

ART. XVII. – *Migration to 19th century Barrow-in-Furness: An examination of the Census Enumerators' Books 1841-1871.*

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RESEARCH concerned with the rapid population growth of 19th century Barrow-in-Furness has, until recently, been unable to make use of the census enumerators' handbooks, the one hundred year confidentiality rule preventing their consultation. Bainbridge's 1939 "population study",¹ the most recent published work concerned entirely with this expansion, was forced to rely on published census statistics. Similarly later research whether considering population migration as part of a comprehensive study of the towns' growth,² or within discussions of county population trends,³ has had to rely primarily upon the Registrar General's figures and published census returns. Such aggregate statistics inevitably provide only an approximation of movements undertaken; the census returns, whilst in the case of Barrow being consistent with actual growth, excluding all local migration. Accuracy of migration flows inferred from the Registrar General's figures have to date not been checked, and to do so from the enumerators' handbooks would be a massive task. This paper attempts to add to the findings of these earlier studies through an examination of the census enumerators' handbooks for 1841, '51, '61 and '71. The conclusions of earlier research are considered, the more detailed evidence from the handbooks in many cases providing further insights and enabling their refinement. Special attention is given to the changing relationship between the migrant's birthplace and occupation as Barrow expanded. The nature of the migration process and its effects upon town structure are also considered; and throughout, possible areas of further research considered, both with regard to the enumerators' handbooks and using other primary sources.

The sheer bulk of data available from the 1861 and 1871 enumerators' handbooks meant that sampling prior to any analysis was necessary, the population being 3,153 persons in 1861 and 18,245 by 1871. (The 1841 and 1851 populations of 152 and 448 respectively were considered small enough to include the entire population in the analysis.) Samples were therefore selected systematically recording the details of every fifth household for the 1861 and every tenth for the 1871 census. This produced a 20% sample for 1861 and a 10% sample for 1871 data. For each census enumeration the settlement's population was considered to be all those whose address was recorded by the enumerator as 'Barrow'. In 1841 and '51 this only included some of those living in the Dalton parish division of Hawcoat. Rapid expansion resulted in the 1861 census listing the town's population separately under the proposed ecclesiastical district of St. George, and by 1871 under the ecclesiastical districts of St. George and St. James; the districts corresponding to the address 'Barrow' for those census years. Use of a moving boundary enabled early local migration from villages such as Hindpool and Salhouse to be included in analysis of census enumerations, before their incorporation in Barrow.

With such large data sets the most feasible method for the statistical section of the analysis was by computer. Standardization of questions asked in the census enabled direct comparison between results for all the 1841 data which was less detailed. By using

a computer, premature reduction of the basic data sets was avoided, and thus it was possible to generate categories which illuminated rather than obscured migration trends. These analyses were complemented by further examination of the data without computational aid. Information obtained both from contemporary sources such as books and directories,⁴ and published research⁵ was incorporated, enabling a more detailed picture of migration and the associated population growth to be established.

Pre-Railway Barrow

One of the first directories to mention Barrow and its role as a port was Parson and White's, published in 1829.⁶ The then hamlet's population was too small to warrant separate recording, although a year later it was estimated at approximately 130 people.⁷ The directory lists fifteen of the resident men and their occupations, four of these being farmers, all others suggesting a very small rural community of a population in keeping with estimates of a year later. By the 1841 census enumeration the port function had expanded, there being three ore jetties compared to the one in 1829, although population had only risen to 152 people.⁸ This is not surprising because, as stated by Marshall, it was unreasonable to expect the mere exportation of iron-ore to produce a town or large village, especially when no ancillary industries had been established providing further employment.⁹

As far as can be deduced from the very basic birthplace classification used in the 1841 census very little long distance immigration had occurred.¹⁰ 92% of the population had been born in Lancashire and the remaining 8% elsewhere in England or Wales. The extent of shorter distance migration within the county is more open to speculation. A probable population increase of twenty-two persons between 1830 and 1841, along with 50% of those listed in Parson and White's directory of 1829 appearing in the census twelve years later and at least 25% having died, suggests a low level of population mobility.¹¹ What immigration there was, taking the village's employment structure into consideration (Table 1) was primarily to the farms if seeking employment. The only

TABLE 1. – Percentage of Barrow's economically active population by industrial group 1841-1871.

