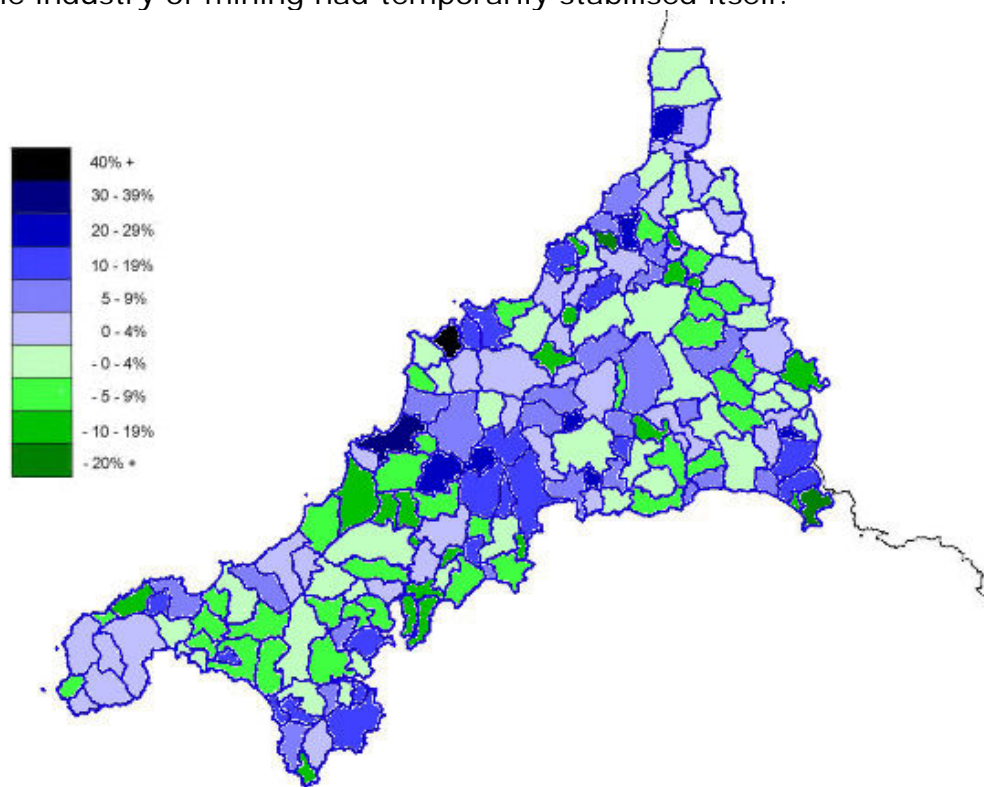


Population change in Cornwall 1901-1951

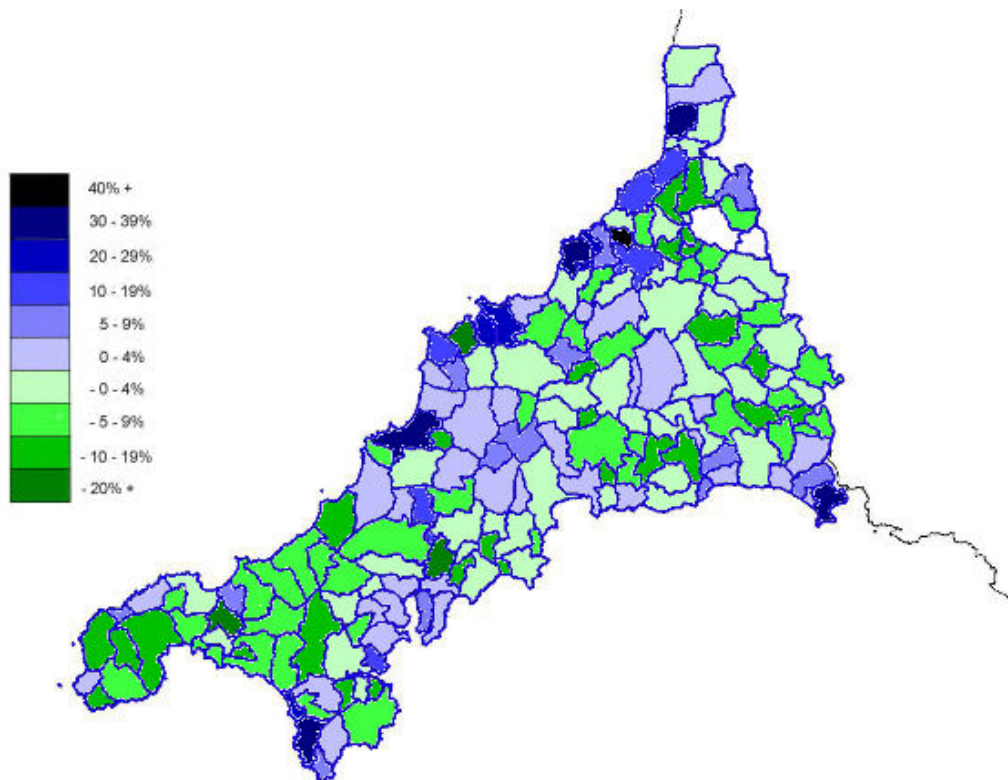
1901-1911

In the Edwardian period population continued to rise, and at the fastest rate seen since the heyday of the mining industry in the 1850s. Growth was fuelled by a mini-economic revival in the second half of the decade. This included rapidly growing demand for clay, something reflected in the continued population growth in mid-Cornwall. Other notable areas with growing numbers included the coastal parishes around the Camel estuary, various parishes to the north west of Bodmin Moor, and the district around Saltash, rapidly being brought into the orbit of Plymouth, aided by cheaper rail fares. Areas of upland and rural east Cornwall on the other hand lost population, as did Calstock, whose industries entered into a steep decline in this decade. In west Cornwall population growth was less marked, though the Lizard and Falmouth were exceptions to this. Both