

A LIST OF THE INHABITANTS OF BUCKFASTLEIGH, DEVON, IN 1698

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Harleian Manuscript 6832 (now in the British Library) lists the 1118 inhabitants of Buckfastleigh in 1698 and records their ages. The names are arranged in two columns on each page, usually in family units. (cf Appendix). Households are not distinguished by any marginal mark. There are some exceptions to this arrangement: page eleven, column one, groups nine newly-married couples and twenty-seven bachelors and widowers. Page twelve, column one, includes three groups of orphaned children, the children of one of the newly-married men by a previous wife and twenty-three newly-born children. Page twelve, reverse, lists two households only, those of the lord of the manor and the vicar.

That the list was compiled under the Marriage Duty Act of 1694 is shown by the separate groupings of three of the four categories of persons liable to special taxes under that Act (births, marriages and bachelors over twenty-five and childless widowers). Some of the fourth category, burials, are indicated by erasure of the name. Eight of the ten erasures are of newly-born children, the other two are of people buried in early January 1698/9 which indicates the date of the final compiling of the list. This was probably done from notes made during the period from April 1697 onwards. There are few mistakes or corrections in the text but there are several examples of people being given the wrong names or children being confused as to order of birth and name.

Minimal descriptions are given: the spouse of head of a household is usually described as 'his wife', a few widows (but by no means all) are indicated by the term 'widd' and the term 'junior' is sometimes applied. Children and relatives sharing the surname of the head of the household cannot be separately identified.

There are seven occasions where people appear to be listed twice and in other cases someone is listed as being alive who is recorded in the parish register as having been buried.

From a careful comparison with the Buckfastleigh parish register¹ it seems that some of the ages given are accurate to within two or three years only, erring on both the upward and downward sides. For example:

Table 1. Examples of inaccuracies in age reporting

Family	Age on list	Baptism	Actual age
Robert Michelmore	50		
Philly his wife	49		
Robert	16	14 Feb. 1681-2	16
Julyan	14	16 Mar. 1679-80	18
Phillip	10	8 Sept. 1685	13
Thomas	12	5 June 1690	8
Philly	09	5 June 1688	10
Mary	05	22 Aug. 1692	6

There are a few 'slips of the pen' which inflate or deflate ages by ten years. For example:

Table 2. Examples of age inflation or deflation by ten years

Name	Age on list	Baptism		Actual age
John Grey	12	17 April	1676	22
Agnes Irish	04	19 Oct.	1684	14
Elizabeth Stephens	08	16 Mar.	1679/80	18
Andrew Voysey	24	5 May	1683	14

Many ages are more accurate than this, and as the list was compiled over nearly two years some variation is inevitable.

There are several examples of the age of married couples, especially in their 30s, being under-estimated when their ages are compared with the date of marriage as recorded in the parish register, such as:

Table 3. Examples of under-estimation of ages of married couples

Name	Age on list	Marriage	Calculated age at marriage	
			Bride	Groom
John Knapman	30	28 April 1679	11	11
Martha his wife	30			
Henry Tozer	33	2 Sept. 1679	14	11
Sarah his wife	30			
Thomas Butland	40	21 Oct. 1673	15	15
Sidwill his wife	40			

Age at marriage seems usually to have been mid-to-late 20s. On the other hand, comparison with the parish register also reveals no families known to be present in the parish who do not appear on the list, suggesting a full coverage of the inhabitants.

Notes

1. Copy of the Buckfastleigh parish register, West Country Studies Library, Exeter.

Buckfastleigh
1698.

A list of all the persons names within the parish
of Buckfastleigh aforesaid as followeth

Robert Micholmore	76	John Warren	60
Julyan his wife	75	Agnos his wife	59
Judeth Micholmore	24	Florance Warren	24
Thomas Symonds	19	John Smith	19
Agnos Labors	00	Joane Randall	18
William Micholmore	15	Paul Lufcomb	16
William Durkor	19	Agnos his wife	53
John Durkor	13	Joane Howse	20
Robert Micholmore	50	John Howse	15
Whilly his wife	49	Robert Gildon	00
Robert Micholmore	16	Mary Gildon	23
Julyan Micholmore	14	John Howse	56
Whilly Micholmore	10	Mary Howse	30
Thomas Micholmore	12	John Bunkam	54
John Skelbourn	20	Agnos his wife	51
Whilly Micholmore	09	Thomas Bunkam	18
Mary Micholmore	05	Agnos Bunkam	08
James Hornbe	40	Mary Harris	58
Grave his wife	36	Grave Howse	59
John Stentaford	18	Edward Lee	30
Thomas Hothobridge	50	Mary his wife	28
Grave his wife	46	Edward Lee	04
Stephen Hothobridge	00	William Lee	02
William Hlastman	00	William Dugid	50
Richard Gunner	54	Mary his wife	46
Barak his wife	50	John Cooke	48
John Bystow	56	Joane his wife	47
Luro his wife	48	Mary Cooke	29
Mary Bystow	12	George Broadwidge	40
George Courk	54	Julyan his wife	35
Elizabeth his wife	46	Anstis Broadwidge	14
Francis Courk	23	George Broadwidge	10
Margaret Courk	12	John Mory	00
Thomas Doope	60	William Cooke	41
Peter Dolich	19	Mary his wife	36
Mary Hartwidge	53	John Cooke	09
		Margaret Cooke	42