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SN 5726 - Household Accounts of the Le Strange Family, 1606-1626

Study Documentation

Summary information

Project title:	The Housewife in Early Modern Rural England: Gender, Markets and Consumption
Investigators:	Dr Jane Whittle, University of Exeter Dr Elizabeth Griffiths, University of Exeter
Project duration:	1 October 2003 – 30 June 2007
Funding body:	Economic and Social Research Council (grant no. RES-143-25-0014)
Source material:	Manuscripts held by the Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, classified in their catalogue as follows: LEST P6, LEST P7, LEST P8, LEST P9, LEST P10, LEST P11.
Database compiled by:	Dr Jane Whittle, University of Exeter Dr Elizabeth Griffiths, University of Exeter
Data collection:	January 2004-June 2007
Software Used	Microsoft Access 2003
Content of Database:	The database contains (1) a summary of the Le Strange household accounts from 1606-1654, (2) transcriptions of accounts from 1606-1626, (3) categorisation of those transcriptions, (4) a dictionary of obscure words, (5) an index of names, (6) an index of places.
Publications:	The database is being used to write a book: Jane Whittle and Elizabeth Griffiths, <i>Consumption and Gender in the Early Seventeenth-Century Household: the World of Alice Le Strange</i> , under contract with Oxford University Press for publication in 2009.
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1. A summary of the research project

The database was created for a project which ran from 2003-2007 titled 'The housewife in early modern rural England: gender, markets and consumption', funded by the ESRC and AHRC as part of the 'Cultures of Consumption' research programme. The project was centred on a detailed study of the household accounts of the Le Strange family of Hunstanton, Norfolk, from 1606-1654, which from 1610 onwards were kept by Lady Alice Le Strange. These accounts are both remarkably long running and complete, and exceptionally detailed. They are also notable in having been written by a married woman. In the project the accounts were used to examine patterns of consumption in this early seventeenth century household, the gendered nature of the household economy, and the level of market development. The main output of the project is a book: Jane Whittle and Elizabeth Griffiths *Consumption and Gender in the Early Seventeenth Century Household: The World of Alice Le Strange*, which is under contract with Oxford University Press for publication in 2009.

The Le Strange Household Accounts 1606-1654

2.1 The Le Strange Family. The Le Strange family lived at Hunstanton Hall, Hunstanton, in the north-west tip of Norfolk. The accounts studied in this project are from the

household of Sir Hamon and Lady Alice Le Strange (nee Stubbes), who married in 1602. Hamon began the disbursement and receipt accounts in 1606. Alice took over the accounts in 1610, adding Kitchen Books in 1613, and separate building accounts from the early 1620s. Alice had eight children, four of whom survived to adulthood. The eldest son, Nicholas, continued to live in the household, with his wife Anne (nee Lewknor) after their marriage in 1630, and their growing brood of children. Further details about Hamon, Alice, and their three sons, Nicholas, Hamon jun. and Roger, can be found in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. The only surviving daughter, Elizabeth, married Sir William Spring of Pakenham, Suffolk, in 1636.

2.2 The Surviving Accounts

Years	1606-9	1610-19	1620-9	1630-9	1640-9	1650-4
Disbursement Accounts						
Kitchen Accounts						
Receipt Accounts						

The disbursement accounts recording purchases survive in an almost unbroken run from 1606 to Hamon Le Strange's death in May 1654. Small but infrequent gaps are caused by a few missing pages from the account books. Receipt accounts, recording sources of income, survive for the same period, but with some larger gaps, most significantly during the Civil War years. Total income, however, was recorded every six months in the disbursement accounts to allow the accounts to be balanced. From 1613 Alice Le Strange began keeping kitchen accounts, or she described as 'household books'. These record purchases, gifts and consumption of food, as well as farm labour. The gaps in these coincide with the gaps in receipt accounts as they were kept in the same account books, some of which have been lost. Building accounts were kept within the disbursement accounts. From the early 1620s these were entered into separate sections for each six month period, before that date building expenses were mixed in with other purchases. Thus data about building survives for the same period as the disbursement accounts.

The 'Alice' database contains a sample of the surviving accounts: this consists of the disbursement accounts from 1606-1626, receipt accounts from 1606-1613 and 1619-1621, and kitchen accounts from 1619-21. Where building accounts were separately indicated they were NOT entered into the database.

2.3 The Original Manuscripts. The original account books are housed at the Norfolk Record Office (NRO), Norwich, as part of the Le Strange collection. The NRO's document references for the account books are LEST P6, LEST P7, LEST P8, LEST P9, LEST P10 and LEST P11. The exact contents of each book is described in the database in the document summary table (tblDocRef). All the accounts were microfilmed for the research project, which means copies of these microfilms can now be purchased from the NRO at a relatively low cost.

