

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Sir,

The Literacy of prisoners in Norwich Castle Gaol

Readers of **LPS** may be interested in the literacy of prisoners in Norwich Castle Gaol and the Chaplain's attempt to educate them as described in his report to the Magistrates included in the Minutes of Quarter Sessions Michaelmas 1841 (Norfolk Record Office C/S4/8 p.116).

'The number of Prisoners now in the Castle is 77, of these 6 are Debtors, of the remaining 71 Felons and Misdemeanants — 33 could not read at all when they were committed, 16 could read a very little, but so as to obtain no information from it, 8 could only read and 14 could both read and write. Again of this number 18 did not know the Lord's Prayer, 29 could repeat the Lord's Prayer but not the Creed and 24 could repeat the Lord's Prayer and the Creed.

A large proportion of these prisoners have been but recently committed so that only 22 of them have been in prison more than three months. These therefore will exhibit the fairest view of the progress of instruction in it, 8 of them could read when committed. Of the other 14 who could not read 6 can now read a Chapter in the Bible. Of the remaining 5 one is in the Hospital with bad eyes and is incapable of employing them; 3 are under the usual course of Instruction, but are too old to make much progress and one is deficient in intellect.

Besides learning to read and employing part of their leisure in reading the Scriptures and other religious books they all commit to memory such prayers and lessons as are calculated to be of use to them when they leave the Prison and however unwilling they might be to undertake these tasks did not the Rules of the Gaol require it, they very frequently on quitting it express their Thankfulness for having impressed upon their minds important Truths which through their own negligence they had disregarded all their lives before.'

James Brown.

(This quotation from the Quarter Sessions Minutes is reproduced here by kind permission of the Norfolk Record Office).

It is possible that a study of Quarter Sessions Minutes throughout the country would contribute further information on the standard of literacy and attempts to improve it.

Yours faithfully,
Mrs. M. J. Lodey.

Fieldfare, Etling Green, East Dereham, Norfolk.

County Record Office Closures

Dear Sirs,

As an interested but almost innumerate reader of **Local Population Studies** I used to be filled with admiration for the clear and concise use of statistics in these pages, until the County Record Office league table appeared in issue no. 25. Our Warwick County Record Office times of opening, 7½ hours daily Monday to Thursday, 7 hours on Friday and 3½ hours on Saturday morning, were there added up, perhaps by a computer, to make a total of less than 37½ hours per week, and not, as by my simple arithmetic, more than 40 hours. The difference is, of course, our Saturday morning opening. Echoes of our battle to stay open on Saturdays may have reached your ivory tower, and you may perhaps have taken it for granted that we were bound to lose. In fact, we won, at least temporarily, and the story of that campaign contains a lesson for Record Office users.

When I first joined the Warwick Record Office in 1955, the staff of the whole Shire Hall was working a 5½-day week, but this was reduced to a 5-day week in about 1963. By a democratic decision of the archivists concerned at that time, and against official opposition, we agreed that the Record Office should remain open on Saturday mornings, with one person only in charge. Our decision was inspired partly by loyalty to the public, and partly, I think, by feelings of job insecurity in a very small and, to many people, luxury department, which made us reluctant to antagonise our friends. Our relationship with the public was later put to the test when the Warwick Castle archives were offered for sale in 1978, and we launched a campaign to buy them for the County; we were amazed and delighted by the local and national response.

Between 1977 and 1980 the use of the Record Office by the public increased by almost exactly 100%, and, with the onset of the financial ice-age which is still with us, our staff of nine decreased by one. We were already coping with two evening classes a week in the Record Office each winter. Saturday mornings finally became so busy that the lack of security for the documents in use in the reading room gave cause for alarm, since the archivist in charge was trotting continually to and from the strong-room, leaving the reading room unattended. We had to have an additional person to invigilate on Saturdays, but the extra £240 per annum to pay one was not forthcoming. The official answer was that we should close on Saturdays, with, perhaps the underlying idea that the public should be made to feel the cuts now being imposed from above. At this point it occurred to us that, since genealogists were to a large extent the cause of our problem, they might be called upon to help solve it. The Birmingham Society for Genealogy and Heraldry, to which many of our readers belong, accordingly produced a very efficient roster of their local members, from among whom one and usually two volunteers attended as invigilators every Saturday for the best part of a year. We got to know them better, and they learned something of our problems and how to use the Record Office more economically, which was a considerable benefit to us all. On hearing a report of this modest success, our Committee then discovered that an extra £5 a week could after all be found to pay a Saturday helper,

who has now been appointed and continues, as does our Saturday morning opening.

The moral of this small non-event is obvious: we are your friends. A Record Office which maintains its services to readers undiminished may only be doing so after long and tenacious struggles; one which reduces services may have suffered a setback and need encouragement to return to the fray. We are on your side, try to help us. Inaccurate league tables and carping editorials are not helpful.

