

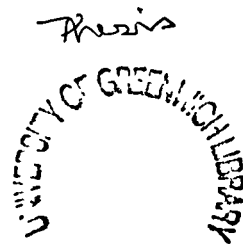
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CRANBROOK, KENT, AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

AREA, c.1570-1670

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the University of Greenwich
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

June 2003

Abstract

This thesis contributes to the discipline of historical research through the detailed local study and analysis of micro-economic developments and social trends within the 'market town' of Cranbrook, Kent and its neighbouring parishes. In particular this study examines the symbiotic relationship between the market town as a nodal point for industry and commerce within the context of the local economy and social structure of its rural hinterland. The nature and incidence of demographic growth within Cranbrook's neighbourhood during local periods of epidemic disease and economic dislocation, provide a context in which to examine the extent to which the Wealden wood pasture agrarian regime could absorb and sustain demographic growth within individual local economies.

Social relations within Cranbrook, show that the town was not isolated from its rural hinterland. The inhabitants of the town and the countryside interacted within a local economy based upon textile manufacture and farming, which effectively defined the complex social hierarchy of the 'neighbourhood'. Kinship-networks among long-standing resident families and their comparative status, wealth and influence within individual parishes, show the importance of familial relationships to business success and social status within the community.

Parish office holding among Cranbrook's 'chief inhabitants' are explored within the concepts of religious ideology and social control in early modern England. Cranbrook society is examined within the context of developing religious attitudes and puritan ideas, which took hold and flourished in this period.

The thesis also investigates the slow decline of the broadcloth industry in the region and contributes to the proto-industrialization debate. The effect of economic recession in broadcloth manufacture is examined against the decline of the neighbourhood population, the contraction in market demand for Wealden broadcloth and increased poverty.

Declaration

I certify that this work has not been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not currently submitted for any degree other than that of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) of the University of Greenwich. I also declare that this work is the result of my own investigations except where otherwise stated.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the University of Greenwich for providing me with a bursary to undertake this study. I particularly wish to thank my supervisor Dr. Michael Zell for the opportunity to engage with this research, his generosity, his scholarly advice, support and encouragement. I am also thankful to Dr. Joan Thirsk for acknowledging my early research. The kindness and helpfulness of the library and archive staffs deserve a special mention; in particular, the staff at Canterbury Cathedral Archive Library, the Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone and the University of Greenwich, Library. I would like to thank Terry Croft for sharing his IT expertise and my colleagues at Kiad. A special thank you is due to Dr. Graham Durkin for his constructive criticism and consistency, and to Denise Durkin for her kindness and hospitality. I am appreciative of the encouragement of my family. I would especially like to thank my children Simon and Emma who have supported me with practical advice and wisdom beyond their years, but most importantly with their love.

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Abbreviations

| | |
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| <i>AgHR</i> | <i>Agricultural History Review</i> |
| <i>AC</i> | <i>Archaeologia Cantiana</i> |
| <i>Assizes, i-vi</i> | <i>Calendar of Assize Records: Kent Indictments: Elizabeth I (1979), James I (1980), Charles I (1980), 1649-59 (1995), Charles II, (1995), Charles II (1997) ed., James Cockburn</i> |
| BL | The British Library, London |
| CCAL | Canterbury Cathedral Archives and Library, Canterbury |
| CKS | Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone |
| <i>CSPD</i> | <i>Calendar of State Papers Domestic; Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth I, James I, Charles I, Charles II, eds., R. Lemon, M.A. Everett-Green, and J. Bruce (1856-1872)</i> |
| ESRO | East Sussex Record Office, Lewes |
| <i>EcHR</i> | <i>Economic History Review</i> |
| <i>Hasted, History</i> | Edward Hasted, <i>History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent</i> (12 vols., 1797-1801) |
| <i>Hist.Journ</i> | <i>Historical Journal</i> |
| <i>JBS</i> | <i>Journal of British Studies</i> |
| <i>LPS</i> | <i>Local Population Studies</i> |
| PRO | Public Record Office, London |
| SRO | Staffordshire Record Office, Stafford |
| <i>VCH</i> | Victoria County History |
| Wrightson & Levine, <i>Poverty and Piety</i> | K. Wrightson & D. Levine, <i>Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700</i> (Oxford, 2 nd edn.,1995) |
| Zell, <i>Industry</i> | Michael Zell, <i>Industry in the Countryside: Wealden Society in the Sixteenth Century</i> (Cambridge, 1994) |

Note: Place of publication is London unless stated otherwise

Chapter 1

Introduction:

Defining the Region Within the Context of Recent Historiography

In the period covered by this study England was primarily a rural society, in which perhaps three quarters of its inhabitants lived and worked in the countryside. In spite of the growing significance of towns, for most people social conventions and cultural ideals were informed by a shared sense of belonging to a local community, with rural values and traditions. In recent years historians have engaged in a debate which seeks to define the actuality of communal relationships.¹ Consequently, definitions of community, the significance to a rural society of its immediate neighbourhood, and how individual groups within that community shared a sense of belonging both to their families and to the wider social world, are important issues for research. In previous studies that have investigated a geographically defined group of parishes, the emphasis has primarily been on economic and demographic definitions.² In contrast, studies that have sought to examine social relations between inhabitants have tended to concentrate on single parishes.³ Amussen's important research into social class and gender relationships concentrated on the wider social community in Norfolk.⁴

Whatever the geographical context, the inhabitants of towns and villages in early modern England interacted with one another in terms of cultural values which were hierarchical and intrinsically conservative. The structures of early modern rural society reflected elite notions of reciprocity and deference, in which traditional ideological concepts were functional to good order.⁵ This study seeks to investigate the complex economic and social structures of a group of contiguous parishes in the Weald of Kent. Through the examination of a core group of parishes centred on the market

town of Cranbrook, the study explores aspects of social and cultural cohesion within the communal structure, and also asks to what extent these parishes were linked in practice as a social neighbourhood.

Traditional historiography has suggested that parishes of varying size and wealth displayed an identifiable social pyramid with a broad base of poor inhabitants rising through a more prosperous 'middle class' of farmers, craftsmen and artisans to a tiny, elite group of landowning gentry. Within this hierarchy inequalities in wealth and power were the norm, and conventional status titles of 'gentleman', 'yeoman', 'husbandman' and 'labourer' (or 'servant') helped to define the individual's place within the social order.⁶ In towns, too, social stratification, gradations of wealth and occupational hierarchies were axiomatic. The market town was not simply a centre of trade; it was the focus of rural life within its locality and profoundly influenced the social and economic characteristics of the surrounding parishes that constituted the local neighbourhood area. Within the market square where goods were bartered, bought and sold, the local taverns and alehouses provided a convivial meeting place for yeomen and husbandmen not only to trade, but to hear news, listen to sermons, criticize government policies and air their grievances.⁷ Urban craftsmen such as carpenters, wheelwrights and blacksmiths served the needs of Cranbrook's indigenous population as well as those of the rural villages within its market area. Consequently, the economic and social functions of the market town of Cranbrook in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were closely interlinked with the relative prosperity of its rural hinterland. In turn, the traditional prejudices and convictions of the rural community informed the culture of the market area as a whole.

Recent historiography, such as Anne Mitson's analysis of dynastic families within a neighbourhood area in South-West Nottinghamshire, has identified the importance of a stable group of core-families.⁸ Mitson's study has shown how these family networks, over several generations, made a particular impact on the life of the communities in which they lived. Within the Wealden parishes that I shall be examining, I hope to contextualize the power and influence of particular dynastic families against the background of their social status and economic roles. Within the market area of Cranbrook and its adjoining parishes of Benenden, Biddenden, Frittenden, Goudhurst, Hawkhurst and Staplehurst, it is possible to identify the economic and social influence of a group of dynastic families whose longevity as core-families within the neighbourhood, allowed family businesses to descend from father to son for three or four generations and for kinship networks to radiate outwards from Cranbrook throughout the immediate locality. An investigation of the significance of occupational and economic solidarity, which may have enabled members of dynastic families to assume positions of social power, (whereby they established themselves as an effective local oligarchy) is an important part of this research.

Phythian-Adams has recently suggested the criteria by which historians should select localities or communities for study.⁹ He has argued that the methods have often been arbitrary, and often given a misleading impression of the geographical, agrarian and social significance of a selected region. Historians have sometimes distorted their descriptions of the social framework in local historical studies, because their criteria are often highly selective. He contends that local 'societies' and 'regions' are possessed of a social significance for the local inhabitants which may overlap or extend beyond the more narrow administrative, trading, farming or political boundaries used by historians to define their particular area of research. His arguments encourage historians to engage

with the much broader historiographical debate that discusses the relationship between history at the local and the national level and the wider implications of micro-histories.¹⁰ Therefore, it is important to address the means by which local historians have sought to define specific localities and the regional agrarian and industrial specializations that may be identified within a particular neighbourhood area. The social arena of a local community functioned within specific limits. The settlement pattern and economic base of a region must first be established in order to try and define its local identity.

The social roles played by different 'sorts' of people in early modern society, and the nature and extent of their local authority, must be understood within the context of local wealth, status and power.¹¹ The classical social hierarchy of the early modern period - gentlemen, yeomen, husbandmen, artisans and labourers - implies a minimum of social mobility, and the existence of a graduated chain of subordination. Individuals were bound by cultural norms of reciprocity and deference within their prescribed degree or class.¹² However, Wrightson has argued that the social dynamics of class differentiation were often more subtle and has suggested that 'the language of sorts' of people may help us to understand such complexities. Contemporaries referred not only to 'all states and sorts of people, high and low', but also to 'the common sort and the meaner sort'.¹³

In particular this thesis will seek to investigate the role played by the 'middling sort' of people in the market town of Cranbrook and its immediate rural hinterland, and to identify the dynamic role that leading inhabitants played in determining the cultural discourse within their local community. Barry provides a clear definition of the characteristics of the 'middling sort':

'The middling sort had to work for their income, trading with the products of their hands (for example yeomen, husbandmen, farmers and artisans) or with the skills

in business or the professions for which they had trained (for example merchants, attorneys and apothecaries)'.¹⁴

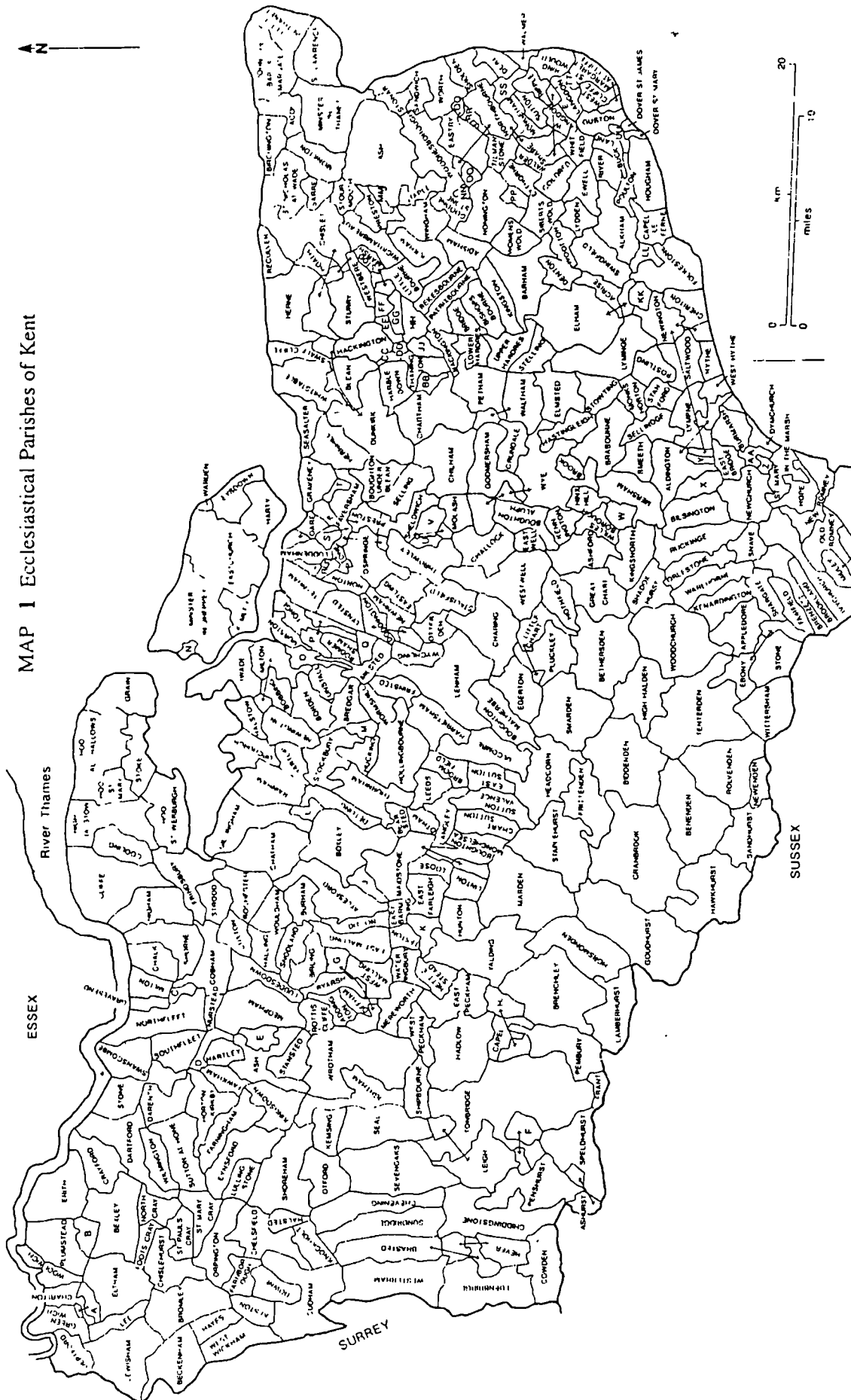
The 'middling sorts' were members of household units whose economic activity defined their status and set the boundaries of their social influence. The lives of the 'middling sorts' centred on the family and the formal skills of the adult male household head. Clearly, the flexibility with which this term can be utilized requires care; it may be necessary to refine its usage within the occupational groups identified in this study.

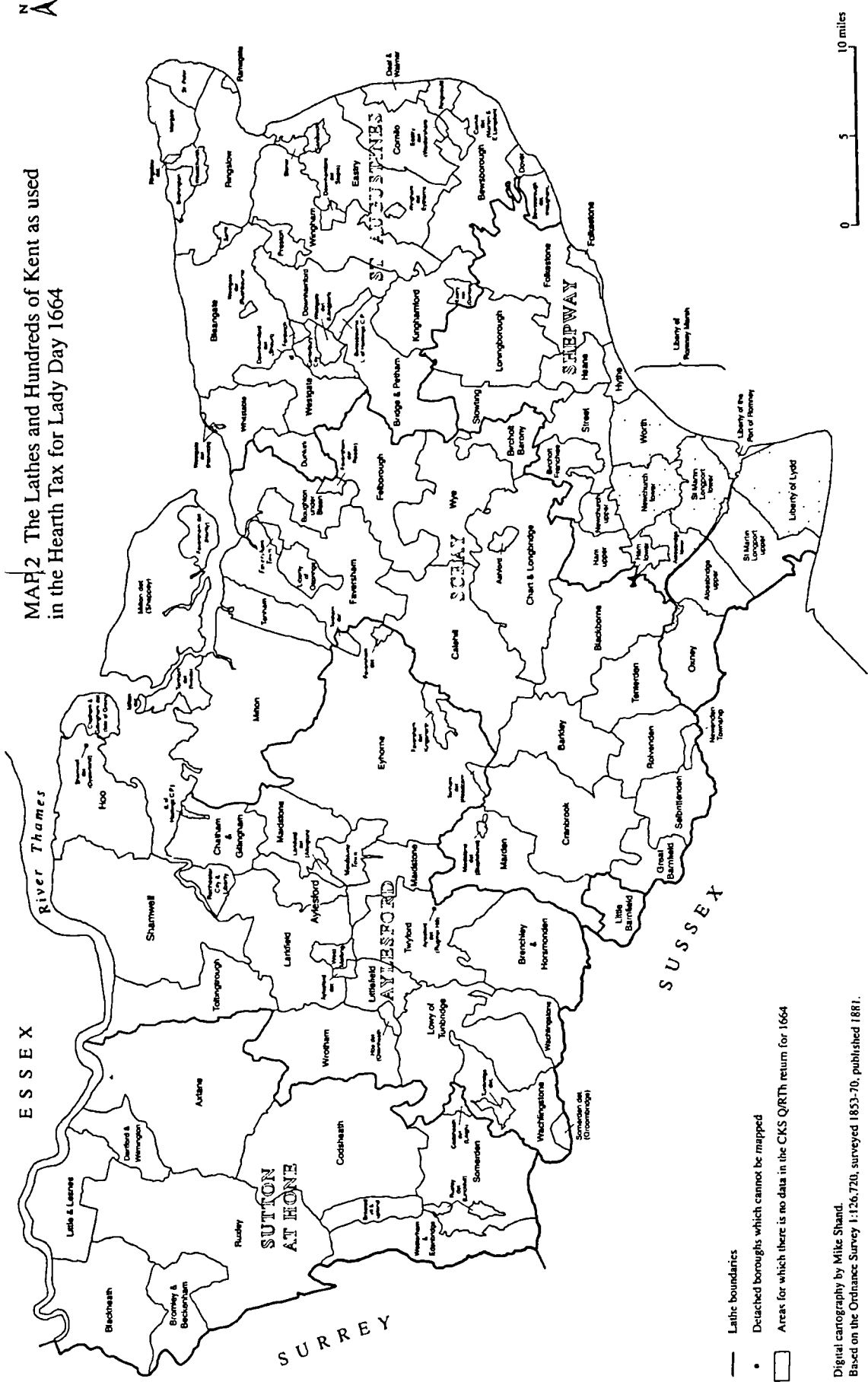
The extent to which individual occupational groups possessed social characteristics and patterns of differentiation that conferred local status and power, can be related to their economic roles within the community. In the Weald the common features of manufacturing and farming activity unified a series of communities and moulded them into a distinct social region. The special geographical and topographical characteristics of the Kentish Weald must first be identified in order to locate the market town of Cranbrook in relation to its neighbourhood area. As Phythian-Adams has argued,

'What is needed is an unambiguously definable area, which is spatially greater in compass than that occupied by any one local society, yet of sufficiently limited geographical extent as still to represent a meaningful context for its inhabitants, and with which may be associated a set of distinguishable cultural traits, not the least of which will be a shared susceptibility to the same outside influences'.¹⁵

The aim of this study will be to demarcate such a neighbourhood with its roots in a group of firmly established community cores, which have been interconnected through kinship or through certain economic and cultural activities that are specific to that locality. This broader conception of social neighbourhood takes in a more detailed spatial reality than that of a simple 'community', and examines the relationship between urban and agrarian society.

MAP 1 Ecclesiastical Parishes of Kent





MAP 2 The Lathes and Hundreds of Kent as used in the Hearth Tax for Lady Day 1664

- Lathic boundaries
- Detached boroughs which cannot be mapped
- Areas for which there is no data in the CKS Q/R/T/H return for 1664

Digital cartography by Mike Shand.
Based on the Ordnance Survey 1:126,720, surveyed 1853-70, published 1881.

Defining the Local Economy

The search for an economic region within the Weald of Kent is aided by a strong historiographical and scholarly tradition that has delineated the region's agrarian regime and manufacturing activities. Contemporaries as late as the early eighteenth century were unanimous in emphasizing the special role of the cloth industry in this area. Participation in the production of woollen textiles gave the region a character that was separate from other economic *pays* in Kent. However, by the early eighteenth century, Defoe lamented the demise of the Weald's former prosperity in cloth manufacture and trade:

'At Cranbrook, Tenterden and Goudhurst and other villages thereabouts there was once a very considerable clothing trade carried on and the yeomen of Kent of which so much has been famed, were generally the inhabitants on that side and were enriched by the clothing trade'.¹⁶

Undoubtedly, the textile industry had a profound and long-lasting effect on the economic life of the region. Consequently the dynamics of the cloth industry in the Weald will be explored more fully in this chapter, which seeks to introduce the main agricultural and industrial specialties within this group of local communities.

The agrarian regime of the Weald will be discussed in the context of its physical geographical and topographical realities. It is useful briefly to outline the general characteristics of the Wealden economy and the restrictions and advantages associated with the physical geography of the region. The area comprises a group of adjacent parishes in the Weald of Kent, centred on the market town of Cranbrook, which varied in area, population and the extent of their involvement in rural manufacturing. In all, seven parishes constitute the neighbourhood area: Benenden, Biddenden, Cranbrook, Frittenden, Goudhurst, Hawkhurst and Staplehurst (see Map1). The traditional administrative structure based on the ancient manorial jurisdiction of the hundred, with its legal structure of hundred courts and constables, was probably already less

significant than the ecclesiastical parish at this time (see Map 2). By the 1590s the ecclesiastical and secular administrative duties of the parish were extensive and important.¹⁷ However, in many cases the individual 'burghs' or boroughs within these parishes fell into different local hundreds. Much of the Weald also fell within the ancient liberty of 'the seven hundreds of the Weald', which by Elizabethan times had little independent jurisdiction of any significance.¹⁸ Within these overlapping jurisdictions of parish and the hundred, parishes were important for the purposes of administration and finance, while the hundred continued to function as a petty policing and judicial authority and as a sub-division by which local magistrates organized their business.

Cranbrook, (which was both a parish and a hundred) was the local market town for its rural hinterland, and was advantageously placed in the centre of the Weald. The town's market status was originally granted to the rectory in 1289, at the request of Archbishop Peckham, and it continued to provide an important local trading centre for 'corn, hops, meat and other provisions'. The rectory was owned by Christ Church priory in Canterbury until the Dissolution, when it passed to the new Dean and Chapter. There were also two annual fairs, on May 30 (St Dunstan's Day) and September 29 (the feast of St Giles), for horned cattle, and horses, as well as domestic household items. By the sixteenth century Cranbrook was the principal market town in the Weald of Kent. According to Hasted, Cranbrook presented a pleasant aspect to visitors: 'it is exceeding, healthy, and considering the deepness of the soil and the frequency of the woods, far from being unpleasant'.¹⁹ The Dean and Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral continued to own the market rights, along with the rectory, into the seventeenth-century although the market privileges were leased out with the parsonage to local farmers:

‘The stallages, pillage, tollage and profits from the market...have belonged to the Dean and Chapter...and for divers years the same market has been let with the parsonage of Cranbrook’.²⁰

A 1661 rental reveals that the rectory tithes and the market were worth £104 p.a.²¹ Unlike the town of Maidstone in Kent, and many other market towns at this time, Cranbrook never acquired a charter of incorporation and therefore never acquired the administrative machinery of self-government.²² Dyer points out that in the absence of these structures in many small towns, ‘one not uncommon device was to create by unofficial means a governing body which represented the natural elite of the community.’²³ This was certainly the case in Cranbrook (see Chapter 4).

Wealden Farming

Cranbrook was the marketing centre of a mixed farming region, but one whose poor soils never produced cereals in abundance. The typical geological structure of the countryside around Cranbrook was composed of heavy, wet clay soils and rough sandstone that were of a generally poor quality. Of Frittenden Hasted noted that ‘the soil is deep stiff clay, very wet and unkindly for tillage’. In Staplehurst the soil is described as ‘in general wet clay intermixed with marl at different places, and in the southern part some sand’. Similarly in Biddenden, ‘the soil too is much the same, having plenty of marl throughout it, the southern and western parts are covered with coppice wood and large oaks are numerous throughout’. In Hawkhurst ‘the soil is in general clay, abounding with marl, although in the northern part there is much sand’. Although the geology was similar in Goudhurst, it was nevertheless described as having ‘oak trees of a large size...the lands are in general very fertile’, and Benenden parish ‘is situated mostly on high ground, much more so than most of the adjoining country, and consequently more pleasant’.²⁴

The region's heavy clay soil was difficult to plough, and in order to maintain fertility for arable husbandry, required constant manuring with liberal applications of marl.²⁵ Arable husbandry was engaged in principally to raise wheat and oat crops for domestic consumption and animal fodder, with only a small marketable surplus for most farmers.²⁶ The soil was unsuitable for barley production. In the early seventeenth-century just under 30 per cent of the Weald's acreage was in arable, compared with nearly 56 per cent in pasture and meadow, and the remainder in woodland.²⁷ Both the geology and the topography of these Wealden parishes precluded arable farming on a large-scale. Agrarian historians have long established that this part of Kent was far more suited to a pastoral agrarian regime of livestock fattening, grazing and dairy production.²⁸ Although there is a tradition of differentiating between parishes in the High Weald (which include Benenden, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst) as having slightly poorer quality soil with more extensive woodland and heathland, and those in the Low Weald (including Biddenden and Staplehurst) as having a higher proportion of more fertile farmland, research has shown that the farming regimes of these two areas were remarkably similar with only marginal differences in the extent of arable production taking place.

The Weald also possessed abundant natural resources which were vital to the infrastructure of the region, including local supplies of raw materials in the form of timber and iron ores, in addition to fast flowing rivers which were beneficial both to farming and manufacturing.²⁹ Brent has characterized the Weald as an area of dispersed settlements and small-enclosed fields, established by the piecemeal colonization and accumulation of tracts of woodland rooted in heavy clay and sandstone soils.³⁰ The dispersed nature of the rural settlement pattern meant that manorial control in the Weald was weak. It is characteristic of the manorial structure in Kent that many of the

larger manors along the downland and sandstone ridges possessed outlying portions or 'dens' in the Weald, often 10-20 miles away from the home manor. These had been, in the middle ages, swine pastures where pigs were grazed amid the dense oak and beech woodlands.³¹ The manor of Chilham in eastern Kent, for example, extended over lands in the Weald. Its manorial court rolls show that Chilham possessed scattered, detached 'dens' in the Weald, throughout Biddenden, Cranbrook, Frittenden, Goudhurst, and Headcorn, some 20 miles from Chilham parish. The dens provided extensive pannage in ancient woodland.³² Wealden parishes generally, and in particular those included in this study, were large both geographically and in terms of their populations. The loose manorial regulation imposed on local inhabitants and tenants ensured that seigneurial control over both settlement and farming was relaxed, compared with other lowland regions of England.³³ In addition, the existence of large numbers of freeholders who farmed individual, enclosed farms in severalty, fostered an independent local mentality.³⁴

The Kentish custom of gavelkind, which prescribed partible inheritance, ensured the proliferation of many smallholders and family farmers, who enjoyed free tenures and free alienation of their land. Within the increasingly fluid land market of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, individuals with a cash surplus could easily increase their holdings through the piecemeal accumulation of small parcels of land, which in turn encouraged population growth. Moreover, the indigenous population maintained local inheritance customs that encouraged them to sub-divide their holdings among siblings, ensuring that many additional families were able to maintain a stake in the land.

The economic region that encompassed Benenden, Biddenden, Cranbrook, Frittenden, Goudhurst and Hawkhurst was a classic 'wood-pasture' district. The

essential characteristics of such a regional economy have been identified by Thirsk, whose definition of 'wood-pasture' economies embodies: an agricultural area of mixed pasture and arable husbandry with the emphasis on livestock rearing and fattening, allied to widespread dairy production for both domestic use and the local market.³⁵ In wood-pasture districts like the Weald relatively small farms predominated and livestock grazing rather than arable husbandry was the foundation of the local economy.³⁶ It is important to illustrate the nature of farming activity within the neighbourhood area, and assess changes in farming practices which may have taken place during the period under investigation.

The pattern of farming in this area was examined from the evidence of 637 extant probate inventories with clear evidence of farming activity, proved in the Canterbury consistory and archdeaconry courts between 1570 and 1670. The inventories represent a wide cross section of the rural community and include a few farmers who occupied land outside the Weald. It is possible, with these sources, to examine the farming practices of those inhabitants who also occupied land beyond the immediate neighbourhood area. Unfortunately, inventories from the wealthiest farmers who had their wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury have not survived (before 1660). For the purpose of analysis the category of farmer is defined as those individuals whose inventory suggests a full time occupation in livestock rearing and/or arable husbandry; and who owned produce to sell in the market place. The category of 'smallholder plus' includes those small-scale farmers whose inventories show some evidence of livestock or crop production and who probably consumed most of the foodstuffs they produced. It is highly likely that such smallholders needed to supplement their farming activities with either labouring or craft activities in the form of rural by-employments. By comparing the level of agricultural activity carried out

within individual local communities, it is possible to see the varying importance of farming in the parishes which make up the economic region. Table 1.1 indicates the number and share of farming inventories from the parishes of Benenden, Biddenden, Cranbrook (which includes inventories from the tiny adjacent parish of Frittenden), Goudhurst, Hawkhurst, and Staplehurst.

Table 1.1

Comparative Analysis of Farming Inventories 1570-1669

| 1570-1599 | Cra | Gou | Haw | Bid | Ben | Sta | Total |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| Farmers | 35 (25%) | 20 (15%) | 11 (8%) | 20 (15%) | 27 (20%) | 23 (17%) | 136 (100%) |
| Smallholders | 7 (15%) | 6 (12%) | 15 (31%) | 8 (16%) | 8 (16%) | 5 (10%) | 49 (100%) |
| Total | 42 | 26 | 26 | 28 | 35 | 28 | 185 |

| 1600-1629 | Cra | Gou | Haw | Bid | Ben | Sta | Total |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| Farmers | 44 (24%) | 20 (11%) | 26 (14%) | 32 (18%) | 30 (17%) | 28 (16%) | 180 (100%) |
| Smallholders | 21 (31%) | 8 (12%) | 15 (22%) | 8 (12%) | 5 (7%) | 11 (16%) | 68 (100%) |
| Total | 65 | 28 | 41 | 40 | 35 | 39 | 248 |

| 1630-1669 | Cra | Gou | Haw | Bid | Ben | Sta | Total |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| Farmers | 53 (33%) | 22 (14%) | 21 (13%) | 22 (14%) | 20 (12%) | 22 (14%) | 160 (100%) |
| Smallholders | 13 (32%) | 5 (12%) | 6 (15%) | 4 (10%) | 5 (12%) | 8 (19%) | 41 (100%) |
| Total | 66 | 27 | 27 | 26 | 25 | 30 | 201 |

Source: CKS PRC10 1-72, PRC11 1-30, PRC27/1-21, PRC28/4-20

The table shows that Cranbrook, with its greater area and high population,³⁷ produced the highest concentration of farmers throughout the period. It is evident that in the periods 1570-1599 and 1600-1629 the High Weald parishes of Goudhurst and Hawkhurst had the lowest share of commercial farmers. In Goudhurst only 15 per cent and 11 per cent of inventories were of farmers' estates, whereas in Hawkhurst the share was even lower with eight per cent and 14 per cent of inventories respectively. This would give some credence to Kerridge's argument, that a distinction in the soil type led to real differences in farming regimes between the High and Low Weald.³⁸ However,

in Hawkhurst (but not in Goudhurst) smallholders, who could combine agriculture with other forms of economic activity, were especially numerous. So it would be straining the evidence to argue for a significant distinction between High and Low Weald agriculture at this time.

Nevertheless, the Low Weald parishes of Benenden and Staplehurst recorded 20 per cent and 17 per cent respectively of the total number of inventories belonged to farmers in the period 1570-1599, and 17 per cent and 16 per cent in the period 1600-1629. Biddenden also had a high percentage of farmers in the period 1600-1629 (18 per cent of the total number of inventories). Hawkhurst had a higher percentage of small farmers, whereas other parishes such as Cranbrook and Staplehurst had larger numbers and percentages of bigger farmers, although these latter parishes straddled the High and Low Weald divide. More inhabitants in these parishes were farming on a commercial basis during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-centuries in response to a long period of agricultural expansion due to the growth in population, and the profits that could be gained from stock-rearing for the expanding urban markets.³⁹

It has already been noted that the Kentish custom of gavelkind encouraged the subdivision of estates into smallholdings, which, combined with the free alienation of land, inevitably encouraged a fluid market in small parcels of land. There is also evidence to show that the incidence of leasehold tenure increased in the latter sixteenth century, in response to rising agricultural prices and rents.⁴⁰ The main agents and principal beneficiaries of these changes in landholding practices were gentlemen landowners, in the Weald as elsewhere. Zell has demonstrated that there were only a 'few large gentry estates' in the Weald, and that they tended to lease out most of their holdings to tenant farmers. However, landholdings were scattered and piecemeal in the Weald, and consolidation of land within the large estates was very limited. Nevertheless, 'ancient'

and *nouveau riche* gentry families probably owned a majority of the land within the neighbourhood. Interspersed among the gentry-occupied land were numerous owner-occupiers and leasehold tenants, who held relatively small, dispersed parcels of land.

The evidence from a collection of 45 maps drawn for Thomas Plummer Esq. of Cranbrook in about 1640 illustrates the nature and extent of gentry landholding.⁴¹ Plummer held land in Benenden, Biddenden, Cranbrook, Goudhurst, Hawkhurst, and Staplehurst, in addition to lands and tenements scattered throughout east Kent in Appledore, Brookland, Headcorn, Ivychurch, Kenardington, New Romney, Old Romney, Seasalter and Smarden. In all, Plummer's estate amounted to approximately 2,000 acres in Kent, most of which were leased out to numerous tenants in small parcels: in 1640 'the land in the occupation of Robert Robbins in Swattenden Lane, Cranbrook' amounted to 28 acres; in Benenden 'land in the occupation of Jarvis Morlen called the lower land' came to 33 acres; and at Staplehurst 'a farm in the occupation of James Crumpe' contained 123 acres. In addition to the acquisition of land within the neighbourhood area, Plummer engaged in more speculative purchases of land in the rich grazing area of Romney Marsh. Plummer's recently acquired wealth in land, based on a successful career in the law, may be compared with more traditional gentry estates in Cranbrook. Two major gentry families, the Roberts of Glassenberry and the Bakers of Sissinghurst, each held manorial land-holdings far in excess of the 2000 acres owned by Plummer in this period. The Roberts' may have owned over 2000 acres in the Cranbrook neighbourhood area alone - during several generations in the reigns of Elizabeth, James I and Charles I - and the Baker's owned considerably more.⁴²

In Goudhurst, Sir Alexander Culpepper held the manors of Bokinfield and Bedgebury from the time of Elizabeth to the reign of James I, although he leased the

demesne lands to a rapid succession of tenant occupiers. In Benenden the Guildford family held the manor of Hemsted and other lands from the reign of Henry VIII to James I. However, other *arriviste* gentry families were also present. Sir William Campion, barrister at law, came into the area in the late sixteenth century and acquired the moiety of Chingley manor and Combwell manor in Goudhurst; several generations of Campions resided there in the seventeenth century.⁴³ Chingley and Combwell manors are indicative of the mixed farming regime of the region already discussed, whereby pastoral and arable husbandry was combined with the coppicing and management of woodland. In Combwell manor in 1621 Campion possessed approximately 570 acres of land, of which 129 acres were arable (23%), 220 acres were pasture (38%), 39 acres meadow and 185 acres woodland (32%). In the moiety of Chingley manor, in 1622 there were said to be 411 acres of mixed land, of which 136 acres were arable (33%), 133 acres pasture (32%), 46 acres meadow and 96 acres woodland (23%).⁴⁴ As Brent's study of Sussex manors illustrates:

'Whereas woodland and waste were virtually unknown on downland manors...woodland remained common in the Weald, with 26% in Ticehurst, 30% at Ninfield and 41% at Possingworth in Waldron.'⁴⁵

The claim that Wealden woodland was being eradicated in this period has often been made, although, most modern historians including Gulley and Zell reject it.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, there was intense competition for this natural resource because wood was of great importance to clothiers and iron masters, as well as to other landowners in the neighbourhood.

Evidence from estate maps also shows that parcels of land and field acreages were generally small-scale.⁴⁷ Deeds and estate maps also indicate that most estates, large and small, contained some woodland. Arable and pasture cultivation were undertaken mainly in fields ranging in size from one to ten acres, and it is these small

parcels of land that were leased out by gentry landlords, who operated as rentiers and seldom farmed more than a small proportion of their own estates.

To summarise, gentlemen landowners in the Weald were rarely farming on a large scale and the chief characteristic of the region's farming was the presence of many relatively small to medium-sized farms. The modest scale of farming generally, and the high population densities in wood-pasture parishes, meant that by-employments were widely utilized to supplement the household income of most families.⁴⁸ Indeed, the prevalence of farming activity in conjunction with some form of manufacturing or trading activity is a prime feature of the local rural economy at all levels of society. In the Weald many of the 'middling sort' in terms of wealth and social status (which included clothiers, skilled textile workers, most farmers and the wealthier tradesmen) tended to engage in some form of dual economy. In the next chapter I intend to develop a full analysis of the wealth, trades and agriculture that underpinned manufacturing in the neighbourhood area. Although within the countryside a high proportion of the population earned their living either wholly or in part from agriculture,⁴⁹ the growing penetration by trades and manufactures both for local as well as more distant markets must be acknowledged. In a context where many families were dependent on wage labour for survival, and subject to cyclical under-employment, many country-dwellers had to engage in non-agricultural activities in order to maintain their families. The nature and extent of economic diversity between the linked-parishes and the degree to which artisan and craft activities were combined with farming and rural by-employments, will be examined in more detail in the next chapter.

Industry in the Countryside

In seeking to identify the essential characteristics of the economic region it is necessary to go beyond the fixed agrarian social relations that were shared by the local

inhabitants of the Wealden 'wood pasture' regime; in which a social hierarchy based on landed wealth is evident. It is important to identify a more diverse range of associations that help to establish more complex community relationships, in which the inhabitants of the rural and urban environment interacted and formed their social world, and where they developed relations of authority and deference appropriate to their social needs. In the manufacturing region of the Weald a distinct set of economic and social relations was established within the local community of core-parishes. The region, centred on the market town of Cranbrook, was by the sixteenth century firmly established as a clothing neighbourhood. Labels such as 'capitalist', 'manufacturer' and 'wage labourer' must be employed to describe the typical social relations that operated within the broadcloth industry, the particular industrial specialism of the area. Within this economic context linked parishes maintained connections through associations of work, trade, kinship and residence. However, the extent to which each parish was able to maintain its occupational specialism and propensity to produce Kentish broadcloth varied according to the internal dynamics of each individual local society. Moreover, the balance between economic change and continuity was inevitably influenced by the communities' response to external factors, such as the supply of raw materials, land, labour and capital and the market demand for good quality broadcloth. As these local communities adapted to changes in market conditions in the period 1570-1670, social relations within these parishes underwent corresponding changes, and new economic and social relations were formed which resulted in a realignment of the traditional social structure and internal dynamics of some communities.

The dominance of the cloth industry in the central Weald was already old and well established by the beginning of the period covered by this study.⁵⁰ By the sixteenth century the manufacture of broadcloth formed the basis of the economic

regime and cultural identity of the region. The cloth industry of the Weald was the largest employer of labour outside agriculture, and a correlation existed between the rural economy and the manufacture of textiles. However, most wool came from outside the Weald, particularly from the Kent and Sussex Downs and from Romney Marsh, to be worked up within the Cranbrook area. The manufacture of cloth involved a series of labour intensive processes that called for an embryonic division of labour. Most of the stages in the manufacture of cloth were compatible with production in the home as cottage industries, where all the family could contribute to the household economy. As Coleman described it,

‘Children carded the wool; women spun it into yarn; men wove the fabric and did the finishing processes. Consequently the fixed costs of some central establishment were not worth incurring. They could be passed on to the workers in their cottages’.⁵¹

It was the very flexibility of the putting out process and the economic dependency of the workforce on the clothiers that made the rural inhabitants sensitive to changes in the demand for broadcloth in the sixteenth century. A letter written by Lord Cobham to the earl of Sussex in 1568 contained a petition emphasizing the precarious nature of employment in the cloth industry:

‘That clothing in the said Weald of Kent is the nurse of the people, so that in maintaining clothing the people are maintained; decay clothing and the people decay...the making of a broadcloth consists not in the travail of one or two persons, but in a number, as of thirty or forty persons-men, women and children’.⁵²

Therefore, the manufacture and sale of good quality broadcloth provided links between the neighbourhood area, the wider national community and export markets. Kentish broadcloth was shipped to the Netherlands and France through London dealers at Blackwell Hall, although Mayhew provides evidence that cloth exports were also an important commodity in Rye’s shipping trade in the 1580s.⁵³ However, Zell draws attention to the relatively small-scale manufacturing base of Kent clothiers, many of whom combined their entrepreneurial activities with traditional pastoral farming.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, although clothiers spread their economic activity between farming and textiles in order to diversify and protect themselves against the vagaries of the market, contemporaries were in no doubt that cloth manufacture was vital to the prosperity of the local inhabitants. Of Cranbrook Lord Cobham wrote,

‘In the town of Cranbrook, which is but a small part of the county, there is 1000 cloths less yearly made than hath been in the years past...what a number of people, by the lack of clothing, lose a great part of their living; so that daily idleness and poverty greatly increases.’⁵⁵

In arguing for the clothiers’ case, Cobham highlighted the potential for social disorder that might follow from under-employment. The petition also demonstrates the nature and extent of the region’s economic dependence on the cloth trade. The region was vulnerable to external economic events, especially cyclical market movements, the dislocation of overseas trade and government legislation. In 1576 the sacking of Antwerp by the Spanish and fighting in the Netherlands disrupted overseas trade and led to the eventual loss of overseas markets. In addition, legislation in 1566 prohibiting the export of unfinished cloth, which included many cloths produced in the Weald, led to economic hardship that was challenged by clothiers across the country. It is indicative of the influence of Kentish clothiers that they were able to enlist the support of Lord Cobham, the county’s most prominent politician at Court, to plead that Kentish cloths be exempt from the force of the Act.⁵⁶

It is important to explore the thesis that clothiers operated collectively as capitalist entrepreneurs, with a common cultural identity as well as shared economic interests. William, Lord Burghley believed that ‘those who depend upon the making of cloth are of a worse condition to be quietly governed than the husbandmen’, but he was thinking of their workforce rather than the clothiers who organized production.⁵⁷ The social mobility of clothiers, and their local influence, contributed to a local social identity. And they were perceived as a powerful economic group in Wealden society,

whose decisions conditioned social relations within the local community. The micro-society of the Cranbrook neighbourhood and the macro-society of the nation were connected by the regional specialization of clothmaking. In the late eighteenth-century Hasted lamented the demise of Wealden textiles, and commented that ‘the occupation of it was formerly of considerable consequence and estimation, and was exercised by persons who possessed most of the landed wealth of the weald’.⁵⁸

The economic region with its base in Cranbrook was formed at the end of the middle ages and survived through the vicissitudes of trade fluctuations and developments in manufacturing processes until the late seventeenth century. The region of cloth manufacture in the Weald constituted an entity of special economic and social interest. The extent to which the ‘better sort’ of inhabitants of this neighbourhood shared a common social and cultural identity will be examined in the course of this study.

Many clothiers established dynastic families in Cranbrook, and maintained kinship networks throughout the parishes under study. In the following chapters, the social role of clothiers as capitalist entrepreneurs, and their kinship and personal networks will be explored. Examination of the economic importance of textiles will show that clothiers’ activities underpinned the local mentality of the economic region. Within this context economic paternalism, trading links, and debt and credit networks, will be examined. These findings will be examined through an analysis of the active social role of ‘chief inhabitants’ in their local communities, and the way they exercised their political power and superior local status to maintain the local social order.

The extent to which the cloth trade dominated the local economy in the later sixteenth century, has been ably demonstrated by Zell.⁵⁹ However, the economic effects and consequences brought about by the decline and eventual collapse of textile

manufacture in this early proto-industrialized region have not been sufficiently explored, and will be examined in chapter eight of this thesis.

Defining a Local Social System

Cranbrook town and its immediate neighbourhood area was a distinct region that was recognised by the local inhabitants as important to their own internal dealings and in their relations with the wider social world. The market town of Cranbrook and its surrounding parishes formed a local entity that possessed an economic infrastructure and forms of social organization that were of specific relevance to their inhabitants for employment, marketing and distribution of goods and services. Within this well-defined neighbourhood region an economic *pays* was differentiated from the surrounding countryside in Kent. It was one in which an established set of social relations gave the region a distinctive social identity. The process of recovering the nature of actual social relationships within individual communities will involve a more complex analysis of the economic structure of the town of Cranbrook and its interaction with the surrounding communities. Within the context of the local social structure, trade, personal contacts and kinship ties had both economic and social consequences. Thus, in spite of the incomplete nature of the sources available to the historian, the structure of wealth and social status within the community may be reconstructed. It is important to undertake a close examination of local 'ruling groups', which may have formed oligarchies of power within the neighbourhood. The internal logic behind this societal framework is not simply to examine the region as an economic entity, but to explore the relationship between the twin concepts of 'community' and 'society'.⁶⁰

It is therefore important to explore the hypothesis that the social structure of this particular economic region was distinctive in character and that it may be defined as a

'local social system'. However, it is first necessary to establish the basic demographic structure of the area, to estimate total population and to describe the ongoing demographic trends among the parishes within the neighbourhood. The numbers of inhabitants and householders wealthy enough to contribute to taxation can then be examined within the context of the local social structure, in which the incidence of poverty was a significant local feature. The economic variable of changing levels of poverty in the neighbourhood will be more fully discussed in a subsequent chapter. However, it is important to keep the issue of poverty in mind and to explore its overall effect on the local neighbourhood during the seventeenth century.

The Demographic Structure of the Economic Region

In order to describe the demographic trends in the region, the parish registers of baptisms and burials for Cranbrook and the six neighbouring parishes for the period 1570 to 1640 were examined. It is possible to ascertain a range of population statistics for each year under study. However, during the civil war period the registers become unreliable: there is under registration for all parishes apart from Biddenden and Goudhurst in the period 1640-1660, making a simple aggregative analysis impossible for the period 1640-60 (Chapter Eight will examine demographic trends for the period 1650-1679). Estimates of parish populations have been calculated by aggregative methods assuming crude birth rates of 28 and 35 per thousand baptisms for the period and smoothing the annual fluctuations by using seven year moving averages (see appendices, 5-11). It is important to test whether the demographic experience of the Weald displayed characteristics similar to the national population trends outlined by Wrigley and Schofield, in which rural areas of England were producing a 'net natural increase' in population from the 1540s onward.⁶¹

Table 1.2 shows the estimated populations of the individual parishes and of the neighbourhood area by decade.

Table 1.2

Mean Population Estimates by Decade 1570-1639 based on 35 per 1000 Baptisms

| Years | Cra | Gou | Haw | Bid | Ben | Frit | Sta | Total |
|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|--------|
| 1570-1579 | 2,000 | 1,486 | 1,057 | 1,000 | 857 | 371 | 742 | 7,513 |
| 1580-1589 | 3,000 | 1,686 | 1,200 | 1,229 | 1,057 | 314 | 800 | 9,286 |
| 1590-1599 | 2,570 | 1,400 | 1,229 | 1,171 | 1,086 | 257 | 743 | 8,456 |
| 1600-1609 | 2,770 | 1,771 | 1,429 | 1,200 | 971 | 437 | 857 | 9,435 |
| 1610-1619 | 2,514 | 1,943 | 1,429 | 1,200 | 1,085 | 286 | 886 | 9,343 |
| 1620-1629 | 3,000 | 1,857 | 1,571 | 1,257 | 1,171 | 437 | 1,000 | 10,293 |
| 1630-1639 | 3,060 | 1,886 | 1,486 | 1,257 | 1,000 | 429 | 1,000 | 10,118 |

Source: CKS P100 28 5 5, P100 1 16; CCAL Dca/BT/59; CKS P157/1/2, P157/28/1, P178/1/1, P178 1 2, P26 1 2, P20 1 1, P20 1 2; CCAL Dca/BT 78; CKS P347/12 1, P347/12/2

The region was producing a net surplus of baptisms over burials during this period, which resulted in a period of sustained population increase from the later sixteenth century into the mid-seventeenth century. Indeed, a period of rapid demographic growth in the 1580s is identifiable within Cranbrook and the neighbouring parishes. The estimated population growth in Cranbrook during the 1580s, when the parish reached approximately 3,000 inhabitants, was greater than in the adjacent parishes. Zell has highlighted the relative high population densities of Wealden populations reliant on clothmaking and rural industries for employment, which benefited from a pool of under-employed rural labour.⁶² However, demographic growth was checked by a major plague outbreak in Cranbrook in 1597/98, when the parish register records a large number of plague burials (Appendices 1 and 2).

This simple methodology hides the incidence of migration and periods of high mortality in the 1590s, when plague in 1597/98 and a series of bad harvests between

1594 and 1597 checked population growth (Appendices 5-11). The parishes most affected in these crisis years were Cranbrook, Goudhurst, Biddenden, Frittenden and Staplehurst: the overall population in the area, was cut back from roughly 9,300 in the period 1580-89 to 8,450 in the period 1590-99. The statistics for Cranbrook indicate that the population grew less rapidly in the decades 1590 to 1599 and 1610 to 1619, when there was a high incidence of mortality and where a number of years recorded a net natural decrease in population (see Table 1.2 and Appendix 1). In the 1590s demographic growth slowed, but began to recover in the first decade of the seventeenth century. The plague year of 1597 recorded a natural decrease of -127, whilst 1596 recorded a natural increase of only 5 and 1598 and 1599 increases of only 27 and 37. Durkin has shown that in Canterbury, similar pressures increased mortality in the city in these years.⁶³ It seems that family formation only slowly recovered from the effects of plague and the depressed economic conditions of the 1590s, which affected Kent as a whole. In Chilham, on the chalkland of the North Downs, the years 1597, 1598 and 1599 recorded similarly low natural increases/decreases of 8, -3 and 1. In these years high mortality caused by disease and poor harvests checked population growth and probably reduced the proportion of individuals financially secure enough to marry.⁶⁴

Expansion resumed in the first decade of the seventeenth-century, during which the neighbourhood population recovered to approximately 9,430 inhabitants. However, the capacity of Cranbrook parish to absorb and sustain growth was severely challenged in the period 1610-19. During this period, demographic growth in Cranbrook was checked by several more years that recorded a surplus of burials over baptisms. In 1612 there was a net surplus of burials of -26, 1613 -10, 1614 -7, 1616 -4, 1618 -10, 1619 -29. Clearly, the capacity of Cranbrook parish to sustain growth was severely challenged in the period 1610-19. However, population growth in Goudhurst was more vigorous in

this period and increased from about 1,770 in the period 1600-09 to about 1,940 in the period 1610-19, an indication that Goudhurst was an economically expanding parish at this time.

The 1620s, by contrast, began with a major economic crisis, and yet seems nevertheless to have been a decade of steady population growth. Population growth in the neighbourhood parishes reached a peak in the period 1620-29, when population overall was approximately 10,290 (Table 1.2).

If we compare our rough population estimates against parish acreages, it is possible to get some idea of population density within the economic region. Through a comparison of parish population estimates for the 1570s and the 1630s (the last decade for which reliable aggregative data is available) certain trends can be described.⁶⁵ Table 1.2 shows that the overall trend in parishes in the Cranbrook area was of population increase between the 1570s and the 1630s. Nevertheless, as Zell has argued, given the high rates of 'natural increase' in the central Wealden parishes, cumulative demographic growth in the region was possibly limited by emigration out of the neighbourhood, in response to the fluctuating prosperity of the local broadcloth industry.

Yet this region with its rural industries and wood-pasture agrarian economy sustained comparatively dense populations in several parishes throughout the period. Table 1.3 shows the relative density of parish populations in the area. Cranbrook, Hawkhurst and Goudhurst were the most densely populated parishes in the 1570s and the 1630s. The parish of Hawkhurst (6,500 acres) supported a population density second only to the market town of Cranbrook.

Table 1.3

Population Densities in the Neighbourhood Parishes

| Parish (acreage) | 1570s Population | Persons per 1,000 acres | 1630s Population | Persons per 1,000 acres |
|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Benenden (6,700) | 857 | 128 | 1,000 | 149 |
| Biddenden (7,200) | 1,000 | 139 | 1,257 | 175 |
| Cranbrook (10,400) | 2,000 | 192 | 3,060 | 294 |
| Frittenden (3,500) | 371 | 106 | 429 | 122 |
| Goudhurst (9,800) | 1,486 | 152 | 1,886 | 192 |
| Hawkhurst (6,500) | 1,057 | 163 | 1,486 | 229 |
| Staplehurst (5,900) | 742 | 126 | 1,000 | 169 |
| Totals 50,000acres | 7,513 | 150 | 10,118 | 202 |

Source: As in Table 1.2

The estimates of population densities in Hawkhurst and Goudhurst suggest that a local economy based on farming, cloth manufacture and rural by-employments could support communities with comparatively high population densities, even if many residents remained poor. However, it is to the relative prosperity of groups within parish populations and the social hierarchy that our attention must now turn. One way to do this is to examine those householders who were sufficiently wealthy to pay parliamentary taxation.

Wealth and Taxation: the Lay Subsidy, 1597

The demographic evidence demonstrates that there were large populations within these clothing parishes in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-centuries. The social structure of this region was also distinctive, in comparison with other economic *pays* in Kent at this time; in a number of ways the local social system reflected the requirements of the textile industry.

The complex social hierarchy of early modern society is a commonplace: inequality in urban and rural society arose from the economic and social organization of local communities. Within village society social stratification was determined

largely by wealth.⁶⁶ Viewing the social hierarchy within the town of Cranbrook and its rural hinterland through an examination of tax lists provides insights into the nature of the social pyramid, although the fact that only a minority even of adult male householders were rated to the subsidy reduces the usefulness of any such analysis. The limitations of the evidence will be shown as the sources are examined. It needs also to be stressed that the structure of wealth was not rigid but overlapped between trades and occupations, allowing for a degree of social mobility. Taxation evidence must also be treated with caution because it tells as much about contemporary perceptions of social status and wealth among local inhabitants, as about actual wealth.

Throughout the reign of Elizabeth and beyond, the parliamentary subsidy was the main form of national taxation, yet was demanded only from the better off. There were two different categories of assessment, as Hoyle explains: ‘the subsidy taxed the *income* from one form of capital asset (land) whilst in the case of goods it taxed the *capital* value of the asset rather than the profits generated by it’.⁶⁷ The late Elizabethan subsidies taxed inhabitants who owned lands assessed at £1 per annum or more at the rate of 4s in the pound, or 20 per cent in two payments. Those who possessed goods worth at least £3 were taxed at the rate of 2s 8d in the pound or 13.3 per cent, again payable in two payments. Assessments had long ceased to be accurate representations of the actual wealth or income of taxpayers, and a growing majority of adults were excluded from the subsidy altogether. Therefore there are major problems in comparing ratings for the subsidy with wealth in moveable goods given in probate inventories.⁶⁸ Fieldhouse’s detailed work on the 1544 subsidy and probate inventories in mid-sixteenth century Richmondshire provides evidence that although ‘the lay subsidy assessments certainly do not reflect *total* wealth, they provide an indication of *relative* wealth’.⁶⁹ Lay subsidy assessments must be interpreted not as direct evidence of

individual wealth, but as a contemporary indication of how a person was perceived in rank and social status in the community, relative to others who were rated to the subsidy, and to still more inhabitants who were not assessed at all.

Judgements about which inhabitants were well-off enough to contribute to national taxation were made by individuals with local knowledge, who were themselves among the communities' leading inhabitants. In 1597, amongst the assessors for the lay subsidy in Cranbrook were Thomas Sheafe, Robert Hovenden, James King, Peter Courthop and Robert Brickenden, all wealthy clothiers and substantial householders of the 'better sort' in the community. In all, 116 persons from Cranbrook (28% of taxpayers in the area) were assessed for the subsidy based on land or goods, ranging from £20 for the wealthiest inhabitants to £1 for those just crossing the threshold in land.⁷⁰ Of the remaining 298 taxpayers in the neighbourhood area (414 in all) 59 came from Benenden (14%), 54 from Biddenden (13%), 22 from Frittenden (5%), 57 from Goudhurst (14%), 69 from Hawkhurst (17%) and 37 from Staplehurst (9%).⁷¹

Table 1.4 shows a social pyramid with a very sharp point of wealthy inhabitants, and a much wider base of less wealthy householders.

Table 1.4

Cranbrook Parish Subsidy 1597

| Assessment land/goods | Number of Taxpayers | Percentage |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------|
| £20 | 2 | 2% |
| £10-£11 | 6 | 5% |
| £7-£8 | 6 | 5% |
| £5-£6 | 16 | 13% |
| £4 | 20 | 17% |
| £3 | 39 | 34% |
| £2 | 9 | 8% |
| £1 | 18 | 16% |
| Total | 116 | 100 |

Source: PRO E179/127/516

The wealthiest inhabitants, who were both assessed on landed income of £20 p.a. were the two largest landowners, Sir Thomas Baker and Sir Thomas Roberts. The High Collector for the Seven hundreds was Alexander Courthop, clothier, who was assessed on goods worth £7. The disjuncture between inventoried wealth and the assessment of goods for taxation purposes is evident in the inventory of Henry Stonebridge, brewer, whose movables were appraised at £1,165 in 1611, but whose tax assessment in 1597 had been just £6 in goods.⁷² Yet unrealistic as this figure appears to be in terms of real wealth, his subsidy rating placed him in the top 17 per cent of taxpayers in 1597. However, it is significant that the number of persons assessed on £3 to £5 in goods or land constituted the largest band of taxpayers and of these 74 individuals, only nine were assessed on land rather than goods. Other evidence suggests that the social status of these inhabitants was synonymous with the wealthier clothiers, substantial tradesmen and yeoman. For example, James King, clothier and one of the tax assessors, left chattels appraised at £546 at his death in 1617, but he had been rated at £6 in goods in 1597.⁷³ Similarly, Walter Taylor, clothier, was taxed on £4 worth of goods (which placed him only among the wealthiest 43 per cent of taxpayers) although his inventoried wealth in 1612 amounted to £2,207.⁷⁴ The disparity between inventoried wealth and subsidy assessments is evident and far greater than Fieldhouse found for the 1540s, when tax assessments were much more realistic, and men much less wealthy in goods at death.

The Elizabethan subsidy affected only the wealthier groups in the social hierarchy, the individuals who were identified as having sufficient means to contribute. Therefore the subsidy may be used to identify the social elite within the community. Appearance on the subsidy rolls distinguishes the 'better sort' of inhabitants from the

much more numerous 'poorer sort'. And, not all householders who might be defined as 'middling sort' featured regularly as taxpayers.

The size of the minority who contributed to the 1597 subsidy, as a proportion of all householders in Cranbrook, can be calculated from a comparison with the surviving church rate book for 1608. In this year parish dues were paid by 594 resident householders in Cranbrook.⁷⁵ Thus the 116 inhabitants assessed in 1597 for the subsidy represented just 20 per cent of households. At least 80 per cent of Cranbrook's inhabitants were exempt from the lay subsidy. This evidence suggests that there was a significant degree of social polarization in Cranbrook. It is impossible to extrapolate a model of the socio-economic structure from the taxation evidence alone.

Wrightson and Levine's four-fold categorization of social status was based on the 1524/5 lay subsidy for Terling, Essex and provides a simple model of the graded social hierarchy of wealth and social position within the village.⁷⁶ If their evidence is compared with that for Cranbrook in 1597, it is clear that the full range of socio-economic groups that Wrightson and Levine incorporated into their model cannot be compared with Cranbrook's 1597 taxpayers. This is hardly surprising because the subsidies of the 1520s and 1540s were far more inclusive than the late Elizabethan levies, which left out a large majority of householders whose predecessors had been assessed in Henry VIII's reign.

As shown in Table 1.5, a large number of category II inhabitants in Cranbrook were paying tax. However, very few people who were not well off were rated to the subsidy in the 1590s. With the exclusion of labourers and cottagers from the pool of taxpayers, the burden of taxation fell upon a much narrower occupational and social group of Cranbrook society in the late sixteenth century.

Table 1.5**Comparative Wealth Assessment of Lay Subsidy Taxpayers: Terling, Essex, 1524/5 and Cranbrook 1597**

| Category | Wealth Assessment | Social Position | Terling | Cranbrook |
|----------|-------------------|---|----------|-----------|
| I | £10-£54 | Gentry, very large farmers, clothiers | 9 11.8% | 8 7% |
| II | £3-£8 | Yeomen, clothiers, substantial husbandmen and craftsmen | 28 36.8% | 81 70% |
| III | £2 | Husbandmen, craftsmen | 18 23.7% | 9 8% |
| IV | Under £2 | Labourers, cottagers | 21 27.6% | 18 15% |
| Total | | | 76 99.9% | 116 100% |

Source: PRO E179 127/516; Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, 34

Those assessed on land of £1 p.a. in Cranbrook (who would have featured in Wrightson and Levine's category IV), whose wills or inventories survive, were in fact of a considerably higher social status and included clothiers, yeomen farmers, tailors and weavers. Edward Couchman, clothier, was assessed on £1 10s p.a. in land in 1597. He died in 1627 with inventoried wealth of £258. Thomas Ellis, tailor, bequeathed lands and tenements in his will 1608, Alex Couchman, yeoman, left inventoried wealth of £90 in 1617, Richard Beale, yeoman, had moveable goods worth £164 in 1601 and Richard Jeffery, broadweaver, left goods appraised at £79 in 1616.⁷⁷ An attempt to study the distribution of wealth from the Elizabethan tax lists for Cranbrook must recognize that almost all those paying the levy in 1597 were better-off farmers, craftsmen, traders and manufacturers. Even those individuals paying on the lowest assessments were in fact some of the parish's 'middling sorts'- small-scale clothiers, farmers and skilled artisans.

The high population densities of these Wealden parishes, and the dynamics of rural industry and farming in the region, interacted during the late sixteenth and early

seventeenth centuries to create a highly complex economic and social structure. The following chapter, will explore in greater detail the occupational structure of the core-parishes, and analyse the different levels of wealth within occupational groups. This will provide an economic context to facilitate the study of social status and parish politics among the communities' chief inhabitants.

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Chapter 2

Wealth, Trades and Occupations: Establishing a Social Hierarchy

In the previous chapter it was argued that the Cranbrook area was a well-defined economic region within the wider Wealden region. The area was characterized as being distinctive from other economic *pays* in Kent by its participation in the broadcloth industry. This chapter describes the social structure of the region, which was related closely to its trades and business connections. From this it is hoped to identify trading networks based on kinship, farming, manufacturing and craft activities that provided both the internal dynamics of individual communities and links between parishes. The sum of all these connections defined the social infrastructure of the neighbourhood.

The present chapter will focus on the economic activities of the ‘better sorts’ of inhabitants within the neighbourhood area, as well as the ‘poorer sort’, in order to establish a social hierarchy based on wealth and trades. During the sixteenth century, spurred on by growing market demand of a rising population, the more commercially minded yeoman farmers began to employ wage labour and to produce primarily for the market rather than for subsistence. Campbell has argued that these farmers were beginning to develop a self-awareness of their political power and status as ‘the yeomanry’.¹ In addition, wealthier craftsmen came to rely more on apprentice and hired labour, put out work to poorer craftsmen and extended their activities towards the supervision of all stages of production. The inherent conflicts between the larger farmers and the peasant producers, and between the greater and lesser craftsmen is an important consideration. Within the context of this study, it will be important to examine the role played by the communities’ ‘chief inhabitants’ or the ‘better sort’, and

the way in which they functioned within the local community alongside a 'middling sort', who may be identified as the main body of craftsmen and farmers.

The first task is to examine the wealth and occupational structure of the neighbourhood area, in order to provide an economic context in which to study the social relations and status of the ruling elite. It is a striking feature of personal wealth in the Weald at this time that the range of moveable wealth among members of any trade was enormously wide. Therefore generalizations about the social structure of the community, based on the criterion of occupation alone must be avoided. The internal dynamics of wealth creation in each trade must be assessed individually, because men with capital were quite different from craftsmen and tradesmen without. It is therefore necessary to examine particular trades and crafts and their importance within the local economic structure. This will facilitate a study of the relationship between the local elite, the 'middling sort' and the parish poor. The 'middling sort', of economically independent craftsmen, tradesmen and husbandmen, formed the largest group within local society. It is conceivable that it is from this middling group that individuals who sought a degree of social mobility within their community derived.

The examination of wealth, trades and occupations within the market town of Cranbrook and its neighbourhood area provides an essential stepping-off point from which to explore the social structure of the local community. From this investigation it is hoped to address the weakness that Hindle identifies in many local studies of parish power structures: that they 'have very little social depth' and that:

'In failing to locate politics in their local social context, historians of "popular culture" in particular have failed to get to grips with the full ramifications of social differentiation'.²

The dynamics of rural society were imbedded in the social and occupational structures of the market town and its interaction with the surrounding villages. The

marketing function of the community, which took place between inhabitants as consumers and suppliers, was vital to rural society. This dynamic relationship between agriculture and trade suggests that rural society satisfied its basic needs in goods and services locally. Local markets provided an outlet for farmers to sell their produce. And in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the proliferation of crafts and manufactures in the countryside becomes more evident, and the social relationships arising from the increase in non-agricultural activity becomes more complex. As we have already noted, the importance of rural by-employments to the wood-pasture agrarian economy ensured that many country dwellers engaged in both small-scale farming and craft activity. As in the East Anglian countryside,

‘Most manufactures and trades required little equipment and their basic techniques could be assimilated easily by those for whom agriculture could not provide certain or continuous employment.’³

The evidence for growing occupational diversity in the Wealden countryside comes primarily from probate sources. Such evidence has been widely utilized by economic historians to study farming and craft structures in towns and villages.⁴ Inventories have in recent decades become invaluable evidence of the range of occupational diversity in communities, and the relative wealth of social groups and individuals. Inventories survive in a greater number for the diocese of Canterbury than do wills, and therefore cover a greater proportion of the population. Most of the wealthier and middle ranking men - and some of the poorer inhabitants - are represented by extant inventories. Thus they provide information about a broad cross-section of the local population. Although very small estates (worth under £5) were not obliged to be inventoried for probate, the goods of many inhabitants with minimal assets were nevertheless inventoried. The main defect of this source is that few inventories for the wealthiest inhabitants, whose wills were proved in the Prerogative

Court of Canterbury, have survived. The limitations of the probate inventory have been fully examined by Margaret Spufford.⁵ They only contain details of moveable goods, and overlook real estate; goods are valued in contemporary monetary values and therefore the effects of inflation have to be taken into account when assessing distributions of wealth over time; and often the testator's occupation must be implied from the trade goods listed in the inventory. In order to work within the bounds of these deficiencies I have chosen to follow a proven methodology employed by Zell, in his assessment of Wealden occupations in the sixteenth century.⁶ Where doubts arise regarding the testator's occupation because of the lack of trade goods or agricultural evidence, the individual may have been a labourer, retired, a minor or simply fallen on hard times; in this case the category of 'labourer/retired' is utilized. Those inventories that record evidence of only a marginal level of agricultural activity, that are suggestive of a cottager's holdings, rather than full-time farming activity, have been labelled 'smallholder-plus', the plus suggesting an unknown source of income, probably in the form of rural by-employments. In all other instances either the occupation or trade is stated at the beginning of the inventory, or can be reliably inferred from the tools or farming stock recorded. Where both are in evidence the craft or trade is identified as the main occupation rather than the farming activity, in order to show the range of occupations within the neighbourhood. If evidence of agricultural activity alone became the prime criterion the bias to farming would be too great. It has long been established that many - if not most rural households engaged in more than one occupation in early modern England.⁷ The evidence thus presented will provide an overview of trade, manufacturing and agriculture in the neighbourhood. The benefit of testamentary evidence for this particular study is that although the wealthiest gentry

and the poor may be under-represented, the 'middling sort' of people, who constituted the economic base of Wealden society, are amply represented by extant inventories.

Just over 2000 Canterbury archdeaconry and consistory inventories were examined for the period 1570-1670, from the core parishes of Benenden, Biddenden, Cranbrook, Frittenden, Goudhurst, Hawkhurst and Staplehurst. The parish of Frittenden, which is very small, has been included in the Cranbrook total for the purpose of quantification. All extant inventories were consulted for the entire period. Of this total, 222 inventories categorized as being uncertain or of non-farming widows were excluded from the analysis of occupational and trading groups. The period was divided into three bands 1570-1599, 1600-1629, and 1630-1669 in order to detect any relevant trends or changes during the period. A detailed comparative breakdown of the individual local economies of each parish was also assembled.

The Wealth Structure of Local Industries

Tables 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 establish the basic occupational structure of the rural communities. The tables shows, that Cranbrook and its local neighbourhood was able to support a wide range of crafts and trades during this period; and that this trend continued to rise up to 1629.

During the late sixteenth century, between a fifth and a quarter of all inventories in the neighbourhood parishes (except Staplehurst) were of textile trades. Somewhat unexpectedly it was Biddenden, rather than Cranbrook, which had a lower proportion of farming inventories and the highest percentage of textile trades represented. Biddenden was also able to support a number of crafts and trades, including four smiths and three shoemakers. Goudhurst and Benenden also provide evidence of trading activity within their communities across a range of occupations in addition to the 24 per

cent and 26 per cent of estates involved in textile manufacture. Goudhurst supported a wider variety of trades, including nine smiths, five shopkeepers, two tailors, five people engaged in woodworking trades, one leather worker and one miller.

Table 2.1

Occupations and Trades in Inventories, 1570-1599

| Occupation | Cra | Gou | Haw | Bid | Ben | Sta |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Farmer | 35 28° | 20 25% | 11 15% | 20 25% | 27 26% | 24 41% |
| Smallholder + | 7 5° | 6 7° | 15 20% | 8 10% | 10 10% | 5 9% |
| Textile Trades | 35 28° | 19 24% | 19 25% | 25 31% | 26 26% | 8 14% |
| Labourer Retired | 18 14% | 11 14% | 16 21% | 16 19% | 18 18% | 12 21% |
| Smiths | 3 2° | 9 11° | 1 1% | 4 5% | 2 2% | 0 |
| Shopkeepers | 9 7% | 5 6° | 2 3% | 1 1% | 6 6% | 2 3% |
| Tailor | 2 2% | 2 3° | 0 | 0 | 2 2% | 1 2% |
| Shoemakers | 1 1° | 0 | 2 3° | 3 4% | 1 1% | 1 2% |
| Leather Trades | 1 1° | 1 1° | 3 4° | 1 1% | 2 2% | 2 3% |
| Miller Brewer | 6 5° | 1 1° | 1 1% | 0 | 0 | 1 2% |
| Non-farming Gentry/Prof | 3 2° | 0 | 3 4° | 2 2% | 3 3° | 0 |
| Woodwork Trades | 4 3% | 5 6° | 2 3° | 2 2% | 4 4% | 2 3% |
| Building Trades | 0 | 1 1° | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Carrier | 3 2% | 1 1° | 0 | 0 | 0 0 | 0 |
| Total (524) | 127 | 81 | 75 | 82 | 101 | 58 |
| Misc. & Non- Farming wid. | 25 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 12 | 3 |

Sources: CKS PRC10/1-72, PRC11/1-31, PRC27/1-21, PRC28 4-18

A feature of this early period is the importance of Cranbrook itself as a centre of trade and industry for the local neighbourhood. Much economic activity was directly related to the textile industry and the manufacture of Kentish broadcloth, in which 28 per cent of the inventory sample were engaged (24 weavers, nine clothiers and two

shearman). In Cranbrook the range of crafts and occupations was greater than in the neighbouring parishes. As might be expected for a parish with a market town, there was a local concentration of the distributive trades: nine shopkeepers, six millers/brewers, and three carriers, in addition to the handicraft occupations of shoemaker, tailor, and woodworker. Throughout the period under study Cranbrook provided a range of goods and services for its inhabitants and functioned as a centre of trade for the local area.

In the next period the numbers in Cranbrook engaged in textile manufacture may have increased further: the inventory sample shows 31 per cent were textile workers (25 weavers, 34 clothiers, one woadsetter, five clothworkers and two spinsters). In the final sample period the share of inventories suggesting textile trades declined somewhat, but was still substantial (21 weavers, 32 clothiers, three clothworkers and three dyers). The inventories suggest that weaving was the most widespread non-agrarian occupation among Cranbrook's inhabitants and a major source of employment in the region.

The emphasis on textile manufacture is also evident in Biddenden, where the proportion of inhabitants employed in cloth production remained high throughout the whole period. In the period 1570-1599 31 per cent of inventories were textile workers (11 clothiers, 11 weavers, one shearman and two spinsters). In the period 1600-1629 there were 10 clothiers, 10 weavers, three clothworkers, one stockcardmaker, five spinsters and one hempdresser. In the period 1630-1669 there were 11 clothiers, eight weavers, four spinsters, three kerseymakers and two clothworkers. In Benenden too between 1570 and 1629 more than a quarter of inventories show textile occupations. The importance of cloth manufacture as a source of employment in the region, second only to agriculture, cannot be over emphasized. The inventories show that the nucleus of cloth manufacture in the Weald centred on the parishes of Benenden, Biddenden,

Cranbrook and Goudhurst from where the greatest number of clothiers' inventories originate.

Table 2.2

Occupations and Trades in Inventories, 1600-1629

| Occupation | Cra | Gou | Haw | Bid | Ben | Sta |
|------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Farmer | 44 20% | 20 24% | 26 27% | 32 31% | 30 38% | 28 36% |
| Smallholder + | 21 10% | 8 9% | 15 15% | 8 8% | 5 6% | 8 11% |
| Textile Trades | 67 31% | 20 24% | 15 15% | 31 29% | 24 31% | 18 23% |
| Labourer/ Retired | 32 15% | 8 9% | 15 15% | 12 11% | 10 13% | 11 14% |
| Smiths | 1 1% | 6 7% | 1 1% | 3 3% | 0 | 1 1% |
| Shopkeepers | 11 5% | 2 2 ^o | 5 5% | 3 3% | 6 8% | 2 3% |
| Tailor | 3 1% | 3 4 ^o | 2 2% | 2 2% | 0 | 0 |
| Shoemaker | 4 2 ^o | 0 | 2 2.1 ^o | 0 | 1 1% | 0 |
| Leather Trades | 4 2% | 4 5 ^o | 1 1 ^o | 1 1% | 0 | 2 3% |
| Miller /Brewer | 8 4 ^o | 2 2 ^o | 8 8 ^o | 6 6 ^o | 2 3% | 5 7% |
| Non-Farming Gentry / Prof | 2 1 ^o | 4 5 ^o | 1 1 ^o | 3 3% | 0 | 1 1% |
| Woodwork Trades | 11 5 ^o | 3 4 ^o | 4 4% | 2 2% | 0 | 1 1% |
| Building Trades | 0 | 3 4% | 4 4% | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Carrier | 6 3% | 1 1 ^o | 0 | 1 1% | 0 | 0 |
| Total (657) | 214 | 85 | 99 | 104 | 78 | 77 |
| Misc.& Non- Farming wid. | 30 | 15 | 12 | 13 | 6 | 11 |

Source: As in Table 2.1

These findings may be compared to Zell's analysis of a greater number of Wealden parishes in the sixteenth century. In his study the eastern Wealden parishes of Rolvenden, Halden and Tenterden display a predominantly agrarian economy, with 62 per cent, 56 per cent and 41 per cent of inventories suggesting full time farming as the primary occupation.⁸

Table 2.3**Occupations and Trades in Inventories, 1630-1669**

| Occupation | Cra | Gou | Haw | Bid | Ben | Sta |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Farmer | 53 25% | 22 24% | 21 27% | 22 23% | 20 37% | 22 28% |
| Smallholder+ | 13 6% | 5 5% | 6 8% | 4 4% | 5 9% | 8 10% |
| Textile Trades | 57 27% | 33 36% | 22 29% | 28 30% | 12 22% | 20 26% |
| Labourer/ Retired | 25 12% | 10 11% | 4 5% | 14 15% | 6 11% | 13 17% |
| Smiths | 6 3% | 5 5% | 0 | 4 5% | 1 2% | 0 |
| Shop- Keepers | 16 8% | 3 3% | 2 3% | 3 3% | 1 2% | 4 5% |
| Tailor | 2 1% | 1 1% | 3 4% | 2 2% | 1 2% | 0 |
| Shoemaker | 2 1% | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 2% | 0 |
| Leather Trades | 7 3% | 0 | 4 5% | 3 3% | 2 4% | 2 3% |
| Miller Brewer | 16 8% | 6 7% | 6 8% | 8 9% | 2 4% | 5 6% |
| Non-Farming Gentry Prof | 5 2% | 1 1% | 4 5% | 1 1% | 2 4% | 2 3% |
| Woodwork Trades | 4 2% | 2 2% | 4 5% | 4 4% | 0 0 | 1 1% |
| Building Trades | 3 1% | 4 4% | 1 1% | 1 1% | 1 2% | 1 1% |
| Carrier | 1 1% | 1 1% | 0 | 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 |
| Total (606) | 210 | 93 | 77 | 94 | 54 | 78 |
| Misc.& Non- Farming wid. | 25 | 18 | 10 | 9 | 4 | 8 |

Source: As in Table 2.1

The disparity between farming activity and cloth manufacture was not so strong in the parishes immediately surrounding Cranbrook, where Benenden, Biddenden and Goudhurst, provided a large number of full-time farmers and graziers, a trend that increased in the period after 1600. In Benenden the number of farming inventories rose from 26 per cent in the period 1570-1599, to 37 per cent in the period 1630-1669. In Hawkhurst the percentage of farming inventories increased from 15 per cent in the period 1570-1599, to 27 per cent in the period 1639-1669. However, despite the

increased numbers involved in agriculture, the dominant economic activity of Cranbrook and its immediate neighbourhood was cloth manufacture.

