

Chapter 7

Sheffield Plants (circa 1850)

AN INFLUX OF PLANTS FROM THE ENVIRONS¹

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Sheffield, by 1850, was the main centre in the region for Plants. Its Plant population appears to have been growing apace with Sheffield. By 1850, local transport systems were such that only a few Plants had travelled from further afield than the adjacent countryside but Sheffield was growing fast and attracting to it, for example, Plant families from the nearby parishes of Clowne and Sutton-Cum-Duckmanton in Derbyshire.

7.1 Growing number of Plants

Table 7.1 shows the variation of the number of Plants in Sheffield, giving values counted from the 1841, 1851 and 1871 Censuses, and an estimate derived from the 1989 Telephone Directory. The data show generally that the proportion of the Sheffield population called Plant, at these times, remained at about twice the National Average, at about 2 Plants to every 3400 people in Sheffield.

year :	1841	1851	1871	1990
number :	69	84	128	425
				+200
				living in outskirts and Rotherham

Table 7.1: Number of Plants in Sheffield

Other information (*Roots and Branches*, Issue N^o 1, page 6) indicates that modern Sheffield is the fifth largest centre for Plants in Great Britain, after Stoke on Trent, Wolverhampton, Birmingham and Manchester.

7.2 Hunter's Sheffield

In his book *Hallamshire: The History and Topography of the parish of Sheffield in the County of York with historical and descriptive notices of the parishes of Ecclesfield, Hansworth, Treeton, and Whiston, and of the chapelry of Bradfield*, Joseph Hunter ascribes the origin of Sheffield's name to the Saxon word **ea** meaning water. Hence, he points out the Shear-bridge on the stream called the Shea(f) which flows into the River Don near the early settlement called She(a)(f)field; an early spelling was in fact Sceathfeld meaning clearing near the stream then spelled Sceath.

The tumbling waters down the ring of hills that surround Sheffield nurtured its early eminence in harnessing water power for industrial purposes. Ecclesfield (meaning Church-clearing) is 4 miles north of Sheffield's centre. We do not know who first edged tools using the water wheel, which was used more traditionally for grinding corn, but the Vicar of Ecclesfield, who edited an early

¹An earlier version of this Chapter has appeared as J.S.Plant (Feb.1994) *Roots and Branches*, 7, 29-33.

period	1561- 1570	1601- 1610	1651- 1660	1701- 1710	1751- 1760	1801- 1810
marriages	234	417	475	942	1833	5031
baptisms	1085	1475	1698	3033	7036	17760
burials	712	1049	1888	2613	6270	13384

Table 7.2: Growth at Sheffield's parish church and the chapels under it

	Baptisms		Burials	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Parish church	1047	1006	566	500
St. Paul's		3	140	119
St. James's			17	20
Attercliffe	31	31	61	37
Ecclesall	29	20	56	50

Table 7.3: Imbalance of baptisms at Sheffield over outlying parishes, in 1817

dictionary called *Catholicum Anglicum*, seems to have been familiar with the idea, and he died in 1478. The same ring of hills was a barrier to trade but Sheffield's widely famous cutlery, tools, metal buttons and other small items were transported by pack horse.

The Sheffield that is described in Hunter's standard text, published in 1819, predates the known arrival of many Plants in Sheffield. Ecclesall (meaning Church-hill) was only 4 miles SW from Sheffield's centre but was still much more rural and quite separate; after 1835 it became a separate Union of townships from the newly formed Sheffield Union. Table 7.2 shows a constant ratio of about 4:3 for baptisms to burials in the general population of Sheffield, from 1560 to 1810, implying already steady growth. Table 7.3 shows conversely a ratio of about 1:2 at Ecclesall and Attercliffe in 1817, implying that it was not uncommon for those remaining to be buried in those more rural surroundings. The fit and the young, however, more frequently had their children baptised at the more central parish church, as indicated in Table 7.3 by the baptism to burial ratio of about 2:1. A century later, in 1913, this erstwhile modest parish church of St Peter and St Paul became a Cathedral when the much enlarged Sheffield, at last, attained diocesan status.

