	18.3	25.6	37.8	47.9
Farmers	2.9	5.4	7.8	10.2	1.2	3.9	0.4	3.3	4.4
SECONDARY	40.6	25.9	29.7	15.5	36.2	64.5	44.7	47.4	38.2
Carpenters	2.9	2.3	2.8	2.8	5.3	2.1	3.2	2.9	3.0
Blacksmiths	2.7	2.3	3.2	1.4	1.6	1.5	3.6	2.1	2.3
Tailors	1.9	1.7	1.8	1.1	4.1	3.9	5.3	2.1	2.7
Bakers	2.2	1.4	2.8	0.4	3.3	2.1	3.9	1.2	2.1
Butchers	1.0	1.1	0.7	0.4	2.0	2.4	3.6	5.4	1.9
Shoemakers	3.4	2.3	4.9	1.8	4.9	6.9	4.3	6.6	4.3
TERTIARY	10.2	9.7	12.7	6.3	12.5	17.2	29.7	14.9	13.9

	1813-20 Amersham	1813-20 Princes Risborough	1813-20 Wendover	1813-20 Ivinghoe	1813-20 Beaconsfield	1813-20 Olney	1813-20 Stony Stratford	1813-20 Winslow	Mean
PRIMARY	63.7	60.0	65.4	70.5	60.5	40.7	27.2	52.4	56.1
Farmers	1.3	8.5	7.0	4.7	1.8	0.9	0.0	3.8	3.3
SECONDARY	24.4	29.7	27.5	20.8	26.0	39.8	49.1	29.5	30.2
Carpenters	4.0	2.1	3.2	4.3	2.6	0.4	4.4	3.8	3.3
Blacksmiths	2.2	4.9	3.2	0.0	1.6	2.2	3.2	1.9	2.4
Tailors	1.8	0.0	1.8	1.1	3.1	0.4	2.1	3.8	1.8
Bakers	0.7	3.9	2.6	1.4	2.3	0.9	4.1	3.4	2.3
Butchers	1.1	1.8	1.8	2.2	1.0	0.4	1.8	2.3	1.5
Shoemakers	0.7	1.8	3.2	1.8	2.3	7.9	3.5	2.3	2.6
TERTIARY	11.8	10.2	7.1	8.7	13.5	19.6	23.6	18.1	13.8

Sources: 1798 Posse Comitatus; Baptism Registers for 1813-20

The tertiary sector on average is, unsurprisingly, small in these eight towns, but it should be pointed out that there was a good deal of variation. For example, Stony Stratford had a population

of just 1,488 according to the 1811 census, but had a very similar occupational structure to the county town, with 27.2% of workers employed in the primary sector, 49.1% in the secondary sector and 23.6% in the tertiary sector by 1813-20. The significance of such findings are notable in the wider context of the study of urban history, as they call into question the definitions of 'town status' and 'urbanity' which are most commonly used. Stony Stratford would not qualify as a 'town' in any of the recent studies of aspects of urban history, but with an occupational structure broadly similar to that of Aylesbury, one must question why occupational criteria are not a constituent part of definitions of town status. Of course, population statistics are an important indicator, but this example shows that to exclude settlements on the basis of cut-off points of 2,500 or 5,000 inhabitants is potentially misleading. In addition, table 4.4 shows just how small the 'largest towns' in Buckinghamshire were at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The county was overwhelmingly rural at this stage, and the small size of the towns explains why a significant primary sector was sustained in each settlement. Yet despite their size, these settlements had occupational structures which were distinctly urban. This factor will be investigated further in the next chapter, which will examine the nature of the 'urban hierarchy' in Buckinghamshire in the early nineteenth-century.

Chapter 5 – Urban and rural settlements in Buckinghamshire

The county-wide data available for both individual settlements in 1798 and 1813-20 means that a comparison is possible between three categories of settlement at these points. In addition, although it would be too time-consuming to code the whole of the 1851 manuscript census for individual settlements, aggregate figures are available from the published census for the whole county and these have been coded to add an extra data point to the basic occupational structure of the whole of Buckinghamshire, shown as part of table 5.1. Aylesbury has been added to the five other ‘larger towns’ to form the top rung of the ‘urban hierarchy’, with the ‘smaller towns’ and ‘rural areas’ forming the two strata beneath. Mean percentages have been taken of the occupational data for the settlements within each category, in order to investigate the nature and feasibility of thinking in terms of an ‘urban hierarchy’.

Table 5.1 - The basic occupational structures, in percentage terms, of four categories of settlement in Buckinghamshire

LARGER TOWNS

	1798	1813-20	1798 % of total	1813-20 % of total
PRIMARY	1127	1477	34.8	34.5
Farmers	107	148	3.3	3.5
SECONDARY	1572	2043	48.6	47.8
Carpenters	106	200	3.3	4.7
Blacksmiths	79	83	2.4	1.9
Tailors	84	123	2.6	2.9
Bakers	79	77	2.4	1.8
Butchers	75	95	2.3	2.2
Shoemakers	154	227	4.8	5.3
TERTIARY	538	757	16.6	17.7
TOTAL	3237	4277	100	100

SMALLER TOWNS

	1798	1813-20	1798 % of total	1813-20 % of total
PRIMARY	1165	1498	47.9	56.1
Farmers	107	87	4.4	3.3
SECONDARY	929	806	38.2	30.2
Carpenters	72	87	3.0	3.3
Blacksmiths	56	64	2.3	2.4
Tailors	65	49	2.7	1.8
Bakers	52	62	2.1	2.3
Butchers	47	40	1.9	1.5
Shoemakers	104	70	4.3	2.6
TERTIARY	337	367	13.9	13.8
TOTAL	2431	2671	100	100

RURAL AREAS

	1798	1813-20	1798 % of total	1813-20 % of total
PRIMARY	12534	15142	71.2	71.1
Farmers	1848	1982	10.5	9.3
SECONDARY	3877	4482	22.0	21.0
Carpenters	503	643	2.9	3.0
Blacksmiths	297	359	1.7	1.7
Tailors	221	193	1.3	0.9
Bakers	201	274	1.1	1.3
Butchers	217	318	1.2	1.5
Shoemakers	595	485	3.4	2.3
TERTIARY	1183	1667	6.7	7.8
TOTAL	17594	21291	100	100

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

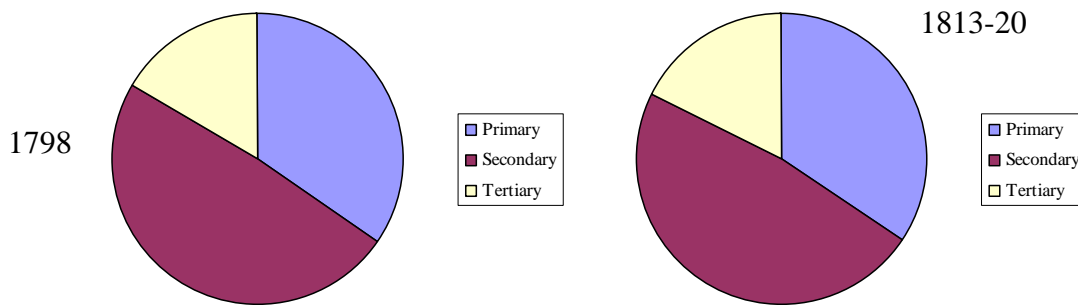
	1798	1813-20	1851	1798 % of total	1813-20 % of total	1851 % of total
PRIMARY	14826	18113	18242	63.7	64.1	51.6
Farmers	2062	2217	1868	8.9	7.9	5.3
SECONDARY	6378	7330	11455	27.4	26.0	32.4
Carpenters	681	930	945	2.9	3.3	2.7
Blacksmiths	432	506	515	1.9	1.8	1.5
Tailors	370	365	492	1.6	1.3	1.4
Bakers	332	413	566	1.4	1.5	1.6
Butchers	339	453	508	1.5	1.6	1.4
Shoemakers	853	782	1271	3.7	2.8	3.6
TERTIARY	2058	2796	5622	8.8	9.9	15.9
TOTAL	23262	28239	35319	100	100	100

Sources: 1798 Posse Comitatus; Baptism Registers for 1813-20; 1851 published census

The first point which becomes abundantly clear on examination of these tables, and also the pie charts shown in figures 5.2 to 5.4, is that there are clear and substantial differences in the occupational structures of the three categories. This is not surprising, but it reinforces the point that occupational factors should be included in the classification of settlements – whether a place is denoted as a ‘large town’, ‘small town’ or ‘rural area’ should not simply be wholly dependent on size, as very clear patterns emerge when examining the figures. In the ‘larger towns’ category at the beginning of the nineteenth-century, the primary sector accounted for just over one-third of the adult male workforce, the secondary sector formed almost one-half, and the tertiary sector made up the remaining one-sixth of adult males in employment. These levels are consistent between the two data points, and the same applies to the ‘rural areas’ of Buckinghamshire. Here, the primary sector formed slightly over 70% of the adult male workforce, with just over 20% in the secondary sector

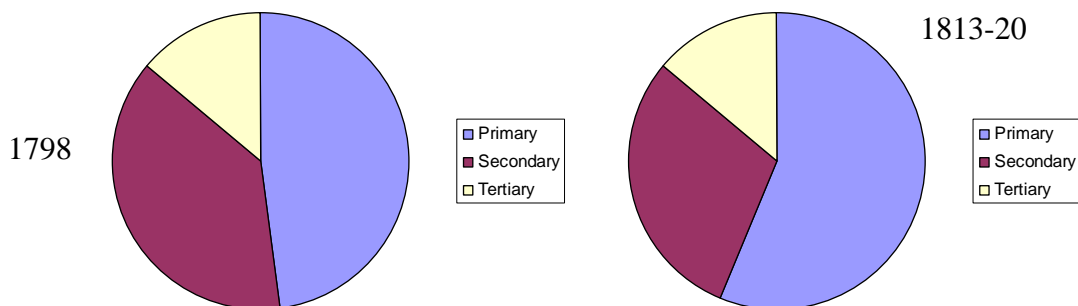
and the remaining 6-8% in the tertiary sector. In the ‘smaller towns’, the tertiary sector accounted for just under 14% of the adult male workforce at both points, but there was a degree of variation in the primary and secondary sectors – the former rose from 47.9% in 1798 to 56.1% in 1813-20, and the latter decreased from 38.2% to 30.2% in 1813-20.