	1841	1851	1861	1871
Agriculture	54.1	9.9	5.1	0.8
Mines and Quarries	—	—	2.1	1.8
Building	2.4	7.6	18.8	10.3
Iron and Steel Manufacturing	—	—	12.0	18.6
Clothing Manufacturing	10.4	11.7	4.7	5.9
Other Manufacturing	6.3	12.9	16.2	11.2
Transport	—	5.8	15.4	7.1
Retailing	6.3	12.9	3.8	7.3
Industrial Services (including labourers)	—	25.7	11.1	25.9
Public and Professional Services	4.1	1.2	1.7	3.1
Domestic Service	16.7	12.3	9.0	8.0
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

N.B. Percentages may not add up to exactly 100 as they are only correct to one decimal place.

occupation recorded in the census relating to the port was that of the Customs Officer, Thomas Hodgson who was born in Lancashire; and with other village based employment provided through the port being part-time it is unlikely that this generated more than a small local population movement.¹² Probably those of Barrow's population born outside Lancashire had moved from Cumberland and Westmorland, there being little in the village to attract the longer distance migrant. Both of these counties were much closer than mainland Lancashire, and were experiencing heavy population losses throughout the 1831-41 decade. However, without a detailed analysis of other sources such as parish registers, it is impossible to be certain.

Commencement of construction of the first section of the Furness Railway joining Dalton, Kirby and Barrow must have resulted in considerable upheaval in 1845.¹³ A shortage of manpower meant that labourers on the railway were paid far higher wages than all the others, resulting in a movement from local farms and other employers of unskilled labour to work on the railway. However, it is impossible to prove this from census records as by 1851 this section of the track was completed and the workers had gone.¹⁴

Railway and Ironfield Expansion

In 1846 the population of Barrow was estimated to be about 300¹⁵ and the completion of the railway brought more people into the village, so that by 1851 there was a total of 448. These increasing numbers when compared to the pre-railway enumeration of 1841, as well as earlier estimates, led the compiler of an 1849 Directory to remark "the population of Barrow has greatly increased in the last twenty years".¹⁶ Undoubtedly the main cause of this growth was the increased trade brought by the railway (see Table 1). Compared with later decades there was no great influx of immigrants because, as pointed out by Marshall, there were at this time few industries to absorb them.¹⁷ Analysis of the enumerators' handbooks reveals a more detailed picture of Barrow's population. A steady influx of people over the 1841-51 period meant that by 1851 only 15.4% of the village's population were native born, 62.5% having been born locally (that is in either Cumberland, Westmorland, or Lancashire-over-Sands). Considerable local migration to Barrow had therefore already occurred.

The importance of local as opposed to national migration is immediately obvious from Fig. 1. Proportions of population born in Lancashire-over-Sands (54%), Cumberland (6.3%), and Westmorland (2.2%) show that the majority of migrants to Barrow, moved short distances, mainly within Furness. This is supported by Marshall's analysis of the 1851 enumerators' handbooks for Westmorland in which he found the overwhelming majority of the population either remained in their village of birth or moved only a few miles within the county.¹⁸

65% of females aged sixteen or over were recorded by the 1851 enumeration as "married" but only 33% were in some form of employment, the majority having come to the village to be with their husbands, and not to seek work for themselves. In contrast only 45% of males in this age group were married; the majority of single males still living in their parental home, having moved to the town as part of a family group.

