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NINETEENTH CENTURY**

*by*

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Close to the 150th anniversary of 'the Great Hunger', the Irish potato famine of 1845-47, it is a fitting time to recall Nottingham's first Irish immigrants, part of that great wave of migrants which provided much of the impetus for the Industrial Revolution but also caused much fear and antagonism and gave rise to many of the Irish stereotypes. The Irish were reluctant immigrants, many of them forced to leave by political oppression, religious discrimination and a wretchedly unjust system of land tenure which kept the bulk of the population in almost permanent destitution. For many, immigration to Britain was not their first choice and was used as a means of earning their passage to what was perceived as the more prosperous and welcoming shores of America. Many more however, stayed in Britain, occupying 'a curious middle place', seeing their sojourn here as a temporary one and exercised more by familial ties and political developments in 'the old country', than in consolidating their position in Britain. The development of Irish studies over the past twenty years has uncovered a great deal of historical detail, not only of the Irish communities in the great manufacturing centres, but also of their settlement in cities and towns not normally associated with the Irish. This greater diversity of scholarship offers a more balanced picture of 19th century Irish immigration. It shows for example that the reception they received was by no means universally hostile and depended on a myriad of local geographical, historical, economic and political factors, as was the case in Nottingham.

There is no documented evidence of an Irish presence in Nottingham before 1832, though Irish migration to the East Midlands had been growing since the extensive land drainage and the subsequent growth in agricultural employment in Lincolnshire after the end of the Napoleonic wars. By 1828 seasonal Irish immigration to the districts around

Holbeach, Boston and Spalding had become a regular feature of agricultural life, especially as the English corn harvest coincided with a slack time in the Irish farming season. Although they were welcomed by local farmers, their presence raised tension and animosity amongst Lincolnshire farm labourers who felt the Irish were responsible for a lowering of wages and rising unemployment, and by 1833 attacks on the migrants were common. Seasonal migration continued to grow however, and by 1844 it was reported that up to 800 Irish a day were arriving in Stamford on the railway line from Liverpool.<sup>1</sup>

It is likely that at least some of these migrants would have made their way to Nottingham, either in search of work and a permanent home, or as a base to await further seasonal employment. Both the 1841 and 1851 census returns show a number of Irish agricultural labourers, though it is likely that as the building boom took off in Nottingham in the 1850s many of these would have found more lucrative employment in this trade: by 1878 the chairman of the Nottingham Board of Guardians, William Foster, reported that as far as he knew there were no Irish agricultural labourers in Nottingham.<sup>2</sup>

When Fr. Robert William Willson came to minister in the Nottingham mission in 1824, he found only 150 Catholics; within a year this number had doubled and a new church was needed.<sup>3</sup> In what was to become the Diocese of Nottingham (comprising Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire), the congregation grew from 4000 in 1826, to 16,000 in 1840, and 20,000 in 1850.<sup>4</sup> It is not noted how many of these were Irish, but it is likely that many were, as by 1832 in his submission to the Parliamentary Report on the State of the Irish Poor, Fr. Willson reported that he 'apprehended at least 400, including children'. He admitted that numbers

were constantly fluctuating; although he does not give their location it is likely that given their later pattern of settlement they would have lived in the Leenside and Hockley areas. He recorded the appalling conditions in which they lived, noting that 'in one court containing about 16 rooms: 11 of them occupied by the Irish and 90 persons reside in the 11 rooms, I counted myself last week. The rooms are very small and miserable dwellings.'<sup>5</sup>

Practically all the cities and towns of the industrial revolution had a 'Little Ireland' in their midst, which like Leenside was usually situated in the poorest and most unhealthy part of town. There were of course some Irish who by virtue of their economic or occupational position managed to live outside these ghettos, but for many British people the Irish became synonymous with urban squalor, disease, crime and violence. Even by the standards of the day however, the social problems that the Irish - and indeed the poor in general - faced in Nottingham in the first half of the 19th century were unique and particularly severe. In the mid-18th century, Nottingham was a pleasant market town of some 5,000 people. There was a rapid increase in population to satisfy the needs of the town's growing industry, so that by the 1830s, 50,000 were living in an area similar in size to that of a century before.<sup>6</sup>

