

## MISCELLANY

### The Compton Census - Peterborough

Our attention was drawn by the Rev. David Bond of Peterborough to a deposit in the Northamptonshire Record Office and, by kind permission of the County Archivist, we are able to print this transcript. The deposit consists of copies of:-

1. The letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Bishop of London (Bishop Compton) instituting the Census, with details of the questions to be asked.
2. A letter from the Bishop of London to the Bishop of Peterborough, instructing him to make the enquiry in his diocese, together with a note saying how he proposes to proceed.
3. The return sent in by the Archdeacons (the beginning only of which is transcribed here).

The Archdeacons' return is of particular interest because it contains a memorandum which makes it clear that incumbents had sometimes returned the total number of inhabitants, sometimes the number of communicants (i.e. those above the age of 16), sometimes the number of families. This is of importance because, all too often, it is assumed that the returns are of communicants and need to be inflated by a multiplier, often taken to be  $\frac{1}{3}$ , to give actual populations. Clearly, in this diocese, the practice varied from incumbent to incumbent, even in the same deanery, and the same has been found to be true in other dioceses. Unfortunately, we rarely have an archdeacon's explanatory memorandum! Hence the population estimates derived from the Compton Census must be treated with caution unless there is evidence to show which procedure was adopted in the particular parish.

1. Lambeth House. Jan 17.1675/6

I have thought fit for some reasons that newly concerne the Church to pray and require your Lordship, and by you the rest of my Bretheren the Bps of this Province that forthwith upon receipt hereof you send Letters directed to the Archdeacons and Commissary of your respective Dioceses, willing and streightley charging them as well by conference with the ministers as the church wardens of

each parish or such others as may best give them the most punctuall satisfaction they particularly informe themselves as to the severall information therein that they are able they presently after their next visitation of Easter ended transmitt their account thereupon in writing unto their respective Diocesans and they unto your Lordsp by you to be communicated unto me with your Ldsp first conveniency: And to the end that they may be the more circumspect and suddaine in the execution of this affaire I think it not unnecessary that there be some advertisement intimated unto them how that even they themselves and their jurisdictions are in some measure herein alsoe concerned. So not doubting of yr Ldsp care in the premisses I bid yr Ldsp heartily farewell and am My Lord Yr Lds

Affectionate ffriend and Bro.  
Gilb. Cant.

#### The Inquirys

1. What number of persons are there by common account and estimation inhabiting within each parish subject unto your jurisdiction.
2. Wt number of Popish Recusants or persons suspected for such recusancy are there residing amongst the inhabitants aforesaid.
3. Wt number of other dissenters are there in each parish of what sect soever wch either obstinately refuse or wholly absent themselves from the communion of the Church of England at such times as by law they are required.

ffor the R Rd ffather in God

Henry Lord Bishop of

London

2. White hall Jan. 21. 1675  
R Revd and my very good Lord.

I have received the inclosed Commands from his Grace the Lord Arch Bp of Canterbury to communicate to your Ldsp I do hereby committ them to your care and by the returne of your account to be sent to me with all convenient speed. Thus wishing Yr Ldsp all

health and happiness  
I rest

My Lord  
Your most faithfull servant  
and Brother  
H. London

The course I have been directed was to order my Chancell<sup>r</sup>  
and Archdeacons to appoint their officials to copy  
out the Heads of Enquiry for each parson in their respective  
precincts and appoint their apparitors to deliver them at  
the warning of ye next visitation

for the R Revd ffather in God  
the Lord Bishop of Peterbury

3. 1676 An account at the Archdeacons Easter Visitation Apr 10-19  
upon 3 Enquiries sent out by the Apparitours before the  
visit. according to an order sent for my L. Archb by  
the B of London to my L.B. of Peterb. and by him to  
the Archdeacon.

Beackley Dea

	Families	Psns young & olde	Popish Recusants	Obstinate separatists
Aynhoe		345	1	15
Ashton in ye wals		100	2	0
Bradwin	18	90	0	0
Blakesley	100	400	0	2 families
Beackley		1068	3	11 whereof 3 are infants
Byfield		556	0	9

etc

Mem<sup>dam</sup> that from many towns the account excluded all under 16 and so I let the number stand here unless it was expressly said in the bills or appeared by the number of families that the children were excluded and then I added half so many more (viz for 2 I counted 3) To a family I account 4 persons one with another. This account was sent to my L.B. of Peterb

Apr 25 1676

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