

Letter to the Editor

MADAM,—The problem of tracing population migration and movement of all types prior to the nineteenth-century censuses presents many difficulties, and especially in the context of rural migration. However, evidence does exist for such migration from the sixteenth century onwards, sometimes over comparatively great distances; for example, between North Yorkshire and Norfolk.

Apprentice indentures enrolled at Norwich and Yarmouth often give the occupation and place of origin of the apprentice's father. This information indicates a considerable migration from rural areas to these two centres and although most of the apprentices were of local origin, some travelled long distances in search of employment and training in particular skills. Between 1520 and 1650 quite a large-scale movement of apprentices took place from rural areas in North Yorkshire, notably Dent, Sedbergh, and Garsdale, to Norwich and to a much lesser extent to Yarmouth. Migrant apprentices, sometimes including several members of the same family, entered a whole range of occupations particularly worsted weaving and the clothing trades. Those of their fathers were, in general, very varied. Some were engaged in agricultural occupations, others in various rural crafts, especially the textile and allied trades. It may be that this migration is simply an example of a general movement from a poor, overpopulated area of under-employment to a relatively rich and expanding area of urban growth and wider opportunities.

It may also be a special movement to an area where the same skills and manufactures were practised, creating long-range links between craftsmen with similar interests. Or it may be that the movement to Norwich, which was at the forefront in cloth manufacturing techniques at the time, could be an expression of a search by Yorkshire families engaged in the textile industry for further training in skills which were not available locally. If so there could have been a return movement of skilled apprentices back to Yorkshire. Of this there is no direct evidence, and it remains no more than a possibility. But it is certainly true that very few took up their freedom in Norwich and Yarmouth. Many may have settled in other urban centres or rural manufacturing areas in prosperous East Anglia, or may have moved outside the region, perhaps to London, or, indeed, returned to Yorkshire.

A great deal of movement both from the immediate East Anglian area, and from as far away as Devon, Wales, and Scotland is also illustrated by the indentures at Norwich and Yarmouth. They provide a valuable if limited source for the study of rural migration at the time. Perhaps other readers of this REVIEW may be able to shed further light on these and similar movements, and on other sources, particularly similar registers of apprentices which are unpublished.

J. H. C. PATTEN

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it available for his perusal. Original letters are, of course, invaluable, but also of particular interest would be such items as family photographs taken at the Bath and West Shows at any time during the past one hundred years, and especially at the turn of the century. Persons in possession of items which might be of interest in this undertaking are asked to con-

tact the Secretary, Bath and West Society, 3 Pierrepont Street, Bath (telephone Bath 3010). Any material requested for perusal will be carefully photocopied, and returned as soon as possible, except where (as it is hoped) the donor gives permission for it to be retained in the Society's Library.

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SEPTEMBER, 1968

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