

The New People of East Oxford: The Suburbanisation of Cowley, 1851-91

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SUMMARY

This paper examines the population of the suburb of Cowley which developed to the south-east of Oxford after enclosure in 1853. It considers the census data of 1861-91 for six streets from the point of view of birthplace, occupation and class. The class structure of the suburb was determined by the housing market, the landholdings before enclosure, the topography, and the number and intentions of the developers. Three groups of migrants are identified by birthplace of household head – native (Oxford-born), local and distant-born. The native-born, most likely to be artisan craftsmen, moved for family reasons, probably looking for more spacious accommodation. The local-born were a highly mobile group who had nearly all made one or more moves before coming to Cowley: their moves were more likely to be economically motivated, involving changes of occupation. Many of the distant-born, more likely to be professional class or with private means, moved to Oxford for its national reputation as a good place to be a consumer rather than a producer. The suburb became lower-middle-class and artisan in nature, although with considerable variety; attempts by developers to make parts of the suburb middle-class failed, though some middle-class characteristics persisted. The occupations of the household heads were mostly the traditional, craft-based ones which would have been found in Victorian villages, with a minority of non-industrial occupations necessary to serve the economy of a county town, and some University-linked jobs (especially college servants). There is almost no evidence of large-scale employment or developing technology. The emphasis is on variety of background and occupation within lower-middle-class parameters.

In 1851 Cowley St. James was an unenclosed parish lying just to the south-east of Oxford. The village was about two miles away but its fields began on the edge of the town, by Magdalen Bridge and next to the built-up adjacent parish of St. Clement, whose houses spilled over a little into Cowley. The population of Cowley was 775, of whom 108 lived in the part nearest Oxford – the part which is the subject of this study.

Enclosure took place in 1853 and most of the parish fields nearest Oxford were sold and made available for building. The population rose dramatically (see Table 1); in 1889 a new civil parish of Cowley St. John was formed from the Oxford part of the old parish.¹ Similar but less dramatic growth was taking place in St. Giles in the north of Oxford and St. Thomas in the west. This growth took place in a county town which was the market town of an agrarian region in decline, which had no large employers apart from the University and very little new industry.

This article examines the migrants into some of the streets of the new suburb. It asks who they were and where they came from; what their motives for moving there may have been; and how they shaped the suburb they formed. The subject is interesting because of the ordinariness of the place: suburbs were being formed at the same time in medium-size county towns all over England with no special attraction to migrants, unlike the industrial and commercial centres of London, the Midlands and the North. H. J. Dyos remarks in the

¹ Henceforth to be referred to as Cowley.

TABLE 1. POPULATION OF ENGLAND & WALES, OXFORDSHIRE, OXFORD AND COWLEY, 1851-91 (000s)

	1851	%	1861	%	1871	%	1881	%	1891	%
England & Wales	17,928	12.7	20,066	11.9	22,712	13.2	25,974	14.4	29,003	11.7
Oxfordshire	170	4.3	171	0.6	178	4.1	180	1.1	185	2.3
Oxford	28	16.7	28	0	31	10.7	35/41*	12.9	46*	12.2
Cowley	0.775	27.9	1.414	82.4	3.725	163.4	5.633	51.2	8.161	44.9

%; growth since previous census.

* After boundary change.

Cowley figures refer to Cowley St. James and St. John combined.

preface to his *Victorian Suburb* that 'The Victorian suburb must not only be one of the most obvious but also one of the darkest corners of English social history Its true beginnings have probably appeared too recent, its landscape too ugly, and its social arrangements too ordinary to capture the serious attention of historians preoccupied with grander themes.'² This is all the more true of county towns. As a group their growth lagged a long way behind the larger cities; but they did grow, approximately matching the population growth of the country as a whole in the second half of the 19th century (see Table 2) and exceeding that of the rural areas and the small country towns; and most of their growth was in suburbs like Cowley. East Oxford is also of interest because it was the principal lower-middle-class and artisan suburb of Oxford: although people from the same class settled in the south and west and to some extent in the north of the town too, there were nothing like as many as in East Oxford, which by 1901 had 14,438 inhabitants, 29% of the total population of the city.³

TABLE 2. POPULATION OF FIVE COUNTY TOWNS, 1801-1901 (000s)

	1801	1851	% growth 1801-51	1901	% growth 1851-1901
Oxford	12	28	133	49	75
Cambridge	10	28	180	38	36
Ipswich	11	33	200	67	103
Worcester	11	28	155	47	68
York	17	36	112	78	117
Total	61	153	151	279	82
England & Wales	8,893	17,928	102	32,528	81

Source: B.R. Mitchell and P. Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (1962), 24-7.

It is not practicable to attempt to analyse the population of a suburb as large as Cowley in a single article. Instead this study uses an area of the parish in the shape of a slice of cake which roughly corresponds to the 'patch' of one census enumerator, comprising four whole streets - Circus, Temple, Stockmore (originally Hockmore) and Marston Streets - together with the parts of Cowley Road and Iffley Road that border this area (Fig. 1). These streets

² H.J. Dyos, *Victorian Suburb: a Study of the Growth of Camberwell* (1961), 11.

³ Cowley: 9,258; St. Clement's: 5,180.



Fig. 1. East Oxford in 1898.

were among the first in the new suburb to be inhabited; the area may not have been representative of the whole though visual evidence suggests that it might have been a fair cross-section of the suburb, with grander houses more reminiscent of North Oxford in Iffley Road, small houses opening directly on to the street in Circus Street, a mixture of large and small semi-detached villas and terraces in Marston Street, and the typical small three-bedroom, two-storey terrace house with front garden in Temple and Stockmore Streets. The information about these people extracted from the census data may give a picture of the origins and social composition of the suburb.

