

## What Factors Affected Population Change in a West Devon Parish, 1841-1861?

“So the young people of the western parishes leave home, and year by year the population falls as it has done steadily for a hundred years. There is no town of any size to hold them; and no town could ever develop in such an unrewarding land ... this vast and lonely countryside ‘where all green things are crushed between the hammer of the west wind and the anvil of the yellow clay’ ”.

W. G. Hoskins, *Devon*, 1954<sup>1</sup>

Bratton Clovelly is part of that landscape that so inspired Hoskins, a sprawling rural parish of over 8,000 acres situated in the undulating hills of the Culm Measures just west of Dartmoor. It seems a timeless place, with steep banks from Saxon times<sup>2</sup> still defining the winding roads and the medieval church of St Mary’s still standing guard over the village. Yet, Bratton Clovelly became an early victim of Victorian rural depopulation, losing one-fifth of its population between 1841 and 1851, the beginning of a decline that continued through the century.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of this study is to investigate what caused population change in the parish from 1841 to 1861, the manner in which the decline occurred and its impacts.

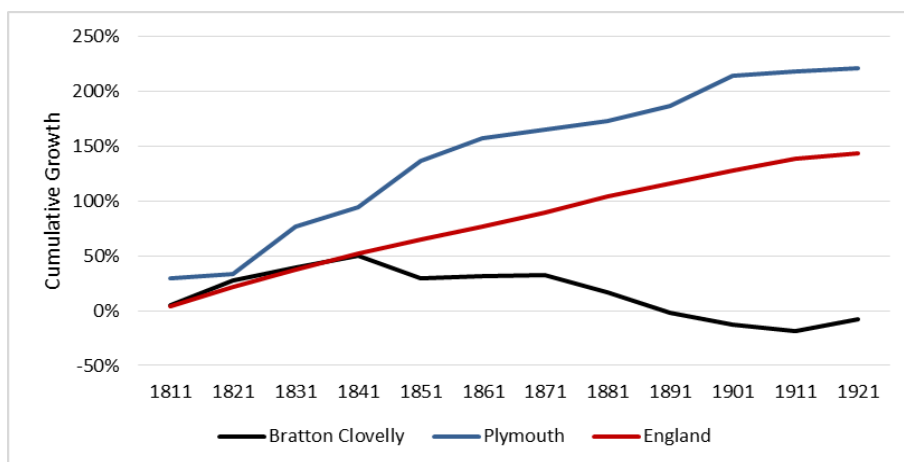
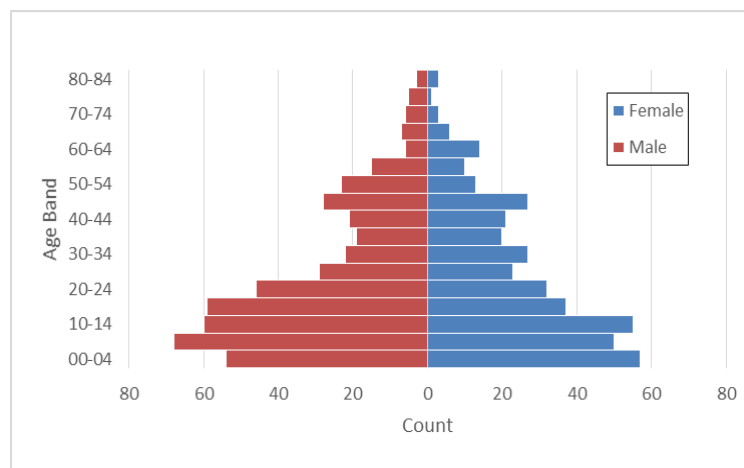


Figure 1. Bratton Clovelly’s Cumulative Population Change v National and Plymouth, [www.histpop.org](http://www.histpop.org)

For the half century before 1841, Bratton Clovelly was a place of growth. Like the nation as a whole, higher fertility and lower mortality had fuelled a sustained increase<sup>4</sup> and Bratton Clovelly's experience was almost precisely that of the national picture rising 50% between 1801 and 1841. Unsurprisingly, the population structure had a broad base, with half of the parish under age 20 by 1841. It was a large parish without constraint from any dominant landowner, and inhabited houses rose from 84 to 147 to accommodate the new families.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, almost 80% of the parish's workforce was employed in agriculture and the land itself did impose constraints. The fast-approaching decline of Bratton Clovelly, like other rural parishes unable to develop alternative industries, may have mostly been a response to having too many mouths to feed.



**Figure 2. Bratton Clovelly's Population Structure in 1841**

Following an explanation of sources and methods, the major components of population change from 1841 to 1861 are explored, and the parish's experience is compared with theory. While the general decline of rural parishes is well-trodden research ground,<sup>6</sup> the mechanisms by which Bratton Clovelly's decline occurred appear to be a local or perhaps regional story, particularly with regard to the pivotal role of farm servants in maintaining community stability and the impact of the regionally popular Bible Christian religion.

## Sources & Methods

For this study, migration is defined as any change of normal residence beyond the boundaries of the Bratton Clovelly parish but within the British Isles. In-migration refers to moves into and out-migration to moves out of the parish, while emigration refers to moves overseas.

The approach for the study was to link Bratton Clovelly residents in the Census Enumerator Books of 1841, 1851 and 1861,<sup>7</sup> a source that enabled consideration of all members of the community, albeit at ten-year intervals. Intercensal movement is not considered in this study, although such movement may have been significant.<sup>8</sup> Census limitations are well-documented<sup>9</sup> and the constraints of the 1841 census made it necessary to also use parish registers<sup>10</sup> to provide a sound basis for linkage to subsequent censuses. Baptism records were found for 79% of study group participants, most notably impacted by approximately 30-40% of the parish attending nonconformist chapels in 1851.<sup>11</sup> Parish church marriage records were supplemented by civil registrations and burial records were found for virtually all deaths in the study period. Other key sources included annual voter records,<sup>12</sup> the 1845 tithe records<sup>13</sup> and wills<sup>14</sup>. These latter sources only covered a portion of the community but provided valuable additional information on land ownership and tenancy, family members and socioeconomic status.

Sources for overseas emigrants required a different approach. The online availability of some overseas records<sup>15</sup> provides limited official sources, but finding the emigrants' destinations and unearthing the people behind the names is greatly aided by the work of family historians. The Internet is full of inaccuracies but there are also many well-sourced and unique stories. These sources have been corroborated with government records, albeit sometimes at the family rather than individual level.

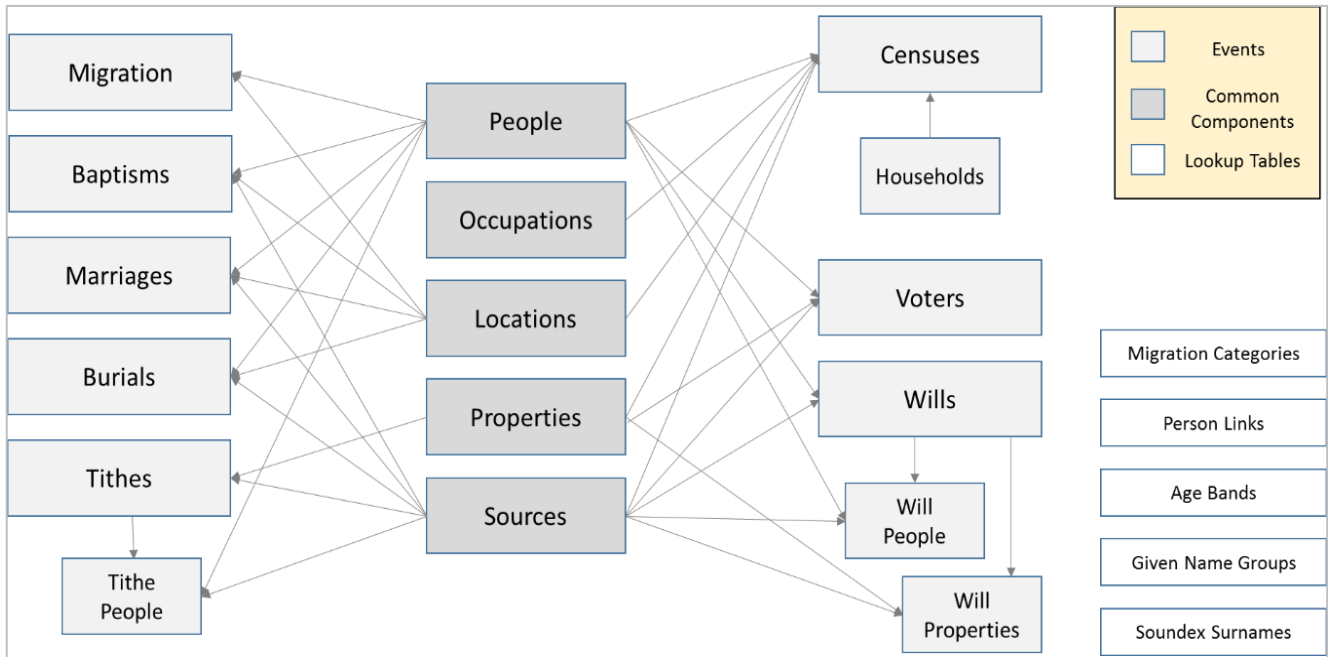
Complex heuristics were manually applied to the linkage of records, with consideration of name, age, birthplace, occupation, residence and family members. The aim was a partial reconstruction of the community through multiple record sources rather than family reconstitution, a method of limited value in studies of short duration and mobile populations.<sup>16</sup> People were included in the analysis if they resided in the parish between 1841 and 1861 and could be

