

2. THE VILLAGE POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE

The village population and its structure particularly at the household level was a direct result of the "economic, social and cultural"(1) environment in which people found themselves. Within Bramham the importance of agriculture as an employer was paramount and would have affected population, household and family size. This then was a traditional picture, locally based and largely independent of the radical changes occurring elsewhere.

The enumerated population of Bramham in 1851 was 1318 but for the purposes of this study it has been reduced to a more realistic 1150 [See Foreword]. The population of the village over time shows a typical pattern [See Fig 6 and Table 4]. A considerable growth from 1811-31 an increase of 56.3% occurred at a time of general rise in the population of England. The enclosure of Bramham [1807] probably had the effect of expanding agricultural employment, more efficient farming and a greater acreage would have led to a larger labouring population. A peak was reached in 1851-61 and from this point until the end of the century there was a steady decline during the period of bad harvests, falling prices and increasing imports which marked sustained rural depopulation. This

population pattern shows Bramhams fortunes to be closely linked with the local agricultural situation and not with the rapid growth of the West Riding population [between 1801-51 there was an increase of 132.5%]. As expected Bramhams population change shows a stronger correlation to that of the District of Tadcaster which saw a much slower growth, a tendency of rural areas.

The actual structure of the village population in 1851 shows a traditional pre-industrial picture. A break down by age and sex [See Table 6 and Fig 7] shows slightly more females [2.4%] but this can not be put down to the longer life span of women because among those aged 60+ there were similar numbers of males and females [46:43]. A weakness of the census is that it can not answer questions concerning change. Thus why there seems to be a small number of males in the range 20-24 is hard to determine. Another anomaly is the relatively high number of females in the range 10-14, the Parish Registers(2) do show a 20% increase in baptisms in 1837-41 over the proceeding five year period when this group were born, but reasons are difficult to ascertain.

(Noted Census requirements for 1830's and compulsory registration of births, deaths, marriages for 1837 ?)

Taken overall the population was youthful, the average age was 26 years and 46.7% of people were under 20 with 14.6% in their twenties. The average life

expectancy in the 19th Century was 40(3) but in Bramham 25% were over this age, 7.8% were over 60 and 7 people were 80 or over [a similar situation existed in Long Buckby Northamptonshire where 8.3% of people were over 60(4)]. An element of longevity is unlikely to be due to better medical facilities but rather to the fact that agricultural workers were among the healthiest labourers not prone to the problems of urban living. Certainly Bramhams stone cottages [Illus 12] meant that housing conditions were better than other areas and local agricultural diversity could have meant a more balanced diet.

High infant mortality, a feature of 19th Century village life can be seen from the Parish Registers. In the years 1845-54 30.6% [63] of all burials were of children under one year. Though declining in the 1890s a similar pattern can be seen over the whole century [1815-94] with 25% of burials falling into this category [Fig 8]. Thus in 1851 the overall picture is of a traditionally youthful population but still very dependent on localised conditions.

With regard to marital status [Fig 8.5] it becomes evident that marriage was an important institution. In 1851 33.4% of the population were married with 5.6% either widows or widowers. What is important is that

few neglected to marry, only 2.2% of women over 40 were unmarried and 2.3% of men. Age at marriage was somewhat late, in 1851 the national average was 26.9 years, (5) and in Bramham Table 7 infers that people were marrying in their twenties. Age of marriages is important because it is the only effective way of restraining fertility. Late marriage helped balance population and resources.

The largest group within the village were children [those under 14] of which 82.8% [351] were described as 'sons' or 'daughters' [Fig 8.5]. This brings in the idea of the household, and family. In Bramham the term 'household' and house are the same because there were no families sharing accommodation thus there were 261 households.

In turning to consider household structure some economic factors of village life have to be considered. In the 19th Century among the labouring population there was little surplus wealth and many lived a hand to mouth type existence. Any additional income from other members of the family would have been crucial. But the importance of the family as an economic unit is not clear. In Bramham the evidence shows that the household based economy was not a salient feature suggesting some prosperity in the

village allowing women and children not to have to work. By way of caution, the census does not show the casual and seasonal basis of agricultural employment which would have certainly supplemented household income.

