

# A GUIDE TO EASTER BOOKS AND RELATED PARISH LISTINGS

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## Introduction

In 1735 the compiler of a terrier of the lands and dues belonging to the Rector of St Laurence, Ludlow noted that 'every householder within the parish ought to pay yearly (at Easter) one penny smoke and one penny garden; every Master tradesman to pay yearly twelve pence, every journeyman six pence, every servant male or female (above the age of sixteen years) receiving wages, to pay six pence, every day labourer four pence, and every other person whomsoever (above the age of sixteen) two pence'.<sup>1</sup> Whilst the exact amount contributed by each communicant and the methods for collecting it varied from one parish to another, this Easter tithing system was a crucial part of the parish financial system and has left behind it a remarkable class of documents known as Easter Books, or, less commonly, as Paschal or Easter Rolls. The earliest date from the mid-sixteenth century, the latest run until 1836, the year of the Tithe Commutation Act.<sup>2</sup> This article is intended to provide a brief description of Easter Books, the ways in which they are compiled, where they can be found and to note some of their uses. An annotated list of Easter Books known to the author will follow in the next issue of **Local Population Studies**.

## The tithe system

In order to appreciate the significance of Easter Books we need to be aware of the complexity of the tithing system.<sup>3</sup> It involved a number of different collections, some of which were the prerogative of the rector, the institution or individual who had the right of patronage, and some the prerogative of the minister. Traditionally the latter derived his income from fees, mandatory offerings, of which the most important was the small sum of two pence or a groat collected from every communicant at Easter, and from tithes. There were three different kinds of tithe. The best known are 'praedial tithes' which were due on crops and a major part of which were collected by the rector or his agents. Tithes were also due on livestock, milk, eggs and garden produce. These 'mixed tithes' were collected by the priest. He also had a right to the 'personal tithe' which was assessed on the profits of trade and crafts or on wages and was generally collected with the Easter offering.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1** An extract from Ludlow Easter Book, 1725-34

[illegible]

**Source:** Shropshire Record Office 2881/1/78. I should like to thank Revd J. Baulch the incumbent of Ludlow parish for granting permission for this page of the Easter Book to be reproduced

Tithes on crops and livestock formed a major part of the rural clergy's income, whilst privy tithes were particularly important in towns and especially in urban parishes where agriculture did not play a major part in the economy. However, as inflation rose from the early sixteenth century onwards the amount due from this source dwindled. Moreover it became increasingly difficult to assess how much each individual owed and in some towns a simpler system of fixed payments was adopted. In Ludlow payments were graded according to status, the master tradesman paying ten pence in addition to the basic Easter duty of 2d, his dependants and day labourers contributing smaller sums. A similar scheme operated in St John's parish, Chester. The parish élite paid 'xii d. for pryvie tythes, iiii d. for four offeringe dayes, i d. for a garden, i d. for smoke', and varying amounts for the other members of their households. Meanwhile 'handy trades and laboringe men' paid only 4d for their personal tithes or, as it was termed 'for the hand'.<sup>5</sup> However, the incorporation of an amount which varied according to the value of the individual's property was more common than the system in St John's. In Coventry, for instance, it was agreed in 1538 that the inhabitants were to be tithed at the rate of twelve pence for every 'tenn shillings rent by year of all and every house and houses, ships, warehouses, sellars and stables' with a slightly lower rate for dyehouses, kilns, brewhouses and malhouses, whilst in the parish of St Margaret, Leicester, 'every house under £10 a year pays one shilling, every house under £20 pays two shillings and six pence, another one shillinge in every five pounds by ancient custom'.<sup>6</sup> A similar element on housing must also have been included with the personal tithe in Ludlow for many of the householders paid slightly more than the sum of twelve pence referred to in the memorandum of 1735.<sup>7</sup>

To facilitate the collection of tithes and offerings, and to ensure that everyone paid the correct amount, the officials responsible compiled a variety of notebooks and ledgers. In some parishes one ledger was used to list all the annual payments to the church including the fixed Easter duty and praedial and mixed tithes. Elsewhere one finds ledgers devoted to tithes or others which simply recorded Easter offerings or the fixed duty and the privy tithe. Most of the examples mentioned in this article fall into the last category. Some of the ledgers just list the names of the contributors and their respective payments. Others are very detailed.

