



# A Religious Census of the County of Berks in 1676.

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

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## THE DEANERY OF READING.

**T**HE manuscript in the Library at Lambeth Palace (Lambeth MS. 693, fol. 252) as described in the preceeding Article is entitled "An account of the number and proportions of Popish Recusants, Obstinate Separatists, and Conformist inhabitants of Berkshire, under the Jurisdiction immediate of the Bishop of Sarum. By Seth Ward, 1676."

As we have previously observed, this document, which is now printed for the first time, is most valuable as supplying a missing link in the ecclesiastical history of our diocese at a period when other sources of information are not forthcoming. It is also of high value from a statistical point of view as giving the population of the county by actual enumeration, and enabling us to see the great advance which has come to pass during the past two centuries in the number of inhabitants, not only in the principal towns but in many of the rural villages, particularly at the end of the shire. Reading—the most eminent of these towns—was known in the seventeenth century as "the largest and the most considerable town in the county," and as having maintained "upwards of seven score clothiers," yet it will be seen that the large parish of St. Mary's contained in 1676, only 1,000 inhabitants, and that of St. Lawrence had but 2,000. Unfortunately there is no return from St. Giles's, but we may approximately estimate the population of the whole borough at this time somewhere about 5,000. In 1801 the population of the three parishes—which by the bye are all described as *Rectories* in the return, was under 10,000, although it was considered a busy and thriving place. It was not however, a very "go-ahead" town, and if we may rely on the authority of a well-known writer in the

first decade of this century, its citizens were in no haste to grow rich by noisy and vulgar methods, like the busy hives in the north ; and a tall chimney shaft, not to say a railway station, would have been considered an abomination by its genteel inhabitants. There were the coaches which brought as many visitors as they cared to have, and no particular trouble was necessary to make the town more alluring than it was already, for as our author observes :—

“ An air of gentility is thrown over the place ; and there is an elegant sociability in the manners of the inhabitants, which is irresistibly attractive to strangers. Hence villas are constantly arising in its vicinity ; nor is this to be wondered at, as there is not a county town in the Kingdom that unites so many charms and advantages to persons of independent fortune and cultivated minds.”

Such an exceptional character we hope our county town may be slow to resign. What would the writer have thought of the Reading of to-day, which contains a population of 64,000 souls, and sends forth its productions to the farthest ends of the world ? Its little neighbour, Tylehurst, too has not lagged behind, and instead of being, as most people can remember, a pleasant country village, intersected by green hedgerows, and dotted with rustic cottages, is rapidly becoming a dreary region of bricks and mortar, the number of its inhabitants having increased from 120 in 1676, and 1058 in 1782, to 3184 in 1894, a greater population than was found in many important towns in the time of the Stuarts. In the reign of Charles the Second no provincial town in the kingdom contained 30,000 inhabitants ; and only four provincial towns contained so many as 10,000 inhabitants.

The royal borough of New Windsor conspicuous from its Castle having been the residence of the Sovereigns of England from the Norman Conquest to the present time, had in 1676 only 1025 inhabitants, against 3122 in 1801, and 8521 (within the borough) at the present day. Of the parishes in the Forest Division of the country—the several *fields* signifying a clearing in the forest, where the trees had been felled,—Binfield, Warfield and Winkfield (including Ascot) had together in 1676 a population of 1245, but now represents an aggregate of over 8000. The names too of Bradfield, Burghfield,, Inglefield and Shinfield, all represent clearings in the forest, by which they were once surrounded : and bear witness to the great amount of unfelled timber which still remained. Sunninghill again, has sprung up from 262 in 1676 and 700 in 1801 to 3929 in 1894. The population of Bray and Cookham, including Maidenhead, has increased from 1785 in 1676 to 16,743 at the present day.

It would be tedious to pursue these statistics further, as by the returns which afford information more complete and minute than can generally be obtained on such subjects, the great change in the character of this portion of the country can be readily seen. Great however as has been the change in the rural parishes in East Berks, those in South and North Berks have not made any striking advance, but have been far outstripped by many younger rivals.

