MIGRATION IN SOUTH WEST LANCASHIRE:

a study of three parishes

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It was claimed in a recent edition of New Society,¹ that until thirty years ago nearly half the people living in a village on the Oxfordshire-Buckinghamshire border had the same surnames as found in a rent roll of 1350 and presumably were their descendants. However, if it is true of this particular village that families have remained in numbers, it has not been true elsewhere, as shown by Levine,² who found in his reconstitution study of Shepshed that only one family, the Bottomley family, replaced itself and continued its surname from the 1580s to the middle of the nineteenth century. Other areas studied by Laslett and Harrison,³ Schofield,⁴ Cornwall⁵ and Clark,⁶ exhibit considerable movement and a high turnover of population from at least the sixteenth century. This pattern is followed by a section of the population, those about to marry, and those recently married, during the years 1661-1760 in three parishes in south west Lancashire.

The parishes, Halsall, Sefton and Aughton are contiguous and roughly straddle the road northwards from Liverpool. They vary in size and composition, Halsall, the largest in area covering 15,540 acres and consisting of five townships, Sefton covering 11,048 acres and consisting of ten townships, Aughton covering 4,410 acres is congruent with the township.

Several sources can be used to study migration including deposition records as used by Cressy⁷ and Clark,⁸ listings such as used in the study of Clayworth and Cogenhoe⁹ and parish registers. The last named were used for this study.

From the three parish registers and associated chapelry registers,¹⁰ all the marriages between 1661 and 1760 were listed and totalled. To study settlement pattern after marriage, the marriages were divided into three groups as follows; where both partners came from the same parish; where one partner came from a different parish; where both partners came from a different parish. The last group was ignored for this particular study as although there were substantial numbers of these, particularly in Aughton, reasons why they married where they did were hard to discover, although it may be that marriage fees were lower here than elsewhere. This way of marrying ceased in such parishes after the passing of the Hardwicke Marriage Act,¹¹ which insisted that at least one partner must have been resident in the parish in which the ceremony was to take place. Therefore, using only the first two groups, the baptismal registers were examined for the years, 1661-1765, so that the first or only birth occurring to a couple previously married could be extracted. The results obtained are shown in table I.

The Biological and Medical Committee, 1950, said that of people marrying 1861-71, 8.1 per cent would be involuntarily childless and in earlier
times it would be less than that.\textsuperscript{13} However, as no further evidence is given why it should be less than 8.1 per cent, if we accept this figure as being accurate for earlier times and allow another 10 per cent for under registration,\textsuperscript{13} it is evident from the figures of baptisms to partners from the same parish that more than 26 per cent of the couples in Sefton, more than 50 per cent of the couples in Halsall and more than 40 per cent of the couples in Aughton, must have moved soon after marriage or evidence of their children would have appeared in the registers. It seems likely that a similar percentage of the 'one partner from other parish' moved on elsewhere also, after allowing for the fact that some who had married in these parishes would move to the other partner's parish to live, probably more so in the case of women who might marry in their own parish and go to their husband's parish to live.

Some of the movement may have been among adjacent parishes, as about half of the marriage partners from different parishes came from adjacent parishes. Maltby produced similar results in her study,\textsuperscript{14} and Clark suggests that settlement poor laws made it difficult to move great distances.\textsuperscript{15} However, there may have been some movement to towns by non-inheriting sons.\textsuperscript{16} Ormskirk, the nearest place was a small market town just outside the Lancashire coal-field, which had some industry, some of which it appeared to lose as the industrial revolution reached its full momentum, but the net migration into Liverpool, a maximum distance of twelve miles away, was considerable at this time. Langton and Laxton estimate that there were about 12,000 immigrants to the town during the period,\textsuperscript{17} and many of them would be short distance immigrants, some probably from these parishes.

In this study certain of the population have been studied at a particular time during their life cycle, that is when they are about to marry or within a few years of marriage. These may be among the most mobile, as it is certainly true now, that people move more when young\textsuperscript{18} and was probably as true 200 years or more ago. This movement and some further movement of other age groups is likely to have produced a considerable turnover of the population in the parishes over time, so that eventually very few of the later inhabitants will be descendants of those living there formerly.

### Table 1. Proportion of families baptising at least one child in the parish of marriage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>both partners of this parish</th>
<th>one partner from other parish</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>total marr.</td>
<td>families with child bapt.</td>
<td>% of families with child bapt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sefton</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halsall</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aughton</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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NOTES

8. P. Clark, pp. 57-90.
    The parish registers of Halsall, 1606-1764, Lancashire Record Society, 1966.
    The parish register of Aughton, 1541-1764, Lancashire Record Society, 1942.
    The register of Melling Chapel in the parish of Halsall, 1606-1754, Lancashire Record Society, 1969.
    Lancashire Record Office (hereafter given as LRO) PR 257-63 Halsall Parish Register, 1622-1844. LRO PR 2992 Maghull Chapelfry Register, 1729-1919. LRO PR 2944 Crosby Chapelfry Register, 1749-1861.
11. 26 Geo. ii. c. 33 *An Act for the better preventing of clandestine marriages, 1753.*
    para IV ... no licence or marriage shall be granted ... to solemnize any marriage in any other church or chapel than in the Parish Church or Publick Chapel belonging to the Parish or Chapelfry within which the usual place or abode of one of the persons to be married ...
    para XI ... that all marriages solemnized by licence ... be under the age of twenty years which shall be without the consent of the Father of each of the partners shall be absolutely null and void.
13. J. T. Krause, 'The changing adequacy of English registration, 1690-1837', D. V. Glass & D. C. Eversley, *Population in history*, 1966, p. 383. Krause says 'as a guess 10 per cent of the births and 5 per cent of the deaths were omitted by the Anglican registers of the time. estimates which may well be too high almost certainly for the period, 1696-1705'.
15. P. Clark, p. 83.