

Hawstead: Census 1841 – Commentary

The Census of 1841 registered a total of 457 people (240 males and 217 females) living in Hawstead (2011: 338). This comprised approx. 90 families, 11 single people living in two almshouses (Metcalf and Great Green) and a further 46 individuals (24 male and 22 female). There were probably somewhat more than 90 dwellings as some of these 46 are noted as 'head' (of household); others as having an occupation of 'farmer' (male) or 'independent means' (both male and female). A significant number were noted as being 'servant' (14 F + 2 M) so they were probably living in with a family, whilst it's interesting to note that 6 men are described as 'sheep shearers': possibly they were itinerant and the census was taken in early summer. Clearly the concept of all properties having an address hadn't come in: only 22 locations are noted, with names like "Hawstead Green", "Pinford End, a farmhouse", "Near farm house, Hawstead" etc. Intriguingly, one is "in a wood near Pinford End"! Only the following are unambiguous: Hawstead House, Hawstead Lodge, Hawstead Place, The Rectory, Rose Cottage, the two Almshouses, Malting and Wash Farm – and the last two are not in use today (neither is, of course, Great Green Almshouses).

Only 22 people are registered as not being from Suffolk, with one not stated. The population was very youthful: there were 215 individuals under 20 years of age (ie almost half the population); 124 between 20-39; 69 between 40-59; 45 between 60-79; and just 4 were over 80. One wonders, however, whether age – at least among the older people – was a matter of guesswork: from age 15 onwards they are exclusively noted as being 15, 20, 25, 30, 35 etc years old. Going by the numbers given, the average age was 25.4 years. (median = 20)

Occupations are given for 148 people and the overwhelming majority (x99) were 'agricultural labourers'. Aside from the aforementioned servants, sheep shearers and those of 'independent means (x8) occupations listed are (all referring to men):

- Farmer (x3)
- Shepherd (x2)
- Blacksmith (x2)
- Shoemaker (x2)

And the following all with just one:

- Butcher
- Carpenter
- Clerk
- Farm Bailiff
- Groom
- Maid
- Sawyer
- Thatcher
- Wheelwright
- Apprentice Wheelwright

If we exclude children and the remaining women, there appear to be approx. 25 men with no occupation noted, so perhaps this represents the level of unemployment in Hawstead at the time.

41 different girls names and 35 different boys names are found in the village in 1841. The most popular (spanning c.85 years up to 1841 of course) were:

Boys: John (41)	Girls: Mary (40)
George (34)	Elizabeth (21)
William (34)	Sarah (20)
James (29)	Susan (19)

Unusual ones included: Ephraim and Jermyn (boys) and Ambly, Mahala and Mirah (girls)

Finally we should consider family size. Of course the nineteenth century is known for large-sized families, but the average in Hawstead in 1841 was just 3.2 children per family. There were large families indeed: 8 had four children, 7 had 5, 5 had 6 and there were even 5 families with 7 children. What we must remember is that this is just a snapshot. In families where the parents are relatively old, if they list only one or two children, it may well be that others have left home to find their fortune elsewhere: otherwise, quite a number of the families with just one or two offspring were themselves young and just starting off building a family: perhaps we'll see how they got on when we come to look at the 1851 census!

AJP 3April 2014