### **The collection of information**

To explain exactly how the system worked and to illustrate the type of information which we might expect to find in an Easter Book let us return to Ludlow. The town is unusual, both because of the number of Easter Books which survive, there being over eighty available between 1717 and 1835, and because of the meticulous way in which they were drawn up. As figure 1 illustrates all the householders in the four city wards were listed in alphabetical order with their wives, servants and any children over sixteen or relatives and lodgers who lived with them. These dependants were named and their relationship to the head was also given in most cases. If the householder took in lodgers they would be noted last.<sup>8</sup> Their names were slightly indented so that if they were not actually described as sojourners, the practice during the

1720s, their status can be assumed. In the right hand margin the clerks noted the amount owed by the group with ticks to indicate payment. The sum in question was sometimes broken down into its component elements, with a figure for each member of the household. However, although each individual could be presented in court for non-payment, in practice the householder was responsible for the members of his family and one total is often given for the group.<sup>9</sup> This explains why some Easter Books only list householders. In the parish of St John's in Chester for instance, the householder was expected to pay 'ii d. for every servant' and unusually, 'nothings for childr and prentizes'. The compilers of the Easter Books rarely noted these younger people.<sup>10</sup>

Occasionally the payments of servants were recorded in a separate ledger or on another page in the Easter Book, as was the case in Ledbury and in St Ewen's, Bristol.<sup>11</sup> Such lists make it clear that, although no longer assessed on a tenth of their earnings, servants could be rated according to their status and whether or not they took wages or were simply given bed and board. In Ledbury and Bristol the wage earner paid the standard duty of 2d and an additional sum for his or her wages. As a terrier dating from 1712 illustrates, in St Margaret's, Leicester the system was even more complex. 'Every man servant pays twelve pence, every maid servant six pence and every apprentice two pence, paid by the master or mistress, all other servants receiving wages pay for themselves'. Meanwhile, 'every son or daughter betwixt the age of sixteen and twenty-one pays two pence, and after twenty-one every son pays twelve pence and every daughter six pence'.<sup>12</sup>

The alphabetical arrangement of the Ludlow lists is unusual for the collection of Easter duties and privy tithes, which began shortly before Easter, was normally organised in circuit fashion, the officials going round the streets noting down the payments household by household. They evidently followed the same route every year and were therefore able to use earlier ledgers to facilitate the collection as the occasional note about someone who had recently left or arrived in the parish makes clear.

In large parishes it took some time to visit each household and it was often necessary to make several trips to deal with arrears.<sup>13</sup> As time went on it became harder and harder to persuade people to contribute and parish records often include lists of offenders whose debts went back several years.<sup>14</sup> In Ludlow not only does one find a record of defaulters at the back of the earlier ledgers, but during the 1720s the clerk often indicated why a person had failed to pay his duty. Such marginal notes help one to pinpoint the poor and those who failed to attend church or, in one unique year, the families which had been hit by smallpox.<sup>15</sup> Other additional material which one might expect to find in an Easter Book includes notes about the payments for bread and wine and lists of outsiders who attended the parish church at Easter, for, like the parson of Holy Trinity in Chester, the priest was entitled to demand an offering from 'strangers which soworne but for a tyme in the parish'.<sup>16</sup> In several of the Easter Books from the parish of Madeley in Shropshire, illustrated in figure 2, sojourners and workmen who only lived in the parish for a short time were noted separately and in St Thomas, Salisbury the offerings of 'such as receauide the communion and not doune vppon the Easter Book' were itemised in the

**Figure 2** An extract from the Madeley Easter Book, 1646-1760

**Source:** **Shropshire Record Office** 2280/2/1. The document is reproduced with the kind permission of the incumbent of the parish.