Clothmaking work as a by-employment was of crucial importance in an area where many poorer inhabitants were dependent on wage labour. Spinning wheels, stockcards and treadles for spinning yarn appear in a great many inventories; spinning wool was a significant source of household income, earned predominantly by women and children. In 1627 Alice Walter of Frittenden had moveable goods appraised at £41, which consisted mainly of household goods and furnishings. Probably her major source of income was from spinning for which she had two spinning treadles, one pair of stockcards, one beam and a pair of scales, valued at £1.⁹ In 1625 Ellen Gourd of Cranbrook had a more typical spinster's inventorial wealth of £3 10s; in addition to a spinning wheel, she owned a pair of stockcards, stools and a pair of hand cards, worth 16d.¹⁰ The minimal investment required to undertake spinning, made the activity attractive as a source of income for the whole household. The multifunctional household economy is evident in the inventory of Thomas Reynold, husbandman of Hawkhurst (d. 1614), who had chattels worth about £37. In addition to three woollen treadles and five pairs of stockcards, he had farm stock of 'four small kine, one calf, and two twelve-monthing buds' worth £13, and he planted wheat and oats. Dairying was an extra source of income indicated by 4 cheeses, 3 crocks of butter, and 1 cheese-press.¹¹ Reynold's domestic economy, in which by-employments with a minimal capital outlay, supplemented farming activity, was typical of the local area. However, spinners were very poorly paid: in the late sixteenth century the piece rate for spinners was only 2d to 3d per pound of wool.¹² Nevertheless, spinning was widespread and the spinners formed a pool of cheap labour which could be employed or laid off as

the demand for cloth fluctuated. And, as the probate accounts of clothiers indicate, spinners and other textile workers were paid in arrears for their work.

In 1588 the goods of Stephen Girdler, clothier of Benenden, were appraised at £144, and amongst many debts and charges against his estate was £3 4s owed 'to divers spinners that were unpaid for work they had spun' and £4 8s due to a local shearman.¹³ The language used in clothiers' wills gives some idea of the subordinate position of the spinner in the local hierarchy. Some spinners were left legacies by their employers. Peter Courthop, a leading Cranbrook clothier who died in 1580, willed '5s each to 20 of my poorest spinners', and Alexander Lake of Goudhurst who also died in 1580, bequeathed '1s each to eight of my poor spinners'.¹⁴ Spinning was low paid semi-skilled work that all the members of the family could participate in; even the very poor could earn a shilling or so per week while working in their own households.

Weaving was important in the Wealden economy both as a full-time occupation and as a by-employment that could be combined with small-scale farming. Weaving was a skilled occupation, usually requiring an apprenticeship. Although there was no specialist craft guild in the neighbourhood, weaving was a male occupation undertaken by master craftsmen who completed formal apprenticeships under the terms of the 1563 Statute of Artificers. In Frittenden, detailed evidence for the 'putting out' of pauper apprentices by the Frittenden overseers, under the Act for Relief of the Poor, 39 Eliz. c. 3. (1597-8), shows many young men were compulsorily apprenticed to a craft. In 1618, for example, the churchwardens and overseers of the poor of Frittenden placed Thomas Darbie as an apprentice to Richard Greenbancke of Cranbrook, weaver, until he was 24. Apprenticeship contracts were ratified by the local Justices of the Peace, Sir Henry Baker and Sir Thomas Roberts.¹⁵ In July 1644 Frittenden officers covenanted with John Scranton of Goudhurst, broadweaver, to take Richard Walter, a poor

inhabitant of Frittenden, as an apprentice. Scranton promised to ‘educate Richard Walter his apprentice in the trade and occupation of broadweaver, after the best manner that he may to teach and train him up’.¹⁶ Even in the latter part of the seventeenth century, when the cloth industry was in decline, weaving still provided useful employment, and children continued to be apprenticed to the trade. In March 1668, the Frittenden churchwardens and overseers bound Thomas Drainer as apprentice to Richard Rocket of Staplehurst, weaver, until Drainer was 24. Between 1580 and 1670 at least 12 individuals for whom bonds survive were apprenticed to the craft of weaving by the Frittenden officers. The unusual survival of Frittenden’s apprenticeship bonds show that young people were put out to a wide range of crafts and occupations within the neighbourhood:

Table 2.4

Apprenticeship Bonds in Frittenden, 1580-1670

| | |
|-------------------|----------|
| Bricklayer | 1 |
| Butcher | 1 |
| Carpenter | 1 |
| Clothworker | 1 |
| Husbandry | 4 |
| Servant | 11 |
| Spinner | 1 |
| Tilemaker | 1 |
| Weaver | 12 |
| <u>Wiredrawer</u> | <u>1</u> |
| | 32 |

Source: CKS P152/14/1

Evidence of apprenticeship of non-pauper children is rare for the Weald because formal apprenticeship agreements do not survive: the absence of organised guilds has resulted in the loss of most indentures of apprenticeship. However, it is sometimes possible to obtain fragmentary evidence regarding apprenticeship through household lists, probate accounts, wills and quarter sessions records. The Parish Rate Book of 1608-1612 shows that in Cranbrook many households contained apprentices and journeymen. In 1609,

565 households included 77 apprentices and 42 journeymen. In 1612 the 526 recorded households, contained 97 apprentices and 82 journeymen.¹⁷

The local cloth industry employed a large number of craftsmen. Weavers were the largest occupational group in the inventory sample with 212 extant inventories. The mean inventorial value of weavers' chattels increased from £45 in the period 1570-1599, to £60 in the period 1600-1629, to £88 in the period 1630-1669. Weavers were independent master craftsmen, who worked up the yarn provided by the clothiers but were not directly employed by them. Yet since the clothier both supplied the raw material and organized the marketing of the woven cloth, the weaver was inevitably dependent upon the clothier. Nevertheless, the wealth of some weavers could rival that of poorer clothiers, and it is clear that the 'craft and mystery' of weaving was valued enough to be passed on to sons which thus created family dynasties. In 1611 Robert Judd, weaver, bequeathed to each of his three sons a broadloom and slays. In 1627 Henry Judd of Cranbrook, broadweaver, died leaving goods appraised at £278. He had in his shop three remnants of broadcloth and four broadlooms, worth in all £16. In addition, he left £204 in money and recoverable debts. In 1638, his brother Anthony Judd of Cranbrook, broadweaver, left goods valued at £163. In the weaving shops were four broad looms and associated 'tackling' worth £23 10s. He also owned five kine and had four acres of wheat in the ground. In 1634 Henry Judd of Cranbrook, weaver, the son of Henry senior, left movables worth £100. In the weaving shop were two looms valued at just over £6. He was also owed £47 in debts due from three clothiers.¹⁸

The Judd family's participation in the local textile industry over a considerable period is an example of how kinship groups developed locally into occupational networks, and how established families were well able to take advantage of such connections. Not all weavers, of course, were as successful as the Judds.

Table 2.5 illustrates the distribution of moveable wealth and the numbers of weavers who were active in the neighbourhood area from surviving inventories.

Table 2.5

Inventoried Wealth of Weavers, 1570-1669

| Total Value (£) | Weavers 1570-1599 | Weavers 1600-1629 | Weavers 1630-1669 |
|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| £100 + | 7 (10%) | 11 (12%) | 16 (34%) |
| £80-100 | 6 (8%) | 4 (5%) | 4 (9%) |
| £60-80 | 3 (4%) | 6 (8%) | 8 (17%) |
| £50-60 | 4 (6%) | 6 (8%) | 2 (4%) |
| £40-50 | 3 (4%) | 9 (13%) | 6 (13%) |
| £30-40 | 13 (18%) | 13 (19%) | 5 (11%) |
| £20-30 | 19 (26%) | 14 (19%) | 3 (6%) |
| Under £20 | 17 (24%) | 11 (16%) | 3 (6%) |
| Total | 72 | 74 | 47 |

Source: As in Table 2.1

It must be taken into account however, that the steep rise in prices in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries increased the nominal value of most goods by the mid-seventeenth century.¹⁹

The period 1570-1629 provides the best sequence for analysis and contrast because the number of weavers' inventories in each cohort is similar. In the period 1570-1599 half of all weavers' inventories were appraised at under £30, while in the period 1600-1629 the proportion of poorer inventories had declined to 35 per cent. For the period 1630-1669 the number of weavers' inventories dropped noticeably, which undoubtedly reflects the overall contraction in broadcloth manufacture in the Weald at this time, although those with inventoried wealth below £30 had decreased to about 12 per cent.²⁰ As an occupational group weavers became wealthier over this period. Poorer weavers, without the resources to combine weaving with farming, were more vulnerable to cyclical fluctuations in the cloth market. If they were also less able to compete with wealthier weavers in extending credit to clothiers, some would have gone out of business as independent traders in the seventeenth century. Wealthier weavers

benefited through economies of scale because they operated two or three looms. Some may have had acquired surplus capital with which to diversify into dairy and livestock farming. Between 1570 and 1629 weavers with modest wealth of £30-£40 remained steady at approximately 18 per cent of those with inventories. But overall, the mean value of weavers' moveable goods doubled over the period of this study from £45 to £88. However, weavers were not necessarily becoming wealthier, as the effects of inflation contributed to this increase. The most striking evidence of an increase in weavers' wealth is in the proportion of inventories appraised at £60 or more: from 22 per cent in the early period to 60 per cent in the period 1630-1669. They provide a contrast with Zell's findings for the Weald as a whole between 1565-1599, when only 19 per cent of weavers were in the higher wealth brackets, evidence, which led him to conclude that 'for the majority, weaving was not a lucrative occupation'.²¹

The importance of farming as an additional source of income to the wealthier weavers is ably demonstrated by the inventory of Edward Aynscombe of Biddenden, (d. 1639), whose moveable goods were appraised at £327. In the weaving shop were his two looms and tackling valued at just £5 10s. In contrast his livestock and crops amounted to £146, approximately 45 per cent of his moveable estate. Aynscombe also engaged in dairying and had a milk-chamber and cheese-house especially for this purpose. His dual businesses of weaving with farming provided him with an income above that of the majority of weavers in the neighbourhood. On the strength of his prosperity he was able to assume the status of one of Biddenden's leading inhabitants by holding local office. An entry in the inventory reveals informs us that he was a member of the local parish vestry: 'due to Edward Aynscombe from the parish of Biddenden, for expenses which he incurred in the office of churchwarden £9 16s'.²²

The 1599 inventory of Edmund Chittenden, a Hawkhurst broadweaver, also offers insights into the dynamics of a joint weaving and farming household economy. Chittenden's moveable goods were appraised at £140. In the weaving shop he had two broad looms, remnants of cloth, wool and yarn appraised at approximately £17 (12% of his total). Cheese and butter making also contributed to the household economy for which he kept a small dairy herd of 'three kine and one weaner £7'. Amongst debts owing to him were: 'Robert Glasier for weaving of cloth £8 10s, Richard Austen for weaving of cloth £5 11s, Richard Gibbons for weaving of cloth 21s'.²³

Men like Aynscombe and Chittenden were not typical of weavers during this period. The majority of weavers had fewer chattels and less capital to invest in farming. Many were quite poor: Stephen Roberts of Goudhurst died in 1602 with goods worth just £14,²⁴ and in 1601 Isaac Stedman of Biddenden left moveable goods appraised at just £20.²⁵

Only a relatively small number of inhabitants were working locally in the cloth finishing trades, either as shearmen or fullers during this period. Their relative scarcity reminds us that much Kentish cloth was sold not fully dressed to the London wholesalers. An Act of 1566, promoted by the London Clothworkers' Company to maintain work for London clothworkers, did little to promote the shearmen's activities in rural areas like the Weald. The local magnate, Lord Cobham, lent his support to provincial clothiers rather than to local cloth finishers, by seeking exemption from the act so that Kent broadcloths could be exported not fully finished. He himself obtained a license to export Kent cloths 'unwrought'.²⁶ Clearly, local clothiers found it easier to market broadcloth in London in an unfinished state, even though there were local shearmen who dressed some cloths. Shearmen were independent craftsmen who finished the cloth ready for marketing, and were paid piece rates for each finished

cloth, in which ‘the nap of the cloth was raised by passing teasels mounted on a frame across the fabric...after which a smooth surface was created by the shearman who with a large pair of scissors clipped off the fluff or rough wool’.²⁷ John Eskrigge, shearman of Cranbrook (d.1581), had movable goods valued at £60, which made him one of the wealthier shearman in his cohort. Eskrigge owned one clothworker’s press, 12 pair of shears, two tenters and two shear boards, worth in all £7 7s.²⁸

Table 2.6
Inventoried Wealth of Clothworkers 1570-1669

| Total Value (£) | Clothworkers 1570-1599 | Clothworkers 1600-1629 | Clothworkers 1630-1669 |
|-----------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Under £20 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| £20-30 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| £30-40 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| £40-50 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| £50-60 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| £60-80 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| £80-100 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| Over £100 | 1 | 8 | 6 |
| Total | 9 | 22 | 9 |

Source: As in Table 2.1

The values of clothworkers’ estates varied enormously, covering the whole range from under £20 to well over £100 especially after 1600. Although some shearmen were very poor, both the numbers of clothworkers and their wealth increased in the early seventeenth century, when broadcloth production in these particular Wealden parishes was at its height.

The inventory of John Botting of Cranbrook (d.1618) is indicative of the wealth of successful clothworkers in this period. The £17 worth of tools in his shop suggests he was successful in his trade. Botting was also an enterprising individual who engaged in the by-employments of brewing and kept a small herd of three dairy cattle. Among his chattels (valued at £134) were a vast range of household items and furniture.²⁹ His will includes bequests to his immediate family that show he intended that his sons should carry on his trade. To his son John he bequeathed £10 at age 21 and eight pairs

of sheerman's shears, and to his son Samuel 10 pair of shears and £30.³⁰ The importance of learning a good trade is evident in the request that his executors allow £20 for his youngest son, 'towards education in learning and in bringing him up, until he is able to be bound out to trade'. The dynasty Botting wished to create survived into the next generation. His son John Botting of Goudhurst, clothworker, died in 1635, leaving a more modest estate of £32.³¹

The concentrated nature of cloth manufacture within the Cranbrook area meant that textile manufacture was able to support a number of specialized labour processes. Yet specialized dyers, or woadsetters as they were called, were rare because most clothiers did their own dyeing, using servants in their own 'workhouses'. However, the few specialist dyers in the mid-seventeenth century were far from being among the 'poorer sort'. As the 1664 inventory of Edward Bills of Cranbrook, dyer, shows, wealthier tradesmen were a source of credit within the community, which kept the wheels of industry functioning. Bills owned chattels worth £505. In the warehouse he had woad, alum, madder, ash and some brasil worth £20, and in the workhouse tools valued at £8 10s. He also engaged in the by-employments of brewing and cheese making.³²

The importance of clothiers as the entrepreneurs who controlled the manufacturing process, and whose capital investment provided the raw materials for textile production, has been demonstrated by Zell.³³ It is clear from Table 2.7 that Cranbrook was the nucleus of manufacturing activity in the area. The largest concentration of clothiers' inventories is from Cranbrook in the period 1600-1629, before the decline of textile manufacture in the Weald. In the period 1570-1629 the numbers of clothiers in the parishes of Benenden, Biddenden and Cranbrook, is especially high compared with Goudhurst, Hawkhurst and Staplehurst.

Table 2.7

Number of Clothiers' Inventories by Parish, 1570-1699

| Parish | 1570-1599 | 1600-1629 | 1630-1669 | Total |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Cranbrook | 8 | 34 | 31 | 73 |
| Goudhurst | 3 | 4 | 7 | 14 |
| Hawkhurst | 3 | 3 | 11 | 17 |
| Biddenden | 10 | 9 | 11 | 30 |
| Benenden | 8 | 10 | 6 | 24 |
| Staplehurst | 3 | 4 | 10 | 17 |
| Total | 35 | 64 | 76 | 175 |

Source: As in Table 2.1

It is more difficult to explain why the period 1630-1669 yields the highest number of clothiers' inventories when, it is generally believed, the broadcloth industry in the Weald was going into terminal decline (see chapter 8).³⁴ Nor is it clear why Staplehurst suddenly became a parish with a concentration of clothiers. It is important to examine the distribution of clothiers' inventoried wealth, the extent of manufacturing activity recorded, the incidence of farming activity by working clothiers and the possibility that some men continued to style themselves as clothiers long after their business as clothing entrepreneurs had ceased. The absence of Prerogative Court of Canterbury inventories may also have skewed the geographical distribution in Table 2.7, because most of the region's wealthiest clothiers resided in Cranbrook, and were more likely to have had their estates dealt with by this court.

Clothiers were able to accumulate significant wealth throughout the period: in 1570-1599, 40 per cent of clothier inventories were over £100, in 1600-1629, 59 per cent and in 1630-1669, 63 per cent of inventories were valued at over £100 (see Table 2.8) Clothiers were the only textile workers to record personal wealth that exceeded £1,000. In the period covered by this study only three other occupations were represented by inventories of over £1,000 and these were all from the market town of

Cranbrook itself. They were Thomas Ruck, merchant, 1583 (£1,856), Henry Stonebridge, brewer, 1611 (£1,165) and Thomas Munn, butcher, 1643 (£2,130).³⁵

Most striking is the huge range of wealth from the small scale-clothier to the major capitalist entrepreneurs, with a substantial investment in stock and circulating capital in debt and credit networks. Clothiers provided both local employment and a marketing link between the regional economy and the largest local cloth market in Maidstone and the London market. Provincial fairs also attracted a good deal of trade and it is recorded that Maidstone had a 'show of broadcloths at its Candlemas, May and St. Faiths fairs'.³⁶

The nearby port of Rye served as an entrepot for the import of dyestuffs, and for the export of cloth through the port to markets in France. However, the bulk of cloth exports to Germany, Spain and the Low Countries tended to be controlled by London merchants, as was the supply of most imported dyestuffs and oil used in the manufacturing process. Clothiers' horizons extended well beyond the immediate neighbourhood area.³⁷ Clothiers manufacturing on a small scale would have been particularly attracted to local markets, but all the more substantial manufacturers and dealers from the Wealden towns sold their cloths through the wholesale market of Blackwell Hall in London.³⁸

Clothiers controlled the initial stages of production, employing servants and apprentices to wash the wool, and sort it ready for carding. The art of dyeing was a particular skill of Wealden clothmakers whose technical expertise earned them a reputation for 'dyed in the wool' Kentish broadcloth of high quality in a variety of colours and mixed shades. Clothiers were the most important employers of wage labour in the Weald. This economic power makes their trading and kinship networks of particular importance to this study. Clothiers were the most important group in the

textile industry because they controlled and organized the manufacturing process, as well as financed the industry with their own capital. So it will be particularly important to analyse their role as dynastic families within the neighbourhood area, something that will be treated more fully in the next chapter.

Table 2.8

Inventoried Wealth of Clothiers, 1570-1669

| Total Value (£) | 1570-1599 | 1600-1629 | 1630-1669 |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| £1000+ | 0 | 7 (11%) | 3 (4%) |
| £100+ | 14 (40%) | 38 (59%) | 48 (63%) |
| £80-100 | 4 (11%) | 3 (5%) | 7 (9%) |
| £60-80 | 7 (20%) | 4 (6%) | 1 (1%) |
| £50-60 | 1 (3%) | 0 | 5 (7%) |
| £40-50 | 2 (6%) | 3 (5%) | 4 (5%) |
| £30-40 | 0 | 0 | 4 (5%) |
| £20-30 | 3 (9%) | 1 (2%) | 2 (3%) |
| Under £20 | 4 (11%) | 8 (12%) | 2 (3%) |
| Total | 35 | 64 | 76 |

Source: As in Table 2.1

Clothiers were the wealthiest occupational group in the neighbourhood area between 1570 and 1669. The sheer number of clothiers, and their economic power, placed them in the strongest position to assume authority in the local community as entrepreneurs and employers of wage labour (See Tables 2.8 and 2.9). The longevity of manufacturing and trading activity among particularly wealthy clothiers, and the ‘dynastic families’ that they established is a feature of Wealden society. As we shall see, such families were able to maintain their place in society throughout fluctuations in the profitability of textile manufacture by employing the advantages of economies of scale, and by diversifying their resources into investments in landholding and agricultural activity.

The Taylor family provides a good example of the symbiosis between farming and cloth manufacture among wealthier clothiers. Richard Taylor the elder of

Cranbrook, styled yeoman in his will (1579), at the time of his death possessed land both in Cranbrook and the surrounding parishes which he bequeathed to his nearest kin, his nephews Alex and Robert, sons of his brother John.

Table 2.9

Mean Value of Estates: Manufacturers, Tradesmen and Craftsmen, 1570-1669

| Occupation + Number of Inventories | 1570-1599 (£) | 1600-1629 (£) | 1630-1669 (£) |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Clothiers (175) | 144 | 421 | 306 |
| Weavers (193) | 45 | 60 | 88 |
| Clothworkers (90) | 36 | 53 | 93 |
| Smiths (46) | 102 | 92 | 66 |
| Shopkeepers (85) | 91 | 140 | 218 |
| Tailors (26) | 49 | 79 | 64 |
| Shoemakers (19) | 48 | 46 | 112 |
| Tanners (25) | 213 | 218 | 226 |
| Leather Trades (15) | 73 | 74 | 76 |
| Millers/Brewers (84) | 64 | 116 | 82 |
| Woodwork Trades (57) | 45 | 83 | 91 |
| Building Trades (13) | 18 | 44 | 91 |

Source: As in Table 2.1

Richard's inventory was valued at £172 and shows that in addition to making cloth he was a farmer. He held corn worth almost £13 in his barn, and seven acres of wheat on the ground (£10), and seven oxen, one cow, three horses (£33). Taylor was also an active clothier, part of a family tradition that continued well into the seventeenth century.³⁹ The 1612 will and inventory of Walter Taylor the elder, clothier, indicates that clothmaking had become a very successful trade for the Taylors. His estate, valued by fellow clothiers Thomas Colvill and John Taylor at £2,207, is a valuable example of a major clothier's wealth and investment in trade at the height of his manufacturing activity. Taylor's working tools were valued at £35, his stock of raw wool was worth £535, and he also had at his death 26 completed cloths, worth £355. In

all, his trade goods totalled about £965, 44 per cent of his movables. He also had £99 in cash and debts owing to him of £813, a sign of the credit extended and circulating capital involved in a major business enterprise, where the formation of capital and credit were functional to trade.⁴⁰ Walter's two sons Richard and Robert both went on to become successful clothiers themselves, thereby perpetuating a family dynasty of textile manufacturing in Cranbrook.

In 1627, Richard Taylor, clothier, left movable goods of £1,314. His appraisers Thomas Colvill, Smallhope Bigg and brother Robert were also literate clothiers. The probate evidence shows that ties of friendship and kinship bound many of the wealthier clothiers together in a social group, which may be termed a clothier elite. The manufacturing activity of the Taylor family made them leading employers in the town, and, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, successive family members held local offices and participated in the politics of the parish as 'chief inhabitants'.

Another 'dynastic family' of Cranbrook clothiers was the Weller's. In 1606, Alex Weller, broadweaver, bequeathed to his brother in law John Blist 'my loom and three slays and the bed my apprentices lie upon' and to his brother Stephen Weller his other loom.⁴¹ Many members of the Weller family exercised social power and influence throughout the period covered by this study. Weller's acted as churchwardens of Cranbrook in 1580, 1605, 1607, 1611, 1612, 1667 and 1668.⁴² In 1611, Alex Weller of Cranbrook, clothier, left goods appraised at £789. His investment in tools and raw materials amounted to approximately £268, and he also possessed made-up cloths valued at £336. He also owned several pieces of land, which were rented out, and which he bequeathed to his sons. The working tools of his trade he bequeathed to his son Alexander to extend the family business into the next generation.⁴³ His other son Richard (d. 1612), was also a clothier. His estate was valued at £832 by several of the

leading inhabitants of the neighbourhood: Jeffery Sussex, gentleman, John Sharpe, Dence Weller and Alexander Weller, Cranbrook clothiers, and John Radcliffe, mercer of Cranbrook.⁴⁴ Dence Weller of Cranbrook was also an active clothier at the time of his death in 1619. His inventory (total value £333) reveals a high standard of material comfort in his household goods and furnishings.⁴⁵ In 1623 John Weller, clothier, the brother of Alexander Weller, left £158 in moveable goods of which more than 50 per cent was invested in raw materials and stock in trade.⁴⁶ Stephen Weller, the elder, was semi-retired by 1634 when his estate was valued at £560 of which £227 were debts owing to him from outside the neighbourhood at Ulcombe and Dover. Alexander Weller, the younger was still very much an active clothier at the time of his death in 1630, as shown by the 25 finished broadcloths in the house, valued at £366. Among his chattels, worth in all £578, Alexander had £94 in tools and raw materials; therefore over 80 per cent of his moveable goods were invested in stock in trade.⁴⁷ The Weller family were highly successful entrepreneurs who sustained their business activities over a long period, although not all were uniformly successful. By operating on a large-scale, they generated capital sufficient both to finance further textile manufacture and to invest in land. They also formed a kinship network of self-supporting individuals, which may have enhanced their opportunity for business success: occupational expertise, as well as tools could be passed on from father to son. The Weller family also formed friendship networks with other clothiers in the immediate locality with whom they maintained credit relationships, appraised each other's inventories and acted as witnesses of wills. Working capital was generated by regular investment in land, which was normally leased out to provide regular income; or farmed directly by clothiers themselves.

The inventories of the Pattenson family of Biddenden, collectively suggest the upward social mobility of clothiers in their home parishes. In 1641 Thomas Pattenson, clothier, had goods valued at £272, a typical sum for a successful clothier at this time. It was an industrious household that engaged in textile manufacture and farming as their primary sources of income in addition to the by-employments of brewing and dairying. Pattenson's stock in trade was appraised at £116, 43 per cent of his moveable goods. He also ran a small farm, with four acres of cereals and an acre of hops, the produce of which he dried in the oast house specified in the inventory.⁴⁸ Diversification and investment in a number of economic activities spread the risk of failure due to bad harvests or a shortfall in demand for broadcloth. The dual economy provided circulating capital for expansion. His son John Patterson, also a clothier, had moveable goods of £1,067 in 1661. In 1663, Samuel Pattenson of Biddenden was styled gentleman in his inventory although his goods amounted to only £35. The concentration of Pattensons in Biddenden over successive generations is typical of family networks in the Weald, and shows the very localized pattern of kinship that is part of this research.⁴⁹

Zell argues that 'the broadcloth industry of the weald, unlike several other regional economies, never recovered from the collapse in overseas demand in the 1620s'.⁵⁰ However, this scenario, which sees decline as beginning in the 1620s, may be unduly pessimistic and chronologically premature. The inventory evidence (see Table 2.7) suggests that the collapse came among the small-scale clothiers, who lacked the capital to invest in stock and were unable to offer wholesale credit to London buyers in order to maintain their stake in the market place against competitors (see chapter 8).

Textile manufacture in the latter seventeenth century was not confined to the traditional clothing parishes in the neighbourhood area such as Benenden, Biddenden and Cranbrook. Manufacturing activity was sustained throughout all the core-parishes in this study and many clothiers became very wealthy. John Buckland of Staplehurst (d. 1664), had goods valued at £1,115, which included investment in textile manufacture, farming and extensive household goods and furnishings, many of which could be termed luxury items.⁵¹ Even if the enormous wealth of individuals such as John Buckland was atypical of clothiers in general, they remained the wealthiest occupational group. The distinctive feature of the period is the way that wealthy clothiers manipulated the debt and credit mechanisms of the market, to maintain a high level of fluid capital. Economies of scale in manufacture gave the large-scale clothiers an edge over their lesser competitors.

It is clear from this general summary of occupations within the textile industry, that it was characterized by hierarchies of wealth, among and within the various trades, and that a qualitative gap separated the wealthy clothier elite and a very few other rich tradesmen, from the numerous small-scale manufacturers and craftsmen who functioned on the margins of profitability.

Within the core-parishes there were two other important, non-agricultural sources of employment: metalworking and the leather trades. Both industries had a traditional basis in the Wealden economy. Local livestock farmers and butchers produced hides for the leather industry, while fuel for the various iron industries was supplied by local coppiced woodland.⁵² Each generated hierarchies of wealth that differentiated the 'better sort' of primary manufacturer and employer from the lesser handicraftsmen of the 'poorer sort'.

The iron industry had been centred in the Weald since Roman times, and had grown in importance during the sixteenth century on the back of increased (although not continuous) Crown demand for armaments.⁵³ This chapter will stress the individual metalworking craftsmen because there was not much primary ironmaking in the core parishes. A wide range of individuals were involved in the ironworking trades throughout the neighbourhood, including blacksmiths, scythesmiths, colliers, locksmiths, wiredrawers, nailsmiths, hammermen, and a gunsmith. However, the mean value of these artisans' moveable wealth declined in the period analysed, from £102 in the period 1570-1599 to £66 in the years 1630-1669, when the numbers of poorer craftsmen with goods under £40 increased. Nevertheless, the majority of metal workers within the neighbourhood possessed chattels worth over £100, and may be characterized as independent master craftsmen who owned their own tools. There was a local concentration of metal manufacture within the parish of Goudhurst, with a number of men specializing in toolmaking (see Table 2.10). Within the metalworking trades dynastic families formed within particular parishes, several of which achieved moderate wealth and established themselves among the 'better sort' within the parish.

Zell has introduced the Rode family, resident toolmakers in Goudhurst from the late fifteenth century. The family continued to trade as scythesmiths throughout the sixteenth century: when Edward Rode died in 1573 he left moveable goods valued at £131, including 42 dozen scythes priced at £18.⁵⁴ The family remained prominent in Goudhurst as wealthy smiths in the seventeenth century. The inventory of Matthew Rode, blacksmith, (d.1606) was appraised by his relatives Richard Rode and Edward Rode, at £150. He combined the trade of blacksmith with a substantial mixed farm valued at approximately £53.

Table 2.10**Smiths Trades by Parish, 1570-1669**

| Trades | Cran | Bid | Goud | Hawk | Ben | Stap |
|-------------|------|-----|------|------|-----|------|
| Cutler | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Scythesmith | 0 | 1 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Collier | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Blacksmith | 5 | 6 | 15 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Nailsmith | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Locksmith | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Wiredrawer | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Gunsmith | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hammerman | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total (47) | 9 | 10 | 22 | 2 | 3 | 1 |

Source: As in Table 2.1

By 1636 the family's status was secure: Thomas Rode, smith, was styled 'yeoman' in his inventory. In addition to the trade goods of a blacksmith, it detailed an extensive farming business, with husbandry tools, arable crops and livestock worth £86, 48 per cent of his moveable goods.⁵⁵ The Rode's spawned a substantial local dynasty, engaged in a number of related iron-working trades within the parish of Goudhurst over a long period.

The Brattle family is another exemplary family dynasty. Thomas Brattle of Goudhurst died in 1591 with goods valued at £193, of which his trade goods - scythes, iron, steel, bellows, anvils, hammers, tongs and coal - were worth £60. Thomas was also engaged in mixed farming. His livestock was valued at £46, and he also had cereals worth £9. In all the combined investment in his trades as smith and farmer amounted to over £120, or about 65 per cent of his estate. Brattle's son Thomas carried on the family tradition of toolmaking in Goudhurst, where he died in 1630, leaving the more modest estate of £65.⁵⁶ Some metalsmiths, however, became quite rich, as was the case of the Lake family, also of Goudhurst, who were among the better off tradesmen in the parish. The large stocks of manufactured scythes in their inventories

show that scythesmiths, like clothiers, processed raw materials into a finished product for sale in both local and distant markets. William Lake, ‘scythemaker’, died in 1587 with goods valued at £74. In 1595, his son Robert Lake, also a scythesmith, left goods worth £390. Robert held the remains of his father’s lease of Vincents Wood, a valuable source of wood for the smelting process. In his workshop were 22 hundred scythes valued at £184, 31 bars of iron (£6) and bellows, anvils and smith’s tools worth in all £22. Robert also pursued a dual economy of metalworking and mixed farming, with crops and livestock appraised at £50.⁵⁷ A similar dual economy of metalwares and farming has been studied amongst metalworkers in South Staffordshire, where cottage-based nailmaking was combined with farming. In the Weald the production of agricultural tools was the leading metalworking trade.⁵⁸

The more numerous blacksmiths left estates representing all but the highest levels of wealth. Among the better off in Cranbrook in the mid-seventeenth century was Simon Everden, blacksmith, whose goods were valued at £134.

Table 2.11

Distribution of Wealth Among Iron and Metal Trades, 1570-1669

| Trades | £10- £20 | £20- £30 | £30- £40 | £40- £50 | £50- £60 | £60- £80 | £80- 100 | Over £100 | Total |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| Cutler | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Scythesmith | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 7 |
| Collier | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Blacksmith | 3 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 30 |
| Nailsmith | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Locksmith | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Wiredrawer | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Gunsmith | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Hammerman | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 3 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 3 | 15 | 47 |

Source: As in Table 2.1

His trade as a blacksmith was his principle source of income, with £40 invested in the tools of his trade.⁵⁹



Table 2.11 shows that among the metal trades there was a hierarchy of wealth arising from the nature of trade and the level of investment needed to maintain stocks of raw materials and manufactured goods. But smiths who were able to maintain a dual economy of farming and metalworking, be they toolmakers or blacksmiths, were most likely to become tradesmen of the ‘better sort’.

There were also wide status and wealth differences within the range of leather trades: some men were capitalist manufacturers and others were artisan makers of leather goods for local sale. Tanning was an occupation which required long-term investment in raw materials and a high level of circulating capital, because the production of leather from hides was a process that required considerable time for the return on the initial outlay to be realized.⁶⁰ Tanners provided a stimulus to the local economy as consumers of locally produced hides and at the same time were a source of raw materials and employment for local leather workers.

Table 2.12

Mean Value of Inventoried Wealth in the Leather Trades, 1570-1669

| Occupation | 1570-1599 | 1600-1629 | 1630-1669 |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Tanners (25) | £213 | £218 | £226 |
| Leather Trades (15)* | £73 | £74 | £76 |
| Shoemakers (19) | £48 | £46 | £112 |

*Leather Trades included: 11 glovers, 3 saddlers, 1 fellmonger, and 1 pailmaker.

Source: As in Table 2.1

The inventory of Samuel Reed of Cranbrook, tanner (d. 1610), illustrates the scale of wealth of tanners in the neighbourhood area. Amongst the appraisers of his estate was fellow Cranbrook tanner, Roger Fryland, who died in 1639 with £324 of moveable goods. Reed’s goods and chattels were valued at £230, amongst which were hides and skins in ‘the tannery house’ worth £49. The social networks of trade are evident in the inclusion of a bequest of £1 to Abraham Beale of Cranbrook, shoemaker.⁶¹

Tanners were active in all the core-parishes examined and many were quite wealthy individuals. Duke Mauld of Hawkhurst, tanner (d.1654) left goods valued at £568, the majority of which was tied up in raw materials and stock in trade: 50 dickers of tanned hides and calfskins (£375), and tanning tools and leathers (£25) made up 70 per cent of his moveable wealth.⁶² A few enterprising individuals combined the rearing of livestock for hides, the tanning of skins into leather and the manufacture of a finished product, thereby creating a vertical chain of production to the market place. In 1645, Peter Philpott of Hawkhurst, a tanner and glover, operated a workshop with leather and skins in various stages of preparation, in addition to finished leather gloves and purses ready for sale. Philpott maintained a flock of sheep for their hides and had at the time of his death 51 sheep and 40 lambs valued at £19. The extension of credit within the community was clearly vital to his business and he had debts owing to him on account of £130, 50 per cent of his £262 estate.⁶³

Shoemakers, by contrast, were generally among the least wealthy of the leather craftsmen and tradesmen in this period. However, the inventory of Samuel Leife of Cranbrook (d.1638) alerts us to the dangers of assuming a certain level of wealth from the occupation stated in the inventory. Samuel Leife was styled 'cordwainer' by the appraisers of his estate, which was valued at £166. The inventory reveals a considerable investment in raw materials for his shoemaking business. In the garret was a substantial supply of hides of various qualities, and in the workshops a large stock of finished shoes ready to be sold. Leife's shoe manufacturing clearly raised him above the wealth of typical shoemakers in this period, which ranged from £10 to £78. The Leife's house included both a servant's chamber and a maid's chamber. And, unlike most shoemakers, Leife was held parish offices. In 1632 he was one of three overseers of the poor, and in 1638 was a surveyor of the highways. The wealth attained by Leife in his

trading activities clearly differentiated him from the majority of craftsmen in the parish.⁶⁴ Artisan retailers like Samuel Leife, who both manufactured and sold goods in the market that served the rural neighbourhood, were a significant feature of the Wealden economy. The widespread distribution of independent artisans and small producer/retailers throughout the core-parishes indicates that the area around the market town was prosperous and populous enough to support a wide range of trades and crafts. Some of these craftsmen and tradesmen became very prosperous individuals, although many poorer craftsmen and artisans scratched out a more modest living in the Weald at this time.

It is a characteristic feature of social relations within the Weald that occupational hierarchies were differentiated between capitalist manufacturers and processors of raw materials, such as clothiers, metalsmiths and tanners - who tended to be among the wealthier inhabitants - and the poorer handicraftsmen such as glovers, shoemakers, tailors and weavers. Nevertheless, the characteristic feature of the businesses recorded in inventories from these parishes is the wide range of occupational wealth recorded within most trades. (See Table 2.9)

The wealth of many individuals was often substantially increased by the dual economy of farming in addition to a craft or trade. Those inhabitants who diversified their business activities into a number of sources of income were the more capitalist orientated of the tradesmen, and it was those who were more likely to be among the 'better sort' or leading inhabitants of their communities. The identifying feature of the Wealden economy is that manufacturers of textiles, leather and metalwares shared the top echelons of the local hierarchy with the better-off farmers. Characteristic of this particular economic *pays* was a mixed social elite, composed both of wealthy manufacturing entrepreneurs and prosperous yeomen farmers.

Comparative Wealth among Farmers and Smallholders

Alongside the neighbourhood's manufacturers, full-time farmers and graziers played a prominent role in the rural economy. Their commercial activities grew substantially during the course of the period under study. In the sixteenth century 'as a group, full-time farmers and graziers were not as wealthy as the manufacturers: only about 46 per cent of farmers' inventories were worth £60 or more'.⁶⁵ The findings for Cranbrook and its immediate rural hinterland support this assertion. In the three periods studied the proportions of farmers with moveable wealth of over £100 were: 1570-1599 47 per cent, 1600-1629, 53 per cent and 1630-1669, 72 per cent of inventories. This level of wealth occurred despite the fact that farming in this part of the Weald was predominantly on a small to medium scale. The factors which encouraged the proliferation of numerous small farms in the region, have been set out by Zell:

'The tenurial peculiarities of gavelkind tenure, the original settlement in which land was held and farmed in severalty, and the absence of large fields...encouraged a busy land market in which small closes of two to five acres could easily be sold or leased'.⁶⁶

Yet by the later sixteenth century wealthy farmers were an established and important group in the rural economy, whose wealth and status distinguished them in every way from the 'poorer sort'. Some could afford to act paternalistically towards their neighbours. A typical example is John Mattresse of Cranbrook (d. 1587), whose £232 inventory made him one of the wealthier farmers in the neighbourhood in the period up to 1600. Mattresse ran a considerable mixed farming enterprise: livestock worth £49, wheat on the ground and in the barn worth £32, £10 in hay and £6 in husbandry tools, in all 42 per cent of his movable goods. Among debts owing to Mattresse totalling £97 was £50 by Alexander Culpepper Esq., £10 by Laurence Weller, and other amounts from debtors in Rye, Lamberhurst, Goudhurst and Cranbrook.

Extending credit to neighbours oiled the wheels of trade within the community, enhanced existing social bonds and was a sign of good repute in the community.⁶⁷

Outside of Cranbrook, the parish of Benenden recorded the largest number of farmers with goods over £100 in the period 1570-1630. Within the parish there is evidence of dynastic farming families who were wealthy yeomen in the sixteenth century and who later aspired to gentry status. The Sharpe's are one such family whose farming and clothmaking activities were conducted within a complex kinship network of brothers, uncles and sons. Thomas Sharpe (d.1586), left inventoried wealth of £324 and evidence of a mixed livestock and arable farm of considerable size. He was a commercial grazier with a large herd of beef and dairy cattle, worth in all £131. But he was also an arable farmer: he had corn in the barn worth £16 together with 12 acres of winter cereals in the ground (which implies about 25 acres of cereals in all). Sharpe's total farming investment amounted to 52 per cent of his moveable wealth. In his will he bequeathed land and livestock to his brothers Richard, William and James. Thomas's kinsman, John Sharpe, had goods appraised at £990 in 1628 by his uncle Richard Sharpe and other substantial local farmers. A highly detailed inventory shows again a mixed farm with the major emphasis on livestock fattening and rearing. At the home farm in Benenden he had 10 oxen, four dairy kine, one bull, seven heifers, 12 Northern steers, and four calves, in addition to 82 sheep and lambs. Sharpe's grazing activities extended into the rich pastures of Northiam and Guildford marsh in Sussex, where he kept livestock valued at £136; in Guildford marsh he also had 38 acres of wheat (£143). A gentleman-farmer, John Sharpe held approximately 99 acres of pasture and 19 acres of arable at the home farm, in addition to 46 acres at Northiam in Sussex and mixed corn and cattle acreage in excess of 84 acres at Guildford Marsh, bringing his combined holding to at least 248 acres.⁶⁸ The farming dynasty, represented by Thomas in the

sixteenth century, remained active and successful in Benenden in the later seventeenth century when John's brother Richard left movables appraised at £970. Richard's social status manifested itself in the consumption of luxury items within the home, and in his ability to extend credit within the neighbourhood. He had money due to him by bond of £497 and book debts owing to him of £32.⁶⁹

The Perry brothers of Frittenden were likewise a highly successful farming family who acquired gentry status, and whose landholding and farming activity extended beyond the immediate neighbourhood. Robert Perry died in 1634, leaving goods worth £1,244. He was farming on a fully commercial scale, and - like other wealthy Wealden farmers - in addition to his home farm, he occupied marshland pastures as well. Perry grazed several hundred pounds worth of cattle and sheep at Snave and at Cheyne Court in Ivychurch (both in Romney Marsh).⁷⁰ A considerable freeholder, he left his estate to his two brothers. James Perry received lands in Boughton Monchelsea, Headcorn and Folkestone as well as a farm with lands in Frittenden and Headcorn. Brother Thomas Perry was left land in Frittenden and Staplehurst. Thomas was himself a substantial farmer when he died in 1639, with goods valued at £914. Like his brother, his farming activities extended beyond the immediate parish, and he too leased marsh-grazing land. His cattle and sheep on the marsh were valued at £353. He also ran a mixed arable and livestock farm in Frittenden with stock valued at £165.⁷¹ The more enterprising and wealthy commercial farmers in the neighbourhood extended their agricultural activity beyond the Weald in response to the market demand for meat, and the limitations of the grassland within the Weald. In order to farm successfully on a large scale, they invariably turned to marshland pastures.

Livestock husbandry in some parishes in the Weald expanded substantially in the seventeenth century, as the textile industry began to decline in importance and men

with capital and initiative looked increasingly to agriculture and the growth of the urban meat market. However, gentlemen farmers like the Sharpe's and Perry's were atypical of the majority of farmers in the Weald. It was the middling farmers in the neighbourhood who formed a social group that Chalklin rightly describes as 'the most prominent element in the rural middle class'.⁷² Commercial attitudes among the Kentish yeomen in the sixteenth century were given impetus by the landholding customs in Kent which encouraged the free alienation of land and the economic independence of the peasantry. A commercial approach to landholding was also encouraged by the Kentish custom of gavelkind, which prescribed the partible inheritance of land at the death of a holder. The subdivision of holdings encouraged the proliferation of a large number of farmers and smallholders in the Weald, and may have had the effect of keeping the size of most individual farmers' holdings down. Yet the inventories used in this study bear witness to the considerable wealth of farmers of 'middling' social status and their extensive farms, composed both of freehold and leasehold lands, a situation made possible by the flexibility of the local land market.

In a sample of 476 farmer/grazier inventories, 28 per cent had moveable wealth over £100 between 1570 and 1599, 53 per cent in the period 1600-1629, and 73 per cent between 1630 and 1670. Farmers with moveable goods of £50-100 were declining in number: about 43 per cent in the period 1570-1599, 30 per cent in 1600-1629 and 22 per cent between 1630-1669. It is also clear that a large number of smallholders were active in husbandry, although in decreasing numbers in this period. The share of smallholders with estates worth £20-50 fell from 70 per cent in 1570-99, to 56 per cent in 1600-29, and to 46 per cent in 1630-69 (see Table 2.13).

William Austen of Cranbrook, 'yeoman', provides a typical example of the farming activities of the 'better sort' in the community. His inventory was appraised at

£255 and included over 30 cattle (both beef and dairy animals) and 100 sheep. Austen also engaged in brewing and dairying as additions to the domestic household economy. Austen's landholding is described in detail and ranged over the parishes of Benenden, Biddenden, and Rolvenden in Kent and Warbleton in Sussex. His freehold estate, which he bequeathed to his wife and sons, was approximately 170 acres.

Table 2.13

Value of Estates of Farmer/Graziers and Smallholders, 1570-1669

| Total £ | 1570- 1599 Farmer/ Grazier | Small- holder + | 1600- 1629 Farmer/ Grazier | Small- holder + | 1630- 1669 Farmer/ Grazier | Small- holder + |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Under £20 | 4 (3%) | 17 (33%) | 1 (1%) | 11 (16%) | 0 | 4 (9%) |
| £20- 50 | 35 (26%) | 33 (70%) | 24 (13%) | 38 (56%) | 7 (4%) | 19 (46%) |
| £50- 80 | 35 (26%) | 1 (2%) | 33 (18%) | 10 (15%) | 18 (11%) | 8 (20%) |
| £80- 100 | 24 (17%) | 0 | 21 (12%) | 1 (1%) | 17 (11%) | 2 (5%) |
| Over £100 | 38 (28%) | 0 | 96 (53%) | 8 (12%) | 116 (73%) | 8 (20%) |
| Over £1000 | 0 | 0 | 5 (3%) | 0 | 2 (1%) | 0 |
| Total | 136 | 51 | 180 | 68 | 160 | 41 |

Source: As in Table 2.1

The accumulation of property evidently continued right up to William's death. Austen's case illustrates how some yeomen estates expanded during their lifetime, but were later fragmented and dispersed among several heirs through the custom of gavelkind.⁷³ The important point is that almost all larger farmers did not operate a single, compact farm, but instead held dispersed holdings, often in more than one parish. Typical was Richard Moter of Benenden 'yeoman' (d. 1578), whose inventory was appraised at £218, of which £142, (65%) was invested in his farm. His ownership of fattening beasts suggests that Moter was farming on a commercial basis. His will shows he owned land in Benenden, Bethersden and Smarden.⁷⁴

The most successful yeomen farmed on the scale of the local gentry. One was John Drayner of Frittenden, 'yeoman' (d. 1628), who left goods valued at £684 at his death. His inventory shows the usual mixed farming regime, including arable crops, livestock rearing and dairy farming. Like other local farms, the bias on Drayner's farm was towards livestock fattening and dairying rather than arable crops.⁷⁵ Drayner had approximately 43 acres of home pasture for assorted livestock and 12 acres of winter wheat. He had a specialist milk chamber with cheese-making equipment and 24 cheeses. His home farm at Frittenden was appraised at £164, but he also occupied 143 acres of marshland pastures where he kept a flock of 102 lambs at Snargate (£32), and 247 sheep in the marsh at Cheyne Court, valued at £132.⁷⁶ Additional marshland grazing increased his total pasture size to 186 acres, which combined with his arable created a substantial holding of over 200 acres.

The ability to extend agricultural activity beyond the immediate neighbourhood was a crucial difference between 'middling' farmers and smaller numbers of wealthy farmers in the seventeenth century. Almost all commercial farmers (gentry, clothiers, or yeomen) obtained marshland grazing. Stephen Gynder of Benenden farmed 215 acres of pasture for cattle and sheep. However, 182 of these acres were occupied in Guildford Marsh and at Rolvenden where substantial sheep flocks and young bullocks were grazed. Gentleman farmer, Sir Thomas Roberts, maintained a large farming interest in Cranbrook of approximately 200 acres of pasture combined with wheat arable of 35 acres; he also held marshland grazing, for sheep and cattle of 178 acres at Scotts Marsh.⁷⁷

However, the majority of farms in the period 1570 to 1629 were self-sufficient family businesses that supplied themselves and local consumers with a marketable

surplus. Most farmers' landholding and livestock husbandry was concentrated within the local neighbourhood.

Table 2.14

Size of Farms from Inventories, 1600-1629

| Parish Number of farms 1600-1629 | Mean Arable Acreage | Up to 4a. | Up to 6a. | Up to 10a. | Up to 20a. | Over 20a. |
|---|----------------------------|---------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| Benenden (25) | 15.7a. | 20% | 16% | 36% | 20% | 8% |
| Biddenden (24) | 10.2a. | 42% | 17% | 21% | 12% | 8% |
| Cranbrook (51) | 14.1a. | 37% | 16% | 14% | 25% | 8% |
| Goudhurst (22) | 14.8a. | 27% | 5% | 36% | 18% | 14% |
| Hawkhurst (17) | 13.3a. | 35% | 12% | 18% | 35% | - |
| Staplehurst (19) | 15.4a. | 16% | 10% | 32% | 37% | 5% |
| Parish Number of farms 1600-1629 | Mean Pasture Acreage | Up to 10a. | Up to 20a. | Up to 40a. | Over 40a. | |
| Benenden (46) | 30a. | 9% | 28% | 37% | 26% | |
| Biddenden (35) | 25.5a. | 17% | 46% | 20% | 17% | |
| Cranbrook (80) | 32.4a. | 14% | 26% | 30% | 30% | |
| Goudhurst (32) | 32.6a | 16% | 28% | 37% | 19% | |
| Hawkhurst (30) | 24.6a. | 13% | 30% | 34% | 23% | |
| Staplehurst (32) | 32.7a | 16% | 31% | 28% | 25% | |

Notes:

Arable acreage includes an estimate for fallow at 1.5 of total arable acreage. Pasture acreage based on stocking estimates of 1.5 acres per head of cattle or horses, 0.5 acre per sheep or colt, not counting calves, lambs or other livestock

Source: As in Table 2.1

Thirsk argued that 'in general the farms of the Weald were small...41% under 5 acres and 38% between 5 and 50 acres'.⁷⁸ Evidence of size of farms in the neighbourhood shows that there was considerable variation between parishes, but confirms that mixed farms were the norm with pasture farming dominating local husbandry. The mean arable acreage in the period 1600-1629 was between 10.2 and 15.7 acres in the

neighbourhood. (Table 2.14) Benenden and Staplehurst recorded the largest mean arable acreages with Benenden at 15.7 acres and Staplehurst at 15.4 acres. They also had the least number of smallholders farming on four to six acres of arable. In Benenden, 36 per cent of farms had up to 10 acres of arable and 20 per cent had up to 20 acres. In Staplehurst only 10 per cent of farmers had up to six acres of arable whereas 32 per cent held up to 10 acres and 37 per cent farmed up to 20 acres of arable. In Biddenden, Hawkhurst and Cranbrook parishes, farmers held smaller arable acreages of up to four acres, and recorded fewer farmers with up to 10 acres. Although a significant number in Hawkhurst, 35 per cent, farmed up to 20 acres. Mean pasture acreage in this period was roughly twice that of arable, and ranged from 24.6 acres in Hawkhurst to 32.7 acres in Staplehurst. The majority of farmers operated on approximately 20 to 40 acres of pasture. In Biddenden, 46 per cent of farms included up to 20 acres of pasture although only 12 per cent of farms in Biddenden held up to 20 acres of arable. The combined arable and pasture acreages in these parishes show the average farm size in the period 1600-1629 was between 35 and 48 acres.⁷⁹

By the period 1630-1669 the mean arable acreage farmed increased in every parish except Benenden, where it fell slightly from 15.7 to 13.5 acres. Overall there was a slight increase in the combined arable and pasture farm size in this period (Table 2.15). The most striking increase was in Hawkhurst and Staplehurst where both arable and pasture acreages increased. In Hawkhurst the average farm size rose from approximately 37.9 acres in the period 1600-1629 to 48.9 acres in the period 1630-1669. In Staplehurst combined acreages rose from 48.1 in the earlier period to 60 acres in the later seventeenth-century.⁸⁰

John Hovenden of Hawkhurst (d.1612), is typical of the small husbandman. His seven acres of wheat, two acres of oats and four acres of fallow were supplemented by

a small flock of sheep, dairy kine, working oxen and horses requiring pasture acreage of 22.5 acres, bringing his combined farm size to approximately 36 acres.⁸¹

Table 2.15

Size of Farms from Inventories, 1630-1669

| Parish Number of farms 1630-1670 | Mean Arable Acreage | Up to 4a. | Up to 6a. | Up to 10a. | Up to 20a. | Over 20a. |
|---|----------------------------|---------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| Benenden (13) | 13.5a. | 15% | 46% | 15% | 9% | 15% |
| Biddenden (26) | 12.1a. | 19% | 38% | 23% | 12% | 8% |
| Cranbrook (48) | 17.8a. | 21% | 10% | 31% | 17% | 21% |
| Goudhurst (27) | 16.2 | 15% | 18% | 22% | 30% | 15% |
| Hawkhurst (17) | 18.3 | 12% | 23.5% | 35% | 23.5% | 6% |
| Staplehurst (24) | 21.5 | 8% | 21% | 29% | 21% | 21% |
| Parish Number of farms 1630-1670 | Mean Pasture Acreage | Up to 10a. | Up to 20a. | Up to 40a. | Over 40a. | |
| Benenden (25) | 34.9a. | 8% | 36% | 28% | 28% | |
| Biddenden (39) | 24.8a. | 13% | 41% | 26% | 20% | |
| Cranbrook (69) | 29.6a. | 9% | 25% | 36% | 30% | |
| Goudhurst (35) | 27.9a. | 14.2% | 22.8% | 37.1% | 25.7% | |
| Hawkhurst (37) | 30.6a. | 13% | 38% | 30% | 19% | |
| Staplehurst (40) | 38.5a. | 7.5% | 22.5% | 37.5% | 32.5% | |

Source: As in Table 2.1

Robert Springate, yeoman of Hawkhurst is representative of the wealthier farmer. Springate left goods valued at £171 at his death in 1619, comprising a substantial pasture farm of 28 sheep and lambs, four kine and four working oxen, in addition to assorted heifers and steers requiring approximately 51.5 acres of pasture. He also had 12 acres of wheat, four acres of oats and three acres of peas on the ground bringing his total farm size to in excess of 70 acres.⁸²

The commercial activities of the wealthier inhabitants, was part of the mechanism of social differentiation that separated the capitalist farming and entrepreneurial elite from the petty tradesmen, artisans and small farmers in the neighbourhood. It is the economic power, social reputation and local influence of these individuals and the political power they were able to exercise in the parish that will be examined in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

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- ² S. Hindle, 'Power, Poor Relief, and Social Relations in Holland Fen c.1600-1800', *Hist. Journ.*, xli, (1998) p.68
- ³ J. Patten, 'Changing occupational structures in the East Anglian countryside, 1500-1700' in H. Fox and R. A. Butlin (eds.), *Change in the Countryside: Essays in Rural England 1500-1900* (1979)
- ⁴ M. Zell, 'Wealth, Trades and Agriculture in the Elizabethan Weald' in A. Detsicas and N. Yates (eds.), *Studies in Modern Kentish History* (Maidstone, 1983) pp.203-218; Zell, *Industry*, ch. 5
- ⁵ M. Spufford, 'The Limitation of the Probate Inventory' in J. Chartres and D. Hey (eds.), *English Rural Society 1500-1700* (Cambridge, 1990) pp.139-175
- ⁶ Zell, *Industry*, pp.115-117
- ⁷ J. Thirsk, *The Agrarian History of England & Wales, iv, 1500-1640* (Cambridge, 1967)
- ⁸ Zell, *Industry*, pp.118-119
- ⁹ CKS PRC10/61/229
- ¹⁰ CKS PRC 10/59/50
- ¹¹ CKS PRC10/48/90
- ¹² M. F. Roberts 'Wages and Wage-earners in England' (Oxford D.Phil., 1981) pp.281-3
- ¹³ CKS PRC 2/6/402
- ¹⁴ CKS PRC32/34/64, PRC17/43 431
- ¹⁵ CKS P152/14/1
- ¹⁶ *ibid.*
- ¹⁷ CKS P100/28/1
- ¹⁸ CKS PRC17/61/103, PRC10 60 204, PRC10/71/54, PRC17/70/143, PRC10/68/146
- ¹⁹ P. Bowden, 'Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits and Rents', in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Agrarian History, iv*, pp.593-609, 815-828
- ²⁰ See ch. below and Zell, *Industry*, pp.228-246
- ²¹ *ibid.* pp.170-171
- ²² CKS PRC11/3/18
- ²³ CKS PRC10 29/112
- ²⁴ CKS PRC10 30 387
- ²⁵ CKS PRC 10/30 403
- ²⁶ *Calendar Patent Rolls, 1566-9*, no.1139 cited in Zell, *Industry*, p.183; see above ch. 1
- ²⁷ G. D. Ramsey, *The English Woollen Industry 1500-1750* (1982) p.10
- ²⁸ CKS PRC10 11/160, PRC17 43 376
- ²⁹ CKS PRC 10/40/55
- ³⁰ CKS PRC17/58 62
- ³¹ CKS PRC 10/70/127
- ³² CKS PRC 11/23/19
- ³³ Zell, *Industry*, p.153-246
- ³⁴ Zell, *Industry*, p.227; C. E. Brent, 'Rural Employment and Population in Sussex between 1550-1640', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, cxiv (1976)
- ³⁵ CKS PRC27/6/468, PRC27/2 20, PRC27/11/5
- ³⁶ CKS Maidstone Recs. Burghmote Bk. 3 fol.22v; Maidstone Chamberlains A/C Paper Bks, nos. 1-5
- ³⁷ E. Kerridge, *Textile Manufactures in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 1985) p.214; G. Mayhew, *Tudor Rye* (Falmer, 1987) pp.238-239
- ³⁸ Zell, *Industry*, 159; *CalSPDom Eliz.* 146/63; *CalSPDomChas. I* 251/27; E. Melling, *Kentish Sources, iii: Agriculture and Industry* (Maidstone, 1961) pp.1-3
- ³⁹ CKS PRC10/20/313, PRC17/43/233, PRC11/8/233
- ⁴⁰ CKS PRC28/5/469, PRC32/42/129
- ⁴¹ CKS PRC10/35/199, PRC17/59/41
- ⁴² CKS P100/5
- ⁴³ CKS PRC 28/5/517, PRC 32/42/113
- ⁴⁴ CKS PRC 10/35/164
- ⁴⁵ CKS PRC28/8/473
- ⁴⁶ CKS PRC28/11/702
- ⁴⁷ CKS PRC28/15/184
- ⁴⁸ CKS PRC11/8/180
- ⁴⁹ CKS PRC11/18/172, PRC17/11/37
- ⁵⁰ Zell, *Industry*, pp.227, 228-246.

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- ⁵¹ CKS PRC27/16/10
- ⁵² Zell, *Industry*, pp.122-134; Brent, 'Rural Employment and Population in Sussex', pp.38-39; H. Cleere and D. Crossley, *The Iron Industry in the Weald* (Leicester, 1985)
- ⁵³ Chalklin, *Seventeenth Century Kent*, pp.130-139; Cleere and Crossley, *Iron Industry in the Weald*
- ⁵⁴ Zell, *Industry*, p.133
- ⁵⁵ CKS PRC10/34/313, PRC10/70/192
- ⁵⁶ CKS PRC 10/20/79
- ⁵⁷ CKS PRC10/17/391, PRC10/25/569
- ⁵⁸ P. Frost, 'Yeomen and Metalsmiths: Livestock in the Dual Economy of South Staffordshire', *AgHR*, xxix (1981); Zell, *Industry*, p.133
- ⁵⁹ CKS PRC11/6/86
- ⁶⁰ L. Clarkson, 'The Leather Crafts in Tudor and Stuart England', *AgHR*, xiv (1966)
- ⁶¹ CKS PRC10/34/360, PRC27/6/103, PRC17/57/31
- ⁶² CKS PRC11/20/24
- ⁶³ CKS PRC11/12/108
- ⁶⁴ CKS PRC10/71/62, P100/5
- ⁶⁵ Zell, *Industry*, p.138
- ⁶⁶ *ibid.* p.91
- ⁶⁷ CKS PRC 10/17/74, PRC17/47/108
- ⁶⁸ CKS PRC28/15/418
- ⁶⁹ CKS PRC10 15/281, PRC17 45/232, PRC28/15/418, PRC32/48/251, PRC11/31/225
- ⁷⁰ CKS PRC 28/18/134; see also S. Hipkin, 'The Structure of Land Occupation in the Level of Romney Marsh during the late 16th and early 17th Centuries' in *Romney Marsh: Environmental Change and Human Occupation in a Coastal Lowland* (Oxford Archaeological Monograph no.46, Oxford, 1998) pp.147-163
- ⁷¹ PRC32/51/215, PRC11 4 133
- ⁷² Chalklin, *Seventeenth Century Kent*, p.230
- ⁷³ CKS PRC10 33 104, PRC17 57 420
- ⁷⁴ CKS PRC10 9/380, PRC17 43 117
- ⁷⁵ J. Thirsk, 'Agriculture in Kent, 1540-1640', in Zell, *Early Modern Kent*, p. 91
- ⁷⁶ CKS PRC28/14/259
- ⁷⁷ CKS PRC28 15/418
- ⁷⁸ Thirsk J. 'Agriculture in Kent, 1540-1640', pp.86-94
- ⁷⁹ Combined average pasture and arable acreages for the neighbourhood 1600-1630: Benenden 45.7, Biddenden 35.7, Cranbrook 46.5, Goudhurst 47.4, Hawkhurst 37.9, Staplehurst 48.1.
- ⁸⁰ Combined average pasture and arable acreages for the neighbourhood 1630-1670: Benenden 48.4, Biddenden 36.9, Cranbrook 47.4, Goudhurst 44.1, Hawkhurst 48.9, Staplehurst 59.9
- ⁸¹ CKS PRC 10/41/54
- ⁸² CKS PRC27/4/112

Chapter 3

The Market Town of Cranbrook

Late sixteenth and seventeenth century Kent was by no means an urbanized county. In this period residents of towns and cities comprised a mere quarter of the national population, which has been estimated at between 3.1 and 3.75 millions in 1603.¹ Wrigley and Schofield, using aggregative back projection, estimated that population increased from 3,275,000 in 1571 to 4,983,000 in 1671.² Nevertheless, England was predominantly a rural society with only five per cent of the population living in towns of more than 5,000 inhabitants in 1520, eight per cent in 1600 and 17 per cent in 1700.³ In accordance with the rest of the country, the population in Kent flourished during the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, 'from around 80-90,000 in the mid-sixteenth century, to an estimated 130,000 in 1603'. By the 1670s this had risen to around 160,000.⁴ Nevertheless, by 1600 only London with a population estimated at 200,000, Norwich 15,000 and Bristol and York approximately 12,000 afforded an 'urban environment' in the modern sense.⁵

In Kent, Canterbury was the largest urban centre in the county with a population of approximately 6,000 in 1600; Dover had approximately 3,000, Maidstone 3,000, and Sandwich 4,350.⁶ Nevertheless, it does appear that market towns and even small communities of a thousand or so inhabitants had an 'urban identity' in the eyes of both town and country men and women and that the urban-rural distinction, so familiar to the twentieth-century observer did have some substance in the early modern period. Urban populations may have been distinct from their rural equivalent in the administrative and political sphere, and yet both were mutually dependent upon their marketing function for economic prosperity.

As we noted in chapter one (Table 1.2), the population of Cranbrook rose from approximately 2,000 in 1570-79 to 2,770 in 1600-09, reaching in excess of 3,000 in the period 1620-39 before falling in the mid-seventeenth century as the market town's ability to absorb population growth declined. Cranbrook was a market town with an urban core surrounded by a large rural area in which a number of distinct settlements/hamlets were located. The parish covered an area of approximately 10,400 acres, which in the 1590s supported a population of 2,500 to 2,800 inhabitants.⁷ The pressure of population growth and the local importance of the cloth industry rendered Cranbrook susceptible to cyclical trade depressions and burdened by increasing poverty in the seventeenth century (see Chapter 8). In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, when the cloth industry was at the zenith of its importance to the town's economy, a natural surplus of baptisms over burials and in-migration sustained steady population growth. However, in the harsher economic climate of the mid to late seventeenth century, large numbers of poor people dependent upon textile manufacture for employment became burdensome as the town's economic expansion ceased. In the period 1570-1590 the town of Cranbrook provided a service centre for about 5,500 to 5,900 inhabitants in the surrounding parishes, which covered approximately 39,600 acres. By 1630-1640 population within the neighbouring parishes had risen to approximately 7,550, which when combined with Cranbrook at the core (3,060), formed a total population in excess of 10,000 and a substantial local market area of 50,000 acres (see Table 1.2).⁸

These central Wealden parishes were large by the standards of small towns and quasi-market villages in Kent. Both Smarden and Elham were recorded by Lambarde, as possessing a market in the late sixteenth century when each had populations of less than 1,000 inhabitants. Goudhurst is one of Everitt's ten or twelve very dubious towns

by virtue of its market, whose population ranged from approximately 1,480 in the 1570s to 1,880 in the 1630s.⁹ Lambarde, writing in the 1570s, identified 24 places as having markets in his *Perambulation*. In 1625 John Norden, in his *An Intended Gyde for English Travailers*, noted 26 Kent market towns.¹⁰ However, towns which possessed no urban characteristics other than a market, cannot be identified as towns in the true sense of the word; they were merely large market villages. Cranbrook fits within the historiography of small market towns in this period; it possessed the principal features of a town and was subject to the same pressures, which contributed to market decay and arrested economic development and prosperity in many small towns.¹¹ Everitt identified about 750 market towns in Tudor and early Stuart England, but this figure is likely to be an over-estimate for this period because Everitt included many late seventeenth century market towns.¹² Dyer's figure of about '650 places with an operating market' in the late sixteenth century is probably more accurate.¹³ Everitt identified 33 market towns in Kent with a population of 600 to 1,000 or occasionally 2,000 inhabitants, amongst which were Ashford, Cranbrook, Faversham, Goudhurst, Sandwich, Tenterden, Tonbridge and Wye.¹⁴ Even so there were probably not 33 active markets in Kent at any one time; as Bower has argued 'the number and location of markets in Kent was not constant throughout the period'.¹⁵ In Kent the number of market towns was rising: 'twenty markets operating in 1588, twenty-four in 1611 and thirty-one in 1673'. Indeed, within Cranbrook's neighbourhood Goudhurst became an active market in 1659.¹⁶ Although relatively few small towns exhibited an elaborate political superstructure (most being unincorporated), one characteristic shared by all Kent towns was that each had an active market. Nevertheless, all the contemporary commentators ascribe urban status to Cranbrook, and its population alone demonstrates that it was a buoyant market centre in this period with an expanding local economy. In

January 1636/37 the contemporary perception of Cranbrook as a town was such that the 'inhabitants' were forced to petition against being overcharged with ship money, 'in regard the town was conceived to be a corporation'.¹⁷

Clark and Slack have pointed to the heterogeneity of small towns and argued that the 'market places of the medium-sized towns gave them a distinct physical image'.¹⁸ And yet Abrams questioned the division between urban and rural history and the concept of the town as a separate social entity. Abrams' work encouraged us to 'understand the structure and function of a town in relation to its larger setting in time and place' and to the dominant forces within the larger social environment and those they seek to dominate.¹⁹ Recent historiography has argued that it is important to study how the inhabitants of the town and the country interrelate. Carter's work on St Ives in Huntingdonshire concurs with Abrams' thesis and offers an alternative concept of 'a hierarchy of overlapping societies, dispersed or nucleated and responsive to one another's needs and demands'.²⁰ Mitson's work demonstrates that there could be great economic and social diversity among rural parishes and yet each was dependent upon 'the local neighbourhood and the wider area of the local town or market centre'.²¹

Therefore, it may be argued that the urban environment of early modern England must be understood within the context of the town and its local neighbourhood. However, the range of services offered by individual towns to their localities inevitably differed. Clark and Slack have provided a theoretical framework for the ranking of pre-industrial towns in which population, economic growth, internal and external trade, and the level of administrative order were significant factors influencing the fortunes of towns.²² Within the localities the market town was a vital institution because 'the market town was not simply a centre of trade; it was the focus of the rural life around it'.²³ Although the term 'community' is one that historians

should use with caution when examining life in early modern England, *gemeinschaft* (association based on familiarity and kinship) is a concept that usefully signifies the communal activity of market day in which the rural/urban exchange of local produce brought about personal interaction and facilitated the exchange of goods and ideas between town and countryside.²⁴ This is not to infer an idealized vision of life in ‘merry England’, but to imply a hierarchical, conflictual, political environment in which social relations and trade were carried out. Within the market place, tradesmen and craftsmen ministered primarily to the needs of the outlying dependent villages, underscoring the close interdependence between the town and the surrounding countryside.

There is some debate as to whether a general decline in the importance of market towns occurred in the seventeenth century, a view held by Dyer to be ‘erroneous’. Clark and Slack argued that ‘late seventeenth century rationalization in marketing pushed many smaller market centres out of business’, while Corfield emphasizes that the towns which grew fastest were those associated with a particular specialist function.²⁵ Certainly in Cranbrook’s case one cannot disassociate the fluctuating fortunes of the region’s specialism in cloth manufacture from the town’s changing economic fortunes. Textile manufacture and its associated impact on wealth creation was the mainspring of urban expansion in Cranbrook in this period.

Cranbrook: A Rural Market Town

The town and parish of Cranbrook was situated within the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the deanery of Charing in the diocese of Canterbury. The single church of St. Dunstan in the centre of the town served a large urban and rural parish and was part of the ancient possessions of the see of Canterbury. The archbishop was the owner

of the rectory and the advowson of the vicarage until the reign of Henry VIII, when archbishop Cranmer granted the rectory and other tenements to Henry VIII, reserving the advowson of the vicarage for himself. In 1544-5 Henry granted these rights to the new Dean and Chapter of Canterbury.²⁶

The early seventeenth-century church rate book provides a guide to the relative size of the town compared with the outlying boroughs and manors. Table 3.1 shows the number of households and the number of communicants for the town.

Table 3.1

Numbers of Households/Communicants Rated in the Town: 1608-1610

| Year | Total Number of Households In Town Ward | Total Number of Communicants In Town Ward |
|------|--|--|
| 1608 | 210 | 621 |
| 1609 | 218 | 624 |
| 1610 | 209 | 622 |

Source: CKS P100 28 1

Table 3.2 shows the size of the town in relation to the rest of the parish. The large number of households and substantial number of communicants in the town shows the scale of the core urban area in relation to its suburban and rural outskirts.

