THE MID-WHARFEDALE LOCAL HISTORY RESEARCH GROUP
PARISH REGISTER OCCUPATION PROJECT

A Comparison between the Craven Muster Roll and Parish Registers.

The Mid-Wharfedale Local History Research Group has been recording occupations shown in Yorkshire parish registers (see LPS nos 38 & 39); one concern frequently expressed in group discussions was whether the occupations in the baptism register really reflected the occupational structure of the community as a whole. It is not usually possible to test this but an opportunity arose to do so in the Craven area where a Muster Roll has survived from 1803 (The Craven Muster Roll 1803, North Yorkshire County Record Office, Publication No. 9, 1976) and we had reasonably good coverage of baptism registers for the decade 1800-9.

Since the Muster Roll recorded men between the ages of seventeen and fifty-five at one date and the baptismal registers recorded a decade of fathers, a comparison of numbers would not be relevant but a comparison of percentages would be significant.

We divided occupations into three broad categories: Land, Non-Agricultural and Labourers. The results are shown in the histogram (fig. 1). The percentages in each group are very close indeed in the largest parish, Skipton, which included both the town and a large rural hinterland and had, as a previous study showed, received many long-distance migrants (Long and Maltby, LPS 24, pp 13-25). The two next largest parishes, Addingham and Silsden, both industrialised villages, show all six comparisons within 10 per cent of each other. Addingham’s non-agricultural workers were predominantly engaged in textiles while at Silsden there was a mixture of textiles and nailmaking.

Greater divergences arise in some of the smaller parishes. In four out of six comparisons which differ by more than 10 per cent the divergence is in the percentage of labourers, a class which would probably include many unmarried men. Similarly, the considerable number of servants recorded in the Muster Roll but hardly represented at all in the registers would account for some differences.

The chapelry of Bolton Abbey is an interesting case (fig. 1). The Muster Roll shows an even spread across the three categories but the baptismal register shows a different distribution which can mainly be accounted for by the circumstance that a part of the chapelry lay outside the boundaries of Craven on the eastern side of the river Wharfe and that this part included much of the township of Beamsley. We know that a cotton mill existed here by 1818; it may well have begun in the previous decade since there are cotton spinners in the register at this date though it is possible that they might have worked in Addingham.
Aggregate comparisons are also close as shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Muster Roll No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Parish Registers No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Agric.</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>1723</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It will be seen that on the whole the Muster Roll and the baptismal registers show very similar occupational structures thus encouraging belief in the validity of the figures obtained from the parish register study.

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