DADE PARISH REGISTERS

Roger Bellingham

Roger Bellingham is a lawyer turned historian with a long-standing interest in Dade registers, which made a significant contribution to his Ph.D. thesis.

Over the last thirty years parish registers have been used with great effect to throw light on the population history of England. To decide whether a parish register was suitable to be used for such purposes systems were developed to assess the quality of that register, and in particular to assess whether a satisfactory percentage of the baptisms, marriages and burials that took place in that parish are likely to have been entered in the parish register. However, until recently relatively little consideration has been given to the quality of the individual entries in a parish register, and still less as to why entries of above average quality appear in a given register. This paper is concerned with the extended parish registers that are to be found in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, in particular the so-called Dade registers that are to be found in the dioceses of York and Chester, which contain substantially more information than most parish registers of the period. It will, it is hoped, lead to a clearer understanding of these registers and make local historians and demographers more aware of their potential.

Earlier literature

In 1970 an article by B.A. Holderness on ‘Personal mobility in some rural parishes of Yorkshire’ appeared in the Yorkshire Archaeological Journal. It was based on research undertaken using nine parish registers that had been published by the Yorkshire Parish Register Society, and its successor, the Parish Register Section of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society. Holderness commented that ‘The reform of registration [in these parishes] emanated from a directive of Archbishop Markham at the Midsummer visitation of 1777, and that from varying dates thereafter they contained considerable additional information about parishioners.’ He provided the following example from the Saxton in Elmet register of 1791:

Rebecca, 1st dau. of Robert Westwood of Saxton, Taylor, son of Thomas Westwood of Kelfield, Husbandman, by Rebecca his wife, dau. of John Pallister of Stillingfleet, farmer [and] Frances dau. of Isaac Cawthorne of Miclefield, Lab by Elizabeth his wife daughter of Samuel Goodall of Milford, Collier, (born) May 30; (bapt.) June 5.
The information in a full Dade baptism entry, such as this, is remarkably comprehensive. Not only does one have the seniority of the baptised child and precise details of the parents but one also has details of both sets of grandparents and the maternal great grandfathers. In 1972 a note in *Local Population Studies* mentioned that this article was 'based on exceptionally detailed entries in the baptism registers of nine parishes in the vicinity of York'. Unfortunately the note did not mention Archbishop Markham’s directive, nor the comment by Holderness that more such registers might exist.

In 1977 an article by E.A. Wrigley in *Local Population Studies* made use of the entries in the baptism register of Colyton, Devon, between 1765 and 1777, which gave information as to the mother’s father. The following entry was, he said, a typical entry of the period:

Mary, daughter of James Drew husbandman by Mary his wife daughter of Joseph Sydenham of the parish of Southleigh yeoman was born the 22d of November 1770 and baptised the first January following.

Wrigley mentioned that when attempting to establish the proportion of the adult population of a parish that was born locally, the data from family reconstructions was not entirely satisfactory. He commented, 'Occasionally there is more direct and complete evidence to be had from parish registers, and in such cases the female population may be better covered than the male.' However, Wrigley made no mention of the Holderness article nor of the changes initiated by Archbishop Markham. Although the evidence is purely circumstantial, it could well be that the extended Colyton format of 1765 to 1777 stems from a book by Ralph Bigland esquire, Somerset Herald, published in 1764, which recommended ‘that in entries of all baptisms the names of the father and mother of the child, and also the name of the mother’s father, residence, degrees, or occupations, be set forth in [the following] manner’:

John Bannister, 3d son of John Banister of Woodbridge, in com. Suffolk, mercer, and Mary his wife (2d daughter of William Jones of Penzance, in com. Cornwal, [sic] merchant) was born on the 20th day of October, and baptized the 17th day of the next month following.