By 1851 there had been a considerable expansion of the proportion and the number employed in manufacturing, transport building, and industrial services, the latter group being almost entirely labourers (see Table 1). Exact occupations of these labourers were

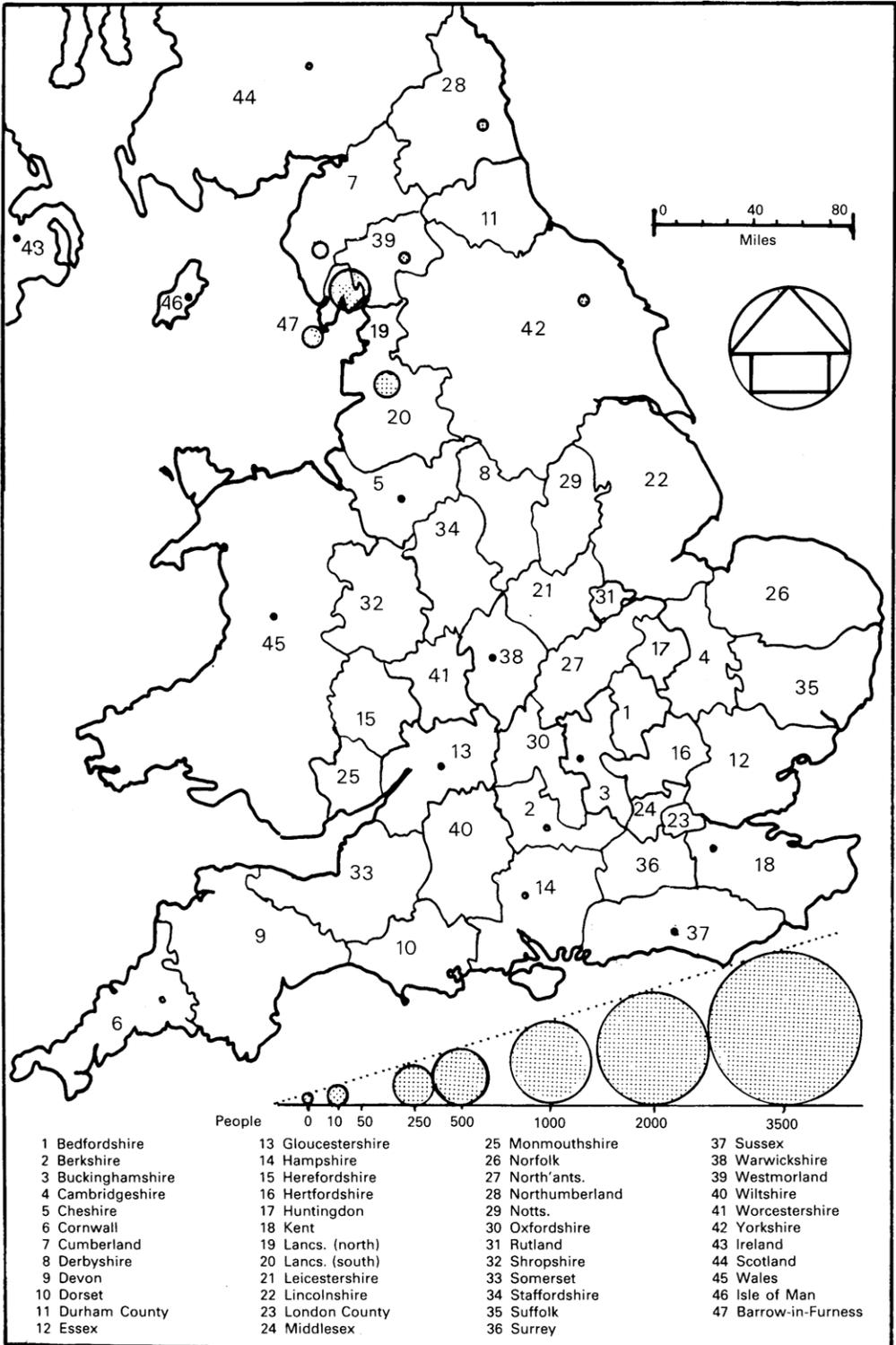


FIG. 1. - Birthplace of Barrow's Population 1851.

not recorded by the enumerators; but the rapid expansion of ore export¹⁹ from the port, and the presence of four resident shipping agents in the town, including Thomas Vivian who was also an iron-ore master²⁰ emphasizes the likelihood that many were employed as loader-carters for the ore. Many of these loader-carters had migrated from Dalton or the immediate vicinity of Barrow. Most professional and intermediate socio-economic groups came from further away in Lancashire or beyond. Migrants such as Thomas Dodson, an engineer born in Cheshire, provided skills and expertise not available locally.