THE BACKGROUND TO DEVELOPMENT

Oxford was rather late in acquiring suburbs, for a number of reasons. The topography of the town, with its winding rivers and marshes, meant that only to the north, in the parish of St. Giles, was there good, well-drained land near the city suitable for building. The University and colleges owned a high proportion of the land round the town and were in no hurry to develop, since as local institutions they had long-term interests in what happened to the land, and no pressing short-term needs for capital. The town of Oxford was nationally in something of a backwater, by-passed by the main channels of communication and with no manufacturing industry to speak of apart from printing; the Corporation and University between them guarded access to the local economy, restricting trading rights to freemen and privileged persons until the Municipal Corporations Act was passed in 1835. The University itself was a mixed blessing to the town – providing a guaranteed market for trade in hard times but responsible for a drop in business during vacations and obstructing the establishment of new industries – notably the Great Western Railway carriage works in the 1860s.⁴ University people themselves were likely to be unmarried, their lives attached to the college buildings in the centre, and often only temporarily resident in Oxford anyway, waiting their turn for college livings elsewhere in the country and unlikely therefore to want to put down roots in a suburb.⁵

In consequence the middle class was small and slow-growing and there was little demand for houses in suburbs. Lower-middle-class and working-class housing was built in the 1820s and 1830s, however, in the parishes of St. Ebbe's, St. Clement's, St. Mary Magdalen and St. Thomas, the parishes on the fringes of the town, as population pressure built up and some of the colleges expanded their premises, pushing the working people out of the town centre.⁶ After this the pace slackened again, perhaps because of the shortage of suitable land, and because of migration out of Oxford,⁷ until the 1850s when a new wave of suburban building started in St. Thomas, Cowley, and (in the 1860s) St. Giles.

The enclosure of Cowley was held up by disputes between the principal landowners, especially Christ Church and Pembroke colleges, about the division of their land. The mixture of pre-enclosure holdings made building impossible, and there was no dominant owner able to dictate the terms of enclosure and subsequent development in the way that St. John's College did subsequently in St. Giles. In North Oxford, St. John's started to develop only because it felt its hand forced by other building in the area,⁸ but once it did so it was able to plan and build a middle-class estate in the long term, with a good chance of

⁴ E.W. Gilbert, 'The Industrialisation of Oxford', *Geographical Jnl.* 109 (1947), 1-25.

⁵ T. Hinchcliffe, *North Oxford* (1992), 159.

⁶ See R.J. Morris, 'The Friars and Paradise: an Essay in the Building History of Oxford, 1801-1861', *Oxoniensia*, xxxvi (1971).

⁷ *V.C.H. Oxon.* iv, 182 ff.

⁸ Hinchcliffe, *North Oxford*, 31.

success, for three reasons: it was the dominant, indeed almost exclusive owner of the land, which gave it the power to dictate the process of development; as a resident corporate owner it had vital interests which gave it the will not to let things slip; and over the whole period of development it had no pressing capital needs and never had to sacrifice the long term to the short.

In Cowley, however, there was a mixture of institutional landowners – Christ Church, Pembroke and Magdalen colleges, the University, and Donnington Hospital (a Newbury charity), as well as some smaller college holdings – and individual ones (in particular the Cowley farming family of Hurst),⁹ and a mixture of motives too: small and absentee landlords were keen to enclose, sell for development and take their profits, but Christ Church, the largest landholder with 278 acres in the parish at enclosure, had a long-term interest in the future of the area and no special need for cash. The college twice blocked enclosure, in 1824 and again in the 1840s, and only finally agreed to it in 1851 when it succeeded in getting a large, secluded allotment of land south of Iffley Road, on which it had no intention of building – motivated instead by ‘a sense of what is best for the beauty of the entrance into Oxford on the Cowley Road’ and by a desire to ‘prevent the building of shabby or unsightly houses within view of the meadow and path.’¹⁰

Once enclosure had at last taken place, development proceeded swiftly. It is tempting to say that it was inevitable that Cowley should become a lower-middle-class and artisan suburb. Because land ownership was fragmented, no developer was able to create the setting and ambience, with the assurance of the right sort of neighbours, required for a successful middle-class development. The ground was low-lying and marshy in places and liable to flood; it was thought to be unhealthy, especially after the intermittent cholera scares of the 1830s-50s. The land was adjacent to the poor parish of St. Clement’s, which had been developed in the first wave of suburban development in the 1820s; and until 1874 it was cut off from the city by a toll gate. Most important, the market in Oxford for good quality housing was limited, because of the relative stagnation of the local economy and the University rules against its fellows living out; and after 1854, with the success of the Park Town estate, North Oxford was in a better position to capture that market. On the other hand, developers needed to have a secure return for their investment: the cost of building and sanitation on low-lying land, the cost of complying with the building bye-laws (introduced in Oxford in 1864) and the landlords’ need for reliable rent-payers made for a standard of housing more within the reach of thrifty artisans and clerks than of the working class.

THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT

As a comparison of the Cowley enclosure map with a modern street map shows, the pattern of distribution of land at enclosure was the basis for street layout.¹¹ By 1878 the streets had been laid out as far as Howard Street, about three-quarters of a mile out from Magdalen Bridge, though some of these streets were half empty for many years and the plots used as gardens.¹² The developers were mostly corporate. The most important one in Cowley was the National Freehold Land Society (N.F.L.S.), originally a Liberal organisation formed to

⁹ M. Graham, ‘The Suburbs of Victorian Oxford: Growth in a Pre-industrial City’ (Univ. of Leicester unpublished PhD thesis, 1985), 22, 30.

¹⁰ Christ Church Archives, MS. Estates 68/237, 68/226, memorandum of Dr. John Bull (c.1845), quoted in Graham, ‘Suburbs’, 85.

¹¹ Oxfordshire Archives, Cowley enclosure map, 1853; *VC.H. Oxon.* iv, 199.

¹² Graham, ‘Suburbs’, 91; Ordnance Survey 1:500 map, 1880.

increase the number of 40-shilling freeholders qualified to vote in Parliamentary elections under the 1832 Act (later prominent in suburban development as British Land). The Society moved in rapidly, even before the formalities of enclosure were complete, and bought estates in what are now Alma Place, to the north of Cowley Road; Marston Street; Temple and Stockmore Streets; and in the Rectory Road, Cross Street and Princes Street area. In these estates the Society laid out streets and plots, which were sold at auction in 1859-60. Also active were the Oxford Working Men's Land and Building Society, formed in 1860, which bought land in Catherine and Percy Streets, and held vegetable and flower shows to show how suburban gardens provided 'profitable and recreative employment for a large body of industrious artisans.'¹³

Individuals were involved as well, however, including John Galpin, a Victorian mixture of philanthropist and speculator and an influential man in the Oxford of the 1860s and 1870s, who as well as being Surveyor to the Local Board bought 300 lots on his own account in the Catherine - Charles - Percy Street area in 1862, with the aim of encouraging the thrifty to own their own homes loan-free in 10-14 years, and later more lots in Iffley Road, Henley Street and Bullingdon Road (Galpin's name is remembered today in the recently-built Galpin Close, near Cowley Road); and William Henry Howard, an attorney and surveyor of Iffley Road, who left his name to Howard Street.

