

Marriage Horizons in Fletton 1891-1911: the Hidden Narrative behind the Parish Marriage Registers*

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Abstract

Traditionally the information contained within the parish marriage register has been used to consider the separation distance of bride and groom when they marry. However, this method of approaching the parish marriage register can be misleading and conceals a hidden narrative. By creating longitudinal narratives, the marriage can be viewed not as an isolated event, but as an event set within the bride and groom's broader life history. This method is time consuming if carried out on a large scale, so the ideal vehicle for this close analysis is the local study, and the parish this paper uses as a case study is Fletton, Huntingdonshire. Fletton is an ideal parish to choose for an analysis of marriage as it was an area of population growth and migration, and so attracted young unmarried migrants, both male and female. In addition, despite its growth, for the period 1891 to 1911 Fletton still had a comparatively small population so full record linkage can take place. In carrying out this approach this paper makes it clear that a quite different narrative of marriage horizons, separation distances and belonging can be told from that which would emerge from a consideration of separation distances in isolation.

Introduction

Central to the writings of Jane Austen, the Brontes and other middle-class nineteenth-century writers was the desire of a bride to find a suitable marriage partner. Not many villages or towns were inundated with 'young ...[men]...of large fortune' and yet the same concerns remained true that most young females (and males) were in search of a partner and that, for them, the marriage market was a lived reality.² With some acknowledged exceptions, such as an obligation where the bride was with child and therefore the decision was already made, marriage was largely the expression of an

* <https://doi.org/10.35488/lps108.2022.13>.

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2 J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Stoke Bruerne, 1992), p. 11.

individual's choice and, as a result, marriage had the power to unite, integrate, segregate and move individuals.

After the 1836 Registration and Marriage Acts, clergy officiating at a marriage would keep a register recording the event. As part of the entry valuable information was recorded such as the residence of the bride and groom at the time of marriage.³ This source of vital information has ensured that marriage registers are a key tool customarily used by migration and community historians in their studies to measure exogamy and endogamy, to look at separation distance at the point of marriage, to observe how marital choices impacted on patterns of migration, to assess integration and development of community, and to consider social mobility and a sense of belonging.⁴

However, this snapshot approach reflects only one point in time and needs to be re-thought. As Pooley and Doherty commented, personal experience should not be lost in favour of statistical analysis, rather one can elucidate the other.⁵ By carrying out

3 E. Higgs, *Life, Death and Statistics: Civil Registration, Censuses and the Work of the General Register Office, 1836-1952* (Hatfield, 2004), p. 2. Higgs describes the detail of this process. The clergy submitted a copy quarterly to the local superintendent. The information collected included name of bride and groom, address and occupation at time of marriage, name and address of the bride's and groom's fathers and their occupations.

4 Studies include, in relation to marriage and this paper: D.E. Ascott and F. Lewis, 'Motives to move: reconstructing individual migration histories in early eighteenth-century Liverpool', in D.J. Siddle (ed.) *Mobility and Modernisation* (Liverpool, 2000), pp. 90-118, <https://doi.org/10.5949/UPO9781846313578>. Ascott and Lewis have observed that marriage is a good indicator of the level to which migrants were willing or able to integrate into the local community, or desire to remain within a known group. A. Richards and J. Robin, *Some Elmdon Families* (Saffron Walden, 1975) supported the view of Ascott and Lewis suggesting that the most successful way to integrate was marriage. J. Day, 'Leaving home and migrating in nineteenth-century England and Wales: evidence from the 1881 census enumerators books' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2014), p. 240, comments that marriage, rather than employment, was the female's 'best utility-maximisation strategy' as the income from employment was limited by 'institutional and structural barriers', therefore it was advantageous for females to seek out a husband who could provide the best income in the long term, to provide for a future family. K.D.M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700-1950* (Cambridge, 2009) discusses, amongst other things, increasing rates of endogamy in relation to a growing population. K. Schürer, *Marriage Register Analysis of a Nineteenth-Century Resort*, Occasional Paper, Bedford College, University of London (London, 1982) discusses marriage horizons and increasing separation distances. See also K. Schürer, 'Regional identity and populations in the past', in D. Postles (ed.) *Naming, Society and Regional Identity* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 200-27. Finally A. Constant, 'The geographical background of inter-village population movements in Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire, 1754-1943', *Geography* 33 (1948), pp. 78-88 is an appraisal of separation distances in Northamptonshire.

5 See C.G. Pooley and J.C. Doherty, 'The longitudinal study of migration: Welsh migration to English towns in the nineteenth century', in C.G. Pooley and I.D. Whyte (eds) *Migrants, Emigrants*

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record linkage, longitudinal narratives can be created. These can then be used to probe more deeply and to consider the marriage event within the broader context of the individual's life journey. These narratives provide a wealth of information and, when this approach is applied, it becomes clear that the marriage registers conceal an alternative narrative.

Taking the above approach this paper will seek to explore the marriage horizons and associated sense of 'belonging' of the brides and grooms of Fletton for the period 1891-1911. In so doing it will demonstrate that at a time when improved transport, in the form of the railways, bicycles, tramways and improved road systems, was generally resulting in increased separation distances, the marriage horizons of the majority of Fletton brides were decreasing.

Fletton

History

The nineteenth-century village of Fletton lay at the north-western edge of Huntingdonshire, and had a population of 256 in 1841.⁶ Diarist Frederick Wright wrote of Fletton at the end of the nineteenth century, 'there was no [s]quire, village green, duck pond or pump. Ours was a working village.'⁷ In 1891 the population was 2,194 and by 1911 it had grown to 4,742 and become the working village that Wright knew. Nowadays, Fletton has been absorbed into the urban area of Peterborough.

