

## THE DIOCESAN POPULATION RETURNS FOR 1563 AND 1603

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In 1563 the Privy Council requested information from all English and Welsh bishops about the state of their dioceses, and one of their requests was for the number of households or families in each parish. In 1603 a similar exercise was undertaken, except that the population question on this occasion was for the numbers of communicants, non-communicants and recusants in each parish, rather than of households. The existence of some of these returns has been known for a long time, and important studies have been published which draw on their population statistics, notably those of Joan Thirsk on Lincolnshire, C. T. Smith on Leicestershire and Lionel Munby on Hertfordshire.<sup>1</sup> In 1959 Joan Thirsk drew attention to all the returns then known to survive; in 1969 T. H. Hollingsworth usefully discussed their value and published a summary table of all diocesan totals for 1603; and more recently Charles Phythian-Adams and A. D. Dyer have used the figures for individual towns in 1563 in analysing urban growth and decay.<sup>2</sup> However, demographic work of a very high order is still being needlessly hampered because the existence of the returns is not widely known.<sup>3</sup>

The present note is intended, therefore, to draw attention to all known surviving returns, and to publish editions of them, and to ask for the help of readers in locating more. A complete list of those known to us is appended; it will be seen that a considerable number of returns are known to survive for 1563, but very few for 1603, and that for ten dioceses out of twenty-six no returns, complete or partial, are known for either year. Yet it is clear that all bishops were asked to make returns on each occasion, and for 1603 there survive at least two different tables of diocesan population totals for the whole country, showing that returns must have been submitted for every diocese.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, returns survive for several other dioceses in 1563 giving all the information requested except for the population statistics, which were promised in a second return once the necessary information had been gathered. It is known, for example, that at least twenty-three bishops made some sort of return in 1563, though in only twelve cases are the population returns known to survive.

All the known copies of returns submitted to the government are now preserved and bound in three volumes at the British Library (Harleian MSS, 594, 595, 618), and it is unlikely that more will come to light; but there is reason to believe that most or all bishops will have kept copies or the original rough drafts, and that more of these have yet to be located or identified.<sup>5</sup> The list below includes three returns not known when Dr Thirsk made her survey twenty years ago — a complete return for Gloucester in 1563, and partial returns for Chichester and York in 1603 — all of which survive among private papers or diocesan archives. The two last, indeed, were printed in local journals as long ago as 1905 and 1943 respectively, but they seem to have been missed in all recent surveys and bibliographies of demographic history. One came to light purely by

chance in a search of journals, one through a recent reference in **LPS** by Derek Turner.<sup>6</sup>

The following list indicates the whereabouts of all returns for 1563 and 1603 presently known to us, together with references to all printed editions or abstracts. We shall be grateful to receive any additions or corrections from readers, and we hope in due course to publish an amplified list in which all additional references will be acknowledged. Should it be thought useful enough for local and demographic historians, a full edition of at least the 1563 returns may be published later.

### **Surviving returns with population figures**

All manuscripts referred to are in the British Library unless otherwise stated.

**BANGOR.** The 1563 return is in Harleian MSS, 594, ff. 18r-27v. Leonard Owen has printed hundred totals in **Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion: Session 1959**, 1959, pp. 99-113, and apparently figures for individual parishes in the county of Anglesey in **Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society Field Club**, 1960, pp. 26-38. The latter article which we have been unable to see is listed in E. A. Wrigley, ed., **An Introduction to English historical demography**, 1966, p. 252. Partial returns for 1603 are in Harleian MSS, 594, ff. 38-44.

**BATH AND WELLS.** The 1563 return is in Harleian MSS, 594, ff. 46r-56v. Unfortunately the bishop misunderstood the question, and returned population figures only for those parishes (61 out of 374) which had dependent chapelries.

**BRISTOL.** No returns known.

**CANTERBURY.** The 1563 return is in Harleian MSS, 594, ff. 63r-84r.

**CARLISLE.** The 1563 return is in Harleian MSS, 594, ff. 85-87r. The parish figures are tabulated in A. B. Appleby, **Famine in Tudor and Stuart England**, 1978, pp. 198-201, together with the figures for those parishes in Cumberland and Westmorland which were in the dioceses of Chester and Durham.

**CHESTER.** The 1563 return is in Harleian MSS, 594, ff. 97-108.

**CHICHESTER.** A partial return for 1603 was printed by W. C. Renshaw as 'Ecclesiastical returns for 81 parishes in East Sussex, made in 1603', **Sussex Record Society**, iv, 1905, pp. 1-17, from a manuscript 'preserved in the Bishop's Registry at Lewes'.

**COVENTRY AND LICHFIELD.** The 1563 return is in Harleian MSS, 594, ff. 156r-71r. The parish returns for Staffordshire only were tabulated by W. N. Landor in **Staffordshire Historical Collections**, 1915, pp. 1xix-1xxii.

**DURHAM.** The 1563 return is in Harleian MSS, 594, ff. 187r-95r. Household totals are given for most, but not all, parishes.

**ELY.** The 1563 return is in Harleian MSS, 594, ff. 198r-200v. The return, except for the Isle of Ely, is discussed and mapped in Margaret Spufford **Contrasting communities**, 1974, pp. 13-28.