The developer's role was to lay out roads and drains, to divide the land into lots, and to sell on to builders, usually by auction. The house builders were many, small, and short-lived; there were 261 builders in East Oxford between 1866 and 1900, most responsible for only two or three houses in five years.¹⁴ Eighty-two per cent of houses built between 1875 and 1900 had three bedrooms; 74% had an outside flushing lavatory; a quarter had bathrooms. The N.F.L.S.'s insistence on a 'building line' set back from the street meant that the houses in its estates almost all had small front gardens - a promise of quiet respectability. An advertisement in *Jackson's Oxford Journal* in 1861 describes the houses as 'built with every requisite convenience, and tastefully papered and painted', and the *Oxford Chronicle* reported in 1860 that 'there is no lack of occupiers, for the houses appear to be tenanted as they are finished.'¹⁵ At the lower end of the market rents started at about 4s. per week for a small house in Alma Place, well above the rates that unskilled labourers could afford; at the upper end a six-bedroomed semi-detached villa in Stanley Road further out fetched about 13s. per week, or £325 to buy.¹⁶

Finance came from a variety of sources, most of them small-scale and local. The largest provider of capital was the Oxford Building and Investment Company, which was very active in both East and North Oxford until it became over-extended and collapsed in 1883; its investors were mostly small savers, 48% of them women.¹⁷ Local solicitors arranged loans from their clients, and it was normal for land to be bought on deferred payment terms. It seems to have been easy to raise cash for house building; and perhaps because of this, building progressed in excitable waves and troughs, with supply at times vastly exceeding demand. 'The town gave itself with enthusiasm to the building craze of the eighties and nineties', wrote a contemporary social commentator, illustrating the flavour as well as the local nature of one of these periods.¹⁸ Table 3 compares building in Cowley with the growth

¹³ *Oxford Chronicle*, 2 July 1864, quoted in Graham, 'Suburbs', 94.

¹⁴ Graham, 'Suburbs', 216.

¹⁵ *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 31 Aug. 1861, p. 4; *Oxford Chronicle*, 10 Nov. 1860, p. 5, quoted in Graham, 'Suburbs', 88.

¹⁶ *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 19 Oct. 1867, p. 4b.

¹⁷ Hinchcliffe, *North Oxford*, 54.

¹⁸ C.V. Butler, *Social Conditions in Oxford* (1912), 84.

of the population; it will be seen that house building outstripped population growth in every decade; there were plenty of houses to choose from, with about a tenth of houses unoccupied at any time.¹⁹

TABLE 3. POPULATION GROWTH AND HOUSING INCREASE,
COWLEY ST. JAMES AND ST. JOHN, 1861-91

Year	Population	% Increase	Houses	% Increase	Pop:housing ratio
1851	775		129		6.01
1861	1404	81	256	98	5.48
1871	3725	165	709	177	5.25
1881	5633	51	1393	96	4.04
1891	8161	45	2050	47	3.98

Each autumn in the 1860s *Jackson's Oxford Journal* published an annual summary of building developments in the city. In 1864 it drew attention to East Oxford: 'It is, however, in the eastern outskirts of the city that the greatest extension is taking place. Iffley and Cowley Roads present a large number of new residences, and the grounds between these roads and St. Clement's is being cut up into a legion of new streets. The houses are for the most part of an ornamental appearance, exhibiting a pleasing variety of style, and they appear to find occupants with great readiness....[They are priced] so as to enable persons of limited means to become their own landlords.'²⁰

THE NEW INHABITANTS: ORIGINS

Who were the householders and families who moved so readily into the new houses? Studies of migration still take as their starting point Ravenstein's 'laws of migration' (1855-89), of which the most relevant to this study are that the majority of migrants go only a short distance; that the natives of towns are less migratory than those of rural areas; that most migrants are adult, families rarely migrating out of their county of birth; and that the major causes of migration are economic.²¹ The major currents of migration were to London, to the fast-growing large cities, and abroad; many fewer moved to the suburbs of county towns. Did these 'laws' apply to these smaller streams of migrants as well as to the large ones?

The new occupants of suburban Cowley came from a very wide variety of places. For the purposes of this study they may be divided into three migrational groups, roughly similar in size, each with different backgrounds and perhaps motives. Of 673 household heads living in the six streets in the census years of 1861-91, 207 or 31% (and a higher proportion of wives) were Oxford-born, and most of these had probably not lived outside Oxford. Almost the same number, 209 (31%), though a smaller proportion of wives, were born in the villages and small towns within 20 miles of Oxford. The remaining 257 (28%) were born more than 20 miles away: Oxford was therefore not their native or local town, and they would have had other reasons for moving there. (If Iffley Road, where more than half of

¹⁹ Graham, 'Suburbs', 202.

²⁰ *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 15 Oct. 1864, p. 5f.

²¹ D.B. Grigg, 'E.G. Ravenstein and the "Laws of Migration"', in M. Drake (ed.), *Time, Family and Community* (1994), 148-9.

the household heads were distant-born, is excluded, the three groups are almost exactly equal in size.) We will examine each of these groups in turn.

The native-born: In the view of Richard Benson, the vicar of Cowley, 'the population of Cowley has mainly developed itself from Oxford. Many of our poorest people have been turned out of the dens of old Oxford to make way for improvements in the City.'²² This may have been a contemporary perception, and streets with lower rents further out in Cowley probably attracted poorer people; but the census evidence from the sample streets does not really support Benson's view. Most of the Oxford-born household heads in the new suburb responded only 'Oxford' to the census-taker for their parish of birth; but if those who did name a parish are representative of the whole, it seems that between a third and a half came from the parishes on the fringe of the city centre – St. Clement's, St. Ebbe's, St. Giles and Cowley itself – and fewer from the richer city centre parishes. They seem to have come from the poorer, but not necessarily the poorest, parts of the city, perhaps looking for more space and privacy, and better domestic facilities and building quality.