The idea of the extended family of co-residing kin working as an economic unit is largely absent in 1851. Households were based on the nuclear family with 66% of households comprised of two generations, usually parents and offspring [Table 11] only a mere 8.5% of households could profess to having an extended family of three generations. To add to this 57% of households had four or less inhabitants [Fig 9], large households did exist, there were 24 with more than eight people but overall the trend was for smaller family groupings. Average household size was 4.4 persons, slightly lower than the national figure which stood at 4.5 to 4.75 persons(6).

In 1851 the family as an economic unit is not particularly strong in Bramham. In only 25% of households did more than one person work, of which only 8% had three or more people working. Only 20 married women had occupations which was just 7.6% of households. If children are also brought into the picture it is seen that child employment was largely

absent with only 12 [4%] of children under 14 years working. By comparison at Long Buckby(7) 12% of children were at work and at Tadcaster(8) 46%. Under half [44.8%] of offspring over 14 were earning an income with 67% of sons and 29% of daughters working. It would seem that wives and daughters generally stayed at home while the men worked.

The census suggests that children were attending school on a more regular basis, limiting their economic usefulness at a young age. A small national school was replaced by a much larger building in the late 1840s [Illus 13]. This level of facility was certainly not the rule in mid 19th Century rural communities. Only a rough estimation of attendance can be obtained from the census by those stated as scholars [a total of 253]. Schools before 1870 were characterised by fluctuating attendance and the fact that the census was taken in March yet children usually worked on the land in Spring and Summer means the number of scholars is unnaturally high. Of the 22.3% of children aged 5-14, not attending school a small proportion were working while the rest were helping at home or were from poorer backgrounds. The age structure of scholars is interesting [Table 8], through 78.7% were between 5 and 14, there were 45 children under 5 years of which 9 were aged 2. In addition 9 were over 14 years,

Tillot remarks that this could be a census error(9) but the numbers seem too significant and suggest that the school had a child minding capacity and parents could afford to release their children from the home suggesting a level of prosperity.

The evidence shows that the family economic unit was not a dominant feature in Bramham. In other areas population growth was putting pressure on accommodation and the result was larger numbers of co-residing kin,(10) but in Bramham this was not the case. It would be wrong not to stress the importance of kin living locally, 37 [13%] of surnames appeared more than twice on the census pointing to the normal pattern of rural family linkages.

As expected there is a strong correlation between household composition and social class [Table 9 & 10] household size and number of offspring clearly differ between social groups due to their relative wealth. Thus Class II households were enlarged by farm and domestic servants as well as relations and children. By contrast the poorer social classes IV and V show fewer offspring and a smaller household size and were largely unaffected by lodgers, a common addition to lower class families who only lived in 3.8% of houses.

The overall impression of Bramham in 1851 is that the population and its structure was a direct result of the economic situation of its inhabitants. It ^{represented} repeated an essentially pre-industrial picture still dependent on external constraints, but a certain level of prosperity can be detected even among the lower orders. Also a number of ideas about rural society can be seen, by the situation in Bramham not to be prevalent. The extended family and co-residing kin, thought to be a crucial arrangement in rural communities where money was scarce is not a dominant feature. But despite this the population structure seems traditional with little evidence of change or breakdown of the community. The decline in rural population and the movement of people into towns which occurred in the second half of the 19th Century would obviously change the structure of village society but in 1851 these show little sign of affecting Bramham.

Footnotes:

- (1) Tranter, T. L, Population and Society 1750-1940, London, 1985 P-186.
- (2) The Brothwick Institute of Historical Research
York, Bramham Parish Registers, BRA 4, 7 and 8.
- (3) Tranter, N. L, Population and Society P-44.
- (4) Greenall, R. L, The population of a Northamptonshire Village in 1851 A census study of Long Buckby, University of Leicester, 1971, P-14.
- (5) Tranter, N. L, Population and Society, P-52.
- (6) Tranter, N. L, Population and Society, P-181.
- (7) Greenall, R. L, The Population of a Northamptonshire Village in 1851, P-22.
- (8) Brewster, B. M, 'Tadcaster 1851', National Register of Archives of West Riding. Northern Section Annual Report and Bulletin, No.13, P1-23.
- (9) Tillot, P. M, 'Sources of Inaccuracy in the 1851 and 1861 Censuses' in Wrigley, Nineteenth Century Society, 1972, P-123.
- (10) Tranter, N. L, Population and Society, P-184.

