

Southern Historians and Their Exploitation of Victorian Censuses

DENNIS MILLS, MICHAEL EDGAR,
AND ANDREW HINDE

Introduction

The manuscript census enumerators' books (CEBs) are well known to family historians for the nominative information they provide about all the individuals residing in a particular place on census nights. Local historians in many parts of England and Wales have made considerable use of them to study a diverse range of topics including occupational and social structure, family and household composition, migration, age and sex structure, and the micro-geography of settlements.¹ However, a perusal of the geographical distribution of these studies indicates clearly that the south of England has been considerably less favoured than the Midlands and the North with this kind of research. With the exceptions of Devon, Kent and Sussex, counties south of the Thames are poorly represented.²

The intention of this article is to provide local historians of southern England with an introduction to the nineteenth-century censuses, making suggestions as to how both the printed reports and the manuscript returns can be used. Illustrative examples are quoted, most of which come from Dorset, which is more familiar to the authors than some other counties, as well as being one of the counties in which studies based on the nineteenth-century censuses are rare. In particular, short supply are longitudinal and comparative studies, and the article looks at some of the insights into social and economic history which can be gleaned from such studies.

Printed census information

Before turning to the CEBs, it is appropriate to discuss some of the aggregated data available in the printed census reports. The first census was taken as a wartime measure in 1801; since then there have been censuses every ten years with the exception of 1941.³ From the

information collected in each census, reports have been issued which contain summaries and commentaries.⁴ Whilst the nineteenth-century census reports are generally only available in large libraries, population totals for each parish between 1801 and 1901 can be found for most counties in the relevant Victoria County History (VCH) volumes.⁵

Consider, for example, population changes in Dorset, as compared with England and Wales as a whole (Table 1). Although Dorset shared in the massive population increase of the nineteenth century, from the beginning of the century it was falling behind the national trend. When underemployed farm labourers began to leave in large numbers after 1850, and farming was not, on the whole, replaced by more dynamic industries, Dorset fell behind to an even greater extent.

Table 1. Population change in nineteenth-century Dorset

	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901
Population (thousands)	114.5	124.7	144.5	159.4	175.3	184.4	189.0	195.8	191.0	194.6	203.0
Increase since previous census (thousands)	10.3	20.8	14.9	15.9	9.1	4.6	6.8	-4.7	3.5	8.4	
Change as percentage of population in previous census, Dorset	9.0	1.59	10.3	10.0	5.2	2.5	3.6	-2.4	1.9	4.3	
Change as percentage of population in previous census, England and Wales	14.0	18.1	15.8	14.3	12.6	11.9	13.2	14.4	11.7	12.2	

Sources. Dorset data from G.S. Minchin, 'Table of population, 1801 to 1901', in *The Victoria History of the County of Dorset*, ed. W. Page, Vol. 2 (1908), pp. 264–73; data for England and Wales from *Census of England and Wales, 1901: General Report with Appendices*, 63 Vict. c. 4 (1904), Appendix A, Table 3, p. 194.

This experience was echoed to a greater or lesser degree by other southern counties. Three counties – Kent, Middlesex and Surrey – did achieve population growth between 1801 and 1901 that was markedly higher than that of England and Wales as a whole, but this was largely owing to the massive expansion of London. Elsewhere, the principal growth areas were the ports and resort towns along the coast, with both Hampshire and Sussex showing increases close to the national rate.

At the other end of the scale Cornwall, Dorset and Wiltshire were particularly badly affected by out-migration. Not only was their growth between 1801 and 1901 well below that of the country as a whole but they each experienced an actual decline in population at some point during the century. Dorset's population fell between 1871 and 1881 (Table 1), while Wiltshire registered successive falls during the eighteen-forties and eighteen-fifties.⁶ Cornwall's experience, exacerbated by a declining tin mining industry, was worst of all, with the county losing population in every decade from the eighteen-sixties.⁷

Although it was unusual for whole counties to lose population like this, much of southern England remained wholly rural in character throughout the nineteenth century; consequently, the 'flight from the land', particularly after 1870, meant that many rural areas and communities within counties suffered population declines despite overall county totals generally going up.

The tables in the VCH volumes typically include population totals for each parish at every census from 1801 to 1901. They are also invaluable guides to the smallest administrative divisions and to parish acreages. The latter were usually derived from the first accurate and standardized figures provided by the Ordnance Survey in the later part of the century. In a few cases, boundary changes in earlier decades will mean that these acreages are not correct for the whole century, but in an area of such little change as Dorset, it is better to rely on the Ordnance Survey figures than those given, for example, in country trade directories. Acreages are particularly useful in agricultural counties, since the calculation of population densities for individual parishes gives an index of economic activity which allows comparisons to be made between parishes as well as with the national and county figures (Table 2).

Table 2. Population changes 1801–1901 and by half centuries, and population density: Dorset and England and Wales compared

		<i>Dorset</i>	<i>England and Wales</i>
Percentage increase	1801–1901	77.3	265.7
	1801–1851	61.0	101.6
	1851–1901	10.1	81.4
Density of population (acres per person)	1801	5.5	4.2
	1851	3.4	2.1
	1901	3.1	1.2

Sources. See Table 1.

Different settlements within Dorset experienced a variety of demographic histories between 1801 and 1901 (Table 3). The first place listed, Puddletown, is a large parish in which the population rose and fell almost symmetrically up to, and down from, 1851, so that it ended the century with only a few more people than it had in 1801. This experience was mirrored by many rural parishes. Local investigation in the CEBs would probably reveal a population gradually ageing during the second half of the century, with many implications for social and economic vitality. Haselbury Bryan is a similar case, but was always much more densely populated, suggesting either a more fertile soil and more labour intensive farming or a greater proportion of people in non-agricultural occupations (or both). Pentridge is an example of the large number of very small communities which experienced a net loss of population between 1801 and 1901.⁸

Like Puddletown, the population of the borough of Lyme Regis rose and fell around 1851 (Table 3), but was no doubt sustained by its resort function so that Lyme Regis ended the century with almost half as many people again as in 1801. An interesting line to investigate in such places is the extent to which the population growth was accompanied by a change in the social and occupational structure. Such a consideration would be even more relevant for resorts like Weymouth, which grew steadily through the century.

The example of Weymouth serves to remind us that although southern England generally remained rural and agricultural in the nineteenth century, some places did experience substantial urban growth. Most of this occurred along the south coast and the resort towns grew fastest of all (largely because they started from a low base). Ports like Southampton also expanded quickly as industrialization gathered pace and the volume of imports and exports increased. Urban expansion was not, however, confined solely to coastal areas. Most notably, railway companies developed whole 'new' towns (such as Ashford in Kent, Eastleigh and Swindon) as engineering and service centres for the fast-expanding rail network. These ports, seaside resorts and railway towns depended upon substantial in-migration for their population growth and the 1851 and later censuses reveal who the immigrants were and where they came from.

