PARISH REGISTRATION AND THE STUDY OF LABOUR MOBILITY

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The study of labour mobility has obvious importance for a wide range of social, economic and demographic reasons, and has not been neglected in recent English historiography. Early work such as that by Peter Laslett on 'Clayworth and Cogenhoe' has been succeeded by a wide and resourceful range of research, utilising many different sources, and supporting the picture of a high degree of personal mobility in pre-industrial England. It is not my intention to review developments in this subject, although the time is approaching for an assessment of its aims and future direction. I want rather to discuss the particular use of parish registers for this purpose. The success of this source to establish demographic trends in England has contributed to the current enthusiasm to extend it to different purposes, which include shifts in the occupational structure over time, and labour mobility. While innovative approaches to sources are very much to be encouraged, it is important that the complications associated with this particular source do not drop from view. I want here briefly to raise some of these, to stress the need for careful definition of the research problems posed, and for the study of the subject to be related closely to wider social, institutional and economic issues.

I need not rehearse the well known problems of clandestine marriage, or laxity of registration, which affect the quality of parish registers. These have been extensively discussed by others, and no doubt there will be further research to clarify their significance for the use of this source to study mobility. But in relation to such use, there are other and perhaps equally troublesome issues. Let us consider the ways in which the source is being applied.

The latest and most interesting application by Souden is both more ambitious and refined than that by Chambers on the 'Vale of Trent', and extends to England some current French research. The method itself is unlikely to be developed further, although it may be used differently, directed at other questions, and more closely integrated with different sources at parochial level. Taking baptisms in a parish, the technique essentially has been to consider the extent to which those baptised stayed
to be married and buried (the other vital events recorded) in the same parish. When individuals baptised in the parish were unrecorded on marriage and death, outward movement and residence elsewhere was assumed to have occurred. The lack of registration of a particular vital event is taken (other considerations being assumed equal) as inferential evidence for residence elsewhere at that particular point in the life-cycle, and vice versa. In this way trends in the turnover of individual parishes have been gauged for successive thirty-year periods between 1601 and 1780. The two essential premises behind this are of course that the person resided in the place of registration and not in a parish outside it, and the assumption that temporal and cross-regional considerations affecting the source remained constant. Souden suggests that such an analysis might present a reliable picture of the extent of mobility or stability in a particular parish which can be temporally and regionally compared. The method is also thought advantageous over many other sources insofar as it considers the non-migrant as well as the migrant. Using this method to consider sixteen different and dispersed English parishes between 1601 and 1780, a diverse range of trends emerged. But it was argued in particular that there was a tendency for a number of parishes, particularly southern agricultural villages, to become increasingly 'closed' over the course of the seventeenth century. In these places men proved to have been more often 'life-time stayers', in the sense of being baptised, married or baptising children, and buried in the reconstitution parish, while fewer were transient. We can note that this argument for a contraction of mobility sees the main change occurring after 1660.

Some considerations suggest themselves on this to which it may be worth drawing attention. I will outline them primarily in relation to the above method, but mention also that other approach to mobility which measures distances between marriage partners' residence places. The method outlined above is dependent on the use of baptism, marriage and burial data, but is unable to take account of the wide range of social and legal factors which determined, however temporarily, the positioning of these vital events. Such factors varied significantly in their operation over time and place, and it is possible that they distort this measure of mobility, by separating residence and place of registration to different degrees in different periods and places. As the fluctuating trends noticed in the degree of personal continuity in each parish are generally small, even slight variations in the incidence of such determining factors might have a significantly mis-representing effect. And insofar as the method can use only a handful of disparate parishes with adequate registration coverage, the regional variation of determining factors may be particularly detrimental to the comparative approach required.

Let me mention some of these factors. It was, for example, very common for a mother to deliver a child (particularly the first) in her father's parish, and this has often been found in accounts of female mobility in settlement examinations. The child would be baptised and then go back with the mother to the husband's parish. Similarly, for Colyton, it was possible to combine information from the 1851 census with parish register information...
to show that some parents had their children baptised in neighbouring parishes although they were resident in Colyton, and did so not just for the first child but sometimes for all of them.\(^3\) This must have been partly the case in the period before the census. But Souden’s method would characterise all children so baptised as life-time ‘migrants’, because in all probability they were not later married or buried in the parish of baptism. A child may have remained totally immobile in the father’s parish all its life, and not escape being categorised as the most thorough going ‘migrant’ imaginable.

