

## 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.

### Protestation returns

Dear Sir,

Where they have survived the Protestation Returns of 1642 have provided the basis for estimates of populations size as well as being a source of great interest to local historians and genealogists. This interest has been reflected in a number of editions of the returns which have been published either for counties or sometimes for individual places.

Some of the returns do, however, contain more than a listing of the names of all male inhabitants in a place over the age of eighteen. Where individuals either signed the returns or made a mark they have been used to measure levels of literacy in local communities. A further use, and one on which I am not aware a great deal of work has been done, is to use the Protestations as a source for the social structure of the local community.

I have looked at the Protestation Returns for a number of English counties and I have found that in some places the names in them are grouped by houses or homesteads. Occupations may also be included and in some places women are given as well as men. The return for the parish of St. Ives in Cornwall contains lists of ships companies in the port at the time the Protestation was taken. A list may also be divided by social or occupational groups, but I have as yet discovered no complete listing of the inhabitants of a place in the returns. However, those returns which do go beyond a straightforward list of male inhabitants over the age of eighteen do seem to be of some potential interest to the local historian. I would therefore be interested to hear from readers who have found returns of this type and of the ways in which they have been able to exploit the information which they contain in their work.

Yours faithfully,  
R. W. Ambler

37 Cumberland Avenue, Grimsby, South Humberside. DN32 0BT.

**154 years old?**

Dear Sir,

1741

A True Copy of the Register of Church-Minshull under Charles Cholmondeley of Vale Royall, Esq. in the County Palatine of Chester.

This is to certify that Thomas Damme of Leighton in this Neighbourhood was interred at Church Minshull on the 20th of February 1648 being seven score and fourteen years old.

Attested by Cornelius Edwards, Minister of Church Minshall.  
Yale Ms Osborn File Damme.

Yours sincerely  
David Cressey

California State University, Long Beach, California, U.S.A.

### **Nurse children**

Dear Sir,

I was interested in your review of Valerie Fildes' article on the age of weaning in **LPS 34**, as this may help to explain an entry I had just come across in the 1851 enumerator's book for Chackmore, near Buckingham. The last entry in the household of Joseph Stanton, agricultural labourer, was:

Elizabeth Mary COVES, 9 months, A child nursing, Birthplace: Chackmore. Mrs Stanton's age was given as 53, hardly an age at which to be suckling a child. She had no one else in the house who could be the mother, or the nurse. One assumes that the child had been left behind in the place of its birth, while the mother, and possibly the father, had gone off in search of work. There were no other Coves in Chackmore.

Valerie Fildes' suggestion that the age of weaning had fallen to nine months by 1800 indicates that Mrs Stanton was feeding the baby entirely on some kind of semi-solid foods and resolved my doubts about the accuracy of the census entry. In passing, it may be of interest that this is the only record of a 'nurse-child' I have found among a population of about 6,500 in Buckingham and nearby villages in 1851.

Yours sincerely,  
Joan Mills

Westhighland, Rectory Lane, Branston, Lincoln, LN4 1NA.

## Readers' Letters LPS 34, Cheney's Handbook of Dates

Dear Sir,

How sensible it was of Glynis Reynolds to bring the above to the attention of all students of English history — and how could anyone ever manage without it? What a treasure it has been since an enlightened local history tutor drew my attention to it many years ago.

Regarding the inaccuracy in the 1945 edition, I can assure Miss Reynolds (and others) that this was corrected in both the 1961 and 1978 editions.

Please, however, will someone explain to me what is meant by the "Old Style" and "New Style" divisions at the top of the Tables on pages 84 — 155: I've never yet found anyone who knew what it all meant!

One should perhaps point out that in the dates of the Rulers of England, all dates between 1st January and 24th March (before 1752) are shown in New Style years, though I cannot find this mentioned anywhere in the book.

Yours faithfully,  
Jo-Ann Buck (Mrs.)

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