So far I have concentrated on urban Easter Books, ledgers which generally only recorded the Easter offering and personal tithes.<sup>17</sup> The records for a rural parish are likely to be far more complex. For instance, in the Burton Easter Dues Book of 1784 to 1804 payments were laid out in columns beginning with the Easter offering, the householders in this community evidently paying for their dependants, and a penny on gardens, small sums for bees and livestock and finally a tithe on crops.<sup>18</sup> A similar system operated in Dalton in Cumberland, where the clerk recorded 'smoke' and 'garth' payments for hearths and gardens, and tithes on ploughs, bees and wax and various animals. Meanwhile, in St Just, a Cornish parish with a mixed economy, tithes were not only due on agricultural produce but also on fish and tin. From a very detailed list of the 'Lawdable Customes' of the parish which opens the Easter Book we know that these collections were made at various times of the year and that the parishioner was responsible for bringing his tithes to the chancel or to a stone in the church known as the 'vannte stone'. Here too we know that servants paid four pence for every 6s 8d that they earned in addition to the standard Easter duty of two pence for a married person and a penny for every single person.<sup>19</sup>

## Related sources

Most of the records listed in the appendix to be published in the following issue of **Local Population Studies** could be described as Easter Books or Tithe Books, but it is also worth mentioning briefly several other types of parish listing, which although compiled for slightly different purposes contain similar types of information and have similar applications. Easter was not merely the time when the clergy collected their Easter duties and tithe eggs. It was also one of the three occasions during the year when it was mandatory to attend communion.<sup>20</sup> In the larger parish the church would have been crowded on Easter Sunday and for a few weeks before and after the festival. Only by issuing communion tokens could the churchwardens check who had attended and who failed to participate. Churchwardens' accounts often contain references to the sale of tokens, and in the parish of St Saviour's in Southwark a series of records was compiled to organise the distribution of tokens.<sup>21</sup> Like Easter Books these listings were arranged topographically with the names of all the householders and notes of the tokens to be allocated to each family. As the tokens were sold the roundsmen crossed them off. They also noted newcomers and people who had moved away or recently died. Although Token Books like those from St Saviour's are rare, similar systems were evidently adopted elsewhere.<sup>22</sup>

The provision of bread and wine at Easter, another parish responsibility, also entailed a house to house collection which was sometimes recorded in a separate ledger. The system was well organised in Salisbury where the parishioners from St Edmund's agreed in 1603 that 'the bread and wine shalbe gathered in three severall circuits', and the churchwardens in neighbouring St Thomas's drew up at least one account book to record the payments. Churchwardens' accounts elsewhere also include notes concerning the provision of bread and wine.<sup>23</sup> Whilst the Easter tithing system should not be confused

with the collections for the communion elements or for token money, for the latter were the responsibility of the churchwardens and did not normally involve either the priest or the rector, in some parishes the different collections must have coincided.<sup>24</sup>

The 'communion silver', as it was sometimes called, was just one of the payments which the parishioner was expected to make towards the upkeep of his local church and the maintenance of the clergy. From the age of sixteen upwards, the parishioners were supposed to contribute towards the purchase of items like books and candles and could be assessed at periodic intervals for church repairs. The parish also paid the wages of the clerk and the sexton, and in 'unbeneficed livings', the priest's stipend.<sup>25</sup> Churchwardens' accounts often refer to collections for wages and in some parishes the historian may be fortunate enough to find the Rate Books which were used to assess each individual for repairs or for the purchase of a bell or an extension to the church. The churchwardens in Chester were particularly meticulous in their record keeping and a large number of 'leys' or assessments survive for the nine city parishes. In Holy Trinity, St Michael's and St Oswald's, for instance, one finds long series of what were described as Quarterage or Morning Prayer lists. These record the amount collected for the clerk's and minister's wages, one list sometimes being used several years running with notches to indicate payments in the margins.<sup>26</sup>

Being governed by local custom, rather than by statute, the organisation of these levies varied considerably from place to place, and the records they generated were normally less comprehensive than Easter Books, for they were confined to householders and included fewer poorer inhabitants. Nevertheless, they share certain features in common with Easter Books and can be used for similar purposes.<sup>27</sup> Indeed it has been suggested that the Easter Book often acted as an administrative 'master list' for other assessments, many Rate Books and Wage Books also being compiled topographically.<sup>28</sup>

Not all tithe documents take the form of nominal lists. Indeed a number of the Easter lists referred to in the Appendix were found in Tithe Books or general Memoranda Books.<sup>29</sup> Such documents include a lot of useful information concerning rural life. The Oundle Easter lists for instance are mixed with notes of the payments made to labourers who worked on the vicar's land and the amounts of ale produced by their wives. Other books mention disputes between the incumbent and his parishioners and include simple totals of tithes collected or in arrears or the number of farms and inhabitants in the parish.<sup>30</sup> It is always worth checking amongst the miscellaneous papers in the Parish Chest for incidental material of this nature, although as it became more convenient to commute tithes for a fixed payment, a trend which increased between the later eighteenth century and the passing of the Tithe Commutation Act in 1836, such documents became less informative.

