Local Population Studies

No. 68 Spring 2002
LOCAL POPULATION STUDIES

No. 68

Spring 2002

Published twice yearly with support from the Department of Humanities, University of Hertfordshire.

© Local Population Studies, 2002

Registered charity number 273621

ISSN 0143–2974

The cover illustration is from W. H. Pyne, Encyclopedia of Illustration of the Arts, Agriculture, &c. of Great Britain, 1845
SUBMISSION OF ARTICLES
Articles, notes or letters, which normally should not exceed 7,000 words in length, should be addressed to Professor N. Goose at the LPS General Office. It is important that material submitted should comply with LPS house style and a leaflet explaining LPS conventions can be obtained from the General Office.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
The annual subscriptions to Local Population Studies are:
- individual subscribers (UK), £9.00,
- individual subscribers (overseas), £11.00,
- institutional subscribers (both UK and overseas), £15.00.
Subscriptions may be paid by Banker’s Order, forms for which may be obtained from the LPS General Office at the address below.

Single copies and back numbers may be obtained from the General Office at the following rates: nos 3, 7–28, £1.40; nos 29–31, £2.25; nos 32–61, £3.00; no. 62 onwards, £4.50. Remittances should be made payable to Local Population Studies.

THE LOCAL POPULATION STUDIES SOCIETY
Annual membership fees are: normal rate (UK and EC) £12.00; other overseas £15.00; student £10.00; student (non-EC), £13.00. Student membership is open to those in full-time education or following an approved course of study. All members of the Society will receive LPS without further payment, may purchase supplements and back numbers of the journal at reduced rates and enjoy other facilities.

The LPSS Secretary is Sue Scott, School of Biological Sciences, University of Liverpool, Derby Building, Liverpool L69 3GS.
E-mail: sscott@Liverpool.ac.uk.

Members wishing to purchase supplements and back numbers should write to the LPS General Office. For members of the LPS Society the prices of back numbers are nos 3, 7–28, £1.05; nos 29–31, £1.70; nos 32–61, £2.25; no. 62 onwards, £3.38. Postage must be added in all cases.

For details of the Local Population History Book Club contact: Dr. P. Franklin, 46 Fountain Street, Accrington, Lancs, BB5 0QP.

ADVERTISING & GENERAL OFFICE
All enquiries about advertising in LPS should be sent to the LPS General Office, Department of Humanities, University of Hertfordshire, Watford Campus, Aldenham, Watford, Herts, WD2 8AT.
CONTENTS

EDITORIAL 5

Peter Laslett 6
Probate Records Centre 6
Population Studies 7
Cambridge Group 7
Editorial matters 7

ARTICLES

P. Howe Identifying nonconformity in late-seventeenth century St. Albans 9

A.M. Froide Hidden women: rediscovering the singlewomen of early modern England 26

S. King Locating and characterising poor households in late-seventeenth century Bolton: sources and interpretations 42

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

P. Tilley Creating life histories and family trees from nineteenth century census records, parish registers and other sources 63

BOOK REVIEWS

J. Cooper The well-ordered town: a story of Saffron Walden, Essex, 1792–1862 (reviewed by S. Durgan) 82

E. Garrett, A. Reid, K. Schürer and S. Szreter Changing family size in England and Wales: place, class and demography, 1891–1911 (reviewed by C. Galley) 83

D.A. Gatley and P.S. Ell Counting heads: an introduction to the census, poor law data and vital registration (reviewed by P. Wardley) 85

Continued Over
CONTENTS (continued)

BOOK REVIEWS (continued)

J. Gibson and E. Churchill  Probat jurisdictions: where to look for wills (reviewed by N. Goose)  87
R. Gwynn  Huguenot heritage: the history and contribution of the Huguenots in Britain (reviewed by N. Goose)  88
D. R. Mills  Rural community history from trade directories (reviewed by G. Shaw)  91
Norma Pilbeam and Ian Nelson, eds.  Poor Law records of Mid Sussex, 1601–1835 (reviewed by T. Hitchcock)  93
S. Scott and C. J. Duncan  Biology of plagues: evidence from historical populations (reviewed by A. Dyer)  95
K.D.M. Snell and P.S. Ell  Rival Jerusalems: the geography of Victorian religion (reviewed by A. Hinde)  97
D.V. Stern  A Hertfordshire demesne of Westminster Abbey: profits, productivity and weather (reviewed by M. Thompson)  98
R. Vigne and C. Littleton eds.  From strangers to citizens: the integration of immigrant communities in Britain, Ireland and Colonial America, 1550–1750 (reviewed by L.B. Luu)  100
Peter Wardley ed.  Bristol historical resource (CD-ROM) (reviewed by T. Hitchcock)  104

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITIES  106
CORRESPONDENCE  108
EDITORIAL

The three articles in this issue of *Local Population Studies (LPS)* are all concerned with the population of England during the late-seventeenth century. Compared with the rest of the early modern period, the late-seventeenth century is rich in sources other than parish registers which may be exploited by local population historians (for example the Hearth Tax returns, the Compton Census and the Marriage Duty lists). The three papers reflect not only this blessing but the recent expansion of local population research from its focus on rural communities to the study of towns and cities.

In the first article, Pat Howe describes some results of a project initiated by members of the the St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society involving the construction of a multi-source computer database of information about people whose names occur in records between 1650 and 1700. Though parish registers of baptisms, marriages and burials form the major source, data from a wide range of other sources have been incorporated. Howe uses these records to identify the number and characteristics of dissenters in the city. She shows that dissent was much more common in St Albans than it was in England as a whole, and dissenters came from almost all ranks and occupations.

In our second article, Amy Froide attempts to estimate the proportion of single (that is, never-married) women in the adult female population using the Marriage Duty assessments. Froide explains that various biases in the Marriage Duty listings, not to mention some conventions adopted by historical demographers, mean that, unless the analyst is careful, some adult ‘singlewomen’ will not be identified (mainly because they will be classified as children). Using data from Southampton, she shows that single women comprised at least one third of the adult female population of the city in the 1690s. More generally, a higher proportion of adult women was single, and a lower proportion married, in urban areas than in the countryside. Indeed, in the towns for which data are available, fewer than half of the adult women were married.

Our third article, by Steven King, concerns the identification of poor households in Bolton. King uses three ‘censuses of the poor’ taken in that city in 1674, 1686 and 1699. After an examination of the reasons why these censuses were taken, and a discussion of their quality, he concludes that they are generally reliable. he then shows that they can reveal how exactly ‘poverty’ was defined in the town and the household characteristics of those regarded as ‘poor’. One of the most interesting points to emerge from King’s analysis is that, although the ability to work was a key criterion, the Bolton churchwardens and overseers also seem to have been employing rather subtle and complex ‘notions of
deservingness’ in order to balance the demand for relief with its supply at a time of social and demographic change.

We also have a ‘research in progress’ piece from Peter Tilley. For a number of years now, Tilley and his colleagues have been working on the Kingston Local History Project, based at the Centre for Local History Studies at Kingston University. Their initial aim has been to build a computer database of the population of Victorian Kingston-on-Thames using a variety of written and pictorial resources. The census enumerators’ books, parish registers, cemetery records and trade directories have so far been added to the database with the promise of more sources to follow. Tilley’s piece describes the database and illustrates some of its potential uses. Noteworthy features of the project include the active collaboration of local amateur historians, and the desire to make the database accessible to and usable by those with standard domestic computing hardware and software.

Peter Laslett

Readers of LPS will be saddened to learn of the death of Peter Laslett earlier this year. Peter was a founder member of the Cambridge Group for the History of the Population and Social Structure and was the author of many well-known works of English population history, including the classic The world we have lost (Methuen, 1965). He was also joint editor (with Richard Wall) of Household and family in past time (Cambridge, 1972), a volume that changed the views of historians about household structure and family formation systems in pre-industrial Europe. Peter Laslett was a strong supporter of Local Population Studies from the early days of the journal. A full appreciation of his contribution to population history will appear in the next issue.

Probate Records Centre

Documents, including wills of some of the most famous people in the UK are to be held centrally in a new purpose built storage facility and document retrieval service in Birmingham. The Probate Records Centre was opened on 4 February 2002 by Michael Wills, Minister for the Courts at the Lord Chancellor’s Department and Dame Elizabeth Butler-Sloss, President of the Family Division.

The new centre replaces previous arrangements where Probate documents were stored in District Registries throughout England and Wales. The total number of records stored is 276,042 boxes and books, dating back to 1858.

Members of the public can go to any Registry in England and Wales and request to read a copy of a will for £5. Previously, a copy would have been sent in the post, taking several days, but the Probate Records Centre will scan the will and send it back to the Registry within one hour of the initial request. Plans are already in place to investigate the possibility of making the service accessible via the Internet.
Population Studies

The journal *Population Studies* has been published since 1946 by the Population Investigation Committee based at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Over the years it has published many well-known articles in population history, including early results from of the Cambridge Group’s family reconstitutions (in 1983), and several papers by Robert Woods and his colleagues on nineteenth-century England and Wales.

Readers of *LPS* might be interested to learn that back issues of *Population Studies* are being sold off at a reasonable price. For more information, visit the following web site: www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/pic/Back%20Issues/htm, or contact the Population Investigation Committee at the London School of Economics, Houghton Street, LONDON WC2A 2AE.

Cambridge Group

Most readers of *LPS* will be aware that the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure has moved from its Trumpington Street offices. The Group’s new address is:

Sir William Hardy Building  
Department of Geography  
Downing Place  
CAMBRIDGE CB2 3EN.

The library is still operating, though, if you would like to visit, it is probably wise to telephone in advance to confirm its opening times. The Group’s telephone number has not changed: it is 01223 333181.

Editorial matters

This issue has been edited by Andrew Hinde. The members of the Editorial Board would like to thank Ken and Margaret Smith for doing the typesetting. Please direct all enquiries to the *LPS* General Office (contact details at the foot of p. 2).

Martin Ecclestone  
Peter Franklin  
Eilidh Garrett  
Nigel Goose  
Andrew Hinde  
Steven King  
Graham Mooney  
Kevin Schürer  
Matthew Woollard

April 2002
A free issue or a binder when you subscribe to *Local History Magazine*

During the last year our *News section* covered a wide range of issues from library closures to the possible privatisation of archives.

*The Rise and Fall of the Turnpike* by Paul Hindle is one of many articles in recent issues. Others have included ‘Public Health and Local Pride’, ‘Homes for Heroes’ and a series on enclosure.

Every issue contains *news from societies*, including new ones such as the Milestone Society.

We carry more *book and periodical reviews* than any other magazine. We also sell history reference books at generous discounts.

*Local History Magazine* also includes a unique *Noticeboard section* where every subscriber can place 50 words free in every issue. Subscribers’ notices are also included on our website (www.local-history.co.uk).

Our *introductory offer* means that you can either pay £17.60 (the normal price for 6 issues) and receive a free additional issue or pay £32 for two years and receive a free binder, worth £7.50, which holds all 12 issues.

To subscribe, send your cheque for £17.60 or £32, payable to Local History, to: Local History Freepost (NG7 2DS) Nottingham NG7 1BR (no stamp needed). Offer applies in the UK only.
IDENTIFYING NONCONFORMITY IN LATE-SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
ST ALBANS

Pat Howe

Pat Howe graduated in Modern History at the University of North London as a mature student in 1985, where she worked as an administrator. Since her retirement she has been working with other members of the St Albans Architectural and Archaeological Society on a prosopographical reconstruction of St Albans society in the later seventeenth century.

Introduction

After the Reformation the people of St Albans demonstrated a leaning towards independence in religious and political thought. They purchased the Abbey Church in 1553 and supported Parliament in the Civil War, and the town was also close enough to London for its inhabitants to be influenced by a strong puritan community in the city. These factors provide sufficient circumstantial evidence to suggest that this town may well have comprised elements which were conducive to the spread of radical Protestantism.

The monastery at St Albans had been an important religious centre and place of pilgrimage during the Middle Ages. The market, established in the tenth century, undoubtedly prospered as a result of the comings and goings of pilgrims, scholars and religious dignitaries. By the seventeenth century the town’s situation of one day’s ride from London on the main highway from London to the north west provided the basis for a thriving economy based on the inn trade and associated occupations of brewing, food retailing, tanning and smithing. Agriculture remained an important occupation, the produce from which was not only for local consumption but also for the rapidly expanding population of London. The town and close environs also attracted the new London gentry to build their ‘second’ homes. The location of St. Albans is shown in Figure 1.

London’s population of a minimum of 310,000 and possibly 475,000 in the later seventeenth century set it apart from all other English towns, and its enormous size greatly influenced urban centres in the provinces by way of trading opportunities and the spread of ideas.1 The population of St Albans in the late–seventeenth century was probably in the region of 3,000 to 3,500 (see below), rendering it the largest town in Hertfordshire; Hitchin came next with 2,175; whereas Hertford, the county town, supported only 1,500 inhabitants.2 Defoe refers to what may have been seen as, and perhaps still is, an anomaly, describing St Albans as ‘the capital town, though not the county town of
Seventeen markets operated in Hertfordshire in 1673, producing the highest density of market towns per square mile of any English county. In England and Wales at this time Langton has identified 1,005 towns, 51 with a population of between 2,500 and 4,999, 277 with 1,000–2,499, and as many as 650 very small ‘towns’ with populations below 1,000. St Albans thus stood in the lower reaches of a stratum that can be regarded as towns proper, above the category of the simple market town. Towns of a similar size and status to St Albans in other counties included communities such as Winchester, Cirencester and Maidstone.

The strong nonconformist element in St Albans detected from the current research largely consisted of regular churchgoers to the parish church who wanted to reform the church from within, rejecting the overwhelming control of bishops and archbishops. Following the Restoration, the incumbents of the three parishes making up the Borough of St Albans were ejected and replaced by men deemed to be more in sympathy with the monarchy and who would operate an Anglican church rather than adopt the ‘puritan’ principles of the Interregnum. During the reigns of Charles II and James II dissenters suffered persecution punctuated by brief periods of toleration, depending on how much the king needed the cooperation of the nonconformist element in parliament and how threatened he felt by the activities of the more radical dissenting sects. It was common for dissenters to attend church occasionally,
perhaps only once a year, thereby enabling them to participate in local
government and avoid persecution. Lacey says that there is convincing
evidence that those who were occasional conformists actually considered
themselves to be dissenters.7 As the century proceeded and persecution of
dissent increased, these people formed distinct groups and began to meet in
private homes, calling themselves Congregationalists and Presbyterians.
Quakers and Baptists were also present in St Albans from around the 1640s. In
this paper the terms ‘dissenter’ and ‘nonconformist’ are used interchangeably.

Methodology

Some 12 years ago a group from the St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural
and Archaeological Society interested in the seventeenth century decided to
form a sub–group of that society with the intention of producing a book on St
Albans 1650–1700. As an aid to this objective, it was decided to create a
computer database, providing a directory of people whose names occur in
records of that period. The major sources have been the registers of baptisms,
marriages and burials for the three parishes, Abbey, St Michael’s and St
Peter’s. The research team has also searched for and assembled information
from marriage licences, wills, probate inventories, corporation records, title
deeds, Hearth Tax assessments, the Protestation Oath returns of 1642 and
1696, a list of voters in the election of 1690, archdeacons’ records, Quaker
records, manorial records and church memorials. In order to organise this
enormous bank of information, families have been reconstructed. Individuals
have been allotted ‘memo’ fields in each of which has been collated surviving
information relating to that person. Linking the information in this way and
studying the records within a community has provided detailed insight into
the lives of the inhabitants of seventeenth–century St Albans and how they
related to each other in trade, religion, friendship and marriage. Take, for
example, William Hickman, ironmonger. His memo reads:

Parliamentarian in the Civil War – Treasurer/High Collector for a
number of wartime and post war committees.8

1646 signed a petition requesting a permanent minister at St Peters
Church.9

1649 a commissioner for the six–month assessment.10

1651–2 was paid for wood and candles for soldiers.11

1654–55 was paid for coals for soldiers.12

1654 a commissioner for ejecting ministers and schoolmasters.13

1663 assessed on eight hearths for Hearth Tax.14

Here we can begin to build up a picture of this man. He was a prominent
member of St Peter’s church and was frustrated by there not having been a
permanent minister for some years. He held official appointments in the
Commonwealth period and the assessment of eight hearths suggests substantial wealth. After his first wife died in 1644, he married Katherine Whitchoct. Her will, drafted in 1680 after she had been widowed, mentions her brothers, Sir Jeremy and Benjamin Whitchoct. Benjamin was a notable Cambridge divine. Katherine’s will goes on to give further clues. She describes a property which was divided into three houses, one occupied by William’s son, another by Jonathon Grew and the third by Dorothy Pemberton, widow. Dr Jonathon Grew became the first minister of the Congregational Chapel built in St Albans in 1698. Dorothy Pemberton is a member of a puritan family whose kinsman, Robert, is described by Katherine as ‘my good friend’. Robert Pemberton applied for a licence to hold religious meetings in his house under the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672. The will is witnessed by Jonathan Grew, William Pembroke, Thomas Clarke and Robert Pemberton. William Pembroke was a signatory to the trust deed of the above-mentioned chapel and was also presented for not attending communion in 1683; Thomas Clarke is a member of a family who appear in Quaker records. The detailed research into the Hickman family is thus a good example of how the study of a community can produce evidence which would not be apparent when examining individuals in isolation.

Christopher Marsh has stressed the importance of studying wills in this way. Nigel Goose has also recommended that the use of a wide range of evidence in support of parish registers can be the ‘best strategy... in any attempt to elucidate the structures and processes of early modern urban populations’. In the drawing up of the family trees in the present study, the wills in particular have been invaluable in achieving a greater degree of insight.

This paper describes a technique based upon the compilation of such detailed biographical information that enables the population of St Albans, and the proportion of that population who were nonconformists, to be calculated. During the process of reconstructing the families an assessment has been made as to whether an individual was alive and living in the town on 31 December 1675, and a total of 3,529 has been calculated. In making this judgement, the biography of each person was considered. For example, where there is a baptism, a marriage, baptism of children, assessment in the Hearth Tax and poor rate, church or civic office, will and burial, spanning the year 1675, the decision for inclusion in the population total was clear. Where no baptism record was available, evidence of residence was usually based on baptisms and burials of children, and often then linked with miscellaneous information, burial and will. Where there is no burial record, men and women are regarded as deceased by the age of 40.

Where no evidence has survived after baptism certain criteria were employed:

1. A woman over 23 was considered to be married or to have left home and has not been included in the total population. The age of 23 was used because this has been calculated as the average age of marriage in St Albans in this period. Some of these women may have remained in
It has been assumed that a man of 24 had left the town. The age was chosen arbitrarily. It is recognised, however, that a young person of 16 years of age could have migrated to take up an apprenticeship or to seek work elsewhere. The number of men between 16 and 24 on 31 December 1675 total 245, and of these 94 are known to have remained in the town. The total population figure might therefore be reduced by 151.

Couples who married in St Albans up to 1669 but for whom no subsequent events are recorded have been discounted. An analysis of the 371 marriages which took place in the three parishes between 1660 and 1669 (the age of couples marrying before 1660 would preclude them from being counted in 1675) shows that 201 couples were not included in the 1675 survey. Table 1 shows the reasons for their omission.

In summary, the total of 3,529 might be increased by spinsters who may have remained in the town and a percentage of couples who may have stayed but produced no offspring. The total could be reduced by young men aged between 16 and 24 who might have migrated. The numbers involved are likely to be small in relation to the total. Estimates of the population have previously been calculated by two different methods. From the Hearth Tax returns in 1663 and 1673 a population of 3,066 has been suggested and from counts of baptisms 2,916. Langton believes that the Hearth Tax provides the best basis for calculating the population. The estimate based on biographical information comes within 15 per cent of that based on the Hearth Tax. Arkell recommends that population estimates should be presented within a range rather than what he describes as with ‘spurious accuracy’, and a range of between 3,000 and 3,500 might be considered appropriate. The calculation from the reconstruction of individual biographies, therefore, stands close enough to previous estimates of the town’s population once reasonable margins of error are allowed for.

Table 1  Analysis of married couples deemed not to be living in St Albans in 1675

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Number of couples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over 40 by 1675</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceased by 1675</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surname suggests stranger to the town or evidence exists of residence in another parish</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No subsequent events recorded*</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * These couples were members of local families and some may have remained in the town.
The computer database and the reconstruction of individual biographies facilitated the process of counting nonconformists. The principal sources used for this purpose were individual wills, deeds of the Quaker meeting house and the Dagnall Street Congregational Chapel in 1676 and 1698 respectively, a register of members of a Baptist congregation dated 1675, a list of voters in the parliamentary election of 1690, a report to the archbishop on the extent of dissent in 1669 and other miscellaneous snippets of information culled from a variety of sources which have been collated in the ‘memo’ fields of the database. The Compton Census of 1676 has not survived for St Albans and nor have the quarter sessions records for the latter half of the seventeenth century. In the absence of these two important sources, the present research uses alternative means, and what follows is an explanation of how individuals have been identified as nonconformists. Once established it was a simple task to insert a code on the computer, providing a total of 263.

Report naming ‘dissidents in response to the Act of Restraining Nonconformists from Inhabiting Corporations’ 1665

This report was found among the Gorhambury papers. It lists 18 men who had held office in the corporation during the Commonwealth and accuses them of belonging to the ‘Phanatique Party’, alleging they had ‘performed acts against the king’. Such acts were graphically described. It was said that Thomas Cowley, the elder, Mayor of St Albans

.... when forces were raisinge for the Parliment putt on his sword saying I have nott wore a sword these 20ty yeares butt now I doe itt to encouradge the people to fight against the Kinge. Hee hath allways joyned wth and shewed wt: countenance hee coulde to the Phanatique partie And hath upheld on Partridge to preach wch: was never called to the Ministrie & hath denied others.

The 18 have been included in the total number of dissenters.

Baptist congregation

Twenty-seven people stated to be from St Albans and described as members of the Baptist congregation which met in Kensworth are listed in a book compiled in 1675 by Hugh Smyth of Wheathamstead. Kensworth is a village eight miles north of St Albans. Inhabitants from 19 other villages are listed. Not all 27 have been identified because first names are not given. For example, members are described as ‘Brother Gould’ or ‘Sister Sleep’, but where they can be recognised they have been included in the final total.

Parliamentary election 1690

The extant list of voters in the parliamentary election of 1690 is a valuable contribution to the current research and has provided an insight not only into the politics of the inhabitants of St Albans but also into people’s standpoint in
religion. In the borough of St Albans three candidates stood for the election: George Churchill, brother of John, first Duke of Marlborough, who had already served as Tory member of parliament for St Albans from 1685–87; Samuel Grimston, Whig and local lord of the manor; and Joshua Lomax. Lomax was a wealthy lawyer, owning large estates in Hertfordshire, Lancashire, Lincolnshire and Buckinghamshire, and a renowned dissenter. According to an indictment in the archdeacon’s records, he was accused in 1683 of not attending holy communion at Easter and having ‘for these twelve, ten, eight, six, four, or two months last past, … made [himself] an utter stranger to [his] parish church of St Albans ...’.

Lomax signed the trust deed of the Congregational chapel mentioned above. According to the charters, the St Albans electorate should have been freemen and entitled to two votes each. Fifty–one voted for Joshua Lomax, not using their second vote. It has been assumed that these men were committed dissenters and they have been counted in the final total of 263. In 20 cases there is other supporting evidence. For example, John Clarke was a well–known Quaker, Richard Mote signed the trust deed for the Quaker meeting house in 1672, and Thomas Tanner, who engaged Thomas Flindell to witness his will, was a cousin of John Clarke and executor and legatee for Thomas Broomer, maltster. Broomer’s wife was the sister of John Clarke; he was an appraiser for Elizabeth Gould, member of the Baptist congregation and he voted for Lomax in the parliamentary election. Thomas Tanner is named as executor and legatee in Broomer’s will. A further 158 voted for Lomax, using their second vote for either Grimston (74) or Churchill (84). The records of each of these electors have been examined and if another piece of supporting evidence has been found, these have been included in the total of identified nonconformists.

Quakers

Further names have been found in the deeds for the Quaker meeting house built in 1676. Other Quaker records have provided further names, but these are scarce for this period and it has not been possible to put names to the 60 persons ‘called Quakers’ reported to the archbishop in 1669 as meeting ‘at a hyred house for ye purpose, every Sunday and Wednesday’. Just as members of the Baptist congregation came from a wide surrounding area, it is possible that some of these Quakers may not have been inhabitants of the town.

Wills and probate inventories

Wills have been used extensively by historians studying the Reformation in attempts to assess the degree of support for either radical Protestantism or the prohibited Roman Catholicism. They have concentrated on preambles and these will be considered later in this paper. In the present study, the aim has been to identify individuals who formed the nonconformist element in the town. Two hundred and fifty nine wills have been examined, dating from 1638 to 1715: of these, 69 testators were female, 15 of whom were described as spinsters and 54 as widows.
The majority of the St Albans wills were witnessed by three people, one of whom was usually the scribe or a lawyer. Normally inventories were taken by two appraisers and, in the present quest to identify nonconformists, where two well-known dissenters were witnesses or appraisers it has been assumed that the testator was also a dissenter. Bill Stevenson, in his examination of the wills of Fenstanton between 1661 and 1724, suggests that testators’ choices of scribe and witness may totally ignore the differences in religious propensity, giving preference to ability and integrity. However, in St Albans there has frequently been a suggestion from another source, or from links by marriage, which has provided supporting evidence. It was noted that Thomas Flindell, cooper, and Thomas Heyward, shopkeeper, appeared together as witnesses to wills or appraisers of inventories on a number of occasions. These two local men were named in the aforementioned report to the archbishop as being leaders of a ‘great number’ of ‘sufficient’ people who met secretly at ‘ye house of William Ayleward, yeoman, called New House’. Between 1658 and 1684 Flindell was witness to six wills. On one occasion Heywood was a fellow witness. Between 1662 and 1685 Flindell was an appraiser in 29 inventories and in seven instances Heyward was also an appraiser. In three instances another known dissenter, Abraham Cowley, was Flindell’s co-appraiser. Where both Flindell and Heyward or Flindell and Cowley acted together, the testators or deceased have been counted among the estimated dissenting population. That Katherine Hickman, a well-known nonconformist, was one who used both Flindell and Heyward gives support to this method of detection.

