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PARISH REGISTERS AND ILLITERACY IN EAST YORKSHIRE

by

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George Crabbe: *The Parish Register*, 1807.

Part II: "Marriages", line 283:

"How fair these names, how much unlike they look
To all the blurr'd subscriptions in my book:
The bridegroom's letters stand in row above,
Tapering yet stout, like pine-trees in his grove;
While free and fine the bride's appear below,
As light and slender as her jasmines grow.
Mark now in what confusion, stoop or stand,
The crooked scrawls of many a clownish hand;
Now out, now in, they droop, they fall, they rise,
Like raw recruits drawn forth for exercise;
Ere yet reform'd and modell'd by the drill,
The free-born legs stand striding as they will.
Much have I tried to guide the first along,
But still the blunderers placed their blottings wrong;
Behold these marks uncouth! how strange that men,
Who guide the plough, should fail to guide the pen.
For half a mile the furrows even lie;
For half an inch the letters stand awry."

PARISH REGISTERS AND ILLITERACY IN EAST YORKSHIRE

PART I

Although the main purpose of this essay is to illustrate one way in which our parish registers can be made to yield interesting information about the past, it may be helpful if a little is said in the first place about the origin of the systematic keeping of registers, and of the varied interest which they hold for the local historian. But those who seek a comprehensive account of their origins or historical importance are referred to some of the standard works, which are noted in the list of books on page 40.

In the Middle Ages in England a rough and ready system of recording baptisms, marriages and deaths was sometimes operated by monastic scribes and parish priests, more especially for the benefit of the families of the great. The practice of keeping parochial registers only became systematic and general through an injunction of Thomas Cromwell in 1538, soon after the suppression of the smaller monasteries and a little before the final suppression of the greater religious houses.

Cromwell had seen the Spanish clergy's baptismal registers in the Low Countries, and his own system appears to have been an extension of, or improvement upon, theirs. It would seem that he was planning the new system soon after he became Vicar-General in 1535, for among the rumours circulating in Yorkshire on the eve of the Pilgrimage of Grace (1536) was the report that christenings, marriages and burials were to be taxed. Thomas Wriothesley wrote to Cromwell:

> "I sende your Lordship herwith a certain copie conteyning suche false and untre surmyses, as have been reported in Yorkshire, and soo, consequently, the causes of that rebellion".

The document referred to in this letter is printed in a footnote in *State Papers of Henry VIII*,[1] the fifth grievance reading as follows:

> "Also, that shalbe noo wedding, buryeng, nor christenyng, but they shall paye a noble for every oone of these to the

1. *State Papers of Henry VIII*, vol. I, p. 482, n.

Kinges grace . . . And all these (six grievances in all) be soo slaunderously reported through out all the countrey, that every man thinkethe, that they shalbe utterly undoon for ever."

It may be remembered that Robert Aske, a country gentleman and London barrister, who was at the head of the rebels in Yorkshire, was a member of the family of Askes of Aughton on the Yorkshire Derwent. Not only the leader but many of the "pilgrims" of 1536 came from East Yorkshire.

Cromwell had to be patient until this disturbance over the suppression of the smaller monasteries had died down, but in September, 1538, he was able to issue the form of the new royal injunctions, one of which read:

"Item, That you, and every parson, vicar, or curate within this diocese, shall for every church keep one book or register, wherein ye shall write the day and year of every wedding, christening, and burying, made within your parish for your time and so every man succeeding you like-wise; and also there insert every person's name that shall be so wedded, christened, or buried; and for the safe keeping of the same book the parish shall be bound to provide, of their common charges, one sure coffer with two locks and keys whereof the one to remain with you, and the other with the said wardens of every such parish wherein the book shall be laid up; which book ye shall every Sunday take forth, and in the presence of the said wardens, or one of them, write and record in the same all the weddings, christenings, and buryings, made the whole week before; and that done to lay up the book in the said coffer as before; and for every time that the same shall be omitted, the party that shall be in the fault thereof shall forfeit to the said church 3s. 4d., to be employed on the reparation of the same church."[1]

Very few parish registers of an earlier date than 1538 are now extant. Holme-on-the-Wolds (1537) is the only case in the East Riding cited by the Yorkshire Parish Register Society. It has sometimes been claimed that the registers of Sinnington in Ryedale go back to 1517 (see, for example, Lawton's *Collections Relative to Churches and Chapels within the Diocese of York*, 1842, p. 535), but J. C. Cox showed in *The Parish Registers of England* that this date was a mistake for 1577. On the other hand, the registers of Snaith begin in 1537, the year before Cromwell's injunction. Neither Sinnington nor Snaith is in the East Riding, but they are near enough to be of interest and accessible to members of the East Yorkshire Local History Society. The Yorkshire Parish Register Society has printed the early registers of Snaith.

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1. W. H. Frere and W. M. Kennedy: *Visitation Articles and Injunctions*, vol. II, pp. 39-40.

Considering the lack of care in the custody of records, so common in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it is surprising that so many parishes still have registers which commence in 1538 or 1539. Cox, after scrutinising earlier lists, allowed 656 for 1538 and 205 for 1539. The number of sixteenth century registers would doubtless be less, had it not been for a Constitution of the Convocation of Canterbury in 1597, which directed not only that registers henceforth should be kept on parchment, but also that parchment copies should be made of the earlier registers which were on paper. This was to be carried back to the first year of the Queen's reign.

As well as being the means of preserving many of the earlier registers, which would otherwise have perished, this enactment has also been the source of some confusion. For it was ordered in 1597 that the names of the minister and churchwardens should be written on every page of the register when transcribed, and ignorance of this order has led some local historians to suppose that ministers and wardens held office in the sixteenth century for incredibly long periods!

At least six places in the East Riding have registers dating from 1538: Atwick, Burton Fleming, High Melton, Sancton, Sculcoates and Wharram-le-Street.

It is beyond the scope of this essay either to trace the history of registers through four centuries, or to point out all the uses to which they can be put by local historians. But it will be clear to the reader that they must have had a very chequered career, if only because of the vicissitudes of the Established Church. Thus we can frequently learn something about the local response to the puritan revolution if we look through the registers in the middle of the seventeenth century. For example, the registers of St. Mary's, Beverley, contain the following entries in 1643:

June 30 "Our great scrimage in Beverley, and God gave us the victory at that tyme, ever blessed be God."

July 30 "Thirteen slaine men on ye King's party was buried."

"All our lives now at ye stake,
Lord deliver us, for Christ his sake."

(as quoted by R. E. Chester Waters).

Frequent gaps in the registers during this period may be due partly to carelessness in keeping them; but credit should be given to the puritans for ordaining in the "Directory" of 1644/5 that in every parish there should be provided "a fair register-book of velim." Unfortunately, later legislation (1653), instituting laymen as "parish registers" (or as we should say, "registrars"), was indirectly responsible for the most serious loss of records, for register books, which passed into lay hands at this time, were not always recovered by the clergy after the Restoration.

At any period in the four centuries of their history the registers are full of the most varied interest. In the earlier centuries there are the epidemics noticeable in the burial registers, and the incidence of infant mortality and death in childbirth; glimpses of large families and of some illegitimacy in the baptismal registers; evidence in the marriage registers of a very limited choice of mate, but occasionally a surprisingly high proportion of "strangers" among the bridegrooms.

It is tempting to use the baptismal or the burial registers for the purpose of estimating the population of a parish at a given time before the date of the first census (1801). Methods of doing this are summarised by W. E. Tate in *The Parish Chest* (pp. 80-81) with his qualified approval. But extreme caution is advisable, for it is easy to prove how misleading these figures can be. The baptismal registers are the least unsatisfactory, if used with the degree of discrimination recommended by W. G. Hoskins in *Local History in England* (pp. 143-45).

From all this wealth of interest in the registers we are now selecting one topic — the evidence of illiteracy in the marriage registers — in order to show how such a subject can be developed by the local historian. This subject has been chosen for three reasons: first, because it is one which any student may pursue further for himself or herself, for the registers are normally easily accessible; and, for the period with which we shall be concerned, they are not difficult to read and gaps are relatively rare. Secondly, the subject is of rather special interest in East Yorkshire, as we hope to show. And, thirdly, the subject links up interestingly with other lines of local research: for instance, the history of primary schools (the subject of Mr. J. Lawson's essay in the present series); or the social condition of the working classes at different periods in the last two centuries.

