# THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH A DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY OF HUNTLEY 1661-1800

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#### INTRODUCTION

A cursory glance at the available data appertaining to the population of Huntley raises some interesting questions. Why, for example, was there a decline in the population after 1650?

Was the apparent sharp rise after 1780 caused by an increase in birth rate or due to immigration?

This paper describes the investigation of Huntley's population and is directed towards answering these and other questions. It is a study which might at first sight appear relatively easy. There are a number of documents relating to the parish which contain information about the population and offer scope for analysis.

The object of the survey is to produce a comprehensive analysis from the earliest available source until about 1871. If the Domesday Survey is ignored this period would have hopefully covered a period of about 300 years. For convenience the study period was divided into two parts, and this paper attempts to describe the research up until the end of the eighteenth century, although occasional facts have been taken from the later period and used for comparison. This point was selected because it marks the point at which reasonably accurate data, in the form of the decennial census, becomes available. Prior to this date it is necessary to calculate the population from other sources and so provide the base data of the study. When the analysis is completed selected periods will be taken and compared to produce trends and patterns of population change and movement.

## THE PARISH OF HUNTLEY

Huntley is situated about  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles west of Gloucester on the main Ross and Hereford road. It appears to have been first mentioned in the Domesday Survey. The Church is known to have existed since the early 12th century and probably even as early as 1080. According to Bigland the original church was very small (1).

Samuel Rudder, in his <u>New History of Gloucestershire</u> published in 1779 describes Huntley as a parish containing good arable and pasture land. Bigland, writing about 13 years later, stated that about one-third of the parish was considered to be waste land, but it had subsequently been enclosed and served as a nursery for timber. Both Rudder and Bigland mention iron ore deposits in the parish.

There are six adjoining parishes plus that of Newent about ½ mile from Huntley's northern boundary. In terms of population in 1801 Huntley ranked fourth in size; a relative position which had probably remained unchanged since 1563 when it consisted of 40 households (2). It is interesting to note that, with the exception of Blaisdon, Huntley's parish church is nearer for certain residents of adjoining parishes than their own, an important fact to be remembered when the migratory trends are analysed.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The parish registers provide essential material for any detailed study of population before 1801. Despite the limitations found with the Huntley registers, any study without them would have been impossible. No other source provides more than a fraction of the information required. The early registers of the parish were destroyed in a fire in the late 1650s. The earliest surviving entry is for 1661 this having been made in retrospect as no regular records were kept until 1679. Problems experienced in using registers are discussed in more detail below.

For the period from 1749 until 1760 details relating to Huntley can also be found in the records of Blaisdon (3). Most of these entries are duplicates of entries in the Huntley registers although four are unique to the Blaisdon record. During this period John Jelf held the office of rector of Blaisdon and curate of Huntley, which suggests that perhaps the Blaisdon registers should also be consulted.

F.S. Hockaday has collected numerous notes from the registers and other ecclesiastical records of Gloucestershire. His 'Abstracts' (4) includes interesting material relating to Huntley including a transcription of the parish register entries from 1661 until 1736 with the exception of the ten year period from 1669 which is also missing from the original register. Hockaday is much easier to read than the registers and although no exhaustive checks have been made, the abstracts would appear to be accurate.

The bishop's transcripts (5) held in the diocesan archives are another useful source providing new information and clarifying some entries in the parish registers which are difficult to read. The earliest document consulted relates to the year 1638/9 but some entries are difficult to decipher. The rector's annual returns were either not made on a regular basis, or have not survived; however they are available for most years from 1680 until 1812. There are a number of inconsistancies between the transcripts and the original registers; perhpas the most obvious being duplicated and triplicated entries in the transcripts for 1771, 1772 and 1773. The general accuracy of the registers is discussed below.

While the sources mentioned above can probably be classed as primary and secondary data there are a number of supplementary records and other sources which cannot be overlooked.

One comprehensive set of documents providing useful information are the Land Tax returns (6). In the case of Huntley these cover the period from 1776 until 1832, although not all years exist. The returns provide details of land owners and occupiers, and when used in conjunction with other documents prove useful in helping to establish residency within the parish.

A large part of Huntley was owned by the Probyn family of Newland and there are a number of estate papers (7) relating to property transfers and tenancy agreements after 1725, which provide further evidence of residence. Their principle limitation is that they do not cover the whole period and there is no way of knowing if the papers are complete.