Fletton's phenomenal growth 'by leaps and bounds' can be attributed to it being at the 'junction of four great railways' 75 miles north of London which played a pivotal role in its growth and prosperity, and at the centre of a 'great expansion in brick-making'.⁸ These industries attracted migrants, predominantly married men with

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- and Immigrants: a Social History of Migration* (London, 1991), pp. 143-73; see also C. Pooley and J. Turnbull, *Migration and Mobility in Britain since the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1991), pp. 17 and 20.
- 6 See W. Page, G. Proby and S. Inskip Ladds (eds) *A History of the County of Huntingdonshire*, Vol. 3 (London, 1936), <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/hunts/vol3/pp169-173> [accessed 4 July 2022]. In 1874 the growth of Fletton necessitated a boundary change. The north-west of the parish became New Fletton and became a suburb of Peterborough acquiring an urban feel and the south-east or Old Fletton retained its rural independence. On 1 October 1905, under section 36 of the Local Government Act of 1894, Old Fletton or Fletton Rural, together with Stanground South and Woodston Rural were formed into the Fletton Urban District. The council offices were located in Old Fletton. Fletton is now in Cambridgeshire.
- 7 F.C.W. Wright, 'Tales of my childhood', *The Huntsman: Journal of the Huntingdonshire Family History Society* 48 (2004), p. 15.
- 8 *The Lincolnshire, Boston, and Spalding Free Press*, 17 May 1898, p. 5.

families who were seeking employment for themselves and their grown-up sons and daughters which enabled families to stay together in the area.⁹ Other diverse industries were also attracted to Fletton by the accessibility to the railways and the availability of female labour, such as Symington's the corset makers, Farrow's peas canning factory and Cadge and Colman's flour millers.

The arrival of the railways and brickyards

That the railways came to Fletton at all was accidental. The Dean and Chapter of Peterborough Cathedral, supported by the local landowner Earl Fitzwilliam, refused to allow the railway to enter Peterborough. Therefore the closest location for the new Blisworth to Peterborough line was outside the city boundaries, on the north edge of Fletton parish, where there was no easy direct access to the station from the centre of Peterborough.¹⁰ The first train ran on Monday 2 June 1845 greeted by a crowd of 8,000 spectators and 'the ringing of the church bells and the bands of music'.¹¹ The new line greatly reduced the journey time to London to two and a half hours and it was observed that, 'perhaps, few railways of similar length have effected a greater change than is likely to result from the Northampton and Peterborough'.¹²

But the new railways were not just important in themselves. The ease with which the railways could be accessed for the transportation of raw materials and goods attracted new industries to the numerous sidings that were available in Fletton including the brickyards.¹³

Geologically Fletton sits on a bed of Oxford clay. Oxford clay has unique properties which are vitally important in the making of bricks and it was bricks that played such an important role in Fletton's development after 1880. Today the name 'Fletton' is synonymous with the brickyards but in 1881 the Fletton brick making industry was in its infancy, operating on a seasonal basis. With the discovery of the Oxford clay that lies beneath Fletton, and the formation of the London Brick

9 See S.A.S. McMullon, 'Migration to Fletton, 1841-1911: an exploration of family migration, the creation of community and social mobility through marriage' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2019) for a fuller discussion of Fletton and migration. <https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.778359> [Accessed 4 July 2022].

10 P. Wascak, *Rail Centres: Peterborough*, (Shepperton, 1984), pp. 9 and 14; R.A. Dane, *Railways of Peterborough* (Peterborough, 1978), pp. 7 and 30. The Earl Fitzwilliam owned much of the land in Fletton and the living of St. Margaret's. It was only in 2018 that the Peterborough Railway Station has been joined to the city centre by the extension of the retail area and a pedestrian walkway. Blisworth is five miles south of Northampton.

11 *London Illustrated News*, issue 163, Saturday 14 June 1845, p. 380.

12 *London Illustrated News*, issue 163, Saturday 14 June 1845, p. 380. The journey to London from Peterborough was via Northampton.

13 For example J.P. Hall and Son, pump manufacturers, were attracted from Newcastle.

Company, there was a revolution in brick making. The once seasonal industry became a year-round industry requiring permanent workers.¹⁴

Methods: the use of marriage registers and the creation of longitudinal narratives

Context and challenge

Parish registers have their limitations, and these are well known to the researcher. As previously discussed, the main limitation of the marriage register, so far as this paper is concerned, is that it only reflects one point in time.¹⁵ The marriage event needs to be placed in a longer life narrative. In this study, we have achieved this in two ways dependent on the circumstances: first, record linkage was conducted through the Fletton censuses using Microsoft Access and the data made available through the Integrated Census Microdata (I-CeM) project; and, second, searches further afield were conducted utilising the family history website Ancestry.¹⁶

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- 14 R. Hillier, *Clay that Burns: a History of the Fletton Brick Industry* (Peterborough, 1981). The revolution in brick making is complex and is recorded in detail in Hillier's book. R. Morton and D. Jaggard, *Design and the Economics of Building* (London, 1995), p. 55. discuss the Hoffman Kiln and the new presses that were capable of producing 3,000 bricks in ten hours.
- 15 The Fletton parish registers for 1841 to 1911 are held in Huntingdonshire Archives (<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/directory/listings/huntingdonshire-archives>). The registers for the majority of the research period, 1841 to 1900, have been transcribed by the Huntingdon Family History Society (they have transcribed 1604-1900 and a CD is available). The registers for the period 1900 to 1911 are accessible on microfiche at the Peterborough Archives. Limitations include the under-recording of vital events, transcription errors and the incomplete recording of certain religious groups, for example nonconformists and Roman Catholics.
- 16 K. Schürer and E. Higgs, *Integrated Census Microdata (I-CeM) 1851-1911* [computer file]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], April 2014. SN: 7481, <https://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-7481-1>. A user guide and manual to the I-CeM data is available as E. Higgs, C. Jones, K. Schürer and A. Wilkinson, *The Integrated Census Microdata (I-CeM) Guide*, (Colchester, 2013). Further details on the I-CeM database together with a number of related resources are available from the I-CeM website at <https://www.essex.ac.uk/research-projects/integrated-census-microdata> [accessed 5 July 2022]. The data received from I-CeM were transferred into an Access database and this enabled a vital element of the data linkage to take place: the tracking of an individual from one Fletton census to another. This could only be completed if the data were consistent. Following the advice given by Kevin Schürer for the Victorian Panel Study, the Fletton census data were subjected to a similar if not as rigorous a regime as that proposed in K. Schürer, 'Creating a nationally representative individual and household sample for Great Britain, 1851 to 1901: the Victorian Panel Study (VPS)', *Historical Social Research* 32 (2007), pp. 211-331.

The decennial censuses must also be approached with caution and the difficulties with their use have been well documented.¹⁷ For this paper, the most relevant is that individuals cannot always be found in the census records due to absence or incorrectly transcribed entries, and the further the marriage is away from the census date the more caution must be applied, especially in terms of place of residence, which can change over time. The record linkage that was conducted used the parish baptism, marriage and burial registers to supplement the census records. For this process, local knowledge of the population that can only be achieved through conducting a local study comes to the fore.