* * * *

One of the provisions of Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act in 1753 was that brides and bridegrooms must sign their names in the register provided, or, if they were illiterate, must make their mark. New marriage registers — printed forms in bound volumes — were issued officially in 1754 when the Act came into force. Thus, from 1754 onwards, the evidence exists nearly all over the country and for a very large proportion of the population,[1] of their literacy or illiteracy at the time of marriage. By counting the number of "marks" of both bridegrooms and brides, and the total number of marriages, in any given period from 1754, we can find the percentage of illiteracy, among those of marriageable age, for that period. Those who married were presumably neither more nor

1. Only Jews and Quakers were excepted in the Act of 1753; relief was given to others in the Marriage Act of 1836.

less literate than others; in other words, they were a fair sample. But we could not include the witnesses of these marriages in our calculations, for there might well be a tendency to choose as witnesses those who could handle a pen. There was a parish clerk at Danby in Cleveland, George Hoggarth, who witnessed almost every marriage in his parish church from 1777 to 1812.

It is true that we are not asking very much in our test of literacy, for the mere signing of one's name is a modest requirement. Thus we are classifying as literate many who may never have put pen to paper except to sign their name, and who may never have read a line of anything (though there is evidence that the ability to read was more general than the ability to write). But it does not matter that our requirements are small; the important point is that we are able to compare the possession of these modest abilities at different places and at different dates from 1754 to the present day.

It should also be confessed that our figures may not always give quite a true picture, for there is a possibility of error in both directions. The officiating clergyman, to save trouble, may occasionally have forged the signatures of illiterate brides or bridegrooms, or have allowed someone else to do this, instead of requiring them to make a mark. But, in examining many registers, I have only occasionally had reason to suspect that this was done, and not at all in the case of East Yorkshire registers.

On the other hand, an incumbent or parish clerk might sometimes fill in the names and instruct the parties to make their marks, when with encouragement they could have signed their names. Not all would have Crabbe's patience:

> "Much have I tried to guide the first along,
> But still the blunderers placed their blottings wrong."

There is reason for believing that the brides, particularly, may appear in the statistics — at least in the middle of the nineteenth century — as less illiterate than they really were.

Evidence of this first came to my notice when I was describing to an old lady the examination of some registers in the North Riding, and she replied that she didn't think much of the idea! On being asked why, she replied: "When I was a girl, it would never have done for a bride to sign her name in the vestry; she was supposed to be too overcome"! I respected this criticism of the figures for the brides' illiteracy in the parish concerned, but supposed that it was only of local significance and might have been valid for only a short period — say during the eighteen-sixties. But then came the discovery of a passage in Flora Thompson's *Lark Rise*, in which she says of North Oxfordshire in the eighteen-seventies or eighties:

> "Statistics of illiteracy of that period are often misleading, for many who could read and write sufficiently well for their own humble needs would modestly disclaim any pretensions to

being what they called 'scholards'. Some who could write their own name quite well would make a cross as signature to a document out of nervousness or modesty."

A further confirmation of this curious convention appears in the seventh annual report of the Registrar-General of Births, Deaths, and Marriages in England, in 1845:

"a certain number of the women able to write, either from timidity or other motives, may not have written their names."[1]

So figures can lie, after all, and our exercise is of little value? No — we must be careful not to claim too much for the figures, but they still have value, and we shall find that, in nearly all the parishes from which we may take samples, the figures make a kind of pattern down the decades. As the Registrar-General claimed in the sober report which is quoted above:

"the return (made to him) is of unquestionable value, as an evidence of the *relative state* of elementary education in different parts of the country, and at different times."

* * * *

Members of the East Yorkshire Local History Society have co-operated in obtaining figures from a number of country parishes in the East Riding. Country parishes were selected because we wished to consider a rural problem only, and of course the task of obtaining the figures in full for a populous urban parish is considerable. In every case the original registers were used; when registers are printed by the Yorkshire Parish Register Society, it is rare for the difference between a signature and mark to be indicated.

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1. *An Act for Registering Births, Deaths and Marriages in England* (1836) required the Registrar-General to present reports to the Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department. In his Second Annual Report (1840) the Registrar-General first referred to the fact that the registers of marriage are of value in the study of illiteracy:

"In considering in what manner the records deposited in this office may be rendered useful in illustrating the condition of the people, I have found the Registers of Marriages calculated to throw much light upon the state of education with respect to writing, among the adult population of England and Wales. Almost every Marriage is duly registered, and every Register of Marriage is signed by the parties married; those who are able writing their names, and those who are unable, or who write very imperfectly, making their marks. Therefore, an enumeration of the instances in which the mark has been made will shew the proportion among those married, who either cannot write at all, or write very imperfectly." (p. 7).

In a number of subsequent reports, especially in the Seventh Annual Report (1845), there are valuable comparative figures of illiteracy for the counties of England.

The figures for seventeen parishes and chapelries are given in full in Part II, and for convenience the percentages of illiteracy only are printed here in Table I. Readers should find it interesting to study the actual figures for individual parishes in relation to the founding of schools or the provision of adult education, and some guidance for pursuing this subject is offered in Part II. But the great variety of local conditions influencing literacy cannot be discussed adequately here. One would require an intimate knowledge of the history of each parish, and that is something which members of a Local History Society may be able to supply for themselves.

Occasionally, however, the pattern may well prove to be inexplicable even to the best informed student, and it should be emphasised that, in the case of the individual rural parish, the number of marriages is so small, even in a decade, that the figures thus provided are bound to be erratic and to some extent unreliable. The statistician would regard the sample as too small to be of much general significance. But the pattern is much clearer when the seventeen parishes and chapelries are grouped together as one unit, as shown in Table II. It will be observed that the selected parishes are fairly well distributed in the East Riding.

At a first glance these percentages may appear to be rather shocking: more than one-third of the bridegrooms and more than half the brides illiterate at the beginning of the period; still about one-third of the grooms and still over half the brides illiterate in the early nineteenth century, and so on. We have to wait until after 1850 before we can say that less than a quarter of the bridegrooms are illiterate; we have to wait until the 1870's before that is true of the brides — the same decade, by the way, in which they caught up and passed the men in literacy.

But it is by no means as disgraceful as at first sight it appears, for relatively to other parts of England the figures are quite good. I have taken and received samples from many parts of rural England, and have rarely found better figures than these for East Riding villages. Indeed, when the Registrar-General provided comparative figures in the 1840's, he showed that from 1839 to 1844 the men and women of the whole of the East Riding (with York) were only excelled in literacy by the Metropolis, and — to a trifling extent — by the northern counties of Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmorland. It is striking, too, that the East is a little superior to the North Riding, and much superior to the West Riding in those years, as the following percentages show (printed on p. 13):

TABLE I

Percentages of Illiterate Men and Women in 17 Country Parishes or Chapelries of the East Riding from the Marriage Registers, 1754-1900

Decades	Burton Agnes		Elloughton		Harpham		Hayton & Bielby		Hotham		Hunmanby		*Hutton Cranswick		Naburn	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
1754–60	62	76	20	35	36	36	40	64	18	82	42	67			—	—
61–70	51	68	35	71	50	10	47	71	36	73	46	54			29	57
71–80	60	56	54	50	83	50	28	72	28	67	32	67			100	100
81–90	46	62	20	64	60	40	43	61	22	39	19	60			44	67
91–1800	42	49	48	36	67	33	14	43	21	25	28	57			—	33
1801–10	32	62	33	48	61	39	37	54	25	46	30	51			29	29
11–20	38	64	27	57	75	55	21	47	27	53	33	54	37	75	31	15
21–30	49	56	32	46	60	45	23	43	31	44	18	32	39	72	29	35
31–40	33	44	22	43	61	35	30	37	31	19	23	34	39	64	15	54
41–50	34	34	26	48	25	41	33	56	25	37	15	37	34	60	29	23
51–60	17	25	19	32	10	35	26	35	16	20	16	28	23	51	—	14
61–70	18	16	9	18	23	8	33	30	20	24	28	32	20	25	8	4
71–80	19	19	12	9	7	14	16	12	25	17	16	14	19	7	5	5
81–90	—	—	3	10	14	—	15	15	10	10	3	14	16	4	8	—
91–1900	—	—	3	—	—	—	6	3	7	—	3	1	1	1	4	4

* There are gaps in the Hutton Cranswick marriage registers from 1754–1813.

TABLE I (*continued*)

Percentages of Illiterate Men and Women in 17 Country Parishes or Chapelries of the East Riding from the Marriage Registers, 1754-1900

Decades	North Cave		North Frodingham		Patrington		*Skirlaugh		Stillingfleet		Skipwith		Thorganby		Wetwang		* Yedingham	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
1754–60	30	65	47	65	35	58			29	53	22	60	62	77	29	71	50	100
61–70	33	74	30	74	35	66	40	67	40	67	32	57	33	62	64	71	38	54
71–80	25	61	36	68	26	60	31	69	43	63	25	60	27	95	40	53	27	73
81–90	22	58	27	73	38	64	27	56	26	47	48	78	41	35	36	54	27	27
91–1800	32	56	27	54	28	55	34	64	45	55	38	65	17	50	42	42	29	71
1801–10	37	67	48	83	36	51	32	68	25	55	40	60	50	55	33	52	50	30
11–20	31	54	36	61	27	43	36	46	29	41	35	47	20	15	35	56	37	12
21–30	26	49	17	41	35	45			25	44	22	30	35	30	39	65	25	25
31–40	33	52	19	51	17	48			26	39	31	39	39	28	47	66	25	58
41–50	29	39	32	51	33	41	22	22	18	37	25	40	19	46	26	47	37	37
51–60	20	39	36	43	44	56	34	31	17	27	32	29	14	7	22	42	36	55
61–70	24	25	16	30	31	41	10	30	14	20	31	31	5	23	25	23	12	12
71–80	22	14	22	19	18	29	20	16	9	5	23	9	4	9	9	6	—	20
81–90	12	6	11	11	10	15	7	9	6	3	3	3	5	—	8	5	—	—
91–1900	5	2	4	4	2	—	5	3	—	4	—	—	—	—	10	3	—	—

*There are gaps in the Skirlaugh marriage registers from 1754-69 and 1821-39 and in those of Yedingham from 1754—1757.

