

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.

The Shrewsbury frankpledge

Dear Sir,

Reading Phillipp Schofield's recent piece in *LPS* 52 on frankpledge lists in medieval Essex has prompted me to inform readers of a correction which ought to be made to my earlier article on the frankpledge population in Shrewsbury, which appeared in *LPS* 41. There I implied that the lists which exist for that town, although different in some respects, were equivalent to the tithing lists which survive for other towns and vills, such as the borough of Maldon in Essex and the communities described by Schofield and others. Returning recently, however, to the study of Shrewsbury's history in order to prepare a contribution for the Victoria County History, I now realize that this was a mistake. In Shropshire frankpledge as a system of collective peace-keeping, including a review of the tithing, had never existed, although confusingly the term 'view of frankpledge' was employed in some liberties (Shrewsbury included) as an alternative description of the 'great court' or court leet (see *V.C.H. Shropshire*, III, 20-1, 53). The Shrewsbury 'frankpledge' lists are in fact suit lists of those men who were obliged to attend the biannual meetings of the court leet – in practice mainly householders as I tried to show in my piece – and this explains why no reference is ever made in these lists to the tithing, chief pledges and other features of the frankpledge system. The same is true of similar lists that survive for other towns in Shropshire and Herefordshire.

Although the populations recorded in suit and tithing lists obviously differ somewhat, the problems relating to the composition and interpretation of these lists are not dissimilar, and the best suit lists too can be used as indices of migration and mortality. In Shrewsbury, for example, an excellent listing with occupations given was drawn up for the great court in October 1664 and this was kept up and amended until April 1668 (Shropshire Record Office 3365/1342). From the clerk's annotations it is possible to calculate that of the 1,207 males originally listed in 1664, the names of 88 were later erased because

they had died, 2 because they had been hanged, and 184 because they had left in the meantime ('abiiit'). Some 23 names were also crossed out without explanation. It can be shown, however, that many of those who had gone or were erased without explanation had in fact simply moved from one street to another (this is occasionally mentioned explicitly). Adjusting for this, we are left with 125 men who appear to have left Shrewsbury altogether between October 1664 and April 1668. (Of course there were others who came and then left or died in the meantime, including one even said to have been drowned, 'mergitur'). These calculations are not meant to be definitive, but to indicate the kind of elementary work on turnover and migration that can be done by using informative suit lists of this kind.

Yours faithfully,
Bill Champion

W. A. Champion, Farmore, Callow, Dewsall, Hereford, HR2 8DB.

Counting marriages

Dear Sir,

I read Peter Razzell's new book **Essays in English population history** with interest, particularly those parts where he quotes figures for marriages in Canterbury Diocese.

I have spent many years compiling an Index of all marriages in East Kent from 1538-1753, using Parish Registers, Bishops' and Archdeacons' Transcripts, Marriage Licences, Quaker and Jewish records and town Year Books. So far, I have analysed the figures for 1661-1690. This does not correspond exactly with Peter Razzell's quoted periods, but as it overlaps, comparison of the figures may be of interest. He takes the total number of marriages from the Enumeration Abstract 1841 Census, from which he calculates that 50.74 per cent of marriages were by licence, but using original records, marriages averaged 910 per year. As all records have not survived, the true number would be higher. The proportion of marriages by licence was 37 per cent. Of the marriages by licence, 15 per cent do not appear in the Parish Registers, so that figures using Parish Registers alone are inaccurate. Only 2 per cent shown in Parish Registers as by licence do not appear in the Canterbury Marriage Licences. Some of these would have been issued by other authorities anyway, so it appears that the survival rate of Canterbury Marriage Licences is very good. The following table and figure shows how the figures of marriages varied from year to year. As some parishes took several years to return to normal record-keeping after the Restoration, the figures for 1661-1662 are incomplete. The surge of marriages and re-marriages in the aftermath of the plague in the mid-1660s, and ague, smallpox and particularly influenza in the late 1670s is clearly visible.

Fourteen per cent of the total numbers of grooms and fifteen per cent of brides were shown as widowed. In 7 per cent of the marriages, both parties were

widowed. Age at marriage is seldom shown in the Parish Registers, but may be shown more frequently on the licence. For grooms, age was shown in 22 per cent of the total number of marriages. Of these, 0.5 per cent were married before they were 20, 47.4 per cent by the time they were 25, 41 per cent by the time they were 30, and 10.5 per cent were over 30. For brides, age was shown in 24.5 per cent of the total. Of these, 10.25 per cent were married before 20, 61.25 per cent by the time they were 25, 23.5 per cent by the time they were 30 and 5 per cent over 30.