Record Type	Links
Unique Individuals	1514
Censuses	2960
Baptisms	1194
Marriages	361
Burials	159
Tithe Properties	125
Tithe Owners & Tenants	201
Voters	707
Wills	35
Will Executors & Legatees	153

**Figure 3. Record Linkages for  
Bratton Clovelly Residents,  
1841-1861**

linked to a previous census (in-migrants) or subsequent census (out-migrants and those who stayed) with high confidence. Linkage was successful for 81% of residents in the 1841-1851 period and 85% in the 1851-1861 period, with a bias toward those more easily found where they moved to or from including families, married couples, in-migrants to the parish and those with less common given names or surnames. Young male out-migrants who had been resident in the parish without kin were the most problematic group, mostly those named William or John.

Retrospective checks were performed to evaluate linkage quality, with only two erroneous linkages detected in Soundex<sup>17</sup> comparisons of the surnames of all but married females. In addition, a *best* birth year and place for each individual had been established through evaluation of all sources which was then compared to all census entries. Age accuracy was lower than reported by Perkyns, 92% versus 96% in 1851,<sup>18</sup> however the study applies age bands which showed a maximum discrepancy of less than 2% for any band. Birthplace sensitivity was evaluated likewise, again with a maximum discrepancy of less than 2% for any distance band.



**Figure 4. Database for the Study of Population Change, 1841-1861**

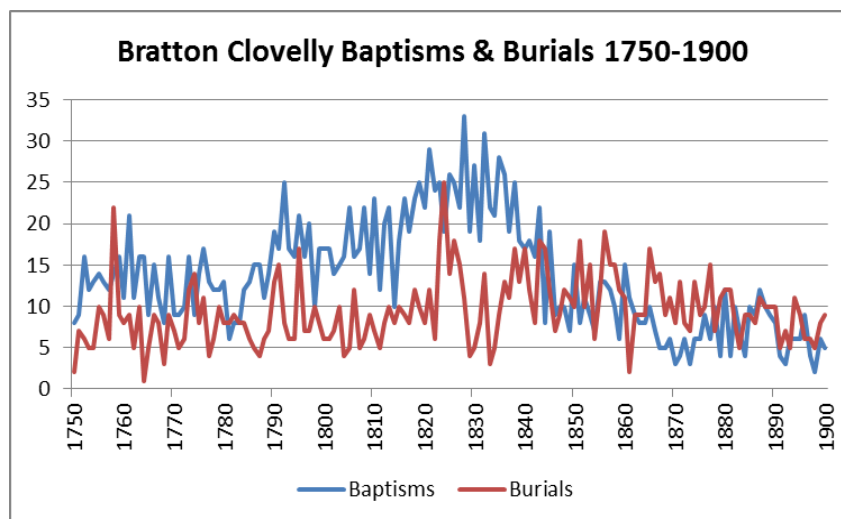
MS Excel was used for the initial linkage process, with the data subsequently stored in a MS Access database for query and analysis. The database is structured similarly to that described by Bradley for prosopographic projects,<sup>19</sup> linking event records to common integrating components of uniquely identified people, locations, properties, occupations and sources. Standardised names, age and distance bands, industries, occupational roles,<sup>20</sup> locations and properties aided integration and analysis.

The database can support queries from the perspective of events, such as all out-migrants between 1851 and 1861, and from the perspective of common components, such as all servants in the parish in 1851. A structured analysis, informed by Pooley,<sup>21</sup> was then undertaken to assemble a comparable set of information for each type of migrant, such as age and migration distance.

The major components of population change in the parish are now examined, covering births and deaths, migration within the British Isles including occupational and lifecycle perspectives, and overseas emigration.

## Births and Deaths

Bratton Clovelly was a long-lived place, part of a large contiguous rural area of Farr's 'Healthy Districts' with life expectancies not attained nationally for another fifty years.<sup>22</sup> With respect to infant mortality, Woods & Shelton report that 'there is also good reason to believe that in some rural parishes, in Devon for example, such low rates had existed for centuries.'<sup>23</sup> The parish registers support these observations where from 1555, the earliest date of Bratton Clovelly registers, to the latter 1700s, the ratio of baptisms and burials shows remarkable stability at about 1.3 baptisms per burial. As nonconformity was not a significant factor in the parish until at least 1815, the registers are likely to provide a fairly complete picture of the population in these earlier centuries. The registers also highlight a clear increase in the baptism to burial ratio from about 1780 to 1830, in line with the national trend.<sup>24</sup>



**Figure 5. Baptisms and Burials, St Mary's Parish Church, 1750-1900**

Baptism and burial ratios from the registers indicate that the growth spurt essentially corrected itself beginning about 1830. However, issues with reliance on the registers arise for the period of this study. Baptisms are understated, only reflecting 76% of study group births in the parish in 1841-1851 and 53% in 1851-1861, similar to parish church versus civil marriage registrations and likely due to nonconformity. On the other hand, burials are mostly complete

in the parish register despite nonconformity. The parish church had a large cemetery, local nonconformist burial grounds may not yet have been in common use, and as Williams explains for neighbouring Northlew, families were of mixed religious persuasions and 'like to be buried in the same ground'.<sup>25</sup> However, deaths are overstated mainly due to 17% of burials from 1841 to 1860 being non-residents.

For the study group, low mortality prevailed with an average age at death of 46.8 and a median age of 55.5, the national average being about 40. In addition, average marital age fell by two years to 26 for men and 24 for women between 1821 and 1861, similar to other studies in the region<sup>26</sup> and reflecting national trends.<sup>27</sup> The modal age for women dropped from 24 to 20 in the same timeframe. Another potential factor in birth rates, celibacy, showed no significant change at about 5% for men and women over age 29. These indicators point to a rate of natural increase at least stable and probably continuing to increase during the study period.

In addition, there were excess births over deaths in the study group, although 12% of those who left the parish are excluded from the calculation due to insufficient information. These excluded individuals either migrated, emigrated or died. Assuming the same death rate for these individuals as the average rate of 10% for those where death dates are known and including intercensal burials from the parish registers, the birth to death ratio is estimated at 1.4 for 1841-1851 and 1.5 for 1851-1861 for the whole study group. Government statistics, for Bratton Clovelly and the encompassing registration sub-district, tell a similar story.<sup>28</sup> In short, population in Bratton Clovelly was inversely related to natural increase during the study period and the population change must have been due to migration or emigration in excess of the 20% decline seen in the population figures.