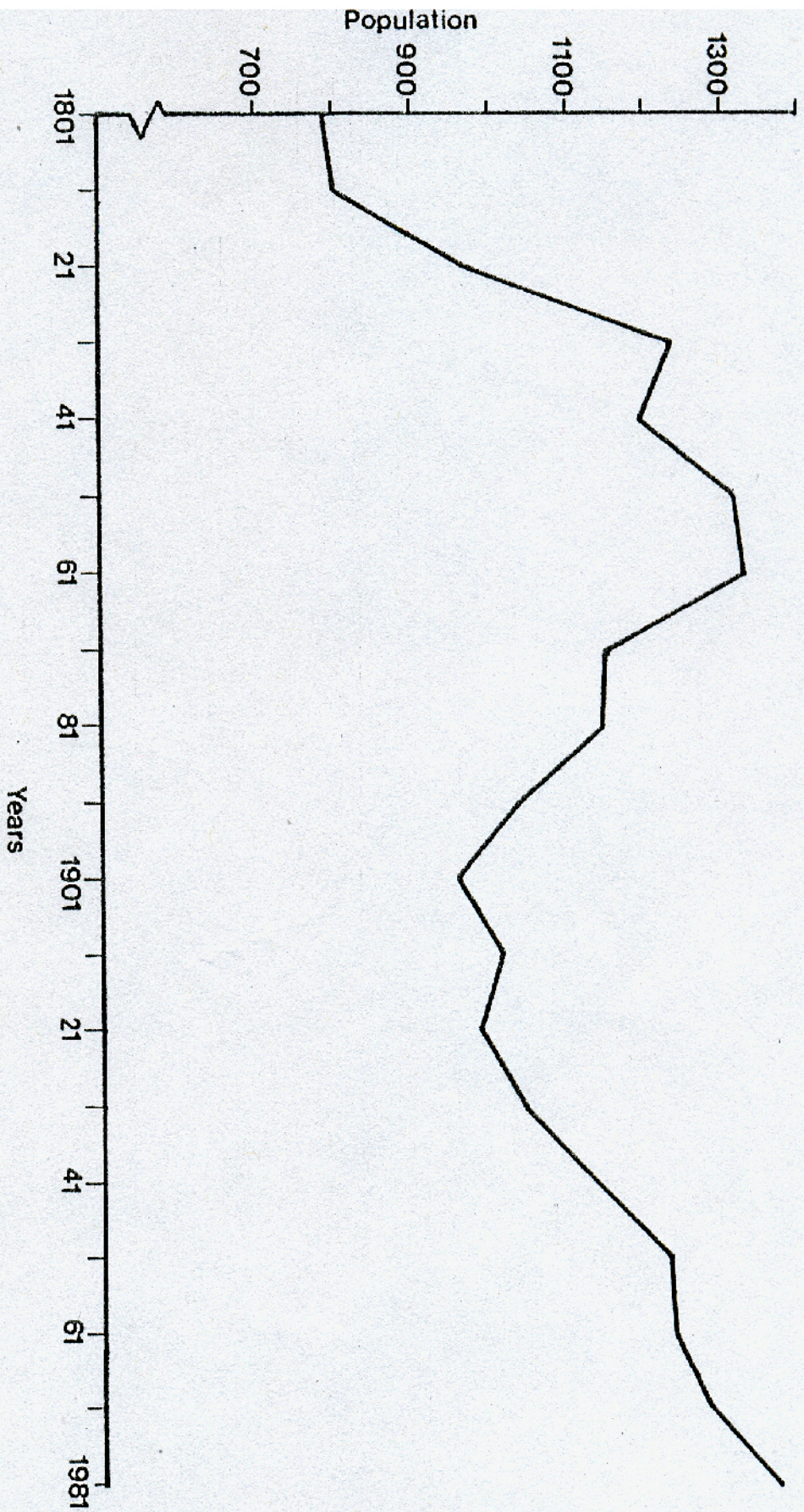


Fig 6. The Population of Bramham 