Similarly, marriage frequently took place in the wife’s or wife’s father’s parish. This is well known, and there is again abundant evidence of it occurring in settlement examinations — although it is difficult to determine how prevalent such a custom was. But research based on the distances between places of ‘residence’ of marriage partners led R. F. Peel, for example, to state of some Northamptonshire villages that: ‘Throughout this period [1600-1940] the percentage of “local” women married never falls below about eighty in any of the villages, and is generally nearer 100 ... The facts concerning women really illustrate the time-honoured custom whereby the marriage is celebrated at the woman’s home ... Cases of women coming into the parish to marry are exceedingly rare.’\(^4\) This point has been made elsewhere.\(^5\) We shall see shortly that it may have been exaggerated, through possible misapplication of the registers, but such a custom certainly existed. It would also be very surprising if it had neither changed over time nor varied between individual parishes. Clearly, the use of marriage registration to measure mobility by the method under discussion is one liable to distortion. The wife inappropriately would become a ‘migrant’ by moving away temporarily from her parish of birth and residence for marriage; or, more probably, she would become a ‘non-migrant’ by moving from her parish of employment (and/or residence) back to her father’s parish for marriage, had she been baptised there. When one also considers the very high but changing and parochially variable proportions of marriages between people ‘resident’ in different parishes, for whom information on residence after marriage is lacking, the use of the place of marriage as an indicator of ‘migration’ may seem problematical.\(^6\)

Perhaps these problems could be overcome by taking account of places of ‘residence’ of spouses, entered in registers. Indeed, the measurement of distances between residences of marriage partners (the other, more frequently used, indicator of ‘migration’ from this source) is based entirely on such entries. But further difficulties emerge here. As is well known, entries of where a person is ‘of’ or ‘from’ are entered very haphazardly in English registers, and usually for men, if at all. In this regard, as in others, English registers are inferior to their French counterparts.\(^7\) The use of this source to measure marriage distances assumes rather precariously that omission of this detail (usually for women) entails residence in the parish of marriage. But insofar as the wife took the husband’s settlement on marriage, one might expect the place where the husband was ‘of’ or ‘from’ to have been entered and that of the wife omitted. In this way the register was an invaluable future aid to parish poor law authorities, help-

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ing to establish the settlements of widows and deserted wives (or their children) who would return and claim relief at a later date. We may probably assume that ‘of’ or ‘from’ usually meant residence rather than settlement, as this was implied by canonical law and later more firmly by Hardwick’s Act. Parish officers may have ignored this in practice, but I think it unlikely for most parishes. But then, as we shall see, ‘residence’ was closely equated with ‘settlement’, particularly before the settlement acts of 1685 and 1691, insofar as residence conferred settlement. And after 1691 residence frequently was in the parish of settlement. Failing this, communication with the parish where a man once resided was of course the usual first step to establish the settlement of his dependents, taking his settlement. There were, in other words, strong reasons for parishes to enter details of where the male marriage partner was ‘of’ or ‘from’, which they had no motive to do for the female. This useful purpose of the registers for parish poor law officers (and registers were constantly used in this way in disputed settlement cases) makes the measurement of marriage distances more problematical than its proponents believe. For the purposes of such measurement, registers certainly have a built-in tendency to understate female marriage mobility, and it would be unwise to isolate their entries from motives entwined with the laws of settlement. In regard to either of the two methods in question, registers do not provide reliable evidence on the synonymy of female residence and place of registration; and given the common absence of information as to where the man was from, nor are they usually an adequate source for male marriage mobility, using the method practised by Souden. The measurement of female marriage distances in particular is seriously flawed because of these considerations.

If we return specifically to Souden’s method, to calculate parochial persistence, there are further problems with the use of baptism and marriage as indicators of mobility. In relation to changes identified after the mid-eighteenth century, let us consider the effects of Hardwick’s Act in 1753, to prevent clandestine marriages. This obliged parties to be married in the church where one of them had lived for four weeks previously. Leaving aside clandestine marriage altogether (usually taken as the main objection to this source as used here), a consequence of this act was to alter the pre-1753 relations of place of marriage to place of settlement, and to place of usual residence. This is certainly measured by the method under discussion. As B. Maltby comments: ‘There were of course more “outsiders” married in Easingwold before the 1754 Hardwick Act than later’. It might seem dubious to interpret such change in the short-term mobility arrangements surrounding marriage before and after 1753 as economically significant changes in the mobility of the labour force itself. One consequence of the act must have been to make residence more closely synonymous with place of marriage; so for example it would be doubtful to argue from this source that the labour force became more stable or endogamous after the mid-eighteenth century. Alternatively, and as Ralph Bigland complained, an effect of this act was that some richer inhabitants were actually, removing from one county or place, and taking lodgings to make themselves parishioners for a month only in another, thereby con-
cealing their true parish and established residence, which of course must render the marriage more obscure and dubious than ever.\textsuperscript{10} I dare say that this statement was not widely applicable below the upper orders. But it does illustrate the type of problems which arise if the parish of marriage has to be assumed constantly and throughout this period to be the parish of residence. The general tendency of Hardwick’s Act would be to suggest a diminution of mobility as measured by this method. But as the usually very local nature of mobility made movement for registration practicable before 1753, such a diagnosis would have little helpful bearing on the question of labour mobility.

