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INTRODUCTION

Despite the considerable amount of research carried out on population trends in nineteenth century Ireland (Connell, 1951, 1962, 1965; Cousens, 1961, 1964; Kennedy, 1973; Lee, 1968; McKenna, 1974; Walsh, 1969, 1970), parish registers have not been used to any great extent as a source material. With a view to examining the utilisation of, and the results that can be obtained from, this particular source, some register-based research undertaken by the author will be discussed (Flynn, 1984). It is hoped in so doing to highlight the merits and defects of parish registers as a source for social, historical, and geographical research.

The research in question dealt with the changing population geography of the Church of Ireland population of Macroom (see Map 1*) in the period between 1837 and 1901. Although the Church of Ireland registers were declared public in the mid 1870's, and should have been deposited in the Public Record Office in Dublin, the registers of over six hundred parishes remained in local custody. Fortunately, the Macroom registers were among these. Only four of the one thousand and six registers deposited in the Public Record Office survived the fire that did so much damage to archive material in 1922 (Barry, 1967; 26). The baptism and burial registers of the Macroom Church of Ireland population are extant from 1727 and the marriage register dates from 1736. In the period under discussion, three hundred and seventeen baptisms were recorded, about five per cent of which related to people living outside the parish of Macroom. Information given included date of baptism, date of birth, name of child, names of parents, residence, and occupation of father. Two hundred and twenty-seven burials were recorded in the period 1837 to 1901, of which one hundred and twelve were parishioners. A further thirty-five referred to "Romanists", five of whom were not from the parish. The remaining eighty entries referred to others from outside the parish of Macroom. Date of burial and name and address of the person being buried were always given. Age was recorded in most cases, and in some entries description of relationship was given. Fifty-nine marriages were recorded between 1837 and 1901. Only three of these were between partners, both of whom came from outside the parish. A typical entry gave date of marriage, names of bride and groom, ages, marital status before marriage, occupation of groom (rarely that of bride), and name and occupation of the father of both bride and groom. Witnesses' names were sometimes also recorded.

In examining the population geography of the study group, the critical surrogates of change used were the crude marriage, birth and death rates, natural increase and intercensal change. The method used to determine the crude rates was to establish the base population by using the published census data which appeared decennially and to estimate the number of marriages, births and deaths using the parish registers. The baptism and burial registers were used to calculate natural increase and the census data to calculate intercensal change. Along with these surrogates of change, other important factors were also examined. Age at marriage was dealt with by examining the marriage register, while all three registers were used to examine migration in relation to marriage. The baptism register was of value also in establishing the incidence of illegitimacy. Age at death, of course, was established by using the burial register. In examining child mortality in relation to parents' occupations, the baptism register was used to supplement the burial register, since the former provided occupational information not given in the latter. In examining demographic and spatial trends within the parish, the town and rural areas were examined separately. National trends were referred to throughout the study and secondary sources were used to identify these.

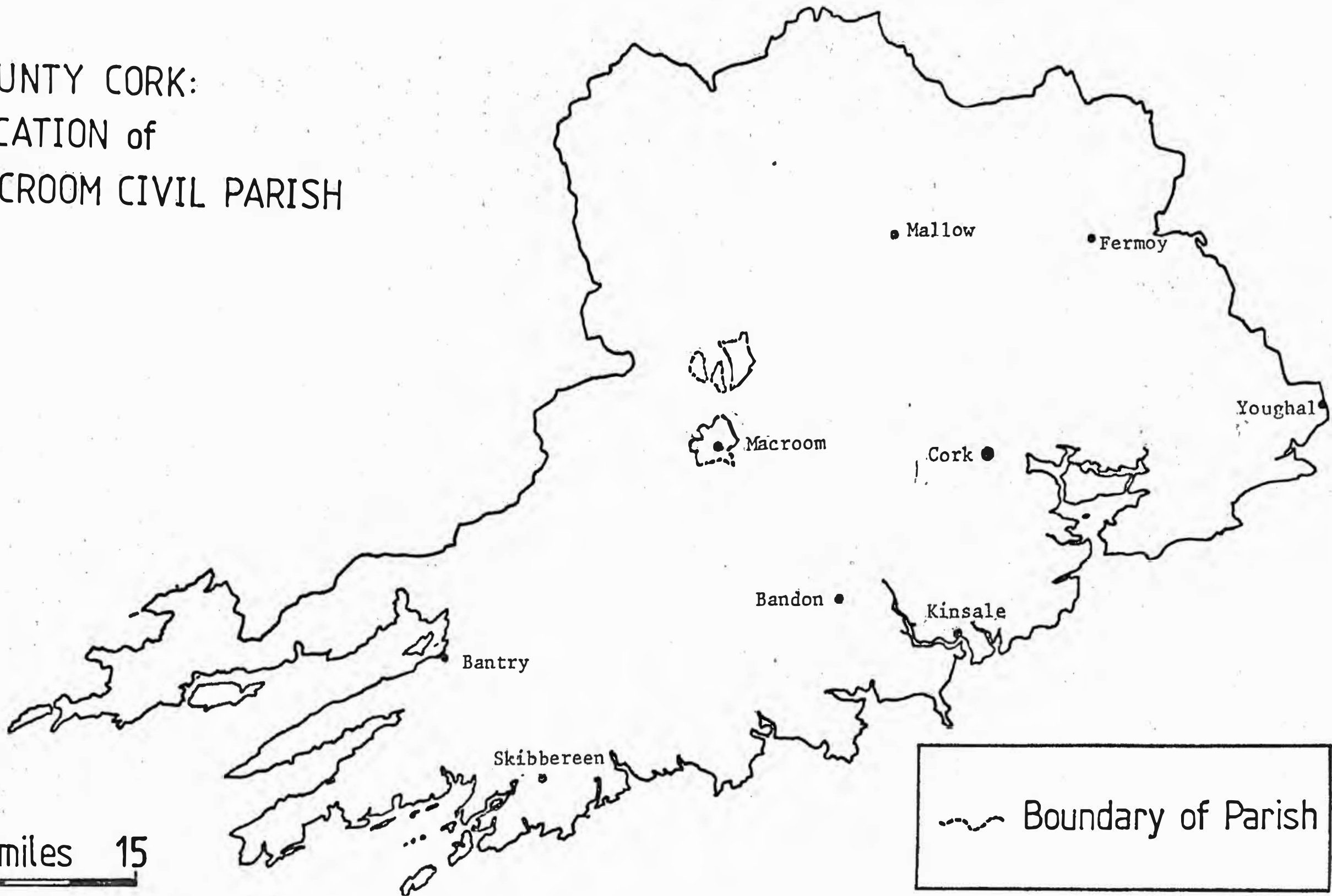
This discussion of the parish registers and the methodology used in the Macroom study, hopefully, gives some indication of the research potential of this particular source. Registers are concerned with ordinary people, with minority as well as majority groups, and with trends occurring at a local level. Demographic patterns of a group can be identified but the registers also lend themselves to the study of occupational, social and class structure (see Table 1). They can also be used to

