BIRTHPLACE ACCURACY IN THE CENSUSES OF SIX KENTISH PARISHES 1851-81

Audrey Perkyns

Audrey Perkyns is a former graduate and research scholar of Royal Holloway College, London University. Having been compelled by disability to retire early from teaching she used the unexpected windfall of time to take up more seriously the local population studies she had become interested in.

'The information relating to birthplaces in the census is of considerable importance. ... Despite its importance very little work has been done on the accuracy of this information, especially since there are few other sources to check it against'. Edward Higgs in his recent welcome HMSO handbook cites a few examples of such work: Anderson's work on the population of Preston in two successive censuses showed a 14 per cent discrepancy among the 475 traced; Wrigley's analysis of birthplaces of household heads in Colyton showed a 15.7 per cent discrepancy for male heads and 6 per cent for females. Yasumoto in an article cross-referencing data from censuses and baptism registers for Methley (Yorkshire) found birthplace discrepancies of 8.0 per cent and 6.8 per cent respectively for those found in both the 1851 and 1861 censuses. Anderson points out that many of these discrepancies are minor; some so minor that they represent only a spelling variation and not a change of birthplace at all. Tillott suggests that the birthplace is subject to clerical error rather than anything more serious, pointing especially to inaccuracies arising from the use of dittos. Armstrong cites Anderson's data as the sum total of our knowledge about the reliability of the returns and describes the task of checking against parochial data as possible but laborious.

A study of the total populations of six adjacent Kentish parishes in five successive censuses, 1841-81, has made possible just such an analysis, through cross referencing, though the 1841 data are omitted from this topic because specific birthplaces were not recorded then. The six parishes are Hartlip, Newington, Rainham, Stockbury, Upchurch and Lower Halstow, and their location is shown in Figure 1.

It is difficult to gauge how far these parishes can be regarded as typical. There are certain significant variations among the six. Hartlip and Stockbury remained agricultural backwaters, their percentage population growth 1851-81 being 10 and 5 respectively. On the other hand Rainham, Upchurch and Halstow grew by 133, 173 and 104 per cent respectively, largely because of the development, in response to demand from London, of the brickmaking industry and the transport and service trades which accompanied it. Table 1 shows the percentages of the working population classified respectively as agricultural workers, mining workers and general labourers in each parish in 1851 and 1881. This gives some indication of the effect of the growth of the brickmaking
industry. Newington, with a population growth of 42 per cent, is seen to fall between the places of rapid growth and change and those which remained stagnant.

The two basic means of checking birthplaces by cross-referencing were (a) within the census data themselves and (b) with baptism records where they exist in the six parishes for the census populations. There are two important criteria for the use of baptism records for this purpose: first the baptism must be soon after birth and secondly the crucial datum is not the place where the baptism was registered but the place of residence at the time.

Baptisms have been used as supplementary evidence only if they took place within six to eight months of birth. This interval can sometimes be calculated with certainty because a date of birth or age at baptism is given, though this occurs only in a minority of cases; it can sometimes be inferred from ages
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<th>(5) 4 as % of 1</th>
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Notes: * = All groups of workers include employers and employees, male and female, all ages. AG = agricultural classification. M = mining classification (mostly brickmakers). IS = general labourers.

 recorded through successive censuses or the age sequence of siblings, for instance. The number of late baptisms varies between parishes. Late baptisms have been excluded from the figures for baptisms given in Table 2. This shows that the percentage of the total populations found to have a usable baptism record in one of the six parishes is quite high, while the percentage of those born in one of the six and having a baptism record there is very high. Indeed it is probably even higher than this table suggests since some wives whose maiden names are unknown might have been baptised there.