Distance, transport and leisure time

The distances that were decided upon for the analysis of marriage horizons in Fletton were based on how far it was practical for a man to walk or cycle, after a day's work, to court his bride. P.J. Perry asserted that if a man was on foot, then five or six miles was perhaps the limit for frequent visits, but this would increase to 12 miles if the suitor had access to a bicycle and 'a paved highway'.¹⁸ In addition to travel by foot and bicycle, courting couples could also arrange meetings by using the numerous carrier carts that travelled through the county. Carrier carts travelled through Fletton on their way to Peterborough from places such as Whittlesey, Yaxley, Farcet, Huntingdon and Cambridge.¹⁹ In addition to this, at the latter end of the study period there was an

17 See, for example, P.M. Tillott, 'Sources of inaccuracy in the 1851 and 1861 censuses', in E.A. Wrigley (ed.) *Nineteenth-Century Society: Essays in the Use of Quantitative Methods for the Study of Social Data* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 82-133; and E. Higgs, *Making Sense of the Census: the Manuscript Returns for England and Wales, 1801-1901* (London, 1989). The census was taken on the following nights: 6 June 1841, 30 March 1851, 7 April 1861, 2 April 1871, 3 April 1881, 5 April 1891 and 31 March 1901. With exception of 1841 these were Sunday nights.

18 P.J. Perry, 'Working-class isolation and mobility in rural Dorset, 1837-1936: a study of marriage distances', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 46 (1969), pp. 121-41, here at p. 123, <https://doi.org/10.2307/621412>. *Cycling* [magazine], 18 June 1892, p. 16. *Peterborough Advertiser*, Wednesday 7 May 1902, p. 4. The Stanley safety bike was launched in 1885 but this innovative mode of transport was expensive. In 1892 an advertisement in *Cycling* magazine promised a Humber no. 11 for £15. A bicycle was not an item that could be purchased without considerable saving. However, there developed a lucrative second-hand market, bringing bicycles into the reach of young bachelors prepared to work and save: in 1902 an advertisement in the *Peterborough Advertiser* promised second-hand cycles in good working order for between £1 and £5.

19 In 1898, from Farcet, Robert Hales ran a daily carrier cart and Joseph Tee and John Watts ran a carrier cart on a Wednesday and Saturday. From Yaxley, William Webster and Frank Arson ran six trips per week to Peterborough via Fletton. See <http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/utis/getfile/collection/p16445coll4/id/167113/filename/186508.pdfpage/page/327> [accessed 5 July 2022]; and

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omnibus which called several times a day in Fletton on its route from Peterborough to Farcet.

As well as local transport, the impact of the railways on the mobility of individuals must be considered. A. Constant has stated that ‘the opening of railway communication ... quickly stimulated mobility and encouraged long distance movement’.²⁰ Leigh Shaw-Taylor and Xuesheng You have observed that, on average, in 1841 there were 0.65 railway journeys per head of population; this increased to 20 or more by 1881; and by 1911 the number of journeys was 32.²¹ This use of the railway is borne out in the local area. Miss Kathleen Willson, headmistress at the Fletton Board School, reported in the school log book on 3 February 1902 that Miss Panter had ‘come by train from Castor’.²² In her previous position Miss Willson had herself commuted from nearby Peterborough to Nassington.

But transport was not the only factor that affected the opportunities that potential partners had to meet or communicate with one another. By the end of the nineteenth century many workers experienced a decrease in working hours, and a half day on Saturday had become the norm, allowing greater time and opportunity for social interaction.²³ Perry has also commented that increased literacy may have had an impact on marriage horizons, as letter writing could sustain courtship between meetings.²⁴

Analysis period

Although Fletton experienced growth from 1841 to 1911 the period 1891-1911 has been chosen for the analysis. A run of complete census data prior to marriage is required to enable a foundation for the longitudinal narratives to be created. The I-CeM dataset provides this in the form of transcribed Excel spreadsheets for the years 1881 to 1911, which can be easily entered into the Access program.²⁵

<http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/utils/getfile/collection/p16445coll4/id/167113/filename/186451.pdfpage/page/270> [accessed 5 July 2022].

20 A. Constant, ‘Geographical background’, p. 79.

21 D. Bogart, L. Shaw-Taylor, X. You, *The Development of the Railway Network in Britain, 1825-1911* [n.d.]

<https://www.campop.geog.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/transport/onlineatlas/railways.pdf> [accessed 5 July 2022]. This mobility was encouraged by Gladstone’s Railway Act in 1844, which made the provision of third class accommodation, on at least one train per route per day, at a cost of no more than a penny a mile, obligatory. In 1874 the Midland Railway abolished second class and increased the comfort of third class. Other railway companies soon followed. See P.S. Bagwell, *The Transport Revolution from 1770* (London, 1974), p. 109.

22 Peterborough Archives PAS/OFS, Fletton Board School Log Book.

23 Perry, ‘Working-class isolation and mobility’, p. 133.

24 Perry, ‘Working-class isolation and mobility’, p. 127.

25 A limitation of this transcribed data is that the 1841 and 1871 censuses were unavailable from

Table 1 Comparison between rates of exogamy and number of marriages per annum in various study areas and Fletton

Area	Period of study	Number of marriages	Percentage of exogamous partners	Mean number of marriages per annum
Otmoor, Oxfordshire	1851-1900	137	47.4	2.7
Elmdon, Essex	1853-1902	210	55.7	4.2
27 parishes, Dorset	1887-1936	1,240	56.3	0.9
Eastwood, Essex	1850-1899	149	39.6	3.0
Leigh, Essex	1850-1899	417	30.7	8.3
Prittlewell, Essex	1850-1899	2,575	19.2	51.5
Southchurch, Essex	1850-1899	221	36.2	4.4
Fletton, Huntingdonshire	1891-1901	163	40.5	16.3
Fletton, Huntingdonshire	1901-1911	178	36.0	17.8

Note: Areas were chosen with similar date ranges to the Fletton study period. The study of 27 parishes in Dorset only includes labouring classes. For Fletton, the period 1891-1901 includes marriages between 5 April 1891 and 31 March 1901 and the period 1901-1911 includes marriages between 1 April 1901 and 2 April 1911.

Sources: K. Schürer, *Marriage Register Analysis of a Nineteenth-Century Resort*, Occasional Paper, Bedford College, University of London (London, 1982). Census enumerators books for Fletton: The National Archive RG11/1591, RG12/1226, RG13/1460, RG14/8669-8672. Huntingdonshire Archives HP28/1/1, HP28/1/2, HP28/1/1/2 and HP28/1/1/3 Fletton Parish Marriage Register.