The example of Charminster (Table 3) shows that local historians should be particularly inquisitive about sudden rises in the population of smaller settlements which may derive from the establishment of large institutions. Between 1861 and 1871, the population of Charminster grew by 520. Minchin reiterates the report of the 1871 Census, that most of this increase should be related to the opening of a County Lunatic Asylum and a County School.⁹ These would have had a

Table 3. Population data for a selection of villages and towns in Dorset, 1801–1901

<i>Place</i>	<i>Puddletown</i>	<i>Haselbury Bryan</i>	<i>Pentridge</i>	<i>Lyme Regis</i>	<i>Weymouth borough</i>	<i>Charminster</i>
Acreege	7,653	2,415	2,053	1,237	180	5,095
Population	909	454	239	1,451	3,617	416
	961	541	160	2,095	11,970	1,679
Population density	8.42	5.32	8.59	0.85	0.05	12.25
(acres per person)	7.96	4.46	12.83	0.59	0.02	3.03
Population change						
1801–1901 (as percentage						
of 1801 population)	5.7	19.2	-33.1	44.4	230.9	303.6
Minimum population	870	454	160	1,451	3,617	416
Census at which population						
was at a minimum	1811	1801	1901	1801	1801	1801
Maximum population	1,297	852	295	2,852	11,970	1,679
Census at which population						
was at a maximum	1851	1871	1861	1851	1901	1901

Sources. See Table 1.

double effect, since in addition to the inmates of the asylum and the scholars, increased job opportunities came from the establishment of such institutions.

Other temporary departures from the 'normal' local situation could occur through large-scale public works. The building of railways was perhaps the most common reason for these temporary parochial demographic blips, but others included, for example, the increases in population at Portland, Wyke Regis and Weymouth in 1901 which were 'attributed mainly to the construction of the breakwater [at Portland Harbour] and to other Government works in progress at the date of the census'.¹⁰

The manuscript census enumerators' books

The aggregated information in the printed census reports typically raises many questions about the social, economic and demographic history of individual localities. Answers to some of these questions can be sought using the much more detailed information in the manuscript census enumerators' books. These came into use with the census of 1841, and are now available for censuses up to 1891.¹¹

It is clearly crucial to assess the quality and reliability of the data in the CEBs. The majority of entries present no difficulty, the source being more consistent and more easily used than many other sources familiar to local historians. However, care needs to be taken over a number of matters relating to the interpretation of a minority of entries.

Consider a transcript of a page from the 1851 CEB for Sturminster Newton, Dorset (Table 4), which illustrates the information recorded. Column [1] contains the numbers of the schedules given out by the enumerator to every householder in his district, to be filled in for census night, and collected very soon afterwards.¹² The enumerator copied the information from these forms into his book, and without doubt he exercised editorial control over the material, since comparison between districts reveals differences of terminology and style. For example, some enumerators failed to use the official abbreviation 'ag. lab.' for agricultural labourer and instead wrote 'farm labourer' or just 'labourer'. At Okeford Fitzpaine in Dorset the term 'yeoman' was used as an alternative to 'farmer' but, as it has not been found in some neighbouring parishes, this usage may represent the enumerator's semantic preference rather than any real difference in either agrarian practice or social status.

Of potentially considerable importance are the different practices found in relation to the identification of co-residing groups (or households) within a distinct dwelling (or houseful). In the 1851 census the enumerators were told to draw a horizontal line from the edge of the

Table 4. Transcript of Specimen Page from the 1851 Census Enumerator's Book for Sturminster Newton, Dorset

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
45	High Street	John Conway	Head	Mar	68		Clock and watchmaker employing 1 man	Dorset Sturminster	
46		Rebecca Do	Wife	Mar		60	House Servt	Bucks Stony Stratford	
47	High Street	Mary Ann Beaumont	Servt	U		15	Landed Proprietor	Dorset Sturminster	
		Elizabeth T Bremer	Lodger	Wid		79	Stationer, Printer, &c	Do	
		Martha Davis	Head	Wid		60	Annuitant	Do Fiddleford	
		Martha A Payne	Sister	Wid		70	Printer, &c	Do Sturminster	
		William [Frith]	Assistant	U	22		House Servt	Midx London	
	1 House	Eliza Bennett	Servt	U		17		Dorset Sturminster	
		Uninhabited							
48	The Cottage	Selena Davis	Head	Wid		61	Landed Proprietor	Do	
		Elizabeth Lambert	Servt	Mar		30	House Servt	Do Spetisbury	
		Charles Do	Servt's son	U	6		Do	Do	
	1 House	Vacant							
49	Row Lane	Harry Newman	Head	Mar	66		School Master	Dorset Sturminster	
		Elizabeth Newman	Wife	Mar		70	Do	Do	
	2 Houses	Vacant							
50	High St	Edmund Short	Head	Mar	39		Butcher	Do	
		Elizabeth Do	Wife	Mar		37	Do	Do	
		Charles Do	Son	U	7		Scholar	Do	
		Ellen	Daur	U		5	Scholar	Do	

Notes. The original is headed 'Township of Sturminster Newton' and 'Town of Sturminster'. The column headings were as follows: [1] – No. of householder's schedule, [2] – Name of street, place, or road and name or no. of house, [3] – Name and surname of each person who abode in the house, on the night of the 30 March 1851, [4] – Relation to head of family, [5] – Condition (as to marriage), [6] and [7] – Ages of males (column [6]) and females (column [7]), [8] – Rank, profession or occupation, [9] – Where born, [10] – Whether blind or deaf and dumb. At the foot of the table the houses were totalled to five inhabited and four uninhabited and none being built. The persons were totalled to six males and eleven females (three empty lines making up the total of twenty on the form).

form under the last person enumerated in each dwelling, and a shorter line between any distinct households within it. In the Sturminster Newton transcript (Table 4) there is a longer line under Elizabeth Bremar and a shorter one between her and Mary Ann Beaumont. The enumerator gave Elizabeth Bremar a separate schedule to fill in, which he numbered '46', because she was a lodger in the dwelling of John Conway, who used schedule forty-five for his own household. It is questionable whether Elizabeth Bremar really constituted a separate single-person household, taking meals on her own and living essentially independently of John Conway. It is even more unlikely that there were really six separate households in a house in Corfe Castle, Dorset, which contained a conjugal family of seven and five people who were probably lodgers.¹³ The historian, therefore, needs to look carefully at these complex housefuls and to attempt to treat them consistently: a separate schedule does not always signal a separate household.¹⁴

The address column ([2] in Table 4) may only contain the most rudimentary information, especially in rural areas, where few houses had numbers and most cottages did not have names. Cross-reference to a contemporary estate or tithe award map, or one of the few early town plans may, however, make it possible to carry out a 'house repopulation' exercise – that is to match households to properties – with a fair amount of success. Where it can be shown that the enumerator walked around his district in a systematic way and kept his schedules in geographical order, such an exercise will be much easier and its results more trustworthy in representing the social geography of the time.¹⁵

The chief problems in the name column ([3] in Table 4) derive from the illegibility of handwriting: a contemporary directory can help with doubtful interpretations. Relatively obscure (to modern eyes) biblical names like Keziah, Hezekiah and Tamar were quite common in the nineteenth century, notably in rural areas with a strong nonconformist presence. Many studies can be carried out using data in the other columns which do not require certainty about personal names, but in any work involving nominal record linkage care has to be taken with spellings. Variations in the spelling of names are common in the CEBs, most of these being phonetic in character.¹⁶

The relationship column ([4] in Table 4) may contain some traps for the unwary, for example the now archaic use of 'son-in-law' or 'daughter-in-law' to refer to stepchildren. Mistakes were sometimes made because the enumerator forgot who he was relating to whom. It is helpful to read the relationship column in conjunction with the occupation column ([8] in Table 4) in order to deal effectively with the various types of co-residing servants. It was common, for example, for co-resident unmarried or widowed relatives of a household head to be

described as servants in the occupation column. In most cases this probably represents a mutually convenient residential arrangement rather than formal employment.