Between 1851 and 1861 the village of Barrow grew steadily. Schneider, a local mine owner, estimated the population to be 900 in 1859; an expansion which was linked with the growth of the Furness haematite iron ore production, the bulk of which was shipped through the port.²¹ Further impetus both to town expansion and migration was gained from the establishment of three firms on the Furness Railway Company's newly planned Hindpool industrial estate. William Gradwell, a builder and general contractor, established his business in 1855 and three years later a hemp and wire works was founded. A brickworks producing the building materials for Schneider's blast furnaces was opened in 1858 and by 1859 three furnaces were on blast; the way was set for the rapid expansion of Barrow as an industrial town.

The Iron and Steel Period up to 1869

By 1861 the town's population had risen to 3,315, an increase attributed by Schneider to the "erection of the (Hindpool) Furnaces" and accompanied by a small building boom.²² The number of immigrants was far greater than in previous years. The population more than trebled in two years with an influx of over 2,000 people.

Earlier work shows that this growth was fuelled by migration of skilled labour from already established iron and steel industrial regions, especially Staffordshire.²³ This is supported by a detailed analysis of the 1861 enumerators' handbooks, (see Fig. 2). By 1861 the proportion of Barrow's population who had been born in the town had fallen to 13.9%; 48.1% were born locally. A more detailed breakdown reveals that nearly four fifths of these local migrants were born in Lancashire-over-Sands, mainly in Furness.²⁴ Some 38% of Barrow's population were born outside the "local" areas in 1861 compared with only 22% in 1851, illustrating the increasing importance of long distance migration to the town. Nearly half of these long distance migrants were born in Lancashire south of Morecambe Bay and are not included in the published census statistics as migrants. The first migrants from Staffordshire (42.9% of those employed in the iron and steel industry) had arrived (see Fig. 2); already they formed the largest single immigrant group outside the local region and mainland Lancashire. Increasing numbers of migrants born in Yorkshire, Scotland and the remainder of the country (compare Figs 1 and 2), illustrate the town's growing importance as a destination for long distance migration, especially for skilled and semi-skilled occupations.²⁵ Their employment, as in 1851, was primarily in occupations in which local people had little experience.

As in most Victorian towns the building industry was one of the largest employers (see Table 1). As found by Pollard²⁶ and Marshall²⁷ a major growth had occurred in this sector. The proportion of people recorded as employed in this sector almost trebled but the actual increase in numbers was far greater. In addition it is probable that a