I-CeM, in the same format as the other censuses. Therefore 1871 became the natural break in the research. Using data up to 1911 will also allow further record linkage to take place utilising both World War 1 service records and the 1939 National Register.

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Exogamy and endogamy

Using the parish marriage register and the place of residence recorded at the time of marriage all marriages can be classified as either endogamous or exogamous. An *endogamous* marriage is one where both the bride and groom record their residence, at the time of marriage, as within the parish. An *exogamous* marriage is one where one party, either the bride or groom, was resident in the parish at the time of marriage and one was resident outside the parish at the time of marriage. Whether a partner was sought from within the parish or from further afield, can be seen in the exogamy rates as, conversely, the remainder of the marriages will represent the endogamy rates.

It is useful to view Fletton's endogamy and exogamy rates within the wider national picture. From an extensive table produced by Kevin Schürer, a variety of study areas have been selected that cover the Fletton marriage study period 1891 to 1911 (Table 1).²⁶ The drawback of these figures is that they cover just one time span whereas the advantage of the Fletton study is that it covers two consecutive time spans, so change over time becomes visible. In addition, the data for the 27 Dorset parishes include only the labouring classes, whereas the other study areas (including Fletton) cover all classes. The parishes of Eastwood and Otmoor are quite rural whereas Fletton was increasingly urban. However, if these differences are borne in mind the analysis is still instructive. The exogamy rate for Fletton males and females from 1891 to 1901 is 40.5 per cent, decreasing to 36 per cent for 1901 to 1911. This appears to be comparable with other more rural study areas such as Eastwood where 39.6 per cent of marriages had exogamous partners and Otmoor, Oxfordshire, where 47.4 per cent of all marriages had exogamous partners.

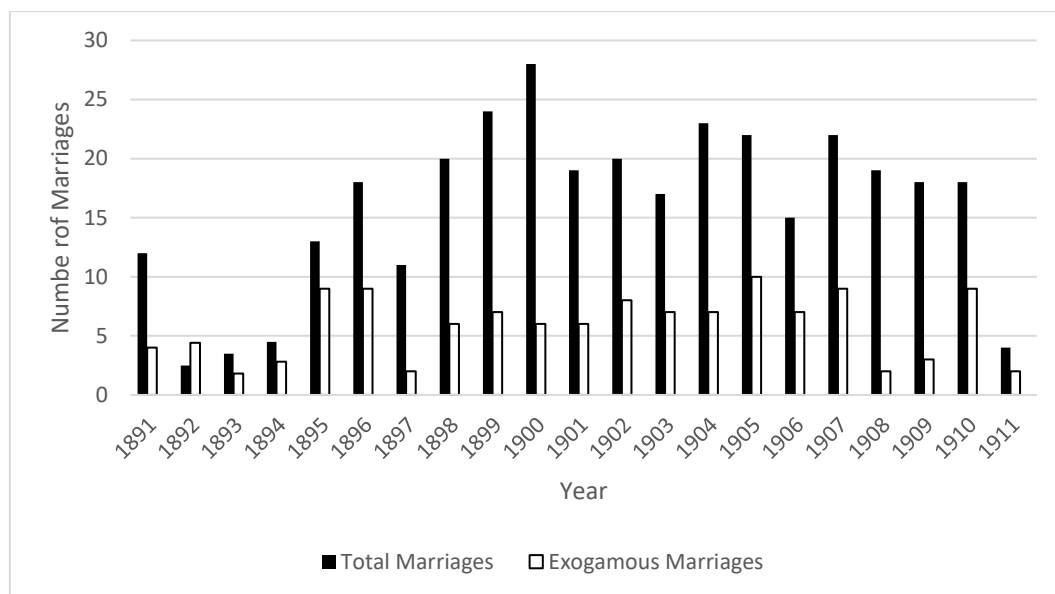
This decrease in the rates of exogamy in Fletton echoes the findings of Keith Snell's study, which covered the period 1700-1837.²⁷ Involving 18,442 marriages over eight counties, he observed that there was a relationship between the population size of a parish and the percentage of exogamous marriages. As the population increased the percentage of exogamous marriages decreased and so endogamous marriages increased as a proportion. With improved transport links it could be expected that individuals would be able to travel further to seek a partner. But in Fletton, as Snell predicted, with an increase in the population due to migration, the exogamous marriages decreased. Kevin Schürer, however, warns against comparing figures from two different timespans and also over long periods of time, as this might conceal fluctuations.²⁸ This apprehension is borne out in Fletton, as looking only at the general trend conceals years where rates of exogamy were either abnormally high or low

26 Schürer, *Marriage Register Analysis*, p. 18.

27 Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p. 199.

28 Schürer, *Marriage Register Analysis*, p. 20.

Figure 1 Comparison between total number of Fletton marriages and number of exogamous marriages 1891-1911



Note: The data include marriages between 5 April 1891 and 2 April 1911. Hence not all the marriages for 1891 are included, and the number of marriages in the period 1 January – 2 April 1911 is not representative of the total number for that year.

Sources: Huntingdonshire Archives HP28/1/1, HP28/1/2, HP28/1/1/2 and HP28/1/1/3 Fletton Parish Marriage Register.

(Figure 1). In 1894 the exogamy rate was at a high of 70 per cent compared to 1908 which experienced a low of 10.5 per cent (2 out of 19 marriages).

Bride ‘stayer’, ‘migrant’, ‘returned’

When analysing the marriages of women described in the registers as being ‘of this parish’ (OTP) brides were classified into three types (Table 2). First, there are the

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Table 2 **Illustrative examples of ‘stayer’, ‘migrant’ and ‘returned’ brides married in June 1907**

Bride’s status at time of marriage	Status at 1881 census	Status at 1891 census	Status at 1901 census	Entry in marriage register
Stayer	Stayer	Stayer	Stayer	Married June 1907 ‘of this parish’
Stayer	Migrant	Stayer	Stayer	Married June 1907 ‘of this parish’
Stayer	Not listed on Fletton census	Migrant	Stayer	Married June 1907 ‘of this parish’
Migrant	Not listed on Fletton census	Not listed on Fletton census	Migrant	Married June 1907 ‘of this parish’
Migrant	Migrant or stayer	Not listed on Fletton census	Migrant	Married June 1907 ‘of this parish’
Returned		Family, including bride were listed on the Fletton census	Family listed on Fletton census, bride does not appear on Fletton census	Married June 1907 ‘of this parish’

Note: The table gives examples of how a female can be a ‘stayer’, ‘migrant’ or ‘returned’ bride with a marriage date of June 1907. Birthplace does not affect subsequent status of the bride. A ‘migrant’ at a census is a person who was resident in Fletton at the time of that census but not listed as living in Fletton at the time of the previous census. A ‘stayer’ at a census is a person who was resident in Fletton at the time of both that and the previous censuses.