With regard to the comparative strength of the religious sects into which the local community was divided, it will be seen that when this enumeration was made in 1676, there was only one Romanist family in the parish of St. Mary, Reading, and two members in the parish of St. Lawrence, with 140 Separatists, many of the latter being members of the Society of Friends, who were somewhat numerous in this town, and where the Monthly Meeting was frequently attended by the Founder of Pennsylvania—William Penn, when he resided at Ruscombe. It was at the latter place that the great champion of the Quaker faith breathed his last in the quaint old house opposite the church, but now destroyed. At Binfield there were 24 Romanists, several families of this faith, including the Dancastles, residing in this parish. Cookham had 16 Papists, and Inglefield the same number, the latter being principally represented by the Englefields. Shinfield returned 10 Recusants—the principal Romanist family here was that of the Garrards, a branch of the Lambourne house—all of whom were ardent Royalists. Shinfield had also 30 Nonconformists. At Upton there were 28 members of the proscribed faith, consisting chiefly of the Perkinsons and their household. At Warfield 13. The Dissenters from the Church outside the Quaker body appear to have been very few in number in this division of the county, and it is evident that the modern "Nonconformists" (a term with a distinct and definite meaning in the 17th century, but utterly obsolete and unmeaning at the present day), for the most part date from the "glacial period of the church," when the trumpet of Wesley was sounded so successfully throughout the land.

The following is the return from the Deanery of Reading as then constituted; and the subject will be concluded in the next article, with the Deaneries of Abingdon and Wallingford.

DEANERY OF READING.

Parishes.	Ministers.	Popish Recusants.	Separatists.	Inhabitants.
V. Aldermaston.....	Wm. Powell .....	00	00	0200
R. Barkham .....	Alex. Stoakes.....	00	00	0100
V. Beenham .....	Philip Goddard ...	07	00	0120
R. Binfield.....	Solom. Naish.....	24	03	0345
V. Bisham .....	Samuel Biscoe ...	00	03	0200
R. Bradfield .....	Jo. Tooker (Cur.)	08	09	0430
V. Bray .....	Ffran. Carswell ...	00	05	1098
R. Burghfield .....	Garnous Dancer	04	07	0400
R. Clewar .....	Jo. Poke [Pocock] (Cur) .....	00	02	0373
V. Cookham .....	Ffran. Crawley ...	16	30	0687
R. Ffinchamsteed .....	Thos. Bright .....	08	06	0250
R. Easthamsteed .....	Robt. Stubbes ...	00	03	0168
V. Hurley .....	Wat. Garnish, Nat. Hunt (Church Wards) .....	00	00	0424
R. Inglefield .....	Humf. Drake.....	16	02	0124
R. Padworth .....	Robt. Butterworth (Cur.).....	00	10	0124
R. Pangborne .....	Ambrose Stardly	01	05	0200
R. Purley .....	Tho. Blagrove ...	00	00	0080
R. Reading (St. Mary ...	Dr. William Lloyd }	one	40	1000
R. Reading (St. Giles) ...		—	—	—
R. Reading (St. Laurence)	John Brasier .....	02	100	2000
R. Remenham .....		—	—	—
V. Shinfield .....	Richard Pawley (Cur.) .....	10	30	1635
V. Shotsbrooke .....	Richard Clare ...	02	00	0075
R. Southam alias Sullam	Wm. Powell .....	01	00	0040
R. Sulhamsteed Abbas ...	James Ffayrer ...	01	04	0150
R. Sulhamsteed Banister	Ja. Ffayrer .....	01	02	0091
V. Stratforde Mortimer...	Jo. Haycocke.....	02	05	0450
V. Sunninghill .....	George Dawson...	00	00	0262
R. Tidmarsh .....	Phillip Goddard...	00	00	0048
R. Tylehurst .....	Simon Louth.....	01	02	0120
R. Ufton .....	Marmaduke Good	28	00	0126

DEANERY OF READING—*continued.*

Parishes.	Ministers.	Popish Recusants.	Separatists.	Inhabitants.
V. Waltham Abbas .....	Richard Cleare ...	01	01	0226
V. Waltham St. Laur'e....	Thomas Wilkinson	08	21	0273
R. Woolhampton .....	Stephen Rose.....	05	00	0122
V. Wargrave .....	John Brandon ...	02	03	0460
V. Warfield .....	Abram Renion	} 13 & 4 Quakers.	10	0650
V. Windsor Vetus .....			—	—
V. Windsor Nova .....	Alex. Reid.....	04	145	1025
V. Winkfield .....	Jerameel Tarrent	01	04	0250

It will be noticed that the parish now known as "White Waltham," was in 1676 known as "Waltham-Abbas," a name of some significance, the suffix being derived from the Abbots of Chertsey and Bisham having been impropiators of the great tithes of the parish, and the place thus acquired this appropriate name. What is the origin of the prefix of the modern name "White," it is difficult to say, and it would be well if the old termination could be restored.

The returns do not include the large parish of Sonning, which was annexed to the Deanery of Salisbury, and as the Dean had peculiar Jurisdiction in the parish it was probably the subject of a separate report, together with the parishes of Hurst, Ruscombe, and Sandhurst, which were dependent on Sonning as the mother church.