TABLE II

Seventeen Country Parishes and Chapelries in the East Riding grouped together as a unit, to indicate the percentage of illiteracy in bridegrooms and brides in each decade from 1754 to 1900.

DECADES	BRIDEGROOMS		NUMBER OF MARRIAGES*	BRIDES	
	Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate		Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate
1754-60	121	36	339	208	61
61–70	179	39	457	294	64
71–80	177	35	503	322	64
81–90	170	32	537	310	58
91–1800	180	33	546	284	52
1801–10	206	36	579	329	57
11–20	219	33	669	337	50
21–30	215	31	696	330	47
31–40	232	30	778	360	46
41–50	209	27	773	328	42
51–60	182	24	757	280	37
61–70	149	21	694	180	26
71–80	96	16	618	77	12
81–90	39	8	486	37	8
91–1900	18	3	622	10	2

* The number of marriages is affected in some decades by gaps in the registers of Hutton Cranswick and Skirlaugh.

Proportion per cent Persons married, 1839-44, who signed with a Mark

	MEN					
	1839	1840	1841	1842	1843	1844
West Riding	38	41	37	38	39	38
E. Riding (with York)	16	21	21	20	18	20
North Riding	22	23	24	24	23	22
	WOMEN					
	1839	1840	1841	1842	1843	1844
West Riding	63	66	63	65	64	65
E. Riding (with York)	41	40	41	39	39	39
North Riding	42	43	42	40	39	39

It will be noted that the Registrar-General's figures for the East Riding in 1839-44 are better than those for our seventeen rural parishes and chapelries in the decade 1841-50; but the difference is not very great — illiterate bridegrooms 20% against 27%, and brides 39% against 42% — and the discrepancies may be explained by the possible superiority of the cities of York and/or Hull, and by the fact that our rural sample is rather a small one. In any case the figures from both sources are good.[1]

Does this mean that East Yorkshire was well supplied with village schools in the latter half of the eighteenth and the first part of the nineteenth centuries, and that many parents were prepared to send their children to school until they became at least literate? Mr. Lawson's essay on Primary Education in East Yorkshire shows that some of the evidence even for the existence of village schools in the eighteenth century is difficult to interpret; but on the whole his study does point to generous provision throughout the period with which we are concerned. The further question as to the readiness of parents to use the facilities available requires further investigation.

1. Dr. J. F. C. Harrison first drew my attention to the superiority of the East Riding, with the comment that Edward Baines (editor of the *Leeds Mercury*) and the Leeds manufacturers would have strongly repudiated the suggestion that the factory workers were behind those in the "backward" (and Tory) agricultural areas. Dr. Harrison's unpublished thesis: "Social and Religious Influences in Adult Education in Yorkshire between 1830 and 1870" has a section on the extent of illiteracy (Ph.D. thesis, Leeds University, 1955, chapter 1).

It may help us to answer that question and add generally to the interest of the present study if we seek now to supplement the statistics with evidence from descriptive accounts of the life of the East Yorkshire countryside. Some of this evidence has been cited by Mr. Lawson; and therefore we have tried to avoid repetition, but suggest that, when this section is read, reference be made also to his essay.

Firstly, Archbishop Herring's Visitation Returns, 1743, are a fruitful source for references both to schools and to other matters of interest in the life of parishes in the diocese of York. The returns come from individual parishes, and should be used accordingly in Part II of this essay; but it is worth noting here that schools are recorded in nearly 40% of the parishes and chapelries which sent in returns. Often there is no record of the number of children or the amount of secular instruction, so it is difficult to estimate the influence of these village schools on literacy. As the Vicar of Yedingham said about the endowed grammar school at Thornton Dale, of which he was master: "Its hard to tell what . . . number of children are taught in it. It ebbs and flows, as other schools do . . ." Very rarely there is some critical comment on the human material with which the schoolmaster had to deal, as at Pickering in the North Riding:

> "The numbr is sometimes more — and sometimes less — All possible Care is taken to cultivate the barren Brain and instruct 'em in the principles of the Chr. Religion . . . "[1]

Secondly, a number of agricultural reports at about the end of the eighteenth century shed a little light on the East Yorkshire scene. William Marshall in *The Rural Economy of Yorkshire* (1788) is more valuable for his native North Riding than for the East Riding. He seems to have the very small farmers of the Vale of Pickering and the North-Eastern moorlands in mind when he exclaims that:

> "Poverty and ignorance are the ordinary inhabitants of small farms."

In contrast, he implies that the large farmers of the Wolds compare favourably with the poor and ignorant small men of the vale and moorlands. He thinks that the practice of reading may have helped to make the "superior class of yeomanry" and some larger tenants as progressive as they are.[2]

Isaac Leatham's *General View of the Agriculture of the East Riding* (1794) is also disappointing from our present point of view. All that he tells us of relevance to our purpose is that there are few counties where the farm servants (who "live in" the farmhouses) and the day labourers (who have cottages) work harder than in the

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1. See Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Record Series, vols. 71, 72, 75 and 77.
2. William Marshall: *The Rural Economy of Yorkshire* (1788), I, pp. 255 and 257; II, p. 249.

East Riding. "Proper attention is not in general paid to the accommodation of labourers, with land for a cow and potatoes, which so highly contributes to their comfort, and enables them to bring up and support their children . . .".[1] It is an incomplete picture, but it seems to portray a labouring population who will have little time or inclination for schooling, in contrast to their masters as depicted by Marshall.

A few years later H. E. Strickland's *General View of the Agriculture of the East Riding* (1812) presents a much fuller, if not wholly convincing, picture. In a section on the Poor he speaks about their education as deficient, many being unable to read, and still more to write or keep accounts. But he praises the natural abilities of the "lower classes," and thinks that this deficiency in their education is chiefly due to the lack of facilities.

It is a gloomy view, only relieved a little by his reference (quoted by Mr. Lawson) to the beginning of the work of the Voluntary Societies in establishing new schools.

Thirty years later, however, when the influence of the voluntary societies should have become evident, and the Registrar-General was able to present his encouraging figures with regard to literacy, an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner still painted a rather dismal picture. This is to be found in the *Report of the Commission on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture* (1843). Sir Francis H. Doyle, reporting on Yorkshire, confessed that farm work interfered with education: "Whenever work offers, they are taken from school . . . They do not, in Yorkshire, go out before ten, except quite accidentally, to light work . . . " But to leave school at ten was bad enough; and, when he asked how these younger children retained what they had learnt, he found that the question was either evaded or answered by the admission: "I am afraid I must say it is generally forgotten."

In East Yorkshire he concluded that "as to education, its general condition is anything but good (if book knowledge be of the value which it is the fashion to suppose) . . ." But, "meagre and unsatisfactory as the instructions given commonly are, this matter is improving rather than the reverse. Infant schools here, as elsewhere, are becoming more frequent . . . so that they come afterwards into the day schools with habits, more or less formed, of docility and self-control. Night schools also, where a few — a very few — of the grown-up labourers struggle gallantly with the difficulties of their position, and endeavour to maintain what they have learned, seem to be on the increase. In particular places, also, where the neighbourhood of a gentleman's house, whose family interest themselves about the poor, or the labours of an energetic clergyman have produced their natural effects, education may

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1. Isaac Leatham: *General View of the Agriculture of the East Riding* (1794), pp. 32 and 51.

be, in some degree, more impressive in its progress and more successful in its result; but, generally speaking, what the children of the poor learn is worth little to them, and as such is thrown aside and rapidly forgotten."[1]

A similar Report, but much fuller for the East Riding, was made twenty-five years later by the Commission of 1867-8.[2] Children were still going out to work at ten years of age, and occasionally even earlier; but the private gangs of women and children working in the fields, which were so common in some counties, were comparatively rare in Yorkshire. This was partly because wages were better than in most parts of England, and therefore there was not the same economic pressure on the labourer and his family. One of the worst aspects of the agricultural system was "living in" for boys of thirteen and upwards, who frequently had no-one to care for their education or morals.