Let us turn to burial registration, where even more serious complications arise. Old people were often insistent on their place of burial — the same is true today — and they would move there before dying, or be moved there when dead. This can be supported at length from the correspondence of paupers with poor law authorities, from emigrants’ letters, working-class autobiographies, or from the themes of popular protest against the new poor law in the nineteenth century. For England such concern seems to have been rather stronger then than it is now. Social historians who are familiar with opposition to the practice of workhouse burial, with the fear of impotence over choice of burial-place, or with the history of friendly societies and burial clubs will readily acknowledge this point.\textsuperscript{11} One would expect this concern to play a major part in the choice of parish for burial, and many common circumstances occur where it distorts the measurement of mobility by the above method. One thinks, for example, of a desire to be buried near one’s dead spouse.\textsuperscript{12} Much movement occurred which was motivated in this way, either in old age or in coffins. Examples of the latter were common, for all social classes, and the registration of burial occurred in the parish to which the corpse was removed.\textsuperscript{13} The well-known local nature of mobility usually made movement of the dead a straightforward exercise, and of course most deaths did not occur from smallpox or plague, which would render such movement unlikely through fear of contagion. Burn’s Ecclesiastical Law discusses aspects of the removal of corpses at some length: as to the sums payable in these cases to respective parsons; whether a person should be buried in the parish of death; whether a moving corpse can be stopped to force payment of debts; and so on.\textsuperscript{14} In these cases of local removal the method under discussion actually measures the mobility of corpses, and the use of burial place as the indicator of ‘labour mobility’ seems rather inappropriate. If the burial took place in the parish of baptism the dead person becomes classified as a life-time ‘non-migrant’, when the corpse could just as readily have ‘lived’ away from that parish most of its animated life. Alternatively, if death took place in the parish of baptism (and/or marriage) but burial elsewhere, the corpse rather curiously becomes a ‘migrant’. Or if the movement took place shortly before death a similar misleading characterisation of ‘migration’ could occur.

We should look in more detail at the movement of the elderly before death. Once again problems occur here, on which clearer focus can be made. For they may provide an independent explanation for the tendency
observed in some parishes for there to be greater personal continuity of registration after 1660, and suggest that the latter had little relation to real changes affecting the mobility of the labour force. The settlement acts of the late seventeenth century introduced changes affecting the positioning of the elderly upon death which, quite apart from the nature of the labour market, create an impression of greater persistence. 'Settlement' of course, was not a new concept, and had existed long before 1662 — gained either by birth or residence in a parish. What was new in the settlement laws of 1662, 1685, 1691, 1697 and 1712 was the power of removal, which previously in the seventeenth century had only extended to vagrants. The acts of 1597 and 1601 made no mention of removal, and in the words of the Webbs, 'neither authorised nor mentioned removal to the parishes to which they belonged, of any section of the poor; and the Judges, as well as other legal authorities, seem to have held that, with the lapse of the previous Acts, there was after 1597, no power in any parish to remove any one, or to expel any but rogues and vagabonds ... Dalton's Country Justice, a law-book of great authority, in the edition of 1635, expressly declares that no man is to be put out of the town where he dwelleth, nor to be sent back to their place of birth, or last habitation, but a vagrant rogue'. And they continue to quote other sources to the same effect, including Pashley: 'Through the whole of this period, that is from 1601 to 1662, all persons were entitled to needful relief wheresoever they were residing'.

This was changed of course by the power given under the late seventeenth-century acts for removal to place of settlement. And settlement was much more strictly defined, especially with the introduction of the 'heads' of settlement in 1691. Removal was permissible whether the person concerned was actually chargeable at the time, or was 'likely to become chargeable' — the latter to be at the discretion of the parish officers. The 1662 Act conferred this power of removal, but allowed a settlement if the party resided for forty days — a period which could be difficult to prove in practice because of the reluctance of parochial witnesses to testify when pressure was put on them by parish authorities. But the 1685 Act is more important for our purposes, because it laid down that the forty-day period had to be from when written notice was given to the overseer. Thenceforth, the giving of such notice was usually the starting point for removal proceedings, and so it became uncommon to give it; and the further legislation of 1691 effectively ended the possibility of gaining a settlement by giving forty days notice. And so there were two different situations faced by the aged (or the ill) in the early and late-seventeenth century. Earlier in the century they had been comparatively secure in their parishes of residence. They could gain a settlement merely by residing there a year — which in fact had given them more legal security than that created by the 'irremovability' legislation of the mid-nineteenth century, which at best laid down three years' residence to obtain immunity from removal, and such 'irremovability' was never synonymous with a 'settlement'. No legal power before 1662 existed to remove them before their one year's residence was completed. The place of their burial registration, in other words, may be taken as usually that of their
residence in old age, although mobility of corpses occurred in the form which we noted above.

