

Thompson, E.P.

'Le Charivari Anglais'.

Annales Economies Societes Civilisations, 27^e anne, No. 2 (1972).

A study of surviving accounts of popular disturbances provoked by unacceptable behaviour (e.g. husbands beating wives, or adultery). Changes over time in what behaviour was considered unacceptable are discussed.

CORRESPONDENCE

Emigrant Family History

Dear Sir,

Having just received issue 9 of *LPS*, may I immediately second Mr. Rickwood's scheme for an LPS Society. I would hope, in fact, that the intervening months have witnessed the initiation of such a plan.

Two other letters in issue no. 9 have spurred this letter. Both suggested possible aids in my frustrating attempt to reconstruct 17th century New England families without immediate access to local English records. One was Mr. Bradley's suggestion of more interchange of information about readers' projects and research problems; the other, Mrs. Jones' mention of Local History Classes. I would be most grateful if any individual or class was able to help me with my English researches. The result could be an intriguing bit of Trans-Atlantic scholarship and another dimension to local studies by adding the element of emigrant family history.

The individuals or classes would be asked to search parish records primarily in the East Riding of Yorkshire, some of which have now been deposited in the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research in York. I realise that I have no hope of tracking down all the places of origin of my 75 original families. But there is strong evidence that a cluster of important political and religious leaders of the American Settlement were neighbours from Holme-on-Spaulling Moor, in the East Riding (the register of this parish is one of those in the Borthwick). I am inclined to believe that others of the settlers must have come from this area and the registers would appear to be the best place to check.

Hope you and your readers can help. The *LPS* journal has certainly been an enormous aid to date.

Yours sincerely

Professor P.M. O'Malley
116 Oxford Avenue,
Haverhill,
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U.S.A.

Age information in marriage bonds

Dear Sir,

Doubt has been raised in a recent issue concerning the accuracy of age information in marriage bonds and allegations (*LPS* No. 9, Autumn, 1972). Mr. Walker's conclusion that "these ages are liable to a high degree of error" is perhaps, unduly pessimistic. For historical and demographic use of the age data it is important that the reliability or unreliability of these ages be determined by checks on a large number of cases.

I have discussed the results of such an analysis and the methods used in 'Marriage Licences and the Local Historian' *The Local Historian*, May 1973. Briefly, having extended this work on early seventeenth century allegations to the diocese of Canterbury, I will give the results for 43 allegations checked. An interesting feature is the accuracy of the reported ages for people marrying in the age range of 16–24. Thereafter there is an increasing divergence between the reported age and the baptism–marriage interval age.

In the sample of 43 London and Canterbury diocesan allegations, the mean age of applicants, male and female, derived from reported ages was 23.2 + 0.5. The 'true' age calculated in years and months was 23.2. Since this very close agreement conceals the actual discrepancies, it may be more instructive to present the cases in the following way:

15 of the 43 licence ages tallied exactly with the true age.

19 of the 43 were either 1 year overstated or 1 understated although 6 of the 19 were in fact only 1 or 3 months short of the reported age. (For example the daughter of a London pewterer who was 13 years 11 months at the time the allegation was made, was reported to be 14, and by this criterion, her reported age was inaccurate by 1 year).

6 of the 43 were understated or overstated by 2 years.

2 of the 43 were understated by 3 years. The two brides in this category were 3 years older than their reported ages.

The final case is an alarming discrepancy of 9 years. George Bartlett, a husbandman of Chislett, Kent, marrying in 1631 at 25, was in fact, 34 years 2 months old at the time.

An eighteenth century sample of Leicester Archdeaconry allegations reveals a greater difference in means: The licence mean for 53 cases was 24.8 + 0.5 and the true mean in years and months, 23.8, there was, however, a correspondingly greater number of ages in category 2: understated or overstated by 1 year only.

Unfortunately there are no checks on older applicants; the oldest member of the seventeenth century sample being 35 years. Samples taken of widow-widower licence populations heap at 40, 50 and 60 with relatively few ages in between. It is interesting that in Mr. Walker's example the discrepancies increase with increasing age. It may be necessary to restrict historical and demographic use of licence age information to first marriages only, where there is a reassuringly close agreement between the reported and true ages.

Yours sincerely,

Vivien Elliott,
65 Forburg Road,
London N16.

A test to establish the accuracy of early civil registration

Dear Sir,

The article by Carol G. Pearce, *Expanding families*, is as you note, a very significant step in the progress of demographic studies. For many years researchers using civil registration records have been aware that the early years of registration are far from complete. Certainly this is my own experience. D. J. Steel, *National Index of Parish Registers, General Articles I* (Unregistered Post 1837 births) pages 145–7, says "The extent to which births escaped registration in the early days is controversial." May I suggest that the present computer material from the Ashford registration district would make an excellent basis for some factual information on just how accurate registration records are in the early years after 1837. Obviously the comparison of the entries would involve a considerable number of hours in obtaining parochial and non-parochial baptisms/births recorded within the Ashford registration district. Despite this daunting task I am sure the study would be worthwhile. It would certainly provide a tremendous source of material for other work.

