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EDITORIAL

Our three articles in this edition span a short chronological range from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth centuries, but take us from Kent, to Lincolnshire, to Lancashire. The lead article is provided by an historian who has made regular, valuable contributions to LPS in recent years, David Jackson, and continues the workhouse theme introduced by Andrew Hinde and Fiona Turnbull in their piece ‘The population of two Hampshire workhouses, 1851-1861’ published in LPS 61 in the Autumn of 1998. David Jackson’s study focuses upon the Medway Union situated in north Kent, on the Medway estuary, which comprised Chatham, Gillingham, Rochester St Nicholas, Rochester Cathedral Church Precincts, Rochester St Margaret, Lydsing and Grange. The study concentrates upon the years 1876-1881, making use of the detailed admissions and discharges register available for the Medway Union as well as the enriched version of the 1881 census available from AHDS History at the University of Essex. Hence the snapshot provided by the 1881 census was used to complement the dynamic picture provided by the admission and discharge registers. Although similar to national figures in terms of the seasonality of admissions, the Medway evidence shows a preponderance of female inmates, rather than the skew towards males that is more commonly found elsewhere by the third quarter of the nineteenth century (Cornwall and Middlesex forming notable exceptions). It is tentatively suggested that the barracks and Royal Naval Dockyard situated here provided more ample male employment than in other more wholly agricultural counties, while it is also possible that women entered the workhouse when their husbands went to sea or were posted away. More men than women were admitted, however, reflecting the shorter average length of their stay. Occupational categories markedly over-represented in the workhouse compared with the general population were domestic service, dress (both predominantly female) and workers with unspecified commodities (predominantly male labourers). Lone individuals predominated amongst admissions, women and children forming the most common family group. The workhouse also appears to have functioned as a maternity hospital for some women, and while the high percentage of inmates admitted as ill or injured is consistent with the institution’s function as a hospital, workhouse deaths were a rare occurrence. Workhouse admissions and discharges registers remain a barely explored source, and those interested in following David Jackson’s example could start by consulting J. Gibson et al., Poor law union records, vols 1-4, published by the Federation of Family History Societies (1993, 1997, 2000).

Our second article, by John Virgoe, provides a detailed analysis of the parish register of St Cuthbert’s Church, North Meols in Lancashire, which records both cause of death and age at death of a large proportion of those buried in the parish from May 1789 until 1801. The results are discussed in the context of the location of North Meols, other sources of information on causes of death, medical knowledge of the period and the contribution which it makes to late
eighteenth-century mortality and medical understanding in rural north-west England. North Meols was a rural, relatively isolated, low-lying, coastal area, and comparison with Whitehaven and London suggests that environmental circumstances were an important influence upon cause of death, with infectious diseases generally and smallpox in particular more common in the port of Whitehaven, and consumption far more common in London than in either North Meols or Whitehaven. However, although the infant mortality rate was high in the metropolis, it was still high (though lower) for rural south-west Lancashire, suggesting that environment was only a second order effect with regard to infant mortality. Although the contemporary terminology applied to causes of death is frequently imprecise, Virgoe demonstrates that there is enough commonality and precision with regard to specific diseases to use this information in comparative studies.

In the third article Edith Hunt provides a detailed analysis of household size and structure for Bassingham in Lincolnshire between 1851 and 1901, which draws upon her Master of Studies Degree in Local and Regional History completed in the Department of Continuing Education at Cambridge University between 2001 and 2003. She asks three main questions: did the size and structure of households change in response to changes in the size and composition of the population, were the latter affected by changes in the local economy, and how did Bassingham households compare with those of other communities? The answer to the first two questions is decidedly positive, for household size contracted in response to agricultural depression, while Bassingham’s age structure showed an increased proportion of elderly residents, and a relative shortfall of younger ones. By the end of the nineteenth century fewer households included either servants or resident kin. In comparison with a range of other communities Bassingham shows both a broad, underlying (and familiar) similarity, but also significant differences in detail which underline the importance of local economic structures and conditions. Hence compared with industrialised Highley this rural community included fewer complex households and fewer households with lodgers, while lodgers were also more commonly found in the more urbanised Berkhamsted region of Hertfordshire. However, comparison with Brough, another rural community, shows that where the agricultural regime was more flexible household size and complexity and age structure was far better maintained across the period 1851-1891. Both basic economic structures and changing local circumstances, therefore, impacted upon the household size and structure of English local communities, and affected how these changed over time.

**Debates in population history**

In this issue we introduce our new item ‘Debates in population history’, with an exchange of views between Simon Szreter and Eddy Higgs on the subject of the evolution of the General Register Office. The discussion stems from a review of Eddy Higgs’ book *Life, death and statistics: civil registration, censuses and the work of the General Register Office, 1836-1952*, which was published as a Local Population Studies supplement in 2004. To give Simon the opportunity to write at length, and to allow Eddy the opportunity to respond, we feature
the review and response here as our first debate. In the next issue we will carry a discussion between Michael Drake and Chris Galley on the question of the contribution of health visitors to the reduction of mortality in the later nineteenth century. Comments on the new feature are welcome.

**Demographic methods**

A further new feature will appear in *LPS* shortly, under the heading of ‘Demographic methods’ (or a similar title) which will be coordinated by Andrew Hinde. Although we have yet to finalise its content, we intend to offer brief introductions to and explanations of some key demographic techniques available to local population historians, together with some views on their value drawn from the practical experience of working with them. We are quite happy to operate in response mode for this item, so would welcome suggestions for topics to include.

**The Local Population Studies Society Annual Conference 8th April 2006**

The date for the sixth in the new series of Local Population Studies Society annual conferences is now confirmed as Saturday 8th April 2006, and the venue remains the Law Faculty of the University of Hertfordshire in St Albans, where we have been so well looked after for the past five years. The title is also confirmed as ‘Death and disease in Britain 1700-1950: urban and rural perspectives’. To date prospective speakers (all to be confirmed) include Michael Drake (infant diarrhoea in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), Eilidh Garrett and Alice Reid (a comparative study of childhood mortality in four Scottish communities), Alysa Levene (infant health in town and countryside), Stuart Basten (infant mortality and smallpox in Newcastle), Paul Glenister (influenza in nineteenth-century Essex), Paul Newton Taylor (burial practices in the mid-nineteenth century). A full programme will be issued with the next LPPS newsletter. Those wishing to book early to avoid disappointment should contact the General Office without delay. The price for the day, to include coffees, teas and lunch, will be held at £25, and we hope again (subject to funding) to be able to offer up to ten free student places.

**The Almshouse Project**

I hope readers will forgive me for claiming editor’s privilege to announce a new collaborative project to research and record the history of almshouses from the medieval period through to 1914. The project has been adopted by the Family and Community History Research Society (FACHRS) as their next major research venture, following on from previous projects on the Swing Riots and the nineteenth-century allotments movement, among others. It will be coordinated by Anne Langley, with Clive Leivers (chair of FACHRS conference and projects group) acting as project adviser and myself as academic adviser.

Despite the enormous progress that has been made in the study of poverty and poor relief in recent years, and the shift from essentially administrative concerns to a direct focus upon the experiences of the poor themselves, there is one aspect of the ‘mixed economy of welfare’ that had been largely ignored, and
that is the part played by the almshouse. One searches in vain for a serious, full-blown, academic history of their contribution and development in any period of English history, despite the fact that they continued to flourish through to and beyond the nineteenth century, and remain an important component of philanthropy even today. As Alannah Tomkins pointed out in *Family & Community History*, 7 in May 2004, it may be that their image ‘has been over-determined’ by the idealism of their founders and their quaint present-day appearance as part of our ‘heritage’, while now, of course, they are often much sought after as bijou residences where they no longer house the poor. Perhaps for these reasons historians have not taken them seriously.

The provision of almshouse accommodation was a very expensive form of philanthropy, and endowments for this purpose—particularly when maintenance of both property and persons was provided too—could dominate provision in a particularly locality in terms of the total sum expended. But just as it is easy to underestimate the proportion of total philanthropic relief devoted to these institutions, it is also easy to underestimate their benefit to the poor. At present, we do not know what their precise contribution was, but a pilot study of nineteenth-century Hertfordshire—a century not generally regarded as the heyday of the almshouse—suggests that contribution could be considerable. Estimates indicate there were 373 places available in Hertfordshire almshouses towards mid-century, providing accommodation for 101 men, which compares unfavourably with the 432 elderly men found in the workhouse. For women, however, there were fully 272 places and, as only 183 elderly women were housed in Hertfordshire workhouses, they played a particularly significant role in the lives of the elderly, female poor.

There are three strands to the proposed project: social, administrative and architectural, with Helen Caffrey acting as special adviser on the subject of architecture (see her ‘The almshouse experience in the nineteenth century West Riding’, *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 76 (2004), 223-46). The list of topics to be investigated is too long to be rehearsed here, but the main focus will be upon provision, the profile of residents and forms of regulation. A template or series of templates will be provided to facilitate the recording of information by project volunteers, preferably in electronic form but otherwise on paper. The minimum outcome of the project will be a gazetteer of English almshouses, but it is expected also to lay the foundations for a series of academic papers and—eventually—a full-blown academic history of the subject. The project is to be formally launched at the annual conference of FACHRS which is to be held in Aspley Guise on 13th May 2006, and it will extend for approximately eighteen months. At the first project planning meeting held 1st October last it was agreed to seek project volunteers from among the readership of *LPS*, as well as from FACHRS. This is, therefore, a call for volunteers to participate. Expressions of interest and requests for further information can be sent to the editor (address on p.2, or n.goose@herts.ac.uk) or to Anne Langley, 12 Squires Road, Stretton-on-Dunsmore, Rugby, CV23 9HF (email anne@langley23.freeserve.co.uk). Full project briefing notes will be supplied in due course, and a briefing meeting will be held in June next year.
Women’s work in industrial England: regional and local perspectives

The above volume will be published in early summer next year, and the editorial process is already well underway. It consists of a combination of key articles reprinted from LPS itself or from other journals, and a roughly equal number of new pieces of hitherto unpublished research. Full contents will be printed in LPS 76. The cover price has yet to be decided, as a late request for the inclusion of a series of colour maps has been agreed, the cost of which is as yet unclear. I am pleased to be able to acknowledge a grant in aid of publication of £500 from the Marc Fitch Fund, for whose continued support we are very grateful.

The Roger Schofield Local Population Studies Research Fund

Subscribers to LPS will be aware that for many years the journal has advertised a Research Fund that has been financed and largely managed by Roger Schofield. I am delighted to be able to announce that Roger has now agreed to endow the Local Population Studies Society with a sum generous enough to allow us to continue to offer small research grants on an annual or biennial basis, in perpetuity, to facilitate research in local population history. The Committee of the Society and the Editorial Board have yet to have the opportunity to discuss exactly how this fund will be managed and distributed, and further details will follow in due course. I would, however, like to take this opportunity to thank Roger for his enormous generosity, on behalf of myself, the Committee and the Board, and to record how delighted we are that we will be able to celebrate Roger’s vital contribution to historical demography and his long-term involvement with LPS through the establishment of a research fund bearing his name.

The LPS Editorial Board

The names of the members of the new Editorial Board are printed on p. 2 above. I would like to extend a warm welcome to Andy Gritt, who joins us as both board member and Treasurer of the Local Population Studies Society, to Janet Hudson, Christine Jones, Tom Nutt and Jon Stobart. Andy Hinde rejoins the board after a brief absence, while Peter Franklin, Chris Galley, Eilidh Garrett and Matthew Woollard have all agreed to continue as board members. Chris will continue to act as book review editor, while Eilidh has taken on the role of Secretary of the Local Population Studies Society, besides continuing to coordinate our ‘News from the universities’ feature. Peter will continue to manage the book club, and to edit the newsletter. Andy will take responsibility for the new ‘Demographic methods’ feature, and will continue to provide the modern section of the annual ‘Review of recent periodical literature’, now assisted for pre-modern articles by Tom and Jon.

The most significant change to the membership of the board is undoubtedly the loss, after an involvement spanning 19 years, of Kevin Schürer. As a living repository of all the ancient wisdom of Local Population Studies, as a sage presence on the board and as a convivial colleague, he will be sorely missed.
recognition of Kevin’s contribution to the journal and the society, an apprecia-
tion by Richard Wall is printed below.

Editorial matters

I am again grateful to Ken and Margaret Smith for typesetting this issue of LPS.

Nigel Goose
October 2005

KEVIN SCHÜRER: AN APPRECIATION

To mark Kevin’s departure from the Local Population Studies editorial board after 19 years of service, I have been asked to put on record his considerable contribution to the journal. The first issue of Local Population Studies on which Kevin worked was number 36 and was published in the spring of 1986, while the last, volume 74, appeared in spring 2005.

Local Population Studies was first published in 1968, developing from a newsletter produced by the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure as a means of communicating interpretation of short and long-term fluctuations in the demography of English parishes revealed by the counts of baptisms, marriages and burials sent to the Cambridge Group by hundreds of local historians. With the founding of Local Population Studies, these historians and others were provided with a means to publish the results of their own demographic research. The composition of the founding Editorial Board reflected this by including an active local historian (David Avery), two persons actively involved in adult education (Colin Barham and Christopher Charlton) as well as a member of the Cambridge Group (Roger Schofield). Different members of the editorial team assumed responsibility for different aspects of the Journal. Production and subscriptions were organised from Tawney House in Matlock, then part of the Department of Adult Education of the University of Nottingham. Correspondence to the editors was handled by Colin Barham in Kent. Various professional historians (that is, those with academic appointments) volunteered to attempt to answer readers’ queries. All editorial decisions regarding the journal were taken collectively, often only after an interminable amount of liaison.

Such divisions of responsibility remained the situation when Kevin joined the Editorial Board in 1986 except that, reflecting the increased standing of the journal, the number of tasks had multiplied, with the addition of a book club and contact with the independently run Local Population Studies Society. Kevin’s initial appointment was as Secretary to the Editorial Board, with responsibility for arranging Board meetings, producing the agenda for and minutes of meetings of the Board, and circulating new submissions for comment by the Board. His major contribution, however, to Local Population Studies
was to come with his centralisation of the management of the journal and successfully ensuring that it was financially secure. This involved the establishment of a General Office, based at the Cambridge Group, to run the journal and staffed by himself and the Librarian to the Cambridge Group, Ruth Omoregie. As Secretary to the Editorial Board, and in effect, General Manager, Kevin now became responsible for all the typesetting, liaising with the printers, membership and subscriptions, and proof reading the contents of each issue where initial problems took a couple of issues to rectify. With typesetting done on the cheap (by Kevin) and a change to local printers and electronic printing, the cost of producing *Local Population Studies* was halved. This ended the situation where each issue was costing more to produce than was received in subscriptions. Other initiatives saw the publication of occasional supplements to *Local Population Studies*, transformed into a full blown book series. Another of Kevin’s plans, however, the merger of *Local Population Studies* and *Local Population Studies Society*, took longer to implement, but has at last been achieved.

This tribute to Kevin would be incomplete without a brief mention of his own research on historical populations. Trained initially at the University of London in both history and geography, Kevin was employed at the Cambridge Group as a Research Associate between 1982 and 1997, and is currently Director of the UK Data Archive at the University of Essex. While at the Cambridge Group he wrote the programmes that generated the detail on the composition of households in England and Wales between 1891 and 1921. Kevin has published studies of rural migration in nineteenth-century Essex, household formation patterns and the departure of children from the parental home, the understanding and coding of occupations in census returns and the principles and practice of the analysis by computer of historical sources. Books which he has co-authored include *Surveying the People* (1992), *Victorian Census Enumerators’ Books* (1996) and *Changing Family size in England and Wales. Place, Class and Demography, 1891–1911*.

Richard Wall
Department of History
University of Essex
THE MEDWAY UNION WORKHOUSE, 1876–1881: A STUDY BASED ON THE ADMISSION AND DISCHARGE REGISTERS AND THE CENSUS ENUMERATORS’ BOOKS

David G Jackson

David Jackson has recently retired after being employed in the pharmaceutical industry in Cheshire for twenty-five years. He maintains his interest in north Kent, where he was born and grew up, by carrying out genealogical and small-scale population studies.

Introduction

Under the New Poor Law of 1834 each parish in England and Wales was allocated to a Poor Law Union, and each union was required to provide workhouse accommodation for its destitute. Working people were expected to be reliant on self-help and mutual aid, with charity available if these strategies failed. Poverty per se was not to be relieved, as it was necessary to encourage the poor to work, and was distinguished from destitution, which was to be relieved.

Poor relief was a last resort, and it is natural to regard workhouse inmates as a section of the population prepared, or forced by circumstances, to accept the harsh environment, confinement, humiliation and stigma of the workhouse. However, evidence is available that inmates did not necessarily regard themselves as an inferior race, set apart from those outside the workhouse. Some paupers did complain, sometimes in writing, about their treatment. The Poor Law Commissioners’ ideal, of separate institutions for each class of pauper, was not practicable, and the norm was a single establishment, with segregation of different classes of inmates. The principle of less eligibility, whereby a workhouse inmate’s lot was to be less desirable than that of the poorest independent labourer, was promulgated by the Poor Law Commissioners. The desitute were to be offered relief in the workhouse, which they would accept only if there was no alternative. This offer of the deterrent workhouse regime was known as the workhouse test. Life in the workhouse was sometimes materially better than the life of an independent labourer, but any perceived advantages were offset by psychological deterrents such as the separation of family members.

Another principle espoused by the Poor Law Commissioners, and closely allied to less eligibility, was the prohibition of outdoor relief to able-bodied males. In 1835 the First Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission stipulated that, firstly, relief in money should not be awarded to employed able-bodied male paupers or their families, except in case of illness or accident;
secondly, male paupers on parish work should receive at least half their relief in kind; thirdly, at least half of the relief given to able-bodied widows and single women should be in kind; and fourthly, payments towards rent should not be made to able-bodied male paupers. However, total prohibition of outdoor relief was impracticable in the face of large-scale unemployment, as was recognised when the Outdoor Labour Test Order of 1842 was issued, permitting provision of outdoor relief to able-bodied men in return for monotonous and unpleasant work. This order was of use to those unions that had insufficient workhouse accommodation. The central authority encouraged use of the workhouse test, but many unions did in fact continue to give outdoor relief on grounds of humanity (families were not broken up), expense (relief could be supplemented by work and charity), and the fact that a man living outside the workhouse could look for work more easily than one confined within it. The New Poor Law introduced an element of discrimination into relief and employment policy, as it was cheaper to employ family men and relieve single men than vice versa. It has been argued that the purpose of the New Poor Law was to abolish outdoor relief to able-bodied men, rather than to all classes of paupers. The New Poor Law was directed at the two parent family, with a male breadwinner, and paid little heed to the problems experienced by deserted or abandoned women with dependents. However, women attempting to support their legitimate children were granted outdoor relief. Further measures against relief to able-bodied males were included in the 1844 Prohibitory Order and the 1852 Regulation Order, both of which permitted outdoor relief to sick men. Such exceptions provided loopholes which local guardians could exploit by giving outdoor relief under the guise of relief in aid of sickness. This and other abuses, including relief from the highway rate, were recognised in 1847 by Edwin Chadwick, the secretary to the Poor Law Commissioners.

A system providing outdoor relief in the form of money was susceptible to abuse, in that overseers, who enjoyed a high degree of autonomy and freedom from central control, could encourage recipients to spend their relief money at selected shops owned by the overseers or their friends, family or associates; employers could profit from the system by paying recipients of relief at less than a fair rate. There was, of course, no guarantee that recipients would spend their relief money wisely.

From 1870, the attitude towards outdoor relief hardened, as indicated by The Goschen Minute, which appeared in the Twenty-second annual report of the Poor Law Board. This minute unequivocally stated the principle that the provisions of the poor law should be used only to relieve the destitute, who were to be maintained wholly at public expense (which meant in the workhouse); extension of statutory relief to the merely poor was considered inappropriate as this group was seen as a legitimate object of charity. The success of this harsh policy is indicated by the removal of one in three recipients of outdoor relief in the period 1871–1876.

The mean annual national totals of indoor and outdoor paupers from 1871 to 1890 are shown in Figure 1. The decline in numbers of outdoor paupers between 1871 and 1876 indicates the success of the harsh policy adopted at this
time. In 1871 the Local Government Board, which had taken over responsibility for the Poor Law, demonstrated its commitment to the reduction, if not abolition, of outdoor relief, by issuing a circular in which Guardians were blamed for the defective management and administration which resulted in an increase in outdoor relief. Options that Guardians were encouraged to consider, and that indicate a hardened attitude towards applicants for relief, included taking some of the children of widows and single women into the workhouse as an alternative to outdoor relief, and careful scrutiny of applications for outdoor relief submitted by the aged. The workhouse could also be used to temporarily house some of a family’s children while the family overcame temporary difficulties.18 An important source of detailed information on individual paupers is the census enumerators’ books (CEBs), which are available for each decennial census from 1841 to 1901. Only a few authors have made use of this source for the study of workhouse inmates.19

The aim of this article is to explore the circumstances and characteristics of workhouse inmates from the information contained in the admission and discharge registers of the Medway Union Workhouse in Kent for the period 1876–1881. Reasons for selection of this union and period included, firstly, the size of the workhouse population, which was small enough to be compatible
with the combination of manual and computer-based methods used but large enough to allow meaningful conclusions to be drawn about the workhouse population as a whole; and secondly, the registers were well kept and legible. Surprisingly, little detailed work has been based on workhouse admission and discharge registers, although lists of surviving registers are available. Indoor relief lists have been used as the basis for work on the population of the Bedford workhouse. Such lists were not available for the Medway Workhouse for the period under study. The precise period selected for study was 1 April 1876 to 1 April 1881, the finishing date being chosen to coincide with the 1881 census, so that information from the CEBs could be used in conjunction with that from the workhouse registers.

The Medway Union was situated in north Kent, on the Medway estuary, and comprised Chatham, Gillingham, Rochester St Nicholas, Rochester Cathedral Church Precincts, Rochester St Margaret, Lydsing and Grange. In the second half of the nineteenth century the Medway Towns and nearby areas were undergoing great industrial expansion. The population of the Medway Registration District increased by 128 per cent, from 42,796 in 1851 to 97,546 in 1901. Increases in population also occurred in outlying villages. Important factors contributing to this expansion included the growth of cement and brick manufacture, requiring machinery and barges, which were provided by local engineering works and barge yards. The naval dockyard at Chatham underwent expansion between 1855 and 1885, and although much of the labour was provided by convicts, 1,144 of whom were enumerated in the 1881 census, the work would have provided considerable stimulus to the local economy. Other local industries included oilseed crushing and clothing manufacture.

According to the 1881 census report the population of the Medway Registration District was 61,644. The enriched version of the 1881 census was used to provide background occupational information on the registration district. This database held a total of 61,401 records for the registration district. The discrepancy between the report and the database amounts to less than 0.4 per cent, so correction was not attempted. Table 1 shows that 39,811 inhabitants were aged 15 years or over, of whom almost 40 per cent were unoccupied. In this age group, the most frequent occupational groups were defence (9.1 per cent), workers and dealers in general or unspecified commodities (8.2 per cent), domestic service or offices (8.0 per cent), workers and dealers in dress (5.5 per cent), and workers and dealers in houses, furniture and decorations (3.8 per cent). Males comprised 53.1 per cent and females 46.9 per cent of the adult population. Children (aged less than 15 years) constituted 35.1 per cent of the population of the registration district, those aged 15-59 years comprised 58.0 per cent, and the elderly (aged 60 years and over) comprised 6.9 per cent. Nationally, males accounted for 47.9 per cent of the adult population and females for 52.1 per cent, while those aged less than 15 years constituted 36.4 per cent, those aged 15-59 years accounted for 56.2 per cent, and 7.4 per cent of the population was aged 60 years or over.
Table 1  Occupations of Medway Workhouse inmates and general population, aged 15 years and over

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<td>Books, prints and maps</td>
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<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machines and implements</td>
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<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houses, furniture and decorations</td>
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<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carriages and harnesses</td>
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<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ships and boats</td>
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<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemicals and compounds</td>
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<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco and pipes</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and lodging</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textiles</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal substances</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable substances</td>
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<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mineral substances</td>
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<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General/unspecified</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refuse matters</td>
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<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unoccupied</td>
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<td>39.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>39,811</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Format and content of the registers

The Medway Union workhouse admission and discharge register is contained in a landscape format book.31 Each double-page spread of the register was divided into columns and was devoted to admissions and discharges for a particular week. From April 1876, 26 columns were available for information on admissions; the first seven were headed as follows: ‘Day of the month’; ‘Day of the week’; ‘Next meal after admission; name’; ‘Calling, if any’; ‘Religious persuasion’; ‘When born’. The next 11 columns were numbered 1 to 9, with 4a
and 8a, and were grouped under the heading ‘Class for Diet’. The remaining four columns on the left hand page were headed ‘No. affixed to the Pauper’s Clothes’; ‘Parish from which Admitted’; ‘By whose Order admitted’; ‘Date of the Order of Admission’. The first three columns on the right hand page related to admissions, and were headed ‘If born in the House Name of Parent’; ‘Observations on Condition at the time of Admission’; and ‘Any other General Remarks’. Eighteen columns were devoted to discharges. The first four were ‘Date’; ‘Day of the Week’; ‘Last Meal before Discharge’; ‘Name’. The next 11 were ‘Class for Diet’, as for admissions. The remaining three were ‘How Discharged and if by Order by whose Order’; ‘In case of death say dead’; ‘Observations on general Character and Behaviour in the Workhouse’. From 1 January 1878, two columns were added in the discharges section, one for ‘Age’ and one for ‘Parish’. The general standard of record keeping appears to be high, with almost all the required information being entered. The only items of information that were frequently missed were ‘No. affixed to the Pauper’s Clothes’ and ‘Observations on General Character and Behaviour in the Workhouse’.