Figure 5.2 – The primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the ‘larger towns’ of Buckinghamshire in 1798, then 1813-20



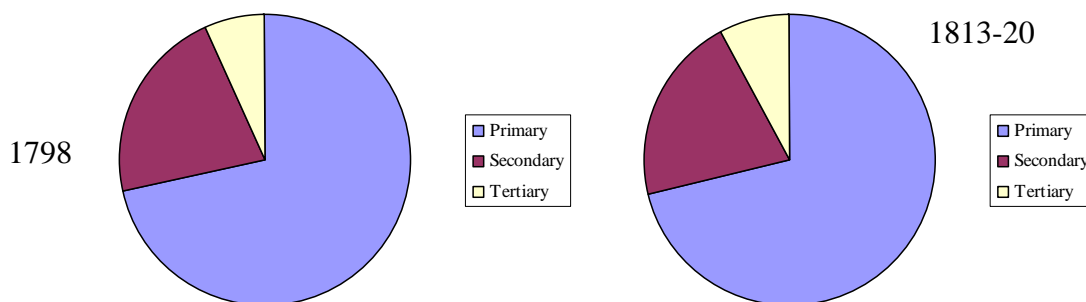
Sources: 1798 *Posse Comitatus*, 1813-20 *Baptism Registers*

Figure 5.3 – The primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the ‘smaller towns’ of Buckinghamshire in 1798, then 1813-20



Sources: 1798 *Posse Comitatus*, 1813-20 *Baptism Registers*

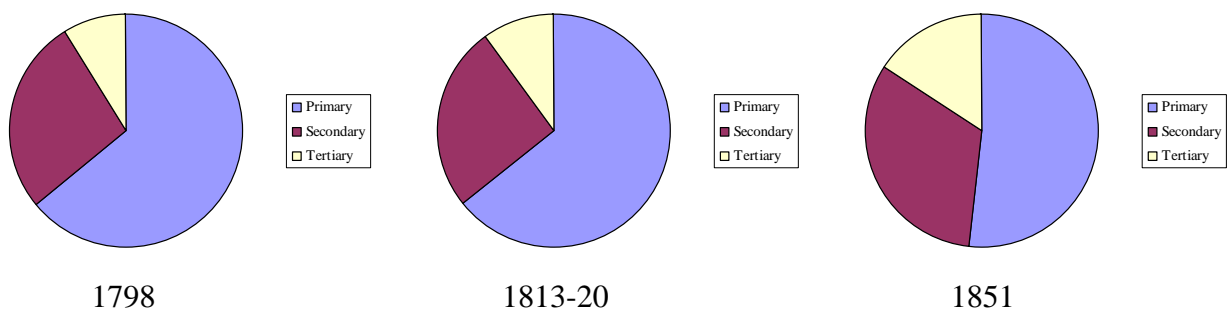
Figure 5.4 – The primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the ‘rural areas’ of Buckinghamshire in 1798, then 1813-20



Sources: 1798 *Posse Comitatus*, 1813-20 *Baptism Registers*

Working with large numbers of people in each category, it is unlikely that the changes in the ‘smaller towns’ are simply attributable to ‘noise’ within the data, but it is still somewhat surprising that this category of settlement was apparently becoming more agricultural at the start of the nineteenth-century. This suggests that certain occupations in the secondary sector were being absorbed into the domain of primarily the larger towns and the county town – again, the clothing and footwear field provides an excellent example of this, with the level of tailors falling from 2.7% to 1.8% and the proportion of shoemakers falling from 4.3% to 2.6% between the 1798 and 1813-20 in the ‘smaller towns’. In the ‘larger towns’, however, the proportion of tailors rose from 2.6% to 2.9% and the level of shoemakers rising from 4.8% to 5.3% between these two points. It should be pointed out though that there were certain occupations which did not take on an ‘urban’ character – carpenters were represented fairly equally between the three categories for example. In 1798, carpenters formed 3.3% of the adult male workforce in the ‘larger towns’, 3.0% in the ‘smaller towns’ and 2.9% in ‘rural areas’. The case of blacksmiths is fairly similar, although there was a very slightly lower proportion in ‘rural areas’ than in the two town categories. Although it may seem a fairly obvious point to make, it seems clear that inhabitants of rural Buckinghamshire did not have to travel for most of the basic needs which were central to their existence, for example shoes for their horses and timber for housing. It would be illuminating to add data from the 1851 manuscript census, to create an extra data point for each category at the mid-point of the nineteenth-century, to see if this trend continued, but sadly this has not been possible in the time available.

Figure 5.5 – The primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the whole of Buckinghamshire in 1798, 1813-20 and 1851



Sources: 1798 Posse Comitatus, 1813-20 Baptism Registers, 1851 published census

At the beginning of the nineteenth-century it is clear that services were an urban phenomenon, but the ‘whole county’ analysis shown in figure 5.5 reveals that major changes took place in the first half of this century. Between 1798 and 1851 the average tertiary sector in a Buckinghamshire settlement had almost doubled, from 8.8% of the adult male workforce to 15.9%. This boom in the tertiary sector was accompanied by a significant decrease in the size of the

primary sector, and a moderate increase in the proportion of workers in the secondary sector. However, this apparent move towards a less agricultural economy was intrinsically connected with levels of urbanisation, particularly into the ‘larger towns’. Tables 5.6 and 5.7 show the population growth between 1811 and 1851 of the ‘larger towns’ and the ‘smaller towns’ of Buckinghamshire respectively. It can be seen that in the former group the mean population growth was 42.5% between these two points and in the latter category it was just 27.8%. These figures must be put in context by considering that the population of the whole of Buckinghamshire rose from 124,304 in 1811 to 167,097 in 1851, according to the published censuses – a rise of 34.4%. The ‘rural areas’ grew at an almost identical rate, with numbers rising from 89,079 in 1811 to 118,820 in 1851 – an increase of 33.3%, but it is most striking that the ‘smaller towns’ were decreasing size relative to the county and rural areas. Population growth in Aylesbury alone was 76.4% between these 1811 and 1851, and thus it becomes clear that the changes in the occupational character of the whole county in the first half of the nineteenth-century were largely due to a fairly significant process of migration from the smaller market towns into the larger towns, and particularly the county town. The effect was to swell the tertiary sectors of these larger towns, and this was mirrored by a fall in the proportion of workers in the primary sector for Buckinghamshire as the importance of the small market towns declined in the first half of the nineteenth-century. Yet despite the changes in the county’s occupational structure which this shift in population engendered, this does not change the fact that there was still no major industry in Buckinghamshire by 1851.

Table 5.6 – Population growth in the ‘larger towns’ between 1811 and 1851³⁹

Settlement	1811 population	1851 population	1811-1851 percentage growth
Aylesbury	3447	6081	76.4
High Wycombe	4756	7179	50.9
Chesham	4441	6098	37.3
Great Marlow	3965	4485	13.1
Newport Pagnell	2515	3651	45.2
Buckingham	2987	4020	34.6
Mean	22,111	31,514	42.5

Sources: 1811 published census; 1851 published census

³⁹ Thorpe (2002), 25.

Table 5.7 – Population growth in the ‘smaller towns’ between 1811 and 1851⁴⁰

Settlement	1811 population	1851 population	1811-1851 percentage growth
Amersham	2259	3104	37.4
Olney	2195	2265	3.2
Princes Risborough	1644	2317	40.9
Stony Stratford	1488	1757	18.1
Wendover	1481	1937	30.8
Beaconsfield	1461	1684	15.3
Winslow	1222	1805	47.7
Ivinghoe	1364	1894	38.9
Mean	13,114	16,763	27.8

Sources: 1811 published census; 1851 published census

Despite the significant historiographic doubts expressed in the introduction, the major differences in occupational structure between the three tiers examined in this chapter suggest that the notion of an ‘urban hierarchy’ remains useful. Borsay relates that: ‘the extent of change in the eighteenth-century has led Penelope Corfield to question the whole notion of an urban hierarchy, and to suggest that during these years a more modern and pluralist system was emerging, in which towns were defined in terms of their ‘leading economic functions’ rather than their regional influence,’⁴¹ but this does not hold true for the case of Aylesbury and Buckinghamshire. There simply was not a sufficient degree of change in the county town of Buckinghamshire in the eighteenth-century for this to be the case, and Aylesbury relied on its regional influence in terms of its role as an administrative, professional and social centre, rather than any specific economic function. By the middle of the nineteenth-century there are signs of change in Aylesbury and also Buckinghamshire as a whole, but these changes will now be put in context through an examination of Aylesbury’s changing occupational structure over a much longer period.

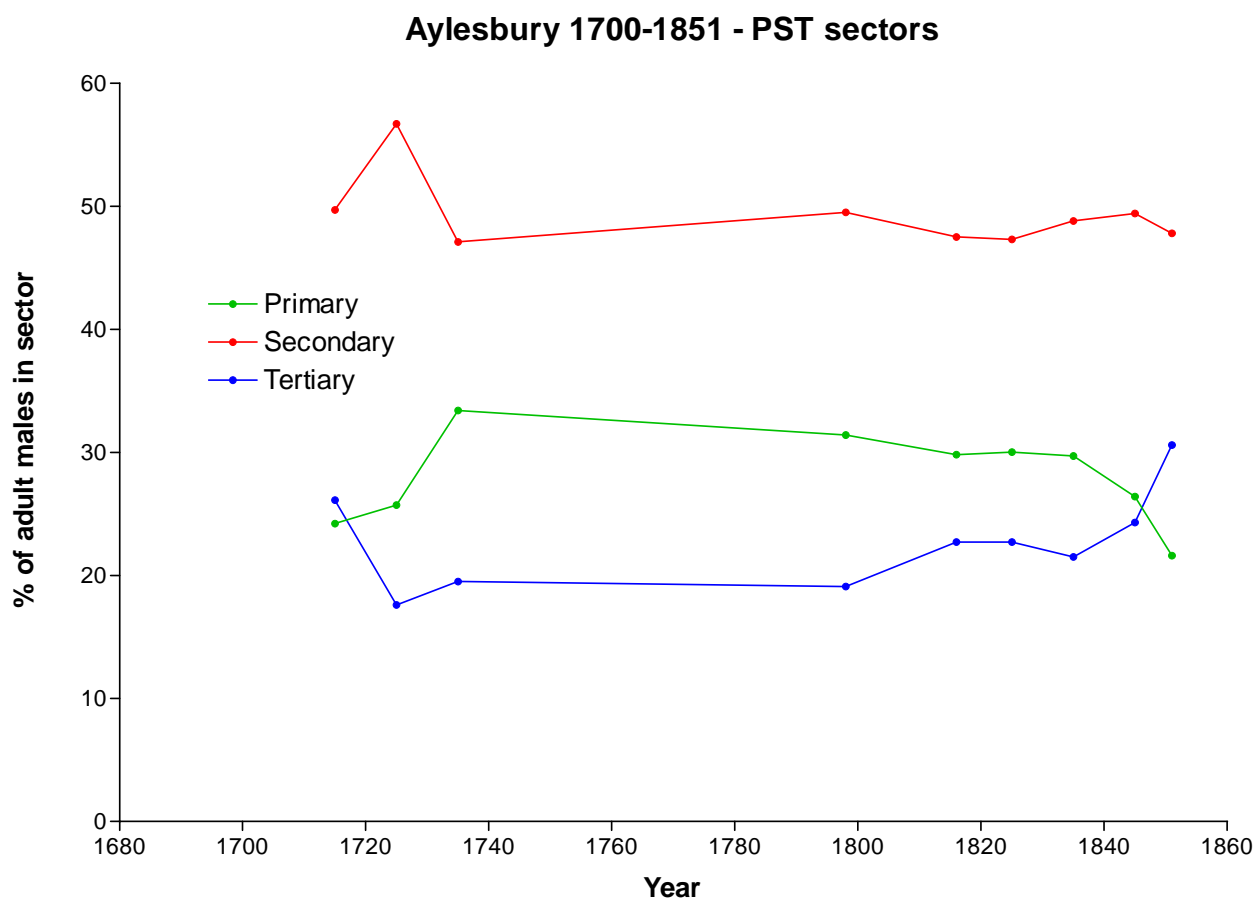
⁴⁰ Thorpe (2002), 25.

