CORRESPONDENCE

Access to Records: L.P.S. 3 and 5

Dear Sir,

It is unusual for me to break the anonymity of the public servant but the correspondence columns of your Autumn 1970 issue contain such remarkable statements that an answer from a professional archivist seems called for.

A single basic assumption can be seen to underlie the letters of Sir Anthony Wagner and Mr. Stanes and, indeed, I suspect is shared by other genealogists and demographers. This is that records are created and preserved for historical reasons. In fact there is no necessary connection between records or archives and history. They are preserved for practical, legal and administrative purposes and their historical value is a by-product of the passage of time and the indulgence of their creators in making provision for their permanent preservation and public access. Let us be quite clear that, with certain clearly defined statutory exceptions, no person has a right of access to the records held by either a local or national archive repository.

With respect to Sir Anthony his thesis seems to be that the sins of the fathers should be committed by the children! Had any of the Government officials who were so complaisant been discovered today they would have undoubtedly have suffered instant dismissal and severe penalties would be likely to result in a Local Authority in similar circumstances. The archivist must remember his responsibility to the creator or depositor of his archives. This is the answer to Mr. Stanes alleged 'difficulties' made by Record Offices. No document can be removed from a repository without stringent precautions, one of which is that it may only pass out of custody if it is being returned to the original depositor. Once in his hands, of course, he is (usually) a free agent. The archivist is not.

I certainly agree that the provision of capital investment and of staff (particularly non-professional) is generally inadequate, but your correspondents are after all the people who are actually providing the money. Are they prepared to press the Government and Local Authorities to spend more on records and to pay the necessary extra rates and taxes?

Yours faithfully,

S.C. Newton

County Archivist, County of East Sussex Record Office, Pelham House, Lewes, Sussex

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Dear Sir,

As both an archivist of a diocesan record office and as an adult tutor with experience of classes in demographic work, I would like to comment on Mr. Stanes' letter in LPS 5.

Mr. Stanes is quite correct in pointing out the difficulties of conducting evening classes where it is desired to work on parish registers which have been deposited in the local record office. This is a difficult problem and one to which there is no easy solution, but the alternative is by no means always plain sailing. There can be just as many problems where the records are still in the parish. Some tutors have had experience of outright refusal by incumbents of access for this purpose, or of consent subject only to certain rigid rules. Mr. Stanes has obviously been lucky.

Looking at the whole subject of deposit from a broader viewpoint, I do not doubt that, as a worker in the local history field, Mr. Stanes uses the resources of his local record office for other projects, and accepts unquestioningly the fact that records have been gathered into one place from a thousand and one different owners and custodians (and many rescued from destruction) for the convenience of himself and fellow-users. In other words, deposit of documents by everyone else is to be encouraged, so long as it does not include the records he happens to want at that time! Secondly, although I am not doubting in the least the value of adult classes, may I remind him that there are many other persons besides adult tutors who require to use parish registers? He may not consider genealogy as worthwhile a pursuit as demography, but in terms of volume of demand, genealogists have a far greater right to comment on the question of deposit of registers, and they are invariably in favour of the records being transferred to record offices. And, indeed has Mr. Stanes considered the case of, for example, the professional demographer from Cambridge or another University who wishes to take a sample survey from six adjacent parish registers in a distant county? With registers in the local Record Office, he could complete the task in a day's trip to the Office, making the trip virtually any day he chose, and consulting the registers in comparative comfort. What would be the result if he had to make six separate arrangements with six separate incumbents and then travel around all the parishes?

Finally, I would ask Mr. Stanes one further question. If the records he wanted to use in a local church were found to be
damp and decaying, would he encourage deposit in the record office in order to arrest the decay, or would he continue to use them for his class and then let them rot away for future generations to worry about?

Yours faithfully,

Adrian Henstock,
County Archivist,
Nottinghamshire Record Office,
High Pavement, Nottingham

Dear Sir,

I have read with interest the recent correspondence in your publication regarding access to census schedules, and to the fact that these are open in Scotland to 1891. Since access to that year is applauded, the implication is that the Scottish example should be followed. Instead of the authorities moving in that direction the opposite is true, and Scotland is being brought into line with England. No further schedules will be opened until the year 2001, when access will be given to the 1901 returns. The reasons for the restrictions are given by Mr. Archibald L. Rennie, present Registrar General for Scotland, in a recent contribution to The Scottish Genealogist, vol. xviii, No. 2 June, 1971.