1801-1981. Source, The Census Reports

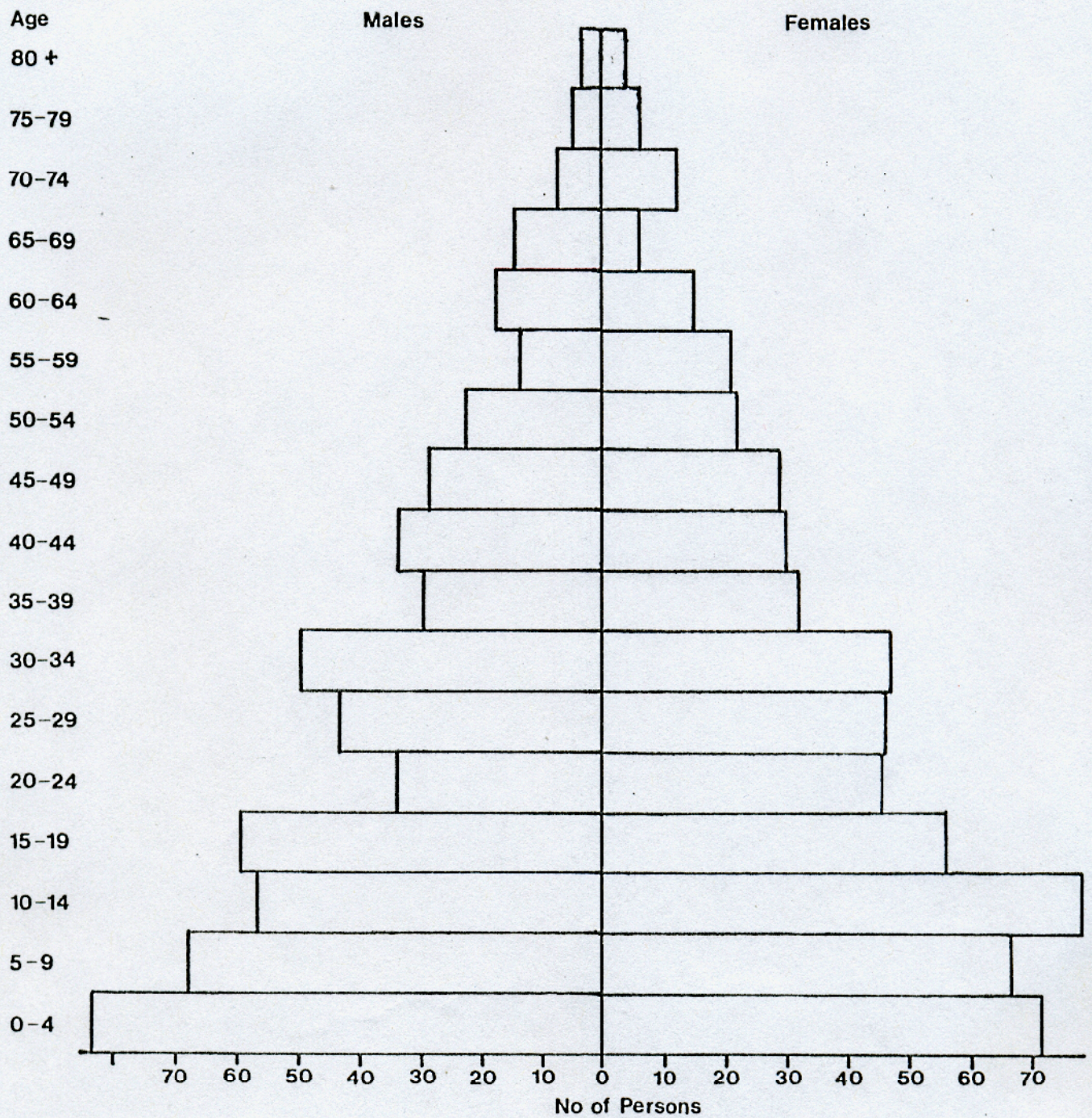