*While this map shows the whole of Macroom parish, we are concerned only with the southernmost part of the parish, since the study group was concentrated there.

COUNTY CORK:
LOCATION of
MACROOM CIVIL PARISH



0 miles 15



Boundary of Parish

TABLE 1: Occupational Background of Church of Ireland Males and Females Married in Macroom Parish between 1837 and 1896.

MALE		FEMALE	
Occupation	Number of People	Occupation	Number of People
Army:		Schoolmistress	1
Army Sergeant	3	Servant	4
Colour Sergeant	1	Sextoness	1
Lance Sergeant	1	Workwoman	1
Staff Sergeant	1		
Bandsman (Artillery)	1	Daughter of:	
Corporal	1	Carpenter	1
Private Soldier	6	Clerk of Petty Sessions	1
Surgeon (Militia)	1	Coalmerchant	1
Trumpeter (Army)	3	Esquire	1
		Farmer	9
Others:		Gent	2
Apothecary	1	House Steward	1
Agent	1	Labourer	2
Baker	1	Landed Agent	1
Clergyman	1	Landed Proprietor	1
Clerk	1	Medical Doctor	7
Commercial Traveller	1	Parish Sexton	1
Constabulary	1	Pensioner	3
Farmer	1	Schoolmaster	2
First Class Sub-Constable of Police	1	Sergeant	1
Gent	5	Servant	1
Landed Proprietor	1	Shoemaker	1
Medical Doctor	1	Slater	1
Miller	1	Smith	1
Office of Inland Revenue	1	Tailor	1
Parish Clerk	1		
Pedlar	1		
Police Constable	1		
Postmaster	1		
Process Server	1		
Sailor	1		
Servant	2		
Shoemaker	2		
Slater	1		
Solicitor	1		
Teacher	1		
Watchmaker	1		
Writing Clerk	1		

Source: Macroom Church of Ireland Marriage Register, 1837 - 1896.

establish the degree of intermarriage and literacy levels. Here it is intended to provide a more detailed description of the actual research carried out by the author in order to assess the value of parish registers as a source. Limitations of space preclude a discussion of the whole study but it is hoped that an examination of the research carried out on the marriage trends of the Church of Ireland population will suffice to show the great value of parish registers as a source material.

TRENDS IN MARRIAGE

In discussing marriage trends of the Macroom Church of Ireland population, the crude marriage rate is examined firstly at the parish level and secondly at the level of town and country. Following this, marriage and migration is dealt with. The final section of the paper is concerned with age at marriage in the parish as a whole and in the town and rural areas separately. To place the research under discussion in a wider context, Tables 2 and 3 showing figures for total, Catholic, and Church of Ireland populations in Macroom, are included.

Before discussing trends in marriage it might be useful to briefly describe the socio-economic and class background of the Church of Ireland minority in Macroom parish in the nineteenth century. This is important for two reasons. It dispels the myth of a Church of Ireland Protestant ascendancy. Secondly, it reveals the wide range of socio-economic backgrounds of the minority population in this part of the country. Table 1 shows the occupational structure of a sizeable sector of the Macroom Church of Ireland population in the period between 1837 and 1896. It can be seen that this population was a very diversified and far from homogeneous religious minority. Over one half of the male spouses in this table were in the army, eleven of whom were soldiers and six of whom were officers. The information provided for the remainder of male spouses' points to a diverse range of occupations. It indicates that this minority was made up of people from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and from the upper, middle and lower classes. This was as true of the female as it was of the male Church of Ireland population. The presence of a strong servant class in particular demolishes the notion of an ascendancy (see Table 1 for occupational details of the fathers of female spouses).