Yours faithfully,

Donald Whyte,
J.P., F.S.A.Scot.,
Genealogist and Record Agent,
4 Carmel Road,
Kirkliston,
West Lothian,
Scotland
Dear Sir,

On page 26 of the article on baptism seasonality, the question is raised as to whether there was any canonical law regarding dates for the administration of baptism. I hope that these few remarks may be of interest, even if they do not help to solve the problem!

The first Christian converts were mainly adult. The season of Lent had its origin in a period of instruction and preparation prior to their Baptism on Easter Eve. Before the eighth century it is thought that nearly all Baptisms took place then. Later, Whitsun was added as a second suitable occasion.

The First English Prayer Book (1549) had this introduction to the service for the Administration of Public Baptism:-

"It appeareth by ancient writers that the Sacrament of Baptism in the old time was not commonly ministered but at two times in the year - at Easter and Whitsuntide, at which times it was openly ministered in the presence of all the congregation. Which custom (now being grown out of use) although it cannot be well restored again, yet it is thought to follow the same as near as conveniently may be ... Wherefore it is most convenient that Baptism be not administered but upon Sundays and other Holy Days when the most number of people come together..."

The Second English Prayer Book (1552) contained the same rubric. When the present Prayer Book was issued in 1662, the old custom was largely forgotten and it was not repeated. Yet some parishes no doubt followed the old ways. In fact it can be found in some places today - when a Solemn Baptism takes place at Easter.

When one considers that the Easter Day can fall on any day from March 22 - April 25, and Whitsunday (dependent upon it) from May 20 - June 13, this old custom may well have played havoc with attempts to interpret the Seasonality of Baptism in some places at various times.


Yours faithfully,

James W. Branson,

15 Upper St. Michaels Road, Aldershot, Hants.

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Has L.P.S. become too technical?

Dear Sirs,

I, a reader from your first issue, am sorry but not surprised that the finances of L.P.S. are precarious. 550 is not a large subscription list and I feel that one difficulty in the way of increasing it might well be that you have not really decided yet just who you are trying to interest. Are your readers amateur or professional historians?

Speaking as an amateur I must say that I find Mr. Bradley's article in No. 5 most discouraging, and it seems to me altogether too academic and to be raising difficulties for difficulty's sake. I say this with some hesitancy since I know the care with which Mr. Bradley works, and the patience he displays in dealing with less experienced people.

Mr. Bradley says, "We need to keep clear the distinction between birth and baptism". Do we? Why? In order to discover what? And indeed can we, if the date of birth is very seldom given?

I imagine that our group is very much like others up and down the country and we use baptism entries for several purposes, as follows:

1. for counting the number of children born in the Parish over the years 1560-1840.
2. for help in assessing the size of families
3. for help in assessing the age of the mother at the birth of her children.
4. for help in assessing the age of people at marriage and/or death.

You will notice that I have used the word "assessing" rather than 'calculating" since one of the first things one must accept when embarking on demographic studies is that, unless one is exceptionally lucky in the amount of information available, many of one's figures and conclusions must be tentative.

For my first use of baptism entries there is really no problem because anyone baptised was certainly born, and whether they are 6 days, 6 weeks or 6 months doesn't matter, unless there is real danger that both birth and baptism are recorded in such a way that

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the entries are thought to refer to two separate people. This would have to happen very often to have any appreciable effect on numbers. Of course one cannot be certain that at least the first child of a marriage was not born in another parish, but in the years before 1851 one could really only discover that by accident.

For the 2nd use the age at baptism matters a little more, because delay in baptising the first child might lead to one not recognising the second child as his sibling. For example, John Cooper, baptised 4.8.1654, might be younger brother to Ann Cooper baptised 5.3.1654, but only if Ann was several months old at baptism. How can one know?

In the 3rd use we get really into the realms of uncertainty. To illustrate: Mary Gill, baptised 4.7.1714 married John Dabell 2.6.1733 and her first child was baptised 9.4.1735. Was Mary Gill married just before she was 19? If she was baptised at the age of 1 month or older, then she was just over 19 when married. If baptised at the age of less than 1 month then she was just under 19 when married. Can we be sure? Does it matter? We can't be sure. Unless the birth/baptism interval is so great as to be completely misleading then I don't think the uncertainty need worry us.

