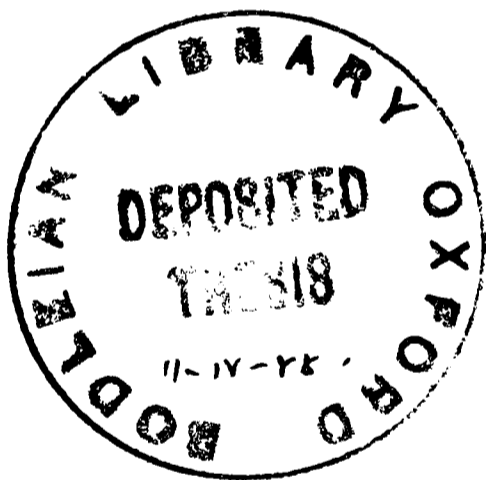


Custom and Conflict in a Wealden Village:

Pluckley 1550-1700



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Thesis submitted for the Degree of D.Phil. in Sociology,  
Faculty of Social Studies, University of Oxford, Trinity Term,  
1987. [1988] <sup>11</sup>

## ABSTRACT

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### Custom and Conflict in a Wealden Village: Pluckley 1550-1700

This thesis aims to determine the relationship between demographic, socio-economic and cultural change in an early modern English village. The village of Pluckley in the Weald of Kent was chosen for the richness of surviving documentation both at a regional and a parochial level. This has enabled Pluckley's experience over the 150-year period after 1550 to be located in the context of regional developments, thus permitting a fuller appreciation of the significance of such micro-history to the national life of the period.

Pluckley's geographical location on the boundary between scarpland and wealden Kent resulted in a relative shortage of common, waste and forest suitable for encroachment or squatting. This spared the village the high levels of immigration found in many woodland-pasture communities, but considerable indigenous population growth during the 1590s-1620s needed to be accommodated. This required the sub-division of many existing holdings; a process made possible by the expansion of textile manufacture in the region. The result was two-fold: a consolidation in the position of small husbandmen and craftsmen in the village at

the expense of more substantial landholders; and an increase in the numerical importance of Pluckley's poorest strata -labourers, cottagers, poor craftsmen and widows.

Two responses to the interlocking demographic and economic crisis of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries can be observed. One was the emigration of perhaps ten per cent of Pluckley's households in the three decades following the industrial crisis of 1630-1. The other was revealed in the apparent resentment of some village officeholders -many of them middling farmers not immune to the financial pressures of the period- to the increased burden posed by the expanding population of poor in the village. This resentment found expression in an attempt to tighten standards of sexual and marital conduct during the period 1590-1640.

There is no evidence, however, that sustained reforming activity in the village extended beyond sexual regulation to other 'disorders' associated by contemporaries with popular culture. Relatively low levels of poverty in the village (compared with elsewhere in mid-Kent) may have hindered the emergence of a powerful Puritan lobby bent on such reforms; though fissures within Pluckley's ruling elite as well as demographic and economic developments may have played their part in the continuing weakness of the 'godly' cause.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank first of all my supervisors Dr. G.E. Aylmer, Dr. R.M. Smith, Mr. J. Goldthorpe, and Mr. J.R. Torrance for their careful criticism and thoughtful guidance.

The fieldwork for this thesis was greatly assisted by the professionalism and efficiency of the staff at Kent Archives Office, Maidstone. I would like to thank in particular the assistant county archivist Miss K.M. Topping for her help. I am grateful also to the staff of the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the British Library; the Cathedral Library, Canterbury; the House of Lords Record Office; Lambeth Palace Library; and the Public Record Office, Chancery Lane. In addition my thanks are due to Mr. Philip Blake of Folkestone, Kent for giving permission to quote from the Dering Mss. in his possession.

A number of individuals kindly gave of their time to offer advice at different stages in the completion of this research project. I would like to thank Prof. Peter Clark, Prof. David M. Loades, Dr. Paul Griffiths, Dr. R.J. Acheson, Mr. W.P. Sutcliffe, Mr. Fred Lansberry, Mr. George Fraser and Mrs. M. Harcourt Williams.

This thesis would not have been possible without the assistance of the Economic and Social Research Council, in the form of a three-year bursary based at Nuffield College Oxford. To both the Council and the Warden and Fellows of Nuffield College go my thanks.

Support of a different kind has been generously provided throughout by my parents, by Jean and Monica Charlot, and above all by my wife, Anne. I hope that the final result does justice to her continuing commitment.

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## List of Abbreviations

A.C.	Archaeologia Cantiana
A.H.R.	Agricultural History Review
B.I.H.R.	Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research
B.L.	British Library
Bod.L.	Bodleian Library
Cal. S.P. Dom.	Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series
C.C.L.	Canterbury Cathedral Library
Ec.H.R.	Economic History Review
E.H.R.	English Historical Review
H.J.	Historical Journal
H.L.R.O.	House of Lords Record Office
J.Ecl.H.	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
J.Fam.H.	Journal of Family History
J.H.G.	Journal of Historical Geography
J.I.H.	Journal of Interdisciplinary History
K.A.O.	Kent Archives Office
L.P.L.	Lambeth Palace Library
P.&P.	Past and Present
PRC	Ecclesiastical Records for Canterbury Diocese deposited at Kent Archives Office
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
Soc.H.	Social History
T.R.H.S.	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society

Introduction: The Historical Community Study in Context

The first 'community' studies emerged out of research conducted in small-town America during the decades before the Second World War. The most notable exponent of this approach was Lloyd Warner, whose five-volume work on the town of Newburyport, New England ('Yankee City') modelled itself on the structural-functionalist anthropology of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. In the first volume of the Yankee City series, published in 1941, Warner and his co-author defined the community as a 'working whole in which each part had definite functions which had to be performed or substitutes<sup>1</sup> acquired, if the whole society were to maintain itself.' Warner consciously selected for study a relatively self-contained, stable community which would provide the opportunity to 'compare easily the other societies of the world with one of our own civilization' by 'accomodat[ing] our techniques, developed by the study of primitive society, to modern groups<sup>2</sup>'

In the early 1930s, Warner made plans to extend his researches to Europe; choosing thinly-populated County Clare in southern Ireland as the area best suited to his needs. Although it was two of his former students who actually conducted and wrote up the fieldwork, the completed work (published in 1940 as Family and Community in Ireland)

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1. W.L. Warner & P.S. Lunt, The Social Life of a Modern Community (New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1941), p.14. The following discussion draws heavily on C. Bell & H. Newby, Community Studies: An Introduction to the Sociology of the Local Community (London, Allen & Unwin, 1971), ch.4-5.

2. Warner & Lunt, op.cit., p.4.

reflected closely Warner's functionalist preoccupations.<sup>1</sup>

At about the same time, University of Wales lecturer A.D. Rees was also engaged in the fieldwork stage of a community study based on the model of structural-functional<sup>2</sup> anthropology. Like Arensberg and Kimball, Rees deliberately sought out an area of well-integrated, relatively isolated communities for study; but in contrast with the regional emphasis of the American researchers, he focussed on the closely-bounded life of a single parish, that of Llanfihangel yng Ngwynfa in Clwyd, North Wales.

This difference of emphasis was more than simply one of scale. Arensberg and Kimball described their purpose as 'not so much to characterise the communities described as it is to examine the behaviour of the persons living in them.' In other words, working at the level of the community provided a convenient context in which to collect and organize data ('getting to grips with social and psychological facts in the raw' as they put it), without making the prior assumption that particular geographical units possessed a coherent internal structure -or 'system'- of inter-relating social<sup>3</sup> institutions in the manner demanded by functionalist theory.

It was precisely such an implicit assumption that characterised the British school of anthropological community research that developed out of the work of Rees and a number

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1. C.A. Arensberg & S.T. Kimball, Family and Community in Ireland (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard Univ. Press, 1940).

2. A.D. Rees, Life in a Welsh Countryside (Cardiff, Univ. of Wales Press, 1950).

3. Arensberg & Kimball, op.cit., p.xxix; idem., Community and Culture (New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967), p.8.

of other Welsh scholars.<sup>1</sup> Like Rees's pioneering work on Llanfihangel, subsequent studies took as their unit of analysis individual parishes sufficiently isolated to sustain the functionalist model of the closed system.<sup>2</sup>

From the late 1950s, this theoretical framework and the essentially static view of rural society it encapsulated came under attack from a variety of quarters. Vidich and Bensman's study of the town of Springdale, in rural upper New York state took as its 'central problem' the relationship between the community and the large-scale society; and James Littlejohn's work on the Scottish border village of Westrigg concluded that its integration into wider social and economic networks was 'the most significant social process in the recent history of the parish.'<sup>3</sup>

Margaret Stacey attacked the problem from a somewhat different standpoint. She questioned the functionalist tenet that all social institutions are inter-connected; adding that there is even less reason to believe this to be the case in any particular small locality. Stacey made the crucial observation that 'Social relations must be seen not only in combination with each other, but in the two dimensions of time

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1. See A.D. Rees & E. Davies (eds.), Welsh Rural Communities (Cardiff, Univ. of Wales Press, 1960).

2. W.M. Williams, The Sociology of an English Village: Gosforth (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956); R. Frankenberg, A Village on the Border (London, Cohen & West, 1957); I. Emmet, A North Wales Parish (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964).

3. A.J. Vidich & J. Bensman, Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Power and Religion in a Rural Community, revised edn. (Princeton, Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), p.317; J. Littlejohn, Westrigg: The Sociology of a Cheviot Parish (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p.155.

and space.<sup>1</sup>

W.M. Williams -a former student of A.D. Rees- came to some of these conclusions in studying the Devon parish of Ashworthy. He pointed out that many earlier community studies (including his own published work on the parish of Gosforth in Cumbria) had failed to recognise that the ownership, occupancy and use of land which formed the basis of social and economic relationships in rural communities was subject to constant change -for both economic and demographic reasons. This initial insight prompted Williams to investigate something of the historical background to the structure of landholding in the village, and it was in tracing this shifting pattern that he discovered that 'it is often extremely difficult to separate the social and economic life of Ashworthy from that of the parishes which surround it.'<sup>2</sup>

Criticisms of this kind formed part of a broader attack on the theoretical underpinning of rural sociology. The result has been a notable move away from exploring communities as objects of study in their own right towards using the community study as a methodology for examining broader social processes. There is a widespread realization among rural sociologists, Howard Newby has noted, that rural change cannot be regarded as an exogenous factor impinging on otherwise static communities:

'Many of the factors responsible for social change in

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1. M. Stacey, 'The Myth of Community Studies', Brit.Jnl. Sociol., XX, 2 (1969), pp.139-40.

2. W.M. Williams, A West Country Village: Ashworthy (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963).

rural society occur from within -in, for example, the rationalization of agriculture- and there is now recognition of the need to knit together an analysis of both indigenous and exogenous factors into a more holistic analysis of community change.'(1)

Many of the insights generated in this debate were incorporated into Alan Macfarlane's ambitious prospectus for historical community research, published in 1977.<sup>2</sup> Thus he sees his book as a contribution to the use of the community in the methodological sense, and 'makes no assumptions about the actual existence or absence of "communities of sentiment" or any other kind of community among the objects of its study'. Macfarlane recognises though (as did Arensberg and Kimball in the 1940s) that models are not simply generated out of an unmediated corpus of facts encountered 'in the raw' at the level of the community. The chosen unit of analysis necessarily intrudes between fact and model, tending 'to give a spurious sense of "community" boundaries which has to be consciously guarded against.'<sup>3</sup>

Recent research on geographical mobility in early modern England has highlighted the potential biases involved in focussing analysis on a single parish. In the Northamptonshire parish of Cogenhoe for example, 52% of the population disappeared and was replaced between 1618 and 1628; while at Clayworth in Nottinghamshire the turnover in population during the twelve years from 1676 to 1688 was about 62%. If the

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1. H. Newby, 'Rural Sociology', Current Sociology, XXVIII, 1 (1980), p.79.

2. A. Macfarlane, Reconstructing Historical Communities (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977).

3. Ibid., pp. 4, 206. On the earlier view, see Bell & Newby, Community Studies: An Introduction, p.41.

effects of change due to births and deaths are removed from both sets of figures, it would appear that over a third of the inhabitants of both parishes were mobile geographically during a period of about ten years. There is no reason to believe that rates of population turnover at Clayworth and Cogenhoe<sup>1</sup> were at all exceptional.

Alan Macfarlane is keenly aware that the existence of such high levels of geographical mobility has important implications for the historian who chooses 'the community' as his unit of analysis:

'On the one hand, we are aware that people were highly mobile and consequently we often obtain only a partial description of any single life-cycle. People move past our bathoscope window and then disappear into the gloom. A second feature of this boundedness, connected to high geographical movement in English communities..., is the fact that economically, socially, intellectually, and in every other way these parishes were not isolated.'(2)

Given this apparent fluidity in English parish boundaries, why look at such small-scale localities at all? Whatever the evident weaknesses of the community study, it does provide the historian with a unique opportunity to link together the widest possible range of archival sources bearing on the social and economic relationships of a manageable number of individuals in the past. The detailed inter-linkage of records which such a methodology affords makes it 'possible to build up profiles of specific individuals which are, in many respects, as full as those which we could construct for

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1. P. Laslett, 'Clayworth and Cogenhoe', in his Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations: Essays in Historical Sociology (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), pp.65-8.

2. Macfarlane, op.cit., p.206.

living individuals.<sup>1</sup>

Record linkage of this kind can only be the preliminary to analysis. The ultimate 'degree of usefulness' of a particular historical community study will not only depend, as Alan Macfarlane implies, on the choice of an area for study with an adequate range of documentary evidence -though this is of course vitally important.<sup>2</sup> It will also depend on the selection of meaningful questions to ask of the evidence.

In his discussion of general approaches to the analysis of communities, Macfarlane draws attention to a number of criticisms which have commonly been levelled at the conceptual and methodological assumptions underlying 'community studies'. Thus it is argued that many such studies while intrinsically satisfying in their own terms, lack the basic descriptive information that permits comparisons and therefore generalizations to be made. Furthermore, it is argued that no amount of micro-studies of this kind will help us to piece together the macro-structure of the whole society. Macfarlane quotes the comment of anthropologist Eric Wolf that 'we cannot hope to construct a model of how the larger society operates by simply adding more community studies.'<sup>1</sup>

Macfarlane suggests that early modern historians can overcome these conceptual and methodological deficiencies partly by choosing for study only those communities of

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1. Ibid., p.37.

2. Ibid., p.34. On the dangers of conducting community research with inadequate source material, see K. Wrightson, 'Villages, Villagers and Village Studies', H.J., XVIII, 3 (1975), p.635.

3. Macfarlane, op.cit., p.14.

manageable size yet large enough to assemble meaningful statistics; and which have at least six of the following eight 'major sources' for a substantial proportion of the period under study: parish registers, wills, inventories, manorial or other surveys, manor court rolls, ecclesiastical court records, Quarter Sessions Records, and deeds. In addition, he offers a number of new conceptual tools -drawn from post-war developments in British anthropology- which aim to replace the discredited systemic framework of functionalism with 'a more flexible and subtle set of analytic categories for the study of highly mobile societies which are still believed to contain "communities" of some kind.'<sup>2</sup>

Macfarlane's close scrutiny of the nature and uses of the key sources for the study of pre-industrial communities performs a valuable service for anyone wrestling with the problems involved in working with materials of this kind. Yet his suggested 'improvements' to the quality of the data and to the concepts used in their analysis fails to tackle a number of the fundamental weaknesses of the community study approach. Macfarlane treats the inhabitants of his chosen parishes of Earls Colne (Essex) and Kirby Lonsdale (Cumbria) as a source for a self-contained body of information on marriage customs, property, religious observance, law and morality, superstitions, recognition of status, sexual behaviour,<sup>3</sup> kinship and so on.

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1. Macfarlane, op.cit, p.14.

2. Ibid., pp.33-6, 16-22.

3. J.D. Marshall, 'The Study of Local and Regional "Communities": Some Problems and Possibilities', North.H., XVIII (1981), p.210.

If the methodology advocated here were followed to the letter in a series of historical studies, we might be in a position to make some general statements about one or more of these themes. This in itself might be seen as an advance on the idiosyncrasy of earlier community studies. The value of such generalizations is necessarily limited, however, by a failure to establish the regional and national frameworks in which local movements and institutions subsist.<sup>1</sup>

The evident geographical mobility of early modern and indeed medieval England has prompted a number of historians to argue the case for such a regionalist perspective.<sup>2</sup> Other considerations point in the same direction. Earlier community studies, we have noted, have come in for criticism on the grounds of non-comparability.<sup>a</sup> A failure to assess the typicality of a particular community in its region not only makes it much more difficult to identify independent variables when seeking explanations for particular sociological patterns; it also makes informed comparison with other localities virtually impossible.

Similarly, the historical abstraction of Macfarlane's method offers little opportunity to address the second criticism of community studies noted above: the apparent irrelevance of the approach in facilitating an understanding of how the larger society operates. The kind of 'holistic'

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1. Ibid., pp.210-11.

2. Ibid., passim.; A.R. DeWindt, 'Redefining the Peasant Community in Medieval England: The Regional Perspective', J.Brit.Studs., XXVI,2 (1987), 163-207; M. Spufford, 'Can We Count the "Godly" and "Conformable" in the Seventeenth Century', J.Ecl.H., XXXVI, 3 (1985), p.428.

approach to the analysis of rural society called for by Howard Newby depends on a careful specification of those sociological pressures and constraints which are found in unique configuration within the the community under study, and those which are common to regional or national 'communities'.

Macfarlane's conceptual framework leaves him ill-equipped to carry out such an exercise. As a number of his critics have pointed out, his emphasis on the family as a social unit means that:

'...collective and institutional constraints of a vertical and horizontal type are not stressed, and are sometimes ignored; the pressures imposed by a man's neighbours or by more powerful individuals scarcely enter the picture.'(1)

Thus Macfarlane fails to recognise that although not geographically isolated, the parish did act as a point of reference and as a source of social relationships both objectively and subjectively for most of the population of early modern England.<sup>2</sup> In their study of the parish of Terling in Essex during the period 1525-1700, Keith Wrightson and David Levine describe the parish community as 'a constellation of institutions' focussing the social and economic interactions of the villagers; 'a network of ties between kin, friends, and neighbors... [which] had a special claim on their loyalties, a special place in their sense of personal

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1. Marshall, 'The Study of Local and Regional "Communities"', p.211; S.D. White & R.T. Vann, 'The Invention of English Individualism: Alan Macfarlane and the Modernization of Pre-Modern England', Soc.H., VIII,3 (1983), p.357; C.J. Calhoun, 'History, Anthropology and the Study of Community: Some Problems in Macfarlane's Method', Soc.H., III,3 (1978), p.371.

2. D. Underdown, Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985), pp.12-15.

identity.<sup>1</sup>

In the following five chapters, an attempt will be made to convey the 'distinct identity' of the Kentish parish of Pluckley during the period from 1550 to 1700. For the reasons indicated, the demographic, socio-economic and cultural life of the village will be located within the wider context of regional, and where appropriate, national developments of the period.

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1. K. Wrightson & D. Levine, Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling 1525-1700 (London, Academic Press, 1979), pp.74-5.

Chapter 1. From Many to Few: Population in Pluckley 1560-1700

(i) Historical Demography and the Village Study

'The technical sophistication of some of the pioneering work in demographic history published in the 1950s and 1960s,' writes E.A. Wrigley, 'was not always matched by willingness to balance the study of the interplay of strictly demographic variables by an investigation of other related features of the community under examination.'<sup>1</sup> Since then the debate has widened considerably. A critical factor in this has been the discovery of a distinctive pattern of marriage in early modern Western Europe, where women spent the first decade or so of their life after menarche unmarried, and where illegitimate fertility was much lower than legitimate fertility.<sup>2</sup>

Wrigley and Schofield's reconstruction of England's population history over three centuries (1541-1871) demonstrates that, except for brief periods when death rates were far above normal, variations in fertility were about twice as important as those in mortality in determining rates of population growth.<sup>3</sup> The primacy given by these authors to this 'purely human phenomenon' has made 'demographic history

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1. E.A. Wrigley, 'The Prospects of Population History', J.I.H., XII, 2 (1981), p.207.

2. Ibid.

3. E.A. Wrigley & R.S. Schofield, The Population History of England and Wales 1541-1871: A Reconstruction (London, Edward Arnold, 1981); R.S. Schofield, 'Through the Glass Darkly: The Population History as an Experiment in History', J.I.H., XV, 4 (1985), p.587.

more solidly social history (and by extension economic history)...<sup>1</sup>

In the controversial interpretative chapters of their book, Wrigley and Schofield build on this interlocking of demographic with social and economic history. Briefly, they argue that population growth rates acted in response to long-run economic trends via the real wage. Causation worked too in the opposite direction: from demographic to economic change. A 'remarkably close relation' was found between changes in population growth rates and those in prices, and through the latter with real wage rates.<sup>2</sup>

The details of this debate which relate particularly to the causes of the observed 'lag' between the real wage and fertility series need not concern us here.<sup>3</sup> A number of points, however, have emerged in this context relevant to our present purposes. Firstly, the evident two-way causal linkage between demographic and socio-economic change confirms that 'population history is necessarily an important part of the history of any society, whether a local community or a national entity.'<sup>4</sup> Secondly, by turning Wrigley's comment on its head, it can be argued that an awareness of regional responses to periods of economic expansion or contraction is

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1. D. Gaunt, Contributor to 'The Population History of England and Wales 1541-1871: A Review Symposium', Soc.H., VIII, 2 (1983), p.143.

2. Wrigley & Schofield, op.cit., ch.10-11; Wrigley, op.cit., pp.216-7; Schofield, op.cit., pp.588-9.

3. See Wrigley & Schofield, op.cit., pp.434-5; E. Moodie, Contributor to 'The Population History: A Review Symposium', p.163.

4. Wrigley, op.cit., p.217.

an essential preliminary to determining linkages between movements in population and those in the economy.<sup>1</sup>

Such a view is lent credence by the apparent variation behind Wrigley and Schofield's national aggregate data.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps, as Michael Anderson argues, improving our indicators for real-wage levels may add little to our understanding of long-run demographic change. He is certainly correct to point out that to sharpen analysis we need:

'...to learn more about the occupational and sectoral distribution of the labour force; about numbers of apprentices, journeymen, and domestic servants; about who entered service and how long they stayed there; and about how many people and what type depended, on what occasions, on poor relief and charity. How did all those matters differ by region and change with developments in agrarian systems and agricultural techniques and with developments in industrial production and urban life?'(3)

If such specification of socio-economic structure is to be integrated with demographic analysis, attempts need to be made to penetrate Wrigley and Schofield's aggregates to determine inter- and intra- regional variation; both in the scale of population growth rates, and the relative contribution of fertility and mortality to that growth. Mary Dobson's analysis of over 600 parish registers (together with surviving nonconformist registers) in Kent, Essex and East Sussex over the period 1600-1800 shows the potential of this kind of work. She is able to demonstrate variation in population movements both between different geographical units

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1. M. Anderson, 'Historical Demography after the Population History of England', J.I.H., XV (1985), pp.604-7; Moodie, op.cit., p.163.

2. See Anderson, op.cit., p.605.

3. Ibid., p.606.

in the region, and between groups of villages exhibiting a range of physical, agrarian, industrial and social-structural characteristics.<sup>1</sup>

If a relationship is to be posited between demographic and socio-economic change in the village, it is vital to assess population movements at the local level in the light of those taking place over a wider field. Only in this way can the specific factors which determine the demographic regime of a village be distinguished. In her characterization of the changing distribution of population in Cambridgeshire 1525-1664, Margaret Spufford shows how the fen-edge and chalk-ridge areas -the emptiest parts of the county in 1524-5- evidenced the steepest rise in population in the period to 1664. The villages of the western clay plateau, in contrast, more thickly settled than the fens in the 1520's, actually shrunk in size in the following 140 years. Spufford's well-known discussion of three villages -one in each of these regions- benefits greatly from being placed in this broader demographic context.<sup>2</sup>

Such an emphasis can have additional benefits. Alan Macfarlane rightly stresses the importance of restricting historical community research to those parishes where six or eight 'major sources'<sup>3</sup> can be exploited. However, even if a full set of records survive for a number of potential

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1. M.J. Dobson, 'Population, Disease and Mortality in South-East England 1600-1800' (Oxford Univ. Ph.D. thesis 1982).

2. M. Spufford, Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1974), pp.10-28.

3. Macfarlane, Reconstructing Historical Communities, p.35. See above p.8.

parishes, the depth and range of coverage will vary. The strengths and weaknesses of each source need to be assessed in the light of the specific problems to be examined.

The result of such a selection procedure might be to choose a parish whose Anglican register does not meet the standards -in terms of continuity and frequency of vital events- preferred by historical demographers.<sup>1</sup> Much valuable work has been done, however, on parishes whose registers do not meet these criteria, or only just do.<sup>2</sup> By comparing the demographic profile of such a village with what one might expect to find by an analysis of its immediate region, and of other villages possessing similar geographical or socio-economic characteristics, an assessment can be made of the results yielded by the suspect register.

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1. See E.A. Wrigley (ed.), An Introduction to Historical Demography (London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966), ch.3-4.

2. See for example Wrightson & Levine, Poverty and Piety, ch.3: Terling increased in population from about 330-580 between 1524/5 & 1671. Alan Macfarlane (op.cit., pp.34-5) suggests 800 as a lower limit below which it is 'difficult to assemble meaningful statistics'. D.E.C. Eversley (in 'Exploitation of Anglican Parish Registers by Aggregative Analysis', in Wrigley (ed.), op.cit., p.54) adopts the less exacting minimum of 500, below which statistics should be studied with caution. One of Spufford's villages -Orwell- never rose much above half that figure in the period 1524-1670s (Spufford, Contrasting Communities, p.23).

(ii) Demographic Change in Kent 1500-1681

Date	Enumerated section of population	Co. estimate of enumerated group	Equivalent pop. (to nearest 1000)
1557	Households* 8,652	22,605	107,000
1603	Communicants 71,765	82,018	136,000
1640	Communicants 44,733	82,804	159,000
1676	Adults 90,839	103,442	172,000

\* Canterbury diocese only

Note: for an explanation of these calculations, see Appendix I

Table 1. Estimates of Population in Kent 1557-1676

(Sources: Bod.L. Ms. Tanner 240, ff.29-38; A. Whiteman (ed.), The Compton Census of 1676: A Critical Edition (London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), Table D/3, p.ci; M.J. Dobson, 'Population, Disease and Mortality in South-East England 1600-1800' (Oxford Univ. D.Phil. thesis 1982), Table 5.3, p.56).

Between the beginning of the sixteenth century and the last quarter of the seventeenth, Kent may have doubled its population from about 85,000 to 170,000<sup>1</sup>. Peter Clark's estimate for 1500 is necessarily a back-projection from later figures since the Lay Subsidy Returns of 1524-5 and 1543-5 for Kent are seriously defective<sup>2</sup>. It is not until the 1550's and

1. P. Clark, English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Religion, Politics and Society in Kent 1500-1640 (Hassocks, Harvester Press, 1977), p.6.

2. J. Sheail, 'The Distribution of Taxable Population and Wealth in England during the Sixteenth Century', Trans.Inst. Brit.Geog., LV (1972); repr. in J. Patten (ed.), Pre-Industrial England: Geographical Essays (Folkestone, Dawson, 1979), 55-69.

'60's that we have precise -though not always reliable- estimates of diocesan or county populations.

Comparing Clark's estimates with our tentative findings for 1557 -the most satisfactory census of the period<sup>1</sup> - an overall population increase of rather less than 25% is suggested over the period 1500-1557. The national rate of growth is thought to have been about 30%, but the comparison is not particularly instructive since recent research has demonstrated the variety of regional responses to the demographic pressures of the sixteenth century. The population of Leicestershire, for example, increased by as much as 89% (1524-1603), while that of Norfolk and Suffolk<sup>2</sup> grew by only 24% in the same period.

The figures for Kent point to an increase of over 50% in the hundred years to 1603. It is impossible to test the accuracy of this figure; but the fact that Kentish census figures indicate an overall growth rate of about 25% between 1557 and 1603 makes it probable that the county's population expanded at a much faster rate than that of East Anglia to the north. Population density in Kent in the 1540's was rather lower than in Norfolk and Suffolk, yet well above that of sparsely-populated Leicestershire. Perhaps this suggests that population growth in Kent fell somewhere between these two extremes: in the realm of 40-60%. This would give a population

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1. See Appendix I.

2. R.M. Smith, 'Population and its Geography in England 1500-1730', in R.A. Dodgson & R.A. Butlin (eds.), An Historical Geography of England and Wales (London, Academic Press, 1978), pp.227-8

total for the Kent of 1500 of about 80-90,000.<sup>1</sup>

The figures for 1557 may obscure in part the extent of population growth in Kent before that date. The census was taken in the middle of a four-year influenza epidemic: 'probably one of the worst, if not the worst demographic crisis the county had to face in the whole period 1500-1640.'<sup>2</sup> Feeding on the deterioration in living conditions resulting from a series of poor harvests and perhaps a slump in cloth production, the epidemic pushed burials in places to two or three times their normal levels, with the worst fatalities apparently falling in 1558.<sup>3</sup>

Of the growth in Kent's population between 1500 and 1676, over half was probably completed by 1603, and over three-quarters by 1640. In the period 1626-46, all parts of Kent (with the conspicuous exception of marshland and coastal regions) show positive 'natural growth rates' (baptisms - burials ÷ baptisms X 100) and 'burial / baptism ratios' (burials per 100 baptisms) of less than 100 (Table 2). There is no reason to believe, as C.W. Chalklin has argued that 'after 1600 population growth was almost entirely in the towns', though rural-urban migration within the county, and migration to the town from outside it meant that urban parishes absorbed a disproportionate share of early

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1. It seems unlikely, therefore, that Kent experienced the 52% growth rate (1569-1603) argued for on the basis of the 1569 returns by M. Zell, 'Population and Family Structure in the Sixteenth Century Weald', A.C., C (1984), pp. 233,237. See the discussion of the census in Appendix I.

2. Clark, English Provincial Society, p.103.

3. Ibid.

Region	Average natural growth levels 1626-46	Average burial to baptism ratios 1626-46
West North Downs	0 to +25	61 to 80
Central North Downs	0 to +25	61 to 80
East North Downs	+25 to +50	below 60
Down Weald	0 to +25	61 to 80
Low Weald	0 to +25	81 to 100
High Weald	0 to +25	81 to 100
Isle of Thanet	+25 to +50	below 60
Stour Valley	0 to +25	81 to 100
Sandstone Ridge	0 to +25	61 to 80
London Environs	0 to +25	81 to 100
South East Coast	0 to -25	over 120
Northern Marshlands	-25 to -50	over 120
Romney Marsh	-25 to -50	over 120
Marsh-Weald	0 to -25	81 to 100
Isle of Sheppey	-25 to -50	over 120
Thames	0 to -25	over 120

Table 2. Average Natural Growth Levels and Burial/Baptism Ratios by Region in Kent, 1626-1646 (Source: M.J. Dobson, 'Population, Disease and Mortality in South-East England 1600-1800', Oxford Univ. D.Phil thesis 1982, Fig. 5.9, p.77; Fig. 6.1, p.119).

1  
seventeenth century expansion.

The evidence from the population estimates indicates that during the periods 1603-40 and 1640-76 Kent experienced growth rates of about 20% and 8% respectively; increasing the population in all from about 130-170,000. According to Peter Clark, after 1603 Kentish population enjoyed 'a brief period of renewed expansion' as a consequence of early Jacobean prosperity and as a reaction to the high mortality rates of the 1590s. By the 1620s, however, this demographic surge had probably run out of momentum, and in any case was finally 'snuffed out' by the plague epidemic of the 1630s.<sup>2</sup>

The population estimates may overstress the strength of early seventeenth century population growth. It seems unlikely that demographic expansion in the 1603-40 period (c.20%) came close to rivalling that of 1557-1603 (c.25%). Regional studies of other parts of England all point to a substantially decreased rate of growth in the period after 1603, such as 11% in Norfolk and Suffolk (1603-70), a similar figure for Hertfordshire, and only a 5% rise in Leicestershire. As R.M. Smith points out, however, these figures may conceal a more complicated demographic process, with substantial increases to the 1630s, and absolute decline thereafter.<sup>3</sup>

Whatever the timing of the slow-down in population growth in Kent, the change in the county's demographic regime

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1. C.W. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent: A Social and Economic History (London, Longmans, 1965), p.30.

2. Clark, op.cit., p.224.

3. Smith, 'Population and its Geography', pp.227-8.

Region	Average natural growth levels 1661-81	Average burial to baptism ratios 1661-81
West North Downs	0 to +25	81 to 100
Central North Downs	0 to +25	101 to 120
East North Downs	+25 to +50	61 to 80
Down Weald	0 to +25	81 to 100
Low Weald	0 to -25	101 to 120
High Weald	-25 to -50	101 to 120
Isle of Thanet	0 to +25	81 to 100
Stour Valley	0 to +25	81 to 100
Sandstone Ridge	0 to +25	81 to 100
London Environs	0 to -25	101 to 120
South East Coast	0 to +25	101 to 120
Northern Marshlands	-25 to -50	over 120
Romney Marsh	-50 to -100	over 120
Marsh-Weald	-50 to -100	over 120
Isle of Sheppey	-25 to -50	101 to 120
Thames	0 to -25	over 120

Table 3. Average Natural Growth Levels and Burial/Baptism Ratios by Region in Kent, 1661-1681 (Source: M.J. Dobson, 'Population, Disease and Mortality', Fig. 5.10, p.77; Fig. 6.3, p.122).

in the period 1661-81 compared with 1626-46 can be seen from Table 3 (above, page 22).

Dobson's presentation of data does not permit precise comparison of the Kentish figures from the two periods 1626-46 and 1661-81, but her examination of 112 parish registers in Kent, Essex and East Sussex suggests that between 1601-40 and the two periods 1641-80 and 1681-1720, the number of baptisms fell by 15% and 4% respectively. Even if we assume that in the last period 20% of baptisms went unrecorded due to nonconformity (a high estimate), an overall decline is still<sup>1</sup> clear.

Results at the parish level from a larger sample (632) which includes nonconformist registers suggests a similar drop of 18% in the annual number of baptisms in the three counties between 1626-46 and 1661-81. Burials, on the other hand, began to outstrip baptisms from the fourth or fifth decade of the seventeenth century; and by 1661-81, the mean burial/baptism ratio (across 637 parishes in the three counties) was almost 19% higher than its 1626-46 level (107 compared with<sup>2</sup> 90).

The change between the two periods can be seen from the Kent data (Tables 2-3): the number of regions with burial/baptism ratios of over 100 rose from 5 (of 16) to 10. However, one has only to compare the demographic fortunes of the marshland regions (Thames, Sheppey, Northern Marshlands, Marsh-Weald and Romney Marsh) with those of inland north and

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1. Dobson, 'Population, Disease and Mortality', pp.73-5.  
2. Ibid.

east Kent (West, Central and East Downs, Down Weald, Thanet and Stour Valley) and upland mid-Kent (Sandstone Ridge) to see that the process of population change in the county was not a uniform one. In turning to the immediate demographic environment in which Pluckley was situated, these variations may be examined in more detail.

(iii) Pluckley in its Demographic Context: Population Density in Mid-Kent 1563-1663

I

By the 1540s, Kent was among the most heavily-populated counties in England, lying at the south-eastern edge of a knot of dense settlement fanning out from London into the East Midlands and East Anglia<sup>1</sup>. This region was not only densely-settled, but wealthy. Of the nine wealthiest counties of England in 1515 (measured in pounds per 1000 acres), six of them clustered around London: Kent, Surrey, Middlesex, Hertfordshire, Essex and Suffolk. Comparing the pattern of wealth distribution in 1515 with that almost 200 years earlier, R.S. Schofield noted:

'The configuration of the richest counties in 1515 would seem to suggest that by the sixteenth century the greatest lay wealth may have been associated with other commodities [than wheat], such as wool and cloth.'(2)

The correlation between areas of cloth production and densely-populated pastoralism was already evident in mid-Kent

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1. Sheail, 'The Distribution of Taxable Population', p.62.

2. R.S. Schofield, 'The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England 1334-1649', Ec.H.R., XVIII, 3 (1965), p.507.

by the 1520's and 1540's, a period of rapid expansion in the industry -cloth exports virtually trebled in volume between 1500 and 1550. Table 4 (below) indicates this concentration of population in the parishes of Cranbrook, Goudhurst, Benenden, Biddenden, Hawkhurst and Headcorn in 1563. These parishes had between them a population of over 5000 at this date (rather greater than that of Kent's largest urban centre -Canterbury) and a population density varying from about 20 to just over 30 households per 1000 acres:

Parish	Households	Equivalent Population	Population Density
Benenden	200	950	29.88
Biddenden	160	760	22.25
Cranbrook	300	1425	28.92
Goudhurst	200	950	20.41
Hawkhurst	200	950	30.80
Headcorn	110	523	21.78

Table 4. Population and Population Density in the Cranbrook Region 1563 (Source: B.L. Ms. Harl. 594, ff.63-84).

As Joan Thirsk has noted, cloth production was an integral part of the pastoral economy of the Kentish Weald. In this as in other cloth-producing regions, the combination of an agrarian regime based on the rearing and fattening of cattle with a number of geographical and social factors encouraging large populations of small farmers and cottagers, provided the context for the development of rural manufacture. The significance of this interlocking of industrial and

1. P. Bowden, The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England (London, Macmillan, 1961), p.43.

2. J. Thirsk, 'Industries in the Countryside', in F.J. Fisher (ed.), Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1961), p.88.

agricultural sectors was recognised in a Lords bill of 1593:

'... within the parish of Cranbrooke... and within eight miles of the same parish... the trade of making and dyeing cloth has, for a long time employed the poor people within 20 miles of Cranbrooke, and the greatest number of inhabitants thereabouts have lived there upon.'<sup>(1)</sup>

A memorial presented to Lord Cobham in 1575 estimated that if the wealden cloth industry were to decline, half its inhabitants would be without subsistence. 'Decay the clothing', it concluded starkly, 'and the people decay'<sup>2</sup>.

Although the region around Cranbrook contained the strongest concentration of cloth production in the Weald, it was not confined to those half dozen or so parishes. In 1565 and 1566, a list of clothiers paying fines in connection with the cloth trade in London included representatives from Pluckley, together with Egerton (to its north-west) and Smarden (to its south-west)<sup>3</sup>. Figure 1 would seem to indicate a high concentration of population in this group of villages, running along the scarp of the Sandstone Ridge, and in the region to the south-east of Ashford where D.C. Coleman has also found evidence of cloth-working<sup>4</sup>.

Broadly speaking, the population of mid-Kent in 1563 was concentrated in its western half; west, that is, of Pluckley. In this region, most villages averaged between 16 and 20 households per thousand acres; while to the east

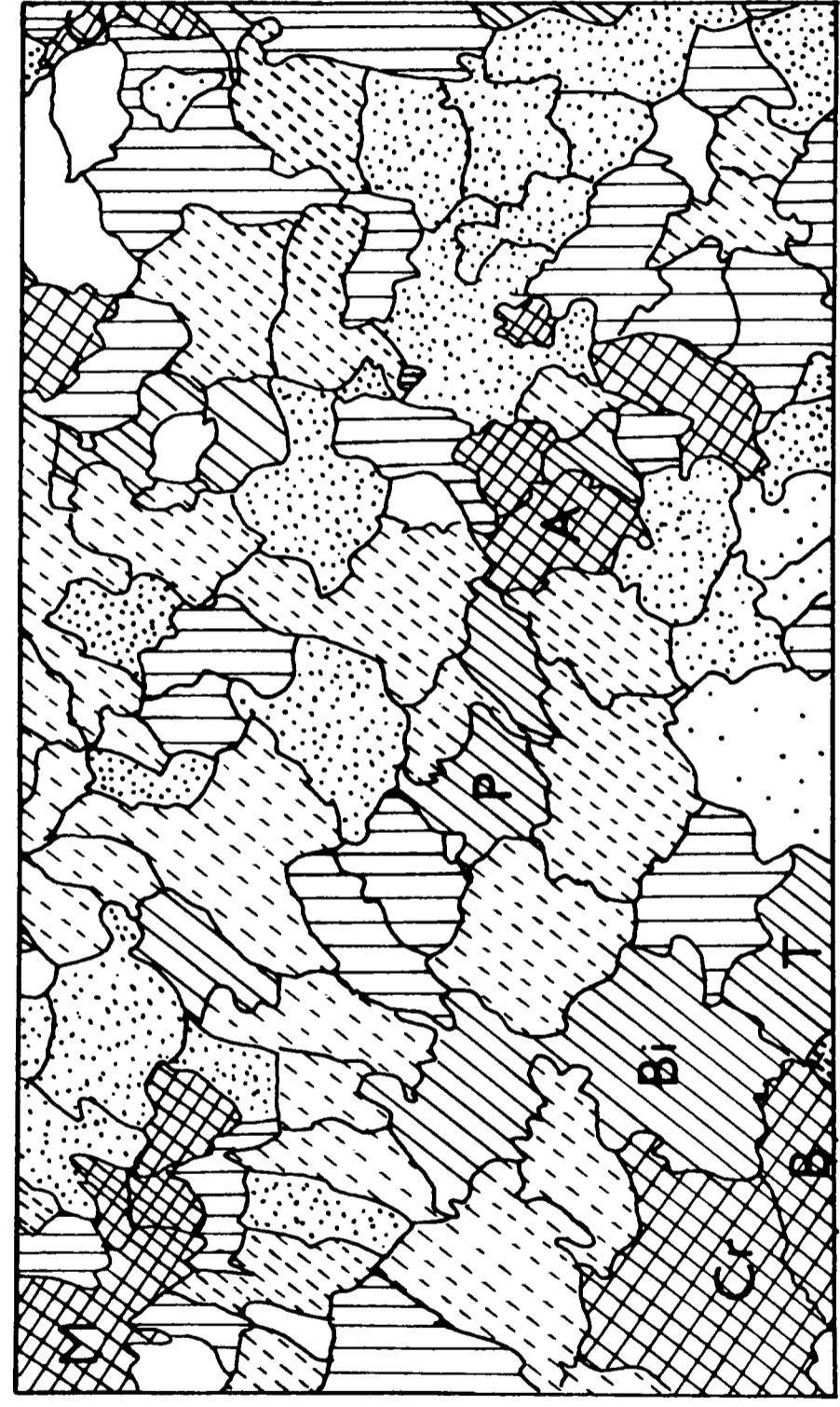
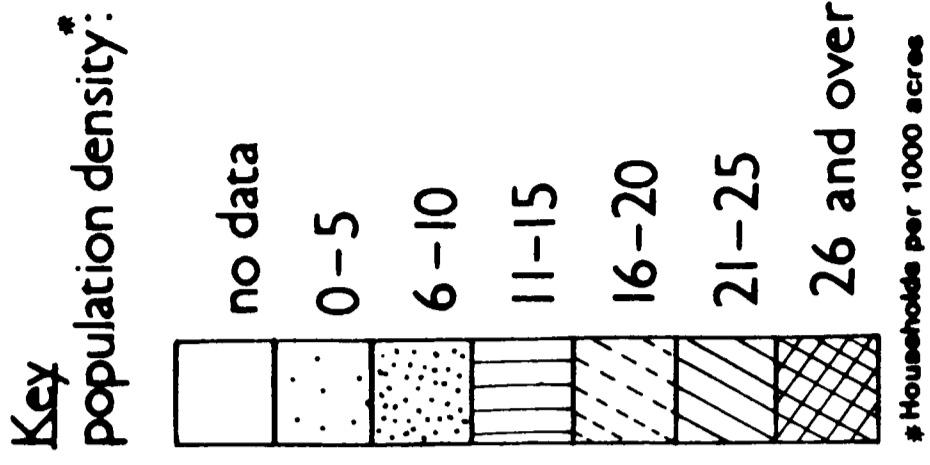
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1. Quoted in Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.117.

2. Quoted in R. Furley, A History of the Weald of Kent (Ashford, 1874), ii. 481-2.

3. The Victoria History of the County of Kent, ed. W. Page (London, Inst. of Hist. Research), iii. 405.

4. D.C. Coleman, 'The Economy of Kent Under the Later Stuarts' (London Univ. Ph.D. thesis 1951), p.149.



- A = Ashford
- C = Canterbury
- P = Pluckley
- Cr = Cranbrook
- M = Maidstone
- T = Tenterden
- B = Benenden
- Bi = Biddenden

**Fig. 1 . Population Density by Parish in Mid-Kent, 1563.**

Source: B.L.Har1.Mss.594, ff.63-84.

averages of 11-15 or below were more common. The cloth industry was one reason for this distribution; another was the fertility of the soils. This second aspect will be discussed at some length in the next chapter, but it can be noted at this point that moving eastwards from Pluckley along the Sandstone Ridge, and northwards to the Downs, the land becomes less fertile for farming; the soils stony and hard to work. This region to the east of Ashford -the least populated in mid-Kent- was probably still heavily wooded in the mid-sixteenth century.

In the first half of the seventeenth century, the High Wealden villages around Cranbrook and the lands of the Sandstone Ridge running south-east from Maidstone continued to be more densely settled than the Wealden Vales and the Downlands to the east of Ashford. In part, this pattern of population settlement was a consequence of its redistribution within the county. The deforestation of parts of the Weald and perhaps the Downs too, together with depopulation in Romney Marsh and Sheppey bear the hallmarks of intensifying farming practices. These processes along with the contraction of the wealden iron industry probably contributed to that 'new phenomenon of sixteenth century Kent', subsistence migration.

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1. See also the evidence assembled from parish register data in M. Zell, 'Population and Family Structure', p.235.

2. A. Everitt, 'The Making of the Agrarian Landscape of Kent', A.C., XCII (1976), p.7.

3. Dobson, 'Population, Disease and Mortality', Fig. 5.2, p.59.

4. P. Clark, 'The Migrant in Kentish Towns 1580-1640', in idem. & P. Slack (eds.), Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700 (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p.142.

Itinerant men and women, often desperately poor, would tramp to the squalid suburbs of towns like Maidstone and Canterbury, or to parishes where industrial by-employment or plentiful commons and wastes enabled them to scratch out a living. The economic pressures which forced migrants onto the roads were not confined to Kent however; perhaps a majority had left villages and towns outside the county, some had come from distant Lancashire and Yorkshire.<sup>1</sup>

Depopulation induced by agrarian change was not the only factor behind the dwindling size of communities in marshland and coastal Kent in the early seventeenth century. These parts of the county were notoriously unhealthy; this is reflected in the negative natural growth levels and high burial / baptism ratios found in Romney Marsh, Sheppey and the Northern and Thames-side Marshes throughout the 1626-81 period.<sup>2</sup>

Mary Dobson has argued that the contrast between population growth in regions like these and those displaying high natural increase levels and low burial / baptism ratios was offset by short-distance migration from communities with a considerable excess of baptisms (like that part of Kent north and east of the Downs summit) to those where baptisms were in deficit. In this way many marshland parishes may have been saved from extinction.<sup>3</sup>

Despite such processes, the population of north and east Kent probably increased substantially between 1563 and

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1. Ibid., Table 5, p.127.

2. See Dobson, op.cit., ch.8.

3. Ibid., p.84.

1626-46: in part because of a beneficial demographic regime; also because the increasing pace of economic life may have attracted new families to its villages and towns.<sup>1</sup> By 1626-46, the population density of the region immediately to the west of Canterbury (measured in baptisms per square mile) equalled that of the Sandstone Ridge and High Weald to the south.<sup>2</sup>

## II

Using Coleman's data from the 1663 Hearth Tax Returns, it is possible to examine changes in population density in mid-Kent in the century after 1563.<sup>3</sup> However, with the exception of parishes or groups of parishes Coleman designated 'urban', the data are presented in the form of hundredal aggregates.<sup>4</sup> For this reason our mapping of mid-Kent's population density in 1663 (Fig.2) necessarily lacks the precision of the earlier representation.

An additional hazard involved in comparing the figures for 1563 and 1663 is that unilinear patterns of population growth or decline over the century cannot be assumed. The high mortality and low fertility levels of the crisis-ridden 1590's, although stopping short of demographic disaster, 'probably dealt a shrewd blow at the demographic upsurge in late sixteenth century Kent.'<sup>5</sup> And in the period 1640-70, of 216 parishes in seven Kentish regions, a mean of 70% in each

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1. See B.M. Short, 'The South East: Kent, Surrey and Sussex', in J. Thirsk (ed.), The Agrarian History of England and Wales V: 1640-1750 (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985-6), p.142.

2. Dobson, op.cit., Fig. 5.2, p.59.

3. Coleman, 'The Economy of Kent', Appendix I.

4. Coleman (ibid., p.393) based his classification on J. Adams, Index Villaris (1690).

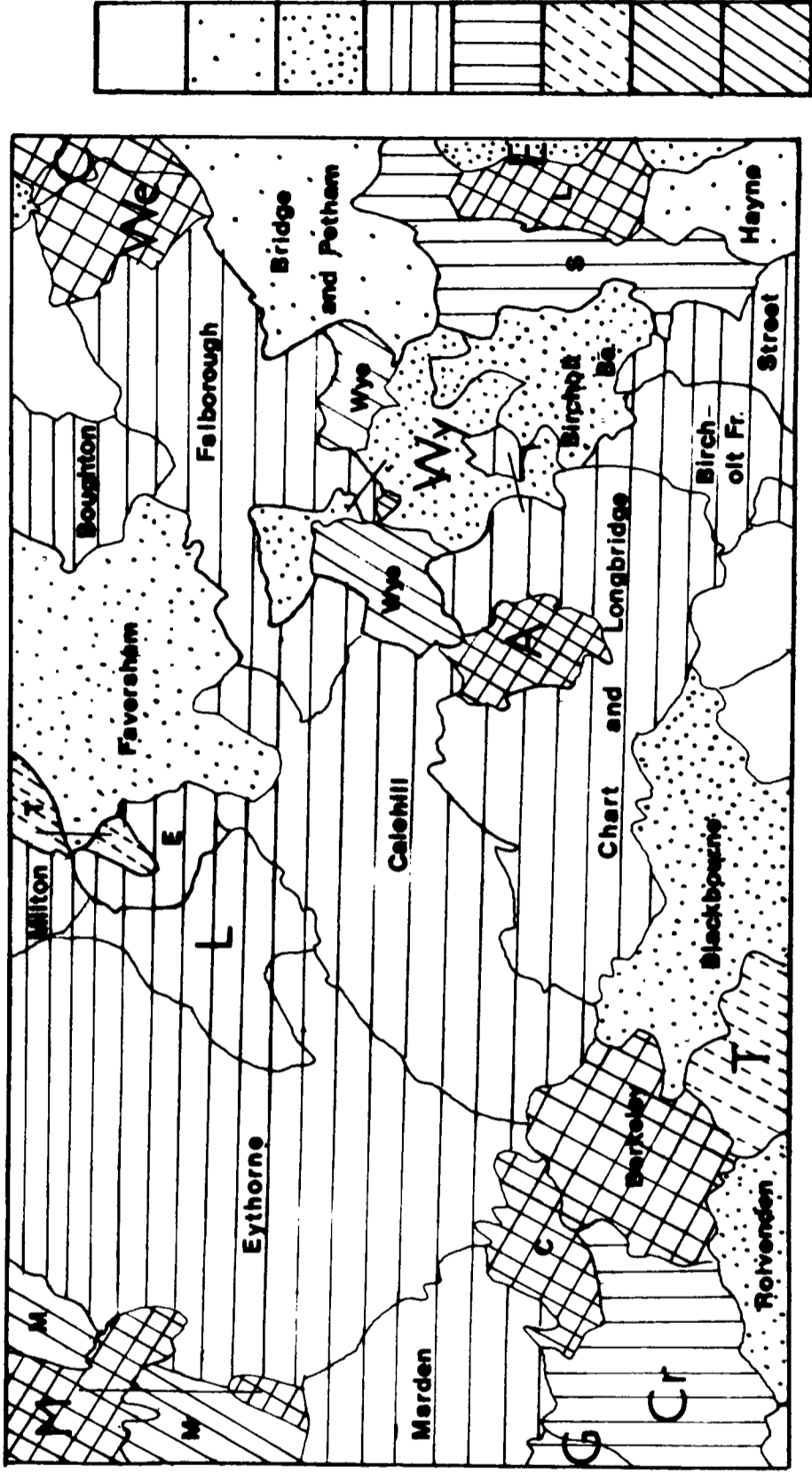
5. Clark, English Provincial Society, p.244.

Urban Areas (large characters)

- A = Ashford
- C = Canterbury
- Cr = Cranbrook
- E = Elham
- G = Goudhurst
- L = Lenham
- M = Maidstone
- T = Tenterden
- We = Westgate Hundred
- Wy = Wye

Rural Hundreds (small characters)

- C = Cranbrook
- E = Eythorne
- L = Loningborough
- M = Maidstone
- S = Stowting



KEY *
NO DATA
11-15
16-20
21-25
26-30
31-35
36-40
41 AND OVER

\* households per 1000 acres

Fig. 2. Urban and Rural Population Density in Mid-Kent 1663.

(Source: D.C. Coleman, 'The Economy of Kent Under the Later Stuarts', London Univ. Ph.D. thesis 1951, Appendix I)

declined absolutely in population.<sup>1</sup>

Nowhere is this more of a problem than when considering the High Weald: the cloth-dominated region of Cranbrook, Goudhurst and Tenterden. The wealden cloth industry was probably stagnating or in decline from the later Commonwealth or Restoration onwards; and, Coleman writes, 'there is little doubt that much distress existed among the cloth workers of Kent and elsewhere at this time.'<sup>2</sup> Without a thriving cloth industry, a vital link in the chain of subsistence was removed in many wealden communities, and the only option for large numbers of clothworkers and their families was emigration. The fact of this exodus is well-known; less apparent is the scale on which it took place.

The rector of Biddenden wrote in 1673 that the parish was 'not so populous now as formerly when the clothing trade there flourished'. Emigration from the region had begun as early as 1616 when the reverberations of the Cockayne Project brought a sharp depression to the industry. 2,000 cloth-workers may have left for the Palatinate at this time; and smaller numbers left for the Continent during the slump of the 1630s. Emigration continued throughout the century: clothworkers departed for Ireland as well as Continental Europe; and the names of men, women and children from the clothing towns of Kent are to be found among the graves of the first New England settlers.<sup>3</sup> Many more must have

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1. Dobson, op.cit., Table 5.8, p.81.

2. Coleman, op.cit., p.157.

3. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, pp.121-2, 35; Dobson, op.cit., p.78 & n.30.

taken up occupations in the thriving industries of Maidstone and Canterbury, or in the seaports of north and east Kent and the dockyard towns bordering the Thames estuary.<sup>1</sup>

Migration from the Kentish Weald made what Mary Dobson has called a 'striking "dent"...on the demographic scene.' We have noted that over south-east England as a whole, the number of baptisms fell by about 18% between 1601-40 and 1681-1720. In eight High Wealden parishes there were 17,515 baptisms in 1601-50, but only 8,809 in 1651-1700: a drop of almost 50%. Nonconformity was high in this region in the later seventeenth century, but:

'...even if we assume that dissenters ceased baptizing their children in the Church of England in the second half of the ...century, and added a figure to cover this loss, there would still have been 6,500 less [37%] baptisms in the second half of the seventeenth century than in the first'.(2)

The downward trend in wealden population was exacerbated by a changed age-structure resulting from migration: the population was getting older as well as smaller. Despite levels of emigration that may have taken 10-20% of the adult population away from some wealden communities, a 'mass of inert labour' still remained; and the evidence of the 1660s Hearth Tax returns indicates that poverty levels in the region were exceptionally high.<sup>3</sup>

In 1673, the inhabitants of Benenden bemoaned 'the great and general poverty in respect of the decay of the trade of cloth makeing with in the said parish, being the greatest

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1. Chalklin, op.cit., p.35.

2. Dobson, op.cit., p.78.

3. See Coleman, op.cit., pp.306,316; Chalklin, op.cit., p.255.

support of most of the inhabitants there'. When a propogandist for New World emigration wrote that 'this lande grows wearye of her inhabitants , who were of lesse prise among us than a horse or a sheepe', his comments must have had a bitter ring of truth about them for many clothworkers and their families dotted all over the Kentish Weald.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of this decline, the Weald remained -along with the London environs, the Faversham region and Thanet- the most densely-settled part of Kent. In 1676 these regions contained on average roughly 20-25 households per 1000 acres.<sup>2</sup> The High Weald was still more heavily populated than this, averaging over 28.5 households per 1000 acres.<sup>3</sup> At least as far east as Calehill Hundred (Fig. 2), it would seem that in 1663 population densities on the mid-Kent Sandstone Ridge and in the Low Weald were about equivalent (21-25 households per 1000 acres). This conforms to what Chalklin found for the Weald as a whole in 1676, but is rather higher than the density he suggested for the Ridge (c. 16-19 households per 1000 acres). As in 1563, the eastern half of the region evidences rather lower levels of settlement in 1663 than the west; with splashes of low density east of Ashford, in Blackbourne Hundred to the south, and Faversham to the north.

For the reasons we have indicated, rates of population

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1. Coleman, op.cit., p.162; Furley, A History of the Weald, ii. 570; Dobson, op.cit., p.78.

2. Chalklin's figures (op.cit., p.28) have been converted from 'adults per square mile' to households per 1000 acres to facilitate comparison. Adults were taken to comprise 60% of the population and 1 sq. mile to be equal to 64% of 1000 acres. The conventional multiplier of 4.75 has also been used. Conversions are necessarily approximate.

3. Dobson, op.cit., Fig. 5.4, p.60.

change 1563-1663 can only be calculated at the hundredal level, except where urban areas are concerned. In the High Wealden cloth towns of Cranbrook, Goudhurst, Tenterden and Biddenden, the numbers of households rose from 860 to 1171, an overall increase of 36% (Table 5). Yet north of the High Weald on the Sandstone Ridge and in the Low Weald, the rural hundreds of Marden, Eythorne, Calehill, Chart and Longbridge and Bircholt Barony and Franchise show a combined increase of 50%, from about 1808-2873 households. North and east of the Ridge in the rural hundreds of Boughton, Bridge and Petham, Faversham, Stowting, Loningborough, Milton, Tenham, Felborough and Wye a similar increase (52%) took place.

As might be expected, most of the smaller towns of the region (Ashford, Lenham, Wye) grew at a faster rate than the rural districts, taken as a whole. They increased from about 312 to 591 households, a rise of almost 90%. The exception to this pattern is Elham, where the population may have dwindled by some 13% between 1563 and 1663. All other parts of mid-Kent, however, were outstripped by the rapid growth of Maidstone and Canterbury; their combined population may have doubled in the century after 1560 from about 5,500 to almost 11,000.<sup>1</sup>

As we have noted, such estimates of population growth probably under-estimate the scale of growth up to the 1630's -since many villages shrunk in size after 1640. The relatively low rates of growth calculated for four clothing parishes in

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1. Figures for Canterbury are incomplete. Chalklin's estimates (op.cit., p.31) have been substituted.

Table 5. Population Growth Rates in Mid-Kent 1563-1663.

Region	Population (households)		
	1563	1663	% increase
<u>High Weald Cloth Parishes:</u>			
Biddenden	160	323	+102
Cranbrook	300	286	-5
Goudhurst	200	273	+37
Tenterden	200	289	+45
overall increase	860	1171	+36
<u>Rural Hundreds:</u>			
SANDSTONE RIDGE AND WEALD			
Bircholt Barony and Franchise	125	233	+78
Calehill	386	617	+60
Chart and Longbridge (ex. Ashford)	373	544	+46
Eythorne (ex. Lenham)	724	1004 (1)	+39
Marden (ex. Goudhurst)	200	327	+64
overall increase	1808	2725	+51
NORTH DOWNS AND NORTH KENT			
Boughton	204	228	+12
Bridge and Petham	211	227	+8
Faversham (ex. town)	339	455	+34
Felborough	240	406	+69
Loningborough (ex. Elham)	54	279	+417
Milton (ex. town)	547	688	+26
Stowting	76	154 (2)	+103
Tenham	120	224	+87
Wye (ex. town)	50	155 (3)	+210
overall increase	1841	2816	+53
<u>Rural Towns:</u>			
Ashford	120	256	+113
Elham	140	122	-13
Lenham	120	192	+60
Wye	72	143	+99
overall increase	452	713	+58

(continued)

Region	Population (households)		
	1563	1663	% increase
<u>Urban Centres:</u>			
Canterbury	842	1474 (4)	+75
Maidstone	300	804	+168
overall increase	1142	2278	+99

- (1) Totals exclude an estimate for Bicknor parish, missing in 1563.  
 (2) Totals exclude an estimate for Monks Horton parish, missing in 1563.  
 (3) Totals exclude an estimate for Eastwell parish, missing in 1563.  
 (4) Estimates for 1563 and 1663 based on C.W. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent: A Social and Economic History (London, Longmans, 1965), p.31.

Sources: B.L. Ms. Harl. 594, ff. 63-84; D.C. Coleman, 'The Economy of Kent Under the Later Stuarts' (London Univ. Ph.D. thesis 1951), Appendix I.

the High Weald may well reflect the process of out-migration we have discussed; and its implications for the age-structure of their populations. Cranbrook, indeed, seems to have dwindled in absolute terms (1563-1663), suggesting considerable emigration during the course of the seventeenth century.

Although mid-Kent's rural population rose by some 50% in this period, an increased proportion of the region's inhabitants were living in its urban centres by 1660. For parishes -like Pluckley- south of the Downs, it was above all the rapid growth of Maidstone that heralded the changing order:

'The wealth and importance of this town was one of the most significant aspects of the Kentish economy at this period. It dominated the rich and populous agricultural area of mid-Kent, sat astride the only navigable river of the county which provided a vital channel of communication from the Weald of Kent and Sussex, was within easy reach of London and had an early development of lighter industries and processing which was to be the stamp of Kent's subsequent pattern.'(1)

(iv) Demographic Change in Pluckley 1560-1700

I

Although parish registers were instituted by Thomas Cromwell in 1538, a mere 500 survive from this early date; and many of those lapsed during Queen Mary's reign (1553-8). Many more registers -like Pluckley's- commence soon after Elizabeth I became queen in 1558. As in most cases, the only surviving entries from the first forty years or so thereafter are copies

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1. Coleman, 'The Economy of Kent', p.239.

made in about 1597. An injunction of this date ruled that henceforth registers were to be kept on parchment, and all earlier entries transcribed.<sup>1</sup>

Together with a period of confused registration during the Civil War and Interregnum (1642-61), these years between the inception of registration in Pluckley (1560) and the beginning of the 1590s are the least reliable for demographic purposes. Indeed, among the entries for the years 1571-87 there are numerous references to this effect by John Picard, Pluckley's parson:

'The most of Christinenge[s] for this year [1571] were not to be founde in the ould Register.'

'There were no Mariges found in the old Booke, and but one burial that weare in this yeare [1587].' (2)

From the 1590s until 1641, there is no reason to believe that registration was not diligently executed, but from the latter date until 1662 the orderly form of the register was abandoned; with events of different kinds and from different years apparently randomly mixed. Burials were absent altogether for most of the 1640s, and marriages for most of the 1650s<sup>3</sup> too. Orderly registration was resumed in 1662 and so continued to the end of the century.

Apart from during these two periods of deficient registration, there are no year-long gaps among the entries for baptisms and burials. Marriages are a different matter, but that need not concern us here for it was felt that

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1. R. Finlay, Parish Registers: An Introduction (Hist. Geog. Research ser. 7, 1981), p.6.

2. K.A.O. P289/1/16. Post-Restoration vital events are recorded in a second volume: P289/1/17.

3. K.A.O. P289/1/16.

with numbers of marriages averaging only 3.26 yearly (during periods of reliable registration), variations could not be shown to be demographically significant. Lacunae of shorter duration than a year are difficult to pinpoint, since gaps of a few months in a register like Pluckley's with normally fewer than 50 events a year, may simply indicate a 'lack of business'<sup>1</sup> rather than under-registration.

A more serious problem of under-registration might be suggested by the fact that prior to 1584, Pevington (in the west of the present Pluckley village) was a separate parish. In fact, the parish of Pevington in the 1550s and '60s consisted of 'but two households' and a ruined church. When Archbishop Whitgift made the decision to unite the two parishes in 1584, he was merely formalizing a state of affairs already in existence: since at least 1557, the cure of Pevington (and therefore presumably of the hamlet's infrequent births and deaths) was the responsibility of the parson of Pluckley.<sup>2</sup>

Before examining the progress of population change in Pluckley, something should be said of two other causes of under-registration: variations in the birth-baptism interval and nonconformity. Recent research has suggested that the interval between birth and baptism in England was increasing during the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

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1. M. Drake, 'Introduction', in idem. (ed.), Population Studies from Parish Registers: A Selection of Readings from Local Population Studies (Matlock, Local Pop. Studs., 1981), p.xiv.

2. L.E. Whatmore (ed.), 'Archdeacon Harpsfield's Visitation, 1557', Cath.Rec.Soc., XLV-XLVI (1950-1), i. 121; K.A.O. Q1/7.

This means that the deaths of a rising number of infants went unrecorded in the baptism registers. Therefore (following the estimates made by E.A. Wrigley) 2%, 3.5% and 4% were added respectively to the baptism totals of 1560-99, 1600-49 and 1650-99 to account for missing infants.<sup>1</sup>

Potentially greater levels of under-registration could have resulted from the presence of nonconformists in the village, some of whom boycotted Anglican ceremonies. The Compton Census of 1676 asked incumbents to specify the number of 'nonconformists' in their village. Over Kent as a whole, nonconformists comprised just over 9% of the adult population. In Pluckley, the incumbent reported that only 5 of 250 adults (2%) were nonconformists; a particularly low figure, for in the Weald as a whole, 17% of adults worshipped outside the Anglican Church.<sup>2</sup>

Even assuming that all baptisms and burials affecting these dissenting families in Pluckley took place outside the auspices of the parish church, the effect on aggregate village levels would be slight. In fact, at least some nonconformist events probably found their way into the Anglican Register. Among the nonconformist sects, the Baptists seem to have dominated this part of Kent in the later seventeenth century. They did not generally practice infant baptism, but frequently

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1. E.A. Wrigley, 'Births and Baptisms: The Use of Anglican Baptism Registers as a Source of Information about the Numbers of Births in England before the Beginning of Civil Registration', Pop.Studs., XXXI, 2 (1977), 267-80.

2. Dobson, 'Population, Disease and Mortality', Appendix IV; A. Everitt, 'Nonconformity in Country Parishes', in J. Thirsk (ed.), 'Land Church and People', A.H.R. suppl. (1970), p.188.

had recourse to the parish church to bury their dead.<sup>1</sup>

If the Pluckley figures are correct, we should perhaps add 1-2% to the baptism totals 1662-1700, and no more than 0.5% to the burial totals.<sup>2</sup> The Pluckley figures may be an under-estimate, but even if they understate real nonconformity levels by 400%, under-registration for baptisms and burials would probably be no higher than 10% and 2.5% respectively.

## II

Annual totals (unadjusted) of baptisms and burials in Pluckley 1560- 1700 have been plotted in Figure 3 below. The trough in both baptisms and burials between 1560-90 and 1642-61 is clearly evident; and for the reasons we have indicated it was decided to omit these two periods from further demographic analysis. In the light of the two serious gaps in the demographic record, it was also decided that to transform the annual totals of baptisms and burials into smoothed out 'moving averages' would obscure more than it clarified.

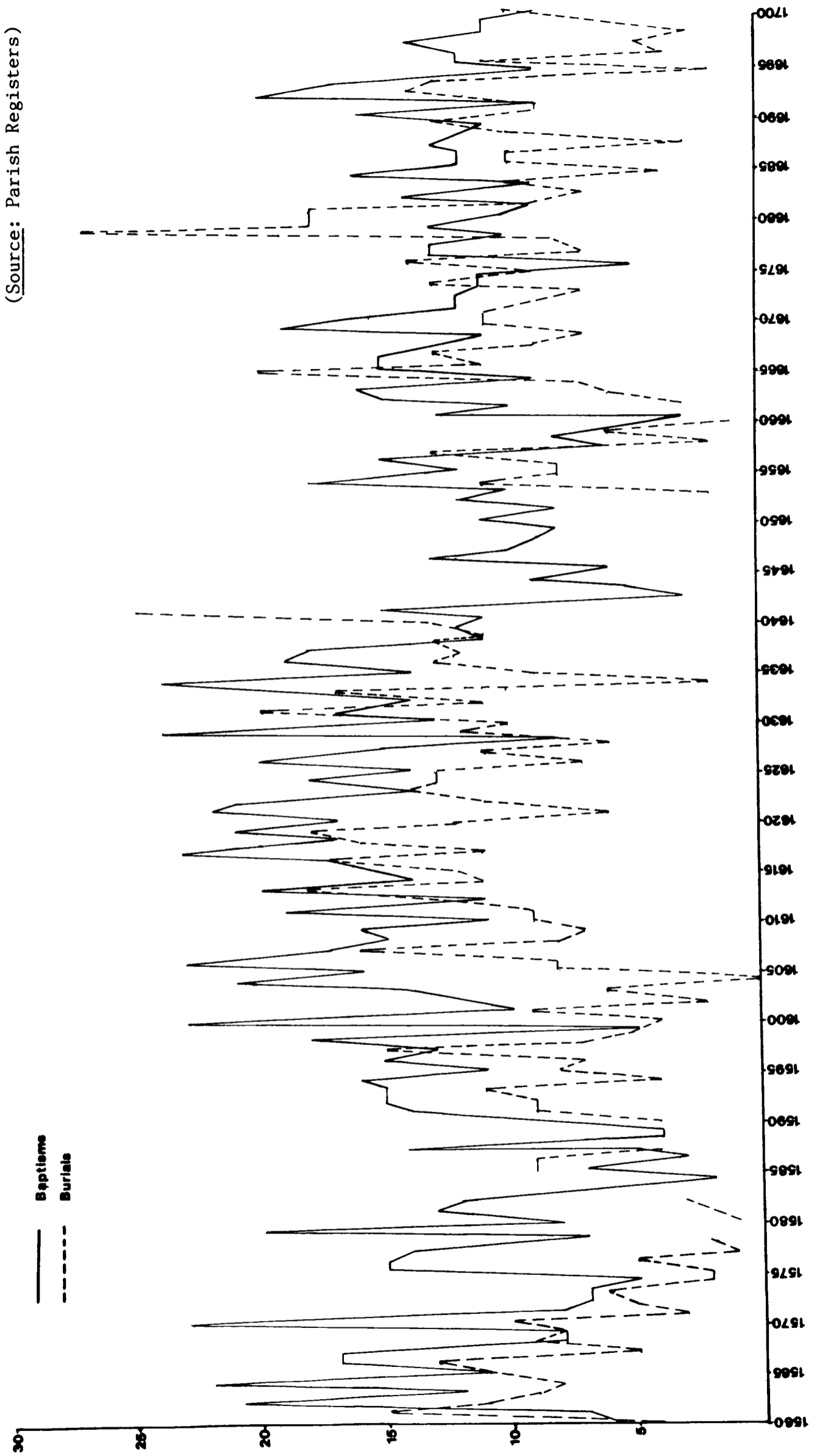
It can be seen from Figure 3 that from the early 1590's both baptisms and burials were rising. This continued into the 1620's, levelling off in the years leading up to the Civil War. Adjusting the baptism totals for the birth-baptism

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1. Drake, 'Introduction', p.xxi; G.F. Nuttall, 'Dissenting Churches in Kent Before 1700', J.Ecl.H., XIV (1963), 175-89.