Table 3.2

Cranbrook Parish Rates 1608: Listings by Borough

| Location | Number of Households | Communicants |
|----------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Town | 210 | 621 |
| Plusshinghurst | 69 | 236 |
| Milkhouse | 56 | 182 |
| Golford/Chittenden | 52 | 186 |
| Hartley | 47 | 151 |
| Wilsley | 42 | 145 |
| Haseldenswood | 38 | 112 |
| Courtstile | 23 | 52 |
| Glassenbury | 22 | 75 |
| Swattenden | 19 | 65 |
| Sissinghurst/Betnams | 11 | 33 |
| Goddards Green | 6 | 27 |
| Total | 595 | 1,885 |

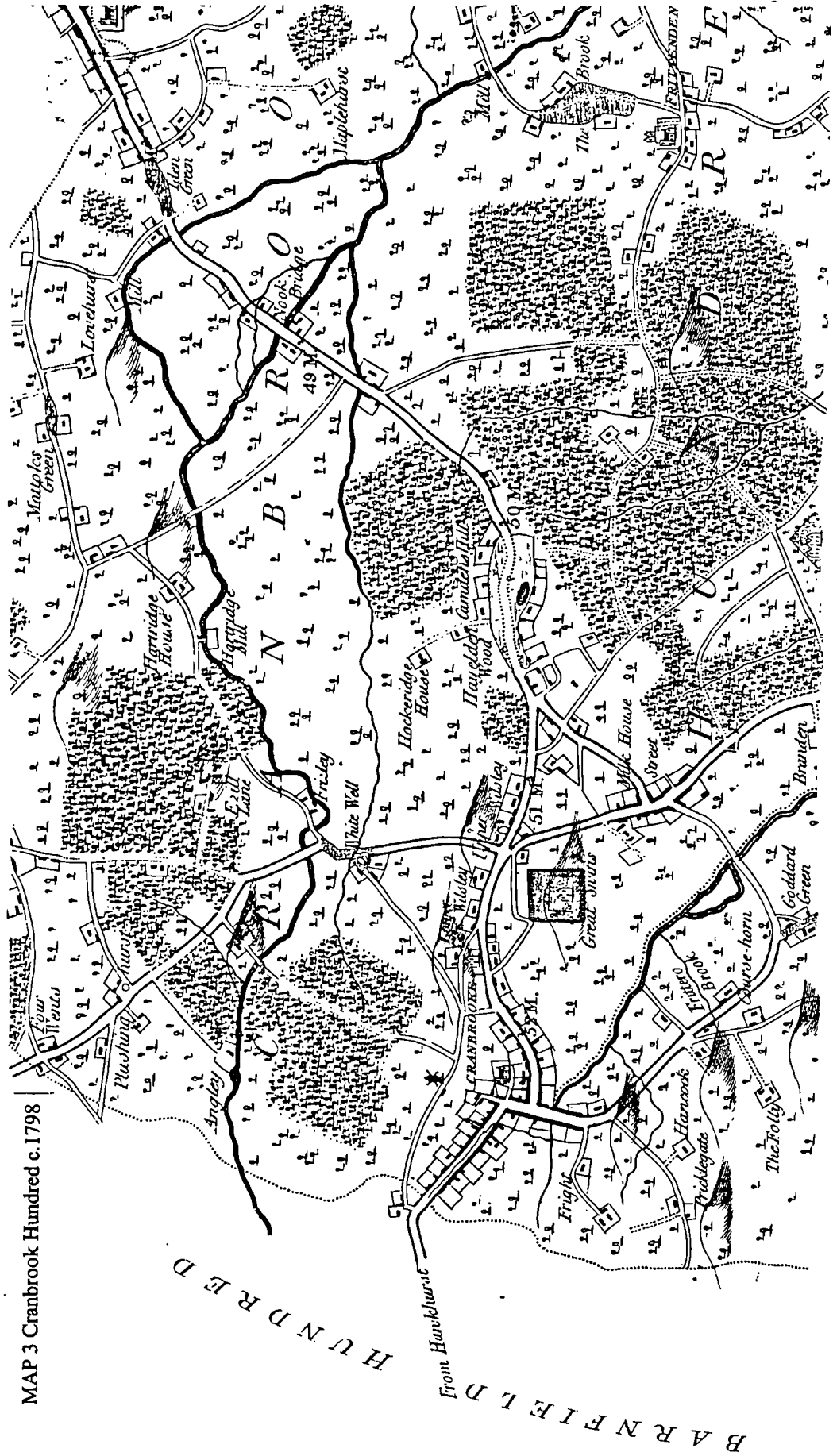
Source: CKS P100/28/1

In 1608, only 41 households (21%) paid between 2s-10s rates, whereas 70 households (33%) paid between 1s-2s and 99 households (47%) paid less than 1s. These figures show that in addition to its marketing function, Cranbrook town was also a residential area in which extreme wealth and poverty (Beggars Row is named in the parish list) co-existed. Hasted's map provides some indication of the street plan of Cranbrook town in relation to its immediate neighbourhood, and shows that the urban area was greater than 'Town borough' alone (see Map 3).²⁷ The boroughs of Wilsley and Milkhouse can also be identified as part of Cranbrook town.

The urban core of Cranbrook was host to a diverse populous of artisans, manufacturers, tradesmen and labourers whose varied economic circumstances contributed to a community of inter-dependent town dwellers. Large wealthy households existed in close proximity to smaller, poor households and single households of widows, creating a diverse urban social structure. In 1608 John Sharpe was the head of a household of twelve people, for whom he paid 6s 8d at the Easter Communion. His household consisted of his wife, two sons Alex and John, three apprentices Henry Merryam, Thomas Sheaffe and Thomas Wood and six servants who contributed the lesser sums of 2d and 6d. Robert Spice, broadweaver, paid just 1s 8d, although he was also the head of a large household of twelve people that comprised his children Richard, Elizabeth, Robert, and John, two journeymen Gyles Bishop and Samuel Tate, two apprentices William Omusteed and Robert Tilden as well as several servants in husbandry. John Fosten, victualler and his wife Mary paid 7s 4d at the communion; John maintained a six-person household of servants and employees.

Within the busy urban centre of Cranbrook there was a market cross, and the town would have possessed shops and shambles for the sale of goods including fish and flesh. Local artisans and tradesmen made and sold a variety of wares to satisfy the

MAP 3 Cranbrook Hundred c.1798



consumer demand of the local inhabitants, and on market days the town became a focus for the sale of fresh local produce (including dairy, grain and vegetables) from the neighbouring villages.

A rental of the properties in Cranbrook town centre dated 1575 provides detail of the busy market place and the cluster of houses and tenements around the 'High Market Street', in which 'divers butchers shops adjoining bound to the churchyard and near the market cross' were in the tenure of Stephen Daly, butcher, for a yearly rent of 53s 4d.²⁸ In 1595 the butchery of Cranbrook and several tenements near to the market cross were in the tenure of John Radcliffe, for which he paid the same rent to the farmer of the parsonage 53s 4d. By 1661 'two tenements and a lane called Butchery Lane abutting the bounds of the market cross' were occupied by Thomas Munn at a rent of £7 per annum. The increase in rent is testament to the lucrative trade in flesh and the growth in the market demand for meat in the seventeenth century.²⁹ Munn's father was also a wealthy butcher. He was the wealthiest shopkeeper in Cranbrook during this period and left chattels valued at £2,130 in 1643.³⁰ Successive Munns were active in parish government: as churchwardens in 1504, 1595, 1641 and 1642; as overseers of the poor in 1629, 1631, 1639 and 1644; sidesmen in 1627, 1635 and 1637 and as surveyor of the highways in 1633. Thomas Munn, jun. crowned an impressive career in parish politics as the constable of Cranbrook hundred in 1652.³¹ The *curriculum vitae* of the Munn family is suggestive of the way in which wealth allied to parish office holding led to contemporary perceptions of elite status within the town.

The wealth of urban tradesmen was related to the size and situation of the town, and the extent to which its rural hinterland was dependent upon its markets for goods and services. If we compare the marketing and service sector of Cranbrook parish with farming and manufacturing, it becomes clear (as shown in chapters one and two) that

Cranbrook's economic base was heavily dependent upon farming and textile manufacture.

Table 3.3 shows that in the parish as a whole in the period 1570-1619, 34.4 per cent of inventories were farming, 45.2 per cent manufacturing and 20.4 per cent distributive. In the period 1620-1669, 39 per cent of inventories were farming, 43 per cent manufacturing and 18 per cent distributive.

Table 3.3

Farming, Manufacturing and Distributive Tradesmen: Cranbrook 1570-1669

| 1570-1619 Farming | | Manufactures | | Distributive | |
|-----------------------|----|--------------|-----|-----------------|----|
| Farmers | 59 | Textiles | 76 | Shopkeepers | 21 |
| Smallholders | 20 | Smiths | 5 | Brewers/Millers | 13 |
| | | Tailors | 4 | Professionals | 5 |
| | | Leather | 7 | Carriers | 8 |
| | | Woodworking | 12 | | |
| Total | 79 | Total | 104 | Total | 47 |
| (34.4%) | | (45.2%) | | (20.4%) | |
| Total Inventories 230 | | | | | |

| 1620-1669 Farming | | Manufactures | | Distributive | |
|-----------------------|----|--------------|-----|-----------------|----|
| Farmers | 72 | Textiles | 77 | Shopkeepers | 19 |
| Smallholders | 26 | Smiths | 6 | Brewers/Millers | 18 |
| | | Tailors | 3 | Professionals | 5 |
| | | Leather | 13 | Carriers | 2 |
| | | Woodworking | 10 | | |
| Total | 98 | Total | 109 | Total | 44 |
| (39%) | | (43%) | | (18%) | |
| Total Inventories 251 | | | | | |

Source: CKS PRC10/1-72, PRC11/1-30, PRC27/1-21, PRC28/4-20 inventories

The combined figures of those engaged in manufacturing, excluding textiles and distributive trades, (see Table 3.4) which may be termed the manufacturing and service sector of the local economy such as shopkeepers, blacksmiths, carpenters, tailors, brewers and professional men in Cranbrook, came to 75 (32%) of inventories in the period 1570-1619 and 76 (30%) of inventories in the period 1620-1669. The large proportion of inventories belonging to textiles manufacturers and artisans in the periods 1570-1619, 76 (33%) and 77 (31%) between 1620-1669, demonstrates the importance of the town's cloth industry as a major source of employment. These inter-connected

markets in manufacturing and trade underlay the economic structure of Cranbrook, which was sustained by demographic growth in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Table 3.4

Distribution of Farming, Textiles, Manufactures: Cranbrook 1570-1669

| 1570-1619 Farming | | Textiles | | Manufacturers | | Distribution | |
|-----------------------|----|-----------|----|---------------|----|-----------------|----|
| Farmers | 59 | Clothiers | 29 | Smiths | 5 | Shopkeeper | 21 |
| Smallholders | 20 | Weavers | 42 | Tailors | 4 | Brewers/Millers | 13 |
| | | Finishing | 7 | Leather | 7 | Professionals | 5 |
| | | | | Woodworking | 12 | Carriers | 8 |
| Total | 79 | Total | 76 | Total | 28 | Total | 47 |
| (34%) | | (33%) | | (12%) | | (21%) | |
| Total Inventories 230 | | | | | | | |

| 1620-1669 Farming | | Textiles | | Manufacturers | | Distribution | |
|-----------------------|----|-----------|----|---------------|----|-----------------|----|
| Farmers | 72 | Clothiers | 45 | Smiths | 6 | Shopkeeper | 19 |
| Smallholders | 20 | Weavers | 42 | Tailors | 4 | Brewers/Millers | 18 |
| | | Finishing | 7 | Leather | 7 | Professionals | 5 |
| | | | | Woodworking | 12 | Carriers | 2 |
| Total | 98 | Total | 77 | Total | 32 | Total | 44 |
| (39%) | | (31%) | | (13%) | | (17%) | |
| Total Inventories 251 | | | | | | | |

Source: see Table 3.3

Hoskins' analysis of occupational structure in Coventry, Northampton and Leicester in the early sixteenth century, concluded that 'in any English provincial town with the rudiments of urban character, some 35 to 40 per cent of the population were employed in three fundamental groups of trades; food and drink, clothing and building'.³² In Cranbrook between 30 and 33 per cent of extant inventories were of inhabitants engaged in the production of the 'basic necessities of life'. This is comparable with Goose's findings based on wills for Colchester and Reading: 'between 23 and 33 per cent of the occupational samples' were employed in these trades.³³ The trades of butcher, brewer, shoemaker, tailor, carpenter, mercer and draper were amongst the leading occupations in provincial market towns at this time, and it has

been shown in chapter two that Cranbrook provided a wide range of goods and services for local consumption.

Cranbrook clearly displayed the characteristics of a town: it had a town population of approximately 1,500 in 1608, and with the addition of its rural settlements Cranbrook parish had almost 3,000 inhabitants at this time (see appendices).³⁴ It contained an unusual concentration of workers associated with the cloth industry, its weekly market and fairs provided goods and services for the local neighbourhood and a majority of households supported themselves predominantly from non-agricultural activity. Cranbrook was a marketing centre for the provision and distribution of goods and services to the local community; the fact that it also had a specialist function as a centre for textile manufacture impacted on the economic fortunes of the urban economy as cyclical movements in the fortunes of the cloth industry occurred. If the growth of a pre-industrial town like Cranbrook was linked to its specialist function, then it will be important to examine whether economic dislocation in cloth manufacture in the latter part of the seventeenth century significantly affected the local urban economy, and contributed to Cranbrook's decline as a market town (see Chapter 8). Taking into account the wealth and employment opportunities generated by Cranbrook's clothiers in the production of goods for sale outside the local market area, the importance of clothing to the town's economy is clear. As Goose argues, 'given the very unequal distribution of wealth in pre-industrial towns their total contribution to wealth creation was of overwhelming importance'.³⁵

Cranbrook and its Local Market Area

An analysis of the occupational distribution in the neighbourhood parishes of Biddenden, Benenden, Hawkhurst, Goudhurst and Staplehurst based on probate

inventories (Table 3.5) reveals that in the period 1570-1620 farming accounted for 279 (47%) of inventories; manufacturing 259 (44%) and distributive trades 53 (9%). In the period 1620-1669 farming inventories numbered 185 (40%), manufacturing 213 (46%) and distributive trades had risen slightly to 59 (13%). The higher proportion of inhabitants engaged in farming compared with Cranbrook shows the more rural character of the hinterland parishes. Similarly, the relatively small proportion of distributive trades in these parishes suggests their dependence on Cranbrook as a market centre. In the surrounding parishes manufacturing and distributive tradesmen alone, excluding textile workers, numbered 136 (23%) in the period 1570-1619 and 118 (26%) in the period 1620-1669. In Cranbrook, those engaged in the production and distribution of basic goods were proportionately greater than in the hinterland, representing 33 per cent and 30 per cent in each cohort. (Table 3.4)

Table 3.5

Farming, Manufacturing and Distributive Tradesmen: Benenden, Biddenden, Goudhurst, Hawkhurst and Staplehurst, 1570-1669

| 1570-1619 Farming | | Manufacturing | | Distribution | |
|------------------------|-----|---------------|-----|-----------------|----|
| Farmers | 194 | Textiles | 176 | Shopkeepers | 30 |
| Smallholders | 85 | Smiths | 24 | Brewers/Millers | 18 |
| | | Tailors | 10 | Professional | 3 |
| | | Leather | 24 | Carrier | 2 |
| | | Woodworking | 23 | | |
| | | Building | 2 | | |
| Total | 279 | Total | 259 | Total | 53 |
| (47%) | | (44%) | | (9%) | |
| Total Inventories. 591 | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| 1620-1669 Farming | | Manufacturing | | Distribution | |
| Farmers | 144 | Textiles | 144 | Shopkeepers | 17 |
| Smallholders | 41 | Smiths | 13 | Brewers/Millers | 35 |
| | | Tailors | 9 | Professionals | 6 |
| | | Leather | 24 | Carrier | 1 |
| | | Woodworking | 16 | | |
| | | Building | 7 | | |
| Total | 185 | Total | 213 | Total | 59 |
| (40%) | | (47%) | | (13%) | |
| Total Inventories. 457 | | | | | |

Source: CKS PRC10/1-72, PRC11/1-30, PRC27/1-21, PRC28/4-20

Nevertheless, inhabitants in the rural parishes were provisioned with many of the ‘basic necessities’ of life. Butchers, mercers, drapers, victuallers, grocers, chandlers, haberdashers and ironmongers serviced the rural community with everyday needs. In addition, rural craftsmen manufactured and distributed a variety of goods locally. The leather trades, smiths and woodworking trades provided valuable skills in a farming community.

An examination of the 1597 subsidy for Cranbrook hundred shows the relative distribution of taxpayers in each parish, and highlights the relative wealth and size of Cranbrook compared to its rural neighbours. Cranbrook parish had 116 taxpayers, 28 per cent of the total number of 414. Table 3.6 provides a comparative analysis of taxpayers in Cranbrook hundred against population figures for the neighbourhood parishes.

Table 3.6

A Comparative Analysis of the 1597 Lay Subsidy and Population 1590-99

| Number of Taxpayers | | | Population by Parish (approximate) | |
|---------------------|-----|-------|------------------------------------|-------|
| Cranbrook | 116 | (28%) | 2,800 | (31%) |
| Biddenden | 54 | (13%) | 1,200 | (14%) |
| Benenden | 59 | (14%) | 1,100 | (12%) |
| Frittenden | 22 | (5%) | 320 | (4%) |
| Goudhurst | 57 | (14%) | 1,400 | (16%) |
| Hawkhurst | 69 | (17%) | 1,200 | (14%) |
| Staplehurst | 37 | (9%) | 800 | (9%) |
| Total | 414 | | Total | 8,820 |

Source: PRO E179 127 516; CKS P20 1/1, P20 1/2, P26/1/1, P26/1/2, P100/1/15; CCAL Dca/BT/78, P157/1/2, P157/28/1, P178 1 2, P178 1/2, P347/12/1

The number of taxpayers rated to the subsidy in each parish was in proportion to the overall size of population in each parish, and, in the 1590s represented approximately the top five per cent of the population. The numbers of shops roughly reflected the relative populations of the neighbourhood’s parishes. There was a significant correlation between population and the provision of local market services. Benenden

produced the largest number of shopkeeper's inventories: 11 survive for the period 1570-1620. There are seven for Goudhurst, six from Hawkhurst, four from Biddenden and two from Staplehurst. The relatively few extant shopkeeper's inventories from the parish of Goudhurst, which Everitt lists as a market town, suggests otherwise: not a town but a mere market village. Cranbrook, with its greater economic diversity provided a more varied range of goods and services, including luxury items not available in the villages. Inventories from the period 1570-1619 show that a wide range of shopkeepers: mercers, drapers, butchers, apothecaries, grocers and victuallers serviced the needs of the local community. By the mid-seventeenth century more specialist shops, including a haberdasher and gunsmith widened further the range of facilities available in the town.

The market functions of Benenden, Goudhurst and Hawkhurst were probably the most developed outside of Cranbrook in terms of the needs of local farmers, craftsmen and tradesmen. Some of the wealthiest tradesmen also came from these particular parishes. Thomas Gyrdler, draper of Benenden (d. 1608) had goods worth £131. John Austen, mercer, of Goudhurst (d.1667) owned goods appraised at £390 and Thomas Philpott, butcher of Hawkhurst (d. 1572) left chattels valued at £169.³⁶ In contrast, there were butchers, mercers, drapers and grocers of more modest wealth of between £20 and £100 selling their goods in the rural parishes, which were more typical of shopkeeper's wealth.

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries demand was buoyant and Cranbrook acted as a service centre for the local neighbourhood. However, by the late seventeenth century, depression in the cloth industry, increasing poverty and rural unemployment led to stagnation in Cranbrook's economy - as happened in many market towns in the seventeenth century.³⁷ Although the petitions of townsmen seeking

to gain rent reductions during periods of economic hardship must be treated with caution, a 1661 petition to the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury by the tenants of Cranbrook's parsonage and market, who paid an annual rent of £33 6s 8d for a 21 year lease, complained that the market place was in a dilapidated state, 'the cross being neglected to be repaired it now being ready to fall down'. The decline in the town's prosperity as a market centre had become a cause of concern to the leading tradesmen, of whom 26 individuals signed the petition (see Chapter 8).³⁸

The 1664 hearth tax returns provide some insight into the wealth and poverty of the inhabitants of Cranbrook town in the mid-seventeenth century. Table 3.7 sets out the number of hearth taxpayers (287) and includes both chargeable and exempt householders in the town borough of Cranbrook. It also seeks to relate the number of hearths in houses to broad social and occupational groups.

Table 3.7

1664 Hearth Tax: Cranbrook Town Borough-Social Structure

| Number of Hearths | Social Position | Number & % of Households: Chargeable + Exempt 287 |
|-------------------|--|---|
| 6-20 | Gentry & very wealthy farmers | 12 (4%) |
| 3-5 | Yeomen, clothiers, tradesmen & craftsmen | 53 (19%) |
| 2 | Husbandmen, craftsmen | 86 (30%) |
| 1 | Labourers, poor craftsmen, widows | 136 (47%) |

Source: CKS Q/Rth 1664

Of 287 households, 164 (57%) mainly one and two hearth households were exempt from payment of the tax, an indication of the extent of poverty in the town in the 1660s (see chapter 8, Table 8.11). Those householders occupying the largest houses, with six or more hearths, numbered only 12 (10 per cent of those charged and four per cent of all households assessed). They included John Relf, gentleman, the wealthy clothiers Edward Couchman (six), Robert Hawes (seven) and Robert King (eight), and leading

tradesmen such as Thomas Munn, woollendraper and Alex and Robert Osborne, butchers. Comparison is possible with Wrightson and Levine's study of Terling, which found that 8.2 per cent of households were taxed on six-20 hearths, 23.8 per cent on three-five hearths, 17.2 per cent on two hearths and 50.8 per cent on one hearth.³⁹ Spufford too has argued that 'in general an incontrovertible association between wealth and household size' existed which can be discerned in the hearth tax returns. The findings for Cranbrook town's inhabitants can be compared with Cranbrook hundred as a whole.

Cranbrook hundred consisted of seven boroughs of which Town and Abbots Franchise were wholly within Cranbrook parish. Smithditch and Faircrouch boroughs included houses from Biddenden, Cranbrook, Goudhurst and Staplehurst parishes, whilst Cruthole and North borough were a mixture of Cranbrook's neighbouring parishes. Therefore, it is not possible to assume that Cranbrook hundred was representative of Cranbrook parish. However, the fact that Cranbrook hundred was an administrative neighbourhood is in itself interesting, because an overview of the hundred places the town in its local context as a market centre.

Table 3.8

Cranbrook Hundred: Chargeable and Exempt Households by Borough, 1664

| Cranbrook Hundred by Borough | Chargeable Households | Exempt Households | Total |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Town Borough | 123 | 164 | 287 |
| North Borough | 74 | 43 | 117 |
| Faircrouch | 65 | 53 | 118 |
| Cruthole | 59 | 31 | 89 |
| Smithditch | 44 | 40 | 84 |
| Abbots Franchise | 24 | 15 | 39 |
| Kings Franchise | 21 | 11 | 32 |
| Total | 410 | 357 | 766 |
| Total % | 53% | 47% | |

Source: see Table 3.7

Within Cranbrook hundred 409 households were chargeable to the hearth tax in 1664, while 357 households - 47 per cent of a total of 766 households - were exempt from payment. Town Borough constituted the town centre of Cranbrook and had the largest concentration of both chargeable households 123 (43%) and exempt householders 164 (57%). The 57 per cent of exempt households in the town flies in the face of Clark and Slack's assertion that 'the rich lived in the heart of the towns, not at the periphery'.⁴⁰ In Town borough, 112 exempt taxpayers lived in one hearth houses, 40 lived in two hearth houses and five lived in three-five hearth households. There was in fact a concentration of poor households living in the town centre at this time.

In the rural boroughs (as in the town) there were some very substantial households. Lady Baker was assessed on 38 hearths and Lady Roberts on 32; both were widows of wealthy gentlemen. Edward Guildford, Esq. was assessed on 17 hearths and Alexander Groombridge, clothier on 16 hearths. The gentleman farmer Robert Holden, assessed on 10 hearths, left £794 in moveable goods at his death in 1677, and Harmon Sheffe, gentleman farmer was assessed on eight hearths in 1664; his goods were valued at £623 in 1666.⁴¹

Table 3.9

Hearth Tax: Distribution of Hearth Households in Cranbrook Hundred by Borough, 1664

| Cranbrook Borough's | 1 Hearth | 2 Hearths | 3-5 Hearths | 6-20 Hearths | Total |
|---------------------|----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| Cruthole | 30 | 25 | 27 | 7 | 89 |
| Kings Franchise | 11 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 32 |
| North | 41 | 21 | 46 | 9 | 117 |
| Town | 136 | 86 | 53 | 12 | 287 |
| Abbots Franchise | 12 | 9 | 14 | 4 | 39 |
| Smithditch | 36 | 25 | 19 | 4 | 84 |
| Faircrouch | 42 | 39 | 30 | 7 | 118 |
| Total | 308 | 213 | 197 | 48 | 766 |

Source: CKS Q/RTh 1664

In Town borough householders in the six-20 hearth group of gentry, clothiers and wealthy farmers, numbered 12, a mere four per cent of the 287 households, and there were only 46 such households (6%) in Cranbrook hundred overall (see Table 3.9). Fifty-three households, 18 per cent of those in Town borough, represented the better off, 'middling sort' of yeomen, clothiers, wealthy tradesmen and craftsmen assessed on three-five hearths. Within Cranbrook hundred 197 households (26%) were assessed on three-five hearths. The broad base of poor householders, paying on only one hearth, made up the largest group of households. In the hundred overall, 308 households (40%) possessed only one hearth, and in the Town borough the proportion was even higher, 136 households or 47 per cent of all households.

A comparison between hearth tax assessments and inventoried wealth (in probate inventories) show that there was something less than a simple correlation between the number of hearths and the range of moveable wealth in Cranbrook. The yeomen farmer Richard Fowle (d.1669) was assessed on four hearths and left inventoried wealth of £664, while Goulden Skinner, yeoman (d.1665) was assessed on three hearths and left £156 in goods.⁴² Analysis of the inventories of distributive tradesmen who can be identified as hearth taxpayers in Cranbrook shows that ten shopkeepers and craftsmen were assessed on three-five hearths, amongst whom were the trades of brewer, mercer, barber, saddler, tanner, carpenter and bricklayer. Their moveable goods ranged from £31 to £399. The only tradesman to be taxed on two hearths was Thomas Punnet, gunsmith, whose inventory was appraised at £69 in 1667.⁴³

The wealth and household size (number of hearths) of these tradesmen indicate that urban living standards among the 'middling sort' in Cranbrook were relatively

high. The collective evidence for a large number of urban dwellers of middling status, from inventories and hearth tax evidence, indicates that Cranbrook was a prosperous town. It is likely that the parish's urban inhabitants identified themselves as being part of a distinctive social milieu within the local community. Participation in a range of parochial duties at all levels was particularly important to the perception of status and identity amongst Cranbrook's inhabitants. It must also be remembered that Cranbrook had a large rural hinterland and inhabitants from these boroughs also participated in parochial duties. Involvement in local governance was dependent upon individual status, wealth and the opportunity to leave the workplace in order to serve but, as Barry has argued, within this social group 'membership of some association was axiomatic' (see Chapter 4 for a full analysis of parish office holding and local status).⁴⁴

The customary values of townspeople produced a common urban identity in this period, in which communal as opposed to purely individualistic concerns were taken seriously. Nevertheless, the Cranbrook vestry always included some men who were not town-dwellers but who were farmers drawn from the rural settlements of the parish. However, the values that all of Cranbrook's elite sought to preserve, which in turn helped to maintain their hegemony, were the values of 'middling vestry members'. Townsmen engaged in parochial activities in part to protect their own self-interests and to enhance their status within the community. A culture of paternalism and protectionism informed the decision-making process in Cranbrook. The upper echelons of the town's social hierarchy formulated social policy and exercised authority over the majority of the inhabitants. This is reflected in a memorandum copied into the churchwardens' accounts for 1608:

'It is agreed and condescended by the whole worshipful of the parish of Cranbrook in the county of Kent and all the honest yeomen inhabitants of the same together with farmers and others, that from this time forth there shall be no stranger or foreign person be received in the said parish by any of the above said inhabitants but

such as shall be very well known to be persons of honest life and conversation and of ability to live of themselves without any charge of the parish...In witness whereof the said worshipful with the rest of the said inhabitants and every of them to this their consent have set their hands'.⁴⁵

Of the 34 inhabitants who signed the document the occupation or status of 31 can be recovered. They were men of good repute and status within the community. There were three gentlemen, 15 clothiers, four yeomen farmers, three weavers, two brewers, the minister, one butcher, one tanner and one widow. This collective response to the problems posed by in-migration, by a wide range of better-off parishioners, stemmed from an association of like-minded 'inhabitants'. Vestrymen, be they townsmen or their rural counterparts, were confronted by the demands of increasing poverty in a parish described already as 'being very populous'.⁴⁶ The concern shown here to protect and maintain employment opportunities for the indigenous population and to prohibit the entry of migrants, who could become a drain on parish poor relief funds, demonstrates that unemployment and poverty were already a concern in Cranbrook at this time. In the *mid*-seventeenth century, the hearth tax records show that the incidence of poverty had worsened and as many as 357 households (47%) were exempt from payment. By the 1670s economic recession was affecting the town's prosperity and the period of rapid population growth and economic expansion, experienced in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, had ended (see Chapter 8).

Cranbrook's economic problems give some credence to the general thesis that many market towns were declining in prosperity in the late seventeenth century. The evidence from inventories does not especially sustain this argument, although it does not suggest an expansion in the marketing of goods and services. In the period 1570-1619, 47 (21%) of inventories were of those engaged in distributive trades. In the period 1620-1670, 44 (18%) derived from distributive tradesmen. Taking into account the rise in prices in the seventeenth century,⁴⁷ and the increase in Cranbrook's

population from 2,000 to nearly 3,000 in this period, the fact that the number of distributive tradesmens' inventories failed to increase in number and value suggests that consumer demand in the town was moribund in the latter part of the seventeenth century.

In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Cranbrook was a thriving market town with an economic base in farming and textile manufacture (see Table 3.4). In the period 1570-1619, 76 out of 104 manufacturing inventories (73%) were of persons engaged in textile manufacture. In the period 1620-1670 there were 77 textile inventories out of a total of 109 manufacturing inventories, 71 per cent. In the rural parishes, between 1570-1619, 176 (68%) of 259 manufacturing inventories were of textile trades. In the period 1620-1670, textiles still represented 68 per cent of manufactured goods (see Table 3.5). Although it would be simplistic to deny the reality of decline in the cloth industry on the basis of these figures alone, the inventory evidence shows that Cranbrook's cloth industry had not yet collapsed in the mid-seventeenth century. Further analysis of the slow contraction of the textile industry of the Weald must wait until later (chapter 8), but I would argue that although the numbers of extant clothing inventories in the seventeenth century is pertinent, it is less convincing when considered against other evidence, such as productivity, market demand and capital expansion within the industry.

In the course of the seventeenth century, Wealden cloth production declined, bringing impoverishment to many of those employed in the textile trades. Contraction of production and rural under-employment contributed to an overall decline in the demand for goods and services in Cranbrook, and to a recession in the distributive trades. Nevertheless, like most market towns, there was also a considerable farming element in Cranbrook's urban economy which was growing in importance: 79 (35%) of

inventories were of farmers in the period 1570-1619 and 98 (39%) in the period 1620-1670 (see Table 3.3). The scale of their wealth and the local farming regime, have been examined in some detail in the previous chapter. In addition to the farmers, many urban clothiers, weavers, tradesmen and craftsmen combined agriculture with industry. The wealth created from both farming and cloth production boosted the local economy, and encouraged trade to flourish in sixteenth century Cranbrook.

It is some indication of the scale of marketing activity in Cranbrook during the sixteenth century that the market and the parish tithes were leased out at £104 per annum.⁴⁸ The Dean and Chapter of Christ Church, Canterbury received the rents from the tenants of the 'market cross and the profits of the market and two fairs yearly', which were held by the town's inhabitants.⁴⁹ Disputes over market rights and privileges were frequent and a case in Star Chamber in 1615 reveals that Cranbrook fair held on the 19 May and 1 September had been re-located. Given the crowded nature of the town centre on market days, when the town was the focal point for marketing of goods from the neighbourhood, a more suitable location for Cranbrook fair was found on 'Ball field'. Dyer argues that 'frontage on to a market space was so valuable that many of the bitterest disputes in towns at this date centred on attempts to re-locate the market area'.⁵⁰ The spokesman for the Dean and Chapter stated that the new site was acceptable to people thereabouts and 'to the best sort of inhabitants of the town'. He also noted that that the fairs were removed from the streets of Cranbrook 'which are very narrow and dirty and are troublesome and scarce passable for people to go to and fro through the streets there with cattle that should and are to be driven in there', and because 'the booths and stands of tradesmen set up obstruct passage along the streets'.⁵¹

A rental of the parsonage of Cranbrook in 1575 shows that the Dean and Chapter held a number of properties in the town which were farmed out to tenants. The parsonage house, barn, outhouse, gardens and orchard and seven pieces of land, together with the windmill, amounted to some 40 acres. The rents from these properties were worth £33 6s 8d to the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury. A tenement called Danehouse was held by Frances Hartredge, for which he paid 7s 6d. Other properties owned by the Dean and Chapter clustered around the churchyard and market place. A dwelling house and divers butchers shops 'near to the market cross in length 39 yards by 8 yards breadth' were in the tenure of John Batley who paid 53s, and Stephen Daley paid a yearly rent of four marks. There were also four houses and a small herb garden near the High Market Street and other houses for which John Baker paid 2s 3d yearly, in addition to a dwelling house and gardens containing one acre one rood in the tenure of Thomas Sharp and Robert Taylor, who paid 6s 8d.⁵² The tenants and sub-tenants of these properties changed with some rapidity in this period, and a rental in 1590 records that four small tenements and a garden late in the tenure of Sir Richard Baker, who paid 2s 2d a year, was now in the occupation of Mark Berry and Thomas Denwood, farmers of the parsonage.⁵³ In 1613 the rents from the capital messuage of the parsonage and 40 acres of lands remained at £33 6s 8d. By 1661 rents on Dean and Chapter properties in the town had increased considerably and their holdings seem to have become more extensive. The parsonage and its orchards, lands and tenements, amounting to 40 acres, had by this time passed into the tenure of Alexander Remington. Thomas Daniel held a tenement and land containing three roods for £4 per annum. A tenement and messuage called the Millhouse and the Windmill, in addition to approximately three roods of land, were in the occupation of John Hayward at £7 rent. Thomas Munn, butcher, held two messuages and backsides in addition to a lane called 'Butcheries Lane' adjacent to

the market cross, for which he also paid £7 per annum. In 1661 these properties and others owned by the Dean and Chapter in Cranbrook brought in rents of £85 6s 8d. With the additional income of £104 per annum from the tithes and market rights belonging to the rectory, the Dean and Chapter was receiving £189 per annum from its Cranbrook properties.⁵⁴

The wealth of Cranbrook's shopkeepers and merchants in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries shows the importance of its marketing function both for its local population and for the wider neighbourhood area. In the period 1570-1619, 38 per cent of shopkeepers had goods appraised at over £100 and 35 per cent of manufacturing-craftsmen had goods over £100. In the period 1620-1670, 47 per cent of shopkeepers' inventories, and 33 per cent of manufacturing craftsmen, were valued at over £100. When inflation is taken into account these figures probably represent a fall in the real value of inventoried wealth of this sector of the economy in the latter part of the seventeenth century.

In the sixteenth century the Ruck family were exceptionally important as merchants and mercers in Cranbrook. Thomas Ruck, sen. left goods appraised at £1,856 in 1583 and William Ruck died with goods valued at £350 in 1597. Thomas Ruck's son, also Thomas, died with inventoried wealth of £446 in 1607.⁵⁵ The Ruck dynasty of merchants was active in parish affairs: members served as churchwardens in 1567-68, 1577-78 and as overseer of the poor in 1625.⁵⁶ Henry Stonebridge, brewer (d.1611) with goods valued at £1,165, was one of the wealthiest businessmen in Cranbrook at this time. It is not surprising to find that he served as churchwarden in 1602-03.⁵⁷ Similarly, Elizeus Martin, apothecary (d.1635; inventory valued at £432) was an active participant in parish government. He served as overseer of the poor in 1625 and as churchwarden in 1630-31.⁵⁸

Wealth was obviously one of the criteria for participation in parish politics, and although men of lesser wealth were active as parish officers, it is likely that elderly or retired parish officers of lesser wealth had given goods away in their lifetime and that they were worth far more when they served as churchwardens or overseers. William Hickmote, butcher (d.1636; inventory £57) served as an overseer of the poor in 1607 and 1617. Thomas Austen, apothecary (d.1599) and Alex Osborne, butcher (d.1645) each left chattels worth under £20, yet they both served as churchwardens and overseers of the poor; in addition Osborne served as constable of Cranbrook hundred in 1635.⁵⁹ .

The occupational structure and status of parish office holders will be discussed more fully in the following chapter, but it is clear that although individual wealth was one of the criteria on which participation in parish government was based, many wealthy tradesmen and shopkeepers failed to serve as parish officers. Thus Cranbrook's 'chief inhabitants' were not simply all those parishioners who fell within a certain wealth band. The interaction between rural and urban society was an important attribute of the regional economy based on Cranbrook. And the central feature of Cranbrook's economy was its connection with the woollen cloth industry.⁶⁰ It gave Cranbrook a distinctive social structure and cultural identity as a clothing town. Through a study of the correlation between wealth, trade and parish office holding, it is possible to observe the complex and multifaceted social relationships within Cranbrook and its neighbouring parishes. An examination of those pro-active members of the parish who perceived themselves as the 'better sort', and their activities as parish officers, will then allow us to explore the structures of paternalism and deference amongst the governors and the governed within Cranbrook. The next chapter will examine the 'chief

inhabitants' through their activities as parish officers, through which their social status as the 'best men' of the parish was demonstrated and confirmed.

- ¹ For population estimates see table 2.1 in D. Palliser, *The Age of Elizabeth: England under the later Tudors 1547-1603* (Harlow, 1992) pp.39-40
- ² E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871* (1981) p.208
- ³ C. Galley, *The Demography of Early Modern Towns: York in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Liverpool, 1998) pp.5-6
- ⁴ M. Dobson, 'Population, 1640-1831' in A. Armstrong (ed.), *The Economy of Kent 1640-1914* (Woodbridge, 1995) p.11
- ⁵ Palliser, *The Age of Elizabeth*, (1992) 4, 237; J. Bower, 'Kent Towns, 1540-1640' in M. Zell (ed.), *Early Modern Kent 1540-1640* (Woodbridge, 2000) p.141
- ⁶ J. Bower, 'Kent Towns', p.160; G. A. Durkin, 'The Civic Government and Economy of Elizabethan Canterbury' (University of Kent Ph.D, 2001) pp.32-33. Durkin provides a detailed breakdown of the population of Canterbury in the Elizabethan period showing the composition of the indigenous population in relation to the stranger or protestant refugee community; P. Clark and L. Murfin, *The History of Maidstone: The Making of a Modern County Town* (Stroud, 1995) p.42. Clark and Murfin fail to provide an accurate population figure for 1600 but show that it varied widely in this period from nearly 2,000 in 1565, 6,000 in 1642 and 3,000 in 1670; J. Andrews and M. Zell, 'The Population of Sandwich from the Accession of Elizabeth I to the Civil War' in *Archaeologia Cantiana*, cxxii (2002) p.86
- ⁷ Zell, *Industry*, p. 66
- ⁸ *ibid.* p.86, The first census of 1801 shows that the combined size of Cranbrook and its neighbourhood parishes was 49,952 acres, supporting a population of 10,307, W. Page, (ed.), *The Victoria County History of the Counties of England: The History of the County of Kent*, iii (1932) p.363
- ⁹ A. Everitt, 'The Market Towns' in P. Clark (ed.), *The Early Modern Town: A Reader* (Oxford, 1976) pp.168-179
- ¹⁰ W. Lambarde, *Perambulation of Kent* (Bath, 1970) pp.53, 259; W. Smith, *The Particular Description of England, 1588* (1879) pp. 6-8, cited in E.G Box, 'Kent in Early Road Books', *AC*, xlv (1932) pp.2-5
- ¹¹ C. W. Chalklin, 'South East' in P. Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, ii (Oxford, 2000) pp.51-60; C. W. Chalklin, 'A seventeenth century market town: Tonbridge', *AC*, lxxvi (1961)
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- ⁴⁴ J. Barry, 'Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Association and the Middling Sort' in J. Barry and C. Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800* (Basingstoke, 1994) p.84
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- ⁴⁹ CCAL DCc/BB13 24
- ⁵⁰ Dyer 'Small Market Towns', p. 443
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- ⁵⁵ CKS PRC 21 6 460, 10 25 233, 10 34 303
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- ⁵⁷ CKS PRC27 2 20, P100 5
- ⁵⁸ CKS PRC28 18 174, P100 5
- ⁵⁹ CKS PRC10 29 11, 11 12 202, P100 5; *Assizes*, iii
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Chapter 4

Chief Inhabitants, Parish Office Holding and Local Status

The basis of town and parish government lay in the management of resources and the 'imposition of constraints on individuals for the common good'. Leading figures of the town had from medieval times assumed an elevated standing in their community on the basis of manorial regulations and government policies: they became 'chief inhabitants' through their exercise of communal authority on behalf of manorial landlords. As Dyer argues, 'the community...was called into being to serve the needs of the lord, the government and the church'.¹

The market town of Cranbrook had a simple governmental structure even in the early modern period: as an un-incorporated town, administration centred on the activities of the manorial courts and the parish vestry. Since, as Dyer noted, 'very little scholarly attention has been paid in recent years to these themes',² it is important to investigate the political structures of towns like Cranbrook. The authority of the manor court was weak in the Kentish Weald, where 'land was held and farmed in severalty', farmers held small parcels of enclosed fields, and communal regulation of cropping was absent. Manors, which held detached dens in the Weald, allowed holdings to be transferred freely between tenants who registered the transfer at the bi-annual manorial court, for a small fee.³ In general the disciplinary powers of 'court leets' held by local landowners had withered away by the late sixteenth century, and there was very little manorial control over the private lives and economic arrangements of individuals. A parliamentary survey of the Seven Hundreds in 1652, conducted for the sale of the 'honour, manor and lands' belonging to the late King, shows that at the 'court leet all constables and borsholders' were chosen and elected for the following year. There was

also a 'court baron' held at Cranbrook every three weeks for sums under 40s.⁴ However, it is unlikely that these courts were very active at this time. The development of non-manorial forms of government in Cranbrook coincided with weak manorial control. In the absence of a conventional borough government authorized by a charter of incorporation the inhabitants of Cranbrook created a governing body which represented the natural elite of the community. Authority was derived from the commonly perceived power and prestige of the local elite. Enhanced social status acquired through office holding may in turn have encouraged the 'better sort' of inhabitant to serve. But it remains uncertain whether the political power of dynastic families preserved or undermined the effectiveness of parish government, through the formation of self-perpetuating oligarchies of power.

Wrightson has asserted the importance of studying hierarchies of power within society. He argues that 'the social distributions of land, wealth, status and power retain their place among the most persistent preoccupations of historical debate'.⁵ Whilst historians have long engaged with the traditional concepts of hierarchies of power in early modern society, the social reality of political power in people's everyday lives remains elusive.⁶ As Wrightson readily admits, the 'conceptual and methodological' difficulties of studying social stratification within society are complex.⁷

The discussion of wealth and occupational structure in previous chapters has provided insight into social stratification among different economic groups within Cranbrook and its rural hinterland. Contemporary perceptions of social status associated with the concept of gentleman, yeoman, and husbandman may be too simplistic when seeking to determine alliances of power within society (which were culturally more complex). Cranbrook society in the period 1570-1670 was highly stratified, and existed within occupational groups, as well as between them. Some

occupational groups included men of both 'lesser' and 'better sorts'. Kinship groups as well as social alliances played a significant role in the creation and reproduction of Cranbrook's urban elite. The dynamics of local governance were influenced by the interplay of wealth and status, and authority was vested in men of 'the better sort', and sanctioned by economic necessity and social norms.

Being un-incorporated Cranbrook lacked the civic administrative structure of many small and medium-sized towns. As a result its institutional framework was parochial. The parish was a social entity in which economic, political and religious structures overlapped, and over which the town's 'chief inhabitants' exercised a social and moral authority. Experience in parish office entitled individuals to a permanent role in the governance of the community through the parish vestry. In 1583, Sir Thomas Smith's *De Republica Anglorum* described the structure of the English commonwealth. He noted the fundamental distinction between 'them that bear office and them that bear none'. Smith noted that, next to the gentry, the yeomen, 'had the greatest charge of doing, in the commonwealth', but acknowledged that within the parish even 'such low and base persons' such as 'poor husbandmen, copyholders and artificers...be commonly made churchwardens'.⁸

This chapter tests Smith's assertion about the widespread participation of the 'middling sort' in parish office holding, by focusing on the Cranbrook parish vestry, the main forum for local political activity. The parish was socially constructed as well as a geographic entity, which inculcated a sense of belonging to a specific community. It was also an agency of power and status. The key to understanding the role of 'chief inhabitants' in the parish is to examine the dynamics of administrative activity, where their perceived status was exemplified. Examination of the structure and stability of these parish elites will help us to understand the power structure of the community,

which to a certain extent was a function of the exclusivity or otherwise of vestry politics.

Early modern England was not a democracy; only a small minority of people could vote in parliamentary elections.⁹ However, Cranbrook parish government was an important forum for political participation, and a relatively large number of citizens joined in. It was a duty of householders to serve as parish officers and thereby participate in the governance of their 'little commonwealth'. However, as Goldie argues, 'it was not supposed that citizenship pertained to every adult'; office holding was the prerogative of 'heads of households who were economically independent'.¹⁰ Rotation of office ensured that many inhabitants shared in the process, although it will be shown that some families and occupational groups were more important than others. Membership of the vestry was the reward for residents who were able and prepared to take up the responsibilities of local office. If, as Wrightson has asserted 'the local community was structured by a hierarchy of belonging',¹¹ then it is important to explore which social groups were pre-eminent in representing the common values of the local community. Hindle argues that 'as the meaning of community narrowed, chief inhabitants began to regard themselves not merely as representatives of the local community but actually as that very community'.¹² In Cranbrook, it is possible that the values and concerns of the town's 'chief inhabitants' were coterminous with the community's interests and anxieties. But it is possible that the concerns of its 'chief inhabitants' may also have reflected their own narrow interests.

Parish governance was in the hands of the churchwardens and the overseers of the poor, supported by the surveyor of the highway and sidesmen. Together they formulated social policy at vestry meetings in their capacity as the 'chief inhabitants'. The vestry also included former office holders who were not officers that year, but who

nevertheless witnessed accounts, were appointed assessors for the church scott and other rates, and ratified decisions taken in vestry meetings.¹³ Those trusted with ex-officio duties had all gained experience of parish office as serving members of the vestry. In 1668, 16 ex-officio vestrymen witnessed a decision to appoint the parish schoolmaster, 'according to the power to us committed, make our free election and choice of Jonas Botting to be the schoolmaster of the English school...to teach and instruct the poor children of the parish'¹⁴

References in parish meetings to decisions taken by the 'inhabitants' must be treated with some scepticism. The vestry of Cranbrook was led by a relatively small elite who were notionally answerable to a wider body of members, sometimes referred to as 'the inhabitants'. When parishioners spoke of the unanimous consent of the parishioners, they clearly did not mean all townsmen, or even a democracy of male householders. It is likely that the phrase 'advice and consent of the major part of inhabitants' in practice meant the consent of the wealthier, office-holding householders. French has argued that 'office holding can be seen as the mould in which these substantial residents left an impression of their social status'.¹⁵ Similarly, Wrightson and Levine claim that in Terling, Essex, participation in parish affairs by the more substantial villagers 'justifies our regarding these men as a distinct group in village society'.¹⁶ In discussing the increased range of parochial duties imposed on vestries in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, which conferred discretionary powers on village notables, Hindle too argues that 'political participation was relatively circumscribed and reflected the social and economic ascendancy of village elites'.¹⁷ The Tudor state instigated a series of legislative, social and moral regulatory reforms. By obtaining the co-operation of village worthies who perceived themselves to be the

'best men' in their community, central government secured the implementation of new social legislation and its authority was legitimised in the community.

The Customary Status of Parish Office Holding

Vestries probably originated in the fourteenth century for the management of ecclesiastical affairs, and the increasing obsolescence of hundredal and manorial courts in the sixteenth century provided an impetus to their activities.¹⁸ Dyer has shown that from the late medieval period the village had a practical collective existence, with 'its own internal hierarchy and traditions of self-regulation', and that through their leadership in manor courts and the vestry 'the peasant leadership gained even more authority over their neighbours'.¹⁹ By the early modern period there was a tradition of practical leadership in the regulation and administration of the parish by the leading peasantry.

Modern historical research on the social origin and status of churchwardens and parish officers is contradictory, and at least one respected contemporary commentator offered a disparaging picture of churchwardens. Sir Thomas Smith complained that 'low and base persons...in villages...be commonly made churchwardens'.²⁰ Some modern historians too have argued that churchwardens were men of little wealth and low social status. Haigh described them as 'the meanest and lewdest sort of people', and Manning as 'men of humble origin'.²¹ More recent historiography has disagreed. Ingram argues that churchwardens were usually drawn from among the 'middling and substantial householders...they thus formed a virtually random cross-section of the upper half of parish society', and Sharpe agrees that churchwardens were 'recruited almost exclusively from the upper stratum of village society'.²²

This chapter examines the connections between wealth and occupational status, and parish office holding in Cranbrook. It also studies the selection of churchwardens, overseers of the poor, sidesmen and surveyors of the highway in Cranbrook and its neighbouring parishes of Benenden, Biddenden, Frittenden, Goudhurst, Hawkhurst and Staplehurst. The names of officers were derived from a continuous set of churchwardens' accounts for Cranbrook (1570-1670), and the Canterbury diocese visitation call books for the period 1594-1670. The Cranbrook accounts provide not only details of the churchwardens and other officers, but also information concerning assessors for the levying of the church scott and the officers chosen to administer the poor's lands within individual boroughs of the parish. In addition there are minutes of several meetings of the parish vestry which formulated social policy. The visitation call books provide a useful cross-reference for the names of churchwardens and parish officers in Cranbrook as well as containing the names of serving churchwardens for the neighbouring parishes. But they do not record the names of the other parish officers.²³ The names of hundred constables have been drawn from the quarter sessions records and constables' rolls, which are extant for the period 1592-1617, and the printed *Calendar of Assize Records: Kent Indictments* for the period 1625-1670.²⁴ These sources have been supplemented by material from parish registers, probate inventories, wills, lay subsidies and hearth tax records in order to build up a profile of the occupations and wealth of parish officers.

The absence of churchwardens' accounts for the parishes neighbouring Cranbrook precludes a comparative discussion of whether 'open' or 'closed' vestries were the local norm or the exception. In the case of Cranbrook, whilst the vestry was not 'select' in the sense that the same body of officers served for indefinite periods of time, access was nevertheless tightly controlled by the selection procedure. Cranbrook

officers were chosen and elected each April for the year following at the annual audit of the accounts.²⁵ It was the custom for each churchwarden, at the end of his first year of office, to nominate the person with whom he would serve for the second year. Officers were 'chosen' and 'elected' by a select body of leading inhabitants who attended the parish meeting, vetted the accounts and agreed the church scott for the following year, all of which was described as happening by 'the consent of the greatest number of parishioners'. In Cranbrook the evidence for co-option is clear. Churchwardens' accounts which do survive for Biddenden parish, show that a similar process of co-option was employed, and that churchwardens were 'elected and chosen'.²⁶ In Cranbrook the vestry was composed mainly of wealthy clothiers, other tradesmen, yeomen and parish gentry, and the term 'greatest number of parishioners' was a euphemism for the 'best men of the parish'. The conventional formulation can be seen in a memorandum inserted into the accounts in 1608:

'It is agreed at the church account for the 1st April 1608, by Sir Thomas Hendly, Kt., William Plummer Esq., William Eddy, vicar, Robert Brickenden, William Sheaffe, James King, William Hovenden, John Taylor and others of the chief of the parish, that there shall be a church scott of £46'.²⁷

The eight named 'chief of the parish' can be identified from inventory and will evidence as being two gentleman, two yeomen, three clothiers and the vicar; the meeting went on to elect Thomas Colville, clothier, and John Bennett, clothier, as churchwardens. Many similar examples could be given to show that the co-option of vestrymen from among the 'better sort' was one of the ways that power was consolidated by the local ruling group. The process of who got into the vestry will be discussed more fully in the section on dynastic office-holding and kinship networks below.

At least some of the leading gentry in Cranbrook were always present when collective decisions had to be made by the 'chief of the parish'. At the head of that

body of men were prominent local gentry: Mr Walter Hendley, gentleman; Sir Thomas Hendley, Kt.; The Right Worshipful Sir Richard Baker, Kt.; Mr Walter Roberts, Esq.; Mr Thomas Baker, Esq.; The Right Worshipful Mr Thomas Roberts, Esq.²⁸ Their participation in parish politics was an extension of their role as county magistrates and leading landowners. Gentry involvement in parish affairs could also have been informed by a desire to be seen to be active in local affairs, as the representatives of external political authority. Indeed such a role would have legitimized their authority and leadership in the local community. However, although prominent local gentlemen attended parish meetings, they did not usually act as parish officers. In this sense the governance of the parish was relatively free of direct gentry control, and the day-to-day handling of parish affairs was dominated by men of more 'middling status'.

This is not to say that participation in local governance was unrestricted; on the contrary, participation was relatively circumscribed and 'chief inhabitants' would have been well aware of the social benefits attached to office holding. It is likely too that Cranbrook's leading parishioners perceived themselves as being part of a distinct social milieu. More generally, notions of paternalism and protectionism informed the decision making process in Cranbrook. In 1608 the parish elite formulated a policy of inclusion and exclusion, which demonstrated the vestry's authority over the majority of inhabitants. Their by-law, copied into the churchwardens' accounts, asserted:

'It is agreed and condescended by the whole worshipful of the parish of Cranbrook in the county of Kent, and all the honest yeomen, inhabitants of the same, together with farmers and others, from this time forth there shall be no stranger or foreign person received into the said parish by any of the above said inhabitants but such as shall be very well known to be persons of honest life and conversation and of ability to live by themselves without any charge on the parish'.²⁹

Of the 34 signatories to the document, the occupation or status of 31 can be identified: there were three gentlemen, 15 clothiers, four yeomen, eight tradesmen and the minister. The consideration shown here to protect and maintain employment

opportunities for the town's indigenous population and to prohibit the entry of migrants, who might become a drain on the parish, indicates that the related issues of unemployment and poverty were important concerns of Cranbrook's ruling elite in the early seventeenth century.

The Wealth and Status of Churchwardens

Most historians agree that participation in parish politics and administration enhanced the individual's social status in their communities. French argues that the 'wealth, reputation and "credit" of some inhabitants made them more "fit" than others to hold office'.³⁰ To what extent was the appointment (or selection) of churchwardens and overseers of the poor (the most prestigious offices) a reflection of personal wealth or the occupational ascendancy of particular groups within the parish?

Table 4.1 shows the occupations of churchwardens in the period 1570-1670 from various probate sources. Clothiers dominated the office of churchwarden: 116 officers (62%) out of a total of 187 who can be identified were from this occupational group. The high incidence of churchwardens who were clothiers is hardly surprising; the local economy was dominated by the textile trade, in which 33 per cent of inhabitants with probate inventories were engaged in the period 1570-1619 and 31 per cent in the period 1620-1670 (see chapter 3, Table 3.2). Among those residents employed within the textile trades as a whole, 38 per cent of inventories were of clothiers in the period 1570-1619 and 58 per cent were styled clothier in the period 1620-1670. The large numbers of clothiers who served as churchwardens was a reflection of their wealth and local status as employers of labour. Between 1570 and 1650, out of a total of 163 churchwardens identified by their occupation, 74 clothiers (45%) selected fellow clothiers to serve with them in the following year.

Table 4.1**Occupations of Cranbrook Churchwardens, 1570-1670**

| Cranbrook Churchwardens/Occupations 1570-1670 | Number of Churchwardens 225 Number of officers occupations identified 187 | Percentage |
|--|--|------------|
| Clothier | 116 | 62% |
| Yeoman/Farmer | 33 | 17% |
| Merchant | 15 | 8% |
| Butcher | 5 | 3% |
| Brewer | 4 | 2% |
| Apothecary | 3 | 2% |
| Gentleman/Professional | 3 | 2% |
| Draper | 2 | 1% |
| Miller | 2 | 1% |
| Tanner | 2 | 1% |
| Blacksmith | 2 | 1% |

Source: CKS P100 5 1 ff.1-270, PRC17 40-72, PRC32/39-54, PRC10/1-72, PRC11/1-30, PRC27/1-2, PRC28 4-20

Cranbrook clothiers may have acted collectively to co-opt onto the vestry individuals whom they could rely upon, either because of family obligation or friendship. However, it must be remembered that clothiers were also competitors with one another, and therefore consolidation of power within particular family networks may have been important. The impressive wealth of clothiers, when compared to other occupational groups, may have been a significant factor in determining selection for office. The second most important group of office holders was 33 yeoman/farmers (17%) followed by a variety of wealthy tradesmen. It is likely that many of the churchwardens without an identified occupation were farmers of one sort or another, and they may account for many of the 38 churchwardens (17%) whose occupations are unknown.

Tables 4.2 and 4.3 show the average value of inventoried goods by occupation in Cranbrook in this period, from a sample of 427 inventories from the archdeaconry and consistory courts. Although caveats concerning the reliability of inventory

evidence must be borne in mind,³¹ the sample does provide clear evidence of the wealth differentials between occupational groups. Two cohorts 1570-1619 and 1620-1670, have been identified both because the time period covered is a long one and to enable the rise in prices in the seventeenth century to be recognised.

Table 4.2

Mean value of inventoried goods in Cranbrook: 1570-1619

| Occupation 1570-1619 | Number of Inventories 208 | Average value of Inventory £ | Range £ |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| Clothier | 29 | 326 | 10-2207 |
| Apothecary | 2 | 301 | 16-587 |
| Brewer | 7 | 271 | 35-1165 |
| Mercer | 5 | 269 | 8-477 |
| Professional | 4 | 188 | 33-434 |
| Tanner | 3 | 172 | 65-230 |
| Butcher | 6 | 138 | 22-300 |
| Farmer | 59 | 119 | 18-592 |
| Woodworking | 12 | 86 | 14-235 |
| Carrier | 8 | 85 | 28-223 |
| Blacksmith | 2 | 83 | 29-137 |
| Tailor | 4 | 75 | 32-120 |
| Miller | 6 | 69 | 20-163 |
| Clothworker | 6 | 68 | 24-135 |
| Smiths | 3 | 62 | 45-85 |
| Shoemaker | 3 | 46 | 11-76 |
| Shopkeeper | 7 | 43 | 16-67 |
| Weaver | 42 | 39 | 5-154 |

Source: CKS PRC10 1-72, PRC11 1-30, PRC27/1-21, PRC28/4-20

Clothiers were undoubtedly the wealthiest occupational group in Cranbrook at this time: the average total of clothiers' inventoried goods was £326 in the period 1570-1619 and £322 in the period 1620-1669. In addition, the estates of wealthier clothiers were more likely than most to have been dealt with by the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (it handled at least ten from clothier-churchwardens), whose inventories have generally not survived before 1660. This reduces the average inventory value of clothiers in the sample as a whole. However, the mere fact that many clothiers had probate granted in the provincial court points up their exceptional wealth. The probated estates of 28 clothiers who were also churchwardens had an average gross value of

£444: clothiers who served as churchwardens were wealthier than clothiers in general. Smallhope Bigg, (d. 1638) had the largest inventory total in this period, with goods appraised at £1,862. He also led an active career as a parish officer, serving as sidesman in 1610, surveyor of the highway in 1615 and churchwarden in 1621-22. Josias Colvill, clothier (d.1631) left goods valued at £1,027. He served as churchwarden in 1625-26.³²

Table 4.3

Mean value of inventoried goods in Cranbrook: 1620-1669

| Occupation 1620-1669 | Number 219 | Average inventory value £ | Range £ |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|------------|
| Butcher | 5 | 484 | 17-2130 |
| Clothier | 45 | 322 | 8-1863 |
| Farmer | 72 | 279 | 32-1972 |
| Apothecary | 2 | 249 | 65-433 |
| Brewer | 12 | 229 | 16-417 |
| Miller | 4 | 191 | 20-570 |
| Tanner | 2 | 178 | 32-324 |
| Shopkeeper | 8 | 177 | 13-399 |
| Clothworker | 6 | 155 | 12-505 |
| Mercer | 3 | 122 | 65-194 |
| Tailor | 3 | 106 | 35-172 |
| Carrier | 2 | 98 | 60-137 |
| Woodworking Trade | 7 | 96 | 15-204 |
| Professional | 6 | 94 | 10-325 |
| Leather Trades | 6 | 85 | 22-125 |
| Weaver | 25 | 85 | 10-339 |
| Shoemaker | 5 | 77 | 35-166 |
| Blacksmith | 4 | 67 | 28-134 |
| Smith | 2 | 46 | 24-69 |

Source: see Table 4.2

The example of Francis Fowle (d.1632) who left inventoried wealth of £441 illustrates how clothiers were especially influential in parish politics. He served as a churchwarden in 1620-21, constable in 1625 and overseer of the poor in 1632. The high incidence among clothiers of multiple office holding is particularly striking. James King, whose inventory was appraised in 1617 at £546, is typical. He served as churchwarden from 1598-99 became surveyor of the highway in 1607 and later served

two terms as an overseer of the poor in 1609 and 1615; in addition he was constable of Cranbrook hundred in 1600-01.³³

The correlation between wealth, occupation and office-holding is further illustrated by the clothier Robert Hawes (d. 1677). Hawes owned land in Cranbrook and in Robertsbridge, Uckfield and Framfield in Sussex. He lived at Beech House in Town Borough, Cranbrook, which was assessed on seven hearths in 1664. He served in the minor parish office of sidesman in 1623, then as churchwarden from 1634-35. He was also an overseer of the poor in 1627, 1638 and 1651. Finally, Hawes served as constable for Cranbrook hundred in 1648-49 which involved him in governance beyond the immediate parish.³⁴ Clothiers who held more than one office were especially likely to serve in the more prestigious posts of churchwarden, surveyor of the highway and overseer of the poor. Service in the lesser offices of sidesman, and as a witness to vestry decisions often served as the first step in the *cursus honorum* of parish politics.

If we look again at Tables 4.2 and 4.3, we can see that the average weaver's inventory in the period 1570-1620 was £39 and in the period 1620-1669, £85. The average clothier's moveable goods were eight times this sum (£326) in the early period and four times (£322) in the latter period. It is noteworthy, therefore, that in the period examined no Cranbrook weavers were identified as churchwardens. The only weaver who held office was Anthony Jude, who served as overseer of the poor in 1633. He was amongst Cranbrook's wealthiest weavers with goods valued at £169 at his death in 1638, four times the average weaver's wealth, and he also possessed several landed properties.³⁵

Farmers were the group second most likely to serve as churchwardens. As noted in Table 4.2 and 4.3 the estates of farmers formed a high proportion of probate inventories. The sheer numbers of farmers in Cranbrook made them a powerful social

group who demanded a voice in local politics. The 'yeomen' farmers formed the elite of the farming community, and were widely recognised as suitable to hold office. The problem of using the status term 'yeoman' is an important anomaly that must be addressed. Both wills and inventories demonstrate that the label 'yeoman' could be used to describe a person of some wealth, even when the individual was not actually a farmer. For the purpose of this analysis, only those 'yeomen' who were clearly occupied as farmers have been included in this category. The average values of yeoman farmers' inventories were £119 in the period 1570-1619 and £279 in the period 1620-1669. Two farmers who served as churchwardens had their inventory proved in the prerogative court of Canterbury, and the mean average estate of 13 farmer-churchwardens was £277 in the period overall. The uncertainty of status additions is particularly well demonstrated by Harmon Sheafe who was variously described as yeoman, farmer and gentleman in different sources. Sheafe lived in Kings Franchise borough in a large house that was assessed on eight hearths in 1664. The combined evidence of his will and inventory show that he was a significant landowner and occupier in Cranbrook and on Romney Marsh and that he had a considerable farming business. That he was also styled gentleman in the constables' rolls hints at his elevated social status. Sheafe died (1666) with chattels worth £624, and was throughout his life an active participant in parish politics. He first entered the vestry as sidesman in 1636, becoming overseer of the poor in 1641 and churchwarden for 1644-45. He acted as surveyor of the highway in 1649 and constable for Cranbrook hundred in 1657. The full *cursus honorum* of local office holding is demonstrated in Sheafe's political career.³⁶

William Austen, yeoman-farmer (d.1611) left goods appraised at £255, more than twice the average for farming inventories at this time. He had served as

churchwarden in 1596 and 1597 and became an overseer of the poor in 1609. In between he served as the constable of Cranbrook hundred in 1601-02.

The possession of substantial wealth was a particularly important qualification for admittance to the vestry for urban tradesmen. As noted in chapter 3, manufacturers (other than textiles) and distributive tradesmen formed the smallest occupational groups in Cranbrook at this time (Table 3.1). But, as with other leading occupations which produced office-holders, the tradesmen who were admitted to the office-holding elite all had greater wealth than was the average for their trade or craft. The wealthy merchant Thomas Ruck, (d.1583) with goods valued at £1,856, served as churchwarden in 1567. Elizeus Martin, apothecary, (d.1635) leaving chattels worth £433, served as churchwarden in 1630-31. Symon Evernden, blacksmith, (d.1640) had goods worth £134 and served as churchwarden in 1628-29.³⁷ When tradesmen were elevated to serve alongside clothiers and yeoman-farmers as churchwardens, wealth was clearly one of the criteria that mattered. The above average wealth of churchwardens suggests that to parishioners outward prosperity was a sign of prudence, and contributed to the general perception of high status and good repute.

The cycle of office holding for these wealthier inhabitants did not necessarily require a term as sidesman, but the position of churchwarden was regularly followed by selection to the posts of overseer, surveyor and constable. Once admitted to the inner circle of parish officers, administrative activity for these men became more than a transitory experience. Although the churchwardens' accounts provide examples of one-off post-holders, a spell as churchwarden was frequently the start of a long career in vestry politics. Of 225 churchwardens recorded in the accounts between 1570 and 1669, a total of 147 (65%) also held office as overseers, surveyors, sidesmen, and constables during their careers.

Cranbrook's urban society was shaped by its unequal social hierarchy, as well as by its economic structures: capitalist employer and wage labourer, master and servant, governor and governed. Naturally, its vestry was dominated by a parish oligarchy, and presided over by the landed gentry. Cranbrook's officers were drawn from an occupational elite, predominantly of clothiers, but including also yeomen farmers and the wealthiest urban tradesmen. Cranbrook's political oligarchy was composed of many more manufacturers and tradesmen and fewer farmers than in a typical rural parish of this era. The governing elite was drawn from a socially restricted segment of the community, which excluded 'the poorer sort' and many of the 'middling sort' of inhabitants from local office. In this respect the customary power structure represented by Cranbrook's vestry reflected the local gradations of status and wealth in the parish. In doing so it was typical of power structures in towns and parishes throughout the country at this time.

An analysis of churchwardens' tax ratings can contribute to our understanding of wealth as a factor in selection to local office. The 1598 lay subsidy which affected only a small minority of householders, shows that churchwardens were recruited almost exclusively from the wealthier members of Cranbrook society. Forty-five churchwardens who served between 1570 and 1629 can be identified in this subsidy, and all the churchwardens who held office between 1590 and 1610 were subsidy-men in 1598.³⁸

The list of contributors to the 1596 forced loan from Cranbrook hundred, demonstrates equally well the overlap between the community's economic and office holding elites. Thirty names appear on the list, which gives an amount for each individual's landed income and wealth in goods.³⁹ As with the lay subsidy assessments, the assessments represent only a small fraction of the real values of lands and goods. Of the 30 names

under Cranbrook hundred, 24 can be identified from wills, inventories and the churchwardens' accounts as local officeholders. The list is headed by the gentry landowners who presided over vestry meetings: Thomas Roberts, Esq. rated at £20 p.a. in lands, was to lend £50, and Thomas Hendley, Esq. was assessed at £15 lands and was also to give £50. Nine clothiers are included, all of whom served as churchwardens between 1575 and 1620.⁴⁰ Only one clothier, Robert Holden, was rated as highly as the local squires, which suggests that status was even more important than disposable assets in identifying potential contributors to the 1596 loan.

Six yeoman-farmers were rated for the loan, all of whom served as churchwardens.⁴¹ Richard Glover was assessed on £7 in lands and was to lend £50 he was a churchwarden in 1586. Thomas Sheafe, merchant taxed on £13 land and assessed to lend £50, was similarly rated as highly as the leading gentry landowners.⁴² The office holding elite of Cranbrook hundred were seen by assessors as being the most able contributors to royal taxation. For Cranbrook's 'chief inhabitants' high social status brought with it financial obligations.

The correlation between status as parish officer and the expectation of making a contribution to national taxation can be seen in the other neighbourhood parishes. In Staplehurst five individuals were assessed to pay the loan; amongst them was William Turner, assessed at £11 in goods and asked to pay £20; he served as churchwarden in 1622. In Biddenden three individuals were to pay the loan, including Henry Allard, assessed on £6 land but asked to pay £50, who served as churchwarden in 1595. Paul Bathurst of Goudhurst the serving churchwarden was requested to loan the crown £50.⁴³ Most of those selected for the loan were or would become parish officers, and often went on to serve as constable of their hundred.⁴⁴

To be ranked alongside gentlemen in the subsidy book and among those asked to loan the Crown money publicly demonstrated the elevated standing of the clothiers, farmers and tradesmen who contributed. It was another mark of their acceptance into an elite social and political circle. But they were also much more likely to be taxed and asked to provide other services for the Crown. Nevertheless, some of those who were wealthy enough to contribute to the crown loan sought release from their privy seals in the year 1596-7. The local Justice of the Peace, Thomas Roberts of Glassenbury, wrote on their behalf to the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, Sir John Leveson in May 1597:

‘Sir, give me leave I pray you to acquaint you with some hard measure which is landed upon William Sheafe and divers others of the seven hundreds by Privy Seals which of late were sent unto them, for I know not by what error but as I take it by some wrong information lately made unto the good Lord Cobham...many weak and poor men within the seven hundreds received privy seals and the greatest part of the wealthiest and best able escaped scottfree.’⁴⁵

It is likely that there is some truth in Roberts’ claim that many of the wealthiest and most able to pay escaped, while others were forced to contribute to the loan. Alexander Courthope, the High Collector of the lay subsidy for Cranbrook hundred in 1598, was rated on £9 and loan assessed at £50, and yet his name was crossed out from the 1596 list of loan payers. Others were similarly crossed off the list, for reasons unknown. Even wealthy clothiers could face liquidity problems, and other wealthy tradesmen were also vulnerable to economic recessions and occasional crises in the rural economy, for example the effects of the failed harvests of the mid-1590s. Roberts’ wrote several letters on behalf of named individuals, including Thomas Scotchford, clothier, who allegedly could not pay the sum of £20 demanded of him because of ‘his losses and hinderances by merchants which hath of late been so great’, and Mr Hendley, ‘who saith he is a thousand pound in debt, and I know it to be true’.⁴⁶ Although these claims should not be taken at face value, the fact that these men could elicit support from their local Justice of the Peace gives some credibility to their claims.

The ‘inability’ of these particular wealthy inhabitants to contribute to the forced loan is of course relative; most clothiers’ wealth was significantly greater than that of most of their neighbours. Those rated for the loan had risen into the upper echelons of parish society, and were expected to pay accordingly. In Cranbrook, 80 per cent of those assessed for the loan were or would become churchwardens.

For the mid- and later seventeenth century, a comparison between the hearth tax ratings of officeholders and of their communities as a whole, also shows the association between wealth and office-holding. Table 4.4 is derived from the 1664 hearth tax returns for Cranbrook, Benenden, Biddenden and Hawkhurst. It compares the numbers of hearths in houses occupied by men who served as churchwarden, overseer of the poor, sidesman and surveyor of the highway, against those for Cranbrook residents in general. The households have been grouped into three bands, one-two hearths, three-five hearths and six or more hearths, which correspond to the categories used in previous chapters.

Table 4.4

Hearth Tax Ratings of Officers: Cranbrook and the Neighbourhood Parishes, 1664

| Hearths Assessed | Cranbrook Hundred | Cranbrook Church Wardens | Cranbrook Overseers of the Poor | Cranbrook Sidesmen | Cranbrook Surveyors of the Highway | Benenden, Biddenden, Hawkhurst Churchwardens |
|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| 1-2 Hearths | 521 (68%) | 3 (10%) | 6 (19%) | 11 (35.5%) | 11 (34.5%) | 4 (15%) |
| 3-5 Hearths | 197 (26%) | 15 (48%) | 16 (50%) | 11 (35.5%) | 10 (31%) | 14 (54%) |
| 6+ Hearths | 48 (6%) | 13 (42%) | 10 (31%) | 9 (29%) | 11 (34.5%) | 8 (31%) |
| Total | 766 | 31 | 32 | 31 | 32 | 26 |

Source: CKS Q/RTh 1664, P100/5/1; CCAL Dcb/v/v

These represent respectively, poor husbandmen-craftsmen, well-off clothiers-farmers-tradesmen, and gentlemen-wealthy farmers and clothiers.

Unlike the sixteenth century, where tax records seem to suggest that no ordinary folk became churchwardens or overseers, around 10-20 per cent of mid-seventeenth century office-holders were rated on just one or two hearths, although they formed a very small proportion of one-two hearth households. There were 193 three-five hearth households in Cranbrook (25%), while households with six or more hearths numbered just 45 or only six per cent of households in Cranbrook. When the distribution of hearths in the parish is compared with that of houses occupied by parish officers the wealth of vestry members becomes apparent. Only 10 per cent of churchwardens in Cranbrook and 15 per cent in the adjacent parishes lived in houses with one or two hearths. About half of churchwardens lived in three-five hearth houses, the households of substantial clothier farmers and tradesmen. However, more than four out of 10 churchwardens in Cranbrook (42%) and almost a third in Benenden, Biddenden and Hawkhurst lived in houses with six or more hearths, the category associated with gentlemen and very wealthy farmers and clothiers. These were the top rank of townsmen and villagers, men like Richard Holden, clothier, assessed on six hearths, who was churchwarden from 1656 to 1657; Alexander Groombridge, yeoman farmer, assessed on 16 hearths who served as churchwarden from 1669 to 1670; and Thomas Plummer, gentleman-lawyer, taxed on eight hearths who served as churchwarden in 1661. As in the late sixteenth century, the office-holding elite was recruited mainly from the wealthy minority.

The hearth tax returns also show that the office of overseer continued to be held by the more prosperous inhabitants in the community: 50 per cent of overseers were in the three-five hearth category and 31 per cent lived in houses with six or more hearths. These data help to illustrate the important position that 'chief inhabitants' occupied as agents of authority in their parish. Typical were Peter Coombes, assessed on four

hearths, overseer of the poor in 1651 and churchwarden from 1665 to 1666; Thomas Munn, woollen-draper, taxed on six hearths, churchwarden in 1640-41 and overseer in 1644; and Robert Hovenden, yeoman-farmer taxed on six hearths, who served as churchwarden in 1633 and then as overseer of the poor in 1647.

As in the early seventeenth century, many of the parish's 'chief inhabitants' of the 1660s were multiple office-holders over a long period of time. John Bennett, clothier, taxed on four hearths in 1664, served as churchwarden in 1636-37, was overseer in 1632 and 1648, surveyor of the highway in 1640 and 1653 and constable for Cranbrook hundred in 1646 and 1647. Highway surveyors and sidesmen, however, were drawn from a much wider cross-section of householders, including less well-off husbandmen, yeomen, clothiers, craftsmen and tradesmen. Many such men served as sidesmen but failed to progress to the more prestigious offices, probably excluded from the inner circle of higher office because of their lesser wealth and status. Sidesmen who were rated in the higher bands of four-five hearths and six hearths or more, were most likely to become churchwardens and overseers. James Bridgeland, clothier, aptly illustrates the progression of office holding from minor to major parish office. Taxed on four hearths in 1664, he had begun as sidesman in 1635, became an overseer in 1651 and a churchwarden from 1657 to 1658. Robert Hawes, clothier, first entered the vestry in 1623 as sidesman; he was a churchwarden in 1634-35, and served as an overseer in 1627, 1638 and 1651. He became the constable for Cranbrook hundred in 1648-49 and was taxed on seven hearths in 1664. His longevity as a vestryman with wide ranging experience of office holding clearly made him one of the 'chief inhabitants' of the town. These findings are comparable with French's data on office holding in Suffolk and Essex, which showed 'a hierarchy in parish office with the most wealthy officers

found among the churchwardens and overseers, and those with the smallest number of hearths at the level of the sidesmen'.⁴⁷

All the fiscal evidence for parish officers in Cranbrook shows that wealth was always an important criterion for selection to local office. As members of the vestry, the better off assumed positions of authority which confirmed their reputation and importance in the community. The mere fact of participating in parish governance contributed to their status as one of the 'better sort' or a 'chief inhabitant'. Almost all vestry officers in Cranbrook were wealthier than the great majority of the parish inhabitants. The combination of wealth and enhanced social status gained through office holding gave the 'chief inhabitants' a collective identity as the parish's 'best' men, an elite social group distinct from those who did not serve.