At the head of each of the 11 ‘Class for Diet’ columns in the admissions section is the total number of paupers in each class at the beginning of the week. Following the list of paupers admitted during the week is the sum of those present at the beginning of the week and those admitted. Beneath this is the number of paupers in each class discharged during the week, derived from the totals in the discharges section. The bottom row, derived by subtracting the total number of discharges from the sum of those present at the beginning of the week and those admitted during the week, represents the total number of paupers present in each class at the end of the week. This figure is carried forward to the top of the next admissions page. Grand totals of paupers present at the beginning and end of the week appear to the right of the Class 9 column. The registers show evidence of auditing at approximately six monthly intervals.

Inmates enumerated in the census

Census enumerators’ books (hereafter CEBs), intended to collectively list every person present in the country, have formed the basis of many demographic studies. The great advantages of the CEBs include widespread availability, wide geographical coverage, and inclusion of all social classes, but their disadvantage is that they only provide a static snapshot of the population every ten years. In the current study, the snapshot provided by the 1881 census was used to complement the dynamic picture provided by the admission and discharge registers.

A total of 605 inmates were enumerated in the Medway Union Workhouse in the 1881 census, of whom 46.6 per cent were male and 53.4 per cent were female. Inmates aged less than 15 years constituted 33.4 per cent, those
between 15 and 59 years comprised 31.8 per cent, and those aged over 60 years accounted for 34.8 per cent. Pre- and post-1834 workhouses of East Anglia showed a bias to the young and old. In Hertfordshire in 1851, approximately one third of inmates were aged less than 15 years and about another third were over 60. In the fifth and sixth decades of the nineteenth century, only one sixth of the population of the Bedford workhouse was aged 60 or over. In two Hampshire workhouses (Winchester and Basingstoke) in 1851, 40-45 per cent of inmates were aged less than 15 years. About 20 per cent were aged at least 60, a figure in accord with the statement that in 1851 less than one in five workhouse inmates was aged 60 or more. About 40 per cent of Hampshire inmates were aged 15-59, compared with about 46 per cent of the population of the county. In Leicester in 1881, the young accounted for about 28 per cent and the old for about 38 per cent of inmates. In eight Kent workhouses in 1881, 34 per cent of inmates were under 15 years of age, and 36 per cent were 60 or over. Children constituted roughly similar percentages of the workhouse and general populations, but the aged represented a much greater percentage of the workhouse population than of the general population. This increased percentage of elderly inmates in the Medway workhouse in 1881 compared with workhouses earlier in the century is consistent with the suggestion that provision for groups other than the aged was made outside the workhouse as the nineteenth century progressed, and the observation that in 1891 inmates aged over 65 constituted one third of the national workhouse population.

**Total numbers of inmates in the Medway Union Workhouse.**

Figure 2 shows the total numbers of male and female inmates by week throughout the study period, derived from the weekly totals described above. The seasonal variations are striking, with the workhouse population reaching annual maximum levels between January and April, and minimum levels between August and October. Broadly similar seasonal variations in workhouse populations were seen in rural Hampshire in the fifth and sixth decades of the century. The current study shows that seasonal variations were not confined to agricultural districts. If the summer minimum of Medway inmates for each year from 1876-1881 is compared with the preceding winter maximum, reductions of between 15 and 22 per cent are apparent. Corresponding national figures vary between 10 and 17 per cent. This contrasts with earlier work which suggested that summer minima seldom fell below 90 per cent of winter levels in the mid-nineteenth century, and that even this differential had almost disappeared by the end of the century. Further work on seasonal fluctuations in workhouse occupancy, revealing considerable variation between summer and winter in the agricultural counties, is in preparation.

Total numbers of male and female inmates increased over the five year period, subject to short-term variations and the seasonal trends mentioned above. Numbers for the two sexes show similar trends with female inmates outnumbering males for almost the entire period under study. This finding is at variance with other workhouses in Kent in 1881 and Hertfordshire in 1851 and is discussed below.
Figure 2  Medway Union Workhouse male and female inmates, 1876–1881

Reasons for admission

Reasons for admission given in the register were assigned to summary categories, shown in Table 2. This table shows reasons for admission that accounted for at least 4 per cent of admissions of children or adult males or females.

The commonest reason for admission of children under 15 was destitution. Other common reasons were desertion, birth in the workhouse, illness/injury, and admission of a parent. Reason for admission was not stated for 10.0 per cent of children. Only 2.4 per cent of children were admitted as orphans. A category ‘returned from service’ comprised six girls who had been discharged ‘To service’ up to four months previously and one for whom no discharge was found. Of two boys ‘Returned from sea’, one had been discharged ‘To sea’ six weeks previously and one was recorded as ‘Taken into service’ nine days earlier. Clearly, attempts were made to place these children in work, but the reasons for their return to the workhouse are not known.

Table 2 also shows that for inmates of both sexes aged 15 years and over the commonest reasons for admission were illness/injury and destitution. The only other cause associated with more than 5 per cent of admissions was the mental
category. Caution must be exercised when interpreting reasons for admission. Some comments are ambiguous; for example, does ‘from asylum’ mean that the individual was cured or untreatable, and similarly does ‘from hospital’ mean that the individual was successfully treated or considered incurable? Should inmates admitted with a relative be considered as admitted with a relative, or classified by that relative’s reason for admission? Sickness or infirmity could predispose to poverty and destitution, so some inmates admitted as destitute could well have reached this condition as a result of illness. These reservations are minor, and the conclusion that the workhouse fulfilled an important function as a hospital is inescapable. Illness (including mental), and pregnancy accounted for 63.1 per cent of adult admissions. Destitution, desertion, birth in the workhouse and illness/injury were together responsible for 82.6 per cent of admissions of children.

### Matching admission entries with discharge and census information

Between 1 April 1876 and 3 April 1881, 3,771 admissions and 3,682 discharges were recorded. For the purposes of the current study, a record was created in a computer database for each admission, with a field for each column in the register. A second database was created for discharges, again with a field for each column. For each admission entry, a search was made in the discharge register for the discharge of the relevant inmate, and the data for the discharge was copied to the record in the admissions database. The standard search facilities of the database program were used to identify candidates for linkage,
but the final decision to link or not was made by the investigator. When admission and discharge records were linked, name was the most important field used. Trivial spelling differences were numerous and were ignored when linking records, as were the occasional instances of extra forenames and transposition of multiple forenames of an individual. Class for diet was used when necessary to provide support for links made and from 1878 age and parish were also used. Age on admission was calculated by subtracting the birth year given in the register from the year in which the admission took place. Age on discharge was copied from the register. From the calculated age on admission and the given age on discharge, the age difference was calculated as the mode of the following expression:

\[
\text{Age difference} = \text{age on discharge} - (\text{age on admission} + \text{number of completed years between admission and discharge}).
\]

Where the age difference between admission and discharge entries was greater than ten years, the two records were not considered to constitute a match.

If an admitted inmate was not found in the discharge register, a database of the 1881 CEBs for the Medway workhouse was searched, and where possible entries were matched on the basis of surname, forenames and age. Age difference was calculated in the same way as for discharged inmates, with the census date being used in place of the discharge date.49

Age differences were not available for the 986 admission entries matched with discharges that occurred before 1 January 1878, as age at discharge was not recorded. When discharges occurring after the end of 1877 were matched, problems with multiple inmates bearing the same name were not encountered, and age difference provided grounds for non-matching in only 18 cases. These 18 cases were excluded from subsequent analysis, but data from inmates discharged prior to 1878 was included, in order to extend the study period to five years. The very low failure rate of non-matching consequent upon a large age difference indicates that this approach did not seriously impair the integrity of the study.

For only 90 (2.4 per cent) admission entries were the criteria for a successful match not met. Ninety-seven per cent of the matches showed age differences of five years or less. A high level of internal consistency was thus maintained in the keeping of the registers and CEBs. Of the 3,682 discharges that took place during the period under investigation, 11.3 per cent were not matched with admissions. Even if the registers had been totally error-free, those discharges relating to pre-April 1876 admissions could not have been matched.

The 1881 CEBs list 605 inmates. Four hundred and thirty (71.1 per cent) were matched. Unmatched census entries were spread across the age range. In the current study, 24 children were admitted as orphans and were matched. Seven of these appear in the discharge register, with only four having durations of stay of less than 14 weeks. The remaining three stayed for 25, 62, and 104 weeks. Of the 17 orphans enumerated in the census, one had been present for
Figure 3  Durations of stay for discharged inmates

Source: Medway Union Workhouse admission and discharge registers, 1876–1881.
six days, three for 32 days, and the remainder for between 36 and 113 weeks. These findings support the suggestion that orphans became long-term residents in the workhouse.\textsuperscript{50}

**Duration of stay**

Figure 3 illustrates the durations of stay of inmates whose admissions and discharges were matched. Inmates most commonly spent up to two weeks in the workhouse, with exactly seven days being the commonest period. A similar situation prevailed between 1850 and 1857 in the Winchester Workhouse, with short durations of stay being the norm.\textsuperscript{51}

A population pyramid for the 3,760 admissions with age assigned is presented as Figure 4. This shows that up to the age of 9 years, male admissions outnumbered female, while between 10 and 34 years females outnumbered males. Subsequently, up to the age of 79 years, males outnumbered females.

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**Source:** Medway Union Workhouse admission and discharge registers, 1876–1881.
From 80 years, more females than males were admitted, presumably as a result of the greater longevity of women.

Duration of stay for matched inmates who stayed up to a year showed no major differences between the sexes. A population pyramid for inmates enumerated in the 1881 census but without admission entries during the study period, Figure 5, shows a preponderance of females, suggesting that most very long term inhabitants were female, and provides an explanation for the consistently predominantly female population of the workhouse. Goose suggests that counts of admissions of males were skewed by seasonal variation in availability of employment, and that long-term inmates are more likely to appear in the census. There were 175 enumerated inmates (78 male and 97 female) without admission entries, constituting 28.9 per cent of the total.
recorded in the census. The young (aged less than 15 years) and the aged (aged more than 70 years) represented 21.7 and 29.7 per cent of unmatched enumerated inmates respectively, suggesting that the young and the old constituted the majority of long-term inmates.

Occupations

The enriched version of the 1881 census was used for investigation of occupations.53 The classification is described by Woollard and is based on the Registrar General’s scheme for 1881.54 For all individuals enumerated in the census, the code assigned during the enrichment process was used without modification. Occupations listed in the admission register were assigned manually, using the same classification. Only individuals aged 15 years or more were included in the analysis of occupations. This analysis is presented in Table 1, which shows that the only occupational groups that contributed more than 5 per cent to the workhouse population at the time of the census were Domestic Service or Office, Workers and Dealers in Houses, Furniture and Decorations, Workers and Dealers in Dress, Workers and Dealers in General or Unspecified Commodities, and Unoccupied. Unsurprisingly for an area housing a dockyard and barracks, over 9.1 per cent of the population was involved in defence, while less than one per cent of the workhouse population fell into this group. Domestic Service accounted for 8.0 per cent of the total population, but 24.3 per cent of the workhouse population. Of the total of 3,191 domestics in the total population, over 92 per cent were female; in the workhouse, over 96 per cent of the 98 domestics were female. While domestic service was clearly an important source of female employment, the high percentage of workhouse inmates belonging to this group indicates that such employment failed in many cases to provide an adequate income and independence. Workers and Dealers in Ships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family type of inmate</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lone person</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother with child(ren)*</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father with child(ren)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both parents with child(ren)</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothers/sisters under 15 years</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband and wife</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/uncertain</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N 3,771

Note: *Women who were admitted alone and subsequently gave birth in the workhouse were classed as mother with child.

Source: Medway Union Workhouse admission and discharge registers, 1876–1881.
and Boats comprised over 4 per cent of the total population, but only one member of this group was present in the workhouse. Unsurprisingly, employment for these workers was secure in an area with a naval dockyard and a requirement for barges to transport heavy local commodities such as bricks. Workers and Dealers in Dress were over-represented in the workhouse, accounting for 12.4 and over 5.5 per cent of inmate and total populations respectively. In the workhouse, 72 per cent of the 50 inmates in this group were female, while in the general population, 75 per cent of 2,194 individuals were female. Forty-four per cent of the workhouse inmates were described as needlewomen or ‘sewing,’ compared with 14 per cent of those members of the general population in the Dress category. It appears that, like domestic work, needlework was a poorly paid occupation for women, which often failed to provide sufficient income for an independent existence. Workers and Dealers in General or Unspecified Commodities were also over-represented in the workhouse, accounting for 19.1 per cent of the workhouse population and 8.0 per cent of the general population. General labourers represented 64.4 per cent of this category in the general population and 96.1 per cent in the workhouse population. The Unoccupied category comprised over 38.8 per cent of the general population, but only 21.3 per cent of the workhouse population.

Family structure

The registers did not have explicit provision for recording family relationships of inmates, except for identification of the mothers of children born in the workhouse. However, groups of inmates admitted with the same surname could be confidently ascribed to family groups, and the reason for admission of children sometimes contained the information that an individual was admitted with an identified family member. Examination of the Medway registers does not support the statement that ‘The only distinction which can be established with some certainty is that between those entering with a spouse and those entering alone.’55 Seven family types were identified, as listed in Table 3. A group was identified as a mother with children if the woman was over 16 years old, and was at least 15 years older than the oldest child admitted with her. A corresponding rule was adopted for groups consisting of father and children. Groups consisting of mother, father and children were identified by the presence of a man and a woman, each aged over 16 years and each at least 15 years older than the oldest child admitted with them. Examples of the other/uncertain category include groups of brothers and sisters some of whom were over 15 years of age, and groups containing adults of different sexes with the same surname but an age difference great enough to cast doubt on the assumption that they were husband and wife.

Table 3 shows that 61.7 per cent of admissions were of lone people. The next most common category was that of mothers with children, contributing 25.9 per cent. The remaining categories together contributed a total of less than 13 per cent. In only two instances was there evidence of family members entering at different times. Fanny Archer entered with her child, aged less than one year, to be followed five days later by two children aged four and ten years with the surname Archer. The reason for admission of these two children was ‘Mother
in house.’ In another case, Elizabeth Duffell was admitted with three children aged between one and 11 years, to be followed two weeks later by 11 year-old Susan Duffell, admitted because ‘Mother in workhouse.’ No other admission entries made reference to previously admitted family members. The 1851 CEBs for six Hertfordshire workhouses, selected because family groups were readily identifiable, list a total of 87 families (defined as one or both parents with child (ren)). In only 14 cases were both parents present. Of the remaining 73 families, nine were headed by a widower. Although the numbers in the study on Hertfordshire and the present work are derived differently, it is clear that in both instances the commonest family group was a woman with children.

**Birth in the workhouse**

A total of 121 births (including one pair of twins, classed as two births) were recorded in the admission register during the study period. The admissions of all but six of the mothers were identified in the register. Four of these six mothers gave birth between April and July 1876 and were probably admitted before the start of the study period. The remaining two gave birth in July 1879 and September 1880, and their names were illegible in the ‘name of parent’ column.

These six births were excluded from the analysis, leaving a total of 115 births and 114 admissions of pregnant women (making allowance for the mother of

**Table 4 Durations of pre-and post-natal periods spent in the workhouse**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration (days)</th>
<th>Pre-natal stay (per cent)</th>
<th>Post-natal stay (per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0–1</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–7</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8–14</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15–21</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22–28</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29–35</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36–42</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43–49</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–313</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>114*</td>
<td>94*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** *Fourteen children died in the workhouse, so their mothers are excluded from the post-natal stay column. Six children were enumerated as inmates with their mothers in the census, and are also excluded.*

**Source:** Medway Union Workhouse admission and discharge registers, 1876–1881.
twins). Table 4 shows that 28.9 per cent of admissions of pregnant women occurred on the day of the birth or the day before and 39.5 per cent occurred within a week of the birth. Mothers appeared to be in no hurry to leave the workhouse after the birth, with none leaving less than 11 days after the birth (Table 4). 75.5 per cent of discharges took place when the children were between 11 and 28 days old. The period normally spent in lying-in hospitals at this time was between one and two weeks. The maximum stay after the birth was 313 days. Fourteen children who were born in the workhouse died there, eight of them in the first fortnight.

Six mothers of children born in the workhouse were enumerated there with their children in the 1881 census. One child was born on 3 April 1881 (the day prior to census night), and the ages of the others varied between one and 100 weeks. Six women gave birth in the workhouse on more than one occasion. Five of these gave birth to two children and the third gave birth on three occasions. Most women giving birth in the workhouse were young, with 32.5 per cent aged between 21 and 25 years, while the 16-20 and 26-30 years age groups each represented another 22.8 per cent. The children who died in the workhouse were mainly those of younger mothers, 46 per cent of the mothers being 17-20 years old. It is probable these young mothers were giving birth for the first time, and that the children were illegitimate. Firstborn children and the children of unmarried mothers faced a greater risk of early death.

Death in the workhouse

Numbers of deaths in the Medway workhouse and in the registration district for the complete years 1876–1881 are contained in the *Annual reports of the Registrar General*. During this period there were 6,868 deaths in the Medway registration district. Of this total, 574 (8.4 per cent) occurred in the workhouse. This is in accord with the observation that, for much of the nineteenth century, death in the workhouse was rare, accounting for less than one in ten of all deaths. Between 1876 and 1881, the national percentage of deaths occurring in workhouses varied from 5.8 to 7.0 per cent.

During the five year study period, 480 deaths were recorded in the discharge register, representing 13.0 per cent of the 3,682 discharges. Three hundred and sixty three of these deaths, or 75.6 per cent, were successfully matched with admissions, and only these will be examined further. Age at death was calculated as age at admission plus the number of completed years between admission and death. This approach was adopted because it allowed a uniform method to be used for deaths without an age at death recorded in the discharge register and for those deaths occurring after 1 January 1878, for which age at discharge was recorded. Furthermore, it can be argued that a figure based on age at admission, which was probably given by the inmate, is likely to be more reliable than one based on age obtained from other sources after death.

Fifty deaths (13.8 per cent) were of children aged less than 15 years. Of the remaining 313 deaths, 173 were of males and 140 were of females. A population pyramid for deaths of inmates aged more than 15 years is presented in Figure
6. Numbers of male deaths exceed or approximate to female deaths across almost all age groups, although female deaths outnumbered male in the 26-30 and 81-85 groups.

Reasons for admission of inmates who died in the workhouse are summarised in Table 2. Unfortunately, the discharge registers do not give information about the cause of death. The two commonest reasons for admission of inmates who died aged less than 15 years were birth and destitution, each accounting for 28.9 per cent. Illness/injury accounted for 13.3 per cent. Table 2 indicates that no single reason for admission showed an association with subsequent death in the workhouse for inmates aged less than 15 years. For inmates aged 15 years and over, illness/injury was by far the commonest reason for admission of inmates who subsequently died, contributing 85.1 per cent for males and 80.6 per cent for females. These figures are substantially greater than the 62.2 per cent and 43.7 per cent for admitted inmates. Destitution, at 9.7 per cent for males and 11.3 per cent for females, was the next most common reason.
Conclusions

Throughout the study period, variations in numbers of paupers in the Medway workhouse reflected the national variations. Total numbers increased over the period, and superimposed on this trend were seasonal variations whereby numbers increased during the winter months. National numbers of outdoor paupers showed similar but less marked trends, and the ratio of outdoor to indoor paupers declined, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Board.

No single definitive explanation can be given for the predominance of females over males in this workhouse. Reasons cited for the general predominance of men in workhouse populations, particularly in agricultural counties, include the ineligibility of single men for outdoor relief on the grounds of family sickness, the preference of employers to employ married rather than single men, the vulnerability of manual workers to physical infirmity or injury, and lack of family support for elderly male family members.63 Such considerations could well have applied in the Medway area, but barracks and a Royal Naval Dockyard were situated here, and would have provided ample male employment. Furthermore, it is possible that women entered the workhouse when their husbands went to sea or were posted away. In the absence of more information on reasons for admission, this theory can neither be proved nor refuted. Outdoor relief to the families of soldiers was permitted, and it is possible that the servicemen’s wives entered the workhouse in an attempt to force the Guardians to send them to join their husbands.64 In any case, if married servicemen were posted abroad, their wives could well encounter hardship and, if they could not find casual employment, be forced to enter the workhouse. It is of interest that although the population of the workhouse was at all times predominantly female, most admissions were of males, a reflection of gender differences in average length of workhouse residence.

Most inmates stayed in the workhouse for short periods, most commonly a week, and stays in excess of three months were unusual. Inmates enumerated in the census had in many cases been in the workhouse for longer periods, more than a quarter having no admission entries during the study period. The fact that most of the enumerated inmates without admission entries were female supports the view that most very long term inmates were female, and provides an explanation for a predominantly female workhouse population in the face of more male than female admissions. Durations of stay up to a year did not vary significantly between the sexes.

Assessment of the occupations given in the admission register confirms the low social status of most of the inmates. Categories markedly over-represented in the workhouse compared with the general population were domestic service, dress (both predominantly female) and workers with unspecified commodities (predominantly male labourers). The seasonal pattern in the numbers of labourers admitted to the workhouse is not unexpected, as many labourers would have worked outdoors in agriculture or brickmaking. In the
Medway area brickmakers’ labourers could often fall back on agricultural work. However, both these occupations were seasonal.

Most admissions (61 per cent) were of lone people. The commonest family group to be admitted to this workhouse was mother with child(ren). This may be attributed to the husbands being members of the forces who were posted away.

For pregnant women, admission late in pregnancy was the rule. This may reflect a general fear of ‘the house,’ reluctance to be separated from friends and family, a need to continue working (paid or unpaid), or other reasons. In some cases, labour may have started unexpectedly. Post-natal stays were longer than pre-natal, with mothers and babies remaining at least 11 days, reflecting the normal ‘lying-in period’. Notwithstanding the apparent wish of women to delay entering the workhouse for as long as possible, six women returned to the workhouse for subsequent births. The fact that younger mothers gave birth in the workhouse is consistent with the institution’s role as a maternity hospital. The high percentage of inmates admitted as ill or injured is consistent with the institution’s function as a hospital. This work supports the view that ‘The workhouse provided a home for the aged, the decrepit and the geriatric and a hospital for those who were temporarily or chronically sick.’ Children were also a significant group in the workhouse population. The widely held belief that the Victorian poor dreaded death in the workhouse and the consequent possibility of a pauper’s funeral may well be based in fact, but the reality appears to be that workhouse deaths were a rare occurrence.

Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to Professor Nigel Goose and the LPS Board for valuable comments on drafts of this article.

NOTES

5. Digby, Pauper palaces, 13.
6. The Poor Law authorities never defined the term ‘able-bodied’. It has been suggested that the term was used to describe people aged 15 years and over who could work to support themselves: see Digby, Pauper palaces, 110, 144.
10. Digby, Pauper palaces, 118.
13. Digby, Pauper palaces, 151.
14. Williams, From pauperism to poverty, 64-5.
15. Digby, Pauper palaces, 112.
29. Calculated from Schürer and Woolard, 1881 Census of Great Britain.
30. Calculated from 1881 Census Of Great Britain, Vol III. Ages, condition as to marriage and birthplaces of the people. BPP 1883, LXX, 5.
31. As no independent source is available for checking the information, it was decided to assess internal consistency between the admission register, discharge register and CEBs. The CEBs, listing inmates who were in the workhouse on 3 April 1881, were completed from information provided by workhouse staff, and cannot therefore be considered independent. The consistently good layout and handwriting of the registers and CEBs support the view that they are reliable sources of information.
32. Unfortunately, no reference to the diet table of the workhouse was found in the Medway Archives catalogue.
33. National index to 1881 British Census and 1881 British Census, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints [CD-ROM] (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1999). This database lists 606 inmates, but inspection of the CEBs shows that one entry was crossed out.
34. Digby, Pauper palaces, 37.
41. Thomson, ‘Workhouse to nursing home’, 47.
43. Poor rates and pauperism – comparative statement of pauperism, BPP 1877, LXX, 475–577; Poor rates and pauperism – comparative statement of pauperism, BPP 1878-9, LX, 393–494; Poor rates...
and pauperism – comparative statement of pauperism, BPP 1881, LXXVIII, 409-512


47. As a consequence of overcrowding in lunatic asylums, a provision of 1862 allowed chronic lunatics to remain in the workhouse, Digby, Pauper palaces, 172.