2.4 Hamon's Accounts 1606-1610. The accounts begun by Hamon Le Strange in 1606 are inferior to those kept by Alice Le Strange in a number of ways. His handwriting is more difficult to read, he had a tendency to list bills as payments to certain people rather than detailing the actual items purchased, and it is not clear how comprehensive they are.

2.5 Alice's Accounts 1610-1654. Alice Le Strange was an exemplary account keeper. She wrote in a clear italic hand and recorded items purchased in some detail. Most remarkably she kept the accounts in an unbroken run and appears to have been very comprehensive in what she recorded. She divided the accounts into six month periods beginning and ending at Michaelmas and Lady's Day, balancing receipts and outgoings at the end of each period.

2.6 Disbursement Accounts. The disbursement accounts begin as an undifferentiated list of payments but gradually became more refined over time as various types of payment were separated out. From 1613 payments for food and farm labour went into the kitchen books, although medicines and occasional luxury purchases of food remain in the disbursements. From this period servants wages were also more systematically recorded in the disbursement accounts, at the beginning or end of each six month period and marked with 'W' in the margin. From the early 1620s, building expenses were also separated, clearly denoted as subsections within the disbursement accounts.

2.7 Receipt Accounts. The receipt accounts record the actual money coming into the household in the order that it was received. Money was received for rents and the sale of farm produce, timber and other miscellaneous items. Loans are also recorded: the money borrowed appears in the receipts accounts, and repayments and interest in the disbursement accounts.

2.8 Kitchen Accounts. The kitchen accounts are perhaps the most remarkable of all the accounts, although their sheer size and detail makes them difficult to study. These accounts were kept weekly. They record purchases of food, gifts of food and food taken from 'store' (the home farm). The turnover of basic items such as beef, butter, cheese, saltfish, beer, bread, and grain is recorded with amounts in stock at the beginning of week, amounts added through production or purchase, amounts eaten or 'spent', and amounts in stock at the end of the week, carefully quantified. The accounts also record items purchased for the kitchen such as utensils and cooking-wares, as well as day labour employed on the home farm and in the garden. The farm was largely pastoral, with sheep, pigs and dairy cattle. As well as the weekly accounts, Alice undertook six-monthly stock takes where she reviewed the number and health of the farm animals as well as other foods in store. Grain was generally provided by tenants as rental payments or occasionally purchased.

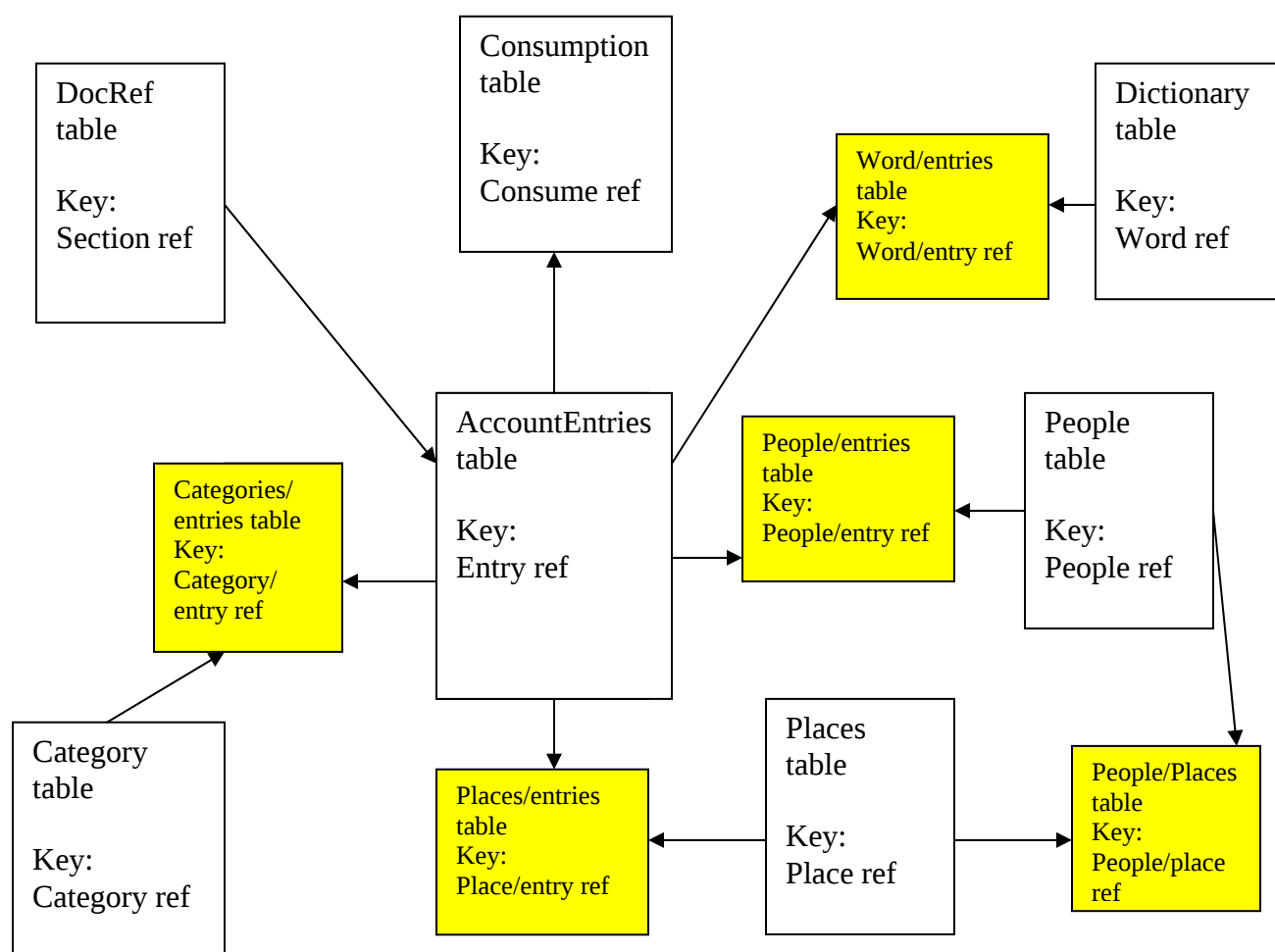
2.9 Building Accounts. Money expended on building is initially mixed in with other purchases in the disbursement accounts, but from the early 1620s forms a separate section within each six month period of disbursements. The Le Stranges undertook an extensive programme of building: repairing and building service buildings for Hunstanton Hall (1610s), significantly enlarging Hunstanton Hall (1620s), and repairing and rebuilding farm houses and service buildings on their estate throughout the period. These accounts have not been studied in any detail for this research project.