At first sight the calendar of Gloucestershire marriage allegations compiled by Brian Frith appears to be a useful source of data. However the allegation itself was not necessarily followed by a marriage. Even where the marriage did take place it did not necessarily take place in the parish of either of the intending partners. The place of residence stated in the allegation is sometimes misleading and could in fact refer to a place of temporary residence (8). The marriage allegations relating to Huntley cover the period from 1661 until 1698. For a large proportion of this period (i.e. 1661-1678) the entries in the parish registers are incomplete so it is not always possible to confire that the marriages did in fact take place within the parish. The records do however help explain the "disappearance" of people from the parish.

In 1717 a survey commissioned by the Duke of Kent, who was lord of the manor prior to Sir Edmund Probyn, listed all his tenants and their leases (9). It also gives the ages of people mentioned although these do not always correspond with ages which can be derived from the baptism register. While not listing all the inhabitants it is nevertheless a useful source of information. Just over 120 years later the tithe map and apportionments provides a similar list of inhabitants.

There are a number of published sources which provide interesting details about the parish and its inhabitants. Many local historians have been critical about these works because of alleged inaccuracies. However they cannot be ignored. No source has been found to be completely reliable and it must remain a matter of conjecture as to which documents offer the best information. The earliest of these works is the Ancient and Present State of Glocestershire by Sir Robert Atkyns originally published in The earliest of Atkyns confined himself mainly to the history of the parish but he does make reference to 45 houses "and about 240 inhabitants". The average number of births and burials are also quoted; there averages are consistant with details in the parish registers. Samuel Rudder in his New History of Gloucestershire (1779) follows the same general style as According to Rudder the population in 1779 stood at 269. Ralph Bigland's papers published in 1791 are much more interesting from the demographic viewpoint, as he not only lists the rectors from 1548 and people summoned by the Heralds in 1682/3 but also gives a statistical summary of marriages, births and deaths between 1781 and 1790 and details of inscriptions on 79 tombs and headstones.

There is one other printed source worthy of mention. This is Men and Armour for Gloucestershire compiled by John Smyth. It lists all able bodied men between the ages of 20 and 60 who were fit for military service in 1608. Although there were certain exclusions it lists 46 men from Huntley together with an indication of their age.

Other material relating principally to the 19th century includes the census returns and various trade directories first published about 1850. These fall outside the period of the initial study and are therefore not considered in any detail. Four sources from the earlier period have yet to be studied and these include wills proved in Gloucester, the poor law records, the Hearth Tax returns and parish accounts from 1727 which include details of tithes collected.

The list of sources of data described above is not exhaustive and other material does exist but is not known to be available locally. It is not intended to consider other material until detailed analysis of local data has been completed after which the situation will be re-appraised.

## GENERAL DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS

Before considering the problems of using the local information it is probably worth noting a few points raised by a number of writers on population studies. It has been found that many generalisations made are not appropriate to the records of Huntley.

The problem of underregistration due to Catholic and Nonconformist families within a parish probably has little, if any, significance in Huntley. In 1603 there was no evidence of Catholics or Nonconformists; in 1676 there was one recorded Nonconformist (2) (there were few in adjacent parishes either).

A much more serious problem is that of underregistration for other reasons. According to Hollingsworth
(10), "in England, it is known from other sources, and
obvious on close analysis, that the proportion of persons
baptised of those which were actually born, was substantially
below 100%." As Chambers states "the bringing of babies to
the font was a less pressing problem than the disposal of a
corpse in the graveyard" (11). In the case of Huntley
omissions would not appear uncommon. Only on completion of
the study will it be possible to quantify the possible
significance of under-registration. Tranter suggests three
reasons for omissions in the 18th and early 19th centuries;
growing disinterest in religious observance; rapid
geographical re-distribution of the population; and the
spread of Protestant Nonconformist religion (12). While the
latter can probably be disregarded in the case of Huntley one
might add oversight on the part of the rector to make the
necessary entry. Hollingsworth goes on to say that all

English registers are arguably incomplete at all periods and in 1700 about 30% of births were probably not recorded as baptised (13). If this were true of Huntley it could seriously affect the planned analysis.