## Internal Migration

Internal migration was a normal part of life for Bratton Clovelly residents. In 1841, only 468 of the residents, or 54%, had been born in the parish and by 1861, almost half of these 468 natives had moved elsewhere. However, they may not have thought of themselves as migrants, since 98% of the internal moves identified to date were within Devon or neighbouring Cornwall parishes, with only 16 people arriving from or departing to anywhere else in England during the study period. The continuous ebb and flow of population stands out in the Bratton Clovelly evidence and, as more migration studies are undertaken at the local level, this high volume of short-distance movement is increasingly being identified as the dominant migratory pattern for communities in this timeframe.<sup>29</sup>

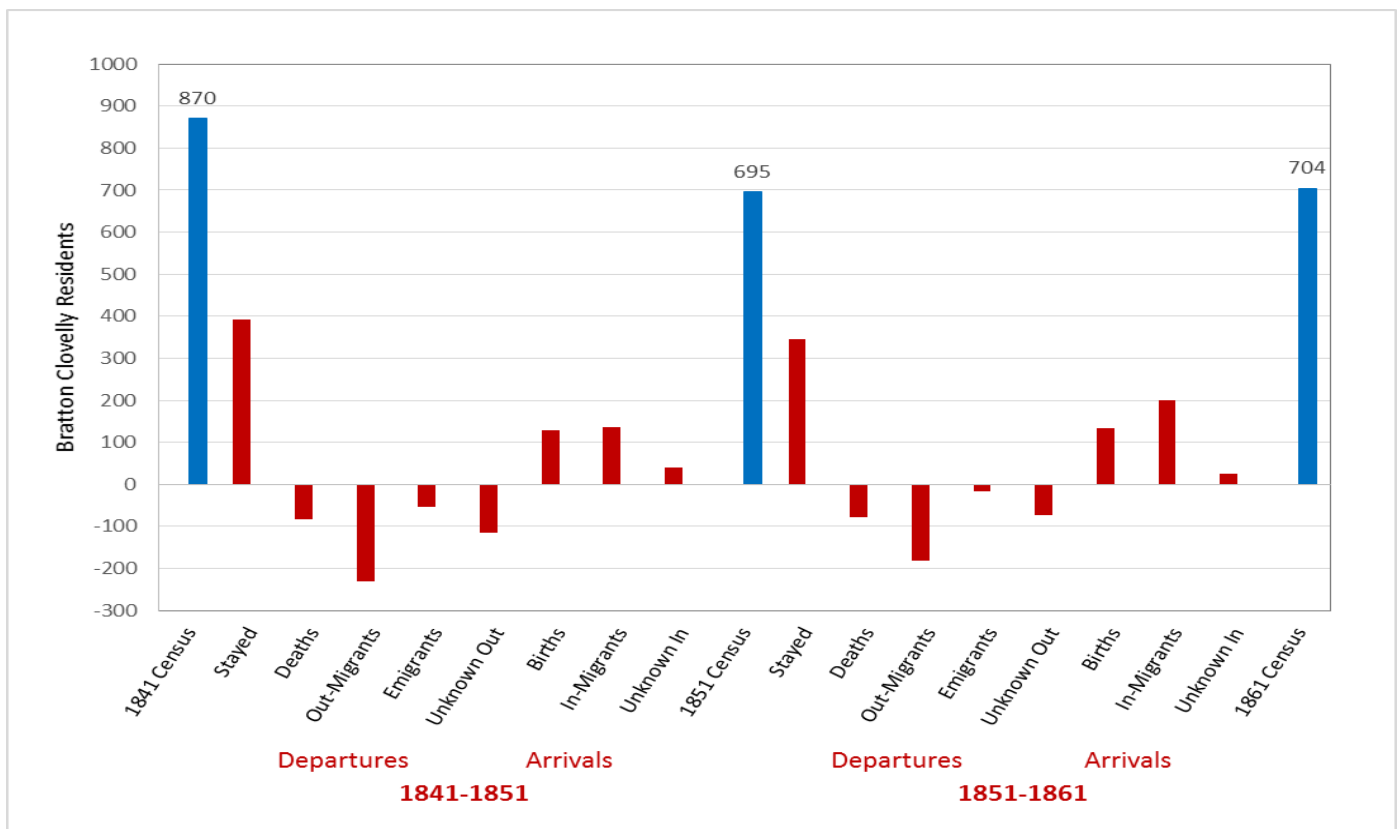


Figure 6. The Ebb and Flow of Bratton Clovelly's Population, 1841-1861

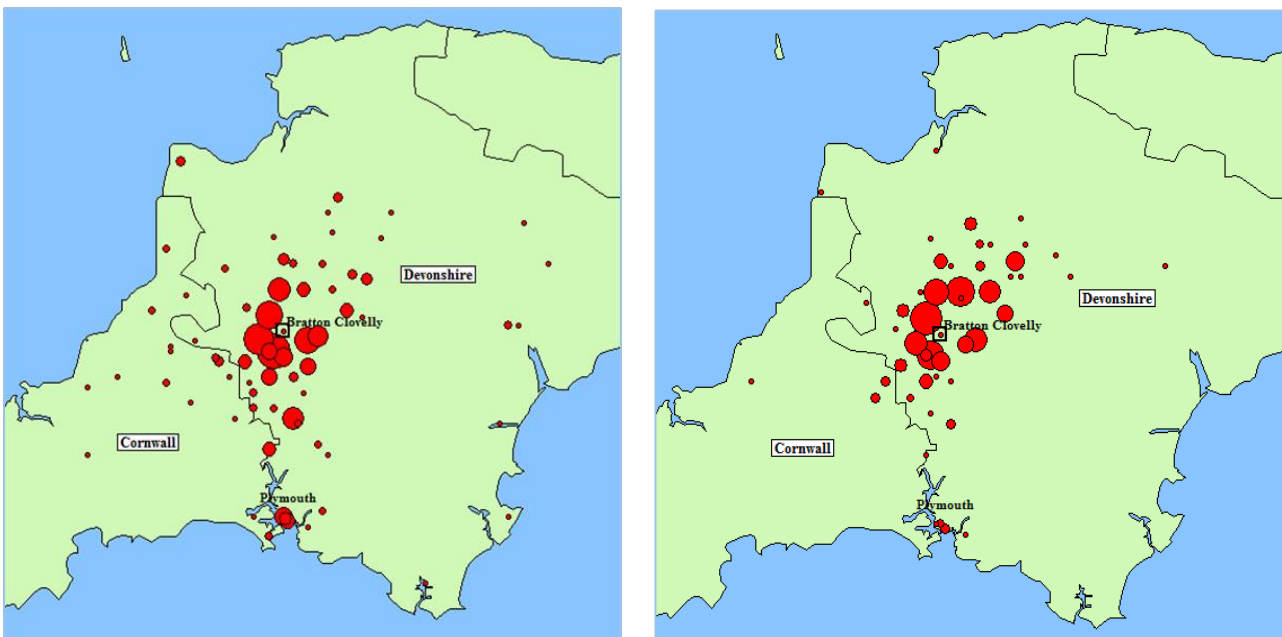


Between 1841 and 1851, the parish's population declined by 20% whereas it remained essentially stable from 1851 to 1861. Yet, there were 365 migrants in the period of decline and 382 in the stable period, about half of the total population in each period. Movement was continuous, but population change only occurred when in-migrants and out-migrants were out of balance. This happened between 1841 and 1851 when, of those whose origins and destinations can be determined, 77 more people left Bratton Clovelly for local destinations than came into the parish – accounting for 44% of the total decline.

		1841-1851			1851-1861		
		Stayed	Out	In	Stayed	Out	In
<b>Total</b>		391	230	135	345	182	200
<b>Sex</b>	Male	53%	52%	56%	54%	52%	52%
	Female	47%	48%	44%	46%	48%	48%
<b>Age</b>	0-9	28%	30%	17%	25%	24%	17%
	10-19	18%	30%	31%	17%	37%	29%
	20-29	12%	16%	19%	12%	21%	24%
	30-39	13%	10%	17%	12%	11%	11%
	40-49	16%	7%	5%	14%	3%	8%
	50-59	9%	7%	8%	13%	2%	7%
	>=60	4%	0%	2%	8%	2%	5%
<b>Birthplace (miles)</b>	Bratton Clovelly	64%	50%	16%	63%	63%	9%
	< 5	16%	30%	34%	17%	18%	40%
	>= 5 and < 10	12%	10%	22%	11%	10%	35%
	>= 10 and < 20	6%	6%	22%	8%	7%	10%
	>= 20	3%	3%	5%	2%	3%	7%
<b>Migration Distance (miles)</b>	< 5		53%	44%		40%	50%
	>= 5 and < 10		10%	28%		25%	30%
	>= 10 and < 20		26%	19%		13%	13%
	>= 20 and < 30		9%	1%		13%	6%
	>= 30		3%	7%		10%	2%
<b>Settlement Type</b>	Village or Hamlet		80%	90%		78%	93%
	Town		10%	7%		12%	4%
	Urban		10%	3%		10%	4%

Figure 7. Those who stayed, migrated out of or migrated into Bratton Clovelly, 1841-1861

The migrants were more likely to be unmarried and younger than the population who stayed in the parish, with most difference in the 10-29 age range. In addition, out-migrants were more likely to have been born outside of the parish than those who stayed, 44% versus 36%. Most moved for work or marriage, as other studies have found.<sup>30</sup> Of longer-term import, a net of 8% of the migrants moved to towns and urban areas, mostly Tavistock and Plymouth. Occupational choices featured local mining and quarrying which would only last into the next decade, the Plymouth Dockyards and domestic service. This small trickle amidst all the other movement contributed to the national figures on urbanisation and fundamental structural change for the country as a whole.