2. The relative under-registration of baptisms and burials is calculated from Wrigley & Schofield, The Population History of England and Wales, Table 4.2, p.92.

Fig. 3. Annual Totals of Baptisms and Burials in Pluckley 1560-1700.



interval, the following numbers of baptisms and burials have been derived for the period 1591-1641:

Baptisms 845

Burials 538

During the period 1626-46, we have noted (above, Table 2) that natural growth rates on the Sandstone Ridge and in the Low Weald both averaged 0 to +25; and burial / baptism rates averaged 61 to 80 and 81 to 100 respectively. For Pluckley, using similarly unadjusted totals for the period 1626-4<sup>1</sup>~~6~~, we have a natural growth rate of +24 and a burial / baptism ratio of 77. This places natural population growth in the village in the mainstream of demographic experience in the Sandstone Ridge region.

By comparing these derived statistics with two earlier 16-year time periods 1594-1609 and 1610-25, a comparison of the rates of growth in the three periods can be made:

Period	Baptism & Burial Totals	Natural Growth Levels	Burial / Baptism Ratio
1594-1609	a:245 b:115	53	47
1610-1625	a:275 b:202	27	73
1626-1641	a:254 b:192	24	77

a = Baptisms b = Burials

Table 6. Natural Growth Levels and Burial / Baptism Ratios in Pluckley, 1594-1641 (Source: Parish Registers).

The high natural growth levels and low burial : baptism ratios of the period 1594-1609 compared with the two

subsequent ones is immediately apparent. During the earlier period there were over twice as many baptisms as burials (245 : 115), while baptism totals in the later two periods were only 36% and 32% higher than those for burials (275 : 202, 254 : 192). Both baptisms and burials were rising up to 1610-25; both fell by similar amounts thereafter.

The fact that both baptisms and burials were rising up to 1610-25 seems to confirm that Pluckley's population was also rising in this period. But as R.S. Schofield points out:

'...the same pattern could be produced by a rise in both fertility and mortality with no change in the size of the population. In this case, the "surplus" population (of baptisms over burials) will have emigrated.'<sup>(1)</sup>

Aggregative analysis in itself offers no solution to such problems of interpretation, since 'when we are considering numbers of events alone we have no means of separating the effects of changes in fertility from the effects of changes in population size.'<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, we do not have population estimates for Pluckley at any date between the 1560's and 1660's. There is, however, no ground for thinking that there was emigration from the village in the period up to 1625. Indeed, the presence in the village of employment in the cloth industry, together, perhaps, with land newly cleared from the forest in its southern half, may have attracted new families to Pluckley in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. But the fact that numbers of baptisms and burials did not increase

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1. R.S. Schofield, 'Some Notes on Aggregative Analysis in a Single Parish', Local Pop. Studs., V (1970), pp.12-3.

2. Ibid., p.12.

dramatically between 1594-1609 and 1610-25 argues against a large influx of migrants.

In the 1550s and '60s, Pluckley's population probably stood at some 360 to 375 inhabitants. The evidence of the Hearth Tax returns suggests that by the early 1660s it had risen by a relatively modest 27%-32%<sup>1</sup> to 475. Yet assuming that Pluckley's population in 1590 was roughly equivalent to that thirty years earlier, a calculation of 'natural increase' based on the surplus of baptisms over burials would indicate that by 1640 village population levels had almost doubled to reach a figure of between 650 and 700.

It is likely that Pluckley's population in 1590 was somewhat greater than the estimates for the 1550s and '60s, suggesting an even higher 'natural' population level by 1640 than this. It is possible that mortality crisis hitting the village in the 1640s or '50s accounts for some of the shortfall between estimated population at the Restoration and that suggested by natural increase. However, a proportion of that shortfall -and probably a large one- must have been the result of emigration from Pluckley in the seventeenth century, as the Kentish broadcloth industry (an important source of by-<sup>2</sup> employment in the village) went into decline from the 1630s.

In considering Pluckley's demographic regime from the Restoration to the end of the century, the raw totals of baptisms and burials have again been adjusted to account for the birth / baptism interval of the period. In addition the

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1. Bod.L. Ms. Tanner 240, f.35; B.L. Ms. Harl. 594, f.69; K.A.O. Q/RTh.

2. See below, chapter 2(b).

baptism and to a lesser extent the burial totals have been increased to accomodate 'low' and 'high' levels of nonconformity in the village (2% and 10%).

	Crude Totals 1662-1700	+4% adjustment for birth:baptism interval	Low Non- conformity*	High Non- conformity**
A	485	504	514	555
B	394	394	396	404

A = Baptisms; B = Burials

\*Low Nonconformity= +2% (baptisms) and +0.5% (burials)

\*\* High Nonconformity= +10% (baptisms) and +2.5% (burials)

Table 7. Baptism and Burial Totals in Pluckley 1662-1700.  
(Source: Parish Registers)

During the period from 1662-1700, there remained a surplus of baptisms over burials, though the gap between the two narrowed somewhat: between 1591-1641 and 1662-1700 burials as a proportion of baptisms rose from 64% to 73-77%.

The Kentish regions of the Sandstone Ridge and Low Weald evidenced average natural growth rates of 0 to +25 and 0 to -25 respectively in the period 1661-81; and burial / baptism ratios of 81 to 100 and 101 to 120 (Table 3). Taking the unadjusted baptism and burial totals in Pluckley 1662-81 (1661 is defective), it can be seen that the village's demographic experience fell once again within the range which Dobson plotted for the Sandstone Ridge: a natural growth rate of 8, and a burial / baptism ratio of 92. As in 1626-46 Pluckley seems to have enjoyed a healthier demographic regime than the villages of the Weald to the south.

In order to compare more precisely the demographic

trends of the later seventeenth century with those of the earlier period, both sets of data need to be adjusted to minimise biases caused by under-registration. Therefore the natural growth rates and burial / baptism ratios of 1594-1609, 1610-25 and 1626-41 (Table 6) have been re-worked allowing for the birth-baptism interval (Table 8 below). Post-Restoration figures have been adjusted as in Table 7.

Period	Natural Increase		Burial / Baptism Ratio	
1594-1609	54		46	
1610-1625	29		71	
1626-1641	27		73	
	A	B	A	B
1669-1684	9	14	91	86
1685-1700	38	41	62	59

Note: A= Low Nonconformity (2% of adults); B= High Nonconformity (10% of adults)

Table 8. Adjusted Natural Growth Levels and Burial / Baptism Ratios in Pluckley 1594-1700.  
(Source: Parish Registers)

Although Pluckley's population continued to generate a surplus of baptisms in the later seventeenth century, the reduced level of demographic activity is clear from Figure 3. Even when adjustments are made for under-registration, the average number of baptisms each year was 18-25% lower in the period 1662-1700 than in 1591-1641. And despite the increase in burial totals relative to baptisms, average burials each year dropped somewhat in the later seventeenth century.

Even in the period 1669-84, which included three years of high mortality, one of 'crisis' proportions, total numbers of burials remained short of their 1610-25 levels. These

years did, however, mark the only time in Pluckley's demographic history between 1560 and 1700 when a deficit of burials threatened to become a surplus. At the end of the century the village's demographic prospects brightened with the surplus of baptisms over burials reaching its highest since the turn of the seventeenth century.

We have argued that Pluckley's population in the 1660s and '70s was considerably smaller than in the 1610s and '20s. If the village's population did grow in the later seventeenth century, it was not a marked rise; for in 1758 Pluckley's population was little different from its 1660<sup>1</sup> level. It seems that in this Kentish scarpland village, as in south east England as a whole 'the scale and size of life in [the] early eighteenth century... was little different from what it had been a hundred years earlier.'<sup>2</sup>

### III

In addition to reflecting broad movements in mortality levels, the demographic record in Pluckley was punctured at several points by sharp peaks in the number of deaths. On four occasions during the years 1591-1641 and 1662-1700, these peaks reached 'crisis' proportions, according to R.S. Schofield's definition:<sup>3</sup> twice in the first half of the seventeenth century and twice in the second. Mary Dobson observes:

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1. In 1758, a Bishop's visitation recorded Pluckley's population as 411 (Dobson, 'Population, Mortality and Disease, Appendix 3).

2. Ibid., p.72.

3. R.S. Schofield, 'Crisis Mortality', Local Pop. Studs., IX (1973); repr. in Drake (ed.), Population Studies, 97-108.

'The smaller parishes of downland and lowland regions, unlike the sprawling wealden parishes, were prone to a doubling or trebling of average burials...perhaps once in every 20 or 30 years.' (1)

Pluckley sat astride the border between upland and lowland Kent, but its experience of mortality crises followed the 'upland' pattern, with major burial peaks every twenty years or so during the periods for which we have reliable evidence.

Paul Slack has noted that only rarely did mortality crises in early modern England coincide with periods of near-famine.<sup>2</sup> In Pluckley such a coincidence occurred only once, in 1631. The harvest of 1630 was the worst since the 1590's,<sup>3</sup> with all grains at least 40% above their normal price levels. Indeed between June 1629 and Autumn 1630 Kentish corn prices more than doubled; and the supply problem was exacerbated by large-scale grain shipments abroad and by the greedy demands of the Capital. The situation was yet worsened by a continuing slump in the county's industry and the spread of the plague to several Kentish towns.<sup>4</sup>

'The harvest of 1630 was bad, the spring of 1631 therefore critical'.<sup>5</sup> It was in these months of acute distress that the heaviest fatalities in Pluckley occurred. Eight died between January and March 1631. To put this seemingly low figure in perspective, the annual average of deaths in the

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1. Dobson, op.cit., pp. 186-7.

2. P. Slack, 'Mortality Crises and Epidemic Disease in England 1485-1610', in C. Webster (ed.), Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), p.10.

3. W.G. Hoskins, 'Harvest Fluctuations and English Economic History 1620-1759', A.H.R., XVI, 1 (1968), 15-31.

4. Clark, English Provincial Society, p.350.

5. Hoskins, op.cit., p.20.

five years either side of 1631 was 11.3. Six died in the following three months, and thereafter mortality levels began to drop (3: July to September; 3: October to December).

The seasonal distribution of mortality rules out plague and dysentery as the causes of death, while its relatively long duration makes influenza unlikely. The absence of a trough in baptisms suggests that famine-induced starvation was not at work here either. Smallpox could have been responsible for the deaths, but the winter and spring mortality peaks, together with the seemingly small number of deaths among children points to typhus. Of the 20 who died in the village, only 3<sup>1</sup> were children, marginally less than in a normal year.

	1626	1627	1628	1629	1630	1631	1632	1633	1634	1635	1636
A	0	3	1	6	7	3	6	7	2	5	3
B	7	8	6	12	10	20	11	17	2	4	10

A = Children B = Adults

Table 9. Adult and Child Mortality Totals in Pluckley 1626-36.

(Source: Parish Registers)

Although there is no suggestion of famine in Pluckley itself, the presence of typhus in these 'locust years', if proven by further <sup>a</sup>research, may not have been unrelated to the harvest crisis of 1630-1. Conceptions leading to baptisms fell sharply in these years in the seventeen south-eastern parishes analysed by Dobson, pointing to severe food shortage. In such conditions, an epidemic of typhus -the 'famine fever'- could have struck a population whose physical defenses had become

1. 'Normal' = 11-year moving average centred on 1631.

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weakened by malnutrition.

The other peaks of high mortality (1641, 1665 and 1679) do not show a close connection between epidemic disease and harvest crisis. Though the epidemic of ague, smallpox and influenza coincided with a 'deficient' harvest (1678) and a 'bad' one (1679), there is no evidence of a widespread food shortage on the scale of the 1590s or the 1630s.<sup>2</sup>

In 1641 both smallpox and plague were reported in parts of south-east England. Andrew Applebey has noted that plague occurred rarely in rural areas. Yet Pluckley was a short six miles from Ashford, where plague had struck in 1625.<sup>3</sup> Twenty-five died in Pluckley in 1641, the second highest total in the century. The seasonal distribution of plague follows a conventional pattern:

'The first cases appeared in the late spring or early summer, then mortality curved upwards to a peak in late summer or early autumn, followed by a decline with plague deaths stopping altogether about 1 December.'<sup>4</sup>

In Pluckley, only three died in the first three months of the year; eight in the second three months and nine between July and September. Between October and the end of the year, levels dropped to five.

In 1665 several of the Thames and Medway towns were 'miserably infected' with the plague, while Dover may have

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1. Dobson, 'Population, Disease and Mortality', Fig. 7.8, p.236; A.B. Applebey, 'Disease or Famine? Mortality in Cumberland and Westmorland 1580-1640', Ec.H.R., 2nd ser. XXV (1973), p.413; Clark, op.cit., p.322.

2. Hoskins, op.cit., p.29; Dobson, op.cit., pp.258-60.

3. Dobson, op.cit., pp. 248, 242; Applebey, op.cit., p.405; Clark, op.cit., p.406.

4. Applebey, op.cit., pp.253-4.

lost between a quarter and a third of its population between 1665 and 1667. By 1666 Maidstone and Canterbury had become affected and the epidemic began to spread into the Kentish countryside. Ashford was on a main road to London from the Kentish coast where (among other places) the outbreak might have originated.<sup>1</sup> The high mortality level in Pluckley (20) for 1665 may suggest that plague had reached the village. Deaths there peaked in April-June (8) with rather lower levels in January-March (6) and July-September (5).

1678 marked 'the first of the most unhealthy set of years in 17th and 18th century south-east England.' It was in the midst of this disease-ridden period, in 1679, that Pluckley experienced its most serious mortality crisis, when twenty-seven people died. According to Mary Dobson, the early months of the year saw high mortalities caused by smallpox, perhaps aided by relapses of the fever ('ague') which had wrought a heavy toll in some parishes in the autumn of 1678. The ague returned in the following autumn and influenza in the winter. Mortality in Pluckley was almost 2.5 times greater than the annual average in 1679, and it remained high (59% above average) in the two succeeding years. By autumn 1682 mortality levels in Pluckley had subsided. The ague does not appear to have returned; an absence noted elsewhere in the region.<sup>2</sup>

In all, 63 people (42 adults and some 21 children) died in this three-year epidemic visitation. If our population

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1. Dobson, op.cit., pp.253-4.

2. Ibid., pp.258-60.

estimate for the 1670's is about right, somewhere between 14% and 18% of Pluckley's adult population was lost.<sup>1</sup> Such statistics put in their context the remarks of John Picard, Pluckley's parson, who jotted in the parish register in 1604:

'There died not one in this parish in this whole yeare praise to God in whome wee live for through Christ the true spirituall and eternal life of our soules...'(2)

The parish of Pluckley comprised one of a number of densely-settled communities located on the scarp edge of the Sandstone Ridge. As elsewhere in mid-Kent, it would seem that the high population levels of the area reflected the critical contribution of textile by-employment in creating employment opportunities in the local economy.

Although the natural growth levels of Pluckley's population placed its demographic experience within the mainstream of the Sandstone Ridge region, its net population growth rate over the period 1560-1660 was at about 30% considerably lower than the rate of 50% calculated for rural mid-Kent as a whole. Some part of the shortfall between 'natural' and 'real' demographic growth in the village could have been the result of unrecorded mortality crisis during the Interregnum period. However, a proportion of that shortfall -and probably a substantial one- must have derived from emigration following the contraction of employment in the Wealden cloth industry; a process which had begun to gather pace by the 1630s.

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1. The figure for children is probably somewhat inflated since a listing in the parish register as the son/daughter of someone did not necessarily imply an age at death of under 16.

2. K.A.O. P289/1/16.

Chapter 2. Economic Structures

(a) The Farming Economy: An Agricultural Revolution?

(i) The Geography of Farming in Mid-Kent

I

If Kent's geology makes the geography of the county 'complicated', this is nowhere more the case than in mid-Kent (Fig.4). The land slopes gradually southward from the summit of the North Downs -the 'Hog's Back of Kent'- and meets first Holmesdale and then the Sandstone Ridge, before levelling out into the Wealden Plain below. It is where this second escarpment abuts upon the Weald that the village of Pluckley lies. In fact, the edge of the 'Lower Greensand' formation which marks the boundary of the Sandstone Ridge traverses the middle of the village, as Bane and Gethin-Jones's survey<sup>1</sup> shows.

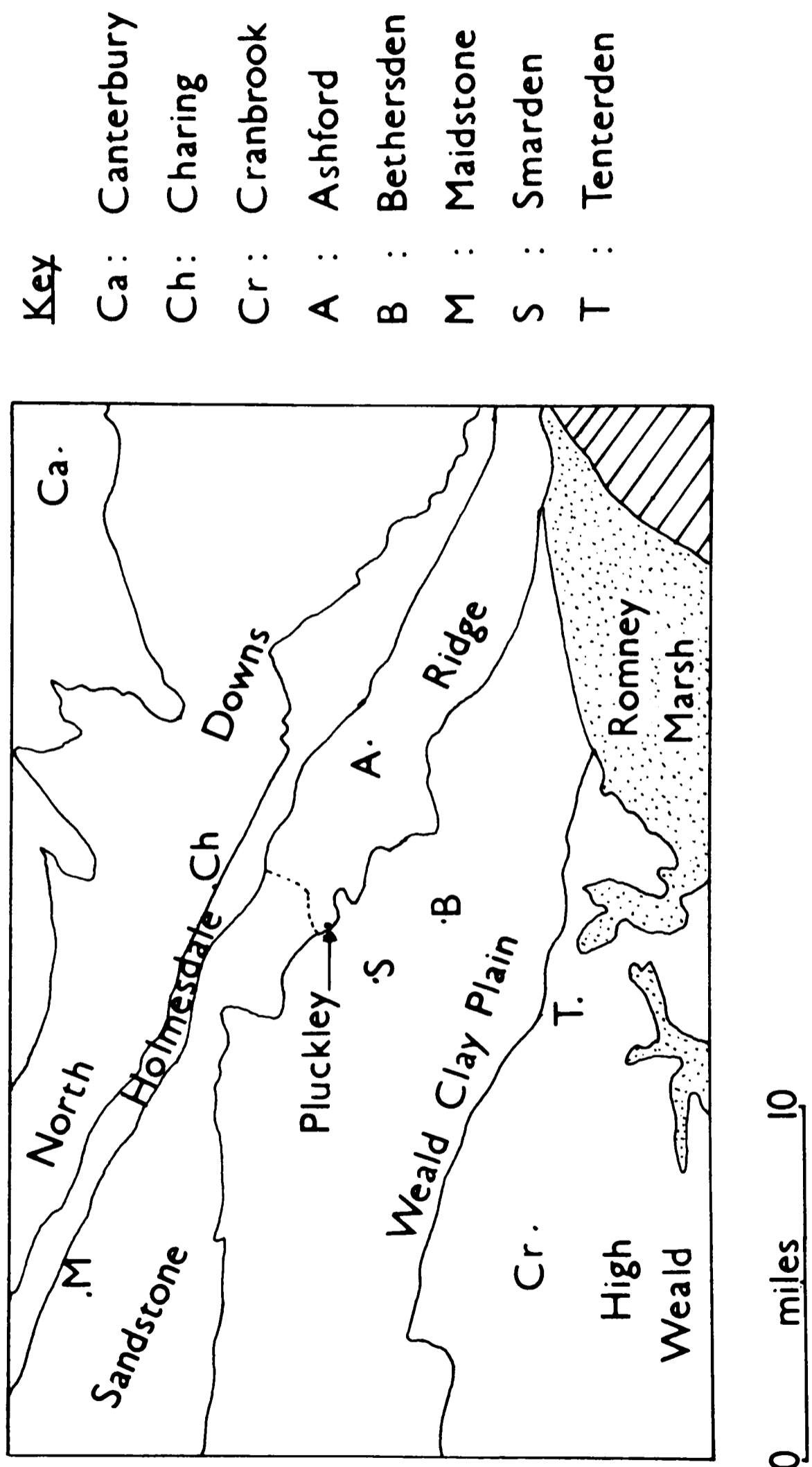
This ridge, running parallel to the chalk-topped Downs rises in places to a height of about 200 metres; though in the area we are concerned with, it peaks at just over half that. The ragstone and hassock underlying this part of the ridge produce soils highly variable in their quality:

'In mid-Kent there are limited areas of deep, silty, brown earths on brick earths, together with loamy soils over the Hythe Beds ragstone and hassock, which are more variable; deep, retentive yet well-drained soils are intermixed with others that are shallow, imperfectly drained or stony. Most of these soils in mid-Kent are

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1. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.9; J.Boys, General View of the Agriculture of Kent (Brentford, 1794), p.76; W. Bane & G.H. Gethin-Jones, 'Fruit-Growing Areas on the Lower Greensand in Kent', Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries Bulletin, LXXX (1934).

Fig.4. The Geology of Farming in Mid-Kent



(Source: G.H. Garrad, A Survey of the Agriculture of Kent, London, Royal Agric. Soc., 1954, map 3)

suitable for arable crops, and the best are excellent for growing fruit and hops...'(1)

It is on the 'ragstone' section of the escarpment that the best soils are to be found. Confusingly, the terms 'Ragstone' and 'Kentish Rag' are sometimes used to describe the ridge as a whole, but strictly speaking, both characterize a stretch of hills about fifteen miles long running approximately from Mereworth eastwards to Boughton Malherbe.<sup>2</sup> A triangle formed of this stretch of escarpment as its base, Maidstone at its centre and Aylesford at its apex delimits a region of rich, well-drained, loamy soils -among the most fertile in the county- and now, as in the early modern period,<sup>3</sup> a noted centre of fruit and hop production.

The village of Pluckley lies just to the east of the Ragstone, where the hassock-based soils though somewhat heavier in texture, and scattered with unweathered stone fragments, remain highly productive.<sup>4</sup> G.H. Garrad writes of this region:

'Moving eastwards from Boughton Malherbe through Egerton, Little Chart and Mersham to Aldington and Lympe, the elevation of the hills continues to fall and the proportion of fruit becomes less and less. It is,

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1. C.P. Burnham, 'The Soils of Kent', Cantium, IV, 3 (1972), p.62.

2. Bane & Gethin-Jones, op.cit., p.3; G.H. Garrad, A Survey of the Agriculture of Kent (London, Royal Agric. Soc., 1954), p.39.

3. Bane & Gethin-Jones, op.cit., p.3; Burnham, op.cit., p.62; Garrad, op.cit., p.39; Everitt, 'The Making of the Agrarian Landscape', p.7; Victoria History of Kent, i. 462; Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, ch.5.

4. Bane & Gethin-Jones, op.cit., pp.45-50; Boys, General View of the Agriculture of Kent, pp.77-8; Victoria History of Kent, i. 462.

however, good open farming country on rolling hills...'  
(1)

Garrad's is a modern appraisal. In 1798 William Marshall wrote that :

'The lands of the face of the hill, though steep and rugged are of a very superior quality, strong loam on rock, resembling those of the district of Maidstone.'  
(2)

Writing at the same date, Edward Hasted in his History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent described the northern half of Pluckley in similar terms:

'The soil of this parish is much the same as Egerton, Boughton and other adjoining ones in the like situation on the summit of these hills, where the Quarry Stone prevails, and is there very fertile both for corn and hops.'  
(3)

On the top of Pluckley Hill stands St. Nicholas's Church; according to Hasted a recognised northern boundary of the Weald, and one of a 'string of churches stretched along the face of the hill.'<sup>4</sup> From this village high-point of about a hundred metres, the land falls steeply to the south, dropping by sixty metres in two miles (Fig.5). In this flatter, southern part of the village, Hasted found 'a miry, deep clay,<sup>5</sup> covered with woods, broad hedge rows and spreading oaks.' In general terms, Hasted's dual characterization of Pluckley's soils corresponds with the geological hiatus in the village mapped by Bane and Gethin-Jones.

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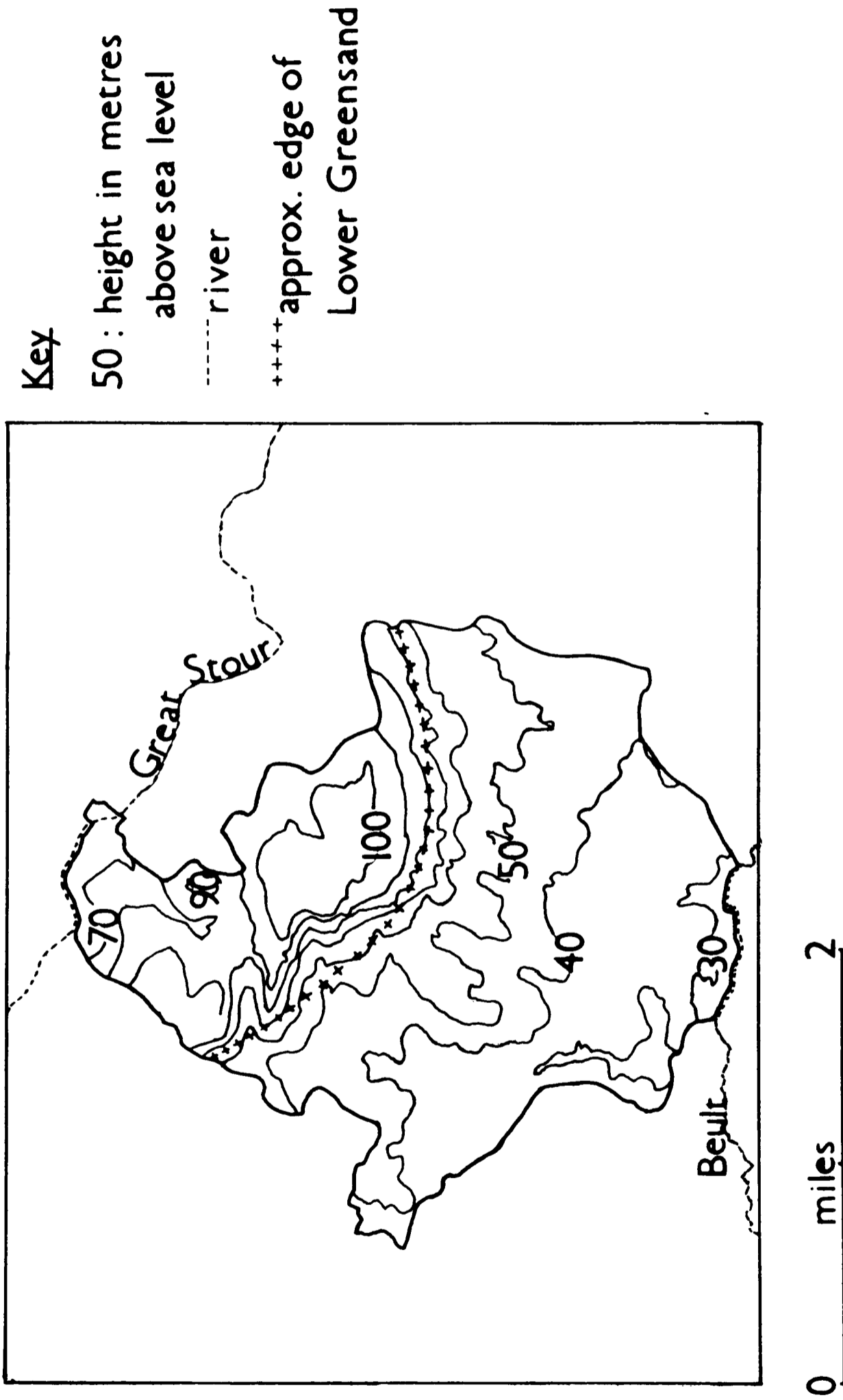
1. Garrad, Survey of the Agriculture of Kent, p.39.

2. W. Marshall, The Rural Economy of the Southern Counties (London, 1798), i. 343.

3. E. Hasted, The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent (London, 1797-1801), vii. 464.

4. Ibid., p.463; Marshall, op.cit., i. 344.

5. Hasted, op.cit., vii. 464.



**Fig. 5. The Parish of Pluckley: Geography and Geology.**

(Sources: Ordnance Survey 1:50,000, sheet 189; W. Bane and G.H. Gethin-Jones, 'Fruit Growing Areas on the Lower Greensand in Kent', Min. of Agric. and Fish. Bull., LXXX (1934), map at end of volume)

The outcrop of Weald Clay in Kent covers some 85,000 acres (about one eighth of the county), but is by no means uniform in character. It is overlain in various places by patches of loam or gravel; superficial deposits that can radically alter land values.<sup>1</sup> At the northern edge of this four to six mile band, G.H. Garrad notes,

'At the junction of the Weald Clay and the Lower Greensand, on the lower slope of the Greensand escarpment, there is a heavy loam on a gentle southern slope where the soil is not so stiff and the drainage is much better [than elsewhere in the Weald]'. (2)

Marshall too commented on the improved quality of Wealden soils as one moved northwards from the River Beult (on Pluckley's southern boundary); this is probably the result of the admixture of Wealden clays with Greensand loams.<sup>3</sup>

## II

'Although the relationship between geology and landscape is never one of simple determinism, it is impossible to get away from the profound influence of geology in Kent in any consideration of its settlement, topography, [or] agrarian history...'(4)

It was the easily-worked and fertile soils derived from the Oldhaven Beds, Thanet Sands and Brickearths which together with its coastal proximity attracted some of Kent's earliest settlers to that part of the county north and east of the Downs.<sup>5</sup>

Beginning in the 5th Century A.D., this earliest phase of Kentish settlement was also associated with the

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1. Garrad, Survey of the Agriculture of Kent, p.34.

2. Ibid., p.36.

3. Marshall, op.cit., i. 343; The Victoria History of Kent, i. 462.

4. Everitt, 'The Making of the Agrarian Landscape', p.6.

5. Ibid., p.7.

colonization of the river valleys traversing the county at right-angles to the Downs -the valleys of the Medway, the Stour rivers, and the Darent and Cray. In addition, a ribbon of villages became established along the scarp-foot of the Downs, the source of several of these rivers or their tributaries<sup>1</sup>.

The establishment of a permanent settlement in Pluckley -bordering the Great Stour as it flows parallel to the Downs towards Ashford before turning inland- probably belongs to the earliest phase of settlement : its etymology points to a Saxon clearance in the forests of the Sandstone Ridge<sup>2</sup>.

Although Pluckley was one of many scarp-edge villages established by 1086, much of this 'Chartland' was not so populous and remained heavily wooded<sup>3</sup>. South of the Ridge, in the Weald, permanent settlement was a rarity in this period; but in the summer months pigs would be brought from all over the settled parts of the county to temporary pastures -or dens- cleared from the Wealden forest<sup>4</sup>.

Vestiges of this structure survived into the early

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1. Ibid., pp.21-4.

2. J.T. White, The South-East Down and Weald: Kent, Surrey and Sussex (London, Methuen, 1977), p.99.

3. Gulley, 'The Wealden Landsape', Appendix 3. According to Alan Everitt (op.cit., p.7), this alternative name for the Sandstone Ridge derives from the Norwegian kart which means 'rough rocky sterile soil': a fitting description for the poor soils covering much of this region.

4. Ibid., p.22; E.M.J. Campbell, 'Kent', in idem. & H.C. Darby (eds.), The Domesday Geography of South-East England (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1962), p.558; F.W. Jessup, A History of Kent (Chichester, Phillimore, 1974), p.45; White, op.cit., pp.96-7.

modern period, long after such transhumance had disappeared. Many of the larger manors on the hills of Down- and Chartland Kent retained outlying parcels in the Weald; their relationship with the parent manor reduced to 'purely the petty financial one'<sup>1</sup>.

In Pluckley, Sheerland Manor continued to possess 'den' lands in the seventeenth century, lying both within the village (probably in its southern 'wealden' half) and in nearby Smarden and Biddenden. At least three other manors held den lands in Pluckley in this period; including that of Little Chart, lying in the parish of the same name on Pluckey's north-eastern boundary. Little Chart Manor held den lands in seven other villages scattered all over the Weald, among them Goudhurst and Cranbrook.<sup>2</sup>

In the 12th and 13th centuries at the same time as the more remote and infertile parts of Down- and Chartland Kent were being settled, the first large-scale inroads were made on the woodlands of the Weald; part of a process of forest clearance at work all over the country.<sup>3</sup> Often, it seems, the old drovedens formed the nucleus of the new homesteads, surrounded by lands freshly cleared from the forest. Assarting on this scale took place in the context of a remarkable demographic expansion in Kent : between Domesday and the early

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1. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.48.

2. K.A.O. U1107/M6; Furley, History of the Weald, ii. 704, 709; G. Ward, 'The Lost Dens of Little Chart', A.C., LVIII (1946), 1-8. For other examples see Jessup, op.cit., p.45.

3. Everitt, 'The Making of the Agrarian Landscape', p.25; W.G. Hoskins, The Making of the English Landscape (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1970), pp.86-94; idem., English Landscapes (London, B.B.C. Books, 1973), pp.23-5.

14th century, the county's population may have increased three-fold<sup>1</sup>.

On the lands newly reclaimed from the wealden forest, 'mixed farming showed a certain bias towards animal husbandry' (particularly cattle); though 'indifferent arable crops'<sup>2</sup>, mainly oats and wheat, were also grown. By the early 14th century, farming systems in Holmesdale and on the hills of the Sandstone Ridge had become differentiated from those practiced on the claylands below. The region was notable for the flexibility of its husbandry. While 'the principal contrast between this locality and the Weald was the greater importance here of sheep and wheat'<sup>3</sup>, some manors seem to have kept no sheep, and the relative importance of wheat and oats to have varied from manor to manor<sup>3</sup>.

There were a number of phases of concentrated clearance and settlement in the Weald in subsequent centuries, but according to J.L.M. Gulley, it was the century after 1550 that witnessed the most sustained attack on the Wealden forest<sup>4</sup>. As in the earlier period, this process was associated first and foremost with the expansion of population in the region; but it was aided by the demands of wealden industry -particularly that of the iron furnaces and forges. These were spreading rapidly throughout the western Weald in the first half of the 16th century; the hammering of the forges,

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1. Everitt, op.cit., p.25; Chalklin, op.cit., p.12.

2. A.R.H. Baker, 'Field Systems in South-East England', in idem. & R.A. Butlin, Studies in Field Systems in the British Isles (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1973), p.416.

3. Ibid.

4. Everitt, op.cit., p.27; Hoskins, Making of the English Landscape, p.124; Gulley, 'The Wealden Landscape', ii. 48.

in Camden's words, 'resound[ing] all over the places  
adjoyning'<sup>1</sup>. In addition, the increasingly lucrative character  
of commercial farming in the later 16th and 17th centuries  
offered other incentives for grubbing up woodland.<sup>2</sup>

Writing in the reign of Charles I, Sir Edward Dering  
recognised these factors at work in his description of changes  
visible in the Kentish landscape from upland Pluckley:

'...within memory, whoever from this hill of Pluckley  
had taken survey of our Wealdish p[ro]spect, he should  
have had no other object but one continued wood. But  
look now a[n]d you shall find that wood broken into many  
small playnes, both of pasture and of corne...The  
profitable husbandry of Marling, and ye devouring  
furnace of ye iron mill, hath p[er]suaded one to ridd  
uppe, yt which ye other hath confirmed... And thus ye  
yett acknowledged Weald beginnes (as people and  
consequently tillage encrease) to take ye face of ye  
now doubted Weald.' (3)

(ii) Livestock, Crops and Farming Systems in Pluckley  
1562-1700

'Men talked of tillage,  
The prises of wheat, of sheep and neat,\*  
And orders of their village...  
Quoth Goodman Hare to another there,  
How workes your land in Brimly?  
Why, quoth old Paine, 'twants but a raine,  
But I war'nt 'twould worke even trimly...  
Quoth Goodman Pip, how standeth your sheep?  
They say there dies abundant.  
Faith, quoth Ned Scot, they all have the rot,  
I hold a hundred pounds on't...'

From The Countryman's Chat, a ballad of c.1625<sup>4</sup>

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\*cattle

1. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, pp.12, 130-1; E. Straker, Wealden Iron (New York, Augustus Kelley, 1969), ch.6; W. Camden, Britannia (1610 edn.), quoted in Straker, op.cit., p.14.

2. Clark, English Provincial Society, pp.6-8; Hoskins, Making of the English Landscape, p.138.

3. K.A.O. U350/Z17.

4. H.E. Rollins (ed.), The Pepys Ballads (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard Univ. Press, 1932), i. 233-5.

I

Providing reasonable answers to questions like those put by the farmers in this seventeenth century ballad must be the starting point for any analysis of the farming economy of an early modern village. To this end, reliable and systematic data are needed on the value and acreage of particular crops and of grassland; and on the value and number of cattle and other livestock; and most elusively, on the systems of husbandry under which crops were sown and animals raised.

Agrarian historians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries necessarily suffer from a paucity of such systematic data. Indeed, in much of the debate on the 'Agricultural Revolution', its absence was taken for granted. What was missing, as Mark Overton has pointed out, was 'systematic quantitative data on innovation, yields, output, or the extent of the area cultivated'. Instead, 'we are invited to accept or reject statements or sets of statements about the past by the force of literary persuasion and appeals to select documents.<sup>1</sup>'

In fact it was recognised over forty years ago that probate inventories could provide detailed, long-run evidence on some of these questions. W.G. Hoskins called inventories 'perhaps the most neglected class of records

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1. M. Overton, 'Agricultural Revolution? The Development of the Agrarian Economy in Early Modern England', in A.R.H. Baker & D. Gregory (eds.), Explorations in Historical Geography: Interpretative Essays (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), pp.127-8.

handled by the economic and social historian.<sup>1</sup> In the 1950s and early 1960s, a number of local historians took up Hoskins's challenge: Joan Thirsk on Lincolnshire, M.A. Havinden on Oxfordshire, W. Harwood Long on Yorkshire, and Julian Cornwall on Sussex.<sup>2</sup> Since then, local studies based on probate inventories have burgeoned. As regional evidence has both multiplied and increased in sophistication, it has come to play a greater role in discussions of agrarian change at the national level.<sup>3</sup>

Among the most innovative of recent research in this field is the computer-assisted study by Mark Overton of over 4000 Norfolk and Suffolk inventories. His results showed -among other things- that between the 1580s and 1680s, under 10% of inventoried farmers were growing turnips. By 1700, some 50% were.<sup>4</sup> These findings modify somewhat Eric Kerridge's dating of the beginnings of turnip husbandry. He argued for their widespread introduction in High Suffolk in

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1. W.G. Hoskins, 'The Leicestershire Farmer in the Sixteenth Century', in his Provincial England: Essays in Leicestershire History (Liverpool, Liverpool Univ. Press, 1950), p.124.

2. J. Thirsk, English Peasant Farming (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957); M.A. Havinden, 'Agricultural Progress in Open-Field Oxfordshire', A.H.R., IX (1961); repr. in E.L. Jones (ed.), Agriculture and Economic Growth 1650-1815 (London, Methuen, 1967), 66-99; W.H. Long, 'Regional Farming in Seventeenth Century Yorkshire', A.H.R., VIII, 2 (1960), 103-14; J. Cornwall, 'Farming in Sussex 1560-1640', Sussex Arch. Collns., XCVIII (1954), 79-156.

3. See J. Thirsk, England's Agricultural Regions and Agrarian History, 1500-1750 (London, Macmillan, 1987), pp. 11,19-22.

4. Overton, 'The Development of the Agrarian Economy', p.129; idem., 'The Diffusion of Agricultural Innovations in Early Modern England: Turnips and Clover in Norfolk and Suffolk, 1580-1740', Trans. Inst. Brit. Geog., n.s. vol. X (1985), pp.209-12.

the mid-seventeenth century, and elsewhere in England by  
1  
1670-80.

The analysis of a single parish's probate inventories throws up rather similar problems to those encountered when working on one parish register. Evidently, a sample of less than 100 farmers cannot bear the same weight of interpretation as one of 4000. As with demographic work, it is vital in this context both to establish and as far as possible control for biases in the record; and to assess the final results in the light of other studies of local or comparable farming economies.

A statute of 1529 established that the executors or administrators of an estate should make a list of the movable goods and chattels of the deceased as part of the process of proving a will. Most inventories were drawn up within three weeks of the testator's death, and take the form of a room-by-room assessment of his or her movable wealth; followed (where appropriate) by a list of crops and livestock in the farm buildings and fields.<sup>2</sup>

Anyone was permitted to dispose of an estate by will, but in practice few leaving goods worth less than £5 did so. Thus any study based on probate inventories inevitably

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1. E. Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution (London, Allen & Unwin, 1967), pp.270-4.

2. J.D. Marshall, 'Agrarian Wealth and Social Structure in Pre-Industrial Cumbria', Ec.H.R., 2nd ser. XXXII (1980), pp.503,506; J.A. Johnson, 'The Probate Inventories and Wills of a Worcestershire Parish 1676-1775', Midland Hist., I (1971), pp.20-1; M. Overton, 'Probate Inventories and the Reconstruction of Agrarian Landscapes', in M. Reed (ed.), Discovering Past Landscapes (London, Croom Helm, 1984), pp.168-9; S. Porter, 'The Making of Probate Inventories', The Local Historian, XII, 1 (1976), 36-7.

omits the poorest sections of the community. Alan Everitt has estimated that three in four labourers were too poor to leave an inventory in the period 1560-1640; and by the end of the century, they were probably even less well represented. Since our concern is with the farming economy, their absence from the inventoried population is less damaging than it may seem: it is unlikely that many of those too poor to make a will or leave an inventory would have held any land, or owned more livestock than a pig, a few chickens, or a hive of bees.

97 inventories refer unequivocally to the movable wealth of Pluckley farmers 1562-1700. In order to assess changes in farming practices over time, the inventory set was divided into two chronological groupings of approximately equal numbers of cases: 1562-1639 and 1640-1700:

	<u>Decade</u>	<u>No. of Inventories</u>
Group I	1560-9	4
	1570-9	6
	1580-9	5
	1590-9	2
	1600-9	11
	1610-19	11
	1620-9	6
	1630-9	4
		-----
	TOTAL	49
Group II	1640-9	12
	1650-9	1
	1660-9	8

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1. A. Everitt, 'Farm Labourers', in J. Thirsk (ed.), The Agrarian History of England and Wales IV: 1500-1640 (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 420, 424.

2. Ibid., p.420.

3. See Appendix II.

1670-9	11
1680-9	9
1690-1700	7
	----
TOTAL	48

Each of the 97 inventories within these two groups were coded into 52 variables using the SPSSX computer statistics package (see Appendix II). In order to gauge the responses of those farmers working different-sized holdings to the constraints and pressures of the agrarian economy between 1562 and 1700, the two chronological groupings were each divided into sub-sets based on total appraised wealth. Given the steep price rises of the first half of our period,<sup>1</sup> it seemed vital when sorting the inventories to control for any biases such inflation might bring. The estate value of each inventory was therefore deflated, using the years 1565-74 as a base; and they were then grouped into four sub-sets according to the 'deflated' estate value of each: £1-24, £25-49, £50-99, and £100+.<sup>2</sup>

How important numerically were these four groupings in Pluckley's social structure? To assess this, the question of how representative the inventories are must be tackled. Of 185 men recorded in Pluckley's burial register between 1591 and

-----  
1. Between the decades 1560-9 and 1690-9, the prices of farinaceous products (wheat, barley, rye, peas) tripled; those of meat doubled; while textile and industrial products showed more modest increases (see C.G.A. Clay, Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500-1700 (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), i. Appendix to ch.2). The cost of living of a building worker, constructed from a mixed 'basket of consumables' was almost 2.5X higher in 1690-9 as in 1560-9 (E.H. Phelps Brown & S.V. Hopkins, 'Seven Centuries of the Prices of Consumables compared with Builders' Wage-Rates', Economica, n.s. XXII (1956); repr. in E.M. Carus-Wilson (ed.), Essays in Economic History II (London, Edward Arnold, 1962), 193-207).

2. See Appendix II.

1641, 36 (19.5%) left extant inventories. In the later seventeenth century, survival rates are better: Of 126 male burials 1662-1700, 37 (29.4%) left extant inventories. These rates fall within the range found by other researchers; one of whom has suggested 20% inventory survival as a typical figure.<sup>1</sup>

Such figures may not seem very promising. In fact, most of the poor did not go through probate, having little to bequeath. The inventories of only nine men and women leaving under £10 have survived; 7.7% of the total.<sup>2</sup>

What proportion of the adults were too poor to go through probate? One possible answer is provided by the Hearth Tax Returns of the 1660s, since few of those described therein as 'non-chargeable' made wills or left inventories.<sup>3</sup> The returns for 1664 list the names of 71 Pluckley householders paying on hearths, and 29 exempt from payment.<sup>4</sup> The latter group comprised 29% of the total. Thus for the period 1662-1700, the surviving inventories probably represent about 41% of those men who went through probate.

For the earlier period, no source comparable to the Hearth Tax has survived. The fact that only 19.5% of male deaths in the years 1591-1641 have left their mark in inventories makes firm conclusions difficult. However, the coincidence of this low ratio with a period of high population

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1. J.P. Horn, 'The Distribution of Wealth in the Vale of Berkeley, Gloucestershire, 1660-1700', Southern Hist., III (1981), p.86.

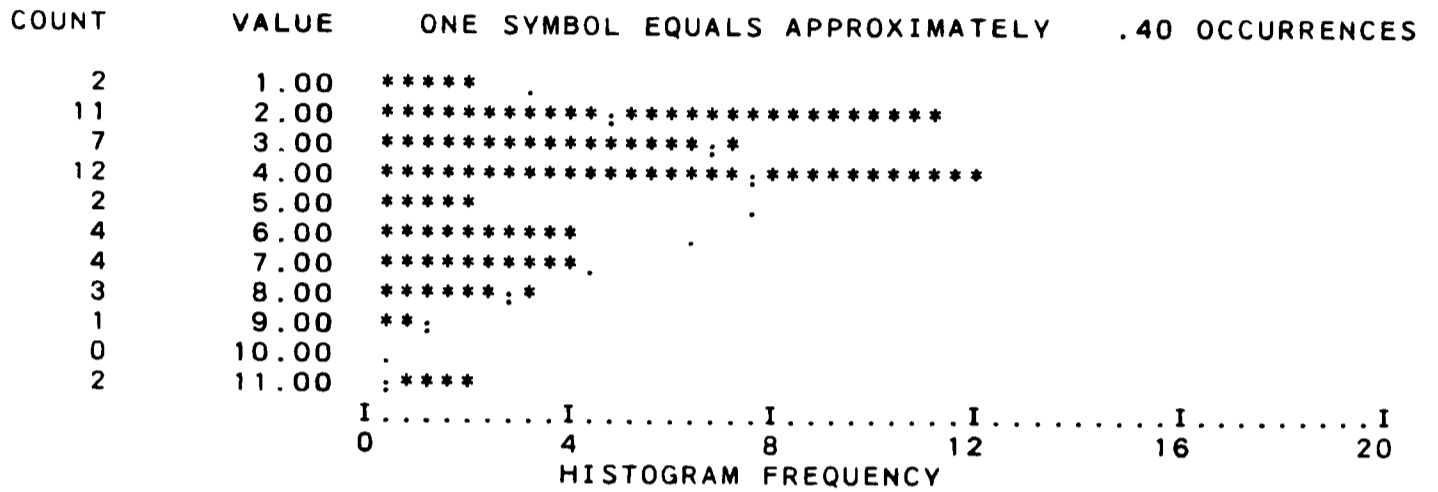
2. See ibid., p.87 for similar findings.

3. None of Horn's sample of 773 testators were listed as 'non-chargeable' in the Hearth Tax returns of 1672-4 (ibid., p.89).

4. K.A.O. Q/RTh.

Period I

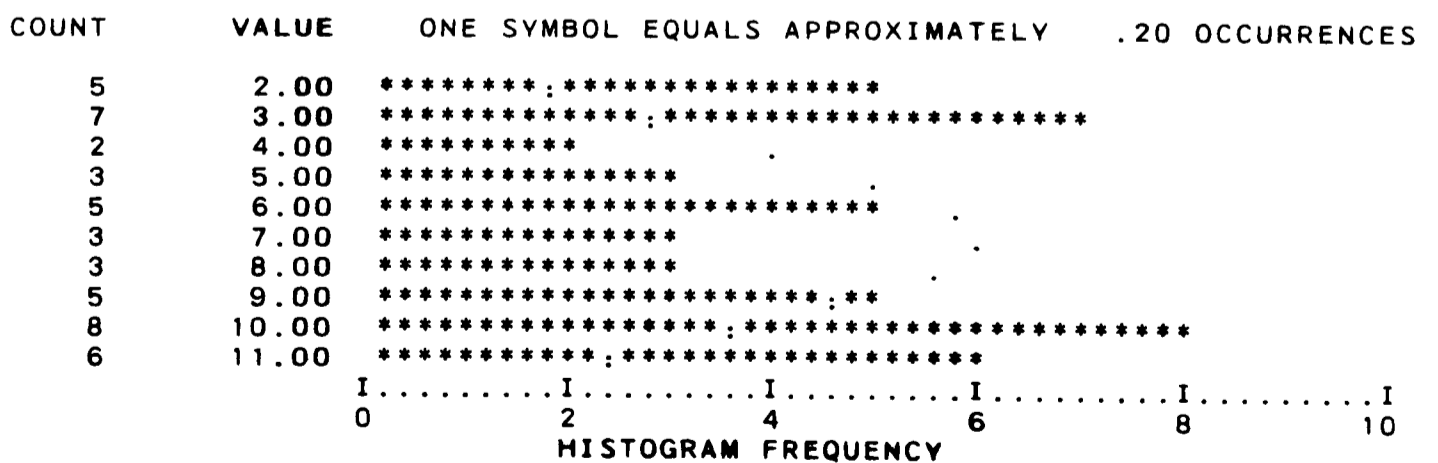
VALUE LABEL(£)	VALUE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID PERCENT	CUM PERCENT
1- 4	1.0	2	4.1	4.2	4.2
5- 29	2.0	11	22.4	22.9	27.1
30- 49	3.0	7	14.3	14.6	41.7
50- 79	4.0	12	24.5	25.0	66.7
70- 89	5.0	2	4.1	4.2	70.8
90-109	6.0	4	8.2	8.3	79.2
110-149	7.0	4	8.2	8.3	87.5
150-189	8.0	3	6.1	6.3	93.8
190-249	9.0	1	2.0	2.1	95.8
450+	11.0	2	4.1	4.2	100.0
Missing	999.9	1	2.0	MISSING	
	TOTAL	49	100.0	100.0	



VALID CASES      48      MISSING CASES      1

Period II

VALUE LABEL(£)	VALUE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID PERCENT	CUM PERCENT
5-29	2.0	5	10.4	10.6	10.6
30-49	3.0	7	14.6	14.9	25.5
50-69	4.0	2	4.2	4.3	29.8
70-89	5.0	3	6.3	6.4	36.2
90-109	6.0	5	10.4	10.6	46.8
110-149	7.0	3	6.3	6.4	53.2
150-189	8.0	3	6.3	6.4	59.6
190-249	9.0	5	10.4	10.6	70.2
250-449	10.0	8	16.7	17.0	87.2
450+	11.0	6	12.5	12.8	100.0
Missing	999.9	1	2.1	MISSING	
	TOTAL	48	100.0	100.0	

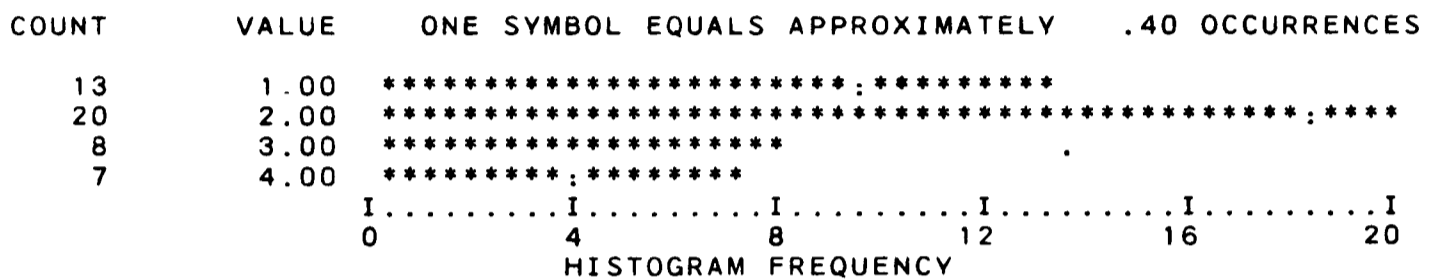


VALID CASES      47      MISSING CASES      1

Fig.6. Frequency Distribution of Appraised Wealth in Pluckley Probate Inventories 1562-1639 and 1640-1700 (Source: Probate Inventories).

Period I

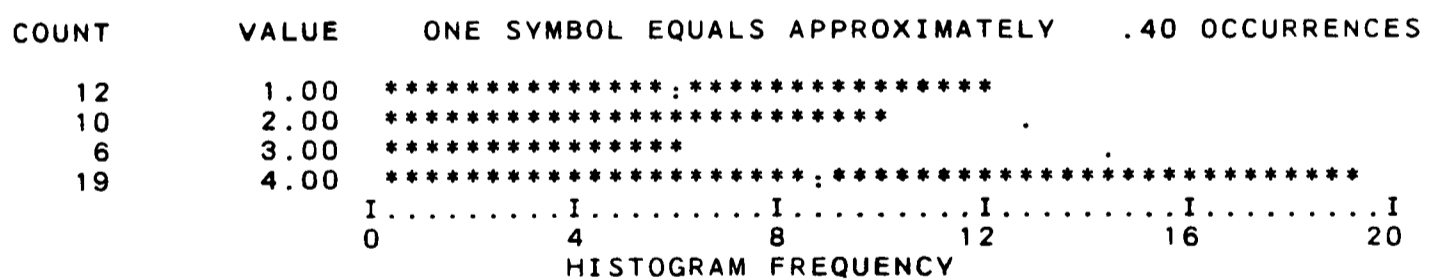
VALUE LABEL (£)	VALUE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID PERCENT	CUM PERCENT
1-24	1.0	13	26.5	27.1	27.1
25-49	2.0	20	40.8	41.7	68.8
50-99	3.0	8	16.3	16.7	85.4
100+	4.0	7	14.3	14.6	100.0
Missing	888.8	1	2.0	MISSING	
	TOTAL	49	100.0	100.0	



VALID CASES      48      MISSING CASES      1

Period II

VALUE LABEL (£)	VALUE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID PERCENT	CUM PERCENT
1-24	1.0	12	25.0	25.5	25.5
25-49	2.0	10	20.8	21.3	46.8
50-99	3.0	6	12.5	12.8	59.6
100+	4.0	19	39.6	40.4	100.0
Missing	888.8	1	2.1	MISSING	
	TOTAL	48	100.0	100.0	



VALID CASES      47      MISSING CASES      1

Fig.7. Frequency Distribution of Appraised Wealth (Deflated) in Pluckley Probate Inventories 1562-1639 and 1640-1700.

(Source: Probate Inventories)

levels and (up to the 1630's) a thriving cloth industry may suggest that a larger proportion of the village's male inhabitants were too poor to leave a will or inventory than in the post-1660 period.<sup>1</sup>

Returning to the specifically farming inventories, frequency distributions have been plotted for the periods 1562-1639 and 1640-1700 (hereafter Periods I and II), both before and after deflation (Figs. 6-7, pp. 71-2). While smallholders (£1-24) continued to form about a quarter of the farming population throughout the 140-year period, numbers of middling farmers (£25-49) dwindled (41.7%- 21.3%). At the same time, the wealthiest section of the farming community almost tripled in size (14.6%-40.4%). Like the smallholders, smaller but still substantial farmers (£50-99) remained a relatively constant -if minor- element in the farming population (16.7%-12.8%).

In order to put these trends in comparative perspective, we must return to money values, and to the complete inventory set (117 cases). For the second half of the seventeenth century, a number of historians have quantified the relative proportions of surviving inventories of different values. The figures for Pluckley (1660-1700) have been included; with those referring only to farming inventories added in parenthesis (Table 10, p.74).

The differences in the divisions of personal wealth used by the historians whose work is tabulated below, makes -----  
1. Horn (op.cit., pp.88) found that 'In the Vale of York those parishes with low coverage tended to have high proportions of non-chargeables.'

TOTAL INVENTORY VALUES	CUMBRIA 1661-90	GLOS.* 1660-99	CAMBS. 1661-70	LINCS. 1669	PLUCKLEY 1660-1700
NOS. IN SAMPLE	775	983	340	97	46 (34)
	%	%	%	%	%
Over £100	21.1	38.0	27.4	29.0	56.5 (64.7)
£60- 100	36.0(a)	22.5(c)	12.5	19.5	13.0 (11.8)
Under £60	43.0(b)	39.7(d)	60.3	51.3	30.4 (23.5)
TOTAL	100.1	100.2	100.2	99.8	99.9(100.0)

\*Figures for Glos. based on means of decadal percentages 1660-99  
a=£40-100; b=less than £40; c=£50-100; d=less than £50

Table 10. Percentage Distribution of Personal Wealth: Pluckley in Comparative Perspective 1660-1700.

(Sources: J.D. Marshall, 'Agrarian Wealth and Social Structure in Pre-Industrial Cumbria', Ec.H.R., 2nd ser. XXXIII (1980), p.507; J.P. Horn, 'The Distribution of Wealth in the Vale of Berkeley, Gloucestershire, 1660-1700', Southern Hist., III (1981), Table 3, p.101; Pluckley Probate Inventories).

precise analysis of Table 10 difficult. It is immediately apparent, however, that Pluckley's values cluster at the top of the range (56.5% over £100) to a much greater extent than those of any other region.

C.W. Chalklin has drawn attention to an apparent 'tendency for wealthier farmers to predominate' among Kentish probate inventories in the Restoration period.<sup>1</sup> This does not imply of course that the distribution of inventoried wealth revealed in Table 10 necessarily distorts real wealth levels among Pluckley's farming community. The evident discrepancy between the results from Pluckley and those from a number of other inventory samples does hint, however, that the bias in the Kentish data pointed out by Chalklin was at work in the village; and other evidence considered in the next chapter points in the same direction.<sup>2</sup>

This might suggest that the option of comparing the whole set of inventories from Period I with that of Period II should be abandoned altogether in favour of a more detailed consideration of changes in farming practice within each of the four sub-groups. It was decided, though, that the relatively small size of the Pluckley data-set meant that questions concerning shifts in the pastoral/arable balance, and in the holdings of particular classes of livestock required using the full set of inventories, whatever limitations that was to place on the value of the results.

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1. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.96, n.2. On this question, see J.S. Moore, 'Probate Records: Problems and Prospects', in P. Riden (ed.), Probate Records and the Local Community (Gloucester, Alan Sutton, 1985), p.18.

2. See ch. 3 (iii).

II

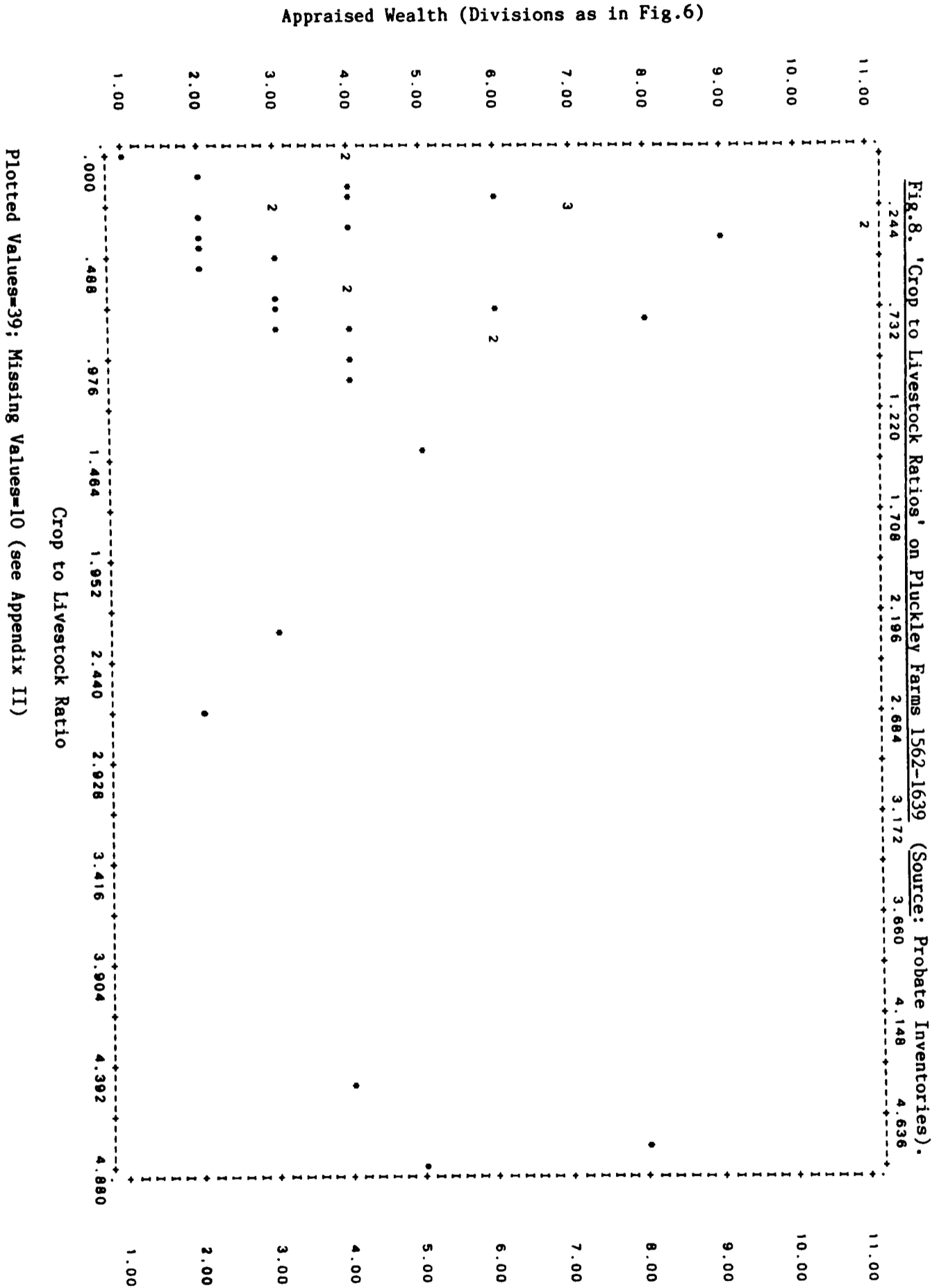
Among the farming regions of Kent, agriculture on the Sandstone Ridge was 'more truly mixed than in other areas'. About a third (34.1%) of the land there supported crops in the seventeenth century; somewhat higher than in the Weald to the south (29.5%), and lower than on the Downs to the north (54.3%). In practice though, the complex geography of the region forced modifications of this pastoral-arable balance. On the fertile ragstone soils south of Maidstone, crops and grass probably comprised about equal proportions, while some fifteen miles away near Ashford, arable land was in short<sup>1</sup> supply.

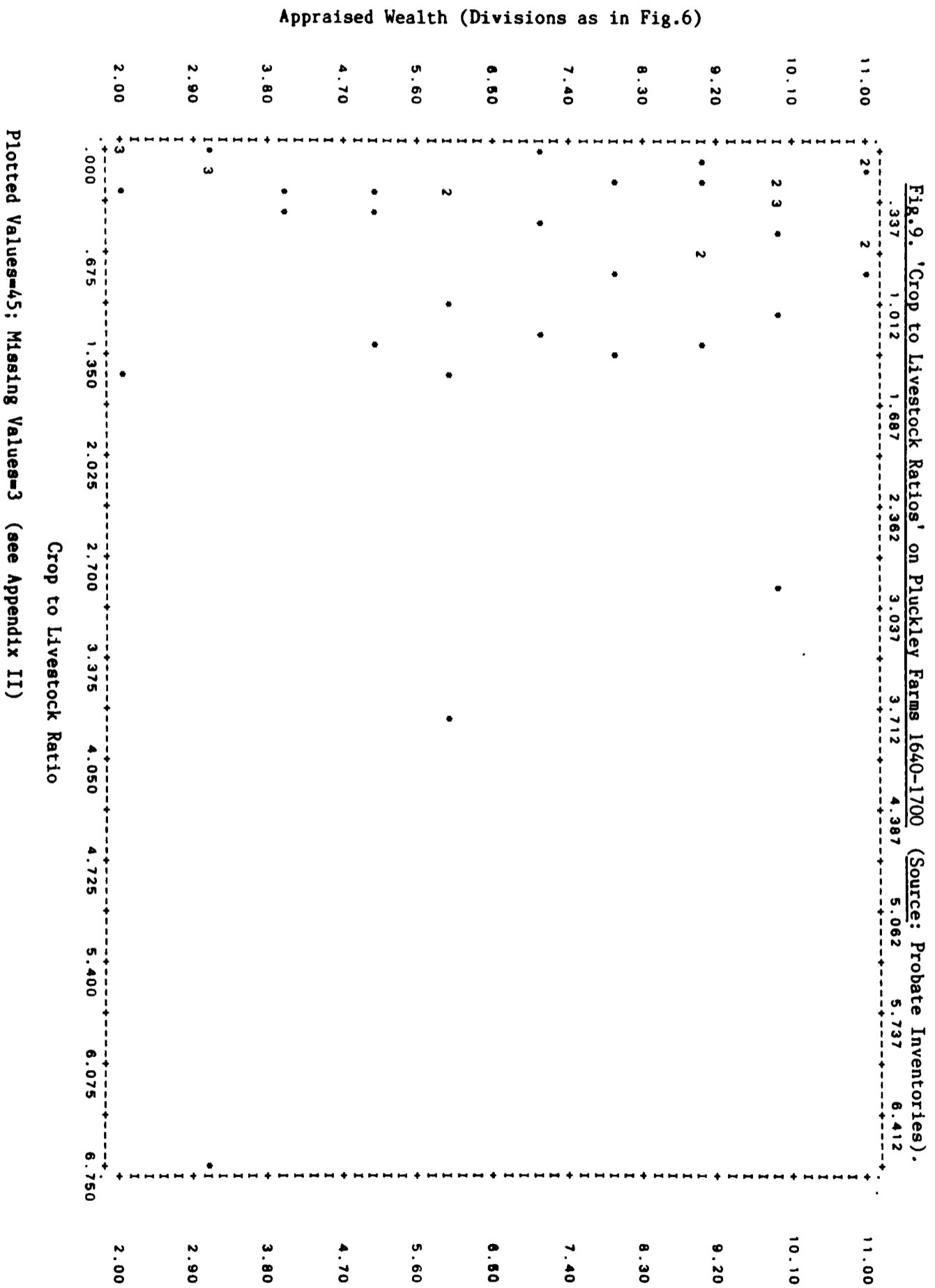
Pluckley lay just to the east of the Ragstone Hills, but since it nevertheless enjoyed relatively fertile soils, arable/pastoral land use was probably more equally balanced than is suggested by Chalklin's figures for the Ridge as a whole. Probate Inventories rarely appraise meadow or perman-<sup>2</sup>ent grassland; but their relative importance may be crudely gauged by examining the investment of Pluckley farmers in crops and livestock.

Figures 8 and 9 (pp.77-8) show that the vast majority of farming inventories evidence a 'Crop to Livestock<sup>3</sup> Ratio' (CLR) of less than 1.0. In fact, on over 75% of farms in both periods, investment was heavier in pastoral than in

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1. Chalklin, op.cit., pp.73,76; Short, 'The South-East: Kent, Surrey and Sussex', p.275.  
2. Overton, 'Probate Inventories and the Reconstruction of Agricultural Landscapes', pp.169-70.  
3. Total value of crops divided by total value of livestock. Thus if the CLR is less than 1.0 in a particular inventory, investment in crops is lower than in livestock.





arable husbandry.<sup>1</sup> All but 12, however, of the 97 farmers leaving inventories practiced some form of mixed farming; and of those investing solely in either crops or livestock, most farmed on a modest scale, probably earning the bulk of their incomes from other sources.<sup>2</sup>

Between 1562-1639 and 1640-1700, the median CLR fell from 0.55 to 0.33.<sup>3</sup> In other words, on the median Pluckley farm in the later seventeenth century, crops accounted for only a quarter of farm produce, compared with a third in the eighty years before 1640.

That this shift in emphasis brought Pluckley's farming economy closer to the 'Wealden' pattern is suggested by a comparison of the village figures with Michael Zell's analysis of over 300 farming inventories from twelve Kentish wealden parishes covering the period 1565-1601.<sup>4</sup> 'In all parishes', he notes, 'the mean ratio of livestock to corn was at least two to one. The mean ratio of the parochial averages was over three to one.' This translates into an average CLR of 0.31 -roughly equivalent to the state of affairs in

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1. The precise figures are 82% (Period I) & 78% (Period II).  
2. Typical of the farmers in this category were George Taylor (d.1640) who left an estate worth £28-15-6 including 2 cows and a calf, 7 sheep and a couple of pigs; or Robert Knock (d.1675) who left £45-9-0, including £2-6-0 worth of wheat and barley (K.A.O. PRC 11/7/113; 11/37/160). The one exception to this generalization was Edward Chisman (d.1666), whose £134 estate included 6 head of steer, 3 kine, 2 heifers, 4 calves, a mare and two pigs -but no crops. Chisman was a kerseymaker, leaving two looms 'in the workehouse' (PRC 11/26/15).  
3. Calculated from testators practicing mixed farming (see Appendix II).  
4. M. Zell, 'A Wood Pasture Agrarian Regime: The Kentish Weald in the Sixteenth Century', Southern Hist., VII (1985), p.82.

REGION	CROPS											
	Wheat		Oats		Barley		Peas/Beans		Tares		Rye	
	acres	%	acres	%	acres	%	acres	%	acres	%	acres	%
Weald												
1600-1620	104.5	38.2	136.0	49.7	6.5	2.4	18.5	6.8*	--	--	8	3.0
1680-1700	108.0	30.2	213.0	59.6	29.0	8.1	7.5	2.1*	--	--	--	--
Sandstone												
1600-1620	151.5	39.1	49.5	12.8	120.5	31.1	45.5	11.7	20.5	5.3	--	--
1680-1700	191.5	32.5	187.0	31.7	153.8	25.9	51.5	8.8	5.0	0.8	--	--

\* Peas only

Table 11. Grains and Pulses in the Weald and Sandstone Ridge Regions of Seventeenth-Century Kent.

Source: C.W. Chalklin, *Seventeenth Century Kent: A Social and Economic History* (London, Longmans, 1965), p.78.

1  
Restoration Pluckley.

Such a swing towards pastoral farming would seem to conform to C.W. Chalklin's account of agricultural change in the Weald and on the Sandstone Ridge in the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> His analysis of 120 probate inventories points to a 35-40% increase in the average (mean) head of cattle on farms in these regions between 1600-20 and 1680-1700 (from 11-15 in the Weald and 9-12.5 on the Ridge). Although the bias towards wealthier farmers in the probate inventories exaggerates the size of the herd in the later period, numbers had 'probably risen slightly by the end of the century'.<sup>3</sup> Accompanying this shift towards livestock production -according to Chalklin's findings- was an increase in the share of arable acreages devoted to oats: the bulk of which went for cattle fodder. Wheat on the other hand became less important both in the Weald and on the Ridge; and in the latter region, barley too lost ground (Table 11, p.80).

