

## 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.

### The hundred year rule

Dear Sir,

The recent TV series on Family History illustrated the popularity of the subject, together with the wide range of source material upon which it can draw. Whilst one appreciates the intention behind the hundred year restriction on access to census data, this seems rather out-dated in view of other sources containing very similar information which are readily accessible today. These include parish registers, some available in published form, files of the local press and the records which may be consulted at St. Catherine's House. In addition there is published and unpublished material resulting from the activities of family history societies and of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. The comments of other readers of **LPS** would be of interest.

Yours sincerely,  
Alan Gillies.

Sunnymead, Epsom Road, Ashted, Surrey KT21 1LD.

### The Computer File Index — a new edition News wanted of research in Scotland

Dear Sir,

You may be interested in knowing that the new edition of the Computer File Index is now out and will be available for distribution sometime around the first of July. It has now nearly fifty million names in it and many problems have been corrected. Also, since the writing of the article (**LPS** 21, pp.55-8) a branch library has been established at Southampton at Chetwynd Road, Southampton.

I wonder whether any reader could help me with the following query. Are there any studies that you are aware of in Scotland where reconstruction of villages is taking place and/or 'under registration' in their old parochial registers?

Sincerely,  
Paul F. Smart.

Genealogical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 50 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84150, USA.

## **A bigamous marriage?**

Dear Sir,

I have recently come across a curious entry in the marriage registers of Treswell, Nottinghamshire, which may be of interest to your readers. On 27 November 1826 the marriage took place of George Bell and Mary Hunt, both of Treswell. In the space allocated for marital status, George was said to be a bachelor, but against Mary's name the curate, the Rev. John Mickle (who conducted the ceremony), wrote 'whose Husband John Hunt was transported for Life having received a Reprieve from "Sentence of death" passed on him at Lincoln for stealing a Mare'.

I imagine that according to both canon and common law Mary was not free to marry as her husband was still alive and no divorce had been obtained. However the clergyman and inhabitants of Treswell evidently took the more humanitarian view that as John had been transported for life he was as good as dead to her. There was no question of Mary's second marriage being arranged in a secretive manner. Treswell was only a small place (224 inhabitants in 1831) and Mary would have been well known to everyone. She was baptised in the parish in 1801 (as Mary White) and married John Hunt there on 17 July 1821, this first marriage also being conducted by John Mickle. Mary and John Hunt had two sons, Francis and John, before he was transported.

Mary's second marriage was conducted following banns, so if anyone in Treswell had any objections, they had the opportunity to voice them. The clergyman does not appear to have thought it necessary to obtain higher authority, although he does note in the register 'A Copy to York' (i.e. to the archbishop as bishop of the diocese). It must be admitted that Mary and George Bell had rather forced the community's hand: Mary was evidently pregnant for their daughter Sarah was christened on 15 March 1827. The couple had two more children, William and George, and there is nothing in the registers when their christenings are recorded to indicate anything irregular in their parents' marriage.

In May 1833 tragedy struck the Bell family: on 16 May George, aged one year, was buried; on 19 May William, aged four years; and on 23 May Sarah, aged six years. Finally on 4 June 1833 Mary Bell (whom the Rev. John Mickle noted was the 'mother of the three children above') was also buried, aged thirtyone years. Thus in the space of three weeks George Bell lost his wife and all three of his children. The epidemic — if indeed an epidemic was the cause of their deaths — was confined to their household. There were only three other burials in Treswell that year: one was in January, another was in December and the third, although in May like the Bell children, was of an occupant of Claborough workhouse. George remained a widower for three years, marrying a widow called Benedictus Bartrop on 5 June 1836.

Yours faithfully,  
Freda M. Wilkins-Jones (Mrs.)

111 Moorland View Road, Walton, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S40 3DD.

## Triple twins

Dear Sir,

There is in the Buckinghamshire Record Office, Aylesbury, a transcript of the parish register of Shenley, Bucks. covering the years 1653-1702 which was made by W. R. Dawson in 1938. (The present location of the original register is not known). Among the entries are three, apparently recording the baptism of twins born to the same parents in three successive years.

- 1667 'Joseph and Eliz: Gemelli of John & Joyce Curtis Aug. 12'  
They were both buried on 17th August.
- 1668 'Joseph & Luke, Gemelli of John & Joyce Curtise June 23'  
Joseph was buried on 5th July and Luke in 'July'.
- 1669 'Will. & Mary, Gemelli of John Curtize & Joyce his wife June 17'  
They appear to have survived as there is no reference to their burial before 1679.

I can find no more baptisms of children of John and Joyce between 1661 and 1679. There was a John Curtis buried on 30th April 1673 who may have been the father. The bishop's transcripts for Shenley are very incomplete and shed no more light on this period.

Yours faithfully,  
John Wilson.