48. Kidd, State, society and the poor, 41

49. The database used was National Index to 1881 British census and 1881 British census.

50. Hinde and Turnbull, ‘Two Hampshire workhouses’, 48

51. Hinde and Turnbull, ‘Two Hampshire workhouses’, 43

52. Goose, ‘Workhouse populations in the mid-nineteenth century’, 55; Jackson, ‘Kent workhouse populations’, 64


57. The work of Goose is based on the CEBs. The present work is based on admission registers. The arrangement of the Medway CEBs did not facilitate identification of family groups. The layout of the register, with admission of parents and children together, allowed family groups to be identified with some confidence.


62. Thirty-ninth annual report of the Registrar-General, abstracts of marriages, births and deaths 1876, 99; Fortieth annual report of the Registrar-General, abstracts of marriages, births and deaths 1877, 99; Forty-first Annual Report of the Registrar-General, abstracts of marriages, births and deaths 1878, 99; Forty-second annual report of the Registrar-General, abstracts of marriages, births and deaths 1879; Forty-third annual report of the Registrar-General, abstracts of marriages, births and deaths 1880, 99; Forty-fourth annual report of the Registrar-General, abstracts of marriages, births and deaths, 93.


64. Hinde and Turnbull, ‘Two Hampshire workhouses’, 47

65. Preston, Industrial Medway, 92.

66. Engels, Poverty and poor law reform, 34.

67. Fear of death ‘on the parish’ was exacerbated by the 1832 Anatomy Act, which allowed the dissection of unclaimed pauper corpses: see P.C. Jupp and C. Gittings, Death in England (Manchester, 1999), 221.
CAUSES OF DEATH IN A RURAL SOUTH-WEST LANCASHIRE COMMUNITY IN THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

John Virgoe

John Virgoe, a retired chartered geologist, gained a PhD from Liverpool University for a thesis on rural south-west Lancashire in the eighteenth century, from which this article is drawn.

Introduction

From May 1789 until 1801 the parish register of St Cuthbert’s Church, North Meols in Lancashire, records both cause of death and age at death of a large proportion of individuals buried in the parish. A brief summary of this medical information was made by F. J. Baildon, a Southport doctor, in the introduction to the transcribed parish register. This article examines this information in greater detail and discusses its significance in the context of the location of North Meols, other sources of information on causes of death, medical knowledge of the period and the contribution which it makes to late eighteenth century mortality and medical understanding in rural north-west England. It is thought that Lancashire in the period 1760–1840 had higher death rates than other comparable counties not only in the urban, industrialising areas but also in the rural communities. Five diseases were said to be important in the county— influenza, typhus, typhoid, putrid fever and whooping cough. 1

The parish church of St. Cuthbert’s is located some 18 miles north of Liverpool and about 12 miles south west of Preston (see Figure 1). Today it is part of the Chuchtown district of Southport, but in the eighteenth century Southport did not exist. The urban area of modern Southport encompasses virtually the entire area of the historic North Meols parish from Crossens in the north to Ainsdale in the south. North Meols was typical of many Lancashire parishes, covering a large area and made up of more than one administrative township. North Meols contained two townships, Birkdale and North Meols itself. Birkdale was a dispersed township with house scattered over the area, but no centre. There were numerous other minor centres of population, such as Marshside, Rowe Lane, Banks, Blowick (both higher and lower), Crossens, and Little London. These are all recorded in the parish registers. Little London could cause confusion to any one not familiar with the area, since it is often referred to in the registers as London. There was a semblance of a village centre at North Meols, recorded in the registers as Churchtown and still known by that name today. An excellent picture of the parish is portrayed in William Yates map of Lancashire, date 1786 (Figure 2). The parish formed a long coastal strip, about
nine miles in length, but at its widest it was only about two and a half miles from the shore and on average about half this width. It was a low-lying area, at its highest being only about ten metres above sea level (about 33 feet) and most of the parish was well below this elevation. The total land area was 10,680 acres, but there was an extensive foreshore which at low water extended the area of the parish to nearly 25,000 acres. Historically, North Meols has been at the mercy of the sea and a major incursion of the sea occurred in 1720 when about 5,000 acres, nearly half the area of permanent dry land in the parish, were flooded. The boundary between land and sea is almost imperceptible and the coastline has continually altered, both due to natural causes and the
intervention of man, through the building of banks along the shore. The northern part of the parish was bounded on its inland side by Martin Mere, once the largest lake in Lancashire until a major effort was undertaken to reclaim the Mere at the beginning of the eighteenth century. This was only partially successful, and a further attempt was made in the early 1780s for which Thomas Eccleston of Scarisbrick was awarded a gold medal of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce in 1786. On Yates’ map Martin Mere is described as ‘dry in the summer season’. At its lowest the reclaimed land of Martin Mere is below sea level and even today the Mere would rapidly revert to wetland if the pumps at the pumping station at Crossens were turned off. Along part of the shore was a large area of sand dunes and on the inland side of the parish an extensive stretch of peat bog, known locally as mosses. Although North Meols was fairly close to Liverpool and Preston, it could still be reasonably described as remote in the later part of the eighteenth century. The road between Liverpool and Preston went through Ormskirk, some six miles to the south east. North Meols was on the road to nowhere, and access was also impeded by the mosses, which were still in the process of being drained and turned into the top quality agricultural land they constitute today.
In 1725 according to Bishop Gastrell there were about 200 families in the parish giving a population of about 1,000 to 1,200. By 1801 the population had increased to 2,096 in 327 inhabited houses. Parish registers survive from 1594 and have been published in two volumes by the Lancashire Parish Register Society. The originals are still held by the church, which makes general access difficult. However, the transcription was carried out by Frank Cheetham (1872–1936), a well-known local historian, with an impressive list of historical publications, and is probably reasonably accurate. They record an excess of baptisms over burials, which between 1701 and 1801 amounted to an aggregate increase of 1,798 persons. Simplistically, this would more than account for the growth in population and allow for some migration away from the parish into the growing Lancashire towns. The situation is complicated however, by the nature of Lancashire parishes, which are large, often comprising several townships, so that it is relatively common for major life events such as baptisms, weddings and funerals to take place in a neighbouring parish church if this is closer than one’s own parish church. That this is the case in North Meols is evident from the frequent recording of the burial of individuals from neighbouring parishes and townships.

A fundamental change in the area occurred at the end of the period under consideration here with the beginnings of the development of Southport as a leisure resort during the 1790s, the name first being used in 1798. Prior to this change the seaside communities had lived a unique type of existence, being major centres for smuggling in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, fishing communities, which developed their own techniques for fishing along the shore, and managing the sand dunes as important rabbit warrens.

North Meols church is an old foundation, the first recorded rector being appointed in 1178. The church was completely rebuilt in the eighteenth century, further enlarged and modified in 1860 and enlarged and changed again in 1908–09. South-west Lancashire is an area where many of the gentry and common people continued to follow the Catholic religion after the Reformation, but in North Meols there were only three Catholics recorded in 1767. This contrasts with neighbouring Scarisbrick, where over 20 per cent of the population were Catholics. John Baldwin became rector in 1748, changed his name to Rigbye (his wife’s maiden name) in 1789, and remained in office until his death in 1793, when he was succeeded by Gilbert Ford who was the incumbent for over 40 years, dying in 1835. The parsonage at Crossens was in a poor state of repair, and the rector was not usually resident in the parish until a new parsonage was built in the 1830s, most of the parish work being done by a resident curate who lived in the parsonage. John Mawdesley, the son of a husbandman from Parbold, a Lancashire township about 12 miles from North Meols, became curate in 1780 and remained in office until his death in 1814. He is considered to have made most of the entries in the parish register between 1778 and 1813. The period when the registers record medical information does not, therefore, coincide with the incumbency of any particular individual. The recording of such
information started suddenly, quickly reached a peak when the vast majority of burial records gave a cause of death and then faded away over a period two or three years. This pattern is clearly shown in Figure 3. Why or by whom this information was initiated remains a mystery. Mawdesley’s background does not suggest that he had any particular knowledge of medical matters, and if he was responsible, why did he not start much earlier during his curacy? If he was responsible why did he suddenly stop? It is possible that the procedure may have been initiated by a churchwarden with a medical background, but unfortunately no churchwardens’ records survive before 1813.

Establishing causes of death prior to 1837

Information on the causes of death nationally prior to the introduction of general registration in 1837 is patchy. An early attempt to collect systematic information on the subject was initiated in the late sixteenth century following an outbreak of plague in London in 1592, when what became known as the London Bills of Mortality were started. Early recordings were spasmodic, but in 1603 they were put on a more regular footing with weekly accounts of burials and christenings printed on Thursdays, with an annual summary published each year on the last Thursday before Christmas. The information on causes of death was provided by searchers, elderly women of the various parishes who were called out to examine the corpses and report to the parish clerk, who in turn forwarded the information. No particular medical skill was involved, and many of the causes given were a matter of common sense, such as aborted or still born, fits, convulsions, fever, cough, old age (usually over 60), various accidents and consumption (usually indicated by emaciation).
Often the searchers reported the opinions of relatives, friends or a physician if one had been involved with the deceased. Although the information in the Bills of Mortality was intended to provide a measure of whether the population was increasing or decreasing and furnish data on the state of health of the metropolis, they were little used until John Graunt (1620–1674) made the first real effort to collect medical statistics from them, to analyse his results and to relate them to social factors—the first attempt to do so. The London Bills of Mortality, however, have been said by some to be worthless and their advantages and shortcomings are briefly summarised by Landers.

In 1750 Thomas Short, a physician from Yorkshire, set out to establish which trades, situations and locations were best suited for a long life. His interest in population questions may have arisen from his perception that Graunt’s work was based on the metropolis and could not therefore provide a sound basis for considering either the nation as a whole or the rural areas which Short considered to offer a superior way of life. He used data from the Bills of Mortality as well as parish registers from 160 different parishes. The latter only provided him with numbers of burial and baptisms, the ratio between which he used to decide whether the population was rising and therefore to infer whether the place was a healthy one or not. This approach is clearly simplistic and takes no account of other important factors such as migration. Short’s work has been criticised on a number of grounds, being considered as colourless and unimpressive as well as lacking novelty.

By the eighteenth century Bills of Mortality were being produced by a number of other towns, including Norwich, Northampton, Carlisle, Liverpool, Carlisle, Chester and others in England, as well as some towns abroad. At the same time, there was increasing criticism of the way in which the London Bills were kept and proposals for improvements in the ways that information should be recorded. This was prompted to a degree by the need to have better information for the calculation of life insurance and annuity premiums by a growing industry, and a growing awareness of the effects of different lifestyles, occupations, diet, relaxations, sex, and even the air that was breathed upon life expectancy. Linked to these changes was an increased consciousness that better information was required on the population make up and its health and that some other countries had better reporting systems. This was ultimately to lead to the first census of 1801 and general registration in 1837. In the meantime, these changes in attitude did not affect the rural areas, where the only recording system was the parish registers.

Although parish registers are the major source of recorded deaths in the pre-registration period, the amount of detail they provide on any individual is highly variable according to the whim of the recorder. The basic information they record is the name of the deceased and the date of burial. Often they may contain the place of residence and next of kin (wife, husband, father, mother, son or daughter). Less frequently they include the occupation and age of the deceased and, less frequently still, the cause of death. This randomly recorded information cannot be located easily by a programmed search of parish registers (unless one systematically trawls through every register for the country).
but is most likely to be found by chance when using registers for another
purpose. Mary Dobson, in her study of death and disease in Kent, Sussex and
Essex, found that only six parish registers out of the 600 she examined
recorded causes of death for any length of time, although the vicar of Newhe-
ven, Sussex, in 1804 thought 'it no bad plan to mention the disorder of each
that dies as it will greatly assist any medical person who attends the village.'17
Therefore reports on such chance finds of unusual information such as cause of
death is of value even if it only makes known its existence to other researchers.
This is of particular value when it comes from a rural area, where Bills of
Mortality do not exist, and where the health of the population may be consid-
erably different to those living in the cramped and often unsanitary conditions
in the urban areas. An analysis of their contents enables comparisons between
different localities to be made. Other parishes from which information has been
published include Whitehaven in Cumbria.18 The so-called Dade Registers
provide a further source for examining a wide-range of topics including
further information on causes of death.19 These registers originated from the
initiative of William Dade, who introduced a new and more detailed format in
1770 for the registers of St Helen Stonegate, York. The use of registers in a
similar format was extended by a directive of Archbishop Markham of York in
1777, and the practise was carried out mainly in the dioceses of Chester and
York, but was by no means universal. Registers in the Dade format in general
only exist for the period 1777 to 1812.

In addition to the problem of paucity of information there is also the question
of its usefulness. The vast number of terms used to describe causes of death
were both vague and imprecise and often described not a pathological condi-
tion, but merely symptoms from which no inference can be drawn.20 Although
in a few cases, such as smallpox, the diagnosis is thought to be reasonably
certain, doubt has even been raised in this instance suggesting that confusion
between smallpox, measles and scarlet fever was possible.21

Causes of death in North Meols

In 1787 and 1788 combined only eight causes of death were given in the North
Meols burial register, all of whom were drowned. Five of these were listed as 'a
drowned man' with no name given and were presumably of corpses that were
recovered from the sea. Then from 12 May 1789 onwards most burials give a
cause of death, so that from 1 January 1790 until 31 December 1798 nearly 90
per cent of all burials have a cause of death given. In the following three years
the percentage drops off. In 1799 only 75 per cent have a cause given, in 1800
this had decreased to 60.3 per cent and in 1801 only 34.5 per cent. In 1802 and
1803 there were only seven causes of death recorded. Three of these were
drowned men and two others were accidents. One was a man from Liverpool
killed when loading a balk and the second, a 16 year old youth, was killed by a
gun. Thereafter until 1810 only accidents were noted as cause of death. It
therefore seems that apart from 1789 until 1801, causes of death were only
recorded when the cause was not a natural one. In the period which is consid-
ered in this article, 12 May 1789 to 31 December 1800, there were 442 burials
recorded of which a cause of death was given for 374 individuals (84.6 per cent). This is not a large sample, but it will be shown that useful information can be extracted from it. Because of the high proportion for which a cause is given, it is also meaningful to examine those burials for which no cause is given, since these were exceptional and one can suspect that there should be a reason for such exceptions. Of the 69 burials for which no cause of death is given, 38 (55 per cent) were infants below the age of one year, a further six (8.6 per cent) were under three years old and 11 (15.9 per cent) were over 60. The age groups for which no cause of death is given are therefore mainly those groups which would be most expected to have a high mortality rate, namely, the very young and the elderly. Thus only 14 burials might be considered to be genuine cases of death of individuals for whom no indication of the cause of death was given.

Of the burials 211 (47.7 per cent) were females and 231 (52.3 per cent) were males. This is a slightly unusual ratio, there being, on average about 104 men born for every 100 females and all must die, whereas the North Meols figure is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Within North Meols parish</th>
<th>Outside North Meols parish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banks</td>
<td>Ainsdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birkdale</td>
<td>Bretherton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blowick</td>
<td>Burscough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churchtown</td>
<td>Croston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cop End</td>
<td>Eccleston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossens</td>
<td>Great Crosby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heys</td>
<td>Halsall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Blowick</td>
<td>Hesketh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little London</td>
<td>Hindley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>Holmswood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshside</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mearside</td>
<td>Newburgh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moss Lane</td>
<td>Ormskirk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Meols</td>
<td>Preston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowe lane</td>
<td>Scarisbrick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poolside</td>
<td>Tarleton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Haws</td>
<td>Upholland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tulketh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warrington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
over 109. However, very little significance can be ascribed to this statistic, since the local picture is complicated by the burial of unknown individuals who were drowned and also by the burial of others from outside the parish.

Of the 442 burials recorded during the period under examination, places of residence were given for all but 15 individuals, eight of whom were unnamed and died by drowning. The places where the deceased came from is summarised in Table 1. There were 57 individuals (12.9 per cent of the total) who came from outside the parish, 47 of whom were recorded as paying double dues. The largest number (17) of those from outside the parish were from neighbouring Scarisbrick, the second highest number (9) were from more distant Liverpool. All 57 were from south Lancashire townships. Although the majority were from townships adjacent to or close to North Meols and therefore demonstrate the operation of convenience, some were from surprisingly distant townships such as Warrington and Hindley.

The presumed ages at burial are given for 95 per cent of all burials. Since there were also a number of burials for bodies recovered from the sea for whom no details were known, this figure is higher than 95 per cent for those from the parish. The distribution of recorded age at death is shown in Table 2.

### Table 2  Age at death recorded in the parish register (percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not given</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0–1</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–9</td>
<td>7.6</td>
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<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10–19</td>
<td>6.6</td>
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<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–29</td>
<td>9.5</td>
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<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–39</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–49</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60–69</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70–79</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 80</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Infant deaths (age 0–1) constituted 25.6 per cent of the total, and 8.8 per cent more died before the age of 5. If these are excluded the mean age at death was 43.3 years for females and 44.5 years for males. The oldest age at death recorded was a 91 year old woman, and the youngest a child who only lived half an hour. There is little difference between the pattern for males and females. There is considerable detail concerning the ages of those who died below the age of two years. Nine were less than one day old. A further ten died at one week old or less. Another 17 did not live more than one month and 53 more did not live beyond a year. Of those who enjoyed their first birthday, 24 did not live to see a second. Most of those that did not live a week were not baptised but, surprisingly, three of those that only lived a few hours were.

An assessment of the accuracy of the ages at death as given in the burial register was made as follows. A search was made in the baptismal register for all the 420 individuals whose age at death was recorded, and 240 were found, with varying degrees of confidence. For many there was a high degree of confidence since the names of both parents were given in both registers. This was obviously most likely for younger people, although such cases existed for those who died up to the age of 42. A comparison of the ages given in the burial register and computed from the two registers showed no difference in 184 cases (76.7 per cent). Of the remainder, 44 (18.3 per cent) were within plus or minus one year which, allowing for delays in baptism after birth and delays between death and burial, is within acceptable error. Only six cases showed a discrepancy greater than two years, of whom four were over 70 years of age on either basis and the greatest difference was eight years for a man whose age was given as 77 or 85 years. On this basis it would seem that the ages at death as given in the burial register are remarkably accurate.

### Table 3 Causes of death and numbers listed in the registers 1789–1800

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Abortion</th>
<th>Ague</th>
<th>Asthma</th>
<th>Burned</th>
<th>Childbed</th>
<th>Chinkcough</th>
<th>Colic</th>
<th>Consumption</th>
<th>Convulsions</th>
<th>Decay of nature</th>
<th>Decay of old age</th>
<th>Decline</th>
<th>Dropsey</th>
<th>Drowned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Falls</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>39</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fits</td>
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<td>2</td>
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Infant deaths (age 0–1) constituted 25.6 per cent of the total, and 8.8 per cent more died before the age of 5. If these are excluded the mean age at death was 43.3 years for females and 44.5 years for males. The oldest age at death recorded was a 91 year old woman, and the youngest a child who only lived half an hour. There is little difference between the pattern for males and females. There is considerable detail concerning the ages of those who died below the age of two years. Nine were less than one day old. A further ten died at one week old or less. Another 17 did not live more than one month and 53 more did not live beyond a year. Of those who enjoyed their first birthday, 24 did not live to see a second. Most of those that did not live a week were not baptised but, surprisingly, three of those that only lived a few hours were.

An assessment of the accuracy of the ages at death as given in the burial register was made as follows. A search was made in the baptismal register for all the 420 individuals whose age at death was recorded, and 240 were found, with varying degrees of confidence. For many there was a high degree of confidence since the names of both parents were given in both registers. This was obviously most likely for younger people, although such cases existed for those who died up to the age of 42. A comparison of the ages given in the burial register and computed from the two registers showed no difference in 184 cases (76.7 per cent). Of the remainder, 44 (18.3 per cent) were within plus or minus one year which, allowing for delays in baptism after birth and delays between death and burial, is within acceptable error. Only six cases showed a discrepancy greater than two years, of whom four were over 70 years of age on either basis and the greatest difference was eight years for a man whose age was given as 77 or 85 years. On this basis it would seem that the ages at death as given in the burial register are remarkably accurate.
There are 42 causes of death recorded in the North Meols burial register for the period under consideration. These are listed in Table 3. This table gives the full details of the causes, with the exception of accidents, which are given in more detail in the registers, the falls for example, being two from carts and one from a horse, and one of the drownings being described as in the canal. The six deaths from pox are almost certainly smallpox. It is noteworthy that for one death, that of a 16 week old boy, the cause is described as ‘unknown’. This is the only acknowledgement of ignorance of the cause, but it does suggest that some consideration had been given to the cause, despite the fact that no cause is given for 68 other deaths. The number of causes in this list can be reduced to 37 by combination without losing precision: for example, decay of nature, decay and decline could be simply reduced to decline, but they are given in detail at this stage for completeness.

A number of the supposed causes of death given do not truly identify the cause of death, but merely indicate a symptom. Of these, the commonest (and the second most common cause overall) is fever, which only indicates that the cause of death was associated with a high temperature and probably an infectious condition. Other causes of death which describe symptoms but are not diagnostic of a specific condition include white swelling, throat swelling, fits, convulsions and sickness. Causes of death which were usually identified accurately in the eighteenth century include smallpox, measles, and whooping cough (chinkcough).

The causes of death are broken down by age group in Table 4. The commonest causes of death are summarised in Table 5 and will be considered in turn. By far the commonest cause listed was ‘weakness’, accounting for nearly one in four of those for whom a cause is given and over 20 per cent of all deaths. This term is of little medical significance, but it would seem to be most appropriate to apply it to the most vulnerable, namely the very young and the elderly. An examination of the age distribution to whom this term was applied only partly bears this out. Although a third of those to whom this cause was ascribed were below ten years of age (of whom over two thirds were babies less than two years old) and 28 per cent were over 60 years old, the largest group were between 11 and 60 years old. The term was therefore widely used across the age spectrum, suggesting that people to whom the term was applied died from a number of different causes which were not clearly identifiable but which left them in a weakened condition. Such causes could be, for example, malnutrition or a debilitating disease such as consumption. It is also interesting to consider what was considered to be old age. Of those listed as dying of old age, all except one were over 70 and over half were over 80. The exception, strangely, was only 53 years old.

The second most common cause of death was ascribed to fever, 72 cases being described simply as ‘fever’ and two as ‘nervous fever’. Deaths due to fever did not show any bias towards a particular age group, being distributed across the age spectrum. This term could be ascribed to a number of medical conditions, and its general use is perhaps symptomatic of the ignorance of disease in the
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<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not given</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>68</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals: 25  112  37  28  26  42  28  27  26  35  32  24  442

44
late eighteenth century. It could possibly be linked to malaria, only one case of 
ague, which could be malaria, having been reported. This is at a time when a 
study of the geography of disease in Kent, Sussex and Essex suggested that 
places below 50 feet above sea level, and especially saline and marshland areas, 
were much more unhealthy places than uplands, a significant factor being 
mosquitos and their involvement in malaria.25 Geographically, this description 
fits North Meols, but there is less evidence that it was a particularly unhealthy 
place, and any involvement with malaria can only be guessed at from the 
evidence available. The breakdown of deaths stated to be due to fever is shown 
in Table 6. It can be seen that such deaths occurred in every year with a greater 
tendency to occur in the winter months and not in summer. There was an 
increase in death due to fever in 1797 when the second quarter had four more 
deaths than the first and the fourth quarter was the highest. This trend continued 
into 1798 with a high number of deaths in the first quarter which were claimed 
to be due to fever. This pattern suggests that the increase during these six 
months was probably due to an outbreak of an unidentified infectious disease.

Deaths from smallpox were only recorded amongst children, the oldest victim 
being 15 years old. This may be because adults susceptible to the disease had 
already survived it in childhood and were therefore immune to a second attack 
later in life. Smallpox was not an endemic disease in the neighbourhood, but 
was probably introduced from outside and occurred in spasmodic outbreaks. 
There were single, isolated deaths due to smallpox in March 1792 and September 
1794, both of the children dying coming from Liverpool, from where the 
disease probably was introduced. The main outbreak was between July 1795 
and March 1796, when 41 children died of the disease with a peak in the month 
of October. Smallpox undoubtedly was the cause of the higher than average 
number of deaths recorded in 1795. Three further deaths due to smallpox were 
recorded in the second half of 1800, possibly indicating a second outbreak, but 
due to the paucity of causes of death recorded at this time this cannot be 
confirmed. The first death recorded at this time was a child from Ormskirk,
suggesting that this may again indicate a possible origin, Ormskirk being on the road between Liverpool and Preston.