Can we safely assume that Mary was married nearly 2 years before the birth of her first child? We really don't know. We might try to hazard a guess by looking at her year of marriage to see if we can discover any circumstances which might make it difficult or unwise for her to have a child earlier. Was it a year of bad harvest? of some natural disaster? of war?. Do we know her husband's occupation and did it require long absence from home? Was there a long clerical interregnum just before the baptism of her child? To some of these questions we may be able to find no answer. To try to answer others we might make a cautious guess. If this is all we know is it not reasonable to say "We can't be sure, but it looks as though Mary Gill, born in 1714 married at the age of 19 and had her first child nearly 2 years later, shortly before she was 21?".

Of course we may have one more piece of information about Mary Gill which would be useful. Supposing the Register says "Mary Dabell (whom we know to have been Mary Gill before marriage) buried 10.11.1790 age 76? This sort of entry is quite common.

This brings in our 4th use of baptism entries. A simple calculation shows that, if 76 is reasonably accurate, then Mary Gill
was indeed born in 1714. Of course we may doubt the accuracy of the age '76' as well, but if we are going to doubt everything then we might as well give up. If the age given at burial obviously does not tie up with the baptism date, e.g. 68 or 79, then, seeing how inaccurate ages were even by the time of Census returns, I would still assume the year of baptism to be the year of birth and would regard the given age at burial as likely to be inaccurate.

And that brings me to why I find Mr. Bradley's article discouraging. A glance at the following tables will show what I mean.

**Burton Joyce, Notts.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Total no. of baptisms</th>
<th>Recorded births</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1601-1650</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1651-1700</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1701-1750</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1751-1800</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1801-1830</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,353</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is it not discouraging to think that in only 67 cases out of a total of 2,420 one can safely make an estimate of age? In fact, in these 67 cases it would not be an estimate at all, but a fairly certain fact.

Let us look at these 67 cases to see if they are so grouped as to be worth using as any kind of indication of pattern.

**Birth/Baptism intervals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>in days</th>
<th>0-7</th>
<th>8-14</th>
<th>15-21</th>
<th>22-28</th>
<th>29-35</th>
<th>36-42</th>
<th>43-49</th>
<th>50-56</th>
<th>57-63</th>
<th>71-77</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1601-50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1651-1700</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57-63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1701-50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1751-1800</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1801-30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>age 14 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There seem to be three interesting points to notice about this table.

1. In these 67 cases where birth is noted as well as baptism, spread as they are through the years, the intervals between birth and baptism must surely be exceptional to make them worthy of note.
2. The instances would all took place in the years 1701, 1702 or 1703 and constitute 90% of all baptisms for those years.

3. Except during these early years of the 18th century very often there is only one child in a family whose birth is given as well as baptism, or whose age at baptism is recorded.

What then is the interval to which these intervals are the exception? It seems quite impossible to say. And these instances seem too few and too scattered to indicate any accepted practice, so, with respect, it would seem to me that, from the point of view of an amateur like me Mr. Bradley's search is fruitless and I could better and more profitably spend my time examining ways in which I can use those figures which are available to the greatest purpose.

Which brings me back to where I came in. To whom is Mr. Bradley's undoubtedly learned article directed?

Yours truly,

Margaret Massey,
14 St. Helen's Grove,
Burton Joyce, Nottingham

A reply from Leslie Bradley

The question of the readership at which L.P.S. is aimed is, of course, a matter for the editors. I am on Mrs. Massey's side. I have taken it that L.P.S. was intended to be a link between people interested in population studies, both professional and amateur, and I would be sorry to see it direct itself solely to the professional. There is room for both - but I suspect that the editors will point out that amateurs have been backward in submitting articles, and that they may well ask Mrs. Massey to suggest what kind of article she would like to see in L.P.S., not in general terms like "not too technical", but in more specific detail.

