

## RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

### IDENTIFYING THE CENSUS ENUMERATORS – CORNWALL IN 1851

Tom Arkell

This research was prompted by the recent initiative of Michael Drake and Dennis Mills which encouraged LPSS members to quarry as much information as possible about the census enumerators.<sup>1</sup> It has taken advantage of Ray Woodbine's on-going herculean labours on the Cornish census of 1851 which is available currently in the form of published transcripts with indexes for 91 contiguous Enumeration Districts (EDs) in central and south-east Cornwall.<sup>2</sup> These stretch from Wadebridge in the north to Fowey and Looe in the south and cover Bodmin and Lostwithiel as well as the surrounding countryside. They provide an ideal opportunity to track down all the census enumerators and to analyse the most accessible and salient data about them, although it must be remembered that for those EDs on the edge of the area all the adjacent parishes cannot be searched thoroughly.

At least 90 of the 91 enumerators were male because the forename of only one was recorded with an initial rather than the full name. Two-thirds of them lived in the district for which they were responsible and only 5 per cent outside the parish; the rest were recorded as living in other EDs within the same parish. The population of their EDs ranged from 116 to 1,154, normally in inverse proportion to their areas. Altogether one quarter of the EDs had fewer than 300 people, a half had between 300 and 600 inhabitants and another quarter had over 600.

The task of identifying the enumerator is easiest when the ED's first or last schedules contain a person with the enumerator's name. This occurred in three EDs in ten in this sample and even when there were other men in the same district with the same name the possibility that they might have been the enumerator can be discounted. But uncertainty arises when he has no special place and more than one right name is traced in the census enumerators' books. Here this applied to nearly one case in five or a total of sixteen instances. The instructions given to the local registrars on selecting their enumerators provide some help in unravelling this problem:

The enumerator, in order to fulfil his duties properly, must be a person of intelligence and activity; he must read and write well, and have some knowledge of arithmetic: he must not be infirm or of such weak health as may render him unable to undergo the requisite exertion: he should not be younger than eighteen years of age, nor older than sixty-five: he must be temperate, orderly and respectable, and be such a person as is likely to conduct himself with strict

propriety, and to deserve the good-will of the inhabitants of his district. He should also be well acquainted with the district in which he will be required to act; and it will be an additional recommendation if his occupations have been in any degree of a similar kind'.<sup>3</sup>

In six instances the circumstances of one individual made them so much more likely to have been the enumerator than the others that one can accept them as such with few reservations. In one ED, for example, where three of the right name lived in the parish but not in the district, the claims of a mine labourer (aged 64) and an agricultural labourer (59) yield to those of a draper and grocer of 33. In another a 'tea and calico draper' (47) overrides his father, a retired commercial traveller (78), and a Greenwich pensioner (50). In three others a landed proprietor (56), a victualler (35) and a farmer's son (22) are preferred respectively to an agricultural labourer (28), a lodging bargeman (43) and a landed proprietor (80). A rather different problem occurred in one ED in Bodmin where the initial 'R' was substituted for the enumerator's forename and so extended the potential choice to five men from the town – three Roberts, a Richard and a Roger. Since only the Richard lived in the particular ED and he was also the town clerk (53), he is the prime contender from this group, but if it ever emerged that the 'R' did not stand for Richard, this decision would be invalid.

However, no similar selection can be made with any confidence in ten other EDs. In the most complex of these elimination exercises six adult males had the same name as one of the two enumerators in Blisland parish (of only 606 inhabitants), with four living in the relevant ED and two in the other half of the parish. The latter were a farmer (aged 84) and an annuitant (60) who was a lodger and so must be discounted along with two others – an agricultural labourer (47) and a farm servant (24). But either a farmer (aged 70) or his son of 20 could have been the enumerator. Four other EDs also had both a farmer (aged 67, 65, 57 and 39) and a farmer's son (aged 26, 29, 18 and 22) with the same name as the enumerator and, although the farmers' claims may appear to be stronger, one cannot choose between them and their sons without guessing. Elsewhere there are equally impossible choices between a farmer's son (32) or a schoolmaster (22), a fund holder (65) or a master blacksmith (30), a master carpenter (61) or a carpenter (38), a mason (28) or a master mason (51) and a labourer (52) or a farm servant (24). Although one of each pair may appear as the more likely candidate, none can be selected with any certainty as the district's enumerator and the last one poses particular problems because if there had been a third alternative, such as a farmer or grocer, the labourer and farm servant would have been eliminated with very few qualms.