A son or daughter with a different surname from the parents is most likely to be a stepchild, but could, of course, be an adopted child, and might also be the illegitimate child of the wife as a result of a previous liaison. A study of illegitimacy in Colyton, Devon, reveals that men did take on such children when they married the mother.¹⁷ For example, schedule forty-eight in Sturminster Newton (Table 4) shows that in the case of Charles Lambert, son of the servant, the enumerator was careful to state his exact relationship to the head of the household. Such care, however, was missing in a case from Stalbridge (Dorset), in a household consisting of a male unmarried head, a widowed female servant and two 'sons'.¹⁸ Here the two 'sons' shared the widowed servant's surname and were clearly her children rather than sons of the head (unless he fathered them illegitimately on his servant after she was widowed). The two boys are described as having been born in Stalbridge and cross-referencing to the baptism register could reveal the true position. Another common ambiguity arises where a daughter with an illegitimate child persuaded her mother to bring it up and to disguise it as far as possible as one of her own children. A case was found at Corfe Castle in which a widowed female had, apparently, two daughters called Susan, one aged twenty-three years, one three years. The younger Susan was almost certainly the illegitimate daughter of the twenty-three year old, or of an absent sister.¹⁹

Column [5], which describes marital condition (or marital status), is usually unproblematic. For persons under sixteen years, most enumerators left the column blank, as they were instructed to do. Such juveniles can be assumed to be unmarried.

The age and sex columns ([6] and [7] in Table 4) are not difficult to read, although occasionally a person's age is written in the wrong column. There are sometimes problems of illegibility where a Somerset House checker has been over-enthusiastic in using crayon when tabulating information for the printed reports. As to the accuracy and consistency of the ages, although age mis-statement was common, and when tracing persons from census to census inconsistencies abound, if the ages of the inhabitants of a parish are aggregated into five-year age groups (0-4 years, 5-9 years, and so on up to, say, eighty years and over), then a reasonably accurate picture of the age structure of the population usually emerges.²⁰

Column [8], which is headed 'rank, profession or occupation' will often be the most fruitful for the historian. However, it is also the most problematic. To begin with, archaic occupational descriptions will occur, such as the use of 'dairyman' in Dorset to refer both to those who rented a farmer's dairy herd at so much per cow per year and to male dairy workers

employed directly by farmers. However, a study of eleven Dorset parishes revealed that the checkers had generally inserted in the CEB the word 'grazier' to distinguish the independent dairyman from the farm employee.²¹ It also seems that where a 'dairyman's' wife is described as a 'milk seller', then the 'dairyman' was working for himself rather than for a farmer.

It should be borne in mind that the column describes rather more than just occupation. Description such as 'gentlewoman', 'independent' and 'annuitant' are common. The first of these appears not to have been claimed or allowed indiscriminately, but the latter two descriptions on their own are quite ambiguous, since cross-references to other sources can show that 'independent' sometimes implied little more than independence from poor relief, and 'annuitants' often existed on very meagre annuities. Similarly, the description 'landed proprietor' could mean the ownership of as little as one and a half acres, and 'proprietor of houses' could imply only a couple of tumbledown cottages.

Another wide-ranging description was 'pauper'. This almost invariably denoted a person in receipt of relief under the new Poor Law. The most numerous class of such persons were the elderly, many of whom were receiving permanent outdoor relief. Their erstwhile occupation was frequently noted, as in 'pauper (ag. lab.)'. Entries where younger persons are described as, say, 'pauper and ag. lab.' probably indicate that some form of temporary relief was being received, most likely because of sickness within the family. Another group eligible for poor relief and often found described as 'paupers' were widows with dependent children.²²

The most widespread problem associated with the occupation column is associated with the status of the many tradesmen and craftsmen. Although description of persons such as wheelwrights and grocers were intended to indicate whether or not they were masters, journeymen, assistants or apprentices, practice varied widely. A contemporary trade directory can help identify tradesmen and craftsmen who were masters running their own businesses. Directories may also fill out the picture of dual occupations, sometimes recording second occupations, or printing them in a different, possibly more reliable order. Occupational mobility was rarely a significant factor in rural areas but people are sometimes described differently in (almost) contemporaneous sources. John Linington of Swanage in Dorset, for example, is listed in an 1848 directory as a bricklayer; by the time of the 1851 census, however, he describes himself as a master mason; two years later he again appears in a directory but now as builder and mason.²³ The building trades were particularly prone to such variations of occupational description, often reflecting the irregular nature of their employment, but also testifying to success and upward social mobility on occasion.

Employers were told to state the number of men they employed, but often did not. Farmers were additionally supposed to give their acreages. However, there are many farmers whose acreages are missing, as well as farm bailiffs who felt that the questions did not apply to them. Even where the acreage and number of labourers employed are stated, it has to be remembered that farms are not necessarily parcelled neatly within parish boundaries. The figures given might well refer to land in two or more parishes, but this is very rarely specified in the CEBs. All this means that a study of farm sizes and employment is much more difficult to carry out than might at first appear, unless directories, crop returns, parish registers, tithe surveys and estate papers can also be brought to bear on the problem.

The exact status of elderly tradesmen, craftsmen and farmers can be problematic. Some may well have effectively retired and ceded day-to-day control of the business to a son, while still considering themselves to be the titular head of the enterprise. Further uncertainty can arise where an elderly widow has, on the face of it, assumed her dead husband's occupation. Catherine Isaacs, for example, a sixty year-old widow living at Sturminster Newton in 1851, is described as a 'tanner employing 8 men'. At the same time her twenty-four year old son, William, is described (rather redundantly) in the occupation column as 'tanner's son'.²⁴ By 1852/53 a directory names William as running the firm.²⁵ Of course, Catherine could have died in the intervening period; however, it is also possible that William was effectively running the business in 1851. Priscilla Hallet of Oakeford Fitzpaine, a sixty-five year-old widow, was described in the 1851 census as 'farmer of 130 acres emp. 3 labs'.²⁶ Her thirty-eight year-old unmarried son Joseph is also described as 'farmer'. Perhaps Rebecca owned the property or held the lease while her son actually farmed the land. Such a situation is certainly most likely to arise on small family farms. Instances such as these are not especially common but they do illustrate the kinds of complications and inconsistencies that will inevitably crop up from time to time.

Despite the sorts of ambiguities described in the previous few paragraphs, the CEBs provide an unrivalled opportunity to study employment structure in the Victorian period. Their main advantage is that, unlike all other sources, they contain information about the whole of the male workforce.

However, the work carried out by women is much less faithfully reflected in the census than that of men, since so much of it was part-time and/or unpaid, and therefore either in practice or in principle excluded from the CEBs.²⁷ In parts of Dorset, significant numbers of women were listed as 'glovers' or 'straw-plaiters', presumably because the work was regular. By contrast, relatively few female farm labourers were recorded, presumably

because, excepting dairy work, women's farm work was only seasonal.²⁸ This was quite common and similar situations are found in straw plaiting areas of Buckinghamshire and lace-making districts in Devon.²⁹ The occupational description 'occasionally works in fields' ascribed to three women at Corfe Castle in the 1851 CEB is very much a rarity.