Prompted perhaps by Wrigley’s article, in 1979 W.J. Sheils contributed a valuable note to *Local Population Studies* entitled ‘Mobility and registration in the north in the late eighteenth century’. Holderness had realised that the registers he had found emanated from a direction by Archbishop Markham. Sheils identified William Dade (circa 1740–1790) as the man responsible for the format of the entries in those registers. In 1770, shortly after he became curate of St Helen Stonegate, York, Dade introduced a new form of register for baptisms and burials. The extent of the detail is shown by the baptism entry quoted by Sheils:

Thomas, 1st born [child of] Cochran, William, coachmaker, eldest son of William Cochran, coachmaker, and Elizabeth, his wife [and]
Martha, 3rd daughter of Mr John Brooks, coachman, of the Minster Yard, and Sarah Rhodes, his wife, Davygate, born 20 July baptised 24 July 1770.13

The style of this entry follows closely the proposal by Bigland, except that Dade made the crucial decision to give details for both parents. Then 23 years of age, Dade became assistant curate at St Martin Micklegate, York, in 1763 and it is quite possible that he had seen Bigland’s book before he became curate of St Helen Stonegate.14 Sheils, apparently unaware of Bigland’s book, implied a link to Ralph Thoresby’s Ducatius Leodiensis of 1715, but this connexion seems less likely. Sheils also assessed the parish registers from the present York Archdeaconary then deposited at the Borthwick Institute in York and reported in his note that 82 of the 161 registers ‘gave all details under Dade’s scheme’.15 In 1980 M. Long and B. Maltby’s article ‘Personal mobility in three West Riding parishes, 1777–1812’, considered geographical and occupational mobility in the Dade parishes of Skipton, Addingham and Bolton Abbey.16 Sheils’ article in 1979 provoked comments in Local Population Studies from A. Henstock as to Dade registers in Nottinghamshire and from T.J. Falla who mentioned Berkshire registers which he thought to be in Dade format.17

The article by Holderness was referred to in a course book for the Open University Course D301 Historical Sources and the Social Scientist, but the next published research on the subject appears to be Claire Davey’s paper in Local Population Studies in 1988 based on the Moreton, Essex, parish register between 1796 and 1812, although she did not appreciate that she had found a Dade register.18 Two further notes have appeared in Local Population Studies, ‘The use of marriage horizons to study migration’ in 1990 and ‘Age at marriage in the late eighteenth century’ in 1998. In 2002 an article by the present writer on ‘Dade Registers’ in Archives provided an overview of these registers and an indication of some of their potential for demographic research.19

The only published attempt at a catalogue of Dade registers is in Webb’s Guide to parish records in the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research (1987). He included a brief note on Dade registers but also indicated which of the registers then deposited at the Borthwick Institute in York were in Dade format and for what period. Wilcox, in Volume 11 of the National Index of Parish Registers, referred very briefly to Dade registers and stated that he had included the Dade covering dates as given in Webb.20

The introduction of Dade Registers

As Sheils mentioned in his note, Dade had also introduced this system in two York parishes, St Helen Stonegate and St Olave.21 By 1773 the parish registers of at least five York parishes were in this format and, for reasons that have not yet been ascertained, the newly founded Christchurch at Macclesfield, then in the diocese of Chester, adopted the Dade system in 1776, although it was discontinued the following year.22 Then, in 1777 Markham, who had been bishop of Chester, was translated to York and asked at the time of his primary visitation in that year that the Dade system should be adopted. In 1777 the
The diocese of York consisted of York, the Ainsty, the East and West Ridings, the eastern part of the North Riding, Nottinghamshire and the peculiar of Hexham. The western part of the North Riding was then part of the archdeaconry of Richmond in the diocese of Chester.

As great Complaints have arisen of the Registers of Marriages, Births and Burials belonging to several parishes, being in accurately kept and drawn out, so as not to identify and ascertain the Persons, etc. whereby they have not their due Weight in point of Evidence: It is required for the future, that the following Form be pursued and adhered to.

A true and perfect copy of the Parish Registry of A from the Day of 1776, to the Day of 1777.