**Figure 8. Destinations of out-migrants (left) and origins of in-migrants (right), 1841-1861**

Figure 8 shows that out-migrants had a preference for locations to the west and southwest of Bratton Clovelly. This is similar to the orientation found by Williams in his 1950s field study of neighbouring Northlew, an orientation that he could not explain.<sup>31</sup> Northlew was slightly larger than Bratton Clovelly but had many similarities in terms of geography, agriculture, land

ownership and tenancy, socioeconomics, migration experience and population decline. There may have been historic land ownership or kinship ties that contributed to the location preferences of migrants, however both of these parishes are situated at the northeastern edge of the Tamar River catchment, the commercially important waterway that flows to Plymouth between Devon and Cornwall. Further research might be usefully applied to the migratory flows of other places on the boundaries of this catchment.<sup>32</sup>

### Occupational View

Bratton Clovelly in the study timeframe – its history, culture, social structure and economy – was about land. Almost 80% of its workforce was employed in agriculture, including farmers, farm labourers and farm servants.<sup>33</sup> The land was clay, best for cattle and sheep, with about half arable mostly for wheat and oats. Markets were local, the railway still decades away and roads sometimes impassable in the wet weather. Mechanisation would have been difficult in the challenging terrain. The farms were on average 155 acres each, some good and some poor, and, like Williams’ Northlew,<sup>34</sup> many of the farmers would start small and work their way up the ‘agricultural ladder’. Although there was movement amongst farms, the owner occupiers were still attentive in their wills to keeping properties intact whilst managing to provide for all of their children through arrangements such as tenancies-in-common.<sup>35</sup>

Acreage	No of Farms
> 500	2
400 - 499	1
300 - 399	2
200 - 299	11
100 - 199	18
50 - 99	7
10 - 49	6
1 - 9	6
Total	53

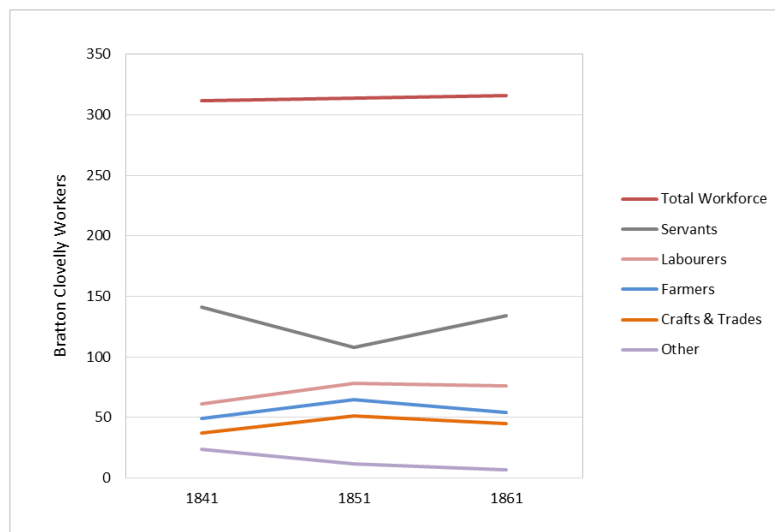
Figure 9. Farms of at least 1 acre

Acres Owned	Resident	Absent
> 1000		2
500 - 999	1	
400 - 499	1	
300 - 399	2	1
200 - 299	5	3
100 - 199	2	6
50 - 99	2	1
10 - 49	6	1
1 - 9	7	2
Total	19	14

Figure 10. Resident and Absent Landowners

However, eleven farms were advertised for sale in the study period, another four for long-term lease,<sup>36</sup> so opportunities were available. The farmers could come down the agricultural ladder as well, through age or misfortune. So it was not unusual to see an agricultural labourer become a farmer, or a farmer become an agricultural labourer, or for the children of these families to marry. Although homes and wages were modest,<sup>37</sup> both the farmers and farm labourers were at the heart of the local economy and neither contributed to the parish's decline. In fact, both groups showed a net increase through the study period.

It was somewhat different for the small number of craftsmen and tradesmen of the parish but to the same effect. Almost 20% chose towns and urban areas as the parish shrank. However, their migration rate was not high and these occupations often seemed transitional, with agricultural labourers becoming craftsmen and craftsmen becoming farmers or agricultural labourers. In the end, there were more craftsmen at the end of the study period than at the beginning but one of the two inns had not survived.



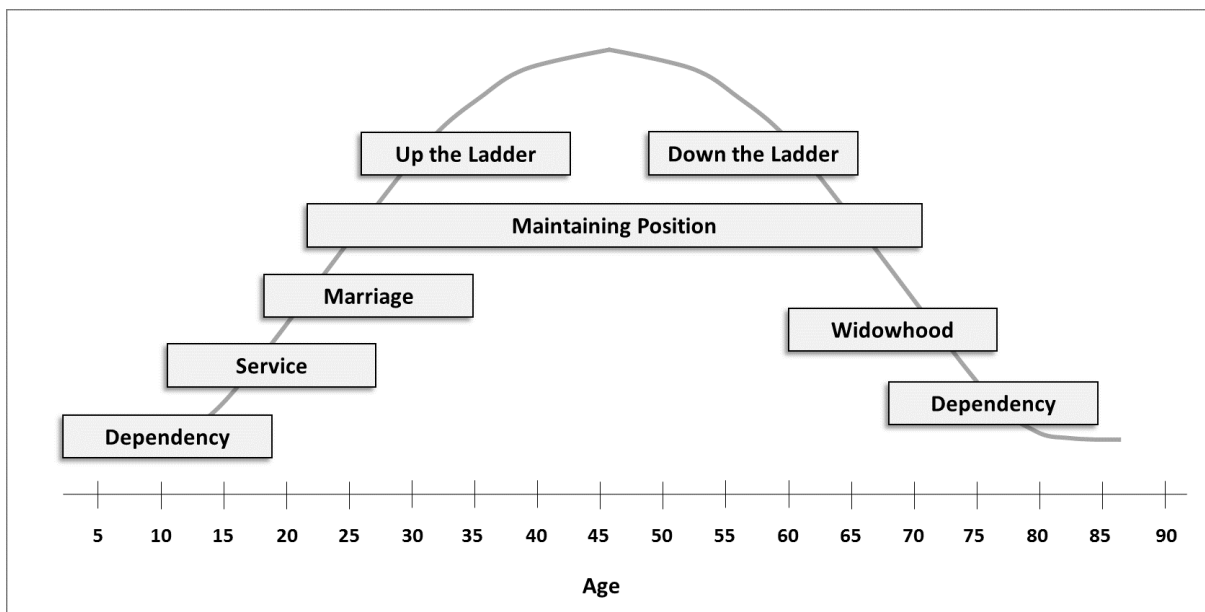
**Figure 11. Total Workforce and Occupational Groups, 1841-1861**

Overall, the surprising impact of the population decline on the workforce as a whole was that there was *no* change. The young servants, about 45% of total workers, absorbed the change with work continuing as usual for the adults. Servants dominate the overall statistics for

internal migration. Where opportunities existed, they could take servant work in the parish or join the adult workforce. Where opportunities did not exist, they moved on, to new locations and perhaps new types of work. The change in the servant workforce was sharp between 1841 and 1851, but after the more stable decade following, even the servant workforce was little different in absolute terms. As a smaller parish, there was a higher percentage of workers, 45% in 1861 versus 36% in 1841. There were fewer male servants, female domestic servants had replaced female farm servants, and female workers had increased from 18% to 25% of the total workforce. Otherwise, substantive change is not apparent.

#### Lifecycle View

Accepting that individual migration decisions may have been complex, there are unifying themes at various points in the migrants' lifecycles when considered collectively. Realistically, the age boundaries when each broad motive dominates may vary considerably between individuals but a simple model can reflect much of the experience.