Sources: Census enumerators books for Fletton: The National Archive RG11/1591, RG12/1226, RG13/1460, RG14/8669-8672.

Table 3 Marriage horizons of brides recorded as being 'of this parish', 1891-1901 and 1901-1911

Distance partner travelled	'Stayer' brides				'Migrant' brides				'Returned' brides			
	1891-1901		1901-1911		1891-1901		1901-1911		1891-1901		1901-1911	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Within Fletton	13	61.9	15	71.4	66	64.7	94	71.8	11	47.8	17	65.4
<6 miles	2	9.5	5	23.8	13	12.7	14	10.7	6	26.0	1	3.8
6-12 miles	3	14.2	0	0.0	3	2.9	1	0.8	1	4.3	0	0.0
Within 12 miles	18	85.7	20	95.2	82	80.4	109	83.8	18	78.3	18	69.2
12 miles or more	3	14.3	1	4.8	20	19.6	21	16.2	5	21.7	8	30.8
Total marriages analysed	21		21		102		130		23		26	

Note: An individual is termed a 'stayer' when she is recorded as being 'of this parish' in the marriage registers and was resident in Fletton at the time of the previous census and described there as a 'stayer'. An individual is termed a 'migrant' when she is recorded as being 'of this parish' in the marriage registers and but was either not listed as being resident in Fletton on the previous census return or listed on the previous census as a migrant. An individual is termed 'returned' when her family are resident in Fletton but she herself has moved away and returned for the marriage ceremony.

Sources: Census enumerators books for Fletton: The National Archive RG11/1591, RG12/1226, RG13/1460, RG14/8669-8672. Huntingdonshire Archives HP28/1/1, HP28/1/2, HP28/1/1/2 and HP28/1/1/3 Fletton Parish Marriage Register.

‘stayers’: females who were recorded as being OTP in the marriage registers and who were recorded on at least one previous Fletton census return as being a stayer.²⁹ Second, there are the ‘migrants’: females who were recorded as being OTP in the marriage registers but who were either not listed as being resident in Fletton on the previous census return or who were recorded on the previous census return as being migrants. Finally, a third group, ‘returned’, were females who were recorded as being OTP in the marriage registers whose family was resident in Fletton but who themselves had moved away, perhaps to find work or seek a partner.³⁰ These females then returned to Fletton for their marriage ceremony.

Marriage horizons

Table 3 reveals that, between 1891-1901 and 1901-1911, 61.9 per cent and 71.4 per cent, respectively, of Fletton ‘stayer’ brides were drawn to endogamous grooms. This pattern is replicated by both ‘migrant’ and ‘returned’ brides among whom, for the same periods, the greater percentage of brides were able to find eligible grooms locally in Fletton. The increasing percentages of all brides who married endogamous grooms confirms that, as the Fletton population increased due to the influx of unmarried male migrants drawn by employment opportunities, so too did the pool of partners. Brides did not find it necessary to move away from their family and home parish to find a groom.³¹

Even amongst ‘stayer’ and ‘migrant’ brides whose marriage horizons took them slightly further afield for their marriage partners, the greater percentage still found a partner within 12 miles of Fletton.³² Over the time period this percentage also increased from 85.7 per cent to 95.2 per cent for ‘stayers’ and 80.4 per cent to 83.8 per cent for ‘migrants’. The fact that the majority of marriage partners were still chosen from within a 12-mile distance of Fletton meant that links with family, community and culture could be retained even when integration was taking place into a new community. This created stability for the newly married couple where a new life could

29 In the Access database all individuals were classified as stayers or migrants. A ‘stayer’ was an individual who had been recorded on at least one previous Fletton census return as either a stayer or a migrant (regardless of where (s)he was born), a migrant was an individual who had not been recorded on a previous Fletton census return (regardless of where (s)he was born). For example, an individual could be born in Fletton but move away; if (s)he returned (s)he would be considered a ‘migrant’.

30 Day, ‘Leaving home and migrating’, p. 249.

31 Schürer, *Marriage Register Analysis*, p. 20; McMullon, ‘Migration to Fletton, 1841-1911’. After carrying out record linkage it was possible to identify the unmarried male migrants as being either independent or family migrants. That is, they migrated alone or as part of a family.

32 The distances were calculated using Google Maps and following roads.

be found without cutting ties to the old. As Snell proposed, and other studies endorse, this also ‘underlined... [the]... local nature of marriage’.³³

This ‘local nature of marriage’ meant that the percentage of ‘stayer’ and ‘migrant’ brides who, by choice or necessity, searched for a groom further afield, was reducing. In fact, as will be seen in the analysis below, even amongst those who did move away from Fletton the main drivers for that move were varied and included employment opportunities and changing family situations. Meeting a partner may have been a happy coincidence. For ‘stayer’ brides this reduction was 14.3 per cent to 4.8 per cent while ‘migrant’ brides saw a lesser reduction from 19.6 per cent to 16.3 per cent. These figures are comparable with other studies. Perry observed the marriage horizons of individuals in 27 west Dorset parishes between 1837 and 1936.³⁴ His study differed from this study of Fletton in that he excluded certain groupings such the middle and upper classes, certain occupations such as ‘dairymen’ and marriages where the bride and groom were from different social classes, whereas in the Fletton analysis all marriages were included. Despite these differences the comparison is still worthwhile. Perry found that, between 1897 and 1906, 54 per cent of individuals married partners from within their own parish, 80 per cent married partners from within a 12 mile distance and 20 per cent married partners from further afield.