the central mining district and West Penwith also experienced some population rises in this first decade of the new century, indicating that the old staple industry of mining had temporarily stabilised itself.



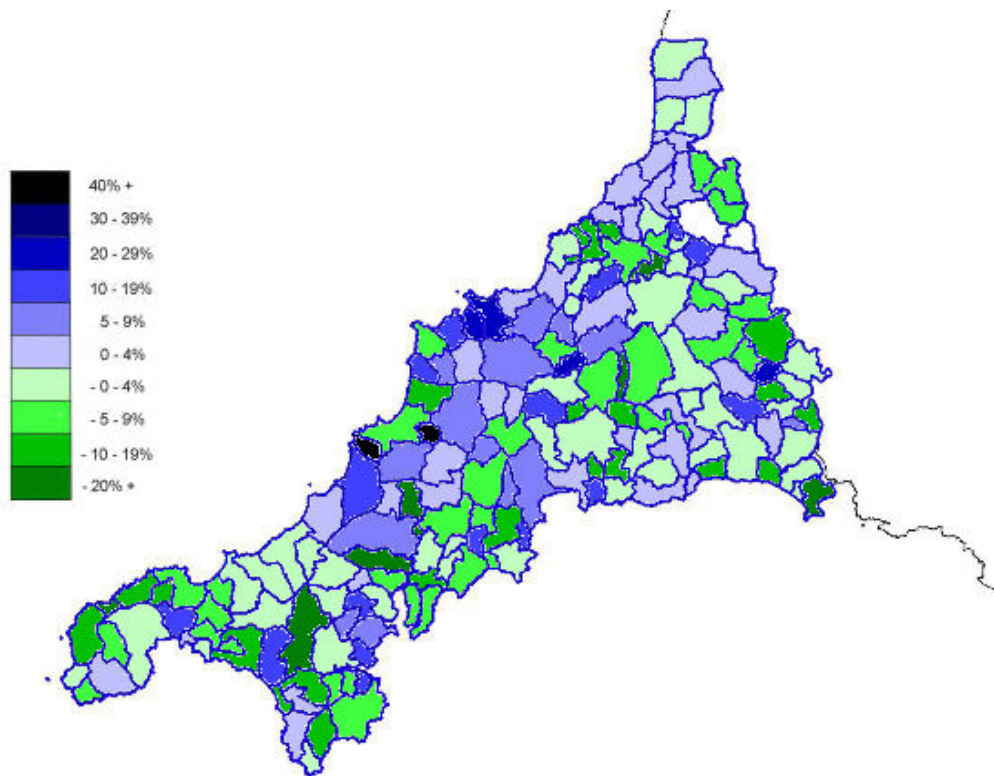
1911-21

The census of 1921 was taken rather later in the year than usual. As a result it picked up the evidence of the early tourist industry, exaggerating the noticeable rise in the populations of coastal communities such as Bude, Boscastle and, first and foremost, Newquay. It also masked an overall fall as depopulation re-established itself. Most of east Cornwall and the older industrial areas of west Cornwall saw population falls, with many parishes losing more than 10 per cent of their people during the war years. The exceptions continued to be the far south east, mid-Cornwall (although the population growth of the pre-war period fell back even here), the parishes bordering the Fal estuary and the western part of the Lizard.