But after 1662, and particularly after 1685, aged people became removable to their parish of settlement when chargeable, or 'likely to become chargeable', and when no longer of productive potential to a parish. They were either sent back, or more commonly went back themselves (in anticipation of removal and its humiliations). As one eighteenth-century woman made clear when examined as to her settlement: 'her said husband told this examinant soon after marriage that he belonged to the parish of Waltham St Lawrence, and that he would go there to end his days'. This had rarely occurred earlier, when the concept of 'settlement' had been more flexibly adopted to place of residence, in which one had the right to relief, and when no legal power to remove existed.

Now, settlements of course were usually gained when young, particularly with the introduction of the 'heads' of settlement after 1691. The most common way of gaining a settlement was by hiring for a year when unmarried. Similarly, the widespread gaining of settlement by apprenticeship almost exclusively concerned the young. And the dwindling of earning capacity in old age made it increasingly unlikely that the lower orders would rent a residence of £10 value per annum, which also conferred settlement. Another main head of settlement — that of serving a parish office — was a very uncommon means to a settlement. Such offices were generally allocated to those who were settled already, so as to avoid creating settlements which might later burden the poor rates. As far as the two 'heads' which most commonly conferred settlement were concerned (hiring for a year and apprenticeship), the gaining of a settlement was a life-cycle stage, immediately prior to marriage. That settlement would therefore more frequently be the parish of marriage in the late-seventeenth century, particularly after 1691 — because of this similar age specificity of marriage and the gaining of settlements. (Farm servants of course commonly married shortly after their last yearly hiring, as regional marriage seasonalities demonstrate.) In other words, given that people in the later-seventeenth century would finally move back to their settlement parishes in old age, one would expect them to be recorded as buried more frequently in their parishes of marriage, because of these legal changes. (The proportion of those whose burial only was registered in a parish would fall, for example.) And when this is found by Souden to have occurred, it may indicate little of significance on the mobility of the active workforce, which I take to be our prime interest. Rather, one is witnessing a predictable response to the new laws by the aged and the parishes which dealt with them. These points of course apply in varying degree to all the parishes considered, and not merely to those for which a decline of outward 'migration' was charted in the late-seventeenth century. The results obtained for other parishes would equally be a confusing mesh of changes in labour mobility, registration mobility, and the combined incidence of other sociological and legal factors such as those affecting the elderly.

A factor which lent added significance to these changes was the desire
of parish officials to avoid the burial costs of their elderly residents. Parishes were not only refusing to make payments to their non-settled elderly in the late-seventeenth century, but also removing them in case they should die there. Perhaps as many as a half of labouring people from agricultural communities were unable to pay the costs of burial, and such costs were usually shouldered by the parish in which death took place, rather than by the parish of settlement.\textsuperscript{20} The situation regarding this liability to burial costs was somewhat ambiguous, and never clearly defined by legislation or legal precedent. At times parishes acted as if the parish of settlement had the obligation to bury the corpse, and the body was removed there.\textsuperscript{21} Similarly, there were legal disputes over liability to bury and burial costs, where the place of death was not in question.\textsuperscript{22} But the practice generally was as laid down by Simon Degge in \textit{The Parson's Counsellor}, 1676: 'By the custom of England, every person (except such as are afterwards excepted) [murderers, excommunicates] may at this day be buried in the Churchyard of the Parish where he dies, without paying anything for breaking the Soil'.\textsuperscript{23} And the advice of the Solicitor General given privately to Francis Sadler was: 'I think every Parishioner has the undoubted Right to be buried in the Churchyard without paying any fee for breaking of the Ground; and I think it will be the same in the case of an accidental Death, and of One not a Parishioner: It being for the Sake of the Living, that the Dead should be buried'.\textsuperscript{24} The interpretation of 'may ... be buried' and 'the undoubted Right' in these statements is not entirely clear. But the custom of taking a mortuary fee also suggests the extent to which non-parishioners were buried outside their place of settlement and/or residence — as levied 'from travelling and wayfaring men in the places where they happened to die'.\textsuperscript{25} And it was said of the parish of Chapel-en-le-Frith in Derbyshire, that 'the Burial Registers at once drew attention to the great number of non-residents buried in the Churchyard ... and in the Church itself'.\textsuperscript{26} The same statement would apply to most parishes; and the prevalent entries in Churchwardens' and Overseers' Accounts, and in parish registers, of statements such as: 'Mr. Ward buried a man'; 'A poore cripple woman was buried'; 'William Wade, who died as a stranger'; 'A peregrine Woman was buried here', and so on, might support the view that burials paid for by the parish generally took place in the parish of death, rather than the parish of residence and/or settlement.\textsuperscript{27}