Despite the local nature of marriage, there were ‘stayer’ and particularly ‘migrant’ brides who searched further afield for marriage partners. The ‘migrant’ brides may have been utilizing links that they still had with their previous communities. In addition, the combined factors of improved transport links, diverse employment opportunities and an increase in the level of literacy may have impacted on the increased separation distances. The separation distance of exogamous marriages in Fletton increased from 3 miles in 1821-1830 to 60.2 miles by 1901-1911 (Figure 2). Schürer observed a similar increase in his nineteenth-century resort study, where both male and female separation distances increased from 16.1 km in 1800 to 54.4 km in the 1890s.³⁵ An increase in separation distances, from 2.9 miles in 1750-1843 to 12.6 miles in 1844-1943 was also witnessed by Constant in five parishes in Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire.³⁶

33 K.D.M. Snell, ‘English rural societies and geographical marital endogamy, 1700-1837’, *Economic History Review* 55 (2002), pp. 262-98, here at p. 263, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0289.00221>; see also R.F. Peel, ‘Local intermarriage and the stability of rural population in the English Midlands’, *Geography* 27 (1942), pp. 22-30. In Peel’s study of registers from Maidwell, Lamport, Great Everdon and Farthingstone in Northamptonshire 1600 to 1900, although there was an increase in marriage partners coming from further away ‘attributed to transport developments’, there was still ‘overwhelming localism in marriages’ (p. 25).

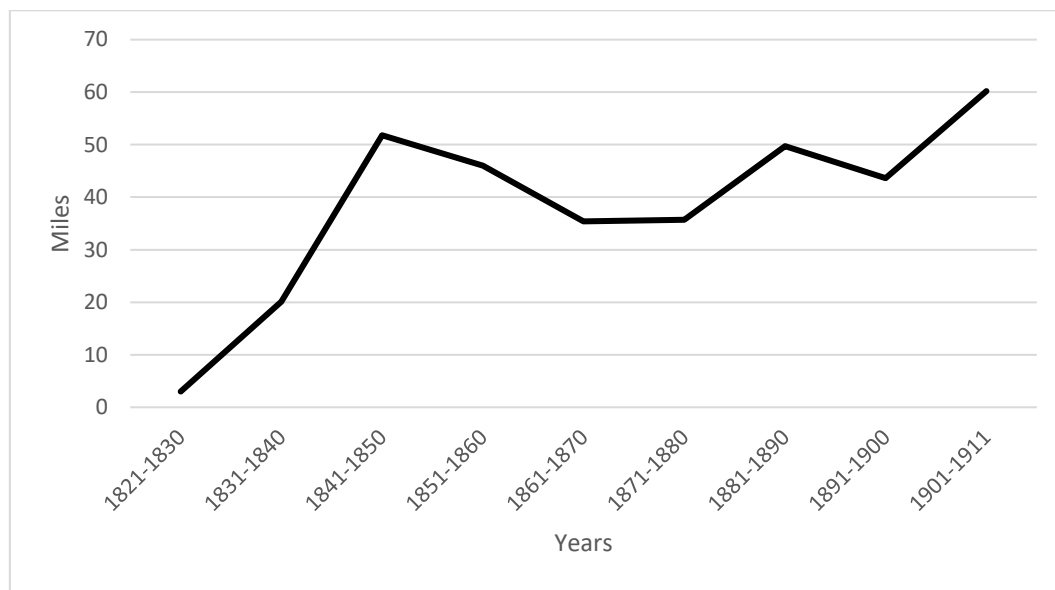
34 Perry, ‘Working-class isolation and mobility’, p. 124.

35 Schürer, *Marriage Register Analysis*, p. 22. This equates to 9.9 miles and 33.8 miles. Schürer links the increased separation distances to the Southend to London railway (see p. 26).

36 Constant, ‘Geographical background’, p. 82. Proximity to a railway was important in this study.

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Figure 2 Average separation distances of Fletton exogamous marriages, 1821-1830 to 1901-1911



Source: Huntingdonshire Archives HP28/1/1, HP28/1/2, HP28/1/1/2 and HP28/1/1/3 Fletton Parish Marriage Register.

In total there were 45 marriages where the ‘stayer’ or ‘migrant’ bride went further than 12 miles to find her groom. If, rather than using the traditional method of calculating separation distances, the method proposed by this paper is applied, that of using record linkage to create longitudinal narratives, then a broader picture of the circumstances of marriage is revealed. As demonstrated in the examples below this new narrative is one not of increased separation distances but of local courtship, marriage and belonging.

In 1897 Annie Lovatt Lucas, a resident of Fletton, married Frederick William Wade.³⁷ At the time of marriage Wade was resident with his family 68 miles away in Scarning, Norfolk. However, a census entry reveals that in 1891 the Wade family in Scarning were being visited by cousin Annie Lucas, aged 19 years, from Fletton. At this time Wade was just 16 years of age. Annie’s marriage horizon was therefore not

³⁷ The National Archive (hereafter TNA) RG12/1555/86.

chosen randomly but determined by family connections resulting in a marriage to her cousin.

In 1909 Amy Gilby, also a resident in Fletton, married Arthur Ernest Plumb.³⁸ At the time of marriage Plumb was resident in Derby. Both Amy's and Plumb's families were resident in New Fletton at 16 and 18 Park Street.³⁹ It would appear that Plumb, a wagon builder, had moved to Derby to seek work before marrying, and thereby secure their future. So, rather than Amy seeking a groom from 79 miles away she was actually courting the son of her next-door neighbour.

Rose Martin married Charles Kingston in 1902 and at the time of marriage Kingston was resident in Hove, Sussex.⁴⁰ Kingston was born in Parson Drove, Wisbech, and by 1901 he had migrated 17 miles and was a baker manager boarding at his place of employment in Park Street, New Fletton. Kingston was evidently drawn to Fletton by the new opportunities that could be found there including, it would seem, his future bride. Rose did not have to travel 153 miles to seek a groom as Fletton's opportunities brought her groom to her. Kingston then sought greater opportunities that were available in Hove and came back to Fletton to marry his bride before returning to Hove with Rose to begin married life.

Florence Gibbons married William Drakard, a coach builder of Edgbaston, in 1905. It would appear that a Fletton bride was choosing a groom from 84 miles away. However, their migration narrative reveals a different picture. Drakard originated from Bourne, Lincolnshire and in 1901 he was boarding in Russell Street, Peterborough just a few streets away from where Florence was living with her family in Gladstone Street. Therefore, it would appear that the couple met in Peterborough before Florence's family moved to Old Fletton and Drakard ventured further afield to Edgbaston, perhaps in order to gain better employment prospects for his forthcoming nuptials.