7.3 Origins of local Plant name

The Index of the 1851 Census for Sheffield indicates that only about half of those therein called Plant were born in Sheffield, which accords with the consideration that the population of Sheffield was at that time trebling every 50 years and many had travelled to Sheffield from the surrounding region, as is detailed for Plants in Table 7.4. In this table, the first column contains places close to Sheffield's centre, the second around 5 miles to the SE, and the third 10 miles and further into Derbyshire. In the fourth column the item 'Elsewhere' refers to Plants who came from as far as Northamptonshire, Staffordshire, or Warwick.

When only males over 30 are considered (part (b) of the table) it is seen that 14 out of the 17 were from outside Sheffield. The Sheffield Plant name before 1820 seems to have come mostly from around Gleadless (Handsworth) and NE Derbyshire, as indicated in the second and third columns of Table 7.4(b).

The descendants of the Sutton-Cum-Duckmanton Plants may account for a significant number of the Plants that are found, around 1850, in Sheffield. For example, 3 Plants are recorded as 'from Clowne' (in column 3 of Table 7.4(b)) and these had quite certainly descended from the youngest son Thomas (1745-1827) of the first Sutton-Cum-Duckmanton Plant generation; this Thomas took up a farm in nearby Clowne, where he had 18 children by 2 wives between 1772 and

Place	No.	Place	No.	Place	No.	Place	No.
(a) all those called Plant							
Sheffield	39	Gleadless	13	Clowne	3	Oth.Yorks.	1
Brightside	5	Beighton	2	Sutton-C-D	3	Notts.	4
Wadsley	1	Birley	1	Calver	2	Manchester	1
Ecclesall	1	Mosborough	1	Oth.Derbys.	4	Elsewhere	3
(b) males over 30							
Sheffield	3	Gleadless	3	Clowne	3	Oth.Yorks.	1
		Beighton	1	Sutton-C-D	1	Notts.	1
				Oth.Derbys.	3	Elsewhere	1

Table 7.4: Places of birth of Plants living in Sheffield in 1851

1819. Though as yet unsubstantiated, it also seems possible that the Handsworth (Gleadless) Plants were descended from the eldest son Robert (1727-91) of the original Sutton-Cum-Duckmanton Plant generation; Robert apparently moved to Beighton, which is near Gleadless, and which is where he had children around 1750. There are 4 Plants recorded as from Gleadless and Beighton (column 2 of Table 7.4(b)), who hence may be associated with the Sutton-Cum-Duckmanton family, and to these we can add, for example, 2 of those 3 who are recorded as 'from Sheffield' (column 1 of Table 7.4(b)) who were in fact descended from the Handsworth Plants; Handsworth is only 3 miles to the east and it bordered, in 1851, on Sheffield. Furthermore, the Plant who is recorded as from Nottinghamshire (column 4 of Table 7.4(b)) was descended from the Beighton Plants and hence probably also from the Sutton-Cum-Duckmanton family.

7.4 Transport and Growth

The exploits of Plants from Handsworth and NE Derbyshire will be described later; they arrived in a nineteenth century Sheffield, in which the new population was much more mixed than before. It was also divided within itself; class distinctions, hardly known in the old Sheffield, had sharpened as the wealth of a few increased and a slightly higher level of education became noticeable in some circles. In 1736 there had been 9696 people in Sheffield and, by 1801, this had become 31314. The growth of Sheffield and its new heavy industry were made possible by developments in its transport systems, which were now beginning to overcome the local geographical barriers to trade, as detailed for example by Mary Walton (1948) in her book *Sheffield: Its Story and Its Achievements*.

As soon as the turnpike era had started (Chapter 4) Sheffield became indebted to enterprising landlords of the Angel Inn. In 1760 Samuel Glanville started the first regular stage-coaches to London, Leeds, Wakefield, Chesterfield, Mansfield and Nottingham. The journey to London took 3 days but, by 1787, this had been reduced to 26 hours. The reputation of the Angel later passed to the Tontine Inn and, by 1838, thirteen coaches left the Tontine (near Dixon Lane) daily with the ring of hooves on the cobbles aptly symbolising the quickening pace of Sheffield life; until one day in 1840 all this bustle ceased overnight and the horses stood idle; the train to London drew out of the North Midland Railway Station at Masborough (Rotherham)² and close behind its flying wheels came the great age of steel.