1. Crude Marriage Rates

The crude marriage rate (number of marriages per one thousand of the population) in pre-Famine Ireland was about seven per thousand (Lee, 1973; 3). By the 1860's, it had declined to just over five per thousand (Lyons, 1973; 45; Daly, 1981; 89) and was only about four per thousand in the 1880's (Lyons, 1973; 45; Daly, 1981; 89). It showed a slight increase at the end of the century.

Table 4 shows that the crude marriage rate for the Macroom Church of Ireland population fluctuated considerably throughout the period under discussion. The pre-Famine rate of over three was more than doubled in the decade 1847-56. The rate declined to almost the pre-Famine level in the decade 1857-66, but increased to just under seven during the next twenty years. The marriage rate was at its lowest in the decade 1887 to 1896.

It is possible to advance a number of explanations for the differences between the national and the Macroom marriage rates. It may be argued that differences are likely to occur because of the small-scale nature of the study group in comparison to the national scale. It can also be argued that such differences highlight the inadequacies of aggregate national data in providing a picture of demographic trends at a local level. This indicates the value of parish registers, as it is only with such a source that local trends and detailed patterns of population change can be analysed. The differences in local and national rates could also be explained by looking at the nature of the groups represented by both rates. The national rate, which is discussed in much of the published literature, pertained mainly to an aggregate Catholic and agricultural population wherein it is possible to discern a wide variety of social classes ranging from a peasantry right through to a Catholic landholding sector. The Macroom rate was that of a Protestant agricultural and non-agricultural population (see Table 1 for details). The trends of a minority in a particular local setting cannot easily be identified through the use of national data, and it is for this reason that parish registers are of such value.

Other explanations for the Macroom marriage rate can also be put forward. It is possible that the low pre-Famine rate was due to out-migration of some of the marriageable population, although to suggest reasons for such movement here would be highly speculative. The low rate must have had quite

TABLE 2: Population of Macroom Parish, according to Religion, 1861 - 1901^a.

Year	Total Population	Catholic Population	Church of Ireland Population	Church of Ireland Population as a % of Total Pop.
1861	4888	4677	203	4.2
1871	4952 ^b	4733 ^b	202 ^b	4.1
1881	4981	4890	91	1.8
1891	4556	4468	86	1.9
1901	3881	3794	86	2.2

^a Breakdowns of population totals according to religion are not available before 1861.

^b Includes the workhouse population.

Source: Census of Population, Ireland, 1861 - 1901.

TABLE 3: Population of the Town and Rural Areas, Macroom, according to Religion, 1861 - 1891^a.

Area	Year	Total Population	Catholic Population	Church of Ireland Population	Church of Ireland Population as a % of Total Pop.
Town Area	1861	3289	3122	166	5.1
	1871	3193 ^b	3018 ^b	158 ^b	5.0
	1881	3099	3047	52	1.7
	1891	2933	2880	51	1.7
Rural Area	1861	1599	1555	37	2.3
	1871	1759	1715	44	2.5
	1881	1882	1843	39	2.1
	1891	1623	1588	35	2.2

^a Figures for 1901 are not included, because it seems that the town population figure is based on a wider area than in the earlier censuses. Thus, the 1901 figures are not comparable with the earlier ones.

^b Includes the workhouse population.

Source: Census of Population, Ireland, 1861 - 1891.

TABLE 4: Marriage Rate for Macroom Parish, 1837 - 1896^a.

Decade	Average Population	Number of Marriages	Average Crude Marriage Rate per Annum
1837-46	247 ^b	8	3.2
1847-56	220.4 ^b	17	7.7
1857-66	203	7	3.5
1867-76	202 ^c	14	6.9
1877-86	91	6	6.6
1887-96	86	1	1.2

^a While much of the overall research on Macroom deals with the period up to 1901, marriage trends are examined for the period 1837 to 1896, as this span can be conveniently divided into six decades.

^b These population totals are estimated.

^c This is part of a total population which includes the workhouse population.

Sources: Macroom Church of Ireland Marriage Register, 1837 - 1896. Census of Population, Ireland, 1861 - 1891.

opportunity for replacing itself naturally, since a low marriage rate could result in a low birth rate — excluding the influence of migration. The Church of Ireland population's chances of becoming more significant spatially were also reduced, especially when one considers the probable increase in the Catholic population.

Whereas in the period between 1837 and 1846 only two out of eight marriages involved people from outside the parish, in the decade 1847-56 seven out of seventeen marriages involved "outsiders". This "outsider" factor may have been one reason for the rise in the marriage rate after the Famine. This high rate was important in that there was greater potential for natural increase. With this arose the possibility of an increase in the numerical and spatial significance of the Church of Ireland population. The decline in the marriage rate in the decade 1857-66 may have been due to a decline in the number of "outsiders" marrying parishioners. Of the seven marriages recorded in this period, only one involved an "outsider". The low rate may also have been due to out-migration. This decline meant that natural increase could again be lower. The "outsider" factor did not significantly influence the marriage rate for the decade 1867-76. Of fourteen marriages recorded for this decade, only two involved "outsiders". It would seem that the relatively high marriage rate in the decade 1877 to 1886 was influenced by the "outsider" element. All six marriages recorded in this period involved outsiders (all male). This situation may have been caused by the decline of the Church of Ireland population at this time, and opportunities for "meeting one's match" within the parish must have been significantly reduced.

