

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.

Occupational analysis: a plea to readers

Dear Sir,

LPS 38 for Spring 1987, carried a report that Professor Cole of Swansea had embarked on a major study of long-term trends in the wealth of the middle classes in the centuries leading up to the Industrial Revolution, i.e. from **circa** 1530 to 1780.

The project, which is based mainly on a large-scale sample of probate inventories, is expected to generate a good deal of information on changes in the occupational distribution of the population which are generally regarded as a key indicator of economic development. But it is well known that inventories tend to be socially biased in that some groups, such as yeomen, were more likely to make wills than others, e.g. labourers. It is most important, therefore, to try to obtain data on the occupational distribution of the adult population as a whole from an independent source in order to supplement and, if possible, correct, that derived from probate inventories. For this reason, I invited offers of help from local historians who might be willing to comb through the parish registers for their locality in order to identify any (and particularly **burial** registers) which may contain this information for the **sixteenth** and **seventeenth** centuries, and, where practicable, to tabulate the data for selected years throughout the early modern period.

After a promising initial response to my appeal, the project has been virtually at a standstill in the last few years, in part, perhaps, because some potential volunteers have been otherwise engaged on the Cambridge Group study of occupational distribution in the early nineteenth century. I understand, however, that this is unlikely to be so in the future, and since my own work on probate inventories will take several years to complete, I should like to take this opportunity to renew my appeal for help with the collection of occupational data from the parish registers for earlier periods.

I am at present concentrating my efforts on ten counties in midland and southern England for which the probate records happen to be particularly good – northern Shropshire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire in the West Midlands, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire in the East, and southern Wiltshire, Hampshire (including the Isle of Wight) and west Sussex in the South. Occupational information from these areas is especially needed at this stage; but since it is hoped that the study will eventually be extended to other parts of the country, offers of help from local historians anywhere in England and Wales would be most gratefully received.

Anyone who may be able to assist should write to me at the address below.

Yours sincerely
W.A. Cole

31 The Chestnuts, West Street, Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire PE18 8HH.

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