4  
In Pluckley, the mean head of cattle per farm rose from 8.6 to 12.9 between Periods I and II: an increase (50%) broadly in line with Chalklin's findings (Table 12, p.83). If milch kine are omitted from the calculations (Table 13, p.84), a clearer picture can be discerned of movements in fat and store cattle: 'the chief means of livelihood for the wealden farmer, and to a lesser extent of the farmer of the

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1. Calculated from ibid., Table 4, p.81.

2. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, ch. 5-6.

3. Ibid., p.96 and note, p.98.

4. The grouping 'cattle' includes -unless specified otherwise- milch kine; oxen; breeding, working and fattening cattle (adults and young).

Sandstone Ridge.<sup>1</sup> Once again, a mean increase of about 50% is suggested (7.1 to 10.7); and taking into account Chalklin's caveat, we may conclude that by 1640-1700, a significant expansion in the fattening and breeding of cattle had occurred in Pluckley.

The median number of cattle (not including milch kine) per farm, however, rose by more modest proportions between the two periods (5.7 to 7.6), pointing to an expansion biased towards larger cattle enterprises. Over twice as many farmers after 1640 as before owned more than nine head of cattle; and the holding of John Pell (d.1665) was at seventy beasts over twice as large as any holding from the earlier period.<sup>2</sup> In addition, cattle-owning became more widespread among Pluckley farmers in Period II: only 31% held no cattle, compared with 47% in Period I.

A rather different process was at work with regard to dairy cattle. Most farmers (about 75%) owned some milch kine throughout the 1562-1700 period, but most dairies were small (Table 14, p.85). By Period II, the median herd had risen to a modest 4.2: much the same situation as Boys was to find in the 1780s.<sup>3</sup>

A large dairy herd was not unknown though. Two farmers who died in the 1640s -George and Stephen Pell- kept herds of 16 and 33 kine respectively. The latter also left ~~£~~ 3 worth of butter and cheese.<sup>4</sup> But in neither period have the inventories

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1. Chalklin, op.cit., p.98.

2. K.A.O. PRC 11/25/68.

3. Boys, General View of the Agriculture of Kent, p.83.

4. K.A.O. PRC 11/26/66; 11/10/82.

PERIOD	NUMBER OF CATTLE OWNED	HERDS OF THIS SIZE
I	0	10
	1-3	11
	4-6	9
	7-9	2
	10-12	1
	13-15	3
	16-18	--
	19-21	--
	22 and over	4
	Missing	7
	Unclear	2
		TOTAL
-----		
Mean=8.6; Median=5.8; % of farmers owning cattle=78.7%		
-----		
II	0	8
	1-3	10
	4-6	6
	7-9	4
	10-12	3
	13-15	4
	16-18	5
	19-21	--
	22 and over	5
	Missing	3
	Unclear	--
		TOTAL
-----		
Mean=12.9; Median=8.3; % of farmers owning cattle=83.3%		
-----		

Table 12. Cattle on Pluckley Farms 1562-1639 & 1640-1700.  
 (Source: Probate Inventories)

PERIOD	NUMBER OF CATTLE OWNED	HERDS OF THIS SIZE	
I	0	22	
	1-3	8	
	4-6	3	
	7-9	5	
	10-12	--	
	13-15	1	
	16-18	2	
	19-21	1	
	22 and over	1	
	Missing	4	
	Unclear	2	
	TOTAL		49
	Mean=8.3; Median=5.7; % of farmers owning cattle=53.2%		
II	0	15	
	1-3	10	
	4-6	5	
	7-9	2	
	10-12	5	
	13-15	3	
	16-18	1	
	19-21	--	
	22 and over	3	
	Missing	4	
	Unclear	--	
TOTAL		48	
Mean=10.7; Median=7.6; % of farmers owning cattle=66.7%			

Table 13. Non-Dairy Cattle on Pluckley Farms 1562-1639 & 1640-1700 (Source: Probate Inventories).

PERIOD	NUMBER OF MILCH KINE OWNED	HERDS OF THIS SIZE	
I	0	12	
	1-3	19	
	4-6	12	
	7-9	2	
	10-12	--	
	13-15	--	
	16-18	--	
	19-21	--	
	22 and over	--	
	Missing	2	
	Unclear	2	
			-----
		TOTAL	49
-----			
Mean=4.2; median=2.7; % of farmers owning milch kine=75.5%			
-----			
II	0	10	
	1-3	16	
	4-6	13	
	7-9	3	
	10-12	--	
	13-15	--	
	16-18	1	
	19-21	--	
	22 and over	1	
	Missing	3	
	Unclear	1	
			-----
		TOTAL	48
-----			
Mean=5.9; Median=4.2; % of farmers owning milch kine=77.1%			
-----			

Table 14. Milch Kine on Pluckley Farms 1562-1639  
& 1640-1700 (Source: Probate Inventories).

of any other farmers leaving more than nine milch kine survived. Throughout the period, a handful of substantial farmers probably kept large dairy herds; supplying cheese and butter for local markets.<sup>1</sup>

Most farmers kept a flock of sheep (Table 15, p.87). In Period I, most flocks were of under fifty sheep, and almost 30% under ten. In Period II, the numbers over fifty tripled, while those flocks under ten dwindled to 6.3% of the whole. In the period to 1640, the mean flock in Pluckley was a modest 35.6. The discrepancy between this figure and the mean of 52 for the Sandstone Ridge as a whole probably results from the inflation of the regional totals by the large flocks grazed on the poor heathland and common covering much of the Lower Greensand. In such areas, as about Charing north of Pluckley, 'a large flock of "heathcropper" sheep was viewed by contemporaries as necessary for farming on these soils'.<sup>3</sup>

By 1640-1700, the mean Pluckley flock stood at 54.2 (about the regional average); and the median flock had increased by over 200% from 16.8 to 52.5. How can we account for this dramatic expansion in sheep numbers, and the probable increase in cattle rearing and fattening by Period II? Sheep, it seems, were valued as much for their dung as for their meat and wool in the fertile 'Maidstone Plantation' of mid-Kent at this period. Are we seeing here the kind of 'spiralling'<sup>4</sup>

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1. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.98.

2. Ibid., p.100.

3. Short, 'The South-East: Kent, Surrey and Sussex', pp.274-5.

4. Ibid., p.275. See also D. Baker, 'Agricultural Prices, Production and Marketing with Special Reference to the Hop Industry: North-East Kent 1680-1760' (Kent Univ. Ph.D thesis 1976), p.388.

PERIOD	NUMBER OF SHEEP OWNED	FLOCKS OF THIS SIZE
I	0	20
	1-9	8
	10-19	4
	20-49	6
	50-99	2
	100 and over	2
	Missing	6
	Unclear	1
	TOTAL	49
Mean=35.6; Median=16.8; % of farmers owning sheep=58.3%		
II	0	16
	1-9	3
	10-19	6
	20-49	3
	50-99	10
	100 and over	3
	Missing	7
	Unclear	--
TOTAL	48	
Mean=54.2; Median=52.5; % of farmers owning sheep=66.6%		

Table 15. Sheep on Pluckley Farms 1562-1639 & 1640-1700  
 (Source: Probate Inventories).

process M.A. Havinden described at work in open-field upland Oxfordshire, where a combination of convertible husbandry and later fodder crops facilitated higher stocking levels, and therefore improved soil fertility?<sup>1</sup>

As J.A. Yelling has pointed out, it is a 'dangerous assumption' to use increases in median numbers of cattle and sheep as evidence of a swing to livestock 'in the absense of any information about the size of holdings to which the inventories refer'.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, insufficient data in the Pluckley inventories precludes the 'safer method' Yelling advocates: to employ only those documents recording both livestock numbers and cropped acreages, and then to relate the two figures.<sup>3</sup> As we have argued elsewhere, however, groupings of inventories based on deflated estate values may be taken as a proxy for divisions made according to size of holding.<sup>4</sup>

Groups I/II and III/IV were combined; thereby splitting the inventories above and below the deflated value of £50. In the case of sheep, the median flock among the grouping of farmers below £50 increased from 8.9 to 17.9, and among those above £50, it rose from 45.4 to 70.4 between 1562-1639 and 1640-1700. For cattle, median herd sizes rose from 2.7 to 4.2 and 11.0 to 14.9 respectively.

It is improbable, then, that the evident increases in median livestock numbers are an illusion created by a bias

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1. Havinden, 'Agricultural Progress', passim.

2. J.A. Yelling, 'Probate Inventories and the Geography of Livestock Farming: A Study of East Worcestershire 1540-1750', Trans. Inst. Brit. Geog., LI (1970); repr. in Patten, Pre-Industrial England, p.97.

3. Ibid.

4. See Appendix II.

towards larger farmers in the later period. Certainly more substantial farmers grew to numerical dominance in the period after 1640 (see Fig. 7, p.72), but it would seem that smaller farmers shared in livestock increases.

For Eric Kerridge, the clearance of the Wealden forest and its conversion into farming land was made possible by the practice of convertible husbandry, which had -he argues- spread to the region by the mid-sixteenth century:

'In the early sixteenth century, many farms here consisted largely of woody and bushy grounds and small ragged cattle pastures. Then between 1540 and 1650...the woodlands were speedily cleared... Clearance was rapid, maintenance difficult. Unless ploughed, the land would revert to wood and unless enriched would bear little of corn or grass.' (1)

In Kerridge's view, it was the application of marl\*, advocated by Gervase Markham in The Inrichment of the Weald of Kent (1625) which 'alone made the soils here good up-and-down land, so that the measure of one is the measure of both'<sup>2</sup>. Although it seems clear that Markham suggested crop rotations that implied convertible husbandry, the extent of its practice in the period to 1640 is uncertain.<sup>3</sup>

The evidence of a number of manorial account books points to its implementation on gentry farms in the Weald by the 1630's<sup>4</sup>, but it may have been uncommon on less substantial farms, particularly those of smallholders. On the latter, 'the proportion of arable to pasture could not vary widely

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\* carbonate of clay and lime

1. Kerridge, The Agricultural Revolution, pp.216-7.

2. Ibid., pp. 217, 246.

3. Gulley, 'The Wealden Landscape', ii. 121.

4. Ibid., ii. 121-2; A. Fletcher, A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex 1600-1660 (London, Longmans, 1975), pp. 13-14.

without imbalancing home food supplies'; and the benefits of improved yields of crops and grass may have seemed marginal when placed beside the reorganization of the farm which convertible husbandry demanded.<sup>1</sup>

There is no direct evidence of such systematic alternation of grassland and ploughland in Pluckley before the Restoration, though its introduction may have accompanied an extension of arable cultivation, as farmers sought to benefit from buoyant grain prices in the century to 1650. Victor Skipp has demonstrated such a process at work in the Forest of Arden in Warwickshire in the period 1610-49; and J.L.M. Gulley has argued that the 'there was more arable in the Weald in the early seventeenth century than ever before.'<sup>2</sup>

Such demand for land for commercial farming, together with the needs of the burgeoning population of the region were probably the main factors behind the attacks on the Wealden forest in this period. It is significant, in this context, perhaps, that in the reign of Charles I, Sir Edward Dering wrote of the 'profitable husbandry of Marling' as a cause of disafforestation, and also refers to an expansion of arable acreages: 'as people and consequently tillage encrease'.<sup>3</sup>

It is impossible to quantify the extent to which Pluckley shared in this process of forest clearance, though it is probable that before the introduction of new fodder crops

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1. Gulley, op.cit., ii. 122-3; Kerridge, op.cit., pp. 195-207.

2. V. Skipp, Crisis and Development: An Ecological Case Study of the Forest of Arden (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978), ch.7; Gulley, op.cit., ii. 120.

3. K.A.O. U350/Z17.

and grasses -principally clover- in the 1660s and '70s, expansion of the cultivated area was the main cause of any increases in total farm production that occurred.<sup>1</sup>

Hasted, we have seen, described Pluckley's wealden lands in 1798 as 'covered with woods, broad hedge rows and spreading oaks'.<sup>2</sup> It was almost certainly more heavily-wooded in the mid-sixteenth century, though it would not -even then- have been the 'one continued wood' of Dering's account.

In 1590, Daniel Bettenham, owner of the Manor of Sheerland in upland Pluckley leased a twenty-acre parcel of land in the south-east corner of the village. According to a later report, what he found was of 'the greatest parte...woodland bushie and ruffe land'. Somewhere between six and twelve acres of the land was pasture and arable, some of the former newly planted with 'younge springs'.<sup>3</sup> Bettenham 'would divide the arrable grownd from the woodgrownd and sowe the arrable'; to which end 'the wood and stumbles growinge and beinge in that parcell...[were] ridd up'.<sup>4</sup>

There were probably many parcels of land in Pluckley - at least in its southern half- on which the cultivated area was expanding in this way in the period to 1640. Arable acreages could be thereby increased, while maintaining sufficient animals to keep the tillage in good heart. It was perhaps such considerations that prompted landlords like Richard Dering to place restrictions on the extent to which

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1. For a recent discussion of this question, see Clay, Economic Expansion and Social Change, i. 107-10.

2. Hasted, History and Topographical Survey, vii. 463.

3. K.A.O. U1107/L9/8, f.6; U1107/L9/7.

4. K.A.O. U1107 L9/8.

tenants could plough up their grasslands. In a lease of 1587, the new tenants on a 16-acre holding in upland Pluckley were bound not to 'break up nor plow' any more of their lands than were under crops already. Such clauses were a common feature of Kentish leases in the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup>

After 1650,

'...prices moved in such a way that the profits to be made from grain farming were almost continuously under pressure for the rest of the period, and over several decades the economic climate imparted a consistent bias towards livestock husbandry'.<sup>(2)</sup>

These economic processes interacted with an intellectual climate in which improvements in fodder crops had become 'the subject of lively debate and publicity' by the 1650s; and the improved livestock-carrying capacity which such crops brought to grassland made them 'thoroughly commonplace in the later decades of the seventeenth century'.<sup>3</sup>

By the 1670s, clover leys were being sown in Pluckley by some of its more prosperous yeomen, like John Henekar (d.1675) whose £242-9-0 Group IV estate included £12 worth of clover and hay.<sup>4</sup> Even at this early date, however, clover cultivation was not wholly confined to the substantial farmers of the village;<sup>5</sup> its practitioners included Edward Gooding, a Group II

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1. B.L. Add.Ch. 55963; Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.77.

2. Clay, op.cit., p.130.

3. J. Thirsk, 'Agricultural Innovations and their Diffusion', in idem. (ed.), Agrarian History of England and Wales V, ii. p.556.

4. K.A.O. PRC 11/38/102. See also the inventory of Edward Poss (d.1685): PRC 11/49/14.

5. Denis Baker ('Agricultural Prices, Production and Marketing', p.235) found much evidence of 'farmers of quite modest means...experimenting with the new crops' in E. Kent in the decades after 1680. See also Overton, 'Agricultural Innovations', pp.214-8.

grocer, whose £79 estate placed him on a par with wealthier husbandmen.<sup>1</sup> There is no evidence that other artificial grasses like sainfoin and trefoil -better suited to light, dry upland soils- were sown in Pluckley in this period; while turnips<sup>2</sup> (rare in Kent before 1700) were also absent.

Marl and lime or chalk were applied to the lands of the Weald and Sandstone Ridge throughout the period, and the spreading of compost from corn stubble together with animal dung<sup>3</sup> was a common stipulation in Pluckley leases. According to Joan Thirsk, an increased use of fertilizers of all kinds supported the advances made in the realm of new fodder crops and grasses.<sup>4</sup> In Sir Edward Dering's (2nd. bart.) list of 'such things as may be beneficiall by way of improvement', made in c.1673, he recorded his intention to spread his 'lower land' with lime, 'the advantage of the crop paying more than the charge of the liming'; along with planning experiments in sowing both sainfoin and trefoil.<sup>5</sup>

It is likely that the swing to livestock evident in Pluckley in Period II was associated with the spread of convertible husbandry in the village; whereby clover would be sown in short leys (1-2 years), following wheat, barley or<sup>6</sup> oats. How did the arable sector respond to these changes in

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1. K.A.O. PRC 11/47/179.

2. Baker, op.cit., pp.227-36; Chalklin, op.cit., p.86.

3. Chalklin, op.cit., pp.84-5; see B.L. Add.Ch. 55965, 55976, 55987, 56031.

4. Thirsk, 'Agricultural Innovations', p.558.

5. H.L.R.O. Colln. of Philip Blake Esq. Ms.F, ff. 39-43.

6. Baker, op.cit., ch.5A; Boys, General View of the Agriculture of Kent, pp.78-81-92; Marshall, Rural Economy of the Southern Counties, i. 69-70, ii. 140; Cornwall, 'Farming in Sussex', pp.70-2; G.H. Kenyon, 'Kirdford Inventories 1611 to 1776', Sussex Arch.Collns., XCIII (1955), pp.97-100,146-7.

farming practice?

CROP	PERIOD I %	PERIOD II %
Wheat	66.7	66.7
Oats	59.6	45.8
Barley	23.4	25.0
Peas and Beans	31.9	29.2
Hemp	8.5	16.7
Rye	2.1	--
Hops	2.1	8.3
Hay	60.4	66.7
CASES	49	48

Table 16. Percentage of Probate Inventories Mentioning Main Crops in Pluckley 1562-1639 and 1640-1700

(Source: Probate Inventories)

In 1794, John Boys wrote of upland west Kent that:

'The mode of cultivation or rotation of crops varies so much throughout this part of the county, that it is impossible to lay down any particular system as the practice of the district; each farmer follows that plan which he thinks will answer his purpose best, and hardly any two neighbours adopt the same mode.'(1)

An important reason for the differences in cropping systems Boys was to note derived from the variety of soils in the region. In Pluckley, only a quarter of farmers grew any barley, and throughout the period oats was the most commonly-sown of the spring grains (Table 16). In the Weald, little barley was grown, and many of those farmers growing the crop in the village probably worked lands on its more fertile upland slopes. Indeed, barley cultivation -at least at the beginning of the period- may have been more important than oats in that part of Pluckley above the heavy clays of the

1. Boys, op.cit., p.79.

1  
Weald.

Below Pluckley Hill, as at Tonbridge in the Kentish Weald or Kirdford in its Sussex counterpart, oats would certainly have been the main spring grain, with barley and pea cultivation comprising perhaps 15-20% of spring acreages. Throughout the village, wheat was the dominant winter-sown grain; rye was not well suited to the predominantly clay soils<sup>2</sup> of the village.

Owing to the small size of the inventory sample, and perhaps to the vagaries of the manner in which they were appraised in Pluckley, the acreage put down to particular crops can only be established on a handful of its farms:

NAME	DATE	WHEAT	OATS	BARLEY	PULSES	TOTAL
J.Lambart	1601	13.5	13.0	--	--	26.5
T.Wylles	1608	5.0	12.5	--	--	17.5
R.Birckhom	1642	7.0	4.0	--	--	11.0
S.Pell	1643	6.0	6.0	--	--	12.0
J.Mantle	1665	4.0	15.0	--	--	19.0
T.Hodge	1700	9.0	10.0	3.0	4.0	26.0
TOTAL (ACRES)		44.5	60.5	3.0	4.0	112.0
% OF SOWN ACREAGE		39.7	54.0	2.7	3.6	100.0%

Table 17. The Acreage of Arable Land Cultivated By Six Pluckley Farmers 1601-1700.

(Sources: K.A.O. PRC 10/48/370-1; 10/35/244; 10/46/64; 11/8/97; 11/9/50; 11/10/82; 10/62/74; 11/25/34)

Evidently, with data from so few of Pluckley's farmers, the results can be at best suggestive. The acreages

1. See Table 11, p.80; Kenyon, op.cit.; Cornwall, op.cit.; Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.78.

2. C.W. Chalklin, 'The Rural Economy of a Wealden Parish 1650-1750', A.H.R., X, 1 (1962), Table A, p.38; Kenyon, op.cit., p.98; Zell, 'A Wood Pasture Agrarian Regime', pp. 80-1; J. Thirsk, 'Arable Husbandry', in idem. (ed.), Agrarian History of England and Wales IV, p.169.

put down to wheat and oats are almost certainly inflated by the inclusion in the sample of only one farmer growing barley or pulses (peas and beans). And because barley and pulses are spring crops, the relative importance of oats compared with wheat is probably also exaggerated. Some tentative conclusions can nevertheless be drawn.

It seems unlikely that the cultivation of oats in Pluckley in the early modern period ever comprised the 50-60% of the sown acreage Chalklin's findings suggest for the Weald (see Table 11, <sup>p. 80</sup> ~~p. 53~~). It is equally improbable though that this crop was relatively as unimportant in the village as on the Sandstone Ridge as a whole, where between 1600-20 and 1680-1700, its share of the sown acreage increased from 12.8% to 31.7%.<sup>1</sup> At least by Period II, oats had probably become the single most widely-sown crop in the village, as wheat and barley acreages contracted.

CROP	PERIOD (CASES)	INDIVIDUAL CROP VALUE AS A PROPORTION OF TOTAL CROP VALUE
Wheat	I (16)	58.6%
	II (13)	95.4%
Barley	I (5)	16.3%
	II (4)	14.4%
Oats	I (10)	23.3%
	II (7)	25.5%
Pulses	I (6)	8.2%
	II (3)	5.4%
Hay	I (18)	21.6%
	II (22)	20.1%

Table 18. Mean Individual Crop Values as a Proportion of Total Crop Values in Pluckley Inventories, 1562-1639 & 1640-1700 (Source: Probate Inventories).

1. See Table 11, p.80.

The only measure we have -crude though it is- of such changes in the arable sector between Periods I & II is the proportion of the total value of crops in each inventory<sup>1</sup> invested in individual crops.

Broadly speaking, the 22.5% drop in wheat's share of crop values between Periods I a II corresponds with the scale of decline both in the Weald and on the Sandstone Ridge (21% and 16% respectively)<sup>2</sup>. The modest increase in the value of oats in Pluckley is probably an underestimate, but taken with the changes in wheat values does point to a swing towards pastoral husbandry. The fodder crop, oats gained ground at the expense of winter-sown wheat and spring-sown barley, peas, and beans.

This however, is not the whole picture. What William<sup>3</sup> Marshall called the 'Maidstone Plantation' was, we have noted, an important focus of fruit and hop production in the early modern period. Neither crop were systematically recorded in inventories, since they were held to come from the soil<sup>4</sup> 'without the industry or manufacture of man'. Hops though were definitely being grown in Pluckley as early as 1586; the inventory of Clemisse Lull, widow, records 'ii pounds of hopes,

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1. Because of the small data set, the mean ratio of each crop as a proportion of the total value of crops was calculated from those inventories listing the total inventory value of that crop. For this reason, the set of inventories used in each case is somewhat different. The figures, therefore, should be seen as indicating in general terms changes in the balance of different crops; but not the scale of that change, nor the relative proportions comprised by the different crops.

2. See Table 11, p.80.

3. Above, p.57.

4. Burn's Ecclesiastical Law, quoted in E. Melling, Kentish Sources III: Aspects of Agriculture and Industry (Maidstone, Kent County Council, 1961), p.7.

a crocke of sprats and fyshe', valued at 1s 6d. The hopground of this smallholder (her farm goods consisted of £3-1-0 of wheat, oats, malt and beans; 3 kine; a calf; and a few pigs and chickens) was probably between 0.5 and 2 acres, as were most plots in the county before 1640.<sup>1</sup> If there was any hop-growing on a larger scale in Pluckley at this period -like the sixteen acres cultivated by George Franklyn, gent. of Chart Sutton in 1604- it has not left any trace.<sup>2</sup>

By the 1640s, there were several larger-scale hopgrounds in the village. John Woolton's £217 Group IV estate (he died in 1640) included £20 worth of hops and £40 worth of hop-poles; pointing to a hopground of ten acres or more. Sir Edward Dering was growing hops by 1620; and his wages bill for hop-pickling forty years later suggests a rather more modest hopground of 5-10 acres.<sup>3</sup> Hop-growing continued to spread on the fertile soils of the Maidstone District for the rest of the century, though few growers before 1750 had as many as ten acres. Records have survived of several such modest enterprises in Pluckley between 1660 and 1700.<sup>4</sup> Though the spread of hop-growing was hindered by the initial expenses,<sup>5</sup> production costs, and the vagaries of resulting yields, it had

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1. K.A.O. PRC 10/15/139-40; Baker, 'Agricultural Prices, Production and Marketing', P.479; Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.92.

2. Chalklin, op.cit.

3. K.A.O. PRC 11/7/24; U350/E4; U133/E2/9. Estimated acreages are based on a comparison with the hop-growing accounts given in Chalklin, op.cit., p.93.

4. Short, 'The South-East: Kent, Surrey and Sussex', pp.275-7; Inventories of Henry Crutwell (d.1665), John Pell (d.1665) and Edward Norman (d.1676): K.A.O. PRC 11/23/160, 11/25/68, 11/42/58.

5. Chalklin, op.cit., p.93; Short, op.cit., p.276; Baker, op.cit., ch.9-13.

not failed to attract Edward Norman, listed as a 'yeoman', but whose <sup>1</sup> £103 estate placed him among the least wealthy of that rank.

According to Denis Baker, fruit production in Kent was stagnating by the 1680s and '90s, the victim of 'a long-term decline in fruit prices from the end of the sixteenth century'. And 'nowhere is there any evidence to suggest that the extension of fruit-growing was a feature of "improvement" in the deflationary decades [i.e. after 1680].'<sup>2</sup> A comment by Sir Edward Dering, writing of Pluckley in about 1673 would seem to confirm this picture: 'I see in this parish abundance of old dead fruit trees but few or none of young ones.'<sup>3</sup>

Many farmers would have laid out a small orchard or two near the house -probably amounting to less than an acre. Though the Maidstone region along with the Sittingbourne-Faversham district supplied the bulk of London's fruit requirements throughout the period, Pluckley inventories give little idea of the scale of fruit production in the village.<sup>4</sup> References to fruit in store are scattered throughout the inventory set, but values listed are never more than a few shillings, apples being the only fruit listed by name.<sup>5</sup> According to John Norden, the cider produced by a modest orchard 'without any further supply of Ale or Beere, sufficed a good householder and his family, the whole year

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1. K.A.O. PRC 11/42/58.

2. Baker, op.cit., p.273.

3. H.L.R.O. Colln. of Philip Blake Esq., Ms.F, f.40.

4. Baker, op.cit., pp.264,286,290; Chalklin, op.cit., pp.90-2.

5. K.A.O. PRC 10/4-5, 11/24/48, 11/52/185, 11/53/13.

following.<sup>1</sup> Only on larger farms would cider have been brewed  
beyond domestic requirements.

III

We argued earlier that the farming data from Group I to IV cannot often be safely used to pinpoint subtle changes in the husbandry of Pluckley farmers. It is important to recognise, however, that studying any inventoried population as a single group is unlikely to capture the experience of the majority of testators.<sup>2</sup> An independent analysis of each of the four 'deflated' sub-groups will permit the scale of farming practiced by villagers of varying levels of wealth to be established -an essential preliminary to accounting for changes over time in the numerical importance of different strata of Pluckley landholders.

PERIOD	SUB-GROUP	NO. CASES	TOTAL INVENTORY VALUE (£)			
			MIN.	MAX.	MEAN	MEDIAN
I	I	13	4.4	42.1	20.1	21.4
	II	20	27.4	94.3	55.1	71.9
	III	8	48.1	182.5	104.9	106.3
	IV	7	106.5	673.7	275.8	183.3
		TOTAL	48			
II	I	12	7.1	53.5	33.7	34.3
	II	10	61.0	106.5	87.7	92.5
	III	6	98.5	185.7	145.9	143.8
	IV	19	200.1	808.0	400.3	345.0
		TOTAL	47			

Table 19. Appraised Wealth (Undeflated) by Sub-Group in the Pluckley Inventories 1562-1639 & 1640-1700  
(Source: Probate Inventories).

1. J. Norden, The Surveyors Dialogue (London, 1618), p.214.  
2. J. Oliver, 'Farming and Agricultural Change in South Cambridgeshire 1665-1730' (Cambridge Univ. B.A. dissertation, 1982), p.8.

As might be expected, these four groupings do not dovetail easily into contemporary status classifications such as gentleman, yeoman, husbandman, and labourer. As Margaret Spufford has shown, 'each [status] group contained members who could well, judging from the value of their goods, be fitted into the next'<sup>1</sup>. In Table 20, mean (deflated) values of Groups I-IV have been compared with Cressy's findings based on an analysis of 3,261 probate inventories (1580-1700), similarly deflated.

NATIONAL SAMPLE (3,261 cases)		PLUCKLEY SAMPLE (95 cases)		
Status Group	Mean Value (£)* 1580-1700	Group	Mean Value (£)* 1562-1639      1640-1700	
Gentlemen	174.9	IV	167.5	186.6
Yeomen	98.9	III	60.9	65.4
Husbandmen	42.5	II	35.0	40.7
Labourers	14.8	I	12.6	16.2

\* deflated to 1565-74 base

Table 20. Mean Values (Deflated) by Sub-Group in Pluckley Probate Inventories (1562-1700) and by Status Group in Cressy's National Inventory Sample (1580-1700).

(Sources: D. Cressy, Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1980), Table 6.9, p.139; Pluckley Probate Inventories)

We may broadly conclude from this and other comparable work on inventories that Group I comprise what Alan Everitt has termed 'peasant labourers'<sup>2</sup>, along with less substantial and middling husbandmen. Group II includes most of the

1. Spufford, Contrasting Communities, p.39.

2. Ibid., pp.37-9; Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, pp. 232,243-4; Johnson, 'Wills and Inventories of a Worcester-shire Parish', p.23; Everitt, 'Farm Labourers', pp.412-21. Everitt defines 'peasant labourers' as 'those workers whose livelihood was based partly on their holdings' (ibid., p.412).

wealthier members of that rank; plus the lower echelons of the yeomanry. Middling yeomen fall within Group III; and Group IV is reserved for the wealthiest yeomen and gentry.

The peasant labourers of Group I, like many less prosperous husbandmen depended in part for their livelihood on paid work on the farms of their neighbours.<sup>1</sup> John Barton, for example, when he died in 1665 left a £42-14-9 estate which included 17 sheep and 3 steer. Forty-five years earlier, Barton had been employed by Sir Edward Dering as the 'chefe husbandman' on his Surrenden estate. He was still working at Surrenden in the 1640s -receiving occasional payments for felling wood, fencing and ditching.<sup>2</sup> Others combined a smallholding with spinning or weaving cloth, or practicing a trade or craft. At least 60% of the farmers in Group I were part of such a dual economy.<sup>3</sup>

About a third of Group I farmers lacked sufficient capital and land to sow crops, and most of the rest put down a few acres for domestic consumption. Stephen Maylan (d.1576) with seven acres of spring-sown oats and beans, alongside his 4 kine, 5 calves, and horses worked a holding of perhaps about 35 acres: farming on a scale unfamiliar to most smaller husbandmen and labourers.<sup>4</sup>

Few of them owned more than a couple of cows, perhaps

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1. Chalklin, op.cit., p.242; Baker, 'Agricultural Prices, Production and Marketing', pp.155-9.

2. K.A.O. PRC 11/24/48; U350/E4; U1107/A13.

3. 15 of the 25 Group I inventories refer more or less explicitly either to clothworking (the overwhelming majority) or to the practice of some other craft or trade.

4. K.A.O. PRC 10/8.

with the odd heifer or calf; and about a third possessed a modest flock of usually under twenty sheep. More farms though had a horse or two than kept either cattle or sheep; possibly to profit from the sale of offspring, as well as to provide much needed personal transport and the capacity to carry heavy loads of corn and timber. In addition, most Group I farmers -like their more substantial neighbours- would have kept several pigs and a few chickens or other poultry. Predictably, fat cattle were virtually unknown in Group I, and the absence of oxen would suggest that farmers shared plough teams, either with those of similar status outside the inventory group, or more likely with other wealthier farmers in the village.<sup>1</sup>

Among the more prosperous husbandmen and modest yeomen of Group II, all grew some crops, but the sown acreage was small on most farms -usually under fifteen acres.<sup>2</sup> Cattle-owning was more widely spread than in Group I: only a quarter owned no cattle (Period I: Period II :: 25%:22%). Fattening, though, remained rare -only one farmer in four or five kept beef cattle. Sheep gained in popularity over the period - the proportion of farmers owning a flock rose from

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1. According to John Boys (General View of the Agriculture of Kent, p.157), 8-10 oxen were needed to plough the heavy soils of the Weald.

2. Three summer inventories from Periods I & II have survived. They give sown acreages of 3 acres and 7 acres (twice): PRC 10/35/290 (Thomas Tilyeman, d. 1611); 10/40/155 (George Butcher, d.1618); 10/31/35 (James Best, d.1603). Three other inventories made when either spring or winter corn was on the ground point to similar acreages (c. 3-10 acres): PRC 10/8 (Walter Bocher, d.1575); 10/36/442 (Richard Tylman, d.1606); 10/42/222-3 (William Tylman, d.1615). Others though were growing rather more crops like George Pout (d.1586) and widow Benet Pinkaman (d.1661) who grew 8 and 9 acres of wheat respectively, and probably sowed annually about 15-20 acres of corn altogether (PRC 10/15; 11/12/12).

47% to 78%, and flocks over fifty became more common after 1640. Again, a small stable of one to three horses was the norm, together with up to six pigs. The near absence of oxen (only two instances have come to light) suggests similar ploughing arrangements as in Group I, though a few farmers may have been using horses for that purpose by the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Moving to Group III, it is difficult to be certain about the scale of arable farming -given the small number of cases. However, sown acreages could be considerable, like that of Thomas Hodge (d.1700) at 26 acres (9 acres wheat, 10 oats, 4 peas/beans, and 3 of barley). Less substantial acreages were probably more typical like the 11 acres of wheat and oats sown by Thomas Birckhom in 1642. At least some Group III farmers though put down less than five acres of crops each year, while retaining a substantial livestock holding. Gabriell Jennings, for example, sowed only two acres of wheat in the winter of 1638-9, but his animals comprised 2 kine, 5 head of beef cattle, 4 heifers, 3 calves, 19 sheep, 3 pigs and 2 horses.<sup>2</sup>

All the middling yeomen of Group III kept a small dairy herd (1-6 kine), and most -perhaps an increasing number- were fattening four to twelve head of cattle for the beef market, as well as breeding and working them. As in Group II, sheep husbandry seems to have become more widely practiced (Period I: Period II:: 50%:86%). In the case of both cattle and sheep, it is not clear whether herds and flocks increased in size as

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1. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.104.

2. K.A.O. PRC 11/62/74; 11/9/50; 11/53/139.

well as frequency between Periods I and II.

For Group IV's prosperous yeomen and gentry farmers, a small arable acreage might reflect the relatively modest scale of farming of a man like Richard Giles, gent. (d.1693), on whose £395-9-3 estate only £81 was invested in crops and livestock. His 2 steer, 2 kine, 4 heifers, 43 sheep and a horse, together with 4 acres of wheat put him on a par with many of the farmers of Group III. The 156 yards of broadcloth appraised at £42 reveal his involvement in the clothing industry, the income from which may have been at least as important to him as that derived from farming.<sup>1</sup>

Giles's was the smallest recorded acreage among the surviving Group IV inventories, but Stephen Pell (d.1643), whose £534 estate included over £300 worth of livestock, sowed only six acres of wheat and six of oats in 1643.<sup>2</sup> More typical probably was a sown acreage of 25-30 acres, like that of John Lambart (see Table 17, p.95). To put this figure in perspective, in a sample of twenty north- and east-Kent inventories made in 1700, nine had sown acreages of 25-30 acres, and four had over 50 acres sown (98 acres, 66 acres, 72 acres, 79 acres).<sup>3</sup>

On some Pluckley farms though, corn acreages could be considerably greater than on John Lambart's holding. The chance survival of the probate inventory of John Bettenham Esq. (d.1647), together with an account book of Sir Edward Dering (2nd.bart.) made between 1673 and 1675 enables us to

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1. K.A.O. PRC 11/60/58.

2. K.A.O. PRC 11/10/82.

3. Chalklin, 'The Rural Economy of a Wealden Parish', p.39.

reconstruct with the some precision the farming practices of the village's two largest landowning families.

At his death, Bettenham had on the ground 18 acres of wheat, 18 acres of oats, 8 acres of barley, 3 of peas and 4 of tares: a total of 51 acres. In the years 1673-5, Dering had between 47 and 73 acres under the plough, with varying proportions of wheat, barley and oats. On both farms fodder crops (oats, peas and tares) comprised more than half of the sown arable; and part of the barley crop may have gone for cattle feed too.<sup>1</sup>

Both men invested more heavily in livestock than in crops. Bettenham's animals were worth over twice as much as his crops (CLR=0.49). Dering's crop values remained constant in the years 1674-5 at £200, but his livestock holding increased by some 60% between these two dates (CLR=0.63 and 0.39 respectively). By 1674, Dering was evidently farming on a considerable scale (Table 21, P.107); but unlike on the Bettenham estate, sheep continued to account for the majority of livestock values. During these three years, Dering never owned more than twice as many cattle as Bettenham had done in 1647, while his sheep flock at its largest was over five times his neighbour's (516 compared with 99).<sup>2</sup>

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1. K.A.O. PRC 11/14/34; H.L.R.O. Colln. of Philip Blake Esq., Ms.F, ff. 27v, 77v-78, 103-104v. The exact acreages of Dering's crops are as follows:

Year	Wheat	Barley	Oats	Total
1673	13	20	14	47
1674	28	10	35	73
1675	15	18	20	53

2. A 'note' of Dering's stock made in 1677 gives a similar picture of his livestock holdings, though somewhat fewer sheep (348) are recorded (K.A.O. U133/E2/11).

LIVESTOCK	BETTENHAM				DERING			
	1647		1673		1674		1675	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Milch Kine	7	33.5	--	--	--	--	--	--
Oxen	4	36.0	--	--	8	44.0	--	--
Steer/Beasts	9	45.5	8	36.0	6	26.0	39	132.0
Runts	--	--	16	41.0	--	--	--	--
Heifers	2	7.5	} 8	32.0	{ 7	25.0	} 11	20.0
Calves	3	4.5						
Weathers	} 72	39.0	171	66.4	{ 60	30.0	155	129.0
Ewes								
Tegs	--	--	80	30.2	76	30.0	--	--
Rams	7	5.0	4	3.0	5	4.0	5	5.0
Lambs	20	7.5	--	--	71	16.0	105	25.0
'Fattening sheep'	--	--	--	--	40	20.0	--	--
Horses	3	10.0	--	--	13	50.0	10	90.0
Pigs	26	19.0	11	5.0	20	10.0	16	10.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>207.5</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>213.6</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>320.0</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>516.0</b>
<b>CATTLE TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>127.0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>68.0</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>152.0</b>
<b>SHEEP TOTAL</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>51.5</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>99.6</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>160.0</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>264.0</b>

A=number B=value(£)

Table 21. Livestock on the Estates of John Bettenham Esq. (1647) and Sir Edward Dering 2nd bart. (1673-75) (Sources: K.A.O. PRC 11/14/34; H.L.R.O. Colln. of Philip Blake Esq. Ms.F).

Among other Group IV farmers, about three-quarters kept sheep by 1640-1700; and most kept over fifty animals. On sheep-carrying farms, a holding of about 100 -like John Bettenham's- seems to have been typical. The inventory of only one farmer has survived which indicates a sheep-farming operation on a scale similar to Dering's. John Perie gent. had £407-14-0 invested in sheep and lambs when he died in 1683: a flock of perhaps 500-600 animals. With the exception of a couple of horses, all of Perie's £550 worth of livestock were grazed on pastures rented or owned in the Romney Marsh region of east Kent.<sup>1</sup> Like many of Pluckley's wealthiest farmers, Sir Edward Dering also dispatched livestock to the Marsh, though it is not clear on what scale, nor whether his cattle as well as sheep were fed on its rich, ryegrass pastures.<sup>2</sup>

With one exception, all other Group IV farmers invested more heavily in cattle than in sheep; the median farm holding 13.3 of the former by Period II.<sup>3</sup> Almost half of farms by this time, however, possessed over sixteen animals; including, typically, a modest dairy herd (up to 7 animals), and a dozen or more fat and store cattle: John Bettenham is a good example of such a farmer. Few possessed more cattle than the Dering estate at its most heavily-stocked (only two such inventories have survived). The largest recorded holding, that of John Pell, yeoman, amounted to 81 animals; 34 of which

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1. K.A.O. PRC 11/47/138.

2. Of 6 inventories from Periods I & II with deflated values of over £250, 4 list livestock holdings 'in the Marsh'. See Short, 'The South-East: Kent, Surrey and Sussex', pp.284-5.

3. John Wolton (d.1640) kept 100 sheep worth £50 out of a total livestock holding of £76 (K.A.O. PRC 11/7/24).

1  
were grazed in Romney Marsh.

(b) The Integration of Agricultural and Industrial Production:

Woolen Textile Manufacture in Pluckley

'Old Andredsweald at length doth take her time to tell,  
The Changes of the world, that since her youth befell...  
She learn'd the churlish axe and twybill to prepare,  
To steel the coulter's edge,  
And sharpe the furrowing share:  
And more industrious still, and only hating sloth,  
A huswife she became, most skild in making cloth.'

Michael Drayton, Poly-Olbion, 1622.

In his topographical survey of the county published in 1828, W.H. Ireland wrote that 'the manufactures in Kent are not very abundant'. With the exception of iron furnaces 'contiguous to Sussex', and the 'numerous mills for the manufactory of silks', near Sevenoaks, he makes no mention of industry in the Kentish Weald.<sup>2</sup> Yet at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the manufacture of woolen cloth in the Weald of Kent, in Suffolk, and in the town of Reading comprised the second most important group of textile industries in the country; at a time when the woolen industry 'alone accounted for almost all of England's exports and was undoubtedly England's main employer of industrial labour.'<sup>3</sup>

Established in the fourteenth century, the cloth

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1. K.A.O. PRC 11/25/68.

2. W.H. Ireland, England's Topographer or A New and Complete History of the County of Kent (London, 1828), i. 101.

3. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.116; D.C. Coleman, Industry in Tudor and Stuart England (London, Macmillan, 1975), p.16; S.M. Jack, Trade and Industry in Tudor and Stuart England (London, Allen & Unwin, 1977), pp. 101-2.

industry of wealden Kent formed -at the beginning of our period- part of what Peter Bowden has termed 'the south-east industrial region'<sup>1</sup>. The region specialized in the production of the heavy broadcloth, together with the lighter and cheaper kersies. These coarse cloths were usually sold (unlike the broadcloths of the West Country) in a 'dressed' state; and dyed a wide variety of colours, often before weaving.<sup>2</sup>

As in other forest-pasture regions, it was the coincidence in Wealden Kent of large, populous parishes with a form of agriculture well suited to textile by-employment,<sup>3</sup> combined with the natural advantages of local fuller's earth and water supplies, that attracted clothiers to the region in increasing numbers after 1500. In addition, the 'high urban labour costs, excessive guild restrictions and costly civic overheads' of the older urban industrial centres like Canterbury and Sandwich encouraged at least some clothiers there to see the advantages of transferring production to the Weald; where 'there was minimal regulation and the price of labour was rather less'.<sup>4</sup>

Cloth production was the most labour-intensive of all the major industries of the period, and the existence of

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1. Clark, English Provincial Society, p.8; Bowden, The Wool Trade, p.50.

2. Bowden, op.cit., p.50; K.G. Ponting, The Woolen Industry of South-West England (Bath, Adams & Dart, 1971), ch.4; Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, pp.117-8. The process of 'dressing' involved drawing out and cropping the loose fibres to give a smooth appearance.

3. See J. Langton & G. Hoppe, Town and Country in the Development of Early Modern Europe (Historical Geography Research Series, XI, 1983), pp.24-30.

4. Thirsk, 'Industries in the Countryside', pp.79-81; Clark, op.cit., p.8.

underemployed workers capable of taking on such work to supplement their meagre earnings from agriculture was a critical enabling factor in the development of the industry.<sup>1</sup>

In the clothing townships of sixteenth-century Lancashire, organization of the industry was dominated by independent weavers: 'quite poor men who worked at home, assisted by the rest of the family, and who owned one loom, and perhaps a spinning wheel'. Such men would buy wool in small quantities from wool dealers or broggers; and other members of the household, or specialist workers, would perform the operations of carding and spinning, necessary to keep the loom supplied.<sup>2</sup>

In the Weald of Kent in contrast, most wool was probably bought by the clothier -an entrepreneur- and distributed to the homes of carders, spinners, weavers and fullers. After fulling,<sup>3</sup> the woven cloth was usually dressed in the clothier's own 'workhouse' or 'shop', and if it had not been done earlier, dyed. Upon completion, cloths were dispatched by road to London, to be sold in its Blackwell Hall market.<sup>4</sup>

This splitting-up of the processes of cloth manufacture within the framework of a 'domestic' or 'putting-out' system lowered the clothier's costs, and raised productivity;

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1. D.C. Coleman, 'Textile Growth', in N.B. Harte & K.G. Ponting (eds.), Textile History and Economic History (Manchester, Manchester Univ. Press, 1973), p.2.

2. N. Lowe, The Lancashire Textile Industry in the Sixteenth Century (Manchester, Chetham Soc., 1972), pp.20ff.

3. A process whereby the cloth was cleansed and pressed with a clay called 'Fuller's Earth'.

4. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, pp.115-9; idem., 'A Kentish Wealden Parish: Tonbridge 1550-1750' (Oxford Univ. B.Litt. thesis 1960), p.57.

affording what D.C. Coleman has called 'historically... the most striking example of division of labour'. Since every stage but the dressing and dyeing took place within the domestic sphere, 'the basic process of manufacture fitted in remarkably well with the family structure.<sup>1</sup> John Hooker's well-known comments about sixteenth-century Devon could have applied equally to many wealden households of the period:

'Wheresoever any man doth travell, you shall fynde at the hall dore, as they do name the front dore of the house...the wiffe, their children and their servants at the turne spynninge or at their cardes carding.' (2)

Because of the uniquely labour-intensive character of the industry, sustained population increase in an area already producing cloth would produce conditions favourable to an extension of the domestic system.<sup>3</sup> In the first part of this chapter, we saw how the diffusion of broadcloth manufacture in sixteenth-century Kent was associated with substantial increases in the population of its wealden and scarpland regions. By the 1540s, there had emerged a close correlation between the most heavily-settled parishes, and those with concentrations of cloth manufacture. One such dense band of settlement lay on the Weald's northern fringes; and comprised such 'semi-industrial townships' as Pluckley, Smarden, Lenham and Ashford.<sup>4</sup>

It is not clear when the cloth industry was first estab-

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1. Coleman, 'Textile Growth', p.2; idem., Industry in Tudor and Stuart England, pp. 26-7.

2. W. Hooker, Synopsis (1599), quoted in M. Campbell, The English Yeoman Under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts (London, Merlin, 1967), pp.14-5.

3. Coleman, 'Textile Growth', p.3; idem., Industry in Tudor and Stuart England, p.25.

4. Clark, English Provincial Society, p.90.

lished in Pluckley, though it was certainly in evidence by the mid-15th century.<sup>1</sup> Of the 97 farming inventories for the village, 34% list yarn, woven cloth, or the 'stockards', spinning wheels and looms that indicate involvement in woolen or other textile manufacture.<sup>2</sup> Between 1562-1639 and 1640-1700, the proportion of Pluckley farmers connected with the industry fell from 52% to 26%; evidence in keeping with Chalklin's account of post-Restoration decline, and giving partial confirmation to Sir Edward Dering's comment of c.1670 that Kent's trade had 'visibly declined, and is now totally lost'.<sup>3</sup>

The English woolen textile industry between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries has been described as 'one of the more technologically stagnant and conservative industries in European economic history.'<sup>4</sup> Innovation in the industry came not through technical innovation, but through the continuous emergence of 'new products' -new fabrics, new designs, different colours, different finishes, changes in yarn, in weaves, and in patterns. Such 'mutations' disseminated by imitation, were the clothier's response to the threat of stagnation.<sup>5</sup>

According to C.W. Chalklin, the early seventeenth century witnessed such diversification in wealden clothmaking;

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1. W. Durrant Cooper, 'John Cade's Followers in Kent', A.C., VII (1868), pp. 238, 264-5.
  2. See J. Langton, 'Industries and Towns 1500-1730', in Dodgson & Butlin (eds.), An Historical Geography, p.175 for comparable figures for 5 Cotswold hundreds.
  3. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.121; 'Sir Edward Dering on the Decay of Rents in Kent, c. 1670', in J. Thirsk & J.P. Cooper (eds.), Seventeenth Century Economic Documents (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972), p.85.
  4. Coleman, 'Textile Growth', p.5.
  5. Ibid., pp.8-9; Jack, Trade and Industry, p.104.

with the appearance of linen-weavers, kersey-makers, narrow-<sup>1</sup>weavers and linsey-wolsey makers. With the exception of the last, all of these manufactures were practiced in Pluckley in the early modern period,<sup>2</sup> though diversification cannot be precisely dated.

As early as the 1560s and '70s though, kerseys and linen were being woven in the village. Stages in the manufacture of several varieties of cloth were often handled within the same household, like that of John Butcher (d.1569), whose inventory lists 'a broadloame, a kerse loome, ii winding trendles and all the tacklings thereto' worth £4. John Lambart had been engaged in linen and woolen manufacture when he died in about 1601. His inventory records '30 quarters of hempe and some yearne' at £1-10-0; and two linen wheels, a woolen trendle and a pair of stockards,<sup>3</sup> worth perhaps five shillings.

The figures for the whole group of farming inventories point to a doubling in the number of holdings on which hemp- the raw material of linen manufacture- was grown between Periods I and II (see Table 16, p.94). Among the inventories of those villagers involved in cloth production, not only did linen manufacture become more common (in Period I 35% of the sample, in Period II, 56%); but also greater numbers of linen-workers grew hemp on their own plots: probably sown in

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1. Chalklin, 'A Kentish Wealden Parish', p.60.

2. Linen-spinning and weaving, together with kersey manufacture are listed in inventories. Evidence for the narrow- as well as the more common broad-loom can be found in an entry in the parish vestry book for December 1669, where Daniel Briges is bound apprentice to Nicholas Baldock of Pluckley 'to be tothe to weve both broad cloth [and] narrow' (K.A.O. P289/8/1).

3. K.A.O. PRC 10/15, 10/48/370-1.

one- or two-acre parcels mixed with other arable crops.<sup>1</sup>

Some hemp was clearly being 'dressed' for manufacture. Robert Waters, 'hempdresser', left a Group I estate of £39-8-8 when he died in 1688, including 'ten shaines of coarse yarne' (7s), and 'a parcell of hempe', worth under £1. Leaving no livestock or crops except a few apples, the bulk of his movable wealth (£22-10-0) consisted of debts owing to him, presumably for work already completed. Other hemp was probably sent for Maidstone, where 'the best thread in all England' was spun; or destined for processing into linseed oil or poultry feed.<sup>2</sup>

Flax also made an appearance in the later seventeenth century, grown by a poor kerseymaker, John Raines, in 1683. His £27-17-0 estate included 'flax and flax seed' worth £1-10-0, £10 worth of cloth and wool, a horse, a cow with calf, and a couple of young pigs.<sup>3</sup> According to Joan Thirsk, production of both hemp and flax was expanding in this period, and Kentish evidence confirms this picture.<sup>4</sup> The cultivation of both crops -well-suited to peasant production,

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1. Thomas Wylles sowed 5 acres of hemp and wheat in 1608 (K.A.O. PRC 10/35/245) and Richard Barman sowed 2 acres of hemp and oats in 1641 (PRC 11/8/97).

2. K.A.O. PRC 11/52/185; Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.88; J. Thirsk, 'Seventeenth Century Agriculture and Social Change', in idem. (ed.), 'Land, Church and People', suppl. to A.H.R., XVIII (1970); repr. in P. Seaver (ed.), Seventeenth Century England (New York, Franklin Watts, 1976), p.97; J. Thirsk, 'Farming Techniques', in idem. (ed.), Agrarian History of England and Wales IV, p.177.

3. K.A.O. PRC 11/47/150.

4. Thirsk, 'Seventeenth Century Agriculture', p.97; Short, 'The South-East: Kent, Surrey and Sussex', p.303; Baker, 'Agricultural Prices, Production and Marketing', pp.250ff.

was a response to the slump in corn and cattle prices in late seventeenth-century England, as well as to the contraction of cloth manufacture in the Weald.<sup>1</sup>

Next to the cost of labour, wool -the raw material of cloth manufacture- was the most substantial of the clothier's expenses.<sup>2</sup> Some clothiers kept a sizeable flock of sheep themselves: John Wolton (d.1640) and Edward Nepacker (d.1675) had 100 apiece, and Richard Giles, gent.(d.1694) kept 79.<sup>3</sup> Some Pluckley clothiers seem to have dealt in wool, as well as in cloth, like William Huggett, whose 1614 estate included 568 quarters of wool. Joan Thirsk has suggested that some wealden clothiers may have also traded in cheese; perhaps exchanged by their clients for wool. Huggett's inventory certainly bears this out (he left 214 lbs. of cheese at his death), and Thirsk has found other examples of such dealings.<sup>4</sup>

Most Pluckley clothiers though depended to a large extent on supplies of wool bought in either from local wealden and scarpland graziers; or probably more often from the specialist sheep graziers of the North Downs and Romney Marsh.<sup>5</sup> In 1632, Thomas Couchman bought seventeen quarters of wool from Thomas Waterman of Bethersden in the Weald below Pluckley. In addition, he obtained 11-12 quarters from his own sheep; and he bought eleven more 'of two women unknown at Dover', probably originating in the Marsh.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Baker, op.cit., p.256.

2. Chalklin, op.cit., p.120; Coleman, 'The Economy of Kent', p.153.

3. K.A.O. PRC 11/7/24, 11/37/186, 11/60/58.

4. Thirsk, 'Industries in the Countryside', p.80.

5. Ibid., p.70; Chalklin, op.cit., p.118.

6. Bod.L. Ms. Films Dep. 913, ff.75-6.

As in the whole of the region, clothing manufacture in Pluckley was largely in the hands of men of moderate capital.<sup>1</sup> There may have been clothiers operating in the village on the scale of Peter Courtopp of Cranbrook, who left a £1,180-17-5 estate in 1567 -including wool and cloth worth £729- but no trace of men of this substance has survived.<sup>2</sup> The wealthiest Pluckley clothier, Henry Crutwell (d.1664) left an estate worth £558-18-8, of which cloth and wool comprised about £70. The evidence of several other clothiers' inventories indicate that investment of this order or less was usual.<sup>3</sup>

It is difficult to discern a pattern in the farming practices of Pluckley clothiers. Most kept 4-7 milch kine, a few fattening cattle, horses and pigs. There is some evidence to suggest that clothiers' farms were weighted towards arable husbandry to an extent untypical of farms as a whole: 3 of 6 inventories for which data are complete record CLR's of greater than 1.0. For most, wheat was the most valuable crop, though one clothier-farmer had £60 invested in hops and hop-poles.<sup>4</sup> The clothier farming on the largest scale was John Leonard, with £109 worth of crops and £99 of livestock; a holding which places him among the top half of Group IV farmers.<sup>5</sup>

Wiltshire's clothing industry 'may be said to have been organized on what is generally known as the domestic or putting-out system.' Such a term, however, is 'somewhat

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1. Chalklin, op.cit., p.120.  
2. Melling, Kentish Sources III, pp.110-2.  
3. K.A.O. PRC 11/23/16.  
4. K.A.O. PRC 11/7/24.  
5. K.A.O. PRC 11/37/186.

misleading', for large-scale enterprises and small free spinners 'competed side by side'<sup>1</sup>. Kentish manufacture was similarly dominated by the domestic system, but there is evidence from Pluckley that small craftsmen, mostly weavers, owned finished broadcloths and kersies themselves; presumably woven on their own looms.

John Raines, to whom we have already referred (p.115), seems to have woven his own cloth; and George Butcher (d.1618), another kerseymaker left a Group II estate of £60-9-1, which included 26 quarters of wool, two kersies, and in the 'shopp' 'vii stayes for a kerseyloome and all implements belonging to yt'<sup>2</sup>. Thomas Maylam (d.1607) was a somewhat more prosperous weaver. His £95-6-4 Group III estate included a loom 'in the shop' worth £1, 44 yards of kersey at £6, 40 yards of russet at £5, 24 yards of 'kirsey remnaunts' at £4, and 16 quarters of yarn worth £4. Spinning also went on<sup>3</sup> in the Maylam household, for two woolen trendles are listed. Small numbers of cases make it difficult to be certain, but the evidence from the inventories suggests that such 'quasi-independent' households formed a small but not insignificant<sup>4</sup> minority of those working cloth (7 of 19 households).

Most carders, spinners and weavers, then, were probably employed on a piece-rate basis by clothiers, usually working in the home on their own equipment. Unlike the 'stockards'

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1. G.D. Ramsay, The Wiltshire Woolen Industry in the Sixteenth Century, 2nd edn. (London, Frank Cass, 1965), p.6.

2. K.A.O. PRC 10/40/155.

3. K.A.O. PRC 10/34/110.

4. See K.G. Ponting, A History of the West of England Cloth Industry (London, Macdonald, 1957), p.25 for similar findings relating to West Country manufacture.

and spinning 'trendles' which cost no more than a few shillings, a loom cost £1-2, several months wages for an agricultural labourer of the period. Like those weavers buying their own wool, those employed by clothiers left estates varying considerably in their value. Stephen Hart's estate amounted to no more than £4-14-8 when he died in 1602; and included a linen loom and two pairs of cards, together with a handful of sheep and a pack of hay. John Butcher's Group II estate, on the other hand, included -as we have seen- two looms and a trendle, when he died in 1569. He also left wheat, malt, hay, oats, and apples worth £4-2-8; 3 kine, 2 horses, 9 pigs and some poultry.

Too few weaving inventories survive to attempt to establish any differences that existed between weavers employed by clothiers, and those of quasi-independent status. Elizabeth Melling's analysis of 32 clothing inventories from Cranbrook (1565-1605) pointed to the existence of a grouping of substantial weavers and other clothworkers -a third left estates over £50. Other work too suggests considerable variation in the scale both of weavers' manufacture, and of their personal wealth. Probably in Pluckley as in Wiltshire,

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1. But see the inventory of Abraham Butcher (d.1603), clothier, which includes one broadloom and two kerseylooms. They could have been for his own use, but his £160 Group IV estate suggests that he probably employed full-time weavers working on his premises (K.A.O. PRC 10/31/33-4). For another example, see Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.119.

2. K.A.O. PRC 10/30/251; 10/15/212-3.

3. Only seven inventories can be proven to be those of weavers.

4. Melling, Kentish Sources III, pp.105-6; Lowe, The Lancashire Textile Industry, pp.28-31; Ramsay, The Wiltshire Woolen Industry, p.15.

'the class of well-to-do weavers' possessing two or three looms 'almost imperceptibly merged into the ranks of the meaner clothiers, in whose homes was so often found a loom at which they presumably wove.'<sup>1</sup>

The carders and spinners were the largest single group in the woolen industry, since it took at least five full-time workers<sup>2</sup> to keep a weaver supplied with yarn. Carding, often undertaken by children, accentuated the cohesiveness of wool. The process involved converting the woolen fibres into a maze by working them between two boards ('stockards') covered with wire spikes.<sup>3</sup> Pairs of 'cards' are a common item in the inventories of Pluckley weavers and spinners; and from 1650 to 1666,<sup>4</sup> stockards were frequently bought for the village poor.

The spinning of carded wool into yarn was poorly paid work at the best of times, but in real terms the wages of spinners -as other textile workers- declined during the period. K.G. Ponting has suggested that the low level of wages offered by clothiers in this 'most sweated of trades' gave textile workers an incentive to buy small parcels of wool in local markets,<sup>5</sup> and thus circumvent the domestic system. With the exception of those weaving households who also practiced spinning, there is no evidence that Pluckley spinners worked with their own wool (though several seem to have dressed their own hemp). Every indication is that the spinning of woolen yarn in the vilage was dominated by the domestic system.

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1. Ramsay, op.cit., p.15.

2. Lowe, op.cit., p.25.

3. Bowden, The Wool Trade, p.41.

4. K.A.O. P289/5/1; P289/8/1. See ch.4, ~~pp.236-7.~~ pp. 237-8.

5. Ponting, The Wool Industry of South-West England, p.25.

James Edwardes who spun both linen and wool left a Group I estate worth £31-11-7 when he died in 1618. On his smallholding he had kept 2 kine, 10 sheep and 3 pigs; and would have sown a few acres of wheat, barley and peas each year. Income from his holding would have offered Edwardes and his family some protection against falling real wages. George Taylor (d.1640) was also a linen spinner, and his Group I estate of £28-15-6 and livestock holding of 2 kine and a calf, 7 sheep, 2 pigs, and a 'stock of bees' suggest a man of similar wealth to Edwardes, though he does not seem to have sown any of his land with crops.<sup>1</sup>

Edwardes and Taylor were two of the 40% of Group I farmers' households in Pluckley who either carded and spun wool or hemp; or wove yarn into often brightly-coloured broadcloths, kersies and linens. A similar proportion of cottagers, according to Alan Everitt were employed in the Midland Woolen Industry in the period 1500- 1640.<sup>2</sup>

For wealthy farmers like John and Stephen Pell, the listing of a woolen or linen trendle may indicate that servants were required to spin wool or hemp as a small addition to household incomes.<sup>3</sup> For most of the spinning and weaving done by Pluckley farmers, however, the term 'by-employment' may 'convey a false impression. They were not accidental or subsidiary, secondary or a miserable makeshift. They were an integral part of the pastoral way of life.'<sup>4</sup>

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1. K.A.O. PRC 10/46/64; 11/7/113.

2. Everitt, 'Farm Labourers', p.425.

3. See also the inventory of Francis Kingsnoth (d.1612): K.A.O. PRC 10/41/340-1.

4. Thirsk, 'Seventeenth Century Agriculture', p.98.

Chapter 3. Landholding and Social Structure: Property, Wealth  
and the Social Organization of Agricultural Production

'In all ages and nations, and through all religions there hath beene a constant practice to distinguish between man and man by a different valewation made arising from some observable worth or want discerned betwixt them whereby the able and worthy have alway[s] beene raised in estimacon (as itt were) severed from ye ignoble and unworthy.'

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Sir Edward Dering (1st bart.), c. 1631.

Dering's view of history shares little with that of the social historian or sociologist; yet common to all is the need to account for the unequal distribution of goods and services, rights and obligations, power and prestige which we term 'social stratification'. In this chapter we shall be concerned with what Keith Wrightson has recently termed the 'social-distributional approach' to stratification: to investigate statistically demonstrable differences in the distribution of land and income, and where possible to relate the observable pattern to contemporary status and occupational hierarchies.

Such interlinkage raises important conceptual problems, for a number of studies of early modern social structure have demonstrated that English society at this

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1. K.A.O. TR1627, f.92.

2. Dering writes (ibid., f.109): 'What is history but the pedigree of the world and what history but insisteth upon the descent and succession of eminent persons therein mentioned.'

3. J. Littlejohn, Social Stratification (London, Allen & Unwin, 1972), p.9.

4. K. Wrightson, 'The Social Order of Early Modern England: Three Approaches', in L. Bonfield et al. (eds.), The World We have Gained: Essays Presented to Peter Laslett (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp.184ff.

period showed few signs of a classic 'order-based' stratification system, wherein:

'...a hierarchy of degrees...each one distinct from the other...[is] organized not according to the wealth of their members nor their consumption capacity, nor yet by their role in the process of production of material goods, but according to the esteem, honour and rank that society attributes to social functions that have no connection at all with the production of material goods.'(1)

Although such status or occupational labels as 'gentleman', 'yeoman', 'husbandman' and 'labourer' could carry certain assumptions about the 'status and way of life rather than wealth'<sup>2</sup> of those so named, there is little doubt that the latter, whether manifested in land-ownership or less tangible forms of wealth was the critical factor in the long run. Sir Anthony Wagner gives an example of how this process might work:

'A yeoman might grow richer than many of his neighbours among the gentry, yet not wish to assimilate his way of life or his status to theirs; though if the wealth lasted his son or grandson would usually do so.'(3)

In this way, however, such static labels can obscure the facts of individual social mobility. Moreover the labels themselves took on new meanings over time as the relative<sup>4</sup> wealth of social groups shifted -for better or worse. When this is compounded by the considerable overlap in terms of wealth evident between individuals of different categories,

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1. R. Mousnier, Social Hierarchies (London, Croom Helm, 1972), p.23.

2. See Sir A. Wagner, English Genealogy, 2nd edn. (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972), Part IV.

3. Ibid., p.145.

4. Wrightson, op.cit., pp.188-90; G.E. Aylmer, 'Caste, Estate -or Status and Class in Early Modern England', unpublished paper, Univ. of Paris (1966), with a postscript (1973), p.10.

and the often vague and haphazard use of status and occupational labels in local records, it may be wondered what social reality such terms grasp, particularly below the level<sup>1</sup> of the gentry.

Bearing in mind these difficulties, the third section of this chapter will attempt to integrate a discussion of the pattern of landownership and its devolution (part one) and landlord/tenant and farmer/labourer relationships (part two) into a consideration of changes in the distribution of wealth (1524-1664) to come to some conclusions about village social structure.

(i) Landownership: Pattern and Process

I

The association of Kentish lands with the tenure or custom of gavelkind has long been celebrated in works glowing with provincial pride. A poem of 1700 described the county as:

'The Goddess of the British Isle,  
Fair Liberty on Thee does smile,  
Thy Lands Exempt from all Despotick Sway...  
Guard what your Fathers fixt of old,  
When early pious, wisely bold,  
The Conquerer they Controul'd.'(2)

Yet the peculiarities of Kentish tenure pose considerable problems for an investigation of the structure of landholding

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1. For a local example of the problems involved in relating status groups to wealth levels, and the inconsistency of the labels describing them, see P. Styles, 'The Social Structure of Kinton Hundred in the Reign of Charles I', in his Studies in Seventeenth Century West Midlands History (Warwick, Roundwood Press, 1978), 150-74.

2. P.A. Motteux, 'An Ode, Performed at the Anniversary Feast of the Gentlemen Natives of the County of Kent', Nov. 1700, in J.H.L. De Vaynes (ed.), The Kentish Garland (Hertford, 1881-2), i. 164-5.

in its villages. Leaving aside the question of gavelkind for the moment, the most striking feature of Kentish tenure in the early modern period was the overwhelming predominance of freehold as opposed to copyhold land.<sup>1</sup> Many Pluckley rentals have survived which describe rents paid by 'tenants', but often those so described were to all intents and purposes freeholders; their outright ownership of land dependent<sup>a</sup> merely on the payment of a nominal quitrent (perhaps including a hen or a few eggs), together with a fixed fine and sometimes a heriot at the time of purchase or inheritance.<sup>2</sup>

In a rental of the manor of Everingacre in Pluckley drawn up in 1594, lands amounting to some 50-100 acres yielded only 5s-2.5d in quitrent, together with a few hens, some geese and a pair of plough wheels. Ninety years later in 1684 over 500 acres on Sheerland Manor in Pluckley, Smarden and Biddenden<sup>3</sup> drew in rent £3-18-2, assorted poultry, eggs and a red rose.

Pluckley freeholders would have concurred with the farmer in John Norden's The Surveyors Dialogue (1618), when he stated:

'Syr, we acknowledge that the Lord ought to have his rent, and that is all, and our services at his courts, but the Land we have is our owne.'<sup>(4)</sup>

Attendance at the Court Baron of one or more of Pluckley's manors would be the only contact the village freeholders had with manorial regulation. At these courts, held two or three times a year, rents, reliefs and in some cases one

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1. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.46.

2. Ibid., pp.46-8; Zell, 'A Wood Pasture Agrarian Regime', p.70.

3. K.A.O. U1311/M1; U1107/M6.

4. Norden, The Surveyors Dialogue, p.4.

or more heriots were payable.<sup>1</sup> Typical of the fines due on inheritance was that paid by Daniel Nower at the court of Pevington Manor in 1633. Nower was left four acres by his father Joshua who had died in 1618. The former paid 4d as a relief, in addition to the yearly rent of 8d. At the same court, Samuel Howenden paid a relief of 7d for seven acres recently bought of the heirs of one John Whale; lands which drew a similar sum in yearly quitrent.<sup>2</sup>

Of the three Pluckley manors for which manorial records of this kind survive, only Everingacre seems to have levied a heriot: the seizure on the death of a freeholder of his best beast or a money payment of a few shillings if he had no livestock. When Stephen Turner inherited his father's lands in 1554 he paid as a heriot a 'pied cow' worth 16s, equal to nine years quitrent.<sup>3</sup> It is not clear how often a flesh and blood rather than money payment was taken; but for a small farmer, the taking of his best animal could impose a more than nominal burden.

No less than eight manors held lands wholly or partly in Pluckley, and several others had 'den' holdings there. Among the latter, the manor of Wye was over ten miles away, and even the courts of those manors nearer home like Little Chart and Westwell may have been seldom attended by Pluckley's freeholding 'tenants'.<sup>4</sup>

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1. K.A.O. U820/M1; U275/M1.

2. K.A.O. U820/M1, ff. 2,4.

3. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.47; K.A.O. U275/M1, f.10.

4. Hasted, History and Topographical Survey, vii. pp.465ff. On the village's 'den' holdings, see ch.2, p.62.

When it is remembered that even on the smaller freeholds true tenants were probably in a majority,<sup>1</sup> the link between manor and occupier becomes even more tenuous. In this context it is not surprising perhaps that when witnesses in a Chancery case between Richard Dering and Daniel Bettenham Esquires in the 1580s were asked if they knew the manors of Surrenden, Sheerland and Malmaines, a number of them replied -like 63 year-old William Post- that they knew the places concerned, but 'not whether they be mannors or no.'<sup>2</sup>

The largely formal connection between village freeholders and the patchwork of manors in the village, together with the complexity of that pattern makes it difficult to recover units of landownership from surviving manorial documents; while the seeming predominance of the tenant among Pluckley's farming population makes the reconstruction of farming units from these sources virtually impossible.

Of the eight manors with jurisdiction in Pluckley, four were in the hands of the Dering family by 1550: Surrenden (the family seat), Everingacre, Malmaines and Pirifields; comprising perhaps 500-700 acres in all. A further three manors were acquired between that date and the end of the century. Rooting Manor lay on the parish's eastern border, and attached to it were 293 acres in Pluckley, Hothfield and Pevington. It was bought of Sir Warham St. Leger of Leeds near Maidstone for <sup>3</sup>£170 in 1570.

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1. Chalklin, op.cit., pp.58-9.

2. K.A.O. U1107/L9/1, ff.48ff. Post's testimony is at f.64.

3. Hasted, op.cit., vii. p.468; K.A.O. U1107/A1; U2113/T31.

The more substantial West Kingsnorth Manor lying to the south of Roting was bought twenty-five years later by Dering for £800 from John Baker Esq. of Sissinghurst, Cranbrook, a member of the largest wealden landowning family of the period.<sup>1</sup> The last of the Pluckley manors newly acquired by the Derings was Pevington Manor in the west of the parish. This property with 240 acres of land in Pluckley, Little Chart and Smarden came to Richard Dering by inheritance through his mother Margaret, the sole heir of Thomas Brent Esq. of Willsborough.<sup>2</sup>

Even when the lands attached to these manors can be ascertained with any precision, it is often not clear what proportion of demesne lands lay in Pluckley. And of course, it is virtually impossible to determine how much land the Derings held in smaller freehold parcels.<sup>3</sup> However, when Sir Edward Dering (1st bart.) came of age in 1619, Surrenden, the family seat comprised 271 acres. The family's holdings in Pluckley probably amounted in all to about 1000-1500 acres at this time, or between 30% and 50% of village lands.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Hasted, op.cit., vii. 468; K.A.O. U1107/L9/8; Zell, 'A Wood Pasture Agrarian Regime', p.71.