They seem to have moved out to Cowley more because of changes in family circumstances than anything else. Of fifteen 1861 household heads traced back to 1851, eight had grown up, married and established their own families and households, pursuing the same or similar occupations as their fathers; another five had larger families and the move was presumably in search of more space and better value: George Sayer, for example, a carver and gilder, lived in 1851 in Blackfriar's Road, St. Ebbe's with his wife and two children; by 1861 he had four, and had moved to Marston Street. The remaining two heads moved because of family contraction rather than expansion: one woman, Alice Crump, was married to a college servant in King Street and was widowed, setting up as a laundress in Cowley Road; a livery-stable keeper, Charles Seckham of Magdalen Street, retired or lost his job, his household shrank from six to three and he moved to presumably smaller or cheaper premises in Cowley Road. These sample cases may be typical of the short-distance home-movers in Oxford, life-cycle rather than economic migrants (though they are not really migrants at all), joining the net exodus of more than 3,500 people out of central Oxford in the 1850s and 60s.²³ They are also typical of the restlessness of the late Victorians; tenancies were short (weekly or monthly), very few owned their homes, and moving house was cheap: many moves were only a quarter of a mile or less as householders found homes to fit their family sizes and stages in life.²⁴

The local-born: The local-born household heads, those born in the small towns and villages up to 20 miles away, came from a wide variety of places. The 33 heads of household in 1861 list 25 different places of birth between them, with a similar variety in later years. No more than five heads come from any one place in any census; the most mentioned are the larger towns and villages, Woodstock, Witney, Abingdon, Kidlington (though no heads in 1861 or 1871 came from the registration district of Banbury, which apart from Chipping Norton was the only other growing town in the county), and there is nothing to indicate that migrants were more likely to come from one part of the county than another.

²² *Cowley Parish Magazine*, November 1881.

²³ *V.C.H. Oxon.* iv, 182.

²⁴ F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society* (1988), 172; R. Dennis and S. Daniels, 'Community' and the Social Geography of Victorian Cities', in Drake, *op. cit.* note 21, p. 205. Cf. the case of David Brindley of Liverpool whose diary reveals 12 moves in 10 years, all in the same area, for reasons which were a mixture of life-cycle, desire for respectability and personal whim: C. Pooley, 'Residential Mobility in the Victorian City', *Trans. Inst. Brit. Geog.* n.s. 4 (1979), 272.

Most local-born household heads, however, had already moved away from their birthplaces at some time before coming to Cowley, as an examination of the 1851 census shows.²⁵ Of the 1861 cohort of 34 heads, only five were still in their birthplaces in 1851; another five already lived at other addresses in central Oxford; the rest were not found²⁶ but appear to have left their birthplaces. Only four of these 34 heads still lived in the six streets in 1871, whose census tells the same story. This is too small a sample to be reliable, but it suggests that this was a very mobile group of people, more mobile than the native, urban-born group; that only a small minority, if any, moved directly from their birthplace to the suburb; and that a more common pattern was to move as a young single adult away from one's village birthplace, perhaps to a town, and then move a second time with wife (country-born men considerably outnumbered women in the sample) and children to the suburb²⁷ – though this would not be the last move. The local-born heads seem to support Ravenstein's contention that the rural-born were more migratory than the town-born.

W. A. Armstrong suggests that farm labourers and rural craftsmen came under different pressures. The latter were more likely to leave the village, and to move further afield; the former would change occupation or move to the nearest town. 'All the quick-witted ones go to London'.²⁸ About half of the group in the very small sample here were the sons of farmers and farm labourers and the other half sons of (or themselves) tradesmen or skilled craftsmen – one could argue that Oxford attracted both groups or neither. After 1871 the proportion of local-born heads and wives declined steadily; as the agricultural depression began to bite, and as networks of migrants developed, there were more and greater incentives to move further than Oxford with its limited opportunities.

Altogether the local-born heads of household seem to have been an even less homogeneous group than the native-born and distant-born heads, with a wide variety of occupations. Perhaps surprisingly, there is no real evidence of 'chain migration' – rural people moving to town to live near family or local connections. Their social class profile is close to the mean for the sample. This is not surprising if one takes into account the variety of their origins, the number of moves they had made since leaving their birthplaces, and the degree of urbanisation – the time they had already spent in towns, the nature of their work – to which they had submitted. Table 4 (below) lists some local-born heads, with their identified residences and occupations between 1851 and 1871.

The distant-born: The distant-born household heads, those born more than 20 miles from Oxford, constitute the largest of the three groups, by a small margin. Over the period the number of 'near-distant' migrants from 20 to 50 miles away, mainly from Oxfordshire's neighbouring counties, declined and those coming from further away increased; this reflects Oxford's declining position as a regional centre of attraction, but perhaps a higher national profile, as the University became more secular and expanded and the housing stock improved. More people came from all parts of the country; and though only a small number were directly connected with the University, they included a significant proportion of professional people and, more numerous, single or widowed women of independent means, especially in 1881 and after. Women with private incomes flocked to Oxford in the

²⁵ Made possible by the indexed 1851 transcripts of the Oxfordshire enumerators' schedules.

²⁶ Though about half of these had surnames too common to make a search in Oxford practicable.

²⁷ As suggested for Nottingham and its suburban-type settlements in R. Smith, 'Population Movements and the Development of Working-class Suburbs 1801-51: the Case of Nottingham', *Local Pop. Studies*, 47 (1991), 62.

²⁸ W.A. Armstrong, 'The Flight from the Land', in G.E. Mingay (ed.), *The Victorian Countryside*, i (1981), 124-6.

TABLE 4. IDENTIFIED LOCAL-BORN HOUSEHOLDS 1861-71,
WITH RESIDENCE IN CENSUS YEARS AND OCCUPATIONS

Name	Birthplace	In 1851	In 1861	In 1871
George Oakley	Pyrton	Birthplace Ag lab's son, 13	Cowley house servant, 25	Cowley College servant, 35
Joseph Soanes	Forest Hill	Birthplace Hurdle maker's son, 12	Cowley Policeman, 22	?
William Aldworth	Garsington	Birthplace Farmer's son, 22	Cowley Coal merchant, 33	?
William Ellard	Duns Tew	Birthplace Ag lab, ag lab's son, 17	Cowley Musician, 27	?
George Hill	Great Tew	Birthplace Carpenter, ag lab's son, 16	Cowley Joiner, 26	?
Thomas Savage	Arncott	Fisher Row, Oxford Ag lab, 20	Cowley Dairyman	?
Frederick Middleton	Cotteslowe	King St., Oxford College servant, 22	Cowley College servant, 32	?
John Mawer	Headington	High St., Oxford Hatter/hosier, 28	Cowley Hatter/hosier, 38	?
Susannah Nash	West Ilsley	High St., Oxford Coachman's wife, 37	Cowley Annuitant, 47	Cowley Annuitant, 57
Ezra Bunker	Whitchurch	New Rd., Oxford Wood turner, 33	Cowley Turner/timber dealer, 43	Cowley Timber merchant, 52
Eliza Nutt	Great Milton	Birthplace Carter's wife, 24	?	Cowley Lodging house keeper, 44
Martha Butler	Beckley	Birthplace Farmer's daughter, 52	?	Cowley Farmer's daughter, 72
Edwin Gurdan	Elsfield	Birthplace Ag lab's son, 9	?	Cowley Carpenter, 29
William Cooper	Garsington	Birthplace Baker, 36	?	Cowley Baker, 56
James Bryan	Headington	Birthplace Slater/plasterer's son, 5	?	Cowley Shopman hatters, 25
Phebe Neighbour	Horspath	Birthplace Farmer's wife, 24	?	Cowley Farmer's widow, rtd, 44
Elizabeth Spindler	Horton cum Studley	Birthplace Farmer's wife, 28	?	Cowley Independent means, 48
James Burrows	Horton cum Studley	Birthplace Publican/timber dealer's son, 5	?	Cowley College servant, 25

