

## PARISH REGISTERS AND THE PROBLEM OF MOBILITY

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A study of the marriage horizons of a group of parishes in a Yorkshire dale has led to some general thoughts on the use of Parish Registers in consideration of the problem of the mobility of ordinary people during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

From a complete family reconstitution one could estimate with some degree of accuracy, at least as far as the population of child-bearing age was concerned, the influx and exodus of families and individuals. The large number of "untraceable" burials may reflect the immigration of couples with "ready-grown" families, baptized elsewhere.

A rough estimate of the number of new names and the disappearance of old ones is a guide too to the changing population of a community. This may not however be immigration or emigration, but simply the dying out of a family. This latter might be confirmed by family reconstitution. Local history explains many rises and falls in the population, for example, the introduction of new industries, new transport facilities, etc.

There remains, as a possible source of information concerning mobility, the study of marriage horizons, which, if investigated on a sufficiently wide scale, might reveal different trends at different periods in different areas. It has, I believe, been sufficiently well established that the people of the English countryside were surprisingly mobile, though marriage horizon study indicates that the great majority found their partners - almost inevitably - from within easy walking distance, but even here there are signs of differing practices in different parts of the country.

As before 1754 (and in some cases after too!) the method of recording marriages in the register differed from parish to parish, it would be important to standardize the method of analysis if it were hoped to obtain comparable results from a large-scale investigation.

Before 1754 many registers appear consistently to give the parish of origin of a marriage partner, if it is not the parish itself. Some give the name of the settlement within the parish, if there is more than one well-defined settlement - though this usually only occurs for the "home" parish. After 1754, too, when the information is more detailed, sometimes the parish only and sometimes the settlement within the parish is stated. These factors must be taken into consideration when a system of measurement is devised.

The following suggestions are made for standardizing the analysis:-

(1) Numbers should be calculated from the date when the origin of marriage partners is regularly given, but the number of marriages recorded prior to this date should be stated. Where there is a suspected faulty patch in the register (i.e. no parishes given) this period should not be reckoned in the final calculations.

Example Parish A.

Total marriages	780
No parishes given before marriage number 269 (in 1710)	-269
No parishes given between marriage nos. 500 and 650 (1730-60)	-150
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Number of marriages used in calculations	361
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It might perhaps be better to calculate from the beginning of a year, rather than from the actual first marriage to a "foreigner", although in a large parish it is sometimes possible to see where the recording changes practice in the middle of a year.

(2) For many other calculations which might be made from the analysis, e.g. the number of "strangers" married (that is, both partners from outside the parish), or the periods when these and one-partner foreigner marriages take place, or possible differing customs of different occupations, the records should give

- (a) The number of the marriage
- (b) male or female from "outside"
- (c) parish (and settlement if given)
- (d) date
- (e) occupation (if given)

In this way an account of all "foreigners" is obtained, and it remains to measure the distance it is estimated they travelled. For this purpose 1" O.S. maps are usually adequate, though local knowledge is sometimes helpful for unusual spellings.

(a) Adjoining parish. Whereas for some particular parish it may be of significance and interest that X% took their partners from "adjoining parish", this cannot be of general use, as a large parish may have many adjoining parishes and another be almost encircled by a larger one.

(b) If the measurement is to be given in miles, it still remains to be decided between which points the measurement should be made. In a countryside with a long tradition of nucleated villages this is perhaps not a grave problem - concentric circles of 5, 10 and 15 miles will give fairly accurate results. But in a large parish of scattered farm settlements the distance from the (possibly) central parish church to a farmhouse on the boundary may in itself be more than 10 miles. Given two similar adjoining parishes, the margin for error could be up to 20 miles, i.e. if the partners came from farmhouses which were neighbours but across the parish border, or from farmhouses on the farthest distant borders of the two parishes (in which unlikely case they might be 40 miles distant!). However, even in large parishes with scattered farmhouses, the densest settlements near the Parish church presumably account for the majority of marriages (and the distances over-calculated and under-calculated may, we hope, cancel each other out) - which would mean that the method most likely to produce reliable results would be to measure from parish church to parish church. If however there is a sizeable secondary settlement in the outside parish from which the partner is stated to come and which is appreciably nearer the parish being analysed, it is wise to note this. A considerable number of such marriages might throw out the calculation, e.g. Ripon and Burnsall, as shown in the tables given later. If settlements are regularly given, their use in the analysis would give a more accurate result, but it is important to state if and when they have been used.