The prevailing attitude to women's work tended to be that women were simply dependants; if they were economically active it was commonly regarded as merely 'topping up' the family wage. Many services and products for sale in the nineteenth century were produced in the home and some enumerators did enter descriptions such as 'farmer's wife' and 'innkeeper's wife' which, vague though they are, probably indicate some sort of direct productive function. Unfortunately, the checkers who compiled the printed abstracts resolutely excluded all such descriptions as referring to unpaid work. The printed tables are therefore of very dubious value for an investigation of women's employment. Despite their manifest inadequacies, significantly more information on women's occupations is commonly revealed to the local historian through the CEBs.³⁰

The penultimate column ([9] in Table 4) is headed 'where born', and not parish of birth, with the consequence that sometimes the name of an obscure hamlet or even of a farmstead will appear instead of the name of a substantial place that can be checked easily in directories. The 1851 CEB for Corfe Castle (a parish with an area of 8,000 acres) contained many birthplaces of this kind, and local knowledge linked with Ordnance Survey maps was invaluable in their identification.³¹ Another problem is the occasional appearance of a name such as 'Winterborne' without its adjectival addition (one can choose from some thirteen 'Winterbornes' in Dorset!). In rare instances a placename, usually referring to a place some distance away, might be so badly misspelled as to be unrecognizable in a national gazetteer (for example Ecclesome, Sussex, for Icklesham?).³² It might have been that the householder had left that place many years previously and had forgotten the correct spelling. Or, if the respondent was illiterate, the name may have been unfamiliar to the enumerator so that he simply spelt it phonetically. Occasionally one might also find that a village has changed its name since the nineteenth century or that it has been known by two different names. The north Dorset villages of Shillingstone and Iwerne Courtney, for example, were (and, indeed, still are) also known as Shilling Okeford and Shroton respectively. Although such examples are rare, they do serve to emphasize the desirability of the historian's researching the general history of a place before undertaking any analysis of its CEBs, especially where he or she is not familiar with the area.

The 'where born' column can clearly be used to analyze migration,

but only lifetime migration. Occasionally parents with several children reveal traces of their migration histories in the birthplaces of the children. John Gozney, for instance, was an agricultural labourer born at Purse Caundle in north Dorset.³³ His wife came from Templecombe, just across the border in Somerset. Of their four children, the eldest was born at Haydon, a parish adjacent to Purse Caundle. The family then appears to have lived at Purse Caundle for a time, as the two middle children were born there. By the time of the 1851 census, however, the Gozneys had moved again, this time to the neighbouring parish of Stourton Caundle, where their youngest child was born. Very localized migration was common amongst agricultural labourers, while that over longer distances was much more the preserve of farmers, tradesmen, craftsmen, professionals and the gentry.³⁴ Itinerant traders, sometimes found living in tents or caravans on census night are particularly likely to have children with geographically diverse birthplaces.

Useful though these 'traces' are, the travels of most people between their date of birth and the date of the census are largely a closed book to the historian. Nevertheless, much can be gleaned from a study of birthplaces (classified, for example, according to distance from the place of current residence), especially when cross-tabulated with occupation and sex.

Column [10], which deals with disability, gives the historian very little scope, although the family historian will occasionally be chastened to find unsuspected imbecility in the family, as a question about this was added to 'blind and deaf-and-dumb' in later censuses. Such information even appears unsolicited in the 1851 census, such as the entries 'of weak mind (idiot)' at Corfe Castle and 'afflicted' at Sturminster Newton.³⁵

Illustrative analysis

We illustrate the kind of analysis which can be carried out using the CEBs by looking at the occupational structure of seven rural parishes in Dorset (Table 5). We have classified the reported occupations into groups of like kind, using one of two commonly used classification schemes.³⁶ Although agriculture was predominant in the rural economy of most of southern England, it was not uncommon for rural communities to support some kind of non-agricultural activity, often particular to their locality, sometimes based on local resources. Thus the seven Dorset parishes contained groups of stone workers, straw plaiters, plasterers, coastguards, brick and tile makers, sawyers and glovers. Some of these groups were very small and few were significant outside

the local context, but they were important modifiers of the occupational structure of individual parishes.³⁷ Even within agriculture there was a variety of occupations, including shepherds, farm servants and dairymaids, as well as the numerous agricultural labourers.

Table 5. Age structures of different occupational groups in rural Dorset 1851

<i>Occupational group</i>	<i>Age group (years)</i>						<i>Total number employed</i>
	5-14	15-19	20-24	25-44	45-64	65 and over	
Farmers	0	0	2	25	32	22	81
Farm workers	73	126	85	212	106	21	623
Trades and crafts (masters)	0	0	0	38	44	11	93
Trades and crafts (journeymen)	9	40	36	72	32	15	204
Trades and crafts (overall)	10	42	46	122	79	26	325
Marine occupations	1	1	1	30	13	1	47
Professional and gentry	0	0	3	24	10	8	45
Domestic servants and estate workers	12	29	18	53	21	4	137
Special occupations of the localities	41	60	38	65	37	9	250
Other	9	13	10	15	11	6	64
All occupations	146	271	203	546	309	97	1,572

Notes. The figures in this table are based on data for the following seven parishes: Langton Matravers, Studland and Worth Matravers (in the Isle of Purbeck); and Child Okeford, Hinton St Mary, Okeford Fitzpaine and Stourton Caundle (in the Vale of Blackmore). The occupational group 'trades and crafts (overall)' includes twenty-eight persons working in trades and crafts who did not state whether they were masters or journeymen. 'Marine occupations' exclude Royal Navy officers (who are included with 'professional and gentry'). 'Special occupations of the localities' include stone quarrying in the Isle of Purbeck and sawyers and gloving in the Blackmore Vale.

Sources. PRO. CEBs for Langton Matravers, Studland and Worth Matravers, 1851, HO 107/1856; CEBs for Child Okeford, Hinton St Mary, Okeford Fitzpaine and Stourton Caundle, 1851, HO 107/1852.

Consequently small villages might have as many as twenty different occupations, large villages perhaps forty, and small market towns, such as Stalbridge in Dorset, as many as a hundred. In these circumstances the need to group occupations becomes self-evident. Occupational groups also provide an ideal framework for studies of other topics. Thus, for example, occupational groups varied in their age composition (Table 5) and their migratory tendencies. In the seven Dorset parishes, there were above average proportions of farm workers aged between ten and twenty-four years, and a similar youthfulness is seen among servants and journeymen employed in trades and crafts. The bulk of the servants were unmarried females, whose careers in service ended on marriage. Conversely, farmers and master craftsmen were disproportionately elderly, much as one would expect for occupations requiring capital and experience, though some farmers and master craftsmen may simply have been reluctant to retire or, indeed, unable to for economic reasons.³⁸

Of the people resident in these seven Dorset parishes in 1851, 61 per cent of the population had been born in the parish where they were enumerated, just over one fifth had been born in other parishes within five miles, and fewer than one in five had been born further afield. There were, however, wide variations between occupational groups, with persons working in highly localized industries, such as the stone workers in Purbeck and the glovers in the Vale of Blackmore having the highest proportions of natives (about 75 per cent). About 60 per cent of the farm workers and journeymen tradesmen and craftsmen were living in their native parishes, while farmers and master tradesmen and craftsmen were significantly more mobile; only about 40 per cent were natives. The most migratory group were the professionals and gentry, three quarters of whom had been born elsewhere.

As might be expected, domestic servants were a highly mobile group. Two thirds of them had been born in parishes other than that in which they were living in 1851. Overall, servants had moved much shorter distances on average than the professionals and gentry. It should be noted, however, that there was a considerable difference between what we might call 'specialist' domestic servants of both sexes (such as butlers, valets, and ladies' maids), and 'general' domestic servants and estate workers. The former were largely confined to high status gentry and professional households, and they were often as mobile over long distances as their employers. The latter were found in a wide range of households: they were employed by small tradesmen and craftsmen and farmers as well as the gentry. They tended to have been born in one of the surrounding parishes, if not the parish where they were employed.