Thomas Miller	Bicester	Birthplace Grocer's shopman, 18	?	Cowley Clothier, tailor, 38
William Baker	Bletchington	Birthplace Ag lab's son, 8	?	Cowley College servant, 26
Thomas Hore	Deddington	Birthplace Road lab's son, 16	?	Cowley Stone mason, 36
Richard Akers	Brize Norton	Birthplace Baker/grocer's son, 4	?	Cowley Grocer, 24
Henry James	Abingdon	Birthplace Turner for spinner Mason lab's son	?	Cowley Grocer's assistant, 31
Eliza Lovegrove	Headington	High St., Oxford College servant's wife, 45	?	Cowley Widow, 65
Eliza Hackshaw	Brill	Longwall St., Oxford Hairdresser's wife, 31	?	Cowley Lodgings, 50
James Harwood	Cassington	Albert St., Oxford Shoemaker, 33	?	Cowley Shoemaker, 53
John Bowley	Ferry Hinksey	Clarendon St., Oxford Policeman, 34	?	Cowley Shopman, 54
William Harding	Sunningwell	St. Mary Hall, Oxford Servant, 20	Cowley College servant, 30	Cowley College servant, 40
Thomas Howson	Witney	Queen St., Oxford Chemist/druggist, 43	?	Cowley Chemist & druggist, 63

?: whereabouts unknown

1870s, mostly to genteel North Oxford²⁹ but some to Cowley too. As Armstrong points out in relation to York in 1851, which also attracted people of independent means, they were consumers rather than producers, attracted by a good place to spend money, not earn it.³⁰

Distant-born migrants were therefore more likely to be in the professional and non-manual classes than the other groups; not only was Oxford more attractive to these classes but those who travelled further would tend to be people with more education, skill and capital,³¹ though there were still nearly twice as many skilled craftspeople as professionals among the distant-born. Many of them moved to the larger, grander houses in the Iffley Road which had been built by developers aspiring to a middle-class suburb.

But variety is still the key factor: distant migrants to the six streets came from a very wide range of places and had an enormous range of occupations – all the different services required by a non-industrial county town: to give examples from the 1861 census, they include a shoemaker from Wellington in Somerset, a grocer from St. Pancras, a newspaper reporter from Leamington, a commercial traveller in leather from Kings Norton, a watchmaker's assistant from Devonport, a tailor from Lyme Regis, and an accountant and

²⁹ 31% of householders in central North Oxford lived off private incomes in 1881 compared with 21% in 1871; Hinchcliffe, *North Oxford*, 167.

³⁰ A. Armstrong, *Stability and Change in an English County Town: a Social Study of York, 1801-51* (1974), 96.

³¹ *Ibid.* 92.

local Methodist preacher from Barnard Castle in Yorkshire. One can only guess at what brought them to Oxford, and where else they had lived since leaving their birthplaces.

So these three groups – the urban Oxford-born, the local rural-born, and the further-travelled distant-born – together made up the new suburb; it is hard to say whether these groupings kept any distinct identity once they had joined the suburban melting-pot. But throughout the period to the end of the century this population was highly mobile, with only some 15-18% of residents in the same house in consecutive census years, very much in line with the national average for towns.³² (This residential mobility is partly accounted for by children growing up and leaving the family home; for household heads alone the figure is about 27% for East Oxford – compared with 35% for North Oxford, where the middle-class community would have had annual leases instead of weekly or monthly ones, more stable occupations and more possessions.)³³

THE NEW INHABITANTS: CLASS AND OCCUPATION

Cowley was a lower-middle-class suburb, inhabited chiefly by skilled artisans, college servants and their families. The new parish was never likely to be middle-class proper, partly because the fragmented ownership of the land before enclosure prevented a coherent development plan, partly because of the discouraging topography, but mainly because of the lack of solid middle-class demand. Even North Oxford was developed only slowly because of the weakness of demand, and other attempts to establish middle-class suburbs or outposts failed altogether.³⁴

In the latter half of the 19th century there was a relentless trend towards middle-class segregation and differentiation, most notably in the suburbs: in the words of Harold Perkin, 'Segregation at every level and in every occupation and pastime was the hallmark of the middle class.'³⁵ Over a period of time a suburb was likely to become more rather than less homogeneous as its social character was confirmed, and to establish its place in the hierarchy of suburbs belonging to a town. So when the Conservative Land Society (set up to counter the Liberal National Freehold Land Society) bought an estate in December 1859 on the corner of Iffley and Magdalen Roads, a quarter of a mile further down the Iffley Road than the sample area, and marketed it as 'suitable for villas and detached first-class houses ... to attract the highest class of residents, and to induce builders to erect thereon good and tasteful houses', the venture failed and 35 of the 63 plots were still unsold in 1865.³⁶ There was a surfeit of middle-class housing on the market, St. John's College was starting to develop its estate in North Oxford – much more attractive from a middle-class point of view – and a piece of land next to the Conservative Land Society estate had been sold for lower-class housing.

Within its upper and lower limits the new Cowley suburb was socially graded too, the social composition of its streets influenced by the aspirations of their developers, expressed in the price and size of the houses, by their aspect, convenience and location, and by the market: the class of the people who at any time were looking for new housing. The Iffley Road (Fig. 2) had the greatest appeal, looking over the undeveloped Christ Church land

³² Dennis and Daniels, *op. cit.* note 24, p. 204.

³³ Graham, 'Suburbs', 355.