⁴¹ Borsay (1990), 4.

Chapter 6 – Aylesbury, c1700-1850

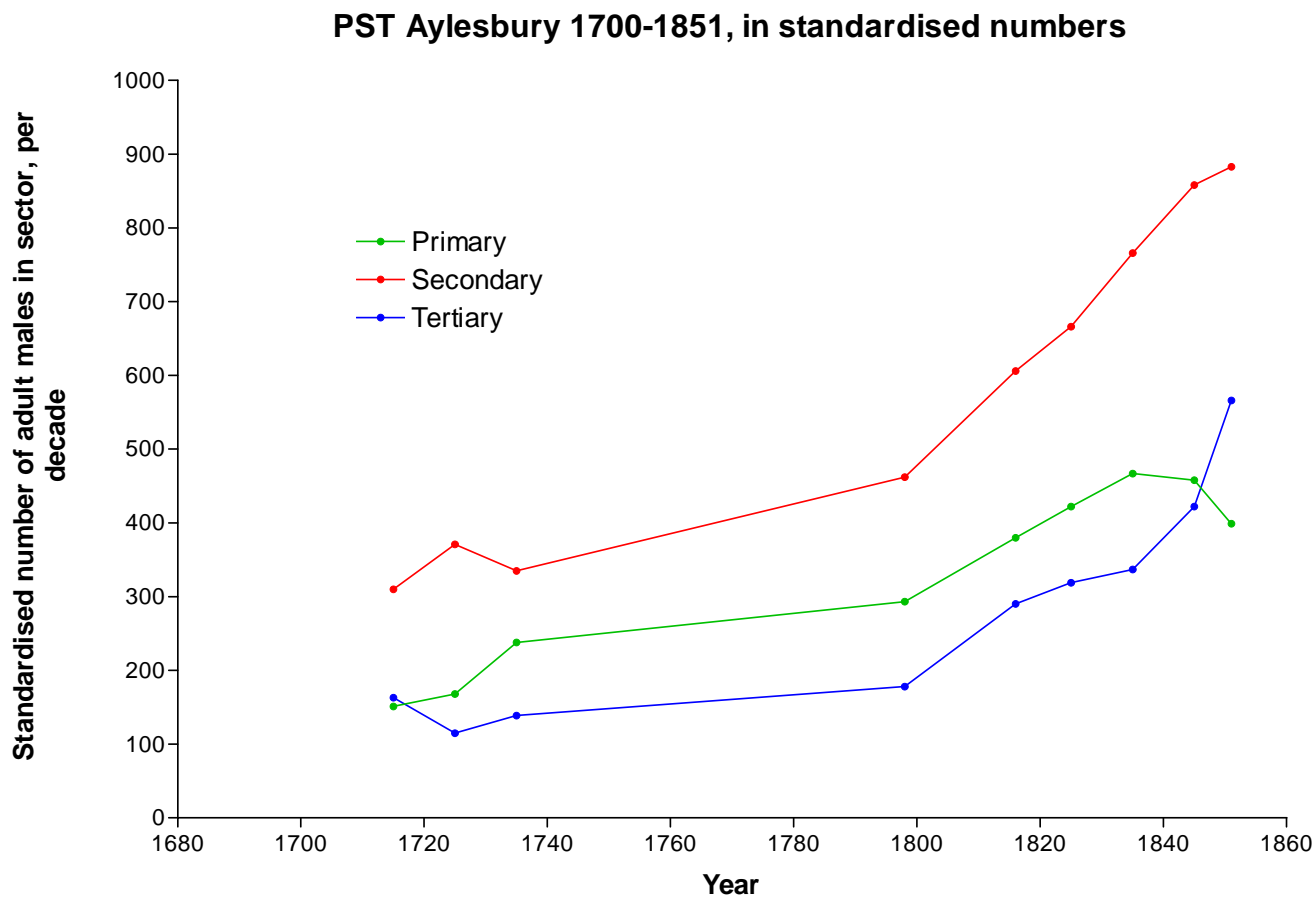
Figures 6.1 and 6.2 show the basic evolution of Aylesbury's occupational structure between 1700 and 1851, in terms of the three main sectors – primary, secondary and tertiary. The most immediately striking feature is the level of continuity in each of the three sectors – the overall picture is one of remarkable stability until the very end of the period, although there are changes which must be discussed. One of the most striking features of figure 6.1 is the sharp fluctuations between the 1710s, 1720s and 1730s. Such significant changes are surprising and possibly implausible – I can find no feasible explanation for the three major sectors varying so much over just 30 years. It may well be that the relatively small number of events recorded in the baptism registers of the early eighteenth century has resulted in 'noise' fluctuations giving a slightly skewed picture of Aylesbury's occupational structure at this stage, but the fundamental trends over a long period of time are still clearly discernible. An approach tailored to the nature of the coding system will now be taken, with a basic examination of the three major sectors first, then a more detailed investigation of the most significant sub-sectors.

Figure 6.1



Sources: *Baptism Registers for the 1710s, 1720s and 1730s; 1798 Posse Comitatus; Baptism Registers for 1813-20, 1820s, 1830s and 1840s; 1851 manuscript census*

Figure 6.2



Sources: Baptism Registers for the 1710s, 1720s and 1730s; 1798 Posse Comitatus; Baptism Registers for 1813-20, 1820s, 1830s and 1840s; 1851 manuscript census

Given that Buckinghamshire was one of the most agricultural counties in England, the primary sector of its county town presents an intriguing prospect. Overall, the primary sector's share of Aylesbury's occupational structure falls away slowly after the 1730s, from 33.4% at this point to 21.6% by 1851 (see tables 6.9 and 6.10 at the end of this chapter for a complete breakdown of Aylesbury's occupational structure over time). However, it is only really after the 1830s that this decline begins in earnest, due to both a decrease in standardised numbers in the primary sector and a significant expansion of the tertiary sector. This timing is instructive, and suggests that agriculture formed a significant part of Aylesbury's economy until a relatively late stage. With the most significant changes occurring from around the 1830s onwards, the desirability of investigating the second half of the nineteenth century becomes clear. However, this and other potential avenues of enquiry for the future will be discussed further in the conclusion to this investigation.

After the apparent fluctuations during the 1720s, the secondary sector in Aylesbury is remarkable for its lack of growth or decline – between the 1730s and 1851 it consistently makes up

between 47% and 50% of Aylesbury's adult male workforce. It is clear from the secondary sector breakdown that there was no significant concentration of industry in Aylesbury – for example, the textile industry was relatively insignificant – and local studies corroborate that it was not until the latter half of the nineteenth century that there was any considerable industrial development in the area.⁴² Hazell & Watson, a London printing press, moved their business to Aylesbury in 1867, and in 1870 the Aylesbury Condensed Milk Company (now Nestlé) set up a major factory, but until this point there is little doubt that the secondary sector in Aylesbury was made up of more traditional handicraft industries. For example, there was a significant concentration of tailors and shoemakers, as the 'clothing and footwear' sector remained consistently between around 10% and 15% of the adult male workforce. At the beginning of the eighteenth-century the food and drink industry was well represented, with 13.9% of adult males employed in this field in the 1720s, but the proportion fell away over time and by 1851 had more than halved to just 6.4%.

Although these figures mask a small rise in standardised numbers, there is certainly the possibility that at the beginning of the eighteenth-century inhabitants from the surrounding villages would come to the county town to meet their nutritional needs, but by the middle of the nineteenth-century the villages would themselves contain the requisite bakers, butchers and drink manufacturers to make the journey to Aylesbury from the hinterland unnecessary. This suggests a changing relationship between a town and its surrounding country – although the town by necessity relied upon the country for food and raw materials, the reverse was not necessarily true at all times, as the level of basic, everyday services which the countryside demanded from its urban centre became more limited as time went on. Wrigley's claim that 'only clothing of the necessities of life was more commonly acquired from a distance, and might have an urban origin,'⁴³ is well evidenced by the figures for Aylesbury, and means we must re-evaluate the idea of the county town as a provider of basic goods for its hinterland, as it seems clear that this relationship was changing over time.

The tertiary sector is of great import to urban studies, as towns have increasingly come to be seen as service centres for their surrounding areas. Several aspects of the tertiary sector will be examined in more detail in due course, but again it should be pointed out that the sector as a whole was extremely stable and only really increased in size towards the end of the period being studied, rising as it did from 21.5% in the 1830s to 30.6% by 1851. This is certainly a sharp rise, but when put in national context they seem surprisingly low, considering that Aylesbury was in theory the

⁴² See for example, Hanley and Hunt (1993), Gibbs (1885).