**Figure 12. Lifecycle Model of Bratton Clovelly Migration, 1841-1861**

Dependent children under 20 moving with their parents comprised a substantial proportion of migrants throughout the study period, 25% of those moving into the parish and 15% of those moving out. As 28% of the total parish were dependent children, they may have been a constraining factor in local out-migration. However, given the large families that moved overseas in the 1841-1851 period, a much higher proportion of 38% is found amongst this group. Dependent children may have actually been a motivator for the early emigrants.

Those working as servants account for the largest amount of movement in the parish, with 28% of total migrants (less excluded individuals) either coming to the parish to work as a servant or leaving for a servant role at their destination. Most were male farm servants aged between 10 and 24, with the children of agricultural labourers entering service on average earlier and in higher proportions than those of farmers and craftsmen. During the study period, the age of female workers joining the workforce increased, age 15-19 becoming the norm, simultaneously with an almost complete transition from agricultural to domestic service.

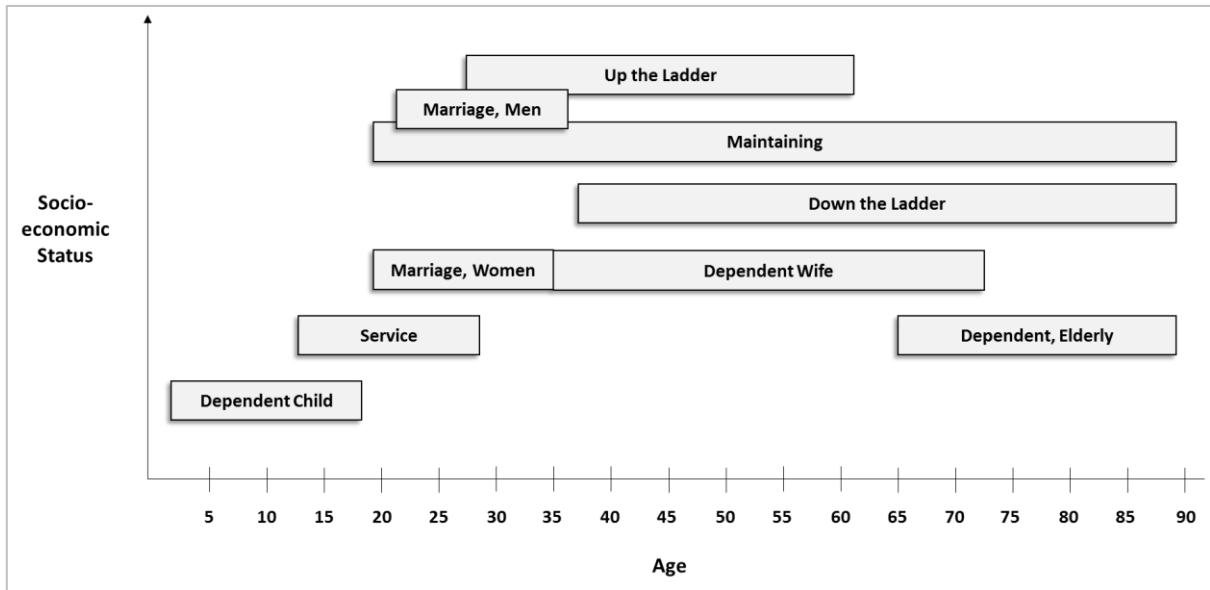
Marriage was the next key transition, with at least 15% of migrants moving within the decade of marriage. For men, the figure mainly includes moves from farm servant to agricultural labourer necessitated by marriage rather than moves with a more substantial change in job type. For women, the moves reflect establishing co-residence, for which brides moved about twice as often as grooms. Subsequent to the decade of marriage, the dependent moves of wives accounted for about 10% of overall moves.

For adult workers, many work-related moves were between the same types of jobs at origin and destination, such as agricultural labourers moving between farms or craftsmen between villages. This type of move accounts for just over 10% of all moves, while those moving to

more favourable positions account for another 10%. More favourable positions are exemplified by moves to larger farms or better wages, craftsmen moving from journeyman to master, agricultural labourers or craftsmen becoming farmers, house servants becoming lady's maids, and tenant farmer emigrants becoming land owners overseas. This figure is probably understated though since neither the quality of the farms, nor the size of farms where migrants came from or went to, has been considered. A few moves to less favourable positions were also detected, for example where a farmer downsized or became an agricultural labourer in later life.

A small group of moves was due to changes in family circumstance, most associated with widowhood. A few moves were also related to pauperism, although this category needs further investigation since a preliminary review of surviving out-relief rolls indicates that the census records may not reflect paupers still working.<sup>38</sup>

In hindsight, all of the components of the basic model proposed for migration have socioeconomic aspects albeit alongside non-economic drivers. With minor modification, particularly considering the status of females distinct from males, the model can be adapted to reflect the socioeconomic transitions of the community as a whole rather than just the migrants. It is unsurprising that the many migrants are, at an abstracted level, just a reflection of their community. These lifecycle findings are broadly consistent with those derived by Pooley from family histories across Britain.<sup>39</sup>



**Figure 13. Bratton Clovelly Socioeconomic Model derived from Migration Lifecycle Model, 1841-1861**

## Emigration

Through the study period, 70 Bratton Clovelly residents from the 1841 and 1851 censuses chose to move overseas. There was no corresponding counterflow, meaning that these emigrants accounted for 40% of the parish's population decline. Parish officials at the time attributed the parish's steep drop in population to these emigrants, with no mention of the less visible loss from local migration.<sup>40</sup>

The emigrants included an almost equal number of males and females, a slightly higher female to male ratio than the general Bratton Clovelly population. Their occupational distribution reflected the home population, and most of the farmers had been tenant farmers in England. However, the emigrants differed from the home population in significant ways. They included a disproportionately high number of 20-29 year olds and married couples, reflecting the many young families who emigrated. Also, 60% of the emigrants were not native to Bratton Clovelly, reflecting a relatively mobile group. Although religion is only known for those who settled in Canada, it seems likely that there was a particularly high number of



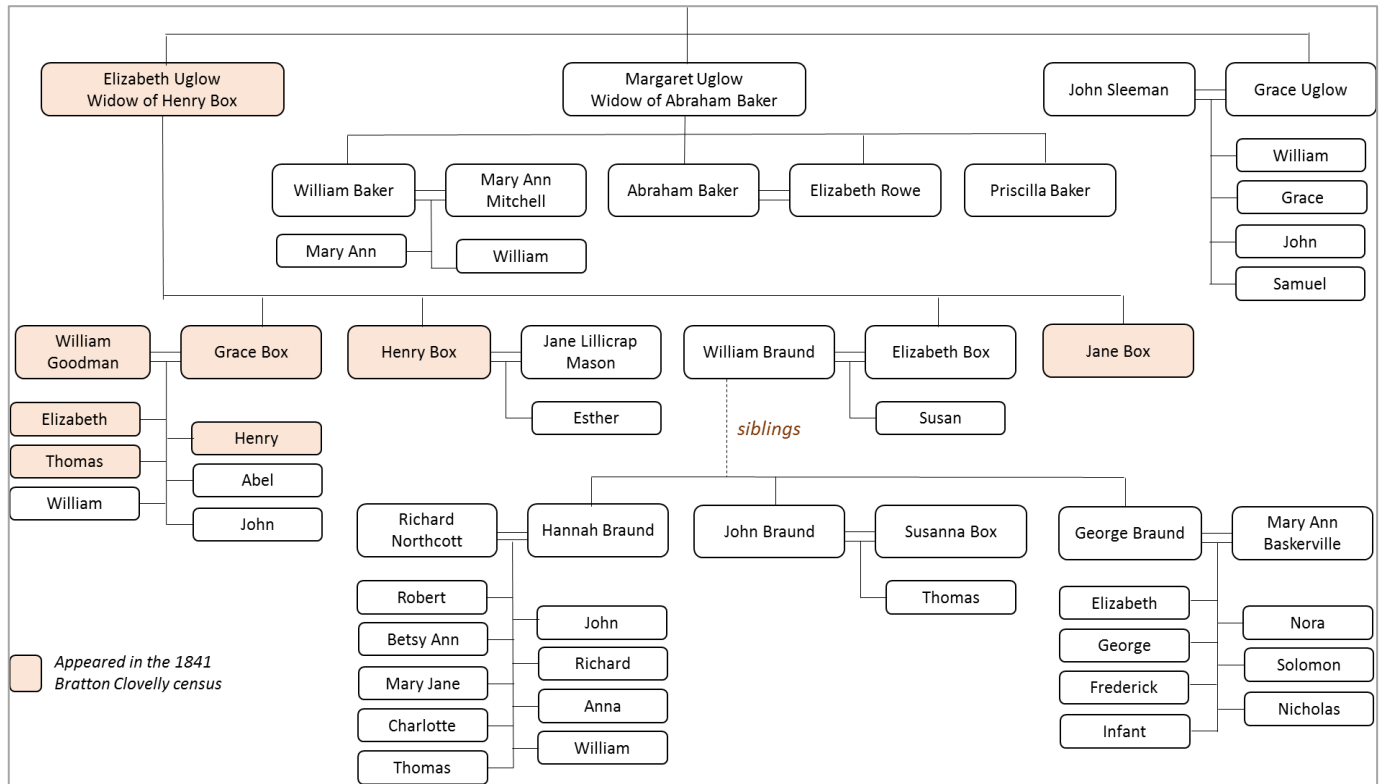
Bible Christians among the emigrants, a Methodist-like denomination based in nearby Shebbear, Devon with two chapels already in Bratton Clovelly. Even where religion is not known, the emigrants overwhelmingly chose Ontario as their destination, the overseas heartland of Bible Christian mission work, and most settlers in the USA chose Ohio or Wisconsin, the two places where the Bible Christian Canadian Conference had their most active missions in the States. Australia would not become a major destination until the 1860s.

