

LOCATING THE "MISSING MARRYERS" IN COLYTON, 1660-1750

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Introduction

When the original reconstitution of Colyton was analysed by Tony Wrigley, one of his discoveries was a fall in the number of marriages celebrated in Colyton church in the period 1660 to 1750, and particularly in the first half of this period. The drop in marriages far exceeded the fall in baptisms which suggested that this was unlikely to be due to poor recording, but rather, that the marriage ceremony was being avoided in Colyton church. Only 145 marriages were celebrated in Colyton in the period 1650-99 for couples who subsequently baptised their children there: this was an average of a mere 2.9 marriages per year. In the period 1700-49 only 204 marriages were celebrated by couples who later baptised their children in Colyton, an average of four per year.

Prior to Hardwicke's Act of 1753, marriage which took place outside of church and without banns was legally validated; indeed, drawing on the aggregate analysis sample of the 404 parishes, Wrigley has shown that the baptism/marriage ratio rose during the seventeenth century to the point where only an estimated 90 per cent of marriages were recorded in the parish registers.¹ More recently, Schofield has inflated the figure to a possible 14 per cent of marriages which are missing.² Colyton can be treated as a case study, to trace the background of the 'missing marryers'.

This article results from a project to produce a 'total reconstitution' of the parish of Colyton.³ An attempt was made to link documents concerning the Colyton inhabitants such as tax assessments and poor relief records, to the Family Reconstitution Forms (FRFs) to give each family a 'class' or status attribute. Since FRFs are constructed around a marriage date, missing marryers appear on what are known as 'dummy' FRFs generated from baptism or burial details only. Table 1 shows in how many cases the status of dummy FRFs can be established in comparison with normal FRFs, and illustrates that in the period 1650-1749 a slightly greater proportion of dummy FRFs have status designations than FRFs with marriages. Table 2 shows the distribution of these dummy FRFs according to status. The results shown in this table must be compared with the status of the entire set of FRFs which is shown in Table 3.

By comparing Tables 2 and 3, it can be seen that the first cohort of missing marryers showed a similar status distribution to marryers in Colyton. In the 1550-99 and 1600-49 cohorts rather more of the poor and crafts categories

Table 1 Percentage of dummy FRFs with status designation compared to FRFs with marriages and status designation 1538-1799

| Cohort | Dummy | With marriages | % difference |
|---------|-------|----------------|--------------|
| 1538-49 | 42.2 | 39.5 | + 2.7 |
| 1550-99 | 25.0 | 36.7 | -11.7 |
| 1600-49 | 35.5 | 42.5 | - 7.0 |
| 1650-99 | 48.3 | 43.6 | + 4.7 |
| 1700-49 | 50.4 | 49.9 | + 0.5 |
| 1750-99 | 44.5 | 47.9 | - 3.4 |

Table 2 Status designation of dummy FRFs 1538-1799

| Cohort | Total | Gentry | | Crafts | | Labourer | | Poor | |
|---------|-------|--------|------|--------|------|----------|------|------|------|
| | | n. | % | n. | % | n. | % | n. | % |
| 1538-49 | 51 | 42 | 82.4 | 3 | 5.9 | 6 | 11.7 | - | - |
| 1550-99 | 71 | 20 | 28.2 | 19 | 26.8 | 10 | 14.1 | 22 | 31.0 |
| 1600-49 | 184 | 43 | 23.4 | 71 | 38.6 | 24 | 13.0 | 46 | 25.0 |
| 1650-99 | 245 | 51 | 20.8 | 69 | 28.2 | 33 | 13.5 | 92 | 37.5 |
| 1700-99 | 159 | 28 | 17.6 | 42 | 26.4 | 9 | 5.7 | 80 | 50.3 |
| 1750-99 | 80 | 9 | 11.3 | 30 | 37.5 | 26 | 32.5 | 15 | 18.8 |