Now the expenses of such parish burial were considerable. I calculate an average parish burial expense of nineteen shillings for certain London and Bristol parishes in the late-seventeenth century, not including drink.\textsuperscript{28} With the introduction of legislation requiring that the corpse be wrapped in woollen material from 1666, and its reinforcement in 1678, such charges had risen considerably.\textsuperscript{29} And the taxing of registration of vital events, introduced in 1694, further increased this burden by charging four shillings for every burial. Duties on baptism and marriage after 1694 were excused for paupers, but this was not so for burials. In cases of pauper burial, parishes had to pay the duty of four shillings from the poor rates, as well as all the other attandant costs. There were, in other words, increasingly strong motives for a parish to avoid having a person dying within its
bounds, whose corpse it would have to bury. Under the new settlement laws a parish could eject aged persons likely to die, by the new power of removal to place of settlement, or by threatening removal and its associated humiliations. The change was most significant for the treatment of the elderly. And from 1666, through to 1678, and then 1694, there were ever stronger reasons for parishes to act in this way, given rising costs of parish burial. They could also remove or eject the sick, for the same reason. Entries such as ‘for getting a man away, being like to dye in the Parish, one shilling’, are common in overseers’ and constables’ accounts.  

Another related point was that expenses for the maintenance of the elderly were seldom sent through the post in the late-seventeenth century, and the general policy was simply to remove. Such a practice reflected the inchoate postal system of the period, and a prevailing state of inter-parochial mistrust. In a later period, with the development of the postal system, internal communications and transport facilities, these expenses were more commonly sent through the post. The payment of non-resident relief by the parish of settlement became more common, although there remained much regional variation. There was, therefore, probably some easing of the removal of the non-chargeable aged in the eighteenth century. The growing use of settlement certificates in the early-eighteenth century also suggests this, although it is difficult to know how common such practice was. And the rising poor rates after the mid-eighteenth century contributed to bring removal cases more frequently to Sessions — again a dangerous and increasingly costly consideration for parish officers contemplating removal of the non-chargeable elderly. Similarly, the falling costs of parish burial in the eighteenth century were significant here: as the burial in woollen acts became increasingly ignored, as the 1694 legislation ended; and as the new ‘undertakers’ (stocking all items) reduced burial costs, to the detriment of all the local artisans whose individual contributions had previously been required to bury someone. In relation to the woollen acts for example, the survival in parish collections of affidavits indicates that the implementation of these acts was increasingly discarded in the 1730s and 1740s, to become very uncommon after the 1760s, although in rare cases examples can be found of this right up to the formal repeal of 1814. In some rural Oxfordshire and Oxford parishes by the late-eighteenth century parish burial costs had fallen to about six shillings, and this despite the course of inflation. In other words, the estimated and rising costs of removal (given the possibility of a court case) increasingly exceeded those of the parish burial — and the lingering living (if still unchargeable) eventually benefited as the fluctuations of parochial calculation ushered in ‘humanitarian’ motives.

All these points should make one careful in the use of parish registers to study mobility change over the long-term. Because of falling burial costs, one might expect some return in the late-eighteenth century to the early seventeenth-century frequency of people being more commonly buried in a different parish from that of baptism and/or marriage. In general terms though, the effects of the late-seventeenth century laws might be to create an impression (using this method) of more long-term parochial stability
throughout the eighteenth century, along the various lines suggested — with the main break occurring after 1662 or 1685, strengthened in 1691, and brought about in effect by the introduction of removal, and the unprecedented split between place of settlement and residence. Where once residence had determined settlement (with no possible obstacle), now settlement determined the residence of those who, with their productive lives effectively over, found themselves permanently chargeable. Such complications surrounding the use of this source have received little attention. But it is clear that poor law practice should not be assumed to be constant over time and region, and not to have had an important and changing effect on the synonymity of place of residence and registration.

If one were to take a sceptical view, the results of analysing parish registers between 1600 and 1780 may be some remove from the actual historical changes in labour mobility which one hopes to uncover. The results arrived at were predictably diverse and lacking in uniformity. But insofar as Souden is able to suggest a general pattern of change, it appears to match a priori expectations of the way this source would respond to the introduction of the settlement laws and changes in poor law administration, and it is possible that it may be explained in such terms. Other factors would produce similarly misleading outlines of long-term mobility change, and while it is hard to define their incidence and change over time, this does not detract from their possible importance. For example, the geographical location of familial events such as baptisms, marriages and burials, just as with the treatment of the elderly, was of course influenced by regional differences in, and changing attitudes to, kin relationships. The synonymity of residence and parish registration would change or vary regionally partly in accord with this. One thinks for example of urban or market-town inhabitants maintaining links with the countryside from which they had lately come, and going back temporarily to baptise or marry, and eventually to be buried. Readers familiar, for example, with rural-urban kin connections in south Wales will appreciate the extent of this today. Much attention has been paid to household size by demographers, but little is as yet known of the regional and temporal incidence of kinship ties in the past, affecting the positioning of these vital events. It is likely that such ties existed in some variety, and that they were closely related to employment opportunities, regional economy and local poor relief practices. Both kinship ties and associated factors acting on the positioning of the elderly and of burial would have been closely influenced by poor law administrations which were very variable regionally, and within the same parish over time. However characterised, such factors would certainly influence the results of this method. If the units of study were large groups of parishes within the same region, such administrative variations might even themselves out in a benign manner. But when the unit of study is necessarily an isolated parish this is less likely to be the case.