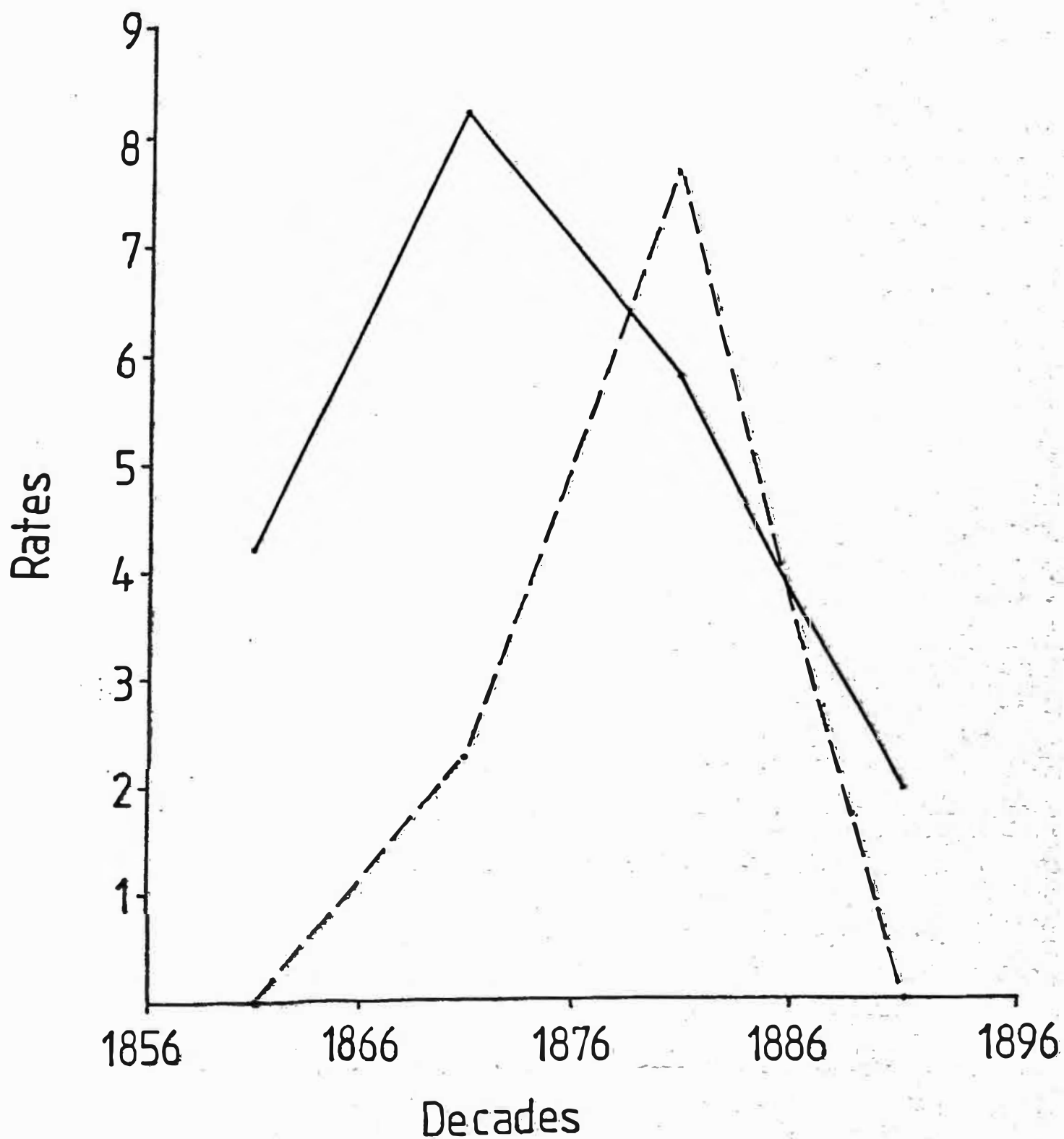
Further population decline in the decade 1887-96 may have been partly the reason for the very low marriage rate recorded in this period. Again, opportunities for marriage within the study area were limited. The fact that the "outsider" factor was reduced absolutely in this period (the one marriage involved an outsider) would suggest that the Macroom population did not afford an opportunity for outsiders to marry parishioners because of the small size of the marriage field. Alternatively, the low rate may have been caused by the out-migration of a marriageable population. Once again the possibility of natural increase was lessened considerably.

The parish registers provide the researcher with an opportunity to examine small scale demographic patterns in great detail. The marriage rate of the Macroom Church of Ireland population could not have been reconstructed by any source other than the parish registers, with the exception of civil registration data. Walsh has shown that the civil registers, which date back to 1864, are unreliable, particularly in the early years of registration (Walsh, 1970; 150). Parish registers have the advantage over civil registers in that they extend much further back in time than the civil registers.

