

1851 Census of Religion - Census Sunday, 30 March 1851

Southwell and its Adjacent Villages

Fiskerton Township

Area 1043 acres or just over one and a half square miles. It had a population of 333: 158 males and 175 females.

Wesleyan Methodist Chapel erected in 1809. It had free seats for 72 people, rented (or otherwise appropriated) seating for 64, and standing room for 20.

<u>Attendances:</u>	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Gen. congregation	75		76
Sunday scholars	40		20
	115		96

James Marriott, Society Steward

Morton Parish

Area 498 acres or just over three quarters of a squ. mile. It had a population of 140, 66 males and 74 females.

Parish Church {no dedication given] consecrated before 1800. Benefice endowed: land £76; tithe, £3; fees, 13 shillings. Total about £80 p.a. or about £5600 by today's values. St Denis's had accommodation for 101 people, with only 8 seats free, the remaining 93 were rented.

<u>Attendances:</u>	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Gen. congregation	25		30
Sunday scholars			3
	25		33
Average for previous 12 months:			
Gen. congregation	40	60	45
Sundayscholars	30	30	5
	70	90	50

Remarks: 'Morton is situated about half a mile from Fiskerton. On March 30 what is called a love feast"¹ was held in Fiskerton by the Wesleyans - This accounts for the decrease in the general congregation on that day.'

John W. Marsh, Vicar

¹A 'love feast' or *Agape* was a common religious meal in the early Church. It had a close relationship with the eucharist and probably preceded in. 1 Cor. 11:17-34 condemns abuses during this meal! In later periods the 'love feast' became a kind of charity supper.

Upton Area 1860 acres or about 3 squ. miles. The population totaled 629, with 314 males and 315 females.

Parish Church dedicated to St Peter [actually St Peter and St Paul], 'Ancient Parish Church'. Total annual income of £103, in today's values about £7200. The parish church had accommodation for 150, but no indication of free and appropriated seats.

<u>Attendances:</u>	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Gen. congregation	100		70
Sunday scholars	50		
	150		70

Remarks: 'The sittings in the space available for public worship does [sic] not include the children's sittings.'

Fredr. Wm. Naylor, Vicar

Wesleyan Methodist Chapel Erected in 1831. Accommodation for 150 people, in 90 free seats and 60 appropriated.

<u>Attendances:</u>	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Gen. congregation		68	62
Sunday scholars		32	21
		100	83

F.B.Stephenson, Superintendent Minister

Rolleston Parish consisting of the townships of Rolleston and Fiskerton. Rolleston Township had an area of 1662 acres or just over two and a half squ. miles. Population of 252, with 124 males and 128 females.

Holy Trinity, 'Ancient Parish Church'. Endowed with tithe valued at £210 p.a., glebe at £50, and Easter Offerings at £2, giving a total of £262, or about £18000 in today's values.

<u>Attendances:</u>	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Gen. congregation	46	85	
Sundayscholars	21	22	
	67	107	

R.H.Fowler, Vicar

Southwell Parish had an area of 4550 acres, or about seven squ. miles. It had a population of 3512, with 1673 males and 1843 females.

Trinity Church, 'Conse[crated] 31 March 1851 as an additional Church. Erected by private subscription except a grant from the Nottinghamshire Church Building Soc. of £500. Cost £4000 or thereabouts.' The church was endowed thus: 'land church yard £0. 10. 0; permanent endowment: £32. 9. 8; pew rents £111. 10. 10.' This gave a total of some £145 a year, or about £10000 in today's values.

<u>Attendances</u>	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Gen. congregation	141	164	
Sunday scholars	88	83	
	229		

'Remarks: Expenses of Church, including £10 p.a. to Building Fund, are paid out of the Pew Rents and amount to about £31. A voluntary offering from the congregation has about made it up. Small pox diminished both school and congregation.'

John Corrington, Incumbent

Collegiate Church St Mary had accommodation for 800, with 300 free seats and 500 appropriated (i.e. rented or freehold).

<u>Attendances</u>	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Gen. congregation	500	250	250
Sunday scholars	200	200	

Peter Coxon, Clerk

Note: This is a bare minimum of information and gives no figures for the endowment income of the Minster. The numbers of attendances for census Sunday are obvious estimates and are listed on the return as 'usual no. of attendants.' It seems that the process of the census was somewhat beneath the dignity of the Minister clergy!

Moon Lane Chapel, Particular or Calvinistic [sic] Baptist

'Formerly the Southwell Workhouse, bought and altered at an expense £1700 in 1838-9.' The chapel had accommodation for adults for 320, with 70 free seats and 250 appropriated, and 80 additional seats for Sunday scholars.