## The uses of Easter Books

Easter Books have many applications and can be used in conjunction with a number of other records. Unlike most population listings they often survive as part of a series and can therefore be used to study the turnover of households within a community and to check for abnormalities caused by adverse conditions. Long series like those from Dalton, which date from 1673 to 1765, or from Ludlow and Oundle where over fifty ledgers survive, are unusual. But if one is fortunate to find a run lasting for a decade or more, and if street names are given, it is possible to study the developmental cycle of the household, noting how often property passed from man to wife and father to son, and to trace people's movements within the parish.<sup>31</sup>

It is obviously far easier to carry out topographical surveys in an urban parish where the collectors moved from house to house and named each street, than in a rural parish of dispersed settlements like Burton or Penwith.<sup>32</sup> Where all communicants are recorded, rather than householders only, it can be interesting to compare the structure and stability of the household in different streets. Similar comparisons can be made by using the householder's annual contribution as a guide to social status or correlating the ledgers with records such as tax lists and freemen's registers.

One detail which was not mentioned when discussing the format and compilation of Easter Books was that of occupational status. As the appendix to this article illustrates, in most of the Easter Books analysed such details are sporadic. We may find that occupations are only given for the élite, as in Ledbury, or that a particularly diligent clerk noted occupations one year but not the next, as in St Thomas's in Salisbury. To use Easter Books for occupational surveys one would therefore need to resort to supplementary material. In this respect the Ludlow Easter Books are again remarkable for the clerks consistently recorded the occupational status of most of the householders and quite a number of their dependants. Quite why they should have bothered with this detail is uncertain for the personal tithe was no longer based on the profits of trade. But in Oundle, the only parish to rival Ludlow in this respect, we can see how this element had been modified so that 'every man or woman for their trade pays 13 1/2d yearly, and they that haue two trades pays double for soe much, or 3 trades trible'.<sup>33</sup> In order to pinpoint people with dual occupations the Easter Books were arranged according to trades rather than following the standard circuit format, and ended with lists of the élite, those 'inhabitants that exercise no trade' and of the labouring population. Unfortunately, the latter were only included in the earliest surviving ledgers so, although this is another parish with a remarkably long series of Easter Books, the fact that they do not cover the entire adult community limits their use.

The comprehensiveness of the source is obviously a crucial issue, for one of the most important uses of an Easter Book is to ascertain the size of the community in question by multiplying the number of households or adding in an element for children under communicable age. We cannot go into detail here about the most suitable multipliers, an issue which has been covered elsewhere.<sup>34</sup> However, it is important to note some of the problems which need to be



considered when using Parish Rate Books as a demographic source and to stress that any totals should be treated as rough guides rather than precise estimates. In some ledgers it is not always clear where one household ends and another begins, so unless checks can be made between books or the units are numbered or separated by gaps or brackets, it is probably safer to use the number of communicants as a population guide.

There can be few population listings which do not omit a certain proportion of the community because of error, evasion or deliberate policy. However, in the communities which have been studied using Easter Books comparing different ledgers, suggests that, on the whole, the degree of under-registration was fairly low. Each series needs to be assessed on its own merits and, if possible, compared with other population sources. The greatest care should be taken when dealing with a large, rural parish of widely dispersed settlements. But in an urban parish the local officials perambulated the streets at regular intervals and must have been aware of changes in tenure as householders died or migrated. Possibly they would have had a greater knowledge of the stabler members of the community than of mobile groups such as children, servants and lodgers. But again, where checks have been carried out, the registration of the other communicant members of the household seems to have been fairly reliable.<sup>35</sup> From marginal notes and other evidence one gets the impression that the organisers of the Easter collection took great pains to keep their records as up-to-date as possible. This was certainly true in the large parish of St Michael in Coventry where the late sixteenth century Rate Books include notes of newcomers and where they had come from or of inhabitants who had recently died.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile the incumbent at Ledbury always listed the young people who had recently taken the sacrament for the first time and who, in his parish at least, were only expected to pay half the standard Easter offering.<sup>37</sup>