2.10 The Le Strange Archive. The household accounts of Hamon and Alice Le Strange are just a small part of an extensive Le Strange family archive, housed at the Norfolk Record Office. Supporting documents which are helpful for the interpretation of the accounts include a seventeenth century catalogue of Hamon Le Strange's large library; a notebook kept by Hamon Le Strange, and notebooks kept by Nicholas Le Strange. There are extensive estate documents, some of which were written or indexed by Alice Strange Le Strange. Household accounts also survive for a short period in the fourteenth-century, and for the sixteenth century. The sixteenth-century Le Strange's are the topic of another books: Cord Oestmann, *Lordship and Community: The Lestrangle Family and the Village of Hunstanton* (Boydell Press, 1994).

3. The 'Alice' Database

3.1 Using the database. The heart of the database is the account entries table (tblAccountEntries). This contains the transcriptions of the accounts in their original spelling and in modern spelling. To browse through the accounts, open this table as a 'form' and click through the entries one by one. To go to a particular year, or search for particular words, click on the relevant box and then use the 'find' facility in Access.

3.2 Database structure



Note: link tables are shaded; arrows point from one to many in relationships (head = many, tail = 1)

3.3 Account Entries table (tblAccountEntries).

Contains the following fields:

Section ref: which cross-references with the DocRef table.

Entry ref: a unique reference number for each entry from the accounts. These are numbered in the same order the entries appear in the original manuscript.

Year: the year the accounts come from. This follows the years as recorded in the accounts (i.e. from March to March).

Month: the month of the year the accounts come from. 01 is January, 12 is December.

DayofMonth: day of the month, only entered if clearly indicated the accounts.

Transcription margin text: any text that appears in the left hand margin of the accounts, in its original format as far as possible.

Transcription main text: the exact transcription of a particular phrase or line within the accounts.

Modernised margin text: margin text in modern spelling and/or extended form.

Modernised main text: main text of entry in modern spelling.

Cost £: amount noted in the accounts in the £ column.

Cost s: amount noted in the accounts in the shillings column.

Cost d: amount noted in the accounts in the penny column.

Notes: any notes about transcription problems, meaning or context.

Because this table is large, it is best viewed as a 'form'.

It contains a sample of the accounts, as described in section 2.2 above.

It is possible to output an almost exact transcription of the accounts from this table in either original or modernised spelling, by selecting margin text, main text and £, s. and d., in a query and report, and making sure the entries are in the order of the entry ref. numbers.

