

CORRESPONDENCE

Letters intended for publication in *LPS* should be sent to Kevin Schürer, *LPS*, Department of History, University of Essex, Colchester, CO4 3SQ.

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.

Birthplaces in the 1881 Census

I write to you on behalf of the Nineteenth-Century Censuses Collection Project at the University of Essex to ask for your help on a matter which may interest *LPS* readers. The project is funded with a grant from the Leverhulme Trust to work on the machine-readable 1881 British census created by the Genealogical Society of Utah with the assistance of the Federation of Family History Societies and many others.

This database was created by transcribing the census enumerators' books verbatim onto computer, complete with all the variations of form and spelling that were contained within the original. In order to make these data more useable we are classifying two of the most used and variable items in the CEBs – places of birth and occupations. We estimate that there are about 1.5 million *unique* birthplace descriptions in the census and around 3 million *unique* occupational descriptions which require classification..

Birthplaces in the census are of vital importance and great interest to the historical community and it is our intention to classify every birthplace given in the 1881 census to one of the 16,198 civil parishes into which Britain was at that time divided (or, if foreign, a country of birth). The majority of birthplaces within each county can be classified in a straightforward manner. Variants of parish names, such as Ambleston in Pembrokeshire, are coded quickly (see the accompanying illustration), and these make up the majority of the place-names mentioned in the census. However, the census also contains a large number of places which are not so straightforward – an example is "Colney Park Farm" in Hertfordshire. It is these places which are particularly problematic, for in the case of those place-names as the sub-parish level it is hard to determine their location without quite detailed local knowledge.

Since our time is limited – two years for the completion of all the occupation and birthplace classification – it would be too time-consuming for us to search all of the necessary local sources such as maps, directories and local histories for these more obscure place-names. We would therefore like to enlist any assistance that local historians and other interested individuals are prepared to give us. We would like, therefore, to send any interested readers, a copy of a) the standard list of civil parishes for a given county, and b) a complete list of all place-names given in the CEBs for that county. Some of these will already have been classified to parish level, but the remainder require identification. To give some idea of the type of work involved an example of the types of entry to be dealt with is appended to this letter.

Once the project has been completed, in return for the assistance sought we will provide those contributing with a copy of the finished birthplace dictionary for the county concerned. This will give every unique birthplace as recorded in the census, as well as its associated civil parish, Ordnance Survey grid-reference, Registration District and Sub-District identifiers. This will provide an invaluable tool in aiding local history research.

Lastly, I should like to point out that the computerised census data we are using for this project are held by the History Data Service (HDS) at the University of Essex, and an *uncoded* version will be made available shortly for research and teaching purposes. Researchers will be able to obtain data for individual counties in column separated format but should be aware that the data for many counties are very large and pose significant data management and analysis problems. Potential users of the data are asked to write to the HDS, University of Essex, Colchester, CO4 3SQ or email sheila@essex.ac.uk. The HDS regrets that it is unable to provide a service for genealogical research at the present time.

If any societies, groups or individuals are interested in participating in this project they should write to Mark Allen at the University of Essex, who will provide further details. Alternatively, those interested can gain further information by e-mailing mark@essex.ac.uk or phoning 01206 - 873026 (direct line).

Yours faithfully

M. Allen
Department of History, University of Essex
Colchester, CO4 3SQ

Extracts from the Pembrokeshire data

<i>CEB Place-names</i>	<i>Standard Parish</i>	<i>CEB Place-names</i>	<i>Standard Parish</i>
Ambleiton	Ambleston	Amoth	Amroth
Ambleton	Ambleston	Aunderfoot	
Ambelston	Ambleston	Amlet	
Amblaston	Ambleston	Amlaston	Ambleston
Amblesstone	Ambleston	Amlesto	Ambleston
Ambleston Parish	Ambleston	Amleston	Ambleston
Amblestone	Ambleston	Amlston	Ambleston
Amblston	Ambleston	Amorth	Amroth
Ampleston	Ambleston	Amroath	Amroth
Ambra		Amroath	Amroth
Amborth	Amroth	Amroht	Amroth
Ambrath	Amroth	Amroth	Amroth
Ambroath	Amroth	Amroth Parish	Amroth
Ambroth	Amroth	.	
Ambwth	Amroth	.	
Amberson	Ambleston	.	
Ambaston	Ambleston	Cellan	
Ambeston	Ambleston	Cilgran	Kilgerran
Angle	Angle	Cilgrin	Kilgerran
Angle Parish	Angle	Cold Blow	
Angle Hill		Coldblow	
Angle Pembroke	Angle	Cleadall	
Amhoath	Amroth	Coldlyn	

Should you decide to help us you will receive a list on a computer disk (or if you prefer on paper) like this for your county. The column to the left contains the place-names exactly as given in the census enumerators' books. The column on the right gives the parish that we have assigned to each place-name. You will also receive a standard list of parishes.