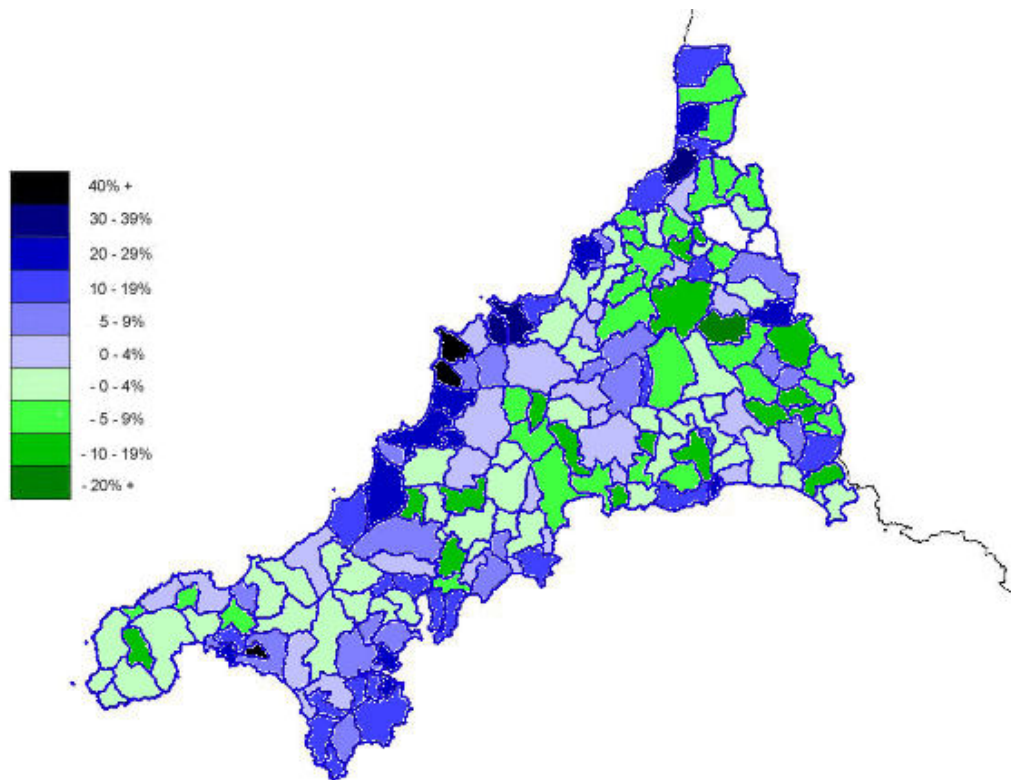
1921-31

A slow population decline continued into the 1920s. Nonetheless, an area in Pydar hundred and Trigg bucked this pattern and experienced population growth in this decade. The exception was unusually Newquay, but this was a reflection of its inflated population in the 1921 census. The area of growth extended westwards as far as St Agnes and Kenwyn. However, outside mid-Cornwall the picture was more variegated. While parishes on St Austell Bay grew, those in the Roseland lost people for example. More parishes in south east Cornwall saw their population numbers fall than rise in this decade, as was the case in the west, where, outside Falmouth and its environs, the Helston district, Mullion and Cury, Ludgvan and Marazion and St Buryan, the population generally fell.



