

## CORRESPONDENCE

Letters intended for publication in **LPS** should be sent to Kevin Schurer, 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.

### Human afflictions noted in the population censuses

Dear Sir,

In the course of transcribing and indexing the censuses for North Cardigan rural districts and Aberystwyth Borough I was struck by the frequency with which such afflictions as blindness, deafness, mutism and idiocy were mentioned. All instances of these I carefully extracted in the hope that the statistics might form a useful basis for district-by-district comparisons and for calculations of incidence rates. The work has proved to be most interesting. Though it is tempting to ascribe some of the conditions to particular occupations (e.g. lead mining) which were common in the area, unfortunately it is obvious that a study of seventeen rural districts and one urban district produces a statistical sample too small to be of sufficient significance, and conclusions reached as to possible causes for some conditions are too speculative for sound judgement. Clearly there is scope for a much broader study perhaps on regional or even national lines, and for exploring other sources of evidence on the medical and biological aspects of the data obtained.

The area I am studying is devoted mainly to agriculture and lead mining in the rural districts, and to a market centre and lead-ore shipment in the one urban area. The population of the rural districts ranged in total from 9,388 in 1841 to 16,777 in 1871. That of Aberystwyth ranged from 4,916 in 1841 to 8,440 in 1881. Ideally, it would be necessary to study another area of roughly comparable size and with similar types of occupations; indeed it would be even better to study a number of such areas, perhaps in differing parts of the United Kingdom. However, therein lies the rub; my own studies have occupied me pretty fully already for six years. Where can we obtain a sufficient range of census transcripts to facilitate this study? Dedicated census transcribers are still fairly rare animals, and working direct from micro-films alone is extremely hard on the eyes. It is perhaps a forlorn hope that one day the PRO will offer for sale good quality transcripts of censuses for all districts. If it were so, a potential gold-mine might be unearthed.

Readers may judge the potential of a wider-based study from these basic facts which emerged from my own work on North Cardiganshire. In the period 1851-81 there were sixty-one cases of blindness recorded, thirty-four cases noted as deaf or as deaf-and-dumb, and forty-one who were listed as idiots, lunatics, imbeciles or as insane. I have extracted the names, ages and personal details of each afflicted person and have taken care to ensure that no individual was counted twice (i.e. recorded in successive returns). I am aware, of course, that some cases of blindness could have been due to such causes as diabetes (untreatable until 1922), cataracts and

glaucoma, and that a likely cause of deaf-mutism (especially when young children were concerned) was infections, such as measles, whooping cough and scarlet fever contracted early in life, and that there were a number of factors which could have contributed to the cases of idiocy and imbecility.

I hope that I have said enough to stimulate others to help widen this study.

Yours faithfully

E. Alwyn Benjamin

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

### **Records of Infant Welfare Clinics or Day Nurseries from 1910 to 1930**

Dear Sir,

The Medical Research Council would like to find records of children who attended infant welfare clinics or day nurseries between the wars. Early this century several reports were published that emphasised the high death rates among infants in Britain. As a result medical officers of health were required to set up maternity and child welfare programmes that aimed to nourish infants better, and to educate mothers in child care. To this end, every area held clinics at least once a week. The children were weighed and examined and their general state of health noted.

Therefore at the clinics there were records made of each infant consultation, with details such as the child's name, address, birth weight, state of health and feeding regime. Four hundred such records have already been found in Plymouth but these are not enough for a detailed study. We are therefore asking that if anyone knows where infant welfare records still exist they write with details of the collection to: Professor D. J. P. Barker, MRC Environmental Epidemiology Unit, Southampton General Hospital, Southampton SO9 4XY or telephone Southampton (0703) 777624.

Yours faithfully

Professor D. J. P. Barker MD, PhD, FRCP  
Director

### **Access to Census Returns**

Dear Sir,

I was interested to see Michael Farrar's comments (LPS 33) that the 1841 and 1851 census returns were entirely confidential in 1914 and not opened to public inspection until 1924. This is not correct.

It was one of the first great achievements of this Society, founded in 1911, to obtain the release of the Census Returns in 1912. I have the original letter, dated 6th June,

1912, from the Under Secretary of State at the Home Office to Gerald Fothergill, acting on our behalf, which says:

"In reply to your letter of the 28th ultimo, I am directed by the Secretary of State to say that he has authorised the production to the public in the search room at the Record Office of the Enumeration Schedules of the 1841 and 1851 Censuses, on payment of the fees fixed by the Master of the Rolls viz. 1s. for one piece, and 2s. 6d. for each set of 10 pieces."

In 1909 a solicitor, William Haworth, who had gained access to the 1861 returns at Somerset House in 1895, claimed £8,250 from the Duke of Portland, for finding therein evidence which he claimed would dispose of the allegation that Thomas Charles Druce was the fifth Duke of Portland. "What!?", Mr. Justice Darling said, "For going to Somerset House and looking at a few sets of papers!".

Yours sincerely  
Anthony J. Camp

Director, Society of Genealogists, 14 Charterhouse Buildings, London EC1M 7BA

## A New LPS Supplement

# POPULATION STUDIES FROM PARISH REGISTERS

A Selection of Readings from Local Population Studies  
with an introduction by Michael Drake

A selection of contributions from LPS compiled around a series of important topics: Marriage, Baptism, Burial, Migration and Area Studies. It brings together some of the most valuable items to have appeared in LPS during the last sixteen years.

Michael Drake's introduction outlines some of the basic procedures of parish register analysis and identifies the pitfalls and difficulties which can so easily trap the unwary.

252 pages including an index. Soft cover. ISBN 0 9503951 7X.

**Population Studies from Parish Registers** can be obtained from booksellers or direct from Mrs. M. Ballington, Tawney House, Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 3BT. Price **£6.00** (plus **70p** postage and packing).

Paid-up members of the **Local Population Studies Society** can purchase **Population Studies from Parish Registers** at the special price of **£5.00** (plus **70p** postage and packing).