Choosing a census year and a place to study

Although the CEBs were first used in 1841, the 1841 census is not always the best starting point since in that census the information collected was more rudimentary than that in later censuses. The schedules were unnumbered; there is no information on relationships within the household or marital condition; the age data are approximate; the occupational data is less comprehensive; and the birthplace entry is limited to indicating whether or not a person was born in the county of enumeration.³⁹ So if the early Victorian period is the target, it is often best to start with the 1851 census, and where linkage to a tithe survey or other major document produced around 1840 is possible, there are advantages in first of all linking the 1841 and 1851 censuses before bringing in further information.

The CEBs for the censuses from 1851 to 1881 are practically identical apart from varying numbers of lines per page, which might affect the legibility of the handwriting (in 1851 twenty lines were in use, thereafter there were twenty-five). In 1891 there were thirty-one lines on each page, but a more significant change was the introduction of three extra columns designed to overcome the problems associated with employment status noted above. These were headed 'employer', 'employed', and 'neither employer nor employed', but their introduction signally failed to solve the problem, as significant numbers of men entered responses in two different columns. In the building trades this may have been almost rational behaviour in the face of the erratic circumstances prevailing, and such conditions were more common in other trades then than they are now. In general, however, a statistically reliable response related consistently to the specified date of the census was not obtained.⁴⁰

A more useful, and apparently more successful, new feature in 1891 was the eliciting of information on housing. Householders were asked to state the number of rooms, (of a defined character) occupied, where that number was less than five. This opens up the possibility of studying overcrowding. Multiple occupancy remained a factor in several areas by that date, for example in many Kent and Sussex non-downland parishes. In the Dorset parish of Langton Matravers three-quarters of the houses had fewer than five rooms and larger households like that of Richard Bower who, with his wife, mother, four children and three nieces occupied a four-roomed cottage, must have endured very cramped conditions.⁴¹

Although it is impossible to look at overcrowding in any systematic way before 1891, its existence can be inferred from earlier CEBs. Thus in the Hampshire parish of Nutley in 1841 we find a household

containing a middle-aged agricultural labourer, a woman who was either his wife or his sister, two widows with two and three children respectively, and four young male agricultural labourers.⁴² Similarly, in Winslade, Hampshire, in 1841, an agricultural labourer, a woman who was probably his wife, and five younger members of the same family shared their home with a second family of four persons and another young male agricultural labourer.⁴³ Households of this size and composition almost certainly indicate overcrowding. It is unlikely that an agricultural labourer would be renting anything larger than a four-roomed cottage.

Many considerations might bear on the choice of a place to study, including familiarity with placenames and personal names, a knowledge of other aspects of the local context, and the availability of other sources (such as Poor Law records). However, even where the locality is already chosen, the choices of enumerator and year still need some consideration. Legibility and apparent reliability may help to narrow down the choice. Additionally, a careful look at the preliminary pages of the relevant CEBs is very useful. Here the enumerator was asked to describe his district. The descriptions given were often quite detailed. For example, in the 1881 CEB for Cliddesden in Hampshire (which included the adjacent parish of Winslade), the following description was given:

The whole of the parish of Cliddesden including Hatchwarren farmhouse and cottages, Pensdell cottages and the Lodge; cottages near the Grove, Audley's Houses, the Lodge, Middle Lodge, Hackwood Park, Tigwell's Lodge in do. and part of Hackwood House, Swallick Farmhouse and Cottages. The whole of the parish of Winslade including Hackwood Farmhouse, the cottages at Round Town, Dances Lodge in Hackwood Park, and Winslade Village.⁴⁴

The information in such a description can be used to relate the CEB data to that from other contemporary documents. The preliminary pages also usually include a statement about visitors and about persons known to be absent from home on the night of the census. Visitors were also noted in the relationship column of the main list, so they can easily be identified and excluded from aggregations if necessary. If, however, there were many people recorded as temporarily absent, perhaps because of a horse fair or a feast day in a nearby village, they cannot readily be identified, so that may not be the best census year to choose.

Once a decision about locality has been reached we would urge historians to consider undertaking a study over two or more census years as there is a notable dearth of such studies both in the southern

counties and nationally.⁴⁵ The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of great social and economic change, and the CEBs provide an opportunity to examine these changes as they affected 'real' people in their communities over time. The many one-census parish studies which have been undertaken provide only 'snapshots' of particular places at particular dates. They also tend, in some (although by no means all) cases, simply to address the data rather than specific questions of historical interest.⁴⁶

The foregoing comments are not meant as a criticism of one-census studies: most of them do not pretend to be anything other than what they are and much of value has been produced. Indeed, the overall corpus of work of this kind constitutes a significant and probably under-utilized source for historians of the nineteenth century. We do feel, however, that the emphasis on one-census 'snapshots' has contributed to the stasis that, with a few exceptions, seems to have permeated the field of census studies in recent years. Change over time must be one of the historian's central concerns and the way ahead for census studies lies with focused longitudinal studies linking at least two censuses.

There are two ways of going about this kind of work. First, two or more census can be compared by the cross-tabulation of data from each census. Secondly, one can undertake a nominal record linkage exercise, tracing individuals from one census to another. Nominal linkage of sources such as parish registers, tithe awards and poor law records to these censuses greatly enhances the scope and depth of what can be achieved. For example, by linking two or more censuses we can identify those who appear in one census but not in subsequent ones. If the marriage and burial registers have been linked to the census we can identify changes of name by women on marriage as well as which of the 'missing persons' has died in the parish between censuses. That leaves a group whom we can fairly safely assume to have moved out of the parish. The characteristics of these 'movers' can then be investigated and compared with those of the 'stayers' who did not leave, both at particular census dates and over time.⁴⁷

Studies using several censuses for the same place, particularly those involving nominal record linkage and incorporating other sources, have considerable potential for the study of rural society in southern England in the second half of the nineteenth century. They do, however, require considerably more work, time and resources than a one-census 'snapshot' study. Some sort of computer and database software is a virtual necessity, especially where several censuses are being linked. Careful thought and planning are needed before beginning such an exercise but we hope that historians will take up the challenge and produce more longitudinal analyses of this kind.

For those with an open mind as to locality, the VCH tables will indicate the range of communities of particular sizes, of declining or increasing population, and so on. The size of the population required for useful results depends on the particular interests of the research. A study of household and family size and composition requires about 150–200 households in order to strike meaningful averages, the equivalent of a total population between 750 and 1,000. Alternatively, when the age and sex composition of the population is the centre of interest everyone in the population ‘counts’, and reasonably reliable results can be obtained from 500 people, although a breakdown by sex and five-year age spans may produce a few erratic figures. With larger towns (such as Weymouth) one might consider studying one district of particular interest, or, say, a one-in-five or one-in-ten sample of all the households in the whole town.⁴⁸

The original CEBs in the Public Record Office are no longer open to consultation. The Office holds microfilm copies of the CEBs for the entire country, and further copies are widely available in county libraries and record offices.⁴⁹

Comparative studies

To discover the 60–70 per cent of the population of a Dorset village in 1851 were living in their birthplace is one thing; evaluating such a figure is quite another. Was that figure typical of Dorset? Probably, yes. Was it typical of rural England as a whole? Probably not – 40–50 per cent was more typical in the East Midlands and figures below 20 per cent are not unknown. Clearly, if comparisons with other studies are to be made, some other studies might be consulted before deciding the categories for tabulations. Moreover, reading previous work is likely to generate ideas as to questions and approaches which may not at first be obvious. In this penultimate section of the paper, we summarize very briefly some such publications based on CEBs for southern England. In doing so, we hope to give a flavour of what has already been achieved, and to provide points of comparison for certain topics.