I am sorry that Mrs. Massey finds my article discouraging - but surely she has misunderstood the position. I, an amateur like Mrs. Massey, was asked to write on Seasonality, and in that context the birth-baptism interval is important. There is no question of "raising difficulties for difficulty's sake." If assertions are made about birth seasonality without knowledge of the birth-baptism interval they are, quite bluntly, invalid. In many other aspects of population
studies, including those which Mrs. Massey indicates, the birth-baptism interval is of no consequence at all. There is, however, the general point, of which this is just one instance, that whether one is amateur or professional, whether the aspect with which one is dealing is simple or complex, it is important not to state conclusions without stating clearly the assumptions on which they are based.

(The editors hope other readers will express their views on this subject).

1542 Muster Rolls

Dear Sir,

Pages 586/587 of the printed Papers of King Henry VIII, for 1542, give the figures for the Muster of that year for various Oxfordshire Hundreds. I am particularly interested in the Bampton Hundred which covered this village of Standlake.

I should be most grateful if you could give me any guidance regarding the relation between the figures shown in the Muster, (20 for Standlake) and the current population - unfortunately the date is prior to Parish Registers.

The only clue I have so far unearthed is in an article on "English Population in the early 16th Century", in Ec.H.R. 2nd Ser, Vol.XXIII (1970) which suggests that

a) the proportion of female to male was 93.4 to 100
b) 40% of the population was under 16.

I did not notice a percentage for over-60s, but if one assumed this to be in the order of 20%, one could arrive at a hazardous guess - again with the assumption that the Muster figure represented 100% of the 16-60 yr. population (male)! Or did it?

I would be grateful for any suggestions - I do not know of any contemporary census which might serve as a comparison.

Yours faithfully,
F.R.L. Goadby,
Gaunt Mill, Standlake,
Nr. Witney, Oxon

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Roger Schofield comments:

As Brigadier Goadby has correctly observed, there are always two questions to be answered when using lists or accounts of certain groups to estimate the total population. The first is whether the lists or accounts are themselves accurate, and the second is what proportion of the total population these particular groups comprise. Unfortunately these questions are also usually difficult ones. For the accuracy of the muster returns I have consulted Dr. J.J. Goring, who has worked extensively on military history during the reign of Henry VIII, and he tells me that he does not really know whether the muster returns are 100% accurate, although he suspects they are fairly good and certainly better than the muster lists of Elizabeth's reign. If they are 100% perfect, then, as Brigadier Goadby points out, we should have a list of all males between the ages of 16 and 60. The next question to be answered therefore is what proportion of the total population is comprised by males of these ages.

Unfortunately, in the absence of any censuses in the early 16th century we have no knowledge of either the age or the sex-structure of the population at this date. The figures which Brigadier Goadby cites from an article in the Economic History Review were applied there to a slightly earlier muster return of 1532, but they come from Gregory King, who calculated them by slightly revising the age-structure he found in Lichfield, Staffordshire in 1696. The age-structure of the population varies according to the rates of fertility and mortality current during the previous generation, and is particularly sensitive to changes in fertility. There is therefore no guarantee that Gregory King's figures are appropriate for 1542 and indeed the contrasts between fertility and mortality in the late 17th and mid 16th centuries, which are becoming apparent from family reconstitution studies suggest that this late seventeenth century age-structure may not in fact be appropriate at all.

When detailed knowledge fails it is often helpful to find limiting cases between which the truth will probably lie. If we are prepared, for the sake of argument, to make the rather unrealistic assumptions that mortality is constant and that fertility is either constant or is changing in a regular way, then we can use stable population theory to calculate the age-structure of the population. (1) Let us consider two cases, in which fertility and mortality are about as extreme as we are ever likely to find in practice.
1) High fertility with a birth rate of about 50 per thousand and low mortality with expectation of life at birth of about 50 years.

2) Low fertility with a birth rate of about 28 per thousand and high mortality with expectation of life at birth of about 30 years.