2. B.L. Add.Ch. 55969; K.A.O. U275/E1; R. Hoveden (ed.), 'The Visitation of Kent, 1619-21', Harl. Soc. Publics., XLII (1898), pp. 139-41.

3. For example in 1684 Sir E. Dering (2nd bart.) owned 7 messuages and over 80 acres on the Bettenhams' Sheerland Manor (K.A.O. U1107/M6).

4. Bod.L. Gough Kent 20, ff. 10-11. Of the 7 manors including lands in Pluckley, those whose acreage is known (Surrenden, Pevington, Pirifields, Roting, Everingacre) totalled 1034 acres. The remaining two manors -Malmains and W. Kingsnoth-amounted to several hundred acres between them (rent levels suggest this). Although some lands in each manor lay outside the parish, allowance must be made for non-manorial holdings in the village (see n.3). The figure of 30-50% is based on the Pluckley acreage given in Victoria History of Kent, iii.p.463.

Besides Pevington Manor, Richard Dering inherited over 400 acres from 'my uncle Brent' on the Down- and Chartland north and east of Ashford in Boughton Aluph, Willsborough, Sevington and Mersham; and south of Canterbury in Upper Hardres, Kingston and Stelling. In 1619 Richard Dering's grandson Edward inherited these and other lands together worth £1000 per year. By the 1670s, the Derings had acquired lands in five marshland parishes about Milton and Sittingbourne in North Kent, but had probably sold those lands in the east of the county inherited from Brent.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Edward Dering's income after 1619 at £1000 yearly put him in the upper stratum of Kentish gentry, between the average yearly income of a sample of baronets (£1,405) and knights (£873) in the period 1640-60.<sup>2</sup> The lands of most Kentish gentry, Alan Everitt reminds us, were commonly confined to a handful of parishes and were worth under £250<sup>3</sup> per year; a quarter of the Dering figure.

At least up to the 1650s, it seems likely that the improving fortunes of the Dering family (from 'Esquire' to 'Baronet' in three generations) was built on an increasing holding in land. Sir Anthony Dering spent £3459 on lands during his lifetime (1558-1636), and sold £2229 worth, a net gain of £1230. His son Sir Edward may not have added signifi-

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1. H.L.R.O. Colln. of Philip Blake Esq., Ms.F, f.18; B.L. Add. Ch. 70657.

2. A. Everitt, The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion 1640-60 (Leicester, Leicester Univ. Press, 1966), p.41. A similar figure of £800 was put on the annual value of Dering's estate in 1644 (Bond, The Diaries and Papers of Sir Edward Dering, p.6, n.5).

3. Everitt, op.cit., pp.41-2.

cantly to the Dering estate. Indeed he records in a pocket book of 1637-9 that his sales of land up to that point had outweighed his purchases by some £2000: £7123 bought and £9194<sup>1</sup> sold. The shortfall was later confirmed by his son.

The greater sums involved in Sir Edward Dering's transactions, however, point to an increased scale of economic activity; a trend which continued into the young adult life of his son, the second Sir Edward Dering. After coming of age in 1646, Sir Edward junior spent £6000 on lands in Ousden, Pluckley and other Kentish parishes in the following nine years. In 1671 he recorded in a 'household book' that he spent in all £14,461 'to clear the estate and enlarge it.'<sup>2</sup>

When Sir Edward Dering (1st bart.) inherited the family seat of Surrenden in 1619, he kept 195 acres 'for my own occupation' worth £136 per year, and leased the remaining 76 acres worth £62 per year. In this he broke with the practice of his father who had 'husbanded and occupied' all the Surrenden lands. The Derings continued to farm an acreage of this order into the early 1640s: the churchwardens' accounts<sup>3</sup> record a family holding of between 154 and 201 acres.

With the exception of Pevington Manor which passed to the second Sir Edward's half-brother Henry on the death of his father in 1644,<sup>4</sup> the other Dering manors were probably put out to rent; reserving the timber and, where they survived, the

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1. B.L. Add.Ms. 47,787, f.4; Sir Edward Dering's Second Household Book, 1652-85, quoted in Bond, op.cit., pp.41-2.

2. Bond, op.cit.

3. Bod.L. Ms. Gough Kent 20, ff.13-4. K.A.O. P289/5/1.

4. K.A.O. U275/E1, f.27.

<sup>1</sup>  
courts. The above figure of £136 for the first Sir Edward Dering's farming income indicates that agricultural produce formed but a small proportion of his total yearly wealth at this time of £1000. And Maurice Bond has characterized the income of the second baronet in the 1650s in similar fashion:

'Annual receipts from his estates... consisted mainly of rents between £500 and £900, with varying sums for timber and small sums for his farm produce, his whole income totalling £600 to £1,500.'(2)

For a number of reasons, rents made up a less significant proportion of Dering's income from the 1660s. Between 1675 and 1679, he drew between £172 and £274 yearly in rent, never more than 10% of his total income. According to Bond, this fall in Dering's rent receipts prompted a move into investment; it may also have been accompanied by an expansion<sup>3</sup> in his farming operations, as Table 21 (p.107) suggests.

According to Edward Hasted, Sheerland, the last of the eight Pluckley manors had originally formed part of a larger manorial unit with the manors of Surrenden and Malmaines, until its division between three co-heirs in the second<sup>4</sup> century after the Conquest. Lying at the summit of Pluckley Hill between Surrenden and the parish church, Sheerland was the seat of the Bettenham family. The Bettenhams originated in Cranbrook, but by the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century they had become established in Pluckley when Alice Bettenham married Nicholas Dering, great-great-great grand-

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1. E.g. B.L. Add.Ch. 55987, 56031.

2. Bond, The Diaries and Papers of Sir Edward Dering, p.6.

3. K.A.O. U275/A2; Bond, op.cit.

4. Hasted, History and Topographical Survey, vii. p.465.

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father to Richard Dering.

Between 1590 and 1642, first Daniel Bettenham (d. 1596) and then his son John (d. 1647) were recorded by Pluckley churchwardens as occupying 280 acres of land in the village; and the evidence of John Bettenham's probate inventory confirms that the family farm was of this order.<sup>2</sup>

||However, not all that 280-acre holding necessarily lay on the demesne of the Sheerland Manor; and we have no way of knowing either what proportion of their lands the Bettenhams rented to other farmers, or what proportion of the lands they occupied, they themselves leased.<sup>3</sup>

That Daniel Bettenham leased out part of his Pluckley holdings is evident from his will, in which he stipulated that with the exception of one William Stonestreat, all his tenants:

'...shall occupie such lands as they have of myne yeldinge the same rent that they nowe give for the tearme of seaven yeares, so that [i.e. providing that]

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1. W.B. Bannerman (ed.), 'The Visitation of Kent 1530-1,1574', Harl.Soc.Publics., LXXIV-V (1923-4), i. 24; Bod.L. Ms. Gough Kent 20, f.6. The last source records that Nicholas Dering died in 1517.

2. K.A.O. U275/Q2; P289/5/1. Using the 'somewhat hazardous' method advocated by J. Cornwall ('Farming in Sussex', pp.68-9, 75-6), 0.5-0.75 acres have been allowed for each sheep and 1-1.5 acres for each cow/beast. Sown acreage has been translated into total acreage by allowing one-half to one-third for fallow land. With the inclusion of meadow at 17% and woodland at 5% (after Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.76), a total farm of 250+ acres is suggested.

3. It would seem from a later reference in the churchwardens' accounts and from comparable poor 'sesses' (see E.C. Lodge (ed.), The Account Book of a Kentish Estate 1616-1704 (London, British Academy, 1927), pp.xli-ii) that where land was leased, the assessment fell upon the tenant and not the owner. Otherwise it was presumably the owner-occupier who paid.

they make no wast of the hedgs & springs nor fell no woods... & keepe the howses in good reperacons.'(1)

There is little evidence though that the Bettenhams owned substantial freehold lands on the other manors in Pluckley. A small parcel is listed on the Surrenden manor roll under John Bettenham's name in 1633, and a 1564 list of quitrents for Malmaines includes payments by John's grandfather Thomas Bettenham for two parcels of unspecified acreage. Similar records for Pevington and Everingacre manors make no reference at all to Bettenham lands,<sup>2</sup> and in all probability the family estate comprised little more than the demesne of Sheerland, together with assorted small parcels of land in the village: perhaps 400-600 acres in all.<sup>3</sup>

Less ambiguous is the evidence concerning Bettenham holdings outside the village and its immediate neighbours. In his will, Daniel Bettenham left the manor of Sundridge in Bromley, Kent to his son John together with the manor of St. Cleares alias Netterhall in Suffolk, and copyhold lands also in Suffolk. Other lands in Bromley were left to four younger sons.<sup>4</sup>

Even if the fortunes of the Bettenham estate were improving in the century before John Bettenham's death in

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1. P.R.O. PROB 11/88/78.

2. K.A.O. U820/M1, f.49; U350/M1; U275/E1; U275/M1.

3. In 1647, John Bettenham left 2 messuages and 41 acres in Pluckley to his son Peter and a messuage and 10 acres to Francis. Unfortunately for our purposes, J. Bettenham had granted his other lands by deed inter vivos which his will merely confirmed (K.A.O. PRC 17/70/711). It was perhaps one parcel of these lands which George Bettenham (another son and a beneficiary of the deed) sold to Sir Edward Dering in 1655; consisting of 4 acres in Pluckley (K.A.O. U1107/A17).

4. P.R.O. PROB 11/88/78.

1647, the rapacious demand of the Derings for land in Pluckley and other nearby villages began, it seems, to open up an economic and probably also a social gulf between the two neighbouring families. Thomas Bettenham and John Dering were both assessed on £30 in lands in the Lay Subsidy Returns of 1541. 123 years later, Francis Bettenham was assessed on eight hearths in the tax of 1664, Sir Edward Dering on thirty-four.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, in 1652 Francis Bettenham was farming only 175 acres in the village, and twenty-three years later he sold lands in Pluckley worth £320 to Sir Edward Dering.<sup>2</sup> Nor was this an isolated sale. In his will written in 1683, Dering declared his resolve to clear:

'...my executors from all debts or summes of money due to any of the younger children of Mr. Francis Bettenham deceased for their porcions out of the lands of Sherland in Plunckley [sic] in Kent.'<sup>(3)</sup>

Taken together with the relatively modest estate of £241 left by Francis Bettenham in 1678 (his father's had been worth almost three times as much), a prolonged period of contraction in the Bettenham estates is suggested. This process was apparently completed -according to Hasted- 'almost within memory' when Sheerland was sold to Sir Edward Dering (?4th<sup>4</sup> bart.), probably in the early years of the eighteenth century.

## II

By the late 1590s then, some 1400-2100 acres or 45-70%

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1. P.R.O E179/124/241; K.A.O. Q/RTh.

2. K.A.O. P289/5/1; U1107/A24.

3. P.R.O. PROB 11/376c/10357, repr. in Bond, The Diaries and Papers of Sir Edward Dering, p.209.

4. Hasted, History and Topographical Survey, vii. 468.

of Pluckley's freehold land was owned by one of two families. M.L. Zell's recent study of wealden landholding in the sixteenth century indicates that such figures put Pluckley among only a handful of villages in the region where the combined holding of a few gentry families formed such a large proportion of village lands.<sup>1</sup>

Up to the early 1640s (when parliamentary sequestration struck the Dering estate) a maximum of about 550 acres or 18% of village lands were farmed directly by the Derings and Bettenhams. This means that at least 25-50% of Pluckley's total acreage was held in leasehold in this period. In fact the figure was almost certainly higher than that since '[in the sixteenth century Weald] landowners wealthy and not so wealthy regularly leased out a large share of their holdings.'<sup>2</sup>

The churchwardens' assessments for the poor which survive in a broken series during the years 1628-52<sup>3</sup> give a unique insight into the pattern of occupation of Pluckley lands during this period (Table 22, p.136). About 90% of village landholders occupied less than 60 acres throughout this 24-year period, and over 70% less than 30 acres. Within the second smaller category, the modest husbandmen and peasant labourers with holdings of perhaps 5-20 acres (defined as Group I in the last chapter) merged at the lower end of the

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1. Zell, 'A Wood Pasture Agrarian Regime', pp.71-2. See also Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, pp.50ff.

2. Zell, op.cit., p.71.

3. K.A.O. P289/5/1; U275/Q2. Earlier sasses survive for 1590 and 1623-4 but in all there are serious lacunae in the data given (U275/Q2). A number of the surviving sasses for the later period 1628-52 suffer from similar shortcomings. Those tabulated in Table 22 reflect the chronological range of the most complete examples.

DATE	1628	1633	1641	1646	1652					
TOTAL ACREAGE ASSESSED	2085	1938	2103	2082	1964					
OCCUPIERS BY SIZE OF HOLDING:										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%				
Less than 5 acres	14	17.1	15	18.1	12	13.5	11	12.4	7	8.0
5 - 9 acres	17	20.7	19	22.9	26	29.2	25	28.1	25	28.4
10 - 29 acres	30	36.6	30	36.1	31	34.8	28	31.5	33	37.5
30 - 59 acres	13	15.9	11	13.3	14	15.7	20	22.5	18	20.5
60 - 99 acres	5	6.1	6	7.2	3	3.4	2	2.2	3	3.4
100 - 199 acres	2	2.4	1	1.2	2	2.2	2	2.2	2	2.3
200+ acres	1	1.2	1	1.2	1	1.1	1	1.1	--	--
TOTAL	82	100.0	83	100.0	89	99.9	89	100.0	88	100.0
MEAN HOLDING (ACRES)	25		23		24		23		22	

Table 22. The Holdings of Occupiers of Land in Pluckley (Excluding Woodland) 1628-1652 (Sources: K.A.O. P289/5/1; U275/Q2).

scale into a grouping of cottagers with 'no more than a garden or pasture for a cow'. Such holdings -amounting to no more than a few acres- supplemented primary employment as a craftsman or tradesman, or as an industrial worker or agricultural labourer.<sup>1</sup>

There is no evidence that the 'middle range' of holdings, which Margaret Spufford found had disappeared in Chippenham, Cambridgeshire between 1560 and 1633, suffered a similar fate in Pluckley.<sup>2</sup> Those occupiers of between 10 and 29 acres (broadly comparable to Spufford's half- to one and a half-yardlanders) remained the single largest grouping throughout the period (31.5-37.5%), and worked between them about a quarter of the village's pasture and arable.

Those occupying less than five acres were apparently less fortunate. Their numbers halved between 1628 and 1652; the decline setting in after 1633. The experience of those without land who were included in the assessments up to 1646 would seem to lend strength to this downward trend among the poorest members of Pluckley's population.<sup>3</sup> In 1633 the landless comprised 16% of those assessed by the churchwardens. Their numbers dropped in each subsequent assessment, falling to 11%<sup>4</sup> by 1646.

Alongside the smallholders and middling farmers, those working over 60 acres formed a small minority of all occupiers during this period: never more than 10%. Nevertheless, between

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1. Chalklin, 'The Rural Economy of a Wealden Parish', p.34.

2. Spufford Contrasting Communities, ch. 2-3.

3. K.A.O. P289/5/1; U275/Q2.

4. The actual figures for the landless are 16.2% (1633), 13.5% (1641), 11.0% (1646).

26% and 46% of Pluckley's farmland was occupied by such men.

The broad outlines of land occupation in Pluckley evident in Table 22 fit what M.L. Zell has found for the Weald as a whole:

'In most wealden parishes there were scores of smallholders, a goodly number of family farmers, and a small number of larger holdings of sixty to at most a few hundred acres.'(1)

What of the apparent changes over the 24-year period? First of all it must be remembered that the churchwardens assessed the occupier of land in the village, whether owner or tenant. If, as is argued, tenant farmers were in a majority in Kent at this time, even on the smaller freeholds,<sup>2</sup> then it is possible that the picture of rural landholding implicit in Table 22 is truncated because larger landowners rented out parcels of their property.

Such an effect is clearly at work with regard to the upper stratum of Pluckley landowners: village gentry leased out hundreds of acres to tenants from the parish or elsewhere. Lower down the scale the process may have balanced itself out to a certain extent since, as C.W. Chalklin has argued, a landowner often rented all or part of the lands in his occupation, while himself the owner of lands leased to other tenants.<sup>3</sup>

The churchwardens' assessments probably do underestimate landowning levels, at least among more substantial occupiers. And those with smallholdings, or even without land, it must be

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1. Zell, op.cit., p.75.

2. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.59.

3. Ibid., p.60.

remembered, included widows and more prosperous farmers who had 'retired'; settling the bulk of their property on a son or other relative.

An example will serve to illustrate these problems. In 1630, two years before his death, Thomas Poss was listed as occupying 16 acres. In the following three years first Poss and then his widow were recorded as landless. From 1631, Thomas's eldest son makes an appearance in the assessment, listed as holding 16 acres.<sup>1</sup> Yet in addition to these Pluckley lands, Thomas Poss left other holdings to Richard; 20 acres in Pluckley to a second son William; and a further two holdings (including one of at least 20 acres) to his three other sons Edward, John and Thomas.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, in Thomas Poss senior's case, the acreage he was given in the assessments conveys little of his total estate.

However, it is unlikely that many of those owning below about 30 acres would have leased out more than a fraction of their holdings; unless their income was supplemented to some considerable extent by non-farming activities. So while the numbers of farmers below 30 acres are no doubt swollen to a certain extent by men like Thomas Poss, it is probable that for the majority so listed, the acreages given do not radically distort real levels of landownership.

In any case, unless there were radical shifts in the scale of inter vivos property settlements like Thomas Poss's, or in the proportion of their holdings landowners

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1. K.A.O. P289/5/1; U275/Q2; PRC 17/68/282.

2. K.A.O. PRC 17/68/282.

themselves occupied (and there is no reason to believe that either occurred in the years 1628-52) it would seem that any significant changes in the balance of landowning implicit in Table 22 indicate real changes in the pattern of village landownership.

In chapter one, we noted the 'striking dent' made on Kent's demographic regime by emigration induced by industrial crisis; and its probable role in accounting for stagnation in Pluckley's overall population at a time of considerable natural increase.<sup>1</sup> It is no accident perhaps that the decline in the numbers of families with little or no land from 1633 onwards fits closely the chronology of industrial crisis.<sup>2</sup>

The industrial depression of 1630-1, the third since the beginning of the century, coincided with the worst harvest since the 1590s, and the presence of typhus in the village at this time may indicate severe hardship.<sup>3</sup>

Those with little or no land of their own were the most vulnerable to the play of economic forces, though all those with holdings under about 30 acres and perhaps more<sup>4</sup> might see their modest profit margin disappear in the face of spiralling corn prices and un- or under-employment in the broadcloth industry.

The continuing importance, however, of that grouping of farmers occupying between 10 and 29 acres in the years after

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1. See ch.1, pp.32-3,46.

2. Chalklin, op.cit., p.121; Clark, English Provincial Society, pp. 317-22, 353-6.

3. See ch.1, pp.50-2.

4. P. Bowden, 'Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits and Rents' in Thirsk (ed.), Agrarian History of England and Wales IV, pp. 657-9.

1633 argues against widespread downward mobility from that level. Indeed, with one exception,<sup>1</sup> no cases have been found of occupiers assessed at 10-29 acres in 1633 and less than 10 acres in the years up to 1652. Some may have been forced into sale in the manner portrayed by Spufford in Chippenham,<sup>2</sup> but the working farm seems to have been maintained largely intact.

Of course such smallholders could have left the village immediately upon sale of their properties, or at the end of the term of their tenancies. For this reason, together with the apparent exemption of many of those on poor relief from assessment (for obvious reasons), and as we shall see other poor villagers, we should regard the figure of 8% loss from the village indicated by the fall in the number of those without land or with less than five acres (1633-46) as a minimum estimate of out-migration during this period.

Overall then there is little evidence for the 'disappearance of the small landowner' in Pluckley, at least in the period up to 1650. On the other hand, a decline in the numbers of cottagers and landless labourers seems to have occurred, and when this evidence is put together with the demographic data from chapter two, a process of out-migration from the village is suggested.

Such a picture does not fit easily into the bi-polar model used in recent years by agrarian historians. This model distinguishes two kinds of regions, differing in their

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1. Edward Kingsnoth was attributed 26 acres in the 1633 sess (K.A.O. U275/Q2). From 1641-6 he was listed as holding no land, and from 1647-52 he was listed but given no assessment (P289/5/1).

2. Spufford, Contrasting Communities, ch.2-3.

topography, economy and social structure.<sup>1</sup>

The first of these is the woodland pasture region dominated by animal husbandry. Such regions were characterized by large, often enclosed parishes of dispersed settlement, where the peculiarities of livestock production coupled with plentiful wastes and commons and opportunities in rural industry provided the environment for a flourishing class of peasant-proprietors during the seventeenth century. The same factors that brought success to such peasants also attracted large numbers of poor immigrants in the period to 1660, whose settlement was often aided by a weak manorial structure.

The second and opposing ideal-type is that of the mixed farming region, dominated by arable husbandry. In the typically small, nucleated villages of such regions, shortage of land coupled with forms of tenure generally less favourable to the occupier than in pastoral-woodland regions left the smallholder more vulnerable to the economic pressures of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Deprived of the twin supports of rural industry and plentiful commons and

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1. The following two paragraphs are based on the following sources (only the main contributors to the formulation of the model are indicated): J. Thirsk, English Peasant Farming (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957); idem., 'Industries in the Countryside', passim.; idem., 'Agriculture and Social Change', pp.91-2,98-103; idem., 'The Farming Regions of England', in her Agrarian History of England and Wales IV, pp.1-15; Everitt, 'Farm Labourers', pp.462-3; idem., 'Nonconformity in Country Parishes', passim.; W.G. Hoskins, The Midland Peasant: The Economic and Social History of a Leicestershire Village (London, Macmillan, 1957); P.A.J. Pettit, 'The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire: A Study in their Economy 1558-1714', Northants. Rec.Soc., XXIII (1968); Spufford, Contrasting Communities, ch.3-5,12; Skipp, Crisis and Development, ch.9.

wastes, many such small farmers had little choice but to sell. The story of the mixed farming regions in the seventeenth century is one of continuing economic polarization. Many victims of this process were forced to leave their villages both because employment opportunities were limited, and because the often highly manorialized structure of such communities left little room for a swelling population of landless.

The experience of Pluckley departed from that of the ideal-type 'pastoral-woodland village' in a number of important ways. Firstly, although the absence of copyhold tenure and open-field agriculture meant that the manor as such played a minor role in village affairs,<sup>1</sup> landownership in Pluckley was highly concentrated, especially from the end of the sixteenth century. Over half of Pluckley's 3000 acres were probably leasehold at this date, and much of the land was in the hands of one of two gentry families.

In an influential early characterization of the kinds of factors common to rural industry, Joan Thirsk wrote:

'The common factors seem to be these: a populous community of small farmers, often mainly freeholders...or customary tenants with a tenure almost as good as freehold...pursuing a pastoral economy...In the rearing districts the resources of the land (particularly the generous commons) are sufficient to support and do support, a custom of gavelkind...'(2)

Yet we have seen that in Pluckley freeholders may have

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1. See Clay, Economic Expansion and Social Change, i. pp. 64-5, 87-9 on open-field agrarian organization and copyhold tenure. On the Kentish manor, see Thirsk, 'The Farming Regions of England', p.62; Clark, English Provincial Society, p.7; Coleman, 'The Economy of Kent', pp.46-9.

2. Thirsk, 'Industries in the Countryside', p.86.

been in a minority among the village's landholders and landless cottagers. In any case freeholders did not dominate village life in the way common in the pastoral-woodland regions of Suffolk, Wiltshire and indeed in the Kentish Weald.<sup>1</sup>

Another common feature of pastoral-woodland villages absent in Pluckley was plentiful common and wasteland. In this the village's experience was not markedly different from the Weald as a whole, where wastes were 'small and scattered unevenly' and common land too was in limited supply.<sup>2</sup>

There were considerable stretches of woodland in the village though; perhaps as much as 1000 acres in the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> Much of it was probably owned by the Dering family. 600 acres of woodland in Pluckley and Little Chart were attached to the Surrenden Estate when the first Sir Edward Dering inherited it in 1619. It allowed, he noted, '30 acres yearly of 20 yeares growth to be felled for ever.'<sup>4</sup> Parcels of woodland attached to the other Dering manors were commonly reserved for the landlord's use when the properties were leased; and in renting out lands in the village, other freeholders placed similar restrictions.<sup>5</sup>

There is little but impressionistic evidence about the

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1. Thirsk, 'The Farming Regions of England', pp.46-9, 57-8, 67-9; Chalklin, op.cit., pp.58-9; Zell, 'A Wood Pasture Agrarian Regime', p.75.

2. Zell, op.cit., p.76.

3. This figure assumes that all those lands excluded from the churchwardens' assessments in 1628-52 were wooded. It should therefore be regarded as a maximum estimate.

4. Bod.L. Gough Kent 20, f.30.

5. E.g. B.L. Add.Ch. 55987 (Malmaines, 1594), 56031 (West Kingsnorth, 1650). For other landowners, see B.L. Add.Ch. 55923, 55931, 55965, 55976.

extent of woodland on the bulk of holdings, but most of it probably lay in small parcels of less than ten acres in extent. A few substantial farmers might have exploited timber commercially, though none on the scale of Sir Edward Dering (2nd bart.). He sold oak worth £1400 to the Navy Commissioners in the 1670s, which was transported by road to Faversham eleven miles away, and from there to Chatham by hoy.<sup>1</sup>

Quite what proportion of Dering's timber was felled to honour such contracts and whether it was replanted is not certain. Not clear either is the extent of disafforestation in the village more generally; though as we have argued, Pluckley was almost certainly more heavily wooded in the 1550s than it was a century later.<sup>2</sup>

In many pastoral-woodland villages, at least before the Restoration, relatively uncontrolled access to parochial or manorial wastes and commons enabled a large body of landless or semi-landless cottagers to grow up, their numbers swollen both by population increase and by immigration. In Brigstock in the Royal Forests of Northamptonshire, a complaint of 1623 referred to 'multitudes of poor people which have and do increase daily by reason of the continual erecting of new cottages and taking in of inmates.' In Northamptonshire as a whole, the average size of forest villages doubled between

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1. Calendar of State Papers Domestic, Car. II, Vol. CCCXLII, 3 (1673). See also R. Latham & W. Matthews (eds.), The Diary of Samuel Pepys (London, Bell & Hyman, 1970-83), vi. 77. The scale of Dering's timber sales may be placed in context by referring to Bowden's examples -though for a slightly earlier period (Bowden, 'Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits and Rents', pp.678-9).

2. See ch.2, p.91.

1524 and 1670, whereas that of the non-forest villages increased by an average of only 40%.<sup>1</sup>

The demographic evidence from Pluckley argues against considerable immigration into the village between the late sixteenth century and the Civil War.<sup>2</sup> But the figures for the natural increase of the parish's population over this period do suggest a rapidly growing village population; at least before emigration began to take its toll, probably in the 1630s. Between 1560 and 1605, Pluckley's population may have increased by a third to about 500, and reached about 600 a decade or so later.<sup>3</sup>

If immigration into Pluckley was low compared with many pastoral-woodland villages,<sup>4</sup> this probably reflected the dearth of commons, wastes and forests suitable for encroachment and squatting in the manner seen, for instance, in the Northamptonshire Forests.<sup>5</sup>

Yet population in the village was rising and had to be accommodated. The extension of the cultivated area no doubt aided the carrying capacity of the land;<sup>6</sup> but it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that demographic expansion on this scale must have resulted in some sub-division of holdings, even if the home farm could be maintained intact. Though common and waste could not render smaller units viable in the manner Spufford has described in fenland Willingham

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1. Quoted by Pettit, 'The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire', pp.170-1; ibid., ch.7.

2. Above, ch.2, pp.45-6.

3. See the discussion in ch.2, p.46.

4. Everitt, 'Farm Labourers', pp.409-12.

5. Pettit, op.cit., ch.7.

6. See ch.2, pp.90-1.

(Cambridgeshire), the expansion of the broadcloth industry up to the 1620s and '30s did provide an environment in which sub-division could flourish.<sup>1</sup>

This process can be seen at work in two presentments made by Pluckley churchwardens in 1633 and 1635 to local Justices of twenty-nine cottagers living in the village at that date.<sup>2</sup> All those presented occupied fewer than the statutory minimum of four acres. Clearly in Pluckley as elsewhere, the law was widely ignored.<sup>3</sup> In 25 of the 29 cases the cottage landholding is specified: 19 cottagers had no land attached to their dwellings; one had 0.5 acres; one had one acre; three had two acres; and one three acres.

At least nine of the twenty-nine cottages had been erected or become cottages<sup>4</sup> within the memory of the churchwardens; and six dated from the period between 1605 and 1620, precisely the period when demographic pressure was at its greatest.

Cottages might be 'created' from former tenements, or existing cottages might lose part or all of their lands through sale by their owners. Alternatively if a property was rented out, its lands might be taken back into the owner's occupation. In about 1607 Edward Maylam inherited a cottage, formerly a kitchen or outhouse attached to his grandfather's house. At this time (1607) the cottage had 'part of 9 acres'

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1. Spufford, Contrasting Communities, p.165; Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.121.

2. Bod.L. Ms. Films Dep. 913, ff. 65-6, 135-9.

3. Everitt, 'Farm Labourers', pp.400-1.

4. It is not clear what the upper limit of a 'cottage' holding was, though 8 acres was apparently regarded as such, and 12 acres sufficient to be termed a 'tenement'.

attached to it. Thirteen years later in 1620, 'all but one acre' of the land was sold to one Richard Field. By 1635, the cottage had passed by inheritance to Edward's son Thomas, and was occupied by his step- or half-brother John Suckling. In about 1615 a cottage owned by Daniel Nower lost its 8-acre holding when Nower took the land into his own occupation; and in 1627-8 Thomas Bishop did the same with a 6-8 acre plot attached to a cottage he owned<sup>1</sup>.

The physical partition of a house or cottage to make a further dwelling along the lines of Edward Maylam's was not uncommon. The cottage owned by Nathaniel Rachel at the time of the churchwardens' presentment had been converted from a barn adjoining the cottage of Thomas Adgor in 1610, the former 'made several from the other'. The Nepacker brothers too lived in a partitioned cottage, one brother owning 'the most' of it, the second brother the rest. And widow Anne Fowle rented part<sup>2</sup> of the house of Thomas Tilghman, himself a cottager.

About half of the twenty-five cottages not owned by their occupiers were leased out by gentry - Sir Edward Dering, Sir Anthony Dering and John Bettenham - and a prosperous yeoman Daniel Nower<sup>3</sup>. Most of the remainder were leased out by middling Pluckley farmers like Thomas Lambin, William Poss and Walter Mund, who occupied 17, 20 and 24 acres respectively. A few cottages were in the hands of men outside the village, and a couple more were owned by poorer men like Thomas Tilghman

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1. Bod.L. Ms. Films Dep. 913, ff. 65, 137-8; K.A.O. PRC 17/54/362.

2. Bod.L. Ms. Films Dep. 913, ff. 65, 135-7.

3. Daniel Nower was listed as holding 140 acres in 1633 (K.A.O. U275/Q2).

who leased out part of their own cottages.<sup>1</sup>

The rents levied by these men were more than nominal. The 20-50s per year generally charged was the going rate for Kent at this period;<sup>2</sup> not an inconsiderable sum for a labourer who if he managed to find regular work might earn up to about £12 per year.<sup>3</sup>

Evidently neither Sir Edward Dering (one of the JPs to whom the churchwardens made their presentment) nor other substantial landowners in the village were averse to breaking the law on leasing cottages with less than four acres. They needed labourers for their farms, and in a period of intense population pressure coupled with high returns on commercial farming, more profitable uses for land could be found than attaching it to cottage holdings.

For less prosperous farmers, reaping the maximum returns on their total landholding could make the difference between getting through years of high grain prices, and being forced to sell. For such men there was little incentive to leave eight or nine acres attached to a cottage when little extra could be thereby gained in rent.

For cottagers themselves, the extra pound or two a year to be made from converting a barn or outhouse into a dwelling could prove a similarly valuable addition to household incomes, for many were desperately poor. Of ten of the twenty-

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1. Lambin's holding is given in the 1633 sess (K.A.O. U275/Q2); Poss's in 1643 and that of Mund in 1630 (P289/5/1/).  
2. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, pp. 252-3.  
3. Bowden, 'Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits and Rents', p.657.

seven cottagers presented in 1635, the churchwardens recorded that they were 'so poore that many of them descend, the rest are likely to descend to receive almes of the parish'<sup>1</sup>.

The same pressures that made for the whittling away of lands attached to cottages and the partition of houses or cottages encouraged the taking in of 'inmates'. A statute of 1589 forbade the harbouring of poor persons -usually single- as sub-tenants or lodgers.<sup>2</sup> Like the four-acre ruling on new cottages, the proscription of inmates sprang from mounting fears among the central authorities of the threat posed by a growing population, large numbers of vagrants and paupers, and the disorders they were held to provoke.<sup>3</sup>

Among the Pluckley inmates were a number of men and women 'working out of covenant', contrary to another Elizabethan statute, the Statute of Artificers (1563). Among other things the Statute specified that employees in stated occupations had to hire themselves out on a yearly contract.<sup>4</sup> When grain prices were low (as in the mid-1630s) it was:

'...particularly tempting for the young unmarried man with only himself to support to disregard the Statute...and work for one or more farmers on a daily or piece wage for part of the year instead of contracting for regular employment.'<sup>5</sup>

In all thirty-two men and women were presented either as 'inmates' or for living 'out of covenant' in 1633/5, though

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1. Bod.L. Ms. Films Dep. 913, f.139.

2. Act 31 Eliz. C.7.

3. P. Slack, 'Poverty and Social Regulation in Elizabethan England', in C. Haigh (ed.), The Reign of Elizabeth I (London, Macmillan, 1984), pp. 225-6.

4. L.A. Clarkson, The Pre-Industrial Economy in England 1500-1750 (London, Batsford, 1971), pp. 168-70.

5. Clark, English Provincial Society, pp. 353-4; Chalklin, op.cit., p.250.

the former group included four men on poor relief, 'placed by consent and appoyntment of the overseers'<sup>1</sup>. Predictably perhaps, the largest group among those households taking in inmates or those uncovenanted were drawn from the lower strata of village society. Those ascribed less than 10 acres in the poor sess comprised half of the eighteen households whose landholding can be ascertained,<sup>2</sup> among them several cottagers. All but two of the remainder lived with middling households in the 10-29 acre grouping.

In addition a Mr. William Sharpe -assessed on 30 acres in 1633- had clothworker Thomas Hilles living out of covenant at his house in the same year, together with an inmate John Greenstreet. Perhaps Sharpe, described as a 'clothier' at about this time was employing the two men. This is almost certainly what John Bettenham was doing in 1633 when labourer Clement Moone lived out of covenant at his house.<sup>3</sup>

Bettenham was also benefitting from a breach of the law with regard to inmates. In 1633 John Sotherden had been an inmate with widow Alice Moone for three years. The cottage was presumably rather more substantial than most for although landless it paid in rent to Mr. Bettenham £5 per year. Of this sum, Widow Moone paid £1-13-4 and Sotherden £3-6-8.<sup>4</sup>

Nationally the enforcement of the statutes concerned

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1. Bod.L. Ms. Films Dep. 913, ff. 67-9, 75-6, 140-2.
  2. When individuals were not listed in the 1633 sess, their landholding was taken where possible from the assessments of 1628-32 and 1641. Those cottagers listed as 'so poore that many of them descend...[etc.]' were assumed to hold less than 10 acres.
  3. K.A.O. U275/Q2; Bod.L. Ms. Films Dep. 913, ff.12, 68-92.
  4. Ibid., f.67.

here was patchy and sporadic.<sup>1</sup> In the village the law was evidently broken at the highest level. With regard to cottages, this would seem to indicate that their proliferation posed no real threat to village or local authorities; either in terms of costs to the parish coffers or as potential sources of disorder.

With regard to inmates and those living out of covenant, the position is less clear. Thomas Hilles, one of William Sharpe's inmates was :

'...now the third time warned by us [Sir E. Dering & Sir Robert Darrell, JPs] to quitt his inmateship, and to enter into covenant according to law: [He] doth promise within one fortnight to quitt ye s[ai]d inmateship and before Christmas day next [1633] to bring unto us or one of us a testimoniall of his being entered into covenant, with whom and where.'(2)

Yet Dering's persistence must be placed alongside the contravention of the law by other prominent members of the village, together with numerous middling and lesser landholders there. In Bettenham's case at least, flouting Dering's authority seems to have been linked to a long-standing disagreement between the two families.<sup>3</sup> Less substantial landholders in the village probably had more prosaic motives for taking in inmates or those not under covenant. Some inmates perhaps were taken in as labourers or servants on a short-term basis. Others would have paid a shilling or two a week in rent, while a handful continued to

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1. Clarkson, The Pre-Industrial Economy, p.170; Everitt, 'Farm Labourers', p.401.

2. Bod.L. Ms Films Dep. 913, f.75. See also Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.250.

3. See ch.4, pp.267-70, ch.5, pp.332-37.

live 'uncovenanted' with their parents.

In any case cottagers and inmates of one sort or another never posed the kind of problems in Pluckley they did in many other pastoral-woodland villages. The dearth of parochial wastes or common pasture and woodland was reflected in the fact that all cottages in the village were leased from often substantial householders -no evidence has survived of a squatter community in the village. And inmates, probably single for the most part totalled no more than twenty-two persons in 1635, less than 5% of the village population.<sup>1</sup> This grouping of cottagers and inmates -consisting for the most part of poor craftsmen, labourers and clothworkers- comprised about 23-24% of Pluckley's population of 600 at this time. When put together with the names of other Pluckley inhabitants listed as holding under 10 acres,<sup>2</sup> it would appear that about 30% of village households lived at or near subsistence level at this period, vulnerable to sudden rises in the cost of bread, or a fall in the demand for broadcloths and kersies.

We have discussed in the context of Pluckley's cottage-owning population how demographic pressure, and linked to it rising demand for land, offered village landowners incentives to cut down or remove the land attached to a smallholding. On the other hand a rising population brought

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1. To calculate this figure it was assumed that all cottagers except widows were heads of households -thus requiring the multiplier of 4.75 to reach total population. To this figure were added -unaltered- the numbers of widowed cottagers and inmates.

2. Because no assessment for 1635 survives, that for 1633 was substituted (K.A.O. U275/Q2).

with it an increased demand for cottage holdings to rent. As John Norden recognized, 'private lucre' might encourage landowners or tenants to erect new landless or semi-landless dwellings 'with hedges, ditches, pales, wals, shedds, etc.'<sup>1</sup>

That increased numbers could afford to live in such diminished holdings points to the role of the broadcloth industry, at its peak in the very years when population pressure was at its most intense. The demise of the industry which set in from the 1630s seems to have induced a crisis among the village's poorer inhabitants in the ensuing decades. For Pluckley's middling farmers too, diminished earnings from cloth-working together with other conditions inimical to small-scale agriculture might lead to the mortgage or sale of part of their estate, or if tenants, to a reduced leaseholding. Any fragmentation that did occur though -at least in the period 1628-52- seems to have left the working unit on all but the smallest village farms intact.

### III

The last of the criteria common to centres of rural industry (in rearing districts at any rate) was the custom of gavelkind, a form of partible inheritance. According to C.W. Chalklin, the custom was 'a normal practice' in seventeenth-century Kent below the level of the gentry, and<sup>2</sup> applied to all the estates of those who died intestate.

Implicit in Thirsk's comments is the assumption that the

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1. Norden, The Surveyors Dialogue, p.101.

2. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, pp. 55-6.

practice of gavelkind commonly resulted in the sub-division of holdings between two or more co-heirs. In pastoral-woodland regions, the argument runs, it was the availability of plentiful commons and wastes and rural by-employment that enabled holdings sub-divided in this way to remain viable, even when village populations were swollen by immigration.<sup>1</sup> There are therefore two questions at issue here. First, whether those leaving wills or dieing intestate in early modern Pluckley practiced the custom of gavelkind; and second, whether such a custom commonly implied the fragmentation of holdings.

128 wills left by Pluckley men and women below gentry level made between 1550 and 1700 have survived amongst the collections of the Archdeaconry and Prerogative Courts of Canterbury; all but 23 of them written before 1640.<sup>2</sup> Sixty-seven of these Pluckley testators left real estate in the form of houses and/or land, and in most cases the beneficiary or beneficiaries were one or more sons of the deceased (Table 23, p.156).

According to the custom of gavelkind, lands were divided equally between the sons (or failing male issue, between the daughters) upon the death of the father. Initially the term had embraced a much wider body of inheritance customs associated with a specific form of socage tenure which yielded rent or 'gavel' rather than military service. By the

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1. Thirsk, 'Industries in the Countryside', p.86. C.G.A. Clay (Economic Expansion and Social Change, i. 99-100) has recently restated this argument.

2. K.A.O. PRC 17; P.R.O. PROB 11.

sixteenth century, however, 'gavelkind' had come to denote the custom of Kentish partibility assumed, in the absence of proof to the contrary, to affect all lands in the county.<sup>1</sup>

Property bequeathed to:	No.	%
Only son	9	13.4
One of several sons	14	20.9
Several (but not all) sons	5	7.5
All sons	20	30.0
All children	1	1.5
One of several daughters	1	1.5
Several (but not all) daughters	1	1.5
All daughters	2	3.0
Widow outright	2	3.0
Other relative	8	11.9
Other or unclear	4	6.0
TOTAL	67	100.2

Table 23. Bequests of Real Estate in Pluckley Wills 1550-1700 (Source: K.A.O. PRC 17; P.R.O. PROB 11).

Thirty-nine villagers who died between 1550 and 1700 provided for more than one son in their will, giving an opportunity to examine the way in which land distribution was affected by inheritance. As we might expect, those testators settling lands on all their sons form the largest single group (20 cases). In 14 of these 20 cases though the estates bequeathed in this way were comprised of a number of disparate<sup>2</sup> holdings, following the typical wealden pattern.

A testator might leave a house, lands or both to an

1. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.55; W.S. Holdsworth, A History of English Law, 5th edn. (London, Methuen, 1942), iii. 259; C.I. Elton, The Tenures of Kent (London, 1867); A.W.B. Simpson, An Introduction to the History of the Land Law (Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), p.21; Oxford English Dictionary, compact edn. (Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), i. 1123.

2. Short, 'The South-East: Kent, Surrey and Sussex', p.294.

eldest son, with a second property shared between two or three other sons. In 1637 Solomon Oxly left his son James his house and lands in Warne and Eastchurch in the Isle of Sheppey, and his two younger sons lands in Charing. Alternatively two elder sons might be left a holding equally and a younger son or sons a separate holding. George Panton bequeathed his properties in Sussex and in the Kentish parish of Charing in this way in <sup>1</sup> 1585.

Most testators, though, when bequeathing a number of separate holdings left one or more property to each son. Often it seems that the division was not an equal one - evidenced either in the property willed to different sons, or in the financial burden placed on them in providing for daughters' portions, or for widowhood or other annuities.

In 1550 Thomas Ellis left one holding to each of his three sons: the messuage he then occupied to his son Richard; a messuage, mill and 28 acres to George Ellis; and 8 acres of land to his third son, Edward. Richard, George and Edward Ellis were to pay £7, £5 and £4 respectively to their three <sup>2</sup> nephews, the sons of Thomas Ellis's brother John. Over a century later in 1686 Edward Lambin left a messuage and 18 acres in Pluckley to his eldest son Sampson, and a messuage and 20 acres to his second son Edward junior. John, the youngest, inherited a messuage with 2 acres in Pluckley plus lands in Challock. All bequests were conditional upon an annuity of £22 being paid yearly to their widowed mother Mary;

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1. K.A.O. PRC 17/70/10, 17/46/176.

2. K.A.O. PRC 17/29/232.

of which Sampson and Edward were to contribute £8 each and John <sup>1</sup> £6.

Returning to the remainder of our twenty cases of bequests to all the testator's sons, we come to the six wills specifying the equal division of property among the male heirs. In Pluckley- as Chalklin found in wealden Tonbridge over the same period- such provision was a less common form of devolution than dividing a number of properties between several sons or settling all the estate on one son.<sup>2</sup>

There is some evidence that equal partition of lands was most common among those with least to bequeath, as Margaret Spufford has suggested of the will-makers of fenland Willingham.<sup>3</sup> Three of the six wills in this category were drawn from farmers leaving Group I or II inventories, and two others<sup>4</sup> also seem to have been men of modest substance.

When weaver William Dowle made his will in 1570 his lands were placed in the hands of his executors until his debts were paid. When his two sons reached 21, they were to inherit equally 'all my landes and tenements'. Dowle left a Group I inventory of £28. John Huggett, a husbandman wrote his

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1. K.A.O. PRC 17/76/410.

2. Chalklin, 'A Kentish Wealden Parish', pp. 41-2.

3. M. Spufford, 'Peasant Inheritance and Land Distribution in Cambridgeshire from the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries', in J. Goody et al. (eds.), Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe 1200-1800 (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976), p.168.

4. K.A.O. PRC 17/43/357; PRC 10/11: Will and Inventory of William Dowle, 1582-3; PRC 17/57/225; prc 10/35/290: Will and Inventory of Thomas Tilgman, 1606-?1611; PRC 17/42/294; PRC 10/8: Will and Inventory of Stephen Maylam, 1675-6; PRC 17/31/35: Will of John Moore, 1559; PRC 17/35/154: Will of John Huggett, 1561.

will in 1560/1. In it he left his three sons one cow and 10s each. After the death of Huggett's widow, all his lands were to pass to Edmund, Peter and John, his sons. John Moore had only a field to bequeath when he made his will in January 1559. After his widow's death, Moore's land was to be equally divided between his four sons Zachary, Joshua, John and Jeremy. On inheritance, they were to pay their sisters Rebecca and Rachel 40s each.<sup>1</sup>

Even if all the cases recorded here relate to the devolution of an individual holding (in Dowle's case for instance this is not clear), those estates liable to equal sub-division between a number of co-heirs were a small proportion of all bequests: 13.5% if land willed to 'all daughters' and 'all children' is included.

It would seem then that few Pluckley testators devolved lands to their heirs according to the custom of gavelkind. Its practice was concentrated perhaps among those poorer farmers and other villagers who had only one holding to bequeath yet still wished to give all their sons a toehold on the land. Such a practice was not universal though even among the smallest farmers. When Timothy Saunder died in about 1590, he left a Group I inventory of £26. In his will of 1588 he left all his lands which amounted to only half an acre to his son John. He continued:

'As concerning the residue of my children, George Saunder and Richard Saunder and Katherine Jordaine and Bennet Saunder and Alice and Anne Saunder my daughters, I will they shall have porcion and porcion alike.'(2)

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1. K.A.O. PRC 17/35/154.
  2. K.A.O. PRC 17/48/191; PRC 10/19.

It is interesting to note that those Pluckley will-makers like Timothy Saunder who left all their lands to one or two of several sons numbered at nineteen over twice as many as those following the custom of gavelkind to the letter by dividing their lands equally between their heirs. Of these nineteen testators ten placed on one son alone -usually the eldest- the burden of paying the portions of their brothers and sisters. These sums were to be paid either within a short space of time after the testator's death (usually within three years); or if the recipients were minors upon coming of age: usually at 21 or 22 for boys and at 18 or upon marriage for girls.

Most of the rest of this group of testators shared the burden of provision between two parties; usually the inheriting son and the widow, occasionally between two sons. This might be a roughly equal division like the provision made by Theophilus Tilman in his will of 1635. It made son Christopher's inheritance conditional upon a payment of £40 to his brother Theophilus junior. In addition, Christopher's sister was to be given £40 at twenty-one, and his aunt 20s,<sup>1</sup> both sums to be paid by his widowed mother Alice. In other cases the heaviest burden fell on the inheriting son. When John Poss left a messuage and lands in Pluckley and Smarden to his son James, the latter was bound to pay four of his brothers £50 each. John Poss's widow Elizabeth had to pay 20s

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1. K.A.O. PRC 17/69/145. See also the will of John Bofote (1556) where two payments of £140 to the two brothers of the inheriting son are shared between the latter and his widowed mother (PRC 17/34/34).

to each of John's five remaining sons when they reached  
twenty-two.<sup>1</sup>

Only in two of the nineteen cases did the burden of support for the brothers and sisters of the inheriting son or sons rest exclusively with the widow. In both these wills,<sup>2</sup> payment was to be made when the sons and daughters came of age, by which time the the death of the widow might in any case have shifted the burden of support to the inheriting son or sons.

Returning to the full set of wills in which real estate was bequeathed, it was extremely rare for property to be left outright to the widow without condition. Only two such wills have come to light, and in both cases the testator appears to have been childless.<sup>3</sup> In 48 other landed wills, widows figure among the beneficiaries. As Table 24 (p.162) indicates, most were granted the family lands for life. Presumably in such cases the heirs of the family were already adult since it was assumed they would enter the devolved lands immediately upon the death of the widow.

Much less popular alternatives were to grant a cash annuity for life (9 cases); the profits of a portion of the family lands for life (4 cases); or the profits of all lands for a specified period of time with or without an annuity

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1. K.A.O. PRC 17/70/639.

2. Will of Nicholas Butcher, 1567 (K.A.O. PRC 17/40/23); Will of William Kingsnoth, 1639 (PRC 17/70/616).

3. Will of William Whitton, 1551 (K.A.O. PRC 17/27/250); Will of John Heathe, 1565 (PRC 17/40/91). In most cases of childlessness a relative -usually the brother of the deceased or his son- inherited. Sometimes devolution followed this pattern if the testator had one or more daughter but no sons (see the will of Richard Willes, 1596: PRC 17/51/302).

thereafter (2 cases). When those inheriting the testator's land were still minors, the property would normally be held in trust for them until they reached the age of 18, 21 or whatever. In most, but not all cases, the widow would receive an annuity for the remainder of her life after surrendering the property.

Terms of bequest:	No.	%
All lands for ever	2	4
All lands for life	19	38
Some lands for life	4	8
Annuity for life	9	18
All lands for a period of years	2	4
All lands until majority of heirs	7	14
Moveable goods only	7	14
Total	50	100

Table 24. Bequests to Widows in Landed Pluckley Wills 1550-1700 (Sources: K.A.O. PRC 17; P.R.O. PROB 11).

In addition, in about one in seven of these fifty wills, widows were left only moveable goods of one kind or another. Since what was bequeathed was often the 'residue' or 'remainder' of the estate after other conditions of the will had been fulfilled, it is not clear whether widows benefitting from such clauses were typically better or worse off than those enjoying the use of lands or a regular annuity.

The bequest of livestock may have been viewed by some testators as an alternative to lands or annuities, for of six widows left livestock in their husband's will, three had bequests only of moveable goods. John Rychardson made his will in 1550. He left his widow Alice a 'gyrdell cowe', a

'gyrdell heifer' and an acre of wheat; plus the 'household stuff' she had brought when she married, a flitch of bacon, a gallon of butter, the 'best [cheese] of her owne makyng', and a bushel of wheat. In 1596 another widow was left the milk of three kine until the Michaelmas after her husband's death; and a third 'my best cowe at her choice' in 1610.<sup>1</sup>

Two of these widows left cattle or their produce were left 'housroome' with their sons, as was another recipient of livestock.<sup>2</sup> Such provision though was rare: only five widows in all were granted living space in the houses of their sons.<sup>3</sup> Typically the widow would be granted a single room with access to a fire in a second; and perhaps wood to burn on it. Houseroom was not necessarily granted for life. In a will of 1596, Richard Willes's widow was given a room in her son's house until the autumn following his death.<sup>4</sup>

Margaret Spufford has written of 16-18th century Cambridgeshire, an area nominally of primogeniture that:

'...the provision made by fathers in their wills in the form of fragments of land and of cash sums for younger sons, and of dowries for daughters, as well as maintenance for the widow, all came out of the future profits of the main holding. They did not come out of the savings if any of the testator. They therefore amounted to a considerable burden on the main holding and on the inheriting son. For this reason the distinction between primogeniture and unigeniture on the one hand, and partible inheritance on the other, is a very blurred one.'<sup>(5)</sup>

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1. K.A.O. PRC 17/23/203; Will of Richard Willes, 1596 (PRC 17/51/302); Will of Francis Kingsnoth, 1610 (PRC 17/58/144).
  2. Will of Robert Whitton, 1550 (K.A.O. PRC 17/26/322).
  3. That is 5 of the 67 wills in which real estate was bequeathed.
  4. K.A.O. PRC 17/51/302.
  5. Spufford, 'Peasant Inheritance and Land Distribution', p.157.

In Pluckley, as in the Cambridgeshire villages studied by Spufford, it was the effects of these burdens and not to any great extent the sub-division of holdings by partible inheritance that rendered the estates of village will-makers vulnerable to fragmentation.<sup>1</sup>

Yet according to the measure recently suggested by Lloyd Bonfield, only about 37.5% of potential male testators in Pluckley actually made a will over the period 1591-1640. This result is not very different from those Bonfield calculated for Orwell (Cambridgeshire) and Terling (Essex) at 32.5% and 25.6% respectively; but is significantly lower than he found in Willingham, also in Cambridgeshire (59.8%).<sup>2</sup> If we assume that many of the 30% or so of Pluckley's inhabitants living at or near subsistence level in this period had little or no land to devolve; we may estimate that on about a third of village estates, holdings of land passed from one generation to the next by customary inheritance: in short, by gavelkind.

Customary inheritance is the third stage in the process of devolution. Together with inter vivos transfers of land and bequests by will, devolution 'embraces the

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1. Spufford, Contrasting Communities, p.166.

2. L. Bonfield ('Contrasting Communities: Court Rolls and Settlements as Evidence of Hereditary Transmission in Early Modern England', Illinois Law Rev., III (1984), pp. 646-8) works on the assumption that 50% of all decedents were male; and using model life tables estimates that half the burials recorded in the parish register were for persons over the minimum age of testation (i.e. over 29). Using the Pluckley register (K.A.O. P289/1/16) for the years 1591-1640, we derive 513 burials, 256.5 male burials, and 128.5 male burials over 29. 48 male wills from Pluckley have been found in the contemporary registers in K.A.O.

totality of the transfer of resources from a senior generation to a junior generation.<sup>1</sup> Little is known about what prompted some men and women to make wills. Some have suggested that wealth was the main determinant; others that family responsibilities or the nature of the property being transmitted<sup>2</sup> were the key factors.

In any case it would appear that even when property was transmitted according to the custom of gavelkind, co-heirs often came to an arrangement between themselves which by-passed the partibility rule. If a number of holdings were bequeathed, co-heirs commonly distributed the properties amongst themselves. If a single holding was involved, one heir might rent the property from the other or others, paying a share of the profits. Probably more often, heirs sold their share;<sup>3</sup> either to other family members or to an outsider.

In an agreement drawn up in 1639, the heirs of Thomas Lambin (died c.1633-4) partitioned the lands inherited from their father. Two sons Peter and Joshua were to have the principal messuage together; and three other sons Thomas junior, Edward and John inherited a holding each. In March 1640 Thomas junior left his inheritance to Peter and Joshua

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1. Ibid., p.643.

2. R.T. Vann, 'Wills and the Family in an English Town: Banbury 1550-1800', J.Fam.H., IV (1979), pp.353-5; Wrightson & Levine, Poverty and Piety, p.96; Spufford 'Peasant Inheritance and Land Distribution', pp.166-7; C. Howell, 'Peasant Inheritance Customs in the Midlands, 1280-1700', in Goody et al., Family and Inheritance, p.141; Bonfield, op.cit., pp. 650ff.

3. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, pp.56-7; idem., 'A Kentish Wealden Parish', pp.42-5; A.R.H. Baker, 'Field Systems in South-East England', p.141; Short, 'The South-East: Kent, Surrey and Sussex', p.295.

Lambin by will, and in a deed of 1645 the two brothers divided the properties they now held in co-ownership. Peter took 25 acres of woodland in Smarden and Joshua 16 acres of land in Pluckley. The last observable link in this chain came in 1659 when Peter Lambin and his wife Mary sold their Smarden woodlands to John, Earl of Thanet.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Lambin's heirs presumably inherited according to the custom of gavelkind. Husbandmen Thomas and Richard Adgor certainly did so, for in a deed of 1656 in which they partitioned a messuage inherited from Mildred late wife of Thomas, it was specified that the property should descend according to the custom. When Thomas's two sons themselves inherited some thirty years later, one sold his half share in a tenement at Pырvillhill in Pluckley to his brother for £10.<sup>2</sup>

Thus our conclusion for Pluckley mirrors that for Tonbridge where, C.W. Chalklin noted, the effect of gavelkind on the inheritance of property in the parish was 'not very great'. For this reason, 'the dispersal of lands by sale was far more important in keeping to a small size the holdings in Tonbridge than was the custom of bequeathing land.'<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless gavelkind ensured that large numbers of small parcels of land came onto the market, and their re-sale or leasing between co-heirs can have only partly reversed the process of sub-division.<sup>4</sup> Moreover the division of larger

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1. K.A.O. U455/T93; U275/Q2; Bod.L. Ms. Films Dep. 913, f.139.

2. K.A.O. U55/T328. See also B.L. Add.Ch. 55913-4; K.A.O. U47/50 T18; Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.57 & note.

3. Chalklin, 'A Kentish Wealden Parish', pp. 45-6, 50.

4. Short, op.cit., p.295; Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.57.

estates into their component holdings when settled on the next generation helped to restrict the emergence of engrossed farms. Whether or not engrossing on a significant scale did occur depended on whether the economic forces pressing the middle-sized and smaller farmers off the land were stronger than 'the constant endeavours made by the community to provide for as many of its sons as possible.'<sup>1</sup>

ii) Landlords and Tenants, Farmers and Labourers: The Social Organization of Agricultural Production on the Dering estates

I

Up to the 1660s, we have noted, the Dering family were heavily dependent on income earned in rent. Only £136 of Sir Edward Dering's estimated yearly income of £1000 in 1619 was credited to his farming operations. This was a reflection of the use to which he put his land. His home farm in Pluckley comprised about 200 acres and his woodland probably a few hundred more. The remainder of his 1000-1500 acre holding in the village was put out on lease.<sup>2</sup>

The leases he recorded in a notebook kept in the 1630s confirm that it was an acreage of this order that earned Dering his Pluckley rents. The book lists nineteen parcels of land in the village and in neighbouring Little Chart and Smarden put out on lease in 1637, about 950 acres in all. Of this acreage over 50% and perhaps nearly 80% (i.e. 500-750

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1. Spufford, Contrasting Communities, p.87.

2. See above, pp.129-31.

acres) lay in Pluckley itself.<sup>1</sup>

The rent roll from 17 of these 19 leases of 1636 was £536, a figure which suggests that the Derings' Pluckley rents were an important part of their total income. This is especially true when it is remembered that the leases of a number of sizable family properties lying wholly or partly in the parish did not expire in 1637. The 50-acre manorial demesne of Everingacre, for instance, was leased by Sir Edward to one George Gervais in 1638.<sup>2</sup>

Since most of Dering's holdings were let on short leases of seven years or less (as was the Kentish practice in the seventeenth century), it is probable that rent levels exhibited a consistent upward trajectory from the late sixteenth century to about 1620.<sup>3</sup> Although there is little in the way of systematic evidence for Kent, Peter Bowden has described the half century or so preceding the Civil War as a period in which 'On the estates of...landed families in Yorkshire, Northamptonshire, East Anglia and elsewhere, a doubling or trebling of rent receipts...was by no means exceptional.'<sup>4</sup>

Hunger for land coupled with the upward movement in prices pushed rents up. In an age of rapid inflation a landowner who depended primarily on rents for his income had two options if he wished to maintain his standard of living:

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1. Bod.L. Ms. Gough Kent 20, ff. 58-83. On 4 parcels acreages were estimated according to the approximate rent per acre on other holdings. 471 acres lay solely in Pluckley, and an additional 317 in 'Pluckley and Little Chart': 788 in all.

2. Ibid., ff.83-4.

3. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.60.

4. Zell, 'A Wood Pasture Agrarian Regime', pp.70-1; Bowden, 'Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits and Rents', p.691.

raising rents on existing holdings, and creating new holdings and farm extensions by intakes from adjoining forest or waste.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Edward Dering clearly thought the situation worthy of improvement, for he wrote in 1632:

'I do loose in Surrenden Rentes, which should be 200li per annum about 29-10-0 at the rates now letten, by reason of my absent living, beside my wood for fewel which is the worse for overlong forbearing.'(2)

In all probability Dering made use of both options in order to improve his rent roll. We saw one result of this kind of pressure in the last section when cottages were erected, perhaps on former waste grounds; and on the plots of existing cottages, accompanying land was pared to a minimum.

The consistent purchase of land by the Dering family -at least up to the death of Sir Anthony Dering, Sir Edward's father in 1635- would suggest that landlord incomes on this particular estate had not been seriously compromised during the inflationary decades. In a 27-year period after 1608, Sir Anthony spent over £2000 on buying lands in Pluckley and elsewhere, while selling only £800 worth.<sup>3</sup>

From the 1540s, all landholders working a farm yielding a marketable surplus in years of moderate or good harvest were in a position to benefit from increasing selling prices and labour costs that had not kept pace with inflation. This meant that gentry farmers like the Derings could substantially improve their incomes unless gains from agricultural sales

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1. Bowden, op.cit., pp. 679-80.  
2. Bod.L. Ms. Gough Kent 20, f.34.  
3. Ibid., ff. 89-97.

were offset by a rent roll fixed by custom or burdened with long-termed leases. In Kent the predominance of leasehold tenure coupled with the generally short terms for which land was let meant that rents could be progressively increased without the delays or obstruction sometimes met with on copyhold manors.

For the same reasons that the Dering farm was probably increasing its profits in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, so were the holdings of village tenants, at least the more substantial ones. If some poorer peasant farmers or land-holding labourers were forced to sell partly as a result of increased rents, there would be no shortage of takers for their holdings among land-hungry neighbours.

The upward movement in rent began to slow down after 1620, and had more or less come to an end by the Civil War, a conflict which marked 'the end of an era for both landlords and their tenants'. Though the high prices of agricultural produce during the years 1640-63 (a result of poor harvests, wartime conditions and probable population pressure) rendered the period one of comparative prosperity for substantial tenant farmers and freeholders, those same pressures left

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1. G. Batho, 'Noblemen, Gentlemen and Yeomen', in Thirsk (ed.), The Agrarian History of England and Wales IV, pp.291-2; Bowden, op.cit., pp. 659, 679-80.

2. K. Wrightson, English Society 1580-1680 (London, Hutchinson, 1982), pp.136-7; Clay, Economic Expansion and Social Change, i. 90.

3. Clay, op.cit., p.91; Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.64.

poorer tenants ill-equipped to pay their rents.<sup>1</sup>

However, for some landlords the fall in rents was overshadowed by the loss of their estates through sequestration by King or Parliament. The estates of Sir Edward Dering were being held in sequestration by 1643; Dering himself having joined the King's forces the previous year. His wife and children remained in Pluckley; apparently on the verge of starvation, dependent on the charity of a number of family tenants.<sup>2</sup> In May 1643, Lady Dering petitioned the Committee for Sequestrations to receive a portion of the income from her husband's estate for her maintenance and that of her children. On four occasions, Lady Dering alleged, Parliamentary soldiers had plundered the family estate. On the last, they had taken all her cattle, and threatened to seize<sup>3</sup> the rest of her goods too.

In August 1643, a certain amount of corn and hops were granted to Lady Dering and her children, together with pasturage for six cows and horses 'in part of her allowance for her mayntenance & her children'. A Parliamentary ordinance of that date allowed up to a fifth of the income of sequestered estates to be paid in this way.<sup>4</sup>

By the beginning of June 1644 Dering had resigned his commission with the King and had become the first person in

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1. Clay, op.cit., i. 91; P. Bowden, 'Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits and Rents', in Thirsk (ed.), The Agrarian History of England V, ii. 75.

2. Everitt, The Community of Kent, pp.205-7.

3. K.A.O. U350/013.

4. B.L. Stowe 184, f.96; C.G.A. Clay, 'Landlords and Estate Management in England', in Thirsk (ed.), op.cit., ii. 179.

England to petition Parliament to recover his estate by paying a 'composition fine'. On 1 June Dering was granted a full fifth of his estate, but he did not live to see his estate discharged two months later. The composition fine, set as high as £1000 since Dering 'was in actual war against Parliament' was withdrawn, and his son Edward was admitted to his estates on the 22 August. According to the churchwardens' accounts however, it was not until 1647 that all the sequestered lands were returned to the Dering family from other Pluckley<sup>1</sup> villagers to whom they had presumably been leased.

In addition to capital damage done to the Dering estate while under sequestration, further losses were probably incurred because unpaid rent arrears could not be recovered, at least not in full.<sup>2</sup> It is not clear to what extent the second Sir Edward Dering succeeded in collecting outstanding rent arrears, but his experience with a Mr. Nicholas Barham, gent. to whom he wrote in May 1650 may not have been untypical:

'You know there is now fower & thirty pound due to me for a whole years rent of the farme besids some arrears of our Lady days rent 1649 & something for wood...and I am not willing to borrow of others & let you enjoy what is mine, I desire you therefore...to name some certaine & speedy time for the payment of the whole...' (3)

After the Restoration rents remained low, mainly as a result of the fall in the prices of agricultural products.

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1. B.L. Ms. Stowe 184, f.96; M.A.E. Green (ed.), Calendar of Proceedings of the Committee for Compounding Etc. 1643-60, (London, H.M.S.O., 1889-92), ii. 831-2; Everitt, op.cit., pp.205-7; Bond, The Diaries and Papers of Sir Edward Dering, p.2; K.A.O. P289/5/1.

2. Clay, op.cit., p.126.

3. U133/C1/1.

Reduced rents did not however mean a lighter burden for the tenant. Indeed C.G.A. Clay has recently argued that the earning capacity on many farms in this period fell further<sup>1</sup> than rents.

For much of the period from 1660 until the end of the century financial self-interest fostered a renewed paternalism in landlord-tenant relations. In conditions of agricultural depression, a landlord was well-advised to hold onto competent<sup>2</sup> farmers possessed of sufficient capital to stock their lands. This might mean consolidating a number of holdings, since large farms attracted the kind of tenant most likely to survive difficult years without falling into rent arrears.

The difficulties involved in renting out property at all in this period, however, necessitated a degree of flexibility with regard to arrears unthinkable before 1640. In addition the landlord might shift the real burden of rent by reducing the taxes payable by the tenant; lessen his financial responsibility for the repair and maintenance of fixed capital (including the preservation of soil fertility); or slacken the clauses of his lease controlling the break-up<sup>3</sup> of pasture or cropping practices more generally.

Sir Edward Dering's comments of c.1670 on possible remedies for the 'decay of rents' have become well-known since they were published in Thirsk and Cooper's collection of 17th<sup>4</sup> century economic documents. In a passage in his personal diary

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1. Clay, Economic Expansion and Social Change, i. 91.  
2. Idem., 'Landlords and Estate Management', p.241.  
3. Ibid., pp. 224-36.  
4. 'Sir Edward Dering on the Decay of Rents', pp. 85-8.

written about three years later, Dering outlined the background to the 'decay', drawing on his own experience at Pluckley. His remarks are worth quoting at some length:

'...And finding not only by the generall complaint of allmost of men but newly by [my] owne experience: the great fall of rents comonly a seaventh part oftentimes...& sometimes a moietye of what lands went for in 1640 & besides how very ill those lands are that are let out, are answered by the necessitie of paying the taxes & the as great necessitie of humouring the tenants in their reparacons, libertie of ploughing what they will and suchlike & when all is done taking...rent out by worke done or in porcions or at best by parcels & longtime after it is due. And considering besides that my rents which were never great are now much lesse...' (1)

Dering was clearly troubled with rent arrears. In a note entitled 'Arrears of Rent Due at or before Michaelmas 1666', fifteen tenants are listed, owing in all £892-7-1. Almost half of this sum (£358) was due from one Henry<sup>2</sup> Phillpott. Three years earlier Phillpott had been the subject of inquiries made by Dering's steward, Thomas Rolf. Rolf reported a number of tenants in arrears in a letter to Sir Edward of November 1663. Phillpott was to be asked why 'he<sup>3</sup> meanes to be so cereless in paying his accompt.' By 1673<sup>3</sup> Phillpott had presumably still not paid his rent in full, for he was in prison for debt. Phillpott had leased considerable lands on Dering's Eastbridge Manor; and the latter recorded with some trepidation that a new tenant would have to be found for them by autumn 1674, 'Phillpotts time being then out, & he not able if he be willing to hold it any longer.'<sup>4</sup>

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1. H.L.R.O. Colln. of Philip Blake Esq., Ms.F, f.36.
  2. K.A.O. U1107/E13.
  3. K.A.O. U133/E2/9.
  4. H.L.R.O. Colln. of Philip Blake Esq., Ms.F, f.36.

In addition to the Eastbridge lands, another £100 yearly in rent was to be lost that autumn by two other farms at Tenterden and Bobbing 'throwing into my hands'. Unfortunately for Dering, his rental difficulties coincided with the loss of government employment worth £600 per annum and the looming costs of providing apprenticeships, education and marriage portions for five of his children.<sup>1</sup>

'Upon the whole', he wrote in 1673, 'I forsee a considerable alteracon in my affaires and the plenty I have hitherto lived in, which must be supplied as well as it maybe.' The second baronet could see no 'great and considerable improvements' that could be made to his estate like draining, flooding or building, nor the digging of mines; but he did consider less spectacular savings worthy of his attention, even if by 'honest industry' he could gain thereby 'but...ten pound a yeare.'<sup>2</sup>

As far as household expenses were concerned, Dering stated his intention to follow a course of 'generall frugalitie'. This amounted to cutting down on his own trips to London; terminating his building and refurbishing plans for Surrenden; 'dispose[ing] of my younger sonnes to professions or employment as soon as they are capable of it'; cutting spending on such items as firewood, candles, wine etc.; and finally substituting a number of the day-labourers on his estate for live-in servants. All these savings Sir Edward considered best implemented under his personal supervision; an

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., ff.36-7.

opportunity afforded him by less frequent trips to London.<sup>1</sup>

In addition he made a long list of 'such things as may be beneficiall by way of improvement.' Among the twenty-two ambitious projects Dering mooted were the building of lime- and tile-kilns, a windmill, a glass factory, a salt-works and malthouse; experimentation with new grass crops and the extension of his hop and fruit acreages; the better fertilization of his soils and 'ordering' of his woods; and an attempt to 'bring in some new [textile] manufacture into theis parts of [the] country'. Several of these schemes, Dering was forced to admit 'are of vast expence and doubtfull success...and all of them much too heavy for my private shoulders to bear.'<sup>2</sup>

We do not know if any of Dering's plans ever materialized. Certainly there is no evidence that his financial position became any more secure in the next ten years. In about 1675 he sold £1009 worth of lands in Pluckley and nearby parishes, among them 'my woodlands in Pluckley, Little Charte, Bethersden, Smarden and Hothfield' at £170. The properties, he noted, were 'to be settled for present Maintenance'<sup>3</sup>. Dering regained government office in 1675 as Commissioner of Customs, and from 1679 as Commissioner of the Treasury. Although he earned an average salary of almost £1000 a year during the years 1676-9, his outgoings continued virtually to match his annual income of £2500-£4500, leading

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1. Ibid., ff.37-9.