While baptisms can be useful additional evidence for those whose birthplace can be checked by multiple appearances in the censuses, they are crucial for those who appear there only once (single entries). Table 3 shows the number of baptismal records available for cross-checking birthplace accuracy for single entries. A record of the place of residence at the time of baptism was not required until after 1812, so no earlier baptisms have been included in these figures for single entries if there is a discrepancy between birthplace and place of baptism (there are only 7 such). In all but seventy-nine (3.4 per cent) of the 2,351 single entries with baptisms, the baptism residence coincides with the census birthplace. A careful scrutiny was made of these seventy-nine
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Notes:  
* = 154 of the 468 records are missing, destroyed.  
** = Late baptisms excluded. The area referred to in columns 2 and 3 equates to the six parishes combined.

exceptions. Thirty-three showed evidence of a move at about the time of birth/baptism; twenty-one were in families which moved very frequently or showed evidence of a short stay in another parish; eight were in families of yeomen farmers with lands in several adjacent parishes; six were orphans or illegitimate children (three of these with birthplaces in Milton might well have been born in the workhouse); three others had birthplaces carefully distinguished from the preceding and following entries. All of these (seventy-one) may well have recorded a correct census birthplace even though it differs from the baptism place of residence. That leaves only eight cases: five of these may have incorrect census birthplaces (four are in long lists of dittos and one is a servant). The remaining three cases are interesting. Two are a brother and sister aged six and four who alone of their family are ascribed birthplaces in
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**Notes:** * = 154 of the 468 records are missing, destroyed.

Bobbing, while all the siblings were baptised and the others were born in Newington; for the younger the baptism register records for place of residence 'Newington but belonging to Bobbing.' The meaning of 'belonging to' in this context is open to speculation. The last of the eight exceptions was a six year old living in Rainham with her grandparents, presumably temporarily since her family in Upchurch includes a three day old baby. Her grandparents gave her birthplace as Rainham, carefully distinguishing her from their own children, so this may well have been correct, though her baptism and residence at the time were in Upchurch. So all but a handful of baptism records support, or at least fail to contradict, the census birthplaces. This analysis seems to show that baptismal records are a very useful source for checking birthplaces. Baptism records have also been used as an extra check for multiple census entries. The last column of Table 3 shows that the percentage of the population which is checkable is very high in all parishes until 1871, though it falls in 1881.
In the case of multiple census appearances, any birthplaces found to be definitely or probably wrong have been coded E (for error); multiple differences where the correct version is uncertain have been coded A (for anomaly). Table 3 lists the numbers and percentages of errors and anomalies in each parish 1851-81. A calculation of the total numbers over all twenty-four censuses shows 369 errors and 351 anomalies in 19,330 observations. Errors amount to 1.91 per cent of this total and errors and anomalies together (720) amount to 3.72 per cent. These 720 represent not individuals but occasions on which an error, certain or possible, occurred. The 369 errors account for 339 individuals (thirty have two) and the 351 anomalies for 158 individuals. (Eight of them have a mixture of Es and As, so there are in all 489 different individuals with at least one birthplace discrepancy.) As the 158 individuals coded A appear on two, three or four occasions it is likely that they have given a correct birthplace on at least one occasion. It is therefore reasonable to deduct these 158 from the total of 720, and this reduces the number of certain or possible errors to 562, or 2.91 per cent of the total population.

However, since there is no means of knowing the proportion of errors among the single entries with no baptism records, the numbers of these should be deducted from the total population in order to find the percentage of discrepancies in the total checkable population. The numbers and percentages for the checkable population in each census are to be found in the last 2 columns of Table 3. The total checkable population over all twenty four censuses is 13,460. The 369 errors represent 2.74 per cent of this number and the 720 errors and anomalies together represent 5.35 per cent. The 562, the nearest obtainable figure of certain and possible errors, represents 4.18 per cent of the checkable total. This last figure seems to be the most satisfactory overall estimate.

In addition to those coded E or A there are fifty-eight records that were entered as blank or not known, but these birthplaces are in fact known from other years. These have not been included in the Es and As since they are not discrepancies of the same sort. If they are added to the 720 the total of 778 represents 4.02 per cent of the total population and 5.78 per cent of the checkable population.