Table 3 Distribution of FRFs with status by cohort 1538-1799

| Cohort | Total | Gentry | | Crafts | | Labourer | | Poor | |
|---------|-------|--------|------|--------|------|----------|------|------|------|
| | | n. | % | n. | % | n. | % | n. | % |
| 1538-49 | 86 | 61 | 70.9 | 19 | 22.0 | 6 | 6.9 | - | - |
| 1550-99 | 228 | 67 | 29.4 | 35 | 15.4 | 85 | 37.3 | 41 | 17.9 |
| 1600-49 | 473 | 132 | 27.9 | 129 | 27.2 | 81 | 17.1 | 131 | 27.7 |
| 1650-99 | 350 | 113 | 32.3 | 49 | 14.0 | 37 | 10.6 | 151 | 43.2 |
| 1700-49 | 344 | 65 | 18.9 | 56 | 16.3 | 44 | 12.8 | 179 | 52.0 |
| 1750-99 | 425 | 94 | 22.1 | 131 | 30.8 | 136 | 32.0 | 64 | 15.0 |

showed a tendency not to marry in Colyton. While the poor category in the 1650-99 cohort seems high, it is lower than in the distribution in the total collection of FRFs; conversely, the craft category is double the proportion in the total collection of FRFs. Twenty-eight per cent, rather than fourteen per cent, of them appear in the dummy FRFs. This trend is also evident in the 1700-49 cohort, with 26 per cent of dummy FRFs being classified as crafts, while there were 16 per cent in the cohort as a whole. Crafts are still 7 percentage points higher for dummy FRFs than for the entire collection of FRFs in the cohort 1750-99.

It is clear then, that in the period 1650 to 1749, missing marryers in Colyton church were not disadvantaged in terms of income. They comprised the central core of the Colyton population. They were craftsmen, small landholders or labourers in regular employment. They were neither the gentry nor the poor, they came from 'the middle' of society.

Finding the missing marryers

Where did they marry? The first check was made on parishes surrounding Colyton. It was possible to search the registers of nine nearby parishes for the period 1650-99.⁴ Four neighbouring parishes do not have registration covering this period.⁵ The register of St Sidwells, a parish in central Exeter, was also searched for this period to gain an insight into whether any Colyton marryers were located in the city.

Of the sample, most marriages of Colyton couples were found in Shute in the 1680s, and Seaton and Beer in the 1690s. Marriages of Colyton couples were found throughout in the Farway registers. All the registers contained a few cases where one or both partners came from Colyton. In the case of Farway, the Reverend Mallocke seems to have married Colyton people to bring the weddings he performed up to an average of five or six a year, possibly to augment his income by marriage fees, which he could not otherwise collect in such a tiny parish. As was the case in Colyton, all the parish registers in the sample show that vicars married people who were resident outside their parishes.

Some of the marriages must have taken place in other churches because of their geographical proximity to people's homes. Colyton is a big parish, and some of the outlying farm hamlets were nearer to other churches than to the parish church. In some cases it is apparent that children married in the same parish outside of Colyton as their parents had done.⁶ Interestingly, these cases generally had their children baptised in Colyton.

However, geography was far from being the only factor influencing marriage patterns. Some of the marriage places seem to be rather irrational. Thus, on 11 February 1682, Edward Harper and Alice Hawker married in Shute, but they were both born in Colyton and resided in Colyford, thus nearer to Seaton and Beer parish if they had wanted to marry outside Colyton. The explanation is likely to be short-term, short distance migration which evades the record. Most of these weddings are of farm servants who do not seem to have generally gone 'home' to marry in seventeenth-century Devon.

In some cases the marriages may have taken place in other parishes to legitimise a child, or maybe immediately before one was born. For example, Robert Sweetland, son of Samuel Sweetland was baptised in Colyton on 18 September 1697. He was not recorded as 'base', but the marriage of Samuel Sweetland and Jane Drower took place only two months later on 22 November in Seaton and Beer. Robert Sandy and Ann Crow were married in Seaton and Beer on 23 September 1699. Two days later their daughter Ann was baptised in Colyton where they lived.⁷

In two cases the marriages involved Colyton widows, which is fairly remarkable since only three, or possibly four, widows can be identified as remarryers in Colyton church in the period 1650-99. A few Colyton marriages could be found in the St Sidwells register, where a large increase of 'by licence' marriages of people from all over the county of Devon took place after 1660. William Hake and Ann Mills of Colyford who married at St Sidwells on 5 May 1670 were presumably new migrants to the city.