Such points as these occur again and again in the evidence collected for the Report of 1867-8 by the Hon. E. B. Portman in Yorkshire. He speaks of an initial difficulty, "that the subject was an entirely new one to most persons, that the farmers had never turned their attention to the subject, or had even imagined that an inquiry would be set on foot as to the condition of their labourers". Nevertheless he is able to report that: "It is pretty generally conceded that ten years would be a fair age to fix as a limit, below which boys should not be employed in the fields for hire. It appears that you would thereby secure at any rate three years' schooling, during which time they should acquire a fair proficiency in reading, writing and arithmetic." The possibility of legislation on these lines appealed not only to Mr. Portman, but also to a precocious little boy at Dalton Holme:

> "A few days after Mr. Portman's visit to this parish, a small boy, not seven years old, who had been bird tenting for some weeks, volunteered the remark to the mother of some boys who were sent to school, 'I wish t'law would come that boys wasn't to work while they was ten'."

But the question which had been asked in 1843 was asked again now: how could children retain what was learnt before they were ten? A boy of thirteen gave evidence at Withernwick: "I went out picking stones and twitching at ten years old, and was out nearly six months in the year . . . I forgot my reading and other things."

The Rector of Hornsea was emphatic on this point about early accomplishments being lost: "They for the most part soon forget

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1. *Report of the Commission on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture* (1843, pp. 288-293).

2. *Reports of the Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons, and Women in Agriculture, First Report* (1867-8).

all that they have learned at school, and when they come to be married cannot write their own names."

An Agriculturalist at the East Riding Chamber of Agriculture in Beverley spoke in the same strain: "They all knew that two out of every three of their servants could not write at all. He had a lad in his employ who had just sent away a letter that had taken him three months to write. They could scarcely get a lad to sign his name when they hired him."

Portman implied, by the prominence given to certain evidence, that he thought the solution of the problem lay in the encouragement of evening schools. The Rector of Hornsea's evidence, however, showed the difficulties: "We had an evening school for some years, but the farm servants could not or would not attend. The farm servants, who would be most benefited by a night school, cannot well attend on account of distance, bad weather, and the objection made by their masters."

The indifference or hostility of the farmers is often criticised. For instance, the schoolmaster at Withernwick said: "I once kept a night school; fourteen or fifteen farm lads came from the houses, but I could not keep it on, as it did not pay. I should like to see forced attendance at night schools. The farmers take no interest in the school".

The master at Bishop Burton complained of opposition: "The hours for night school, from 7 to 9 p.m., are objectionable to the farmers, as they like their servants to be about the place; though not actually at work they are ready in any emergency, and they are expected to be in bed at 9 p.m."

At a meeting at Howden, attended by the principal occupiers of land in Howdenshire, it was said that: "Farm lads would not read at nights. A suggestion that the farmers might take some trouble to provide instruction for the lads in their houses in the evenings by means of books or by establishing a custom of reading aloud during the long evenings, was ridiculed."

But if the night school was attacked by many of the farmers, it had doughty champions in the 'sixties, and none more influential than the daughter of a clergyman at Boynton, Miss Mary Simpson. She wrote at length to Mr. Portman, and is quoted by him as one "whose experience among farm lads and the children of the agricultural class is as extensive as that of anyone in Yorkshire." That experience went back to 1856, if not earlier.

> "Something of continuous teaching," she thought, "is the more necessary, because when a child was little he could not exercise his mind much on what he learned, and having no real grasp of it, it is the sooner lost before he is of age to know the real meaning of anything . . . I see that at Beverley one of the speakers said that boys who had been working in the fields all day are unfitted for the mental labours of the night school. I think that observation can hardly have been the

result of experience. To anyone accustomed to teaching working lads in a night school it reads rather like nonsense. Night schools ought to succeed, and will, perhaps, be found the best means that can be devised for keeping up and supplementing the insufficient education of children in agricultural districts."

Her estimate of the deficiency at Boynton was that about one-fourth of the young people growing up could not read at all, and about one-third could read very little.

She included in her evidence a detailed description of her own evening School: it was held at Carnaby in the summer for two hours, with twenty-six lads over twelve years on the register, and an attendance of fourteen. In the winter the class met at Boynton, with ten on the register and an attendance of six; the meeting then only lasted an hour on account of stable work. As for the curriculum: "They are taught reading, writing, knowledge of the Bible, rudiments of geography and history, with a very little composition and no arithmetic."

Her conclusions were significant: "A night school can never supply the deficiencies of a day school while there is neither compulsory rule nor any inducement beyond love of learning. Love of the teacher is almost the only real inducement that tells now."

We can see from other sources that "love of the teacher" counted for a good deal in Miss Simpson's success in the education of farm lads. For, in the first place, she wrote anonymously two little books on her experiences in teaching. One is called "Ploughing and Sowing" (London 1861), the other "Gleanings" (London, 1876). The full title of the former is "Ploughing and Sowing; or, Annals of an Evening School in a Yorkshire Village, and the Work that Grew out of it. From Letters and Private Notes. By a Clergyman's Daughter."

It was edited by the Rev. F. Digby Legard, who spoke in the preface of the great need for adult education; otherwise "what little is gained in our village schools will, in a great majority of cases, be utterly lost and effaced." Internal evidence in these books reveals Miss Simpson's identity, and her work has also been the subject of a chapter in *The British Workman Past and Present* by the Rev. M. C. F. Morris (1928). Her books reveal with great modesty her extraordinary devotion, telling how she even tramped over the fields by the side of boys at the plough, because the farmers objected to time being lost, and she had no other means of winning the plough lads for her night school or her Bible class on Sunday. That she exercised a remarkable influence over her pupils is clear from the way some of them visited her or corresponded with her after they had changed their "place," following the Martinmas hirings.

A tribute to her memory exists in the restoration of the Chapel of Ease at Fraisthorpe in her father's parish. It received the support

of the Archbishop of York, several bishops and other dignitaries of the Church; Gladstone, who was then prime minister, was among the laymen supporting the memorial.

If the report of the Commission of 1867-8 provides valuable evidence on illiteracy among farm servants and others in East Yorkshire, it is surpassed in some respects by ecclesiastical records of the same period, particularly the York Diocesan Visitation Returns for 1865. Among the questions addressed to the incumbents of the parishes the following were apt to elicit answers having some bearing upon our subject:

"16. Are you able to retain your young people in your Sunday School after they have ceased to attend the Daily School?

17. Have you adopted any other mode of retaining them under instruction by Adult or Evening Schools? And, if so, what success have you found to attend such Schools?"

"19. Can you mention anything which specially impedes your own ministry or the welfare of the Church around you? Can you, if so, suggest any remedies?"

More than six hundred returns to the inquiry are preserved in the diocesan archives, now in the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research.[1] Two hundred and ten of these were from churches and chapels-of-ease in the Archdeaconry of the East Riding of which:

43 indicated the existence of an evening school,

48 indicated that an evening school had been discontinued, and

119 gave no indication that an evening school had been tried.

Many of the clergy in these predominantly agricultural areas showed their concern for the welfare of farm servants and were particularly anxious to get them into evening schools; but direct references to illiteracy were surprisingly few. It did not often occur to the incumbent to say exactly what was done in their schools, though the Vicar of *Wetwang* told the Archbishop just what we want to know: reading, writing and arithmetic were taught, but the "attendance not so good."

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1. There are two volumes of Returns for 1865 in the Borthwick Institute, with reference no. R.VI.A.49. The kindness of Canon J. S. Purvis, Director of the Institute, who made my research among these records so pleasant, is gratefully acknowledged.

   The Returns have been examined previously by Dr. J. F. C. Harrison and are discussed in his unpublished thesis, referred to on p. 13, note 1. They will be considered more briefly in Dr. Harrison's forthcoming volume, *Learning and Living*, 1790-1960 (to be published by Messrs. Routledge and Kegan Paul).

   My examination has been carried out independently, because it seemed desirable to extract the information relating to parishes in the Archdeaconry of the East Riding.

In their struggle to win farm servants for further education the clergy often blame the shyness and ignorance of the lads themselves, the inherent difficulties in farm-service, and — perhaps most strongly — the attitude of many of the farmers.

The following are representative replies on these points: First, brief references such as these:

Bainton: "14 pupils, likely to increase"; but impeded by "the present state of farm service . . ."

Foxholes: 35 pupils described as "adults and boys in service."

Nafferton: Attendance fell off because of "duties connected with the farm yard."

Secondly, references to the desire to get farm lads as pupils:

Brantingham: "wished for Farm-servants, but did not get them: 10 or 12 adults attended."

Ganton: "It is very uphill work to get the young apprentices and farm boys to come to the Night School. I find them Coals and Candles — but they attend very ill."

Holme on Spalding Moor: "for Farm Lads and apprentices, but our success is small as yet."