### MARRIAGES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When married</th>
<th>Names of persons married</th>
<th>Man’s Title</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>age</th>
<th>Banns or Licence</th>
<th>By whom married</th>
<th>In whose presence married</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>177 January 2</td>
<td>A. B. Bat. 21</td>
<td>G. H. J. K.</td>
<td>Rector</td>
<td>L. M.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>C. D. Spr 24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### BIRTHS and BAPTISMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s name</th>
<th>Father’s name, Abode Profession and Descent</th>
<th>Mother’s name and Descent</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Baptised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### DEATHS and BURIALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person’s Name</th>
<th>Abode</th>
<th>Descent Profession and abode</th>
<th>Died</th>
<th>Buried</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Distemper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. B. C. Eldest Son of D. E. of F. Esq by G.D.H I of K Gentleman</td>
<td></td>
<td>2nd of March</td>
<td>5th of March</td>
<td>In the Chanc</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Consumption</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 Parish register format indicated in Dean Fountayne of York’s visitation articles.
No copy of Markham’s visitation articles have yet been located amongst the papers for the visitation, but several parish registers appear to contain copies of parts of the format that Dade and Markham wished parishes to adopt. Some parishes in the York diocese were peculiaris under the jurisdiction of the Dean of York. In 1778 Dean Fountayne issued his visitation articles, which have survived. The relevant part relating to the keeping of parish registers is shown in Figure 1.

The close similarity of the 1777 copies in the registers of parishes which were not peculiaris of the relevant parts of the Dean’s articles, suggests that the latter were copied from the instructions issued by the Archbishop. It seems that in neither case was the seniority of either the baptised child or of the parents shown whereas both were given in the format used by Dade at St Helen Stonegate.

Markham’s successor at Chester was Bielby Porteus. His first visitation was comprehensively considered by J. Addy in 1977. Addy’s article makes no mention of parish registers and nothing relating to them has so far been found amongst the visitation papers at Cheshire Record Office. Porteus himself wrote a pamphlet after the visitation but again it said nothing about the maintenance of parish registers. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that, at least in the Archdeaconry of Richmond and possibly in the rest of the diocese, Porteus issued a document remarkably similar to that of Dean Fountayne’s visitation pro forma. At Satterthwaite in the parish of Hawkshead, now in Cumbria, after the visitation of Bishop Porteus on 4 July 1778, the register gives the names of both grandparents and the dates of birth and baptism. After a further visitation in 1783 the register is in the Dade format used by Archbishop Markham and the Dean of York, with headings on each page:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s Names</th>
<th>Father’s name , Abode</th>
<th>Mother’s name and Descend</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Baptised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peggy Leck</td>
<td>William Leck of Satterthwaite collier, son of Robert Leck of Satterthwaite by Margaret his Wife</td>
<td>Hannah daughter of John Dobson of Hazel Rigg in Carmel husbandman by Mary his wife</td>
<td>Aug 9th</td>
<td>Aug 10th 1783</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The content and use of Dade registers

For the family historian the benefit of a Dade register is obvious, but one should also consider the benefits to the demographer. In a baptism entry there is the immense advantage of near certain identification. Thus when studying occupations in a parish register one can base one’s calculations on the individual fathers appearing in the register and avoid the distortions involved if one bases research on the occupation of the father of each baptised child, when the father’s occupation is counted each time a child is baptised. The data can be used, as it was by Holderness and Long and Maltby, to establish
spatial and occupational mobility. If seniority is given one can quickly see if a child is ‘missing’, perhaps baptised in another parish. Other uses to which demographers can put these, and similar, registers have been considered elsewhere.30

A Dade register records the gap between birth and baptism, usually considered a significant yardstick for assessing the quality of a register. It is commonly stated that any figure for infant mortality, and particularly death within one month of birth, must be suspect by the late eighteenth century because of the increasing delay in baptising children. The true extent of that delay must usually be an informed guess, but in Dade registers both the date of birth and date of baptism are normally shown. At Selby between 1777 and 1788 the mean gap between birth and baptism was three days: 86.5 per cent of all baptised children were baptised within ten days of their date of birth.31

