
Editorial

The care of the elderly, and the respective roles of family and state, have been part of the political discussion in England since at least the Elizabethan Poor Laws, and they resurfaced with a vengeance during the recent UK General Election Campaign. Such discussions are rarely properly historicized, and there is a fairly widespread popular assumption that ‘in the past’, families were crucial providers of support for the elderly. Few historians would dispute this, of course, but following the pioneering work of Peter Laslett and others we would neither want to underplay the historical role of the ‘state’ or the ‘collectivity’.

Readers of *LPS 98* will be pleased to see the work of Tom Heritage, a doctoral student at the University of Southampton, tackle the nature of elderly support, most particularly their living arrangements, in nineteenth century Hertfordshire. His findings are finely-grained, and both reinforce and refine existing understandings of the social history of older people in this crucial—and well-documented—period. In addition, we are also delighted to showcase the work of another recent PhD, Rosemary Leadbeater of Oxford Brookes University. Her work is on smallpox in the eighteenth century, a horrific disease, but one which has now (hopefully) been finally conquered through human ingenuity. She uses the detailed parish records surviving for Oxfordshire to delve deep into the history of the disease there, focusing especially on two disastrous outbreaks in the small town of Banbury, showing that children’s risk of exposure to the disease was closely related to their home environment: having parents or older siblings with immunity was crucial to reducing infant mortality.

Fertility forms the subject of our remaining long article, by H.M. Boot. Analysing the census returns of the Lancashire cotton town of Rawtenstall, and deploying the ‘own-children method’ to calculate rates of fertility, he tracks the decline in fertility in the later nineteenth century. A number of potential factors can be used to explain this decline, but it seems that collapse of the market for Lancashire cotton as a result of foreign competition was critical. It is both an interesting methodological piece, and a useful exploration of the way reproductive decisions could be influenced by wider economic changes.

Migration forms the topic of one of our two shorter contributions, by Keith Geary, who himself recently gained his DPhil from Oxford University. He looks at movement in and out of Bidford-on-Avon in Warwickshire in the nineteenth century, finding a mobile population, but one whose movement tended to be within the local area. Females were more mobile than males, and he questions the degree to which migration was necessarily determined by economic factors. The importance of ‘circulatory movement’ is highlighted. It is a detailed piece,

closely located in the study of the censuses, very much in the *Local Population Studies* tradition. It also benefited greatly from the availability of sources online. Our final piece, by Crichton Smith and colleagues, highlights a new online tool for rendering statistical data for New South Wales (Australia) usable for modern scholars. Readers are urged to visit the website themselves, (www.REPstats.info): the authors of the piece are especially keen to hear suggestions for future directions for the project. This is, of course, something the *LPS* community will be especially qualified to help with. Finally, we also have a report from the Autumn 2016 conference, and our annual collection of book reviews.

Once again, we here at *LPS* are indebted to the work of Viv at Cambrian Typesetters, to Halstan Printers, and to the tireless efforts of our LPSS administrators, Tiffany Shumaker and (since earlier this year) Annette Walton in our Oxford office.