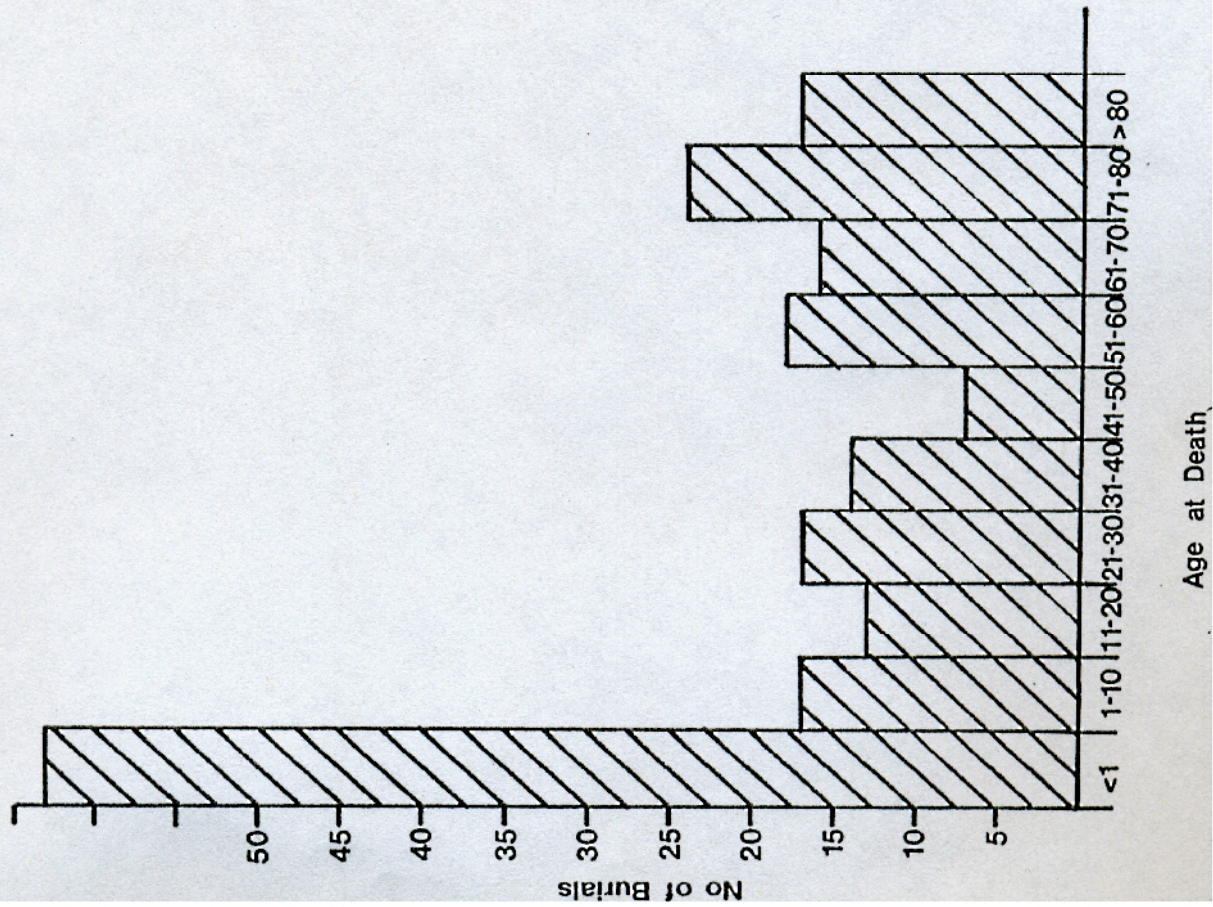
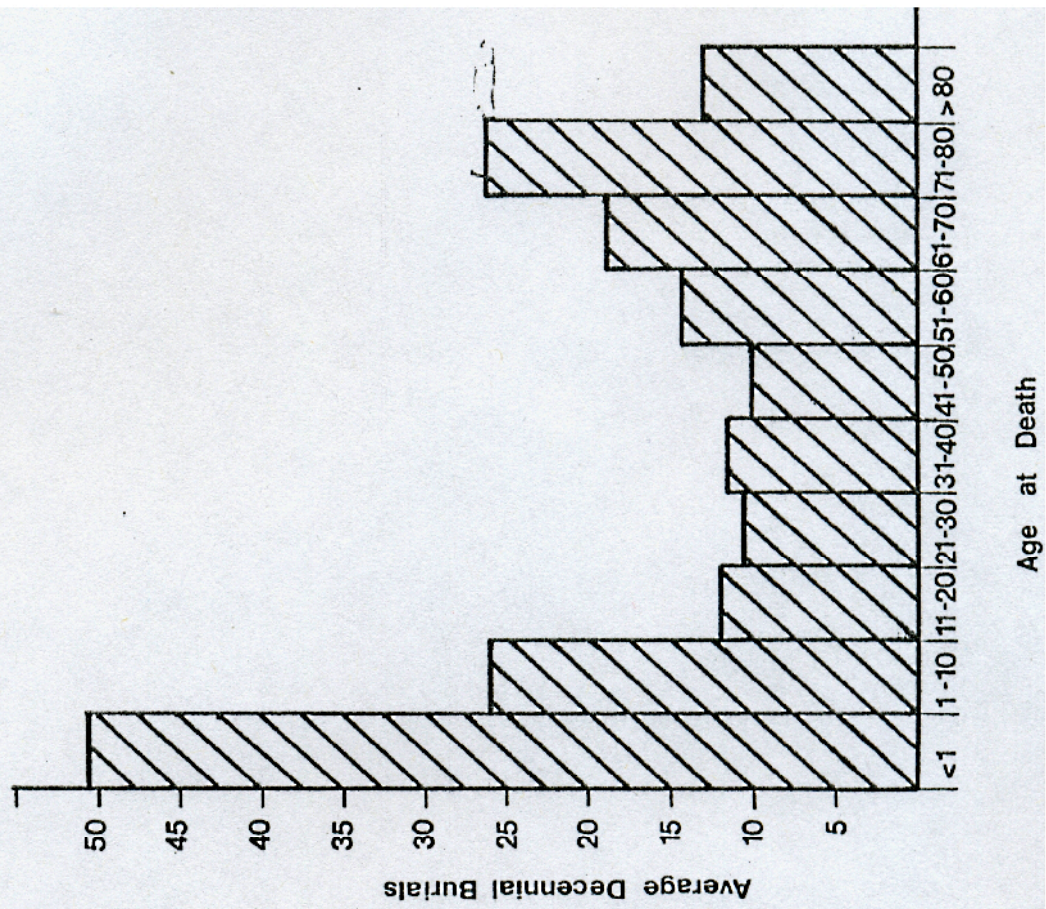