Hornsea: "the class for which they were mainly intended (farm servants, etc.) would not attend."

Kexby: Impeded by distance and the "unwillingness of the young servants."

Thirdly, references to the yearly change, following the hirings:

Catwick: Blames the annual "change of place."

Etton: Does "tolerably well," but the "present mode of hiring farm servants" impedes the work in rural parishes.

North Cave: "without success," for young men only here one year.

Rudston: Average attendance 11; "yearly hirings prejudicial."

Fourthly, references to the employing farmers:

Aughton with East Cottingwith: "An attempt was made to establish an Evening School for the farm servants—but unsuccessfully as some of the farmers refused either to support it or allow their servants to attend."

Harswell: "The masters rather unwilling that their men should come . . . Shall try again."

Kirby Underdale: Blames the distance and "long hours of work." "There are about 60 farm servants in the parish. The difficulty of instilling any good into their minds is very great and the great obstacle is the late hours they are kept at work and the indifference manifested by their employers for their well being."

Skidby: "lads . . . often late and irregular;" blames farmers for lack of piety and sense of responsibility.

Wawne ("Waghen" in the Returns) "not very successful." Impeded by "the ignorance of the farm-servants. I think a greater interest in their intellectual and spiritual welfare on the part of employers is needed."

Wharram Percy: Blames "the condition of the Farm Servants." Wishes for "An appeal to the Tenants, as well as the Landlords."

Even an enthusiast like the Rev. F. Digby Legard, who edited *Ploughing and Sowing* for Miss Simpson, finds "great difficulty" at *Whitwell*, where he sometimes has only four to eight in the class, and those apprentices, though he wants farm lads. If we turn to Miss Simpson's own villages, we find that at *Boynton* her father, the Rev. Francis Simpson, modestly makes no reference to her work, though he notes the existence of a class. At *Carnaby* he remarks: "the success is not encouraging."

Disillusionment and depression were very common in connection with these classes; after all, about 48 had been given up as against about 43 in existence in 1865. There was *Burnby* (Harthill), where the "Novelty wore off . . . reduced to one, when I reluctantly abandoned it." And there was *Market Weighton*, where the Vicar confessed: "I am not strong enough to carry it on." At *North Dalton* the class was "very badly attended," and even "A Reading Room . . . proved a failure after 6 weeks."

A few clergy were opposed to the very idea of evening schools: *Cowick:* "I have not much faith in mere secular classes . . ." And at *Thorpe Bassett:* "No — and I may be permitted to add that in this part of the County I should look upon Evening Schools, or Evening services — as neither more nor less than an incentive to immorality already too rampant."

While Dissent ranks as the chief obstacle to the ministry of very many of the clergy, it is also blamed for or associated with the prevailing ignorance in country districts:

Hutton Cranswick: "Alas! There are three (Chapels) — the Independents, the Methodist and the Ranters places — the Masses being steeped in Poverty and Ignorance frequent these Schismatic Displays as they would Theatres." But sometimes schooling would be accused of fostering Dissent:

Shipton: "I would suggest an inquiry into the connexion between Ranting and schooling — 'A little knowledge is a ranting thing.' Our Schools do not breed Church folk but Ranters . . ."

Shipton school was described in the Return as "A small Free School."

A different diagnosis came from

Nunburnholme: Specially impeding the work of the Church was "Apathy, the result of Dissent having worn itself out." This remark is interesting both in itself — for it is surprising at so early a date as 1865 — and because it came from the Rev. F. O. Morris, father of the Rev. M. C. F. Morris, who was to draw attention to the work of Miss Mary Simpson (see pp. 17 and 18).

Many other things contributed to the difficulties of the clergyman who might wish to develop evening classes. It was often the scattered character of the population, as at

Brandsburton: "little success, the Pupils generally living at scattered and distant farms."

Or it might be the difficulty of negotiating an East Riding road; as at *Broomfleet:* "The terrible state of the road prevents anyone stirring at night."

The lack of a suitable building was often the excuse:

Great Driffield: "badly hindered because I have not a fit place to hold them in."

Ellerton: "No building for the purpose."

Lund: "Through want of an available place or room."

Mapleton: "Not so much could be raised by a penny a week subscription as would pay for fire and candle."

Generally a room in the day-school was used; but at *Bishop Wilton:* "The master takes little interest, and the consequence is that very few attend."

More often however, there was co-operation with the schoolmaster, and it was not always clear to whom the credit for an evening school was really due:

Bridlington, St. Mary's: A successful evening school shared by the incumbent and schoolmaster.

Newland: "gave it up" when only three pupils; but hopes that a schoolmaster will revive it."

It should be noted that under the Revised Code of 1862 certificated teachers were permitted to teach in both day and evening school, and Government grant was payable subject to strict regulations. It has been shown by M. E. Sadler: *Continuation Schools in England and Elsewhere* (1908), pp.58—62, that the number of students in grant-aided evening schools increased rapidly after 1862; but it seems improbable that many of the evening schools which we are considering were in receipt of grant.

The evidence so far has emphasised the difficulties, but the Returns sometimes record hopefulness or even a modest triumph:

Bilton: Classes on three nights at the Day school and on other nights at the parsonage: "Most highly valued."

Cottingham: Class has been running for 3 years "with marked success"; about 40 pupils.

Dalton Holme: "There are now no residents who have not derived the advantages they desired from it"—a little ambiguous?

Hull (St. Stephen's): "None are admitted under 18 years of age, each pays 1d. per night. Average attendance above 100."

Hull (The Mariners' Church): "84 have attended during 1864-5 — the average attendance being 26."

Hunmanby: "A Night School well attended."

Kirk Ella: "It has answered very well"—Average attendance 18.

Patrington: "doing very great good" — 30 adult males.

Roos: "about 18 young men . . . chiefly apprentices."

Skipsea: "pretty fair success."

Sutton (Holderness): "Great success this winter."

Welton: A class held for fifteen years — "Success varies."

Well might the success vary in a long spell of fifteen years, a record which takes us back within sight of the pioneering of the 'forties.

"Night Schools . . . seem to be on the increase," Sir Francis Doyle had said in the Report of 1843 (see p. 15). And now, at the time of the Returns of 1865 which we have examined, they probably had reached their peak. Before two more decades had passed they were to decline, as Dr. Harrison has shown for the diocese of York as a whole, drawing his evidence from another set of Returns in 1884.

Such is the evidence concerning literacy from some of the printed and MS. sources for the first hundred years or so of the period covered by our statistics. It may strike the reader that there is some conflict between the figures, which we have seen are good, and contemporary comments, which on the whole are gloomy. But it should be remembered that the zest for reform generally coloured reports of the type which we have been considering; and in any case the writers were thinking mainly of agricultural workers and their children, who undoubtedly formed the bulk of the illiterate in East Yorkshire villages. This could be proved conclusively from 1837 onwards; but the occupations of bridegrooms were only given spasmodically in the earlier registers.

It may be admitted also that progress in literacy had been rather slow for a decade or two after the early 'forties. There is an interesting note by E. B. Portman in 1867 on this point:

> "I met a book-seller or hawking man at Stamford Bridge station who had been at his trade for eight years in that neighbourhood; he said that the people could not read and write better than when he began. The class of books that he was most able to sell was not the best for the morality of the people."

But matters were improving in the 'sixties: the literacy of brides advanced remarkably in that decade. Then the Education Act of 1870 and its successors would in time reduce the problem of illiteracy to much smaller dimensions. The majority, however, were literate *before* 1870, and that is attributable partly to East Yorkshire's early schools and partly to the quality of the people themselves.

There are, of course, many ways in which this short study could be expanded and made to tell a more complete story. As suggested above the Marriage Registers from 1837 can be studied with a view to learning the occupations of illiterate bridegrooms.

Another subject, particularly, invites further study. It is connected with the Marriage Registers which nearly always give the name of the parish to which the bridegroom belongs. This information has been used for a few parishes by Mr. Frank Nicholson, one of the contributors of figures for individual parishes in Part II. Mr. Nicholson writes:

> "It occurred to me that a fair number of bridegrooms in all parishes would come from outside the parish, and that on the basis of the line, 'Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits,' these more enterprising questers for brides would be likely to be less illiterate than the natives."

As far as they go, the figures provided by Mr. Nicholson point to this conclusion. At Hayton and Bielby comparison was made decade by decade between the local and "stranger" bridegrooms: in eleven decades the strangers were superior, often to a marked degree; in four decades they were somewhat inferior.

But one would not expect to find a very striking contrast in an area where many of the "strangers" were probably the young men "living in" with the farmers, for these we had reason to believe, were often illiterate.