Using the Princeton model life tables which conveniently tabulate the demographic consequences of a large number of different combinations of fertility and mortality rates (2), we find the following age structure:

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Population</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>under 16</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 60</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 60</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentage of the population excluded from the muster returns because it is under 16 years of age will therefore probably be somewhere between 30% and 51% and indeed the figure of 40%, which Brigadier Goadby cites, lies almost exactly halfway between these two extremes. We would, however, expect that the percentage of the population excluded from the musters because it is over age 60 will be between 3% and 10% which is somewhat lower than the 20% hazarded by Brigadier Goadby. In summary, therefore, we would expect the proportion of the population excluded from the muster returns on age grounds will be between 40% and 55%. But of the 16-60 years age-group only the men were mustered, so women must also be excluded. Unfortunately we have no means of discovering the sex structure of the population in the early 16th century, but we shall not be far wrong if we take the number of men and women as approximately equal. Since Table 1 shows that the 16-60 years age-group comprises between 45% and 60% of the population, men aged between 16 and 60 must comprise between 22½% and 30% of the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FERTILITY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION UNDER 16 YEARS</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION OVER 60 YEARS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High B.R. = 50%</td>
<td>Low B.R. = 28%</td>
<td>High B.R. = 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(1)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(2)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(3)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation of Life at Birth</td>
<td>High (1)</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(o_0^0 = 50)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low (2)</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(o_0^0 = 30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
population. Thus the total population will be somewhere between 3.1/3 and 4\(\frac{1}{2}\) times the number of males aged 16-60 listed in the muster returns. Since the muster return lists 20 names for Standlake, the total population was probably between 67 and 90 people. In making this estimate we are of course assuming that the muster returns are accurate, and if we suspect that they are not, then we must raise our estimates of the total population accordingly.

These estimates are also based on the assumption that the population was stable in the technical sense described above. If there were changes in fertility or mortality in the years preceding 1542 then this assumption is unjustified, but it is unlikely that the age-structure would lie outside the range indicated here. Another, more serious, possibility is that there may have been age-specific migration, say of young married couples, into the village which may have given it an unusual age structure. These are possibilities which must always be born in mind when using model life tables in practical situations; but the life-tables are worth studying in their own right for the light which they throw on the interaction between fertility and mortality.

In particular it is instructive to consider the relative impact of changes in fertility and mortality on the proportion of very old and of very young in the population. Table 2 shows how different combinations of high and low fertility with high and low expectations of life at birth affect the proportions of the population under 16 and over 60 years of age.

The effect of high fertility is clearly to make the population younger. Regardless of expectation of life at birth, if we compare the high and low fertility columns we find that high fertility means a higher percentage of the population is under 16 years and a lower percentage is over 60 years. The difference is greater however when expectation of life at birth is high than when it is low, and the absolute difference is greater for the under 16s than it is for the over 60s. This is because mortality is more severe amongst the younger age groups, and when mortality slackens to produce a higher expectation of life at birth, it is usually the younger age groups that benefit most. Since, as we have seen, high fertility means a large percentage of the population under 16 years, and it is this group which experiences particularly heavy mortality rates, it is not surprising that the effect of a change in mortality should be greater in conditions of high fertility than in conditions of low fertility and that it should affect the younger age groups most of all.

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Notice, however, that if we begin with high fertility and a high expectation of life at birth (column 1, row 1), a fall in fertility from a birth rate of 50 per thousand to a birth rate of 28 per thousand reduces the percentage of the population under 16 much more (51% to 33%) than does a fall in the expectation of life at birth from 50 years to 30 years (51% to 43%). Notice too that the effect of a fall in the percentage of the population under 16, whatever the cause, is usually to increase the percentage over 60. Thus in conditions of high fertility, an increase in mortality, through its action on the younger age groups, has the paradoxical result of actually increasing the percentage of very old people in the population (compare rows 1 and 2 of columns 1 and 3).

The age-structure of a population is important, not only because it influences the population's subsequent demographic experience, but also, because it entails social and economic consequences. For example, an increase in the percentage of young people in the population may both reduce individual opportunities for marriage and also increase the demand for agricultural products relative to the demand for non-agricultural products. Thus knowledge of the ways in which changes in fertility and mortality are likely to interact to produce changes in the age-structure can be useful when we consider the probable historical consequences of changes in birth rates which we have discovered either from aggregative analysis or from family reconstitution.

NOTES

(1) The idea of a 'stable population' is well described in T. Hollingsworth, *Historical Demography*, pp. 339-44

(2) A.J. Coale and P. Demeny, *Regional model life tables and stable population* (Princeton, 1964). I have used the "North" set of tables rather than the more usual "West" tables because I believe their mortality experience is more like that of pre-industrial England.