8 Madeley Road, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP21 8BP.

## The meaning of 'alias' Interpreting handwriting

Dear Editor,

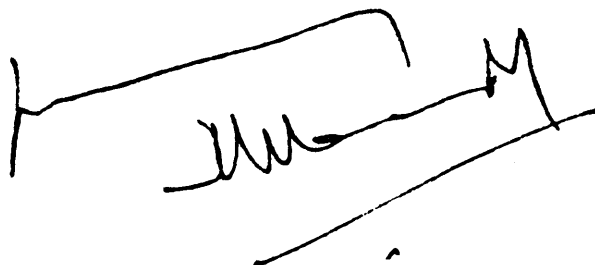
With reference to David Cressy's article in **LPS** 21, 'Social status and literacy in North East England 1560-1630', p.22, it is possible that the word 'alias' indicated, in addition to 'otherwise', the implication of 'formerly.' I have come across this in sixteenth and seventeenth century title deeds where a property is described as 'Gauntes alias Tyrletts' — the Gaunts had been there since c. 1450 and the Tyrletts had built the house.

In the same issue of **LPS**, regarding the article 'Biological Inter-relationships between parishes in East Kent: an analysis of Marriage Duty Act returns for 1705' by David Souden and Gabriel Lasker, in the paragraph on 'spelling', p.33, the clue may also lie in the interpretation of the handwriting — in clerk's hand, written in the cursive way, Corling and Garling, Neame and Nearne, Burvell and Bornell, may be indistinguishable. This may have led to perpetration of one of the interpretations in a particular parish in subsequent generations.

This is similar to what I term the 'phonetic variation' — in my family two Goadby boys went away some two miles to another village in North

Warwickshire to marry, and were there recorded as Goalby. Subsequent generations of that branch in Warwickshire and in the USA have kept to the variation.

The combination of phonetic and calligraphic variation often gets us guessing!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. R. L. Goady'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right, and a large, stylized 'M' at the end.

**Editor's note.** However you may wish to interpret the calligraphic evidence we know this letter to be from F. R. L. Goady (Brigadier, F.S.G.) Gaunt Mill, Standlake, Witney, Oxon. OX8 7QA.

### **Memorial tablet in Hatherleigh parish church**

Dear Sir,

Unless Karla Oosterveen has other information not imparted in her Miscellany note in **LPS** 21, I do not see her problem. The William Wyvill monument at Hatherleigh would seem to have been the responsibility of William Wyvill senior, and having set it up for his son in or after 1693, he filled up the lower part with the successive records of his first two grandchildren to die — the first and third children of his daughter Joan. As it is a Wyvill M.I., the omission of a statement that she was Fortescue's wife on the first occasion need not be significant; the fact that the mother's name never occurs in the register entries — surely a familiar feature of most registers at some time — almost confirms that there was no difference in marital status throughout the series of baptisms.

Had the first child been born before marriage the mother's name might be the more likely to appear in the register, either with or without the father's identity being revealed.

The marriage of John Fortescue and Joan Wyvill may perhaps be recorded in another parish, for any of a number of valid reasons, and since apparently the Fortescues were a 'prominent Devon family' their monuments may well be elsewhere, too.

So what is Miss Oosterveen's point about the 'children of a gentleman and a commoner, one of whom must have been a bastard'? I do not see that there is any 'must' about it. One can no more make a mystery out of this than of the fact that in the first three entries and the last two, Fortescue is 'Mr.' while the intermediate items style him 'gent'; whereas the Wyvill M.I. calls him 'Gent' in the first 'Mr' period!

Yours sincerely,  
Harold Gough.

Beverley House, 141 Grand Drive, Herne Bay, Kent.

Dear Sir,

Of course, no one can prove anything either way. However, it does seem to me strange that they did not say 'his wife Joan' in an age which set great store by these things, and they certainly laid themselves open to misrepresentation (if that is what it is) by mentioning a wife — unnamed — later on.

I do not see any very compelling reason for assuming that the monument was put up by Wm Wyvill Sr. It might equally have been put up by John Fortescue or by Joan, particularly if they wished to identify themselves with the Wyvill family.

Yours sincerely,  
William Reader.

67 Woodvale, London. N10 3P4

### **Demographic limitations**

Dear Sir,

If conscience makes cowards, it also makes stoics. Awareness of mortality and aspiration to immortality, records and record-keeping are recurrent human preoccupations. With this regard your readers may be interested in the comments of two seventeenth-century writers. Their cautions apply to demography.

Richard Whitlock declined 'to passe over the Stage of the World as a Mute, leaving no Testimony that he lived (much less lived to the end of his Creation) his Being to be found no where but in the Church-book: where it may be, many of the same name make even that but confusedly known.' (Preface to Zootomia, 1654.)

And Thomas Browne mused that 'Oblivion is not to be hired: The greater part (of mankind) must be content to be as though they had not been, to be found in the Register of God, not in the record of man.' (Chapter V of Urne Buriall, 1658.)

Yours etc.

A. K. Sietz (Archivist).

11 Stanhope Road, Highgate, London N6.