The care which individual officials took to check up on newcomers was extended to those people who, because of dissenting beliefs or apathy to all forms of religious observance, failed to attend church. Such 'non-attenders' were still conceived of as members of the parish and even if the local officials abandoned the attempt to ensure that they fulfilled their spiritual obligations, they tried diligently to assert their right to collect tithes and offerings from the entire community. In Salisbury, Ludlow and Bristol those who did not take communion were still entered in the Easter Books.<sup>38</sup> In Madeley in Shropshire, the parent parish of the Ironbridge community, the Quaker Abraham Darby and his family appear in many of the surviving Easter Books despite never paying their duties, see figure 2.<sup>39</sup> In other parishes too the very fact that defaulters were listed regularly testifies to the determination to catch all potential rate payers whether they attended church or not.<sup>40</sup>

Although individual cases may reduce our concern about the impact of non-conformity and papism on the coverage of Easter Books, it is hard to generalise, for the strength of the dissenting community varied from place to place and from one date to the next. The Established Church's hold on the population was weakest in towns and in areas characterised by pastoralism and rural industry and it declined in the second half of the nineteenth century as the trend towards separatism and irreligion gathered momentum.<sup>41</sup> When using

some of the later Easter Books it is therefore important to ascertain whether or not there was a flourishing Independent group in the locality and to bear in mind that, in towns in particular, many of the poorer sort never went to church. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the effect of papism also needs to be considered, although at this point many Catholics and Independents were still 'partial-conformists'.<sup>42</sup>

The final issue which needs to be taken into account before using Easter Books as a demographic tool is the coverage of the poor. Here too the evidence suggests that exclusion on the grounds of poverty was not a serious problem. There is also evidence to show that the exclusion of the poor was not a serious problem, for almsmen and the recipients of parish relief were expected to pay their Easter dues and, although occasionally excused payment, would still normally be listed. In the parish of St Martin in Salisbury, it was found that less than 5 per cent of those listed in the 1635 Census of the Poor did not feature in the Easter Books which date from 1635 to 1639, a very low margin of error when one considered that some would have died or left the parish. Similar results were obtained in neighbouring St Thomas's when the 1603 Easter Book was correlated with a list of 123 householders who were given relief during the plague of 1604. Many of the other Easter Books which have been mentioned also include lists of almsmen or indicate pauper status with marginal notes.<sup>43</sup>

Given their wide social coverage, it is interesting to compare the number of communicants per household in the wealthier and poorer parts of a parish, or if data are available, between units headed by people of different occupational or marital status. The study of household structure is, of course, only possible with the more detailed ledgers which record communicants rather than householders only, and cannot hope to be as detailed as studies involving the entire population. Nonetheless some interesting results can be obtained by focusing on the adult population alone. For instance, in Salisbury where the records from two parishes were subjected to close analysis, it was found that there were significant variations between the central market streets and the less densely populated back streets, and that the stability of the household had a significant bearing on its composition.<sup>44</sup>

Whatever one's interests, care needs to be taken when using Easter Books and similar Rate Books. Much depends on the men who actually drew up the ledgers, and before starting to use them one needs to establish how the collection was organised and whether certain sections of the community are likely to be underregistered. It is also important to compare one list with another, for certain officials may have been less diligent than others, and to make as much use of supplementary materials as possible. Easter Books may not be ideal population sources<sup>45</sup> yet the fact that they often survive in serial form and that they include a lot of incidental material means that they can be a very rewarding tool. Moreover, they are far more widely available than some of the population listings which have been exploited by historians in the past.