Finally, to help interpret the results for marriage horizon analysis, it is useful to give some information on the geographical location, the pattern of settlement, and the occupational structure of the parish. Particular attention should be paid to the existence of roads, which might facilitate migration, and to the presence of hills and rivers, which are often alleged to act as barriers.

The following study of a group of West Riding Parishes illustrates some of the points made above. The parishes lie along the river Wharfe, as shown in the attached sketch map. The gap between Weston and Ilkley is filled by the chapelry of Denton (part of the large parish of Otley) whose registers are not printed and do not begin until 1754. The churches themselves are all within a few hundred yards of the river, with the exception of the church at Rylstone (a chapelry of Burnsall parish) which geographically belongs rather to Skipton, in the Aire valley. Weston and Conistone churches lie on the left bank of the river; Ilkley, Addingham, Bolton Abbey, Burnsall and Linton lie on the right bank.

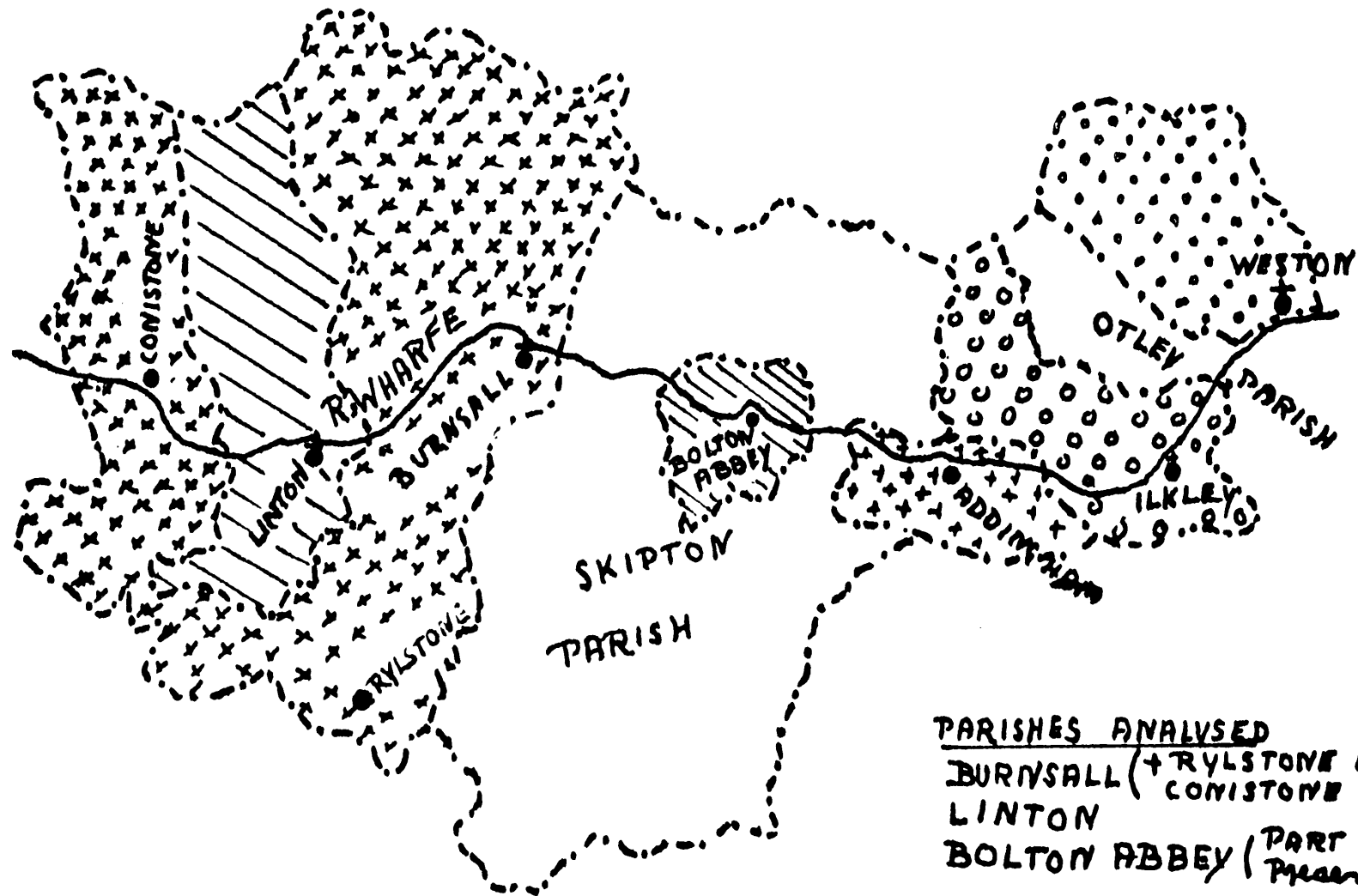
As the valley is nowhere very wide, none of the parishes has a large area of flat land beside the river, so that each quickly becomes gently sloping and then more steeply rises to moorland or fell country. The lower parishes are in the millstone-grit area, whereas around Burnsall we move into the limestone belt, which includes Linton and Conistone, so that the high country in the two regions is different in appearance - the upper dale fells being grass-covered, except for large outcrops of limestone, and the lower covered with heather or bracken.

