The population history of Britain in the nineteenth century
New Studies in Economic and Social History

Edited for the Economic History Society by
Michael Sanderson
University of East Anglia, Norwich

This series, specially commissioned by the Economic History Society, provides a guide to the current interpretations of the key themes of economic and social history in which advances have recently been made or in which there has been significant debate.

In recent times economic and social history has been one of the most flourishing areas of historical study. This has mirrored the increasing relevance of the economic and social sciences both in a student's choice of career and in forming a society at large more aware of the importance of these issues in their everyday lives. Moreover specialist interests in business, agricultural and welfare history, for example, have themselves burgeoned and there has been an increased interest in the economic development of the wider world. Stimulating as these scholarly developments have been for the specialist, the rapid advance of the subject and the quantity of new publications make it difficult for the reader to gain an overview of particular topics, let alone the whole field.

New Studies in Economic and Social History is intended for students and their teachers. It is designed to introduce them to fresh topics and to enable them to keep abreast of recent writing and debates. All the books in the series are written by a recognised authority in the subject, and the arguments and issues are set out in a critical but unpartisan fashion. The aim of the series is to survey the current state of scholarship, rather than to provide a set of prepackaged conclusions.

The series has been edited since its inception in 1968 by Professors M. W. Flinn, T. C. Smout and L. A. Clarkson, and is currently edited by Dr Michael Sanderson. From 1968 it was published by Macmillan as Studies in Economic History, and after 1974 as Studies in Economic and Social History. From 1995 New Studies in Economic and Social History is being published on behalf of the Economic History Society by Cambridge University Press. This new series includes some of the titles previously published by Macmillan as well as new titles, and reflects the ongoing development throughout the world of this rich seam of history.

For a full list of titles in print, please see the end of the book.
The population history of Britain in the nineteenth century

Prepared for the Economic History Society by

Robert Woods
University of Liverpool
Contents

List of figures                                     page vii
List of tables                                     viii
Author’s preface                                   ix

1 Malthus’s Britain                               1
2 What do we know and how do we know it?          9
3 Whether to move and where to go                 20
4 Marriage                                       26
5 How many children should we have?              32
6 Mortality                                      41
7 1911                                           53

Glossary of demographic terms                    55
Bibliography                                     57
Index                                            70
Figures

1  A model of a demographic system  page 6
2  Long-term trends in English fertility and mortality  18
3  A comparison of the influence of fertility and mortality on intrinsic natural population growth rates for England, France and Sweden from 1751 to 1981  19
4  Age-specific marital fertility curves  33
5  The changing contribution of nuptiality and marital fertility to overall fertility in England  34
6  The percentage of brides signing the marriage register with a mark; index of marital fertility; index of real wages; and the percentage of civil marriages in England and Wales  40
7  Numbers surviving to each age out of 1,000 live births  42
Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The population of England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The social class composition of England and Wales</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Population redistribution and urbanization in England and Wales</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Demographic indices for England, 1551–1850, and England and Wales, 1851–1975</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Index of population married, $I_m$</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Index of illegitimate fertility, $I_h$</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Estimated class-specific standardized death rates for England and Wales</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Cause-specific standardized death rates for England and Wales</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Influences on infant mortality</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Author’s preface

This is a study in historical demography written by a geographer. It focuses on the form and nature of long-term population change in Great Britain (not Ireland, for which see Ó Gráda, 1994), but it does so, where necessary, by stressing the geographical variability of demographic forms and the role of population re-distribution. Demography is a technical subject which is inherently quantitative and rather empirical in outlook. It often rests uneasily with social theory and social history, but without the detailed evaluation, description and analysis of population statistics which demography provides, one cannot hope even to begin to understand the causes and consequences of the rise of Victorian cities, the wider significance of marriage, family planning and the sanitary revolution. This pamphlet has been written for economic and social historians in a way that should prove accessible, but it does introduce demographic indices as descriptive devices, hence the brief Glossary of Demographic Terms, and it does dwell on the changing nature of that shifting sand created by official statistics. It is, therefore, not only a brief introduction to a body of literature, but also an opinionated guide to certain fundamental research questions to which that literature relates either explicitly or implicitly. Most of these questions remain only partially answered, the victims of inadequate data or unsophisticated theories, but herein lies the interest and the challenge.

I should like to express my thanks to those historical demographers who have provided help, support and advice on matters associated with the population of Britain in the nineteenth century, but especially Gerry Kearns, Paul Laxton, Graham Mooney, Naomi Williams, Sally Sheard, Chris Galley, Chris Smith, Andy Hinde, Eilidh Garrett, Patti Watterson, Nicola Shelton, Clare
Author's preface

Holdsworth, John Woodward, Dick Lawton, Chris Wilson and Michael Anderson. Finally, I owe a special debt to Alison, Rachel and Gavin.

March 1995