## Conclusion

Why then is so little known about Easter Books? To answer this question we need to return to the subject of parish finance. At the beginning of the article it was pointed out that some tithes were collected by the rector and others, including the personal tithe and the Easter offering, by the incumbent. However, in practice the system was rather more complex. In some parishes the rector collected everything and gave the priest a regular stipend instead. Such 'unbeneficed' livings were particularly common in towns. In towns too the corporation or the vestry often assumed responsibility for the collection of parish rates and the payment of the minister's wages. The system was very flexible and what was true of one parish or one incumbency was not necessarily true of the next. As a result Easter Books are to be found in a variety of repositories and one needs to ascertain the officials in charge of the collection in order to locate the source. Sometimes Easter Books are found amongst estate papers, the Oundle ledgers, which were organised by the rector's agents, being a case in point. Sometimes they form part of the parish archive along with churchwarden's accounts, as was true in Salisbury and in Chester. In Leicester, however, where the Corporation held the advowson (the right of patronage), and in Coventry, where one of the incumbents during the seventeenth century arranged that 'hee might without trouble of collectinge or gathering his tythes ... have and receive from the mayor ... £100 yearly as an annual rent', the Easter Books were found amongst the city records.<sup>46</sup> The fact that such records may be known under a variety of names and that they vary considerably in content and compilation adds to the problems of tracking them down. As the list in the following issue of *LPS* indicates, it has already been possible to find a significant number of urban Easter Books and a limited number from rural parishes. But undoubtedly many more of these interesting and immensely valuable records must survive.<sup>47</sup>

### Acknowledgements

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The following abbreviations have been used in the accompanying notes:

BCRL	Bristol City Reference Library
CCRO	Chester City Record Office
CDRO	Chester Diocesan Record Office
CRO	Coventry Record Office
CMRO	Cumbria Record Office
DRO	Durham Record Office
GDRO	Gloucester Diocesan Record Office
GL	Guildhall Library
GLRO	Greater London Record Office
HWRO	Hereford and Worcester Record Office
LRO	Leicester Record Office
LCRO	Lancashire Record Office
NRO	Northamptonshire Record Office

## NOTES

1. **Ludlow Parish Registers**, vol.13, part 2, pp.712-4.
2. For more details on Easter Books and the origins of the system see S.J. Wright, 'Easter books and parish rate books: a new source for the urban historian', **Urban History Yearbook**, 1985, pp.30-45. I am grateful to Pinter Press for permission to use material from this article. The earliest known examples of Easter Rolls are found in the churchwarden's accounts for Holy Trinity, Chester. Details concerning the lists and the other sources mentioned in the following discussion, including references, are given in the Appendix to be printed in the following issue of **Local Population Studies**. It is emphasised that the list is by no means exhaustive, but includes records which were discovered by the author during the course of her research. She would be interested to learn of the whereabouts of similar listings.
3. An introduction to the tithing system can be found in C. Hill, **Economic problems of the Church from Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament**, 1956, Chapter 5 and N. Evans, 'Tithe Books as a source for the local historian', **The Local Historian**, 14, 1980, pp.24-7.
4. Wright, 'Easter books', pp.30-2.
5. Details concerning the arrangements in St John's were appended to the Easter Rolls which date from 1670 to 1730. Their survival seems to be due to the fact that they were used in a local tithe case. The smoke penny had its origins in a tithe upon firewood, and whilst more common in rural parishes, was customary in a number of towns. In Exeter, for instance, a penny was charged for 'smoke' on houses with a kitchen, chimney and hall and a half penny for poorer dwellings. W. MacCaffrey, **Exeter, 1540-1640**, 1978, p.179.
6. T. Sharpe, **Illustrative papers on the history and antiquities of the City of Coventry**, 1871, pp.6-7. **LRO**, 18D62 13a.
7. A similar system evidently operated in many other towns, Wright, 'Easter books', p.33.
8. As the designation of lodgers in population listings is very unusual the Ludlow lists are particularly valuable. For an analysis of the group see S.J. Wright, 'Sojourners and lodgers in a provincial town', forthcoming in **Urban History Yearbook**, 1990. Sojourners are also noted in some of the Easter books from Madeley in Shropshire. See also Appendix in next issue of **Local Population Studies**.
9. S.J. Wright, 'Confirmation, catechism and communion: the rôle of the young in the pre-Reformation Church', in S.J. Wright, (ed) **Parish, church and people: local studies in lay religion**, 1988, pp.217-8.
10. Elsewhere the standard Easter duty of 2d was levied on children.
11. Wright, 'Easter books', p.33. In St Ewen's the offerings of servants and youths were possibly collected in the church when they took communion, the lists of their payments being prefixed with various dates during the Easter season. Special collections for younger communicants were also taken in St Michael's, Chester and St Martin's, Leicester. St Michael's Churchwardens' accounts, 1558-1678, **CDRO** P65/8/1 ffs.101, 60, 62, 87; T. North, (ed) **The accounts of the churchwardens of St Martin's, Leicester, 1459-1844**, 1844, p.117.
12. **LRO** 18D62 13a. In some parishes the fact that the householder paid for non wage-earners meant that journeymen and maid servants were included in the lists, but not apprentices. In St Thomas, Salisbury, for instance, the latter only appear in any number in three of the Easter Books which survive between 1574 and 1607 and even then they were generally numbered rather than named.
13. In Southwark the collection of tithes and delivery of communion tokens to 1442 households took over forty days. For details of the arrangements in this parish see J. Boulton, **Neighbourhood and society: a London suburb in the seventeenth century**, 1987, pp.14-21.
14. In Salisbury a number of ledgers from the parish of St Thomas included lists of 'casualties', defaulters who might eventually be taken to court if they persistently withheld their tithes and in St John's Chester notches were appended for every year unpaid.
15. The smallpox epidemic occurred in 1726.
16. J.R. Beresford, 'The Churchwardens' accounts of Holy Trinity, Chester, 1532-1633', **Journal of Chester and North Wales Archaeological and Historic Society**, 38, 1985, pp.170-1.
17. If the parish included part of the neighbouring rural hinterland one might also expect to find