Consumption was probably endemic in the area, a few deaths being reported due to it in every year except 1791 and 1798. There was a slight increase in the number of reported deaths due to consumption in 1795 when 11 were reported compared to the average for the 11 year period of 3.4. Although consumption was given as a cause of death for ages ranging from babies less than two years old to one case in which the victim was over 80, it was mainly attributed those in their twenties, and females seem to have been more susceptible than males, 22 (59.5 per cent) of the deaths being those of females. Most deaths due to consumption were in the age range 10–60 (88 per cent of male deaths and 73 per cent of females) and the disease was most common between the ages of 10 and 21 for females and 21 and 30 for males. Baildon considered that that many

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Annual total</th>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Number of burials</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Annual total</th>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Number of burials</th>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1790</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1797</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>1792</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1798</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1793</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1799</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1794</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of the deaths attributed to fever or weakness were probably also due to consumption.26 A possible way of testing this suggestion is to consider the relative numbers of deaths due to consumption, weakness and fever in each year, since with an endemic disease such as consumption numbers of deaths due to this cause were less likely to change markedly, and if the numbers of deaths due to consumption were considerably less in any year and those due to fever or weakness increased significantly, then it was possible that some deaths reported as due to weakness or fever might have been due to consumption. Since consumption was less likely to be a cause of death in the very young, deaths due to weakness or fever of those below five years of age have been excluded. The result of this exercise is given in Table 7. It can be seen that this approach works reasonably well for eight of the 11 years considered, with an average of 11 and a range of plus 5 and minus 4 (excluding 1795, 1797, and 1798). In 1794 there was an exceptionally high number of deaths reported as due to consumption itself. There were no deaths attributed to consumption in 1798, which was unusual. The proposition must, at best, be considered only a hypothesis, but the results do suggest that there may be some validity in it. Similar problems have been encountered elsewhere, King claiming that ‘decline’ was an alternative label for tuberculosis (or consumption).27

Accidents accounted for nearly 6 per cent of all burials, the majority being from drowning, perhaps not unexpectedly in a seaside parish in which fishing was an important occupation. What is also significant is that a high percentage (42 per cent) of those who drowned in the sea, including two women, were not identified and were presumably bodies that were washed up on the foreshore. The burials of those who died at sea contain minor stories of human and family tragedy, including the burial on the same day of four young men, varying in age between 16 and 23 and also the burial at the same time of a brother and sister aged 15 and 24 respectively. Both incidents indicate accidents leading to multiple deaths. It is clear that going to sea, even in the usually relatively calm waters off the Lancashire coast, was a dangerous activity in the eighteenth century.

---

Table 7 Numbers of deaths reported as due to consumption, weakness and fever 1790–1800

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Consumption</th>
<th>Weakness</th>
<th>Fever</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1791</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>1792</td>
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<td>1793</td>
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<td>11</td>
</tr>
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<td>1797</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1798</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1799</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fits accounted for 21 deaths, to which, perhaps, a further three due to convulsions should be added, it not being clear what the difference was between the two. Death due to these causes was mainly a condition of childhood: 18 (75 per cent) of those who died from these causes were below the age of five. Only two deaths ascribed to fits were of adults, a man aged 31 and a woman of 46. It is possible that these could have been due to epilepsy.

Minor causes of death include a number which are more specific in their diagnosis. These include seven cases of chinkcough (whooping cough), two cases of jaundice, one case of scorbetic complaint, two cases of asthma and 14 cases of dropsy. Whooping cough was a disease that caused deaths in the under five year old group. Deaths due to this infection were confined to two outbreaks in 1795 and 1800, there being two deaths in 1795 (April and October), the remaining five occurring between August and November 1800 and including the death of two children from the same family within two weeks of each other. There was only one other death due to an infectious disease, being a single death due to measles of a two year old child in 1800. Surprisingly there was only one case where a woman specifically died in childbirth, and one case was quoted where the death was due to abortion. This was most likely a miscarriage, as the woman in question was the wife of the Rev. John Maudesley, the curate of North Meols, believed to be the compiler of
the registers. Her demise may have been, in part, due to her age (44 years).

Figure 4 shows the number of burials from 1789 to 1801 inclusive in each quarter of the year. From this it can be seen that there is a strong tendency for most deaths to occur in the first three months of the year, this being the case in 10 of the 12 years considered. The exceptions are 1795, when the smallpox epidemic caused the fourth quarter to have the highest number of deaths and 1797 when the high number of deaths due to fever, possibly linked to an infectious disease, caused the fourth quarter to have the most deaths. The general pattern shows a reduction in deaths in the second quarter followed, usually, by a further reduction in the third and sometimes a further reduction and sometimes an increase in the last quarter of the year.

**Comparative studies**

There are few detailed similar studies of individual communities from the late eighteenth century with which to compare the information from North Meols. One such is Ward’s study of Whitehaven from 1751 to 1780. Dobson’s detailed regional study considered the geography of disease and concluded that the healthiness of a locality was dependent upon both drainage and geology, and that places above 300 feet above sea level had low levels of mortality whereas places below 50 feet above sea level were inherently unhealthy. The worst of all were saline estuaries and marshlands, although this environment had become much healthier by 1800. She though that the biggest divide was not rural/urban but marshland/non-marshland, due to the influence of the mosquito. This argument may not be applicable in cooler Lancashire. Both Ward and Dobson produced lists of causes of death based on the original descriptions from their primary sources, Ward giving 78 individual causes of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8</th>
<th>Comparison of major groupings of causes of death used by Ward and Dobson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ward</td>
<td>Dobson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Specific</td>
<td>Respiratory and throat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genito-urinary</td>
<td>Pregnancy and childbed related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musculo-skeletal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respiratory</td>
<td>Chronic diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gynaecological</td>
<td>Gastro-intestinal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neurological</td>
<td>Casualties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin</td>
<td>General infections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulatory</td>
<td>Fivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumours</td>
<td>Deaths related to medical / surgical intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digestion</td>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidental</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a regional study, Dobson’s work does not provide a good basis for comparison with the data from North Meols, but Ward’s study of Whitehaven provides a useful basis for comparison, being from a similar time period and for a relatively small place, but differing from North Meols in terms of environment. North Meols was a rural, relatively isolated, low-lying, coastal area; Whitehaven provides data from a small town which was also an important eighteenth-century port and mining area. To facilitate this comparison the information from North Meols has been summarised into the same categories used by Ward, the details being shown in Table 9.

A comparison between Whitehaven (1750–1781) and North Meols (1789–1800) using these categories is made in Table 10. The percentage of deaths for which no causes is given was higher in Whitehaven than North Meols, so that to give a better comparison of known causes in the two places the percentage is also given excluding these deaths. There is generally a similar picture of the causes of death in both places. The main differences are the higher percentage of infectious causes in Whitehaven which are offset by an increased percentage of non-specific causes given in North Meols. In Whitehaven, almost all non-specific deaths were described as ‘decline’, whereas in North Meols the term ‘weakness’ was the overriding description. These differences in terminology probably reflect no significant difference. A much wider list of infections was
Table 10  Comparison of causes of death in Whitehaven and North Meols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Whitehaven</th>
<th></th>
<th>North Meols</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%*</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not given</td>
<td>886</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-specific</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>112</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genito-urinary</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>0.3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musculo-skeletal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respiratory</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gynaecological</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neurological</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Circulatory</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tumours</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Digestion</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
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<td>89</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infections</td>
<td>1,351</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,134</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:  %* excluding 'not given' category.

given for Whitehaven, which included a wide range of different fevers. Although the most common three causes of death were the same in both places, there was considerable difference between them. The commonest cause of death in Whitehaven, accounting for 44.2 per cent of infectious diseases, was smallpox, whereas this only accounted for 27.2 per cent in North Meols. Epidemics of smallpox flared up in Whitehaven on an approximately four-yearly cycle. The figure for Whitehaven may have been influenced by its role as a port making it more vulnerable to infectious disease: at least one of its four outbreaks during the period examined has been linked to a ship coming from Dublin, and of the four adults who died of the disease one was a mariner and another a mariner’s wife. 30 North Meols was probably less affected due to its greater isolation.

In North Meols the commonest infection was described as fever at 43.7 per cent compared with Whitehaven at 33.4 per cent, despite the greater range of fevers listed in the latter town. An even greater difference was seen in the percentage of deaths due to consumption, with North Meols at 23 per cent of all deaths due to infections compared with 9.8 per cent in Whitehaven. Ward does, however, suggest that consumption deaths may have been under-recorded in Whitehaven in the later years of the period. 31 Measles was the fourth most important infectious disease causing death in Whitehaven, accounting for 6.8 per cent of such deaths, whereas it was almost negligible in North Meols with only one such death.
Table 11  Comparison of four causes of death by percentage in Whitehaven, North Meols and London

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basis</th>
<th>Whitehaven all deaths causes given</th>
<th>North Meols all deaths causes given</th>
<th>London causes given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumption</td>
<td>4.2  5.9</td>
<td>8.8  10.4</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fevers</td>
<td>14.4  20.0</td>
<td>16.7  19.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smallpox</td>
<td>19.0  26.5</td>
<td>10.4  12.3</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infancy</td>
<td>‘High’ – 25.6</td>
<td>19.3  32.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>3,138  2,252</td>
<td>442  374</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

North Meols was a marginally more dangerous place to live than Whitehaven with a greater percentage of accidental deaths. This is made more apparent when one examines the causes of death. In Whitehaven three main causes of accidental death were recorded in almost identical numbers: being burnt in the pits, killed in the pits and killed (no specific reason given). Drowning only came fourth in the list, accounting for only 16.9 per cent of all accidental deaths. In North Meols drowning was the overriding cause of accidental deaths accounting for 80 per cent of all accidents. There is therefore a clear difference between the two places, mining being the most dangerous activity in Whitehaven and fishing at North Meols, with the sea being a more dangerous working environment than under ground.

A limited attempt has also been made to make a comparison between Whitehaven, North Meols and London, since this would introduce a comparison with a third environment, that of a crowded, densely-populated metropolis. Data on the frequency in percentage terms of deaths from consumption, fevers, smallpox, infancy and all other causes is provided for London for various 25 year periods including 1775 – 1799 by Landers, but direct comparison with Whitehaven and North Meols is not straightforward since it is not known whether the basis for London is all deaths or only deaths for which a cause is given. Consequently, in Table 11 percentages for North Meols and Whitehaven are calculated on both bases to compare with London.

These figures show high infant mortality for the metropolis and lower, but still high, infant mortality for rural south west Lancashire, suggesting that environment was only a second order effect with regard to infant mortality. The most significant figures are for smallpox and consumption, both diseases where eighteenth century diagnosis was likely to be reasonably accurate. They suggest strong possibilities of environmental influence. There is evidence that the disease in North Meols was possibly brought into the area occasionally from Liverpool and without this factor smallpox deaths in North Meols would probably have been much lower. Whitehaven, as a port, seems to have been much more vulnerable to this disease. The most significant difference is in the figures for consumption, with both Whitehaven and North Meols showing much lower incidences than London. Even allowing for possible under-reporting of this disease, as suggested by Ward, this would seem to indicate the crowded and possibly poorer housing conditions of the capital were a
factor in the prevalence of this disease. There are differences in the reported figures for fever between the north west and London but, as Landers states, the interpretation of fever is problematic.\(^3\)

Another investigation of late eighteenth century causes of death in Lancashire considered the parish of Colne in the east of the county.\(^3\)\(^4\) This was a location very different to North Meols, being an elevated and generally damp environment which was industrialising and with congested houses and unpaved streets, providing many hazards to health.\(^3\)\(^5\) The streams received effluent from several hamlets yet there was no mention of water-born diseases such as cholera and typhoid which became prevalent in England in the nineteenth century.\(^3\)\(^6\) In Colne the reporting system was broadly similar to North Meols, but the pattern of causes of death was different. The infectious diseases smallpox, measles, whooping cough and scarlet fever were important causes of child deaths while the main killers of adults, apart from decline and old age, were respiratory problems, strokes and fits, dropsy, cancer, accidents and childbirth.\(^3\)\(^7\)

**Conclusion**

The causes of death cited for North Meols are broadly similar to those used elsewhere and therefore in keeping with eighteenth-century medical knowledge on diagnosis, which remained at this time strictly limited.\(^3\)\(^8\) It is easy to be critical of causes of death given in eighteenth century sources, and it should be remembered that even today with modern medical knowledge diagnosis is a complicated art based on the synthesis of symptoms, medical history, physical examination, the use of modern testing facilities and the identification of possible anatomical structures involved and pathological processes,\(^3\)\(^9\) whereas in the late eighteenth century the clinical thermometer and stethoscope did not yet exist and the significance of the pulse in disease was not properly understood.\(^3\)\(^0\) Ward considers that the minister of Whitehaven, who kept the register there, must have consulted at least one doctor in the town, since the terminology used was that of the medical profession.\(^4\)\(^1\) Her argument is equally applicable to North Meols, although the identity of any medical practitioner in the parish to whom the curate would have had regular and immediate access, which would have been required for diagnosis before burial, remains unknown. This study illustrates the problem of elucidating the history of the causes of death in the period before general registration and comparing places even where there is reasonable data and relatively consistent terminology. Nevertheless, it also demonstrates that the topic is well worth pursuing, and that even on a parochial basis differences can be identified between places such as North Meols, Whitehaven and Colne which do not arise merely from differences in the reporting terminology.

**Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank John Stewart for his helpful comments on the draft of this paper and Matthew Woollard and the LPS Editorial Board whose valuable assistance made the final version possible.
NOTES

4. 1801 Census.
10. E.S. Worrall, Return of papists, Diocese of Chester 1767 (Catholic Record Society, 1980).
11. Cheetham, Parish registers, viii.
15. ‘Observations on the increased population, healthiness etc of the town of Maidstone’ (1782), 2; ‘Observations on the Bills of Mortality in Carlisle for the year 1779’, 2. Facsimiles of both of the above publications are reproduced in D.V. Glass ed., The development of population statistics (Farnborough, 1973).
23. Probably the Great Sluice erected by Thomas Fleetwood in the 1690s for draining Martin Mere and which ran through North Meols on its way to the sea.
24. Dobson, Contours of death and disease, 240.
25. Dobson, Contours of death and disease, passim.
27. King, A Fylde country practice, 11.
29. Dobson, Contours of death and disease, 225, 518, 493.
31. Ward, Death in eighteenth century Whitehaven, 258.
32. Landers, *Death and the Metropolis*, 95.
HOUSEHOLD SIZE AND STRUCTURE IN BASSINGHAM, LINCOLNSHIRE, 1851–1901

Enid Hunt

Enid Hunt graduated from the University of London with a degree in History in 1963. For many years she has worked as a genealogical researcher. This paper is based on research undertaken for the M.St. degree in Local and Regional History at the University of Cambridge, 2001–2003.

Introduction

The need for detailed studies of the household within particular local economic and social contexts has been stressed by Wall and demonstrated by, for example, the comparative work of Goose in Hertfordshire and Smith in Nottinghamshire. The release of 1901 census data has given the opportunity to examine household structure over a fifty-year period; the 1851 census was the first to show the relationship of household members to the head, enabling family size and household structure to be analysed, and Anderson has suggested a period of at least 50 years for any study of gradual change in family behaviour.

This study examines the households of a rural community in Lincolnshire in order to assess the effect of economic and social change in one particular place during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Three questions are posed. Did the size and structure of households change in response to changes in the size and composition of the population? Were the latter affected by changes in the local economy? How did Bassingham households compare with those of other communities?

Bassingham

Bassingham parish is situated in the Kesteven part of Lincolnshire, on the western edge of the county, nine miles S.S.W. of Lincoln and nine and a half miles N.E. of Newark, Nottinghamshire. In the tithe award of 1851 it was assessed at 3,015 acres, and it encompassed a ‘large and well-built’ agricultural village, the inhabitants numbering 892 in 1851. According to Mills’ criteria Bassingham was an ‘open’ village of many small freeholders. The manor had been divided since the fourteenth century, and of the four major landowners in 1873, only two lived in the village.

The population figures for Bassingham (Table 1) reflect changes that were taking place elsewhere in Britain during the second half of the nineteenth
century, a time when the transition from a mainly agricultural, rural society to an industrial, urban society was completed. Most rural populations reached their peak in 1851 or 1861 and then declined. Young people in particular left the countryside to seek employment in the towns.

The figures in Table 1 show that Bassingham’s population doubled over the first half of the nineteenth century, peaked in 1861, and then went into notable decline. By 1901 it had fallen back to the 1821 level, having dropped by almost a third since 1851. The fall in the number of inhabitants was accompanied by changes in the age structure of the community as shown in Figure 1.

By 1901, children under the age of 15 formed 32.1 per cent of the population, a significantly smaller proportion compared to the 40.5 per cent they had comprised in 1851. The fall in the number of inhabitants was accompanied by changes in the age structure of the community as shown in Figure 1.

Throughout the 50 year study period, over half of all occupied males in Bassingham worked in agriculture: for example, 60.2 per cent in 1851, and 57.1 per cent in 1901. However, the village clearly suffered from the general agricultural depression of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when a combination of bad harvests and competition from abroad led to a decline in the agrarian economy. Not all areas suffered to the same extent, but arable areas such as Bassingham were particularly badly hit.

In 1902, The Lincoln Gazette described ‘black clouds’ over the village, due to ‘the grievously stricken industry of agriculture’. Men had moved away to work in towns. Between 1871 and 1901, Bassingham lost a third of its farm workers; the number falling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Inhabitants</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1801</td>
<td>413</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>+18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>+25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>+14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>+12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>892</td>
<td>+12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1801–1851</td>
<td>+479</td>
<td>+116.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>928</td>
<td>+4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>853</td>
<td>-8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>-15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>-10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>-5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851–1901</td>
<td>-278</td>
<td>-31.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BPP 1852-3 LXXXVI 1851 Census, Population tables, 64; CEBs, Bassingham, 1851–1901 (HO 107/2136; RG 9/2477; RG 10/3540; RG 11/3374; RG 12/2712; RG 13/3196).
from 125 to 84. These figures include living-in farm servants of whom there were 26 in 1871, but only 11 in 1901. However, the number of farmers decreased only slightly from 22 in 1871 to 20 in 1901.

Apart from agriculture, out of all occupied males in the parish in 1851, 65, or 24.9 per cent, worked in various crafts in 1851; by 1901 their numbers had been reduced by more than half to 30, just 15.9 per cent. The main female occupation was domestic service, which accounted for 53.8 per cent of occupied females in 1851, falling to 46.9 per cent in 1901.11

Sources and methodology

The census enumerator’s books (CEBs) are the major source for this study.12 The Bassingham CEBs from 1851–1901 are clearly written; the enumerators all lived in the village and were farmers or tradesmen, except for William Wilson, the doctor’s assistant, in 1881, so it is reasonable to assume a fair degree of accuracy.13 Household size was measured using Anderson’s method, a new household commencing with every entry for ‘head’ in the enumeration column ‘relation to head of household’, although visitors have been excluded from the analysis.14 Lodgers are included as part of the households in which they were enumerated, except in 1881 when they were enumerated separately and have been counted as six separate households. Household structure was coded according to Laslett’s scheme, as described by Schürer and Mills.15
Comparative studies

In order to place Bassingham in a comparative context data have been drawn from published studies of communities representing a diversity of location, type, size, and economic structure. Goose’s work on the Berkhamsted region of Hertfordshire in 1851 (which includes the rural community of Aldbury), Tranter’s examination of Cardington in 1851 and Nair’s study of Highley, Shropshire, 1851–81, have proven particularly useful. In addition, Goose’s study also provides comparisons with Laslett’s analysis of 100 communities between 1574 and 1821, the work of Armstrong on York, and that of Anderson on Preston and rural Lancashire. Of the latter studies, the Lancashire sample is most directly comparable with rural Bassingham; York and Preston were large urban communities. As well as these published studies, census data for Brough in Westmorland has been used to compare with Bassingham for the years 1851 and 1891.

In 1851 the Berkhamsted region of Hertfordshire included two market towns, which accounted for over 50 per cent of the population; otherwise the area was a rural one. The parish of Aldbury was of comparable size to Bassingham at this time, with a population of 816. The age structure of the region, and of Aldbury, was similar to that of Bassingham at mid-century, with children forming the largest group (36.8 per cent in the region, 39.5 per cent in Aldbury, 40.5 per cent in Bassingham). The proportion of persons aged 45 and over was also much the same as that of Bassingham (18.2 per cent in the region, 18.9 per cent in Aldbury, 19.1 per cent in Bassingham). Although the predominant male occupation in Aldbury was agriculture, the proportion of the male workforce so employed was lower, at 46.4 per cent, than the 60.2 per cent found in Bassingham. Far fewer females worked as domestic servants in Aldbury; only 9.3 per cent of all female workers compared with 53.8 per cent in Bassingham. Aldbury offered alternative employment in the straw plaiting industry.

Cardington was a rural parish in Bedfordshire with a population of 1,451 in 1851, much larger than that of Bassingham. However, the proportion of children, 39.4 per cent, was very close to that of Bassingham, while 17.5 per cent of the inhabitants were aged 45 or over, a slightly smaller proportion than that of Bassingham. As in the latter parish, farming was the predominant occupation in 1851: 11.3 per cent of households were headed by farmers, and almost 50 per cent by agricultural labourers, and around 20 per cent by tradesmen or those engaged in crafts. Domestic handicraft industries, mainly lace-making but with some straw plaiting, occupied almost 70 per cent of resident female offspring aged over 5 years.

Nair’s study of Highley, allows comparison across the 1851–1881 censuses. Highley, although basically a farming community, also experienced some degree of industrialisation which affected its economic and demographic structure. In 1851, with 359 inhabitants, it was less than half the size of Bassingham. However, an influx of railway navvies working on the Severn
Valley Railway increased the population by approximately ten per cent in 1861. By 1871 it had declined to about 300, but by 1881 it was back to the 1851 level; a renewal of coal mining had brought more men to the village. These changes were reflected in its age structure. In 1881 a lower proportion of the inhabitants were aged 50 or above: approximately 16.5 per cent compared with approximately 19.3 per cent in 1851. This was a reversal of the situation in Bassettingham, where the proportion of persons in this age group increased from 15.3 per cent in 1851 to 23.6 per cent in 1881. Highley’s occupational structure also changed. In 1851, 50.9 per cent of working men were occupied in agriculture; by 1881 this had fallen to 32.3 per cent, with almost 50 per cent now employed in coal mining or quarrying. As in Bassettingham, the main female occupation was domestic service, which occupied 50.0 per cent and 45.6 per cent of working females in 1851 and 1881 respectively.

In the mid-nineteenth century Brough was a declining Westmorland market town. In 1851 it was just over three-quarters the size of Bassettingham, with a population of 695. By 1891 this had fallen to 608, a decrease of 12.5 per cent, compared with 27.4 per cent in Bassettingham over the same period. Unlike Bassettingham, there was little change in the age structure of the community. In 1891 31.3 per cent of the population were children under the age of 15; they had comprised 32.5 per cent in 1851. There had been 24.6 of the population aged 45 and over in 1851, in 1891 the equivalent figure was 23.5 per cent. During the same period the proportion of children in Bassettingham declined from 40.5 per cent to 32.1 per cent, while that of the group aged 45 and over increased from 19.1 per cent to 32.9 per cent.

Brough had a higher proportion of occupied males working in trades and crafts than Bassettingham: in 1851, 43 per cent were in these occupations, falling to 36 per cent in 1891. A smaller proportion worked in agriculture, but nevertheless in 1851 farm work occupied one quarter and in 1891 30 per cent of working males. In Brough, however, livestock breeding and rearing and dairy farming predominated, with arable crops being grown for fodder. The area was one of small family farms, where relatives did the work. Thus, unlike arable Bassettingham, Brough did not suffer unduly from the agricultural depression. As in Bassettingham, the main female occupation was domestic service, employing 64.8 per cent of the female workforce in 1851 and 58.9 per cent in 1891.

**Household size**

Between 1851 and 1901, the average size of households in Bassettingham fell, as shown in Table 2. The figures for 1851 and 1861 in Table 2 closely match Laslett’s calculation of the national mean household size of 4.75 persons. They are similar to Goose’s mean household size of 4.83 persons for the Berkhamsted region in 1851, and may be compared with the twelve groups of communities included in Mills’ ‘English Rural Norm’ of 1851, also cited by Goose, where the average household size varied between 4.09 and 6.07 persons.

In the Lincolnshire Wolds, Rawding found that larger villages had smaller households, as they tended to be better provided with accommodation, albeit
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of persons</th>
<th>% change</th>
<th>Number of households</th>
<th>% change</th>
<th>Mean household size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>+4.3</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>+6.6</td>
<td>4.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>917</td>
<td>-8.1</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>+4.1</td>
<td>4.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>843</td>
<td>-15.7</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>-11.4</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>-9.3</td>
<td>179 b</td>
<td>-10.1</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>-6.2</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>+1.2</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CEBs (see Table 1).