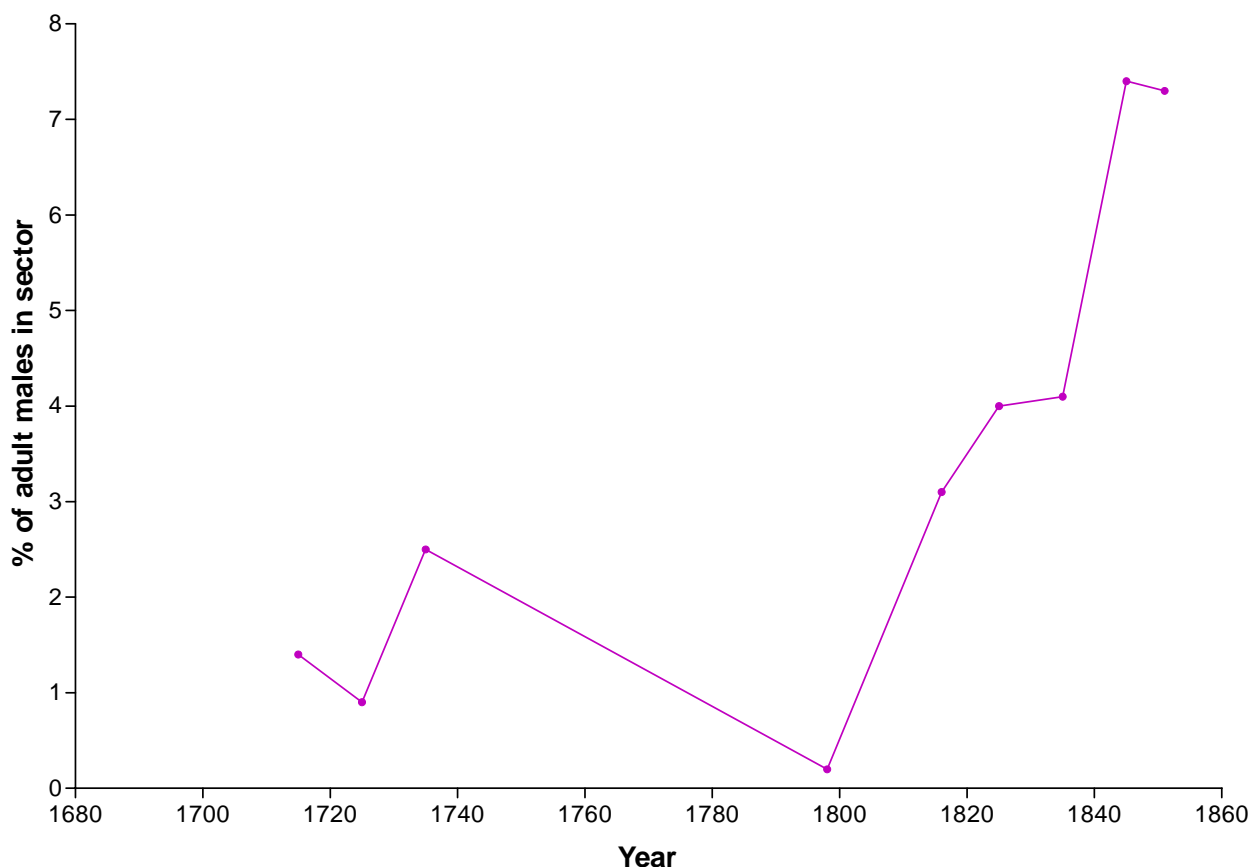
⁴³ Wrigley (2004), 262-3.

service centre for a large portion of Buckinghamshire. Wrigley finds that in England and Wales in 1841, 19.8% of males aged 20 or over were employed in the tertiary sector, and in 1851 this figure stood at 23.4%.⁴⁴ One might expect a county town to be significantly above the national average in terms of the proportion of adult males it employed in the service sector, but it is not until 1851 that the differential between the two is substantial. Again, it would be illuminating to see how this trend developed in the second half of the nineteenth century.

One of the main benefits of Wrigley's coding system is that very specific sub-sectors can be examined over time, and one of the most intriguing areas is that of transport. It was the huge increases in transport, shown in figure 6.3, which drove the increase of the tertiary sector towards the midpoint of the nineteenth-century, as it rose from 1.4% in the 1710s, to 4.1% in the 1830s and then up to 7.3% in 1851.

Figure 6.3

Transport in Aylesbury 1700-1851

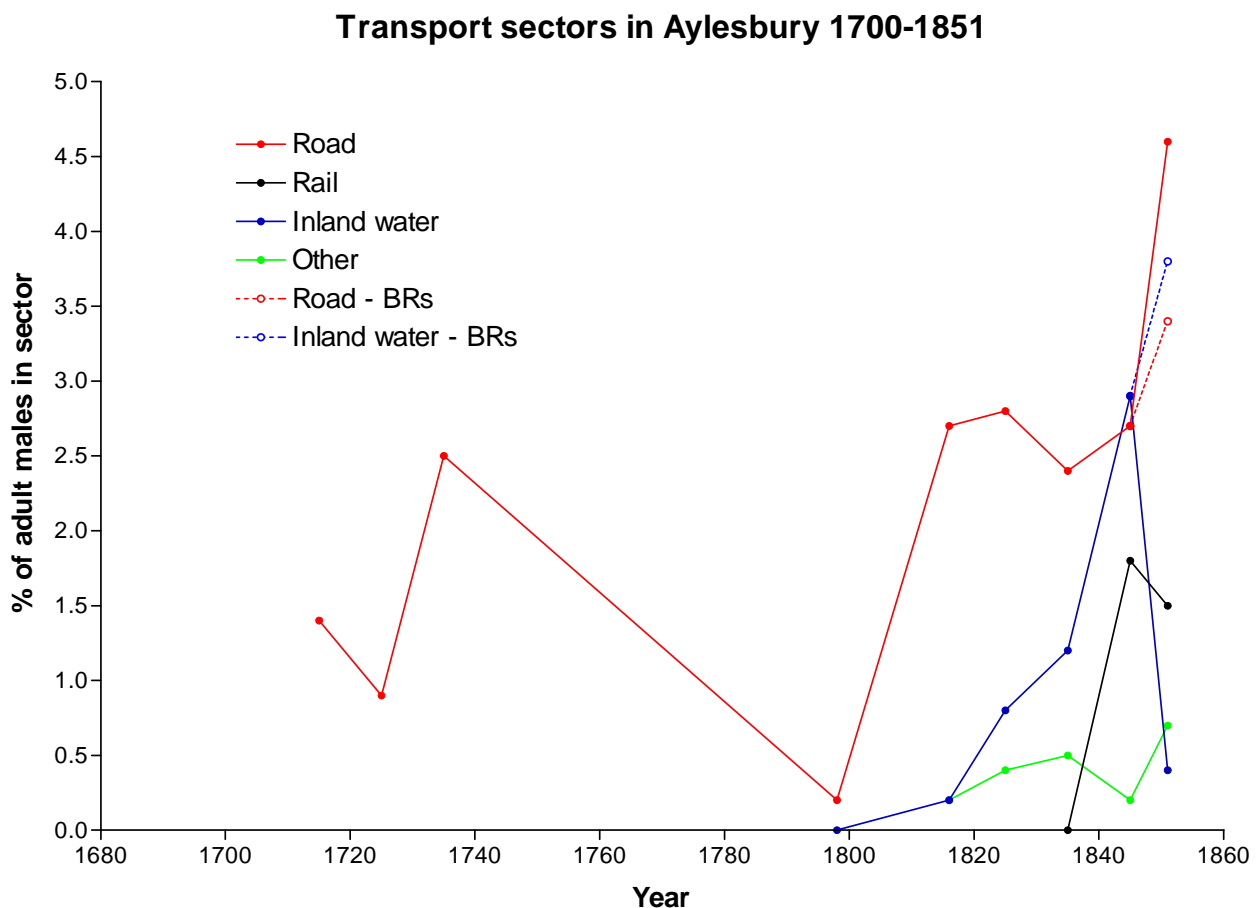


Sources: *Baptism Registers for the 1710s, 1720s and 1730s; 1798 Posse Comitatus; Baptism Registers for 1813-20, 1820s, 1830s and 1840s; 1851 manuscript census*

⁴⁴ Wrigley (2004), 164.

However, viewing this graph quickly leads to the question of why the transport sector apparently only accounted for 0.2% of the adult male workforce in 1798. The answer lies in the specific structure of the source used for this data point, namely the Posse Comitatus. It is well known that returns were required of horses, wagons and carts, but the suspicion must be that people employed in using these items were not listed in the main register of occupations, and as such the level of transport workers was under-recorded in 1798. Militia lists were compiled in order to put together a contingency plan in the event of a French invasion – such a plan would have involved large-scale evacuations of citizens and also the moving of soldiers and heavy military equipment. Transport workers would undoubtedly have been needed for this task, and this is perhaps why they were not recorded elsewhere in the Posse Comitatus. It is simply inconceivable that the sector could have fallen to 0.2% of the adult male workforce, when it stood at 2.5% in the 1730s and 3.1% in the 1813-20.

Figure 6.4



Sources: *Baptism Registers for the 1710s, 1720s and 1730s; 1798 Posse Comitatus; Baptism Registers for 1813-20, 1820s, 1830s and 1840s; 1851 manuscript census; Baptism Registers for 1846-1855 (dotted lines)*

Figure 6.4, which shows a breakdown of the proportion of workers in each of the transport sub-sectors, must therefore be viewed in this context, but nevertheless it gives an excellent indication both of the strength of the data being used in this investigation and the care with which such data must be interpreted. The striking and sharp increases in the proportion of adult males employed in the inland water and rail sectors fit beautifully with the advent of these modes of transport in Aylesbury. Traders in the county town were extremely keen for a canal to be built around the beginning of the nineteenth-century, as commerce had been lost to Wendover traders whose canal had been built by 1797.⁴⁵ The Aylesbury branch of the Grand Junction Canal had been completed by 1814 and it is clear that not only did it have a big effect on costs of carriage – the retail price of coal was halved immediately⁴⁶ – but that many jobs were also created as a result. The proportion of workers in the inland water sector rose from zero in 1798, to 0.2% in 1813-20, 0.8% in the 1820s, 1.2% in the 1830s and 2.9% in the 1840s.