Fig 7. The Age and Sex Structure of Bramham 1851

Fig 8. Graph of number of Burials
by age at death 1845-54



Graph of Average Decennial Burials
by age at death 1815-94



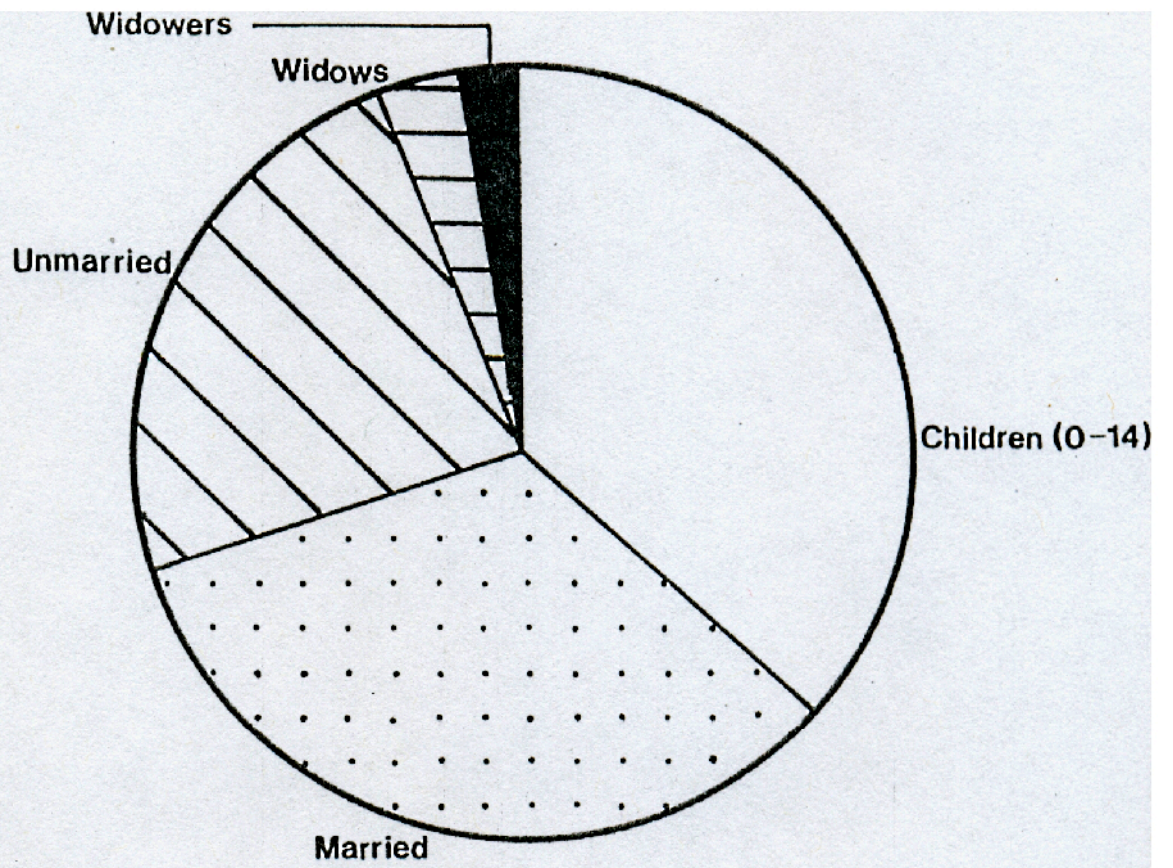


Fig 8.5. Marital Status of the Population of Bramham 1851

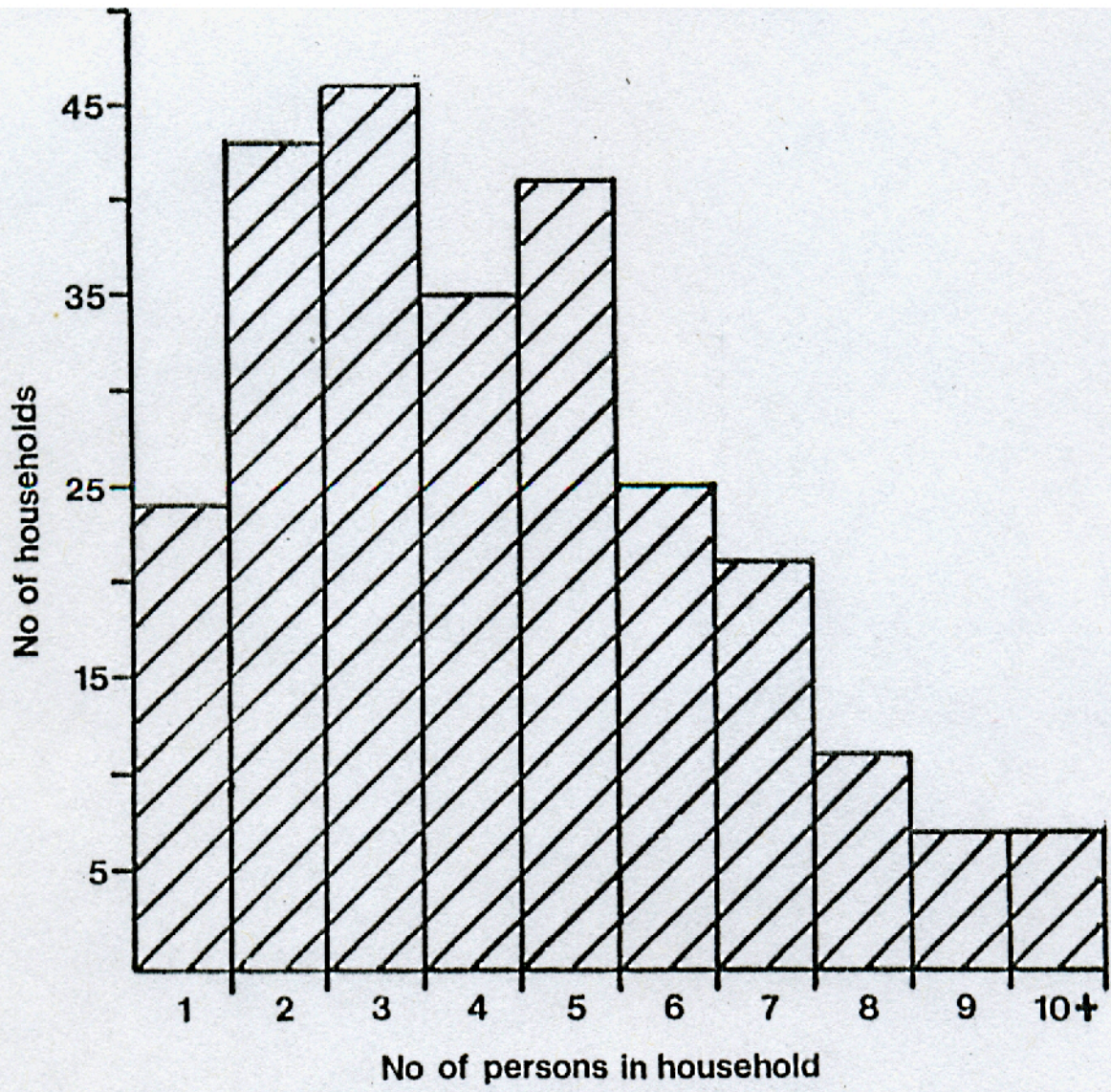


Fig 9. Graph to show number of persons in households

Table 6 Age-Sex Structure in Bramham 1851

| Age | MALES | FEMALES | TOTAL | % TOTAL |
|-------|-------|---------|-------|---------|
| 0- 4 | 83 | 72 | 155 | 13.5 |
| 5- 9 | 67 | 67 | 134 | 11.6 |
| 10-14 | 56 | 78 | 134 | 11.6 |
| 15-19 | 59 | 56 | 115 | 10 |
| 20-24 | 33 | 46 | 79 | 6.9 |
| 25-29 | 43 | 46 | 89 | 7.7 |
| 30-34 | 49 | 47 | 96 | 8.3 |
| 35-39 | 29 | 32 | 61 | 5.3 |
| 40-44 | 33 | 30 | 63 | 5.5 |
| 45-49 | 28 | 29 | 57 | 4.9 |
| 50-54 | 22 | 22 | 44 | 3.8 |
| 55-59 | 13 | 21 | 34 | 3.0 |
| 60-64 | 17 | 15 | 32 | 2.8 |
| 65-59 | 14 | 6 | 20 | 1.7 |