It is difficult to account for such variations as exist in birthplace accuracy between individual parishes and years as shown in Table 4. Hartlip has the best record and Stockbury the worst. All are better in 1851 than subsequently. The very high figures for Stockbury in 1861 and 1871 might be attributable to the fact that its enumerators were somewhat less literate than those elsewhere. John Jennings in 1861 was a publican and Daniel Goodhew in 1871 was a victualler and farmer. Both had good clear hands but also impressively idiosyncratic spelling and a tendency to carelessness. However, John Jennings was also the enumerator in Stockbury in 1851 where the figure for discrepancies is far lower. Perhaps familiarity with the job had bred a certain contempt for detail. And the enumerator in Halstow in 1881, which also has a high percentage of discrepancies, was a pernickety young schoolmaster with a penchant for irrelevant details subsequently crossed out by his superiors.
Table 4  Discrepancies in birthplaces

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<th>(4) no. of A</th>
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<td>3.72</td>
<td>13460</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>5.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:  
E (Error) = this year's version of birthplace certainly or probably wrong.  
A (Anomaly) = one discrepancy among many: right version not known.  
* = See column 4 of Table 2 for calculation of checkable population.  
** = Upchurch 1861: 154 of the 468 records are missing, destroyed.

It seems unjust to blame the enumerator for some of the errors, and some mistakes seem to suggest that he had difficulty in reading illegible handwriting, or perhaps on occasion he misheard what was said. Possible examples of the former are Chilham-Chatham, Dymchurch-Newchurch, Eastbourne-Littlebourne, Uffington-Orpington (both of these given as in Berkshire and as an alternative to Reading which appears on a third occasion). Harriet Andrews, twice given as Boughton (pronounced Bawton) and once as Borden perhaps misled the enumerator by the way she spoke. Another case of this surely is that of Emily Philpott, recorded as Guildford, Surrey in 1871 and Kent, Sturry in 1881. And the enumerator of Upchurch in 1881 must be forgiven for crossing out and overwriting the data for the Jacobs family: Amelia, wife of George, and her
eldest child were born in Queenboro', but the family lived on the island of Greenboro' in Upchurch and the next two children were born there.

However the enumerator was not always so anxious to be accurate. Among the 369 errors there are 116 dittos (over 31 per cent). He probably should have known that Manchester and Newmarket were not in Kent, though he could hardly have been expected to recognise some of the small places named by migrants from other counties. Finally, John Longley, the schoolmaster in Rainham continuously from 1851-81 and the enumerator of one part of Rainham 1861-81, who seems to be meticulous as well as neat and literate, gives his own birthplace twice as Chatham and twice as Rochester.

Some apparent discrepancies pointed out by computer checking turn out not to be real discrepancies at all and have not been counted as such for the purposes of this exercise. Sometimes a seeming discrepancy is merely a matter of added detail, for example specifying one of the several Boughtons in Kent. Sheppey might be more exactly entered as Queenborough, or Australia as Melbourne. On the other hand detail can sometimes cause confusion, for example the person who gives Malling as her birthplace in one census, specifying East Malling in another, and Town (sc. West) Malling in a third.

Quite often the name of a farm or of a smaller district within a parish is given instead of the parish name itself and in this case, as Tillott recommends, local knowledge is essential. And a standard work of reference is important, such as exists for Kent in the form of Wallenberg. So one can ascribe Darling (sc. Darland) to Gillingham, Beacon Hill and Luton to Chatham, Troy Town to Rochester, Yelsted to Stockbury and Maresbarrow (Meresborough) to Rainham. St. Margaret's always seems to mean Rochester and St. Mary's Hoo. An individual who gives Yelsted in one year and Stockbury in another has not been counted as a case of birthplace error; he knew he was born in Stockbury and tells us so on both occasions, if in different words. Some of these variations can be difficult to interpret especially where a phonetic spelling of a mispronounced name is used, though the places named in the description of the enumeration district which appears at the beginning of the census record are helpful indicators. There was also some confusion about parish boundaries; hence an entry such as 'Key Street, Newington, Bobbing'. Key Street is on the Dover Road which forms part of the boundary between Bobbing and Borden and is listed by Wallenburg in Borden; Newington is adjacent to both.