Note: 
- a = excluding visitors
- b = including six lodgers enumerated as separate households. If these were not counted as separate households then the mean household size would be 4.11 persons.

often of poor quality. Bassingham was well provided with houses; even when the population was at its peak, in 1861, there were four uninhabited houses and one being built. By 1881, although 30 houses were unoccupied, the number of households had dropped to 179, 3 less than in 1851, which suggests that houses had been built expecting an expanding population but, instead, people had left the village. Between 1861 and 1871 the population decreased by 8.1 per cent, yet the number of households increased by 4.1 per cent, resulting in a fall in mean household size from 4.72 to 4.17 persons; this was well before 1891, when Laslett calculated that a national reduction in household size began. In contrast, Highley, which saw an influx of workers, saw mean household size reach 5.0 persons in 1861 and peak at 5.2 persons in 1881. Mean household size in Brough was, at 4.06 persons, smaller than in Bassingham in 1851, but by 1891 had increased very slightly to 4.07, just overtaking that of Bassingham which by then had declined to 4.00 persons.

A more detailed analysis shows the proportion of households of different sizes in Bassingham in 1851, and how it compared with other communities (Table 3). As in other communities in 1851 the moderate-size 3–6 person household was the most common domestic arrangement in Bassingham, accounting for more than half the households. Large households holding 7 or more persons formed a significant proportion of the total, only exceeded by the percentages found for Preston and the Lancashire rural sample. Bassingham conformed to the general pattern in 1851: rural communities usually had a greater proportion of large households than their urban counterparts, though there were exceptions. In the town of Preston, many households included resident kin and, as the figures for Aldbury and Brough show, not all rural communities contained a high proportion of large households.

The first column of figures in Table 3 demonstrates that the proportion of single person households in Bassingham corresponds very closely to that found in York and in Laslett’s 100 communities. It is a higher figure than was found for the 2,300 households in the Berkhamsted region, but smaller than
that for the 180 households in Aldbury. Goose suggests that the percentages widowed in the population might be expected to have a bearing upon household size, but although Aldbury had a slightly above average proportion widowed (6.0 per cent compared with 5.7 per cent in the region as a whole), this did not provide a full explanation for differences across the region. In 1851, 11 per cent of Bassingham’s adult population were widowed, yet there was a smaller proportion of single person households than in Aldbury.34 Out of Bassingham’s 53 widows and widowers, only 5 lived alone. Otherwise, families accommodated their widowed relatives, as Anderson found in Lancashire.35

Further analysis shows how household size in Bassingham changed over the period 1851–1901, and also how it changed in comparison with Brough over the decades between 1851 and 1891 (Table 4). By 1901 in Bassingham the number of households comprising a single person had increased from 10 in 1851 (5.5 per cent of the total) to 25 (15.3 per cent): a 150 per cent increase in 50 years. On closer examination, 3 of these households in 1851 were those of widows or widowers aged over 60; by 1901 this number had increased to 19. The increase in the number of single-person households would appear to be related to changes in the age structure of the community. People were living longer, and as younger men and women left the village to find work elsewhere, there were fewer families left to accommodate elderly relatives.36

While the proportion of moderate size households saw little change, there was a much greater change in the numbers of large and small households. In 1851, around a quarter of all households accommodated seven or more persons, while a smaller proportion, about 20 per cent, included only one or two persons. By 1901, the positions were reversed; over a third of households were now small, while the proportion of large households had fallen to just over 10 per cent. Brough had more small than large households in both 1851 and 1891; it also had a lower percentage of children than Bassingham in 1851, a proportion which had hardly changed by 1891, unlike Bassingham, where the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Single person</th>
<th>Small 1–2</th>
<th>Moderate 3–6</th>
<th>Large 7+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bassingham</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brough</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkhamsted region</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldbury</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancashire rural sample</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 communities 1564–1821</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CEBs Bassingham (see Table 1) and Brough (HO 107/2439); Goose, Berkhamsted, 64–6.
Table 4  Changes in household size: Bassingham 1851, 1891 and 1901, Brough, 1851 and 1891

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household size</th>
<th>1851 Bassingham %</th>
<th>1851 Brough %</th>
<th>1891 Bassingham %</th>
<th>1891 Brough %</th>
<th>1901 Bassingham %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single person</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small (1-2)</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate (3-6)</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>53.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large (7+)</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CEBs, Bassingham (see Table 1) and Brough (HO 107/2439 and RG 12/4324).

Table 5  Mean household size by occupation of head, Bassingham, 1851 and 1901

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1851</th>
<th>1851</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of households</td>
<td>No. of persons</td>
<td>Mean household size</td>
<td>No. of households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmen</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradesmen</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9.50</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourersb</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CEBs Bassingham 1851 and 1901 (see Table 1).

Notes:  
- a = mainly agricultural labourers: 68 in 1851, 43 in 1901  
- b = the household of William Storr, grocer and draper, had fourteen inhabitants.

percentage dropped. This suggests that a reduction in the number of children was a significant contributory factor affecting household size in Bassingham.

Other studies have demonstrated a relationship between the occupation of the household head and the size of the household. Laslett found that in the 100 communities 1574–1821 the higher socio-economic groups comprising clergy, yeomen and husbandmen all had households of above the mean household size of 4.75 persons; tradesmen and craftsmen had an average household size which lay just below the mean, while labourers had the smallest households. Goose found that in the Berkhamsted region in 1851 farmers had a mean household size of 7.07 persons, while that of agricultural labourers was 4.99. In Cardington Tranter found that farmers headed the largest households, with an average size of 6.38 persons, followed by tradesmen (5.96), craftsmen (4.68) and labourers (4.92). Table 5 shows the household sizes of different occupational groups in Bassingham in both 1851 and 1901.
Table 6  Components of the household by occupation of household head, Bassingham, 1851

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>No. of households</th>
<th>Children a</th>
<th>Adult offspring b</th>
<th>Servants</th>
<th>Apprentices</th>
<th>Lodgers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmen</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradesmen  c</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers d</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** CBEs Bassingham 1851 (see Table 1).

**Note:**
- a = children are defined as those aged less than 15 years
- b = adult offspring are defined as resident children aged 15 years or over
- c = the household of William Storr included five children, three apprentices and three servants
- d = as Table 5, note a.

The 1851 figures are similar to Laslett’s, Goose’s and Tranter’s results. Household size was highest among professional people and farmers (6.00 persons) and lowest among labourers (4.93) and craftsmen (4.95). In 1901 the pattern was similar, although generally households were smaller. The smallest households still belonged to labourers, craftsmen and those in ‘other’ occupations, at 3.79, 3.56 and 2.97 persons respectively.

Other studies have found that household size was affected by the presence of servants, children, and apprentices. As Table 6 shows, it was the presence of servants and adult offspring which accounted for the larger households of farmers and professional people in 1851, although labourers had a higher average number of children.

Thomas Johnson, the village doctor, headed a household of ten: his wife and four children, an apprentice, a cook, a housemaid, and a thirteen-year-old nursemaid. The household of Daniel Wayland, curate, included four unmarried adult daughters and three servants: a cook, housemaid, and thirteen-year-old groom boy. The two largest farms in the village (400 and 300 acres) had households of eleven and ten persons respectively: Charles Marfleet accommodated his wife and five children, a cook, two housemaids and a groom/gardener, while Robert Morley of Bassingham House had a wife and two children, three house servants and three farm servants. Yet among the labourers there were also some very large households: for example, William Reynolds’ household of eleven included six children and three farm servants. But the largest household in the village was that of William Storr, grocer and draper. As well as William and his wife Mary, this comprised five children under the age of 12, their 17-year old teacher Ruth Bainbridge, three apprentices, a nursemaid, a cook and a groom-cum-porter.
Table 7 Components of the household by occupation of household head, Bassingham, 1901

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>No. of households</th>
<th>Children a</th>
<th>Adult offspring b</th>
<th>Servants</th>
<th>Apprentices</th>
<th>Lodgers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmen</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradesmen</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CEBs, Bassingham, 1901 (see Table 1).

Notes: a and b = as Table 6
       c = as Table 5, note a.

In 1901, the pattern was similar, although generally households were smaller, the largest households being those of tradesmen, farmers and professional persons. Apart from farmers’ households, the average number of children per household had fallen, accounting for the decrease in average household size. As in 1851, it was the presence of servants which accounted for the larger households of farmers and professional persons, although the average for farmers was lower than in 1851. Servants and apprentices increased the size of tradesmen’s households. Both professional and farmers’ households had fewer co-resident adult offspring (Table 7).

Although the overall average household size had fallen, excluding craftsmen, there were still examples of large households in every section of the community. John Morshead, draper and baker, headed a household of eight, comprising his wife, four apprentices, a cook and a housemaid. Farm foreman Arthur Willis accommodated twelve persons: his wife and seven children, plus three farm servants. The rector, a widower, headed a household of eight: two unmarried daughters, a daughter-in-law, two grandsons, a cook and two housemaids. Two agricultural labourers headed households of ten: Frank Porlas housed a wife and eight children, while John Wallace had his wife and six children plus her parents.

The households of Brough present a different picture. Compared with Bassingham, there was less disparity between the average household size of different occupational groups: in 1851 farmers had the largest households (4.92 persons as opposed to 6.10 in Bassingham), while labourers’ households were not much smaller (4.43 persons). By 1891, the households of craftsmen were slightly larger than those of the farmers (4.94 persons compared with 4.64), whereas in Bassingham the size of craftsmen’s households had fallen to 3.81 persons, and farmers continued to head the largest households with 5.30 persons on average. The households of professionals were much smaller than those of Bassingham (3.80 persons in 1851 and 2.50 in 1891, compared with
Both farmers and professionals in Brough had fewer resident servants than their counterparts in Bassingham: farmers had an average of 0.5 servants and professionals 0.6 servants in 1851 compared with 1.2 and 1.6 respectively in Bassingham. In 1891 the same two groups had 0.5 and 0 servants on average in Brough, whereas in Bassingham in 1901 professionals retained 1.1 servants and farmers 0.9 servants on average. These Brough households had a similar average number of children and adult offspring to those in Bassingham, thus suggesting that the difference in household size can be attributed to the number of servants. Apart from two large farms of over 300 acres, the farms in Brough were below 100 acres, and family members apparently did the work. Although the majority of Bassingham farms were also small (as in Brough, only two were over 300 acres in 1851) Bassingham farmers accommodated more servants; the arable farming there requiring more labour than the livestock farming of Brough.

### Household structure

Laslett found that the most common household unit was the nuclear family, and this was the case in Bassingham, as Table 8 shows. The nuclear family predominated here throughout the period, as it did in Highley between 1851 and 1881, and in the Berkhamsted region in 1851, where most of the population lived in nuclear families of moderate size. In Bassingham, the proportion of simple family households declined, from 75.3 per cent in 1851 to 64.4 per cent in 1901; a higher proportion of the community were now living alone. Migration of young people from the village meant that there were fewer families with children. In 1851 120 households (66 per cent) contained children under the age of 15; by 1901 this had fallen to 87 (53.4 per cent). The number of households with children fell by 27.5 per cent yet the total number of house-
holds fell by only 10 per cent, but the number and proportion of households with young people aged 15–17 hardly changed; from 34 (18.7 per cent) in 1851, to 32 (19.6 per cent) in 1901.43 Tranter found that in Cardington in 1851 the numbers of resident offspring, including adults, in a household varied according to the socio-economic status of the head; the group with the largest households, the farmers, had more offspring living with them than the rest of the community. However, this was not the case in Bassingham, where the figure for farmers was virtually the same as others in the community (Table 9). But Bassingham farmers had twice as many adult offspring living with them as did other sections of the community, averaging one per household, presumably because they worked on family farms.

It should be noted that not all 'offspring' in the census were blood relations of the adults they lived with. In Highley, a number of families contained children who were in fact stepchildren of one of the couple, as a result of re-marriage or illegitimacy.44 And in Bassingham, eleven-year old John Wilkinson, living with George and Sarah Weightman and their other children Hugh and Mary Weightman in 1851, was probably the illegitimate son of Sarah, who was Sarah Wilkinson before her marriage in 1841.45 In 1881, the four children with the surname Norton living with John and Jemima Graves were recorded in the census as his stepchildren.46

Apart from one example in 1851, that of Hugh Weightman, a farmer whose son and family shared his accommodation, there were no households where families combined, but as Table 8 showed, extended family households, containing one or more relatives beyond the conjugal family unit, formed a significant part of the community. Brough had a similar proportion of extended family households in 1851 (14.7 per cent compared with Bassingham’s 15.4 per cent), with hardly any change in 1891 (14.9 per cent, the same as Bassingham). Both communities conformed to the general pattern of household structure as shown in the nineteenth century CEBs, where extended family households were not unusual.47 As there was no shortage of houses in either place, these households must have accommodated relatives for economic or practical reasons. Thus in Bassingham, in 1851, we find nineteen year-old

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Bassingham</th>
<th>Cardington</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of households</td>
<td>No. of offspring</td>
<td>No. per household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CEB Bassingham, 1851 (see Table 1); Tranter, ‘Bedfordshire parish’, p.94.
Note: a = Only households headed by married or widowed persons are included in this table. b = 'offspring' include both adults and children.
Henry Baguely living and working with his uncle, William Baguely, a market gardener; Ruth Rogers kept house for her widowed farmer brother, George. Similarly, in 1901, William Hewson, a 65 year-old farmer, accommodated his grand-daughter and her husband, using family labour to help on the farm; draper Robert Wilson’s niece Emily worked in the shop and lived with his family.

When all households which included non-nuclear relatives are counted (in Table 8, extended family, multiple family and no conjugal family households) 18.1 per cent of households in Bassingham in 1851 contained additional relatives, only a slightly lower percentage than the country as a whole (20.2 per cent).48 Other communities had a higher proportion of households with co-resident kin; 30.5 per cent in Highley, and around 25 per cent in the Berkhamsted region, rural Lancashire, and Brough.49 In Highley, there was more pressure on accommodation than in Bassingham, and Anderson found a particularly strong commitment to family relationships in Lancashire: both factors would contribute to a higher proportion of households with kin. By 1901, 16.6 per cent of Bassingham households still accommodated relatives, but the average number per household had fallen. In 1851 it was 0.31, close to Walls’ figure of 0.28 for the East Midlands; by 1901 it had dropped to 0.20.50 Overall, the number of co-resident kin in Bassingham had declined by 41 per cent, although the number of households had fallen by only 10 per cent. In 1851, Brough had more relatives per household than Bassingham, averaging 0.44; generally, households in the Northern region averaged a higher number of relatives, 0.37, than those in the East Midlands.51 As in Bassingham, the average number per household in Brough fell; by 1891 it was 0.34; again, the total number of households fell to a lesser degree (12.9 per cent), than the number of co-resident kin (32.4 per cent), leading to a lower average per household.

A wide range of relatives were housed in Bassingham; for example, of the 28 extended households in 1851, 13 contained grandchildren without parents, seven included parents or parents-in-law, four included sisters or sisters-in-law, two included brothers, and four included nieces or nephews. A similar range of relatives was accommodated in 1901, when ten households contained grandchildren without parents, six included parents or parents-in-law, one held an unmarried sister-in-law, and four housed nieces or nephews. George and Sarah Weightman provided a home for the illegitimate children of their daughter Mary; three year old Charles in 1871, and ten year old Florence in 1891, when her mother worked as a cook at Uppingham School.52 In 1851, agricultural labourer John Donson accommodated his 72 year old pauper mother-in-law along with his wife and three children; similarly, in 1901, cottager John Hart’s household included his 80 year old widowed mother, as well as his wife and five children. Clearly, there was a continued commitment to family relationships in Bassingham; as Nair found in Highley, relatives took in both the old and the young when necessary.53

The proportion of Bassingham households with lodgers in 1851 was, at 7.7 per cent, (Table 10), lower than the approximately 10 per cent found by Goose in
Bassingham had 2.2 per cent of its population living as lodgers in 1851, a figure which had fallen to 1.5 per cent by 1901. Brough had a similar proportion of households with lodgers (7.6 per cent) as Bassingham in 1851, and there was little change in 1891 (7.4 per cent compared to 6.8 per cent in Bassingham). It should be noted that in 1851 no distinction was made in the census returns between the different types of lodger, but from 1861 the term ‘boarder’ was introduced in an attempt to distinguish between lodgers, who lived separately from the rest of the household, and those who boarded with the family; finally in 1901 lodgers were enumerated as separate households. In Bassingham the number of households with lodgers fell from 14 in 1851 to 9 (enumerated as boarders) in 1901, perhaps suggesting fewer employment opportunities, as Nair has shown that in times of increased employment the number of lodgers rose. In 1861 and 1881 around 30 per cent of the households in Highley included non-kin residents. Bassingham contained 14 households with lodgers in 1851, but only half of the lodgers were working men, the latter comprising five agricultural workers, two labourers, and two craftsmen. In 1901 nine households contained boarders including two agricultural labourers, one police constable, one house painter, one foundry worker, one journeyman baker, one retired shoemaker, one female dressmaker and one female Salvation Army officer. The number of working male lodgers or boarders therefore remained similar (nine in 1851, seven in 1901), but there was a change in their composition, with fewer agricultural workers and a broader range of occupations by the beginning of the twentieth century.

The 18.7 per cent of Bassingham households which contained servants in 1851 (Table 10), was greater than the proportion of similar households found by Goose in the Berkhamsted region (10.0 per cent) or that found by Tranter in Cardington (12.7 per cent). Bassingham offered little female employment apart from domestic service, which may explain why more households there had servants. The Berkhamsted region and Cardington both offered straw

| Table 10 | Households with servants a and lodgers, Bassingham, 1851 and 1901 |
|----------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|
|          | 1851  | %    | 1901  | %    |
| Lodgers or boarders | 14    | 7.7  | 9  a  | 5.5  |
| Servants (all) b  | 34    | 18.7 | 24  | 14.7 |
| Servants (farm) c | 14    | 7.7  | 8    | 4.9  |
| Servants (domestic) d | 26    | 14.3 | 18  | 11.0 |

Source: CEBs Bassingham, 1851–1901 (see Table 1)
Notes: a = male and female servants
        b = households which included farm or domestic servants, or both
        c = household which included farm servants
        d = household which included domestic servants
        e = all enumerated as boarders.
Table 11  Households with servants * by household head, Bassingham, 1851 and 1901

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation of head</th>
<th>No. of households</th>
<th>1851 No. with servants</th>
<th>% with servants</th>
<th>No. of households</th>
<th>1901 No. with servants</th>
<th>% with servants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer b</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade/craft</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:  CEBs Bassingham 1851, 1901 (see Table 1).

Note:  a = both male and female servants are included  
b = in 1901 farmers include three foremen.

plaiting as an alternative, plus Cardington also had lace-making. But both Goose and Tranter’s studies show that the majority of households with servants were those of farmers, and this was also the case in Bassingham (Table 11).59

Between 1851 and 1901, the number of households with servants fell from 34 (18.7 per cent of all households) to 24 (14.7 per cent) in Bassingham, contributing to the overall reduction in household size. The majority of households with servants were still headed by farmers, but a smaller proportion of farming households now had servants. The number of living-in farm servants had almost halved, from 21 in 1851, to 11 in 1901. This reflected changes taking place elsewhere. For example, between 1851 and 1881, the number of farm servants halved in Highley, farm service being in decline by the mid-nineteenth century.60 In Bassingham, the fall in the number of living-in farm servants can also be attributed to the effect of agricultural depression; overall the number of farm workers fell by almost a third. The number of living-in domestic servants also declined. In 1851, 35 females, including seven children under the age of 15, worked as living-in domestic servants; by 1901, the number had dropped by almost a third to 24, of whom five were children. In general, such work was undertaken by young, single women; in Bassingham, the number of single women aged between 15 and 29 declined by 29 per cent between 1851 and 1901. Here, as was generally the case in late nineteenth-century England, domestic service was already in decline.61

Brough had a smaller proportion of households with servants, 15.3 per cent in 1851 and 10.1 per cent in 1891; the family-based farming economy meant that fewer farmers employed resident servants; 3 out of 13 in 1851, 8 out of 22 in 1891. Over the four decades the number of living-in farm servants dropped from 6 to 3, while that of resident female domestic servants went down from 26 to 17. Unlike Bassingham, there was no decrease in the number of young, single women, but here too, a decade earlier, domestic service was in decline, although as in Bassingham there was little alternative employment.
Conclusion

This study has shown how particular local economic and social circumstances influenced the size and structure of households in Bassingham during the second half of the nineteenth century. Agricultural depression, leading to a much-reduced population and a change in demographic composition, clearly had its effect. Average household size declined from 4.8 to 3.7 persons, and although more than 50 per cent of households were still of moderate size, there was a significant increase in the proportion of small and one person households, associated with the changing age structure of the community. Fewer households had children, and there were more older people. The number of large households fell. Fewer households had servants; the decline in agriculture had reduced the need for resident farm servants. Fewer families had co-resident kin; at no time during the study period was there an increase in their number which might suggest relatives combining households in response to economic difficulties, as Howlett and Brayshay have shown for some west country communities.62 Table 12 shows how these changes affected household size and composition. As employment opportunities in Bassingham were limited, it did not attract many potential lodgers from outside, and therefore this group had no significant effect on household size.

Comparisons with other studies have shown that the households of Bassingham corresponded in many ways to those of other communities. The mean household size of 4.8 in 1851 was close to that found in the Berkhamsted region and elsewhere; the majority of households were of moderate size, and the nuclear family predominated. The largest households, expanded by offspring and servants, were mainly those of farmers and professional persons. But the comparisons have also revealed differences and variations which can be attributed to particular local circumstances. Bassingham had a higher proportion of simple family households and a smaller proportion of households with co-resident kin than Highley, where there was more pressure on housing accommodation. Mean household size became smaller in Bassingham,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1851 Total no.</th>
<th>Average per household</th>
<th>1901 Total no.</th>
<th>Average per household</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servants</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodgers *</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kin b</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CEBs Bassingham (see Table 1).
Note: a = includes boarders
      b = excludes nuclear family.
but larger in Highley in 1861 and 1881, as a result of a different local economy, industrialisation leading to an influx of workers and a rise in the number of lodgers. The proportion of households with lodgers in Bassingham was also smaller than that found overall for the Berkhamsted region, which included two towns, in 1851; generally, lodgers were less common in the countryside. But a higher proportion of Bassingham households had servants than either the Berkhamsted region or Cardington, perhaps because both these places offered females alternative employment to domestic service.

The comparison with Brough, although limited to the period up to 1891, has demonstrated the distinctive experience of two rural communities in different parts of England, and confirms that the changes which took place in the size and structure of households in Bassingham can be attributed to a particular economic and social environment. In Brough, a different type of farming meant a viable and successful local economy; although the population declined, this was not to the same extent as in Bassingham, and did not result in a change in age structure. Thus the decline in mean household size, which had begun in Bassingham by 1861, had not appeared in Brough by 1891, and so the latter did not experience the same changes in the proportions of large and small households. Finally, the family-based, less labour-intensive farming economy in Westmorland meant that farmers' households had fewer servants.

In summary, this study has shown that while Bassingham households shared some characteristics with those of the communities with which it has been compared, there were differences which can be ascribed to its particular local economic and social environment. It is hoped that the value of detailed studies of this kind, which include comparisons with other communities, has been confirmed.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Dr Margaret Shepherd, and to members of the Local Population Studies Editorial Board, for guidance in the preparation of this paper.

NOTES


4. W. White, Directory of Lincolnshire (Sheffield, 1842), 600; CEB Bassingham, 1851. There is some confusion over the extent of the parish. The census reports 1851–1881 state that Bassingham parish was 1,940 acres in extent; yet the census reports of 1891 and 1901 give an acreage of 3,057, close to the 1851 tithe award assessment. As far as can be discovered no boundary change took place.


10. The Lincolnshire Gazette, 6 September, 1902, 6.

11. The figures for domestic service exclude those described in the census as housekeepers who were related to the household head.

12. The National Archives, CEBs, Bassingham, 1851–1901 (see Table 1).


18. CEBs Brough, 1851 and 1891: H0 107/2439; RG 12/4324. Transcription and database provided by M.E. Shepherd.


31. Laslett, 'Household size', 140.


39. The figure of 9.50 for tradesmen has been discounted, as there were only two households and the average size is distorted by the large household of William Storr.


41. Laslett, *World we have lost*, 91–4, 99.

43. CEBs, Bassingham, 1851, 1901.
44. Nair, *Highley*, 204.
46. CEB, Bassingham, 1881.
50. Wall, ‘Regional and temporal variations’, 91. The calculation for Bassingham includes all relatives apart from those in the simple family unit of parents and children.
52. CEBs Bassingham, 1851, 1861, 1901; Hunt, *Weightman family history*.
DEBATES IN POPULATION HISTORY

THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Simon Szreter and Edward Higgs


Edward Higgs is undoubtedly our leading authority on the archival records of the General Register Office of England and Wales, having published numerous insightful articles and an excellent users’ guide to the manuscript returns of the census. Furthermore, the history of the GRO should be a fascinating one for our generation. We are now obsessed both with information technology and with citizen rights. This department of government was founded by statutes passed in 1836 as the office of information about and for individuals. It also developed, from early on in its history, its own intriguing political programme for the use of that information, intimately related to public health issues. Historical scholarship in this field is particularly indebted to John Eyler’s classic intellectual biography of William Farr, Victorian social medicine (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979). Eyler’s work has provided the most exacting standards and guidance to the history of the GRO during its first four decades of existence.