Belonging

The experience of 'belonging'

Rates of endogamy and exogamy calculated from the parish marriage register have also been used to measure or define a sense of 'belonging' to a parish.⁴¹ But, as has been witnessed by the examples described above, just because a marriage would appear to be exogamous, that does not mean that the individuals did not have a clear sense of

38 TNA RG14/2086.

39 Prior to Amy's family living at 16 Park Street, New Fletton they lived at 30 Elm Street, New Fletton, which is an adjoining street.

40 TNA RG14/5196/401, RG12/1303/102, RG11/1694/125, RG13/1461/4, RG12/1226/73.

41 Snell, *Parish and Belonging*, p. 162.

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belonging to the parish. Conversely, it is misleading and unwise always to assume that, if the marriage register shows an endogamous entry at the point of marriage, the bride or groom felt any affiliation or sense that they 'belonged' to the parish in question.⁴² Snell has warned that the recording of vital events in a parish does not necessarily indicate migration, residence or persistence within that parish.⁴³ After all, to marry in a parish one party, bride or groom, only had to be resident in the parish for three weeks.⁴⁴ Again, the picture provided by the traditional use of parish marriage registers conceals a hidden story that can be revealed through longitudinal narratives.

In Fletton in the period 1891-1911 it was increasingly found that brides and grooms were listed as 'of this parish' but residency could not be confirmed by reference to the census for either themselves or other family members. It could be that individuals had dual residence, but it could also be that individuals were becoming more mobile and were only temporary members of the community, moving in and out without leaving a trail in the sources available. Additionally, in the period analysed, of the OTP marriages 28.7 per cent recorded the same place of residence for both the bride and groom (Table 4). In these cases, the address given by both bride and groom was detailed enough to be certain that it was the same place of residence, for example a house number or name. For the period 1901 to 1911 this accounted for 46.5 per cent of the OTP marriages. This figure seems unlikely and if taken at face value creates a misleading sense of belonging.⁴⁵

Two examples demonstrate how record linkage, combined with the intimate knowledge of an area that comes with conducting a local study, begins to reveal the true sense of belonging which exists behind the marriage registers.

Mabel Kathleen Hempsted married George Henry Holloway at St. Margaret's Church in 1905. At the time of marriage Holloway was a telegraphist resident in Rowno Voltignie, Russia.⁴⁶ Although recorded as being resident in Fletton at the time of her marriage, in 1901, Mabel was resident with her family in Hammersmith, London. Mabel's father was Nathaniel Hempsted and his role in the development of the Fletton brickyards is well documented by Hillier.⁴⁷ Nathaniel died in 1903 in a hansom cab accident. Mabel was the niece of the brickworks manager Edward Dickinson, who was resident in Fletton in 1901. Mabel must have had strong feelings

42 More detailed record linkage would be required to ascertain if all these marriage partners had any link to the Fletton parish that is not immediately evident.

43 Snell, 'English rural societies', p. 271.

44 Act for Marriages in England. 6 & 7 Wm IV, c. 85 (1836).

45 Huntingdonshire Archives HP28/1/7/1 The transcriptions were checked, and the accuracy and competency of the incumbent were researched so the figure appears accurate.

46 TNA RG13/48/154, RG14/7281/125. Supporting family details have been kindly provided by Julian Baldwin, a family member.

47 See Hillier, *Clay that Burns*.

of belonging for either Fletton or more likely the Dickinson family as she turned to her uncle at this important life event.⁴⁸

Table 4 Residency of 'of this parish' (OTP) marriages, 1891 -1911

Period	Number of marriages	Number of OTP marriages	OTP marriages where same address recorded for bride and groom, as a percentage of all OTP marriages	
			N	%
6 April 1891- 31 March 1901	160	103	7	6.8
1 April 1901- 1 April 1911	184	127	59	46.5
Total	344	230	66	28.7

Notes: It is unclear from the registers whether there is a gap between Monday 16 and Thursday 19 April 1900 or whether no marriages were recorded.

Source: Huntingdonshire Archives HP28/1/1, HP28/1/2, HP28/1/1/2 and HP28/1/1/3 Fletton Parish Marriage Register.

Henry Harbor married Mary Ann Briggs on 27 May 1901, and on their marriage certificate it was stated that they were both resident in Hill housing at 18 Princes Road, Old Fletton.⁴⁹ Only a few months earlier, on the 1901 census, both bride and groom

48 George Holloway would later die in the Russian Revolution and Mabel would settle as a widow in Stoke Newington.

49 J.C. Hill, who owned the Fletton brick works, built housing for his brick workers in Old Fletton.

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were recorded as being resident in Retford, Nottinghamshire.⁵⁰ Harbor, a coal merchant's son, was resident with and employed by his family at 29, 31 and 33 Woolpack Street, North Retford, Nottinghamshire, whilst Mary Ann was living with her family at 9 East Street, East Retford, Nottinghamshire. In 1907 the family emigrated to Canada, Henry arriving in Halifax, St John on 13 April 1907 and Mary following with the children on 23 November 1907.⁵¹ But the birthplaces of their children reveal that Peterborough must have been significant to the family in some way, perhaps in a work-related capacity. Just four months after Harbor and Mary's marriage their first son Charles was born in Peterborough. This was followed by the birth of their daughter Mary Ann in 1904 in Retford and then in 1906 the birth of their second daughter Beatrice in Peterborough.

Belonging and the 'returned' bride

Without record linkage and longitudinal narratives, one group of brides that could not be identified are the 'returned' brides. The 'returned' brides recorded their place of residence at marriage as OTP, however this was their parents' address. In the Church of England this would be termed a qualifying connection.⁵² In reality, they had already moved away and made connections in a new community, perhaps in pursuit of work or a partner or both. Not surprisingly, in both time periods, out of all three groupings, fewer 'returned' brides found a partner within 12 miles of their home parish, 78.1 per cent for 1891-1901, reducing to 69 per cent for 1901-1911 (Table 3). It is also the 'returned' brides whose marriage horizons meant that, for 1891-1901, 22 per cent of grooms came from more than 12 miles away increasing to 31 per cent for 1901-1911. However, what is surprising is that, despite the fact that the 'returned' brides had moved away from home, between 1891 and 1901 48 per cent of them found their partner within their home parish of Fletton and, by 1901-1911, this had increased to 64 per cent. This perhaps demonstrates that the connections the 'returned' bride made

50 TNA RG13/3119/19, RG13/3121/66; Year: 1916; Census Place: Manitoba, Brandon, 21; Roll: T-21925; Page: 1; Family No: 4;
<http://www.ourroots.ca/page.aspx?id=933607&qryID=e191689e-a9a6-4498-84c9-c167bf8385b3> [accessed 14 August 2017]; personal information kindly provided by Kathleen Dimsdale.