As noted above, a relatively large number of studies have focused on Devon, Kent and Sussex. Two Sussex examples are longitudinal studies by Brian Short. One examines the village of Plumpton using the censuses of 1841–1871 and includes a house repopulation exercise.⁵⁰ The second used all five censuses from 1841 to 1881 for Burgess Hill in the course of charting its growth from a village to a small town between *c.* 1840 and *c.* 1914. Topics analyzed include age structure, household composition, migration and social structure, and local comparisons are made.⁵¹

Kent has an unusual study taking advantage of the June date of the 1841 census to look at visitors and holidaymakers in Margate.⁵² Although the majority of visitors were described in the census as of 'independent' means, Margate was by 1841 becoming the holiday destination of a growing number of tradespeople and professionals. Only one in ten of the visitors had been born in Kent: most of the rest almost certainly came from London.⁵³

The parish of Colyton, Devon, is probably the most closely studied in England, after original family reconstitution work carried out on its exceptionally good parish registers.⁵⁴ The 1851 Colyton CEBs have been used to explore the composition of kin groups and the life cycles of offspring, particularly in relation to employment.⁵⁵ A sequence of papers by Jean Robin reports investigations of the family care of the elderly; prenuptial pregnancy; illegitimacy; the relief of poverty; and the life courses of all children aged under ten in 1851, through to the 1891 census.⁵⁶ All Robin's studies are longitudinal and in each case the census data is linked with other sources, including parish registers, poor law records, voting lists, parish records, school log books, and local newspapers.

Devon is also the locus of the largest study of rural migration so far carried out in southern England. Bryant looked at a population of 13,000 at the 1851 census in the Dart valley. Of particular methodological interest is his use of the birthplaces of successive children in families to trace migration paths.⁵⁷

Moving to Dorset, two studies have used material as the basis of inter-county comparisons. Saito compared occupational patterns in Cardington, Bedfordshire, and Corfe Castle, Dorset, in two periods – that of the 1851 census and that of two pre-censal community listings of 1790 (Corfe Castle) and 1782 (Cardington) which contain exceptionally rich data for the period.⁵⁸ As both villages had substantial textile industries, information on women's occupation is relatively plentiful. In the earlier period at Cardington, women worked through their childbearing years, whereas in Corfe Castle they dropped out of the work force at that stage of their life cycle. By 1851, Corfe had virtually lost its textile industry, but at Cardington, in place of spinning, the making of lace had taken a firm hold, though only among the younger women.

Thomson's study of the consistency of age reporting compared Ealing, Middlesex, with Puddletown, Dorset.⁵⁹ His paper shows that in broad terms age reporting in the census is reliable enough for statistical studies of populations of significant size, even if discrepancies of one or two years are common at the individual level. The better educated, more middle class population of Ealing was less consistent than rural Puddletown. Thomson suggests that the difference was due to the rural

enumerator's better knowledge of their populations, and the restraint this would impart on the declaration of false ages.

Also in Dorset, Edgar compared 1851 occupational structures in the Isle of Purbeck with those in the Vale of Blackmore, emphasizing that 'rural' is not necessarily synonymous with 'agricultural'.⁶⁰ Both areas contained a wide variety of non-agricultural occupations, including stoneworking and coastguarding in Purbeck and gloving in Blackmore. A few parishes appeared to contain random specialities, including a group of sawyers, a group of plasterers, and eleven men working for a brick, tile and pottery manufacturer. The occupied population stood at 39 per cent of the total in Purbeck, but at 44 per cent in the Vale of Blackmore, where females engaged in gloving. Another striking difference was that in the Purbeck parishes only 13 per cent of the occupied population was engaged in traditional service trades and crafts, compared with exactly twice that proportion in Blackmore. The explanation offered is the negative influence of the shortage of agricultural work in the latter area, which forced men to try their hands as self-employed tradesmen and craftsmen, despite the constant overcrowding of these callings.

Conclusion

This briefest of summaries gives some idea of the wide variety of work represented in the relatively few census studies undertaken in counties south of the Thames. More especially it indicates the multifarious opportunities for southern historians to enrich their knowledge of Victorian communities using the CEBs. Although this source is not without its difficulties, these are manageable, and there are no other comprehensive and universal sources containing details of the whole population during this period. The parish registers are less reliable in the face of nonconformity, and civil registration data for entire communities are impossible to use at present because of restrictions on access. The county trade directories, important and useful as they are, contain only economically 'significant' householders; the poll books and electoral registers only electors; rate books only ratepayers; tithe surveys only landlords, tenants and owner-occupiers; and so forth. These and many other sources are, of course, capable of being linked to the CEBs, using the well-established technique of nominal record linkage. In these days of ubiquitous personal computers, much of the routine hard work can be eliminated from the research process; and flexible databases make it possible to change one's mind about its direction even after the work of initial inputting has been completed.⁶¹

We re-emphasize the desirability of attempting longitudinal studies: southern England has several exemplary models. Period pictures based on a single census can be interesting and are often based on an implied comparison with the same community today. However, history is essentially about change over time, and this can only be assessed by explicit comparison of the same community at different dates. The comparison of two static pictures, such as those for 1851 and 1891, can be used to demonstrate some of the changes of the railway age. Better still is the nominal linkage of persons in successive censuses, tracing them through their life cycles, using the resultant data to show demographic and social structural trends at community level.

Finally, the fifty plus back numbers of the twice-yearly journal *Local Population Studies* exemplify what has been done by many individual local historians in this field since 1968. Not only will their work illustrate many methodological points, but it will also provide the researcher with important points of comparison – only by seeing one's 'parish pump' in comparative context can that 'pump' be fully appreciated.⁶²

Notes

¹ For a bibliography (comprehensive although not quite complete) of pre-1989 publications making substantial use of data from the CEBs, see D. Mills and C. Pearce (eds), *People and Places in the Victorian Census: a Review and Bibliography of Publications Based Substantially on the Manuscript Census Enumerators' Books, 1841–1911*, Historical Geography Research Series, No. 23 (Cheltenham, 1989).

² Mills and Pearce, *People and Places*, p. 6. Mills and Pearce list only two studies of Cornwall, three of Dorset, three of Hampshire, one of the Isle of Wight, three of Berkshire, two of Surrey, one of Wiltshire, and none of Gloucestershire. Devon is represented by fourteen titles, Kent by eleven and Sussex by thirteen. Since their bibliography was compiled, a number of other studies have been published. Some of these are discussed in the section on comparative studies below: one which is not, but which might interest readers of this journal, is P.R.A. Hinde, H.R. Davies and D.M. Kirkby, 'Hampshire Village Populations in the Nineteenth Century', *Southern History*, XV(1993), pp. 140–61.

³ In 1966 an additional sample census was taken as an experiment. The experiment was not considered successful enough to be worth repeating.

⁴ For further details of what is available in these reports, see D. Mills and M. Drake, 'The Census, 1801–1991', in *Studying Family and Community History: 19th and 20th Centuries*, Vol. 4, *Sources and Methods for Family and Community Historians: a Handbook*, ed. M. Drake and R. Finnegan (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 26–35.

⁵ In the early VCH volumes, these tables were compiled by G.S. Minchin: see, for example, *County of Bedford*, Vol. 2(1908), pp. 111–16; *Berkshire*, Vol. 2 (1907), pp. 234–43; *County of Buckingham*, Vol. 2 (1908), pp. 94–101; *Dorset*, Vol. 2 (1908), pp. 264–73; *Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, Vol. 5 (1912), pp. 435–50; *Kent*, Vol. 3 (1932), pp. 356–70; *Surrey*, Vol. 4 (1912), pp. 447–53. In the later VCH of Wiltshire, see M.

Saunders, 'Table of Population, 1801 to 1951', in *A History of Wiltshire*, ed. E. Crittall, Vol. 4 (1959), pp. 315–61.