Table 5 and Figure 1 show that considerable differences existed in the marriage rates for urban and rural districts in the parish of Macroom, in the period under discussion. Except for one decade, namely 1877 to 1886, the town rate was higher than the rural rate. In comparing the aggregate national with the local rural and urban rates of marriage in the parish of Macroom, both the latter were lower than the Irish rate in the decade 1857-66. In the following decade the town rate was higher and the rural rate lower. In the period between 1877 and 1886, both rates were higher than the national rate, while in the last decade of the study period both rates were lower. The failure of national data to indicate spatial variations at a local level is clearly demonstrated here.

Most Church of Ireland marriages in the parish of Macroom occurred in the town and the town in fact played a significant role in shaping the overall population structure of the Church of Ireland minority in this part of the country. Probably the main factor influencing the low rural rate was the small size of the Church of Ireland population. This meant that there was a very small marriageable population, and it is not surprising that three out of the four rural marriages involved outsiders. The local, and even individual, level of analysis that parish registers allow can be shown here in regard to the rural rate. The registers allow an examination of just how much or what section of the study population was responsible for a particular marriage. It can be seen, in fact, that one family was responsible for a number of marriages in the period under study. Three out of four marriages involved members of the Crooke family, with Matilda marrying in 1872, Frances in 1881, and Rina in 1882. The role of particular families in influencing the marriage rate was not as important in the town, but here too there are examples of individual families influencing the overall marriage rate. Three daughters of Nicholas White married in the period under discussion, one in 1868, one in 1870 and another in 1879. Two daughters of Abraham Greenhalgh also married, one in 1873 and the other in 1881. That there are no further examples of particular families influencing the marriage rate suggests that the town rate was influenced significantly by a transitory population. The generally low rural marriage

MARRIAGE RATES:
TOWN and RURAL AREAS of MACROOM PARISH,
1857-1896



— Urban Area
- - - Rural Area

Sources: Macroom Church of Ireland Marriage Register, 1857 - 1896.
Census of Population, Ireland, 1861 - 1891.

FIGURE 4

TABLE 5: Marriage Rate for the Town and Rural Areas, Macroom, 1857-96^a.

Decade	Average Town Population	Number of Marriages - Town	Average Crude Marriage Rate per Annum - Town	Average Rural Population	Number of Marriages - Rural	Average Crude Marriage Rate per Annum Rural
1857-66	166	7	4.2	37	0	0
1867-76	158 ^b	13	8.2	44 ^b	1	2.27
1877-86	52	3	5.8	39	3	7.7
1887-96	51	1	2.0	35	0	0

^a In dealing with urban and rural areas of Macroom parish, this is the period under discussion, since the populations of both areas cannot be calculated before 1857.

^b This is part of a total population which includes the workhouse population.

Source: Macroom Church of Ireland Marriage Register, 1857 - 1896. Census of Population, Ireland, 1861 - 1891.

TABLE 6: Marriages Involving Outsiders, Macroom, 1837 - 1896.

Decade	Number of Marriages	Number of Marriages Involving One "Outsider"	Number of Marriages Involving One "Outsider as a % of Total Marriages"
1837-46	8	2	25
1847-56	17	7	41.2
1857-66	7	1	14.3
1867-76	14	2	14.3
1877-86	6	6	100
1887-96	1	1	100

Source: Macroom Church of Ireland Marriage Register, 1837 - 1896.

TABLE 7: Church of Ireland Marriages Involving Troops with Macroom Addresses, 1837-96.

Decade	Number of Marriages Involving Troops with Macroom Addresses as a % of Total Marriages	Number of Marriages Involving Troops with Macroom Addresses as a % of Total "Indigenous" Marriages ^a
1837-46	25	33.3
1847-56	23.5	40
1857-66	28.6	33.3
1867-76	35.7	41.6
1877-86	0	0
1887-96	0	0

^a Marriages which do not involve outsiders.

Source: Macroom Church of Ireland Marriage Register, 1837 - 1896.

TABLE 8: Female Age at Marriage, Macroom, 1847-96.

Decade	Brides less than 21 years as a % of all Brides	Brides of 21 years or over as a % of all Brides
1847-56	11.8	88.2
1857-66	42.9	57.1
1867-76	14.3	85.7
1877-86	16.6	83.3
1887-96	0	100

Source: Macroom Church of Ireland Marriage Register, 1847-96.

ate may have meant that the possibility of natural increase was not very strong. This was compounded by the likelihood that most of the rural marriages resulted in out-migration, thus negating the positive effects of the high rate in the decade 1877-86.

The above discussion emphasises the merits of parish registers to a spatial analysis of marriage trends in a religious minority in nineteenth century Ireland. Even though the residential data in the Macroom registers does not permit a detailed spatial analysis of the study area, it does provide an opportunity for examining the demographic trends in a minority population in both urban and rural contexts. At a more general level the analysis of the Macroom registers suggests that migration was of considerable importance in influencing the local marriage rate. The section below discusses the importance of "outsiders" in the overall marriage pattern for the period 1837 to 1896.

2 Marriage and Migration

Table 6, below, shows that the "outsider" element increased in importance between 1837 and 1856. In the two decades after that it declined in importance but between 1877 and 1896 it was very significant once again. This meant that there was either predominantly male in-migration (since only one outsider was female) for purpose of marriage or predominantly female out-migration immediately after marriage (see Map 2 for origins of "outsiders"). The baptism and burial registers were used to establish which type of migration occurred, and again analysis at the individual level is both possible and necessary to establish what exactly happened "on the ground", at the local level.