Certainly, it requires only slight changes of poor law policy to produce the differences of registered continuity within parishes to which significance has to be attached. For example, policies governing the removal of the aged, payment of baptism, marriage or burial expenses from the poor
rates, or inter-parochial agreements or hostilities would all have such effects. There are other points worth mentioning too: the changes in positioning of baptisms, marriages and burials would also be altered by factors such as the later use of settlement certificates; parochial policies on the financially necessary or morally obligatory nature of marriage in some circumstances; policies on the payment of fees for registration after 1694; differing parochial payment of 'lying-in' expenses; the varying operation of the allowance and 'head money' system; the relation of local burial societies to the practice of pauper burial; changes in the levels of pauperism affecting the extent of pauper burial; the effects on the treatment of the elderly of the provision of a parish workhouse, and so on. Alongside the operation of the settlement laws, and the changing state of parochial communication, the influence of such factors raises questions on the reliability of statistical changes arrived at by this method. Little is known about the combined impact of these factors. But as historians we can be certain that the necessary a priori assumption which holds such practices to be either non-existent, or constant over time, or regionally identical is not one which we ought to make.

Clearly, the study of 'migration' cannot be an autonomous subject in its own right, either at the methodological level, or in relation to the historical questions asked. We require fuller understanding of the social, legal and economic context of registration. In particular notice has to be taken of the changing treatment of the aged, and the other ramifications introduced by the settlement laws. Some of the more readily identifiable difficulties centre around those laws, and I do not wish to deny the greater possibilities for this method in a country such as France, where there was no equivalent settlement system, and which lacked an institution as all-embracing as the old poor law. In France the extraneous factors to be taken into account over the long-term are far less obtrusive, and the registers more detailed and informative. By comparison, long-term arguments using this approach in England are more problematic because of the factors outlined, and perhaps it would be better suited to such analysis of change over shorter time intervals.

In this connection possibilities certainly remain. Let me give some examples. The method would be an interesting one to study the effect of enclosure on parochial labour demand and supply. The older arguments made by Chambers and his followers that enclosure did not produce out-migration — that on the contrary it brought a fuller and more re-numerative demand for labour, holding workers on the land and even producing in-migration to recently enclosed parishes — have recently been challenged by Crafts, who has used county-level data to demonstrate that enclosure usually was followed by out-migration.32 On current evidence, Crafts' arguments seem more reliable than those of Chambers. But insofar as they are based on county-level data it would be helpful to have material on mobility at parish level to supplement them. Clearly, Souden's method could be well adapted to this end, and could even cover the poorly understood enclosures before parliamentary enclosure, as well as the latter.
Another way in which the method could be applied would be to consider questions on the growth of rural cottage industries and their impact in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Of course, the subject has recently been much debated. But it remains an interesting and potentially important one, covering the social and demographic effects of such industry on rural society, and the origins of industrialisation. Some of the questions in England which still require sharper answers concern exactly when and why rural 'putting-out' industries began, the ways in which regionally specific cottage industries differed, and what their effects on rural-urban and rural interparochial mobility were. Much headway could be made here by considering changes in the proportions of 'movers and stayers' in those parishes undergoing a growth of cottage industry.

It is also the case that patterns of landownership, alongside distinctive parochial social structures, contributed to an isolation in the country of some parishes practising cottage industry; and the same influences were important in the growth of 'open-close' parochial dichotomies from the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries — dichotomies of course which went beyond the situation and growth of cottage industry, and which were closely associated with the operation of the poor law. In turn, the respective labour abundance and shortages of 'open' and 'closed' parishes had an impact on agricultural innovation in the eighteenth century, on many aspects of the rural standard of living, and on rural out-migration. For these reasons the question of 'open-close' parishes is an important one. And yet it still remains uncertain exactly how clear-cut open-close dichotomies were in practice, when they developed, and what their effects were on the labour market. Once again, it is possible that the use of parish registers discussed here, in association with other sources, may be able to help answer more short-term questions such as these.