⁶ Census of England and Wales, 1901, *Summary Tables. Area, Houses and Population; Also Population Classified by Ages, Condition as to Marriage, Occupations, Birthplaces, and Infirmities*, 63 Vict. c. 4 (1904), pp. 7–8.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Care should be exercised in interpreting population changes in very small parishes, as their populations are inclined to behave erratically. The arrival or departure of one or two large households, for example, can have a big relative effect on the population of a parish of only 100 or 150 persons.

⁹ Minchin, *VCH Dorset*, p. 269.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ The 'hundred year rule' prohibits access to census information about named individuals for 100 years after the information was collected. General descriptions of the CEBs can be found in E.G. Higgs, *Making Sense of the Census: the Manuscript Returns for England and Wales, 1801–1901*, (1989); E.G. Higgs, *A Clearer Sense of the Census: the Victorian Censuses and Historical Research* (1996); S. Lumas, *Making Use of the Census* (Public Record Office Readers' Guide No. 1, 1993); and D. Mills and K. Schürer (eds.), *Local Communities in the Victorian Census Enumerators' Books* (a *Local Population Studies* supplement), (Oxford, forthcoming).

¹² Until 1891, the enumerators in England and Wales were male. In the 1891 census, a number of female enumerators have been identified.

¹³ P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], CEB for Corfe Castle, 1851, H[ome]O[ffice], 107/1856, ff. 147b and 148a.

¹⁴ A set of rules for determining where one household ended and another began has been drawn up by Michael Anderson: see his 'Standard Tabulation Procedures for the Census Enumerators' Books 1851–91', in *Nineteenth-Century Society: Essays in the Use of Quantitative Methods for the Study of Social Data*, ed. E.A. Wrigley (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 134–45.

¹⁵ See D.R. Mills, 'The Technique of House Repopulation: Experience from a Cambridgeshire Village, 1841', *Local Historian* XIII (1978), pp. 86–97. For a southern example (from Ramsgate in Kent) see R.S. Holmes, 'Identifying Nineteenth-Century Properties', *Area*, VI (1974), pp. 273–77.

¹⁶ For example, in a number of parishes in northern Hampshire, the name 'Goodyer' was, in various CEBs, also written as 'Goodier', 'Goodyear' and 'Goodear'; the name 'Nicholson' also appears as 'Neckerson'; and the name 'Parris' also appears as 'Paris', 'Parriss' and 'Parrs'.

¹⁷ J. Robin, 'Illegitimacy in Colyton, 1851–1881', *Continuity and Change*, II (1987), pp. 316–19.

¹⁸ PRO. CEB for Stalbridge, 1851, HO 107/1852, f. 116a.

¹⁹ PRO. HO 107/1856, f. 144a.

²⁰ Record linkage can reveal inconsistencies in the ages reported by the same person at successive censuses. For example, in the parish of Berwick St James, Wiltshire, twenty-seven out of 144 persons traced from the 1851 census to the 1861 census gave ages in the two censuses which differed by fewer than nine years or more than eleven years. Later in the century, however, the reported ages were less inconsistent: the corresponding proportion for persons traced from the 1871 to the 1881 censuses was eleven out of ninety-nine.

²¹ The parishes are: Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge, Stourton Caundle, Child Okeford, Hinton St Mary and Okeford Fitzpaine (all in the Vale of Blackmore); and Swanage, Corfe Castle, Studland, Worth Matravers and Langton Matravers (all in the Isle of Purbeck).

²² Although it is reasonable to assume that all those described in the CEBs as 'paupers' were in receipt of poor relief, the converse is usually not true. Many persons who were receiving relief were not explicitly described in the census as paupers; thus the CEBs rarely provide a good indication of the extent of pauperism in a parish.

²³ PRO. CEB for Swanage, 1851, HO 107/1856 f. 36a. *Post Office Directory [Dorset]* (1848), p. 2707. *Slater's Directory, Dorsetshire* (1852/3), p. 35.

²⁴ PRO. CEB for Sturminster Newton, 1851, HO 107/1852, f. 180a.

²⁵ *Slater's Directory, Dorsetshire* (1852/3), p. 34.

²⁶ PRO. CEB for Okeford Fitzpaine, 1851, HO 107/1852, f. 289a.

²⁷ On the recording of women's work in the census, see E. Higgs, 'Women, Occupations and Work in the Nineteenth-Century Censuses', *History Workshop Journal*, XIII (1987), pp. 59–80, and B. Hill, 'Women, Work and the Census: a Problem for Historians of Women', *Ibid.*, XXXV (1993), pp. 78–94.

²⁸ The employment of women in agriculture was, in most of Dorset, usually one on a part-time or occasional basis by the third quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1860, for example, a respondent from the Cerne Poor Law Union remarked that there was '[v]ery little employment for women and children in this district in winter; seldom more than two or three days per week, at 6d. or 8d. per day'. See 'Return of the Average Rate of Weekly Earnings of Agricultural Labourers . . .', *Parliamentary Papers* (1861), L, p. 617. For a cautionary note about taking the census data on the employment of women in agriculture too literally, see E. Higgs, 'Occupational Censuses and the Agricultural Workforce in Victorian England and Wales', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, XLVIII (1995), pp. 700–16.

²⁹ On Buckinghamshire, see P. Horn and C.A. Horn, 'The social structure of an "Industrial" Community: Ivinghoe in Buckinghamshire in 1871', *Local Population Studies*, XXXI (1983), pp. 9–20. On Devon, see J. Robin, 'From Childhood to Middle Age: Cohort Analysis in Colyton, 1851–1891', *Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure Working Paper*, No. 1 (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 33–4.

³⁰ In addition to the difficulties mentioned with women's work, the CEBs are also not always very helpful in describing the occupations of teenagers, especially girls. Teenage girls tend to be labelled as 'assistant at home', or with the phrase 'helps at home', whereas their brothers are generally given an unambiguous entry such as 'ag. lab.'.

³¹ PRO. HO 107/1856.

³² PRO. HO 107/1852.

³³ PRO. CEB for Stourton Caundle, 1851, HO 107/1852, f. 131b.

³⁴ Occasionally, there is evidence suggesting that a farmer migrating over a relatively long distance might be accompanied by one or two of his labourers. For example, in the north Hampshire parish of Cliddesden in 1851 we find one John Falmer, farmer of 400 acres, who was born in Lambourn in Berkshire (some twenty-five miles away). In the same parish we also find Thomas Martin, an agricultural labourer, also born in Lambourn. While this could be a coincidence, evidence from the birthplaces of the children of both men suggests that they had migrated from Lambourn to Cliddesden at the same time. See PRO. CEB for Cliddesden, 1851, HO 107/1681.

³⁵ PRO. HO 107/1856, f. 153a; 107/1852, f. 176b. Clearly, the interpretation of such terms as used by householders and enumerators poses great problems.

³⁶ The scheme we have used is that suggested by Dennis Mills: see D.R. Mills and J. Mills, 'Occupation and Social Stratification Revisited: the Census Enumerators' Books of Victorian Britain', *Urban History Yearbook* (1989), pp. 63–77, which is based fairly closely on an original classification devised by Peter Tillott. Tillott's scheme was originally made available on duplicated sheets: published versions may be found in A. Roger, *Approaches to Local History* (1977), and D. Mills, *A Guide to Nineteenth-Century Census Enumerators' Books* (Open University Course D301 Milton Keynes, 1982), pp.

