

CORRESPONDENCE

Letters intended for publication in **LPS** should be sent to RICHARD WALL, 27 Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1QA.

Editors' 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 overcrowding survey **LPS** 29

Dear Sir,

You may already have solved the problem of the 'overcrowding survey' but if not may I refer you to a most informative article by J. White, 'When every house was measured' **History Workshop** 4 (1977) 86.

The Survey records appear to survive for quite a number of places and are interesting evidence of housing and social conditions in the 1930s — referring back to nineteenth century development in many cases.

Yours faithfully,

Nat Alcock,

18 Portland Place, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 5EU.

A hammer to crack a nut? A new approach to the study of marriage horizons, **LPS** 28

Dear Sir,

I was interested to read that Jeremy Millard had developed more sophisticated techniques for extracting information and indicating trends from the registration of marriages than the earlier, simpler method used for analysis of marriage horizons, i.e., calculation of distances from one parish church to another and expressing the results in percentages.

It was further reassuring — after a preliminary glance at the article in **LPS** 28 — to be told that the techniques are "well within the grasp of the amateur local historian". I fear, however, that he overestimates the statistical competence, understanding or even interest of at least the older local historians. Indeed it seemed to me that the value of the historical conclusions reached were not commensurate with the complexity of the means employed.

While it is legitimate that the techniques may be of over-riding interest to the professional historian/demographer, it seems doubtful whether the average local amateur historian should be encouraged to follow such involved methods for analysis of what is, in any case, a very small feature in the much wider picture of migration of populations.

Yours faithfully,
Bessie Maltby,

28 Denton Road, Middleton, Ilkley.

The Hampshire Record Office: fees for access to records not in mind

Dear Sir,

I refer to the Editorial in **Local Population Studies** 30 (Spring 1983) entitled 'Record Offices — hours of opening, fees for access and photocopying charges.'

I should be glad if you would make it clear to your readers that charges for access to records are not, and have never been 'under consideration' in Hampshire. What your enquirer was told was that consideration was being given to charging a fee for searches carried out by members of staff on behalf of the public in answer to postal enquiries. This is the practice of a number of Record Offices and does not appear to me to contravene the principle of free access to sources of information, although in fact for other reasons it was decided not to introduce such a charge in Hampshire.

This misunderstanding, which has led to what I regard as a serious piece of misinformation on a sensitive issue, underlines the dangers of carrying out research of the sort that has led to the publication of your table on the telephone. Answers to a written questionnaire are much less likely to lead to such errors, and while few of us enjoy answering questionnaires, I feel sure that most archivists would prefer to spend a little time on this to seeing inaccuracies about their offices based on verbal misunderstanding.

I should be interested to know whether your readers share your apparent view that offices remaining open, or as you put it 'claiming to be open' during the lunch hour without making new productions of documents during that period might as well close completely. I very much doubt if this is the view of users of these offices, who seem to find little difficulty in organising their work so that they have ordered sufficient documents to last them until productions restart.

Finally, I must comment that to compare statistics which you admit yourself to be disparate because of the additional (mostly smaller) offices included in your new survey can only detract from the weight of your argument. If the 41 offices quoted in the 1981 survey (**LPS** 25) are considered apart from the rest, it will be seen that 61% (not 52% as you quote) compared with 66% in 1981 offer opening hours as good as or

better than the Public Record Office, and 34% (not 31%) compared with 44% in 1981 open for more than 40 hours a week. I am not disputing that any lessening in opening hours, (or in other services offered to the public) is unfortunate and should be monitored; such monitoring, however, will lose credibility if the statistics are based on false comparisons.

Yours faithfully,
Rosemary Dunhill,
County Archivist,

Hampshire Record Office, 20 Southgate Street, Winchester SO23 9EF.

Editors' note

We are delighted to hear that the Hampshire Record Office is not considering charging fees for access to documents. We are fully aware of the risks of telephone surveys and used this method in 1981 and again this Summer only because of earlier unhappy experiences with written enquiries. We found some archivists enjoyed answering questionnaires so little they did not reply and even one or two who made it plain it was not their policy to answer enquiries in this form. But this is history; our aim is to make the information contained in **LPS** as accurate as possible and in future in similar cases, unless the printing schedule absolutely rules it out, we shall circulate our findings to those who have supplied information before publication and invite them to identify any errors or ambiguities.

The Guildhall library

Information has been received from the Guildhall library indicating an omission in our description of the service the library offers. In fact it is open each Saturday and for a total of 43½ hours each week.