

CORRESPONDENCE

The Incidence of Tudor Suicide: additional sources discovered

Dear Sir,

In his contribution to *LPS 5*, Autumn 1970 — 'A Note on the Incidence of Tudor Suicide' — Dr. Hair employed a list of '. . . all the suicides in the county of Essex for the period 1560-1603 (from the King's Bench Records) . . .' based on the work of Dr. Alan Macfarlane, to compare with his calculations based on the inquests to be found in Dr. R. F. Hunnisett's *Calendar of Nottinghamshire Coroners' Inquests, 1485-1558*, (1969).

Unfortunately Dr. Macfarlane's list, made in 1966, on the files numbered K.B.9 597 to K.B.9 712, was made the year before the discovery of a further batch of files belonging to King's Bench Indictments Ancient during a search of the King's Bench File Sacks under the direction of Mr. C. A. F. Meekings of the Public Record Office. These are now numbered for Elizabeth's reign from K.B.9 1006 onwards and help to remedy gaps in the Law Sittings for that reign previously left unaccounted.

Taking a sample period 1561 to 1590, there should have been 120 Law Sittings. The files assembled in the years 1967 to 1969 mean that 87.5 per cent (105) of the files which should exist are now accounted for, though one file was found broken and a few membranes may have been lost. Dr. Macfarlane's list, however, would only represent 62 per cent (74) of those files which must originally have existed for the period 1561 to 1590. Dr. Hair's calculations upon the number of verdicts of suicide given for Essex in Elizabeth's reign must, therefore, be somewhat understated.

Yours sincerely,

Simon J. Stevenson
Emmanuel College,
Cambridge, CB2 3AP.

Editors' Note

Mr. R. G. Hyde has written to us asking us to make clear that his letter in *LPS 14* referred to Cowley, Uxbridge, not Cowley, Oxford, and that his address is 12 Robins Close, Cowley, Uxbridge UB8 2LE.

The birth/baptism interval at Harberton, Devon

Dear Sir,

The dates of births and baptisms are recorded for Harberton, Devon, from 1699 to 1709 and again from 1726 to 1727. Philemon Phillips was the parish clerk for both periods and he recorded the births and deaths of his own children. Not every baptism has a birth date but in the appropriate years there were 121 with both dates out of a total of 263

baptisms. The most common intervals were fifteen and sixteen days, the maximum was twenty-nine, the minimum one.

It has been suggested that this interval may have varied with time and place. There is some evidence to show that it did not do so in Harberton since the same interval is predominant in 1653-64 in a very different religious climate. Out of fifty-six baptisms in those two years, forty have the birth date recorded. Thirteen had intervals of between fourteen and sixteen days, six had an interval of twenty-one days and twenty-three had intervals of between thirteen and twenty-one days. The maximum interval was thirty-five days, the minimum again one.

There is no obvious reason for the presence of birth dates. At neither period was there an apparent change in clerkship. Philemon Phillips clearly intended to record every birth date since he left spaces for this, but failed to fill in most of them. A hint of social custom is perhaps recorded in the statement that ' . . . was born and baptised privately on December 2nd and brought to Church on December 26'. This was a gentleman's child. Uniquely, for one particular family births *only* are recorded. These were perhaps Dissenters, presumably Baptists.

Yours sincerely,

R. G. F. Stanes,
Culver House,
Payhembury,
Honiton, Devon.

A WEA group project in demographic studies in Liverpool

Dear Sir,

We have been using the parish register for St. Nicholas, Liverpool, which has been printed and is in two volumes — thus it gives us 'more books to go round'. We found that for a period from 1700 to 1725 occupations and addresses are given as well as the usual information — and in many cases there is even more, like 'lodger with Widdow Smith' or 'servant to Alderman So and so'. We also found a map of Liverpool as it was in 1725, scale 100 yards to the inch — a street plan in fact. So using these two sources we have set about reconstructing the town as it was then.

We have spent ten weeks extracting the information from the parish registers — card indexing every entry — then sorting these cards into streets — and making appropriate lists — then occupations — and doing the same — then putting them into alphabetical order and working out whether the Richard Singleton in Moore Street in 1702 is the same man who lived in Castle Street in 1704. If the occupation is the same, there is a chance that it is — but of course if that is 'saylor' there is doubt!

Before we had been at it (there are only thirteen in the class) for two weeks we realised that we should never cover twenty-five years — so reduced it to the first ten. I have been engaged by the WEA to continue with this course during the winter and hope that these

thirteen will still be able to come — but have in the meantime been instructing a class of forty odd who will be eligible to join in themselves at the end of their course (we have made the 'project' class a select band of those who have been through a course of instruction — just so that we know that they are fit to be let loose on archival material, and have proved that they are seriously interested!). Thus I am hoping for a much enlarged class in the winter. The ones who have done a lot of the donkey work on the first ten years will go on now to make something useful of the material we have got, and search other documents to fill in more of the life story of the population of Liverpool then. It was a period of growth — the Liverpool Parish was set up and St Peters consecrated in 1704. A lot of the occupations so far named probably encompass the men who worked on this. If new members join in — and I feel sure that they will — then they will be set to 'do' the next ten years or so — and catch up the others.

Of course it is quite possible for a family to live ten years in one house and never to go the church to baptise a child, marry another, or bury the dead — so we will use rate books, quarter sessions, etc. — whatever we can lay hands on to try to fill in the gaps.

Basically all we have done so far is card index and list — but already one or two interesting points have emerged. People 'lodged', and lodging house keepers were often widows. People moved — both houses and occupations — occupations usually moved up the scale. *Sayler, Saler*, etc. seem to refer to the rock bottom sailor, whereas *Marriner* seemed to mean the captain or some 'officer' class, and we have other material to search which gives us names of ships and their officers for that period, and we are gradually building up the picture, even of where they go and for what. We hope to link this with the family in the picture of the birthrate of their children. 'Foreigners' are few and far between — even to Scots, Irish and Welsh names. Although I have used the name Smith above as an example, I did that out of habit but in fact the name Smith was rare, comparatively. Many of the names found in Liverpool in 1700 are still there today! Although men of like occupation gathered together in the same street, the town does not seem to have been ghettoed.

Obviously there is much to interest the class here. They tend to divide themselves up according to their interest and work on their own — one is 'doing' the poor and has found reference to a 'little twisted girl' in papers relating to one of the major families of the town. Another is concentrating on the Bluecoat School which was established in 1709 because her son has just gone there; another is keenly interested in the shipping — in 1709 it is recorded that the first vessel sailed for Africa, and in 1717 the new dock, the Dry Dock was built (now Canning Dock). And so on.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Simpson,
19 Harboro Road,
Sale, Cheshire.