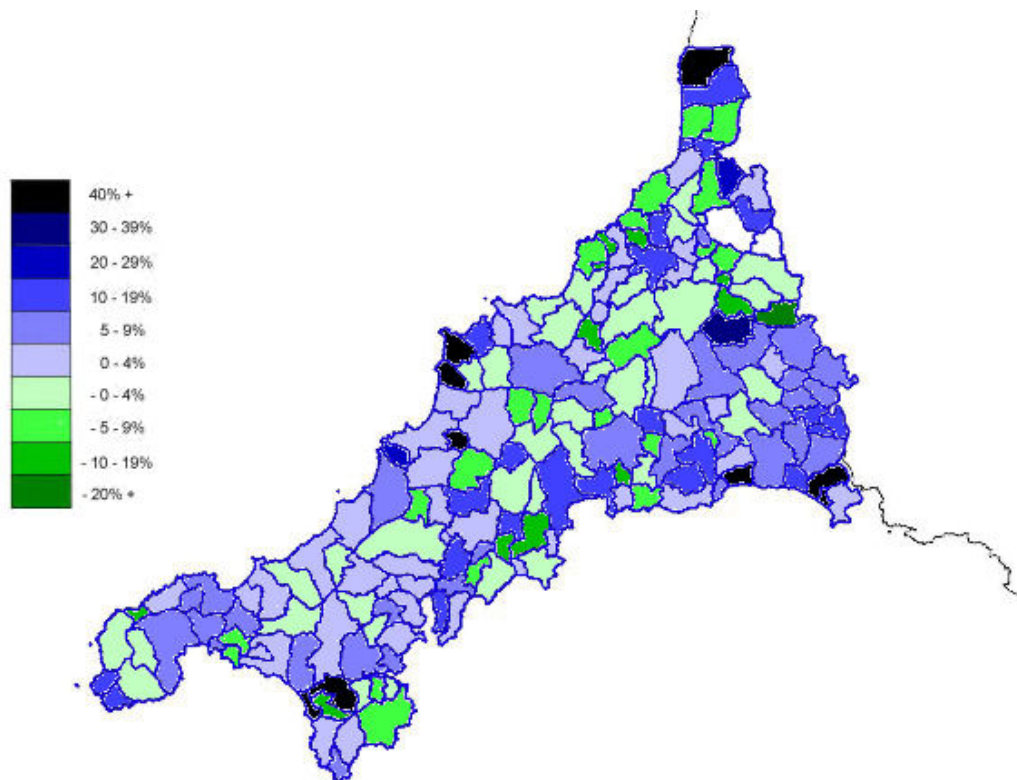
1931-39

For obvious reasons no census was taken in 1941. But a parish by parish estimate was made in 1939. Accepting this as accurate, there seems to have been some recovery of population in the 1930s in coastal parishes, with strong growth resumed right along the north coast from St Agnes to Stratton and, in contrast to the 1920s, growth also along the south coast from Marazion to Mevagissey. While tourism in this period was a net job-creator and in consequence places with a tourist sector relatively prospered it was a different story in the older industrial areas. There, this was a miserable decade of chronically high unemployment, reaching as high as 60 per cent at times in the depressed community of Gunnislake on the border with Devon. Out-migration was the dominant process here and large falls in parts of mid and east Cornwall compensated for the growth in coastal areas. The decline in the St Austell area reflected the difficulties of the clay industry as the American market failed to recover from its collapse in 1929-31. Meanwhile, in east Cornwall many farmers struggled with low food prices and in some cases crippling debts.



1939-1951

This period included the very difficult demographic experiences of wartime and of post-war austerity and reconstruction. In the former population in Cornwall had, unlike during the First World War, risen rapidly as a result of movement out of the cities and also of forces personnel into Cornwall. Many of these later left again but enough stayed on to ensure that the population in 1951 remained considerably higher than in 1939. However, it had fallen back from its peak of the early 1940s and depopulation resumed in many parts of rural Cornwall in the latter part of the war years and the first years of peace. Indeed, many such rural parishes in north Cornwall and inland in mid and west Cornwall lost people over this period. However, in most districts the population in 1951 had grown. Generally, population growth was fastest in south east Cornwall, around St Austell and in parts of the west of Powder hundred. But the very fastest growth was often linked to the wartime legacy of military camps. Airfields at Culdrose and St Mawgan led to growth in Mawgan in Meneage, Gunwalloe, Mawgan in Pydar and St Merryn. Population in Antony was boosted by the Royal Navy bases there and that in Morwenstow grew because of the siting in the parish of a military installation, later to become an important link in highly secretive state surveillance of transatlantic telephone communications.



Bernard Deacon June 2007