2. Ibid., ff.39-45.

3. K.A.O. U133/E2/16.

him to write in 1680:

'My expence hath been very grat & my way of living very free & which is worst that it eateth up not my estate alone but all the benefit of my employments also, & which is worst of all that it still increaseth upon me. So that it doth really require some sevins...'(1)

To this end, in 1683 Sir Edward Dering made provision for his expenditure 'if it should be my fortune to outlive my present employment'. Sums spent on beer, wine and other alcohol were to be cut by half, as was outlay on coal and firewood. His own and his wife's expenses were to be similarly reduced, as were those of his five dependent children. With further savings on servants' wages, stabling costs, and 'Books, pictures, journeys & all other extraordinaries, reparacons etc.', Dering family expenses were to be cut by <sup>2</sup> £900.

It is not clear whether Dering withdrew property from rental in a period which saw his rent roll considerably diminished. It would seem though that he began to explore other possible sources of revenue: perhaps expanding his farm, and from the late 1670s, putting out money at interest.<sup>3</sup> Whatever his financial difficulties in the decade to 1679 (he reckoned his expenditure greater than his income), he could still find at least £320 to consolidate his Pluckley landholdings with purchases from Francis Bettenham. As was often the case with such purchases, Dering's motives for buying the land were probably as much social and political as

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1. K.A.O. U275/A2; U275/A3, ff. 20-1.

2. K.A.O. U275/A4, f. 165.

3. See ch.2, p.105-7; K.A.O. U275/A2-4; Bond, The Diaries and Papers of Sir Edward Dering, p.6.

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financial ones.

The Dering estate was to remain in financial difficulties for some years yet. When the third baronet -Sir Edward's son- made his will in about 1689, a list of debts was appended to it totalling £2680. A bill was brought before Parliament four years later permitting the sale of the Manor<sup>2</sup> of Northwood near Milton in north Kent to pay the debts.

## II

In 1673, as we have mentioned, Sir Edward Dering (2nd bart.) recorded his intention:

'To have lesse of day labourers of which I have had great store for these 7 yeares past & for yt must be done rather to keep men in the house as ploughmen, gardiners etc.'(3)

Labour costs were an important item of expenditure for any large farm, and the pressures of a period of falling prices for agricultural goods and rising real wages 'must have induced many profit-conscious farmers to examine the size, structure and deployment of their workforce.'<sup>4</sup>

Sir Edward Dering's comments fit the argument advanced by Ann Kussmaul that during the period 1650-1750 low food prices made live-in servants a more attractive proposition than non-resident labourers because they were cheap to board.

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1. See above, p.134; Clay, 'Landlords and Estate Management', p.179.

2. B.L. Add.Ch. 70657; Hist. Mss. Comm., House of Lords VI, (1692-3), pp.302-3.

3. H.L.R.O. Colln. of Philip Blake, Ms.F, f.38.

4. Bowden, 'Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits and Rents' in Thirsk (ed.), The Agrarian History of England and Wales IV, p.663; Oliver, 'Farming and Agricultural Change', p.58.

For mainly pastoral farmers like Sir Edward Dering, the constant demand for labour throughout the year was a further incentive for hiring labour in the form of servants. Before 1650, on the other hand, these economic pressures did not apply: high food prices pushed up the cost of board and lodging and therefore encouraged farmers to depend more heavily on out-labourers.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the period 1550-1700 though, most large farms would have hired in varying proportions both live-in servants and non-resident labourers. The former would contract for a fixed wage usually including diet and board for a year or longer. The latter would be hired for periods varying from a few days to nearly the whole year; their wages paid either by the day or on a piece-rate basis.<sup>2</sup>

On arable or mixed farms, the numbers of labourers required increased considerably during harvest time. On the Derings' Surrenden farm in Pluckley and Little Chart, five non-resident labourers assisted the workforce of servants in July 1663. In the following two months eleven and thirteen men respectively were hired, as well as an unspecified number of hop-pickers. Most of the extra labourers taken on were Pluckley inhabitants, as the Hearth Tax returns of that year indicate. Among those hired however, were one man from Great Chart (near Ashford); and three from Smarden, on Pluckley's

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1. A Kussmaul, Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England, (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981), ch.6; Oliver, op.cit, p.58; Langton & Hoppe, Town and Country in the Development of Early Modern Western Europe, p.26.

2. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, pp.246ff.

<sup>1</sup>  
southern border.

Some harvesters may have migrated from elsewhere in Kent; perhaps from Thanet where the barley and wheat crops were commonly brought in before the end of July.<sup>2</sup> But longer-distance migrant labour of the kind Thomas Baskerville described in about 1664 as filling the Kentish roads with sickles and scythes was probably confined to the highly-developed grain economies of the north of the county at this date.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the harvesting of hay, wheat, barley, oats, pulses and tares, these summer months were also the time of the hop harvest. Picking began late in August or early September and required many more hands acre for acre than did corn harvesting. On the Dering estate probably no more than ten acres were put down to hops in the 1660s, compared with about 80 acres of corn and meadow. In August and September 1663, wages for hop-pickers comprised 44% of the total wage bill for non-resident labour.<sup>4</sup>

In the eighteenth century, as the hop industry increased its hold over mid-Kent agriculture, the region began to draw in migrant hop-pickers from London and Wales as well as the more populous Kentish towns.<sup>5</sup> Writing in 1798, William

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1. K.A.O. U133/E2/9.

2. Chalklin, op.cit., p.84.

3. Thomas Baskerville, quoted in Everitt, 'Farm Labourers', p.434; Chalklin, op.cit., p.84.

4. K.A.O. U133/E2/9.

5. Between 1700 and 1800, hop acreages in Kent may have tripled (D. Baker, 'Agricultural Prices, Production and Marketing', p.488).

Marshall described the Maidstone region in the hop-picking season as 'a forest of hops..., the lanes and village greens swarm with these strolling pickers, men, women, children and infants.'<sup>1</sup>

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries demand for hop-pickers was lower, and any migration to the region that did occur was probably mostly over short distances. This probably took some Pluckley villagers to neighbouring parishes at the height of the season to lend a hand with the harvest. Perhaps this was what a man named Brigs did in the autumn of 1658. In the churchwardens' accounts, a payment to Goody Brigs is listed in October 'when her husband was aharvesting.'<sup>2</sup>

Marshall's later comments about the employment of women and children as hop-pickers seem to have applied to early modern Pluckley. In September 1643, ten women were paid for picking hops on the Dering estate. One woman, Goodwife Garnett was paid with 'her boy', and three others were paid for a partner or, like Joahne Pangben with 'her Companie'. It would seem that such female labour was rare in Pluckley in this period: no evidence has survived of female labouring except in this specific hop-picking role.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, little can be discovered about the number of live-in servants housed by the Derings or other farmers in the village. We do know though that when Sir Edward Dering (1st bart.) took over the running of Surrenden farm in

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1. Marshall, The Rural Economy of the Southern Counties, i. 240-3.

2. K.A.O. P289/5/1.

3. K.A.O. U1107/A13.

1619, his 'family' consisted of thirteen servants; among whom were only three servants-in-husbandry: a 'Husbandman', a 'Petty Husbandman' and the 'Husbandman's Boy'. In addition, the Derings employed ten household servants, including a 'Warrener and Brewer' and a 'Coachman and Horsekeeper'<sup>1</sup>. Just over twenty years later in 1642-3 twelve non-resident labourers were employed (not including the hop-pickers) during the months from December to October. Unless the numbers of servants had expanded considerably in the intervening years, it would seem that most of the farm work on the Dering estate in the 1640s was done by temporary workers paid by daily or piece rates.<sup>2</sup>

The numbers of such labourers employed in this eleven month period is probably a considerable underestimate since the record for the months June-September appears incomplete. In July the only payment made was 17s-7d to one John Hunt for six days work in the gardens; fitting or repairing a door 'betwixt the hall chamber and the gallerie'; for half a day spent 'mending wagons; and half a day going to Eastwell. However, taking the months December 1642 - May 1643 and October of that year, six labourers worked on a permanent or semi-permanent basis.

Three of the six were employed in general husbandry work about the estate, of which the seasonal round of a man named 'Hilles' may be taken as an example. Between December and June his time was divided between felling trees and making

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1. Bod.L. Ms. Gough Kent 20, ff. 8-10.

2. K.A.O. U1107/A13.

faggots; work on hedges and ditches; and a number of one-off tasks which included helping to repair a pond in December and destroying molehills in January. In the summer months, Hilles probably lent a hand with the harvest, for in October 1643 he was listed as making hay. Hilles and two others earned between £6.2 and £6.5 during these seven months (December to May & October), suggesting an annual wage of £11-12, somewhat higher than the typical figure for southern England at this period.<sup>1</sup>

Three other labourers were employed on more specialized work. Coates was the only one of the six listed as working in the hopground. In five of the six months in which payments to him were made, his work was confined to looking after the hops. He also helped with winter dung-laying in January 1643 and with making hay in August and September of that year. The last two of the 'permanent' labourers were John Hunt -who had worked at Surrenden for over twenty years- and his son, also called John.<sup>2</sup> They often worked as a pair, dividing their time between the gardens and general repair work about the estate.

In addition to these six, a number of other labourers worked more sporadically on the Dering estate. Some, like John Barton -a second estate worker of some twenty years standing- were employed in general husbandry work (he earned two-thirds of Hilles's wages during these months). Others did more specialized work. Walter Bocher worked in the hopground

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1. Bowden, 'Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits and Rents', in Thirsk (ed.), The Agrarian History of England and Wales IV, p.657.

2. K.A.O. U350/E4.

and on the threshing floor as well as in the fields. Gilbert Edwardes, a mason was also employed on the estate with his apprentice; and his work included repairing the houses of Dering's tenants as well as such jobs as pointing and plastering around Surrenden House itself. A carpenter, Samson Lorryman also worked for Sir Edward - though less frequently than Edwardes. Like Edwardes, Lorryman did work both for Dering's tenants and in Surrenden itself, alongside his other<sup>1</sup> commitments which included making coffins for village paupers.

Other labourers were no doubt employed in the busy summer months to bring in the harvest. Two such men made a fleeting appearance in the accounts for Spetember 1643, each paid two days at a shilling a day for 'pulling hoppoles'<sup>2</sup>. However, we must turn to a similar set of accounts made twenty years later during the summer months of 1663 to get a fuller picture of such seasonal labour.<sup>3</sup>

In July of 1663, we have noted, five non-resident labourers were working on the Dering estate; all but one of them, it seems, on a regular basis. Two men hoed amongst the hop plants; two more were at work bringing in the hay crop. One of the latter also trimmed the hedges (on the orders of local Justices), cut down thistles, chopped faggots, and spread dung. A fifth -perhaps John Hunt's successor- worked in the gardens. In August all eleven pairs of hands (including eight newly hired) helped with the harvest: cutting, binding, carrying and threshing the wheat, peas, beans, oats, tares and

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1. K.A.O. P289/5/1.
2. K.A.O. U1107/A13.
3. K.A.O. U133/E2/9.

the remainder of the hay. In addition two men were paid in part for shearing sheep, and one of the permanent labourers divided his time between cutting peas, beans and wheat; mowing hay; binding oats; ploughing; faggoting and working on the highways.

In September attention was shifted to the barley and hop harvests. Eight of the thirteen labourers employed were newly hired; and seven in all worked solely on the barley harvest: mowing, binding, carrying and loading it onto wagons. Two others helped bring the barley in; and they and four others also continued to harvest the other crops. Probably more than thirteen labourers -perhaps all women and children as in 1643- were hired to harvest the hops, and others (including one employed for that purpose alone) pulled up the now redundant hop-poles.<sup>1</sup>

Dering's steward Thomas Rolf felt it necessary to apologize for the high labour bill of September 1663 (he spent about £66 in all). In a letter written later that year, Rolf told his employer:

'S[i]r, your worship may think that the disbursements in September ar Larg: but verely I think that if any man had had the ordering of it they could not amad it less.'

(2)

Rolf went on to describe his efforts to get in the barley and hops as quickly as possible:

'I hop [? hoped to] cut part of the barley with the mowares & so went betweene sumtime with the hoppickers &... [\*] with the mowers because I would have all your

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\*ms. damaged.

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

business goe f[o]rward as well as might be: When it was fine weather every one clapt one to git what healp they could.'(1)

Pluckley labourers were probably somewhat better off in real terms in the 1660s than in the 1640s. Where wage rates can be compared between 1642-3 and 1663, increases of between 14% and 33% took place. Since the same period witnessed a slight fall in the price of wheat, 'The higher wages probably meant a small improvement in the standard of living at the lowest level of society.'<sup>2</sup>

The fortunate coincidence of the second of these fragmentary farm accounts with the Hearth Tax assessments means that many of the labourers employed by Sir Edward Dering in 1663 can be traced in both sources. Of the eighteen labourers listed in the accounts possibly from Pluckley ten<sup>3</sup> appeared in the Hearth Tax assessment of the year 1664.

All those listed were assessed on one or two hearths (7 and 3 cases respectively); usually indicative, according to Margaret Spufford of labourer or husbandman status. This grouping ranged from the poorest inhabitants of the village to those with moveable wealth worth around £100: broadly speaking the upper limit of the second category of farmers which we delineated in the last chapter.<sup>4</sup>

The Hearth Tax provided for the poorest members of any

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1. Ibid.

2. Wages for pulling hop-poles and felling wood rose by 33% from 1s to 1s-4d between the two dates; and the rate for hedging by 14% from 1s-2d to 1s-4d. Dering's rates were not untypical for Kent at this period (Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, pp. 251-2).

3. K.A.O. Q/Th.

4. Spufford, Contrasting Communities, pp.39-40; above Table 19, p.100.

village community to be exempted from payment on the grounds of poverty. Heads of households (on whom the tax was levied) were considered 'non-chargeable' if they occupied houses or owned property worth less than £1 a year; owned personal estate worth less than £10 or were not liable to contribute to local church and poor rates. Since 1664 was a time of low grain prices, those not liable to pay the tax were 'people who had no money surplus after the purchase of food, or in other words were living on the subsistence level, in an unexceptional year.'<sup>1</sup>

Seven of the ten labourers appearing in both the 1663 accounts and in the Hearth Tax of the following year were exempted on grounds of poverty.<sup>2</sup> So even if real wages had improved since earlier in the century, many labouring families remained desperately poor.

### (iii) Wealth and Social Structure

In the predominantly agrarian economy of rural England in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, wealth and access to the means of production in the form of land were necessarily closely linked. As we saw in Chapter 2, however, a grouping defined according to moveable wealth might encompass broad variation in the scale of farming activity undertaken by its members.<sup>3</sup> Among more substantial villagers, a small farm (evidenced by investment in crops and livestock) might mean

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1. Chalklin, op.cit., p.255.

2. K.A.O. Q/RTh.

3. See ch.2, pp.102-8.

simply that other lands were leased out. On the other hand, it might also signify that farming was pursued alongside a second occupation such as that of clothier or merchant. The same sorts of problems apply lower down the economic ladder with regard to the landholding of artisans and clothworkers; and of the tradesman and craftsmen who might be drawn from any position in the hierarchy. Thus, as Keith Wrightson has observed:

'Social stratification in the villages...tended to be dictated by levels of wealth rather than by the mere fact of landholding itself, though in an overwhelmingly rural society the former obviously depended to a large extent on the latter.'(1)

The historian of sixteenth and seventeenth century social structure is dependent for data concerning wealth distribution on a small number of central government tax assessments; each with their own peculiar pitfalls and shortcomings. For the sixteenth century, the most widely used are the Lay Subsidy Returns of 1524-5 and 1543-5, particularly the earlier assessment. Both subsidies assessed all persons over sixteen worth at least £1 a year in lands or the same amount in goods. In practice it was usually all householders (with some exceptions) whether men or women who were assessed. In the earlier subsidy, provision was also made for assessment on wages. Since the statute governing the collection of the 1524-5 tax stipulated that the major source of personal wealth was to be taxed in each case, the returns give a unique insight into the relative importance of wage

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1. Wrightson, English Society, p.35.

labourers in different regions of sixteenth century England.<sup>1</sup>

The insights offered by either subsidy are not, however, free of distortion. Clergymen were exempt; so were most women and an unspecified number of poor householders. In addition, unknown numbers of persons were eligible for taxation, but evaded payment, or were overlooked by the appraisers. Evasion though was probably low, and those householders worth less than £1 a small proportion of the total.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately two problems remain regarding the Kent Subsidies. Firstly, the county is one of the very few for which returns for both 1524-5 and 1543-5 are seriously depleted.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, even where returns have survived, taxpayers were commonly listed according to the hundred in which they lived and not -as elsewhere- according to their parish or borough.

No subsidy rolls for either Pluckley or for Calehill hundred in which it lay have survived for the years 1524-5 or 1543-5. What is extant is a complete roll of 1524 from Chart Hundred (neighbouring Calehill to the south and east), comprising the parishes of Bethersden, Great Chart, Hothfield and part of Ashford.<sup>4</sup> With the possible exception of the last, these parishes occupied similar positions topographically and economically to that of Pluckley in the early sixteenth century and may therefore serve to give an approximation of the distribution of wealth in the village at that point.

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1. Sheail, 'The Distribution of Taxable Population and Wealth', pp. 55-7.

2. Ibid., pp. 57, 67.

3. See ibid., Figs. 1-3, pp.61-3.

4. P.R.O. E179/124/194.

The data in Table 25 (p.191) have been sub-divided into the same four categories as those used by Wrightson and Levine in their study of Terling (Essex); and their figures have been included along with those of Chart Hundred. The schematic 'social positions' they attached to each category have also<sup>1</sup> been given.

Because our data relates to Chart Hundred and not to Pluckley itself, it is clearly impossible to uncover the meaning of the sums assessed in 1524 in the way Wrightson and Levine and Margaret Spufford have done.<sup>2</sup> A number of points can nevertheless be made. The grouping Wrightson and Levine term 'labourers and cottagers' comprised about the same proportion of the community in both Terling and Chart (27.5-28%). In Terling, the taxpayers assessed on wages were confined to those worth less than £2 a year; and in sixteenth-century Cambridgeshire the same applied. In Chart, in contrast, ten men were assessed on £2 yearly in wages. It is not clear if this reflects simply a difference in appraisal; or, as Spufford argues, that in distinguishing between 'wages' and 'goods' as the main source of income, the tax was being levied on labourers living in their own cottages and on resident

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1. A number of minor changes were made to the wealth groupings of Wrightson and Levine (Poverty and Piety, p.34) in order to incorporate the Chart data. In Category I, Terling's richest taxpayer was assessed at only £54. The grouping had to be enlarged considerably to include Chart's Thomas Knechbull, who paid at £150. Wrightson & Levine's category of £2-8 was extended to include those in Chart paying on £9. Category III was extended to include those paying on £2 'wages' (see text); and Category IV enlarged to include those paying on goods, lands and wages -and not just the last two.

2. Ibid., p.33; Spufford, Contrasting Communities, pp. 28-36.

CATEGORY	WEALTH ASSESSMENT	SOCIAL POSITION	NO. AND PERCENTAGE OF TAXPAYERS			
			TERLING		CHART	
I	£10 - 150 land or goods	Gentry/very large farmers	9	11.8	20	19.2
II	£3 - 9 land or goods	Yeomen/substantial husbandmen/craftsmen	28	36.8	38	36.5
III	£2 goods or wages	Husbandmen/craftsmen	18	23.7	17	16.3
IV	Under£2 lands, wages or goods	Labourers/cottagers	21	27.6	29	27.9
TOTAL			76	99.9	104	99.9

Table 25. The Distribution of Wealth in Chart Hundred, Kent and Terling, Essex from the Lay Subsidy Returns of 1524  
 (Sources: P.R.O.E179/124/194; K. Wrightson and D. Levine, Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling 1525-1700, London, Academic Press, 1979, p. 34).

servants respectively.<sup>1</sup>

If we include those assessed on a yearly wage of £2 with Wrightson and Levine's small husbandmen and craftsmen (Category III), it would appear that this grouping formed a less significant element in Chart Hundred (16.3%) than in Terling (23.7%). Yeomen, substantial husbandmen and craftsmen on the other hand, formed about 36-37% of taxpayers in both communities -the single largest grouping.

By reworking our figures somewhat, we may compare our findings for Chart with those of Margaret Spufford for 16th century Cambridgeshire. She has argued that an assessment of £2-4 in the Subsidy implied a holding of about 15-30 acres, and those of £5-10 men who 'might well hold more than one tenement, and form much more than a "kind of lower middle class" in their own villages.'<sup>2</sup>

	% Taxpayers assessed at			
	Under £2	£2-4	£ 5-10	over £10
Chart Hundred	28	36	19	17
Cambridgeshire	53	29	10	8

Spufford's figures fit John Sheail's findings that the high sums of money returned to the Exchequer from parts of Kent were a result of a richer rather than a more densely-settled population than elsewhere in the South-east; for there is little doubt that Cambridgeshire was more populous than

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1. Spufford, op.cit., pp. 31-3.  
2. Ibid., p.35.  
3. These figures are approximate, based on proportions given as fractions in the text (ibid., p.35).  
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mid-Kent in the first half of the sixteenth century:<sup>1</sup>

'Cambridgeshire's relative lack of prosperity in the 1520s, considering the part of the country in which it lay, was therefore accounted for, not because it was thinly peopled, but because it had few gentlemen, and, indeed, few really wealthy yeomen.' (2)

Assuming that the experience of Chart Hundred was not radically different from that of Pluckley at this time, the distribution of wealth in 1524 may be compared with that pertaining in the village 140 years later by considering the Hearth Tax Returns of 1664 (Table 26, p.194). This tax was levied on all householders in a series of assessments during the 1660s and '70s; with the level of taxation set according to the number of 'hearths' in the houses of each. As we have noted, provision was made for the poorest members of the community to be exempted from payment.<sup>3</sup>

Margaret Spufford has convincingly argued that 'in general an incontrovertible association existed between wealth and house size.'<sup>4</sup> By grouping inhabitants exempt from the tax and those paying on different numbers of hearths into four categories, comparability with the 1524 figures may be achieved.

The returns of 1664 have been chosen for two reasons. Firstly, those exempt from payment were consistently recorded. Secondly, levels of poverty in 1664 should represent those of a 'normal' year in the period since corn prices (of critical importance to poor households) were low, having fallen from

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1. Ibid., p.10; J. Sheail, quoted by ibid., p.29.

2. Ibid.

3. See above, pp.186-7.

4. Spufford, op.cit., p.39.

CATEGORY	WEALTH ASSESSMENT (HEARTHES)	SOCIAL POSITION	NO. AND PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS							
			Pluckley(1664)	Terling(1671)	Mid-Kent(1663)	Weald(1663)				
I	6 - 20	Gentry/very large farmers	7	7.0	10	8.2	214	5.2	192	4.5
II	3 - 5	Yeomen/substantial husbandmen/craftsmen	23	23.0	29	23.8	730	17.8	740	17.5
III	2	Husbandmen/craftsmen	24	24.0	21	17.2	760	18.5	685	16.2
IV	1 and exempt	Labourers/poor crafts- men/poor widows	46	46.0	62	50.8	2399	58.5	2611	61.8
TOTAL			100	100.0	122	100.0	4103	100.0	4228	100.0

Table 26. Hearth Tax Distribution in Pluckley, Terling (Essex), Four Mid-Kent Hundreds and Ten Wealden Hundreds 1663-1671 (Sources: K.A.O. Q/RTth; Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, p.35; D.C. Coleman, 'The Economy of Kent Under the Later Stuarts', London Univ. Ph.D thesis 1951, pp. 306, 316).

the 'almost famine rate' of 1661-2<sup>1</sup>. In Table 26 the figures and four groupings from Terling have once again been included, together with average findings from a sample of rural mid-Kent<sup>2</sup> and wealden hundreds.

If we compare the Hearth Tax distribution in Pluckley in 1664 with the Chart subsidy of 1524, the expansion in the numbers of households falling into Category IV is immediately apparent (27.9%-46.0%). Accompanying this trend, there occurred a significant fall in the number of yeomen, substantial husbandmen and craftsmen of Category II: In 1524 they accounted for 36% of Chart taxpayers; in 1664 only 21% of Pluckley households were drawn from that grouping.

It would appear from D.C. Coleman's findings for mid-Kent (including both Chart and Calehill Hundreds) that such a drop in the number of Category II members was a general feature of the region in the 140 years after 1524. A similar process may have occurred in the Weald over the same period. Certainly by the 1660s, the region exhibited a similar distribution of wealth to that of mid-Kent to its north; though as we might expect, the former contained somewhat higher levels of Category IV householders than the latter (62% compared with 58.5%)

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1. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.255.

2. D.C. Coleman's data on exempted households was based on a slightly larger sample of hundreds than those on taxpaying households; and the former is given only as a percentage (Coleman, 'The Economy of Kent', pp.306,316). It was therefore necessary to inflate the figures of taxpayers for mid-Kent and the Weald by those percentages to arrive at figures comparable to those for Terling and Pluckley. The numbers and percentages given for both Kentish regions are therefore approximate.

If we break up the Category IV figures into those paying on one hearth and those exempt, it can be seen that Pluckley had lower levels of both exempted householders and those assessed on one hearth than did Terling and the two Kentish regions:

Householders	Pluckley	Terling	Mid-Kent	Weald
a) taxed on 1 hearth	17.0%	18.0%	26.5%	25.8%
b) exempt	29.0%	32.8%	32.0%	36.0%
Total (Category IV)	46.0%	50.8%	58.5%	61.8%

In a mixed farming village like Terling where most of the land was in the hands of ten large tenant farmers, we would expect most Category IV members to be landless labourers, exempt from payment.<sup>1</sup> In the pastoral-woodland Weald and mid-Kent regions on the other hand, we might expect perhaps similar or larger numbers of very poor householders (swollen by immigration), coupled with large numbers of marginally better-off labourers and cottagers benefitting from the opportunities denied to the poor of mixed-farming regions.<sup>2</sup>

What could not have been anticipated however, is the low level of both components of Category IV in Pluckley. Overall, there were proportionally a quarter fewer such households in Pluckley than in either mid-Kent or the Weald in 1663-4. The numerical strength of Pluckley's labouring population at 46% approximated more closely to that of Terling's (at 50.8%) than it did the two Kentish regions.

1. Wrightson & Levine, Poverty and Piety, p.28.  
2. See above, p.142.

This was not it seems because Pluckley had suffered the same degree of economic polarization as the Essex village, for its husbandmen and craftsmen comprised a significantly greater share of the village population (24.0% compared with 17.2%). More likely, Pluckley had escaped the high levels of immigration common to many pastoral-woodland villages in the century before 1660: a point implied by the evidence we considered earlier.<sup>1</sup>

Unless Pluckley's experience was radically different from Chart's, considerable economic polarization had nevertheless occurred; witnessed both in the increased numbers of labourers, cottagers and so on; and in the decreased levels of yeomen, substantial husbandmen and craftsmen between 1524 and 1664. This process was apparently accompanied by the consolidation of the position occupied in the village by the husbandmen and craftsmen of Category III.

Can the shifting distribution of wealth suggested here accommodate the changes in Pluckley's farming population implied by the data considered in Chapter 2? Between 1562-1639 and 1640-1700 we argued, the farmers belonging to what we termed Group I maintained their share of the inventoried population. Group II numbers fell by 100%, and Group IV numbers rose by a similar amount. The farmers of Group III remained a small and static component of the total<sup>2</sup> between the two periods.

It is virtually impossible to tie inventory values to

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1. See above, p.145-6.

2. See ch.2, p.73.

numbers of hearths precisely. Margaret Spufford's attempt to correlate the latter with contemporary inventories demonstrated that each hearth assessment could embrace wide and overlapping estate valuations. Moreover, the groupings into which Spufford divided hearth taxpayers (1,2,3,4+ hearths) cannot easily be related to the divisions we have used to compare the Lay Subsidy and Hearth Tax Returns. What can be done is to relate both inventory and Hearth Tax assessments to contemporary status descriptions to make some comparisons of the suggested trends. For the reasons we indicated at the beginning of this chapter, such a correlation is a somewhat crude and haphazard business, but should give us the broad outlines of the social structure each data set implies.

We argued in Chapter 2 that Inventory Groups II and III corresponded approximately to the more prosperous husbandmen and yeomen,<sup>2</sup> the grouping we have termed 'Category II' in our comparison of the 1524 and 1664 tax returns. Both the data sets record a decline in the importance of this grouping. Between 1562-1639 and 1640-1700, Group II & III members fell proportionally by almost 25%; and Category II members by almost 15% between 1524 and 1664.

It is probable that the drop recorded in the two inventory sets (24%) is inflated because after the Restoration, Kentish inventories were less numerous than in the earlier period, 'especially for the small farmer.'<sup>3</sup> In this context we should interpret the apparent stasis in Pluckley's

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1. Spufford, Contrasting Communities, pp.37-41.

2. See ch.2, pp.101-2.

3. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.77, n.2.

Group I farmers (broadly speaking the smaller husbandmen, craftsmen and 'peasant labourers' of Wrightson and Levine's category III) with some caution: the bias towards larger farmers probably accounts for the discrepancy between the movement in Group I inventories (-1.5%) and that in Category III members between the two tax assessments (+8.4%).

Because of this bias in the inventory data, the near tripling in the share of the farming population comprised by Group IV members between 1562-1639 and 1640-1700 (14.5%-40.4%)<sup>1</sup> almost certainly overstates any real growth in that sector; though some expansion in the numbers of Pluckley's large farmers and gentry may have occurred in the century and a half after 1550.

The Hearth Tax Returns of 1664 offer the most reliable guide to Pluckley's social structure in the early modern period. Small husbandmen and peasant labourers formed the largest single group in the village's farming population, but their numbers were more than equalled by those considered too poor to pay the tax. Altogether more than four out of every ten households in Pluckley at this date were those of labourers, cottagers, poor craftsmen and widows.

Evidence from the inventories (problematic though it is) and from our comparison of the two sets of tax returns suggest that the smaller husbandmen, poorer craftsmen, labourers and cottagers grew to numerical dominance in the village at the expense of more substantial husbandmen and yeomen. By the late 1620s, the churchwardens' accounts imply, the later

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1. See ch.2, p.73.

pattern had already become established: in 1628 those holding between 1 and 29 acres accounted for almost 75% of Pluckley<sup>1</sup> landholders.

However, these assessments came at the end of several decades of rapid population growth. Some fragmentation must have occurred; aided by an expanding broadcloth industry and to a certain extent, by the customs of inheritance practiced in the village. This does not seem to have heralded 'the disappearance of the small landowner' in the village which Margaret Spufford found in upland Cambridgeshire. Instead holdings contracted, despite the probable clearance of many acres of woodland.

This meant on the one hand an increased role in the village for small husbandmen and craftsmen. On the other it meant increased vulnerability for Pluckley's poorer inhabitants, as cottage landholdings were whittled away. An increased burden of rent may have brought extra pressures to bear on those householders ill-equipped to benefit from the rising prices of agricultural goods; and with the demise of the broadcloth industry, many such families, perhaps 10% or more of Pluckley's population, probably began to leave the village for nearby Kentish towns, the capital or even the New World.

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1. See Table 22, p.136.

Chapter 4: Poverty, Crime and the Search for Order, 1590-1700

'But it is observed in some parts where I have travelled where great and spacious wastes, mountaines, woods, forests, and heaths are, that many...cotages are set up, the people given to little or no kinde of labour, living very hardly with oaten bred, soure whay, and goates milke, dwelling far from any church and chappell, and are as ignorant of God or any civill course of life as the very savages amongst the Infidels.'

John Norden, The Surveyors Dialogue, 1618.<sup>1</sup>

(i) National Trends and Local Initiatives

I

Norden's observations (first published in 1607) reflected a contemporary preoccupation in both central and local government with the attitudes and actions of the lower orders. During the last twenty years of Elizabeth's reign this found expression in a tide of legislation aimed at dealing with the problems of poverty (there were at least seventeen bills on the subject in the 1597-8 session alone), drunkenness and victualling, profanation of the Sabbath, bastardy and swearing.<sup>2</sup>

The theme was repeated in the dark images of ministers' sermons and in the 'charges' read by a judge or senior justice at the assizes and quarter sessions. In one charge delivered in the 1590s, Kentish JP William Lambarde expressed alarm that county authorities were having to face 'infinite swarms of evils that of latter years (more than in former ages) have

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1. Norden, The Surveyors Dialogue, pp. 111-4.

2. Slack, 'Poverty and Social Regulation', p. 225.

invaded the realm and overrun it' and 'such an inundation of wickedness in this last and worst age that...we are justly to fear that we shall every one be overwhelmed thereby.'

The extent to which such fears reflected real changes in the levels of poverty and crime is more difficult to determine, and has been the subject of some controversy among historians. All agree, however, that while government legislation was in the first instance a response to a variety of temporary crises during Elizabeth's reign, these crises must be seen in the context of 'interlocking, dimly understood yet profoundly unsettling social and economic changes' which England was experiencing during this period.

The 80% increase in the population of England and Wales between 1540 and 1640 created land shortage and the sub-division of holdings; it brought about heightened levels of geographical mobility and the consequent strains of substantial immigration. It prompted inflation in the price of grains as agricultural production failed to keep pace with economic growth. The adjustments in the rural economy which these conditions stimulated required the expansion of wage labour, but continuing underemployment kept money wages low at a time when food prices were spiralling upward.

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1. Wrightson, English Society, pp.149-51; W. Lambarde quoted in J.A. Sharpe, Crime in Early Modern England (London, Longmans, 1984), p.159.

2. See for example D.M. Palliser, 'Tawney's Century: Brave New World or Malthusian Trap?', Ec.H.R., 2nd ser. XXXV, 3 (1982), 339-53.

3. Slack, op.cit., pp.226-7; Underdown, Revel, Riot and Rebellion, pp.17-18.

4. Wrigley & Schofield, The Population History of England, Table 7.8, pp.208-9; Wrightson, English Society, ch.5.

Significantly, it was in Elizabeth's reign that the term 'labouring poor' was used for the first time. First of all in urban centres, and later throughout the country, poverty expanded upward through the economic structure, taking in not only the traditional 'deserving poor' (the elderly, the sick and disabled, and orphaned children) but also many families who had hitherto been able to support themselves. A number of censuses of the poor, commissioned by anxious local authorities in the 1570s, '80s and '90s revealed that perhaps 10-12% of rural populations required parochial assistance in years of dearth or depression. In urban areas the figure could be as high as a fifth.

It was no longer possible (as those who conducted the surveys had hoped) to restrict relief to 'deserving' groups and to expel or instil discipline into the rest. John Pound's work on Norwich in the 1570s has shown that the great majority of those considered for relief were in fact in work: 'Without it hunger was a certainty, starvation a very real possibility.'

From the 1570s, Tudor legislators at least recognised the possibility of unemployment born of necessity not of idleness, but the focus remained firmly on the vagrant. Contemporaries overestimated the scale and character of the problem, alarmed at the threat to established norms which the rootless life of men and women on the tramp seemed to pose.

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1. Slack, op.cit., p.228; Clay, Economic Expansion and Social Change, i. 214-22.

2. Slack, op.cit., pp.230-1.

3. J. Pound, Poverty and Vagrancy in Tudor England, 2nd edn. (London, Macmillan, 1986), p.24.

Nevertheless they correctly perceived that numbers of vagrants on the road were increasing in the last years of Elizabeth's reign. Their numbers formed part of that larger body of poor folk on the move termed 'subsistence migrants' by Peter Clark. Often travelling alone and over long distances, such migrants made for squalid urban suburbs or the squatter settlements of woodland-pasture regions.<sup>1</sup>

If contemporaries were justified in pointing to increased numbers of resident and mobile poor, what of the escalating incidence of crime they saw as its corollary? Historians of crime have discovered that the number of serious crimes (mainly property offences) tried at county assizes did rise more rapidly than the country's population during Elizabeth's reign to reach a peak between the 1590s and 1620s.<sup>2</sup> In addition to these trends in civil crime, offences punishable under ecclesiastical law were also increasing during these years. R.A. Marchant has calculated a rise of 143% in the numbers of presentments to the York church courts between 1595 and 1633, and J.A. Sharpe has detected an expansion in correctional cases before the Essex Archdeaconry Court between about 1580 and the outbreak of the Civil War.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid., p.46; P. Slack, 'Vagrants and Vagrancy in England 1598-1664', ECH.R., 2nd ser. XXVIII (1974), p.377; idem., 'Poverty and Social Regulation', pp.228-9; Clark, 'The Migrant in Kentish Towns', passim.

2. J.S. Cockburn, 'The Nature and Incidence of Crime in England 1539-1800', in idem. (ed.), Crime in England 1550-1800 (London, Methuen, 1977), pp.52-3; Sharpe, Crime in Early Modern England, p.57.

3. R.A. Marchant, The Church Under the Law: Justice, Administration and Discipline in the Diocese of York 1560-1640 (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1969), p.212; Sharpe, op.cit., p.26.

However, as J.M. Beattie has recently noted:

'Indictments are a fragile guide to criminality...What is being observed is a crude reflection of two intersecting factors: the number of offences being committed, and the determination of those who thought themselves victims (and of the authorities) to punish them.' (1)

Beattie's comments apply equally to those brought before civil and ecclesiastical authorities. Much has been written of the 'dark figure' of unrecorded crime; of the inhibitions to prosecution; of the role of mediation and arbitration; and of informal community sanctions.<sup>2</sup> The other side of this coin is the 'increase of governance' observed to a varying extent throughout Elizabethan and early Stuart England: a 'quickening of the tempo of local administration' which involved redefining many routine aspects of life among the poor as deviant.<sup>3</sup>

## II

The value of these insights has been to bring the history of crime into closer association with the rest of the discipline in a process akin to earlier developments in

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1. J.M. Beattie, Crime and the Courts in England 1660-1800 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986), pp.263-4.
  2. J.A. Sharpe, 'Enforcing the Law in the Seventeenth Century English Village', in V.A.C. Gattrell (ed.), The Social History of Crime in Western Europe since 1500 (London, Europa Publics., 1980), 97-119; K. Wrightson, 'Two Concepts of Order: Justices, Constables and Jurymen in Seventeenth-Century England', in J. Brewer & J. Styles (eds.), An Ungovernable People: The English and their Law in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (London, Hutchinson, 1980), 21-46; M. Ingram, 'Communities and Courts: Law and Disorder in Seventeenth Century Wiltshire', in Cockburn, Crime in England, 110-34; C. Herrup, 'New Shoes and Mutton Pies: Investigative Responses to Theft in Seventeenth-Century East Sussex', H.J., XXVII, 4 (1984), 811-30.
  3. A. Fletcher, Reform in the Provinces: The Government of Stuart England (London, Yale Univ. Press, 1986), p.116.

historical demography. In particular, the recognition that 'behind every indictment, presentment and binding over there lay an individual set of circumstances' has drawn attention to the need 'to grasp something of the interpersonal relationships that preceded formal court action.'<sup>1</sup>

While the history of crime has generated a number of community studies based on this premise, the local history of poverty remains largely divorced from such a contextual framework.<sup>2</sup> Work by Paul Slack, A.L. Beier and others has done much to add to our understanding of the framing and implementation of poor law legislation (including local initiatives on poverty); but it has taken the imaginative collation of overseers' accounts with other local records by Tim Wales and W. Newman Brown to indicate how poor relief may be placed 'within the wider context of the economy of the poor.'<sup>3</sup> This in turn has shown how analyses of poverty at the local level may form part of that 'total reconstitution' of communities urged by Alan Macfarlane.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Sharpe, Crime in Early Modern England, p.73.

2. E.g. P. Slack, 'Poverty and Politics in Salisbury, 1597-1666', in Clark & Slack, Crisis and Order in English Towns, 164-203; idem., 'Vagrants and Vagrancy', 360-79; idem., 'Poverty and Social Regulation', 221-43; A.L. Beier, 'Poor Relief in Warwickshire 1630-1660', P.&P., XXXV (1966), 77-100; idem., 'The Social Problems of an Elizabethan County Town: Warwick 1580-1590' in P. Clark (ed.), Country Towns in Pre-Industrial England (Leicester, Leicester Univ. Press, 1981), 46-85; J. Pound (ed.), The Norwich Census of the Poor (Norfolk Record Soc., 1971).

3. W. Newman Brown, 'The Receipt of Poor Relief and Family Situation: Aldenham, Hertfordshire 1630-90', in R.M. Smith (ed.), Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), 405-22; T. Wales, 'Poverty, Poor Relief and Life-Cycle: Some Evidence from Seventeenth-Century Norfolk', in Smith, op.cit., 351-404.

4. Macfarlane, Reconstructing Historical Communities, p.34.

Those community studies that have attempted to locate<sup>1</sup> crime within a local demographic, economic and social context have nevertheless linked patterns and trends in prosecutions before civil and ecclesiastical authorities to processes of socio-economic stratification in village communities including changes in the levels of poverty. The most complex analysis of this kind is Keith Wrightson's and David Levine's study of Terling in Essex over the period 1525-1700;<sup>2</sup> and it is worth considering in some detail how they construct their argument.

The village of Terling lies on the fertile boulder clay of central Essex, about thirty-eight miles north-east of London. Between 1524/5 and 1671 its population increased by some 75%; and as we saw in chapter three, this demographic growth was accompanied by a considerable expansion in the numbers of poor cottagers and landless labourers in the village, while the numbers of substantial yeomen, husbandmen<sup>3</sup> and craftsmen remained stable.

Despite changes in the pattern of freehold ownership in Terling (gentleman rentiers increasingly replaced peasant proprietors), Wrightson and Levine argue for 'the relative stability of the broad pattern of landholding'; with most of the land in the hands of perhaps ten large tenant farmers. What was left was divided between half a dozen fairly

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1. In the following discussion, 'crime' shall be taken to comprehend 'behaviour which is regarded as illegal and which, if detected, would lead to prosecution in a court of law or summarily before an accredited agent of law enforcement' (Sharpe, Crime in Early Modern England, p.4).

2. K. Wrightson & D. Levine, Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Tering 1525-1700 (London, Academic Press, 1979).

3. Ibid., pp. 19, 34-6, 45-7.

substantial leasehold farms; a number of smaller lease-holdings; and finally a 'varying but quite large number' of free- and copyhold smallholdings.<sup>1</sup>

The authors associate these demographic and economic changes in the village with a process of cultural stratification which involved a reorientation of values among its more substantial inhabitants. They felt the increased burdens of poor relief, symbolizing 'the radical divergence of the fortunes of the villagers' at a time when rising levels of literacy brought into more prosperous homes those ideas of moral reform and social control being urged in the elite milieu of the county justices and other gentry, and in the works of religious writers. The emergence of a group of committed Puritans among the yeomen of the parish cemented this process of cultural stratification 'superimposed' on existing divisions by 1640.<sup>2</sup>

In the uneasy economic climate of the early seventeenth century, as distinctions of wealth between the successful yeomen farmers and tradesmen and the precariously balanced labourers and cottagers widened, the leaders of the parish pursued a conscious policy of imposing on the community:

'...a social discipline that would preserve social stability while at the same time bringing the comportment of the villagers more firmly into conformity with their own novel conceptions of order and reformation.'(3)

In the context of central government preoccupations we

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1. Ibid., pp. 28-30.  
2. Ibid., pp. 175-6.  
3. Ibid., p.177.

sketched at the beginning of this chapter,<sup>1</sup> a group of Terling activists -drawn principally from the village's yeomen and wealthier tradesmen- showed a growing willingness to prosecute the kind of 'disorderly' behaviour hitherto widely tolerated. Terling business at the civil courts of assize and quarter sessions and in the church courts rose steadily at the end of the sixteenth century, peaked in the reign of James I and declined thereafter.<sup>2</sup>

A closer analysis of this increased level of judicial activity revealed firstly a sharp rise in 'interpersonal disputes' (primarily theft, persons bound over to keep the peace to others and assault). A heavier concentration on sexual offences (mainly bastardy, sexual incontinency and prenuptial pregnancy) in the church courts was a second feature of the overall increase; and a third, the initiation of prosecutions aimed at a stricter 'regulative' control over other aspects of village life.<sup>3</sup>

Most of this last category of offences were centred around the alehouse: local officials became increasingly intolerant towards unlicensed ale-selling, drunkenness, tippling, gaming and dancing. Prosecutions were brought against both the mainly poor alesellers, and against their

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1. See Slack, 'Poverty and Social Regulation', pp.240-1 on the role of central government policy in creating cultural stratification at the parish level.

2. Wrightson & Levine, op.cit., p.114.

3. 'Regulative' prosecutions included the prosecution of ale-house keepers and their disorderly customers; those failing to attend church; those erecting illegal cottages; and a variety of other penal offences such as swearing, taking in lodgers or inmates, and keeping hunting dogs (ibid., p.117).

customers who included a number of Terling's more prosperous yeomen and craftsmen. Such disorderly behaviour was held to promote ungodliness and idleness as well as impoverishing the parish.<sup>1</sup>

Wrightson and Levine link the peaks in prosecution for theft to years of particular economic stringency (such as 1597-1603, 1630-1 & 1649-50) and suggest that the figures provide less an index of the incidence of crime than of 'occasions upon which an offence gave rise to prosecution uninhibited by intervening consideration or mediating action.'<sup>2</sup> Years of high prosecutions may therefore reflect some of the strain put on interpersonal relations in a period when middling as well as poor villagers risked severe economic hardship. That this strain was not confined to the poorer villagers is suggested by the bunching of interpersonal disputes involving villagers of superior wealth and standing at the turn of the sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1610s and '20s the sporadic social conflict within the village elite was giving way to a pattern of hostility between the rulers of the parish and its poorer inhabitants, as a group of activists came to dominate the ranks of village office-holders and quarter sessions jurymen. This heralded a struggle to establish effective control over the village's alehouses (mostly during the period 1609-19); and in the 1620s a judicial offensive against prenuptial

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1. Ibid., pp. 119-37.  
2. Ibid., p. 122.  
3. Ibid., pp. 122-3.

pregnancy -a practice hitherto widely tolerated.<sup>1</sup>

In the early days of reform, parish officers had met with some resistance from a number of substantial villagers in their effort to establish control over alehouses and curb their customers; and in their redefinition of permissible sexual and personal conduct. Such opposition as there was, however, was largely overcome during the remainder of the century; drunkenness and other forms of 'disorderly' behaviour were increasingly confined to Terling's poorer inhabitants.<sup>2</sup>

If concern about the cost of relieving the poor was one motive behind the attempt to establish new standards of order in Terling, this found further expression in the implementation of the Elizabethan poor law statutes in the village. Parish officers became increasingly insistent that those in receipt of relief should conform to the statutory definition of the 'deserving poor'.

Thus in the terms of Henry Smith's charity (1626), it was stipulated that only those resident in the parish for five years or more were eligible. Furthermore, 'those that are guilty of excessive drinkinge, profane swearing, pilfering or other scandalous crimes...' were also barred from payment. In this way moral reform was helped along by the economic dependency which poor relief fostered. Social control of this kind accounts in part for the reduced level of disorderly behaviour among Terling's poorer inhabitants, as well as their

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1. Ibid., pp. 125-35, 140, 178.

2. Ibid., pp. 177-9.

wealthier neighbours, later in the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Wrightson and Levine close their account of Terling by raising the question of the typicality of their findings. They claim tentatively that 'Terling provides...one variant of a social process that was active elsewhere though subject to considerable local variations in chronology and consequences.'<sup>2</sup>

More recently published work by Keith Wrightson on the county of Essex as a whole has indicated that even in a county 'closely governed and solidly protestant' in the early seventeenth century, fewer than sixty out of over four hundred parishes and hamlets 'freely presented' unlicensed alesellers<sup>3</sup> on three or more occasions between 1616 and 1630/1. And Martin Ingram has concluded from an examination of Wiltshire's church court and quarter sessions records that:

'the lack of any sustained campaign against alehouses, drunkenness and popular festivities and the like was typical of the great majority of rural parishes...in the period before the Civil War.'<sup>4</sup>

Therefore while many examples of sustained campaigns against the forces of 'poverty, idleness, ungodliness, disorder' late in Elizabeth's reign and in the early years of Stuart<sup>5</sup> successors have come to light, it would be misleading to

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1. Ibid., p.179.

2. Ibid., p.183.

3. Wrightson, 'Two Concepts of Order', pp. 33,39.

4. M. Ingram, 'Religion, Communities and Moral Discipline in Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Century England: Case Studies', in K.Von Greyerz (ed.), Religion and Society in Early Modern Europe 1500-1800 (London, Allen & Unwin, 1984), p.191.

5. Wrightson & Levine, Poverty and Piety, p.180; Fletcher, Reform in the Provinces, ch.8; Underdown, Revel, Riot and Rebellion, ch.3-5; J.Goring, Godly Exercises or the Devil's Dance? Puritanism and Popular Culture in Pre-Civil War England (London, Dr. William's Trust, 1983).

regard Terling's experience as a blueprint for that of the country as a whole.

### III

What of Kent? There are indeed signs of that 'increase of governance' evident elsewhere in Elizabethan and Jacobean England. Peter Clark has described the growth of a powerful county government in Kent as 'the dominant theme of Kentish politics in the mid and late Elizabethan period'; with continuing 'administrative sophistication' in the early years of James's reign. This was signalled by the growing number of county justices and the formalization of petty sessions in the county. The Commission of the Peace gained power at the expense of urban independence and the liberties of the Cinque<sup>1</sup> Ports.

Accompanying this 'horizontal' expansion in county government was a 'vertical' growth in its influence -the county bench sought increasingly to intervene in the running of local communities, especially in the areas of poor relief and economic regulation. This played an important part, Clark argues, in the institutionalization of parish oligarchies, while augmenting the power of the gentry, in particular those middling gentlemen drafted onto the county bench in large numbers. By 1600 one in four Kentish parishes had a resident<sup>2</sup> justice.

An analysis of the 1600-4 quarter sessions for the county shows that as in Essex, regulative offences dominated

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1. Clark, English Provincial Society, pp.142-4,311.

2. Ibid., pp.144-5.

business (68% of all indictments compared with 32% concerned with criminal charges). The largest number of these offences involved unlicensed alehouse keepers. Clark associates this offensive against the alehouse with an onslaught -mainly by the county's radical protestants- on the mores of what he terms the 'Third World' of the poor and spiritually ignorant which co-existed alongside the respectable worlds of the gentleman landowner and the substantial peasant and townsman. The increased level of unemployment, vagrancy, malnutrition and social distress in late Elizabethan Kent swelled the numbers of this underclass of 'the charmist, the church absenter and the tramp.'<sup>1</sup> This occurred at a time when the established religious order was being shorn of its magical elements; and the 'lewd customs' associated with popular recreations, and with popular sexual and other conduct were coming under increasingly<sup>2</sup> critical scrutiny.

Patrick Collinson has argued that the records of the archdeaconry of Canterbury point to 'a crusade against sin as defined by respectable Protestant opinion' in Elizabethan Kent. Reaching its climax in the 1590s, this concern with 'non-respectable society' began to fall away from the<sup>3</sup> beginning of the reign of James I.

An 'obsessive concern' of the Kentish reform movement

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1. Ibid., pp.145,152-6,180.

2. Ibid., p.155; Goring, Godly Exercises or Devil's Dance?, pp. 11-14.

3. P. Collinson, 'Cranbrook and the Fletchers: Popular and Unpopular Religion in the Kentish Weald', in his Godly People: Essays in English Protestantism and Puritanism (London, Hamble-down Press, 1983), p.407; Clark, op.cit., p.180; J.M. Potter, 'The Ecclesiastical Courts in the Diocese of Canterbury 1603-65' (London Univ. M.Phil. thesis 1973), p.54.

was the godly reformation of the Sabbath, a growing preoccupation among Elizabethan divines. If attending church and listening to sermons were the best medicines against sin, the Sunday activities of the people were bound to become a critical issue for the Puritan clergy and magistracy. A stress on the strict observance of the Sabbath necessarily involved a confrontation with traditional values since Sunday was normally the only day when ordinary people were free to enjoy themselves in dancing, gaming, or in the delights of the<sup>1</sup> alehouse.

The vehement opposition of some godly preachers to such Sunday activities was fuelled by their alleged association with proscribed sexual behaviour. Jeremy Goring has argued that pre-Civil War England saw 'a remarkable widening' in the scope of the seventh commandment prohibiting adultery, so that all activities that 'stirred up lust' (even towards one's<sup>2</sup> own spouse) came in for censure.

In a sense, concern for the sexual disorder inherent in popular revels (mixed dancing was regarded with particular horror) was part of a wider concern with familial discipline and gender roles between 1560 and 1660 which was reflected in other complaints levelled against such customs. They were held to undermine parental authority by encouraging young people to associate freely, with sin the inevitable result,

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1. Clark, op.cit., p.157; Fletcher, Reform in the Provinces, pp.266-7; Goring, Godly Exercises or the Devil's Dance?, pp.9-14.

2. Goring, op.cit., pp.11-12.

and to lead to the neglect of both work and religious duties.<sup>1</sup>

Alehouses were similarly held responsible for filial disobedience, sexual license and disruption of family life; and drunkenness -like popular music and dance- was judged inimical to personal (and therefore spiritual) discipline as well as public order. Inebriation, a Jacobean statute claimed, was 'the root and foundation of many other enormous sins, as bloodshed, stabbing, murder, swearing, fornication, adultery and the like.'<sup>2</sup>

Alehouses raised the spectre of disorder, drunkenness and immorality, but equally important in the minds of their opponents, the type of immoderate drinking encouraged in disorderly establishments exacerbated the problems of poverty. Richard Gough gives numerous cases from seventeenth-century Myddle of people of all classes who ruined themselves by excessive drinking. David Higley of Balderton for example, 'was a good husband by fitts. What he got with hard labor hee spent idely in the Alehouse.'<sup>3</sup>

There is ample evidence from Terling and elsewhere that

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1. D. Underdown, 'The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England' in A. Fletcher & J. Stevenson (eds.), Order and Disorder in Early Modern England (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), 116-36; S.D. Amussen, 'Gender, Family and the Social Order, 1560-1725', in Fletcher & Stevenson, op.cit., 196-217.

2. P. Clark, The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830 (London, Longmans, 1983), ch.7; Goring, op.cit., pp.22-3; Jac.I Cap.5, quoted in J.A. Sharpe, Crime in Seventeenth-Century England: A County Study (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), p.49.

3. Clark, op.cit., p.167; Sharpe, op.cit., p.53; D.G. Hey, An English Rural Community: Myddle Under the Tudors and Stuarts (Leicester, Leicester Univ. Press, 1974), p.227.

many alehouses tolerated tippling, drunkenness, gaming, fighting and swearing (including on Sundays and other holy days); harboured sexual miscreants and thieves; received stolen goods, and may even on occasion have served as centres of organised criminal activity.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand it was widely recognised that alehouse-keeping could function as a form of out-relief. A West Riding clerk of the peace identified five hundred unlicensed alesellers in the county in a letter to the assizes of 1638, 'most of them poor people which otherwise would fall upon the parish'. Turning a blind eye to such establishments could be seen by parish rate-payers as a valuable rein on the cost of relief.<sup>2</sup>

Other groups had good reason to see alehouses licensed. Clerks of the peace garnered fees for licensing and recognising the considerable potential for profit, some tried to effect increases. For JPs too there was self-interest to set against the public good. As the administrative powers of the county magistracy became increasingly devolved on groups of local justices in the guise of petty sessions, the alehouse license developed into perhaps the most important instrument of official patronage; though apportioning the burdens of poor relief and intervening in the appointment of parish officers could serve a similar function.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Clark, English Provincial Society, pp.98,102-3; Sharpe, op.cit., pp.52-5,112-3; Sharpe, Crime in Early Modern England, p.105; Wrightson & Levine, Poverty and Piety, pp.134-5.  
2. Sharpe, Crime in Seventeenth Century England, p.55; Fletcher, Reform in the Provinces, p.233.  
3. Fletcher, op.cit., pp.236-7; N. Landau, The Justices of the Peace 1679-1760 (London, Univ. of California Press, 1984), p.221.

(ii) A Framework for Analysis?

It is difficult to generalise about the strength of the pressures for and against alehouse regulation and other indicators of reform either at the level of the county bench<sup>1</sup> or in the case of individual communities. As we have seen, some idea of the county-wide trends in both quarter session indictments and church court presentments can be gained for Kent; but as Peter Clark admits, the geographical distribution and possible local determinants of the 'rural sabbatarianism' -which formed an important component of hostility to sexual deviancy, alehouses, popular recreations etc.- are less than<sup>2</sup> clear.

David Underdown's recent research on Wiltshire, Somerset and Dorset during the years 1603-60 aims to provide a framework for linking the socio-economic characteristics of particular rural and urban communities to patterns of cultural<sup>3</sup> conflict in the period. In the first place, while:

'In communities of all types demographic and economic forces were widening the gap between the few, the parish elites of wealthy yeomen and clothiers and the many, the small landholders and landless poor [...]'

these forces had somewhat different effects in woodland-<sup>4</sup> pasture and in arable districts.

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1. On the variety of county responses, see Fletcher, op.cit., pp. 242-3. On the possible determinants of regulation campaigns in Essex and Lancs., see Wrightson, 'Two Concepts of Order', passim.

2. Clark, English Provincial Society, p.176.

3. Underdown, Revel, Riot and Rebellion, especially ch.2-4.

4. Ibid., pp.25-6.

Underdown argues that 'higher levels of poverty and disorder' were characteristic of pastoral and textile than of arable areas; deriving from their attraction for inmates, squatters and other poor cottagers, and 'masterless men', among them vagrants. These were the 'savages' of whom John Norden wrote.<sup>1</sup> Some have raised a note of caution about the apparently watertight distinction between pastoral areas of high immigration, poverty and crime, and arable areas where the opposite pertained,<sup>2</sup> but the general applicability of this model derived from the work of Alan Everitt -particularly where pastoralism coincided with areas of clothing manufacture- seems well established.<sup>3</sup>

For Underdown, the higher incidence of poverty and disorder in pastoral and clothing districts worked as a catalyst in creating cultural as well as economic divisions. The problems of poverty became 'the overwhelming public preoccupation of the "substantial men" of these threatened parishes'; the poor were viewed as 'a threat to property and order as well as a heavy burden on the poor rates.'<sup>4</sup>

For the parish elites of woodland pasture and clothing areas, Underdown argues, Puritanism provided both a metaphor for their dissociation from the 'ignorant and profane multitude' and a programme for the more disciplined ordering

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1. Ibid., p.34.

2. J.A. Sharpe (op.cit., pp.70-2) accepts the poverty-crime correlation but argues that the Essex evidence does not suggest that squatter settlements were confined to forest communities.

3. Everitt, 'Farm Labourers', esp. pp.462-4; idem., 'Non-Conformity in Country Parishes', passim.

4. Underdown, op.cit., pp.33-4.

of their lives and those of their neighbours. In short, Puritanism was 'a response to social instability.' After 1600, a new community of the elect began to supplant a disintegrating community of the parish in many pastoral-woodland parishes; and in doing so it gave further impetus to that disintegration.<sup>1</sup>

It was in such communities -particularly districts of cloth-working- that campaigns against popular festivities (such as church ales and calendar rites, popular sports and games) were most commonly undertaken, and the greater unity of parish elites there ensured that greater success was achieved and less effective resistance met with than in other areas. Success in eliminating the disorderly recreations still popular among younger people and the poor was never total of course, but 'because of the breadth of Puritanism's appeal, they were more successful than their less numerous, more isolated counterparts in more traditional areas.'<sup>2</sup>

Underdown recognises the dangers of determinism in his model. He notes that some of the pastoral regions within Somerset, Wiltshire and Dorset were as culturally conservative as the arable Downlands. Such regions:

'...had less nucleated residential patterns than chalk country villages, but resembled them in being less socially polarized, less affected by the pressures of a market economy or by the influx of landless poor, than in the clothing parishes and towns.'<sup>3</sup>

If woodland-pasture villages which had escaped social

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1. Ibid., pp. 40-2,80. See W. Hunt, The Puritan Moment: The Coming of Revolution in an English County (London, Harvard Univ. Press, 1983), p.141, for a similar argument.

2. Underdown, op.cit., pp.82,104.

3. Ibid., pp.103-4.

polarization and immigration were less likely to generate Puritan-inspired oligarchies bent on reform than those which had not, it might be expected that arable or mixed-farming districts which experienced (for whatever reason) a high level of immigration and/or poverty would deviate from Underdown's 'arable' ideal-type -increasingly polarized, but 'relatively stable and reciprocally paternalistic and deferential.'<sup>1</sup>

His characterization of the arable village assumes strong manorial control and communal open-field agriculture, which functioned to slow down the 'erosion of parochial identity that was occurring in the clothing districts.'<sup>2</sup> Where such elements were absent a different pattern could emerge. If weak manorial control coincided with ample space for cottage-building and plentiful employment opportunities, immigration could create a large body of poor cottagers and squatters. Such developments were most common in pastoral districts, but in arable areas there were a minority of 'open' villages of this type.<sup>3</sup>

In many mixed-farming regions, those who lost their farms together with the younger sons of peasant farmers were often forced to leave their villages to look elsewhere for work, victims of shortage of land and of by-employment coupled with manorial authorities hostile to a swelling population of landless.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp.40-1.

2. Ibid., pp.84ff. See also Thirsk, 'The Farming Regions of England', p.65.

3. Clay, Economic Expansion and Social Change, i. 98.

4. See ch.3, pp.142-3.

'Open' villages were one exception to this pattern. Terling seems to have been an example of another: a mixed-farming village where increased employment opportunities seem to have kept pace with indigenous population growth, aided by the 'precocious' adoption of convertible husbandry which the county's early enclosure permitted.<sup>1</sup> This fact, together with its weak manorial organization might have rendered Terling's 'old bonds of paternalism [and] deference...expressed in familiar religious and communal rituals' more vulnerable to fragmentation than those of the west country parishes; and moreover, left the formal sanctions of civil and church courts as the only available vehicle for the effective maintenance of personal and public order as defined by the parish elite.<sup>2</sup>

(iii) Poverty and Poor Relief in Pluckley

I

Pluckley was both a woodland-pasture and a clothing parish. If we combine the evidence considered in chapters two and three, however, a somewhat different picture of the village's demographic and socio-economic development emerges than these labels might suggest. Although Pluckley shared the manorial weakness and individualistic agriculture rapidly gaining ground in the pastoral districts of the west country<sup>3</sup> the dearth of commons, wastes and forests in the village suitable for encroachment meant that immigration remained low,

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1. Wrightson & Levine, Poverty and Piety, pp. 20,36.

2. Ibid., p.177; Underdown, Revel, Riot and Rebellion, p.40.

3. Underdown, op.cit., pp.19-20.

illegal cottaging widely tolerated and squatting apparently non-existent. Nevertheless, indigenous population growth had to be accomodated and despite the clearance of many acres of woodland, holdings were sub-divided into smaller parcels -their viability aided in the first instance by a flourishing broadcloth industry. By means of this process, small husbandmen and craftsmen proliferated while numbers of yeomen and substantial husbandmen declined. This new pattern was clearly established in the village by the 1620s.<sup>1</sup>

The fragmentation of landholding units (including the re-direction of land resources away from cottage plots) also functioned to increase the proportion of Pluckley's population vulnerable to the vagaries of food prices and critically dependent on the continuing prosperity of Kent's textile industry. The combination of restricted waste and common land in the village and from the 1630s the contraction of industrial employment there seems to have forced at least ten per cent of Pluckley's population to leave the parish by the 1660s.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the effects of these two related processes of out-migration and expansion in the numbers of Pluckley's smaller farmers, those considered too poor to contribute to the Hearth Tax of 1664 represented with twenty-nine households a greater proportion of village inhabitants than the husbandmen and craftsmen (twenty-four households). Moreover, when the labourers, poor craftsmen and poor widows are counted

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1. See ch.3, pp.134-47.

2. Loc.cit.

together, their numbers very nearly equal the combined strength of the entire middle range of Pluckley's farming population (forty-six compared with forty-seven households).<sup>1</sup> That these were significantly lower than average levels of poverty for mid-Kent in general and for the Weald in particular should not hide the fact that numbers of Category IV households in the village may have increased by about 65%<sup>2</sup> between 1524 and 1664.

In the model of cultural stratification proposed by David Underdown, the threat to property, order, and the parish coffers posed by increasing poverty levels plays a critical role in hardening the attitudes of parish elites against hitherto tolerated popular attitudes and practices. Such evidence as there is for Kent would appear to fit such a framework: concern in the county with the disorders of the 'Third World' reached a peak in the 1590s, when a run of disastrous harvests (1594-6) combined with industrial depression, and plague and other sicknesses to create a 'landslide of poverty' which existing arrangements for poor relief were quite unable to stem.<sup>3</sup>

What of Pluckley? The apparent paucity of land for squatting or illegal cottaging in the village may have kept poverty levels there low in the 1590s and in the years of slump after 1617 compared with other wealden and scarpland parishes. In both periods the roads were swollen with thousands of subsistence migrants including many attracted

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1. See Table 26, p.194.

2. See Ch.3, p.195.

3. Clark, English Provincial Society, pp.235-41.

into the county from London or other worse-affected parts of the country. In communities where such itinerants settled in large numbers the problems of poverty were particularly acute. In Ashford, for example (only six miles from Pluckley), the poor of the town were driven by cold and the need for fuel during the 1590s to tear down their neighbours' hedges and fences in the search for wood.<sup>1</sup>

Although we have no record of the contours of poverty in Pluckley in the 1590s, it is probable that the combined force of unemployment, high food prices and sickness pushed not only the impotent poor in the village, but also what Carl Bridenbaugh has termed 'the invisible poor' near to the brink of subsistence. This latter grouping included those poor villagers who in times of high unemployment and expensive grain (like the 1590s) might well be forced into destitution. A crisis as severe as this, however, could result in marginally better-off groups also being drawn into the net of real poverty; not only labourers, but respectable craftsmen such as masons, glaziers and bakers. Since both these elements of the invisible poor usually had families to support (unlike the impotent poor),

'...the economic fall of a marginally poor householder brought as many as four times the number of villagers onto the poverty line as did the plight of an impotent householder.'(2)

The only hint we have of the difficulties faced by Pluckley villagers in these years comes in the words of a

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1. Ibid., pp.235-6,317-20.

2.C. Bridenbaugh, Vexed and Troubled Englishmen 1590-1642 (New York, Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), p.375; Clark, op.cit., pp. 239-40.

petition presented to the county justices at Ashford in July 1595 by one John Child<sup>1</sup>. Child complained that the father of a bastard child born to his daughter Martha had refused to pay the sum of £50 promised him to keep the child and its mother. Child 'beinge a verie poore man' had 'bin at greate charges with the kepinge of them' since Michaelmas 1594 'by reason of the dearth that had byn to his greate hinderance & undoing.' If the money was not forthcoming, he concluded, 'bothe my selfe, my wife & children & the poore wench are greatly impoverished or utterly undon.' The following January, the Justices ordered the child's father -Pluckley yeoman Richard Younge- to pay for its upbringing. Whether that implied handing over the £50 requested earlier is not clear.<sup>2</sup>

For the period after 1617 we are on somewhat firmer ground as far as Pluckley is concerned. A combination of harvest glut (1618-20) and then dearth (1622, 1624 & 1630) put many small Kentish farmers in extreme difficulties, and intermittent high corn prices spelt trouble for landless or semi-landless cottagers, labourers and craftsmen and their families. The situation was made worse by a 'ruinous medley of economic blows' which hit the Kentish textile industry at this time.<sup>3</sup>

Reference has already been made to one consequence of this interlocking crisis -the surge in subsistence migration. Unemployment, malnutrition and disease were its grim

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1. K.A.O. QM/SB/68.

2. K.A.O. QM/SM/6/unfol. Young's Group III inventory of 1616 has survived: K.A.O. PRC 10/42/5.

3. Clark, op.cit., pp. 317 (& n.1), 318-9; see also Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, p.121.

accompaniment and although there is no evidence that ordinary men and women starved to death in Kent in the 1620s, the consequences of harvest failure were reflected in increased mortality levels and, for brief periods, reduced numbers of registered births.<sup>1</sup> Pluckley's inhabitants may have been spared large numbers of migrants, but in a village where almost 75% of its landholders worked less than thirty acres in the 1620s, and clothworking provided by-employment for well over half its families, it is not surprising to find (as in other Kentish parishes) that the cost of poor relief rose considerably over the course of the decade.<sup>2</sup>

In 1623 £19 was disbursed on poor relief in Pluckley, already an increase of almost three-fold in real terms since the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup> In 1624, a year of 'meagre corn crop' and 'soaring prices' the sum of £18 spent on poor relief was somewhat lower than the previous year, but seventeen individuals were given assistance, compared with ten in 1623.<sup>4</sup>

In the following two years payments leapt to £29 and £36 respectively, before falling to lower levels for the rest of the decade. In 1630 -a year which brought the worst harvest since the 1590s and with it renewed industrial crisis- payments climbed again, this time to £39.<sup>5</sup> Although some of this increased level of poor relief in the 1620s should be put

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1. Clark, English Provincial Society, pp.320-1.

2. Ch.3, p.135; ch.2, p.113; Clark, op.cit., p.321; K.A.O. P289/5/1.

3. K.A.O. P289/5/1. The increase 'in real terms' was calculated by deflating the later sum in the manner used for inventories (see Appendix II).

4. Clark, op.cit., p.318; K.A.O. U275/Q2.

5. K.A.O. P289/5/1.

down to continuing demographic growth, the correlation between harvest and industrial crises and years of high disbursement points to the link between deepening poverty in the village and higher relief payments. After 1630 the same pressures that forced some of Pluckley's poorer inhabitants to leave the village pushed those who remained into increasing dependence on the parish: Between the decades 1623-32 and 1654-63, annual payments to the poor increased on average by over 80%, which represents a rise of nearly 60% in real terms.<sup>1</sup>

Payments peaked during the years of crisis in the late 1640s, when a five-year run of poor harvests (including two of 'dearth' proportions) combined with a prolonged trade depression to produce 'great misery in both the industrial and agricultural sectors of the population.'<sup>2</sup> In 1649, Pluckley overseers disbursed over £60 for the first time in the seventeenth century, giving assistance to twenty men, women and children in the village. In addition to paying the usual weekly or monthly doles, overseers took the exceptional step of handing out supplies of wheat, oats and malt to over half of Pluckley's adult paupers.<sup>3</sup>

## II

It remains to place those in receipt of poor relief within the context of the economy of the poor more generally. First of all, though, something should be said about the institutional development of the Tudor poor law, the most

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1. K.A.O. P289/5/1; U275/Q2. The increase 'in real terms' was calculated as explained in Appendix II.

2. Beier, 'Poor Relief in Warwickshire', pp.88-92.

3. K.A.O. P289/5/1.

important elements of which were on the statute book by 1597-8. Earlier legislation (of 1563 and 1572) had included the first positive steps towards a compulsory rate for the relief of the poor. Justices were empowered to bind over those who refused to contribute to the relief of their parishes in 1563; and nine years later the county bench was given the power to determine the size of contributions based on surveys drawn up by the parish churchwardens, constables and the newly-created 'overseers of the poor'<sup>1</sup>.

