

Chart 2.

Chart 1 shows the predominance of agriculture and service (mainly domestic and female) in Colton's employment structure in 1901. Note in Chart 2 the paucity of professional and clerical jobs (3% and 2.3% respectively). While 22% of the population work in industry, these are mainly low level jobs, especially unskilled labouring.

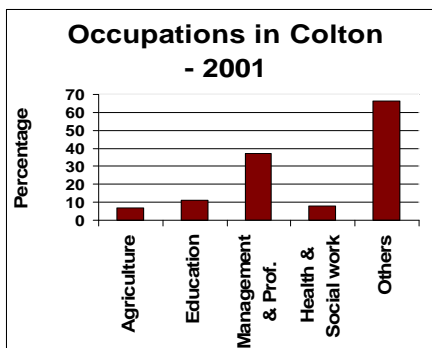


Chart 3.

By 2001 agriculture has shrunk to 7% of the workforce (26 people), while management and the professions comprise 37%. Full-

time education for the over 16's provides 11%, a situation unknown in 1901.

References.

The Census Records for Colton, Staffordshire Record Office.
Colton Parish Register, Births, 1884 - 1899.

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Hey D. Ed. The Oxford Companion to Local and Family History. OUP 1966.

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Colton History Society

Occupations in Colton

The population of Colton in 1901 was not greatly different from that of today: 760 then, compared to 701 recorded in 2001. The occupational structure of Colton in those times, however, was very different. In an era before the widespread use of cars and mechanisation work on, or related to the land accounted for no less than 32.5% of all those in employment.



In all 101 people (96 male, 5 female) out of a working population of 311 worked in agriculture in 1901, compared to just 26 people, 7% of the working population, in 2001. If one adds to the 1901 figures those in associated trades: blacksmiths, wheelwrights,

carters, etc, the importance of this sector is even more striking. With 17 people declaring that they worked with horses – waggoners, teamsters, two ploughboys – we must imagine a village whose sights, sounds and smells reflected this key mode of transport. Sixty seven women and girls were in employment and they represented some 21.5% of the working population: which might appear a surprisingly high figure, till one sees that almost three quarters of them were in service.



A Colton resident in service at the turn of the 19/20th Century.

From housemaids and parlour-maids to cooks and a lady's companion, these women maintained, amongst others, Bellamour Hall and Lodge, Colton House, the Rectory and the large farm-houses in and around the village.

Despite the predominance of agriculture and domestic service, industry did play a part in employment, albeit demanding low levels of skill. The leather industry in Rugeley (cf. Leathermill Lane), in particular the tannery, provided jobs. Thirteen men were involved in tanning processes, though admittedly 11 of these were tanners' labourers, one a flesher and one a scudder, removing bits of fat and other unsavoury residues from the hides. A southerly wind, and even the return from work of the men themselves, would no doubt have had a frequent olfactory impact on the village, especially in warm weather. Apart from these, the Derby Oxide Colour Works, down by the River Trent bridge, was a source of employment for a handful of men. These would be clearly distinguished by the red pigment on their clothes and skin.

Mechanisation of one kind had affected work patterns in Colton by this time. The coming of the railway in 1847 brought new kinds of work. By 1901, no fewer than 31

Coltonians, all men, were working on the railway. Six of these were navvies or labourers, but others had found employment requiring more skill, such as bricklayers, clerks and signalmen. We can visualise the daily trudge to and from Rugeley of this relatively new breed of worker, supporting a mode of transport that opened up the village to rapid travel and a much wider range of external influences.

Crafts were still practised to a significant degree, by both men and women. Four were blacksmiths, and one of these had an apprentice; there were five carpenters, a joiner, a wheelwright and a cordwainer (shoemaker), the last of these not easy to find nowadays! Four dressmakers accounted for the female contribution to this category.



Mr. B. Williscroft (Second left) the village wheelwright, carpenter and coffin maker.

Trades and commerce were fairly important in 1901, engaging 20 males and 3 females, representing 8% of total employment. Five butchers, no less, lived in Colton at this time, in addition to which there were two butchers' assistants and a slaughterman. A leather merchant, a builders' merchant, two publicans and a beerhouse/shopkeeper at the Dun Cow, also figure among this group, as do a laundress, working on her own account, and two laundress workers. The make-up of this category presents a sharp contrast to the kinds of trades we see in Colton today.

Compared to today the professions were not, in numerical terms, very prominent. There were nevertheless two schoolmistresses, one of these being Lizzie Yates, possessor of a well-known Colton surname; a "certificated" elementary school-master; an assistant teacher and a pupil teacher. They formed important members of the then professional class. Unusually, an actor and an actress, Harry and Ada Yardley, lived in Hamley Lodge, with their domestic servant. They bought a touch of the exotic to the employment pattern of the day. Frederic Bonney, another notable person who lived in Colton House, appears in the records as a magistrate.

Professional employment in 2006 is hugely more significant, with managerial and professional work occupying 37% of those of working age, with education, health and social work outstanding among them. One wonders what our predecessors of a hundred years ago would make of the 31 full-time students (aged 16+) living in Colton in 2001.

In conclusion, the bare figures of employment patterns at the start of the last century give a fascinating glimpse into the life of the village. We see a village, in spite of the advent of the railway, much more self-contained and sufficient than today, with the work on the land, on the 13 active farms, and trades related to agriculture dominating employment. Industry offered low level jobs and professional and clerical work was much less prominent than now.

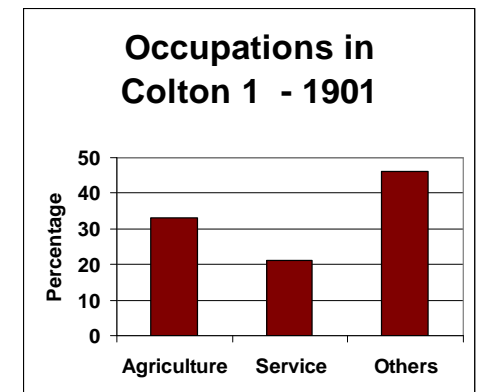


Chart 1.