Yours faithfully,
M. W. Farr,

Warwickshire County Record Office, Priory Park, Cape Road,
Warwick, CV34 4JS.

Civil Registration data under the Elementary Education Act (1876)

Dear Sirs,

In the article 'Historical demography in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the absence of the civil registers' (LPS 26) you refer to the birth registers kept by the education authorities. The Elementary Education Act, 1876, required registrars to transmit to the authority 'a return of such of the particulars registered by him concerning deaths and births of children as may be specified in the requisition of the local authority' (39 & 40 Vict c79 s26). This provision was retained in the 1944 Education Act (1944 c31 s94).

The details requested from registrars presumably varied from authority to authority. Stockport's registers (we have 1881-1972, with some gaps, in the archives) do not give fathers' occupation before 1909, for instance. Unlike the Cambridgeshire example in the article ours give no information on mortality, migration or school allocation and therefore are of less value to the demographer. The source is explicit as the entries are signed by the Registrar.

Yours faithfully,
M. J. Critchlow,
Archivist

for Director of Recreation & Culture
Metropolitan Borough of Stockport, Recreation and Culture Division,
Central Library, Wellington Road South, Stockport, Cheshire, SK1 3RS.

1801 Census of Winwick

Dear Sirs,

In reply to your request for additional listings in LPS 24 & 25, I do not know if you have a note of the existence of the 1801 Census of Winwick with Hulme (formerly Lancashire now Cheshire). The original is still in the Church chest though likely to be deposited shortly probably in the Cheshire Record Office.

It is a single section book of nine folios of paper, size 240 by 362. Tipped into it are 1 one folio containing a summary of the figures of the census and 2 two folios containing the Queries and Answers by the Rector to the Bishop's Visitation of 1789.

I do not know if a similar return exists for the other nine townships of the Parish. It is unlikely.

The first page lists the questions laid down by the Act of 41 George III — 'An Act for taking an Account of the Population' etc. Each household is numbered from one to ninety six. Name, age and sex is given for each individual as well as their trade or occupation. 'Inmates' are included. Totals are given of inhabited and uninhabited houses as well as the totals in each kind of employment. There is also a summary table of these particulars for all the ten townships of the Parish (Ashton being divided into three separate areas). Handwriting superb.

Xerox copies were deposited in the Lancashire and Cheshire Records Offices in 1977 and Liverpool Record Office have subsequently made a copy. I have a Xerox copy myself.

Apart from the tables the Census was published in full in the North Cheshire Family Historian in Vol. 5 No. 1 (Feb. 1978).

Yours etc.
John Bulmer,

Kenyon Hall, Winwick Lane, Croft, Warrington, WA3 7ED.

Record office charges for access

Dear Sir,

I enjoy reading your well informed articles and editorials and hope that the latter will continue the crusade against the 'unenlightened' local authorities.

The formation of the Kent Archives Fellowship will we hope help the Kent Archives Office through these difficult times.

It seems a pity that the Cathedral Library and Archives here in Canterbury should still deem it necessary to charge for the production of three categories of records and I enclose a note of their current charges.

Yours faithfully,
Duncan Harrington.

Cathedral Archives and Library, and City Record Office, Canterbury, CT1 2EG.

By order of the Diocesan Registry a charge of 50p an hour or £1.50 a day is made for production of Bishops' Transcripts and Parish Registers; and 50p for each tithe map.

Churchwardens and their registers

Dear Sir,

I recently came across a statement of churchwardens' duties in a legal manual which, after noting that the churchwardens must provide a box in which the parish register is to be kept, added the words which follow.

'Every Sunday they [the churchwardens] shall see that the minister shall enter therein [in the register] all christenings, weddings, and burials, that have been the week before; and they (with the minister) shall subscribe their names at the bottom of every page; and they shall yearly within a month after March 25th, transmit to the bishop a copy thereof for the year before, subscribed as above.'

J. Gifford, **The complete English lawyer**, 1823, p.318.

The practice of signing the register periodically, if not annually, to record the fact that a copy has been sent to the diocesan authorities was of course widespread but I cannot call to mind amongst the registers I have seen in the East Midlands more than one example where the churchwardens signed their names in the register in any other circumstances. I would be interested to know the extent to which churchwardens followed the injunction to sign each page of the register and also any evidence there may be of registers being written up every Sunday. In my experience it is unusual to find indications of a register being maintained at such regular intervals — indeed, in many cases the register appears to have been copied up annually, possibly at the same time as a fair copy was sent to the bishop.

Yours faithfully,
Christopher Charlton.

University of Nottingham, Department of Adult Education, Tawney House,
Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 3BT.