In the midst of the acute problems of the 1590s crisis, the Acts of 1597-8 were passed, and reissued with minor alterations in 1601. In the realm of poor relief the Acts 'contained little in the way of innovation and little that was really sweeping or bold.'<sup>2</sup> In recognising the problems involved in taxation, however, the Acts did provide for the main responsibility in levying poor rates to be transferred from the JPs to the overseers, whose duties were at the same time clarified and brought under closer judicial scrutiny.<sup>3</sup>

A campaign against vagrants and beggars was in Paul Slack's words 'the quid pro quo in return for public taxation and outdoor relief'<sup>4</sup>. As with those clauses dealing with out-relief, the 1597-1601 Acts gave greater powers to parish officers. They were ordered summarily to whip vagrants coming within their jurisdiction, and in an effort to suppress the physical mobility characteristic of the period, offenders were

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1. Slack, 'Poverty and Social Regulation', p. 222; Pound, Poverty and Vagrancy, pp. 42-6.

2. Pound, op.cit., p. 52.

3. Ibid., pp. 52-3; Slack, op.cit., p. 222.

4. Slack, op.cit., p. 222.

to be returned to their places of origin- if necessary<sup>1</sup>  
with further whippings to help the recalcitrant along the way.

A writer of the 1680s neatly summarized the provisions of the Old Poor Law as 'work for those that will labour, punishment for those that will not, and bread for those that cannot'<sup>2</sup>. Once vagrants and strangers had been expelled, it was assumed that able-bodied poor could be set to work on stocks of materials (such as flax and hemp) funded out of the parish rates; and poor children bound as apprentices -again at parish expense. This would leave a residue of traditional 'deserving poor' to be supported through out-relief: principally widows, the sick, the lame, and orphan children. Able-bodied poor who refused to work or vagrants who persistently went on the tramp were to be consigned to the 'house of correction', where -it<sup>3</sup> was hoped- they would learn the habits of labour.

These neat categories were, it has been noted, ill-equipped to cope with the strains of the 1590s. According to Peter Clark, 'In practice parish relief [in Kent] concentrated on assisting the impotent and as many respectable poor as possible' during these years. The new burdens such provision brought to bear on parish officers and ratepayers alike, along with the new concept of institutionalized charity it implied, delayed the implementation of a comprehensive<sup>4</sup> rating system.

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1. Ibid., pp.222,229-30.

2. R. Dunning (1686), quoted in J.O. Appleby, Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England (Princeton, Princeton Univ. Press, 1978), p.131.

3. Slack, op.cit., pp. 222-3, 230-1; Pound, Poverty and Vagrancy, pp.51-3.

4. Clark, English Provincial Society, p.241.

In some parts of the country the new legislation was not enforced at all before the 1620s or even the 1640s, and widespread (though not universal) rating only arrived in the last third of the century. In Kent, however, a majority of communities had begun to implement the poor law statutes by 1603. In Pluckley itself, some sort of compulsory assessment for the poor was being levied by 1606, for Thomas Moter was presented to the archdeaconry court at Canterbury that year for non-payment.<sup>1</sup>

It is perhaps no coincidence that it was in 1628, at the end of a decade of escalating payments to Pluckley's poor, that it was agreed:

'...by the common consent of the parishioners of Pluckley...that from this time forward there shall be a Leiger Booke, att all times kept for the accomptes of the overseers of the poore...That is to say all receiptes and payments by them had and made, or the breife of them, The which accompts being first passed and allowed by the parishioners and those allowances confirmed by the Justices shall be entered by the succeeding churchwardens and overseers in the beginning of their year.'<sup>(2)</sup>

Concern was expressed about how the money raised for poor relief should be spent:

'Concerning the disbursements of the forfeitures, the churchwardens and overseers are to be advertised That the bestowing of them must be to the use of the poore, and not to the sparing of so much in the usuall assist of the parishe for then itt spares mony in theire purses who give releife, and the poore who should have releife thereby, are never the better.'<sup>(3)</sup>

It is not clear to what extent Pluckley's ratepayers as

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1. Ibid., pp. 239, 241; Fletcher, Reform in the Provinces, pp. 184-7; Clay, Economic Expansion and Social Change, i. p.230; C.C.L. X.4.11/16.

2. K.A.O. P289/5/1.

3. Ibid.

a whole shared these sentiments, but the statement was signed by six of the village's most substantial landowners including Sir Anthony and Sir Edward Dering; along with John Copley the parson, one of the churchwardens for that year, and two of the overseers.

As early as 1568 parish overseers (or 'collectors of the poor' as they were termed then) were paying allowances to Pluckley villagers for boarding their poor neighbours.<sup>1</sup> However, it is not until the 1620s, with the survival of detailed and long-running overseers' accounts entered in the new 'Leiger Booke',<sup>2</sup> that some insight can be gained into the role of poor relief within the wider social and economic life of the village.

### III

Recent research on the overseers' accounts of seventeenth-century Norfolk and Hertfordshire<sup>3</sup> has demonstrated the close relationship between the family economy of the poor and the relief provided by the parish:

Those on poor relief were to a great extent the victims of the breakdown of the household economy -widows left alone in old age and unable to get enough help to support themselves, widows left with young children to bring up; occasionally families where the husband was alive but which were overburdened with children to bring up and continuously needed parish relief, but more often families which were victims when short-term crises (illness, dearth, trade depression) pushed the precariously balanced economy over the edge.'<sup>4</sup>

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1. K.A.O. U275/Q1, f.28b.

2. K.A.O. P289/5/1; U275/Q2.

3. Wales, 'Poverty, Poor Relief and Life-Cycle', 351-404; Newman Brown, 'The Receipt of Poor Relief and Family Situation', 405-22. Also relevant is the editor's introduction to Smith (ed.), Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle, 74-85.

4. Wales, op.cit., p.353.

In pinpointing these groups on relief (to whom must be added orphan children too young to enter service or apprenticeship -similarly victims of household breakdown), it has been suggested that there was a three-phase life-cycle of poverty in early modern England. In the first phase we find children and adolescents; in the second phase married adults aged roughly thirty to fifty with children living at home; and in the third, the aged.<sup>1</sup>

The only point in the life of the poor when respite could be had from this grim cycle was in late adolescence or early adulthood (i.e. age group 15-30) when individuals from society's lower strata were most likely to be servants or apprentices in the households of their wealthier neighbours, or not as yet burdened with costly offspring. As Wales points out, though, short-term crises could bring even those groups at a relatively economically advantageous stage of the life-cycle onto poor relief.<sup>2</sup>

Peter Clark had this last group in mind when he described how the 'marginal' poor swelled the pauper populations of a number of Kentish towns and villages during the period 1596-8.<sup>3</sup> Turning to Pluckley, the evidence we have for the years 1623-4, 1626-30 and 1641-1663 does not suggest that the marginal poor or indeed Clark's 'respectable poor' (approximately corresponding to 'phase two' families) drew support from the parish in any large numbers during these

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1. Smith, op.cit., pp. 75-7.

2. Ibid., p.77.

3. Clark, English Provincial Society, pp.239-40. See above, p.224.

years. The one exception to this is the dearth year 1624, when eight men received some sort of financial help from the parish, the highest total recorded in the surviving accounts. How many of these men did not fall within the 'impotent poor' category, however, is unclear.<sup>1</sup>

During the years 1641-63 -the longest period of continuously surviving accounts-<sup>2</sup> there were never more than five men on relief in any one year; and (with one exception) they were consistently outnumbered by widows and other women, many of them presumably aged.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, over this period men comprised on average only 16.5% of those receiving financial assistance from the parish each year in the form of a regular dole, free rent, fuel, clothes, food, or medical or other services (including burial at the parish expense).

The comparable figures for women (most of whom were widows) and children (most of whom would have been orphans or the young children of widows) confirm Wales's comment that 'the aged, the widowed and the orphaned' typically<sup>4</sup> predominated among those in regular receipt of poor relief. Together they accounted for 83.5% of those supported by the parish each year during this period.

Reworking these figures suggests that there was a much higher turnover in recipients of relief among adult males than among adult women and children. Although men formed on

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1. K.A.O. U275/Q2.

2. The following analysis is based on the churchwardens' account book for Pluckley, 1628-1664: K.A.O. P289/5/1 (unfol.).

3. The exception was in 1663 when there were 4 men on relief and 3 widows or other women.

4. Wales, 'Poverty, Poor Relief and Life-Cycle', p.358.

average less than a fifth of those on relief each year, they accounted for about a third (33%) of the total number of individuals on the parish during the period 1641-63. In fact during these years only about 30% of adult male recipients of relief received parochial assistance for two or more years, and less than one in ten for five years or above. The corresponding figures for adult women were 64.7% and 35.3%: a considerable difference.

The imbalance between the sexes among adult paupers during the period 1641-63 (when women comprised on average 75% of their number each year) matches the situation found at Cawston, Norfolk in 1607 (63.3% women) and Aldenham, Hertfordshire between 1631 and 1681 where women formed, on average, 83% of adults on relief each year.<sup>1</sup>

It is probable that many of the widows and other women on relief in Pluckley went onto the parish in their fifties or sixties, and continued to draw support until their deaths between about sixty and seventy-five. Poor relief for the elderly should not, however, be seen as a kind of pre-industrial old age pension, payable on 'retirement': 'Aging in seventeenth-century society was a process of gradual withdrawal from economic productivity and self-support.' Poor relief slowly took over as the earning capacity of the elderly declined.<sup>2</sup> On this assumption it would appear that there were few elderly male paupers in Pluckley in the mid-seventeenth century: the average male villager paid relief between 1641

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1. Ibid., p.379; Newman Brown, 'The Receipt of Poor Relief and Family Situation', p.412.  
2. Wales, op.cit., pp. 366-7.

and 1663 spent only 1.5 years on the parish. This would account for an order written in the vestry book in March 1678/9. 'Old Robert Boughton' was to be given a 'decent' burial, 'having been a charge for a long time past'. In fact Boughton had been receiving relief only since 1670.<sup>1</sup>

Old age was not of course the only factor which propelled women onto poor relief. Nearly a quarter (23.5%) of Pluckley widows paid relief during the period 1641-63 were left with one or more young children to bring up; and one widower was placed in the same predicament. In six of these nine cases it was not the loss of a spouse in itself that forced the family onto relief.

For example, goodman Adgore and his wife both drew support from the parish in 1649, that year of high spending on the poor. By 1659 goodwife Adgore had been widowed and was paid (except in 1660) up to the end of our period. Widow Adgore's daughter makes a fleeting appearance in the overseers' accounts in 1662; the last entry recording a payment to carpenter Samson Lorryman for her coffin.

Widower Robert Wood was in a rather different position. The first payment to his family came in 1643 with the death of his wife (the parish paid for her coffin); and the same year the Henekars were given six shillings for looking after Wood's son. Four years later the boy had a pair of shoes made by cobbler Niell Sanders, but by the end of 1648 he was an orphan. The following year he was clothed and again shod at parish expense. Thereafter he disappears from the record.

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1. K.A.O. P289/8/1.

The loss of the spouse's income brought by bereavment put such families in a position of particular economic vulnerability.<sup>1</sup> There were, however, other circumstances in which one parent had to bring up a young family alone. Mary Blunden, an unmarried servant was twice brought before Canterbury Archdeaconry Court for bastardy during the years 1629-33. Still single, she had begun to draw parish relief by 1641 and continued to do so for the next fifteen years. In the last year in which payments to her were recorded (1658), the overseers bought cloth for a son of hers.<sup>2</sup>

Important as these and other relief payments were to the economy of the poor, they are only part of the story. Many of the poor, Tim Wales has found, were partial wage-earners, and many of them depended on a wide range of sources of income to support themselves. Besides begging and parish relief, these included day labour and casual jobs, rights in common land and the support of kin.<sup>3</sup> In a parish like Pluckley, cloth-working must have played a critical role in this respect, since carding and spinning could continue to be practiced well into old age. Pluckley's parson recorded one example of this in the parish register:

'Joane Dan: a poore olde maide that lyved partlye by the parish also was buried the xxxth daye of December 1605, but she wrought mutch for her lyving as longe as she was able: spininge and cardinge wouls diligently for her poor lyvinge.'<sup>4</sup>

The potential of cloth-working for offsetting the costs

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1. Smith, 'Introduction' to idem. (ed.), Land, Kinship and Life Cycle, p.77.
  2. C.C.L. X.6.8/50,184.
  3. Wales, 'Poverty, Poor Relief and Life-Cycle', p.352.
  4. K.A.O. P289/1/16.

of parish relief was evidently recognised by village overseers because in 1644, and on a regular basis between 1650 and 1663, they bought stockcards, stockcard stools, and on one occasion a spinning wheel for use by Pluckley's poor.<sup>1</sup> It is not clear to what extent the poor willingly co-operated in such schemes. How for instance did one Widow Marden react in 1666 when stockcards were ordered for her 'to encourage her in works'? Certainly the overseers did have sanctions available if they did not consider the poor to be working hard enough. In June 1671 the parish vestry ordered the overseers 'to take notice of what worke the Widow Briggs [and] her children doe, and to keep them to worke.' If this failed, complaint was to be made to local JPs 'that they may be punished.'<sup>2</sup>

In addition to earnings in industrial, agricultural and other employment, a number of those on poor relief in the village received payments from the overseers for providing a variety of 'services' for their fellow paupers. These included the provision of houseroom and food; looking after others in their own homes (or that of a third party) and carrying wood, food, etc.; buying, making or repairing clothes and shoes for the poor; and carrying the coffin or otherwise helping at pauper burials.

Almost one in five (18%) of those adults drawing relief over the period 1641-63 received payments of this kind on top of their conventional relief. An additional ten adults (15%) were paid in this way less than five years before or after

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1. K.A.O. P289/5/1.

2. K.A.O. P289/8/1.

other parochial assistance; the two systems often alternating a number of times. It is probable that on such occasions sums paid for services were intended to contribute to the subsistence of the service-provider in much the same way as dole payments did.

A much wider group of villagers were involved in the provision of services for the poor than the paupers themselves. Indeed, during the period 1641-63, fifty-two other individuals were given payments by the overseers, mostly for boarding widows and poor or orphaned children. On rare occasions this might mean the overseer himself, or perhaps a churchwarden, taking in a pauper. Between 1643 and 1648, an orphan girl Elizabeth Butcher was boarded by (among others) two overseers (George Jarvis, 1643; Robert Knock, 1648) and one churchwarden (James Poss, 1646). Similarly, overseer William Watkins was paid in 1662 for looking after Widow Oxly when she was sick.

Some indication of the broader characteristics of these fifty-two may be gained by correlating -where possible- those providing services for the poor with those appearing in the acreage assessments used in chapter three. The results of this exercise suggest that the poorest Pluckley ratepayers (those working less than five acres) rarely received such payments except following help at pauper burials. Assistance of other kinds devolved mainly upon small and middling landholders (5-29 acres), who between them accounted for over two thirds (69%) of those households boarding, looking after, or fetching

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1. K.A.O. P289/5/1; U275/Q2. See Table 22, p.136.

for Pluckley's pauper population.

There was, however, an important difference in the character of provision between those villagers who drew relief themselves and Pluckley inhabitants more generally. The vast majority (90%) of the latter were involved with looking after paupers for only one or two years; only two individuals provided services in four or more different years. Among the paupers in contrast, taking in or otherwise helping the poor for four to seven years was not uncommon, involving as it did nearly a third (32%) of the whole group.

The extent to which Pluckley's population as a whole took part in the care of the poor should not be exaggerated though. Even when those renting accommodation to paupers and those supplying their everyday necessities (food, clothes, fuel, etc.) are counted with those boarding or otherwise 'servicing' the poor, it would appear that only 36% of Pluckley ratepayers were involved in such provision over the period 1641-52.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the system of parochial poor relief supported a whole network of social and economic relationships which remain largely unexplored. An effective illustration of this can be seen in the payments made in connection with the support of the Suckling household during a thirteen month period beginning in April 1643.<sup>2</sup> John Suckling was paid a weekly dole of between 1s and 1s-3.5d until his death in August 1643. His widow received a similar dole (1s to 1s-3d)

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1. K.A.O.P289/5/1; U275/Q2.

2. K.A.O. P289/5/1.

from September that year until the following May, when the overseers presented their account. In addition, the following payments were made:

	£	s	d
- To John Suckling 4lb. candles	0	1	8
- To Goodwife Kingsnoth for 3 weeks for Goody Suckling	0	6	0
- To Goodwife Butcher for helping Goodwife Suckling 6 weeks	0	8	0
- To Goodwife Suckling 2lb. candles	0	0	9
- To Goody Suckling for 'bullocke' and 'hedges' [?]	0	1	0
- To Elizabeth Pout for helping John Suckling	0	2	0
- To Goodman Hart for a bed and a coffin for the Suckling child	0	1	0
- To him more for malt for John Suckling	0	4	10
- To John Nepacker for meat for the Sucklings	1	1	3
- To Goodwife Butcher for helping at Sucklings a week before he died	0	8	0
- To Goodwife Anstew for a 'gem' for John Suckling just before he died [?]	0	0	10
- To Goodman Lorryman for a coffin for Suckling	0	5	6
- To Goodwife King for a sheet to bury him in	0	2	0
- To Robert Hunt for burying Suckling and for his bearers	0	2	6
- To Richard Davi for helping at Suckling's burial	0	1	0
TOTAL	3	6	4

(iv) Crime and the Enforcement of Order

I

In the spring of 1632, Mary Blunden, an unmarried servant, was working in the household of Samuel Greenstreete a prosperous Pluckley yeoman. Like a number of those listed above, she was being paid for helping a fellow parishioner,

though the bill for the 'helping of Goodwife Greenstreete who was then sicke' was presumably footed by her husband and not by Pluckley ratepayers.<sup>1</sup>

That December Blunden was delivered of a son fathered by Thomas Wills, another of Greenstreete's servants. By the following April, the child had come to the attention both of local justices and of the archdeaconry court at Canterbury. As we have seen, Blunden had been presented to the church court once before for bastardy (in 1629), and as on that earlier occasion, she was excommunicated. She did not drift back into favour with the church either, at least not quickly: Between 1633 and 1637 she was presented on three further occasions as an obstinate excommunicate.<sup>2</sup>

Did this string of appearances before justice and church court judge alike form part of a self-conscious offensive by a ruling group of villagers against some of the attitudes and actions of Pluckley's 'Third World'? To answer this, other questions need to be put: Was there a self-conscious caucus of reformers in the village or indeed a ruling group at all? And does the term 'Third World' as used by Peter Clark adequately describe Pluckley's poor, or its lawbreakers, or both?

Reference has already been made to the main problem that faces any historian of early modern crime seeking answers to these kinds of questions: What was the relationship between the recorded incidence of crime and what was actually going on? An increased sensitivity to the 'dark number' of crimes

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1. Bod.L. Ms. Films Dep. 913, f.45; K.A.O. P289/5/1.

2. Bod.L. Ms. Films Dep. 913, f.45; C.C.L. X.6.8/50,184,233; Z.3.16/unfol.; L.P.L. VG4/15/27.

neither reported nor proceeded against has brought with it a recognition of the 'shadowy' 'fragile', or even 'futile' character of data gleaned solely from assize or quarter session indictments -the raw materials of a number of early quantitative studies.<sup>1</sup>

The community study possesses a number of advantages in this respect. Taking the parish and not a larger area as the unit of analysis makes it feasible to combine material from a wider range of court archives than the familiar records of assize and quarter sessions. The 'embarrassment of documentary riches' which results from such a synthesis can provide detailed profiles of offenders, their victims and the local officers of law enforcement. Furthermore, the complex record linkage that only the intensive community study affords means that all three groups can be placed in their social context, allowing the historian to 'make more informed guesses about the social interactions which preceded prosecution.'<sup>2</sup>

I

Keith Wrightson has written persuasively of the existence of 'two concepts of order' in early modern England. One was embodied in statutes codifying existing social and economic practice and in enactments aimed at curbing the perceived excesses of 'common country disorders'. The other

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1. Sharpe, 'Enforcing the Law in the Seventeenth-Century English Village', p.118; Herrup, 'New Shoes and Mutton Pies', p.811; Beattie, Crime and the Courts in England, p.262; Sharpe, Crime in Early Modern England, ch.3.

2. J.A. Sharpe, 'Crime and Delinquency in an Essex Parish 1600-1640', in Cockburn (ed.), Crime in England, p.92; idem., Crime in Seventeenth-Century England, pp.212-3.

was a more flexible code tailored to suit local needs: 'less a positive aspiration towards a natural condition of disciplined social harmony than a negative absence of disruptive conflict locally.'<sup>1</sup>

The task of bridging the gulf between the ideals of national legislators and the more complicated local reality devolved ultimately not upon the shoulders of JPs or the high constables, but upon often reluctant village officials. The petty constables, hundredal jurymen, churchwardens and overseers that made up this group usually held office for a year; chosen by a vote of village householders, by the court leet or vestry, or by simple rotation around the parish.<sup>2</sup>

It is not surprising that such village officials commonly shared the values of the community from which they were temporarily elevated; a code which demanded neighbourly conduct and respect for custom. This might take the form of turning a blind eye to local lawbreakers 'for neighbourhood sake' (as one Wiltshire man justified his reluctance to name a thief), or seeking their informal admonition in an effort to avoid the formal sanctions of court action.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Wrightson, 'Two Concepts of Order', pp. 23-4.  
2. Ibid., pp.26-7; J.R. Kent, The English Constable 1580-1642: A Social and Administrative Study (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986); W.E. Tate, The Parish Chest: The Records of Parochial Administration in England, 3rd edn. (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1960). The hundredal jurymen were in fact chosen by the under-sheriff before each sessions meeting.  
3. Underdown, Revel, Riot and Rebellion, pp.15-6; Sharpe, 'Enforcing the Law in the Seventeenth-Century English Village', p.107; Wrightson, 'Two Concepts of Order', p.25; Ingram, 'Communities and the Courts', p.128; Sharpe, Crime in Early Modern England, p.78.

Martin Ingram has argued that this system of values subjected potential prosecutors and other agents to pressures to exercise mercy. This was partly a matter of convenience since proceeding to trial would cost the complainant time, trouble and money. A similar mixture of motives lay behind attempts at arbitration by friends, respectable members of the community or local clergymen or even Justices of the Peace.<sup>1</sup>

In January 1608 for example, Richard Dering and John Picard, Pluckley's parson wrote to the Commissary General of Canterbury diocese on behalf of village glazier John Mersface who had been presented to the archdeacon's court for failing to seek absolution for a sentence of excommunication passed three years earlier. In their letter can be seen the kind of intervening considerations that must have kept many disputes and differences out of court altogether:

'May it please you to understand that the borer hereof John Mersface being ofen moving by us to reconcile himself (as christian duty binding him) to the church is now thereof most willing, and hartily sory for the delaing of time so longe, we therefore... do intreat you to restore him again from his excom'nication: he is in truth a very poor man greatly charg[i]ng with a lame, impotent, and sensles child and in part releving by our contributing. Thus we leave you to the lordes good keping.'(2)

It is in the nature of such mediation that it leaves few written documents. This is even more the case regarding various informal sanctions at the disposal of sections of the community anxious to maintain social discipline. Employers

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1. Ingram, op.cit., p.128; Sharpe, 'Enforcing the Law in the Seventeenth-Century English Village', pp.112-3; Fletcher, Reform in the Provinces, pp. 62-3,66-8.

2. C.C.L. X.4.8/76-7; repr. in Rev. F. Haslewood (ed.), 'Visitation Articles', A.C., XXII (1897), p.103.

had considerable powers of control and correction over workers living-in and apprenticed, including the power of dismissal. The great landowner too was in a strong position to exercise informal control over the behaviour of his tenants, and by extension over the conduct of others living in his immediate vicinity.<sup>1</sup> There is little direct evidence of either phenomenon in Pluckley. There is a case though of an employer agreeing with the parish overseers to dock the wages of a man who worked for him in order to recover money owed to the parish.<sup>2</sup>

Like the employer and the landlord, the constable had considerable powers of summary punishment, but its arena was a more public one -the village stocks and whipping post. The constable might also sanction (or even take part in) another form of public action, regarded by its participants as a supplement to the legal system: the charivari. This is not the place to describe the details of this deeply rooted form of communal behaviour, but it can be noted that such deviants from accepted social and sexual norms as witches, arsonists, scolds, cuckholds, whores, and sodomites could be the targets of one of a variety of mocking demonstrations, often characterised by 'hostile derision'.<sup>3</sup>

A note of caution needs to be struck, however, with regard to Wrightson's 'two concepts of order'. In one sense, there was a conflict between the priorities of villagers and

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1. Sharpe, op.cit., pp.112-3; Fletcher, op.cit., pp.66-9.

2. K.A.O. P289/8/1.

3. Kent, The English Constable, pp.273-5; M. Ingram, 'Ridings, Rough Music and the "Reform of Popular Culture" in Early Modern England', P.&P., CV (1984), 79-113; Underdown, 'The Taming of the Scold', passim.

magistracy -the high incidence of assaults on constables and other local officials in seventeenth-century Essex bears grim testimony to this.<sup>1</sup> Yet, as Anthony Fletcher has recently pointed out:

'...once the law had been brought into play, the outlook of JPs and villagers had much in common: both, in the majority of cases, put preservation of peace above the strict application of the law. This was not simply a matter of pragmatism: it was a matter of conviction about how order could and should be maintained; it was the accepted price of a specific approach to punishment.'<sup>(2)</sup>

The powers of summary jurisdiction and binding over available to justices working out of sessions were a central element of this flexibility. By issuing a recognisance to keep the peace or to be of good behaviour, the justice could effectively suppress any form of behaviour regarded as antisocial. The device was recognised by the justices, and, when there a number of parties, by the plaintiff, as a punishment in itself, forcing the defendent to pay a fee and undertake a troublesome journey to the sessions. Once there, few offenders received any more serious judicial censure than a reprimand. Alternatively, a recognisance could be terminated at the discretion of the justice before the court was in session.<sup>3</sup>

For complaints that resulted in formal court proceedings, substantial areas of discretion remained. In civil and

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1. Between 1620 and 1680, the victims of 14% of all assaults tried before the Essex quarter sessions were local government officials (Sharpe, Crime in Seventeenth-Century England, p.122).

2. Fletcher, Reform in the Provinces, pp.82-3.

3. Unpublished work by T.C. Curtis, cited by Fletcher, op.cit., p.81; Landau, The Justices of the Peace, p.107; Beattie, Crime and the Courts in England, pp.268-9.

ecclesiastical suits and to some extent in misdemeanour cases, formal arbitration mechanisms 'were of great importance in limiting bitterness and conflict and helping to restrain those who were too quick to resort to litigation.'<sup>1</sup> In the treatment of property cases which dominated criminal business at both assizes and quarter sessions,<sup>s</sup> there was also room for flexibility, albeit of a different kind. The approach to punishment referred to by Fletcher dictated that 'heavy consideration' be given to 'the circumstances of the crime and the condition of the accused.' The result was that less than half of those liable to execution (the penalty for most thefts) were ever sent to the gallows.<sup>2</sup>

## II

The evidence from a number of community studies points to the dominance of more prosperous villagers among holders of such local offices as the petty constable, sessions juryman, churchwarden and overseer.<sup>3</sup> It is precisely these strata of the village population, J.A. Sharpe reminds us, who 'were increasingly identifying with the "respectable" values of the state and godliness against the "rough" values of the labouring poor.'<sup>4</sup>

The occupants of offices in seventeenth-century Pluckley

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1. Ingram, 'The Communities and the Courts', p.125.
  2. C. Herrup, 'Law and Morality in Seventeenth-Century England', P.&P., CVI (1985), p.106.
  3. Sharpe, 'Crime and Delinquency', p.77; Wrightson & Levine, Poverty and Piety, p.104; Ingram, 'Religion, Communities and Moral Discipline', p.185; Kent, The English Constable, pp. 80-122; Wrightson, 'Two Concepts of Order', pp.40-4; Hoskins, The Midland Peasant, pp.205-11.
  4. Sharpe, Crime in Early Modern England, p.76.

were mostly men of middling rank. For the period 1625-54 it has been possible to identify all but five of the sixty-six village churchwardens and overseers in the acreage assessments drawn up to calculate the poor rates. The results are given below in Table 27, using the same acreage divisions as in chapter three.<sup>1</sup> Two measures of the distribution of office-holding have been used. The first (column I) lists once each individual occurring in both data sets; while the second (column II) lists each separate occupancy of the office of churchwarden or overseer in an effort to determine whether individuals from any of the acreage groups were more or less likely to hold office on more than one occasion.

LANDHOLDING (acres)	I OFFICE-HOLDERS		II OFFICES	
	No.	%	No.	%
0	1	1.6	1	0.9
Less than 5	1	1.6	1	0.9
5-9	7	11.5	12	10.3
10-29	26	42.6	50	43.1
30-59	17	27.9	33	28.4
60-99	6	9.8	13	11.2
100 +	3	4.9	6	5.2
TOTAL	61	99.9	116	100.0

Table 27. Office- and Landholding in Pluckley 1625-54.  
(Sources: KAO P289/5/1; U275/Q2)

The figures show the extent to which men from the 10-29 and 30-59 acre groupings dominated office-holding in Pluckley during these years; comprising between them 70% of those serving as churchwardens and overseers, and filling about the same percentage (71.5%) of all offices. Not too much

1. K.A.O. P289/5/1; U275/Q2. See Table 22, p.136.

significance should be read into the relative size of these two groupings: it would appear that the preponderance of men from the 10-29 compared with the 30-59 acre-group corresponds closely to the numerical strength of the former in the farming population as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

Cottagers, peasant labourers and poorer craftsmen on the other hand were seriously under-represented among the ranks of Pluckley's churchwardens and overseers. Between them those working holdings of under ten acres accounted for an average of nearly 40% of all Pluckley landholders during the period 1628-52, yet made up only 13.1% of its office-holders and as a group filled only 11.2% of those offices.<sup>2</sup>

Pluckley's churchwardens and overseers were then drawn from the upper half of the village population; with cottagers, peasant labourers, poorer craftsmen and the landless of all kinds largely excluded. Yet the men who most often filled these offices were themselves of relatively modest fortune -working holdings of under thirty acres. In this sense the position was somewhat different from that in Terling where the yeomen and wealthy tradesmen (defined as Category II in the last chapter) dominated the ranks of churchwardens and overseers during the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup>

A further contrast with Terling emerges when considering the regularity with which particular individuals held office. In Table 28 below the frequency of office-holding during the

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1. See Table 22, p.136.

2. Loc.cit.

3. Wrightson & Levine, Poverty and Piety, pp.104-5. See Kent, The English Constable, pp. 82-103,109-119 for comparable contrasts among occupiers of the office of constable.

two periods 1625-54 and 1665-1700 has been compared:

FREQUENCY (yearly terms)	1625-54		1665-1700	
	No.	%	No.	%
1	31	50.8	40	47.6
2	13	21.3	20	23.8
3	13	21.3	19	22.6
4	2	3.3	4	4.8
5 +	2	3.3	1	1.2
TOTAL	61	100.0	84	100.0

Table 28. Frequency of Office-holding in Pluckley 1625-54 & 1665-1700 (Sources: K.A.O. P289/5/1; U275/Q2; P289/8/1).

Firstly, the results confirm the pattern suggested by the second column of Table 27; namely that few men served as churchwardens or overseers more than twice over the period 1625-54 (only 27.9% in fact). It would appear in addition that the situation changed little during the course of the seventeenth century: between 1665 and 1700, 28.6% of occupants of the offices of churchwarden or overseer served for more than two years.

There were significant exceptions to this pattern. Samson Lorryman served three times as churchwarden and three times as overseer between 1639 and 1650; and William Poss may have been churchwarden and overseer three and four times respectively during the years 1639-1660<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, since such multiple occupancies (i.e. those of more than three terms) comprised less than a fifth of all occupancies in seventeenth-century Pluckley, it would be inappropriate to talk of 'oligarchic'

1. The doubt about William Posse's office-holding derives from the missing churchwardens' data for 1642-3 (K.A.O. P289/5/1).

control of village government in the way Wrightson and Levine<sup>1</sup> have described its working in early modern Terling.

Office-holding was both less elitist (though only relatively so) and more diffuse in Pluckley than in the Essex village. We should therefore be cautious, perhaps, before using phrases like 'the consolidation of yeomen oligarchies' to describe a generalized process of change in village government during this period.<sup>2</sup>

It has been noted that the expansion of county government resulted in increasing intervention in the running of local communities -particularly in the areas of poor<sup>3</sup> relief, local trade, and in the regulation of the alehouse. By the 1560s, the extra powers this had brought to parochial officers were augmented by the development of a system of annual visitation by the archdeacon or occasionally the bishop which required churchwardens to present (among other things) the names of any who had offended 'their brethren either by adultery, whoredom, usury and any other uncleanness of life.'<sup>4</sup>

The parish of Pluckley fell within the rural deanery of

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1. Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, pp.104-5.
  2. The phrase is David Underdown's (Revel, Riot and Rebellion, p.26). See J.A. Sharpe, 'The History of Crime in Late Medieval and Early Modern England: A Review of the Field', Soc.H., VII, 2 (1982), p.193, for a view largely informed by Terling's experience. Wrightson himself (English Society, p.171) is more cautious.
  3. Above, pp.213-4.
  4. B.L. Woodcock, Medieval Ecclesiastical Courts in the Diocese of Canterbury (Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 1952), p.69; A.J. Willis, Church Life in Kent 1559-1565 (Chichester, Phillimore, 1975), pp.1-7; R. Houlbrooke, Church Courts and the People during the English Reformation 1520-1570 (Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), ch.2; Potter, 'The Ecclesiastical Courts in the Diocese of Canterbury', p.96.

Charing and therefore it was at the annual visitation held each Easter in Ashford that new churchwardens were sworn in and clergy required to produce their instruments for consignation and pay their procuration fees. At or before the visitation, churchwardens had to submit a 'bill' of presentments from which charges would be framed and offenders summoned to appear before the archdeaconry or consistory courts at Canterbury, often at less than a week's notice.<sup>1</sup>

The churchwardens were responsible for the fabric and furniture of the church; for ensuring that all parishioners attended church; and that neither church nor churchyard were profaned by plays, games, or other unseemly behaviour. According to Margaret Potter's analysis of the Canterbury evidence, however, it was the churchwardens' other concerns that produced the bulk of presentments: 'Incontinency before marriage, fornication or adultery and failing to co-habit with a husband or wife were the main causes for presentment', with other socially undesirable forms of behaviour (like blasphemy, swearing, slander, drunkenness, and working on Sundays or other holy days) also bringing a few offenders each year in front of the Canterbury judges.<sup>2</sup>

It would appear that presentments by Pluckley churchwardens shared in the expansion of such correctional (or ex officio) business brought before the Canterbury courts in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The evidence for this, based on a search of the surviving ex

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1. Potter, op.cit., pp.18,94-9; Willis, op.cit., p.4.

2. Potter, op.cit., pp.96,55. See also Marchant, The Church Under the Law, pp.217-9; Houlbrooke, op.cit., p.75.

## OFFENCE

## NUMBERS OF INDIVIDUALS PRESENTED

	1560- 1569	1570- 1579	1580- 1589	1590- 1599	1600- 1609	1610- 1619	1620- 1629	1630- 1639	ROW TOTALS
Absence from church	--	3	2	--	--	7	--	5	17
Bastardy	2	2	--	5	4	4	1	6	24
Bridal Pregnancy	--	--	--	2	8	6	2	10	28
Sexual Incontinency	2	4	--	5	8	7	7	2	35
Failure to co-habit	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	1
Drunkenness	--	--	--	1	1	--	--	--	2
Swearing	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	1
Contentiousness/quarrelling	1	--	--	1	--	2	--	1	5
Working/playing on the Sabbath	--	--	--	--	1	2	--	--	3
Standing excommunicate	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	5	6
Disorderly alehouse	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	1
Assault/disorderly behaviour in the church/churchyard	--	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	4
Failure to pay church/poor rates	--	--	--	--	4	2	2	1	9
Miscellaneous	--	--	1	--	1	1	--	--	3
Unclear	--	--	1	1	1	4	--	1	8
DECADAL TOTALS	5	9	4	15	31	37	15	31	147

Table 29. Regulation of Sexual and Personal Conduct in Pluckley 1560-1639 based on Presentments to the

Archdeaconsry and Consistory Courts at Canterbury (Sources: C.C.L. X1.3-13; X2.2,4; X3.5,8,11; X5.5,9;

X6.7-9; X7.5,8; X8.5,12; X9.3-5,9,12; Z3.16; Z4.5,7,9; L.P.L. VG4/15).

officio material for the period 1550-1700 is presented in Table 29 (p.254)<sup>1</sup>.

As Potter's generalizations suggest, it was the presentment of sexual miscreants that accounted for the greater part of Pluckley business before the courts. The increased level of presentment for the offences of bastardy, bridal pregnancy and sexual incontinency (i.e. fornication and adultery) from the 1590s is evident from the table, with an apparent peak in the first two decades of the seventeenth century. This pattern fits closely the results of similar work on Terling and Kelvedon in Essex, and Keevil in Wiltshire.<sup>2</sup>

If the data from Table 29 is analysed year by year, it is particularly striking to find that sexual offences clustered during the crisis-ridden mid-1590s: ten of twelve individuals presented that decade came before the courts between 1594 and 1597. These years also saw the first couple presented (Daniel and Joan Pickard in 1597) for conceiving a child before their marriage.<sup>3</sup> A further bunching of presentments followed the industrial and harvest crisis of 1630-1, when levels of poor relief in the village climbed to record levels. Fifteen men and women were presented to the courts for sexual transgressions between 1633 and 1637,

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1. The following act books and presentments were searched for Pluckley ex officio material: C.C.L. X.1.3-5,7,12-13; X.2.2, 4; X.3.5,8; X.4.3,5,8,11; X.5.5,9; X.6.7-9; X.7.4-5,10; X.8.2, 5-6,8-16; X.9.1-16; X.10.17; Y2.16-18,20,23-4; Y.3.9.17; Y4.9-10; Z.3.10,16; Z.4.1-11; L.P.L. VG4/2-25; CM XIII/44.

2. Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, ch.5; Sharpe, 'Crime and Delinquency', 90-109; Ingram, 'Religion, Communities and Moral Discipline', 177-93.

3. C.C.L. X.4.3/111.

including two for multiple offences.<sup>1</sup>

These cases suggest that Pluckley's churchwardens were responding with hostility -or at least reduced tolerance- to the sexual incontinence of their neighbours. There had always been a large measure of public support for the correction of fornicators, adulterers, persistent quarrellers, drunkards, and defamers: those whose activities had scandalized,<sup>2</sup> threatened or alienated the greater part of the community. From the 1590s, however, the definition of unacceptable behaviour was widened by Pluckley officials, part of that 'deliberate confusion of poverty and criminality'<sup>3</sup> characteristic of the period. As has been argued, this concern was underpinned ideologically by new ideas of reform and social control slowly assimilated from the county bench and from the works of religious writers. It also had an economic dimension in that uncontrolled sexuality threatened to burden parish ratepayers with the support of unwanted children and their mothers at a time of acute demographic stress and deepening poverty in the village.

The comments made by a number of leading Pluckley landholders when the new overseers' 'Leiger Booke' was inaugurated in 1628 may reflect how some parish ratepayers responded to these economic pressures. The signatories hint

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1. L.P.L. VG4/15/25b,27b; C.C.L. X.6.8/184,203,222b,254b,293,296; Z.3.16 (unfol.).

2. Houlbrooke, Church Courts and the People, p.263; M. Ingram, 'The Reform of Popular Culture? Sex and Marriage in Early Modern England', in B. Reay (ed.), Popular Culture in Seventeenth Century England (London, Croom Helm, 1985), p.139.

3. Fletcher, Reform in the Provinces, p.116.

that earlier parish officials had neglected the support of the poor in favour of sparing 'money in their purses who give releife.'<sup>1</sup>

It is in this context that the conflict over the proper definition of sexual relations within marriage should be seen. It was reflected in the presentment of twenty-eight Pluckley men and women for prenuptial pregnancy during the period 1590-1639.<sup>2</sup> About half of the village couples (eight of fourteen) appeared in court to defend their names; a pattern<sup>3</sup> also found in Cranbrook (1560-1607) by Patrick Collinson.<sup>3</sup> Two couples alleged that their child had been born at least nine months after their wedding.<sup>4</sup> Six others did not deny prenuptial sexual relations, but argued for their legitimation by way of a marriage contract entered into by both parties in the presence of friends or relatives.<sup>5</sup>

Medieval ecclesiastical law recognised that a couple could enter into a binding union without the participation of a priest. By the early sixteenth century, however, 'the vast majority of matrimonial contracts...were viewed by one or both parties as merely the first step towards solemnization in church.'<sup>6</sup> Although sexual intercourse between contract and solemnization was discouraged or even forbidden by medieval

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1. See above, p.230-1.

2. C.C.L. X.4.3/111; X.4.5/92; X.4.8/76b,162,168b; X.5.5/126; X.5.9/69b,97; X.6.7/39b; X.6.8/203,222b,254b,296; L.P.L. VG4/15/27b.

3. P. Collinson, 'Cranbrook and the Fletchers: Popular and Unpopular Religion in the Kentish Weald', in his Godly People: Essays in English Protestantism and Puritanism (London, Hambledon Press, 1983), 399-428.

4. C.C.L. X.4.5/92; X.4.8/168b.

5. C.C.L. X.4.8/162; X.6.7/39b; X.6.8/203,222b,254b,296.

6. Houlbrooke, Church Courts and the People, pp.56-7.

legal commentators and moralists,<sup>1</sup> it was apparently tolerated by Pluckley officials up to the mid-1590s. After that point they set themselves against a practice widely regarded as sanctioned by the law.<sup>2</sup>

John and Mildred Barton were evidently somewhat mystified at being presented to the archdeaconry court in November 1636. The former testified before the court that 'he and his said wife had promised each others marriadge', having 'as they reilly thought firmly contracted themselves together.'<sup>3</sup> Other couples stressed that they had contracted themselves together in the presence of witnesses. When Richard Davye 'asked his newe wife yf shee would bee marryed to him within a fortnight then next following' in 1605, 'shee answered yea withall her herte' in front of her mother and future mother-in-law. And William Henekar, whose wife was delivered of a child within eighteen weeks of their marriage in 1633, told the court that his father-in-law had been aware of their contract eighteen months earlier.<sup>4</sup>

Henry Marsh and his wife Ann, in contrast, laid emphasis on their intention to marry promptly when they had contracted themselves together in 1633. What had come in their way, Henry Marsh alleged, was the unbending opposition of his

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1. M. Ingram, 'Spousals Litigation in the English Ecclesiastical Courts c. 1350-1640', in R.B. Outhwaite (ed.), Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage (London, Europa Publics., 1981), p.39.

2. See Ingram, 'The Reform of Popular Culture?', p.147.

3. C.C.L. X.6.8/296.

4. C.C.L. X.6.8/162,203.

mother to the match:

'He verily beleeveth in his conscience that they the said Marsh and his wife had been long since marryed together had his mother given her consent but she would not thereto consent and at this present [time] also is very angry against him.'(1)

If a matrimonial contract and sexual relations were entered into but the planned marriage cancelled for some reason, those bound could find themselves before the church court charged with fornication or bastardy. The testimony of a number of those presented reflects an assumption that the contract represented an irrevocable commitment to marry. This can be clearly seen in the testimony of Anne or Agnes Taylor presented for fornication in 1629.<sup>2</sup>

Even when her contracted husband -one William Sharpe- had set the day of his marriage to a second woman, Taylor left word 'in a lawfull and publicke manner...that she was his contracted wife & in that manner had forbidden the bannes of matrimony.'<sup>3</sup> Sharpe's marriage had gone ahead nevertheless, but according to Taylor's account, he had later left his wife and gone with his parents to the Pluckley home of Anne or Agnes Taylor's mother, 'of purpose to crave pardon of this respondent for his offence in marrying the other & to acquaint her how he was betraied therein'. It was while staying for two or three nights there, the churchwardens alleged, that Sharpe had 'carnal knowlege'<sup>4</sup> of his former 'contracted wife'.

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1. C.C.L. X.6.8/222b. See also Ingram, op.cit., p.135.

2. C.C.L. Z.4.5/175b.

3. Ibid. (my emphasis).

4. Ibid. See also C.C.L. X.4.5/17-17b; X.4.9/54.

IV

The pattern of prosecution of sexual offenders in Pluckley between 1560 and 1639 fits closely that revealed in a number of other community studies.<sup>1</sup> There is little sign in the village though of the second strand of moral reformation Wrightson and Levine found at work in Terling over the same period: a crusade against alehouses, drunkenness, dancing and other popular festivities.

Certainly such a campaign has left no trace in presentments to the church courts. Between 1560 and 1639 only six men and women were presented for drunkenness, swearing, quarrelling or other contentious behaviour; four were presented for disorderly behaviour in the parish church or churchyard; one was charged with working, and two with playing 'cailes' (a kind of skittles), on the Sabbath; and one widow was brought before the court for keeping a 'disorderly' alehouse -also on a Sunday.<sup>2</sup>

It is possible that village officials promoted a drive against popular manners solely through the channels of the quarter sessions courts. However, it is difficult to see why they should have widely tolerated those 'disorders' of popular culture which came within the purview of the ecclesiastical authorities while pursuing a vigorous policy in the secular courts.

Unfortunately the patchy survival of Kentish quarter

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1. See p.254<sup>5</sup>, n.2 for sources.

2. C.C.L. X.1.8.2b; X.3.8/73; X.4.5/16b; X.4.8/76,166-7; X.4.11/189b; X5.5/20b-21,66; X.5.9/164; X.6.7/40-40b,53b; X.9.9/81.

session material before 1650<sup>1</sup> precludes any unequivocal answer to this question, but certain observations can be made. In the first five years of the century, we have noted, 'regulative' offences dominated business at Kent quarter sessions (68% of all indictments) with prosecutions of unlicensed alesellers the single largest group. A search of the engrossed sessions rolls upon which Clark based these figures did not reveal any record of 'regulative' prosecutions involving Pluckley inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> For the later period 1627-35 the warrants recorded in Sir Edward Dering's Justice's Diary include just three references to the suppression of unlicensed alehouses in the village (in 1628, 1632 & 1633), together with a fine of five shillings imposed on a man in 1628 for being drunk.<sup>3</sup>

Such information as these warrants contain, when placed alongside the solitary presentment to the church court, confirms a number of the points made earlier about alehouses. Both of the alesellers mentioned by Dering (one was prosecuted twice) were drawn from the poorest sections of Pluckley society, living as inmates with village cottagers - John Elmer junior with his father and John Southerden with widow Alice Moone.<sup>4</sup>

Wrightson and Levine have documented the 'impressive' list of offences attributed to alehouse keepers in early

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1. E. Melling, Kentish Sources VI: Crime and Punishment (Maidstone, Kent County Council, 1969), Introduction.  
2. See above, pp.213-4. K.A.O. Q/SR 1-4, QM/SR 1. The last roll extends the record of sessions business to 1605.  
3. Bod.L. Ms. Films Dep. 913, ff.2-3,7,44.  
4. Ibid., ff.67,140.

seventeenth-century Terling.<sup>1</sup> The only Pluckley aleseller apparently persistently involved with the courts was John Elmer junior, fined twice for illegal aleselling and once for drunkenness during the years 1628-32. There was though some tradition of inebriation in his family -his father, John Elmer senior, was brought before the church courts for 'excessive drinking or drunkenness' in 1604. His habits evidently did not meet with the approval of parish officers, for in 1621 he was presented again, this time as one 'who doth sometimes offende his brethren in swearing and wickednesse of lyffe.'<sup>2</sup>

In one case, those found drinking in the alehouse were also named. On 28 April 1633, Dering recorded in his diary:

'Peter Walter maketh oath yt Michael Sanders and a boy servant of Joseph Bull did upon wensday last drinke in the house of John Southerden of Pluckley, bocher, and did there pay 2d a peece. He further sayth he saw there Richard Baldwick there drinking and upon wensday also he did see there Joshua Lambyn and Thomas Benchkyn who there called for beere which was brought unto them by the wife of the said John Southerden.'<sup>(3)</sup>

Three of these five tipplers can be traced in other sources. Two men, typical of Kentish alehouse customers at this time,<sup>4</sup> were drawn from the bottom half of Pluckley society. Sanders (who admitted that he had been at Southerden's 'every day in this last week') was an inmate in

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1. Wrightson & Levine, Poverty and Piety, p.137. See also Sharpe, 'Crime and Delinquency', p.99; Wrightson, 'Two Concepts of Order', pp.41-2.

2. Bod.L. Ms. Films Dep. 913, ff.2-3,7; C.C.L. X.4.8/76; X.6.7/53b.

3. Bod.L. Ms. Films Dep. 913, f.44.

4. Clark, The English Alehouse, ch.6.

the house of Nicholas Cole and later Sampson Lorryman. He drew poor relief in the mid-1620s and was a kerseymaker and cobbler by trade. Thomas Benchkyn was a cottager, renting a three-acre holding from Sir Anthony Dering.<sup>1</sup>

Joseph Bull's servant, according to Peter Clark also represented a common type of alehouse drinker -eager to escape the restrictions placed on their behaviour in their home households.<sup>2</sup> Joshua Lambyn was somewhat more prosperous: in the mid-1630s he was listed in the churchwardens' assessments as working a holding of eighteen acres. His tippling evidently did not render him unsuitable for parish office; he served as a churchwarden in 1638 and again 1652-3.<sup>3</sup>

Joane Nepecker's customers on one Sunday in December 1613 had come from further afield. One man had come from Little Chart, and he was joined by 'some strangers whose names she doth not remember'. It is possible that they sought refuge from churchwardens and constables of other parishes who kept a closer eye on Sunday drinking than their Pluckley counterparts. According to Nepecker's testimony, however, the shelter they sought in her establishment was of a different kind: 'to keepe themselves out of the rayne.'<sup>4</sup>

Less certainty surrounds the regulation of alehouses at other points in the first half of the seventeenth century. Three further series of papers have survived which cover the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries: loose sessions

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1. Bod.L. Ms. Films Dep. 913, ff. 67,139-40; K.A.O. P289/5/1; QM/SRC/1606/271.

2. Clark, *op.cit.*, ch.6.

3. K.A.O. P289/5/1.

4. C.C.L. X.5.9/164.

papers (1574-1622), among them a thousand depositions; draft 'court in session' minutes (1594-1618); and a second set of loose papers covering the period 1639-77.<sup>1</sup> There are references to nineteen Pluckley men and women indicted, bound over, named in petitions or orders, or called to give evidence between 1595 and 1650, but again there is no sign of the kind of 'regulative' prosecutions that brought over a hundred Terling villagers before the Essex bench between 1560 and 1639.<sup>2</sup>

The survival of a virtually complete series of indictment and recognisance process books and rolls from 1650 gives a more systematic picture of quarter sessions business in the later seventeenth century. Just over a quarter (27%) of those brought before the courts were indicted for regulative offences; all but two charged with infringements concerning inmates, cottages and labour regulation.<sup>3</sup> In addition warrants were issued for the settlement of two pauper families, and a man was bound to answer orders concerning a bastard child.<sup>4</sup>

The near absence of quarter sessions business linked to the control of popular sexual and other manners in Pluckley during this period fits the picture of county administration given by Norma Landau.<sup>5</sup> Not only did the numbers of indictments and recognisances as a whole fall away in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, but the character of offences finding their way to court changed. This signalled, she

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1. K.A.O. QM/SB,SI,Sq,SRc; QM/SM 1-52; Q/SB 1-12.

2. Wrightson & Levine, Poverty and Piety, Table 5.1, p.118.

3. The other two indictments concerned non-attendance at church. See ch.5, p.358 for one of these cases.

4. K.A.O. Q/SPi 1-3; Q/SI/E1-112; Q/SRC/E1-112.

5. N. Landau, The Justices of the Peace 1679-1730 (London, Univ. of California Press, 1984).

argues, 'a decreased surveillance of that conduct of the individual which affected the community's economy and the social relations of its inhabitants.'<sup>1</sup>

In an analagous process, the presentment of sexual offences to the church courts at Canterbury dwindled in the Restoration period; their share of ex officio cases falling from 35% in the early seventeenth century to just 5% in the years 1663-4.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, only two Pluckley villagers were presented to the courts for sexual offences between 1660 and the end of the century; both of them (John Cushman in 1668 and Katherine Rachell in 1678)<sup>3</sup> charged with fornication.

This slump in both secular and ecclesiastical court cases was partly related to administrative changes -the greater role of poor relief in the disciplining of petty offenders and the drift of business to the petty sessions. It was also perhaps, as J.A. Sharpe has suggested, the result of a less aggressive attitude towards offenders on the part of local officers, 'an unconscious psychological reaction as the great wave of demographic expansion levelled off.'<sup>4</sup>

When considering sexual and other regulative presentments and indictments brought by Pluckley officials as a whole, the similarities between the experience of the village and that of Keevil in Wiltshire studied by Martin

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1. Ibid., p.246.

2. Potter, 'The Ecclesiastical Courts in the Diocese of Canterbury', pp. 54,193-4.

3. C.C.L. Z.4.8/38b; Z.4.5/20b.

4. Clark, English Provincial Society, p.402; Fletcher, Reform in the Provinces, p.242; Landau, The Justices of the Peace, ch.7; Sharpe, Crime in Seventeenth-Century England, pp.178-9; idem., Crime in Early Modern England, pp.184-6.

Ingram are striking.<sup>1</sup> The officials of both parishes reacted to the particular pressures of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century by redefining the boundaries of acceptable sexual and marital conduct; but in other respects their response was muted, with only sporadic action against alehouses, drunkenness and popular festivities.<sup>2</sup>

V

Pluckley villagers were then only rarely brought before the courts for offences such as drunkenness, swearing and quarrelling. In two particularly well-documented cases some of the factors prompting officials to seek formal sanction can be observed.

In December 1610 Marke Davye, a Pluckley tailor and Thomas Pell of Smarden quarrelled in the former's parish churchyard; an action that could theoretically bring presentment to the church court. It did indeed bring Davye into court in April 1611, but the reason for his presentment probably owed little to ecclesiastical law. Davye's and Pell's argument did not end at the church gates, but escalated into physical violence. Davye threw Pell to the ground and struck him blows which (according to the coroner's report) caused the death of the Smarden man two days later. Davye was indicted for murder and tried before Maidstone assizes in February 1611. The defendant persuaded the jury to reduce the charge to

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1. Ingram, 'Religion, Communities and Moral Discipline', *passim*.

2. Ibid., pp.185-6,187-8.

manslaughter, allowing him to claim benefit of clergy.<sup>1</sup> Davye's quarrel had become a serious matter for Pluckley's churchwardens, for despite the common experience of death, there was no indifference to murder in early modern England.<sup>2</sup>

Church court presentment could also provide a platform for what Martin Ingram has termed 'vexatious' prosecution: 'the exploitation of legal forms to express aggressive impulses unrelated to the ostensible grounds for action.'<sup>3</sup> In Burnham-on-Crouch (Essex) and in Keevil (Wiltshire) presentment to the church courts was used in just such a way in the 1620s and '30s to promote personal feuds between factions of village notables.<sup>4</sup>

In July 1634 Pluckley's parson John Copley was presented to the Archdeacon's Court for quarrelling ('brawlinge') in the church in time of divine service. According to Stephen Pell, one of the village churchwardens and instigators of the court action, on Sunday 29 December 1633, Copley was interrupted in the middle of his sermon 'with loud talking' by Sir Edward Dering and his brother Henry. Copley replied in similar fashion:

'...he then also did loudly chard[g]e the said Sir Edward Dering with want of obedience and duety to him.

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1. C.C.L. X.5.5/66; repr. in Haslewood (ed.), 'Visitation Articles', p.104; J.S. Cockburn (ed.), Calendar of Assize Records: Kent Indictments James I (London, H.M.S.O., 1980), p.93.

2. Beattie, Crime and the Courts in England, p.77.

3. Ingram, 'Communities and the Courts', p.118.

4. Wrightson, 'Two Concepts of Order', pp.41-3; Ingram, 'Religion, Communities and Moral Discipline', pp.187-9.

He then also scorned the degrees of Sir Edward Deringe, skoffing at his knighthood [and] at his baronetship...And said that Sir Edward Deringe was illbread... and had not the Grace of God and that he was the proudest man in the world. He then protested that hee went in feare of his life by reason of the malice of Sir Edward Dering, hee then also taxed Sir Anthony Dering with malice and wronge done to him and derided and scornfully called Henry Deringe...by the name of an illiterate fellow. All which was done and spake with greate heate and passion...'(1)

Pell concluded his presentment with a curt appraisal of Pluckley's incumbent:

'Our Minister is divers times passionate and cholericke & then forgetteth himselfe in violent language, but at other times is of sober behaviour.'(2)

Copley's intemperate comments came at the end of many years of rancorous dealings with the Dering family, beginning soon after his arrival in the parish in 1616. Copley clashed with Sir Anthony Dering (Sir Edward's father) over Pevington tithe payments in 1618, and in 1631 he joined John Bettenham Esq. in his protests at Sir Edward's 'improvements' to Pluckley church.<sup>3</sup>

The Bettenhams themselves had over fifty years of legal wrangling with the Dering family behind them. The years 1583-1608 were particularly litigious with two suits in the Court of Star Chamber, two in King's Bench, two in Canterbury Archdeaconry Court, one each in the Courts of Chancery, Common Pleas and Wards, and possibly others too.<sup>4</sup> The ostensible grounds for action varied. A disputed right of way

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1. L.P.L. VG4/15/25.

2. Ibid.

3. K.A.O. U350/Q1/2,4-6,9, Q7; B.L. Ms. Stowe 743, ff. 83, 98-100,108.

4. K.A.O. U1107/L9/1-4,6-11; L9/2; L9/3/1; U133/L3/2; U275/F5-6; U350/Q1/8; P.R.O. STAC8/125/2, 61/29; C.C.L. X.4.8/92, 166b-67b; X.4.11/189b; B.L. Ms. Stowe 150, ff. 40,42,63.

across a lane fuelled a five-year Chancery case in the 1580s, while disagreements about the terms under which Daniel Bettenham had leased 100 acres of farmland in Pluckley and Smarden from the Dering estate prompted a number of suits for trespass and debt in the early years of James's reign. And throughout this thirty-five period two generations of Derings and Bettenhams failed to agree which pews in Pluckley church belonged to whom.

At the root of many of the claims and counter-claims that characterised this flurry of court action lay a preoccupation with manorial rights and jurisdictions, with frequent reference made to the medieval sub-division of the manor of Pluckley.<sup>1</sup> This concern found its most explicit form in a second dispute involving Pluckley church in 1631. It could not be agreed whether a number of coats-of-arms in the body of the church belonged to the Bettenham Manor of Sheerland, or to the House of Malmains, one of the Deering manors.<sup>2</sup> John Copley entered the fray by claiming that one of Sir Edward Dering's servants had defaced a manorial inscription on the font; and like John Bettenham he voiced his opposition to a number of structural changes to the church carried out by Sir Edward.<sup>3</sup>

Learning of Copley's role in the affair, Dering wrote to Pluckley's parson in June 1631, attributing to him 'a turbulent & unpeaceable disposicon, perhaps I might justly adde malitious.' He continued:

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1. See ch.3, p.131.
  2. See ch.5, pp.335-7.
  3. K.A.O. U350/Q1/4; B.L. Ms. Stowe 743, f.99.

'Those unkindnesses which have often revived and as often (I hope) been buried between my cousin Bettenham's house and oures were fitter (especially by you whose parochians we are) to be oyled over rather than renewed and torne up afresh.'<sup>1</sup>

Despite a judgement on the case by Archbishop Abbot in 1632 (which ordered many of Dering's structural changes to the church to be reversed) the matter remained unresolved. Copley claimed from the pulpit in 1633 (according to Stephen Pell's testimony) that 'he went in feare of his life by reason of the malice of Sir Edward Deringe'; while the following April Dering accused Copley in a letter to William Laud of 'crafty insinuations to my father's tenants plotting with surmises to abuse me in creditt and in profitt', and of 'threats of poore neighbors in the parish as of masons and labourers'<sup>2</sup>. Three years later, Dering petitioned the archbishop -unsuccessfully- to have Copley removed. He concluded his appeal with the observation that Pluckley's parson 'hath admitted so much malice to our family that he cannot be at peace with our ashes.'<sup>3</sup>

It is difficult to penetrate the rhetorical hyperbole which abounds in documents of this kind to assess the effects of the Dering-Bettenham-Copley feud on the wider population of the parish. There is evidence, however, that both Bettenham and Copley viewed opposition to certain aspects of parochial government as an attack on Dering himself.

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1. K.A.O. U350/Q1/6.

2. K.A.O. U350/Q1/4-9; Cal. S.P. Dom. Car I, vols. CCXIX, 13, 13(I), CCLXV, 35; L.P.L. VG4/15/25; B.L. Ms. Stowe 743, f.99.

3. B.L. Ms. Stowe 743, f.108; Add.Ch. 56025, 56027; Cal. S.P. Dom. Car.I, vol. CCCXLVII; K.A.O. U350/Q1/2. Dering was still trying to have Copley removed in July 1639 (K.A.O. U350/Q1).

In January 1633, Pluckley churchwarden Alexander Hart and overseers Anthony Barnard and John Astrey seized eight young sheep belonging to John Bettenham when he refused to pay his poor rates. The local officers told Bettenham that it was their intention:

'... to sell them p[re]sently unlesse he would lay downe ye mony of his assesse: to which he angrely replied that they should be in his belly first: For I will not be subject to youre master's pride and then [he] further added that S[i]r Edward Dering... should not come well of from this although tis come well of in ye starre-chamber...' (1)

Like Bettenham, Copley refused to pay his poor rates in 1632; and in addition both men were among those in the village the following year who would not take a poor apprentice -an unpopular measure newly enforced by the reissued Book of Orders.<sup>2</sup> The new orders were opposed by three of the five churchwardens and overseers for 1633, (by) and<sup>1</sup> one other who had served the previous year. Dering saw the hand of conspiracy behind this threat to magisterial authority; and not without some justification, it seems. When John Potkins, one of the village churchwardens was bound to appear at Canterbury sessions in September 1633 'to answer his refusall in not taking his apprentice', John Bettenham and John Copley stood<sup>3</sup> as his sureties.

The motivation of Potkins (who later denied that Bettenham and Copley had advised him not to take an apprentice) and the other opponents of the Privy Council

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1. Bod.L. Ms. Films Dep. 913, f.18 (my emphasis).

2. Ibid., ff. 13,47-9. See Fletcher, Reform in the Provinces, pp.215-6; Clark, English Provincial Society, p.352.

3. Bod.L. Ms. Films Dep. 913, f.70; K.A.O. P289/5/1; U133/L4/1; Cal. S.P. Dom. Car.I, vol.CCXL,35.

orders is not clear. In the wake of harvest and industrial crisis, though, many middling farmers would probably have sympathised with Potkins's assertion that:

'He understood the meaning of the said Statutes as well as the said justices... [and] that putting forth of apprentices. was contrary to the said statutes...' (1)

Yet all was not unanimity among Pluckley's parochial officials. Potkins himself was presented to the archdeaconry court for non-payment of poor rates at the visitation of 1632 just as he took up the first of two terms as churchwarden. In 1634 he was presented again for absconding with parish funds.<sup>2</sup> And he was not the only parish officer to become involved with the courts following the action of his colleagues. The wife of Stephen Rayner, a Pluckley overseer was summoned to Canterbury in July 1634, being 'already excommunicate because she will not come to church nor receive the holy comunion at the hands of our Minister.'<sup>3</sup> She was presented again the following March.

It is tempting to see Potkins's presentment and possibly Rayner's too as related to Sir Edward Dering's conflicts with John Bettenham and John Copley. It may be no coincidence that Potkins's and Rayner's second presentments, and Copley's were all the work of one man -churchwarden Stephen Pell. It may also be significant that Samuel Greenstreete (a churchwarden in 1631 and among those refusing to pay their poor rates in 1632) was presented for non-attendance at church in 1636; and that John Wolton (an overseer in 1633) was brought before the

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1. K.A.O. U133/L4/1. See also Clark, English Provincial Society, p.352.

2. C.C.L. X.6.8/136b; L.P.L. VG4/15/8.

3. C.C.L. X.6.8/203b,233; L.P.L. VG/4/15/26b.

archdeaconry court in 1637 for going to neighbouring Little Chart 'on some Sundayes to the after noon sermon.'<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the background to these presentments, they raise the question of the extent to which it is possible:

'...to label these officers neatly as what contemporaries would have called the "well-affected", and then turn to examine the delinquent elements ranged diametrically against them.'<sup>(2)</sup>

As far as sexual delinquency in Pluckley is concerned, offenders were only very rarely drawn from the ranks of village officials. Richard Younge, a prosperous yeoman and churchwarden in 1575 was presented to the archdeaconry court for bastardy in 1594 and again for bridal pregnancy in 1602.<sup>3</sup> He was the only churchwarden serving between 1550 and 1618 to be involved with the courts in this way, though Benet, the wife of Thomas Waterman (a churchwarden in 1591) was accused of having 'lyved incontynently with Wyllyam Golding now a jurnyman shomaker'<sup>4</sup> at Tenterden in 1575.

From 1619 (when lists of overseers as well as churchwardens become available) to 1639, it would appear that sexual misconduct as punished by the courts was exclusively confined to the non-office-holding sections of village society. It is possible of course that churchwardens 'discriminated against the poor and defenceless in making their returns to the archdeacon', and therefore that 'their

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1. C.C.L. X.6.8/283; repr. in Haslewood (ed.), 'Visitation Articles', p.106; C.C.L. Z.3.16 (unfol.).

2. Sharpe, 'Crime and Delinquency', p.95.

3. C.C.L. X.3.8/109-109b; X.4.5/92; K.A.O. QM/SB/ 68; QM/SM6 (unfol.).

4. C.C.L. X.1.12/118.

presentments will be a poor indication of the extent of religious, morally impeccable behaviour in the population at large.<sup>1</sup>

If such a bias was at work though, it did not operate consistently in favour of village office-holders. At the Easter visitation of 1616, Jane Posse was presented to the archdeacon's court 'for haveing a child, she being unmarried'. She was one of the daughters of John Posse, a yeoman clothier who had held parish office as a churchwarden in 1605. In May 1616 he petitioned the court for clemency, stating that before committing the crime his daughter had:

'...from childhood lived in honest name & fame in the said parishe and alwaies caryed and behaved herselfe soberly and modestly without manner of imputation of lightnes or wantonnesse...and [had] orderly and dutilie frequented devyne service...' (2)

She was now, moreover, 'very sorowfull and penitent for her offence' and 'hath humbled herselfe before God whome she has soe highlie offended'. The petition was signed by twenty of Pluckley's 'cheifeste inhabitants'; including Sir Anthony Dering, John Bettenham Esq., and the parson, John Picard. Most of the rest of the subscribers were those men of middling rank that filled the bulk of village offices. Indeed, Richard Sotherden, one of the churchwardens of 1616, was among their number.

It seems likely that many of Pluckley's more prosperous inhabitants were prepared to support John Posse's petition

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1. Collinson, The Religion of Protestants, p.220.

2. C.C.L. X.5.9/76b-77; K.A.O. P289/5/1; QM/SRc/1612/180. Posse held office again as a churchwarden in 1627-8 and as an overseer in 1636.

precisely because sexual misconduct was a rarity among this section of village society; when it did occur, it was a matter of some import. Such concern does not square with a generalized laxity towards elite transgression.

Even the village gentry were not spared from presentment. Peter Bettenham, one of John Bettenham's sons fathered two bastards between 1634 and 1636. By the time the second case came to court in July 1636, he was no longer resident in Pluckley, yet balked at the prospect of returning to the parish to perform his penance:

'The said Mr Bettenham is descended of good and gentile parents who live in very good esteeme and that although hee is very sorry for his said offence yet if hee should be enjoyned to performe the publique penance enjoyned to him...it would bee a farr greate[r] greife to him & likewise shame and greife to his said parents.'(1)

Although commutation of penances was officially frowned on, the court was sympathetic to his plea; and -no doubt to his relief- Peter Bettenham was permitted to pay a fine of £5<sup>2</sup> instead.

Lower down the social scale -in fact within the stratum that generated most of Pluckley's churchwardens and overseers- sexual deviancy was more common. At least two such couples were presented for bridal pregnancy in the period 1590-1639; one of them the household of John Barton, Sir Edward Dering's 'chefe husbandman'. Two more such men came before the courts for adultery, and a third was charged with

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1. L.P.L. VG4/15/25b-26; C.C.L. X.6.8/293-4.

2. C.C.L. X.6.8/294; Potter, 'The Ecclesiastical Courts in the Diocese of Canterbury', pp.103-4; C. Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England (London, Secker & Warburg, 1964), pp.311-3.

<sup>1</sup>  
fornication.

Since many of those presented for committing sexual offences cannot be traced in any other records, it is impossible to determine with precision what proportion of miscreants were drawn from ~~the~~ Pluckley's poorer families. Among those whose economic status can be established, however, <sup>2</sup> the poor were in a clear majority (63%) with all but a handful of the rest marginally better-off men like John Barton, or Christopher Butcher (presented for incontinency in 1620) whose income derived in part from farming a seventeen-acre holding, <sup>3</sup> in part from labouring work on the Dering estate.

## VI

Those indicted for property offences -theft, burglary, house-breaking and poaching- were also largely drawn from these poor and marginally poor strata. All but two of the fourteen villagers brought to our knowlege before the quarter sessions (1574-1700) and assizes (1558-1625) for property offences were recorded as labourers or men of low-status crafts and trades such as tailors, millers and tanners.

The articles most commonly stolen by Pluckley thieves (putting aside poachers for the moment) or by others within <sup>4</sup> the parish were foodstuffs, household goods and small

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1. C.C.L. X.4.5/149; X.5.5/126; X.5.9.257b X.6.8/296; X.9.3/65b; Z.3.16(unfol.); K.A.O. PRC 11/24/48; U1107/A13; U350/E4.

2. The grouping 'poor' was taken to include those listed as holding less than 10 acres; all cottagers, inmates, labourers and servants; and those in receipt of parish relief or otherwise described by contemporaries as 'poor'.

3. C.C.L. X.9.5/257b; K.A.O. P289/5/1; U350/E4.

4. In addition to the 14 Pluckley villagers, 4 residents of other parishes came before QS and assize courts charged with committing offences in the village.

livestock; the removal of which often required 'simply a sharp eye and a fast hand.'<sup>1</sup> Thieves usually took items that were immediately useful and not readily identifiable as out of place in an average home. Food could be quickly eaten or sold to receivers; and only major livestock, money, plate and other luxury goods had to be concealed if discovery was to be avoided.<sup>2</sup>

The punishment for theft could be tailored to suit the perceived seriousness of the crime. If the value of the goods stolen was set at more than 12d, the offence was categorized as 'grand larceny' and therefore as a serious crime or felony which could carry the death penalty. When the value was set at less than 12d, 'petty larceny' was invoked, a misdemeanour punishable by whipping, fining, pillory, stocks, or a limited period of imprisonment. The prices set to goods on indictments often bore little resemblance to their market value, even if they were not artificially lowered for legal reasons. From the mid-seventeenth century, the employment of this latter device meant that a valuation of 10d was commonly entered on Kentish theft indictments; thus pre-judging the crime as one of 'petty larceny'. Thomas Else, a Pluckley labourer, was indicted in this way for the theft of two sheep in 1678.<sup>3</sup>

Some kinds of theft were considered serious enough to warrant the automatic label of 'felony' without benefit of clergy. Reginald Ward, a Pluckley labourer was hanged for one

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1. Herrup, 'New Shoes and Mutton Pies', p.818.