Expansion of housing onto the common fields was prevented by the failure of the Corporation to enclose the common land; this meant that Nottingham was effectively held in a vice up to the Enclosure Act of 1845. Many of the houses built in the first half of the 19th century were of inferior quality, and most (7,000-8,000 of the town's 11,000), were built back-to-back with many formed into courts and quasi-courts, often with only the most rudimentary of sanitary systems. 'The courts contained an abundance of small tenements, there being many families and even extra lodgers in all, maggots in carrion flesh, or mites in cheese could not be huddled more closely together'<sup>7</sup>.

The Irish in 1832 were forced by economic conditions into the poorer parts of town, but they also appeared to form a community; as Fr. Willson commented 'they remain a distinct class, though children of Irish parents born here, of course adopt the manners of the English as they are frequently engaged in

play with English children.' Living conditions by modern standards were appalling, although the Irish were probably no worse off than many of the host community.

By the 1830s Nottingham had become the hosiery capital of England, and the introduction of steam to lace-making made these the town's largest industries. These trades however, were extremely vulnerable to the vagaries of raw material prices and international competition. Some of the Irish in 1832 were framework knitters, or worked in some branch of the garment industry and some gravitated towards those trades that became synonymous with the Irish: hawking of small wares and labouring. In spite of their poverty however, Fr. Willson comments that less of the women were driven to prostitution than the English and it is clear from other sources that the taboo on sexual immorality was stronger in such a closely-knit society with strong religious beliefs than in the more heterogeneous host population. He comments on the impoverished state of the children, whose main diet 'consisted of red herrings and potatoes'. Influenced by this environment, Fr. Willson displayed a somewhat uncatholic view of procreation, observing that 'the males associate chiefly with people from Ireland and form intimacies with them, that lead to early marriage. When remonstrated with at the prospect of a family, they invariably explain we cannot be poorer.'

The 1841 and 1851 census returns allow us to look more closely at these immigrants. Although technically in-migrants, there is little doubt that they saw England as a foreign country and were in turn seen as foreigners. The accepted method of 'counting' the Irish migrants used here and in similar studies in other cities and towns, is to include those born in Ireland and to define as Irish all family members where the head of the household is Irish-born. By 1841 the Irish in Nottingham had doubled to 781 or 1.4% of the population, an increase that was in line with the inexorable rise in Irish immigration before the Great Famine, when it was estimated that up to one million people had left Ireland since the end of the Napoleonic wars. Forced to leave by the huge rise in population and the grossly unjust system of land tenure, their passage was facilitated by a growth in literacy and the spread of the English language, coupled with cheaper and easier travel to Britain with

the introduction of the steampacket. These developments had the effect of 'equipping a substantial section of the Irish people for leaving the country.'<sup>8</sup>

Overall the gender balance of the Irish population of Nottingham in 1841 is almost equal, although there were more women than men in the 25-50 age group, reflecting the fact that employment opportunities for women in the hosiery and service industries were plentiful. In this group there were 33.5% Irish men to 44.4% women, compared with 21.6% men to 33% women in the host population.

The age and sex distribution is somewhat distorted by the inclusion of thirty Irish-born soldiers, including two officers and three non commissioned officers, stationed in the local barracks which went to make up the permanent garrison considered to be necessary to subdue outbreaks of disorder during those turbulent years. However, even if the army personnel are removed from the calculation there were still considerably more Irish in the 25-50 age group: 32.7% of the host population compared with 45.5% of the Irish. This is to be expected in a newly arrived immigrant population, many of whom would probably have been single people. In the age group 0-20 the situation is reversed: this sector accounts for 43.8% of the host population, and only 37.9% of the Irish.