The opposite situation arises in the forty instances when people have nominated the nearest large place to their probable birthplace on one occasion but are more exact on another, for example Chard-Taunton, Uffington-Reading, Stock-Chelmsford, Brook-Canterbury, Buckland-Dover.

Where Hollingbourne or Milton is given on one occasion and a parish within its hundred on another it is possible that the person concerned was born in the workhouse but was thought of as belonging to the parish named. This explanation is likely to be relevant in the case of seven errors and eight
anomalies. A reference to workhouse censuses can often supplement a vague entry in a parish in another year.

In a very few cases it looks as if a child (especially a first child) was born at the mother's home but in later years was thought of as born in the same parish as the rest of the family. Methods approaching those of family reconstitution can throw light on such problems. 17

Among the real discrepancies, over 51 per cent of the errors also have a correct entry on more than one occasion. Over 27 per cent of these can be checked against a baptism record. Baptism registers combined with census data can indicate when a family migrated to the area and help to point to the approximate date at which the birthplaces of the children of these families can correctly be assigned to the six parishes and thus to detect mistakes in later censuses.

If parents appear to be punctilious about getting their children baptised, even the absence of a baptism can sometimes be useful negative evidence especially if combined with an absence from one census of a family who appear in the preceding and subsequent ones. The care with which parents distinguish the birthplaces of siblings is another indication of accuracy. It quite often happens that an individual has a correct birthplace as long as his parent is responsible for his schedule but when he becomes head of a household he associates himself with the place he lived in as a child, wrongly believing himself to have been born there. Heads responsible for wives' entries sometimes made similar mistakes about them. There are some insoluble muddles. Michael Fitzgerald, a tailor of Newington, gives Aspley as his birthplace in 1861, Woburn in 1871 and Sandy in 1881 (all in Bedfordshire). Jesse Atwood, an agricultural labourer of Stockbury, gives Hollingbourne in 1851, Thurnham in 1861 and Huckin in 1871. Elizabeth Dennis gives Minster (Sheppey) and Canterbury respectively when she is head of her household in Halstow in 1851 and 1861; in 1871 and 1881 when she is living in her son-in-law's household in Upchurch her birthplace is given first as Strood and later as Canterbury. Sometimes the explanation is obviously that a husband's and wife's birthplaces have been transposed. The worst muddles about birthplace seem to occur in the same families as uncertainties about ages. In all about one third of those with birthplace errors or anomalies also have an age error.

Some apparent muddles may have an explanation. The yeoman farmer recorded in Newington 1861-81 who gave his own birthplace as Halstow, Borden and Milton respectively, his wife's as Milton, Upchurch, Milton and his daughter's as Borden, Bobbing and Borden may well have held land in several parishes. The same applies to William Walter, a substantial farmer and a JP by 1881, who sometimes gives Bobbing and sometimes Upchurch. Baptism records seem to confirm this point for these yeomen farmers, who held their land under the Kentish custom of gavelkind by which it was divided between heirs.

Many of the cases illustrated above suggest a very considerable mobility, but mobility within a small area. Some families moved so often that they seem hardly to be able to remember which of their numerous brood was born where.
### Table 5a  Status in household of people with birthplace discrepancies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>(1) Total population</th>
<th>(2) % Checkable population</th>
<th>(3) % Checkable population</th>
<th>(4) % no. in Error(E)</th>
<th>(5) % no. in Error(A)</th>
<th>(6) % of Anomaly(A)+E</th>
<th>(7) % of Anomaly(A)+E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head</td>
<td>4098</td>
<td>20.64</td>
<td>3088</td>
<td>22.39</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>33.59</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>3327</td>
<td>16.76</td>
<td>2326</td>
<td>16.87</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>28.91</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son/daughter*</td>
<td>9482</td>
<td>47.75</td>
<td>6954</td>
<td>50.42</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>21.09</td>
<td>154</td>
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<td>Parent*</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relation</td>
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<td>3.74</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Servant</td>
<td>1028</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>31</td>
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<td>Lodger</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>Visitor</td>
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<td>0.40</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Total**</td>
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<td>100.00</td>
<td>13791</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>744</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
* E (Error) = this year's given birthplace certainly or probably wrong
* A (Anomaly) = one discrepancy among many; right version not known
* Total numbers exceed those on other tables because some individuals fall into more than one category.
* = including in-laws