In many cases legatees have provided evidence of nonconformity, as in the will of Katherine Hickman already mentioned. In his will written in 1679, Robert Pemberton names well-known dissenters, Abraham Cowley, William Pembroke and Jonathon Grew, as legatees. The widow, Ellen Passmore, in her will written in 1672, creates a dilemma. Joshua Lomax acts as her witness, although he might have been engaged in his capacity as a lawyer, notwithstanding his religious beliefs. Ellen’s first three legatees are the ministers of the three parish churches in St Albans, who it could be assumed would be conforming at that time. She then lists 12 female friends, three of whom have surnames associated with dissent, and it is suspected that her ‘friends’ are members of a congregation. Her choice of preamble is unique in the St Albans wills:

... considering that the days I have to live in this earthly tabernacle cannot be many do therefore in order that when I come to die I may have nothing to do but to resign myself into the hands of that good God who gave me life and being and to my dear Saviour Jesus Christ by whose precious death and blood shedding I shall have a most glorious life and being to all eternity.

Finally, she names dissenters Thomas Heywood and William Pembroke as legatees. On balance this appears to be the will of a dissenter. That she makes bequests to the incumbents of the three parishes could be a clue that local churches were operating in much the same vein as before the Restoration.
While all three ministers who were in post during the Interregnum had been ejected in 1662, it is interesting to note that John Rochford replaced his father, William, as vicar of St Peter’s.

Tracing nonconformity from the preambles in the St Albans wills is difficult. Margaret Spufford has argued from her research on the wills in Willingham that the extent to which the religious opinions of testators can be determined is limited. She discusses the spectrum of formulae used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and suggests that the single phrase ‘I bequeath my soul to Almighty God’ is neutral and does not necessarily convey any strength of religious feeling, whereas any will which stresses salvation through Christ’s death and passion, or makes reference to the company of the elect, indicates a stronger position and indicates that the testator may well be a puritan or Calvinist. Christopher Marsh expresses caution in reading too much into the length of dedicatory clauses. This view, however, is not supported by the will of Joshua Lomax whose dedicatory clause, requests for sermons, and bequests to the poor extends to some 1,200 words before he begins on the material bequests to his family and friends.

In the St Albans wills, 126 preambles are variants of the following wording:

I commit my soul to Almighty God my creator hoping and steadfastly believing through the merits, death and passion of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to have my sins pardoned and to be made partaker of everlasting happiness in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Out of these, 20 testators reinforced the basic formula by adding the following statement or similar wording:

and to appear at the last day not clothed with my own righteousness but in the rich robes and righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to me and to inherit eternal life to which holy trinity and one eternal deity be all honour and glory and praise both now and for ever.

Twelve of these were written by John Leigh; one by Thomas Downes, schoolmaster, whose vote for Joshua Lomax in 1690 implies dissent; two by Thomas Richards, town clerk, listed in 1665 as a member of the ‘Phanatique Party’ and whose wife was from a prominent dissenting family; and two were written by John Charnocke, also an alleged member of the ‘Phanatique Party’. Joshua Lomax’s will was written by a fellow lawyer, John Tombs, whose son was Lomax’s godson, suggesting they were close friends and co-religionists. William Foxwist, another lawyer and dissenter, wrote his own will. Seventeen of the 20 had been identified as dissenters before considering the preamble of their wills. Of the remaining three, two were widows, about whom we have very little information; their husbands are unknown to us. The third, William Beastney, was a local butcher. One of his witnesses is possibly a dissenter; the other is John Retchford, the vicar of St Peter’s. The will was written in 1667, which precludes the use of the 1690 voting list. William Foxwist’s will is also witnessed by John Retchford.
Did Beastney employ John Leigh for his legal qualifications regardless of his religious position? The testators of nine of the 12 wills written by John Leigh were almost certainly dissenters: does this suggest that all who asked him to write their wills were so? This will be discussed further below.

No such ambiguity is expressed in Robert Pemberton’s will. His preamble reads:

... I give up my soul into the hands of Almighty God my creator in the blessed name and mediation of Jesus Christ my saviour and redeemer by whose death and passion which I verily believing he suffered for me and all the rest of the elect of God. I do steadfastly believe and assuredly hope to obtain remission of all my sins and life everlasting through his glorious resurrection and merits in whom I believe in my heart into righteousness and whom I confess with my mouth into salvation. My body I commit to the earth from whence it was taken in hope of a happy resurrection at the coming again of my saviour Jesus Christ.44

That Robert Pemberton makes this lengthy, pious commendation correlates with other evidence pertaining to him and bears out Margaret Spufford’s view that the stronger the preamble, the stronger the testator’s beliefs. However, it is not always as simple as that. Three well-known dissenters: Katharine Hickman (1675), William Gould (1683 – a member of the Baptist congregation), and Thomas Flindell (1687) give nothing away. They have completely omitted a preamble and only ‘praise the holy name of God’. Five other known dissenters omit any reference to religion whatsoever. Alban Coxe in 1666 simply praises ‘the holie name of God’.46 Yet his database memo quoted below implies that he was a dedicated Commonwealth man:

1646/47 signed a petition requesting a permanent minister at St Peters.47

Commissioner for raising assessment for maintenance of the forces by the Act of 7 December 1649.48

1650 Colonel Coxe occupied part of the gateway with a messuage or tenement and land and ruins round the Abbey Court.49

1653 appointed judge for the county of Hertfordshire.50

1654 Commissioner for ejecting scandalous, ignorant and insufficient ministers and schoolmasters.51

Only 18 of the 126 using the basic preamble quoted above had already been identified as dissenters. The records of the remaining 108 testators have been re-examined, taking cognisance of Spufford’s comments. Those who have strengthened the basic preamble fall neatly into the category of dissent. With so much contradiction in evidence, caution has been exercised in labelling testators who felt ‘assured of salvation through the death and passion of the Lord Jesus Christ’ without considering their biography as a whole. Therefore, the same principle has been followed as before: that is to say, if a second piece of evidence survives the testator has been classified as a dissenter.
One hundred and forty–four wills were witnessed by an attorney or scrivener. Five attorneys were prominent during the period of this study. There is little evidence from the preambles that they exerted any influence on the testators. The formula used in the majority of these wills was the standard one quoted above. Four scriveners were prolific in witnessing wills: two generations of John Barnard, father and son, John Charnocke and John Leigh. The John Barnards wrote 52 wills, using the following neutral wording in the majority of cases:

I commend my soul into the hands of my good God in the hope of a joyful resurrection through my blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Of the 52, only nine testators are thought to be dissenters. John Charnocke drafted 15 wills between 1648 and 1668. He generally uses the standard preamble, but in Richard Ruth’s will a stronger wording surely reflects the testator’s religious faith. The wills witnessed by Joshua Lomax follow a similar pattern: mostly standard formulae, except two stronger messages from Ellen Passmore and William Preston. In view of the frequent use of the standard clause by Charnocke and Lomax, it is more than likely that the stronger message is by the request of the testator rather than suggested by the attorney, which supports Rosemary O’Day’s findings that ‘some wills are marked in their preambles by strongly individual phraseology and it seems safe to say that deviant wills of this kind do reflect the individual testator’s beliefs’.54

As we have seen, it is quite a different story when the wills written by John Leigh are examined. He was operating in the last quarter of the century, following on from John Charnock who died in 1671. Of 29 wills, seven have a particularly elaborate dedicatory clause:

I commend my soul into the hands of Almighty God my creator steadfastly believing through his holy spirit by the bitter death and bloody passion of his son and my ever dear and blessed saviour Jesus Christ to receive full pardon and free remission of all my sins and to appear at the last day not clothed with my own righteousness but in the rich robes and righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to me and to inherit eternal life to which holy trinity and one eternal deity be all honour and glory and praise both now and for ever. Amen.

In 1690 Leigh voted for Joshua Lomax, not using his second vote, and in 1698 he was a signatory to the deeds of the newly erected Congregational chapel. It is suggested, therefore, that nonconformist testators deliberately invited this scribe to write their wills. Christopher Marsh finds ‘no reason to suggest that scribes deemed it fitting to impose long and idiosyncratic clauses upon those who had not asked for them. It may well have seemed a waste of time to do so’.55 This view is confirmed by the St Albans wills.

From this analysis, 375 males have been identified as nonconformists over the whole period of study. The next section will attempt to quantify the
proportion in relation to the town as a whole, particularly focusing on the year 1675 when 263 nonconformist males are judged to have been living in St Albans. Table 2 indicates the number of occasions on which the various sources have been used to make this judgement. These do not divide equally between those identified because in some instances a variety of sources provide the evidence.

Estimating the extent of nonconformity in St Albans

Having identified the nonconformists by the method described, an estimate has been made as to the proportion they formed of the population. The total of 3,529 calculated from the process of family reconstruction includes 1,192 males. Two hundred and sixty-three men have been identified as nonconformists living in St Albans in 1675. This suggests that dissent was as high as 22 per cent. This compares with a national average of between 4 and 5 per cent, but in Amersham, an area where radical religion was rife, the nonconformist community amounted to some 25 per cent.56 Maidstone, a town with a comparable population to St Albans and similarly active in providing necessary supplies to the expanding capital, was reported to have had 316 dissenters, about 10 per cent of its total population.57

A check on the number of nonconformists in St Albans can be made from other sources. According to Urwick the Congregationalists and Presbyterians of St Albans united in the building of the Dagnall Street Chapel in 1698, which was designed to seat 400.58 The number of St Albans members of the Baptist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Number of times various sources have been used in the identification of nonconformists living in St Albans in 1675</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voting list</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witnessing of wills</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family links*</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraising for inventories</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legatees</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quaker records</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preambles in wills</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archdeacon’s records</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage links</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonconformist records</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * Family links have not been considered sufficient evidence on their own (that is without additional information) but they have been used to give weight to the deduction.
church at Kensworth was 27 in 1675.⁵⁹ The 60 Quakers reported to the Archbishop in 1669 might also be included, making a total of 487 which is remarkably close to the 263, doubled to include female members.⁶⁰

Who were the dissenters?

Of 375 nonconformist men who have been identified over the whole period of the present study, it has been possible to determine the occupation of 229, and these have been analysed in Table 3. The occupations of dissenters roughly follow the pattern for the town as a whole. That the proportion of those working in agriculture is slightly higher might be explained by the fact that two large nonconformist families, the Aylewards and the Kentishes, farmed vast tracts of land in St Peter’s and St Michael’s parishes, extending beyond the town boundaries. These men described themselves as yeoman in their wills. As Nesta Evans has observed, ‘yeoman’ was often used as a status rather than an occupational description and it was not uncommon in the seventeenth century to find yeoman living in towns. Some also had a trade.⁶¹ It is possible that more labourers than have been identified were nonconformist but documentary evidence is sparse for this social group. However, in the 1690 election 58 per cent of labourers who voted chose Joshua Lomax. Only two labourers in our period have left wills. Of the 125 dissenters of whose occupations we have no knowledge, 21 are described as gentlemen.

Table 4 presents a comparison between the assessment for the Hearth Tax on dissenters in comparison to the whole town.⁶² The low figure for one– and two–hearth households can be explained in that exemptions are more likely to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational sector</th>
<th>Dissenters</th>
<th>Whole town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and drink</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leather</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textiles</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household goods</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professions</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
be on this size of property. The owners of the larger properties included Sir Harbottle Grimston, Master of the Rolls, whose country estate, Gorhambury, was assessed on 40 hearths and Sir Richard Jennings, member of parliament and father of the Duchess of Marlborough, assessed on 24 hearths. Other large establishments were inns. If we regard those assessed on one or two hearths as of generally low social standing, then they are somewhat under-represented among dissenters compared with the whole town. However, this may partly reflect the difficulty in identifying the relatively poor from the sources. There is no evidence that the middling inhabitants, defined as those assessed on three to five hearths, show any particular bias towards dissent. If we regard those assessed on six hearths or more as relatively wealthy, then it is clear that dissent was indeed slightly more common among this group. However, these differences are ones of degree only, and on the basis of the Hearth Tax evidence we can only argue that dissent was widespread across the social spectrum in late-seventeenth century St Albans. Traditionally, it has been the view of historians that ‘protestant sectarianism was primarily the prerogative of the rich and moderately well-to-do’.

However, Spufford and Stevenson have shown this not to be the case in their biographical studies of the inhabitants of Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire. Nevertheless, their work is focused on village communities and Spufford goes on to suggest that ‘protestantism, being a religion of the book, was the preserve of the literate ... and flourished amongst townsmen’.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that it is feasible to construct a biographical database for a substantial urban community in the late-seventeenth century, to use this to establish the extent of nonconformity among the male population, and to identify the main economic and social characteristics of those nonconformists. The strength of dissent in St Albans can largely be

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of hearths</th>
<th>Dissenters</th>
<th>Whole town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – 5</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
attributed to it being a thoroughfare town with good communication, in close proximity to London. It has been noted that the migration pattern into the town comes predominantly from the north west. This route crossed the Chilterns where, as we have seen, nonconformity was also prevalent. Indeed the current research has shown that St Albans Quakers and Baptists travelled to Kensworth, a village at the foot of the Chiltern hills, for their meetings.

Numerous references to London have been found in the St Albans records, implying there was a close relationship with the city. In Thomas de Laune’s account of *The present state of London*, published in 1681, no less than seven coachmen and waggoners are listed as plying the route between Aldersgate Street and St Albans. Other market centres in Hertfordshire have only one or two carriers listed. News, views and publications would have been exchanged in the inns where the provincial highways terminated. It is on record, for instance, that the Bull and Mouth Inn in Aldersgate was a meeting place for Quakers. Tradesmen with connections in the city and merchants travelling through St Albans to other parts of the country were likely to have spread the message of dissent. Communication was a prime element in the dissemination of independent ideas and beliefs and this busy route from the north west to London, passing through St Albans, could be the key to the strong nonconformist element in the town.

NOTES

8. Public Record Office (hereafter, PRO); SP28 6 Part III f. 439; 11 Part f.26; 127 Part I; 130 Part II f.59; 154; 155 Item 15; 197 Part I ff.187–198 and Part II ff.49–57; 230; 231; 232; 233 (I am grateful to Alan Thomson for these references).
11. Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (hereafter, HALS), Off. Acc.1162 Mayor’s Account, 175.
12. HALS, Off., Acc,1162 Mayor’s Account, 178.
16. PRO, PROB 11 370/434.
19. PRO, SP44 38A.
23. E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, The population history of England 1541–1871: a reconstruction, (London, 1981), 228. Wrigley and Schofield have calculated the expectation of life in 1676 to be 36.4 years: The population history, Table A3.1, 528. We have rounded this up to 40, because in a sample of 305 burials in the St Albans registers, the average age at death of adults 16+, where ages are known, is 39.7 years.
27. HALS, VIII B67.
29. HALS, 9243.
31. HALS, D/EDY T11.
32. BRO, FR24/18/3.
33. BRO, FR24/18/3.
37. PRO, PROB 11 364/326.
38. HALS, 123 AW 22.
40. Marsh, ‘In the name of God?”, 222.
41. PRO, PROB 10 1158.
42. PRO, PROB 10 1055.
43. HALS, 113 AW 2.
44. PRO, PROB 11 364 f.152.
45. PRO, PROB 11 370 f.110 (Hickman); HALS, 120 AW 12 (Gould); HALS, 123 AW 10 (Flindell).
46. HALS, 147 AW 4.
47. Urwick, Nonconformity, 149.
49. HALS, Gorhambury Manorial Records, Quit Rent Rolls, XB 7 D.
50. Firth and Rait, Acts and ordinances, 758.
51. Firth and Rait, Acts and ordinances, 971.
52. HALS, 90 AW 9.
53. HALS, 108 AW 19 (Passmore); PRO, PROB 11 332/398 (Preston).
55. Marsh, ‘In the name of God?'”, 239.
57. Whiteman, Compton Census, xxxvii.
58. Urwick, Nonconformity, 229.
59. HALS, Off. Acc. 1162.
60. Lyon–Turner, Original records, 92.
63. B. Stevenson, 'The social and economic status of post-Restoration dissenters', in Spufford, Rural dissenter, 333.
64. A comprehensive discussion of the social status of dissenters is presented in M. Spufford, 'Introduction', in Spufford, Rural dissenter, 1–102; Stevenson, 'The social and economic status'.
68. Frearson, 'Mobility and descent', 286.
Introduction

Historians of women in early modern England are becoming increasingly interested in women who lived their lives outside the state of marriage. These scholars have begun to elucidate the lives and experiences of singlewomen, that is, adult females who had not yet married, as well as that smaller subset of women who died never married. Although the new focus on singlewomen is fruitful and long overdue, when it comes to explicating the numbers of such women in early modern England, not much work has been done. This is a significant lacuna since any study of singlewomen must confront the question of their significance (both in quantitative and qualitative terms) to early modern society.

This article is an attempt to calculate the proportion of singlewomen in the adult female population at a given moment in early modern England. It uses the Marriage Duty assessments to provide a snapshot of the number of adult singlewomen in the later seventeenth century. What this source reveals is that singlewomen comprised between a third and a half of the adult women in various English communities in the 1690s. But, as useful as the Marriage Duty listings are for exploring marital status, there are also several problems that must be addressed when using them. Taking Southampton as a case study, this article shows how the early modern biases of the assessors, as well as the modern conventions of historical demographers, serve to hide the adult singlewomen recorded in the Marriage Duty assessments. In fact, the proportion of singlewomen in England’s adult female population was higher than it appears at first glance.

The idea that at least one third of adult women were single in seventeenth-century England may come as a surprise to many scholars. One reason, perhaps, is that when we think of numbers of single people in the pre-modern period we most likely think of the work of E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield. Using back projection techniques to estimate mortality levels and age structure, and then combining these with marriage totals derived from parish registers, they estimated that for persons born between the years 1575 and
1700 fully 13 to 27 per cent had never married by their forties. They also posited that early modern rates of non-marriage were highest throughout the seventeenth century, at the end of which they peaked and began to fall. Wrigley and Schofield’s figures have not gone unchallenged. David Weir has argued that both under-registration and clandestine marriages may have made celibacy rates look higher than they actually were, particularly in the later seventeenth century. Weir has suggested that from 6 to 20 per cent of people born between 1566 and 1741 had not married by their forties. Schofield’s more recent work has also settled on a lower estimate of 4 to 19 per cent of people dying never married in early modern England.

This article addresses a different question: instead of estimating how many women died never married, it provides a calculation of how many adult women were single at a given point in time. We must remember that demographers like Wrigley, Schofield, and Weir were not calculating numbers of singlewomen, rather they were estimating rates of marriage and non-marriage in order to chart fertility rates. This means that historians of singlewomen should be wary of using their estimates as a basis for any arguments about the presence of singlewomen in the past. First of all, Wrigley and Schofield never calculated actual numbers of single people. There are few records that illustrate how many early modern people died never married (burial registers, for instance, rarely included a person’s marital status). This meant that Wrigley and Schofield had to rely on demographic models and back projection to arrive at an estimation of the proportion of people who were still single in their forties. Second, and even more problematic for studying singlewomen, demographers did not break down their estimates by gender. Wrigley and Schofield did not estimate marriage rates for both men and women; it was never their interest to do so. And third, these scholars were concerned with estimating proportions of people who died never married. This is not the same thing as calculating the single adult population, including people who might yet marry, as well as that smaller group of people who died never married.

Marriage Duty assessments in late-seventeenth century Southampton

In order to calculate the proportion of adult women who were single at a given point in time, a source is needed that estimates the marital status of all adults. Such a source would provide a snapshot of all adult singlewomen at a particular point in the past. Fortunately, such a source exists for England in the early modern period. Called the Marriage Duty Tax, these assessments recorded individuals and provide some evidence of their marital status for communities throughout England in the later seventeenth century. The Marriage Duty Tax arose because of the English government’s need for money in the 1690s when war was declared on France. The government decided to levy a new type of tax on all births, marriages, and burials, as well as an annual duty on bachelors over the age of 25 and childless widowers. This legislation stayed in effect between 1695 and 1706. With every vital event subject to taxation, and parishes responsible for paying the burial tax for those
on poor relief, local assessors drew up purportedly complete lists of their inhabitants. Historical demographers consider these listings to be the closest thing to a complete census before the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, historians suggest that about 10 per cent of England’s population most likely escaped registration.9

The Marriage Duty assessments have long been a mainstay of historical demographic research. Numerous scholars have used the listings to compute population totals, sex ratios, and household composition in various communities across late seventeenth-century England.10 Documents related to the Marriage Duty are extant for at least 150 rural and urban communities, and more returns periodically come to light.11 The port town of Southampton has one of the most complete series of Marriage Duty assessments, with extant returns for the years 1695–97. This means that many historians have used Southampton’s assessments, but they have usually used the listings for only some of Southampton’s eight (intramural and suburban) parishes, or have used assessments from more than one year at the same time.12 In contrast, this article uses the assessments from all eight Southampton parishes for the single year of 1696, which means that the figures on the town’s population structure presented here vary from those presented in earlier demographic studies. This article is also the first attempt to use Southampton’s Marriage Duty assessments as a source for shedding light on the adult population’s marital status.

The reason so many historical demographers have employed Southampton’s listings is their ease of use and thoroughness. Each parish in the town appointed two assessors who compiled lists of all inhabitants by going from house to house. The men began to write on a new line each time they listed a new household. They recorded the name of the head of household first (usually a married male) and then the names of his wife, children, and any relatives residing in the household. This was followed by a list of any lodgers, servants, and apprentices. Along with the person’s name was usually a description of their relationship to the household head. For instance, in St. Michael’s parish a household entry looked like this:

Aaron Deveule, his wife Susanah, children: Mary, Sarah, Aaron, Eliz., Anne, Frances, Susanah, maid servant Mary Vine.

While Southampton’s Marriage Duty assessments have seen a fair bit of use, the history of the town in the early modern period has not been of as much interest to historians. This is largely because the port was at its lowest ebb in this period.13 By the sixteenth century the Mediterranean trade that had made Southampton one of the most important ports in medieval England had waned, or had been taken over by London merchants. The town had no industry to speak of, and dwindling customs revenues meant that its economy floundered. The civil wars of the mid-seventeenth century continued to disrupt trade and the Plague of 1665 hit Southampton hard. Largely due to disease, the town’s population fell from about 4,200 in 1596 to only 3,001 a century later. By the end of the seventeenth century the corporation was in
debt, there had been no significant building in Southampton for over a hundred years, and visitors such as Celia Fiennes called the town ‘distressed’. But in the eighteenth century things began to look up. Gentry and nobility started to build country houses near the town, and a mineral spring began to attract elite visitors interested in drinking the waters to improve their health. Most importantly, Frederick Prince of Wales arrived in 1750 to bathe in the sea. Where royalty came, the fashionable followed, and for the remainder of the eighteenth century Southampton enjoyed a new reputation as a spa and resort town along with renewed economic prosperity.

**Singlewomen in late-seventeenth century Southampton: preliminary estimates**

To produce statistics on adult singlewomen from Southampton’s Marriage Duty assessments, Peter Laslett and Richard Wall’s ‘Suggested rules for interpreting English documents’ were followed. According to these guidelines for working with population listings, all persons recorded as ‘child’, ‘son’, or ‘daughter’ should be counted as unmarried minors, and all women recorded as ‘servant’, ‘lodger’, or ‘sister’ should be considered singlewomen. Following these rules, the Marriage Duty assessments provide the following data about the town’s population in 1696. The inhabitants listed in Southampton’s eight parishes in 1696 yield a population total of 3,001 persons. Over half or 1,645 of the town’s inhabitants were female. Like many English towns in the seventeenth century, Southampton was female-dominated, with an overall sex ratio of 81.5 males to every 100 females. An initial count reveals that Southampton’s female population consisted of 931 single females, 473 wives, and 156 widows. The most that could be determined about another 85 females was that they were unmarried adults (either singlewomen or widows). While Southampton’s assessors always recorded a married woman as a ‘wife’, sometimes they did not indicate if an unmarried adult woman was a widow or a spinster, and so to be precise I have assigned these 85 women to a separate category called ‘unmarried women’.

In sum, as Table 1 shows, the Marriage Duty data reveal that over half, or 56.6 per cent, of the females in Southampton were single (both children and adults). A further 28.7 per cent were married, 9.5 per cent were widowed, and 5.2 per cent were unmarried adult women (either single or widowed). High proportions of singleness were not restricted to women either: 59.7 per cent of Southampton’s males were single (both children and adults), 35.2 per cent were married, and 4.2 per cent were widowed.

The next step was to determine the proportion of singlewomen in the adult female population, which meant that single female children had to be excluded. Unfortunately, Southampton’s Marriage Duty assessors did not include the ages of the inhabitants they recorded. This is true of most of the Marriage Duty assessments since age was not a required category, making it impossible to know for sure who was a minor and who was an adult. So Laslett and Wall’s guidelines for counting minors were again followed, as was
their suggestion of counting any women recorded as ‘servant’, ‘lodger’ and ‘sister’ as single adults. The results, shown in Table 1, reveal that 41.6 per cent of females and 41.0 per cent of males in Southampton were minors. Once female children are excluded from the female population it is possible to identify the adult women in Southampton. As Table 2 shows, in 1696 25.6 per cent of the adult females in Southampton were single, 16.3 per cent were widowed, and a further 8.9 per cent were unmarried (either single or widowed).

The Marriage Duty assessments for Southampton reveal that less than half of all adult women, or 49.2 per cent, were married. While early modern historians have assumed that the married state was normal for adults, this source shows that the majority of women in Southampton were actually unmarried in the late-seventeenth century. Perhaps equally surprising, the majority of unmarried adult women were single, not widowed: for every two widows living in seventeenth-century Southampton, there were three adult singlewomen.