The 1841 census returns do not provide evidence of the civil condition or family structure, so it is not possible to comment on these areas with any degree of accuracy. The Irish were concentrated in two areas: Leenside, and in a number of streets and courts between Goose Gate and York Street. Many of the framework knitters lived in close proximity, especially around Crossland Place in Leenside, and in a number of courts around Millstone Lane; there was a concentration of tailors around Parliament Street.

The census is somewhat deficient in allowing us to make a full analysis of the occupational structure of the migrants; in all 271 occupations were returned for the Irish: 213 male and 58 female, showing 34 different occupations. Tables 1 and 2 show the most popular male and female occupations.

TABLE 1

Occupations accounting for more than 2% of total occupied Irish Males in 1841.

	No.	%
Framework Knitters	66	31
Tailors	30	14
Soldiers	30	14
Hawkers	23	10
Labourers	19	9
Agricultural Labourers	17	8
Shoemakers	14	7
Lace Makers	7	2.5
Others	10	4.5
	<hr/> 216	<hr/> 100

TABLE 2

Occupations accounting for more than 2% of total occupied Irish females in 1841.

	No.	%
Stitchers/seamers	17	29
Lace Dressers	13	23
Servants	7	12
Dealers	4	7
Dressmakers	3	5
Milliners	3	5
Framework Knitters	3	5
Housekeepers	3	5
Others	5	9
	<hr/> 58	<hr/> 100

What is immediately striking, though not surprising, is that the majority of occupations are connected with the hosiery, lace and garment-making trades amounting to 72.4% of females and 49.7% of males. Migrants will of course seek to capitalise on their marketable skills and following the collapse of the Irish woollen and cotton industries, which had gone into terminal decline when large amounts of cheap British goods were dumped on the Irish market in the 1830s, thousands of workers were thrown out of employment. Nottingham would have been a natural focus for these workers, especially from the Dublin area with its tradition of stocking and glove making.

There is some evidence of contact between Nottingham and Dublin framework knitters from as early

as 1812 when Gravener Henson, leader of the Nottingham framework knitters - and reputed to be one of the leaders of the Luddites - travelled to Dublin to enlist the support of the Irish workers for a petition to prevent frauds and abuses in the industry. The petition was organised with the intention of banning the production of 'cut-ups', a new method of working considered by many knitters as fraudulent and responsible for driving down wages and living standards. A disappointed Henson however, received little sympathy and was told in no uncertain terms that the Dublin knitters did not engage in such practices and that 'the evil lay with yourselves'. No doubt they felt they had little to thank the English workers for, as Henson comments 'they are most shockingly oppressed by bad English goods; 10 years since there were 700 hands now there is not above 200.'<sup>9</sup>

The Nottingham frame knitting trade would have required some adaptation for the Irish workers, but it was work in which their wives and families could also be employed in sewing up. Although Nottingham was regarded as the hosiery capital of Britain, its Golden Era was over by 1815. Framework knitting was hard and lowly-paid work, with families often having to work up to 70 hours a week. In good times skilled men could earn 15s. per week, children 3s. and women up to 6s. 6d.; but in leaner times earnings could fall by up to half.<sup>10</sup> Workers had no guarantee that they would actually receive wages; framework knitter George Kendall observed that in two years he had been given only 16s. 6d., of which 10s. 6d. went to pay interest on pawn tickets. As many framers were often involved in other businesses, and owned butchers' and grocers' shops, workers could be paid in kind, often having to sell the meat or tea back to make ends meet.<sup>11</sup> Despite the difficulties of the work however, migrants flocked to the town, so that by 1851 over half the population of Nottingham had been born outside the town. Smith estimates that at least two-thirds of these people were women, attracted by employment as domestic servants and in the lace industry, and most came from within a 50-mile radius of Nottingham.<sup>12</sup>

In 1841 Nottingham was in the grip of one of its periodic depressions. Workers in the hosiery trades, and framework knitters in particular, were especially vulnerable in hard times, and because of their concen-

tration in this industry the Irish were obviously in an extremely precarious position. Despite this however, there were only seven Irish in the Union workhouse out of a total of 480. Two of these were framework knitters, and three were members of the same family - a mother and two daughters. An Irish-born soldier, Robert Foster, probably the breadwinner of the family, languished in the nearby House of Correction, an indication that the lot of a soldier and his family was no more secure than the rest of the population.