In terms of overall numbers, however, the marriages found in other parishes do little to explain the bulk of missing marriages in this period. Furthermore, linkage of this particular subset of 'dummy' marriages shows them to be either gentry or from the poor, and thus the same sort of people as those who continued to marry in Colyton church. Their age structure was also similar to those caught in the registration process, though the women were slightly older at marriage than those in the overall Colyton sample.

A further search for the missing marryers was made in the Devon marriage bonds.⁸ All the bonds for the period 1660 to 1699 were scrutinised. In thousands of bonds, only twenty-four cases were discovered involving at least one marriage partner who came from Colyton. Sample years from the eighteenth century did not reveal any Colyton cases at all. In comparison with other dioceses, the Devon documentation is disappointing. Unlike allegations, bonds do not give the spouses' dates of birth or ages, or the occupation of the bridegroom or any details of the couple's parents. Only two Colyton cases were marriages of widows. In eleven cases it was possible to establish the age of the bride from the reconstitution, but this varied, from 16.5 to 41.1 years. Social status was also variable but tended towards the upper end of the social scale. A few cases involved marriages of labourers or craftsmen, and these usually involved prenuptial pregnancies.

Clandestine marriage

One explanation for the 'missing marryer syndrome' is that Colyton could have been a centre for clandestine marriage since it was an ecclesiastical 'peculiar' and therefore lay outside direct episcopal control. This is worth considering as evidence has been increasing to indicate the importance of clandestine marriage centres in other parts of the country.⁹

Had Colyton been a clandestine marriage centre we could expect a large number of outsiders to marry in the parish but not in the church, and also for marriages of the lower classes to be excluded from the marriage record, since they were most likely to want to take advantage of paying competitive marriage fees.¹⁰ The signs of a clandestine marriage centre in the register then might be a reduced number of marryers from the poorer section of the population and a drop in the number of people recorded as having just married in the parish but not participated in any other recordable event. Thus, Souden noted that Colyton had a drastically reduced proportion of couples who only married in the town in the period 1650-1750.¹¹ These are the cases where the FRFs feature no baptisms or burials of the marital couple and no baptisms of

Table 4 Number and percentage of 'marriage only' case FRFs 1538-1799

| Cohort | n. of 'marriage only' cases | n. of FRFs with marriages | % |
|---------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------|
| 1538-49 | 22 | 82 | 26.8 |
| 1550-99 | 185 | 501 | 36.9 |
| 1600-49 | 220 | 650 | 33.8 |
| 1650-99 | 121 | 266 | 45.5 |
| 1700-49 | 149 | 353 | 42.2 |
| 1750-99 | 203 | 559 | 36.3 |

Table 5 Status of 'marriage only' FRFs 1538-1799

| Cohort | Total | Gentry | | Crafts | | Labourer | | Poor | | Unknown | |
|---------|-------|--------|------|--------|------|----------|------|------|------|---------|------|
| | | n. | % | n. | % | n. | % | n. | % | n. | % |
| 1538-49 | 22 | 2 | 9.0 | 1 | 4.5 | - | - | - | - | 19 | 86.4 |
| 1550-99 | 185 | 16 | 8.6 | 6 | 3.2 | 23 | 12.4 | 1 | 0.5 | 139 | 75.1 |
| 1600-49 | 220 | 18 | 8.2 | 6 | 2.7 | 6 | 2.7 | 10 | 4.5 | 180 | 81.8 |
| 1650-99 | 121 | 12 | 9.9 | 4 | 3.3 | 1 | 0.8 | 12 | 9.9 | 92 | 76.0 |
| 1700-49 | 149 | 9 | 6.0 | 7 | 4.7 | 3 | 2.0 | 35 | 23.5 | 95 | 63.7 |
| 1750-99 | 203 | 30 | 14.8 | 28 | 13.8 | 20 | 9.8 | 9 | 4.4 | 116 | 57.1 |

children. This suggested that there could have been a clandestine marriage centre in or near the parish.