The pattern of settlement is similar throughout - a few "major" and "minor" settlements along the valley and scattered farmhouses on the higher land. (Rylstone, though not on the river, also comprises three major settlements and other isolated farms.)

Starting with Weston, the farthest down the valley, and the nearest to a large market borough (Otley), it consisted at the time of the analysis of two major settlements. Weston itself and Askwith a mile or so further up the valley, with a small group of farmhouses at Scales (on the hillside) and isolated farmhouses on the Blubberhouse and Askwith moors.

Ilkley's major settlement lies around the church, with others which were probably of approaching size in the earlier periods, at Wheatley, Langbar-cum-Nessfield and Middleton (the latter two about a mile up the northern hillslopes.)

Addingham, as can be seen from the map, was a smaller more compact parish, with one settlement of the same name and a number of farmhouses strung along the moor edge.



PARISHES ANALYSED  
 BURNSALL (+ RYLSSTONE AND  
 CONISTONE CHAPELS)  
 LINTON  
 BOLTON ABBEY (PART OF SKIPTON  
 present boundary  
 indicated)  
 ADDINGHAM  
 ILKLEY  
 WESTON

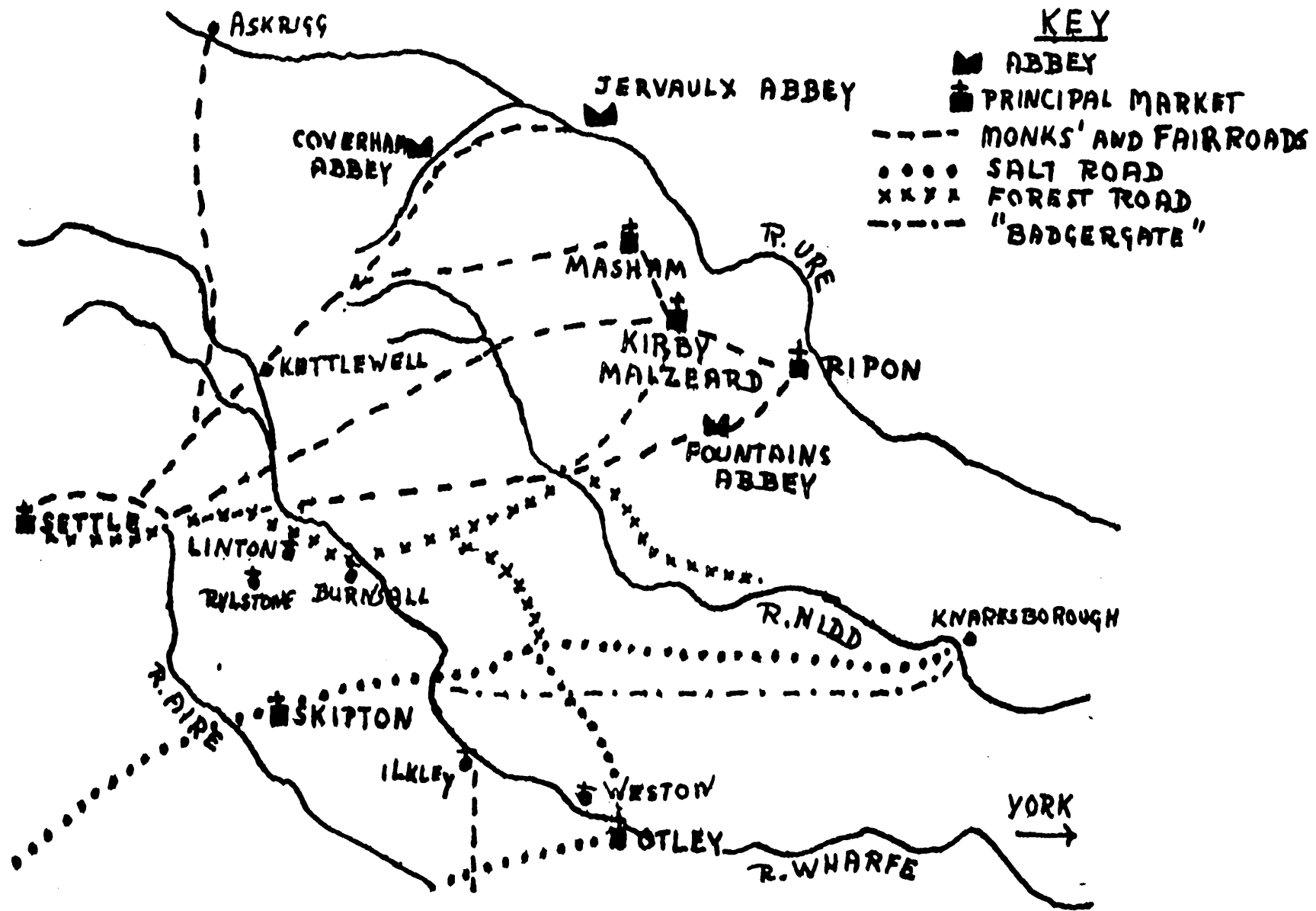
Bolton Abbey, a chapelry of Skipton Parish, served a group of houses round the Priory and many scattered farmhouses, a small settlement on the left bank hillside, Beamsley, and Halton East on the right bank slopes, neither more than a couple of miles away.