In a burial entry the identification of the deceased is usually clear cut, the cause of death may be somewhat superficial but age at death is usually given. If the deceased was born in the parish one can readily link the dates of death and birth, very important if one is considering infant mortality. The quality of the available data is clear from a burial entry in the Selby parish register in 1782:32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christian Name</th>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Descent, profession and abode</th>
<th>When died and where buried</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Distemper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Fisher</td>
<td>Wife of Stephen Fisher of Selby joiner &amp; daughter of Samuel Stobbard of Selby labourer by Mary his wife, daughter of Michael Turner of Castleford Labourer</td>
<td>March 20th Selby Churchyard</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Childbed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As to marriages, Webb commented in 1987 that ‘as a result of the workings of Lord Harwicke’s Marriage Act of 1754 the [Dade] scheme as it related to marriages could not be introduced.’33 In about 20 parish registers that are in Dade format the marriage registers are in the usual Hardwicke format but also provide some or all of the data mentioned in the visitation pro forma: the man’s occupation, status and age; and the woman’s status and age. The publication of the parish register of Masham 1717–1800 has, however, drawn attention to Masham’s marriage register which, between 1779 and 1812, appears to have been in precisely the format proposed by the Dean of York in his visitation articles.34 Where such data is available, as at Selby, it is very valuable. In particular the ages of the parties are recorded in the marriage register so that one does not have to rely on ages based on estimated dates of birth. Further, if occupations are shown one can calculate average age at first marriage by occupation.35
It is difficult to say how many Dade registers exist. Very few registers will provide all the data for the full period between 1777/8 and 1812, when virtually all were discontinued after a standard national form of parish register was introduced in 1813.36 Furthermore, the level of data contained is highly variable. In his article in 1979 Sheils said that of the 161 relevant registers deposited at the Borthwick Institute for Historical Research in York, 82 'gave all details under Dade's scheme'.37 This is unlikely since even in a good Dade register, such as Selby, all the details in an ideal Dade entry do not appear in every entry. The parish register section of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society (and its predecessor the Yorkshire Parish Register Society) have published about 100 registers that cover the years 1770 to 1812. Of these, some 25 appear to be in Dade format and about 35 have Dade features. In all approximately 226 Yorkshire registers have been identified, or provisionally identified, as being in Dade format or having Dade features. Of these, 15 were then in the diocese of Chester. There are at least seven in Nottinghamshire, which was then within the diocese of York. Research into the registers in the Chester diocese is at a very early stage and it would therefore be premature to hazard a guess as to the number in that diocese. However, there appears to have been a significant number in the Furness area of Lancashire.

Other parish registers in extended format

There is an understandable tendency to treat Dade registers as a generic term for any register in extended format during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but to do so causes unnecessary confusion. It is, for example, particularly important to distinguish Dade registers from those introduced in the diocese of Durham by Bishop Barrington in 1796: the Bishop specifically asked that 'the place of nativity of the parents' be entered in the register whereas the Dade registers show the names and residence of the grandparents at the date of the event.38 The following sample extract from the Bishop's 'improved form' is preserved in the Whickham parish register.39

Register of baptisms in the Parish (or Chapelry) of A---- in the year 1798

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Birth</th>
<th>Baptism</th>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Names of the parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Smith</td>
<td>July 21st</td>
<td>July 28th</td>
<td>4th daughter of</td>
<td>John Smith, farmer, Native of Newark on Trent by his wife Jane Thompson, Daughter of Henry Thompson, native of this parish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before Bishop Barrington had been translated to Durham he had been the Bishop of Salisbury. An entry in the parish register for Cholsey, Berkshire, in 1789 suggests that he had introduced the 'Barrington format' into that diocese before he moved to Durham.40

Bishop Barrington's brother, Daines Barrington, may have been responsible for the 'Proposed Form of Baptism and Burial' mentioned in the Gentleman's
Magazine in 1781. Registers ‘Printed by and for J.Nichols in London in 1781’ were in use at Milton Ernest, Bedfordshire, in 1783 and showed the following sample entries under the printed headings:\textsuperscript{41}