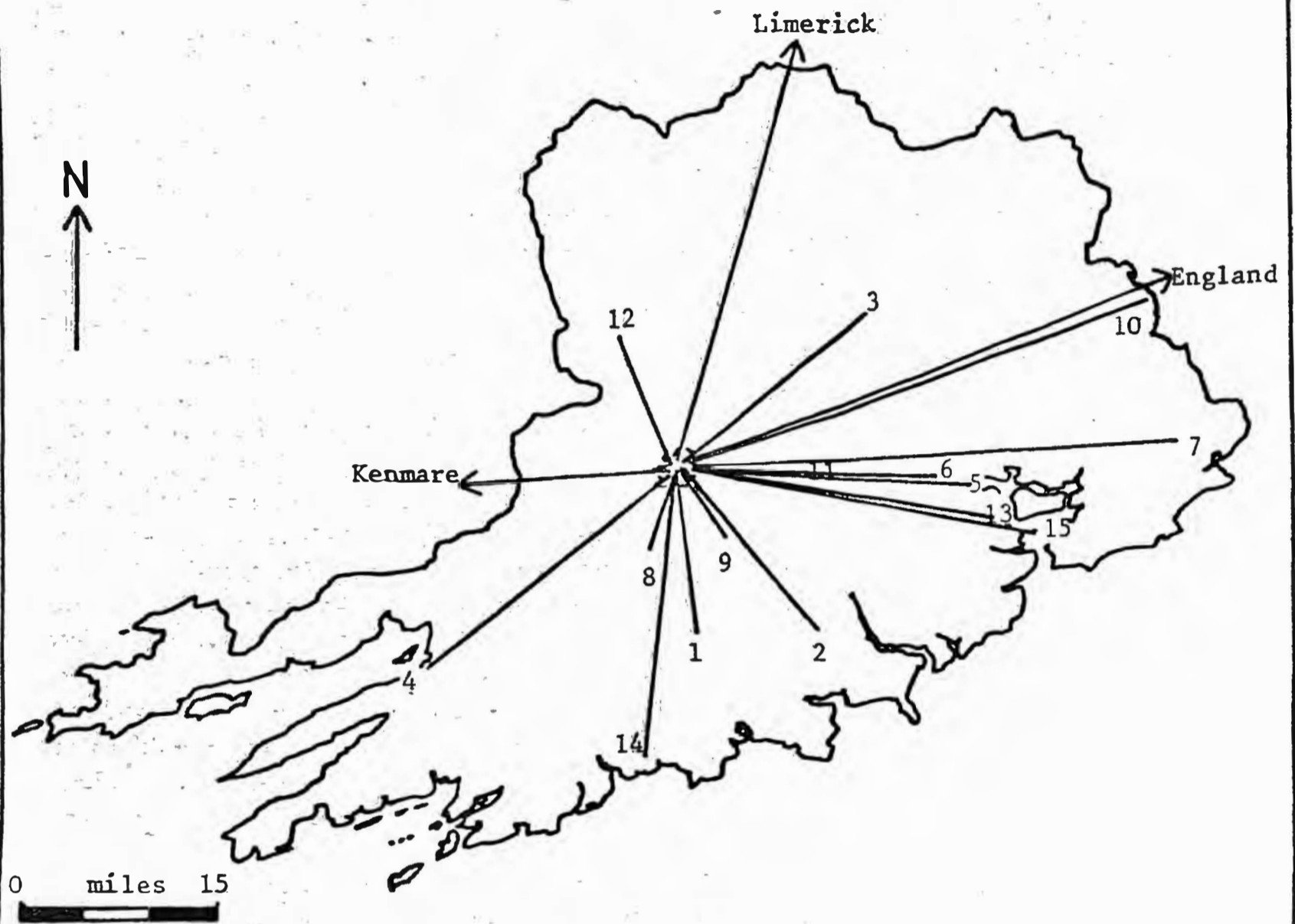
Of the nineteen marriages involving "outsiders", references to only four were found in the baptism and burial registers. In 1855, David Armstrong of Spike Island and Ann Armstrong of Macroom were married. That these lived in the study area after their marriage is established by the baptism register. Between 1856 and 1872 this couple had eight children and in each case Macroom town was given as the place of residence. In 1858, David Ross of Kilmurry and Eliza Hogan of Macroom were married. The baptism of a child of theirs was recorded in 1859 and the address given was Macroom. Albert Beamish of Lee-Mount, in the parish of Magourney, married Alice White of Macroom in 1870. The latter's burial was recorded in 1899 and the address at which she died was Lee-Mount. In 1881, J. S. Barber of Bantry and E. Greenhalgh of Macroom were married. One of their children was baptised in 1883 and the address given was Macroom.

In the first example above, the spouse married into the parish and the couple remained in the town for at least seventeen years. David Ross also married into Macroom. The baptism of one of his children here is not sufficient, however, to argue that the Ross family remained in Macroom for the rest of their married life. In the case of the Beamish marriage, it would appear that he and his bride, Alice White, moved out of the town to Lee-Mount after the marriage. J. S. Barber also married into the town but it cannot be presumed that the family continued to live there after 1883, the year when their child was baptised.