Burnsall is much the largest parish in extent and with a population in the 17th and 18th centuries similar to Ilkley's (and possibly rather less than Linton). It is a curious shape, almost enclosing the smaller parish of Linton. The upper arm is served by the chapel of Conistone, which includes another small hamlet, Kilnsey, just across the river, and the part of the Parish which extends beyond the watershed on the western side of the Wharfe - and whose streams drain into the Aire - is served by Rylstone chapel. There are two other settlements within a mile or so of Rylstone, - Hetton and Cracoe - with Threapland another half-mile towards Burnsall. Burnsall village itself is situated on the riverside and there are a succession of small hamlets all along the river to the boundary of Skipton Parish - Hartlington (with Hartlington Raikes on the hill going over to Nidderdale), Appletrewick and Drebley, and one small settlement, the "hidden village" in a fold in the hills, Thorpe-sub-Montem, less than two miles from Burnsall itself.

The parish of Linton, which appears to have had the largest population of all from the middle of the 17th till at least the early 19th century, is made up of four major settlements - Linton, Grassington, Threshfield and Hebden - its Parish church standing by the river some  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 mile from all four.

During the period under consideration the main occupation of the dales-people of the parishes lower down the valley was, as might be expected, husbandry. In the 18th century however the greater part of the inhabitants of the parish of Linton were engaged in mining - chiefly lead - and in some of the other parishes there was a good deal of woollen and linen weaving. The ups and downs of these industries can be traced to a certain extent through the occupations given in the Parish registers.

There were many roads which linked these parishes with those "outside", all "old" by the 17th century. There were parts of Roman roads, salt roads, a Forest road, roads used by the monks of Fountains, Sawley, Byland and Coverham Abbeys, who owned many granges and farms in the district, and a famous "Drove" road down which the cattle from Scotland were driven to the Fairs in Malham and thence to Ripon and Masham along the earlier market roads. Many of



these roads are now only green tracks over the hills, though some have been incorporated in the modern metalled highways. The most important markets in the district were probably those at Kirby Malzeard, Masham and Ripon to the East and Skipton and Settle to the West.

A sketch map showing the principal roads in relation to the parishes under review and the principal settlements within the parishes is attached.

The following tables summarise the marriage horizons of the parishes. Information on the residence of marriage partners is not given for exactly the same period in each of the parishes, as is clear from the table below.

TABLE 1

Burnsall	1654-1662	and	1703-1812
Rylstone	1725-1754	"	1802-1812
Conistone	1659, 1688-1753	"	1797-1812
Ilkley	1611-1638	"	1673-1812
Linton	1654-1656, 1667-1684	"	1689-1777
Bolton Abbey	1710-1733	"	1754-1812
Addingham			1754-1812
Weston	1678-1739	"	1756-1812

However, in any one parish the practices regarding choice of marriage partners do not appear to vary in any recognisable pattern over the 100 to 150 years usually available for analysis, so although the marriage horizon figures for the different parishes refer to slightly different periods, they would still appear to be broadly comparable.