As we have seen, however, generally 'missing marryers' were not poor. Furthermore, contrary to Souden's observation, Table 4 shows that as a proportion of FRFs with marriages, 'marriage only' cases increased to form nearly half of all marriages celebrated in Colyton in the 1650-99 period. Table 5 gives the status of people involved in 'marriage only' cases according to the status categories, and from this table it is clear that most of the 'marriage only' individuals came into the 'unknown' category. That is, they were not people who participated in the economy or social life of Colyton to an appreciable extent. They certainly did not own or occupy any land, and none of the poor law documents indicate that they had a settlement in Colyton. They probably fitted into either the top or bottom rungs of Colyton society. They were likely to be either mobile sons or daughters from gentry families or, alternatively, they were farm servants who moved around and did not marry in their home parish. The marriage register actually states that these were 'servants' in many cases. This group were not likely to have made a conscious decision against marrying in Colyton church, as they were not deeply embroiled in village disputes or loyalties. Many of them seem to have been using the church rather like a civil office, as a place to get married in, rather than with any particular symbolic significance. Therefore, the evidence suggests that the sector of the population who could have been expected to use a clandestine marriage centre

were still marrying in the Anglican church. More likely, it seems that rather than being clandestine marryers the 'missing marryers' formed a nonconformist congregation for whom the records, if they were kept, have been lost.¹²

Who were the missing marryers?

A profile can be drawn up of the typical 'missing marryers'. They were fully integrated into community life in Colyton. They had more recorded entries on the index cards which formed the total reconstitution than those who married in the parish church. They were likely to have been brought up in Colyton. If not born there, they would generally live there before marriage. They were usually partially literate and had partaken of the feoffee's education system. We find their signature on receipts for a variety of small trade deals which were commonplace in Colyton as a busy market town. The evidence that these people formed a nonconformist congregation will now be examined.¹³ Unfortunately it has been necessary to piece together the history of nonconformity in Colyton from a disparate set of not entirely reliable sources in the absence of any dependable records.

As in other parts of England, there is evidence of considerable ecclesiastical disruption in mid-seventeenth-century Devon. In Colyton, the vicar was ejected in 1647 and replaced by a puritan, John Wilkins. During the period 1653 to 1660 justices of the peace married people. This period of civil registration meant a minor revolution in marriage practices.¹⁴ An ecclesiastical court matrimonial case of 1672 describes the marriage of Nicholas Dowdling and Frozett Wreford of Dunchideock, who had gone to Exeter fifteen or sixteen years previously to be married by a justice 'according to ye Law and Manner at that time'. This was an impersonal wedding which seems to have taken place as quickly and with as little ado as possible. It was a 'group' wedding, 'there was a great company there, there being sev'all others then and there to bee married'.¹⁵

According to Pulman, Dr Manson, (who later became one of Cromwell's own chaplains), laid the foundations of nonconformity in Colyton in 1640.¹⁶ In 1647, the Reverend John Wilkins, a puritan, replaced the ejected Reverend Thomas Collyns, to become vicar of Colyton. The **Parish Magazine** of September 1907, which as a gossipy and not unexpectedly, pro-Anglican publication indicated that this was an unwelcome change for at least some of the parishioners. It said that Wilkins was 'forced on to people' and that Collyns, the 'rightful clergyman', was persecuted. His house was plundered, he was forced into hiding and had to sell his possessions to maintain his ten children. The magazine claims that he was well loved in the town. A tailor in charity maintained one of his children, two or more were kept by weavers (whose wives nursed them), and the rest were put into service. Reading between the lines then, Collyns did not have the support of any substantial sectors of the population who could have been expected to keep him in a little more dignity.