3.4 Document summary table (tblDocRef)

Contains the following fields:

NRO ref: the Norfolk Record Office document reference to this item within the Le Strange (LEST) collection. Thus 'P6' in this table = NRO: LEST P6.

Type: the type of account.

BUIL – building accounts

DISB – disbursement accounts

KITC – kitchen accounts

MISC – miscellaneous entries

REC – receipt accounts

Section ref: a unique reference for each section of the accounts. The number indicates its sequence within the whole collection of accounts, middle section indicates the original document reference from the NRO, and the last section indicates the type of accounts.

Start year: the year in which this section of accounts starts, 0 if unknown.

Finish year: the year in which this section of accounts finishes, 0 if unknown.

Folios: the folio range as recorded in the original document.

Pages: the number of pages (i.e. sides of text) in the section.

Hand?: the hand in which the accounts were written. If blank then Alice le Strange.
 HLS – Hamon Le Strange; NLS – Nicholas Le Strange.
 Notes: further notes describing the section of accounts.

The table summarises all the household accounts written by Hamon and Alice Le Strange between 1606 and 1654.

3.5 Categorisation of entries (tblCategories)

Contains the following fields:

Category ref: a unique reference number for that category.
 Category: a short description of the category e.g. FOOD & DRINK
 Category description notes: a detailed description of what is included in the category.

The categories are inclusive rather than exclusive, so one entry in the accounts may be placed in more than one category. This is useful when extracting all the entries in the database relating to textiles and clothing, or medicine, for instance. However, it does mean that the categories cannot be used to calculate the proportion of expenditure on a each category as double counting will occur.

3.6 Dictionary (tblDictionary)

Contains the following fields:

Word ref: a unique reference for each word in the dictionary.
 Word: the word which is defined. Some are in the spelling found in the accounts, some are in a standardised or modernised spelling as found in the dictionary.
 Definition: the definition of the word
 DefSource: the source of that definition. Three main sources were used: *Oxford English Dictionary online* was the most useful resource; D. Yaxley's, *A Researcher's Glossary* was helpful in many cases; JCW indicates that the meaning was inferred by Jane Whittle using the context of the document. Where this field is blank the meaning was inferred by either Jane Whittle or Elizabeth Griffiths from general knowledge.

3.7 Index of people (tblPeople)

Contains the following fields:

People ref: a unique reference for each person in the index.
 Surname: the person's surname.
 First name: the person's first name.
 Title: as given in the accounts, blank if no title used.
 Gender: m or f, blank if no information available.
 Relationship: relationship to Alice Le Strange.
 Role/occupation: either as stated in the accounts, as inferred from contextual information.
 Year of birth: if known.
 Year of death: if known.
 First appearance: year in which person first appears in accounts.
 Last appearance: year of last appearance in accounts.
 Other details: further information and cross-referencing to other documents.

This table contains the names of all people appearing in the account entries. It has been checked to eliminate duplicate entries as far as possible. Some entries may in fact refer to more than one person. The first seven fields have been entered consistently and checked. However, the fields with year of birth and death have been little used: they were designed so that cross-referenced data could be entered from parish registers – this was not done due to lack of time. The year of first appearance has not been checked after duplicate entries were eliminated so may be inaccurate in a number of cases. The year of last appearance has not been filled in.

3.8 Index of places (tblPlaces)

Contains the following fields:

- Place ref: a unique reference for every address or place name appearing in the accounts.
- Address: a location within a particular place, if given, e.g. Lincolns Inn; Chapel Mill.
- Place: the parish, town or city mentioned.
- County: for places within England, the county. For places outside England, the country.
- Grid ref: this field has not been used.
- Distance from Hunstanton: this field has not been used.
- Notes: extra information.

This table offers of geographical index of all the places mentioned in the accounts. The information in this table was entered into the database at the same time as the transcription of the accounts. It has not been checked for duplicates and inconsistencies.

3.9 Turnover of food (tblConsumption)

Contains the following fields:

- Consume ref: a unique reference for each entry relating to the consumption of food.
- Period: period covered by the entry e.g. one week or six months.
- End date: end date of period covered, e.g. for week ending 23 October 1624 '23/10/1624'.
- Commodity: type of food consumed e.g. beef.
- Description: any further detail given about that commodity, e.g. 'unweighed' for cheese.
- Activity: e.g. remaining, spent, or stored.
- Number: number of units referred to e.g. 2.5 for two and a half.
- Units: units that commodity is measured in, if relevant, e.g. bushels, pints, stone.
- Entry ref: cross-reference to AccountEntries table
- Notes: any further notes.

This table was designed to aid the analysis of the kitchen account entries. It has not been used due to lack of time.

Database table relationships