However, according to the 1851 census the proportion then fell to just 0.4%, and it is here that the care with which data sources must be handled becomes clear. The census would only have recorded where someone was on census night, and the nature of many occupations in the transport sector would have meant that they were mobile and potentially not in Aylesbury on census night. Baptism registers are therefore a better indicator, as can clearly be seen on figure 6.4 in relation to the inland water and road sectors, because they do not suffer from the ‘away from home on census night’ problem. Nevertheless, the strength of the data can again be seen when examining the railways. The Aylesbury branch was opened in June 1839, and the proportion of workers employed on railways rose from zero to 1.8% between the 1830s and the 1840s. With the coming of the railways Aylesbury became a significant transport node, and it seems probable that the town would have become a more viable location for industry as coal could be bought in at a much cheaper price and any products which were manufactured could be distributed around the country more quickly and easily. This may account for the advent of major factories in the county town from the 1860s onwards, explained above.

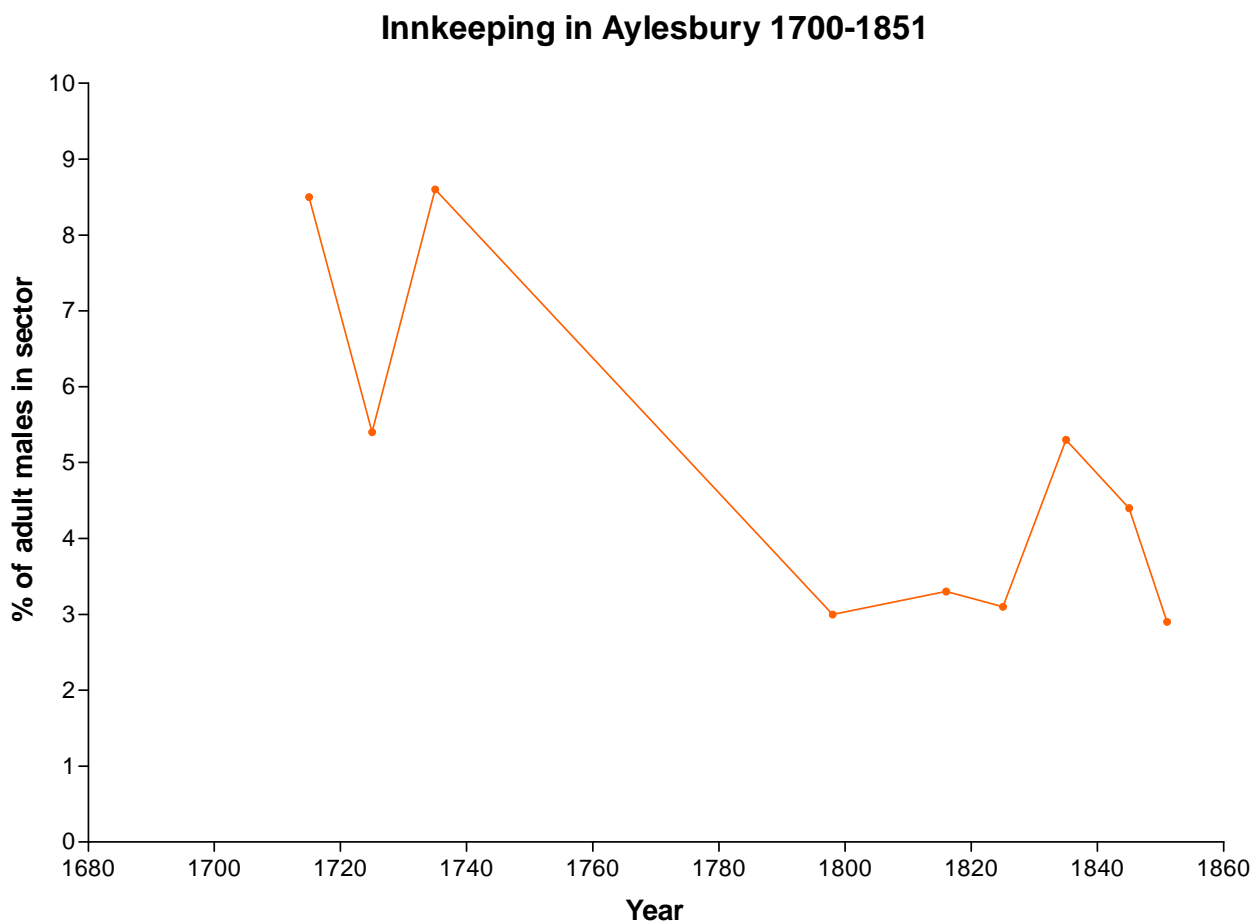
Another sub-sector worth investigating is that of the provision of food, drink and lodging. Everitt, in his study of five county towns in the period 1760-1820, notes their development as meeting places of traders and dealers. He points out that: “in part it arose from the position of these places as regional markets; but it also gave rise to a whole range of new business facilities based on

⁴⁵ Bush and Bush (1980), 3.

⁴⁶ Gibbs (1885), 584.

urban inns.”⁴⁷ It is instructive to analyse this sector in detail because the proportions of adult males working in this area can be verified in approximate terms by looking at Victuallers’ Licences for Buckinghamshire.

Figure 6.5



Sources: Baptism Registers for the 1710s, 1720s and 1730s; 1798 Posse Comitatus; Baptism Registers for 1813-20, 1820s, 1830s and 1840s; 1851 manuscript census

Figure 6.5, which shows the proportion of adult males employed in the innkeeping profession in Aylesbury, suggests that innkeeping declined over time. Extremely high levels of innkeeping in the 1710s and 1730s – with around 1 in 12 adult males apparently employed in this sector at these points – suggest that in the early eighteenth-century there were more people visiting Aylesbury than actually lived there, which would mark the county town out as a marketing and social centre. However, by the first half of the nineteenth-century innkeepers only formed between 3% and 5% of the adult male workforce in Aylesbury. Inns were heavily associated with overnight stops for travellers, but the system of turnpike roads connecting Aylesbury to other settlements did not alter significantly in this period; had a new road bypassed the county town, this could have

⁴⁷ Everitt (1979), 97-8.

explained the decline in innkeeping. Therefore the argument that seems most credible is that there was a spread of innkeeping into the surrounding countryside. The number of Victuallers Licences granted in the Hundred of which Aylesbury was a part fell from 104 in 1753 to 81 in 1827 – this is approximately a 20% fall, compared with a 50% decline in Aylesbury alone. This suggests both that innkeeping increasingly moved into the settlements around Aylesbury, and that the county town declined as a centre where people would stay to take part in the market and other activities.

In spite of this, it must be remembered that these trends are based on changes in percentages, and in this case it is perhaps more informative to look at how the standardised number of innkeepers varied over time – this variable is plotted in figure 6.6. The widely-fluctuating trend suggests that there was some ‘noise’ involved which would only be ironed out if the settlement size was much larger, but it remains clear that there were periods of relative stability in the 1710s, 1720s and 1730s, then steady increases from a relatively low level in 1798 up to the 1830s and 1840s. These changes may have been related to adjustments in the granting of Victuallers’ Licences. In 1787 a ‘Royal Proclamation against vice and immorality’ was sent to every Bench of magistrates, and this effectively reduced the number of new licences issued. Licences had to be re-applied for every year, and those alehouses with bad reputations were now often refused a licence.⁴⁸

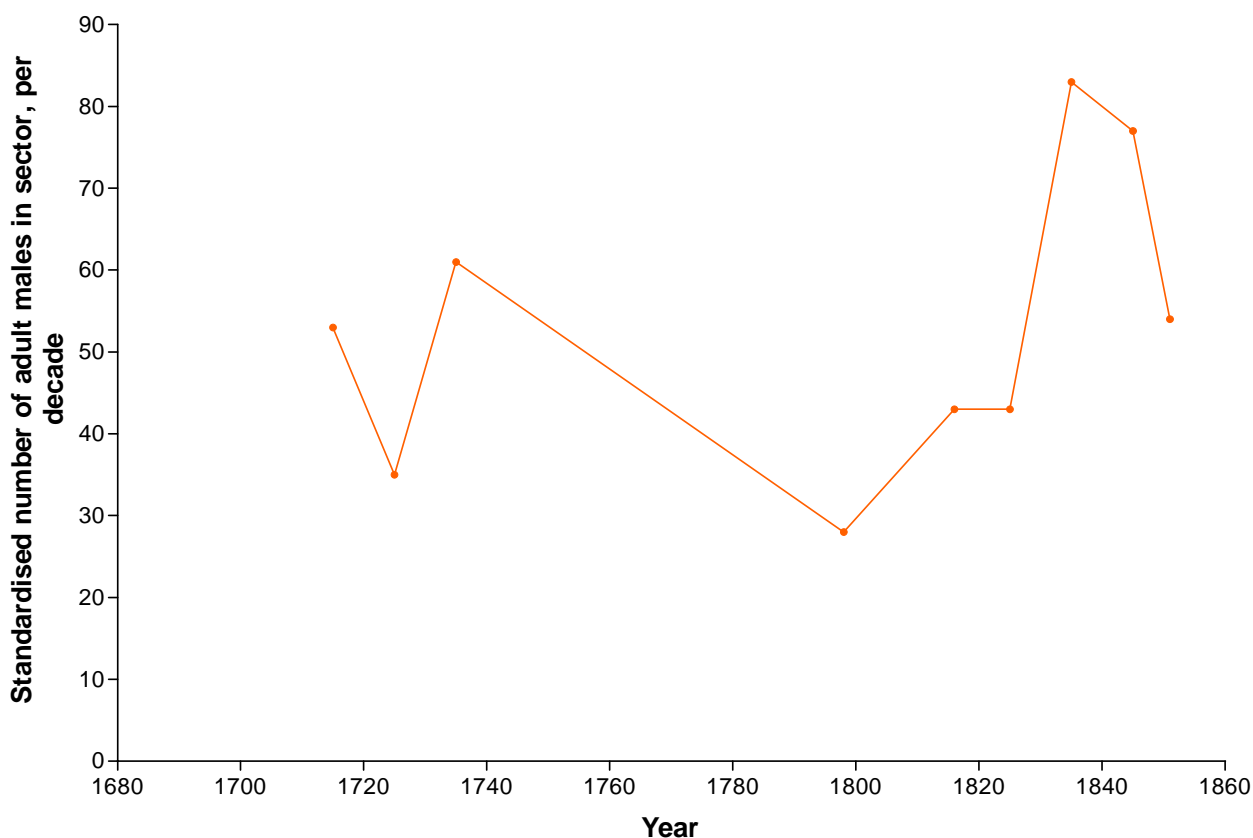
However, alehouse keepers soon complained that their ‘rights to trade’ were being curtailed by Justices, where those of other tradesmen were not, and in 1819 a House of Commons Committee supported this argument. ‘Free trade’ was now thought to be the best way to break the influence of Justices, who laid themselves open to corruption, and from this point onwards they began to issue more licences again.⁴⁹ Both of these changes in legislation can be identified, in general terms at least, on figure 6.6, and can also be verified by looking at the number of licences granted for Aylesbury. In 1753 a total of 39 licences were granted, but by 1827 this number had been reduced to 34, and this change can be identified on the graph, with the standardised number of innkeepers for 1827 falling slightly below that of 1753. All of this is comforting in terms of the reliability of the data presented, but it does not change the fact that the number of inns in Aylesbury was certainly not increasing, even if it was not actually declining significantly in real terms. This seems strange, given the development and improvement of the surrounding transport network, and seems indicative of stagnation over time rather than dynamic growth and prosperity.