In 1662 John Wilkins was himself ejected for refusing to sign the Act of Uniformity. He then preached at his own house forming a separate Presbyterian church until his death. Whereas neither Collyns nor his children appear in the parish registers, Wilkins's youngest child was baptised in Colyton church after

his ejection which confirms that nonconformists only partly rejected Anglican registration.

There was a gap of three years after Wilkins's removal during which Colyton had no vicar. In 1665 Thomas Tanner was appointed. He was an Oxford academic and barrister. According to the parish magazine of June 1909 he was unpopular, being seen as 'forward' and 'conceited'. He stayed in Colyton until 1676. Robert Simson was then incumbent for a year. He was succeeded by William Salter whose ministry contains the only tendencies to occasional registration defects in Colyton's history.

By the time that Colyton produced the Sedgemoor rebels in 1685, the town was a centre of radical dissent. Earle thought that the dissent was 'underground' with meetings taking place in the hills and after dark. He maintained that this would have had no effect on the registration system.¹⁷ In fact, it appears that Wilkins led a viable alternative to high church Anglicanism which had quasi-political implications and appealed to the broad 'middle' of Colyton society. The original George's Meeting House was built sometime between 1685 and 1705 with John Kerridge as first minister. He had been ejected from Lyme Regis in 1662. He seems to have been an influential figure who was able to capitalise on Wilkins's lead. Wilkins died in October 1667 and it is possible to speculate that, for a decade or so after that, nonconformism was fairly shapeless and the population was united only in its rejection of high church Anglicanism.¹⁸ Two licenses were granted for Presbyterian meetings in Colyton at the houses of Widow Drake and Bernard Dwight.¹⁹

The Sedgemoor rebels provide some indication of the make-up of the section of 'missing marryers'.²⁰ About eighty-six men, around a quarter of the total adult male population of Colyton, fought for the Duke of Monmouth against Catholicism. Considering that they came from different families, the extent of support for Monmouth is remarkable. Analysis of the background of the rebels shows that they could be defined as the 'middle' of Colyton society. They were generally craftsmen, or had trade connections, and they identified with the town, rather than rural parts of the parish of Colyford. They were led by Roger Sachel, a substantial yeoman who first took up arms at Lyme.

Statements taken on the capture of the rebels reveal that they had deep seated convictions. These men were religious zealots who believed wholeheartedly in Protestantism as a cause. Joseph Speed, a shoemaker, was: 'A poor man, who could thank God that since the age of sixteen he had had the checks of conscience on me'. His whole design 'in taking up arms under the Duke of Monmouth was to fight for the Protestant religion which my own conscience dictated to me'. Clearly, Speed had been politicised during Wilkins's ministry, and this was likely to be the case for most of the rebels since their average age was over forty.

John Sprague, a mason, stated he 'Believed that no Christian ought to resist a lawful power; but the case, being between popery and protestantism, altered the matter, and the latter being in danger, he believed it was lawful for him to do what he did'. The high church Anglicanism in Colyton was not distinct from

popery. The dissenters were thus an organised movement driven underground until the Toleration Act of 1688. Only with some type of corporate backing could the individual rebels have received the necessary support to fight for their convictions.

Wilkins was probably marrying couples outside of the church after his ejection until his death. Being an essentially 'anti-establishment' activity, it is hardly surprising that there are no records to make this clear. To confirm this suspicion, the rebels' marriages were analysed. The rebels can be linked to fifty marriages, only fifteen of which took place in Colyton church. The other thirty-five fall into the missing marriage category.

The rebels had to be at least in their late forties to have married at Colyton church during Wilkins's ministry, and five of the fifteen cases fall into this category. In fact, only one rebel seems to have married outside of the church in the pre-1662 period. After 1662 and before the Act of Toleration, only six marriages of rebels took place in the church. They were the poorest rebels and it is possible that they were employed by other rebels and were caught up in the rebellion without holding any steadfast religious or political views against popery. The marriages of the remaining four rebels took place after 1688.