### Table 5b  Category ratios for status in household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>(1) Proportions checkable</th>
<th>(2) Proportion in Error</th>
<th>(3) Proportions in Error+Anomaly</th>
<th>(4) Proportions in Error</th>
<th>(5) Proportions in Error+Anomaly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head</td>
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<td>3.15</td>
<td>7.03</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>9.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
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<td>3.34</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>8.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son/daughter*</td>
<td>73.34</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7.78</td>
<td>4.04</td>
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<td>2.56</td>
<td>3.67</td>
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<td>3.02</td>
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</tr>
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<td>4.18</td>
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<td>9.57</td>
</tr>
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<td>24.89</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>5.45</td>
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<td>69.46</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>5.39</td>
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**Notes:**
* Column 1 = Column 3 as % of Column 1 in Table 5a.
* Column 2 = Column 5 as % of Column 1 in Table 5a.
* Column 3 = Column 7 as % of Column 1 in Table 5a.
* Column 4 = Column 5 as % of Column 3 in Table 5a.
* Column 5 = Column 7 as % of Column 3 in Table 5a.
* = including in-laws.

There are as many as fifty-three examples of this problem among errors and thirty-four among anomalies. There were quite a few military and naval families, as well as bargemen, whose occupation made them mobile. Even more striking is the fact that 536 (over 74 per cent) of all errors and anomalies...
Table 5c  Status in household: servants and lodgers by parishes and years

Numbers and category ratios (total population = 100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Total (No.)</th>
<th>Servants (No.)</th>
<th>Servants Ratio</th>
<th>Lodgers (No.)</th>
<th>Lodgers Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hartlip</td>
<td>1428</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>7.56</td>
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<td>3744</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>144</td>
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<td>7593</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
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<td>2442</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>7.66</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1.88</td>
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<td>2669</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>6.03</td>
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<td>1980</td>
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<td>103</td>
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<tr>
<td>*<em>Total</em></td>
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<td>1028</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>3.98</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total (No.)</th>
<th>Servants (No.)</th>
<th>Servants Ratio</th>
<th>Lodgers (No.)</th>
<th>Lodgers Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1851</td>
<td>3652</td>
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<td>5.94</td>
<td>157</td>
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<td>5457</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>4.98</td>
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<td>223</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>5.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>*<em>Total</em></td>
<td>19856</td>
<td>1028</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>3.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:  * = Total numbers match those on Table 5a

are within five miles of the alternative version of the birthplace; and 399 (over 55 per cent) are within two miles, or in an adjacent parish.

It is useful to trace some of the characteristics of those with birthplace discrepancies, particularly sex ratio, status in household, age group, social class and the birthplace itself. The first of these can be briefly stated: the sex ratio (f=100) for the total population over all parishes and all years is 107.20; that for errors 119.64 and that for errors plus anomalies 116.87. There was a majority of males in all parishes except Hartlip and in most years and it seems that males were even more likely to record a birthplace error.

Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8 respectively are concerned with the other four characteristics. The numbers of errors in each category are given, also the percentage which these numbers represent as a proportion of total errors, but it is more important and interesting to look at each category as a percentage of the same category in the total or checkable population, and this is what the category ratios do. These columns show which categories seem most or least likely to record birthplace errors. In the case of age groups Table 6 shows clearly that errors (and anomalies) become increasingly likely with age. For instance, for every one hundred under the age of ten in the checkable population there are 0.70 with a birthplace error; in the ten to nineteen age group this increases to 2.35. If errors and anomalies are considered together the
Table 5d  Status in household: servants and lodgers by parishes and years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Checkable (No.)</th>
<th>Servants (No.)</th>
<th>Servants Ratio</th>
<th>Lodgers (No.)</th>
<th>Lodgers Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Hartlip</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
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<td>90</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
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<td>5206</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2.50</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1720</td>
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<td>4.83</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1.69</td>
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<td>62</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.68</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>13791</strong></td>
<td><strong>488</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.54</strong></td>
<td><strong>345</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Checkable (No.)</th>
<th>Servants (No.)</th>
<th>Servants Ratio</th>
<th>Lodgers (No.)</th>
<th>Lodgers Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>2698</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>3194</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>3942</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>3957</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>13791</strong></td>
<td><strong>488</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.54</strong></td>
<td><strong>345</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:  * = Total numbers match those on Table 5a.