³⁴ M. Graham, 'Housing Development on the Urban Fringe of Oxford, 1850-1914', *Oxoniensia*, lv (1990), 147-66.

³⁵ H. Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society* (1984), 83.

³⁶ Graham, 'Suburbs', 89.



Fig. 2. Ifley Road in about 1900, looking south-east, from a postcard by Henry Taunt. (Oxfordshire Photographic Archive, Oxfordshire County Council)



Fig. 3. Cowley Road in about 1900, looking south-east from the Plain. (Oxfordshire Photographic Archive, Oxfordshire County Council)

opposite and 'commanding magnificent views of the River Isis [Thames]'³⁷. This appeal was reflected in the houses built along it – a great mixture of villas and terraces large and small, considerably grander, larger and more varied in style than any of the other streets: clearly an attempt to build a middle-class thoroughfare, but with modest housing too. Just beyond the N.F.L.S. land in Marston Street three estates owned by the Hurst family (formerly the largest farmers in the parish) were built between James Street and Magdalen Road, with a well-ordered pattern and building line and the intention (not really achieved) of a slightly higher-class development than the streets closer to town.³⁸ Beyond this, on the outskirts of the built-up area, grew what the vicar Richard Benson called 'the wild and straggling settlement of Robin Hood',³⁹ slightly poorer houses, where Benson established the Home of Compassion for unmarried mothers. Over on the Cowley Road side of the parish (Fig. 3), where Benson built the parish church of SS. Mary and John and the St. John's Hospital for incurable diseases, the houses were smaller again, near the new Oxford City Workhouse on the north side of Cowley Road, relocated there from its original site in Wellington Square. So the suburb was a patchwork of development, all socially graded within its context of lower-middle-class and artisan development.

The generally lower-middle-class nature of the suburb is confirmed by an analysis of the occupations of the household heads in the six streets, using the Registrar-General's classifications of 1921 and 1951:

TABLE 5. HOUSEHOLD HEADS BY SOCIAL CLASS, 1881
(EXCLUDING UNCLASSIFIED)

	No.	%
Class I: Professional and managerial occupations	24	12
Class II: Intermediate non-manual	58	29
Class III: Skilled manual	92	46
Class IV: Intermediate manual	26	13
Class V: Unskilled manual	1	

Source: R. Woods, *The Population of Britain in the Nineteenth Century* (1992), 26

Professional-class people lived mainly in Iffley Road, which was attracting a smattering of middle-class people – women with independent incomes, clergymen, an army major, a retired solicitor – though by 1891 this class had considerably narrowed to three women of independent means, a chemist/surgeon, a curate and a university graduate. All these people may have had genteel backgrounds or pretensions but not the income to match. Iffley Road seems by 1891 to have failed in its attempt to be a middle-class street, despite the distinction of some of its houses and its aspect – perhaps because of the growth of North Oxford, or perhaps because Cowley was changing in nature. Certainly Benson thought that it was changing, for the worse: in 1883 he wrote that 'in 1859 there were literally no actual poor in the district Now, however it needs not be said that the poor, the very poor, element of our population has greatly increased. ... The large proportion of the ignorant and rambling

³⁷ *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 19 Oct. 1867.

³⁸ Graham, 'Suburbs', 92.

³⁹ *Cowley Parish Magazine*, October 1886.

poor who have been driven within our borders by the improvements of many parts of Oxford ...[in consequence, Cowley] having so many families in utter poverty beyond the proportion of other city parishes.⁴⁰ There is little evidence to show that any of these really poor people were settling here, rather that the suburb was settling down into its role as the place for the artisan and lower middle class in Oxford, second to North Oxford in the social scale; and the social level of a suburb, once established, tended to be self-reinforcing.

The proportion of living-in servants confirms the lower-middle-class status of the six streets. About 30% of households had servants. As elsewhere, servants were employed well down the social scale, for example by laundresses (probably as assistants rather than personal servants), college bedmakers and a hairdresser's assistant; but not all professional households employed servants.⁴¹ The ratio of servants to households is much lower than North Oxford's, but higher than in the south and west of the city.

Two groups of workers deserve separate mention – tailors and college servants, the two largest occupational groups in the six streets. There must have been tailors in every artisan suburb in England, and the ones in Oxford little different except that the University provided more reliable, though seasonal, business. Tailoring was under threat from ready-to-wear clothing, especially after 1880; we cannot tell from the census how many were employed and how many in business on their own account. Tailors had portable skills and had been one of the most mobile groups in the exodus from the countryside;⁴² they were probably more likely to be Liberal in politics. Though their incomes must have varied very widely, they come rather low down in Baxter's 'hierarchy of labour' of 1867, ranked with railway workmen, postmen and boot and shoe workers on 21-23s. a week.⁴³ They must have been in considerable competition with each other when work was scarce.

As an in-migrant group, tailors tended to be native or distant-born; local rural-born migrants must have gone further afield. More tailors were Oxford-born in 1881 and 1891 because more of them worked together in families with native-born children: one of the notable trends is that relatively fewer heads but more household members worked as tailors, suggesting that they were finding it harder to support their families on their own. In Circus Street in 1891, for instance, Rowland Powell had his three sons working (presumably with him) as tailors or apprentices, and in Temple Street James Bowerman's wife Edith and mother Martha both worked as tailoresses.⁴⁴

College servants, on the other hand, were unique to Oxford and Cambridge. They would have been more or less unskilled, and reliant on personal contacts to get jobs; once in a position, they were relatively secure, if low paid. They had their own hierarchy, however, which is not easy to detect from the census. Some college servants were well-off people who went in for land speculation and development: for instance Tyndale Road, on the north side of Cowley Road, was developed in 1859 by a college servant, William Gunstone.⁴⁵ They probably enjoyed some reflected prestige from the University connection, and were an identifiably cohesive group, holding debates and sporting contests, reported in the local newspaper, as a kind of mirror of undergraduate activities. As a group they were deferential and conservative – 'all just regular lower-middle, upper-working class Tory, you know ... just easy going, placid types'.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, January 1883.

⁴¹ E. Higgs, 'Domestic Servants and Households in Victorian England', *Social History*, 8 (1983), 201.

⁴² Armstrong, 'Flight from the Land', 124.

⁴³ G. Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain* (1979), 115-16.

⁴⁴ Few tailors' wives or daughters were dressmakers, however, who tended to be the daughters of heads with other occupations.

⁴⁵ Graham, 'Suburbs', 90.

