

## EASINGWOLD MARRIAGE HORIZONS

Bessie Maltby

Mrs. Maltby, a housewife, was one of the earliest CAMPOP volunteers, and in this capacity has undertaken aggregative analyses, literacy counts and the Easingwold reconstitution.

The problem of how mobile people were in the past is of interest in many contexts, yet it remains a difficult one to solve, largely because there is so little direct evidence. One indirect approach is to study the distance over which people found their marriage partners, or as it is rather quaintly known in technical language: the marriage horizon. The marriage registers are used to discover the residence of the marriage partners, though of course it is chiefly the husbands from other parishes who can be traced from one register, as it appears to have been the custom for the wedding to take place in the bride's parish. This kind of analysis can emerge as a useful by-product of family reconstitution, as with the present study of the Easingwold register.

Easingwold, a small town in the North Riding of Yorkshire, situated in the ancient Forest of Galtres, near the Howardian Hills, is a parish for which family reconstitution has recently been completed. It is a parish with only one main centre of population - Easingwold itself. Raskelf, an extra-parochial chapel lies to the southwest, and has always been a comparatively small community. None of the adjoining parishes possesses a town of the size of Easingwold. The nearest large settlement is York, thirteen miles away, and there are traces of a considerable number of Easingwold girls marrying in parishes in that city.

The first note of parish of residence in the Easingwold register is in 1644, and thereafter where one partner or both came from outside the parish this appears to be stated. However, from 1669 to 1685, when with a different clerk the information is in Latin, there are only two references to other parishes. Thereafter the register reverts to its original form. The words "of this parish" are not consistently used until 1713 but the family reconstitution already done bears out the belief that where no place of origin is given the parties are from Easingwold.

In the following table the distances have been calculated from Easingwold itself. Apart from a long, narrow tail to the South, Easingwold stands very approximately in the middle of the parish. In calculating the percentages, 63 marriages from the period 1669-1685, when residence is not recorded in the register, have been excluded.

Marriage Horizon: Easingwold (1644 - 1812)

	No. of marriages	Proportion of all marriages ( $\pm$ 0.5%)
Partner from up to 10 miles away	241	23%
Partner from over 10 and up to 20 miles away	68	7%
Partner from over 20 miles away.	32	3%
TOTAL:		
Partner from another parish (65 of these were women)	<u>341</u>	<u>33%</u>

The analysis confirms the generally accepted view that, while many partners were found from outside the parish, they mostly came from within a radius of ten miles. In Easingwold, approximately 10% took their partners from more than ten miles away, and this suggests a slightly wider movement than Dr. Eversley states to be the general conclusion from studies so far made (1). However Dr. Eversley's calculations were based on a fifteen mile radius, and this extra five miles might well account for about two-thirds of the 68 marriages in the 11-20 miles distance group, making the number of marriages over fifteen miles about 5% of all marriages at Easingwold. There is no indication of more marriages involving distant partners between 1683 and 1746 than later - if by distant is meant from more than 10 miles away. At Bickenhill, a village a few miles to the south-east of Birmingham, there were many more marriages involving partners from a distance during the period 1683-1746 than was the case later in the eighteenth century, when such marriages became very rare (2).

There is no indication of such a pattern at Easingwold, for even when

the 'irregular' marriages are taken into account (i.e. marriages where both partners came from outside the parish) the proportion of marriages involving a distant partner (taken here to mean from more than 10 miles away) remains roughly constant from 1683 to 1810.

<u>Period</u>	<u>Marriages with 'distant' partner</u>	
	No.	% of all marriages
1683-1796	38	10
1747-1810	67	12

There were of course more 'outsiders' married in Easingwold before the 1754 Hardwick Act than later, but most of them were from adjoining parishes, with smaller settlements.

The first marriage partner from outside the County is noted in 1729, a man from Horncastle (Lincolnshire); the next from Hamsterley (Co. Durham) in 1761, and Calverton (Nottinghamshire) in 1771. There were bridegrooms from London in 1773, 1782 and 1812. Darlington (1784), Sunderland (1806) and Scawby (Lincolnshire) complete the spouses recorded from other counties, but some of the Yorkshire partners from the West and East Ridings came from as long distances, for example, Bridlington (1710), Scarborough (1783), Hull (1786), Huddersfield (1792) and Sheffield (1803).

That Easingwold has since Roman times been on the route from London to Newcastle and had coach transport from 1734 to London and from 1706 between York and Easingwold does not seem to be reflected in the marriage partners chosen by the women of Easingwold. It would be interesting to know whether the men of Easingwold went any further afield for their wives. The probable origins of a few (the parish of their fathers) can be traced from details in the baptismal and burial registers - Keswick, Glasgow, Ridgley (Staffs), Newcastle, Derby, Bristol, Warwick, London, Cleethorpes (Lincs.), Carlisle and Whitby. A number of these were, however, married to men whose fathers also came from distant places. How long the husbands had been in Easingwold it is often not possible to discover. Indeed, there is some indication from occupations of some of them that their stay in Easingwold was likely to be temporary, e.g. itinerant preacher, waterman and postboy.

Although choice of marriage partner is only one aspect of mobility, and in a centre with such good communications as Easingwold possibly

a minor one, it does give us an indirect insight into mobility in the past. At Easingwold most marriages took place between people who were resident in the parish, and marriage partners from outside the parish came from a relatively short distance away. It would be interesting to know whether other parishes show the same pattern.

#### NOTES

1. D.E.C. Eversley. 'Population History and Local History' in An Introduction to English Historical Demography (edited by E.A. Wrigley (London 1966).), 21-2.
2. Eversley, op.cit., n.22.