The inventories of 182 Cranbrook inhabitants who had goods valued in excess of £100 in the period 1570-1670 also show that wealth and occupation were significant factors in election to parish office. When examined against the names of churchwardens, sidesmen, overseers of the poor and surveyors of the highways who served in this period, the probate evidence confirms the dominant role amongst parish officers of inhabitants engaged in textile manufacture.

Table 4.5

Office-holding among parishioners with inventoried wealth over £100: 1570-1670

| Occupation | | Held Office | | Did Not Serve | |
|-------------------------|-----|-------------|-----|---------------|-----|
| Textiles | 66 | 47 | 71% | 19 | 29% |
| Farming | 64 | 32 | 50% | 32 | 50% |
| Tradesmen/Manufacturers | 52 | 25 | 48% | 27 | 52% |
| Total | 182 | 104 | 57% | 78 | 43% |

Source: CKS PRC 10/1-72, PRC11/1-30, PRC27/1-21, PRC28/4-20, P100/5/1

Table 4.5 shows that the occupation of textile manufacture was most likely to lead to election to parish office. Of the 47 (71%) who served, there were 45 clothiers and only two weavers. However, among the 19 (29%) who did not serve there were six weavers

and two dyers. Farmers in contrast, divided evenly between those who served and those who did not. Tradesmen/manufacturers were least likely to be selected for office with a slightly higher proportion of non-servers 27 (52%) than those selected. It seems likely that clothiers were chosen both because they were wealthy, and because they were part of an occupational group that was recognised by their peers as being suitable. Those outside the clothier elite who served were probably included because of their superior wealth and desire to identify with the 'better sort' in the community.

The oligarchy of office holders played a varied and important role in the politics of the parish. One of these roles was as witnesses, executors and overseers of wills for friends, neighbours and family. Some were also active as trustees or guardians of local institutions. In May 1574 Queen Elizabeth granted a charter to establish a 'free and perpetual Grammar School' in Cranbrook. It provided for a board of Governors to oversee the finance and administration of the school.⁴⁸ Besides the vicar of Cranbrook, the board comprised Sir Richard Baker, Esq., Walter Roberts, Esq., Thomas Ruck and Thomas Sheafe, merchants; Robert Brickenden, yeoman-farmer and six clothiers, John Courthop, Peter Couthop, Francis Hartridge, Walter Hendley, Laurence Sharpe and William Sheafe. All were from the upper echelons of Cranbrook's elite; they were also experienced vestrymen. The 10 clothiers, yeomen and merchants had all served as churchwarden between 1560 and 1579, and many also served as overseers of the poor and surveyors of the highway.⁴⁹ Among the vestrymen, those who participated in additional civic offices were also particularly active in the vestry over a long period. They acted as witnesses to parish meetings and the granting of leases of parish property, and as local assessors of the poor in their respective boroughs. Some sense of the dynamics of office holding can be gained from the churchwardens' accounts where the activities of 'chief inhabitants' involved in parish business can be discerned. In

1577, eleven past or serving churchwardens were witnesses to the granting of a lease in Cranbrook.⁵⁰ In 1590, nine past or serving churchwardens, many of whom became overseers of the poor or surveyor of the highways, were appointed assessors for the church scott.⁵¹ The expertise of parish officers is particularly striking in the choice of assessors for the church scott in 1640. Some had many years' experience in the vestry behind them and many were the sons of past generations of serving officers.⁵² Cranbrook's self-perpetuating oligarchy exercised power and influence in local affairs both during and after the years when they held office. In many of these transactions they portrayed themselves as 'the inhabitants of the parish' as they carried out a wide range of decisions in the name of all the parishioners.

Experience of parish office, enabled some men to progress to the office of constable for the hundred. Two sample periods were examined, the period 1592-1617, for which the original constables rolls are extant, and the period 1625-1670, for the parishes of Biddenden, Benenden, Cranbrook, Frittenden, Goudhurst, Hawkhurst and Staplehurst, located in Cranbrook, Barkley, Great Barnfield, Marden, Rolvenden and Selbritten hundreds.⁵³ The constable's rolls were compared with churchwardens' accounts, visitation call books, testamentary and taxation evidence, in order to determine whether serving constables who had held parish office were one and the same person. In the period 1592 to 1617, 58 parishioners (46%) out of a total of 125 constables also served in parish offices. In the period 1625 to 1670, 303 constables were identified of whom 111 (41%) also held office as churchwardens, overseers and parish officers.

The research by Joan Kent on English village constables has greatly enhanced our understanding of the economic and social status of these officers. Kent argues that although 'few gentleman served as constables, these officials were mostly chosen from

the more substantial families just below that rank.⁵⁴ Kent's work also shows that in Pattringham, Staffordshire, large or middling farmers dominated the constableness, and that 'the same men filled other local offices as well, including that of churchwardens.'⁵⁵ The findings for Cranbrook and its neighbouring parishes in Kent support this thesis. William Austen, yeoman-farmer, served as churchwarden for Cranbrook parish in 1596-97, as overseer in 1609 and as constable for the hundred in 1601-2. His inventory was appraised at £255 at his death in 1611. John Bennett, clothier, served as churchwarden from 1608-10 and as constable for Cranbrook hundred in 1614. His movable goods were valued at £258 in 1632. Thomas Couchman, clothier, was parish warden in 1587-88, and constable of Cranbrook hundred in 1597. His chattels were worth £162 in 1611. Constables in the neighbouring parishes came from the same social milieu. In Benenden, Richard Glover, clothier, served as churchwarden in 1606-1607 and as constable of Rolvenden hundred in 1599-1600. His goods were valued in 1613 at £222. John Sharpe was churchwarden of Benenden twice in 1609 and 1624, and then served as constable of Selbritten hundred in 1628. A wealthy farmer, his goods were appraised at £991 in 1628.⁵⁶ In Hawkhurst, John Mercer, farmer, was sidesman in 1595, churchwarden in 1603 and constable of Great Barnfield hundred in 1600.⁵⁷ These examples confirm that in Cranbrook and its neighbourhood appointment to this office was deemed to be a highly desirable confirmation of elite status. Many hundred constables had previous experience of parish administration as churchwarden and overseer of the poor. The 'chief inhabitants' who served as vestrymen and hundred constables distinguished themselves from the majority of inhabitants who did not serve. The social polarization evident within Cranbrook and its neighbouring parishes was based on conventional stereotypes of wealth, status, and authority. The social hierarchy

in the parish was regulated by customary concepts of status and legitimisation that were apparently consented to by the majority of townsmen.

Dynastic Office- Holding Families and Kinship Networks among the Elite

Two features of dynastic families in the Cranbrook area was that many family members held office and were likely to be wealthier than their less stable neighbours. These factors enhanced the contemporary perception that they were reliable and respectable inhabitants, fit to hold parochial office. Although they made up a small percentage of the overall population, leading clothier and farming families provided a stable core of individuals who acted as Cranbrook's 'chief inhabitants'. Because they were economically active in Cranbrook over a long period, they are more visible to the historian, as employers and as property owners. These stable core families were able to assume considerable authority in the town because of their superior status and wealth. Over the whole period under review power was concentrated into the hands of a relatively small group of families.

The influence of dynastic families in Cranbrook operated in two ways: not only did they create numerous kinship networks based on occupation and friendship, but marriage between dynastic family groups enhanced the opportunity for long-staying families to survive within the Cranbrook neighbourhood. Seventy different family surnames of churchwardens appear in the churchwardens' accounts for Cranbrook in 1570-1670. Of this number 45 family surnames (64%) appear as churchwarden for one to two terms. Twelve surnames (17.1%) appeared three or four times as churchwarden, and 16 names (4.2%) appear five or six times. However 10 families (14.2%) provided churchwardens between seven and 16 times: the Austen family were churchwardens eight times, Colvill (seven), Couchman (15), Courtop (10), Holden (16), Hovenden (12), King (eight), Sheafe (eight), Taylor (10) and Weller (12). Overall, these 10

families contributed 106 terms of service as churchwarden, 42 per cent of the recorded terms of office. The larger group of families that served one-two years managed only 84 terms of office (33.6%). Although selection to parish office was widely distributed among the towns 'middling' householders, there was a core group of 'chief inhabitants' who dominated the vestry over a long period of time. Family ties within this group of ten clothier and farming families are apparent from wills, which show how common was inter-marriage between members of this core group of office holding families.

Kinship ties between these wealthy families were clearly a major factor in their prolonged local ascendancy. Peter Courthop served as churchwarden from 1572-73, he died in 1579 leaving a bequest to 'the eldest son of Robert Hovenden my kinsman £5', and 'to the eldest son of Thomas Couchman my kinsman, £5'. The executor of his will was Alexander Courthop and the overseer Thomas Sheafe, it was witnessed by Thomas Sheafe, Peter Courthop sen., Richard Sheafe, William Couchman and Gabriel Couchman.⁵⁸ All of these friends and kinsmen were part of the core group of wealthiest officers. Mary Holden, widow, (d.1607) bequeathed £10 to her daughter Mary King, wife of James King, and to her daughter Elizabeth Courthop, wife of Richard Courthop she bequeathed £10', and to 'John Hovenden her nephew she left £6'. Her executors were her son John Holden and her 'well beloved brothers Robert Hovenden and William Couchman'.⁵⁹ Mary's son John Holden, clothier, (d.1625) bequeathed to his daughter Elizabeth, the wife of Richard Taylor, £5, and to his son Peter Holden £850, to be kept 'in the hands of Smallhope Bigg' until Peter was 21. Thomas Sheafe, yeoman (d.1604) bequeathed to his 'sons' 'Giles Fletcher, George Roberts, and Peter Courthop, a gold ring' and to his 'sister Courthop, sister Hovenden and sister Couchman a gold ring as a good-will token'. His will made provision out of his extensive estate for his sons and daughters, and was witnessed by his kinsman William

Sheafe.⁶⁰ The language employed in his son Edmund Sheafe's will of 1625 indicates the warmth of family feeling within this extensive kinship network. Edmund bequeathed to 'my aunt Couchman 5s' and appointed as one of his overseers 'my loving kinsman and christian neighbour Smallhope Bigg of Cranbrook.'⁶¹

It remains an intriguing question whether religious zeal motivated some of these men to be active in parish politics and cemented the bonds of inter-marriage and friendship between them. As we shall see in chapter five religion was one of the factors which encouraged some families to emigrate to New England in the 1630s. Some of the men who served multiple periods of office holding came from these same families or had married within the group: the Bigg, Sheafe and Courthop families were notable in this regard. The wills of others show that they may have been among Cranbrook's committed Protestants. John Holden, clothier, (d.1623) left to his son Richard 'my book of Martyrs', and Harmon Sheafe (d.1665) included a religious preamble in his will which avouched his thanks to God 'for the making of my life more comfortable to me here and also for the further enabling of me to do him service all the days of this my pilgrimage'.⁶² Elizabeth Jorden, widow of Richard Jorden, churchwarden from 1589-90, whose father Edward had also served (1565-66), bequeathed to her 'son Edward my whole book of Martyrs and my Bible'. Her will also shows kinship connections with other elite families, including her cousin Robert Hovenden and her brother, Alex Courthop.⁶³ Many similar examples exist to show how family ties between wealthy office-holders may have been initiated, or strengthened, by strong religious convictions.

Extensive inter-marriage between these families resulted in complicated kinship networks, in which first and second marriages often took place from within this small group. Alexander Taylor, clothier (d.1657), made provision for his sister Courthop,

who had married twice, and for Thomas Couchman, his kinsman; he also left money for Mary Couchman alias Colvill, his kinswoman the widow of Edmond Colvill of Cranbrook, clothier, and for his brother-in-law John Courthop.⁶⁴ A few examples from Cranbrook's marriage register suggest the tip of an iceberg of inter-marriage between office-holding families. Robert Hovenden married Mary Couchman (1572), Dence Weller married Joan Hovenden (1590), John Weller married Katherine Bigg (1593), John Taylor married Clemence Couchman (1596), John Courthop married Elizabeth Taylor (1624) and John Weller married Mary King.⁶⁵

Analysis of the churchwardens' accounts show that when it came to selecting who was to serve as churchwarden in the following year, co-option of kinsmen within the elite group helped to perpetuate the existing oligarchy. Wealthy clothier William Sheafe chose Richard Taylor, yeoman-farmer, to serve with him in 1576. Richard Hovenden, yeoman-farmer, selected Robert Holden, clothier, to stand alongside him in 1580. Holden selected Alex Weller, clothier, who in turn chose Edmund Colvill, clothier, who nominated Robert Hovenden, yeoman-farmer, who appointed Robert King, clothier as his partner. King chose his kinsman Alexander Taylor, clothier, who selected Robert King in 1585. For many years the tendency of churchwardens to select exclusively from within a close occupational and kinship network of wealthy inhabitants persisted. In 1596 William Austen, yeoman-farmer, selected Richard Taylor, clothier, who chose Walter Hendley, clothier, who selected John Bigg, clothier, who selected James King, clothier, to serve with him. This practice continued in the seventeenth century when, for example, Smallhope Bigg, clothier, (1622) selected John Holden, clothier to serve as his fellow churchwarden, and again in 1626 when Josias Colvill, clothier, nominated Richard King, clothier, who in 1627 selected Willam Couchman.⁶⁶ The domination of this small group becomes less evident in the period

after 1640, but some names from the early Stuart oligarchy were still prominent. Robert Taylor served as churchwarden in 1650 and selected Richard Austen 1651-52, who chose John Courthop 1652-53. Richard Holden was co-opted to serve in 1656-57. Wealthy clothiers continued to dominate as an occupational group, at least up until 1660.

Many men from dynastic families also served as sidesman, overseer and surveyor of the highways. In the period 1607-1650, out of a total of 137 overseers of the poor 27 members of the Austen, Bigg, Couchman, Courthop, Holden, Hovenden, King, Sheafe, Taylor and Weller families served in this prestigious office in Cranbrook. More than a quarter of overseers in this period came from the core group of dynastic families. In addition, of the 111 surveyors of the highways identified as serving in the same period, 32 (28%) were members of the same small group of dominant families. The office of surveyor of the highway was very important in an area heavily dependent upon the maintenance of roads for trade, (discussed in chapter 8) which helps to explain the occasional appointments of even leading gentry to this office. Sir Thomas Roberts held the post in 1621, Sir Walter Roberts in 1628 and Sir Thomas Roberts in 1637. The Munn family were wealthy butchers and woollen drapers, and were also active in parish politics over a long period as churchwardens, overseers of the poor and surveyors of the highway.⁶⁷ William, Thomas and John Plummer, gentleman lawyers were also active in parish governance. All three served as overseer of the poor in 1623, 1629, 1631 and a Thomas Plummer, Esq. was surveyor of the highways in 1627-28, 1648, and 1667.

To summarise, whilst numerous middling families passed through the vestry and participated occasionally in parish affairs, many dynastic family members were

part of a dominant, self-selecting office-holding oligarchy. High status amongst Cranbrook's wealthier inhabitants found its expression in parish office holding.

When Cranbrook is compared with its neighbouring parishes, the structure of office holding appears to be somewhat different. In Cranbrook at least 70 different family surnames served as churchwarden from 1570-1670. Of this number, 45 surnames (64.3%) served as churchwarden one-two terms, 12 surnames (17.1%) three-four terms, three surnames (4.3%) five-six terms and 10 surnames (14.3%) seven or more terms of office. Yet, this small group of 10 families who served seven-16 terms of office each, collectively dominated the vestry 106 times. Whereas the more widespread distribution of office holding families, serving one-two and three-four terms, collectively held office far less. However in the rural parishes the prestigious office of churchwarden was much less dominated by a few families over a long period of time; and there was greater participation in office holding by the whole body of the 'better off'. In the neighbourhood parishes, only Biddenden and Hawkhurst recorded any families who held more than seven terms of office as churchwarden. *The large number of families who served only one-two terms of office (particularly in Staplehurst) shows that the office of churchwarden was widely shared (or even rotated) among the middling or well-off householders.* However, in Benenden and Hawkhurst rather more families served multiple terms of three-four years as parish officers (see Table 4.6). The reason why office holding in some parishes in the area was less dominated by a relatively restricted oligarchy is unclear. It could be because outside of Cranbrook the financial implications of holding office were less frightening. Also in the rural parishes, the farming elite would have assumed greater authority. Moreover in Cranbrook, the status-rewards of holding office were higher and therefore attracted extra competition, from which it is likely that the wealthier, dynastic oligarchic families won out.

Table 4.6**Distribution of Family Surnames serving as Churchwarden, 1595-1660**

| Parish | 1-2 terms | 3-4 terms | 5-6 terms | 7+ terms |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Biddenden [38 surnames] | 31 81.6% | 4 10.5% | 1 2.6% | 2 5.3% |
| Benenden [40 surnames] | 33 82.5% | 6 15% | 1 2.5% | 0 |
| Frittenden [40 surnames] | 34 85% | 3 7.5% | 3 7.5% | 0 |
| Goudhurst [41 surnames] | 35 85.4% | 5 12.2% | 1 2.4% | 0 |
| Hawkhurst [39 surnames] | 31 79.5% | 6 15.4% | 1 2.6% | 1 2.5% |
| Staplehurst [50 surnames] | 47 94% | 2 4% | 1 2% | 0 |

Source: CKS P100 5 1, CCAL Dcb v v

Kinship ties between office-holding families across the parishes are very difficult to pin down from the sources available, especially because of the incomplete survival of the visitation call books for the neighbouring parishes. However, analysis of the extant evidence from churchwardens' accounts, call books and wills shows that there were some families who participated in the vestries of several parishes. From a total of 252 family names of churchwardens who served in these parishes, 45 families, (18%) had kinsmen who served as churchwardens in neighbouring parishes. A further 76 families (30.1%) were part of a network of families who in addition to being churchwarden, held the office of sidesman, overseer of the poor or surveyor of the highway. Familiar names such as Austen are to be found serving as churchwarden in Benenden, Cranbrook, Goudhurst, Hawkhurst and Staplehurst. The Beale family served in Biddenden, Frittenden, Goudhurst and Hawkhurst; and the Besbiche family were as churchwardens in Biddenden, Frittenden and Goudhurst. Similarly the Crothall's served as churchwardens in Benenden, Biddenden and Hawkhurst parishes. It is noteworthy that among Cranbrook's group of 10 most active office-holding families the Bigg, Colvill, Couchman, Holden, Hovenden, and Weller families seem to have

confined their office-holding to Cranbrook parish. The King and Sheafe family served as churchwardens in Cranbrook and Goudhurst.

Wealth may have been a necessary requirement for office holding because of the churchwarden's financial obligations when there was any deficit in parish funds. At a vestry meeting in 1596, fifteen of the town's wealthiest inhabitants including the local squires Thomas Roberts Esq., and Thomas Hendley Esq., together with leading clothiers, merchants, farmers and tradesmen decided that outgoing churchwardens were to make up the shortfall in the parish accounts:

'From henceforward, the wardens of the parish of Cranbrook, shall present every person who refuses to pay their church scott, clerks or sextons wages and that the wardens are not to be discharged of their wardenship duties, until they have accomplished their order, and not any new wardens to be in their rooms chosen... the said warden so going out of his office shall within one month gather the residue...or pay it themselves'.⁶⁸

Wealth combined with social status contributed to a contemporary perception that certain inhabitants had a natural or even inherited role as leaders of their community. It must also be said that only the wealthier householders could have afforded to take time off from their businesses to undertake the duties of office. This may explain the transient nature of office holding by some inhabitants who served only one or two terms of office and may have in practice precluded some from serving at all. Age would also have been a factor in selection to office. Vestry members needed to be of sufficient financial means and social standing in the community. It is unlikely that many younger householders would have had the time or the means to fulfil the obligations of parish office. The lack of evidence for financial inducements to serve suggests that the willingness to hold office was an opportunity for the wealthy to show their 'elite' status. However, some apparently wealthy inhabitants did not serve as parish officers, either through indifference, lack of time or failure to be included in the friendship or occupational groups from which office holders were chosen. Many

examples could be given to show that some wealthy inhabitants from less prestigious occupations may have been either excluded from office or were unenthusiastic about participating. Thomas Chittenden, smith (d.1594), with goods valued at £137 never served. Similarly, Richard Ballard, carpenter (d.1603) with goods valued at £222 and Robert Scales, butcher (d.1634) with chattels appraised at £135 failed to participate.⁶⁹ Other occupations were possibly frowned upon among the elite group; wealthy brewers seldom became office holders.⁷⁰

The social and cultural reality of political power in peoples' lives is much more difficult to fathom from the sources available. But it is clear that ties both of kinship and of occupational solidarity were important in local politics. It is also clear that many alliances based on wealth and occupation existed between individuals who were active in parish governance. The structure of local politics was determined in part by the unequal structure of wealth and power, in part by customary procedures of selection and in part by the economic reality of the town as the dominant centre of rural textile manufacture. In the following chapter an examination of social and kinship networks will reveal the underlying alliances between status groups in the community.

- ¹ C. Dyer, 'The English Medieval Village Community and its Decline' in *Journal of British Studies*, xxxiii (1994) pp.408-414
- ² A. Dyer, 'Small Market Towns, 1540-1700', in P. Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, ii, 1540-1840* (Cambridge, 2000) pp.425-452
- ³ M. Zell, *Industry in the Countryside: Wealden Society in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1994) p.6
- ⁴ PRO E317 Kent/3
- ⁵ K. Wrightson, 'The Social Order of Early Modern England: Three Approaches' in L. Bonfield, R. Smith, K. Wrightson (eds.), *The World We Have Gained: Histories of Population and Social Structure* (1986) p.177
- ⁶ For a lucid account of social hierarchy and concepts of order see: E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1990) esp. ch. 2
- ⁷ Three approaches suggested by Wrightson are: contemporary perceptions, social-distributional and social relations. K. Wrightson, 'The Social Order of Early Modern England', p.177
- ⁸ Quoted in S. Hindle, 'The Political Culture of the Middling Sort in English Rural Communities, c. 1550-1700', in *The Politics of the Excluded c. 1550-1850* (Basingstoke, 2001) p.125
- ⁹ M. Goldie, 'The Unacknowledged Republic: Office holding in Early Modern England', in *The Politics of the Excluded*, p.154
- ¹⁰ *ibid.* p.173
- ¹¹ K. Wrightson, 'The Politics of the Parish in Early Modern England' in P. Griffiths, A. Fox, S. Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1996) p.19
- ¹² S. Hindle, 'A Sense of Place? Becoming and Belonging in the Rural Parish, 1550-1650', in A. Shepard and P. Withington (eds.), *Communities in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2000) ch.6
- ¹³ CKS P100 5 1, in 1577, 14 of Cranbrook's chief inhabitants, clothiers, merchants, tradesmen and farmers witnessed the granting of a lease. In 1590, 9 chief inhabitants were appointed sissors for the church scott.
- ¹⁴ CKS P100 5 1 f.267v
- ¹⁵ H. R. French, 'Chief Inhabitants and their Areas of Influence: Local Ruling Groups in Essex and Suffolk Parishes 1630-1720', (Cambridge PhD, 1994) p.131
- ⁶ K. Wrightson and D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in An English Village: Terling, 1525-1700* (Oxford, 1995) p.106
- ¹ S. Hindle, 'The Governance of the Parish' in R. Houston, E. Muir. B. Scribner (eds.), *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, 1550-1640*, (2000) pp.204-207
- ⁸ S. Webb and B. Webb, *The Parish and the County, English Local Government*, i (1906) pp. 37-38
- ¹⁹ C. Dyer, 'The English Medieval Village and its Decline', p.414
- ²⁰ Sir Thomas Smith, *De Republica Anglorum*, (ed.) M. Dewar (Cambridge, 1982) pp.76-77
- ²¹ C. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1975) pp.18-19, 231; R. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex: A study of the Enforcement of the Religious Settlement 1558-1603* (Leicester, 1969) pp.24-25
- ²² M. Ingram, *Church Courts Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987) pp. 324; J. A. Sharpe, 'The People and the Law' in B. Reay, (ed.), *Popular Culture in Seventeenth Century England* (1985) pp.255-6
- ²³ CKS P100 5 1; CCAL Dcb v v
- ²⁴ CKS QM/SRO 1-56; *Assizes*, ii-v
- ²⁵ For a full discussion of 'closed', 'open', and 'select vestries' see Hindle, *The State and Social Change* pp.207-215
- ²⁶ CKS P26 5 1
- ²⁷ CKS P100 5/1 f.130
- ²⁸ CKS P100 5 1 ff.21, 50, 66, 81, 89, 99, 103, 130
- ²⁹ CKS P100/5/1 f.131
- ³⁰ H. R. French 'Chief Inhabitants and their Areas of Influence', p.178
- ³¹ M. Spufford, 'The limitations of the Probate Inventory', in J. Chartres and D. Hey (eds.), *English Rural Society 1500-1800: essays in honour of Joan Thirsk* (Cambridge, 1990)
- ³² CKS PRC28/20/350, 28 17 464, P100/5/1
- ³³ CKS PRC28/19/672, P100 5, PRC28/8 230, QM/SRO 19,20,21,
- ³⁴ PRO PROB11/325 142, CKS Q/RTh 1664, P100 5; *Assizes*, iii, p.538
- ³⁵ CKS P100/5, PRC10 71/54, PRC17 70 543
- ³⁶ CKS PRC32/53/433, 27/18 86, P100 5 1, Q/RTh 1664; *Assizes*, iv, p.248
- ³⁷ CKS PRC21/6 460, 28 18/174, PRO PROB11/263 112, CKS 27 11 5, 11/6 86, CKS P100 5
- ³⁸ PRO E179 127/516, P100 5 1

³⁹ SRO D593/5/15/2

⁴⁰ SRO D593/5/15/2; CKS P100/5/1 William Sheafe, churchwarden 1576 was assessed on £6 in goods paid £30; Dence Weller, churchwarden in 1602-3 was rated at £5 in lands was to loan £20; Robert Holden, churchwarden 1580 was assessed on £12 goods was to loan £50; John Weller, churchwarden 1607 was assessed on £9 goods was to loan £20; Walter Taylor, overseer 1608 was rated on £4 goods was loan assessed at £10

⁴¹ SRO D593/5/15/2; CKS P100/5/1 The yeoman farmers Robert Hovenden, churchwarden 1582-83 was rated on £8 in goods and loan assessed at £20; Richard Wiley, churchwarden in 1619-20 was rated on £8 in lands and loan assessed at £30

⁴² SRO D593/5/15/2, CKS PRC 28 5/469, P100/5/1

⁴³ SRO D593/5/4 42 1, CCAL Dcb/v/v

⁴⁴ SRO D593/5/4 42 1, CCAL Dcb/v/v; CKS QM/SRO/1-56: Thomas Scotchford, constable of Cranbrook hundred in 1617 was loan assessed at £20; James King, clothier was churchwarden in 1598-99, constable in 1600-1 and overseer of the poor in 1609. In Barkley hundred, of the 8 inhabitants in Biddenden parish assessed for the loan, 6 were constables and parish officers. In Goudhurst, part of Cranbrook hundred, 7 inhabitants were assessed for the loan of whom 4 were churchwardens and constables in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

⁴⁵ SRO D593 5 4 42 4,22

⁴⁶ SRO D593 5 4 42 4,41,53

⁴⁷ H.R. French, 'Chief Inhabitants and their Area of Influence', p.144

⁴⁸ D.H.Robinson, *Cranbrook School* (1993)

⁴⁹ CKS P100 5 1

⁵⁰ CKS P100 5 1 ff.1-270 Robert Brickenden, yeoman farmer, churchwarden 1573-74; Peter Courthop, clothier, churchwarden 1572-73; Thomas Dence, clothier, churchwarden 1559; Richard Goodman, clothier, churchwarden 1571-72; John Hovenden, clothier, churchwarden 1558-59; William Hovenden, clothier, churchwarden 1568-69; John King, clothier, churchwarden 1566; Richard Lyne, merchant, churchwarden 1569-70; John Netter, tanner, churchwarden 1563-64; Walter Roberts Esq. surveyor 1628; Thomas Ruck, merchant, churchwarden 1567-68; John Sharpe, clothier, churchwarden 1600-01; Richard Taylor, yeoman farmer, churchwarden 1576-77

⁵¹ CKS P100 5 1 ff.1-270 Robert Brickenden, yeoman farmer, churchwarden 1573-74; Edmund Colvill, clothier, churchwarden 1581-82; Richard Goodman, clothier, churchwarden 1571-72; Robert Hovenden, yeoman farmer, churchwarden 1582-83, overseer 1616, surveyor 1614; Richard Jorden, clothier, churchwarden 1589-90; *Andrew Ruck, merchant, churchwarden 1577-78; Thomas Sheafe, merchant-churchwarden 1560-61; William Sheafe, clothier, churchwarden 1575-76, overseer 1608; Alex Weller, clothier, churchwarden 1580-81, overseer 1626*

⁵² CKS P100 5 1 ff.1-270 Samuel Baylie, clothier, overseer 1636; Richard Brickenden, yeoman farmer, overseer 1635, 1639; Thomas Colvill, clothier, churchwarden 1608, overseer 1631; Lawrence Foster, brewer, surveyor 1638, churchwarden 1650-51; Robert Hawes, clothier, churchwarden 1634, overseer 1627, 38, 51; James Holden, clothier, churchwarden 1629-30, overseer 1630, 45, surveyor 1632, 40; Alex March, merchant, churchwarden 1638-39, overseer 1631, 1647; Isaac Walter, clothier, overseer 1636, churchwarden 1645-46

⁵³ CKS QM/SRO 1-56; *Assizes*, iii, iv, v

⁵⁴ J. Kent, 'The English Village Constable, 1580-1642: The Nature and Dilemmas of the Office' in *Journal of British Studies*, xx, (Spring 1981) p.28; J. Kent, *The English Village Constable, 1580-1642* (Oxford, 1986)

⁵⁵ *ibid.* pp. 28-29

⁵⁶ CKS QM/SRO 22,52,36,18, P100 5, PRC 10 33 104, 28/18 309, 27/2/45, 28/10/422; CCAL Dcb/v/v,

⁵⁷ CKS QM/SRO 22; CCAL Dcb v v

⁵⁸ CCAL PRC32 34 64

⁵⁹ PRO PROB 11/114 84

⁶⁰ CCAL PRC 32/40 68

⁶¹ CCAL PRC17/64 230

⁶² CCAL PRC32/46 292, PRC32/53/433

⁶³ CCAL PRC32/39 146

⁶⁴ PRO PROB 11/275/182

⁶⁵ CKS P100/28/5

⁶⁶ CKS P100/5/1

⁶⁷ Francis Munn was overseer of the poor in 1610, Thomas Munn, woollendraper was churchwarden 1640-41, overseer 1629, 1644 and surveyor 1652, 1654; Thomas Munn, butcher was churchwarden 1594-95, overseer 1631, 1639, and surveyor 1633, 1635

⁶⁸ CKS P100/5/1 f.89

⁶⁹ CKS PRC10/22/660, PRC10/67/131, PRC10/31/26

⁷⁰ CKS PRC10/20/461 Francis Pretty, brewer (d.1591) £142; PRC10/48/240 Richard Nichols vintner/brewer (d.1618) £305; PRC10/55/132 John Foster, brewer/victualler (d.1624) £109; and PRC10 71/122 George Roberts, brewer (d.1638) £327 never served.

Chapter 5

Kinship Networks at Home and Abroad

Historians have recently begun to examine how kinship networks informed the attitudes and behaviour of people in past societies. The social historian now seeks answers to questions of how popular mentalities contributed to family formation and neighbourhood relationships. What were their attitudes to social interaction, family relationships and religious observance?¹

In order to address this neglected area of study, historians have turned to anthropology and the established social sciences in order to gain a greater understanding of the hidden structures and meanings in peoples' lives in the past. Anthropologists and historians have increasingly realized that a common focus is needed if we are to gain insight into an understanding of kinship relationships in early modern England. The anthropologist most frequently cited by social historians is Clifford Geertz, who in recent years has championed the cause of those historians who seek a history of social interaction within communities, but who rebel against the use of quantitative materials and methodologies. Geertz calls on us to 'seek out the webs of meaning in which people live,' asking historians to determine just what patterns of meanings guided the lives of people in the past.² In 1976 Sabeen argued that 'we have no analysis of the kind of uses to which kinship can be put'.³ Wrightson, writing slightly later, recognized that 'little is known' about kinship, but nevertheless asserted that 'kinship ties beyond those of the nuclear family were of limited significance in the social structure of village communities'.⁴ Cressy too argued that 'the part of the kinsman' is one of the great unexplored areas of early modern social history'.⁵

In every community in the past social bonds which maintained relations between individuals were an essential element in the fabric of communal life,

supporting kinship networks and friendship groups, without which society would have ceased to function. Kinship is one of the most complex and yet basic concepts in any community: the bonds of familial obligation were central to the structure of people's everyday lives. Family members were expected to assist each other and to offer support and contacts simply because they were a kin relation. The bonds of kinship also intersected with the reciprocal bonds of hierarchy and deference between unequal individuals.

Family networks, including relationships of blood and marriage, were complex. There were ties within families that bound members together for a variety of purposes, be they emotional support, occupational co-operation or the ceremonies and rights of passage that governed life. However, there were also points of conflict that could drive families apart. What strikes one immediately is that the maintenance of kinship structure over time was often intimately linked to the way that the family assets, particularly land and property, were held and passed on from one generation to another. The questions that we need to ask are therefore: what familial ties can be found among siblings and other kinsmen, and what were the networks of blood and marriage which bound the different generations together?

In early modern England the extended family operated as a personal network of closely related lineage, offspring and ancestry, distinct from friendships, neighbours and occupational groups. The kinship group was a primary unit of social interaction and wealth creation, in a period when the domestic household was central to the family economy. Separate domestic households were the result of marriage alliances that can frequently be attributed to the desire to enhance the circumstances of individual families. Kinship structures were also affected by local inheritance customs and these may have determined the ability of family members to remain resident in the town or

village where they were born. The interaction of these essential characteristics contributed to the relative density or looseness of kinship networks in the community and also affected the size of the domestic household.⁶ Mitson's work on kinship networks in South-West Nottinghamshire has provided evidence that the kinship network 'was available and could be used not only socially but also economically when the need arose',⁷ a point that Cressy made more generally a few years earlier.

Kinsmen acquired through marriage were embraced in alliances and networks almost as readily as kinsmen bound by ties of blood. Marriage not only provided each of the contracting partners with additional kinship connections and obligations, but it also gave all their family relations an added interest in the expanded family network. Subsequent marriages boosted the range of networks and possible inter-connections and increased the likelihood of association among kin. Therefore kin acquisition was cumulative, because family relatives acquired through marriage did not cease to claim kinship and reciprocal bonds after the death of the spouse. Kinship groups with useful patronage links provided a vital support network for family members, which could include financial assistance and enhanced career opportunities, and which were often endorsed by religious ideals and political associations.

Research undertaken during the last twenty years has centred around the debate over the relative importance of the nuclear family or the extended family network in early modern England. It has been argued that the bonds between extended family members were weak, and that children left home in their mid-teens and thereafter lived outside the family. Macfarlane, for example, claimed that English kinship networks were shallow, and limited to the closest family members.⁸ Historians now agree that an idealized view of a peasantry with extended family ties giving way to the nuclear family, in the face of economic and social change in the sixteenth century, or later, is a

myth.⁹ The primacy of the simple two-generation, nuclear household is now firmly established. Large and complex extended households which contained resident kin, or even several co-habiting families, were comparatively rare in England.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Houston and Smith have stressed that the English kinship system was 'flexible', that kinship beyond the household was important in some circumstances, but that the range of kin drawn into the social network was in fact narrow, being restricted to uncles, aunts and close cousins.¹¹

To what extent does Cranbrook fit with this well-known framework? It will be shown that in seventeenth century Cranbrook and its adjacent parishes social networks were essentially fluid, and that kinship and familial obligations were flexible. In looking for patterns in household structure and in the strength of kinship bonds among different social groups, it is necessary to examine a number of factors that affected kinship ties. Among these are the circumstances of individual families and the level of wealth necessary to house and maintain a more complex family group. The nature of employment opportunities also played a role in sustaining kinship networks within the local area. Ties of kinship may also have been important in the rise of powerful family groups, some of whom were able to consolidate their economic power and social influence in the interests of the kinship group. The significance of kinship, therefore, depended not simply upon the question of the immediate availability of family locally, but upon the way that kinship expectations affected the social dynamics of individual household relationships.

It is self-evident that family networks derived from both sets of parents. Kinship was not confined to the maternal or patriarchal line but may be traced bilaterally through both the father and the mother. Consequently, each new generation possessed a distinct range of kin relations that evolved over time. Kinship networks could also

achieve some degree of permanence, where long-staying families became influential in an economic or political sphere.

The range of kin inevitably varied according to individual circumstances and would change over time depending upon age and marriage. The core relationships in any kinship group consisted of those between husband and wife, parents and children and between siblings. In this period the language of kinship was comparatively simple. No distinction was made between the terms used for relatives on the father's as against the mother's side of the family, and the terms used were vague beyond the immediate nuclear family and the parents of the individual. For example, father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, brother, sister, uncle were common, but the naming of extended kin was less specific: the terms kinsman, cousin, even friend, being used without reference to the exact nature of the relationship. The significance of these characteristics is that the acknowledgement of the wider family network was highly versatile and varied from household to household.¹²

Some individuals recognized a wide-ranging network of cousins whereas others concentrated their focus on their immediate family. Within the Cranbrook neighbourhood area it is also likely that the interpretation of the value and meaning of kinship was influenced by the specific needs and circumstances of particular occupational and social groups. The aristocracy and upper gentry showed a great deal of interest in ancestry and lineage, and tended to recognize a wide range of kinsmen who could be useful patrons in promoting the aspirations of lesser family members. Clark has argued that in Kent kinship provided an 'important ingredient in the complex web of a gentleman's reputation'.¹³ It is likely too that kinship was important among respectable tradesmen and farmers, in providing opportunities for families to place their children as servants and apprentices in the households of kinsmen. At the base of the

social hierarchy people were probably less conscious of blood relationships beyond the immediate family, because the possible advantages of such networks were fewer. Nevertheless Cranbrook merchants and tradesmen often utilized kinship networks as a means of establishing business connections and fostering trade. It will also be shown that family solidarity among Wealden farmers was an important consideration in decisions about inheritance. The Kentish custom of gavelkind (partible inheritance) greatly affected the dispersal of landholdings, and enabled small farms to proliferate into the seventeenth century. Overall, the crucial factor is likely to have been the relative balance of advantage and disadvantage that could be derived from developing and maintaining contact with the extended family group. Additionally, local economic factors, such as the availability of local employment opportunities and debt and credit networks, were also probably important.

For the majority of the population in early modern Cranbrook the nuclear family was the dominant form of household structure. Many children left home to take up jobs or apprenticeships, and all, upon marriage, *formed their own nuclear* households. But they also maintained close contact with their immediate family. Kinship was the basis for co-operation between family members within the town and its neighbouring parishes, but the degree of observance was flexible. Although the nuclear family was the norm in Cranbrook, within some of the wealthiest families siblings and other kin did live together in one group rather than establishing a new household at marriage, although such households were atypical.

Whilst it can be shown that kinship was important to families within Cranbrook and the adjacent parishes, familial networks were also important to a wider range of kin in other towns in Kent, beyond the local neighbourhood. Kinship networks can also be identified as one of the determinants alongside economic and religious push factors

which informed the decision of some families in the neighbourhood to emigrate to New England in the 1630s. A case study of the extended family networks utilised by a group of wealthy clothiers and farmers, including their social networks of intermarriage and economic dependency, will illustrate the complexity of kinship ties in the locality. Although the decision to emigrate may have been atypical of the majority of inhabitants at this time, their occupational and social solidarity is typical of the way wealthier members of the community consolidated financial networks and cemented family relationships. As will be discussed in chapters six and seven, it is possible that puritanism was one of the links between kinsmen which helped maintain social relationships between families in Cranbrook and New England.

Inheritance Patterns and Bequests to Kinsmen

The dynamics of kinship networks in the Cranbrook area may be explored, in part, through the evidence of bequests in wills, inventories and accounts, which illustrate the mentality of gift giving at death. Secondly, information about the structure of households and the existence of kin living locally can be ascertained from analysis of the Cranbrook church rate books for the years 1608-12. Probate evidence also sheds light on the strength of family connectedness within the immediate locality and beyond. It will be shown that it was not uncommon for several branches of families to reside in the same neighbourhood, and that they maintained close kinship ties. With regard to the evidence of testamentary bequests to kin, simplistic interpretations must be avoided. A range of variables, including the testator's stage in the lifecycle (which may have informed the individual's concern for family members at death) and the marital status of the testator, could have affected the testator's sense of obligations to a wider kin network. Probate evidence is also problematic because wills mainly survive from the

'middling sort' of inhabitants - clothiers, farmers, craftsmen and tradesmen - individuals who had land and property to bequeath. The poorer sorts in rural society are much less likely to be represented by wills. Kinship ties may have been weakened by the absence of inheritance, because it removed the inducement of financial gain as a motive for maintaining family connections. It was the opposite of the wealthy gentleman or clothier maintaining extensive kinship networks of patronage and lineage in order to benefit from bequests.

All Cranbrook wills in the period 1600-1640 have been examined, and the numbers of bequests made to family members under the most frequently used kinship names calculated. The testators were also divided into occupational or status categories in order to evaluate whether different groups demonstrated any different patterns in the nature of their bequests.

Table 5.1 reveals some common trends between the various groups. It contradicts, to some extent, Macfarlane's view that the English kinship system was shallow and limited to close relations. The most frequently named beneficiaries amongst all social groups were admittedly the immediate nuclear family of wives, sons, daughters and grandchildren. However, brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews also received a significant number of bequests. There was a contrast in this pattern between yeomen and clothiers. Yeomen were significantly more likely than the other occupational groups to leave goods to grandchildren.

From a sample of 404 yeomen's bequests there were 52 bequests to grandchildren (13%), but in a sample of 293 clothier's bequests only four (approximately 2%) were made to grandchildren. But clothiers were the occupational group most likely to leave goods to their brothers 29 (10%) and their cousins 19 (6.4%). The probate evidence also shows the way households regulated the

transmission of land between one generation and the next. In Cranbrook customary partible inheritance was generally followed, although testators often practiced a modified form of primogeniture in which the main property was left to the eldest son, with lesser holdings or money left to younger sons.

Table 5.1

Bequests to Kinsmen in Cranbrook Archdeaconry, Consistory and Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1600-1640

| Family Beneficiaries | Husbandman | Yeoman/ Farmer | Clothier | Tradesman- Artisan | Gentry | Total Bequests |
|---------------------------|------------|-------------------|----------|-----------------------|--------|----------------|
| Total Number of Testators | (12) | (40) | (37) | (68) | (8) | (165) |
| Wife | 8 | 28 | 28 | 46 | 4 | 114 |
| Son | 18 | 77 | 66 | 83 | 15 | 259 |
| Daughter | 19 | 53 | 51 | 106 | 16 | 245 |
| Grandchildren | 4 | 52 | 4 | 27 | 7 | 94 |
| Brother | 5 | 8 | 29 | 25 | 3 | 70 |
| Sister | 3 | 10 | 9 | 35 | 3 | 60 |
| Nephew, Niece | 4 | 35 | 22 | 37 | 5 | 103 |
| Son in law | 1 | 17 | 6 | 15 | 3 | 42 |
| Daughter in law | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| Brother in law | 0 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 14 |
| Sister in law | 0 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 11 |
| Cousin | 3 | 4 | 19 | 20 | 24 | 70 |
| Uncle, Aunt | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Father, Mother | 0 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 14 |
| Godchild | 0 | 21 | 2 | 21 | 7 | 51 |
| Other Kin | 1 | 30 | 19 | 21 | 14 | 85 |
| Unknown | 3 | 58 | 25 | 61 | 11 | 158 |
| Total Bequests | 69 | 404 | 293 | 517 | 121 | 1,404 |

Source: CCAL PRC17/40-72, PRC32/39/52; PRO PROB11wills

The incidence of bequests to sons was greatest amongst landholders. Yeomen made 77 bequests to sons (19%), clothiers 66 (23%) and husbandmen 18 (26%) of their overall bequests (see Table 5.1). Wives were often bequeathed an annuity and allowed to reside in the family property until death, at which time it descended to the eldest son or sons. In 1592 Richard Taylor the elder, yeoman, bequeathed 'to my wife Agnes an

annuity of £8 a year for life arising from the lands and tenements in Cranbrook' and 'to my son John my messuage and tenements in Cranbrook in fee simple'.¹⁴ Although it is difficult to assess the degree of emotional warmth between husband and wife from testamentary evidence alone, some indication of emotional attachment in marriage can be discerned from the provision for wives in wills. Indeed the large number of wives who were appointed executrix of estates testifies to their valued position in the household. Nevertheless, a widow's rights were frequently reduced or extinguished if she re-married. Typically, Roger Beale, a yeoman (d.1614), left his wife all his household stuff as well as his mansion house and all the attached lands during her lifetime. If his wife remarried, then it was stipulated that his son Joseph could enter and occupy the property.¹⁵

Testators generally intended their property to stay within the family and to pass through a simple line of descent to children and grandchildren, rather than alienating property away from the immediate family line. James King, yeoman (d.1617), held a considerable landed estate in Cranbrook and Hawkhurst. His will left each of his four sons some land in addition to a clothier's workshop and tools.¹⁶ Josias Colvill, clothier (d.1631), bequeathed to his youngest son Josias £30. Josias was also bequeathed the mansion house and land in Furley, Sussex, but were he to die before age 21 years then another son, Edmund, was left the house and land. Josias also bequeathed that all his household stuff should be sold and the money divided equally between his five other children.¹⁷

Among yeomen, the occupational or status group outside of the gentry most likely to have significant landholdings, every attempt was made to keep property within the immediate nuclear family. Sons and grandsons received the bulk of the yeoman farmer's real estate and moveable goods. Edmund Sheafe, yeoman (d.1626), possessed

extensive property in Cranbrook, as well as pasture in Romney Marsh. Sheafe made meticulous provision for the transmission of his land, which went principally to his sons Thomas, Harman and Jacob.¹⁸ This way of passing wealth from one generation to the next helped younger siblings to establish independent households within the existing community, and in consequence many younger sons were able to maintain strong links with the kin family.

If the immediate line of descent was blocked, a wider kinship network was invoked: property rights were transferred sideways to affinal and lateral descending kin, and the more extended networks of nephews, cousins and uncles then became more important. The gentleman landowner, John Hicks, in the absence of children and grandchildren of his own, made numerous bequests in property and goods to an assortment of nephews, nieces and cousins.¹⁹ The local magnate, Sir Henry Baker, drew on the help of his uncle by marriage, Sir Richard Smith of Leeds Castle, to counsel his wife and act as an executor of his estate, which included substantial landholdings.²⁰ In the absence of children of his own, Edward Osborne, clothier, provided for his nephews, bequeathing 'Alex, son of my brother John Osborne, my messuage and tenement, buildings and lands lying at Plushinghurst in Cranbrook,' in addition to goods and monies to his other nephews John and Thomas.²¹

Cranbrook gentlemen made bequests to a much wider range of kinsmen than most of their neighbours. Although bequests to sons and daughters constituted 12 and 13 per cent of gentlemen's legacies respectively, bequests to kinsmen beyond the direct line of descent suggest their importance in the structure of gentry patronage. In all 24 bequests to cousins, approximately 20 per cent of the gentry sample, were made to extended kin.²² This hints at the greater importance placed on social networking and patronage within this social group. By contrast, only three (4.3%) of husbandmen's

bequests were to cousins, yeomen four (1%), clothiers 19 (6.2%), and tradesmen 20 (3.8%). Similarly, the careful selection of related family to assume the role of godparent, at the baptism of a child, was an opportunity for the effective creation of fictive kin relationships that could enhance social prestige. By this means lesser kinsmen frequently attached themselves to people of higher social rank. Proportionately, the gentry made the largest number of bequests to godchildren at six per cent, with yeomen representing five per cent. Gentry families extended their bequests to a wider network of connections than others because of their greater wealth in the first place.²³

Husbandmen, in contrast, made fewer bequests to kinsmen beyond the immediate nuclear family. The narrower social sphere in which they lived and worked, and the fact that their estates were smaller, meant that inheritance was more tightly focused on their nuclear family, in order to avoid dispersing their land or goods. Moreover, in the absence of landed property, there was little incentive to develop extended kinship ties and make provision for default of the immediate male line. Therefore, it was not unusual for tradesmen to make bequests of property and trade goods to daughters. In these circumstances there was no basis for emphasizing the ties of blood and encouraging the consolidation of large holdings. Tradesmen and craftsmen were concerned to see that the tools of the trade were handed on through the immediate family line. Among tradesmen the custom of making provision for godchildren is also evident. Elizeus Martin, apothecary, in the absence of any children of his own, made numerous bequests to cousins and godchildren. In all, 14 cousins and four godchildren were left something, including '£10 for his godson John Robotham towards placing him as an apprentice at 14 years of age'.²⁴

Kinsfolk naturally assisted each other in the practical administration of their estates at death. Token gifts were made to an extensive network of kin relations, who acted as executors, witnesses and administrators of estates. Other family members were trusted with the care of the deceased's wife and children, and arrangements were often made with kinsmen to provide for the education, apprenticeship and upbringing of minor children. For these reasons, numerous small bequests were made to a wide range of kinsfolk beyond the nuclear family. This suggests that ties among the wider extended family are partially obscured by the dominance – in wills - of the immediate family as legatees, and that more distant kinsmen and friends were also of practical importance. The emphasis placed in the historical literature on the basic nuclear household may eclipse the wider significance of the extended family.²⁵ As we have noted, family formation was essentially ego-centered, but many factors could complicate and extend the family's social and kinship network beyond the immediate nuclear family. Re-marriage is evident in a number of cases, and when this occurred a wide range of kin could be embraced in bequests. The will of Edmund Sheafe, yeoman (d.1626), makes provision for his wife's children by a previous marriage, and reveals the warmth and affection between him and his stepdaughters and their husbands: 'to my wife's five children and to my three sons in law, which married her daughters, to each of them coloured gloves, in remembrance of my love to them all'.²⁶

When new kin relations were introduced into the family, more complex inheritance patterns emerged, and the system opened out to include more remote kin. Wills show that an assortment of kinsmen beyond the nuclear family could be called upon to perform a range of formal and informal services for the family, and that ties of blood and marriage produced networks that could be invoked to enhance both personal and business activities.

The Incidence of Dynastic Families in Cranbrook

The survival of probate inventories for inhabitants employed in the textile trades and in farming in Cranbrook in the period 1600-1640, who shared the same surname, show that there were a number of long-staying families. Although dynastic families formed only a small proportion of the inhabitants in these occupations, they were an important social group (see Tables 5.2 and 5.3). The wealth of long-staying families occupied in textiles or farming, made continued residence more likely, and allowed extended kin networks with influence in the community to become established.

Table 5.2

Surnames in Cranbrook Textile inventories, 1600-1640

| Number of Textile inventories sampled (138) | Number of Family inventories |
|--|------------------------------|
| Weller | 9 |
| Couchman | 7 |
| Taylor | 7 |
| Sheafe | 4 |
| King | 4 |
| Hovenden | 4 |
| Sharpe | 4 |
| Judd | 3 |
| Rogers | 3 |
| Courthop | 3 |
| Colvill | 3 |
| Martin | 2 |
| Iddenden | 2 |
| Fowle | 2 |
| Crothall | 2 |
| Busse | 2 |
| Bridgeland | 2 |
| Botting | 2 |
| Bigg | 2 |
| Beale | 2 |
| Baseden | 2 |

Source: CKS PRC10/1-72, PRC11/1-30, PRC27/1-21, PRC28/4-20

The sphere of influence of most of these families was primarily confined to the parish of Cranbrook, although some families such as the Sheafes, Taylors, Sharpes and Hovendens, had kin in the neighbouring parishes of Goudhurst, Biddenden and Staplehurst. Only the wealthiest clothier families maintained kinship networks in the

wider neighbourhood area throughout this period. Many of the wealthier clothiers acquired or built properties known as 'cloth halls', which were handed on from one generation to the next, and diversified into direct farming and landholding. Unsurprisingly, these were the families who became involved in the governance of the town and parish as 'chief inhabitants' (see Chapter 4).

Of the 138 textile inventories sampled, 71 (51%) involved a recurring family surname. The wealthy Weller family had nine inventories proved, seven per cent of the total. The Couchman and Taylor families had seven respectively, five per cent of the total.

In the large parish of Cranbrook opportunities for employment afforded siblings greater opportunities to find work locally and therefore maintain their presence in the local neighbourhood. The parish's large rural area provided opportunities for both farming and industrial employment, and many families engaged in both these occupations. Table 5.3 shows that the Taylor, Couchman and Sheafe family, in addition to being prominent among textile inventories, also featured significantly among farming inventories. Of the 96 farming inventories sampled, those of recurring family surnames represented 40 (83%) of the total. The Taylor family had seven inventories proved in this period, seven per cent of farming inventories. Clearly, these dynastic families formed a powerful textile/farming elite in their community, whose longevity in the community enhanced their local status.

Such a diversified local economy enabled siblings either to marry and settle in their native parish, or in a neighbouring parish, thereby maintaining and expanding local kinship networks. Of the 75 marriages that took place in Cranbrook among members of the clothier elite in this period, 22 (29%) were alliances between members of families already identified as being part of this dynastic elite.

Table 5.3**Surnames in Cranbrook Farming inventories, 1600-1640**

| Number of Farmers inventories sampled (96) | Numbers of family inventories |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Taylor | 7 |
| Draner | 5 |
| Couchman | 4 |
| Courthop | 3 |
| Sheafe | 3 |
| Perry | 2 |
| Marchant | 2 |
| Leeds | 2 |
| Holland | 2 |
| Grayling | 2 |
| Edmed | 2 |
| Brissenden | 2 |
| Beale | 2 |
| Baylie | 2 |

Source: see Table 5.2

Inter-marriage among this particular occupational elite enhanced the families' social status within the community and increased the capital assets of an already wealthy group. Their longevity in the locality enabled such families, through a continuous process of consolidation and dispersal of property, facilitated by customary inheritance patterns, to accumulate landed estates in addition to their capital investment in the clothing industry. Dynastic family groups such as the Wellers, Couchmans, Kings, Sheafes, Taylors and Hovendens, are notable by their propensity for intermarriage within their own occupational and social groups (see Table 5.4).

Kinship networks could also be advantageous in furthering business interests within the neighbourhood. Individuals regularly contracted debts with and offered loans to kinsmen, although the probate accounts demonstrate that a variety of links other than kinship also supported business activities. Considerable lending and borrowing took place at a local level, although the sources conceal the details of these transactions. It is difficult to determine whether sums borrowed were for personal or business activities.

Table 5.4**Dynastic Marriages within Cranbrook's Clothier 'elite', 1590-1640**

| | |
|------|--|
| 1596 | John Taylor m Clemence Couchman |
| 1590 | Dence Weller m Joan Hovenden |
| 1593 | John Weller m Katherine Bigg |
| 1598 | John King m Alice Sharpe |
| 1603 | William Hovenden m Sara Colvill |
| 1605 | <i>Richard Courthop m Katherine Sharpe</i> |
| 1606 | Peter Courthop m Elizabeth Sharpe |
| 1610 | Richard Sharpe m Mary Sheafe |
| 1612 | Samuel Colvill m Elizabeth Weller |
| 1615 | Thomas Colvill m Elizabeth King |
| 1615 | Thomas Hovenden m Elizabeth Weller |
| 1615 | John Sharpie m Elizabeth Taylor |
| 1615 | Alexander Sheafe m Elizabeth Colvill |
| 1616 | William Couchman m Elizabeth Couchman |
| 1618 | Thomas Colvill m Elizabeth Taylor |
| 1620 | Robert Courthop m Elizabeth Colvill |
| 1620 | Robert Hovenden m Mary Couchman |
| 1624 | John Courthop m Elizabeth Taylor |
| 1629 | John Taylor m Sara Bigg |
| 1634 | Thomas Bigg m Elizabeth Colvill |
| 1636 | John Weller m Mary King |

Source: CKS Cranbrook Marriage Register P100/1/15

Economic networks which sustained local business activities extended beyond the immediate neighbourhood, to other parts of Kent and Sussex, especially Maidstone, Tenterden, Rye, Lydd, and New Romney as well as London. A sample of 40 probate accounts shows that local manufacturers were able to call upon complex economic, social and kinship networks. The accounts of Cranbrook clothiers from the period 1580-1660 show that all had debts to other Cranbrook inhabitants, 20 owed money within the neighbourhood, 24 to kinsmen, friends and business associates in other Kent and Sussex towns and 19 had links with London dealers.²⁷

The importance of occupational solidarity within this particular group is evident in a number of ways. Legacies in wills and inventories show that, amongst the clothier elite, individuals used their substantial wealth to consolidate their families' position. A sample of 45 Cranbrook clothiers' wills for the period 1570-1640 shows that their

bequests were intensely localized. Forty-five clothiers bequeathed goods to kinsmen and friends within Cranbrook, six left goods to friends and family from within the neighbourhood, eight to individuals from other Kent and Sussex towns, two bequests were made to kinsmen in New England and only one bequest was made to a prospective family member in London.²⁸ Many examples could be given of men like William Rogers, clothier (d.1619), who left his son William Rogers his ‘copper, hurdles and tenter and all the other implements’ in his workshop, so that the family business could be continued.²⁹ Inter-marriage between the premier families effectively created a local manufacturing aristocracy, who dominated Cranbrook during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

In the sixteenth century and beyond, several generations of the Courthop family lived at ‘Goddards Green’ formerly known as ‘Wardes’ in Cranbrook parish (see Appendix 12). The influence of this ambitious family was felt in the town over half a dozen generations, as employers, and as churchwardens and school governors.³⁰ Already clothiers in the fifteenth century, they acquired a close network of kinsmen through inter-marriage and had assumed gentlemanly status by the early seventeenth century.³¹ The will of Alexander Courthop, gentleman (d.1608), shows the elaborate and careful consideration given to kinsfolk in legacies by some Cranbrook elites. Alexander ensured that his younger sons were provided for financially, and that thought was given to their education and upbringing. His son Nathaniel was to receive £220 after he had served his apprenticeship, whereas his younger sons, Caleb and Robert, were to be cared for by Alexander’s executors who were charged with their schooling, ‘until they be of age to be bound to prentices in some good trade’. Kinsmen who lived outside the neighbourhood were also recognised: Alexander’s brother-in-law, Mr William Stemp of Lewes, Sussex, received ‘for a remembrance of the old love and

amity between us, a gold ring 20s'.³² The family home of Wardes passed by will from Alexander Courthop (d.1525) through several generations to his grandson Alexander in 1608. He left his eldest son Peter Courthop 'my capital messuage called Wardes, with all buildings and five pieces of land' totalling 25 acres in addition to other properties and parcels of land in Cranbrook.³³ Peter subsequently moved to Danny Place, Hurstpierpoint, Sussex, at which point the family home was leased out.³⁴ The property was still held by the family in 1657, when his son Caleb was living at the renamed 'Goddards Green House' at the time of his death.³⁵

Among gentry families, marriage alliances were particularly important, and kinship ties played an important role in furthering business and political ambitions. The marriage settlement drawn up by Sir Thomas Roberts (1607) for his son, Walter Roberts, and his prospective wife Margaret, cemented kinship bonds between the Glassenbury and Brenchley branches of the Roberts family upon marriage, bringing together 'Walter Roberts, eldest son, and heir apparent' and 'Margaret Roberts, sole daughter and heir apparent of George Roberts of Brenchley'.³⁶

Other findings demonstrate that kinship networks were important within Cranbrook, and that many families lived near to their kinsfolk either in the same or neighbouring boroughs. The 1608 church rate book shows that households often contained resident apprentices, journeymen and servants who were kinsmen of the householder.³⁷ This permitted inhabitants to maintain close ties with family members, and give help and support when required. It also fostered residential stability within the parish's population, as close family proximity may also have enabled occupational groups, particularly those involved in textiles, specialist crafts and trades to become entrenched in the community. Where family networks flourished, financial assistance may have been provided in the establishment of future business activities. In the Town

borough of Cranbrook in 1608 of the 206 households, 81 householders (39%) were related to householders in the same borough (they shared the same surname). Other householders evidently chose to live within close proximity to their kinsmen. Of the same 206 householders, 82 households (40%) had kinsmen who shared the same surname in neighbouring boroughs. There were four Courthop households in Town borough and two others in the neighbouring borough of Goddards Green. The Weller family had five households in Town borough in addition to branches of the family in Milkhouse and Willslie boroughs. Kinsmen not only set up households near to their relations but wealthy householders also provided opportunities for employment and training within their households for children of kinsmen. John Sharpe maintained a large household that included members of prominent local families as servants and apprentices. Thomas Sheafe, Henry Merriam and Thomas Wood were apprentices and Mary Courthop was among the household servants. Thomas and John Sharpe were placed into service with their kinsman Richard Sharpe, clothier, of Plushinghurst borough. An extensive network of Sharpe's, were also resident in three of the neighbouring boroughs.³⁸ Family connectedness in the town was extensive and the webs of meaning behind kinship networks were complex. Kinship clearly extended beyond families who shared the same surname and reciprocal bonds and obligations to family acquired through marriage were also important. These findings suggest that many families maintained close ties with their extended kin, and it is evident that long-staying families were among these. The quality of family relationships cannot be gleaned from the evidence, it can only be implied from the nature of bequests in wills. Poorer families had fewer material possessions and could not provide the financial and business opportunities that wealthier families could provide. However, it would be

simplistic to think than the emotional qualities of love and affection were any less important in poorer households.

In the previous chapter it was shown that ‘chief inhabitants’ utilised their kinship networks to enhance local status and perpetuate their role as parish officers (see Chapter 4). This chapter has shown kinship connections were particularly important among dynastic families, especially those engaged in farming and textile manufacture. It is now important to examine whether kinship ties were important beyond the immediate locality and, if so, what bonds held families together over time and distance.

Kinship Networks between Cranbrook families and New England emigrants

Kinship networks were clearly important within the local neighbourhood area. But ties of blood and marriage were also maintained between families in Cranbrook’s neighbourhood area and their relatives who migrated to New England in the 1630s. Wealden families migrated to the New World for complex economic and religious reasons. At least 34 heads of households and their families emigrated from Cranbrook’s neighbourhood, many sailing out with their neighbours from the same parish. The port lists show that settlers travelled as family groups. They record the numbers of children, their names and the servants within each party.³⁹

Many emigrants settled in the same town as their former neighbours in England, thereby continuing their old associations of kinship and friendship. Some travelled in groups led by non-conforming clergymen. It should also be remembered that these Wealden parishes all have associations with religious non-conformity in the seventeenth century (as will become clear in Chapters 6 and 7 below). Seventeenth-century emigrants were clearly attracted by the opportunity for religious freedom in the New World, often denied to them in England at this time. Religion, especially the

'hotter sort of Protestantism,' played an important part in the lives of some Cranbrook families and may have contributed to their decision to emigrate. Unfortunately, evidence about the religious attitudes of individuals is difficult to find, and can only be implied by the interaction and intermarriage of like-minded individuals. It is likely that kinship groups, who settled in New England, were at least sympathetic to puritan religious attitudes. William Eddy, vicar of Cranbrook 1591-1616, married Mary Fosten of Cranbrook and they had a large family of ten children. Two of his sons were among the early emigrants to Massachusetts. John and Samuel Eddy sailed from England on the 'Handmaid,' arriving in Plymouth in 1630. John was 'a godly man' who moved to Watertown where he became a freeman. He was appointed the first town clerk in 1635 and was also a member of the early church.⁴⁰

Patronage by local gentry may also have influenced the decision of neighbourhood residents to emigrate. Some of the principal settlers of Guildford, Connecticut, were from the Weald of Kent. They may have named the county after their patron in Kent. The manor of Hemsted in Benenden was owned by the wealthy Guildford family.⁴¹ Family and financial connections between the Guildford's and wealthy local clothier families were cemented in the late sixteenth century, and these alliances may have brought kinsmen together as emigrants in the seventeenth century. In the 1580s Thomas Sheafe purchased lands in Woodchurch, Kennardington and Appledore (Kent) from Richard Guildford.⁴² His grandson Jacob travelled from Cranbrook to Guildford, Connecticut at the age of 42, emigrating with his mother and Rev. Henry Whitfield.⁴³ In 1587 Sir Henry Guildford sold Thomas Kitchell (kinsmen to the future emigrant Robert Kitchell) 100 acres of marsh in the Guildford Level in the parish of East Guildford, Sussex.⁴⁴ William Guildford from East Guildford, Sussex sailed with his wife Joan the daughter of Rev. Jacob Sheafe to Boston in 1638 and

settled in Guildford, Connecticut in 1639.⁴⁵ The Sheafe kinship network will be explored in more detail later in this chapter (see Appendices 13 and 15).

A series of family connections and marriages between prominent Cranbrook families in the late sixteenth century resulted in a complex social network based on occupational solidarity and puritan ideas in the seventeenth century. Family networks demonstrate how kinship remained important to families across time and space, and were maintained through a series of reciprocal obligations and financial ties.

On the 9 April 1635 the 'Elizabeth' set sail from Sandwich, Kent to Dorchester, Massachusetts. Amongst the passengers were migrants from the Kentish towns of Canterbury, Sandwich, and Ashford, as well as a number from Cranbrook and the neighbouring parishes of Benenden, Biddenden and Hawkhurst.⁴⁶ Included in the passenger lists were members of the Bigg, Stowe, Sheaffe and Foster families (see Appendix 14). Rachel Bigg, the mother of John and Smallhope, sailed to New England with her two daughters who had married into the Foster and Stowe families of Cranbrook and Biddenden respectively. John Stowe sailed with his wife Elizabeth, described as a 'very godly woman,' and their six children. Rachel Biggs' widowed daughter, Patience Foster, also sailed on the 'Elizabeth' with her young son Hopestill. The Bigg family were early emigrants to North America. Richard Bigg was recorded in a muster for the West Sherley hundred, Virginia in 1625. The will of John Bigg of Maidstone, Kent records that his mother, brother and sister were in New England.⁴⁷ The Biggs were related to the very puritan Starr family of Cranbrook: Moregift Starr married Rachel Bigg at Biddenden in 1616/17. Dr. Comfort Starr of Cranbrook and Ashford embarked on the 'Hercules' in 1634 with his wife, three children and three servants. His links with England were maintained and he was bequeathed property in the will of Jehosephat Starr of Ashford in 1659.⁴⁸

The close kinship ties between family members in Cranbrook and New England is evident from bequests made to the Stowe and Foster children at the deaths of Smallhope and John Bigg, their uncles in England. Smallhope Bigg, clothier, died in 1638 and his will shows that links between close relatives on both sides of the Atlantic were maintained. A number of lesser kinsfolk who went to America received financial help from his estate. He bequeathed 'to all my kinsfolk now resident in New England 20s, and £10 to be distributed to them by my mother and brother John Stow as they shall think best'. He also made provision for his sisters, Patience Foster and Elizabeth Stowe of '£100, lent to them since their going to New England', to purchase land for him. His nephew, Hopestill Foster, was bequeathed £300, and his sister Elizabeth Stowe's two boys, Thomas and John, were left £200 each. Bigg also directed that his brother-in-law John Stow should purchase land for him in New England and that 'if my brother Stow has bought any lands for me in New England, then this shall count in the sums to his children'.⁴⁹ Smallhope Bigg possessed three Books of Martyrs, an indication of his 'godly' inclinations, whilst his parents' decision to give 'godly admonitions' as christian names shows that he was from a family with strong puritan ideals.

The will of Edward Poss (d.1638), clothier, shows that members of several other important Cranbrook families had also migrated to New England at this time, including Mr Thomas Ruck, a merchant who had married into the Sheafe family. Poss bequeathed £50 to be sent 'with all convenient speed to Thomas Ruck who formerly lived in Cranbrook and to John Stow that formerly lived in Biddenden, to the benefit of the plantation there'.⁵⁰ The link between religious discontent in England and emigration to the new world is suggested by the number of bequests from Cranbrook puritans to their relatives in New England. Indeed, emigration may have heightened a sense of

kinship in some extended families. Poss also bequeathed £5 each to three ‘preachers of God’s word, Mr Williamson at Benenden, Mr Harbert at Ryarsh, and Mr Warren at Sandwich, and £2 to Mr Abbott of Cranbrook. Family connections lay behind a chain of networks, financial and personal, that preserved kinship ties. As the Bigg, Stow and Foster network indicates, a web of marriages involving several lines of descent and generations, linked New England families with the Kentish Weald. However, it seems likely that kinship bonds were strongest in the first generation of settlement, when ties of love and familial obligation with immediate blood kin were most important. Family bequests, leases of land, guardianships and bonds ensured that kinsmen honoured financial and other duties at home and abroad.

In 1639 Dorothy Sheafe and her husband, the Rev. Henry Whitfield, and their children migrated to Guildford, Connecticut. Her sister Joanne Sheafe married William Chittenden of Hawkhurst and Margaret Sheafe married Robert Kitchel. All three couples migrated to the New World as a close kinship group, taking their children and servants with them. Rev. Whitfield was the leader of the colony that settled in Guildford. The fact that many Sheafes were active in the church adds weight to the argument that religion informed marriage ties and cemented relationships in the period prior to the English Civil War. Religion encouraged alliances between families in Cranbrook’s neighbourhood who shared similar religious attitudes. As already mentioned, Jacob Sheafe sailed with his mother in 1639 in the family group that included members of the Sheafe and Ruck households. Edmund Sheafe married Elizabeth Taylor in 1587, with whom he had five children; he fathered five more children with his second wife Joanne and became stepfather to Joanne’s four children by two previous marriages (see Appendices 13 and 15). Edmund’s will demonstrates the complex nature of kinship connections arising from marriage alliances.⁵¹ Joanne’s

first husband was John Kitchell who she married in 1596, by whom she had a son Robert Kitchell in 1601. Robert Kitchell travelled to New England with his two sisters both of whom married into Cranbrook families. Elizabeth married Thomas Ruck in 1616 and Francis married George Nashe in 1620. In 1631 Robert Kitchell married Margaret Sheafe, a niece of Edmund Sheafe and daughter of Richard and Margery (Roberts) Sheafe.⁵² The Ruck family, which had included several wealthy drapers and merchants in Cranbrook, continued this tradition in America. Thomas Ruck became a draper and innkeeper in Salem and was made a freeman in 1640.⁵³ In both Cranbrook and New England the extensive tribe of Sheafes maintained a network of reciprocal kinship ties throughout the seventeenth century, based in part on the acquisition and transfer of land and property.

On arrival in New England many of the Cranbrook area migrants were sufficiently wealthy to establish themselves according to their social status in England, as leading participants in the new plantations. William Chittenden and his wife Joanna, daughter of Dr. Edmund Sheafe and Joanna Sheafe of Cranbrook, sailed with his Sheafe brothers-in-law to New Haven, Connecticut in 1639.⁵⁴ William became a landowner and a man of considerable wealth. In 1648 'the freeman's charge' included the Rev. Henry Whitfield, Robert Kitchel and William Chittenden among its number, raising these Wealden families above the level of mere planters.⁵⁵

Emigrants transferred traditional ideas of neighbourhood to their new homeland. Cranbrook settlers purchased land in adjacent plots, and to all intents and purposes established their former communal relationships in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Kinsmen and neighbours from England maintained close ties in their adopted homeland, evident from the plots allocated on the plantation to settlers. Adjoining to Sheafe's home lot, 'William Chittenden had 16 acres of upland and seven

and one-half of meadow land', in a prime location. His kinsman Robert Kitchel held a home lot immediately opposite.⁵⁶

Not all settlers, of course were motivated by religious ideals. The Virginia Company and the Massachusetts Bay Company financed emigration on a large scale and many would have been attracted by the opportunity of 'betterment migration' and the acquisition of land, as we have already noted with the Bigg family. William Brown of Frittenden travelled to Sudbury, Massachusetts in 1639, and was made a freeman in 1641. In 1649 he petitioned the general court for 200 acres of land for £25. He married Mary Bisley of Duxbury in 1641 and they had four children. Mary's connections with her parents (Besbiche) were evidently maintained over the years, and at William's death he bequeathed to Mary his whole interest in the lands given to her by her father at Headcorn and Frittenden in Kent.⁵⁷

English settlers to New England were motivated by a number of factors, including greater opportunities for investment in land and religious and political freedom. The prevailing economic difficulties in the cloth industry in the 1630s may have provided a stimulus to emigration, but this was less important in Cranbrook than in Wiltshire.⁵⁸ The majority of families from the Cranbrook area were not pushed by impoverishment to emigrate. The kinship networks uncovered were of established - and sometimes wealthy - clothier, yeoman and tradesmen families. Migration enabled some emigrants to acquire land and achieve high social status in America as freeman and as founders of the church. For the servants who travelled with householders, there were also opportunities for betterment. Many settlers maintained contact with their homeland and their English kinsmen; family members were remembered in wills and bequests, and extended family networks were maintained through long distance communication, inter-marriage and property transmission.⁵⁹ Affinal kin acquired through marriage were

as important to kinship networks as ties of blood. For some emigration was instigated by networks formed in the Weald and maintained by reciprocal bonds of familial duty.

The family networks that operated among those who travelled to the New World show that claims of kinship embraced a much wider circle than the nuclear family. Ties of blood and marriage produced alliances which operated alongside - and strengthened – other bonds based on occupational solidarity, social alliances or religious commitment. A tangled web of inter-marriage over several generations linked some of Cranbrook's leading families and created an active extended kinship structure.

This chapter has shown that bequests were left to a wide range of kin family who sometimes lived at a considerable distance, and that extended kinship networks could be maintained over time and distance. The majority of will-makers made the greatest provision for their immediate kin, and looked outside the nuclear family only when they died childless. For the vast majority of inhabitants in Cranbrook there was little left to bequeath after the immediate family had been catered for. The bonds which held families together, depended upon individual circumstances, occupation and family expectations. Some groups were more tightly bound by economic networks than others and utilized these for business as well as personal reasons. Nevertheless, it is likely that most sections of society operated within a kinship network, however small. Kinship links are most readily detected among the 'middling' and 'better sort' of Cranbrook inhabitants, who were economically active and more likely to make a will. Among this group were dynastic family members who represented the stable core of Cranbrook inhabitants. Their strong local presence and interconnectedness through marriage magnified their influence in the locality. In the following two chapters Cranbrook society will be examined within the context of developing religious attitudes, including the evolution of a distinctly 'puritan' outlook that was to take root during this period,

and which – as we have already discovered in this chapter – could have a decisive impact on the lives of men and women in the Cranbrook area.

