

# Sevenoaks up to 1650

## Jean Fox 2002

### Introduction

"The present state of the Town (*of Sevenoaks*) itself is good and it seemeth to have been (for these many years together) in no worse plight: And yet find I not in all history, any memorable thing concerning it save only that, in the time of King Henry the sixth, Jack Cade, and his mischievous many, discomforted there Sir Humfrey Stafford and his brother, two noble gentlemen, whom the king had sent to encounter them". Other than the founding of the School by William Sennocke, this is all that William Lambarde, writing a description of Kent in 1570, could find to say about Sevenoaks<sup>1</sup>.

William Lambarde, born on 18th October 1536, the eldest son of John Lambarde, Alderman of London and a wealthy London draper, became an antiquary and jurist

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1 Lambarde, p.470. He gives the name of the town as "Sennocke or (as some call it) Seven oke, of a number of trees as they conjecture"

and, in 1570, he wrote the Perambulation of Kent which gives an insight into life in Kent in the second half of the sixteenth century.

The aim of this work is to describe the development of Sevenoaks, a medium-sized town in Kent, up to 1650 using the wills which have survived and other contemporary sources to highlight specific aspects of the life of people living in the neighbourhood. The basic approach is chronological but, because particular families and topics can cover a long period, it has sometimes been necessary for topics to take precedence over chronology.

In general, wills have survived only for the relatively wealthy men and women of the town. Even though individual people of the "poorer sort" cannot often be identified, descriptions of the kind of lives they led and the problems they faced are given where these are available. Where details are not available for Sevenoaks itself it is often possible to extrapolate from circumstances in surrounding areas.

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## **Section 2**

Details of Sevenoaks Families and Transcripts of the Wills.

# Chapter 1

## The Development of Sevenoaks

### Early Times

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About 6000BC, in the middle stone age men were settling on the relatively dry, sandy ground to the south of the area and many of the implements they used have been found in the area. The development of agriculture led to more permanent settlements. and artifacts from have survived from the bronze age (about 1900-500 BC). Next came the Celts and the development of an iron-age culture and, between 75 and 50 BC, the Belgae, vigorous warrior-settlers of mixed Gaulish and German ancestry. From this time onwards there was a flourishing trade across the Straits of Dover. A hundred years later Roman legions invaded the country and, before long, the inhabitants of Kent became absorbed into the Roman province.

## The Jutes in West Kent

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From the fifth century onwards, free tenants known as ceorls, the predecessors of the yeomen, were becoming established in the Holmesdale valley. Each had their farmstead surrounded its own fields and, in the autumn they drove their cattle and swine into the forest to the south.

## The Origins of Sevenoaks

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There was an old droveway south from Shoreham, through Otford and then to the Otford swine pastures in Penshurst and Chiddingstone. In addition to the swineherds, this would have been used by travellers going to more distant places and those going north would have welcomed somewhere to stop after climbing up the steep escarpment. Thus a stopping-place could have become established where Sevenoaks church was subsequently built.

## The Hundred of Codsheath and the Manor of Otford

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By the eleventh century, the manor of Otford was an ecclesiastical estate dominating the area and including the sub-manor of Sevenoaks. Two hundred years later it was the richest of the Archbishop's Kent manors with Otford still more important than Sevenoaks.



## The Church of St. Nicholas

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At the beginning of the thirteenth century the country suffered from the quarrels between king John, his barons and the pope, one of the results being that the pope placed the whole country under an interdict which prohibited the clergy from performing divine service. But by the end of the century the church of St. Nicholas was well established with a recently built tower and an arcade of columns.

## Sevenoaks Becomes a Market Town

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The first written record of a market in Sevenoaks is dated 1287 but Sevenoaks could have received a market charter at the beginning of the thirteenth century when Henry III granted a number of charters to villages in the area. Records surviving from the fourteenth century mention shops in the centre of the town.

## Methods of Holding Land

41

In Norman England, land could be held of knight service or by socage tenure, both requiring the tenant to provide service to his lord, the first connected with warfare, the second with husbandry. Buying and selling of land was a complicated process with complicated conveyancing procedures.

## Local Administration

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Judicial and administrative business was handled by a number of different courts. Within the hundred there were the Hundred or manor Court itself, the court-baron (the civil court of the lord of the manor) and the court-leet (the king's court) concerned with the keeping of public peace and order. By Tudor times, criminal cases were heard at the Assize court but the manor court continued to regulate local matters such as drainage and food regulation.

## Economic Depression & the Black Death

51

The middle of the fourteenth century saw a change for the worse in the weather, a pestilence which killed many animals and the arrival of the Black Death. Although no details have survived of the resulting effects in the Sevenoaks area, generally there was a shortage of labour of all kinds with, not unnaturally, those labourers who had survived demanding higher wages.

## The Developing Estates of Sevenoaks

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During the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the gentry prospered with many of them being functionaries and agents of magnates. In the Sevenoaks area the archbishop's household would have been a major employer. These men invested their money in land which paid them rent, building up considerable estates in the process. Knole was one of these estates assembled, in particular, by the Knoles (from whom it received its name), the Brutons and the Grovehursts

## The Farm of Bradbourne

61

Bradbourne belonged to the Earls of Pembroke for most of the thirteenth century. In the next two centuries it had a number of different owners but, in 1540, Henry VIII decided to take it in exchange for the manor of Brasted. It remained with the Crown until the beginning of Elizabeth's reign when it was bought by Ralph Bosville.

## Early Times

The land to the north of Sevenoaks rises sharply to the chalk escarpment of the North Downs which, at its crest, is over 800 feet above sea level. In the south of the parish is a lower greensand ridge, not as high generally as the North Downs but reaching about 700 feet at Riverhill in the south of the parish of Sevenoaks. Between the chalk escarpment and the lower greensand ridge is the Vale of Holmesdale which is about four miles wide; through it runs the River Darent until it turns northward through Otford and the Darent Gap in the North Downs. The name of this river goes back to Celtic or pre-Roman times and means the water where oaks are plentiful<sup>2</sup> showing that, even at that early time, the oak was an important tree in the area. The bottom of the Holmesdale Valley is gault, a blue-to-grey clay of great value in brick-making.

Below the lower greensand ridge is the wealden clay of the low-lying Medway valley between the ridge and Tonbridge. Most of the parish of Sevenoaks is on the lower greensand with the River Darent to the north-west at Riverhead and Sevenoaks Weald and the manors in the south of the parish on the clay. The lower greensand area did not make good agricultural land and the town of Sevenoaks would be reliant on springs, wells and rainwater. To the south, the clay, once the

forest had been cleared, was suitable for pasture with arable land further to the north on the chalk.

## **The Stone Age**

About 6000BC, in the mesolithic period - the middle stone age - the weather was warm and wet with oak forests predominating particularly on the clay soils. Mesolithic man preferred the drier, sandy ground to the south than the chalk of the north downs and many mesolithic-type implements have been found in the area. Three of these sites are on the sandstone; one at Chipstead, another at Greatness on the northern boundary between Sevenoaks and Otford and the third near Blackhall in the north east of the parish of Sevenoaks.

The site at Blackhall, a flint-working floor, was still being used hundreds of years later during the neolithic and bronze ages. By the neolithic period, agriculture had been invented which led to semi-permanent and even some permanent settlements. As well as simple cultivation, stock-rearing, hand-made pottery, spinning and weaving were introduced and some good polished axes found at Blackhall. Artifacts from Blackhall have also survived from the bronze age (about 1900-500 BC). The Greatness site also continued to be used with a bronze-age round barrow being discovered there.

## The Celts and the Belgae

Next came the Celts and the development of an iron-age culture. Immigrants into Sussex and north west Kent set up iron-workings and the development of tribes led to the need to build hill-forts. One of these was that at Oldbury, a strategic point controlling the route from the north to the Medway crossing at Tonbridge and thence to the iron of the weald.

Then, between 75 and 50 BC, came the Belgae, vigorous warrior-settlers of mixed Gaulish and German ancestry. Building hill-forts including the one at Oldbury<sup>3</sup>, they were the most sophisticated of the Celtic tribes, growing wheat and flax and tending their cattle<sup>4</sup>. They were skilled potters and metal-workers minting considerable quantities of coins.

## A Roman Province

From the time of Julius Caesar's expedition to Britain in 55BC, if not before, there was a flourishing trade across the Straits of Dover with the Belgae in Kent exporting corn, cattle, gold, silver, iron, hides, slaves and hunting dogs and

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3 Clarke and Stoyel, pp.2-7

4 Paxman, p.53

importing luxury goods such as wine, oil, pottery, silver and glass ware<sup>5</sup>. Such trade would have required a considerable amount of organisation with some of the exports coming originally from outside Kent and the imports needing to be distributed throughout the south east.

In 43 AD the invading Roman legions of Aulus Plautius may have marched along the east-west route which is now known as Pilgrims Way. It is not known when this trackway, on the south side of the North Downs at roughly the 350 feet contour was first used but Clarke and Stoyel consider that there was strong evidence of it being a through route during the Roman occupation and it could date from prehistoric times. There is also evidence for a ridgeway along the top of the downs which was also a through trackway<sup>6</sup>.

It did not take long for the inhabitants of Kent to be absorbed into the Roman province. The Romans had no racial prejudices, only a sense of cultural superiority, in part deserved; despite their basic aim of political, economic and strategic advantage to the Roman empire, the authorities were genuinely anxious to extend the benefits of their civilisation to conquered races<sup>7</sup>. The nearest known

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5 West, p.4

6 Clarke & Stoyel, pp.9-10

7 Clarke and Stoyel, p.10

Roman settlement of note to Sevenoaks was Lullingstone villa in the Holmesdale valley, near to the east-west route.

## The Jutes in West Kent

Next, from the end of the fifth century onwards, came the Angles, Saxons and Jutes who developed the techniques of ploughing and organised crop-rotation to increase the yield. According to Bede writing in the eighth century (with whom Witney agrees)<sup>8</sup>, Kent was mainly settled by the Jutes who can be distinguished from the Anglo-Saxons by the greatly superior status enjoyed by the ordinary freeman.

It was during this period that the differences between west and east Kent came to be emphasised and these led to the dual Kingship of Kent with the younger son ruling from Rochester and the older one from Canterbury<sup>9</sup>. A later development was the twin sees of the early Christian Church with East Kent in the diocese of Canterbury under the archbishop and West Kent ruled by the Bishop of Rochester.

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8 Witney, pp. 2-3

9 Rayner, p.11



## The Ceorls and their Farmsteads

The laws of inheritance of the Jutes provided that property was divided between all the sons equally, or daughters if there were no sons; this custom is known as gavelkind. It was at this time that Kent was divided into a number of separate provinces called lathes, a name which is unique to Kent.

Each lathe was partly royal estate, partly kept as demesne and partly let to free tenants known as ceorls. The farmsteads of the ceorls stood apart surrounded by their own fields, rather than being grouped into villages; they were worked independently as distinct from the Anglo-Saxon system prevalent in the more northern parts of England where fields were divided into strips and farmed on a co-operative basis. The woods and pastures belonging to the farm could, however, be a considerable distance away which led to a great transmigration of stock to their fattening grounds: sheep to the marsh and swine to the forest. At least the pannage season came after the corn had been harvested but the droving took up a considerable amount of time and, since the swine would be feeding in the forest for about seven weeks, the herdsmen would be living there during that time<sup>10</sup>.

## Precursors of Wealthy Yeomen

To work his land on his own a ceorl had to provide his own plough and ox-team; his independence was the consequence and mark of superior status. The wealth of the yeomen of Kent recorded by Lambarde in 1570 may have originated in that of the Jutish ceorls eight hundred years earlier whose value was assessed at twice the value of those of Wessex freemen<sup>11</sup>. After the Norman conquest, the descendants of the ceorls could sell or devise their lands without leave of the lord except for the rents and services due from them. This can be seen in many wills from Tudor times and later, the testator devising land to his heirs with the proviso that they paid the "lord's rent" (the annual quit rent). Also, if a man was executed for felony his land was not forfeit but devolved upon his heirs leading to the Kentish jingle:

"The father to the bough  
The son to the plough"<sup>12</sup>.

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11 the laws of Hlothere of Kent and of Ine, H.M.Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions* (1905), 105-14, quoted by Witney, p.58

12 Witney, p.58

## Droves through the Forest

The movement of cattle and swine into and out of the forest and between the settlements, formed droves through the forest. These sometimes followed paths founded by the early-iron industry in the Weald or the metalled Roman roads but many were merely formed by use. In hilly country and on the sandy soils, they appear as hollow ways cut constantly deeper by the rapid run-off of rain and, in wet weather, they turned into minor water-courses made worse because considerable rain fell in the autumn, the season when they were most heavily used.

A particularly fine example of these hollow ways was formed between Sevenoaks and Plaxtol, each a drove into the Sutton-at-Hone common<sup>13</sup>, Sutton-at-Hone being the lathe in which Sevenoaks was situated. This need for a settlement to have some forest land and some where crops could be grown led, in this part of the county, to the area controlled by a particular settlement tending to be a long-thin area with land to the north suitable for cultivation and forest to the south.

In the ninth century, the forest started just south of the east-west road and the clay of the Weald made it particularly difficult to cross. The ancient name of the forest to the south of the greensand ridge was Andredswald and Bede described it as "thick and inaccessible, the abode of deer, swine and wolves".

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13 Witney, p.130

There were numerous paths across the ridge (the Jutish droves) and, as bad weather made some impassable, deviations were necessary. These trackways were probably opened up more systematically from about the middle of the tenth century.

## **The Development of the Rye Road**

Sometime, probably, at the beginning of the tenth century, a new road with a bridge across the Medway was built at Tonbridge, this river crossing having been until then one of the main obstacles facing travellers from the coast to London. With London now an important trading centre and the ports of Rye and Winchelsea growing, communication between the city and the ports prompted the development of a north-south road (the Rye Road) but the wooded sandstone ridge just to the south of Sevenoaks was still a barrier between Tonbridge and Sevenoaks.

About three miles north-west of what was to become the town of Sevenoaks, there was a ford across the river Darent at the village of Chipstead. This crossing, was an early stopping point on the Rye Road which initially went to the west of Sevenoaks. In selecting a point for crossing a river, the problem was often to find a

reasonably dry approach with the actual fording of the water then being relatively easy. This can be seen, in particular, at Tonbridge where the track from the north is down the slope of the aptly named Dryhill with the steep ridge of Quarry Hill coming close to the river on the south<sup>14</sup>.

## **Sevenoaks Not on the Route of the Danish Invasions**

Possibly due to being away from the more wealthy parts of Kent to the north and east, the Holmesdale valley did not suffer too much disruption from the Danish invasions of the ninth and first half of the tenth centuries<sup>15</sup>. It was thus in a good position to take advantage of the more stable conditions in the later tenth century which allowed the local economy to move from the mainly subsistence farming of Saxon times to a more market-based one.

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<sup>14</sup> Witney, p.136

<sup>15</sup> Rayner, p.24

# The Origins of Sevenoaks

In Anglo-Saxon times, travellers along the drove roads set up wayside shrines at focal points in the forest formed by the convergence of a number of old droves with many of them near or at river crossings. Shoreham was the mother-church for the area and there was an ancient droveway south from there which followed the east bank of the Darent through Otford and then, a mile and a half further south at what is now St. Johns, crossed the east-west road through the Holmesdale valley which ran from Winchester to Canterbury (approximating to the modern A25).

From below 300 feet when it was following the river, in the next three miles south, the way rose to over 600 feet about a mile and a half south of what was to become the town of Sevenoaks. Here there was a dividing of the ways. Those heading for Tonbridge and possibly further south, descended to the crossing of the Medway via the steep slope of River hill. The swine pastures of Otford were in Penshurst and Chiddingstone so that, in late summer, the swineherds with their pigs would have taken the more westerly droveway down Hubbard's Hill.<sup>16</sup>

## Possible Stopping Places

Two suitable stopping places for those passing through this area were the top of the sandy ridge at the northern end of the forest and, a mile and a half north at the crossing of the east-west road. By the beginning of the eleventh century, shrines built earlier at these two sites had developed into the church of St. Nicholas and the chapel of St. John the Baptist but there was also a shrine to the north of the site of the church at what was later to become the market cross<sup>17</sup>.

The dedications of the churches on these droveways show the concern of the worshippers for travellers who could have been people going a great distance such as from Rye to London but included the swineherds making their annual visit to the forest with their animals. Everitt<sup>18</sup> found that, in reconstructing the course of the droveways, the patron saints of churches situated on them were very often those associated with the protection of travellers. The droveway through Otford is a good example of this with Otford church itself being dedicated to St. Bartholomew and that at Penshurst, at the end of the droveway, to St. John the Baptist. St. Bartholomew, St. John and, in particular, St. Nicholas, the patron saint of Sevenoaks, were all invoked by travellers for their protection.

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<sup>17</sup> Rayner, p.21

<sup>18</sup> Everitt, p.269

## A Market Before the Conquest

Although there is no record of Sevenoaks before the Norman Conquest, there is archaeological evidence that there was a market there prior to 1066<sup>19</sup>. The market was situated on the road to Otford with the London Road being a minor fork and this supports the supposition that that it developed to serve the local inhabitants prior to the Conquest.

In this part of Kent, as in the Weald, the villages were trading rather than agricultural communities<sup>20</sup> and this must have been the main reason for the initial growth of Sevenoaks since its poor soil, only slowly brought into cultivation, would not have attracted men expecting to make their living from husbandry particularly since there was no running water at the site. A petition of 1640 describes Sevenoaks as having only three public springs only one of which was in the town itself<sup>21</sup>.

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19 Everett, p.268

20 Witney, p.144

21 Larking, p.184



# **The Hundred of Codsheath & the Manor of Otford**

By Norman times local administration was becoming more sophisticated with each lathe having been divided into a number of smaller areas called hundreds, a name common to southern, central and eastern England. Sevenoaks, together with Brasted, Chevening, Halstead, Kemsing, Leigh, Otford, Seal, Shoreham and Sundridge, was in the lathe of Sutton-at-Hone and the Hundred of Codsheath.

Each hundred had a meeting place, that for Codsheath being on a sandy hill at the junction between the east-west route through the Darent valley and the route north from Sevenoaks. Within the Hundred was the manor of Otford, an ecclesiastical estate which, in addition to Otford, included Sevenoaks, Sevenoaks Weald, Shoreham, Halstead, Chevening, Woodlands and Penshurst. There seems to have been a manor house at Otford prior to the Conquest but subsequent archbishops enlarged this so that it became one of their stopping points as they travelled round the county.

## **Sevenoaks in the Mid-Eleventh Century**

Domesday Book, written in 1086 but probably describing conditions as they were before the conquest, records a total of 159 heads-of-household for the whole manor

of Otford. These comprised 13 serfs or slaves, 29 bordars who were smallholders whose holdings averaged 8 acres and 117 villeins, men who had larger holdings. This was one of the more prosperous manors with fewer serfs and larger than average land holdings. Depending on the size of the average household, the total population of this estate would have been between 600 and 800 people.

The manor also had six water mills to which the tenants would have had to take their corn for grinding but these were of comparatively low value, probably small and dilapidated<sup>22</sup>.

## **“Wood of 150 Hogs”**

Another extra belonging to the manor was "wood of 150 hogs" but there is a problem in interpreting this phrase. The archbishop received a yearly payment from his tenants in return for pannage, the pasturing of pigs. This payment was at the rate of one pig for every ten feeding in the woods. If the phrase means that the payment consisted of 150 swine, this would mean that the tenants had a combined herd of about 1,500 swine which they would pasture each autumn in the woods belonging to the manor and these would be in addition to the archbishop's own herds, perhaps another 500.

The phrase “wood of 150 hogs” has, however, alternatively been interpreted as meaning that the wood was capable of supporting 150 hogs thus reducing the number of pigs in the area to a tenth of that suggested by the earlier interpretation. This seems a more reasonable number. Either way, the total number feeding in the manor of Otford was only a third of the number at Wrotham<sup>23</sup>.

## The Sevenoaks Area about 1400

Dunlop portrays the area which Sevenoaks was later to dominate as it was in about 1400. In the north were Shoreham, Halstead and the Great and Little Parks of Otford all cultivated directly by the servants of the Archbishop. There were farms at Timberden, Broughton, Frog Farm, Twitton, in Dutton Green, on Otford Mount, in Chevening, Sepham, Chipstead, Morants and Dryhill, cultivated by tenants who paid rent to the Manor. Sundridge was another of the archbishop's manors. Around Sevenoaks was a ring of farms: Brittain's, Kippington, Clenches, Wickhurst, Panthurst, Rumstead, Knole, Blackhall, Greatness and Bradbourne all of which probably came into existence in the twelfth century, between Domesday and Magna Carta<sup>24</sup>. One of the earliest surviving buildings in the area is the

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23 Clarke and Stoyel, p.45

24 Dunlop, p 68

manor house of Wickhurst which was built about 1260, during the reign of Henry III<sup>25</sup>.

Closer in there were a number of smaller farms including the Glebe land near the Rectory and the farm now known as Bligh's which was likely to have been the home farm of the archbishop's holding of Sevenoaks.

On old maps the name "Sevenoaks Vine" covers a large area to the north of this farm. Since other vineyards are mentioned for this area of Kent, it is possible that this name "[recalls the presence hereabouts of a small vineyard cultivated for the archbishop's table by his bailiff in Sevenoaks](#)"<sup>26</sup>. At this time Sevenoaks would have consisted of wood and plaster cottages lining the road near the church which was possibly the only stone building in the village.

## The Effect of the Norman Invasion

The Norman Conquest had brought central administration. London had become the capital with power regarding church affairs being delegated to the bishops. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the manor of Otford, the richest of the

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<sup>25</sup> Sevenoaks Weald, p.10

<sup>26</sup> Dunlop, p.68

Archbishop's manors in Kent, was still more important than the sub-manors of Knole and Sevenoaks. Which of the villages was to become predominant in the area must have depended on a wide range of factors.

## The Church of St. Nicholas

In the winter of 1122-23, the *Textus Roffensis*, was compiled under the orders of the Bishop of Rochester. Part of this is a list of the churches paying for chrism oil and is almost certainly a copy of an earlier Saxon list; it includes practically all the pre-19th-century churches in the area amongst which is Seounaca (Sevenoaks)<sup>27</sup>. Thus, by the beginning of the twelfth century, if not considerably earlier, Sevenoaks had a church in its own right.

The *Textus Roffensis* also shows that it was paying nine pence a year to the church authorities as distinct from the "capellas", chapels of a church, which paid only sixpence. Also in the list was the capella or Hospital of St. John the Baptist of "Greternersce" (now Greatness). This Hospital (or Hospice) could have been founded, sometime before 1066, to give travellers along this way a place of rest and overnight refuge.

## The Patron Saint

The church is dedicated to St. Nicholas, one of the most popular saints in Christendom with more than 400 dedicated to him in England alone. He is venerated as the patron saint of sailors, travellers and children for whom he later became Santa Claus. His connection with children derived from the story that he raised to life three children who had been pickled in a brine tub and a relief in a chapel of Downside Abbey, Bath, portrays this legend<sup>28</sup>. One of his symbols is three gold balls or three money bags and in one legend he is said to have dropped these through the window of a poor man's house to provide dowries for his three daughters thus saving the man from shame and the women from prostitution<sup>29</sup>.

## The Pope's Interdict

During the reign of King John (1199 to 1216), the country suffered from the king's quarrels with his barons and the pope. In addition to heavy taxation required to finance continental wars, the people had to live their lives with the whole country under an interdict placed on it by the pope. At the beginning of the reign, the Archbishop of Canterbury died. The pope chose Stephen Langton to fill the vacant

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<sup>28</sup> The Book of Saints, London, 1989, p.416

<sup>29</sup> Erickson, p.96

position but the king refused to have such an appointment made by anyone other than the English Church and English Crown. Unable to get his way, John started to persecute the clergy and seize church land and the interdict, which lasted for six years, was the pope's retaliation.

This prohibited the clergy from performing divine service so that, amongst other deprivations, church bells could not be rung, the dying could not have the last communion and they had to be buried in unconsecrated ground. Since for the most part the country would not have wanted interference from outside even if it had come from the Pope, who would have policed this ruling? Or was the pope's authority, as head of the church, such that external enforcement was unnecessary even if it did mean that everyone who died would face damnation? At least at the beginning of Henry III's reign, life in the country became more settled and towns could develop without the interruptions and heavy taxes caused by war.

## **The Parish of Sevenoaks**

The parish of Sevenoaks was much larger than it is now, being about five miles from north to south and four miles across. It included Riverhead in the north with rich, fertile soil and Sevenoaks Weald in the south below the sandstone ridge. In

1218, Aaron, clerk, was the papal chaplain and clerk at Sevenoaks and Master Henry of Caumbray was appointed to serve there in 1241<sup>30</sup>.

At the end of the century, the rector of St. Nicholas was Henry of Ghent, a Fleming and one of his charitable acts was to establish a "Chantry to the honour of the Virgin Mary" endowing it with the gift of some land<sup>31</sup>. Also in the thirteenth century, a tower was built at the north-west corner of the church, the south aisle and an arcade of columns were added<sup>32</sup>.

## Sevenoaks Becomes a Market Town

Sevenoaks, in the hundred of Codsheath and the manor of Otford did not surpass the village of Otford, in the Darent valley, until at least Tudor times but Otford was on lower lying ground than Sevenoaks with river marshes to the south and the steep hillside to the north. As Henry VIII was to point out later, when he was persuading the Archbishop to give him Knole, Otford "standeth low and is

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30 Gordon Ward Notebooks, Sevenoaks X, p.2, 5

31 Dunlop, p.62; a chantry was an endowment or chapel for the chanting of masses

32 Rayner, p.39



rheumatick . . . As for Knole, it standeth on a sound, perfect and wholesome ground".

Villages tended to become established where there was a church whilst other apparent focal points without a church remained static; Riverhead (or Rethered as it was then) was the meeting place of the Hundred but it remained a hamlet long after Sevenoaks had become a town.

Not only was a church usually positioned at a junction of pathways through the forest, it was the centre of the life of the community, a place where people came on secular occasions as well as religious ones. These gatherings would attract stallholders and craftsmen and those villages in a favourable position and with a powerful lord of the manor interested in its development would grow into small towns.

## **A Welcome Place to Stop**

Whilst Otford and Shoreham were close to the east-west route and the old settlements of Halstead and Riverhead were on the north-south route, Sevenoaks was in a position to attract travellers and traders from both. Just over twenty miles south east of London, Sevenoaks was approximately a third of the way along the

road which became one of the most important roads in Kent, second only to the London-Canterbury-Dover road.

After climbing the sandstone ridge at Riverhill and perhaps resting at Sevenoaks, the direct onward journey would take travellers up the chalk escarpment to the top of the North Downs across the heath and sandy soil of what is now Bromley Common until they reached Bromley and Lewisham. Sevenoaks, as it had done before the Conquest, must have seemed a welcome place to break this journey and, of the towns on the Rye Road, it is the one where the church was built directly on the road.

## Travellers and the Rye Road

Dunlop quotes Arthur Bryant's description of the travellers who passed through Sevenoaks: "pedlars of salt from the seashore, dealers in ploughshares and ironware from the Wealden foundries, merchants of richer and more exotic goods coming from Rye and Winchelsea. Mingled with all this would be the swineherds, singly or in parties, with or without their beasts"<sup>33</sup>. One of the more unusual shipments were John Dowse's felt hats. Dowse, a freeman of Rye in the 1580s,

made white felt hats which he sent to London to be dyed after which they were returned to him<sup>34</sup>.

Most travellers would have been on foot even if they had a pack animal to carry the goods they were taking to market and they would be lucky if they could walk twenty miles in a day. Sometimes it was necessary to use oxen to help haul heavy weights. An ordinary horseman, on a good day, could manage thirty miles but much less if the roads were muddy or the weather bad. In 1360, Edward III landed at Rye in the evening and set off immediately, on horseback, for London where he arrived next morning. Such speed of travel required fresh horses waiting at changing posts and Edward, later in his reign, organised staging posts at Flimwell and Chipstead, that is at twenty mile intervals<sup>35</sup>.

## Transport of Fish

Even with the development of Sevenoaks, Chipstead continued to be used not only as a staging post but also as a fish market. Transport of fish from Rye to London was of great importance and had to be done speedily since seafish, unlike fresh water fish, once caught, die quickly. A pack horse could make the journey from

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34 Donald, p.6

35 Watson, p.27

Rye to Chipstead in a day and here the fish was either salted to preserve it or transferred quickly to the packtrains of small horses waiting to take it, as fast as possible, to London<sup>36</sup>.

The speed with which the rippers transported their fish from the coast to London made it attractive to use them to carry official mail. From the mid 1500s, the two main posts from London to the continent went mainly via Dover but there was also a messenger service from Rye to London. When there was no special need for speed this took two to three days, or even longer, indicating that the couriers were walking<sup>37</sup>.

The route to Paris from London via Dover and Calais, although having a shorter sea passage than via Rye and Dieppe, was much longer: 251 miles on land and 19 miles sea crossing compared with 172 land miles and 60 miles sea crossing. Land travel was more expensive than sea and Calais also had high port duties. Thus, although the Rye road never had the official status of that to Dover, was still an important route for both travellers and letters<sup>38</sup>.

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36 Donald, p.6

37 Donald, p.9

38 Donald, p.11

## Traders and Gentry

Adequate roads were obviously necessary for the growth of a town but also important was a river, or at least a navigable stream<sup>39</sup>. Tonbridge had the Medway and Chipstead the Darent but Sevenoaks has no waterway. Nor was it fertile agricultural ground suitable for the growing of cereals. It was, however, adequate for mixed farming with good park and grazing land interspersed with great trees making it suitable for development into a deer-park and cattle feeding-grounds. The lack of a waterway had not detracted from the town's attraction for traders and a few stalls in the tenth century, perhaps in the churchyard, had by the end of the thirteenth century developed into a thriving market.

A parallel development had been the decision by leading local families to form "gentry" estates out of very small pieces of land later to be amalgamated into the manor of Knole<sup>40</sup>. The sub-manors of Otford surrounding Sevenoaks church were small agricultural communities, held of Otford Manor, none of them of much value before the fifteenth century although some, at least, had "permanent footholds in or close to Sevenoaks market-place"<sup>41</sup>. Even so their owners were high ranking people often closely connected with the king. Estates in the Hundred of

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39 Thirsk, p.479

40 Du Boulay, p.2

41 Knocker, p.54

Codsheath must have been sought after since they often went to favourites of the crown.

## The Early Market

By the beginning of the thirteenth century there had probably been a market of at least a few stalls in Sevenoaks for two hundred years but there is no early official mention of it. The Hundred Rolls of Edward I (about 1275) include "[the Archbishop of Canterbury has the return of writs, a gallows, the assize of bread and ale and pleas](#)" for Sevenoaks but without a market being mentioned. This could mean that the market was of no value to the lord of the manor rather than it did not exist at all<sup>42</sup>.

Recognised market rights were of great importance to the growth of a town and Sevenoaks could have received its market charter earlier in the thirteenth century, perhaps from Henry III during whose reign (1216-1272) when many markets received their charters. Two for nearby villages for which records do exist are Kemsing in 1218 and Seal in 1233. Seal received a second charter in 1284 and

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42 Knocker, p.56; Knocker concludes (p.61) the market was toll free and thus of little value to the lord of the manor except for the rents from plots which he could impose as owner of the soil.

Shipbourne its charter in 1294 and it is from 1287 that the first written record of a charter for Sevenoaks has survived<sup>43</sup> thus giving it official recognition.

By the thirteenth century, the market had moved north of the church to the space between what were then two diverging tracks and are now two roads, one leading to London, the other to Otford and Dartford. This triangular shape for a market town was the second most common after the single, long, wide street.

## Early Records of the Market

Some records tenancies held of the archbishop have survived. In 1292, Roger de Sevenoaks granted to Roger de Cnolle (Knole) some shops and plots of ground in the market place<sup>44</sup>. Another early record concerning the market comes from a Pleas of the Crown of 1313:

"Robert, son of Geoffrey Alif of Ightham and William Readhod of Hartley stole a heifer which belonged to Thomas Faber of Ightham and, having driven it to the town of Sevenoaks, sold it in the market there for seven shillings and immediately took flight"<sup>45</sup>.

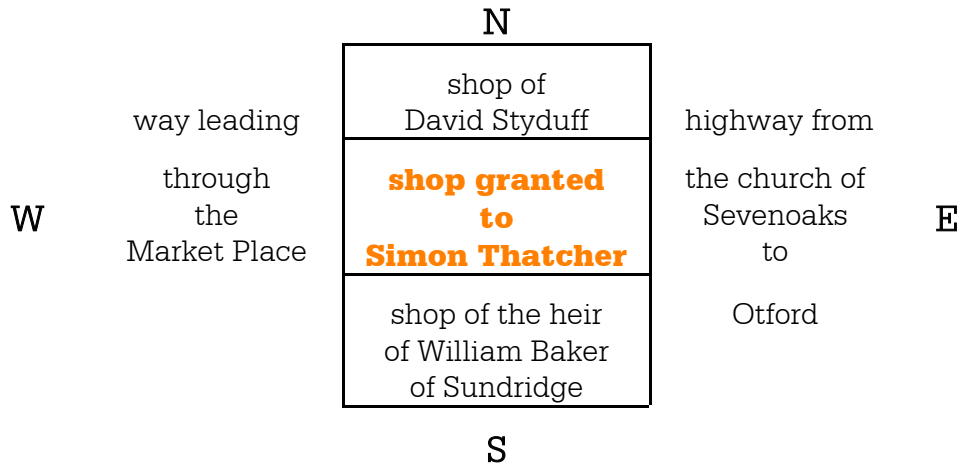
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43 Dunlop, p. 57

44 Rayner, p.37

45 Dunlop, p.67

In 1384, Richard Gamene of Brasted granted a shop to Simon, son of Richard Thatcher of Sevenoaks, the description of which shows that, by the end of the fourteenth century, there were a number of shops in the centre of the town as shown in the diagram below<sup>46</sup>.





Much later, in 1570 Lambarde lists Sevenoaks market day as Saturday and the holding of fairs on St. Nicholas's day (6th December) and St. Peter's day (29th June)<sup>47</sup>.

## Methods of Holding Land

A lord of the manor could be a tenant-in-chief, holding his land direct from the king, or a sub-tenant. Lords of the manor, either laymen or churchmen, might have a number of manors which could be in different parts of the county or even country. In Norman England land could be held of knight service which required the tenant to serve in wars, as necessary. Often the tenant did not go himself; instead, he provided a man fitted out with armour, weapons and a horse to go in his place. As land was divided, a man could hold land for which a fraction (half, quarter, etc.) of a knight was payable. Another way land could be held was by socage tenure where the tenant provided other types of service to the lord.

"Knight's service land required the presence of the tenant in warfare and battle abroad, socage tenure commanded his attendance at the plough and other the lord's affairs of husbandry, at home: the one by manhood defending his lord's life

and person, the other by industry maintaining with rent, corn and victual, his estate and family<sup>48</sup>.

Land held by either of these means could be inherited by the custom of gavelkind although, by the thirteenth century, a man in his will could direct that his land was to be inherited by a particular son or divided in a specific way, that is his will took precedence over the custom.

## The Transfer of Property

The transfer of property from one person to another was a complicated process; one method of evading conveyancing restrictions was by means of fines, fictitious legal actions used for this purpose from the twelfth century until 1833. The intended purchaser, as plaintiff, claimed the property from the vendor which was transferred by a legally sanctioned agreement<sup>49</sup>. This involved a court case in London. Two Sevenoaks examples, held at Westminster during the reign of Edward II, are given in Table 1.1.

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48 Lambarde, p.477

49 Tracing Your Ancestors in the PRO; PRO Handbook No. 19

An interesting feature of both these examples is the inclusion, in both cases, of the wives of the men involved.

**Table 1.1 - Transfer of Land using Fines**

date	plaintiff:	defendants:
November 1308	Richard de Asshewy	Roger de Loudham & Johanne, his wife John Gysors and Isobella, his wife Robert Box and Maria. his wife
<p>1 messuage, 80 acres land, 9 acres mead, 20 acres wood and 40s rent with appurtenances in Sevenoaks, Kemsing, Seal and Otford.</p> <p>The defendants admit it to be the right of Richard; as that which he has of their gift, to hold to him and to his heirs. They receive for the admission, etc. £100.</p>		

Spring 1312	John, son of John le Botiller and Alice, his wife	John le Botiller of Sevenoaks
<p>2 messuages, 1 mill, 3 tofts, 70 acres land, 16 acres mead, 10 acres pasture, 2 acres wood and 8s rent with appurtenances in Sevenoaks, Kemsing and Otford.</p> <p>John le Botiller admits it to be the right of John, son of John (le Botiller); and, for himself and his heirs, grants to John and Alice and the heirs of John, son of John (le Botiller). For which concession John and Alice, for themselves and the heirs of John . . . grant to John le Botiller an annuity of £10 for his life with liberty to distrain should the same be at any time in arrears.<sup>50</sup></p>		

The first of these transactions looks like a straightforward sale but the second shows John, the elder, handing his land on to his son in return for an annuity of £10 per year.

Le Botiller's land included rent of eight shillings (£0.4) but rents were sometimes payable in goods rather than, or in addition to, money; this would have the advantage (or disadvantage) of inflation proofing. One example concerns some land at Wrotham, a village a few miles from Sevenoaks where the rent for a messuage and some land included 12 hens and 60 eggs (presumably per year)<sup>51</sup>.

## Local Administration

Whether or not as a result of the increased power of those whose only language was English, it was enacted in 1363 that "men of the law, both of the temporal and of holy church law, from that time forth should plead in the mother tongue"<sup>52</sup>. Prior to this time, most of the work carried out by the local courts must have been carried out in the language used by the people with whom they were dealing even if the clerks recorded some of the proceedings in Latin or Norman French.

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<sup>51</sup> Greenstreet, Kent Fines, 1877, p.345

<sup>52</sup> Coulton, p.28, from The Brut, E.E.T.S. 1908, p.315

## The Hundred or Manor Court.

Local judicial and administrative business was handled by the Hundred or Manor Court. A man brought before the court, usually by his neighbours, first had to pay his surety which was returned to him if he was cleared of the charge.

An entry in the Hundred Court held at Shoreham on 17th May 1389 throws an interesting light on Sevenoaks at that time. The representatives of Sevenoaks were two ale-tasters, William Austyn and John Mellor. They deposed that, for Sevenoaks alone, thirty-eight householders brewed once or more and all paid 2d a time. Then Richard Clede added a further eighteen and Robert atte Mede a further seven making a total of sixty-three houses in Sevenoaks who brewed ale. Presumably the court was interested only in householders brewing for sale as distinct for their own consumption. As Dunlop says "[even allowing that it was small beer, the amount of liquor must have been considerable](#)"<sup>53</sup>.

How many households were there in Sevenoaks in 1389? Towards the end of the sixteenth century the population was about 1000<sup>54</sup> which, taking the average family size as five, gives 200 households. A hundred and fifty years earlier there would have been many fewer than this. It thus looks as if, assuming the details

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53 Dunlop, p.66 (2d = 0.83p)

54 Fox, Jean; A.C. Vol. 116, 1996, p.228

from the court records are correct, that at least one in three households was brewing ale for sale, presumably, to the other two-thirds many of whom would also have been brewing for themselves.

## Prayer Books and Theft

Two entries in the Rolls of the Hundred Court for 1389 and another from 1412 give an inkling of the wealth of the church in the Otford/Sevenoaks area at that time. They are all concerned with a "porthors" (an abbreviation for a portable Book of Hours) or a breviary. "Agnes, servant of John Dygon, found in Otford a book called a porthors, the value of which the jurors know not, which book Agnes gave to Margery, the wife of John Dygon aforesaid". Nothing more was recorded concerning this porthors but later in 1389 John Elm, Rector of Lambhithe was robbed of "a porthors, value 100 shillings". In 1412, a servant of John Parker, the parson of Otford, stole the parson's horse on which he escaped taking with him:

"a saddle and bridle worth 13s 4d  
a breviary worth £13 6s 8d  
a silver chalice worth £2  
seven silver spoons worth 14s  
three boxes with certain gems and gold rings worth £5 6s 8d  
one bag, two pairs of blankets, four yards of fustian, one napkin cloth,  
value £1 6s 8d<sup>1155</sup>.

The horse was valued at £4. Presumably, except for the horse, saddle and bridle, these items belonged to the church rather than the parson himself.

These prayer books would have been made from parchment with decorated borders, coloured initials and they could have illuminated panels or whole pages. Their high value (£5 for the one stolen from John Elm, £13.33 for that from Otford) was accounted for by the amount of time required for their making. The Archbishop's house at Otford would have attracted skilled craftsmen for its building and furnishing but there would have also been a demand for smaller items, religious ones such as breviaries but also fine clothes and jewellery.



## The Court-Baron

Within the hundred, there were two other courts. The Court Baron, the civil court of the lord of the manor, which all freehold tenants were obliged to attend, was held at the manor house in Otford although those from the more distant southern parts were allowed to meet in front of the church gate at Penshurst<sup>56</sup>. It was mainly concerned with the registration of title to land and the collection of dues to which the lord was entitled. Although supposedly a three-weekly court, it had always been held irregularly and by the beginning of the seventeenth century it usually met only once a year<sup>57</sup>.

## The Court-Leet

The court-leet, concerned principally with the keeping of public peace and order, was the king's court which met twice a year at the meeting place for the hundred at what is now the site of St. Mary's, the parish church of Riverhead<sup>58</sup>. It was here that the freemen came for the institution of the view of frankpledge. This was a system, going back to Saxon times, where a man at the age of twelve had to be

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<sup>56</sup> Clarke & Stoyel, p.69

<sup>57</sup> Harrison, 1937, p.178

<sup>58</sup> Dunlop, p.43

adopted into a tithing which was a body of men each of which were pledges for the good behaviour of one another. Originally, as its name designates, a tithing was a group of ten men but it could actually be as many as thirty; the tithing-man was the head man of the tithing. At the view, as the court was called, each man paid his tithing-penny as his due to the lord.

In many villages and towns both criminal and civil courts continued to be heard in the manor courts well into Tudor times. Even when criminal proceedings were carried out at the Assize courts, the manor courts regulated local matters such as drainage and food regulation. Little is known of how these procedures were carried out in Sevenoaks but for those places where court rolls have survived they show illiterate and uneducated peasants and townsmen using and manipulating the courts for their own purposes with a greater skill and sophistication than they are generally credited with having. These courts were also centres of social and political influence, often providing the town or village with a primitive but effective form of democracy<sup>59</sup>.

## **Church Administration**

From the point of view of church administration, most of West Kent was in the See of Rochester and most of East Kent in the See of Canterbury. The Deanery at

Shoreham, however, was a "peculiar" of Canterbury which meant that the ecclesiastical government of those parishes within the Deanery came under the Archbishop of Canterbury. There were about thirty-five of these parishes including all those in the Hundred of Codsheath except Seal, Kemsing and Leigh. Wills for people in these parishes were proved at the Deanery. Whilst some executors must have been pleased to have just a short journey to Shoreham instead of the fifteen miles to Rochester, others would have been disappointed not to have had the opportunity to visit the cathedral town.

## **Economic Depression & the Black Death**

Up to the beginning of the fourteenth century, the climate was warm and pleasant with vineyards in southern England producing considerable quantities of wine even if it was rather sour. The forty years from 1280 to 1320 saw a great expansion in agriculture. The profits from the sale of wool from all the Kentish manors was £48 in 1288, £146 in 1321 and £157 in 1322. But then there was a sudden change; wool profits were only £93 in 1323, corn production fell and all agriculture suffered a decline<sup>60</sup>.

One of the reasons for this change was the weather with severe storms, drought and lower temperatures. In addition, a pestilence killed many sheep and cattle and then, in the autumn of 1348, the Black Death (bubonic plague) spread from Europe to the south of England. It struck very rapidly with sudden swellings in the groin, armpit or neck, red spots on the breast and back, vomiting, blood spitting and delirium and usually lasted no more than three days<sup>61</sup>. In December 1348, when the plague first struck Kent, Edward III celebrated Christmas at Otford manor-house where, even though times were hard, there was feasting, dancing, singing and dalliance<sup>62</sup>. There were further outbreaks of plague in 1361 and 1368 to 1369 with minor eruptions until the end of the century.

## Problems in the Diocese of Rochester

A monk, William Dene, describes the problems in the Diocese of Rochester. In 1349, the Bishop, who maintained only a small household, "lost four priests, five gentlemen, ten serving men, seven young clerics and six pages, so that not a soul remained who might serve him in any office. At Malling he consecrated two abbesses but both died almost immediately, leaving only four established nuns and four novices. To our grief, the plague carried off so vast a multitude of people

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<sup>61</sup> Abell, p.103

<sup>62</sup> Clarke and Stoyel, p.76

of both sexes that nobody could be found who would bear the corpses to the grave. Men and women carried their own children on their shoulders to the church and threw them into a common pit. From these pits such an appalling stench was given off that scarcely anyone dared to walk besides the cemeteries".<sup>63</sup>

The Bishop spent the winter of 1349 and spring of 1350 at Trottiscliffe, about eight miles east-north-east of Sevenoaks sadly finding that in all his manors, "buildings and walls were falling into ruins and in that year there was scarcely a manor that returned £100". "In the monastery at Rochester supplies ran short and the brethren had great difficulty in getting enough to eat; to such a point that they were obliged either to grind their own bread or to go without. The prior, however, ate everything of the best." Everyone suffered from the very large rises in prices with that of fish increasing so much that want of it was such "that many who had been wont to live well had to content themselves with bread and potage"<sup>64</sup>.

## The Disappearance of Chapels

Up to a third of the national population died but there would have been wide variations in different parts of the country. Some idea of the reduction in

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63 quoted by Abell, p.104 and West, p.78; Malling is about 14 miles east of Sevenoaks

64 Dene quoted by Abell, p.106, West, p.79, Abell, p.106

population and prosperity of the region can be obtained from looking at the number of churches which disappeared. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, in the Darenth valley, there were a number of chapels attached to a mother- church but at least five of these did not survive into the next century<sup>65</sup>.

## Shortage of Labour

Another result of the dearth and pestilence was that there was a shortage of labour of all kinds. Dene recorded that the "labourers and skilled workmen were imbued with such a spirit of rebellion that neither King, law nor justice could curb them". It was not only the manual workers who found themselves able to take advantage of their scarcity value, "the priests betook themselves to places where they could get larger stipends than in their own benefices".<sup>66</sup>

Labourers combining together for higher wages led to the passing in 1349 of the Statute of Labourers: "Whereas late against the malice of servants which were idle and not willing to serve after the pestilence without taking excessive wages, it was ordained" that "everyone under sixty, man or woman, not having a livelihood or

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65 Everett, p.157

66 Abell, p.105

ground to cultivate, should be obliged to serve any employer who should require them at the old rate of wages in the neighbourhood".<sup>67</sup> But such measures could not solve the problem if the men were not available and, as the number of farm labourers had greatly decreased so their wages had risen. What the Statute did do was aggravate the rebelliousness of the poorer people leading to the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.

## Commuted Labour Services

In 1352, Archbishop Islip recorded that Wrotham manor (about six miles east-northeast of Sevenoaks) was ruined through the pestilence and property had decayed for lack of funds to maintain it<sup>68</sup>. The landlords' difficulties were often compounded because, prior to the Black Death, many lords had allowed labour services due to them to be commuted for money. For example, in Otford in 1254, "the custom of wattling hurdles and fold<sup>69</sup> was placed at rent". Now, because labour was so much more expensive, lords of the manor often found they were in greater difficulty than those tenants who had survived the plague and worked the land themselves. Thus many of them wished to revert to services in kind. Even so,

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<sup>67</sup> Coulton, p.351; Abell, p.105

<sup>68</sup> Clarke and Stoyel, p.77

<sup>69</sup> the tenants' obligation of making hurdles and pasturing their sheep with the lord's flock; Clarke and Stoyel, p.77

in 1356, Archbishop Islip, although having had problems with Wrotham, "granted his men at Otford relief from the carrying of wood as long as they behaved well towards him, paying their rents and doing their customs loyally".

## **"Mowing Their Gavel"**

Some of these arrangements would obviously depend on the relationship between lord and tenant and the situation in the Sevenoaks area may not have been so bad as in districts dedicated to the growing of crops which required more labour than did pastoral farming..

In 1381, the See was vacant after the murder of Archbishop, Thomas Becket, and a royal commission was appointed to compel the tenants of Otford to do their reaping services<sup>70</sup>. In 1389, all the tenants of the Lord of the Manor of Otford who rented Algarysdenne in Weald, except William Sleghtre, were to be distrained for not "mowing their gavel". Gavel was a tax, originally levied in the form of services to the lord and goes back to a much earlier social structure. By the end of the fourteenth century, tenants objected to being obliged to do a certain amount of ploughing, reaping or mowing on the land of the lord of the manor which could be a considerable distance away from the lands of which they were tenants.



Algarysdenne is thought to be near Penshurst whilst the land they were expected to mow was likely to be in Otford<sup>71</sup>.

## Church Building

Another victim of the labour shortage was Sevenoaks church which, at the beginning of the century had been enlarged by the widening of the north aisle. Probably, when this work was done, a similar widening of the south aisle was planned but, by the time the money for the further extension had been collected, the Black Death had taken its toll and church building had been brought to a standstill<sup>72</sup>. This failure to continue the enlargement could, however, have been due to structural problems which seemed to have developed at the beginning of the century since, in 1404, the rector was ordered to add buttresses to shore up the chancel<sup>73</sup>.

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71 Ward, p.168

72 Dunlop, p.69

73 Rayner, p.39

# The Developing Estates of Sevenoaks

For about a hundred years starting in the 1270s, there were at least three families actively building up rent paying estates in Sevenoaks: the Brutons (who could have been descended from Baldwin de Bretun) whose land was mainly in the Bradbourne/ Riverhead area), the Grovehursts and the Knoles. The men from these families, like most of the prospering "gentry" of this time, were functionaries and agents of magnates; in the case of those from Sevenoaks, it would often have been the archbishop's household which employed them<sup>74</sup>.

At the end of the thirteenth century, the properties of tenants in the Sevenoaks area of the archbishop's manor of Otford were generally small, often a fraction of an acre with two acres about the maximum. This was because estates, having been inherited under the custom of gavelkind, had been divided between all the sons unless the will had specified something to the contrary. Many, on inheriting a small plot, found it to their advantage to sell it, one example being the son of a mason who, in 1280, sold all his share of his father's land in Sevenoaks and Chiddingstone to Robert of Knole. Even though this must have been at least two separate plots, the entry fine was only 8s<sup>75</sup>.

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74 M.M. Postan, "The English Gentry in the Thirteenth Century", the Neale Lecture, 1972, quoted by du Boulay, p.5

75 £0.4; Du Boulay, p.3

## The Knole Estate

In the Lambeth Palace papers for 1281, there is a reference to a house belonging to William and Roger de Knole<sup>76</sup> whilst, in 1292, "all those shops and plots of ground with appurtenances in the market place of Sevenoaks which formerly belonged to Peter the merchant of Sevenoaks" were granted by Roger de Sevenakes to Robert de la Cnolle<sup>77</sup>.

Four years later Robert of Knole purchased some land partly for money and partly for the promise to place the seller, properly fitted out with clothing, "in a suitable office at my own costs within one month". This was most likely an office in the archbishop's household. This type of arrangement occurred again in 1298 when William, son of Richard Durrant, negotiated a seven-year lease of part of his inheritance to Henry Bruton who, in return, arranged a London apprenticeship for him<sup>78</sup>.

About 1304 Henry Bruton was Archbishop Winchelsey's attorney appointed "to maintain the liberties of the church of Canterbury and it tenants and, as a married

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<sup>76</sup> Sackville-West, p.20;

<sup>77</sup> grant from the Manor Court quoted by Dunlop, p.67

<sup>78</sup> du Boulay, p.4

layman, he could have been a common lawyer"<sup>79</sup>. In 1347 "Roger of Knolle and Sybil his wife" sold Knole to Henry de Grofhurst<sup>80</sup> (or Grovehurst). Henry Grovehurst, clerk and rector of Horsmonden, died in 1362 and one of the properties he owned was Knole. There is a quitclaim dated 1364 from Henry's feoffee to his heir, Roger Ashburnham, in which the first occurrence of the phrase "manor of Knole" is found<sup>81</sup>. About 1370 it was conveyed to Geoffrey, Lord de Say who was admiral of the fleet at the end of the reign of Edward III<sup>82</sup> and in 1419 it was bought by Thomas Langley, Bishop of Durham, who paid £133 6s 8d in cash for its 800 acres of wood and other land<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>79</sup> du Boulay, p.6

<sup>80</sup> Hasted, p.63

<sup>81</sup> du Boulay, p.6

<sup>82</sup> Hasted, p.63

<sup>83</sup> R.L.Storey, "Thomas Langley and the Bishopric of Durham, 1406-37", 1961, pp.94-95, quoted by du Boulay, p.6

# The Farm of Bradbourne

Bradbourne is in the north-west of the parish with a tributary of the Darent running through that part of the estate which is now Bradbourne Lakes. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, houses with moats were very fashionable and the original manor of Bradbourne was built with one<sup>84</sup>.

In the twelfth century (and perhaps earlier), Knole and Bradbourne in Sevenoaks had the same owners as Seal and Kemsing and at the beginning of John's reign (about 1200) they were in the possession of Baldwin de Betun, Earl of Albemarle. These sub-manors formed part of the dowry of Alice, Baldwin de Bretun's daughter who, in 1204, became the second wife of William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, a powerful baron who had borne the sceptre at the coronation of Richard I in 1189. It was Alice's husband who took the lead in proclaiming Henry, John's nine-year old son, king on the death of John in 1216. Although seventy, he took on what would now be called the Regency but he died in 1219.

## Fulk de Breaute

Hasted and Phillips have an interesting story of how, at some time during John's reign, Bradbourne came to be in the possession of Fulk de Breaute. As the story goes, in 1213, in order to be ready to repel an invasion, John assembled an army, mainly of Welsh and Flemish mercenaries, on the Downs between Canterbury and Dover. Fortunately no invasion occurred, ships from the Cinque Ports having fought a successful battle against the French Fleet. Breate (or Brent) was described as "a bastard by birth, of mean extraction who had come out of the Low Countries, with some foreign auxiliaries and freebooters, to king John's assistance and became a great favourite both with that king and his son Henry III from whom he was invested with much power and had the lands of many of the barons conferred on him".

Pembroke's son and heir was also a William Marshall and he had sided with the rebellious barons during John's reign and after the death of the old William Marshall, Henry III may have seized Bradbourne and given it to Fulk.

But Fulk de Breate did not stay in Henry III's favour for long since he soon returned to his natural inclination and "became guilty of many cruelties and oppressions and at length sided with prince Louis of France in his design of invading England.

But failing in this, he fled into Wales and the king seized on all his possessions throughout England<sup>85</sup>.

At the same time as Fulk was falling from favour, the second Earl had become loyal to Henry whose sister, Eleanor, he married in 1228 when she was only thirteen.

## Bradbourne 1225

Certainly, in some way, Fulk de Brete came by an interest in Bradbourne at some time since in 1225 the "Abbess of Wilton had in the manor of Kemsing at forty shillings rent of the gift of Baldwin de Bretun<sup>86</sup> and that Faulkes de Brete unjustly, and without judgement, disseised her thereof. The King orders the Sheriff of Kent to have the property restored to the Abbess". Owners of property sometimes left bequests of annuities to be paid from their lands "for evermore" and it looks here as if this is what Baldwin de Bretun had done. When the land was sold, the obligation to pay the annuity passed to the new owner.

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85 Hasted, pp. 62-63; Phillips (p.5) gives a longer description of Beate's exploits

86 Kemsing, at this time, was held by the same owners as Bradbourne and Baldwin de Bretun was Pembroke's father-in-law and the previous owner of Bradbourne

It was also recorded in 1225 that "the lord king has granted to the Earl Marshall all the oxen and all the stock and corn found both in granaries and on the land in the Manors of Kemsing, Sutton and Bradbourne which Falk de Breaute once held, which manors indeed the lord King committed to the same Earl as long as it please the King. And the Sheriff of Kent is commanded to make him full seisin thereof"<sup>87</sup>. Like the Abbess earlier, the Earl Marshall was occupying the land by seisin, that is he did not fully own it.

## Eleanor, Lady of the Manor

William Marshall died in 1231 and was succeeded by his brother Richard but when Richard went to Wales to pay homage to the king he was dismissed on the grounds that Eleanor was "great with child" and that he had been conversant with the king's enemies with France.

On being widowed, Eleanor retired to her manor of Seal and Kemsing and Henry gave her twenty oaks from his Tonbridge estates to rebuild her manor after a fire. Richard escaped to Ireland but later in the same year the king accepted his homage on the understanding that he made "livery of the manors of Sutton, Kemsing and Bradbourne" to Eleanor who, as a widow, lived at Kemsing until she married the Earl of Leicester.



"Eleanor, Countess of Leicester, who was the wife of William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke" died in 1275 when she was still in possession of these manors<sup>88</sup>. The Chancery Inquisition Post Mortem gives a number of rental values and the money value of services due to the lord of the manor. Although these are for Kemsing, not Bradbourne, they give an idea of prices at that time; they are given in Appendix 11 which gives the background to this description.

## Roger Bigod, the Next Heir

When she died, the next heir to the sub-manors was Roger Bigod, the grandson of Maud (sister of Eleanor's husband) who had married Hugh Bigod, Earl of Norfolk and Marshall of England. Owners of Bradbourne are not mentioned specifically again until 1493 although Phillips was sure that it had the same owners as Kemsing and Seal<sup>89</sup>.

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88 Phillips, p.4

89 Phillips, p.7

## A Fulling Mill

On the tributary of the Darent which ran through Bradbourne, there was a fulling mill which, in 1283, was owned by Henry de Brutone (of Brittain). He had received a grant of "all that brook called Raulettesbroke lying in the parish of Sevenoaks between the land of the lord of Bradbourne and the fulling mill of the said Henry called Hugettesmelde". Three years later Henry de Brutone was granted a further three acres at Bradbourne called the Mershe with three fields adjoining it<sup>90</sup>.

In 1332, John Joce was the tenant paying an annual rent of forty shillings (£2) for the eighty-three acre farm with the mill<sup>91</sup>. John Joce appears in two cases concerned with arrangements regarding land ownership both of which were complex, possibly the reason why they were taken to the Court at Westminster for adjudication. These are described in Appendix 11 and show how complicated land tenancy and ownership could be in the fourteenth century.

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90 Cart. Misc. No. 63, at Lambeth Palace, quoted by Phillips, p.3

91 Reynolds, p.1

## The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Bradbourne was to have owners who valued it as a distinctive property rather than something which paid them rent. The first of these was Walter de Pevenly who demolished the existing farmhouse and built an imposing house known as Pemly Court, the biggest house that was ever to stand on the site. At this time, if not before, the moat was probably filled in not only because it had become outmoded but also because, by then, they were thought unhealthy. In the 1420s Bradbourne was owned by the Ashe family who rebuilt much of the house and incorporated their coat of arms in several of the windows<sup>92</sup>.

About 1410, a miller from Bradbourne, John Durbarre and William de Retherhythe (Riverhead) were arraigned as chief participants in a poaching expedition. They assembled, "with many other persons armed in warlike manner and entered the Archbishop's park at Otford . . . in the middle of the night and broke the pales and, with their dogs, chased and killed and took away twelve deer and attacked John Russhehawe, parker of the Park, and his servants and wounded the said Russhehawe in the throat so that he barely escaped with his life and is still in danger and neither he, nor any in his name, dare guard the park for fear of the said

Retherhythe and Durbarre". The two men were said to have been common breakers of parks for seven years but what happened to them is not known.<sup>93</sup>

## John Isley of Sundridge

John Isley of Sundridge, in 1472 one of the MPs for Kent, came into possession of Bradbourne sometime before 1493 when, in his will, he left "the Manor of Bradbourne and Tymberden with the mill and lands in Sevenoaks" to Edward, his second son. Tymberden is northwest of Sevenoaks, near Shoreham. Edward never married and, when he died in 1528, Sir Henry Isley, knight, owed him £10, the rent for Bradbourne and Tymberden for two years. Although Henry had rented the estate for at least two years, John left "all his lands in Kent" to his nephew, Anthony Isley, possibly one of Henry's younger brothers.

## Tudor Times

At sometime before 1540 Henry Isley had taken over possession of Bradbourne since on 20th November 1540 Henry VIII took it and Tymberden in exchange for the manor of Brasted (a village about three miles west of Sevenoaks) plus £716 7s

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93 Early Chancery Proceedings, iv, 177 (no date); quoted by Ward, p.80

11d, presumably the difference in price between the two estates<sup>94</sup>. Bradbourne remained with the Crown until the beginning of Elizabeth's reign when it was bought by Ralph Bosville whose story will be told later.

# Chapter 2

## The Fifteenth Century

The fifteenth century saw the founding of Sevenoaks School and the continuous growth of the town with rebellion against Henry VI impinging on the locality in the middle of the century.

### James Fiennes, Lord Saye and Sele

73

Before the middle of the fifteenth century James Fiennes had become the owner of the much enlarged Knole estate.

### The School

75

In 1418 William Sevenoke, a citizen of London and a senior member of the Grocers Company, who had been rescued as an orphan by some citizens of Sevenoaks, set up a school in a house he owned in the town. It was one of the earliest Free Schools in Kent and shows the town's connections with the learned and rich over thirty years before the Archbishops came to Knole.

## Cade's Rebellion

78

As a result of Henry VI's wars with France, taxes had to be raised opposition to which led to a rebellion led by Jack Cade. One of the targets of the rebels was James Fiennes, Lord Saye and Sele, who, at this time owned Knole and the Battle of Solefields in Sevenoaks was a victory for the rebels. They did not, however, have the resources and leadership required to carry out a longer campaign.

## "The Lord's Great House at Sevenoaks"

83

James Fiennes having been murdered by the rebels, Knole passed to his son William who sold it, in 1456, to Thomas Bouchier, Archbishop of Canterbury who continued to enlarge the estate and carried out a considerable amount of building work.

## The Town in the Fifteenth Century

90

By the middle of the fifteenth century, Sevenoaks was a small town with butchers' and fishmongers' shops in the market place and perhaps a hundred and fifty houses and five hundred inhabitants.

## Buying and Selling Land

98

From at least the beginning of the fifteenth century, there were a large number of people in Sevenoaks buying and selling land, often in very small parcels

## Shops in the Market Place

102

Owners of shops in Sevenoaks Market did not always live in Sevenoaks. The oldest surviving building in the town dates from between 1450 and 1530 and is in the Shambles

## Sevenoaks and London

104

From the earliest times Sevenoaks had supplied fish and corn to London and, by the fifteenth century, there were men of Sevenoaks who were important citizens of London



# James Fiennes, Lord Saye and Sele

The enlargement of the Knole estate continued under Thomas Langley, the Bishop of Durham and his heirs, the bishop probably having bought it as a family investment. In 1429 the manor practically doubled in size when an estate of five messuages and 1,500 acres were received by fine<sup>95</sup> which also conveyed the homage and services of fifty named tenants, all belonging to Sevenoaks<sup>96</sup>. In 1444 Knole was owned by Henry Langley who passed it to Ralph Legh, esquire whose wife was Henry VI's daughter, Elizabeth. Sometime before 1450, the estate was owned by James Fiennes, Lord Saye and Sele who added to it by acquiring Panthurst and Joces.

Fiennes was Constable of Dover Castle, Warden of the Cinque Ports, Lord Chamberlain and one of Henry VI's council. In 1450 he was appointed Lord Treasurer but this was, during Cade's rebellion when he was also Lord Lieutenant of Kent, to be the cause of his downfall as we shall see later.

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95 a method of evading restrictions when transferring land, as described above

96 du Boulay, p.7 who gives the names of the feoffees but not of the tenants whom he says are not "at the moment identifiable with any part of the settlement"

## The Estate of Joces

Joces as a placename soon disappeared; it could have been an early name for what later became Panthurst or just a part of it. In 1326, John Joce of Bradbourne had granted his father's land in Sevenoaks to William Moraunt and John of Filston, both important tenants of the manor of Otford. After William Moraunt and his son, the estate of Joces passed in turn to Thomas Pantier and William Sevenoke, the founder of Sevenoaks School, who may have held it as security for a loan<sup>97</sup>. It was later owned by Reginald Peckham, esquire, of Wrotham who sold it to Fiennes in 1447. Peckham was a member of a well-to-do Kentish family but this did not save him from being harassed for in 1448 he was forced, under threat of death, to make over to Fiennes a large estate at Seal<sup>98</sup>. Not content with getting the land by extortion, Fiennes proceeded to demand double rents from his tenants in Seal and Kemsing<sup>99</sup>

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97 Lambeth, Cart. Misc., v.138, quoted by Ward, p.44

98 du Boulay, pp.7-8

99 Rayner, p.41

# The School

In 1418 William Sevenoke, a citizen of London and a senior member of the Grocers Company, set up a school in a house he owned in Sevenoaks and, fourteen years later, he endowed it in his will of 1432. The background to this endowment is described, graphically, by Lambarde<sup>100</sup>: "About the latter end of the reign of King Edward the third, there was found (lying in the street at Sennocke) a poor child whose parents were unknown and he (for the same cause) named after the place he was taken up, William Sennocke". Edward III died in 1377; although Lambarde writes of William Sennocke, the name is given as "Sevenoke" in contemporary records of his career in London.

Lambarde continues: "This orphan was, by the help of some charitable persons, brought up and nurtured in such wise that, being made an apprentice to a grocer in London, he arose by degrees (in course of time) to be Mayor and chief magistrate of that City. At which time, calling to his mind, the goodness of Almighty God and the favour of the townsmen extended towards him, he determined to make an everlasting monument of his thankful mind for the same.

"And therefore, of his own charge, built both a hospital for relief of the poor and a Free School for the education of youth within this town, endowing the one and the

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100 Lambarde, p.469; Edward III died in 1377

other with competent yearly living (as the days then suffered) towards their sustenance and maintenance." A book of verse published in 1592<sup>101</sup> inverted the name derivation, having William say: "By testament in Kent I built a town and briefly called it Sevenoaks from my name. A free school to sweet learning, to renown, I placed for those that played at honour's game".

## The Establishment of the School

William Sevenoke initially established the school in 1418 in his own house endowing it, in his will of 1432, with property which he owned in Petty Wales, just to the west of the Tower of London. An unusual provision was that the master, although he was to be a bachelor of arts and competent in the science of grammar, was "by no means (to be) in holy orders". Sevenoke made an endowment of approximately £200 for the wages of the master and the care of the school and stipulated that all the boys from the neighbourhood who presented themselves for instruction should be taught without any fees being required<sup>102</sup>. Usually, in what were called "Free Grammar Schools" it was only instruction in Latin and Greek which was free; for other subjects such as English, writing and

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101 Richard Johnson; The Nine Worthies of London; quoted by Dunlop, p. 73

102 Jordan, pp. 68-69

arithmetic, a small fee was charged by the master<sup>103</sup>. In his will William also endowed the almshouses of Sevenoaks which were to house twenty poor men and women.

From the year starting at the end of 1418, the time when he set up the School in Sevenoaks, William Sevenoke was Alderman for the Tower Ward of the City and Mayor of London. Whatever the provenance of the details related by Lambarde and later writers, his coat of arms shows his connection with Sevenoaks. His seven golden acorns on a blue field are still used, by Sevenoaks School, as "Founders Arms"<sup>104</sup>.

## Early Gifts to the School

Sevenoaks School was one of the earliest Free Schools in Kent and shows the town's connections with the learned and rich over thirty years before the Archbishops came to Knole. Nothing more is known of the school until 1489 when the Master was Thomas Hales. Since it had survived for over fifty years, there must have been local landowners, gentry and merchants prepared to give it their support. The earliest recorded gift to the school was of fifteen acres of land

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103 Dunlop, p.74; Scragg p.22; Frank W. Jessop, A History of Kent, p.81.

104 Dunlop, p.74

lying east of Hollybush Lane presented by William Pett of Riverhill and others in 1510. Richard Pett who died in 1513 gave part of his land at Quaker's Hall to the school prior to his death<sup>105</sup>. The land presented by the Petts, together with some from other yeomen, had an estimated value of £100 and was to be used for the joint support of the school and an almshouse<sup>106</sup>. The Pett family continued to be interested in the school until at least the end of the sixteenth century and their contributions are described later.

## Cade's Rebellion

Whereas under Henry V (1413 to 1421) war with France had been successful, by the reign of Henry VI the French were in the ascendancy. When his father died, Henry VI was only nine months old and it was 1445 before he began his reign in person. The English armies had been defeated numerous times during the Protectorship of the Duke of Bedford and they were no more successful under Henry.

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<sup>105</sup> Ward, p.282

<sup>106</sup> Jordan, p.69

William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk was accused of selling Anjou and Maine to France and of being the cause of the loss of Normandy and Picardy. He was Henry VI's "fall guy", banished by the king in hope of appeasing the populace, but the ship carrying him to his exile was intercepted and he was "captured by Kentish ships and, after a mock trial by sailors on the beach at Dover, had his head knocked off on the gunwale of a boat"<sup>107</sup>. For this, Fiennes "threatened vengeance on the common people of the county"<sup>108</sup>.

As a result of the war, taxes had to be raised. Opposition to these taxes produced the "Complaint of the Commons of Kent", fifteen items based on real hardships, one of which was "a demand of the truth of rumours that Kent was to be turned into a deer forest as punishment" for the killing of Suffolk.

The refusal of this Complaint led to the assembly at Blackheath (near Greenwich), on 1st June 1450, of about twenty thousand men under the command of Jack Cade, not "his mischievous many", as they were described by Lambard over a hundred years later, but an organised military force drawn from established families who saw Fiennes, who was Lord Treasurer, as being particularly responsible for the heavy taxes.

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107 Abell, p.124

108 Dunlop, p.76

## The Battle of Solefields

When the king's forces approached, Cade's men retired towards Knole, possibly intending to attack it as the seat of Fiennes. According to Stow, when the king's force arrived at Blackheath "the said Kentish men had fled the night before his coming into the wood country near unto Sevenoaks whereupon the King returned again to London and sent Sir Humphrey Stafford with William Stafford, Esq., his kinsman, and other gentlemen to follow the Kentish men who, finding them at Sevenoaks, set upon the rebels and fought with them for a long time but, in the end, both the Staffords were slain with many of their people"<sup>109</sup>.

Not what was expected when you set out against the "filth and scum of Kent"<sup>110</sup>. This defeat, the Battle of Solefields, so frightened the royal party that they retreated to Kenilworth. Solefields, the traditional site of the battle, is south of the church on the southern edge of the town.

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<sup>109</sup> Stow quoted by Dunlop, p.76

<sup>110</sup> Stafford, according to William Shakespeare



## Another Advance on London

The Kentish men again advanced on London and on the night of 5th July when they were in Southwark "hearing the bridge to be kept and manned ran with great haste to open the passage where between both parties was a fierce and cruel encounter. Matthew Gough, more expert in martial feats than the other captains of the city, perceiving the Kentish men better to stand to their tackling than his imagination expected, advised his company no further to proceed towards Southwark till the day appeared, to the intent that the citizens hearing where the place of jeopardy rested, might secure their enemies and relieve their friends and companions. But this counsel came to small effect for the multitude of the rebels drove the citizens from the wooden piles at the bridge fort to the drawbridge and began to set fire" to the houses.

"Alas! What sorrow it was to behold that miserable chance! For some, desiring to eschew the fire, leapt on his enemy's weapon, and so died; fearful women with children in their arms, amazed and appalled, leapt into the river; others, doubting how to save themselves between fire, water and sword, were in their houses suffocated and smouldered; yet the captains, nothing regarding these chances, fought on this drawbridge all the night valiantly but, in conclusion, the rebels got the drawbridge and slew John Sutton, alderman, and Robert Heysand, a hardy citizen, with many others . . . "

“This hard and sore conflict endured on the bridge until 9 o'clock in the morning in doubtful chance and fortune's balance: for some time the Londoners were beat back to the piles at St. Magnus Corner and, suddenly again, the rebels were repulsed and driven back to the piles in Southwark so that, both parties being faint, weary and fatigued, agreed to desist from fight and to leave battle to the next day on condition that neither Londoners should pass into Southwark nor the Kentish men into London.”<sup>111</sup>.

## Fiennes Executed

In the meantime, however, it seems that some of the Kentish contingent had crossed the Thames, gained entry into the city of London and managed to get Fiennes out of the Tower where he had taken refuge. “They hurried him to the standard in Cheapside where they cut off his head and carried it on a pole before his naked body which was drawn, at a horse's tail, into Southwark and there hanged and quartered”<sup>112</sup>. At this stage, Cade entered into negotiations and his men were offered a free pardon which was accepted and the men returned home. Cade and a few followers still persisted and he went to Dartford, Rochester and

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111 The chronicler Hall quoted by Abell, p.125

112 Hasted, p.64

then, as his men started to quarrel amongst themselves, he went inland and was killed a few days later, probably at Heathfield in Sussex.

## "The Lord's Great House at Sevenoaks"

After the murder of Lord Saye and Sele by the rebels, Knole passed to his son and heir, William. Panthurst, however, was left to his widow, Emmelina, since, in the autumn of 1450 there was a private arbitration concerning Panthurst between Emmelina and John and Thomas Barton (or Boteler). The Bartons, father and son, who were described as yeomen of London and Farnborough (Kent) respectively, claimed the estate by inheritance. It was awarded to the Bartons with 10 marks damages and in 1454 granted wholly, by John Barton, to his son as "the tenement in Sevenoaks inherited from Panteris gentlemen"<sup>113</sup>.

William, now Lord Saye and Sele, was involved in the Wars of the Roses and in 1456, in need of funds, he sold the house and lands of Knole to Thomas Bouchier, Archbishop of Canterbury, for £266 13s 4d. This was twice what Bishop Langley had paid some thirty years earlier but, in that time, the manor had more than doubled in size.

## The Manor House is Extended

Bourchier bought Knole as a private individual and he lived there for thirty years adding extensively to the buildings, converting the small stone manor house into something more suitable for an archbishop. This included building a timber-framed court with a stone gate-house which has survived, the court albeit completely faced with stone. The gatehouse includes slots through which boiling oil could be poured onto attackers but these were to give an impression of strength and longevity rather than serve a useful purpose<sup>114</sup>.

Otherwise, little direct evidence remains of what he did, either in the buildings or paper records although some accounts have survived at Lambeth Palace:

In 1467 the costs and expenses incurred on repairing the manor of Knole included "For carriage of thirty loads of stone for the new tower, 7d load = 16/9. Carriage of six loads of timber at 7d = 3/6. Carriage of one other of lead from London to Knole 3/4."<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Rayner, p.45

<sup>115</sup> 16s 9d (£0.84), 3s 6d (£0.175) and 1s 4d (£.17) respectively

And in 1468 "One labourer for 6 days work in the great chamber and new solar 2/- . Making 700 lathes to the new tower, 14d. One labourer 4½ days in the old kitchen 4d"<sup>116</sup>.

The most direct route connecting Knole and the centre of the town was via Webbs Alley. Although the way was steep it was the one used most frequently and, on the slopes below Knole, there was a man-made pond with a ramp into the water. This may have been used to refresh horses on the journey to the house and, in dry weather, to swell up the timber wagon wheels to secure them in their iron rims.<sup>117</sup>

## The Trustees of the Estate

In 1465 a panel of very powerful trustees was set up to receive pieces of land sold by local men for the enlargement of the Knole estate. These included:

- master John Stokes, archbishop's Auditor of Causes of whom Sir John Fastolf wrote in 1456 advising men to keep on friendly terms with such a man,
- master Robert Kirkham, keeper of the Rolls of Chancery,
- John Clerk, a Baron of the Exchequer,

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<sup>116</sup> quoted by Sackville-West, p.21; 6 days work for 24d, 4d (less than 2p) per day seems about standard for the time but the labourer working in the kitchen was paid less than a quarter of this.

<sup>117</sup> Rayner, p.46

- Sir William Tyrrell, knight, steward of the archbishop's household
  - and a group of the archbishop's gentlemen *familiars*<sup>118</sup>.
- If Reginald Peckham could be "persuaded" to sell by threats from Lord Saye and Sele, what hope of bargaining (or even refusing to sell) would the local men have had if they owned land which the archbishop wanted to add to his estate?

## Archbishops at Knole

In 1481 J. Judde was appointed Steward of Knole for life, being paid 3d a day with the authority to live in Knole himself or appoint a deputy<sup>119</sup>. There is a memorandum in his accounts recording that "Hank Tyler is coming for tiling upon the bakehouse, the kitchen, the hall . . and mending of the Pastry and for daubing over the kitchen and the stables; for five days work taking 6d, total 2s 6d. . Item: for his child, 5 days to serve him 2d a day. Total 10d. Item for 100 lathes, 10d. Item for 200 nails 2d." The Pastry was part of the kitchen; "daubing" would have been plastering<sup>120</sup>.

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118 du Boulay, p.8

119 Register 19, Chapter House Library, Canterbury, quoted by Ward, p.291

120 Ward, p.92 (spelling modernised)

An item for 1468-1469 calls Knole "the Lord's great house at Sevenoaks". The Archbishop at this time owned twelve palaces and houses in Kent and this description implies that the one in Sevenoaks was one of the larger and more important ones. Having such a house within the parish must have attracted people of all classes to the town: labourers and carters, masons and other craftsmen, servants to work in the house, tradesmen to provide food, clothing, furnishing for the house and its occupants, churchmen and courtiers attendant on the Archbishop. Bouchier also carried out work on the church of St. Nicholas and also probably built the original Old Market House<sup>121</sup>. This period of the town's expansion saw Sevenoaks become the centre of the area with villages such as Otford in the Darent valley becoming of less significance.

## The Late Fifteenth Century

In 1480 Bouchier presented Knole to the See of Canterbury and his successor as Archbishop, Cardinal Morton, continued the work on the house. Morton, who died at Knole in October 1500, was described by Hasted as "this great prelate who left behind him the character of having been born for the good of all England, of being greatly learned and honourable in his behaviour and who deserved so well

both of the church and commonwealth that the high honours and offices which were conferred on him were too small a recompense for his singular worth<sup>1122</sup>.

At this time the bailiff of Knole was Thomas Bone (or Boone) and his will, proved in 1487, shows him as a sheep-farmer who also bought and leased out property in various parts of west Kent<sup>123</sup>.

## The Early Sixteenth Century

In 1518, Cardinal Campeggio, the Papal Legate, made a slow progress through Kent accompanied by a large retinue of "bishops, lords, estates and gentlemen". On 27th July he was received by the Archbishop "in right honourable wise" at Otford where he stayed two nights. Two years later, Henry VIII and Katherine stayed at Otford on their way to the Field of the Cloth of Gold, the king being accompanied by 4,000 men and the queen an additional 1,000<sup>124</sup>. Given the large size of these retinues, it is likely that Knole was used to accommodate some of them and both Otford and Sevenoaks must have seen an unusual influx of visitors.

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122 Hasted, p.66

123 du Boulay, p.10; he was not "of Sevenoaks" and thus his will has not been transcribed

124 Dunlop, pp.88-89



Knole remained in the possession of the See of Canterbury until, in 1539, Cranmer "gave" it to Henry VIII. From then it was owned by various royal, aristocratic and ecclesiastical people until, in 1565, Queen Elizabeth gave it to Thomas Sackville who did not take up occupation until 1604. Thus from the mid-fifteenth century, Knole started to change from a sub-manor amongst many to a "great house" and this was another reason for the growth of Sevenoaks.

Knole manor, "the creation of a luxurious residential estate", was also profitable with enough accounts surviving to show that the cash paid to the lord's household treasury from the "manor" of Knole usually exceeded that from the manor of Sevenoaks. For the years 1491 to 1537, whilst there was considerable variation between the years, the average cash delivered annually from Knole to the archbishop was a little over £28 but that from Sevenoaks (as distinct from Knole) was only just over £21<sup>125</sup>.

# The Town in the Fifteenth Century

The account roll of Otford manor for 1403-4 shows how Sevenoaks was growing at the beginning of the fifteenth century. The roll notes the payment of nine new rents in the town with eight of these being small plots, "[obviously for shops and houses in the market place](#)". In the same year there were four new rents for plots for houses with gardens on "le Vyne" which is where the road north from Sevenoaks Town divides, the east fork going to Seal and the west one to St. Johns and Otford<sup>126</sup>.

## Robert Noreys, Woodward of Sevenoaks

One of these new plots was let to Robert Noreys, woodward of Sevenoaks, and Isabella, his wife (a woodward was an officer who guarded the woods). It had a 49 foot frontage on the Seal road extending to the High Street leading from the town of Sevenoaks to "La Spitale" (The Hospital). In the deeds of sale of small properties, roads were often used to indicate boundaries, for example: the road

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126 Collection of account- and court-rolls in Lambeth palace library, no. 839 quoted by Clarke and Stoyel; p.96 from which the next paragraph is also taken

from Sevenoaks to Otford or Tonbridge or Chipstead, or the road through the middle of Sevenoaks or from Riverhead to Whitley Wood<sup>127</sup>.

Timber was a valuable product for a number of the Sevenoaks manors and thus many of them would have needed the services of a woodward. In 1541 timber from Knole was used for the construction of the King's manor house at Dartford. In the 1460s and 1470s Edward IV instigated many building projects including the palace at Eltham and some of the beams in its ceilings may have come from the Sevenoaks area.

## A Small Market Town

By the middle of the fifteenth century, Sevenoaks was a small town with perhaps a hundred and fifty houses and five hundred inhabitants<sup>128</sup>. In general, the economy of the Sevenoaks area appears to have been based on mixed farming and cloth-making but with a number of landlords, great and small, making a living from residential property.

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<sup>127</sup> du Boulay, p.3

<sup>128</sup> Brian Scragg; Sevenoaks School, A History; Bath 1993, p.26

Considerable building was going on in the town and the church had had four windows built in its north wall in the "Decorated" style. Each of the sub-manors provided building materials depending on its own particular resources: timber from Brittain's for the shops, thatch from Seal and tiles from Longford in Dunton Green. There was also considerable interchange of materials such as sand from Sevenoaks to Panthurst and wooden shingles from Panthurst to Knole<sup>129</sup>.

