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## Editorial

This issue of *Local Population Studies* is a special issue to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Local Population Studies Society and the centenary issue of the journal. The articles which follow have been specially commissioned for this issue, and most of them take the form of reflections on the past 50 years of research into local populations in the past, and suggestions for the future by eminent academics who have had a close association with the journal over this period. The first contribution, from Richard Smith, looks at recent and possible future areas for development in the field of medieval English demography. It focuses especially on the analysis of *inquisitiones post mortem* and other manorial records. Smith stresses the degree of uncertainty surrounding demographic analyses based on these data. He concludes that much more is now known with some confidence about male adult mortality than about female nuptiality and hence fertility. There is thus an inequality in our knowledge about different components of demographic change. To some extent this is because of the availability of sources, and it may never be possible to compensate fully for the lack of source material, no matter how ingenious researchers are; but there is a clear challenge to population historians to try to fill the gaps in our knowledge of medieval English demography.

In his contribution, Tony Wrigley raises a key theme of the contributions in this issue, the relationship between the general (exemplified by the national) picture and the particular (revealed by local studies situated within their specific contexts). Wrigley illustrates the theme using the example of migration from the countryside to the cities and back from the cities to the countryside. He stresses how common rural–urban migration was in the English past compared with other European countries. The implication is that it is likely to have affected all aspects of population change at a range of geographical levels.<sup>1</sup> There is surely room for more local and regional studies of the relationship between migration, mortality, nuptiality and fertility.

Migration is also the theme of Colin Pooley's paper. Pooley reviews recent developments in the study of migration and mobility in the modern period, suggests likely future directions and assesses their relevance for locality-based studies. The paper looks at the connections between residential migration and daily mobility and on the contribution of mobility studies to migration research. He examines four themes: the development of large digitised databases, the potential use of genetic data, the importance of longitudinal studies of migration, and the value of biographical information for migration research. He suggests that more emphasis could be placed on comparative studies both within Britain

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1 It is apposite in this context that this issue of *Local Population Studies* contains a review of Michael Anderson's recent book: *Scotland's Population from the 1850s to Today* (Oxford, 2018), which makes this point strongly in respect of Scotland.

and between Britain and other countries, on the role of transport and communications in migration, and on the ways in which migration and mobility connect to the wider social, economic, cultural and political structures of society.

Alysa Levene examines what local perspectives have added, and continue to add, to welfare history. She begins by summarising the work of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure on households and the ways they functioned, and shows how work on local populations has set many of today's research agendas. Her paper then argues that a fruitful way forward might be to use national and regional studies to identify local case studies that would be particularly interesting or informative. Finally, like Pooley, Levene discusses the implications of 'big' data and digitisation for local studies of welfare in the past.

This brings us to the paper by Eilidh Garrett and Alice Reid, which can be viewed as an example of what 'big data' make possible. Garrett and Reid's piece is of a different character to the other articles in this issue, in that they present illustrative results from a recently completed research project, the *Atlas of Fertility Decline in England and Wales*.<sup>2</sup> This project has used the newly available machine-readable data on individuals from the censuses from 1851 to 1911 to estimate fertility at the level of the registration sub-district. The results from the project can be used to highlight geographical variations in fertility at the regional and local level. Explaining the patterns observed, though, will require detailed local studies, and here Garrett and Reid return to the theme of the relationship between the 'local' and the 'national'. Studies that, Garrett and Reid suggest, shed new light on local scenes will each add a piece to a jigsaw which, when completed, should bring a whole new level of understanding of the complex puzzle that is the fertility transition in England and Wales. One product of the *Atlas of Fertility Decline in England and Wales* project is an interactive website, PopulationsPast, that allows researchers to view maps of a whole range of demographic measures (not confined to measures of fertility and marriage) at the level of the registration sub-district for England and Wales in 1851, 1861, 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911. This new resource is described in the Sources section of this issue, and is reviewed by Christine Jones in the Book Reviews section.

Over the past few decades, a debate has been going on within historical demography about the value of 'social scientific' approaches to understanding population processes in the past, approaches which seek to generalise and to apply the methods of social science to historical data.<sup>3</sup> Some historians have cautioned against trying to seek monocausal or

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2 The project has, at times, gone by other names, such as the *Atlas of Victorian Fertility Decline*. Throughout this issue of *Local Population Studies* we have chosen to use the name *Atlas of Fertility Decline in England and Wales* as this is the name by which it is known on the website of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure (see <https://www.campop.geog.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/victorianfertilitydecline/> [accessed 28 June 2018]). The word 'Victorian' is also rather misleading, as the project covers a period ending in 1911, ten years after the good lady's death.

3 A good example of this is the debate about the best way of explaining the fertility decline in Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: see J. Gillis, L.A. Tilly and D. Levine (eds), *The European Experience of Declining Fertility, 1850–1970: the Quiet Revolution* (Oxford, 1992), especially the introduction by G. Alter, 'Theories of fertility decline: a nonspecialist's guide to the current debate', pp. 13–27.

universal explanations, and championed the value of studies of particular places. This debate is another manifestation of the tension between the ‘general’ and the ‘particular’, or the ‘local’ and the national or international. In his reflection on working on the supply of labour in a household context Osamu Saito argues that both ‘social scientific’ approaches and detailed local ‘context-heavy’ research are needed. Historians looking at local communities should not ignore macro-level structural changes, but they can provide evidence and examples which those working on a broader canvas should not ignore either.

When *Local Population Studies* was launched 50 years and 100 issues ago, its stated aims were as follows: ‘to provide a link which will enable those working in their local communities to draw attention to their discoveries and difficulties, to keep them informed of other people’s work, and to provide a place where their enquiries can be answered and where the techniques used in this field of research can be explained and examined’.<sup>4</sup> It was also hoped that the journal (then called a ‘newsletter’) would help ‘the study of population in the past to acquire a greater measure of coherence’.<sup>5</sup> The ‘newsletter’ has come a long way since then, having been transformed into a mainstream academic journal and made an important contribution to the achievement of the ‘coherence’ in the study of population history that was sought in 1968. Nevertheless, I hope, as I take on the role of editor, to ensure that *Local Population Studies* remains faithful to its original aims, and that it will continue to provide an outlet for the work of both amateur and professional historians and social scientists, and to keep each group informed of the work of the others.

Several of the papers that are included in this issue were given at the Local Population Studies Society’s spring conference held in Cambridge on 21 April 2018. I should like to thank the organisers of that conference, and my predecessor as editor of the journal, Dr Jonathan Healey, who originally commissioned the papers. Thanks are also due to the other members of the Editorial Board, who have copy-edited and proof read the material.

Andrew Hinde

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4 ‘Intentions’, *Local Population Studies*, 1 (1968), p. 3.

5 P. Laslett, R.S. Schofield and E.A. Wrigley, ‘CAMPOP and *LPS*’, *Local Population Studies*, 1 (1968), p. 4.