The insecurity of a hand-to-mouth existence in Leenside is illustrated in a letter from Fr. Thomas Rimmer, a Catholic priest who ministered to the poor in that area:<sup>13</sup> 'Nottingham contains about 60,000 inhabitants. The Catholic body amounts to about 1,000 English and Irish. I speak of those who attend chapel. Also there are many Irish who do not attend.' He had obvious sympathy for the Chartists, and comments that if he had to work for very long in the poverty of Leenside he would soon become a 'radical'.

By 1847 Famine migrants had begun to arrive in Nottingham and were already causing alarm. Similar concern had been raised three years earlier when the *Nottingham Review* reported on 25th October 1844 that 'there were several cases of smallpox in the town most of which existed amongst the lower class of Irish'. The Sanitary Committee reported on 15th March 1847 that there was concern about 'the importation of smallpox and other diseases by strangers, particularly Irish coming into the town which being in a central position and lying between the western coast of England and the agricultural district of Lincolnshire is a frequent place of resort.'

This was not an auspicious time for the arrival of the migrants. Nottingham in 1847 was again hit by an economic slump and large numbers of people were unemployed and dependant on relief. Fifty shops in the centre of town were closed<sup>14</sup>, and death rates rose sharply<sup>15</sup>, probably due to under-nourishment and lowered resistance to disease. There were reports of death by starvation in Lowdham<sup>16</sup>, and the mayor of Nottingham was distressed by a report in a national newspaper that '25,000 people in Nottingham were reduced to eating putrid horseflesh.'<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the latter part of 1846 and the first half of 1847 the local press carried heartrending accounts of the distress in Ireland, and the arrival of large numbers of sick and starving people at British ports 'up to 100,000 a day'<sup>18</sup> according to a leading local councillor, William Felkin. The local press, in common with the national newspapers, laid the blame for the catastrophe both on the indigence of the native Irish, and the profligacy of the landlord class.

There was also sympathy for the plight of the Famine victims, though such sentiments were tempered by the fear of an invasion of these destitute migrants as had occurred in Liverpool and Manchester. Felkin, responding to a statement by the mayor that '150 Irish immigrants applied to our relieving officers during the last week', stated that 'it appeared that typhus had been brought into the Nottingham union workhouse in the last week by immigrants, though it would be most painful and distressing to adopt stringent means, yet the case is so obviously threatening that the preservation of our country demands immediate steps to be taken to prevent the infliction of these evils upon us.'<sup>19</sup> Felkin went on to propose that the Council petition the Prime Minister to stop the Irish immigrants entering the country and to cease payment of public monies to Irish landlords. A sub-committee to draft the petition was formed, and it was duly presented to the Council on 14th May 1847, and passed with one vote of dissent.<sup>20</sup>

One of the Council's greatest fears was that an influx of sick and destitute Irish would overwhelm the meagre resources of poor law provision for the town. The lack of poor law records for the period makes full analysis of the period impossible, but some insight can be gleaned from the reports of the Nottingham Board of Guardians. These show that pressure on their resources was indeed acute. In the year up to September 1847, 662 serious cases had been treated, more than double that of the previous year. Deaths in the workhouse had risen from nine in 1845-46 to 235 in 1846-47. Admissions in two districts were up from 3163 to 4266 in the same period<sup>21</sup>, and expenditure on relief had increased by a third.<sup>22</sup>