The idea of using the registers in this way is not new. When Miss E. M. Walker did some work on the Gargrave-in-Craven registers a few years ago, she concluded that "the charge of inbreeding so often made against the village community was not applicable to Gargrave in the mid-eighteenth century." She wondered if a large proportion of the young men (52% "foreigners" at Gargrave in the 1750's) "had the use of a stout pony for crossing the fells." And Miss Walker, like Mr. Nicholson, thought that "the foreign bridegrooms, being lads of enterprise, may have been more literate than the stay-at-homes."[1]

Clearly the subject deserves further investigation, not only to supplement our knowledge about illiteracy, but also to indicate the proportion of "stranger" bridegrooms in rural areas where inbreeding was believed to be prevalent.

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1. Unpublished manuscript notes.

PART II

Some Statistics of Illiteracy from the East Riding

These statistics of illiteracy from selected country parishes and chapelries in the East Riding have been supplied by members of the East Yorkshire Local History Society and others, as follows:

Burton Agnes by the author;

Elloughton, Hayton, Hotham, Hutton Cranswick, Langtoft (three decades only), North Cave, North Frodingham, Patrington and Skirlaugh by Mr. Frank Nicholson;

Harpham by Mr. H. S. Welburn;

Hunmanby by Miss L. M. Owston and Mr. C. W. Howes;

Naburn and Stillingfleet by Mrs. A. Owston;

Skipwith and Thorganby by the Rev. and Mrs. J. H. Armstrong;

Wetwang by Mrs. A. Sawdon;

Yedingham by the late Miss J. Pidd.

The figures should be studied in conjunction with information about schools in individual parishes. This information may be derived from J. Lawson: *Primary Education in East Yorkshire* (No. 10 in the present series).

Some original sources are:

Archbishop Herring's Visitation Returns, 1743, Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Record Series, vols. 71, 72, 75 and 77;

Directories of the East Riding, including Baines (1823), White (1840), Sheahan (1856), Kelly (1872), and Bulmer (1892), George Lawton: *Collections relative to Churches and Chapels within the Diocese of York* . . . London, 1842. Lawton used the Reports of the Commissioners on Public Charities, published in the eighteen-twenties for the county of York;

Two *Commissions on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture*, 1843 and 1867-8. Their reports are considered in Part I, but they also have interesting information about individual villages and schools;

Annual Reports, Committee of Council on Education, 1855-56, pp. 347-48. There is material relating to Yorkshire;

Unpublished records of the Diocese of York (at the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, York).

The notes printed after the statistics are mainly from some of these sources, as supplied by contributors. The author has added notes from the Agricultural Commissions, because the Reports may not be readily available. But notes from the Diocesan Returns of 1865 are not included, although they often give fuller information about schools than the Directories.

The growth of populations and their later decline (almost universal in the countryside) are not indicated here, for the figures for any parish are easily obtainable in a table in the Victoria County History for the County of York, vol. III. Students should consult this table, both as some guide to understanding the rise and fall in the number of marriages decade by decade, and also as an indication as to how adequate the provision of schooling may have been.

BURTON AGNES

DECADES	BRIDEGROOMS		NUMBER OF MARRIAGES	BRIDES	
	Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate		Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate
1754–60	18	62	29	22	76
61–70	24	51	47	32	68
71–80	26	60	43	24	56
81–90	23	46	50	31	62
91–1800	18	42	43	21	49
1801–10	16	32	50	31	62
11–20	18	38	47	30	64
21–30	20	49	41	23	56
31–40	22	33	66	29	44
41–50	15	34	44	15	34
51–60	6	17	36	9	25
61–70	8	18	44	7	16
71–80	6	19	32	6	19
81–90	—	—	11	—	—
91–1900	—	—	28	—	—

Notes on Burton Agnes : A Free School was founded by the will of the Rev. Richard Green, 1563. The Vicar reported to Archbishop Herring in 1743 that "There are Thirty or more taught in it to read." Lawton reported in 1842 that the schoolmaster "who instructs the poor gratuitiously in reading . . . charges a moderate quarterage for writing and arithmetic." The school had become a National School before 1872, and had both a master and a mistress.

ELLOUGHTON

DECADES	BRIDEGROOMS		NUMBER OF MARRIAGES	BRIDES	
	Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate		Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate
1754–60	4	20	20	7	35
61–70	6	35	17	12	71
71–80	13	54	24	12	50
81–90	5	20	25	16	64
91–1800	12	48	25	9	36
1801–10	9	33	27	13	48
11–20	8	27	30	17	57
21–30	9	32	28	13	46
31–40	8	22	37	16	43
41–50	6	26	23	11	48
51–60	6	19	31	10	32
61–70	3	9	33	6	18
71–80	4	12	34	3	9
81–90	1	3	29	3	10
91–1900	1	3	39	—	—

HARPHAM

1754–60	4	36	11	4	36
61–70	5	50	10	1	10
71–80	5	83	6	3	50
81–90	6	60	10	4	40
91–1800	10	67	15	5	33
1801–10	11	61	18	7	39
11–20	15	75	20	11	55
21–30	12	60	20	9	45
31–40	16	61	26	9	35
41–50	8	25	32	13	41
51–60	2	10	20	7	35
61–70	3	23	13	1	8
71–80	1	7	14	2	14
81–90	1	14	7	—	—
91–1900	—	—	10	—	—

Notes on Elloughton : It was reported to Archbishop Herring in 1743: "there is a small School lately set up in this Parish and as we apprehend four Pounds is yearly paid to it by some Benefaction from the Dissenting Meeting house at York . . ."

A Schoolmaster is recorded in Baines' Directory, 1823.

There is no reference in White (1840) except to a boarding school under Matilda Mills. But a day school with a mistress is recorded in 1872.

Notes on Harpham : 1743 (to Archbishop Herring), "There is a Petty School without any settled Endowment; the Master is maintained by the Voluntary Contributions of the Tenants; He teaches about fifteen Children . . ." White (1840) recorded a schoolmaster.

DECADES	BRIDEGROOMS		NUMBER OF MARRIAGES	BRIDES	
	Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate		Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate
1754–60	10	40	25	16	64
61–70	8	47	17	12	71
71–80	7	28	25	18	72
81–90	10	43	23	14	61
91–1800	4	14	28	12	43
1801–10	9	37	24	13	54
11–20	7	21	34	16	47
21–30	7	23	30	13	43
31–40	14	30	46	17	37
41–50	9	33	27	15	56
51–60	8	26	31	11	35
61–70	10	33	30	9	30
71–80	4	16	25	3	12
81–90	4	15	27	4	15
91–1900	2	6	36	1	3

Notes on Hayton and Bielby: White (1840) recorded a schoolmaster at Hayton. Sheahan (1856) referred to a school built at Hayton in 1854 by the Lord of the Manor who "takes great interest in the working of it . . . he has established a system of prizes for regular attendance." But see pp. 17 and 18 for difficulties in the 'sixties.

An encouraging note from an ex-schoolmistress appears in the evidence to the Commission of 1867-8: "I once had a night school in summer, which was well attended by lads varying from 18 years to 30 years. They learnt quicker than children of 8 and 9 years. A library has been established. Farm lads come from every farm to get books; they ask for "Travels," and books of that description; 40 lads came in one evening. They take the books home, and pay ½d. a fortnight. Most of these lads were educated at Hayton School. The farmhouses are close to the village."

It is interesting to note that Burnby, a mile away, had a night school in 1865; details obtained by Dr. J. F. C. Harrison from the York Diocesan Visitation Returns are given in W. P. Baker: *The English Village*, pp. 113-114.

Bulmer (1892) said a National School was built at Bielby in 1871, and had an attendance of 32.

HOTHAM

DECADES	BRIDEGROOMS		NUMBER OF MARRIAGES	BRIDES	
	Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate		Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate
1754–60	2	18	11	9	82
61–70	4	36	11	8	73
71–80	5	28	18	12	67
81–90	4	22	18	7	39
91–1800	5	21	24	6	25
1801–10	6	25	24	11	46
11–20	4	27	15	8	53
21–30	5	31	16	7	44
31–40	5	31	16	3	19
41–50	4	25	16	6	37
51–60	4	16	25	5	20
61–70	5	20	25	6	24
71–80	3	25	12	2	17
81–90	1	10	10	1	10
91–1900	1	7	15	—	—

Notes on Hotham : 1743 (Herring): "There is not any Endowed School in my Parish"; but in 1784 an entry in *The Poor Book Belonging to the Parish of Hotham* reads: "Paid for ye School House Windows Mend. 3s. 6d." Baines (1823) recorded: "Withill Thos. clock mkr. and day school."

White (1840) recorded a schoolmistress.

Sheahan (1856): There is a School held in a room adjoining the house occupied by the schoolmistress, gratis; each being the property of the Rev. E. W. Stillingfleet . . ."

Bulmer (1892) mentioned a small school, attended by about 30 children.