⁴⁸ Eureka Partnership (2003), 2-3.

⁴⁹ Eureka Partnership (2003), 2-3.

Figure 6.6

Innkeeping in Aylesbury 1700-1851 (standardised numbers)



Sources: *Baptism Registers for the 1710s, 1720s and 1730s*; *1798 Posse Comitatus*; *Baptism Registers for 1813-20, 1820s, 1830s and 1840s*; *1851 manuscript census*

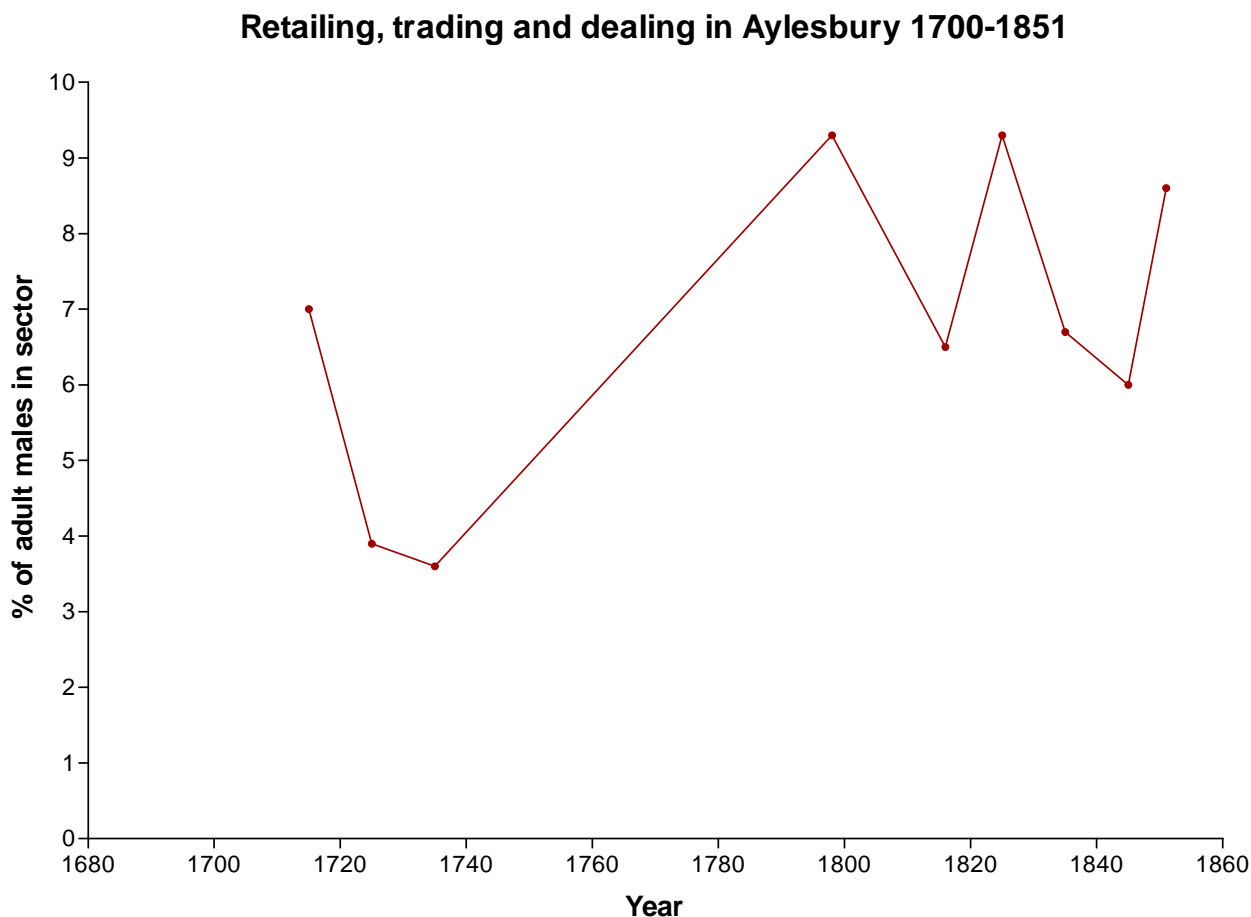
Peter Borsay's 'English Urban Renaissance', published in 1989, has been one of the most significant contributions to urban history in recent years. In this work, Borsay contends that in the century after 1660, English provincial towns experienced a cultural renaissance which included the transformation of the urban landscape and the expansion of fashionable public leisure habits, encompassing the arts, sport and arenas of public display. He identifies Aylesbury as a 'regional centre', which is defined as an important town that was able 'to exert a major impact on an extensive hinterland.'⁵⁰ There were several ways in which this 'renaissance' could potentially manifest itself in the occupational structure of the county town, and these demand examination. The first is connected with the alleged rise in consumption which many historians, for example McKendrick et al,⁵¹ have argued for in the eighteenth century. Although such arguments are difficult to prove, a 'consumer revolution' in this century would suggest that more shops and dealers would be needed to cater for increasingly varied and fashionable tastes, and this factor is

⁵⁰ Borsay (1989), 7.

⁵¹ McKendrick et al (1982).

charted in figure 6.7, which shows the proportion of adult males employed in the ‘retailing, trading and dealing’ sector.

Figure 6.7



Sources: Baptism Registers for the 1710s, 1720s and 1730s; 1798 Posse Comitatus; Baptism Registers for 1813-20, 1820s, 1830s and 1840s; 1851 manuscript census

The proportion of retailers roughly doubles in this period, but this is a case where more than one use can be made of the data collected. Simply charting the proportion of shopkeepers and dealers does not reveal the variation within such trades, but the data (even that which has been discarded for not passing the ‘95% test’) can be searched for the presence of ‘luxury tradesmen’. Of the nine occupations which Stobart classes as being indicative of a luxury market,⁵² eighteenth-century Aylesbury possessed just five of these according to the Baptism registers for 1700-1780. At least one of each of the following was recorded: a clock-maker, tobacconist, book-seller, lawyer and wine merchant – the first four were all first recorded between 1700 and 1712, but a wine merchant only appeared in the baptism registers in 1778. Moreover, there was no sign of a goldsmith, cabinet-maker, peruke-maker or musician between 1700 and 1780. The same exercise can be

⁵² Stobart (2004), 156.

conducted for other features of ‘leisure and improvement’ in the eighteenth-century, by consulting local studies and contemporary accounts. Stobart lists eight criteria in this category⁵³, but Aylesbury only exhibited three of these: horse race meetings⁵⁴, quarter sessions⁵⁵ and squares⁵⁶. It would be unrealistic to expect that a town would feature all nine of these ‘luxury occupations’ and all eight of the ‘leisure and improvement’ facilities, expect perhaps in the booming resort and spa towns such as Bath. However, it is perhaps instructive that records of several of the features and occupations which are ‘missing’ in Aylesbury can be found around the 1820s – a cabinet-maker was operating from 1820⁵⁷, a lending library to supply the poor with free books was opened in 1821, a theatre was founded in 1823 and the ‘Committee of the Aylesbury Amateur Concerts’ met in the same year, although they could have been in existence at an earlier point.⁵⁸ With Aylesbury lagging at least half a century behind the limits of Borsay’s ‘urban renaissance’ here, it is hard not to conclude that Aylesbury was ‘left behind’ in this respect.

Another aspect of the ‘urban renaissance’ which could potentially be charted in occupational data is the changes in the urban landscape. Many buildings were re-fronted in classical style, and brick came to replace timber as the basic building material – as Borsay states: ‘to contemporary observers brick became a powerful symbol of a community’s architectural status and economic prosperity.’⁵⁹ Local studies attest to a significant degree of change in this field in Aylesbury⁶⁰, and figure 6.8 testifies to a three-fold rise in the proportion of adult males working in building and construction from 3.2% in the 1710s to 8.8% by 1851. However, the largest rise comes between 1798 and 1813-20 – a jump from 6.0% to 10.8% – and again this falls outside the later limit of the ‘urban renaissance’. Aylesbury’s population grew slowly in this period, rising from 3,186 in 1801 to 3,447 in 1811, and it would therefore be reasonable to argue that this apparent rise in the building industry was not due to large-scale construction of houses, and could therefore be linked to an ‘urban renaissance’. However, it is debateable whether a boom in re-fronting houses in a classical style would actually require more builders than those who already worked in Aylesbury. Although it is thus clear that occupational descriptors are only of limited use in evaluating the ‘urban renaissance’ on a micro level, the evidence which has been presented in this chapter points to the conclusion that Aylesbury was indeed ‘left behind’ by at least half a century in this regard. More

⁵³ Stobart (2004), 151.

⁵⁴ Borsay (1989), appendix 7.

⁵⁵ Defoe (1724-7), letter VI.

⁵⁶ Market Square and Temple Square still form the centre of ‘old Aylesbury’.

⁵⁷ Although there is still no sign of a professional musician, goldsmith or peruke-maker in the baptism registers between 1813 and 1855.

⁵⁸ All from Birch (1975), 111.

⁵⁹ Borsay (1989), 55.

⁶⁰ Hanley and Hunt (1993), chapter 1.

research needs to be done to establish whether other towns exhibited similar patterns of development – if this was the case, then Borsay may have placed the later limit of his ‘urban renaissance’ at too early a point.