number per hundred of the checkable population increases steadily from 1.38 for the under tens to 10.51 for the over fifty nines. The similar columns suggest that social classes d and e are more likely to have birthplace errors and class a least likely.¹⁹

Table 5b shows errors classified by household status in proportion to both total and checkable populations. In view of the age group findings it is not surprising to see that sons and daughters are least likely to record an error and parents much more likely (parents particularly likely to record an anomaly rather than an error) but it is perhaps more surprising to find heads, who were responsible for their own and others' details, so high on the list. Errors among servants, lodgers and visitors form a higher proportion of the checkable than of the total population, which reflects the fact that a smaller percentage of these three categories is checkable, this being clear from the first column of Table 5b. The graph in Figure 2 illustrates the figures in Table 5a.

Over all parishes and all years together there is a high degree of correlation in respect of household status between total and checkable populations (a correlation coefficient of +0.99) but there is some variation between parishes and between years, as is evident from Tables 5c and 5d, which give a breakdown for just two categories, servants and lodgers.²⁰ Table 5c shows that there were proportionately more lodgers in the total population in Upchurch
Table 6  Age groups of people with birthplace discrepancies

Numbers and percentages of errors and anomalies plus category ratios for each age group (checkable population for each age group = 100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Checkable population</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No. in Error(E)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>E Ratio</th>
<th>No. of E+Anomaly(A)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>E+A Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 10</td>
<td>3848</td>
<td>28.59</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>7.36</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 19</td>
<td>2809</td>
<td>20.87</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>17.89</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>15.56</td>
<td>3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 39</td>
<td>3384</td>
<td>25.14</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>32.22</td>
<td>6.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 59</td>
<td>2353</td>
<td>17.48</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>28.73</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>29.31</td>
<td>8.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 59</td>
<td>1066</td>
<td>7.92</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>12.74</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>15.56</td>
<td>10.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13460</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>100.01</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>100.01</td>
<td>5.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:  
E (Error) = this year’s given birthplace certainly or probably wrong  
A (Anomaly) = one discrepancy among many; right version not known

Table 7  Social classes of people with birthplace discrepancies

Numbers and percentages of errors and anomalies plus category ratios for each class (checkable population for each class = 100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class*</th>
<th>Checkable population</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No. in Error(E)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>E Ratio</th>
<th>No. of E+Anomaly(A)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>E+A Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>1349</td>
<td>10.02</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>7.92</td>
<td>4.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>2447</td>
<td>18.18</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10.84</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>13.75</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>7512</td>
<td>55.81</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>69.38</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>61.67</td>
<td>5.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>1832</td>
<td>13.61</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>13.01</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>15.42</td>
<td>6.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>5.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13460</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>100.01</td>
<td>5.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:  
E (Error) = this year’s given birthplace certainly or probably wrong  
A (Anomaly) = one discrepancy among many; right version not known  

and Halstow and in 1881 (where and by when the brickmaking industry had developed); there were more servants in Hartlip and Stockbury (which remained agricultural parishes). The proportion of servants over all parishes decreases gradually from 1851 to 1881. Table 5d shows that the proportions of these categories in the checkable population are always smaller than their proportions in the total population and this is especially noticeable where their percentages in the total population are highest, suggesting a high level of in
migration. The fact that fewer servants, lodgers and visitors than other categories are checkable and that more of these show errors suggests the need for special caution in the use of their birthplace data.