Other subjects analysed were the distribution of the population of marriageable age in East Kent, with a comparison of the 1664 Hearth tax and 1676 Compton Census figures; where people found their partners and where they married them; occupations; and favoured months for marriage.

As time permits, I hope to analyse other sections from my Index.

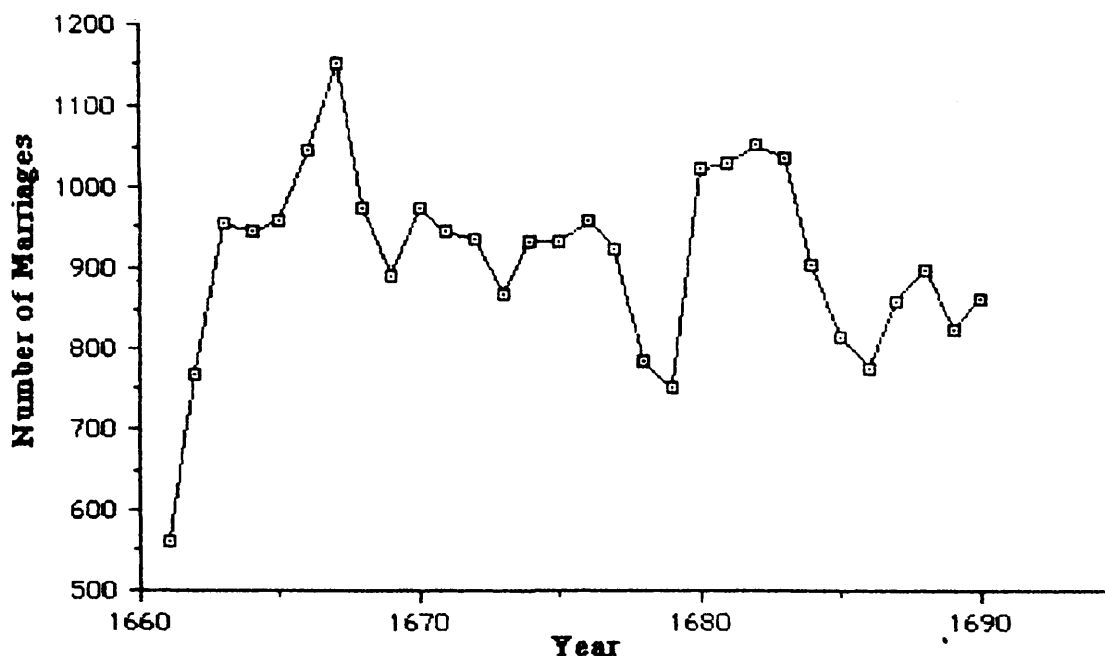
Yours faithfully,
Jane Jones

Weir Bank Lodge, Monkey Island Lane, Bray, Maidenhead, Berks. SL6 2ED.

Table 1 **Number of marriages per year**

Year	n. of marriages	Year	n. of marriages
1661	562	1676	957
1662	769	1677	921
1663	956	1678	784
1664	946	1679	750
1665	959	1680	1024
1666	1044	1681	1029
1667	1151	1682	1052
1668	975	1683	1035
1669	890	1684	904
1670	973	1685	812
1671	944	1686	773
1672	935	1687	859
1673	867	1688	896
1674	931	1689	821
1675	932	1690	861

Figure 1 Number of marriages per year



1851 and 1861 printed census volumes for England and Wales

Dear Sir

Readers might be interested in a project I am currently undertaking to produce a machine-readable version of the 1851 and 1861 printed census volumes for England and Wales. Data for the censuses are being keyed onto computer together with vital registration data for the period 1851-55 and Registrar General's **Supplement** to his 1861 report. The data set, once completed, should prove to be an important teaching aid and it is hoped to produce an **Atlas of mid-nineteenth century England and Wales**. To date 116 of the 623 registration districts have been entered onto computer in an area stretching from Bristol to North Lancashire. Preliminary analysis of the data is already throwing up some fascinating findings. The employment of married women, contrary to expectation, was found to be highest in the ribbon and silk towns of the west midlands. Illegitimacy, averaging c. 8 per cent of live births, was found to be highest in the rural districts of the midlands and lowest in the large urban conurbations. Further analysis of the data revealed that only part of the difference can be explained by the under-registration of births in urban areas, and analysis of the marriage data revealed a tendency towards late marriage in those areas where illegitimacy was highest. If you would like to know more about this project please contact me at the office on 0782 573623 or at home on 0782 415340.

Yours faithfully
D. A. Gatley

Dr D.A. Gatley, 114 Thornton Road, Shelton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs. ST4 2BD.