Many writers point out that some parish registers give full information about occupations of bridegrooms at the time of their marriage, or the ages of individuals at their death. As it will be seen there are periods in the registers of Huntley where a minimum of information is given. This is particularly noticeable in the case of burials. Tranter points out that when women are buried their marital status is normally recorded and where only the name is given it is normally safe to assume that she died unmarried (14). It would be unwise to accept this statement in the case of the Huntley registers.

## HUNTLEY PARISH REGISTERS

The period under study is covered by three separate books which form the parish registers of Huntley. The earliest surviving register covers the period from 1661 until 1777. Absence of registers from earlier years is explained by an entry in the register stating that the parsonage was burnt down in the latter end of the incumbency of the Rev. Thomas Unwyn (probably the late 1650s). Layout and style in the surviving registers vary. Between 1661 and 1668 carriages baptisms and burials are shown separately. This can probably by explained by the fact that these details were copied from "an inperfect Register" made by Unwyn's successor the Rev. Issac Hague. The absence of entries after 1668 until 1679 is further explained by the allegation that Hague "did not keep regular account till the year 1679". All these earlier details are believed to have been entered by Jackman Morse who was rector from 1726 until 1765.

The first entries made by Isaac Hague, probably in his own hand, run chronologically from 1679 until 1688; marriages, baptisms and burials are not separate. Details appear in Latin until 1686, after which all subsequent entries are in English.

With the installation of a new rector following Hague's death the style changed. Details of baptisms, marriages and burials are grouped separately for each year. This pattern continued until 1767. However with the passing of the Marriage Act in 1754 separate marriage registers were introduced which resulted in many, although not all, details being entered twice for a number of years.

Records of baptisms and burials are inconsistant with the bishops transcripts and many omissions occur in the registers as illustrated below.

## Details of Entries Made

1768 ) 1769 ) Missing 1770 ) 1771 Baptisms and Burials

1772 Missing

1773 Baptisms and Burials

1774 Burials

1775 Burials

1776 Baptisms

1777 Baptisms

After 1776 a new register for recording baptisms and burials was introduced. Style became much more formalised. baptisms being completely separated from burials. register covers the period up until 1812. The Marriages register mentioned above is haphazard in layout and content. Pages 1 to 24 should show marriages by banns while page 25 onwards should record marriages by licence. Examples of typical entries are shown in the front of the book. Early entries follow the prescribed style but gradually they become less uniform. Details of banns are recorded before the actual marriage to which they refer. By 1799 the entries relating to marriages by banns had reached page 24, the limit of space allowed, and after this date all marriages were shown towards the end of the register. Theoretically marriages by banns and by licence should have been shown in separate parts of the register, but in practice this has not been strictly applied. Between 1755 and 1773 records of marriage by licence follow a chronological sequence, but subsequent entries include marriages by banns and dates run as follows:-1797; 1793; 1774; 1786; 1801; 1802; 1804; 1806

Page 21 probably covering the year 1797 is missing which could explain why that year appears out of sequence in the register.

Looking a little closer at the entries one or two interesting observations can be made. The parish of residence is quite often stated although the impression gained from reading the registers is that there are periods during which the rector did not record such details. Occupations are likewise included but this only appears to have been generally fashionable between 1679 and 1684/5 after which they were gradually omitted except where they were an aid to the identification of the individual mentioned.

Entries showing illegitimate births sometimes also record 'the reputed father's name in addition to that of the mother. There are also two or three entries in the baptism register where the child's surname does not correspond to that of the recorded parents. It may be possible to explain this practice when the study is complete but in the early stages this causes an added difficulty when analysing details.

After 1754 the marriage register records details of witnesses at the wedding. As the register was signed by the couple being married and the witnesses an assessment of literacy in the parish will probably be possible

The burial details range from basic facts (e.g. date and name) to more informative details such as age and cause of death. Entries recording the burial of a woman sometimes

state the husband's name or the deceased's marital status if a spinster or widow, but on other occasions only the name is shown. Where the entry relates to a man there is never any reference to his wife. The parents of children who died are sometimes recorded. Age at death is not generally shown although it does appear to have been recorded if the deceased was aged 80 or more. The ages quoted are not always accurate and are sometimes vague (e.g. "aged 90 odd"). On 24 January 1683 the first recorded burial in accordance with the Wool Act took place. Most subsequent burials up until 1685 recorded similar details after which the details seem to have been omitted. In a few cases cause of death is stated but this seems to have been restricted to deaths resulting from accidents e.g. "drowned in the Well at the Crown"; "killed by a waggon"; "who had his death by reap hook;" and another who died after falling from his horse. There are one or two entries relating to places of residence which raise some interesting questions about the general mobility of the population; one burial in 1662 records a child from Framptonon-Severn and another in 1729 records the death of a woman from Arlingham. Both are particularly interesting because the villages mentioned are on the east bank of the Severn.