**Hidden singlewomen**

As impressive as the numbers of singlewomen derived from Southampton’s Marriage Duty listings are, these are only preliminary numbers. Due to two methodological problems, the assessments actually hide (and thus lead us to underestimate) the proportion of adult singlewomen. The first problem is that the biases of the early modern period serve to hide adult singlewomen in the contemporary sources. To understand why we need to look at the intentions

Table 1  Marital status of females and males in Southampton, 1696

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single (minors)</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>549</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single (adults)</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried (either single or widowed)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1,645</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>1,340</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Sixteen persons are not included in the above figures because their gender was uncertain.

**Sources:** Southampton Record Office, SC 14/2/66a-b, 67a-b, 68a-b, 69, 70a-b, 71, 72, 73a-c, 74a-c.
and assumptions of the creators of the tax listing. The Marriage Duty assessments were not documents designed to detect singlewomen; in fact, they often masked their existence. It is important to remember that the Marriage Duty was a tax, and as such the assessments listed what early modern people considered to be households (and heads of households) because they were the basic units of taxation in early modern England. The Marriage Duty was so called because it was a tax on births, marriages, and burials, and since such familial events were their focus the assessors recorded families and the male heads of household responsible for paying these taxes. Singlewomen only mattered in the eyes of the tax collectors if they got married, gave birth or died, for by doing so they were liable to a tax.19

Second, the Marriage Duty sometimes did specifically identify single adults, but these single adults were men, not women. Men’s marital status is more evident in this source because a tax was levied on bachelors over the age of 25 as well as on childless widowers. Contemporaries assumed these men could afford to pay a tax because they had no family for which to provide. Singlewomen over the age of 25 and widowed women did not pay a comparable tax, perhaps because contemporaries presumed that women could not afford to do so.20 While unmarried women benefited financially from this lack of taxation, historians of women do not. Since unmarried women were not taxed like their male counterparts, the marital status of these women was not always explicitly recorded. This means that the Marriage Duty is a less helpful source for historians interested in singlewomen; since their marital status was of less interest to the assessors, it was not as well recorded.

Lastly, sources such as the Marriage Duty Tax cannot be read outside the context in which they were created. Early modern England was a Protestant society that encouraged universal marriage. Government officials (tax assessors included) reflected this societal ideal. Unmarried adult males were taxed, perhaps to coerce them into marriage. Bachelors and widowers seem to have been taxed implicitly to encourage marriage, since married men were not taxed comparably.21 Unmarried adult women were not taxed, it seems, because contemporaries assumed women would not remain unmarried by

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried (single or widowed)</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Southampton Record Office, SC 14/2/68a-68b, 70a-74c.
choice. All women who had not yet married were assumed to be wives in waiting. They were denied the status of independent adults and assessors were not likely to record mature singlewomen as such. Instead these women were more likely to be presented under the rubrics of ‘daughter’, ‘servant’, ‘sister’ or ‘lodger’—categories which positioned the adult singlewoman as a household dependent, or wife in waiting, rather than as an autonomous individual. For example, out of the 931 single females identified in Southampton’s Marriage Duty assessments, 862 were listed as either daughters or servants (see Table 3). This means that 92.5 per cent of single females (both minors and adults) appear to have been young females living with parents or masters and awaiting some future marriage.

The answer depends on how we define ‘daughter’. The second methodological problem encountered is not the source itself but the conventions established by modern-day demographers for using the source. When we follow the guidelines for counting children and adults created by historical demographers like Peter Laslett and Richard Wall, we miss counting a number of adult singlewomen. Modern guidelines turn out to be as much of an obstacle to determining numbers of singlewomen in the past as the early modern sources.\textsuperscript{22} Laslett and Wall, as we have seen, suggested that any females recorded as ‘daughter’ in population listings such as the Marriage Duty should be counted as minors. But some scholars, including Kevin Schürer, have acknowledged that persons recorded as ‘son’ and ‘daughter’

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\footnotesize
\begin{tabular}{l|c}
\hline
Relationship to household head & No. \\
\hline
Daughter & 681 \\
Servant & 181 \\
Boarder, lodger, or stranger & 25 \\
Sister & 20 \\
None-- marital status derived from other sources & 17 \\
Kinswoman & 3 \\
Granddaughter & 2 \\
Niece & 1 \\
Nurse child & 1 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Household position of single females in Southampton, 1696}
\end{table}

Note: This does not include the 85 unmarried adult females who were either single or widowed. These 85 women had no recorded household position or were heads of household with no recorded marital status.

Sources: Southampton Record Office, SC 14/2/66a-68b, 70a-74c.
might have been adults. Although the children of the household head, these individuals were not necessarily children in the sense of being underage or in their minority.23

A number of adult singlewomen are likely to be hidden behind the words ‘daughter’ or ‘child’. This is especially true because historians of the family in early modern England have found that it was common for adult daughters to remain at home with their parents. For instance, Richard Wall found that half of all singlewomen between the ages of 15 and 44 who lived in the English communities of Lichfield and Stoke-on-Trent, and almost half (43.9 per cent) of those who resided in Corfe Castle, were living in the parental home.24 This means that women designated as ‘daughter’ in listings such as the Marriage Duty could have been adult singlewomen rather than female children.

If ages are not recorded, the only way to determine if recorded children were in fact minors is to check for them in other sources that might shed some light on their age. Cross-checking of evidence derived from population listings with other available sources is, of course, a laborious process, and one that depends upon the serendipity of record survival: but if we want to produce more accurate statistics about the past, the work must be done. Due to Southampton’s relatively good series of parish and municipal records, it proved possible to cross-check the names of a limited number of the single females listed in the 1696 assessments. The sources consulted include parish registers (which record baptisms, and thus can help reveal a person’s age), wills, court records, and other tax listings extant from Southampton. The results of this cross-checking were revealing.

It was possible quickly to identify the approximate age of 40 women who were recorded as ‘daughter’ in Southampton’s Marriage Duty assessments. All of these were over the age of 18 (a conservative threshold of female adulthood in the early modern era), and some women were considerably older.25 For instance, Elizabeth Downer, who lived with her father in St Michael’s parish, was described in the Marriage Duty as his ‘daughter’. While we might assume from this that Downer was a young girl, parish registers revealed that she had been born in 1655, which made her 41 years old when she was listed in the 1696 assessment. Similarly, Jane Helliard was 39 years of age when the Holy Rood parish assessors recorded her as a ‘daughter’.

While Elizabeth Downer and Jane Helliard are extreme examples, they were by no means rare. For instance, three women in the Marriage Duty listings had sued debtors in the town’s Common Court in the mid-1680s, an action only a singlewoman over the age of 18 could take. This means that by 1696 these three women were at least in their late twenties or early thirties when the tax assessors recorded them as ‘daughter’. Three other women in the 1696 Marriage Duty had appeared in the 1692 Poll Tax. These women were recorded as servants in that year, so if they had entered service in 1692 in their mid-teens, as was common, a conservative estimate would place them around the age of 20 in 1696. But these women also could have been in service for a
few years by 1692 which would mean that they were well into their twenties by 1696. The largest number of adult children were found in Holy Rood parish: 15 recorded ‘daughters’ were actually adult singlewomen. Among them was Mary Vernon, a woman recorded as a servant in a tax listing as far back as 1678. This made her at least 34 years old in 1696, if not older: Vernon was no child, she was almost middle-aged.

The problem of hidden singlewomen is not limited to Southampton and its Marriage Duty assessments. Population listings from the Middlesex community of Harefield yield similar examples from 1699. In Harefield, as in Southampton, individuals recorded as children were not always minors. For example, the household of John Hanyan Esquire and his wife Susan included a 30-year old ‘son’, Henry, and a 22-year old ‘daughter’, Elizabeth. Frances Binnet, widow, was listed with her ‘daughter’ Frances, aged 27.

Listings based on the 1695 Marriage Duty assessments for the Staffordshire town of Lichfield also included the ages of the inhabitants. These listings can provide a sense of just how many persons recorded as ‘child’ may have in fact been above the age of majority. Lichfield was almost the same size as Southampton in the late-seventeenth century. Of its 2,861 inhabitants, almost one third, or 933, were single females (compared to 804 single males). Over half, or 511, of the 933 single females were under the age of 15, and were thus children (see Table 4). Added to this were 170 singlewomen between the ages of 15 and 20, and thus in the midst of young adulthood. A further 125 were between the ages of 20 and 25, and 72 more were between the ages of 25 and 30. These women, while not minors, were precisely the type likely to have been recorded as children by the Marriage Duty assessors in other communities, especially if they were still living in the parental home or were at home between jobs in service. Numbers of singlewomen in Lichfield still remained relatively high among thirty-somethings: there were 25 singlewomen between the ages of 30 and 35, and another 22 between the ages of 35 and 40. A further eight singlewomen over the age of 40 lived in the town in 1695. The Lichfield evidence thus reveals that singlewomen were a common demographic group until women reached their forties. This is significant since few people in late seventeenth-century Lichfield lived beyond the age of 65 or 70. Calculating only numbers of single women over the age of 40 miss the majority of single females in early modern communities. This is why calculations of all adult women who had not yet married are more useful for determining the presence of singlewomen in the early modern era than are estimates of never-married women in their mid-forties.

Singlewomen in late-seventeenth century Southampton: revised estimates

The discovery that a significant number of females recorded as ‘daughter’ in the Southampton Marriage Duty assessments were not minors but adult singlewomen has a significant effect on the calculations. As Table 5 shows, subtracting the 40 adult ‘daughters’ from the category of child and adding them to the adult singlewomen category increases the proportion of
Table 4  Age of all single females in Lichfield, 1695

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age groups (inclusive)</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-15</td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-40</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-45</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-50</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-55</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>933</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Singlewomen in Southampton’s adult female population from 25.6 to 28.6 per cent, while the proportion of married women drops from 49.2 to 47.3 per cent, and widowed women fall from 16.3 to 15.6 per cent. Unmarried women (either singlewomen or widows) fall slightly to 8.5 per cent. Moreover, the 40 adult daughters discovered by cross-checking other sources from Southampton are likely to be just the tip of the iceberg: more exhaustive cross-checking would have certainly turned up more similar cases, and further raised the proportion of singlewomen in the adult female population.

For the final count of adult singlewomen in early modern Southampton, the 8.5 per cent of adult women whose marital status could only be determined as unmarried (whether single or widowed) were assigned into the respective categories of singlewomen and widows. As singlewomen outnumbered widows in the 91.5 per cent of the population whose marital status could be identified, two-thirds of the unspecified unmarried women were added to the singlewomen category and one-third to the widowed category. Adding two-thirds of the unmarried women to the second count of adult singlewomen produced a final calculation of 34.2 per cent (see Table 5). Before the corrected second count it appeared that adult singlewomen comprised a little over a quarter of Southampton’s adult female population in 1696, but the final figures suggest that singlewomen were even more numerous, comprising just over a third of the adult women in Southampton.
Southampton in context

If over a third of the adult women inhabiting Southampton in 1696 were single, was this unique, or did other English communities also have significant proportions of single female inhabitants? It is possible to compare Southampton with other communities for which Marriage Duty assessments are extant. Such comparisons reveal that the proportion of adult singlewomen in Southampton was in keeping with, but actually lower than, those in other English communities. To produce these comparisons, the work of other historians on the Marriage Duty assessments (none of whom calculated numbers of adult singlewomen) has been used to compile statistics on the marital status of the populations concerned. Hence from Philip Styles’ work on the Marriage Duty assessments for the village of Fenny Compton, Warwickshire, it was calculated that as many as 35.6 per cent of the adult women in this community were single in 1698, which shows that significant numbers of singlewomen were not merely a feature of towns. Smaller towns were also home to more singlewomen than was Southampton: Gregory King’s figures for the Staffordshire town of Lichfield reveal that as many as 49.9 per cent of adult females in the town were single. But perhaps nowhere were singlewomen more prominent than in London where, from the statistics compiled by D.V. Glass, it was calculated that singlewomen made up over half, or an astounding 54.5 per cent, of the adult female population in the late seventeenth-century. This is no doubt due to the uniquely large number of servants and apprentices who migrated to the metropolis to find work. What these comparisons reveal is that the proportion of singlewomen in Southampton’s adult female population, at 34.2 per cent, was actually on the low side; and this is true without any cross-checking for adult ‘daughters’ having been undertaken for Fenny

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>First count (raw numbers based on Marriage Duty)</th>
<th>Second count (includes 40 adult singlewomen recorded as ‘children’)</th>
<th>Final count (two thirds of unmarried women added to singlewomen category and one third added to widow category)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singlewomen</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widows</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wives</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried (single or widowed)</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Southampton Record Office, SC 14/2/66a-68b, 70a-74c.
Compton, Lichfield, or London. It is possible that the depressed state of Southampton’s economy, outlined above, rendered it less attractive than many other towns to single, female migrants.

The percentages of adult singlewomen in various communities in early modern England are laid out for comparative purposes in Table 6. In addition to the four individual communities for which statistics have been compiled, this table includes the percentage of adult singlewomen derived from Peter Laslett’s population figures for a sample of 100 communities in early modern England. Laslett’s work was based on various types of local population listings, including the Marriage Duty assessments. After subtracting 40 per cent from his figures for single females (to separate out minors in the population), it was calculated that on average 30.2 per cent of adult women in early modern England were single. This number is slightly lower than that found in towns like Lichfield and Southampton, but is still surprisingly high considering that Laslett’s 100 communities included rural as well as urban centres. And, once again, no cross-checking has been done for ‘hidden’ adult daughters.

### Table 6 Marital status of adult women in early modern England

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Southampton, Hants. (pop. 3,001)</th>
<th>London</th>
<th>Fenny Compton, Warwicks. (pop. 415)</th>
<th>Lichfield, Staffs. (pop. 2,861)</th>
<th>100 English Communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>54.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** Some of these estimates did not distinguish between single female minors and single female adults. I have calculated the percentages of adult singlewomen myself by subtracting the proportions of children in these urban populations (23 per cent in London, 35 per cent in Fenny Compton, and 40 per cent in the 100 English communities) from the total number of single females to derive the marital status of adult women only.

Conclusion

The data considered here suggest that singlewomen in late-seventeenth century England comprised at least a third of all adult women. Moreover, in smaller towns such as Lichfield, as well as in the much larger metropolis, as much as half of the adult female population was single. Factoring in the proportions of widows, it is apparent that only about a half of all adult women in early modern England were married at any given moment. This is a sobering thought, since most of the research to date on women in the early modern period has focused on married women. The statistics presented in this article, therefore, should provide some added impetus to the growing body of work on singlewomen. These women comprised a large proportion of the adult female population, and as such, need to be integrated into research on women in early modern England.

The high numbers of single and widowed adult women living in early modern England mean that historians of this period must be more careful about assuming that marriage was the norm for adults, or that it dominated all of a person’s mature years. Moreover, the guidelines historical demographers have established for using population listings have unintentionally, but also unreflectively, replicated the marriage-centred focus of the early modern assessors. By focusing on the married male head of household, and by referring to people only in relationship to the household head, historians have obscured the adult singlewomen who lived in these households, just as early modern assessors once did. Both the assessments and the rules we have created to use them reflect a marriage-centred perspective: we need carefully to reconsider these sources and the ways in which we read them in order to provide a more accurate picture. Early modern England was a complex society and if we acknowledge that all documents from the era are constructed texts that reflect the cultural assumptions of the time, even sources created to hide this complexity can be used to help reveal it.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the following organizations for the financial support to conduct the research for this article: the Local Population Studies Society, Duke University, the North American Conference on British Studies, and the Huntington Library in conjunction with the British Academy. She would also like to thank the Local Population Studies Editorial Board, and Terry Bouton, for their comments and helpful suggestions.

NOTES


2. Historians of singlewomen in early modern England have relied on the work of these two scholars when addressing how many singlewomen there were in early modern England. For two recent examples, see Hill, Women alone, 10–11; and S. Mendelson and P. Crawford, Women in early modern England, (Oxford, 1998), 166–7.


6. Demographers are interested in fertility because they believe it is the motor of population change. According to their models, if a woman marries relatively late in adulthood, or not at all, she produces fewer children, and thus the population grows more slowly. Demographic interest in potential fecundity has led these scholars to label as ‘celibates’ or ‘spinsters’ women who reach their forties (and so presumably the end of their childbearing days) without marrying. Feminist critics of demography have pointed out that women only enter into the demographic picture as agents of fertility, and that the only women who seem to ‘matter’ are those between the ages of 15 and 45. For a feminist critique of historical demography, see B. Hill, ‘The marriage age of women and the demographers’, History Workshop Journal, 28 (1989), 111–41, and S.C. Watkins, ‘If all we knew about women was what we read in Demography, what would we know?’, Demography, 30 (1993), 551–77, esp. 559.


8. Weir has suggested that, ‘hard evidence from parish listings should become a priority for local studies, both to confirm the magnitude of celibacy and to provide answers to some basic historical questions about celibates’, ‘Rather never than late’, 349–50.


11. The Marriage Duty generated two types of documents for every English parish or ward: listings of inhabitants along with the duties and surcharges to which they were liable, as well as annual accounts of the duties paid. Only a small number of the second type of document have survived, but this article only uses the first type of document: Schürer, ‘Variations in household structure’, 257.

12. For instance, in his study of household structure Schürer used assessments from five of the eight Southampton parishes, one of which was from 1695, two from 1696, and a further two from 1697. This means his conclusions are problematic since they leave out St Michael’s, one of the two largest parishes in the town: see Schürer, ‘Variations in household structure’. The 1696 Southampton assessments are complete in terms of listings of inhabitants. The taxes collected or accounts for 1696 are missing for some parishes, but as only the population listings are used here, this is not significant.

13. The few histories of early modern Southampton include the articles by L.A. Burgess and E.

Southampton Record Office (hereafter SRO), SC 14/2/66a-b, 67a-b, 68a-b, 69, 70a-b, 71, 72, 73a-c, 74a-c.

Since the gender of 16 individuals in the Southampton listings is unclear, this number was subtracted from the total population of 3,001. This yields a population total of 2,985: 1,645 women and 1,340 men, and a sex ratio of 81.45. My figures can be compared to those of David Souden who recorded a population of 2,984 and a sex ratio of 82.4 for Southampton in 1696. The difference in our figures seems to result from Souden also deducting the 16 persons of unclear gender from his population total, but then inexplicably adding these 16 individuals into the male category when calculating the sex ratio. Souden’s slightly higher ratio of 82.4 is incorrect, but he does note the trend of female-dominated sex ratios in seventeenth-century towns. Souden, ‘Migrants and the population structure’, 150, Table 17, and n. 56. See also C. Galley, The demography of early modern towns: York in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, (Liverpool, 1998), pp. 142–3.

Laslett and Wall suggest that those persons described in population listings as daughters, granddaughters, nieces, siblings, servants, sojourners, boarders, apprentices, and journeywomen ‘can be presumed to be single’. To the single category were added women whose single marital status could be established from other Southampton sources. Wives were more easily categorized since Southampton’s assessors always referred to a married woman as the ‘wife of’ their husband. The assessors also usually indicated the marital status of widows by referring to them explicitly as such. It was assumed that any woman listed with three children who all shared the same surname was a widow, since it was rare in Southampton for a single woman to have more than two illegitimate children with the same man. Women with no recorded marital status, who either had no children listed with them or less than three children, were included in the category of unmarried women, since they could have been either single mothers or widows. Some could also have been wives whose husbands were away from home (mariners, for instance), but this is unlikely since the Southampton assessors appear to have listed husbands whether they were at home on that day or not.

For less than one per cent of the adult male population was it possible to determine that they were unmarried, but not more specifically whether they were bachelors or widowers.

Whether singlewomen paid the tax themselves when they married has not been consistently established. For London, Glass noted that some singlewomen were recorded as paying the tax, while others were not: Glass, ‘Introduction’, xix. But Arkell says that husbands paid the duties on marriage: Arkell, ‘An examination of the poll taxes’, 167.

Although, at a similar date, the Poll Tax of 1692–3 declared that wealthy singlewomen with estates worth at least £1,000 were liable for the first time: Arkell, ‘An examination of the poll taxes’, 146, Table 1, and 157.

Various schemes to encourage marriage appeared at the end of the seventeenth century. Contemporaries worried that Englishmen (but not women) were eschewing the marital state. Many of these schemes advocated taxing bachelors in order to persuade them to marry. See, for instance, Marriage promoted, (London, 1690), 24; John Dunton, The ladies dictionary, (London, 1694), 236–39; and The levellers, (London, 1703).

While Schirrer, ‘Variations in household structure’, acknowledged that so-called ‘children’ might not be minors, he did not attempt to amend his calculations on proportions of children in the English population.

Wall looks at two groups: single females aged 15 to 45 and those over 45. His use of the age 15 and the fact that he refers to the females aged 15–45 as ‘never married women’ implies that he
counts females aged 15 and over as adults. But he is vague about this. R. Wall, ‘Woman alone in English society’, *Annales de Demographie Historique*, 17 (1981), 303–17, especially Table 2.

25. Historians are not definitively agreed on the age of majority for women in the early modern period. Adulthood was different for women than for men and was multi-phased for both genders. Economic adulthood began in the mid-teens when females began to support themselves in great numbers, often in service. Religious adulthood began for both males and females in the mid-teens, when they became full communicants of the Church of England and could serve as godparents. Legal adulthood could be measured by the age at which females inherited, which was (if not at marriage) most commonly at the age of 16, 18, or 21. But females were able to serve as executors, contract debts, and sue in civil courts at age 18. I.K. Ben-Amos says childhood ended and young adulthood, or youth, began in the mid-teens, at which point an individual began to take on more responsibilities. I.K. Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and youth in early modern England*, (New Haven, 1994), chapter 1, especially 30, 36, 38. For evidence on female legal adulthood in wills, see Peters, ‘Single women’, 334; R.T. Vann, ‘Wills and the family in an English town: Banbury 1550–1800’, *Journal of Family History*, 4 (1979), 362; Froide, ‘Single women, work and community in Southampton’, 305.

26. These listings come from the papers of the political arithmetician Gregory King, who made use of data from the Marriage Duty assessments. Although based on the Marriage Duty assessments, these particular listings included additional information that King obtained, such as the age of some of Harefield’s inhabitants.


28. These listings are also from Gregory King’s own papers. King was from the town of Lichfield and may have had access to additional information about its inhabitants: Glass, ‘Gregory King’s estimate’, 364.

29. P. Styles, ‘A census of a Warwickshire village in 1698’, *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, 3 (1951–2), 39–40. Fenny Compton’s total population was 415, 197 of whom were women. Styles estimated the percentage of single people (not just women) of marriageable age in the village at around 15 per cent. To find the percentage of adult women who were single, I made my own calculations using Styles’ figures (which are admittedly vague and contradictory at points). Styles listed 135 adult women: 71 wives, 16 widows, and 13 unmarried (by which he seems to mean single) women, plus an additional 35 servants and strangers who he counted as single females. He said he assumed the latter group consisted largely of women who he believed were likely to have been unmarried (i.e. single). Turning these figures into percentages, the adult female population of Fenny Compton consisted of 52.5 per cent married women, 11.9 per cent widowed women, and 35.6 per cent single women. Since Styles’ assumption that all the servants and strangers were female may be overstated, it would be safe to lower the estimated percentage adult females in the village who were single to 32 or 33 per cent.


32. Laslett, ‘Mean household size’, in Laslett and Wall, *Household and family*, 145. A good overview of the many arguments and estimates concerning the proportion of children in early modern England is found in T. Arkell, ‘A method for estimating population totals from the Compton census returns’, in Schürer and Arkell, *Surveying the people*, 97–116. Arkell believes that while contemporaries and present-day historians have estimated that children under 16 comprised between 30–42 per cent of early modern England’s population, population listings for the very late seventeenth century tend towards a higher figure of about 40 per cent: ‘Method for estimating population totals’, 100–2. I have therefore used the latter figure in my calculations.
LOCATING AND CHARACTERIZING POOR HOUSEHOLDS IN LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY BOLTON: SOURCES AND INTERPRETATIONS

Steven King

Steven King is chair of the history department and research co-ordinator at Oxford Brookes University.

Debates

The revival of academic interest in the character and role of the Old Poor Law during the last 15 years has meant a renewed concern with thorny issues such as the way in which contemporaries defined ‘poverty’ and ‘pauperism’ and the living arrangements of the poor, the elderly poor especially. In terms of definition, it is widely believed that relief rolls changed from being dominated by women and the life-cycle poor in the late-seventeenth century to being dominated by men and structural and cyclical causes of poverty by the 1790s. By the early-nineteenth century it is possible to see very clearly in both the north and the south the development of a sub-group of the poor who were always poor and passed on the culture of being poor to their children. The relief rolls also grew in size as the eighteenth century progressed, with the poor law coming to support more people and to pay for more types of goods and services. Thus, whereas expensive medical treatment was rarely to be found in the seventeenth-century overseers’ figures, such treatment was commonplace by the opening decades of the nineteenth century. There is also an argument that the poor law increasingly came to recognize relative as well as absolute poverty, something that we can see reflected in the size and value of pauper inventories for Essex, Norfolk, Westmorland and Lancashire and in the fact that by 1803 it was not uncommon to find communities where over half of the population was directly dependent on poor relief (if we assume that receipt of relief by a household head implies family poverty). This ever-widening definition of need and deservingness (often not directly related to the underlying poverty conditions of individuals and communities) generated a steep rise in nominal poor relief expenditure in the late-eighteenth century which, in terms of the concern that it fostered among contemporary commentators, matched that in the late-seventeenth century.