51 Henry's father Edward arrived at Montreal on 19 June 1908 with his daughter Ada, to join his two sons William and George (information kindly provided by Janice Jeffs).

52 If the bride does not live in the parish where she wishes to be married there are, in law, certain circumstances, or qualifying connections, which will allow her to do so. These include being baptised in the parish, having her confirmation recorded in the church register, previously living in the parish for at least six months, having attended worship at the church for at least six months, having a parent who has either lived in, or worshipped, in the parish for at least six months, or having a parent or grandparent who was married at the church and who is attending church services. These qualifying connections could equally apply to the groom.

with a new parish were only transient in nature and not as strong as the sense of belonging she had with her home parish to which she returned to marry a 'local boy'.

The following examples demonstrate how migration narratives can again reveal the true circumstances surrounding these marriages. 'Returned' bride Catherine Belson (Figure 3) was, in 1891, a live-in domestic servant in Peterborough.⁵³ In 1896 she married Arthur White (Figure 3), a brickyard labourer who lived with his family in Gladstone Cottages, Queens Road, Old Fletton. Catherine's father George was also a brickyard labourer. Catherine returned to Old Fletton to marry the groom she courted before she moved away.

'Returned' bride Annie Lenton, married brickyard labourer Harry Burton in 1900.⁵⁴ Annie was a domestic servant in Aldermans Drive, Peterborough and her family lived in Love Lane, Old Fletton. Although living with his family at 2 Queens Road, Old Fletton, Burton had previously also lived in Love Lane, Old Fletton so the couple had been neighbours prior to Annie moving away.

Figure 3 Catherine Belson (c. 1900) and Arthur White (c. 1914)



Sources: Photographs courtesy of Chris Beighton

53 TNA RG13/1460/66, RG13/1460/101, RG12/1231/24. Personal details supplied by Chris Beighton.

54 TNA RG13/1460/52

Another returned bride who married a ‘Fletton boy’ was Rosetta Gilbert. Rosetta married Richard Leonard Knighton, a brickyard labourer, in 1896. In 1891 Rosetta was employed as a domestic servant in Wandsworth, London whilst her family, headed by her father William, a railway servant, resided in Love Lane, Old Fletton. Born in Alconbury Hill, Huntingdonshire, in the 1891 census Knighton was recorded as living in Stanground with his family. He and his brother Elijah were both brickyard labourers, whilst their father Joseph was an agricultural labourer. Prior to 1896 the family moved to brickyard rented housing at Persimmon Terrace, Old Fletton where they resided in numbers 23 and 24. Rosetta most likely met and courted Knighton when she returned home at holiday times.

The final example of a ‘returned’ bride is Emma Garfoot who married John George Braybrook in 1899.⁵⁵ When they married, Braybrook (a carpenter/joiner) was living at home at 23 Tower Street, New Fletton and Emma was in service in Lyddington, Rutland. Emma, born in St Stephens, Bow, was the daughter of Robert and Ann Garfoot. Robert had been a successful farmer in Cottesmore, Rutland farming 85 acres and employing eight men, but the agricultural depression in the 1870s may have encouraged him to seek the security of railway employment as, by the time Emma was born in 1874, he was employed as a railway passenger guard and living in St. Stephens, Bow. Mobility within the railways was usual and the family moved to Cottesmore House, Oundle Road, New Fletton, where on 12 August 1889 Robert died. Emma’s sister Mary, a school mistress, and her mother Ann remained at Cottesmore House, but Emma had already entered service in Lyddington-cum-Caldecott, Rutland, for curate Alfred Whistler. Braybrook, son of George and Elizabeth, was born in Fletton. His father George was a miller with Cadge and Colman. Braybrook had been successful as he had funded the purchase of four properties and a workshop in Tower Street. The families lived just a couple of streets away from each other and when Emma visited home there would have been an opportunity for courting.

Conclusion

Marriage registers are a vital tool used in the exploration of a range of topics including marriage horizons and belonging. However, when used in the traditional way they can be misleading. As demonstrated in this paper, by using a new approach, where the marriage event is placed within the context of a chapter in an individual’s life, a new narrative has been revealed.

55 TNA RG9/2305/43, RG10/577/58, RG11/489/54, RG12/1226/112, RG13/1461/37, RG11/1591/71, RG12/1226/74, RG13/1460/86, RG14/8674/220, RG13/1461/46, RG14/8672,149.

It has been witnessed that, at a time when transport links were improving and separation distances were increasing, the marriage horizons of the majority of Fletton brides were decreasing. Between 1891 and 1911 an increasing number of brides were able to choose their groom from a greater pool of males within the local area. By the period 1901-1911, 95 per cent of 'stayer' brides married a groom from within 12 miles of Fletton, for 'migrant' brides this was 83 per cent and for 'returned' brides 68 per cent. It is true that for the 'stayer' and 'returned' brides the sample size is small, compared with that for the 'migrant' brides. Further research on other places can help confirm whether the pattern is more general.

The period 1891-1911 witnessed the growth of key industries in Fletton: the railways and brickmaking. These thriving industries not only attracted unmarried men to the area, but also enabled the sons of established families to remain in their home parish. As a result there was an increase in endogamous marriages. The figures described above reveal marriage horizons that were even more locally based than previously thought, and a marriage market that has a sense of belonging at its core.

This Fletton study demonstrates the accuracy of Colin Pooley's suggestion that local population studies are ideally placed to take on and respond to the 'key changes and challenges' which are occurring in migration research, which include the use of big data, genetic data, longitudinal data and life writing.⁵⁶ As Dennis Mills and Kevin Schürer commented, the individual migration story does not aim to replace statistical analysis, but can act as a counterbalance to the more static view.⁵⁷ In Fletton a new approach has enabled a new narrative to be told.

56 C.G. Pooley, 'Local histories of migration and mobility', *Local Population Studies* 100 (2018), pp. 52-9, here at p. 53, <https://doi.org/10.35488/lps100.2018.52>. A. Miles, *Social Mobility in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century England* (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 35.

57 D.R. Mills and K. Schürer, 'Migration and population turnover', in D. Mills and K. Schürer (eds) *Local Communities in the Victorian Census Enumerators' Books* (Hatfield, 1996), pp. 218-28, here at p. 227.