<b>Total Emigrants</b>		70	
<b>Sex</b>	Male	36	51%
	Female	34	49%
<b>Age</b>	0-9	15	21%
	10-19	15	21%
	20-29	23	33%
	30-39	9	13%
	40-49	2	3%
	50-59	5	7%
	60-69	1	1%
<b>Marital Status</b>	Unmarried	37	53%
	Married	32	46%
	Widowed	1	1%
<b>Birthplace (miles)</b>	Bratton Clovelly	28	40%
	< 5	10	14%
	>= 5 and < 10	11	16%
	>= 10 and < 20	18	26%
	Other	3	4%
<b>Occupation in England</b>	Farmer	6	9%
	Ag Labourer	7	10%
	Farm Servant	9	13%
	Other Servant	1	1%
	Crafts	4	6%
	Miller	1	1%
	Schoolmistress	1	1%
None Specified	41	59%	
<b>Travelled With</b>	Lone Traveller	8	11%
	Parent	28	40%
	Spouse	9	13%
	Spouse & Children	22	31%
	Other Kin	3	4%
<b>Destination</b>	Canada	51	73%
	USA	15	21%
	Australia	4	6%
<b>Religion</b>	Church of England	16	23%
	Bible Christian	28	40%
	Unknown	26	37%

**Figure 14. Bratton Clovelly Emigrants, 1841-1861**

The statistics provide a basis for comparing emigration experiences, but the emigrants' individual stories aid in considering motives. In 1839, Henry Box died leaving £300 in effects to his wife and two sons, along with the remainder of what was probably a 14-year tenancy on the 228-acre East Banbury farm. He also set aside £40 to each of his three daughters. He and his wife Elizabeth were recent in-migrants to the parish likely from Cornwall, and Henry only briefly appeared in the 1837 Voters' List for the parish before his death. East Banbury was a desirable farm, about half arable and half pasture, attracting an assessment of £10 in the 1845 Tithes and owned by the largest landowner in the parish. Following Henry's decease,

Elizabeth took charge of the farm, appearing as a farmer and head of an 11-member household in the 1841 census including her children, son-in-law, grandchildren and farm servants. In 1849, Elizabeth along with over fifty kin, left England to settle in Racine, Wisconsin, USA. She and her relatives who had been residing in Bratton Clovelly in 1841 accounted for over 10% of the parish's emigrants during the study period.



**Figure 15. Elizabeth Box (nee Uglow) and her kinship network of fellow emigrants, primarily from the Box Family Tree, <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/>**

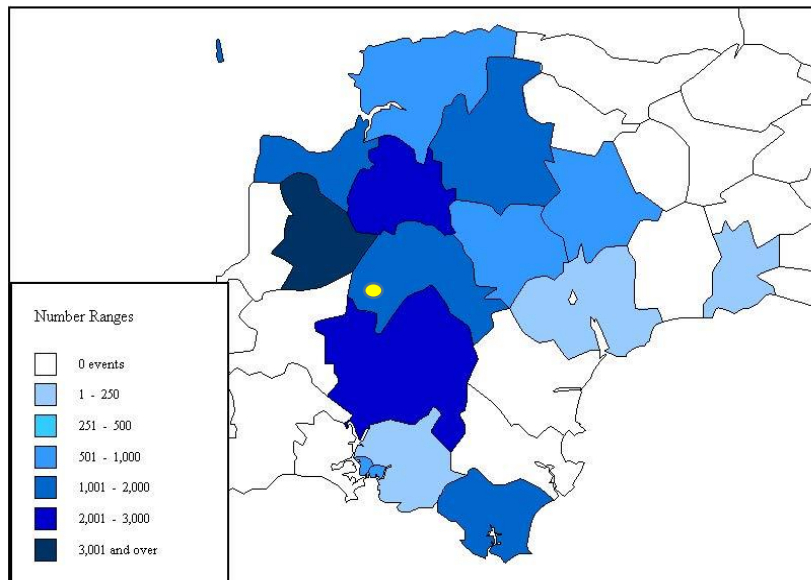
Why Elizabeth's family left and why they chose Racine can only be surmised. Her farm tenure was probably nearing an end but many tenant farmers were long-term and renewal was probably possible. Labour may have been in short supply due to high levels of emigration in the region,<sup>41</sup> but Elizabeth's large kin network probably buffered her from such shortages. However, she and her children had money to buy land, which they did soon after arrival, like 75% of Bratton Clovelly emigrants. The States were the most popular destination for English emigrants at the time but no one else from Bratton Clovelly had chosen Wisconsin. Although

indications are that Elizabeth and her immediate family were Church of England members, her kin may have been Bible Christian and she would have undoubtedly known of the Bible Christian missionary work in Wisconsin<sup>42</sup>. Newspapers also disseminated emigrant stories and correspondence along with adverts for passage.

Whatever the reasons, the decision to emigrate was a major one. The passage was about six weeks and dangerous, with two of Elizabeth's youngest kin dying at sea. The Wisconsin Territory had only been opened to settlers little more than a decade prior following the Black Hawk War, and statehood was only granted the year before her arrival. Pioneers were faced with winter storms, prairie fires, displaced lawless Indians, mosquito swarms and wolves. They had to build homes before the snows set in and quickly clear sufficient land to simply meet their own needs, with the nearest neighbours perhaps miles away and up to a 90-mile trek to the mill.<sup>43</sup>

The experience of Elizabeth and her family was not entirely unique. Thomas Allin, his wife Mary Brimacombe and a large kin group emigrated in 1842 to Canada West, later to become Ontario. Thomas was a tenant farmer of Northcombe and Broxcombe farms, the largest in Bratton Clovelly but home to the moorlands and its vestiges of ancient common rights in the northern part of the parish.<sup>44</sup> He had just finished a difficult court case with his new landowner who Thomas claimed was sabotaging his improvement work so that the property could be let in lots.<sup>45</sup> Thomas and his relatives, a Bible Christian family, included over 20% of Bratton Clovelly's emigrants in the study period. Most of the remaining emigrants from the parish also travelled in family groups, recognising that the low number of those who travelled alone could be significantly understated due to the difficulty of locating them in the many possible destinations. Few identifies a similar pattern of movement in her case study

examination of several North Devon parishes including Bucks Mills, a parish dominated by the surname Braund like Elizabeth Box's in-laws, where 'emigration was almost all conducted as extended family groups and prompted by affiliation to the Bible Christian Church.'<sup>46</sup>



**Figure 16. Bible Christian Chapel and Sunday School Attendances in Devon 30 March 1851, (Bratton Clovelly shown in yellow), from J Few, *Food, Fish, Faith and Family*, p. 75**

The migration of kinship groups exemplified by the Box and Allin families seems to be of a somewhat different nature than chain migration where family groups follow those who have previously settled.<sup>47</sup> With the Bratton Clovelly networks, it seems that each conjugal family made an independent decision, some electing to remain in England, but that the decisions of all or most of the network were taken almost simultaneously followed by mass migration together or as soon as circumstances permitted. Baine's information flows<sup>48</sup> were undoubtedly critical to the decision-making and choice of destinations, and perhaps *viral* might be an apt term for the rapidity of the process, a term fittingly popularised by the Information Age.