It is only possible to speculate about the subsequent destination of marriage partners in the case of the remaining fifteen marriages to "outsiders" recorded in this period. It could be argued that "outsiders" migrated into the study area but did not appear on parish registers for a number of reasons. Among the major reasons it could be that no children resulted from the marriages, that children were not baptised, that the people involved changed religion, or that they had their children's baptisms recorded in other parishes. It could also be that the time period covered by this study is not sufficient to take into account births or deaths in these families, particularly in the case of marriages recorded toward the end of the study period. In regard to the fifteen marriages of which we have no further mention in the parish registers, it would appear that considerable out-migration occurred. The decline in the Church of Ireland population from an average of two hundred and forty-seven in the decade 1837 - 1846 to an average of only eighty-six in the decade 1887 - 1896 would seem to bear this out. The use of registers of neighbouring parishes would help to establish the validity of this suggestion.

Migration of a more implicit nature may also have occurred in Macroom at this time. It could be that a number of individuals who subsequently appeared on the parish register migrated to the study area some time before marriage and had a significant effect on the marriage rate. Troops may have been particularly important in this respect (see Table 1 for the numerical significance of troops in Macroom). While their addresses in the parish registers were given as Macroom, it is more than likely that most, if not all, of the soldiers or officers recorded here were not born in the parish and had been

MARRIAGE and MIGRATION, 1837-1896: ORIGINS of 'OUTSIDERS'



- | | | | |
|---|-------------|----|--------------|
| 1 | Ballineen | 9 | Kilmurry |
| 2 | Ballymodan | 10 | Knockmourne |
| 3 | Ballynamona | 11 | Leemount |
| 4 | Bantry | 12 | Millstreet |
| 5 | Cork | 13 | Monkstown |
| 6 | Inniscarra | 14 | Rosscarbery |
| 7 | Killeagh | 15 | Spike Island |
| 8 | Kilmichael | | |

Source: Macroom Church of Ireland Marriage Register, 1837 - 1896.

MAP 2

in the area for only a short period of time.

Table 7 shows that marriage involving troops with Macroom addresses were particularly significant in the first four decades of our study period. In this period, such marriages increased from being a quarter to more than one-third of all marriages recorded in the Church of Ireland register for Macroom. They were more significant among those marriages which did not involve "outsiders". That marriages involving troops no longer played a role in local marriage trends in the period between 1877 and 1897 was due probably to a scaling down or an end to the stationing of troops in Macroom. Because of the "nomadic" nature of the soldier's life, out-migration of soldiers, officers and their Macroom brides, was probably responsible for diluting the Church of Ireland female population of its marriageable women. It also accounts for a considerable amount of population decline in this religious minority.

From an analysis of the registers it would seem that migration, and especially out-migration, was a significant factor affecting the Church of Ireland marriage rate in Macroom. In the decade 1837-46, it would appear that the two marriages involving "outsiders" resulted in out-migration. In the following decade out-migration was probably as significant and only one out of the seven marriages involving "outsiders" definitely resulted in in-migration. Between 1857 and 1876 out-migration as a result of marriage may not have been very significant since only three out of twenty-one marriages involved "outsiders" and since one of these definitely resulted in in-migration. From 1877 to 1896 when all seven marriages involved "outsiders", out-migration may have been important. This is suggested by the fact that only one example of in-migration due to marriage can be found for this period. The continued decline in the population would appear to bear this statement out. The implications of out-migration, the dominant factor in the decline of the Church of Ireland population here between 1837 and 1896, were that the chances of population increase among the study group were lessened, and that serious imbalances in the age structure of the local population were caused by the out-migration of the younger elements, particularly young women, subsequent to marriage. The sex ratio of Church of Ireland young males to females here was probably also upset. In-migration of marriage partners, while seemingly less important than out-migration, meant that the rate of population decrease was reduced. This in turn meant that the spatial significance of the local Church of Ireland population was maintained, to a degree.

Age at Marriage

As already indicated, parish registers give detailed information on a variety of demographic features including age at marriage. In the Macroom Church of Ireland registers, no indication of marriage age is given before 1847, but from this date until 1896, this can be examined. At the national level, Lee has argued, 'between 1845 and 1914 average male age at marriage rose from about 25 to 33, average female age from about 21 to 28' (Lee, 1973; 3). In Macroom, the specified age of males at marriage ranged from twenty to thirty-nine, while "full age"* was given in the remaining entries. It seems that marriage at the age of twenty was an exception, and while "full age" could have meant twenty-one it is likely that it included many who were well over that age also.

In regard to female age at marriage, "full age" was given in many cases and "minor" was given twice. The specified ages ranged from eighteen to twenty-four. No particular temporal trends can be established. Because female age at marriage is important to subsequent fertility patterns, female age at marriage should be examined further. The only way this can be done is to calculate the number of females marrying before the age of twenty-one and compare this to those marrying at the age of twenty-one or over.

Table 8 shows that there were significant fluctuations in age at marriage between 1847 and 1896. Except for the decade 1857-66, the percentage of females marrying before the age of twenty-one was generally low and was zero in the last decade under study. The percentage of females marrying at twenty-one or over was in general very high and reached one hundred per cent in the decade 1887-96. Again, the Macroom results show that local details gleaned from parish registers seriously question results based on national data. Macroom trends did not follow national trends for most of the period but they were beginning to do so in the last decade of the study period. However, it should

*This term, used in the parish registers, refers to those aged twenty-one and over.

the parish registers is unsatisfactory. be pointed out that information on age at marriage contained in the parish registers is unsatisfactory. All that can be said at this stage is that male age at marriage was probably higher than female age at marriage.