One of the workhouse surgeons, the aptly named Mr. Stiff, reported that smallpox had been brought into the workhouse by the Irish, and reported that in

an eight day period the vagrant office had received '150 English, 110 Irish, 10 Scots.'<sup>23</sup> By August things were no better and the guardians were forced to increase the size of the vagrant ward, outdoor relief was extended, and the able-bodied were given the choice of working on the construction of the Arboretum or of going into the workhouse.<sup>24</sup>

The acute distress in the town was partly responsible for a resurgence of Chartism in 1847, dormant since the failure of the Chartist-inspired industrial of 1842. Dorothy Thompson<sup>25</sup> has argued that there was a high level of Irish involvement at all levels in the Chartist movement nationally, and it is likely that at least some of those Irish framework knitters - a trade which formed the backbone of Nottingham Chartism - were involved. The return of Feargus O'Connor to fight the Nottingham seat on a Chartist ticket gives added weight to this conjecture. Following the death of Daniel O'Connell in 1847, O'Connor was the only politician of stature to espouse the needs of the Irish in Britain, and as such was in a unique position to win the allegiance of the Nottingham Irish. He arrived in Nottingham in 1846 exhorting the electors to 'throw out the do-nothing, kid-glove reformers.'<sup>26</sup>

O'Connor claimed to be descended from the last High King of Ireland, Roderick O'Connor; and the flamboyance of his style, despite the republicanism of his rhetoric, certainly had a regal quality about it. He held a number of huge meetings at which he would arrive in a carriage drawn by four greys and preceded by the green Chartist flags, wreaths, banners and a band playing the Chartist anthem 'The Lion Of Freedom', the first verse of which went:

The Lion of Freedom comes from his den.  
We'll rally round him again and again.  
We'll crown him with laurels our champion to be  
O'Connor the patriot of sweet liberty.<sup>27</sup>

Another Irishman Fr. Thaddeus O'Malley, 'the famous Irish radical', was elected to the Chartist National Assembly at a mass meeting in the Market Square on Easter Monday 1847 before a crowd of 25,000 people, at which O'Connor also spoke<sup>28</sup>. Fr. O'Malley had even less time for the 'moral force' Chartists than O'Connor, and advocated 'the formation of armed clubs', and stated his intention to take part in their formation<sup>29</sup>. The relationship between

Chartism and religion is a complex one and does not lend itself easily to overly-simplistic explanations. Smith's comments, for example, that 'many radicals would have abstained from voting for O'Connor because of his Roman Catholic beliefs'<sup>30</sup> is inaccurate in two respects: O'Connor was a Protestant, and Nottingham radicals obviously did not balk at supporting O'Malley, a Catholic priest. Radical movement however, often throw up such apparent contradictions. Saville in his analysis of the revolutionary year of 1848 considers the question of Irish involvement in Chartism in the context of the racial hostility often directed at them. He draws a comparison with the experience of Jews in the east end of London in the 1930s, who were active in radical politics amidst a tide of anti-semitism; this says Saville 'demonstrates a wide gap in social consciousness between ordinary people and political radicals, so it was with the Irish in the 1840s.'<sup>31</sup>

The fortunes of O'Connor and Chartism waned rapidly after his election in 1847, but he maintained some support in Nottingham even after the decline of his national popularity, and when a petition was raised to ease his financial difficulties in 1852, the majority of the contributions came from Nottingham<sup>32</sup>. A statue was unveiled to his memory in 1859 in the Arboretum, a small recognition to be balanced against the fact that he was later to be made the scapegoat for the failure of Chartism and the decline of working class radicalism for a generation.