⁴⁶ C. Platt, *The Most Obliging Man in Europe* (1986), 12.

College servants tended to be local-born, as domestic servants were, though not from any particular villages. As with domestic servants, perhaps college employers thought that country-born employees were more likely to be suitably subservient, though as the University expanded more town-born people were employed. Unlike tailoring, the college servant business does not seem to have been family-based: there are only one or two instances where sons or other relatives followed their fathers. Both groups, however, seem to have been geographically cohesive in the six streets, living close together presumably for mutual support, contacts and information, the college servants living in the streets nearer the town centre and a shorter walk from their work. They were more stable residentially than average: of the 40 household heads who were tailors or college servants in 1871, 19 were still resident in 1881. College servants and tailors, in their contrasting ways, made up the social backbone of the inner suburb.

One can attempt a social reconstruction of the six streets in the late 19th century from the census and trade directories. At the top of the social scale was the Iffley Road, as would be expected of a main thoroughfare with open land opposite (Fig. 2). Among its inhabitants were the clergy: Richard Benson, the very energetic high church vicar of Cowley, lodged in Henley Terrace on the corner of Marston Street with his curate in 1861; the retired vicar of Trimdon in County Durham also lived in Iffley Road, as well as a number of other clergymen; also Robert Parker, clerk to the University Examination Schools; and Robert Castle, surveyor and member of the well-known local building family, responsible for the new workhouse among many other public buildings. Many of the other residents were women with private means who had chosen Oxford as a pleasant place to live but perhaps could not quite afford North Oxford; an example is Eliza Cheadle, 61, a clergyman's widow from Nottingham, who lived at 9 (now 33) Iffley Road with her adult daughter and a servant. Iffley Road housed St. John's Middle Class School for boys and later the Middle Class School for girls; it was possible to matriculate at the University while at the boys' school. Most households had a servant; some had two.

Towards the east of the parish was the other main thoroughfare, Cowley Road (Fig. 3), inhabited mostly by small shopkeepers (probably with their own businesses) and other tradesmen and women, with a scattering of servants and live-in assistants and apprentices. John Best lived here, a cricket ball manufacturer employing five men and supplier to the Australian touring team in 1880 as well as to many of the colleges;⁴⁷ also Charles Hall, who had a nursery garden on the corner of Cowley Road and Marston Street and was gardener to the University Botanic Garden in 1866.⁴⁸ Castle's brickyard was opposite, on the north side of the road. Other tradesmen included florists, coal merchants, fancy goods and furniture warehouses, and confectioners. The East Oxford Constitutional Hall was built in the 1880s near the junction with Marston Street.

The most genteel of the cross streets was Marston Street (Fig. 4), with a mix of large and small terraces and semi-detached villas. Here was the Mission House of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, known as the Cowley Fathers, the first stable religious community for men in the Church of England since the Reformation, founded by Benson and completed in 1868. Until Keble College was opened the Mission House was licensed by the University authorities as 'Benson Hall' for undergraduates who wished to take orders but could not afford college fees.⁴⁹ There were at any time about fifteen mission priests, novices or lay brothers here, many from America or Ireland, and the community established houses in

⁴⁷ Advertisement in *Valler's Trade Directory*, 1880.

⁴⁸ *Oxford Directory*, 1866.

⁴⁹ G. Congreve and W.H. Longridge (eds.), *Letters of Richard Meaux Benson* (1916), 7.



Fig. 4. Marston Street, looking east from Ifley Road. (Oxfordshire Photographic Archive, Oxfordshire County Council)



Fig. 5. Circus Street. (Oxfordshire Photographic Archive, Oxfordshire County Council)

India, southern Africa and America. Benson was living here in 1881. Near to it, at no.5, was the Middle Class School for girls, until it moved to the Iffley Road. The biggest tradesman was probably Charles Bancalari, the son of an immigrant from Sardinia, an athletic and cricket outfitter with a shop in the High Street. There were some single women of independent means, some more members of the extensive Castle family of builders and surveyors, originally from Woodstock, and a little group of tailors at the Cowley Road end of the street. There was a scattering of servants in the street, mostly in the larger terraces and semi-detached villas on its north side.

Stockmore and Temple Streets may be taken together. These are both built of smaller, more homogeneous terraces with front gardens and single-storey bay windows, typical of the majority of Cowley streets, inhabited by trades and craftspeople – especially tailors (eight in Stockmore Street in 1881) and college servants (eleven in Temple Street in 1881). Female household heads were laundresses or dressmakers. There were still some living-in servants employed in these streets, but relatively few. Stockmore Street was dominated on its north side by Ezra Bunker's Victoria Saw Mill (employing three men in 1881) and on its south by the temporary 'iron church', built in 1859 by Benson and serving as the parish church until SS. Mary & John was built in Cowley Road in the 1880s.

Smallest was Circus Street (Fig. 5), named after the Alhambra Circus which was here in the early 1860s. The small terraced houses opened straight on to the pavement; there were no servants here; and (as noted above) the turnover of population was probably greatest. However the occupational status of the household heads was not significantly lower than Temple or Stockmore Streets. Table 6 lists the inhabitants of Circus Street in 1871.

Richard Meaux Benson, the vicar, was the key figure in the institutional social and parish life of the suburb. A former student at Christ Church, he had previously been vicar of the village parish of Cowley St. James when Bishop Wilberforce asked him in 1859 to devote himself to the new suburban parish of Cowley St. John (officially separated in 1870 from rural Cowley St. James, but in practice before that) instead of going to India as a missionary.⁵⁰ While vicar he was instrumental in the building of three churches – the iron church in Stockmore Street, St. John the Evangelist next to the Mission House in Iffley Road, and the new parish church of SS. Mary and John in Cowley Road (he had previously helped build a church while a curate at Surbiton).

The *Cowley Parish Magazine*, which Benson founded and edited, reveals his preoccupations and concerns. Among the sermons and meditations, lists of school and church funds and accounts of cricket matches and prizegivings, he lectured his readers on their duties as founders of a new Christian community: 'There is a danger of our lacking that distinctive parochial unity which is so important to the well-being of a district. Larger interests dash over us and have a tendency to break our population into atoms ere it be consolidated into a firm mass.'⁵¹ He asked them to attend the parish church instead of city centre ones, demanded financial support for the building of new church schools to avoid the 'compulsory rate' and control by government, and set up or supported numerous clubs and societies – clothing and lying-in clubs for the poor (a combination of insurance and charity), a temperance society, a needlework society ('its usefulness will be abundantly manifest in forming habits of industry at home amongst the women of the parish'), a horticultural society and a reading room ('There is a Lending Library in which are several good books') as well as courses of lectures, poetry readings and Bible classes. All these served his purpose in establishing a secular Anglican community, perhaps to parallel the religious

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 4.