Yours faithfully,

Duncan W. Harrington,
Registered Genealogist,
1 Saint Augustines Court
North Holmes Road,
Canterbury, Kent.

The correlation between census and parish register data

Dear Sir,

I was interested to read in L.P.S. No. 9 the note by P. E. Razzell on the correlation between census and parish register data. He argues that if a man's baptism is not registered in the parish where he himself said he was born, then it was not registered, which on the face of it seems likely.

However, here I take issue with him, having just after 15 years (desultory) search, found the baptismal entry of my mother's great-grandfather, who was not born where he thought he was.

The discovery came about because I consulted the Allen Marriage Index in the Herts County Record Office: my forbear lived and was married in Hitchin, and said he was born there. The only possible marriage to have been that of his parents took place at Kings Walden, the bridegroom being a St. Ippollitts man, and all the children were baptised at St. Ippollitts, which is only about a mile from Hitchin. I have not yet had time to authenticate any marriages further back, but judging from the marriage index there was a certain amount of to-ing and fro-ing between the two parishes, and my own parents, who knew nothing of this, moved out of Hitchin for 12 years and lived at St. Ippollitts, where I was born.

Incidentally, my ancestor also gave his age wrongly at the census of 1851, but a younger brother, also living in Hitchin, correctly gave his age and birthplace. It seems possible that labouring men at that date (both were brickmakers) thought the census a lot of nonsense, and were not over-particular about accurate answers to questions.

Yours faithfully,

Margaret Hole (Mrs.)
Westgate,
Montague Road,
Berkhamsted.

Records of hiring fairs and servants testimonials

Dear Sir,

Although there was no statutory basis for having done so, several English counties in the 16th to 18th centuries ordered their constables to attend the hiring fairs, or 'Statute Sessions', or 'Petty Sessions', and to keep records of the hiring agreements made between masters and servants. A cache of these records has survived in Lincolnshire, and I would be very interested in knowing if any of your readers had discovered any others.

The Lincolnshire records cover hiring sessions held in Holland from 1767 to 1876, but they are not continuous for any one fair for more than forty years. The records for several of the fairs are loose foolscap or double foolscap sheets, while those of the Spalding fairs are recorded in special books. The loose sheets are headed with the date and place (always a public house) of the statute session, and are signed by the petty constables of the neighbouring parishes and by the chief constable of the wapentake. In this area two sets of fairs appear from the records to have been held each year. The principal fairs were in April, and a secondary series was held in November. There is one line in the register for each hiring agreement, and there are columns for the name of the master or mistress, his or her residence, the name of the servant, the wages, and the terminal date of the period of service. The Spalding hiring books are similar; they do not include the terminal date of service, but most helpfully include the name and residence of the servant's last master.

I am seeking this information for my PhD thesis from the University of Toronto on servants and labourers in early modern English agriculture, and it would be valuable to me to compare this set of documents with those from an area less fenny. There is no reason why the documents should have survived. There was in general no requirement to deposit them at Quarter Sessions, nor to keep them with parish records. Yet the Lincolnshire set did survive, with the Holland Quarter Sessions records. Did any others?

May I use this opportunity to add a further enquiry.

Have any of your readers, in their searches through parish records, found there examples of the 'testimonials' that were ordered kept in the final clauses of 5 Eliz. c.4? These certificates were to have been issued to servants leaving the parish, and were to have been sealed by the parish constable and registered with the parson, vicar, or churchwarden. The statute gives an example of the form they were to have taken:

'A B, late servant of C D of E, husbandman or taylor in County _____' is licensed to depart from his said master, and is at liberty to serve elsewhere.'

I have found one such register, which covers just twenty years in the 16th century, for a small Essex parish (ERO D/P 135/1/1), and no others. I believe these testimonials would be useful evidence for my thesis in economic history, which I am preparing for the University of Toronto.

Yours faithfully,

Ann Kussmaul Cooper
23 Chesterton Towers,
Cambridge.

Double registration in the Census

Dear Sir,

I have recently been studying the 1851 Census Report for Edmonton, Middlesex and have discovered that at least TWO people have been entered twice. Sarah Blacktop, a widow aged 73 born in Hatley, Bedfordshire, was recorded as living alone in Claremont Street, a nurse. She was also a servant, 'Sick Nurse' at the house of Ann Maria Brown in Fore Street. Ann Conyard, a married woman aged 58, born in Edmonton, Monthly Nurse, was recorded with her family at Saddler's Mill Bridge and also at the home of Stephen Aylin, a fishmonger in Church Street, whose wife had a month old baby. Has anyone else found duplicated entries?