There is other evidence of a community of dissenters in Colyton. Through the linkage process a network of exchange and marketing can be established between them. There are indications that they gave each other mutual help. Wilkins's son, Edward, lodged with John Clapp, a rebel and a merchant in 1678. Edward Wilkins was a plateworker and part of the very craft and workshop tradition from which the rebels sprang.

In the early eighteenth century, as nonconformity took root and was sustained in Colyton, marriages were still not always celebrated in the church. The extent of dissent is suggested by child naming practices.²¹ The names of Charity, Patience and Grace, all common among nonconformists, were frequently found in Colyton. In 1707 a Baptist church was formed after a row in the Presbyterian church, but in 1715 the Presbyterian church alone had a congregation of two hundred people.²² According to Eyre Evans, the popularity varied with different ministers.²³ Only twenty-five 'hearers' were recorded in 1712, but this soared to 220 during Youatt's ministry from 1714 to 1729. In July 1717 the will of Benjamin Slade, a merchant, granted 'towards the maintenance of the meeting now held in my uncle's, Willm Lymbry's meeting house'. Grace Lymbrey, in 1725 left £29 towards the Presbyterian meeting in Ottery St Mary, 20s. per annum for the Presbyterian meeting in Beer for twenty years, but a triumphant £200 for supporting the Presbyterian meeting in Colyton.²⁴

Eighteenth-century nonconformity was predominantly middle class and town based in Devon,²⁵ and labourers seem to have returned to marrying within the ambit of the Anglican church in the early eighteenth century. In fact, a particularly low number of labourers married outside of the established church in the 1700-49 cohort. It is also possible that more rigid enforcement of the 1662 Settlement Act underlined the need for the marriage of the labouring poor to be officially recorded. Certainly, parish registers were often consulted to determine

a person's settlement by mid-eighteenth century overseers of the poor.

In 1761 a new Unitarian chapel was built to replace the old George's Meeting house. The registers of this chapel are still extant but take in only 9 per cent of Colyton's population.²⁶ Polwhele's 'History' records eighty dissenters in Colyton in 1793.²⁷ Clearly, nonconformism was losing popularity amongst all classes in the second half of the eighteenth century and this trend seems to have continued. In the first half of the nineteenth century one of the ministers of George's Meeting died of starvation. An Independent chapel was built in 1814 for a working class congregation. Their register contains just a few entries, relating to a small section of the population. It has now been incorporated into the reconstitution. Nonconformity was thus most popular in Colyton during the period 1650 to 1750, when marriage registration deficiencies can be identified. Other Devon historians have found that nonconformism has seriously affected registration to the point of making reconstitution impossible.²⁸ However, although the reconstitution of Colyton did prove possible, what is the significance of its results for those who were 'missing'?

The impact of missing marryers on reconstitution studies

If the theory about missing marryers being nonconformist marryers is correct, an assumed marriage date calculated by subtracting nine months from the baptism of the first child on the dummy FRFs, would be fairly accurate in a large proportion of cases. So it is possible to incorporate these new cases into age at marriage data, where the baptism date of the spouses can also be established. Since dummy FRFs constituted between a quarter and a third of all Colyton FRFs in the period 1650-1749, this addition is potentially very significant. Without these cases, which were generally craftspeople or labourers, a demographic analysis by status reflects only the top and bottom of parish society.

The inclusion of these 'missing marryers' contributes most to the male marriage figures, since it is much easier to link males to their own baptism than females, because their names were always given when their children were baptised. How does the age at marriage calculated for these extra 'dummy marryers' compare with the ages analysed for men? This is considered in Table 6 which shows that ages of the missing marryers are so near to the ages for the men who married in church that they can be used with confidence to extend the sample size by looking at 'all men'.

