

## CORRESPONDENCE

Letters intended for publication in **LPS** should be sent to Kevin Schürer, 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.

### **A call for help**

Dear Sir,

This is both a letter of thanks and an appeal for help. **LPS** readers who have known me since my student days will know that I have an illness of twenty years standing which has frequently prevented me from working for long periods. This has only been correctly diagnosed and treated in the last two years as Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) and, as a result, I am now left severely disabled, housebound and frequently bedridden. The situation is that sometimes my brain works and my body does not; sometimes my body works and my brain does not; sometimes neither work; and sometimes both function together and I am relatively well. It is unlikely that this will change much from now on and there is no possibility of my returning to full-time research.

I have managed to write to a few people who have been of particular help to me but I'm afraid it is an impossible task to write to everyone personally. I owe many notes of thanks and many of you will have put me down as a bad correspondent. But I am not ungrateful, it is just that it has become more and more difficult to carry on, especially during the last five to six years. So, this is a general 'thank you' to everyone who has offered or provided me with accommodation; helped me to apply for grants; find publishers for my books; sent me reprints, illustrations and references; commented constructively on my work; and encouraged me to carry on research in a subject which is so wide and multidisciplinary that it often seemed impossible that one person alone could complete it. I would like to assure the grant committees, to whom I owe end of grant reports, that their money has been well spent and that I am always careful to acknowledge their financial assistance in my publications.

Now to my request for help. I would like to continue my research from home during the periods when I am well enough to work and, particularly, to write up the material I was working on before I became too ill to continue in 1989.

My greatest problem is keeping up with the literature because I cannot travel to libraries. I can only continue if you will help me by sending me reprints, references, illustrations, publishers' catalogues, information about relevant theses and reports, library accession lists, notices of conferences and symposia and their proceedings, and any publications of computer searches you think might be useful. Because I will only be able to work at a slow pace I need to receive this information on a long-term basis.

My main areas of interest are the feeding and care of infants in all countries and all periods, but particularly Britain, the British Empire, Europe and USA in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: infant feeding vessels, nipple shields and breast pumps, human milk banks, breastfeeding and Aids, breastfeeding and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, wet nursing, nurse children, fertility and lactation, the effect of women's work on feeding methods, maternal nutrition and welfare; infant welfare; infant morbidity and mortality; maternal mortality; foundlings and foundling hospitals; infanticide, abuse and overlaying of infants; swaddling; history of nutrition, particularly nutritional deficiency diseases (Rickets, infantile Scurvy, infantile Beri-Beri, Kwashiorkor, etc.); diarrhoeal disease; history of paediatrics, childhood and the family. I also need to know about current research on breastfeeding, artificial feeding and weaning worldwide.

If you feel you could help me liaise with publishers or notice any grants for which I might be eligible to help cover research expenses, and/or could help me to apply for them, please let me know. Also, if any of you are throwing out books, papers or office equipment which might be of use to someone working at home please think of me. Anything would be helpful. All I have at present is an Amstrad PCW 8256 (with no software) and a calculator.

In return, I would like to use my sixteen years of knowledge and experience to help people researching in the same field. I often receive letters requesting information but as I am frequently unable to write or type I have great difficulty in replying to these. Instead, if people would telephone me during the day, preferably in the morning, then I could deal with request in a few sentences. If anyone would find it helpful to discuss their research they are welcome to visit me at home provided they telephone first to make sure I am well enough (Junction 10 on M1; Junction 8 on A1(M); A10 and A505 from Cambridge). I am unable to give lectures, present papers in person, or commit myself to any deadlines but I do hope to meet several outstanding commitments to books and publishers. I hope very much that editors will still feel I have something to offer but it will need to be on the understanding that if I am too ill to meet the deadline they will need to have a second string in mind. I am also able to comment on, or edit, papers; referee papers for journals, and do the occasional book review, but only if they are central to my subject and one at a time. If you think I could help in this, please telephone me first to check the current situation. As I cannot afford reprints unless the journal or publisher provides them free I'm afraid I cannot respond to casual reprint requests but I shall continue to send reprints or copies of my publications to those on my reprint list and those to whom I have promised copies.

If you work in a department please leave a copy of this letter with the secretary and librarian and post it on your notice board, and if you are going to a conference please put a few copies in your briefcase to distribute to interested parties. My ability to continue at all depends entirely on whether, and how much, other people are prepared to help me.

Yours faithfully  
Valerie Fildes

Holt View, Lye Hill, Breachwood Green, Hitchin, Herts. SG4 8PP. Telephone (0438) 833 244.

### **Small Towns in England - ESRC Research Project**

Dear Sir

The Small Towns Project, based at the Centre for Urban History, University of Leicester, has been running under the direction of Professor Peter Clark since 1985. Funded by the ESRC, the European Commission, and the Nuffield Foundation, the Project has been collecting and computerizing historical data for England's "small towns", for the period 1600-1850. Following our previous notices in *LPS*, interested individuals and local history groups have kindly helped us by providing information. Our volunteer and Leicester-based research teams have now helped assemble over 100 parish register aggregations. These have been added to the 97 aggregations generously donated by the ESRC Cambridge Group to the Project from their collection of 404.

The Project has steadily built up information for a historical database, to allow the changing fortunes of England's 800-plus "small towns" to be charted during the early-modern period. Data has thus far been collected in two principal areas: demographic information from parish registers, using the Cambridge Group methodology; and occupational data, transcribed using forms and protocols designed at Leicester, in consultation with Loughborough University. Data collection has now begun in a third field, looking at a range of "soico-cultural" indicators - numbers and types of societies, schools, local publications, etc. This combination of information will form the basis for future micro and macro studies on the development of England's small towns. Preliminary findings, from Professor Clark and Dr Wilson, will be published in a forthcoming Cambridge University Press volume on European Small Towns, edited by Peter Clark.

We would be glad to hear from other local historians or groups who would be interested in taking part in the Project.

Yours faithfully  
Emmett Sullivan

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