<u>Attendances:</u>	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Gen. congregation	84		110
Sunday scholars	32		
	116		110
Average for 12 months			
Gen. congregation	150		250
Sunday scholars	50		
	200		250

'Remarks: The general congregation has diminished during the last four months owing [to] the Church being without a Pastor, and conducting worship by lay or local preachers, and partly owing to several concurrent circumstances having an unfavourable effect upon the general aspect of our affairs.'

Thomas Clements, Secretary Chemist and
Druggist

Wesleyan Methodist Chapel Erected in 1839. It had accommodation for 414 people, with 200 free pews and 214 appropriated.

<u>Attendances:</u>	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Gen. congregation Sunday	65		150
scholars	61		
	126		150
Average for 12 months			
Gen. congregation	80		250
Sunday scholars	60		
	140		250

Henry Ratcliffe, Chapel Steward

Edingley Parish Area 1800 acres or about 2.8 squ. miles. The parish had a population of 381, with 194 males and 187 females.

St Giles had accommodation for 100, with 16 free seats and 84 appropriated.

<u>Attendances:</u>	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Gen. congregation	50	60	
Sunday scholars	30	30	

5

80

90

William Alvey

Note:the attendances given are for the 'usual no.of attendants' and seem not to be the figures for census Sunday.

Wesleyan Chapel erected 1838. This had space for 102, in 50 free seats and 52 appropriated.

<u>Attendances:</u>	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Gen. congregation			77

Richd. Brown, Chapel Keeper

Halam Parish Area 1310 acres, or about two squ. miles. The parish had a population of 390, with 204 males and 186 females.

Parish Church. 'Name Unknown'¹ [St Michael the Archangel - but was this the dedication in 1851?]. The parish church had accommodation for 140 people in 40 free seats and 100 appropriated.

<u>Attendances:</u>	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Gen. congregation	40	40	
Sundayscholars	50	50	
	90	90	

Joseph Leeson

Note:as with Edingley parish church these are not census Sunday attendances, but an estimate of the 'Usual No. of attendants'. The census return here, as at Edingley, seems not to have been signed by the incumbent.

Wesleyan Methodist Chapel This was erected before 1800 [Note: dates were required only if churches or chapels etc. had been erected subsequent to 1800]. All the seats were free, uniquely for the churches and chapels in Southwell and its immediate vicinity.

<u>Attendances:</u>	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Gen. congregation [no attendances for Sunday scholars given]			53
Average for 12 months			50

'Remarks: This building was erected and used for a Barn until 1834 when it was altered and became a Chapel.'

John Adamson, Steward

Notes:

1. In the churches and chapels supplying figures for seating, on average 37% were free and 63% were appropriated (rented or freehold), or roughly a one third/two thirds ratio.
2. Adult attendances on 30 March 1851 represented 47.5%, or nearly half, of the population of the area. If we add in the attendances of Sunday school children, the figure rises to 66%, or two thirds of the population. But note that these are *attendances* and not separate individuals. Many people, especially in the nonconformist chapels, attended twice or more on Sundays. If we take only the morning attendances on 30 March, or attendances in those chapels at other times when this was the only service that day, then about 25% of adults from Southwell and the neighbouring villages attended church or chapel that day. The true picture is probably nearer 30 - 35%, given that some people would have attended once that day at a service other than the morning service. So - about a third of the adult population went to church at least once on 30 March 1851. This is about the national average
3. 30 March 1851 was not a church festival, but it was Mid-Lent Sunday, or Mothering Sunday. Nationally, Anglicans complained that many adult children visited their parents that day, and so were not to be found in their usual place in church. Nonconformists saw this as an excuse.
4. Nationally, also, the Church of England was shocked by the statistics produced by the census of religion. Not only did they show how strong was the nonconformist challenge (in Derbyshire, for example, there were more nonconformist attendances than Anglican on 30 March 1851), but also how 'godless' the nation was. If only 35 - 40% of the nation attended church that day (and very many of these were nonconformists), the Church of England asked, what did this say about the Church of England's role in the religious life of the nation?
5. It is too easy to say that those who attended church or chapel on 30 March were predominately middle-class, though this was the conclusion the official report on the census came to. In fact, many artisans attended, mainly at nonconformist chapels. However, generally speaking it can be seen that the mass of the labouring poor did not attend, not least because the proportion of free pews was so low (though much higher in 1851 than it had been a generation earlier).
6. Church and chapel attendances rose steadily from the 1840s, peaking in the 1890s, and, save for the period from 1914 - 18, holding steady until the late 1920s (though Sunday school attendances reduced drastically from the late 19th century). Attendances began to decline but remained high from the 1920s until the outbreak of the second World War. They declined by about 20% in the war years and rose to 1929 levels during the 1950s. Drastic decline began in the early 1960s and has continued ever since, with the Church of England losing at least 50% of its notional membership in the forty years from 1960 to 2000.

Michael Austin

