

CORRESPONDENCE

Intervals between deaths and burials in the nineteenth century

Dear Sir,

Having completed an index of the memorial inscriptions in two of the parish churches in the Aberystwyth district and an index of the burials carried out at the older parish church at Llanbadarn Fawr, I have been in a position of being able to gather some information on the average intervals between death and burial between about 1830 and 1870. I give brief details of the results below:-

Aberystwyth town. Generally four to six days.

Neighbouring rural area. Generally five to eight days, but with some notable exceptions e.g. in 1831 (12th October) David Griffiths of Nanteos Arms, Ponterwyd, Cardiganshire remained unburied for thirty-five days, and his brother Edward who died on the 2nd February 1833 was not buried until 20th February 1833 perhaps because of inclement weather and the primitive state of the roadway down the twelve miles of steep gradients. Their father, John Griffiths aged fifty-eight died on the 10th March 1837 and was buried at the Llanbadarn parish church only five days later.

More distant areas. Generally about eight days, but it is noted that one David Griffiths who died at Llandrindod Wells (about seventy miles away) on the 9th October 1834 was buried at Llanbadarn four days later, and this was thirty years before the railway came to Aberystwyth.

Yours sincerely,
E. Alwyn Benjamin,

74 Beechwood Drive, Penarth, South Glamorgan CF6 2QZ.

The Llandyrnog Householder's schedules for the 1851 census

Dear Sir,

With reference to Donald McCallum's remarks on the role of the enumerator in filling in householders' schedules in the 1871 census, some light can be thrown on the problem by a study of the returns for the registration sub-district of Llandyrnog in Denbighshire for 1851. For some reason the original householders' schedules were preserved instead of the enumerators' schedules, the only case, so far as we know. We give here a brief summary of the relevant results of a study which we made some time ago.¹

Firstly, none of the census forms was printed in Welsh, despite the fact that the district was very Welsh speaking at the time. Secondly, a close study of one parish (Llangynhafal) showed that forty-seven forms (41%) were completed by the enumerator, although some were signed by a member of the family, or a mark made. Thirty-four (29%) were completed by a

member of the household and twenty-two (19%) were completed by neighbours. Twelve (10%) could not be definitely ascribed. The neighbours concerned could be identified by a careful study of the handwriting, and they were an agricultural labourer, a retired seaman, a shoemaker and a small farmer. The householders or their neighbours completed the forms fully, usually giving too much detail rather than too little, and this was especially noticeable for the two best-educated men in the parish, a rector and an attorney. The section on occupations gave the most difficulty; the jobs of domestic servants and agricultural labourers were often defined more exactly than required. The enumerator had made many alterations to bring the information on the schedules into line with the standard forms, and there were further pencil annotations of the type which is found on all enumerators' schedules, and which we presume were made in the Census Office. We can therefore deduce what the enumerator would have copied into his schedules, as well as what the householder wrote down on his original form, and this gives a unique insight into the detailed mechanics of census-taking. If these forms were typical, the process of copying the information into the enumerators' schedules would have meant considerable filtering.

In the case of Llangynhafal, a certain amount of interesting genealogical information would have been lost, such as the exact dates of birth of all the members of one family, and the names of the houses where the members of another family were born.

We conclude that there is no reason to suppose that the accuracy of the Census depended on the proportion of the forms filled in by the enumerator, since he examined and corrected those which he did not complete himself. The main factors would have been the accuracy of the memory of the householder and the integrity of the enumerator. We have found many cases of errors and omissions from both these causes in North Wales.²

Yours faithfully,
R. M. & G. A. Benwell,

21 Ettington Road, Coventry CV5 7LD.

1. **Denbighshire Historical Society Transactions**, vol. 27 (1978), R. M. & G. A. Benwell, The 1851 Census in the Llandyrnog sub-district.
2. **Anglesey Antiquarian Society Transactions**, (1973), R. M. & G. A. Benwell, Interpreting the Census returns for rural Anglesey and Llyn.

Another early historical demographer?

Dear Sir,

Recent examination of John Aubrey's MS notes of his perambulation of Surrey in 1673¹ revealed that to demonstrate the improving economic condition of Farnham in the seventeenth century, he gives the annual totals of baptisms for those born in the 1560s and 1660s.

The purpose of Aubrey's tour was to provide material for John Ogilby's

Britannia (1675) and he was possibly influenced by his fellow member of the Royal Society, Gregory King.

Yours faithfully,
J. Jeremy Greenwood,

Deerings Place, 50 Reigate Road, Reigate, Surrey RH2 0QN.

1. Bodleian Library, MS Aubrey 4. An edited version was published as **The natural history and antiquities of the County of Surrey** (1718).

East Kent Monsters

Dear Sir,

As a contribution to the discussion on 'monsters' and unnatural births, I can offer the following two items from East Kent.

1. In the Herne burial register is the entry under 1565:
'John Jarvys had two woemen children twynes baptized at home ioyned together in the belly and havynge each the one of theyr armes lyng at one of theyre owne shoulders and in all other p[ar]tes well p[ro]portioned children buried Augusti 29.'

There was no baptism entry to correspond with this, nor is there any other issue of this marriage, which was Jarvys's second, beginning 1562, or of the first which lasted from 1558 to 1561.

In J. Russell Smith's **Bibliotheca Cantiana** (1837) there is a reference to: 'The true Description of Two Monsterous Chyldren borne at Herne, in Kent, the 27 daie of Auguste, in the yere of our Lorde 1565, they were booth women Chyldren, and were chrystened, and lived halfe a Daye. The one departed before the other almost an Houre.

Imprinted at London by Thomas Colwell, for Owen Rogers. N.D.'

An annotation reads 'A broadside, with a woodcut of the children united like the Siamese Twins. A copy was in the Heber collection.'

Unfortunately, I have never been able to see a copy of this broadside, which I understand is not in the British Library. I should welcome any information on the existence of this.

Putting the two sources of information together, and accepting their accuracy, it appears that the twins were born sometime on August 27 and survived about twelve hours, long enough for an informal baptism, probably by the midwife — compare the 1567 entry.

'William Lawson had an infant christyaned by the woemen buried 21 eiusdem (March).'

The twins' survival may have lasted into the following day and burial was a day later, on August 29. Perhaps, as at Kelsale, Suffolk in 1545 (**LPS** 26), they were 'sene to many credible people' in the interim, since someone took the opportunity to write-up and illustrate the story for the 'popular press'.

2. A less specific, and thus tantalising story appears in the adjoining parish of Reculver in 1644-5. In the baptism register under 1644 is:

'Thomas ye sonne of { Henry }
 { Boas } Cobb was baptised ye 19th daye of
March.'

while ten days later, after the Lady Day change of year date to 1645 we find:

'Thomas ye p[ro]digious sonn of { Henry }
 { Booz } Cobb was buried ye 29th
day of March.'

Just how Thomas qualified for the description 'prodigious' at ten days of age is not explained, but it can hardly be other than in the sense of 'abnormal' or 'monstrous'. There does not seem to be any external corroboration of the story in this case, so we are left in the dark as to the form of the abnormality.

Yours faithfully,
Harold Gough,

Beverley House, 141 Grand Drive, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 8HU.

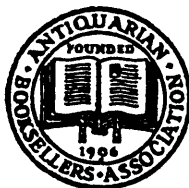
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