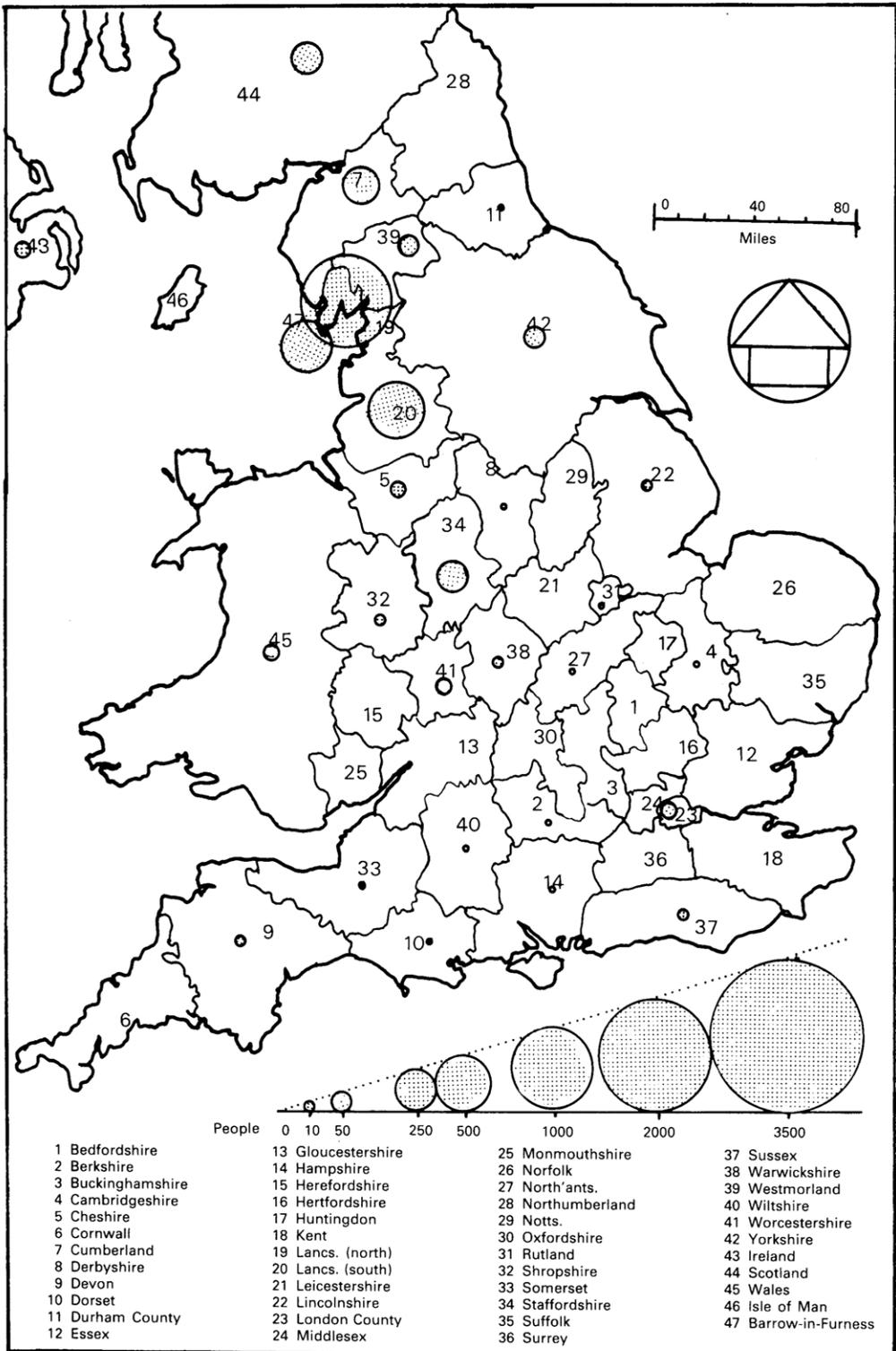


FIG. 2. - Birthplace of Barrow's Population 1861.

significant proportion of unskilled migrants from mainland Lancashire whose occupation was recorded simply as "labourer" were also employed in the building trade.

As in 1851 the vast majority (80%) of female migrants aged sixteen or over were married at the time of enumeration and living with their husbands. In contrast only 56% of males in this age group were married, a significant proportion living as lodgers with no family recorded in the enumerators' handbooks. The lack of accommodation in Barrow meant that many skilled workers tramped alone and did not bring their families to the town until suitable housing had been obtained. A consequence of this was that males began to outnumber females, especially in the 20 to 35 age group, who were the majority of newcomers.

Barrow continued to expand rapidly until 1867, the year in which the Devonshire and Buccleuch docks were opened.²⁸ An increasingly varied population over this period is suggested by the number and variety of non-conformist chapels constructed. Congregationalist, Wesleyan and Welsh chapels were opened in Hindpool in 1863 with Baptist and Primitive chapels opening in 1866.²⁹ General building works must have provided considerable employment. Twenty-two building firms were listed in the 1866 Mannex Directory. The construction of the docks, begun in 1863, brought between 1,500 and 2,000 navvies to the town,³⁰ whilst the Bessemer steel works in conjunction with the iron works, employed "nearly 3,000 hands".³¹ However, these developments afforded very little in the way of employment for other than working class males. It is almost certain that the imbalance between male and female migrants (as well as between classes) increased up to 1867, although a detailed study of chapel membership records and similar sources is needed before substantiation is possible. By 1861 many new skills were already established in Barrow. Industrial expansion especially in the building trades, demanded skilled and semi-skilled artisans as well as unskilled labourers. These classes increased in number but there was no comparable development of a middle class. Completion of the docks in 1867 resulted in a sudden drop in population as the navvies and other workers left the town. The population fell to about 16,000.³² Houses remained empty and for the next two years very little expansion occurred.

