

# LONDON ELECTORAL HISTORY – STEPS TOWARDS DEMOCRACY

## 7.7 MIDDLESEX AND SPATIAL CLASSIFICATION

All Middlesex is *ugly*, notwithstanding the millions upon millions which it is continually sucking up from the rest of the kingdom. ... [T]he buildings consist generally of tax-eater's showy tea-garden-like boxes, and of shabby dwellings of labouring people, who, in this part of the country, look to be about half *Saint Giles's*: dirty, and have every appearance of drinking gin.<sup>1</sup>

It is hard to imagine Middlesex as an agrarian county. Yet Middlesex (see Fig. 1) was for long an agricultural county by predominant land-use, if not by population. Its production was driven by the insatiable demand for fresh produce from the nearby metropolis, even while buildings of the growing conurbation were continually extending into the area.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the urban and rural economies were intermingled. The 1841 census, for example, noted the presence of 359 hay-makers, sleeping in sheds in Harrow parish.<sup>3</sup> But urban residents, both rich and poor, were ever encroaching. Would-be smart new housing was juxtaposed with 'shabby dwellings'. The labourers appeared as down-at-heel inner-urban gin-drinkers according to the beer-drinking William Cobbett, in the hostile commentary cited immediately above. His highly pertinent cultural reference was to Hogarth's picture of urban degeneration in *Gin Lane* (1751), satirising the all-too-urban parish of St-Giles-in-the-Fields in the Holborn district of the ancient Hundred of Ossulston, Middlesex. And, with or without the social criticism, the urbanisation of the county was indeed inexorable.

English county franchises were based not on residence, but on the ownership of landed property. The available evidence in the Middlesex poll books relating to places generally refers to the place where a

freehold lay, although some later poll books also included details of the voter's place of residence. Though there was no requirement to do so, many freeholders lived at the place where their freehold lay. Such individuals are identified in those poll books which record the name of the occupier, and where that name is the same as that of the voter. In these cases, the classification of place of freehold will serve as a proxy for place of residence. In other cases, where there is no inherent classification of place of residence, its subsequent allocation must necessarily be problematic.

Middlesex was by area England's second smallest county, after Rutland; but after Yorkshire it had in 1801 the second greatest population. Nowhere, therefore, was more urbanised or more densely populated. Even small places in Middlesex, such as Twickenham or Staines, were larger than many respectable provincial towns. Mid-nineteenth-century censuses further reveal what had long been, and long remained true: that a substantial minority of this population consisted of recent immigrants. At the same time, plenty of those who were not first generation immigrants into Middlesex were the sons and daughters of migrants who had come in earlier times. Population turnover was the norm.

For administrative purposes, the county of Middlesex<sup>4</sup> was divided into six Hundreds, together with the City and Liberties of Westminster, which lay wholly within Ossulston Hundred, although they constituted a separate entity for civic purposes. The City of London likewise lay enclaved by Ossulston Hundred, but formed no part of Middlesex.

The six Hundreds varied in size, in population, and in the degree of urbanisation they experienced. By any measure the most populous and urbanised part of the county throughout the period was Ossulston Hundred, which occupied the southern and eastern part of the county, bounded on the south by the river Thames and on the east by the adjoining county of Essex. Within Ossulston Hundred the most populous and urbanised parts were those lying immediately outside the City of London: in Westminster, in the Holborn Division, the Tower Division, and the Finsbury Division.<sup>5</sup>

Spatial categories within the Hundreds were not consistent over time, as population growth led to the creation of new parishes throughout the period. The spatial classification shown in Table 84 is derived from the printed poll book of 1802, the last for which complete data for the county is available, together with the census of 1801. It should be noted

that this first census report made no mention of the tiny parish of St Peter ad Vincula. This church, a 'Royal Peculiar', lay within the Tower of London<sup>6</sup> and was in subsequent census reports returned in the Tower Division of Middlesex. Its omission from the 1801 census was probably because of what would later be called wartime 'reasons of national security', to avoid revealing the size of the garrison within the Tower.<sup>7</sup>