A medieval market cross is known from 1417; this was believed to have given divine protection to bargains struck under it. A butcher's shop was described, in the same year as "[lying between the highway from Sevenoaks church to Otford on the east and a way leading through the midst of the market place on the west](#)"<sup>130</sup>. This shop, then described as in the Butchers' Shambles, was bought at the end of the sixteenth century by John Blome, a rich mercer, who bought a considerable amount of property in Sevenoaks.

The Butcher's Shambles was described, in 1417, as lying between the highway from Sevenoaks Church to Otford (the present High Street) on the east and a way leading through the midst of the market place on the west<sup>131</sup>;

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129 du Boulay, p.8

130 Ward, p.193

131 Ward, p.193

The present day Shambles is in the same position as described in 1417 with its northern end by the market hall, the highway from Sevenoaks church to Otford is the High Street and the way on the west the London Road. The oldest surviving building in the town, dated to between 1450 and 1530, is in the Shambles. It was originally detached with a jettied front onto the Shambles and may have been built as a two-storey, unheated shop with its first floor open to its crown-post roof<sup>132</sup>.

## Plots in the Market

A number of plots which were probably first granted about 1440 appear in the 1492 accounts for the Bailiwick of Otford<sup>133</sup>. In 1440 they would have been just standings or stalls being replaced with buildings at a later date. One of these which measured only six feet on its northern boundary and was mentioned in 1437 in the Court Roll of 16 Henry VI when it had been occupied by John Pollesholt, poulterer. In 1492, John Carpent was paying a rent of two pence for it.

These accounts also record that William Fraunces was paying two pence "for one parcel of land lying in the Market of Sevenoaks, late Richard Lucas's" which had

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<sup>132</sup> Rayner, pp. 36-37

<sup>133</sup> Knocker, p.57

been described in the Court Roll for 1445. John Wybourne was paying one halfpenny for "a parcel of land containing in length seven feet and in breadth two feet, lying in the Market of Sevenoaks next the shop of John Barnard".

Other entries in the Bailiwick accounts include six shillings and eightpence due "for shops and shambles in the Market of Sevenoaks" and thirteen shillings received "for the farm of thirteen shops in the Market of Sevenoaks" rented out to various people.

## **Shops and Shambles**

In 1467 there were nine butchers' and four fishmongers' shops in the market-place which shows that there must have been a considerable local demand since the archbishop's household was supplied directly.

The shambles were small premises erected by the town for the sale of fish and meat and let out to townsmen or foreigners only on market days. They were often in the centre of the market place adjoining the market house<sup>134</sup> and this is the case in Sevenoaks where the Shambles is just to the south of the market place and where still, in the year 2001, there is one butcher's shop.

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134 Thirsk, p.484

Shops were more permanent structures often burgage tenements, that is, rented out by the year and opened each day. They usually had a wooden pentice or lean-to attached to the shop front and this could extend several feet into the street. Burgage tenants in most towns also claimed the right to erect stalls or sheep pens in front of their shops as far as the channel in the centre of the street. The presence of shops did not necessarily imply a market; Westerham, a few miles west of Sevenoaks had a row of mercers' and grocers' shops many years before it had a market<sup>135</sup>.

## Inns and Frontages for Merchants

The market cross may have stood where the present market hall now stands although an alternative location is near the present Chequers Inn to the south of the market hall. This is a sixteenth or early seventeenth century timber-framed building, possibly built on the site of an earlier structure. Its name could refer to the chequered cloth placed on the table where market dues were paid<sup>136</sup>.

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135 Thirsk, p.484

136 Rayner, p.36

Another inn was the “New Inn” purchased in 1481 by Bouchier. This stood opposite the church, by the entrance to Knole. From its name, there had been an inn in Sevenoaks before 1481.

Once the market was established, the road from the church and the two diverging roads would have provided valuable frontages to the merchants and other wealthy men; each "plot would have been narrow in frontage, though deep. The street would be as long as it needed to be to give each man his opening in trade"<sup>137</sup>.

## Fairs in Sevenoaks

The accounts of 1492 also include seven shillings received for "the issues of the Fair held" at Sevenoaks "on the Feast of St. Nicholas the Bishop"<sup>138</sup> which was 6th December; Sevenoaks also had a summer fair on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, 29th June<sup>139</sup>.

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<sup>137</sup> Platt, p.30

<sup>138</sup> these details from the Bailiwick accounts are taken from Klocker, p.57

<sup>139</sup> Clarke & Stoyel, p.70



## More Development

In addition to the building work carried out at Knole, Archbishops Bouchier and Morton were also responsible for the enlarging of the church and the Old Market House was probably built by one of them; in 1486 Morton owned thirteen shops in the market-place<sup>140</sup>. Other wealthy citizens of the town were also contributing to the church one of whom was William Potkin who died in 1499. A monument was erected in the church for William and his wife, Alexandra, who died in 1501. In 1937 what remained of this was a "rough, erect stone on the north side of the north pier of the chancel arch with deep sockets suggesting brass effigies"<sup>141</sup>.

Substantial houses were built around the market place and Sevenoaks was now an important stopping point on the road between Rye and London. Sometime during the reign of Henry VIII, James Willford, a rippier of Rye, secured an annuity charged upon the Saracen's Head in Friday Street in London for the perpetual repair of the highway between Riverhill in Kent and Northiam in Sussex<sup>142</sup> (a distance of about 26 miles). This shows that, by that time, Riverhill was the main route up the sandstone ridge.

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140 du Boulay, p.10

141 Sevenoaks Parish Church Burials

142 Dunlop, p.89

This annuity is one indication of how important London was to the growth of towns such as Sevenoaks. The Saracen's Head was owned by the Merchant Taylors' Company but many of the Companies of the City of London included men who had connections with the various towns of Kent. Some of these were men who had gone to London from the locality and, once established, kept their family ties; others were men who, having become wealthy from trade, wanted to become "country gentlemen".

## Buying and Selling Land

In addition to partible inheritance associated with the custom of gavelkind, land so held could be sold by its owner without there being any restrictions on the sale. From the number of deeds and indentures which have survived from the fifteenth century onwards<sup>143</sup>, there were a large number of people selling and buying land in the Sevenoaks area. These included women (usually widows), yeomen and artisans.

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**143** a large number of these were summarised by Gordon Ward (see his notebooks, particularly Sevenoaks VI) but the originals of many are in CKS archives, see, for example, U1000/7 T46

Because of the way which land was sold in small parcels, some manors could have land in a large number of different parishes, one example being the manor of Rumshed in the south-east of the parish of Sevenoaks but with land in Seal, Tonbridge and Leigh as well as Sevenoaks.

The following land deals in Riverhead are just some of those for which details have survived; many of these involved the Hawkyn family.

## **The Hawkyn Family**

The Hawkyn family was large and prosperous. Besides John Hawkyn, fuller, who granted land to a number of people in 1471, there was John Hawkyn, butcher, whose son, John Hawkyn of Riverhead sold some land to a man from Chipsted in 1490. At some stage, a John Hawkyn had moved to London since the John Hawken of St. Olave, near London, gentleman, who owned land in Riverhead very likely came from the same family. This John, in 1503, was in a position to appoint an attorney to "[deliver to Robert Johnson of Riverhead Bayleys Field at Riverhead](#)".

## Land Deals

In 1471, John Hawkyn of Riverhead, fuller, granted land he held in Sevenoaks and Chevening to John Bery, Walter Bery, Thomas Fremlyn and Richard Claygate. Twelve years later, Walter Bery of Riverhead granted a messuage and garden (which he had possibly bought from Hawkyn) to Richard Claygate. In 1491, Richard Claygate of Riverhead sold a house with two gardens to William Boby, Richard Pett and John Hawke (Hawkyn?).

William Boby died sometime before 1512 since, in that year, Richard Pett and John Hawke made arrangements, by means of an enfeoffment, by which William's son and heir, Thomas, could inherit a messuage called Hoggeshawe. 1512 was possibly the year in which Thomas came of age and, almost immediately after receiving the property, he sold it to Robert Hunt and John Wymble.

William Boby had probably died a considerable time before 1512 since his widow, Alice, subsequently married Thomas Holway who himself died in 1512. This was the Thomas Holway whose will has survived. Alice had inherited a messuage and two gardens from her first husband and this, after Thomas's death, she sold to Robert Hunt and John Wymble.

In 1513, John Wymble, granted to William Devenshire (Devynschyer) his rights and title to a messuage and two gardens in Riverhead and a few months later

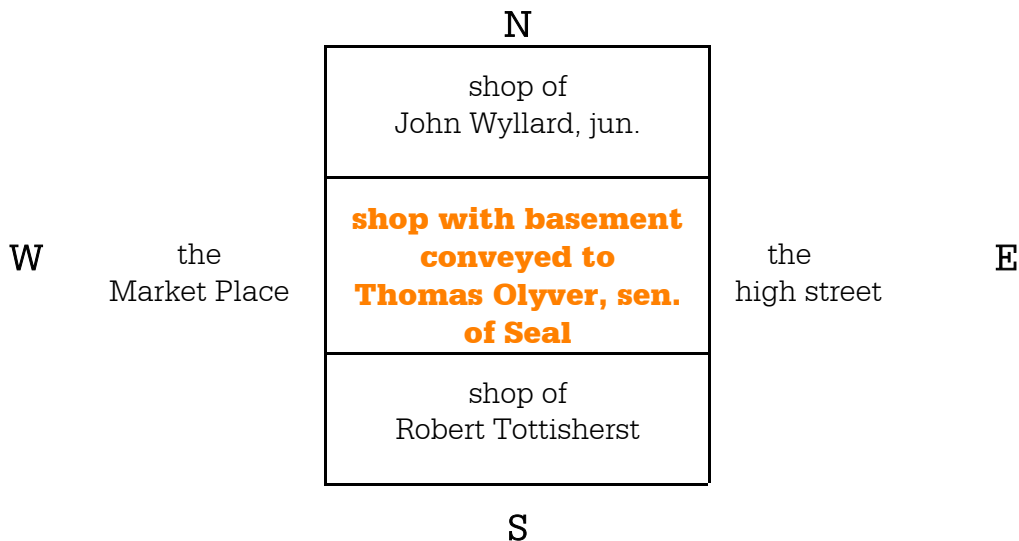
Richard Hunt acknowledged receipt, from William Devenshire, of the amount outstanding for the "bargain and sale of one cottage and garden at Riverhead in Sevenoaks".

## Gardens

Many of these deeds mention gardens but without detailing the amount of land attached to the dwellings; gardens could have been used for the growing of corn or vegetables such as beans and onions. For a husbandman to be self-sufficient and live above the subsistence level, he needed to have about 20 acres. On this he would have been able to grow just over 150 bushels each of oats, barley and wheat with most of the wheat being sold to give him money to pay the rent. The oats and barley would have provided the family with bread and ale.<sup>144</sup>

## **Shops in the Market Place**

An early transaction concerning a shop in the market place has survived with both seller and purchaser living in Seal<sup>145</sup>. On 20th June 1502, John Ffyllpott (or Phillpott), yeoman, conveyed to Thomas Olyver, senior, all his right in a shop with a basement situated in the market place of Sevenoaks:



It looks as if Robert Tottisherst's shop (he mentioned two shops in the market place in his will of 1512) stayed in the family for well over thirty years. In 1559, the shop in the "[Flesh Shambles](#)" to the south of the shop "[of Robert Hunt, late Robert Tottishert's](#)" was sold to William Wymble, alias Hall, butcher "[of Sevenoaks Town](#)". This alias continued at least until 1630 when the will of William Wimble,

alias Hall, was written. This Robert Hunt could have been the son or grandson of the Robert Hunt who bought the messuage in Riverhead in 1512.

## Sevenoaks and London

Sevenoaks had been in regular contact with London from the times of its earliest development with fish and corn being transported up to London. On the return journey the carriers could have brought some of the luxury goods available in the capital since there were rich gentlemen living in the town and the local villages. For William Sevenoke to be apprenticed to a grocer in London, there must have been contact between the town and the city on a personal basis. By the end of the century, men could be following a career in London, either at court, as lawyers or as merchants whilst having a house in the Sevenoaks neighbourhood where they lived for part of their year.

Sir John de Pulteny, four times Mayor of London, built a house with a large stone hall for himself - Penshurst Place - in the 1330s<sup>146</sup>.



## Sir William Hampton of Plaxtol

Another early example of a man who lived locally yet was intimately connected with London is Sir William Hampton of Plaxtol (about 5 miles east of Sevenoaks) who was an alderman of the City of London from 1462 to 1482. He had a town house in the City where he and his wife, Cristina, would have lived for part of the year.

Sir William and Cristina have been drawn by Yvonne Young as they might have appeared in the 1480s from details given in contemporary documents. Sir William, who was a member of the Pouch Makers Guild with interests in a local tannery from which he could have obtained the leather for his pouches, was very rich so that he could afford to keep up with current fashions in dress. In the drawing, he is shown wearing a cloak which falls in vertical pleats from his shoulders and his shoes, whilst pointed, were kept within limits - as became an alderman - compared with the 18 inch points worn by some of the men of fashion<sup>147</sup>.



*Sir William Hampton and Cristina – 1485*

# Chapter 3

## Early Wills & the Importance of the Church

At least thirteen wills have survived from before 1520 the earliest being that of William Sevenoke, the founder of Sevenoaks School, written in 1432. Most of those from before 1510 were written in Latin and they have not been investigated for this study; two although listed in the Indexes of Wills Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury produced by the British Record Society<sup>148</sup> could not be found..

### "Our Lady of Pity"

110

Many testators of the fifteenth and early sixteenth century left money for the burning of candles in front of images in the church.

### The Hospital & Chapel of St. John

111

This small foundation flourished in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

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<sup>148</sup> they may not have been found because the microfilms are difficult to read

## Wills from the 1510s

112

Five wills dating from the 15010s have been investigated; four of these were probably written by the vicar.

## Preambles of Wills

116

After the date and name there was generally a section in which the testators bequeathed their soul to God and gave their wishes regarding concerning burial; this is called the preamble.

## Prayers and the Care of the Soul

118

Before the Reformation many testators asked for masses and obits to be said for the benefit of their souls and those of their friends and relatives and even “of all christian souls”.

## Bequests to the Church & Good Works

121

Many testators left money to the church, sometimes specifying how the money was to be used. On occasion money was left to parishes other than the one in which the testator lived.

## The Introduction of the Poor-Box

124

Bequests to the poor came to be modified in the 1530s since beggars and vagabonds wandering from parish to parish in the hopes that alms were being distributed at a funeral were becoming a nuisance.

## Memorials

126

Many of the memorials placed in the church did not survive the Reformation but two, from the early sixteenth century were recorded in 1631.

## The Celebration of Mass

127

Before the Reformation, everyone was both legally and religiously obliged to attend the weekly mass.

## Feast Days and Fast Days

128

The Christian year comprised a series of festivals each preceded by a period of abstinence. For those not living in abject poverty, the year was made up of a sequence of fasts and feasts.

# “Our Lady of Pity”

John Beal, in his will of 1473, mentions "[our lady of Pity](#)" and David Vaphopkyn the rood<sup>149</sup>. Every church had at least a simple image of Our Lady but, in many churches there was also Our Lady of Pity, the one in Charing being described as "[the Light of the Pity and Compassion which has the Blessed Virgin at her son's Passion and Burial](#)". In the Deanery of Shoreham, as well as at Sevenoaks, there were such figures in the churches of Hunton, Otford, Penshurst and East Peckham<sup>150</sup>. There would have been a candle kept burning constantly in front of the image and some churches, at least by the 1530s, had as many as thirteen such votive lights burning on the altar, in the rood loft and before the images of saints<sup>151</sup>.

Duncan<sup>152</sup> mentions a John Harrison who in 1525 left a "[cow to find light to burn before the image of our lady in our lady's chancel in Sevenoaks for evermore](#)". If the profit from the cow was to provide the money, what happened when the cow came to the end of her useful life. Was it expected that the cow would produce a

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149 Duncan, p.148

150 Duncan, Vol. 23, p.136 and 1906, p.vii

151 Hutton, p. 117 who stresses that many of the decorations and activities outlawed by the various Reformations had been present for only a generation, the parish religion in 1530 being an intensely dynamic and rapidly developing phenomenon

152 Duncan, p. 148, who gives the reference Roch. viii 10

calf so that the church continued to receive the profit? Perhaps the cow was to be sold and the money invested so that the light could burn for "evermore".

## The Hospital & Chapel of St. John

Thomas Mugworthy was vicar of Sevenoaks and, in his short Latin will of 1503 he left 20s for reparations to the church and money to the Hospital and Chapel of St. John at Greatness<sup>153</sup>. Situated about a mile north of Sevenoaks where the road to Otford crossed the east-west road, this foundation was very poor, at least until the fourteenth century.

In 1338 it was left £5 by Peter of Crowland but in 1354 it received a much larger endowment from Cecilia, widow of Gamaliel atte Watere. This consisted of three houses and more than a hundred acres of land, meadow and wood the income from which was to be used to support the hospital and for the saying of prayers for the king, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the widow herself, her late husband, her father and brothers, mother and sisters and for all other benefactors and also for the souls of Sibilla and William of Sepham from whom Cecilia had purchased the land.

At that time the Hospital had a Master - Sir Roger Avered - who was to see that this bequest was carried out as Cecilia had specified<sup>154</sup>. The title of "Sir" given to the Master probably indicated that he was a priest.

## Wills from the 1510s

The group of five wills from the 1510s are interesting as wills written before the Reformation:

Clemens Broke (or Brook)	widow	8th September	1510
Peter Newman		14th September	1510
Thomas Holway		31st July	1512
Robert Tottisherst	gent.	12th December	1512
Richard Pette		5th June	1513

Clemens Broke is the only one referred to directly as "of Sevenoaks"; Richard Pette's interests in Sevenoaks are obvious but the connection of the others is gained from where they were to be buried and their bequests to the church and the poor.

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154 Cal. Patent Rolls, ccviii, 46 and Patent Rolls, 28 Edw. III., pt.1, m.21, quoted by Ward, p.14



Robert Tottisherst and Thomas Holway wished to be buried within the church, Robert "in Saint Peter's chancel" and Thomas beside his wife and children. The other three were to be buried in the churchyard.

If, as suggested in Appendix 6, the vicar Edward Repe wrote four of these wills, that is all but Thomas Holway's, the differences and similarities in phraseology are interesting. The will of Robert Tottisherst, gent., is much longer than the others and shows him to be a man with definite opinions of his own but deciding how much of the difference between the other three wills was due to testator preference and how much to the fact that the scriptor did not have a word-processing system turning out standard phrases is difficult to assess.

All five testators were "whole in mind" and, with little variation, bequeathed their souls to "Almighty god, to our blessed lady saint Mary and to all the holy company of heaven". See Appendix 5 for details of these religious preambles. Thomas Holway, whose will was not written by Edward Repe, describes almighty god as "father of heaven".

## Thomas Holway

Thomas Holway owned a considerable amount of land with a bakehouse in Sevenoaks which was rented out and "lands, tenements, pasture, meadows, woods, underwoods, rents and service" in Westerham and Brasted. These lands

were left to John Potter who, during the life of Alice, Thomas's wife, was to pay her all the revenues from a particular tenement. Thomas's tenements in Sevenoaks were to be sold for the best value and the proceeds used to pay some small legacies:

- £6 13s 4d to his son John and £3 6s 8d to his son Sir Thomas Holway; this is the only time his sons are mentioned
- £3 6s 8d to "the reparations and mending of a causeway" running to the church gate
- £13 6s 8d for a priest to say mass for two years
- 13s 4d to Alice, his wife, and 6s 8d each to two other women.
- 4d (1.6p) to each of his godchildren.

Given the small amounts left to his wife and sons, Thomas may have made earlier arrangements for their welfare and Alice was to have a house with a garden for two years after his death but no mention of where she was to go then. In his will, Thomas's main concern seems to have been the church and his "soul's health" with the rest of the money coming from his lands and tenements was to be distributed for this purpose. In addition the residue of his lands and goods was to be disposed for his "soul and all christian souls in such alms, deeds and charitable works" as his executor should think best.

But was Thomas feeling guilty about something and thus more worried about his soul's health than might be expected? His will contains the proviso that "if it happen mine executor to be charged in the law with any manner of action or suit

concerning me, the forsaid Thomas Holway, testator, then I will mine executor defend the said action and suit according to the law with my forsaid lands and goods."

## Robert Tottisherst

Robert Tottisherst's bequests show him to have been a wealthy man; he lived at Blackhall Manor and owned land in Chevening, Otford and Meopham as well as Sevenoaks where he had two shops in the market place. Blackhall manor had been owned by the Tottishursts at least from fourteenth century with William de Totishurst appearing in the court rolls during the reigns of Edward III and Richard II. Until 1563, Blackhall manor was owned by Thomas Tottishurst who was a justice of the peace for the county<sup>155</sup> but it was then sold to Ralph Bosville.

Robert gives a long list of household items which Alice, his wife, was to inherit and these show how well equipped his house must have been. She was also to have twenty "mother sheep" and twenty loads of wood each year from his lands called Wyllinghurst<sup>156</sup> in Sevenoaks for which she had to pay for the felling and

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155 Hasted, p.86

156 Gordon Ward (p.247) identified Willinghurst, owned at the beginning of the sixteenth century by the Tottishersts, as being on the left hand side of the road going down from Sevenoaks to Riverhill from about the top of White Hart Hill to about opposite Park Place

carriage. Some of Robert's wealth must have come from his sheep since he left four men (perhaps his shepherds) one mother sheep each.

## Preambles of Wills

The structure and writing of a will is described in Appendix 4. After the date and name of the person whose will was being written, there was generally a section bequeathing their soul and giving their wishes concerning burial. This was an important part of the will often introduced with the phrase "First and principally" or even, as Richard Besbeeck put it, much later, in 1633 "First and above all things".

This preamble can be used to gain information on a person's beliefs although, in some cases, they may have been following the current fashion, ensuring that nothing was written which conflicted with prescribed practice or it may have been the scribe who had a standard form which he used except where the testator had strong opinions of his or her own.

Since four of the surviving wills from the 1510s were probably written by Edward Repe, the vicar, the similarity of the preambles is not surprising but, in any case, mentioning Mary and the holy company of heaven which all these wills do, is typical of pre-Reformation wills.

No wills have survived from the 1530s and the only one surviving from the 1540s, that of John Potkyn written in 1543, has a very short preamble: "I bequeath my soul unto Almighty God, redeemer and maker of all the world" with no mention of burial. This was typical of the 1540s and 1550s and perhaps showed a desire to ensure that no preference was made between the various beliefs.

The preamble to the will of John's uncle, Peter Potkyn, clerk and rector of St. Peters, Eastcheap, London, written in 1520, although not "a Sevenoaks will" is of interest because of the unusual in the way his wishes are expressed rather than the sentiment:

"I bequeath my soul to almighty god desiring him as (any) creature may ask and desire his maker to show that tender and infinite charity of his passion that he suffered for mankind, in the departing of my soul, that my ghostly enemy have no power of me and that it would please him to take me to his eternal joys.

"I bequeath my soul to our blessed lady to whom her son denyeth nothing and to all blessed company of heaven that they of their charity would be mediators for me to almighty god and also to be succouring and defending me from my ghostly enemy in my departing."

# Prayers and the Care of the Soul

There was considerable variation in the desire for prayers. Clemens Broke, in addition to leaving money to a priest to sing for her soul, left four shillings to the four people who were to bear her body to the church.

## Thomas Holway and Richard Walkelyn

Thomas Holway bequeathed 40s for dirige<sup>157</sup> masses and alms to be given to poor people and also 20 marks (£13.33) to "an honest priest, being a singer, to sing and say mass for my soul, and all christian souls, by the space of two years next after my decease in the parish church of Sevenoaks". Others made more complicated arrangements. For example, Richard Walkelyn had a ten year lease on Thomas's bakehouse in Sevenoaks which he was to keep until the end of its term. Of the 24s annual rent, 13s 4d was to be used for a yearly obit and the rest for repairs to the bakehouse.

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157

"dirige" was the first word of an antiphon sung in the office for the dead; in its contracted form of "dirge" it now means a funeral song or hymn

## Peter Newman

In order to pay for his mortuary<sup>158</sup> and the tithes he owed, Peter Newman left his gelding to the vicar. Immediately after his decease "an honest priest" was to sing for his soul, his friends' souls and all Christian souls for "the space of one half year", the priest being paid five marks (£3 6s 8d; £3.33). Peter also left 3s 4d for a Jesus mass which was a mass sung every Friday as a weekly devotion to Our Lord<sup>159</sup>.

## Robert Tottisherst

The wishes of Robert Tottisherst, whose tomb was to bear the inscription "Pray for the soul of Robert Tottisherst sometime servant unto the Lord Cardinal Bouchier"<sup>160</sup>, were more detailed. At his burial there were to be three diriges and masses and "other works charitable" for which he left 40s with similar arrangements for his month's mind<sup>161</sup> for which he left £3 6s 8d. Immediately after his decease, a priest was to sing for his soul and his "friends' souls and all

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158 a payment made to the parish priest on the death of a parishioner

159 Leland, 1906, p.xx

160 John Weever, Ancient Funeral Monuments

161 commemorative masses one month after death or burial

christian souls one whole year" with an obit<sup>162</sup> for his soul and his friends' souls at the end of the year. For this the priest was to get £6 13s 4d (£6.67) "for his stipend and wages".

## Richard Pette

Another who wanted masses and obits was Richard Pette. He left £10 to an honest priest for "saying Saint Gregory's great trentall . . for my father, my mother, my soul and all christian souls as the great trentall ought to be withall manner of things thereto belonging". An obit was to be kept for him every year for twenty years for which 6s 8d was to be paid each year. Another 6s 8d was to be paid each year for "the maintaining of (the) Jesus mass as long as it is maintained. In addition, Richard's wife was to pay 6s 8d from the lands he left to her also for the Jesus mass. Richard also wanted a priest to sing two trentalls at Shoreham for the souls of "Master William Pette and William Aboth".



## Bequests to the Church & Good Works

Many wills of this period give money to the high altar for tithes often described as "negligently forgotten". Thomas Holway left 12d (5p) for this purpose, Richard Pette 3s 4d (17p) and Robert Tottisherst 6s 8d (33p). Peter Newman's gelding, left to the vicar, was partly to cover the tithes he owed.

**Clemence Broke**, whilst not mentioning tithes, left a considerable amount of money to the church:

-	to the high altar	6s 8d
-	for a cope	40s
-	for a cross of silver	10s
-	towards a new censer of silver	10s.

But there was also the peculiar item of "[£14 to be levied of Sir Burton, priest, late chaplain with my lord of Buk, to be disposed for the wealth of my soul](#)". After her death a monument was put in the church with the inscription "[Pray for the souls of Thomas Brooke and Clemence Brooke, his wife, which Clemence Brooke died 1510 24 February](#)"<sup>163</sup>.

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<sup>163</sup> 1511 in the new calendar; John Weever, *Ancient Funeral Monuments*; this monument was no longer visible in 1937.

**Richard Pette** left money for:

- buying a cross for the church 40s
- reparations to the church 40s
- mending the book in the church 40s.

He also left 40s to "[the mending of the pavement of the town](#)".

**Robert Tottisherst** left £3 6s 8d to the church without specifying any specific purpose.

**Thomas Holway**, in addition to the 12d for the high altar of Sevenoaks, left a similar amount to the high altar of Shoreham and 20s to churchwardens of Sevenoaks to buy a silver cross. He also left £20 each to the churchwardens of Sevenoaks, Westerham and Shoreham for the use of each parish; this was to be paid three years after his wife's death. In addition, he wanted to make it easier to get to the church leaving £3 6s 8d "[to the reparations and mending of a causeway between the Shelining stole and the church gate of Sevenoaks, to be paid within two years upon condition that the parish amend and repair the residue](#)".

Just as people like Thomas Holway left money to churches in parishes other than where they lived, Sevenoaks was sometimes the recipient of bequests from non-residents of the town. One example is the bequests of **John Isley of Sundridge** (about two miles from Sevenoaks) made in 1493: "[towards a](#)

vestment for Sevenoaks Church 40s; to pray for my father's soul he being buried in the South Altar and to the High Altar 3s 4d<sup>164</sup>.

At this time the church was usually the first recipient of money left for "good works", both repairs or additions to the church and also to help the poor. Whilst these bequests show a mixture of piety and utilitarianism none of the testators left money specifically to the poor of the parish. The gift of a silver cross or other valuable item to the church could, at this time as well as later, have come from the testator's desire to glorify god and obtain salvation but was also a means of displaying their wealth to their fellow parishioners.

These wills which have survived must have been just the tip of the iceberg; many other parishioners must have made similar bequests. We have already seen how the Archbishops were adding to the church building in the fifteenth century and this was typical of the country as a whole much of it financed by large donations from the wealthier laity. Between 1370 and 1532, 95 per cent of testators in Norwich left bequests to their parish churches<sup>165</sup>.

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164 PCC: 21 Vox; quoted by Dunlop, p.91

165 Doran and Durston; Princes, Pastors and People; London 1991, p.38

# The Introduction of the Poor-Box

There were other factors besides changes in belief which made modifications necessary to the way in which bequests were made to the poor. Although there are no examples in the surviving Sevenoaks wills, testators would sometimes leave money to the poor attending their burial.

By the beginning of the 1530s, beggars and vagabonds were becoming a common nuisance and the first act concerning their punishment forbade any form of begging without licence except for "[common doles used at burials or obits](#)". A further act of 1536, however, required every parish to establish a poor-box for the specific purpose of reducing the "[inconveniences and infections](#)" arising from "[common and open doles](#)" and the establishment of any such doles or the distribution of "[ready money in alms](#)" other than via the poor boxes was forbidden. Any previously established doles of this form, for example, where someone had set up the charitable distribution of money to the poor for a number of years, were to be carried out via the poor box<sup>166</sup>.

A later example of this change is that of Eme Beale who, in 1556 and thus after the Reformation, gave "[to the box ordained for the poor in the parish of Saint Mary Hill 12d](#)" and also willed to be "[distributed among the poor in the said parish of Sevenoaks within the space of six days next after my decease 20s in money](#),

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166 22 Hen. VIII cap. 12 and 27 Hen. VIII cap 25, quoted by Duffy, p.510

where most need shall be, at the discretion of executor under named". Her executor would thus decide who the recipients should be rather than there being a "free for all". Some testators gave the responsibility for deciding who should benefit from their bequest to the churchwardens. Much later, John Blome in 1624 left 2d each to forty children of the parish but he wanted to ensure that only the most deserving profited from his benevolence for he specified it was to be "distributed at the discretion of my executor, the vicar, churchwardens and overseers for the poor".

Some wills, but not any of those surviving for Sevenoaks, contain phrases such as "because common doles be prohibited and put away by Act of parliament". Duffy suggests this shows that testators did not lightly include provisions in their wills which they thought might complicate probate or bring trouble on heirs and executors<sup>167</sup>. Leaving arrangements for burial and distribution of charitable bequests "to the discretion of my executor" need not mean that testators were indifferent to what happened but, having appointed an executor who already knew their wishes, it was better not to go into too much detail in the will.

# Memorials

At least two other memorials were placed in the church before the Reformation, both being recorded in 1631 but not visible in 1937. The first was basically to remember Thomas Gregby but since he, and his father, both had two wives, the inscription gets complicated: "Pray for the soul of Tho. Gregby, Alice and Godliffe, his wives and for the souls of his father and mother Richard Gregbye, Margaret and Agnes his wives, which Thomas deceased 22 April 1515"<sup>168</sup>.

The second was from the early 1520s: "Pray for the souls of John Yardley, Sergeant of Arms to our Sovereign Lord the king, and Joane Pette, his wife, which John died An 1522"<sup>169</sup>. Weever, writing in 1631, does not record any later memorials. Was this because no more were erected? Or was it only the later ones which were destroyed during the reign of Edward VI?

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<sup>168</sup> Weever, John

<sup>169</sup> Weever, John

# The Celebration of Mass

These memorials and bequests to the church might be thought of as coming just from a minority of the parishioners and, obviously, only a few would have money to give to the church. But, for the country as a whole, there is evidence to show that the ordinary people attached to the beliefs and practices of the Roman Catholic church. Worship centred round the weekly mass which everyone was both legally and religiously obliged to attend.

The priest usually celebrated mass on his own with the congregation viewing the ceremony from behind the rood screen which separated the nave from the chancel. Even so, attending mass was an important and popular activity. In early sixteenth century London the most pious lay people rushed from church to church in order to be present, on a single day, at as many elevations of the host as possible<sup>170</sup>. Not so easy to do this in the country.

# Feast Days and Fast Days

Feast days such as Corpus Christi were marked by processions and the staging of mystery plays. These plays were a very effective way of teaching the fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith to the ordinary people, most of whom could not read. Saints and the "holy company of heaven" were called upon for assistance both in this life and to help the soul's progress to "the joyful resurrection to life everlasting".

The Christian year comprised a series of festivals each preceded by a period of abstinence. For those not living in abject poverty, the year was made up of a sequence of fasts and feasts. Over a third of the days in the year were days of fasting or abstinence from meat. All Fridays, except during Christmas and Easter, the forty week days of Lent and the four weeks of Advent before Christmas plus vigils for local feasts were all fast days. Only a single meal, which could not include meat and had to be eaten after midday, was allowed on a fast day. In addition, there were other days of abstinence when no meat was allowed<sup>171</sup>. The strictness with which these rules were enforced varied in different parts of the country but it was relatively easy for a person to obtain a dispensation from the bishop to excuse them from fasting<sup>172</sup>.

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171 Bossy, p.110

172 Ridley, p.211



The avoidance of meat was enforced more strictly than fasting since it conserved meat when stocks were low in February and March and supported the fishing industry. Even so, dispensations could be obtained and various categories of people such as the sick, those over sixty and pregnant women were excused automatically<sup>173</sup>.

# Chapter 4

## The Early Sixteenth Century

With Archbishop Warham at Knole for part of each year, the town of Sevenoaks continued to grow and the School benefited from endowments made by a number of wealthy men. But as a man's wealth increased, so did the taxes he was expected to pay and, in 1528 many of the local yeomen decided that an appeal to the most important landowner in the area, the Archbishop himself, might be to their benefit.

### Heresy Trials in Sevenoaks

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1511 and 1512 saw over fifty suspected heretics from various parts of Kent brought before Warham at Knole and five of them were handed over to the secular arm for execution.

## Sevenoaks School and the Potkyns

139

The brothers Peter and William Potkyn and William's son John were all benefactors of Sevenoaks School with John appointing six administrators in 1543

## Taxes and an Appeal to the Archbishop

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In 1522 commissioners were sent into each county to assess the wealth of each man. By 1528, the yeomen of Kent were suffering from high taxation at a time of poor harvests and about a hundred of them assembled at Knole in the hop of getting Archbishop Warham to intercede with the King. Little came of their endeavours but complaints continued throughout the county.

## Bad Harvests and Epidemics

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The general population also had to contend with droughts, floods, cold summers and low prices which could be caused by overabundance. Bad weather and harvests could also lead to the spread of epidemics.

# Heresy Trials in Sevenoaks

## The Lollards

Before Luther and the rise of Protestantism in Europe, heretics in England were usually Lollards secretly studying early translations of the bible and other writings which, in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, were still handwritten. Lollardy was based on the teachings of John Wycliffe in the second half of the fourteenth century who preached particularly against the “indolent fictions which passed under the name of religion in the established theory of the Church”<sup>174</sup>.

Many of their beliefs were similar to those of the later Puritans and, by the end of the fourteenth century, it was beginning to find supporters amongst the merchants and gentlemen with Lollardy becoming particularly strong in Kent. One of its supporters was Sir John Oldcastle of Cooling Castle<sup>175</sup> who was burnt at the stake in 1418. After that, support for the heresy dwindled and by 1500 the Lollards were mainly artisans and husbandmen although a few London merchants and substantial tradesmen could still be counted amongst them.

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<sup>174</sup> Abell, p.108 quoting Froude

<sup>175</sup> about five miles north of Rochester

## Warham's Drive Against the Heretics

1511 to 1512 saw a drive against the Lollards by Archbishop Warham and the bishops of Coventry and Lichfield, London and Lincoln. Between April 1511 and June 1512 fifty-three suspected heretics from the diocese of Canterbury were brought before Warham and details of the proceedings have survived<sup>176</sup>. They were held in various places in the diocese and at Warham's palace at Lambeth but the largest number were held at Knole with two in the church at Sevenoaks. Since those being tried, and the witnesses, had to be brought from a considerable distance, was this choice of Knole made because Knole was one of Warham's favourite houses?

Warham both presided and was the judge at the majority of the trials with a "numerous and formidable team of clerics" to assist him. One of the four named public notaries was William Potkyn, probably one of the three Potkyns who were connected with Sevenoaks School in the first half of the sixteenth century. A Peter Potkyn, "legum doctoribus", was also mentioned and he could have been William's brother. The trials held in Sevenoaks are listed in Table 4.1.

# Table 4.1: Heresy Trials held in Sevenoaks

\* - William Potkyn present at the hearings

date		from:	trial held at:
28 Apr to 2 May 1511 <sup>*</sup>	Proceeding against: Robert Harryson William Carder Agnes Grebill	Canterbury Tenterden Tenterden	at Knole; all three refused to abjure and were reliquinshed to the secular arm on 2nd May

2 to 5 May 1511*	Abjurations and Pences of: Christopher Grebill William Riche John Grebill, sen. John Grebill, jun. William Olberd, sen. Agnes Ive Agnes Chetynden Thomas Manning Joan Colyn Robert Hilles	Cranbrook Benenden Benenden Tenterden Godmersham Canterbury Canterbury Benenden Tenterden Tenterden	at Knole
26 Jul 1511*	Abjuration and Penance of: Agnes Raynold	Cranbrook	at Knole
29 Jul 1511*	Abjuration and Penance of: Thomas Churche	Great Chart	in Sevenoaks parish church
3 Aug 1511*	Abjuration and Penance of: Vincent Lynche	Halden	in Sevenoaks parish church

8 Aug 1511	Abjuration and Penance of: Joan Riche	Wittersham	at Knole
16 Aug 1511	Abjurations and Penances of: John Lynche Thomas Browne	Tenterden Cranbrook	at Knole
16 Aug 1511	Abjuration and Penance of: John Franke	Tenterden	at Knole
5 Jun 1512*	Abjurations and Penances of: John & Joan Bukherst Joan & John Dodde John & Rabage Benet	all of Staplehurst	at Knole
5 Jun 1512*	Dismissal of: James Bukherst		at Knole



Another local trial was held on 2nd August 1511 in the "capella curata de Otford" to hear the Abjurations and fix the Penances of Alice Hilles and Margaret Baker. William Potkyn was present at that trial and also those held in Canterbury in September. It is possible that William Potkyn first came to know Sevenoaks from his attendance at these trials.

## Penances and Executions

The first three tried at Knole, Robert Harryson, William Carder and Agnes Grebill, were all condemned as relapsed or impenitent heretics and were handed over to the secular arm in the knowledge that they would be burnt to death. The last one, James Bukhurst, was dismissed as not convicted. Penances were imposed on the others, with nearly all of them having to carry out more than one penance and some as many as six. The most common penance was carrying a faggot on some public occasion usually in their parish church on one or more Sundays<sup>177</sup>.

No record is known to have survived of the executions of the five people handed over to the secular authorities (three from their trial at Knole and two others) but one of the penances imposed upon Agnes Chetynden, tried at Knole a few days after the three heretics, was to watch the burning of William Carder. Although this implies the court expected the sentence to be carried out, the archbishop

frequently mentioned that the penances imposed might be commuted so that "it may well be that the penitential discipline was considerably milder in practice than the sentences initially suggest"<sup>178</sup>

## Comings and Goings at Knole

The summer of 1511 to that of 1512 must have been a busy time for Sevenoaks with so much going on at Knole. Warham and his team of clerics would have been in residence for a considerable time during both summers but, after the trials at Knole ended on 2nd May, many of the "team" were at Lambeth by 8th May ready for the proceedings against John Browne of Ashford which lasted until 19th May and those against Edward Walker of Ashford which lasted until 3rd October.

Did trials such as that of Edward Walker last so long because they had to be adjourned while the various people who made depositions were summoned to give evidence? Since other trials took place between May and October 1511, that of Edward Walker could not have continued uninterrupted throughout the period.

William Potkyn, whilst at Lambeth on 15th May was back at Knole, Sevenoaks and Otford from 26th July to 3rd August but in Canterbury by 11th September.

Whilst William Potkyn riding his horse between the various towns where his services were required does not present too much of a problem, how were those accused of heresy transported from their home parishes and where were they kept when they arrived in the towns where they were to be tried? And it was not only the accused who had to be brought to the trials. There were others such as Agnes's husband and two sons all of whom gave evidence at her trial and William Ryche, a glover from Benenden.

## Sevenoaks School and the Potkyns

The gifts of land presented to the School by the Petts and others in 1510 which were described earlier were followed by other benefactions. Three Potkyns, the brothers Peter and William and William's son John left wills which have survived - dated 1520, 1538 and 1543 (with a codicil in 1545) respectively. John wanted to be buried in Sevenoaks and his will has been transcribed in full - see [section 2](#)<sup>179</sup>. John's uncle, Peter Potkyn, clerk and rector of St. Peters, Eastcheap, London and William both wanted to be buried in London but all three were interested in Sevenoaks School.

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<sup>179</sup> there are abstracts of all three wills in the Hugh Miller MSS, Vol.2, pp.189-198 (CKS archives). The extracts from William Potkyn's will given here are taken from there but with the spelling modernised

## The Founding of the School

In his will, William gives details of his brother Peter's interest in Sevenoaks School as well as bequests of his own. He starts with some background to the founding of the School:

"whereas one William Sevenoke, sometime alderman of London deceased" by his will, gave some lands and tenements in London to the parson, vicar and churchwardens of the parish of Sevenoaks on condition that paid for a school master and paid other yearly bequests to certain poor people of the town.

The money available was not, however sufficient to keep a school master and carry out the other bequests, and so Peter Potkyn, "moved with charity at the time of his decease, intending that a school master, being honest, discrete and well learned, should there be kept for evermore, to instruct, inform and teach poor scholars coming to the said school, after the form and rules of grammar taught in Paul's School founded by Master Doctor Collet, late dean of the cathedral church of St. Pauls of London and that the said school master there being should have a sufficient and convenient stipend and salary so that he do teach and instruct the children of the said school, willed and declared" that the residue of his money should be used to purchase as much lands, etc. in the city of London as "should make up the yearly wage of the forsaid school master in Sevenoaks, teaching and instructing in form aforesaid . . . to the sum of

£13 6s 8d with the wages that is and shall be paid of the last will of the said William Sevenoake".

## **William Potkyn's Bequests to the School**

After the death of Peter, William took on the maintenance of the school master and by the time, eighteen years later, when he first wrote his will (10th January 1537/8) he had already specified that certain lands and tenements in the city of London were to be purchased "for the augmentation of the stipend of the school master of Sevenoaks".

In addition, he then decided that his capital message called the Star and all his tenements in London should be sold to the most profit and the money so raised used to purchase "as much lands and tenements within the said city of London as shall extend to the yearly value of £9 10s, whereof I will that £9 yearly be paid to the school master of Sevenoaks . . . to augment his yearly stipend and towards the finding of an usher there and 10s yearly distributed amongst the poor scholars of the said school" provided that they sang anthems and masses and said prayers for "the souls aforesaid and all christian souls".

But six weeks later William, having had second thoughts, added a codicil: instead of £9 10s being given yearly to the School indefinitely, it was to receive only £100 from the sale of the Starre. This was to be paid at the rate of £9 10s a year until

the total of £100 had been given and was to be used as previously described. In addition £66 13s 4d from the sale was to go to his wife and £100 to his son John. Since another five years later, when John wrote his will, his capital message was the Star, it looks as if it was never sold - or at least that John bought it from his father's estate.

## John Potkyn's Support of the School

John Potkyn had himself been a scholar at the School and he willed an annuity of £9 to it "for ever" to be paid from the receipts from the Star in Bread Street. But he was not happy about how the School was being run: "the inhabitants of the town . . . have let the lands of William Sevenoke and have taken bribes so that it will utterly decay except there be remedy found. Also upon the change of the school master, they cause the next school master to grant a pension of £3 6s 8d only as if it were chopping of a benefice. Whereas, except it be substantially looked to, it will utterly decay".

Like his father, John also changed his mind about how long the School should receive the annuity; in a 1545 codicil the period was limited to twenty years. The Potkyns continued to be associated with the School, Thomas Potkyn being one of its Governors in the 1570s.

## Administrators of the School

Another problem noted by John was the lack of a ruling body. In the hopes of remedying this John appointed six men as administrators who were to give and distribute all his lands and tenements in London "accordingly as I have humbly desired". One of these administrators was Sir John Baker, knight, to whom William had left a "ring with a head enamelled in the top" eight years previously. William described Baker as "attorney to our sovereign". John gave him his "best ring with three stones, viz. a diamond, an emerald and a ruby upon condition that he do give and distribute all this my foresaid lands and tenements in London accordingly as I have humbly desired him by writing". John also decreed that Sir John Baker's name be written in the book as a benefactor of Sevenoaks School "for his pains to be prayed for with my father, my uncle Peter Potkyn and my name John Potkyn".

# Taxes and an Appeal to the Archbishop

In the spring of 1522 a muster was held, ostensibly to survey the availability of men and weapons in case there was a war but also to assess personal wealth in order to make it easier to raise money for military purposes.

Following the muster, a subsidy was proposed and commissioners were sent into each county who, in turn, appointed men to administer the subsidy in each hundred<sup>180</sup>. An assessor of wealth was selected for each village or town; these were to be "the most substantial, discrete and honest persons" and they were to obtain a statement of the personal wealth of each man with women being included if they were acting as the head of the household. If the assessor had reason to doubt any statement, the person who had provided it was to be brought before the commissioners to be closely examined under oath with statements also being taken from neighbours. They were penalties for perjury and also for those who failed to appear when summoned by the commissioners.

## Land, Goods and Wages

Traditionally lay subsidies had taxed moveable wealth but the Tudors broadened the tax base and in the 1524/5 subsidy, annual, seasonal and periodic incomes

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180 The following details of the subsidy are taken from John Sheail's thesis



were included. Wealth was grouped under three headings: land, goods and wages with each person being taxed under only one but that one which would provide the highest return for the government.

Moveable goods included "coin, plate, stock of merchandise, all manner of corn and blades served from the ground, household stuff and all other goods and cattles, moveable as well within this Realm as without". But this definition was open to various interpretations, for example, were animals essential for work on the farm to be excluded? Was corn needed for feeding the household to be excluded?

The rates of taxation also varied:

1s (5p) in the £ on - annual income from land and other sources  
- capital value of moveables worth £20 or more

6d (2½p) in the £ on - capital value of moveables worth between £2  
and £20

4d (2p) in the £ on - capital value of moveables worth between £1 and £2

Wage earners aged over sixteen who earned over £1 a year were liable to a tax of 4d regardless of how much they earned.

The assessors were interested only in the category of wealth which would yield the highest tax so that moveable goods would not be included for those with a large amount of land whilst many wage earners do not appear as such since they were taxed on their moveable goods.

## A Prosperous County

The Lay Subsidy Returns show that, in a national context, Kent was outstandingly prosperous, the excellence of its croplands, the woodlands and the waterways being greater than in other parts of the country. It had richer husbandmen and artisans, the land was particularly rich and the nearness of alternative employment raised the level of wages. The taxation returns for the subsidy of 1524-25 show taxpayers in Kent paying more tax per square mile than in any other county except Middlesex. But these high returns were set against a background of complaints about the dearth of food and fall in prices<sup>181</sup>..

## The Yeomen Approach Warham

During the mid-1520s, harvests had been good but that for 1527 was very bad, causing food prices to rise sharply. In addition, trade with the Low Countries was threatened when war was declared against the Emperor in January 1528. The yeomen of Kent, looking for someone to intercede with the King, decided to approach Warham. The archbishop heard of this and sent out men from his household to try to dissuade them but, even so, about a hundred assembled on the Tuesday of Easter week 1528 at Knole.

Warham describes the episode in a letter to the Council: not everyone "which had like cause to come" had joined the assembly because "the great number of their neighbours" had been persuaded "to tarry at home" with only two or three coming from each parish so that "they would make no great multitude to the discontent of the king's most noble grace".

From this assembly six people, selected to put their case to the Archbishop, told him how "they and their neighbours at home, being poor and needy, desired" Warham "to be a means to the king's grace to have their loan money". He told them "that they had not chosen the best time to speak in this matter considering the great charges that the king's grace had had lately and further was like to sustain" and asked them who had persuaded them to assemble. The delegation answered "poverty only, affirming that many of them, especially their neighbours that tarried at home, lacked both meat and money".

Warham was careful not "to incense the uncertainty and wavering brains" of the assembly. "For commonly, in a multitude, the more part lack both wit and discretion and yet the same more part take upon them to rule the wiser". He reminded them that they had made a similar approach regarding the loan money two years previously "with the which unlawful assembly the king's grace was then not a little displeased". How this new assembly would be taken, he could not say.

They answered that "they trusted verily that the king's grace would take no displeasure for the asking of the said loan in as much as they were his true

subjects and would live and die in his cause, trusting that the king's grace would have pity and compassion upon their poverty".

## Warham's Response

The yeomen humbly asked Warham to speak for them to the king but he told them to abstain from unlawful assemblies and make their petition in writing when he would offer it to the king with his support. He would not, however, speak for them without a petition lest he should "say more or less in their cause than they would be contented withall".

But the yeomen "had little wit to make such a supplication and could get no man that would write for them in this cause since it concerned the king's highness". They asked Warham if he could provide someone to do it for them but Warham was not prepared to help them to that extent. With this, the company departed but Warham was informed that later "some lewd person among them spoke unfitting words after they had been in the town and drunk their fill".

It looks as if Warham had, as he had apparently done two years earlier, at least stopped the discontent from turning into anything more serious.. As he told the Council "I have thus by fair words answered and partly contented two assemblies

which have come to me in this matter, thinking verily that by fair words and gentle entertaining they will be better ordered than by rigorous means"<sup>182</sup>.

## The Collapse of the Appeal

The yeomen's difficulty in finding someone brave (or foolhardy) enough to be the one who should put their grievances in writing is understandable but a scribe, John Potter, was eventually found. The government responded by sending Lord Rochford (Thomas Boleyn, Anne's father) to investigate and the "five persons that were disposed to put up a supplication unto my lord of Canterbury concerning their loan money" were brought before him. Potter confessed to his "misbehaviour and great folly" and said that Brian Cavall, one of the five, had dictated the petition<sup>183</sup>. The yeomen's appeal thus came to an end.

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<sup>182</sup> A.C. Vol.1, p.36-39; Warham writing to the Council from Otford. Dated 1526? but actually 1528 according to Peter Clark

<sup>183</sup> L. & P. Addenda I, pt.1, 152 quoted by Clarke and Stoyel, p.109

## But Discontent Continued

The yeomen, artisans and clothiers throughout Kent continued their complaints against the level of taxes and there was a considerable amount of interchange of information regarding each town's reactions to the impositions of government such as the fixed loans.

In the May following the Easter assembly at Knole, the clothiers of Cranbrook were complaining that trade was so bad that they were not able to keep as many men busy as formerly and, if they were compelled to abandon their trade, great numbers would be left idle.

A group were heard discussing the possibility of rising against Wolsey and "when we have the Cardinal, we may not slay him for, if we do, the land shall be interdicted (by the pope). Therefore, if we take him we will bring him to the seaside and there put him in a boat in the which shall be bored four great holes. The holes shall be stopped with pins and so the boat and he shall be conveyed . . . into the sea and, when it is there, the pins shall be pulled out and so sink him"<sup>184</sup>.

# Bad Harvests and Epidemics

Taxes were not the only problem with which the populace had to contend. There were droughts and floods, cold summers when the crops did not ripen and, for those who relied on selling their produce, times when prices were low due to a surfeit.

From 1535 to 1545 the harvests were generally better than average but the summer of 1540 was exceptionally hot and dry. "No rain fell from June till eight days after Michaelmas (29th September) so that in divers parts of this realm the people carried their cattle six or seven miles to water them and also much cattle died and also there reigned strange sickness among the people in this realm as dysentry and hot agues and also pestilence whereof many people died"<sup>185</sup>.

Running water could be easily contaminated so that it was not necessarily an advantage provided that springs, wells and rainwater gave a sufficient supply. What could have been, for the most part, a positive factor for Sevenoaks would turn into a hazard in years such as 1540. Parish registers for Sevenoaks have not survived from before 1560 so that it is not possible to say whether the death rate in Sevenoaks was above average in 1540 but, with no running water in the town itself, such a long drought could have caused serious problems.

## Hot Burning Fevers and Other Strange Diseases

1549, 1550 and 1551 saw three bad harvests in succession with another two in 1555 and 1556. Then came various epidemics: "What diseases and sicknesses everywhere prevailed! The like whereof had never been known before, both for the lasting and mortality of them: which being hot burning fevers, and other strange diseases began in the great dearth of 1556 and increased more and more the two following years. In the summer (of) 1557 they raged horribly throughout the realm and killed an exceeding great number of all sorts of men . . . In 1558, in the summer, about August, the same fevers raged again in such manner as never plague or pestilence"<sup>186</sup>.

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<sup>186</sup> John Strype, writing in the seventeenth century, quoted by Smith, p.55



# Chapter 5

## The Reformation; Henry VIII & Edward VI

### The English Reformation

157

In the 1520s the desire to return to the fundamental beliefs of the early Christians began to spread throughout Europe. The introduction of printing helped this movement spread although it also made available tracts supporting and prayers supporting the position of the Catholic Church.

### The Need for an Heir

160

Henry and Katherine's only surviving child was a daughter, Mary, and Henry desperately needed a male heir to ensure the succession. By the late 1520s Henry had become infatuated with Anne Boleyn and sought a remedy for his problems in divorcing Katherine and marrying Anne. Although this took a long time, by 1533 Henry was married to Anne and the break with Rome was complete.

## The Nine Articles

162

These gave the “facts” behind the changes with Anne’s pregnancy being seen as a sign of God’s approval

## The Oath of Supremacy

163

In 1534 everyone the Oath of Supremacy was introduced as a means of committing everyone to the new order but this had to be supplemented by propaganda and persuasion.

## Cranmer at Knole

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Cranmer now owned Knole where he stayed on at least two occasions in 1536 and 1537.

## The Dissolving of the Chantries in 1540

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This saw the end of chantry at St. Nicholas's church established by Henry of Ghent and also that of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist at Greatness.

## A King at Knole

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Henry VIII acquired Knole in 1538 and, although he never lived in the house, he had the park stocked with deer for hunting and carried out building work at Knole and his other estates in the Sevenoaks area.

## More Taxes

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At the end of his reign more money was required for Henry's wars and, this time, enforced loans were the method chosen for raising it. From the contributors to the loan of 1542, it appears that there were not yet any wealthy people living in the parish. Another "loan" was ordered in 1544 but the 1540s did not see the same level of antagonism to the raising of money as had happened in the 1520s.

## Religious Changes 1538 to 1547

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Whilst Henry had become head of the church in England, he wanted to keep the doctrine of the church as it had been under the pope although this was not completely possible. The English language came to be used for parts of the service as well as for the sermon and purgatory and prayers for the dead lost some of their importance. Parishes were ordered to keep a register of all births, deaths and marriages but, in general, these have not survived for years earlier than about 1560.

## Edward VI

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When Edward came to the throne in 1543, the church became Protestant with the use of a new prayer book and communion replacing the mass. Processions, mystery plays and church ales were banned and by 1550 many altars had been replaced with communion tables.

## The Darkenold Family

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William Darkenold was vicar of Sevenoaks from 1535 until 1554; he was one of the Durtnell family for which eleven generations prior to 1538 have been traced. The family were mainly concerned with the timber and building business, a business which has survived to the year 2000.

## A Glimpse of the Market in the 1550s

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The deeds for the sale of a shop in 1551 show that, by then, part of the market was designated the "Fish Market".

# The English Reformation

The English Reformation was part of a European wide Protestant movement which questioned old superstitions and wanted to return to the fundamental beliefs of early Christianity. In 1516 Erasmus, the Dutch scholar, called for the translation of the bible into vernacular languages so as to promote the direct education of the common people<sup>187</sup>.

Henry VIII's beliefs were those of the Catholic Church so that he was, at least initially, opposed to the new ideas. In 1521 he wrote a long theological tract in answer to Luther's heresies and was rewarded by the pope with the title, still held by his successors, "Defender of the Faith".

## The Introduction of Printing

By 1526 translations of the Bible with Lutheran commentaries were beginning to circulate in England, the printing presses introduced at the end of the previous century making the production of books and pamphlets so much easier.

But it was not the introduction of printing itself which caused the Reformation. From the 1470s until well into the sixteenth century, the English printing trade

was dominated by Caxton, Wynkyn de Worde and Richard Pynson, all religiously conservative. Grammar books, almanacs, conduct-books and law reports formed the basis of their trade, supplemented with liturgical books to serve the parish churches, letters of indulgence for hospitals, guilds and other charities, tracts to promote traditional piety and a large number of Latin primers giving prayers for indulgences and illustrated with pictures.

Books which had originally circulated in manuscript form were now printed and thus made available to a much wider audience. The Archbishop's library at Knole would have some of these as well as the newer books but printing must have made it possible for the local gentry to buy not only religious books but ones such as the Book of Good Manners which Caxton printed after having had it translated from the French.<sup>188</sup>

Collections of sermons were another popular subject and most of these were in English rather than Latin. These added to the demands for English translations of the Bible which had surfaced well before the actual break with Rome.

## John Frith

Many of the men who were to be associated with the Reformation were at Cambridge University in the 1520s. These included William Tyndale, one of those who translated the bible into English and Thomas Cranmer who was to become Archbishop in 1532.

Another was John Frith, who was at Cambridge from 1523 to 1525, grew up in Sevenoaks and was to be martyred for his beliefs in 1533. Frith was born, in 1503, in Westerham about ten miles from Sevenoaks but, while he was still a child, the family moved to Sevenoaks where his father was an innkeeper. Sevenoaks School claims Frith as one of its pupils<sup>189</sup> and he was at Eton from about 1520 to 1522. After Cambridge he went to London where he stayed for about two years helping Tyndale with his translation of the New Testament into English. Subsequently he moved to the Continent where he wrote some religious treatises of his own.

# The Need for an Heir

By the mid 1520s, the major concern of the Tudor dynasty was the desperate need for a heir. Henry had married Katherine of Aragon, the widow of his elder brother, Arthur, in 1509 very soon after he became king. At the beginning of their reign, they had been happy together but, although Katherine had had a large number of pregnancies, the only child who had lived was the Princess Mary. Henry even vowed to lead a crusade against the Turk should he have a healthy son. By 1525, however, he had given up hope and become convinced that Katherine's failure to bear a son was due to him having married his brother's widow, a sin since it broke the rules of affinity laid down in the Old Testament. Although the pope had sent a dispensation stating that Henry and Katherine could marry despite being brother and sister-in-law, Henry had come to the conclusion that this was not sufficient to avert the anger of God.

## Anne Boleyn

By 1527 Henry had become infatuated with Anne Boleyn, daughter of Thomas Boleyn who owned Hever about six miles south west of Sevenoaks. It may have been this proximity to Hever which decided Henry VIII to make a visit to Knole<sup>190</sup> (then owned by Warham). But before Henry could marry Anne, who it was hoped



would produce a legitimate heir, he needed the annulment of his marriage to Katherine to be confirmed by the pope. The problem here was not that Clement VII was particularly averse to granting the annulment but that Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor and Katherine's nephew held military supremacy in Italy and by 1528 was in a position to force Clement to support Katherine rather than Henry.

## **The Break with Rome**

What was to become known as the Reformation Parliament met for the first time at the end of 1529 and, over the next three years, passed a number of statutes which extensively curtailed ecclesiastical privileges. Slowly the situation built up to the break with Rome. In 1529 Thomas Wolsey fell from power to be replaced by Thomas Cromwell who, by 1533, was the king's chief minister. There were other changes. Archbishop Warham, who had been against the annulment, died in 1532 and was succeeded by Thomas Cranmer who declared in 1533 that Henry and Katherine had never been husband and wife and that Henry and Anne could be legally married. The Reformation Parliament continued its work and the break with Rome was completed.

# The Nine Articles

One of the provisions which affected all churches was that the title of pope had been completely rejected and, wherever it was used, it had to be replaced by "bishop of Rome". This meant that the name "pope" in all prayer books had to be scratched out, something which many people thought to be sacrilegious. Thus, in the country overall there were to be many convictions for the offence of not erasing the name.

Towards the end of 1533 a short pamphlet of Nine Articles, brief assertions of the facts behind the reformation, was printed "[not only to exhort but also to inform](#)" the King's "[loving subjects of the truth](#)". God's approval for the changes was shown by Anne's pregnancy, the fine weather "[with great plenty of corn and cattle](#)", the peace moves in Europe and the absence of epidemic disease<sup>191</sup>. How many of these pamphlets were printed and how far they circulated is not known but with the many connections which Sevenoaks had with London it is likely that at least most of the gentry of the town would have seen a copy or knew of its contents.

# The Oath of Supremacy

The government, however, had to do more than print pamphlets in order to ensure the acceptance of its changes. In 1534 it decided to bind everyone to the royal supremacy by means of an oath. It started with the clergy of West Kent and George Lightstone, curate of Seal, signed the declaration that the "bishop of Rome hath no greater jurisdiction committed to him by god in this realm of England than any foreign bishop"<sup>192</sup>.

The oath was then administered to the whole male population; men were used to oaths of fealty and allegiance but this swearing-in of the realm was the first time that a spiritual commitment was used as a political test. Unfortunately no records have been found of what happened in Kent but, given Cranmer's support for the changes, it is likely that the county was at least as concerned as Hampshire and Suffolk to ensure that all who should have done took the oath.

## Administering the Oath in Hampshire and Suffolk

Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, wasted no time in getting organised in Hampshire. Receiving instructions from Cromwell on the last Wednesday in April, by the following Monday he had assembled at Winchester, not only as many of

the commissioners as were in the county and could travel but also a good many others including gentlemen, abbots and priors. These did all "take the said oath very obediently as this bearer can signify"<sup>193</sup>.

Having divided up the county and knowing the distance of one village from another, the commissioners organised the oath taking for the rest of the population so that people did not have to travel far. A complete census of males over 14 years of age was obtained and Gardiner, wishing not to err, wondered whether the king wished women to be sworn too. However, it looks as if women were not included. But Gardiner saw problems in the time it would take "considering especially that every man's name must be written". Although the commissioners had "gladly and willingly taken upon them to do the parts allotted unto them", there were only twelve of them and some had other duties requiring their attention. Thus he suggested additional names to add to the commission.

The survival of a commissioners' certificate for the village of Waldringfield in Suffolk shows how thoroughly the orders were carried out. In the middle of May, three gentlemen presided over the administration of the oath to 92 people. The names were written out beforehand; one gentleman, two clerks and nine others signed their names, 34 men made their mark; against one the word "impotens" (sick) was written. This totals 47; were the others not there? Or did they refuse

the oath? Or were they not even capable of making their mark? The last is the most probable since the certificate claims to be a list of people sworn<sup>194</sup>.

## In Defence of the Royal Supremacy

By the oath of supremacy, Henry and Cromwell hoped to gain everyone's commitment to the new order but it needed to be supported by continuing propaganda and persuasion. In June 1535 Cromwell sent out a circular letter to the bishops and, a week later, one to the sheriffs and JPs. That to the bishops included a form of declaration to be made from all pulpits and John Longland, bishop of Lincoln, had two thousand of these printed, sending Cromwell a copy desiring to know if it were Cromwell's pleasure that it should be sent out in that form<sup>195</sup>. This is one example of the difference which the introduction of printing had made to the dissemination of propaganda and information from government.

The paper that Longland sent to the printer may be the "[discourse in defence of the Royal Supremacy](#)" intended for the use of unlearned priests. This political sermon, starting "[Ye shall understand that I am commanded by my ordinary to declare unto you . . . specially two things](#)" includes all the instructions given to the bishops. The preacher was to proclaim the King's supremacy in the Church,

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194 Elton, 1972, p.225; including the analysis of the certificate.

195 Elton, 1972, p.238; L.P.F.D. Vol.8, no.922; Longland to Cromwell

resting it upon the authority of "the King's high court of Parliament" as well as "of all the clergy of this his realm assembled" . . and support the case by citations both from the Old and New Testaments<sup>196</sup>.

## Cranmer at Knole

Cranmer, as Archbishop of Canterbury, was now the owner of Knole and he seems, on occasion, to have used it as a country retreat. Away from London but not as far as his Canterbury estates and in a better location than Otford Palace, his use of Knole must have brought trade and other visitors to Sevenoaks.

One of his visits was in April 1536. Katherine of Aragon had died at the beginning of the year and, on the day of her funeral Anne suffered the miscarriage of a son. Henry began to consider divine wrath again and Anne had many enemies at court, in particular those who did not like her support for the evangelical reformers. Henry was also attracted to Jane Seymour whose family belonged to the conservative faction. What was even more disastrous for Anne, in March 1536 Cromwell decided that it was in his interests to take the conservative side in the events which were to lead to her execution.

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196 L.P.F.D. Vol.8, no.294; Elton, 1972, p.234

Cranmer does not seem to have participated in the conspiracy but his visit to Sevenoaks ended with the summons to attend the newly elected Parliament and a consultation as to whether Henry could abandon Anne<sup>197</sup>.

He was also at Knole in October and November 1537 when the risings in the north of the country which are known as the Pilgrimage of Grace were at their height. George Marshall, a priest who had been a reformer since the 1520s, was arrested in London as a result of disturbances there and placed in Cranmer's care. In this position, he accompanied Cranmer to Knole<sup>198</sup>.

## The Dissolving of the Chantries in 1540

With no religious houses in the locality, the Dissolution of the Smaller Monasteries in 1535 and that of the Larger Monasteries in 1539 had no direct effect. But the dissolving of the Chantries in 1540 saw the end of chantry at St. Nicholas's church established by Henry of Ghent and also that of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist at Greatness.

Chantries were sometimes used as schools possibly increasing their contribution to the locality. In Sevenoaks the parishioners may have lost a facility which they

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197 MacCulloch, 1996, p.156

198 MacCulloch, 1996, p.171

would have liked to have kept but it could equally well have been underused. The Hospital at Greatness had provided facilities for travellers who would otherwise have had to stay at a hostelry, if they could find one in the locality. Thus this statute deprived the locality of some facilities but how important they were to the people living or travelling through the town is not known.

The men working in the two establishments do not seem to have suffered badly. Robert Clements was chaplain of the chantry when he died in 1537. His successor, William Hopkyns, served only long enough to secure a pension of £6 a year; in 1547, he was 47 years of age and "of honest qualities and conversation. And hath not any other living besides the said chantry"<sup>199</sup>.

John Clayton, the Master of the Hospital of St, John the Baptist at Greatness in 1540, had to surrender the building and its funds in return for a pension of £8 2s 10d (£8.14) per year. Soon after this the rector of Sevenoaks died and John Clayton was appointed as his successor<sup>200</sup>. But John Clayton did not surrender everything in 1540, for as reported in 1547 by the Commissioners of Edward VI: "there remaineth in the hands of the said Sir John Clayton a silver chalice"<sup>201</sup>.

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199 as reported by Edward VI's Commissioners; Dunlop, p.93; presumably his pension of £6 was paid for the rest of his life

200 Dunlop, p.94

201 Gordon Ward, p. 14



# A King at Knole

In 1538, Cranmer was forced to exchange Knole for other church land in Kent. Ralph Norice, Cranmer's secretary, gives an often quoted account of the transaction. "My Lord, minded to have retained Knole unto himself, said that it was too small a house for his Majesty. Marry, said the king, I had rather have it than this house, meaning Otford; for it standeth on a better soil. This house standeth low and is rheumatic, like unto Croydon, where I could never be without sickness. And as for Knole, it standeth on a sound, perfect, and wholesome ground; and if I should make abode, as here I do surely mind to do now and then, I will live at Knole and most of my house shall live at Otford. And so by this means both these houses were delivered into the king's hands".

Sevenoaks, Sevenoaks Weald, Knole and Chevening with Panthurst and Brittaines, Otford, Shoreham, Wrotham, Northfleet and Maidstone were all given to Henry. In exchange the archbishopric received some properties from the dissolved monasteries but not sufficient to repay it for what it had lost. The king was now lord of the manor and the patron of the living and it was he who appointed John Clayton rector of Sevenoaks in 1540. Henceforth it would be the king's men, courtiers and lawyers, who formed the ruling presence in the town rather than the archbishop's clerics and priests.

## Henry VIII's Other Estates

At the same time, Henry added other lands in the Sevenoaks area to his estates. At the beginning of 1538, he bought<sup>202</sup>:

- a watermill, 4 acres of meadow, 3 acres of pasture and 17 acres of waste in Sevenoaks for £40 from Edward Asshe and his wife Margery
- the Manor of Childe comprising 60 acres of land, 20 acres of meadow, 60 acres of pasture, 20 acres of wood in Kemsing, Otford and Sevenoaks for £100 from Thomas Tottisherst, gent., and his wife Elizabeth.

Four years later he bought:

- a messuage with 120 acres land, 30 acres of meadow, 80 acres of pasture and 40 acres of wood in Sevenoaks, Seal and Kemsing for £20 from Sir Percival Harte and his wife Frideswide. £20 seems a very small amount compared with the amount paid for the earlier purchases.

## Work at Knole and Otford

Henry did not live at Knole as Norice said he had hoped to do and the only time he is known to have visited it was in 1541 when he was on his way from Eltham to

Penshurst. Whenever he travelled, Henry took with him his own locks and had them fitted to his bedroom door<sup>203</sup>.

On 6th July in that year, Sir Richard Rich recorded that "the king intends to repair the buildings and clean the ponds and gardens of his manors at Otford and Knole, together with his parks of Otford, Knole and Panters, Kent and has appointed the bearer, Robert Russell, overseer of the work". Russell was authorised to receive the payment of "such money as he shall require"<sup>204</sup>. Thus, even if the town did not gain from visits of the royal household, those connected with the maintenance of the buildings and land would benefit from the work generated by a rich landlord.

The accounts for work carried out at Otford and Knole do not differentiate between the two but, in addition to some building at Knole, Henry VIII saw to the stocking of the deer park there which Cranmer had been too poor to do<sup>205</sup>. Although Henry was fond of hunting and had presumably stocked the park for this purpose, there are no records of him doing so.

In 1543, Sir Richard Longe was paid "for making the king's garden at Knole", this being the earliest mention of a garden at Knole<sup>206</sup>. Once a garden was made, it

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203 Henry VIII in Kent, KCC, 1991

204 Clarke & Stoyel, p.116

205 Rayner, p.47

206 State Papers of Henry VIII quoted by Sackville-West, p.35

had to be maintained and, for example, in September 1546, four weeders were employed "for the king's majesty's garden at Otford" for 23 days at 3d per day<sup>207</sup> (1.25p per day, a total of £1.15).

## Timber for His Manor House

The erection of Henry VIII's Manor House at Dartford was started in the summer of 1541 and "along every waterway, round the coast, inland, boats (ships, luggers, hoys . . .) were bringing their supplies of stone, timber, roofing tiles, bricks, iron-work, etc. to Dartford . . . from the royal parks of Knole, Otford and Joydens, carts of one and two tons' capacity were dragging their loads to the nearest river-port"<sup>208</sup>. "Bretons" is also mentioned as being associated with Knole and this was probably, Brittain's. Dartford is on the river Darent which flows through Otford and the timber would probably have been floated down this river, perhaps using horses walking along the bank to control the logs.

The carters taking the timber from Knole Park came from a number of local villages and included "T. Oliver from Seal" and "Ed. Colgate from Sevenoaks". Loading large timbers on to carts to take it to the Darent or dragging it with the aid of horses cannot have been an easy task particularly since it was probably

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207 Clarke & Stoye, p.117

208 Kirby, p.7

autumn, or even winter, by this time. When the timber reached Dartford, it was "diligently" examined by the overseer, presumably before payment was made.

Since in some months there were approaching 500 skilled and unskilled men recruited mainly from London and Kent working on the building, other men from Sevenoaks could have been employed. Bricklayers seem to have been the most difficult to find since the warden of the bricklayers received "fifteen shillings for his riding costs at divers times with the commission to 'preste'" them for the building work at Dartford.<sup>209</sup>

## More Taxes

Towards the end of Henry's reign, England again became embroiled in war, more money was required and taxation was very high from the 1540s onwards.

Perhaps because of Henry's increased power, perhaps because the gentry had benefited from his policies or perhaps because of what happened to those who refused, whatever the cause, this time people seemed positively anxious to supply the King with money and there were few of the problems which had followed from the demand for the "amicable grant" twenty years earlier.

## The Forced Loan of 1542

In 1542 there was a forced loan with those who "gladly strained themselves" to contribute, as before, never seeing their money again. Although the town had been growing throughout Henry's reign none of the contributors to the loan of 1542 came from Sevenoaks<sup>210</sup>. Of the 262 names, 167 were from the diocese of Canterbury, 47 from the diocese of Rochester and Peculiar of Shoreham with no parish being given for the remaining 48. John Lennarde of Chevening, father of the John Lennarde's whose will has survived, was assessed for 20 marks (£13.33) and villages close to Sevenoaks also feature: John Sennocke, vicar of Seal and John Tebold, also from Seal but owning a shop in Sevenoaks, Robert Moulton of Otford and Lady Anne Gray of Ightham Mote. This could indicate that most of the land in Sevenoaks was owned either as small holdings or was leased out from owners living elsewhere.

The lack of any contributors from Sevenoaks is particularly interesting since the northern part of the lathe of Sutton-at-Hone was the area, together with that round Cranbrook, which paid the highest tax per thousand acres in 1543/4: £6 and £6 10s respectively. The southern part of Sutton-at-Hone, (the western Weald), however, paid only between £2 10s and £2 15s.<sup>211</sup> Whilst Sevenoaks was

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<sup>210</sup> Greenstreet, Kent Contributors, 1877, pp.398-404

<sup>211</sup> Zell (2000), p.4

growing as a market town, it does not yet seem to have had any wealthy people living within the parish..

## **The Benevolence of 1544**

In 1544, Henry's need for money was even greater than two years earlier and, with Parliament not due to meet until the following February, it was decided to demand a benevolence. This method of raising money, supposedly by voluntary gifts but, in practice, with those from whom they were requested having no choice, had been declared illegal in 1484. But this did not deter Henry and orders were sent out to the appointed commissioners in January with detailed instructions as to how they should carry out their task.

The commissioners were to appoint one or two substantial persons of the shire to receive the money for the contribution and give them a book or indented roll in which they were to write the names of all contributors to the loan. The collectors were to deliver the money to the Cofferer of the King's Household being paid two pence in the pound (just under 1%) for its collection and portage to London<sup>212</sup>.

Summoning no more than twelve men at a time, the commissioners were to speak to each man on his own reminding him of the King's work on his behalf. This was

"lest, coming a number together, some one unreasonable man, among so many, forgetting his duty towards God, his sovereign lord and his country, may go about by his malicious forwardness to seduce all the rest, be they never so well disposed". Those alleging poverty or otherwise refusing to pay were to be charged with ingratitude but, if they persisted in their refusal, they were to have their names taken, be told to keep the matter secret and commanded to appear before the Council<sup>213</sup>.

## Refusal to Pay

That this was no easy way out is shown by what happened to Richard Reed, a salter and alderman of London. When he refused to pay, the authorities took the opportunity to make him an example to other possible dissidents. He was "commanded, on pain of death, to make himself ready to serve the king in his wars in Scotland". Thus "he might somewhat be instructed to the difference between the sitting quietly in his house and the travail and danger which others daily do sustain"<sup>214</sup>. Maybe those not so exalted as Richard Reed may have found it easier to escape the notice of the commissioners.

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213 Lodge, p.74

214 Wriothsesley, p.151



# Religious Changes 1538 to 1547

Henry wanted to keep pre-Reformation doctrines whilst ensuring that he was the head of the English church with no interference from the pope. Even so, there were some changes.

## The Extinguishing of Lights

A change which effected each parish was Thomas Cromwell's injunctions of 1538 which instructed each parish, among other things, to extinguish all lights in the church except those on the altar, in the rood loft and before the Easter sepulchre. Ronald Hutton, who carried out a survey of the accounts kept by churchwardens for 198 country wide parishes, found that, following this injunction, all such candles were apparently extinguished in the parishes in his sample thus beginning the dissociation of many folk rituals from formal religion<sup>215</sup>. The candle in front of "our lady of Pity" in Sevenoaks would thus have gone.

## Other Changes

Another of the injunctions made it mandatory to keep parish registers to record baptisms, marriages and burials but for Sevenoaks, like many other parishes, these have not survived prior to 1560.

But, of more direct importance, the English language was used much more than previously. Although sermons had been preached in English for many years, it was now also used for parts of the service. Cromwell ordered that a copy of the bible, in English, be placed in every parish church "[for every man that will look to read therein](#)". It was not long, however, before the authorities ordered that it must be chained to the lectern and that only noblemen could have one in their own homes without a priest's permission. Anne Boleyn showed a personal interest in the vernacular bible and it may have been partly due to her influence that, at least for a short time, English Bibles were available in some churches.

There was a similar ambivalence to other aspects of worship. With regard to purgatory and prayers for the dead, the Ten Articles of Faith produced by the church, under Henry's orders, said that it was "[a very good and charitable deed to pray for souls departed](#)" but made no claims that the prayers were efficacious and questioned whether purgatory existed at all<sup>216</sup>.

## Local Changes

The north-west part of Kent was in the diocese of Rochester so that towns such as Tonbridge, Bromley and Dartford owed allegiance first to the Bishop of Rochester. Sevenoaks was in an unusual position, not only from being in the Peculiar of Shoreham, but also, until 1538, having the Archbishop of Canterbury as the lord of the manor. Cranmer was one of the most Protestant churchmen in the country; he could promote and protect radical preachers and ensure the promotion of Protestants to key positions.

The archbishop's commissary, Christopher Nevinson, forbade the distribution of holy water and Candlemas candles to the people, tried to prevent blessed candles being placed in the hands of the dying, limited outdoor processions, attacked auricular confession and sought to prevent absolutions being given to those who could recite their Pater and Ave only in Latin. He also supported a campaign to remove images from churches wherever he could<sup>217</sup>.

More details of these changes seems to have survived (or were reported) from parishes in East Kent than for those in the West. There was great variation between parishes. In some, it was the clergy who were more radical than the laity, in others conservative clergy could be faced with a radical congregation. Some priests failed to delete the pope's name and titles from the liturgical books

and discouraged reading of the bible whilst others were leaders in the destruction of images<sup>218</sup>.

## Edward VI

Edward reigned for six years from 1547 until 1553. There is no record of him coming to Sevenoaks and, in 1550 he granted the "[manors of Knole and Sevenoaks](#)" to his uncle, the Earl of Warwick, later the Duke of Northumberland. According to Herbert Knocker, it was this grant which created the manor of Sevenoaks, the archbishops never having claimed it as a manor<sup>219</sup>. Northumberland sold considerable land to Thomas Culpepper and George Harper "[except the capital messuage called Knole](#)" and then, in 1553, exchanged Knole and Otford with the king for the town of Wellington in Somerset<sup>220</sup>.

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<sup>218</sup> for illustrations from parishes in the see of Canterbury, see Duffy, pp 434-442

<sup>219</sup> Knocker, p.59

<sup>220</sup> Dunlop, p.98

## The Protestant Reformation

During Edward's reign England became a Protestant country. The use of the new English Prayer Book, in which a new communion service replaced the old sacramental mass, became mandatory in the summer of 1549. Images of saints were regarded as idolatrous and removed from the churches. Crosses and censors such as those provided from bequests made by Clemens Broke and Richard Pette were destroyed. "Vessels of the Church were thoroughly eliminated from our parishes in the sixteenth century. Not one chalice remains in any Kentish Church"<sup>221</sup>.

The images of Christ, Mary and John which had stood on the top of rood screen were often replaced with the royal arms of the king. These were generally destroyed during the reign of Mary, the only authentic set of the arms of Edward VI which seems to have survived being at Westerham church which is about five miles west of Sevenoaks. In the early 1550s, there may have been a similar set in Sevenoaks.<sup>222</sup>

A major change in Sunday worship was the banning of the parish procession with which the main mass of each Sunday and major feasts began. The reason given for this in the Injunction of 1547 was that it would eliminate "all contention and

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<sup>221</sup> Robertson, p.327

<sup>222</sup> MacCulloch, p.163

strife" which had arisen among the people "by reason of fond courtesy and challenging of places in procession" and also so that they could hear quietly was said or sung "to their edifying"<sup>223</sup>. These changes meant that the congregation changed from being participants to onlookers.

## The Banning of Ceremonies, Mystery Plays & Church Ales

A royal proclamation also banned four important ceremonies: the blessing of candles at Candlemas, ashes upon Ash Wednesday and palms upon Palm Sunday and the adoration of the rood on Good Friday, popularly called "Creeping to the Cross"<sup>224</sup>. Mystery plays were banned on the grounds that they mixed "scurrilitie with divinity". Popular ballads which combined a godly lyric with a well-known tune, were banned because, again, they mixed the sacred with the profane.

Church ales which had been held by the church wardens to collect money for the parish funds were discontinued by the late 1540s as were also other gatherings at which money was collected for the church.

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<sup>223</sup> Duffy, p. 451

<sup>224</sup> Hutton, p.120

## Changes to the Church

Many of the churches had their walls whitewashed and scriptural texts painted on them. Church altars were replaced by communion tables slowly in the 1540s but more rapidly from 1550 onwards. When, in November 1550, the Privy Council wrote that most of the altars in the country had been taken down, and the remainder should be removed to avoid disputes, they could have been exaggerating only slightly, if at all<sup>225</sup>. Even so, Edward ordered a further visitation to seize all goods except linen, chalices and bells.