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- ¹ J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (1991) pp.102-109
- ² C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1972, reprinted 1993) pp.3-30; D. I. Kertzer, 'Anthropology and Family History', *Journal of Family History* (Fall 1984) p.203
- ³ D. Sabeian, 'Aspects of Kinship Behaviour and Property in Rural Western Europe before 1800', in J. Goody, J. Thirsk, and E.P Thompson (eds.), *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe, 1200-1800* (Cambridge, 1976) p.101
- ⁴ K. Wrightson and D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in An English Village, Terling, 1525-1700* (Oxford, 1995) pp. 83-84; K. Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (1982) pp.44-45
- ⁵ D. Cressy, 'Kinship and Kin interaction in Early Modern England', *Past & Present*, no. 113 (1986) pp. 38-70
- ⁶ An early debate regarding the relative shallowness and narrowness of kinship relations, and the qualitative aspects of kinship, is Miranda Chaytor, 'Household and Kinship Ryton in the late 16th and Early 17th Centuries', *History Workshop Journal*, x (1980) pp. 25-60; and K. Wrightson, 'Household and Kinship in Sixteenth Century England' *History Workshop Journal*, xii (1981) pp. 151-58
- ⁷ A. Mitson, 'The significance of Kinship Networks in the Seventeenth Century: South-West Nottinghamshire', in C. Phythian-Adams (ed.), *Societies, Cultures and Kinship, 1580-1850*, (Leicester, 1993) p. 50
- ⁸ A. Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin* (Cambridge, 1970) pp. 139-149
- ⁹ R. Houlbrooke, *The English Family, 1450-1700* (1984) pp. 55-58; Cressy, 'Kinship in Early Modern England', p. 41
- ¹⁰ R. A. Houlbrooke, *English Family*, pp. 54-58
- ¹¹ R. Houston and R. M. Smith, 'A new Approach to family history?' *History Workshop Journal*, xiv (1982) p.127
- ¹² D. Cressy, 'Kinship and Kin interaction' pp.38-70
- ¹³ P. Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Religion, Politics and Society in Kent, 1500-1640* (1977) pp. 124, 190
- ¹⁴ CKS PRC17 48 116
- ¹⁵ CKS PRC17 57 369; A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (1995) pp. 61-78
- ¹⁶ CKS PRC 32 44 265
- ¹⁷ CKS PRC 32 49 7
- ¹⁸ CKS PRC 17 64 230
- ¹⁹ PRO PROB11 129 22
- ²⁰ PRO PROB11 143 45
- ²¹ PRO PROB11 216 93
- ²² PRO PROB11 143 45 Henry Baker of Sissinghurst, Kt and Bt, made elaborate arrangements for securing property within the family, ensuring that uncles and cousins inherited in the event of a failure in the male line.
- ²³ PRO PROB11 223 158 Walter Roberts of Glassenbury, Esq. d.1652
- ²⁴ CKS PRC32 51 5
- ²⁵ D. O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint* (Manchester, 2000) pp. 30-55, 99-121
- ²⁶ CKS PRC17/64 230
- ²⁷ CKS PRC2 11/191 Edward Couchman, clothier, (d.1600) owed monies to his kinsmen William, Gabriel, and Giles Couchman in addition to Thomas Couchman of Maidstone; CKS PRC21/16/150 Alexander Sheafe, clothier, (d.1602) owed 11s to his kinsmen Alex Sheafe the weaver of Cranbrook. He also owed a large number of business debts in Benenden, Maidstone, Heathfield, Wadhurst and London; PRC20/6/214 John Weller, clothier, (d.1624) Weller was indebted to a number of local clothier families (Weller, Hovenden, Courthop, Barham, and Osborne). He employed a number of local people in Cranbrook and the neighbourhood and also had business links with Maidstone, Egerton and London. He also maintained the children of his deceased kinsmen John Weller in 'apparel and other necessaries 15s', and his son Stephen Weller for 1 whole year £6 13s 4d
- ²⁸ CCAL PRC17/41-70; PRC32/31-52
- ²⁹ CCAL PRC17/45/47
- ³⁰ CKS P100/5 Churchwardens Accounts; DCb/v Visitation call Books; Thomas Courthop was churchwarden at Cranbrook, 1562-63, Peter Courthop, churchwarden 1572-73, Peter Courthop 1613-14; The original Board of Governors of Cranbrook Grammar School, chartered in 1574, included John and Peter Courthop.
- ³¹ CCAL PRC32/14/100, PRC16/56, PRC32/30/510, PRC32/34/64, PRO PROB11/112/80, PROB11/267/331

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- ³² PRO PROB11/112/80
- ³³ PRO PROB11/112/80
- ³⁴ ESRO SAS/CO/15/17
- ³⁵ PRO PROB11/267/331
- ³⁶ CKS U410/T214
- ³⁷ CKS P100/28/1
- ³⁸ *ibid.*
- ³⁹ PRO C.E. Banks, *Topographical Dictionary of 2885 English Emigrants to New England, 1620-1650* (Genealogical Publication, 1937); C.E. Banks, *The Planters of the Commonwealth, 1620-1640* (Genealogical Publication, 1961); CKS Kent Pioneers TR2896
- ⁴⁰ CKS Kent Pioneers TR2896/57,58,59,60, NEHGR, 244; C.C.R. Pile, *Cranbrook a Wealden Town* (Cranbrook and District Local History Society, 1990) pp.49-50
- ⁴¹ Hasted, *History*, vii, pp.177-179
- ⁴² CKS PRC32 40 68
- ⁴³ CKS Kent Pioneers TR2896 57,58,59, 60
- ⁴⁴ W.K. Watkins, 'Some Guilford, Conn. Settlers and their Relationship, or The Sheafe Family in England and New England', in *Sheafe Family of Guilford Conn.* (in Cranbrook Museum Archive)
- ⁴⁵ CKS Passenger List Sa/Ac7, E157 20, f.19, 20, Kent Pioneers TR2896
- ⁴⁶ CKS Kent Pioneers TR2896 57, 58, 59, 60
- ⁴⁷ PRO E157 20
- ⁴⁸ P. Wilson Coldham, *The Complete Book of Emigrants 1607-1660* (Genealogical Publishing Co. 1987); Richard Bigg emigrated on 'The Swan' 1610; PRO E157/20; CKS Kent Pioneers TR2896/57
- ⁴⁹ CCAL PRC32 51 115
- ⁵⁰ CCAL PRC17 70 614
- ⁵¹ CKS PRC17 64 230
- ⁵² CKS P100 28 5; D. Lines Jacobes, 'The Kitchell, Sheafe and Ruck Connections in England', *The American Genealogist*, xiv (in Cranbrook Museum Archive)
- ⁵³ CKS Kent Pioneers TR2896, NEHGR 66,358
- ⁵⁴ This information is held in the Archive of Cranbrook Museum within the Chittenden Family Archive, Extract from 'Chittenden Genealogy'
- ⁵⁵ Cranbrook Museum Archive, extract, 'Later Settlers in Guilford' in *History of the Plantation of Menunkatuck*, ch. 15
- ⁵⁶ Cranbrook Museum Archive, extract from the 'Genealogy of the Chittenden Family', pp. 8-11
- ⁵⁷ CKS Kent Pioneers TR/2896 57, 58, 59, 60, Sa/AC7, S7 0442
- ⁵⁸ A. Salerno, 'The Character of Emigration from Wiltshire to the American Colonies 1630-1660', (University of Virginia, PhD, 1977); A. Salerno, 'The Social Background of Seventeenth Century Emigration to America', *Journal of British Studies*, xix (1979) pp. 31-52
- ⁵⁹ D. Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1987) pp. 263-9

Chapter 6

Religion in Cranbrook: Continuity and Change

The relationship between religion and community and the 'reformation of manners' as an instrument of social control, has become one of the central themes of recent historical debate.¹ Rather than concentrating on the changing forms of established religion, historians have attempted to study religion within society as a whole. Social anthropologists have approached religion as a social phenomenon which should be studied 'in terms of the totality of the culture and society in which they are found'.² In this way the religious culture of a community may be understood in terms of its shared values, attitudes and beliefs. Within this approach, the religious ideology adopted by the 'better sort' in the community may be seen in Gramscian terms as reflecting the 'intellectual and moral leadership' of the dominant social group.³ Thus religion in early modern England was a cultural and social force that transcended the institutional hierarchy of the church.

Recent contributions to the debate over religious change and the reform of popular culture have studied individual communities, and made an assessment of puritan activity as a factor in religious reform and social change.⁴ Wrightson and Levine's study of Terling in Essex, and Ingram's study of Keevil in Wiltshire, provide contrasting analyses of the relationship between religious developments, demographic growth, economic and social change, and shifts in moral attitudes in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Collinson's work on Cranbrook principally focused on religion, the puritan activity of 'godly' laymen and morals enforcement in the late sixteenth century, but without economic context or analysis of the social composition of this group. Nevertheless, Collinson's study provides a basis for comparison with Wrightson and Levine's study of Terling, which was dominated by a puritan group bent

on moral 'reform'. By comparison, the extent to which Cranbrook may be classified as 'puritan' is questionable. Collinson does not see Cranbrook as a puritan town, in which 'the whole town reverberated with psalm-singing and godliness'.⁵ But his work concentrated on religious trends in Cranbrook during the sixteenth century, prior to the onset of Laudian reforms and the development of religious separatism.⁶ It is important to contextualize the development of 'godly religion' and enquire whether a puritan 'reformation of manners' took place within Cranbrook and its neighbourhood area during the seventeenth century. Is it possible to identify an oligarchy of parish officers who instigated a campaign of social and moral reform, aimed at improving the sexual manners and religious practice of parishioners?

Ingram too has argued that a direct comparison between Terling and Cranbrook is unwise since Cranbrook was a market town of 'at least 2,000 communicants in 1597', whereas Terling was a small rural parish.⁷ More fruitful, perhaps, will be a comparison with religious developments and efforts at social control in the neighbouring market town of Rye in Sussex, which has also been identified as a puritan stronghold in this period, and which had important trading connections with Cranbrook. Rye was an incorporated borough (with a formal governmental structure) by the early sixteenth century, whereas Cranbrook was administered by its parochial officers. Nevertheless, Cranbrook had an urban identity and was a busy market town, although it was also a very large parish which embraced a large rural population. The interaction between non-conformist activity in Cranbrook town and the neighbouring rural parishes will be considered in order to establish if there was a significant number of parishioners who deviated from the established Protestant religion, and who may have given the neighbourhood a particularly 'godly' religious mentality.

Religious Reform and Non-Conformity in the Weald

It is an established commonplace that the Kentish Weald was a breeding ground for Lollard heresy from the fifteenth century. Unorthodox and anti-sacramentarian sentiments were uncovered by Archbishop Warham in 1511, by which time heretical ideas had taken root in the clothing parishes of Tenterden, Cranbrook and Biddenden. Zell concluded that 'judging from the residence of those accused of heresy in Kent, there were Lollards in Maidstone...and in the parishes between Cranbrook and Tenterden in the Weald'.⁸

Lutheran influence in Kent grew from the 1520s, encouraged by the free flow of ideas engendered by trade between the Wealden clothmaking centres, via the Cinque port towns of Rye and Dover, and the Low Countries in the sixteenth century. A translation of the Latin Bible into English was sought by William Baker of Cranbrook, who declared of St Mathews's Gospel that, 'it was a pity that it might not be known openly'. Richard Harman of Cranbrook helped William Tyndale in his exile in Antwerp in the 'setting forth of the New Testament in English'.⁹ Historians have explained the progress of the Protestant Reformation in Kent as being driven from above and below through 'an exceptional set of circumstances which favoured both the enforcement of the 'official Reformation' programme and the spread of popular Protestantism'.¹⁰ Kent's geographical proximity to Europe and the Low Countries was a major factor in the county's receptivity to reformed theologies; in addition, Kent's proximity to London made it relatively easy for Crown policies to be disseminated in the county.

The extent to which some of the Marian martyrs in the Weald had fully embraced the official version of the Edwardine Reformation doctrine or were traditional Lollard heretics is debatable. As Collinson argues, Foxe himself 'scouted the possibility that any of the martyrs could have been deviant from the godly Protestant

consensus'.¹¹ Certainly a minority were prepared to sacrifice their lives for the new religion, but 'the size and commitment of that minority must remain in doubt'.¹² Those martyred from Cranbrook and its neighbourhood between 1555 and 1558, evident in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* included William Hopper, 1555; John Archer, weaver, Alice Potkin, wife, 1556; Edmund Allen, miller, Katherine Allen, wife, Alice Benden, Joan Bradbridge, William Lowick, Thomas Stephens, William Waterer, 1557; and Alice Smith, 1558.

With the Protestant ascendancy under Elizabeth, Cranbrook gained its first protestant minister in 1561 in the person of Richard Fletcher.¹³ Fletcher's first year of residency saw the removal of traditional iconography from the church, with the removal of glass and the whitewashing of walls. The progress of the Reformation in Cranbrook in the sixteenth century can be traced in part through the churchwardens' accounts, which record measures of compliance with official religious settlement.¹⁴ Fletcher, whilst moving the Protestant Reformation on in the town through the removal of popish iconography, was by no means radical in his ministry. By the 1570s Cranbrook and its neighbourhood area had actively embraced the Protestant Reformation.

The evidence of will preambles seems to suggest that wider religious developments had overturned the catholic sentiments of parishioners: the overtly Catholic religious preambles of the early sixteenth century had been replaced by formulaic Protestant preambles, which conformed to the official religion. However, historians have argued that the religious sentiments expressed in will preambles are uncertain evidence of individual religious faith. Preambles may not have expressed the testator's true religious convictions but instead reflected the local scribe's personal preference for particular formulas.¹⁵ It is, for example, impossible to assume religious

change on the basis of will preambles in which the testator committed 'his soul to God, his maker' before disposing of his or her property. The omission of reference to saints and the reliance on being saved solely through the 'merits of Christ', have been seen as definite signs of a Protestant faith. Duffy has pointed out that preambles which have formerly been regarded as particularly reformist in conviction, such as those which state 'first I give and bequeath my soul to almighty God my only saviour and redeemer, by the merits of whose death and passion I am in full hope to be saved', were in fact not a rarity in sixteenth century England.¹⁶ Nevertheless, in most cases they can be regarded as 'Protestant' preambles' whoever's convictions they represent. Mayhew has shown that in the mid-sixteenth century this type of preamble was being used in Rye, not far from the Kentish Weald.¹⁷ In which case the changes in traditional phraseology cited by Clark as characterizing significant shifts in belief during this period may have been overstated.¹⁸ Wills which fail to mention the cult of saints and prayers and masses for the dead may simply signify a prudent strategy on the part of Catholics in a period of religious intolerance. However, covert Catholics did not have to include the Protestant claim of a personal conviction of being saved by the death and merits of Jesus Christ; all they had to do was use the non-committal preamble.

The evidence for Cranbrook shows that there was a shift in emphasis and phraseology in will preambles in the mid-sixteenth century, in which the pre-reformation enthusiasm for saint's cults and masses for the souls of the dead disappeared. In the period 1540 to 1570 the number of wills with an overtly Catholic preamble declined significantly. Of 109 Archdeaconry court wills in this period only that of Richard Dence, who died at the end of the Marian period in 1558, included a traditionally Catholic preamble. Dence also bequeathed 'to each of six priests to say and sing dirges and masses for my soul, my father and mothers souls, and all Christian

souls 12d'.¹⁹ During the early years of the official Reformation some testators' convictions underwent a conversion to Protestant theology. The rapid decline in the number of Cranbrook wills that mention the Virgin Mary and the saints could, if taken at face value, reflect the success of the Protestant Reformation in the Weald. However, it could just as well represent the acceptance by local scribes and clerics that Catholic preambles were no longer acceptable.

From 1561, as we have seen, the minister of Cranbrook was Richard Fletcher, and from this time the influence of a Protestant ministry on the religious convictions of the people of Cranbrook can be said to be effective. Many of the 205 Archdeaconry and Consistory court wills from Cranbrook between 1570 and 1620 included religious preambles with the 'reformist' formulae advocated by the local scribes. The preamble of John Fishenden, clothier, written in 1581, is typical of Cranbrook preambles at this time:

'I commend my soul to almighty God my maker saviour and redeemer, hoping assuredly to be saved by the death and bloodshedding of our lord and saviour Jesus Christ'.²⁰

The phrases 'remission and forgiveness of all my sins' and 'steadfastly believing to be saved' were also popular, and indicate the testator's hope in his own salvation but not the certainty of everlasting life as one of God's elect. Preambles such as these, which avouch trust in the merits or passion of Christ, adhered to the orthodox Protestant formulae. However the will of Smallhope Bigg, clothier, who was a member of a wealthy puritan family in Cranbrook, whose family migrated to New England in the 1620s, contains greater certainty of everlasting life. Bigg declared in 1638, 'I commend my soul unto God my creator, trusting assuredly through the merits of Jesus Christ my redeemer and saviour to be made partaking of life everlasting'.²¹ Sir Thomas Roberts, an active member of the vestry meeting and an influential local Justice of the Peace,

affirmed in his will his faith in his own salvation through 'Jesus Christ my saviour and redeemer by whose only death, passion without my merits or defects I am fully assured of everlasting life and salvation'.²²

In general, preambles that declared with great certainty the testator's convictions of his own salvation, are not very common. In order to discover evidence of the 'hotter sort' of Protestantism in Cranbrook's neighbourhood, 573 archdeaconry court wills from Cranbrook, Biddenden, Hawkhurst, Goudhurst and Staplehurst were sampled for the period 1570 to 1639: testators who were certain that they were among the 'elect and chosen' of God were surprisingly few in number. Only 20 wills affirmed the testator's belief in their predestined election as one of God's chosen.²³ In 1600 Bridget Shepard of Cranbrook asserted that:

'I bequeath my soul unto God my creator, saviour and redeemer being fully assured and steadfastly believing that He hath reunited unto me and mercifully forgiven me all my sins in the death and bloodshedding of His only beloved son Jesus Christ in whom amongst many of the daughters of Israel He hath elected me before the foundation of the world unto eternal life and salvation'.²⁴

Similarly Richard Beal, yeoman, in 1601 asked that God 'have mercy on my soul and to receive me unto the member of His elect to enjoy the fruition of eternal life'. Stephen Weller, clothier, was equally certain of salvation in 1635 when he declared 'I commit my soul to God who gave it, being fully assured and steadfastly believing that this mortal life ended, I shall have and enjoy everlasting life with Him in heaven.'²⁵

Wills from the neighbouring parishes show that overtly Catholic references to Saints and the Blessed Virgin had disappeared by the late sixteenth century, and had been replaced by declarations placing greater emphasis on being saved through the merits of Jesus Christ. In Biddenden, out of a sample of 107, wills only nine (8.4%) asserted a belief in being one of God's children predestined to enjoy 'resurrection to

life eternal' as one of the 'elect and chosen'. In 1586, Edward Philpot, husbandman, began his preamble with the words:

'In heart as a penitent offender wholly submitting myself under the mercy of almighty God and humbly beseeching to be placed by the merits, death and passion of our lord and saviour Jesus Christ amongst the members of His elect and chosen'.²⁶

The enthusiastic reformer John Whetcombe, rector of Biddenden from 1579 to 1609, guided religious doctrine in the parish and affirmed in his will a clear belief in his election. Whetcombe asked that 'of His mere mercy and entire love without any defect of mercy, He will place me with the rest of His adopted and chosen children in that holy and spiritual Jerusalem of His'.²⁷ A sample of 112 wills from Hawkhurst in this period confirms that the majority of wills incorporating a religious preamble adopted the protestant formula of placing one's faith, belief and trust in the death, passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ alone as the criterion upon which one could be saved. The fervent testimony of faith ascribed in 1570 to Agnes Sloman, widow, exemplifies the godly sentiments of a few Hawkhurst inhabitants who displayed an unequivocal trust in their ultimate redemption and election, although such sentiments were atypical of testators in general:

'I give and bequeath my soul unto the hands of God ... and to my lord Jesus Christ his dear son, who redeemed me and all mankind, and to God the holy ghost who sanctifieth me and all the elect of God...I trust through Jesus Christ to live and reign in joy after the course of this mortal life is finished forever...After that my soul shall be delivered from the burden of flesh. I commit to the earth trusting assuredly that it shall rise again in joy without corruption and live amongst the elect of God forever'.²⁸

Bible Ownership

Bible ownership, as recorded in inventories and in wills, may also be an indication of a serious Protestant commitment to become familiar with the 'word' through Bible reading and study in one's own home. Of course the mere ownership of a Bible does not necessarily mean that the testator was literate and able to read it. Some

Bibles may have been owned and never read, others inherited from family members merely as keepsakes. Moreover, the incidence of Bibles in inventories may be an underestimate of the actual number of Bibles, because many may have been given away prior to the testator's death to kinsmen. Nevertheless, there was a comparatively high level of Bible ownership recorded in Cranbrook and its surrounding parishes, that may be indicative of the growth of Protestantism in the neighbourhood (Appendix 16).

Table 6.1

Numbers of Bibles recorded in inventories 1570-1660 by Parish

| Cranbrook Total Inventories 631 | Goudhurst Total Inventories 299 | Hawkhurst Total Inventories 274 | Biddenden Total Inventories 310 | Benenden Total Inventories 258 | Staplehurst Total Inventories 238 |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| 115 | 60 | 36 | 39 | 31 | 47 |
| 18.2% | 20% | 13.1% | 12.5% | 12% | 20% |

Source: CKS PRC10 1-72, PRC11/1-30, PRC27/1-21, PRC28/4-20

Goudhurst, Staplehurst and Cranbrook had the highest proportion of inventories with Bibles over this period. In addition, there is more evidence of Protestant non-conformity in this part of the Weald than in other parts of Kent in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Acheson has shown that between 1590 and 1641 some parishioners were presented for joining conventicles when it was politically precarious to do so. Cranbrook had four non-conformist presentments, Goudhurst five, Biddenden three, Benenden two, Staplehurst two and Hawkhurst one. Moreover, religious conventicles were recorded in Cranbrook in 1604, Frittenden in 1599 and Goudhurst in 1602.²⁹ In the Goudhurst case the landowner William Campion, was presented because:

‘He maintained in his house a schoolmaster called Robinson who has ever since Easter last preached in his house twice every Sunday and holy day, he is not licensed; he maintained in his doctrine usury and said there is no hell’.³⁰

Similarly, in Cranbrook in 1604 it was charged that Reginald Lovell ‘taketh upon him to preach (being a layman) in his house the first Thursday in every month to which sermon resort divers of sundry towns thereabouts’.³¹

Underdown has shown that wood-pasture areas like the Weald were inclined to foster ‘godly’ values and that in Somerset, Wiltshire and Devon pastoral clothmaking regions, Protestant non-conformity flourished.³² In the Weald too there is a correlation between a wood-pasture agrarian regime, a local dependence on textile manufacture and Bible ownership.

Bible ownership was to be found amongst a cross-section of artisan-craftsmen, tradesmen and farmers in Cranbrook and the neighbouring parishes (Appendix 16). The greatest concentration of Bible ownership was amongst textile workers and farmers in all parishes apart from Cranbrook.³³ In Cranbrook 115 inventories recorded Bibles, of this number 38 (33%) were of textile workers, 26 (23%) were of tradesmen and 23 (20%) were farmers. Cranbrook as a market town included a higher proportion of tradesmen than the surrounding villages, where farmers would have been more prominent. In Hawkhurst, 13 (36%) of testators with Bibles were engaged in textile manufacture, eight (22%) in farming and seven (19%) were tradesmen. Goudhurst, Staplehurst and Benenden parishes recorded the highest proportion of farmers as Bible owners with 19 (32%), 16 (34%) and 12 (39%) respectively. By contrast in Cranbrook and Hawkhurst, workers in the clothing industry were the dominant occupational group in Bible ownership. Many testators also possessed other religious books such as prayer books, sermons and martyrologies, which suggest an active interest in religion.

John Petter of Goudhurst, farmer (d.1594), owned ‘one Bible, one New testament and one service book’. James King of Cranbrook, clothier (d.1617), owned ‘one great Bible, one service Book, and one old Book of Martyrs’. In 1613 Thomazine

Whetcombe, daughter of the minister of Biddenden, possessed 'one English Bible, and a New Testament'.³⁴ Similar examples could be given of Bible ownership, as well as evidence from wills, which show that many inhabitants in these parishes were literate and knowledgeable in the doctrine of their Protestant faith. In 1619 William Rogers, clothier, of Cranbrook, bequeathed to his son 'my book of Calvin's Institution, Calvin on Genesis, Calvin on Timothy and Titus'.³⁵ Rogers utilized his literacy and served as a parish officer in 1607. In all, 22 (19%) of testators with Bibles served as churchwardens and 13 (11%) as parish officers: in total 35 (30%) of those who owned Bibles in Cranbrook.³⁶ This trend was repeated in Benenden and Goudhurst where 12 (39%) and 19 (32%) of Bibles were owned by churchwardens and parish officers. However, in Biddenden, only 10 (26%) of Bibles were owned by parish officers and in Staplehurst only two Bibles, can be attributed to serving officers. These statistics probably under-represent the actual number of Bibles owned by churchwardens, and other parish officers because not all officers have extant inventories. Nevertheless they do signify that within the neighbourhood, committed Protestants were active members of the parish church. Only in Staplehurst does it appear that 'godly' Protestants were not especially active in local governance.

By the seventeenth century multiple Bible ownership became more common in the Weald. Whereas most late sixteenth century testators who owned Bibles had only one, with or without other works of devotion, later it became more common for families to own two or three bibles. Bibles frequently became cherished family possessions which by the early seventeenth century were being handed down through the generations. Protestantism ideally required an understanding of the scriptures; in the Cranbrook area many literate craftsmen, tradesmen, yeomen and husbandmen were in a position to acquire an understanding of their faith. The significant number of office-

holders who owned Bibles from these occupational groups indicates that many godly inhabitants were active in local affairs. The evidence also suggests that Protestantism in the late sixteenth century was a broad church, encompassing differing degrees of religious zeal.

Was radical Protestantism a sub-cultural activity in the town or was it part of the mainstream ideology of the majority of inhabitants? An analysis of the tendency of parishioners in Cranbrook during the period 1570-1640 to request funeral sermons and to make charitable bequests in their wills can help us to examine this question. Whilst many tradesmen, artisans and farmers acquired sufficient literacy to read the scriptures for themselves, preaching remained an important means of spreading Protestant ideas. Cranbrook wills have been divided into two periods, 1570-1599 and 1600-1640, in order to determine whether an increase in the incidence of charitable bequests and sermons occurred. A total of 325 Cranbrook wills, from the Archdeaconry and Consistory courts and from the Prerogative Court of Canterbury were examined. Analysis of one hundred wills from the period 1570-1599 shows that 18 (18%) included charitable bequests and nine requested a sermon at the testator's burial service. In the period 1600-1640 there was a substantial increase in the occurrence of both these phenomena. The number of charitable bequests had risen to 56 (25%) from a total of 225 wills, and the number of sermons requested had grown to 44 (20%).

Although there was a perceptible increase in the number of charitable bequests in the early seventeenth century, it would be simplistic to see this as evidence of puritanism. All sorts of Protestants preached in favour of charitable giving, and it was fully in line with established church preaching. Although the doctrine of predestination taught that good works could not lead to an individual becoming one of the 'elect', it was one of the outward signs of leading a 'godly' life and as such was a sign of

election. If charitable giving can be taken as evidence of the success of Protestant preaching, then the record of bequests to the poor in Cranbrook wills is suggestive of growing Protestant sentiment. Many were bequests from poor craftsmen like Thomas Hall, pail-maker (1579), who bequeathed 'to the poor of Cranbrook £4', Peter Addyson, shoemaker (1582), who left '20s to the poor of Cranbrook', and his brother Richard, also a shoemaker, who bequeathed 'to Mr Fletcher, vicar of Cranbrook 6s 8d for a sermon at my burial'.³⁷ The will of Rose Austen, widow, (d. 1580) indicates that she actively participated in the 'godly' community and attended sermons throughout the neighbourhood. She bequeathed to 'the poor of Cranbrook £3' and to 'Mr Nichols, the preacher £4, Mr Ely of Cranbrook minister 40s, Mr Francis of Lamberhurst, preacher, 20s, Mr Ely of Tenterden, preacher, 20s, Mr Hopkinson of Salehurst, preacher, 20s, and Mr Spencer of Frittenden, preacher, 20s'.³⁸

Collinson has ably explored the ministry of Richard Fletcher in the 1570s, and argued that whilst Fletcher was reformist in his theology he operated within the Elizabethan Protestant tradition and was in no sense a radical in his ministry.³⁹ But, the fact that he was presented by his churchwardens in 1579 for preaching that 'some of his parish did swear they would not come unto church until such things were brought to pass that they had devised', shows that there was a more radical element in Cranbrook at this time.⁴⁰ The puritan preacher John Strowd arrived in Cranbrook in 1575, and was influential among a radical minority there. His provocatively preaching against the traditional ceremonies of the established church and encouraged non-conformity. The will of John Baylye, weaver (1576), shows that his puritan preaching was well received by some. Baylye bequeathed to 'Mr Strowd, preacher, for a sermon at my burial 6s 8d'.⁴¹ Strowd's message was socially inclusive, and the will of Peter Courthop, clothier (1579), shows that the preaching of Strowd and his contemporaries was making

headway within the community. Courthop bequeathed £10 to be distributed amongst nine preachers, including John Strowd, and preachers from Lewes, Tenterden, Pluckley, and Salehurst.⁴²

Burial sermons had been part of Fletchers 'reformist' ministry prior to Strowd's arrival in Cranbrook. In 1573 he was bequeathed 3s 4d for a sermon by Richard Wattes, husbandman.⁴³ Successive ministers were called upon to sermonize at burials in order to 'edify the people' and the trend increased during the seventeenth century. Mary Sheafe, widow, asked for 'Mr Eddy or some other godly preacher who will preach to the people assembled at my funeral'.⁴⁴ Frequent bequests to ministers for providing a funeral sermon suggests that most people were happy with their local incumbent at this time. Yet the seeds of more radical Protestantism were also sown in the late sixteenth century, which ripened into a more blatant opposition to the established church in the 1630s and 1640s. By then some of Cranbrook's 'hotter Protestants' began to perceive themselves as 'godly' inhabitants. The inclusion of puritans within the parish vestry indicates that some of the 'godly' chose to be active *within* the established church in their pursuit of 'godly rule', rather than turn to separatism. It must be remembered that the Elizabethan and early Jacobean church fostered a moderate puritanism, which was politically and socially inclusive and sought to strengthen the Church of England against the perceived dangers of a popish threat. Men on the margins of conformity organized clandestine meetings or went into exile, but it was not until the late 1620s that many traditional puritans began to dabble with sectarianism. Their practices matured into a more flagrant opposition to the religious policies of Charles I's government in the 1630s.⁴⁵ Local opposition to these political and religious policies and their role in inducing emigration to New England in the 1630s has been discussed in chapter five.

As already mentioned, Richard Fletcher met with discontent from some of his parishioners in 1579 when he preached against those who would not join in parochial worship. Absenteeism from church and lay discontent with individual ministers and their commitment to 'reformist' ideas will be discussed in the next chapter. However, it is clear that by the late sixteenth century there was some support in Cranbrook for more radical ideas, which may have originated from a succession of puritan curate-preachers whom Fletcher appointed between 1575 and 1585. Collinson has speculated that Fletcher might have been influenced to make such appointments by the 'godly element in the surrounding country, some gentry included, who may have promised support for preachers of whom they approved'.⁴⁶ Certainly the preaching activities of John Strowd after 1570 were compounded by the appointment of Thomas Ely as Fletcher's curate in 1579-80, and the puritan divine Dudley Fenner in 1583. Tyacke has shown that the practice of baptizing children with 'godly' names became popular after Fenner's appointment, but it seems likely that Thomas Ely may have also been influential in inspiring a taste for overtly religious names in Cranbrook, even before Fenner's arrival. Ely moved to Warbleton, in Sussex, where the practice of conferring puritan baptismal names became popular among a small minority in the 1580s.⁴⁷

Cranbrook's baptism register shows that Mercy Gibson was baptised with a 'godly' name in 1577, and the name was also given to Mercy Wyly in 1581 and Mercy Munn in 1582. The biblical names Theophilus, Nathaniel and Caleb were also given in 1581 and 1582, amongst whom was Nathaniel Courthop, baptised into a wealthy clothier family.⁴⁸ From-Above Hendley was also baptized into another prosperous clothier family in March 1583, and Fenner named his own daughter Morefruit, sister for Freegift, in December 1583, and another child Faint-Not Fenner in 1585. Between 1577 and 1606, 33 children in Cranbrook were baptised with 'godly' admonitions,

amongst which were the names Be-Strong (one), Comfort (two), Faint-Not (two), Freegift (one) From-Above (one), Love (one), Mercy (seven), Morefruit (one), Moregift (one), No-Strength (one), Repentance (seven), Smallhope (one), Standwell (one) and Thankful (four). Such names not only praised God for the gift of a safe birth but also burdened the child with a reminder of their responsibility for waging a lifelong struggle against sin. At least 41 others at this time were baptised with Old Testament names such as Boaz (two), Caleb (five), Joshua (two), Moyses (four), Nathaniel (nine), Solomon (four) and Zachery (four). Perhaps puritan families deviated from more conventional names in order to affirm their common identity as members of a group of 'godly' parishioners. Wealthy families like the Biggs, as well as families of much more modest wealth, such as Lovell and Starr, chose this explicit religious usage. The Cranbrook register records Thomas Starr's six children as Comfort, No-Strength, Moregift, Mercy, Suretrust and Standwell. Comfort Starr moved to Ashford and then migrated to Massachusetts in New England where he died in 1659, whereas other members of the Starr family continued to live in Kent (see Chapter 5).⁴⁹ Indeed his kinsman Jehosephat Starr was still living in Cranbrook in 1652, when puritan indignation inspired an action at the Assize against 'John Robson, Thomas Baseden, clothier, and John Read, husbandman,' for playing 'an unlawful game called cricket, in Ballfield Cranbrook, a close belonging to Jehosephat Starr, yeoman'.⁵⁰ The grandson of Thomas Starr, also named Comfort after his father, adhered to the family's puritan thinking and was 'reported as preaching at Cranbrook' in 1669 and later at Goudhurst.⁵¹ Reginald Lovell is probably the same layman already mentioned as being presented to the church courts for preaching in his house in 1604, and who was described in the diary of John Manningham as 'a good honest poor silly puritan' who 'goes to the ground when he talks in Divinity with a preacher'.⁵² Lovell baptised his

children Faithful and Thankful, and the names Comfort, Moyses, and Nathaniel were also given to Lovell children at this time.

The mindset of late Elizabethan England provided a perfect breeding ground for preachers such as Fenner to sow doubts and fears in the community: threats of a popish invasion and several deficient harvests in the 1580s could be read as a divine punishment against a degenerate society. The name Repent first appears in the parish register in January 1586, when Repent Boorman was baptized; his sibling was subsequently named Thankful in March 1600. Repentance Walter was baptized in June 1588, but thereafter the name assumes greater importance as blatant self-contrition for bearing a bastard child. Five more babies were given the name Repentance between 1600 and 1606 after which the word 'bastard' is recorded in the baptism register. Repentance was a 'puritan' baptismal name, but one that was not a claim of godliness or exclusivity. Concern within the parish vestry about growing poverty in the town resulting from economic dislocation in the cloth industry in the early seventeenth century may have precipitated a harsher attitude within the community towards illegitimacy. The churchwardens' accounts show that at this time the burden of the poor rate was becoming a vexation to the parish officers.⁵³ In naming a child Repentance, the 'sin' of the parents was not only laid heavily on the child, but the indignation of the parish was also signified. However, 'godly' baptism names were never commonplace in Cranbrook, and, whilst many more were baptized with biblical names the majority of inhabitants were given traditional names.

The Enforcement of Religious Observance

In the late sixteenth century presentments against the clergy show a confused and often contradictory struggle taking place within the vestry to implement the

doctrine and liturgy of the established church. In the period 1570 to 1609, concern with the implementation of church order and the regularity of clerical conformity was of some importance to vestry officials (Appendix 17a). Irregularity in the minister's vestments and negligence in the provision of services and rights of baptism were issues which stirred the churchwardens into action. So too was failure of the clergy to maintain the fabric and furniture of the church and to implement Protestant initiatives such as the removal of 'popish' iconography and the whitewashing of the church walls. In those years Cranbrook churchwardens presented 25 complaints for clerical negligence, Hawkhurst officers 18, and in Staplehurst 23 presentments were made about irregularities in the minister's duties.

In Cranbrook, Fletcher was presented in July 1579 for preaching that 'there were some in the parish that did swear they would not come into church until such time that things were brought to pass that they had devised'.⁵⁴ Without doubt some parishioners were unhappy with the progress of the reformation in Cranbrook. Nevertheless, the bulk of the presentments show that a traditional Protestant agenda was operating in the parish. Between 1582 and 1589, Fletcher was presented eight times for offences which included, 'the minister wears no surplice', 'the church wants whitening and the churchyard repair' and 'for not providing a pulpit'. There were complaints that the 'perambulation had not been observed', and in 1588 'that there are as yet in our church windows certain images and pictures which are offensive and may be taken for monuments of superstition'.⁵⁵ Although the godly complained about the last vestiges of 'popish idolatry', the minister was also being presented 'for allowing Randall Haywood to preach and administer the sacrament', and that 'he suffered him to say service and baptise children'.⁵⁶ Parish clergy were expected to wear clerical dress, and in 1606 the Cranbrook minister William Eddy was presented 'for that he doth not

wear a hood upon his surplice'. Similar complaints were made in Benenden, Biddenden, Hawkhurst and Staplehurst between 1582 and 1600.⁵⁷ There were also complaints in these parishes that the incumbent failed to perform the rights of baptism properly. In Staplehurst, concern over the minister's failure to provide regular services and that the incumbent failed to perform the traditional rights of baptism and wedding services sparked a series of presentments by churchwardens. Staplehurst recorded the highest proportion of presentments 23 (14%) in the categories of the 'clergy' and the 'church' in the period 1570 to 1609. In 1583 the minister was presented because 'he doth not always wear the surplice, neither cross the children in the baptism'; between 1593 and 1604 Mr Newman was presented 11 times, because he neglected weddings, provided no Wednesday and Friday service and did not say divine service on Sunday.⁵⁸

Any traditional practices which harkened back to popish customs were liable to be presented to the courts. In Biddenden, for example, the churchwardens presented the rector John Whetcombe several times in 1609 for 'giving beer and cheese in our church of Biddenden every Easter day after evening prayer, the which disorder as yet continueth'. The following year his successor, Dr John Barncroft, was also presented 'for giving beer and cheese' within the parish church upon Easter day.⁵⁹ The complaints against church ales were part of the ongoing campaign to suppress secular festivities linked to religious festivals, part of the broader puritan critique of traditional customs which were perceived to encourage popular disorder. Yet, as Duffy argues in his work on Morebath in Devon, 'the ales were one of the most practical expressions of the life of charity which the parish existed to support'.⁶⁰

The irregularity of services, and the failure of ministers to catechise children, their toleration of unlicensed preachers and the fact that many were absent from their parishes were all causes for concern amongst vestry in Cranbrook and its neighbouring

parishes in this period. But at the same time parishioners who served as churchwardens and sidesmen sought to purge the church of all forms of 'popish' iconography. However, this does not make them all 'puritans'. During the late sixteenth century parish presentments suggest a transitional relationship between the clergy and their parishioners. Parish officers wanted to bring the church into line with the wider Protestant tradition, which necessitated purifying the church of the last vestiges of Catholicism; official church orders, implemented by parish officers, required the church walls whitewashed and stained glass and ornaments removed. The systematic whitewashing of chancel walls symbolized the intention to reform a corrupt church at parish level. However, churchwardens also wanted regular services with the full rights of baptism performed by a conscientious clergy, concerns which were not specifically 'puritan'.

It would be wrong, therefore, to divide Cranbrook Protestants into orthodox 'traditionalists' and a 'puritan' opposition. Cranbrook parish was a broad church, in which a range of opinions flourished at this time. Given this broadly Protestant context, radical opinions were able to ferment *within* the traditional parish community, because many inhabitants with puritan leanings were active in local politics and served on the parish vestry. The Bigg family was involved in parish politics over several generations. John Bigg, clothier, served as churchwarden of Cranbrook in 1597 and 1598. His son Smallhope Bigg, clothier, maintained the family tradition and served as churchwarden of Cranbrook in 1621 and 1622. The Biggs were puritans and maintained kinship connections with other like-minded families in the neighbourhood. They were also active within the established church in Cranbrook, participating as parish officers and influencing parish politics. In 1638 Smallhope Bigg bequeathed £5 to Mr Abbot with the request that he preach a sermon at his funeral. Among his possessions were '3

Books of Martyrs'.⁶¹ His wife Ellen, who died the same year, also made religious bequests, including 20s 'to the Rev. Pastor Mr. Abbot to preach a sermon to my neighbours who shall accompany my body'. Ellen also bequeathed sums to local preachers, including 40s to Mr Thomas Warren of Sandwich, 40s to Mr Abinezer Warren of Ryarsh, and 20s to Paul Greensmith of Loose.⁶² The diverse location of these preachers suggests that a wider, puritan network existed, which maintained ties among the godly across Kent.

Nevertheless, these varied expressions of puritan commitment did not emerge from a majority movement in late sixteenth or early seventeenth century Cranbrook. Although puritan ideas were important within Cranbrook and drew upon a wide social base, its exponents were only a minority. Yet, it is also clear that several gentry, as well as clothiers, farmers and tradesmen, were at the forefront of religious activism in Cranbrook and the surrounding parishes. A more radical element did exist within the neighbourhood, but it was a sub-cultural minority, compared to the majority of parishioners who opted for 'outward conformity' to the Elizabethan settlement.

The Roberts of Glassenbury were an established and wealthy gentry family in Cranbrook. They were actively involved in local politics as Justices of the Peace, and regularly attended the Quarter Sessions.⁶³ Successive Roberts were also active as ex-officio members of the parish vestry.⁶⁴ Evidence from a number of sources indicates that the family inclined towards a 'hotter sort' of Protestantism in the early seventeenth century, when they were in a position to influence parish politics in their dual role as local gentry and 'godly magistrates'. Sir Thomas Roberts of Glassenbury (d.1628) bequeathed 'the minister Mr Abbot 40s to preach' at his funeral. In addition he asked his overseers to give £10 to 'increase the sum of money in Cranbrook appointed for the stock of the poor, either to buy land or towards the erection of a house of correction in

Cranbrook'.⁶⁵ A house of correction was indeed built, and offenders were sent to it at the Quarter Sessions and Assizes as a punishment. Of course, it would be unwise to suggest that Sir Thomas' monetary bequest to build a house of correction was motivated primarily by religious belief. Elite anxiety that traditional hierarchies were threatened and the universal fear of social disorder created a climate of admonishment and repression against the 'reprobate' in early modern England. Nevertheless, the will of his son Thomas Roberts of Glassenbury, Esq., also provides evidence that the family was sympathetic to the puritan cause. In his 1647 will he bequeaths money to his 'loving brother John Roberts, now in Holland', where he is presumably in self-imposed religious exile.⁶⁶ However, the most striking evidence comes from the 1642 Kent Assizes when Sir Walter Roberts (d.1644), the eldest son of Sir Thomas Roberts (d.1627), was charged with allowing a religious conventicle to take place in his house, one that was attended by other prominent local residents.⁶⁷ The parish clerk and schoolmaster John Elmstone was one of the conventiclers in attendance. Elmstone (d.1661) included in his will a bequest 'to the poor of Cranbrook parish where I dwell 20s' and a sum to 'poor widows and other persons in want that be in church communion with me in Cranbrook, with some other Godly poor there to be distributed by the advice of the elders of that church society'.⁶⁸ Richard Sloman and George Glasier, clothiers, were indicted at the Assizes in 1644 for attending a religious conventicle in the house of John Sloman at Hawkhurst, in May 1641. At the same Assize these two individuals as well as nine others were indicted for recusancy at Hawkhurst.⁶⁹ In June 1642 another conventicle was brought to the attention of the Assizes; 19 named individuals and others from Cranbrook and the neighbouring parishes assembled illegally in the house of William Harvey in Cranbrook.⁷⁰ These conventiclers were drawn from a cross section of local society, and reflected well the

local occupational structure: five clothiers, three labourers, two weavers, and one mercer, haberdasher, barber, spinster, shoemaker and yeoman. The interaction between individuals at these gatherings from Cranbrook, Goudhurst, Benenden and Biddenden is indicative of the role neighbourhood networks played in disseminating non-conformist religious ideas. It appears that puritan activism in the Weald cut vertically through the social hierarchy, bringing together individuals from disparate social and occupational groups, including members of the social elite.

The support of an important local magnate who was sympathetic to non-conformist ideas may have encouraged alternative forms of worship to take hold in the locality. However, it is also likely that patronage by the Roberts family was a defence against more extreme puritan ideas. Sir Thomas Roberts (d.1628) was an example of a 'godly' magistrate who patronised the established 'godly' clergyman, Mr Abbot. In the 1640s the zealous questioning of Mr Abbot's ministry in Cranbrook was led by parishioners described as 'Brownists' by Abbot, men who posed a direct threat to the traditional teachings of the Protestant church. In the 1640s the broad consensus within the Cranbrook church, which had formerly included moderate puritan views, was no longer able to accommodate more radical religious opinion. In a letter to Sir Edward Dering in March 1640, Robert Abbot expressed his concern that after 24 years of faithful ministry it was not merely a dislike of Laud's religious policies that was at the root of discontent in Cranbrook, but a far more radical disaffection with episcopacy, and a fundamental shift towards separatism. Abbot wrote:

'They profess that were Bishops removed, the Common Prayer Book and ceremonies taken away they would not join with us in communion. They stick not only at our Bishops, service and ceremonies but also at our church. They would have every particular congregation to be independent and neither to be kept in order by rules given by King, Bishops, Councils, or Synods. They would have the votes about every matter of jurisdiction, in choice admission of members and ministers, excommunications and absolutions to be drawn up by the whole body of the church both men and women'.⁷¹

Abbot's anxiety that his world was truly being 'turned upside down' is evident in a letter to Dering, dated 5 July 1641. His claim that 40 communicants opposed to the established church were inciting disorder, indicates that a radical minority in Cranbrook were discontented with Abbot's ministry and the traditional church order. Abbot wrote:

'A friend hath forewarned me this day that tomorrow will 40 come unto me to persuade me to lay down the common prayer book or else they will not come to the church and these are of the middle sort of the parish...I know not what to do or say to give content'.⁷²

The conflict in Cranbrook is suggestive of the nature of religious non-conformity in the locality in the 1640s, which was to mark this part of the Weald as strongly inclined towards religious separatism by the second half of the seventeenth century.

Cranbrook puritans were at the vanguard of seventeenth century religious change, constantly adapting to the instability of the times, but always distinct from the Protestant mainstream. As we have noted, there is evidence of Protestant dissent in Cranbrook and Goudhurst as early as 1602 and 1604, when small-scale separatist conventicles were presented before the ecclesiastical courts. However, 'godly' Protestants in Cranbrook who participated in a church in constant flux were quite distinct from those parishioners who wished to detach themselves from the majority of the church. The lack of evidence for separatist conventicles in Cranbrook in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries shows that covenanting to form a separated church was rare here prior to the mid seventeenth century. However, discontent with Laudian reforms incited some of Cranbrook's 'hotter sort of Protestants' in the 1640s to form a pressure group intent on more sweeping reform of the traditional church. In 1641/42 a movement arose which seriously unsettled the incumbent Robert Abbot and alerted the authorities to the threat of schism within the parish, led not by the unruly 'many headed multitude' but by a small cross section of the respectable middling sort.

Nuttall has shown that by the mid seventeenth century many 'traditional' puritans were Presbyterians. By the 1650s Baptists, Congregationalists and Quakers had also established themselves in Cranbrook and the neighbouring rural parishes. Nuttall argued that non-conformity in Kent was 'well established long before 1662 and was separatist in its origins'.⁷³ Staplehurst had a Congregational church established in 1648. The General Baptists were particularly strong in the Weald, following the conversion of Francis Cornwell and Christopher Blackwood, the former vicar of Marden and rector of Staplehurst in 1644. Whitley lists Baptist churches in existence during the interregnum at Biddenden, which had been formed prior to 1648; Cranbrook formed from Biddenden in 1648.⁷⁴ The Quakers Caton and Stubbs visited the area in 1655 where at Cranbrook and Staplehurst they found 'a very open people, that were ready to embrace the everlasting truth'. Another Quaker, Ambrose Rigge, witnessed the testimony of Thomas Howesgoe, pastor of a large group of Seekers in Staplehurst in the 1650s, whose conversion to Quakerism was noted by Rigge,

'We came to Staplehurst. Here we found a great congregation of Seekers so called amongst whom Thomas Howesgoe was Teacher, where we had a good service, many of them being convinced with their Teacher, and his wife and children, who lived and died in the faith'.⁷⁵

Howesgoe's religious development from proto-Congregationalist to Seeker to Quakerism demonstrates the fluidity of movement between the religious sects at this time. The intellectual roots of religious non-conformity may be traced to the 1630s, although there were some minor instances of conventicling in the early seventeenth century. The development of religious dissent in the 1640s must, on the whole, be attributed to the complete breakdown of traditional religious authority after 1641. Only in the 1640s did some puritans turn to outright separation. In the next chapter we return to the activities of Cranbrook's churchwardens, this time in presenting the misdemeanours of their neighbours to the church courts. These efforts to enforce

greater religious and moral discipline will be examined within the context of a 'puritan' campaign for a 'reformation of manners'.

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- ² E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion* (Oxford, 1965) pp.111-112
- ³ A. Gramsci, *Selection from Prison Notebooks* (trans. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell-Smith), (1971) pp.57-58
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- ⁵ P. Collinson, 'Cranbrook and the Fletchers: Popular and Unpopular Religion in the Kentish Weald', in P. N. Brooks, (ed.), *Reformation Principle and Practice* (1980) pp.186-187
- ⁶ R.J. Acheson, *Radical Puritans in England 1550-1660* (1990) ch. 4
- ⁷ M. Ingram, 'Religion, Communities and Moral Discipline', in Von Greyerz, *Religion and Society*, p. 183
- ⁸ M. Zell, 'The Coming of Religious Reform', in Zell (ed.), *Early Modern Kent, 1540-1640* (Woodbridge, 2001) p.180
- ⁹ Cited in P. Collinson, 'Cranbrook and the Fletchers', p.176
- ¹⁰ Zell, 'The Coming of Religious Reform', p.178-179
- ¹¹ *ibid.* pp.242-244; Collinson, 'Cranbrook and the Fletchers', p.178
- ¹² Zell, 'The Establishment of a Protestant Church' in Zell (ed.), *Early Modern Kent*, p.216
- ¹³ *ibid.* p.180
- ¹⁴ CKS P100 5
- ¹⁵ M. Spufford, 'The Scribes of Villagers' Wills in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, and their Influence', *Local Population Studies*, vii, (1971) pp.28-43; M. Zell, 'The use of religious Preambles as a Measure of Religious Belief in the Sixteenth Century', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 1, (1977) pp.246-9; C. Marsh, 'In the Name of God' Will-Making and Faith in Early Modern England', in G.H. Martin and P. Spufford (eds.), *The Records of the Nation*, pp.215-249
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- ¹⁷ G. Mayhew, 'The Progress of the Reformation in East Sussex 1530-1559: the Evidence from Wills', *Southern History*, v, (1983) pp.55-56
- ¹⁸ P. Clark, *English Provincial Society From The Reformation To The Revolution: Religion, Politics and Society in Kent 1500-1640* (1977) pp.58-60
- ¹⁹ CCAL PRC17 34 217
- ²⁰ CCAL PRC17 44 110
- ²¹ CCAL PRC32 51 115
- ²² CCAL PRC32 47 240
- ²³ CCAL: a sample of PRC17 wills, 1570-1639: Cranbrook 187 wills (2 elect); Biddenden 107 wills (9 elect) Hawkhurst 112 wills (1 elect); Goudhurst 96 wills (3 elect); Staplehurst 71 wills (none)
- ²⁴ CCAL PRC17/52 44
- ²⁵ CCAL PRC17 53 62, PRC32 51/199
- ²⁶ CCAL PRC17 47/30
- ²⁷ CCAL PRC17 59 190
- ²⁸ CCAL PRC17/41/42
- ²⁹ R. J. Acheson, 'The Development of Religious Separatism in the Diocese of Canterbury 1590-1660' (University of Kent D.Phil, 1983) p.12
- ³⁰ CCAL X.9.3 f.138
- ³¹ CCAL X.9.3 f.226
- ³² D. Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford, 1985) pp.9-20
- ³³ Cranbrook 115 Bibles: textiles 38 (33%) farmers 23 (20%) tradesmen 26 (23%); Goudhurst 60 Bibles: textiles 16 (27%) farmers 19 (32%) tradesmen 60 (25%); Hawkhurst 36 Bibles: textiles 13 (36%) farmers 8 (22%) tradesmen 7 (19%); Biddenden 39 Bibles: textiles 12 (31%) farmers 8 (21%) tradesmen 5 (13%); Benenden 31 Bibles: textiles 6 (19%) farmers 12 (39%) tradesmen 5 (16%); Staplehurst 47 Bibles: textiles 9 (19%) farmers 16 (34%) tradesmen 9 (19%)
- ³⁴ CKS PRC10/23/164, PRC28/8/230, PRC10/35/185
- ³⁵ CCAL PRC32/45/47
- ³⁶ CKS P100/5 f.45

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- ³⁷ CCAL PRC17/43/318, PRC17/44/290, PRC17/44/259
- ³⁸ CCAL PRC17/44/134
- ³⁹ Collinson, 'Cranbrook and the Fletchers', pp.173-202
- ⁴⁰ CCAL X.2.2 f.58
- ⁴¹ CCAL PRC17/42/233
- ⁴² CCAL PRC 32/34/64
- ⁴³ CCAL PRC32/32/163
- ⁴⁴ CCAL PRC 17/58 375
- ⁴⁵ J. Spurr, *English Puritanism 1603-1689* (1998) p.9
- ⁴⁶ Collinson, 'Cranbrook and the Fletchers', p.190
- ⁴⁷ N. Tyacke, 'Popular Puritan Mentality in Late Elizabethan England', in P. Clark, A.G.R. Smith, N. Tyacke, (eds.), *The English Commonwealth 1547-1640* (Leicester, 1979); Collinson, 'Cranbrook and the Fletchers', p.197
- ⁴⁸ CKS P100 28 5
- ⁴⁹ CKS P100 28 5, TR/1042/5; B.P. Starr, *A History of the Starr Family of New England* (Hartford, Conn., 1879) vii
- ⁵⁰ *Assizes*, iv, p.692; Jehosephat Starr was also constable of Cranbrook hundred in 1649 and 1650
- ⁵¹ G.F. Nuttall, 'Dissenting Churches in Kent before 1700', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, xiv (1963) pp.175-189
- ⁵² CCAL, X.9.3 f.226; R. P. Sorlien (ed.), *The Diary of John Manningham of the Middle Temple, 1602-1603* (Hanover, New Hampshire, 1976) cited in Collinson, 'Cranbrook and the Fletchers', p.198
- ⁵³ CKS P100 5
- ⁵⁴ CCAL X.2.2 f.58
- ⁵⁵ CCAL X.2.4 f.52, 136, 128
- ⁵⁶ CCAL X.2.4 f.269
- ⁵⁷ CCAL X.4.11 f.52, X.2.4, X.3.5, X.4.5, X.3.10
- ⁵⁸ CCAL X.2.4 f.166, X.3.10
- ⁵⁹ CCAL X.9.9 f.110, 156; X.5.5 f.16
- ⁶⁰ E. Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven, 2001) p.120
- ⁶¹ CCAL PRC32 51 115
- ⁶² CCAL 17 70 482
- ⁶³ M. Zell, 'Kent's Elizabethan JPs at Work', in *Archaeologia Cantiana*, lxxxix (1999) p.35, Walter Roberts (1559-60; 1565-80) of Cranbrook: 1567, 1568, 1570, 1573; Thomas Roberts (1587-1625) (Kt. 1604) of Cranbrook: 1588, 1591, 1593, 1595, 1597, 1598, 1599, 1600, 1603
- ⁶⁴ CKS P100 5 f.65
- ⁶⁵ CCAL PRC32 47 240
- ⁶⁶ PRO PROB11 202 247
- ⁶⁷ *Assizes*, iii, p.449
- ⁶⁸ PRO PROB11 305 138
- ⁶⁹ *Assizes*, iii, p.464
- ⁷⁰ *Assizes*, iii, p.449
- ⁷¹ BL Stowe MS 184, ff.27-8
- ⁷² BL Stowe MS 184, f43
- ⁷³ Nuttall, 'Dissenting Churches in Kent before 1700', p.179
- ⁷⁴ Whitley in Nuttall 'Dissenting Churches in Kent before 1700', pp.181-182
- ⁷⁵ A. Rigge, *Constancy and Truth*, (1710) in R.J. Acheson, 'The Development of Religious Separatism' p.113

Chapter 7

Authority and Social Control: Was there a Puritan Reformation of Manners in Cranbrook?

The previous chapter examined the impact of the Reformation on the religious life of Cranbrook. Protestantism apparently took hold as 'popish' practices were vanquished by the local church hierarchy. There emerged too, a puritan movement within the parish in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period which, although small in relation to the population as a whole, was influential among many of the leading citizens of Cranbrook and the surrounding neighbourhood.

The complex question of how puritans related to their neighbours, and to what extent they attempted to change or control social behaviour and morality within their communities must now be addressed. As we have seen, a number of puritan families in Cranbrook adopted the idea of baptising their children with invented names with strong didactic overtones in the 1580s, a trend which continued into the first decade of the seventeenth century. This mode of differentiating themselves from the 'un-godly' multitude set some puritans apart from their neighbours, and created an aura of otherness among those who subscribed to the notion that the puritan sister and brotherhood was an elite group personally chosen by God. The inference of names like Repentance, Mercy and Be-Strong is that the 'elect' individual must also wage a life-long struggle against sin and be ever vigilant against temptation.

If, however, only those families who chose to identify themselves with 'godly' names can be counted among the puritan group in Cranbrook, then it represented a very small minority indeed. But this is probably not the case. Many 'godly' individuals chose to baptize their offspring with traditional or biblical names. And, although the puritan group in Cranbrook was a minority group, it would be wrong to underestimate

their influence in the parish. The 'godly' came to believe that the disorderly and immoral lifestyle of some was both a scandal and a hindrance to the smooth functioning of the commonweal, and that such behaviour should be rooted out.

There is a considerable debate among social and religious historians about the link between puritans and social control, and whether puritans provided the impetus behind the 'reformation of manners', or whether economic and social factors were of equal or greater significance. This debate, begun by Hill, centred on the relationship between increased social differentiation, population growth and the development of 'puritanism' in the period prior to the civil war.¹ Wrightson and Levine's study of the Essex village of Terling examined the social background of puritans and argued that religion provided a mental framework for the local 'better sort' to differentiate themselves from the increased number of 'poorer sort' in Terling.² Spufford has questioned the connection between puritan thinking and social differentiation between rich and poor, arguing that religion was primarily a form of social cement between villagers.³ Ingram has demonstrated that in Wiltshire dislocation in the cloth industry and the emergence of increased numbers of local poor created a climate of anxiety about social control, which did not derive from puritan thinking at all.⁴ Von-Friedeburg, whilst accepting that economic, social and religious push factors could contribute to local moral reform, argues that 'a central facet of both Puritanism and the attempt of local authorities to cope with economic and population pressures was the prosecution of a wide variety of petty offences'.⁵ Should a desire to reform society be seen as characteristically 'puritan'? We need to investigate who were the objects of local moral reform, what was the nature of offences brought before the ecclesiastical courts and whether any changes took place in the prosecution of offences in Cranbrook and the neighbouring parishes between 1570 and 1639. The regulation of personal

morality by local magistrates at the Quarter Sessions and Assizes need also to be considered within this context.

The inhabitants of these Wealden parishes experienced religion within a localized set of economic and social circumstances. As we have seen, Cranbrook was the centre of the cloth industry in the Weald, with a large workforce dependent upon manufacturing that was subject to cyclical fluctuations in employment. Cranbrook was also a populous market town with a group of satellite parishes that relied upon the town for goods and services. The opportunity for textile employment, combined with farming as a by-employment, was a stimulus to demographic growth: Cranbrook's population increased from approximately 2,000 in the period 1570-79 to 3,500 in the decade 1630-39. Taken together with the parishes of Benenden, Biddenden, Frittenden Goudhurst, Hawkhurst and Staplehurst, the population of the neighbourhood area increased from approximately 7,500 in 1570-79 to 10,500 in the period 1630-39.⁶ Economic changes during the early seventeenth century tested the ability of the town to absorb increasing numbers of poor people. The hypothesis to be tested in this chapter is whether the 'better sort' became the moral guardians of the 'poorer sort' in Cranbrook and its neighbourhood parishes.

Is there evidence of a determination to eliminate disorderly behaviour at this time, and was this stimulated by an elite concern that 'disorderly' behaviour could become a financial burden on the parish? The idea that puritans, concerned with social control, aimed to discipline the immorality of the poor through a 'reformation of manners' has become a commonplace. As we have seen in chapter six, between 1570 and 1640 traditional religious beliefs and practices were abrogated as Protestant worship became established. Local impetus for the creation of a more 'godly' community gathered momentum and encouraged some individuals within the parish to

adopt puritan rhetoric and social values. Evidence from the Cranbrook area, however, suggests that social 'reform' was aimed at the whole of society, not just the poor, and that social and religious discipline, orchestrated by parish officers and the local justices, was motivated by a desire to create not just a 'godly community' but also an orderly society.

The first part of our discussion of social enforcement is based on personal presentments put forward at the archdeacons' visitations in the period 1570 to 1639. After 1639 this evidence disappears due to the abolition of the church courts during the Civil War. In this period Benenden, Biddenden, Cranbrook, Frittenden and Hawkhurst were in Charing deanery, whereas Goudhurst and Staplehurst were in Sutton deanery. In chapter 4, the procedure for election to the offices of churchwarden, sidesman, overseer of the poor and surveyor of the highways was set out and it was argued that such officers played a central part in the governance of their parishes. In this chapter the duty of the churchwardens to report on the conduct of parishioners will be explored. Potter claimed that in general 'the two churchwardens, upon whom the burden of presentment fell were elected annually by the joint consent of the minister and his parishioners'.⁷ However, in Cranbrook there was a system of co-option by the outgoing churchwarden, rather than any sort of election, which encouraged oligarchic tendencies (see Chapter 4). In Biddenden churchwardens were similarly 'elected and chosen' for the following year, and their appointment witnessed by the 'best men' of the parish. Although it is not clear whether the outgoing churchwarden personally chose his successor.⁸

It was the duty of churchwardens, at the archdeacon's visitation at the end of their term of office at Easter, to render their accounts and present any parishioner who had offended 'their brethren, either by adultery, whoredom, usury and any other

uncleanness and wickedness of life'.⁹ Presentments were made on the basis that such behaviour was offensive to the congregation; many were made on the basis of gossip and 'upon common fame', which led to a certain notoriety being achieved by the offenders. Indeed, the churchwardens of Biddenden were warned by the authorities in 1603 against presenting too readily upon 'common fame', when the churchwardens were reprimanded for being over zealous.¹⁰

Many puritans saw the church courts as an example of a church only half-reformed, 'relics of a popish past', for which reason they were abolished during the 1640s. But Ingram has argued that far from being an anachronism in this period, 'at least up to 1640 it is realistic to regard most aspects of the church courts work as being in reasonable accord with the values of the wider society'.¹¹ Analysis of the disciplinary presentments made at the archdeacon's visitations will help determine the relationship between church court presentments and the mentality of officers.

To examine whether a 'reformation of manners' was enforced by more committed laity in Cranbrook two cohorts have been designated: presentments made from 1570 to 1609 and those from 1610 to 1639. Although the two cohorts are of unequal length, the periods have been chosen to show whether the number of presentments increased during the early seventeenth century, and whether there was an increase in presentments for sexual and social offences. All types of disciplinary presentment have been identified and classified, and the number of individuals presented for each misdemeanour, categorized as 'the clergy', 'the church', 'laymen and the church', 'private lives of laymen and 'miscellaneous'. Appendices, 17(a) and 17(b) provide a detailed breakdown of the types of offences within each of these five main categories for Cranbrook and its neighbouring parishes in the two sample periods.

Table 7.1 and Table 7.2 show that churchwardens were most vigorous in presenting parishioners for disciplinary offences in all parishes in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Table 7.1

Ex-Officio Presentments by Churchwardens at the Archdeacons' Visitation by Parish, 1570-1609

| | Cra | Fri | Bid | Ben | Haw | Gou | Sta | Total |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| The Clergy | 15 | 2 | 11 | 8 | 12 | 3 | 14 | 65 |
| The Church | 10 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 9 | 46 |
| Laymen & The Church | 154 | 27 | 103 | 119 | 107 | 66 | 70 | 646 |
| Private Lives of Laymen | 254 | 47 | 147 | 82 | 117 | 108 | 73 | 828 |
| Miscellaneous | 13 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 7 | 1 | 37 |
| Total Number of Presentments | 446 | 80 | 269 | 217 | 250 | 193 | 167 | 1,622 |

Source: CCAL Dcb X.1.9, X.1.10, X.1.11, X.1.12, X.2.2, X.2.4 pt1, X.2.4 pt2, X.2.9 pt1, X.3.5, X.3.8, X.3.10 pt2, X.4.3, X.4.5, X.4.8, X.4.9, X.4.11, X.9.9

During this early period there were 1,622 presentments across all the parishes studied. Sixty-five (5%) related to the clergy, 46 (3%) to the church fabric, 646 (40%) involved laymen and their obligations to the church, 828 (50%) concerned the private lives of laymen and there were three per cent miscellaneous. Presentments relating to the 'private lives of laymen' were most numerous and when they are considered in conjunction with those in the category 'laymen and the church', formed 91 per cent of presentments. This demonstrates the preoccupation of local office holders with the enforcement of social discipline. Jones has shown that in the period 1490-1560 the majority of church court presentments were for personal morality and sexual misbehaviour.¹² A preoccupation with sexual immorality was not a new phenomenon in the late sixteenth century.

Table 7.2 shows that overall the number of presentments declined in number in the period 1610 to 1639, even if we take into account the shorter sample period. In the period 1610 to 1639 the courts were not overwhelmed with increasing business arising from churchwardens.

Table 7.2

Ex-officio Presentments by Churchwardens at the Archdeacons' Visitation by Parish, 1610-1639

| | Cra | Fri | Bid | Ben | Haw | Gou | Sta | Total |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| The Clergy | | | 3 | 1 | | 1 | | 5 |
| The Church | | 1 | 1 | | 4 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| Laymen & The Church | 84 | 18 | 44 | 32 | 67 | 28 | 13 | 286 |
| Private Lives of Laymen | 167 | 33 | 67 | 25 | 73 | 90 | 67 | 522 |
| Miscellaneous | 4 | | 3 | | 4 | 1 | | 12 |
| Total Number of Presentments | 255 | 52 | 118 | 58 | 148 | 121 | 81 | 833 |

Source: CCAL Dcb X.9.9, X.5.1 pt1, X.5.1 pt2, X.5.5, X.5.9, X.6.4, X.6.7, X.6.8

These data in fact give some credence to Ingram's argument that the church courts were declining in importance in the period before the Civil War, due to popular discontent with ecclesiastical justice and growing competition from the secular courts. In total there were 833 presentments in the second period, of which only 13 (2%) of presentments related to the clergy and the church, 286 (34%) concerned laymen and the church, 522 (63%) involved the private lives of laymen and one per cent were miscellaneous. The concentration on the sexual behaviour of laymen and the relations of laymen with the church, therefore, increased in the seventeenth century. During the period 1570-1609 there were 828 presentments in the category 'private lives of laymen', 50 per cent of offences. In the period 1610-1639 there were 522 transgressions in this category, 63 per cent of the total. By contrast, there was markedly

less concern with the activities of the clergy and irregularities in the fabric and furnishings of the church, which had presumably been brought into conformity with the requirements of the church by this time.

Appendix 18 provides an analysis of presentments at visitations by parish in the period 1570 to 1639. The figures reveal interesting variations between the parishes in the different types of presentments. In Benenden, Frittenden and Goudhurst, concern with the religious behaviour of laymen ranged from 34 to 55 per cent in the period 1570 to 1609 and 23 to 55 per cent in the period 1610 to 1639. Presentments related to the private lives of laymen ranged from 82 (38%) in Benenden to 254 (57%) in Cranbrook in the period 1570 to 1609, and from 117 (43%) in Benenden to 167 (65%) in Cranbrook in the period 1610 to 1639. Concern over ecclesiastical and moral discipline in these parishes continued to be important in the period overall (1570-1639). Only in Benenden were presentments relating to the laymen and the church more frequent than presentments concerning personal behaviour: 151 (55%) in the period 1570-1639 overall. In Hawkhurst, the high incidence of disciplinary presentments for disorderliness by laymen in relation to the church is also noticeable at 107 (43%) between 1570 and 1609, and 67 presentments (49%) between 1610 and 1639. However, official discipline of the conduct of parishioners in their obligations to the church dwindled in the period overall, from 66 (34%) to 28 (23%) in Goudhurst, and from 70 (42%) to 13 (16%) in Staplehurst. By contrast the 'reformation of manners' aimed at the private sexual conduct of parishioners, increased from 108 (56%) to 90 (74%) in Goudhurst, and from 73 (44%) to 67 (83%) in Staplehurst, where the pursuit of 'godly' probity evidently took on an exceptional zeal in the first half the seventeenth century. To summarise, although the numbers of all presentments per annum decreased between

the first and second periods, the concern among churchwardens over personal, moral and sexual offences increased between the two periods.

Parochial Discipline: Laymen and the Church

What were the issues of authority and discipline that concerned parish officers in Cranbrook and its adjacent parishes, which led to presentment at the church courts? Can an elite campaign to reform the disorderly behaviour of the poor and irreligious be discerned? As we noted in the previous chapter, late sixteenth century presentments show an often contradictory struggle taking place within the parish vestry to implement the protestant reforms. Not all parishioners were well disposed to the teachings of the church and some railed against their ministers in the performance of their duty while others absented themselves from church.

Absenteeism from church in Benenden was high in the period 1570 to 1610. In the category 'laymen and the church' 34 out of 119 parishioners (29%) were presented for being absent from church. This was the largest number within this category. A further 32 parishioners (27%) absented themselves from holy communion at this time. In Benenden, in 1608, Rose Watts refused to come to the minister when he called her for catechising, 'wherein in a most ridiculous manner she behaved herself, sitting upon a form and refusing to stand up'. The churchwardens also accused Rose of infrequent church attendance and refusal to stand up during the confession, when she 'doth nothing but laugh and use other unseemly gestures in the time of confession'. In the same year Edward Burgess's wife was admonished because 'she refuses to stand up at the time of the confession', a request that the congregation of Benenden were 'often admonished and put in mind thereof'.¹³ William Watts was presented because he 'wilfully absented himself from church and divine service' and for railing that his

'minister preaches nothing but Aesop's fables'. Watts' abuse of Vincent Huffam, the minister of Benenden, was quite vicious and personal: he called the minister's wife 'a dahlia' in the churchyard after prayers, and offered '8d a day for her to pitch to his wagon'. The churchwardens and congregation were offended by Watts' disorderly behaviour (including unseemly gestures in church) during services, sermons and catechising.¹⁴ The sexual slander of Huffams' wife as 'a delila' questioned her virtue and was, by implication, defaming the minister as a cuckold.

The proportion of parishioners presented for being absent from church and failing to take communion was also high in the parish of Staplehurst, where 54 offences (77%) out of a total of 70 presentments were made in the category 'laymen and the church'. Seventeen per cent of presentments in all the parishes for offences relating to 'laymen and the church' were for failure to attend church, and 29 per cent for failure to take holy communion, in the period 1570-1610. In the later period this had declined to 16 per cent for absence from church and six per cent for failure to take communion. It seems that the campaign by churchwardens to improve church attendance was having some effect and that presentments for ungodly behaviour during the late Elizabethan period were beginning to make a difference by the early seventeenth century.

Recusants were particularly likely to come under suspicion in the late Elizabethan period, when the threat of Catholic invasion and the fear of 'popish' insurgency at home were at their height. In this period the Bakers of Sissinghurst (in Cranbrook) remained a traditionally Catholic gentry family. Zell has argued that as long as they 'conformed, conservatives like Sir John Baker...continued to hold both their central government posts and their commissions as Kent magistrates'.¹⁵ However, in July 1594, Mary Baker, wife of John Baker, was presented at the Assizes for recusancy along with her maidservant Eleanor Breacher, and Elizabeth Hendley. In

1596 Lady Baker and her maidservant once again came under suspicion as recusants and were presented to the church courts.¹⁶

In Benenden 12 people were presented to the church courts for recusancy in the period 1570-1610, many from prominent families. George Guildford Esq. and his wife Dorothy, who came before the church courts in 1606/7, were among this group.¹⁷ In the same year they were brought before the Kent Quarter Sessions along with other Benenden recusants because 'they did not repair to their parish church of Benenden'. Sir Henry Guildford and his wife Elizabeth were also indicted for recusancy at the Assizes in March 1613, while Thomas Gildredge, gentleman, and his wife were presented as 'popish recusants' in the church courts, Quarter Sessions and the Assizes. In Goudhurst, Sir Alexander Culpepper came to the attention of the church courts in July 1590. He was indicted at the Assizes for being 'recusant for 16 months' in September 1595, and was also indicted at the Quarter Sessions in 1595, when a certificate was presented from 'the vicar and the churchwardens of Goudhurst that Sir Alexander Culpepper was the only recusant there'.¹⁸ Some Catholics, who conformed to a degree but privately maintained their own beliefs, continued to be presented at the church courts and the secular courts into the seventeenth century. John Mason of Goudhurst was presented as a recusant (1631) and 'for having a child baptised in his own house after the popish manner'.¹⁹ In the period 1635-1647, 30 indictments for recusancy were made at the Assizes against parishioners from Biddenden, Cranbrook, Goudhurst and Hawkhurst when not only popish recusants came under the suspicion of the authorities but also dissenting Protestants appeared to pose a threat to the political and religious order.

Concern to create a more orderly community by enforcing regular religious worship appears to have been important to church officers. Presentments for poor

church attendance focused on the potential for disorder that could ensue if religious observance lapsed. During the late sixteenth century a campaign against drinking and victualling in the time of divine service, dancing and playing games, and working and trading on the Sabbath was also waged in the Cranbrook neighbourhood. However, it would be wrong to presume that this movement was merely aimed at controlling the conduct of the poorer sort. Irregular church attendance and enjoyment of merrymaking, drinking and playing games on Sundays and Holy days cut across the social hierarchy. In turn, ecclesiastical and social discipline was not the concern of puritans alone; abhorrence of social disorder was part of the elite mentality of governance, and arose as much from economic pressures as from religious concerns. A directive written into the west Kent order book for 1633 shows the authorities' concern to prevent disorderly behaviour and reduce the potential for increased poverty. It sets out corrective strategies for the misuse of alehouses and charges local office holders with the administration of government initiatives:

‘Alehouses kept without licence and many others by unfit persons and in unfit places in a disorderly manner and upon consideration of the great abuse of masterless men and women who having no means of living but their labours doe live out of service...and of the swarms of Rogues and Vagabonds wandering in all places, for the reformation of all which is ordered that the justices of the peace in their several divisions do with all convenient speed send their warrants to all constables, petty constables and borsholders...And in one month partake unto them in counting under the hands of themselves and the minister and churchwardens, overseers of the poor and other substantial householders of every parish what number of inns, taverns there are in every parish’.²⁰

In 1640 the local justices received a letter from John Banks which complained about an increase in the vice of drunkenness and the great multitude of alehouses in the county. Banks protested that ‘every parish throughout the kingdom is overgrown with these odious foul sins, drunkenness, swearing and whoredom’.²¹

The ecclesiastical and the secular courts used their authority to respond to elite perceptions of contemporary social problems. The increased workload of local magistrates and parish officers derived from new administrative burdens placed on local communities, including the supervision of poor relief and of prescribed norms for personal morality. A perceived need for social discipline informed the attitudes of officers in the secular and church courts, and as we shall see, necessitated the implementation of a 'reformation of manners'.