Figure 6.8

Building and Construction in Aylesbury 1700-1851



Sources: Baptism Registers for the 1710s, 1720s and 1730s; 1798 Posse Comitatus; Baptism Registers for 1813-20, 1820s, 1830s and 1840s; 1851 manuscript census

Table 6.9 - Breakdown of Aylesbury's occupational structure 1700-c1850, in percentage terms

	1710s	1720s	1730s	1798	1813-20	1820s	1830s	1840s	1851 census
PRIMARY	24.2	25.7	33.4	31.4	29.8	30.0	29.7	26.4	21.6
Agriculture	22.8	24.9	32.6	30.1	28.5	28.6	27.8	22.4	18.3
farmer	2.9	4.9	4.9	2.0	1.6	0.2	0.7	1.2	1.1
farm labourer	19.1	19.4	27.1	28.1	26.6	28.0	26.8	21.1	16.4
Estate work	1.3	0.8	0.4	0.8	1.0	1.1	1.7	2.1	2.2
gardener	1.3	0.8	0.4	0.8	1.0	1.1	1.7	2.1	2.2
Forestry	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.2	1.9	1.1
Mining	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
SECONDARY	49.7	56.7	47.1	49.5	47.5	47.3	48.8	49.4	47.8
Food and drink	11.9	13.9	10.8	6.5	4.6	6.0	5.2	5.9	6.4
baker	2.4	3.8	2.9	3.5	1.6	2.1	2.2	2.5	3.2
butcher	5.8	5.5	6.0	2.5	1.5	2.6	2.1	3.0	2.5
drink	2.6	2.6	1.0	0.2	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.4	0.4
Clothing and footwear	12.3	10.4	9.3	12.5	12.7	13.4	15.1	12.6	10.7
tailor	7.1	5.0	2.0	6.6	4.7	4.3	5.9	4.8	3.8
boot and shoe making	5.3	5.4	7.3	5.8	8.0	9.1	9.2	7.8	6.9
Building and construction	3.2	4.9	6.7	6.0	10.8	7.0	7.4	8.5	8.8
carpenter	1.1	3.1	3.9	3.2	4.9	3.0	2.9	3.1	2.9
bricklayer	1.0	0.6	2.2	1.8	3.7	1.9	2.9	3.1	2.4
mason	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.8	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.9
plasterer, painter	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	1.1
Textiles	1.3	0.9	0.7	1.7	0.8	1.1	1.5	3.7	1.7
cotton	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
wool	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.0
silk	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	1.2	1.4
linen	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.8	0.6	0.5	0.1
Leather, bone and hair	4.0	1.1	1.4	2.2	1.9	1.6	1.2	0.9	0.9
Woodworking	1.6	4.7	2.0	1.3	1.1	1.9	1.2	1.7	1.5
joiner, cabinet maker	0.8	2.1	1.4	0.2	0.1	0.7	1.0	1.4	0.7
Instrument making	0.6	0.2	0.3	0.8	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.6	0.5
clock, watch maker	0.6	0.2	0.3	0.8	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.6	0.5
Gold, silver, jewellery	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
Printing and publishing	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.8	2.0	1.8	0.9
Vehicle making	0.0	1.2	1.1	1.8	0.8	1.1	1.6	1.0	1.3
wheelwright	0.0	1.2	1.1	1.8	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.4	0.6
Pottery, glass, brick making	1.3	0.8	0.1	0.0	0.7	0.3	0.1	0.3	2.2
pottery, earthenware	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
brick and tile making	1.3	0.8	0.1	0.0	0.5	0.3	0.1	0.3	2.2
Non-ferous metals manufacture	1.8	1.5	1.0	0.3	1.9	1.7	1.3	0.7	0.8
Iron and steel	2.1	4.6	4.5	2.3	2.0	2.6	1.8	1.4	1.7
blacksmith	2.1	3.5	3.2	2.2	2.0	2.6	1.6	0.9	1.4
Engineering	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.5	0.4	0.9	0.8	0.4
Gunmaking	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0
Chemical industries	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Gas, coke, water	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
Furniture and furnishing	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.2
Rope making	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Straw and rush	0.2	0.8	0.4	1.5	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.7
Minor manufactures	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Secondary, general	9.0	10.2	8.4	9.0	8.5	8.5	8.8	8.8	8.6
TERTIARY	26.1	17.6	19.5	19.1	22.7	22.7	21.5	24.3	30.6
Transport	1.4	0.9	2.5	0.2	3.1	4.0	4.1	7.4	7.3
road	1.4	0.9	2.5	0.2	2.7	2.8	2.4	2.7	4.6
rail	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8	1.5
inland water	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.8	1.2	2.9	0.4

	1710s	1720s	1730s	1798	1813-20	1820s	1830s	1840s	1851 census
Trading and dealing	4.0	2.4	2.5	4.8	3.9	4.5	3.1	3.0	4.5
food and drink	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.7	0.6	0.7	1.6	0.9
textiles and clothing	3.4	1.4	2.2	3.0	2.1	1.7	1.3	0.4	1.5
Retailing	3.0	1.5	1.1	4.5	2.6	3.8	3.6	3.0	4.1
shopkeeping, grocer	0.6	0.3	0.7	4.2	1.6	1.5	1.8	1.9	1.5
Provision of food, drink, lodging	8.5	5.4	8.6	3.0	3.3	3.1	5.3	4.4	2.9
Public service	2.1	0.3	0.6	0.7	1.0	0.6	0.6	1.7	1.7
inland revenue, customs and excise	1.3	0.0	0.6	0.7	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.5
local and parish government	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.5	0.3	1.5	1.1
Professions	1.9	2.8	2.1	2.8	3.8	2.9	1.3	1.7	4.5
law	0.3	0.5	0.1	1.0	1.4	1.8	0.3	0.6	1.9
medicine	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.5	1.1	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.7
clergy	0.0	1.1	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.9
teaching	1.0	0.5	0.1	0.3	1.1	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.7
Clerical, secretarial, administrative	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.5
Armed forces	0.5	0.3	0.7	0.0	1.7	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.4
army	0.5	0.3	0.7	0.0	1.7	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.3
navy	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1
Domestic service	0.0	0.2	0.1	1.0	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.7
Entertainment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Service occupations	2.4	1.8	0.0	1.0	0.8	1.4	1.4	0.5	1.1
barber	2.2	1.8	0.0	0.8	0.5	0.9	1.1	0.1	0.3
Banking and financial services	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.6	1.3
Titled, and property owners	2.2	1.8	1.1	1.0	0.9	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.7

Table 6.10 - Breakdown of Aylesbury's occupational structure 1700-c1850, in standardised numbers

	1710s	1720s	1730s	1798	1813-20	1820s	1830s	1840s	1851 census
PRIMARY	151	168	238	293	380	422	467	458	399
Agriculture	142	163	232	281	364	403	436	390	338
farmer	18	32	35	19	20	3	10	21	21
farm labourer	119	127	193	262	340	394	421	368	303
Estate work	8	5	3	8	13	15	27	36	40
gardener	8	5	3	8	13	15	27	36	40
Forestry	0	0	3	5	4	4	4	32	20
Mining	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
SECONDARY	310	371	335	462	606	666	766	858	883
Food and drink	74	91	77	60	59	84	82	103	118
baker	15	25	21	33	20	29	34	43	60
butcher	36	36	43	23	19	36	33	53	46
drink	16	17	7	2	8	8	14	7	7
Clothing and footwear	77	68	66	116	163	189	237	219	198
tailor	44	33	14	62	60	61	92	84	71
boot and shoe making	33	35	52	54	103	128	144	135	127
Building and construction	20	32	48	56	138	98	116	147	163
carpenter	7	20	28	29	63	42	46	55	54
bricklayer	6	4	16	17	48	27	46	55	45
mason	2	0	1	0	10	2	4	3	16
plasterer, painter	0	0	0	2	5	6	7	9	21
Textiles	8	6	5	16	10	15	23	65	31
cotton	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
wool	0	0	0	3	8	3	3	9	0
silk	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	21	26
linen	3	1	2	3	3	11	9	9	2
Leather, bone and hair	25	7	10	20	24	22	18	15	17

	1710s	1720s	1730s	1798	1813-20	1820s	1830s	1840s	1851 census
Woodworking	10	31	14	12	14	27	18	29	27
joiner, cabinet maker	5	14	10	2	1	10	16	24	12
Instrument making	4	1	2	8	1	3	0	10	10
clock, watch maker	4	1	2	8	1	3	0	10	9
Gold, silver, jewellery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Printing and publishing	0	0	0	2	3	11	31	31	17
Vehicle making	0	8	8	17	10	15	25	17	24
wheelwright	0	8	8	17	10	8	12	7	11
Pottery, glass, brick making	8	5	1	0	9	4	1	5	40
pottery, earthenware	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
brick and tile making	8	5	1	0	6	4	1	5	40
Non-ferous metals manufacture	11	10	7	3	24	24	21	12	15
Iron and steel	13	30	32	22	25	37	29	24	31
blacksmith	13	23	23	20	25	37	25	15	26
Engineering	1	0	1	0	6	5	14	14	7
Gunmaking	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Chemical industries	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gas, coke, water	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Furniture and furnishing	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	2	4
Rope making	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Straw and rush	1	5	3	14	11	11	10	10	13
Minor manufactures	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Secondary, general	56	67	60	84	109	120	138	154	159
TERTIARY	163	115	139	178	290	319	337	422	566
Transport	9	6	18	2	40	56	65	128	135
road	9	6	18	2	35	39	38	46	85
rail	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	31	28
inland water	0	0	0	0	3	11	18	50	7
Trading and dealing	25	16	18	45	50	64	49	53	83
food and drink	0	0	0	3	9	9	12	27	16
textiles and clothing	21	9	16	28	26	24	21	7	28
Retailing	19	10	8	42	34	54	57	53	76
shopkeeping, grocer	4	2	5	39	20	21	29	32	27
Provision of food, drink, lodging	53	35	61	28	43	43	83	77	54
Public service	13	2	4	6	13	9	9	29	31
inland revenue, customs and excise	8	0	4	6	3	2	4	3	10
local and parish government	5	0	0	0	10	7	5	26	21
Professions	12	18	15	26	49	41	21	29	83
law	2	3	1	9	18	26	5	10	35
medicine	4	4	5	5	14	7	10	12	12
clergy	0	7	7	9	0	0	0	2	16
teaching	6	3	1	3	14	7	4	3	12
Clerical, secretarial, administrative	0	1	1	0	4	6	4	7	10
Armed forces	3	2	5	0	21	4	3	5	7
army	3	2	5	0	21	3	3	2	6
navy	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	1
Domestic service	0	1	1	9	16	17	18	21	31
Entertainment	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Service occupations	15	12	0	9	10	19	22	9	21
barber	14	12	0	8	6	13	17	2	6
Banking and financial services	0	0	0	2	0	1	5	10	24
Titled, and property owners	14	12	8	9	11	4	0	2	12
TOTAL NUMBER OF WORKERS	624	654	712	933	1276	1407	1570	1738	1848

Sources for tables 4.1 and 4.2: Baptism Registers for the 1710s, 1720s and 1730s; 1798 Posse Comitatus; Baptism Registers for 1813-20, 1820s, 1830s and 1840s; 1851 manuscript census

Chapter 7 - Conclusions

Studies of towns in this period normally contain a lengthy section on what actually constitutes a town, but rarely do they conclude that occupational factors should be included in the classification of settlements. Corfield is right to stress that the definition of a town is best tested against multiple criteria: 'factors commonly include a certain population size and locational density; an element of institutional organisation; some social heterogeneity; a cultural identity; and acceptance as a 'town'.'⁶¹ However, several of these factors are difficult to measure, and the argument presented in this investigation suggests that they should be substituted by measures of a settlement's occupational structure. For example, the importance of the county town as an administrative and professional centre can be discerned from occupational data with a much higher degree of certainty than individual contemporary accounts which allegedly confirm or deny a settlement's acceptance as a 'town'.