It is almost certain that after 1688 the register was written up at the end of each year. Unless this procedure was adopted it would have been difficult to group marriages, baptisms and burials separately. There are two loose sheets of paper relating to christenings and burials for the years 1803/4 and 1804/5. Details from these s eets are also to be found in the appropriate place in the register. Could it be that these loose pages were in fact the rector's original notes of services performed?

In the front of the earlier register there are some interesting notes relating to the perambulation in 1759; notes concerning the poor law administration and bequests to the poor; rectors of the parish from Thomas Unwyn (c.1600) until 1817; and patrons of the church. Most of these notes were made by Jackman Morse. Indirectly these notes will prove useful in confirming some details, particularly relating to family relationships.

Unfortunately the parish registers of Huntley are inconsistant in style and detail. There are numerous cases of duplicated entries and a strong indication that there were periods when entries have either been omitted or removed. There are instances where Bigland, for example, quotes details from tombstones, but no entry can be found in the burial register. Reference has already been made to page 21 of the marriage register which is missing. A page has also been cut from the earlier register which relates to the year 1767 or thereabouts, and some baptism details for 1776/7 have been entered twice. The inaccuracies will of course influence any demographic analysis. However the Huntley registers still provide the most comprehensive and useful set of records for the study in hand.

## ANALYSIS

The depth and scope of the analysis being made from the available raw data falls into a number of natural classes.

(i) Births

(ii) Marriages and family structure

(iii) Deaths (iv) Other

Within each class it is possible to carry out simple analysis e.g. number of births, marriages or deaths each year. By carrying out simple calculations from this basic data it is also possible to prepare statistics showing age at marriage or the natural growth of the population. More complex analysis is time consuming but it produces much more interesting information about family structures and migration for example. While simple analysis is quick and usually only entails counting entries in the registers, more detailed work presents its own problems which will be discussed later.

Before any real work can be undertaken it is necessary to ascertain details of population at specified Tranter suggests two methods (15). The first is to divide the number of births, marriages or deaths for a given year or period, by the assumed crude rates per thousand. If this method is used to estimate Huntley's population in, say, 1766 the inhabitants would have numbered 86. If the year 1761 had been chosen the population would have been 428. Both figures, even if considered in isolation, are highly suspect. Clearly, it is necessary to select a representative year, or better still to use an average. The 9 year average for 1759/67 would then indicate the population to have been 222. This latter figure is probably much more realistic than the first two quoted, but preliminary researches show this figure is probably lower than the actual. Tranter himself points out that this method depends on the accuracy of assumptions, regarding birth rates, and the possibility of variations depending on the period selected. Even so it also assumes that under-registration is not a significant problem. This factor could be serious in the case of communities with a small population, as in the case of Huntley.

Another method which can be used to calculate population trend is to take the known population at a specific date e.g. the 1801 census figure and to calculate the net change to population using details from the baptism and burial registers. Even this method produces its own problems, principally that of migration. Ignoring baptisms and burials from persons known and resided in adjacent parishes the population for Huntley in 1764 would have been estimated at 127. This figure is thought to be inaccurate, and if in fact this is the case it does indicate that there must have been a fairly high degree of migration into the village.

Hoskins suggests yet another method which is to calculate the average number of births over a 10 year period and multiply the result by 30 (16). This gives an estimated population of 190.

It can be seen that the results derived from using the three methods discussed can produce widely different population estimates. Without a reasonably accurate population base, particularly with a small population, the various rates and trends calculated could be very misleading. Further analysis and discussion on this point must be left until the study is completed.

Before the more detailed analysis can be undertaken it is necessary to relate dates, births or baptisms, marriages and burials to individuals. Using one page per person it is possible to collect information about people who resided in the village over the study period. As mentioned above this data is not restricted to entries in the parish registers and much information can be gleaned from other sources to help piece together the demographic jig-saw puzzle. During the study, which covers approximately 120 years, over 2,500 people have been identified. In many cases only a single entry in the available records has been found; in others there are numerous entries over the life span of the person. Sometimes there are frequent references to an individual over a period of years and then references cease, without explanation. Where the lack of references cannot be explained by a burial entry in the register the question of migration must be raised again. Even though the study is incomplete, the lack of data on certain people must be explained either by the theory above concerning residence in relation to the parish boundary or be due to migration. These, of course, may not be the only explanations.