36–8. The other main scheme in widespread use is that described in W.A. Armstrong, 'The Use of Information about Occupation', in Wrigley, *Nineteenth-Century Society*, pp. 191–310. Armstrong's scheme is based on the well-known work of Charles Booth in the late-nineteenth century; see C. Booth, 'Occupations of the People of the United Kingdom', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, XLI (1886), pp. 314–44. Experience suggests that the Booth-Armstrong scheme is much better suited to urban than rural areas. In the countryside, the range of occupations found was much more limited than in towns, and the categories of the Tillott-Mills scheme reflect this.

³⁷ The stone workers of Purbeck certainly had a significance outside the local context, since their product was used in construction work over a wide area, and especially in London: see M.J.D. Edgar, 'Occupational Diversity in Seven Rural Parishes in Dorset, 1851', *Local Population Studies*, LII (1994), pp. 48–54.

³⁸ Despite their nominally higher social status, the economic situation of numbers of small farmers and craftsmen in the South was decidedly precarious; many were probably only marginally better off than agricultural labourers and therefore needed to continue to earn for as long as they could. The Tillott-Mills occupational classification scheme is deficient in that it fails to recognize this adequately. On the existence of a class of small 'peasant' farmers in southern England during the nineteenth century, see M. Reed, 'Nineteenth-century Rural England: a Case for "Peasant Studies"?'', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, XIV (1986), pp. 78–99; M. Reed, '"Gnawing It Out": a New Look at Economic Relations in Nineteenth-Century Rural England', *Rural History*, I (1990), pp. 83–9, and M. Reed, 'The Peasantry of Nineteenth-Century England: a Neglected Class?' in *Conflict and Community in Southern England: Essays in the Social History of Rural and Urban Labour from Medieval to Modern Times*, ed. B. Stapleton (Stroud, 1992), pp. 210–39.

³⁹ More specifically, exact ages are given for persons aged under fifteen years, but for older persons, age is stated only to the nearest five years below the exact age (for example, persons aged from twenty to twenty-four years are all recorded as being aged twenty years). The birthplace data do indicate whether a person was born in Scotland, Ireland or 'foreign parts'.

⁴⁰ E. Higgs, 'The 1891 Census: Change and Continuity', *Local Historian*, XXII (1992), pp. 185–87.

⁴¹ PRO. CEB for Langton Matravers, 1891, RG12/1641, f. 66a.

⁴² PRO. CEB for Nutley, 1841, HO 107/386/19, f. 3a. Marital status is not given in the 1841 CEBs, but in this case the two widows were started to be such in the 'rank, profession or occupation' column.

⁴³ PRO. CEB for Winslade, 1841, HO 107/386/3, f. 4a.

⁴⁴ PRO. CEB for Cliddesden and Winslade, 1881, RG 11/1257.

⁴⁵ Mills and Pearce, *People and Places*, p. 8.

⁴⁶ A further problem with many of these studies is that many of them are difficult to obtain, being available only as working papers or reports rather than being formally published. The southern examples which should prove possible to track down are P. Sheail, *A Downland Village* (Winchester, 1979), and J. Tooke, 'Caterham – who was who in 1851', *The Bourne Society Local History Records*, XXI (1982), pp. 5–14.

⁴⁷ For examples of this kind of work, see P.R.A. Hinde, 'The Population of a Wiltshire Village in the Nineteenth Century: a Reconstitution Study of Berwick St James, 1841–71', *Annals of Human Biology*, XIV (1987), pp. 475–85; and Robin, 'From Childhood to Middle Age'.

⁴⁸ However, sampling is not an appropriate strategy for nominal record linkage. To see this, suppose that a one-in-five sample of the households of a place is taken in each of two censuses. The chance that a person listed in the earlier census will be successfully traced in the next census even if that person was resident in the place at that date is only

20 per cent. Therefore, any sensible analysis of out-migration is rendered virtually impossible through nominal record linkage established by sampling.

⁴⁹ For a directory of the holdings in county libraries and record offices (for censuses up to 1881), see J.S.W. Gibson (ed.), *Census Returns 1841–1881 on Microfilm: a Directory of Local Holdings* (5th edition, Birmingham, 1990). Print-outs of relevant CEBs are usually easy to obtain, and we have found them invaluable even where transcriptions have been made, since the true interpretation of information in the CEBs often only becomes clear as work progresses (for example, as a result of cross-reference to other documents). They also allow the comparison of pages side by side, which is a great help with problems such as poor handwriting and faded ink.

⁵⁰ B. Short, *Scarpfoot Parish: Plumpton 1830–1880* (Brighton, 1981).

⁵¹ B. Short (ed.), *A Very Improving Neighbourhood: Burgess Hill 1840–1914* (Brighton, 1984).

⁵² J. Whyman, 'Visitors to Margate in the 1841 Census returns', *Local Population Studies*, VIII (1972), pp. 19–38. From 1851 onwards, censuses were taken at the end of March or the beginning of April.

⁵³ On Kent, see also a substantial examination of the Admiralty Dockyard at Sheerness using the three censuses 1851–71: N.H. Buck, *An Admiralty Dockyard in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: Aspects of the Social and Economic History of Sheerness*, (Urban and Regional Studies Unit, Centre for Research in the Social Sciences, University of Kent at Canterbury, 1981).

⁵⁴ See, for example, E.A. Wrigley, 'Family limitation in pre-industrial England', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, XIX (1966), pp. 82–109.

⁵⁵ R. Wall, 'Work, Welfare and the Family', in *The World We Have Gained*, ed. L. Bonfield, R.M. Smith and K. Wrightson (Oxford, 1986), pp. 261–94.

⁵⁶ J. Robin, 'Family Care of the Elderly in a Nineteenth-Century Devon Parish', *Ageing and Society*, XLIV (1984), pp. 505–16; J. Robin, 'Prenuptial Pregnancy in a Rural Area of Devonshire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: Colyton 1851–1881', *Continuity and Change*, I (1986), pp. 113–24; Robin, *Continuity and Change* II; J. Robin, 'The Relief of Poverty in Mid-Nineteenth Century Colyton', *Rural History*, I (1990), pp. 193–218; Robin, 'From Childhood to Middle Age'.

⁵⁷ D. Bryant, 'Demographic Trends in South Devon in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', in *Exeter Essays in Honour of Arthur Davies*, ed. K.J. Gregory and W.L.D. Ravenill (Exeter, 1971), pp. 125–42.

⁵⁸ O. Saito, 'Who Worked When: Lifetime Profiles of Labour Force Participation in Cardington and Corfe Castle in the Late 18th and Mid 19th Centuries', *Local Population Studies*, XXV (1979), pp. 14–29. Pre-censal listings of inhabitants such as those Saito used are very rare in England. They were usually made because of a personal interest shown by a local inhabitant (for example the incumbent). Further information about their survival may be obtained from the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, 27 Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1QA.

⁵⁹ D. Thomson, 'Age Reporting by the Elderly in the 19th Century Censuses', *Local Population Studies*, XXV (1980), pp. 13–25. Puddletown has also been the focus of a study of household and family structure: see E.B. Wolnaikowski, 'Family and Population Change in a Nineteenth-Century English Village' (unpub. Ph. D. thesis, Cornell Univ., USA, 1976).

⁶⁰ Edgar, *Local Population Studies*, LII.

⁶¹ On this issue, see P. Hudson, 'A New History from Below: Computers and the Maturing of Local and Regional History', *Local Historian*, XXV (1995), pp. 209–22.

⁶² Readers wishing to join the Local Population Studies Society can obtain membership particulars by contacting the Society's honorary secretary, Sir David Cooke, Bt, 78 Harlow Terrace, Harrogate HG2 0PN.