The advantage of the PST system is that individual occupations can be examined in great depth. Thus it has become clear that some occupations, for example those in the 'clothing and footwear' sector, were moving up the urban hierarchy and were increasingly becoming centred on the larger towns and county town, at the expense of tailors and shoemakers in the smaller towns and rural areas. Some occupations were more universal, and remained so, for example carpenters and blacksmiths. Everitt has claimed that: 'what was remarkable about the English county towns of the Hanoverian period was the concentration of so many varied functions within it, and the range, the scale, the scope and the quality of the facilities it afforded...for that reason these places came increasingly to focus the economic and social activity of the countryside around them in the early modern period.'⁶² This is not true of Aylesbury after 1700, as there were clearly adequate resources in rural areas of Buckinghamshire to meet almost all daily needs – for example, butchers, bakers, carpenters and blacksmiths were all present in significant quantities.

Aside from Aylesbury's position as the county capital, there is substantial evidence to suggest that Aylesbury, and indeed Chelmsford, were 'left behind' due to failure to industrialise. A lack of expansion in the retailing and innkeeping sectors in both Aylesbury and Chelmsford suggests that these county towns were not developing in a commercial sense, as shops and inns were the primary locations in towns where goods were bought and sold. In addition, the 'Urban Renaissance' seems to have arrived late in Aylesbury, by around half a century in terms of institutions and 'luxury' occupations. Its proximity to London was certainly a factor to consider,

⁶¹ Corfield, in Corfield and Keene (1990), 209.

⁶² Everitt (1979), 111.

and the London Season seems to have pulled away many members of the ‘upper gentry’ rather than the country ‘pseudo-gentry’, which suggests that any real attraction as a social centre was waning by the beginning of the nineteenth-century. This corroborates Everitt’s claim that by the 1820s the role of county towns as social centres for the ‘upper’ gentry had declined, and even his estimate that the urban gentry may have comprised about 4% of the population of the county town is much too high for Aylesbury.⁶³ It seems almost paradoxical then that Aylesbury developed some classic ‘urban renaissance’ features in the 1820s, when the presence of the distinguished gentry was apparently waning, but this is indicative of the slow rate of development in Aylesbury. While the gentry were in all probability influenced by the social and cultural ideas of the ‘urban renaissance’ within Borsay’s designated period, the county town took at least half a century to catch up and by this point the interests of the gentry were firmly centred on the nation’s capital, rather than the county capital.

The evidence presented in this investigation lends support to the revisionist theories of Wrigley⁶⁴ and Crafts⁶⁵ concerning the Industrial Revolution. Moreover, it deepens the explanation by presenting a geographical dimension, namely a more regionally-variegated timeframe. The ‘traditional’ timeframe for the ‘Industrial Revolution’ is approximately 1770-1830, and it is easy to see that these limits simply do not apply here. Working with Wrigley’s model, there is little doubt that coal was the most important factor in allowing the limits of the ‘organic economy’ to be transcended. One of its major fields of influence was in the development of steam-powered factories, but in the ‘traditional’ timeframe of the ‘Industrial Revolution’ this really only applied to cotton and wool textiles – it was the second half of the nineteenth-century before it became widespread for factories to be steam-powered, as it was not economically viable before then.⁶⁶ It is tempting to conclude that this cost factor was linked to the advent of railway transport and its effect on reducing the purchase price of coal, as although there was very little change in terms of occupational structure in Aylesbury, the alterations that did occur were confined to the 1830s onwards, and the railway was completed at the end of this decade. However, it was a further three decades before there was any significant factory presence in Aylesbury, and so this explanation seems unlikely.

The image of Aylesbury’s overwhelmingly unchanging occupational structure fits in with Crafts’ view that the ‘modern’ sector was associated with high productivity and mechanised factory

⁶³ Everitt (1979), 100.

⁶⁴ Wrigley (1988).

⁶⁵ Crafts (1985), Crafts and Harley (1992).

⁶⁶ Crafts (1985), 69.

production, whilst the ‘traditional’ sector was characterised by entrenched practices and stagnation.⁶⁷ It is inconceivable that Berg and Hudson’s view could apply to Aylesbury – that the non-factory sector was vibrant, able to expand and adapt, and featured ‘extensive and radical technical and organisational change.’⁶⁸ If this was true, and the traditional economy in Aylesbury was backward and unchanging, then the question of why Aylesbury was indeed so industrially backward must be raised. The high cost of coal is one explanation, but this would only have hindered the heavy industries. In addition, the introduction of the railways brought coal prices down but no new, coal-dependent industry appeared straight away; we must conclude then that this factor was necessary, but not sufficient, to inspire industrial growth.

It is more useful to think in terms of a geographical and practical explanation. As Armstrong states: ‘the staple industries of the rapidly-expanding settlements were iron-smelting, coal-mining, cotton and wool textile manufactures, and ship-building,’⁶⁹ but Aylesbury, like York, had no outstanding positive advantages to offer any of these industries. There was no ship building, no coal to be mined and no fast-running streams to provide the water power for mills. The county town of Buckinghamshire simply had no natural advantages which would draw in industrial entrepreneurs, and this could explain why Aylesbury failed to develop industrially before 1850. As a town it did not have sufficient natural or geographic benefits for it to become a centre of industry in the first waves of industrialisation, and consequently the occupational structure which was established at the beginning of the eighteenth-century was little different by the midpoint of the nineteenth-century. It is arguable that the stages of industrialisation which arrived in Aylesbury in the latter half of the nineteenth-century were due to technological developments, which effectively reduced the need for a good transport network or proximity to a coal field. The rapid increases in the thermal efficiency of steam engines over the course of the nineteenth-century reduced the cost of coal for a given amount of mechanical energy, and consequently steam-powered factories became much more widespread from around 1850 onwards.⁷⁰ Therefore the fall in the cost of coal was simply not sufficient on its own to stimulate industrial develop in towns such as Aylesbury, and it was not until the second half of the nineteenth-century that technology had developed sufficiently to make the county town of Buckinghamshire a viable location for industry.

We return to the idea of an elaborate network of economic linkages, with the position of a town dependent on its influence over the local economy, the national economy and potentially the

⁶⁷ Crafts and Harley (1992), 703-30.

⁶⁸ Berg and Hudson (1992), 24-50.

⁶⁹ Armstrong (1974), 26.

⁷⁰ Daunton (1995), 192-196.

international economy. An influential position in this system could have been achieved either by a town focussing on a single industrial function, or by the town acting as a significant service centre for an extensive hinterland. However, the picture which emerges from this investigation is that Aylesbury was defined neither by its all-encompassing regional influence nor a specific, concentrated economic function. The relationship of the county town of Buckinghamshire with its hinterland was arguably notable but limited in scope, with Aylesbury's role as the administrative and professional service centre of the county, combined later with its importance as a transport node, dominating the association rather than any all-encompassing role as a commercial, industrial or service centre. It is crucial that we think of Aylesbury's position within the wider process of industrialisation in the context of Buckinghamshire's importance as an agricultural county – its role as a food provider for other areas, which were experiencing much more radical change in this period, is tied in with the process of regional specialisation. This was certainly not a new phenomenon, but it did reach much greater levels than ever before in the nineteenth-century. Inevitably, agricultural production remained in the areas where the soil was conducive to good plant growth and regions with obvious natural advantages for manufacturing, for example near a coal field, tended to become centres of industry. Equally, some areas were geographically suited to certain types of production, and so regional specialisation became a marked national phenomenon for the first time. Thus cotton textiles became focussed in South Lancashire, wool textiles in the West Riding, small metalwares and hardware trades in the Midlands.

Therefore it is abundantly clear from this investigation that Stobart is right to argue that a proper understanding of the national economy can only be gained through closer regional analyses.⁷¹ Everitt has proposed that: 'it is doubtful if one can really understand a regional society in the full sense without some appreciation, some sympathetic re-creation, of the life of its capital: and as yet there are remarkably few such places for which this has been adequately undertaken.'⁷² The hope is that this study has gone some way to rectifying this situation, by drawing on occupational data to establish such a 're-creation'. There is little doubt that Aylesbury's occupational structure changed very little between around 1700 and 1850, and this is further evidence to support the revisionism of Wrigley and Crafts. In addition, it seems clear that if one wants to fully understand the impact of the Industrial Revolution on a town like Aylesbury, data from the second half of the nineteenth-century must be examined. The patterns which emerge from around the 1830s onwards are the most significant, therefore if the whole of the 1851 manuscript census for Buckinghamshire could be coded, along with the Census Enumerators' Books for

⁷¹ Stobart (2004).

⁷² Everitt (1979), 94.

subsequent decades in the nineteenth-century, a much fuller picture of the effects of industrialisation on the occupational structure of Aylesbury and similar towns would doubtless emerge. There was simply no radical industrial change in this county town in the century and a half under scrutiny – Aylesbury consistently stood as the administrative and professional service centre of the county, but aside from this role for the tertiary sector the rest of its economy was largely traditional and stagnant, until around the 1830s at least. From this point onwards was steady growth in the tertiary sector, but overall, on the basis of the arguments and figures presented in this analysis, there can be little doubt that Aylesbury was indeed ‘left behind’ for the vast majority of this period.

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