The following table gives the number of marriages in each of the parishes in which both partners came from the parish, only one partner came from the parish, or neither partner came from the parish



TABLE II

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Total Marriages</u>	<u>Where Parish known</u>	<u>Both partners of this Parish</u>	<u>One partner from other Parish (2)</u>	<u>Both partners from other Parish</u>
Burnsall	1,578	971	607	357 (37%)	7
Rylstone Chap.	102	102	73	24 (23.5)	4
Conistone Chap.	207	64	48	13 (20)	3
Ilkley	950	807	542	239 (29.5)	25
Linton	1,836	775	556	192 (24.7)	27
Bolton Abbey	599	444	293	149 (33.7)	2
Addingham	1,053	415	297	118 (28.4)	0
Weston	412	330	207	119 (36.5)	4

The percentage of marriages in which one partner came from outside the parish ranges from 20% in Conistone Chapel to 37% in Burnsall, a range which includes the figure of 33% found for the North Riding parish of Easingwold.<sup>(1)</sup> Burnsall also has an unusually high proportion of marriage partners from over 15 miles away, as is clear from Table III.

**TABLE III**

**Marriages outside Parish**

<u>Parish</u>	<u>10 miles &amp; under</u>	<u>11-15 miles</u>	<u>Over 15 miles</u>
Burnsall	244 (25.3%)	40 (4.1%)	70 (7.3%)
Rylstone Chap.	13 (12.8%)	2 (2.0%)	8 (7.8%)
Conistone Chap.	11 (17.2%)	0	1 (1.6%)
Ilkley	177 (22.0%)	28 (3.6%)	34 (4.3%)
Linton	138 (17.8%)	20 (2.7%)	33 (4.4%)
Bolton Abbey	119 (26.9%)	13 (2.9%)	17 (3.8%)
Addingham	88 (21.2%)	8 (1.9%)	21 (5.1%)
Weston	99 (30.0%)	13 (4.0%)	6 (1.8%)

As mentioned earlier the high proportion in Burnsall of marriage partners from over 15 miles away may be due to the large numbers (32) from the parish of Ripon: Ripon itself is more than 15 miles distant from Burnsall, but it is a big parish with a reasonably large settlement at Pateley Bridge (with a chapel), within 10 miles of Burnsall. Out of this total 6 of the marriage partners are stated to be from Pateley Bridge - all before 1737: thereafter only the "Parish of Ripon" is given. Even if we guessed that as many as half of the 26 "Ripon" partners came from the part of the parish within 10 miles of Burnsall, the percentage of partners from more than 10 miles away would still remain high, as is shown by the following table:-

	<u>10 miles and under</u>	<u>15 miles and under</u>	<u>Over 15 miles</u>
Burnsall	257 (26.7%)	40 (4.1%)	57 (5.9%)

Table IV summarises the relative position of the parishes with regard to the percentage of marriage partners coming from more than 10 miles away. This shows the diversity of the northern group - Burnsall and Rylstone chapel having around 10% from more than 10 miles away, but Conistone chapel only around 2%. The remainder of the parishes in the group have more or less the same percentage of marriages from more than 10 miles away (5.8 to 7.9%).

TABLE IV

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Within Parish &amp; within 10 miles</u>	<u>Over 10 miles</u>
Burnsall	88.5%	11.4%
Rylstone Chap.	90.2%	9.8%
Conistone Chap.	98.4%	1.6%
Ilkley	92%	7.9%
Linton	92.8%	7.1%
Bolton Abbey	93.2%	6.7%
Addingham	92.8%	7.0%
Weston	93.9%	5.8%

Apart from the differences in detail noted above, the marriage horizons of the parishes in the group are broadly similar and not unlike marriage horizons found elsewhere. It is however interesting that whereas in some parts of the country a small hill appears a great obstacle to the intermingling of people from parishes on either side of it, in the Yorkshire dales the marriage partners are as likely to be found from "over the top" as from up and down the valley (apart from the adjoining village), probably owing to the highly developed system of medieval market roads which followed the shortest routes over the fells.

NOTES

1. "Easingwold Marriage Horizons" in Local Population Studies Magazine and Newsletter No. 2 Spring 1969.
2. The slight discrepancy between the totals in the fourth column in Table II and the additions of the columns in Table III is explained by the few names of parishes which cannot be traced. They are included in the "One partner from another Parish" additions but cannot be analysed in greater detail.