Unfortunately, the results for women cannot add many cases to the analyses. Only in 34 per cent of dummy FRFs in the period 1630 to 1700 was any indication given of the wife's name at all. In this minority sample, the women's christian name could be established from either a child's baptism or from another document which was used in the total reconstitution. If the dummy marriages took place in Colyton, but are not recorded there, there is reason to believe that a number of the women would be Colyton born. Since these cases could not be incorporated into the full analysis of marriage age, a separate

Table 6 Calculated ages at marriage for male missing marryers compared with men marrying at Colyton church 1650-1749

| Cohort | n. | Missing marryers | | n. | Church marryers | |
|---------|-----|------------------|-----------|----|-----------------|---------|
| | | mean | std. dev. | | mean | std.dev |
| 1650-99 | 134 | 27.5 | 5.8 | 72 | 27.2 | 5.7 |
| 1700-49 | 76 | 27.5 | 6.1 | 92 | 27.5 | 8.0 |

attempt was made to discover their age at marriage. Of these named female missing marryers, a sample of seventeen with unusual christian names was chosen. Examples of these names are Dorcas, Bashaba, Urith and Tephany. Eleven of the seventeen cases could be linked back to a baptism in Colyton. This produced a range of marriage ages from 21.9 years to 38.2 years. The mean age, however, was 28.7 years which is similar to the mean of 28.8 for women marrying in Colyton church in this cohort. This test indicates that as far as can be proven, the excluded women's marital behaviour did not differ significantly from the women in observation.

Conclusion

It would appear that the age at marriage of the Colyton nonconformists was not markedly different from their Anglican-marrying counterparts. As we know, they continued to baptise and bury within the established church. In the absence of any detailed records it is difficult to speculate as to why marriage was unusual, especially as the nonconformists did not separate themselves from the community in terms of social and economic interaction. As all the known Colyton records have now been examined, only the chance discovery of missing documents can enlighten us further. A more hopeful prospect is the result of research on other communities with significant nonconformist congregations.

NOTES

1. E.A. Wrigley, 'Births and baptisms: the use of Anglican baptism registers as a source of information about the number of births in England before the beginning of civil registration', *Population Studies*, 31, 1977, pp.281-312.
2. R.S. Schofield, 'English marriage patterns revisited', *Journal of Family History*, 10, 1985, pp.2-20.
3. P. Sharpe, 'Gender-specific demographic adjustment to changing economic circumstances: Colyton 1538-1837', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1988); and P. Sharpe, 'The total reconstitution method: a tool for class-specific study?', *Local Population Studies*, 44, 1990, pp.41-51.
4. The marriage registers were searched in Devon Record Office (hereafter D.R.O.) for Axmouth, Branscombe, Farway, Honiton, Musbury, Offwell, Seaton and Beer, Shute and Widworthy.
5. Axminster marriages do not start until 1695. Kilmington has no marriages recorded between 1589 and 1727. Northleigh parish registers only commence in 1697 and Southleigh's only begin in 1754.
6. R.A.P. Finlay, 'Distance to church and registration experience', *Local Population Studies*, 24, 1980, pp.26-41 comments on distance affecting baptism registration.
7. J. Caffyn, *Sussex believers: baptist marriage in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*, 1988, p.60 found that Baptists in Sussex in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries sometimes formalised marriages in parish churches after the birth of a child to establish the validity of the union in the civil court.