The revival of the Catholic Church in the 19th century is inextricably linked to Irish immigration. What Cardinal Newman called the 'Second Spring' of Catholicism would not have been possible without that huge influx. Yet there is a curious reluctance to acknowledge that influence; Canon Cummins' *Nottingham Cathedral: A History of Catholic Nottingham*, for example, devotes just eight lines to the Irish. Is this perhaps a resonance of the historical ambivalence felt by many English Catholics towards what Connolly has called an Irish 'do-it-yourself religion'?<sup>33</sup>

The differences between English and Irish Catholicism can be overstated, but differences there certainly were, not least in their different attitudes to religious observance. D.W. Miller's research<sup>34</sup> into

pre-famine Irish Catholicism shows a relatively low level of observance; this he argues was facilitated not only by the folk memory of the old Celtic church and the survival of some pre-Christian practices such as the festival of Lughnasa, but also the legacy of the more recent penal laws. This may in part have accounted for what Canon Sweeney called 'an awesome number of Catholics who had put aside all visible allegiance to Catholicism by the final decade of the nineteenth century.'<sup>35</sup> 'For if Miller's argument is accepted then the Irish emphasis on the 'customary' aspects of religion, to the neglect of the 'canonical' features, may well have persisted and been passed on to the next generation.

For the beleaguered Irish poor however, their religion was a sanctuary, and their priest a figure of central importance whose period of ministry to a particular congregation often extended to an adult lifetime. His authority was accepted not only by the devout but also by the lapsed or non-practising in his flock. The provision of education has always been of central importance to the Catholic Church, and the first Catholic girls' school was opened in Stoney Street, followed soon after in 1834 by a boys school in Bell Yard, Long Row. The first purpose-built Catholic school was built in Kent Street and opened in 1842, taking 140 boys. By 1870 Catholic schools had been established in George Street (a ragged school run by the Irish Sisters of Mercy), Derby Road, and Narrow Marsh.<sup>36</sup>

The 1851 census reveals that Nottingham's Irish population had once again doubled from its 1841 level, though this is probably considerably less than at the height of the Famine exodus in 1847. There were now 1,686 Irish or 2.8% of the population. This census was far more comprehensive than previous ones, and allows us to make an analysis of marital status, and family structure, in addition to age, gender, and occupational structure. The enumerators also asked about place of birth, in addition to country of birth, though in the case of the Irish only 192 answered this question. From this sample it can be seen that the Dublin migrants had now been supplanted by a considerable influx from the west of Ireland, many of whom were probably Famine migrants.

TABLE 3

Birthplace of male and female Irish migrants, 1851.  
(Only Counties with more than ten entries).

<i>County</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Dublin	69	36
Sligo	44	22
Mayo	27	14
Others	52	28
	192	100

The Famine is also reflected in the distorted age structure of the Irish population, with a preponderance of people aged 20-50; as in all famines the fittest tend to survive. The Irish population was almost equally divided between male and female, a somewhat unusual phenomenon in a relatively new immigrant community. (By 1871 however, this had changed and Nottingham by then had the lowest male-female ratio of any Irish community in Britain, a further reflection of the employment opportunities available). The occupational structure of the female Irish in 1851 was almost unchanged, though male employment was now dominated by labourers from the west of Ireland, most of whom were young single men, concentrated in a number of lodging houses around Glasshouse Street. Indeed most of the migrants - almost half - lived in this area, mostly in a number of courts between Millstone Lane and Milton Street. The Irish community in Leenside had not increased at the same rate, and were concentrated in Pear Street, Lees Yard, Crossland Street, Currant Street, and Narrow Marsh. (Figure 1).

TABLE 4

Occupations accounting for more than 2% of total occupied males in 1851.

<i>Occupations</i>	<i>No. of Irish</i>	<i>%</i>
Labourers	190	38
Agricultural Labourers	58	12
Framework Knitters	53	11
Cordwainers/Shoemakers	47	10
Hawkers/Hucksters/Dealers	44	9
Scholars	42	8
Others	62	12
	496	100

TABLE 5

Occupations accounting for more than 2% of total occupied females in 1851.

