

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.

The expanding Prideaux population

Dear Sir

Readers of my article in **LPS** 36,^{*} 1986, may like to know how my attempts at estimating the Prideaux population turned out. To some extent they illustrate beginner's luck, for at some vital dates I obtained the right result for the wrong reasons.

While my count of telephone subscribers in England proved a useful guide, I was greatly misled by not having made a more systematic survey of those living overseas. To my surprise there are more than 200 Prideauxs listed in the USA, more than 150 in Australia, and about 40 in Canada, New Zealand and South Africa.

I drew attention to more than 20 spelling variants, but there are more than 40 now recorded. Of these the early version of PRIDDIS has survived, so that more than 50 members of the clan (including a few PRIDDICES) are listed in that form in directories in 1988. They are mostly, I think, descended from the east Devon branch of which one family obstinately refused to conform to the EAUX convention in the early nineteenth century at a time when all others did so. As a result of this oversight on my part, together with my ignorance of the number living outside this country, I based my back-projections on a figure of a thousand population derived from a supposed list of 300. There is now a global total of over 700 people listed, and it is unlikely that the clan numbers much less than 2,200. Using this as a base I should have estimated a population of about 150 in the year 1550, and expected to find a score of households.

There were in fact 18 or 19 households by the end of Elizabeth's reign, not 12 or 13 as I had thought. There were nearly twice as many by the eve of the Civil War, but by 1705 not more than 38 families can be found whose children are born in the eighteenth century. Far from the gentry families being more prolific in the seventeenth century, the civil unrest took such toll of their numbers that their expansion was arrested. As a result there were only 49 households visible by 1805, very close to my guesstimate, made on false premises, that there would

be some fifty collateral family units! They probably represent 350-400 individuals, to whom must be added childless couples and unmarried adults. The increasing mobility which can be noticed from 1790 onwards, to be followed by emigration overseas after 1840, made the tracing of pedigrees increasingly difficult; but the rapid expansion of population is clearly visible, more marked overseas than in the home country. I did not attempt to carry my study beyond 1880.

Yours faithfully
Roy Prideaux

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* R. Prideaux, 'Descending lines and the search for connections in an expanding population', LPS 36, 1986, pp. 8-18.

A family affair

Dear Sir

Whilst carrying out research at the Essex Record Office in Chelmsford I came across the following entry in the Epping Union Board of Guardians Minute Book for the 5th June 1840 (ref G/EM 3). This concerns the governor of the union workhouse and his wife, also the matron, who had been newly appointed to their respective positions at the end of April 1840. The entry reads:

Also it was resolved that it be communicated to the [Poor Law] Commissioners that since the appointment of Benj Goode Miller & wife to the Office of Govenor & Matron of the Union Workhouse, it has been ascertained that his said Wife was the Widow of his own Nephew who was the son of his late Sister - And Consequently the Marriage is void *ab initio* - and to obtain their Opinion as to the Course proper for the Guardians to pursue.

A second minute dated a week later directs the Clerk to write to the Poor Law Commissioner. Their reply must have been received within a week for the minutes of the following weeks meeting (19/6/1840) record that the appointments were withdrawn. The matter did not rest there since the minutes of June 26 and July 7 note the Board's refusal to allow Benjamin Miller any remuneration.

This issue clearly illustrates that marriage within the prohibited degrees was not just a matter of concern to the ecclesiastical authorities. For those who may wish to follow-up the matter more closely a further account of Mr Miller and (said) wife should appear in the Poor Law Commissioners in-letter books housed at Kew (PRO MH12/3479).

Yours faithfully
Elizabeth Sellers

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