After the first railway line had come into Sheffield from Rotherham in 1838, the south Yorkshire coalfield was rapidly developed to feed the greedy engines and the multiplying furnaces for steel. The opening near central Sheffield, in 1851, of the Victoria Station near the street (built in 1795) called The Wicker, made possible better communication both with eastern England and with London and, in 1870, the Midland Railway's branch to Chesterfield was opened, with a station built near

²Masborough or Masbrough, at Rotherham, is 5 miles NE from the centre of Sheffield and should not be confused with the village of Mosborough or Mosbrough, which 5 miles SE of Sheffield.

Place	No.	Place	No.	Place	No.
Sheffield	28	Doncaster	3	Ashbourne	8
Ecclesall	4	Rotherham	1	Hayfield	3
Chesterfield	9	East Retford	1	Derby	6
Bakewell	12	Worksop	5	Nottingham	4
Chapel 1 F	4	Mansfield	2	Gt Boughton	5

Table 7.5: Distribution of Plant deaths (1837-51) around Sheffield and to the south

central Sheffield at the Ponds, providing a quicker and easier way to the manufacturing centres of the Midlands and London.

7.5 Further developments in Sheffield

During the fifty years after 1843 the population of Sheffield trebled, becoming an estimated 333922 in 1893, whereupon the Council decided to celebrate their jubilee by asking the Crown to bestow the title of City upon the Borough, and the request was granted. In 1875 the first bold street-making scheme ever attempted had driven Leopold Street, Pinstone Street and Surrey Street through the jumble of buildings and narrow alleys, the crowded little shops, stables and works; and most of their tall new buildings were completed by 1893; and in 1897 Queen Victoria herself came in “royal weather” to open the new Town Hall, which bears on the tip of its two-hundred feet tower the figure of Sheffield’s adopted deity from earlier times, Vulcan the Smith.

At these times, Plants from Clowne were living in the centre of Sheffield, such as near Pinstone Street, and indeed, in 1841, on the site of the yet to built new Town Hall. Plants from several branches of this family, including ones that had hitherto remained in Sutton-Cum-Duckmanton, arrived in Sheffield as will be described in some detail later and they thence underwent a change of emphasis in their activities from rural to commercial and industrial.

7.6 The name Plant near Sheffield

The distribution of Plant deaths *around* Sheffield, for the years 1837-51, is shown in Table 7.5 and indicates that Sheffield *itself*, which had become the largest centre overall in the region, now had a significant proportion of the Plants. The region considered in Tables 7.5 and 7.6 spreads some 20 to 50 miles around Sheffield and extends furthest to the south; these 2 tables show the total number of registered Plant deaths and births, in the Civil Registration Index, for parishes throughout South Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and indicate, for example, rates of 2 deaths and 3 births per year in Sheffield which accords with expectation based on the known Plant population there of about 85 and growing in 1850. The distribution of Plant births *around* Sheffield, for the years 1851-58, is shown in Table 7.6 and shows that a high incidence of Plant activity occurred also (by then) in Chesterfield (10 miles south of Sheffield) which, though only a ninth the size of Sheffield in 1851, was beginning to grow almost as fast. Further investigation indicates however that there were few Plants in central Chesterfield and that the designation ‘Chesterfield’ in the Civil Registration Index included births at such outlying places as New Whittington, which is over 2 miles north of Chesterfield’s centre. Plants were now no longer found in other nearby traditional centres such as rural Clowne.

Place	No.	Place	No.	Place	No.
Sheffield	24	Barnsley	1	Ashbourne	6
Ecclesall	5	Doncaster	7	Belper	2
Chesterfield	21	Rotherham	1	Derby	2
Bakewell	3	East Retford	8	Nottingham	3
Chapel 1 F	13	Worksop	4	Others	4

Table 7.6: Distribution of Plant births (1851-8) around Sheffield and to the south