

CORRESPONDENCE

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

Editor's Note

LPS readers are reminded that the editorial board is always prepared to offer advice on subjects within the scope of **LPS**. Sometimes queries which have been raised are discussed in print in this section of the journal but there are many others which are not published, so if you think we can help do not hesitate to contact us.

Christian names — an appeal for help

Dear Sir,

The Names Society is currently engaged in a survey of eighteenth century christian names, depending largely upon the evidence of parish registers. It has chosen the years 1700, 1725, 1750, 1775 and 1800 as the years for detailed investigation. The purpose of the survey is to arrive at as wide a coverage as is possible of the country and as large a multiplicity of names as the parish registers in particular and any other sources in general can produce. Such a purpose has the following aims in view:

1. To establish the Top Twenty names, boys and girls, of the eighteenth century.
2. To discover the pattern of change in names during the eighteenth century and the reasons for the change.
3. To pinpoint the new names and note the disappearance of any of the old ones.
4. To follow the eighteenth century names into the nineteenth century and trace the resurrection of any of them.
5. To retrace the eighteenth century names into the seventeenth century.

We are therefore appealing for help from students of local history, particularly students in local population studies, to

- (a) Increase our eighteenth century coverage of the country by excerpts from parish registers (or any other source) of the nominated years,
- (b) Do the same for the seventeenth century without limitation of years (the seventeenth century registers being notorious for their gaps and omissions).

The Society to date has accumulated some 60,000 eighteenth century baptismal entries (c. 12,000 for each nominated year) gathered from some 600 parishes and has established firmly the identity of the Top Twenty names of both girls and boys, but for the rest our coverage of the Midlands and the North is very thin. (To give an example, we have no real evidence that MARMADUKE is a Yorkshire-confined name; nor indeed can we be sure from our present evidence when BETTY became a name in its own right.) Again the vast majority of the parishes surveyed are rural and if we are to reveal any difference between rural and urban nomenclature we need more evidence from registers of large centres of population.

Moreover it is increasingly becoming clear that while a small core of names dating from the thirteenth century (not only christian but Christian and due to the influence of the church) endures solidly throughout our recorded history, the rest of the names are bound up with the internal history of each individual village, region, shire, what-have-you and that either a study of such names in any particular place would throw light upon the history of that place, or the history of the place would throw light upon the names, that is to say, would give the reason for their appearance in that particular spot (one thinks particularly of Puritan names). In other words local historians might do well to examine the parochial records as a first priority and attempt to build up local history from the vagaries of the names they find there. (To quote Bardsley, 'in towns like Oldham, Bolton, Ashton, Blackburn, the clergyman's baptismal register is but a record of Bible names.)

Hence a further reason for our appeal to **Local Population Studies**. Needless to say, the co-ordinator of the survey (the undersigned) will very readily give any prospective helpers details of parishes already recorded to prevent duplication and, indeed, helpful information already gleaned from the project.

Yours etc.
N. F. Gosling.

2 Harcourt Spinney, Market Bosworth, Nuneaton.

The Marriage Lines

Dear Colleagues,

The state's interest in reliable registers of vital events goes back in one form or another to 1538 and its satisfaction has occupied a long line of parish clerks, curates and, latterly, officials of the Registrar General's department. It is not so clear, however, what interest individuals took in all this record keeping. Did it worry the inhabitants of Tetbury in 1695 (**LPS** 10, p.15) that their marriages were recorded as clandestine or the temporary inmates of the lying-in asylum at Lodge-on-the-Wolds that their children were entered in the registers of nearby Cotgrave as illegitimate (**LPS** 15, p.50)? It is possible to envisage circumstances in which an individual might wish to refer to a register, to prove entitlement to an inheritance, or if there should be some doubt about his place of legal settlement under the various Poor Law Acts. However, it is not absolutely necessary for him to retain a personal copy of the relevant papers although no doubt a valuable insurance against the loss or destruction of the parish registers. Indeed, there seem to be surprisingly few documented cases of individuals acquiring copies of register entries as opposed to the frequent noting of these events in the pages of the family Bible. On the other hand one family Bible, that of the Hurst family, now in the Pioneer Museum in Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A., contains a copy of a marriage record that would appear to have been produced by the parish of St. Philip, Birmingham. A transcription of this document is given in full below in which all the words that were there in print are now

given in heavy type. There is good reason to see it as a contemporary, or near-contemporary, copy of the marriage entry, seen, for example, by the printing of 'one thousand eight hundred.'

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Marriage solemnised in parish of St. Philip, Birmingham in county of Warwick in year 1831

Wm Hurst of this parish bachelor and Susanna Webley of this parish spinster were married in this Church by **Banns 1** this seventeenth day of November in the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty one by me Charles Caraven lecturer

William Hurst's X mark
Susanna Webley's X mark

in presence of

Mary Passey's X mark
Wm Rea

No 1369

This is a true copy of the register kept in parish Church of St. Philip Birmingham in County of Warwick

1 These words are crossed out in the document.

The evidence points therefore in the direction of this being a contemporary copy. William Hurst, although he could not sign his own name and may not have been able to read, was careful to preserve a written record of his marriage. The obvious questions are, how typical is William Hurst? When did people begin keeping records of their own marriage? Was the same concern evidenced over baptism or burial?

Perhaps some of our readers may be able to enlighten us.
Richard Wall,

27 Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1QA.

Fees for consulting registers in the Surrey Record Office

Dear Sir,

I am grateful to Dr. Robinson for clarifying Guildford diocesan practice in charging for parish registers copies (**LPS** 17, page 60). I do not wish to debate with him the reasons for which an incumbent receives, or should receive, a fee when the register is searched but I am surprised that he regards the Guildford practice of charging 'extremely modest.' Does he suggest that elsewhere the hapless researcher might have to pay yet another search fee to the record office as well as the incumbent's fee and the cost of the xerox?

The illogicality of the situation that I described in my previous letter remains. If I 'search' the register in the record office by laboriously transcribing by hand ten pages of baptisms, I pay no fee. If I choose rather to use modern technology and have the same ten pages photographed, I have to obtain the incumbent's prior permission and pay a fee.

I am glad that Dr. Robinson has enlightened me on the procedure for obtaining permission during a vacancy. It is a pity that this information was not given to me at the time of my visit to Guildford.

Finally, in case in this or my previous letter I may have given a contrary impression, I wish to make it clear that I was treated with nothing but kindness and courtesy at the Guildford office.

Yours sincerely,
Derek Turner.

Wyverne, 81 Newtown Road, Ramsey, Cambs.

Smallpox Innoculation Deaths

Dear Sir,

With reference to the notes in **LPS** concerning smallpox, the following may be of interest to your readers.

Headcorn, Kent. Original parish registers. Reference P181/1/4*
Burials:

- 5 May 1784 Elizabeth Beek infant died of the smallpox by inoculation
duty paid 3d 7 May
- 7 May 1784 Samuel Beek infant died of the smallpox by inoculation
duty paid 3d May 9

The same register also carries this very sad entry.

17 July 1792 James Hayward youth
Sarah Hayward aged 10 years

The above children were left at home by the mother who was absent for some days, they found means to force the lock of a cupboard where she kept spiritous liquor which they drank to such a degree as occasioned their death .

*Register deposited at the Kent Archives Office, Maidstone.

Yours faithfully,
Duncan Harrington.

143 Sturry Road, Canterbury, Kent.