Yours sincerely,

A. E. Robinson (Mrs.)
5, Chase Court Gardens,
Enfield,
Middlesex EN2 8DH.

Richard Wall comments:

The double-registration of the two Edmonton nurses is interesting – in the 1841 Return for the Devon village of Colyton one or two servants (but not as far as I am aware any of the Monthly Nurses) were counted on two separate occasions, once in their family of origin and once in what was presumably their place of residence and work. In addition, one entire household appears twice, with certain details discordant, for example, age of husband 45 instead of 46 but leaving little room for doubt that the units were identical. The enumerator may have blundered and counted twice the form filled in by the householder. Since householders schedules were delivered to each address before the census day, it would be perfectly possible for two householders' schedules to be issued and completed in cases where, for instance, the property concerned possessed a shop front on the main street and living quarters at the rear, but with access to a back street.

Hair

Dear Sir,

I am engaged in research involving the analysis for trace elements in human hair both modern and historical.

The primary purpose of this study is to assist in establishing an historical (pre-industrial) baseline for the human intake of trace metals and with this information determine the degree to which pollution has contributed to an increase in the human intake of these trace metals. At the same time we expect to be able to obtain information of importance in evaluating

nutritional deficiencies.

Our studies thus far have been limited to the United States. The custom of saving hair as mementos does not date back as far here in America as it does in England. As a result we have very few samples available to us prior to 1840. The saving of hair mementos especially in brooches, tie pins, lockets, and other glass enclosed pieces of jewelry dates back much further in England as I easily discovered in visiting antique shops as well as the Victoria and Albert Museum.

To my knowledge this is the first major study on human artefacts involving more than just a few trace elements. Because of this we fully expect to be able to derive a large amount of information of relevance, not only to present-day human intake levels of trace elements, but also to be able to evaluate changes in nutritional patterns during historical periods. Thus far the only major problem I have encountered in interpreting the historical hair analysis data is associated with the fact that people washed their hair less frequently than we do today. As a result I must for proper comparison analyse some hair samples from persons living today who do not wash their hair frequently. For the United States we are hoping to acquire such samples from various residents in the Appalachian regions.

The difficulties which we encounter in interpreting data for historical American hair samples are due to the fact that no files such as those built up by the Cambridge group exist in the United States. This is further complicated by the greater mobility of American families. It appears to us as though a complimentary study of British hair, both modern and historical, would add significantly to an overall evaluation of the human intake of trace elements.

I would be glad to hear from anyone who can provide or is able to put me in touch with hair samples. I hope to be in England shortly and will be able to make arrangements for hair to be collected and stored until I can inspect it and remove the tiny amounts required for analysis.

Sincerely yours,

Adon A. Gordus
Professor of Chemistry
Department of Chemistry,
The University of Michigan,
Ann Arbor, Michigan.

[Editors Note. We will be pleased to pass on to Professor Gordus any information or offers of help readers may have.]

Access to Civil Registers

Dear Sir,

May I refer to the Editorial published in *Local Population Studies* No. 9 and in particular to the discussion reproduced on pages 6 and 7 about the possibility of obtaining extra-statutory facilities for access to local registers of births, deaths and marriages?

Some misunderstanding appears to have arisen among your readers. We should, therefore, be grateful if you could make it clear that the over-riding consideration in deciding whether a superintendent registrar having custody of local registers may be asked to make extra-statutory facilities available must be whether in practice the superintendent registrar is able to provide staff and accommodation to enable the registers to be inspected under proper supervision and without detriment to the statutory services which he is required to give to the public. These include attending to the preliminaries to all non-Anglican marriages, the performance of civil marriages and the issue of certificates required by the public.

County Councils, County Borough Councils and London Borough Councils provide register office accommodation and staff in accordance with the Registrar General's assessment of the extent of service needed in each individual registration district for the proper performance of the functions imposed on the registration officers by statute. These arrangements are embodied in registration schemes made by the local authorities with the approval of the Secretary of State for Social Services or the Secretary of State for Wales.

Many superintendent registrars are part-time officers and three quarters of all of them work single-handed. It is the exception rather than the rule for a superintendent registrar to have spare capacity to meet extra-statutory demands on his time. Your readers will, therefore, appreciate that, however valuable the research, facilities for access to registers must be dependent on the superintendent registrar's ability to fit in visits by the researcher with his own statutory commitments and that the demands of the public in the exercise of their legal rights and obligations must always be given priority.

Yours faithfully,

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