## The Prayer Book and the Psalms

Not all the changes consisted of destruction and the banning of rituals. The reformers were working for a rationalised faith based on the gospels. Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer was used basically in its 1552 version until the end of the nineteenth century. The songs of King David were translated into Tudor rhyming verse and the singing of these Psalms became a popular part of the reformed religious experience which was again to last for at least three centuries.<sup>226</sup>

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225 Hutton, p.126

226 MacCulloch, p.12

# The Darkenold Family

Even though Edward himself was not seen at Knole, Sevenoaks is likely to have been industrious in supporting the royal injunctions. The vicar of Sevenoaks from 1535 was William Darkenold who was deprived of his living in 1554, a year after Mary came to the throne. Whether this was because of his views or because he was married, he obviously had Protestant leanings.

Darkenold is one of many variations of the name Durnell, a family for whom eleven generations prior to 1538 have been traced, this family having lived for over 800 years within five miles of Sevenoaks Market Place. Bryan Darknall "of [Westerham, carpenter and yeoman](#)" died in 1608<sup>227</sup> but the Durnell timber and building business has survived to the present day.

## The Darkenolds and Bradbourne

In 1545, Bradbourne was owned by Henry VIII since, in that year, an indenture was made between him and "William Darkenolde, gentleman". This granted to Darkenolde the lease of a watermill called "Brodeborne" and five pieces of land together with "[all ponds, waters and fishes thereunto belonging, now or late in the](#)

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227 Durnell, C.S.



tenure of John Webbe, late parcel of the possessions of Sir Henry Isley, Kt. and now annexed to the Honour of Otford<sup>228</sup>.

The William who was granted the lease of Bradbourne mill could have been the father of the William Darknoll, rector of Penshurst from 1563 to 1596 who was buried there and commemorated by a brass plate let into the wall near the altar:

"There lyeth William Darknoll, parson of this place  
Ending his ministry even the year of grace 1596  
His father and mother, and wives two by name  
John (80), Jane (83) and two Margarets (50, 67) all lived in good fame  
Their several ages who liketh to know  
Over each of their names the figures do show  
The sons and the daughters now sprung of this race  
Are five score and odd in every place<sup>229</sup>.

But what was the connection between the vicar of Sevenoaks and the rector of Penshurst?

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228 Reynolds, p.1

229 Durnell, C.S. p.7, spelling modernised

# A Glimpse of the Market in the 1550s

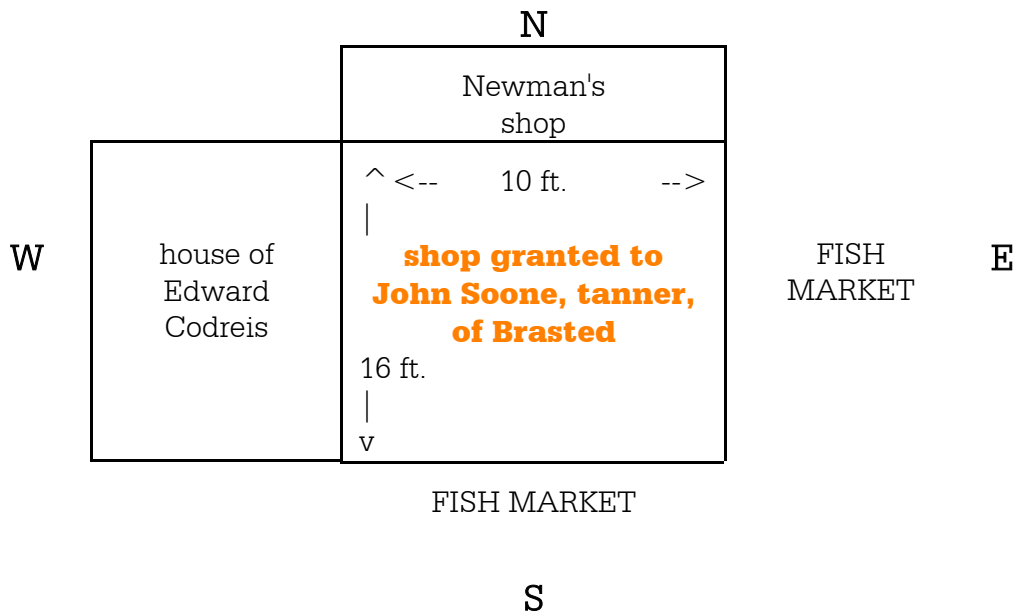
By the middle of the sixteenth century there were a number of larger houses close to the market, their frameworks formed of large oak beams, probably from the locality. These beams carried the weight of the upper storeys and the tiled roof. The lower walls were brick filled between the timbers with the higher storeys faced with hanging tiles. Kentish ragstone was used for the foundations, hearths and chimney breasts. Dunlop gives a drawing of such a house<sup>230</sup>.

By 1551, part of Sevenoaks Market was designated as the "Fish Market"<sup>231</sup>. Did the rippers from the south coast break their journey at Sevenoaks to sell some of their fish? Some of the fish sold could have been fresh water fish from local fish ponds. This detail comes from the sale by Robert Hunt, yeoman of Sevenoaks, of a shop to John Soone, tanner of Brasted, for 36s 8d (£1.83):

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<sup>230</sup> Dunlop, p.90

<sup>231</sup> Gordon Ward Notebook Sevenoaks 13, p.14



# Chapter 6

## Return to Catholicism; Mary Tudor & the Wyatt Rebellion

In the summer of 1553, Edward died and an attempt was made to retain the Protestant changes by making Lady Jane Grey queen. This, however, was unsuccessful and Mary, Henry VIII's daughter by Katherine of Aragon and a devout Catholic, succeeded to the throne.

### Restoration of Churches & Ritual

190

Mary ordered churches to rebuild their altars and replace their ornaments and plate but many could not find the necessary money. The re-introduction of rituals was not restricted by shortage of money but the social activities which were the most popular with the people could sometimes get out of control. Kent posed more problems for government in that it was the county most opposed to a Catholic rituals.

## The Wyatt Rebellion

194

The proposed marriage of Mary to Philip of Spain triggered a rebellion in Kent led by Thomas Wyatt who published a Proclamation which brought in supporters including the Isleys and Knevets from the Sevenoaks area. The rebellion started well with Wyatt capturing Rochester but Henry Isley and the Knevets, with their men, were routed at the Battle of Blacksole Field, a few miles from Sevenoaks from where they had set off for Rochester. Ten days later it was all over with the Knevets being executed in Sevenoaks which also saw the trial and execution of Sir William Isley and a farmer from Wrotham called Mantell.

## Queen Mary's Martyrs

201

After London, Kent suffered more martyrdoms than any other county

## Wills from the 1550s

201

Two wills from 1558 and 1559 show a return to Catholic phraseology whereas the will of Eme Beale written in 1556 has a preamble of the type expected in a non-Catholic regime. Giving the date Eme's will was written was complicated by there being both a queen and a king at the time.

# Restoration of Churches & Ritual

Whilst the ultra-Protestantism of Edward VI's reign had by no means been popular with everyone, immense changes had been made to church buildings, their decoration, and all the ceremonies connected with them. A return to Catholicism, however, was even less popular but not necessarily for religious reasons.

It soon became obvious to Mary that she could not return to the church the lands which had been given to or bought by the laity, not only the nobility but also to the gentry and professional men. Catholicism was also associated with foreign influence and when it became known that Mary was considering marrying Philip of Spain this led to rumours of the coming of the Inquisition.

Once her government was established, it worked to restore the Catholic faith in those areas where it could avoid conflict with large groups whose interests would not be met by such a change. In December 1553, the Privy Council imprisoned a Maidstone man who had sponsored a petition for Protestantism in his parish. Probably more to the liking of many of her subjects, in March 1554 she issued injunctions for the restoration of all processions and all "laudable and honest ceremonies"<sup>232</sup>.

## The Churches

There were, however, some changes she could make. To begin with Mary ordered every parish to build an altar, obtain a cross and hallow ashes on Ash Wednesday, palms on Palm Sunday and water on Easter Eve. By the end of 1554 most parishes had rebuilt their high altar and obtained vestments and copes and at least some of the utensils and ornaments of the mass and the necessary books.

During the rest of Mary's reign, they continued to add to their equipment and (at least within the sample studied by Hutton) all those parishes which had removed their rood lofts rebuilt them. In some cases it was possible to bring items out of hiding; other parishes might first have bought a wooden crucifix which was replaced later by a silver or gilded cross. Many of these changes were compulsory including, by 1556, the obtaining of an image of the patron saint. Yet, as Hutton records, "[most of the parishes in the sample decorated their churches more than the legal minimum](#)" <sup>233</sup>.

Replacing items always costs more than disposing of them. Whilst changes under Edward had cost little, some of those under Mary caused serious financial problems. Where church plate and cloths had been confiscated by Edward's commissioners or bought by parishioners, there was some possibility of them being returned but many had been destroyed or lost. Each parish had, by some

means, to find money for restoration work. Church rates and collections from the congregation were the obvious ways but some parishes found unusual solutions: at South Littleton in Worcestershire the priest agreed to pay for the books required in return for being given the right to cull and sell the pigeons which lived in the steeple<sup>234</sup> ..

## Restoration of Ritual

Restoration of ritual was easier and candles appeared in churches again, palms were blessed on Palm Sunday; processions and church ales, May games and the decoration of churches with plants all revived. These were obviously popular with the people and had been missed during Edward's reign.

But not all of them were to the government's liking and, in 1555, all May games were forbidden in Kent on the grounds that "lewd practices" of "vagabonds and other light persons . . are appointed to begin at such assemblies"<sup>235</sup>. It seems that the social activities connected with the church rather than the doctrinal ones were what the people had missed. Hutton found little interest in the cult of saints or provision for souls in Purgatory. Candles were blessed at Candlemas but the

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234 Worcesterhire R.O., 850/1284/1, p.12 quoted by Hutton, p.130

235 Acts of the Privy Council of England, v, p.151 quoted by Hutton, p.131



only images before which they were lit were those on the high altar and the rood loft.

## Restoration in Kent

Kent, however, was the county where the progress of change back to Catholic rituals was slowest<sup>236</sup>. Kent includes the sees of Canterbury and Rochester and also those parishes, like Sevenoaks, in the Peculiar of Shoreham. In the Canterbury diocese and the Peculiar, Cranmer, as one of the main instigators of the Protestant Reformation, would have had a considerable influence which may have meant that more people were converted to the new ideas and also that the visitations were carried out more thoroughly during the reign of Edward. Literacy levels were probably above average in Kent since it was a rich county closely connected with London. Those with the ability to read the Bible for themselves and prepared to attend lectures and sermons would be more likely to find Protestantism to their liking and, given their position in society, be able to influence other parishioners.

# The Wyatt Rebellion

On 14th January 1554 the proposed marriage of Mary and Philip of Spain was announced and this was the trigger for a rebellion in Kent which was much more serious than that of John Cade. With many in Kent averse to the return to Catholicism, alliance with a strong Catholic country was seen as a great danger. On 22nd January Thomas Wyatt, of Allington Castle near Maidstone, published a proclamation at Sevenoaks, Tonbridge, Ashford and Maidstone:

"For as much as it is now spread abroad, and certainly pronounced by the Lord Chancellor and other of the Council, of the Queen's determined pleasure to marry with a Stranger. We therefore write unto you, because you be Englishmen, that you will join with us as we will with you unto death in this behalf, protesting unto you before God that no other earthly cause could move us unto this enterprise but this alone, wherein we seek no harm to the Queen but better counsel and counsellors"<sup>237</sup>.

## The Response to Wyatt's Proclamation

Whilst Wyatt was making his proclamation "Sir Henry Isley, Anthony Knevet, William Knevet, with others were at Tonbridge, Sevenoaks and other towns in the west part of the shire, stirring the people by alarms, drums and proclamations"<sup>238</sup>.

Wyatt and his well-armed followers who included Sir Henry's brother, Thomas Isley, but without the West Kent contingent, marched on Rochester on 26th January and took possession of it. There Wyatt waited for his supporters sending a letter to the Knevets and Isley "requiring them to accelerate their coming unto him". Meanwhile, Robert Southwell, Sheriff of Kent, and Lord Abergavenny were marshalling the government forces making their headquarters at Malling about nine miles east of Sevenoaks.

## The Battle of Blacksole Field

After receiving the letter from Wyatt, the Isleys and Knevets who had spent part of the intervening time at Penshurst rifling Sir Henry Sydney "of his armour, he being attendant upon the Queen's Highness as a faithful subject", marched first to Sevenoaks and then started on the way to Rochester. But Abergavenny and

Southwell marched out of Malling and overtook the rebels at Blacksole Field in the parish of Wrotham.

Here, the rebels were handled "so hot and so fiercely that, after a small shot with long bows by the traitors, and a fierce brag showed by some of the horsemen, they took their flight away as fast as they could. Yet of them were taken prisoners above three score". Abergavenny's men "chased the horsemen till they came to a wood called Hartley Wood, four miles distant from the place where the onset began" but Henry Isley and the Knevets managed to escape, at least for the moment.

After the battle, Abergavenny and his men retired to Wrotham and Southwell with his to Otford, both only a few miles from Sevenoaks. They had difficulty finding food for their men and Sevenoaks would have been called upon for supplies.

Many of the townspeople, not yet knowing what the outcome of the uprising would be and seeing "the same violent and inflammable people whom John Cade had a century before led to London"<sup>239</sup> rushing to join Wyatt, would not have wanted to support either side too vigorously. They would have been what Proctor called "neuters, lurking in caves during the tempest, watching but where should come the victory". But some of the men of Sevenoaks could have joined the Isleys and Knevets as they passed through the town before the battle either for the excitement or because they were worried by the change back to Catholicism

After the defeat of his expected reinforcements from West Kent, Wyatt "fell into . . . great extreme anguish" whilst Abergavenny and Southwell decided to wait for reinforcements before making an attack.

## Wyatt Retains Rochester and Captures Cooling Castle

The Duke of Norfolk with an armed force and Captain Brett with six hundred men arrived at Gravesend where they were met by Lord Cobham, "the most powerful brain and political factor in the neighbourhood"<sup>240</sup> But, instead of staying with Norfolk at Gravesend, Cobham returned to his castle at Cooling. Even worse from the government's point of view, when Norfolk advanced with his men to retake Rochester, Brett defected to Wyatt taking his men with him. Norfolk had no alternative but to retire to Gravesend.

Wyatt's success continued with the capture of Cooling Castle and he then marched towards London, reaching Southwark on the south bank of the Thames on 3rd February, nine days after his Proclamation was published.

From here, things began to go wrong for him. Stopped from crossing London Bridge, on the 6th February he decided to make a long detour up river and cross the river at Kingston about twelve miles in a direct line from London Bridge. His

followers started to melt away and those that remained became dispirited and weary. The distance back to London north of the river was much longer but the next day he and his remaining men assembled at Hyde Park about a mile and a half from Westminster.

Opposing them was the Earl of Pembroke with a troop of horsemen but the Earl “determined rather by policy to achieve the victory than by bloodshed to confound the rebels”<sup>241</sup> so that Wyatt’s men were allowed to march in good array towards Charing Cross. Pembroke’s horsemen “hovered all the while without moving until all was passed by saving the tail, upon which they did set and cut it off” without the rest stopping to assist those attacked. Wyatt himself, with about five hundred men, pushed on until they came to Charing Cross and from there they continued towards the City.

When Wyatt reached Ludgate his entry to the City was barred and, after some fighting, he was persuaded that in resisting he could “get no good but be the death of all (his) soldiers” to the great peril of his soul<sup>242</sup>. Wyatt and his companions gave themselves up and were sent to imprisonment in the Tower.

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241 John Proctor, printed in Pollard, p.248-9

242 Nichols, p.50

## Punishment

The rest of February saw the trial and sentencing of most of the rebels with the execution of about eighty men in London and twenty-two in Kent. Henry Isley and his brother Thomas were executed at Maidstone and Anthony and William Knevet at Sevenoaks after having been tried in London.

Sir William Isley, the uncle of Henry and Thomas, and Mantell, a farmer from Wrotham, were tried in Sevenoaks and, having been captured with arms in their hands, were condemned to death. Men who had supported Wyatt surrounded the Market House where the trial took place and a strong body of armed horsemen had to be brought in to ensure that an attempt was not made to rescue the prisoners<sup>243</sup>. Early next morning Isley and Mantell were marched under strong guard to Gallows Common about a mile to the north of the town centre and there executed.

The ordinary men of Kent who had supported Wyatt were rounded up by Southwell but there were so many of them that the prisons were full and he wrote to London asking for the speedy appointment of a special commission. It was not just where to keep the prisoners but also that "[sundry of them be husbandmen and sundry artificers and all is at stay for the period of their imprisonment](#)"<sup>244</sup>.

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243 Wrothesley's Chronicle in English Historical Documents, Vol.5, p.128.

244 State Papers, Vol. III, no.32

Fortunately for him, the prisoners and those affected by their imprisonment, Southwell did not have to wait long for the Queen's commission which directed him and the justices of the peace to "not only bail and set at large such as were in prison in the county for that offence, being of no small number, but also to compound with fine the offenders, according to the quality of their offences. Which manner of order, being not heard of in the like case, or at least very rarely, declared a singular clemency and benignity in the Queen"<sup>245</sup>.

Wyatt himself was not executed until 11th April. The marriage of Mary and Philip took place in July 1554.



## Queen Mary's Martyrs

At the end of 1555 Parliament obtained the queen's agreement that there was to be no restoration of monastic lands but throughout that year many martyrs were burnt for heresy. Between 1555 and her death in November 1558, approaching three hundred people suffered martyrdom, most of them from south-east England. Sixty-seven were Londoners but in Kent fifty-seven were burned, much more than in any other county, Essex with thirty-nine having the next largest number<sup>246</sup>.

## Wills from the 1550s

The wills of two men who died in the 1550s have survived: Robert Leighton's written in 1558 and William Constable's in 1559. Both men bequeathed their souls to "almighty god and to our blessed lady St. Mary and all the blessed/holy company of heaven" which is unusual for wills as late as this. This may have been due to the return, under Mary, of Catholic phraseology.

The preambles of a random sample of 33 wills written between 1531-1559 from neighbouring parishes, mainly Seal, have been examined and the great majority (27) have a very simple preamble on the lines:

"I bequeath my soul to (Almighty) god and my body to be buried in the church/churchyard".

The exceptions hark back to wills written before the 1530s, for example: "I bequeath my soul into the hands of god and into the holy company of heaven and my body to be buried in the common churchyard" (John Patriche; 1555; Seal; CKS: Crb/Pwr 11.349).

Eme Beale of London, widow, late of Sevenoaks (1556) has a longer preamble which is of the type expected in a non-Catholic regime: "I bequeath and commend my soul unto almighty god, my maker and redeemer, trusting and faithfully believing, through the merits of Christ's most precious passion, all my sins be clearly forgiven. And my body to be buried in open burial where god it shall dispose".

## **Specifying the Date of Eme Beale's Will**

The dating of Eme Beale's this will shows how complicated such a relatively simple thing could become when the sovereign was a queen whose husband had the title of king: "The 22nd day of May in the year of our Lord god 1556. And in the second and third years of the reigns of our sovereign Lord and Lady Philip and

Mary by the grace of god king and Queen of England, Spain, France both, city of Jerusalem and Ireland, defender of the faith, Archduke of Austria, Duke of Burgundy, Milan and Brabant, Count of Haspestannders Tyroll". This will, which was written by John Skampion, scrivener, was not proved until 28th June 1574. It looks as if both Eme and her husband had been married previously; perhaps Eme came from Sevenoaks but her husband from London since there are no Beales in the Sevenoaks parish registers.

# Chapter 7

## Administration & the Courts of Law

The workings of the various Law Courts up to the beginning of the Civil War are described.

### The Sheriff

207

The sheriff was the head of local government for the county.

### Local Courts

207

The Court Baron, the civil court of the lord of the manor, and the court-leet were still the two main local courts in Tudor times and continued their work into the seventeenth century. Records for both courts have survived for a number of periods up to 1707 for the nearby village of Ightham and some examples are given from these.

### Church Courts & Churchwardens

212

The Church Courts were concerned with the moral behaviour of the men and women of the parish and the law-enforcers were the churchwardens who were also responsible for the running and maintenance of the church

with items such as pest control being added to their duties as a result of legislation.

## **Justices of the Peace** 218

The backbone of local government were the Justices of the Peace, members of the gentry recruited by a royal commission, who carried out a large number of varied duties.

## **William Lambarde** 220

For some time prior to his appointment as a JP for Kent, William Lambarde lived at Ightham. William, author of the Perambulation of Kent, also wrote about the duties of JPs.

## **Quarter and Petty Sessions** 223

Quarter Sessions were concerned with civil and minor criminal cases whilst Petty Sessions dealt with various minor offences.

## **The Petty Constable** 225

Each parish or village elected a man to serve in the unpaid post of Petty Constable usually for a year his jobs including keeping the peace, see that trade regulations were kept and assist the churchwardens with the administration of the Poor Laws.

## The Poor Law

226

Providing for the poor became more of a problem from the middle of the fifteenth century and by the middle of the sixteenth each parish had to set up an almshouse and collect money for the upkeep of the poor from its parishioners. By the end of the century, the poor were the responsibility of the Parish Vestry but the records for Sevenoaks have not survived; some details are given for Chiddingstone. Poor people moving from place to place were also a problem and here the examples are taken from Ightham.

## The Court of Assizes

232

Here more serious cases were tried before professional judges; these included orders for the maintenance of roads and bridges. Punishments could be corporal (including execution) or monetary but the accused could plead “benefit of clergy”. Investigations prior to arrest and appearance at the Assizes could be carried out by JPs. During Elizabeth’s reign the Assizes were held in Sevenoaks on four occasions.

## The Probate Courts & the Peculiar of Shoreham

240

The proving of wills was the responsibility of the ecclesiastical courts which, for those living in West Kent were the Archbishop’s Court in London for the wealthy and the Bishop’s Court in Rochester. But Sevenoaks was in the Deanery of Shoreham and so used the court at Shoreham instead of Rochester.

## The Sheriff

In each county, the head of local government was the sheriff, appointed by the king or queen but by the sixteenth century his power was declining although he still presided over parliamentary elections. He was also expected to support the government in time of emergency. As we have seen, in 1554 Robert Southwell, with Lord Abergavenny, were called upon to marshal a force to oppose Wyatt's rebellion.

John Lennarde and his son Sampson both served a year as Sheriff, John in 1571 and Samson in 1592.

## Local Courts

The Court Baron, the civil court of the lord of the manor, and the Court-Leet (sometimes called View of Frank-Pledge), were still important institutions in Tudor times and were still operating, to a certain extent, in the seventeenth century. When, in 1630, the manor of Great Kippington was sold to Thomas Farnaby, the phrase "all that to the view of frank-pledge belonging or

appertaining" was included in the detailed description of what was being sold<sup>247</sup>. The Court Baron for the manor of Rumshed was still being held in the 1640s with the rents of various pieces of land and enquiries concerning heriot being the main items investigated<sup>248</sup>.

The jury of the Court Baron, called the homage, was chosen from tenants of the manor whilst all those resident within the manor were eligible for the jury of the court-leet.

## The Court-Leet

This was the king's court and dealt with offences against public order such as theft, affrays and bloodshed, drunkenness and disputes over public ways, hedges and water courses. The purpose of the Assize of Bread and Ale, which was introduced in the reign of Henry III, was to ensure that the bread and ale supplied was of good quality and that people were not overcharged or supplied with short measure. It was the court-leet's responsibility to see that these regulations were followed.

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247 Indenture 1630, CKS: U/1000/1 T1, bundle 1

248 Gordon Ward Notebooks, Rumshed V



Since all men could serve on the jury of the court-leet, all ranks could participate in the maintenance of order within their town or village. Each year the jury of the court-leet appointed the various officials required, the number of these depending on the size of the community and, for example, whether or not there was a market which had to be supervised.

Aleconners tested the quality of the ale and all inhabitants had some duties to perform. In some places it was the lord's duty to maintain the stocks and weights and measures, in others it was the men of the parish who had to carry out this work.

In 1541 an Act was passed which required all men to practice with the long bow and, in order that they would not be diverted from this, it prohibited the keeping for gain of common houses, bowling alleys and other places for unlawful games and, at least until the end of Elizabeth's reign, men were being brought before the courts for "playing bowls unlawfully" and allowing the playing of "the unlawful game of common dicing" in an alehouse<sup>249</sup>.

## The Ightham Records

Ightham is a village about 4½ miles to the north-east of Sevenoaks and records for both courts have survived for a number of periods up to 1707. Whilst Ightham had a population only about a third that of Sevenoaks, there must have been many similarities between the cases heard there and those at Sevenoaks. In Ightham both courts were presided over by the steward of the manor who acted at the View as the King's representative, unless the sheriff or his deputy was present.

The Ightham records, written in medieval Latin with numerous contractions (even up to 1707), consist mainly of Court Rolls. Dates, at least in the earlier rolls, were given by reference to saints' days so that, for example, the date 23rd March 1463 was, translated from the Latin, "[Wednesday next before the feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the third year of the reign of King Edward IV](#)"<sup>250</sup>.

## Overcrowding

One of the Court's concerns was overcrowding and means to overcome its evils and the bad sanitary conditions associated with it often occur in the Ightham records. Many cottages there had "[no water supply other than rain and the](#)

springs which trickle out of the Sandgate beds and fill small hollowed-out pools, called wells. These . . . were of great importance to the inhabitants and the authorities were alert to protect them from pollution<sup>251</sup>. Conditions must have been very similar in Sevenoaks.

## The Recovery of Debts

In Ightham, at least, the Court Baron acted for a period as a court for the recovery of debts not exceeding 40s (£2). An early entry records a debt owed by John Tebold of Seal who died in 1501 owning shops in Sevenoaks and Seal. In 1491, William a Ware complained that John Tebold had bought from him an ox for 18s (£0.80) of which he paid only 10s (£0.50). "Tebold was attached by two heifers to answer the claim which, however, was settled out of Court"<sup>252</sup>.

A much more complex charge of debt came before the Court also in 1491. William a Forde complained against Thomas Pelsworth for debt of 11s 4d (£0.57). "The defendant was attached by 13 sheep, value 13s. The plaintiff, by his attorney, William James, stated that on 10 October 1485 the defendant borrowed from him 4s. He was surety for the defendant to Thomas Levesoth of Goudhurst for 2s and

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251 Harrison, 1938, p.11

252 Harrison, 1939, p.20; presumably "attached" meant that he gave two heifers as surety

the residue, 5s 4d, was for fresh fish which the plaintiff delivered to the defendant at Ightham". The plaintiffs were allowed to settle out of Court.<sup>253</sup>

These two examples show the geographical area over which men worked and also that people like William a Forde were in a position to employ an attorney.

## Church Courts & Churchwardens

The Church Courts and its officers, the churchwardens, "provided the machinery through which moral discipline was enforced"<sup>254</sup> with its main punishments being humiliating penances such as standing before the congregation in a white sheet or, if one was lucky, a fine. Both the woman who gossiped maliciously and the one who had an illegitimate child could find themselves presented at the Archdeacon's court. Adultery, fornication, defamation, sabbath-breaking, witchcraft and blasphemy all came within the court's remit<sup>255</sup>.

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<sup>253</sup> Harrison, 1939, p.20-21; Goudhurst is about 14 miles south of Ightham

<sup>254</sup> Rowse, p.424

<sup>255</sup> Plowden, p.189

## The Churchwardens of Sevenoaks

Churchwardens were generally appointed for a year at a time but, since they were not paid for the work they carried out, they often served reluctantly knowing they would be fined if they refused.

The record of those for Sevenoaks does not start until 1599 when the parish registers began to be recorded in a book. There were two wardens each year and sometimes one would be appointed for a second year; in the years between 1599 and 1646 this happened fifteen times with two of these serving a total of three times<sup>256</sup> and two others twice but not in successive years. No churchwardens were given for 1647 to 1652

Approximately seventy different men took on the post of churchwarden at least once. "Approximately" because, with the limited information available, it is not possible to tell, for example, whether the William Olyver who was churchwarden in 1632 was the same man who served in 1644 and 1645. Of these, the status or occupation is known only for twenty-one:

gentleman	5	yeoman	4
mercier	2	householder	2
shoemaker	2		

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<sup>256</sup> John Masters (1599, 1607, 1608) and William Crawley (1624, 1625, 1627)

with a tailor, husbandman, schoolmaster, carpenter, bricklayer and wheelwright. See [Appendix 16](#) for a complete list.

## The Running of the Church

The churchwardens were responsible for the smooth running of the church which included reporting those who did not attend the church services and also checking that the vicar performed his duties correctly. If they thought it necessary, they could report directly to the bishop.

They also had the power to act in areas which impinged on the church without being its direct concern. Thus they could close alehouses which opened during the hours of church services. Unless a special dispensation had been obtained, marriages could be performed only if the banns had been correctly read out in the parish church and one of the partners had to be resident in the parish.

Within the church, men and women usually sat apart and the seating also took strict regard of social status. This could lead to arguments and even brawls within the church. Whilst some of the rules sound extreme to modern ears, many parishioners were presented to the courts for "[sleeping, spitting, swearing, jostling, scoffing and, on one occasion, letting off a gun in church](#)"<sup>257</sup>. Perhaps we

might allow sleeping but the other offences are unlikely to be met with today. That may be because no one today is forced to go to church.

## **Churchwardens as Accountants**

The churchwardens were the legal guardians of all the property belonging to the church and had to account for all the income received and money spent. Income could come from rents of houses or land left to the church or other endowments such as a parish flock of sheep or a cow. There were also rents for pews and charges for graves within the church.

Money was required for the maintenance of the church buildings and other expenses for which the churchwardens were responsible such as the church plate, the bread and wine needed for communion and the purchase of items such as altar cloths, surplices and books.

It was often the case, however, that the parish revenue was insufficient to meet the church expenses and it was necessary to supply the deficiency by means of a rate particularly after the Reformation when church ales, which had provided money for the church, were no longer held.

## A Church Rate and the Vestry

Originally voluntary, a church rate had been raised on the parishioners from an early time but, by the fifteenth century it had become compulsory being imposed by a parish meeting called the Vestry being named from the place where it met. Consisting, in theory, of all the parishioners, in many places it had become a select group of 12 or 24 parishioners, holding office for life and filling vacancies by co-option. They summoned the Vestry on Easter Tuesday to impose the rate and then collected it presenting to the ecclesiastical courts those who refused to pay<sup>258</sup>.

## Other Duties

In 1556 another duty was imposed on the churchwardens, that of pest control. They and six other parishioners were to assess a rate for the destruction of vermin. They were also to appoint "two honest and substantial persons" of the parish to be "distributors of the provision for the destruction of noiseful fowls and vermin" who were to offer rewards for the heads and eggs of certain birds and the heads of certain beasts (crows, hawks, weasels, etc.), which were to be "burned, consumed or cut in sunder" in the presence of the said churchwardens<sup>259</sup>.

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258 Tanner, p.508

259 Tanner, p.508



In the 1570s an edict was passed that country people were to wear woollen caps and thus give support to the woollen cloth industry. Again it was the churchwardens who were made responsible for getting the people to obey the order and report back to the local officer<sup>260</sup>.

The churchwardens were also responsible for the smooth running of the church which included reporting those who did not attend the church services but also checking that the vicar performed his duties correctly. If they thought it necessary they could report directly to the bishop. But they also had the power to act in areas which impinged on the church without being its direct concern. Thus they could close alehouses which opened during the hours of church services.

Unless a special dispensation had been obtained, marriages could be performed only if the banns had been correctly read out in the parish church and one of the partners had to be resident in the parish.

# Justices of the Peace

From the time of the Reformation onwards, the preservation of order was a major concern of the government and the church and the "Homily of Obedience", written in 1547 told of the consequences if order was not kept:

"there reigneth all abuse, carnal liberty, enormity, sin and Babylonical confusion. Take away kings, princes, rulers, magistrates, judges and such estates of God's order, no man shall ride or go by the highway untroubled, no man shall sleep in his own house or bed unkilld, no man shall keep his wife, children or possessions in quietness, all things shall be common and there needs must follow all mischief and utter destruction both of souls, bodies, goods and commonwealths."<sup>261</sup>

Justices of the Peace (JPs), appointed by a royal commission, were recruited from the gentry families to perform a large number of duties and act as a link between the parish, county and central government.

## The Duties of JPs

Within their own parish JPs enforced government religious policy and were responsible for the maintenance of public order as well as that of highways and bridges. They also carried out duties, such as binding apprentices, giving order for the relief of the impotent poor and granting licences to beg.

A JP acting on his own could order breakers of the peace to desist and, if he was able, he could arrest them himself or call for assistance from others. A JP also took depositions from witnesses or those accused of a crime and could bind over people to appear in court<sup>262</sup>. There were no regular wages attached to the office but certain small allowances were made out of the fines, in particular, 4s (£0.20) a day during attendance at Quarter Sessions. There were, no doubt, ways of gaining other advantages from holding a position of authority in the county as well as social position which went with the post. It was also thought that the gentry of the county should give their services for the welfare of the community.

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262 Tanner, p.455 and Zell (2000), p.17

## Sevenoaks JPs

The Lennard and Bosville families included at least one JP in each generation whilst Stephen Theobald was a JP from at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Thomas Sackville, a Privy Councillor from 1571, was a JP from the beginning of Elizabeth's reign but he was more a national than local figure and did not gain full possession of Knole until the end of the century. By that time his heir, Robert Sackville, was also on the bench; later Edward Sackville had the status and authority of a JP but did not attend the Assizes.

## William Lambarde

In 1579 William Lambarde was appointed a justice of the peace for Kent and, from his own experiences, he wrote about the duties of JPs..

He had entered Lincoln's Inn in 1556 at the age of nineteen; this was one of the London Inns of Court where men studied the common law but Lambarde spent a considerable amount of time translating Anglo-Saxon laws and transcribing chronicles. He was called to the bar in 1567 and in July 1568 was appointed to a Commission of Sewers in Kent. These commissioners were authorised to oversee repairs to the sea walls, the cleansing of rivers, public streams and ditches and

the drainage of marshes and low-lying ground in the area under their jurisdiction. It was after this appointment that he began to write the "Perambulation of Kent".

## **His Marriage to Jane Multon**

During this time he stayed at St. Clere, the home of George Multon, which was then in the parish of Ightham about four miles east of Sevenoaks. Here he met George's daughter, Jane, whom he married on 11th September 1570 on the eve of her seventeenth birthday.

The marriage between the thirty-four year old Lambarde and the young daughter from a well-to-do Kentish family is often presented as a great romance but both Lambarde and Jane's father could also have had more practical reasons for the marriage. George Multon was a justice of the peace, a position to which Lambarde was hoping at that time to be appointed; Multon would also be able to introduce him into Kentish society<sup>263</sup>. In exchange, the Multons, a Kentish family, would gain from being linked with more cosmopolitan society and Lambarde was an ambitious man. Thus the romantic marriage also followed the middle-class tradition of choosing a wife for other reasons besides (or instead of) love.

## A Gentleman of Kent

Jane, however, died three years later, probably from smallpox, and was buried in Ightham church. William and Jane, who had no children, had lived at St. Clere after the marriage and William stayed there for another ten years. Here he established himself as a gentleman of Kent whilst continuing his membership of Lincoln's Inn so that in the same year he became a justice of the peace (1579) he was also elected an associate of the bench at Lincoln's Inn.

In 1583 he married again and moved to Halling (about four miles south west of Rochester), where his children were born. His eldest son was called Multon in memory of his first wife and her father and each subsequent generation continued this tradition. The Lambarde family moved to Sevenoaks in 1654 and lived there for three hundred years, William being commemorated by a window in the parish church.

## Quarter and Petty Sessions

JPs tried cases, usually four times a year, at the Quarter Sessions which were concerned with civil and minor criminal cases based on presentments made by the grand jury. The courts also handled matters concerned with local and national taxes, the poor law, vagrants and bastards, the maintenance of roads and bridges and the licensing of alehouses. At the Quarter Sessions, orders for maintenance and licenses were issued but, if the orders were not carried out or, for example, people sold ale without a licence, it was the higher courts to which the defendants were summoned.

## Grand Juries

The JP chose and charged the grand jury for the hundred, some of whose members might be men owning only a little land and not having much learning. Lambarde said that juries had to "hear and receive" what others brought to their notice but also they had "to inquire and present" things they had themselves found out. Juries, however, often found it difficult to indict their betters and could also favour their friends and seek vengeance on their enemies.

Lambarde, who had seen all these problems himself, made a number of charges to juries and, at Maidstone in 1599, he told them how they should carry out their duties:

"Spare not for love, dare not for hatred, stick not for fear of any to make your presentment, but simply, as out of the sight of men and yet in the sight of God, in duty to her Majesty, for love of your country, and with care of yourselves and yours, make faithful discovery of these evildoers to the riddance of some of them, the amendment of others and ease of the place where you live and dwell"<sup>264</sup>.

This was obviously written from the viewpoint of someone used to being in authority and perhaps relatively easy for the average jury man when the wrong was committed by an "outsider" but not so easy if it was someone of note in the parish, perhaps a wealthy landowner or a local gentleman.

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<sup>264</sup> "Lambarde and Local Government" by Read; quoted by Bridenbaugh, p.256



## Petty Sessions

Petty Sessions were held in particular localities as necessary at the discretion of any two JPs. They dealt with various minor offences, the verdict being given by a jury of the hundred.

## The Petty Constable

Each hundred had a High Constable responsible for the peace of the hundred but at the local level he was assisted by the constable of the parish or village. This office, which was unpaid, was held by ancient custom under the common law. The constable was elected and sworn in at the Court Leet and usually a particular man held it only for a year. The duties were thus considered such that a number of men from the village could carry them out without specific training and without it impinging too greatly on the work they did to earn their living.

These duties, however, covered a range of activities. The constable had to "prevent breaches of the peace, profane swearing, unlawful games, Sabbath-breaking and eating of flesh on fast-days; and to deal, in the first instance, with rogues and vagabonds, wandering players and breaches of trade regulations. He had to work with the churchwardens in the administration of the Poor Law and he

conducted whippings under the instructions of the local JP and carried out other sentences inflicted in Petty or Quarter Sessions"<sup>265</sup>. The vicar also had to be present at any whippings carried out in the parish<sup>266</sup>.

The constable was not paid for carrying out his duties and, whilst there was no doubt many ways of making small amounts of money, the position was not without danger. The prevention of poaching and trespassing and ensuring that conduct in the alehouses did not become disorderly could often have found him facing an angry or inebriated group of men.

## The Poor Law

"With us the poor is commonly divided into three sorts, so that some are poor by impotence, as the fatherless child, the aged, blind and lame, and the diseased person that is judged to be incurable; the second are poor by casualty, as the wounded soldier, the decayed householder, and the sick person visited with grievous and painful diseases; the third consisteth of thriftless poor, as the rioter that hath consumed all, the vagabond that will abide nowhere, but runneth up

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<sup>265</sup> Tanner, J.R.; p.510

<sup>266</sup> Tanner, J.R.; p.508

and down from place to place (as it were seeking work and finding none), and finally the rogue and the strumpet." So wrote William Harrison in the 1570s in his Description of England<sup>267</sup>.

## The Beggars Act of 1536

But how to provide for the poor had been a problem facing government since at least the time of Henry VII. The effect on bequests made in wills of the Beggars Act of 1536 has already been described. This act laid the legal responsibility on each parish for the relief of its own poor and they were to do this so that "none of them of very necessity shall be compelled to wander idly and go openly in begging to ask alms . . . but also to cause and compel all and every the said sturdy vagabonds and valiant beggars to be set and kept in continual labour". In addition:

. . . every preacher, parson, vicar, curate of this realm, as well in all and every their sermons, collations (homilies), bidding of the beads, as in time of all confessions and at the making of the wills or testaments of any persons, at all times of the year shall exhort, move, stir and provoke people to be liberal and bountifully to extend their good and charitable alms and contributions . . . for and toward the comfort of the said poor . . .<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> quoted by Plowden, p.82

<sup>268</sup> Tanner, J.R., p.479

## Charitable Alms

By an Act of 1550, each parish was to set up a house for the aged and impotent poor whose care was to be paid for by alms collected from the parishioners. A further Act was passed in 1552 which made the vicar and churchwardens responsible for the election, each Whitsun, to elect two "Gatherers and Collectors of the Charitable Alms". The next Sunday, these two were to attend church and "gently ask and demand of every man and woman what they of their charity will be contented to give weekly towards the relief of the poor". Although there was no compulsion to pay, the Collectors were to collect this money each week from those who had responded to their request.

During Mary's reign, more pressure was put on people to contribute. The Collectors were to "charitably exhort" anyone who refused. If they could not be persuaded, they were to be sent to the bishop who, if necessary, was "to take order for the charitable reformation of every such obstinate person". It was to be 1576 before any further punishment was imposed on parishioners who did not contribute towards the Poor Rate. Anyone not responding to the Collectors was to be forced to pay twice the amount originally asked of them.<sup>269</sup>

## Poor the Responsibility of the Parish Vestry

By the end of Elizabeth's reign, care of vagrants and the poor was the responsibility of the Parish Vestry which appointed overseers of the poor to carry out the work. Dunlop records that the minute books of the Vestry have many entries showing with what care this task was carried out<sup>270</sup> but these books have not been found.

One of them was actually lost at the time, this being recorded at the Easter Quarter Sessions of 1602. "By negligence of John Blome and Euticus Terry, or one of them, a book of assessment of the parishioners of Sevenoaks hath been lost whereby was lost from the poor . . . 21s 2d (£1.06)". If Blome could prove the delivery of the book to Terry but Terry could not prove its return to Blome, then Terry was to pay the money lost to the overseers of the poor. But if Terry could prove the return of the book to Blome, then it was Blome who had to pay the money to the overseers. Terry, supported by the oath of John Masters who had been one of the churchwardens in 1599, said that Blome had the book again and it was therefore ordered that Blome should pay the overseers<sup>271</sup>.

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<sup>270</sup> Dunlop, p.106

<sup>271</sup> CKS: Q/SR3 m 4d No.2

## Collection and Distribution in Chiddingstone

Details of the records for Chiddingstone from 1565 to 1658 have been described by Gibbons. For each year from 1565 to 1584 the "Accounts of Collectors for the poor" give a list of those contributing to the poor with the total amount received and a list of the poor receiving relief. In 1565 when the accounts began £3 18s 11d (£3.95) was collected but this seems to have been more than was required and, in most years, there was a "comfortable balance over"<sup>272</sup>. The collectors doled out small sums to the sick and needy and distributed specific gifts and bequests but there were no pensioners receiving regular sums nor is there any record of children being apprenticed or boarded out.

After a gap of fourteen years, poor relief in Chiddingstone was carried out on a larger scale with two to four poor rates being levied each year. Both "indwellers" living in the parish and "outdwellers" who owned land in the parish were liable for rates and, in 1604, there were 62 indwellers and 45 outdwellers with the latter being rated at 1d per acre. The amount collected between 1598 and 1630 varied between £11 and £26 10s.

## The Wandering Poor

Poor people wandering from parish to parish were also restricted by the Poor Law. Anyone without means of support or someone to stand surety for their good behaviour was to be sent back to their own parish. In the Ightham Court Rolls for 1586-1618 there are many accounts of strangers being received into houses without such sureties having been made. The Court held on 20th October 1601 heard that William Weston had taken into his cottage two men and a widow "as inmates, without sureties". He was to find sureties or remove them under penalty of 10s. But the Court did not move very quickly for it was not until eighteen months later, on 5th May 1603, that William Weston forfeited 10s to the lord of the manor because he had not removed his tenants.

Perhaps because of laxness such as that shown above, the problem seems to have become worse. In 1608 the Court ordered that, in future, anyone taking in a stranger without first putting "into security in the sum of ten pounds to the churchwardens and overseers" was to forfeit to the lord of the manor twenty shillings for every month that the person stayed in Ightham. These were very large sums of money.

The definition of a stranger was anyone who had not been resident in the parish for a year. Even with these high penalties there were some who tried to evade them. In October 1610 John Terry was found to have received "John Charyrie, a

stranger, in his cottage, without sureties for the exoneration of the parish" and he was to forfeit 20s for every month of his stay<sup>273</sup>.

## The Court of Assizes

The more serious cases were tried at the Court of Assizes before professional judges travelling on circuit but with JPs in attendance.

## The Maintenance of Roads and Bridges

Where orders for maintenance of roads or bridges had not been carried out, the whole town or village who should have carried out the work could be indicted and these cases could continue over a number of years.

Sometimes it was not clear who was responsible, one example being the bridges at Tonbridge. In March 1626, two bridges were found to be "in great decay and very dangerous" but the jury could not establish who was responsible for their repair. Two years later no work seems to have been done since it was recorded that "the great bridge at Tonbridge, which has been presented before, is decayed



and dangerous". And in 1633 it had "not been repaired despite having been presented before".<sup>274</sup>

## Corporal and Monetary Punishment

Lambarde succinctly described the punishments which could be meted out: "The punishments that be commonly put in execution at this day and wherewith the justices of the peace have to do, they be divided into corporal, pecuniary and infamous:

"Corporal punishment is either capital or not capital. Capital (or deadly) punishment is done sundry ways as by hanging, burning, boiling or pressing. Not capital is of divers sorts also, as cutting of the hand or ear, burning (or marking) the hand or face, whipping, imprisoning, stocking, setting on the pillory, or cuckingstool, which in old time was called the tumbrel.

"Under the name of pecuniary punishment I comprehend all issues, fines, amercements and forfeitures of offices, goods or lands"<sup>275</sup>.

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274 Cockburn (Chas.I); 112, 618, 911

275 Hurstfield, p.159

Conspirators, traitors and perjurers were liable to "infamous punishments" similar to attainder where the guilty person lost civil rights and possibly their land and goods.

Whilst the usual penalty if found guilty of burglary or grand larceny (theft of property worth more than one shilling) was hanging James Browne, a labourer of Sevenoaks was sentenced to an even worse fate. In February 1603 he was found guilty of coining; he had manufactured a twelvepenny-piece and a sixpenny-piece "contrary to statute" and was to be hanged and drawn<sup>276</sup>.

"Pressing" was a punishment to whom those who refused to plead when charged with a felony were often sentenced. It was a severe punishment which consisted of putting heavy weights on the body until the accused either pleaded or died.

## Benefit of Clergy

Faced with the possibility of a heavy sentence, the accused could plead "benefit of clergy" implying that he could read; if so, he would be handed over to the clerical court for sentencing which could result in a much lower penalty. The proof of literacy consisted, however, of the accused being able to read a verse from the bible which was almost always a particular verse from Psalm 51, aptly known as

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276 Cockburn (Eliz.I), 3032

the "neck verse". Anyone who knew they might be faced with this test surely memorised this verse before going for trial.

One example where this plea was allowed for someone definitely not "of the clergy" was the case of John Shepe, labourer, but apparently a boy aged thirteen. He was found guilty of having broken into the barn of John Coggar on 7th March 1581 where he set fire to some corn so that the barn burned down and was destroyed but he avoided punishment because he was "allowed clergy"<sup>277</sup>.

## An Investigation by JPs

Lambarde also kept a diary of his duties as a JP between 1580 and 1588 and this gives a detailed insight into the work involved. Many of the entries are concerned with the keeping of ale-houses but in February 1583 he had to deal with a more serious case:

"23 Feb 1583: Sir Christopher Alleyn and I examined sundry persons at Sevenoaks concerning the suspicion of wilful poisoning of William Brightred by Thomas Heyward and Parnel, his now wife, then wife of the said William

28 February: Sir Christopher Alleyn, Mr. John Lennarde and I examined divers others persons concerning the said William

Brightrede's death and concerning the like suspicion of poisoning of Joan, late wife of the said Heyward. And we then committed the said Heyward and Parnel to the gaol.<sup>11278</sup>

Sir Christopher Alleyn lived at Ightham Mote and Mr. John Lennarde would be the John Lennard whose will has survived. The investigation carried out by Lambarde and his colleagues formed the basis for the trial at the March Assizes.

There Thomas Hayward, yeoman and Petronella Hayward, his wife, of Chiddingstone were indicted for murder. On 31st October 1581, "at Sundridge, they gave to William Brightred, then husband to Petronella, a broth containing ratsbane, from the effects of which he died on 7th November". Thomas's wife was similarly poisoned on 18th December; she survived for nearly a fortnight, dying on 31st December. Ratsbane is a general term for poison used for killing rats and also a name for many poisonous plants. The Haywards were found guilty and sentenced to hang<sup>279</sup>.

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278 Gleason, pp. 12-13

279 Cockburn (Eliz.I); 1200

## Mercy for Pregnant Women

At the Assizes in July 1583, Petronella Hayward (found guilty in the above case) was still a prisoner and a jury of matrons was assembled to examine her, and two other women. Petronella and one of the others was found to be pregnant the possibility of which had presumably been the reason for staying her execution. She continued to appear as a remanded prisoner until July 1587 when she was released on bail and again the following year. Finally, in February 1589, she was discharged<sup>280</sup>. A Sevenoaks woman who was remanded because she was pregnant was Alice Cooper, spinster, who had been found guilty of stealing a number of items in the summer of 1596<sup>281</sup>.

## The Assizes in Sevenoaks

During Elizabeth's reign the Kent Assizes were held in Sevenoaks four times (Lent 1588, 1591, 1596 and 1601), surprisingly the same number of times as at Canterbury, with Maidstone and Rochester being the most usual places<sup>282</sup>. In 1588 John Lennarde was present in his capacity as JP but he was ill in 1591; his son Sampson was one of the JPs in 1596.

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<sup>280</sup> Cockburn (Eliz.I); 1226, 1258, etc.

<sup>281</sup> Cockburn (Eliz.I); 2363

<sup>282</sup> Cockburn (Eliz.I): Canterbury 4, Dartford 9, East Greenwich 3, Maidstone 30, Rochester 32, Sevenoaks 4

Over two hundred years earlier, one of the complaints of the men from west Kent in the "Complaint of the Commons of Kent" had been that they had to attend the Sessions at Canterbury "**which causeth some men five days journey**". It may have been that the towns where the Assizes were held most often were those that most people could reach most easily and Canterbury, in the south-east of the county, would not have been one of these.

These occasions would have called for a considerable amount of organisation and given the inhabitants of Sevenoaks the excitement not only of having the professional judges and their entourage staying in the town but also prisoners being delivered from other gaols in the county to be tried during the two or three days which the Court was held.

## **Meeting the Judges; the Courtroom**

The judges were met a few miles from the assize town by the sheriff of the Kent and local officers accompanied by some of the county gentry. The procession into the town was attended by pike- and liverymen specially clothed for the occasion and, on arrival the town welcomed them with bells and music after which the judges would go to their lodgings. Having discussed items of importance with the local officers and gentry, the judges, now dressed in their robes, went to the

church for prayers read by the local minister and a sermon given by the sheriff's chaplain.<sup>283</sup>

The market hall which, by Elizabeth's time was an octagonal oak-framed building on posts<sup>284</sup>, would have been used as the courtroom. Where there was sufficient room, the judges sat in the middle of a raised bench with the county magnates ranked in descending order of importance on either side and on a low bench in front. The sheriff, undersheriff and court clerks sat at a low table with the jury box and prisoners' dock behind them.<sup>285</sup> Whether or not the Sevenoaks courtroom was heated is not known but judges going on circuit were warned to take warm clothes with them and another possible danger was infection, including gaol fever, caused by so many people being crowded into a small place.<sup>286</sup>

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283 Cockburn (1972), p.65

284 Rayner, p.37

285 Cockburn (1972, p.67

286 Cockburn (1972, p.53

# **The Probate Courts & the Peculiar of Shoreham**

Even though the proving of wills might be thought a secular business, it was carried out by the ecclesiastical courts. This could have arisen because early lawyers were almost always clerics and, in addition to be literate, were quasi-independent of the king and barons and therefore thought to be unbiased<sup>287</sup>. This system survived the break with Rome and was suspended during part of the Commonwealth. It was reintroduced when it was found that the civil courts could not handle the work and continued until 1858.

For people having property in more than one diocese, their will was proved in the the highest court, the Prerogative Court which for the southern part of England was that of the Archbishop of Canterbury (PCC); this court was held in London, not Canterbury.

## **The Deanery of Shoreham**

People of less wealth usually had their wills proved in the bishops's court. West Kent is in the diocese of Rochester but Sevenoaks was one of about thirty-five

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<sup>287</sup> McLaughlin, p.3



parishes in Kent which were in the Exempt Deanery of Shoreham (or the "peculiar" of Shoreham), that is they were exempt from the jurisdiction of the local archdeacon or bishop. This meant that, whereas most ordinary people from this area had their wills proved at the Rochester Consistory Court (RCC), those from Sevenoaks were proved in the Deanery court. From the historian's point of view this has the great disadvantage that wills proved before 1614 have not survived and thus the number of early wills which we have is less than would be expected for a town the size of Sevenoaks.

## **Documents connected with Probate**

To have a will proved, the executors took the will to the appropriate court where it was copied into the probate book. These probate books have usually survived better than the original wills although sometimes both have survived and, on occasion, it is the will itself rather than the copy which has survived. For the Deanery of Shoreham, the latter is the case.

In addition, inventories were made of the testators goods and the executors had to produce accounts showing how the estate had been administered. For all courts handling estates for Western Kent, however, very few inventories or accounts have survived for the period covered by this study.

# Chapter 8

## Elizabethan Times

From the time of Henry VIII the importance of Sevenoaks had been growing whilst that of Otford decreased and this trend continued. Elizabeth was crowned Queen in January 1559 and reigned for forty-four years.

### A Cautious Approach to Religion

247

Elizabeth and her government managed to steer a course between the Protestant radicals and their Catholic adversaries.

### Local Administrative Changes

250

Local Administration came to be based on the parish and the parish registers came to be kept on a more regular basis. These make it possible to estimate the population of the town

## Elizabethan Knole

251

Throughout Elizabeth's reign the ownership of Knole was complicated with a variety of claims, grants and leases and, although Elizabeth granted it to Thomas Sackville in 1565, it was 1603 before he could take full possession of it.

## The Burghs and the Streatfields

253

The Burghs were a gentry family; the Streatfields were ironmasters with the son marrying the daughter of a wealthy yeoman.

## The Purchase of Land by Artisans

256

It was not only the wealthy who purchased land from one another; carpenters, pewters and millers (and no doubt others) were engaged in the buying and selling of land which could be outside their own parish.

## "Gentle" Households

259

Members of the gentry, merchants and lawyers all found Sevenoaks attractive as a place for their country estate. Some of the Sevenoaks families are described later but the Tebolds, who lived in the local village of Seal whilst owning a shop in Sevenoaks, show the wide ranging contacts even a rich yeoman family could have.

## Elizabeth's Progress through Sevenoaks

264

When making a Progress through Kent in 1573, Elizabeth stayed a few days at Knole.

## Roman Catholics in Elizabethan Times

265

Roman Catholics were seen as a threat in that they might be prepared to support an invasion to restore the old faith. Various laws were passed with the aim of reducing the problem and in 1581 Samuel Lone, gentleman of Sevenoaks, was imprisoned as a recusant.

## Tudor Highways

269

From 1523 onwards a number of Acts of Parliament were passed for the maintenance of roads and bridges. Travellers not only had to contend with the state of the highways, there was also the danger of being waylaid by robbers. Men could be attacked in villages as well as in the forests which gave them the opportunity to ambush their victims.

## Minor Offences 1586-1618

276

Since records have not survived for Sevenoaks, examples taken from the Court Rolls for Ightham are used to illustrate the types of minor offences being committed locally in these years.

## Grand Larceny and Other Crimes

280

Grand larceny (theft of goods valued at more than a shilling) was the most common crime tried at the Assizes and a number of examples connected with Sevenoaks are described.

## Information from the Parish Registers

285

May and June were the most popular months for marriage with more baptisms in February, March and April than the other months. The seasonal variation in burials, which were highest in March April and May, was caused more by differences in adult mortality than the death of infants. Occupations were given sometimes.

## Wet-Nursing and Chrisomers

290

Whilst the practice of bringing infants from London to be wet-nursed was common in some of the local villages, there were only a few cases recorded in Sevenoaks itself. What is peculiar to the town is the multiple burials of chrisomers with no other details given.

## Elizabethan Wills

296

The wills of Robert Leighton, William Constable, Paul Farrow and Edward Sibbly are described.

## Dearth and Corn Supplies

300

The usual cause of famine was bad weather which could drastically reduce the corn crop which, in turn, meant a high rise in its prices. In the late 1580s, the government made various attempts to get grain distributed to the poor using JPs to supervise the arrangements.

## Building in Sevenoaks Market

304

A butcher's shop built about 1600 was still a butcher's shop in 1976

## Glass-Making in Sevenoaks

305

Glass was being manufactured in Sevenoaks in the 1580s with John Lennarde, the tenant of Knole, selling wood to the glassmakers. Since he was often in London, his steward wrote to him with details of the estate including his dealings with the glassmakers but by the end of Elizabeth's reign it was becoming difficult to find sufficient wood for the furnaces.

## Murder in Seal

314

On 3rd March 1590, William Pynden living at Padwell in the parish of Seal was stabbed when his house was being burgled by a gang of six men which included a blacksmith and two labourers from Sevenoaks.

# A Cautious Approach to Religion

Elizabeth, the daughter of Anne Boleyn, was associated with the Protestant cause but she and her ministers favoured a cautious approach to religion even though, before Parliament met, she showed her inclination for a non-Catholic settlement. She kept open her claim to the Royal Supremacy by adding "&c" after her royal titles<sup>288</sup> which appears after "defender of the faith" in the introduction to many Elizabethan wills and also in wills written during the reigns of later monarchs.

A bill was passed at the beginning of the reign making Elizabeth the supreme governor of the church and the queen wished to avoid favouring either the Protestant radicals or their Catholic adversaries. Believing in the absolute power of the throne she was hostile to Protestants on the continent who rose against their Catholic rulers but, at the same time, her continuation of her father's break with Rome antagonised Philip II of Spain who had been Mary's husband.

A third Book of Common Prayer was drawn up, taking a middle course. Although it restored the Protestant communion service which replaced the Catholic mass and was more Protestant than the first book of 1549 it was less so than the second book of 1552. With this middle course, during the first ten years of the reign, religion was not a major problem with the Catholics offering little open defiance.

## English Catholics

In 1569, however, a Catholic rebellion, caused as much by political as religious problems, arose in the north of England. This was quickly suppressed but in the following year the pope excommunicated Elizabeth. Whilst there were not many English Catholics who wished to see Elizabeth deposed and replaced by the rule of the Pope and the king of Spain, the bull of excommunication encouraged Philip to embark upon plans to invade England.

The problem for English Catholics was to show their loyalty to the queen and yet keep to the tenets of the old religion. Fines and even imprisonment were imposed for recusancy by a Statute of 1581. Although the term recusant means, in general, anyone who did not attend the Church of England when it was legally obligatory to do so, it was used to refer to Roman Catholics in particular.

Although the Statute of 1581 was, for the most part, only slackly enforced, at least one family in Sevenoaks suffered for its beliefs. In 1581 Samuel Lone, who had just inherited Rumshed manor, must have blatantly flouted the rules since he had to suffer imprisonment<sup>289</sup>. Since more recusants were recorded in Kent in the seventeenth century, their activities are described later.



## How Devout were the Ordinary People?

At least some, like Samuel Lone, openly showed their allegiance to Catholicism even if they did not oppose the queen, but it is very difficult to decide how many of the ordinary people were "either indifferent or plain neuter" who did "greatly regard not of what religion they be"<sup>290</sup>. Many may have attended church with some reluctance, particularly if they missed the old rituals and honouring of the saints.

At the other extreme were the Protestants who attended as many sermons as possible and had meetings to read and discuss the bible. To these, the mere attendance at a church service was no indication that a person was a true believer. Peter Clark estimated that "something like a fifth of the population of Kent stayed away from church on a regular basis in the later sixteenth century"<sup>291</sup>.

Edward Dering, from Romney in East Kent, wrote at that time "We have no news hear to write of but country things . . every man going after his ox and his horse and most do glorify god no more than their brute beast"<sup>292</sup>. Even moderate Protestantism was an intellectually demanding and morally rigorous religion transmitted by the written and spoken word. Why should this have had an

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290 HMC Report, Lord Montague of Beaulieu, p.37, quoted by Collinson (1982), p.200

291 Clark, p.156

292 Collinson (1982), p.201

appeal to the ordinary man busy working his land? Lacking evidence from the less wealthy but more numerous workers, it is easy to think that religion was of much more importance in ordinary life than it actually was.

## Local Administrative Changes

During the Elizabethan period local administration came to be based on the parish so that, instead of the Manorial or Hundred Courts, the Parish Vestry became the centre of local government. The Vestry, however, did not generally have the same democratic structure as the manor courts it had superceded; the ordinary people now found themselves with plenty of duties but few rights<sup>293</sup>.

Although Cromwell had introduced the keeping of parish registers it was not until the 1560s that they were kept on a regular basis; these give details of baptisms, burials and marriages. At the end of the century many parishes took on what must have been a mammoth task of copying the original records into book and, in general, it is these copies which have survived. In 1599 the two churchwardens for Sevenoaks were John Masters and Moses Olyver and they signed each page of the new book to prove that they were “good copies” of the original.

## The Population of Sevenoaks

From these records of baptisms and burials estimates of the population can be made. This increased from about 900 at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign to about 1300 at the end, an increase of about 45% in 40 years - see [Appendix 13](#) for more details.

## Elizabethan Knole

In the second half of the sixteenth century Sevenoaks was changing rapidly from a town with its major house owned by the church to one consisting of a number of estates of which Knole was the largest and richest. At the beginning of Mary's reign, Knole was returned to the crown when Northumberland was executed for treason. Reginald Pole was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 1556 and Mary granted Knole to him but he does not seem to have visited the house in the two years he was archbishop. But at least during the reigns of Edward and Mary Knole had owners to take care of it whereas Otford was not so fortunate.

## Otford Palace

A survey of the Palace, carried out for Edward in 1548, showed that it was in need of major repairs but none appear to have been carried out. The estimate Elizabeth received at the beginning of her reign for the rehabilitation of the building was much more than she was prepared to spend. This lack of interest continued practically to the end of her reign when, in 1596, she was reported as saying "sooner shall the House fall and the deer perish than so much money shall be disbursed"<sup>294</sup>.

## Ownership of Knole

Even though Knole did not fall into disrepair, its ownership at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign was by no means straightforward. In 1559, she created Henry Carey (the son of her mother's sister Mary Boleyn) Baron Hunsden and gave him a number of manors in Kent including Sevenoaks, Seal and Kemsing. In order for there to be no doubt of his entitlement, Hunsden preferred a claim against the Crown to show that the queen's gift included all the privileges previously held by Archbishop Bouchier. The judgement, given in his favour, specifically mentions Sevenoaks market.

In spite of the gift and judgement, the queen subsequently granted Knole to the Earl of Leicester for whom a survey was made in 1561. This showed the acreage of the Knole Park as 446 acres containing fifty deer<sup>295</sup>. Leicester then leased Knole to Thomas Rolfe for 99 years but Rolfe died at the end of 1565 and Leicester returned Knole to the queen who then gave it to Thomas Sackville. But the complications following on from this lease were to continue for nearly forty years. Sackville had problems not only with the lease to Rolfe but also with another lease which had been granted to John Lennarde of Chevening, also apparently by Leicester<sup>296</sup>. Only in 1603 was he able to take full possession of Knole.

## The Burghs and the Streatfields

Estates in the Sevenoaks area were still growing with people buying a number of relatively small plots. In 1591 Lady Katherine Burgh, widow, and one of her sons, Sir John Burgh, knight, bought a large number of small pieces of land in Sevenoaks, Leigh, Chiddingstone, Hever and Penshurst from Henry Streatfield of Chiddingstone, yeoman, paying £397 10s for them<sup>297</sup>.

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<sup>295</sup> Ward, p.153

<sup>296</sup> Dunlop, p.104

<sup>297</sup> Indenture dated 25th November 1591; CKS: U908 T6

Four of these were in the occupation of Thomas Walter; described as being in Sevenoaks and Penshurst, they were, like most of the other parcels, very small - 6, 8½, 1.3 and 14.7 acres. Each is described by giving the owner of the land to the north, west, south and east or the road or river forming the boundary. The relationship between the Burghs and the Streatfields illustrates how, throughout history, the gentry in a position of apparent wealth were often dependent on merchants or industrialists for "ready-cash".

## **Richard Streatfield, Ironmaster and Money-Lender**

Henry Streatfield, who sold the land to the Burghs, was the father of Richard Streatfield, an ironmaster, who married Ann Fremlyn, daughter and co-heiress of William Fremlyn, a wealthy yeoman from Kemsing. Richard, whilst farming some of his land, was also a money-lender and some of the Burgh lands were mortgaged to him. When he died, in 1601, his debtors included various local gentlemen such as George Rivers, Esq.<sup>298</sup>.

## **The Ironworks**

The running of an ironworks required considerable capital and, whilst Richard's father could probably have set him up, his wife's money was no doubt welcome.

Capital was required for setting up the business but the purchase of iron ore and charcoal was the major expenditure. When Richard died in 1603, he was described as a yeoman but his main wealth was connected with the iron industry<sup>299</sup>:

at the hammer forge at Pilbeames, there was:

-	various types of iron, a little cast iron and old guns	£331 11s 11d
-	220 loads of coal	£146 13s 4d
-	tools	£ 8 9s 10d
-	lease of the forge	£20 per annum

At his furnace in Chiddingstone, which he probably owned, was:

-	cast iron	£ 60 12s
-	pieces of guns	£ 10 13s 4d
-	"1200 loads of mine"	£150
-	765 loads of coal	£500 13s 4d

Whilst these figures do not show Richard's total wealth, they do indicate the amount of capital that was tied up in the business. They also show the small amount invested in tools compared with that in materials.

# The Purchase of Land by Artisans

As has already been seen, it was not only the wealthy who purchased land from one another. The following indentures show that carpenters, pewters and millers were engaged in the buying and selling of land and not only in their own parish. Given that there must have been other indentures and sales, this can be only a partial picture of what was going on.

## From William Morris to John Ippenberrie

In the 1550s, William Morris alias Devenshire, a carpenter living in Riverhead, died and left some land to his two sons, William and John. He could have been the William Devenshire who bought a messuage and two gardens from John Wymble in 1513 (or his son). William probably did not leave a will so that his land would have been divided under the rules of gavelkind.

On 10th April 1556 his son William Morris of Maidstone, miller, sold his "whole share of a messuage, garden, 2 acres, 6 day works and 2 days work of land" in Riverhead to John Ippenberrie of Maidstone, pewterer, for £10. On 20th May 1556, the other son John, a yeoman of Wrotham, sold his share, also to John Ippenberrie and also for £10<sup>300</sup>.



## From the Pewterer to the Tilemaker to the Yeoman

It would seem that by 1563, John Ippenberrie had died and that the land was inherited by his two sons since it was again divided into two plots. In that year, Ambrose Ippenberrie, pewterer, sold the land which his father had bought from William Morris. Either land values had gone up considerably in nine years or the Ippenberries had carried out a great number of improvements to the land for, the purchaser, Richard Reynolds, tilemaker of Riverhead, paid £46 for it<sup>301</sup>.

Four years later, in 1567, Reynolds sold it to George Achildren, yeoman of Erith, this time for £76<sup>302</sup>. In each case the land sold was described as consisting of 1 acre, part of the original 2 acres, bounded on the west by the lands of John Chapman, by the highway on the north and east and, on the south, by the lands of the Archbishop in 1556 (Reginald Pole), of the king in 1563 and the queen in 1567 (Elizabeth was actually queen in 1563 as well as 1567). How, in eleven years, had it managed to increase in value from £10 to £76?

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301 Gordon Ward Notebooks, Sevenoaks VI, p.38

302 Gordon Ward Notebooks, Sevenoaks VI, p.39

## Twenty-Eight Years Later

Another deed concerning this plot of land survived from May 1595. George Children, yeoman of Sevenoaks, in consideration of £1 paid to him by Edmund/Edward Richards of Sevenoaks, gent. sold to him "all that one parcel of land containing ??? 6 day work more or less with the appurtenances in which said parcel of land there runneth the brook or river. All which said parcel of land with the said river water course are lying and being at Riverhead . . abutting:

- on the one part unto the backside of the said George against the east
- to the garden or backside of William Barnarde and likewise to a certain garden of the said Edmund, late purchased of the said George, against the south
- and to the lands of the said Edmund likewise late (belonging to) the said George, west
- and in the other part to the land of the said George wherein the said river runneth.

Which said parcel of land and water are in the occupation of Robert Smyth.<sup>11303</sup>

## "Gentle" Households

In addition to the lord of Knole and gentlemen such as the Lones, Lennardes, Bosvilles and Petts described below, merchants and lawyers found Sevenoaks "a pleasant place" for a country estate with a not too arduous journey to London. Many of the gentlemen who bought land in Sevenoaks were also lawyers with positions in the Inns of Court.

Sevenoaks was thus very fortunate not only in having the great house of Knole but also in the number of "gentle households" within the parish. Once set up as lords of the manor, these men wanted to establish themselves in the community and one of the ways of doing this was to contribute to charities such as the School and the almshouses.

"Though Kentish households of this kind were rarely more than twenty strong, the spectacle of master, mistress and gentle children together with . . . their liveried 'family' of attendant lesser kin, maids, messengers, cooks and riders could not fail to impress a village where almost all ordinary people lived in household circles of between three and five." These households, in addition to employing local people and being customers for local produce often gave hospitality to the poor, endowed almshouses and made bequests to the parish. "Charity like this was seen as one of the essential attributes of the gentleman"<sup>304</sup>.

## Gentlemen's Dress

A number of contemporary writers described the variety and luxury of gentlemen's dress which, they thought, was paid for at the expense of, for example, the distribution of food to the poor. The writer of "A Health to the Gentlemanly Profession of Serving Men", written in 1598, held "this excessive costly apparel a great cause why gentlemen cannot maintain their wonted and accustomed bounty and liberality in hospitality and housekeeping - for, . . . :

- the mercer's book shall come *item*: for so many yards of cloth of gold, of silver, velvet, satin, taffeta or suchlike ware;
- the goldsmith's *debt* for chains, rings, jewels, pearls and precious stones;
- the tailor's bill, so much for such a suit in laced satin and suchlike superfluous charges,

amounting in one year to more than the revenues of his lands"<sup>305</sup>.

It is not likely than many of the gentlemen of Sevenoaks would have had the money to go to these extremes but the temptation to keep up with county gentlemen they would meet at the Assizes and Quarter Sessions could have put a strain on their finances. Twelve years after this was written, the Earl of Dorset at Knole was setting a standard to which very few in the country, never mind in Sevenoaks, could possibly attain.

## Their Background

The gentlemen of Kent were not "of so ancient stock as elsewhere, especially in the parts nearer to London, from which city (as it were from a certain rich and wealthy seed plot) courtiers, lawyers and merchants be continually translated, and do become new plants amongst them. Yet be their revenues greater than anywhere else: which thing groweth not so much by the quantity of their possessions or by the fertility of their soil, as by the benefit of the situation of the county itself . . . the sea, the river, a populous city and a well traded highway . . . the fruits of the ground be dearly sold and consequently the land may yield a greater rent".

"These gentlemen be also (for the most part) acquainted with good letters, and especially trained in the knowledge of the laws: They use . . . large portions of their own territories as well for the maintenance of their families as also for their better increase in wealth. So that they be well employed both in the public service and in their own particular and do use hawking, hunting and other disports rather for their recreation than for an occupation or pastime."<sup>306</sup>

## The Tebolds of Seal

The Tebolds (or Theobalds) from Seal, a village about three miles north of Sevenoaks, illustrate this interaction of town and country in detail although they must have been an exceptional family. John Tebold, who married at the beginning of the sixteenth century and had a shop in Sevenoaks market, had connections with Thomas Boleyn being one of those who stood surety for him when he was appointed Sheriff of Kent in 1513.

When John was assessed in 1542 for £6 13s 4d (£6.67) for the loan to the king, he was given as a gentleman<sup>307</sup> but his will of 1545 describes him as a yeoman; he was also a clothier. He had three sons and seven daughters. His eldest son, Thomas, godson of Thomas Boleyn, went to Cambridge University and travelled on the continent as a scholar. His second son Richard went to London where he was admitted to the Middle Temple, practised as a lawyer and went on to own property in Saint Bartholomews.

Of the daughters, Johane married Thomas Palley of the Company of Fishmongers and went to live in London, Agnes married Thomas Bylle, physician to Henry VIII and Dorothy married John Croke, a canon of St. Paul's in London and a member of Parliament. These were just their first marriages; Johane later married Thomas

Hendley, a gentleman from Otham in Kent and Agnes and Dorothy each married twice more..

## Seeking Their Fortune in London

Many young, unrecorded, men (and women) of all classes must have gone to London to find work. Those with the ability and energy to succeed could progress from apprenticeship to become freemen of a livery company and perhaps a rich merchant. "Of all the counties in the realm, Kent was perhaps the principal supplier of men for the inexorable need and the limitless opportunity which the city presented"<sup>308</sup>. And, when they had prospered, some of this prosperity would be fed back to their home town in the form of bequests to relatives and charitable donations,

# Elizabeth's Progress through Sevenoaks

Other than a brief visit to Sevenoaks at the beginning of her reign when she stayed at Bradbourne, Elizabeth is known to have come to the town only once more and then stayed just a few days. This was in 1573 when she was making a Progress through Kent, starting from Greenwich on 14th July.

A progress was carried out at a leisurely pace with frequent stops for speeches and toasts in wine. She stayed at Croydon with the Archbishop and then went to Orpington where a "magnificent nautical masque" was performed for her. A anonymous whole-length portrait of the queen, now at Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire, shows her in an embroidered dress suitable for a summer progress.

The queen usually dined at midday at the place where she had spent the night and travelled on to the next place in time for supper. She arrived at Knole on Friday, 24th July and stayed until the following Wednesday when she went on to Lord Abergavenny's seat at Birling<sup>309</sup>. Since she would have been accompanied by courtiers, bodyguards and servants with numerous coaches and carts, the town would have seen an influx of people and Knole would have required provisions of all kinds to cater for the queen and her household. Many of the townspeople and those from the outlying districts would have gathered in the town to welcome the royal party.



Of the first part of her travels Burleigh wrote to the Earl of Shrewsbury "The Queen had a hard beginning of her Progress in the Wild of Kent . . . where surely were more dangerous rocks and valleys and much worse ground than in the Peak". This probably referred to the roads in the Sevenoaks area<sup>310</sup>.

## Roman Catholics in Elizabethan Times

Those wishing to keep to the old faith had long posed a problem for the government which saw them as a threat in that they might be prepared to support a Catholic country such as Spain in its attacks on England. Restrictions of various types and levels of severity were thus imposed.

At the beginning of Elizabeth's reign numbers of learned men went abroad, some of them to Louvain, which was one of the institutions which trained men for the priesthood. Many of these returned to England as missionaries, often surviving by being hidden in the houses of gentlemen.

Thomas Tebold, the scholar son of John Tebold, had early in his career appeared to favour the reformers. In 1549, however, he retired to the Catholic University of Louvain in the Netherlands where he died in 1550. Whilst no one else of John's

immediate family were Catholics, two of the recusants mentioned in 1640 were Oliver and Robert Theobald, gentlemen of Sevenoaks.

## **Enforcement of the Recusancy Laws**

The enforcement of the laws against recusancy tended to vary depending on the political situation. At various times during Elizabeth's reign, the government was worried about the possible threat posed by Catholics and, in 1571 a bill was presented to her whereby "every subject not sick or in plight" had to attend the parish church once every quarter and receive Communion annually. The fine to be imposed for non-attendance was £12 and for non-Communion 100 marks (£66.67) but the queen's objections to requiring Communion stopped this particular bill.

In the 1580s when the Spanish Armada was expected to invade southern England, the threat appeared more serious and Acts were passed imposing a fine of £20 a month for those who did not attend church on Sundays or Holy Days. New legislation provided for fines to be paid directly to the Exchequer instead of, as previously, into the local poor relief. These new laws were handled by the secular courts whereas previously recusancy had been the concern of the ecclesiastical courts.

## The Imprisonment of Samuel Lone

More serious penalties could be imposed and, in 1581, Samuel Lone, the eldest son of the Richard Lone whose will has survived, was imprisoned for recusancy. Even though the government was worried that the Catholics might support a Spanish invasion, people were not imprisoned lightly for their religion. Although the threat was there, people could often mitigate the penalties they faced by attending their parish church on certain days in the year and paying a fee on other occasions.

Samuel's faith must have led him into practices to which the church could not turn a blind eye; perhaps he had sheltered a priest in his house. This house was likely to have been Sevenoaks Park which is where Richard Lone originally settled when he came to Sevenoaks.

## Conditions in Prison

But if Samuel went to the same prison in London as Laurence Vaux, who was there from 1580 to 1585, except for lack of freedom to leave, conditions were not too bad:

"When I was taken to the prison-hall I found there no small number of prisoners - nobles, priests, women, gentlemen and lay people - all shut up for the Catholic faith. We have soft beds,

rooms tidy enough, where we can read out our hours, say our prayers and study. From my room I have a charming prospect, from one window towards the south and from the other towards the north”.

“Twice a day we all go down to the dining-room and there sit down together to table. We are very well treated for diet, having many dishes, both boiled and roast. We always have the best white bread and capital beer and wine. Nothing is heard among us but what is Catholic, pious and holy. The daily expenses for the table are ten stivers (pence) a day - four for dinner, four for supper and two for our beds. A maid makes the beds and sweeps the rooms. So I remain a prisoner but well content with my state; we hope for better things at last. The Jesuits prosper. Farewell and pray for me. In haste, 20 Oct 1580.”<sup>311</sup>

10d per day, means that a year's imprisonment would have cost over £15 just for bed and food.

Samuel's sojourn in prison did not change his allegiance to the Catholic faith although perhaps he was little more circumspect than he had been earlier. Even so, it is likely that, in order to be released from prison he had to pay very heavy fines. In addition, since he did not attend the services in the parish church, there

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311 Laurence Vaux writing to the Prior of St. Martins; Caraman, p.215

would have been continuing fines to pay. More details of Samuel and the rest of the Lone family are given later.

## Tudor Highways

The first recorded Act of Parliament for the repair and regulation of thoroughfares was passed in 1523 as a result of the poor condition of the roads in the Weald of Kent<sup>312</sup>. These were churned up into treacherous quagmires by the carts used by the ironmasters to carry coal to their foundries and their iron products to the customers. If these were the roads to which Burleigh was referring when Elizabeth travelled on them, they had not improved much in fifty years.

## The Maintenance of Bridges

Well maintained bridges were also necessary if goods were to be transported efficiently and many villages owed their prosperity to a local bridge. One example was Edenbridge on the Eden, a tributary of the Medway and about six miles south-west of Sevenoaks. During Henry's reign JPs had been given authority to investigate broken bridges and, "where no person or corporation could be made

responsible, to tax the inhabitants of the town or parish for the repair of the bridges situated within its limits". They were also "to appoint collectors of these taxes and surveyors to inspect the bridges and spend upon them the money so collected".<sup>313</sup>

## Forced Labour and Highway Surveyors

In 1555, during the reign of Mary, an Act had been passed which required every cottager and householder to work for eight hours a day for four days during the year repairing the roads in his parish or find someone else to do it for him. Every landowner in the parish with land worth £50 a year or more had to provide two men to work on the roads for the same length of time. In 1563, the number of eight-hour days to be worked per year was increased to six. This work was to be supervised by highway surveyors chosen by the churchwardens but these surveyors were not qualified and served for only a year at a time.

Each parish was responsible for the roads and bridges within the parish and, since there was no higher authority maintaining major roads, those parishes on a main route could be put to large expense. In some cases they could gain from the traffic passing along the road but this was not always sufficient recompense.

## The Roads in the 1590s

According to Sir Robert Sidney writing to his wife in 1594 about the advantages of a house in Otford, the road from Otford to London was much better than those through the Weald to Penshurst<sup>314</sup>. With the damage caused by the carts continuing, an Act of 1597 required every ironmaster who carried three loads of coal or one ton of iron for more than one mile along the roads between 12th October and 1st May, or thirty loads of coal or ten tons of iron in the summer, to contribute to the cost of repairing the road with cinders, gravel, stone or chalk<sup>315</sup>.

In 1598, Paul Hentzner, a travelling tutor to a young German nobleman, used the Rye road to London. They took post horses for London, changing them at Flimwell and Chipstead. Hentzner was surprised "how swiftly they run, their bridles are very light and their saddles little more than a span over". The 65 mile journey cost them each 2d a mile plus half the guide's fee of 4d for each of the three stages, a total of 11s 4d (£0.57)<sup>316</sup>.

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314 Clare and Stoyel, p.133

315 Ridley, p.78

316 Donald, p.13

## Highway Robbery

Not only had travellers to contend with the state of the roads, there was also the constant danger of highway robbery. Of the 163 entries for highway robbery in the Elizabethan Assize records for Kent, nearly a quarter were on the roads leading out of London to the southeast, particularly at Shooters Hill. The road from Sevenoaks to Tonbridge, particularly where it passed through Whitley Wood and Southfrith Forest, was another favourite haunt of the robbers with four attacks taking place in the parish of Sevenoaks and five in that of Tonbridge.

Maintenance of the roads was necessary not only to avoid the surface deteriorating but also to make it less easy for highwaymen. The grand jury for the 1605 March Assizes had had it brought to their attention that the "[narrowness of road through Birch Wood between the gibbet and the Tile oast on the highway between Farningham and London had facilitated a great many robberies there](#)".

No one on the grand jury lived nearby and so they asked the sheriff to identify the owners of the land adjoining the road at Farningham so that the woods could be cut back "[according to statute](#)". Farningham is about seven miles north of Sevenoaks. The problem was still there in 1608 when Mr. Stephen Theobald, a JP from Sevenoaks, was one of those detailed to survey the wood<sup>317</sup>.



## Attacks in the Woods

Just before Christmas 1565, Henry Meere and Adam Smythe were making their way through Whitley Wood, just south of the town of Sevenoaks, when they were attacked by four men, described in the indictment as yeomen of Sevenoaks. £11 was stolen from Meere and £63 from Smythe<sup>318</sup>; perhaps they had just concluded a good deal in the town and were making their way home.

Both travellers and highwaymen could come from a considerable distance. In January 1573 William Woodward, a merchant from London was on his way between Sevenoaks and Tonbridge when he was attacked, in Southfrith Forest, by three yeomen, one from Canterbury and two from Horsmonden. All were found guilty and sentenced to hang. William Woodward was obviously a marked man for in December of the same year he was stopped again in the forest by another highwayman<sup>319</sup>.