For the eighteenth century, the size and complexity of the pauper family under the old poor law has also been subject to empirical investigation, at least in the south of England. Thomas Sokoll has shown that those who constructed local censuses of the poor usually listed poor people outside their household
context. Using census data for two Essex communities he has been able to show that, in contrast to the orthodox views of Laslett and others, poor households were bigger than average and the most, rather than the least, complex. Poor people lived with their marriage partners, with children, with other kin, servants and other poor people, often shifting between household forms in an effort to make ends meet and retain their independence.5 Such conclusions have resonance with a further strand of poor law historiography which stresses that the agents of the communal welfare system were frequently eager to create a partnership between the poor law and family networks in the care of the old and other life-cycle poor.6

These reinterpretations, and the revitalisation of the historiography of the poor law that they signify, are welcome. Yet, they also leave many loose ends. Thus, while the eighteenth-century poor law has been subject to increasingly sophisticated analysis, the practical operation of the seventeenth-century poor law remains, for many areas, a closed book. In particular, welfare historians have inadequately explored three issues. First, the definitions of poverty used by urban and rural communities to underpin the piecemeal development of a national rate-based system of poor relief constrained by the central problem of equating limited supply of welfare with potentially unlimited demand. As Slack points out in his seminal work on the seventeenth-century poor law, resistance to raising rates and use of the language of reformation for the poor in the 1620s gave way by the 1670s and 1680s to an emerging national welfare system underpinned by the language of improvement and sentiments of genuine concern for the plight of the poor.7 Yet the issue of who was included and who was excluded from the classification of so called ‘deserving poor’ remains to be explored, despite the fact that Tom Arkell has offered us a theoretical framework for local empirical analysis.8 Were the poor defined according to their ability (or inability) to labour, as McIntosh suggests, or did seventeenth-century communities employ more sophisticated definitions revolving around income and moral suitability?9 Was recognition as deserving tied up with subtle notions of citizenship? Did seventeenth-century communities recognize the plight of those overburdened with children? And how far had regional peculiarities in the definition and treatment of poverty been ironed out by the end of the seventeenth century? These sorts of questions remain to be asked and answered for most seventeenth-century English regions.

A second issue also requires more analysis: the significance of the seventeenth-century (urban and rural) pauper censuses that occur frequently in some northern and Midland counties. Taken for a variety of reasons, but chiefly as a benchmark of need for what was in many places a nascent poor law system, these censuses provide an opportunity to look at definitions of poverty. Yet we need to ask searching questions about the provenance, coverage and reliability of such sources, duplicating the sophisticated discussions of the same documents at the end of the eighteenth century. Finally, the very existence of such pauper censuses highlights the fact that we still know little about the household arrangements of the poor. Did the
seventeenth-century poor live in large and complex households like those in the late eighteenth century? Or had there been a transition in the living arrangements of poor people as national legislation finally created the outlines of a welfare system by the second or third decade of the eighteenth century?

Notoriously sparse and ambiguous seventeenth-century sources make these sorts of questions difficult to answer on a systematic basis. For certain places, though, some very good late-seventeenth century sources survive and this article uses censuses of the poor from the town of Bolton in Lancashire, together with supporting data, to make a contribution to the debate over seventeenth-century definitions of the poor and their household context. It will suggest that, at least for Bolton, seventeenth-century pauper censuses can, when used carefully, provide as much information about the poor as their more familiar late-eighteenth century counterparts. The censuses suggest that Lancashire communities were late to implement a poor law system funded from local property taxes and that, at least in Bolton, churchwardens and overseers adopted a nuanced definition of deservingness which was intricately tied up with both a willingness and ability to seek work and the degree of connection one managed to maintain with occupational, neighbourhood and kinship networks. Bolton pauper households will be shown to have been small and relatively simple, and it is concluded that there may have been a watershed in poor law policy and the experience of being poor in the very late seventeenth century.

Place and sources

Little work has been conducted on the seventeenth-century Lancashire poor, the poor law and its administrators. To some extent this is not surprising: while the county had a well established sub-regional industrial structure by 1660, its population was sparse, levels of urbanisation were low and wealth was limited. In some ways, then, the county is not very interesting if we want to understand the socio-economic structure of seventeenth-century England, and in particular the nature of poverty. Nor are the sources on the poor and the poor law particularly good. Most Lancashire communities enforced the terms of the 1601 poor law only slowly, and the sources for studying the lowest strata of society are limited. There is also the problem of interpreting the records that do survive, not least because the sources were constructed by contemporaries with limited education and experience. In addition, the fact that the formal writing of records was frequently done by someone other than the official nominally responsible for the task, probably does not help. Thus, Roger Lowe, an apprentice to a general merchant in late-seventeenth century Ashton-in-Makerfield, was a scribe for the illiterate overseers and the parish officers of the parish – testimony to a degree of doubt over the provenance and content of manuscript records.

The situation in the town of Bolton (Figure 1) is different. The town figures heavily in Quarter Sessions records for late-seventeenth century Lancashire and its officials took regular censuses of the poor, both those recognized by
Figure 1  Map of Lancashire
the poor law and community and those not. This must have involved a considerable amount of work, for the absolute scale of grinding poverty in seventeenth-century Bolton is not to be doubted. Despite the fact that the town was a key area in the hardening sub-regional geography of the woollen and fustian industries from the mid-seventeenth century, the area had a limited rate base. At the time of the 1664 Hearth Tax over 80 per cent of all households had only a single hearth, broadly in line with the average for east Lancashire but substantially higher than on the Lancashire plain, in what were later to become coal mining communities. This said, there were important divisions between the experiences of the two parts of the town. Some 53 per cent of household heads in Little Bolton were non-chargeable in 1664 compared with 77 per cent in Great Bolton. In other words, if we assume in the broadest terms that non-chargeability equated to poverty (absolute or relative), then the very poorest people were crowded into distinct areas of the town either by accident or design. There is evidence that the latter was the more likely. In common with other seventeenth-century towns, the Bolton vestry had been left numerous houses in the wills of prominent citizens to be deployed in aid of the poor. It bolstered its housing stock in the later seventeenth century by seizing houses that could not be kept in repair, or which had been abandoned, by their occupants and above all by purchasing small units. Almost all purchases of this sort were in the Great Bolton area.

The general message, though, is that Bolton had a significant poverty and marginality problem. This article uses three of the Bolton censuses (those from 1674, 1686 and 1699) in order to understand the character of that poverty. The reasons behind the taking of these censuses and the questions that were asked of people are not clear. We know from the records of the churchwardens that they, rather than the overseers, were charged with constructing the 1674 census. Indeed, the Bolton vestry did not elect its first overseer of the poor until 1681, and it was not until 1686 that the town was taking poor law legislation seriously. An entry in the vestry minutes of August 1686 states:

> It is ordered by the said justices of the Assizes that the poor of the said township and parish of Bolton henceforward shall be sufficiently relieved and provided for from tyme to tyme by a tax equally to be raised and assessed upon all the inhabitants of the whole parish of Bolton.

It seems likely, then, that the 1686 census was conducted by the overseers, in response to the need to establish a baseline record of poverty in the town and parish. The 1699 census was certainly taken by the overseers, whose names are recorded both on the census and in the vestry books. This census may have been a reflection of the spiralling cost of relief in the town and throughout Lancashire given the poor weather and epidemics of the 1690s, and in consequence it is sensible to be slightly wary about some of the conclusions which emerge from a reading of the document. How the churchwardens and overseers conducted their surveys is not at once obvious. Paul Slack suggests that there was extant guidance on how such censuses should be taken, but no
Figure 2  A page from the 1674 pauper census

Source:  Lancashire Record Office DDKe 2/62, ‘Census of the poor’.
record of such guidelines has been found in an otherwise remarkably well preserved archive. This said, where we cross reference the censuses with surviving rate lists for the town, it is plain that both the churchwardens and overseers made their record by going from street to street rather than simply relying on extant tax lists. It seems unlikely that poor people would have been missed by accident. We can, then, have some faith in the reliability of these late-seventeenth century sources.

The least detailed census is that of 1674, which records the size and structure of the poor person’s household, some ages, some physical conditions and sometimes the occupations of those deemed poor. Figure 2 reproduces a page of the 1674 return. Thereafter, the censuses become more informative and the information more complete. That for 1686 records the names and ages of all people deemed poor, including children in nuclear families, their ‘condition’, their employment (if any), their income from sources other than the poor law (their ‘weekly get’) and their monthly poor law allowance, if any. The 1699 survey goes even further, distinguishing between those who were poor and lived in their own household, those who were ‘tabled’ in the households of others at poor law expense, and those, ‘sojourners’, who were lodged with others at their own expense but still considered poor. Figure 3 reproduces a page of this document.

Considered together, these illuminating sources can help us to pin down how exactly ‘poverty’ was defined by contemporaries in a seventeenth-century urban area and the household characteristics of those defined as poor in these terms.

Defining poor households

Tom Arkell has suggested that late-seventeenth century society employed overlapping and sometimes competing definitions of the term ‘poverty’. One definition related to those considered too poor to pay local taxes, another to those considered too poor to pay national taxes. Further definitions were employed by the overseer or the vestry, by those who administered endowed charities and by the clergy in deciding who was too poor to pay taxes on baptisms, burials and marriages. All of these ‘definitions’ were tied up with wider regional and national trends in sentiment towards the poor. Such differences in definition, Arkell argues, were inevitable in a seventeenth-century society where different degrees of need could hit almost anyone for at least one phase of the life-cycle. As Steve Hindle argues of Frampton, in Lincolnshire, ‘a myriad of uncertainties and insecurities ... could temporarily or permanently undermine the precarious viability of ... household economies’. It was perfectly possible for a once prosperous ratepayer to find his or her income constrained in old age, and thus to be unable to pay rates even if not receiving poor relief. A bout of sickness could drag an otherwise marginal family to the brink of the poor relief system but they might find themselves prevented from falling into the breach by charities designed for those not in receipt of poor relief. By the same token, it was also possible for
Figure 3 A page from the 1699 pauper census

Source: Bolton Record Office PBO 1/1-2, 'Census list, 1699'.
those too poor to pay rates at an early stage of the life-cycle to graduate to the ratepayer list later in life. The grey area between sustained economic independence and life-threatening poverty provides plenty of leeway for defining need.

The situation was no different in Bolton. As we have seen, Hearth Tax exemption figures suggest that on average at least 62 per cent of Bolton households were deemed to be in no position to pay. For the Poll Tax of May 1678, an even larger proportion of the population was deemed ‘poor’. Some 124 families were assessed for the tax, or just under one-third of all families present in the 1670s. Some indication of the reasons for non-payment can be found in the entry for Roger Leigh and his wife, who were exempted because they did not pay the church or poor rate and had previously received a charitable contribution for more than a month. Such criteria highlight a further definition of poverty in Bolton: those deemed too poor to pay local taxes. In 1686, 148 people were assessed to pay the poor rate in Great and Little Bolton, including approximately 50 people who were also named as poor in the poor census of that year. By 1699, the assessment list had grown to 159 individuals or occupiers, including approximately 65 of those who were also named as poor in the poor census of that year. Being named and paying, however, were two different things, and in both cases it appears that under 100 individuals financed poor relief in Great and Little Bolton. Not all of those who went unassessed for local taxes, or who failed to pay them, were included in the censuses of the poor, however. The 1674 census numbers 513 people, or roughly 31 per cent of the likely population at that date if we use a multiplier of 4.5 on the Hearth Tax. By 1686 the number listed had fallen to 232 people, while by 1699 the total number of poor people was 341. In other words, there was a substantial proportion of the population (over 60 per cent in some years) who neither paid local taxes nor appeared as poor (whether or not they received relief) in the censuses of the poor. This is not a particularly surprising observation: Steve Hindle has highlighted the problem of ‘shallow poverty’ in Lincolnshire. Indeed, this is precisely the sort of overlapping and conflicting definition that we might expect from the work of Arkell. It does, however, raise the important question of what criteria were employed by the churchwardens and the overseers in deciding who should appear in the three census documents used here. Shallow poverty also begs the question of what significance poor people themselves attached to appearing or not appearing in the census lists.

At first blush, the preamble to the 1674 census provides us with a simple answer to the question of definition. This ‘particular survey of the poor in the township of Bolton’ defines the poor as follows:

\[
\text{that is to say, of the aged decreped, blynde lunatick and diseased beinge past labor, as also the fatherless motherless and infant not able to labour, and poor familys overcharged with children together with such sums of money as we consider must of necessitie be paid yearly to them to keep them from starving.}\]
Later in the same survey the churchwardens added a further sublist of people not in the book but assisted with money and kind at our doors and such also as are in great necessitie, being overcharged.

In other words, this was a survey of those who (it was thought) needed formal and informal charitable relief because of their inability to labour, their having too many children compared to their income, or their being sick or orphaned. Whether such a preamble was merely a form of words or accurately represented the criteria employed in taking the census (and whether need fed through to actual relief) is uncertain, but the question gets to the heart of the discussion in this section. As early as the 1620s Essex ratepayers were interpreting poor law legislation to mean they were only liable to help ‘the lame, impotent, old, blind and such other as being poor are not able to work’. The same was true in Norwich in the 1570s. In both cases the similarity in the language used for the preamble compared to Bolton is striking, and should perhaps incline us to view such preambles as merely a form of words.29 This said, the 1686 and 1699 surveys provide us with no similar preamble, perhaps suggesting that a definition of deservingness in the eyes of local officials had become well-entrenched as they became more familiar with the operation of a formalized and rate-funded poor law system.

What was the nature of this definition? Similar criteria seem to have been employed at all three dates. Thus, sickness and incapacity were two of the most important variables attached to inclusion in the census. Figure 4 shows the variety of terminology to be found under the column heading...
'condition'. While we must be wary of the exact meaning of any of these terms, the fact that the general category ‘lame’ diminishes in importance over the three censuses should give us some confidence that diagnosis of precise problems was becoming more common. More precise or not, it is clear that physical disability was a significant variable in determining whether a person ended up recorded in the poor census at any of the three dates. We should, however, note the entry for Thomas Wade in 1674, which says that he is ‘so simple as not fitt to work or to beeg’. The inability to work or to exploit other unseen areas of the economy of makeshifts, rather than a simple mental disability, was what weighed heavily in the minds of the churchwardens.

Old age and the inability to work weighed equally heavily in 1674. Figures 5 and 6, showing the age distribution of male and female adults recorded as poor at each census date respectively, reveal that in 1674, the majority of those with recorded ages were aged over 60, and they usually carried a signifier that they were past garnering significant income through labour. This focus on the old was to become more sensitive over time. In common with census takers in Salisbury, the overseers of Bolton came to recognize different degrees of inability to work on the part of older people. Phrases such as ‘almost past work’, ‘short of right work’ or ‘unable to work at present’ become normal after 1674 and coincide with a fall in the proportion of those with stated ages who were recorded as old in the censuses. On average, only 43 per cent of adults listed in 1686 and 1699 were aged 60 or over, though the figures are more impressive if we accept that the onset of old age in the seventeenth century was in the age group 50–59. Even so, it is clear that there was a subtle shift in the definition of poverty over time, to include more families with children.
The number of children in these poor families was by no means large. In 1674 the average number of children in families recognized as poor was 2.56. By 1686 the mean had climbed slightly to 2.59, and by 1699 it had climbed further to 3.0. Of course, these mean figures mask considerable complexity. The 1674 figures are kept low by the presence of large numbers of one-child units, in turn reflecting a higher number of widows and old couples with a single disabled child in 1674 than in subsequent censuses. In turn, the 1699 figures are slightly inflated by the development of a formal policy on apprenticeship, which was imposed from 1696, and which may have removed some single child units that would otherwise have counted in the figures. Yet, these caveats notwithstanding, it is probable that we do see a real change in the size of families classified as poor over time. This may reflect generally higher fertility, more ill-health amongst parents, or it may reflect a conscious effort to target limited resources in a more effectual manner as relief bills spiralled in the 1690s. The latter is an interesting idea, and it should be noted that the churchwardens and overseers were less concerned with the number of children than their relative ages. Those families with high fertility and short birth spacing were most likely to be recognized as poor, a fact which we see reflected in the extraordinary numbers of people aged 15–39 who are recorded. The 1674 entry for John Davidson ‘overcharged with a wife and 4 small children’ sets the tone for definition of family poverty right up until 1699.

In general, there is little that is surprising here. Other commentators have also found that sickness, old age and (less commonly) large family size were criteria for being seen as deserving in seventeenth-century England. Yet,
even a cursory look at the figures and other supporting evidence suggests that the criteria employed by the census takers are more complex than they initially seem. While there are no exact figures for the incidence of sickness or old age in the wider late-seventeenth century Bolton population, we can be clear that the proportion of old people recognized as poor by the 1680s and 1690s is small, and the figures can have reached nowhere near the representation of old people in the wider population by the 1690s. Similarly, the schedules of assessment and non-assessment for the late-seventeenth century Poll Taxes imply that large numbers of families with considerable numbers of small children were not regarded as poor enough to be included in the censuses of the poor. And when we look at petitions to the Lancashire Quarter Sessions, evidence abounds of people with claims similar to those eventually recorded who were turned down for relief. Alexander Bradshaw petitioned the justices in 1686 stating:

whereas your peticioner being borne and brought uppe in the habblett of Bradshaw aforesaid in the said parish of Boulton and an inhabitant there all his lyfe tyme hitherto, Hath heretofore till now of late within the space of one year now last past by his Industry mentayned himselfe and Family in such sorte as hee hath not beene charageable or burdensome to any. But now it hath pleased God to visitt him and his wife with lameness and infirmities that they are noe longer able to mentayne themselves and their children ... they are now destitute of Habitacion and are likely to starve ... unless your good worships will be pleased to take the premises into your Serious Consideration.

Bradshaw uses all of the key words that we see in the censuses of the poor, including infirmity and lameness, and stresses his settlement in Bolton, but he has been refused relief by the churchwardens. Being sick and unable to work was not, then, a passport to an appearance in the censuses of the poor. Oliver Seddon ‘his wiefe and seaven smale children’ also had a case with many parallels to those recorded as poor in the censuses. His petition stated:

your peticioners are grown extreame poore in soe much thet they neither have houseroome to inhabite in nor subsistance to be releeved with which att the last Sessions was made knowne to your Worships ... they and their ancestors being bredd and borne in the said towne of Boulton att which said Sessions it was ordered that your peticioners should bee releeved ... your peticioners ... beinge still unreleeved humbly make bould to supplicate unto your worships for confirmacion of the same Order ...

While the 1686 census records nobody with seven children, those with four or five appear regularly, but Seddon does not. Such examples are common throughout the 1650–1699 period, and the fact that substantial numbers of petitions contain references to support for the case from other township residents might be read as suggesting that being needy and being effectively tied into the community in networks of friendship, occupation or neighbourhood was the key conjunction of circumstances that lead to
inclusion in the censuses of the poor. As Thane reminds us when talking of the
treatment of the old in the seventeenth century, ‘“community” was no
romantic abstraction. It was a tangible mesh of support and exchange made
up of complex interactions and reciprocities, rights and obligations, created
out of need and a fear of need ... care for the poor was among its essential
features’.39 This said, we should beware of linking inclusion in the censuses
with any simplistic notions of citizenship or settlement. While settlement and
thereby citizenship were key criteria in some areas in determining whether a
poor person was relieved and how generously, the detailed 1699 Bolton
survey includes many people who were recorded as ‘sojourners’, lodgers and
other transients. The 1674 survey, as was seen earlier, also included a separate
list of the itinerant poor. Both groups are recorded, whereas people like the
petitioner Bradshaw, living all his life in a place, are not included. Such
observations might provide support for the idea that it was practical
connections within the community that really mattered.

There are, however, competing explanations of the criteria employed by the
Bolton census takers. In common with Slack, Broad has argued that the
seventeenth-century poor law was a court of last resort and that it rarely
provided permanent support.40 Faced with expanding demand but constrained
supply of welfare (we should remember that the Bolton poor law had been
introduced unwillingly and had been under-funded right from the start) the
town may have sought to recognize as deserving only those who looked like
they might be shorter-term recipients of some combination of charity and rate-
based relief. In other words, the census schedules might represent the outcome
of a pragmatic consideration of current and future supply of, and demand for,
welfare in a poor seventeenth-century urban community. Clearly, a man with
seven children, like Oliver Seddon, was not a good bet in this respect. Nor was
he morally upstanding. The constable had apprehended both Seddon and
Bradshaw for fighting and causing a nuisance several times before they
petitioned for relief, suggesting that the overseers may have been employing
some moral criteria in their consideration of deservingness.

Of course, the exact criteria for inclusion and non-inclusion in the different poor
censuses of Bolton will always remain closed to us in definitive terms. The key
point, however, is that there was a detailed process of assessment of
deservingness being undertaken in the nascent Lancashire poor law system.
This process of creating rules on deservingness was to set the tone for the whole
county during the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Lancashire, and
south-east Lancashire in particular, was one of the last places to see any
transition in the composition of relief lists away from women, the elderly and
other ‘traditional’ relief recipients, and to men. The county was home to some of
the harshest poor law régimes in England, and rarely provided enough to live
on. Poor law régimes here also excluded large numbers who felt poor enough to
apply for relief, and Lancashire, along with Cumberland and Westmorland, saw
charity making a substantial contribution to welfare funds until well into the
nineteenth century.41 This framework was set in the seventeenth century and,
arguably, census-taking of the sort that we see in Bolton was a vital part of this
framework-setting.
Table 1  Size of poor households in Bolton: 1674, 1686 and 1699

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of members</th>
<th>Number of households</th>
<th>Mean household size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1674</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1686</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1699</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:  See Figure 4.

Household characteristics of ‘the poor’

One of the criteria for census inclusion that we have yet to consider is the presence or absence of kin, and the related question of the household and family structures of poor people. Potentially this issue is an important one, since, in common with west Yorkshire, it can be shown that throughout the eighteenth century the poor law in Lancashire disproportionately saw to the welfare of those who were ‘kin-poor’.42 The issue is complicated, of course, by the related question of whether these seventeenth-century censuses really record poor households and families, or whether, as in the eighteenth century, poor people are abstracted from their household context by the record keepers. This is not an easy question to answer. Table 1 suggests that in each of the three censuses, mean family size (none of the three censuses record servants) is below the 4.0–4.2 people suggested as normal by Laslett for the later seventeenth century, and substantially below the levels recorded in the late-eighteenth century. On the face of it, this should give us cause for concern that poor people have been abstracted from their household context.

Yet, we should not overplay concerns about the quality of the sources when it comes to family size. Even in the least detailed of the censuses (1674) the churchwardens appear to have been very precise in their recording of household composition. For instance, Robert Crompton and his wife, aged 66 and 60 respectively, were recorded in 1674 as living with the bastard child of their daughter. Elizabeth Lonro, aged 56, was recorded as living with her widowed daughter and her three small grandchildren. Similar observations might be made about recording in the other two documents. In 1686, for instance, Deborah Walmsley (aged 74) was recorded as living with her grandchild (aged 9), while Christopher Spackman (aged 80 and almost past labour) was recorded as living with his grandchild (aged 7). Recording, then, seems to have been painstaking. This was particularly true of the 1699 survey, which consciously distinguished between householders, tablers (lodgers paid for by the poor law) and lodgers. Even in this survey, however, mean family size was only of the order of 3.3, adding weight to the idea that family sizes amongst the late-seventeenth-century Bolton poor were small.
Some idea of how we should interpret Table 1 is perhaps to be seen when we consider the proximity of surnames in the census schedules. In 1674, Ralph Boxwirth is listed as poor along with his wife and three small children. Recorded in a separate household, but listed immediately after Ralph, is the widow Margaret Boxwirth, aged 80. We know from rating lists of 1664 that Ralph and Margaret Boxwirth were charged for different properties and it seems highly likely that they lived next to each other but in different houses. Assuming that there was a kinship relationship here, it may have been that proximity substituted for household complexity and larger family size. Pat Thane believes that it was usual for kin to move nearer to aged relatives at times of need. This idea would also be consistent with Hearth Tax data, which show an overwhelming preponderance of the very small single-hearth properties that one still finds in Bolton today and which might have restricted co-residence. Certainly, other examples of ostensibly proximate residence abound in this and the other censuses. Thus, in 1674, William Brook and his wife, together with three children, are listed next to John Brook, his wife and one child, and in turn next to Widow Brook, aged 60. The rating list of 1672 suggests that widow Brook was living on her own at this date, again implying proximate residence. Similarly, Thomas Tildsley, his wife and three children, are listed next to Roger Tildsley and his wife, and in turn next to Ralph Tildsley (aged 60) and his wife. If such proximity does reflect dense kinship patterns, then the contrast with the eighteenth century (where those recognized as poor by their communities were disproportionately likely to be those without kin) is notable and suggests that the early-eighteenth century may have marked a turning point in underlying poor law policy which involved a careful targeting of limited welfare supplies.

This idea requires more empirical investigation. In the meantime, we must also interpret the lessons of Table 1 in the light of the possibility that the overall family and household size in Bolton may not have been large. We can use Poll Tax data to obtain at least a crude indication of such background family sizes. Thus, in 1678 (and making allowances for those who were recorded as two households when they clearly were not) the average unit size was 2.8. This included several large gentry households, 13 apprentices and 40 servants; even if we were to add a notional extra 1 or 1.5 people to reflect the particular criteria of the Poll Tax, the mean family sizes suggested by the three poor censuses would hardly look out of place. In short, it seems likely that the families of poor people as defined in Bolton were relatively small.

Family structure amongst those recognized as poor in the three census documents looks less out of place when compared to the historiographical literature. Figure 7 suggests that nuclear families formed the core of family units among the poor in 1674, whereas by 1686 single adults with children almost exactly balanced nuclear families. The majority of these single adults were widows, but single men like Roger Hardman, who lived with a widowed
daughter aged 50, were also common. By 1699 there had been a significant increase in the importance of lone individuals, even after we control for tablers and sojourners who were recorded as single units but lived elsewhere. In both 1686 and 1699, the overseers made a subtle distinction between those who lived alone and paid rent, those (sometimes but not always labelled ‘sojourners’) who were recorded as paying for house room and those who were tablers. Elizabeth Aynon was a spinner and ‘pays for house at 3d. per week’, whereas Ellen Wade was a spinner but paid 2d. for ‘room’. Being a ‘tabler’ implied a closer relationship with the host family than simply paying for room. Most ‘tablers’ were young children (though they were not always orphans) such as ‘Henry Walker, a tabler aged 10 who winds but has lost his faculties’. However, they could also be old people such as Widdow Bradshaw (aged 80) and Thomas Dobson (aged 62). In all three censuses complex units make up less than ten per cent of the whole, broadly in line with the figures suggested by Laslett from a much wider sample of seventeenth-century census documents.45 How far do these trends reflect the inadequate recording of the churchwardens and overseers, and how far do they reflect real trends in the household structure of poor people in Bolton?