DECADES	BRIDEGROOMS		NUMBER OF MARRIAGES	BRIDES	
	Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate		Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate
1754–60	19	42	45	30	67
61–70	17	46	37	20	54
71–80	23	32	72	48	67
81–90	10	19	53	32	60
91–1800	15	28	53	30	57
1801–10	20	30	66	34	51
11–20	18	33	55	30	54
21–30	13	18	74	24	32
31–40	21	23	93	32	34
41–50	14	15	93	34	37
51–60	17	16	104	29	28
61–70	23	28	81	26	32
71–80	10	16	63	9	14
81–90	2	3	62	9	14
91–1900	2	3	65	1	1

Notes on Hunmanby : Baines (1823): "a Parochial library has been established nearly twenty years, for the benefit of the poor — A Lancasterian school was established . . . in 1810, under Mr. Thomas Duggleby, who enjoys a salary of about £60 per annum for his services". White (1840) recorded that Thomas Duggleby, junr. was also a schoolmaster here.

Evidence to the Commission of 1867-8 showed that children of 8 to 12 years were engaged in private gangs for "brassacking" (weeding out charlock from crops), and that boys of 10 went out "bird-tenting" for very long hours.

"It would be desirable that all children between the ages of 9 and 12 or 13, should attend school for six months during the year . . . The district is fairly supplied with schools, but the parents are indifferent about education . . . ". It was thought that in small parishes in the Wolds "the necessity for certificated masters is a serious drawback to the success of the schools." Finally, "the farm lads are very rough in their manner, half of them cannot write, and they very seldom come to church; the girls perhaps are a little better educated." (pp. 383-4).

HUTTON CRANSWICK

DECADES	BRIDEGROOMS		NUMBER OF MARRIAGES	BRIDES	
	Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate		Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate
1754–60					
61–70					
71–80		*Registers*	*Missing: 1*	*754–1813*	
81–90					
91–1800					
1801–10					
11–20	16	37	43	32	75
21–30	34	39	88	63	72
31–40	33	39	85	54	64
41–50	31	34	92	55	60
51–60	21	23	90	46	51
61–70	14	20	69	17	25
71–80	14	19	75	5	7
81–90	7	16	45	2	4
91–1900	1	1	81	1	1

NABURN

1754–60	—	—	4	—	—
61–70	4	29	14	8	57
71–80	3	100	3	3	100
81–90	4	44	9	6	67
91–1800	—	—	9	3	33
1801–10	2	29	7	2	29
11–20	4	31	13	2	15
21–30	5	29	17	6	35
31–40	2	15	13	7	54
41–50	5	29	17	4	23
51–60	—	—	14	2	14
61–70	2	8	24	1	4
71–80	2	5	39	2	5
81–90	1	8	13	—	—
91–1900	1	4	25	1	4

Notes on Hutton Cranswick : 1743, Thos. Dowbiggin (curate) reported: "We have three places where children are taugh (sic), but not one School Endowed, the Children there taught Are not Above forty in Number, at present not thirty, the persons teaching them Are carefull to Instruct 'em in the Principles of the Christian Religion According to the doctrine of the Church of England, And to bring 'em to Church."

Baines (1823) mentioned a Sunday School. Baines and White (1840) referred to two schoolmasters.

1844, foundation of Infants' School, by subscription.

Notes on Naburn : 1743, Thomas Kayley (curate): "There is a private School Taught by a Man, who teaches children to Read write and to cast up Accounts. He is very careful in teaching the Church Catechism." Baines (1823) referred to "an endowed school of £10 per annum, for ten boys . . . " Further details in White (1840), including the date of the endowment: 1784.

NORTH CAVE

DECADES	BRIDEGROOMS		NUMBER OF MARRIAGES	BRIDES	
	Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate		Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate
1754–60	11	30	37	24	65
61–70	14	33	42	31	74
71–80	11	25	44	27	61
81–90	15	22	69	40	58
91–1800	23	32	72	40	56
1801–10	27	37	72	48	67
11–20	28	31	90	49	54
21–30	20	26	77	38	49
31–40	24	33	73	38	52
41–50	21	29	72	28	39
51–60	16	20	81	32	39
61–70	18	24	75	19	25
71–80	13	22	59	8	14
81–90	6	12	51	3	6
91–1900	3	5	61	1	2

Notes on North Cave : 1743, Anthony Almond (Minister); "We have two English Schools (not endow'd) wherein the most, if not all, the children in the Parish are taught: Due Care is taken to instruct them in the Church Catechism, and to bring them to Church." 1770-72, a "new School house" was erected by the subscriptions of the inhabitants, with an endowment of a small piece of land, partly in lieu of common rights (under an Enclosure Act of 1763), and partly the gift of the Lord of the Manor. The master not to teach any scholars as free, but to receive the following prices: "Reading 2s. per quarter, Writing 3s. per quarter, Common Acc't to the Rule of Three 4s. per quarter."

In 1783, "and to teach four children gratis per year whom the . . . Trustees shall appoint."

White (1840) reported that: "In 1833 the Lord of the Manor . . . built a commodious school in which about 40 boys and 30 girls are instructed mostly as free scholars."

Bulmer (1892): "There are separate schools for boys, and girls and infants. The former has accommodation for 100 and average attendance of 45, the latter for 110 with 65 in average attendance."

NORTH FRODINGHAM

DECADES	BRIDEGROOMS		NUMBER OF MARRIAGES	BRIDES	
	Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate		Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate
1754–60	8	47	17	11	65
61–70	7	30	23	17	74
71–80	8	36	22	15	68
81–90	6	27	22	16	73
91–1800	7	27	26	14	54
1801–10	11	48	23	19	83
11–20	12	36	33	20	61
21–30	7	17	41	17	41
31–40	11	19	57	29	51
41–50	17	32	53	27	51
51–60	15	36	42	18	43
61–70	6	16	37	12	30
71–80	8	22	36	7	19
81–90	4	11	36	4	11
91–1900	1	4	25	1	4

Notes on North Frodingham : Lawton (1842) gave an account of the Rev. Samuel Hunter's charity (mid. eighteenth century ?), which was increased from £25 to £30 through there being no schoolmaster from 1803 to 1807. This produced 30s. per annum "paid to the schoolmaster for teaching four poor children the English tongue and the Church catechism free of charge except 1s. per quarter, and he accordingly teaches the said number reading, writing and accounts."

Baines (1823) mentioned a schoolmaster; White (1840) — rather curiously— gave the names of three.

In 1845 a National School was built. In 1856 (Sheahan) there was a "flourishing" Mechanics' Institute, but it was defunct in 1860. In 1865 an Independent Day School was established; fees 2d. to 5d. a week.

It was reported to the Commission of 1867-8 that, while 44 boys between 10 and 13 years were on the register at school in summer the average attendance was only 15. The attendance of girls was 23 out of 32.

PATRINGTON

DECADES	BRIDEGROOMS		NUMBER OF MARRIAGES	BRIDES	
	Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate		Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate
1754–60	11	35	31	18	58
61–70	24	35	68	45	66
71–80	20	26	78	47	60
81–90	25	38	66	42	64
91–1800	17	28	60	33	55
1801–10	23	36	63	32	51
11–20	20	27	74	32	43
21–30	33	35	93	42	45
31–40	15	17	87	42	48
41–50	30	33	90	37	41
51–60	39	44	88	49	56
61–70	23	31	73	30	41
71–80	9	18	51	15	29
81–90	2	10	20	3	15
91–1900	1	2	50	—	—

Notes on Patrington : 1743, N. Nichols (Rector): "There is no Publick or Charity School Endowed, or maintained any otherwise than by Every One's paying for the Instruction of his own children during pleasure." There are two schoolmasters in Baines (1823); and in White (1840) three "Academies" including one in the Workhouse. Both the Commissions on the employment of women and children in agriculture, in 1843 and 1867-8, contain interesting references to Patrington: In 1843 the Clerk of the Patrington Union stated: "The boys have all an opportunity of learning to read, etc. at Sunday schools on the National system, and many of them are taught writing and arithmetic on the week days, especially the boys in the Union workhouse. The girls have the same opportunities, except that knitting and sewing must be substituted instead of writing and arithmetic. Seeing the ignorance that prevails among husbandry servants, one cannot but fear that early instruction is afterwards too little thought of, and therefore not kept up." Children go out to work "from 9 years to 14 years, according to constitution of body and mind". And a Guardian of the Union said: "parents would look more at anything their children might earn than at any benefit they might derive from going to school." The Commission of 1867-8 elicited more detailed information: 80 infants on the school register (attendance 64); 83 to 84 boys (64 attendance in winter, 54 in summer); 60 girls (attendance 45). "There is one boy of 16, one of 15, several of 14 . . . Children of labourers usually leave at 12, some come back a little in the winter . . . Those who attend school regularly up to 10 or 11 years are well grounded in reading, writing and arithmetic. The parents are quite uneducated, and do not appreciate education for their children, consequently they do not care to send them regularly to school . . . There is a night school open for three nights a week. Twenty males attend, varying in age from 12 to 28; they are mostly sons of tradesmen or lads employed in shops, and they come very willingly. Very few are of the agricultural labouring class."