On 7th December 1572, William Burley, a tanner from Tudeley (just to the east of Tonbridge), was on his way home from Sevenoaks where, judging from the amount of money he had on him, he had had a successful day selling his wares. In the highway at Riverhill (which ran through the woods just south of Sevenoaks) he was attacked by James Bigge, a yeoman from Yalding, who stole £6.07 from

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318 Cockburn (Eliz.I), 354

319 Cockburn (Eliz.I), 639, 695

him. At his trial at the February 1573 Assizes, he stood mute and was therefore sentenced to be pressed<sup>320</sup>.

All these highwaymen were described as yeomen; they were obviously the elite of the criminal world. Before one could aspire to such heights it was necessary to have a good horse able to put on a good speed.

## Robberies Nearer Home

More unexpected than robberies in the forest were the number which took place in the highway of a town or village although the attacks were perhaps in the parish rather than the centre of the village. In May 1577 four labourers assaulted John Cowper in "[the highway at Sevenoaks](#)"<sup>321</sup>.

At the Assizes held in July 1579, five men, a tailor, labourer and three yeomen, all from London, were charged with attacking John Lennarde in the highway at Chevening and stealing £3.65 from him. On the same day in June they had also attacked William Wood, taking from him a sword and £1.24. The tailor was found guilty and sentenced to hang; the others were at large.

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320 Cockburn (Eliz.I); 664

321 Cockburn (Eliz.I), 882

At the same Assizes, Benjamin Boorne, one of the accused yeomen who had not been caught, was charged with another man for highway robbery in May 1579 at Gillingham and his accomplice was sentenced to hang. Sometime between July and March of the following year, Benjamin Boorne was eventually captured and, at the March Assizes he was tried for the attack on Lennarde.

In this case he was found not guilty but his sins caught up with him in a further trial at the same Assizes. He and five other yeomen were charged with attacking a man at Shooter's Hill in Eltham in September 1579 and Boorne and one of the others were found guilty and sentenced to hang<sup>322</sup>.

This series of attacks shows a gang of men, with perhaps Boorne as its leader, working over a considerable area - Chevening, Gillingham and Eltham. Other assaults, carried out by different people, occurred in the highway at Chevening in 1584, January and September 1585 and March 1595<sup>323</sup>.

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322 Cockburn (Eliz.I); 971, 986 & 1007

323 Cockburn (Eliz.I); 1359, 1387, 1624 & 2282

## Minor Offences 1586-1618

Records have not survived for the Court Leet and Court Baron but those for the village of Ightham for the years 1586 to 1618 show the type of problems which must have been common throughout the area. There were a wide range of offences: breaches of the peace, immigration from other places, trespass, nuisance, hedge-breaking, etc. forming a considerable part with other cases relating to public rights and duties and the protection and welfare of the inhabitants of the village<sup>324</sup>.

### Encroaching on the Highway

Blocking the road was a common nuisance: on 1st October 1589 it was recorded that "Walter Mugge has placed a rack for feeding his cattle in the highway near the rectory of Ightham to the inconvenience of the common passage there. To be removed before 1 November under penalty 5s" (£0.25). According to an entry six months later, Mugge forfeited the penalty since he had not complied with the order<sup>325</sup>.

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324 Harrison, 1937, p.189

325 Harrison, 1937, p.199

What could the court do in such a circumstance? A few years earlier, in 1586, Stephen Mills had been ordered to remove some manure he had placed in the highway under penalty 3s 4d (£0.17). When he had not done so the 3s 4d was forfeited and he was again ordered to remove the manure within one month under a further penalty of 6s 8d. In April 1587 it was recorded that he had removed it so the further threat had been sufficient to get him to comply<sup>326</sup>.

## Fouling of the Water Supplies

This was another problem with geese often being the cause. In 1588, Lancelot Woodden was presented to the Court for "allowing his geese to disturb, dig in and defile a certain water or spring used for the necessary purposes of life by the inhabitants to the grave inconvenience of the Queen's subjects. Fined 12d and ordered to abate the nuisance"<sup>327</sup>.

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326 Harrison, 1937, p.198

327 Harrison, 1938, p.11

## The Ducking Stool

Fines or penalties which were forfeited if the necessary actions were not taken were one of the main punishments inflicted by the courts. But they did have other options, often specific to the particular infringement. The ducking stool was often used as a punishment for common scolds or nagging women. This was a chair or stool, attached to a beam, to which the woman was tied and the beam was pivoted so that the woman could be ducked in the water as many times as was thought appropriate.

In a relatively small village the provision of a ducking stool might have been thought an expense which could be avoided and this seems to have been the case in Ightham. In 1587 the jury presented two women as "common brawlers, quarrellers and disturbers of the peace". But "since there are no convenient means of punishing them, they are to be punished at discretion". Harrison concluded that since Ightham had no ducking stool, the court left the jury to decide on a punishment. They decided on the easy way out: at the next court they gave the verdict that the women were "not common quarrellers as was previously represented"<sup>328</sup>. The women, however, may have changed their ways at the thought of what worse punishment the jury might invoke.

## Provision of a Crow-Net

Villages and towns were responsible for the provision of certain items required by the whole community. If these were not available when required, a group of men could take their complaint to the court-leet.

In Ightham, it was the duty of the village to maintain a crow-net, presumably used for catching crows. In 1590, the jury found that there was not "within this View, a common net called a crow-net" and "by the grace of the lord of the manor the inhabitants were given till the next Court to provide a suitable net, under penalty of 10s<sup>329</sup>".

# Grand Larceny and Other Crimes

Grand Larceny, theft of goods valued at more than one shilling (5p), was the crime which appeared most often in the Assize records.

## The Haytes of Sevenoaks

The Haytes were a family in which a number of the men engaged in thieving as at least an important sideline to their main occupation. In 1562, Thomas and William, both husbandmen, were charged with grand larceny, having stolen twenty sheep from a close in Chelsfield. Thomas was at large and William was pardoned. In 1575, John, also a husbandman, was found not guilty of stealing seven sheep and four lambs from Robert Hunte of Sevenoaks.

But in 1579 the career of Thomas (now a labourer) came to an end when he entered a stable at Sundridge and attacked one of the servants who was "dressing" horses. In self-defence the servant struck Thomas on the head with a horsecomb inflicting injuries from which he died<sup>330</sup>. The Assize record is for the inquest and the verdict has not survived.



## A Horse Thief

John Pratt, a labourer, seems to have specialised in stealing horses: an iron-grey gelding and a bay gelding, both valued at £3, and another gelding at £2, and a bright-bay mare worth £5. He was found guilty in 1582 and sentenced to hang. However, unless there was another labourer of the same name, the sentence cannot have been carried out since in 1583 he and his wife were charged with breaking into the house of John Masters and, at that time, they were both at large<sup>331</sup>.

Horses were valuable and, if a criminal was to advance from grand larceny to highway robbery, he needed a good horse. Certainly horses feature in a large number of the indictments. In 1599 William Burgis, another Sevenoaks labourer, stole a bay gelding and a black gelding both valued at £5<sup>332</sup>. This cannot be the William Burgis whose will has survived since he was buried in 1594; he did not mention a son William.

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331 Cockburn (Eliz.I); 1114 & 1256

332 Cockburn (Eliz.I); 2680

## Sheep, Geese and Bee Stealing

The recorded criminal life of the tailor, Richard Harborowe of Sevenoaks, extended from 1592 to 1603. Just before Christmas, 1592, he and a weaver from Chipsted stole a sheep valued at 12s (£0.60) from William Pococke but they were both allowed benefit of clergy.

In 1595, a month before Christmas, Harborowe was indicted for stealing some geese but this time he was found not guilty. In December 1600, when he had been demoted to "labourer" he was found guilty of stealing 2 stocks of bees but, since these were valued at only 11d, the crime was only petty larceny so that he was sentenced to be whipped.

His career came to an end in February 1603 when, a tailor again, he was found guilty of grand larceny and sentenced to hang. This time he had stolen a sheep, valued at 6s 8d (£0.33) from Thomas Locke of Chevening.<sup>333</sup>

## Organised Crime

An indication of organised crime is given by the following case. On 4th October 1597, two labourers from Hadlow stole 40 yards of russet cloth, 10 yards of broadcloth, 10 yards of white cotton and 10 yards of green cotton. Two tailors from Sevenoaks, Michael Thompson and James Crosse, were indicted as accessories.

One of the labourers was hanged in Sussex whilst the other was at large but this looks very much as if they had been paid by the tailors to acquire some cloth by nefarious means. This suspicion is confirmed by the two tailors being charged at the February 1600 sessions as accessories to grand larceny. Thompson, however, was found not guilty and Crosse was at large<sup>334</sup>.

## Thieves of No Fixed Abode

The unsettled life of those engaged in petty crime can be seen from a group of people indicted for grand larceny at the July 1596 Assizes. Richard Jorden and Henry Daye, both described as labourers from Shipbourne were, indicted for stealing a grey gelding and a bay mare from Richard Mann on 16th April with William Bawcombe, a husbandman from Shipbourne as an accessory.

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334 Quarter Sessions, CKS: QM/SB 220; Cockburn (Eliz.I); 2536 & 2741

Six weeks earlier, the same Henry Daye, but then of Sevenoaks, stole a roan mare assisted by Sarah Bawcombe, "wife of William Bawcombe of Sevenoaks". Did Daye and the Bawcombes live near the boundary of Shipbourne and Sevenoaks or did they wander from parish to parish sleeping wherever they could find accommodation?

The labourer Simon Darby moved a greater distance. On 19th September 1597, when he burgled the house of Andrew Holmewood in Seal, he is given as "of Sevenoaks". A month later he burgled a house in Otford but was then described as "of Farningham".<sup>335</sup>

## The Goods Stolen

In the indictments for grand and petty larceny the value of goods stolen is given. Horses, ranging from £2 to £5 each, were the most expensive items with 40 yards of russet cloth at £4 and 10 yards of broadcloth at £5 being the only others at such high value. Gowns were luxury items of dress, one valued at £1.67 being stolen from the house of Henry Boston in Sevenoaks in 1565 and another at £1.50 from John Heues in 1596. See [Appendix 12](#) for more details.

# Information from the Parish Registers

Once parish records of baptisms, marriages and burials were kept reasonably reliably a much fuller picture can be obtained of the population of a parish.

## Marriages

There is insufficient data for Sevenoaks to give a reliable estimate for age at marriage but those for villages close to Sevenoaks show men marrying at twenty-five to twenty-six and women two years younger; data for Staplehurst in Kent and Terling in Essex give similar results<sup>336</sup>.

May to July were the most popular months for marriage and this could partly have been the effect of the church's prohibition of marrying during three particular periods in the year. These were from a month before Christmas to the middle of January, nine weeks before Easter until one week after and, four weeks later, for another three weeks which included Whitsuntide. Emmison notes that a few ministers in Essex, including one in 1575, made a note of these periods in their parish registers<sup>337</sup>. Although there were some marriages in these "prohibited

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336 Fox, J. (1996); p.227, p.235

337 Emmison, 1976, p.158

periods", for Sevenoaks and the villages Seal, Kemsing and Ightham, from 1561 to 1602, only one-fifth of the total were celebrated within these periods, half the number which would be expected if there had been no prohibition.

## Age at Baptism

Parish records usually give only the date of baptism, not that of birth. In Elizabeth's reign, the clergy were told "to admonish their flocks not to defer christening longer than the first or second Sunday after birth except for just cause"<sup>338</sup>. A study carried out by Berry and Schofield shows that this admonishment was generally followed since they found that at about 1600 the average age at baptism was only a few days whereas by 1800 it had increased to about a month<sup>339</sup>.

For the years 1642 to 1650 both dates were given in the Ightham parish register and, for this very small sample of 25, the average age at baptism was 15 days with seven being older than three weeks. If this was typical for the locality, by the middle of the seventeenth century, on average about two weeks would need to be deducted from date of baptism to give date of birth.<sup>340</sup>

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338 Emmison, 1976, p.139

339 Berry & Schofield who analysed the data for 43 parishes where both dates were available

340 Fox (1996), p.238

It was the parent's responsibility to have their children baptised and, during Elizabeth's reign, the day chosen was to be a Sunday or holy-day. In Sevenoaks, for the three years 1593 to 1595, nearly three-quarters of the 121 baptisms were on a Sunday and it is likely that some of the others were on one of the many holy-days<sup>341</sup>. It thus looks as if that for both marriages and baptisms, Sevenoaks people followed the church's directions.

## Seasonal Variation in Births

Given that May to July were the busiest for marriages, that February to April were the peak months for baptisms might not be altogether unexpected although first children of a marriage would be only a small proportion of the total. The assumption that the first child would be likely to be born about nine months after marriage is not, however, supported by the evidence. Figures for Sevenoaks have not been calculated but those for Seal where 151 baptisms can be correlated with marriages, show that the average time between marriage and baptism was just under twenty months<sup>342</sup>.

Thus other reasons need to be found for the fall in the number of children born in in June, July and August which, in Elizabeth's were only two-thirds of those in

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341 Fox, J(1996), p.240

342 Fox, J (1993), p.243

the peak months. The decrease in the number of conceptions in summer and autumn may have been because , for those working on the land, it would be the busiest time of the year.

## Burials

Following the national pattern, the average number of monthly burials in August were only two-thirds of those for the peak months, March, April and May. This seasonal variation was caused mainly by changes through the year in adult mortality rather than infant burials<sup>343</sup>.

If there was a will, this could give instructions regarding burial but, even if there were not, there would be arrangements to make and the costs of the burial and funeral which were by no means negligible.

The bill paid by a widow of, probably, a labourer of Harlow in Berkshire in the time of Elizabeth<sup>344</sup> lists the following items:

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343 Wrigley and Schofield, p.294

344 Fletcher, p.8



for his shroud	5s
making of his grave	4d
tolling of his passing bell	6d
for watching with him in time of his sickness	1s
for a supper for the ringers and other neighbours	£1
total of	£1 6s 10d (£1.34).

The deceased must have been a wealthy labourer.

If the deceased had left a will, before it could be proved, an inventory had to be produced so that the total value of all the goods and chattels could be calculated. Then the proving of this had to be organised and there were payments to be made to the officials of the probate court. If there was no will and the estimated value of "the estate" was less than a certain amount, the process was simpler.

## Occupation from the Parish Records

Sometimes, but not always, the occupation or standing of a man was given in the parish records. There seems to have been two reasons for doing this:

- the man's standing, such as gent. or householder, was such as to warrant a mention
- the fact that there were a number of men with the same name so that they had to be differentiated by their occupation.

A family where the latter was particularly the case was the Woods:

- John Wood, sadler, had five children baptised between 1570 and 1590;
- John Wood, barber, three between 1570 and 1577;
- John Wood, shearman, four between 1571 and 1589;
- John Wood, hempdresser, four baptised between 1605 and 1613;
- John Wood, brewer, eight between 1609 and 1627<sup>345</sup>.

By this means we know that these trades were represented in Sevenoaks at these times but not how many other men for whom details were not given (or did not appear in the parish records at all) also practised them.

## Wet-Nursing and Chrisomers

### Burials of “Nurse Children”

In Elizabethan times infants, particularly from London, could be sent a considerable distance to be breast-fed by a wet-nurse and in some towns and villages round London the practice seems to have been organised on a large scale. The only evidence that wet-nursing was carried out locally is the recording of the burials of “nurse children”. With no other references it is impossible to tell what

proportion of those coming to the country lived long enough to return to their parents.

Such burials occurred fairly frequently in the village of Seal (accounting for 5.6 per cent of the burials between 1565 and 1598). The term was used very infrequently in Sevenoaks although the form "[Jane, daughter of Davy Cronke of London](#)" is likely to indicate such a child. If all references to children of fathers from London, Maidstone, etc. are taken as ones being wet-nursed in Sevenoaks, they account for 2.6 per cent of all burials between 1565 and 1602. The burials of these children have been included in the yearly burial totals.

One town for which more information is available is Chesham in Buckinghamshire, a similar distance from London as Sevenoaks but to the north-west<sup>346</sup>. Infants were taken from London to Chesham in the carts making their return journey after taking corn to the city. Carts from Sevenoaks to London could have been taking meat or wool but the journey of twenty-five miles for a very young baby must have been a hazardous beginning to its life. How was the child fed during the time taken for the journey?

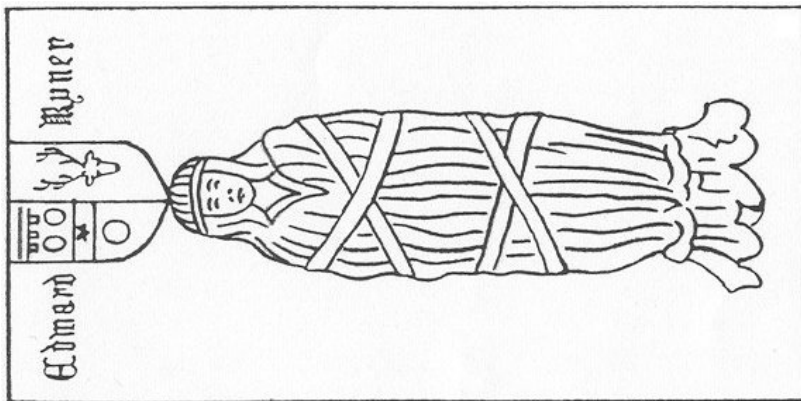
## Chrisomers

In the years 1594 to 1598, some burials in Sevenoaks included an unusual feature: the burial of one or more chrisomers was added to the record of a normal burial.

For example:

- on 23rd March 1595/6 "George West and two chrisomers",
- on 20th July 1598 "widow Pock and two chrisomers".

A chrisomer (or chrisom child) is defined as a baptised infant who died and was buried before the mother was churched, that is attended a particular religious ceremony after the birth of her child. At baptism, the infant was annointed with chrism (holy oil) and a white linen cloth, the chrisom, was wrapped round the child and worn for seven days or until the mother was churched. At that service the chrisom was presented to the church and the priests used it for general purposes. In the event of the child dying before that time, the chrisom was used as its shroud and this was bound round with ornamental strips of linen.



This is shown dramatically in the picture of the incised slab of Edward Myner, Croxall<sup>347</sup>.

## The Burial of Chrisom Children

Cranmer's first Prayer Book of 1548 had kept the ceremony of anointing at baptism and although it was not mentioned in the second Prayer Book of 1552, chrisom oil continued to be used as late as the beginning of the eighteenth century. The burial of chrisom children was fairly frequent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries<sup>348</sup> but not coupled with other burials.

Three examples from Kirkburton, Yorkshire, for 1568 are:

26th November was Margaret Kay buried. "A crysm chyld".

9th December was John March buried. "A crysm chyld".

28th December was Ellen Littlewood buried. "A crysm chyld".

## The Peculiarity of Sevenoaks

What is peculiar to Sevenoaks is the multiple burials and the absence of any details. Looking at 1594,

14th March "William Wakling and four chrisomers".

18th September "wife of Robert Vane and four chrisomers."

There does not seem to have been a number of baptisms just prior to the burials which could be connected with the chrisomers. One suggestion is that they may have been wet-nursed infants whose death occurred a short time after they had been brought to Sevenoaks having been baptised in the parish where they were born with the parishioners not knowing or being unwilling to specify who the parents were<sup>349</sup>.

In this case was there a local "entrepreneur" organising wet-nursing in Sevenoaks in the 1590s? Not very successfully it would seem from these burials. Perhaps, if wet-nursing was being carried out on an organised basis, a number of infants were brought from London together and the chrisomers could have been those who did not survive the journey or died very soon after as a result of it.

The burials of chrisomers have not been included in the yearly burial totals.

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349 Dr. Roger Schofield, Director of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Studies, private correspondence, 27 July 1994; see Fox (1996), pp.241-245 for further discussion

# Elizabethan Wills

Two wills, whose preambles have already been described, have survived from the very beginning of Elizabeth's reign:

- Robert Leighton who, "sick in body" when the will was written sometime in 1558, was buried on 30th December 1558
- William Constable, alias Gryffyne, who was also sick in body when his will was written on 25th July 1559.

Both these wills are short but they show that it was not only the wealthy of Sevenoaks who had connections with London or beyond:

## Robert Leighton

Robert Leighton left to his wife a large number of household items but all these were "in the keeping and in the house of my sister Elizabeth Fayrebarne, widow, dwelling in the parish of Hurst within the county of Berkshire". He also gave her two coats, "all her wearing apparel and . . . all other my goods, moveables and unmoveables wheresoever they be, or may be found".

Hurst was between sixty and eighty miles west of Sevenoaks, a long way away for so much of his household stuff to be stored and he seems rather vague as to the



whereabouts of the rest of it. Was his wife living in Hurst with Robert perhaps working in Sevenoaks?. Robert was buried in Sevenoaks which is what he wanted; perhaps Sevenoaks was his "home town" which he was visiting when he was taken ill. One of the witnesses to the will was Thomas Searle, curate of Sevenoaks, who possibly wrote it.

## William Constable

William Constable wanted to be buried in the church of Sevenoaks "[if I change my life there](#)". He does not seem to have been married leaving bequests to his brother, two sisters and a cousin. William had a chest which was in the house of Robert Waddesborough at the Cock in Westminster. In it were some old gold coins - angels, ducats and french crowns - other money and clothes. Robert (who William describes as his "ost" or "oft") and his "fellow" Henry Williams were to be his executors.

William looked to be reasonably well off since the clothes he bequeathed included a "[crimson taffeta doublet](#)", a "[black coat and spanish jerkin](#)", his best cap, his two best shirts and all his boots. What occupation did he follow? He seems to have been connected with horses, leaving his saddle and bridle to Henry, but the saddle was described as "[flebyttten](#)" (fleabitten?) and he owed money for horsemeat. Was "ost" a word connected with ostler?

## Paul Farrow

The will of Paul Farrow was written on 12th June 1578 by George Brooke (or Brooker). Two other wills written by George Brooker have survived (there could be others not discovered), one from Speldhurst written in 1606 and one from Penshurst written in 1611. Although thirty-three years seems a long time for a scribe to be working, Nicholas Hooper and his son John each performed this service for over forty years. Brooker used unusual phrases in his wills, for example "he to have them when he shall accomplish the age of 21 years".

The other witness to Paul Farrow's will was William Lawson who was the vicar of Sevenoaks from 1560 until 1579. Paul Farrow's position or occupation is not given in the will but because this is absent it cannot be assumed that he was a man of no importance in the town. Farrow must have been fairly wealthy since he left valuable household goods to his two sons and to the younger £40 "to be paid and employed for his most use the last day of May 1580". He owned the leases of two houses one of which he had purchased from Mr. Alderman Starkey and he appointed as his overseer "my master, Richard Lone, Esquire", probably the Richard Lone, gent., whose will of 1581 has survived.

## Edward Sibbell

Edward Sibbell's will written on 5th March 1592/3 is very short will with no religious preamble. He left everything, including all his land, to Dorothy, his wife, who was to have one tenement in Sevenoaks to herself and her heirs forever with all the rest of his land going, on her death, to Mathew Colthurst. Although Edward Sibyll was recorded by the Heralds in their visitation of 1574 nothing else is known of him.

## Dearth and Corn Supplies

The usual cause of famine was bad weather with successive wet and cold summers leading to a disastrous cumulative effect on grain production. With bread forming a very large part of the diet and little in the way of an alternative, the price of corn soon soared. With people having to pay the increased cost for their staple food even less was left for meat, cheese or vegetables.

Because records survive for the rich but not for the poor, it is easy to look at the families which thrived and forget those that suffered. During Tudor times, whilst there was the opportunity for the enterprising, given some luck, to prosper, the gap between the reasonably well-off and the poor became greater, partly because of inflation. A yeoman family was much nearer to being self-sufficient and could therefore manage much better than a labourer whose wages did not keep pace with the prices of commodities which he had to buy and those with smallholdings could only survive when conditions were good. This meant not only good weather but also having a wife capable of making a little from spinning or keeping chickens and having the ability to manage the household efficiently.

## Dover Harbour: Employment for Labourers

For those without land, finding work could be difficult in less prosperous times and landless labourers were hounded from parish to parish. Occasionally there would be major works where they could hope to find employment.

Dover was a major port but throughout the sixteenth century considerable work was required to keep it open to larger vessels and, even though Henry VIII had spent £63,000 on it, by the time Lambarde was writing in 1570, it had been brought to “miserable nakedness and decay”. So much so that Elizabeth not only gave money herself but also, in 1581, “took order by Parliament . . . for a general help upon the tonnage towards the relief of this decayed harbour”.<sup>350</sup>

The resulting works, which continued for the rest of the century, required a large labour force and men were attracted from a wide area coming “from as far as Sevenoaks and Maidstone, more than could usefully be employed . . . At the height of the operation (in 1583) one thousand men with five hundred carts were hard at work on the harbour”.<sup>351</sup>

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350 Lambarde, pp. 133-134

351 Hasenson, Dover Harbour, p.29, quoted by Zell (2000), p.163

## Ex-Soldiers Unwelcome

In the late 1580s, soldiers returning to England from fighting on the continent and, disembarking at the Kentish ports, could cause problems as they wandered through the county. With the supply of grain dwindling, Lambarde became ever more convinced that the county must be rid of idle ex-soldiers and other rogues so as to increase the supplies for the hardworking and disabled poor.

## The Shortage of Corn

By the January of 1587, it was obvious to the government that means must be taken to relieve the state of famine in the country but the local JPs, William Lambarde and John Leveson, were already taking action. The use of grain for making ale and beer was reduced by the suppression of 30 alehouses and forbidding the owners of others to "sell cakes of white bread and strong drinks worth more than half-pence a quart"<sup>352</sup>.

The government ordered the JPs to question the large grain growers in the county, all of them being bound to deliver grain to the poor of their parish and to sell their provisions at the open markets. By this means they raised 618 quarters of grain (7.725 tons) for distribution to the poor and another 896½ quarters (11.2 tons) to be

taken to several markets in the locality. Of the 896½ quarters, Maidstone, Rochester, Gravesend, Dartford and Milton were to receive 757 leaving 134 for Sevenoaks and 4½ for Malling.<sup>353</sup>

Lambarde and Leveson gave instructions for the selling of the grain. The suppliers and the amount each was to provide were to be listed in a register book. It is unlikely that Sevenoaks had any large grain growers although there could have been some who, at least in a good year, had a little surplus to sell in the local market. The grain had to be displayed openly but none was to be sold before 10.00 a.m. From then until noon it could be sold in quantities of two bushels or less and after that in larger quantities. Any left unsold had to be stored and brought to the next market.<sup>354</sup>

## The End of the Century

The weather improved after 1587 but 1594 saw the first of another four very bad summers with the price of corn again soaring and, by 1596, famine was appearing in some parts of the country. The suffering of these years was one of the factors which led to the passing of the Elizabethan Poor Law in 1601.

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353 Warnicke, pp.62-63

354 Warnicke, p.63

# Building in Sevenoaks Market

Even during these bad times, building in Sevenoaks was continuing. What is now 99 High Street was built between 1575 and 1600 and 101 High Street about 1600. These were originally detached buildings with passageways all round them and 101 High Street was a butcher's shop until 1976.

Anthony Stoyel made a reconstruction of these two buildings which shows the principal framing timbers<sup>355</sup>. They occupied a very small site close to the Market House and included two interesting features:

- continuous first floor jettying on three of the sides of No. 101 was probably included for the practical reason of giving the greatest possible floor space whereas in a rural setting it was generally added for its aesthetic appeal
- it was usual with timber-framed buildings to leave the upper storeys open to the roof but, in the case of No. 101, the construction shows that there was a full length attic floor with the roof framing being such as to give maximum space and head room.

Both features would have been unusual in a rural building used for domestic purposes but could have been normal in towns. There are, however, other reasons for thinking that these two buildings were probably shops, perhaps with a craft workshop included on the ground floor with the two upper floors being used for

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355 Stoyel, 1984, figure 13; the following paragraphs are taken from Stoyel, 1984, pp.21-22



storage: the evidence points to the original buildings not having any heating and neither possessed a garderobe. There is evidence that, at least in the town of Coventry, there were 'common privies' instead of a garderobe in each house but this was unusual.

## Glass-Making in Sevenoaks

In the 1580s when John Lennarde of Chevening and Sevenoaks (who is described later) was the tenant of Knole, glass was being manufactured in the vicinity of the Knole estate.

### The Demand for Glass

The glass manufactured locally could have been used for windows at Knole, particularly since a contemporary survey had shown that "[the capital house of Knoll is in meet good repair saving for glass](#)"<sup>356</sup>. Penshurst Castle had glass in its windows in the thirteenth century and by the sixteenth century the use of glass became more common so that, by the beginning of the seventeenth century the

windows of most houses in Kent were glazed<sup>357</sup>. Thus, by the 1580s, there would have already been a considerable demand for glass from the more prosperous owners in the neighbourhood. It is thus likely that the production was on a greater scale than that required just for Knole's own use.

The market for glass was such that there were other glass-houses in the Sevenoaks vicinity, for example "the great glass house hill towards Penshurst" mentioned in a letter written in 1597<sup>358</sup>. A hundred and fifty years later Daniel Defoe described the white sand of the Maidstone area the best in England for melting into flint glass and looking-glass plates<sup>359</sup> but Knole could be self-sufficient providing its own sand and wood. The latter would be coppice wood which, after cutting, would be ready again in another twelve to fifteen years.

## The Position of the Glass House

A furnace house for glass making needed a plentiful supply of sand and wood and had to be fairly high up to give a good draught. Gordon Ward suggests that the glass house for Knole was at the junction of Hubbard Hill Road and Gracious Lane. It could already have been in use fifty years earlier since there is a

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357 Chalklin, p.149

358 to Sir Ralph Sidney, noted by Lennard

359 Chalklin, p.149

reference in the accounts of Otford Manor, which then included Knole, of "one parcel of land near Glashowesland at Coldwell towards the east and towards Whyteclyff towards the south, west and north"<sup>360</sup>. Water was necessary for washing raw materials and for cooling so that furnaces were generally built near rivers, streams or ponds<sup>361</sup>. There is no waterway in the area suggested by Ward unless the glasshouse was further south at Panthurst but the name "Coldwell" gives a hint that there may have been a well in the vicinity.

Knole glasshouse probably produced crown window glass sheets, the first example of these found in England being at the Weald glasshouse at Knightons, Alford, Surrey, sometime after 1550.

Early glass furnaces often had a very short life, seldom longer than two to three years and with extensive repairs often being necessary several times a year. Knightons was a vivid example of this, there being four successive furnaces on the site with the third of these starting the production of crown window glass which required a two-chamber annealing furnace<sup>362</sup>.

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<sup>360</sup> Ward, p.18

<sup>361</sup> Vane, p.138

<sup>362</sup> Vose, pp. 136-137

## Wood from Knole

John Lennarde, who was the tenant of Knole from about 1570 to 1590, sold his wood to the glass-makers, presumably paying them for the glass required for Knole. As a barrister and JP, he spent a considerable amount of time in London and elsewhere from Sevenoaks and, whilst he was away, his steward, Roger Puleston, wrote to him with details concerning the estate<sup>363</sup>. His accounts show him receiving £68 6s 8d (£68.33) between the end of July and December 1585 for 410 cords of wood<sup>364</sup>. But just prior to 26th July, Haite<sup>365</sup> carried, from near the Painted Gate to the glasshouse, 65 cords for which Puleston had not received payment. The Painted Gate seems to have been the entrance to Knole Park where the wood was stacked for collection by the glassmen; it could have been just south of what is now the White Hart on the other side of the road and about a mile south of the church<sup>366</sup>.

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**363** the following extracts are from Lennarde, pp.1-6

**364** Lennarde thus received 3s 4d (£0.17) per cord which is a measure of cut wood originally determined by using a cord or string; standardised as 128 cubic feet.

**365** Henry Hait, householder, was buried in Novemeber 1595, Richard Hait, householder, having been buried ten years earlier

**366** Ward, p.19

## Paid Not in Money

On 19th February 1586 Puleston recorded a number of cords of wood "carried by my own team . . and the rest by Haite" for which "he paid me not in money but in things that he allowed for of me and for 178 bushels of ashes, 28 cords of log wood left at the ?? of my entry there 2 loads pot clay for making 12 pots, one load of brick clay for making of bricks 3 stones for making an oven, 3 syles, 2 pails, 2 shovels, ??, a wheel barrow, 3lbs of saffron, 100 of last, 4 bushels of freting glass and 6 pipes as appeareth by his bills". This looks as if the glassmakers were having problems obtaining cash to pay Lennarde and, instead, supplied him with ashes, building materials and some other items.

8th November 1587 Roger Puleston to John Lennarde: "All the cords by the Painted Gate are carried to the glasshouse already and 3 cords from Hook Wood" (the main entrance to Knole, Town Gate, opposite the church, ran through Hook Wood<sup>367</sup>).

## Finding Wood was Getting Difficult

Puleston wanted to know where else he should find wood for the glasshouse and described the security arrangements made for Knole. "The outward Court gate is

locked every night at supper time and all the night after supper also; the Town gate and all the gates in the park are kept locked both night and day". There were two other gates besides the Town and Painted Gates: Blackhall Gate at the other side of the park and Knole Beech Gate. The 446 acres of the park, of which 92 acres were woodland, had deer roaming in it<sup>368</sup>.

Oneby, the man in charge of one half of the glasshouse, and Puleston had reckoned that Oneby had "had so much wood as came to £3 11s 4d" and Puleston had received glass "the price whereof came to £4 8s 5d" so that he was "in hand with the glassmen since your worship's departure and not behind."

## Glass for Knole

All the glass was brought to Knole "not by horse load but by cart load" and it was "handsomely placed in the chamber" which Lennarde had appointed. There were "two locks on the door to make all fast".

The other men working in the glasshouse were Mr. Valyan who had returned having worked there before. Oneby was willing for him to work there "in manner and form as he did before" and he took on "the charge of the one half of the glasshouse and Ferris worked with him the same side". Oneby's side was worked

not by him but by Mr. Brussell and a young man. Oneby, however, was "dressing and heating his furnace for on Monday next he meaneth to begin to work there".

Roger Puleston wrote to Lennarde again just over a week later, on 17th November. Considerable work had been carried out between the writing of the two letters and it is possible Lennarde had returned to Knole for a short time after receiving the first one. "There hath been charged since your worship's departure 24 cords of wood to the glasshouse and I have received so much glass as amounteth to £6 and for the other 3 cords I shall receive glass tomorrow. Valyan and Ferris have promised to deliver me 20s worth of glass towards the payment of their debt before Saturday night. They . . . work night and day but only while the founder is tempering his metal; on the one side of the furnace Valyan and Ferris do work and on the other side Brussell and the young man. Tomorrow, God willing, Mr. Oneby is determined to begin to work and Mr. Brussell's son shall work with him who is already come to the glasshouse."

## **Wood Still in Short Supply**

Someone "hath filled up all the sawpits in the park. Pococke hath carried all the rails and piled them up on the back side of the kitchen as your worship commanded. I spake with Lawe and he hath taken a view of the trees which you appointed Adams to fell of the which he will take as much as will suffice his turn. Adams and George do work at the Painted Gate and they do not set up the cords

as fast as they are carried away. Therefore, if you will have the glassmen to continue at work you must either grant that more woodcutters may be set at work or else suffer them to carry out of some other place in the park, for all the cleft cords that were in the Hook Wood are carried to the glass house already".

## French Huguenot Glassmakers

In the second half of the sixteenth century a number of French Huguenot glass-makers came to England and set up furnaces in the south of England. The masters of the furnace, Valyan and Brussell, could have been members of two families of glass-makers: "Le Vaillant" a Normandy family and "Brossard". Elsewhere there had been bloodshed between rival glass-makers but here excellent relations existed between Valyan and Ferris, probably an Englishman<sup>369</sup>. "- Laurens, glassman" was buried in March 1592 and this looks like another foreign name.

Skilled men such as glass workers had been encouraged to come for at least forty years. In 1552, Henry Smith, a merchant of London applied for permission to bring into the realm certain strangers expert in making "broke glass" which was commonly called "Normandy glass". By this means some Englishmen "may be set to work and get their living and in time learn and be able to make the said glass



themselves and to instruct others". Henry Smith received his licence and the monopoly to produce Normandy glass for twenty years<sup>370</sup>.

## The Decline of Glass Making in the Area

From the notes written by Roger Puleston, we can see that, by the end of the sixteenth century, it was becoming difficult to find sufficient wood to fire the furnaces. In 1615 the use of wood fuel in glasshouses was forbidden but, before then, glass furnaces which could use coal were being designed<sup>371</sup>. This required a much greater draught to allow the coal to burn properly but also the glasshouse needed to be sited close to a source of coal or, at least, in a position to which coal could be transported easily. The Sevenoaks area satisfied neither of these requirements and thus, as it became more and more difficult to find sufficient wood, the glasshouses in the Sevenoaks locality probably declined.

Although glaziers were mentioned later, they were more likely to be the men fitting glass into windows rather than makers of glass, particularly since, by the seventeenth century it was becoming much more common to have glass windows in ordinary houses.

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370 Eng. Hist. Doc., p.1007-8

371 Vane, p.143

# Murder in Seal

A murder for which considerable detail is available is that of William Pynden who lived at Padwell in the parish of Seal but at least 1½ miles from the village. He was stabbed on 3rd March 1590 when his house was being burgled by a gang of six men including three from Sevenoaks: John Kyng, a blacksmith, and two labourers, Robert Waller and John Coker. The other three were John Medhurst, a shoemaker from Wrotham, John Willard, a blacksmith from Chevening, and William Brown, an edgetool-maker from Trottiscliffe.

The jury at the inquisition held, before the coroner at Seal on 5th March 1590 (the day on which William Pynden was buried) found that, on the night of 3rd March, the accused burgled Pynden's house while he, his wife Juliana and three servants were there. "In the course of the felony, they stabbed William Pynden in the chest with a knife inflicting a wound from which he died the next day". They do not appear to have made much from the burglary - 2s in money from a chest belonging to one of the servants and 16d in a purse belonging to another.<sup>372</sup>

## Pynden's Will

Although fatally injured, Pynden managed to have a long will written and this was witnessed by two of the parish gentry, two well-to-do yeomen, described as "jurats", and Edward Holman, a "practitioner in physic"<sup>373</sup>. These men must have assembled at the Pynden's house quickly after the attack, one of the yeomen probably having come from Kemsing, three miles from Padwell.

Presumably the gang ran away after the stabbing and one of the servants ran to Seal (or rode, if there was a horse available) with news getting the doctor and other men of authority to go to the Pynden house one of whom presumably wrote the will. If the attack actually took place late in the day, it does not seem possible that the witnesses could have assembled the same day and the will been written then. Perhaps the attack actually took place early on the 3rd or the will was written on the 4th.

## The Inquest

The coroner before whom the inquest was held was Thomas Tuttesham who appears to have come from East or West Peckham, about seven miles from Seal. To organise his attendance at Seal and assemble a jury from the local parish

gentry and wealthy yeomen on the day after Pynden died would tax a modern administration but for different reasons. Methods of communications and means of travel have improved immensely but, even four hundred years ago, were men like Tuttesham and the witnesses to Pynden's will and members of the jury able to leave their other occupations whenever emergencies such as this arose?

## **A Previous Burglary**

The charged men seem to have carried out crimes in different districts. On 18th February, four of them (including Waller and Kyng) had had a large haul from the house of a yeoman of Trottiscliffe. As with the Pynden case, this took place while the yeoman, his wife and four children were there but perhaps Pynden had put up some resistance whilst here the victims thought that discretion was the more prudent course to follow. The items stolen included a considerable amount of linen, two latten candlesticks and five flitches of bacon which were valued at 5s (£0.25) each.

## Indictment at the Assizes

When they were indicted at the Assizes, in July 1590, Medhurst and Willard were at large; the others were found guilty and sentenced to hang. Willard was tried in March 1591 and also sentenced to hang.

But 3rd March may not have been the first time that William Pynden met John Willard, the blacksmith from Chevening. At the Rochester Assizes, on 27th February 1589, Pynden was on the trial jury which found Willard (then described as a labourer of Chipstead) guilty of grand larceny in that he stole some broad-cloth from two men in Benenden. At that time, Willard was allowed benefit of clergy.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Cockburn (Eliz.I), 1735, 1739

# Chapter 9

## The Threat of Invasion

Reports of the preparations for an invasion of England being made by Philip of Spain were being received by the Privy Council by 1584 and England had to be ready to repulse any landing on its shore. Even the defeat of the Armada in 1588 did not remove the threat completely and musters and levies to raise money continued until at least 1596. Sevenoaks in Kent, one of the most threatened counties, was obviously involved in these preparations.

### Local Musters

321

All able-bodied men, each equipped with his weapons, were supposed to attend the local musters which were called throughout the 1580s.

### Bands of Militia

322

In 1585 the Sheriff received orders regarding the choice of men for bands of militia and these included instruction about training and the choice of weaponry.

## The Readiness of the County in 1586

325

as shown by the Lord Lieutenant's report

## But Problems in 1587

327

March 1587 saw alerts being issued for an expected invasion which did not materialise. The tension fell only to rise again as fears arose for 1588 and urgent orders began to be issued. Lambarde wrote a long reply to Cobham's demands detailing the problems of the people.

## Early 1588

330

In April 1588, the Constables of the Hundreds were instructed to muster everyone between the ages of 16 and 60 whilst those over sixty, or otherwise unable to attend, were to send their arms and weapons for use by someone else. The borsholders were to send the names of everyone within their jurisdiction.

## Warning Beacons

332

A system of warning beacons, braziers on the top of posts, had been developed from the earlier system of bonfires and these were manned from March to October. Warned by ships at sea of an enemy ship approaching, beacons on the coast were lit thus sending the warning to the next beacon in the chain.

## The Church as Propagandist

335

The church was called in to make the people aware of the threatened danger and therefore the need to raise taxes. Prayers were to be said for protection and preachers were “to make some exhortation” to the people to fight for their country.

## The Armada Defeated

336

The first warnings that the Spanish Armada was on its way came in the middle of June but the English had a month to prepare since it was t23rd July before the fleet came into sight. But land fighting was not necessary, the Spanish fleet being defeated at sea by the English albeit with the help of the weather.

## Further Musters

341

There were further musters, training and assessments for money throughout the rest of 1588 and 1589 and these continued, although not so often, until at least 1596.



## Local Musters

Faced with the threat from Spain, one of the government's priorities was to make arrangements so that men from Sussex, Kent and Essex could be sent to wherever danger threatened and local musters, sometimes held as frequently as once a week, were called throughout the 1580s.

These were supposed to be attended by every able-bodied man between sixteen and sixty and a certificate for Kent for 1580, which excludes the cities of Canterbury and Rochester, put the number of footmen who ought to turn out as 14,217. Jessop, however, thought it unlikely that more than half of the total turned out at any one muster<sup>375</sup>. Perhaps about a hundred would have been expected from Sevenoaks.

## The Arming of the Men

Each man had to bring his weapons but the bow or billhook, which the men had owned themselves, had been superseded by a pike, longbow or even a musket or caliver (a light musket) and these were provided at the expense of the county. Although a man could be fined or punished in some other way if his equipment

did not "pass muster", few parishes could have had sufficient modern weapons to equip all the men who were supposed to have them.

Officers were recruited from the local gentry, the organisation and efficiency of the musters being the responsibility of the Lord Lieutenant of the county and his deputies<sup>376</sup>.

This mustering of untrained men had been the standard method of defence against invasion for hundreds of years. But particularly with the more sophisticated weapons being used, it was beginning to be seen as an unsatisfactory arrangement

## **Bands of Militia**

In April 1585 the Privy Council wrote to the Sheriff with instructions regarding the choice of men for the bands of militia. They were to be selected carefully and the letter included instructions about training and the care of the weaponry and it was important to have men capable of being trained to use the modern weapons.

It was also important for the officers to know which men they could call on at any one time. Thus instructions were included as to the keeping of lists of the men in the bands to make it possible to know where the soldiers were upon any occasion so that they could instantly "be called for and had". The captains were to be notified of the death or departure out of the county of anyone in the band so that "another may be forthwith substituted into his or their place".

## Men Able to Support Themselves

The queen, however, was also looking for men who would, at least partly, be able to support themselves. Each band "should contain and consist of men of such sufficiency and ability as shall be able to furnish themselves in such decent and soldier like sort as is fit for such as are to be employed only within the realm for the true purposes above mentioned and will be of themselves or by their parents or friends contented to bear the yearly charges of the training without my further trouble, or at the least without extraordinary expenses unto the county other than for powder and the time of training"<sup>377</sup>.

As is implied here, but not unexpectedly, it was easier to find men of the type required for the defence of their own towns and villages than it was to recruit for an army which was to see service overseas.

## The Lord Lieutenant's Instructions on Training

On 1st August 1585 Lord Cobham, Lord Lieutenant of the County, sent his deputies, Sir Henry Cobham (his brother) and Sir Thomas Fane, detailed instructions on how the foot bands were to be trained.

They were to choose the time judiciously to best suit their recruits. Training the men to shoot presented difficulties and was to be carried out by corporals in every band on the holy days after prayer, "men of ability", as described above, having been chosen for such bands. These instructions ended with a final and express warning: those who were retainers to noblemen and gentlemen were not to be exempt no matter to whom they belonged.

## Disapproval from Mr. Lennarde

Another letter from the Lord Lieutenant on 17th August lists a number of problems. "Mr. Lennarde and others (as far as I see) will not approve his armour to be employed on them that serve or be put in bands or companies, nor that his men willingly to be enrolled among others"<sup>378</sup>. "Mr. Lennard" was probably John Lennarde of Knole and Chevening who was one of the three men before whom the

musters were to be presented. (Although John wrote his will in 1587 it was not proved until 1591)

## The Readiness of the County in 1586

In 1586 the Lord Lieutenant reported on the military preparedness of the county:

"There are trained in this county 2,500 men and put under captains; to which His Lordship has added 700 more with the good liking of the county. 300 horse put in readiness under captains; to each captain 50, with a lieutenant, trumpet, cornet and all in suitable cassocks. There are appointed to each company of 300 trained men, 50 pioneers; and to every company of 200 men, 39 pioneers furnished under the leading of the head constables of the place where they are levied, and to every company two carts. The Justices will see 300 shot mounted upon ordinary nags for the firing of the beacons, viz. 50 out of each lathe. The Justices of the quorum and th'other Justices have agreed to find petronells but such of them as have the leading either of horse or foot desired to be eased thereof, in respect they are otherwise employed . . .<sup>11379</sup> .

A petronell was a kind of large pistol or carbine used especially by horse soldiers. In order to counter the reaction, the butt of the petronell was rested against the chest (hence the name) and, since this could have been quite painful, the reason why the soldiers "desired to be eased thereof" is understandable.

## The JPs Duties

During 1586 Cobham continued to remind the JPs of their duty to watch the beacons, to disarm all ill-affected persons, to prevent rumours and to make sure that, as the men were mustered and inspected, a proportion of the archers were transferred to muskets<sup>380</sup>.

## But Problems in 1587

In March 1587 all the endangered counties were alerted to be ready to repel an invasion but, as no Armada appeared, the tension reduced only to lead to further fears at the end the year that 1588 would see its approach.

Urgent orders began again in October 1587. On 13th November Sir Thomas Fane sent a letter to the other deputy lieutenants in Kent requiring all defaults in armour and weapons to be supplied by the 20th<sup>381</sup>. Did this very short time induce panic in the recipients of the letter who were warned that "very shortly" the muster master would arrive to see all the armour and weapons?

In December the instructions were repeated and Lambarde who, as a JP, was one of the recipient of these, wrote a long reply to Cobham<sup>382</sup> which gave details of the state of the lathes of Aylesford and Sutton-at-Hone.

After claiming that Kent could provide more than 2,000 foot and 200 horse, he complained of the demands made on those least able to bear taxation, purveyance and levies. He described the long peace as being the mother of riches and the father of many children and that, by comparison with former years, there had been no increase in the present assessment. But he then complained about

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<sup>381</sup> D.593/S/4/11/1 quoted by McGurk, p.75

<sup>382</sup> Lambarde, D.593/S/4/11/1/9 quoted by McGurk, pp. 77-78; spelling modernised

landowners increasing their rents to the detriment of good and honest farmers, many of whom had become broken and fallen into beggary.

## The Burdens Placed on the Populace

Lambarde pointed out that in 1581, 1582, 1585, 1586 and 1587 subsidies and a fifteenth had had to be paid with there also being many musters and extraordinary days of training and lately several companies of soldiers had had to be provided.

His complaints next turned to purveyance "which is the most heavy of all, Her Majesty's purveyors do daily grow upon us not only by the taking of more part of the provisions than hath heretofore been yielded but also by exacting of greater proportions (or rather complement for they exceed all proportion) than we may conveniently bear, for which they pay very little or no money at all".

There was also the cost of training: "for there are within this division<sup>383</sup> almost 300 armed persons, besides the officers, pioneers, artificers, carters, etc. besides the lighthorsemen". In his opinion no footman should be drawn from home and trained for less than 12 pence a day or any horseman under 20 pence a day. For 16 days of actual training, 4 days should be added for coming out and going home

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383 that is, the two lathes



again and the total cost would have been £300. Lambarde then asked how, if they sent men other than already trained bands, they could supply them with coats suitable for that time of year (December) out of the £300, plus "powder, match and bullet".

## Further Complaints but No Fear of Mutiny

Lambarde continued his complaints, pointing out that many had been persuaded by Cobham and others to "leave almain rivetts, arquebuses and handguns aside as being unserviceable, 'which nevertheless were thrust upon us by authority' and to buy instead good corslets, calivers and muskets even though these were not demanded by law".

All these demands could anger even "dutiful men" and, whilst assuring Cobham that he did not fear any mutiny, he did think it a dangerous practice to first arm men and then offend them. Even so he knew that Kent was loyal and that the common man would not lift his hand against Her Majesty. The winter of 1587-88 passed without major incident but, on April 1st 1588, orders were sent out for the reviewing, training and new mustering of soldiers<sup>384</sup>.

## Early 1588

In the spring of 1588 the Earl of Sussex recommended that the first line of defence should be trained soldiers kept ready to move to wherever danger threatened. The musters, who Essex said "in times of alarm and trouble are for the most part given rather to run up and down amazed than to follow their necessary work and labour", were only to be called up as a last resort<sup>385</sup>.

## A General Muster

On 11th April 1588, Sir Henry Cobham and Sir Thomas Fane wrote to the Constables of the Hundreds of Codsheath, Somerden, Westerham and the ville of Brasted charging them "immediately upon the receipt hereof" to send out precepts for "all persons<sup>386</sup> between the age of sixteen and three score, other than spiritual persons, lame or impotent. And those that be already of the trained band enrolled to appear personally before John Lennarde, Thomas Willoughby and Thomas Potter, Esq. , , by 7 of the clock afore noon the 25th of this month and the persons of Codsheath aforesaid at Sevenoaks the 26th day of the same month . . there to be seen, viewed and mustered withall such armour and weapons on their back,

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385 Whitehead, p.45

386 presumably excluding the women

fair, clean and serviceable, as any of them is charged with either by statute or otherwise".

The borsholders were to instruct all those either above sixty or otherwise incapable of attending, to send "their arms and weapons upon some man's back as may be fit to serve".

Each borsholder was also to bring with him the names "of every inhabitant within his limit, written on paper with a large margin, the householders by themselves and the servants by themselves. And if there be any that have lived of late in the low countries, or elsewhere as soldiers, to set a special mark on his name".

The Constables were warned: "Fail ye not, at your peril, making return of this precept".<sup>387</sup>

# Warning Beacons

Lambarde was busy on other fronts besides the mustering and training of soldiers. How to get news to London of a threatened landing on the south coast quickly so that orders could be issued and defence organised was another area of concern. A system of warning beacons had existed for at least two hundred years. Initially these had been brushwood bonfires but, at the end of the fourteenth century, these were replaced by posts with pots of pitch or braziers on them. Each post was a square cut tree with a rough wooden ladder to give access for lighting<sup>388</sup>. About 1570 Lambarde published a map of these.

For this he was attacked on the grounds that he was giving useful information to the enemy but he defended himself by arguing that the publication of the map would make it easier for the watchers to operate the system efficiently<sup>389</sup>.

From a note in a letter from the Lord Lieutenant to his deputies in 1585 it appears that the local people themselves needed information: "Whence each beacon doth take light or to what place it giveth light, I think that none of the commissioners do know except if maybe learned by old men of the country"<sup>390</sup>.

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388 Faulkner, p.5

389 Jessop, p.97

390 CKS: U1000/5; 05/4

## The Beacons of Kent

A map drawn in 1588 by Sir William Brooke, Lord Cobham<sup>391</sup>, shows the positions of the beacons, the nearest to Sevenoaks being at Raspit Hill, about four miles east of the town and just inside the parish of Ightham.

The first fire, at the coast, was to be lit when an enemy fleet was sighted, a second if the fleet came within four miles of the coast and another if the enemy landed.

The beacons were manned from the beginning of March until the end of October since any invasion would most probably occur in the summer months and, during the winter, the weather was often too bad for the next beacon in the chain to see the previous one. Another drawback was that, through mischievousness or carelessness, a false alarm might be given. This happened on a few occasions and the Kentish men who mustered and prepared to resist the invasion "made it very plain to Her Majesty's Council that they were not amused"<sup>392</sup>.

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391 Abell, p.184

392 Jessop, p.97

## The Warning System

By 1588 the beacon warning system had been organised so that the warning came earlier and was also more specific. Small fast ships, called pinnaces, were posted to the sea approaches to England. These could be fishing smacks, privately owned merchant vessels or scouting and communication ships attached to one of the navy's fleets. If one of these ships saw an enemy ship approaching, it was to strike a sail twice and fire a cannon and then repeat the sequence. At night, the signal was two lights one above the other and then to continue firing "a piece". Look-outs at prominent points along the coast, near where the beacons were sighted, gave them early warning of possible danger.

In addition, at strategic points, beacons were maintained in groups of three. Depending on which beacons were lit, the musters were called to assemble at a particular part of the coast or warned simply to hold themselves in readiness. By this time, Lord Lieutenants had to maintain a post service in the county, using both horsemen and runners. Where it was possible to use horses and with fresh horses available along the route, a more detailed message could be transmitted almost as fast as a beacon signal<sup>393</sup>.

# **The Church as Propagandist**

Against an actual invasion the great majority of the populace could be expected to fight against the enemy but England was still under threat from Roman Catholicism and the Queen and her advisers knew everything had to be done to keep dissent to an absolute minimum. Money was short and taxes had to be raised; people had to see the reason for this.

## **Prayers for Protection**

One of the ways of doing this was via the church. In the middle of July 1588, Archbishop Whitgift sent a letter to all the bishops saying that, given the dangerousness of the times, they should cause prayers to be said in every parish according to letters he had sent them earlier and a newly printed book he was sending them. This book contained prayers against rebellion, in favour of "the clergy, nobility, Judges, magistrates, people and commonalty" and for God's protection against invasion.

## An Exhortation to Fight

Licensed preachers were "to make some exhortation every week", an example of the type of sermon he was expected to deliver being:

"She is your true and natural Queen, bred, born and brought up amongst you, and as she has naturally loved you even from the beginning of her reign, so do you most naturally, like English men, defend her, fight for her, and not only gaurd her with danger of your lives but also aid her with your lands and livings, and as God has blessed you by her means with gold and silver . . open your purses and bestow largely upon her now intime of war, by whom you have filled your coffers richly in time of peace . .

*Pugnate pro patria*, fight for you country, your dearest country, wherein you have been bred, born, nourished and brought up, toward which you ought to be as inwardly affected as you are naturally moved to your mothers. It is your native soil, and thereore most sweet; for what may be dearer or sweeter than your Country?"<sup>394</sup>

## The Armada Defeated

On 18th June 1588, the Council "being advertised that the king of Spain's navy is already abroad on the seas and gone to the coast of Biscay" instructed Cobham to



give immediate orders: all gentlemen who were captains or leaders of men in the county were in no wise to be absent from it; all the bands were to be complete and in readiness to be employed as occasion would serve; the beacons were to be watched and the authors of doubtful rumours severely and speedily punished.

The government's plans were to keep the armies "ready to serve where occasion shall arise" and two of the captains were told that it was the Council's wish to "have all the companies of horse in the shire and 6,000 foot and 600 pioneers, with all the powder, bullets, match and victuals to be ready to march either to the sea coast or to join with the forces in Essex, Sussex or London"<sup>395</sup>.

On 11th July, the horse and trained foot soldiers went to Rochester where they were reviewed; the three main commanders were Sir Thomas Fane for West Kent, Sir Thomas Scott for East Kent and Sir James Hales for the cavalry. The forces from East Kent were to be the front line troops with the West Kent men forming the "second battayl". All cattle were driven inland and standing grain which could not be harvested was to be destroyed<sup>396</sup>.

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395 Lambeth MSS. 1392, f. 37

396 Abell, p.184

## Rival Plans of Action

The places of assembly for the Kent forces were confirmed, those from the lathe of Sutton-at-Hone being Dartford and Sevenoaks. The government's strategy was to prevent the confusion it feared on invasion by arranging for an orderly retreat, if necessary, with a counter-attack in due course. But Sir Thomas Scott thought it would be better to prevent a landing from happening in the first place and wanted more forces to be able to do this<sup>397</sup>.

## The Armada Defeated at Sea

The Spanish Armada came within sight of England in the middle of July. On 23rd July, as the Armada was approaching the Isle of Wight, Lord Lieutenants were instructed to begin mustering their mounted troops and trained foot-soldiers. The Privy Council also sent a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury "[praying his Lordship to give orders to all the Bishops and pastors in all the dioceses . . . to move their auditories and parishioners to join in public prayers to Almighty God, the giver of victories, to assist us against the malice of our enemies](#)"<sup>398</sup>.

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<sup>397</sup> McGurk, p.85

<sup>398</sup> Whitehead, p.94

With a running fight taking place in the Channel, the Kent commanders received a sequence of orders directing their forces to a variety of places depending on how the Council saw events progressing. If the Spaniards landed, the first brunt of the action was to be taken by the forces from East Kent with a reserve of nearly 3,000 men from West Kent being assembled at Maidstone under Sir Henry Cobham and Sir Thomas Fane. This force consisted of only 200 trained men and 100 well armed but only partially trained, the rest being both imperfectly armed and imperfectly trained. Fortunately, helped by the weather, the Armada was dispersed at sea and none of these forces were required to fight<sup>399</sup>.

## The Army at Tilbury

But the country still had to be prepared for an invasion and, at the end of July, an army was being formed at Tilbury in Essex under the Earl of Leicester. This was made up from men from Kent, Essex and Sussex but not all of them actually arrived there. One of the reasons for this was that the government wanted the trained bands near enough to be within call if there was a landing without having more than a minimum in the camp since the counties paid the men until they joined the army when they became the responsibility of the government<sup>400</sup>.

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399 McGurk, p.87

400 L. Boynton, *The Elizabethan Militia* (1967), p. 163 quoted by McGurk, p.87

The troops at Tilbury were described by an old soldier:

" . . and because that no man can conveniently and fitly be armed unless he be first fitly appparelled for his armour and also for the use of his weapon and that in the camp and army of Tibury in 1588 whereas there were regiments of divers shires with divers bands both of demilances and lighthorsemen I did see and observe so great disorder and deformity in their apparel to arm withall, as I saw but very few of the army that had any convenience of apparel and chiefly of doublets to arm upon, whereof it came to pass that most of them did wear their armour very uncomely, uneasily<sup>401</sup>

How many men from Sevenoaks could be counted amongst those "little stragglng bands, bearing a motley collection of weapons and armour, making their way on foot" towards Tilbury? Those that did might have seen the Queen when she visited the camp on 8th August, wearing a tall head-dress of nodding plumes<sup>402</sup>. It was here that she gave her famous speech which included "I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm"<sup>403</sup>.

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401 from Sir John Smith's "Instructions, Observationsa and Orders Militarie" (London, 1595), p 183, quoted by McGurk, p.89 (spelling modernised)

402 Whitehead, pp. 96 and 120

403 Dunham and Pargellis, p.344

## Further Musters

By the autumn of 1588 those mustered would have been home again but there were further musters, training and assessments for money throughout the rest of 1588 and 1589.

### November 1588

For the November 1588 muster, each 100 of the trained bands was to be accompanied by fifteen pioneers "furnished with bill, dagger, mattock and sword, three carriages, three smiths, three carpenters, a victualler and a clerk" whilst each shot was to have two pounds of powder, two of lead and two rolls of match.

The powder and match required special attention having to be stored under the charge of some fit and discreet person and specially guarded but yet be in a convenient place for when it was wanted. The two main towns where powder was stored for the lathe of Sutton-at-Hone were Dartford and Tonbridge with Crayford and Rochester for the lathe of Aylesford. But Sevenoaks and Canterbury were the other two towns detailed to have stores of powder.<sup>404</sup>

This continuing watchfulness had to be paid for and everyone was again taxed according to the last subsidy and those who refused to pay after being reported to the deputy lieutenants were to be committed to prison<sup>405</sup>.

## December 1588

Only a month later, the constable of Codsheath received a precept regarding the mustering of able bodied men on 27th December at Sevenoaks. He was also instructed to "take, or cause to be taken, a perfect note in writing, in large books, fair written, with large margins and wide space, of all the several houses of every several parish in the said hundred, together with the names and surnames of every householder and ?? with the names and surnames of their servants and children being above the said age of 16 years. And that you yourselves be not left out of the same and that also you personally appear before us" at the time of the muster "bringing with you the said note and books".<sup>406</sup> It looks as if the constable was to have a busy Christmas.

This precept, from John Lennarde, Thomas Willoughby and Thomas Potter, Esq., was written at Chevening where John sometimes lived when he was not at Knole or in London.

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405 McGurk, p.91

406 CKS: U1000/3, 05/11

## January 1589

In January 1589, Henry Cobham wrote to the three men who had sent out the previous precept regarding money for the soldiers. There was to be levy of 13s 4d (£0.67). 10s (£0.5) of this was to go to Sir John Norice who was to "furnish every soldier with coat and sword" with the rest being paid to the soldier as his "conduct money". Sir John also intended to "furnish the soldiers with ?? and weapons which is expedient the soldiers may have knowledge by you thereof."<sup>407</sup>

## Summer 1589

The summer of 1589 saw the possibility of the Spaniards sending another Armada and John Lennarde, Thomas Willoughby and Thomas Potter were instructed in the June regarding the "speedy setting in readiness" with the "watches duly kept . . and likewise the beacons to be kept guarded and watched as has been accustomed". Furthermore the foot bands were to be "well armed and furnished with powder" and the horse bands "well armed and mounted"<sup>408</sup>.

The musters held in August were to be held in such places "most meet" and "least troublesome to the people for their repair thither" but the captains were to be put

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407 CKS: U1000/3, 05/8

408 CKS: U1000/3, 05/14

to considerable work. They were to make "books and rolls" with the "names of their lieutenants, officers and soldiers and, upon every soldier, to set down the quality of his weapon, furnished or unfurnished. And likewise the names of the persons with their several occupations and the places of their dwelling. And also the owners of the carts and wagons that belong to any band and the places where they dwell. And, in like manner, that they do set down what quantity of powder, match, bullet, every soldier hath".

Sir Henry had presumably asked for such information previously since he complained that, because he had not received it, he could not give Lord Cobham the information he required. Sir Henry now wanted to receive the details, with each book signed with the captain's name, before Michaelmas requesting "that it please you to have due regard for the accomplishment of this said service to be so shortly done by you as is required".<sup>409</sup>

## A Selected Band from Sevenoaks

Musters and levies continued until at least 1596. The 1591 accounts of Sir John Leveson for money received in the lathe of Sutton towards the furnishing of 36 men, (16 pikes, 2 halbardens, 8 muskets, 8 calivers) have survived and a "selected



band" was mustered at Sevenoaks in July 1591. There are also lists of men for the hundred of Codsheath.<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>410</sup> CKS: U1000/3 which includes numerous documents not quoted here

# Chapter 10

## Elizabethan Families: The End of the Reign

The Lones, Lennardes, Bosvilles and Pocockes all came to Sevenoaks in the fifteenth century although the Lennardes and Pocockes were local in that the Lennardes came from Chevening and kept their connections with that village and the earliest Pococke for whom details have survived came from Seal.

### The Lones

349

Richard Lone came to Sevenoaks in 1559; he had a large family with his eldest son, Samuel, who moved to Mereworth in the about 1610, living into his eighties. Samuel and his son George, who remained in Sevenoaks, were Roman Catholics. Burglaries from the house of George Lone give some idea of the value of his household goods and the problems of a poor man living on Samuel Lone's property are described.

## The Lennardes

364

The Lennardes were an old Chevening family but the John Lennarde who died in 1591 and his son Sampson lived at Knole from 1574 to 1604. John Lennarde's connection with glass-working has already been described. The complicated law cases which could arise from dealings in property are illustrated by a case regarding tithe wood. Poaching was another problem. John Lennarde, who believed he would be saved by god's mercy alone, expressed his beliefs forcefully in his will.

## The Bosvilles

378

Bradbourne was purchased in 1555 by Ralph Bosville, a gentleman of Lincoln's Inn, who came originally from Yorkshire. It was inherited by his son Henry who had married a rich heiress but Henry died young leaving a number of children the eldest of whom, another Ralph, was only fourteen. Ralph, however, prospered being knighted at the beginning of the reign of James I. The estate was built up but Ralph's son, Leonard, died without heirs and Bradbourne passed to his daughter, Margaret, who had married Sir William Boswell.

## The Petts

392

The first Pett for which records have survived is Thomas atte Pette who was the tithing man in 1414. They were a wealthy family who supported Sevenoaks School.

## The Elizabethan Pockokes

399

The first Pockoke for whom any details has survived is Robert Pockoke of Seal whose 1566 will, together with an inventory , has survived. Thomas Pockoke, in 1587, owned a considerable amount of land which he divided between his three sons. Hellen Hadsoule, a widow who wrote her will in 1585, was probably a Pockoke. William Pockoke's capital messuage had been divided into a number of parts each occupied by different people.

## The End of Elizabeth's Reign

406

The last ten years of Elizabeth's reign were a time of economic depression caused partly by the costs of fighting at sea and wars in the Low Countries and Ireland but also by a number of bad harvests.

# The Lones

The first appearance of a Lone in the Sevenoaks area was in 1349 when John Lone "de la Sele" (of Seal) and his wife Sibell granted a messuage in the parish of Kemsing to William Kent of Otford and a Richard Lone, gent. of Ightham was mentioned in 1557<sup>411</sup>. This name was sometimes given as "Loane" but here the version "Lone" is used throughout. In 1559 Richard Lone bought Sevenoaks Park and lands, comprising 100 acres, from Thomas Potkyn.

Hasted described the Richard Lone who bought Sevenoaks Park as the son of Robert Lone of Ellow in Suffolk who "bore for his arms two coats"<sup>412</sup> and it is possible that the gentleman of Ightham could have come from Suffolk sometime during the reign of Phillip and Mary.

## Sevenoaks Park

Sevenoaks Park, as such, had existed for only a short time, since it was only in the late 1540s that someone, possibly John Wildgoose, had "emparked", that is built a fence round, an area of land of over 100 acres to the south of the church.

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411 Gordon Ward notebooks, Polhill VII, p.29 & Rumshed IV, p.9

412 Hasted p.89; Ellough, Suffolk is about eight miles southwest of Lowestoft

Emparking, in earlier times, had been the prerogative of the king, bishops and the higher aristocracy. Now we see it being done by a gentleman of Sevenoaks who proceeded to build himself a house at the entrance to his estate from the High Street.

The house which Wildgoose built could have been on the site of the house to the south of the church now called Park Grange and, prior to the emparking, this could have been the manor house of the sub-manor of Sevenoaks for which no clear details have survived. In 1555, John Wildgoose sold "the capital messuage and 120 acres of land called Sevenoaks Park to Thomas Potkyn who paid for it in seven instalments and then, in 1559, sold it to Richard Lone<sup>413</sup>.

## Richard Lone's Other Property

In 1557, at the end of the reign, Richard Lone bought a manor in the south of the parish which was called Rumshed or Rumpsted having taken its name from the family of Rumpsted. Sir William de Rumpsted is, traditionally, the foster-father of William Sevenoke, the founder of Sevenoaks School whom Hasted describes as having received both maintenance and education from (Sir William's) charity and benevolence<sup>414</sup>. If the purchaser of Rumshed and Sevenoaks Park was an

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413 Dunlop, p.107; Herbert W. Knocker, *Sevenoaks: the Manor, Church and Market*, A.C. Vol. 38, 1926, p.54

414 Hasted, p.89

"incomer" to the area, he soon became established in the town being associated with Ralph Bosville in the setting up of the School's new constitution and becoming one of its early Assistants.

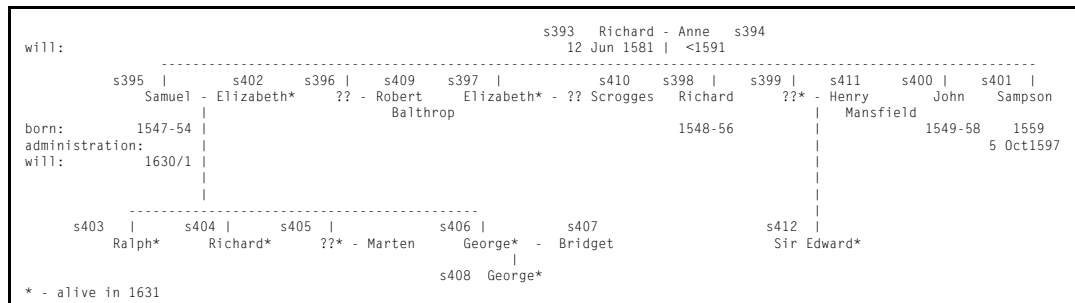
In addition to Sevenoaks Park and Rumshed, by the time he died Richard had property at Kippington and Greatness mills and a farm at Greatness. He also had land in Sundridge, Staplehurst, Frittenden, Biddenden, Marden and Tonbridge. Part of this was earmarked for the jointure and dower of the wife of his eldest son, Samuel, and part for the jointure and dower of his own wife.

## **Richard Lone's Will and Family**

Richard Lone, gent. was in "good health and of perfect mind and remembrance" when his will was written on 12th June 1581 but he could not have lived much longer since it was proved only a month later (14th July). He was most likely the Richard Lone who was Paul Farrow's master and overseer.

Richard, probably in his sixties when he died, had four sons and three daughters living when he wrote his will, with Samuel and the daughters all married and the other sons over twenty-one. It was Samuel who was to inherit all Richard's "[manors, lands, tenements and hereditaments](#)" but not until the death of Richard's wife, Anne, whom he made his executrix. Richard's son-in-law, Henry Mansfield was appointed the overseer of Richard's will in 1581; Sir Edward Mansfield, knight

and Henry Mansfield, Esquire who were overseers of Samuel's will in 1631 could have been Richard's grandsons.



## Richard Lone's Children

In the tree above, the years given below the names of Richard's sons are the dates between which they may have been born. If Samuel, Richard's eldest son was born in 1547 he would have been 84 when he died in 1631. All Richard's daughters married before 1581.

There is no mention of Sampson, his youngest son, being underage which implies he was born before 1560. Seven children in ten years is feasible giving 1550 as the latest date for Samuel's birth assuming he was the oldest child. If any of three



daughters were older than Samuel or any of them, although married were underage, it is possible he was born as late as 1554.

When Samuel wrote his will in 1631 his sisters, Scrogges and Manfield, were still alive by which time they must have been in their seventies, if not older. Samuel was already married to Elizabeth in 1581 and we would expect their elder children to have been born in the 1580s.

Gordon Ward gives the age of George Lone as thirty in 1619<sup>415</sup> in which case he was born in 1589. In 1633, there was a George Lone, gent. and George Lone, Esq. In Sevenoaks<sup>416</sup>.

## Anne Lone, Richard's Widow

In 1591, when the Burghs bought land from Henry Streatfield, yeoman, of Chiddingstone, they also bought a cottage with a little garden and a little yard and some "land, meadow, pasture or wood" which "now are, or late were, in the tenancy or occupation of Mrs. Ann Lone, widow, or her assigns". This was "boundeth on the north and west" by lands belonging to Samuel Lone, on the east

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415 Ward Notebooks, Rumshed V, p. ??

416 Cockburn, Chas.I No. 1068

by common land which was part of the manor of Knole and on the south by "the highway leading from Bore Place to Ightham called Gracious Lane"<sup>417</sup>.

There is a road south of Sevenoaks church and school called Gracious Lane but to describe this as a even part of a road from Bore Place to Ightham seems unusual. Bore Place is about 3.5 miles south-south-west of Sevenoaks and Ightham 4 miles west-north-west. Passing through Sevenoaks might have been the easiest route but the road to the south of Anne Lone's cottage would now be described as the road from Bore Place to Sevenoaks.

Regardless of its southern boundary, it looks as if, when Anne died, the house in which she had lived was sold. Three or four years earlier, on 21st December 1587, it had been burgled with 10 gallons of butter worth £2, five pieces of brawn<sup>418</sup> worth 5s and 6 lbs of hemp worth 4s being stolen.

In February 1588, at the Assizes held in Sevenoaks, Richard Turner and John Ward, both labourers, and John Brooke, a weaver, all from Chevening, were charged with the burglary. Turner was found guilty and sentenced to hang but the other two were found not guilty. Six months previously Turner, together with

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<sup>417</sup> indenture CKS: U908 T6

<sup>418</sup> a preparation of meat made from pig's head and ox-feet, cut up, boiled and pickled

another man, had been charged with burgling a house in Sundridge and stealing £5 worth of barley malt. On that occasion, he had been found not guilty<sup>419</sup>.

## Samuel Lone - A Catholic

As already described, in 1581, soon after his father's death, Samuel was imprisoned for his adherence to the Catholic faith. Even though the preamble to Richard's will includes some unusual phrases it does not show any unorthodox beliefs: "I bequeath my soul to almighty god, the creator and maker thereof, and to Jesus Christ who redeemed and bought it with the price of his precious blood, beseeching him, of his infinite mercy and goodness, to pardon me of my great sins and wickedness which I have most grievously committed against him and to receive my soul to his favour and grace". If he died in Sevenoaks Richard wanted his "sinful body to be buried within that aisle of the church of Sevenoaks aforesaid wherein I have used to sit" and he left forty shillings (£2) to the maintenance of the church. This seems to show that he was attending church regularly and, at this date, it was unusual for money to be left to the repair of the church.

It thus seems that Samuel was the first in the family to have a strong belief in the old religion.

## Samuel Lone and Rumshed

Samuel continued to absent himself from the parish church and was repeatedly charged with recusancy which meant that he was continually paying fines. It was probably his need for money to pay these fines that led to the complicated arrangements which were made for Rumshed.

The Lones did not live at Rumshed as, at the end of Elizabeth's reign Richard Polhill was the tenant of the manor<sup>420</sup>. In 1610, John Lone, Esq. paid Samuel £360 for the manor of Rumshed which included 10 messuages, a cottage, 2 tofts (homesteads), 2 water mills, 10 orchards, 190 acres of land, 52 acres of meadow, 180 acres of pasture, 126 acres of wood and a rent of £12 per year. These 500 acres of land were in the parishes of Sevenoaks, Tonbridge, Chevening, Leigh and Sundridge<sup>421</sup> and must have been worth more than £360. John was probably Samuel's brother and it could be that John was, by this means, helping Samuel pay his fines.

At some time before 1613 Samuel moved to Mereworth about eight miles east of Sevenoaks. Despite the apparent sale of Rumshed to John, Samuel still retained some interest in it and the various surviving deeds concerning the manor show

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420 Manor Court held 6th April 1601; Gordon Ward Notebooks, Rumshed V. p.3

421 Octave St. Hilary, 1611, Gordon Ward Notebooks, Rumshed V, p.6

that many complicated bargains were made using fines, deeds of agreement and annuities.

## Samuel Died in 1631

Samuel's will was written in 1630 and modified in July 1631 when, in his eighties, he probably died. After his death an inquest was held into the land he had owned and this found that he had held the manor of Rumshed "by fealty suit of Court and annual rent of 9s and died so seised when there accrued to the Lord King, of heriot one cow worth £2 . . and that George Lone is son and heir of the same Samuel". But why was this Inquisition Post Mortem held as far away as East Greenwich?

On 17th January (1632?) the Court Baron of George Lone, armiger, was held at Rumshed in the presence of Nicholas Drabble, seneschal (steward) of the said manor.<sup>422</sup> See [Appendix 10](#) for details of the owners of Rumshed.

## George Lone

Others of the Lone family, including Samuel's son George stayed in Sevenoaks. They were all Roman Catholics and their problems, together with those of other recusants, are described later.

Because of their Catholicism, the Lones could not aspire to be JPs but they were not completely cut out of society. It could have been to Sevenoaks Grange that, on 23rd April 1617, Richard Sackville, Earl of Dorset, and his wife Anne "went to Mr. Lune's house to see the fine flowers that are in the garden"<sup>423</sup>.

Although little is known of George Lone other than his indictments for recusancy he was the victim of two burglaries. The items stolen and the amount at which they were valued compared with similar items stolen from other people show that, although George must have had to pay a considerable amount in fines because of his recusancy, he still managed to spend money on his household.

## Samuel's Other Children

Samuel had two other sons, Ralph and Richard, and a daughter. The Richard Lone, gent., of Mereworth who was indicted for murder in 1612 could thus have

been Samuel's son. An inquest held on 9th March found that, on the previous day, Lone had attacked John Somers with a pikestaff and killed him. Lone was imprisoned and found guilty at the July Assizes where he was remanded after judgement. He was still a prisoner in March 1613 but nothing further was recorded<sup>424</sup>; if he was tried and found guilty, he would probably have been allowed benefit of clergy. Samuel's third son, Richard, was still alive in 1631.

## Samuel's Will

When Samuel wrote his will in 1630 he described himself as a gentleman of Mereworth so that his will is not included as "of Sevenoaks" but a transcript of it is given in section 2 together with the will of his father. Samuel must have been in his eighties when he wrote his will and, at that time, his wife, Elizabeth, whom he had married before 1581 and two of his sisters were all still alive. Samuel appointed as his executor Thomas Stanley of West Peckham (about two miles south of Mereworth) who was to have £5 a year for twenty years taken from money coming from the "Bore of Sundridge".

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424 Cockburn (James I); 673, 674, 680, 721

## Two Burglaries at Sevenoaks Grange

The first of these was on 1st July 1636. James Oliver of Sevenoaks, labourer, was charged with stealing nine sheets and three cupboard-cloths from George Lone. The cupboard-cloths, which like the sheets were valued at 1s each (£0.05), would be decorative cloths for putting on the top of the cupboards.

The burglary in October 1641 was much more serious. Four Sevenoaks labourers, John Hawes, Thomas Paradice, Thomas Sherman alias Graunt and William Thompson, were indicted for burglary and grand larceny with Mary, the wife of John Hawes as an accessory<sup>425</sup>.

## The Items Stolen

Twenty-one aprons and nine smocks were taken by the thieves. Not only does this show the number of aprons and smocks needed by the members of his household but the aprons were valued at over 13d each compared with some stolen from other households in 1636 and 1644 valued at 6d and 10d respectively. Similarly the smocks were valued at over 3s each compared with 1s for another smock stolen in 1636. The four shirts taken were valued at 5s whilst other stolen in 1625 were only 2s.

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425      Cockburn (Chas.I): 1385, 2018



George, however, could not surpass John Pococke who was burgled only a month before him, when it came to sheets. Those taken from John were valued at 16s a pair, with George's valued at 10s. Even so, other sheets in the 1640s were valued at 6s and 2s a pair and George's pillowbars were 3s compared with 2s 6d for those belonging to John.

An item not mentioned elsewhere is a cloth carpet valued at £1 and another of the more valuable items was a horseman's coat valued at £2. Two expensive horses were also stolen: a grey gelding valued at £6 and a grey mare at £7. John Hawes and his accomplices also stole a grey mare from Richard Woodgate but it was worth only £5. See [Appendix 12](#) for more details of the values placed on stolen items.

## **A Poor Man with Nowhere to Live**

Whilst Samuel Lone had been in prison in 1581 Rumshed would have been without a master and we actually know of one of the problems that arose because of his absence.

Peter Ware was a poor man with nowhere to live and so took up residence with his pregnant wife "in or under an oak" on the waste of Romshed Manor. With Samuel Lone away, there was only his bailiff and John Stevens living in an old cottage to whom Peter could go for help and none was forthcoming.

As the time for baby's arrival approached, Peter at last "set up four scratches and the women which came to her travail were faine to thatch and cover it". A scratch was a long forked stick and the four formed the corners of his shelter with other sticks laid across at the top. The sides would then have been covered with whatever was available and the roof thatched; there would have been no windows or chimney. Not a very welcoming shelter for the Ware's son, also called Peter.

When Samuel Lone was released and came back to take charge of the Rumshed land, Peter Ware was described to him as a wandering vagrant who had built a house on the manor waste, cutting down the lord's trees to make it. Lone, however, let Ware stay in his cottage "in respect of his impotency and poverty"<sup>426</sup>. Thus we learn how one very poor Sevenoaks family had to manage in the 1580s.

## The Cottage in 1641

Over fifty years later, in 1641, the building of Ware's cottage was still causing problems. John Thiselton, John French, Peter Stevens and William Double brought a case about a new cottage which had been built, probably by Peter's Ware son, nearby to where the original cottage had been. The plaintiffs stated that "all the landholders hereabouts hath had the benefit of the waste and cut the woods between their lands and the highways" and that their houses and land

adjoining were "much the worse by reason of this cottage and the inhabitants therein". In addition, the man living in the cottage had no lease and was but at tenant-at-will. The defendant objected that he had but rebuilt an ancient house but this was not accepted by the plaintiffs who also claimed that the new inhabitants were "no wise poor nor impotent but a childless yeoman"<sup>427</sup>.

# The Lennardes

We have seen that at the end of Elizabeth's reign and during that of James I, the Lones of Sevenoaks Grange and Rumshed were a Roman Catholic family. The tenants of Knole had very different religious views.

The Lennardes (or Lennards) were an old Chevening family; Adam de Chevening was one of the justices of the great assize in the reign of King John at the beginning of the thirteenth century<sup>428</sup>. A John Lennarde died between July 1555 and July 1556 when he was seventy-six and there is a brass plate in Chevening church to commemorate him<sup>429</sup>. He was the father of the John Lennarde whose will, written in November 1587, has survived. In it this John gave his age as seventy-eight "[by my parents' saying](#)" and, when he died in the spring of 1591, he was in his eighty-second year. John's son Sampson, probably born about 1540, died in 1615 so that at least three generations of Lennardes lived well into old age.