2. Ibid. Beattie, Crime and the Courts in England, pp.186-90.

3. Melling, Kentish Sources VI, pp.10-11; K.A.O. Q/SRC/E56 (unfol.).

such offence -horsetheft- in 1597. The death sentence could also be the punishment for offences against property:

'...with some added intrusion of a victim's home, status or person. And even these crimes brought execution generally only if they were combined with a distinctive form of behaviour. Decision-makers recognised criminals by their fondness for crimes of profit, their calculated approach to illegal activity and their lack of remorse once they were taken into custody.' (1)

Burglary and housebreaking were held to constitute such an 'intrusion'. William Adger, a Pluckley husbandman was allowed clergy for his first burglary offence in 1573 when he was convicted of stealing a coat, a pair of hose and a doublet worth 20s-10d and £7 in money from an Elham man. Less than a month later he was back before the Kent assizes for breaking into the house of Richard Tylman, a middling Pluckley farmer, from whom he stole a doublet and hose worth 15s. This time he was less fortunate and sentenced to the gallows.<sup>2</sup>

Henry Kingsnoth and his wife Mary were indicted for grand larceny in 1676. Although it is not clear how the couple were sentenced, the circumstances surrounding their case suggest little of the opportunism characteristic of most thefts. Henry Kingsnoth was a tailor by trade, and in April 1676, working separately, he and his wife plundered the stores of two other Pluckley tradesmen Edward Gooding and George May. Their haul included: 2 yds. and 8 other pieces woolen cloth; 7 pairs stockings and 1 waistcoat; 40 yds. tape; 1lb. silk; assorted thread, yarn and buttons; and 1000 pins.<sup>3</sup>

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1. J.S. Cockburn (ed.), Calendar of Assize Records: Kent Indictments Elizabeth I (London, H.M.S.O., 1979), p.22; Herrup, 'Law and Morality', p.113.

2. Cockburn, op.cit., pp.114,125; K.A.O. PRC 10/36/442.

3. K.A.O. Q/SRC/E52 (unfol.).

Exempted from paying the Hearth Tax in 1664, Kingsnoth was a man of modest substance with only the produce of a meagre five-acre cottage plot together with occasional payments from the parish for boarding paupers and perhaps casual labouring work to augment the profits of his business. For such a man the bountiful stocks of his more prosperous neighbours -one of whom left £34-3-4 in 'grocery wares and old lumber' when he died in 1679; the other £54 in 'moneys owing to him' at his death in 1689- may have seemed a prize just too tempting to resist.<sup>1</sup>

The single property offence for which the largest number of Pluckley villagers were indicted during the period 1650-1700 was poaching. There are also scattered references to its incidence earlier in the century. Pluckley warrener Francis Jenever used his occupational skills in 1607 to take a rabbit with dogs and nets from the property of Sir John Tufton at Hothfield. George Godden, a labourer on the Dering estate was also implicated. It would appear that both men were persistent offenders or at least suspects: in 1627 local justices ordered their houses searched to 'bring away netts, feretts, gunnes, etc.'<sup>2</sup>

Poaching could be characteristic of what J.A. Sharpe has termed 'social crime'; an offence which represents 'a conscious, almost a political, challenge to the prevailing social and political order and its values.'<sup>3</sup> Centuries of

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1. K.A.O. P289/5/1; Q/RTh; K.A.O. PRC 11/49/159; PRC 11/53/13.  
2. K.A.O. QM/SI/1608/11; QM/SRC/1608/79-80; U350/E4; Bod.L. Ms. Films Dep. 913, f.2.  
3. Sharpe, Crime in Early Modern England, p.122.

legislation on the taking of game had effectively restricted its practice to men of landed or other property. Legislation of 1605-9 barred men with lands worth less <sup>than</sup> £40 a year from taking deer, rabbits, partridge or pheasant (even from their own property); and from 1671 the qualification was raised to £100. Those classes excluded did not always share their betters' view on the landed order's exclusive right to game. Small landholders might ignore the prohibition on the property they owned or rented; while the landless labourer was often not averse to stocking his pot with the odd rabbit or <sup>1</sup> partridge.

Four Pluckley poachers were brought before Canterbury quarter sessions between 1656 and 1661. Two of them (labourers George Genever and George Hennicar indicted for taking partridges in 1656 and 1657/8) may have been examples of Sharpe's 'social criminals'; but the same cannot be said for Francis Bettenham gent., lord of the manor of Sheerland. In March 1659 Bettenham took three deer from the Earl of Winchelsea's Eastwell Park, located in the parish of that name a few miles from Pluckley. This village gentleman may have been involved in an organised poaching operation based in the village. In May 1659 Pluckley tanner Robert Swift was also caught in Eastwell Park, and like Bettenham he appeared before <sup>2</sup> Canterbury justices in the summer of 1661.

Although it was not unusual for gentry or yeomen to

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1. P.B. Munsche, Gentlemen and Poachers: The English Game Laws 1671-1831 (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981), Appendix; Sharpe, 'Enforcing the Law in the Seventeenth-Century English Village', p.105; idem., Crime in Early Modern England, p.126.  
2. K.A.O. Q/SPI/1; Q/SI/E17/38, E24/35-36.

involve themselves in poaching gangs, it was clearly not a peculiarly elite crime.<sup>1</sup> There were, however, a range of offences characteristic of Pluckley's middling and upper strata, which reflected their role in the village as landholders, landlords and employers. Reference has already been made to the non-payment of poor/church rates, and of the refusal to take a poor apprentice. To these transgressions may be added building or leasing cottages with inadequate lands attached; failure to maintain roads, ditches or hedges on their property; and lodging inmates or those living 'uncovenanted'. Almost half (45%) of those villagers who served as churchwardens or overseers in the period 1619-40 infringed one or more of the statutes regulating practice in this area.<sup>2</sup>

Only a handful of presentments or indictments covering assault committed by Pluckley villagers have survived, but village officers were among those involved: Nathaniel Field (overseer 1637) and John Posse (churchwarden 1605, 1627-8, overseer 1624) were indicted for assaulting a man at Charing in 1612. And Samuel Greenstreete was presented while serving as a churchwarden in 1621 for assaulting Thomas Taylor in Pluckley churchyard. Greenstreete struck his victim in Pluckley churchyard with 'violent' blows to the neck, knee and stomach.<sup>3</sup>

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1. See Sharpe, *op.cit.*, p.130.

2. See Sharpe, 'Crime and Delinquency', p.97 for similar examples of law-breaking by officials of seventeenth-century Kelvedon (Essex).

3. K.A.O. QM/SIq/42/1; C.C.L. X.6.7/40b. See also K.A.O. Q/SI/E80/2, Q/SRC/E77 (unfol.).

VI

The shortage of common, waste and forest-land in Pluckley suitable for cottaging or illegal squatting probably spared the village the worst excesses of poverty in the period from the 1590s crisis to the Restoration. Nevertheless, the cost of parochial poor relief was rising (by nearly 60% in real terms between 1623-32 and 1654-63); and the comments made by a number of the village's largest land-owners in 1628 suggests that this increased financial burden was not without its opponents. Indeed, during the years 1605-24, six villagers were presented to the church courts for refusing to pay church or poor rates. One of them, Thomas Moter, was presented on four separate occasions.

Many ratepayers were themselves vulnerable to the demographic and economic pressures which formed the background to the escalating level of poor relief in the village. And it was precisely such middling groups that filled the bulk of parish offices in the seventeenth century. They responded to these pressures by trying to enforce stricter standards of sexual and marital conduct; mainly through the presentment of the village's poor and marginally poor elements to the church courts. More prosperous offenders did not escape judicial sanction, but after 1619 there was a clear break between Pluckley's sexual miscreants and those villagers who served the parish as churchwardens and overseers.

It would appear that this new attitude towards sexual

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1. C.C.L. X.4.8/90; X.4.11/16,123b; X.5.5/158b,258b; X.6.7/47, 151; X.9.9/51,58b.

deviancy was shared by many of the middling group of Pluckley villagers. The campaign of reform initiated by village office-holders in the 1590s did not depend for its success on the activism of a few men exercising 'oligarchic' control over parochial government (as in Terling), for less than one in three churchwardens and overseers served more than two terms in the periods 1625-54 and 1665-1700.

Turning from enforcement of sexual regulation to the other 'disorders' associated by contemporaries with popular culture, the picture is more confused. As Martin Ingram found in Keevil, there was apparently no sustained campaign in Pluckley against unlicensed alehouses, drunkenness, swearing and so forth; or against dancing, gaming and other popular recreations.

With Ingram, we would wish to distinguish between these two strands of moral reform, and suggest that common demographic and economic pressures lay at the root of the concern with sexual and marital conduct; while a broader antipathy to the 'disorders' of popular culture required (pace Margaret Spufford) the additional ideological input of Puritanism.<sup>1</sup>

There is certainly no indication that 'a knot of Puritan reformers' of the kind David Underdown has associated with clothing parishes were active in the village. It must be remembered, however, that Pluckley was probably not a typical

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1. Ingram, 'Religion, Communities and Moral Discipline', pp. 190-1; idem., 'The Reform of Popular Culture?', pp.149, 157-9; M. Spufford, 'Puritanism and Social Control?', in Fletcher & Stevenson, Order and Disorder, 41-57.

clothing parish: there were proportionally fewer very poor and marginally poor households in the village in the 1660s than elsewhere in the Weald of Kent.<sup>1</sup> The disorders associated with the 'Third World' may therefore have figured less prominently in the minds of Pluckley's office-holding classes than in those of their contemporaries in other clothing parishes.

A number of historians have drawn attention to the inter-weaving of economic self-interest and religious zeal in the Puritan assault on the disorders of popular culture: 'A reformation of manners might help to save souls; it would certainly bring relief to taxpayers by eliminating immiserating vices.'<sup>2</sup>

The evidence from Pluckley and Keevil suggests that the tightening up of sexual morality by village office-holders required only the second of these two elements. Yet if common economic and demographic pressures alone could generate sufficient concern among middling groups to bring relatively large numbers of sexual miscreants from the village before the church courts, why did 'immiserating vices' like drunkenness and other alehouse-related offences not provoke a similar response in parochial officials?<sup>3</sup>

Possibly, Joshua Lambin was not the only Pluckley churchwarden who enjoyed the good fellowship of the alehouse;<sup>4</sup> and without the solvent of reforming Puritanism, this 'integral part of popular culture' may have proved more

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1. Underdown, Revel, Riot and Rebellion, p.82; above, Table 26, p.194.

2. Hunt, The Puritan Moment, p.142.

3. I am grateful to Dr. Smith for raising this question.

4. See above, pp.261-2.

resilient to demographic and economic pressures than a set of attitudes towards extra-marital sexuality which even among the lower orders was deeply ambivalent.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Sharpe, Crime in Seventeenth-Century England, p.52; Ingram, 'The Reform of Popular Culture?', p.147.

Chapter 5: The Social Environment of Religious Belief

'Religion's the Cry, yet there are not many  
That ever had any I tell you; for why  
There's little they mind, but to rant roar  
And sing, and cry, God Save the King,  
Then off with their Drink. Is this true Religion?  
Is this true Religion? Sirs, What do you think?'

1  
from The Dissatisfied Subject, a ballad of 1692.

(i) The Wealden Tradition

Writing of the Kentish wealden parish of Biddenden in 1683, its rector Dr. Giles Hinton distinguished two groupings of nonconformists worshipping outside the Church of England. 'All the vulgar sects about London' were represented among 'the generality of dissenters', but in the opinion of the village's incumbent, their religious views did not derive from:

'...their own choice, as by the ignorance or error of their education, for they are as much to[o] weke in the constitution and usages of the Church of England, as the disciples of Ephesus were of the Holy Ghost.'

According to Hinton, a second group of sectaries were also resident in Biddenden:

'...for there are also remaining some Brownists who boast that they kept themselves unmingld with all other dissenters ever since the days of that notable seismatic [sic] from whom they have their denomination.'(2)

Other sources confirm the numerical importance of  
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nonconformists in Biddenden's post-Restoration population; but

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1. Rollins, The Pepys Ballads, vi. 219.

2. C.E. Woodruff (ed.), 'Letters Relating to the Condition of the Church in Kent during the Primacy of Archbishop Sancroft', A.C., XXI (1895), 184.

3. Whiteman, The Compton Census, p.25; L.P.L. Ms. 1126, f.35.

assessing the significance of Dr. Hinton's more specific comments is less straightforward. The distinction he makes, however, between the hereditary separatism of the parish 'Brownists' and its other dissenters drawn to nonconformity by their 'ignorance or error' of Anglican doctrine reflects two strands of an explanation advanced (with different emphases) by a number of historians to account for the apparent geographical continuity of religious radicalism in the Kentish Weald.<sup>1</sup>

In a recent review of the history of Dissent from the Reformation to the French Revolution, Michael Watts has used evidence of such geographical coincidence to support his argument for a 'continuous tradition of radical dissent' in the county from the persecution of the Lollards in the early fifteenth century until the foundation of the first General Baptist churches in the 1640s.<sup>2</sup> Christopher Hill came to much the same conclusions, though he placed greater stress on

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1. Everitt, 'Nonconformity in Country Parishes', 178-99; Collinson, 'Cranbrook and the Fletchers', 399-428; R.J. Acheson, 'The Development of Religious Separatism in the Diocese of Canterbury, 1590-1660' (Kent Univ. Ph.D thesis, 1983), pp.200-4; J.F. Davis, Heresy and Reformation in the South-east of England 1520-1559 (London, Royal Historical Society, 1983); idem. 'Lollard Survival and the Textile Industry in the South-east of England', in G.J. Cuming (ed.), Studies in Church History III (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1966), 191-201; C. Hill, 'From Lollards to Levellers', in M. Cornforth (ed.), Rebels and their Causes (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1978), 49-68; Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent, pp.228-9; P.Clark, English Provincial Society, pp.30,77,101,177; M.R. Watts, The Dissenters I: From the Reformation to the French Revolution (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1977), pp.13,284,353.

2. Watts, op.cit., p.284.

doctrinal continuities linking 'Lollard to Leveller'<sup>1</sup>.

The geographical continuities are certainly striking. The Weald of Kent generated Lollard heresies for much of the fifteenth century. Lollard activity was concentrated in the southern Weald (in the area around Tenterden, Cranbrook and Halden) where two heretics held benefices in the 1420s; but Archbishop Warham's visitation of 1511 also uncovered Lollards at Maidstone and Ashford to the north.<sup>2</sup> It was into such a Lollard milieu that the future Anabaptist martyr Joan Bocher (or 'Joan of Kent') moved sometime before 1543, settling in the parish of Frittenden, near Cranbrook. She was brought before the consistory court at Canterbury in the early 1540s charged with Lollard-inspired heresies; discovered continental Anabaptism later that decade; and was burnt for her view of the Incarnation in 1550.<sup>3</sup>

Peter Clark found that the origin of those Kentish Protestants burnt for their beliefs under Mary 'bears some crude topographical correlation with the known cases of later Lollardy'.<sup>4</sup> Among their number were two members of the so-called 'Free-Willers': a group of anti-predestinarian conventiclers active on the northern edge of the Weald (at Lenham and Pluckley) and elsewhere in mid-Kent, possibly from the 1530s. By Christmas 1550, the Free-Willers had left Kent

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1. Hill, op.cit.

2. J.A.F. Thomson, The Later Lollards, 1414-1520 (London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), pp.173-89.

3. J.F. Davis, 'Joan of Kent, Lollardy and the English Reformation', J.Ecl.H., XXXIII, 2 (1982), 225-33.

4. Clark, English Provincial Society, p.101.

and moved to Bocking in Essex in an effort to escape persecution in their own county. It may be significant that Bocking is only eleven miles from Steeple Bumpstead, once the home of Joan Bocher and a centre of Lollard activity in the 1520s.<sup>1</sup>

A 'residual ethic of exclusivism' may link the Free-Willers with some of the first seventeenth-century separatists in Kent; active in the north-wealden parishes of Egerton and Sutton Valence from the early 1620s.<sup>2</sup> Their persistent conventicling moved Archbishop Laud to admit in a letter to the King in 1637 that 'I am utterly to seeke what to doe w[i]th yem'.<sup>3</sup> Three years later what was probably the first Kentish Baptist church was founded in the wealden parish of Smarden, with a covenant signed by one hundred and nineteen men and women.<sup>4</sup> By 1672, there were at least thirty-six Baptist churches (or at least potential churches) in wealden and scarpland Kent; and in 1676, nonconformists of all kinds accounted for as much as 17% of the Weald's communicants. The comparable figure for the county as a whole was less than 2%.<sup>5</sup>

The vast majority of Kentish Baptists in the seventeenth

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1. J.W. Martin, 'English Protestant Separatism at its Beginnings: Henry Hart and the Free-Will Men', Sixteenth Cent. Jnl., VII,2 (1976), 55-74; Watts, The Dissenters, pp.10-11.

2. R.J. Acheson, 'The Development of Religious Separatism', p.54.

3. B.L. Ms. Harl. 787, f.21.

4. Acheson, op.cit., ch.6.

5. G. Lyon Turner, Original Records of Early Nonconformity Under Persecution and Indulgence (London, Fisher Unwin, 1911-14), ii. 1002-8; Everitt, 'Nonconformity in Country Parishes', p.188. See also G.F. Nuttall, 'Dissenting Churches in Kent before 1700', J.Ecl.H., XIV (1963), 175-89.

century were Arminian or 'general' rather than Calvinist or 'particular'. Although many contemporaries failed to grasp the difference between the two groups, the doctrine of general redemption -of Christ dying for all men rather than a predestined group of elect- which gave the General Baptists their name prevented any sense of common purpose with the Particular Baptists. Indeed, relations between the two groups were frequently bitter: on one occasion the General Baptists were alleged to have called their Calvinist brethren 'the gates of Hell, their common enemy.'<sup>1</sup>

The General Baptists 'had been profoundly shaped by the continental Anabaptist tradition and came closest of all sectaries in England to being true Anabaptists.'<sup>2</sup> The history of the first General Baptist church, founded in exile in Amsterdam by Nottinghamshire gentleman Thomas Helwys belongs essentially to the annals of native English Puritanism. Nevertheless the history of Joan Bocher illustrates the intermixing of native Lollard and continental Anabaptist influences; and the examinations of a number of Marian heretics -among them the Free-Willers- points to the emergence in Kent of what A.G. Dickens has called 'a subdued and

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1. Acheson, op.cit.; M. Tolmie, The Triumph of the Saints: The Separatist Churches of London 1619-1649 (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), p.72; J.F. McGregor, 'The Baptists: Fount of All Heresy', in idem. & B. Reay, Radical Religion in the English Revolution (Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 1984), p.28.

2. Tolmie, op.cit., p.69.

Anglicized type of Anabaptism<sup>1</sup> by the 1550s.

Evidence for the survival of such 'Anabaptist' views in Kent during the period between 1560 and 1640 is thinly-scattered and difficult to interpret.<sup>2</sup> However, the success of the General Baptist message in Kent in the subsequent period (especially in the Weald) with a stress on general redemption and biblicism not dissimilar to the Free-Willers, may owe something to the survival of an underground tradition of 'rustic Pelagianism' in the county.<sup>3</sup>

We should be cautious, though, of accepting at face value the kind of organizational continuity described by the rector of Biddenden in 1683. Indeed the whole concept of a self-conscious linear tradition of radicalism in the Weald is perhaps less helpful than one:

'...which envisages a common "pool" of anti-authoritarian attitudes capable of absorbing a variety of notions, foreign as well as indigenous; this might form the basis of an explanation of certain "heretical" beliefs.'(4)

Among these notions should be included elements borrowed from mainstream Protestantism. As one recent critic has pointed out, such a perspective is missing from Peter Clark's

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1. Ibid., pp.69-71; McGregor, 'The Baptists: Fount of all Heresy', p.26; Davis, Heresy and Reformation, ch.6; A.G. Dickens, The English Reformation, revised edn. (London, Fontana, 1967), p.328.

2. Acheson, op.cit., pp.201-3.

3. On General Baptist strength after 1640, see ibid., ch.6; Nuttall, op.cit., pp.181-6; Watts, The Dissenters, Table XII, p.509. The phrase 'rustic Pelagianism' is from P. Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement (London, Jonathan Cape, 1967), p.37.

4. Acheson, op.cit., p.204.

study of Kent from the Reformation to the Civil War. A failure 'to investigate the critical convergence of Lollardy and early Protestantism' does not lend conviction to Clark's later assertion that the revived separatism of Elizabethan Kent was the linear successor ('hereditary separatism' he terms it) of Lollardy and Edwardian Anabaptism.<sup>1</sup>

In fairness it must be pointed out that 'hereditary separatism' forms only one part of a multi-causal explanation advanced by Clark to account for the re-emergence of separatism in Elizabethan Kent;<sup>2</sup> but the substance of Collinson's criticisms remains valid. One of the main themes stressed by J.F. Davis in his work on the beginnings of Protestantism in south-east England is the considerable intermixture of orthodox Edwardian Protestant with heretical Lollard and Dutch Anabaptist doctrines.<sup>3</sup> John Fishecocke of the wealden village of Headcorn, for example, when examined in 1556 followed the Free-Willers when he declared that 'he will not communicate with an advouterer nor a covetous parson'. Unlike some of the Kentish heretics though, he considered it 'yvill and ungodly' to doubt the Trinity, and maintained that no one should preach or teach 'onles he be sente or admytted by the rulers.'<sup>4</sup>

Yet religious belief - 'heretical' or otherwise- does not

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1. P. Collinson, Review of Clark, Provincial Society, J.Ecl.H., XXXI, 2 (1980), p.230.  
2. Clark, op.cit., p.177.  
3. Davis, Heresy and Reformation, ch.6.  
4. Ibid., pp.126-7. See also P. Collinson, The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559-1625 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1982), pp.253-4.

take root and flourish in a vacuum; and it is in this context that Dr. Hinton's comments on 'the generality of dissenters' in his parish are particularly interesting. His characterization of certain of Biddenden's nonconformists as 'weke in the constitution and usages of the Church of England' may in part reflect the consequences of particular intractable geographic, demographic and sociological conditions inimical to the pastoral interests of the established Church. The exceptional size and scattered settlement pattern of Kentish wealden parishes made regular church attendance -especially in the winter months- virtually impossible for some villagers; and clerical oversight was also hindered by rapid population growth fed by immigration.<sup>2</sup>

According to Alan Everitt, the spread of Dissent in the region was further facilitated by the comparative weakness of the manorial structure. This was bound up, as we have seen, with the complexity of manorial jurisdiction and the absence of open-field agriculture. The relative scarcity of resident gentry in the Weald was probably also a contributory factor, as Margaret Spufford's researches on seventeenth-century Cambridgeshire have suggested.<sup>3</sup>

It was the 'absence of effective ecclesiastical

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1. Everitt, 'Nonconformity in Country Parishes', pp.188-93; idem., 'Farm Labourers', p.463; Thirsk, 'Industries in the Countryside', 70-88.

2. Everitt, op.cit., pp.189-91; Collinson, 'Cranbrook and the Fletchers', p.400.

3. Everitt, op.cit., p.191; J. Thirsk, 'The Farming Regions' p.59; Everitt, The Community of Kent, p.19; Spufford, Contrasting Communities, pp.306-15.

'policing' in the Weald created by this combination of factors, together with trading links with other parts of the country and overseas that began to attract Lutheran ideas to the Weald from the 1520s; as it had attracted Lollard heresies in the previous century.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, J.F. Davis has argued that these trading links -fostered by the rapid expansion of the cloth industry in the first half of the sixteenth century- acted as a critical catalyst in the dissemination of religious radicalism in the Kentish Weald. In Davis's schema, it was the middlemen of the woolen industry -the staplers, clothiers, fell-mongers and wool-broggers- who spread the heresies of early sixteenth-century Lollardy as they travelled from village to village and out of the county to London.<sup>2</sup>

More generally, Michael Watts has suggested that it was to economically independent groups like these, freed from the 'social and economic pressures of the countryside' that Lancastrian Lollardy, Elizabethan separatism and late Stuart Dissent chiefly appealed.<sup>3</sup> What information we have on the economic position of the Baptists, the largest of the post-Restoration wealden sects seems to confirm this picture:

'Small craftsmen and tradesmen predominate: weavers, shoemakers, tailors, ironmongers, bakers, glovers, and buttonmakers. They comprise those "middling sort" whose independent or itinerent patterns of work and vulnerability to market forces had traditionally attracted them to popular heresies.'<sup>(4)</sup>

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1. Clark, English Provincial Society, p.31.

2. Davis, 'Lollard Survival and the Textile Industry', passim.

3. Watts, The Dissenters, p.353.

4. McGregor, 'The Baptists: Fount of all Heresy', p.36.

Yet McGregor adds the caveat that 'There is no doubt...that the surviving evidence underestimates the number of rank and file Baptists wholly or partly engaged in agriculture.'<sup>1</sup> These two generalizations are not necessarily inconsistent, at least not as far as the Kentish Baptists are concerned, for the wealden economy was built on the widespread combination of active farming with artisanal or trade employment. And nowhere was such a dual economy more important than in the region's densely-settled clothing<sup>2</sup> parishes.

In the last analysis, these general points concerning the determinants of Dissent can do no more than provide a framework for analysing the religious history of a particular community. They provide little indication, for example, of the relative significance of wealden topography, manorial structure and lordship, population and immigration levels, and cloth manufacture, in generating constraints and exerting pressures capable of influencing the pattern of religious belief.

In addition, it must be remembered that post-Restoration Dissent, like pre-Civil War Puritanism exercised the minds of only a small minority of the population: in 1676 less than one in five adults resident in the Kentish Weald worshipped<sup>3</sup> outside the Church of England. Put another way, the combined

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1. Ibid.

2. M. Zell, 'A Wood-Pasture Agrarian Regime', p.88. On Pluckley see ch.2, p.113.

3. Everitt, 'Nonconformity in Country Parishes', p.188.

effect of a continuing underground tradition of religious radicalism and a number of geographic, demographic and sociological pressures inimical to worship within the established Church were not often sufficiently strong to overcome those other pressures and traditions which encouraged at least formal Anglicanism.

(ii) The Beginnings of Protestantism and the 'Godly Folk'

I

When Nicholas Harpsfield, the Marian archdeacon of Canterbury diocese visited Pluckley in 1557, he found that the ornaments and furniture of the parish church of St.Nicholas's failed to meet the standards required by the ecclesiastical authorities on no less than twenty-four counts. In the neighbouring hamlet of Pevington (also served by Pluckley's parson) 'all the ornamentes and belles' of the parish church were said to be in the hands of two local gentry families.<sup>1</sup>

Pluckley's was one of 243 Kentish parish churches and public chapels visited by Harpsfield between July and September 1557. Part of Archbishop Pole's policy of restoring where possible the material resources as well as the traditional pieties of the pre-Reformation church, the

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1. L.E. Whatmore (ed.), 'Archdeacon Harpsfield's Visitation, 1557', Catholic Record Society, VL-IVL (1950-1), ii.pp.119-21.

visitation found that church vestments and plate were missing all over the diocese:

'In material terms alone, the task was immense. Not only did the results of deliberate iconoclasm and the Edwardian confiscations have to be overcome; there was also an extensive backlog of sheer neglect in many places, innumerable cures were vacant...tithes and other dues were unpaid, chantries in debt, and other obligations uncharged.'(1)

If Harpsfield's visitation as a whole made 'scarcely a mention' of the extirpation of heresy, the second strand of the archbishop's drive against Protestant innovation,<sup>2</sup> this was not true of its work in Pluckley. The records of the parish visitation include the order that:

'...the bo[r]sholder\* doe apprehend the wife of John Hart and others whose names are conteyned in a bill and being suspected of heresie and also to bring [them] to Crambrok upon Satterdaie next.'

The others ordered 'secretlie apprehended' were Henry Hart (later noted as already dead), John Anowre, Nicholas Hugge, and 'one Hatche'. This represented the largest total of suspected heretics for any parish recorded in the 1557<sup>3</sup> returns.

What was the background to these events? One of those accused of heresy in 1557 had come to the attention of Archbishop Pole's predecessor Thomas Cranmer as early as 1538. By this date, only five years after the newly-consecrated

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\* A parish officer equivalent to the petty constable.  
1. P. Hughes, The Reformation in England (London, Hollis & Carter, 1953), ii, p.237; D.M. Loades, The Reign of Mary Tudor (London, Ernest Benn, 1979), pp.343-4.  
2. Ibid., p.344.  
3. Whatmore, 'Harpsfield's Visitation', p.120; J.F. Davis, 'Heresy and Reformation in the South-east of England 1520-59' (Oxford Univ. D.Phil. thesis, 1968), p.68.

prelate had concluded the divorce of Henry VIII, Thomas Cranmer had established his dominance in the Kentish Church; and had begun to find a lay response to his and Thomas Cromwell's policy of Protestant reform.<sup>1</sup> According to Peter Clark, by the mid-1530s the two men had abandoned an early cautious policy of tolerating widespread 'neutrality-cum-conservatism' in favour of attempting to 'win the hearts and minds of the population with radical preaching.' To achieve this end they were prepared -at least initially- to sanction the evangelizing efforts of radical Protestants with little concern for the precise character of their<sup>2</sup> doctrines.

It was in this context that Cranmer wrote to Cromwell in April 1538 in favour of 'certain men of Smarden and Pluckley', indicted at the recent Canterbury quarter sessions for 'unlawfull assemblies'. In their defence, the six accused men claimed that they had been indicted '...of none occasion or ground else, but for cause they are accounted fawters of the new doctrine.' Cranmer asked the King's chief minister to intervene to secure the release of the men unless their<sup>3</sup> indictment could be 'worthily' justified.

Two of the accused men were from Pluckley: Henry Harte and John Stanstrete, the former among those named for heresy in Harpsfield's visitation twenty years later. During the next fifteen years or so Cranmer may have come to regret his

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1. Clark, English Provincial Society, pp.36-7.

2. Ibid., p.47.

3. J.E. Fox (ed.), Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1846), p.367.

intervention in favour of these wealden Protestants, for in 1548 and 1549 Henry Harte published two tracts<sup>1</sup> in which he argued the case for separation from the established Church. It was fundamentally mistaken, Harte wrote, for people to say:

'We be safe, for we bee all Christians: we have Gods word and his holy sacramentes among us, and therefore ye great plagues and threatenynge of God (declared by his prophetes and apostles) againste sinners shall not touch us...Thinkest thou that they shal be preserved and defended of God that continue and delite in sinne and wickednes?'(2)

Harte poured condemnation on the worldliness, pride and moral corruption of the Church prelates,

'...which boast of power and auctoritie to rule and governe other[s] and yet have no respect to their own soules...which seke holynes onely by outward sacramentes and signes not regardyng what the hert & inward conscience bee...'(3)

As a result, men of the Church were no more than 'blynde guides', who 'oftentimes spake of faythe, penance and love, and yet consume the tyme of their lyves in vanitie and idlenes.' Harte's readership was urged not to 'have fellowshyppe wyth devels': to reject the hollow shell of orthodox Christian observance and the carnal excesses seen as its corollary in favour of a life of religious sincerity and personal austerity.<sup>4</sup>

The word of God as revealed in the Bible provided all

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1. H. Harte, A Godly Newe Short Treatyse (London, 1548); idem., A Consulerie For All Christians (Worcester, 1549).

2. Harte, A Consulerie, f.Eii, quoted in J.W. Martin, 'English Protestant Separatism at its Beginnings: Henry Harte and the Free-Will Men', Sixteenth Century Jnl., VII, 2 (1976), p.65. The account of the Free-Willers that follows draws heavily on Martin's article.

3. Harte, A Consulerie, f.Cviii v-r, Cvii v, quoted in Martin, op.cit., p.63.

4. Harte, A Consulerie, f.Cv v ff., quoted in Martin, op.cit., p.64.

the guidance needed to follow a life according to these principles. For Harte, the appeal of 'this greate benefite' (as he described bible-reading) lay in its power to generate sudden religious insight, not in providing scriptural authority to support a self-conscious framework of theological argument. He evidently distrusted the time-honoured techniques of biblical exegesis favoured by more orthodox religious commentators.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, a number of witnesses questioned in about 1550 by the Privy Council on the beliefs of Harte and his supporters make explicit reference to his distrust of human learning. One quoted Harte as saying that 'his faithe was not growndid upon Lernityd men for all errors were broughte in by Lernityd men'.<sup>2</sup>

Internal evidence in the tracts suggests that Harte already had a following by 1548-9;<sup>3</sup> and soon afterwards it would appear that they travelled to the Essex clothing township of Bocking in an effort to escape persecution. At Christmas 1550 a meeting of sixty-strong 'Kentishemen' and 'diverse of the towne' in the house of one Upcharde was interrupted by local officials as:

'...thei fell in argument of thinges of the Scripture speciallie wheather it were necessarie to stand or kneele, barehedde, or covered at prayer which at length was concluded in ceremonie not to be materiall, but the hartes before God was it that imported, and no thing els...'(4)

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1. Ibid., pp.64-5, 61-2.

2. C. Burrage, The Early English Dissenters, 1550-1640 (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1912), ii. p.2.

3. Martin, op.cit., pp.63-4.

4. Burrage, op.cit., p.4.

Among those 'assembled for scripture matters in Bocking' later called to give evidence before the Privy Council were two Pluckley men (Harte was not among them), two men from Ashford and two from Lenham, and one 'Cole of Maydestone, s[c]holemaker'. According to John Strype (who learnt his facts from an 'old Register'), the Kentish conventicle had met at Faversham -about twelve miles from Pluckley over the Downs-<sup>1</sup> and in 'divers' other places.

The examination of those men brought before the Privy Council in February 1551, together with a set of depositions concerning the group made at about the same time, confirm that by this date Harte's conventicle was a fully-fledged separatist one. Those examined admitted to having 'refused the communyon above ii yeres' and were alleged to affirm 'as a generall doctryne that they oughte not to Salute a Synner or a man whome they knowe not'. There is also a suggestion in these depositions that members of the group had 'contrybuted' sums<sup>2</sup> for the maintenance of the conventicle.

There is also ample evidence in the depositions of the importance Harte and his followers attached to the doctrine of general redemption which gave the 'Free-Willers' their popular nickname. In Harte's tracts the doctrine of predestination is implicitly rejected. Salvation is available for all men; but God's promise is a conditional one. What Harte stresses is man's continuing responsibility for virtuous

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1. Ibid., pp.5-6; J. Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials (London, 1721), ii. p.236.

2. Burrage, op.cit., pp.3, 5-6.

<sup>1</sup>  
conduct. Several of those giving evidence in 1550 refer to predestination or original sin, and again it is the comments attributed to Harte himself that prove the most trenchant:

'Ther was no man so chosen that he might dampne hime selfe. Nether yet anye men soe reprobate but that he mighte kepe goddes Comaundments...Sancte Paule mighte have dampnid hime selfe if he listed.'(2)

The best-documented episode in the history of the Free-Willers is the so-called King's Bench prison dispute of 1554; a doctrinal confrontation between orthodox Edwardian Protestants and Harte and a number of his followers, all imprisoned by the Marian regime for heresy. Harte himself seems to have played a relatively minor role in the discussions, except on the question of predestination, where the doctrines underlying his tracts of 1548-9 formed the basis of a lively exchange with orthodox Protestant John Bradford.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to Harte, at least one other Pluckley Free-Will man was imprisoned for heresy under Mary -Nicholas Shetterden. Among those brought before Privy Council following the events at Bocking, Shetterden was burnt at Canterbury with a second Free-Willer in July 1555. His examination is recorded at length in the pages of John Foxe's Acts and Monuments.<sup>4</sup> There is no mention there of the anti-predestinarian strand in Free-Will thinking (possibly because Foxe chose not to report such heterodox opinions); but Shetterden does show a distrust

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1. Martin, 'English Protestant Separatism', p.65.

2. Burrage, op.cit., p.1.

3. See Martin, op.cit., pp.68-72.

4. Burrage, op.cit., p.5; G. Townsend & S. Reed Catley (eds.), The Acts and Monuments of John Fox (London, Seeley & Burnside, 1841), vii. p.287.

of human learning worthy of Harte himself. Asked by the Lord Chancellor whether 'the few' or 'the doctors and the whole Church' should be his 'guide in understanding', Shetterden replied:

'I Do not believe for the few, nor for the many, but only for that he bringeth the word, and showeth it to me according to the process thereof.'<sup>(1)</sup>

The apparent geographical continuity between the centres of Free-Will activity in the 1550s and those of the older Lollard centres has already been indicated.<sup>2</sup> It must be emphasized though that the increasing availability of the vernacular Bible from the 1530s (Cromwell ordered every parish church to make one available for public reading in 1538) marked a radical break with the past; affording what Claire Cross has called the 'emancipation' of lay religious belief. This brought about 'a process of grafting Protestant beliefs onto ideas derived from Lollardy' in London and elsewhere in southern England, and in the Midlands and East Anglia.<sup>3</sup>

Quite how Harte and his followers discovered the Bible is not clear, but the most articulate of the Free-Will men was in no doubt that it had worked a major transformation in his life:

'For as mucche as it hath pleased the eternall God which seperated me from my mothers wombe to lighten the inward eyes of my mynde withe hys grace, and thorowe the knowledge of his word and working of his holy spirite,

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1. Fox, Acts and Monuments, vii. p.310. See Davis, Heresy and Reformation, p.144.

2. Above, pp.288-9.

3. C.Cross, Church and People 1450-1660: The Triumph of the Laity in the English Church (London, Fontana, 1976), p.73.

to worke a perfecte repentaunce and amendmente of my former lyfe, love constraynethe me too wyll you (good brethren) to be partakers of this great benefite.'(1)

Unfortunately there is no way of estimating the number of Pluckley members of the Free-Will group, nor the impact of their doctrines on the religious belief of its villagers. Little is known either of Henry Harte's place in the life of the community, except that after his death (probably about 1557), his heirs continued to hold freehold lands on the Derings' Malmaines manor; though by about 1564 they had been sold to (?Thomas) Bettenham.<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Shetterden was being employed as a servant to Richard Dering Esq., the elder (great-uncle to Richard Dering of Surrenden) when his master made his will in 1546; and Thomas Sharpe, the third known Pluckley Free-Willer was described as a weaver in a 1558 source.<sup>3</sup>

## II

Peter Clark has used the evidence from will preambles to argue that in the wealden deanery of Charing (which included Pluckley) 'committed Protestant beliefs' had made greater headway by the 1540s than in any other part of the rural Kent -with the exception of the deaneries to the east of Canterbury.<sup>4</sup> The evidence from Pluckley wills appears to confirm this picture, at least for the period after 1550. From

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1. Harte, A Consultarie, f.Avi v, quoted in Martin, 'English Protestant Separatism', p.61.

2. K.A.O. U350/M1.

3. K.A.O. PRC 17/26/21; P.R.O., Calendar of Patent Rolls iv (1557-8), p.52.

4. P. Clark, English Provincial Society, pp.58-9.

that date until the accession of Elizabeth in 1558, only one Pluckley will was prefaced by the conventional religious preamble taken to indicate 'conservative' or 'Catholic'<sup>1</sup> belief.

It is not easy to use evidence of this kind to reach sound conclusions, since the religious sentiments expressed in the preamble commonly provide a more accurate reflection of the opinions of the scribe who wrote the will than of the testator him- or herself. Margaret Spufford's analysis of the surviving will preambles from the Cambridgeshire villages of Orwell and Willingham concluded that taken alone, they tell 'little or nothing of the testators' opinions'.<sup>2</sup>

However, M.L. Zell has suggested that the personal bequests following the preamble can provide a clearer indication of the religious beliefs of the testator. He gives several examples of Kentish gentry whose wills begin with a staunchly Protestant formula, but end with a request like that of Thomas Digges that the priests at his burial 'shall sing<sup>3</sup> masse and praye for my soule'. It may therefore be significant that such bequests -associated with conservative or Catholic

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1. The formula taken to indicate 'conservative' or 'Catholic' belief is that of asking for the intercession of the 'Blessed Virgin Mary, the Saints, and the whole Company of Heaven', or some similar phrase. See Spufford, Contrasting Communities, pp.320-1; Clark, English Provincial Society, p.58 & n.75; M.L. Zell, 'The Use of Religious Preambles as a Measure of Religious Belief in the Sixteenth Century', B.I.H.R., L (1977), p.246. The will in question is John Spice's of 1555 (K.A.O. PRC 17/35/10).

2. Spufford, op.cit., p.332.

3. Zell, op.cit., pp.248-9.

belief- appear in only one Pluckley will written during the years 1550-8.<sup>1</sup> The evidence from the Pluckley wills is not conclusive then, but taken together with Clark's broader survey does suggest that Protestantism was well established in the village before 1558. Further evidence of this is provided by the fact that Pluckley did not share in the widespread reversion to conservative religious preambles during the reign of Mary: in 1552 they comprised just 6% of all Canterbury diocese preambles.<sup>2</sup> By 1556 this figure had risen to 42%.

From 1541 until his deprivation in 1554, the rectory of Pluckley was served by William Lancaster.<sup>3</sup> Collated by Archbishop Cranmer as part of a policy during these years of promoting radical clerics to livings in his gift, Lancaster came under critical scrutiny for his Protestant views during the conservative reaction associated with the Prebends' Plot<sup>4</sup> of 1543:

'Lancaster, parson of Pluckley uses no holy water in the church porch and a great part of his parish do not receive holy bread. In going on procession he does not rehearse Sancta Maria or any other saints' names. When told that Stephen Giles in his presence...said that he blessed himself daily and nightly In nomine patris, etc. and that he said a Paternoster and a Ave Maria and a Creed in honour of God and our Lady, etc., the parson said that if he knew Giles had used that form of

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1. In her will of 1556, widow Elizabeth Rychardson left 12d to the parish curate 'to praye for me and to ayde my sonne in this my last wyll' (KAO PRC 17/30/221).

2. Clark, English Provincial Society, p.100.

3. L.P.L. Reg. Cranmer, f.385; C.C.L. Reg. N, f.68; F. Haslewood, 'The Rectors of Pluckley, Kent for Upwards of Six Hundred Years', A.C., XXII (1897), p.87.

4. Clark, op.cit., pp. 47-8, 64.

prayer he would never accompany him or drink with him.(1)

Exactly what role Lancaster played in the consolidation of Protestantism in the village is not clear; but Giles's deposition communicates vividly the division in opinion that must have developed in Pluckley in the aftermath of the official Reformation. Although their views on the subject rarely leave any traces, 'Even the the most illiterate, and least intelligent in every village must have been aware of the magnitude of the changes that were taking place'<sup>2</sup>; the most far-reaching of which was the replacement of the latin mass by the first English Prayer Book in 1549.<sup>3</sup>

William Lancaster provides a link with further evidence of committed Protestantism in Pluckley in the 1550s -though it is no less difficult to interpret than the wills. In January 1554, Lancaster along with William Dyminge, a second Pluckley cleric, joined twenty others from the village in a revolt of several thousand strong led by Sir Thomas Wyatt; ostensibly against Queen Mary's proposed marriage to Philip of Spain.<sup>4</sup>

In the standard history of Wyatt's Revolt, D.M. Loades has argued that the handful of gentry who planned and led the rebellion were motivated almost exclusively by secular and

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1. J. Gairdner & R.H. Brodie (eds.), Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII (London, HMSO, 1902), xviii, 2. pp.306-7.

2. Spufford, Contrasting Communities, pp.242-3. See also D.M. Palliser, 'Popular Reactions to the Reformation During the Years of Uncertainty', in F. Heal & R. O'Day (eds.) Church and Society in England: Henry VIII to James I (London, Macmillan, 1977), pp.35-56.

3. Dickens, The English Reformation, pp.301-4.

4. The numbers include one Pevington man, Henry Knocke.

political considerations. The common people who took part, in contrast, were responding to the call of their betters in the main because of ties of seigneurial loyalty.<sup>1</sup>

Loades's interpretation of events surrounding Wyatt's Revolt of 1554 has been challenged from a number of quarters.<sup>2</sup> Malcolm Thorp has questioned the assertion that with one exception the conspirators<sup>a</sup> were 'indifferent to doctrinal questions'; and Peter Clark has argued that tenurial ties alone cannot account for the distribution of popular support for the revolt.<sup>3</sup> We should not underestimate the power of the Spanish threat as a motive behind the conspiracy and (in a rather different form) behind the actions of its supporters. Nevertheless, a recognition of Clark's point leads to the likely conclusion that opposition to the religious settlement of the Marian regime played its part in mobilizing at least some of the two to three thousand rebels involved.<sup>4</sup>

Loades buttresses his argument against the religious factor by noting that none of the 560 recorded rebels appear in Foxe's list of Kentish martyrs; and only one is mentioned in Harpsfield's visitation of 1557. He admits that the nine clergy who appear on the record were probably Protestant; but adds that most were unbeneficed.<sup>5</sup>

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1. D.M. Loades, Two Tudor Conspiracies (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1965), pp.78, 86-8. I am grateful to Prof. Loades for guidance on the relevant sources for the Revolt.

2. Principally by Clark, English Provincial Society, pp.87-98; M.R. Thorp, 'Religion and the Wyatt Rebellion of 1554', Church Hist., III, 4 (1978), pp.363-80.

3. Ibid., pp.366-74; Clark, op.cit., p.94.

4. Ibid., pp.90-1.

5. Loades, op.cit., pp.87-8.

The main evidence in favour of a partly religious causation of the revolt would appear to lie in the correlation between centres of Edwardian religious radicalism and those parishes which sent the highest numbers of men to Wyatt's cause. This is suggestive but not conclusive since there was a 'rough correlation between the geographical distribution of popular support and the homes of the leaders.'<sup>1</sup>

In Pluckley there were two clerics -one of whom was beneficed- and also a gentleman taking part.<sup>2</sup> The latter, a man by the name of George More, remains an elusive figure. From what is known of the structure of landownership in the village at this date, however, it seems most unlikely that even if he was a substantial freeholder, More could have mobilized such a large proportion of Pluckley's seventy-five or so households through a manipulation of 'seigneurial' ties.<sup>3</sup>

There is scattered evidence of convinced Protestant belief among the other Pluckley rebels. As we have seen, Lancaster had a track record of nonconformity; and from the wills which William Dyminge drafted, it would appear that he too was a man of the 'new doctrine'.<sup>4</sup> A third rebel was weaver

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1. Clark, op.cit., p.90.

2. The discrepancy with Loades's figures (op.cit., Appendix I) derives from the fact that Dyminge is consistently recorded in the court records as a 'sadler'. The relevant sources for Pluckley are: P.R.O., Calendar of Patent Rolls (Mary) ii, pp.93-4, iii, pp.44,125,395-6, iv, pp.55-6; Calendar of Patent Rolls (Eliz.) i, pp.149,163,239; KB 27/1169; KB 29/187; KB 8/26,32.

3. P.R.O., Calendar of Patent Rolls (Eliz.) i, p.239.

4. Dyminge wrote at least three wills between 1550 and his death in 1563. Each 'beseeches' God that 'for and by the merits of Jesus Christ's passion' the testator be 'forgiven of all my sins and to be a partaker of his kingdom' (K.A.O. PRC 17/ 26/322; 17/27/203; 17/34/165).

and Free-Will man Thomas Sharpe; and a fourth, John Harris left a will in 1597 possibly indicative of a committed Protestant faith.<sup>1</sup> None of the other participants in the revolt have left evidence of particular religious piety. It seems plausible though, that in an area where the reformed doctrines of Cranmer and Cromwell had gained a strong foothold by the 1550s, and where the Free-Will group had at least a handful of adherents, the fear of Spanish invasion would have been inextricably 'intertwined with religious considerations'.<sup>2</sup>

It may be significant that over half of the ordinary villagers taking part in Wyatt's Revolt belonged to those economically independent strata of wealden society with whom religious radicalism has been identified.<sup>3</sup> Among the Pluckley rebels were five clothiers or clothworkers, two tailors, one carpenter, one miller, a shoemaker and a butcher. What little evidence we have on the wealth of the nineteen men does not permit any firm conclusions to be drawn, except that their numbers spanned the whole range of social stratification in the village: from miller Nicholas Bucher, who left a Group I estate in about 1569, to 'husbandman' Robert Knock whose Group IV estate of 1578 included twenty-eight head of cattle and seventy-two sheep.<sup>4</sup>

If Wyatt's cause had effectively mobilized the committed Protestants in the village population, weaver Nicholas

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1. Burrage, The Early English Dissenters, ii. pp.5-6; P.R.O., Calendar of Patent Rolls (Mary) iv, p.55; KB 29/187. On J. Harris, see below, p.327.  
2. Thorp, 'Religion and Wyatt's Rebellion', pp.378-9.  
3. See above, pp.294-5.  
4. K.A.O. PRC 10/2/401; 10/9.

Huggett's name should have been among the rebels. Listed as a heretic by Harpsfield in 1557, his will and inventory of 1570 give tangible evidence of the strength of his religious beliefs. Combining the goods appraised by his neighbours and those he bequeathed in his will, it would seem that at his death Huggett owned two English Bibles, five New Testaments, one 'booke of the prophetts', and 'one booke of the kyngs wherein are dyv[er]s other bookes conteyned'. His will was witnessed by Robert Hatch, possibly the 'one Hatch' also named as a heretic in the visitation of 1557.<sup>1</sup>

Within four months of the collapse of Wyatt's Revolt, William Lancaster had been deprived of his living on the grounds of marriage. His was one of about seventy deprivations within the diocese of Canterbury during the years 1554-5, but his involvement with the rebels must have made his replacement an urgent priority for the new archdeacon, Nicholas Harpsfield. The new rector was Radolphus Write, the first of three Marian incumbents.<sup>2</sup>

When Harpsfield toured the diocese three years later, particular attention was paid to those parishes which had a long tradition of heterodoxy, or had featured prominently in the events of 1554. At Cranbrook in the southern Weald - a centre of Edwardian Protestantism which had sent fourteen rebels to the aid of Sir Thomas Wyatt - it was ordered that all parishioners should be confessed by the middle of Lent, and

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1. Whatmore, 'Harpsfield's Vistation', p.120; K.A.O. PRC 17/41/ 233; 10/5/311-3.

2. L.P.L. Reg. N, f.68; Clark, English Provincial Society, p.99; Haslewood, 'The Rectors of Pluckley', pp.87-8.

thereafter should receive communion each week. In addition, each household was to be represented at church processions held every Wednesday and Friday. The parish vicar was enjoined not to bury anyone who refused to attend and receive; and Easter communion was to be withheld from any who would not bow before the cross.<sup>1</sup>

At Pluckley there is no record of parochial discipline of this kind being administered. A detailed inventory was made, however, of church goods and furniture found to be missing from St. Nicholas's church; their loss probably the result of the Royal seizures and local pilfering that followed the Edwardian reforms.<sup>2</sup> Among the items ordered restored were furnishings for the altar and plate for the sacraments; and lamps, crosses, and images of Christ and the saints. New seating was ordered built on both sides of the choir; the font was to be given a new lock and key; and 'banners and streamers convenient' were to be provided before Rogation week.<sup>3</sup>

The quality of pastoral care in the village also came in for censure from the archdeacon. A visitation of 1555 had recorded that Pluckley's rector was non-resident and that there was no curate to officiate in the church either.<sup>4</sup> William Barker, who replaced Write in 1556 does appear to have resided in the parish, but the thirty-acre glebe was leased to a lay

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1. Clark, op.cit., p.76; Loades, Two Tudor Conspiracies, Appendix I; Whatmore, op.cit., ii. p.183, quoted in Davis, 'Heresy and Reformation', pp.153-4.

2. Clark, op.cit., p.75.

3. Whatmore, op.cit., ii. pp.119-20.

4. C.C.L. Z.3.6/157b.

<sup>1</sup>  
'farmer'. Harpsfield admonished the farmer for letting the parsonage barn fall into disrepair; and of the parish incumbent it was noted that 'there hath bene but one sermon this yere except suche as the parson made wherein he dothe chafe with his farmer.' Criticism was also levelled at other aspects of Barker's ministry. He was ordered to appear at Canterbury on the Tuesday after Michaelmas because Bourne's wife had 'received at the parsons handes after Easter before masse and so departed the church.' And it was recorded that:

'...the parson cannot be founde manny tymes for christenynges and burialles by meanes whereof sometymes children have remayned unchristened by the space of iiiior daies.'(2)

The evidence from Harpsfield's visitation does not suggest that the established Church in the village was in a strong enough position to enforce the restoration of Roman Catholicism in the rigorous manner demanded by Harpsfield and Archbishop Pole. During the year 1555 and possibly for longer, Pluckley was not served by any resident minister of the Church; and what is known of Barker's incumbency (1556-8) does not give a picture of close parochial supervision either.

### III

Nicholas Morton B.D. was collated by Archbishop Pole to the living of Pluckley in September 1558, the third incumbent  
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to serve the parish in five years. Morton held the living for only a matter of months, for with the accession of Elizabeth I

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1. L.P.L. Reg. Pole, ff. 67-8; Haslewood, 'The Rectors of Pluckley', p.87; Valor Ecclesiasticus (London, H.M.S.O., 1810-34), i. p.65.

2. Whatmore, op.cit., ii. p.120.

3. L.P.L. Reg. Pole, f.81; Haslewood, op.cit., p.88.

and the official rehabilitation of Protestantism, William Lancaster was restored to his former benefice. That a state of confusion was the result of this rapid turnover of personnel in the parish rectory is not to be wondered at. It was reported some months after Lancaster had been restored to the benefice of Pluckley that 'certen of the same parishe are in doubte whether he be restored or no unto the said benefice.' The efforts of the new rector to resume his ministry were apparently being thwarted by his predecessor. According to the Queen's Visitors who intervened to clarify Lancaster's position in January 1560, 'the sinistrall reporte of one Mourton late pretended person' that 'we have allowed him the mighelmas rente laste paste' had meant that Lancaster 'cannot quietlie receyve suche rents and dewties as to him of right apperteyne.'<sup>1</sup>

This third turnaround in church organization and parochial ritual in thirty years must have left many people 'profoundly shaken by so much interference with traditional forms of expression which were no longer traditional.'<sup>2</sup> The confusion over the incumbency of Pluckley rectory in the first year of restored Protestantism cannot have helped matters. At the beginning of 1560 the Queen's Visitors urged the villagers to accept William Lancaster's 'just title' to the benefice over that claimed by the 'late pretended person', Nicholas Morton. Although no record of the incident has survived, many of the same villagers would have heard Lancaster condemned as

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1. K.A.O. U1823/3/Q1.

2. Spufford, Contrasting Communities, p.243.

unfit to hold clerical office just six years earlier.

Intervention by the Queen's Visitors together with the machinery of episcopal visitation undertook the task of repairing the damage done to the pastoral structure of the Kentish Church by the upheavals of the previous decades. According to Peter Clark, at least outward conformity to the Protestant order had been secured in the county by 1562.<sup>1</sup> As was recognised by most of the new bishops, however, the progress of Protestantism in the parishes was hindered by an absolute shortage of clerical manpower (about a third of Canterbury diocese livings were vacant at Elizabeth's accession); and by the 'deplorable' educational qualifications<sup>2</sup> and vocational aptitude of many of the beneficed clergy.

A major obstacle standing in the way of recruiting more highly qualified parochial clergy was the near-subsistence remuneration offered by many livings. The traditional answer to this problem was pluralism -the holding of two or more benefices in combination. Though this did succeed in attracting highly-educated men into the Church who might otherwise have looked elsewhere for a career, it left the ministry of those parishes without a resident rector or vicar

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1. Clark, English Provincial Society, p.162.

2. R. O'Day, 'The Reformation of the Ministry, 1558-1642', in idem. & F. Heal (eds.), Continuity and Change: Personnel and Administration in the Church of England 1500-1642 (Leicester, Leicester Univ. Press, 1976), pp.55-61; P. Collinson, 'The Church and the New Religion', in C. Haigh (ed.), The Reign of Elizabeth I (London, Macmillan, 1984), pp.185-6.

in the hands of often poorly-paid and under-qualified curates.<sup>1</sup> In Canterbury diocese, the incidence of pluralism peaked in the first decade of Elizabeth's reign, with Archbishop Parker's attempts to alleviate the pastoral problems associated with a severe shortage of clergy. In 1561, 44% of the beneficed parochial clergy in the diocese were pluralists, twice the figure for the early sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

Pluckley's living was a relatively lucrative one. The annual income of the parish rectory was estimated at just over £20 when the Valor Ecclesiasticus was commissioned in 1535. This placed the benefice among the wealthiest 15% in the diocese.<sup>3</sup> The union of the parish with neighbouring Pevington in 1584 added a small increment to the value of the rectory; but more significant in the long run was its relatively extensive glebeland of thirty-four acres and its uncommuted great tithes which enabled Pluckley incumbents to enjoy a standard of living equivalent to that of a prosperous yeoman: in 1634 John Copley's income was estimated at 'one hundred pound by the yeare at the least.'<sup>4</sup>

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1. O'Day, op.cit., p.57; Clark, op.cit., pp.158-9; J.I. Daeley, 'Pluralism in the Diocese of Canterbury during the Administration of Archbishop Parker', J.Ecl.H., XVIII (1967), pp.47-8; M.L. Zell, 'Economic Problems of the Parochial Clergy in the Sixteenth Century', in R. O'Day & F. Heal (eds.), Princes and Paupers in the English Church 1500-1800 (Leicester, Leicester Univ. Press, 1981), pp.25ff.

2. Daeley, op.cit., p.49; M.L. Zell, 'The Personnel of the Clergy in Kent in the Reformation Period', E.H.R., LXXXVIII, 3 (1974), p.532.

3. Valor Ecclesiasticus, i. pp.64-5; Zell, 'The Personnel of the Clergy', p.529 & n.1.

4. K.A.O. U350/Q1/7; L.P.L. Reg. Grindal I, f.459; C.C.L. D/T/P5. The comparison with yeoman incomes is based on Mildred Campbell's figures, given in Wrightson, English Society, p.33.

Collated to Pluckley in February 1568 following the death of William Lancaster, Edward Dering was the last non-resident parson of the parish before the Civil War.<sup>1</sup> The younger brother of Richard Dering Esq. of Surrenden, he entered Christ's College, Cambridge early in Mary's reign, and commenced a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1560. He was made a fellow of the college in the same year; a position he held until 1570. It was probably while at Christ's that Dering 'became infected with more than the formal Protestantism of the rest of his family.'<sup>2</sup>

His subsequent swift rise to national prominence before an early death in 1576 has been ably documented by Patrick Collinson<sup>3</sup> and needs no repetition here. Dering's views on Church doctrine do require brief treatment though, because it is likely that they played a prominent role in his choice of John Picard as the man to serve the parish cure during his brief incumbency (1568-70).

A theologian of no great profundity, it was as a preacher that Edward Dering excelled. At the heart of his priorities was the pastoral role of the Church. 'Without the preaching of the word', he wrote, 'we can never have fayth.' The high standards Dering demanded of the ministry ('scarce one parish of an hundred' met his requirements) and his

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1. L.P.L. Reg. Parker I, f.38; KAO P289/1/16 (under yr. 1569).  
2. P. Collinson, 'A Mirror of Elizabethan Puritanism: The Life and Letters of "Godly Master Dering"', in his Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism (London, Hambledon Press, 1983), p.294.  
3. Ibid., passim.

impatience with the slow pace of change brought him into conflict with Archbishop Parker (whom he accused of lax administration); with the Chancellor of Cambridge University; and finally, at the beginning of 1570, with Queen Elizabeth<sup>1</sup> herself.

It was probably while at Christ's, Cambridge that Dering met John Picard who had entered the college in February 1565. Three years later, Dering hired Picard as curate for his new benefice of Pluckley. Ill-health had forced the resignation of the village's non-resident parson by the spring of 1570; and his position was taken over by Picard himself, now a Master of Arts. The new rector was one of only about fifty graduate clergy in the diocese at this date, scattered over almost<sup>2</sup> three hundred parishes.

From a couple of marginal notes scribbled in Pluckley's parish register in 1609-10, it would appear that -like Dering- Picard attached great importance to the pastoral role of the godly minister. He wrote with some pride in 1609:

'I have bene here ther poor shepherde to god glorye be it spoken in Christ Jesus one saviour and redemer one only mediator and intercessor this ful fortie yeares and have been risident amonst them according to mi bounden deutie, thankes be unto god through Jesus Christ our lord and savior for this 41 yeares laste paste...'(3)

Picard did not share Edward Dering's relative

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1. Ibid., pp.292-3, 296, 298-9, 303-5, 313.

2. J. & J.A. Venn, Alumni Cantabrigiensis I (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1922-7), iii. p.358.; C.C.L. Z.3.9/119b; K.A.O. P289/1/16 (under year 1610); Collinson, op.cit., p.303; L.P.L. Reg. Parker I, f.398b; Haslewood, 'The Rectors of Pluckley', p.89; Daeley, 'Pluralism in the Diocese of Canterbury', p.89.

3. K.A.O. P289/1/16 (under year 1609).

indifference to questions of Church ceremonial. Elizabethan Puritans had in common an emphasis on the authority of the Bible in matters of religion. Such 'bibliocentricity' -as one<sup>1</sup> historian has called this preoccupation- implied an elevation of the sermon above the liturgical side of church observance. Yet on the question of what came to be regarded as 'popish' survivals in the Anglican service -notably the use of the sign of the cross in baptism, the wearing of the surplice, and the 'churching' of women after childbirth- the range of attitude was more varied; running 'from grudging toleration to hysterical revulsion'<sup>2</sup>.

John Picard's view on the matter seems to have fallen between these two extremes. While still Edward Dering's curate he was presented to the archdeaconry court because 'he dothe minister the holye communion in fyne comon breade': a common Puritan practice. His response to the presentment is not<sup>3</sup> recorded. Picard was brought before the court again in 1583, this time on the subject of the surplice. Asked if he wore the surplice in time of divine service, Picard admitted that he had not always worn the garment. He maintained in his defence that 'the surples is not decent nor comelye but olde and worne.' His testimony was later contradicted by one of his own churchwardens, William Marketman, who stated simply that 'the surples is very good'. The court ordered new vestments to

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1. Hunt, The Puritan Moment, p.113.

2. P. Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement (London, Jonathan Cape, 1967), pp.26-8, 364-7; Hunt, op.cit., pp.91-2.

3. C.C.L. Z.3.10/37a.

be provided if it was thought necessary.<sup>1</sup> With action against clerical nonconformity by John Whitgift, the new archbishop of Canterbury, imminent, Picard may have considered equivocation<sup>2</sup> over the surplice to be the wisest course.

Whether Picard conformed subsequently is not clear. Certainly he managed to keep out of the church courts after 1584; but this in itself is not conclusive.<sup>3</sup> Whatever course Pluckley's parson chose to take on this issue, it is probable that his position in the village was much strengthened by the stance of the Dering family. No explicit evidence of this survives, but both Richard Dering Esq. and his younger brother John were among those Kentish gentlemen who petitioned the Privy Council in May 1584. In writing, and later in person, the petitioners drew attention to their strongly-felt opposition to Whitgift's policy of harrassing nonconformist<sup>4</sup> ministers.

This does not necessarily mean that the Derings themselves favoured deviation from the orthodox rituals of the established Church. It does suggest, however, that they shared the Puritan insistence on the importance of a godly preaching ministry:

'Few Puritans could accept the logic of depriving parishes of dedicated pastors and putting inferior clergy in their place at a time when the threat of Romish Anti-Christ was more acute than ever, when Church

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1. C.C.L. X.2.4/145b.

2. See Clark, English Provincial Society, pp.170-2; Collinson, op.cit., pp.249-62.

3. See Spufford, Contrasting Communities, pp.249-58; Clark, op.cit., p.172.

4. Collinson, op.cit., p.258, Clark, op.cit., p.171.

and Kingdom needed every sinew of godliness: to them the obvious bulwark of defence was a reformed Protestant religion.'(1)

Several of these concerns were voiced explicitly in the will preamble of William, son of Marian heretic Nicholas Huggett. William Huggett inherited his father's 'lesser bible' when he died in 1570; along with 'one booke of the prophetts', 'one booke of the kyngs' and 'dyv[er]s other bookes.'<sup>2</sup> The younger Huggett similarly left a bible to his son Thomas at his death in 1610; together with two linen looms ('indeed... old and little worth, but as they are so I give them') that indicate that he had followed his father into the cloth trade.<sup>3</sup> William Huggett's thirty-five line preamble (the longest of any surviving Pluckley will) begins in clear Calvinist tone with the bequest of his soul:

'...into the hande of almightie god my heavenly father beleevinge stedfastlye throughe the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved even in the vertue of his death & meritts & most pretious blood shedding, & in the power of his resurrectione from the deade, beinge of one faithe & one Soule with all the true beleevers in the truth of gods most holy word, the gospell & glad tydings of salvation with all the faithfull & true children of god: accordinge to the meaninge of the holye ghost; and so I hope stedfastlye to continue during my life.'

This clause would appear to assume the rigorous exclusivism characteristic of fully-developed predestinarian Calvinism. Although Calvinism 'provided a common ameliorating bond' within the Church of England at this period, linking conformists with moderate Puritans;<sup>4</sup> there were differences of

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1. Clark, op.cit., pp.172-3.

2. K.A.O. PRC 17/41/233.

3. K.A.O. PRC 17/59/171.

4. N. Tyacke, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution', in C. Russell (ed.), The Origins of the English Civil War (London, Macmillan, 1973), p.121.

tone and emphasis: Puritans were not simply 'the hotter sort of Protestants'. As Peter Lake has recently argued, Puritans tended to place election and assurance of salvation at the centre of their practical divinity; an emphasis that was closely linked to their preoccupation with preaching and with the potency of God's word.<sup>1</sup>

William Huggett considered those 'faithfull & true children of god' to be synonymous with 'all true beleevers in the truth of gods most holy word, the gospell & glad tydings of salvation'. In short, 'the basic criterion of election... was receptivity to the Word.'<sup>2</sup>

In a remarkable second passage, Huggett elaborates further on his religious beliefs:

'...Also I abhorr all superstitione & idolotrie all atheisme and whatsoever tendeth to impietie or evill presumption or distruste, I abhorr & also detest the doctrine of those men that write that we can have noe church of god in England because we submitt not ourselves to the Pope of Rome and to his most corrupte doctrine in manye things: But I beleeve the truth of gods most holye word in everie thinge accordinge as the holye men of god have sett it downe...I beleeve that Jesus Christ is the sonne of god...I beleeve whatsoever is testified of him in his holye word and that he hathe witnessed of his heavenlye Father and of himselfe, this is life eternall that they know thee to be the onely verie god.'<sup>(3)</sup>

Hostility to 'superstitione & idolotrie' etc. and to the 'most corrupt doctrine' of the Roman Catholic Church was not peculiar to Puritans. What set apart these 'hotter' Protestants (or 'the godly' as they preferred to call

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1. Percival Wilburn (1581), quoted by Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement, p.27; P. Lake, 'Calvinism and the English Church 1570-1635', P.&P., CXIV (1987), p.39.

2. Hunt, The Puritan Moment, p.123.

3. K.A.O. PRC 17/59/171.

themselves) from their less 'precise' brethren was the intensity with which they felt these forces posed a threat to religious and moral discipline. It was this concern with beating back the forces of ungodliness in all its manifestations that countered the twin dangers of fatalism and hedonism implicit in the doctrine of predestination, and formed the basis for that alliance of 'magistracy and ministracy'<sup>1</sup> characteristic of Elizabethan and Jacobean Calvinism.

When William Huggett was buried in February 1610, he was described by parson John Picard as 'a faithfull honest neighbour'<sup>2</sup>. What epithets would Picard have chosen for the hundreds of other villagers who died during his forty-seven year incumbency in Pluckley rectory?

The evidence from the wills can provide only limited guidance. As was indicated earlier,<sup>3</sup> village will-writing at any one point was often dominated by a handful of scribes who tended to follow a set formula -perhaps with minor modifications- in drawing up religious preambles. It is difficult to pinpoint accurately those scribes at work in Pluckley since it has not been possible to compare the handwriting used on different occasions -all the surviving wills are office copies, not originals. However, a close analysis of extant wills for the period 1550-1639 (only a

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1. D. Hirst, Authority and Conflict: England 1603-58 (London, Arnold, 1986), pp.64-5; P. J. Collinson, The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559-1625 (Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), ch.4.

2. K.A.O. P289/1/16 (under year 1609).

3. Above, pp.305-6.

handful survive after 1640) revealed that 43% of the total seem to have been written by just five scribes: William Dyminge and Henry Kingsnoth during the 1550s and '60s; Luke Hasell and John Hudson during the 1580s-1610s; and Henry Pollard during the period 1610-39.<sup>1</sup>

Margaret Spufford has argued that unless a testator had unusually strong religious convictions, he probably did not influence the form of preamble normally used by the scribe. He was able, though, to exercise some choice over the man who was to draw up his will; and it is highly unlikely that he would have chosen someone whose general opinions conflicted strongly with his own. The generality of wills are therefore of limited use in indicating individual religious preferences (except those of the scribe); but may be used to show broad movements in opinion, such as the swing away from the cult of the Virgin and the Saints in the 1550s.<sup>2</sup>

Strong religious convictions, though, 'may come through, expressed in a variant of the formula usually used by the scribe concerned.'<sup>3</sup> Keith Wrightson and David Levine made use of 'strikingly individual wills...with complex, essentially personal clauses' to illustrate 'the passing of a whole generation of parish notables of striking personal piety' in early seventeenth-century Terling.<sup>4</sup> Other historians have found will preambles a less sensitive tool. In Elizabethan

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1. K.A.O. PRC 17; P.R.O. PROB 11. The preamble of each will was checked against the names of overseers and executors as well as witnesses.

2. Spufford, Contrasting Communities, p.333.

3. Ibid., p.334.

4 Wrightson & Levine, Poverty and Piety, p.158.

Cranbrook, an important centre of Kentish Puritanism, Patrick Collinson discovered that the virtual monopoly over will-writing enjoyed by the parish clerk meant that only eight out of 122 religious preambles 'breathe an authentic and personal spirit of Calvinistic piety'<sup>1</sup>. And Nicholas Tyacke's innovative study of Puritan baptismal names in the Sussex parish of Warbleton failed (with one exception) to find any correlation between using such names and leaving a will with 'more than a formal statement of religious belief.'<sup>2</sup>

Returning to the Pluckley wills, there are relatively few of the 'strongly-worded individualistic clauses' which Margaret Spufford urged local historians to seek out. As might be expected, Nicholas Huggett's preamble uses the kind of distinctive vocabulary which reflects his committed Protestantism;<sup>3</sup> and widow Joane Tylman's will, from the early date of 1552, conveys similar personal piety:

'...first I comend my sowle into thands of allmightigod my lovinge lorde and father whuse I knowe and beleve and confesse hath of verye Love by the obedience and blude of my salvior christ redemed me and all mankinde from syn that if frome the bondage of Sathan o[u]r mortall enmey that as maney as woll here his holly ward that is to saie obaye the will of god and Labour to do the same. To the same god whiche onely is wise be prayed fo[re]lever and glory nowe and ever amen.'(4)

Widow Tylman's stress on general redemption may reflect

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1. P. Collinson, 'Cranbrook and the Fletchers: Popular and Unpopular Religion in the Kentish Weald', in his Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism (London, Hambledon Press, 1983), p.413.