Otherwise, the administrative patchwork of the county is shown in sequence, ordered by Hundreds and Divisions within Hundreds. The results ranged from small rural parishes like Perivale (population of 28 in 1801) to giant urbanised parishes like St Marylebone (63,982 in 1801), an area which was immediately central to the new Marylebone constituency after 1832.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 84**  
**Spatial distribution of Middlesex population**

| Hundred  | Division | Parish               | Population<br>(1801) | Sub-<br>total |
|----------|----------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Edmonton |          | Edmonton             | 5,093                | 16,885        |
|          |          | Enfield              | 5,881                |               |
|          |          | South Mimms          | 1,698                |               |
|          |          | Monken Hadley        | 584                  |               |
|          |          | Tottenham            | 3,629                |               |
| Elthorne |          | Old Brentford (Town) | 1,443                | 12,959        |
|          |          | Cowley (Village)     | 214                  |               |
|          |          | Cranford             | 212                  |               |
|          |          | West Drayton         | 515                  |               |
|          |          | Greenford            | 359                  |               |
|          |          | Hanwell              | 817                  |               |
|          |          | Harefield            | 951                  |               |
|          |          | Harlington           | 363                  |               |
|          |          | Harmondsworth        | 879                  |               |
|          |          | Hayes                | 1,026                |               |
|          |          | Hillingdon           | 1,783                |               |
|          |          | Ickenham             | 213                  |               |
|          |          | Northolt             | 336                  |               |
|          |          | Norwood              | 697                  |               |
|          |          | Perivale             | 28                   |               |
| Ruislip  | 1,012    |                      |                      |               |
| Uxbridge | 2,111    |                      |                      |               |

| Hundred  | Division            | Parish                          | Population<br>(1801)         | Sub-<br>total |       |
|--|---------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|-------|
| Gore   |                     | Edgware                         | 412                          | <b>6,968</b>  |       |
|  |                     | Elstree                         |                              |               |       |
|  |                     | Harrow on the Hill              | 2,485                        |               |       |
|  |                     | Harrow Weald                    |                              |               |       |
|  |                     | Hendon                          | 1,955                        |               |       |
|  |                     | Kenton                          |                              |               |       |
|  |                     | Kingsbury                       | 209                          |               |       |
|  |                     | Pinner (Hamlet)                 | 761                          |               |       |
|  |                     | Roxeth                          |                              |               |       |
|  |                     | Great Stanmore                  | 722                          |               |       |
|  |                     | Little Stanmore                 | 424                          |               |       |
|  |                     | Sudbury                         |                              |               |       |
| Wembley and Alperton                                     |                     |                                 |                              |               |       |
| Isleworth  |                     | Heston                          | 1,782                        | <b>9,266</b>  |       |
|  |                     | Isleworth                       | 4,346                        |               |       |
|  |                     | Hounslow                        |                              |               |       |
|  |                     | Twickenham                      | 3,138                        |               |       |
| Ossulston  | Finsbury            | Old Artillery Ground (Precinct) | 1,428                        | <b>76,268</b> |       |
|  |                     | Charterhouse (Extra-parochial)  | 249                          |               |       |
|  |                     | Finchley                        | 1,503                        |               |       |
|  |                     | Friern Barnet                   | 432                          |               |       |
|  |                     | Glasshouse Yard (Liberty)       | 1,221                        |               |       |
|  |                     | Hornsey                         | 2,716                        |               |       |
|  |                     | St Mary Islington               | 10,212                       |               |       |
|  |                     | St James Clerkenwell            | 23,396                       |               |       |
|  |                     | St Luke Old Street              | 26,881                       |               |       |
|  | St Sepulchre (part) | 3,768                           |                              |               |       |
|  | Stoke Newington     | 1,462                           |                              |               |       |
|  | Holborn             |                                 | St Clement Danes (part)      |               | 4,144 |
|  |                     |                                 | Duchy of Lancaster (Liberty) |               | 474   |
|  |                     |                                 | Ely Place (Extra-parochial)  |               | 281   |
|  |                     |                                 | St John Hampstead            |               | 4,343 |
|  |                     |                                 | Paddington                   |               | 1,881 |
|  |                     |                                 | Rolls Liberty (Liberty)      |               | 2,409 |
| Saffron Hill, Hatton Garden and<br>Ely Rents (Liberties) |                     |                                 | 7,500                        |               |       |
| St John Baptist Savoy<br>(Precinct)                      |                     |                                 | 320                          |               |       |
| St Andrew Holborn  | 15,932              |                                 |                              |               |       |

