

Sixteenth Warwick Symposium on Parish Research

'Parishes and Migration' University of Warwick, 12 May 2018

Report and photographs by Joe Chick (Warwick)

This year's meeting was co-organised by the Warwick Network for Parish Research and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie project 'Migration in the Early Modern World' ([MIGMED](#)). At the outset, delegates were welcomed by *Beat Kümin* (Warwick) who thanked the Humanities Research Centre and the European Commission's HORIZON 2020 programme for their support. He introduced this year's theme and outlined three key questions to consider across the day. Firstly, what was the role of the parish? Secondly, how distinctive were English parishes? Thirdly, how did the nature of migration develop across time? Attention was also drawn to the resources available on the My-Parish site (<http://warwick.ac.uk/my-parish>), a platform providing opportunities for the exchange of ideas between university-based and independent researchers. The latter was exemplified by an ongoing dialogue with Milton Abbas Local History Group whose members got in touch to find out more about the historical context of the eighteenth-century poor book they are transcribing.

Richard M. Smith (Cambridge) delivered the keynote address covering a wide range of themes from pre-Black Death times through to the modern era. Revisiting theses advanced by Peter Laslett fifty-five years ago, he stressed the current scholarly consensus that pre-modern migration was much more prevalent than once believed and explored the different sources and methods utilised by historians and demographers. Until recently, attention had often focused on the least mobile in society (for the practical advantages of the continuity of their birth, marriage, and death records) and thus the broadly defined 'middling sort'. Among the many challenges, Smith noted that – for administrative reasons – individuals' named locations in parish registers did not necessarily reflect their places of residence. He also drew attention to the importance of links between towns and the countryside, suggesting that rural migration was vital to underpinning the industrial developments of the early modern era.



The first panel looked at the theme of Irish migration. *Phil Batman* (Leicester) discussed migration to a York parish, with a specific focus on two streets, at the time of the Irish potato famine of the mid nineteenth century. A key tool in his analysis was his Surname Index measure for quantifying the prevalence of kinship families among residents. He used this to argue for a general decline in kinship density across the period of Irish migration. Looking at newspaper reports regarding two Irish families, the Calpins and the Brannans, he found contrasting fortunes: the former being characterised by integration, the latter by alienation.



Bethany Marsh (Nottingham) spoke on Irish refugees in London in the years 1641-1651. She explored parish poor relief as one of the factors which determined the areas to which migrants moved. Some poorer parishes, such as Cripplegate, struggled to fund the poor in their own parish so could not offer generous relief to refugees. The most attractive relief was not necessarily in the richer parishes, though, with places like St Olaf Jewry lacking suitable residences for the poor. Her paper returned to the issue of heterogeneous record-keeping, noting how some parish records allowed relief numbers to be quantified, while others did not.



The ensuing discussion focused on a number of aspects, including the surprising level of generosity towards refugees in some areas of the capital. There seems to have been little coordination between the different London parishes, perhaps due to preoccupation with the Civil War. With regard to York, delegates suggested varying degrees of parochial involvement as a possible factor affecting chances of integration.

The second panel turned to the theme of religious identities. *Felicita Tramontana* (University of Warwick) gave a paper on migration patterns emerging from the seventeenth-century registers of a number of Catholic parishes in Palestine. Her research identified three main reasons for



mobility. The first related to the administration of sacraments, with many parents moving some distance to secure the baptism and/or confirmation of their children. The second concerned marriage opportunities, with friars sometimes acting as the facilitators of inter-parish unions. The third involved Dragomans (interpreters and guides), who moved to take up their posts at Franciscan houses. The findings showed complex patterns suggesting that the friars acted as agents in local as well as wider migration networks.

David Fletcher (Warwick) spoke on the mobility of nonconformist clergy in the later seventeenth century. The 1662 Act of Uniformity required an oath of adherence to new Church practices which many clergy refused to undertake. This led to almost 2,000 clergy losing their position in the 'Great Ejection'. The vast majority of the clergy continued to preach, with many migrating due to fines for remaining within five miles of their parish. To support one another, networks of nonconformists formed which supported new centres of worship. Fletcher argued that the Great Ejection was counterproductive, with the resulting networks allowing nonconformist beliefs to reach a greater number of people.