Some the lessons of Figure 7 make sense when set against our wider understanding of the operation of the seventeenth-century socio-demographic system and the nature of Bolton society. It is perfectly plausible that high death rates in the late-seventeenth century North West generated the increase in the number of single parent families seen between
1674 and 1686. The persistent rise in the proportion of lone individuals is also entirely plausible because the later censuses are detailed enough to allow us to make a distinction between lodgers and those who really were alone. A considerable (and rising) proportion of these lone paupers were old (defined as anyone aged 50 or more) and while this might look suspicious in the eighteenth century, in the seventeenth century – with a ‘new’ poor law, resistance to rates and limited resources – it may have made infinitely good sense for overseers and churchwardens to do everything they could to keep old paupers independent and active in their communities. Certainly, this is Thane’s interpretation of the general operation of the seventeenth-century poor law.46 She also suggests that the opportunities for the formation of complex households may have been lower in the later seventeenth century than before or after, with over half of those reaching old age having no living kin to form complex households with.47 In fact, we see some of the force of this argument played out in the Poll Tax schedules of Bolton from 1678, in which single individuals with servants, apprentices or lodgers vastly outnumber those listed with various degrees of non-nuclear kin.48 In short, it may well be correct to see poor people as becoming more isolated in the household context at the same time as they were linked into a variety of other community and kinship networks and thus to merit inclusion in the censuses of the poor. For the eighteenth century, the trend was almost certainly reversed.49

Conclusion

The Bolton census documents discussed here are to be understood in the context of the infancy of the seventeenth-century north-western poor law. As Quarter Sessions material suggests, communities were feeling their way (very often unwillingly) to a familiarity with national legislation and its manifest nuances, contradictions and failings. This was the nascent Old Poor Law, and churchwardens and overseers in Bolton and elsewhere had to deal with the problem of balancing the supply of welfare with the demand against the backdrop of significant changes in the socio-demographic context, something that we see played out in the household context of the poor in Bolton as recorded in census documents. While we might want to question the usefulness of these sorts of sources in the eighteenth century, for the seventeenth century we can have more confidence in them, and the 1699 census of Bolton seems unquestionably to be an accurate document. What all the censuses show is that in order to balance supply and demand, the churchwardens and overseers were employing complex notions of deservingness which probably left some old and sick people, with a decent moral character and good connections to their neighbours, occupational and other networks, listed as poor and other people in the same situation not listed. What the significance of being listed was in terms of the experience of being poor is a topic that requires much more empirical work.

Of course, this has been a partial study of one late-seventeenth century urban community, and in that sense it is dangerous to generalize or to speculate. What the Bolton census documents do seem to show, when compared with
eighteenth century overseer lists or vestry minutes, is that there was probably a subtle change in the perceived role of kinship in the welfare process from the early-eighteenth century, as the constellation of need, the supply of welfare and the richness of other elements of the economy of makeshifts changed. Such observations add weight to Paul Slack's decision to make a division between the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century Old Poor Law and that which came after.50

NOTES


3. A trend reported most recently in J. Broad, 'Parish economies of welfare 1650–1834', *Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), 985–1006, though for an attempt to draw out the regional aspects of this change see King, *Poverty*, 254–69.


15. This figure does not include paupers, who did not require exemption. Adding pauper totals from overseer and census records would thus bolster the conclusions drawn here about the intensity of poverty in Bolton. It should be stressed that this sort of spatial variation is common. For more on comparative figures and their underlying meaning, see the survey in N. Goose, 'Economic and social aspects of provincial towns: a comparative study of Cambridge, Colchester and Reading, 1500–1700', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1984). I should like to thank the editorial board for highlighting both of the points raised in this endnote.

16. See Lancashire Record Office (hereafter LRO) DDKe 2/6/2, 'Census of the poor' and BRO PBO 1/1–2, 'Census list, 1686' and 'Census list, 1699'. There are six further pauper censuses between 1674 and 1701.

17. BRO PBO 2/1, 'Vestry minutes 1655–1744'.

18. BRO PBO 2/1, 'Vestry minutes 1655–1744'.

19. Slack, From reformation, 68.

20. Other census documents of a similar or even earlier date are more detailed. For details of other censuses and for guidance on how to interpret such documents, see P. Thane, Old age, 48–56.


24. As the Constable Accounts for Bolton make clear, administration of the town was (notwithstanding its relatively small size) organized on the basis of ‘ends’—lower, higher, middle, west, east, north and south—with different people serving the same office for the different ends. The scope for widely divergent definitions of need was strong in this sort of administrative confusion. See BRO PLB 6/1, ‘Constable accounts 1683–1715’.

25. BRO ZZ 39/7, ‘Poll tax, 1678’.

26. The assessment lists are appended to the back of the censuses in each year, as they are for other census years not considered here.


28. LRO DDKe/2/6/2, ‘Bolton survey, 1674’.

29. See Wrightson, Earthly necessities; and Slack, From reformation, 48. For more detailed guidance on language, see Than, Old age.

30. Those with unstated ages are excluded from these charts. For women in 1686 and 1699, the likely impact of such exclusions on the distribution is negligible. At both dates less than five per cent of all women had unstated ages. In 1674, the ‘unknown’ figure among women is 30 per cent and we must thus regard this particular section of the chart with suitable caution. For men, the 1686 and 1699 figures, at eight and four per cent respectively, are also insignificant. However, in 1674, 59 per cent of men had no age statement, and we must thus regard this part of Figure 5 as, at least, indicative.

31. Pat Thane argues that by the later seventeenth century people had a more sensitive appreciation of what constituted ageing. For a discussion of this and the age at which being old was usually seen to start, see Than, Old age.

32. Broad, ‘Parish economies’, suggests that in the 1790s the poor law moved the relief focus away from substantial benefits to the most needy, and towards shallower benefits to a larger number of people. There may be a counterpart in the late-seventeenth century, speculation that is bolstered by the fact that other seventeenth-century censuses in the North West come increasingly to recognize the problem of families with too many children and not enough income. See Cumbria Record Office, Kendal (hereafter CRO) WD/Ry/32/1–4, ‘List of inhabitants of Kendal town’; CRO WD/Tr/F/176, ‘List of poor householders in Troutbeck’; CRO WD/Ry/35/1, ‘Poor households in Grassmere, Rydal, Troutbeck and Ambleside, 1684 and 1686’.

33. On apprenticeship, see BRO PGB 7, ‘Apprenticeship indentures, C17–C19’.


35. Pat Thane, Old age, 236, argues that in 1672, nine per cent of the population was aged 60 or over.
and that the figure was rising. See Thane,
36. See BRO ZZ 39/7, 'Poll tax schedules, 1678' and ZZ 29/11, 'Tax schedules'.
37. LRO QSP 176/6, 'Petition'. 'Hablett' is a dialect term for habitation.
38. LRO QSP 32/8, 'Petition'.
40. Broad, 'Parish economies', 986.
41. On these issues, see King, Poverty, 217–18.
42. King, Poverty, 214–18.
43. What I have not considered in the context of Table 1 is the likely impact of economic conditions in Bolton on who was included in these census documents. The position of Bolton in the hardening sub-regional economy of Lancashire, and its relatively diversified economic base, means that it is incredibly difficult to obtain a sense of whether the 1686 figures in particular reflect the onset of 'better times' or not. My thanks to the editorial board for raising this point.
44. Thane, Old age, 132.
46. Thane, Old age, 108.
47. Thane, Old age, 136.
48. BRO ZZ 39/7, 'Poll tax schedule, 1678'.
49. The pauper census material offers many possibilities for exploring this question, and others such as the nature of inherited poverty in the seventeenth century.
50. Slack, From Reformation.
CREATING LIFE HISTORIES AND FAMILY TREES FROM NINETEENTH-CENTURY CENSUS RECORDS, PARISH REGISTERS AND OTHER SOURCES

Peter Tilley

Peter Tilley is currently at the London School of Economics and Political Science working towards an M. Phil./Ph. D. on internal migration in Victorian Britain. He was previously Honorary Research Fellow at Kingston University, acting as Project Manager for the Kingston Local History Project. Prior to that he spent many years in the computer software industry.

Introduction

Since early 1996 the Kingston Local History Project, based at the Centre for Local History Studies at Kingston University, has been building a computer database from the variety of written and pictorial resources available in the local community. This will be used to explore various aspects of Kingston’s socio-economic history in the late-nineteenth century. For two years the project had no budget, so the early work was undertaken by an unpaid project manager (the author) and volunteers recruited by him from the local community. In 1997 limited funds became available from the university to enable the employment of a part time administration assistant followed two years later by funding for a database administrator. This paper is primarily focussed on a description of the process involved in producing personal life histories.

In line with the thinking of J.D. Marshall, the project has encouraged the active participation of the local community in collecting and recording relevant data. It also makes the resulting life histories and other records available to genealogists, local historians and other interested academics through a user-friendly version of the database at the local history room of the Royal Borough of Kingston’s Heritage Centre. Whilst the old market town of Kingston-on-Thames is the main area for study, the village of Blechingley, some 20 miles to the south, is also part of the project, mainly as a pilot study but also as a rural alternative to the urbanised community of Kingston.

Up to the mid-nineteenth century, Kingston had been a market town and the first stop for stage coaches leaving London for Portsmouth and the West Country. However, the coaching trade went into terminal decline when the railways arrived in the area in 1837. Although on the main railway line, for a variety of reasons Kingston station was located about one and a half miles outside of the town in the small village of Surbiton. A local property
entrepreneur saw the potential of a green-field site on the river Thames only 40 minutes away from London by train and set about building spacious middle class villas together with the necessary supporting artisan cottages. The success of his enterprise can be judged by the 353 per cent population growth for Kingston between 1841 and 1891 when the national population only grew by 82 per cent. Throughout this period, Kingston had no significant industries either within the town or in close proximity. Indeed, based on the Booth/Armstrong classification system, the three occupational sectors showing substantial growth rates were ‘dealing’ (shops), ‘public service and professional’, and ‘domestic service’, whilst agriculture and manufacturing were declining.³ Such a profile could be expected from the middle class suburb that Kingston was becoming.

Blechingley is situated on the main road from Guildford and Reigate to Canterbury and the channel ports on the Kent coast. With a population in this period averaging about 1,700 it could be considered a fairly large village but its overall growth was almost zero. Whilst the agricultural depression of the 1870s may have accounted for some of this lack of growth the fact that the nearest railway station was some four miles away in the village of Nutfield could have inhibited any influx of middle class commuters. The population of Nutfield itself grew by 90 per cent between 1841 and 1891 and the bulk of this growth was in the final 30 years.

Because the work on Kingston is ongoing and incomplete, this paper will focus on complete life histories and family trees from Blechingley, but will describe a method common to both locations. Figures 1–3 illustrate the types of report that can be produced. The benefits to genealogists and family historians of such ‘on demand’ life histories and their associated family trees are obvious, but the underlying data are also available for analysis. When up to six census records are available for any individual, age reporting can be easily checked for accuracy, as can place of birth. Individual occupational changes over time can be easily monitored against national trends and the commonality of occupations for fathers and sons can also be checked, confirming the more limited data from marriage records. The factors affecting social mobility within a community may well be revealed and models for migration behaviour beyond the community can be built.

Previously, most family reconstitution has been based on a period prior to the late-nineteenth century, using parish registers to derive statistics on nuptiality, fertility and mortality for that community.⁴ The additional data available in life histories enables the researcher to compile much more comprehensive family structures. Eckstein and Hinde recently reported in this journal on a study of family reconstitution for the period 1841-1891 using parish registers and the census enumerators’ books.⁵ With very little modification their methods could make use of life history records as described in this paper. Life history data would also appear to be an ideal source for event history analysis.⁶
Source data

At this stage, four main sources of data have been used to construct the life histories. First are the census enumerators’ books (CEBs) for 1851 to 1891. Although there were slight variations of content over the years, for the purposes of this paper each record in the CEBs can be thought of as consisting of at least name, address, relationship to head of household, marital status, age, sex, occupation, place of birth (town or village and county, plus country if not England), and a statement of certain disabilities. Second, we have parish registers of baptisms, marriages and burials for 1840 to 1900. From 1813 parish registers for the established church had a fixed columnar format. Baptism records contained the date of baptism, the child’s forename and surname, the father’s and mother’s names, the father’s trade or profession, the parents’ abode, and the name of the officiating minister. In some parishes the date of birth is also given, albeit intermittently. Marriage registers showed the date of the marriage, and for both bride and groom: name, marital status, age (if over 21 then this would usually state ‘full’ or ‘of age’), occupation, abode, father’s name and father’s occupation. Bride, groom and witnesses also signed the register or left their mark and the officiating minister signed his name. Burial registers were quite simple, showing only the date of the burial; the name, age at death, and abode of the deceased, and the officiating minister.

Third, the parish burial registers are augmented by cemetery records for burials after 1855. Municipal cemeteries were introduced in the 1850s when many of the parish churches were having difficulty in finding space in their own graveyards. In Kingston all denominations were accepted in the cemetery, although different religions were often allocated different areas. The cemetery burial register records are of good quality and contain additional information beyond the parish burial registers such as grave location, type of grave and whether the ground was unconsecrated. In Blechingley they also contain the depth of the grave and the fee paid. Finally, there are trade and street directories published by the likes of Kellys. These tended to contain records of two types of people: those who wished to advertise their trade, such as grocers and carpenters, and those who wished to advertise their perceived social status by virtue of an entry in the directory. Listings were usually in street sequence as well as trade sequence where appropriate. Later additions could include the 1841 CEBs (already in for Blechingley), electoral rolls, rate books, school registers, workhouse admission records, newspaper articles and indeed any source with local nominal data.

With the exception of the 1881 census where a machine-readable copy was provided by the Genealogical Society of Utah (Mormons), all this source data needed to be keyed into computers. It was decided that, where possible, hard copies would be obtained so that data entry could be undertaken by our team of local volunteers (currently numbering about 30). These range in age from 25 to 81 and have proved to be a very valuable asset. Most work at home on their own computers using software and instruction manuals prepared by the centre; some come to the centre
Table 1  Volume of source data for Kingston and Blechingley

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Number of records</th>
<th>Kingston</th>
<th>Blechingley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Census enumerators’ books</td>
<td>140,000</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptism registers</td>
<td>13,800</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage registers</td>
<td>10,300</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burial registers</td>
<td>33,065</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local directories</td>
<td>See note below</td>
<td>730</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The baptism registers for Kingston are incomplete. The census enumerators’ books for Blechingley include the 1841 census. The burial registers for Blechingley go up to 1917. The local directories for Kingston have not yet been incorporated into the database. There are three publishers of local directories in Kingston during this period and as yet the books are not in electronic form. Current effort is on consolidating census records and parish registers, with local directories scheduled as one of the next projects. Because they are printed we have been considering using optical character recognition on scanned images but the problems involved may well outweigh the benefits.

twice a week for checking and some do both. All the Blechingley data were keyed in by the 81-year old. The volumes involved for both locations are shown in Table 1.

The keyed-in data were imported to the main database, where the content was checked and validated. Checking was a visual process from print-outs but the computer was able to carry out validity checks which revealed, for instance, a boy called Mary, a female blacksmith and a woman of 75 claiming to be mother of a five year old. To ensure source integrity, wherever possible we have retained the original written information so the archive section of the database may contain apparent anomalies such as the examples above. Of course, the analysis section can be adjusted to reflect a more accurate view of the source data.

Database design features

The database package used for the project is Microsoft Access, which is part of the Microsoft Office Professional suite of applications. Within Access, tables store the data, queries sort, filter and analyse data in the tables, forms provide a user-friendly interaction to processing, and reports facilitate the design and formatting of printed output. To ensure portability, most processing for the project uses only these standard features within Access: hence users do not require a knowledge of programming. A new low-specification personal computer would have sufficient power and storage capacity to handle many times the volumes required.
When using Access, data are stored as fields within records. A table is a collection of records of the same type. Within data tables, each record can be split conceptually into two sections. The archive section contains the data as recorded in the original documents. The other section is made up of added fields containing the coded and standardised data needed for analysis and record linkage. Each record in every table also contains a field that gives it a unique identity (UID) within the table.

After the record linkage routines have been completed, the UIDs can be grouped to identify individuals in the various data tables. For the Kingston project the table that holds these groupings is called the person table, since it has a uniquely identified record (a person record) for each known individual. By definition, an individual can have only one record per census year, one baptism record and one burial record. The relevant records pertaining to that person are identified by their UID as stored in the person record (their person ID). This technique is not appropriate for marriage records, local directories and parent fields within baptisms and marriages where multiple records can be linked to the same individual. To cater for these possibilities the technique is to store the UID of the relevant person record as a field in the appropriate record within the data table. This method is known as using a ‘foreign key’ and for record retrieval it is less efficient than the direct key method.
Figure 2  Life history data for William Sargant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan 1832</td>
<td>LOCAL DIRECTORY</td>
<td>OCCUPATION: (Doctor) Surgeon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan 1839</td>
<td>LOCAL DIRECTORY</td>
<td>OCCUPATION: (Doctor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Jun 1841</td>
<td>CENSUS</td>
<td>PLACE OF BIRTH: ; OCCUPATION: Surgeon ; RESIDING: In the Town; STATUS: Not Given; Relation of William Kent (65546)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 May 1847</td>
<td>BAPTISM OF CHILD</td>
<td>ABODE: Blechingley OCCUPATION: Surgeon BIRTH DATE: 04/09/1843 MOTHER: Harriet Sargant, CHILD: Alice Sargant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Mar 1851</td>
<td>CENSUS</td>
<td>PLACE OF BIRTH: Sheffield York ; OCCUPATION: Surgeon General Practitioner ; RESIDING: Surgery (Camden Ho) N side of Main Street; STATUS: Married; Head of Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Sep 1852</td>
<td>BAPTISM OF CHILD</td>
<td>ABODE: Blechingley OCCUPATION: Surgeon CHILD: Herbert Sargant MOTHER: Harriet Sargant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan 1853</td>
<td>LOCAL DIRECTORY</td>
<td>OCCUPATION: (Doctor) Surgeon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Sep 1855</td>
<td>BAPTISM OF CHILD</td>
<td>ABODE: Blechingley OCCUPATION: Surgeon CHILD: Joseph Sargant MOTHER: Harriet Sargant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Jun 1858</td>
<td>BAPTISM OF CHILD</td>
<td>ABODE: Blechingley OCCUPATION: Surgeon CHILD: Edward Sargant MOTHER: Harriet Sargant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Dec 1860</td>
<td>BAPTISM OF CHILD</td>
<td>ABODE: Blechingley OCCUPATION: Surgeon CHILD: Marion Sargant MOTHER: Harriet Sargant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Apr 1861</td>
<td>CENSUS</td>
<td>PLACE OF BIRTH: Sheffield Yorkshire OCCUPATION: Licenciate of the Apothecaries Company of General Practitioners ; RESIDING: High Street; STATUS: Married; Head of Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Dec 1864</td>
<td>BAPTISM OF CHILD</td>
<td>ABODE: Blechingley OCCUPATION: Surgeon CHILD: Ada Mary Sargant MOTHER: Harriet Sargant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan 1871</td>
<td>LOCAL DIRECTORY</td>
<td>OCCUPATION: (Doctor) Surgeon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Apr 1871</td>
<td>CENSUS</td>
<td>PLACE OF BIRTH: Sheffield Yorkshire ; OCCUPATION: General Practitioner(Medical) ; RESIDING: (Camden House) High Street; STATUS: Married; Head of Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan 1874</td>
<td>LOCAL DIRECTORY</td>
<td>OCCUPATION: (Doctor) Surgeon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Jul 1879</td>
<td>BURIAL</td>
<td>GRAVE SITE: Family Vault North of Chapel; FOLIO: 54/128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Figure 3  Life history data for Alfred Sargant**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 Jul 1850</td>
<td>BAPTISM</td>
<td>PLACE OF BIRTH: Blechingley, Surrey; MOTHER: Harriet Sargant; FATHER: William Henry Sargant; ABODE: Blechingley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE: 3</td>
<td>30 Mar 1851</td>
<td>CENSUS, PLACE OF BIRTH: Blechingley, Surrey; OCCUPATION: Not Given; RESIDING: Camden Ho. N side of Main St; STATUS: Not Given; Son of William H Sargant (65573)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE: 23</td>
<td>2 Apr 1871</td>
<td>CENSUS, PLACE OF BIRTH: Blechingley, Surrey; OCCUPATION: E India &amp; China Merchant; RESIDING: High St; STATUS: Unmarried; Son of William H Sargant (65573)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE: Full</td>
<td>7 Oct 1880</td>
<td>MARRIAGE, Bachelor of Blechingley, Gentleman; MARRIED TO: Maria Howard (Spinster) of Blechingley, BRIDE'S AGE: Full; GROOM'S FATHER: William Henry Sargant (Surgeon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE: 33</td>
<td>3 Apr 1881</td>
<td>CENSUS, PLACE OF BIRTH: Blechingley, Surrey; OCCUPATION: West India Commercial Clerk; RESIDING: High St; STATUS: Married, Head of Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Sep 1882</td>
<td>BAPTISM OF CHILD</td>
<td>ABODE: Blechingley; OCCUPATION: Gentleman; MOTHER: Maria Sargant; CHILD: Irene Kathleen Sargant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Oct 1883</td>
<td>BAPTISM OF CHILD</td>
<td>ABODE: Blechingley; OCCUPATION: Gentleman; MOTHER: Maria Sargant; CHILD: Violet Sargant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Jul 1885</td>
<td>BAPTISM OF CHILD</td>
<td>ABODE: Blechingley; OCCUPATION: Merchant; MOTHER: Maria Sargant; CHILD: Gladys Reina Sargant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Oct 1888</td>
<td>BAPTISM OF CHILD</td>
<td>ABODE: Blechingley; OCCUPATION: Gentleman; MOTHER: Maria Sargant; CHILD: Alfred Norman Sargant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Jun 1890</td>
<td>BAPTISM OF CHILD</td>
<td>ABODE: Blechingley; OCCUPATION: Gentleman; BIRTH DATE: 04/12/1889; MOTHER: Maria Sargant; CHILD: William Granville Sargant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE: 43</td>
<td>5 Apr 1891</td>
<td>CENSUS, PLACE OF BIRTH: Blechingley, Surrey; OCCUPATION: Head Clerk to West India Merchant; RESIDING: Glenfield House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Apr 1894</td>
<td>BAPTISM OF CHILD</td>
<td>ABODE: Blechingley; OCCUPATION: Gentleman; BIRTH DATE: 23/01/1894; MOTHER: Maria Sargant; CHILD: Dudley Howard Sargant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan 1895</td>
<td>LOCAL DIRECTORY</td>
<td>ABODE: Glenfield House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan 1905</td>
<td>LOCAL DIRECTORY</td>
<td>ABODE: Glenfield House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan 1907</td>
<td>LOCAL DIRECTORY</td>
<td>ABODE: Glenfield House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan 1909</td>
<td>LOCAL DIRECTORY</td>
<td>ABODE: Glenfield House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan 1911</td>
<td>LOCAL DIRECTORY</td>
<td>ABODE: Glenfield House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan 1913</td>
<td>LOCAL DIRECTORY</td>
<td>ABODE: Glenfield House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan 1915</td>
<td>LOCAL DIRECTORY</td>
<td>ABODE: Glenfield House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE: 69</td>
<td>30 Jan 1917</td>
<td>BURIAL, GRAVE SITE: Old Cemetery; eight feet; FOLIO: 274/630</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
previously described. However for the application described and with the processing speed of modern computers such concerns over efficiency are academic.

When the original data is unsuitable for analysis or record linkage it has to be converted to a standardised or coded version. This is achieved with the use of lookup tables. Records in lookup tables have two fields, one for all possible variations within the original data and one for the appropriate standard version. By matching the original data with the first field of the lookup table, the second field containing the standardised or coded version is available for processing. This method is used to standardise forename, county of birth, relationship to head of household, and marital status. It also provides codes for occupations based on the Booth/Armstrong classification.

Record linkage

The objective of record linkage is to identify the same person in different source material. For Kingston life histories, that source material will be census records of different years, parish registers of baptisms, marriages and burials, cemetery records and entries in street/trade directories. By early 1997, the database contained records for the censuses of 1861 and 1871 and it became necessary to devise routines for inter-censal linking. The volume of data involved was too large to consider purely manual methods but a search of the literature revealed several papers and book chapters involving automated record linkage. Some early examples from the 1960s and 1970s (mostly concerned with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century parish registers) used large main frame computers and sophisticated programming routines, neither of which are applicable to computer processing in 1997. Other previous examples involved family based record linkage for North American census data, computer-aided linkage for eighteenth century Cheshire poll books and automated linkage between CEBs and civil register data for mid-Wales. On examination none of the methods they used was felt to be wholly appropriate to the exercise in linkage which we were wishing to undertake. The study of mid-Wales by H.R. Davies had most relevance, but his procedures made no use of family context and were fully automated using a software package which is no longer readily available. The North American study described attempts to incorporate a family context but lacked sophistication in the use of computer software, having been written in the 1980s.

We were tempted by the multiple pass linkage algorithms described in a recent paper by Harvey, Green and Corfield. These constitute a fully automated system that uses successive passes through the data to arrive at linkages with confidence levels attached. When used by them on the Westminster poll books of 1784 and 1788 it produced impressive results. We set about coding their concept as Access routines for the CEBs and completed this in two days. Our results appeared equally impressive in that a 39 per cent linkage rate was achieved with a confidence level exceeding 80 per cent whilst
a 50 per cent linkage rate could be achieved if the confidence level was lowered to 28 per cent. Before accepting these results we decided to do some ‘spot-testing’, and it was at this point that we began to have doubts about the technique. Of a random sample of the matches found by the algorithms, some proved obviously false when checked against the original manuscript CEBs. Furthermore, some links which we had identified as true during preliminary experiments were not made by the application of these algorithms.