<i>Occupations</i>	<i>No. of Irish</i>	<i>%</i>
Stitchers/Seamers	83	26
Lace Drawers	57	18
Houseservants	57	12
Seamstresses	26	8
Housekeepers	23	7
Others	95	29
	321	100

There was a multiplicity of types of household in the Irish community (Table 6), though in the crowded and cramped conditions of Nottingham's slums, the term 'household unit' assumed less importance than it does today. The degree of stability and integration of a migrant group can however, be measured by the extent of inter-marriage with the host population. As Table 7 shows, no less than 93.1% of all Irish marriages were to other Irish people. This can be compared to Bristol, a town with a long-standing Irish population, where the percentage of inter-Irish marriages was only 50%. The percentage of single Irish people aged over 18 was also high at 50%, compared to 33% for Bristol. Correspondingly the number of Irish widows and widowers was low in Nottingham at 2.5%, compared to 6% of the host population, and no less than 16% of the Bristol Irish. The structure of the Irish population then is to be expected given that a high proportion were recently-arrived Famine immigrants. A high percentage of single people, and a low ratio of dependants were the marks of a distorted population that characterised many Irish settlements in the post-Famine period; a visible manifestation of the single greatest tragedy visited on the Irish people in modern history.

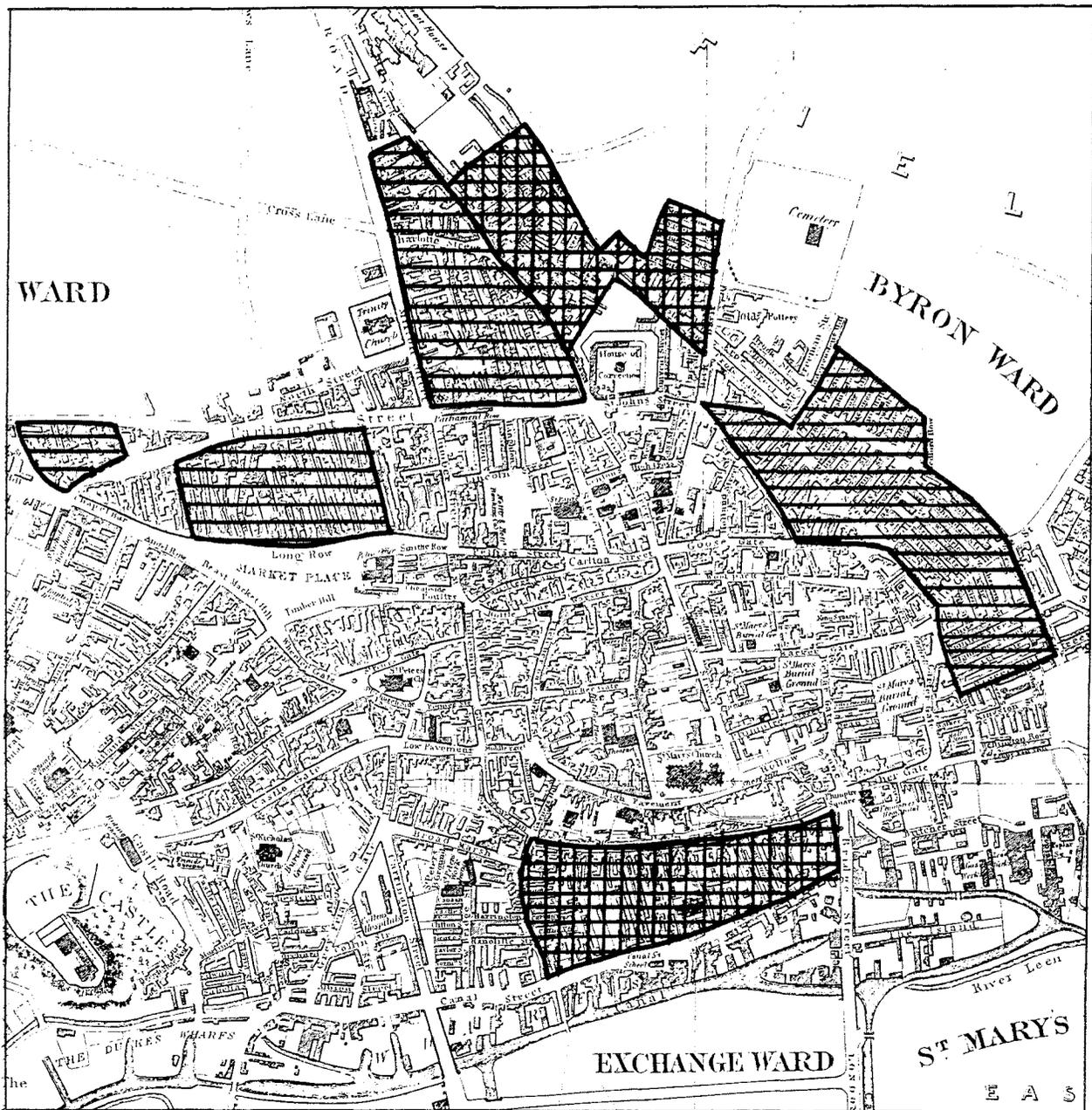


FIGURE 1: Areas of Irish settlement in Nottingham, based on 1851 census returns superimposed on Dearden's Map of Nottingham, 1844. Single hatching denotes medium density, cross hatching denotes high density.

TABLE 6

Types of Irish Households, 1851.

<i>Category</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Single persons	6	1.8
Single parent families	27	8.4
Irish husbands and wives	30	9.3
Irish head and non-Irish spouse	5	1.5
Irish households with co-resident kin	25	7.8
Irish households with lodgers or visitors	62	19.2
Irish households with co-resident kin and lodgers	9	2.7
Irish husbands and wives and children	130	40.4
Widows	25	7.7
Widowers	4	1.2
