

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.

An issue of quality: two views

Dear Sir

You asked readers for more letters. Perhaps you will not entirely welcome this one.

Gratifying though it is that the *LPS* calendar now after many years appears to be synchronised with that of the rest of the world, the effort to keep pace with the present seems to have had a deleterious effect on the quality of one of the most prized and long running items: News from the Cambridge Group.

The gist of the news was certainly exciting: at last some hard demographic data about the twentieth century. The manner of its telling left something to be desired: in presentation, in what was included and in what was omitted.

The typographical error count appeared to be higher in this part of the issue than in any other. Could it be that the spelling of "Bethanal Green" is due to an insufficiency in the "availability of relavent" proof readers? (I have used double quotes as *LPS* technology seems incapable of distinguishing between single quotes and apostrophes.)

I cannot help feeling that this contribution, frustratingly fascinating though it is, has not been scrutinised with the same editorial care as other contributions to the issue. Perhaps, to be charitable, the "hard slog" of the "very time consuming and laborious process" has so enervated the sloggers that they had no energy left to describe their work in the way one would expect from a long-established and well respected research department. I can only hope that the next announcement (sic) of results will come with a more helpful commentary and analysis.

In case you were wondering, I found the rest of the issue well up to the usual high standards and as informative and interesting as ever!

Yours faithfully
Derek Turner

29 Beech Road, Thame, Oxfordshire OX9 2AN.

Editors' note – We do, in fact, welcome this letter, after all it does not harm to be reminded of our failings from time to time. Derek Turner is right to point out the typing mistakes in the various news items of LPS 43, and is correct in thinking that these were the result of rushing final copy to the printer without the provision of sufficient proof reading. We are very much aware of the problem of keeping to schedules and are doing our best to solve it. Concerning the project on twentieth century household data described in the News from the Cambridge Group of LPS 43, since this project utilizes census data post-dating 1881, it is covered by both the Confidentiality Act and the Official Secrets Act. As a consequence of this, although the Cambridge Group can and will publish research findings from the data, they are not at liberty to discuss the creation or preparation of the data files.

Dear Sir

I am inspired to write in response to your recent call for letters (LPS Autumn 1989). As one of your overseas readers, I am sometimes concerned that LPS may be too narrowly viewed as, literally, "local population studies". The articles carried are excellent pieces on the detective work required to understand local population change. However, the studies are more than that: they are often the building blocks for understanding national population movements.

For my work, the studies have other uses in teaching and speeches (yes, even in North America!). Often LPS articles are exactly what the doctor ordered, i.e., concrete, specific examples of demographic-social change and, perhaps, documenting the range of human demographic behaviour. Portrayals of fertility, marriage, and family behaviour (and its marvellous variation) over the centuries come alive in the issues of LPS.

The "grass roots" nature of LPS and the Society has created a treasure of local history that some of us in other countries can only view with envy and admiration.

Yours faithfully
Edward T. Pryor

Director General, Census and Demographic Statistics Branch, Statistics Canada,
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0T6.

Literacy in France

Dear Sir

In Michael Heffernan's introduction to his article in LPS 42, he states that, 'males were 10 to 20 per cent more literate than their female contemporaries' (p.32). This, surely, is misleading since he is really comparing the number who were literate, not degrees of literacy. Consequently, the statement should read as follows: 'when comparing men and women, 10 to 20 per cent more men than women were literate.' However, the percentage calculated are also given to misinterpretation. For example, Table 1 of the article (p.33) states that in the period 1816-20 54 per cent of males were literate, compared to 34 per cent of females. This difference could be expressed as twenty percentage points, but less ambiguously 59 per cent more men were literate than women (ie. $54 - 34 \times 100 = 159$).

Yours faithfully
Brian Sheldrake

26 Bowood Road, Swindon, Wiltshire SN1 4LP.

Editors' note – General problems relating to the use of percentage calculations are discussed in a separate note in this issue of LPS.

A Query about Chapelries

Dear Sir

With reference to Professor Hair's query about chapelries (LPS 42 Spring 1989, p.58), I have recently been looking at the registers of Kirkby Stephen. Kirkby Stephen is a large parish of 3,522 acres consisting of eight townships and two chapelries. The registers begin in 1647. Mallerstang is an ancient chapelry, the chapel being rebuilt by Anne, Countess of Pembroke in 1663. The registers begin in 1713. The first book from 1713 to 1813 only contains baptisms. The second book from 1813 to 1882 contains baptisms, marriages and burials. Of the 740 entries in the first book, 39 are illegible as the book has suffered from damp. Of the remaining 710 entries, 461 or 65 per cent also appear in the Kirkby Stephen registers, only 249 or 35 per cent are new entries. The distribution of new entries varies over time. From 1713 to 1728 there are 103 entries of which only 6 are also in the Kirkby Stephen registers. From 1729 to 1761 there are 200 entries, half of which are new and half duplicates. From 1762 to 1813 there are 407 entries, of which 52 or 12 per cent are new. Thus the proportion of entries which only appear in the Mallerstang registers falls drastically over time. The position is further complicated as there are some entries in the Kirkby Stephen registers relating to Mallerstang which do not appear in the Mallerstang registers.

With the second register a change takes place. The baptisms and burials which appear in the Mallerstang registers do not appear in the Kirkby Stephen registers, although there are still a few entries in the Kirkby Stephen registers

relating to Mallerstang which do not appear in the Mallerstang registers. It is different with the marriages. There are forty-one entries from 1831 to 1851, which is as far as I have gone and, except for six these are all in the Kirkby Stephen registers. In these six cases it is stated that one of the marriage partners came from another parish. It may be that the Mallerstang chapel was not authorised to solemnise marriages and that the incumbent recorded the marriages he knew of where ever they took place.

It follows from the Mallerstang registers that it is not safe to do a family reconstruction from a chapel register or from the registers of the mother church alone. Neither would it be correct to count the registers and add the totals together. How far the Mallerstang registers are typical of early chapel registers remains to be discovered.

Yours faithfully
Arthur Duxbury

Firbank, 48 High Street, Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria CA17 4SH.

An LPS Supplement

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