references to tithes on crops and livestock. In Ledbury, for instance, the vicar was entitled to tithes on eggs, honey and wax, vegetables and fruit, hemp, wool and flax and in the Easter Books for Oundle and St Mary's, Leicester certain householders were noted for a tithe on livestock.

18. Where a name is followed by a 'P' this probably indicates pauper status. The numbers by several other householders could be an indication of the number of years they were in arrears.
19. J. Taylor, (ed) 'The Easter Books of St Just in Penwith, 1588 to 1596', **Journal of the Royal Institute of Cornwall**, 20, pp.218-21.
20. Wright, **Parish, church and people**, pp.217, 133. Statutes of the Realm Acts of Uniformity for 1559 and 1593 (1 Eliz. c2 and 35 Eliz. c1 and 2.) and the Ecclesiastical Canons of 1604.
21. The books survive from 1593 to 1643 and in 1620, 1621 and 1622 all communicants were named and numbered. See J. Boulton, p.15. **GLRO** P92/Sav/187-315. In Salisbury the churchwardens' accounts included payments for money spent striking and delivering the tokens. Here each communicant had to notify the clerk of his intention to take communion during the week preceding the service and to pay a halfpenny for a token. The token was then given back at the service. J. Cox, **Churchwardens' Accounts**, 1913, p.100.
22. In St Botolph's Without Aldgate, lists of householders and the tokens issued to them are found in the Parish Daybooks, (GL MS 9234), and the Easter Book for Christchurch, Bristol in 1595 concluded with the note 'there followeth the names of all those yt do receave and hath token', although unfortunately the list itself has not survived.
23. H.J.F. Swayne, **The Churchwardens' Accounts of St Edmund and St Thomas, Sarum, 1443-1702**, (n.d.), p.194. **WRO**, St Thomas Records, 1900, No.65. In Berkhamstead it was agreed in 1601 that 'all single communycants shall paye for ever hereafter towards the charge of the bread and wine at Easter for evrie of themselves 1d and all the rest of the parishioners according to theire abillities' and in Spelisbury in 1575 the accountants noted the decision that every communicant should pay a farthing for the communion elements 'not only against Easter, but to serve for every month in ye yere for ye same purpose'. J. Cox, pp.99-100.
24. Certainly the Easter Book could be used to indicate the communicants who had 'not recyved', as was true in Christchurch, Bristol in 1558 and in Ludlow during the 1720s, and the compiler of the Ludlow Easter Books also noted money collected for bread and wine at different dates.
25. Churchwardens relied not only on mandatory assessments, but also on voluntary contributions to finance their work. Parochial responsibilities are discussed by C. Burgess in "'A fond thing vainly imagined". an essay on Purgatory and pious motive in late medieval England', in Wright, (ed) **Parish, church and people**, pp.72-5, and by S.J. Wright, 'Catechism, confirmation and communion', *ibid.*, p.218.
26. See N. Alldridge, 'Loyalty and identity in Chester parishes 1540-1640', in Wright, (ed) **Parish, church and people**, pp.91-4, for a discussion of the organisation of parish affairs in Chester. Another type of listing used in Chester and elsewhere was the pew rent book.
27. Alldridge's detailed work on Chester illustrates the point. 'House and household in Restoration Chester', **Urban History Yearbook**, 1983, pp.39-52 and 'The population profile of an early modern town: Chester 1547-1728', **Annales de Demographie**, 1987, pp.115-31.
28. N. Alldridge, 'Loyalty and identity', p.92.
29. This was true of the lists for St Martin's, Salisbury which date from 1634-1640; the Daventry Easter Book of 1732 and the Easter Silver list from Bishops Stortford. See the Appendix for details of these sources.
30. Dr Whitemans' notes that incumbents often referred to Tithe Books when asked the number of families in their parish. Anne Whiteman, (ed), **The Compton Census of 1676**, 1989, p.xliv.
31. S.J. Wright, 'Family life and society in sixteenth and early seventeenth century Salisbury', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester, 1982 and 'The elderly and the bereaved in eighteenth century Ludlow', in M. Pelling and R.M. Smith (eds) **Life, death and the elderly: social attitudes and responses in the past**, forthcoming.
32. Although in Penwith the farms are actually named so it is easier to pinpoint where each family lived.
33. **NRO**, Smith of Oundle Papers Box 515/8, 1650 Easter Book.
34. On household multipliers see T. Arkell, 'Multiplying factors for estimating population totals from the Hearth Tax', **Local Population Studies**, 28, 1982, pp.51-7 and for estimates of the proportion of the population under 15 at different dates, E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, **The population history of England 1541-1871**, 1981, pp. 217, 528 The age of first communion is discussed by Wright in **Parish, church and people**, pp.213-5.
35. Wright 'Easter books', pp.36-7. In Ludlow the population totals derived from the Easter Books are very stable throughout the eighteenth century.
36. Although the records in question were described as rate books it is clear from their format that they were Easter Books.
37. In Ludlow newcomers to the sacrament were listed in the 1720s, the ages of these younger