We decided to examine each potential match derived by the application of the multiple pass algorithms in the context of the household. To undertake this as a purely manual exercise would have been prohibitively demanding on time, so we looked at using facilities within the database. An Access form was designed which displayed the two records selected as potential matches. The two ‘individuals’ referred to by the records on the form are usually members of larger families or households and it is possible that information about this could help to confirm or deny the match. For example, if the two ‘individuals’ shown on the form have different parents in two census years the potential match is likely to be false. Two sub-forms were used to display the household members associated with the two entries on the main form. The reviewer indicated his or her decision using appropriate *match flags* on the main form, the three options being ‘review’, ‘false’ and ‘true’, with ‘initial’ as the unallocated setting (these are shown towards the top right-hand corner of Figure 4). Using his or her judgement, the researcher was required to allocate either ‘true’ or ‘false’ to each potential match. If he or she wished to consult the primary sources, or to discuss the potential match with colleagues the form was marked as ‘review’.

The conclusions of this exercise confirmed our doubts. Over 3,600 (or 44 per cent) of the matches found by the automatic routines proved to be false when considered in context of the household, whilst a further 1,900 true matches were missed by the automatic linkage routines. However, the effectiveness and speed of the manual review process seemed to offer a way forward so we set about associating it with an automated system of extracting potential links through the use of algorithms. We were looking for algorithms which would create these potential links by giving maximum exposure to the data whilst minimising the number of false matches. The practicalities of various algorithms are illustrated in Table 2 which shows for 1871–1881 the number of additional true links tailing off for the ‘weaker’ algorithms whilst the number of potential links to be reviewed escalates up to 150,000. After much experimentation we have come up with a set of five algorithmic approaches which would appear to offer a pragmatic and effective approach. These have been used on five sets of census data for Kingston, six sets for the villages of Blechingley and Nutfield and three sets for the industrial town of Middlesbrough. In all cases we have been able to establish a linkage rate of between 35 and 40 percent of the population with what we would like to think of as 100 per cent confidence.
The match criteria required within the five algorithmic approaches are described below:

1. Matches on Short Standard Forename, Soundex Surname Code, Sex, Standard County of Birth, and Year of Birth (calculated by subtracting recorded age from the census year) within five years.\\(^{17}\)

2. Matches on Short Standard Forename, Full Surname, Sex, and Year of Birth within five years. Compared with algorithm 1, this algorithm has been weakened by removing County of Birth but tightened slightly by using full surname. Whilst it will produce many more potential matches it is likely to have a low hit rate for true matches. It is aimed at catching mis-recorded or missing county of birth.

3. Matches on Short Standard Forename, Full Surname, Sex, and Standard County of Birth. Aimed at mis-recorded age, this will tend to create a large number of potential matches, though this number can be reduced if Year of Birth is included with a tolerance of 20 years. This latter measure avoids matching a child with a parent of the same forename.

4. Matches on Short Standard Forename, Sex, Standard County of Birth, Year of Birth within five years, and Surnames with a suitable Guth matching score.\\(^{18}\)

5. Matches on Short Standard Forename, Sex, Standard County of Birth, Year of Birth within five years, plus two or more other family members having the same personal details in each census year.

Algorithm 1 is the basic algorithm and should produce about 75 per cent of the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Algorithm</th>
<th>Potential matches</th>
<th>True matches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex, Surname, Standard Forename, Year of Birth, Standard County</td>
<td>4,283</td>
<td>4,128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex, Surname, Standard Forename, Standard County, Year of Birth ± 5</td>
<td>7,306</td>
<td>6,318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex, Soundex Surname Code, Short Standard Forename, Standard County, Year of Birth ± 5</td>
<td>13,544</td>
<td>7,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex, Soundex Surname Code, Short Standard Forename, Standard County</td>
<td>47,759</td>
<td>8,117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex, Soundex Surname Code, Standard Forename, Standard County</td>
<td>60,371</td>
<td>8,319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex, Soundex Surname Code, Short Standard Forename</td>
<td>150,360</td>
<td>8,889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of algorithms and other methods e.g. Pattern matching, Family forename matching</td>
<td>19,604</td>
<td>10,194</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2  Effectiveness of various record linkage algorithms for Kingston 1871–1881
true matches. Algorithms 2–5 are likely to produce another 15 per cent in total. The remaining 10 per cent are identified without algorithms.

When reviewing a potential match which has been produced by one of the algorithms it may be obvious to the researcher that other records in the household should be matched. Consider Figure 4, which shows the review of the potential link for Louisa Campbell. This potential link was identified by algorithm 1 and is clearly true. The link between the two records for her daughter Alice will need to be identified later by algorithm 2 because place of birth is missing in 1891. However, this could be pre-empted by the researcher. The field labelled F1 is blank if that record has not been identified by an algorithm so if an obvious match within the sub-forms is displaying a pair of blank F1 fields then that potential link can be introduced for consideration at a later phase. The researcher keys the record identifier from the second table (shown as field F2 in the second sub-form) into the blank field F2 on the first sub-form so updating the first table. Moreover, looking at the whole household it would appear obvious that all three people in 1881 are in fact still in the same household in 1891 and the field F2 should also be updated for the servant named in 1881 as Elizabeth Campbell. An experienced researcher will be aware of the possibility that in 1881 the enumerator carelessly wrote ‘do’ for all surnames subsequent to the head. This could explain why Elizabeth Perrott was previously recorded with the same surname as the head of the household. The absence of place and county of birth for Elizabeth in 1891 would weaken further the potential for automatic linkage.

A pseudo-algorithm extracts records identified by a completed F2 and adds them to the link table for review by the researcher. The example in Figure 5 shows two entries for a William Brockwell for 1871 and 1881. In isolation, most fully automated routines would assess that all relevant fields match perfectly and assign a true result with a confidence level of 100 per cent. In reality, the household detail revealed in the sub-forms shows that the two families are completely different and the match should be false. Any record linkage procedure should be able to cope with these kinds of scenarios.

From the above it can be seen that we think it is impossible to define in advance rules for researchers to follow when examining possible links. Hence they are told to allocate the match flag ‘true’ only if they are sure in their own mind that the two records relate to the same person. ‘False’ is to be allocated for any cases where there is uncertainty unless the researcher feels that possibly the uncertainty could be resolved by looking at the source records or by discussing it with colleagues. In those cases the allocation is ‘review’. This whole approach is at odds with the method usual for fully automated routines where the true decision is a probability statement based on the best fit amongst competing options.

There are several safeguards built into our procedures. All potential links are maintained in a link table together with the researcher’s assessment of true, false or review. This enables records from either table which have been previously classified as part of a true pair to be excluded from future
algorithms. At the end of the review of a particular algorithm run, the system also checks whether any records have been classified as part of a true linkage more than once and, if such records are found, it changes the match flags in the link table back to ‘initial’ for further review of the offending linkages.

On census records our experience has shown that using these five algorithms the number of potential matches can be estimated at 75 per cent of the total population in the smaller of the two census tables. Whilst not essential, it is preferable to assess all potential links from the first algorithm before applying the subsequent algorithms. This prevents any records which are part of a true match from being considered by the other algorithms. As a guide to the required time we have found that a competent researcher can assess 200 potential matches per hour. Hence the processing time for the linkage of two census tables with 10,000 records and 12,000 records respectively would be calculated as follows:

Potential matches from five algorithms (75 per cent of 10,000) 7,500

Review time for 7,500 potential matches at 200 per hour 37.5 hours

Likely true matches from the process 3,750
Table 3  Illustrative processing times for Blechingley

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Records</th>
<th>Number of records</th>
<th>Average keyboard input rates</th>
<th>Hours to check and validate</th>
<th>Hours to create or update standard tables</th>
<th>Hours to perform record linkage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Census records</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>60 per hour</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptism records</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td>100 per hour</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage records</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>30 per hour</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burial records</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>120 per hour</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local directories</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>120 per hour</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>253</td>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5  Example of census record linkage (false)
Table 3 gives estimates of the time spent to complete all the processing for Blechingley. Whilst these can be taken as a guide, for other communities they may well vary with the complexity and diversity of the records.

Each record in a census table has two fields named ‘LinkNext’ and ‘LinkPrev’ which, on completion of the review process, are updated as appropriate with the UID of the paired record in the next or previous census respectively. When all census tables have been updated, records are then appended to a person table for the entire first census. For subsequent census tables, records are only appended if LinkPrev is empty, that is, they have no link to a previous census. For each record in the person table the average year of birth from the census records is calculated and added as a field to the table. Fields are also updated on the person table with the personID of mother, father and spouse based on the relationship to head in the census tables. When a previously identified person is missing from an intermediate census but reappears in a later census, two records will have been added to the person table. Successful links between non-successive censuses cause the merger of the two person records previously created.

There is also an alias table, which has fields for surname, Standard Forename, Soundex Surname Code and personID. Records are added to this table whenever a name differs from a previous census entry for the same person. Hence all records in the alias table point to an entry in the person table. At this stage, for any given name the alias table will point to an appropriate record on the person table and this feature is used for the record linkage of the other types of data. Records are linked through the Standard Forename, and Soundex Surname Code in the alias table to records in the person table, whereupon potential matches that conform to further criteria specific to the type of data are extracted for review. All household census data for the potential match are also extracted and displayed during the review process. The Access form for linking groom marriages to the person table is shown in Figure 6 and a similar layout is used for the other specific data sources. Methods of linkage for each source are now described.

**Baptism records.** Besides the name of the person being baptised, baptism records sometimes contain a date of birth which allows validation of the potential link. The records also contain the name of each parent together with the abode and occupation of the father, and linkage can be confirmed by comparing these with the census records displayed. When identified, the person IDs of the mother and father are added to the baptism record together with that of the individual. Even when there is no match for the individual i.e. the person baptised has never appeared in a census record, the mother and father fields may be updated if known. Additional person records are created for these non-matched individuals who may well have died or moved before the next census.

**Marriage records.** Each marriage record contains three possible matches: the groom, the bride before marriage, and the bride after marriage. Thus the matching process has three passes through the data. Because they are
linked through the person tables it is possible to associate individuals who do not appear in the immediately preceding census (such as girls who migrate temporarily for domestic service). Age and marital status, as shown on census records either side of the marriage date, permit a degree of validation whilst father’s name and occupation can be checked against census records during the review process. At the end of the process, five fields may have been updated with a person ID, namely: Groom, Bride Pre, Bride Post, Groom’s Father and Bride’s Father. Where different person records then exist for Bride Pre and Bride Post, the entries are merged to a single person record.

**Burial records.** For burials, name and age are the only variables available for linkage. Having identified a potential match using the alias table, the person table is checked for validity. An average year of birth with a variance of more than five years from the burial record will cause that potential match to be rejected. We tend to say ‘true’ only when there are no competing entries and there is other corroborative evidence, such as absence from the next and subsequent censuses (especially where the previous spouse is present and is widowed or has remarried). A true match during the review process will cause the person number to be added to the burial record and the date of burial inserted in the person record.

**Street/trade directories.** These may contain details of occupation but are often restricted to date, name and place of abode. Record linkage may assume the person to be over 21 but has little else for validation. The review process linked via name may allow the address and occupation to be confirmed from the census records. A true match during the review process will cause the person number to be added to the record in the street/trade directories table.

Our normal approach to the review process is to present the researcher with grouped potential links, the groups relating to the same person in the first table. From our experience of census linking the use of quite strong algorithms restricts the number of potential links in any group, with very few groups having more than five records and most having just one. The weaker algorithms necessary for the linking of other sources creates much larger groupings, sometimes up to 100. In these cases the review form has an option which we call ‘Auto advance’. If this option is switched on, then whenever a potential link is classified as true all other potential links in the group are automatically classified as false and the routine advances to the next group. We are currently investigating a weighting system which will put the more likely matches at the front of each group.

**Creating life histories and family trees**

When all linkage processing is complete, within the person table is the wherewithal to create life histories and family trees. Each census record has
a person ID, as do records in the tables for baptism, marriage, burial and street/trade directories. For baptisms and marriages these may also include the person ID for the parent. Once the person ID is known, then using the principle of foreign keys described earlier, all relevant records can be
retrieved for either life history reporting or further analysis. For family trees, using the person ID for father, mother and spouse contained in each person record allows the creation of generation charts as shown in Figure 1. Because both life histories and family trees are created automatically using standard features within Access there could be some minor discrepancies within parental relationships.19

In line with good database practice, life histories are not stored but are created when needed. To create a life history for a named individual, the person ID of all persons matching that name is obtained by interrogating the alias table. This gives access to the associated records in the person table whence access to all other data tables is available. Appropriate records are extracted and arranged in date sequence for printing (see Figures 2 and 3).

Conclusion

This paper has described how the Kingston Local History Project set about the preparation of basic life histories for two late-nineteenth century communities in Surrey. The use of expensive computers or bespoke computer programming was precluded by limited or non-existent funding, as was any attempt at the sophisticated processing described in several previous exercises in record linkage. The result is a set of practical procedures that can be executed at a minimal cost on any modern personal computer: there is no reason why such life histories cannot be compiled for any community in England, Wales or Scotland. No special programming skills are required although an understanding of the concepts of Microsoft Access is desirable. Reasonably accurate estimates of the time taken by the processing procedures are available, allowing budgets to be calculated and adhered to. Such projects need not be the work of academic institutions and there is no reason why groups focussed on local or family history could not set up and manage them. Indeed, through the offices of two interested local history societies in other parts of Surrey, relevant data for two more villages and a small town are currently being keyed in and will be available as life histories and family trees to their members and other interested parties. 20

Acknowledgements

All census data are Crown copyright and are published by kind permission of the Controller of Her Majesty’s Stationery Office. The Kingston Local History Project is grateful to the staff at the Local History Room of the Royal Borough of Kingston’s Museum and Heritage Service for their assistance in collecting the Kingston data and also to the excellent group of volunteers who spent many hours inputting and checking the data. Our particular thanks to Bill White for inputting all the Blechingley data and to the Blechingley Conservation and Historical Society for providing the relevant source material and checking the results.
NOTES

1. Our experience may well be standard for collaborative projects of this nature: see N. Goose, ‘Participatory and collaborative research in English regional and local history: the Hertfordshire Historical Resources Project’, Archives, 22 (1997), 98–110 for details of a project which had similar problems in its early days. More details of the Kingston Local History Project can be found in P. Tilley and C. French, ‘From local history towards total history: recreating local communities in the 19th century’, Family and Community History, 4 (2001), 139–49; and P. Tilley and C. French, ‘Record linkage for nineteenth-century census returns: automatic or computer aided?’, History and Computing, 9 (1997), 122–33.


7. There are also markers to indicate the last record of a household and the last record of a dwelling house.

8. For a guide to trade directories, see D.R. Mills, Rural community history from trade directories (a Local Population Studies supplement), (Aldenham, 2001).

9. With a large proportion of the data being on microfilm or microfiche, printing charges were kept to a minimum by the generosity of the Royal Borough of Kingston’s Heritage Centre who allowed us to take hard copy, the only cost being paper.


11. A detailed explanation can be found in I. Winchester, ‘What every historian needs to know about record linkage for the microcomputer era’, Historical Methods, 25 (1992), 149–65.

12. See, for example, the papers in E.A. Wrigley, ed., Identifying people in the past, (London, 1975).


14. Davies, ‘Automated record linkage’. Davies’s procedures were implemented on a mainframe computer using the package Scientific Information retrieval (SIR).


17. Short Standard Forename is based on the first three letters of the Standard Forename and is held in the standard forename lookup table. Where desirable it is adjusted: hence Bill, Will, Win and William are recorded as ‘Wil’; whilst Hannah, Ann, Anna, Anne and Annie are all recorded as ‘Ann’. The Soundex Surname Code is a phonetically based code designed to pick up matches of similar sounding names. It is considered by some to be inappropriate to nineteenth-century handwritten records. We do not accept this as many of the names are written as dictated. Some 15 per cent of our linked records match on Soundex but not on full surname. It is, however, crude, and whilst it will match Smith with Smyth it will also match Snethurst with Saunders. The Soundex code is implemented within Access queries by using a pre-recorded programming
routine called a function.

18. The Guth matching score is a measure of compatibility between two names and is derived from a pattern matching technique designed by Gloria Guth in the 1970s: see G. Guth, ‘Surname spellings and computerised record linkage’ \textit{Historical Methods Newsletter}, 10 (1976), 10–19. Since the names are not coded in any way it can generate an enormous number of potential matches so records should be filtered before the technique is applied. It is best used on residual records where other algorithms have failed.

19. Children of lodgers are often erroneously shown in the CEBs as children of the head of the household. Other cases show children as sons and daughters of the head of household when both the children and their real parents are living within the household of the children’s grandparents. With careful analysis, these can often be detected and the standardized relationship adjusted without changing the original data.

20. Should any readers of this journal wish to set up similar operations the author would be very pleased to offer advice and copies of standard Access routines. His email address is petertilley@talk21.com.
BOOK REVIEWS


Jacqueline Cooper attempts successfully in this book (which developed from her MA thesis) not only to give a vivid and readable picture of life in Saffron Walden in the period 1792–1862 but also to engage in many of the debates of current historians. Her journalistic skills make the town, and the people living there, come to life for several different kinds of readers. The details about a large number of named persons will be useful for family historians. For academic historians the author constantly poses questions and considers theories in the light of the evidence she assembles, and in the course of that she necessarily raises further questions. The combination of different, well-referenced, sources, both quantitative (like the census) and qualitative (including the extracts from the town missionary’s diary given in the Postscript), gives depth to the discussion. The events in Saffron Walden are located in a wider context. The main argument is that the representation of Saffron Walden by its leaders in this period as a ‘well-ordered town’ is a deliberate construction of reality ‘to keep order against a rising tide of poverty and petty crime among a burgeoning population’.

The book is divided into two parts, although the writer suggests that each chapter could also be read as a separate essay. Part One of the book, called ‘Challenges’, outlines the economic and social background of Saffron Walden. Then problems are considered, such as sectarian rivalry and central government interference, which undermined attempts to present a united front against pauperism, crime and protest, and the fears raised by the Captain Swing riots. Part Two, called ‘Responses’, argues strongly that philanthropy was deliberately used, as well as the poor law and the criminal law, to counter the challenges to social order. Thus allotments, charities, self-help schemes, education and religion were a means of social control of the poor.

This book makes a good attempt to let the poor tell their side of the story, although, as the author points out, it is not easy to discover what that is. A partisan approach is clear throughout, but counter arguments are discussed. The author’s argument is expressed in a compelling and impassioned way, but occasionally the colourful language almost makes it seem overstated. For example, the prize-giving at the Agricultural Show is described as ‘an elaborate charade, a staged drama’: ‘Historians have noted the significance of agricultural shows … as philanthropic extravaganzas to offset the threat of Chartism which aimed to stoke the fires of democracy in working-men’s hearts …’. (pp. 193–4). The author acknowledges the difficulty of trying to assess the motives of people in this period: ‘[o]ne should not entirely judge this [charitable work] from the perspective of
today’ (p. 173). In the Introduction she says that this study is ‘not the whole story or the only story’. Given that, an objective evaluation of the role of philanthropy is not possible. It is particularly difficult to assess how far the dominant ideology was absorbed by the poor. Perhaps it would be worth making even more explicit for the general reader the point that there is an increasing awareness among historians of the role played by their own values and ideologies in constructing their explanations.

It is slightly disconcerting that the book appears to start with 1832, the middle of the period under examination, when the reader may be wondering whether 1792 has particular significance. In one or two places the reader has to work out a precise date: ‘Finally, a new lock up was built …’ (p. 111). At times the detail might be considered excessive; some of the extra information relating to events after 1862 could perhaps be pruned. On the other hand it is the abundance of both evidence and discussion which enables the book to work at many different levels, to provide for both general and academic readers, and that is a very laudable achievement. The book is clearly and attractively printed with pleasing illustrations and a very useful fold-out map at the back, and it is excellent value for its low price.

Shirley Durgan
*Victoria County History, University of Essex*


One of the great ironies of English historical demography is that more is known about certain aspects of the population in 1700 than in 1900. The reason for this is simple: the exploitation of parish registers has enabled individual, early-modern family histories to be compiled using family reconstitution, while the researcher of the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods is still denied access to vital registration data and hence cannot replicate this procedure. Cross-sectional data about family structure can be obtained from the censuses, but the hundred-year rule means that access has only just been allowed to the one carried out in 1901. As a response to this situation, a group of researchers at the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure were given privileged access to ‘anonymised’ individual returns from the 1891, 1901 and 1911 censuses ahead of their scheduled release dates. This book, which is the result of their analysis of these returns, is a unique glimpse of the English and Welsh population at a time when the demographic transition was under way. It is well up to the standard of other books in this distinguished series and should become required reading for anyone with an interest in population history.
Garrett et al. mainly employ data drawn from 13 communities scattered throughout England and Wales: Abergavenny, Axminster, Banbury, Bethnal Green, Bolton, Earlsdon, Morland, Pinner, Saffron Walden, Stoke, Swansea, Walthamstow and York. The communities do not form a representative national sample, instead they were selected to encompass a range of differing environments. Clearly there is the possibility, indeed the likelihood, that not all environments have been covered adequately. However, by focussing its gaze away from national patterns of behaviour, the book explores the rich and diverse experiences of the population at this time.

The anonymity in the sample means that it is not possible to make links between censuses, a fact that limits the research questions posed. It means that much of the analysis is centred on the 1911 census, which required each married women to provide information about the number of live births in her current marriage and the number of children that had subsequently died. After some statistical manipulation, these data allow estimates of marital fertility and infant and child mortality to be generated for the period 1891–1911 when England and Wales was experiencing profound changes in both variables. It also permits new types of enquiry, where previously it was necessary to rely on official reports published under the auspices of the General Register Office. Topics such as the relationship between infant mortality and location, class, household structure, housing, and maternal employment can be examined and many new facts emerge from the detailed and thorough investigations undertaken by the authors. For instance, it is now possible to confirm that ‘the offspring of women born in Eastern Europe (who were probably Jewish) were much more likely to survive than average’ (p. 198).

Following three introductory chapters that place the subsequent analysis in context and discuss the individual communities, the main body of the book consists of two long, detailed chapters exploring the influences on infant and child mortality and fertility respectively. These are followed by one which places the earlier results into a wider national perspective using aggregate results from the 1911 census published in the Fertility of marriage report (1923). The concluding chapter is subtitled ‘the mosaic of demographic change’ and reflects the authors’ view that rather than experiencing a single demographic transition, individual communities throughout Britain experienced multiple, independent declines in both mortality and fertility. Some of the results, such as environment being more important than class in determining levels of infant mortality within individual families, will be familiar from work previously published by the authors. However, the book contains a wealth of additional detail and produces a picture of England and Wales at the turn of the century as a country where individual behaviour was influenced by community norms, resulting in considerable local diversity. ‘Where a couple lived largely dictated the life chances of their children: who they lived amongst provided their guidelines for acceptable behaviour in choice of partner, the type of courtship they enjoyed, their expectations of marriage and the number of children they were likely to have’ (p. 399).
We must be grateful to Garrett et al. for increasing our knowledge of the demographic transition in England and Wales. The book, however, raises as many questions as it answers, both about the relationship between mortality and fertility decline and the reasons why different communities experienced such different transitions. By emphasising geographical and local diversity, though, it should act as a stimulus to local historians wishing to exploit the 1911 census once it becomes available. It is a pity that we shall have to wait ten years for this.

Chris Galley
Barnsley College


Counting heads combines an excellent booklet, akin say to a ‘Censuses for dummies’, that explains the development of the United Kingdom population census between 1801 and 1871, with a CD-ROM which provides summary tabular details extracted from published census reports. This joint publication is one outcome of longstanding research undertaken by the two authors. David Gatley’s collection of statistical material taken from the British Census reports is placed alongside corresponding Irish data collated by Paul Ell, one of a team of scholars who have investigated the demographic impact of Ireland’s Great Famine. The publication, in a machine-readable format which is generally user-friendly, of these aggregated statistics, presented by nation, county and administrative unit, provides a rich resource of great potential for historians of the mid-nineteenth century British Isles. Here can be found data on population density, house construction and the relative importance of economic activity defined by occupation, along with summary information relating to marital status, crime, literacy, and (for Ireland) the ability to speak Gaelic.

Although local historians will benefit from easy access to contextual material describing regions and districts there is, a few worked examples apart, relatively little information at the historical microscopic level of the individual parish. Family historians searching for named individuals, with very few exceptions, should not turn to Counting heads in the hope that it offers a machine-searchable source for genealogical research. The exceptions are those who share a surname which phonetically resembles ‘Gatley’, who might be interested to discover a table, provided as an exemplar, which demonstrates that their Victorian antecedents were probably resident in north-west England.

The software provided on the CD-ROM, though slightly dated in appearance (an inevitable result of rapidly changing styles and standards of web page presentation), proved to be robust and generally tractable under test using two differently equipped personal computers. On the
first, an NT-operated computer, all the facilities functioned without hitch or delay. On a PC operated by Windows 95, access to the statistical facilities required a little local intervention through recourse to Windows Explorer. However, this difficulty should not deter a potential user, as it posed no serious handicap and probably could be addressed easily after further investigation of the cause. Once functioning, all the various data-selecting, graphical and cartographical features worked as promised, and the statistical routines (which are highly effective though relatively inflexible) are the equal of others produced from the ‘Statistics for Education’ stable. The booklet which accompanies the CD is highly recommended; it is clear, concise and a very valuable resource in its own right. More information about all these features (and related products) can be found at the web site that advertises Counting heads: http://www.statsed.co.uk/index.html.

For teachers, attempting to inspire and provoke the young with relatively accessible material representative of their own locality, classroom use of the census is now a well-established tradition. The arrival of the census enumerator can be taken to signify the arrival of the modern world. Contemporary demands for official statistics, which would inform decisions concerning economic and social policies, provide markers indicative of attitudes to society and to governance. While unofficial estimates of population size and growth had been a preoccupation of those who engaged in political arithmetic, the officially mandated collection of demographic information by the Census of Population transformed contemporary understanding of British society after its introduction in 1801. When repeated at decennial intervals the questions set subsequently by the census administrators multiplied in number and changed to accommodate responses reflecting the issues of the day. The Censuses of Population not only provide information about social phenomena but they also indicate the perceptions and prejudices held by those who constructed these inquiries.