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428 Hasted, p.108

429 Hasted, p.124, describes a "brass plate and inscription for John Lennard obt. 2d and 3d Philip and Mary, aet.76" but associates it with the alabaster tomb of the John who died in 1591

## John Lennarde of Knole

The John Lennarde who died in 1591 is described in his will of 1587 as "of Knole" and he and his son Sampson lived at Knole from 1574 to 1604.

John, who wanted to be buried in Chevening, was a barrister at Lincoln's Inn and a JP for the county for over thirty years from 1554 to 1590; he was also sheriff of Kent in 1571. As sheriff he would have presided over the county court held near Maidstone every four weeks, executed writs from the Westminster courts, supervised the justices' entertainment at sessions and assize and conducted public executions.

There were other duties connected with the post but, during the reign of Elizabeth, what made it so attractive to local society was the honour attached to it rather than the sheriff's administrative importance<sup>430</sup>. The last Assizes John attended was at Rochester in the summer of 1590 and he was recorded as ill in the following February<sup>431</sup>. He must have died soon after this since his will was proved on 17th April 1591. Since he was born in 1509 his children could have been born from the late 1530s onwards.

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<sup>430</sup> Clark (1977), p.113

<sup>431</sup> Cockburn (Eliz.I); 547, 571, 31 & 1866

## The Manor of Brasted

In 1577, John's sons, Sampson and Samuel, bought the manor of Brasted from William Isley who was indebted to the crown to the amount of £3644. As a result, an Act of Parliament was passed so that Isley could sell as much of his lands as would pay his debts. The lord treasurer, with others, were appointed commissioners for carrying out the necessary conveyances. Notwithstanding this act, two years later the attorney-general "brought an information in the court of exchequer for seizing the manor" on the grounds that the Lennardes had purchased it without first obtaining licence from the crown. Fortunately for the Lennardes, they received judgement against the crown<sup>432</sup>.

## A Court Case Regarding Enclosure

John Lennarde, however, had other problems in 1579. As recorded earlier, on 30th June he was assaulted by highway robbers who stole £3.65 from him. A more lengthy business concerned the enclosing of some land, a judicial sentence being passed "in the arches" against "Foster and Pocock" for tithe wood in the parish.

The Court of Arches was a high ecclesiastical court held in London. If the reference here is to that court and, since there was also a reference to the Court of

Augmentation, this would look to be the case, it again shows how apparently minor cases from areas well outside London could be referred to a high court.

Apparently John had enclosed "lands and wood into Otford Park and seventy-four acres of land and wood into Knole Park, which joined to Whittley and lay below the hills, and sixty acres into Panter's park, adjoining Whittley but lying nearer the Weald; and because the tithe of land and wood belonged to the vicar of Sevenoaks, and twenty shillings for tithe pannage out of Knole, therefore by the decree of the Court of Augmentation, by the king's command, the vicar had five pounds decreed to him"<sup>433</sup>.

## Tithe Wood

Wood was the produce of the land and, because of this, tithes were due for it. Although Lennarde had been selling wood for a long time and it had been usual to pay an agreed amount rather than hand over a tenth of the amount received to the church, coming to an agreement on this amount was not always easy.

The difficulty in interpreting instructions regarding the payment of tax is by no means new. A document headed "Questions on Tithings" dated 6th May 1621, over forty years after Lennarde's case, deals with the felling of wood and it is likely

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<sup>433</sup> 35 king Henry VIII, quoted by Hasted, p.103; since Hasted says that this £5 had been paid ever since, this must have been £5 a year which Lennard was charged with paying.

that this was trying to describe a situation with which the Knole estate was only too familiar.

Timber trees, oaks, ashes and elms were not titheable but tithe by prescription, that is a money payment, "may be due for both firewood and timber trees, for as one may prescribe in a *modus decimandi* against the parson, so likewise may the parson prescribe against him. But a prescription to have tithe of firewood or timber trees must be a usage time out of mind, not from a few, but generally and the payment to be constant as of right and not either to eschew trouble or for any other respect than as due in right for tithe".

This was summarised in 1624 as "No sort of great timber is titheable unless the parson can prescribe for it"<sup>434</sup>. It looks as if the landowner needed to worry only if the rector or vicar of the parish was likely to have a lawyer on his side to look for a loophole to exploit but, in Sevenoaks, this was certainly possible.

Such cases show how complex dealings in land and the taxation associated with it could be. No wonder many families encouraged at least one of their sons to study at the Inns of Court so that, even if they did not qualify as lawyers, they would have some knowledge of the minefield into which such legislation could lead them.



## Management of the Household

John Lennarde's accounts for 1585 include other items in addition to the sale of wood to the glasshouse already described. He does not mention his wife in his will and she had probably died some time previous to its writing. One of the entries in his accounts (but unfortunately without the amount) show that one of his daughters managed the household:

"Received of my daughter Lennarde, the third of June 1585, as an overplus of money that she had as remaining in her hands touching expenses in household and other payments made by her".

Other entries in the accounts show money received for rent, hides at £2 for six, sheep fells at 23d (9.6p) each and calves at 8s (£0.4) each<sup>435</sup>.

## Roger Puleston, Steward

When John was away from Knole, his steward, Roger Puleston, wrote letters keeping him up-to-date with his business interests (particularly the glass-making), ending the one written on 8th November 1587 "Thus awaiting your worship's answers . . . I cease, committing you to the tuition of the Almighty who evermore have you in his keeping, your poor servant in the Lord to command".

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435 Lennard, p.3

This could be taken as a standard ending from servant to master but between then and 16th November Lennarde had written to him that he "should not forget, forslow (delay) nor deceive" him in those things entrusted to him. Puleston was obviously upset by this apparent mistrust: "Forget I might and forslowe but God forbid I should live to deceive you and yet I am sure I have offended in neither of the three for I go twice or thrice every day to the glasshouse and the glassmen were never at such unity and concord amongst themselves as they are at this instant"<sup>436</sup>.

## Poaching

A year later, on 14th November 1588, Puleston wrote regarding the taking of deer from the estate. "If it may please you, so it is that one Roots, with Robert Waler and one Mederie, were seen on Sevenoaks Vine with a crossbow (testing) how it would shoot. This was on Saturday before All Saints day and, the Wednesday next after, a male deer was hurt . . on All Saints day, two poor men . . in Godwyne woods, said that a little before day they saw 3 young men come out of the park with a deer on their shoulders"<sup>437</sup>.

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<sup>436</sup> Lennard, p.5

<sup>437</sup> CKS: Gordon Ward book Sevenoaks 7, page 38, quoting from "An Account of the Families of Lennard and Barrett" by J. Barrett Lennard (this account has not been traced)

Poaching must always have been a problem to landowners such as John Lennarde but 1589 saw a particularly unpleasant incident. According to an inquisition held at Sevenoaks, on the night of 13th August "Henry Smythe, a keeper for John Lennarde, esq., caught sight of some poachers in Knole Park . . He sounded the alarm and Edmund Smythe and William Pococke, two of Lennarde's servants, hurried from Knole Place to assist him. In the darkness Henry mistook Edmund for one of the poachers and attacked him with his cudgel. Edmund defended himself and, in the ensuing affray, Henry received injuries from which he died on 20th August"<sup>438</sup>. No further details were given but presumably the verdict was accidental death.

## John Lennarde's Beliefs

"John Lennarde, Esquire, of Knole and Chevening," stated his beliefs emphatically in his will of 1587. Whilst he did not mention "the elect" (who are described later) he believed he would be saved by god's mercy alone: "I commend my soul to the mercy of god in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in and by whose bitter passion, death and resurrection only, without any merit or desert of mine, I verily trust to attain to salvation and joy everlasting. My body, but earth, I commit to the earth and I will the same to be buried and bestowed at and in Chevening church or chapel in such sort as the body of christian man ought to be, after and by the

discretion of my two sons, Sampson and Samuel, heartily praying them to foresee that, in the bestowing thereof, nothing be done that may seem offensive to god but that that be only done which may stand with his sacred word."

He was also concerned that his grandchildren were brought up in the love and fear of god: "I will exhort and charge all my children, on god's behalf and on my blessing, whom in god's name I do bless that they read, hear and remember this article, viz: that they be watchful and careful with a diligent eye and mind over their children and such other as they have and take the charge and government of, to keep them from loose and dissolute life and to see that they spend their time in the love and fear of god."

## **Money to the Poor**

The timing of the distribution of money to the poor is unusual implying that it should be given to them before his death: "I will that within convenient time next after my departure out of this earthly tabernacle, or rather in my life time when I shall be in extremis, there be distributed by mine executor amongst the poor and impotent people inhabiting within the parishes hereafter named such several sums of money herein to each parish appointed."

These parishes, which were widely spread, were mainly ones from which he had received rents and revenues. Besides seven other parishes local to Sevenoaks and

Chevening, there were parishes in Cambridgeshire, Somerset, Yorkshire, Wiltshire and Essex.

The two from which he did not receive rents - Knockholt and Halstead - were each to receive 6s 8d because they bordered upon Chevening where he was born. The poor of other parishes were also to receive consideration "by and at the discretion of mine executor".

## **Sampson Lennarde, Executor**

Sampson, John's eldest son and executor, could have had a hard task in front of him. He was to see all John's debts "fully paid to the uttermost farthing and give full recompense with the more for any injury that any creature can truly prove that ever I did him". He must, however, have inspired confidence in his ability to carry out such work. Six years later, Sampson was one of the five overseers appointed by John Pett whose wife was to be executrix and again he was the one expected to do most of the work.

## **John Lennarde's Monument**

If the monument to John Lennarde and his wife Elizabeth in Chevening church was made at Sampson's instigation, it shows that John was right to have

confidence in him. It is a fine alabaster tomb with the figure of a man in armour (although he was a successful lawyer rather than a soldier) and, at his side, is his wife with her head on a soft pillow<sup>439</sup>.

## John's Sons, Sampson and Samuel

Both Sampson and his younger brother Samuel were JPs, Sampson from at least 1593 to 1607 although he does not seem to have attended the Assizes during the reign of James I<sup>440</sup>. Sampson was also the sheriff of Kent in 1592. Samuel attended the Assizes from 1598 until 1612 but JPs are not given for the rest of James's reign<sup>441</sup>.

Sampson married Lady Margaret Fienes, an heiress to a peerage and their son, John who was baptised in October 1575, was to become Baron Dacre. By 1604, he had moved to Herstmonceux in Sussex and, in that year, he surrendered the remainder of his lease of Knole to Sir Thomas Sackville, for £4000.

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<sup>439</sup> Watson, p. 65

<sup>440</sup> Cockburn (Eliz.I); 1978, 2999; Cockburn (James I); Samson could have continued as a JP until his move to Sussex

<sup>441</sup> Cockburn (Eliz.I); 2732 & 2999; Cockburn (James I)

In November 1595, Matthew Barr, a labourer from Eynsford, stole 17 partridges and a pheasant from "Simon Leonard, esq."; this could have been Sampson. Barr seems to have specialised in the theft of birds since his other indictment was for stealing 12 pigeons. From this entry, pigeons were valued at 1.26p each, partridges at 2.33p and a pheasant at 10p<sup>442</sup>.

Sampson's wife died in 1611 and, on his death in 1615, he was buried in Chevening church where there is a large canopied tomb commemorating the both Margaret and Sampson. Like his father, Sampson is shown in armour with Margaret in her robes "with their heads resting on cushions; at his feet is a boar's head out of a ducal crown and at hers a dog; on the south side are three sons kneeling on cushions, the first in robes, the others in armour; on the north side are five daughters; . . . on the top are six coats of arms with their quarterings"<sup>443</sup>.

## The Manor of Wickhurst

In 1611, some years after moving to Herstmonceaux, Sampson sold to John Cacott, gent. of Sundridge "among other premises, the manor or farm called Wickhurst, with its appurtenances, containing one hundred and sixty acres of land, in Sevenoaks, out of which there was a rent of ten shillings and eightpence

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442 Cockburn (Eliz.I); 2345

443 Hasted, p.124

granted, by deed indented, to Thomas Lock and James Wood, churchwardens of Sevenoaks and their successors<sup>444</sup>. (neither Lock nor Wood were given in the list of churchwardens - see [Appendix 18](#))

Wickhurst, in the Weald of Sevenoaks, just north of Penshurst, was one of the manors which Sampson inherited from his father. A rental from 1642 has survived. These were to be received "on St. Andrew's day at sunrising at a maple tree standing in Leigh parish in Kent near the highway leading from Sevenoaks to Penshurst. And . . . with Thomas Medhurst near the place to collect the said rents on the time and place abovesaid and (I) have delivered him a horn to summon in the tenants with, according to the customs of the said manor"<sup>445</sup>.

## Another Sampson Lennarde

Sampson Lennarde, son of William Lennarde of Chevening, accompanied Sir Philip Sydney to the Netherlands and was with him at the Battle of Zutphen in 1586. After returning to England he spent his time as a writer and translator and compiled genealogical and heraldic collections. One of his most well known translations was that of a French treatise entitled "The Bloody Rage of that Great Antechrist of Rome". This shows that John Lennarde was not the only one in the

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444 Hasted, p.91

445 CKS: U1000/7/M20; spelling modernised



family to have strong Protestant views. This Sampson was buried, in August 1633, at the Church of St. Benet, Paul's Wharf, London, presumably the parish in which he lived.<sup>446</sup>

# The Bosvilles

The Bosvilles, who came from Yorkshire, were another family of "incomers" with Ralph Bosville buying Bradbourne in 1555. The early history of Bradbourne with Henry VIII taking it over in 1540 with the Darkenolds leasing it in the mid-1540s has already been described. It continued to be leased out until 1555 when Ralph Bosville, gentleman, of Lincolns Inn and Clerk to the Court of Wards and Liveries, purchased the estate from the Crown.

## The Manor of Blackhall

Having reorganised Bradbourne, Ralph bought the neighbouring manor of Blackhall in 1563 for £220<sup>447</sup> although he still let both of them out to tenants. About 1565 he was mentioned in a Rental of Knole Manor:

"Ralph Bosville, Esq. for the manor of Blackhall, late Thomas Tottisherst and six tenements called the Rents of the east part of the town of Sevenoaks 6s 1d.<sup>448</sup>

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447 Reynolds, p.2

448 Ward, p.83 but with spelling modernised.

Robert Tottisherst whose will has survived was possibly Thomas's grandfather; he owned a considerable amount of land in Sevenoaks when he died in 1512 but, although according to Gordon Ward he lived at Blackhall Manor, he does not mention it in his will.

Blackhall Manor was to the east of Bradbourne and the north of Knole but it is obvious from the wills and various deeds that the manors (or estates) were not self-contained piece of lands. As well as the land surrounding the manor house, they could own shops in the market place and other pieces of land possibly outside the parish.

## Payments in Kind

The rental book also gave details of the payments in kind which the Bosville tenants had to make at various feasts throughout the year, mainly Christmas and Easter. These included "poultry, chines of pork, quarters of oats, apples and walnuts. Thus at Christmas no less than 27 capons were supplied, two being specified to be fat and of the largest size"<sup>449</sup>.

## Ralph Bosville

Ralph Bosville, who was a JP from the beginning of Elizabeth's reign until his death in 1580<sup>450</sup>, married twice and had three sons and three daughters by each wife. There were no descendants from the children of his second marriage.

When Ralph Bosville died in 1581 he was also "possessed of the manor, or farm of Britains and three hundred acres of land and one water mill" which was inherited by his second son, Robert Bosville<sup>451</sup>. Robert Bosville, of Eynsford, who was a JP from 1597 to 1603, was knighted in 1604<sup>452</sup>.

## Another Roman Catholic

The Lones were not the only ones to have a Roman Catholic in the family. John Bosville, one of Ralph's sons from his second marriage, "being an adherent to the older form of religion, crossed to the continent in 1589 and entered the University of Valladolid where he took priest's orders in 1592". In 1635, when he was sixty-six, he went on a mission to Rome and "was in such esteem with his superiors that

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450 Cockburn (Eliz.I); 3, 739

451 Hasted, p.91; 300 acres is approximately 1200 sq.yds, 1100 sq.metres

452 Zell, A.C. 1999, p.31

he was on the list of candidates for a mitre" but, unfortunately, he died before receiving the honour<sup>453</sup>.

## Henry Bosville

Ralph's eldest son and heir, Henry, had married Elizabeth Morgan of Chilworth in Surrey who was the sole heir of her mother, the daughter and heir of Sir Roger Stucknor of Bodiam Castle. Henry was a wealthy man owning, in addition to his estate in Sevenoaks, a number of houses in London, one of which he had lived in "for the most part of nine years" when he wrote his will in 1590. When he was in Sevenoaks he lived at Bradbourne but Blackhall, which at least by 1590 included lands of 104 acres, was leased out at a yearly rent of £80 13s 4d.

Henry also travelled abroad since he requested that his body be "buried, if I die in England, where my wife meaneth to be buried".

## Henry's Instructions to his Wife

He did not give his wife's name in his will nor did not appoint her as his executrix, perhaps because the will was complicated. From the will, however, their

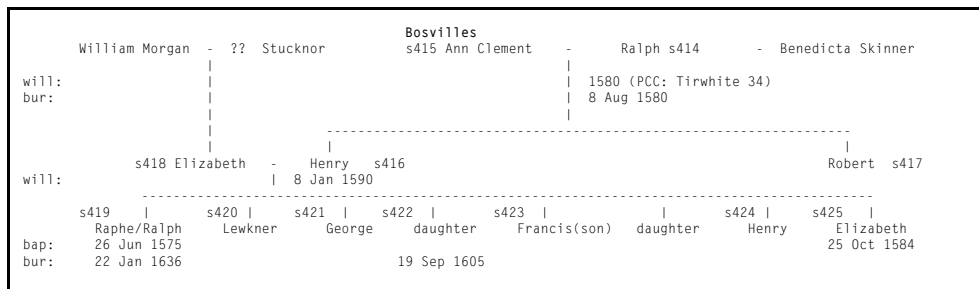
relationship appears to be such that not making her his executrix had other reasons besides it being a matter of not giving her a too difficult task to do since he was:

"steadfast in belief that my wife will marry and no reason that a stranger should be invited with my goods and children impoverished. Thereby . . my will is that she shall have but only the occupation of my goods and household stuff being at my house at London . . and that she become bound within forty days after my death unto my eldest son Ralph Bosville to deliver unto him when she shall marry all such goods and household stuff, or the value thereof, as they shall be praised at. And I will that my goods be praised immediately after my death before such bond taken and that at their uttermost value".

Elizabeth was, however, to "have to her own use, all her jewels and the chain she commonly" wore which was over £60 in value. Henry also desired his wife "to remember that her children be flesh of her flesh and bone . . And therefore that she would have as great a care as she can over them, calling upon my sons' teachers that they profit in learning. And that my daughters be brought up in quality and as shall be fit for them. And that after their years of consent in marriage, she have a special regard of them that they be not allured to cast away themselves in marriage".

## Henry's Family and Their Inheritances

Not only was Henry wealthy, he also had a large family: five sons and at least three daughters, all under age when his will was written in January 1590. All Henry's lands were already entailed to his eldest son, Ralph (or Raphe) "with remainder for default of issue" to each of his other sons in turn.



Henry's other four sons were each to be paid an annuity out of his lands - see [section 2](#) for details. Those for Lewkner, George and Francis are given at the beginning of the will but Henry was very much an afterthought, his annuity being practically the last item in the will. The middle three sons were also left some houses and land but it appears they were only to get this if their annuities were not paid. Alternatively, Ralph could pay any of his brothers a lump sum and thus reduce the annuity payable, every £100 paid reducing the annuity by £10.

Henry's daughter Elizabeth had already been assured of a life time annuity of £20 "with a condition of redemption so that either she shall have the annuity or a hundred and ten pounds" - the redemption terms do not appear to be very good being equivalent to less than the annuity for six years. Each of his other daughters was also to receive an annuity of £20 from his will.

## Henry's "Ready Money"

Henry had a considerable amount of "ready money", as he called it: £1700, "seven hundred whereof may appear by two several writings when they are laid together being indented, one part whereof I have left in the custody of my wife and the other in the keeping of . . Mr. Doctor Johnson. And the rest, . . is readily to become by laying two writings indented together which my father(-in-law) Morgan and my brother(-in-law) Maddison have in their custody".

In addition he had £680 "in good debts" plus "other desperate debts" and his "plate, leases, goods, hops and cattell".

## Investment in Land

His "dear friends, viz: my father Morgan, brother Maddison and Mr. Doctor Johnson, . . with all the convenient speed that is possible, . . with the residue of my ready money, debts, hops and cattell, do purchase lands within forty miles of



my house in Kent, unless there be a greater pennyworth of lands offered further of the which I would then should be accepted". From this land, each of Henry's daughters, starting with the eldest, was to receive the sum of £400.

In the interim, between the raising of the money and the purchase of the land, the money was to be put in a strong coffer and "kept under three locks in my wife's custody and she to keep one key and my father-in-law, brother-in-law aforesaid and Mr. Doctor Johnson, or some two of them, to keep the other two keys until the money shall be bestowed according to my will".

## **The Wardship of Ralph**

Henry's son Ralph was born in the summer of 1575 and was therefore only fourteen when his father died. Because he was underage, Henry, at the end of his will mentions the Master of the Wards. Henry hoped that the wardship of his eldest son and heir would be bestowed either upon the heir himself or Henry's "father-in-law and brother Maddison and Doctor Johnson, or any of them, the wardship of my said heir male to his own use" and, if such a grant was made, £300 was to "be paid unto the said Master of the Wards, as to his own use". Henry, as the son of the Clerk to the Court of Wards and Liveries presumably knew all about how underage heirs who had to become Wards of Court lost out and hoped by these means to keep these losses to a minimum.

Ralph cannot have done too badly from being a ward of court. In 1594, when he was still only nineteen, he married Mary, the daughter of Sampson Lennarde and, after becoming a JP at the end of Elizabeth's reign<sup>454</sup>, was knighted at the beginning of the reign of James I.

## The Bosville Pedigree

Henry also decreed that his son and heir "at his full age, do make over the body of my father at Sevenoaks a tomb and there to be the image of a man lying in a gown and over him annexed by the side of the wall and into it to have the whole pedigree of the Bosvilles graven in brass and colours in the coats be at the heraldry. And if my cousin Bosville's son of Newhall will not lend his pedigree to make it by them, that it be made by the pedigree fetched from the heraldry".

## Sir Ralph Bosville

Sir Ralph was reported as being "a gentleman of quality, blood and fair and ancient coat-armour"<sup>455</sup>. Anne, wife of Richard Sackville, recorded him as dining at Knole on two occasions: on 24th January 1619 with the Selbys from Ightham

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454 Cockburn (Eliz.I); 2872

455 Harleian Manuscript 1359 (British Museum) quoted by Ward, p.110

Mote and again at the end of the year when he "played and sung to me in the afternoon"<sup>456</sup>. He also owned valuable books one of which was a copy of the works of Sir Thomas More. We know about this because he had lent it to Richard Thomas whose house was burgled in 1609 and one of the items stolen was this book, valued at £1, "belonging to Sir Ralph Bosville"<sup>457</sup>.

Ralph added to the family estate since a 1607 rental book of Sir Ralph Boseville<sup>458</sup> shows lands of about 900 acres with Blackhall over 200 acres and Britain's farm 220 acres. His mansion house of Bradbourne included "outhouses, a brewhouse, barns and stables".

## The Farm on the Vine

One of the other parcels of land which Ralph owned was the Farm on the Vine. Over a hundred years earlier, in 1469, Mr. John Walder lived at the Vine<sup>459</sup> but it is not known when there was first a farm there.

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456 Sackville-West/Clifford, p.111

457 Cockburn (James I); 487

458 Chapter House Library, Canterbury, excerpts from CKS document D1007

459 Lambeth, Cart. Misc. v. 165, quoted by Ward, p.111

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, when Ralph Bosville owned it, it included a messuage, barn, fifty acres of land and a parcel of heath land called Poll Aise, all held on lease by Edward Blackman for twenty-one years from 1600. The rent for this was £10 per year, four capons and, much more unusual, the trimming of the head and beard of Sir Ralph. For some reason this particular service seems to have become attached to this land since the next tenant, Thomas Berdsworth, was also required to provide a barber "to shave and pull and trim the head and beard of Sir Ralph Bosville, knight, as often as need shall require".

## The Need for a Chapel at Bradbourne

The house at Bradbourne was "a mile at least from the parish church of Sevenoaks . . . so that you cannot easily repair with your wife and children and the rest of your household to the said parish church of Sevenoaks for almost all the winter and on other stormy and rainy days to hear divine service in the same on Sundays and festivals and therefore you have humbly besought us, as you have an oratory or chapel of great antiquity in your house of Bradbourne well supplied and equipped with a decent table for administering the Holy Communion, with seats fit and well arranged for sitting or kneeling in the same, and other things necessary for divine worship, in which formerly in stormy seasons, (as you assert) prayers of this sort were wont to be celebrated on Sundays and festivals, that we should deign to confirm same to you, your posterity, the lords and heirs of Bradbourne for the time being, or rather, to grant anew what your ancestors had, that is, that in the same

place you might hear divine service freely without offence to anyone." Thus wrote the archbishop to Sir Ralph on 3rd November 1614.

The archbishop granted him the freedom to "procure a fit minister to read and rehearse both morning and evening prayer according to the custom of the English Church . . and if it happen sometime that you . . desire to have some sacred discourse in the said chapel for the better incitement of you or (your posterity) and your households . . we grant that to you . . only do you or they procure for that purpose a pious and learned man who . . may show himself obedient and compliant to the decree and ecclesiastical canons of the realm of England."<sup>460</sup>

Permission was given for the Sacrament of the Last Supper to be celebrated in the chapel as many times in the year as Sir Ralph chose provided that they attended the parish church at least once in the year, "especially in the festival of Easter".

Children could be baptised there and marriages celebrated providing the bans were read in the parish church and, ten years after the death of Sir Ralph, Mary, the daughter of Mr. John Bullion, minister, was baptised in the Chapel<sup>461</sup>.

Even so, this freedom was to be taken advantage of only when the weather was inclement or people sick or infirm. "On all other Sundays or festivals on which the

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460 Rooker, p.1-2

461 Sevenoaks Parish Church Baptisms; CKS: P330/1/42

sky is either cloudless or clear, or your health or theirs does not prevent you or them from repairing . . . to the said church . . . you (are to) frequent the said church of Sevenoaks as other parishioners."

## **Bradbourne Goes to Sir Ralph's Children**

Sir Ralph died at the beginning of 1635 and administration was granted to his only son, Leonard Bosville who died five years later without any children. An Inquisition Post Mortem was held in Sevenoaks on 21st April 1636 to enquire after the estate held by Sir Ralph. Details of this are given in Appendix 11 together with a list of all the known owners of Bradbourne.

After Leonard Bosville's death, the administration of his will was granted to his sister, Margaret, and her husband, Sir William Boswell, Leonard's wife having renounced the executorship. Bradbourne then passed to Margaret and her husband..

## **Thomas Jeffrey, Servant from Bradbourne**

Although presumably the Thomas Jeffrey whose will was written on 2nd October was the Thomas Jeffrey, servant from Bradbourne, who was buried on 6th October 1641, the will neither gives his occupation nor mentions Bradbourne. The request

to be buried in the church chancel implies that he had some standing in the parish and he himself had a servant, John Husell, to whom he left ten shillings.

# The Petts

The John Pett who was active in Sevenoaks in the time of Elizabeth was the grandson of Richard Pett who had donated land to Sevenoaks School in the early 1510s. Riverhill House had been owned by John's father (Robert), his grandfather (Richard) and, prior to him, by William Pett. John Pett, like William and his grandfather, was interested in Sevenoaks School and Robert could also have supported it without any details surviving.

## The Tithing Man of 1414

There were Petts in Sevenoaks from the beginning of the fifteenth century. In 1425 Thomas Pette acted as agent for William Sevenoke, founder of the School, when he was selling some land in Panthurst Park. He could also have been "Thomas atte Pette", the tithing man for Sevenoaks in 1414, who was fined 4d in 1429 because he was "a common victualler and charges excessively". This does not seem the kind of activity to be expected of a tithing man but, according to Ward, no particular obloquy attached to fines for excessive charging<sup>462</sup>.



## Summary of the Petts

1414	Thomas atte Pette	tithing man for Sevenoaks
1425	Thomas Pette	agent for William Sevenoke, founder of the School
	William Pett <sup>*</sup>	owned Riverhill House; subsequently owned by Richard, Robert and John
1513	Richard Pett <sup>*</sup> Robert Pett	Richard's will written son of Richard
1560	John Pett <sup>*</sup>	grandson of Richard appointed Assistant of the School
1593		will written
* - known to have been interested in Sevenoaks School		

By the sixteenth century the Petts were a wealthy family with Richard owning a mansion place and other lands in Sevenoaks and Westerham and a shop in the market place of Sevenoaks.

## John Pett Sells Some Land

John Pett was appointed an Assistant of the School in 1560 and, perhaps prior to this (or as a result of his appointment), he gave an annuity of £5 to the School to be charged to the Riverhill estate.

In 1575 he decided to sell some of his land. Gordon Ward assumes that this was of necessity but, if some of the Elizabethans at the end of the sixteenth century were like some of the Elizabethans at the end of the twentieth century, he could have decided to take a profit to invest elsewhere. Perhaps in some of the trading companies which were being set up to trade with developing colonies: for example, the Virginia Company which we will come to later.

The land which John Pett sold in 1575 was "three parcels of land and meadow and wood containing by estimation nine acres, called Wellane fields in Sevenoaks, abutting to the high road called Well Lane leading from little Kippington towards the north, to lands of George Broke called Christmas Croft towards the west, to a road from Great Kippington to woods of Richard Lone called Jenyn Hills otherwise Julyan Hills towards the south and to lands which Richard Lone recently purchased from Thomas Potkyn towards the east"<sup>463</sup>. Well Lane, now known as Oak Lane and leading to Little Kippington, was clearly the northern boundary.

## John Pett's Will

John Pett's will was written on 22nd May in the thirty-fifth year of "the most happy reign" of Queen Elizabeth (1593), when he considered "it convenient to give order for the disposition of my goods and lands whilst god giveth me health and understanding, as well to be before of such day when it shall please god to visit me with sickness as also for the avoiding of strife that may ensue for want of order".

Since John was appointed an Assistant of the School in 1560, he must have been at least in his sixties by 1593 but his wife, Francis, was considerably younger since their son, Thomas, was not yet eight. Perhaps Francis was John's second wife but no other children are mentioned. John described himself as healthy in May but he had only a few weeks to live being buried on 28th June.

## John's Wife, Francis

John's wife was left houses and land in Sevenoaks, with a yearly value of £50 "or thereabouts" for her natural life and it seems she could keep this inheritance until her death provided that she did not "contract or marry herself to any person without the assent and good liking" of two or three of Sampson and Samuel Lennarde, John's "brother Cooper of London" (perhaps Francis's brother) and Thomas Lawson of London, merchant tailor. Francis Pett, widow, married Dr.

Milborne, rector, on 2nd August 1593<sup>464</sup>, less than five weeks after John was buried but, presumably, with the consent of at least two of the above men. Richard Milborne was one of the witnesses to John's will and possibly also the scribe.

## The Inheritance of his son, Thomas

The rest of John's land was left to Thomas but, if he died before coming into his inheritance this was to be paid to the "assistants and wardens of the Grammar School of our Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth of Sevenoaks aforesaid to be by them employed charitably by their good discretion to and for the relief of the poor almspeople of Sevenoaks".

## John's Overseers

The overseers were to be Mr. Justinian Champines, the elder, Esquire, Mr. William Lambarde (the historian of Kent), Mr. Edward Cork of North Cray, Mr. Sampson Lennarde, Esquire, and Mr. Samuel Lennarde, gent. with Sampson Lennarde being assigned to do most of the work involved. In recompense for this he was to receive five marks a year (£3 6s 8d).

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<sup>464</sup> parish register (CKS: P330/1/1); 13th July is given in the 1937 transcript (CKS: P330/1/42); John Spratt was vicar of Sevenoaks from the beginning of 1584 until his death in 1614 but rector and vicar were two separate posts.

During Thomas's minority they were to receive the rents, etc. of the lands left to him giving Thomas's mother a yearly amount during that time - £10 a year until he was eight, £15 from eight to sixteen and forty marks (£26 13s 4d) from sixteen to twenty-one "or so much more as by the discretion of the said Mr. Sampson Lennarde shall be thought convenient".

## John's "Evidences, Books and Writings"

These "evidences, books and writings" detailed the houses and land which John owned and the custody of these documents was the concern of a postscript to the will. He mentioned them in his main will but, after that had been written, he received further advice and so required his executrix to provide a strong chest to put them in. This was to be "well barred with iron having three several locks and three divers keys" which were to be kept by three of his overseers "during the time of their natural life and afterwards to be delivered to their survivors in order and time".

In this chest all his writings, etc. were to be kept and delivered to Mr. Sampson Lennarde or any other of his overseers who needed them in the execution of the will. This arrangement had to continue until his son or next heir was twenty-one which would not have been for thirteen years or more.

## John's Household Stuff

From the value of a bond which his wife Francis was to give for half of it, John must have valued his "household stuff, be it in plate, pewter, brass, iron, bedding, linen or in whatsoever other sorts" at about £400. Francis was to have the full use of it until Thomas was twenty-one but then she was to give him half "if he be then living and require it".

In order to ensure that she did this after what would have been a period of over thirteen years, he willed "that a true inventory be made of the said plate and other my said household stuff in witness indented between my said wife and my overseers . . . within fourteen days after my decease. And that my said wife become then bound to my said overseers . . . in an obligation of the sum of two hundred pounds for the leaving of the one half of my said plate and household stuff to . . . my said son".

Only if Francis entered into this bond was she to be his executrix and, if she refused, Thomas was to have everything immediately after John's decease, his overseers taking the responsibility of keeping it for him.

# The Elizabethan Pocockes

Pococke (Pocock or Peacock) was a common name in Sevenoaks and a number of their wills have survived. This was a large Sevenoaks family and those living in the seventeenth century are described later together with a simplified family tree.

From the second half of the sixteenth century there are the wills of two yeomen who were probably brothers:

- Thomas Pococke whose will was written on 27th April 1587 probably by the vicar, John Spratt; it was proved on 11th May.
- William Pococke, the elder whose will is dated 17th April 1596. According to the parish register, William was buried 9th August 1596 but probate was granted on 7th August.

## Robert Pococke of Seal

Earlier than these was the will of Robert Pococke of Seal<sup>465</sup>, written on 18th March 1565/6 probably by Gilbert Jenyns, vicar of Seal and Kemsing from October 1561 until 1603. This will appears to have been written much more hurriedly than others written by Jenyns, not surprisingly as Robert must have been very close to death since he was buried on 19th March.

Most unusually for the Rochester Diocese, Robert's will is accompanied by an inventory. He left his tenement to his wife and then to his sons; his wife, who was to be his executrix, was also to have all his moveable goods and debts. His goods, including three cattle, three kyne and two hogs, two acres of corn, a featherbed, bedding and linen, table, form, 2 stools and one chair, two cushions, two chests, various kitchen items and some vessels and troughs in the buttery, were valued at a total of £10 16s (£10.80) and the debts owed to him came to just over £11.

## Thomas Pococke

Thomas Pococke, in 1587, left houses, lands and tenements called Bletchingly in Sussex, totalling 160 acres to John, one of his sons<sup>466</sup> whose will of 1619 has survived.

He also had houses, lands and tenements at Bayley's Hill, about two miles to the south of Sevenoaks just on the other side of Sevenoaks Common, and about twenty acres whose names "Covenenth" and "Culverden" were given but not their location.

Probably all this land was within the parish of Sevenoaks; it was divided between Thomas's other two sons, William and George (will 1613). Part of George's



inheritance was a "parcel of meadow ground lying to Hatch Landgate" which was to be "divided from a little parcel or hoppet of ground with a hedge to be made through the middle of a shaw<sup>467</sup> being betwixt the meadow and the said hoppet or little piece of ground".

## A Fight in George Pococke's Field

On 12th March 1594, a field belonging to George Pococke was the scene of a fight which ended in the death of one of the men. It started with an argument between two shoemakers, William Wilde and William Walklyn. When this escalated to them punching each other, Wilde immediately led the way to the field where they fought, Walklyn armed with a sword and a dagger and Wilde with a long piked staff with which he struck Walklyn and killed him. At his trial in July, Wilde confessed but was allowed benefit of clergy<sup>468</sup>.

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<sup>467</sup> small group of trees

<sup>468</sup> Cockburn (Eliz.I); 2179

## Theft of a Ram and a Sheep

Eighteen months later at the end of 1595, two men stole one of George's rams but, since its value was given as only 10d (4.2p), they were charged with petty larceny and sentenced only to a whipping<sup>469</sup>.

Three years earlier, William Pococke had suffered a greater loss than that of George's ram. On 22nd December 1592, John Brooke, a weaver from Chipstead, and Richard Harborowe, a tailor from Sevenoaks, stole one of his sheep. This was valued at 12s (£0.60), much the most valuable sheep stolen in Sevenoaks recorded at the Elizabethan Assizes. The others ranged in value from £0.11 to £0.33.

But what was wrong with George's ram that it was valued at so low a price? Perhaps he was old and had no future except as meat for those prepared to eat tough mutton. The other question is why was William's sheep valued so highly.

## Hellen Hadsoule

Hellen Hadsoule, widow, whose will was written 29th December 1595 has survived, was also connected with the Pocockes. Hellen left £1 to the poor of each of six parishes - Sevenoaks, Otford, Sundridge, Ash, Stanstead and Kingsdown.

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469 Cockburn (Eliz.I); 2348

She appointed a William Pococke as one of her executors and he and his wife, Elizabeth, were to receive all her household stuff "[whatsoever now remaining in the house](#)" of William Pococke. It thus looks as if that is where she was living in 1595.

Hellen left money legacies totalling nearly £60 to a large number of people including Hadsoules and Pocockes. Amongst these were a number of Pococke brothers and sisters whose father's name was not given but it is likely that they were the children of William and Elizabeth. It is also probable that William was the son of the Thomas who died in 1587. Hellen could have been a Pococke since nothing is known about her marriage or husband.

## **William Pococke's Capital Message**

In 1596, William Pococke owned two messuages both in Sevenoaks; the one he had recently purchased he gave to his eldest son. His "[capital message or tenement and buildings, barns, stables and outhouses . . . orchards, lands, meadows, pastures, feedings, woods and underwoods](#)" he gave to his wife, Joane, "[during the term of her natural life if she so long keep her self sole and unmarried. And that neither she nor her assigns do not make any wilful spoil or waste in or upon the said premises or any part or parcel thereof](#)". This was a usual injunction when property was not given outright.

## The Division of the Message

This message had been divided up in a complicated way, different parts being occupied by different people. There was a "new stable near situated to the said capital message and adjoining unto a lane there called Pococke Lane and to a certain new stone wall" towards the east and "to a certain old barn or stable . . towards the west, which said new stable is also now in the tenure or occupation of the said George Shawe".

A part of the orchard had been "marked and shifted out by me, the said William Pococke th'elder in the presence of William Olyver of Stonestreet and Robert Robinson of Sevenoaks aforesaid, which said part of the said orchard abutteth on one side to the yard or close of the said capital message or tenement towards the east, to the upper part of the said old barn south, to the upper or other part of the said orchard west. And so goeth directly across from the said upper part of the said old barn unto the lands of John Sone where there is a pale chopped for a mark north".

There was also "that part of the said capital message or tenement" where Robert King and his son William lived. This included two little gardens one of which "abutted to the great barn" and was "newly paled". It was this part that William's third son, George, was to inherit with Henry, the second son, having the other part which must have included the main entrances since George "his heirs and assigns and every of them, and all such as shall be his or their farmer or farmers to the

said premises, shall have free liberty, entry, ingress, egress and regress in at the great gate of the close to the said capital messuage or tenement belonging, to go and to come with horses, carriages or other necessary things whatsoever to the said new stable, orchard and garden aforesaid. And also further to have free liberty for him or them that shall so occupy that part of the said messuage or tenement wherein the said Robert and William King do now inhabit or dwell, to come and go to the draw well to the said capital messuage or tenement belonging to fetch, have, draw, take and carry away from the same meet and sufficient water for their needful and necessary expenses at all times meet and convenient for ever."

# The End of Elizabeth's Reign

Although after about 1590 the fear of invasion was no longer present, armies had to be dispatched to the Low Countries and France and the demands for more men, more supplies and more money were unending. More taxes were demanded but were never sufficient. The peace and prosperity of the earlier part of Elizabeth's reign faded; plague raged and crops failed. It was a time of economic depression caused partly by the costs of fighting at sea and wars in the Low Countries and Ireland but also by a number of bad harvests.

Describing England in 1600 Thomas Wilson wrote: "It cannot be denied but the common people are very rich, albeit they be much decayed from the states they were wont to have, for the gentlemen which were wont to addict themselves to the wars are now for the most part grown to become good husbands and know as well how to improve their lands to the uttermost as the farmer or countryman, so that they take their farms into their hands as the leases expire and either till themselves, or else let them out to those who will give most"<sup>470</sup>.

Courtiers and politicians "put in mind of (the Queen's) last end, and knowing that (she would) assuredly change this life and the time thereof most uncertain", as Eme White wrote regarding herself in her will, were preparing for the coming of James I with tensions between the various factions giving rise to instability. In

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470 Thomas Wilson, England in 1600, in Hughes, p.2

1603 the death of the old Queen came with some relief to her subjects and James was widely welcomed.

"The reign closed not in the exultation of victory but in gasping relief which greeted the light at the end of the tunnel"<sup>471</sup>.

# Chapter 11

## Education and Literacy

One of the changes during the sixteenth century was the much greater use made of written material. Lawyers had produced deeds and indentures for a long time but these were now, like wills, usually written in English. The Reformation changed religion from one based on ritual to one where reading the bible and other sacred texts was of great importance. Writing also became important in administration, even at the local level.

### Early Education

412

Children learnt many of the necessary skills within the family and parents were to instruct them in the basic precepts of religion and morality. But by the end of Elizabeth's reign most parishes had a petty school for teaching children from six or seven how to read, write and do simple accounting.



## The Need for Education

415

By the second half of the sixteenth century it was becoming necessary for men aspiring to become constables or borsholders to have some fluency in writing. Bible reading and interest in sermons also required the ability to read and write.

## Sevenoaks School in the Time of Elizabeth & the Early Stuarts

417

Elizabeth, after visiting Ralph Bosville at Bradbourne in 1558, granted to the School the use of her name and the Letters Patent she issued provided the school with a new constitution. Details of a number of bequests have survived and the Governors and Assistants were given in an indenture of 1578 and again for 1612.

## Books, Manuals and Writings

424

Many books and manuals were produced covering a wide variety of topics. These were sold in bookshops in the larger towns and from market stalls in smaller towns with petty chapmen travelling about the country. In addition to wills, many men had “writings” giving details of land ownership and bonds entered into.

### Books Owned by Testators

427

A number of books were owned by the testators of Sevenoaks and John Turner, citizen and skinner of London, had not only books but “writings” which he done himself.

### Ability to Write

429

It is difficult to obtain any information as to how many people could write from their wills since they were not written by the testators. Where a person could not write their name, they made their mark which was could be a simple cross but many people used an initial as their mark.

### Signing One's Name

434

The number of people who signed a will as the testator or a witness is investigated for both PCC wills and those proved at the Deanery of Shoreham.

### John Spratt, vicar of Sevenoaks, and his Wife

438

John Spratt was vicar of Sevenoaks for thirty years and the wills of both him and his wife have survived.

## The Writers of Wills and Professional Scriptorers

439

Wills were written by the vicar, the parish clerk, professional scriptors and friends or neighbours who could write. Professional scriptors also had to be called in when other legal documents were required.

## The Parish Registers

446

From 1538 onwards, baptisms, marriages and burials had to be recorded but most of those made before about 1560 have not survived. In 1597 all parishes were instructed to copy surviving records from earlier years into a book.

## Early Education

Most children learned the skills necessary for the carrying out of the various tasks connected with husbandry within the family. From an investigation of some four thousand coroners' inquests into accidental deaths, mostly from the fourteenth century, Barbara Hanawalt was able to discover the habitual occupations of the children of country people. She found them water-carrying and fuel-gathering, catching fish in rivers and ditches and collecting shellfish from the seashore, gathering rushes, picking fruit and nuts and, above all, herding livestock. From looking at their sometimes dangerous play, she came to the conclusion that the stages of child development, for example in the mastery of motor skills, followed each other much as in modern times, determined by biological factors rather than cultural conditions.<sup>472</sup>

Parents were also expected to instruct them in the basic precepts of religion and morality. John Lennarde, in 1587, included an exhortation "[on god's behalf](#)" to all his children, "[whom in god's name I do bless that they read, hear and remember this article, viz: that they be watchful and careful with a diligent eye and mind over their children and such other as they have and take the charge and government of, to keep them from loose and dissolute life and to see that they spend their time in the love and fear of god](#)".

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<sup>472</sup>quoted by Collinson (1988) p.82

## Learning to Read and Write

But the ability to at least read, if not write, was becoming more important and, at least by the end of Elizabeth's reign, most parishes had a petty school, that is one for the primary teaching of children. This was often run by the vicar and sometimes held in the church itself or its porch. There is a reference in the 1573 survey of Otford Palace to a school house "[butting upon the Great Chamber](#)" and in 1586 the "minister", William Marcrofte, and Henry Jedder were together in charge of a school at Otford<sup>473</sup>.

Both boys and girls usually started school at six or seven learning the basics of reading, writing and casting accounts although the level and quality of teaching varied greatly depending on the ability and enthusiasm of the teacher. From 1613 Maidstone had public rates to support an usher. Also, and this was very rare, children of all the freemen of the town were to be "[freely taught . . . the Science, Art and Knowledge of Humanity or Grammar](#)"<sup>474</sup>. Rates were just one method of funding such schools, others being endowments from rich benefactors and subscriptions by parishioners. Sometimes bequests were made to attach a primary school to a grammar school.

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473 Clarke and Stoyel, p.131

474 Bridenbaugh, p.319

## Governmental Guidelines for Teaching

The Elizabethan government was concerned that the teaching in schools should follow certain precepts and the authorities allowed 10,000 copies of the official "Lily's Latin Grammar" to be printed annually. The "ABC with the Catechism" and the "Primer and Catechism" as "set forth by the Queen's majesty to be taught to children" probably sold even more copies<sup>475</sup>. Such numbers show that, even though imposed by the government (or perhaps because it was), there was a great need for guidance which books such as these could provide.

Towards the end of the reign of James I, there were more trained teachers who, together with improved textbooks, greatly improved the teaching in the petty schools. These teachers had stayed at university until "learning, discretion and judgement had ripened them for the well managing of a school"<sup>476</sup>.

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475 Bradenbaugh, p.322

476 Donald Lupton, *London and the Country*, pp. 115-122 quoted by Bradenbaugh, p.324

# The Need for Education

Although education was seen as being necessary for earning a living, for many people this consisted of knowing how to grow their crops and rear their animals; women needed to know how to bake and brew. They may have needed to calculate prices at the markets and possibly wanted to read common prayers at church but none of this required a large amount of "book learning".

We have already seen, however, that, during the emergency of preparing for possible invasion by the Spaniards in the 1580s and the aftermath of surveillance, the constables and borsholders of the hundreds were instructed to produce detailed lists "with large margins and wide space" and special marks by the names of those people "who had been in the low countries". These lists were to give both "names and surnames" showing that it was then becoming necessary to identify people by both names rather than just as, for example, "John, carpenter".

To carry out such tasks, the constables and borsholders needed a reasonable proficiency in writing.

## Bible Reading and Sermons

Religion was also becoming much more based on reading the Bible and listening to sermons that it had been before the reign of Elizabeth.

In some communities, listening to as many sermons as possible and then gathering to discuss them became an important part of life. In 1641, the Czech Johann Amos Comenius was impressed by "the eagerness with which the people (he met in England) crowd to the services on Sunday" and was still more amazed at the discovery that

"a large number of men and youths copy out the sermons . . . They discovered an art which has now come into vogue even among the country folk, that of rapid script (tachygraphia) which they call stenography . . . For this they employ symbols (characters) signifying whole words and not single letters of the alphabet. Almost all of them acquire this art of rapid writing as soon as they have learnt at School to read the Scriptures in the vernacular. It takes them about another year to learn the art of shorthand"<sup>477</sup>.

Whilst we do not have any evidence of the people of Sevenoaks being particularly interested in sermons, they were some parishioners who, from their wills, regarded themselves as "of the elect".

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477 Comenius in England, ed. Robert F. Young (Oxford 1932) p.65, quoted by Bridenbaugh, p.326



# Sevenoaks School in the Time of Elizabeth & the Early Stuarts

William Painter was the headmaster of the school at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign but he left in 1561. At that time, the headmaster received a salary of £50 a year in addition to having a house provided for him and his family<sup>478</sup>.

Not unexpectedly, whatever was arranged at John Potkyn's instigation the School, like any on-going institution, was still in need of support. Ralph Bosville, although he did not live in Sevenoaks, became interested in the school after purchasing Bradbourne. He wanted to procure for it "a foundation more suited to its increasing importance".

Bosville was thought well of at Court and this esteem carried over from Mary to her successor. Soon after her accession in 1558, Elizabeth visited Bosville at Bradbourne and in 1560 she issued Letters Patent under which Town and School were "incorporated" into one body. She also granted to the School the use of her name in the "certain and sure knowledge that our parish of Sevenoaks in the County of Kent is a place fit and proper for teaching and instructing boys and youths, both because it is very populous and full of young people and also because

in past times a large number of boys and youths have assembled here from the neighbouring towns for the purpose of acquiring knowledge<sup>479</sup>.

## A New Constitution

The Letters Patent provided a new constitution for the school which, together with the almshouses, was to be administered by two Wardens and four Assistants (or Governors). The Wardens and Assistants were to be elected annually and were also given some responsibilities for the town. The constitution provided that a member of the Bosville family should always be one of the Assistants and this was adhered to until 1761 when no one was available. The other three Assistants when the constitution first came into effect were John Pett, gentleman, Thomas Potkyn, gentleman, and Thomas Lock, yeoman<sup>480</sup>. Richard Lone was also one of the early Assistants. These men were probably associated with Ralph Bosville in the setting up of the new constitution.

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479 Scragg, p.35

480 Dunlop, p.103

## The Bequests of John Lennarde and Anthony Pope

In 1565 John Lennarde of Chevening granted an annuity of 10s 8d (£0.53) out of his lands at Wickhurst. In 1571, Anthony Pope made a gift to the School of £7 or £8 a year from the lease of a tavern in London which was to start when died. Although he specified that this annuity was to go "towards the maintenance of God's glory and the eruditions and bringing up of the poor scholars there in virtuous discipline, godly learning and good and civil manners", these sentiments may not have been uppermost in his mind when he set up the endowment which had been forced upon him since he had obtained for himself a long lease on some of the School's London property which had been "outrageously undervalued"<sup>481</sup>.

## John Porter's Bequest

In 1578, John Porter from a large Seal family but a citizen and fishmonger of London, granted an annuity of £12 a year so that "all the children that shall be born and inhabiting within the parish of Seal and Kemsing . . shall be taught in the same free school of Queen Elizabeth in Sevenoaks, freely, without paying any rewards, wages or recompense to the schoolmaster or usher . . except of their own liberality and free will". John was only in his thirties at this time, presumably just getting established as a London merchant, when he made the indenture setting

up this annuity which was to be paid from his lands in Seal and Birling but it was to take effect only when he died.

John wrote his will<sup>482</sup> in 1607 when his instructions were that the annuity to the school “shall be truly and faithfully paid and satisfied . . . for ever, according to the tenor, limitation and true meaning of the deed or deeds, evidence or writing within that behalf I have hereto before made”. But some time after that it seems that he wanted to revoke the annuity since, on 4th March 1612, a bill of complaint was presented to the Court of Chancery for payment of the annuity. John was buried in May 1612 with the will being proved on 21st May; and according to the original indenture payment should have started on the first of four annual feast-days “as first shall happen next after the death of the said John Porter”?

The Lord Chancellor ruled against John Porter so that the school was to “have, hold and quietly enjoy the said rent-charge of twelve pounds a year, against the said defendant”<sup>483</sup>.

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482 PCC: Fenner 40

483 ???; pp.16--21

## The Guardians and Assistants in 1578

The decree against John Porter includes a copy of the original indenture setting up the annuity and this gives the names of the Guardians and Assistants of the school in 1578. The indenture was between John Porter and:

- guardians of the town and parish of Sevenoaks . . and of the free school of Queen Elizabeth:  
Robert Greenwell alias Greenell and Richard Walter, yeoman,
- four assistants of the town and parish of Sevenoaks and of the free school of Queen Elizabeth:
- Ralph Bosville, esquire, clerk of the Queen's Majesty's Court of Wards and Liveries,
- Richard Lone, esquire, one of the prothonatories of the Queen's Majesty's Court of Common Pleas,
- John Pett, gentleman, and Thomas Locke, yeoman.

At the end of the century, Nicholas Locke, yeoman, possibly the son of Thomas Locke, was either a Guardian or Assistant of the School. During Elizabeth's reign the Locke family owned a farmhouse and land called Lock's Bottom between Knole and Blackhall which Nicholas sold at the end of the century.

## Masters of the School

It does not seem that William Sevenoke's provision that the master was "by no means" to be in holy orders was adhered to, at least not by the end of the sixteenth century when Mr. Richard Buckley was master of the school. Buckley was inducted vicar of Seal and Kemsing on 9th January 1603 and it is probable that he resigned as master of the school to become a local vicar.

In 1610 it became necessary to dispense with the services of another master in a more drastic manner: Sir Ralph Bosville was allowed "expenses in law" for expelling Humfry Frank, schoolmaster. Frank was mentioned in the parish register in 1605 so he could have been Buckley's successor but he was not the only master with whom the school had problems.

John Tiller was appointed headmaster of Sevenoaks School in 1619 and again he was probably a parson. Although he was unpopular with the governors and thought to have had recusant sympathies, he survived as headmaster until 1631 when he was warned "to leave the school conditionally"<sup>484</sup>.

## The Guardians and Assistants in 1612

The decree regarding John Porter's bequest to the school made at the beginning of 1612 gives the wardens and assistants for the school at that time:

- wardens of the town and parish of Sevenoaks . . . and of the free school:  
Edward Wynter and Richard Cronke
- four assistants of the said town and parish of Sevenoaks:  
Sir Ralph Bosville, knight (the grandson of the Ralph Bosville who had witnessed the original indenture)  
Richard Milborne, doctor in divinity and dean of Rochester  
Robert Warcopp, gentleman, whose will of 1625 has survived  
George Johnson, gentleman

## A Later Benefactor

John Blome was another benefactor, leaving money in 1624 towards new building work but with the proviso that it should not be paid until six months after building started. This was not until 1631 when the old timber building dating from the early days of the school was "so ruined that of necessity the same must be pulled down". It was replaced by a stone building with two stories. On the ground floor there were two rooms with a connecting passage and the attic upper

floor had two rooms, one for the master and the other for the usher. This work was supervised by Thomas Pett, an Assistant (Governor) from 1626 until 1667<sup>485</sup>.

## Books and Bookshops

That a large number of people could read is shown by the vast number of books published. There were books on religious, political and philosophical subjects, travel, history and topography and translations of the classics.

Sermons and lectures were printed and circulated but not all publications were serious; romances, ballads, pamphlets and broadsheets with titles ranging from "Practice of Piety" to "Delights in th'Closet" circulated widely. Just as the coming of radio and television in the twentieth century gave people much more knowledge of what was going on in other parts of the world, so did printing and the ability to read widen the horizons of those living in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. According to Henry Peacham, you could "have all the news in England and other countries, of murders, floods, witches, fires, tempests and what not in one of Martin Parker's ballads"<sup>486</sup>.

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485 Dunlop, p.123; Scragg, pp. 26,44

486 Bridenbaugh, p.341



Although London was obviously the English centre for printing and publishing, there were booksellers in other towns; a shop in Shrewsbury in 1585 had a stock of 2,500 different titles much of it consisting of unlicensed editions of the Bible, New Testaments, Prayer Books, catechisms and more than 250 sermons<sup>487</sup>.

In smaller towns books, pamphlets and ballads were sold from market stalls and petty chapmen travelled about the country so that there would be few places which did not have access to some of these publications. In 1617, Sevenoaks had its own petty chapman - Richard Smythe living in a messuage with a garden owned by the yeoman Thomas Wylde. In 1623 a writ was issued requiring the Sheriff to produce Francis Robbins of Sevenoaks, another petty chapman, but the reason for this is not given<sup>488</sup>.

## Technical Manuals

Technical manuals illustrated methods of keeping accounts, taught mariners how to navigate or dealt with every day matters such as Thomas Tusser's "Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry" published first in 1557. Written in doggerel verse, this "practical and moralistic compendium for an English land-based

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487 Bridenbaugh, p.342; for comparison, Sevenoaks Bookshop in 2000 has about 13,000 titles in stock.

488 Cockburn (James I), 907

society turning its back on the Middle Ages"<sup>489</sup> became a Tudor best seller with at least nine editions by 1610.

Manuals giving instructions on how to produce documents for debts, marriages, transfers of land and many other transactions began to appear about the middle of the sixteenth century with the "Newe Book of Precedents" first published in 1543 followed by a further five reprints in the next sixty years.

## Safe-Keeping of "Writings"

Chapbooks which often sold for two pence (less than 1p) included titles such as "Everyman Made his Own Lawyer"<sup>490</sup>. "Writings", "evidences", bonds and deeds are all referred to in wills and these were often kept in a special chest. Although many wills are dated just prior to death, some were written a long time considerably earlier - fifteen years in the case of William Frankwell. Quite a few wills include the instruction that all previous wills written by the testator were to be revoked. Thus, once written, a will may have needed to be kept safely for a number of years. Revoking of any previous wills was mentioned by at least six of the Sevenoaks testators - two women and four men.

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489 Geoffrey Grigson in his introduction to Thomas Tusser, p. xix

490 Erickson, p.23

## Books Owned by Testators

Although not often featuring in wills, books were mentioned by some of the Sevenoaks testators. In 1593, Henry Bosville willed that the books in his house at Bradbourne were not to be removed but were to remain unto his male heirs as heirlooms. The vicar, John Spratt, left all his books to John Fosbrooke. In 1616, Mathew Everest, husbandman, left his best bible with half his other books to one of his sons.

Giles Cranewell, gentleman, gave all his "common law books" to his son Christopher. Given that, from his will, his land holdings appear complicated, he and his heirs could have found these books very useful. Many of the gentry found it a useful asset to have attended the Inns of Court for a year or two even if they did not become a fully qualified lawyer. In addition to giving them knowledge regarding their own transactions, JPs generally came from the gentry and some knowledge of the law would enhance their chances of being selected for such a post.

### John Turner's Books and Writings

John Turner, citizen and skinner of London but living in Sevenoaks when he wrote his will in 1639, had a number of books which he gave Mr. Besse, schoolmaster, of

Sevenoaks; these included some on sacred subjects with one about Martin Luther. Dr. Gibbons, parson of Sevenoaks, was to have his choice from among his other divinity books. John Turner, clerk and his executor, was to have the rest except for those of which he already had copies and these were to be offered to Dr. Gibbons or Mr. Besse. This implies that both John, the skinner, and John, the clerk, each had a fair number of books. John also had two pictures, one of St. Paul and the other of his brother, Edward.

John Turner, however, did not just read books; in addition he had made "[notes and writings of divinity](#)" which he gave to Mr. Besse hoping he might "[find some useful words of persuasion to the glory of god and good of his church](#)". John also asked Mr. Besse to impart to Dr. Gibbons his "[meditations and notes of divinity by me gathered and left in writing to make use of them to god's glory wherein he shall see fit and convenient](#)".

Authors of plays and poetry often circulated their work in manuscript form for several years before they were published with scribes being employed to make copies for handing round. For example Philip Sidney wrote his *Arcadia* between 1580 and 1583 but it was not printed until 1590<sup>491</sup>. John Turner does not seem to have been seeking publication for his work but, like many people, did not want his notes to be completely lost.

# Ability to Write

Wills give some idea of the number of the number of people able to at least write their name. Whilst investigating the number of signatures on wills compared with the number making their mark gives some idea of the writing ability of the people concerned, signing one's name did not necessarily mean that a person could write fluently. Many would have been able to make notes for themselves on market prices, their crops and animals without being able to write legibly for other people to read.

The other problem is that not everyone who could write would be able to sign their will when they were "sick in body". An extreme example is that of Thomas Leddall of Penshurst whose will of 1645 has survived<sup>492</sup>. It was written when he was "visited from above with sickness" and he makes his mark, a rather shaky letter "T". But Thomas Leddall wrote a large number of wills, mainly for people from Penshurst and Chiddingstone, the first of those found being from 1615 and the latest from 1644. It is possible that the testator and the scrivener were two different people but this seems unlikely.

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492 PCC: original has survived: Prob. 10/652

## Making One's Mark

By the end of the sixteenth century, most villages probably contained several people who could write<sup>493</sup> but since most surviving documents were written by professional scribes or, particularly in the case of wills, by the vicar, it is difficult to gain any information from them regarding the ability of the general populace to write.

## Initials as a Mark

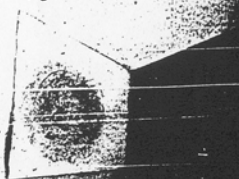
Where a person could not write their name, they made their mark which was often, but not always, a simple cross. The end of the will of Thomas Holmes is a particularly good example. The mark of Thomas Holmes was a confident "T H" with the witnesses to his will, Thomas Pett and Richard Besbeeck signing their names and Susan Roberts making her mark which looks like a crude "S".

and Testament And I will and desire my loving friends friends and the people  
 and Matthew Watson to be my dearest desires them to be my friends and my  
 reason the execution and performance of his my last will and Testament In witness  
 whereof to these three parts of paper containing my last will and Testament  
 I the said Thomas Holmes have set my hand and Seal and do hereby  
 revoke all former wills the days and years aforepast.

Witness of Thomas  
 Holmes

These signed sealed and delivered as the last  
 will and Testament of the said Thomas  
 Holmes in the presence of us

Thomas Pitt Richard Bessiech

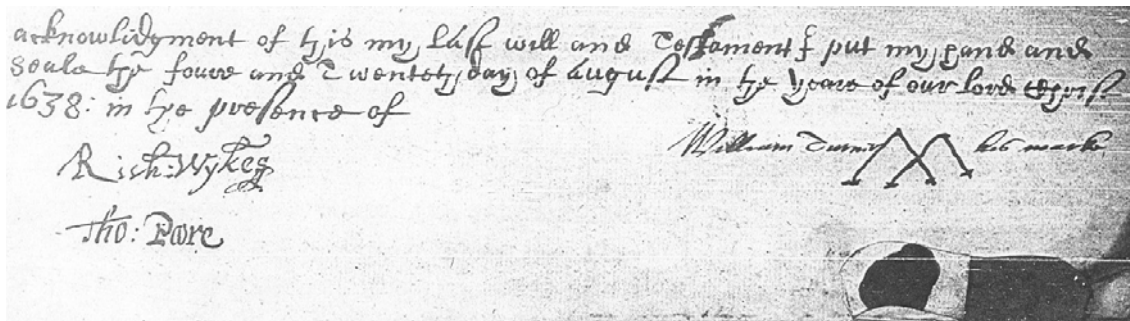


Witness of the Court  
 Robert

Probatum fuit hinc testamento quibus diebus  
 Januarii Anno Domini 1824 quibus diebus  
 Popo legi sunt hinc et hinc hinc hinc  
 hinc et hinc hinc hinc hinc hinc hinc  
 hinc hinc hinc hinc hinc hinc hinc  
 hinc hinc hinc hinc hinc hinc hinc  
 hinc hinc hinc hinc hinc hinc hinc

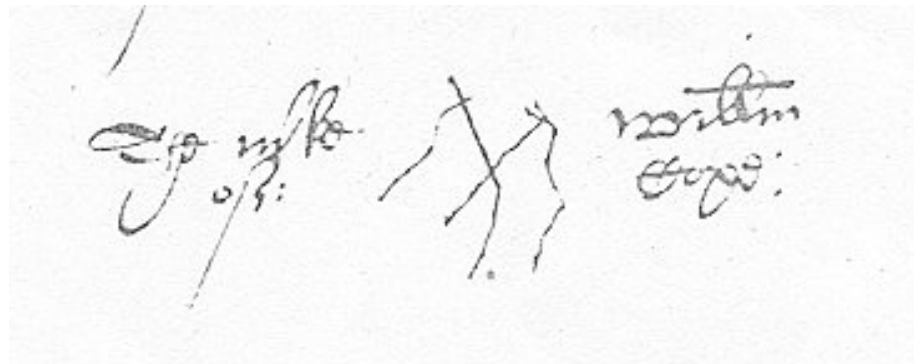
## William Turner and the Letter "W"

The mark of William Turner, baker, on his will of 1638 appears as "M" but, in 1624, William Turner, baker, witnessed the will of William Lawrence making the same mark as on his own will but the other way up so that it was, correctly, a "W". Perhaps when he made his mark on his own will, the paper was handed to him the wrong way up. See [Appendix 4](#) for more details.





Another Sevenoaks example of what appears on the will as an “M” for a man with the name “William” is the mark made on his will by William Coxe:



The image shows a handwritten signature and a large, stylized mark. The signature on the left reads "J. Coxe" in cursive. To its right is a large, bold, stylized mark that resembles a capital "M" or a series of intersecting lines. To the right of this mark is the name "William" written in cursive, with "Coxe:" written below it.

# Signatures and Marks

With only a minority making a will, it is difficult to extrapolate from signatures on wills to the general populace and, since those that did came mainly from those who had property of value to leave to their heirs, there would be an above average likelihood of the testators being literate.

These provisos should be taken into account when considering the figures in the following tables which shows the number of signatures and marks made by both testators and witnesses in the Sevenoaks wills. Since the originals (or at least microfilm of them) are available for the wills proved at the Deanery of Shoreham, more information is available for them than for the PCC wills where only the probate copies have been examined. Because of this the details are given in two separate tables depending on where the will was proved.

## Shoreham Wills

Table 11.1: Signatures and Marks for both Testators and Witnesses

Shoreham	signature	signature?	name	mark	total
men	25 21%	14 12%	20 17%	58 50%	117
women	1 6%		1 6%	15 88%	17
total	26 19%	14 10%	21 16%	73 55%	134

Even with the originals of the Shoreham wills it is often difficult to decide whether a name was written by the writer of the will or was a signature. Four categories have been used: signature - definitely looks like a signature; signature? - possibly a signature; name - impossible to decide who wrote it; mark.

Table 11.2: Signatures and Marks for both Testators and Witnesses

PCC wills	"by me"	name	mark	total
men	24 14%	131 76%	18 10%	173
women	2 11%	10 53%	7 37%	19
total	26 14%	141 73%	25 13%	192

For PCC wills only the probate copies have been examined and it is not known which, if any, of the originals have survived. Thus nothing can be deduced from the handwriting and the actual marks made by witnesses and testators are not available.

Sometimes a name in the probate copy is preceded by the words "by me"; for example the probate copy of the will of Eme Beale, widow, ends "These witnesses at the sealing, reading and delivering of this present testament Henry Smith, draper, Richard Turke, fishmonger and John Skampion, scrivener. By me Henry

Smith, by me Richard Turke, John Skampion". From this it could be deduced that "by me" showed that the name was a signature written by the witness.

Another variation is shown by Henry Gifford's will, Henry having "set my hand and seal . . . in the presence of the witnesses Thomas Walter, John Comber. The mark of Henry Gifford". Thus "set my hand" does not necessarily imply that a person wrote their own name. All that can be said with any certainty is that where the phrase "mark of" occurs, that person made their mark. In the table, "name" shows that, in the probate copy the name was written without there being anything to indicate that this person made their mark.

# John Spratt, vicar of Sevenoaks, & his Wife

John Spratt was the vicar of Sevenoaks, having been installed on 21st February 1583/4 and, as the vicar, would have been one of those responsible for the education of the children of the town as well as for writing the wills of his older parishioners. His successor, William Turner, was installed on 28th April 1614<sup>494</sup> so that John was the vicar for thirty years.

The wills of both John Spratt and his wife Beatrix have survived. They do not seem to have had any children and neither burial was recorded in the parish register. John includes some latin phrases at the beginning of his will which, since there were no witnesses, he may have written himself. He left legacies totalling about £110 to a number of relations and his executor and his main heir was Edward Sisley whose will has also survived.

Beatrix had "[brought up as a child](#)" Sara Rosen whom she described in her will as her "[late servant](#)" and, "[in regard of her long and dutiful service to me done before](#) (Sara's) [marriage](#)" to William Bostock, Beatrix made William her executor.

# The Writers of Wills

Since the vicar often visited the sick and dying, he would have written the wills of many of his parishioners and others were written by the parish clerk. Some people used the services of a professional scriptor whilst others called upon a friend or neighbour who could write. Examination of these wills show the interaction between the idiosyncrasies of the writer and the desires of the testators themselves.

## The Vicar and the Parish Clerk

Of the four wills written by John Spratt which have survived, the two written in 1606 have very similar preambles but those of Thomas Pococke (1587) and George Pococke (1613) are very different both from each other and from the other two. They definitely seem to reflect the beliefs of the men themselves rather than being those of the scriptor.

Four wills written by John Wood, parish clerk in the 1630s, have survived; that of John Turner, husbandman, written on 9th May 1636, has a preamble which reads as the words of the testator himself - or at least of those round his bedside - rather than those of the scriptor. These wills show that, whilst a man such as the vicar, parish clerk or professional scriptor would generally use a more or less

standardised form there were testators, even as humble as a husbandman, who could impose their own words on the text.

## **Wills Written by Professional Scriptors**

At least six wills were written by professional scriptors:

- Beatrix Spratt's in 1615 and Eme White's in 1616 by Nicholas Hooper, curate of Shipbourne
- two others in 1624 and 1632 by his son, John Hooper, who was a notary public and parish clerk of Tonbridge.

The two written by Nicholas Hooper are very similar and also similar to many of the other wills which he wrote (at least 130 wills between 1574 and 1618). John Hooper also wrote many wills (well over 100 between 1601 and 1641) but his preambles are generally shorter than his father's and this is the case in the two Sevenoaks wills.



The end of Beatrix Spratt's will showing the Nicholas Hooper decoration:

The Residue of all my good, and Cattells, debts, bills, bills, bonds, payables, and all other my  
 movable goods, great, small, freehold, full and wife, god's effort, without and purpose, gift and bequest  
 to me, in the last will and testament of my late father Sir John, knight, of the County of York, of a  
 child, in regard of his long and dutiful service to me, and his marriage: neither in the  
 the last will and testament of my mother and sole executrix of his, my will, to be his said widow  
 and my said husband's and daughter's share. And I do give, my gift, bequest, and bequest to my said  
 friend, Sir Thomas, Sir John, and Sir Paul, the children of my said father, to be his said widow and  
 the share of his, my will. To my said father as a token of my goodwill, to the said of his son  
 as a token, his said son, necessary and needful about his, my will to be his said widow. In witness  
 whereof, to his, my last will and testament, I have signed, my hand, and seal.  
 Given at my house, first above written. ~~At the last~~  
 Read. And acknowledged  
 at the time and last will of  
 his said father, Sir Paul  
 in the presence of me, Nicolas, his son,  
 master, clerk, and of  
 Sir Thomas, Sir John, and  
 Sir Paul, his son,  
 at the last will of his son  
 Sir Paul.

The other professional scriptor (or scrivener as they were sometimes called) whose work in Sevenoaks has survived was William Gibson who wrote the wills of Percival Smith in 1616 and Thomas Wylde a year later. The originals of both have survived so that they can be seen to have been written by the same person. Both yeomen were described as being "crazy"<sup>495</sup> and weak in body but yet of good and perfect remembrance". Crazy has not been met with elsewhere and this is an example of the use of a completely different word rather than an unusual spelling.

## Timothy Stone, Blacksmith and Scriptor

Some people would develop their writing skills through their work as clerks to merchants or as skilled craftsmen who needed to be able to write to carry out their trade. They might then draw up documents for neighbours as an extra source of money.

One example of such a person is Timothy Stone, blacksmith, who, in 1616, lived in a messuage with a kitchen and garden owned by Eme White. Her will was "read, sealed and declared as the true and last will of the said Eme White in the presence of me, Nicholas Hooper, sen., writer hereof and of Timothy Stone" with Stone signing his own name. Was he there just because he was one of Eme White's tenants? This question arises because, eight years later, the will of

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495      spelled "crazy"

William Browne was written by Timothy Stone whose signature is the same as it was when he signed Eme White's will.

Also in 1616, Timothy Stone witnessed the will of Percival Smith which was written by the scrivener, William Gibson. Another blacksmith, Leonard Gale, could cast up accounts and write so that it was probably usual for at least the more prosperous blacksmiths to be able to write. Perhaps Stone built on the experience he gained by seeing Hooper and Gibson write wills. He may have helped them with note taking and was then later able to work on his own.

When writing Brown's will, Stone used a word for "executor" which is very hard to decipher and it may have been a phonetic spelling; another peculiarity was "all so ido" for "also I do". In 1625, Elyas Garland spoke his will in the presence of three men, one of whom was Timothy Stone. Although this was a very short, nuncupative will, it was proved at the PCC and only the probate copy has been examined so that it is not known if it was written by Stone.

## Unusual Spelling

Another example of unusual spelling is the will of John Walter which was possibly written by the main witness, Henry Cronke. It looks as if it was written by a professional except for the very idiosyncratic spelling and it this, rather than deciphering the handwriting, which makes the will difficult to read. Examples of the spelling are "bee queaee" for "bequeath", "my boodie to beeread" for "to be

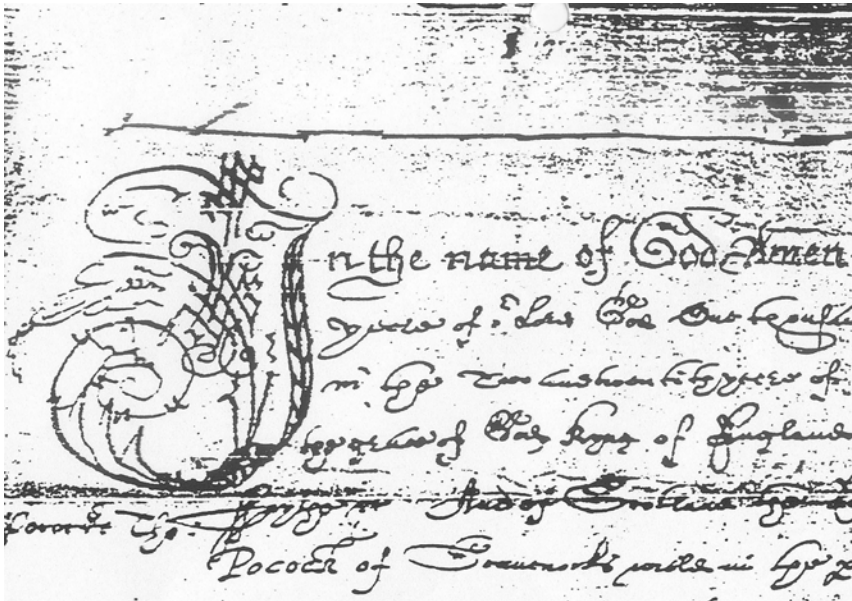
buried" and "beeLongeng" for belonging. The wording is also slightly strange on occasion: "during her natural life and no longer". These examples show that there were people who could write well but had not had sufficient education to be able to spell in the orthodox way.

## Writing of Deeds

Given the number of deeds which have survived concerning the transfer of land, the richer people of Sevenoaks would often have had to call on the services of someone able to write legal documents and a number written by Nicholas Hooper for people in the locality of Sevenoaks have survived. Notaries were another profession who carried out the task of writing documents. John Hooper, Nicholas's son was a notary public and also the parish clerk of Tonbridge.

## Embellished Letters and Signatures

Some scribes signatures and the Hoopers also added other decorations to the documents they wrote. John Hooper was usually less flamboyant than his father although the will he wrote for Thomas Pococke in 1624 starts with a decorative "I".



Much earlier, Thomas Marten, notary public, signed a deed in 1559 with a particularly magnificent signature: Marten, T.M. with notary public in abbreviated form below<sup>496</sup>.

## The Parish Registers

In 1538 Thomas Cromwell initiated the keeping of parish registers recording baptisms, marriages and deaths but this was not very popular if only because it made more work for the vicar and churchwardens. In addition, it was rumoured that, once records were being kept, there would be a tax set on each baptism, marriage and burial. Henry VIII was reported as saying that this rumour was "blown abroad" by certain "cankered parsons, vicars and curates" but it was many years before records were kept in any regular way.

In the Sevenoaks area, Edenbridge's registers dating from 1545 are the earliest with it being 1557 to 1566 before many parishes start to have surviving records. Those for Sevenoaks date back to 1558 but, like many parishes, those for the sixteenth century were not recorded in a book but on odd sheets of paper<sup>497</sup>.

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496 Ward, p.272

497 Ward, p.116

## Copying Older Records

In 1597, all parishes were ordered to copy their older records into a parchment book which the Vestry would have had to buy. In 1599 John Spratt, who had been vicar of Sevenoaks since 1584, produced a book of baptisms, marriages and burials which starts in 1560 and, to do this for 1560 to 1584, he would have had to work from whatever records had been made by his predecessors. Each page of Spratt's copies was signed by the two churchwardens for 1599 - John Masters and Moses Olyver.

In the village of Seal this task was carried out by Gilbert Jenyns, vicar of Seal from 1561 until just before his death in 1603. Again, each page of the registers which Jenyns transcribed was signed by himself and the two churchwardens but, presumably throughout, he was copying from originals he had for the most part made himself. In 1568 Jenyns had married in Sevenoaks and on 5th December 1570 he became rector there, a post he held for upwards of twenty years<sup>498</sup>. Rector and vicar of the parish of Sevenoaks were two completely separate positions with the vicar carrying out the day to day running of the parish leaving Jenyns free to carry out his duties as vicar of Seal.

# Chapter 12

## The Sevenoaks Testators

The testators of Sevenoaks can be grouped together by status/occupation. The background to each group is given together with excerpts from the wills. The two largest groups are the gentlemen and the yeomen which is what would have been expected.. It is also affected by there being no wills from the lower courts in the earlier years and, the husbandmen, artisans and tradesmen would be less likely to have there wills proved at the PCC.

### The Testators of Sevenoaks

452

The 110 testators whose wills have been examined are listed in Table 12.1

### Gentlemen

454

Those who had had a reasonable education and could “live idly without manual labour” did not find it difficult to become “gentlemen” in Tudor times.



## The Wills of Three Gentlemen

456

Items from the wills of Robert Warcopp, John Jylbert and John Hope are described.

## Yeomen

459

Kent was renowned for its wealthy yeoman and those from Sevenoaks included yeomen like Edward Sisley, a churchwarden in 1612 and the overseer of many wills. In addition there were others who worked their own land with the help of paid labour.

## The Yeomen Wills

466

The wills of George Children, Stephen Nash, Henry Gifford, Edward Sisley Thomas Wylde and Thomas Burgis are described.

## Husbandmen

472

These men farmed their land themselves selling what surplus they had in the local market. It was the ranks of the husbandmen and yeomen that the churchwardens and overseers of the poor were predominantly drawn.

## The Wills of the Husbandmen

476

The seven wills of husbandmen do not tell us much about these men but details are given from the wills of Mathew Everest, John Turner of Weald and Thomas Morley.

## The Real Estate of the Testators

479

Places mentioned by the Sevenoaks testators are detailed in three Appendices:

- 7 - Kent Villages and Towns Mentioned in the Wills
- 8 - Places in Sevenoaks Mentioned in the Wills
- 9 - Connections Outside Kent.

Some interesting items regarding land owned by the testators are given in this section

## Charitable Bequests

484

Benefactors of charitable causes came from many social classes but, except for those who left money to the School, there is practically no surviving details of any grants made by Sevenoaks people in their lifetime. The testators who specified their gifts in most detail were William Burgis, John Blome and Robert Warcopp.

## Money Bequests

488

Money bequests could take the form of lump sums which might be paid immediately, when a child reached a certain age or at another specified time in the future. They might also be paid by another legatee who inherited land from which the money was to be derived. Legacies could also take the form of annuities.

## Connections with London

491

Sevenoaks was close enough to London for there to be continuous interchange between the two with people like Henry Bosville living a large proportion of the time in the city but taking an active interest in Sevenoaks.

## A Special Funeral

498

Robert Holmden's burial, for which he gave detailed instructions, took place on 17th January 1620.

## George Scott, Citizen & Grocer of London

500

Scott wanted to be buried in Sevenoaks although he lived in London; in addition to his house he owned Brook Place in Riverhead.

## The Soales of Riverhead & their Inn, the Bull

503

In 1645 John Soale was the innholder of the Bull at Riverhead but disaster seems to have struck the family in 1647 with John Soale, the elder, his wife and John Soale, the younger, all being buried in that year.

The testators whose wills have been investigated can be grouped as shown in the following table (PCC indicates wills proved at the PCC, “Sh”, those proved at the Deanery of Shoreham. The groupings given in this table are used in some of the subsequent analyses.

**Table 12.1 The Testators of Sevenoaks**

	<1540	1540-1599	1600-1650		Total		
	PCC	PCC	PCC	Sh.	PCC	Sh.	Total
Esq.& gentleman	1	6	12	2	19	2	21
citizens of London		1	3		4		4
professionals:							
schoolmaster			1		1		1
vicar	1		1		2		2
yeomen		3	8	7	11	7	18
husbandmen			1	6	1	6	7
tradesmen:							
baker				1		1	1
clothier		1			1		1
haberdasher				1		1	1
mercier			2	1	2	1	3

artisans:							
bricklayer				1		1	1
carpenter			1	1	1	1	2
shoemaker				2		2	2
tailor				3		3	3
tanner			1	1	1	1	2
wheelwright				1		1	1
innholder			1		1		1
labourer				1		1	1
millor			1		1		1
servant				1		1	1
not specified	3	3	4	8	10	8	18
women	1	2	7	8	10	8	18
TOTAL	6	16	43	45	65	44	110

Of the eighteen women whose wills have been investigated thirteen were widows, four were unmarried women and one, although unmarried and therefore described as a spinster, was contracted to marry. Elizabeth Petley, one of the widows, was also an innholder.