Further Expansion 1869-71

Recovery was heralded in late 1869 by the planning of a completely new shipyard on Old Barrow Island; and in the following year the Barrow Iron Shipbuilding Company was formed.³³ Considerable expansion of the iron and steelworks and the establishment of new industrial concerns during and after 1870 represented the start of a new era of immigration. By the 1871 census, population had expanded to 18,245, an almost six-fold increase since 1861. However, when interpreting this data one must realize that it represents net and not gross migration to the town; a significant proportion of those arriving between 1861 and 1867 having left by 1871.

By the 1870s an increasing proportion of Barrow's rising population was due to natural increase, 16.7% having been born in the town during the 1861-71 intercensal period. The proportion of migrants born locally had halved to 23.1% although actual numbers were still increasing (compare Figs 2 and 3), whilst the importance of long distance migration was growing rapidly. As in 1861, migrants from Staffordshire formed the largest single migrant group apart from Cumbria and mainland Lancashire, accounting

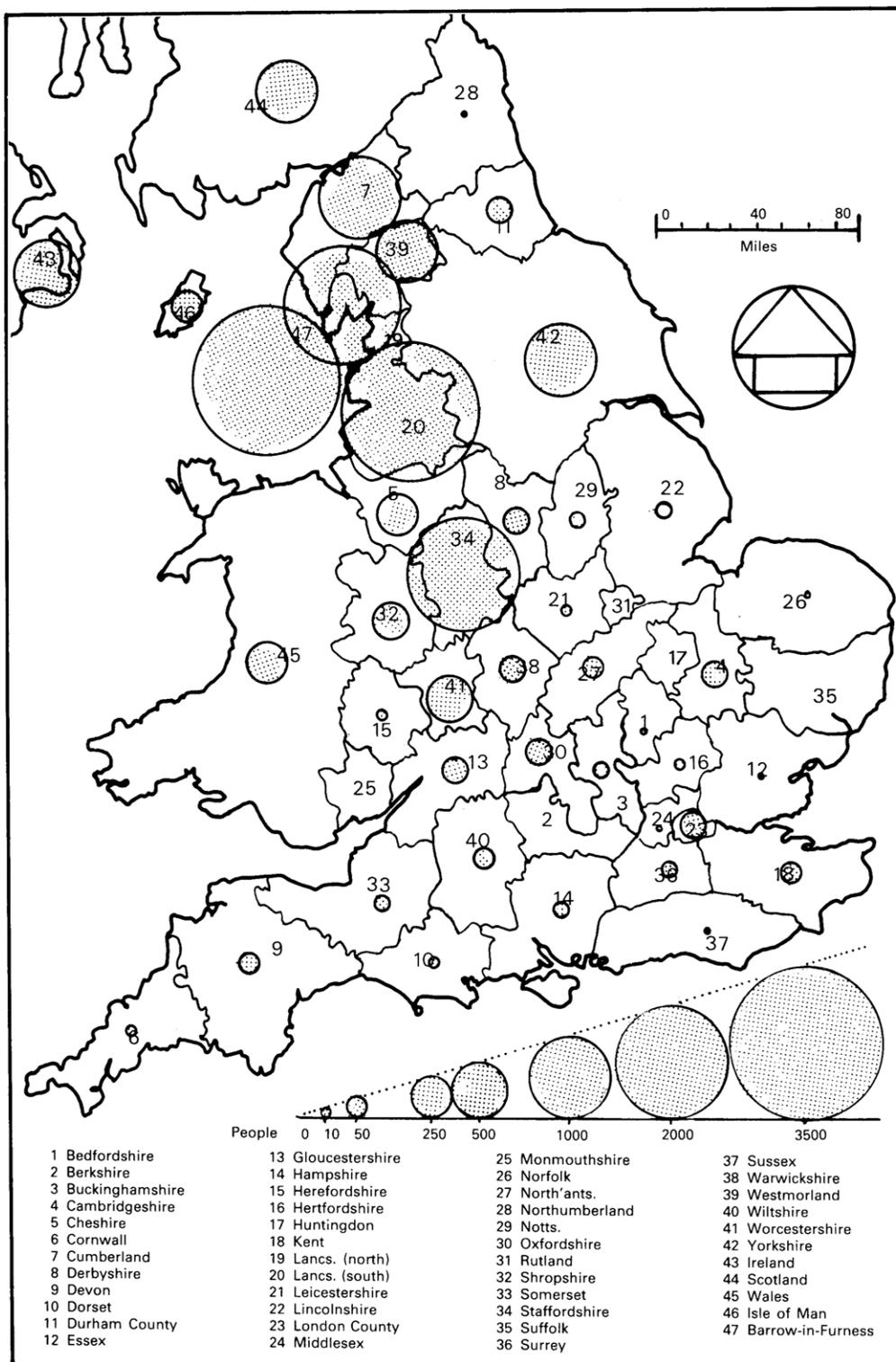


FIG. 3. - Birthplace of Barrow's Population 1871.

for 11.2% of Barrow's population. Increased numbers of migrants from all other areas of Britain (compare Figs 2 and 3) support Marshall's findings of an increasingly cosmopolitan population.³⁴ Expansion of the iron works and establishment of a steel works and other related industries, resulted in continuing expansion of mainly semi and unskilled employment in the manufacturing and industrial service sectors (see Table 1). Thus by 1871 importing of skills from already established areas of expertise was of less importance. The town became increasingly working class in character.

As suggested in Marshall's analysis of the 1875 Barrow Directory, by 1871, Cumbrian-born migrants could be found in all occupations in the town although they tended to predominate in skilled artisan, clerical and, to a lesser extent, in retailing jobs.³⁵ Employment of people from further afield was, as previously, mainly in occupations in which local people had little experience, although not to the same extent as in 1861. In the case of iron and steel manufacturing the increase in semi- and unskilled jobs was paralleled by a decline in the proportion of Staffordshire-born people employed by the industry. At the same time there was a substantial rise in the proportion of people born in mainland Lancashire who were employed in retailing (from 11.1% to 26.9%) and this suggests the growing attraction of Barrow as a town for new migrants.