The discussion of these papers pursued some further lines of investigation. In seventeenth-century Palestine, given the increasing presence of other missionary orders, it was important that the Franciscans managed to secure as many conversions (from Greek Orthodox communities) as possible. Regarding the Great Ejection, reactions in affected parishes varied greatly, with one Anglican minister effectively accommodating a nonconformist preacher in the parsonage, while other incumbents made deliberate efforts to eject the newcomers.

The third and final panel looked into migration in local communities. *Tom Roberts* (University of Liverpool) spoke on Italian immigrants in Elizabethan London. While Italians had been present in the capital for centuries, members of this group tended to integrate little into their parish of residence and were often highly



mobile between parishes. Roberts argued for two main barriers to integration. The first was religious: Italians were most often economic migrants, unlike the Huguenots, and most remained Catholic. The second was linguistic: judging from their letters, most Italians spoke little English, even those who had been resident for a number of years.

Marion Hardy (Exeter) then explored migration patterns in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Devon. A number of driving forces emerged from her evidence. Firstly, following the Battle of Cadiz, there was a period of immigration of soldiers and militia members arriving in the important port of Plymouth. Secondly, the fishing trade created links with Newfoundland; one individual made regular trips across the Atlantic over a fifty-year period. Thirdly, the 1640s saw a wave of Irish immigrants which forged long-term connections between Devon and Ireland.



The symposium concluded with comments by *Andreas Holzem* (Tübingen/Cambridge) and *Beat Kümin* (Warwick) on the three broad themes that had been proposed in the introduction. Both underlined the role of the parish, albeit with a warning that too exclusive a focus on this unit obscured other agents, factors and institutions. The multiple forms of mobility evident in the day's papers demonstrated that pre-modern horizons stretched from the local to the global. Kümin wondered whether the prominence of the middling sort in local life had less to do with reputation or expertise than simply their more static lifestyles and identified 1689 as a watershed moment, when Protestant nonconformists received formal permission to worship in places other than the parish church. Holzem advocated greater attention to theological and confessional dimensions. Compared to German territorial states, he found the prevalence of dissent in English parishes particularly noteworthy. The Palestinian evidence highlighted the administration of sacraments as a major factor in local mobility, something also known from the large parishes of northern England. Several discussants pointed to changes over time. While late medieval parishes had tried to attract pilgrims with shrines, a few decades later they actively stemmed the influx of the poor for financial reasons. 'Gadding to sermons', the practice of travelling to hear particular godly preachers, emerged as another post-Reformation phenomenon. The modern period, finally, saw greater parish poor relief collaborations, in forms such as workhouse unions.

Abstracts of the papers, visual impressions and further resources are available at: <http://warwick.ac.uk/my-parish/parishsymposia/2018migration/>. The 17th Symposium

will take place on Saturday 18 May 2019 on the theme of 'Parish Participation' with a special regional emphasis on Scandinavia.

Programme of Papers

Beat Kümin (University of Warwick): 'Introduction'

Richard M. Smith (University of Cambridge): '55 Years since Laslett's "Clayworth and Cogenhoe": What Have we Learned about Pre-Modern Mobility?'

Panel 1: 'Irish Migration'

Phil Batman (University of Leicester): 'The Fate of Irish Potato Famine Immigrants in a York Parish'

Bethany Marsh (University of Nottingham): 'A Grim Spectacle: The Migration and Relief of "Irish" Refugees in London, 1641-1651'

Panel 2: 'Religious Identities'

Felicita Tramontana (University of Warwick): 'Migration in Palestine Parishes'

David Fletcher (University of Warwick): '"Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth": The Mobility of Nonconformist Clergy after the 1662 Great Ejection'

Panel 3: 'Local Communities'

Tom Roberts (University of Liverpool): '"By the Venecian Shippis": Resituating the Italians in Elizabethan London'

Marion Hardy (University of Exeter): 'Inter-Parish, Transhumant and Transient Migrants in Devon c. 1600-1800'

General Discussion and Wine Reception