# Gentlemen

Because of the few surviving wills from the lower courts, the largest class of testators is gentlemen but nothing is known of most of these men except what can be gleaned from their wills and, sometimes, entries in the parish registers or a mention in someone else's will.

Thomas Smith writing on the manner of government of England in 1583 says that "gentlemen be made good and cheap in England. For whosoever studieth the laws of the realm, who studieth in the universities, who professeth liberal sciences and, to be short, who can live idly and without manual labour and will bear the port, charge and countenance of a gentleman, he shall be called master, for that is the title which men give to esquires and other gentlemen". Esquires were those gentlemen entitled to a coat-of-arms.

Smith considered that there was nothing amiss with this manner of making gentlemen. "For the prince loseth nothing by it, as he should do if it were as in France: for the yeomen or husbandmen is no more subject to tail or tax in England than the gentleman: no, in every payment to the king, the gentleman is more charged, which he beareth the gladlier and dareth not gainsay for to save and keep his honour and reputation. In any show or muster or other particular charge

of the town where he is, he must open his purse wider and augment his portion above others, or else he doth diminish his reputation.<sup>499</sup>

## Land Transactions

There was a large amount of buying and selling of land and houses by the gentlemen of Sevenoaks and the surrounding villages. These men could have been working their own land with the help of local labour but many were mainly landlords.

In 1604, Edward Richard, a gentleman from Riverhead sold to another gentleman, Robert Warcopp, a "capital messuage with a garden, etc." for £160. This was at Riverhead, with the highway between Seal and Sundridge (the present A25) to the north and some land owned by a citizen and merchant of London to the west<sup>500</sup>.

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<sup>499</sup> Dunham and Pargellis, pp. 208-209; De Republica Anglorum by Thomas Smith, first printed in 1583

<sup>500</sup> Gordon Ward Notebooks, Sevenoaks VI, p.43

# The Wills of Three Gentlemen

## Robert Warcopp and Thomas Pierpoint

One of the assistants of the School in 1612, Robert Warcopp mentions neither wife nor children in his will but he was one of a close knit family. By January 1625 when he wrote his will, he had already made his "dutiful niece Anne Warcopp" and her husband, Thomas Pierpoint, his main heirs having "made over unto them" by a deed his house, its contents and the land belonging to it plus £200. A Thomas Pierpoint, gent, had two sons baptised in 1622 and 1624, the eldest of whom was left £50 by his great-uncle. A Thomas Pierpoint was churchwarden in 1635 and another two children of "Thomas Pierpoint, gent." were baptised in 1634 and 1637; whether or not these were all the same Thomas it is impossible to say.

Robert Warcopp left legacies to a large number of other relatives, the main ones totalling £310. Of these his "most faithful kindred Elizabeth Montforde, now the wife of George Breton", her brother Humfrey Mountforde and her daughter Sara Jones, were each left £40 as was also George Breton. This was because of the "entire love of my near kinsman and most constant friend John Mountforde, late father of the said Elizabeth and Humfrey, at whose hands I found more faithful kindnesses than of all the rest of my kindred".



## John Jylbert

Often a man's widow was not the mother of all (or any) of his children and this obviously complicated the arrangements made for the family. "John Jilbert, gent" was buried on 1st March 1621 only two days after the date the will was witnessed for the last time but it was not proved for another ten years - June 1631. John had appointed Nathaniel Studley, the husband of John's daughter, Elizabeth, as his executor and he was there ten years later to carry out his father-in-law's wishes.

Whether or not John's wife, Alice, was still alive is not known. Alice, was probably John's second wife and not Elizabeth's mother and John had entered into a bond to pay £500 "where my said wife shall appoint within six months" after his decease. If Nathaniel Studeley did not do this, John's overseers were given the authority to sell a farm in Sundridge called Randalls or other land in Sundridge so as to raise the required £500. Was it problems with this bond which delayed the proving of the will?

## John Hope

A man could be wealthy but have most of his money tied up in land and property. Such a one was John Hope, gentleman, who died in 1632, owning a messuage and land in Sevenoaks and Chevening and a tenement and lands in Kingsdown. He had three sons and four daughters, all under twenty-four in 1632. He left £100

to each of his sons to be paid when they were twenty-four whilst each of his daughters was to receive £40 when they were twenty-one or when they married if they did so at an earlier age. The money for these bequests, as well as for paying John's debts and mortgages, was to come from the sale of his Kingsdown property.

John appointed four friends as overseers and together with his wife, who was the executrix, or "any four, three or two of them, by indenture, feoffment<sup>501</sup> . . . or any otherwise according to law, to bargain, sell, grant, enfeoff and confirm, for the greatest price that may conveniently be had, all that my messuage or tenement commonly called Pells and all the barns, outhouses, closes, yards, gardens, orchards and lands, arable, meadow, pasture, woods and woodlands thereto belonging . . . in Kingsdown . . . at any time and times seeming fit to my said overseers and wife, to any person or persons, and his and their heirs forever, who shall purchase and buy the same".

After his debts and mortgages had been discharged the portions for his children were to be organised. These were to be put out until they were to receive them, John desiring "the best fatherance and assistance of all my said overseers that the same may come safely to my said children. And the profit in the meanwhile to my wife whilst they shall be on her charge or else to themselves." If one or more of his sons were "put to apprentice" some of their portion could be used for this.

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501 a trust, usually set up by a man before he died, to avoid taxes

# Yeomen

The next largest group was that of the yeomen with eleven wills proved at the PCC and seven at Shoreham. Kent overall was remarkable for the number, independence and wealth of its yeomanry which gave the county a stable system of small and independent holdings.

## The Effect of Gavelkind

Jordan thought that this wealth and independence was derived rather more from the fertility of the region, the proximity to London and the Cinque Ports and the opportunities for the employment of younger sons than the peculiar merit's of Kent's traditional system of landholding<sup>502</sup>, that is gavelkind.

In contrast, Lambarde, writing at the time but without the overall perspective of later historians, saw this system of considerable importance: "The yeomanry . . . is no where more free and jolly than in this shire . . . copyhold tenure is rare in Kent and tenant right not heard of at all. But in place of these, the custom of gavelkind prevailing everywhere, in manner every man is a freeholder and hath some part of his own to live upon". In practice, gavelkind was probably another factor to add to those given by Jordan although a will could override the tradition of gavelkind.

## “Joy Exceedingly”

Lambarde continues: "And in this their estate, they please themselves and joy exceedingly, insomuch as a man may find sundry yeomen (although otherwise for wealth comparable with many of the gentle sort) that will not yet for all that change their condition, nor desire to be apparelled with the titles of gentry"<sup>503</sup>.

Whilst the title of gentleman was a sign of advancement the position brought extra responsibilities to society and taxes were likely to be higher as shown by Thomas Smith's description of gentlemen.

Those who were tenant farmers of land owned by the gentry, generally paying rents fixed for a lengthy period, could benefit from the rising prices of cereal and livestock prices. From the large number of "lately purchased" fields, meadows and other small plots, the market in land was a very fluid one.

## An Active Land Market

Some yeoman worked land which had been in the family for generations but many bought or leased it using money they had acquired from their own efforts. Profit could be built up by selling a few extra bushels of grain each market day or from the ability to slowly increase the number of sheep and cattle they reared. It

did not require a large capital sum to increase their land holdings by a small amount at a time.

The closeness of north Kent to London meant that the whole area flourished because of the capital's demand for food. This demand led to an active land market with rising prices and gave enterprising yeomen farmers opportunities to develop their holdings and add to their wealth. The Pocockes and the Olyvers (described later) were two groups of wealthy yeoman families and there were many others in the locality.

## **“Not Idle as Gentlemen”**

In 1583, Smith described yeomen as living wealthily, keeping good houses, working to acquire riches, frequenting markets and keeping servants, not idle as gentlemen. "By these means (they) do come to such wealth that they are able, and daily do, buy the lands of unthrifty gentlemen and, after setting their (sons) at the universities, to the laws of the realm, or otherwise leaving them sufficient lands wheron they may live without labour, do make their sons by those means gentlemen"<sup>504</sup>.

A similar description of some yeomen of Essex, written in 1594, could have also applied to the richer yeomen of Kent: they wear "the weeds of gentlemen; they only oversee their husbandry and give direction unto their servants, seldom or not at all setting their hand unto the plough"<sup>505</sup>. A prime example of such a yeoman, but from seventy years before, was John Tebold of Seal.

The wealthier yeomen, at least in country parishes, fraternised with the gentlemen, the two groups standing surety for each other and borrowing money from each other<sup>506</sup>. Examples in Sevenoaks are: Richard Fletcher, yeoman, who witnessed the will of John Hope, gentleman, whilst John Warcopp, gentleman witnessed the will of Robert Vane, yeoman.

There were also the less wealthy yeomen, expert at the practical tasks involved in farming and able to follow the markets to which he was sending his produce. Whilst himself doing some of the work, he would also employ labourers but "though he be master, he says not to his servants 'Go to field' but 'Let us go' and with his own eye doth fatten his flocks and set forward all manner of husbandry."<sup>507</sup>

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505 Norden, p.xii

506 Campbell, p.57

507 Duncombe, p.208, quoting a description written in 1615 quoted by E. Kerridge, in *The Farmers of Old England* (1973), p.64

## Thomas Miller and his wife Godlyf

An example of a rich yeoman from the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth was Thomas Miller and his wife Godlyf who lived at Crouch about six miles east of Sevenoaks and, like Sir William Hamilton and his wife, they are shown by Yvonne Young as they might have appeared when dressed in their finery. In the early 1560s, the fashion was to emphasise a small waist by wearing doublets and breeches padded with rags, flock or even bran and the fitted stockings were hand knitted. As the grandson of a humble poulterer and the grandfather of a future baronet<sup>508</sup>, he also illustrates the rapid rise which a family could make from husbandman to gentry.



*Thomas Miller and Godlyf – 1563*



## A Wealthy Yeoman from Faversham

No inventories have survived from the Sevenoaks but Nicholas Wigmore of Goodnestone Court, near Faversham whose inventory shows him to have been a wealthy yeoman. He died in the spring of 1560 when his household goods and farming assets were valued at over £240. From the raw wool and woollen yarn, spinning wheels and other implements used in the woollen trade, it seems that his wealth was founded on wool probably from his own sheep. He also had a poultry yard with chickens, geese, ducks and three turkeys - two hens and a cock..

His house had at least twelve rooms well furnished with wall hangings and a large supply of linen and kitchen equipment. Meals were served on pewter dishes supplemented with wooden trenchers but he also owned some silver plate<sup>509</sup>. His land holdings are not mentioned but it is likely that the more prosperous yeomen of the Sevenoaks area lived in a similar style.

# The Yeomen Wills

The wills of nineteen Sevenoaks yeomen have survived but others proved at the Deanery of Shoreham would have been lost. The earliest is that of Thomas Pococke of 1587 with three of the others coming from the same family. Percival Smith, described as a yeoman in his will, was given as a wheelwright when he was buried and he, and his large family, are described later with the other artisans.

None of the men described as yeomen in their will were so described in the parish register when they were buried or had children baptised. Where their burials were recorded, they are generally given as householders but this term was also applied to a shoemaker, a carpenter, two tailors, a mercer and a husbandman.

## Stephen Nash

Stephen Nash who died in 1623 left a nuncupative will. Generally with nuncupative wills there is no way of telling how accurately the words of the dying person were remembered and transcribed but in the case of Steven Nash the correction of what could have been a serious mistake was added at the end of the will. Steven Nash "[departing out of the world](#)" is first reported as saying that "[one John Browne that had married his sister](#)" was to be Steven's executor; the two

witnesses to this were Ralph Lonell and Richard Stockwood. Following this is another "Memorandum":

"that Steven Nash, late of Sevenoaks . . . yeoman, caused one Richard Stockwood to write his last will and hereunto annexed wherein the said Stockwood mistakenly did set down and write the name of John Browne instead of John Plomer for, in truth, John Plomer (and no other person named John married any sister of the said Steven Nash. And the said testator in truth did nominate and appoint the said John Plomer to be his executor".

## Henry Gifford

In October 1604, Henry Gifford was "[sick in body and full of infirmities and thereby put in mind of](#)" his last end and therefore wrote his will. It was amended a month later and proved on 8th January 1604/5, Henry Gifford having been buried on 20th December 1604. Henry had married for the second time only three months before writing his will; he and his first wife had had twelve children baptised in Sevenoaks between 1570 and 1591 so that he must have been in his early sixties.

His new wife could have been much younger and it may have been to ensure her inheritance that he wrote his will either at her instigation or because he wanted to make sure she did not loose out to his children. The only land Henry mentions

was in Rye in Sussex and Henry's son, Nathaniel, was to inherit this on the death of his stepmother. How long did he have to wait for his inheritance?

Henry Gifford is one of a number of men who must have been tenants of the houses in which they lived in Sevenoaks whilst owning lands in other places.

William Longe had the farm of Pankhurst and John Price was another who only mentioned a house in Biddenden which his father, Richard Price, had bought, presumably as an investment. Biddenden is just over twenty miles south-east of Sevenoaks.

## Edward Sisley

Edward Sisley, a churchwarden of Sevenoaks in 1612, and overseer to a number of wills, was a wealthy yeoman, able in 1619, to leave his son £200 and "one hundred marks" (£66.33) to each of his four daughters who ranged in age from sixteen to six. Specifying some legacies in pounds and some in marks was not particularly unusual.

In 1614, he had been the heir of the childless vicar, John Spratt, whose wife died two years later and this inheritance could have added to his wealth. He was obviously a respected citizen of Sevenoaks called upon by many when they wanted a responsible and able man. He was able to leave his wife and five underage children well-provided for and, from the money and land he owned, his

house would have been as well equipped as that of Nicholas Wigmore of Faversham had been sixty years earlier although Edward's wealth seems to have come from cattle rather than sheep.

Moses Olyver is the earliest known person to appoint him as an overseer, a task which, as described later, could have taken him a number of years but did provide him with a number of benefits.

In April 1617, Edward Sisley and John Fornte were appointed overseers of the will of **Thomas Wylde** who made bequests to a large number of people. He rewarded his overseers with "**three shillings and fourpence a piece for their pains to be taken herein**". One of the particular tasks, which like many other overseers, they were asked to particularly supervise was the distribution of the money he gave to the poor people of Sevenoaks. In October of the same year, **Elizabeth Petley**, widow and innholder, appointed Edward Sisley as one of her overseers.

In his will he left the "**lease of certain lands in Sussex which I hold of my Lord Dane**" to his son "**for all the term of years therein to come**". The house in which he lived in Sevenoaks was also leased and Edward mentions the "**stock of cattle and corn . . upon the said farm**". He did, however, own some tenements in Sevenoaks.

## Thomas Wylde

The three messuages and two tenements in Sevenoaks owned by Thomas Wylde were each identified by their occupants:

- a petty chapman, Richard Smythe;
- Bridget Vigin widow;
- Peter Symons who occupied a "tenement or outlet";
- Roger Thomas, cutler, who lived in part of a messuage with a garden which he shared with Thomas Martin;
- George Lownes, shoemaker who shared a tenement and garden with Dennise Smythe, widow.

Wylde does not appear to have any children and, although Elizabeth, his wife and executrix was left all his goods, etc. not otherwise bequeathed, there is no indication of where she would live. Since Thomas does not mention the house in which they were living, perhaps she would automatically continue to live there.

A large number of people benefited from Thomas's will, the bequests including ten "tegs or sheep" which he had bought at Lewes the previous whitsuntide.

## Thomas Burgis

Although described as a yeoman, Thomas Burgis mentions no land at all and seems to have been working for his "master Mr. Robert Hembeen" and, since he left £1 to "Mathew Plumer, servant, in the house with me at Mr. Binces", this is where he presumably lived. He left legacies totalling £80 which were to be paid "as by the bonds made over unto me may appear". A young man with a mother, two married sisters, one with three children living in Uckfield, he may have been building up some capital intending to set up on his own later but, unfortunately, became ill - or suffered an accident.

# Husbandmen

"The husbandman's pride and his wit are very near alike, yet they will calculate of dearth and plenty and will prognosticate today of corn, cattle, butter, cheese and such other, what price they will bear for a year or two to come." So wrote Barnamie Rich in 1606<sup>510</sup>. These men farmed their own (or rented) land but without having a large surplus to sell regularly at the market. It was mainly the well-off husbandmen who, together with the yeomen, attended the parish meetings in the Vestry and from whose ranks the churchwardens and overseers of the poor were drawn.

## The Housewife to Market

As with yeomen, the following description of husbandmen in Essex written in 1594 would apply also to those parts of Kent near to London. "men of husbandry who wholly dedicate themselves to the manuring of their land. And these commonly are furnished with kyne that the wife twice or thrice a week conveyeth to London milk, butter, cheese, apples, pears, frumenty, hens, chickens, eggs,

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510 in "Faults and Nothing Else but Faults" quoted by Campbell, p.156 (spelling modernised)



bacon and a thousand other country drugs which good housewives can farm and find to get a penny. And this yieldeth them a large comfort and relief<sup>511</sup>."

Whilst Sevenoaks was too far from London for the housewife to go there on a regular basis, the market in Sevenoaks, with its local gentry and Knole, would have been a place where she could hope to sell the produce from the family's work.

## General Carriers

"There were also they that live by carriage for other men and to that end they keep carts and carriages, carry meal, malt and many other things". Having taken goods up to London, they could return loaded with items required by the local gentry. From 1610 onwards, when the Earl of Dorset and his family lived at Knole, traffic between Sevenoaks and London would have been much greater than earlier with the increased demand for luxury goods from the capital.

## Intended for a Husbandman

Another description comes from Thomas Powell writing in 1631<sup>512</sup>: "The husbandman may, . . . for the happy content of the life and the honest gain which it brings with it, be worthy to invite a right good man's son to undergo the profession. A man intended for a husbandman must be of disposition part gentle and part rustic, equally mixed together. For if the gentleman be predominate, his running nag will outrun the constable. His extraordinary strong beer will be too headstrong in office of churchwarden. And his well-mouthed dogs will make him out-mouth all the Vestry. But if the clown be predominant, he will smell all brown bread and garlic."

## Cultivating the Land

For those cultivating the land, the year began in the autumn with the sowing of the winter corn. Before winter set in, sufficient firewood had to be collected and stored. Bracken and ferns were also required:

"Get home withe thy brakes ere all summer be gone  
For tethered up cattle to sit down upon.  
To cover thy hovel, to brew and to bake  
And to lie on the flooring where cover ye make."<sup>513</sup>

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512 Dunham and Pargellis, p. 573; Powell, Thomas; Tom of All Trades; first published in London in 1631

513 Thomas Tusser, quoted by Fletcher, p.24

January and February was the time for ploughing with each field needing to be ploughed three times to make it ready for the next crop. Hedging and ditching were other activities for the spring with March and April seeing the spring sowing. The best time to do this being just before it rained; then, after the rain, the ground was harrowed which lightly covered the seed with soil.

Thistles had to be cut, mole hills destroyed and then, in May and June, there was the weeding of the crops to be done. Hay making began at the end of June followed by the corn harvest with everyone praying for good weather. Thomas Tusser again advised on being ready at the right moment:

"Make sure of thy reapers, get harvest in hand,  
For corn that is ripe do but drop if it stand;  
Be thankful to God for the harvest He's sent,  
And be willing to save it with earnest intent."<sup>514</sup>

Assuming there had been no disastrous bad weather to ruin the hay and crops, the year ended with the celebrations for harvest home.

# The Wills of the Husbandmen

Only seven wills have survived for husbandmen and these add only a little to the picture of Sevenoaks. One of the seven was Edward Lampard, an early member of the Lampards or Lambards who were later to become a large Sevenoaks family. Gordon Ward describes a map drawn of part of the parish of Sevenoaks in 1630 by Thomas Lambarde "[who was a great map maker and the first of the Lambards to live Sevenoaks](#)"<sup>515</sup>.

## The Everests

Two others were for members of the Everest family which had branches in Sevenoaks, Tonbridge, Chiddingstone and other local villages. Mathew Everest, husbandman of Sevenoaks, was a churchwarden in 1604 and, in the same year, he was appointed one of the overseers of the will of the yeoman Henry Gifford.

Mathew was buried in January 1616; his will, in which he appointed his brothers, John Everest of Tonbridge and Peter Everest of Sevenoaks, his overseers, is short. All Mathew's children seem to have been of age when he wrote his will so that Peter, most likely the eldest son since he was joint executor with his mother, was probably born in the early 1580s.

The Peter Everest of Sevenoaks who wrote his will in 1644, like Mathew a husbandman and with his elder children born in the 1610s, could have been Mathew's son. When he wrote his will, he had five children over twenty and five under twenty, the upbringing of the younger ones being left to his eldest son, John.

## John Turner of Weald

The will of "John Turner of Weald" who was buried on 15th May 1636 just six days after the date of the will, contains an unusual clause. John Turner had a son, John, under twenty-one in 1636, and a daughter Mary who had married Edward Fletcher on 5th November 1633. Edward Fletcher was left all John's unbequeathed "[goods and chattels and estate](#)" most unusually "[towards my maintenance while I live](#)". This seems to imply that this part of the will was to come into effect directly but, since John died so soon after the will was written, this clause would have had no practical effect.

The land John mentions was in East Grinstead about twelve miles south-west of Sevenoaks. This was left eventually to his son, but, until John junior was twenty-one, Edward Fletcher and Mary were to have the land paying £4 a year to John's wife Agnes and £3 a year to his son.

## Thomas Morley

The will of Thomas Morley, written in March 1627, does not give his occupation or standing but, from his will, he appears to have been a careful man who had earned enough to buy a house and some land and had worked out the best way to use the money from this to the advantage of his three sons, Thomas, William and Henry.

He gave his eldest son £2 and a "brass kettle of three gallons". All the rest of his goods and chattels were to be sold and what remained after all his debts, etc. had been paid was to be divided equally between William and Henry. His house and land was to be let out and, for three years, the rent was to be used for the maintenance of Henry, the youngest son. After that the rent was to be equally divided between the three sons until the property itself was divided between them. The man Morley appointed his executor to organise the selling of his goods, the paying of his debts, the letting of the house and the division of the rent was John Cooper of Chipsted.

# The Real Estate of the Testators

Taking the wills as evidence, a third of the testators had no land at all whilst a quarter mention land only in Sevenoaks; this leaves over a third who had land outside the parish of Sevenoaks.

By the sixteenth century most of the land in Kent was enclosed and it is probable that very little land in the county had ever been held in common. Thus each holding could be farmed as a separate entity and there were a large number of freeholders with complete freedom to alienate or sell their holdings<sup>516</sup>.

## Avoiding the Disadvantages of Gavelkind

The Kentish custom of gavelkind was to divide the land between all the heirs and we have already seen a number of brothers who had each inherited a small part of their father's estate selling their portions to one purchaser so that they could become a viable property again. Splitting the family holding into units too small to be practical could be avoided by the writing of a will.

The mercer, John Masters (or Maisters) had four sons and a daughter; he made his son Mathew his executor and main heir leaving him his "parcels of land, house,

shops and shambles" with the other sons receiving only very small legacies. Perhaps they had already had money from their father to set them up in a trade or other occupation.

In other cases, testators such as John Blome had built up their estates, which could include land in more than one area (and more than one county), to such a size that they could be divided between a number of sons without harm.

## Identifying Parcels of Land

Land was often identified in the wills by giving the name of the man from whom it had been purchased and some men had obviously been carrying out an extensive programme of enlarging their estates. Another method of describing a piece of land was to say whose land bordered it.

Some testators described their holdings in great detail whilst others just give a hint that they owned some land but, obviously, there must have been some who owned no land at all. Robert Gavell was a rich gentleman whose specified legacies total about £400 but no land was mentioned; perhaps in cases like this, there were other legal documents specifying details of property owned. Some wills, which do mention land, etc. owned by the testator, refer to "writings" which give additional information and it is possible that these existed even when they



were not referred to in the will. John Potkyn laid out in a separate writing how his London property was to be managed by a group of six men.

## Leasing of Premises

As already noted, the wealthy yeoman, Edward Sisley, owned some tenements in Sevenoaks but he leased the house in which he lived and the land with it. Seven men mention land outside Kent but did not seem to have any within the county. For example, the yeoman Henry Gifford owned land in Rye, Sussex and the husbandman John Turner had a house and land in East Grinstead in Sussex. By chance, we know that Gifford had the tenure of a messuage near the Market Place<sup>517</sup> and probably it was common for men to receive the rent from land they owned outside the parish whilst leasing the premises where they lived in Sevenoaks.

## Giles Cranewell, Gentleman

Giles Cranewell, was another who possibly leased land in Sevenoaks but whose holdings were in other parishes, in this case, in the Hever, Chiddingstone, Ide Hill, Bough Beech area. His mansion house was called Chittenden which is to the

west of the road from Ide Hill, just over a mile south of the village on the northern boundary of the parishes of Hever and Chiddingstone.

The position of the mansion house is described in detail in the will: "abutting upon the high way leading from Ide hill to Bow Beech towards the east, upon the highway leading from Ide Hill to Hever towards the north and west and upon a lane leading from the tenement of John Wallis to a tenement called Danes towards the south and east and to the lands of Sir Thomas Hopkins, knight, towards the north and to the land sometimes Mr. Cromers called Hilders towards the east and south".

Hilders Farm is just over half a mile south of Chittenden on the Ide Hill to Bough Beech road. Giles also owned some land in Hever, three "closes or parcels of ground" and other land in the parish of Chiddingstone

## **Martin Rebankes**

The tailor, Martin Rebankes, is described in his will as "of Sevenoaks Weald" but the only other mention of Sevenoaks in his will is his bequest to his youngest daughter, Ann Hall, of "one joined chest standing in the Weald in the parish of Sevenoaks furnished as it standeth". He also had another chest "standing at Brasted" which he left to Martin Blackman, his eldest daughter's son, together with a joined chest.

Again the land he owned was outside Sevenoaks: his land, tenements and messuage at Idehill in the parish of Sundridge was to be equally divided between his two daughters each of whom had a son who, on their mother's death was to inherit her half.

## Land Outside the South-East

A few of the Sevenoaks testators, one of whom was John Lennarde, owned land outside the south-east of England. William Wright, gentleman, who wrote his will in 1617, had a lease or grant in reversion for thirty-one years, specified "[under the great seal of England](#)", for six tenements and land in Glastonbury, Somerset and 180 acres in North Wales, the latter being described as a "[gavel](#)" of land which is a tribute or rent. Such land would be an investment with the owner unlikely to have been concerned with how the land was used provided that he received his rent regularly.

# Charitable Bequests

W.K. Jordan investigated Philanthropy in England, 1480-1660, publishing a book with that title in 1959 and a further study devoted to Kent in 1961. Many of the donations and endowments included in Jordan's totals were made during the life-time of the benefactor and, except where details have been found for Sevenoaks, are not included in this study.

We have seen how, prior to the Reformation, testators left money to the church and for masses to be said for the dead. In 1548 Cranmer instructed that give money to the poor chest that previously they would have bestowed “upon pardons, pilgrimages, trentals, masses satisfactory, decking of images, offerings of candles, giving to friars and upon other like blind devotions”<sup>518</sup>. In that there were only a few bequests to the church, people obeyed this instruction but whether or not all that the money which would previously have gone to the items listed by Cranmer was diverted to good causes or not it is impossible to tell.

## Kentish Benefactors

During the period 1480 to 1660, 6,662 benefactors from many social classes, donated over a quarter of a million pounds to charitable and social institutions in

Kent. Larger than the amount provided in any other rural county, this shows both the wealth of Kent and the mature sense of social responsibility of the benefactors. The number of donors exceeded the total for any other rural county except Yorkshire, the average gift being just under £38<sup>519</sup>. Donations were particularly small between 1541 and 1570, rose by nearly five times in the early Stuart years but fell sharply again after 1630.

Over this whole period, just over 40 per cent of the money donated went to the relief of the poor who were of special concern to the people of Kent. A little more than 20 per cent went on the endowment of educational institutions, particularly the founding of grammar schools. Sevenoaks almshouse received part of the proceeds from the land left by the Petts and other men to the School showing these two interests to be of importance to the town.

Whereas before 1540, donations for religious needs made up over 60 per cent of the total contributed, in the Elizabethan period (1561-1600) they were less than 9 per cent.

## Bequests to the Poor

The nuncupative will of George Children was spoken about the 14th December 1595 twelve days before he was buried. Most unusually, four months before he died, perhaps because he knew he had not long to live, George had set up a trust by which an annuity of £5 was to be paid, out of his lands in Leigh and Tonbridge, to the poor of Sevenoaks<sup>520</sup>.

Excluding nuncupative wills, just over half the testators whose wills have survived made charitable bequests and this proportion is similar for most of the groups. It was the men who were also citizens of London who left most money to charity with the gentlemen, yeoman, tradesmen and artisans and the women being the other main contributors. The group which contributed the least were the husbandmen, only one of the six leaving anything to the poor and that only a bequest of £0.33. The nuncupative will of Richard Turner (1634) is exceptional in that it is the only nuncupative will in which there was a charitable bequest - 20s to the poor.

Sometimes the poor were to receive their charity in the form of bread: the gentleman, John Hope, asked to have distributed at his burial "[such dole in bread money or otherwise as \(his executrix\) shall think fitting](#)".

## William Burgis, Clothier (1594)

"The poor people inhabiting in the almshouses" were to receive ten shillings from William Burgis's will and to the poor inhabitants of Sevenoaks forty shillings. It was usual for such gifts to the poor to be specified as being amongst the first to be paid by the executors. "As well the said sum of ten shillings as the said sum of forty shillings to be given and distributed according to the discretion of my executrix . . . within one month after my decease."

## John Blome, Mercer (1624)

The rich mercer, John Blome, specified his bequests in some detail:

- to the sixteen almshouses in Sevenoaks 16s (or did he mean the sixteen people in the almshouse?).
  - "To 40 other the poorest people within the same parish 6d a piece, to 40 of the second sort of the poor there 4d a piece"
  - "And to 40 poor children of that parish 2d a piece".
- "To be distributed at the discretion of my executor, the vicar, churchwardens and overseers for the poor of the said parish".

He also gave "to the poor of Edenbridge 20s to be distributed by the minister and overseers for the poor of the same parish."

## Robert Warcopp, Gentleman (1625)

In addition to twenty shillings left to the poor of Sevenoaks, Robert Warcopp gave ten shillings to be divided between the poor living in the almshouses and specific sums to a number of poor people including twenty shillings to "poor widow Locke" and ten shillings each to six people including Robert Reynolds of Riverhead, "goodwife Byott" and three widows.

## Money Bequests

Where a testator had both wealth and a family for whom to provide, the arrangements can be very complicated so that it is impossible to total the monetary bequests. Often all that can be deduced is that a man was "wealthy" without actually defining what is taken to be wealthy. A bequest could consist of a lump sum or an annuity or "yearly rent". Lump sums were often payable at different times, not only because they were to be paid when a child reached a given age but sometimes spaced so as to be paid out of incoming revenues.



## Bequests to Children

Some testators gave a considerable amount of thought to organising when bequests to children should be paid, taking into account both the child's likely requirements and the where withall to pay the legacies.

One such testator was the widow Elizabeth Petley who had four sons and three daughters; Thomas, the eldest son gets a modest £2 but he had probably been his father's main heir. Mathew, her second son was to be her executor and thus received the residue of her "plate, monies, leases and chattels". Her third son, William, was to receive £20 within six months "after the expiration of his apprenticeship" which had probably been arranged by his father.

John, the youngest son, received the largest legacy (£40 in two instalments), perhaps because he had had, so far, little spent on his advancement. The two elder daughters were married and had probably had some money from Elizabeth and her husband at that time so Annis was left £5 and Winifrith only £2. The youngest, Elizabeth, would need money when she married so she was left £20, only half of that given to John but, like him, she was to receive it in two instalments.

## Legatees with Responsibility for Other Bequests

Legacies might be paid by another beneficiary when he inherited the land left to him. John Blome's son was to pay a total of £280 to various relatives after the death of John's widow. William Burgis of Kippington, clothier, had lent £400 to his son-in-law which was to be used to pay some of his legacies.

Some testators wanted to ensure that any debts they owed were fully paid. Henry Gifford left his wife, Alice, all his land. etc. in Rye but, if she refused to pay the surety "[which standeth bound by bond or by bill for payment](#)" or any sum of money which was lawfully demanded from her, his overseers were given the authority to sell as much of this land as was necessary to discharge his debts and sureties.

## Annuities

Legacies sometimes took the form of annuities to be paid either by the executor or another beneficiary who had inherited a particular piece of land. It was thus necessary for the testator to specify the penalties to be incurred if the annuity was not paid.

**Thomas Turner's** will of 1640 gives an example of the usual form these took: "[And if it shall happen the said several sums or annuities . . . to be behind and unpaid by the space of one and twenty days next after any of the said feast days of payment](#)

in which the same ought to be paid as aforesaid, that then and from thence forth it shall and may be lawful to and for the said Daniell Bassane, Jane Bassane, Elizabeth Bassane and Sarah Bassane severally and respectively to enter into and distrain in and upon the said messuage, lands and premises and the distress and distresses there taken to lead, drive, carry away, impound, detain and keep until the said several and particular legacies, and every part and parcel thereof several devised unto them, the said Daniell Bassane, Jane, Elizabeth and Sarah Bassane, shall be fully satisfied and paid".

Given that there were testators who left three or four different annuities from different pieces of land and that these penalties for non-payment were repeated for each, it is easy to see how some wills were very long. Thomas Turner subscribed his "name unto every sheet of paper being four in number and fixed together with one label".

## Connections with London

With Kent so close to London there was a continuous interchange between the capital and the county's towns and villages which led to London's wealth and aspirations having an "almost unbelievably great effect" on the institutions of

Kent. A major reason for the size of this effect was that rather than being spread thinly over the whole county or dissipated in direct handouts to the poor, most of the donations were concentrated in particular communities as endowments for almshouses, grammar schools and other trusts.

Sevenoaks was one of the many towns which were decisively affected by London benefactions, £1406 of its total of £2551 coming from local sources. In contrast, Chiddingstone, the village from which the Lennardes came, received only £30 of its £1568 from London<sup>521</sup>.

The main area in which London money was invested to the benefit of Sevenoaks was the School founded by a grocer and citizen of London who gave property in London for its initial endowment. The Potkyns were Londoners using London property to fund the School but John, the younger of the three, attended the School himself. John Porter, although from a Seal family, was a citizen and fishmonger of London when he granted the School an annuity, in this case from land he owned locally.

Some charitable bequests came to Sevenoaks from people whose connection with the town was not given in their wills. In 1556, Eme Beale left £1 to be distributed amongst the poor of Sevenoaks but, although she lived in London, she described herself as "[late of Sevenoaks](#)", possibly the town where she grew up. Since we do

not know her maiden name, there is no way of knowing whether or not she came from a Sevenoaks family.

## Contacts with London

The Sevenoaks wills give just a few hints as to what must have been a considerable amount of contact between Sevenoaks and London with young people being apprenticed there, professional people living in London for at least part of the year, tradesmen supplying the capital and the wealthier people of Sevenoaks obtaining luxury goods from there. The number of wills which were proved in London which could have been proved at the Deanery of Shoreham shows the attraction of going to London.

In 1590 Henry Bosville had lived "[for the most part of nine years](#)" in his house in Clements Inn, London. Thirty-five years later, Henry Bosville, tailor, from Southwark, London was making Rose Petley a gown. William and Johane Wright's daughter married Mr. William Rolfe of London in January 1619 and was living in Temple Bar in Fleet Street in 1623. William Constable's chest containing old gold coins, other money and clothes was at the Cock in Westminster. William Seyliard's considerable wealth consisted of land and premises in London. George Scott, citizen and grocer of London was buried in Sevenoaks.

## The Corner House near the Market Place

An indenture dated 27th May 1603 brings a number of Sevenoaks people into contact with William Bennet, citizen and draper of London and his wife Judith who owned a messuage near the Market Place called the Corner House which they had had from John Lusted who himself had had it from John Pett, gent., who had died in 1593.

At the time of the indenture it was in the tenure of Henry Gifford and the Bennets sold it to William Blome, son of John Blome, mercer, of Sevenoaks, for £100. William was only seventeen in 1603; perhaps John bought it for his son. The Bennets agreed that the property was free of all "sales, bargains, grants, leases, jointures, statutes, tithe charges and incumbrances whatsoever" except for one annuity of £5 granted by Lusted to Henry Seyliard in 1585 and the lease to Henry Gifford which had been granted in 1599 for a period of twenty-one years, the annual rent being £6.50 for the first four years and £8 for the rest of the term. After the sale, this rent was to be paid to William Blome and the Bennets were to "do all else necessary to free William Blome from any unforeseen charges".<sup>522</sup>

## Robert Holmden

Robert Holmden, originally from Sevenoaks, was a citizen and leatherseller of London who, on his retirement returned to live in Sevenoaks. It was recorded that, on 17th January 1620, "Mr. Robert Holmden, gent., a christian and liberal benefactor both to the parish church, school and poor of Sevenoaks" was buried<sup>523</sup>.

He owned a "messuage or tenement" in Great East Cheap which he left to the Wardens and Society of the Worshipful Company of Leathersellers of London; it was called The George on Horseback which sounds as if it was an inn. This, with "the reversion, rents and profits thereof" was given to the Company for ever on condition that each year £12 was distributed as shown in Table 12.2. The bequest to six poor men and women shows that women as well as men could be "free of the Company of Leathersellers."

Table 12.2: Yearly Payments from Holmden's Bequest

£4	"towards the maintenance of a scholar in the university of Cambridge or Oxford", the scholar to be selected from "the grammar free school of Sevenoaks" or, if there was no one suitable at Sevenoaks, from the "free school of Tonbridge". Once preferred, a scholar was to receive the £4 for four years provided he stayed at university that long; at the end of the four years or when he left university, a new scholar was to be chosen.
£6	"unto six aged poor men and women being free of the said Company of Leathersellers and not married into any other Company", five shillings per quarter, per person.
£1 13s 4d 6s 8d	to the Renter Warden of the Company to the Clerk to the Company to the Beadle of the Company



## The Beneficiaries of a Rich Man's Will

Thomas Nevill's connection with Sevenoaks is completely unknown; no Nevills are recorded in the Sevenoaks parish registers and his bequest of £5 to be distributed to the poor of the town within eight months of his death is the only time Sevenoaks is mentioned in his will.

This was written on 26th February 1566/7, when he was a wealthy haberdasher and citizen of London. He left a large amount of money to a variety of London charities, to the poor in villages in Oxfordshire and £30 towards the mending of the highways near Dunstable in Bedfordshire. His gifts show the wide range of institutions which could benefit from a rich man's will:

- £5 to each of four hospitals and £5 to every prison in London
- £30 to the Company of Haberdashers to be lent for two to four years to "four honest young men of the same company upon good sureties without taking of any man of commodities for the same".
- Three loads of coal to be distributed to the poor of the parish of St. George in Southwark each year until £15 had been spent with Neville specifying that the coal "yearly be bought in summer at the best hand". The poor of St. Patrick without Newgate of London were also to benefit from a similar yearly distribution of coal.

# A Special Funeral

Robert Holmden who left money for a scholar from Sevenoaks School gave detailed instructions for his funeral and the money to be laid out for this

**Table 12.3: To be Spent on Richard Holmden's Funeral, etc.**

"to four men who shall carry my corpse to the earth"	£1 each
- the preacher at the funeral	£5
- the clerk	10s
- the gravemaker	5s
- the ringers	10s
the poor, to be distributed on the day of burial	£10
for entertaining his neighbours and kinsfolk which came to his burial	£40
- for reparations of the body of the church	40s each
- to the churchwardens	per year <sup>524</sup>
- poor of the parish	

<sup>524</sup> during the period of a lease of lands in Shipbourne

With £40 to be spent on entertaining the “neighbours and kinsfolk” which came to be burial, there must have been some feasting in the town on that midwinter day with many people to drink the health of the rich leatherseller.

Although Robert owned land in a number of parishes, there is no mention of any land or buildings in Sevenoaks but that is where he wanted to be buried and his burial took place on 17th January 1619/20.

Edenbridge was another town where both the church and the poor benefited considerably from his will. He left £3 per year towards the reparations of the body of the church and this was to be paid, forever, out of his tenement called Jesopps in Penshurst. A total of £40 was left to the poor with £5 of it being spent each year for eight years on wood and fuel (including its carriage) which was “to be delivered at their doors between the first of May and Michaelmas”. He also left £2 to the poor of every parish where he had any lands at the time of his death.

# George Scott, Citizen & Grocer of London

George Scott, although living in London, wanted to be buried "in Sevenoaks in the county of Kent in a grave to be made in the ground within a vault which I lately caused to be made at the upper end of the south aisle of the chancel of the same church for the laying of the body of my late dear mother and such others of her posterity as shall desire to be buried there". Perhaps his parents had lived in Sevenoaks and that is where he grew up.

## Will Proved before he was Buried

Although married he did not have any children alive when he made his will, his heirs being his nieces and nephews. Dated 8th May 1645, it was not proved until 2nd February 1648/9. According to the transcript of the Sevenoaks parish register "Mr. George Scott, Esquire," was buried on 20th February 1648/9 over two weeks after the will was proved. This date is also given in the Hugh Miller MSS, Vol.1<sup>525</sup>. Did George die in London (where the will was written) with it taking over three weeks to get his body to Sevenoaks, the will having been proved in the meantime?

How would the body have been transported? On a horse? In a cart? Or in one of his coaches? We know he owned at least two coaches since, amongst the items

which George left to his wife were his "two coaches withall my horses for coach and cart with all harness and furniture to them" belonging.

## The Grocers Company

Whilst William Sevenoke who had founded the School was a member of the Grocers Company, no other early connection between Sevenoaks and the Company have been found. In 1929, a small, undated, coin of bronze was found with the inscription "William Allen of Sevenoaks in Kent" and also the arms of the Worshipful Company of Grocers. Coins such as this one were used for transactions too small to be handled by government minted money.<sup>526</sup>

A William Allen married in Sevenoaks in 1659 and earlier than this there were a number of Allens in Sevenoaks, notably the prosperous sadler, Joshua Allen. It is possible that the Allens had connections with the Grocers Company earlier than 1659.

## Connections with Riverhead

In 1635, Thomas Locke of Norfolk mortgaged his "large house or Inn called the Bull" in Riverhead for £100 to George Scott, paying him £7 a year until such time as the loan was redeemed.

For as long as the loan was outstanding after the death of George and his wife, the £7 a year was to be paid to the Sevenoaks churchwardens who were to provide, each Sunday throughout the year, "fifteen two penny loaves of good and wholesome wheaten or household bread of a day old" to be distributed to such of the poor of Riverhead "frequenting divine service every Sunday morning as shall be nominated and appointed by the tenant . . . that shall dwell in my manor house called Brook Place at Riverhead". The wardens and clerk of the church were to have the remaining ten shillings<sup>527</sup> a year for "their care and pains to be taken". Thus, in addition to his house in the City of London, he owned Brook Place in Riverhead which was let out to a tenant.

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<sup>527</sup> fifteen loaves at 2d each is 30d per Sunday. Fifty-two Sundays in a year gives a total of 1560d = 130s = £6 10s

# The Soales of Riverhead & their Inn, the Bull

George Scott, described the "large house or Inn called the Bull" for which he held the mortgage as "sometimes two tenements with the barns, stables and other buildings . . . now in the tenure or occupation of John Soale, innholder".

In 1647 some disaster seems to have struck the Soale household; John Soale, the elder, "innholder" was buried on 10th June, Grace Soale, his widow, on 24th September and John Soale, the younger, on 3rd October. The wills of both John Soales have survived but John Soale, the elder's was written in Latin and has not been investigated. His executor was to have been his wife, Grace, but since she had died before the will came to be proved, so that Ann Jesson, the daughter of Grace's sister, was appointed the administrator of the will.

John Soale the younger is described as an innholder in his will written on 27th September 1647. With no close relatives to whom to leave his estate, John made two friends, John Jesson who was a mariner living in Redcliffe in Surrey, and Thomas Carter, a tailor from Chevening, his heirs and executors. Their inheritance included a "messuage or tenement . . . in Chipstead which was lately purchased by John Soale, my father". John Jesson could have been Ann Jesson's father or husband.

# Chapter 13

## Women in the Sevenoaks Neighbourhood

When the life of ordinary people is considered in detail, it can be seen that women played a large and important role within the community.

Introduction 510

"Good Points of Huswifry" 511

For a yeoman or husbandman to prosper he needed a good housewife to support him, one who could take responsibility when he was away, look after the chickens and the dairy and take any spare produce to market.

Administering an Estate 513

To do this the executor had to obtain an inventory of the deceased's goods (if their value was over £5), take this with the will to the probate court and get approval from the judge to administer the estate. When the wife was appointed as executrix, which she often was, she carried out these tasks and usually attended the court herself.



## Grants of Administration

518

Of the twenty recorded Grants of Administration made for Sevenoaks men, half were made to women.

## Executors and Overseers

519

Over half the men whose wives survived them appointed her as their executrix. The tasks facing an executor or overseer could be onerous and sometimes continue over a long period of time.

## Rachel Besbeeche, Relict and Executrix

524

When Richard Besbeeche died in 1633 he left his wife pregnant with five children under ten. Rachel, appointed executrix, was granted probate when her posthumous daughter was about a month old. The tasks facing her over the years until her children were twenty-five are described.

## Selling Land

530

Sometimes executors had to sell land in order to carry out the instructions in the will and some of the arrangements could be very complicated.

## Arrangements for Widows

532

Widows could be left land and property outright or only for as long as they remained unmarried; they could also, or instead, be left an annuity. The testator also had to take into account any dower which his wife had brought to the marriage. If property was not left outright, the testator was concerned that the eventual heir would receive the land in good condition.

## Daughters' Portions

538

Examples of the bequests to daughters by Sevenoaks testators are given.. Gleason used these portions to estimate the wealth of JPs and this is discussed.

## William Wright, his wife, Johane, & Their Daughters

542

William and Johane had two daughters and the arrangements for their inheritances is described.

## Other Female Relatives

547

The mothers of some testators survived them and daughters-in-law were sometimes left a specific legacy.

## Copyhold Land Claimed by Sisters

547

An example is given of copyhold land in Ightham being claimed by a man's sisters.

## Conflicts Within Families

550

Wills sometimes show that not always did families live in harmony together. Two examples are given.

## The Wills of Sevenoaks Women

552

Only seventeen wills have survived for Sevenoaks women from before 1650.

## The Widows of Sevenoaks

556

Since only a very few wills have survived for the widows of Sevenoaks it is not possible to make any generalisations. From the wills, the widows writing them were all independent women usually owning land in their own right.

## Eme White, Blacksmith's Widow

560

Eme made her three grandsons her executors and left all her property and goods to them.

## Martha Stanford

563

Martha, although “of Sevenoaks”, wanted to be buried in Thissleworth in Middlesex, at least thirty miles from Sevenoaks

## Remarriage and Separation

564

Some, but by no means all, widows remarried with the likelihood of a widower remarrying being greater than that for a widow and not necessarily because they found it easier to find a new wife.

## Witchcraft

568

Some cases of women being accused of witchcraft, including the bewitching of animals are described. Many of those charged were found “not guilty”.

## Women and Hedge-Breaking

574

It was particularly women who carried out the hedge-breaking but their husbands who were charged with allowing their wives to do.

## Crime and Punishment

576

Generally when women were accused of larceny it was only items of low value which they had stolen and, as petty larceny, the punishment was to be whipped. But Elizabeth Beane was a persistent thief and, as such, was sentenced to hang. But pregnant women could expect at least a postponement of their execution.

The parish was concerned with the the birth of a bastard child only if it was likely to become a charge upon the parish. But in 1604, Marie Turner arrived in Sevenoaks with a young baby and this was the beginning of a complex case. There is also the case regarding the upkeep of a bastard child and an action against the parish officers of Ightham who were charged with taking the law into their own hands.

# Introduction

Women were not called upon to be parish constables and it was very rare for a woman to serve as a churchwarden although they were quite often innholders and, as such, sometimes on the wrong side of the law. Neither did they serve in armies and only occasionally did they own property; even so with two of the Tudors being queens in their own right and other notable women in Tudor and Stuart times, they are not completely absent from national history. At the local level we have already seen that a woman, Agnes Grebill, was one of the most obdurate of the heretics tried in Sevenoaks in 1511. During the reign of Charles I there was a sizeable Catholic community in Sevenoaks and those who were charged as recusants included a number of unmarried women and widows.

One woman about whom a large amount is known is Lady Anne Clifford who lived at Knole for part of the time between 1609 and 1624. We know intimate details of her life because she kept a diary from 1616 to 1619 but, as the daughter and sole heiress of George, Earl of Cumberland, and the wife of Richard Sackville, Earl of Dorset, she was obviously markedly different from the other women of Sevenoaks. Extracts from her diary are given in the description of Knole in Stuart Times.

## "Good Points of Huswifry"

In 1557 Thomas Tusser wrote "a hundred good points of husbandry", a doggerel calendar of the farmer's year. When he married he added "a hundred good points of huswifry" in the preface of which he wrote<sup>528</sup>:

"Take weapon away, of what force is a man?  
Take huswife from husband and what is he than?

As lovers desireth together to dwell,  
So husbandrie loveth good huswiferie well.

Though husbandrie seemeth to bring in the gains,  
Yet huswiferie labours seem equal in pains.

Some respit to husbands the weather may send,  
But huswives affairs have never an end."

## The Housewife's Responsibilities

Both husbandmen and yeomen needed wives who could not only look after the children and provide meals for the family and servants but also rear the chickens and pigs, make butter and cheese, do the brewing and washing, provide remedies for various ailments and act as head of the household when their husbands were absent. These women would add to the family income by selling produce such as eggs, cheese, ale, honey and perhaps herbs grown in the garden, in the local market. This would involve a journey to the local town where they would meet friends and discuss what was happening in the locality.

Women also worked for wages in order to supplement the family income. There were many possibilities: agricultural work, needlework, spinning, cleaning and washing, but these were all relatively badly paid often because they were seen as work carried out by women in their spare time.

Tending the sick was another activity for which women could be paid. In his will of 1616, William Coxe gave £2 to Grace Robinson who attended him in his sickness but whether she had been employed to do this or had done it from kindness is not known. £2, however, would have been a good wage for a woman to have earned for a year of such work.



# Administering an Estate

In the records that survive, women are often described just as "the wife of" without being given a name of their own. In the records of the probate courts, the name of the women appearing was usually given but followed by the more depressing description "relict of". Many men made their wives the executrix of their wills and sometimes sisters or daughters could be named as the executrix.

When there was no will and the value of the goods left came to more than £5, a grant of administration was granted by the court and again it was often the man's widow to whom this was given.

## Proving or Administering a Will

Thus a large number of women, many of them ordinary, appeared in the probate courts. Taken overall, for the whole country, nearly three-quarters of all the people appearing in court to prove wills, exhibit inventories and file accounts were women<sup>529</sup>.

All the people with whom the woman had to deal would have been men:

- the apparitors who enforced the filing of accounts,
- the probate clerk who made a fair copy of the will and account, checking the arithmetic,
- the judge who approved, or did not approve, the accounts and awarded the residual goods<sup>530</sup>.

Prior to producing the account, which was necessary whether or not there was a will, she would have had to deal with the appraisers who produced the inventory. Here she may have had to haggle as to which goods were hers and therefore should not be included in the inventory.

## Identifying Her Own Goods

Alice Jylbert, probably John Jylbert's second wife and not the mother of his daughter, was to be allowed to "peaceably and quietly have, take and carry away all such goods and implements and household stuff as were her own at the time of her intermarriage and to dispose of them at her own pleasure". In this case, however, John's son-in-law was the executor and Alice would have had to agree with him which were her goods.

On entering upon marriage, particularly a second marriage, a woman would make sure that all those goods which she brought to the marriage were marked and therefore identifiable.

## Debts Owning and Owed

There could be debts owing to the dead man who could also have died with debts of his own. Giles Cranewell's first instruction was that all the debts he "owed in law or in conscience be duly paid" but with six children, at least some of which were underage, how much chasing after unrecorded debts would his widow have wanted to engage in?

The work to be carried out by an executor was summarised by John Cole: "the residue of all my goods, chattels and estate, after my debts paid and my funeral expenses discharged and the legacies in this my will performed, I do wholly give and bequeath unto my well beloved wife". With all this to do, George Pococke's wife was instructed "to discharge all my debts and legacies within as short and convenient time as she can possibly".

## How Long Did This Take?

Some estates could not be wound up quickly. **Richard Hills** died in 1641, his will having been written two years earlier. His youngest son, John, whom he made his executor was about thirty when Richard wrote his will in which he specified that the last of the legacies to his children (£20 to his eldest son) was to be paid eight years after his death with three small legacies to his grandchildren when they were twenty-one, possibly ten or more years after his death. There was also an annuity of £5 to be paid to Richard's widow for the whole of her life.

The final stages in the administration of Richard's estate were complicated by the death of John in 1645 who, before he died, just had time to write a short will making his eldest brother his executor who was instructed to take on responsibility for his mother's annuity but would also have had to pay the remaining legacies from his father's will.

Legacies to underage children were sometimes specified to be paid to their parents who usually had then to release the executor from any future debt but, in some cases, there were legacies to be paid out of annual revenue from land and thus could not be paid earlier than specified.

## Complications for Mary Carleton

Anthony Carleton, just prior to writing his will, had surrendered some copyhold land in Bedfordshire for £125 "to the use of my last will", that is, to be used for bequests, etc.. He detailed various changes to be made to the original surrender but whether or not these were made in the 2½ years before the will was proved is not known. It is to be hoped so for the sake of Mary, Anthony's widow and executrix, since there were additional problems.

Anthony had two brothers, Erasmus and "Mr. Bigle". Erasmus, who had died before the will, had left some money to Anthony which he had not yet received but which was to be given to his other brother to put into a bond for Anthony's underage daughter, Margaret.

Anthony added his "earnest request and desire" to Bigle "that he would give to my said daughter such consideration and increase for the same as he doth now allow for the same". But Anthony valued his wife's ability to decide what was best for their daughter's welfare. Margaret must have been quite young since, if Bigle died before Margaret received the money due to her, it was to be "put and placed out by" Bigle's executors "upon good security given unto some kinsman or friend of me, the said Anthony Carleton, for the use of my said daughter if Mary, my wife, shall think it fit". If not, then Mary was to place it out herself.

# Grants of Administration

Twenty grants of administrations for Sevenoaks men were recorded in the Administration Act Books of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC) and in half of these the grant was made to the widow. In most of the others the man was either not married or his wife had already died and two of the other grants were made to women: one to a sister and another to the daughters. The widow of Thomas Newman, innholder, refused to take on the task of administration perhaps because of the complexity since there were four children and Newman was in debt to Godwin Smith to whom the grant was made.

## The Widow's Third

Ecclesiastical law specified that, if a man died intestate and left a widow she was to receive one-third of his residual goods. The court usually appointed the widow as the administratrix and she generally received as much as two-thirds of these goods. It was not that the court was being particularly generous; it was looking to the future. If the widow received only a third, which could often be as low as £11, she and her children could be reduced to poverty and would become a charge on the poor rates<sup>531</sup>. With twice this amount she might have sufficient to pay the rent

on her cottage, keep hens and possibly a cow, and make a living for herself and her family.

## Executors and Overseers

Out of 79 male testators from Sevenoaks, the wives of 56 were living when the wills were written. Thirty of these were named as the sole executrix and another eight as the joint executor usually with a son. These percentages (54% sole executor, 14% joint) are slightly lower than those given by Erickson for a number of places between 1523 and 1689<sup>532</sup>. This may be because earlier Sevenoaks wills survived only if they were proved at the PCC and wealthy men named their wives as executrix less often than ordinary men who are under represented in Sevenoaks. For this small sample, there is no significant difference between wealthy and ordinary men in the numbers giving this responsibility to their wives.

## Henry Bosville's Arrangements

Henry Bosville did not make his wife his executor; this might have been because Henry's lands were already entailed to his eldest son and the administering of his estate was going to be complex. This complexity was probably the main reason why appointing a wife as executrix was less common for the gentry than for yeomen and artisans. Instead Henry appointed his eldest son, who was still underage. He thus needed someone to administer his estate until his son was old enough to take on the responsibility and for this chose three men, his father-in-law, brother-in-law and Christopher Johnson, a doctor of physic. His wife was not however deprived of all responsibility since she was to have in her keeping the "strong coffer", and one of its three keys, in which his money was to be stored until it could be used to buy land.

## Overseers

Overseers were appointed by 57 of the 79 testators who sometimes stressed that their purpose was to help the widow administer the estate and, given the complexity of the arrangements, such help must have been welcomed. But even when this was the overt purpose of their appointment, they were also expected to see that the testator's wishes were carried out as specified. Sometimes but by no means always, the testator left money to his overseers and occasionally specified that they should be paid their expenses.



In some cases the overseers were given particular authority if the widow was lax in any way: Henry Gifford's will and meaning was that if his wife should refuse to pay and discharge "any surety or sureties which standeth bound by bond or by bill for payment of any sum or sums of money for me, and she being before lawfully demanded, that then it shall be lawful for my overseers to enter, sell and make sale for so much money as shall discharge any of my debts and save harmless any surety". Henry was one of those who specified that each of his overseers should receive some money - in his case ten shillings each.

## Edward Sisley

Edward Sisley, the wealthy yeoman we have already met, appointed three "very loving friends" as overseers "desiring them to be aiding to my said wife with the execution of this my will". But his wife was not given carte blanche for Sisley continues "my will and meaning is that, my said wife shall, before she intermeddle with my estate or the probate of this my will, enter into sufficient bond with surety or sureties such as my overseers shall like of for the true payment of my debts and performance of this my will in every respect. And if she shall refuse so to do, then I make and ordain executors of this my will my said overseers before named." Even though the word "intermeddle" may not have had the overtones which current usage would give it, Sisley obviously thought some control was necessary.

## Thomas Holmes

The will of Thomas Holmes shows the type of situation which must have faced many wives with a large family. When he wrote his will in 1624, Thomas was owed £100 by an "obligation" to which Thomas Pett, gent., and Richard Fletcher, mercer, had agreed. Ann, Thomas's wife and executrix, was to receive this £100 "in consideration that she shall pay and discharge all my debts and legacies and see me decently buried and my funeral duties discharged".

Thomas had a married daughter with two children of her own, two sons and another daughter over twenty-one and four younger children. Each of these was left a legacy ranging from £36 for the youngest daughter down to £1 for the married daughter who had presumably had her portion when she married. Until the children's portions became due Thomas's wife was to have the profits from them and it could easily have been eight years before the last of these legacies would have been paid.

The legacies specified by Thomas total about £200 so that he must have had other money besides that owed to him. Ann would have had a lot of accounting to do but was no doubt pleased to have the help of Thomas's "very loving friends Richard Besbeech and Matthew Wastone" whom he appointed his overseers "desiring them to be aiding unto my said wife in the execution and performance of this my last will and testament".

## Other Important Jobs

An executor could be faced with additional problems, perhaps as in the case of John Turner, citizen and skinner of London, if the testator had himself been the executor for another person whose estate had not been finally settled.

John was resident in Sevenoaks when he wrote his will and he appointed his wife as joint executor with his cousin, another John Turner. At this time he was the executor of the estate of Mr. Thomas Wheeler and had in his keeping "the bedstead which was the bedstead of him the said Thomas Wheeler, draper, with a featherbed, bolster, pillows, rugs, blankets and other furniture to the same. And also a trunk whereupon is set these letters T.W. with such linen as my loving wife knoweth we have agreed to be given and were put into the said trunk not setting down the particulars because I am assured she will not deceive him." It would be most important not only that Wheeler's heirs received all his goods but also that none of them were included in John Turner's inventory.

## Rachel Besbeece, Relict and Executrix

Richard Besbeece lived at Riverhill to the south of Sevenoaks Town but little is known of him except from his will and this shows again the complexity and work with which a newly widowed and pregnant woman with children.

Richard died, at the beginning of February 1633 having written his will on 10th January. The tasks facing his wife and executrix, Rachel, were many. The will was not proved until 4th September, three weeks after his posthumous daughter was baptised.

The first task after the death was arranging the funeral and burial. Richard wanted his burial to be remembered leaving "five pounds of good and lawful money (to) be spent at the day of my burial upon the neighbours in wine and cakes". The vicar was given ten shillings to preach at his funeral and twenty shillings to the "ringers" - presumably the bell ringers.

He left four sons (the eldest not yet ten) and a daughter and the legacies left to them were to be paid at the unusual age of twenty-five.

## Richard's Sons and Daughter

Richard specified that the land he left to his eldest son Richard was to go to him when he was twenty-five "and not before". He was also to have £60 part of which was to go "towards the binding of him apprentice" and the rest paid to him at the end of his apprenticeship.

His sons, John and Edward were also to take possession of their land when they were twenty-five but Richard hoped his son Daniel would make a scholar "or otherwise be meet for the service of some lawyer". He was to be given £200 "to be employed and put forth to the best use for him by my executor".

His daughter Rachel did not do so well; she was to receive £40 part of which was to be used to "put her forth and to place her in service for a certain time and after the expiration of her said term that then the remainder to be paid unto her upon the day of her marriage".

## Richard's Posthumous Daughter

If the child, unborn when Richard wrote his will, was a boy he was to be provided with a legacy of £100 part of which was to be used to put him "forth apprentice" and the rest paid to him when he was twenty-one. If a girl, the money was to be

used "for the better training of her up in some service and the remainder to be paid unto her at the day of her marriage".

Elizabeth, daughter of Richard, was baptised on 12th August 1633, seven months after Richard wrote his will. Even if Elizabeth was a week to ten days old when she was baptised; perhaps because of the particular circumstances, she was a few weeks old. Even so, the Besbeeches must only just of known of the pregnancy when Richard wrote his will at the beginning of January.

Her eldest child was probably born about 1620 so that, if she were born in the late 1590s, Rachel would have had to lived to her mid-fifties to see her youngest daughter reach the age of twenty-one.

## **Executrix and Mother of a Young Baby**

The will was proved at the PCC and the probate clause at the end of the will shows that "Rachel Besbeech, relict" was granted the executorship. Thus, with a baby about a month old, Rachel made the journey to London. She could have employed a wet-nurse which would have made it unnecessary to take the baby with her.

When wet-nurses were employed, as they were by some of the wealthier families, the time interval between successive births was often only between 15 and 18

months compared with over two years when the mother fed them herself. This was because breast-feeding acts as a contraceptive. The baptism dates are known for all of the Besbee children except the eldest and the intervals between them are 26, 25, 37 and 33 months. With the time between successive births as long as this it looks as if Rachel fed her children herself rather than employ a wetnurse<sup>533</sup>. She could, of course, have just employed a wet-nurse for Elizabeth given the different circumstances.

Since she had taken on the executorship, Rachel was to receive the rents and revenues of Richard's lands in Goudhurst, Horsmonden, Sevenoaks and Chevening "for and towards the bringing up and educating" of the children until the sons, Richard and John and Edward each came into their inheritance. Those in Sevenoaks other than Riverhill she was to have until her death.

## Richard's Overseers

Richard appointed as his overseers his brother-in-law (his sister's husband) and another man. Whilst some wives could expect help from the overseers, the main duties of Richard's overseers seem to have been to check that Rachel carried out her duties correctly rather than to help her: "they, upon their oaths taken before the Judge of the Court shall swear they shall not see anything done partially by

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<sup>533</sup> see Fox, Jean, p.247, for a discussion of birth intervals and the use of wet nurses

my executrix but that all things contained in this my last will and testament to be fulfilled by my executrix according to my mind and will herein mentioned".

Rachel was to put in a bond of a thousand pounds with other conditions "for the more sure and better accomplishment of the will" but if she could not, or would not, take on the executorship, the two men appointed overseers were to become his executors.

## The Tasks Facing Rachel

During the twenty years she would have had to start by ensuring that Richard's "smith and workman" was paid his legacy of £5 and that his servant, Margaret Marshall, had had all the wages due to her. Margaret, Moses Wood (another servant), and Jone Remington (an apprentice), were each to have two ewe sheep which were to be kept on the land at Riverhill. These sheep would need to be selected and marked so that they could be identified later.

Within a month of probate being granted, the poor of the parish of Sevenoaks had to have £1 distributed amongst them but this task, from Rachel's point of view, would mean giving the money to the overseers of the poor who would see to its distribution. Then there was ten shillings to each of two of Richard's god-daughters. Also to be organised was the delivery of a "branded cow" to John Remington of Goudhurst, a black cow to her husband's sister in Brenchley (both



fifteen to seventeen miles from Sevenoaks), and a "great red cow" to his sister in Westerham (five to six miles).

## **Rachel's Mother-in-Law**

Richard's "loving mother Michall Pococke, widow", who in 1633 must have been about seventy, was still alive when her son died.. Michall Besbeeche, widow, married George Pococke in July 1595 when Richard was about two or three.

Richard left her a white faced heifer which was to be "delivered unto her by the hands of my executors within a month after the probate of this my last will and testament".

## **Selling Land**

Sometimes it was necessary to sell property or land and overseers could be asked to assist with the sale to ensure that the best price was obtained and the money then invested for the maximum profit. Here good overseers would have been very helpful since, even if the wife had been aware of purchases and sales throughout her married life, it is most unlikely that she had the necessary knowledge to embark on such a project without the help of trusted friends.

We have already seen the complicated arrangements which had to be made when John Hope, a wealthy gentleman but with his money tied up in land, died in 1632. With land to sell and seven children to provide for there would have been many transactions and accounts would have to be kept of all these until all the portions had been paid. At that stage, whatever remained from the sale was to be divided equally between John's wife, who was his executrix, and the seven children.

### **The Beecher's Land in Seal**

Another interesting transaction concerned some land in Seal. Marie Beecher was the third wife of William, a millwright of Seal; as his executrix she was given authority in his will to sell some land and the bargain of sale for this transaction

has survived. William wrote his will<sup>534</sup> in January 1605 about a fortnight before he died and in it he described four parcels of land in Seal totalling about eighteen acres which he had originally purchased from Thomas Walter, butcher of Sevenoaks.

In September 1603 he had mortgaged these to Robert Pelset, yeoman of Seal, for £20 on condition on that in September 1605 the mortgage would be redeemed by the payment of £21 12s. This amounts to paying interest of £1 12s on a loan of £20 for two years, an annual rate of 4%. Details of this mortgage were given in "certain indented".

William's will was that Marie should redeem the mortgage on the due date but she might need to sell some land to raise the money required. Thus, by his will, he gave her one of the four parcels which she could sell to Robert Pelsett for £21 12s. This she did, the bargain of sale<sup>535</sup> to which Marie put her mark being written by Nicholas Hooper, curate of Shipbourne and scribe of wills and other documents.

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534 CKS: Drb/Pw 20

535 CKS: U55-T354

# Arrangements for Widows

The unknown author of "The Law's Resolutions of Women's Rights", writing in 1632, describes the grief of a newly made widow: "But, alas, when she hath lost her husband, her head is cut off, her intellectual part is gone, the very faculties of her soul are, I will not say, clean taken away, but they are all benumbed, dimmed, and dazzled."

Women in such a state would hardly have been able to carry out the duties of an executrix as described above but, since he goes on to say how it was as a widow that a woman came into her own, the author was probably being ironic. "Why mourn you so, you that be widows? Consider how long you have been under the predominance of parents, of your husbands; now you be free in liberty and free . . . at your own law".<sup>536</sup> All right if their husbands had been in a position to leave them some where to live and enough to live on but there must have been many left facing poverty.

## Property and Annuities Bequeathed to Widows

Of the testators with wives living when they wrote their wills and with land or property devised to them, four-fifths of them left their bequests to them for their

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<sup>536</sup> facsimile reprint, New York; Garland Publishing, 1978; quoted by Klein, p.29

natural life, only five of the fifty limiting them to the time they remained a widow. Of these five, two men left annuities to their wives, both for £4. On its own £4 was unlikely to have been sufficient for a women to live on with £5 being the amount quoted in probate accounts for the maintenance of a child of either sex<sup>537</sup>.

The widow of Richard Hills was to be paid £5 per year if she did not live and board with their son, John, who was Richard's executor and, again, this does not seem over generous but she was also to have the use of half of his household stuff during her natural life. Whether or not his mother lived with John, when he died whilst she was still alive, he made provision for this annuity in his will.

## John Blome's Wife

John Blome's wife was another of the five who had a message in Sevenoaks left to her only for as long as she remained single but she was to receive an annuity of £20 for life. With this she would have been able to live in a state befitting a rich mercer's widow particularly since she also inherited a considerable amount of furniture and other contents of their house. But there was another proviso:

"provided always, nevertheless, . . if my said wife shall not rest contented with the gifts and legacies devised and bequeathed to her by this my will but shall sue for her dower out of any the lands or tenements whereof I have been seized during

the coverture betwixt us, that then she shall loose the benefit of all gifts and legacies whatsoever given to her by this my will".

## A Wife's Dower

John Blome's will is one example of where the testator had to take into account his wife's dower (entitlement to estate) and/or jointure which was the provision he made for her either in the will or by a separate settlement.

John Maister's will gives a clear indication of what could be involved. He gave "unto Jane, my loving wife, (in recompense and being of her jointure and dower) the moiety or one half of all my household stuff being equally divided. And also the sum of twenty pounds of lawful english money to be paid unto her by my executor hereafter named within one year next after my decease, if she be then living. Item: I give and bequeath more unto the said Jane, my wife, . . . (in recompense and being of her said jointure or dower) one annuity or yearly rent of four pounds of lawful english money . . .

To have . . . and take the said annuity or yearly rent of four pounds . . . during her natural life. . . with sufficient power and authority to distrain for the same in such cases used and accustomed provided always and upon condition nonetheless that she, the said Jane, my wife, shall immediately after my decease deliver unto my executor hereafter named the writing and bond heretofore made

unto her for her jointure or other provision as by the said deed and bond more fully appeareth".

## Shared Accommodation

The widow of Walther Wills, Julian, was expected to live with their son, Christopher, who had been given all his moveable goods upon condition that Julian should have the use of them "during her natural life and the use of the chamber next the stairs and fire for her use". William Lawrence left his wife "the hall and chamber over the hall, the buttery, the mill house and chamber over the mill house and the kitchen and garden plot" of the house in which he lived with "free liberty to go to and fro through the close and backside of the house to fetch water". This liberty to get to various parts of the house, hang washing in the backside or orchard and collect firewood were all very important to the widow.

Another will from the locality, that of James Rixon of Pembury who wrote his will in August 1592<sup>538</sup>, gives a considerable amount of detail. Throughout her widowhood, his wife was to enjoy "the parlour of my said mansion house with free access, ingress, egress and regress to and from the same at her will and pleasure and also fire and fire room sufficient within the hall and kitchen . . free liberty to bake, brew, wash, work and do all other such necessities within my said mansion

house and to take water, waste and to hang clothes and such other commodities within the orchard and backside . . in time of want of water to have the same brought home to her according as she shall need the same".

In addition, her sons were to "well and orderly keep" for her the cow given to her "or another in her room at her liking, upon the premises winter and summer during the whole term of her said life being so long a widow". She was also to have £5 a year, and "eight bushels of good apples with sufficient place for the safe keeping of the same at her will and pleasure". The eldest son was twenty-seven so that both James and his wife were probably in their fifties when he died.

## **Peter Everest's Bequests**

Some men do not seem to have provided for the long term future of their wives in their wills. One example is the husbandman, Peter Everest, who had five underage children and five adult children. He made his eldest son, John, executor and it was he who was to educate and bring up the younger children. The two adult sons were to receive £3 each, the daughters £2 each with the others being paid £4 each when they were twenty.

Peter's wife Elizabeth was to receive a joined bedstead with all its furniture, some chests, a table, cupboard and other furniture, a third part of his linen, half his pewter, various kitchen utensils, all his poultry and £10 in money. This does not



look like the will of a poor man but it ends abruptly without any land being mentioned although the table and cupboard were "in a low chamber in the west end of my dwelling house".

It is probable that with wills of this type arrangements regarding land and houses and been made in separate documents which would supplement the provisions of the will.

## Maintenance of Property

If a widow remarried any property she owned outright would pass to her new husband, hence the reason for limiting the bequest to the period of her widowhood. If the limitation was to her natural life, her second husband would enjoy the property until her death when it would devolve to the heirs specified in her first husband's will.

Its state and value at the end of this time would depend on how it was looked after and some testators tried to avoid its exploitation by including phrases such as provided that "she nor her assigns do not make any wilful spoil or waste". Sometimes they were specifically forbidden from felling any timber except that required for necessary repairs.

Maintaining property in a good condition is one thing but William Seyliard's wife, Ann, was to have the use during her widowhood of "so much of my household stuff as she shall make charge for her own usage and afterwards, the same to be delivered back again to my executors". Although brass kettles and pots could last for a number of generations, sheets and other linen would wear out so it is hoped that it was not expected that everything would be returned as it was when William died. At least it would have been a problem for Ann's executors or administrators, not herself.

## Daughters' Portions

John Yardley, Sergeant of Arms to the king, is the earliest testator who gives details of the marriage portions to be paid to his daughters: "I bequeath unto every daughter that I have, to be paid to them at the day of their marriage, £20". This was in 1522 but, unfortunately the will is short and we know little of his family. He entrusted the wellbeing of his children (so he could have had some sons) to his wife's brother, Richard Pett, who was to use the residue of his goods "to the preferment and setting forth of my children as shall seem to him most expedient". It is probable that his wife had died before he wrote his will.

## Estimating JPs' Wealth from Daughters' Portions

Gleason investigated the wills of the JPs of Kent in order to try and estimate their wealth. Since these "hardly ever provide unambiguous evidence about the values of either the land or the total wealth" of the testator, he used the legacies, marriage portions or dowries left to unmarried daughters to indicate the fortunes of the gentry in monetary terms<sup>539</sup>. The results for the JPs of Kent are given in Table 13.1 together with those for Sevenoaks for those wills where it is possible to extract a figure.

The legacies left by the richer men of Sevenoaks to their daughters are very small compared with Gleason's amounts for the daughters of JPs. To extend the range the other way, Anne Clifford's marriage portion was £17,000 when she married Robert Sackville, the Earl of Dorset, in 1609 but the final payment of £6,000 was not paid until ten years later. Anne was one of the richest heiresses in England<sup>540</sup> and this illustrates the great difference in wealth between those living at Knole and the parish gentry of Sevenoaks.

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539 Gleason, pp. 263-264

540 Erickson, p.86

Table 13.1: Legacies to Daughters

years	1558-79	1580-99	1600-19	1620-41
Kent: JPs	4*    £1,214	7    £1,538	3    £1,733	5    £3,380
Sevenoaks: Esq. gent. yeomen wheelwright		2    £ 900  2    £ 20	  2    £ 53	 5    £ 113 2    £ 57 1    £ 10

\*        number of bequests followed by average amount

## The Sevenoaks JPs

From their wills, John Lennarde and Henry Bosville were the wealthiest of the Sevenoaks testators with Lennarde leaving £1000 to each of his unmarried daughters provided that they “bestowed” themselves with the consent of their brothers, Sampson and Samuel ["one half to be paid the day of her said marriage and the other half at the year's end next following"](#).

John's other three daughters were already married but had they each had £1000? He showed a distinction in his will between boys and girls, leaving each of his grandsons £10 but his granddaughters only £5 including those of "which God shall send" to one of his married daughters who, so far, had had no children. In contrast, Thomas Holmes left both his grandsons and granddaughters £2 each.

Henry Bosville's wishes were more complicated: each of his daughters (number unknown) were to receive an annuity of £20 and then £400 coming from the proceeds of land which was to be purchased, for that purpose, by his "very dear friends" from money he already had. Stephen Theobald, in his very short will of 1631, left his daughter, Kathern, £200. His wife, Mary, and his two feoffees, George and William Blome of Sevenoaks, were to have the "full power to sell any parcel" of his lands in order to raise this £200.

## Changing Circumstances

If a man lived for some years after writing his will, circumstances could obviously change. Giles Cranewell, gentleman, initially wrote his will on 23rd July 1613 and in it he left his daughter, Martha, all the leases he had at the time of his death "if she be not provided for and preferred in marriage in my life time".

But Giles was still alive in the spring of 1616 and, presumably, Martha had not married. By this time, upon consideration and moved by "weighty causes", he

decided to make void the gift of his leases to Martha and substitute them with a gift of £50 which was to be "raised with the profits of Winkers lease and with the fall of woods and timber in Chittenden" (Chiddingstone); the leases were now to go to his executors who were his wife and son Christopher. This change was made on 4th April 1616. But, from being too generous to his daughter, he seems to have gone too far the other way so that his executors thought £50 too little and, on 8th April, he changed it to £80. The will was proved on 30th September 1616.

## **William Wright, his wife, Johane, & Their Daughters**

How much a man could leave to each of his daughters would depend not only on his overall wealth but also on the size of his family and their age. William and Johane Wright had two daughters, Johane and Mary, neither of whom was eighteen when their father wrote his will at the beginning of 1617.

## His Daughters' Inheritance

William Wright, gentleman, owned land in Riverhead and Sevenoaks and leases of other land in various parts of the country. This was to be divided between his two daughters, Mary, baptised in Sevenoaks in March 1609 and Johane who was also under eighteen when William wrote his will in 1617.

In addition to the land, he left each of them £100. Johane and Mary were to inherit when they came to the age of eighteen or when they married, whichever happened first. Until that time, Johane his wife, who was William's executrix, was to have all the profits, etc. towards their maintenance and bringing up.

If, however, Johane thought it "fit and convenient for the good of my said daughters" that the lease in reversion should be sold while the daughters were under age or unmarried, William's overseers were to sell it "to the best price and value". The money received was then to be put out by the overseers "with consent of my executrix to the most profit and advantage for my said daughter or daughters".

## Not To Marry Without Consent

William also charged his daughters "upon my blessing, that they marry not without the consent and good liking of their mother and advice of my overseers". This could be a modern father's advice to his daughters, not domineering but stating his wishes. William's overseers were all people of note:

- Mathias Caldicot, gentleman, Mr. Matthew Caldicott, my Lord Dorset's favourite
- Edward Legge, gentleman, steward of household to the right honourable, the Earl of Dorset
- George Breton of Cliffords Inn, gentleman,
- Mr. Peter Shipman, citizen and haberdasher of London and William's brother-in-law (the brother of Johane, William's wife).

## Eighteen Months Later

William was still alive at the end of 1618 and, by this time, Johane, his elder daughter had plans to marry. The memorandum to his will, dated 12th December 1618 reads as if it was written by Peter Shipman.

It records William as saying that "he had altered many things in his will but he would enjoin his son-in-law upon the making over those things that he had intended to his daughter Mary to pay unto the said Mary the sum of five hundred



pounds beside certain houses and ground lying in Sevenoaks parish contained in his will which he had given to be paid at her years of eighteen or day of marriage and the residue of his estate he gave to his wife".

The probate copy of the will presumably records the will after the alterations were made (it is not known if the original, which would show the alterations, has survived). Johane married William Rolfe of London, in Sevenoaks, on 7th January 1619, seven days before "Mr. William Wright of Retherhed" was buried.

## The Will of William's Widow

When William's wife wrote her will at the end of 1623, her daughter Johane and William Rolfe were living in Temple Bar in Fleet Street in London but Mary, who was her mother's heir and executrix, would still have been only fourteen. Mary was left:

- £400 due to her mother "by divers bonds from divers men"; this money was to remain in the hands of Johane's overseers (her brother Peter Shipman, William Rolfe and George Britain - or Breton, another of William's overseers) until Mary was eighteen with "the use thereof" paid to her half-yearly until she was eighteen years or she married.

- all her mother's "plate whatsoever, moveables and household stuff"; so much as was "necessary for the furnishing of five chambers" for Mary was to be reserved and the rest sold with the proceeds being added to the £400 "for the further use, behoof and profit of" Mary.
- all the rest of her mother's goods, chattels, moveables and household stuff not bequeathed

If Mary died before she was eighteen, half of the £400 was to go to another of her mother's brothers, William Shipman, but the other half Mary could bequeath "at her discretion at the time of her death or departure out of this life".

No burial was recorded for Johane but she wished "to be laid by the body of my husband in the parish church of Sevenoaks."

## Other Female Relatives

Some of the men, not necessarily all young, died before their mothers. Richard Thomas, in 1615, who had a married daughter as well as three underage children, left an annuity of £3 to his "loving mother". This was to be paid out of the proceeds from his lands and tenements. John Cole's "aged mother" was to be kept by his wife or paid an annuity of £5.

Occasionally money was left to a married woman with a specific instruction that it was to be for her own use. One example is John Blome who left Sara, the wife of his son George, the rents and profits of a tenement in Seal which she was to "have and receive to and for her own proper use and maintenance".

## Copyhold Land Claimed by Sisters

A case from the Court Rolls for the manor Ightham shows not only how copyhold land was passed on when a tenant died but also how other female relatives besides wives and daughters could inherit.

On 7th October 1612 it was recorded that, at the time of his death Reginald Hawkes held, "of the lord of this manor, by copy of Court Roll, one customary

messuage and one garden with two parcels of land containing three acres. No heriot accrued because he had no live animal at the time of his death." A proclamation was made for anyone claiming the premises as next heir of Reginald.

## **Reginald's Sisters Claimed Half Each**

"Whereupon Margaret Hawkes and Jane Hawkes, sisters and co-heirs of Reginald, appeared and prayed to be separately admitted to the premises, namely Margaret to the one half of the premises and Jane to the other." The Court granted each of them and their heirs half of "the said messuage, garden and three acres of land . . . at the will of the lord, according to the custom of the manor, by rent per annum 10d, suit of Court, heriot and relief when they fall due. And they paid to the lord a fine of £5 for such their separate estates and admittance to the premises so had, and separately did fealty to the lord in Court and were admitted tenants in the form aforesaid."