All these characteristics ensured that when the PC arrived in schools the Population Census, either in its raw published format, or as an already cleaned-and-polished data set, was probably the most popular of historical sources used to demonstrate both source-orientated research and the application of IT in history. It is, of course, not only students at school and college who will gain from exposure to this new resource. One of the growing preoccupations of those who have gained significant life experience since they last occupied a classroom is an interest in historical research, be it research focused on the region, the locality or their family. Counting heads will be welcomed as a valuable introduction to one of the most important sources available to historians of the nineteenth century while its considerable stock of summary demographic data, which would require enormous amounts of time to duplicate, will be received by its users with suitable gratitude.

Peter Wardley
University of the West of England

The latest ‘Gibson guide’ to appear is the fifth edition of this valuable finding aid for probate documents which, despite its title, also provides helpful information on administrations, inventories and probate accounts. Initially this publication was a simplified version of Gibson’s *Wills and where to find them* (1974) which, together with Anthony Camp’s *Wills and their whereabouts*, 4th edn (1974), will be familiar to any scholar who has used probate records at all extensively in their research. Gibson notes in his introduction to the fifth edition that it remains a guide to probate jurisdictions and their records for the newcomer to local and family history. Its purpose is to suggest where to start looking for wills and associated records, and for this reason information on records before the mid-sixteenth century is largely omitted. One might suggest that there is just a hint of false modesty here, for Gibson’s work (updated from the last edition by Else Churchill, Genealogy Officer at the Society of Genealogists) is a mine of detailed information on probate jurisdictions, the location of probate records and associated publications, abstracts, indexes and typescripts that can profitably be consulted by any researcher.

Its format, like so many of its companion volumes, is clear and straightforward. A brief introduction notes some of the major movements of probate records since 1974, from which this reviewer learned that the wills and inventories he so painstakingly consulted in the late 1970s, for Cambridge at the University Library and for Reading at the Bodleian, have now been relocated to Cambridge Record Office and the Berkshire Record Office respectively. In 1858, of course, the transfer of probate jurisdiction from ecclesiastical to civil authority created a centralised system, and the major change here in recent years has been the transfer of post-1857 probate records from Somerset House to First Avenue House at 42-49 High Holborn. The introduction closes with a brief outline of ‘probate documents and procedures’, which includes a short paragraph on probate accounts. Although Peter Spufford’s index, published as *Probate accounts of England and Wales* (British Record Society 112 and 113) is mentioned here, there is unfortunately no reference to T. Arkell, N. Evans and N. Goose, eds, *When death us do part: understanding and interpreting the probate records of early modern England* (Aldenham, 2000), from which it could have been ascertained that the number of surviving accounts is 43,000 not circa 30,000. Indeed, a lot of additional information on the probate process and the survival of wills and inventories might also have been gleaned from this source.

The remainder of the volume follows the format of most ‘Gibson guides’. A section dealing with national repositories is followed by information on each county respectively, in alphabetical order. For each county, too, a helpful sketch map indicates the main areas of ecclesiastical jurisdiction as well as the peculiar jurisdictions that, in the case of counties such as Essex, sometimes offer considerable additional complexity. North and South Wales, the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands, Scotland and Ireland are treated last.
In sum, this is another very welcome updated edition in the extensive Federation of Family History Societies series of publications, useful to local and family historians alike, and excellent value at the price. The book is available on-line at http://www.familyhistorybooks.co.uk.

Nigel Goose
University of Hertfordshire


Huguenot heritage was first published to great acclaim in 1985, marking the tercentenary of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the symbol and central component of Louis XIV’s oppressive policies which, in the 1670s and 1680s, resulted in a diaspora of perhaps 180,000-190,000 Huguenots from France, some 40,000-50,000 of whom found their way to England, the second most favoured destination after the Dutch Republic. This was the second mass migration of the early modern period to involve French Calvinists; the first occurred in the late-sixteenth century as a result of the French Wars of Religion, St Bartholomew’s Massacre, the oppressive policies of the Spanish Duke of Alva, and the economic dislocation that accompanied the Dutch Revolt. This ‘first wave’ of French and Dutch Protestants, Gwynn estimates, produced foreign communities in England that numbered roughly 15,000 at their peak, almost equally divided between French and Dutch churches. This estimate is based upon lists of communicants produced in the 1630s, and might be a little on the conservative side. In this very welcome second and revised edition of his book, Gwynn discusses both of these main waves of migration, concentrating upon the French Calvinists that feature in the title, but giving due recognition to the impact of the Dutch as well, and including new material that has appeared since 1985. Following a dearth that had lasted over half a century, the years since the tercentenary have seen an impressive record of research and publication on early modern migration to England, and if the first edition of Huguenot heritage commemorated this event it was without doubt also partly responsible for stimulating this upsurge of interest.

Although the main focus of the book is the Huguenots in England, one of its many strengths is its admirably succinct and clear contextualization within the tortuous political and religious history of early modern France, which explains – in outline at least – the motivations for migration that spanned over a century. The human element to the story is never obscured by political and religious intrigue, however, and hence Chapter One opens with a thumbnail sketch of the experiences of Jean Migault as he faced the depredations of the dragonnades in the 1680s. The determination of the Migault family to escape (as they eventually did in 1688), despite the severe laws against migration, might indeed ‘underline the importance that French Calvinists placed on the ability to worship as they chose’ (p. 10). However, it is worth noting that the number of Huguenots who remained behind in late-seventeenth century France, at
over half a million, far outnumbered those who left. Nevertheless, the primacy of the religious motivation for leaving is not in doubt, particularly for the migrants of the late-seventeenth century, and, although escape from economic dislocation clearly played its part in the first wave of migration of the later sixteenth century, Gwynn emphasises the importance of religion throughout, both as a reason to flee France and as a vital consideration behind the manner in which the migrants were received by the host nation (in this respect again allied closely to considerations of economic advantage).

Indeed, much of the book is taken up with discussion of the reception of the Huguenots in England, by both the state and the populace, and their various contributions to English economic and intellectual life. Providing accurate measurement of the latter is, of course, extremely difficult, but Gwynn discusses in turn the various occupational niches to which the Huguenots can be shown to have contributed, in trades, crafts and the professions. One particular problem here, of course, is in determining when a migrant is no longer a migrant, and some of the credit extended to the descendants of French refugees (in the realms of the law and the military services, for instance) might seem a little misplaced (pp. 102-3). On their reception and assimilation Gwynn has much to say, and he returns to these questions repeatedly throughout the book, emphasising the complexity of responses from both the indigenous population and the emigrants themselves. While recognising the fact that the migrants had their opponents (although this reviewer would take issue with statements such as ‘xenophobia was often present’ (p. 5)), the overwhelming impression is of a society that was both open and generally open-minded enough to welcome minorities escaping the oppressive Catholic powers of continental Europe, particularly as they often brought with them both skills and capital from which the host nation would benefit in abundance.

Huguenot heritage is delightfully written, and this second edition is not only updated but also more comprehensively footnoted and illustrated than the first. Gwynn is to be congratulated once again on a book that is the fruit of a lifetime’s research, and is at once erudite and eminently approachable, while Sussex Academic Press must be thanked for their interest in migration studies that is producing an increasingly impressive portfolio of publications.

Nigel Goose
University of Hertfordshire


Kain and Oliver’s work, Historic parishes of England and Wales: electronic map – gazetteer – metadata, represents an interesting and (we believe) successful attempt at combined digital and paper publishing. It presents the boundaries of the early parishes of England and Wales in a form that should allow academic researchers, local historians and genealogists to discover the whereabouts of parishes and sub-parish units in the period prior to the
boundary reforms of the late-nineteenth century. It is a detailed study published at a scale of one inch to the mile (1:63,360). Rather than selling individual small map sheets, the authors have taken the decision to publish the detailed work on CD-ROM with an accompanying book. The CDs contain maps of the administrative units in a choice of file formats accompanied by a gazetteer that acts as a finding aid to the parishes and ‘metadata’ to show the provenance of their boundaries. The maps show the boundaries of the ancient parishes as researched by Kain and Oliver. Each parish is numbered to allow it to be linked to the gazetteer and metadata information. To provide context, a bitmap scan of the New Popular Edition ‘one inch to the mile’ maps (published in the 1940s) is included as a backcloth to the parish boundary maps.

The book, published in tandem with the CD-ROM, provides both a description of the project and a paper copy of the gazetteer information. Its first 41 pages cover the aims of the work and the methodology used to create the data, while the remainder contains a paper copy of the gazetteer. The first section is clear and well written and reflects the authors’ detailed understanding of the subject matter. In it they describe the system of historical parishes and the uses to which they can be put. They explain the difficulties of mapping early parish boundaries and the methodology and sources that they have used to do it. Finally they provide a full description of the structure of the gazetteer and metadata information.

The gazetteer information provided by the book is an alphabetical list of parishes and similar units in England and Wales, including both place-name and locational information. The place-name information includes a reference number, the unit’s modern and historical names, the type of place it is (for example, whether it is a parish, a tithing or a township), and the name of its mother parish. The locational information allows the reader to locate the unit on the map. It consists of a National Grid reference for the centre of the parish and the New Popular Edition map sheet number in which the parish will be found.

On its own the book is of limited use. It provides a good review of how the resource was created but the paper gazetteer does not go very far. In essence it only allows the reader to find out what type a particular areal unit was, to convert between ancient and modern place-names, and to find an approximate location of the parish either through the National Grid reference or the New Popular Edition sheet number. In combination with the CD-ROMs, however, the publication is an excellent resource. The CD-ROMs contain an electronic version of the gazetteer metadata in either Microsoft Excel or Adobe Acrobat PDF formats. They have all the information included in the paper version but also include a reference number that allows the user to locate each parish in the 1851 census, the source of the boundary information, the archive reference number for the source, and additional comments. This adds the metadata information to the gazetteer information given in the book.

The real value of the CD-ROMs, however, lies in the digital maps. The gazetteer tells the reader how to locate the parish on the maps; the maps show
the full boundaries of the parish. The reader is thereby able to see the pattern of the surrounding parishes and, from the New Popular Edition backcloth, to gain an idea of the physical features and settlement pattern of the area in which the parish is situated. The maps are available in two file formats: the commonly available and easy to use Adobe Acrobat PDF\textsuperscript{TM} format (price £15 plus p. & p.) and the more specialised Adobe Illustrator\textsuperscript{TM} v. 6 format (price £45 plus p. & p.). Adobe Illustrator\textsuperscript{TM} is a drawing package that will not be familiar to most readers and will, if used, need to be both purchased and learnt. Its advantage is that it allows readers to select individual features and, if required, to edit them.

Providing this volume of map-based information in colour at an affordable price to the reader is only possible in electronic form and we commend the authors for having the courage to publish the information in this way. The combined resource provides an excellent finding aid that should be of interest to a wide variety of people with an interest in early parishes and data and information published using them. Having the gazetteer and metadata information combined with the maps provides a vast amount of useful information in a form that is far easier to use than, for example, F.A. Youngs, \textit{Guide to the local administrative units of England}, 2 vols (London, 1979 and 1991).

Our one significant criticism of the work is that although the gazetteer and metadata information and the maps form an integrated resource, they are two separate files with no physical link between them. In its current form the reader finds the number of the parish of interest from one source (map or gazetteer) and then locates it on the other. The use of more powerful software (such as a Geographical Information Systems package) would provide a link between the two so that, having clicked on a parish on the map, its gazetteer/metadata information could be brought up automatically. Similarly, the parish could be mapped automatically by selecting a row of gazetteer/metadata information. Admittedly, this would need a third type of file format and would require the readers to purchase and learn another, more complex and more expensive, type of software.

Overall, we are very impressed with this resource. It provides a vast amount of information of use to local historians and genealogists in an easily accessible format at very low cost. To order a copy, visit the History Data Service web site at http://hds.essex.ac.uk.

N. R. Burton and I. N. Gregory
\textit{University of Portsmouth}


During the last decade local and community historians have given increased attention to the availability, reliability and use of directory material. Such interest has spawned a range of studies that together have identified some
salient characteristics of trade directories and their potential. As Mills explains, such potential uses include: complementing census information; tracing family trees; locating places of worship; identifying transport facilities; and the study of trades, crafts and services. On the whole, directories have usually been applied to towns and mainly used to explore economic activities. This book extends such interests in two main ways: into a detailed study of rural communities, and into a range of thematic areas.

The book has two clear areas of interest – community history and directories – which are outlined in the ‘Introduction’. In both cases, the author gives fairly basic discussions which are ‘aimed at the beginner without any formal training’ (p. 7). As a consequence, experts would probably take issue with the approach, although most would have to agree that the central points are covered and explained. As Mills explains, directories were being published ‘at the rate of two or three a decade’ for rural areas at this time (p. 11). If there is one quibble with the introductory chapter it is that Mills is a little vague on where the beginner might locate them, especially on the internet.

The rest of the book is arranged into nine chapters, which attempt to uncover aspects of rural community history between 1840 and 1940, although the time period is flexible. Chapters Two and Three establish the basis of rural communities in terms of crafts and industries, and population trends. Both themes are researched using directories alongside other sources such as the census. There is a brief discussion of the terminology used by directories to cover different types of retailers but, unfortunately, an opportunity is missed to make comparisons across different directories and the author also ignores some of the detailed research on this topic. The exploration of rural population trends in Chapter Three demonstrates the versatility of directories by using them to supplement printed census material.

Having established the basis of the book, Mills turns to an examination of more detailed themes in the remaining chapters. In essence, these are a series of case studies drawn from a variety of areas, but mainly from the east Midlands and eastern and southern England (Chapter Four). Chapter Five discusses dual occupations which ‘were among the most characteristic talismen of the traditional community’ (p. 43). As Mills demonstrates, trade directories prove as difficult as other sources in recording multiple occupations. One solution is the use of nominal linkage analysis, which he suggests but does not demonstrate (although he does provide a series of examples from east Lincolnshire which show the main types of dual occupations recorded in White’s Directory. In turn, this material serves as ‘a preliminary stage in the analysis of directory material relating to trades and crafts serving the countryside’ (p. 52). For example, Chapter Six traces the decline of village trades between the 1840s and 1980s, based on material from Kelly’s Directories of Buckinghamshire. Other perspectives on service provision are drawn from studies of Leicestershire. These examples, alongside others in Chapter Seven, mark a rediscovery of earlier studies by historical geographers, although these are not referenced.
Chapter Seven extends the discussion through an examination of the relationships between village communities as inferred from directories. This theme of dependence also forms the basis of Chapter Eight, which explores the relationships between town and country. The discussion focuses on transport networks, information on which has always figured largely in directories. Major examples are drawn from Lincolnshire, which show the complex web of interactions that existed between market towns and their hinterlands. The geographical scale of analysis is widened to the county in Chapter Nine, drawing on what Mills terms ‘county lists’. These are found in Kelly’s Directories and are alphabetical lists of residents and businesses across a county. Mills argues that they can be used to examine changes across fairly large areas. However, as he explains, ‘the nature of directory entries themselves is problematical because of a change in classification’ (p. 86). This is a common difficulty with directories and one that requires a good deal more consideration from community historians.

The final chapter covers the descriptive material in directories, or at least the parish descriptions, as well as ‘explaining some of the technical terms which were used’ (p. 89). Its main concerns are geographical and administrative information, land ownership, religion and education. These are well known to those who use directories, but this is the first comprehensive guide aimed at the community historian.

The book is well illustrated throughout and contains a wealth of examples reflecting the interest of its author. It does have a few shortcomings, but it certainly provides the beginner with a clear understanding of how directories can be used, and in that sense the book achieves its aim. It will be a welcome addition to every local history library and should become a standard reference to those using directories in rural history.

Gareth Shaw

University of Exeter


In May 1698 Elizabeth Davy, a pauper from Beeding in Sussex was brought on horseback to Lewes to be examined as to her legal settlement. The examination was made by a Justice of the Peace, and he determined that she should be sent to Keymer. On hearing this news, the parish officers from Beeding got on their horses and simply rode away, leaving Elizabeth penniless in a strange town (p. 275). The faint records of the experiences of people like Elizabeth, of being examined and removed from one parish to another under the auspices of the Old Poor Law form the substantive content of this large volume of records. The information contained in removal orders, bastardy orders, settlement examinations, and certificates and bastardy bonds for 23 mid-Sussex parishes is reproduced, along with a substantial introduction, and indexes to personal names and place names mentioned in the text.
Anyone familiar with local records produced under the Old Poor Law will know just how voluminous they are, and how frustrating they can frequently be. Collectively, they undoubtedly represent the largest single class of records preserved from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to have survived in this country. And yet their very volume teases the historian. A single line, a printed form, a formulaic examination, or a line in an account book is, all too often, apparently the only record of an individual’s interaction with the comprehensive but decentralised system of relief and removal in practice before the nineteenth century.

The difficulty is that while large amounts of information is recorded about single individuals over long periods of time, this information is scattered through a complex parochial and county archive that makes tracing individuals extremely difficult. To do so, the researcher needs a clear sense of how the system worked and why, and access to the whole gamut of local records involved. Poor Law Records of Mid Sussex makes readily available a portion of this archive for a portion of Sussex. As a result, this volume will be widely welcomed by social, economic, local and family historians.

At the same time, it is a profoundly frustrating book. The editors have artificially drawn a line around records relating to the legal process whereby an individual was removed from one parish to another, and excluded the much larger body of information about how paupers were treated once they had been removed. As a result, we are left with a cold and difficult set of materials that substantially underplays the wealth of the archives involved. Nor does the introduction help provide a context for this material. It is accurate enough, but ignores a wealth of recent scholarship on the Old Poor Law, relying instead on a peculiar mix of the out of date and unreasonably general. As a result it does little to suggest the myriad ways in which these sources might be used.

More difficult still is the editors’ decision to index only names and places. The records themselves contain a wealth of information about personal circumstances and social relations, but these have been largely put beyond the historian’s reach by the lack of a subject index of any kind. This makes sense only if you assume that family historians, or perhaps historians interested in a single parish, will be the only readers of this volume. The records deserve more attention than this, and, with the right index and introduction, they would certainly have received it.

Because this is a beautifully produced book, sold at a remarkably reasonable price, it will no doubt find its way into the hands of interested scholars. But at the same time it represents a missed opportunity that this reviewer can only regret.

Tim Hitchcock
University of Hertfordshire

Plague is a familiar feature of the demographic, social and economic history of the later middle ages and early modern period, from its arrival near Weymouth in 1348 and the destruction of a large section of the later medieval population, through to its last fling in the Great Plague of London in 1665. When, in around 1900, medical science eventually understood the mechanisms of bubonic plague, it seemed we knew it all. Plague had burst from its heartland in Asia into Europe in three great pandemics, the first in the sixth century, the second in 1347 to 1670, and the third late in the nineteenth century. It was essentially a disease of rodents, especially rats; their fleas bit human beings and gave them a disease of terrifying severity.

But there were always problems in applying the facts which scientists had accumulated about the plague bacillus *Yersinia pestis* to the historical record. The medieval epidemic had spread nearly everywhere with remarkable speed, killing perhaps one third of the population; neither the rapidity of its transmission nor the extent of its mortality were typical of the modern epidemics known to science. Thus historians were forced to assume that plague had taken a pneumonic form - about which little was known - in order to spread directly between humans without the intervention of rat and flea. And was it really possible for black rats and their fleas to flourish in the British climate, never mind in Iceland or Scandinavia? And how could epidemics extend into the winter, beyond the standard summer plague season, when fleas must surely be dormant? And why did no one notice the heavy mortality of rodents which ought to have accompanied epidemics?

The standard works found ways around these problems: J.F.D. Shrewsbury’s *History of bubonic plague in the British Isles*, (Cambridge, 1970), an exhaustive (and exhausting) chronological survey, assumed that mortality levels had been exaggerated by medieval chroniclers and that some of the epidemics were of other diseases, winter typhus for example. Biraben’s European survey, *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*, (Paris, 1975-6) suggested that human fleas could have replaced rodent parasites to produce those awkward effects. Your reviewer has spent an academic lifetime complacently aware of these disparities between medical fact and historical interpretation - how could such an exotic hothouse phenomenon explain the famous Eyam plague, in the climate and housing of upland Derbyshire? The zoologist Graham Twigg produced work in the 1980s which showed that there is little evidence of the presence of rats in medieval England and that plague behaved as if it were solely spread through the air between people. But he is a scientist. Historians and scientists do not speak to each other very often and, when they do, frequently misunderstand one another.

This book brings together a biologist (Duncan) and an expert in historical demography (Scott) to begin to bridge the gap between the disciplines and to move us forward into a deepened understanding of the nature of epidemics in
their human and microbiological aspects. They attack a wide canvas, with surveys of plague in Britain and Europe, and embed in it a painstaking analysis of the 1597–1598 epidemic in Penrith (Cumbria) based chiefly on its parish register. Their message is that true bubonic plague may have occurred in the Mediterranean basin from time to time - the Marseilles epidemic of 1720–1722 looks very likely, and there is sound scientific evidence of *Yersinia pestis* in bones from the medieval and early modern periods in southern France - but that in England, and most of Europe, the culprit was not bubonic plague. Instead, we must postulate some other disease which is now extinct, and that was probably due to a virus similar to that which has recently caused Ebola fever in Africa; they term it ‘haemorrhagic plague’. It resembled true plague in its capacity to produce the buboes in the lymph glands (which are bubonic plague’s only clear diagnostic symptom outside the laboratory): hence the confusion between two quite distinct diseases. But otherwise this lost disease was readily spread by human contact and had different symptoms from bubonic plague which contemporaries recognized.

The authors show how it is possible to use mortality patterns and other contemporary evidence to reveal that all that scientists know of bubonic (or pneumonic) plague fails to match the observable historical phenomena. Indeed, one finds it remarkable that historians have been so loyal to the bubonic plague theory for so long. The necessary re-interpretation will not transform our view of these episodes, however, since the dead are still dead, whatever we ought to call the organism that killed them. We ought to be more willing to accept the probability of high medieval mortalities, and be prepared to deploy a rather different range of explanations for the details of early modern ones. Readers of this periodical would benefit from study of the authors’ methods of analysing the ‘shape’ of epidemics and the way in which they reconstruct matters such as incubation periods and secondary infections from the data in parish registers.

This is such an interesting and valuable topic that it is a pity that this volume is not more satisfactory. In trying to survey the whole plague period in Britain and Europe it is inevitably superficial: the many pages of ‘Shrewsbury re-hashed’ should have been very briefly summarized; and the science needs to be translated into English, for example ‘the CCR5 chemokine receptor locus on human chromosome 3’ (p.21) (indeed!). The handling of historical sources, both primary and secondary, does not always convince. The impressive Penrith work needed to be placed in a context which was more thorough and considered, rising more surely above the mass of petty detail, and editorial intervention from Cambridge could have been more rigorous. But we needed this book, and should be grateful for it. It will stimulate more research, which will modify its conclusions but not, one feels, contradict them.

Alan Dyer

*University of Wales, Bangor*

Uniquely among censuses of England and Wales, that of 1851 requested returns from every place of worship. It asked for details of the number of places (or ‘sittings’) the building contained and whether these sittings were ‘free’ (that is, available to all-comers) or ‘appropriated’ by certain persons. It also asked clergymen to state the number of persons attending religious worship and Sunday School there, both on Sunday 30 March 1851 and ‘on the average’ over a period.

Given the enormous amount of quantitative information in the returns, it is surprising that they have not hitherto been systematically analysed by social and economic historians. It may be that researchers with no religious belief themselves have felt uneasy about entering this territory. But whatever the reason, ‘most economic historians studying the period after 1660 have an avid propensity to ignore anything religious’ (p. 4). The population historians have confronted the geography of religion, but even they are not really interested in the subject for its own sake, but are obliged to consider it because of its effect on the quality of parochial registration.

In this book, K.D.M. Snell and Paul Ell fill this gap in the historiography. The first part (200 pages) is a collaborative effort between Snell and Ell, and presents a descriptive analysis of the geography of all the major denominations: the Church of England, ‘old dissent’ (Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, Quakers and Unitarians), ‘new dissent’ (mainly the various strands of Methodism) and Roman Catholicism. The results are depicted at the level of the registration district in a series of striking maps which reveal a regional structure to England and Wales which has hitherto been largely invisible. Thus, for example, we learn that the Church of England had two large ‘core’ areas, one in east Hampshire, West Sussex and Surrey, and the other in the Midlands. Independents were especially strong in Essex and Suffolk and in Wales. Baptists were strong in south Wales, too, but their core area lay in Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire, south Buckinghamshire and west Hertfordshire. Methodism, on the other hand, flourished in its Wesleyan form in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, in its primitive form in areas bordering the North Sea coast from the Tees estuary to Lowestoft, and in its Calvinistic form in Wales (and in north and west Wales above all). In general, the geography of religious worship in 1851 confirms the hypotheses put forward many years ago by Tillyard that ‘old dissent and the Church of England ... tended to be strong in the same regions’, whereas ‘Methodism tended to develop in areas where the established church was weak’ (p. 191).

The second section of the book (written by K.D.M. Snell) consists of a series of chapters on specific themes, illustrated with detailed analyses (at the parish level) of 15 counties. There is not space here to treat all these themes in detail. Two, however, may be of particular interest to readers of *Local Population Studies*. The first is a comparison of the 1851 returns with the Compton Census.
returns of 1676 (written with Alasdair Crockett), in which attention focuses on whether the geography of ‘old dissent’ showed continuity over the intervening period. The authors’ conclusion is that such continuity is hard to detect at the parish or local level, though it is clearly there on a broader regional scale. Roman Catholicism, on the other hand, shows definite patterns of continuity at the local level, especially in areas where prominent Catholic families owned land. The second is an analysis of the relationship between conformity, dissent and landownership. The results of this demonstrate a strong positive relationship at the parish level between the degree of religious pluralism, or diversity, and the extent to which the land was divided up among many owners. In other words, ‘closed’ parishes conformed; ‘open’ parishes did not.