\textbf{BAPTISMS}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Aged</th>
<th>Name of the child</th>
<th>Names of the father and mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1781</td>
<td>– days</td>
<td>John Smith, Son of John Smith, Labourer, and Mary his Wife; formerly Mary Evans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{BURIALS}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name of the deceased</th>
<th>Names of the father and mother</th>
<th>Aged</th>
<th>Supposed cause of death</th>
<th>Where buried</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1781</td>
<td>John Smith of this Parish, labourer</td>
<td>Son of John Smith and Mary Smith formerly Evans</td>
<td>– years Smallpox</td>
<td>On the –side of the churchyard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are also other registers in the later part of the eighteenth century that give more than the basic level of information. Colyton in Devon has already been mentioned and, following the arrival of a new Bishop in 1783, it is understood that many Norfolk parish registers show the maiden name of the mother of the baptised child and that this continues until 1812.

\textbf{Future use of Dade registers}

In general registers in Dade format exist only between 1777 and 1812, about 25 years. But the quality of the data available can be outstanding and, in contrast to family reconstructions in the Cambridge Group format, it does include information on migrants. Whilst Wrigley’s opinion is that those who left a parish probably displayed much the same characteristics as those who stayed, for some demographers a potential flaw in the work of the Cambridge Group is that migrants are under represented in the reconstructions upon which their work is founded.\textsuperscript{42} Research using the Selby Parish Register, which is in Dade format, has also suggested it may be unwise to exclude migrants when calculating age at first marriage.\textsuperscript{43}

When considering these registers one is reminded of the all too familiar claim that the only thing which equals the extraordinary importance of the topic is the strange neglect in which it has been left by earlier workers.\textsuperscript{44} It is now over 30 years since the article by Holderness appeared in the \textit{Yorkshire Archaeological Journal}, yet relatively little research has been undertaken using Dade registers.\textsuperscript{45} One reason for this neglect is understandable: the full
potential of the data can only be realised by first inputting it into a relational database, and this can be very time consuming. But ignorance of that potential has also played its part, and it is hoped that this article will enliven interest in these valuable registers and encourage their fuller exploitation.

NOTES

7. E.A. Wrigley, ‘A note on the life time mobility of married women in a parish population in the later eighteenth century’, Local Population Studies, 18 (1977), 22–4; The Cakerton Parish Register (1538 to 1837) was published by the Devon & Cornwall Record Society in 1928.
10. R. Bigland, Observations on marriages, baptisms, and burials as preserved in parochial registers (London, 1764), 53.
12. The evidence for this is purely circumstantial. Markham certainly adopted the Dade system and he may have well have been aware of Dade’s activities before Markham was translated to York.
15. Sheils, ‘Mobility and registration’, 42.
22. Cheshire Record Office, Macclesfield P84/1.
23. See, for example, Braithwell Parish Register, Doncaster Record Office P71/1/A2, Selby Parish Register, Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, York PR SEL, Alne Parish Register, Borthwick, PR ALN.

24. York Minster Archives, C1/112.

25. The headings in certain printed registers produced by York printers show the child’s seniority but not that of the parents: see, for example, Selby Parish Register.


27. Bielby Porteus, A charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Chester at the primary visitation of Bielby Porteus (Chester, 1779).


32. Selby Parish Register—the burial register did not show date of burial.

33. Webb, Guide to Parish Records, v; Lord Hardwicke’s Act, 22 Geo II c33.


36. Rose’s Act 52 Geo III c 146. A few parishes appear to have maintained a Dade register after 1812, as well as the register in the Rose format. See C. D. Rogers The family tree detective (3rd edn, Manchester 1997), 77. The Dade register for Witton in Cheshire was maintained after 1813.

37. Sheils, ‘Mobility and registration’.


39. Durham County Record Office EP/WHM. This parish register was used by Alan Wright in his article, ‘Birth-baptism intervals in Whickham parish, Co. Durham c.1770–1820’, Local Population Studies, 71 (2003), 81–7, although he does not mention that it is a Barrington register.

40. Berkshire CRO D/P 38/1/2. See comment in footnote 17 above.

41. Bedfordshire Record Office P90/1/6; see Falla, ‘Further material for eighteenth century mobility’.


44. Holderness, ‘Personal mobility’.