This is particularly so since lodgers written off as 'not known' were not included in these figures. In 1841 in Newington the enumerator was the son of a victualler living in his father's household who provided no names, no occupations and no birthplace counties for five lodgers in his father's inn. There is no later case as bad as this but there are altogether, 1851-81, twenty-three inn lodgers with no birthplace given. Some employers seem to have been meticulous about supplying correct birthplaces for their domestic and farm servants living in; others just listed them all as the census parish.

A further line of enquiry was prompted by findings made by Razzell in a pilot study cross-matching register and census data (1851 and 1861): that there were more discrepancies in urban than rural areas, that migration was an important factor in causing birthplace errors and that birthplace evidence was significantly more reliable for natives than for those not born in the census parish. The data in Tables 8a and 8b support these findings. It is clear from Table 8a that there are far more errors among non-natives than natives, the latter accounting for only 12.74 per cent of errors and 10.14 per cent of errors plus anomalies. But it also seems to show that 59.35 per cent of Es and 48.75 per cent of As plus Es belong to those born within five miles, and 78.59 per cent and 74.58 per cent respectively to those born within twenty miles, which appears to confirm...
Table 8a  Birthplaces of total and checkable populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>(1) Total population</th>
<th>(2) %</th>
<th>(3) Checkable population</th>
<th>(4) %</th>
<th>(5) Category ratio 3 as % of 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home parish</td>
<td>8943</td>
<td>46.26</td>
<td>7816</td>
<td>58.07</td>
<td>87.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbour (a)</td>
<td>2452</td>
<td>12.68</td>
<td>2184</td>
<td>16.23</td>
<td>89.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 miles (b)</td>
<td>2958</td>
<td>15.30</td>
<td>1511</td>
<td>11.23</td>
<td>51.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 miles (c)</td>
<td>2837</td>
<td>14.68</td>
<td>1287</td>
<td>9.56</td>
<td>45.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer Kent (d)</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>32.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London (e)</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>31.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere</td>
<td>1070</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>30.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19330</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>13460</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>69.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:  
(a) One of the other 5 parishes of this exercise.  
(b) Within a radius of 5 miles from the centre of Rainham excluding (a).  
(c) Within a radius of more than 5 but less than 20 miles.  
(d) Elsewhere in Kent and Sussex.  
(e) The former LCC area.

Table 8b  Birthplaces of errors and anomalies (Es and As)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>(1) No in Error(E)</th>
<th>(2) %</th>
<th>(3) No of E+Anomaly(A)</th>
<th>(4) %</th>
<th>(5) Category ratios*</th>
<th>(6) E</th>
<th>(7) E+A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home parish</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>12.74</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>10.14</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbour (a)</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>30.35</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>17.64</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 miles (b)</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>31.11</td>
<td>7.08</td>
<td>14.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 miles (c)</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>19.24</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>25.83</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>14.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer Kent (d)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5.97</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>19.46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London (e)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>16.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>14.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>100.01</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:  
(a) - (e) As for Table 8a.  
* = Each equivalent category of checkable population = 100

the earlier presumption of a high degree of localized mobility. However, Table 8b suggests that caution is advisable in drawing inferences from these conclusions, since calculations can be made only on the checkable part of the population and this, unsurprisingly, is biased in favour of those born in or near the census parishes. The checkable population categories shown in Table 8a as ratios of the total population categories indicate this clearly: for every one hundred in the total population born in the census parish 87.40 are checkable but the ratio steadily decreases to 30.75 for those born 'elsewhere'. The single,
apparently surprising, exception, that those born in the neighbouring five are more likely to be checkable than natives, may be explicable by the tendency too often incorrectly to record the census parish as the birthplace, for example by the use of dittos or by some employers for their servants. In this respect one might regard native birthplaces as less reliable.

When the category ratios for errors and anomalies are considered (Table 8b) it is clear that natives still represent a very small proportion, but other ratios are more evenly divided over the various distances from the census parish. For instance, the London figure given as a percentage of all errors and anomalies (2.64 per cent) does not look as impressive as the category ratio which shows that for every one hundred native Londoners in the checkable population there were 16.96 errors or anomalies.