| <b>Hundred</b> | <b>Division</b> | <b>Parish</b>                  | <b>Population<br/>(1801)</b> | <b>Sub-<br/>total</b> |
|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
|                |                 | St George Bloomsbury           | 7,738                        |                       |
|                |                 | St George the Martyr           | 6,273                        |                       |
|                |                 | St Giles in the Fields         | 28,764                       |                       |
|                |                 | St Marylebone                  | 63,982                       |                       |
|                |                 | St Pancras                     | 31,779                       |                       |
|                |                 |                                |                              | <b>175,820</b>        |
|                | Kensington      | Acton                          | 1,425                        |                       |
|                |                 | St Luke Chelsea                | 11,604                       |                       |
|                |                 | Chiswick                       | 3,235                        |                       |
|                |                 | Ealing                         | 5,035                        |                       |
|                |                 | Fulham                         | 4,428                        |                       |
|                |                 | Hammersmith                    | 5,600                        |                       |
|                |                 | Kensington                     | 8,556                        |                       |
|                |                 | West Twyford (Extra-parochial) | 8                            |                       |
|                |                 |                                |                              | <b>39,891</b>         |
|                | Tower           | St Botolph Aldgate             | 6,153                        |                       |
|                |                 | Bethnal Green                  | 22,510                       |                       |
|                |                 | Blackwall                      |                              |                       |
|                |                 | Bow                            |                              |                       |
|                |                 | St Leonard Bromley             | 1,684                        |                       |
|                |                 | Christ Church Spitalfields     | 15,091                       |                       |
|                |                 | St John Hackney                | 12,730                       |                       |
|                |                 | Holywell Street                |                              |                       |
|                |                 | Hoxton                         |                              |                       |
|                |                 | Moorfields                     |                              |                       |
|                |                 | Mile End New Town (Hamlet)     | 5,253                        |                       |
|                |                 | Mile End Old Town (Hamlet)     | 9,848                        |                       |
|                |                 | Norton Folgate (Liberty)       | 1,752                        |                       |
|                |                 | Old Ford                       |                              |                       |
|                |                 | Poplar and Blackwall (Hamlet)  | 4,493                        |                       |
|                |                 | Ratcliff (Hamlet)              | 5,666                        |                       |
|                |                 | St Paul Shadwell               | 8,828                        |                       |
|                |                 | St Leonard Shoreditch          | 34,766                       |                       |
|                |                 | Smithfield, East               |                              |                       |
|                |                 | St Anne Limehouse              | 4,678                        |                       |
|                |                 | St Catherine (Precinct)        | 2,652                        |                       |
|                |                 | St George in the East          | 21,170                       |                       |
|                |                 | Stepney                        |                              |                       |
|                |                 | St Mary Stratford at Bow       | 2,101                        |                       |
|                |                 | Tower Without (Precinct)       | 563                          |                       |
|                |                 | St John Wapping                | 5,889                        |                       |
|                |                 | St Mary Whitechapel            | 23,666                       |                       |
|                |                 |                                |                              | <b>189,493</b>        |