Higgs’ flow of stimulating articles on the history of the GRO have indicated that he would be the scholar to complement Eyler’s foundational study with a book which added the dimension of administrative and organisational history to Eyler’s research on the first four decades, and which then took the story on for the next seven decades to give us an integrated intellectual, scientific, administrative and political history of the later life of this highly significant office of government. Higgs has also published in 2004 The rise of the information state (Palgrave), an ambitious but also accessible and refreshingly anti-Foucauldian conspectus, which sensibly argues that the information about individuals collected by the state from 1500 onwards was often less about surveillance than ‘empowerment’—information required by middle-class persons to go about their property-owning and rate-paying legal lives and by working-class persons to receive various forms of income transfers and other social and health services.
The GRO should be the paradigm case for Higgs’ more general interpretation. It was both the government gatekeeper of individuals’ legal identities, through its supervision of the civil registration system since July 1837 and the producer of official demographic statistics—the basis for the state to exercise its Foucauldian ‘biopower’. However, Higgs does not really take the opportunity in *Life, death and statistics* to connect with these interesting and ambitious theses discussed in *The rise of the information state*. Those looking for an amplification and an examination in detail of that larger agenda through an expert case study will come away rather disappointed. As Higgs tells us in the opening sentence of the Preface he has opted instead for ‘a rather old-fashioned’ organisational history of a government department. The result, at least for this reader, is a bit of a curate’s egg.

There is much on the positive side. Indeed, the opening and the closing pairs of chapters of the book are excellent and are important new contributions to the history of the GRO. In chapter 1 Higgs is to be congratulated on finally unravelling and making complete sense of the obscure origins in 1836 of the Registration and Marriage Acts, which originally created the GRO and the civil registration system which it supervised. He convincingly shows that a sequence of eminent scholars, including John Cullen, David Glass and John Eyler have failed to place these acts in the correct context of the immediately preceding work of the Real Property Commission, 1829–33, and an associated social movement by the propertied upper and middle classes ‘to establish state institutions for the recording and preservation of titles to property’ (p. 9). This movement also led to the establishment of the Public Record Office, the Patent Office, the Land Registry and the Central Probate Office. Hence, like each of these offices, the alphabetical indexes of the GRO were housed conveniently near to the inns of court in Somerset House. Previous accounts which stressed the primary role of Dissenters have been misled by ‘a masterly exercise in jumping-on the property-recording bandwagon’ (p. 11) by John Wilks, MP, leader of the Protestant Society for the Protection of Religious Liberty.

A highlight of the latter part of the book (chapter 7) is an excellent analysis of the takeover of the GRO by the new Ministry of Health—or more precisely by Sir Robert Morant’s National Health Insurance Committee—which resulted in the sidelining of Bernard Mallet, the incumbent Registrar-General, by ‘Morant’s little Sylvanus’, as the future Registrar-General (1921–45) was unflatteringly known in Whitehall. As is well-known, the new Ministry of Health under Sir George Newman (who pipped Arthur Newsholme, the incumbent Chief Medical Officer of the Local Government Board, to the nation’s new top medical post in 1919) was consistently evasive on the issue of the health implications of unemployment and class differentials in health during the interwar period. As Higgs shows, consequently the new and independent MRC surpassed the GRO as the principal scientific analyst of these important inter-war health issues. Higgs notes that under Vivian’s regime Dr T.H.C. Stevenson (Farr’s third successor as Medical Superintendant of Statistics from 1909) was rarely allowed to put to use the new official social classification scheme, and that Stevenson himself rapidly became disaffected...
(p. 198). (Stevenson partially circumvented this muzzle placed upon him by publishing class analyses of official data in academic journals, such as the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*).

Another benefit of Higgs’ scholarship is that we now know much more about how the GRO’s staffing grew (or rather failed to do so for much of the nineteenth century) and the nature of its work. Outside the peak activity census years, most of its work was in the processing of the annual inflow of civil registration and in conducting searches of these alphabetically-filed documents for probate purposes, etc. Given that the annual records of such vital events more or less doubled between 1840 and 1895 while the number of searches requested increased by a factor of 50, it is noteworthy that staffing for the whole Office appears only to have risen modestly from 70 to 78 clerks from 1855 to 1895 (Tables 3.1 and 3.2). One of the book’s several strengths is in its examination of the administrative struggle of successive Registrars-Generals of varying abilities to manage efficiently these ever-expanding demands on the national registration service. Higgs confirms that the last two decades of the Victorian century were ones of particular difficulty for the Office on the administrative side. Higgs shows that at almost exactly the point around 1900 when this form of pressure on the Office began to ease, in consequence of falling fertility and mortality rates, a rapidly increasing range of new central state demands on the GRO for mass registration information on whole categories of individuals emerged. Initially this was related to the early ‘welfare’ legislation of the New Liberals. For instance, the old age pensions introduced in 1908 required verification of the 490,000 claimants’ ages. But this was as nothing compared with the deluge of work related to World War I and its aftermath. The GRO’s system of national registration was crucial to the conscription of millions of men and women into the armed forces, munitions and other industries, along with its provision of evidence of dependency triggering transfer payments for wives and children and then—all too often—for widows of the conscripted.

The principal historiographical beneficiaries of Higgs’s primary focus on administrative and organisational history are, perhaps not surprisingly, the Office’s administrative heads—or some of them. Higgs certainly makes a good case for the crucial importance of the long-serving second Registrar-General, George Graham (1842–1879), although he is too hasty to claim that other historians have been guilty of belittling Graham. Eyler’s and my own main focus on the intellectual and scientific output of the GRO has inevitably given prime attention to the remarkable, unbroken series of gifted medical superintendents from Farr onwards but I, for instance, have always written of the ‘partnership’ between Farr and Graham. Although Higgs emphasises the revisionist case he makes for recognition of the at least equal significance of the administrators—the Registrar-Generals—relative to the medical statisticians in the history of the GRO, even he, himself, seems to be arguing the opposite at times, notably in chapter 7, when demonstrating how intellectually vigorous was Farr’s fourth successor, Percy Stocks, who held the post after Stevenson (1933–50). Higgs convincingly shows how it was Stock—and certainly not the
long-serving Sylvanus Vivian—who successfully carved out an entirely new public health role for the GRO in the tenth and eleventh decades of existence, as provider of the nation’s morbidity statistics for the new NHS. Of course, it is broadly true that the GRO only fully flourished when led by a team in which both its administrative and its scientific chiefs were each men of great ability and mutual respect, as attested both by its founding partnership (1840–80) and the period of doldrums which beset the GRO during the twenty-year tenure (1880–1900) of the office of Registrar-General by Brydges P. Henniker, an ex-Horse Guards Etonian who, as Higgs documents, was rather out of his depth.

The main reservation I have over the volume’s scholarly value follows from Higgs’s decision, announced at the start of the Preface, to confine himself to an ‘organisational history’. This seems to me to have been a fundamental mistake. The GRO was fully involved, from the beginning of its existence, in a number of the key political, ideological and scientific matters of the day. Higgs finds that he simply cannot avoid engaging with this aspect of the GRO’s history. But instead of presenting this as an integrated part of his account, he continually offers summaries of these developments in order to attempt to downplay their importance. Having set himself to write only an organisational history, he seems to have interpreted this to mean that he should write a history which asserts the primary importance of the administrative history of the GRO over those other aspects of its intellectual, scientific and political history which have been previously researched by other scholars. This approach traps Higgs into spending far too much of his time in the central chapters of this book arguing for his narrow and rather less interesting, reduced history of the GRO through the unsatisfactory method of cantankerously critiquing other historians’ research on the GRO’s intellectual and scientific history, without always paying sufficient attention to the complexities of other scholars’ work (not something Higgs has been guilty of in most of his other published articles).

I ask readers’ forbearance in illustrating this problem with one major example of it, related to an aspect of my own research on the history of the Registrar-General’s social classification of occupations, in use at the censuses from 1911 to 1991. This official model of the nation’s social classes has turned out to have great influence on the twentieth-century study of fertility decline and on the analysis of health inequalities (featuring in the Black Report in 1980 for instance). It was originally constructed by Dr T.H.C Stevenson, the third of Farr’s successors as Medical Superintendent of Statistics for analysing and presenting the results of the famous 1911 ‘fertility census’. Higgs’ critique of my work on the origins of the official classification scheme occupies large parts of chapters 4 and 5. However, it is premised on a fundamental misreading or, at best, a rather crude simplification of a range of complex arguments relating to a very specific and detailed chronology about changing scientific and political ideas during the period c.1860–1925. I required several chapters to construct this complex story in Part II of *Fertility, class and gender* (Cambridge University Press, 1996). Higgs’ misreading of my interpretation is compounded by the repeated experience when reading these two chapters of *Life, death and statistics* of first encountering my own work turned into an unrecognisable caricature,
only to find a few pages later a crude version of my own interpretation reappearing as the antidote to this straw man, being presented as if it is Higgs’ own, new revisionary thesis!

For instance, in chapter 4 Higgs claims of my discussion of official and unofficial work on social classification in the 1880s that ‘Szreter argues ... that the creation of this [that is, the subsequent, Stevenson model of social class] reflected a long-standing interest on the part of the officers of the GRO in the subject.’ (p. 134) and that Szreter ‘attempts to provide a lineage for Stevenson’s innovation’ (p. 141). This enables Higgs to conclude that Szreter is wrong: that the GRO had no such long-standing interest and ‘in the 1890’s the Office continued its traditional role of analysing natality and mortality in terms of locality, settlement type, population density and occupation. … Stevenson’s work in this field [from 1909] should be credited, therefore, as an innovative break with the past rather than as the culmination of the GRO’s research efforts.’ (p. 144). However, the latter sentence summarises exactly the position I have argued—at rather greater length—both in 1991 (Social History of Medicine) and 1996. My point, in doing so, was to demonstrate that, despite the GRO’s definite knowledge of various other social classification schemes and its preparedness to experiment with them in the 1880s, it deliberately never invested in the effort of constructing a social classification scheme for itself because this had insufficient pay-off for its primary goal, which was the promotion of the nation’s public health. As long as this was conceived by the GRO as principally a local authority and individual responsibility, a national social class analysis was not important.

However, by the turn of the new century a range of vigorous political ideologies, from the Fabian socialists on the left, through Liberal Imperialists, to the hereditarian eugenicists on the right, were arguing for the need for truly national policies to deal with the nation’s perceived social and health problems. The eugenicists focused on the issue of reputed class differentials in mortality and fertility to argue that the nation was succumbing to a deterioration in its hereditary ‘stock’. Therefore the GRO, as the authoritative keeper of official statistics on these matters, was asked to examine these claims for the Inter-departmental Enquiry on Physical Deterioration, reporting in 1904. John Tatham and William Dunbar (Stevenson and Mallet’s predecessors) found no support for the hereditarian view in their analysis of infant mortality patterns, finding instead an association with deficient environments (Szreter, Fertility, class and gender, 247). However, the eugenicists redoubled their campaign after 1904 and so the GRO continued to find itself fighting a battle over the correct interpretation of its demographic statistics, with the eugenicists also alleging that declining fertility was due to failing fecundity among the more intellectual classes in society. Furthermore, with the election of the New Liberals in 1906, a novel willingness in the national government itself to see health and social issues as a national responsibility provided another crucial impetus—for T.H.C Stevenson after 1909 to undertake the labour of creating a social classification scheme so that the central government would henceforth have at its disposal measures of the
social patterns of mortality and fertility divergence which its national policies would be affecting. Thus, the GRO’s disposition towards a social classification scheme does have a long and complex history but it is only by understanding its long-standing reasons for not investing in something which it was well aware of, that we can understand what it was that changed in the first decade of the twentieth century in the wider context in which the GRO was operating and what the precise motives were that led to the innovation. The structure of my argument seems to have eluded Higgs, who has therefore now misled his readers about my work and about this important aspect of the history of the GRO.

Higgs also spends much space in chapter 5 disputing whether the emergence of an official social classification scheme was primarily the work of T.H.C Stevenson, in close contact with his public health mentor, Arthur Newsholme, as I have argued (Szreter, Fertility, class and gender, chapter 5). Higgs prefers instead to intimate to his readers that the classification scheme may have emanated from the putative eugenicist motivations of Sir Bernard Mallet, Stevenson’s Registrar-General, but he produces no new evidence of substance to back up this claim for Mallet’s primary influence. This is not a repeat of the impressive revisionist scholarship of chapters 1 and 2. Higgs wants to return us to the state of hypothetical conjecture regarding the origins and motives for the classification scheme as perhaps being ‘eugenic’, entertained by Soloway and Austoker before I published my arguments and evidence in full in 1996. But Higgs introduces no compelling new evidence on this issue, while seeming to ignore the salient points in the account I have offered: firstly (as Higgs does acknowledge, but in a footnote on p. 141), that it is Stevenson, not Mallet, who is clearly documented as having first raised the issue of the need for a fertility census classified by social position; secondly, Mallet himself is twice on record as having acknowledged that ‘the credit for both the initiation and the organisation’ of this work should go entirely to Dr Stevenson (Szreter, Fertility, class and gender, 268); thirdly, the fact of Stevenson’s long-standing and continuing close collaboration with the leading anti-hereditary environmentalist, Arthur Newsholme (such that it was Newsholme who first used and published in an official document the classification scheme Stevenson had developed). As I also pointed out, this was confirmed by a search of the Mallet private papers (which I conducted), which turned up nothing to support Mallet’s candidature for authorship of the scheme (Szreter, Fertility, class and gender, 267).

Furthermore, as a result of working since 1996 on Stevenson’s biography for the new Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford University Press, 2004) I can now add the following quotation from Sir Bernard Mallet, which would seem to clarify precisely what happened in relation to the two men’s working practices when he and Stevenson took over at the GRO:

We were appointed to the General Register Office in the same year—1909, I, as Registrar-General and he as Superintendent of Statistics. We at once set to work on the preparations for the Census; and it did not take me many weeks to recognise that he had what amounted to a positive genius for extracting
from the mass of statistics on births and deaths which came into the office the
most valuable and original results. I therefore gave him as free a hand and as
much support as I could, and the result was a very marked improvement in
our vital statistics, which soon became again what they had been in the last
century under Dr Farr, a model of their kind and recognised as such all the
world over (Mallet, The Times, 14th September 1931).

Thus, Higgs’s attempt to build a case that Mallet rather than Stevenson was
driving the analytical agenda of the GRO from 1909 has to rely on a couple of
quotations (p. 138) from Mallet’s introductory statements to the Registrar
General’s annual reports where he advertised to readers the significance of the
ensuing analyses in Stevenson’s authored ‘Letter to the Registrar General’. But
these were Stevenson’s analyses! Mallet’s deference to Stevenson’s expertise is
clear in everything Mallet wrote on the subject of their working relationship.

What could have been a masterly, new summary synthesis, which might have
integrated an administrative narrative with what we know from the earlier
research of David Glass, John Eyler, Richard Soloway and other scholars
(including myself and Higgs) has instead been too narrowly designed and is
consequently disfigured in its central chapters by a misconstrued exercise in
boxing with shadows, which contests not the real interpretations of other
scholars but crude simplifications of them. The other five chapters are much
better than this, as I have indicated. However, a magisterial, wide-ranging and
accurate interpretation of the whole history, significance and contribution of
this important institution and its work, the GRÖ 1837–1952 (at which point it
became the Office of Population Census and Survey, OPCS, and has since been
again transformed into the Office of National Statistics, ONS), matching the
high standards set by John Eyler’s work, still remains to be published.

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Life, death and statistics: a reply to Simon Szreter

It is always nice when someone whose work you admire takes the trouble to
read and comment on one’s own offerings in a field. Simon Szreter has, of
course, published a number of key works on the history of the General Register
Office (GRO), including his magisterial Fertility, class and gender of 1996. In
conjunction with John Eyler, Simon has rightly placed the history of the GRO
at the centre of the development of the modern public health movement. I am
glad that he finds most of the chapters in my book on the GRO of use. His kind
words respecting my work on what one might call the non-intellectual origins
of the 1836 Registration Act, and on the importance of the relationship between
the GRO’s administrative and scientific heads for the successful prosecution of
the institution’s intellectual work, are especially heartening. Alas, he does not
like the two central chapters, and rather dams the whole as a ‘curate’s egg’.

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Normally in such circumstances it is incumbent upon an author to take the rough with the smooth, and to remain silent. However, in this case I think that some reply is appropriate, and that for two reasons. First, and most importantly, Simon raises some interesting issues with respect to writing institutional history that merit further exploration. Secondly, and rather unfortunately, he may have given the mistaken impression that I have attempted a general critique of the whole school of historians who have worked on the intellectual history of the GRO.

To take the second matter first, as far as I am aware I have not undertaken an extensive critique, cantankerously or otherwise, of the generality of historians’ research on the GRO’s intellectual and scientific history. I discuss the work of John Eyler on the scientific activities of William Farr in two sections of Chapter 3, but mostly summarise, to the best of my ability, what he says. This is a prelude to an analysis of the limited clerical support Farr could draw upon within the GRO for his work, and of the contribution of George Graham, the second Registrar General. The exception to this self-denying ordinance is in the case of some of Simon’s own work, which is the only example that Simon gives. The reason for my engagement with his arguments here is that Simon has tried to understand the cycles of activity in the GRO in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods—relative institutional inertia followed by a burst of activity—in terms of an intellectual struggle between public health environmentalism and eugenics. I think that these cycles of activity are best seen in administrative and managerial terms. This is perhaps not very exciting history but that does not make it untrue. Chapter 4 examines the reasons for the relative decline of the GRO in the 1880s and 90s, drawing, in part, on some suggestions made by Simon as to the possible non-intellectual reasons for this pattern. In fact, only 17 pages of Chapter 5, out of the book’s 250, deal directly with the 1911 classification of socio-economic groups.

Simon claims I misunderstand his broad argument that the Victorian GRO was interested in understanding poverty and mortality in terms of social class but that its environmentalism and local interests prevented it spending many resources on such an analysis. T.H.C. Stevenson’s development of the system of socio-economic groups in the aftermath of the 1911 census is thus an innovation but within a departmental tradition. As Simon puts it in his *Fertility, class and gender*, ‘there is a strong continuity manifest in T.H.C. Stevenson’s work … when he came to construct the professional model [of SEGs]’ (p. 121). This is surely the argument of Chapter 2 of this key work, which attempts to create a GRO ‘genealogy’ for Stevenson’s activities. Simon’s argument has not eluded me, I simply do not agree with it. As I see it, the GRO never had more than a passing interest, if that, in class-based explanations of poverty or mortality in the Victorian period. It also showed precious little interest in the subject after 1911, at least until Percy Stock’s arrival as the GRO’s medical statistician in the early 1930s. In this sense Stevenson’s work was indeed more of a departure than is allowed for in Simon’s analysis.

More broadly, Simon claims that in *Life, death and statistics* I have written ‘a history which asserts the primary importance of the administrative history of
the GRO over those other aspects of its intellectual, scientific and political history which have been previously researched by other scholars’. I think this is a rather crude caricature of what an institutional history should try to do. My argument in the book is that one cannot write the organisational history of the GRO as if it was simply a research project—a sort of Victorian Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure. Institutions are not the sum of the intellectual work that goes on within them. The springs of organisational development within the GRO were various, and not always a direct reaction to scientific debates. Moreover, that organisational history gives a context within which intellectual developments can be understood, and at times does indeed determine what intellectual work can be done. The latter activity requires infrastructure, and that infrastructure depends upon political and organisational decision-making, on resources, and on intangibles such as leadership. As the book tries to show, this was especially true from the late Victorian period onwards as the GRO was progressively integrated into Whitehall. For both those who have experience of life outside academe, and for academics constrained by the idiocies of the Research Assessment Exercise, such arguments will not seem that controversial. Indeed, the positive aspects of Simon’s review appear to endorse these arguments. Problems seem to arise, however, when they are applied to Simon’s own work.

The difference in our approaches can be seen in Simon’s portrayal of our disagreement over the 1911 classification system as a dispute over its intellectual authorship. I do not attempt to argue that Sir Bernard Mallet was the author or instigator of the specific system used. Rather, I suggest that as the head of the GRO he was interested in the question of class, both in terms of its impact on fertility and mortality, because he had eugenic concerns. Of course, he let Stevenson get on with the analysis, as befits a hierarchical structure of authority, but he worked hard to persuade the Treasury that his Superintendent of Statistics should have the means to analyse the data through the purchase of machine tabulation equipment. If Mallet did not support this work it would not have happened, just as Graham prevented Farr working on stillbirths because he thought enquiries into the subject might undermine the registration of births. As Simon points out, Mallet in his own reports draws attention to Stevenson’s work but he does so to draw out their relevance to eugenic debates. One cannot, therefore, see the GRO as an organisation simply as part of an environmentalist crusade against eugenics. That Stevenson was replaced in the 1930s by Percy Stocks, the medical statistician in Karl Pearson’s Eugenic Laboratory at UCL, is further evidence that eugenic concerns and the GRO were not necessarily inimical.

Nor am I convinced that Stevenson’s own outlook was necessarily formed by a belief in an environmentalism that saw social inequality and its results in terms of what Simon describes as a ‘transgenerational cycle of poverty or deprivation, entirely due to environmental economic and social factors’ (Fertility, class and gender, 214). Stevenson’s arguments for the importance of the possession of a form of reified ‘culture’ in explaining the contraceptive or hygienic practices of the middle classes, and thus their lower fertility and mortality compared to the working classes, seem difficult to square with this particular environmentalist
model. Rather than seeing the public health movement as a unitary, and uniformly progressive, entity, it might be better to see it, like many other loose groupings, as containing numerous strands, not all of which we might sympathise with today. This is not to fall back on the universal cynicism of Michel Foucault, but merely to foreground the complexity of historical developments. This meshes with the over-arching message of my broader study of The information state in England, in which I argue that ‘empowerment’ through State recognition should not always be seen as an unalloyed blessing (see my comments in ‘Colloquium on The Information State: Reply to Victor Gatrell and Steve Hindle’, Journal of Historical Sociology, 18 (2005), 138–143).

In an exchange such as this it is, of course, impossible to do justice to the arguments of both parties, and I would be delighted if other scholars are encouraged to buy our books to see these arguments in full!

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All articles reviewed were published in 2004 unless otherwise stated.

P. Anderton, 'Milking the sources: Cheshire dairy farming and the field notebooks of the 1910 “Domesday” survey', Local Historian, 34, 1–16.

Anderton draws attention to the value of the field notebooks, held in the National Archives at Kew (class IR58), that were written to facilitate the land tax valuation exercise that started in 1910, which are more informative than the related valuation books that can be found in county record offices. His study covers six neighbouring townships in the Holmes Chapel district of Cheshire where dairy farming predominated. A range of information is presented on farm sizes, land ownership, rents per acre, the floor plans of farms and the various specialised spaces and outbuildings they incorporated. Although the notebooks were not intended as a judgement upon farming methods and do not contain information on size of herds, variety of crops or profit margins, both the structural information they contain and the personal judgements sometimes offered give at least impressionistic evidence of the range and quality of farming practice.


Austin utilises the published returns from the 1307 subsidy for Hertfordshire (J. Brooker and S. Flood, eds, Hertfordshire Lay Subsidy Rolls 1307 and 1334, Hertfordshire Record Publications, 14 (1998), with an introduction by Mark Bailey), converts tax paid to taxable wealth and proceeds to map these results onto the soil and topography of the county. As the greatest part of the tax burden fell upon those with lower taxable wealth, the data primarily reflects the number of taxpayers, and to a lesser degree the wealth of individuals. He finds that all but one of the top ten townships were located on the main highways that followed the major river valleys through the centre and eastern edge of the county, which offered the best agricultural opportunities due to the rich alluvial soils found there. Smaller townships were situated on well drained boulder clays, but those who lived on the north-western uplands and southern London clays did not generate sufficient wealth to reach the tax threshold. As in adjoining Bedfordshire, therefore, settlement patterns and wealth were strongly related to soil types, and to access to major roads and waterways.
By a detailed consideration of a series of examples, Baigent shows in this paper the circumstances in which contemporary town maps can be a useful aid to tracing the history of urban development. She emphasises that, as with any other historical sources, it is important to ‘consider the purpose for which the map was drawn, the context in which it was published and often republished, and the personality of the cartographer’ (p. 37). The examples she considers include maps of Bristol, Bath and Gloucester.


Bailey examines the evidence contained in the Domesday Book on the changing nature of land ownership in Buckinghamshire in the 20 years after the Norman conquest. In 1066 land ownership was highly fragmented, reflecting centuries of partible inheritance as well as the ebb and flow between Anglo-Saxon and Dane: neither the crown nor the church was a major landowner. The defeat of Harold II at Hastings led to a massive change in landownership, scarcely one acre in 100 remaining in English hands. Of 393 Buckinghamshire estates listed in 1086, only 25 were held by the same person or institution as in 1066, while all the remaining English owners were ‘small fry’. A second group of Anglo-Saxons managed to survive as tenants to Norman overlords while, much more rarely, some new English owners emerged as a result of accommodation reached with the new regime.