⁵¹ *Cowley Parish Magazine*, January 1867.

TABLE 6. CIRCUS STREET, 1871

<i>Address</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Birthplace</i>
1	Henry Griffin, 30, Emma Griffin, 36, Martha Webb, servant, 18	Servant	Oxford
2	William West, 50 Martha West, 38 4 children	Tailor	Oxford
3	William Read, 34 Elizabeth Read, 34 3 children	Carpenter & joiner	Botley
4	William Johnson, 36 Ellen Johnson, 37 5 children	Sergeant Militia Staff	Kings Sutton
5	Edwin Gurdan, 29 Harriet Gurdan, 32 2 children	Journeyman carpenter	Elsfield
6	James Harwood, 53 Elizabeth Harwood, 61 Son, daughter & son-in-law	Shoemaker	Cassington
7	James Selby, 36 Maryann Selby, 33 5 children	Carpenter	Oxford St. Thomas
8	Cornelius Kempster, 30 Lucy Kempster, 30 4 children	Tailor	Oxfordshire
9	James Hoare, 46 Elizabeth Hoare, 52 2 children 1 lodger	Gardener	Tackley
10			
11	Frederick Brooks, 24 Rose Brooks, 22	Photographer	Oxford
12	Frederick Shepherd, 25 Harriet Shepherd, 26 2 children	Tailor's foreman	Oxford
13	Martha Johnson, 59, widow John Johnson, 31, son	Professor of cornet	Standlake

one in Marston Street: he had 'no use for schemes for social betterment that were not distinctly Christian'⁵² and made no mention of the nonconformist churches, Methodist and Congregationalist, that were built in Cowley. Benson resigned as vicar in 1886.

⁵² Congreve and Longridge, *Benson*, 17.

CONCLUSION

Middle-class contemporaries who lived in central or North Oxford either ignored the new suburb of East Oxford altogether, or saw it as something unnatural: a 'base and brickish skirt' (Gerard Manley Hopkins), a 'vast tumour' (the Revd W. H. Charsley).⁵³ To aspiring inhabitants it was a 'limited illusion', a personal rebirth, a chance to distance themselves from the courts and slums of St. Clement's and the town centre⁵⁴ or to escape the limited prospects of the countryside. To local developers, builders and investors it was a chance to make money quickly.

The chief social feature of the six streets was variety: variety of background, of place of birth, of occupation. Within the boundaries of class this must have been the social characteristic of the suburbs of most non-industrial county towns serving the various needs of the local population. Their occupations were mostly the traditional ones of the skilled manual class – cabinet maker, carpenter, joiner, dressmaker, gardener, tailor, cordwainer, upholsterer, shoemaker, wood turner – together with the usual shopkeepers – baker, butcher, grocer – who would have been found in a Victorian village, and a scattering of clerks (seven in 1861, fourteen by 1891). They seem to have been small employers living in or next to their workplace, as did John Best, the cricket ball manufacturer in Cowley Road, and Ezra Bunker, the sawmill owner in Stockmore Street; or self-employed, or employed in turn by small employers. There is no sign of large industry or mass employment, and little of the growing white-collar class; the only craftsmen who might not have been found in a village were the builders, decorators, painters and gas-fitters who were building the new suburb.

Mixed with these craftspeople and tradesmen were those people living or working in Oxford because it was a medium-size county town: teachers, policemen, musicians, newspaper reporters, commercial travellers; and people who lived there because it was a university town: a few students, the clergy (five in 1861), printers, and college servants.

As a place for in-migrants, it offered space, inside water taps and flushing lavatories, and privacy to people who were already town dwellers; they moved for domestic rather than economic improvement. People moving there from rural Oxfordshire would more likely be economic migrants: highly mobile, with more than one move behind (and probably ahead of) them, many escaping from agricultural backgrounds and taking on quite different occupations. And there was a substantial body of people, the women of independent means, who chose Oxford as a pleasant place to live rather than work, and Cowley as an inexpensive suburb.

People who came to live in Cowley were older than most migrants in England and Wales, in their thirties and forties instead of under thirty; already with families instead of single (of the 533 people there in 1861 only about 70, most of them domestic servants, were not living with relations). Perhaps this was a characteristic of suburbs of county towns, with younger, single and therefore more mobile migrants tending to move to larger towns or city centres or to emigrate altogether. As the suburb matured, this characteristic was accentuated: although residential mobility remained high, the inhabitants became older on average, with both older householders and older children; at first Cowley had many more children than the national mean, but in their apparent shift towards fewer children between 1861 and 1891 suburban families may have been anticipating the national trend.

⁵³ *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (1967), quoted in Graham, 'Suburbs', 1; *Cowley Parish Magazine*, May 1867.

⁵⁴ R. Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain* (1989), 40.

All over England developers struggled to make their suburban estates middle-class. Most of them overestimated the market and underestimated the size a town needed to be to support such an estate;⁵⁵ they failed to appreciate the prerequisite conditions and the resources and persistence needed, and suburban history is full of their failures. In Oxford there was only enough demand for one middle-class suburb of any size, and even that one was successful only because of the patience, resources and determination of the landowner, St. John's College in North Oxford. Cowley had too many different landowners, developers and builders to compete in this respect – and only some of the developers wanted to. At the same time, like most other developers, they could not afford to cater to the poorer working class; and because the market was not large enough in towns this size for exclusively white-collar districts, they aimed ambivalently at both a lower-middle-class and artisan market.⁵⁶ Like many such suburbs, this one was not socially exclusive but had fringes of slightly higher and lower classes.⁵⁷ The study of the population of the six streets shows how it settled down to become a solid, lower-middle-class and artisan suburb – with just a flicker of gentility in the Iffley Road.

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⁵⁵ Towns under 50,000 could not generally support an exclusively middle-class estate; Rodger, *Housing*, 29.

⁵⁶ G. Crossick, 'The Emergence of the Lower Middle Class in Britain', in Crossick (ed.), *The Lower Middle Class in Britain 1870-1914* (1977), 49.

⁵⁷ S.M. Gaskell, 'Housing and the Lower Middle Class, 1870-1914', in Crossick, *Lower Middle Class*, 167.