In 1892, Bulmer noted these average attendances: infants 40, boys 72, girls 55.

If these figures appear impressive, it should be remembered that the population was large: 1,724 is given in the Commission's Report in 1867-8. And part of the evidence submitted was to the effect that "Children of 8 to 10 years of age are employed for singling turnips and bird-tenting; in the former work they usually go with their parents. Some are used for driving horses at that age. A boy of 8 years is no good for work."

SKIRLAUGH

DECADES	BRIDEGROOMS		NUMBER OF MARRIAGES	BRIDES	
	Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate		Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate
1754–60		*Registers*	*Missing: 17*	*54–69*	
61–70	6	40	15	10	67
71–80	9	31	29	20	69
81–90	17	27	62	35	56
91–1800	17	34	50	32	64
1801–10	20	32	63	43	68
11–20	18	36	50	23	46
21–30					
31–40		*Registers*	*Missing: 18*	*21–39*	
41–50	5	22	23	5	22
51–60	10	34	29	9	31
61–70	3	10	30	9	30
71–80	5	20	25	4	16
81–90	3	7	43	4	9
91–1900	2	5	39	1	3

Notes on Skirlaugh : See Mr. Lawson's booklet, p. 7 for an account of a seventeenth-century endowment for a schoolmaster, to be unmarried because: "a diligent teacher shall have little occasion to have the use of company of any woman . . . being in such a bare and barren place as Skerley chappel stands in"! In 1840 White commented "The country is now fertile, and the master is allowed to marry."

1743, to Abp. Herring: "There is a School in the Chappelry of Skirlaugh Endow'd with 40s. p. annum. the Children taught there about 20 . . ."

In 1840 (White) the trustees allowed 10 guineas for the education of ten poor children, and from £7 to £10 for apprenticing poor boys.

In 1860 a National School was built. But the Relieving Officer of the Union reported to the Commission of 1867-8 that "Children go out to work as young as 10 years . . . Children go with their parents for singling turnips. There is a great deal of work done by the piece; the fathers who earn good wages at it do not send their children to work young. The union generally is well supplied with schools. Night schools have not answered."

In 1892 (Bulmer), the average attendance of boys and girls at school was 45; infants 40.

DECADES	BRIDEGROOMS		NUMBER OF MARRIAGES	BRIDES	
	Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate		Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate
1754–60	13	29	45	24	53
61–70	23	40	58	39	67
71–80	22	43	51	32	63
81–90	14	26	53	25	47
91–1800	22	45	49	27	55
1801–10	12	25	47	26	55
11–20	20	29	69	28	41
21–30	15	25	59	26	44
31–40	18	26	70	27	39
41–50	13	18	71	26	37
51–60	9	17	52	14	27
61–70	7	14	50	10	20
71–80	5	9	58	3	5
81–90	2	6	33	1	3
91–1900	—	—	49	2	4

Notes on Stillingfleet : 1743, Robert Potter (Vicar): "There is one endowed school in ye Township of Acaster free for ye whole Town . . . and £1 6s. a year left for teaching four Children in ye Township of Kelfield."

Baines (1823) noted a more handsome endowment of £21 6s. a year at Kelfield for "a public school for the benefit of the poor children of this township"; also a schoolmaster mentioned at Stillingfleet, but perhaps this was for Acaster Selby, for Lawton in 1842 only referred to schools at Acaster Selby and Kelfield. At the former "all the poor children of the township are taught reading, writing, and accounts."

White (1840) noted a schoolmaster at Stillingfleet, and reported that "the School is now conducted on the National system."

SKIPWITH

DECADES	BRIDEGROOMS		NUMBER OF MARRIAGES	BRIDES	
	Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate		Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate
1754–60	8	22	35	21	60
61–70	15	32	47	27	57
71–80	10	25	40	24	60
81–90	13	48	27	21	78
91–1800	16	38	42	27	65
1801–10	18	40	44	25	60
11–20	12	35	34	16	47
21–30	8	22	37	12	30
31–40	8	31	26	10	39
41–50	11	25	43	17	40
51–60	12	32	38	11	29
61–70	10	31	32	10	31
71–80	8	23	35	3	9
81–90	1	3	39	1	3
91–1900	—	—	32	—	—

Notes on Skipwith : 1743, "There is one Charity School, whose Scholars are instructed by my Clerk, who is very capable of it."

White (1840) stated that the school was founded and endowed in 1714 by Mrs. Dorothy Wilson of York, with a further endowment from the Rev. Joseph Nelson in 1817. The master was required to teach 14 poor children of Skipwith and 14 of North Duffield. Lawton (1842) said there were "13 free scholars, who may require to be taught Greek and Latin. No desire had been expressed at the time of the (Charity Commissioners') Report, by the parents, to have anything more taught than reading and accounts." Kelly's Directory in 1893 reported that "the school has been enlarged and will hold 90 children; average attendance 55." A school had also been built at North Duffield in 1872.

THORGANBY

DECADES	BRIDEGROOMS		NUMBER OF MARRIAGES	BRIDES	
	Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate		Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate
1754–60	8	62	13	10	77
61–70	8	33	24	15	62
71–80	6	27	22	21	95
81–90	7	41	17	6	35
91–1800	4	17	24	12	50
1801–10	10	50	20	11	55
11–20	4	20	20	3	15
21–30	7	35	20	6	30
31–40	7	39	18	5	28
41–50	2	19	11	5	46
51–60	2	14	15	1	7
61–70	1	5	22	5	23
71–80	1	4	23	2	9
81–90	1	5	20	—	—
91–1900	—	—	26	—	—

Notes on Thorganby : 1743, "We have a publick School, endow'd with forty shillings a Year and an House, Twelve Scholars are taught free not for ys. Endowment, but by Contribution, there are now about thirty in all, I take care of them myself . . ." (John Sutton, Curate, who lived in the School House). The school and master's house were built and endowed by Thomas Dunnington in 1733 (Lawton), not 1783 as White and Sheahan stated.

There were further endowments by Robert Jefferson and others. The school was rebuilt in 1820 by John Dunnington Jefferson (Sheahan, 1856). Kelly (1872) referred to "A Government school for boys and girls". It is described in Kelly (1893) as a "National School erected in 1829(?), for 85 children; average attendance, 68."

WETWANG

DECADES	BRIDEGROOMS		NUMBER OF MARRIAGES	BRIDES	
	Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate		Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate
1754–60	4	29	14	10	71
61–70	9	64	14	10	71
71–80	6	40	15	8	53
81–90	8	36	22	12	54
91–1800	8	42	19	8	42
1801–10	7	33	21	11	52
11–20	12	35	34	19	56
21–30	17	39	43	28	65
31–40	25	47	53	35	66
41–50	15	26	58	27	47
51–60	11	22	50	21	42
61–70	12	25	48	11	23
71–80	3	9	32	2	6
81–90	3	8	38	2	5
91–1900	3	10	31	1	3

Notes on Wetwang : Apparently no return was made to Abp. Herring in 1743, and Baines (1823) did not record any teacher at Wetwang or Fimber. Neither did Lawton (1842) note any educational charity; but White (1840) recorded a schoolmaster at Wetwang and a mistress at Fimber. Kelly's Directory of 1872 was able to report that Wetwang had "a good school for boys and girls, supported by Sir Tatton Sykes", with both a schoolmaster and mistress. At the same time Fimber's school, with only a schoolmistress was "entirely supported by Sir Tatton Sykes." They were both then National Schools.

YEDINGHAM

DECADES	BRIDEGROOMS		NUMBER OF MARRIAGES	BRIDES	
	Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate		Number Illiterate	Percentage Illiterate
1758–60	1	50	2	2	100
61–70	5	38	13	7	54
71–80	3	27	11	8	73
81–90	3	27	11	3	27
91–1800	2	29	7	5	71
1801–10	5	50	10	3	30
11–20	3	37	8	1	12
21–30	3	25	12	3	25
31–40	3	25	12	7	58
41–50	3	37	8	3	37
51–60	4	36	11	6	55
61–70	1	12	8	1	12
71–80	—	—	5	1	20
81–90	—	—	2	—	—
91–1900	—	—	10	—	—

LANGTOFT

(three decades only)

1761–70	6	46	13	8	62
71–80	8	47	17	9	53
1801–10	8	35	23	11	48

Notes on Yedingham : In 1743 William Ward (Vicar) reported: "There is no School in the Parish". He himself was non-resident, for he was "Master of the Grammar School" at Thornton (Dale).

In 1840 (White) there was a schoolmaster; and in 1872 (Kelly) "a National school for boys and girls", with a master.

Notes on Langtoft : 1743: "No School." The first Directory to record a Schoolmaster was apparently White's in 1840.

Kelly (1872): "A National School for boys and girls was built in 1846."

A Short Book List on Parish Registers

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