| 70-74 | 7 | 12 | 19 | 1.7 |
| 75-79 | 5 | 6 | 11 | 1 |
| 80+ | 3 | 4 | 7 | 0.6 |
| | 561 | 589 | 1150 | |

Table 7 Percentage of those unmarried in Bramham 1851

| | AGE | | |
|-----------------|-------|-------|------|
| | 14-19 | 20-29 | 30+ |
| Unmarried Men | 21.5 | 64.5 | 14 |
| Unmarried Women | 30.6 | 56.5 | 12.9 |

Table 8 Age Structure of those listed as 'Scholars'

| Age | No. of Scholars | % |
|-------|-----------------|------|
| 2 -5 | 45 | 17.7 |
| 5 -9 | 118 | 46.7 |
| 10-14 | 81 | 32 |
| 14+ | 9 | 3.6 |

Table 9 Average number of resident offspring by
Social Class of Household Head

| Social Class | No. of Households with Offspring | Offspring per Household |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| I | 1 | 5 |
| II | 24 | 2.4 |
| III | 56 | 3.4 |
| IV | 81 | 2.6 |
| V | 16 | 2.8 |

Table 10 The average size of Households according to
Social Status of Household Head

| Social Class | Persons per Household |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| I | 15 |
| II | 5.5 |
| III | 4.4 |
| IV | 4.1 |
| V | 4.3 |

Table 11 Number of Generations in Households

| | | % |
|-----------------------------|-----|------|
| Households of 1 Generation | 66 | 25.6 |
| Households of 2 Generations | 170 | 65.9 |
| Households of 3 Generations | 22 | 8.5 |



Illus.12 Labourers cottages. They are clearly small, in 1851 this row was seven dwellings which is emphasised by the sliding windows and front doors which open onto the road. But in 1851 their stone construction made them relatively sound and certainly superior to many agricultural cottages in the south of England.



Illus.13 The village school before demolition in the 1960's. Built in the 1840's with church sponsorship it was a sizeable school for the time when education was not nationally organised and most teaching took place in far less formal surroundings.