A major point to stress throughout is that this use of registers has slight importance if unrelated to the active mobility and role within the economy of the labour force itself. It is unfortunate that the method is so dependent on the movement of those not, or no longer, productive (the baptised infant, the pregnant woman, the ill, aged and the dead), alongside the short-term mobility of marriage partners. Because of this, isolated parish registers will always have methodological limitations for the specific study of labour mobility. At present it appears to be long-term changes in the latter which are at issue, and it is not especially the intention here to express reservations over the view now held by a number of historians that labour mobility diminished in and from the late-seventeenth century. This remains a possibility with some indications based mainly on 'middling' class-bound sources to support it. But one reason for scepticism resides in the recent and possibly more reliable findings by Kussmaul (on the basis of marriage seasonality data) that farm service peaked in prevalence during the early eighteenth century. This suggests a very contrary picture. For farm servants were probably the most mobile among the labour force, and numerically significant in a society with a comparatively young age structure by the standards of today. And another point is worth making in this connection. Neither the method discussed here, nor
arguments for a decline of internal mobility in the late-seventeenth century, are strongly supported by comparisons with the fall after 1661 in recently produced emigration figures for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Such trends in emigration, influenced in particular by religious motives and attitudes, are clearly unsuited to answer questions on internal labour mobility — unless seventeenth-century religious fervour is seen to be economically determined in a parallel way and to the same extent as internal labour mobility: a deterministic explanation for religious fervour of a kind to worry Tawney, let alone his critics. That is, the high emigration of 1621-1661 was surely religiously motivated, and emigration was a solution to personally experienced national problems in a way in which internal mobility was not.

To conclude, the term ‘migration’ has to be used carefully, even allowing the supposition that records covering those on the fringe of the labour market are adequate to discuss the labour force itself. While there has been considerable methodological innovation in the use of registers discussed here, it is important to define clearly the purpose of research. But one hopes now that these issues can be explored further, and that more specific questions can be raised which relate actual labour mobility to economic and institutional factors.

NOTES

I am grateful to Rab Houston, David Thomson, Richard Wall, Keith Wrightson and Tony Wrigley for their comments.


2. See D. Souden, 'Movers and stayers in family reconstitution populations', in this volume of LPS, and J. D. Chambers, The Vale of Trent, 1670-1800: A Regional Study of Economic Change, Economic History Review Supplement No. 3, 1957, 'a larger proportion of men disappeared from the registers ... Altogether, between 40 per cent and 50 per cent of the names in the baptism registers do not recur in the burial registers'. Chambers of course was not using the source for regional comparison, or to consider questions of temporal change. See also L. Henry, 'Mobilité et fécondité d’après les fiches de famille', Annales de démographie historique, 1976, pp. 279-302.

3. Information provided by Professor E. A. Wrigley.


6. See V. H. T. Skipp, ‘Discovering Bickenhill,’ Dept of Extra Mural Studies, Birmingham University; B. Maltby, ‘Parish registers and the problem of mobility’, LPS, vol. 6, 1971, pp. 32-42; F. H. Erith, Ardeleigh in 1796, 1778, p. 4, on local variation in this; Chambers, Vale of Trent, p. 50: in one parish, of 490 couples married between 1730 and 1754, only fifteen were resident as to one or both partners, in the parish itself. Of the rest, the marriage partners of 284 were drawn from different parishes, sometimes at considerable distance from one another.


8. 26 Geo II c.33.


10. Ralph Bigland, Observations on Marriages, Baptisms and Burials ... in Parochial Registers, 1764, p. 56.

11. A large literature against the New Poor Law bears this out. Much of it is of a propagandist nature, which is useful for our purposes as it points very clearly to the popular sentiments on which it was playing. See for example, Rev. F. H. Maberley, To the Poor and their Friends, 1836; G. R. W. Baxter, The Book of the Bastilles, 1844; William Cobbett, Legacy to Labourers, 1830. And see P. J. H. Gosden, The Friendly Societies in England, 1815-1875, 1961; E. Copeland, Remarks on the Poor Law Amendment Act with Reference to Pauper Medical Clubs, 1838; Ann Digby, Pauper Palaces, 1978, p. 164; P. Horn, Labouring Life in the Victorian Countryside, 1976, pp. 178-9, 196-7; N. Longmate, The Workhouse, 1974.

12. Pace Edward Shorter The Making of the Modern Family, 1976, who would presumably find such a desire unlikely before his eighteenth-century rise of ‘romantic love’.

13. Examples of the inter-parochial movement of corpses are extensive, and can be found in overseers’ accounts for the period, in churchwardens’ accounts, in poor law correspondence, in removal records and coroners’ reports, in funeral certificates and in local newspapers. See for examples of this: H. Wilkins, The Poor Book of Westbury-on-Trym, 1910, pp. 34, 35, 168, 220, 230, 268, 334; H. Gill & E. L. Guilford (eds.), The Rector’s Book, Clayworth, Nottinghamshire, 1910, p. 13; W. McMurray (ed.), The Records of Two City Parishes, 1925, p. 367; G. F. Beaumont, History of Coggeshall in Essex, 1840, pp. 55, 56, 210, 251; R. Bigland, pp. 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 27; J. S. Burn, History of Parish Registers, 1862, pp. 104, 108; R. Burn, The Ecclesiastical Law, vol. II, 1824, pp. 259, 268-70; Bodleian MSS DD Par. Watlington, b. 16; F. H. Erith, pp. 83, 93; Ann Digby, p. 164; B. Hammond, ‘Urban Death Rates in the early-nineteenth century’. Economic History, vol. I, 1926-9. Much removal was performed by friends, ex-employers and relatives. For a nineteenth-century example of this practice, see Thomas Hardy, Far From the Madding Crowd, chapter XLI. Accounts of expenses claimed for removal cases also sometimes include mention of delivery of the dead. See for cases of this: Huntingdonshire County Record Office, Q/S Vagrancy Box, 1800-54; 136/3/7 (1831-54); West Suffolk Record Office, N2/1/8/12; Bedfordshire County Record Office, DDF 1/13/4/1-3; Herefordshire County Record Office, 3r.1.12.2.1.2 (1810); 3.7.1 (1816); 20 D/P 87. B 133; T. 1977.10.1; B 133; T. 1977.10.1; B 133; T. 1977.10.1. The internal organs of the body were often removed if the distance the corpse had to travel was considerable; and I am informed that in perhaps as many as 60 per cent of deaths today the same practice occurs. Such removal of the dead is almost universal practice today. There have been obvious advances which facilitate this, and the distances moved are often considerable. But if it is supposed that the familial and kinship feelings behind such removal have not altered radically, and if we recall the very local nature of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century mobility, there is no reason to suppose that the practice was uncommon then. Little has been written on this subject.