In the ensuing analyses, therefore, this ED has been omitted together with one other in Menheniot where the enumerator was George Martin Pooley. No George Pooley appears in or around the parish in any of the transcripts completed so far by Mr Woodbine, although one of its other EDs does contain an unacceptably weak candidate in Martin Pooley, a shoemaker (28) who was merely a lodger in the household where he lived. Thus identifying all the enumerators is more difficult than one might anticipate and so the analysis

which follows has been confined to 89 of the 91 districts. And for those nine EDs which have two plausible candidates for enumerator rather than none, each is counted as 0.5. In these analyses the rural and urban areas are not studied separately because only thirteen EDs at most can be classified as urban and all but four of them derive from towns with no more than 1,200 inhabitants. In addition, mining was the predominant economic activity in substantial parts of the countryside.

Not surprisingly by far the largest occupational group among the enumerators was farmers and their sons (42 per cent), while only two were employed in mining. Table 1 shows how diverse the occupations of the other enumerators were, with only one group with 5.5. (schoolmasters) and four with three each (butchers, cordwainers, grocers and masons). The table also shows how, for the purpose of analysis, they have been grouped together into two virtually equal halves, with each split into three further sub-divisions. The one for agriculture (with mining) comprises farmers, farmer's sons and others and the non-agricultural one craftsmen, traders and dealers and a rather diverse rest with those of independent means and those working in administration and education. The only logic behind the two miscellaneous sub-groups is of course that they are the product of the other compelling four and of the convenience of avoiding additional groupings that would be meaninglessly small.

Many of the main characteristics of the enumerators and of the principal differences between the agricultural and non-agricultural groups are as one might anticipate (see Table 2). Three-quarters of the enumerators headed their own households and virtually all the rest were sons; their marital condition was distributed similarly with three-quarters married, one-fifth unmarried and nearly one in twenty widowed. Because most of the bachelors were farmers' sons, only 65 per cent of the agricultural group headed their own households (compared with 88 per cent for the others) and 33 per cent were unmarried rather than 8 per cent of the non-agricultural enumerators. The latter were also significantly older, with 63 per cent forty and over in comparison with 40 per cent of the agricultural ones.

On the other hand the agricultural enumerators lived in much larger households: 44 per cent had nine or more residents compared with 9 per cent for the others. The agricultural enumerators also had more resident female servants: the proportions with two, for example, were 24 per cent of the agricultural group and 2 per cent of the non-agricultural one. Sometimes the number of female domestic servants can be taken as a crude indicator of social standing, although widowers were more likely to have housekeepers and wives might employ teenage general servants as substitutes for grown-up single daughters if they had none at home.

The agricultural enumerators were also more likely to enumerate the district in which they lived (81 per cent rather than 56 per cent for the non-agricultural) and to have smaller populations in their EDs. Sixty per cent of the agricultural enumerators had under 400 inhabitants, but only 27 per cent of the non-

**Table 1 Occupations of 89 enumerators**

	n	Total	Per cent
<b>AGRICULTURAL (with mining)</b>			
A1 Farmer		24.5	27.5
A2 Farmer's son		13	14.6
A3 Others		5	5.6
gardener	1		
land agent	1		
wood bailiff	1		
copper miner	1		
mine agent	1		
Total		42.5	47.8
<b>NON-AGRICULTURAL</b>			
N1 Craftsmen		16.5	18.5
cordwainer	3		
mason	3		
carpenter	2		
joiner	2		
blacksmith	1.5		
bootmaker	1		
cabinetmaker	1		
miller	1		
saddler	1		
tailor	1		
N2 Traders & dealers		15	16.9
butcher	3		
grocer	3		
auctioneer	2		
draper	2		
flour dealer	1		
innkeeper	1		
ironmonger	1		
mercier	1		
victualler	1		
N3 Others		15	16.9
schoolmaster	5.5		
scholar	1		
parish clerk	2		
postmaster	1		
relieving clerk	1		
town clerk	1		
gentleman	2		
landed proprietor	1		
fund holder	0.5		
Total		46.5	52.2

agricultural ones, while all but one of the ten EDs with populations of over 800 were tackled by non-agricultural enumerators. But there was no marked difference between the two groups on one other important characteristic – the enumerators' birthplaces. Three-fifths of both were born in the parish which they enumerated.

