

The background of the cover is a detailed historical map of Britain, showing a dense network of roads and rivers. The map is rendered in a light brown or sepia tone. A dark blue rectangular box with a white dashed border is centered on the map, containing the title and authors' names.

# Migration and mobility in Britain since the 18th century

Colin Pooley and Jean Turnbull

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# Migration and mobility in Britain since the eighteenth century



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## Preface

The research on which this book is based originated from chance discussions at conferences attended by academics, family historians and genealogists. Whilst mulling over the relative lack of detailed information about individual migration patterns in the past, and complaining about the difficulties which frequent residential moves pose for family historians tracing their ancestors, it became obvious that there was scope for collaboration between the various groups. Family historians and genealogists who trace their ancestors invest a vast amount of effort in reconstructing individual life histories, including details of all residential moves. Although collected mainly out of personal interest, we realized that such data could collectively provide a rich source for historical analysis of migration. The research on which this book is based uses a large volume of information collected by family historians and systematically analyses these data to try to address some of the key issues surrounding population migration in the past. In particular, these data allow research to go beyond the interpretation of static census and similar sources to focus on the life-time experiences of migration for a large and representative population.

We also undertook this research in the belief that individual migration experiences were important, and are therefore worth a considerable investment of effort to study. Any understanding of social, economic and cultural change in the past must take account of the process of migration. Population movement had a fundamental impact on individuals, families, places, and the wider societal structures within which such change took place. The migration process can only be understood in relation to such changes; but the migration experience itself provides a window on broader social, economic and cultural changes which were occurring within British society from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. Thus, the analysis presented in this volume is, wherever appropriate, set within a context which relates the causes and effects of migration to other aspects of society, economy and environment.

The research itself has been undertaken over a period of some four years. We began with a pilot survey using information gathered from family historians based in North-West England, and then refined our research methodology for the main phase of data collection from December 1993 to September 1995. During this period we collected data from respondents in all parts of Britain and overseas. The success of the research is mainly due to the enthusiastic way in which family historians and genealogists responded to our requests for information, and the excellent detail that these responses contained. The full research methodology and the accuracy of the data are evaluated in the body of the book, but this research has certainly demonstrated that there is great potential for

collaboration between academic researchers and family historians. There is also scope to extend the longitudinal analysis of these data beyond the areas covered in this volume, and the material on which analysis is based is available through the ESRC Data Archive.

Any large research project such as this incurs many debts of gratitude. We are particularly indebted to the many family historians and genealogists who completed data forms, and to the family history and genealogy societies which willingly publicized the project. Without this support the research would simply not have been possible. We would also like to thank the funding bodies that supported the research: The Nuffield Foundation for two small grants to allow collection and analysis of the pilot data, and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) which supported the main project. During the life of the project a large number of individuals provided us with help and advice. Casual research assistance with coding, data entry and data checking was at various times provided by Amanda Topps, Geraldine Byrne, Fiona White, Janet Darrall, Margaret Stelfox, Jan Hopkins, Mike Bullock, Alan Gunton, Lucy Berger and Anne Heaven. Assistance with computer mapping, and the establishment of the ARC/INGRES link to enable us to plot and analyze spatial data within a Geographical Information System, was provided by staff of the North West Regional Research Laboratory at Lancaster University, and we are especially indebted to Barry Rowlingson and Adrian Maddocks. Further cartographic assistance was provided by Nicola Higgitt and Claire Jeffery in the Department of Geography Cartographic Unit, and computing assistance was given by staff in Lancaster University's Information Systems Service, especially Lynne Irvine.

During the life of the project we have gained immeasurably from a large number of informal discussions with colleagues in the Geography and History Departments at Lancaster, and from comments and questions at seminar and conference presentations to academics and family historians in various locations. We are especially grateful for the advice given by Kevin Schurer and colleagues at the Cambridge Group for the Study of Population and Social Structure in the early stages of the project; to Ken Prandy for information on computer-assisted occupational coding; to Richard Dennis for his constructive comments on an early draft of the book manuscript; and to Steven Gerrard and other staff at UCL Press. Last, but by no means least, we should also thank our respective families for putting up with the times when the project spilled over into evenings and weekends. Any errors and misinterpretations in the book are, of course, entirely our own responsibility.

We hope that this book will begin to fill some gaps in our knowledge of migration in the past, and will stimulate further research on the important topic of population mobility. However, perhaps the greatest benefit we have gained from the project is the establishment of a wide range of contacts with family historians who are interested in placing the information they have about their ancestors in a wider historical context. We hope to be able to maintain these contacts, and to continue research which benefits both academics and family historians.

*Lancaster*  
*September 1997*

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