Information collected and recorded about people is of little use in its raw state. Simple analysis can reveal certain statistics relating to age at marriage, average age at death, and average size of family, to name but a few. For more detailed work it is necessary to reconstruct families. Hollingsworth suggests that it is seldom possible to reconstruct more than 10% of families because of migration (17). Initial work on the reconstruction has been made. In some cases success came easily while in others the only common bond is the same surname. Two examples are given in appendices B and C.

On examination these appendices reveal many more problems associated with the study. It is unfortunately sometimes necessary to guess possible family linkage after weighing all available facts. Looking at the Davis family, the earliest recorded person having the name was Alice Davis who died in Huntley in 1667. The link between Alice and Francis is uncertain although it is known from the parish registers that Francis once resided in St. Briavels. From his marriage to Elizabeth Jones in 1662 there were at least three children, and possibly a fourth, Edward. As mentioned above the parish registers are incomplete from 1669-78, a period very important in the case of this family. entries existed it may have explained why there is no further reference to Alice (born 1665), and could perhaps have confirmed the relationship between Edward and Francis. No evidence has yet been found to suggest that Elizabeth (the elder) and William were ever married. Many more questions arise from further study. It is interesting to note that after 1748 there was no surviving male issue of this branch

of the Davis family and it therefore effectively dies out. There are isolated references to people bearing the name Davis (Appendix C) but none fit into the pattern except perhaps John who married Susannah Mills in 1703, who may have been another son of Francis. The two examples illustrate some of the problems associated with family reconstruction. Unlike the genealogist who would try to find further references to people in adjacent parishes, this study is restricted to Huntley and searches beyond the records of the parish are usually unnecessary.

### PROBLEMS

During the collection of data a number of problems had to be overcome. Perhaps the most obvious was handwriting. The earliest document used was the bishops transcript for 1638 which was written in a hand which resembled the Tudor script. Many of the early documents were in Latin although only elementary knowledge of the language is required to translate the parish register entries.

One thing which was found to be confusing early in the study was the variety of different spellings of surnames. The following examples are typical of the problem:-

BoddinghamCassellBodenhamCasswellBodinghamCaswellBodnamCoswell

Probably the most confusing name encountered was 'Fokes' which was for a long time treated in isolation, then, more by accident, it was found to link with 'Fox'. Unfortunately neither of these names was common in Huntley during the 18th century so it is not possible to be absolutely certain of the linkage as the name was present for only about 5 years.

The most difficult task of all was posed by common names. In the 18th century 11 references were found to a William Fowle, none of which provided an obvious link. Although many of the entries must have related to the same person, family reconstruction, coupled with an element of subjective judgment based on unconfirmed statistics relating to average age at marriage, provided a degree of clarification. Even so, four "William Fowles" remained unlinkable and doubt must remain as to the accuracy of the other links for the time being.

## CONCLUSION

In concluding this summary of the problems encountered it is perhaps worth looking briefly at a few of the statistics which have emerged so far. It must be emphasised that in some cases statistics are based on incomplete analysis or small samples.

The graph in Appendix D is in fact where the study began. It was developed from available data and refined as other details came to light. The earliest reference to Huntley's population (not shown on the graph) was in the

Domesday Survey of 1086 when the male population was stated to be 11. A survey of Gloucestershire village population, by Dr. Alicia Percival, was published in Local Population
Studies in the Spring 1972 edition. This paper quotes various population figures for the parish from 1563. By applying factors based on ratios of age structures, size of families and households which have been suggested by various writers, it is possible to make an estimate of population trend. As we have seen these methods can produce wide fluctuations from what would seem to be realistic levels so one can only guess as to its accuracy. After 1800 the figures used are those published in the census returns. From the parish registers it has been possible to extract details appertaining to the baptisms and burials. The graphs in Appendices E and F show the 9-year trends. Assuming for the moment that the population figures are accurate, the birth rate in 1690 was about 35 per thousand. Fifty years later it had dropped to 20 per thousand and by 1800 it had risen quite dramatically to 41 per thousand. The first figure could be reasonably accurate, but by comparison with other studies the figures for later periods would appear suspect. Turning our attention to burials rates, at the same dates, the figures would be 29, 21 and 18 per thousand respectively. These figures may be more realsitic than those given for births although the rate for 1740 must be questioned.