At the end of the sixteenth century, and in the wake of the terrible plague epidemic of 1597, the vicar of Cranbrook, William Eddy, wrote in the parish register, that plague in the parish was a 'judgement of God for sin...especially that vice of drunkenness which did abound in the town'. Eddy blamed the 'inns and victualling houses of the town, places of great disorder' as well as the immorality and sexual incontinence of parishioners for the outbreak of disease, but lamented the fact that God's punishment, far from drawing people into 'repentance, many seemed to be more hardened in their sin'.²² The plague raged for nearly sixteen months, from April 1597 to July 1598, and killed at least 192 inhabitants, mainly women and children. Of the 246 deaths recorded in the burial register for this period, 78 per cent were plague victims. Twenty-five unfortunate casualties who died in the outlying quarters of Plushinghurst, Haseldenswood and Golford were buried 'near to their dwellings because they could get none to carry them unto the church'.²³ Plague swept through the town without any respect for the wealth or moral probity of its victims. The puritan Reginald Lovell lost his two young children, Faithfull and Comfort, to the plague and their bodies were unceremoniously buried in Golford quarter. But the minister upbraided parishioners for their vices of drunkenness and promiscuity in the language of traditional Protestantism, not in a specifically puritan rhetoric.

In Benenden, Cranbrook and Goudhurst presentments for drinking and victualling in the time of divine service numbered 28 (8% of presentments in the category 'laymen and the church') in the period 1570 to 1609. This increased to 20 (14%) in these parishes in the period 1610-1639. In Biddenden in the early period they numbered 14 (14% of presentments). In Cranbrook in the later period, presentments for disorderly alehouse drinking and victualling in service time, assumed greater importance with the authorities, when they numbered 17 (20% of presentments). In Hawkhurst, 13 offences (19%) in this category concerned Sunday drinking. These figures point to an increased concern about alehouses, particularly with respect to Sunday opening, but more generally as establishments where drunkenness could incite immorality, disorder and idleness. Wrightson has argued that 'at the level of the community, the struggle over alehouses was one of the most significant social dramas of the age'.²⁴

The surviving Quarter Sessions rolls from 1600 to 1604 include at least 16 infractions for illicit alehouse keeping from Cranbrook and its neighbourhood. The importance of tippling as a by-employment to supplement the household income is evident: butchers, weavers, labourers, and widows were presented for 'keeping an unlicensed tippling house'.²⁵ The surviving sessions papers from 1577-1622 confirm that the regulation of disorderly or unlicensed tippling houses occupied much of the justices' time. Justices of the Peace used their authority to direct hundred constables to maintain lists of alehouse keepers who infringed the licensing laws, and searches for 'rogues and vagabonds' were common.²⁶ It was not just the poorer sort who engaged in this illicit activity: in 1598 John Beeching of Hawkhurst, clothier, was indicted for 'keeping a common tippling house', and John Foster and Richard Waterman of

Cranbrook, clothiers, (1617) 'kept common alehouses and tippling houses without licence'.²⁷

Either the problem of illicit drinking and victualling was growing or there were greater efforts being made to regulate and control the number of unlicensed alehouses. Periods of dearth (1594-8, 1623-4 and 1630) provided an increased incentive to regulate the activities of alehouses. The Books of Orders were invoked by the justices in an attempt to restrict the brewing of ale in order maintain barley stocks.²⁸ The seriousness with which Justices of the Peace and parish officials took their duty to implement the Books of Orders is shown in the increased numbers of indictments at the Assizes during the late 1620s and 1630s, when there were 72 indictments for unlicensed tippling in the Cranbrook neighbourhood alone.²⁹

Concern over alehouses, however, arose not simply from a desire to regulate their activities in response to crises. Churchwardens in Cranbrook presented parishioners found drinking and victualling in service time in order to discipline the 'ungodly' and to contain the rising level of poverty in the parish. In contemporary Rye a similar concern with alehouses resulted in a tightening of the victualler's recognizance in 1575, which ordered them not to 'suffer to remain any idle person or persons long to sit singing, drinking'; the following year they were ordered not 'to suffer any labouring person...which hath wife or children in the said town or liberties to sit drinking or to spend their money within the house'.³⁰

In 1574 Thomas Fowle, a Cranbrook alehouse keeper, was presented for 'that he keeps evil rule in his house upon Sundays and holy days, selling meat and drink in the preaching and service time...to the evil example and offence of godly neighbours'. In Benenden (1584) Thomas Davington was presented for 'lying at the alehouse at Benenden using no trade for his living', whilst his kinsman Richard Davington was

also presented for 'selling bread and drink in the time of divine service'.³¹ In Biddenden (1598) Mathew Wacher, tavern keeper, was presented for selling beer and victuals on the Sabbath in divine service. The unruly behaviour that could ensue after a few drinks is illustrated by the scuffle between John Beal and the parish sidesmen, who had left the church service in order to patrol the village looking for offenders. When charged with leaving the tavern to attend church, Beal shook his fist and 'derided the sidesmen'; he 'then returned to the tavern...where he and his company remained till some were so drunk that they were not able to ride to their own dwelling'.³²

Disapproval of a disorderly and 'sinful' alehouse culture comes across forcefully in many seventeenth century presentments. In Goudhurst in 1611 Alexander Chintyn, servant, was in the local alehouse when he 'did most lewdly and rudely behave himself towards a maidservant, saying he would have his pleasure of her, following her up and down the house with his member in his hand'. Margaret Smith of Hawkhurst was accused in 1621 not only of adultery, but also of 'offending her brethren by drunkenness'. In Biddenden too, misgivings that alehouses drew parishioners away from their trades, and encouraged idleness, informed respectable attitudes. Richard Clyfe was presented (1611) for 'that he hath of a long time led a very disordered lewd life, in frequenting alehouses...and not following his vocation...and hath not received holy communion.' Richard Sole of Biddenden, was similarly chastised for 'drunkenness, whereupon he greatly misdeemed himself to the dishonour of God and the offence of good Christians'.³³ In Cranbrook (1623) John Holdish was presented for 'offending his brethren by his absence from church and drinking in time of divine service'.³⁴

The social austerity conventionally associated with puritans is exemplified in presentments against dancing, music and games and aimed at preserving the sanctity of

the Sabbath. As Hutton has noted, churchmen had been concerned to discourage excessive merriment on the Sabbath from medieval times when decrees aimed at controlling unruly behaviour were enacted. It was not necessarily an attitude specific to puritans. The Sabbath was a time for sobriety and Christian worship; indeed 'bodily labour was less sinful upon that day than vain or idle pastime, such as dancing'.³⁵ There was also, perhaps, a desire to control the youthful high spirits of servants and apprentices who might otherwise be led astray. In Cranbrook in 1570, Walter Mascall was presented for 'keeping dancing in his house upon the Sabbath whereby the people be stirred to wantonness'.³⁶

Churchwardens frequently employed apprentices and servants within their households. It was part of their social duty as responsible householders and church officials to discipline their behaviour. In Goudhurst in 1594 Alexander Rode was presented for allowing 'persons to play cards on the Sabbath day', and in Hawkhurst in 1605 four young men were presented for 'pitching ball in time of divine service'. The following year in Cranbrook, *James Rich* offended his brethren for 'keep[ing] disorder in his house upon the Sabbath day in the time of divine service, fiddling, piping and, as we suspect, dancing'.³⁷ Time spent in the alehouse or at Sunday pastimes was liable to draw young people away from religious observance and was therefore sinful. So in Benenden Philip Martin was presented for 'playing the fiddle at unlawful times upon St Peter's day, to draw the younger sort of people to spend their time unlawfully'.³⁸

Efforts to enforce the Sabbath, particularly the control of working and trading on Sundays, were especially strong in Cranbrook and Hawkhurst, where approximately 20 presentments (8%) in the period 1570-1609 categorized as 'laymen and the church' were for these offences. As a major market centre for the locality, Cranbrook traders may have been tempted to 'open their shop windows' on Sundays, especially

shopkeepers whose perishable goods may not have been sold in the town's Saturday market. In the period 1610 to 1639 there was a significant increase in the presentments of individuals for neglect of Sunday worship. In Cranbrook, 10 offences (12%) in this category were for working and trading on Sunday, a trend that was even more marked in neighbouring Benenden, eight (25%), and Hawkhurst, 23 (34%). Attempts to control the incidence of Sunday trading were aimed at the middling sort of artisan and shopkeeper as well as husbandmen who infringed the sanctity of the Sabbath by plying their trade. The local campaign to enforce the Sabbath was thus not confined to disciplining the poorer sort, but touched a wide cross-section of the laity.

In 1599 John and Richard Hovenden, members of a wealthy Cranbrook clothmaking and farming family with a strong tradition of parish office holding, were presented for that they did 'reap wheat on the Sabbath day'.³⁹ Thomas Starr, tailor, of Cranbrook, kinsman to the strongly 'puritan' Starr family, was brought before the courts for 'keeping his shop window open in the time of divine service'. In Benenden, Peter Crothall, mercer, contravened the Sabbath by 'selling his wares' and in 1605 a series of presentments against husbandmen, for shearing sheep, mowing the grass and making hay were made in Hawkhurst, where an enforcement wave against Sunday working is evident.⁴⁰ Weavers and clothworkers were frequently caught plying their trade on Sundays, when the demand for cloth in the region was high, even though as cottage workers they were less visible than those in the market place.⁴¹

Parochial concern with the godly discipline of the laity and the maintenance of religious observance cut across status and occupational hierarchies, and were not aimed especially at the poor. Churchwardens aspired to maintain a high standard of religious observance and piety, ideals which exemplified the protestant, and for some puritan ethos, of sobriety and regular church attendance. Nevertheless, the continuing

presentments for such offences as drinking and victualling in service time and working on the Sabbath, suggests that their campaigns were only partially successful. Clearly, expectations of social behaviour and religious observance varied within individual communities. Not all parishioners accepted the moral requirements demanded of them by parish elites, and even some 'parish elites' were divided on these issues.

Active participation as a parish official did not place one above reproach in seventeenth century Cranbrook: the reform of disorderly behaviour was aimed at anyone who transgressed social norms. William Hickmotte, butcher served as an overseer of the poor, one of the most senior positions within the vestry in 1607, but had been presented along with Robert Scales, butcher, for killing and selling meat on the Sabbath in 1606. Four years later, in 1610, William Hickmotte, Robert Scales, Thomas Munn and Thomas Weller, all well-off butchers, some of whom had served or were still to serve as parish officers, were all presented for keeping their shop windows open and selling meat on the Sabbath.⁴²

In the period 1570 to 1639 (at least) 148 churchwardens and parish officers from these parishes were presented to the church courts. In Hawkhurst 31 officers (33%) out of a total of 97 parish officers identified, were brought before the courts between 1594 and 1639. In Biddenden, of the 126 parish officers identified, 24 (19%) came before the courts. In Cranbrook 277 officers were identified in the period 1570 to 1639 of whom 35 (13%) were presented to the church courts.⁴³ And, because of the incomplete nature of the sources for the parishes outside Cranbrook, these figures are likely to be an underestimate of the overall number of officers presented. A high proportion of presented officers had committed sexual offences: 35 (30%) out of the 148 presentments. Fifteen presentments (22%) were for officers failing to pay the church scott and 23 presentments (16%) were for being absent from church and

communion. Twenty-three officers (16%) also found themselves before the courts for Sunday trading or working their farms on the Sabbath, whereas 20 others were presented for drunkenness and disorderly fighting in the churchyard.⁴⁴ These figures demonstrate that not all parish officers led exemplary, godly lives, and that many vestrymen were being presented for the same moral and religious lapses as their neighbours. But, these presentments also demonstrate that even in this age of moral reforming, parishioners were not barred from office because they had been presented to the church courts.

Parochial Discipline: the Private Lives of Laymen

If the record of presentments concerning the issue of the laity's religious obligations tells us something about the way the community experienced religion in these parishes, then the far greater number of presentments concerned with personal morality hint at a related campaign to enforce sexual discipline and instil traditional Christian values in the neighbourhood's parishioners.

Churchwardens became increasingly ready to present the private misdemeanours of laymen, which had, perhaps, previously been regarded with neighbourly tolerance. In the period 1570-1609 in the neighbourhood parishes overall, 828 (50%) presentments were concerned with the 'private lives of laymen'; this increased to 522 (63%) in the period 1610-1639 (see Table 7.1, 7.2). The most common presentments were of a sexual nature (fornication, incontinence, adultery and bastardy), but those who fostered neighbourly discontent as a scold, blasphemer, swearer and common drunkard were also likely to be presented (Appendices 17(a), 17(b). Parishioners presented on 'common fame' were also subject to the jaundiced accusations of neighbours. Yet, it is simplistic to see the 'reformation of manners' in

Cranbrook purely in terms of changes in religious attitudes. It must be remembered that cyclical crises in the cloth industry, as well as a rising population stretched parochial resources to the limit. Such economic considerations also informed parochial attitudes to the issue of sexual misconduct.

The neighbourhood area was the home of many young apprentices and servants, some of whom were sexually active but not financially able to establish their own households. Parish officers responsible for collecting the local rates would have been well aware of the financial burden of poor relief, arising from disorderly sexual behaviour. In reality, it will be shown that many baseborn infants were maintained at their father's expense.

In Cranbrook and its neighbourhood most presentments were for sexual offences: the crimes of fornication, incontinence, adultery and bastard bearing constituted the largest group of presentments in the period 1570-1639. However, quantifying and interpreting the sources is not unproblematic. Presentments were not always consistent in naming both parties in a sexual relationship. In this analysis two persons have been counted where two were cited to appear. Also women's marital status is not always clear: women who were presented without the addition of 'wife' or 'widow' cannot be assumed to have been unmarried. Presentments that include the addition 'single woman' or 'servant' imply a young woman. The terminology used in fornication and adultery citations can also be unclear. There is a problem of categorizing cases when there appears to be an overlap of offences. I have included all those presentments which contribute to discussing the question, what sorts of sexual immorality were the churchwardens most concerned about? Distinguishing between 'fornication' and 'adultery' provides insight into whether it is the illicit sexuality of youth that most concerns the churchwardens, or sexual activity outside marriage. Of

course there is the problem that one partner might be presented for adultery, while the other was presented for fornication and bastard bearing.

Table 7.3

Sexual Offences 1570-1609

| Offence | Cra | Sta | Haw | Gou | Ben | Bid | Fri | Total |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------------|
| Fornication | 71 | 8 | 11 | 17 | 25 | 27 | 19 | 178 (26%) |
| Adultery | 17 | 8 | 18 | 15 | 9 | 21 | 2 | 90 (13%) |
| Pre-Nuptial Pregnancy | 7 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 3 | 7 | 0 | 24 (3%) |
| Bastardy | 37 | 16 | 13 | 40 | 15 | 4 | 11 | 136 (19%) |
| Incontinence | 95 | 29 | 68 | 16 | 9 | 51 | 8 | 276 (39%) |
| Total | 227 | 61 | 110 | 95 | 61 | 110 | 40 | 704 |

Source: see Table 7.1 *There were also 9 presentments for irregular marriage, 10 bigamy, 6 rape, 1 buggery, 4 prostitution and 4 incest

It is for this reason that where both parties were cited they have both been included as persons rather than single offences. The terms ‘fornication’ and ‘incontinence’ could also be used interchangeably, and many presentments were imprecise in identifying the fact that a woman was pregnant or had given birth to a bastard child as being the offence rather than citing the sexual misdeed.

Tables 7.3 and 7.4 include all those presented for fornication, adultery, pre-nuptial pregnancy, *bastardy* or *incontinence*. *There were no fewer than 704* presentments for sexual offences in the neighbourhood parishes between 1570 and 1609, 85 per cent of presentments in the category ‘private lives of laymen’; roughly 18 sexual presentments per annum. In the period 1610-1639 there were 460 presentments for sexual offences, 88 per cent in this category, or about 16 per annum. In four out of seven parishes (Biddenden, Cranbrook, Hawkhurst and Staplehurst) incontinence was the most presented sexual offence in the period 1570-1609. In 1610-1639 it was the most presented offence in six out of seven parishes.

Table 7.4**Sexual Offences 1610-1639**

| Offence | Cra | Sta | Haw | Gou | Ben | Bid | Fri | Total |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------------|
| Fornication | 51 | 2 | 23 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 100 (22%) |
| Adultery | 9 | 3 | 7 | 5 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 35 (8%) |
| Pre-Nuptial Pregnancy | 3 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 15 (3%) |
| Bastardy | 6 | 6 | 8 | 27 | 7 | 11 | 5 | 70 (15%) |
| Incontinence | 88 | 52 | 23 | 33 | 5 | 22 | 17 | 240 (52%) |
| Total | 157 | 64 | 62 | 74 | 24 | 50 | 29 | 460 |

Source: see Table 7.2 There were also presentments for irregular marriage 3, bigamy 3, rape 3, prostitution 3, and incest 4

Fornication was the second most common sexual offence in Biddenden, Cranbrook and Goudhurst in the period 1570-1610, when overall there were 175 presentments for sexual misconduct between unmarried men and women. Bastardy accounted for 136 of presentments (19%) in the period 1570 to 1609 and 70 (15%) in the period 1610 to 1639. There was considerable variation between parishes for this offence. In Goudhurst bastardy presentments were exceptionally numerous in both periods with 40 (42%) in the period 1570-1609 and 27 (36.4%) in 1610-1639. Benenden presentments for this offence numbered 15 (24.5%) in the period 1570-1609 and seven (29.1%) in the period 1610-1639; and in Staplehurst there were 16 (26.2%) in the period 1570-1609 and only six (9.3%) in the period 1610-1639. In Cranbrook there were 37 presentments (16.2%) for bastardy in the period 1570-1609 but only 6 (3.8%) in the period 1610 to 1639. However, not all bastard-bearers in Cranbrook were presented. In the period 1570 to 1599 the parish register records 29 baptisms with the addition 'bastard' against the entry, and in the period 1600 to 1629 there were 39.⁴⁵ Laslett has shown that there was a comparatively low level of illegitimacy in early modern England,⁴⁶ but Ingram has argued that illegitimacy levels varied between different communities, and that parish

registers underestimate the number of births because some children were not baptised.⁴⁷ Presentments for bastardy in the neighbourhood reached a peak at the end of sixteenth century, although there was considerable local variation

The church court evidence suggests that by the late sixteenth century there was less tolerance of disorderly sexual conduct, and that presentments for these offences increased further in the seventeenth century. Presentments for sexual incontinence numbered 276 (39%) in the period 1570-1609 and 240 (52%) in the later period. Those for fornication numbered 178 (26%) in the early period and 100 (22%) in the latter. In terms of popular culture there may have been an acceptance of extramarital sexual activity, but as far as the church courts were concerned it was a sin. Jones has shown that a high incidence of prosecution for sexual offences in the late medieval and early Tudor period was linked to economic and religious factors, and argued that the 'church courts pursued alleged adulterers in fact more vigorously before about 1520 than later'.⁴⁸ In Cranbrook and its neighbourhood in the period 1570-1609 there were 704 presentments for sexual offences (fornication, incontinence, adultery and bastardy). Sexual offences amounted to 43 per cent of the total number of 1,622 presentments made in all categories in this period. In the period 1610-1639 there were 460 presentments for sexual offences, representing 55 per cent of the total number of 833 presentments made in this period.

The growing numbers of presentments suggest an increased effort to impose sexual discipline in the Cranbrook neighbourhood. A combination of religious conviction and economic concerns were instrumental in encouraging parish worthies to take a harsher view of incontinence and fornication in the seventeenth century. In 1608 concern with the mounting costs of poor relief in Cranbrook produced a directive by parish officers requiring 'all the honest yeomen and inhabitants' to exclude incomers to

the town who might place a burden on parochial funds.⁴⁹ Expenditure on poor relief continued to rise through the early seventeenth century. In May 1612 a sesse was made for the relief of the poor of £104 9s. In fact, the sum paid to the poor was £128 18s, and the shortfall was met from parish rents. By 1615 the poor sesse was raised to £114 5s, while payments to the parish poor and for placing of poor children into apprenticeship had risen to £132 13s. The following year the overseers of the poor raised three sesses for poor relief, bringing in £130 9s. But £146 4s was actually spent to relieve the burden of the poor and to place poor children, leaving a deficit that again had to be met from rents from parish properties.⁵⁰ The escalating burden of poor relief was therefore an important influence on the attitudes of Cranbrook's 'chief inhabitants', who were charged with collecting and disbursing the funds.

In Biddenden, a parish cautioned by the Archdeacon's court for presenting too frequently in the early seventeenth century, a concern with poverty may have reflected a real problem in the parish. In 1582 the parish governors had 'erected and built two houses within the parish for the use of the poor'. They were to be 'ordered and governed...by the churchwardens and ten of the chieftest and most substantial men'. The churchwardens were made responsible for the placing and displacing of paupers, which inevitably gave churchwardens considerable discretion in dispensing parish relief.⁵¹ By 1636 it is said that the parishioners were 'greatly charged with annual rents for the houses and habitations for the poor people in the parish'. The churchwardens and overseers sought to raise funds to enlarge and repair the property but wanted its use restricted so that 'no other persons but the old, aged and impotent persons that have monthly relief at the charge of the parish and that no young persons able to labour be placed there'.⁵²

The condemnation of sexual immorality by officials also entailed a reinforcement of the patriarchal ideal of the family. The rhetoric of the well-ordered domestic household was preached both by the clergy and parish officers in this period. Foyster argues that 'puritan ministers had ensured that patriarchal ideas reached a wider audience when they adopted them in their sermons and writings'.⁵³ In Cranbrook, as we have noted in the previous chapter, sympathetic ministers and preachers were responsible for widening the appeal of 'godly religion'; concurrently parish officers were keen to impose stricter moral discipline on parishioners. Ingram has sought to downplay the severity of the 'reformation of manners' in Wiltshire by arguing that social discipline was not novel in the Elizabethan period.⁵⁴ Evidence of sexual enforcement drives in Kent in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries supports Ingram's case. Nevertheless, the intensity of ecclesiastical and secular discipline in individual parishes should not be underestimated. In Cranbrook 'puritan' teaching can be identified as one of the influences which may help to explain the large number of presentments against sexual immorality in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

The rhetoric of disapproval found in presentments is evidence of official thinking in this area. In Benenden, Julyan Ffyres and Alice had a child out of wedlock for which they were presented to the church courts in 1571, as a warning to others; for if 'such filthy sin which is detestable before God should be unpunished, honest people should be much troubled and charged with their bastards'.⁵⁵ Some of those brought before the courts were young servant girls made pregnant by their masters. Unfortunately, identifying the servants from the information provided in presentments is not always possible. The status of servant and master is not always given, even when a young girl is presented for fornication and bastard bearing. The case of Thomas Wells

and Anne Fawtrell is typical and highlights the unfortunate consequences of the contemporary sexual double standard. Thomas Wells of Benenden was initially presented to the authorities in 1597 for 'keeping beads and other books of popery'. In the same year he was also presented for 'committing fornication with his servant Anne Fawtrell' who bore him a child 'by her confession at the birth of the child'. Both Wells and Fawtrell were also examined by, Sir Thomas Roberts (who found that the child had been stillborn) in his capacity as the local Justice of the Peace. Roberts found Wells and Fawtrell guilty and ordered that Wells pay 'the collectors of the relief of the poor of Benenden £6 13s 4d 'as well as 53s for the keep of Anne, 'being weak and diseased'. However, Anne was ordered to be 'set in the stocks openly upon some Sunday or holy day from nine in the forenoon until four in the afternoon...and shall further be whipped with 20 stripes'.⁵⁶ The incident illustrates contemporary notions of justice and the practice of public shaming imposed on women who transgressed social and religious norms. Male householders could through a process of *compurgation and fines* avoid the public humiliation that befell women. The maidservant often had to bear the harshest consequences of abuse, through public shaming and loss of employment. For both master and servant the loss of good repute in their community could be damaging, hence some masters tried to absolve themselves of responsibility, by encouraging the servant to lay the blame elsewhere. In 1578 Richard Benton was charged with fornication with Elizabeth Burryshe, servant, whom he had allegedly made pregnant. Benton claimed that Elizabeth, prior to confessing the incident to the churchwardens and sidesmen, had 'openly in the church caused and charged one Taylor her master to have carnal knowledge of her body'.⁵⁷

In 1579 it was found that John Osborne of Cranbrook had begotten his servant Alice Weeks with child, and that 'Margaret Martyn went from him also with child'.⁵⁸

In Biddenden in 1574 Richard Besbiche and Margaret Browning, his servant, were presented that 'contrary to the laws of God' they committed 'the great offence of whoredom'.⁵⁹ In 1594 Thomas Scranton was presented for 'an incontinent life with his servant Julian Fludd', and in 1606, John Wood, weaver, of Staplehurst was punished for 'incontinency with Margaret King, his servant'.⁶⁰ Householders, however, were vulnerable to false accusations, as in the case of Agnes Austen of Benenden, who 'reported that her master hath had to do with her three times'. Agnes also claimed that she was with child, although a search by local women on her body found this to be untrue.⁶¹

Most maidservants were vulnerable within the household, and subject to the master's authority, irrespective of their relative social status. When that position of trust was abused by masters, the gravity of sexual slander, and the subsequent loss of reputation in the community called the ideal of the patriarchal household into question.⁶² Accusations of sexual immorality between masters and servants also weakened the reciprocal bonds of authority and deference that legitimised status groups.⁶³

Thomas Austen, clothier, was presented in 1611 'for begetting his maid servant with child', as she avouched to the local Justice of the Peace, Sir Thomas Roberts.⁶⁴ The case of Laurence Poyle of Goudhurst shows that the authorities could also impose harsh punishments on male fornicators. In 1595 Poyle was presented for begetting his servant, Hovers, with child, although he continued to profess his innocence even when sentenced. The churchwardens acknowledged that he had already been punished by two local Justices of the Peace who ordered that Poyle give 'to the poor of the parish £6 13s, and pay 10d weekly' until the child reached the age of thirteen years. He was also

set in the stocks as a punishment on Easter day, when many parishioners would have witnessed his public shame.⁶⁵

Organising provision for social welfare was clearly an important aspect of parish governance. But parish relief was not the only source of financial support for unmarried mothers. Maintenance payments were also regulated by the Quarter Sessions. In 1593 an examination before Sir Thomas Roberts, regarding the incontinence of Margery Pattenden of Cranbrook with James Philpot, proved that Philpot was the father of her child.⁶⁶ At the Maidstone sessions in September 1600, Robert Russell was accused of begetting a bastard child on the body of Joanne Awborne at Staplehurst. It was ordered that Russell 'pay the churchwardens all the arrears due before he departed the town and pay 10d' until such time as the court ordered otherwise.⁶⁷ A dispute over parochial responsibility in Biddenden, in 1602, shows that parish officers were not keen to accept the financial burden of maintenance. Thomas Stephens, aged five years, was kept at the charge of the parish although he had a mother and grandfather living at Benenden. It was argued that the mother was able to work and the grandfather had some goods. The Justices of the Peace were asked to consider whether the child should remain the responsibility of the parish or be kept by the parents or jointly.⁶⁸ At the west Kent sessions in 1636, controversy concerned which parish should be responsible for the 'keeping of Joanne Morris and her newly delivered bastard child'. It was decided that Staplehurst 'ought to keep and relieve the said Morris'.⁶⁹

Living away from parental control afforded apprentices and servants a freedom that could result in an unwanted pregnancy. Katherine Bigg, servant to Edmund Gooch, had a relationship with a young sawyer, and was presented for having a baseborn child in Biddenden parish. The young man abdicated his financial responsibility and

vanished from the parish after Katherine's confession.⁷⁰ Some unfortunate girls, who might have had a good hope of marriage, were left to bear the consequences of a relationship of unfulfilled promises.

It was not unusual for couples to begin sexual relations before church marriage, especially when a marriage contract was in sight. Ingram suggests that 'rates [of pre-nuptial pregnancy] varied between communities and in some places declined from the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth century'.⁷¹ Collinson found that in Canterbury diocese as a whole there was an increase in presentments for this offence in the late sixteenth century.⁷² In Wrightson and Levine's study of Terling, Essex presentations for bridal pregnancy in the 1620s are seen as part of a 'puritan' movement against sexual immorality.⁷³ Within Cranbrook and its neighbourhood area, newlyweds were being presented for bridal pregnancy well before the 1620s, and the incidence of this offence did not dramatically increase in the seventeenth century. However, the prosecution of pre-nuptial pregnancy was not very common in any neighbourhood parish: in the period 1570-1609 and 1610-1639 presentments for pre-nuptial pregnancy only accounted for 3 to 3.2 per cent of sexual offences. Benenden, Biddenden and Goudhurst parishes presented most of these offences. (See Table 7.3, 7.4)

The incidence of bridal pregnancy and bastardy suggests that some couples waited until the birth of a child was imminent before setting up an independent household. And the phenomenon was not confined to the poorest in society. Lawrence Sharpe, clothier, and his wife Ann were presented in 1603, 'for they had committed fornication with each other before their marriage as appears by the birth of their child'. Richard Couchman, the son of Edward Couchman, yeoman, committed fornication with Elizabeth Morris; 'Elizabeth confessed' that Richard was the father 'both before the birth and at the birth'. They both fled the parish of Biddenden rather than face

public humiliation.⁷⁴ Peter Smith, husbandman of Goudhurst, was presented in 1608 for having ‘carnal knowledge of Lydia Swann’s body’. A neighbour, Elizabeth Harman who saw their activities, reported them to the churchwardens. Smith was presented again in that year for the same offence and with the same partner, and again there were several ‘eyewitnesses’.⁷⁵

Sexual incontinence was definitely seen as a problem which cut across the social hierarchy. Presentments for these offences cannot be regarded as a ‘reformation of manners’ aimed only at the poor, although periods of dearth and unemployment heightened awareness of the problem of poor relief at a parish level. At such times, in the periods 1590-1604, 1615-1627 and 1627-1638, the harsh language used in presentments and the sudden increase in the number of offences for bastard bearing and fornication is telling. In Cranbrook in the period 1590-1604 there were 97 presentments for sexual immorality, 43 per cent of the total in the period up to 1610. In Biddenden in the period 1590-1604 there were 59 sexual presentments, 54 per cent of the total. These examples show that periods of economic crisis coincided with enforcement waves against deviant sexual behaviour. Similarly, seventeenth century recessions in cloth production may have precipitated an increase in concern over sexual behaviour that could conceivably increase poor relief obligations (see Chapter 8).

In Cranbrook between 1615 and 1620 there were 43 sexual offences (mainly fornication and incontinence), and in the period 1620-1627 there were 54. Goudhurst, Hawkhurst and Staplehurst the period 1620-1627 recorded 95 presentments, 48 per cent of all these cases in the period 1610-1639 in those parishes. Cranbrook and its neighbourhood clearly experienced local campaigns to reform popular behaviour in response to economic circumstances. Campaigns by churchwardens were also initiated in accordance with their own perception of personal morality and religious order.

Everyone in the community was subject to the moral scrutiny of parish officers, regardless of social status: ecclesiastical justice was more egalitarian than might have been predicted.⁷⁶ An important aspect of popular justice was that the courts were seen to administer discipline with an even hand, although wealthy parishioners were sometimes treated less harshly than their poorer neighbours. In 1632 Thomas Couchman of Cranbrook, clothier, claimed that as a result of 'slanderous speeches' there was now a common fame amongst the poorer element, that had been taken up by 'the better sort of people within the said parish', that Thomas Couchman lived incontinently with Rebecca Browne. Subsequently Couchman was presented for having 'carnal knowledge of her body, three times in a wood', for which he paid her 13s. Couchman, a wealthy and influential man, had compurgators to speak for him and confirm his good name and reputation. The court, perhaps mindful of their disparate social status, found Rebecca Brown to be a 'notorious, idle, naughty and wicked person', and it was generally accepted that she had falsely accused him.⁷⁷

The loss of one's personal reputation due to malicious gossip was an embarrassment to all 'respectable' residents. The reputations of 'middling' householders, especially those of parishioners whose 'honest repute' was essential to their trade and status in the community, were most at risk from accusations brought about by 'common fame'. In 1608, Richard Bateman, clothier, was presented for 'incontinency' and fathering a child by his father's maidservant, Betrice Tasset. Mindful of the damage that such an accusation could have on his reputation, Bateman enlisted the support of his local minister in his protestation of innocence. John Whetcombe, the minister of Biddenden, wrote to the diocesan official, the 'right worshipful Dr. Newman' at Canterbury, asking for his leniency in the matter. Whetcombe noted that 'the young man Richard Bateman was by trade a clothier', and

raised questions about the moral history of the servant girl. He pleaded that Bateman's words and protestations were so 'vehement and powerful and pathetic' that a man 'privy of them would deem him wrongfully charged'.⁷⁸ In practice, at least in this case, local authority favoured the 'better sort' of inhabitant above the servant girl, whose inferior status brought her testimony into doubt.

Personal accusations against craftsmen of only modest wealth could nevertheless damage their ability to maintain their livelihood. Simon Drayner of Frittenden, tailor, was presented for having sex with his wife before marriage. They had married in 1628 and his wife Mary was expecting their child. The court found that although Simon 'lived in some esteem by his trade', 'he was a poor man' reliant upon 'the expectation and maintenance of work'. Drayner, concerned for his loss of good repute, protested that if he should be made to perform public penance, 'he might grow a person contemptible, by reason of evil people upbraiding him'.⁷⁹ Men and women of only modest status were anxious to avoid the public shame of being punished for sexual offences. In Cranbrook in 1627, Richard Earle and his wife Joanne were presented for fornication together prior to marriage. Earle argued that it was because his wife suffered two falls during her pregnancy that she was delivered of an 'abortive stillborn' child, prematurely, in May 1627 and that if this accident had not happened 'his wife would have gone out her full time'.⁸⁰ In a society keen to regulate private morality, public concern over the possible abortive delivery of the baby would have justified the intrusion of the courts into private grief. In February 1639 Margaret Pincon of Hawkhurst, spinster, was indicted at the assizes for infanticide, by an inquisition held at Hawkhurst in 1638 on the body of a male child. It was claimed that Margaret had given birth to a bastard child, which she immediately strangled, although the jury found her not guilty.⁸¹

Adultery was a much more common – and serious – charge brought by churchwardens against parishioners in the church courts. In the period 1570-1609 there were 90 presentments in the neighbourhood for adultery, 13 per cent of sexual offences. Adultery presentments in the later period numbered 35, 7.6% of sexual presentments. In the period 1570-1609, Biddenden, disciplined the highest number of parishioners for this offence, 21 (19%) and eight (16%) in the period 1610-1639. (See Table 7.3 and 7.4) The language used to condemn adultery in Biddenden between 1580 and 1589 says a good deal about social attitudes of the serving churchwardens at this time. John Smith, was presented for ‘committing the filthy act of adultery’, William Frynd and Alice the wife of Thomas Ashly were presented ‘upon vehement suspicion of the heinous crime of adultery’ and John Braswell for ‘using a whore, whereby he is burnt’.⁸²

In spite of the harsh tone of these presentments, there is evidence that some parishioners sought to alleviate the brutal consequences of an unwanted pregnancy for their neighbours. Sympathetic parishioners, who sought to care for women made pregnant but subsequently abandoned by the father, were liable to be brought before the courts themselves for ‘harbouring’ pregnant women.⁸³ Robert Ford and Thomas Beeching of Goudhurst were presented in 1599 for ‘receiving and harbouring a suspected woman with child’. In Benenden, a series of presentments in 1598 demonstrates the effect of parish discipline on the lapsed morality of the poor. Agnes Homes was presented for giving birth to ‘a base born child’. However, the kindness of her neighbours, William Pascall and his wife, resulted in their presentment for harbouring a pregnant woman, and another neighbour, Thomas Watkins, was presented for concealing the birth of the child. Widow Sloman, the midwife, brought in to deliver the child was also presented for ‘being at the birth of the child’.⁸⁴ The incident reveals

two sides of the communal response to illicit sexual activity, one the care and protection of the individual by the community, and the other an official preoccupation with social control and moral discipline.

Conventional protestant thinking in Cranbrook and its neighbourhood was the inspiration behind these campaigns to regulate personal morality. Puritan ideas may also have provided a mental framework for social discipline, which could be implemented at a parish level by sympathetic parish officers. Historians from Hill to Wrightson and Levine have portrayed 'puritanism' as an ideology of the 'better sort' of wealthy parish officer who imposed a degree of regulation on the 'poorer sort' in the community.⁸⁵ However, Spufford and Ingram have argued that the situation is more complex.⁸⁶ The question of how puritan ideas, economic dislocation and moral reform were linked can only be explained by looking at the economic and social characteristics of specific communities. In the case of Cranbrook, highly localized issues informed the churchwardens' efforts to impose social discipline. The concern of village elites to inculcate better church attendance necessitated a campaign against alehouses, Sunday drinking, dancing and revelling in service time. Office-holders implemented the ideals of the 'honest householder' and directed their attention to controlling and instilling moral discipline in the young and impressionable. The goal of creating an orderly community, based upon the ideals of official protestant thinking, shaped the regulation of private behaviour, which demanded higher standards of personal discipline than in the past. As we have seen, the presentment of sexual offenders was not limited to the poor. The demand for high moral standards was directed at all social ranks, with the 'better sort' as well as the 'poorer sort' of inhabitant being equally likely to be upbraided for disorderly behaviour.

This study has also shown that periodic enforcement waves were occasioned by harvest crises, employment opportunities and population growth, in parishes dependent upon the cloth industry for their prosperity. Rising poverty and the growing burden of poor relief were pertinent issues in these parishes. The enforcement of morality and religious observance was in the hands of the churchwardens of every parish, who had a traditional duty to denounce wrongdoers and discipline the community. In Cranbrook and its neighbouring parishes, churchwardens may also have aimed to instil in parishioners higher standards of personal behaviour. But ultimately, the successful governance of the parish, by its wealthy officeholders, rested upon pragmatic solutions to the problems of social discipline and making provision for the poor. Economic factors were therefore as important as the search for a 'godly reformation' in shaping parish policy. In Cranbrook the 'reformation of manners' was governed by a continually changing political agenda, determined by a complex web of religious and social imperatives, but implemented by individuals. Enforcement of religious discipline and private morality continued to be important, long after the church courts ceased to function in the 1640s. In the next chapter the contraction of textile manufacture in the Weald and the decline of Cranbrook's prosperity in the period 1640-1670 will be considered as well as the increased poverty that de-industrialisation brought with it.

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- ¹ C. Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (1964; 4th ed. 1991)
- ² K. Wrightson and D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village, Terling, 1525-1700* (1995)
- ³ M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1974)
- ⁴ M. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987) pp.70-83
- ⁵ R. Von-Freideburg, 'Reformation of Manners and the Social Composition of Offenders in an East Anglican Cloth Village: Earls Colne, Essex 1531-1642, *Journal of British Studies*, xxix (Oct. 1990) p.349
- ⁶ CKS P100/28/5; CCAL Dca/BT/59; CKS P20/1/1, P20/1/2; CCAL Dcb/BT/13; CKS P26/1/2; CCAL Dcb/BT/1/18, Dca/BT/1/78; CKS P178/1, P178/1/1-30; CCAL Dcb/BT/1/114; CKS P157/1/2, P157/28/1; CCAL Dca/BT/80; CKS P347/12/2; CCAL Dcb1/224
- ⁷ J. M. Potter, 'The Ecclesiastical Courts in the Diocese of Canterbury, 1603-1665' (University of Kent M.A., 1972) p.96
- ⁸ CKS P26/5/1 ff.10, 26, 68, 123
- ⁹ R. Phillimore, *Ecclesiastical Law and the Church of England*, xi, part iv (1895)
- ¹⁰ CCAL Dcb X.4.8 f.14
- ¹¹ M. Ingram, *Church Courts Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987) pp.4, 11
- ¹² K. M. Jones, 'Gender, Crime and the local Courts in Kent, 1460-1560' (University of Greenwich Ph.D, 2001)
- ¹³ CCAL X.9.9 f.41, f.43v
- ¹⁴ CCAL X.9.9 f.44v, f.45
- ¹⁵ M. Zell, 'Governing the County' in Zell (ed.), *Early Modern Kent 1540-1640* (Woodbridge, 2000) p.33; Zell, 'Kent Elizabethan JPs at Work: Appendix 1, Sir Richard Baker was commissioned as JP (1559-1594) [Sheriff, 1563, 1583]: attended Quarter Sessions 1560, 1564, 1570; Thomas Baker was JP (1598-1625: attended Quarter Sessions 1601
- ¹⁶ *Assizes*, i, p.362; CCAL X.4.3 f.17, f.18
- ¹⁷ CCAL X.4.11 f.67, 113, 196, X.9.9 f18
- ¹⁸ CKS QM/SI 1606 13; *Assizes*, ii, p.127, 308; CKS QM/SB/75
- ¹⁹ CCAL X.6.4 f.187
- ²⁰ CKS Q SO, W1 f.43
- ²¹ CKS U350 C2 88
- ²² CKS P100 28 5 f.92
- ²³ CKS P100 28 5
- ²⁴ K. Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680*, (1982) p.167, P. Clark, 'The Alehouse and Alternative Society' in D. Pennington and K. Thomas (eds.), *Puritans and Revolutionaries* (Oxford, 1978) pp.47-72
- ²⁵ CKS Q SRI/25-35, Q SR1/3, Q SR2, Q/SR4
- ²⁶ CKS QM/SB 547, QM/SB771 A list of unlicensed tipplers and alehouse keepers in Selbritten, Rolvenden, Cranbrook, Great Barnfield and Barkley Hundreds.
- ²⁷ CKS QM/SB70, 72, 95, 547, 663, 745, 771, 805, 1131, QM/SI/1598/2,1, QM/SI/1617/5
- ²⁸ B. Quintrell 'The Making of Charles I's Books of Orders', *English Historical Review*, xcv (1980); P. Slack, 'Books of Orders: the Making of English Social Policy, 1577-1631', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th ser. xxx (1980)
- ²⁹ *Assizes*, i, ii
- ³⁰ G. Mayhew, *Tudor Rye* (1987) p.228
- ³¹ CCAL X.1.12 f.51, X.2.4 f.184, X.2.4 f.194
- ³² CCAL X.4.3 f.8, X.4.3 f.97
- ³³ CCAL X.5.5 f.113, 148v
- ³⁴ CCAL X.6.7 f.51, f.134
- ³⁵ R. Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: the ritual year 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1994) pp.70, 78
- ³⁶ CCAL X.1.10 f.11
- ³⁷ CCAL X.3.10 Pt 2 f.21, X.4.8 f.173v, X.4.11 f.7
- ³⁸ CCAL X.5.5 f.160v, f.170
- ³⁹ CCAL X.2.2 f.74
- ⁴⁰ CCAL X.4.8 f.136v, f.137v, f.138, f.138v
- ⁴¹ CCAL X.4.9 f.158, In 1607, Tobias Hooper was presented for 'setting up a cloth on the tenter on the Sabbath day'
- ⁴² CCAL X.4.11 f.53, X5.5 f.49, f.51

- ⁴³ Approximate number and percentage of churchwardens and parish officers presented to the church courts 1594-1639, as a proportion of the total number of officers identified, in Benenden were 15 (10.2%), Goudhurst 15 (13.2%), Staplehurst 17 (15.1%) and Frittenden (11%)
- ⁴⁴ There were also 2 presentments for usury, 1 attempted rape, 2 churchwardens refused to present parishioners, 2 unlicensed teachers, 1 for courting on a holy day, and 5 remained excommunicated from the church
- ⁴⁵ CKS P100/28/5
- ⁴⁶ P. Laslett, 'Introduction: comparing illegitimacy over time and between cultures', in P. Laslett, K. Oosterveen and R. M. Smith (eds.), *Bastardy and its comparative history* (1980)
- ⁴⁷ M. Ingram, *Church Courts*, p.158
- ⁴⁸ K.M. Jones 'Gender, Crime and the local Courts in Kent, 1460-1560', p.154
- ⁴⁹ CKS P100/5 f.131
- ⁵⁰ CKS P100 5 f.148, f.160
- ⁵¹ CKS P26 28 2
- ⁵² CKS Q SO WI f.83v
- ⁵³ E.A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage* (New York, 1999) p.3
- ⁵⁴ M. Ingram, 'The Reformation of Manners in Early Modern England', in Griffiths *et al.* (eds.), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1996) p.55
- ⁵⁵ CCAL X.1.11 f.17
- ⁵⁶ CCAL X.2.4 Pt 2 f.90, f.94
- ⁵⁷ CCAL X.2.2 f.20v
- ⁵⁸ CCAL X.2.2 f.78v
- ⁵⁹ CCAL X.1.12 f.119v
- ⁶⁰ CCAL X.3.8 f.134, X.4.9 f.108
- ⁶¹ CCAL X.2.4 Pt 1 f.225
- ⁶² M. Ingram, *Church Courts*, p.165
- ⁶³ M. Ingram, 'The Reformation of Manners in Early Modern England', p.48
- ⁶⁴ CCAL X.5.1 f.110v
- ⁶⁵ CCAL X.3.10 pt.2 f.20
- ⁶⁶ CKS QM/SB 12 Sessions Papers
- ⁶⁷ CKS Q SRI 3
- ⁶⁸ CKS Q SR3 38
- ⁶⁹ CKS QSO/W1
- ⁷⁰ CCAL X.6.7 f.177
- ⁷¹ Philip. E. H. Hair, 'Bridal pregnancy in rural England further examined' *Population Studies*, xxiv (1970), 59-70; M. Ingram *Church Courts*, pp.157, 219-237
- ⁷² Collinson, 'Cranbrook and the Fletchers: popular and unpopular religion in the Kentish Weald', in P. Newman Brooks (ed.), *Reformation principle and practice* (1980) p.184
- ⁷³ Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp.132-134
- ⁷⁴ CCAL X.4.11 f.37, f.43
- ⁷⁵ CCAL X.4.9 f.214, 229
- ⁷⁶ CCAL X.5.9 f.83, X.6.7 f.123 Edward Wagborne, clothier of Hawkhurst was presented in 1616 for fornication. John Taylor, clothier, of Biddenden was presented for whoredom in 1623.
- ⁷⁷ CCAL X.6.8 ff.152v, 153, 154
- ⁷⁸ CCAL X.4.11 f.224v
- ⁷⁹ CCAL X.6.8 f.31
- ⁸⁰ CCAL X.6.8 f.2
- ⁸¹ *Assizes*, i, p.352
- ⁸² CCAL X.2.4, X.2.2 f.98v, Pt2 f.214, f.78
- ⁸³ R.H. Helmholz, 'Harbouring Sexual Offenders: Ecclesiastical Courts and Controlling Misbehaviour', *JBS*, xxxvii (1998) pp.262-266
- ⁸⁴ CCAL X.4.3 f.231, f.234, f.235
- ⁸⁵ C. Hill, *Society and Puritanism in pre-revolutionary England*, pp.507-10; Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp.110-141
- ⁸⁶ M. Spufford, 'Puritanism and Social Control' in A. Fletcher and J. Stevenson (eds.), *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985); M. Ingram, 'The Reform of Popular Culture? Sex and Marriage in Early Modern England in B. Reay (ed.), *Popular Culture in Seventeenth Century England*' (1985) pp.129-65, 'Religion, Communities and Moral Discipline in Late Sixteenth-

Seventeenth century England: Case Studies' in K. von Greyerz (ed.), *Religion and Society in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800* (1984) pp.177-93

Chapter 8

The Decline of the Cloth Industry in the Region, 1640-1670: Local Responses to Poverty

In December 1677 the ‘case of the poor of the parish’ of Cranbrook was presented by the minister, Charles Buck, churchwardens Stephen Osborne and Theophilus Fowle and 24 of the leading inhabitants to the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church, Canterbury. The townsmen acknowledged in their petition that Cranbrook had ‘been a great clothing town’ but that ‘by reason of the great decay of the said clothing trade’ and that ‘being very populous it is become exceeding poor’.¹ Of course this plea may have been biased by the interest of stallholders keen to negotiate reduced market rents with the Dean and Chapter. But it is also true that by the late seventeenth century its textile industry had declined and the cost of poor relief in the town was a heavy burden. For 16 years it had amounted to £450 and upwards a year.² The problem of economic decline was echoed in the protests of neighbouring parishioners: a 1673 petition from Benenden complained of the ‘great and general poverty in respect of the trade of clothmaking within the said parish’; and in the vicar of Biddenden in 1683 reported that the parish ‘was not so populous now as formerly when the clothing trade there flourished’.³

This final chapter will explore the trajectory of change in Cranbrook from the perspective of the cloth industry, and its role in the town. It will also examine the evidence for economic dislocation and cyclical trends in the textile industry. What was the extent of the decline, and was there still significant cloth manufacturing in the years after the Civil War? As we have noted in previous chapters, Cranbrook’s elite was drawn heavily from the wealthiest occupational group, the clothiers, who had dominated the parish vestry over a long period (although farmers and leading

tradesmen also held office). Part of this chapter will investigate whether the town's governors were less likely to be clothiers in the 1660s, and if other occupational groups were growing in civic importance. The chapter will also focus on the question of whether Cranbrook declined or stagnated as a market town between the early and later seventeenth century. Finally it will seek to examine how the parish elite sought to cope with the problem of a large dependent population, increased poverty and growing unemployment.

The Weald: A Proto-Industrialized Region

Cranbrook's neighbourhood was a good example of a proto-industrialized region, according to the theory first defined by Mendels.⁴ It is not my intention here to rehearse the whole proto-industrialization debate, the key features of which have been discussed by Zell.⁵ However, it is important to recall the importance of the Weald as an early proto-industrialized region (Chapters 1 and 2 above). Cranbrook and its neighbourhood had several of the *geographical, historical and cultural pre-requisites* that were crucial for the establishment of a proto-industrial cloth industry. It was located in a wood-pasture farming region, where small farms proliferated, where there was an active land market, and where there were large numbers of petty freeholders engaged in pastoral farming. This was typical of other cloth manufacturing areas such as East Somerset, Wiltshire and the important clothing area of the Colne Valley in Essex and Suffolk, where wood-pasture agrarian regimes supported large under-employed populations in 'open parishes'.⁶ In Kent the custom of gavelkind favoured the expansion of rural industries and the proliferation of smallholders, who needed to supplement their farming through by-employments in rural cloth manufacture.

Zell has shown that large-scale capitalist clothiers prospered and adapted well to changes in the market demand for textiles into the second decade of the seventeenth century. He has argued that the clothier elite was successful because their capital was also invested in other profit-making activities such as farming and by acting as rentier landlords, which supplemented their income from cloth production and increased their liquidity.⁷ It has always been assumed, however, that by the mid seventeenth century these Wealden clothiers were under pressure from changes in the market, and that their failure to adapt and supply the growing market for lighter, less expensive cloths was fundamental to the collapse of the cloth industry in Kent. There remained large, dependent populations economically vulnerable in the period of industrial decline from the 1640s onwards.

Demographic Developments 1640-1676

Although the Cranbrook area was densely populated by the seventeenth century and still growing by a process of natural increase [Appendices 1 & 2], the local broadcloth industry, which had provided a staple source of employment in the town and surrounding parishes, was no longer expanding.

Table 8.1

Cranbrook Population Estimates by decade: based on 30 and 35 per 1,000 baptisms

| YEAR | 30 PER 1,000 | 35 PER 1,000 |
|---------|--------------|--------------|
| 1580-89 | 3,500 | 3,000 |
| 1590-99 | 3,000 | 2,570 |
| 1600-09 | 3,233 | 2,770 |
| 1610-19 | 2,933 | 2,514 |
| 1620-29 | 3,500 | 3,000 |
| 1630-39 | 3,567 | 3,060 |
| 1640-49 | 3,267 | 2,800 |
| 1650-59 | 2,967 | 2,542 |
| 1660-69 | 1,533 | 1,314 |
| 1670-79 | 1,227 | 1,090 |

Source: CKS P100/28/5, P100/1/16; CCAL Dca/BT/59

Population estimates for Cranbrook in the seventeenth century suggest that the economic downturn in broadcloth production depressed demographic growth. Cranbrook's population (based on 30 per 1,000 baptisms) was approximately 2,930 in 1580. Growth was checked in the 1590s by the plague outbreak of 1597/98 and a series of poor harvests, but recovered in the following decade. In 1600 it was about 3,200. Growth was checked again in the period 1610-19, possibly due to the setbacks in cloth production in the years following the Cockayne fiasco. Recovery is evident in the 1630s but by the latter part of the seventeenth century Cranbrook's population was in decline. In 1660 the population was approximately 2,400, and by 1670, the parish registers indicate a population of only about 1,570. The interpretation and reliability of the baptism registers is questionable in this late period, due to the incidence of non-conformity and the dislocation in record keeping during the Civil War. The problem is both the incidence of non-conformity and delayed baptism.⁸ Cranbrook's population was undoubtedly in decline in the post-1660 period, but probably not as drastically as indicated by estimates based on parish registration, which had become seriously defective in the Restoration period.

Examination of the parish registers from neighbouring villages confirms that incomplete registration may, in part, explain the apparently steep declines in population during the Civil War period and beyond. The outbreak of fever and influenza in 1657-59, which affected communities across Kent, may also have checked population growth in the Cranbrook area.⁹ Sickness compounded by harvest crises, scarcity and high prices during the period 1659-62 would also have curbed parish populations.¹⁰ The incidence of non-conformity is also uncertain, and cannot be clarified until the Compton Census of 1676, when the incumbent reported the numbers of conformists, papists and non-conformists in the parish. In the 1660s registration becomes more

systematic than in the 1650s and some delayed baptisms are recorded, but the registers remain unreliable because of the increase in non-conformity. However, it is likely that the general trend derived from parish register analysis, of a neighbourhood population in decline, is an accurate one. In the parishes adjacent to Cranbrook, population growth also slowed down in the late seventeenth century, possibly in response to a harsher economic climate and depressed opportunities for local employment.

In Benenden in 1581 the population was approximately 1,270, and this continued to increase in the early seventeenth century (Table 8.2). In 1621 it had risen to 1,430.

Table 8.2

Benenden, Population Estimates by decade based on 30 and 35 per 1,000 baptisms

| YEAR | 30 Per 1,000 | 35 Per 1,000 |
|---------|--------------|--------------|
| 1580-89 | 1,233 | 1,057 |
| 1590-99 | 1,267 | 1,086 |
| 1600-10 | 1,133 | 971 |
| 1610-19 | 1,267 | 1,085 |
| 1620-29 | 1,367 | 1,171 |
| 1630-39 | 1,176 | 1,000 |
| 1640-49 | 1,067 | 914 |
| 1650-59 | 833 | 714 |
| 1660-69 | 900 | 771 |
| 1670-79 | 767 | 657 |

Source: CKS P20 1 1, P20 1 2, P20 1 3

But growth was not sustained, and by 1641 it had declined to 1,170, a trend that continued after the Civil War period. In 1660 population was roughly 1,030 and in 1670 it was 1,070. This decline is more credible than Cranbrook's apparent 'decline' from 3,000 to 1,500 in a decade.

Biddenden's 1580 population was approximately 1,260 (based on 30 per 1,000 baptisms). Growth was checked slightly during the 1590s, when plague in the neighbourhood and harvest failure were significant, but during the early seventeenth

century growth resumed up to the 1640s (Table 8.3). However, a decline in population is evident from the mid seventeenth century onwards. In 1640 it was 1,600, in 1660 – 830 and in 1670, 867, although the very large ‘decline’ in the 1660s and 1670s is probably in part the result of under-registration.

Table 8.3

Biddenden Population Estimates by decade based on 30 and 35 per 1,000 baptisms

| YEAR | 30 Per 1,000 | 35 Per 1,000 |
|---------|--------------|--------------|
| 1580-89 | 1,433 | 1,229 |
| 1590-99 | 1,367 | 1,171 |
| 1600-09 | 1,400 | 1,200 |
| 1610-19 | 1,400 | 1,200 |
| 1620-29 | 1,467 | 1,257 |
| 1630-39 | 1,467 | 1,257 |
| 1640-49 | 1,167 | 1,000 |
| 1650-59 | 833 | 714 |
| 1660-69 | 833 | 714 |
| 1670-79 | 566 | 486 |

Source: CKS P26 1/2

Goudhurst’s register suggests a similar downward trend in the seventeenth century (Table 8.4). Goudhurst’s population (based on 30 per 1,000 baptisms) increased from approximately 1,800 in 1580 to 2,630 in 1620. Growth slowed during the 1630s, and in 1641 the population was about 2,530. Thereafter growth ceased and by 1650 Goudhurst’s population was approximately 1,666.¹¹

Table 8.4

Goudhurst Population Estimates by decade based on 30 and 35 per 1,000 baptisms

| YEAR | 30 Per 1,000 | 35 per 1,000 |
|---------|--------------|--------------|
| 1580-89 | 1,967 | 1,686 |
| 1590-99 | 1,633 | 1,400 |
| 1600-09 | 2,067 | 1,771 |
| 1610-19 | 2,267 | 1,943 |
| 1620-29 | 2,167 | 1,857 |
| 1630-39 | 2,200 | 1,886 |
| 1640-49 | 2,333 | 2,000 |
| 1650-59 | 1,467 | 1,257 |
| 1660-69 | 1,500 | 1,286 |
| 1670-79 | 1,533 | 1,314 |

Source: CKS P157/1/2, P157/28/1

Goudhurst seems to have been particularly hard hit by the influenza epidemic, and Chalklin notes that 'only 53 had died during the whole of 1657' whereas '14 died in February 1658, 10, 11 and 21 in March, April and May'. The following spring influenza was still rife and there were 14 burials in March and 15 in May.¹²

Staplehurst displays the expected pattern of late sixteenth century growth being checked in the crisis years of the 1590s, followed by recovery in the early seventeenth century. In the 1580s population was approximately 870 (based on 30 per 1000 baptisms) rising to 1,170 in the 1620s and 1630s. By 1660-69 it had apparently fallen to 470, although population recovered slightly in the period 1670-79 to 670.¹³ Staplehurst, however, was a parish with a strong non-conformist element, and under registration may partially explain this 'decline'. Nevertheless, the economic difficulties that culled parish populations throughout the neighbourhood also affected Staplehurst.

In Hawkhurst the same pattern in population movement is repeated: strong growth in the late sixteenth century, which continued until the 1630s. In the 1580s population was approximately 1,400, in the period 1600-19 it was 1,670, and in the period 1620-29 it was 1,830. By the late seventeenth century Hawkhurst's population was also in decline; in 1660-69 down to about 1,100 and in 1670-79 roughly 1,000.¹⁴

For the 1660s it is possible to check population estimates based on the parish registration with estimates based on the Hearth Tax returns. The population of Cranbrook Town in the late seventeenth century, based upon the 1664 hearth tax returns, was between 1,220 (based on a multiplier of 4.25) and 1,360 (4.75 multiplier). Population in the urban core of Cranbrook was therefore comparable with Ashford (1,139), or Dartford (1,288) in Kent. Maidstone was already a much larger town, with a population of approximately 3,400.¹⁵ The whole *parish* of Cranbrook, including rural boroughs that were part of the parish, was between 2,244 (based on a 4.25 multiplier)

and 2,508 (using a 4.75 multiplier).¹⁶ This is much more credible than the estimates based on recorded baptisms for the entire 1660s. Baptism entries for the 1650s indicated a decadal population figure of 2,967, which give greater credence to these estimates from the hearth tax returns. Baptismal entries (individual years at 30 per 1000 baptisms) indicate a population of 2,400 in 1660 and 2,867 in 1661. However, comparative analysis of baptism and hearth tax populations for the year 1664 is problematic, because the register suggests a dramatic fall in population.¹⁷

In the 'great borough of Goudhurst', the semi-urban centre of Goudhurst parish, population was roughly between 1,160 (based on a 4.25 multiplier) and 1,230 (based on a multiplier of 4.75). When the rural parts of the parish are taken into account, population in the parish overall was between 1,598 and 1,786 in 1664.¹⁸

The hearth tax return provides a more accurate estimate of population at this time than estimates based on parish registers, which suffer from the problems of late baptisms, the disruption of record keeping during the Civil War period and the growth of non-conformity. But parishes are difficult to isolate within the administrative boroughs of traditional hundreds. Only Cranbrook and Goudhurst had boroughs that were sufficiently self-contained to permit the use of hearth tax returns to estimate parish populations. Nevertheless, even when under-registration is taken into account, the overwhelming trend in all these parishes is one of declining populations. When employment opportunities in cloth manufacture were at their greatest in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, local populations expanded through natural increase and inward migration. As the cloth industry began to contract during the second and third quarters of the seventeenth century, depressed employment opportunities contributed to a reversal in the demographic trend.

At the very end of the period under consideration the Compton Census of 1676 recorded the number of inhabitants of communicable age in every parish.¹⁹ The return for the parish of Cranbrook recorded 1,300 inhabitants in the parish 'over the age of 16 years'. The returns for neighbourhood parishes were: Benenden 560, Biddenden 700, Frittenden 315, Goudhurst 1,000, Hawkhurst 1,000, and Staplehurst 455. Parish population estimates from the census returns can be made using suitable multipliers, although the use of the source is not unproblematic. It is important to clarify what information the returns are actually providing. The rounded numbers suggest that the ministers were sending in their own rough estimates. The vicar of Cranbrook states '1,300 persons over 16 years'; in Benenden the minister is more specific: 'men and women over 16 years'. The accuracy of Frittenden's return is more certain: '215 persons of years of discretion, men and women, and near 100 under age boys and girls'. In Hawkhurst the vicar includes 'by diligent inquiry 1,000 men and women over 16', whereas in Biddenden, Goudhurst and Staplehurst the returns record the number of 'inhabitants'.²⁰ It is likely that, 'inhabitants' means those over 16 years. Whiteman suggested that 33 per cent was a reasonable estimate of the proportion of the population under 16 years, and that therefore a multiplier of 1.5 is reasonable for estimating total populations.²¹ Arkell clarified the range of possibilities, and concluded that 'recent scholarship has tipped the scales towards 33 per cent', but suggested that 'the more traditional 40 per cent' may be accurate in some parishes.²²

Table 8.5 compares the census returns for the neighbourhood with baptism populations for 1676. The overlapping evidence from baptisms and the census returns endorses the reliability of parish register populations in Benenden, Goudhurst, and Staplehurst at this time. The accuracy of the sources for Cranbrook and Hawkhurst are

more questionable. Nevertheless, the Compton census confirms the overall trend of declining parish populations in the period after the Civil War.

Table 8.5

Comparative analysis of the Compton Census returns 1676 and Baptism estimates of Population

| PARISH | Compton Census Returns | +33% under 16 yrs. | +40% under 16 yrs | Multiplier of 1.5 children under 16 yr | Population from Baptism 1676 (30 per 1000) | Population from Baptisms 1676 (35 per 1000) | Decade 1670-1679 (30per 1000) |
|-------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--|--|---|-------------------------------|
| Cranbrook | 1,300 | 1,940 | 2,166 | 1,950 | 1,633 | 1,400 | 1,676 |
| Benenden | 560 | 836 | 933 | 840 | 800 | 657 | 767 |
| Biddenden | 700 | 1,044 | 1,166 | 1,050 | 800 | 566 | 486 |
| Frittenden | 315* | | | | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Goudhurst | 1,000 | 1,492 | 1,666 | 1,500 | 1,600 | 1,400 | 1,533 |
| Hawkhurst | 1,000 | 1,492 | 1,666 | 1,500 | 1,100 | 857 | 1,000 |
| Staplehurst | 455 | 679 | 758 | 682 | 433 | 429 | 670 |

*Frittenden includes 'persons of years of discretion men and women and under aged boys and girls'

Source: A. Whiteman, *The Compton Census of 1676*; CKS P100/1/16, P20/1/3, P26/1/2; CCAL Dca/BT 78; CKS P157 1 2, P178 1 2, P347/12/3

The 1676 census demonstrates the high incidence of non-conformity in Cranbrook's neighbourhood by this time. In Cranbrook, the vicar recorded approximately '400 sectaries of all sorts, Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptists and Quakers' were resident, approximately 31 per cent of inhabitants of communicable age.²³ In Benenden non-conformists numbered 45 (8%) of those of communicable age, and in Biddenden there were 90 (13%). Goudhurst recorded 'about 100 wholly dissenters' (10%) and in Hawkhurst the minister returned 150 non-conformists (15%). High levels of non-conformity were also reported in Frittenden 84 (27%) and Staplehurst 160 (35%). The majority of non-conformists in Frittenden were Presbyterian and Anabaptist, although Quakers, Brownists and other sectarian groups were noted. In Staplehurst there were many Quakers along with Anabaptists, Brownists, Presbyterians and Independents.²⁴ An information by William Killburne concerning gathered

meetings in 1662 reported that 'Anabaptist meetings have long been held at or near Cranbrook...and there are meetings in private places by night. At one meeting 150 Quakers stood silent, quaking and trembling for two hours'.²⁵ The numbers of non-conformists in these Wealden parishes in the 1676 returns confirms the argument made in chapter 6, that non-conformist groups constituted a sizable proportion of parish populations in the later seventeenth century. Under-registration, due to non-conformity, therefore partially explains the decline in population shown in parish registers. Nevertheless, an overall contraction in population within the neighbourhood area is evident, and can in part be attributed to the decline in textile manufacture in these parishes. It is now time to look at the structural problems in Cranbrook's economy which lay behind its demographic decline.

The Decline of the Cloth Industry 1640-1670

The central Weald flourished as a proto-industrialized region from the early sixteenth century, but was unable to sustain that expansion in the next century. Among the problems facing the Wealden cloth industry was the growing competition for raw materials, especially wood, from the local iron industry. There were repeated complaints to parliament from the 1570s regarding the ironmasters' insatiable demand for wood and the dangerous threat this posed to the cloth industry.²⁶ Acts were passed in 1581 and 1585 for the preservation of timber in the Weald.²⁷ Access to wood was also an issue in a 1594/95 conspiracy to attack the iron works of John Baker, Esq. One contemporary thought that grievances among the poorer sort 'do grow for want of corn, small wages and scarcity of wood'. Indeed Lord Cobham hoped that gentlemen might be 'persuaded to help the poorer sort with wood at a reasonable rate'. Popular discontent was allegedly 'increased by the rich fellowship of the clothiers in these

quarters, that repine much at Mr Baker's lettings of his iron works'.²⁸ Discontent arose out of rival interests of the 'richer' and 'poorer sort' to secure adequate supplies of wood at reasonable prices, tensions that informed local attitudes to the control of woodland into the next century. A petition to the privy council in 1637 against John Brown's proposed building of a furnace in the town argued that 'the town and other parishes adjoining have for many years subsisted by the trade of clothing', but that due to the increased use of wood for making brass and ordnance 'no furnace should be erected within the parish – wood being at so great a necessity for their trade'. Brown replied that 'the number of poor and the assesses for them in Cranbrook and its neighbourhood is much increased', the problem being the clothiers' wages to textile workers 'by reason the poor employed by them cannot live upon the wages'.²⁹ Coleman argued that the close proximity to London and its demand for agrarian produce raised food prices in Kent. In consequence 'the minimum subsistence wages necessary for Kentish textile workers were probably higher than those on which thriving textile areas were developing, remote from London'.³⁰

The ability to secure wood supplies was in fact one of the determinants of a clothier's success or failure in cloth production. The importance of securing woodland can be seen in the wills of the wealthier clothiers, many of whom maintained and coppiced their own woodland. It is probable that those clothiers who were able to secure a constant supply of wood were those most likely to achieve, the economies of scale necessary for the competitive production of textiles. Alexander Osborne, clothier (d. 1650), held 20 acres of wood at Plushinghurst (in Cranbrook parish), which he bequeathed to his son along with his 'workshop, copper, hurdle, tenter and all the implements of clothing'.³¹ James Holden (d.1653) bequeathed to his son 20 acres of woods in Benenden and Rolvenden.³² His kinsman, Robert Holden (d.1653), purchased

woodland from Thomas Couchman and requested that 'my wood standing near Sissinghurst Park, shall be cut down by my executors and sold for payment of my legacies, but no other wood to be felled growing on any other of my land'.³³ Josias Colvill, still an active clothier in 1687, had purchased woodland at Glassenbury and 'Rogely wood in Biddenden' which secured his supply of this valuable resource.³⁴ Alternatively, woodland could be rented: Peter Courthop, who died in 1679, paid £10 per annum in rent for woodland, whereas Alex Weller brought in wood from two local sources in Benenden at a cost of £14 15s which was outstanding at his death in 1631.³⁵ Clothiers' secured their supplies of wood through a combination of owner occupation, leasing and ad hoc local purchases, all within a competitive local market.

Cranbrook clothiers had relatively easy access to their primary markets in London and local markets in Maidstone, via an infrastructure of water borne and road transport. However, the decay of the highways was a serious problem and their maintenance preoccupied parish officers throughout the seventeenth century. The inhabitants of Cranbrook were frequently presented at the Assizes for not maintaining the highways and bridges leading from the town to neighbouring parishes.³⁶ The principal roads from London, Maidstone, Tonbridge and Brenchley converged near the town and led by diverse routes to Tenterden and Romney Marsh, Hawkhurst and on into Sussex. Through failures of maintenance and natural decay even important highways could become impassable. Hasted wrote of Cranbrook's roads:

'In dry seasons from the looseness of the sand, they become very deep and heavy...as to become almost intolerable', and 'the bye roads are very bad in winter, and so very deep and miry, as to be but barely passable'.³⁷

Yet despite the problems of poor highways, Cranbrook's manufacturers might have the improved the transport infrastructure if the financial (and psychological or entrepreneurial) incentives had been compelling enough to motivate them.

The Kent broadcloth industry was subject to recurring periods of economic dislocation throughout the seventeenth century. In the early seventeenth century exports of undressed cloths fell from 76,123 in 1606 to 71,539 in 1614, a seven per cent decline. Exports of dyed and dressed cloths fell from 10,574 (Kent supplied 3,945) in 1606 to 6,469 (Kent supplied 2,068) in 1614, of which Kent's share fell from 37 to 30 per cent.³⁸ Cyclical crises and changes in demand for English woollens were associated with the Cockayne project of 1614-16, the collapse of European markets in 1621-22 and another export crisis in 1630-31. Zell has argued that after 'each successive crises recovery was at a lower level of production and sales than the previous one'.³⁹ A petition from Kent along with other counties in 1659, complained of the declining state of the once-flourishing broadcloth industry.⁴⁰ In the Commonwealth and Restoration periods the decay of Cranbrook's manufacturing base continued. Nevertheless, the broadcloth industry survived in the Weald until late in the century, and some wealthy clothiers continued to prosper during the Restoration period, although their numbers were small in comparison with the numerous successful clothiers of the late Elizabethan and Jacobean period. This thesis has already shown that some clothiers established family dynasties, and accumulated great wealth and authority as capitalist employers of labour. Dynastic clothing families, by virtue of the wealth acquired through inter-marriage and economic success, were able to achieve economies of scale which lesser clothiers could not match. Many of the families that achieved great prosperity in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, consolidated their wealth in the period up to the restoration through successful investments in farming, and through the rents taken on the lands they leased out to others.

The considerable debate among historians over this first 'de-industrialization' suggests that the reasons for the Wealden cloth industry's decline are complex.

Wealden clothiers had the 'reputation of making strong, durable broadcloths of good mixtures and colours', which were noted for their high quality and fairly high price.⁴¹ But the textiles produced in Cranbrook's neighbourhood ignored the general trend in the seventeenth century towards lighter, cheaper and less durable cloths. Coleman argued that increased competition from continental clothmakers, European wars and political dislocation during the Civil War in England, allied to emigration of skilled workers and high costs of labour, combined to make Kentish broadcloth uncompetitive.⁴² Chalklin thought that the high cost of labour in Kent was the most significant factor in making the product too expensive to sell.⁴³ Short's argument that Wealden clothiers were 'a clique' whose businesses were 'externally controlled and increasingly dependent on national, metropolitan and international forces' has been questioned by Zell, who has shown that rural clothmaking was 'financed by the manufacturers themselves, from family and from other local sources of capital'.⁴⁴ Short's thesis is mistaken because it assumes that Wealden cloth manufacture was heavily dependent upon metropolitan investment; the evidence, as will be shown, does not support this argument.⁴⁵ Zell has argued that 'the capitalist clothmakers of the Kent Weald failed because they failed as entrepreneurs' and that 'as their industry declined some simply turned to commercial farming, while others leased out their lands to local farmers'.⁴⁶

It is now time to examine the state of the Cranbrook cloth industry in the seventeenth century, to better understand both the timing and the reasons for its decline. There was no simple, across the board decline in the early seventeenth century. For a long time the wealthiest and most able clothiers did not fail as entrepreneurs, because they consolidated their business enterprises, diversified their assets and either bought out lesser clothiers or drove them to the wall through their greater market power. If we

compare evidence for Wealden cloth production in the 1630s with evidence for the period 1640-49 and 1660-69, some interesting findings emerge. The average inventorial wealth of clothiers in Cranbrook in the 1630s was £503. In the neighbourhood parishes clothiers mean inventoried wealth was £245 (see Table 8.6).

Table 8.6

Clothiers' mean inventoried wealth 1630-1669

| PARISH | 1630-39 (43 inventories) | 1640-49 (20 inventories) | 1660-69 (35 inventories) |
|-------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Cranbrook | £503 | £159 | £260 |
| Benenden | £262 | £96 | £239 |
| Biddenden | £258 | £348 | £589 |
| Goudhurst | £298 | £366 | £118 |
| Hawkhurst | £269 | £172 | £191 |
| Staplehurst | £137 | £119 | £328 |

Source: CKS PRC10 1-72, PRC11 1-30, PRC27 1-21, PRC28/4-20

In the 1630s two clothiers, Smallhope Bigg (d.1638) and Josias Colvill (d.1631), left goods valued at £1,862 and £1,027 respectively. Biggs' inventory shows that he was a large-scale cloth producer: his stock of coloured cloths was appraised at £598 and he had '12 broadcloths in cloth and colour' worth a further £185.⁴⁷ Similarly, Colvill had 23 completed broadcloths in London, valued at £350, and 10 broadcloths at the weavers and spinners valued at £120.⁴⁸ The majority of 'clothiers' in this period were active cloth makers, with cloths in production at the weavers' and finished cloths in stock or with London dealers.

Table 8.6 shows the fortunes of textile manufacturers in the neighbourhood area. Of the 33 inventories sampled (1630-39), 24 showed signs of active cloth production. At this time most clothiers were primarily engaged in manufacturing with farming investments forming only a small part of their chattels. John Codwell of Biddenden (d.1638), had cloth ready at London valued at £97, and cloth in manufacture worth about £60, in addition to wool and dyestuffs; his stock in trade came to 76 per

cent of his total inventory worth £412.⁴⁹ Thomas Sabb of Goudhurst (d.1632) possessed five cloths dyed and ready made, valued at £56, and large quantities of dyed wool ready for making up into cloth at the weavers.⁵⁰

Table 8.6 also shows very clearly that the decline of textile manufacture in the area was a very slow death. The period 1640-49 was probably less productive due to the dislocation of the Civil War and hence clothiers' prosperity declined. Clothiers in Cranbrook in particular, and Benenden and Hawkhurst seem to have suffered in this period. Nevertheless, clothiers' prosperity clearly rallied somewhat in the period 1660-1669, although as we shall see, this was not necessarily due to the production of broadcloth.