We would ask you to perform the following:

Firstly, check the list of standard names (not shown here) and keep a note of any spelling errors on this list, although we would *not* require you to change any of the standard names or add any names. Some parishes may appear to be missing from the list as we are deliberately using a list of 1881 parishes.

Moving onto the list of names to be coded, (in the left column) you will note that most of the names already have a parish allotted to them by us (in the right column). We would ask you to check that we have not, in error, mistakenly inserted the incorrect parish name by each place. This can occur when two places in the county have similar names.

There are gaps in our list where a parish name is prefixed or suffixed to another

word. In the example given there is a parish named 'Angle'. There is also a place named 'Angle Hill'. This place *may* be in the parish of Angle, but this is not necessarily the case. We would like you to attempt to fill these in, if possible with the correct parish name. An OS grid reference could also be given.

Sometimes places from other counties are incorrectly assigned to 'your' county. In the example opposite 'Cellan' is actually in Cardiganshire. Should you come across such a place-name and you know which county it should be in then you would be asked to note the correct county name or to state positively that it is not in your county.

Some places remain blank for other reasons. They may be names of hamlets, farms or unknown places where we do not know the correct parish to assign them to. We would ask you to fill in the *correct place-name and parish name* (if known) using your local knowledge to fill the gap!

Patterns of consumption

Dear Sir,

I am currently undertaking a project aimed at reconstructing the consumption patterns, with a particular focus on furniture, of middling and elite groups in north Lancashire and south Westmorland during the period 1650–1750. I am going to consider a number of different sources, but one of the key elements will be collections of probate inventories. Since many people have in the past transcribed inventories for various reasons, I would very much like to hear from anyone who might have inventory or other material on consumption which they would be willing for me to look at or who might know of collections of transcribed inventories for these areas.

Yours faithfully

Linda McGhie
Department of Historical and Critical Studies
University of Central Lancashire
Preston, PR1 2HE

Babbage to Tennyson

Dear Sir,

In reading through F. Spufford and J. Uglow's *Cultural Babbage: technology and the history of culture* (London, 1996) I discovered the following letter from Charles Babbage – inventor of the difference engine, an early fore-runner to the modern day computer – to Alfred Tennyson, written in 1851. It may interest LPS readers. Was he right, I wonder?

Sir: In your otherwise beautiful poem, 'The Vision of Sin' there is a verse which reads – 'Every moment dies a man, Every moment one is born.' It must be manifest that if this were true, the population of the world would be at a standstill... I would suggest that in the next edition of your poem you have it read – 'Every moment a man dies. Every moment $1\frac{1}{16}$ is born.'... The actual figure is so long I cannot get it onto a line, but I believe the figure $1\frac{1}{16}$ will be sufficiently accurate for poetry.

I am, Sir, your, &c., Charles Babbage

Your faithfully

C. R. Murex
Knowles Cottage, Belchamp St Paul
near Clare, Suffolk

Hertfordshire in 1851 reviewed

Dear Sir,

I would like to thank you for printing a review of my *Population, economy and family structure in Hertfordshire in 1851. Volume I. The Berkhamsted region* (Hatfield, 1996) in the last issue of LPS. I thought, however, I had better point out that there appears to be an important discrepancy between what I wrote about marriage patterns and what was reported in the review of the book. The data clearly show that where (or because) the sex ratio was skewed women tended to marry *later*, and more remained unmarried: they did not marry *earlier* as stated in the review.

The review also refers to '285 pages of indigestible printout'. The reason the book was published in this format was to give something back to the army of volunteer genealogists and family historians who collected all the data in the first place. This is the format the majority of them wanted. I am, however, considering producing a CD. ROM for each region in turn, probably in Excel for ease of convertibility, as suggested in the review.

Yours faithfully

Nigel Goose
University of Hertfordshire,
Wall Hall, Aldenham, Watford, Herts.