It is not suggested that these figures reflect the true situation as further research and analysis is necessary. They do however raise some interesting questions. Was there a considerable degree of under-registration of baptisms about 1740 or is the population figure quoted above too high? If birth rate was only 20 per thousand why was it lower than in other areas? Had all the young families left the village leaving behind an older population, in which case why was death rate only 21 per thousand? These are all questions which must be answered before any specific statements can be made.

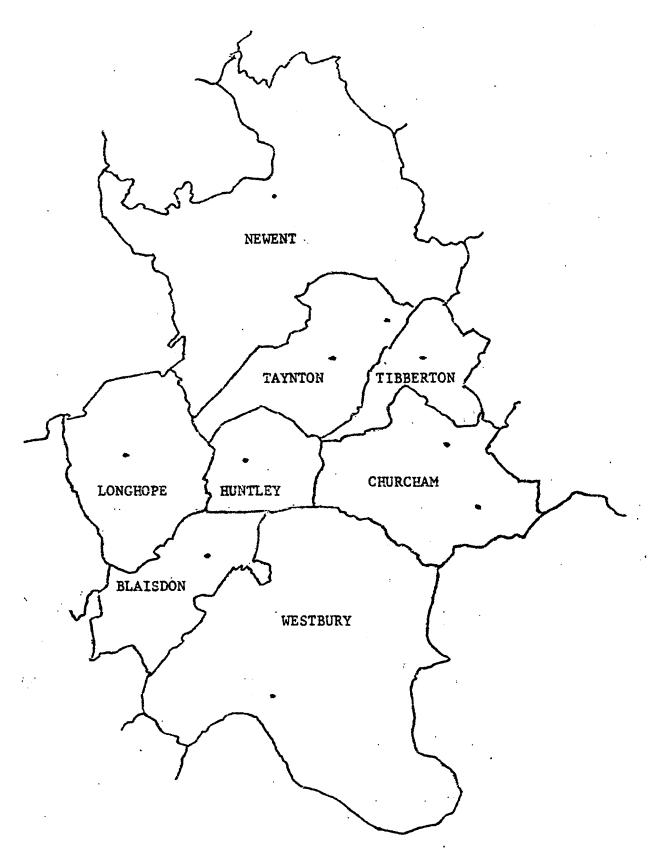
Early figures show a changing trend in age at marriage. During the late 17th century men married about 25 years of age and women at 24. In the 18th century there was a tendancy to marry later with men marrying at 28 and women at 25. Perhaps further analysis can explain this trend, or at least offer some suggestions.

The problems encountered have raised many more questions about the parish population than might have been asked had the supply of data been plentiful, so the mere fact that problems have been encountered has been useful. Early attempts at record linkage (family reconstruction) suggest that there may have been a high degree of migration, as discussed earlier. The reason for this would be interesting to establish and this could well develop into a separate study. Obviously the level of under-registration must be assessed if possible. When the statistics are compiled it will be interesting to compare the findings with other studies and also with the 19th century population of Huntley. Much work remains, and it is hoped that the results will be published later when available.

