

CORRESPONDENCE

Letters intended for publication in **LPS** should be sent to Richard Wall, 27, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1QA.

How accurate is Hearth Tax as a guide to population size

Dear Sir,

It is surely no accident that the fortuitous existence of the Hearth Tax records gave the initial stimulus to the precocious enquiries of the seventeenth-century arithmeticians. This source, despite its shortcomings, remains one of the most valuable for the investigation, on a locality basis, of pre-nineteenth century population change. The recent piece by Dr. Patten (**Local Population Studies**, No. 7, 1971) was an admirable reminder of this fact. That author rightly drew attention, at the same time, to the unbought difficulties, and the consequent need for caution in interpretation of this information. As others have done, Dr. Patten emphasized, above all, the notable variations in the quantity of detail found in the surviving assessments of individual counties, and from year to year within each county. He noted also that the problems giving rise to inaccuracy were likely to be more apparent in urban as opposed to rural parishes: since the vast majority of Englishmen lived, at that time, in a rural setting, students of the subject can perhaps take heart from this observation. And this brings me to the point of this note which aims to draw attention to some other grounds for cautious optimism, albeit on the basis of a study of one county's assessments only.

The question of reasonable accuracy hinges, as Dr. Petten points out, on the care with which the poor were recorded. There is also the further question of to what extent empty and newly-built houses are distinguished in the Hearth assessments. The following description based on the later Warwickshire duplicate assessments housed in the County Record Office for the years 1662-74, serves to throw some light on these issues. The assessments consist of a list of names, linked to four headed columns. The first column distinguishes the names of 'payers' and is headed 'Hearthes chargeable one year'; the second distinguishes 'new-built' houses and is headed 'hearthes chargeable halve a year'; the third column is headed 'hearthes empty and poore, no distresse'; (which of these two categories such houses fall into is made clear by the insertion of the word 'empty' or 'poore' following the owner's or occupier's name in the list); the final column distinguishes the names of the 'certified' poor. At the end of the list of names there appears, where appropriate, most frequently in the villages of the Arden, north of the county, a further (third) group of poor, described as those 'that receive weekly collection, and live in Town houses or in houses on ye Common.' This final category of the poor is set out as a figure, and the names of the house-holders are not generally recorded. The phrasing suggests, however, that the number given offers a reasonable indication of the number of separate 'units' contained in this category, since it is very unlikely that such houses would be assessed at more than a single hearth. There are, of course, minor departures from this pattern; it was found, for example, that twelve almsrooms were included within the main list, though the occupants' names were not provided.

Where it has proved possible to check the accuracy of these figures by comparing them with independent estimates of houses or population, the results have not been discouraging. Such a comparison for individual parishes is often difficult and a source of the mistrust of hearth figures arises from the same cause: so often students fail to compare like with like because hearths are grouped under the names of often quite obscure hamlets, and it is by no means always clear to which parish a particular settlement should be attached.

The purpose of these remarks has been to suggest that within some localities, and for some years, there is the chance that Hearth assessments contain more detail of use to the student of population than is generally recognized. Interesting information about the pace of local building activity, as well as about the different categories of the poor, and their geographical location is surely not confined to some of the Warwickshire series of records. It is perhaps time that a more systematic evaluation of this source for the study of population was undertaken, along the lines already laid out by Dr. Patten and several other distinguished scholars for particular localities.

Yours sincerely,
Michael Martin.

150 Maybank Avenue, Wembley, Middlesex.

The inconsistent use of the surnames Andrews and Anderson

Dear Sir,

In the course of family reconstitution in a number of parishes in north Hertfordshire I have found examples of inconsistency in the use of the surnames Andrews and Anderson. In Barley, between 1750 and 1850 the names were apparently regarded as interchangeable. The same was true in Therfield between 1690 and the 1770s, the form 'Andrews or Anderson' being also occasionally met with in written documents; then in about 1778 Anderson seems to have been adopted almost exclusively as the normal usage in that parish.

In Walkern, Charles and Mary Andrews had nine children between 1830 and 1852 — four girls and five boys. To these they applied a simple rule of thumb; each of the girls was baptised using the surname Andrews, and each of the boys using the surname Anderson.

Against the register entry for the baptism of their daughter Elizabeth Andrews in 1838 appears the marginal note, 'Anderson by the vulgar'; and beside the entry for Sarah Andrews in 1841 is pencilled simply 'Anderson.' The two boys and two girls who were eventually married all used the name Anderson on that occasion, and their father Charles Andrews, who died in 1877, was buried as Charles Anderson.

It would be interesting to know of similar practices regarding the use of the name Anderson, or indeed any other surname ending in —son. Perhaps it is too much to hope to find examples of the complementary form, Andersdaughter, in the Norse fashion!

Yours sincerely,
Arthur Jones.

2 Chantry Lane, Hatfield, Hertfordshire

FEES FOR CONSULTING REGISTERS IN THE SURREY RECORD OFFICE: A REPLY

Dear Sir,

Your Spring 1976 issue contains a letter from Derek Turner criticising the policy of the diocese of Guildford in charging a fee for the photocopying of registers deposited in Guildford Muniment Room as Diocesan Record Office. This criticism is based on a misconception. Fees for searches and for copies of parochial registers are part of the income of a benefice and are not a reimbursement for the time or effort of the minister. The Parochial Registers and Records Measure, 1929, enacts that when searches are made in registers deposited in a Diocesan Record Office the minister is entitled to half of the statutory fee. By comparison the practice in the diocese of Guildford of charging only for certified copies and for xerox or other photographic copies is extremely modest. In addition, this practice in no way affects the provision made in the Measure for the waiving of the fee when searches are made 'for purposes of historical research.' It always remains open to the researcher to request that the fees be waived, and applications made on the part of schools for the copying of specimen pages have been successful in the past.

In the present instance, however, a quite separate point must be borne in mind. By no means all documents, particularly bound volumes, can be xeroxed without suffering harm, and on these grounds alone xeroxing of an entire volume would rarely be permissible: safe preservation is, after all, the primary reason for the deposit of registers and other parochial records and it is clearly part of the archivist's duty to warn incumbents if granting permission to xerox would endanger them. In such a situation Record Office staff would do their best to advise on other possible methods of reprography and their likely costs. Mr. Turner's 'final idiocy' may be disposed of quickly. During the vacancy of a benefice requests for permission would be addressed to the sequestrators.

It is understandable that demographers and other historical researchers may be opposed to the charging of fees for searches in parish registers or for copies of them. They must, however, appreciate that, as the law stands, the waiving of fees is a matter of grace and not of right. An incumbent who renounces his right to fees is acting with a generosity similar — although the cases are not entirely parallel — to that of the owner of private papers who makes them available for research in a Record Office.

Yours faithfully,
David Robinson,
County Archivist.

Surrey Record Office, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, KT1 2DN.