Deficiencies in the data preclude any detailed analysis of spatial trends in age at marriage. Ages of males from the town ranged from twenty to thirty-nine, and "full age" was given many times. The one male marrying in the rural area was of "full age". Ages of males from outside the parish were twenty-three and "full age". Ages of females from the town ranged from eighteen to twenty-four, and "full age" and "minor" were also given. Only the two latter types of information were given for females in the rural area. There was no female from outside the parish marrying in this period.

CONCLUSION

The above discussion, hopefully, gives some indication as to the merits and defects of parish registers as a source of information on the demography of a minority population. It is possible to indicate a number of difficulties associated with this source. While important results can be obtained using this source, what can be established is sometimes limited. This is particularly obvious in regard to age at marriage, though this could be overcome by use of the family reconstitution technique which will be discussed below. Suggesting causes for, and consequences of, the trends and patterns discerned in this study was somewhat problematic. It was difficult to weave the data provided by the registers into a broader social, economic, and spatial analysis of marriage trends in Macroom parish.

The problems associated with the use of parish registers are only minor in comparison to the value of this source as a tool for research. Accessibility of source material is an important criterion when beginning research. The Macroom registers were readily available and other Church of Ireland and Methodist registers are also accessible. Microfilms of Catholic church registers are available in the National Library of Ireland for the period up to about 1880. Permission to use the registers for any period after this date can be difficult to obtain. The registers of minority groups are of a manageable size for short-term and small-scale research. For more detailed and long-term research projects, the registers of the majority, Roman Catholic population could be utilised, either on their own or in conjunction with registers of religious minorities. The under-utilisation of registers means that there is plenty scope for researchers using this source to come up with new and interesting research results. The reliability of a source is also of great importance. The Macroom parish registers would seem to be reliable in this respect. One sign of careful registration is the recording of baptisms of infants who died soon after baptism (Wrigley, 1968). This was a feature of the Macroom parish registers throughout the nineteenth century. From a comparison with various Cork Catholic, Church of Ireland and Methodist registers it would seem that these are a reliable and accurate source of information on a wide range of variables. Of course, the degree of reliability is not constant, and should be tested before any actual research is begun. This question of reliability is particularly important in view of the doubtful reliability of civil registers. Another point in favour of parish registers is that they record every vital event each year, and thus allow for "longitudinal analysis".

Other merits of parish registers have been emphasised in the main body of this paper. Wrigley has argued that population 'is a nexus, the centre of a web of related events' (Wrigley, 1966a; 101). That parish registers can help us to understand that centre has been demonstrated in this paper. As this brief study indicates, Church of Ireland registers allow for the reconstruction of a considerable part of the population geography of a local minority group. Crude marriage, birth and death rates, which cannot be reliably reconstructed through the use of other sources, can be established through the use of parish registers. Some valuable conclusions can be drawn from this study of marriage patterns in Macroom. Thus it has been shown that migration was of particular importance in determining the marriage trends of the minority population. As indicated earlier in this paper, parish registers also allow us to reconstruct the socio-economic and occupational class structure of the Church of Ireland population of Macroom. From comparisons between national and local trends, it is obvious that local sources provide a much sharper focus than do national data. The registers also make possible an examination of town versus rural trends. Urban trends tend to get "swamped" at a national level of analysis. Registers are of value to the geographer, particularly because they allow an examination of social networks from a spatial perspective. While such analysis was somewhat limited in the Macroom study, other registers that have been used by the author provide detailed residential data. This type of data, along with perhaps the use of registers of a number of parishes, would greatly

enhance the 'usefulness' of this particular source for geographic research. Woods has pointed to the need for a re-direction in population geography when he argues that the role of population geographers 'is not to describe the geography of population by emphasis on its distribution but to employ their "spatial perspective" in the analysis of demographic structures' (Woods, 1984; 247). Such re-direction could be greatly aided by the use of parish registers as a source material.

While the potential of parish registers can be tapped by use of a methodology similar to that described in this paper, this particular source can prove to be a greater use if the technique of family reconstitution is employed (see Finlay (1981) for a discussion of the major techniques used in the analysis of parish registers). By this method 'any running series of births (baptisms), death (burials), and marriages can be exploited to provide a detailed picture of many aspects of the fertility, mortality and nuptiality of a community' (Wrigley, 1966b; 82). Among the requirements for the technique to be successful are a one hundred year study period and a population of one thousand to two thousand five hundred. Family reconstitution is particularly suited to large-scale analysis. While the registers are obviously valuable in their own right, it can be suggested that the use of another source, notably manuscript and census material, alongside parish registers would enhance their value even more. The registers can provide a precise demographic picture of local populations and manuscript data can add even greater, though time specific, detail to such a picture. The detailed occupational and household information can also provide the socio-economic framework for local studies.

It is hoped that the description of the Macroom Church of Ireland registers, together with the results that have emerged from the study, indicate the potential of parish registers as a source for research in historical geography and historical demography. An increased use of parish registers by researchers is to be encouraged.

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