15. 13 & 14 Car. II c. 12; I Jac. II c. 17; 3 Wm & Mary c. 11; 8 & 9 Wm III, c. 30; 12 Anne c. 18.


17. Ibid. p. 319, n.2.

18. See 9 & 10 Vict. c. 66, which conferred ‘irremovability’ after five years residence, and 24 & 25 Vict. c. 66, which reduced this to three years. See also 39 & 40 Vict. c. 61.


20. In Witney (Oxfordshire) for example, over 30 per cent of the burials of all classes were pauper between 1783 and 1794, and the poor rate was relatively low at the time compared with other agricultural parishes. Bodleian, MSS DD Witney, c.4.

21. One finds this sometimes in removal cases. See also Bodleian MSS DD Par Garsington b. 12: letter from Maidford to Garsington, May, 1769, where the parish of settle-
ment guarantees to indemnify the parish of residence the costs of funeral should they be incurred.

22. See for example H. Wilkins, p. 200: 'payd the Coroner that State upon ye man killed by ye fall of ye house at gallowes Hill and wh was then spent upon him and ye jury that given that this might not be at ye Charge of his burial, £01. 01. 02.'


24. In Francis Sadler, The Exactions and Impositions of Parish Fees. Sadler was writing against the payment of parish fees, and it may be that this quotation is to be taken as meaning that non-parishioners should not have to pay fees either. If they are to be buried in the parish of death rather than that they should be buried in the parish of death. Certainly the corpse could be removed if desired. But it is not clear if it could legally be imposed on the parish of settlement in some circumstances. For my argument this technicality is not important, as it serves only to clarify the relative extent to which burial registration was different from place of residence through the mobility of the elderly before death. R. Burn, pp. 257-8 provides an uncertain and seemingly contradictory discussion of this.

25. See J. S. Burn, p. 113; F. G. Emmison, Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts, 1973, p. 176. Those dying in one parish, 'not having a dwelling in the same parish by the space of a year and a day, there is due to the parson his best garment.' (Late sixteenth century.) See also 21 Hen. VIII. c.6. For other cases of burial of related non-parishioners, see Gill & Guilford, pp. 21, 31, 33; W. B. Bunting, The Parish Church of St. Thomas à Becket (Chapel-en-le-Frith), 1225-1925, 1925, pp. 115, 123; J. P. Earwaker, History of St. Mary-on-the Hill, Chester, 1898, pp. 117-82; G. F. Beaumont, pp. 220-5; R. Bigland, p. 54 (for the implication that this was frequent); J. S. Burn pp. 105, 106, 133; W. McMurray, e.g. p. 391. And see also the preamble to 7 & 8 Will.III c.35, which states: 'And whereas diverse persons are buried in other Parishes than where they lived or resided by reason whereof the Duties payable upon the Burial of such persons are uncollected ...'


27. J. S. Burn, pp. 104 ff.


29. For this legislation, see 18 & 19 Ch.II c.4, and 30 Ch.II c.3. The latter was not repealed until 1814, but had fallen into disuse long before in the eighteenth century. See e.g. W. S. Weeks, Clitheroe in the seventeenth century, 1927, p. 202.

30. See for example, H. Wilkins, p. 223; W. McMurray, p. 365; W. S. Weeks, pp. 58-9. Or here is an example referred to by Sir William Meredith: 'Coming up to town last Sunday, I met with an instance shocking to humanity: a miserable object in the agonies of death crammed into a cart to be removed lest the parish should be at the expense of its funeral. Other instances every day met with are the removals of women with child and in labour, to the danger of both their lives, lest the child should be born in the parish'. Quoted in P. Mantoux, The Industrial Revolution in the Eighteenth Century, 1952, pp. 444-5.


36. Ibid. pp. 219ff.