2. N. Tyacke, 'Popular Puritan Mentality in Late Elizabethan England', in P. Clark et al. (eds.) The English Commonwealth 1547-1640 (Leicester, Leicester Univ. Press, 1979), p.89.

3. K.A.O. PRC 17/41/233.

4. K.A.O. PRC 17/30/31.

the influence of the Free-Willers in the parish at this point. In any case, it certainly contrasts sharply with the Calvinism of Jacobean Puritan William Huggett. But Huggett's will is exceptional not only in its length. Except for a short period at the end of Elizabeth's reign, there are no wills which -even in short formulaic clauses- repeat his Calvinist emphasis on election. The will of yeoman Francis Kingsnoth, who left a Group III estate when he died in 1613, contains some original elements which may suggest strong religious conviction, but in its general tone it is typical of the majority of pre-Civil War Pluckley wills:

'...first and principally I commend my soule into [the] hands of allmightie god my mercifull father who gave it mee and unto our lord Jesus Christe my Redemer by and throughe whome I only truste to be saved and to have cleere remission for all my Sinnes and my body to the earth from whence it came to bee buried where and when it shall please God of his infinite goodnes to call mee to his mercye w[hi]ch I laye downe in full assurance that god will rayse it upp agayne by his power in the last daye unto life eternall.'(1)

Some village wills give no hint at all of the character of the testator's religious beliefs ('I bequeath my soul into the hands of allmighty God, my maker and redeemer' is the most common); but outside the years 1582-1600, the remainder follow the pattern of Kingsnoth's will. Of the twenty-two wills surviving for this eighteen-year period, however, four make explicit reference to 'God's elect children'<sup>2</sup>. In addition, William Dowle's will of 1582 bequeathes his soul to God, 'being

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1. K.A.O. PRC 17/58/144; 10/41/340; P289/1/16: under yr. 1613.  
2. K.A.O. PRC 17/47/390: Will of John Sprott (1588); PRC 17/48/ 191: Will of Tim Saunder (1589); PRC 17/48/402: Will of Nich. Kingsnoth (1591); PRC 17/50/193: Will of John Harris (1597).

fully assured of my salvation'; and in a revealing phrase, John David left his soul in 1600, 'beleevinge to be saved by a trewe and lively faith'<sup>1</sup>.

Two of the four wills mentioning election were drawn up by Luke Hasell. For example, in 1588 John Sprott committed his soul 'unto the mercy of god trustinge assuredly to be placed amongst the nomber of gods elect children and to raigne in his everlastinge kingdom for ever'<sup>2</sup>. Interestingly though, Hasell wrote three other wills during these years; making use of many<sup>3</sup> of the same elements but omitting any mention of election. This raises the possibility that the Calvinist emphasis of wills like Sprott's reflects something of the testator's own opinions, and not simply those of the scribe.

John Picard is listed as a witness or overseer for only six wills written during the forty-seven years of his incumbency. Among them were John David's will quoted above; and that of John Harris, an old Wyatt rebel who died in 1597, aged ninety. Harris bequeathed his soul to God, trusting that 'by the precious death of Christ Jesus my alone savyo[u]r and redeemo[u]r to be one of his elect and chosen children'<sup>4</sup>. Whether Picard himself drew up these wills is not clear; but the coincidence of his involvement -a rare event indeed- with the peculiarity of their preambles may indicate that these

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1. K.A.O. PRC 17/43/357; 17/52/71.

2. K.A.O. PRC 17/47/390.

3. K.A.O. PRC 17/47/312: Will of James Jervis (1587); PRC 17/49/166: Will of Thomas Chesman (1592); PRC 17/50/285: Will of Thomas Waterman (1597).

4. K.A.O. PRC 17/50/193; P.R.O., Calendar of Patent Rolls (Mary) iv, p.55.

were men or more than conventional piety.

These isolated examples permit only some very tentative conclusions. They suggest that by the period 1590-1610, committed Calvinistic Protestantism had become entrenched among at least a small section of Pluckley's will-making population. What happened in the subsequent period is unclear. The absence after 1600 of any will preambles emphasising election (except William Huggett's of 1610) may owe more to the views of Henry Pollard and John Hudson -who drew up over 60% of Pluckley wills between them during the period 1601-39- than to any major shift in the religious preferences of village testators.

(iii) Factionalism and Arminianism

John Picard died within a fortnight of his wife Margaret early in July 1616. Having arrived in Pluckley fresh from Cambridge in 1568, he stayed in the parish which had given him his first position in the Church of England for the remaining forty-eight<sup>1</sup> years of his life. The contrast with John Copley, collated by Archbishop Abbot later that month, could not have<sup>2</sup> been greater.

Copley was already almost forty when he became parson of Pluckley, though only four years earlier he had been appointed to his first benefice -the more modest living of Bethersden, bordering the village to the south. John Copley was born at

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1. K.A.O. P289/1/16 [unfoliated], under year 1616.

2. L.P.L. Reg. Abbot I, f.49a; Haslewood, 'The Rectors of Pluckley', p.89.

Louvain in Belgium; the son of Sir Thomas and Lady Catherine Copley. The family came from Gatton in Surrey, but by the time of the birth of their fourth son John in about 1577, they had been forced into exile abroad on account of their Roman Catholic faith. The young Copley spent his first eight years in England with a Protestant relation of the family, before returning to Belgium to live with his mother.<sup>1</sup>

During adolescence, Copley spent at least four years studying at a number of Catholic seminaries in northern France. He joined a Jesuit mission heading for Spain in about 1590, but was captured by an <sup>English</sup> ~~British~~ ship off Calais. He was later released on payment of a bond of £300, after having been urged by the archbishop of Canterbury to seek 'better education for the truth of Christian Religion'.<sup>2</sup> After indulging in a life of 'frivolity and hunting' for about six years, Copley entered the English College at Rome and was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest in July 1602.<sup>3</sup>

He returned to England soon afterwards, where his labours:

'...were not unprofitable, nor ill esteemed of by those of the Romane profession, in the which no danger of lawes affrighted me, no imprisonment made me faint, no crosses quailed my courage.' (4)

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1. Dictionary of National Biography (London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1885-1901), xxii. p.189; G. Anstruther, The Seminary Priests: A Dictionary of the Secular Clergy of England and Wales I (St. Edmund's College, Ware & Ushaw College, Durham, 1969), pp.87-8; 'The Responsa Scholarum of the English College, Rome I: 1598-1621', Cath. Rec. Soc., LIV (1962) pp.21-2.
  2. 'The Responsa', p.21; J. Copley, Doctrinall and Morall Observations Concerning Religion (London, 1612), p.18.
  3. 'The Responsa', p.21; Anstruther, op.cit., p.87.
  4. Copley, op.cit., p.19.

He was arrested on at least two occasions during the following six years; on one of them for hearing mass in Newgate prison. In 1610, John Copley was reported to be working as a priest in Sussex; but by 1612 he had received a special pardon, converted to the Church of England, and become vicar of Bethersden.<sup>1</sup>

He published a book the same year explaining his conversion from 'the superstitious, idolotrous, and hereticall Religion of the Romane Church unto the perfecte knowledge and practise of the Religion established in this Realme'; hoping that other recusants would follow his example.<sup>2</sup> In his book, Copley describes how, on his arrival in England, he made a particular study of the works of Protestant controversialists, in order to 'better direct souls' towards the Catholic Church. The 'strong doubttes' that resulted would not leave him, and in discussions with learned Protestants he found himself ill-equipped to defend Catholic doctrine. Finally, after the alleged involvement of the Pope in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, he began to question a number of doctrines of the Catholic Church and found that 'they were not taught and professed by the ancient and Primitive Church'. Upon reaching this conclusion Copley decided to convert to the Church of England.<sup>3</sup>

We do not know to what extent this represents the full background to his conversion, or even adequately reflects the progression in his thinking. There is no reason to doubt, however, that:

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1. Anstruther, op.cit., pp.18-19.
  2. Copley, op.cit., pp.4, 14.
  3. Ibid., pp.19-24.

'...my change and conversion from the faith of Rome to the faith of England was even [sic] beset with manifold difficulties, oppositions, barres and obstacles...For first...I was armed against it by my continuall education and example of my parents... Secondly I was further armed against this my conversion by my function and calling in the Romane Church... Thirdly I was moreover armed against my conversion by the successful practice of my function... [Fourthly and Fifthly] I was armed against this my conversion by the great mutuall love which was betweene me and many cheife and great persons... [and] by the example of most of mine owne kindred...' (1)

John Copley had evidently been a man with a strong sense of his own ability as a churchman; a belief apparently confirmed by 'the reputation and good opinion I found that the Romish clergie and Laitie had of me'<sup>2</sup>. It was moreover as a councillor of 'cheife and great persons' that Copley saw himself. This probably derived both from his family background<sup>3</sup> and their kinship ties to other recusant gentry families; and from the emphasis which Catholic missionaries placed on the spiritual needs of the gentry for both political and pastoral<sup>4</sup> reasons.

The events in John Copley's life preceding his appointment to the rectory of Pluckley in 1616 have been described in considerable detail in part because of their intrinsic interest. They may also, however, help to explain his willingness to confront Sir Edward Dering over his planned alterations to Pluckley parish church in the early 1630s,

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1. Ibid., pp.7-9.

2. Ibid., p.9.

3. In the account of his life to c. 1599 written at the English College, Rome, Copley lists 8 Catholic gentry families to whom he was related ('The Responsa Scholarum', pp.21-2).

4. C. Haigh, 'From Monopoly to Minority: Catholicism in Early Modern England', T.R.H.S., 5th. ser., XXXI (1981), pp.129-47.

thereby embroiling himself in the long-running dispute between the Derings and their neighbours and distant kinsmen, the Bettenhams.

Pluckley's parish church had provided a continuing focus of conflict since the mid-1580s. As elsewhere, an essentially secular preoccupation with manorial rights and jurisdictions -possibly linked with diverging economic fortunes- lay at the root of the issue in question,<sup>1</sup> which revolved around the respective rights of the two families in the church's south aisle (or 'Lady Chapel') as lords of the manor of Surrenden and Sheerland.

In about 1585, acting on the instructions of their master, a number of the servants of Daniel Bettenham entered a seat in the aisle recently erected by Richard Dering.<sup>2</sup> The matter was temporarily settled in Dering's favour<sup>3</sup> following the intervention of Archbishop Whitgift in 1585, but twenty years later, in October 1605, the Commissary General of Canterbury diocese reported that:

'...the servants of Mr. John Bettenham very disorderlye have entered into a pew in our Lady Chapell there, & so (uppon I know not what authoritie) have placed themselves amongst Sir Anthony Derings famely: some distanc[e] from Mr Bettenhams seate, and the rest of his howshold.'<sup>4</sup>

The Dering side maintained throughout that there were a number of pews in the main body of the church set aside for the Bettenham family as lords of the manor of Sheerland. Shortly

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1. See ch.4, pp. 49-50. p. 269.

2. P.R.O. STAC 8/125/2, f.36.

3. Loc.cit.; K.A.O. U1107/L9/6.

4. P.R.O. STAC 8/125/2, f.36; K.A.O. U350/Q1/8.

after the events described by Dr. Newman took place, Sir Anthony Dering secured a second judgment from the ecclesiastical authorities supporting his interpretation of manorial jurisdiction.<sup>1</sup> In a letter of November 1605, Newman urged the parish churchwardens to do everything in their power to prevent further clashes in the church between the Dering and Bettenham families. He added:

'...I earnestly desier all good correspondence betweene them seeing they be allied by birthe & neighbors by habitacons: you may suppose... yt if these gent[le]men fall owt that theyr poor neighbors may indure som[e] brunt, or incurr jelosies: & so be odious to them bothe.'(2)

Newman closed his letter with the instruction to present wrongdoers to the church courts at Canterbury should the problems persist.

Just three months later in February 1606, John Bettenham was presented to the archdeaconry court for placing himself in one of Sir Anthony's south aisle pews. Once again the judgment went against him; but after two unsuccessful appeals to higher ecclesiastical courts (the Court of Arches and the Court of Delegates), Bettenham managed to obtain a 'writ of prohibition' from the Court of King's Bench, forbidding any further action in the suit.<sup>3</sup>

Bettenham's legal manoevering could buy at best a temporary peace. Church services in St. Nicholas's were marked on four successive Sundays during July and August 1606 by further conflict over the south aisle pews. On three

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1. P.R.O. STAC 8/125/2, f.36.

2. K.A.O. U350/Q1/8.

3. C.C.L. X.4,8/166-7; P.R.O. STAC 8/125/2, f.36.

occasions, Dering alleged, a number of his servants were abused and assaulted by members of the Bettenham household and others in an effort to eject them from their seats. Those held responsible -among them John Bettenham himself and his wife Anne- did not deny that they had displaced Dering's servants; what was at issue when the case came before the Court of Star Chamber later that year was whether force had been used or not. Both sides agreed though that scuffles had taken place in the contested pews between the two sets of servants: one of Bettenham's servants admitted to urging a second member of his household to use 'a good pin' to hasten the departure of one of Dering's maids.<sup>1</sup>

The parish churchwardens seem to have agreed with Sir Anthony Dering's contention that unreasonable force was used to eject members of his household, for in December 1607 they presented Anne Bettenham to the archdeaconry court. Although the churchwardens provided no corroboration for some of the more dramatic details of Dering's bill (it alleged for example that Mrs. Bettenham shouted 'Come out here hussee' at one servant and 'did also strike at, and assault' a second), they did charge the defendant with 'pulling or shoving out a mayden sitting in one of the seates w[hi]ch have benn and yet are in controversye: thus not showing 'yt due reverence in time of devine service as ought to have benn.'<sup>2</sup>

Charge was met by counter-charge. John Bettenham presented his own bill to the court of Star Chamber in

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1. P.R.O. STAC 8/125/2, ff.36, 47.

2. Loc.cit., ff.31,36; C.C.L. X.4.11/189b.

January 1608. In it he altered his earlier version of events regarding the last of the four incidents alleged by Sir Anthony Dering. Bettenham maintained that on this and on two subsequent occasions in September, Dering had assembled a 'multitude' of armed men in order to forcibly remove members of his neighbour's household from their seats in the south aisle.<sup>1</sup>

In a mirror-image of Sir Anthony's bill, Bettenham alleged that several pews in the aisle were his birthright as lord of the manor of Sheerland; and that this view had been confirmed by a ruling of the archbishop of Canterbury. In a revealing passage, Bettenham described how:

'...the saide Sir Anthony Deeringe not contentinge himself w[i]th such place in the saide church as his Ancestors in former tymes were contented w[i]th all but vauntinge himselfe that sithence yo[u]r highnes hath indowed him w[i]th the degree of the knighthood and that he is in Comission of the peace in your Ma[jes]ties saide countye of kent & better man than your saide Subject, therefore he will have more (as it pleaseth him terme it) Elbowe Roome in the saide Church.'<sup>(2)</sup>

By October, however, a compromise had been hammered out. John Bettenham agreed to relinquish to Richard and Sir Anthony Dering and their heirs all his rights to sit in the south aisle. In return, the Derings were to grant Bettenham and his heirs free passage through the aisle to their seats in the main body of the church until the latter had built his own side chapel to the north of the chancel.<sup>3</sup>

As we saw in the last chapter, manorial rivalries re-surfaced in the early 1630s, with Sir Edward Dering's

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1. P.R.O. STAC 8/61/29/ K.A.O. U133/L3/2, ff.9-13  
2. K.A.O. U133/L3/2, f.10.  
3. K.A.O. U275/F6.

attempts to make a series of alterations to Pluckley parish church. It is an interesting reflection on Dering's attitude towards the church that he should have even contemplated these changes. They included structural alterations to the church fabric (a passage to the roof was to be blocked off, another opened up); and the removal of a number of manorial brasses for 'restoration' or replacement -part of Dering's<sup>1</sup> efforts to create a spurious Saxon genealogy for his family.

He had, moreover, sought the approval of neither the parson nor the archbishop before embarking on the work. The fact the Pluckley's church was to be 'bettered in decency and<sup>2</sup> conveniency' apparently seemed reason enough to proceed.

But for the opposition of John Bettenham and John Copley, the matter would probably have never reached the ears of the archbishop.<sup>3</sup> Dering evidently regarded Copley's intervention in the matter as wholly inappropriate. In a letter to Archbishop Laud of April 1634, he described how the parson had been 'thrusting his hand into matters of descent & pedigree, & therewith drawing out nothing but untruth.'<sup>4</sup>

Sir Edward Dering's behaviour suggests that he had regarded his intervention in the mundane matters of church maintenance as a natural consequence of his manorial position in the village. The private chapel he worshipped in had after<sup>5</sup> all been built by one his ancestors. The 'combination' of John

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1. See R.H. D'Elboux, 'The Dering Brassess', The Antiquaries Jnl., XXVII (1947), 11-23.

2. B.L. Ms. Stowe 743, f.99.

3. K.A.O. U350/Q1/9.

4. B.L. Ms. Stowe 743, f.98.

5. J. Newman, The Buildings of England: West Kent and the Weald, 2nd edn. (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976), p.465.

Copley with John Bettenham posed a threat to this customary state of affairs -placing the concerns of the church outside his immediate control. Dering's sense of unwarranted exclusion is reflected in his letter to Laud, where he describes the opportunities open to his enemies to deface the family coats of arms:

'...one of Mr. Bettenhams [men]...hath of long tyme before the first defacing, & until synce the last defacing, had & kept a key to go into the church through the Bellferry, which was unknowne to me by which passage they have (as I heare) often (in pretence for singing) entred the church...' (1)

John Copley's strong conviction of his ability as a man of the Church, together with his elite background may well have contributed to his resolve to oppose Sir Edward Dering's plans. Were differences in religious outlook also partly to blame for the evident animosity between the two men?

The answer is not straightforward, since neither men seem to have used the religious beliefs of the other as a weapon of attack. Sir Edward Dering's political career has been the subject of a number of studies,<sup>2</sup> but his religious beliefs remain somewhat elusive. Up to the mid-1630s he was closely associated with the Court party (his second wife was related to the Duke of Buckingham) and therefore with the religious policy of William Laud, since 1633 archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>3</sup>

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1. B.L. Ms. Stowe 743, f.98.

2. W. Lamont, Godly Rule: Politics and Religion, 1603-1660 (London, Macmillan, 1969), pp.81-93; A. Everitt, The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion 1640-60 (Leicester, Leicester Univ. Press, 1966), ch.3-4; D. Hirst, 'The Defection of Sir Edward Dering 1640-1', H.J., XV,2 (1972), 193-208.

3. Ibid., p.197.

During the last years of James's reign, but especially after the accession of Charles I in 1625, the old Calvinist consensus within the established Church came under increasing attack from supporters of the Arminian doctrine of free-grace. It was these men whom Charles placed where possible in the most powerful positions within the Church. Laud had been promised the succession at Canterbury as early as 1626, but it was not until George Abbot died seven years later that he was able to take over the see.<sup>1</sup> The 'Laudian' policy that followed was based upon a set of theological assumptions which shared little with the hitherto orthodox tenets of Calvinism:

'Such a view involved the replacment of preaching as the normal vehicle of saving grace, and one restricted to the elect saints, by sacraments which conferred grace indiscriminately; baptism of all infants, without qualification, began the process of salvation, and this was to be followed by the regular receiving of communion as a result of which all partakers, providing they confessed past sins, were renewed in grace.'<sup>(2)</sup>

It was Laud's emphasis on the importance of the sacraments that lay behind the ceremonialism for which his episcopate is best known. He attempted to enforce a series of changes in parochial ritual which reflected this sacramental position: communion tables were to be removed from church naves to the chancel, raised and railed off; bowing at the name of Jesus and at the altar was ordered restored; and dignified church buildings and ornaments were encouraged in order to provide an appropriately reverential setting.<sup>3</sup>

This drive towards conformity in the parishes was

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1. Tyacke, 'Arminianism and Counter-Revolution', passim.

2. Ibid., p.130.

3. Hirst, Authority and Conflict, pp.164-9.

accompanied by a broadening of the definition of nonconformity punishable by the church courts. It became an offence to expound a Calvinist interpretation of Cranmer's Thirty-Nine Articles, or openly to advocate predestinarian doctrine; to oppose Laud's ceremonial innovations; or to speak out against the anti-sabbatarian Book of Sports, reissued by Charles in <sup>1</sup>1633.

As Lieutenant of Dover Castle (a post he had secured in 1628 through Court connections), Sir Edward Dering seems to have been an energetic servant of the government, both in the secular and religious spheres; gaining a reputation as one of the foremost persecutors of separatists in the area.<sup>2</sup> By about 1635, however, he had left Dover, and four years later he stood for Parliament on an explicitly anti-Court ticket. Possibly, as Peter Clark suggests, his conflict with John Copley, which dragged on throughout the 1630s added 'a dose of Caroline anti-clericalism' to a man whose family background<sup>3</sup> already made him sympathetic to moderate Puritanism. In any case, by 1639 it was being said by Anglicans that he was 'none of our church' and that he 'never would goe up to the rayles to receive the communion'.<sup>4</sup>

There is strong evidence to suggest that John Copley was an active supporter of Archbishop Laud's policies. As early as 1620 his style of churchmanship seems to have alienated a

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1. Tyacke, op.cit., p.139.

2. Clark, English Provincial Society, p.379; Hirst, 'The Defection of Sir Edward Dering', p.197.

3. Clark, op.cit.

4. Hirst, op.cit., p.198.

section of village opinion. In points 4-6 of a list of 'Informations concerning Plucklye' presented to the archdeaconry court, Copley complained that:

'4. There hath beene a greate neglecte of most of my p[ar]ishioners in receaving thrice a year, according to the Cannons in that behalffe.

5. Many of my p[ar]ishioners have gone to other p[ar]ishes when I have p[rea]ched and reade service: and some receaved allsoe at other p[ar]ishes, neglecting thereowne.

6. Manye of my p[ar]ishioners never or very seldome come to service in the afternones on sabothe dayes, of w[hi]ch omissions I desire the Churchwardens may bee admonished to observe and examine the reasons of them, and to note where they are.'(1)

John Wolton, presented to the court seventeen years later, seems a good example of the kind of parishioners to whom Copley was refer<sup>↑</sup>ring. It was alleged that 'he doth goe to the next p[ar]ish of litle Charte on some Sundayes to the after noon sermon.<sup>2</sup>' What drew him there was probably the presence of Puritan rector Samual Keame, whose conventicling got him into trouble with the Laudian authorities on repeated<sup>3</sup> occasions.

Yet Wolton was one of only nine men and women from the village presented to the church courts for offences linked to church attendance during the whole period of Copley's incumbency.<sup>4</sup> In Pluckley, as has been found more generally, church court archives appear to be of little assistance when it comes to assessing true levels of

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1. C.C.L. X.5.9/267, reprinted in F. Haslewood, 'Visitation Articles', A.C., XXII (1897), p.105.

2. C.C.L. Z.3.16 [unfol.]

3. Acheson, 'The Development of Religious Separatism' pp. 78-9.

4. L.P.L. VG4/15/26b; C.C.L. X.5.9/155b, X.6.8/203b, Z3.16 [unfol.].

absenteeism.<sup>1</sup> But even if Copley's comments wildly over-estimate the scale of the phenomenon, it seems unlikely that Wolton's peripatetic habits were wholly exceptional. Moreover those who did 'gad' to neighbouring parishes were not simply part of that 'tidal flow of the godly in an out of the neglected parishes and preaching centres' described by Patrick Collinson, for Pluckley's parson was no 'dumb dog'.<sup>2</sup> The godly folk among the Pluckley villagers were apparently choosing to listen to the sermons of other preachers in preference to those of their own incumbent.

Possibly Copley had never fully embraced that 'rising tide of consensual, evangelical Calvinism' that marked James's<sup>3</sup> reign. He may have retained from his Catholic training a strong sacerdotalism and a respect for church ceremonial; and thus seen in Laudianism welcome official sanction for an approach to God's ministry he had long favoured.

The clearest evidence that John Copley supported the policies of the archbishop in the 1630s comes in his clash with the village churchwardens, recorded in the proceedings of Canterbury Archdeaconry Court. On 4 July 1637, Copley complained to the court that a number of presentments which he had drawn up with the churchwardens following the

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1. Collinson, The Religion of Protestants, pp.208-12; M. Spufford, 'Can We Count the "Godly" and the "Conformable" in Seventeenth Century England?', J.Ecl.H., XXXVI, 3 (1985), p.431.

2. Collinson, op.cit., p.258.

3. P. Collinson, 'The Jacobean Religious Settlement: The Hampton Court Conference', in H. Tomlinson (ed.), Before the Civil War (London, Macmillan, 1983), p.50.

previous Easter visitation had never been exhibited. Declaring himself 'aggrieved' at this state of affairs, Copley urged that:

'...speedy course maybe taken by the Courte for the finding out of this abuse and that recourse may be accordingly had of which perticulier things S[i]r Nathaniel Brent knt. Vicar General to my Lord grace [Archbishop Laud] hath been made acquainted and hath accordingly ordered that course should be taken according to my desire.'(1)

By securing the backing of the archbishop's own assistant, the Pluckley churchman achieved the effect he desired, for just two weeks later the court called on the village churchwardens to explain their conduct. They stated that:

'...they did indeede...joyne with Mr. Copley in their presentments and to the said presentments soe at first by them made did sett their hands...but afterwards considering that they could not justify divers things then presented they did joyne together againe and make new ones.'(2)

As in 1620, Copley was not able to count on the support of his churchwardens in his efforts to stamp his authority on the village. It seems probable that whatever the extent of opposition to his ministry at that early date, his support for the Laudian innovations of the 1630s hardened sections of village opinion against him. This was not simply a function of Puritan hostility to 'popish' doctrines and ceremonies. As Anthony Fletcher has noted, 'the enforcement of Arminianism was provocative even when no more  
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than a moderate Protestantism was the established creed.' This

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1. C.C.L. 2.3.16 [unfol.].

2. Loc.cit.

3. A. Fletcher, 'Factionalism in Town and Countryside: The Significance of Puritanism and Arminianism', in D. Baker (ed.), Studies in Church History 16: The Church in Town and Countryside (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1979), p.294.

derived not only from the disruption to customary church ritual which the new doctrines demanded, but also from the high costs involved -in both time and money- in replacing altar fittings, ornaments and other church furniture; and in the higher standards of repair and upkeep required of church fabric and grounds.<sup>1</sup>

In Canterbury diocese the combined effect of doctrinal and practical objections to Laudianism had created a situation of widespread opposition to the prelate's policies by the late 1630s. Indeed, Peter Clark has argued that possibly a minority of Canterbury parishes ever transferred their communion tables from church naves to the chancel.<sup>2</sup>

In Pluckley though, it seems unlikely that even circumscribed as it was, the parson's influence was not sufficient to effect this symbolically important change. The hand of Copley can be seen behind the last presentment made to the church courts before the collapse of episcopal administration in 1641-2. The communion table and the church carpet were declared 'old and fitt to be replaced'; only one part of the communion wine was kept in a 'cleane pewter bottle', the other in an 'earthen wickett bottle'; and it was admitted that 'swyne have often beene seen in the churchyard'. Otherwise, the churchwardens concluded, 'Wee have all things orderly and decent'.<sup>3</sup>

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1. A. Fletcher, A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex 1600-1660 (London, Longmans, 1975), ch.4.  
2. Clark, English Provincial Society, p.367.  
3. C.C.L. Z.3.16 [unfol.], dated June 1639.

(iv) Civil War and Restoration: Royalism and Dissent

I

Sir Edward Dering continued to make efforts to have Copley removed from Pluckley rectory at least as late as July 1639. By the early months of 1642, however, the situation had changed almost beyond recognition. In June 1641, alarmed at the way in which parliamentary moves to abolish episcopacy seemed to be fuelling disorder in the countryside (including in his native Kent), Dering turned his back on the 'root and branch' reformers he had hitherto supported, and spoke instead in favour of a moderate form of episcopacy. In January 1642 he published a collection of speeches vindicating his new position, which was debated by the Commons, voted a scandal to the House, and ordered to be burned by the common hangman. To complete the downturn in his fortunes, Dering was banished from Parliament and briefly committed to the Tower.<sup>2</sup>

Dering was released from custody in February 1642 and he promptly left London for Surrenden. Barely a month later he became involved in the framing of the localist Kentish Petition, whose demands included the retention of episcopacy and of traditional prayer book religion 'free from

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1. K.A.O. U350/Q1.

2. D. Hirst, 'The Defection of Sir Edward Dering 1640-1641', H.J., XV, 2 (1972), 193-208; W. Lamont, Godly Rule: Religion and Politics 1603-60 (London, Macmillan, 1969), pp.81-93; A. Everitt, The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion 1640-1660 (Leicester, Leicester Univ. Press, 1966), pp.84-93. For the national background, see J. Morrill, 'The Religious Context of the Civil War', T.R.H.S., XXXIV, (1984), pp.155-78.

interruptions, scorns, profaness, threats, and force of such men who daily do deprave it and neglect the use of it'.<sup>1</sup> By the end of March 1642, the Commons had been informed in detail of the petitioners' demands, and several of their number were ordered arrested; among them Sir Edward Dering and a certain 'Mr. Copley, minister'.<sup>2</sup>

Copley was released on bail on 7 April 1642. His co-petitioner was not freed, but he did manage to escape his captors and return to Kent, eventually retiring to Surrenden, where he remained until called to York by the king later that year. Copley retained his living during the early months of the Civil War; but on 7 September 1643 the Commons ordered the benefice of Pluckley sequestered and its cure served henceforth by one Samuel Jemmett.<sup>3</sup>

The sequestration order was lifted several years later and a new rector, Edward Simpson D.D., was appointed. Simpson was a pluralist and it would appear that during his brief incumbency it was Jemmett who continued to officiate in the parish church as curate. Already an old man, Simpson resigned the living of Pluckley in 1649 in favour of his son-in-law, Israel Tonge. Tonge retained the services of Samuel Jemmett up to 1652, at which point Pluckley's curate succeeded Edward Simpson, now dead, as rector of the Kentish

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1. Everitt, op.cit., pp.93-8.

2. Ibid., pp.99-100. Journals of the House of Commons, ii. 502-3.

3. Commons Journals, ii. pp.515-6, iii. p.231; Everitt, op.cit., pp.119-20; A.G. Matthews, Walker Revised (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1948), p.214.

parish of Eastling. Tonge held onto the rectory of Pluckley until 1657, when he was replaced by Thomas Daffy. The latter remained parson until John Copley was restored to his former benefice in 1660 at the age of eighty-five.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, lack of evidence does not permit an account of the Interregnum Church in Pluckley to proceed very far beyond these bare facts. A number of points can be made though. After John Copley had put his name to the implicitly anti-parliamentarian Kentish petition of 1642, his deprivation was bound to follow sooner or later. Had he not taken this step, his fate might have been very different, for as I.M. Green has demonstrated, 'many of those who must have practiced Laud's innovations in the 1630s escaped scot-free in the next decade and continued to serve their parishes.' What protected these men from harrassment was not just their willingness to abandon High-Church ceremonies, but also that their parishioners were not prepared to seek their removal at a time when it would have been very easy to do so.<sup>2</sup>

Behind this reluctance lay what John Morrill has called 'the passive strength of Anglican survivalism'. Morrill marshals convincing evidence to show that despite parliamentary prohibition, attachment to the old Prayer Book and to the seasonal sacraments of the Anglican Church remained

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1. F. Haslewood, 'The Rectors of Pluckley, Kent for Upwards of Six Hundred Years', A.C., XXII (1897), pp.90-1; Matthews, op.cit., pp.32, 214, 225; Dictionary of National Biography (London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1885-1901), xiii, p.377; lii, p.269; lvii, pp.30-3.

2. I.M. Green, 'The Persecution of "Scandalous" and "Malignant" Parish Clergy During the English Civil War', E.H.R., CCCLXXII (1979), pp.529-30.

strong. Ironically, it was the looser, more decentralised structure with which Parliament replaced the old Church during the years 1641-6 that made the elimination of such liturgical conservatism a practical impossibility.<sup>1</sup>

One measure of the strength of traditionalism at the village level is the frequency with which the ejection of a minister by Parliament or county committee led to resistance from the parishioners. This might take the form of a petition, a tithe strike against the newcomer, or even the violent reintrusion of the sequestered minister.<sup>2</sup>

It would appear that the parishioners of Pluckley -or at least certain of their number- adopted a similar stance towards Samuel Jemmett. At some point after his arrival in Pluckley in 1643, seven villagers signed their names to a series of 'Articles exhibited..against Samuell Jemmett Clarke whoe pr[e]tendes himselfe the lawfull Patron of that Church...'<sup>3</sup> Two of the articles were allegedly attested to by the whole parish. Firstly it was stated that Jemmett was not the lawfull incumbent 'for that hee hath obtruded himselfe upon the p[a]rishioners w[i]thout the consent or approbacon of anie of them'. Secondly, he was held to be 'the backwardest in the p[a]rish to pay anie assessm[en]t' to Parliament, even though 'he had his teithes duly paid him'.

Six of the seven other articles were signed by the named parishioners, with one or two of them attesting to the truth

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1. J. Morrill, 'The Church in England, 1642-9', in idem. (ed.), Reactions to the English Civil War (London, Macmillan, 1982), 89-114.

2. Ibid., p.103.

3. K.A.O. U350/Q4.

of each. Three concerned alleged abuses relating to the collection of tithes. Jemmett was accused of lying to a number of villagers (including three of those petitioning for his removal) about the correct sums to be paid in tithe on mown grass.

Jemmett was also charged with valuing his oath more highly than that of other parishioners; with omitting to pray for Parliament during a Royalist plot at Dover; and finally, it was alleged, he expounded false doctrine from the pulpit. Thus he was heard to declare that the congregation 'were not the Church of God: But Ministers w[h]ich are gathered together by authority'; that 'hee had as willingly heare the Excommunication of Christ as of the Church'; that the parishioners 'ought not to be curious of our Salvation but tarry our tyme and God would reveale it to us'; and that 'Discipline is a thinge of naught, compareinge it to a Shell'.

These articles against Jemmett may not be quite what they purport to be. On the one hand the petitioners draw attention to breaches of parliamentary ordinances which Jemmett was supposed to have committed. On the other hand, his initial appointment -which had been ordered by the House of Commons- is described as 'unlawfull', and contrary to the wishes of the villagers. In addition, it is difficult to see any coherent religious position behind the pulpit utterances attributed to Pluckley's minister.

The last article of the petition indicates that Jemmett had obtained warrants from a local justice to distrain the

livestock of several villagers for the non-payment of tithes:

'...[he] hath taken treble damadges or more from many of the p[ar]ish and that comonly in the night w[i]thout anie sworne officer, or before men usuallye went abroad upon anie busines, never returninge anie againe, and he hath gained nowe by him a more warrantes against his p[ar]ishioners, and they knowe not what will befall them in the proceedings thereof.'

It seems clear that whether true or not the doctrinal articles levelled against Jemmett were part of an attempt to deflect the minister's efforts to claim tithe payments from a number of villagers. The petitioners concluded their articles with a request 'for stay of his unjust and ridged p[ro]ceedings until such tyme as the said p[ar]ishioners shall make due prooffe of the p[ar]ticuliers aforesaid.'

Although there is little direct evidence, it is possible that the opposition to Jemmet's tithe demands formed part of a broader antipathy to the parliamentary cause. John Morrill has argued that the ordinances of 1643 and 1647 which transferred jurisdiction in tithe disputes to local justices was probably a specific response to a Royalist campaign to withhold tithes from intruded ministers. This campaign reached a peak in the summer months of 1647 with rumours of a settlement between the king and the army that would bring the restoration of episcopacy and the Prayer Book. Such religious conservatism formed part of the background to the Kentish Revolt of 1648, and Alan Everitt has identified the scarpland villages around Pluckley as one of the centres of rebel support.

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1. Morrill, op.cit., pp.110-2.

2. Everitt, Community of Kent, pp.231-40, 245.

Pluckley could boast a number of Royalist supporters besides Sir Edward Dering. Henry, son of John Bettenham lost his lands to the sequestrators for several years during the mid-1640s; and three other men from the village compounded with the county committee for 'delinquency' in the early 1650s, paying sums ranging from £3 to £70 in fines.<sup>1</sup> Significantly perhaps, one of the delinquents was John Pell, a wealthy village yeoman, and one of those in dispute with Samuel Jemmett over tithe payments.<sup>2</sup>

It may be no coincidence either that Israel Tonge, parson of Pluckley from 1649, also antagonised a section of village opinion at about this time. In the spring of 1657, Anthony Wood records, '...being much vex'd with factious Parishioners and Quakers, [he] left his Benefice'.<sup>3</sup>

## II

No other evidence has been found to suggest that Quakers were active in the parish at this point. Certainly the Quakers and other sects had established a strong foothold in the Kentish Weald by the late 1650s. Although a handful of fully-separatist congregations emerged in Kent in the Jacobean period, it was Laud's harrassment of nonconformists -both within and outside the established Church- combined with his concomitant desire to introduce Arminian 'innovations' in the parishes which 'prove[d] critical in directing the hitherto serpentine development of religious radicalism within

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1. K.A.O. P289/5/1; Calendar of the Proceedings of the Committee for Compounding Etc. 1643-1660, ed. M.A. Everett Green (London, H.M.S.O., 1889-92), i. p.460, iii. p.2175.

2. Calendar of the Cmmttee. for Compounding, i. p.460.

3. A. Wood, Athenae Oxoniensis (London, 1691-2), ii. 502.

his own diocese.<sup>1</sup>

With the collapse of episcopal authority in the 1640s, separatist or proto-separatist congregations all over the county seized the opportunity to draw up covenants and establish the formal structure of gathered churches. In 1640, the first Kentish Baptist church came into being in the parish of Smarden on Pluckley's southern border, and by the early 1650s meetings of the sect were also taking place in Bethersden (neighbouring Smarden in the east and Pluckley in the south-east), and in several other scarpland and wealden communities - Ashford, Benenden, Biddenden, Cranbrook, Maidstone, and Staplehurst.<sup>2</sup>

The Baptists never lost their hold over the Weald. By the 1670s, further Baptist assemblies had been established to the north and west of Pluckley in the scarpland parishes of Sutton Valence, Boughton Malherbe, Lenham and Charing; and in the Weald at Headcorn and Tenterden.<sup>3</sup>

Robert Acheson has drawn attention to the native origins of the first generation of wealden Baptist and Congregationalist ministers (the latter served churches at Addisham and Staplehurst by 1650) - a contrast to the position in the separatist churches of Canterbury, Dover and Sandwich

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1. Acheson, 'The Development of Religious Separatism' p.74. See also Clark, English Provincial Society, pp. 370-1.

2. Nuttall, 'Dissenting Churches in Kent before 1700', p.182.

3 Turner, Original Records of Early Nonconformity, ii. pp.1002-8.

which were pastored by outsiders. Acheson suggests that:

'Wealden sectarian development may have been far more dependent on some kind of residual, native nonconformity whilst that in the urban areas of east Kent drew its inspiration from outside influences.'(1)

The development of Quakerism in Kent took a wholly different form. The geographical distribution of support for the Friends in the Restoration period coincided closely with the itinerary of a series of Quaker evangelists, beginning with William Caton and John Stubbes during the years 1655-6.<sup>2</sup>

There is no evidence in the extensive journals and correspondence of William Caton, Quaker founder George Fox (who also visited Kent in 1655), or other early Friends, that their preaching tours of the county during the years 1655-60 included visits either to Pluckley, or to any of its immediate neighbours.<sup>3</sup> The subsequent weakness of Quaker support in this area is clearly indicated by the evidence from a number of surviving 'Sufferings Books' which list the parish of origin of Kentish Friends imprisoned or fined during the period 1655-1700 for 'meeting together to waite upon the Lord'; or for other offences such as interrupting Anglican services and refusing to pay church rates and tithes. Pluckley does not figure among the sixty or so county parishes listed

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1. Acheson, 'The Development of Religious Separatism', p.209.  
2. Ibid., pp.242-3; K. Showler, A Review of the History of the Society of Friends in Kent, 1655 to 1966 (Canterbury, Canterbury Preparative Meeting for the Soc. of Friends, 1970), ch.2.  
3. A Journal of the Life of...W. Caton, Written by Own Hand (London, 1689); The Journals of George Fox, 2 vols. (London, Healey Bros., 1912); N. Penney (ed.) 'The First Publishers of Truth', Jnl. of the Friends Hist. Soc., suppl. 2 (1907), pp.130-46; Library of the Soc. of Friends, Caton Mss. 3/9,28,93-4,97,165,173; Swarthmore Mss. 4/256,266,271.

in the books; Quaker support seems to have remained concentrated in the southern Weald -around Cranbrook and Staplehurst.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the beliefs held by the Quakers represented a radical extension of the Baptist doctrine of general redemption: 'the expression of true Christianity as moral conduct; the potential of all humanity to know the spirit of God.'<sup>2</sup> Like the Quakers, the Baptists stressed the importance of the light of God dwelling within individual believers. The role of public worship, therefore, was to provide an opportunity for the outpouring of the Spirit through prophesying, not to engage in formal prayer or to listen to preconceived sermons.<sup>3</sup>

However, this emphasis on the human capacity for inspiration by the Holy Spirit existed alongside and in tension with an extreme biblical literalism, possibly inherited from the Lollards. By the mid-seventeenth century, the legal requirements of the faith had come to preoccupy many Baptist congregations; and in wealden Kent as elsewhere this found expression in long-running and often bitter controversies about which observances besides baptism should be considered as qualifications for church membership.<sup>4</sup>

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1. K.A.O. N/FQZ/1-2; J. Bessse, A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers (London, 1753), i. pp.288-300.

2. McGregor, 'The Baptists: Fount of All Heresy', p.61.

3. Watts, The Dissenters, p.205.

4. Ibid., p.206; McGregor, op.cit., pp.39-43; B.R. White, The English Baptists in the Seventeenth Century (London, Bap. Hist. Soc., 1983), pp.41ff; Acheson, 'The Development of Religious Separatism', pp.209-17.

It was in this environment of disputation and division that the Quaker message took root and flourished with its self-conscious appeal for a return to the pure ideals of evangelist separatism. The worldliness and immodesty of Baptist leaders; the stifling formalism of the sect's form of worship; and above all its rejection of religious toleration<sup>1</sup> drew sharp criticism from Quaker evangelists.

The evidence of the Sufferings Books suggests that such defections as there were from the Baptists to the Friends affected in the main those congregations which met in or near parishes where Quaker preachers had been at work in the 1650s. The parish of Pluckley could have been an exception to this pattern and generated a measure of Quaker support sufficiently powerful by 1657 to play its part in driving out the parson, but the apparent absence of village 'sufferers' for the remainder of the century argues against such an interpretation.

Indeed, several pieces of evidence on the state of religion in Pluckley in the 1660s and '70s point in the same direction. In 1663, A Catalogue of all the Benefices & Promocons within the Diocese and Jurisdiction of Canterbury<sup>2</sup> was prepared for the incoming archbishop, Gilbert Sheldon. The manuscript contains many brief sketches of incumbents and their parishes within the diocese of Canterbury; possibly the result of investigations conducted during Archbishop Juxon's

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1. McGregor, op.cit., p.61.

2. L.P.L. Ms. 1126.

visitation earlier that year.<sup>1</sup>

The anonymous author of the document reserved his most detailed comments for those communities where nonconformity was seen as a major threat to the established Church. Of the wealden parish of Cranbrook and its parson John Cooper, it was noted:

'A man of good parts & zealous principles for ye Church, if he knew how to governe them to ye best advantage. The p[ar]ish very great, at least 3000 Communicants in it, of w[hi]ch not above 200 usually come in ye yeare. Pestered with all sorts of Non-Conformists above 1000 ...No Justice nor gentleman in ye p[ar]ish'(2)

The parishes of Bethersden and Smarden, both of which bordered Pluckley in the south, received similar treatment. In Bethersden, 'Those that come to Church are very Conformable, but there are many absenters. Parishioners about 800, of yem 120 communicating p[er]sons'. Its neighbour, Smarden was 'A very disorderly p[ar]ish. 1000 parishion[er]s, not above 200 come to Church. At Easter last but 8 Communicants'<sup>3</sup>.

Pluckley's church at this date was served by graduate curate John Raynes. He was employed by the non-resident and pluralist rector, John Bargrave D.D., who had recently succeeded that octogenarian survivor of pre-Civil War days, John Copley. Like Copley, the new parson had been deprived by Parliament in the early days of the Civil War: he was ejected from a fellowship at Pembroke College, Cambridge in 1644, after holding the position for seven years. Bargrave

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1. I.M.Green, The Re-Establishment of the Church of England (Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), p.170

2. L.P.L. Ms. 1126, f.36.

3. Ibid., ff.35, 38.

also resembled his predecessor in that he recovered his old post at the Restoration. By July 1662, however, he had left Cambridge and gained the livings of the Kentish parishes of Pluckley and Harbledowne; and later that year he added to these a third clerical post -as a canon of Canterbury Cathedral.<sup>1</sup>

The comments of the Catalogue author on Pluckley stand in marked contrast to his appraisals of Cranbrook, Bethersden and Smarden. His verdict was brief in the extreme: Pluckley was a 'Parish indifferently well affected'.<sup>2</sup> It had evidently been decided not to give the village a clean bill of health (compare for example the comments on the parish of Hothfield on Pluckley's eastern border: 'Parishioners very conformable, no sectaries no stiffe Presbyter'), but Pluckley was spared the alarmist comments used to describe a number of other scarpland and wealden communities.<sup>3</sup>

It seems probable then, that the level of nonconformity in Pluckley in the Restoration period was relatively low compared with some of its wealden neighbours. Whether the contrast was as great as that suggested by the Compton Census returns of 1676 is another matter.

On 4 April 1676, Nathaniel Collington M.A., the new rector of Pluckley wrote his 'particular answers to the

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1. L.P.L. Reg. Juxon, f.134a; Haslewood, 'The Rectors of Pluckley', pp.90-2; Venn & Venn, Alumni Cantabrigiensis, i. 84; Dictionary of National Biography, iii. 184; C.C.L. Z.7.4/20b, 61a; L.P.L. VBl/1, f.114.

2. L.P.L. Ms. 1126, f. 38.

3. See loc.cit., ff.35-6,38,43, for the parishes of Cranbrook, Smarden, Bethersden, Biddenden, Sutton Valence.

several Enquiries given in Charge by my L[or]d of Canterbury his Grace'. The third question concerned parish nonconformists:

'To the third enquiry viz. what number of other dissenters [besides "Popish recusants"] are in the Parish of what sort soever which either obstinately refuse or wholly absent themselves from the Communion of the Church of England at such times as by the law they are required. Answer Five.'(1)

This represented only 2% of the 250 adults whom Collington listed as resident in Pluckley.<sup>2</sup> This was the lowest reported figure for the twenty-one parishes of Charing deanery, where the average level of adult nonconformity was 18%. In a number of the troublesome communities pinpointed in the 1663 Catalogue, the figure was considerably higher than this: 48% of Smarden's adult population were dissenters ('with heavy hearts & much shame & greife' its curate recorded the fact); and large nonconformist populations were also recorded at Cranbrook (31%) and Tenterden (25%).<sup>3</sup>

There is no evidence that incumbents consistently falsified their returns by deliberately underestimating nonconformist numbers; but as Anne Whiteman has noted, it is often impossible to check the results from individual parishes against other sources. 'By and large', she writes, 'to hope to obtain accurate numbers of Papists and Dissenters at any

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1. C.C.L. H/2/149.

2. In fact Collington listed the 'numbers of persons...inhabiting within this parish', but he probably refers to men and women over communicable age; i.e. over 16. See Whiteman, The Compton Census, pp. lix-lxxvi; M. Dobson, 'Original Compton Census Returns -The Shoreham Deanery', A.C., XCIV (1978), 61-73.

3. Whiteman, op.cit., pp.8, 25-7.

specific time in the Restoration period is probably a pipe dream.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, what evidence there is for Pluckley offers little guidance in assessing Collington's figures. That there were practicing Dissenters in the village in the Restoration period is confirmed by the quarter sessions records. In 1681/2 Pluckley palemaker Daniel Austen was indicted under the Conventicle Acts of 1664 and 1670 for attending a Baptist chapel and not his own parish church on three different Sundays. In 1683 he was indicted a second time.<sup>2</sup>

It is not clear where Daniel Austen attended chapel, but he could have been a member of the Smarden and Staplehurst Baptist Church congregation, for a man of that name is listed among its members during the years 1702-8.<sup>3</sup> It is impossible to determine whether other Pluckley villagers attended this church, for with the exception of the Baptist covenanters of 1640, no congregation lists survive. It can be stated with confidence though that at its inception in 1640, the Smarden church (the Staplehurst connection came later) did not attract members from the neighbouring parish of Pluckley.

The strength of Dissent in Smarden as revealed in the Compton Census returns was wholly untypical of the scarp-edge region of Kent where Pluckley was situated. The incumbents of the four other parishes bordering the village all recorded nonconformist populations comprising between 6% and 15% of all

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1. Ibid., pp.cxxvi-vii.

2. K.A.O. Q/SI/E64/52, and loose 'copey of indictments'; Q/SPI/3 [unfoliated].

3. K.A.O. TR2800, ff.29-31.

adults. The highest figure was that of Egerton - a village with a separatist tradition stretching back to the 1620s.<sup>1</sup>

Taking into account the tone of the comments in the 1663 Catalogue, it would seem unlikely that nonconformists were proportionally more numerous in Pluckley than in these adjacent parishes. The possibility cannot be ruled out, however, that Nathaniel Collington's figures accurately reflect the strength of Dissent in the village in the Restoration period: that only five adults out of two hundred and fifty 'either obstinately refuse[d] or wholly absent[ed] themselves from the Communion of the Church of England'.

### III

If the evidence of the wills is accepted, Protestantism had gained a strong foothold in Pluckley before the accession of Elizabeth in 1558. The village was situated in a region with a long tradition of religious radicalism; and from 1541-54, the reforming doctrines of Archbishop Cranmer was represented in the village in the person of William Lancaster. That the new faith attracted more than formal support among a section of lay opinion in Pluckley is clearly illustrated by the activities of the Free-Will men during the years 1548-54; and by the relatively high level of heresy uncovered in 1557.

The case of Nicholas Huggett and his son William points to some degree of continuity between these early Protestants and the Calvinists of Elizabeth's and James's reign. It was tentatively suggested -making further use of testamentary

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1. Whiteman, op.cit., pp.26-7. On Egerton, see R.J. Acheson, 'The Development of Religious Separatism', ch.2.

evidence- that by 1610 committed Calvinist Protestantism had become entrenched among at least a small group of Pluckley's will-making population. This process may have been aided by the godly ministry of John Picard, the village parson for forty-six years; and also perhaps by the sympathetic stance of successive generations of the Dering family.

There is no evidence though to support the impression given by John Copley's comments of 1620 that 'many of his parishioners' boycotted the sermons of their own minister and 'gadded' to listen to preachers in neighbouring parishes, even receiving communion there on occasion. If Copley's remarks are not wholly fictitious, however, it is probable that his style of ministry had begun to alienate a 'godly' section of village opinion. From Copley's comments in 1620 and again in 1637, it would appear that Pluckley's churchwardens often featured among those villagers who resisted the parson's attempts to enforce parochial conformity.

Such divisions probably helped to determine the attitude taken by certain villagers towards Sir Edward Dering's conflict with John Copley and John Bettenham over planned 'improvements' to Pluckley church. Dering may have spoken with exaggeration when he complained to Laud in 1637 that 'not one parishioner will concur' with those opposing his plans. It is clear though that his ambitions for the parish church were supported by a number of Pluckley's churchwardens. Each of those who had served in the office during the years 1630-3<sup>1</sup> signed a certificate to that effect in 1634.

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1. Cal. S.P. Dom. Car. I, vol. cccxlvii, 27, I.

Thus John Copley's choice to embroil himself in the fifty year-old legal battle between the families of Dering and Bettenham transformed what had been principally a secular conflict (though fought out in part within the walls of the parish church) into one drawing in that section of village opinion which took exception to his support for Laudian innovation in church ritual and doctrine.

The character of the sources for the pre-Civil War period makes it difficult to estimate the numerical strength of the godly element in Pluckley's population; but the evidence we considered in the last chapter<sup>1</sup> indicates that we should not envisage a parochial godly elite ranged en masse against the village's Laudian parson and his single ally among the gentry.

Indeed the apparently low levels of nonconformity in Restoration Pluckley -though difficult to interpret- are suggestive more than anything of a weak tradition of Puritanism in the village. Of course, not all Puritans decided upon a complete break with their parish church when comprehension became impossible (this alone was what the Compton Census measured); still less did all those who had resisted the imposition of Laudianism take this course. Nevertheless it is difficult to see how a community described in 1663 as 'indifferently well affected' could have witnessed only forty or so years earlier a large-scale revolt against the entire ministry of the village parson.

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1. See ch.4, pp.270-2.

Conclusion

Neither a 'wealden' nor a 'chartland' parish in the full sense of these terms, Pluckley sat astride two of Kent's agrarian regions. By considering the village's demographic, socio-economic and cultural development in the context of that of its neighbours -on both sides of the regional divide- it has been possible to examine the extent to which Pluckley's inhabitants acted within a framework of pressures and constraints different from that operating elsewhere in mid-Kent. Such a methodology, it has been argued, facilitates the identification of independent variables when seeking explanations of particular sociological patterns. Only in this way can informed comparison with the communities of other localities be made, and the significance of Pluckley's experience to the national life of the period assessed.

Although Pluckley shared the pastoralism, textile by-employment and manorial fragmentation characteristic of the Kentish Weald as of other woodland-pasture regions, the village's proximity to the fertile Ragstone escarpment to the south and east of Maidstone implied several critical lines of divergence from the predictions of the 'forest community' model. Perhaps most important, the village suffered from a relative shortage of commons, wastes and forests suitable for encroachment and illegal squatting in the manner seen, for instance, in the Royal Forests of Northamptonshire during this  
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period.

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1. Pettit, 'The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire', ch. 7-8.

This meant that the village offered few attractions for the 'subsistence migrants' of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Kent. Pluckley was thus spared the worst excesses of poverty during the period of demographic expansion up to the Civil War. The Hearth Tax returns of 1664 recorded that there were proportionally a quarter fewer labourers, cottagers, poor craftsmen and poor widows in Pluckley than in either mid-Kent or the Weald as a whole.

Even with immigration levels low, however, considerable indigenous demographic growth needed to be accommodated. Pluckley's population may have increased by about a third to 500 between 1560 and 1605, and reached 600 a decade or so later. The shortage of waste and forest land in the village foreclosed the option open to the inhabitants of the Cambridgeshire fenland village of Willingham, where the resources of the fen commons supported a considerable expansion in the numbers of smallholders during the course of the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> Some sub-division of holdings also occurred in Pluckley during this period (despite a probable increase in the cultivated area), but the process was facilitated not by the resources of the commons but by the expansion of broadcloth manufacture in the Kentish Weald during the first half of our period.

This process of sub-division resulted in a disproportionate growth in the numbers of labourers, cottagers, poor craftsmen and poor widows (a grouping we defined as Category IV). In the early sixteenth century they may have

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1. Spufford, Contrasting Communities, pp. 134-59.

comprised about 28% of Pluckley households. By 1620 over half of the village households were probably drawn from that category.

A second consequence of the sub-division process was a consolidation of the position of small husbandmen and craftsmen (Category III) at the expense of more substantial husbandmen and yeomen (Category II). A comparison of the Lay Subsidy returns of 1524 with the Hearth Tax returns of 1664 suggests that numbers of Category II households fell proportionally by a third between the two dates.

By the late 1620s, the churchwardens' accounts imply, the later pattern had already become established. During the period 1628-52 a consistent 90% of village landholders occupied less than 60 acres, and over 70% less than 30 acres. Those occupiers of 10-29 acres (broadly comparable with the group defined as Category III) remained the largest single landholding group during these years (31.5%-37.5% of all occupiers); though only about a quarter of Pluckley's pastoral and arable land was farmed by such men.

Despite some improvement in employment opportunities resulting from the adoption of convertible husbandry and the expansion of acreages put down to hops and other industrial crops, the fragmentation of landholding units in Pluckley functioned to increase the proportion of the village population critically dependent on the continuing prosperity of the Wealden textile industry. When, in the 1630s, industrial employment in the region began to contract, it would appear that the village economy lost the ability to

sustain the inflated population levels which had built up over the preceding decades. As a result, perhaps ten per cent of Pluckley's households were forced to leave the parish between the 1630s and 1660s.

It seems to have been primarily from the village's population of cottagers, poor craftsmen and labourers that emigrants were drawn in the period after 1630. The interlocking crisis of 1630-1 came at the end of a ten-year period of repeated harvest failure and industrial depression, and the mounting cost of poor relief in the parish in the 1620s reflects the consequences of several decades of intense population pressure and land shortage.

The Essex parish of Terling experienced similar demographic and economic pressures in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but its village economy seems to have been better equipped to provide for the extra mouths. Wrightson and Levine have little in the way of concrete evidence to account for this, but suggest more intensive cultivation on larger farms; the rising prosperity of the farming community as a whole; together with the replacement of live-in servants by labourers dwelling in their own cottages, as possible contributory factors.<sup>1</sup>

Although that grouping of Pluckley farmers occupying holdings of 10-29 acres were by no means immune from the financial difficulties associated with spiralling corn prices and industrial contraction, there is no evidence of the 'disappearance of the small landholder' in Pluckley in the

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1. Wrightson & Levine, Poverty and Piety, p.36.

manner Margaret Spufford found at work in the upland  
Cambridgeshire parish of Chippenham.<sup>1</sup>

The potential for extending the cultivated area by means of disafforestation, together with the continuing opportunities for employment offered by the textile industry (even after 1640 42% of Group I farmers were engaged in spinning or weaving cloth) and the relative buoyancy of livestock prices, may have spared Pluckley's smallholders the fate of their contemporaries in mixed farming communities like Chippenham during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Indeed, the evidence from the inventories shows that Pluckley's smallholders were among the beneficiaries of the improvements in stocking levels that characterised the village farming economy during the course of the seventeenth century.

It is perhaps no coincidence that it was in the midst of the industrial and harvest crisis of the 1620s that Pluckley ratepayers agreed to institute a 'Leiger Book' for recording the collection and distribution of parish funds. The escalating cost of relief was not without its critics though. According to the signatories of the document inaugurating the new account book, certain of the village's previous overseers had been preoccupied with sparing 'money in the purses' of parish ratepayers, at the expense of the poor 'who should have releife thereby'.

Many ratepayers were themselves vulnerable to the demographic and economic pressures which formed the background to the escalating cost of poor releif<sup>↗</sup> in the village. It was  
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1. Spufford, op.cit., pp. 65-85.

precisely such middling groups who were most heavily involved in the administration of the system -both as overseers and churchwardens, and as those most frequently charged with boarding or otherwise 'servicing' Pluckley's poor inhabitants.

Parish officials seem to have gone further than a reluctance to spend ratepayers' money in their endeavours to deal with the problems of poverty in the village. Reflecting a pattern found in a number of other community studies,<sup>1</sup> village officials attempted to enforce, from the mid-1590s, stricter standards of sexual and marital conduct, mainly through the presentment of the village's poor and marginally poor elements to the church courts at Canterbury.

Offenders included villagers drawn from the same social stratum that generated many of the parish churchwardens and overseers, but after 1619 there was a clear break between Pluckley's sexual miscreants and those filling one or more village office. It would appear, moreover, that this new attitude to sexual deviancy was shared by many of the middling sort of Pluckley villagers. The campaign of reform initiated by village office-holders in the 1590s did not depend for its success on the activism of a few men exercising 'oligarchic' control over parochial government (as in Terling), for less than one in three churchwardens and overseers served more than two terms in the periods 1625-54 and 1665-1700.

There is no evidence, however, that sustained reforming activity in the village extended beyond sexual regulation to

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1. Wrightson & Levine, op.cit., ch.5; Sharpe, 'Crime and Delinquency', pp. 90-109; Ingram, 'Religion, Communities and Moral Discipline', pp. 177-93.

other 'disorders' associated by contemporaries with popular culture: unlicensed alehouses, drunkenness, swearing and so forth; and dancing, gaming and other popular recreations. It would appear that in Pluckley -as in the Wiltshire village of Keevil studied by Martin Ingram- a distinction was drawn between these two strands of moral reform. It has been suggested that the broad antipathy to the 'disorders' of popular culture in evidence in Terling required the additional ideological input of reforming Puritanism -a factor missing in both Keevil and Pluckley.<sup>1</sup>

If we accept David Underdown's contention that the emergence of groupings of self-consciously 'godly' reformers were at least in part a response to the social instability of woodland-pasture and clothing parishes,<sup>2</sup> it may be the case that the untypically low levels of poverty in seventeenth-century Pluckley which resulted from low immigration and later net emigration meant that the 'disorders' associated with the 'Third World' figured less prominently in the minds of village office-holders than in those of their contemporaries in other Kentish wealden communities. The process of out-migration may therefore have functioned to ease some of the strain put on social relationships by the population pressure and land shortage of the period.

Pluckley was not entirely lacking in 'godly folk' during the years 1590-1640. However, despite the early tradition of religious radicalism in the village, and the favourable

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1. Ingram, op.cit., pp. 190-1.

2. Underdown, Revel, Riot and Rebellion, pp.40-2,80-2.

environment provided by the forty-eight year incumbency of Puritan rector John Picard (1568-1616), together with the public support for the godly cause proffered by certain members of the Dering family, no parish elite of Puritan reformers seems to have developed in Pluckley during this period. Godly opposition to the ministry of John Copley (1616-43) did prove an irritant to the churchman at least as early as 1620; but it apparently failed to secure an effective power-base among the village's office-holding classes -an essential prerequisite for a vigorous campaign of reform.

The presence in the village of Arminian incumbent John Copley cannot in itself account for the weakness of Puritan support in seventeenth-century Pluckley. The incumbency of Copley's predecessor would appear to have provided a propitious environment for Puritanism to flourish in the village. And even for the period after 1616 the parson's evident hostility towards the godly fails to explain their fragmented support; for as Margaret Spufford's work on seventeenth-century Cambridgeshire has shown, a powerful Puritan lobby could emerge even in parishes with Laudian incumbents: 'These shepherds did not lead their sheep; they were frequently bitten by them.'<sup>1</sup>

Pluckley's demographic and economic development may have been one reason for the weak tradition of Puritanism in the village. Another may have been the long-standing divisions within the parish's ruling elite revealed in a flurry of court action involving successive generations of the Dering and -----  
1. Spufford, op.cit., p.316.

Bettenham families. By the early 1630s, the fifty-year-old dispute had sucked in several of the parish office-holders as well as its parson, but throughout the history of the conflict the pervading atmosphere of hostility between two families who between them owned some 45% to 70% of village lands must have reverberated among Pluckley's 'middling sort', creating further obstacles to the kind of unity of interest upon which the emergence of a caucus of respectable Puritan reformers depended.

Pluckley's location on the very edge of the Kentish Weald seems to have spared the village some of the most serious consequences of the interlocking demographic and economic crisis of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The 'response to social instability' noted by David Underdown failed to materialize in the village; though fissures within the ruling elite as well as demographic and socio-economic factors may have hindered such a development. Reactions to these pressures can nevertheless be observed in the hardening of attitudes among Pluckley's 'middling sort' towards sexual and marital deviancy; and in the emigration of perhaps ten per cent of parish households during the three decades after 1630.

## Appendix I. Estimating Kentish Population Levels 1557-1676

The data derived from the ecclesiastical census of 1557 covers only one of the two Kentish dioceses: Canterbury.<sup>1</sup> It was therefore necessary to add to the figures an estimate for Rochester diocese to permit comparison with the seventeenth-century returns to be made. A study of the returns to the ecclesiastical census of 1603 revealed that Rochester communicants comprised 26% of the county total.<sup>2</sup> Thus the somewhat crude device was adopted of adjusting the 1557 returns upward by this proportion.

In addition, the returns both of 1557 and of 1603 required re-calculation to take account of those parishes missing from the record in each case. It was assumed that the numbers of parishes in Canterbury diocese remained constant at 288.<sup>3</sup> The practice of Mary Dobson was followed in further assuming that the average population of 'missing' parishes was equal to the mean level in recorded parishes.<sup>4</sup> This re-calculation was particularly important in the case of the 1557 returns, where information from only 149 parishes was recorded.

It was decided not to exploit the two Elizabethan censuses (of 1563 and 1569) to estimate county population

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1. Bod.L. Ms. Tanner 240, ff.29-38.

2. A. Whiteman (ed.), The Compton Census of 1676: A Critical Edition (London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), Table D/3, p.ci.

3. See J.I. Daeley, 'Pluralism in the Diocese of Canterbury during the Administration of Archbishop Parker, 1559-1575', J.Ecl.H., (1967), p.40.

4. M.J. Dobson, 'Population, Disease and Mortality in South-East England 1600-1800' (Oxford Univ. D.Phil. thesis 1982), Appendix 6.

since the figures from both sets of returns suggest -when re-worked in the manner described above- improbably low levels of between 75,000 and 85,000<sup>1</sup>. If these figures were accurate, they would point to a rate of Kentish population growth in the ensuing four decades of between 60% and 80%. There is no parallel for demographic expansion on such a scale during this<sup>2</sup> period.

The returns of 1640 and 1676 are taken from Mary Dobson's recent Oxford thesis<sup>3</sup>. Dobson re-calculated her figures to allow for 'missing' parishes in the way described above. She further examined the missing group for bias either by region or by type of parish, and re-worked her figures correspondingly. This second procedure in fact made little difference to the overall results.

We have followed John Patten<sup>4</sup> in adopting conventional multipliers for converting 'households', 'communicants' and 'adults' to total population estimates, both in Table 1 and in Table 4. The multiplier of 4.75 was therefore used for households and 1.66 for adults and communicants.

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1. B.L. Ms. Harl. 594, ff.63-84; Bod.L. Ms. Tanner, ff.29-38.  
2. But see M. Zell, 'Population and Family Structure in the Sixteenth-Century Weald', A.C., C (1984), p.233, where the 1569 returns are used to argue for a county population at this period of about 80-85,000. On the basis of somewhat lower 1603 estimates, Zell argues for a population growth rate (1569-1603) of about 52% (ibid., p.237).  
3. Dobson, 'Population, Disease and Mortality', Table 5.3, p.56.  
4. J. Patten, 'Population Distribution in Norfolk and Suffolk during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in idem. (ed.), Pre-Industrial England: Geographical Essays (Folkestone, Dawson, 1979), pp.72-4.

Appendix II. Coding the Farming Data from Pluckley Probate Inventories

In order to isolate the farming inventories, Pluckley testators owning no more livestock than a pig, a few chickens, or a hive of bees were excluded from the sample; as were those whose crops amounted to no more than, for example, a small pack of hay.<sup>1</sup> Many more village will-makers left neither crops nor livestock, and when all these categories of inventories -together with those documents which proved to be duplicates- were removed from the data-set, the total number of cases was reduced from 119 to 97.

The remaining inventories refer unequivocally to the moveable wealth of Pluckley farmers over the period 1562-1700. It is important to stress, however, that since real estate was omitted from probate valuations, levels of appraised wealth considerably under-estimate real wealth levels among village landowners. Recent work by J.P. Horn has indicated though that 'real wealth and personal wealth do seem related'. Therefore to take 'wealth' to mean only inventoried wealth -as has been done here- is to introduce a 'reasonably accurate' proxy for levels of real wealth among members of Pluckley's farming community.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the total estate value of testators was the

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1. See J.H. Bettey & D.S. Wilde, 'Using a Computer for a Local History Project', The Local Historian, XI, 3 (1974), p.132, where those persons 'having only pig or a few poultry' are similarly excluded.

2. J.P. Horn, 'The Distribution of Wealth in the Vale of Berkeley, Gloucestershire, 1660-1700', Southern Hist., III (1981), p.97.

[Erratum: see following page before this one]

calculate the 'crop to livestock ratio' (CLR). Evidently, the ratio can only be calculated for those farms where both crop and livestock holdings were recorded among the goods of the deceased. Where one set of values could not be coded -either because the testator left no such property, or because inventory damage, illegibility or insufficient precision in the appraisal of goods precluded the derivation of accurate statistics- no CLR was calculated or plotted in Figures 8-9, and the inventories concerned were counted as 'missing values'.

For the other codes, the same practice was followed: if a particular value could not be accurately recorded, it was coded as 'missing'. This procedure was required most often when two or more items in a particular inventory were valued together by the appraisers, or where items were given a value but no quantity. Examples of the former might be: '2 milch kine and 2 oxen - £15' or '3 acres of wheat and 2 acres of oats - £6'; and of the latter: 'in sheep - £5'. In the first example given here, the numbers of kine and oxen would be coded individually, but the values of each recorded as 'missing'. In the second example, the value of the sheep would be coded, but not the number.<sup>1</sup> In just two cases, it was necessary to record the total estate value as missing, owing to the loss of part of the documents concerned (see Figs. 6-7).

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1. See M. Overton, 'Computer Analysis of an Inconsistent Data Source', J.H.G., III (1977), 317-26, for a discussion of these problems.

variable used to group each of the 97 inventories into one of four sub-sets. For the reasons indicated above (p.69), the estate value of each inventory was 'deflated', taking the years 1565-74 as a base. Calculations were based on the price index of the 'composite unit of consumables' compiled by E.H. Phelps Brown and Sheila V. Hopkins.<sup>1</sup> The 1565-74 base was derived from a mean of the annual 'cost of living' indices of this ten-year period. In order to deflate an inventory to this base value, its appraised value was multiplied by the 1565-74 index of 290, and divided by the index of the inventory year. Thus for a £100 inventory of 1635:

$$£100 \times \frac{290}{597} = £48.58$$

The appraised and deflated estate values (plotted in Figs. 6-7) comprised two of the 52 variables into which each inventory was coded for use with the SPSS-X computer statistics package. Every inventory was given a code number to enable the original document to be easily located and a further four codes recorded information on the social status of the testator (if given), and on the period, year, and season of each.

The remaining 45 codes cover data on the crops and livestock of Pluckley testators, together with evidence -if any- of involvement in cloth manufacture. Two codes list the total value of crops and livestock: the data used to

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1. E.H. Phelps Brown & S.V. Hopkins, 'Seven Centuries of the Prices of Consumables, Compared With Builders' Wage-Rates', Economica n.s. XXII (1956); repr. in E.M. Carus-Wilson (ed.), Essays in Economic History II (London, Edward Arnold, 1962), Appendix B, pp.193-207.

Provision was made for the coding (where possible) of the numbers and value of the following livestock: steer/beasts, oxen, milch kine, heifers, calves, sheep (including lambs), horses (including foals), pigs, and poultry. Crops were coded rather differently. Fruit and malt were coded by value only; and the following eight crops by value and acreage: wheat, barley, oats, hemp, hops, peas/beans/tares, rye, and grass/hay. In fact the men appraising the goods of Pluckley testators very rarely chose to list the acreage sown with particular crops -hence the paucity of evidence that could be drawn on to compile Table 17.

Two codes were also included to cover evidence of woven cloth or cloth-working machinery, tools etc. in the Pluckley inventories; and finally a simple binary code listed whether or not livestock was recorded as grazing in Romney Marsh.

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