## Margaret Gave her Share to Jane

By the summer of 1614 Margaret had married and decided to give up her share of the premises to her sister Jane. In order to do this Margaret and her husband went to the Court where Margaret was examined, on her own by the lord's steward; this was to avoid unfair pressure by her husband. After this Margaret surrendered into the hands of the lord of the manor "all her one half share . . with the intention that the lord should deign to re-grant the premises to Jane Hawkes, sister of the said Margaret, and her heirs, at the will of the lord according to the custom of the manor".

At this stage Jane appeared in Court and sought admittance to the premises "according to the intention of the surrender". This request was granted and Jane gave to the lord a fine of 40s for such estate "and for admittance so had and so was admitted tenant and did fealty in Court."<sup>541</sup>

# Conflicts Within Families

Wills sometimes give a hint of conflicts between the different members of a family. William Wimbell, labourer, had two married daughters each with children and there was dissent between him and his sons-in-law.

His will was nuncupative but he felt strongly enough about his sons-in-law to say "in the presence of divers witnesses" that neither of them should have anything to do with his goods and, in particular, his son-in-law John French, should not be allowed "to meddle" with his goods. William appointed two other men, possibly his brothers, to be overseers for his grandchildren "till they came to be 21 years of age" and could inherit his "beds and pewter and 9 sheets with a feather bed and two blankets and two pillows and other goods".

## The Family of William Frankwell, Yeoman

William Frankwell, wrote his will in 1609 but it was not proved until 10th May 1625 a week after "William Frankwell, senior, householder," had been buried. Thus, as William expressed it, the "race of his mortality" did not end for over fifteen years. The executors he appointed in 1609 were William's wife Elizabeth and his son William and these were the executors to whom probate was granted in 1625.

William mentions two daughters and four sons in his will and numerous grandchildren. Elizabeth, particularly since William describes her as his "now wife", may not have been the mother of his children and so could have been considerably younger than him. It could have been his marriage to Elizabeth which made him decide to write his will - or Elizabeth who persuaded him to do so.

## Possible Tensions between Executrix and Executor

The tensions between William's wife and his children, at least in 1609, are shown by his instructions that Elizabeth and his son William, his executors, should "enter into bond, the one to the other, in the sum of one hundred pounds a piece, not to diminish, waste or alter the property of the estate I shall leave unto them by virtue of this my last will and testament without the assent, liking or allowance, the one of the other, the said bond to be entered into by my said executors within one month next after my decease before Samuel Lone, Esq. John Bromfield, gent. and Robert Bromfield, gent. or some of them whom I entreat to be overseers of this my last will and testament". It is unlikely that all these three men were available to be his overseers in 1625. Samuel, although he had moved to Mereworth well before 1625, lived into the 1630s when he would have been in his eighties.

Elizabeth was, however, to be allowed to "give and dispose of, to whom she pleaseth at the time of her departure out of this life to the value of ten pounds or

thereabouts without any breach of the said bond or without the consent of my said son William".

## **The Wills of Sevenoaks Women**

Up to 1650, only seventeen wills, spanning a hundred and thirty years (1512 to 1645), have survived for the women of Sevenoaks and two of these are nuncupative. It is difficult to extract from this small sample any conclusions about Sevenoaks women in general.

As has been found in numerous other investigations, the wills of women, whether married or unmarried, tend to be concerned more with items of furniture or clothing than with land. This would not be unexpected since land was generally owned by men and when a widow had control of it during her widowhood its subsequent owner had usually been specified in her husband's will.

### **Some Women Owned Land**

Some women did own land in their own right and so could bequeath it in their will. Very unusually, Mary Petley, a married woman from Ightham, owned



property in Sevenoaks and Goudhurst in her own right and it was probably because of this that she wrote a will. Elizabeth Petley, widow, and Rose Petley who was unmarried but had a number of brothers and sisters, were both independent women of reasonable means. Rose's bequests are all in money with no household goods being mentioned; perhaps she lived with one of her brothers or sisters. These three Petleys wills are described later with details of two William Petleys, one from Ightham and one from Sevenoaks.

Rose Petley and Elizabeth Pococke, whose will of 1644 is described with the other Pococke wills from the Stuart period, were two of the five unmarried women whose wills have survived.

## Elizabeth Weery

Described as an unmarried woman, Elizabeth Weery seems to have been very well served by the people who were with her at 6 o'clock in the morning "the same day before her decease". These were her brother Robert and his wife Elizabeth, her sister Agnes (the wife of Richard Hills), Amy (the wife of Richard Croutchley) and Agnes Robynson (a servant); the date was 26th November 1616.

On 5th December these witnesses "delivered the words of the gifts and bequests" made by Elizabeth to William Turner, the vicar, who then wrote the nuncupative will. Elizabeth made a large number of bequests which was unusual for a

nuncupative will and, at various points in the will, William Turner added the phrase "the said witnesses affirm that the foresaid Elizabeth Weerie gave . . ."

## Rebecca Sharpe

Rebecca Sharpe was the daughter of Thomas Sharpe, late of Brabourne in the county of Kent. The Index of Wills proved in the PCC gives Rebecca as of the parish of St. Andrews, Holborn, London but identifies Brabourne as in the parish of Sevenoaks thus taking it as Bradbourne. This was 1641 when the Bosvilles/Boswells owned the manor but Rebecca's father could have lived at Bradbourne as the tenant. There is, however, a parish of Brabourne, near Ashford.

The item Rachel picked out for particular mention was her "long damask tablecloth" which, together with her "wearing clothes" both linen and woollen, she left to her aunt with a trunk containing linen which was to be divided between her two brothers. Six pounds was devised in small bequests but she had recently been left £50 by her father and mother and this was to go to one of her brothers whom she made her executor.

## Clemence Pearson

An unusual will is that of Clemence Pearson who, when she became ill, was contracted in marriage to Griffin Henderson whom she made the executor of her will. She was described as a spinster in both her will, written on 23rd June 1606 and in the parish records six days later when she was buried.

Clemence's father was dead and her mother had remarried. She was due to receive a legacy from her father and a gift from her mother. These were in the form of a bond in the hands of her uncle which, "with the benefit thereof" she gave to Henderson who was to pay 40s to her sister Anne. Griffin Henderson married Francis Banister in September 1611 and they had a number of children; Griffin was buried on 30th June 1648.

# The Widows of Sevenoaks

The widows who left wills and those whose husbands could provide for them were fortunate. Whilst many of the male testators instruct their executrix to pay all their debts which could include legacies to his children, this was not always possible. Because very few inventories and accounts of the administration of wills have survived for the Rochester diocese (none have been found for Sevenoaks), no details are available.

Where this information is available, a quarter of all men were found to have left their widows in debt and many widows found that the estate, as given by the inventory, was very much reduced when all the debts had been paid. The reduction varied by county with that in Sussex being the least; there the median value of the inventory was £81 and that of the final account £38, a reduction of 53%. In Lincolnshire, the fall was from £62 to £15 (76% reduction) and in Cambridgeshire from £43 to £8 (80% reduction).<sup>542</sup> Kent is unlikely to have been very different from Sussex.

Looking at these figures, it is not surprising to find that the majority of those on poor relief were widows with children. Some of those left in less straitened

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<sup>542</sup> Erickson, p.200;

Sussex 1572-1711

Lincolnshire 1594-1691

Cambridgeshire 1602-1709

(1024 inventories, 93 final accounts);

( 303 inventories, 244 final accounts);

( 223 inventories, 219 final accounts)

circumstances were able to run the household and possibly increase its value. Eme White invested in property. Johane Wright had obviously put out the money she received to good purposes being owed, on her death, £400 "by divers bonds from divers men". Possibly Johane was a money-lender, an activity open to both single women and widows with some spare cash.

## The Surviving Wills

The widows of Sevenoaks cannot be categorised on the basis of the few wills which have survived. Many widows would not have considered writing a will and some must have died in poverty, or at least, in the almshouse. Many of the wills are, however, interesting in their own right.

The earliest of all the women's wills to survive is that of Clemens Brook dated 1512 and this has already been described.

The widows whose wills have survived were all independent women or, even if, like Hellen Hadsoule, they lived with a relative, had sufficient money of their own not to be kept under sufferance. Hellen Hadsoule was probably a Pococke since, when she wrote her will in 1595, she was living with William Pococke and his wife Elizabeth; it is described with those of the other Tudor Pocockes.

Eme Beale, widow of London but wanting to be buried in Sevenoaks, owned some land in Sevenoaks and elsewhere but, since it was all left to her son, it was not described. The will was written in 1556 but not proved until eighteen years later with no burial for Eme being recorded in Sevenoaks.

## Susan Jeffrey

"Being of perfect mind and memory" and being asked how she would dispose of her estate, Susan Jeffrey replied and said "I will that Richard Jeffrey of Battle in the county of Sussex shall have all that I have or I give him all that I have or words to the like effect".

William Turner, the vicar of Sevenoaks, was one of those present and probably the person who both asked Susan what she wanted to do with her possessions and wrote the resulting nuncupative will. This very short will, written on 17th April 1632, was proved at the PCC on 4th July 1632; it was presumably proved at the higher of the probate courts because some of Susan's estate was in Sussex.

## Agnes Wimble

At the end of January 1637, Agnes Wimble, widow, "spoke in her sickness and a little before her death concerning the disposition of all her goods and chattels in

the hearing of Alice Masters, widow, and Margaret Tomlin, desiring the said Alice Masters to take special notice what her will was".

Agnes had four children, William, Leonard, Margaret and Abraham Tomlin, presumably children from an earlier marriage. Not only did she say what each was to have but she showed them to her companions, laid them together and put them in several places "in the presence of the persons above named". Having done this she hoped that "having so divided the goods with her own hands, her children would agree lovingly and friendly about them". If Agnes was the widow of William Wimbell, labourer, who died in 1630, she must have been his second wife.

Agnes's son, Abraham Tomlin, miller, wrote his will three years later. In it he left "twelve pence of lawful english money" to each of his two brothers, William and Leonard and gave everything else to his sister Margaret, whom he made his executrix. This "cutting of with a shilling" is often taken to show ill-feeling whilst making sure that legatees could not claim that they had been omitted accidentally and should therefore have something from the estate.

Sometimes, however, a son or daughter (or in this case brothers) could have already had a reasonable share of the Tomlin estate. Since their mother had remarried, on their father's death each son may have inherited a sizeable portion and Abraham may have thought this was his opportunity to give their sister, not yet married, something extra.

## Rachel Carrier

Rachel was the widow of Edward Carrier, householder; who was buried in April 1639. She wrote her will in January 1640 making her daughter her executrix. It includes details of a large number of items left to her daughter but it is difficult to read partly because it includes words such as "chos?es" or "ches?es" which cannot be recognised. Her sheets included a pair made from flax and she had a number of kettles ("kiteles"), one of brass and another of iron as well as other brass and iron utensils. Her bedstead had a featherbed and there was also a flock bed, two pairs of pillowberes, a blanket and coverlets.

## Eme White, Blacksmith's Widow

Another widow who owned property was Eme White; this, when she wrote her will in 1616, she had purchased "lately". Nothing is known of Eme's husband but, since she left her eldest grandson a smith's bellows and an anvil, he could have been a blacksmith - from her will, a very prosperous one.

She left one messuage or tenement to her grandson Henry and another (the one in which she was living) to be divided between William and Thomas, Henry's



brothers. Her son, the boys' father, had died eleven years earlier, his youngest son, Thomas, being born five months after his death. Henry, the eldest, was eighteen in 1616.

## Three Grandsons as Executors

She appointed her three grandsons as her executors but “because that William and Thomas White, two of my said executors are underage, I will that my said grandson Henry White, my other executor, shall prove this my will to the use and behoof of himself and his other two brothers”. She did, however, appoint three of her “very good friends and neighbours” who included John Blome, mercer of Sevenoaks, as her overseers.

## Dividing Her Goods

In addition to the property Eme White ordained that her goods, etc. should be divided between her three grandsons. After dividing the goods, her overseers were to set “down some good course whereby” William and Thomas could “have the profit of their portions towards their maintenance” until they reached the age of twenty-one when they were to receive their portions.

It is interesting to consider what form this course could have taken given that the items to be divided were described as "goods and cattle, debts, bonds, bills, credits and chattels". Would everything have been sold and the money then divided into three in which case Thomas and Williams portions could have been invested in some way? Was everything divided into three and then the younger boys' portions sold so that there was money to invest? It would appear that some complex organisation would have been called for since "bonds, bills and credits" show that Eme's possessions included more than pewter, furniture, linen and a few animals.

## **“Agree Together Like Brothers”**

When the will was proved in 1619, Henry White, who would have been twenty-one by then, was appointed executor. Their grandmother was concerned that her three grandsons should "agree together like brothers" and if William or Thomas should at any time "(by means of any form entail or any otherwise howsoever) make any entry, sue, claim or trouble" to Henry regarding "the title or quiet holding and enjoying" of the messuage bequeathed to him, then her gift of the messuage to them was to be utterly void; instead it was to go to Henry.

# Martha Stanford

When she wrote her will in May 1635, Martha Stanford, widow, appointed her cousin Anthony Carleton as her executor but he died in the summer of 1638 and the will was changed to make Anthony's wife, Mary, the executrix. Because the original has survived all the necessary changes can be seen and also it looks as if Martha could write her name.

From her will Martha was wealthy enough to live independently; she wanted to be buried in the church of Thissleworth in Middlesex "[as near the place where my mother was buried in the same church as conveniently may be](#)". This must have been a good thirty miles from Sevenoaks. Moving a body from the place of death to the parish where the deceased wanted to be buried, whilst unusual was not unknown. Because she did not intend to be buried in Sevenoaks, she left £1 to her "[loving friend Mr. William Turner, vicar of Sevenoaks](#)".

Martha was generous to the poor of Thissleworth leaving them £5 to be distributed at her burial. Whilst some of the many cousins who are beneficiaries of the will may have lived in Middlesex, Mary Carleton was from Sevenoaks. Would any of her friends and relations from Sevenoaks have travelled to Middlesex for the burial?

The bequests to her cousins and friends totalled over £90. The only item Martha mentioned in her will was her "[great gold ring with the death's head upon it](#)"

which, together with all her "money, goods, chattels, household stuff and personal estate whatsoever" was to go to her executrix.

## Remarriage and Separation

More lone women than lone men headed their own household or lived on their own. Even though deaths due to childbirth were much higher than in modern times, men still tended to die at a younger age than women.

A study of London widows quoted by Erickson<sup>543</sup> found that, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, those most likely to remarry were the ones of middling wealth; the gentry widows could afford not to marry whilst the widows of poor craftsmen and labourers could not afford to marry. Although the situation facing a widow in a small town such as Sevenoaks would be very different from that in London, overall factors would be similar but with some of the poorer widows having access to at least a little land making them more attractive.

As described earlier, Francis Pett married the rector of Sevenoaks less than five weeks after her husband, John, was buried. The only other widow featured in

these wills known to have been married twice is Agnes Wimble whose children bore the name Tomlin.

## **Remarriage of Widowers and Widows**

Also widowers married more often than widows; in Seal between 1560 and 1650 only four out of the 26 widows whose husbands died relatively young are known to have remarried. Care, however, needs to be taken using such figures for just one parish. The mobility of people from parish to parish is such that, unless the burial of the widow was also recorded, she may have moved out of the parish and the reason for this could have been to marry again.

It is easy to think that the widowers preferred young, unmarried women. But another possible reason for widowers marrying more frequently than widows was that it was easier for a woman on her own to employ men to work her land than it was for a man to find someone, other than a wife, to carry out the "woman's work" of running a household and looking after the children. Farm labourers can work a given number of hours, as and when required, but looking after a house, feeding the children, chickens and other livestock, milking the cow and taking goods to market cannot be fitted into a nine-to-five day.

## Widowers in Seal

A study of second marriages of widowers in Seal with children<sup>544</sup> found that nearly two-thirds of them remarried but whether or not they did depended, to a large extent on the number of children they had surviving from their first marriage. Of the fifteen men who only had one child, thirteen remarried; of the other thirty-five, only eleven remarried. Was this because it was more difficult for a man with a number of children to find a woman prepared to take on the care of the children or was he more concerned that a second wife might introduce discord within the family?

## Michall Besbeeche

Michall, Richard Besbeeche's mother was widowed in the early 1590s when she had, in addition to Richard, two daughters. Since Richard started his family about 1620 he was probably born only a year or so before his father died with his sisters being older than him. Michall married George Pococke in 1595 and, just as he was her second husband, she was his second wife, George having been a widower, with two daughters for nine months. The George Pocockes would thus have thus already have been a large family to which they added three more daughters in the next eight years.

Since she outlived her son, who died in 1633, Michall must have lived to at least her late sixties, outliving her second husband by at least twenty years. Two of George's sisters also married twice but nothing is known of them other than the names of their husbands and children.

## Separation for the Upper Gentry

Whilst divorce was very difficult even for the gentry, where there was money, husband and wife could agree to separate. In her diary for the end of January 1617, Anne Clifford, wife of Richard Sackville, mentions the arrangements being made by her "sister Compton" (who must have been her husband's sister) and "brother Compton" who had decided to separate. "It was agreed that she should have £100 a year and he to have the child from her". Whether this was by mutual agreement or imposed upon "sister Compton" by her husband it is impossible to tell. A month later sister Compton "sent to borrow £77 so I sent her 10 twenty shilling pieces". £10 when she asked for £77 does not seem very generous. The separation was not, however, final since in June 1619, having been at Knole Compton "returned to Brambletie where his wife lives with him but with many discontents".<sup>545</sup>

# Witchcraft

We tend to think that, because life expectancy four hundred years ago was so much shorter than it is now that there were very few old people. This was not so; of those people who managed to reach their forties, having survived the perils of accident, disease and childbirth many were likely to go on to their sixties, seventies and even eighties.

Thus, compared with today, it was the lack of a large group of middle-aged people which would be surprising rather than a scarcity of old people<sup>546</sup>. There would have been old men as well as old women but it was the latter who seemed to draw the most attention particularly when they were thought to be a nuisance. A period in the ducking-stool set up in the village pond was one of the punishments meted out to "common scolds".

Rich widows, such as Eme White and Martha Stanford, could sometimes be feared because of their financial independence but a poor, ill-looking old woman could induce fear for more irrational reasons. When scolding turned to cursing, the situation could become much more serious. By cursing, or even muttering gibberish, as can be done by many senile but harmless people, a friendless old woman could put herself in great danger<sup>547</sup>.

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546 Fraser, p.111

547 Fraser, p.115



Whilst belief in witchcraft was fairly widespread, there does not seem to have been any systematic hunting of witches either in Kent or elsewhere but the occasional indictment does occur in the surviving records. One of the six described here was from Sevenoaks, two from Gravesend, two from Ash near Sandwich and one from Horton Kirby. Even when they were charged, four were found not guilty, Anne Radwell, although found guilty, was reprieved after sentence and the sixth, from Gravesend, whilst found guilty and sentenced to hang, "was respited until the next session".

## The Indictment of Mary Butler in 1635

At the July 1635 Assizes, Mary Butler, a spinster of Sevenoaks, was indicted for murder by witchcraft. "Being a common witch", she was accused of bewitching three people:

- Catherine Smyth so that "her body was wasted and consumed" on 20th August 1632
- Christopher Patchett on 1st April 1625 "so that he languished until 1st June 1628 and then died"
- Bridget Marshall, widow, on 1st July 1631 "so that she languished until 1 June 1634 and then died".

Both Patchett and Marshall seem to have "languished" for a long time before supposedly succumbing to the witch's spells and Mary Butler was found not guilty<sup>548</sup>.

## Anne Radwell of Gravesend

Ten years later, the victims of Anne Radwell of Gravesend also languished. These were Francis Mousse who succumbed rapidly, languishing only from 20th May to 1st June 1643 and Richard Symonds who was "bewitched" on 1st July 1630 but did not die for a year.

Even today people who have no energy, cannot carry out relatively simple tasks for more than a short period at a time but do not have any easily diagnosed illness do not always get sympathy even if they are not said to be "languishing". Are they suffering from a physical or a mental condition? Are they just trying to find an excuse for not working? How much more difficult in the 1600s. Given someone with a grudge against them - or thought to have a grudge - how easy it must have been to consider supernatural causes.

Anne Radwell was found guilty of causing the death by witchcraft of two of the three men for whose murder she was indicted but she was reprieved after sentence<sup>549</sup>.

## Four Other Cases of Murder by Witchcraft

These<sup>550</sup> also resulted in similar sentences:

- in the summer of 1631, Catherine Young, the wife a labourer from Ash near Sandwich, was indicted for two murders by witchcraft but these had, supposedly, taken place in 1623 and 1628. She was "found guilty and sentenced to hang but was respited until the next session".
- also in the summer of 1631, Martha Young, spinster of Ash, perhaps the sister of Catherine's husband, was indicted for witchcraft. She was charged with having bewitched Anne Lacy, aged 4 years, "so that her body was wasted and consumed". Were the charges against Catherine, from eight and three years earlier included to substantiate the case against Martha? Even so, Martha was found not guilty.

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549 Cockburn (Chas.I.) 2309

550 Cockburn (Chas.I) 740, 741, 1290, 2308

- February 1636 saw the indictment of Ellen, wife of George Tislington of Horton Kirby, husbandman. "Being a common witch she bewitched Andrew Lewis so that he languished and his body was wasted". Again the verdict was not guilty
- in July 1646, Audrey Barnett of Gravesend, spinster, was indicted for on the grounds that she had bewitched Mary Hiland . . "so that her body was wasted and consumed". Yet again the verdict was not guilty.

## Bewitching of Animals

But witchcraft could also extend to animals. In March 1647, Hester Browne of Higham, widow, was indicted for murder by witchcraft of Elizabeth Rothery, daughter of William, who languished from 11th to 12th March 1645 and then died.

But both prior to and after Elizabeth's death animals had been dying, supposedly as a result of Hester's bewitching:

- 1 Oct 1644, a gelding (£2) belonging to William Browne, yeoman
- 20 Aug 1645, a black cow (£5), belonging to Thomas Harvy
- 20 Mar 1646, 2 ewes (£1) belonging to Thomas Wakelyn, yeoman
- 26 Sep 1646, a sorrel mare (£5) belonging to Thomas Peachey, yeoman

Each of these indictments was endorsed by three people: firstly by William Rothery in the case of his daughter and each owner of the animals and, secondly by Mary Beane and Elizabeth Pare. Were these people trying to build up a case against Hester Browne? If so, they were unsuccessful since Hester was found "not guilty".

## Verdict “not guilty”

Kent was not unusual in finding those charged with witchcraft "not guilty". Another example (among many) were the three cases which occurred in Witham, in Essex, all towards the end of the sixteenth century. One of them was complicated and another concerned a supposedly bewitched woman who "languished eight months before dying" but none resulted in anyone being found guilty<sup>551</sup>.

When someone was found guilty of witchcraft the sentence "to hang" and, at other times and in other places, such hangings were carried out.

# Women and Hedge-Breaking

Although "witchcraft" could be interpreted as a poor woman trying to assert herself, searching for firewood and, when it was scarce, taking it illegally from the hedgerow can be seen as a more every day need for a woman with a family to cook for and keep warm.

A number of cases in the Ightham Court Rolls concerned the cutting of wood and hedge-breakers "no doubt to be explained by an acute need for firewood among the poorer inhabitants"<sup>552</sup>. It is unlikely that Ightham was very different from other places in the neighbourhood, merely that it is for there that records have survived.

## Gathering Wood: A Woman's Job

It was usually the women who went out to try and gather the wood and when they were caught they were not even given a name of their own. In October 1587, the wives of Robert Bownde and John Burghe were presented to the Court as "common hedge-breakers" and fined 6d each.

But a small fine does not seem to have been very effective. Eighteen months later, Robert Bownde's wife was again before the Court, this time with the wife of

Richard West, and their husbands were each fined 3s 4d. But this was still not considered an effective deterrent and "at this Court it was ordered, with the assent of the jury, that if anyone hereafter offends in this respect, he shall pay for each bundle of wood so taken from the hedge 12d, one half going to the lord of the manor and the other half to the person whose wood was taken; and, moreover, the delinquent is to be put into the stocks until the said sum has been paid."

At the Court held in April 1593, Jane Powell, widow, was found to be a "common breaker of hedges" who had lately broken and plundered the hedges of four people. She was fined 3s 4d and, if she refused to pay was to be put into "the stocks for four hours for the said offence." In 1601 Edward Tunbridge was fined 6d for having allowed his wife to break and plunder a hedge.

## **Inflated Prices Showing the Scarcity of Firewood**

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, firewood became more difficult to find and its price therefore rose. This shortage was of major importance to the ordinary people. Between 1612 and 1633, general prices rose about 15 per cent but the price of firewood rose nearly 120 per cent. That is, something costing 10d in 1612 would have risen in price to 11.5d in 1633 whereas a bundle of firewood costing 1p in 1612 would have cost 2.2p in 1633.

In 1604, Lawrence Winter was before the Court for allowing "his maidservant to break and plunder the hedges of his neighbours, and particularly the hedges of Greenshaw, to the bad example of the other inhabitants. Fined 12d." Was it the maidservant setting the bad example or her employer in encouraging her?<sup>553</sup>

## Crime and Punishment

Margaret Lawrence, a widow from Sevenoaks, instead of obtaining her wood illegally by hedge-breaking, resorted to stealing it when it had already been collected and, in the two recorded cases, chose Eynsford as the location. On 20 July 1635 she stole half a load of wood, valued at 3s (£0.15) from Henry Masters and, on 20th April 1637 one load of wood, valued at 5s (£0.25) from William Payne. She was found guilty on the second charge but was allowed clergy<sup>554</sup>.

Generally, when women were accused of larceny, the items they had stolen were of relatively low value. Sarah Mills, a spinster, was typical. She burgled the house of Edmund Pattenden at Sevenoaks twice: on 15th September and 1st October 1635. The first time she stole a petticoat (4s) and a smock (1s) and on the

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553 Harrison, 1937, pp. 217-218

554 Cockburn (Chas. I); 1461



second time a sheet (2s) and a smock (1s)<sup>555</sup>. She was found guilty but allowed clergy. She was also charged with having stolen two waistcoats (2s), two petticoats (3s) and two aprons (1s) from Richard Bosse on 20th September but, in this case, was found not guilty<sup>556</sup>.

## Grand Larceny

Larceny which could rightly be called "grand" took place at Penshurst at Christmas 1637, the victim being Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. There, on 27th December, he had stolen from him:

- a great diamond mounted in gold valued at £1200,
- 77 pearls on two strings and a necklace of 38 pearls (£40),
- 2 gold medals (£6),
- a purse (1s) and £306 in money.

The person indicted for this crime was Mary, wife of Charles Sandford, gentleman, of Sevenoaks and, on 30th January 1644 she was committed to Maidstone gaol. Here she remained until escaping on 25th July although at the September Assizes of 1644 she was found not guilty.

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555 the amounts in brackets are the values given for each item

556 Cockburn (Chas.I); 1283, 1319

## Sentenced To Be Whipped

Not all the women who were charged were found not guilty or, if guilty, allowed clergy. Being whipped was often the sentence for a relatively minor crime. Edward Mills, labourer, and his wife Hester, of Sevenoaks were charged with having stolen a towel (1s) and a pewter quart-pot (1s) on 1st December 1624 and a pillowbar (16d) and 4lbs of beef (3s 4d) on 10th January. Whilst Edward was found not guilty, Hester was found guilty on the first count "to the value of 10d" and sentenced to be whipped<sup>557</sup>.

At the September 1625 Assizes, Elizabeth Barker, spinster, was found guilty "to the value of 10d" and sentenced to be whipped. Her crime has been to steal a hat and band (8d), a woman's ruff (1s), a kerchief (4d), a night cap (4d) 2 crosscloths (4d), a bodkin (1s), a napkin (2d), and a waistcoat (4d)<sup>558</sup>.

## Elizabeth Beane

The details of the four charges against Elizabeth Beane of Sevenoaks are given in Table 13.2.

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<sup>557</sup> Cockburn (James I); 960

<sup>558</sup> Cockburn (Chas.I); 16

**Table 13.2: Charges Against Elizabeth Beane, spinster**

date 1624	Location/from	Items Stolen	value	
			total	each
5 Sep	Sevenoaks house of: William Davies	13 aprons	13s	£0.05
		4 shirts	8s	£0.10
		4 smocks	6s 8d	£0.08
		1 waistcoat	5s	£0.25
		1 sheet	3s 4d	£0.17
		1 tablecloth	4s	£0.20
		1 horseman's coat	26s 8d	£1.33
		3 hats	15s	£0.25
		3 hatbands	5s	£0.08
		1 coif wrought with gold	6s 8d	£0.33
10 Sep	Margaret Lambert	1 apron	1s	£0.05
10 Sep	Sevenoaks house of John Leigh	2 brass chafers	8s	£0.20
		1 brass c hafing-dish	2s	£0.10
20 Oct	Dartford from Francis Edmytt	1 waistcoat	3s	£0.15
		1 petticoat	8s	£0.40

Here we seem to have a persistent thief; for the first charge she had an accomplice, Thomasine Reape, wife of Daniel Reape, labourer, and possibly was

just one of about six people. Beane was found guilty on only the third and fourth charges but, even so, she was sentenced to hang<sup>559</sup>.

## The Fate of Pregnant Women

A woman sentenced to hang but found to be pregnant could usually expect a reprieve but this did not always happen. In 1583, Petronella Hayward and her then husband, Thomas Hayward, yeoman, was found to be pregnant after murdering her first husband eighteen months earlier. According to the indictment they had given him a broth containing ratsbane. Both Petronella and Thomas were sentenced to hang but she was remanded in prison for six years and then finally released<sup>560</sup>.

Alice Cooper, found guilty of grand larceny in July 1596 was found to be pregnant by a jury of thirteen matrons and she was therefore remanded in custody. She died, however, between then and the next Assizes, February 1597, perhaps in childbirth<sup>561</sup>.

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559 Cockburn (Chas. I); 947

560 Cockburn (Eliz.I); 1200, 1226, 1258, 1309, 1351, etc.

561 Cockburn (Eliz.I); 2363, 2409, 2419

Much later, Cecily, the wife of John Stayner, labourer, seems to have been treated much more harshly. At the February 1635 Assizes she was found guilty of grand larceny for stealing a purse valued at 4d containing 25s in money. For this she was to hang but a jury of twelve matrons found that she was pregnant. Because of this "execution was to be respited until one month after the child is delivered"<sup>562</sup>. There is no confirmation of the sentence being carried out (this information not being included in the Assize records) but neither is there any record of her remand.

## A Sad Case of Infanticide

In January 1581, Joan Bassett, a spinster and servant to the gentleman, George Brooke, of Sevenoaks, was indicted by an inquisition held in the town before the coroner, William Webbe, and a jury of two gentlemen and twelve other men.

They found that, on 24th January, in "Jonelands hothe" at Sevenoaks, Bassett gave birth to an "illegitimate child which she killed by pulling out its tongue and leaving it to freeze to death". At the July Assizes, she was remanded and her trial postponed until the next Assizes (March 1582) where she was found guilty but no sentence is given.

Whilst Bassett was remanded, it was decided that "the process of *venire facias*" was to be issued against Mr. Brooke and his daughter. It is not known what this entailed but it would seem to imply that the two were, in some way, implicated in the case. Was someone in the household thought to be responsible for the position in which Bassett had found herself?<sup>563</sup>

## Bastardy

From the beginning of the 1560s onwards the baptisms and burials of a number of bastard children were recorded in the Sevenoaks parish registers. Normally this is all we know of these children who, when they survived, were presumably brought up in a family without becoming a charge on the parish. Their parents may have been brought before the Church Courts but no records have been found of this.

The birth of a child to an unmarried woman seems only to have become a concern of the parish authorities if there was fear that the parish would have to provide for its upkeep. A complicated case of this type occurred in the summer of 1604 when Marie Turner, from outside the parish, arrived in Sevenoaks with a young baby.<sup>564</sup>

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<sup>563</sup> Cockburn (Eliz.I); 1085

<sup>564</sup> The following account is taken from CKS: QM/SB 352 & 576

## Marie Turner's Background

On arrival in Sevenoaks, Marie was examined twice by Bartholomew Mann, on 17th July and again on 3rd August. Eighteen months earlier, in 1603, she had been bound to her uncle, William Turner, of Hollingbourne (about twenty miles east of Sevenoaks) for one year from Lady's Day (25th March) for which she was to receive four nobles (£1.33).

There John Smith, servant to Nicholas Wood in Hollingbourne was introduced to her to by her uncle who told her that Smith was a "fit match for her in marriage . . and that he was worth two hundred pounds".

At midsummer, when she was already pregnant, Smith "carried her away by her master's consent to her mother's in Meopham". Here, although Marie cited Smith as "the reputed father, wholly", he seems to have left her. Meopham is about ten miles north-east of Sevenoaks.

## Birth of the Baby

When Marie's labour began on a Monday morning three weeks after Christmas, she seems to have been turned out by her mother and she started off to try to get to her uncle's house. This was about fourteen miles as the crow flies but Marie

probably had to go south to Trottiscliffe before turning east which would have made the total distance about eighteen miles

She managed only about nine miles before "she was delivered of the child under the roof of the barn at twelve o'clock of the night, no man being with her but a poor travelling woman whom she had met . . it seemed there had been cattle there for the woman that was there did gather straw for her".

Marie remained in the barn "from Monday night till Wednesday morning and had neither meat nor drink till Wednesday morning". She did not know exactly where this barn was although it was "within one mile of Ditton parish" and she offered "to bring any man to the place which she knoweth upon sight thereof and can go thither".

## From the Barn to Sevenoaks

From the barn "she went to Aeford<sup>565</sup> and there she had "her first relief in a poor woman's house by a walnut tree and warmed herself and her child and had not meat or drink there but saith that she went the Wednesday evening to the poor woman's house near the barn to have some succour. But she would not let her

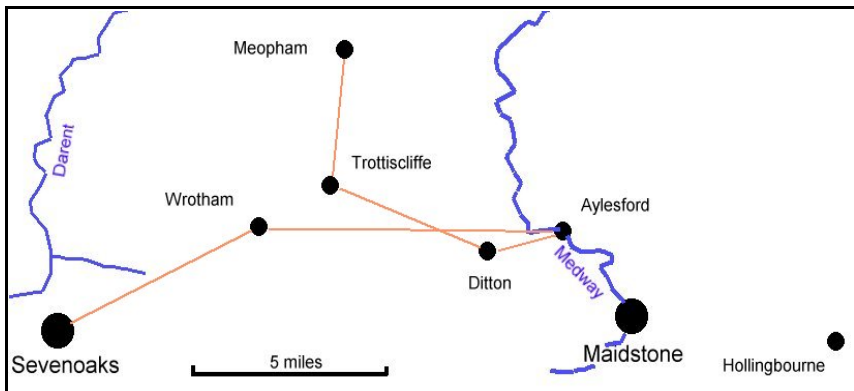
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565

if this was Aylesford, it is less than 2 miles east of Ditton and it looks as if Marie was trying to get back to Hollingbourne but then changes her mind



come in for fear of sickness" and so she went "to Wrotham where a poor woman called goodwife Smight . . gave her a little porridge at the door."



From there she carried the baby to Sevenoaks. Wrotham to Sevenoaks is about six miles and Marie had been wandering from place to place before she obtained a little porridge from goodwife Smight. This was a woman who had given birth three days previously and had spent the last day walking in search of help but with very little success. At Sevenoaks, however, "she had some succour and had milk and then did nourish the child".

## The End of the Story

The next day, not knowing what to do, "she left the child at the house of one Richard Cook alias Dallison in Sevenoaks not knowing what to do with it and was moved to do it because she perceived he had no child and that he said he wished he had such a child". Here the evidence seems to end so that we do not know what happened to Marie Turner and her child.

## The Keeping of a Bastard Child

The details surviving for the second case come from an order made on 18th February 1612 by two JPs, Ralph Bosville and Edward Gillbourne, "touching the keeping of a bastard child begotten on the body of one Jone Frinde of Sevenoaks, spinster, by one Alexander Stonestreet, late of Sevenoaks, tapster".

From various examinations they had found that Stonestreet was the reputed father and therefore ordered that "from the first day of February last past (which is the day of the birth of the said bastard child) pay unto the churchwardens and overseers of the poor of . . . Sevenoaks, and their successors every week the sum of 16d . . . until the said child shall accomplish the age of 14 years or otherwise take away the said child and enter into sufficient bond to . . . discharge the parish of the said bastard child".

He was also to "pay unto Samuel Terry of Sevenoaks, innholder, all such charges as the said Samuel hath been at in keeping of the said Jone Frinde since the said child was born". They also ordered "that Jone Frinde shall (during the said term) pay for all manner of apparel for the said child"<sup>566</sup>.

16d a week is £3.47 a year compared with £5 which was the usual yearly amount allowed for the maintenance of a child according to probate accounts<sup>567</sup>. Even so, it cannot have been easy for a poor man such as Stonestreet to find this amount for the upkeep of his child. The order for the mother to provide for the clothes until the child was fourteen is also interesting.

## **An Action Against the Parish Officers**

This action against the parish officers of Ightham was heard at the Easter Quarter Sessions held in Maidstone in 1602 but there is no further reference to it in the later Quarter Session records. This case, which involved JPs from Sevenoaks, shows local officers could not always take the law into its own hands with impunity.

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<sup>566</sup> CKS: QM/SB 1003

<sup>567</sup> Erickson, p.50

It arose as a result of the officers taking upon themselves the punishment of a woman who was about to bear a bastard child. "George Hawkes of Ightham, yeoman, together with the then borsholder, churchwardens and overseers of the said parish, by the advice of Henry Seyliard, clerk, parson of Ightham aforesaid, did violently take one, Katherine Fullwood, born in Ightham aforesaid and did carry her into a bye land not far from the beacon in the said parish and, she being very great with child and having not passing a fortnight to . . the time of her delivery, did, very cruelly and unjustly against law, nature and humanity, whip and beat the said Katherine.

Whereupon it is ordered by the court that Sir Thomas Waller, knight, Sampson Lennarde, George Chowne, Ralph Bosville and Stephen Theobald, esquires, or some of them, shall call the said offenders before them and then bind them to appear at the next Quarter Sessions . . to answer the said fact and, in the meantime, to be of good behaviour".<sup>568</sup>

# Chapter 14

## The Sackvilles and Knole

In 1603, Thomas Sackville, first Earl of Dorset was finally able to take up residence at Knole. He was succeeded in 1608 by his son Robert who died a year later. The third Earl, Richard Sackville, married Anne Clifford who kept a diary during part of her time at Knole. Richard died in 1624 leaving debts of £60,000 and was succeeded by his brother, Edward who tried to rebuild the family fortune whilst maintaining a high standard of living at Knole.

### Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset

592

Thomas Sackville, Elizabeth's High Treasurer, was one of the wealthiest noblemen of his time. Although serving the king until his death in 1608, he carried out a considerable amount of building at Knole.

### Richard Sackville and Lady Anne Clifford

595

Two days after marrying Lady Anne, Richard succeeded his father. He was addicted to a life of extravagance and, rich as he was, he was in need of ready cash. There were problems concerning his wife's inheritance of her father's estates and, whilst Anne was adamant that she would not give in, Richard wished her to reach a settlement in return for money. This soured the relationship between the two who otherwise were an affectionate couple.

### Anne Clifford, 1616-1619

600

Anne's turbulent life during these years is described with her diary as the main source of information

### Margaret Sackville, The Child

614

Anne Clifford's diary gives us an insight into the bringing up of a child of the aristocracy. Although there was conflict between her parents regarding Anne's lands in Westmoreland, both were concerned with Margaret's welfare.

## Travel and Horses

620

An establishment such as that of the Sackvilles had many different types of horses and men to look after them. Anne was fond of riding and had horses of her own but docile animals were required for children and women, who might be fond of walking, still liked to know there was a coach at their command.

## Other Recreations

627

Richard was the patron of a number of scholars including John Donne who was rector of Sevenoaks for a time. Anne spent a considerable time reading and being read to but there were less serious pastimes such as gambling and bowling.

## The Household of the Third Earl

633

A catalogue of the household at Knole of Richard, Earl of Dorset, in the years 1613 to 1624 has survived.

## Edward Sackville, 4th Earl of Dorset

639

Although inheriting debts of over £60,000, Edward, a Privy Councillor and holding many other posts, managed to regain some of the land sold by his brother, refurbish Knole and live there in luxury .

# Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset

Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, had served Elizabeth throughout her reign and become the High Treasurer of England but, although the queen had given him Knole at the beginning of her reign, it was 1603 before he could take up residence there.

One example where his ability to conduct delicate negotiations was most important were the discussions with the French court about a possible marriage between Elizabeth and the Duke of Anjou. He was in Paris, with Walsingham, on this business in 1571<sup>569</sup>. Sackville continued his duties under James who created him Earl of Dorset on 13th March 1603/4 and in that year he had the very important commission of arranging a peace treaty with Spain.

## One of the Wealthiest Noblemen

Gordon Ward describes Sir Thomas thus: "a poet of real eminence and a lover of music, he was yet a highly competent civil servant, well able to look after his own



and his Sovereign's interests, a lover of mankind (and womenkind) and adept in the art of comely ostentation<sup>570</sup>.

One of the wealthiest noblemen of his day, he was first and foremost a courtier, his main objective being to stand well with his sovereign. "He is said to have been a fine speaker and his letters and State papers show unusual perspicuity. His wealth and munificence in private life helped to confirm his political position and in 1600 he presented a library of books to the Bodleian Library"<sup>571</sup>.

He carried out a considerable amount of building at Knole including adding bay windows to the Green Court, it being a fashion then to have more light in buildings<sup>572</sup>. The glass could have come from the glassworks near to Knole.

## His Death and Will

Although in his late sixties, Thomas Sackville, first Earl of Dorset, continued to serve the king until, in 1608 when he was seventy-two, he died of apoplexy sitting at the Council table in Whitehall<sup>573</sup>. His will was extremely long, covering 24 large

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570 Ward, p.278

571 Phillips, pp.236, 237

572 Rayner, p.49

573 Sackville-West, p.51

parchment sheets, the transcript requiring 165 pages of closely written foolscap. He owned land in a large number of places including Dorset House in the parish of St.Brides, Fleet Street, London. His wealth can be deduced from the bequest to his wife of an "annual rent of £1800 issuing out of all my lordships, manors and lands, etc. and after her decease to my next male heir, to be paid twice a year in the hall of my house called Knoll".<sup>574</sup>

He was succeeded by his son, Robert, the second Earl of Dorset who died a year later.

## Cicely, Countess of Dorset

Cicely, Countess of Dorset, and wife of Thomas, wrote her will in 1612 three years after the death of her son. In this she states that, as the surviving executrix of her husband's will she did "not wish the executors of Robert, late Earl of Dorset, to meddle with my said husband's will but appoint Richard, Earl of Dorset (her grandson) my overseer and also executor of my said husband's will"<sup>575</sup>. She died in 1615 and was buried at Withyham in Sussex as was her husband before her.

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<sup>574</sup> Phillips, p.231

<sup>575</sup> Phillips, p.240

# Richard Sackville & Lady Anne Clifford

Two days prior to his father's death in 1609, Richard Sackville married Lady Anne Clifford, the daughter and sole heir of George, Earl of Cumberland. Richard and his wife of nineteen thus found themselves Earl and Countess of Dorset with large estates to administer and the households of two dowagers countesses (his mother and grandmother) to maintain.

Richard's inheritance included a large fortune accumulated by his grandfather with land in London as well as estates in Kent but, a young man of twenty, he had spent much of his youth at court as a companion to Prince Henry, one of James's sons. Both the Prince and Richard were addicted to tilting, bowling, cock-fighting, gambling and masqueing and Richard was conspicuous for his fine clothes, lavish housekeeping and general extravagance.

The full-length portrait of Richard at Knole by Van Somer shows him with a "pale, pointed face, dark hair growing in a peak and small, mean eyes; (he) is dressed entirely in black with enormous silver rosettes on his shoes". A miniature of him by Isaac Oliver shows the "richness of his clothes, his embroidered stockings" with his hand resting upon an "extravagantly-plumed helmet on the table beside him".<sup>576</sup>

Even a prudent owner might have found it difficult managing the expenses entailed in being a favourite at Court as well as the necessary outgoings of his large estate but Richard was committed to a life of splendour. There were also problems concerning his wife's inheritance of her father's estates in Cumberland and Westmoreland.

## Anne's Inheritance

Three hundred years earlier, by a deed dating from the beginning of the fourteenth century, the estates of the Earl of Cumberland had been entailed upon the Earl's child regardless of sex. Anne's father had died four years before her marriage and, by his will but contrary to the earlier deed, he had bequeathed to his brother Sir Francis, his estates in Westmoreland in the north of England with reversion to Anne in the event of the failure of male heirs.

This will was the source of litigation which continued for thirty-eight years after his death since, Lady Anne and her mother were determined to obtain possession of the lands whilst Sir Francis was equally determined to keep what he felt he was due<sup>577</sup>.

Richard, Earl of Dorset, is said to have lived in the greatest splendour of any nobleman of England. He thus needed all the money he could get and he tried everything he could to persuade Anne to come to a compromise with her uncle in exchange for ready cash. Anne, however, was adamant that she would not give in.

## **Anne's Dowry**

Another problem, particularly for a high-spender like Richard was Anne's dowry. This was £17,000 but it was not until the autumn of 1617 that Richard received £4,000 from Anne's uncle, the Earl of Cumberland, "[which was the first penny I received of my portion](#)". This was twelve years after her father had died but it was to be the 24th June 1619 when Richard received the final £6,000.

## **Richard's Mistresses**

In addition to his horses, hounds, cocks and expensive clothes, Richard Sackville also had a number of mistresses. One of these was Mrs. Venetia Stanley by whom he had some children and on whom he settled an annuity of £500. After the relationship was over, she married Sir Kenelm Digby who sued the Earl for the

unpaid annuity but, once a year, the Earl invited her and her husband to dinner "where the Earl would behold her with much passion, yet only kissed her hand"<sup>578</sup>.

## Affection Between Husband and Wife

Anne's diary for the years 1616, 1617 and 1619 have survived and this shows that, regardless of his mistresses, there was considerable affection between her and her husband. She described him as "in his own nature of a just mind, of a sweet disposition and very valiant in his own person".

It was her intransigence with regard to her father's estates which came between them since he wanted money immediately regardless of whether or not Anne lost her inheritance. As it was, the lawsuits continued as a blight throughout his lifetime and for another seventeen years after.

Richard Sackville died in March 1624 in London and the letter written, on his deathbed, to Anne at Knole again shows the affection he felt for her. It is addressed "Sweet Heart" and says how he had hoped to come to Knole but had been prevented by sickness and ends "So, with my love to you, and God's blessing and mine to both my children, I commend you to God's protection. Your assured loving husband, Richard Dorset". In his will he left her "all her wearing apparel

and such rings and jewels which were hers on her marriage and the rock ruby ring which I have given her".<sup>579</sup>

## Lady Anne at last in Possession of her Lands

Six years after Richard's death, Anne married the Earl of Pembroke who agreed with her about the urgency of enforcing her claim to the estates in Westmoreland but nothing happened for a long time. It was lack of male issue rather than lawsuits which was to settle the matter in the end. In 1641, her uncle Francis died and, two years later, his only son, Henry.

At last, by the terms of her father's will, Lady Anne came into possession of the lands for which she had fought for thirty-eight years. She lived to the age of eighty-six, looking after her estates "with unabating energy" and still showing that she was frightened of no one. To Cromwell she issued the warning that, "if he pulled her castles about her ears, she would build them up again as fast". Her influence lived on in Westmoreland; in 1956 it was suggested that electricity for lights be put into the almshouses she had built in Appleby. The offer was turned down: "We do not think Lady Anne would have liked it".<sup>580</sup>

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579 Sackville-West, pp. 80, 81; the two children were both daughters

580 Sackville-West/Clifford, pp. xl, xlvi, xliii; Sackville-West, p.85

She had, however, paid a heavy price for her lands, the arguments over them having caused such dissension with her husband. "the marble pillars of Knole in Kent and Wilton in Wiltshire were to me oftentimes but the gay harbours of anguish".<sup>581</sup>

## Anne Clifford, 1616-1619

Sometime before 1616 by which time she had been married for seven years, Anne started to keep a diary which begins with details of her life as a child. What survived was an eighteenth-century transcript and it is this which was published in 1923. After the early reminiscences, it jumps to 1616 followed by 1617 and 1619 but with 1618 omitted.

For these three years we have a detailed record of her life, much of which was spent at Knole and, from it we gain the impression of a loving relationship ruined by the controversy over Westmoreland estates.

By 1616 the Dorsets had had four children, three boys (who all died young at Knole where they were born) and Margaret, born on 2nd July 1614, who features in the

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581 Wilton, the seat of her second husband; Sackville-West, p. 67



diary where she is referred to as "the Child". There was to be another daughter, Isabel, born in 1622.<sup>582</sup>

## Pressure to Compromise Regarding her Land

On 21st January 1616, Anne and her husband went to church at Sevenoaks but soon afterwards Richard returned to London leaving Anne to stay in the country where she "was sometimes merry and sometimes sad". In addition to Dorset House in London, the Sackvilles had houses in Sussex at Buckhurst and Withyham (about 11 miles south-south-west of Sevenoaks) and at Lewes.

On 8th February Anne went herself to London, the rector, Richard Milborne accompanying her in the coach. Whilst in London, many people including the Archbishop of Canterbury, on 17th February, tried to persuade Anne to agree to a compromise regarding the estates in the north of England. The next day there was still stalemate between the Anne and Richard and she wrote it was "a marvellous day for me for it was generally thought that I must either have sealed to the argument or else have parted with my Lord".

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582 the following quotation are from the diary, Sackville-West/Clifford, pp. 24-112

## A Journey into the North

It was agreed that she should go to Westmoreland to talk with her mother. Her husband accompanied her for the first five days of the journey but she arrived at her lodgings in Derby "with a heavy heart considering how many things stood between my Lord and I". Reaching her destination in the early part of March, later that month she and her mother sent their answer to the demands being made - a direct denial to agree to the judges' award.

## Threat to Close Knole

Anne arrived back at Knole on 11th April where "I had but a cold welcome from my Lord". He tried to make Anne change her mind by insisting that the Child should go to London and telling her that she could no longer live at Knole. On 10th May the Steward (Mr. Edward Legge) came from London and Anne expected he "would give warning to many of the servants to go away because the audits were newly come up".

If Knole were no longer to house the Earl and his wife and child, the effect would be felt not only by the servants but all those who supplied the household with food, other goods and services. Rumours of the differences between the Earl and his Lady would have circulated in the town and many must have hoped that they would not be deprived of the benefits of having the Dorsets at Knole.

This would be particularly so since, during the previous seven years, Sevenoaks had grown accustomed to having a lord of the manor who lived in such an extravagant style. In 1613, twenty pearl buttons valued at 7s (£0.35) were stolen from William Johnson; at 4.2d each this compares with a hen at 6d and a knife at 4d<sup>583</sup>. Perhaps Johnson with his pearl buttons is a sign of the luxury items which were provided locally for the benefit of the occupants and visitors to Knole.

## The Death of Anne's Mother

On 29th May, Anne received "the heavy news" of her mother's death. She was fortunate in having neighbours who knew the north country, Sir William Selby, senior, having come from there when he bought Ightham Mote on his retirement. He had died in 1612 but Anne sent for his son, Sir William, junior, so that she could "speak to him about the conveyance of my dear Mother's body into Northumberland".

On 1st June she sent instructions that her mother's body was to be wrapped in lead until they heard from her and, on the 4th, two of her husband's men came from London to tell her how he had with "the advice of his learned Council sent a letter down to Westmoreland to my Lady's servants and tenants to keep

possession for him and me which was a thing I little expected but gave me much contentment".

Anne was not only saddened by her mother's death but was also subject to much more persuasion about the lands. The furthest she was prepared to go was pass the "inheritance of Westmoreland to my Lord if I had no heirs of my own body". The entry in her diary for 15th shows, in a personal way, how she tried to relieve the stress to which she was subject: "At this time I wrought very hard and made an end of one of my cushions of Irish stitch work".

## Five Months in the North

In July Anne went to Westmoreland to organise her mother's funeral, Richard having taken her down to the coach where they had "a loving and kind parting". The funeral took place on 11th July, the cortege setting off about 8 o'clock "the body going in my Lady's own coach with four horses and myself following it in my own coach with two horses and most of the men and women on horseback so as there were about forty in the company and we came to Appleby about ½ an hour after eleven and about 12 the body was put into the ground". Anne had many arrangements to make and on 25th July she "signed a warrant for the killing of a stag . . . being the first I ever had signed of that kind."

Anne stayed in the north until December but Richard came to see her in August bringing with him some of the servants from Knole who arrived when "the stuff was not yet come so they were fain to lie three or four in a bed". The day after they arrived Anne "dressed the chamber where my Lady died and set up the green velvet bed where the same night we went to lie".

By 28th they finished "dressing the house in the forenoon and in the afternoon I wrought stitch work and my Lord sat and read by me." Richard returned to London but would not allow Anne to do so. Irish stitch was "her chief help to pass away the time at work" and, on 12th November, she finished another cushion.

## Christmas in London

On 9th December she at last set out for London, riding 27 miles on horseback to where the coach had been left. Nine days later she was met at Islington by her husband and a "great many more" so that they arrived at Dorset House in London in ten or eleven coaches. There she was greeted by the Child whom she had not seen since the beginning of May and all the family spent Christmas and the beginning of January in London.

The Dorset's relationship with royalty can be seen from a note made by Anne for New Year's day: "As the king passed by, he kissed me. Afterwards the Queen came out into the Drawing Chamber where she kissed me and used me very

kindly". On 8th January 1617 they went to Knole where she and Richard "had a falling out about the land".

## The King Tries Persuasion

Later in January the King took the matter into his own hands but even when James tried to persuade Anne to come to an agreement she beseeched him to pardon her but insisted that she would never give up Westmoreland while she lived upon any condition whatsoever. Richard wanted Anne to agree to the terms suggested but he "was far kinder to me in all these businesses than I expected and was very unwilling that the King should do me any public disgrace".

Anne returned to Knole again from where she wrote to her husband "to give him humble thanks for his noble usage" towards her in London. He came to Knole briefly in the middle of January to see the Child who was ill but, from a letter she received at the beginning of February, Anne perceived he was "clean out with me and how much my enemies have wrought against me".

## Richard is Ill

On 15th March it was the Earl who was ill. On his way from London to Buckhurst (his house in Sussex) he "was so ill by the way that (he) was fain to alight once or

twice and go into a house". On 16th he "sent for John Cook to make broths for him and Josiah to wait in his chamber". Mr. Josiah Cooper, a Frenchman, was one of Richard's pages<sup>584</sup>

On 21st "Ned the footman came from Buckhurst and told me my Lord was reasonable well" but the next day the Steward came to say that "my Lord had not been well" and "his going to London had been put off till the next week".

Perhaps to keep herself occupied, on 22nd March Anne "began a new Irish stitch cushion, . . . The 24th we made rosemary cakes". On 28th, Richard arrived at Knole where, although "troubled with a cough" he must have reassured Anne a little during their walk in the garden since, after he had left for London, Anne was more contented than she had been before his arrival.

Richard returned to Knole at the beginning of April but "upon the 11th my Lord was very ill this day and could not sleep so that I lay on a pallet". On the 12th she "went into Judith's chamber where I mean to continue till my Lord is better". This does not seem to have been a good idea since, on the 14th, Anne "was so ill with lying in Judith's chamber that I had a plain fit of fever . . The 15th I was so sick and my face so swelled that my Lord and and Tom Glenham were fain to keep the table in the drawing chamber and I sat within".

That night, however, she "came to lie in the chamber . . . in the green cloth of gold bed".

## Anne Still Refuses to Give In

Law suits continued and Anne was urged to go to London "to sign and seal" but she was determined that she "would never do it, whatever became of me and mine". In the middle of April she organised letters to be sent to all the tenants of the Westmoreland estates, signing thirty-three letters on 19th April in her own hand.

Whenever Richard was at Knole there were many discussions and arguments: "This night (23rd April) my Lord should have lain with me but he and I fell out about matters". The situation had improved by the next night when "my Lord came to lie in my chamber". But a month later when Richard was in London Anne "wrote not to my Lord because he wrote not to me since he went away".

## Money Problems Did Not Curtail Extravagance

The Earl had money obligations which were difficult to avoid. His mother sued "of her thirds which was an increase of trouble and discontent to my Lord"; this was presumably a reference to the widow's third due to her from her husband's estate.



But Richard did not mean to economise for "about this time my Lord made the Steward alter most of the rooms in the house and dress them up as fine as he could". Nor did Anne and on 25th May the tailor came from London "to take measure of me and to make me a new gown". On the same day she received a letter from her cousin to let her know that Richard had cancelled the jointure he had made her the previous year. By this she was to see how much she had offended him but she was "resolved to take all patiently" and she wrote him a letter to "let him know how ill I took his cancelling my jointure but yet told him I was content to bear it with patience, whatsoever he thought fit".

## Anne's Days at Knole

In the midst of writing about all these problems, Anne intersperses the sentence "This night I took a bath" thus showing how unusual this was. The same day, after supper, they went in the coach to "Goodwife Syslies and ate so much cheese there that it made me sick". Was this the wife of the wealthy yeoman, Edward Sisley, whose will has survived?

The 21st June Anne "spent the time as I did many wearisome days besides in working and walking. After supper I walked in the garden and gathered cherries and talked with Josiah who told me he thought all the men in the house loved me exceedingly except Mathew and two or three of his consorts". Mathew was Mr. Matthew Caldicott, the Earl's favourite.

On 3rd July she rode on horseback to Withyham in Sussex to see the tomb of Richard's grandfather, Thomas Sackville. There she "went down into the vault and came home again, I weeping the most part of the day seeing my enemies had the upper hand of me."

## The Ambivalent Relationship Continues

The relationship between Richard and Anne was a series of ups and downs. When he came to Knole on 12th July he was "something kinder to me than he was, out of pity in regard he saw me so much troubled". When he came again on 3rd August they "had much falling out" but the two of them, plus the Child, all slept together that night.

Next morning, Richard went to the seat of Lord and Lady Lisle at Penshurst but he would not allow Anne to go with him even though she had been specially asked to go. "Yet my Lord and I parted reasonable good friends, he leaving me his grandmother's ring". On 19th August "my Lord wrote me a very kind letter from Lewes to which I wrote an answer presently".

Time passed at Knole as Anne walked with friends to whom she gave "some marmalade of quince" which she had made. Another day she strung her chains and bracelets.

## To London Again

At the beginning of November she went to London where there was much visiting. She sent the Queen "the skirts of a white satin gown all pearled and embroidered with colours which cost me four score pounds (£80) without the satin". Whether or not it was because of this gift, next time she was at Court the Queen sent for her "into her own bedchamber and here I spoke to the King. He used me very graciously and bid me go to his attorney who should inform him more of my desires". This Anne did, not returning to Knoles until 20th November.

On 22nd December 1617 all the household removed to London and there was "great housekeeping all this Xmas at Dorset House". After church on 28th December, there came to dine "a great company of the neighbours to eat venison". At this time Anne had a "great desire to have all my Father's sea voyages written up, so I did set Jones to inquire about these matters".

## A Jump to 1619

Without any apparent break, the diary goes straight from December 1617 to January 1619. On 1st January, Anne sent the Queen "a New Year's gift, a cloth of silver cushion embroidered richly with the King of Denmark's arms and all one with stripes of tent stitch"; the significance of the arms was that the Queen was Anne of Denmark.

Richard returned to Knole on 11th January whilst Anne stayed in London entertaining her guests and visiting her friends until the 23rd. The 8th February was Pancake Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday, and Anne made pancakes with her women in the great Chamber. On 10th she received a letter "[whereby I perceived things went in Westmoreland as I would have them](#)".

Both of them returned to Knole but Richard should have gone to London on 24th February. Anne, however, "[entreated him to stay here the 25th, because on that day 10 years \(ago\) I was married, which I kept as a day of jubilee to me, so my Lord went not till the 27th.](#)"

## Back to London

After Easter both the Earl and his wife spent a considerable time in London with a busy social life but there were also many meetings concerning the estates in Westmoreland and, on 8th May, Anne was told by the Chancellor that she must support her uncle.

Meetings were not always held in the public rooms of the house for next day two men (possibly tenants from Westmoreland) came to see her and "[after I was gone to bed I had them into the chamber. Sir John was very forward to do me all the pleasure he could and Mr. Sherborne promised to speak to the Chancellor on behalf of the tenants](#)".

## Return to Knole

It was 17th May before the household returned to Sevenoaks. Since they had been away over a month, everyone at Knole would have been busy getting the house ready for the return of its master and mistress and there must have been calls on the town for provisions and extra help. Those looking after the horses would have needed to ensure that they were groomed and exercised so as be fit for the return of the Earl and his Lady both of whom were keen riders, Anne often at a very early hour.

On 2nd June she rose about 4 o'clock in the morning and rode abroad with her cousin Mary. Two days later about 3 or 4 o'clock, she and Moll Neville rode up to the Beacon and then "[went up to Lady Selby's for some bread and butter](#)". But on the Sunday Anne "[heard neither sermon or prayers because I had no coach to go to church](#)". Either she wanted an excuse not to go or it was not considered appropriate for the Lady to walk or ride to church which is only just over half a mile from the house.

Drinking the waters "[at the Wells near Tonbridge](#)" was already becoming fashionable and, at the end of July, Lord Rutland and Lady Kathleen Manners dined at Knole on their way back from the Wells to London. For anyone making this journey, Sevenoaks would be a convenient place to stop on the way, either at Knole if they were invited or at one of the hostelrys in the town.

# Margaret Sackville, The Child

Whilst Anne was in London and Westmoreland at the beginning of 1616, her daughter Margaret, only eighteen months old, was left in the care of the servants at Knole. When Anne arrived at Knole in April 1916, she was met at the outermost gate by "my Lady Margaret" but the small child was to be used as a pawn by her father in the hope that Anne would come to a compromise about the land. Thus, on 4th May, under her father's orders, she "went into the litter to go to London, Mrs. Bathurst and her two maids with Mr. Legge and a good company of the servants going with her". Mr. Edward Legge was the Steward of Knole. From there she went to Horseley to be under the care of Richard's sisters and was not to see her mother again until December.

## The Ague

After spending Christmas in London, Anne and the Child returned to Knole on 8th January 1617 where, on the 22nd the "Child had her sixth fit of the ague in the morning" and Anne sent a letter to her husband by Mr. Smith who was going to London in the coach to "let him know in what case the Child was. . . The same day my Lord came down to Knole to see the Child". He returned to London the next day but the Child continued to suffer and on 25th "about 5 or 6 o'clock the fit took her which lasted six or seven hours". Upon the 4th February "should have

been the Child's fit but she missed it" and Thomas Woodgate came from London and brought her a squirrel.

Ague was a form of malaria from which both rich and poor suffered but, whilst being endemic in undrained marshy areas such as the Thames estuary, would not be expected in the higher and drier parts of Kent such as Sevenoaks. Anne sounds as if it was something that was, in her experience fairly common. With the "benign tertian" ague the feverish, shivering fits occurred every third day, this being the time it took the parasites to mature<sup>585</sup>. Thus, if it were her sixth fit on 22nd, her first should have been on the 7th which was before they left London so that it would have been there that Child caught the disease.

## A Fit Every Three Days

On 6th February 1617, "the Child had a grudging (murmuring) of her ague again at night" and on the 12th "a bitter fit of her ague again insomuch I was fearful of her that I could hardly sleep all night so I beseeched God Almighty to be merciful to me and spare her life. . . . After supper the Child's nose bled which I think was the chief cause she was rid of her ague." On 21st February, however, "the Child had an extreme fit of the ague and the Doctor sat by her all the afternoon and gave her a salt powder to put in her beer". Except for the break at the beginning of

February, the Child had thus had a "fit" every three days since the beginning of January.

## The Child Recovers

There was better news of the Child on 11th March for she "had two great teeth come out so that in all she had now eighteen"<sup>586</sup>. However it was not until the 6th April that she "stirred abroad" and then only to be brought down to see her father in Anne's chamber.

## The Upbringing of Young Children

The fact that Anne thought it worth mentioning that she herself had a bath has already been mentioned. At this time even upper-class children were not washed very much; the sponge was commoner than the bath and very few children had a bath before their second or third year. According to orthodox beliefs at this time corporal fluids were deemed healthy to the body and so were removed only infrequently<sup>587</sup>.

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586 presumably "come out" means "appeared" rather than "fell out"

587 Hufton, p.200



On 28th April, the Child, two months short of three years, "put on a pair of whalebone bodice" for the first time. On the 1st May, Anne cut the "strings off from her coats and made her use togs alone so as she had two or three falls at first but had no hurt with them". This juxtaposition seems most unusual to us; that a child of just under three should be wearing a whalebone bodice whilst not able to walk on her own seems quite extraordinary. Perhaps suffering so much from the ague had retarded Margaret's physical development.

## Learning to Walk

Children at that time were not encouraged to crawl but were put in wicker walking frames to support them. One reason for this was that a crawling child could be at great danger from open fires whilst a walking frame restricted its movement. It was also thought that a child allowed to crawl would be later in walking and going about on all fours was to adopt animal practices.

Children also had strings attached to their clothes so that could be led, as if on reins, when they began to walk. The strings were cut when the child made its first steps independently and this was an important rite of passage recorded with pride by their mothers, as Anne did here<sup>588</sup>.

On the same day as the strings were cut, "the Child put on her first coat that was laced with lace, being of red baize" and on 15th May, she "put on her white coats and left off many things from her head, the weather growing extreme hot". She was "much commended" by Lady Lisle and other visitors on 25th October but by the end of the month she was "something ill and out of temper like a grudging of an ague which continued about a month or six weeks after".

The whole family spent Christmas 1617 in London but then comes the year's break in the diary.

## Sleeping Alone

On 1st January 1619 "the Child did put on her crimson velvet coat laced with silver lace which was the first velvet coat she ever had". Six months later, on 4th June 1619 "was the first night that the Lady Margaret lay alone, Mavis having a bed made hard by".

The best place for a child to sleep was popularly believed to be in its mother's bed where she could save it from the terrible dreams that shattered infant repose and caused it to wail in the night<sup>589</sup>. In the upper classes, it would be a nursemaid who slept with the child rather than the mother but there could be special

occasions since, on 3rd August 1617, when Richard was at Knole, "the Child lay all night with my Lord and me, this being the first night she did so".

## The Child Reaches her Fifth Birthday

The 2nd July 1619 was Margaret's fifth birthday and so "my Lord caused her health to be drank throughout the house" and she "began to sit for her picture".

Three months later, she was considered old enough to be godmother to "Mary's child", Sir William Selby and Anne's "Coz. Sackville" being his godfathers. "but neither my Lord nor I was at Church".<sup>590</sup> This is the final mention of the Child in Anne's diary but Margaret was fortunate that although throughout her babyhood her parents were at loggerheads regarding the land in the north of England, both were concerned about her welfare.

## The Countess of Thanet

Ten years later Margaret married the Earl of Thanet in 1629 by whom she had twelve children only one of whom died in infancy. She may have suffered from

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590 quotations from Anne's diary, Sackville-West/Clifford, pp. 24-108

the ague as a child and been late in walking but she had also inherited the survival instincts of her mother.

## Travel and Horses

When Anne went to Westmoreland at the beginning of 1616, she was accompanied by her husband as far as Litchfield which is in Hampshire and about sixty miles west of London. They started the journey on 21st February, with two coaches each with four horses and about twenty-six horsemen, reached Litchfield on 26th and soon after parted, Anne continuing to Derby where she arrived in the company of "10 persons and 13 horses".

## From Derby to Westmoreland

From there, "Upon the 1st (March) we went from Parsons House near the Dangerous Moors being eight miles and afterwards the ways so dangerous the horses were fain to be taken out of the coach to be lifted down the hills. This day Rivers' horse fell from a bridge into the river. We came to Manchester about ten at night". Presumably it was the coach rather than the horses which was lifted down

the hill. Anne was still only about two-thirds of the way with about another hundred miles to cover but no further details are given of the journey.

This is the only long journey described in detail but it gives an idea of the size of the Dorset's equine establishment and shows the problems encountered in remote areas.

## **By Horse, Coach or Litter**

Even without those to the north, the Earl and his wife made many journeys, locally, to and from London and further afield, sometimes on horseback and sometimes in a coach. A litter was also used occasionally: At Christmas 1617, when all the household removed to London, the Child "[went before in a litter](#)". In addition, stewards and messengers were continually travelling between Knole and London. This would have required a large number of horses to be kept at both places with extra ones being hired as necessary.

On 23rd January 1619 Anne returned to Knole from London "[in a litter, the Child riding all the way in her coach, I went through the City and over the bridge but she crossed the water](#)". Dorset House was on the north side of the Thames and the Child would have been taken across on the ferry (or in a private boat) to the coach waiting on the south bank.

Coaches in the time of Queen Elizabeth were uncomfortable since they had no springs and were also draughty and slow. By 1619, however, a coach would have made a journey such as that from London to Sevenoaks more pleasant, for all except keen horsemen, particularly if the weather were not very good.

Sometimes a wife would ride pillion behind her husband but there is no mention of this with regard to Richard and Anne who was probably too good a horsewoman to want to travel in that fashion.

## **Horses of All Kinds**

The Earl had horses of different types: those capable of working as a team to draw the coach, horses which were amenable and could be ridden by people not necessarily experienced, and those which were very fit and well-trained and could gallop for long distances. The latter would need the rider to be an expert since they might be temperamental.

Most farms would have one or more cart-horses for general agricultural work, including the pulling of carts whilst packhorses, for carrying goods long distances, were the other main type. Horses to be ridden both long distances and short had always been required and we have seen in the case of Pynden's murder at the end of the sixteenth century how quickly a group of men could be gathered together. Saddle and coach-horses were generally of cart-horse stock, mainly foreign

breeds; those ridden by the Earl and his lady may have had Turkish blood in them, or that of an Irish Hobbie<sup>591</sup>. Horses such as these were expensive animals both to buy and feed; a grey gelding and two grey mares stolen in 1625 were valued at between £5 and £7.

## The Men to Look After Them

At Knole, there was Mr. Peter Basket, Gentleman of the Horse, three grooms "of the Great Horse", the groom "of my Lady's Horse", the groom "for the Stranger's Horse" and the groom "of the Stables". The "Coachman's Man" and the Postillion were also listed in the "Catalogue of the Household and Family" of the Earl of Dorset in 1613 "and so continued until 1624"<sup>592</sup>. There would also have been numerous stableboys at Knole and a similar, if smaller, establishment at Buckhurst. In his will of 1624, Richard left to Anne his "carriage made by Mefflyn, lined with green cloth and laced with green and black silk lace, and my six bay coach geldings"<sup>593</sup>.

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591 Thirsk (1967), p.191

592 Sackville-West/Clifford, pp. lvii - lxi

593 Sackville-West, p.81

## Riding "Very Hard"

At the beginning of May 1617 Richard rode from Buckhurst to London, (about 40 miles) "in four hours, he riding very hard". Given that the going would not have been good all the way, to average 10 miles an hour would require a very fit horse. Richard needed to be able to travel in all kinds of weather. At the end of February 1619, he had to return to London but, "by reason of the great snow" he had to ride rather than go by coach. Unfortunately he "was so ill after his journey that, whereas he intended to return two or three days (later) he stayed nine or ten". In what state was the horse after the journey?

## Anne's Horses

Anne was fond of riding and had horses of her own. After supper, in May 1617, she went out with the Child who "rode the piebald nag that came out of Westmoreland". Since the Child was not yet three, this must have been a "nag", probably being led, which could be trusted with a child as its rider. When Anne had been in Westmoreland a year earlier she had been sent "a dapple grey nag for my own saddle".

Whilst a nag could be an inferior horse, it could also be a small, docile one which would be ideal for the Child even if Anne herself would have preferred a more



sprightly mount. Perhaps the dapple grey horse which arrived on 15th July 1617, Mrs. Arundell having long promised it, was such a one.

Women of rank were, however, prepared to walk considerable distances although often only if they could follow the old saying "it is good going on foot with a horse in the hand". In 1639, Eliza Cope wrote to her sister, the Countess of Bath: "we have had extreme ill weather . . but now I will take the benefit of this frost to go visit some of my neighbours on foot tomorrow about seven miles off but I will have a coach and 6 horses within a call against I am weary".<sup>594</sup>

## Horses for Hunting

There was also the need of horses for recreation. Anne seems to have enjoyed riding but there is no mention of her following the hunt. The Earl, as would be expected, obviously enjoyed the thrill of the chase. He "went a hunting the fox and the hare" at Knole at the end of April but he also required his own horses to be brought to him wherever he might be.

On 4th February 1617 a messenger arrived at Knole after dinner "with a letter to Tom, the groom, to meet my Lord at Hampton Court with his hunting horses".

"Upon the 22nd February, Basket went up with the great horses to my Lord because my Lord intended to ride a day's journey with the Prince".

It was not only horses which had to be taken from Knole to other places: on 3rd March 1617, the under farrier (Tom Petley) and Tom, the groom, "[went to Buckhurst with my Lord's horses and hounds to meet my Lord there](#)". Whilst the horses would be led, perhaps one rider leading one or two other horses, the hounds could have been loose. Modern packs are trained to respond to calls from the "whippers in" and there is no reason why modern methods of training hounds should not have been applied in the seventeenth century. Three riders, six to eight horses, and a pack of hounds would have been met relatively rarely on the roads between Sevenoaks and Buckhurst but, when they did pass that way, they must have been a fine sight.

## **"A Merry Progress"**

It was not only Royalty who made Progresses. "[The 11th \(of August 1617\) my Lord went from Buckhurst beginning his progress into Sussex](#)". With him were Sir Henry Neville, three other gentlemen and about thirty horsemen. "[they being very gallant, brave and merry](#)". In the middle of September he was "[in the midst of his merry progress far out of Sussex where he had hunted in many gentlemen's Parks](#)".

Returning to Knole at the end of the month, he showed off "his stables and all his great horses" to two of the local gentry who had come to dine.<sup>595</sup>

## Other Recreations

The Dorsets had a full social life both at Knole and in London. There were private visits, often used to show off some prized possessions as when Sir Henry Neville's lady came to Knole and Anne "carried her up to my closet and showed her all my things and gave her a pair of Spanish leather gloves". Or, as when Anne and her "Lord went together to my Lady Arundel's where I saw all the pictures and statues in the lower rooms".

In addition to his horses and hounds, Richard had cocks for cock-fighting: in May 1616 he "won £200 at the Cocking Match" and three years later "my Lord's cocks fought at Whitehall when my Lord won five or six battles". Betting of all kinds was commonplace: in July 1616, the Earl's footman "lost his race to my Lord Salisbury and my Lord lost 200 twenty shilling pieces (£200) by betting on his side".

## Richard as Patron of Scholars

There was a more serious side to Richard since he was patron to a number of scholars including Ben Jonson and Fletcher and numbered among his friends John Donne, the poet<sup>596</sup>.

Donne was chaplain to James I and it was the king who appointed him rector of Sevenoaks in July 1616, a post he retained until his death in 1631 but it is not known how much time he spent in the parish. He was there, however, a year after his appointment since, on 26th July, he made a private visit to Knole. The next day, a Sunday, Anne went to church "both forenoon and afternoon, Dr. Donne preaching and he and the other strangers dining with me in the great Chamber".

## January 1619

London in January 1619 was a busy time for the Sackvilles. "The 2-3-4-5th I sat up and had many ladies come to see me, and much other company, and so I passed the time. My Lord went often to the Court abroad and on Twelfth Eve lost 400 pieces playing with the King. The 6th the Prince had the Masque at night in the Banqueting House." This was possibly the last entertainment in the Banqueting House for, on 12th January, "it was burnt to the ground and the writings in the

signet office were all burnt". On 13th May 1619 "my Lord made a great supper to two or three of the Frenchmen that came over with the ambassador. After supper, there was a play and a banquet at which there were a great many lords and ladies."

## Anne and Gambling

Glecko was a gambling game which Anne often played; either she always lost or she only recorded her losses which were £27 "and odd money" on 28th December 1616. After supper on 8th March 1617 she "played at Glecko with the Steward, as I often do after dinner and supper". It was not only the Steward among the upper servants with whom she was prepared to play since she spent most of her time later on that month "walking and playing at cards with the Steward and Basket (Gentleman of the Horse) and had such ill luck that" she resolved not to play for three months.

Anne's gambling would hardly have come under the aegis of the Groom Porter but that of Richard and the other courtiers may well have done. The Groom Porter was a position at court the duties of which included the regulation of gaming within the court including supplying the cards and dice and deciding upon disputes arising during play.

Both Henry VII and Henry VIII had tried to ban gambling games but, not surprisingly, with little success.

Elizabeth decided it might be more effective to organise it rather than forbid it since men were so "given and bent to" these pastimes that "secretly or openly they do commonly play, and that no penalty of the laws and statutes aforesaid hath heretofore restrained them." In 1576 she appointed Thomas Cornwallis as Groom Porter and, by the time of James I, the Groom Porter was the overseer of all officially regulated gambling throughout the country. The Groom Porter was still regulating "all manner of gaming within the kingdom" in 1706 and the office was not to be abolished until the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>597</sup>

## The Game of Bowling

"Burley Break", which Anne and Richard played on 22nd April 1617 "upon the Bowling Green" and again on Whit Sunday "after supper", sounds like an outdoor game.

Bowling alleys were included in the pastimes provided for those attending the celebrations connected with the marriage of Prince Arthur to Katherine of Aragon but a description closer too the time of the Sackvilles was written in 1629: the

game of bowling "doth make the fathers surpass their children in apeish toys and delicate dog-tricks". There were six postures: first, handle your bowl, then advance it, charge it, aim it, discharge it and ply it. "In which last posture of plying your bowl, you shall see many varieties and divisions, as wringing of the neck, lifting up of the shoulders, clapping of the hands, lying down on one side, running after the bowl. . . The mark which they aim at hath sundry names such as a Block, a Jack and a Mistress".<sup>598</sup>

## Reading

Anne read, or had read to her, a large number of books covering a wide range of topics. How much of this she regarded as recreation it is difficult to tell since the entries in the diary are usually of the form "I sat at my work and heard Rivers and Marsh read Montaigne's Essays which book they have read almost this fortnight". That was in November 1616; in the following January Rivers was reading Montaigne's Plays and Moll Neville, The Fairy Queen. Her work was probably the Irish stitch cushions which she made.

A little later in 1617, perhaps because it was Lent, the readings turned to the Bible. On the 8th March she "made an end of reading Exodus" with Mr. Ran and on 13th "made an end of Leviticus". She spent the 16th walking in the Park

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598 from "Wit and Mirth" written by Taylor in 1629; quoted by Brand, Vol.2, p. 297

carrying her Bible and "thinking on my present fortunes and what troubles I have passed through". They had "made an end of reading Deuteronomy" on 27th but Richard who was then at Knole required Mr. Ran's services himself so that Anne had to leave off reading the Old Testament until she could find somebody to read it with her.

Anne spent most of Good Friday listening to Kate Buchin read the Bible and other religious books but a week later she went down to "my Lord's closet" and "read much in the Turkish History and Chaucer. The Arcadia, Mr. Saragol's Book of the Supplication of the Saints, Ovid's Metamorphoses, Leicester's Common Wealth ("in which there's many things concerning the reignment and death of the Queen of Scots") and the Book of Joseph were other books she had read to her."<sup>599</sup>

## Anne Kept to her Chamber

At the end of October 161? "the Drawing Chamber chimney was on fire so that" Anne "supped in the new Drawing Chamber with my Lord" but she was unwell and "never stirred" out of her bed-chamber till 23rd March. On 8th November she "fell into a swoon" but all "the Ladies hereabouts were very kind to me all the time of my not being well".



Nothing has survived after the end of December 1619 when Anne was still determined to keep her "chamber and did not so much go over the threshold of the door".

## The Household of the Third Earl

The Catalogue of the Household of Richard, Earl of Dorset, at Knole from 1613 to 1624 has survived; it names the people of the household and gives the tables at which they sat<sup>600</sup>.

### My Lord's Table

At "My Lord's Table", in addition to Richard, Anne and his two children, were Mr. Sackville, Mr. Frost, John Musgrave and Thomas Garret.

Thomas Frost, "gent. of Knole" was buried on 5th June 1623. In his will he left £700 in legacies ranging from £400 to one of his nephews down to £1 each to a number of people but there are no charitable bequests. He appointed his brother Francis as executor but mentions neither land, money nor residue of goods from

which his bequests could be paid. Amongst those to whom Frost left money were John Musgrove (or Musgrave) and Thomas Poore, Yeoman of the Wardrobe.

## The Parlour Table

Mr. Matthew Caldicott, the chaplain who was Richard's favourite, and Mr. Edward Legge, the steward, sat at the Parlour Table together with the gentleman of the horse, the auditor and secretary and gentleman usher. This group also included six women and three men whose roles are not specified, three pages including the Frenchman, Josiah Cooper, and Mr. Marsh (attendant on my Lady).

In large houses such as Knole, the steward was usually the person in charge of all the domestic arrangements. One of his main duties was the management of the feeding of the household which, particularly when there were guests and entertaining, required a considerable amount of organisation. Some provisions would come from the estate itself, some from the locality and some from further afield.

In the middle of the previous century, the steward of Ingatestone Hall in Essex, "a mid-sixteenth-century manor-house of moderate size" and home of Sir William Petre, visited each week "the granaries, mill-house, malt-house, bake-house, dairy, dovecot and the various rooms for cheese, fish and so on. With the cook he inspected the larders and other kitchen stores, ending his tour with the butler in

the butteries and the cellars. In his book was written each Saturday a statement of what provisions had been received a week earlier, how much was spent and what remained"<sup>601</sup>

Knole, at least during the time of the 3rd Earl and Lady Anne, would have been more difficult to organise than Ingatestone Hall but Richard may not have been as meticulous an overseer as Sir William and his wife.

## **The Clerks Table**

The control of the kitchens, provisions and the kitchen staff was delegated to one or more clerks of the kitchen, At this time, Edward Fulks and John Edwards were both Clerks of the Kitchen with Edward Care, the Master Cook assisted by three other cooks and a pastryman.

Also sitting at the Clerks Table were the Yeomen of the Buttery and the Pantry, the Grooms of the Great Chamber and the Wardrobe and the Usher of the Hall, the brewer and under brewer, the baker and under baker, the caterer, two gardeners, the slaughterman and a French boy.

