

The Population  
Chapter 23 of Sydney Gardner Jarman. *History of Bridgwater, 1889*

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**THE POPULATION.—AN EARLY RECORD—THE CENSUS RETURNS.**

MUCH uncertainty naturally exists as to the number of inhabitants of Bridgwater until comparatively recent times. The first record, we have of any numbering of the population is in 1695, when an apparently reliable entry in one of the registers of St. Mary's Church informs us that in the town there were "2,200 and odd" inhabitants, and in the limits of Haygrove, Dunwear and Chilton there were another 600. These figures, considering the total population of England at that time (a little over five millions — about the population of London to-day), show that Bridgwater must have been an important and flourishing place. After this date there are no means of determining the population of Bridgwater anterior to the present century. The first Census by Act of Parliament in England was in 1801, and

has been continued every ten years since. Four years before that time (1797) there were 3,000 inhabitants and 500 houses. In 1801 the number of inhabitants totalled 3,634, of which 1,715 were males, and 1,919 females. There were 481 inhabited houses, occupied by 520 families; uninhabited houses, 12. Ten years later the Census return gave the following particulars: — Inhabited houses 859, occupied by 958 families; uninhabited houses, 34; in process of building, 25; families occupied in trade, 570; ditto in agriculture, 87; males, 2,240; females, 2,670; total population, 4,910. This number of males did not include absent seamen belonging to the town, nor the local Militia, about 200. At the last Census the figures had risen to 12,704 — made up of 6,152 males, 6,552 females. For the purpose of easy comparison the numbers are tabulated: —

Year	Males	Females	Total	Inhabited Houses	Uninhabited Houses	Building
1801 ...	1715	1919	3634	481	12	—
1811 ...	2240	2670	4910	859	34	25
1821 ...	2939	3216	6155	1059	35	16
1831 ...	3683	4124	7807	1400	85	20
1841* ...	—	—	10,430	—	—	—
1851* ...	—	—	10,883	—	—	—
1861 ...	5793	6327	12,120	2274	99	1
1871† ...	6144	6492	12,636	2510	256	13
1881 ...	6152	6552	2,704	2994	298	7

It will be noticed that the rise in population has been steady and continuous. The great increase shown by the Census of 1841 was doubtless due to the activity engendered by the cutting and opening of the Railway. It may be safely assumed that since the last Census (1881) the number of inhabitants has increased two or three hundred, judging from business activity and the extent of building operations.

\* It is not possible to give more detailed information with regard to 1841, 1851, as neither the Bridgwater papers, nor the Taunton or Bristol journals, give more than the totals, while the lists now in the British Museum do not refer solely to the town, but give the numbers relating to the Union or sub-district.

† These figures are copied from Official returns. A local paper of that year gives the following return for 1871, but it will be seen the figures do not agree:

Parishes	Inhabited Houses	Uninhabited Houses	Males	Females	Totals
Holy Trinity	694	85	1561	1850	3411
St. John's	1145	75	2861	2783	5644
St. Mary's	696	96	1717	1913	3630

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