| Hundred      | Division    | Parish                             | Population<br>(1801) | Sub-<br>total  |
|--------------|-------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
|              | Westminster | Savoy (Liberty)                    |                      |                |
|              |             | St Anne Soho                       | 11,637               |                |
|              |             | St Clement Danes (part)            | 8,717                |                |
|              |             | St George Hanover Square           | 38,440               |                |
|              |             | St James Piccadilly                | 34,462               |                |
|              |             | St John the Evangelist             | 8,375                |                |
|              |             | St Margaret Westminster            | 17,508               |                |
|              |             | St Martin in the Fields            | 25,752               |                |
|              |             | St Mary le Strand                  | 1,704                |                |
|              |             | St Paul Covent Garden              | 4,992                |                |
|              |             | Whitehall and St James'<br>Palaces | 1,685                |                |
|              |             |                                    |                      | <b>153,272</b> |
|              | Spelthorne  | Ashford                            | 264                  |                |
|              |             | East Bedfont                       | 456                  |                |
|              |             | Feltham                            | 620                  |                |
|              |             | Hampton                            | 1,722                |                |
|              |             | Hampton Wick (Hamlet)              | 793                  |                |
|              |             | Hanworth                           | 334                  |                |
|              |             | Laleham                            | 372                  |                |
|              |             | Littleton                          | 147                  |                |
|              |             | Shepperton                         | 731                  |                |
|              |             | Staines                            | 1,750                |                |
|              |             | Stanwell                           | 893                  |                |
|              |             | Sunbury                            | 1,447                |                |
|              |             | Teddington                         | 699                  |                |
|              |             |                                    |                      | <b>10,228</b>  |
| <b>Total</b> |             |                                    |                      | <b>691,050</b> |

**Note:** All places are parishes unless otherwise indicated. Places without population figures are taken from the Middlesex poll book of 1802. No return was made for St Peter ad Vincula, probably for what would later be known as 'reasons of national security' to avoid revealing the size of the garrison in the Tower of London.

**Source:** BPP (1801-2), vii, pp. 207-10.

Overall, then, it was administrative stability, notwithstanding the discrepant sizes of the different parishes, which framed the history of the Middlesex constituency and its electoral returns. The vitality of its political participation also provided a common identity, that stood comparison with that of its civic neighbours in London and Westminster.

**Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> W. Cobbett, *Rural rides*, ed. G. Woodcock (Harmondsworth, 1967), p. 31: ride from Kensington, 25 Sept. 1822.
- <sup>2</sup> John Middleton, *A general view of the agriculture of Middlesex* (1798).
- <sup>3</sup> *BPP* (1843), XXII, p. 219.
- <sup>4</sup> For a traditional local history of Middlesex, see *Victoria county history of Middlesex* (12 vols, 1969-2004), the later volumes of which have much informative material.
- <sup>5</sup> On the economy of the metropolis, see L.D. Schwarz, *London in the age of industrialisation: entrepreneurs, labour force and living conditions, 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1992); and M. Ball and D. Sutherland, *An economic history of London, 1800-1914* (2001). On poverty, see G. Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: a study in the relationship between social classes in Victorian society* (Oxford, 1971); D.R. Green, *From artisans to paupers: economic change and poverty in London, 1790-1830* (Aldershot, 1995); and T.V. Hitchcock, *Down and out in eighteenth-century London* (2004).
- <sup>6</sup> The church (whose building began in 1512) is a chapel royal, under the direct jurisdiction of the monarch rather than a bishop. Many but not all Royal Peculiars are associated with royal palaces or forts; and there are also a few non-royal Peculiars.
- <sup>7</sup> The Tower contained a Grand Storehouse for military equipment (built 1688-92) but was lightly garrisoned for most of the eighteenth century. Its military population increased in the wartime years after 1793; and, after the accidental burning in 1841 of the Grand Storehouse, a new Waterloo Barracks was constructed in 1845 within the walls – now used as the Jewel House.
- <sup>8</sup> See section 7.10.