The period 1640 to 1670 has long been associated with the decline in broadcloth manufacture in the Weald. However, investment was not being withdrawn wholesale from the industry. Where individual entrepreneurs could achieve greater productivity and returns, they continued to make judicious investment in textile production. What is different from the previous period is the lower levels of clothier wealth recorded in Cranbrook during this time. *The average wealth of a sample of 24 Cranbrook clothiers in the period 1640-1669 was approximately £209, a considerable decline from the sample of the 1630s, when the average was £503.* On the other hand, the mean inventory value of a sample of 31 clothiers from the neighbouring parishes had increased slightly to £257, compared with an average of £245 in the 1630s. Possibly rural manufacturers were doing better than their urban counterparts at this time.

In order to evaluate long-term trends in textile manufacture, the period 1640-1670 was divided into two decades, 1640-1649 and 1660-1669. Table 8.7 shows the mean value of clothiers' inventories compared with other occupational groups in Cranbrook and its neighbourhood between 1640-1649. The average clothier's wealth in

Cranbrook in this period was £159 and in the neighbouring parishes £241. Clothiers in the rural parishes of Biddenden, Goudhurst and Hawkhurst were comparatively wealthier than those in Benenden, Cranbrook and Staplehurst.

Table 8.7

Comparative analysis of clothiers mean inventoried wealth 1640-1649

| PARISH | CLOTHIERS (20 inventories) | FARMERS (59 inventories) | WEAVERS (17 inventories) | ARTISANS (22 inventories) |
|-------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Cranbrook | £159 | £153 | £62 | £51 |
| Benenden | £96 | £127 | £44 | £197 |
| Biddenden | £348 | £127 | £44 | £110 |
| Goudhurst | £366 | £201 | £30 | £120 |
| Hawkhurst | £172 | £99 | £25 | £245 |
| Staplehurst | £119 | £169 | £98 | £212 |

Source: see Table 8.6

Table 8.8 shows that individuals styling themselves ‘clothier’ were still resident in these parishes after the Restoration. It also shows that they remained wealthy individuals. In the period 1660-1669 the average clothier’s wealth in Cranbrook was £260, and in the neighbourhood as a whole the mean was £319. Nevertheless, these figures cannot be used to argue that clothiers were becoming wealthier, or that a boom in textile manufacture was signalled.

Table 8.8

Comparative analysis of clothiers mean inventoried wealth 1660-1669

| PARISH | CLOTHIERS (35 inventories) | FARMERS (57 inventories) | WEAVERS (12 inventories) | ARTISANS (41 inventories) |
|-------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Cranbrook | £260 | £273 | £50 | £107 |
| Benenden | £239 | £284 | £79 | £111 |
| Biddenden | £589 | £180 | £244 | £149 |
| Goudhurst | £118 | £179 | £119 | £45 |
| Hawkhurst | £191 | £350 | 0 | £116 |
| Staplehurst | £328 | £230 | 0 | £144 |

Source: see Table 8.6

The rising mean of clothiers’ wealth in both Cranbrook and the neighbourhood parishes, in the later period, disguises a general contraction in the number of small-

scale clothiers operating in the area. Small-scale clothiers, whose manufacturing enterprises were uneconomic, were likely to have gone out of business by this time.

The relatively small number of weavers is also telling, and suggests a contraction in production. The average weaver's wealth in Cranbrook declined from £61 in the decade 1630-39 to £50 in the period 1660-1669. The number of weavers who left inventories in the rural parishes also declined from 17 in 1630-39 to only eight in 1660-1669. It is likely that the success of some weavers in the rural parishes, whose mean inventoried wealth was £127 at this time, hides a much larger number of very poor weavers who had insufficient wealth to have their goods appraised. The ability of some weavers to diversify into rural by-employments (as many always had) provided an additional source of income when weaving skills became redundant, as clothiers cut back production in response to the downturn in demand. Weavers often grew crops on a small-scale or kept a few cows for milk and dairy produce for sale at local markets; inevitably, weavers living in the outlying rural parishes were better placed to pursue these dual occupations.⁵¹

The inventories show that the broadcloth industry in the Weald, whilst declining in importance as a major source of profits and employment, was still of some import even at this late stage. Indeed, some inventories show signs of late seventeenth century capital investment which indicates that some clothiers were still expanding their manufacturing. A few entrepreneurs were able to maintain a healthy place in the competitive market for textiles, in the face of the growing demand for lighter cloths at this time. However, it will be shown that some clothiers had diversified their investments into other businesses, whilst retaining the title of 'clothier'.

Clothiers' inventories from Cranbrook in the mid-seventeenth century show that some specialized clothmakers were actively engaged in textile production. William

Hovenden (d.1642) left goods appraised at £169. He was primarily engaged in cloth production and his stock in trade formed 39 per cent of his chattels. He had wool for two broadcloths, two broadcloths ready made and two half cloths in London awaiting sale valued at £55, in addition to wool and dyes waiting to be worked. Similarly, John Taylor (d.1640) was engaged in production and had £30 in ready-made broadcloth and £21s worth of wool abroad in spinning.⁵² Valentine Browne (d.1665) was also operating a successful clothmaking business. Browne had goods valued at £471, of which £396 (84%) was invested in cloth production. At his death Browne had deposited '£200 on the consideration of a clothing house and land belonging'.⁵³ Browne's assets were wholly engaged in cloth production, and there is no evidence of any effort to diversify his investments. John Baseden (d.1662) also seems to have been operating a profitable textile business when he died in 1662, leaving goods valued at £469. Baseden had 'ten half cloths and four whole cloths at London £50, four broadcloths at the weavers £50, and one half cloth at Fowlers, a dealer in London', in addition to debts due of £100.⁵⁴

However, other clothiers, from the 1640s onwards, diversified their investments into a number of other businesses, while reducing their investment in textile manufacture. Of the clothier inventories sampled from Cranbrook for the period 1640-1670, only 38 per cent show evidence of active cloth manufacture. Some clothiers were more active in farming at this time than cloth production, whilst others operated equally as farmers and clothmakers. Tables 8.6 and 8.7 identified that farming was a lucrative investment in Cranbrook and the rural parishes, which became more profitable between the 1640s and the 1660s. As entrepreneurs, clothiers identified the advantages to be gained from diversifying into farming: good investment opportunities and increasing profits to be made from the rising demand for agricultural produce.

Peter Courthop, 'clothier' of Cranbrook (d.1640), left no sign of textile manufacture in his inventory. His chattels were appraised at £172 and included farming goods worth £143 (83 per cent of his estate), including a hop garden.⁵⁵ Similarly, Robert Taylor, 'clothier' of Cranbrook (d.1662), left only evidence of agricultural investments in his inventory valued at £384. His mixed farming activities of livestock rearing, arable and hops were represented by chattels worth £247, 64 per cent of his goods.⁵⁶ Samuel Hovenden had a clothier's workshop and copper but had ceased cloth production by 1660. He had acquired many luxury household items and was styled a 'gentleman'. Perhaps with his eye on a better investment, he had redeployed his capital into livestock rearing and fattening on a large scale.⁵⁷

In most cases clothiers were retaining the title of 'clothier' even though their principal source of income was their farming activities. Many more clothiers in Cranbrook were combining farming and clothmaking businesses.⁵⁸ However, some clothiers simply seem to have become inactive as producers, with little or no evidence of stock in trade or farming activity. Some of these 'clothiers' may have retired from business, happy to sit back on their investments and acquire the household comforts of a 'gentlemanly' lifestyle.⁵⁹ Others may have ceased production because of the contracting market demand for Kentish broadcloth. There is evidence that clothiers' stock was being left unsold at London warehouses, *due to declining demand*. If clothiers were sensitive to the market, they could have responded to a downturn in demand by laying off their weavers and spinners, who, unlike clothiers, did not have alternative landholding and farming investments to fall back on. Moreover, clothiers who were operating on the margins of profitability would not have had the capital to sustain their clothmaking businesses if their product was lying unsold at the London dealers or if they were owed large sums by their creditors. Under these conditions it is

hardly surprising that the number of active clothiers declined. And, although it is difficult to prove, it seems likely that lesser manufacturers may have sold out to wealthier clothiers, or moved out to the countryside where their costs of production were cheaper.

This decline in the market for Kent cloths can be traced from the mid-seventeenth century onwards, and many clothiers had large sums of money owing to them in outstanding debts. Thomas Goddard of Cranbrook, clothier (d.1663), had movables valued at £358, but this consisted principally of five separate bonds upon speciality of £183 and a mortgage of £100. In all, 81 per cent of his chattles were in debts due.⁶⁰ Thomas Bridge of Goudhurst, clothier (d.1687), left goods valued at £983. Although he had wool and dyestuffs in his workshop worth £247, he was owed £50 by London dealers and had £326 of cloths lying unsold at the London warehouse.⁶¹ Debts owing to the testator were of course a financial asset if the sums were recoverable, and it does not necessarily signify that a clothier was unable to realize the credit extended to others in the course of trading. *It is likely that where no sign of production is evident,* an individual's business activities had largely ceased. Alexander Osborne the elder, clothier (d.1678), had probably retired from business. He had acquired a comfortable lifestyle and his chattels were valued at £1,832, of which £273 was in ready money, silver and gold. He also had debts owing to him of £309, two debts due upon a mortgage of £950, £42 due for rent and £100 in desperate debts; in all £1,401 (76%) of his goods were in debts due.⁶²

Nevertheless, debts due could turn from being an asset into a liability if they were unrecoverable, as was the situation with William Parton, whose Cranbrook clothmaking business was still active in 1673. The administrator of Parton's estate had tried in vain to recover a debt due to him of £234 from the 'Londoners', but the most

that could be 'collected' was £174. However, after the sum total of all his charges and losses, Parton's estate was still worth £820.⁶³

Clothiers' probate accounts can provide us with a final glimpse of the testator's financial state after his debts and obligations had been paid; the net sum is a valuable guide to his liquid assets.⁶⁴ The interpretation of debts and credit networks is problematic because personal and trade debts were seldom itemized separately in inventories. Probate accounts provide a final settling up of the clothier's obligations to his creditors, but it is often unclear whether these sums were for cash loans or trade credits (although they usually specify whether the loan was secured upon a bond). Nevertheless, accounts are useful when they record sums paid to clothiers' outworkers, or money owing for the supply of raw materials. Unfortunately, clothiers' accounts provide rather contradictory evidence of the level and profitability of broadcloth production during this last stage of clothmaking in the Cranbrook neighbourhood.

Some Cranbrook clothiers who were still active clothmakers were operating at a loss by the late seventeenth century, and their accounts tell a story of wide ranging debts unpaid at their death, for which the administrator had insufficient funds. Robert Hovenden (d.1661), was obligated to 'George Curtis of Tenterden for principal money and interest on a debt due upon a bond £120'. He also owed money to his fellow clothier, Robert Holden, upon a bond of £55'. Hovenden's accountant paid out £187 which was 'more than the deceased had in funds', resulting in a £99 deficit.⁶⁵ Samuel Bridgeland, clothier (d.1675), owed four separate sums in rent to landlords in Cranbrook, Biddenden and Aldwich, London amounting to £85, in addition to seven debts due upon bonds totalling £101 to local creditors (some of whom can also be identified as Cranbrook clothiers). In all, his administrator paid out £195, which exceeded his goods valued at £180.⁶⁶

The contraction in cloth production was experienced differently throughout the neighbourhood, and a few clothiers evidently continued to thrive in the rural parishes. It is likely that overheads and labour costs were less in the countryside than in the town. Clothiers were also better placed to combine manufacturing with farming activities in rural parishes and thus more able to diversify into other businesses. The average value of 'clothiers' inventories in Biddenden increased from £258 in the 1630s and £348 in the 1640s, to £589 in the period 1660-1669. Similarly, Staplehurst 'clothiers' mean wealth went from £137 in the 1630s to £328 in the period 1660-69 (see Table 8.6). But in Cranbrook, Goudhurst and Hawkhurst, clothiers mean inventory value went down: in Cranbrook from £503 (1630-39) to £260 (1660-69), in Goudhurst from £298 (1630-39) to £118 (1660-69) and in Hawkhurst from £269 (1630-39) to £191. Moreover, a considerable proportion of late clothiers inventories signify that farming was equally if not more important than cloth production to their economic prosperity.

Table 8.9

Clothiers: Production 1640-1690

| Cloth Production | Farming | Cloth Production + Farming | Not Active |
|------------------|---------|-------------------------------|------------|
| 11 | 15 | 19 | 15 |
| 18% | 25% | 32% | 25% |

Source: CKS PRC10/10 1-72, PRC11/1-30, PRC27/1-21, PRC28/4-20; PRO PROB 4

From a sample of 60 inventories we can see that by the period 1640-1690 a large number of clothiers (32%) were active in farming as well as textile manufacture, whereas only 18 per cent were able to sustain themselves on clothmaking alone. When primarily farming-clothiers and those either retired or economically inactive are taken together we can see that 50 per cent of the sample were not actually engaged in cloth production, although they continued to style themselves 'clothier'.

The importance of status definition and occupation is shown in the preamble of 'Richard Beecham, clothier of the parish of Hawkhurst, yeoman' who died in 1669, leaving no doubt as to his superior status in the community.⁶⁷ It is also indicative of the growing importance of farming as opposed to textiles in the area that a 'clothier' wished to be identified with the yeomanry. As we can see from Table 8.9, some clothiers had by this time abandoned all pretext of cloth manufacture and had gone over to being full-time farmers.⁶⁸ Robert Courthop, 'clothier' of Benenden (d.1681) was engaged in livestock fattening and had arable crops, but showed no sign of clothing manufacture.⁶⁹ Jonah Fuller of Cranbrook, clothier (d.1693), left an estate, wholly comprised of arable crops, cattle and an investment of £28 in a 'hop garden and hop poles'.⁷⁰

But a considerable number of clothiers combined farming with cloth manufacture, as many clothiers had done in the previous century. At his death in 1669 Thomas Scayles, clothier of Biddenden, had a flourishing textiles business and left chattels valued at £1,549. His account shows that he was still actively engaged in broadcloth production. He also employed husbandmen to tend to his farming interests in the neighbourhood and in Sussex. After his debts and expenses were paid Scayles was still a very wealthy man, whose net estate was worth £1,032.⁷¹ It is typical of many surviving clothiers in the neighbourhood at this time whose enterprise successfully combined farming with textile manufacture.⁷²

A number of clothiers, through a combination of different economic activities, continued to be successful. For some this was achieved through astute investments in land. The wills of many longstanding clothier families bear witness to a lifetime of investment locally and beyond the neighbourhood in land and woods which could be farmed directly or leased out. Some clothiers diversified into agriculture locally, and

some were able to accumulate property in Romney Marsh. Investments in land enabled some Cranbrook clothiers to continue their clothing business into the period usually associated with textile decline. Many of the clothiers who fell by the wayside in the harsher economic climate of the late seventeenth century may simply have had less business acumen. But small-scale clothiers, operating on marginal profits, would also have lacked the disposable income to plough back into investment opportunities.

Many leading clothier families were still in evidence in the neighbourhood in the mid-seventeenth century, and maintained the title of 'clothier', even though their principal investments were no longer in textiles. Robert Holden, clothier (d.1653), left a substantial landed estate. To his son John he bequeathed lands in Cranbrook, Staplehurst, Benenden, Ivychurch, Appledore, Farleigh and Loose, and to his son Robert lands in Stone in the Isle of Oxney, Biddenden, Goudhurst and Marden and woodland near Sissinghurst.⁷³ Robert Hovenden (d.1656) bequeathed to his son Robert a 'messuage in Frittenden occupied by John Washer', and to his eldest son Samuel 'a messuage and land in my own occupation called Frizely and a messuage, mill, lands and ponds occupied by Richard Holden'.⁷⁴ The process of property accumulation and subletting is well illustrated by the bequests of Robert Hawes, clothier (d.1667) who, in addition to properties sublet to a number of different occupiers in Cranbrook, also held a messuage and lands in Uckfield, Sussex, and lands and tenements in Framfield, Sussex occupied by a different tenant.⁷⁵ The Colvill family were still active in Cranbrook at the end of the seventeenth century, and they too had long been landholders. Josias Colvill, (d.1680) bequeathed a house, land and woodland in Glassenbury to his son Edmund, as well as a 'lease and land in Wittersham in the Isle of Oxley' and three acres of marshland, together with Rogley wood and other properties in Biddenden.⁷⁶ John Colvill, clothier (d.1691), held properties throughout

the neighbourhood as well as in Headcorn, Bethersden and High Halden.⁷⁷ Lands and tenements that could be leased out cushioned some clothiers from the collapse in the broadcloth market, when by the 1670s and 80s it is apparent that 'Kentish cloth was no longer being exported in any significant quantities'.⁷⁸ It is also likely that alternative investments in property and in direct farming decreased the incentive to adapt an ailing industry to changing market forces.

Who were Cranbrook's 'chief inhabitants' 1640-1690

During the period of decline of the Weald's textile industry after 1640 were clothiers still at the top of Cranbrook's social hierarchy? Of the 58 churchwardens named in the churchwardens' accounts for this period, at least 21 (36%) can be positively identified as clothiers. They formed the largest group in parish politics, compared to eight yeomen (14%), eight shopkeepers (including a Chandler, miller, two butchers, two drapers, one tanner, and one haberdasher) and three gentleman; the occupations of 18 are unknown. The leading role of clothiers in the Cranbrook vestry (discussed in Chapter 4) continued to the very end of the seventeenth century. Wealth, as a criterion for office holding, was still important, and yeomen and prosperous tradesmen continued to be selected on these grounds.

Clothier families prominent in Cranbrook in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, such as Courthop, Holden, Hovenden, Taylor and Weller, continued to serve as vestrymen.⁷⁹ James Bridgeland, clothier, was churchwarden in 1657-58, continuing a family tradition that had begun in Staplehurst in the early seventeenth century, where John Bridgeland served as a churchwarden in 1606 and 1612/13. However, new families were also coming through and participating in parish office holding. Thomas Weston, clothier, was a churchwarden in Cranbrook in 1663

and a kinsman James Weston was churchwarden in Staplehurst from 1665-66. William Parton, clothier, appeared for the first time on the vestry in 1646-47 spawning a new generation of wealthy clothiers in parish office. His son William was churchwarden from 1680-81. Robert Hawes, clothier (d.1667), established a clothing dynasty in the town whose members were actively involved in parish governance: his sons James and Richard, also clothiers, served as churchwarden in 1686-87 and 1687-88 respectively.⁸⁰

The farming elite also continued to pursue their traditional role in parish affairs by serving in a wide range of parish offices. Some had descended from families who were involved in both farming and cloth manufacture, and therefore had wide ranging kinship networks in Cranbrook and in neighbouring parishes. Harmon Sheafe, husbandman, was churchwarden in 1643-44. The Sheafe family were part of a clothier/farming dynasty in the town that had begun in the sixteenth century. Similarly, members of the Fowle family served several terms on the vestry in Cranbrook and Frittenden from the sixteenth century, and Theophilus Fowle, yeoman, served in 1677-78.⁸¹

Tradesmen and shopkeepers were taking a more active role as vestrymen from the mid-seventeenth century onward. In view of the importance of Cranbrook's marketing function at the end of century, tradesmen were rising in social status and some were becoming wealthy. Tradesmen represented the urban elite of Cranbrook, and would have been concerned with the increasing problem of poverty in the town. Thomas Munn, butcher, and his son Thomas, a draper, held office in 1640-41 and 1664-65 respectively. William Hickmote, butcher, was churchwarden in 1654, and Robert Robotham, haberdasher, served as warden in 1682-83. It is likely that the town's wealthier tradesmen became active in parish politics because of the decay of the local market and the fierce competition between tradesmen for economic rents and

good trading positions in the town. However, it must be acknowledged that many wealthy inhabitants did not serve, in the early period or later, either through disinterest, lack of time or the failure to be accepted in the social groups from which churchwardens were chosen.

The Market Town of Cranbrook in the late Seventeenth Century

A survey of the parish in 1773 noted that Cranbrook parish measured eight-nine miles by six-seven miles, and that the lands were in the hands of two hundred different occupiers. Many holdings consisted of small pieces of land of one to seven acres, much of which lay on poor sandy soils. It was noted that very little corn was grown in the parish, the main crop was wheat 'but little of that'. There was still at this time 'very large woods and all enclosed by hedges, ditches and narrow lanes'. The farmers were described as 'dairy farmers, some very small with not an acre of grass for tithe and others with three-six acres of grass and a piece or two of corn or hops'. The great tithes, valued at £268 10s a year, were clearly difficult to collect and some 'small parcels are not worth the fetching'.⁸²

A survey of the rectory of Cranbrook, taken in 1686, had already complained of the overvaluation of the market rights and tolls due to the general impoverishment of the town. The tithes and market, valued at £104 per annum, were deemed to have declined so greatly that 'Thomas Alliband who now collected them did assure the vicar that (all charges deducted) they do not amount to one hundred pounds a year'.⁸³ A petition to the Dean and Chapter as early as 1661 on behalf of Thomas Munn, draper, Alexander Remington, clothier and John Philips, the tenants of the parsonage and market of Cranbrook, provides some insight into the workings of the market at this time:

‘The market of Cranbrook, stallages, pickage, tollage and profits (belonging to the same) whereof the memory of man is not to the contrary hath belonged to the Dean and Chapter’.⁸⁴

These tenants held a 21-year lease at a yearly rent of £33 6s 8d, for which the petitioners paid a ‘considerable fine’. However, the poor state of the market and the consequent loss of profit to traders in the market place was a matter of concern to the three tenants, who claimed that ‘of late during the unhappy troubles the cross being neglected to be repaired, it is now ready to fall down’. In addition, grievances among tenants of the market about rogue traders and failure to recover rents show that harsher times had encouraged discontent and backbiting among the townsmen. Correspondence concerning the tenants’ legal recovery of rents due to them, show that Thomas Plummer (a sub-tenant) was on the receiving end of popular discontent within the market. Plummer alleged, in a letter to Dr Causebon at Canterbury, that there were many that are ‘against me for opposing them about the market place’. Disputed trading rights also seem to have been an issue bringing the complex rights of manorial and Dean and Chapter occupiers and tenants into focus. Plummer argued that he was being opposed because he had ‘*four stalls which stand upon manor land in the town which belongs to the Kings Majesty and ever did and never was claimed by the church*’. Evidently the market lessees were trying to extract rent from Plummer who claimed that ‘it is the only privileged place in all the town’. Friction between leading townsmen shows that in troubled times religious differences could also fuel local discontent. Plummer goes on to complain that ‘they are a company of troublesome sectarian fellows and nothing but study how to make debate between friends without a cause’.⁸⁵

Analysis of the occupations (of fathers) listed in the baptism register for the period 1653 to 1662 provides some insight into the range of services provided by the

town at this time. The large number of people occupied as craftsmen-manufacturers indicates the wide range of goods being produced in Cranbrook (see Table 8.10).

Table 8.10

Cranbrook Occupations and Status from Baptism entries 1653-1662

| OCCUPATIONS | FATHERS |
|------------------------|---------|
| Craftsmen-Manufacturer | 136 |
| Clothier | 99 |
| Weaver | 95 |
| Husbandmen | 76 |
| Shopkeeper | 51 |
| Professional | 10 |
| Dyer | 10 |
| Clothworker | 9 |
| Gentry | 9 |
| Yeomen | 6 |
| Pack-carrier | 6 |
| Labourer | 3 |
| Mariner | 3 |
| Unknown | 39 |
| Total | 552 |

Source: CKS P100 1 16

The 136 inhabitants in this category represented 24.6 per cent of all fathers stated occupations. The category is a broad one and basically sets out to distinguish craftsmen-manufacturers from shopkeepers, although it must be accepted that some craftsmen would have sold their goods direct to the public. The most frequently represented crafts were cordwainer (17), tailor (21), saddler (eight), glover (seven), farrier (five), tanner (five), mason (five), miller (five), heelmaker (four) blacksmith (four) and thatcher (four). There were also the specialist occupations of pailmaker, chairmaker, clockmaker and gunsmith. The diverse range of trades suggests what a busy urban centre for goods and services Cranbrook was in the mid-seventeenth century.

Fifty-one fathers (9.2%) gave occupations that could be classed as shopkeeper in this period. The largest single occupational group was 26 butchers; in addition there

were six mercers, six barbers, three apothecaries, three vintners, three haberdashers, two innkeepers, one draper and one victualler.

This snapshot of Cranbrook occupations also suggests that Cranbrook's economy was still heavily dependent upon textile manufacture at mid-century. Clothiers, weavers, clothworkers and dyers made up almost two-fifths of all occupations recorded. Clothiers numbered 99 (17.9%), weavers 91 (13.7%) and when the 10 dyers and nine clothworkers are taken into account 213 (38.5%) of fathers had textile occupations (see Table 8.10). However, as discussed above, some men styled themselves 'clothier' even though they were no longer producing cloth, using it as a status definition only. And Cranbrook clothiers were substantially less wealthy on average in the period 1660-69 (£260) than in the 1630s (£503) see Table 8.6. Weavers in Cranbrook were also becoming less wealthy (see Tables 8.7 and 8.8), and were more likely to be unemployed or under-employed. The large number of textile workers is not convincing evidence of a flourishing industry at this time. Individuals would have described their occupation as a 'clothier', 'weaver' or 'dyer' even if they were no longer active or prospering in these trades. The manufacturing workforce of a depressed area does not disappear overnight. In the seventeenth century, when entry to a trade or craft necessitated a long apprenticeship, it was difficult for unemployed textile workers to be assimilated into a new trade or craft. In fact, as we shall discover, there was increasing poverty among Cranbrook's large urban workforce.

Poverty and Poor Relief

We have already noted that by 1677 Cranbrook was experiencing sufficient economic difficulty for the leading townsmen to present a case for reducing their rent, based on their claim that the clothing trade was in 'great decay' and as a result the

‘parish being very populous has become exceeding poor’.⁸⁶ Cranbrook’s economy was already in decline in the 1660s if the hearth tax returns can be believed. The 1664 hearth tax return for the Town borough of Cranbrook hundred recorded 287 hearth taxpayers, of whom only 123, or 43 per cent, were chargeable. A striking 164 householders, or 57 per cent, were exempt from payment on grounds of poverty.⁸⁷ In the outlying rural boroughs 286 were chargeable and 193, 40 per cent, were exempt. Unsurprisingly, poverty was most acute in the urban centre of Cranbrook. Coleman found that across the whole administrative county of Kent, the ‘average percentages recorded as ‘not chargeable’ to the Hearth tax in 1663 were: for rural areas, 31 per cent and for urban areas, 34 per cent’.⁸⁸ The proportion of exempt payers in Cranbrook was much larger than the average in Kent.

A breakdown of the number of hearths owned by those who were exempt shows that they were principally the poorest inhabitants of Cranbrook town. Of the 164 exempt payers, 112 (68%) were rated on one hearth, 46 (28%) had two hearths and just five per cent were rated on three-four hearths.

Table 8.11

Hearth Tax Returns for Cranbrook Hundred 1664

| BOROUGH | 1-2 Hearths Chargeable | 1-2 Hearths Exempt | 3-5 Hearths Chargeable | 3-5 Hearths Exempt | 6 + Hearths Chargeable | Total |
|------------------|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|-------|
| Cruthole | 27 | 28 | 24 | 3 | 7 | 89 |
| Kings Franchise | 8 | 11 | 8 | 0 | 5 | 32 |
| North Borough | 24 | 38 | 41 | 5 | 9 | 117 |
| Town | 64 | 158 | 47 | 6 | 12 | 287 |
| Abbots Franchise | 8 | 13 | 12 | 2 | 4 | 39 |
| Smithditch | 22 | 39 | 18 | 1 | 4 | 84 |
| Faircrouch | 31 | 50 | 27 | 3 | 7 | 118 |
| Total | 184 | 337 | 177 | 20 | 48 | 766 |

Source: CKS Q/RTh 1664

The large number of one-hearth households representing 'the smallest type of cottage, some of which would have been built on the simple wooden "forks" or "crucks", indicates the impoverished living conditions of many urban dwellers in Cranbrook'.⁸⁹ These figures can be compared with the inland Kentish, market towns of Maidstone, Ashford and Westerham, which had 50, 43 and 53 per cent of exempt payers respectively.⁹⁰

The heyday of the Wealden cloth industry was over by 1664, and its legacy was a large population with a 'high density of houses and hearths'.⁹¹ The inheritance in Cranbrook of a workforce largely dependent upon the cloth industry was large numbers of the 'poorer sort'. They can be traced in the hearth tax returns: in the Town borough 136 households both chargeable and exempt (47.3 per cent), were rated on just one hearth; 86 (30%) were two-hearth households, representing in all 222 (77%) of all households assessed. Cranbrook hundred as a whole was dominated by a large population of one and two hearth householders; they made up 522 (68%) of all households and 337 (94%) of exempt households, many of whom were probably living on the margins of poverty at this time. A decade later in the larger textile towns of Norwich and Ipswich, the large numbers of exemptions and the high incidence of poor accommodation testify to the scale of problems of England's traditional clothing industry in the later seventeenth century.⁹²

It is almost impossible to distinguish individual parishes in the hearth tax returns, which were organized and recorded by hundreds rather than by parish. This makes a full analysis of the hearth tax returns for the parishes adjacent to Cranbrook impossible. Because some parishes extended into several hundreds it is difficult to isolate individual parishes or groups of parishes within a specific hundred (see Map 2).⁹³ And, hundred boundaries do not coincide with parish boundaries in Kent.

Benenden parish is especially difficult in this respect, extending into Barkley, Rolvenden and Selbritten hundreds. Hundreds were divided into boroughs rather than parishes, and some boroughs contain land in more than one parish.

Where there is a reasonable overlap between parish and hundred, some analysis of poverty levels in neighbourhood parishes is possible. The neighbouring hundreds of Barkley (mainly Biddenden), Little Barnfield (mainly Goudhurst), and Marden (mainly Staplehurst), also show a high incidence of exempt households.⁹⁴ Selbritten hundred comprised large parts of Benenden and Hawkhurst and Great Barnfield held the major part of Hawkhurst. The number of exempt households in Selbritten was 58 (25%) and in Great Barnfield 38 (20%) of households; an indication that fewer very poor households lived there. It is also possible to be reasonably accurate about making a comparison between the 'Town borough' of Cranbrook in Cranbrook hundred and the 'Great borough' of Goudhurst in Marden hundred: both comprised the core of the two market towns. In Goudhurst 273 households were assessed for the 1664 tax, of which 113 (41%) were chargeable and 160 (59%) were exempt. In Goudhurst, 71 per cent (115 households) of exempt households had just one hearth and 26 per cent (42 households) had just two hearths. Overall, one hearth households represented 52 per cent (143 households) of all households in Goudhurst. The *hearth tax returns* suggest strongly that poverty within these once prosperous market and clothing towns was an increasing burden by the 1660s.

The cost of poor relief was a serious problem for Cranbrook parish officers at this time. The slow contraction of broadcloth production in the area and the under-employment of textile workers, contributed to the economic decline of the market town. In 1677 petitioners sought financial relief for the town (and themselves) claiming that poor relief in Cranbrook had amounted to £450 and upwards for the past 16 years.

The leading townsmen asked that out of the £200 per annum in improved rents payable to the Dean and Chapter, 'an annual pension be allowed for the relief of the poor'.

The increase of poverty in the town can be confirmed by a comparison with sums expended in the early seventeenth century, recorded in the churchwardens' accounts.⁹⁵ In 1609 a sesse was raised for the poor of £115 12s which was added to the £17 8s 6d remaining in the overseers hands from the previous year; of this sum £109 14s 7d was paid out in poor relief. A series of entries related to overseers receipts and disbursements show that sums paid out in poor relief and for placing poor children into service were growing. In 1613 the four overseers of the poor collected a sesse for poor relief of £103 7s. The officers also received from rents and from bequests left to help place children in service, which increased the funds available for relief that year to £136 3s 4d; they paid out in poor relief £135 15s 11d. In 1615 a sesse of £130 9s 3d was raised, to which was added the year's rents from church properties and a gift from Sir Thomas Hendley of 16s, bringing the amount available for poor relief to £151. The officers actually paid out in monthly poor relief, allowances and for placing children in service £153 10s 4d.

In the early seventeenth century, the parish was barely able to cover its financial obligations to the poor. In 1635 the churchwardens and overseers put out ten children to apprenticeship with local employers at a charge of £24 to the parish.⁹⁶ Petitioners in 1677 claimed that for 16 years poor relief disbursements had amounted to £450 and upwards.⁹⁷ Detailed analysis of the overseers accounts for the year beginning January 1676/77, shows the magnitude of poor relief in Cranbrook at this time. Although a snapshot in time, the nature and number of payments made are typical of the responses to poverty that overseers sought to effect.

Table 8.12**Number of Cranbrook Overseers Disbursements: January 1676/1677 – December 1677**

| Monthly Payments | Widows | Children | Old | Sick/Lame | Shoes/Clothing | Rents | Stock-Cards | Wood | Other |
|------------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|----------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|
| Jan 143 | 50 | 20 | 7 | 4 | 6 | | 5 | 4 | 47 |
| Feb 132 | 45 | 23 | 8 | 4 | 3 | | 5 | 3 | 41 |
| Mar 115 | 34 | 24 | 7 | 3 | 9 | | | | 38 |
| Apr 169 | 41 | 20 | 7 | 2 | 7 | 39 | 2 | | 52 |
| May 103 | 39 | 23 | 9 | 8 | 4 | | | | 20 |
| Jun 108 | 38 | 25 | 6 | 8 | 3 | | | | 28 |
| Jul 104 | 36 | 21 | 9 | 6 | 13 | | | | 19 |
| Aug 101 | 31 | 24 | 8 | 8 | 5 | | 4 | | 21 |
| Sep 109 | 30 | 22 | 8 | 9 | 8 | | | 10 | 22 |
| Oct 157 | 35 | 24 | 8 | 6 | 11 | 46 | | 3 | 24 |
| Nov 120 | 33 | 22 | 8 | 11 | 15 | | 4 | | 27 |
| Dec 135 | 35 | 22 | 8 | 9 | 23 | | 5 | | 33 |
| Total 1,497 | 447 (30%) | 270 (18%) | 93 (6%) | 78 (5%) | 107 (7%) | 85 (6%) | 25 (2%) | 20 (1%) | 372 (25%) |

Source: CKS P100 12/1

Overseer's accounts for Cranbrook for five years prior to the 1677 petition and for 10 years thereafter, confirm the large amounts paid out on a monthly basis towards the relief of the poor.⁹⁸ Widows, children, the old and the sick were all recipients of parish funds. The parish buried paupers, provided shoes and clothes for poor children, wood for fuel, paid housing/rents, and apprenticed parish orphans to a trade. Unfortunately, overseers often made one-off payments to men and women without recording the reason, on other occasions individual payments were made to relieve specific hardships. For example in February the parish paid for the 'mending of a treadle for widow Peters 2s' and for the 'mending of the cripples cart 1s 8d'. In June overseers paid for 'physic for Joan Branford, she being nearly blind 5s'. The parish also made regular payments to 'blind Winsherst and his boy 11s'. Poor widows were the largest group in receipt of poor relief and many received monthly payments. Orphaned children were placed with local families, whereas older children were put into service. It was the duty of the parish to apprentice pauper children to a trade, and apprentices

were provided with suitable clothing and formal indentures were drawn up. Those too poor to pay the rent on Lady Day or the feast of St Michaelmas were housed at the expense of the parish. Overseers sought to break the cycle of dependency by aiding self-help wherever possible. Hence the provision of stockcards for widows and single women, so that they might provide for themselves. Sums paid for the repair of 'broken treadles' and the 'placing of apprentices and servants' show that overseers tried in many ways to alleviate the burden on the parish. Nevertheless, the impoverished state of many inhabitants is evident. By the late seventeenth century Cranbrook's leading townsmen were compelled by the town's escalating poverty to seek a 'charitable contribution for the relief of the poor' from the Dean and Chapter.

In the neighbouring parishes of Biddenden and Staplehurst, systematic evidence of parish poor relief expenditure also exists for the late seventeenth century; overseers' accounts start in Biddenden from 1653, and for Staplehurst from 1648.⁹⁹ The accounts reveal the onerous burden of poor relief on ratepayers and the large sesses collected in order to alleviate poverty. In Biddenden the overseers provided a detailed account of the annual income received from two annual sesses (Table 8.13), and the outgoing poor relief. The overseers' accounts confirm that poverty in Biddenden was a serious problem, and that in the 1660s the demands on parish relief frequently exceeded what could be collected from the parish's wealthier inhabitants. In the year beginning January 1662/63 Biddenden overseers made 558 disbursements to the parish poor. As in Cranbrook, parish largesse was directed towards the privations of the 'deserving poor': widows, children and the sick, those most vulnerable in the parish. In the years 1664, 1665, and 1666 overseers struggled to keep the account in funds. However, it is noticeable that the annual sesse raised was less in these years than at the beginning of the 1660s, suggesting a general impoverishment of the parish.

Table 8.13**Biddenden Overseers Accounts 1653-1672**

| Year | Received £ | Disbursed £ | Balance £ (Left in overseers hands) | Balance £ (out of purse) |
|------|------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1653 | 177.00.05 | 153.00.05 | 27.18.05 | |
| 1654 | 141.06.03 | 119.07.03 | 21.19.00 | |
| 1656 | 129.01.09 | 102.17.03 | 26.04.06 | |
| 1657 | 84.13.06 | 82.02.04 | 2.00.00 | |
| 1658 | 90.01.01 | 105.07.10 | | 15.06.09 |
| 1659 | 146.02.00 | 129.04.03 | 16.17.03 | |
| 1660 | 159.11.07 | 154.16.05 | 4.15.02 | |
| 1661 | 138.16.07 | 125.07.00 | 13.09.07 | |
| 1662 | 146.16.10 | 143.12.06 | 3.04.04 | |
| 1663 | 164.00.08 | 163.01.00 | 0.19.07 | |
| 1664 | 109.05.04 | 117.12.10 | | 8.07.06 |
| 1665 | 105.04.11 | 111.19.01 | | 6.14.02 |
| 1666 | 111.04.06 | 131.01.07 | | 19.17.01 |
| 1667 | 128.14.00 | 122.07.01 | 6.18.11 | |
| 1668 | 116.06.04 | 115.14.01 | | 0.12.03 |
| 1669 | 152.14.11 | 127.17.11 | 24.07.00 | |
| 1670 | 134.09.09 | 144.02.07 | | 9.02.10 |
| 1671 | 133.13.07 | 141.15.07 | | 8.02.00 |

Source: CKS P26 12 1

It is also likely that parish officers were making a conscious decision to cut back on poor relief expenditure at this time. Parish philanthropy manifested itself in a number of ways. In 1665 overseers paid out £12 in Michaelmas rents and £12 4d in Lady Day rents, primarily for poor widows and single families. Wood was also a necessity for the poor for fuel; overseers spent £4 10s for this. Poor orphans were put out to service in order to learn a trade, 6s was paid to ‘Francis Little for keeping of Henneker’s girl’ and £2 to ‘Thomas Scayles, to take William Evans apprentice’. Some poor inhabitants were buried at the parish expense, and there was an entry for ‘Thomas Reynolls, for a coffin for Margaret Wood 5s, and John Powell for her grave and knell 2s’. Some poor families and children were provided with the basic necessities of life. Two pairs of shoes were provided for Godly Smith’s children, and there were shoes for widow Bristow’s girl and a blanket and waistcoat for Stedman’s boy. Cloth was paid to

'Henry Bennett to make a coat, britches and doublet for John Hopper's boy 5s'. Alex Lucas was paid 2s 4d for making a coat and waistcoat for Attwood's girl.

Table 8.14

Staplehurst Overseers Accounts 1648-1670

| Year | Received £ | Disbursed £ | Balance (left in overseers hands) | Balance (out of purse) |
|------|------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1648 | 99.09.11 | 94.04.08 | 2.05.03 | |
| 1649 | 97.14.04 | 106.14.00 | | 8.19.08 |
| 1650 | 167.18.01 | 182.16.06 | | 15.09.05 |
| 1651 | 173.04.05 | 194.10.02 | | 20.17.03 |
| 1652 | 174.04.05 | 173.12.08 | 0.11.09 | |
| 1653 | 159.11.04 | 157.19.01 | 1.00.04 | |
| 1654 | 135.06.04 | 134.05.08 | 1.01.00 | |
| 1655 | 137.04.02 | 130.10.01 | 6.19.06 | |
| 1656 | 155.03.07 | 133.01.00 | 22.02.07 | |
| 1657 | 154.05.09 | 136.16.10 | 12.08.11 | |
| 1658 | 141.11.05 | 118.19.11 | 22.11.06 | |
| 1659 | 154.18.03 | 141.10.09 | 13.07.06 | |
| 1660 | 153.07.06 | 168.04.04 | | 14.06.08 |
| 1661 | 163.13.09 | 168.19.00 | 14.13.11 | |
| 1662 | 167.04.08 | 164.06.00 | 2.18.08 | |
| 1663 | 153.09.11 | 149.19.03 | 3.10.08 | |
| 1664 | 152.10.09 | 149.07.10 | 3.02.11 | |
| 1665 | 152.10.09 | 149.07.10 | 3.02.11 | |
| 1666 | 130.15.07 | 112.12.04 | 18.03.03 | |
| 1667 | 123.15.00 | 111.18.11 | 11.16.01 | |
| 1668 | 149.16.00 | 151.11.01 | 1.15.01 | |
| 1670 | 134.11.05 | 129.14.08 | 4.16.09 | |

Source: CKS P247/12/1-3

The accounts for Staplehurst begin in 1648 and also show that large sums of money were regularly paid out in poor relief. Table 8.14 shows that there was a substantial increase in the amount of money collected for the poor in 1650, in response to the shortfall of the previous year. The sesse was increased in 1651 although disbursements once again left overseers 'out of purse'. In 1660 the deficit in poor relief payments, encouraged overseers to increase the sesse in 1661, in order to keep up with disbursements. The Staplehurst overseers' accounts show that a similar commitment was made to relieve the poor, the elderly, widows and children. Parishioners had their rent paid for out of the parish purse and received wood for winter fuel, the very poor

were clothed and shod from parish funds. Clearly, the large number of inhabitants in these parishes dependent upon parish funds is testimony to the general impoverishment of the neighbourhood by the late seventeenth century.

Summary

As the Cranbrook cloth industry declined the economic impact of increased unemployment and poverty was felt most acutely in towns, where the workforce was most dependent upon wages and where the opportunities to supplement the household income through farming and farm labour were fewer. In Cranbrook and the rural parishes of Biddenden and Staplehurst, the demise of the cloth industry undoubtedly contributed to the impoverishment and dependency of many of the inhabitants. Cranbrook, with its industrial specialism in textile manufacture, was also the market centre for a large rural area, providing goods and services for its dependent villages.¹⁰⁰ In a period of diminishing resources, the marketing function of both Cranbrook and Goudhurst was adversely affected by the decline in textile manufacture in the neighbourhood. Increased numbers of the 'poorer sort' would also have decreased the viability of the town's service industries and contributed to the eventual decay of the market. In the period 1630-69, Cranbrook's service provision increased only marginally from 21 per cent to 26 per cent over the period 1600-29.¹⁰¹ Moreover, the complaints of Cranbrook's leading townsmen demonstrate that hard times were creating friction between the market traders and shopkeepers, and that more competitive rents were being demanded, in order to offset the decline in demand caused by poverty and under-employment. The consequence of market decay and the problem of increasing poverty were the most serious issues facing the town at the close of period examined in this thesis. Nevertheless, in spite of severe economic difficulties caused by the decline of the local cloth industry, Cranbrook remained an important market for

supplying the local neighbourhood with goods and services right up to the end of the seventeenth century and beyond.

- ¹ CCAL DCc/BB13/24
- ² *ibid.*
- ³ C.W. Chalklin, *Seventeenth Century Kent* (1965) pp.121-2
- ⁴ F. Mendels, 'Proto-industrialization: the First Phase of the Industrialization Process', *Journal of Economic History*, xxxii (1972) 241-262
- ⁵ *ibid.*; Zell, *Industry*, ch. 8
- ⁶ J. Thirsk, 'Industries in the Countryside', in F. J. Fisher (ed.), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England* (1961); K.G Ponting, *The Woollen Industry of South-West England* (1971); G. Unwin, 'The History of the Cloth Industry in Suffolk', in *Studies in Economic History*' (1920)
- ⁷ Zell, *Industry*, pp.226-227
- ⁸ A. Poole, 'Baptismal Delay: Some Implications from the Parish Registers of Cranbrook and Surrounding Parishes in the Kentish Weald' in *Local Population Studies*, 65 (Autumn 2000) pp.9-26
- ⁹ Chalklin, *Seventeenth Century Kent*, pp.40-41
- ¹⁰ *ibid.* p.254
- ¹¹ CKS P157 1/2, P157/28/1
- ¹² Chalklin, *Seventeenth Century Kent*, p.40
- ¹³ CKS P347 12 2, P347/12 3
- ¹⁴ CKS P178 1/1
- ¹⁵ CKS Q Rth 1664, Population estimates are based on the population figures for the total number of households in 1664: 4.25, is the multiplier used by M. Dobson, 'Population 1640-1831', in A. Armstrong (ed.), *The Economy of Kent 1640-1914* (Woodbridge 1995) p.11, Appendix 111A; T. Arkell, 'Multiplying Factors for Estimating Population Totals from the Hearth Tax', *Local Population Studies*, 28 (Spring 1982) suggests a multiplier of 4.75.
- ¹⁶ D. Harrington, S. Pearson, and S. Rose (eds.), *Kent Hearth Tax, 1664* (2000) have clarified the relationship of hundreds, boroughs and parishes. This estimate from boroughs in Cranbrook Hundred includes Town 287, Abbots Franchise 39, Smithditch 84, Faircrouch 118, Total households 528
- ¹⁷ CKS P100 28 5, P100 1 16 The parish register indicates a natural decrease in population due to an excess of burials over baptisms for the years 1658 and 1659 and 1662 to 1670. 1658 -84, 1659 -53, 1662 52, 1663 38, 1664-46, 1665 -27, 1666 -49, 1667 -54, 1668 -37, 1669 -51, 1670 -18
- ¹⁸ Marden Hundred - Great Borough of Goudhurst 273, Ruckherst 24; Little Barnfield Hundred - Bromley Borough 22, Combewell 13, Chingley 24, Lillesden 17, Pattenden 3, Total households 376
- ¹⁹ A. Whiteman, (ed.), *The Compton Census of 1676 - A Critical Edition* (Oxford, 1986) pp.12-30
- ²⁰ *ibid.* p. 26 fn.112, 25 fn.106, 26 fn.114, fn.118, fn.190, 25 fn.107, 26 fn.199
- ²¹ *ibid.* lxvii
- ²² T. Arkell 'A method for estimating population totals from the Compton census returns' in K. Schurer and T. Arkell, *Surveying the People: The Interpretation and use of document sources for the study of population in the later seventeenth century* (Cambridge, 1992) pp.97-116
- ²³ Whiteman, *The Compton Census*, p.26
- ²⁴ *ibid.* p.26
- ²⁵ *CSPD, Charles II* (1861) lvi, p.412
- ²⁶ In 1575 there was a complaint about the decay of the cloth trade in Kent: PRO SP 12/106 no. 49
- ²⁷ *CSPD, Eliz. I*, xcv no.61 (23 Eliz. c.5)
- ²⁸ SRO, D593 5 4 36 11
- ²⁹ *CSPD, Charles I*, (1867) cccxlv, p.290
- ³⁰ D.C. Coleman, 'The Economy of Kent Under The Later Stuarts', (London Ph.D, 1951) pp.153-155
- ³¹ PRO PROB11 212 77
- ³² PRO PROB11 227 120
- ³³ PRO PROB11 240 370
- ³⁴ PRO PROB11/387 46
- ³⁵ CKS PRC2/38/114, PRC20/9/452
- ³⁶ *Assizes*, iii, pp.43, 54, 55, 95, 171; CKS West Kent Note Book, Q/SoW 1625-51 f.30, 48,89, 105
- ³⁷ Hasted, *History*, vii, p.91
- ³⁸ A. Friis, *Alderman Cockayne's Project and the Cloth Trade* (1927) pp.129-130
- ³⁹ Zell, *Industry*, pp. 241-242
- ⁴⁰ *CSPD, Interregnum 1659-60*, p.340
- ⁴¹ quoted in R. Furley, *A History of the Weald of Kent*, ii, p.481
- ⁴² D.C. Coleman, 'The Economy of Kent Under the Later Stuarts', pp.148-163
- ⁴³ Chalklin, *Seventeenth Century Kent*, pp.115-23
- ⁴⁴ M. Zell, 'Credit in the pre-industrial English woollen industry', *EcHR*, xlix, 4 (1996) pp.667-691

- ⁴⁵ B. Short, 'The De-industrialization Process: a Case Study of the Weald, 1600-1850', in Pat Hudson (ed.), *Regions and Industries* (1989) pp.162, 164
- ⁴⁶ Zell, *Industry*, p.245
- ⁴⁷ CKS PRC28/20/350
- ⁴⁸ CKS PRC28/17/464
- ⁴⁹ CKS PRC28/20/340
- ⁵⁰ CKS PRC10/70/93
- ⁵¹ CKS PRC11/22/90, 11/23/102, 11/23/132, 11/25/22, 11/28/85
- ⁵² CKS PRC27/11/41, 11/8/223
- ⁵³ CKS PRC27/17/31
- ⁵⁴ PRO PROB4/15039
- ⁵⁵ CKS PRC27/8/7
- ⁵⁶ CKS PRC11/20/111
- ⁵⁷ CKS PRC 11/17/46
- ⁵⁸ Some clothiers in Cranbrook had clearly scaled down their clothing activities in response to the downturn in demand for the quality broadcloth. Although not a phenomenon that was entirely new to the 1640-1670s the balance of farming to manufacturing was beginning to swing away from textile manufacture. Examples are John Taylor (1640) CKS PRC11/8/223, George Hanburie (1648) PRC 11 15 81, Stephen Weller (1659) PRC11/22 104, James Bridgeland (1667) PRC11/28/33
- ⁵⁹ Robert Hovenden, clothier (d.1660) had a copper in the workhouse and 2 liver colour broadcloths valued at £38. But he had extensive household and furnishings valued at £122, 67% of his total goods and chattels. PRC11/17/45; Thomas Colville, sen. (d.1646) had very extensive household and furnishings, while his workshop was inactive and he had no clothier's stock in trade. He had a modest farming interest and £50 owing to him in debts. PRC11/13/133
- ⁶⁰ CKS11 21 90
- ⁶¹ PRO PROB4 21154
- ⁶² PRO PROB4 3481
- ⁶³ CKS PRC20 12 77
- ⁶⁴ M. Spufford 'The Limitations of the Probate Inventory' in J. Chartres and D. Hey (eds.), *English Rural Society 1500-1700* (Cambridge, 1990) pp.139-175
- ⁶⁵ CKS PRC1 8 103
- ⁶⁶ CKS PRC2 36 161
- ⁶⁷ CKS PRC11 31 31
- ⁶⁸ Numerous examples of clothiers who were primarily farming at this time could be given. Typical is Richard Bathurst of Goudhurst (d. 1664) £196 CKS PRC11/25/24; Peter Sharpe sen. of Benenden (d.1669) £121 CKS PRC11 31 224; Jonah Fuller, Cranbrook (d.1693) £331 PRO PROB4/10113
- ⁶⁹ PRO PROB4 12986
- ⁷⁰ PRO PROB4 10113
- ⁷¹ CKS PRC19 4 59
- ⁷² PRO PROB4 11992
- ⁷³ PRO PROB11/240 370
- ⁷⁴ PRO PROB11 258 329
- ⁷⁵ PRO PROB11/325/142
- ⁷⁶ PRO PROB11/387/46
- ⁷⁷ PRO PROB11/426/112
- ⁷⁸ D.C. Coleman, 'The Economy of Kent Under The Later Stuarts' p.162
- ⁷⁹ John Courthop served as churchwarden 1652-53, Richard Holden 1656-57, Robert Hovenden 1678-79, Robert Taylor 1649-50, Richard Weller 1641, Thomas Weller 1639, 1642
- ⁸⁰ PRO PROB11/276/282, CKS P100/5
- ⁸¹ CKS P100/5; CCAL Dcb/v/v
- ⁸² CCAL Dcc/BB13/48
- ⁸³ CCAL Dcc/BB13/7
- ⁸⁴ CCAL Dcc/BB16/16
- ⁸⁵ CCAL Dcc/BB13/19; Mr Plummer had sent in money in November 1661 for his half years rent and entry fine for which he claimed full discharge of Dr Causabon Dcc/BB13/17. At the same time Thomas Munn, Alex Remington and John Phillips sent a letter stating that Plummer was against them in the market: Dcc/BB13/18
- ⁸⁶ CCAL Dcc/BB13/24
- ⁸⁷ CKS QS/HT 1664 f.46-47

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- ⁸⁸ D.C. Coleman, 'The Economy of Kent Under the Later Stuarts', p.301
- ⁸⁹ *ibid.* p.314
- ⁹⁰ D. Harrington, S. Pearson, Susan Rose (eds.), *Kent Hearth Tax*, 'Introduction', lii
- ⁹¹ *ibid.* xxxv
- ⁹² P. Slack 'Great and good towns 1540-1700', in P. Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History*, ii, 1540-1840, p.360
- ⁹³ D. Harrington *et al*, *Kent Hearth Tax*, provides a useful guide to the complexity of translating hundredal boroughs into parishes
- ⁹⁴ CKS Q RTh 1664, Barkley Hundred had (118)-37% exempt households and (150)-47% 1 hearth households; Little Barnfield Hundred had (36)-46% exempt households and (44)-56% 1 hearth households; Marden Hundred had (294)-47% exempt households and (283)-45% I hearth households
- ⁹⁵ CKS P100 5
- ⁹⁶ CKS P100 5 207
- ⁹⁷ CCAL DCc/BB13/24
- ⁹⁸ CKS P100/12/1
- ⁹⁹ CKS P26 12 1, P247/12/1-3
- ¹⁰⁰ A. Dyer 'Small market towns 1540-1700', in P. Clark (ed.), *Cambridge Urban History*, ii, p.442
- ¹⁰¹ See ch. 2, Tables 2.2 and 2.3

Conclusion

This thesis has shown that Cranbrook fits well within the accepted definition of a small town: having a population of ‘less than 2,500 in 1700’, and ‘any settlement with a public market’.¹ In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Cranbrook’s population grew in line with the expansion of local textile manufacture, and the growth of a local workforce dependent upon the twin occupations of broadcloth production and farming. Chapters one and two demonstrated that within the Cranbrook neighbourhood area the development of rural industry propagated settlements where much of the local population was engaged in non-agricultural pursuits. Chapter three demonstrated that Cranbrook was the urban centre for the neighbourhood area, for which it provided a diverse range of goods and services. The steady growth of population in Goudhurst in the early seventeenth century (the second largest settlement in the neighbourhood) facilitated the development of its own local market, which elevated Goudhurst to the status of a small town by the late seventeenth century. The symbiotic relationship between the town of Cranbrook and its rural hinterland is evident from the dynamics of local marketing and the complementary provision of goods and services for local needs. In this way Cranbrook and its neighbourhood area was a well-defined regional economic system with Cranbrook as its urban epicentre throughout the period studied. The variety of trades operating in Cranbrook’s neighbourhood were those closely connected with the local wood-pasture farming regime, tanning and leather goods, woodworking, the local iron industry, and of course clothmaking. The basic necessities of life were provided in Cranbrook but also in the local parishes where butchers, tailors, millers, carpenters and smiths serviced the local economy. In Cranbrook the marketing

function of the town grew throughout the seventeenth century to provide an outlet for the agricultural produce of its dependent rural hinterland.

The central feature of the economy of Cranbrook and its neighbourhood area in the late sixteenth century was its dependence upon the twin occupations of textile manufacture and farming. Diversity was an important feature of Wealden agriculture: farmers were engaged in mixed arable and pasture farming, mostly on a small-scale, although some large-scale graziers specialised in more intensive livestock rearing in the rich pasture lands of Romney Marsh and Sussex. By the late seventeenth century, some enterprising farmers were growing hops to supplement their arable crops, sheep and cattle rearing. Dairy farming, especially the production of cheese, which could be sold at local and distant markets, was also a popular activity among Wealden farmers. Manorial control was weak by the seventeenth century, and tenurial arrangements in Cranbrook's neighbourhood area operated in the interests of yeomen-farmers and husbandmen. In addition, the Kentish custom of gavelkind favoured the free alienation of small parcels of land and contributed to an active land market. These advantageous conditions allowed those with money to capitalise on the surge in market demand during the period, and provided profits for small-scale and large-scale producers alike. The success of Wealden agriculture fostered the development of the 'middling sort' and fostered wealth creation within this social group. As Lambard claimed, the 'yeomanry, or common people...is nowhere more free and jolly than in this shire'.² In the seventeenth century these factors, combined with a general stimulus to farming due to the region's proximity to London, encouraged an expansion of agricultural production. In the course of the seventeenth century, many clothiers redeployed their capital into direct farming and into the acquisition of land and urban property, to become graziers

and *rentiers*; many also scaled down their textile operations in accordance with the decline in market demand.

In contrast to agriculture, the prosperity of Wealden textile manufacture, the area's principle industrial specialism, was subject to more fluctuating fortunes. The fact that Kent was a 'high price, high wage region' was important in view of the large numbers of people employed as spinners, weavers and clothworkers in the manufacture of broadcloth.³ Labour costs were a very significant element in cloth manufacture and contributed to the difficulties in selling Kent broadcloth. Periods of economic dislocation in the industry in the early seventeenth century were also detrimental to local employment opportunities. Depressions in the cloth trade were in turn felt in the town's marketing and service sector. In the seventeenth century the rising costs of local raw materials – especially wood for the dyeing and manufacturing process – also added to clothier's costs and raised the price of his product. In this harsher economic climate, when demand for high quality broadcloth, was challenged by the 'New Draperies', Cranbrook's product was increasingly overpriced and unsaleable in overseas markets. In addition, adverse government regulations and increased foreign competition contributed to the terminal decline of the industry. By 1724 Defoe observed:

'At Cranbrook Tenterden, Goudhurst and other villages...there was once a very considerable clothing trade carried on, ...but the trade is now quite decay'd and scarce ten clothiers left in all the county'.⁴

The decay of textile production in the Weald in the seventeenth century was central to the economic retrenchment of Cranbrook as a market town, and of its role as a service centre for the neighbouring parishes. The contraction of the region's industrial specialism resulted in unemployment and under-employment, and raised the levels of poverty in Cranbrook's neighbourhood. By the later seventeenth century, the large populations in these parishes dependent upon the cloth industry for employment

were unsustainable. The problem of under-employment among the 'poorer sort' was exacerbated by disease and harvest failure in the period after the Civil War, when burials regularly exceeded baptisms in some parishes; it is likely that many inhabitants in the area were living below the poverty line at this time.

By contrast, Cranbrook's 'chief inhabitants' were men of status and reputation in their community. Clothiers and yeomen-farmers made up a substantial majority of the town's wealthiest inhabitants; unsurprisingly, since they were the leading capitalist employers of the neighbourhood. Shopkeepers and tradesmen of above average wealth also assumed an elevated social position in the town, and became assimilated into the group of 'chief inhabitants'. The wealth and status of the town's leading inhabitants frequently manifested itself in parish office holding. In chapter four parish officers were examined within the context of a local elite who differentiated themselves from the majority of inhabitants who did not serve. A substantial body of clothiers and rural freeholders, combined with a more limited number of urban-bourgeoisie, acted as an effective force for social order in the town. The 'chief inhabitants' were identified contemporaneously as the 'best men' of the parish. Implicit in the use of this term is the elevated status of those parishioners we can identify as churchwardens, overseers of the poor, surveyors of the highway and as sidesmen. Admission to the *cursus honorum* of parish office was shown to be directly related to an individual's wealth. At the same time, participation in parish office raised the status of officers within the community. Parish officers defined themselves and their local social position through the agency of parish governance. Office-holders were frequently obliged to perform social duties as witnesses and executors to wills, as school governors and as hundred constables. A willingness to serve confirmed an individual's superior position within the social hierarchy. Moreover, the dynastic nature of office holding within particular families,

over several generations, enhanced the social status of many already - wealthy families in Cranbrook. Well-established families at the top of the social hierarchy differentiated themselves from the majority of inhabitants by their involvement in parish politics. The dynamics of hierarchy, kinship, wealth and status informed relationships between occupational and social groups. Those who were not 'selected and chosen' into the inner circle of office holders, whether because of a failure to meet the criteria upon which office holding was based, personal indifference or lack of time, stood outside the local power structure of parish governance.

Cranbrook's 'chief inhabitants' were distinguished within their own social and cultural milieu as being proactive in parish office over several generations. A collective mentality was shown to have existed among some long standing office-holding families, based upon occupational solidarity and puritan sympathies. Chapter four also demonstrated that local status and social stratification among the 'chief inhabitants' was defined by wealth. While many individuals from diverse occupations passed fleetingly through the vestry, serving one or two terms of office, it was shown that some families were part of a serial office-holding elite. Some 'chief inhabitants' were more 'elevated' than others, and it is likely that their authority and influence in the town was superior. Dynastic ruling-family members were among the wealthiest and most socially elevated of the town's rulers. The dominance of wealthy clothiers amongst the office holding elite is testimony to the importance and prosperity of textile manufacture in the region during the majority of the period examined in this thesis. In effect the collective identity of Cranbrook's chief inhabitants confirmed their superior status as a core group of stable families, with enhanced authority within the neighbourhood.

Kinship networks were also shown to be important in enhancing the range of opportunities available to family members. Clothiers and yeomen-farmers maintained active kinship networks and many of the most successful families in Cranbrook were related by marriage. Moreover, ties of blood and marriage created reciprocal duties that could be invoked across time and distance. Kinsmen recognised financial obligations and bonds of love and friendship between one another. Kinship networks were important beyond the immediate neighbourhood and emigrants to the New World were often remembered in the bequests and legacies of Cranbrook will-makers. Kinship also cemented relationships between occupational groups within farming and clothing families. Kinship ties were advantageous in prolonging the status and influence of certain families within the local area.

Cranbrook's reputation for non-conformity was shown to be in its infancy in the late sixteenth century. In chapter six it was shown that nascent pockets of radicalism undoubtedly existed, and local support for puritan preachers was reflected in a sizeable minority who chose puritan baptismal names, owned Bibles and nourished a belief that they were among 'Gods' elect'. Puritan thinking, almost certainly contributed to the 'reformation of manners' which aimed to reform the disorderly and immoral lives of parishioners. But this was also shown to be part of the ethos of conventional Protestantism. Moreover, enforcement waves intended to discipline parishioners were shown to be complex in origin, and were often inspired by economic difficulties in crisis years. By the mid-seventeenth century, parishioners in Cranbrook's neighbourhood were more vigorous in their support of non-conformist religion. Non-conformity in Cranbrook's neighbourhood embraced middle-and lower-class enthusiasts, clothiers, weavers, urban tradesmen, artisans, yeomen and labourers, as well as aristocratic support from the Roberts family. By the end of the period studied,

clothiers and urban tradesmen were certainly at the forefront of religious radicalism in Cranbrook. The wills of several late seventeenth century overseers in Cranbrook, provides a vital link between office-holding and non-conformist sympathies, and illustrates that some were amongst the town's wealthiest inhabitants. John Colvill, clothier, served as overseer in February, 1675/76. He bequeathed to his two nephews in New England 20s each. He also bequeathed to 'the poor people called Quakers living at or near Cranbrook 20s'.⁵ Jonah Fuller, described as yeoman in his will and clothier in his inventory, was overseer in charge of payments in April, May and June 1676 and again in February 1676/77.⁶ In July 1681 Fuller was indicted at the Kent Assizes for 'allowing an unlawful conventicle to meet in his house on the 10th July and other occasions'.⁷ John Afford, shopkeeper, distributed poor relief in November and December 1677 and in February 1677/78. Afford also had kinsmen overseas; he bequeathed to his half brother William, living in the province of Maine, America £5. He also bequeathed to John Turner of Cranbrook, clothier and George Courthop of Benenden, millwright, £5 'in trust and confidence that they will employ and bestow the same to relieving and nourishing, the poor and needy of the people called Quakers'. Furthermore, Afford made provision via his 'trusty friends' Turner and Courthop that £5 be paid 'towards enlarging the Meeting House of the people called Quakers in Cranbrook'.⁸ It would seem that outward conformity and participation in parish office often belied strong non-conformist convictions. The textile industry, it seems, provided a climate in which non-conformity could flourish. Contrariwise, economic distress almost certainly fuelled religious dissent. The relationship between the slow decline in the region's textile industry and the growth of non-conformity in the area, both Baptist and Quaker, must be seen as interrelated. By the 1670s the concentration of non-conformist activity in the area was shown to be strong enough to affect population

estimates based upon traditional parish baptisms, an indication of the number of inhabitants in the neighbourhood who worshipped outside traditional Protestantism.

In chapter seven Cranbrook and its local neighbourhood was examined within the context of the 'reformation of manners' debate. It was shown that in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries church attendance was enthusiastically enforced within the neighbourhood through church court presentments. Churchwardens sought to implement the iconoclastic changes of the period, instil higher standards of church attendance and raise standards of personal morality. Churchwardens initiated presentments based upon elite perceptions of orderly behaviour. Whilst pockets of puritan sympathy undoubtedly existed, many inhabitants were brought to account for the same petty misdemeanours and sexual lapses in the seventeenth century as they had been in the sixteenth. Clearly, the ideal was not necessarily commensurate with the reality, and many inhabitants failed to embrace the strictures of traditional Protestantism let alone puritan 'godliness'.

The de-industrialization of this once prosperous clothmaking region has been the subject of considerable debate in recent years. Mendels' explanation of 'comparative advantage' as an interpretation of the de-industrialization of the Weald has been dismissed by Short, who argued that 'Wealden farming could not compete with the returns to be gained from industry'. He claimed that the withdrawal of metropolitan capital and contraction of external markets provides a more plausible explanation than did Mendels.⁹ In contrast to Short, Zell has argued that clothiers financed their business activities through kinsmen and neighbourhood connections and that they were not dependent upon external capital. Moreover, clothiers failed as entrepreneurs because they failed to adapt to changing market conditions.¹⁰ This thesis has shown that the region supported many large-scale farmers and numerous

smallholders and that the trend towards investment in farming increased in the seventeenth century, as the market demand for foodstuffs grew. It was the 'comparative advantage' to be gained from diversification into direct farming, landholding and leasing investments which prolonged the demise of the neighbourhood's cloth industry late into the seventeenth century. Chapter eight provides some answers to the question of what happened to the proto-industrial textile industry in the Weald during the late seventeenth century. It charts a period of slow contraction and decline in the market demand for broadcloth from the 1630s onwards, during which the number of active clothiers declined. Many clothiers redeployed their capital into more profitable investments and those who were unable to do so went out of business. The local industry did not suffer because of the withdrawal of metropolitan capital; indeed it has been shown that many clothiers extended credit to London merchants. The fact that many clothiers had large sums of money tied up in cloth awaiting sale at London dealers, suggests that a quick turn around in profit was unlikely, and that some months could elapse before clothiers saw a return on their investments. Clothiers who were reliant on the profits of textile manufacture alone were less likely to prosper in this harsher economic climate. Cranbrook's textile base was seriously eroded by the 1670s, to the detriment of the market town. To some extent textile manufacture in the neighbourhood was more resilient in the rural parishes, where agriculture and industry could be more readily combined. Nevertheless, external forces did impact upon the broadcloth industry in the Weald, and the failure of the local industry to adapt to the changing market demand for 'New Draperies' is predominant. The dislocation of international trade and decline of overseas markets was made worse by government policies. By the 1670s the decline of the textile industry in the region left the neighbourhood exposed to increasing poverty and structural decay.

By the 1660s the hey-day of the Wealden textile industry had passed, the populations of Cranbrook and its adjacent parishes were in decline, unemployment and poverty were in the ascendancy. The demise of cloth manufacture in the region heralded the decay of a market town dependent upon its failing industrial specialism. Economic impoverishment affected the marketing function of the town, and caused urban tradesmen to seek rent reductions and concessions to compensate for the recession in trade. For the leading townsmen and 'chief inhabitants' of Cranbrook, the juxtaposition between the 'better sort' and the 'poorer sort' was brought into sharp focus as never before.