8. D.R.O. boxes 1 to 6, 42.
9. E.A. Wrigley, 'Baptism/marriage ratios in late seventeenth century England', **Local Population Studies**, 3, 1969, pp.15-7; E.A. Wrigley, 'Clandestine marriage in Tetbury in the late seventeenth century', **Local Population Studies**, 10, 1973, pp.15-21; J.R. Gillis, **For better, for worse: British marriages 1600 to the present**, 1985, pp.136n.
10. E.A. Wrigley, 'Marital fertility in seventeenth century Colyton: a note', **Economic History Review**, 31, 1978, pp.429-36. However, R. Lee Brown, 'The rise and fall of the Fleet marriages', in R.B. Outhwaite (ed), **Marriage and society**, 1981, pp.117-36 found that all social classes married at Fleet prison.
11. D.C. Souden, 'Pre-industrial English local migration fields', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1981): p.28.
12. Personal communication with Mrs Angela Doughty and Mrs Margaret Rowe at Devon Record Office and with Mrs Audrey Erskine formerly archivist at Exeter Cathedral library has convinced me that there is no evidence of an established clandestine marriage centre in Colyton.
13. M. Spufford, **Contrasting communities**, 1974, p.303 found that the Willingham dissenters constituted the 'middle' of society. Caffyn, **Sussex believers**, 1988, pp.99, 166 found that Baptists were fully integrated into their Sussex communities in terms of officeholding and social life.
14. E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, **The population history of England 1541 to 1871**, 1981, pp.89n. examines the effect on registration of the Commonwealth era.
15. D.R.O. Chanter 874.
16. G.P.R. Pulman, **The book of the Axe**, 1875, p.507.
17. P. Earle, **Monmouth's rebels**, 1977, p.17, 209.
18. This might explain the Compton census' deficiency in recording nonconformists. All the population shortfall of an estimated 600 were likely to be nonconformists. See estimates in T. Arkell, 'Nonconformity and population in late seventeenth century Devon - the 1676 Compton census', (offprint in the Cambridge Group library, no.date).
19. F. Bate, **The Declaration of Indulgence 1672: a study in the rise of organised dissent**, 1908, pp.20-25, 62-65. I am grateful to Dr Jeremy Boulton for suggesting this reference.
20. I was fortunate to have had access to the correspondence from Peter Earle to Tony Wrigley about the Sedgemoor rebels, and the convicted men's statements given below are drawn from Earle's research.
21. D.S. Smith, 'Child naming practices as cultural and familial indicators', **Local Population Studies**, 32, 1984, pp.17-27; D.S. Smith, 'Child-naming practices, kinship ties and change in family attitudes in Hingham, Massachusetts 1641 to 1880', **Journal of Social History**, 19, 1985, pp.541-65 has analysed Puritan naming practices in New England.
22. Pulman, **The book of the Axe**, 1875, p.507; J. Murch, **A history of the Presbyterian churches in the west of England**, 1935, p.322.
23. G. Eyre Evans, **Colytonia: a chapter in the history of Devon**, 1898. there is also information in E. Windeatt, 'Early nonconformity in the neighbourhood of Seaton', **Transactions of the Devonshire Association**, 1885, pp.298-312 and W.B. Matthews, 'A shorter history of George's Meeting, Colyton', (unpublished manuscript available in D.R.O. reference 3242 D/23, 1911).
24. S. Anderson Smith, **Extracts from wills proved in P.C.C. relating to the parishes of Colyton and Shute**, 1901.
25. A.A. Brockett, **Nonconformity in Devon in the eighteenth century**, 1958, pp.31-59.
26. R.S. Schofield, 'Representativeness and family reconstitution', **Annales de Démographie Historique**, 1972, pp.122-5.
27. R. Polwhele, **The history of Devonshire**, 1793, p.53.
28. B. Clapp, 'The place of Colyton in English population history', **The Devon Historian**, 1982, pp.4-9. Also personal communication with Mrs Ena Cummings concerning her reconstitution of the parish of Morchard Bishop. More generally, Wrigley and Schofield, **Population history**, 1981, pp.89-95 and J. Landers, 'Mortality and metropolis: the case of London 1675-1825', **Population Studies**, 41, 1987, pp.59-76 comment on Quakerism affecting registration patterns. The evidence presented here suggests that other nonconformist groups also had this effect. Caffyn, **Sussex believers**, 1988 uses Baptist genealogies and finds that Baptists certainly married into their own community before 1753. He associates nonconformity with a non-resident marryer pattern which is also indicated by the registers of Devon churches, since these may have had incumbents who were willing to tailor their wedding services to the requirements of nonconformists in order to validate their marriages in civil law. Seventy per cent of Baptists in Sussex married in an Anglican church.