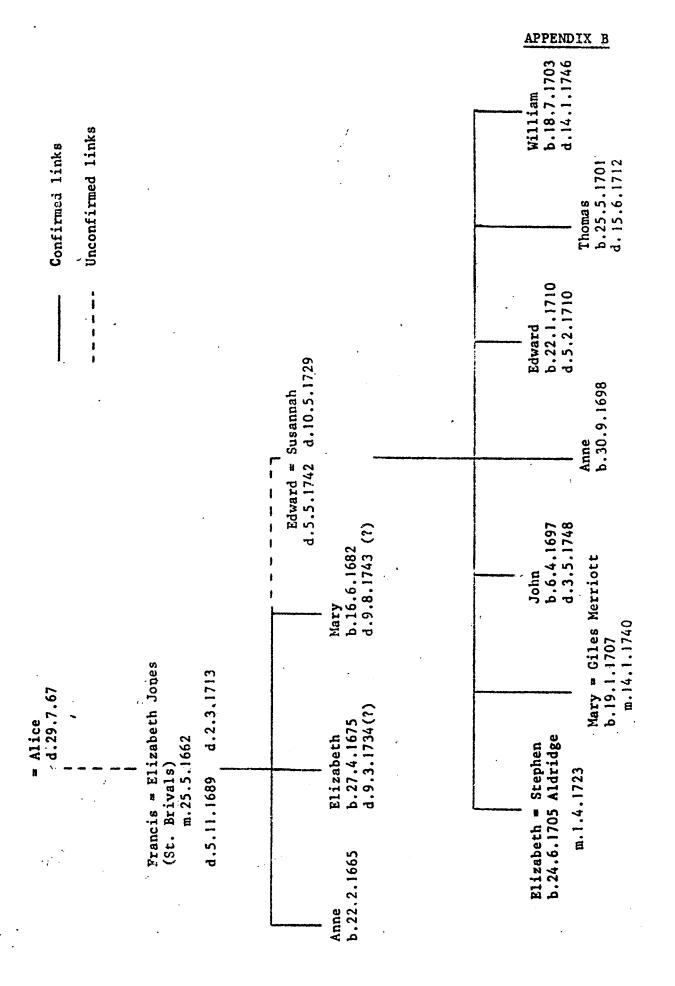
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Anglican Churches.
 Parishes based on existing boundaries



## REFERENCES TO THE NAME DAVIS UNLINKED TO APPENDIX B.

John Davis married (Susannah Mills) 2.11.1703 John Davis buried 23.4.1730 Susannah Davis buried 1.11.1711

Susan Davis married (Thomas Warne) 30.3.1730

Charles Davis (of Westbury) buried 9.6.1739

Maria Davis married (John Dobbs) 30.9.1745

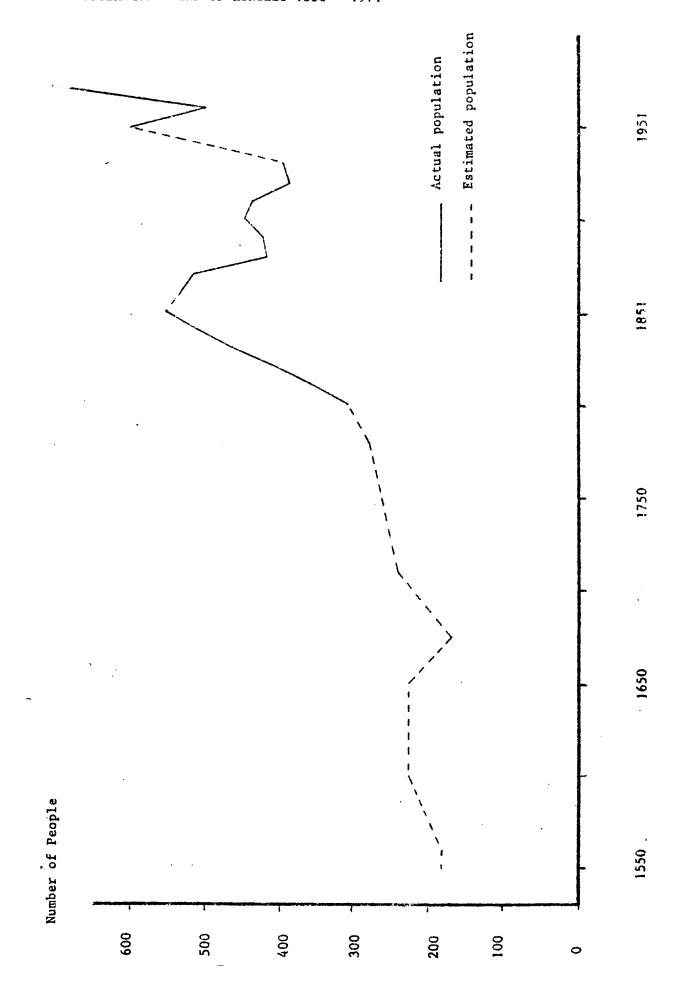
John Davis married (Mannah Davis) 24.12.1755
Mary Davis (daughter of John Davis) baptised 31.7.1757

Sarah Davis buried 1.1.1786
Thomas Davis (Son of Sarah Davis) baptised 27.5.1781 buried 5.6.1784

John Davis married (Elizabeth Sterry) 28.10.1788

Ann Davis (daughter of James Davis) buried 21.3.1796

Elianor Davis (Wife of John Davis) buried 22.11.1798



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