communicants ranging between fourteen and twenty-two. I am grateful to the members of the Ludlow Historic Research Group for help on this issue. In St Margaret's, Leicester marginal notes giving ages suggest that young people were sometimes rated erroneously.

38. See note 24.
39. **SRO**, 2280/2/1-11, Madeley Easter Books, 1646-1760.
40. In St John's in Chester it is clear that by the later seventeenth century over a third of the householders had not paid when the Easter Book was handed to the rector.
41. E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, pp.89-96.
42. Occasional conformity and the various reasons for attending a number of churches are discussed in Whiteman, pp.xxxvi-xli; and by J. Triffitt, in 'Believing and belonging, Church behaviour in Plymouth and Dartmouth, 1710-1730', in Wright, S.J. (ed), **Parish, church and people**, pp.177-83. Dr Whiteman's work is also a very useful guide to the strength of non-conformity in the seventeenth century.
43. A more detailed discussion of the coverage of the poor is included in Wright, 'Easter Books', p.37; and in N. Alldridge, 'Loyalty and identity', pp.93-4.
44. See Wright 'Thesis' and 'Household structure and residential mobility in early modern Salisbury', University of Leicester, Department of English Local History, Occasional Paper, forthcoming.
45. The criteria for an ideal population listing are discussed in P. Laslett, 'The study of social structure from listings of inhabitants', in E.A. Wrigley, (ed) **An introduction to historical demography**, 1966, pp.160-208.
46. H. Stocks, **Records of the Borough of Leicester, 1603-1688**, pp.67-8, 344, 354, 397, and **LRO**, BR 111/8/24. **CRO**, 'Corporation Ecclesiastical Records, Tithe Box 2, Lawsuit Rev. W. Pantin v Corporation, 1638.
47. Easter Books are often mentioned in churchwarden's accounts so that even if they have not actually survived it is clear that this method of collecting and recording the Easter collection was fairly standard.