M. Barke, ‘An 1811 census manuscript from North Shields’, Local Historian, 34, 28–36.

This paper attempts to establish the provenance of an undated manuscript population count of part of the urban area of North Shields which, from internal evidence, was probably drawn up in connexion with the 1811 census. The document is analysed to provide information on population size and growth in Tynemouth since 1800, the relationship between families, tenements and houses, local topography, and sex ratios. Sex ratios were heavily skewed towards women, and in the absence of significant opportunities in the area for female employment, it seems likely that this was a product of the temporary absence of men from this maritime centre due to the exigencies of war, which must cast doubt upon the representativeness of some of the statistics offered here.


This article discusses the medicalisation of childbearing in Barrow, Preston and Lancaster during the first half of the twentieth century, using evidence from the reports of Medical Officers of Health and oral history data from 250 women.
who were born between the 1870s and the 1950s. The argument advanced is that the medical profession gradually wrested control of childbearing from working class women partly because the falling birth rate meant that giving birth became a rarer event in the lives of most women, and partly because the profession was able to claim credit for the reduction of infant mortality and was thus able to argue authoritatively that medicalised childbirth was likely to lead to still lower infant death rates. The consequence was that traditional working class practices surrounding childbirth disappeared. The paper also contains insights into fertility and birth control. Beier’s respondents suggest that until World War I there was a certain fatalism about family size, but that afterwards the idea of planning a family was more overt. Abstinence and withdrawal were cited as widely used methods of contraception, with many women resorting to illegal abortions.


Dade parish registers survive in considerable—if as yet not fully known—numbers for the dioceses of York and Chester between 1777 and 1812. These registers include far more information than do standard parish registers and, although exact details vary, can give information on occupations, parentage, birth order, date of birth and baptism, age and cause of death and migration. Bellingham shows that they are by no means obscure, which makes it all the more surprising that they have not been more fully exploited for demographic purposes. It is hoped that this article will encourage historians to use them in the future.

E.C. Benson and C. Doxey, ‘The ecclesiastical census of 1851 and the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints’, *Local Historian*, 34, 66–79.

The excellent records of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints provide a record of 359 extant branches in the year 1851, which compares with just 188 recorded in the religious census of that year, just 52 per cent of the total; further comparison by locality gave only 133 matches, just 37 per cent of the total. Such a high omission rate is not surprising, however, given the fact that the church was new in Great Britain and rarely had its own chapels by this date, the majority of branches meeting in homes or rented rooms, or places that served other purposes during the week. Furthermore, the census records identified 55 locations for which no membership records exist, demonstrating the value of using difference sources in tandem. The study includes a detailed examination of branches of the church in Norfolk.


These five papers all deal with aspects of emigration, the three by Branigan, Harper and McCarthy specifically with emigration from Scotland. In the first of these three, Branigan charts the patterns of emigration from the Isle of Barra to Canada during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Until the mid-nineteenth century emigration was fuelled fairly continuously by the harsh conditions in the Hebrides, and the vastly greater opportunities for economic advancement in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton Island (the main destinations of the emigrants). Even the introduction of local industrial employment in the form of kelp processing could not stem the tide. Later, in 1850 and 1851, clearances forced another swathe of crofters to depart for Canada. According to Branigan, between 1770 and 1840 more than 2,000 people left (p. 47). In a population of about 2,000, this amounts to an emigration rate of at least 14 per thousand per year, which must have come close to cancelling out the natural increase.

The study of the activities of emigration agents is proving a fruitful approach to the history of emigration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (for an earlier study of this type, see the paper by Hudson reviewed in *Local Population Studies*, 69(2002)). In the third paper, Harper looks at Canadian agents in Scotland and Ireland. Some of the agents in Scotland were very diligent, and in general they were more successful than their counterparts in Ireland. Agents in Ireland had to contend with the reluctance of the Catholic population to leave, long-standing links with the United States which made it more attractive than Canada as a potential destination, and the active discouragement of emigration during the civil war of 1916–23. Protestants in Northern Ireland were worried that selective emigration could lead to a shifting of the demographic balance in the six counties in favour of Catholics. In both Scotland and Ireland, Canadian agents had competition from agents from New Zealand and Queensland (Australia), who were not slow to stress that the Antipodean climate was better than that in Canada.

In the fourth paper, McCarthy uses oral history evidence to shed light on emigration from Scotland during the inter-war period. The main conclusion of her analysis is that emigration during these years was heavily influenced by ‘personal networks’ which ‘disseminated ... information about potential destinations ...[and] supplied intending migrants with funding for their passage and assistance upon arrival’ (pp. 212–3). By the 1920s and 1930s these personal networks were extensive, and are given great prominence in the oral history testimony. McCarthy tentatively suggests that they might have been more important than economic circumstances in persuading would-be migrants to leave, and might help explain the apparent paradox that many people still left Scotland during the nineteenth century when the Scottish economy was very healthy.
The articles by Garrett and Perkins offer information rather than analysis. Garrett has extracted the names of 23 successful men of Northumbrian origin from the *Dictionary of Australian Biography*, and provides a brief précis of their careers. Perkins provides a transcript for 1849–1854 of the pocket book of John Crossman, a timber merchant of Torquay who took passengers to Quebec on his timber ships. The book usually, but not invariably, gives name, occupation or family relationship, age, the amount paid and date of payment, plus occasional marginal notes. Those listed were of humble origin, no doubt aspiring to the success achieved by their Northumbrian counterparts highlighted by Garrett.


This complex paper attempts to examine a network of relationships between illiteracy and occupation in industrialising Leicester. Using a well-known measure of illiteracy (the percentage of brides and grooms who could sign their own name in the marriage register), Brown shows that female literacy (at 40–50 per cent in the eighteenth century) was lower than that of males (60–70 per cent during the eighteenth century) throughout the period from 1760 to 1890, though it had almost caught up by the end of the period. Certain occupations (notably framework knitting) were characterised by low literacy, though the evidence supporting this conclusion relates largely to males.


This short note provides information on birth-baptism intervals in Cerrigydrudion and the surrounding area between 1662 and 1812. The evidence clearly indicates the variability of local practice, as well as confirming the existence of differences by social class.


Information on the employment and remuneration of women workers in agriculture is acknowledged to be scarce and difficult to use. Most conventional sources (such as census returns and the various surveys conducted during the Victorian period) are hard to interpret because women’s work tended to be highly seasonal and to vary markedly even over short distances with the type of agriculture being practised. In this paper, Burnette turns to a potentially more reliable source: farm accounts. These have the advantage in that they record the number of women employed on a continuous basis, together with the amounts that women were paid. They are by no means perfect, but Burnette is surely right when she says that they are superior to other possible sources. Using a sample of farm accounts drawn from across England, she shows that female wages varied over time between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries in a way similar to male wages. They also varied regionally, being higher in areas where other sectors of the
economy competed for female labour (such as the north-west of England). During the first half of the nineteenth century the male-female wage gap increased (except in the north-west), but females continued to be employed as outdoor labourers to an extent roughly double that reported in the 1851 census.


This paper describes the construction of a database containing biographical details of all clergy of the Church of England between 1540 and 1835. The authors stress the variety of sources which were used to try to capture information about as many clergy as possible, and the difficulties of multi-source record linkage that they encountered. Eventually, it is hoped to make the database available on-line to academics and family historians.


Classical demographic transition theory holds that the decline in fertility takes place some time after the decline in mortality because institutional supports to high fertility (which were essential in order to maintain population numbers when mortality was high) are slow to adapt to a lower mortality regime. One corollary of this is that great social upheaval might accelerate the removal of these supports. In this paper, Caldwell examines this hypothesis by looking at 13 examples of massive social dislocation, including one from England: the Civil War and Commonwealth period of the seventeenth century. He concludes that there is considerable evidence that such periods are associated with rapid fertility decline, and that there is only rarely a ‘catching up’ once the period of upheaval has come to an end. It is unlikely, however, that social ‘crises’ of this kind can, alone, cause a fertility transition, but they might accelerate one which is already happening; and they might also bring forward a fertility transition which was about to happen for more conventional reasons.


In 1913, two amateur historians from Halifax, Whiteley Turner and W.E. Denison, together with a local artist, Arthur Comfort, published *A springtime saunter*, being a record of a walk they took over the moors to the north and west of Halifax and through the Brontë country of Haworth and Oxenhope. The book included a wealth of social commentary, including some analysis of population changes in the area. In this paper, Cant and Lloyd write about the authors of *A springtime saunter*, and bring the social and economic history of the area up to date, by describing changes in the twentieth century. The article includes some extracts from censuses, together with oral history evidence gathered from local inhabitants.
This is a brief progress report on a project to list and make available on-line the correspondence between the board of guardians of Southwell Poor Law Union and the central Poor Law Commission and Board in London, held in class M12 in the National Archives in Kew. Although these volumes are listed in the Archives’ electronic catalogue, there is no indication there of their content, and the Southwell Workhouse Research Group intends to make that content available through the construction of both an electronic catalogue and scanned images, working in harness with the National Trust and the National Archives itself. The Archives have provided microfilms of 11 volumes of correspondence, the National Trust have provided office space on the site of the restored Southwell workhouse, and the Research Group are doing the work—providing an exemplar of team work in local historical research. To date that work is already beginning to reveal the intimate nature of the local and regional information that class M12 records contain.

In this paper, Clark examines the administration of smallpox vaccination in one small area of rural Kent, focusing on the tensions between the local authorities and the central Local Government Board, which are revealed in a voluminous correspondence. The Hollingbourne area had a better record of compliance with the vaccination legislation than either Kent as a whole, or the national average. Allowing for infant vaccinations which took place at ages older than the maximum permitted by law, it seems that more than 90 per cent of eligible infants were vaccinated. Previous articles on vaccination legislation include those by Baxby (reviewed in Local Population Studies (LPS) 65 (2000)); Durbach (reviewed in LPS 67 (2001)); and Brown and Brown, and Durbach (reviewed in LPS 71 (2003)).

This article describes the results of an Arts and Humanities Research Board funded project to conduct an in-depth study of the place names of the Strathglass and Beasly and Glass river systems, where the most southern, certain, example of a Norse name was know to survive. Immense linguistics problems were encountered, and as surviving Norse place names are so few there are no clear pointers to the nature of the frontier or type of settlement. It appears, however, that a process of restriction of names to a particular part of an area took place rather than a clear replacement, while the complex overlaying and interacting strata of names from different languages indicate a complex ethnic and political chronology. The authors tentatively hypothesise the existence of a frontier society in which incoming Norse settlers mingled with the established population, but while there is enough toponymic evidence to be certain of their
presence, it is impossible to say anything about the nature of their relationship with the indigenous population.


Users of historical censuses will be well aware of the phenomenon of ‘age heaping’, whereby reported ages are concentrated on numbers ending in the digit 0 (and to a lesser extent 5). The same phenomenon of digit preference occurs in a wide range of historical documents, and the heaping is not always on multiples of five and ten. The authors of this paper present a simple but general method of assessing the magnitude and statistical significance of the data heaping which can be applied in most contexts. The method is explained in detail and compared with existing approaches. Its advantages over previous methods are principally that it is amenable to statistical testing and that it is not restricted to heaping on any particular multiples. It can be applied equally to age heaping in census data, to data on durations in days (which tend to heap on multiples of seven), or to data giving numbers of people attending religious services (which tend to heap on multiples of 50).


Feet of fines are copies of legal agreements reached following disputes over landownership. Long dismissed as a piece of legal fiction, Davies and Kissock complete their restoration to respectability as a valuable source for the exploration of medieval agrarian history at the local and regional level. Here they are used to throw light on the land market in various English counties—principally Shropshire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire—during the period of agricultural crisis of the early fourteenth century, so convincingly described by Ian Kershaw over 30 years ago (‘The great famine and agrarian crisis in England 1315–1322’, Past and Present, 59 (1973), 3–50). From an analysis of nearly 4,000 documents, they find an increased level of activity in the freehold land market during these years, paralleling previous studies of the customary land market, particularly in areas where other documentary sources—such as the Nonarum Inquisitiones—also indicate difficulty, while the 1327 lay subsidy further suggests that it was the poorer sections of society who were selling their land. For all of those forced to sell, there were others ready to take advantage of the opportunity to acquire both animals and land.


Dimmock discusses the population, regional significance, government, economy and social structure of Haverfordwest from the late thirteenth to the early sixteenth century. Recent estimates have revised the proportional demographic weight of Welsh towns in this period to circa 20 per cent of the total population, and for 1377 Haverfordwest is estimated at 2,635 souls, though not without a
little creative accounting. Decay set in at some point in the fifteenth century, but probably not until the 1450s, its long term decline producing a population of approximately 1,500 by 1563 according to the Bishops’ Census of that year, although no allowance is made for the probable undercount that this census can produce. Nevertheless, in the later Middle Ages Haverfordwest played a significant regional role, received an important crown charter in 1479, was involved in the wine trade and may also have participated in the expanding cloth export trade. Over 40 occupations have been found recorded in deeds alone before 1549, all of this reflecting the role that it played as a major ‘small town’ in the later Middle Ages, only to decline and revert to the production of raw materials—along with many other Welsh towns—in the later sixteenth century.


Growing any kind of crop in Scotland’s Highlands and Islands was ever a risky enterprise, and it is likely that low-level, minor subsistence ‘crises’ were a regular occurrence. In this paper, Dodgshon argues that local communities in this region had developed sophisticated strategies to cope with risk, with the result that for a major subsistence crisis to occur, not only did climatic conditions have to be extreme, but also they had to be extreme enough to overcome the risk-minimising strategies which the population had adopted. The paper presents a wide-ranging discussion of the nature of the Highland agrarian economy, and how the inhabitants coped with scarcity.


In this short paper Evans argues that the Hearth Taxes are not generally a reliable guide to either population size of levels of poverty. A brief administrative background is provided, emphasising inconsistency, confusion and the possibilities for evasion: it is suggested that one instruction required that all paupers should be listed, but this instruction does not appear to have been followed. Hearth Tax returns from 1674 (usually one of the more reliable and complete returns) for Framlingham and Stowmarket are compared with contemporary lists of poor-rate payers on the one hand and recipients of relief on the other, and it is discovered that the match is far from perfect for rate payers, and very poor for recipients or ‘collectioners’. Indeed, only 14 of 117 collectioners identified in the Framlingham poor rate list of 1674 were found among the exempt in the Hearth Tax return of that year. Evans reports, however, that exemption certificates have not been consulted, as they remain unsorted and have not been microfilmed for Suffolk, while the fact that many paupers did not head households might well explain their absence from a tax that was only paid by household heads. While it is true that lists of those exempt from the Hearth Tax do not equate to the poor, much previous research testifies to the value of the returns if due allowance is made for the variable quality of recording between both place and time. *Local Population Studies*


This paper uses a variety of archival sources, including probate records, Hearth Tax records, other tax returns and the records of Newcastle Trinity House, to study aspects of the lives of the men apprenticed to Trinity House between around 1650 and 1700. It sheds light on the families from which these men were drawn (not all with a seafaring tradition) and the geographical areas from which they came.


In an article published in 2002, Peter Tilley described the Kingston Local History Project, which is using nominative record linkage to create life histories of the residents of that town during the late-nineteenth century (see P. Tilley, ‘Creating life histories and family trees from nineteenth century census records, parish registers and other sources’, Local Population Studies (LPS), 68, 63–81). This paper describes one of the outputs of that exercise, a micro-study of infant mortality in one street of Kingston between 1872 and 1911. French shows that during this period there were 154 deaths of residents of Asylum Road, of which 64 were to infants aged under one year. Using census data, he demonstrates that Asylum Road was subject to intense overcrowding, being populated substantially by Italian immigrants engaged in casual work, more than one family of whom often shared one small house. The situation did not escape the attention of the Medical Officer of Health and the Coroner, but as many of the properties in Asylum Road were owned by a member of the Corporation and the Board of Guardians no action was taken. Readers interested in the Kingston Local History Project might like to consult the articles by French reviewed in LPS 73 (2004), and French and Warren reviewed below.


The first of these papers uses the annual reports of the Medical Officers of Health—an important but neglected source for the study of population at the local level—in a comparative analysis of infant mortality in Birmingham and Sheffield. The evidence that these reports contain needs to be treated with caution, since they were compiled by people who were convinced that sanitary reform was the key to improving health. For Birmingham, Galley concludes
that it is difficult, if not impossible, to assess how the various social measures introduced affected its infant mortality rate (IMR), but that it seems that social interventions can provide, at best, only a partial explanation of the declines in the IMR. The reports for Sheffield are poorer in quality, but show, as in Birmingham, that efforts to reduce infant deaths centred around preventing epidemic diarrhoea, that blame for infant deaths was frequently directed towards mothers, and that after 1900 efforts were made to improve maternal education. Though Sheffield was less interventionist than Birmingham, the overall pattern of decline in the IMRs in the two cities was virtually identical and hence it seems that social intervention by itself was not responsible for the turning point in the national infant mortality series.

The second paper is a case study of Kingston-upon-Thames in which French and Warren describe their database of the entries in the municipal cemetery burial registers at Bonner Hill between 1855 and 1911 (for more details, see the paper by French reviewed in Local Population Studies, 73 (2004)). These burial details have been linked to the Kingston census returns for 1861, 1871, 1881 and 1891. The burial database and the linked data are now being used to analyse the changing profile of mortality in general and infant mortality in particular. The value of combining the demographic data with the reports of the local Medical Officers of Health is emphasised. Work undertaken so far suggests that, at the individual level, those infants who died from summer diarrhoea had parents in low status occupations, lived in a predominantly working class streets and endured indifferent sanitary conditions.


This paper evaluates the accuracy of the transcription of the 1881 census enumerators’ books (CEBs) under the auspices of the Genealogical Society of Utah which led to the creation of the machine-readable data files now available from AHDS History at the UK Data Archive. By comparing the AHDS files with photocopies and microfilms of the CEBs for a sample of Hertfordshire enumeration districts, Goose shows that serious errors of transcription (which involve the historian using the data files getting misleading or incorrect information) are, on average, very rare. Most serious errors relate to the information about age and occupation. However, although overall the transcription is of high quality, a few enumeration districts have much higher error rates than the average, and there is no easy way of telling which these are from the machine-readable files alone. Finally, the CEB column relating to disability only contains positive information for a small minority of the population, but the errors in transcription are in this case so frequent as to render the data almost useless.


It is widely believed that ‘living-in’ farm service had largely withered as an institution in southern and eastern England by the mid-nineteenth century.
(see, for example, A. Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1981)). This short note is a report of an analysis of the incidence of farm service in the St Albans region carried out by the Centre for Regional and Local History at the University of Hertfordshire. It turns out that the incidence of farm service was considerably higher in this district than might have been expected, and at least double the county level shown in the published census reports. Work is continuing to extend the analysis to the whole county, and only then will the reliability or otherwise of the published census reports become clear.


This is the first of a series of articles commissioned by Alan Crosby, editor of *The Local Historian*, intended to bring to wider notice the activities of organisations dedicated to cognate areas of historical activity. A brief description is provided of the evolution of, and influences upon, historical demography since the 1950s, which underpinned the formation of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure and in consequence the journal *Local Population Studies* in 1968, designed as ‘a forum for all who practice the art’. The evolution of the journal and its activities is outlined, as is its philosophy in promoting collaboration and mutuality between the professional and the ‘amateur’ branches of the historical community. The importance of locality, part of the sea-change that affected at least part of the historical profession in the 1960s, is emphasised, as is the centrality of population history to local history long before ‘community history’ ever raised its head. Its importance is perhaps greater than ever, for the key publications to arise from the work of the Cambridge Group have primarily focused upon the national picture, using local material instrumentally to this end, leaving much work to be done on locality and region. As this work proceeds, the limitations of national averages and the variety of experiences that constituted what have hitherto been described as national trends are repeatedly exposed, re-emphasising the need to take account not only of the specificities of time, but also of place, occupation and class.


Although travel between England and Wales was common by the early sixteenth century, few comments upon or descriptions of the process survive—hence the value of the account of Sir Edward Don, who travelled from his home in Buckinghamshire to mid-and south-Wales in 1524 on family business. Over a period of two months he kept a daily record of his costs and purchases along the way, an extended report upon which is provided here. Unfortunately, Don made few observations upon either Wales or the Welsh, but the diary serves to indicate just how such journeys could take place, and the ease and safety with which they could be conducted, in stark contrast to the dangers inherent in travel to Wales 100 years previously. He reported no signs of
hostility or distrust, and managed to cover 25–30 miles a day, very much like a trip to Wales today.

The nature and process of travel is early modern England is rarely discussed in standard histories of the period, despite the amount of movement that took place both within the British Isles and across the North Sea, and most accounts reside in the rarely read pages of the rather obscure publication series and journals. Any publication which helps to incorporate travel literature into the mainstream is to be welcomed.


In Local Population Studies 73, 86–7, we reviewed a paper by Anne Hardy about perceptions of tuberculosis in England and Wales between 1938 and 1970. This paper uses oral history evidence to describe attitudes to the same disease in Ireland during a similar period of the mid twentieth century. Guest shows that tuberculosis patients were frequently ostracised by Irish society, especially outside Dublin. Sanatoria were places to be feared and avoided. Patients who were discharged from sanatoria would often be isolated by their neighbours (and even sometimes by their own families). Death rates from tuberculosis were high, largely because a lack of X-ray equipment and ignorance or complacency on the part of doctors meant that the disease was not diagnosed at an early stage.


This paper examines the development of Methodism in Halifax over two centuries, with special reference to attitudes towards children’s education. Halifax was a prominent Methodist centre at an early date, with a circuit membership of 1,350 by 1800. Growth continued and new circuits emerged through to the mid-nineteenth century, after which decline set in, and the number of circuits contracted once again. Nevertheless, as late as 1972 there were 1,983 members of the Halifax circuit, falling to 1,088 by 2000. Despite a degree of wavering and uncertainty, Hargreaves detects a growing Methodist preoccupation with education and youth, which developed both in periods of expansion and decline. In periods of expansion it represented a concern to maintain control over Methodist youth, while when the movement felt under threat it represented an attempt to ensure the continuity of its mission. Its primary mechanism was the Sunday School movement, supplemented in the twentieth century by various uniformed and less formal youth organisations, but it struggled to maintain its hold from the 1930s forwards.


Despite Robert Woods’s suggestion that it may be time ‘to draw a line under the McKeown interpretation’ of the modern rise of population and, especially, the
reasons for the decline in mortality after 1750, the McKeown thesis will not go away (see Woods, The demography of Victorian England and Wales (Cambridge, 2000), 359). Drawing on some recent advances in our understanding of the relationship between nutrition and infection; and on some new empirical evidence about real wage trends between 1750 and 1850, Harris challenges those who have dismissed McKeown’s view that improved nutrition and a rising standard of living had an important part to play. He stresses that he is not trying to resurrect the McKeown thesis in its entirety, but wants to offer a ‘qualified defence’ which also ‘acknowledges some … weaknesses’ (p. 405). This reviewer (AH) considers that the paper succeeds in raising the possibility that nutritional improvements might have indirectly contributed more to the decline in mortality than recent literature has allowed. It also highlights some of the gaps in our knowledge of the causes of mortality, notably the lack of any convincing explanation about why mortality from tuberculosis fell so sharply after the mid nineteenth century, and the quantitative impact on mortality trends of immunisation against smallpox and the draining of marshlands before 1850. This is an important paper, which will be essential reading for anyone interested in the history of mortality decline in England during the past 300 years.


This paper describes the epidemic of typhoid which struck Wakefield Prison between December 1874 and April 1875. Harrison describes the complex and inadequate sanitation system in the prison, and charts the lack of a systematic and effective response to the initial outbreak of the disease. He also shows that the outbreak did have long-term effects on the administration of medical care in the prison, as it led indirectly to the appointment of a full-time surgeon. For readers interested in such matters, there are also detailed descriptions of the workings of various types of late nineteenth century earth and water closets.


This paper analyses the determinants of emigration in the great emigration boom period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and compares them with the factors which have affected migration since 1950. Hatton estimates a regression model of emigration to the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand between 1870 and 1913, and finds that this Victorian and Edwardian emigration was driven largely by economic factors, along with a ‘friends and relatives’ effect and some effect from the prevalence of assisted passages – especially to Australia between 1910 and 1913. He then tries to apply the results of this model to ‘predict’ emigration since 1950 and finds that his predictions are quite successful until the mid-1970s, but thereafter emigration was substantially lower than predicted. He attributes the gap to the increasing restrictions placed by the destination countries on migrants from the United Kingdom.

During the past few years, this review of the periodical literature has kept abreast of a recent debate among archivists about the tension between the needs of academic researchers and ‘leisure historians’ (see the papers by Mortimer and Gee reviewed in *Local Population Studies* (LPS) 71 (2003) and Moran and Taylor reviewed in LPS 73 (2004)). This debate focussed on researchers who actually visit record offices. However, an increasing number of users of archives these days travel no further than their home computer terminal, and this paper looks at the needs of this constituency. It is quite technical in places, but gives an insight into the ways that the archivist profession is thinking about providing and enhancing services for online users.