Some emigrants had quite different experiences, from Thomas Woolridge and his sisters whose chain migration to Ohio took place over more than a decade to William Axworthy Wimpey, illegitimate son of the deceased lord of Bratton Manor and one of the earlier Bratton Clovelly residents to choose Australia for his future life. All of the adult emigrants had made complex, life-changing decisions and they did not return to England.

### Migration Theories

Ravenstein's well-studied 'laws of migration'<sup>49</sup> provide an opportunity to consider Bratton Clovelly's migration experience in light of theory. The study supports Ravenstein's law that most migrants only travel a short distance. In fact, there were almost no long distance internal migrants in Bratton Clovelly. The study also found that internal migratory currents have counter-currents, seen in the ebbs and flows of Figure 6, however there is no trace of even Ravenstein's 'feeble' counter-current for emigrants. In addition, the study found that most moves were economic. Virtually all moves appeared to have socioeconomic aspects, mostly work and marriage, however Ravenstein's view that the main economic reason was the attraction of people to economic centres was not a key driver in the Bratton Clovelly evidence. A net of over 90% of the parish's migrants moved to other villages or hamlets.

The study provides no evidence that migration proceeded in steps. Local movement appears to have been free-flowing within a small radius and Bratton Clovelly migrants either remained local or left for overseas. There is also nothing in the study evidence to support the notion that females were more migratory than males. Male and female internal migrant ratios reflect the ratios of the general population, with more men in the parish due to the agricultural opportunities. They went overseas in equal numbers. Sex appears to be unrelated to propensity to migrate. In the study, two-thirds of migrants travelled with parents, spouses

and children or other kin, contradicting Ravenstein's law that families rarely migrate. In addition, Ravenstein stated that most migrants were adults whereas most Bratton Clovelly migrants were dependent children or young servants, many of whom may not have made independent decisions. Ravenstein also commented on the greater draw of the United States than Canada due to geographic resources, but three-quarters of parish emigrants went to Canada.

Undoubtedly, the timeframe of the study just after the rapid population increase of the early 1800s differed from Ravenstein's context of 1871 to 1881. However, his underlying themes of 'woman [as] a greater migrant than men' and 'our great towns and centres of industry [being] the goal to which the migrants from the rural districts most frequently wend their steps' are not borne out by the evidence.<sup>50</sup>

Other less encompassing theories are supported by the study evidence, for example the gravity model<sup>51</sup> applied to internal migration although the orientation of local movement remains unexplained. Also, Baine's information flows<sup>52</sup> and chain migration theory<sup>53</sup> have applicability, but more understanding of emigrant kinship networks and the impact of religion is needed.

### Summary and Further Research

Bratton Clovelly's population declined by 20% between 1841 and 1851 because more people moved out of the parish than moved into it. Most of the net decline can be attributed to short-distance internal migration and another 40% to emigration unanswered by an overseas counterflow. The explanation for the remainder of the decline, including the absorption of almost 50 excess births over deaths, lies with those residents whose origins or destinations could not be determined in the study. Within this group, departures exceeded arrivals by over

70 people. The departures may have been deaths, internal migrants or emigrants, but the net difference accounts for the remainder of the population decline.

The main reason so many people left the parish was probably as a response to the 50% increase in population between 1801 and 1841. The farms continued intact and were able to sustain the labour force, but the land and transport systems constrained the parish's ability to respond to a large population increase. Simultaneously, foreign shores made more familiar through early Bible Christian emigrants and missions provided the chance for land ownership and an independent future for families and kin in like-minded communities, while Devon towns and cities attracted others through better wages and varied employment options.

The young people of the parish absorbed the change, through the institution of service and the law of supply and demand. The balance of servant in- and out-migrants could flex in response to economic conditions, keeping the adult workforce remarkably stable and placing the youth in the types of jobs and locations where labour was needed. They did not have to travel far to achieve the structural change needed by the parish, quickly reducing the parish's over-sized base of children. It was a mechanism for maintaining equilibrium in the face of change, helping to preserve the seemingly timeless place of today.

The study prompts further investigation of a variety of topics. Much work remains on the contribution of farm service to the community's economy and stability, as well as whether or not the eventual demise of this type of service destabilised the adult workforce. The importance of both resident and non-resident kin in Bratton Clovelly needs more detailed investigation, considering the kinship networks of the parish's emigrants. Existing work on kinship patterns in the region,<sup>54</sup> at home and with regard to migration, provides a strong foundation for better understanding. Many questions remain on the impact of Bible

Christianity on the region, with initiatives such as the North Devon Exodus Database,<sup>55</sup> LeeTooze's research into Canadian Bible Christian emigrants,<sup>56</sup> Few's research on the impact of Bible Christianity to North Devon communities<sup>57</sup> and the Methodist My Bible Christian Ancestors initiative<sup>58</sup> promising ample opportunity for future collaboration. The sources and techniques of Methodist Prosopography described by Field<sup>59</sup> are promising.

In addition, much research remains on Bratton Clovelly's movement, not least intercensal migration. The stayers and their persistence also await investigation, including movement within the parish. The study needs extension in time, with population decline continuing for the remainder of the century and the 1860s bringing a new wave of emigration especially to the South Pacific. Many other types of sources are available to enrich the picture, such as Poor Law records. The database is also extensible backward in time, with the question unanswered as to how long high levels of local movement had been an integral part of the parish's experience. As the timeframe of the study broadens, lifecycle reconstruction becomes possible along the quest for 'total history',<sup>60</sup> built on a prosopographic foundation where the evidence of individuals in their local settings can be linked to commonalities that may inform research more broadly.



## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup>W. G. Hoskins, *Devon* (Phillimore, 2003), p. 311, first published in 1954 by Collins.
- <sup>2</sup>'Time Signs Episode 3: The Turning Wheel' (1989) [consulted at Channel 4 on Demand, <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/timesigns/on-demand/8408-003> (16 June 2015)].
- <sup>3</sup>Histpop – The Online Historical Population Reports Website, <http://histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/> (consulted 16 June 2015).
- <sup>4</sup>A. Hinde, *England's Population: A History Since the Domesday Survey* (Hodder Arnold, 2003), pp. 186-187.
- <sup>5</sup>Histpop, *op. cit.*
- <sup>6</sup>For example, see D. Bryant, 'Demographic Trends in South-Devon in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', in Gregory, K. J. and Ravenhill, W. L. D. (eds.), *Exeter Essays in Geography* (University of Exeter, 1971), p. 127.
- <sup>7</sup>'England & Wales Census Collection', original data: *Census Returns of England and Wales*, Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA) [consulted at <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/> (16 June 2015)]. Also 'UK Census Collection', original data: *Census Returns of England and Wales*, Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA) [consulted at <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/> (16 June 2015)].
- <sup>8</sup>For example, see the settlement exam of Agnes Brook, Poor Law Records, Bratton Clovelly, ref 2002A/PO89 (1840), Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter. Transcript available at <http://brattonclovellyops.com/>.
- <sup>9</sup>For example, see E. Higgs, *Making Sense of the Census Revisited* (University of London, 2005), pp. 61-118. Also, E. Higgs, 'Women, Occupations and Work in the Nineteenth Century Censuses', *History Workshop*, 23 (Spring, 1987), pp. 59-80.
- <sup>10</sup>Devon Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, FindMyPast, <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/> (consulted 16 June 2015). Also, Cornwall OPC (Online Parish Clerk) Database, <http://cornwall-opc-database.org/> (consulted 16 June 2015). Also, London Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, Ancestry, <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/> (consulted 16 June 2015).
- <sup>11</sup>M. J. L. Wickes (ed.), *Devon in the Religious Census of 1851: A Transcript of the Devon Section of the 1851 Church Census* (Michael Wickes, 1990), Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter.
- <sup>12</sup>Electoral Registers, Bratton Clovelly (microfiche, 1832-1910), Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter. Transcripts available at <http://brattonclovellyops.com/>.
- <sup>13</sup>'Apportionment of the Rent-Charge in lieu of Tithes, in the parish of Bratton Clovelly, in the County of Devon', (electronic document, 1845), Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter, original data: IR 29/6, 9, 10, 30, Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA). Transcript and derived maps available at <http://brattonclovellyops.com/>.
- <sup>14</sup>Wills (IRW, 1817-1857), IRW series, Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter. Also, Wills (PCC & Archdeaconry, 1619-1854), PROB 11 series, The National Archives, PROB 11 series. Transcripts available at <http://brattonclovellyops.com/>.
- <sup>15</sup>'Canadian Census Collection' and other Canadian records, 'US Federal Census Collection' and other US records, and 'Australia Death Index' & other Australian records, Ancestry, <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/> (consulted 16 June 2015). Also, 'Public Member Trees', Ancestry, <http://home.ancestry.co.uk/> (consulted 16 June 2015).
- <sup>16</sup>J. M. Few, *Faith, Food, Fish or Family? The Impact of Kinship Links and Communities on Migration Choices and Residential Persistence in North Devon 1841-1901*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Exeter (September 2009), pp. 32-38[consulted at <https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/bitstream/handle/10036/88193/FewJ.pdf?sequence=2> (16 June 2015)]. Also, S. King, 'Historical demography, life-cycle reconstruction and family reconstitution: new perspectives', *History and Computing*, 8 (2) (1996), pp. 4-5.
- <sup>17</sup>A. Brown, 'Soundex – Fuzzy Matches', VBA module for MS Access (2011), <http://allenbrowne.com/vba-Soundex.html> (consulted 16 June 2015).
- <sup>18</sup>A. Perkyns, 'Age Checkability and accuracy in the censuses of six Kentish parishes, 1851-1881', in D. Mills and K. Schurer (eds.), *Local Communities in the Victorian Census Enumerators' Books* (Oxford, 1996), p. 115-134.
- <sup>19</sup>J. Bradley and H. Short, 'Texts into databases: the evolving field of new-style prosopography', *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, 20, Supplement 1 (2005), pp. 9-10.
- <sup>20</sup>Based on the description of Tillott's classification scheme in D. Mills and K. Schurer, 'Employment and Occupations' in D. Mills and K. Schurer (eds.), *Local Communities in the Victorian Census Enumerators' Books* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 142-145.