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- ¹ A. Dyer, 'Small Towns in England, 1600-1800' in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 108 (2002) pp.53-67
- ² W. Lambarde, *Perambulation of Kent*, (1570; reprinted Bath, 1970) p.7
- ³ D.C. Coleman, 'The Economy of Kent Under the Later Stuarts' (University of London Ph.D. thesis, 1951) p.383
- ⁴ D. Defoe, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, i (1724; reprinted 1962) p.115
- ⁵ PRO PROB11 426 112; CKS P100/12/1
- ⁶ PRO PROB11 415 109, PROB4 10113; CKS P100/12/1
- ⁷ *Assizes*, vi, p.146
- ⁸ CKS P100 2 1, PRO PROB11/405/131
- ⁹ F.F.Mendels 'Proto-industrialization: the First Phase of the Industrialization Process' *Journal of Economic History*, xxxii (1972) pp.246-249; B. Short 'The de-industrialisation process: a case study of the Weald, 1600-1850' in P. Hudson (ed.), *Regions and Industries: A Perspective on the Industrial Revolution in Britain* (Cambridge, 1989) p.171-174
- ¹⁰ Zell, *Industry*, pp.238, 245-246

Appendix 1

Cranbrook – Baptism and Burial Figures 1570-1659

| Year | Baptisms | | Burials | | Natural inc/dec |
|------|----------|------|---------|-----|-----------------|
| 1570 | 85 | | 56 | | 29 |
| 1571 | 58 | | 55 | | 3 |
| 1572 | 74 | | 61 | | 13 |
| 1573 | 51 | | 51 | | 0 |
| 1574 | 50 | | 59 | | -9 |
| 1575 | 45 | | 38 | | 7 |
| 1576 | 80 | | 39 | | 41 |
| 1577 | 82 | | 32 | | 50 |
| 1578 | 70 | | 43 | | 27 |
| 1579 | 101 | 696 | 55 | 489 | 46 |
| 1580 | 88 | | 70 | | 18 |
| 1581 | 103 | | 57 | | 46 |
| 1582 | 97 | | 119 | | -22 |
| 1583 | 118 | | 52 | | 66 |
| 1584 | 104 | | 61 | | 43 |
| 1585 | 117 | | 43 | | 74 |
| 1586 | 110 | | 53 | | 57 |
| 1587 | 89 | | 48 | | 41 |
| 1588 | 107 | | 51 | | 56 |
| 1589 | 120 | 1053 | 56 | 610 | 64 |
| 1590 | 107 | | 29 | | 78 |
| 1591 | 90 | | 71 | | 19 |
| 1592 | 110 | | 69 | | 41 |
| 1593 | 104 | | 47 | | 57 |
| 1594 | 83 | | 47 | | 36 |
| 1595 | 98 | | 53 | | 45 |
| 1596 | 81 | | 76 | | 5 |
| 1597 | 64 | | 191 | | -127 |
| 1598 | 77 | | 50 | | 27 |
| 1599 | 83 | 897 | 46 | 679 | 37 |
| 1600 | 96 | | 34 | | 62 |
| 1601 | 83 | | 37 | | 46 |
| 1602 | 93 | | 55 | | 38 |
| 1603 | 112 | | 67 | | 45 |
| 1604 | 108 | | 52 | | 56 |
| 1605 | 101 | | 67 | | 34 |
| 1606 | 89 | | 65 | | 24 |
| 1607 | 117 | | 68 | | 49 |
| 1608 | 91 | | 72 | | 19 |
| 1609 | 77 | 967 | 85 | 602 | -8 |
| 1610 | 83 | | 81 | | 2 |
| 1611 | 96 | | 94 | | 2 |
| 1612 | 65 | | 91 | | -26 |
| 1613 | 85 | | 94 | | -10 |
| 1614 | 95 | | 102 | | -7 |
| 1615 | 104 | | 127 | | -23 |

| | | | | | |
|------|-----|------|-------|------|-----|
| 1616 | 85 | | 89 | | -4 |
| 1617 | 92 | | 74 | | 18 |
| 1618 | 92 | | 102 | | -10 |
| 1619 | 87 | 884 | (116) | 970 | -29 |
| 1620 | 115 | | 80 | | 25 |
| 1621 | 102 | | 93 | | 9 |
| 1622 | 123 | | 52 | | 71 |
| 1623 | 82 | | 71 | | 11 |
| 1624 | 106 | | 76 | | 30 |
| 1625 | 101 | | 99 | | 2 |
| 1626 | 85 | | 89 | | -4 |
| 1627 | 97 | | 97 | | 0 |
| 1628 | 113 | | 120 | | -7 |
| 1629 | 122 | 1046 | 96 | 883 | 26 |
| 1630 | 93 | | 99 | | -6 |
| 1631 | 99 | | 84 | | 15 |
| 1632 | 115 | | 109 | | 6 |
| 1633 | 128 | | 100 | | 28 |
| 1634 | 116 | | 83 | | 33 |
| 1635 | 122 | | 107 | | 15 |
| 1636 | 89 | | 109 | | -20 |
| 1637 | 124 | | 97 | | 27 |
| 1638 | 120 | | (135) | | -15 |
| 1639 | 65 | 1071 | 125 | 1048 | -60 |
| 1640 | 127 | | 132 | | 5 |
| 1641 | 106 | | 92 | | 14 |
| 1642 | 95 | | 96 | | -1 |
| 1643 | 113 | | 126 | | -13 |
| 1644 | 113 | | 92 | | 21 |
| 1645 | 106 | | 80 | | 26 |
| 1646 | 106 | | 106 | | 0 |
| 1647 | 89 | | 123 | | -34 |
| 1648 | 62 | | 117 | | -55 |
| 1649 | 60 | 850 | 119 | 951 | -59 |
| 1650 | 74 | | 99 | | -25 |
| 1651 | 75 | | 106 | | -31 |
| 1652 | 63 | | 96 | | -35 |
| 1653 | 57 | | 131 | | -74 |
| 1654 | 82 | | 88 | | -6 |
| 1655 | 84 | | 86 | | -2 |
| 1656 | 104 | | 109 | | -8 |
| 1657 | 74 | | 116 | | -42 |
| 1658 | 71 | | 155 | | -84 |
| 1659 | 58 | 742 | 111 | 1099 | -53 |

Source: CKS P100 1/15, P100 1 16; Dca/BT/59

.6
m

Much better to use variable with
rate too high @ 35
total ppⁿ

Appendix 2

Cranbrook Population based on 35 per 1,000 Baptisms 1570-1660

| Year | Baptisms | 35 per 1,000 | | |
|------|----------|------------------|-------|------|
| 1570 | 85 | 2,428 | | |
| 1571 | 58 | 1,657 | | 1, 0 |
| 1572 | 74 | 2,114 | 63 | |
| 1573 | 51 | 1,457 | | |
| 1574 | 50 | 1,429 | | 2 |
| 1575 | 45 | 1,286 | | |
| 1576 | 80 | 2,286 | | 2 |
| 1577 | 82 | 2,342 | 34 38 | |
| 1578 | 70 | 2,000 | | |
| 1579 | 101 | 2,886 | | |
| 1580 | 88 | 2,514 | | |
| 1581 | 103 | 2,942 | | |
| 1582 | 97 | 2,771 | | |
| 1583 | 118 | 3,371 | | |
| 1584 | 104 | 2,971 | | |
| 1585 | 117 | 3,342 | | |
| 1586 | 110 | 3,149 | | |
| 1587 | 89 | 2,542 | | |
| 1588 | 107 | 3,057 | | |
| 1589 | 120 | 3,429 | | |
| 1590 | 107 | 3,057 | | |
| 1591 | 90 | 2,571 | | |
| 1592 | 110 | 3,142 | | |
| 1593 | 104 | 2,971 | | |
| 1594 | 83 | 2,371 | | |
| 1595 | 98 | 2,800 | | |
| 1596 | 81 | 2,314 | | |
| 1597 | 64 | 1,829 | 3 6 | 2 |
| 1598 | 77 | 2,200 | | |
| 1599 | 83 | 2,371 | | |
| 1600 | 96 | 2,743 | | |
| 1601 | 83 | 2,371 | | |
| 1602 | 93 | 2,657 | 4 | 295 |
| 1603 | 112 | 3,200 | | |
| 1604 | 108 | 3,086 | | |
| 1605 | 101 | 2,886 | | |
| 1606 | 89 | 2,543 | | |
| 1607 | 117 | 3,342 | 7 | 28 0 |
| 1608 | 91 | 2,600 | | |
| 1609 | 77 | 2,200 | | |
| 1610 | 83 | 2,371 | | |
| 1611 | 96 | 2,742 | | |
| 1612 | 65 | 1,857 | | 2 3 |
| 1613 | 85 | 2,429 | | |
| 1614 | 95 | 2,714 | | |

| | | | | |
|------|-----|-------|------|-----|
| 1615 | 104 | 2,971 | | |
| 1616 | 85 | 2,429 | | |
| 1617 | 92 | 2,629 | 32 6 | 2 |
| 1618 | 92 | 2,629 | | |
| 1619 | 87 | 2,486 | | |
| 1620 | 115 | 3,286 | | |
| 1621 | 102 | 2,914 | | |
| 1622 | 123 | 3,514 | | |
| 1623 | 82 | 2,342 | | |
| 1624 | 106 | 3,029 | | |
| 1625 | 101 | 2,886 | | |
| 1626 | 85 | 2,429 | | |
| 1627 | 97 | 2,771 | | |
| 1628 | 113 | 3,229 | | |
| 1629 | 122 | 3,486 | | |
| 1630 | 93 | 2,657 | | |
| 1631 | 99 | 2,829 | | |
| 1632 | 115 | 3,286 | | |
| 1633 | 128 | 3,657 | | |
| 1634 | 116 | 3,314 | 2 | 345 |
| 1635 | 122 | 3,486 | | |
| 1636 | 89 | 2,542 | | |
| 1637 | 124 | 3,542 | | |
| 1638 | 120 | 3,429 | | |
| 1639 | 65 | 1,857 | | |
| 1640 | 127 | 3,629 | | |
| 1641 | 106 | 3,029 | | |
| 1642 | 95 | 2,714 | | |
| 1643 | 113 | 3,229 | | |
| 1644 | 113 | 3,229 | | |
| 1645 | 106 | 3,029 | | |
| 1646 | 106 | 3,029 | | |
| 1647 | 89 | 2,543 | | |
| 1648 | 62 | 1,771 | | |
| 1649 | 60 | 1,714 | | |
| 1650 | 74 | 2,114 | | |
| 1651 | 75 | 2,142 | | |
| 1652 | 63 | 1,800 | | |
| 1653 | 57 | 1,629 | | |
| 1654 | 82 | 2,342 | | |
| 1655 | 84 | 2,400 | | |
| 1656 | 104 | 2,971 | | |
| 1657 | 74 | 2,114 | 27 | 0 |
| 1658 | 71 | 2,029 | | |
| 1659 | 58 | 1,657 | | |
| 1660 | 72 | 2,057 | | |

Source: CKS P100/1/15, P100/1/16; CCAL DCa/BT/59

Appendix 3 (a)

Neighbourhood Parishes: Summary of Annual Baptism Figures 1570-70

| Parish | 1570 | 1571 | 1572 | 1573 | 1574 | 1575 | 1576 | 1577 | 1578 | 1579 | Total |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Benenden | 31 | 25 | 37 | 21 | 21 | 40 | 26 | 35 | 35 | 32 | 303 |
| Biddenden | 38 | 31 | 18 | 37 | 37 | 29 | 42 | 31 | 33 | 52 | 348 |
| Cranbrook | 85 | 58 | 74 | 51 | 50 | 45 | 80 | 82 | 70 | 101 | 696 |
| Frittenden | 12 | 5 | 12 | 9 | 15 | 18 | 17 | 16 | 14 | 13 | 131 |
| Goudhurst | 52 | 48 | 66 | 43 | 32 | 57 | 58 | 50 | 59 | 54 | 519 |
| Hawkhurst | 30 | 30 | 46 | 35 | 30 | 40 | 42 | 34 | 40 | 45 | 372 |
| Staplehurst | 34 | 18 | 20 | 25 | 22 | 22 | 26 | 33 | 26 | 33 | 259 |
| | 282 | 215 | 273 | 221 | 207 | 251 | 291 | 281 | 277 | 330 | 2628 |

Source: CKS P20 1 1, P20 1 2, P26/1/1, P26 1/2, P100/1/15; CCAL Dca/BT/78; CKS P157/1/2, P157 28 1, P178 1 2, P178 1 2, P347/12/1

Appendix 3 (b)

Neighbourhood Parishes: Summary of Annual Baptism Figures 1580-89

| Parish | 1580 | 1581 | 1582 | 1583 | 1584 | 1585 | 1586 | 1587 | 1588 | 1589 | Total |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Benenden | 44 | 38 | 36 | 33 | 38 | 41 | 38 | 27 | 45 | 32 | 372 |
| Biddenden | 42 | 40 | 54 | 42 | 37 | 36 | 42 | 41 | 45 | 47 | 426 |
| Cranbrook | 88 | 103 | 97 | 118 | 104 | 117 | 110 | 89 | 107 | 120 | 1053 |
| Frittenden | 13 | 11 | 16 | 16 | 10 | 10 | 16 | 1 | 9 | 10 | 112 |
| Goudhurst | 54 | 62 | 58 | 69 | 74 | 43 | 60 | 49 | 60 | 59 | 588 |
| Hawkhurst | 40 | 38 | 36 | 41 | 44 | 43 | 36 | 55 | 41 | 45 | 419 |
| Staplehurst | 33 | 27 | 26 | 30 | 29 | 28 | 25 | 32 | 18 | 31 | 279 |
| | 314 | 319 | 323 | 349 | 336 | 318 | 327 | 294 | 325 | 344 | 3249 |

Source: As per Appendix 3 (a)

Appendix 3(c)

Neighbourhood Parishes: Summary of Annual Baptism Figures 1590-99

| Parish | 1590 | 1591 | 1592 | 1593 | 1594 | 1595 | 1596 | 1597 | 1598 | 1599 | Total |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Benenden | 40 | 36 | 38 | 49 | 38 | 31 | 43 | 26 | 39 | 39 | 379 |
| Biddenden | 41 | 51 | 39 | 47 | 44 | 42 | 41 | 29 | 39 | 41 | 414 |
| Cranbrook | 107 | 90 | 110 | 104 | 83 | 98 | 81 | 64 | 77 | 83 | 897 |
| Frittenden | 6 | 11 | 10 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 12 | 11 | 17 | 94 |
| Goudhurst | 54 | 47 | 64 | 35 | 35 | 61 | 48 | 42 | 49 | 55 | 490 |
| Hawkhurst | 40 | 36 | 54 | 45 | 44 | 52 | 35 | 32 | 43 | 45 | 426 |
| Staplehurst | 25 | 31 | 22 | 34 | 24 | 27 | 30 | 22 | 25 | 19 | 259 |
| | 313 | 302 | 337 | 323 | 272 | 316 | 287 | 227 | 283 | 299 | 2959 |

Source: As per Appendix 3 (a)

Appendix 3 (d)

Neighbourhood Parishes: Summary of Annual Baptism Figures 1600-09

| Parish | 1600 | 1601 | 1602 | 1603 | 1604 | 1605 | 1606 | 1607 | 1608 | 1609 | Total |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Benenden | 31 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 33 | 41 | 34 | 38 | 30 | 35 | 338 |
| Biddenden | 43 | 38 | 29 | 42 | 42 | 44 | 39 | 45 | 50 | 49 | 421 |
| Cranbrook | 96 | 83 | 93 | 112 | 108 | 101 | 89 | 117 | 91 | 77 | 967 |
| Frittenden | 19 | 11 | 23 | 19 | 22 | 12 | 13 | 3 | 19 | 14 | 155 |
| Goudhurst | 59 | 56 | 48 | 67 | 62 | 66 | 71 | 59 | 74 | 59 | 621 |
| Hawkhurst | 56 | 36 | 45 | 53 | 56 | 51 | 56 | 43 | 48 | 52 | 496 |
| Staplehurst | 29 | 24 | 33 | 32 | 39 | 38 | 27 | 37 | 30 | 15 | 304 |
| | 333 | 280 | 303 | 357 | 362 | 353 | 329 | 342 | 342 | 301 | 3302 |

Source: As per Appendix 3 (a)

Appendix 3 (e)

Neighbourhood Parishes: Summary of Annual Baptisms 1610-19

| Parish | 1610 | 1611 | 1612 | 1613 | 1614 | 1615 | 1616 | 1617 | 1618 | 1619 | Total |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Benenden | 42 | 36 | 41 | 42 | 29 | 46 | 31 | 43 | 33 | 32 | 375 |
| Biddenden | 44 | 47 | 38 | 28 | 41 | 46 | 36 | 40 | 44 | 57 | 421 |
| Cranbrook | 83 | 96 | 65 | 85 | 95 | 104 | 85 | 92 | 92 | 87 | 884 |
| Frittenden | 9 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 16 | 4 | 12 | 16 | 8 | 95 |
| Goudhurst | 74 | 79 | 57 | 53 | 75 | 73 | 72 | 72 | 60 | 69 | 684 |
| Hawkhurst | 48 | 67 | 46 | 37 | 58 | 51 | 47 | 46 | 54 | 50 | 504 |
| Staplehurst | 38 | 36 | 22 | 21 | 26 | 36 | 21 | 36 | 34 | 37 | 307 |
| | 338 | 369 | 277 | 274 | 330 | 372 | 296 | 341 | 333 | 340 | 3270 |

Source: As per Appendix 3 (a)

Appendix 3 (f)

Neighbourhood Parishes: Summary of Annual Baptisms 1620-29

| Parish | 1620 | 1621 | 1622 | 1623 | 1624 | 1625 | 1626 | 1627 | 1628 | 1629 | Total |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Benenden | 42 | 43 | 42 | 52 | 43 | 31 | 38 | 37 | 37 | 44 | 409 |
| Biddenden | 47 | 48 | 47 | 36 | 52 | 38 | 42 | 34 | 43 | 51 | 438 |
| Cranbrook | 115 | 102 | 123 | 82 | 106 | 101 | 85 | 97 | 113 | 122 | 1046 |
| Frittenden | 25 | 10 | 17 | 14 | 18 | 10 | 19 | 12 | 17 | 18 | 160 |
| Goudhurst | 79 | 68 | 75 | 58 | 73 | 53 | 54 | 60 | 61 | 71 | 652 |
| Hawkhurst | 62 | 61 | 57 | 63 | 46 | 53 | 60 | 59 | 49 | 40 | 550 |
| Staplehurst | 38 | 40 | 32 | 37 | 33 | 35 | 24 | 43 | 32 | 39 | 353 |
| | 408 | 372 | 393 | 342 | 371 | 321 | 322 | 342 | 352 | 385 | 3608 |

Source: As per Appendix 3 (a)

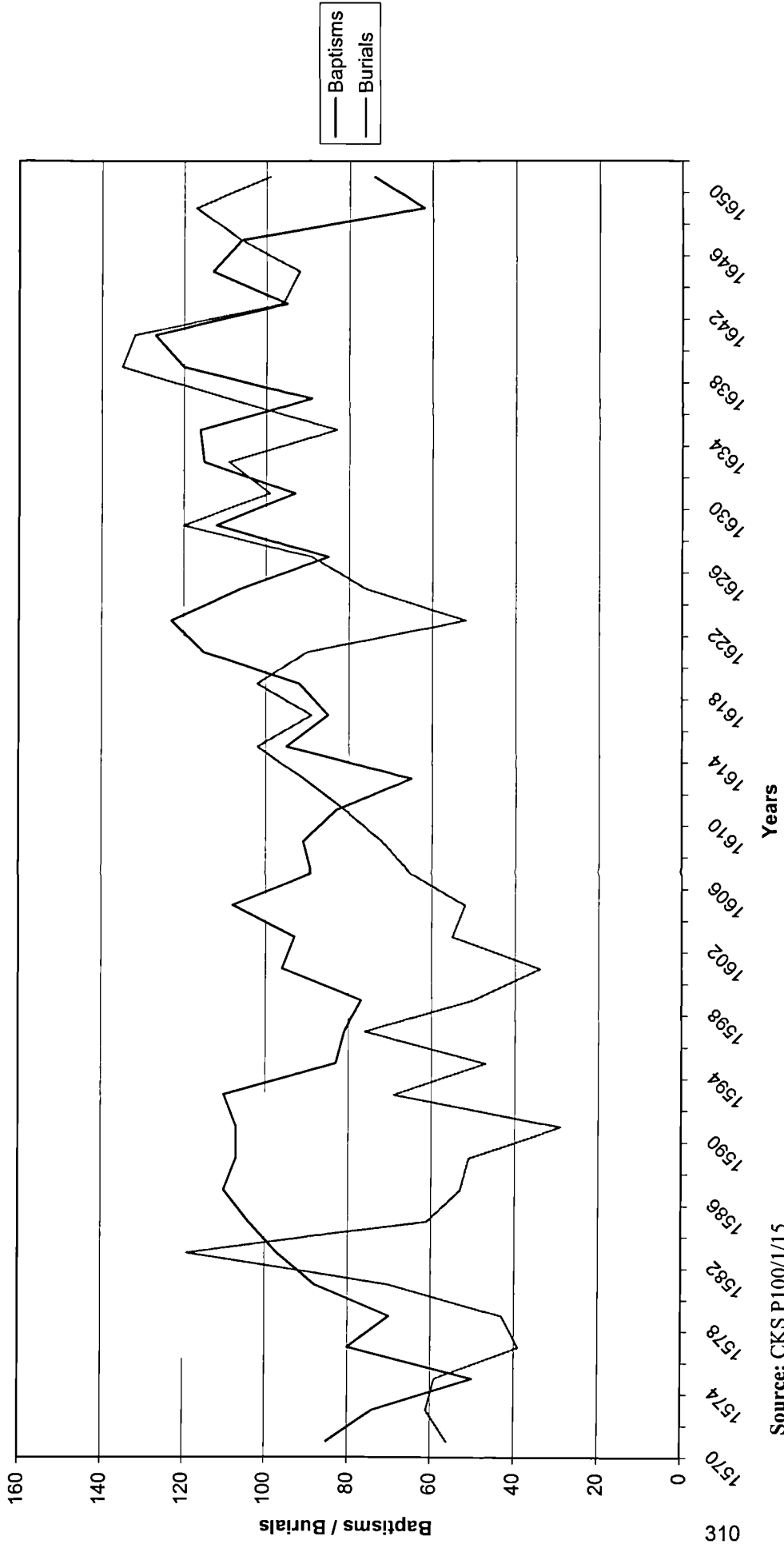
Appendix 3 (g)

Neighbourhood Parishes: Summary of Annual Baptisms 1630-39

| Parish | 1630 | 1631 | 1632 | 1633 | 1634 | 1635 | 1636 | 1637 | 1638 | 1639 | Total |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Benenden | 42 | 27 | 32 | 35 | 36 | 39 | 41 | 29 | 37 | 31 | 349 |
| Biddenden | 54 | 41 | 54 | 49 | 48 | 39 | 46 | 42 | 33 | 30 | 436 |
| Cranbrook | 93 | 99 | 115 | 128 | 116 | 122 | 89 | 124 | 120 | 65 | 1071 |
| Frittenden | 6 | 17 | 18 | 15 | 20 | 16 | 21 | 19 | 11 | 8 | 151 |
| Goudhurst | 70 | 54 | 61 | 70 | 64 | 68 | 72 | 69 | 71 | 60 | 659 |
| Hawkhurst | 58 | 52 | 48 | 49 | 63 | 49 | 58 | 47 | 62 | 35 | 521 |
| Staplehurst | 31 | 36 | 31 | 40 | 45 | 35 | 35 | 39 | 35 | 25 | 352 |
| | 354 | 326 | 359 | 386 | 392 | 368 | 362 | 369 | 369 | 254 | 3539 |

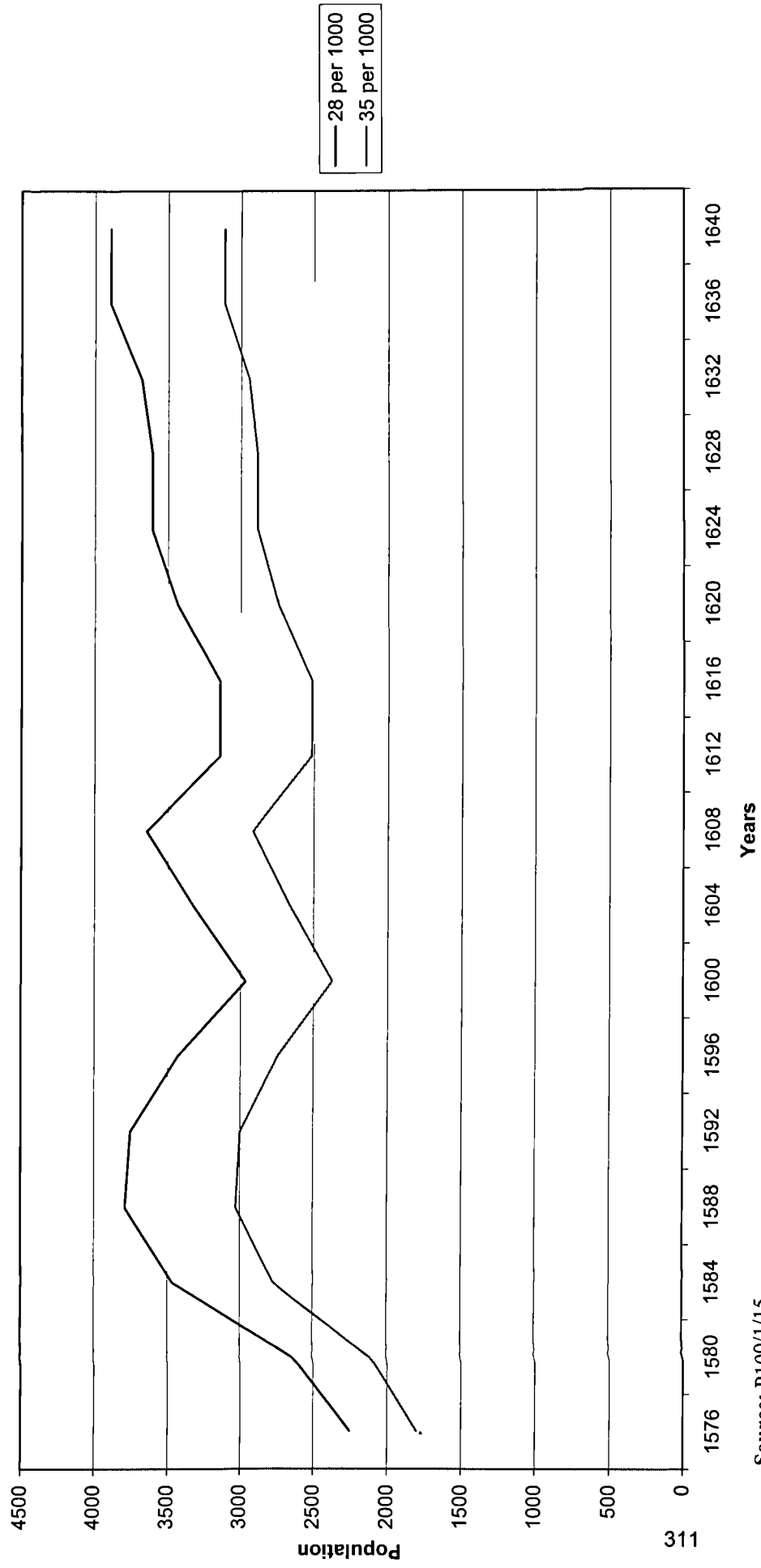
Source: As per Appendix 3 (a)

Appendix 4: Cranbrook Baptisms and Burials, 1570-1650



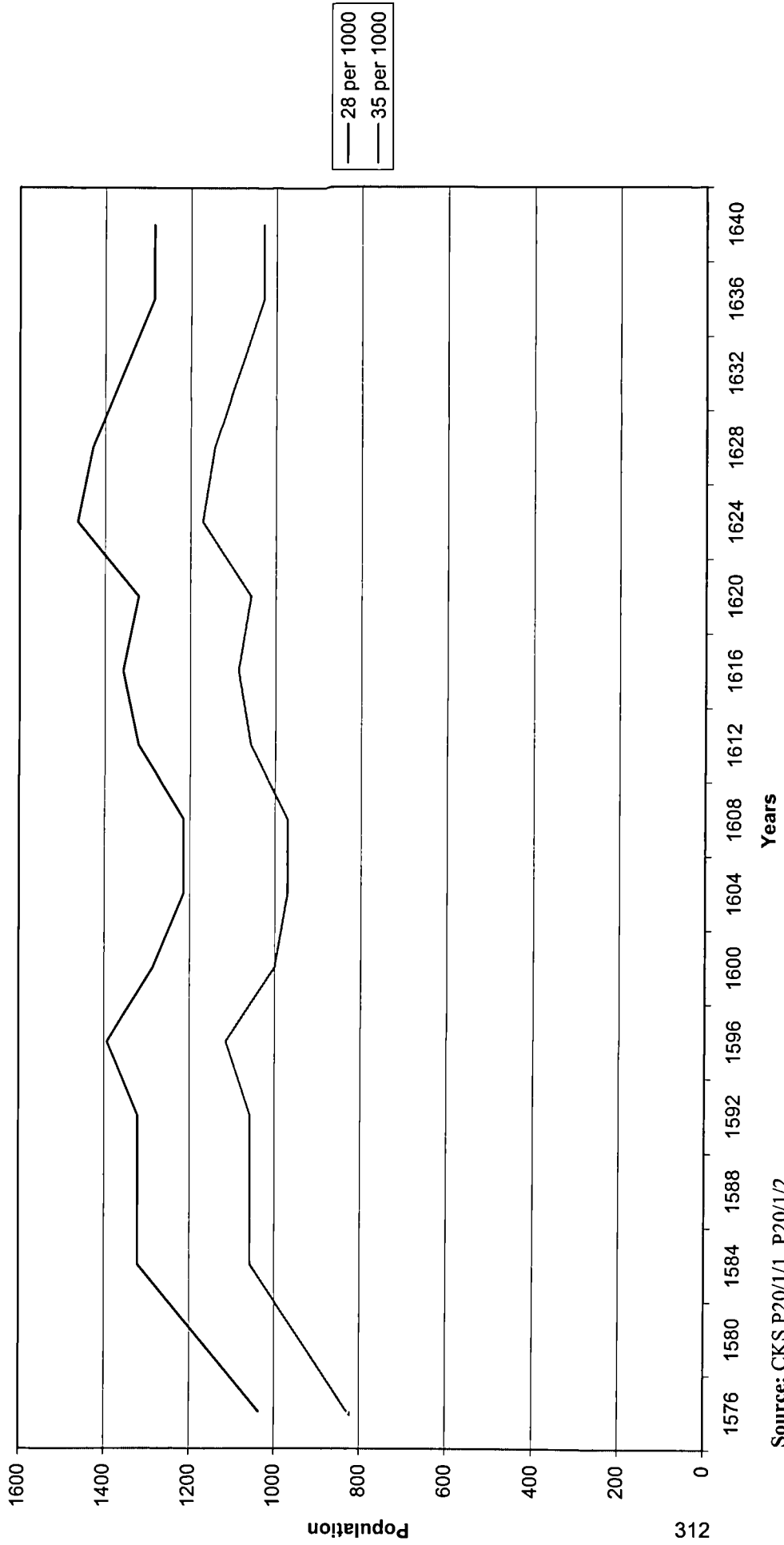
Source: CKS P100/1/15

Appendix 5: Cranbrook Total Population, 1570-1640, Based on 7 Year Averages at 28 and 35 per 1000 Baptisms



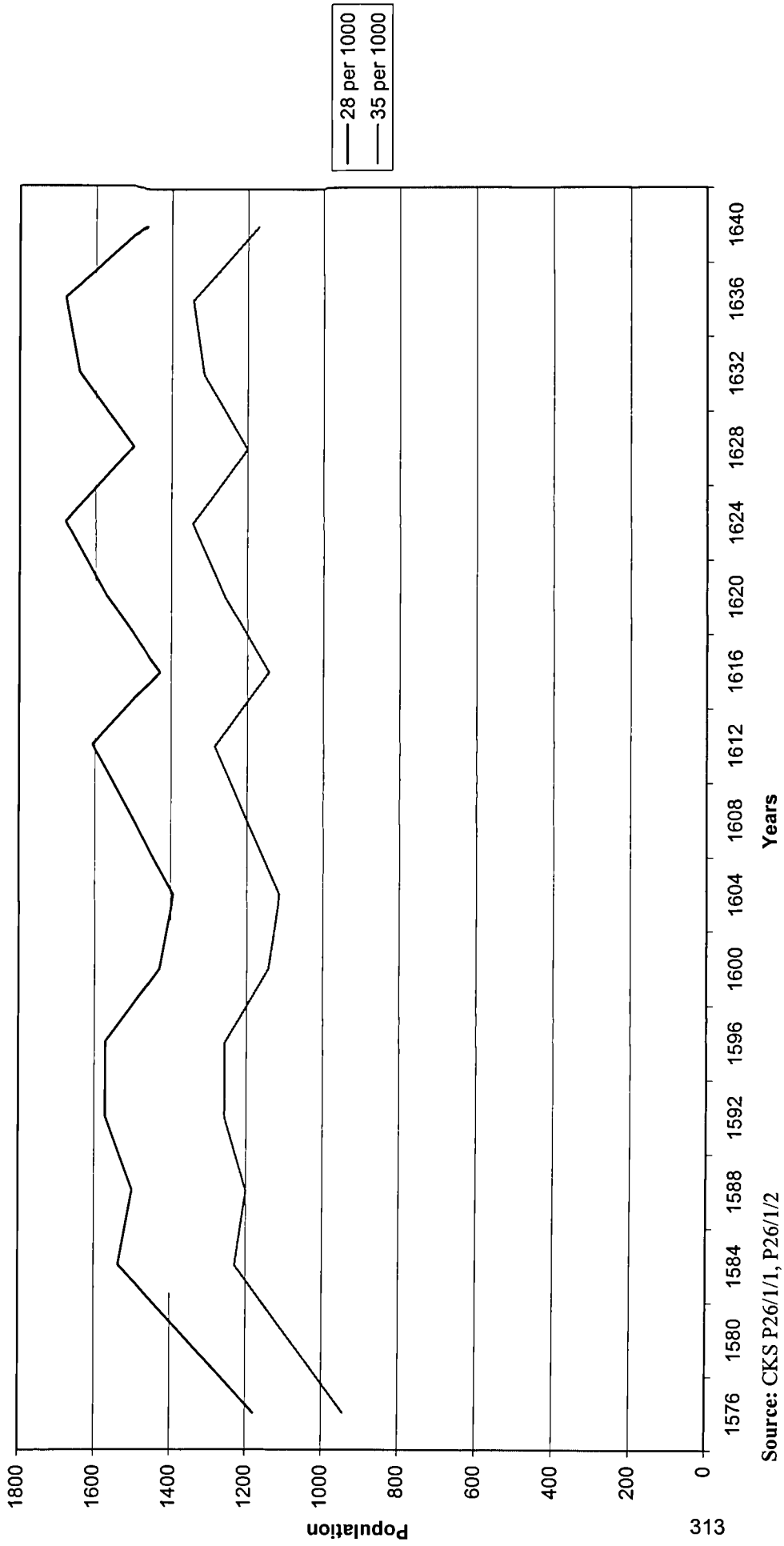
Source: P100/1/15

Appendix 6: Benenden Total Population, 1570-1640, Based on 7 Year Averages at 28 and 35 Per 1000 Baptisms



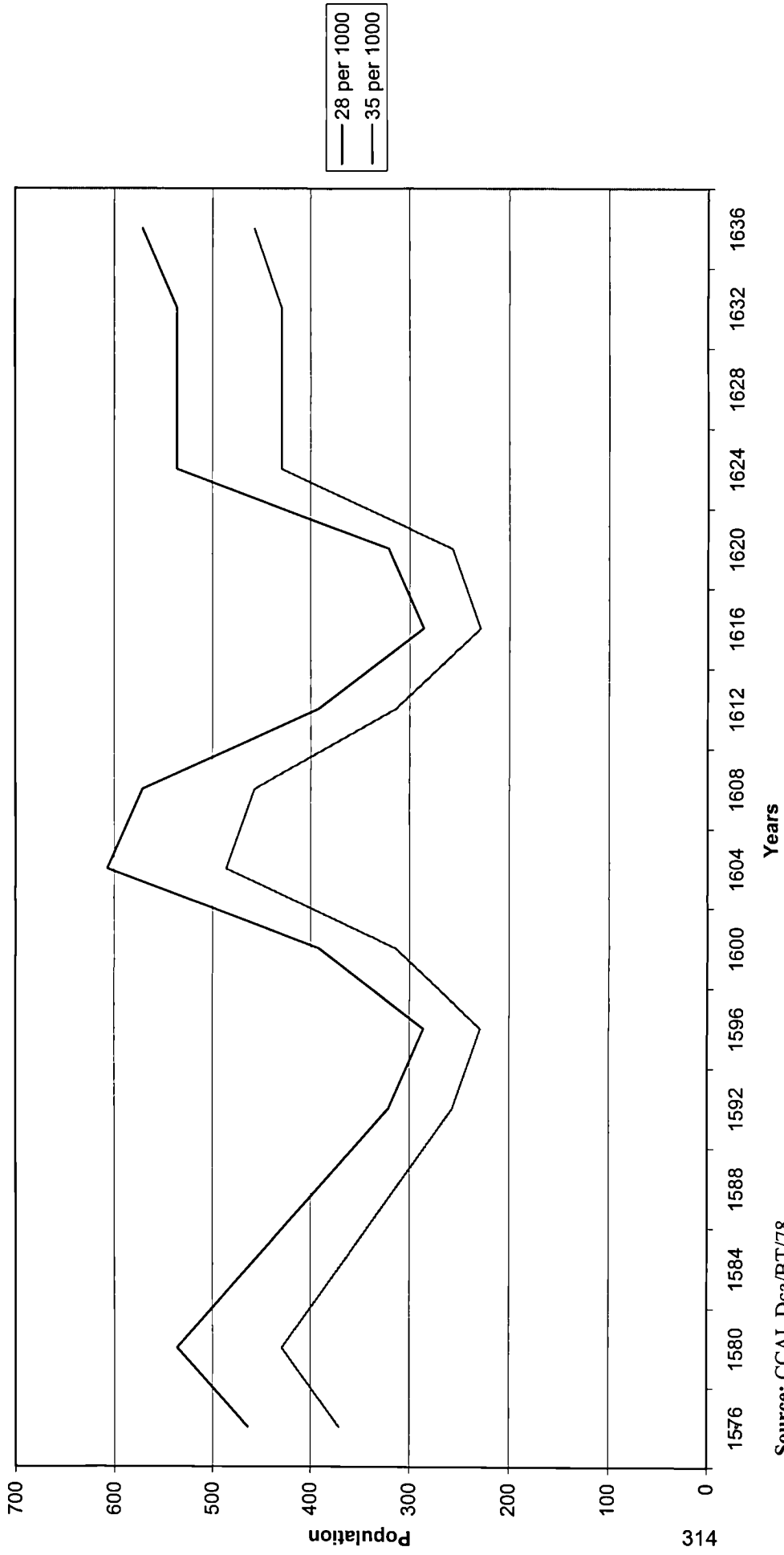
Source: CKS P20/1/1, P20/1/2

Appendix 7: Biddenden Total Population, 1570-1640, Based on 7 Year Averages at 28 and 35 per 1000 Baptisms



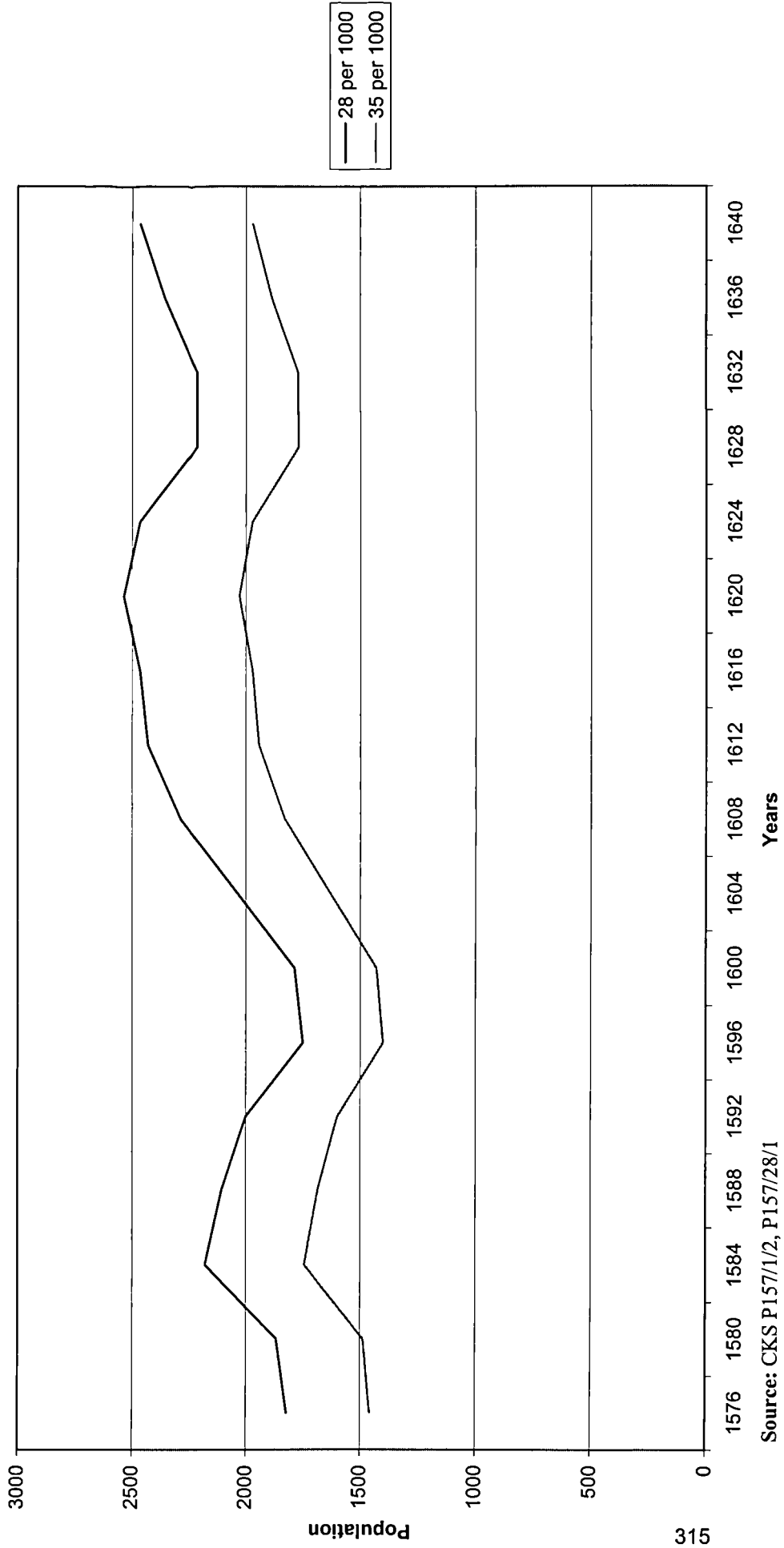
Source: CKS P26/1/1, P26/1/2

Appendix 8: Frittenden Total Population, 1570-1639, Based on 7 Year Averages at 28 and 35 per 1000 Baptisms



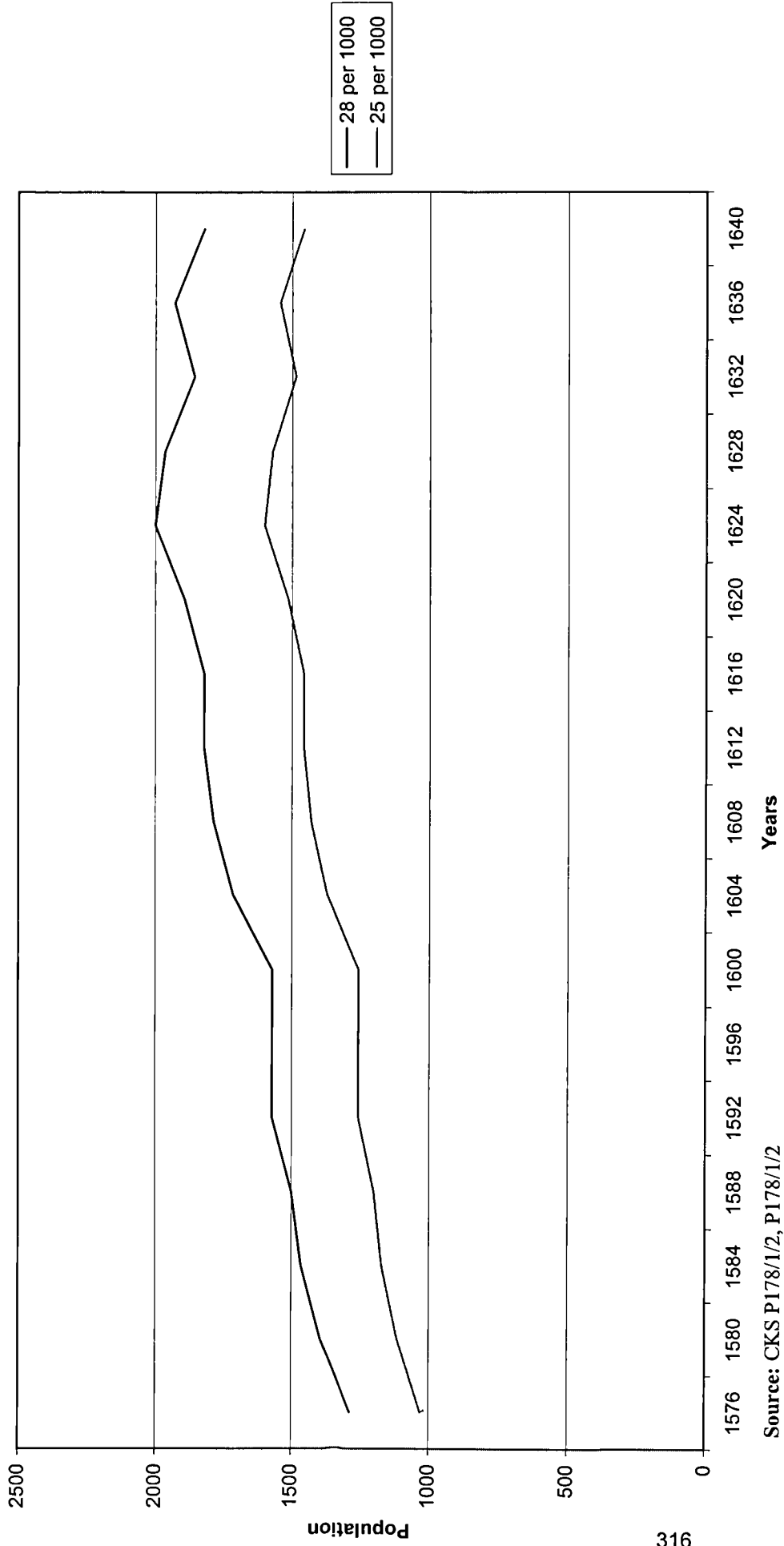
Source: CCAL Dca/BT/78

Appendix 9: Goudhurst Total Population, 1570-1640, Based on 7 Year Averages at 28 and 35 per 1000 Baptisms



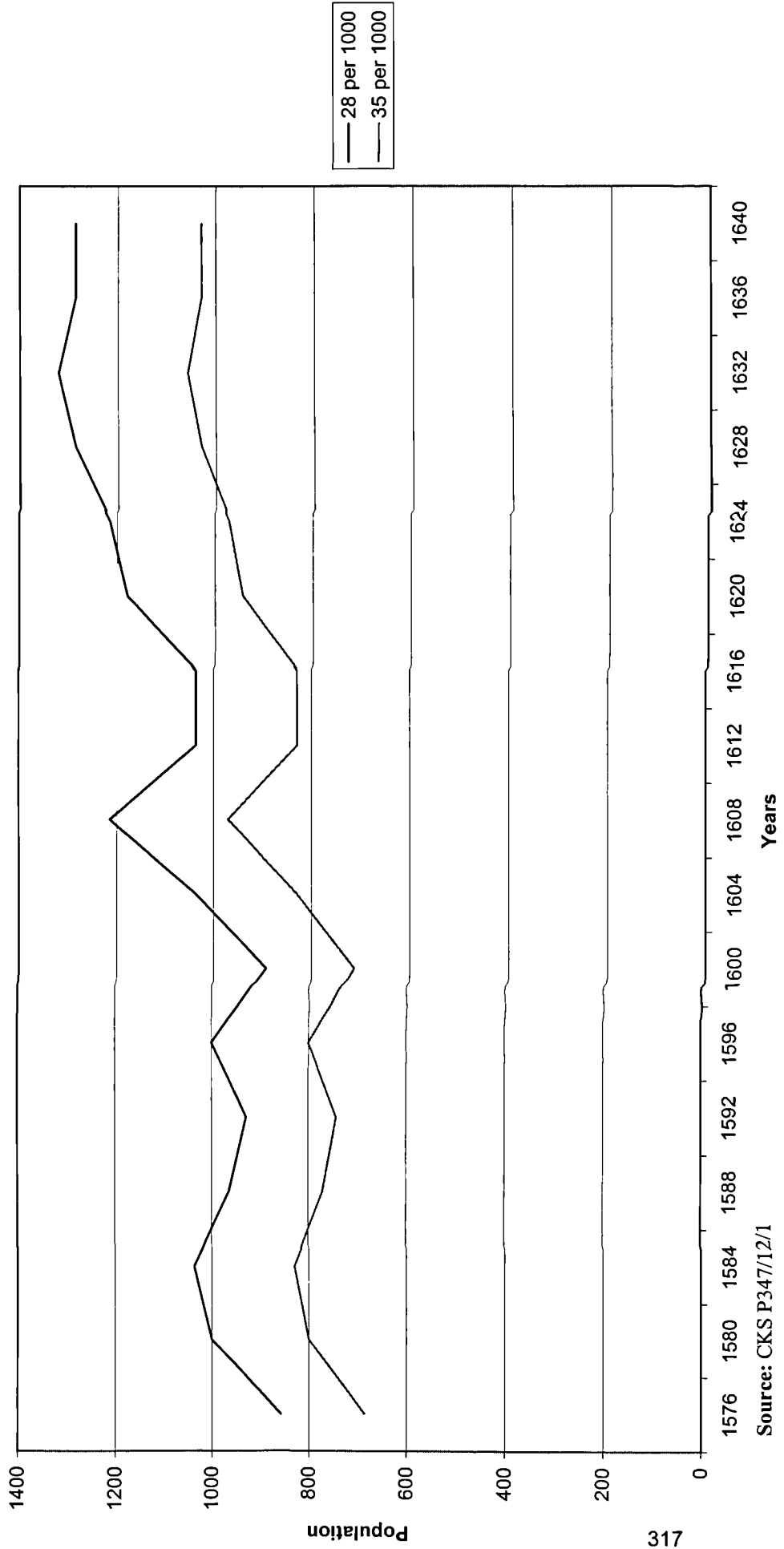
Source: CKS P157/1/2, P157/28/1

Appendix 10: Hawkhurst Total Population, 1570-1640, Based on 7 Year Averages at 28 and 35 per 1000 Baptisms



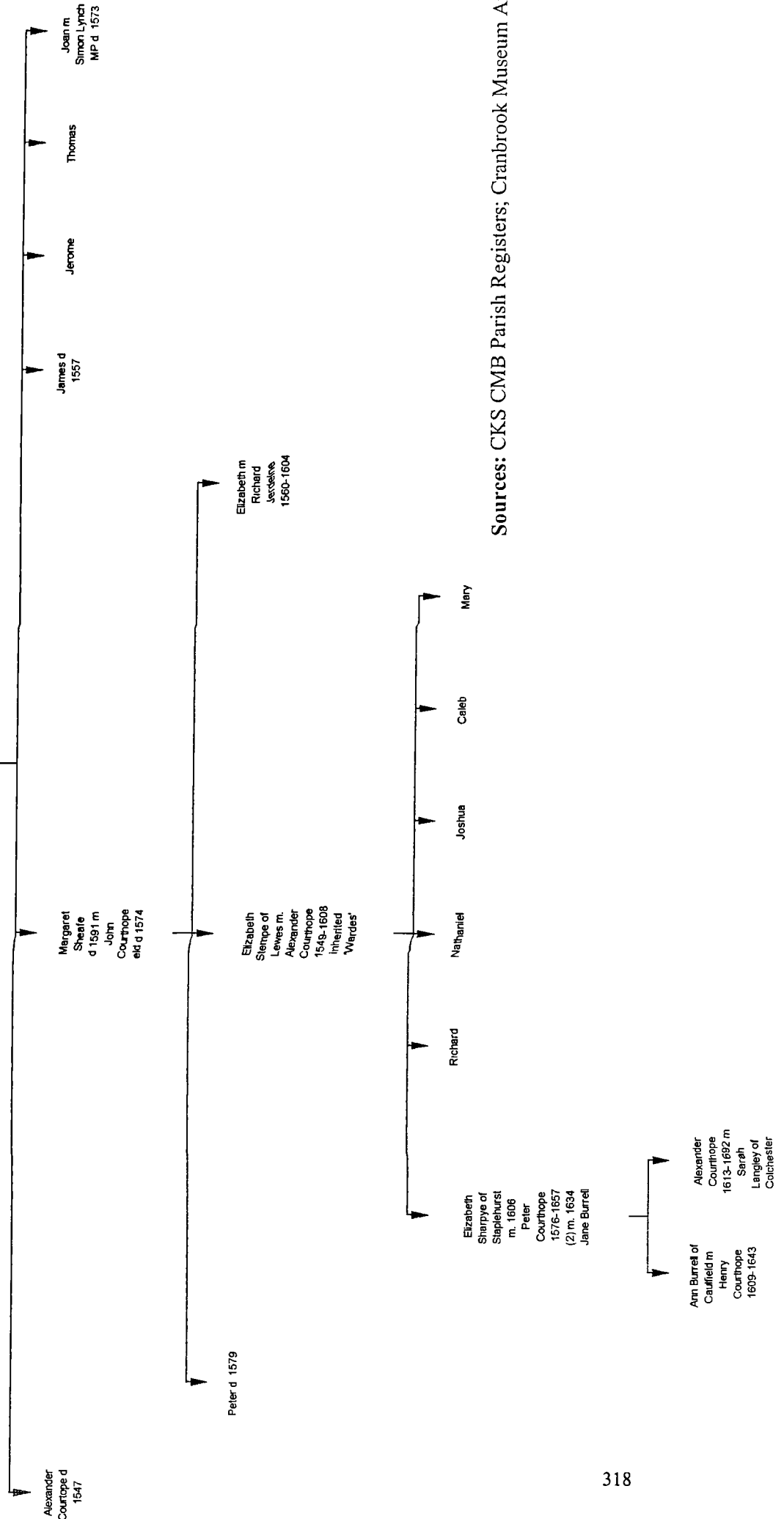
Source: CKS P178/1/2, P178/1/2

Appendix 11: Staplehurst Total Population, 1570-1640, Based on 7 Year Averages at 28 and 35 per 1000 Baptisms



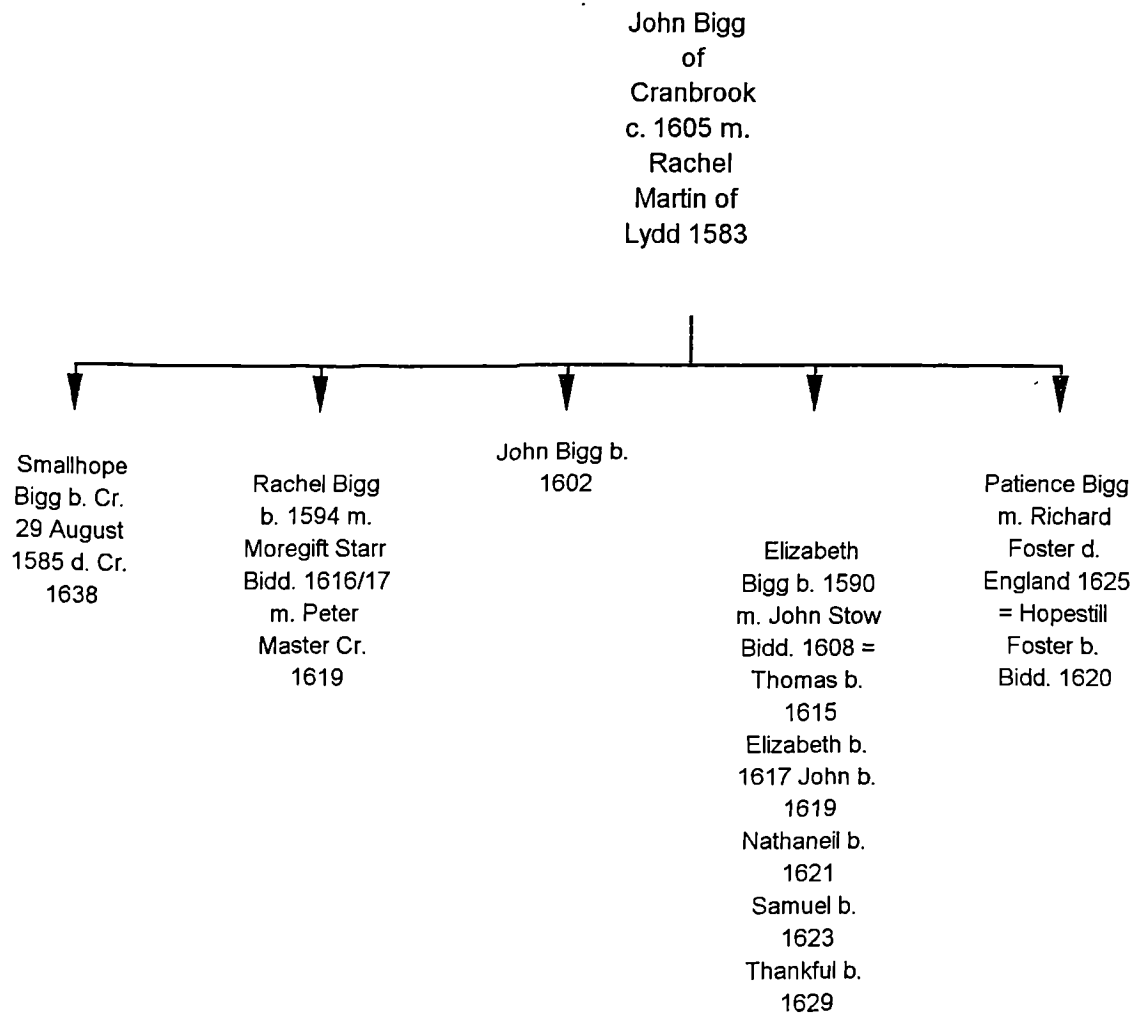
Source: CKS P347/12/1

Appendix 12



Sources: CKS CMB Parish Registers; Cranbrook Museum Archives

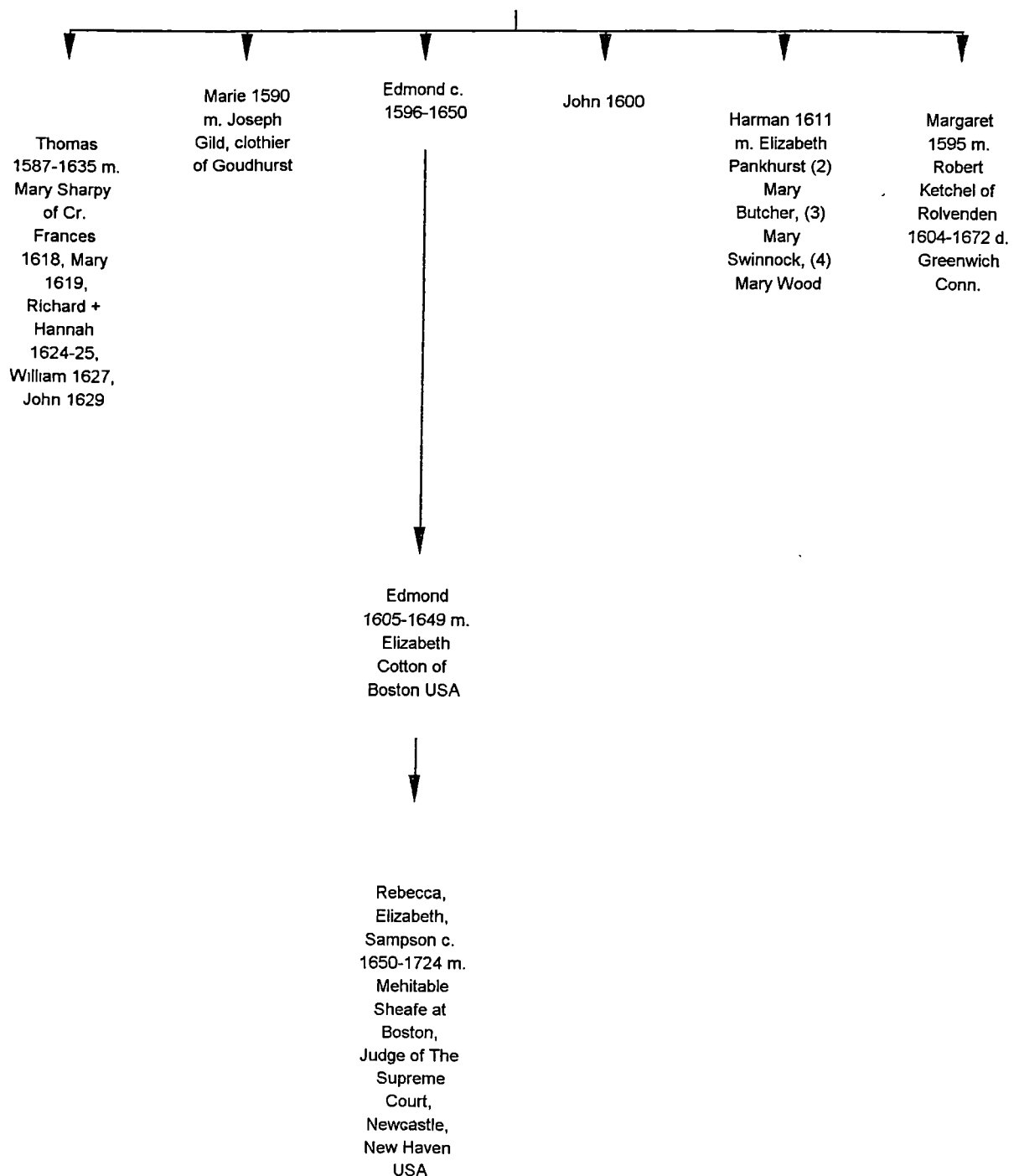
Appendix 14



Sources: CKS CMB Parish Registers; Cranbrook Museum Archives

Appendix 15

Edmund
Sheafe
1580-1628
of Wilsley
m.
Elizabeth
Taylor
1587-1598
(2) Joan
(nee Jordan
-Downe) d.
1659 at
Guildford
Conn.



Appendix 16

Status/Occupational Distribution of Bible Ownership from inventories 1570-1660

| Cranbrook 1570-1660 | Bible Ownership |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Weaver | 13 |
| Apothecary | 3 |
| Brewer | 1 |
| Retired | 7 |
| Butcher | 4 |
| Husbandman | 6 |
| Carrier | 1 |
| Farmer | 17 |
| Clothier | 22 |
| Clothworker | 3 |
| Widow | 10 |
| Miller | 2 |
| Surgeon | 1 |
| Tailor | 2 |
| Carpenter | 3 |
| Mercer | 2 |
| Glover | 1 |
| Turner | 1 |
| Cleric | 3 |
| Gentleman | 2 |
| Blacksmith | 1 |
| Teacher | 1 |
| Tanner | 1 |
| Servant | 2 |
| Labourer | 1 |
| Innkeeper/Vintner | 3 |
| Saddler | 1 |
| Fellmonger | 1 |
| Total | 115 |

| GOUDHURST 1570-1660 | Bible Ownership |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Weaver | 6 |
| Clothier | 9 |
| Mercer | 1 |
| Miller | 2 |
| Widow | 4 |
| Brewer | 2 |
| Gentleman | 4 |
| Farmer | 12 |
| Husbandman | 3 |
| Retired | 2 |
| Hempdresser | 1 |
| Tanner | 2 |
| Smith | 5 |
| Physician | 1 |
| Bricklayer | 1 |
| Carpenter | 1 |
| Spinster | 2 |
| Lawyer | 1 |
| Shearman | 1 |
| Total | 60 |

| HAWKHURST 1570-1660 | Bible Ownership |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Clothworker | 3 |
| Retired | 3 |
| Farmer | 8 |
| Clothier | 8 |
| Gentleman | 3 |
| Tanner | 3 |
| Butcher | 1 |
| Carpenter | 1 |
| Maltman | 1 |
| Widow | 1 |
| Weaver | 2 |
| Victualler | 1 |
| Clerke | 1 |
| Total | 36 |

| BIDDENDEN 1570-1660 | Bible Ownership |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Husbandman | 4 |
| Gentleman | 3 |
| Clothier | 6 |
| Weaver | 5 |
| Tailor | 1 |
| Farmer | 4 |
| Widow | 5 |
| Retired | 1 |
| Cardmaker | 1 |
| Minister Clerke | 3 |
| Barbersurgeon | 1 |
| Blacksmith | 3 |
| Kersymaker | 1 |
| Vigin | 1 |
| Total | 39 |

| BENENDEN 1570-1660 | Bible Ownership |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Tanner | 2 |
| Farmer | 10 |
| Widow | 2 |
| Clothier | 5 |
| Husbandman | 2 |
| Clothworker | 1 |
| Gentleman | 5 |
| Retired | 1 |
| Draper | 1 |
| Grocer | 1 |
| Smith | 1 |
| Total | 31 |

| STAPLEHURST 1570-1660 | Bible Ownership |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Widow | 3 |
| Ironmonger | 1 |
| Farmer | 11 |
| Retired | 4 |
| Gentleman | 2 |
| Weaver | 3 |
| Professional | 1 |
| Clothier | 5 |
| Tallow-chandler | 1 |
| Glover | 1 |
| Blacksmith | 1 |
| Clothworker | 1 |
| Husbandman | 5 |
| Spinster | 1 |
| Cleric | 1 |
| Brewer | 3 |
| Butcher | 2 |
| Surgeon | 1 |
| Total | 47 |

Source: CKS PRC10 1-72, PRC11/1-30, PRC27/1-21 and PRC28/4-20

Appendix 17 (a)
Classification of Offences from the Ex-officio Jurisdiction of the Archdeacon of
Canterbury, 1570-1609

| THE CLERGY 1570-1609 | Cra | Fri | Bid | Ben | Haw | Gou | Sta |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Not-Resident | | | | | 1 | | 3 |
| Has two benefices | | 1 | | 1 | | | |
| Failure to teach catechism | | | 2 | 1 | | 1 | |
| Irregularity of duty/dress | 11 | 1 | 7 | 5 | 10 | 2 | 8 |
| Perambulation not maintained | 4 | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| THE CHURCH | | | | | | | |
| Chancel in decay | 2 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 6 |
| Church/Bells in decay | 4 | | | | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Churchyard in decay | | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Parsonage in decay | 1 | | 1 | 2 | | 2 | 1 |
| Furniture /Ornaments irregular | 3 | | | | 1 | | |
| Bible, Service Books Lacking | | | 1 | 1 | | | |
| LAYMEN & THE CHURCH | | | | | | | |
| Failure to attend church | 6 | 4 | 23 | 34 | 28 | 6 | 7 |
| Failure to take Holy Communion | 54 | 4 | 13 | 32 | 21 | 20 | 47 |
| Un-churched | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| Drinking & Victualling in time of Divine Service | 13 | | 14 | 10 | 7 | 5 | |
| Dancing/Games in Service time | 3 | | | | 2 | | |
| Popery-Recusancy | 2 | | | 12 | | 2 | 1 |
| Non-Payment of church scot, wages | 21 | 9 | 6 | 10 | 24 | 5 | 3 |
| Working on the Sabbath | 12 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 2 | 2 |
| Disorderly behaviour in church and churchyard | 10 | 3 | 8 | 9 | 11 | 12 | 4 |
| Unlicenced Preacher | 7 | | | | | | |
| Parish Officer – Neglects his duty | 1 | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Parishioners stand excommunicated | 24 | 5 | 34 | 9 | 6 | 14 | 5 |

| PRIVATE LIVES OF LAYMEN 1570- 1609 | Cra | Fri | Bid | Ben | Haw | Gou | Sta |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Scold, Blasphemer, Railer, Swearer | 8 | | 9 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 1 |
| Common Drunkard | 7 | | 15 | 6 | | 1 | |
| Husband & Wife Living Apart | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | | 3 | 6 |
| Fornication, Incontinence, Adultery, Bastardy | 227 | 40 | 110 | 61 | 110 | 95 | 61 |
| Irregular Marriage | 1 | 1 | | | | 2 | 5 |
| Bigamy | 5 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | | |
| Suspected Witchcraft or Scorcery | | | 2 | 1 | | | |
| Assault-Rape | 1 | | 1 | | | 4 | |
| Buggery | | | | 1 | | | |
| Prostitution | | | 3 | 1 | | | |
| Incest | 2 | | 1 | | 1 | | |
| MISCELLANEOUS | | | | | | | |
| Unlicenced Surgeon- Physician | 4 | | | | | | |
| Unlicenced Schoolteacher | 4 | | 2 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 1 |
| Usury | 2 | | | | | | |
| Other | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | |
| TOTAL NO. OF PRESENTMENTS | 446 | 80 | 269 | 217 | 250 | 193 | 167 |

Sources: CCAL Dcb X.1.9, X.1.10, X.1.11, X.1.12, X.2.2, X.2.4 pt.1, X.2.4 pt.2, X.2.9 pt.1, X.3.5, X.3.8, X.3.10 pt.2, X.4.3, X.4.5, X.4.8, X.4.9, X.4.1, X.9.9

Appendix 17 (b)

Classification of Offences from the Ex-officio Jurisdiction of the Archdeacon of Canterbury, 1610-1639

| THE CLERGY 1610-1639 | Cra | Fri | Bid | Ben | Haw | Gou | Sta |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Not-Resident | | | | 1 | | | |
| Irregularity of duty/dress | | | 3 | | | 1 | |
| THE CHURCH | | | | | | | |
| Chancel in decay | | | | | 1 | | |
| Church /Bells in decay | | | | | 2 | | 1 |
| Churchyard in decay | | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | |
| Bible/Service Books Lacking | | 1 | | | | | |
| LAYMEN & THE CHURCH | | | | | | | |
| Failure to attend church | 7 | 4 | 14 | 9 | 10 | 1 | |
| Failure to take Holy Communion | 2 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 4 | | 2 |
| Drinking & Victualling in time of Divine Service | 17 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 13 | 1 | |
| Dancing/ Games in Service time | | | 4 | 4 | | | 1 |
| Popery/Recusancy | | | | | | 8 | |
| Non-Payment of church scot, wages | 10 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| Working on the Sabbath | 10 | | 3 | 8 | 23 | | 3 |
| Disorderly behaviour in church and churchyard | 9 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 10 | 3 |
| Parish Officer Neglects his duty | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Parishioners stand excommunicated | 29 | 4 | 12 | | 12 | 4 | |

| PRIVATE LIVES OF LAYMEN 1610- 1639 | Cra | Fri | Bid | Ben | Haw | Gou | Sta |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Scold, Blasphemer, Railer, Swearer | 4 | 1 | 4 | | 3 | 9 | 1 |
| Common Drunkard | 1 | | 2 | | 4 | 2 | |
| Husband & Wife Live Apart | | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Fornication, Incontinence, Adultery, Bastardy | 157 | 29 | 50 | 24 | 62 | 74 | 64 |
| Irregular Marriage | | | 1 | | | 2 | |
| Bigamy | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| Slander | 2 | | | | 2 | 1 | |
| Assault-Rape | | | 1 | | | 1 | 1 |
| Prostitution | 2 | | 1 | | | | |
| Incest-Marriage outside the permitted degrees | | | 3 | | 1 | | |
| MISCELLANEOUS | | | | | | | |
| Unlicenced Surgeon- Physician | 3 | | 3 | | 1 | | |
| Unlicenced Schoolteacher | 1 | | | | 3 | 1 | |
| TOTAL NO. OF PRESENTMENTS | 255 | 52 | 118 | 58 | 148 | 121 | 81 |

Sources: CCAL Dcb X.9.9, X.5.1 pt.1, X.5.1 pt2, X.5.5, X.5.9, X.6.4, X.6.7, X.6.8

Appendix 18
Distribution of Visitation Presentments by Parish, 1570-1639

| CRANBROOK | Number of Presentments 1570-1610 | Percentage Distribution 1570-1610 | Number of Presentments 1610-1639 | Percentage Distribution 1610-1639 |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| The Clergy | 15 | 3% | 0 | |
| The Church | 10 | 2% | 0 | |
| Laymen & The Church | 154 | 35% | 84 | 33% |
| Private Lives of Laymen | 254 | 57% | 167 | 65% |
| Miscellaneous | 13 | 3% | 4 | 2% |
| Total Presentments | 446 | 100% | 255 | 100% |

| FRITTENDEN | Number of Presentments 1570-1610 | Percentage Distribution 1570-1610 | Number of Presentments 1610-1639 | Percentage Distribution 1610-1639 |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| The Clergy | 2 | 3% | 0 | |
| The Church | 2 | 3% | 1 | 2% |
| Laymen & The Church | 27 | 34% | 18 | 35% |
| Private Lives of Laymen | 47 | 59% | 33 | 63% |
| Miscellaneous | 2 | 3% | 0 | |
| Total Presentments | 80 | 100% | 52 | 100% |

| BIDDENDEN | Number of Presentments 1570-1610 | Percentage Distribution 1570-1610 | Number of Presentments 1610-1639 | Percentage Distribution 1610-1639 |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| The Clergy | 11 | 4% | 3 | 3% |
| The Church | 5 | 2% | 1 | 1% |
| Laymen & The Church | 103 | 38% | 44 | 37% |
| Private Lives of Laymen | 147 | 55% | 67 | 57% |
| Miscellaneous | 3 | 1% | 3 | 3% |
| Total Presentments | 269 | 100% | 118 | 100% |

| BENENDEN | Number of Presentments 1570-1610 | Percentage Distribution 1570-1610 | Number of Presentments 1610-1639 | Percentage Distribution 1610-1639 |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| The Clergy | 8 | 4% | 1 | 2% |
| The Church | 5 | 2% | 0 | |
| Laymen & The Church | 119 | 55% | 32 | 55% |
| Private Lives of Laymen | 82 | 38% | 25 | 43% |
| Miscellaneous | 3 | 1% | 0 | |
| Total Presentments | 217 | 100% | 58 | 100% |

| HAWKHURST | Number of Presentments 1570-1610 | Percentage Distribution 1570-1610 | Number of Presentments 1610-1639 | Percentage Distribution 1610-1639 |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| The Clergy | 12 | 5% | 0 | |
| The Church | 6 | 2% | 4 | 3% |
| Laymen & The Church | 107 | 43% | 67 | 45% |
| Private Lives of Laymen | 117 | 47% | 73 | 49% |
| Miscellaneous | 8 | 3% | 4 | 3% |
| Total Presentments | 250 | 100% | 148 | 100% |

| GOUDHURST | Number of Presentments 1570-1610 | Percentage Distribution 1570-1610 | Number of Presentments 1610-1639 | Percentage Distribution 1610-1639 |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| The Clergy | 3 | 2% | 1 | 1% |
| The Church | 9 | 5% | 1 | 1% |
| Laymen & The Church | 66 | 34% | 28 | 23% |
| Private Lives of Laymen | 108 | 56% | 90 | 74% |
| Miscellaneous | 7 | 4% | 1 | 1% |
| Total Presentments | 193 | 100% | 121 | 100% |

| STAPLEHURST | Number of Presentments 1570-1610 | Percentage Distribution 1570-1610 | Number of Presentments 1610-1639 | Percentage Distribution 1610-1639 |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| The Clergy | 14 | 8% | 0 | |
| The Church | 9 | 5% | 1 | 1% |
| Laymen & The Church | 70 | 42% | 13 | 16% |
| Private Lives of Laymen | 73 | 44% | 67 | 83% |
| Miscellaneous | 1 | 1% | 0 | |
| Total Presentments | 167 | 100% | 82 | 100% |

Sources: see Appendices 17 (a) and 17 (b)

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DCa/BT/13 Benenden

DCa/BT/59 Cranbrook

DCa/BT 78 Frittenden

DCa/BT/80 Goudhurst

Bishops Transcripts

DCb/BT/18 Biddenden

DCb/BT/114 Hawkhurst

DCb1/224 Staplehurst

Archdeaconry Court Comperta and Detecta, DCb/X (Charing and Sutton Deanery)

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X.1.10 1570 Charing and Sutton

X.1.11 1571-1572 Charing and Sutton

X.1.12 1574-1576 Charing and Sutton

X.2.2 1578-1582 Charing

X.2.4 pt.1 1582-1589 Charing

X.2.4 pt.2 1582-1589 Charing and Sutton

X.2.9 pt.1 1584-1593 Sutton

X.3.5 1590-1592 Charing

X.3.8 1593-1596 Charing

X.3.10 pt.2 1593-1604 Sutton

X.4.3 1596-1600 Charing

X.4.5 1600-1603 Charing

X.4.8 1603-1604 Charing

X.4.9 1604-1608 Sutton

X.4.11 1606-1608 Charing

X.9.9 1608-1610 Charing

X.5.1 pt.1 1608-1611 Sutton

X.5.1 pt.2 1612-1620 Sutton

X.5.5 1610-1615 Charing

X.5.9 1615-1620 Charing

X.6.4 1620-1633 Sutton

X.6.7 1620-1627 Charing

X.6.8 1627-1638 Charing

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| | |
|--------------|-----------|
| PRC 10/1-9 | 1570-1579 |
| PRC 10/10-16 | 1579-1587 |
| PRC 10/18-22 | 1588-1591 |
| PRC 10/24 | 1596-1598 |
| PRC 10/26-31 | 1593-1606 |
| PRC 10/32 | 1602-1608 |
| PRC 10/33 | 1605-1612 |
| PRC 10/34 | 1604-1615 |
| PRC 10/35-36 | 1606-1613 |
| PRC 10/37 | 1605-1613 |
| PRC 10/38-39 | 1605-1614 |
| PRC 10 40 | 1608-1619 |
| PRC 10 41-42 | 1606-1618 |
| PRC 10 43 | 1612-1617 |
| PRC 10 44 | 1606-1613 |
| PRC 10 45 | 1605-1612 |
| PRC 10 46 | 1613-1619 |
| PRC 10/47 | 1619-1621 |
| PRC 10/48 | 1614-1618 |
| PRC 10/49 | 1613-1619 |
| PRC 10 50-51 | 1619-1623 |
| PRC 10 52 | 1610-1619 |
| PRC 10/53 | 1620-1629 |
| PRC 10 55-56 | 1623-1626 |
| PRC 10/57 | 1625-1626 |
| PRC 10 58-59 | 1626-1628 |
| PRC 10 60 | 1626-1628 |
| PRC 10 61-62 | 1627-1631 |
| PRC 10 63 | 1628-1630 |
| PRC 10 64-65 | 1631-1632 |
| PRC 10 66 | 1630-1632 |
| PRC 10 67-68 | 1632-1634 |
| PRC 10/70 | 1632-1636 |
| PRC 10/71 | 1633-1638 |
| PRC 10/72 | 1637-1638 |

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| | |
|--------------|-----------|
| PRC 11/1-15 | 1590-1648 |
| PRC 11/16-30 | 1649-1668 |

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| | |
|----------|-----------|
| PRC 28/4 | 1601-1604 |
| PRC 28/5 | 1606-1614 |
| PRC 28/6 | 1607-1611 |
| PRC 28/7 | 1607-1615 |
| PRC 28/8 | 1615-1619 |
| PRC 28/9 | 1616-1618 |

| | |
|-----------|-----------|
| PRC 28/10 | 1620-1626 |
| PRC 28/11 | 1621-1623 |
| PRC 28/12 | 1622-1625 |
| PRC 28/13 | 1625-1626 |
| PRC 28/13 | 1625-1626 |
| PRC 28/14 | 1627-1629 |
| PRC 28/15 | 1627-1631 |
| PRC 28/16 | 1629-1630 |
| PRC 28/17 | 1631-1632 |
| PRC 28/18 | 1632-1638 |
| PRC 28/19 | 1633-1636 |
| PRC 28/20 | 1637-1638 |

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| | |
|--------------|-----------|
| PRC 27/1 | 1608-1610 |
| PRC 27/2 | 1611-1612 |
| PRC 27/3 | 1614-1616 |
| PRC 27/4 | 1617-1620 |
| PRC 27/5 | 1627-1637 |
| PRC 27/6 | 1639 |
| PRC 27/7 | 1630 |
| PRC 27/8 | 1640 |
| PRC 27 9 | 1642 |
| PRC 27/10 | 1642 |
| PRC 27/11 | 1643 |
| PRC 27/12 | 1645 |
| PRC 27/13 | 1645 |
| PRC 27/14 | 1661 |
| PRC 27 15 | 1663 |
| PRC 27/16 | 1664 |
| PRC 27/17 | 1665 |
| PRC 27/18 | 1666 |
| PRC 27/19 | 1667 |
| PRC 27/20-21 | 1668 |

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|--------------|-----------|
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| | |
|-------------|-----------|
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| | |
|------------------------|--|
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|------------------------|--|

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P100/1/15 Cranbrook 1570-1653
P100/1/16 Cranbrook 1653-1698
P157/1/2 Goudhurst 1570-1715
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