**Table 2 Characteristics of 89 enumerators**

	All %	Ag. %	Non-Ag. %	A1 n	A2 n	A3 n	N1 n	N2 n	N3 n
<b>Relationship to household head</b>									
Head	77.0	65	88	23.5	-	4	14.5	14	12.5
Son	22.4	35	11	1	13	1	2	1	2
Nephew	0.6	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	0.5
<b>Marital condition</b>									
Unmarried	19.7	33	8	-	13	1	1	1	1.5
Married	75.8	62	88	22.5	-	4	14.5	13	13.5
Widowed	4.5	5	4	2	-	-	1	1	-
<b>Age</b>									
18-29	18.5	27	11	-	10.5	1	0.5	2	2.5
30-39	29.2	33	26	9.5	2.5	2	6	4	2
40-49	23.6	19	28	7	-	1	2	7	4
50-59	18.0	15	20	5.5	-	1	4.5	1	4
60-70	10.7	6	15	2.5	-	-	3.5	1	2.5
<b>Household size</b>									
1-4	30.3	5	54	1	1	-	10	8	7
5-8	44.4	52	38	10	8	4	5.5	7	5
9+	25.3	44	9	13.5	4	1	1	-	3
<b>Female servants</b>									
0	57.3	44	70	7	6.5	5	14.5	8	10
1	30.3	33	28	10	4	-	2	6	5
2	12.4	24	2	7.5	2.5	-	-	1	-
<b>Residence</b>									
in same ED	68.0	81	56	22.5	9	3	11.5	7	7.5
inc. first in CEB	(11.2)	(21)	(2)	(7)	(1)	(1)	(1)	-	-
inc. last in CEB	(19.1)	(26)	(13)	(8)	(3)	-	-	(3)	(3)
in rest parish	26.4	16	35	2	4	1	5	6	5.5
in other parish	5.6	2	9	-	-	1	-	2	2
<b>Birthplace</b>									
same parish	60.1	60	60	15	8.5	2	9.5	11	7.5
adjacent parish	15.7	19	13	5.5	1.5	1	2	-	4
rest Cornwall	18.5	16	20	3	3	1	4	3	2.5
outside Cornwall	5.6	5	6	1	-	1	1	1	1
<b>Population of EDs</b>									
0-199	10.1	9	11	3	1	-	5	-	-
200-399	32.6	51	16	12.5	8	1	-	3	4.5
400-599	32.6	26	39	5.5	2.5	3	5.5	5	7.5
600-799	13.5	12	15	2.5	1.5	1	4	3	-
800+	11.2	2	19	0.5	0.5	-	2	4	3

As yet this remains only a preliminary study of these Cornish enumerators. To understand better the significance of these data one needs to know how close their characteristics came to those of the other males aged 18 to 70 living in the same area.<sup>4</sup> It is also important to discover how many of them held office locally in the previous decade or so and in what capacity and how many acted as enumerators ten years later on. But perhaps most important of all one needs to know how much variation there was in the quality of the work between the different enumerators and whether any rational explanation can be offered for this.

## NOTES

1. LPSS Newsletter no.14, March 1994.
2. They have been transcribed and published by R. Woodbine, 5 Priory Close, Par, Cornwall.
3. Census 1851 Population Tables. Part I, volume I. Report. PP 1852-3, p.cxxxv.
4. In this sample the enumerators' ages range from 18 to 70.

### THE THREE MUSKETEERS!

Caught in the act! Tony Wrigley, Roger Schofield and Peter Laslett at the Cambridge Group's thirtieth anniversary celebration (see page 7 for report).