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- <sup>21</sup> C. G. Pooley and J. Turnbull, *Migration and mobility in Britain since the eighteenth century* (UCL Press, London, 1998). For example, see p. 63.
- <sup>22</sup> R. Woods and N. Shelton, *Atlas of Victorian Mortality* (Liverpool University Press, 1997), p. 28.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.
- <sup>24</sup> E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871: A reconstruction* (Edward Arnold, 1981), p. 529.
- <sup>25</sup> W. M. Williams, *A West Country Village Ashworthy: Family, Kinship and Land* (Routledge, Abingdon, 1963), Chapter 7 'Kinship and Social Life' (page numbers unavailable in Kindle edition). Note that Ashworthy is a pseudonym for the parish of Northlew and tiny parish of Ashbury, both within 5 miles of Bratton Clovelly.
- <sup>26</sup> C. Verney with J. Few, 'Is Blood Thicker Than Water?', *Local Population Studies*, 91 (August 2013), pp. 10-26.
- <sup>27</sup> A. Hinde, *op. cit.*, p. 188.
- <sup>28</sup> 'Twenty-third annual report of the registrar-general' (1862), pp. 276-277 [consulted at <http://histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/> (16 June 2015)].
- <sup>29</sup> A. Perkyns, 'Migration and Mobility: six Kentish parishes, 1851-1881', *Local Population Studies*, 63 (Autumn 1999), pp. 45-55.
- <sup>30</sup> C. G. Pooley and J. Turnbull, *op. cit.*, pp. 209-215.
- <sup>31</sup> W. M. Williams, *op. cit.*, Figure 8 (page numbers unavailable in Kindle edition).
- <sup>32</sup> C. Phythian-Adams (ed.), *Societies, Cultures and Kinship, 1580-1850: cultural provinces and English local history* (Leicester, 1993), pp. 1-23.
- <sup>33</sup> C. Verney with J. Few, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-26. The study uses the same definitions for 'servant' and 'farm servant', except that 'house servant' is classed as domestic.
- <sup>34</sup> W. M. Williams, *op. cit.*, Chapter 2 'The Land' (page numbers unavailable in Kindle edition).
- <sup>35</sup> Wills (IRW, 1817-1857), *op. cit.* For example, see the wills of William Rice (1838) and Grace Jackman (1843). Transcripts available at <http://brattonclovellyops.com/>.
- <sup>36</sup> *Exeter Flying Post*, The British Newspaper Archive, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/> (consulted 16 June 2015). Adverts identified through a search for 'Bratton Clovelly' filtered for advertisements, 1841-1860.
- <sup>37</sup> A. W. Fox, 'Agricultural Wages in England and Wales during the Last Fifty Years', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 66, 2 (June 1903), p. 331.
- <sup>38</sup> Okehampton Poor Law Union Out-Relief Books, Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter.
- <sup>39</sup> C. G. Pooley and J. Turnbull, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-221.
- <sup>40</sup> Histpop, *op. cit.*
- <sup>41</sup> *North Devon Journal*, 31 March 1853, p. 5, cited in C. Verney, *op. cit.* [consulted at The British Newspaper Archive, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/> (16 June 2015)].
- <sup>42</sup> For example, see 'Missionary Chronicle: Wisconsin', Bible Christian Book Committee, *The Bible Christian Magazine for the Year 1852* (J. Thorne, Shebbear, Devon, 1852), pp. 156-160 [consulted at <https://books.google.co.uk/> (16 June 2015)].
- <sup>43</sup> The Western Historical Society, *The History of Racine and Kenosha Counties Wisconsin* (Chicago, 1879), pp. 283-354 [consulted at <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/WI/WI-idx?type=header&id=WI.HistoryofRacine&isize=L> (16 June 2015)].
- <sup>44</sup> C. Vancouver, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Devon* (David & Charles, Plymouth, 1969), first published 1808, pp. 289-292.
- <sup>45</sup> 'Another v. Allen', *Western Times*, 27 March 1841 and 'Allen v. Brock', *Sherborne Mercury*, 5 April 1841, The British Newspaper Archive, <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/> (consulted 16 June 2015).
- <sup>46</sup> J. M. Few, *op. cit.*, p. 83.
- <sup>47</sup> C. G. Pooley and J. Turnbull, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-194.
- <sup>48</sup> D. Baines, *Migration in a mature economy: Emigration and internal migration in England and Wales, 1861-1900* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 23-31.
- <sup>49</sup> E. G. Ravenstein, 'The Laws of Migration', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 48, 2 (June 1885). Also, E. G. Ravenstein, 'The Laws of Migration', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 52, 2 (June 1889).
- <sup>50</sup> E. G. Ravenstein (1885), *op. cit.*, pp. 196-199.
- <sup>51</sup> W. T. R. Pryce (ed.), *From Family History to Community History* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 14.
- <sup>52</sup> D. Baines, *op. cit.*
- <sup>53</sup> W. T. R. Pryce (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.
- <sup>54</sup> C. Verney with J. Few, *op. cit.* Also J. M. Few, *op. cit.* Also, W. M. Williams, *op. cit.*, Chapter 6 'Family and Kinship' and Chapter 7 'Kinship and Social Life' (page numbers unavailable in Kindle edition).

<sup>55</sup> North Devon Exodus Database, Bideford and District Community Archive [consulted at GenUKI, <http://genuki.cs.ncl.ac.uk/DEV/DevonMisc/NDevonExodusListing.html> (16 June 2015)].

<sup>56</sup> Sher Leetooze: Storytell, Historiographer, Family Researcher, <https://sites.google.com/site/sherleetooze/sherleetooze> (consulted 16 June 2015).

<sup>57</sup> J. M. Few, *op. cit.*

<sup>58</sup> My Bible Christian Ancestors, <http://www.mybiblechristians.org.uk/> (consulted 16 June 2015).

<sup>59</sup> C. D. Field, 'Methodist prosopography: sources and exemplars of collective biography in British Methodism', in Hart, D. and Jeremy, D. (eds.), *Brands Plucked from the Burning: Essays on Methodist Memorialisation and Remembering* (Wesley Historical Society, 2013), pp. 238-71 [consulted at <https://clivedfield.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/methodist-prosopography-published.pdf> (16 June 2015)].

<sup>60</sup> J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (5<sup>th</sup> ed., London, 2009), Chapter 3 'Local History' (page numbers unavailable in Kindle edition).

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