	<hr/> 323	<hr/> 100

TABLE 7

Marital Status of Irish Migrants, 1851.

<i>Category</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>% existing Irish marriages</i>	<i>% 18 yrs. &amp; over</i>
Irish born married to Irish-born	487	91.7	43.0
Irish born men married to non-Irish born wives	5	0.9	0.4
Irish born women married to non-Irish born men	39	7.4	3.4
	<hr/> 531	<hr/> 100	
Unmarried Irish born men of 18+	323		28.5
Unmarried Irish born women of 18+	25		2.2
Irish born widows	25		2.2
Irish born widowers	4		0.3
Others not categorized	222		20.0
	<hr/> 599		<hr/> 100
	<hr/> 1130		

The 1840s proved to be the high point of Irish immigration to Nottingham. Census returns show that by 1861 the number had fallen slightly to 1,633 (2.1% of the total population). By 1871 the figure was 1,216 (1.4%); by 1881 it was 1,537 (0.8%) and by 1891 it was 1,332 (0.6%). Other towns and cities offered better economic and residential opportunities, and the migrants obviously voted with their feet. Although the huge influx of poor Irish immigrants led to conflict in other areas, this does not appear to have been the case in Nottingham, probably due to the fact that they were not numerous enough to present either an economic, cultural, or political threat to the status quo.

There seems little doubt however, that they would

have had to contend with a degree of prejudice, and the low level of inter-marriage - even amongst the more long standing immigrants - would suggest that what E.P. Thompson called 'a freemasonry of the disinherited'<sup>37</sup> between the Irish and English poor, had not completely broken down ancestral prejudices. As K.S. Inglis has observed, 'the Irish were perceived, even by the lowest classes of the English population to occupy a still lower grade in the social system than themselves.'<sup>38</sup> By virtue of their 'Irishness', their Catholicism, their geographical and occupational concentration, and in many cases their language, the Irish found assimilation difficult, as Fr. Willson had commented in 1832: 'they remain a distinct class'.

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