The conclusions of this exercise are generally reassuring. The percentages of errors seem to be a good deal lower than those cited in the first paragraph of this article. This is perhaps partly due to the fact that variations of spelling or description have not been counted as discrepancies if they were clearly intended to indicate the same place. The effectiveness of cross-referencing and checking is in proportion to the number of baptism and census data used. It is encouraging to know that when sufficient time and data have been available for the necessary processing this has demonstrated first that a large percentage of the population is checkable, especially up to 1871, secondly that quite a small percentage of the checkable population shows any birthplace discrepancy and thirdly that many of the discrepancies that do exist prove not to be very serious. The findings point to the need for two caveats: that the birthplaces of servants, lodgers and visitors might justify a modicum of suspicion; and that caution is advisable in using birthplace data as the sole basis for calculating mobility, in view of the degree of localized mobility implicit in this analysis. Nevertheless, the fact that about three quarters of alternative versions are within five miles of each other and over half within two miles supports the proposition that fear of inaccuracy should not constitute a major impediment to researchers using this evidence.

NOTES

7. See Figure 2 for an outline map. In this area the civil and ecclesiastical parishes coincided. All were ‘open’ parishes.
8. The population increases over the thirty years 1851-81 represent average annual percentage growth rates as follows: Hartlip 0.35; Newington 1.40; Rainham 4.45; Stockbury 0.18; Upchurch 5.77; Lower Halstow 3.46. The decade 1861-71 was the decade of greatest growth.

10. The Kent Archives Office references for the parish registers are: Hartlip P175; Newington P265; Rainham P296; Stockbury P348; Upchurch P377; Lower Halstow P168.

11. Levine, in an exercise cross-matching parish registers and samples from the 1851 census populations of Shepshed (an industrial village) and Bottesford (a closed rural village) (both in Leicestershire) showed higher and more consistent rates of baptism in the latter than the former, and also evidence of localized mobility: D. Levine, ‘The reliability of parochial registration and the representativeness of family reconstitution’, *Population Studies*, 30, 1, 1976, pp.107-122. He, like Yasumoto, also shows how often ‘missing’ baptisms can be found in neighbouring parishes. The same point is made in a paper by R. Wall, ‘Reconstitution and census: Colytonians in parish register and enumerator’s book’, one of two studies in *Exeter Papers in Economic History*, No. 11, 1976, pp.73-90. I am grateful to members of the editorial board for drawing my attention to the articles by Levine and Wall.

12. Of wives whose maiden names are identifiable only through the presence of a relation in the household quite a few were baptised in one of the six but must have married elsewhere; this could well apply to others with no additional means of identification.


15. For example, Boar’s Ear as the sole given birthplace is not immediately identifiable as Beaux Aires farm in Stockbury, but the Stockbury enumerators in their description of the parish produce such ingenious versions as Bousears and Bowshare as well as a more nearly correct Bozair.

16. At the time of the 1851 census Grace Bronger, alias Godden, was in Hollingbourne workhouse, aged 1, with her mother; her birthplace was given as Hollingbourne. In 1861 when she is with her mother and step(?) father in Stockbury and in 1871 when she is a servant in Newington her birthplace is given as Stockbury.

17. Jane Smith, wife of William, was recorded as Rainham in 1851 but Galway in the next three censuses. Marriage records identify her as the daughter of a woman who appears in the Rainham census of 1851 with a Tipperary birthplace.

18. Elizabeth Baker, present in Rainham 1841-71 as wife, widow and remarried, gave Woolwich and Sheerness as alternative birthplaces.

19. The social classification used is that suggested by Armstrong, ‘The use of information about occupation’. Social class has been ascribed to all the employed according to their jobs, to others according to the head of the household. ‘x’ means class unknown and this includes a large proportion of visitors.

20. Servants include domestic, trade and agricultural; lodgers include boarders.


22. Where there are known errors the correct version of the birthplace has been used for this calculation.