The topic of the assisted emigration of paupers during the 1830s has been discussed in several recent articles recently (see the papers by Howells reviewed in *Local Population Studies* (LPS), 63 (1999); LPS 67 (2001), and LPS 73 (2004)). In this paper, Hill discusses a scheme organised by the poor law authorities in the Surrey town of Dorking which assisted 77 people to emigrate to Canada in 1832, and another party of similar size in 1833. Like Howells, Hill believes that the select vestry acted out of ‘a genuine desire to improve the lives of the poor’ (p. 127). There seems little doubt, though, from the figures she quotes, that one effect of the emigration was to reduce the amount of money paid out in poor relief in Dorking. Therefore altruism and self-interest seem to have made a happy partnership for the ratepayers of Dorking in this case! The Dorking emigration was organised under the auspices of the Petworth Emigration Committee, the workings of which are described in a paper by Thomas reviewed in LPS 71 (2003).


This paper presents an analysis of migration between 1851 and 1861 in four small areas of rural England which were characterised by different social and economic conditions. The analysis makes use of data from the census enumerators’ books but is aggregative in form, avoiding the extremely time-consuming use of record linkage of individual-level data. Estimates are obtained of age-specific net migration among those native and non-native to each study area, separately for males and females. The level of detail thus revealed allows migration patterns to be discussed in the light of the key economic characteristics of each area. Female migration by age in the mid-nineteenth century was fairly similar across rural England except in those areas where there were substantial female employment opportunities. Patterns of migration among men varied more noticeably, and responded not only to the existence of occupational sectors other than agriculture, but also to the structure of the agrarian labour force, and to the local availability of employment over time.
Societies for the reformation of manners flourished in English cities from the 1690s to the 1730s. London recognizances reveal that hundreds of middling and elite men were arrested for consorting with prostitutes, and such men were targeted by these societies, contradicting the current orthodoxy that they only concerned themselves with policing the poor. This article further suggests that the arrests of these men reflects a fundamental transition in the history of sexuality, from seeing prostitutes as predators to perceiving them as victims, and a growing expectation of chastity among men as well as women.


This short note about the history of the influenza epidemic in Scotland between the spring of 1918 and the summer of 1919 shows that the Scottish experience was similar to that of England and Wales, in that the epidemic was distinguished by three successive peaks of mortality and by the fact that young adults were particularly badly affected. Urban areas also suffered more intensely than rural areas, although some level of excess mortality occurred everywhere.


This study uses a range of documentary sources to examine the development of the Jewish population of Northamptonshire since the middle of the nineteenth century. Although there had been Jews in the county as early as the twelfth century, they were expelled in 1290 and did not return in significant numbers until after 1850. A regular congregation was in existence from the 1880s, rather later than in neighbouring counties, and Jewish in-migrants became prominent in a number of trades in Northampton, including the leather and shoemaking industries, tailoring and arms manufacture. The population received a further boost before and during World War II when refugees from continental Europe and (much more numerous) evacuees from London arrived in the county. Several in the 1930s operated as market traders, but there were also businessmen, shopkeepers and the famous furniture company 'Rest Assured', while their contribution to philanthropy and the arts is celebrated too. By 1960 there were over 300 Jews in the town of Northampton, 200 in 1980, and although their numbers have since declined—partly due to out-marriage and conversion to Christianity—the local community ‘still flourish(es)’ (p. 58), while the Northamptonshire Jewry of the past has left a ‘diverse legacy’.


By detailed cross referencing between the burial records of St Peter’s church, St
Albans, and the records of Thomas Coram’s London Foundling Hospital for Abandoned and Deserted Children, Kaloczi traces the deaths of 58 babies sent from the hospital to wet nurses in St Albans. Procedures for admittance of babies to the hospital are described, as are (briefly) the process of inspection of wet nurses and the status of the women who took charge of the infants, who were often ‘desperately poor’ (p. 5). Many babies died, including baby no. 3058, but the proportion that did so is unknown. Baby no. 4634 survived and was subsequently sent, along with other survivors, to the Foundling Orphanage in Shrewsbury.


Not before time, the present government seems to be trying to tackle the impending pensions ‘crisis’ caused by the retirement of the baby-boom generation of the 1950s and 1960s. Steven King discusses trends in current pensions policy, and argues that there are clear signs of a reversion to the welfare policy characteristic of the Old Poor Law (before 1834). The ‘four essential characteristics’ of that policy were a ‘distinction ... between the deserving and the undeserving poor’, local determination of entitlement and local financing, the discouragement of ‘welfare scroungers’, and the magistracy acting as a court of appeal (p. 29). King argues that all of these elements may re-emerge in the twenty-first century as pensions policy is reformed in the face of increased demand from the growing number of elderly persons.


In this paper, King’s thesis is that the period between 1880 and 1906 was not, as has sometimes been asserted, one in which the New Poor Law atrophied. In contrast, many new developments and initiatives were put forward at the local level. In the case of Bolton, and probably elsewhere, the impetus driving forward change came from newly elected women guardians. King uses the working diary of one such guardian to describe how the women in the Bolton union managed to work the complex committee and sub-committee system to achieve significant improvements to the lot of the town’s poor without antagonising their male colleagues on the Board of Guardians.

J. Klein, ‘“Moving on”: Men and the changing character of interwar working-class neighbourhoods: from the files of the Manchester and Liverpool city police force’, *Journal of Social History*, 38, 407–21.

Complaints made to the police in these two cities provide unusual insights into working class neighbourhoods, and indicate a growing diversity and loss of cohesion. As neighbourhoods became less stable, tensions could more easily arise, and issues of respectability and status became more prominent. Men, now spending more time with their families, were increasingly drawn in, adding frictions over masculinity and territoriality. All of this was aggravated by children and gossip. In extreme circumstances the result was campaigns of
harassment and complaint, and ultimately families out of harmony with the rest of a street were forced to move. Conflict was not, however, the norm, and working-class neighbours managed generally to coexist quite happily, even in the unsettled conditions of interwar Manchester and Liverpool.


Before the second World War, only about one per cent of those employed in British passenger liners were women. In her study of this small group, Maenpaa shows that these women executed a very restricted range of tasks, these mainly being an extension of the domestic duties they were expected to perform at home. She also reveals the high level of concern that the employers had about the possibility that male and female employees might mix while at sea, and the steps they took to avoid this happening, which went as far as requiring that female employees take their meals in their own cabins, rather than in the communal dining room. She also shows that promotion prospects for women were almost non-existent, with the most that could be attained being a role supervising other women which had no formal place in the career structure of seafaring labour.


This article provides a general discussion of the vexed issue of who qualified for relief, of the shifting boundaries between inclusion and exclusion, that parish officers had to grapple with as a publicly supported system of poor relief developed in the second half of the sixteenth century. Using the unusually full weekly accounts of the Collectors of the Poor from 1579 to 1596, McIntosh focuses upon the small town of Hadleigh in Suffolk to demonstrate some of the experiments that were adopted to help the ‘deserving’ or impotent poor. Apart from regular outdoor cash payments, Hadleigh owned and operated almshouses where 32 people lived rent free and received a weekly allowance. Payments were also made to ten people who boarded the poor in their own homes, while the town also experimented with a ‘task’ or workhouse, which quickly evolved into a house of correction. Despite such concerted activity, only about 5 per cent of the town’s population received help each year, probably representing 10 per cent if their dependents are included. The principal inhabitants who paid the rates, it is argued, viewed tax-based relief as a supplement to the many forms of voluntary charity, and were never prepared to offer support to the able-bodied unemployed. And, as in many communities studied to date, discrimination grew as the end of the sixteenth century approached, when increased efforts were made to exclude from relief both outsiders and the lewd and idle.


B. Deacon and M. Donald, ‘In search of community history’, *Family and Community History*, 7, 13–18.
It was once famously reported that a survey of the academic literature had produced 99 different meanings of the word ‘community’. While Dennis Mills cannot match that in this paper, he does show that the articles published in the first five volumes of *Family and Community History* have used the word in a variety of different ways. He goes on to discuss the difference between community history and local history, asking whether it is ‘worth going back to the simple ... possibility that typical local historians tend to start with “place” whilst community historians focus on “people”? ’ (p. 10).

In their response to Mills’s paper, the editors of *Family and Community History* ‘argue for a methodologically distinct community history, combining a micro-historical approach with a sensitivity to the discursive construction of the term “community” ’ (p. 13). What they mean by this is that community historians should strive to break free from definitions of community which are too narrow, for example the traditional focus on the village as a ‘community’. Indeed, trying to draw boundaries around a ‘community’ and thereby including or excluding certain people may be unhelpful. What unites community historians is not the study of a particular phenomenon, but a method which tries ‘to understand how general processes work out and are transformed in actual places’.


Conventional demographic transition theory asserts that mortality decline is a consequence of increasing agricultural productivity which makes available a greater quantity and variety of food. In this paper, however, Nicolini turns this causal relationship on its head by suggesting that declining mortality and its attendant increased expectation of life may have made English farmers of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries more willing to make long-term investments in the land, and thereby raise yields.


This article is an important reappraisal of the lay subsidies of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries as a reflection of the distribution of wealth across time and space. After describing the historiographical debate over the value of these returns, Nightingale highlights the categories of wealth that were progressively exempt, examines the consistency of valuations, their relationship to established economic developments and the degree to which they correspond to credit valuations provided by Statute Merchant certificates, to provide a very clear conclusion: from 1294 the valuations start to become unrealistic, and in particular they fail accurately to reflect the performance of the non-agrarian economy. The urban rankings for wealth that they reveal are also suspect, because they favour ports where imports and ships were effectively taxed, and undervalue inland towns where both wool and cash escaped valuation. This does not mean, however, that they fail to provide a valuable topographical
guide to the towns and villages of medieval England, even if the level of wealth that they indicate must be treated with caution.

G. Ortolano, ‘Human science or a human face? Social history and the “two cultures” controversy’, *Journal of British Studies*, 43, 482–505.

The overall theme of this paper is the debate during the 1960s between C.P. Snow, who advocated a ‘scientific history’ and F.R. Leavis, who advanced an alternative vision of social history which used as its sources ‘not parish registers but great writers’ (p. 500). Ortolano’s treatment of this debate may be of particular interest to readers of *Local Population Studies*, for he places right at the centre of his story Snow’s collaboration with Peter Laslett, and in particular his reading before publication of several chapters of Laslett’s *The world we have lost* (London, 1965) and his support for Laslett in the latter’s quest for money to set up the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure.


This paper traces the history of North Evington Poor Law Infirmary from its construction in 1905 to its final transformation into a general hospital in 1930. Rimmington describes the gradual improvement in the administration of the Infirmary from its early years, when it was run by an absentee chief medical officer who was constantly at odds with staff working in the building itself, through its development of a training programme for nurses which gained a national reputation until it eventually became fully absorbed into the national system of health care. In passing, he touches on aspects of local population history, such as the opposition to smallpox vaccination in the late nineteenth century.


This paper uses the machine-readable data from the 1881 census enumerators’ books to analyse the 41,203 surnames with a frequency of 25 or more in the search for ‘cultural territories’ or ‘cultural regions’ (see C. Phythian-Adams, ‘Local history and societal history’, *Local Population Studies*, 51 (1993), 30–45). Regional patterns are immediately evident in the distribution of surnames, but when mapped at the parish level they do not correspond either to physical geography or the geography of administrative counties. The exceptional pull of London is reflected in the fact that there was not a single surname ranked in the top 10,000 in any parish in England and Wales that was not found in the capital city. Cluster analysis of the top 1,000 surnames reveals a diagonal divide running from the mouth of the Mersey to the Thames estuary, roughly demarcating the southern limit of the Danelaw in the ninth century, with East Anglia standing out as a distinct cluster.


The London to Brighton railway opened in 1841, and by 1861 the London,
Brighton and South Coast Railway Company employed over 1,000 men in Brighton at the passenger and goods stations, on the trains and in the workshops. Sheppard’s analysis of the birthplace data from the 1861 census enumerators’ books shows that local men predominated in the less skilled occupations and distant migrants in the skilled workshop jobs, a discovery that reinforces the findings of much previous research into social class differentials in migration distances. Nominal linkage to the 1851 census returns was carried out for men living in Sussex in 1851 and reveals earlier occupations and, in some cases, the occupations of fathers. It turns out that skilled workshop men and semi-skilled machinists tended to follow their fathers into railway employment. Those who were not the sons of railwaymen came principally from a small trade and craft background, or from established and settled labouring families.


This paper discusses William Petty’s estimate, made in 1665, of the wealth of England and Wales and compares it with the better-known estimate made by Gregory in 1696. Slack concludes that King’s estimate was heavily influenced by that of Petty, and that—while their efforts epitomised new perceptions and, within limits of tolerance, the realities of what could be measured and compared in the later seventeenth century—both underestimated per capita and aggregate national incomes, although by how much remains unclear. Of particularly value to the population historian is the publication of a tabulated appendix, ‘A table containing the whole number of acres, houses, chimneys and people in England and Wales, and in each county thereof’. The provenance of this document is unknown, though it was clearly called upon by Petty, and has great, hitherto untapped, potential for modern demographic and social analysis.


There is a dearth of historical writing on the poor law in Wales, which this article seeks to begin to address. It uses an incident which occurred in the rural community of Llantrisant in the early 1840s to bring out those aspects of both medical services and the New Poor Law that were quintessentially Welsh, and goes on to argue that further study of the welfare regime in nineteenth century Wales is important both for Welsh history and for a broader historical understanding of the New Poor Law in rural settings.


The first of these two articles on Cheshire looks at the activities of rural tailors and shoemakers between 1700 and 1760 as revealed by probate inventories and wills. Stobart argues that most rural tailors and shoemakers operated on a
small scale, manufacturing largely to order, and rarely holding large stocks of finished goods. Many combined their craft with running a small agricultural holding. Their economic and social ties were very much with the local rural population, and not with those engaged in similar occupations in urban areas: they were ‘firmly locked into rural life and society… Rather than harbingers of modernity, bring urban values into the countryside, they are better seen as bastions of the rural community’ (p. 160).

By contrast, the second article describes the social worlds of men of commerce and merchants in early eighteenth century Chester, describing not only inter-familial links within the city, but also links with the ‘local, civic and wider merchant community’ which were ‘essential to successful long-distance trade’ (p. 277). These men situated themselves within a much wider urban-based social and economic network.


The letter and account books of John Johnson, merchant of the staple and draper of London, provide a unique insight into the progress and repercussions of the sweating sickness that visited London for the fourth time in 1551. Danae Tankard is concerned with the manner in which the outbreak was experienced and understood, rather than with its pathology or aetiology, although such topics are not entirely ignored. It occurred at a pivotal moment in the Reformation, when there was a delicate balance between conciliatory and radical Protestantism. The Johnson papers amply reflect the Protestant providential worldview of the event as a sign of God’s displeasure, but both sides of the religious divide could use providential arguments to support their own ends, evangelicals adopting it as a judgement upon the failure of people to fully abandon their idolatrous ways, conservatives as a judgement upon the excesses of the Reformation. Occurring when it did, the sweat provided the first real test of the new Protestant nation.


During Victoria’s reign Middlesbrough was transformed from an unruly town with high levels of crime and little policing to a far more stable and policed community with far lower levels of both petty and serious crime. This transition took place slightly later than similar developments in the Black Country, the 1870s and 1880s forming the critical decades in the creation of an effective police force. Unlike some recent studies, that have argued that the reduction of crime in the later nineteenth century was largely due to economic diversification and rising living standards and aspirations, Taylor argues that in Middlesbrough the police played a major role in the reduction of levels of criminality.

Thomas demonstrates how Lady Curzon elicited mutual reassurance and advice from her family and friendship circle, sharing with them her reproductive and ‘bodily ills’, and through them tried to shape public representations of her health, and also to manipulate newspaper representation of Indian political affairs. More widely, however, she argues, and demonstrates, that the potential of the biographical approach can be considerably extended by placing the biographical subject within their friendship and family networks, allowing greater engagement with the wider social, cultural, economic and political contexts within which their subjects lived.

S. Todd, ‘Young women, work and family in inter-war rural England,’ *Agricultural History Review*, 52, 83–98.

For young women in rural England in the 1920s and early 1930s, Todd argues, opportunities for employment were few. Despite this, the depressed state of agriculture, and consequent low wages, meant that their families required them to contribute to the household economy. In consequence, young women were usually sent out to work as domestic servants in their early or mid-teens, often at very low wages, leading to a rise in total domestic service employment. As the 1930s progressed, however, other employment opportunities in the retail and clerical sectors emerged, especially in urban areas, and rural girls were attracted to these by the higher pay and the greater freedom they offered to have a social life. The result was out-migration from depressed country districts, which ultimately led to a shortage of domestic servants in the south and east of England.


In this paper, Ullathorne uses apprenticeship registers relating to more than 1,000 boys who moved from the High Peak Hundred of northern Derbyshire to work as apprentices in Sheffield between 1624 and 1814. He shows that the chance of a High Peak boy being apprenticed varied with economic conditions in the High peak area, and especially the fortunes of the lead mining industry. Once a boy had become an apprentice, however, the likelihood was that he would remain in Sheffield, and not return to Derbyshire, even if economic conditions in the High Peak subsequently improved. Ullathorne carries out some extensive surname analysis which reveals a high level of social interaction across the Derbyshire-Yorkshire border.


This paper reviews the availability of data on the English population before the taking of the first census in 1801. Although it mentions sources such as the Hearth Tax returns and poor law records, the bulk of the paper describes the Church of England parish registers. Wall describes the reasons why registers of baptisms, marriages and burials were first introduced, and attempts to summarise what is known about variations in the quality of the registers over time.
Although there is not a great of new information here, Wall has drawn on a range of material published at different times to produce a useful summary of the content and coverage of the parish registers. He also explores the reasons why the quality of registration was allowed to deteriorate, particularly in the eighteenth century.


Although the title of this article suggests that it is based on the 1851 census enumerators’ books, the census data play only a background role in what is a much more narrative piece. Williams tells the story of the evolution of the population living in the upper reaches of the Llanberis valley (the section between the modern village of Llanberis and the top of the Llanberis Pass). In the late eighteenth century the population of this remote area formed a rather primitive and wild agricultural community. By 1851, 17 out of every 20 males were ‘engaged in quarrying or mining’ (p. 57). The role of two chapels, one Methodist, the other independent, is emphasised, and Williams shows how these were core institutions which bound the community together through a period of rapid economic change.


Historians have long debated whether Malthus was right when he excoriated the poor laws for encouraging poor people to beget children they were unable to support. Empirical analysis of the question has focused on the allowance system for granting outdoor relief to able-bodied paupers, which became common in rural England during the 1790s, and which frequently operated on a sliding scale, the amount provided increasing with the number of dependent children a poor man had to support. In this contribution to the debate, Williams uses community reconstruction data from two Bedfordshire parishes, Campton and Shefford, in which she has nominatively linked poor law records to family reconstitution data. She shows that far from being systematically used on a long-term basis, allowances of the form described above were only used as short term solutions to particularly severe periods of distress, such as those of 1799–1801 and the years immediately following the ending of the Napoleonic Wars. Therefore it is implausible to view them as encouraging childbearing among the pauper population. Because it was only practised intermittently and for short periods, it is also unlikely that the allowance system contributed to the secular fall in the average age at marriage during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.


In this paper Woollard makes use of the census enumerators’ books (CEBs) to examine the types of multiple occupational titles that existed in the later nineteenth century. Having described a typology of multiple occupational
designations, he points out that the rules issued for the allocation of both apparent and real multiple occupations in the 1881 census were, to some degree, contradictory, and so the United Kingdom Data Archive has adopted the principle of giving primacy to the occupation which was apparently most important in terms of income generation. Woollard presents an analysis of several selected occupations in the three counties of Cornwall, Derbyshire and Westmorland. Comparison with data from Anderson’s 2 per cent sample of the 1851 CEIs suggests that the prevalence of multiple occupational titles was increasing over time. He stresses the importance of a clear operational definition of a multiple occupation, and the need to adopt a consistent scheme of classification.


Richard Mead was a London physician who in the early eighteenth century published *A short discourse concerning pestilential contagion, and the methods to be used to prevent it*. The work ran to several editions, the last being published in 1744. Mead believed plague to be contagious, and Zuckerman’s article discusses the controversy which followed the publication of *A short discourse*. The issue was of more than academic importance, for the Quarantine Act of 1721 was based on Mead’s recommendations. This Act was criticised for its draconian proposals regarding ‘domestic’ (that is, within Great Britain) quarantine, including lines being drawn around cities. The Act was subsequently modified, though the external quarantine proposals survived largely intact. In the event, the epidemiology of plague proved to be so complex that neither Mead nor his critics were proved correct.
CORRESPONDENCE

Letters intended for publication in Local Population Studies should be sent to Nigel Goose, LPS General Office, Department of Humanities, University of Hertfordshire, College Lane, Hatfield, Herts. AL10 9AB.

Editor’s note

Readers are reminded that the LPS Editorial Board is always prepared to offer advice on subjects within the scope of Local Population Studies, so if you think we might be able to help please do not hesitate to write to us.

Morbidity and mortality in 19th century silk workers

Dear Sir,

Dr McCunnie has written a very comprehensive article (‘Regulation and the health of child workers in the Victorian silk industry’, LPS 74 (2005), 54-74), which I appreciated all the more for its being so enjoyable to read, and so I would not wish my comments below to be taken as criticism. It occurred to me whilst reading it that he did not appear to have considered the potential effects of the material on which they were working on the health of the silk workers.

This recalled to my mind the brief chapter on the diseases of silk workers in De Mortibus Artificum by the seventeenth century Italian physician Bernardino Ramazzini, sometimes referred to as the father of occupational medicine. He wrote, ‘...the worst off are those who card the rolls or cakes of silk filaments that are left over when the silk is made, and from them manufacture a sort of thread which the townspeople use...since it costs them less than pure silk.’

Ramazzini goes on to describe the left-over filaments with fragments of dead silkworm attached, which are combed several times with ever finer combs. It was the workers who combed the waste silk who were ‘attacked by a terrible cough and serious difficulty of respiration; few indeed grow old at this occupation’. In Ramazzini’s opinion it was the silkworm itself which ‘possesses some sort of noxious and corrosive acrimony injurious to the lungs’. He had probably extrapolated this from the fact that the silkworm needs digestive juices to break down the mulberry leaves which forms its staple diet.

Although Ramazzini was describing a relatively specialised activity to recover waste silk and recycle it, some factories in England also are known to have relied heavily on working on waste silk, especially when the price of raw silk imports of the higher quality rose. Secondly, the reeling process itself would expose workers to similar hazards as Ramazzini describes, though not to the same degree.

For the above reasons it occurred to me to ask whether Dr McCunnie has actively considered the potential effects of the material being worked on. Or, if he has considered it and discarded this as an unimportant issue, what was the
basis for that decision? It is understood that absence of reliable data might be a major problem, although I have recently discovered amongst the British Parliamentary Papers numerous reports of the surgeons attached to the mills on the subject of causes of morbidity and mortality. Unfortunately my own research has not taken me into that field just yet.

Yours Sincerely,

Gordon Cox.
Gordon.Cox@tube.tfl.gov.uk

Parish Boundaries

Dear Sir
As a result of a personal study on parish churches, I have recently become interested in the size, shape and boundaries of parishes in Southern England before 1832. The Phillimore Atlas for Sussex shows that the parish of Worth is quite large but the adjacent Crawley was a fraction of the size. The parish of Lewes had an extensive detached portion to the north. Parishes in a part of Lindsey, Lincolnshire, run almost exclusively East - West.

Richard Morris in his book, Churches and the Landscape, states that the logical shape of a parish is a hexagon but this is rarely achieved and that local conditions, such as manors, influence the boundaries of parishes. John Heathfield in a book about the history of North London states that two Abbeys delineated the boundary between Chipping Barnet (Hertfordshire) and Friern Barnet (Middlesex) a thousand years ago.

The TV programme, Time Team suggested that some parish boundaries follow Iron Age settlements. In Hampshire the boundary between Basingstoke and Worthing follows a Roman road, but why did a parish boundary align itself with a road constructed by Romans hundreds of years previously? Was it for convenience because the course of the road was still visible? Many parishes in the southern part of Oxfordshire have a narrow boundary with the Thames. Was this because they wanted access to water and transport?

I would like to know if an extensive study has been made on this subject and any help that readers can give would be much appreciated. Replies to my e-mail address would be most helpful as I expect to have moved house by the time this letter is published.

Yours faithfully

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Family & Community History encourages and publicises scholarly research in family and community history and provides a forum for researchers regardless of professional or amateur status. It is based on the increasing recognition of the contribution made by small-scale ‘micro’ research when set within a wider perspective. As a peer-reviewed academic journal, it insists on scholarly standards and presentation, whilst remaining broad-based through its emphasis on accessibility and on bringing together institutional and independent researchers.

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