**EXETER.** No returns known.

**GLOUCESTER.** The 1563 return survives in two copies, a contemporary one in Bodleian Library, Oxford, Rawlinson MSS, C 790, and a later one (which we have not seen) in Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, Furney MSS, B. The figures for the Gloucester city parishes are printed by Peter Ripley in **Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society Transactions**, xci, 1972, pp. 200-1, and for the rest of the diocese by Alicia Percival in **LPS**, 8, 1972, table following p. 76, from figures transcribed by Julian Cornwall. The 1603 return is in Harleian MSS, 594, ff. 225r-55v, and has been printed as 'A survey of the diocese of Gloucester, 1603', transcribed by A. C. Percival and edited by W. J. Sheils, in *An ecclesiastical miscellany*, **Publications of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, Records Section**, xi, 1976, pp. 68-102.

**HEREFORD.** No returns known.

**LINCOLN.** The 1563 return is in Harleian MSS, 618, **passim**, covering five of the six archdeaconries (Stow is missing). The section covering the archdeaconry of Lincoln is printed in G. A. J. Hodgett, **Tudor Lincolnshire**, 1975, pp. 189-99; that for the archdeaconry of Buckingham is edited by Julian Cornwall in **Records of Buckinghamshire**, xvi, 1953-60, pp. 258-73; that for the archdeaconry of Leicester, is tabulated in **Victoria County History of Leicester**, iii, 1955, pp. 166-7; and that for the Hertfordshire parts of the archdeaconry of Huntingdon is tabulated in Lionel Munby, **Hertfordshire population statistics 1563-1801**, 1964. The rest of the return has not yet been printed; but the deanery totals for the entire diocese are published in C. W. Foster, ed., *The State of the church*, i, **Lincoln Record Society**, xxiii, 1926, pp. 441-4. The 1603 return was printed in full by C. W. Foster in the same *Lincoln Record Society* volume, pp. 253-328, 337-53, from an original manuscript, 'Liber cleri', in the Lincoln Diocesan Registry. The Leicester archdeaconry section is again tabulated in **Victoria County History of Leicester**, iii, pp. 168-9, and the Hertfordshire section in Munby's **Hertfordshire population statistics**. The 1603 return, unlike that of 1563, covers all six archdeaconries.

**LLANDAFF.** No returns known.

**LONDON.** No returns known.

**NORWICH.** The 1603 return is in Harleian MSS, 595, ff. 95r-193r, covering three archdeaconries out of four (Norfolk is missing). The three surviving sections have all been published, though not very accurately: Norwich by Augustus Jessopp in **Norfolk Archaeology** X, 1888, pp. 1-49, 166-84; Suffolk by C. H. Evelyn White in **Proceedings of the Suf-**

folk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History, vi, 1888, pp. 361-400; and Sudbury anonymously in the same journal, xi, 1901, pp. 1-46. A short extract, for Chippenham, Suffolk (incorrectly attributed to Chippenham, Wilts.) is printed in W. B. Stephens, **Sources for English local history**, 1973, p. 211.

**OXFORD.** No returns known.

**PETERBOROUGH.** No returns known.

**ROCHESTER.** No returns known.

**ST. ASAPH.** No returns known.

**ST. DAVIDS.** The 1563 return is in Harleian MSS, 595, ff. 84r-92r. Leonard Owen has printed hundred totals in **Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion: Sesslon 1959**, 1959, pp. 99-113.

**SALISBURY.** No returns known. The extract printed in W. B. Stephens, **Sources for English local history**, 1973, p. 211 for Chippenham, Wilts. refers in fact to Chippenham, Suffolk.

**WINCHESTER.** The 1603 return is in Harleian MSS, 595, ff. 213-250. An extract is printed in W. B. Stephens, **Sources for English local history**, 1973, p. 211.

**WORCESTER.** The 1563 return is in Harleian MSS, 595, ff. 209r-212v. T. Nash, **Collections for the History of Worcester**, 2 vols, 1781-82, prints the figure for '5 Elizabeth' under each parish, presumably from this or from a local copy in Worcestershire, but with no reference cited.

**YORK.** A part of the 1603 return, covering about two-thirds of Nottinghamshire (147 parishes) was edited by A. C. Wood in **Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire**, xlvii, 1943, pp. 3-14, from 'two bundles of presentment bills ... now in the custody of ... the registrar of the archdeaconry of Nottingham'.

#### NOTES

1. J. Thirsk, **Fenland farming in the sixteenth century**, 1953, and **English peasant farming**, 1957; C. T. Smith, 'Population', in **Victoria County History of Leicester**, iii, 1955, pp. 129-75; L. Munby, **Hertfordshire population statistics 1563-1801**, 1964.
2. J. Thirsk, 'Sources of information on population 1500-1760', **The Amateur Historian**, iv, 1958-60, pp. 132-33; T. H. Hollingsworth, **Historical demography**, 1959, pp. 80-7; C. Phythian-Adams, **Desolation of a city**, 1979, pp. 8-18, 22-4, 237; **Urban History Yearbook**, 1979, pp. 63, 73-4.
3. E.g. Victor Skipp, in his excellent **Crisis and development: an ecological case study of the Forest of Arden 1570-1674**, 1978, carried out very thorough work on the population of five parishes but was unaware of the survival of the 1563 return for the diocese of Lichfield (p. 117).
4. British Library, Harleian MSS, 280, ff. 157r-172v; Bodleian Library, Oxford, Lincoln College MSS, (e) Lat. 124, f. 192v. We owe the second reference to the kindness of Dr Anne Whiteman. The two tables give slightly different totals for most dioceses, adding support to the belief that they were independently calculated from earlier surviving returns for every diocese.
5. Several such returns without population figures survive not only in Harleian MSS, 594 and 595 but also in British Library, Lansdowne MSS, 6.
6. **LPS**, 21, pp. 15-18.