Male migrants increasingly out-numbered female, there being very little opportunity for female employment in the town. As in previous years the vast majority (86%) of females aged sixteen or over were married, presumably having come to be with their husbands. In contrast half of the males in this age group were unmarried. The majority were living as lodgers and not with their parents.

A sizeable Irish-born population was resident by 1871 (4.2% of the town's population). Consideration of the birthplace of Irish heads of households in relation to that of their children suggest that this was due at least in part to the establishment of a steamer service between Barrow and Belfast in 1867. Although this had been in operation for only four years, (a far shorter period of time than equivalent services to Liverpool) approximately half of Barrow's Irish population appear to have entered using this route. However, this hypothesis is based upon a very small sample and requires more detailed testing.

Rapid population growth continued with the opening of the shipyards in 1872 and the construction of the Cavendish and Ramsden Docks between 1872 and 1879, both of which attracted large influxes of labour. Population rose to an estimated 35,000 by 1874.³⁶ By the 1881 census it had reached 47,429.

As Barrow grew, the relative importance of local as compared with distant migration decreased, although even before the coming of the Furness Railway some skills were imported from beyond Cumbria. In the early years of expansion, long distance migrants consisted mainly of skilled workers, often with their families, moving from areas where their skills were already established. The town was also attractive to semi- and unskilled migrants and the population became increasingly divided between the employers and workers. A middle class was almost entirely absent. By 1871 local migrants were to be found in most occupations although they tended to predominate in building, transport and to a lesser extent retailing work. Although male migrants increasingly out-numbered females in the period studied, the construction of a large flax and jute mill in 1871 presumably offered more opportunity for female employment in the future but at the

time of writing the enumerators' books for the 1881 census had not been released for study.

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