Other chapters focus on the geography of Sunday School attendance and the quantitative history of the Sunday School movement in general; on the often-held criticism of the Church of England that the prominence of ‘pew rents’ and appropriated sittings was socially divisive (this was true, but the 1851 census reveals that the same charge could be levelled at many other denominations); and on the growth of ‘secularisation’.

I found this one of the most stimulating books I have read for many years. It offers a genuinely fresh perspective on English social and economic history, especially at the regional and local level. Historians writing today are inclined to forget (or perhaps fail to realise at all) that, because religious worship was of much greater significance to our forebears than it is nowadays, its analysis provides a much better prospect of the social and economic landscape of the past. Although the authors of this book claim to have settled one or two debates that have been perpetuated largely because of a lack of empirical evidence, I feel certain that their analysis will open up many more areas of inquiry. It should be essential reading from now on for anyone interested in the social, economic or population geography of Victorian England and Wales.

Andrew Hinde
University of Southampton


This posthumous publication is essentially the work of Derek Stern who died, aged 52, in 1993. Stern completed his Ph. D. thesis in 1978 at King’s College, University of London, and it is this study of demesne productivity and profit in two discrete periods - 1286 to 1307 and 1362 to 1397 - which we are now fortunate to have in print. In these two periods the Westminster Abbey manor of Kinsbourne (later called Harpendenbury) has unbroken runs of manorial accounts which provide the source material for a detailed and complex analysis of the subject matter; they are also used to demonstrate the extent to
which both direct and indirect evidence about weather and its effect on harvests can be extracted from them.

The introduction, by Christopher Thornton, puts the Kinsbourne manor (on the eastern flank of the Chiltern Hills north of present day Harpenden) into its topographical and historiographical context and evaluates the extent to which Stern’s thesis was both novel and painstaking. It also has an informative excursion on more recent thinking about the effect of climate on the late medieval crisis and includes a useful list of references (additional to Stern’s own list of sources). Stern’s work comprises 13 chapters divided into four parts, plus three appendices. In Part 1 (Chapters 1-3) Stern discusses manorial accounts, their various uses in previous research and their potential utility as records of agrarian practice, productivity, profit and weather. He explains why for his purposes he concentrates upon the demesne and why he has little to say about the rest of the manor and its community, as such digressions ‘would only tend to confuse the issues discussed …’. Having said this, the book provides a useful (if laborious) model for assessing, through a theoretical profit index (TPI), the profits derived from manorial husbandry as today’s accountants might perceive them to be in financial terms. Stern does this by analysing demesne performance in terms of ‘productivity’ which, in a ‘mathematical reductio ad absurdum’, he sees as a product of ‘husbandry’ x ‘weather’, and ‘profit’ which equates to (‘net output’ x ‘market demands’) less ‘cash expenditure’.

Part 2 (Chapters 4-5) is a brief summary of the history and topography of the Kinsbourne manor in its Hertfordshire setting. Part 3 (Chapters 6-8) provides a detailed comparative analysis of arable and livestock husbandry in the two periods, and in Chapter 8 Stern expands upon his view of the potential for adducing valuable evidence about past climate change from the vast stock of English manorial accounts. He lists in separate tables a considerable body of evidence, both direct (in 42 out of 101 Kinsbourne accounts there is explicit reference to the weather) and inferred. In Part 4 (Chapters 9-13) one finds the heart of Stern’s thesis with his definitions of what we might see today as demesne ‘profit’, ‘income’ and ‘expenses’, in money terms. He analyses the performance of the manor in relation to its returns from arable farming in Chapter 10 where, in a series of illuminating graphs covering the two periods on which the study concentrates, he charts the rise and fall of prices, yields, value, expenses and net profits. It is a tribute to his method that Thornton, in a reworking of his data on the later model devised by Bruce Campbell (based upon differential weighting of the various grains and their yields according to the acreage sown) corroborates Stern’s findings about the higher productivity of the later period. In Chapter 11 he deals with the demesne’s animal husbandry in a similar way and shows how this was a more consistent provider of profit than the arable enterprise and often showed a greater return (beware however the different scaling of the axes in the various graphs). In Chapter 12 he consolidates these findings in tables of his TPI; this shows clearly the superior performance of the late-fourteenth century’s demesne farming over that of the sometimes postulated heyday of peak corn production in the earlier period. Paradoxically this ‘Indian summer’ was brought to an end by
the farming out of the whole demesne – a strategy which Stern reveals as being less viable economically than the previous direct management. There is also a comparison of his TPI with the ‘total of all receipts’ in the cash accounts (summa totilis recepti) and with the manorial auditors’ assessment of profit (valor or profitus). Both of these show a generally good correlation between his reckoning and those of the manorial officials – although the medieval estimations of profit were, with only one or two exceptions, rather more optimistic than today’s accountant would establish.

On the Kinsbourne evidence, the peak of production and profit did not coincide with the time of greatest demand for corn, which occurred in the earlier of the two periods studied. Instead it came later with the increased reliance on animal husbandry consequent upon demographic and social change after the Black Death. In spite of his fascination with weather data, Stern was obliged to conclude that the quality of demesne management, the balance between waged and customary labour, the innate fertility of land farmed in demesne, and the extent of depredations by royal tax-collectors and purveyors of supplies in time of war, probably had more effect on profits than this exogenous factor.

The University of Hertfordshire Press is to be congratulated on a worthy choice for the first volume in its new series in Studies in Regional and Local History, which aims to publish ‘scholarly studies [which] … should appeal to both local residents of the areas to which they relate, and to the interested reading public more generally’. The book also provides a model for aspiring post-graduate researchers looking forward to publishing the results of their own researches, many of which would, as P.D.A. Harvey writes of Stern’s work in his preface, ‘… be seen as relevant and valuable contribution[s] to medieval studies’.

Mike Thompson
University of Leicester


During the past 20 years, our knowledge of foreign immigrants in early modern Britain has been greatly enhanced by studies of their presence in various towns and cities. In addition, in 1995 the Huguenot Society published an important commemorative volume, containing 11 essays on the integration of the Huguenot and Walloon refugee communities in England, in memory of Irene Scouloudi, a leading scholar on foreign immigrants in early modern London.

This new volume, far more ambitious in its aims and much broader in scope, comprises 57 papers originally presented at a stimulating three-day international conference held in April 2000 at the sixteenth-century Dutch
Church in Austin Friars (London) to celebrate the 450th anniversary of the grant of the charter by Edward VI to the foreign communities in London in 1550. The charter has long been seen by historians as highly significant, allowing foreign refugees to set up Reformed Churches in the heart of London and to worship in their native languages, and helping to make London a leading centre for exiles escaping religious persecution on the continent. The conference, patronised by Prince Charles, was a great success with the attendance of some 300 scholars and members of the public.

Although dealing with a vast array of themes and topics, the essays in this volume focus essentially on the integration of five groups between 1550–1750: (1) Dutch and French Protestants in England between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, (2) Germans in Britain, (3) ‘others’ in Britain, (4) non-British in the American colonies, and (5) immigrants in Ireland. As the overwhelming majority of immigrants into England during the period were Protestant refugees from the Netherlands and France (it is estimated that 50,000 Protestants came in the sixteenth century and another 50,000 in the seventeenth century), it is not surprising that most essays – Parts I, II, III, IV, VII, and IX – concentrate on the integration of these groups.

The essays sought to address three key questions: (1) what is meant by the terms ‘integration’, ‘stranger’ and ‘citizenship’? (2) how did immigrants move from being strangers to citizens? and (3) what problems did immigrants face in integration? In a volume of this size, it would have been particularly helpful to have these questions and a conceptual framework clearly laid out and addressed in the introductory chapter, and a concluding chapter contrasting the different routes to integration. Lacking these, the reader will have to search through individual essays for answers. With regard to the first question, Essays 9, 36 and 41 are particularly useful. In Essays 36 and 41, Van Ruymbeke and Barrett rightly point out the need to distinguish integration (mutual adaptation) from assimilation (total loss of distinctive ethnic characteristics) and acculturation (reciprocal change in behaviour of both groups as a result of contact). In Essay 9, Goose offers a useful conceptual framework for understanding integration and ways to measure it. He reminds us that integration is a multi-layered process and the depth and speed of the various facets of integration can vary, with political integration being the slowest. The whole process, encompassing economic, political, demographic and marital integration, can take more than 150 years to complete.

With regard to the second question, many authors consider citizenship to have been the key to economic integration – the first stage in the process. Until the middle of the nineteenth century British citizenship could be acquired either through denization or naturalization. Denization, as Beerbühl points out in Essay 54, conferred only a partial nationality and denizens were still excluded from some important economic rights. Naturalization conferred the full rights of a natural-born subject and was acquired through a private Act of Parliament. However, it was costly – the fee ranged between £65 and £100 – and only a minority of foreigners were ever naturalised. According to
Beerbühl, this is because naturalization only mattered to those with considerable wealth, such as merchants, as it offered them the ability to acquire and bequeath property, avoid paying double taxes, own British ships and gain membership of the big trading companies. Even then, it was only crucial when merchants wished to set up merchant houses. However, an alternative view is that naturalization did matter to all foreigners, but many did not acquire it either because they could not afford it or they did not intend to settle permanently. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the ‘alien’ status of immigrants meant that they were subject to economic discrimination, the most important element of which was their inability to learn a craft skill through apprenticeship – the main route to citizenship. This limited their opportunities for upward mobility and forced them to live in certain (often deprived) geographical areas to avoid guild control. In 1709, when it was generally believed that England was under-populated, a General Naturalization Act was introduced to encourage the settlement of large numbers of immigrants in Britain by making their integration easier (Essay 52).

What problems did immigrants face in integration? The essays show that the Dutch and Walloon settlers in England in the sixteenth century, and Huguenots in the seventeenth century, were generally welcomed because of a perceived common Christian identity and religion. In the sixteenth century, the exiles also had powerful friends in government, ensuring them a considerable degree of religious freedom. Many Englishmen shared religious convictions with European Protestants, as demonstrated in their participation in continental wars. Foreign service, as Trim points out, helped reduce traditional xenophobia and encouraged ‘trans-ethnic’ marriages (though Trim does not say that this only concerned a small number of people). But the religious integration of immigrants was not smooth, because, as Collinson notes in Essay 6, religious polarization in England from the end of the sixteenth century (when Puritanism became more widespread and diffuse) made Stranger Churches more distinctly alien and different. This hindered the strangers’ religious integration, a trend that was in opposition to their advancing economic and social integration. By the early seventeenth century Stranger Churches had lost their independence and freedom, as William Laud sought to bring them under stricter control.

On the economic front, the success of immigrants in integration was more mixed. On one level, there was great esteem for foreign workmanship, especially French, among the elites and there was a high demand for French skills in areas such as silver work, decorative art and upholstery. Artists and artisans with exceptional skills, such as the goldsmith David Willaume, were able to enjoy aristocratic patronage (Essays 12–16). On another level, there was much resentment and hostility towards the immigrants, notably the weavers who formed the largest group of immigrant artisans. In both the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, foreign weavers were resented both because of their superior skills and the severe competition they posed (Essays 8 and 40). As Swindlehurst shows, the arrival of Huguenots in Spitalfields in the 1670s and
1680s was seen to upset local economies and local balances, provoking much resentment. Although there was some sympathy for them as Protestants, native English still saw Huguenots as ‘French’, and, as such, treated them with some suspicion. The number of Huguenots – 20,000 in London – added to linguistic, cultural, economic and residential barriers, and helped fuel local resentment against them. There were concerns that they would keep technologies to themselves and would only work with other French weavers. Resentment was exacerbated by the existence of few opportunities for English and Huguenots to socialise, as Huguenots attended their own Church and few spoke English. But as Barrett points out (Essay 41), foreign church membership, contributing to social distancing, was necessitated by the system of welfare provision. Immigrants did not have access to English poor relief either from their parish or from a guild (many guilds did not admit strangers). The only source of relief was from their own church, so retaining links with their community was vital for entitlement to poor relief.

Nevertheless, as Olson contends in Essay 51, overall, the Huguenots were generally welcomed and encouraged to stay in England, a reception which was not extended to the Germans (Palatines) and Protestant Salzburgers who came in 1709 and 1732 respectively. Many from these latter groups were shunted off to the American colonies. More than 3,000 Palatines were also sent by the English Government to Ireland, to bolster the Protestant population there and to bring industry to the country, but the Irish ‘plantations’ were largely unsuccessful as many did not remain there after failing to find rent-free lands. Instead, the Palatines returned to England in the hope of finding a passage to America (Essay 52).

Part IV deals with the integration of ‘other’ groups in England, including Jews, Moors, Turks, Africans and Greeks. With the exception of the Jews, these ‘others’ had few problems in settling in England, largely because they were few in number. There were only a handful of blacks in England – only 14 were buried in Fulham and Hammersmith between 1679 and 1750, and 38 in Greenwich between 1593 and 1750 (Essay 27). More importantly, most worked as servants – some in very grand homes – and were not seen as threatening because they were controlled by their English masters. The Turks and Moors were also few in number: in 1625, only 19 were recorded in London. Many were prisoners and were willing converts to Anglicanism (Essay 28). There were also a few Greek refugees who had fled to London to avoid Turkish tyranny. They were received with much sympathy, as allies against Ottoman and Catholic foes (Essay 29). The integration of the Jews was more problematic. Not only was the practice of their religion forbidden in England, but many Jews were expelled in 1609 by James I and were only invited back after 1650s because of their valuable commercial and trading skills. The number of Jews increased slowly and by 1753 there were some 8,000 in England.

The Jews did not escape discrimination in the British colonies. Although they were allowed to settle, they were generally barred from holding public offices. It was
not until the Naturalization Act of 1740 that they were able to apply for naturalization (Essay 31). The situation of the Jews stood in stark contrast to the Dutch, who were easily accepted in Chesapeake for two reasons. First, English residents in Virginia were dependent on Dutch merchants and seamen for access to European goods and markets, and African slaves. Second, the Dutch also made efforts to integrate by anglicising their names and their boats’ names, and speaking English (Essay 32). The Huguenots, on the other hand, occupied a middle ground, embracing both integration and cultural separatism – for example, in public they spoke English, but in private they continued to use the French language. This strategy of outward conformity and inward separatism is believed to have been the Huguenots’ method of coping with persecution in their homeland, a method which was replicated in the New World (Essay 34).

Overall, this valuable collection of essays has enriched the existing literature on immigration into Britain in the early modern period. With its extensive coverage of the topics, periods and areas, it is a useful reference work and has a great deal to offer to both specialists and the general public.

Lien Bich Luu
University of Hertfordshire


Computers are wonderful things. They allow us to store and manipulate huge amounts of information in new ways, that at times can seem almost miraculous. Thousands of pages of text and images can be shoehorned onto a thin silver disk that seduces us with its shimmering surface, and almost science fiction-like qualities. The difficulty is that this new form of publishing does not come with an agreed set of rules for how the information should be put together. When we sit down to read a book, we know how it will be structured, we know that it has been copy-edited, and we know all the subtle visual clues that allow us to navigate that wonderful creation of the medieval mind.

When it comes to a CD-ROM none of this applies, and we are left to fall back on the common sense of the editors and designers. We are left to rely on a set of newly-imagined conventions that can be changed with a few clicks of a mouse. Unfortunately, in the process of using this relatively new (and already out-dated) technology, the editors and contributors to this collection of resources have allowed themselves to lose sight of the basic purpose and import of publication. They have been seduced by the possibilities of the technology and thrown their intellectual caution to wind.

This collection appears to have emerged from an undergraduate course on the history of Bristol taught at the University of the West of England. It includes a long and unhelpful introduction followed by a series of articles on particular topics, interspersed with technical guides to using the various programmes required to make the package work to best advantage. The articles themselves are quite good, and include interesting pieces by historians such as Madge Dresser on the slave trade and Leonard Schwarz on
the economics of hiring a servant in the eighteenth century. The package also includes a substantive number of both visual and statistical resources, including statistics on poverty and brewing, the slave trade, urban growth and coal production. The focus of both the articles and resources is the eighteenth to the twentieth century, although the nineteenth seems to be best served. The package also includes a relatively comprehensive bibliography relating to the history of Bristol.

However, the package has little shape and no structure. In order to move from the articles to the resources, one has to access an entirely different folder using the ‘start’ menu in Windows, making it extremely difficult to see how the two elements of the package inter-relate. There is also little sense of how one is supposed to move through this huge collection of information. It does not seem to be organised thematically or chronologically, so this user, at least, was left wandering from one topic to the next, uncertain if there was a larger point the editor was seeking to make.

More than this, it is clear that, in the editor’s enthusiasm, some production values have been allowed to slip. The introduction is in need of a serious copy-editing, while the package both explains too much and too little. It includes, for instance, a detailed glossary that defines everything from ‘cancer’ to the ‘new economic history’. I am sure that all the terms defined come up somewhere in the text, but the purpose of including this glossary (as opposed to explaining terms as they appear) is illusive. The package also includes a set of examples of different hands, enthusiastically introducing the user to the joys of medieval and early modern handwriting. This seems remarkably out of place given the resolutely modern focus of the collection. At the same time, there is no clear information on the origin of the sources that are included. The CD contains a legion of Excel files clearly developed from original documents, but no explanation of how or why these files came to be created, or what information was excluded in the process (or if this information was there, this reader was unable to find it). As a result, a student using this package would be denied the all-important opportunity to question the material provided.

Perhaps the most fundamental problem with this work is that the editor seems uncertain who the audience is meant to be. Obviously undergraduate students form one element of it; but the introduction also commends the collection to academics and local historians. I am afraid that this reviewer, while able to see that an undergraduate with the support of a well-structured semester long course might find useful information in it, could not recommend it to either a broader academic or non-academic audience.

Tim Hitchcock
University of Hertfordshire
NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITIES

In this issue we focus on research and teaching in population history and related areas of social history at the University of Southampton.

A Department of Social Statistics might seem like a strange place for population history to be taught or researched, but at Southampton that is where demography is located. The Department runs an undergraduate degree programme in Population Sciences. This includes a compulsory first year course called The Population History of England, taught by Andrew Hinde, which traces the history of England’s population from the time of the Domesday Survey until World War II. In addition, all undergraduates taking the degree programme are required to do a final year project, and usually one or two each year are on historical themes. This year, for example, Mark Ashby is studying crisis mortality in Gloucestershire between 1640 and 1740, using data from the CD-ROM (made available by Local Population Studies) of the 404 parishes analysed in E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The population history of England, 1541–1871: a reconstruction* (London, 1981). Victoria Fairhurst’s project is an attempt to understand why infant mortality in nineteenth-century England was higher in the east and lower in the west and north than might have been expected from the overall levels of mortality.

The Department has a large group of doctoral students, of whom about half are studying demographic topics for their Ph. Ds. A few of these are historical. Currently, Briony Eckstein is close to completing her thesis on the low fertility in England and Wales in the 1930s. She is analysing two sources not exploited by the academic community (at least since their initial reports were written): the original interview transcripts from the Royal Commission on Population set up in the 1940s in response to concerns about low fertility, and the schedules from a survey carried out by Mass Observation in 1944 entitled ‘Britain and her Birth Rate’. Michael Edgar is well into his study of the social, economic and demographic history of the Isle of Purbeck in Dorset during the nineteenth century.

The Department of Sociology and Social Policy also contributes to research in social and demographic history. Violetta Hionidou is a Wellcome Senior Research Fellow in the Department. She has published on diverse topics ranging from nineteenth-century Mediterranean households to the demography of famines and infant mortality. She has also carried out research on fertility, contributing to the spacing-stopping debate using oral history evidence. Currently she is examining the demographic and public health aspects of the 1941–1942 Greek famine. Bernard Harris teaches a number of different courses on the history of British social policy and the welfare state. He has published articles on a wide range of subjects, from the history of human height to the social consequences of unemployment in interwar Britain. He is currently writing a history of social welfare provision in Britain.
from 1800 to the present day. Finally, Susan Burt is a Ph. D. student in the Department, who is studying the records of the Hampshire County Lunatic Asylum during the late-nineteenth century. By linking the data about individuals in these records to the census enumerators’ books, she hopes to be able to discover the family backgrounds of those admitted to the Asylum.

A particularly interesting piece of research currently under way involves collaboration between the two departments. Bernard Harris and Andrew Hinde are working with two other researchers (Claudia Edwards of the London School of Economics and Martin Gorsky at the University of Wolverhampton) on an analysis of the individual sickness records of the Hampshire Friendly Society during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. These data hold out the promise of being able to test the thesis of James Riley that English morbidity increased during the late-nineteenth century as mortality fell (see J. Riley, *Sick, not dead: the health of British workingmen during the mortality decline* (Baltimore, 1997)). Riley’s argument is backed up by evidence from an aggregate analysis of the sickness records of Ancient Order of Foresters and the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows, but he did not use individual-level data. Initial results from the Hampshire Friendly Society data suggest that a substantial part of the increase in sickness rates during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was an artefact of the ageing of the membership of the Society, and not due to any real increase in the amount of sickness.

Finally, in the Department of History, Peter Gray is working on several research projects related to the population history of Ireland, including a major edition of Great Famine texts and a monograph on the making of the Irish Poor Law.

Andrew Hinde
CORRESPONDENCE

Letters intended for publication in Local Population Studies should be sent to Nigel Goose, LPS General Office, Department of Humanities, University of Hertfordshire, Watford Campus, Aldenham, Watford, Herts., WD2 8AT.

Editor’s note

Readers are reminded that the editorial board is always prepared to offer advice on subjects within the scope of Local Population Studies (LPS), so if you think we can help please do not hesitate to contact us.

The 1569 Rising in the North

Dear Sir,

I am a doctoral student at Osnabrück University in Germany and I am working on the 1569 rising of the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland also known as the Rising in the North. I wonder if I might use your columns to prevail upon your readers for information?

I am interested in polemical literature connected with the rising, that is, any pamphlets, tracts, ballads and so forth denouncing the rebels, and also those of Catholic followers bewailing the fate of their friends or relatives.

More pertinent to your readership, the other main focus of my thesis will be on the situation in Durham and Northumberland immediately after the rising. I would like to calculate what percentage of the population was involved in the rising. Material from the 1563 census, despite some question marks over its reliability, will help me to calculate at least approximate population numbers for the region, which will be set against totals of executions, attainders and pardons. I wonder if there is any parish register research that I may not be aware of that might provide more precise estimates?

Any suggestions regarding population numbers in the 1560s and 1570s in the area, and the religious and/or feudal leanings of individuals, families, parishes or villages, will be greatly appreciated and fully acknowledged. Thank you very much.

Sincerely

Daniela Broermann

My address is:

Koernerstr. 34
06114 Halle/Saale
Germany
email: Danibroermaus@netscape.net
Hearth Taxes and the building stock

Dear Sir,

I am writing in response to your recent article on the Hearth Tax and evidence of urban wealth, published in *Local Population Studies* 67. I found it extremely interesting in connection with my own work in Kent which recently formed part of the introduction to the 1664 Kent Hearth Tax, published by the British Record Society as vol. 2 (2000) in the new Hearth Tax series (see below for details).

I am a vernacular architecture specialist, and I have not done any detailed work on reconstructing households or working with probate material in Kent towns – I wish I had, but time was limited. I am in fact currently working on two Kent towns, Faversham and Sandwich, but basically on the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries rather than later and unfortunately, as both towns belong to the Cinque Ports, neither was included in the 1664 returns. Nonetheless, using what I know of the buildings in medieval towns such as these, and those of towns which were developing fast in the late-seventeenth century, such as Deptford and Deal, I think one can begin to make sense of the different patterns of hearth distribution which are apparent between the prospering and increasingly built-up towns (largely western and London orientated) such as Bromley, Chatham, Dartford, Deptford, Gravesend, Greenwich and Woolwich, where both two-hearth and larger households were prevalent and there were relatively few single-hearth households, and the older smaller towns where one-hearth households were commoner.

If one looks at the buildings the picture becomes clearer, for town houses built from around 1660 onwards are extremely well provided with hearths, so that the proportion of hearths to rooms is high. At an earlier date the proportion of hearths to rooms, even in large houses, was much lower and it can be demonstrated that many large and early houses were not fully updated by the time of the tax. Thus medieval houses of six to eight rooms might only have two or three hearths, whereas new houses in Deptford, Deal or Folkestone might have five hearths in a six-room house, or two hearths in a three-room house, and the latter might be occupied by a labourer or a fisherman. In other words, the Hearth Tax begins – perhaps not surprisingly since it would hardly have been worth collecting earlier – at just the moment when the norm in hearth numbers in houses of all sorts was increasing, but before many of the older properties had been completely upgraded. Unfortunately, the lack of surviving building evidence in the western towns in Kent, and lack of 1664 Hearth Tax evidence for the Cinque Ports and Canterbury, where the buildings remain, is frustrating, although something can be said about Faversham and Canterbury from other Hearth Tax returns.

My main point is that one needs to be aware of the building stock when considering differences in hearth numbers between different places. I take your point that the Hearth Tax deals with households not houses, but when virtually every room in a new house was heated, this in itself has implications.
A two-room lodging in a new town might have two hearths, but a house of three or four rooms in an old town (or in the countryside) might only have one hearth, and the occupiers of the two-hearth lodging might be poorer than the occupiers of the three or four-roomed house. I was interested in your point about the generally low personal wealth of those with two hearths in Cambridge and the possibility therefore that they were of lower social status than householders with two hearths in the countryside. But I would add that the fabric of the buildings they occupied may have played an important part in determining their hearth numbers since they may also have been living in recently built properties. Thus the evidence from our very different sources may neatly dovetail, and if Reading is different, is that because Reading was largely built at an earlier date? All this is discussed in more detail in the Kent Hearth Tax volume. I am only sorry I did not have your article to hand when writing my piece.

Yours faithfully,

Sarah Pearson

Old School House,
High Street,
Charing,
Nr Ashford, TN27 OLS
Tel.: 01233 712772

D. Harrington, S. Pearson and S. Rose (eds), *Kent Hearth Tax Assessment, Lady Day 1664*, BRS Hearth Tax Series, vol 2 (2000), is available from The Treasurer, British Record Society, Carolyn Busfield, Stone Barn Farm, Sutherland Road, Longsdon, Stoke on Trent, ST9 9QD. The price is £40 plus postage and packing.