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601 Emminson, 1964, pp. 36-37

## The Long Table

Thomas Poore sat at the Long Table in the Hall with the Yeomen of the Great Chamber and the Granary, various attendants, grooms, footmen and huntsmen. There was also a barber, scrivener, falconer, armourer, a bird-catcher and two "men to carry wood".

## The Laundry-Maids' Table

The list of the women from the Laundry-Maids' Table included "Grace Robinson, a Blackamoor" and, in the Kitchen and Scullery, there was another Blackamoor, John Morockoe whose name sounds as if he could have come from Morocco. John was to be the first of a number of black pages at Knole who were always called John Morocco regardless of what was their actual name<sup>602</sup>.

## John Hall, the Falconer

The inclusion at the Long Table of John Hall, the falconer, indicates that the Earl kept hawks at Knole. A trained hawk was carried hooded on the gloved fist of its master who was usually on horseback. When released, it soared into the sky in

search of prey which it brought to ground where it was located by the sound of the bells attached to its legs. Hawking could be enjoyed as a sport but was also a means of supplying the table. Was Solomon, the bird-catcher, employed in catching birds for eating or in stopping them eating the crops? Perhaps both.

## **Legacies Left by Richard to his Servants**

Some of these servants received legacies under the will of the 3rd Earl. His attendant, Robert Care received £100 and a annuity of £30 whilst Roger Cooke, Attendant on my Lady Margaret, was left £40. Mr. T. Billingsley and Adam Bradford, the barber, and John Guy, Groom of my Lord's Bedchamber, each received an annuity of £20 each whilst the annuities left to John Avery, Usher of the Hall, and John Belgrave, page, were 20 marks (£13.33) each.<sup>603</sup>

## **William Coxe of Knole**

The will of William Coxe of Knole written in March 1616, probably by Thomas Poore, has survived but William is not listed amongst the members of the household. Edward Legge, the steward, was another of the witnesses to this will. In it William left £2 to Grace Robinson (presumably the blackamoor) who attended

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603 Phillips, p.276?

him in his sickness, £2 to John Robinson of Frant in Sussex and £1 to John's brother Charles. If it were not that Grace is described as a blackamoor, she would have been taken as one of the Robinson family of Frant. Had she, early in life, been a servant in the Frant household and then come to Knole?

## Thomas Poore, Yeoman of the Wardrobe

Thomas Poore probably also wrote the will of the baker, William Turner, in 1638. According to his own statement, Poore wrote his own will on 24th May 1649: "[I have written this my will with mine own hand according to my weak creativity](#)". He left over £250 in legacies, mainly to his various cousins with small sums of money and pieces of gold to a number of people, including many from the Sackville family, to buy pairs of gloves. He had three pieces of land, one in Sevenoaks Town which he left to his cousin, another Thomas Poore, who was his executor and two in Surrey which were left to his cousins Anthony and George Poore.

Poore's will contains an unusual variation on the time when a legacy to an underage child was to be paid. Usually a specific age is given but here there is added flexibility: Thomas's three underage female cousins are to have their legacies, two, three and four years after his death "[if they be capable of using or disposing thereof](#)"; otherwise they had to wait until they were twenty.

# Edward Sackville, 4th Earl of Dorset

When he died Richard, the third Earl, left debts of £60,000. In the fifteen years that Richard held the earldom, much of the land he had inherited, including the manor of Sevenoaks, was sold to fuel his extravagances. "Knole, Seal, Kemsing, Whitley Woods, Panthurst Park and lands in Otford and other lands, profits, dry rents in the parish and liberty of Sevenoaks, amounting in all to the value of £500 per annum and above" were mortgaged to Mr. Henry Smith and "afterwards part of this was sold away to the said Smith and the rest to others" with the house being rented back for £100 a year<sup>604</sup>.

Richard was succeeded by his brother Edward whose portrait, by Vandyck, shows him in a swaggering attitude wearing a flame-coloured doublet and the blue Garter. Prior to succeeding his brother Edward had been a Member of Parliament and ambassador to the French Court and, after becoming Earl of Dorset, he held other offices of state.

As far as Knole was concerned, Edward had to rebuild the family's resources and regain the estates sold off by his brother. His son and heir, Richard, was born in 1622 before Edward succeeded to the Earldom but his daughter, Marie, was baptised in Sevenoaks on 12th July 1625.

## Refurnishing at Knole

Edward must have found the furnishings at Knole either very sparse or not to his liking since, four months after his brother's death, he had sent there a large amount of "household stuff" described as they were packed up for transporting<sup>605</sup>.

For the black bed chamber, there was "a fustian down bed, bolster and a pair of pillows, a pair of Spanish blankets, 5 curtains of crimson and white taffeta, the valence to it of white satin embroidered with crimson and white silk and a deep fringe suitable; a test and tester of white satin suitable to the valence. A white rug. All these first packed up in 2 sheets and then packed in a white and black rug and an old blanket." Also for the black bed chamber were "two bedsteads whereof one of them is gilt which, with the posts, tests, curtains, etc. are in all 11 parcels whereof 4 are matted. . 2 high stools, 2 low stools and a footstool of cloth of tissue and chair suitable."

Furniture, which included two walnut tree tables "to draw out at both ends with their frames of the same", curtains and rugs were sent for other rooms and among miscellaneous items were "a round wicker basket wherein are 9 dozen pewter vessels of 9 sorts or sizes", a box containing 3 dozen Venice glasses and a basket in which were 20 dozen maple trenchers.



## A Privy Councillor

The 4th Earl became one of Charles I's Privy Councillor and held many other appointments which meant he had a large amount of state patronage at his disposal. Fortunately, he did not rely on Knole for his income and was able over his time as Earl to repurchase a considerable amount of the property sold by his brother<sup>606</sup>.

He was also able to live in luxury, there being many banquets held at Knole in the 1620s and 30s. The menu for one held on 3rd July 1636 is headed: "To perfume the room often in the meal with orange flower water upon a hot pan. To have fresh bowls in every corner and flowers tied tied upon them, and sweet briar, stock, gilly-flowers, pinks, wallflowers and any other sweet flowers in glasses and pots in every window and chimney"<sup>607</sup>.

## Management of the Park

Whilst high-living went on in the house, the park had to be managed and maintained. Edward added at least 500 acres to the park by obtaining a long lease of Seal Chart and "all woods and underwoods of the waste or common of the

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<sup>606</sup> Dunlop, p.111

<sup>607</sup> Sackville-West, p.99

Manors of Seal and Kemsing, viz., upon Rumshott Common, Riverhill Common, Hubbard Hill Common and Westwood Common<sup>608</sup>.

Part of the park was used for the cultivation of hops and part leased out to farmers for joistment, that is, grazing<sup>609</sup> with the upkeep of the "pales" or fences being one of the major tasks. In November 1628, the money spent on the "pale in Knole park for one year" totalled £8 9s 6d (£8.48); this includes<sup>610</sup>:

-	for felling, clearing and making six loads of pales rails, posts and shores,	2 men	£0.40
-	setting up panels of pales blown down by the wind against River hill at 10d each day each man		£0.25
-	four hundred nails for the pales		£0.10
-	paid for setting up pales at mock-beech gate		£0.03
-	paid a labourer for spreading the mole hills in the meads and for killing moles		£0.21

Moles caught were paid for at the rate of 1.5d (0.6p) each. Were their furs used for coats?

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608 Sackville-West, p.98

609 Sackville-West, p.97

610 Phillips, p.320

## The Wariner, Stewards and Bailiffs

Many country estates made money from the sale of conies (rabbits) and Knole was no exception. In 1628 they brought in about £20 with expenses being £10 of which £5.25 was the year's wages for the "wariner". A week's wages for "hunting conies by night and ferret by day" was £0.2.

In the same year the estate paid its steward of Sevenoaks £0.5 and its steward of Seal £2.50; in contrast, the two bailiffs received £10 and £4 respectively. Given the amount paid to the wariner and the bailiffs, there must have been other advantages from being steward in addition to the wages<sup>611</sup>.

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611 Phillips, p.320; Sackville-West, p.97

# Chapter 15

## The Early Stuarts

In this chapter some of the people living in Sevenoaks during the reigns of James I and Charles I are described. The first family described, the Olyvers, goes back to at least the beginning of Tudor times.

### The Parish 1600-1650

647

Sevenoaks prospered for at least the first forty years of the century with its population increasing up to about 1600 in the 1620s. Knole, whilst it was lived in by the Sackvilles must have a great source of wealth.

### Lawyers

650

This was a time when lawyers were in great demand and qualifying as a one provided a means for the gentry to add to their wealth. The Tebolds are one example are a family which included a number of successful lawyers.

### The Olyvers, Kettles & Panthurst Park

652

The Olyvers, of which Moses Olyver was a member, were a large family living mainly in the parish of Seal but with shops in Sevenoaks Market from 1502 onwards. Moses had a lease on Panthurst Common where cattle were grazed.

### Kippington Manor & Thomas Farnaby

662

The manor of Kippington goes back to at least the middle of the fourteenth century. About 1630 it was bought by Thomas Farnaby, a successful teacher, who established a school there. A patron of Charles I, Farnaby supported the Royalist cause and Kippington was subsequently sequestered.

### The Stuart Pocockes

669

The Pococke family was introduced in Chapter 10; three more wills have survived from the first half of the seventeenth century. The family owned a considerable amount of land and a number of inns.

### The Petleys

681

The wills of Elizabeth Petley, widow and innholder, the unmarried Rose Petley and the wife Mary Petley of Ightham show three independent women. The years 1587 to 1594 show William Petley making numerous appearances at the local courts whilst William Petley of Sevenoaks and his son George were presented at the Quarter Sessions in 1605.

### John Blome, Mercer & Land Owner

686

John Blome was a prominent in the town of which bailiff from 1607 to 1613 and again in 1623. He had four sons between whom most of his extensive land and property was to be divided. There were., however, possible complications due to developments which had not been completed, leases and the possibility that he may have made one or more of his sons a joint purchaser.

### William Seyliard, Gentleman

698

When William Seyliard wrote his will he had six children under sixteen and he left complicated instructions as to how his wealth should provide for them until they came of age. His property was mainly in London and he was worried that it might be destroyed in a fire.

### The Hills Family of Sevenoaks

701

John Hills and his son, also John, were butchers in Sevenoaks but the two wills which have survived are for two yeomen, Richard and John, also father and son.

# The Parish 1600-1650

That Sevenoaks prospered during this half century, or at least up to the beginning of the Civil War, seems to be so but there is little hard evidence of specific events and practically nothing is known of the majority of the population, that is those who were not gentry or rich tradesmen, did not cross the law or write wills (or if they did, they were proved at the Deanery of Shoreham and have not survived) .

Calculating the population from the parish records, that of Sevenoaks was about 1300 at the end of Elizabeth's reign increasing to over 1600 in the 1620s but falling again in the 1630s<sup>612</sup>. Lansberry<sup>613</sup> uses the Hearth Tax returns of 1664 to calculate the population in that year when the number of households in the parish of Sevenoaks was:

Sevenoaks Town	186	}	
Sevenoaks Weald	85	}	
Riverhead	55	}	
			totalling 326

Taking 4.5 people per household, this gives 1467 inhabitants whilst, using the number of baptisms for the years 1661 to 1664, he estimated the total as 1500.

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<sup>612</sup> Zell (2000), pp.274-276; see also Appendix 13

<sup>613</sup> Lansberry, p.xiii

## The Gentry

For most of Elizabeth's reign Knole had been occupied by gentry such as the Lennardes who, whilst wealthy and with London connections, did not live in the style of courtiers like the Sackvilles who, in the reign of James I, used Knole as their main country residence.

Although some of the Elizabethan gentry families came to Sevenoaks during the latter part of the sixteenth century, in 1640 half the gentry in the Sevenoaks area were of medieval Kentish origin with only a fifth having come into the county since 1603. This contrasts with nearly half the gentry in north-west Kent, closer to London, who arrived after 1603 and only one-eighth in the Maidstone area, about ten miles further from London than Sevenoaks<sup>614</sup>.

Some of the gentry would have had a basic training in law with some of these going on to become professional lawyers. But others became Catholics and, as such, their participation in local government was severely limited. These recusants, as they were called, are described in chapter 17.



## **The “Others”**

The yeomen and those connected with the clothing industry continued to prosper and the latter are described in chapter 19. Only a little is known about the artisans and tradespeople (described in chapters 18 and 20 respectively). Where the will of a husbandman has survived, a small amount of detail can be gleaned but the ordinary people of the parish appear in the records, for the most part, only when they have come into contact with the law, usually by committing an offence.

## **Extravagance at Knole**

During the reign of James I, the extravagance of life at Knole must have made a great difference to the town of Sevenoaks. Richard Sackville, the 3rd Earl of Dorset, was one of the richest men in England until he had spent all his money on high living, gambling, entertainments and fine clothes. His successor, Edward, was wealthy before he inherited Knole which meant that, although much of the estate had been sold, life at Knole continued in the extravagant style set by his elder brother. This was to continue until the Civil War.

Luxury foods were required with all the extras necessary for a banquet: flowers for decoration, additional servants, horses for the travellers, accommodation for those who did not stay at Knole itself. With the Sackvilles living at Knole, furnishings,

decoration and maintenance to the building and lands would have been kept at a higher standard than in the previous century. Whilst some of the fittings would have been brought from London, there would have scope for local artisans and, for menial work, the Lord of the Manor would have looked to the people in the neighbourhood.

## Lawyers

Between the Reformation and the development of medicine, engineering and science after the Civil War, the law was the pre-eminent profession for the gentry and the early years of the seventeenth century were perhaps an almost unique period of juristic importance in English history<sup>615</sup>.

The law provided the sons of the middling gentry with a means of adding to the family wealth and both the Lennarde and Bosville families included a number of lawyers. John Lennarde was a JP from 1559 to 1591 and both his sons, Sampson from 1593 and Samuel from 1598 until 1613 or later. Each generation of the Bosvilles also served on the bench and Edward Sackville, the 4th Earl, was also a JP.

## The Tebolds of Seal and Sevenoaks

An earlier example is Richard Tebold (or Theobald) second son of the John Tebold who owned a shop in Sevenoaks at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Richard was admitted to the Middle Temple about 1540 and went on to become the deputy to Queen Elizabeth's Remembrancer (the Collector of personal taxes). In addition to land in Seal and Sevenoaks, Richard owned land in Great Saint Bartholomews in London which is where he lived for a considerable part of his married life.

Richard's nephew, Steven Tebold, who died in 1619 was a wealthy lawyer who was granted arms in 1583 when he was about thirty. A Stephen Theobald of Sevenoaks was a JP from 1601 to at least 1613 and it could be he whose very short will was written in 1631 without any religious preamble. This testator left all his "[estate of lands in Seal or elsewhere](#)" to his wife Mary and then to his daughter Katherine who was also to have £200 at the age of eighteen or when she married whichever first occurred. No burial was recorded for Stephen in either Sevenoaks or Seal; maybe he was taken ill suddenly or had an accident.

# The Olyvers, Kettles & Panthurst Park

The Olyvers were a large group of families owning shops in Sevenoaks but living mainly in Seal. In 1502, Thomas Olyver, senior, bought a shop with a basement in Sevenoaks Market and it is probably this Thomas Olyver whose will of 1505<sup>616</sup> has survived. He divided his land between his two sons, John and William with John receiving some lying in the parish of Sevenoaks.

John's will of 1512 has also survived and, by this time, he owned "tenements, lands and buildings" called Kettles which had previously belonged to his father-in-law, William Baker. Perhaps Kettles was his wife's dowry; it is in the south of the parish of Seal with Kettleshill Farm just inside the Seal/Sevenoaks boundary so that some of its land could have been in Sevenoaks. After the death of John's wife, Kettles went to his son, George - see Tree 15.1 below.

William, the other son of Thomas Olyver, senior, had a shop in the market place of Sevenoaks which he had perhaps inherited from his father; in 1527 he left it to his eldest son, another Thomas. Described as a yeoman, William lived at Fawke and, like many of the other Olyvers, was a wealthy man owning lands in Leigh, Kemsing and Tonbridge as well as Seal and Sevenoaks. His wealth seems to have been based on sheep since he gave one of his sons sixty wether sheep valued at 12d (5p) each with the rest of his sheep going to his other son.

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<sup>616</sup> the Olyver wills mentioned are listed, with references, at the beginning of Section 2

## The Sons of George Olyver of Kettles

George of Kettles had three sons all of whom wrote wills which survived:

- Thomas, the elder, of Kettles which he had inherited from his father, was born before 1519 since he, and his brother William, were mentioned in their grandmother's will of 1521. He must therefore have been approaching seventy when he died in 1585 having written his will in 1581. By this time he seems to have moved from Kettles to nearby Absoloms.
- William, yeoman of Smythet, the middle son, had three sons, Richard, William and Moses, and seven daughters. He died in 1576 when he was about sixty but three of his daughters and Moses were still underage. William's youngest son is taken as the Moses Olyver of Sevenoaks whose will has survived.
- Christopher, the youngest, wrote his will in 1558 when he was probably in his thirties but unmarried. Some of his "stuff" was lying in the hands of Richard Carrier, citizen and skinner of London and this he left to Jane, the skinner's daughter who he had perhaps been planning to marry.

## Subsequent Owners of Kettles

Thomas, the eldest of George's sons, had eleven children born between 1540 and 1560, all except the youngest being mentioned in 1588 in the will of their uncle Christopher. Seven years earlier, when writing his will in 1582 Thomas mentioned only three children - his sons William, John and Jeffrey. He left Kettles to his second son William but, even so, when his eldest son, Thomas, died a year after his father he was described as Thomas Olyver of Kettles. This Thomas left five children with the eldest only eighteen. He instructed that his land, etc. (which included some in the city of London) be sold "[to the best advantage](#)" to pay his debts and legacies with the rest of the proceeds being divided between his children.

William Olyver of Kettles married Isabella Rede in September 1590 and they had a son baptised in January 1594 but Isabella was buried less than three weeks later.

The next mention of Kettles in an Olyver will is in that of John Olyver of Apseland, gentleman, written in March 1640. It was to be sold to pay John's debts and provide portions of £300 for each of his three daughters. The "[overplus, my debts and legacies and funeral charges being paid](#)" he gave to his eldest son John. This implies that John expected that Kettles and the lands, etc. appertaining to it, could be sold for well over £1000. John could have been the grandson of William of Smythet, George's second son.

## Tree 15.1 - The Family of Thomas and Alice Olyver

		#3905 Thomas - Alice #3906			
will:		24 Oct 1505			
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#3907	#3914	#3908	#3910	#3909	
John of Kettles - Alice Baker		Johane	William of Fawke - Eleanor	Edith	
will: 18 Jun 1512	14 Jan 1521		2 Jan 1527		
-----					
#3915	#3916	#233	#3920	#3924	
George of Kettles - Marion		Thomas of Fawke - Margaret	William of Cranbrook	Katherine - Thomas Hartridge	
will:		2 Jan 1562			
		5 children		7 children	
-----					
#265	#266	#253	#2037		
Thomas, the elder, of Kettles - Agnes/Ann		William of Smythet - Johane	Christopher	daughter	
will: 17 Mar 1581		15 May 1576	10 Mar 1558		
bur: 4 Apr 1585		5 Oct 1586	1576		
		see Tree 15.2			
-----					
#421	#422	#220	#717	#3984	#3985
Thomas - Anne	Johane	Sylvester	Lawrence	Robert	Margaret
will: 18 Sep 1586					
bur: 21 Sep 1586					
-----					
#423	#490	#750	#800	#861	#1134
Thomas	George	Anne	John	Susan	Robert
bap: 22 Aug 1568	22 Oct 1570	19 Apr 1573	1 May 1575	26 Dec 1577	27 Nov 1581

## William Olyver of Rumshott

The William Olyver of Rumshott who married Ellen Pelsett in June 1578 could have been the second son of William of Smythet - see Tree 15.2. Rumshott is an area just to the west of Kettles and distinct from Rumshed, the manor owned by the Lones.

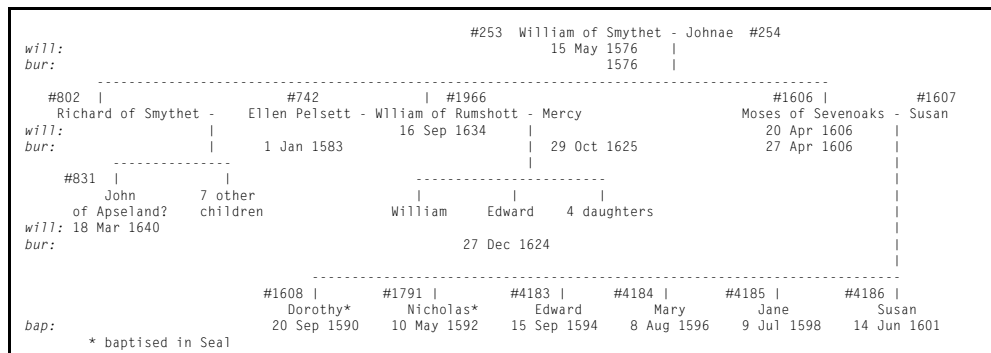
Ellen died as a result of childbirth in 1583 but William married a woman called Mercy and they had at least six children. He was still living at Rumshott in 1625 when Mercy, the wife of William Olyver of Rumshott was buried but sometime during the next ten years he moved to Fawke leaving his son, another William, living at Rumshott. In 1634 when he was "[well stricken in years](#)" and now William Olyver of Fawke, he wrote his will; he would have been about eighty.

The land mentioned in William's will is in the Weald of Sevenoaks and he had a shop in the Butchers Shambles of Sevenoaks. A William Olyver was churchwarden in 1632 and there was also a William Olyver, churchwarden in 1644-45.

With a butchers shop, it looks as if at least the Rumshott branch of the family had changed from sheep farming to cattle.



## Tree 15.2 - Family of William Olyver of Smythet



## Moses Olyver

About 1593, after having had two children in Seal, Moses Olyver and his family moved to Sevenoaks where another four were baptised. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, he had a lease on Panthurst Park which seems to have been used for the grazing of cattle. Moses was living in a farmhouse there when he wrote his will in 1606. He was probably in his mid-forties when he died with all his children underage.

## Moses's Arrangements for his Family

Moses made his son Nicholas, who was fourteen, his executor and although he described his wife as "[his loving wife](#)" and left her £20 and the lease of a tenement, he did not give her name and appointed his brother-in-law, Alexander Waller of Otford, and his good friend Edward Sisley overseers. Waller was to have the custody and government of his son who was "[yet young and not able to manage worldly affairs](#)" and Sisley was to have "[the occupation of the farm house](#)" in which Moses Olyver lived and all the land belonging to it, using the profit from it for the benefit of Moses's children and accounting for it to Waller. Nicholas was the only surviving son but where was Moses's wife and four daughters to live?

In addition, Moses had made a deed of gift granting Sisley his stock of cattle, corn and implements of husbandry for the sum of £240 with which he was to pay the various bequests which Moses had made; these included £40 to each of his four daughters but the latter would not become due until they reached the age of twenty-one or married.

When Moses's will was proved "[Suzanne Olyver, relict of Moses Olyver](#)" was made administrator during the minority of Nicholas. Perhaps Moses knew that this would happen and that therefore his wife would, in effect, have control of his estate until Nicholas came of age.

The will of Edward Sisley, written in February 1619, has survived; if this testator was Moses's friend (which is likely), he lived long enough to see Nicholas reach his twenty-first birthday and take over his duties as executor.

## Panthurst Park in the 13th & 14th Centuries

The name Panthurst Park goes back to at least the thirteenth century when Henry Paneter witnessed a number of local charters one of which concerned the sale of some land at Godden Green. About 1420, one of Henry's descendants, Thomas Pantier, appeared in a case held at the Court of Chancery<sup>617</sup>. In the late 1440s, Panthurst was part of Knole but it went to the Bartons as the result of the arbitration described earlier, returning again to Knole during the time of Archbishop Bouchier.

In 1466 a new barn was built at Panthurst with a stone base "4 cartloads of stone called Ragge" being used for "the underpinning of the said barn". The Kentish ragstone was quarried near where the barn was built with other cartloads being sent to Knole for the building being carried out there.

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617 Lambeth, Cart. Misc. v. 135 and 132 quoted by Ward, p.44

An account for the tiles used on the Panthurst barn has also survived:

10,000 tiles on the new barn there	10s
2,000 tiles bought at Longford	6s
300 tiles called Holloware	9s.

There were still tile works at Longford in the 1930s; Holloware are special tiles for roof ridges, etc.<sup>618</sup>.

## In the 17th Century

About 1614, Panthurst Park was leased by another yeoman, William Longe, for £45 from the Knole estate<sup>619</sup> which had presumably owned it when Moses Olyver was farming it. In 1621 Longe, had cattle "[in his farm called Panthurst](#)" and these, together with other cattle were to be sold to pay his debts. William's main connections seem to have been with Chatham and Aylesford, the latter being about six miles south of Chatham and fourteen miles east of Sevenoaks but he wanted to be buried in Sevenoaks churchyard. And so he was: William Longe, householder, was buried on 15th August 1621 with the will being proved on 30th November 1621. Details of William Longe's family are given in section 2.

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618 Ward, p.93-94

619 Phillips, p.263

In 1627 Sir George Strode purchased Panthurst Park for £2885 but he supported the crown against Cromwell so that his estates were sequestered and, in 1649, he asked to be allowed to compound for his opposition to Parliament. This was granted but, in order to recover his lands, he had to forfeit half their value which involved selling Panthurst<sup>620</sup>.

A map of 1630 shows Panthers Park as consisting of 56 parcels of land and it was presumably one (or more) of these which William Longe rented. Unfortunately this map cannot now be found but Gordon Ward describes it as showing the parcels of land into which it was divided with the fields "depicted as occupied by cattle - strange creatures amongst which horses, sheep and cows can be distinguished but which include monsters partaking of the characters of all three"<sup>621</sup>.

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620 Ward, p.182

621 Ward, p.43-44; he quotes from Kent Fines, 99-71-376(1293), Lambeth Cart. Misc., x68(1325), etc.). Another map of Panthurst Park 1630 showing beasts in the Park has survived: CKS U442 P102

# Kippington Manor & Thomas Farnaby

In the 1630s Kippington, one of the sub-manors of Otford, was the home of Thomas Farnaby: "the most noted school master of his time"<sup>622</sup>.

In 1362, Reginald de Cobham had died possessed of Kippington and, in 1472, it passed by marriage to Sir Edward Borough<sup>623</sup>, possibly a member of the Burgh family who owned a considerable amount of land in the Sevenoaks area during the reign of Elizabeth. At some stage the manor became divided into Little Kippington (later to become Clenches Farm) and Great Kippington.

## William Burgis, Clothier

In the 1590s, the clothier, William Burgis, lived at Great Kippington; in 1594 he wrote his will in which he is described as "old and weak". In addition to the £2 he left to the poor of the parish, he gave ten shillings to "the poor people inhabiting in the almshouses". He had four married daughters and two sons and he had lent George Hanger, one of his sons-in-law, £400 having arranged in the terms of the bill detailing the loan for this to repaid to his sons, John and Thomas.

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622 a Wood, p.214

623 Standen, p.9; the village of Cobham is about two miles west of Rochester

If, however, George paid Thomas's £200 before the time specified in the bill, or was prepared to employ some or all of it "[any way to the benefit and behoof of my said son Thomas, whether it be before my decease or before the time limited for the payment thereof which I pray him to do](#)", then George Hanger was to be discharged of as much as he had spent of the £200. It seems that Thomas was of the age where he needed some money to be spent establishing him and William hoped George would do this.

After William's death, Great Kippington passed to the Hangar family who sold it to John Cowper and, in 1630, Richard Cooper, a dyer, sold it to Thomas Farnaby for £2200<sup>624</sup>.

## The Early Life of Thomas Farnaby

Thomas Farnaby was obviously a "character" and details of his life were recorded in 1808<sup>625</sup>.

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<sup>624</sup> Standen, p.9; Sevenoaks Local Studies Centre, Farnaby-Austin MS., indenture 1 Nov. 1630 quoted by Lansberry, p.xxiii

<sup>625</sup> Noble, quoted by Standen, p.9

"His great grandfather was an Italian musician; his grandfather was mayor of Truro in Cornwall; his father a carpenter in London where he was born in 1575; from thence he went to Merton College, Oxford . . . Gaily volatile, he quitted Britain and Protestantism for Spain and Popery."

But life in Spain was too restraining and, in 1595 (still only twenty) he joined Drake and Hawkins on what was to be their last voyage since, after fighting in the Caribbean, both fell ill and died in 1596. Farnaby returned to England in their ship and became a soldier in the Low Countries. This was no more of a success than Popery or the life of a sailor so he returned to England.

"Landing in great distress in the West of England he assumed the surname of Baynraf, an anagram of his own. His poverty was so great that he was obliged to wander from village to village, teaching the horn-book to the cottagers' children for a precarious bread. At length, at Martock in the county of Somerset, he gained a respectable school which, under him, flourished so much that it obtained the highest reputation. Removing to London, he kept an academy . . . where he instructed at one time, about three hundred sons of the nobility and gentry."



## He Becomes a Teacher

Whilst he was beginning to set himself up as a teacher, he married Susan Pierce of Launcells, Cornwall, by whom he had a daughter and son but Susan died sometime before 1629. From 1612 onwards Farnaby wrote and published a large number of items some of which are listed in Athenae Oxoniensis and in 1632 he was presented with a Royal Patent granting him the sole right of printing and publishing certain of his works.

One of the reasons why Farnaby was able to prosper as a teacher was that, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the gentry had begun to see the advantages of having their sons educated outside the household. In the 1620s he had a school in London to which Sir Edward Dering, junior, had been sent after spending a short time at the "[school of a barbarous tyrant at Hothfield](#)" to which he had gone at the age of six<sup>626</sup>.

Towards the end of the 1620s, Farnaby was in a position to marry Anne Howson, daughter of the bishop of Dublin, their son Francis being born in 1630 when Farnaby was fifty-five. It was at this time that he moved to Sevenoaks.

## Schoolmaster at Kippington

Here he set up another school where he taught "the sons of several noblemen and gentlemen (who boarded with him) with great esteem and grew rich". So successful was he that, in addition to Kippington, he was in a position to buy land in Otford and an estate near Horsham in Sussex.

In 1641, at the request of Charles I, he wrote a Latin Grammar to replace the one in use in "the public schools"<sup>627</sup> but Farnaby, even approaching seventy, was not prepared to retire. Not surprisingly given the preferment which Charles had shown him, Farnaby was a Royalist and was one of those who supported the rising in 1643 near Tonbridge. As a result, Kippington was sequestered by the Parliamentarians and Thomas was imprisoned in London. He died there on 11th June 1647 at the age of seventy-two, his body being brought to Sevenoaks for burial. "He was the chief grammarian, rhetorician, poet, Latinist and Grecian of his time and his school was so much frequented that more churchmen and statesmen issued thence than from any school taught by one man in England"<sup>628</sup>.

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627 Standen, p.10

628 a Wood, p.214

## Thomas Farnaby's Will

Since he died in London, that is where his will would have been written, on 24th March 1645/6; it was proved on 4th November 1647. It is a long will with a number of sections repeated identically except for the name of the beneficiary. The scriptor was Robert Abbot who may have been the source of some of the peculiarities but many of them were due to the complications of Thomas Farnaby's estate probably made even more complex because of his imprisonment. Without this, there would still have been problems since he had been married twice and had a son by each of each wives.

The preamble was unusual as was also the ending: "My soul I commend into the hands of my creator with trust in his mercy and through faith in the merits and mediation of my saviour, Jesus Christ, that it finding pardon and remission of sins, shall in the last day be saved and retained to this body then to be glorified, the decent burial whereof I commend to my executrix".

The date was given at the end followed by the commending of "us and all our souls?" to the Lord's protection and mercy "so beseeching god to bless us all in life and death, I commend us and all our souls to his gracious protection and mercy which I beseech the Lord to grant to us all through the whole course of our life, at the hour of death and the day of judgement".

## An Indenture Regarding Some Leases

Prior to writing his will Thomas had had drawn up an indenture tripartite between:

- William Spurstowe of Hackney in Middlesex, clerk, son of William Spurstowe, citizen and mercer of London, deceased
- William Rogers, citizen and fishmonger, and William Horner, citizen and salter, both of London
- himself and his wife, Anne, and John Farnaby, his son by a former wife and Francis Farnaby, his son by Anne.

The subject of this indenture was some leases for "diverse messuages, lands and tenements" which were the demain lands of the Manor of Otford and the Little Park of Otford, "now disparked". By this indenture, which again shows the complexity of land tenure, the reversion of these lands, etc. were settled on Thomas's wife and two sons "in such manner and for such several and respective estate and estates as in the said indentures tripartite is mentioned".

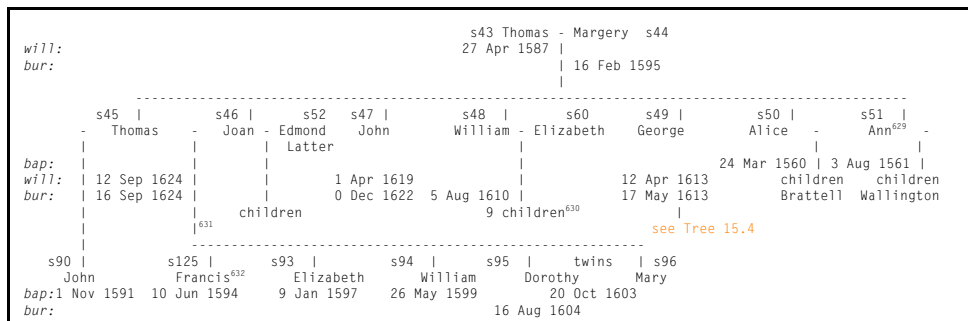
The arrangements for the payment of the profits and the involvement of Spurstowe and Horner were complex, being described in the will with reference to the indenture as were the arrangements made to ensure that "the messuages, lands and tenements may not be sold by either of my said sons nor extinguished but may attend the inheritance thereof and thereby remain in my name and blood for so long as it shall please almighty god according to the respective limitations

of the reversion thereof in the said indenture tripartite limited and appointed". No wonder that the profession of lawyer was a lucrative one.

## **The Stuart Pocockes**

The Pocockes were a large Sevenoaks family who have already been introduced, the first surviving will being that of Thomas Pococke written in 1587. The testators of three of the Pococke wills which have survived from the beginning of the seventeenth century were probably the three sons of the above Thomas and his wife Margery. The fourth will is that of Elizabeth Pococke, maiden.

Tree 15.3  
Some of the Descendants of Thomas & Margery Pococke



s43 Thomas - Margery s44  
27 Apr 1587 |  
| 16 Feb 1595

	s45	s46	s52	s47	s48	s60	s49	s50	s51
	Thomas	Joan	Edmond Latter	John	William	Elizabeth	George	Alice	Ann <sup>629</sup>
<i>hap:</i>									
<i>will:</i>	12 Sep 1624			1 Apr 1619			12 Apr 1613	24 Mar 1560	3 Aug 1561
<i>bur:</i>	16 Sep 1624			0 Dec 1622	5 Aug 1610		17 May 1613	children Brattell	children Wallington
		children			9 children <sup>630</sup>				
		<sup>631</sup>					see Tree 15.4		
	s90	s125	s93	s94	s95	twins	s96		
	John	Francis <sup>632</sup>	Elizabeth	William	Dorothy	Mary			
<i>hap:</i>	1 Nov 1591	10 Jun 1594	9 Jan 1597	26 May 1599		20 Oct 1603			
<i>bur:</i>					16 Aug 1604				

"George Pococke, householder," was buried on 17th May 1613. A month earlier, George Pococke, gentleman, wrote his will but George was a yeoman according to a deed of 1612 and it is likely that he was the man buried in May.

629 Alice's married name was "Brattell". Ann's "Wallington": both had some children

630 six of whom were mentioned in the will of Hellen Hadsoule

631 except for Dorothy, only children mentioned in their father's will are shown here - see [section 2](#) for more details

632 in 1616, Francis Pococke married William Frankwell, one of the sons of the William whose will has survived

John whose will was written in April 1619 was probably the John Pococke buried on 20th December 1622 since the will was not proved until February 1623. Although John's father does not mention a son Thomas, John had a brother Thomas who had perhaps already been established when his father wrote his will. He could have been the Thomas Pococke, yeoman, of Sevenoaks Weald whose will was written on 12th September 1624.

## George Pococke's Family

George Pococke's wife and executrix was Michell, the mother of Richard Besbeech. He and Michell had three daughters, the eldest of whom was fifteen in 1613 when George wrote his will and another, Margery, from George's first marriage who was born in 1593, but no son. In December 1612, he seems to already have been ill since he mortgaged some land "for the better preferment and advancement of Margery Pococke, my eldest daughter and to enable her to pay £80 payable to Richard Besbeech, my son-in-law (stepson) after my decease". He appointed his brother John as attorney for this arrangement.<sup>633</sup>

### Tree 15.4 - Family of George Pococke

				s49			
bur:		s70 Elizabeth - 7 Aug 1594		George - 17 May 1613		- Michell Besbeech, widow s73	
		-----		-----			
		s71	s72		s74	s75	s76
		Elizabeth	Margery <sup>634</sup>	Margaret	Michell	Deborah	Mary
bap:		10 Nov 1592	16 Sep 1593		2 Oct 1598	25 Mar 1601	24 Jul 1603
bur:				15 Jan 1611			

George left Brookes Tenement, the capital message in Sevenoaks in which he lived, with "all the edifices, buildings, sowhouse, yards, backsides, garden, orchards and hemploft" to Michell for the period of her natural life. It had been named after its previous owner - George Brooke, gentleman, deceased,

Michell was also to have the "Inn, message or tenement commonly called The Crown with all the barns, stables, edifices, buildings, closes, yards, gardens, lands, meadows, pastures, woods, underwoods and hereditaments . . . containing . . . by estimation, nineteen acres". When she died Brookes was to go to Margery and the Crown to the other three daughters. As soon as George died Margery, who was twenty, was also to have the Inn called the Pied Bull in which Elizabeth Petley, widow, was living whilst each of his two younger daughters were also to receive a message directly. All of this property was in Sevenoaks.

634 married Thomas Burgess of Rotherfield



## The Pocockes as Innkeepers

The land mortgaged for Margery's benefit included Brookes Tenement, the Pied Bull and also 1½ acres, "sometime part of the messuage called The Kings Arms, in Sevenoaks, lately severed and laid unto my dwelling house". George owned The Kings Arms which had previously been owned by William Pococke, perhaps George's brother who had died in 1610. Thus, George owned three inns or taverns: the Crown, the Pied Bull and the Kings Arms.

Sixteen years earlier, in 1597, a John Pococke had sold, to George Pococke of Goudhurst, the messuage called The George in Sevenoaks as "is now severed and divided from the new erected building of the said John Pococke abutting to the highway in Sevenoaks to the east . . . and the land of the parsonage of Sevenoaks to the south".

## A Licence to Sell Wine

That the Pocockes were in the business of keeping inns is emphasised by a licence to sell wine granted to George Pococke in 1600. This was in the form of an agreement between George Pococke and the agents of Charles, Earl of Nottingham and his son, William, Lord Howard of Effingham, Commissioners "for licences for keeping of taverns and selling of wine by retail". George paid "a certain sum" for his daughters Margery and Margaret and also £2 per annum for a

licence for Margery and, after her death, for Margaret, "to keep a tavern in the town of Sevenoaks and therein to sell and utter wines by retail".

In return, the earl and his son were "contented and pleased to be humble suitors to the King's Majesty for the said licence". George Pococke paid £10 as security for the payment of £2 per annum and the agents promised not to procure any other licence to sell wines in Sevenoaks<sup>635</sup>. Margaret, daughter of George Pococke was buried in 1611 but Margery and his other three daughters lived to enjoy this monopoly to sell wine assuming that they retained it after the death of their father.

## John, Bachelor and Landowner

Although when he wrote his will in 1619, John was described as John Pococke, the elder, he had no wife or children and, like many bachelors, he left a large number of legacies to his nieces, nephews, cousins, etc. Approaching seventy, he gave details regarding the disposition of all his "land and tenements within the realm of England". This included the 160 acres called Bletchingly in Rotherfield, Sussex with its mansion house which he had inherited from his father.

John left money to the poor of Rotherfield, Wadhurst and Sevenoaks. His cousin, John Lutten, and his family and Thomas Burgess and his wife Margery, also lived in Rotherfield but there is no other mention of Wadhurst.

John considered that his "personal and real estate of goods and chattels" were insufficient for his executor to be able to discharge all his "debts, legacies, probate of my testament and of this my will and several expenses about me the said John" and therefore gave Bletchingly to him. He appointed as his executor John Pococke, the son of his brother William who he describes as his cousin.

John described Bletchingly in detail: "all that my mansion called . . . Bletchingly withall the house, edifices, barns, gardens, orchards, lands, meadows, feedings, woods and all other hereditaments and appurtenances thereunto belonging, situated and being in Rotherfield in the county of Sussex". It appears that only part of this inheritance would be needed to pay the debts, etc. since the house was eventually to go to the executor's son.

## **Two Fields of Kettles Sold to the Pocockes**

Whilst Kettles, the messuage and land partly in Seal and partly in Sevenoaks, was owned by the Olyvers until at least 1640, two arable fields totalling 12 acres had been sold to John Pococke, yeoman, before 1616 when John devised them for 41 years from his death to William Wallington, the son of his sister Ann.

Wallington was a carpenter who later moved to Tonbridge and, in 1630, assigned his rights to the fields to Richard Cronk who, in 1632 devised them to John Charman, yeoman of Otford, for £26. In 1641, Charman's widow granted the residue of the lease to Thomas Baker of Otford.

These transactions of the 1630s and 1640s seem to be contradicted, or at least shown as temporary arrangements, by that of 1650 when John Wallington, eldest son of the late William Wallington, surrendered his rights in "2 pieces of arable and pasture" at Kettles to Richard Browne<sup>636</sup>. What was to happen to them in 1660 at the end of the 41 years specified by John Pococke?

## **Thomas Pococke, Died 1624**

The Thomas who died in 1624 had "preferred" his three daughters and son William before he wrote his will. John, the eldest son was to be joint executor with his stepmother and to have all Thomas's land, etc. when she died.

The John who died in 1622 was not the only Pococke testator who, deciding it would be necessary to realise some ready money, asked his executors to sell some

of his land. Thomas Pockocke, writing his will in 1624, shows some of the complications that a sale of this type might entail:

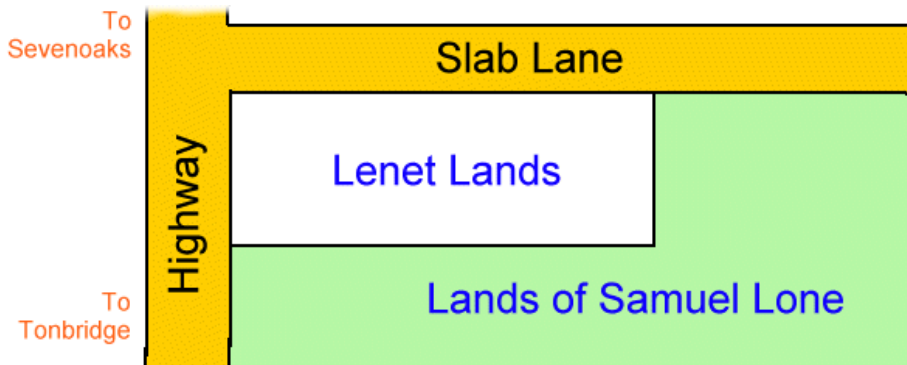
"And therefore, having a great desire that all my debts as well those which I owe by bonds as those which I owe upon mortgages or otherwise . . . should be . . . faithfully and truly paid and discharged, I will, ordain and appoint that my said son John and the said Dorothy, my wife, do and shall so soon as they can or may conveniently after my decease, by deed with livery and seizance<sup>637</sup>, . . . or any other lawful devise and conveyances in the law, bargain, sell, grant, enfeof and confirm to any person or persons and their heirs (who shall buy the lands hereafter mentioned) all those my lands with the profits and appurtenances thereto belonging commonly called Lenet lands . . . (which one, Henry Godman, now holdeth in mortgage)".

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637 livery: a delivery or handing over; seizance from seize: to put in legal possession

## Lenet Lands

The land held in mortgage by Henry Godman included Lenet Lands to the south of Sevenoaks::



From later maps Lenet (or Levett) Lands can be identified as being to the east of the A21 from Sevenoaks to Tonbridge at the bottom of Riverhill where there is now the roundabout connecting the old A21 with the Sevenoaks/Tonbridge bypass. A map of 1655 shows Lenet Lands with Stobbe Lane as its northern

boundary whilst later maps show this lane as having become overgrown. One of these carries a pencilled note: "Slab Lane beneath this shaw"<sup>638</sup>.

## John Pococke, Clothier, and Thomas's Executor

John Pococke was to sell Lenet Lands so that he could redeem all the lands and tenements which had been mortgaged by his father, Thomas, who had "a great desire that all my debts as well those which I owe by bonds as those which I owe upon mortgages or otherwise . . . should be . . . truly paid and discharged".

He also sold eight parcels of land and wood "called Seavenock" to William Franklin, junior of Sevenoaks, yeoman who was the husband of his sister, Francis. From the deed for this sale<sup>639</sup>, we know that "John, the son and heir of Thomas Pococke" was a clothier.

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<sup>638</sup> information from various maps provided by Ann Elton

<sup>639</sup> Gordon Ward Norebooks, Knole II, p.4

## Elizabeth Pococke, Maiden

The Elizabeth whose will was written on 9th May 1644, was probably the "Elizabeth, daughter of John Pococke" baptised 3rd August 1617 and therefore twenty-six when she wrote her will. But which John Pococke was this?

Elizabeth asked to be buried in the church rather than the churchyard showing the status of the family. Her estate consisted of £40 held by her kinsman John Pococke. This was to be divided between various relatives with five pounds going to her brother Thomas "if he be alive and shall survive to come out of Ireland". But, if he was dead or did not arrive "to make challenge of this said five pounds" it was to go to a niece and nephew.

## Burglary at John Pococke's

The house of a John Pococke of Sevenoaks was burgled in September 1641 and this John could have been Elizabeth's father. A pair of sheets (16s), 2 pillow-bars (5s) and 5 napkins (4s) belonging to Pococke and a cloth coat (£1) belonging to Anthony Kipp were stolen and Henry Beale alias Browne of Sevenoaks, labourer, was indicted for the burglary in March 1642<sup>640</sup>.



# The Petleys

Although no details have been assembled for a Petley family, the name occurs a number of times in Sevenoaks and the surrounding villages. The wills of Elizabeth and Rose Petley show two independent women but there is no indication as to whether or not they were related.

## Elizabeth Petley, Innholder

The will of Elizabeth, widow and innholder, looks to have been written by a professional scriptor but all three witnesses signed their name and it is not possible to decide which of them wrote the will. In 1613 Elizabeth was the proprietor of the Pied Bull which belonged to the Pocockes and this was presumably the inn she held on her death in 1617.

Earlier called the Swan and later the Dorset Arms, this inn was in the centre of the town with the Royal Crown close by and The Bull (now the Royal Oak) just south of the church. Elizabeth had sufficient money to leave legacies totalling £90, which except for £1 to the poor, was divided between six of her seven children - three sons and three daughters. Mathew, her second son, was her executor, receiving all the rest of her "[goods, plate, monies, leases and chattels](#)" which again shows a woman of considerable means.

## Rose Petley and the Bosvilles

Rose Petley, of Bradbourne and unmarried, died in 1634; like Elizabeth, she had a reasonable amount of money giving a total of £82 to various members of her family. She had connections with the Bosvilles, leaving money for rings for Sir Ralph Bosville, knight, (who was one of the witnesses of her will), his lady and Mr. James Bosville. When the will was written, she was having a gown made by Mr. Henry Bosville, a tailor, living in Bermondsey Street in Southwark, London and this she left to Isabel Holmden, "who hath been careful and painful for me in my sickness". The connection between the Bosvilles and the Petleys went back, at least, over thirty years since Mr. Thomas Petley married Mistress Ann Bosville on 7th August 1598.

## Mary Petley of Ightham

Mary Petley, the wife of John Petley, a gentleman from Ightham, wrote her will on 5th May 1626 but it was not proved until 6th February 1627/8<sup>641</sup> and her burial was not recorded in either Ightham or Sevenoaks. Mary apparently had a house of her own in Sevenoaks (no details given) and a "[part of the mortgage of Trigges in Goudhurst](#)"<sup>642</sup> independently of her husband, no clue being given in the will as to

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641 CKS: Prs/w/12/185

642 difficult to read but G--d---

how she owned this property in her own right.. She gave these “with all my debts, bonds, bills or any other goods or chattels whatsoever to my loving husband” whom she made her executor.

John Petley, of Ightham, had a number of children baptised in Ightham between October 1626 and 1641. Perhaps Mary was pregnant but ill enough in May 1626 to consider it necessary to write her will but lived long enough to give birth to Thomas, John's first recorded child baptised in the October. John's next child was baptised in June 1629 but he could have remarried soon after the will was proved.

Except for Mary's husband about whom nothing further is known, details of the Petley men which have survived do not show them in as good a light as the feminine members of the family.

## **William Petley of Ightham**

Over a generation before John and Mary, William Petley of Ightham had nine children baptised between 1580 and 1593. His was one of the relatively few families where a majority of the children are known to have died in infancy, the burials of five of the nine being recorded.

William was in a position to have a servant but this is known only because he appeared in the Court Rolls for Ightham five times between 1587 and 1594<sup>643</sup>.

- At the Court held on 27th April 1587, it was found that "William Petley, William Siggisse (or Sigas) and one George, a servant of the said William Petley, broke the peace of our Lady the Queen near an enclosure, at a holy tree. Fined 6d each."
- On 3rd October 1588, the Court fined William Petley 3s 4d for having struck John Burroughs on the head with an iron hammer, drawing blood.
- William Petley was presented to the Court held on 22nd April 1590 for having placed a manure heap in the highway. It was to be removed before 7th June under penalty of 3s 4d.
- On 2nd September 1591, William Petley assaulted George Hawkes and struck him with his fist. "George Hawkes then and there assaulted the said William." At the Court held on 5th October, Petley was fined 12d and Hawke 6d.
- On 17th October 1594 William Petley was one of four men fined 3s 4d for overburdening "the common of Ightham with more sheep than they ought to keep there."

## William Petley of Sevenoaks, Gentleman

In 1600, William Petley of Sevenoaks, gentleman, headed the jury investigating housebreaking at Riverhead. However, at the Quarter Sessions held at Maidstone on 9th April 1605, he and his son George were presented to the Court for obstructing John Achildren, the Constable of the Hundred of Codsheath, in his duties with George having refused to help the constable convey a prisoner to Maidstone<sup>644</sup>.

This charge against George implies that the constable, when carrying out his duties, expected assistance from men in the parish. Given that a constable worked in his locality without any official assistants, the apprehension of wrong-doers must often have required help from the community.

The system of preserving local order depended upon the more substantial members of the local community being prepared to serve as constables, overseers of the poor and as jurors when those suspected of wrong-doing were presented to the court. But the system, to be effective, must also have depended on the support of majority of the community and its active assistance whenever there were problems caused by recalcitrant criminals.

## John Blome, Mercer & Land Owner

John Blome was an important man in Sevenoaks and, as such, when he wrote his will in 1624 he wished to be buried in the church "[as near unto my pew as conveniently may be](#)". John Blome's eldest son George was born in 1581 so that John must have been approaching seventy when he died in 1624. He came from a Penshurst family but, from the time of his marriage, he lived in Sevenoaks where he built up his estates at least from the late 1580s and was still buying property in the 1620s.

Although described as a mercer, there is no mention of London in his will so that it is unlikely that he was a exporter and importer of expensive fabrics. More probably he was supplied a general range of luxury goods to the gentry of the locality; whatever his actual business, from the amount of land and property he owned by the 1620s, he had been very successful.

## The Blome Family Connections

John's wife Julian survived him and he had four sons, George, William, Edward and John, but only one daughter, Mary. The baptisms of John's children and grandchildren were recorded in the parish registers so that it is possible to build up a family tree for them - see [section 2](#).

John had connections with Robert Holmden, the rich leatherseller of London who returned to Sevenoaks in his old age. In his will of 1620 Holmden described John's son George as his cousin and he left £10 to George's wife and considerable sums to their children.

## Service to the Town and Knole

John carried out various duties for the town and its inhabitants and for the "Great House". In 1604, Elizabeth, Baroness of Hunsden, appointed him bailiff of the manor of Sevenoaks and he was the bailiff of Sevenoaks from 1607 to 1613 and again in 1623 and a churchwarden in 1616.

For the year ending at the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel 1612, he was the bailiff of the Manor of Knole and, in 1613, the Countess of Dorset (Anne Clifford) appointed him her "true and lawful attorney" to receive rents from her tenants of the farms attached to the Little Park at Otford<sup>645</sup>. Although nothing is known about Blome's performance of these duties, many bailiffs, like sheriffs and under-sheriffs, exploited their appointment as a valuable source of extra income and corruption and abuse was endemic<sup>646</sup>.

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645 Phillips, pp.262 & 240

646 Clark (1977), p.114

Blome also carried out more personal tasks: Eme White, in 1619, appointed "[her very good friend and neighbour](#)" John Blome as one of her overseers as also did Dorothy Olyver of Fawke in Seal, a widow in her eighties in 1622.

## Purchase of Property from the Wymble Estate

Details of one of his many land deals has survived. During Elizabeth's reign, Edward Wymble, who owned property in Sevenoaks, moved to Penshurst and, when he died towards the end of the sixteenth century, he left this property to his wife and afterwards to his three daughters. One of the daughters sold her reversionary interest in the property to John Blome in May 1587 before her mother died and, on the widow's death, Blome showed Wymble's overseers the writing which recorded his purchase of the "[interest, rights and title, whatsoever belonging or by any means appertaining unto Elizabeth Wymble](#)".

Blome then offered £140 for the other two-thirds. The overseers thought it was worth £180 and proposed that Blome gave them ten shillings to show he was in earnest. They would then "[proclaim at the market cross on the market day, that such housing and lands was presently to be sold](#)" at a price of between £140 and £180. If anyone was disposed to buy it they were to come within a fortnight with their payment. If there was no better offer, John Blome would then be able to purchase it for £140. The proclamation was made and, after a fortnight when no



better offer had been received, John Blome purchased it for what he had originally offered<sup>647</sup>.

## **Blome's Land and Property**

In addition to owning land and shops, John had long leases on other land in both Chiddingstone and Seal as well as Sevenoaks. Many of the pieces of land were identified by the name of the person from whom he had purchased them and John was not only adding to his estates but also developing the facilities for some of his properties.

Most of his property was divided between his four sons and, from the complicated arrangements in his will, it is to be hoped that they were on good terms with each other and could discuss these amicably. One of the shops John owned was in the Leather Market and this he left to his grandson, John, George's son.

## **Bequests from the Land in Chiddingstone**

On John's death in 1624, the disposal of his land, houses and their contents called for complex arrangements but an idea of his wealth can be gained from the

bequests made from proceeds of the land he owned in Chiddingstone which was a relatively small part of his whole estate.

Until her death, an annuity of £20 was to be paid to John's wife. After this John had the "desire that every one of my children and their children, as well those which shall be born hereafter as those which are already born may, after the death of my said wife, have some certain portions out of those lands for their better advantage". These portions totalled £280 with at least half of this being paid within four years of his wife's death.

Since John had "received a good opinion of my youngest son John Blome, that he will instantly and truly pay the same portions if he shall happen to live till the sum shall become due" he gave this land to him with the proviso that he "enter into such further security to the overseers of this my will . . . for the true payment of all the aforesaid several sums of money to my said other children and their children".

## **The Gifts and Legacies Left to his Wife**

John left to his wife, Julian, "for term of her life (if she so long remain sole and unmarried) the messuage or tenement with the appurtenances in Sevenoaks aforesaid which I purchased of John Masters with the garden plot thereto adjoining which I bought of William Bennett". But, if she did "not rest contented with the gifts and legacies devised and bequeathed to her by this my will but shall

sue for her dower out of any" of his other lands or tenements "then she shall loose the benefit of all gifts and legacies whatsoever given to her by this my will". The man from whom he had bought this land could have been the John Maister, mercer whose will has survived

## John's Adjacent Houses

John had two adjacent houses, the one where he lived himself and a "messuage or tenement . . with warehouses and other edifices, gardens, orchards and backsides and appurtenances . . together with a barn and yard" in which George was already living and which he was to inherit on his father's death. Prior to the writing of his will John was engaged in organising the water supply to his own house from the water pit in the great orchard of the one in which George lived.

In his will, the house in which he lived was bequeathed to his son John but he had only got as far as drawing up the plans for the water supply so that John was to have "that part of the water pit now marked and laid out of the water pit within the great orchard, devised to my son George".

There was a further complication. In addition to his father's house together with an "old barn and two stables lately erected at either end of the said barn and the carhouse adjoining thereunto and the gardens, orchards, yards and backsides

now laid thereunto", John was to have three parcels of land called Connyberry Fields estimated as about five acres.

The problem here was that to get to these fields from the house he inherited, John junior had to go through the great orchard which would belong to his brother George. Thus John senior, in his will, stipulated that John was to have "so much of the same great orchard as I have appointed and marked out for a way from my now dwelling house to the said Connyberry Fields".

## Other Bequests to His Son John

Besides the house in which his father lived, John junior was to have:

- five tenements with their gardens and orchards and another two "messuages or tenements with the barn, yards, garden, one orchard and one parcel of land containing, by estimation, one acre of land lying and adjoining altogether".
- "three other parcels of land called Upper Barbers and Nether Barbers containing, by estimation, eight acres with their appurtenances near Kippington in Sevenoaks".
- a shop in Butchers Row which was then occupied by William Davies, butcher.

## Bequests to His Son Edward

In addition to the house next to the Corn Market in which Edward was already living and his father's other shops in the market, Edward was to have three tenements in Sevenoaks with their gardens, orchards and backsides in the several occupations of Robert Wymble, Robert Stanley and John Medhurst.

Edward, whose wife died in childbirth in 1619 with their son dying a year later, was churchwarden in 1626-7.

## Bequests to His Son William

John had "lately new built" a messuage, tenement, barn and other edifices which he bequeathed to his son William with the garden, orchard and three parcels of land at the Lower end of Sevenoaks Town and all the other "tenement, garden and orchard" which he had purchased from William Bennett. Also left to William were lands and tenements near Diborn Hill and another messuage, barn and two orchards all in Sevenoaks.

But out of these lands he had to pay his sister (John's daughter), Mary, an annuity of £5.

## Bequests to His Daughter Mary Petley

Mary (or Marie) was married to Mathew Petley and they had a son William. At the beginning of his will, John had bequeathed to her "for and towards her own maintenance during her life, my house, shop, garden and orchard . . . in Sevenoaks which I purchased of Chadd Lytton". "And I desire my son-in-law, her husband, to permit and suffer her to take and receive the yearly rents and profits thereof to dispose the same at her pleasure."

John referred to the annuity as being "for the better maintenance and advancement of my said daughter after the death of her said husband if she shall happen to survive him". Was Mathew Petley ill or otherwise not thought capable of supporting his wife or was John just giving his daughter some money of her own so that she was not completely dependent on her husband?

## His Daughter-in-law, Sara

Marie was not, however, the only woman to whom John wanted to give some independence. His daughter-in-law, Sara, wife of his son George, was to have "for her own proper use and maintenance the rents and profits of the tenement with the appurtenances in Seal . . . for so many of the years to come of my lease therein as she shall happen to live and, after her death, I give the same lease to John Blome, son of the said George Blome, if he shall be then living".

## Bromfield and the Schoollands

Perhaps as a means of avoiding tax, John had taken out a 99 year lease on five acres of land called Bromfield and another three acres adjoining it from his second son William. The part of the lease for Bromfield was left to his eldest son George and then on his death to George's son. The other three acres "together with the carrying way for carts and other carriages now used thereunto through Bromfield", was left to his son Edward.

John held the leases of four parcels of "the Schoollands . . adjoining to Bromfield". Of these, George was to have the upper one and Edward the lower "together with the way as the same is now railed out and the use of the waterpit within the said Schoollands". The leases of "the two inner parcels of the Schoollands lying to the lands of Thomas Holmes" were left to William.

George and Edward were to pay 10s yearly towards the school rent which was reserved upon the lease with William paying the residue. George was also to have "all the coals, iron, hay, hop poles, lathes, timber, boards and wood that shall be at the time of my death within any the houses, yards, backsides or orchards by this my will devised to him" and also a large number of items which were already in the house. These are listed in section 2 together with those in the house left to William.

## Possible Problems

John Blome, "having thus advisedly and upon good deliberation disposed and settled" all his lands, etc. amongst his sons as seemed to him best "for every of them and their several issue respectively" then became "doubtful whether in the purchase of any the lands and tenements . . . I have made any of my sons joint purchasers with me, which if I have done, my will and meaning herein expressed . . . may thereby be frustrated and made void and suits in law and controversies may thereupon arise between my said sons (which god forbid)".

"Therefore and . . . to the end that every of them and their several issue respectively may peaceably and quietly have, hold and enjoy all and every the lands and tenements to them devised . . . I will and ordain that if any of my said sons . . . shall at any time hereafter . . . claim, challenge or demand any of the lands or tenements aforesaid (other than such only as are given or devised to him or them by this my will) or do refuse, upon reasonable request . . . to make and execute such sufficient release (to my overseers) of their right, tithe, claim and demand of and in any of the lands (arising) by reason of any such joint purchase . . . that then every of my said sons . . . so claiming . . . shall loose all benefit of this my will as well of money, goods and chattels as of the lands and tenements to him or them bequeathed, given or devised in any wise".



## William Blome

In 1624, the Earl of Dorset appointed "my servant William Blome of Sevenoaks, gent. bailiff for the manor and lordship of Sevenoaks at will and pleasure"<sup>648</sup>.

William was also bailiff of the parish of Sevenoaks for over twenty years: from 1626 to 1648; he would have been sixty-two when he retired but his burial is not recorded.

In 1626 he had three pecks of wheat stolen from him by Edmund Colgate, labourer, who was perhaps a descendent of the Edward Colgate who, in 1541, carted wood from Knole for Henry VIII's house at Dartford<sup>649</sup>.

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<sup>648</sup> Gordon Ward Notebooks, Knole II, p.58

<sup>649</sup> Cockburn (Chas.I), 55; Kirby, p.??; a peck was a measure of capacity equal to 2 gallons

# William Seyliard, Gentleman

A number of Seyliard wills have survived from Brasted and Sundridge, the Seyliards (or Selyards) having been in the area from at least the end of the fifteenth century. Four hundred years earlier, in 1200, a grant of 41½ acres of land in Brasted was made by Almaric, Earl of Gloucester, to Richard, son of Ralph atte Seylyerde<sup>650</sup>. William's will, started on 10th February 1631 and "[sealed, signed and published](#)" on 24th October 1632, is, however, the only one from Sevenoaks.

This will is interesting for the way William's considerable wealth, which took the form of land and premises in London, was to be used to provide for his children.

He had four sons and two daughters, all under sixteen when he wrote his will. Thomas, the eldest son, was to receive William's land, etc. with each of the others receiving a portion of £250 when they came of age (or, in the case of his daughters, when they married if this was when they were under twenty-one). In the meantime, a maintenance allowance was to be paid to each of them, the amount depending on their age, increasing as they grew older - see [section 2](#) for details.

## Possibility of Fire in London

William's messuages in London were all close together and he was worried that if there were a fire in the neighbourhood his estate could suffer a considerable loss. He therefore gave authority that if, before sufficient money to pay all his children's portions had been received, there should "happen a fire among my said houses (which god defend) whereby" the loss was £100 or more, then the portions of his younger children could be reduced to whatever his overseers and executors thought fit "having respect to the greatness or littleness of the loss that shall be sustained by such fire".

## Advice on Bringing Up Children

In the year when William started to write his will, Thomas Powell published "Tom of all Trades" which gave advice, sometimes cynical, on how a gentleman should bring up his children. A little late to be of benefit to William but perhaps the executors, who were his two brothers, might have seen it.

Powell recommends that all the sons except the eldest be apprenticed "not into any course according to any prescript order or method of your own election but according to their inclination and addition, seeing that everyone, by instinct of nature, delighteth in that wherein he is like to be most excellent. And delight and

pride in anything undertaken make all obstacles in the way of attaining to perfection of no difficulty."

As for daughters, Powell "would have their breeding like to the Dutch woman's clothing, tending to profit only and comeliness. . . . If the mother of them be a good housewife, and religiously disposed, let her have the bringing up of one of them. Place the (others) forth betimes and before they can judge of a good manly leg."<sup>651</sup>

# The Hills Family of Sevenoaks

Two John Hills, father and son, were butchers in Sevenoaks from between about 1616 to 1640 but the two wills which have survived for Hills are for two yeomen, father and son, Richard and John Hills whose wills are dated 1639 and 1645 respectively. Hills is a fairly common name so that there might have been no relationship between these two families.

## Richard Hills, Yeoman

Richard Hills lived for two years after writing his will and, on 30th April 1641, when his burial was recorded in the parish register he was designated "householder of Greatness". Richard (or someone close to him) had been "touched" for the king's evil - or at least he had somehow acquired one of the gold coins which were presented to sufferers of scrofula when they participated in the ceremony of touching; this he left to one of his daughters.

## John Hills, Richard's Son

In contrast, John, Richard's youngest son, died within a day or so of his will being written since he was buried on 19th September 1645. The first two lines were written in the third person as if it were a nuncupative will but it then reverts to the normal form but without any mention of his soul or where he was to be buried.

John detailed a large number of clothes; perhaps, as a single man, he had the money to be a "bit of a dandy". He left:

To brother Thomas	my best suit my best long coat and my best short coat my best hat except one and my best shirt
To Ralph Hartwell	my long russet coat and one doublet, a short coat one pair of breeches and one pair of stockings
To Thomas Masters	my other long coat my best white doublet and my best hat.

# Chapter 16

## Misadventure, Crime & Enterprise

Only a few records survive of the life of the ordinary people and then they usually tell of their misfortunes or crimes. The main sources are the records from the Assizes and other courts which means that crimes are in the preponderance. Sometimes these can be supplemented with entries from the parish records. Here are described some of these misfortunes and crimes, some of which were committed by “gentlemen”, but the chapter ends with the story of Leonard Gale’s survival of the plague and subsequent success as a blacksmith.

### Misadventure and Murder

706

Anne Geale died when a gun was accidentally discharged whilst the three men who were murdered seemed to have died when fighting got out of hand.

## Larceny and Other Crime

708

There were numerous cases of larceny committed in the Sevenoaks area in Elizabethan and Stuart times but only one case of coining, a most unusual crime and two of highway robbery.

## Negligence of Officials

710

At the local level many carrying out the tasks of local government were unpaid officials appointed on a yearly basis. Not only was it difficult to get paid even expenses, finding anyone when help was required was a problem.

## Movement of Prisoners

713

Prisoners often had to be moved within the county and sometimes even further. When the Assizes were held in Sevenoaks, as they were in 1648, prisoners to be charged there would have to have been brought to the town and housed in the gaol there.

## Alehouses

715

To sell ale required a licence and the keeping of unlicensed tippling-houses occurred frequently. There were also those ale-houses where men met illicitly.



## Card Playing and a Drunken Brawl

718

What started as three men having supper together on a Saturday night turned into a night of card-playing with others joining the group. By the Sunday morning, two of the party were drinking at another victualler's but an argument started when another man arrived. On the Monday, in yet another alehouse, the argument turned nasty with two of the men attacking the third and throwing him into the street.

## Plague and the Gale Family

723

The only references found to deaths from the plague in Sevenoaks were seven deaths in the autumn of 1625 and, in 1637, the deaths of all the members of the Gale family except for the sixteen-year old son, Leonard, who not only survived but went on to write an account not only of his survival but his subsequent success as a blacksmith.

## Leonard Gale, Enterprising Blacksmith

728

Suffering setback to begin with, Leonard eventually to make money from his smith's forge and decided to move into Sussex. He went into partnership with a man with an iron furnace and eventually married and had five children.

# Misadventure and Murder

From the death by misadventure of Anne Geale, spinster, we know that, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, guns were being used to shoot crows feeding on the growing corn. On 18th January 1608 Michael Green, a shovelmaker, went to the house of Robert Phillips, yeoman, to get a gun for this purpose. He took the gun without knowing that it was loaded and then accidentally discharged it, hitting Geale in the side so that she died six days later. An inquest was held at Bradbourne on 26th January, the jury giving the verdict of misadventure<sup>652</sup>.

## A Shoemaker Murdered in Sevenoaks

A year earlier a weapon known from much earlier times was used for the murder of Roger Walle, a shoemaker, who was assaulted in "[Sevenoaks Street in Sevenoaks](#)" on 28th February 1607. Robert Terry, yeoman, aided and abetted by John Richards, gent., attacked Walle with a long handled sword, valued at 2s. Both men, who came from Wrotham, were found guilty of homicide but allowed clergy. This sounds more like a quarrel than an attack in the course of theft. Did yeoman carry long handled swords with them on a general basis or had they set out with the intent of causing someone some harm?

## Two Men Struck on the Head

On 2nd February 1611, when he was “of Chipsted”, Francis Peckham, gentleman, met William Lambe in the high street at Sevenoaks . Here the two of them started to fight and Peckham struck Lambe on the head with a cudgel inflicting injuries from which he died on 8th February. The inquest was held at Chipsted in March 1611 but, in June, when he was indicted at the Assizes he was "at large".

In February 1612 a writ was issued requiring the sheriff to produce Peckham at the July Assizes but it was not until the following March, when he was given as “of Sevenoaks” that he was caught and imprisoned. He was eventually tried at the July 1613 Assizes and, although found guilty, he was allowed benefit of clergy<sup>653</sup>.

The only other person recorded as being murdered in Sevenoaks was Paul Fishenden who was struck on the head with a bat by John Lawrence, baker, on 3rd April 1630. He was injured so badly that he died on 24th May and Lawrence was charged with murder. In this case the jury reduced the charge to manslaughter<sup>654</sup>.

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653 Cockburn (James I); 613, 711, 721, 723

654 Cockburn (Chas. I); 570

# Larceny and Other Crime

Details of the items stolen by people indicted of larceny in Sevenoaks at the Assizes of James I and Charles I are given in Appendix 12. These ranged from a waistcoat valued at 4d (2p), a pair of boots at 5s (£0.25) a cloth carpet at £1 and 4 flitches of bacon at £3.50.

The labourer John Hawes seems to have been the ringleader of a group who carried out a number of burglaries including that of the house of George Lone already described. This was in October 1641 but in 1639 he had stolen a grey mare from Richard Woodgate. His recorded career started in 1634 when he stole two sheep and, when found guilty, was allowed benefit of clergy. The following year he took 6 bushels of malt and a sack from Richard Rogers and this could have been when he started to keep an unlicensed tippling-house for which he was charged in the spring of 1636. But the Lone burglary was to be the end of his exploits since, for this, he was sentenced to hang.

## Coining

A crime which turned up rarely at the Assizes was coining - the illegal manufacture of coins with the aim of passing them off as legal tender. James Browne, a labourer of Sevenoaks, was indicted in February 1603 for manufacturing a twelpenny-piece and a sixpenny-piece from base metal; he

was found guilty and sentenced to be "**hanged and drawn**". Whereas hanging was the punishment to be expected for grand larceny and other crimes, the sentence passed on Browne was most unusual. Perhaps it was so severe because of the fear that the making of false coins, if practised in a large way, could upset the whole economy.

## Highway Robbery

Whether or not the roads near Sevenoaks had become safer than they had been in the reign of Elizabeth, the only two recorded cases of highway robbery took place in the town itself.

In 1605 Simon Ayers, a labourer of Sevenoaks, was indicted for assaulting John Childerne and Susan his wife in the highway at Sevenoaks but he did not gain much from the attack - only a bill (a hatchet with a wooden handle and a long blade), valued at 10d, a chisel (6d) and a pair of gloves (2d) - 4p, 2.5p and less than 1p, respectively.<sup>655</sup>

Thirty-five years later, Nicholas Hayman suffered a greater loss when two labourers attacked him and stole from him £11 in money<sup>656</sup>. One of the labourers,

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<sup>655</sup> Cockburn (James I); 122

<sup>656</sup> Cockburn (Charles I); 1867

John Hope, was arrested and put in the care of John Harte, husbandman, who was the tithing man of Sevenoaks. Harte, however, allowed Hope to escape and, as a result, was charged with negligence<sup>657</sup>. Hope must have been recaptured since he was charged at the Assizes and found not guilty

## Negligence of Officials

The Sevenoaks tithingman was not the only one to be charged with negligence. The men carrying out many of the tasks required for local government at the parish level were often unpaid officials appointed for a year at a time. Even when they were willing to take on the responsibility, inexperience led to inefficiency compounded by the difficulty they often had in getting paid any expenses. At the Quarter Sessions held in 1631, a order was passed giving the JPs power to allow constables and borsholders reasonable expenses "for execution of the statute in the punishing of rogues"<sup>658</sup>.

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657 Cockburn (Chas. I; 1916

658 Clarke, R.D., p.234

## The Indictment of Officials

Throughout the Assize records there are indictments of officials for negligence of various kinds but at the Assizes held in September 1644 there were seven indictments of this type and these show the responsibilities placed on men often serving as an official for a short time without being a "professional".

William Reeve, yeoman, keeper of Maidstone gaol, was accused of negligently allowing four separate escapes:

- on 10th August, Jude Taylor of Hawkhurst, broadweaver, committed in November 1642 on suspicion of burglary
- on 20th August 1644, three labourers of Sevenoaks who had been committed on 29th June 1644 by Sir John Rivers and Thomas Blunt, JPs, on suspicion of felony
- on 27th August, John Martin, committed in May 1643 for refusing to take the oath of allegiance
- on 30th August, Edward Webb of Halstow, committed in December 1642 on suspicion of horse-stealing<sup>659</sup>.

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659 Cockburn (Char.I. 2247,2245, 2246)

Henry Middleton, yeoman, constable of Meopham, arrested three people on suspicion of felony on 30th June 1643 but "on the same day negligently allowed them to escape". For this, Middleton was fined 50s (£2.50)<sup>660</sup>.

## Failing to Make Returns

But it was not only escapes for which officials were indicted in 1644. The constables of four of the hundreds were accused of failing to make returns to the grand jury at the Maidstone Assizes held in July 1642 and James Sayris, jun., of Maidstone, coroner, of "neglecting his office". On 22nd June 1644 he had been summoned to view the body of John Maddison of Plumstead, labourer, who had been found dead on 28th May, believed to have been murdered. But Sayris "wilfully refused to do so".<sup>661</sup>

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660 Cockburn (Char.I) 2244

661 Cockburn (Char.I.) 2242, 2243



# Movement of Prisoners

When men had been arrested, they often had to be taken some distance to prison. In some cases the borsholder or constable handed over the job of transporting them to gaol to whoever was available to do it.

Presumably the suspects would have had to be marched to the Assize town and this could be some distance away. The only times we know about this was when it went wrong, there being a number of indictments for allowing prisoners to escape. One example is the case of two labourers from Gravesend. On 22nd September 1628, the borsholder of Gravesend delivered Ambrose Bridge into the custody of the labourers "for carriage to Maidstone gaol. On the same day they negligently allowed Bridge to escape."

At the Assizes held in March 1629, six months after he was supposed to have been moved to Maidstone, Bridge was indicted for grand larceny having stolen a grey mare on 21st September 1628; he was reported as being "at large"<sup>662</sup>.

Gravesend to Maidstone is only about thirteen miles and so within a day's walking distance but this would not always be the case. Prisoners sometimes

needed to be moved considerable distance; one of those in gaol at Maidstone in March 1629 was "to be removed by writ to Gloucestershire"<sup>663</sup>.

## The Gaol of Kent Delivered to Sevenoaks

In September 1648 the Assizes were held in Sevenoaks and a Gaol Delivery Commission was issued empowering the gaol of Kent to be delivered to Sevenoaks. Thus, by 1648, the Sevenoaks gaol must have been large enough to cope with a number of prisoners but no details are given in the records of the gaol prisoners for the Sevenoaks Assizes although they were listed for each of the Assizes held at Maidstone.

At least from the time of the building of the mid-16th century market hall, there had been no room there for the gaol so that the town gaol was in a house in the London Road, probably a ground-floor room in one of the timber-framed buildings<sup>664</sup>.

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<sup>663</sup> Cockburn (Char.I), 366

<sup>664</sup> Rayner, p.37

# Alehouses

The keeping of an alehouse could provide a secondary income for both men and women and had the added advantage of needing no special training or experience and little capital expenditure.

To make ale, dried malt was mixed with a large amount of unmalted grain and put in the mash vat to form the grist. Water was heated and, when it reached a particular temperature, poured on to the grist and agitated. Extra water was added at higher temperatures until the starch turned to sugar when the mash was separated from the spent grain and put into cooling vessels. The next stage was to add yeast and leave the liquid to ferment which would take several days. Finally various spices were added<sup>665</sup>.

To sell ale, however, required a licence from the local justices; without one the alehouse keeper was liable to be presented to the Quarter Sessions Court. By this licence the alehouse keeper was forbidden from opening on the Sabbath, allowing unlawful games, harbouring wanderers and vagrants or infringing upon the regulations which established and maintained local respectability<sup>666</sup>.

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665 Calrk, 1983, p.100

666 Campbell, p.158

## Keeping Unlicensed Tippling-Houses

Seven men from Sevenoaks were indicted for keeping unlicensed tippling-houses "on 1st July 1635 and other occasions", on "the 1st February 1636 and other occasions" and "between 1st February and 12th July 1637". These were headed by John Chapman who was given the title of victualler. We shall meet John and his wife Anne later since they were indicted for recusancy a number of times in the 1630s and 1640s.

The other six were all described as labourers: Thomas Raines, John Acourte, John Hawes, John Momon, William Smith and John Swift. John Hawes we have already met and he was assisted by his wife Mary both in the burglary of the Lone house and the keeping of an unlicensed alehouse and she was charged with the latter in March 1641.<sup>667</sup>

There would always be men (and women) prepared to flaunt the law by alehouse keeping and, in 1644, Alan Cryer and William Turner, both victuallers of Sevenoaks, appeared before the court. Cryer did not manage to control his customers and was indicted in 1646 "for keeping ill-rule and allowing ill-disposed persons to meet illicitly by night in his house on 18 July 1646 and other occasions".<sup>668</sup>

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667 Cockburn (Chas.I); 1348, 1328, 1490, 1902

668 Cockburn (Chas.I) 2291, 2439

## A Forgotten Cloak

Occasionally the record of a minor incident has survived which could occur, in a similar way, in modern times. William Masters, in 1609, the Wednesday after Whitsuntide, laid his cloak upon a bush in Sevenoaks. Perhaps it was a warm June day or it may have rained and he had laid the cloak out to dry.

He then went into a nearby alehouse, forgetting all about his cloak. When he came out, it had disappeared. On searching, he found a cloak, which he thought was his, in the house of William Cooke, labourer, where, as he said in his testimony, it had been taken by Edward Knight, another labourer. Edward's friends, however, said that the cloak had been in the house where it was found previously. There, unfortunately, the tale ends<sup>669</sup>.

## Card Playing & a Drunken Brawl

A much more complex case came before the Quarter Sessions in May 1614. It started with two men playing cards on a Saturday night and continuing into Sunday morning and ended with William Crawley, the younger, being attacked on the Monday. We know about this from the statements made by various participants.

On 21st May 1614 Richard Farnefould of Steyning in Sussex came to Otford with something (unreadable) to sell. According to his statement, about sunset, his mission accomplished, he went to Sevenoaks to talk to Mr. Nicholas Rootes and they met at an inn and had supper with a clothier from Hawkhurst. About 11 o'clock, Farnefould and the clothier went to Farnefould's chamber where they played cards until about 3 o'clock in the morning, it then being Sunday.

### William Crawley Joined Farnefould & the Clothier

On the holyday, William Crawley, the younger of Sevenoaks, came in and wanted to join them at cards. When Farnefould refused, Crawley suggested that he and the clothier, who was presumably more keen, should go and find a barn or stable in which to play. But Farnefould "was loth that the clothier, his friend, should play

in a barn" and so managed to get the agreement of "Burcom's wife" for them to play in her house, that of "old Burcom, farrier".

Farnefould, the clothier, Crawley and a householder called Croft started to play cards at about 8 o'clock on the Sunday morning but Farnefould wanted to stop after about an hour. At this "Crawley swore that if (Farnefould) left off play he would take away (his) money and beat him". At the same time, old Burcom tried to persuade them to play dice instead of cards.

Here Farnefould's evidence ends except for a comment that the same Sunday morning, "before or about time of Divine Service, one Thomas Tuttesham, the younger of Sevenoaks, played at stoolball with others". This was presumably added to show that others besides himself and his companions had been breaking the sabbath.

## **The Evidence of Michael Weery, Victualler**

The next information of the happenings on that Sunday came from Michael Weery, a victualler. It seems that two of the card players, Crawley and Crofts, had moved on the victualler's where they were drinking when old Burcom's son, Richard, arrived. Richard was unwelcome and, when he was not allowed in for a drink, threatened to beat Weery. The others, however, continued to ignore him and he eventually went away.

Returning on the Monday with a truncheon he found that Weery was not there so Richard Burcom "left word at (Weery's) house that he would beat (him) and be revenged of him before night".

## William Crawley Takes Up the Tale

On the Monday morning Crawley was in another alehouse, that of widow Petley<sup>670</sup>, when old Burcom (James) arrived and finding Crawley there pressed upon him a glass of beer. But Crawley refused "to pledge him having formerly quenched his thirst". James Burcom thereupon "took a glass of beer and poured it into (Crawley's) pocket telling (him) further that if he would not pledge him he would knock him about the pate".

At this point Richard Burcom, like his father a farrier, came in and, seeing what was going on challenged Crawley to fight him in the field. Crawley answered that such combat would not be lawful but both the Burcoms set upon him. James "with his fist struck (Crawley) a blow on the jaw" and the pair took him "one by the throat and the other by the hair of the head" threw him into the street. By the side of this testimony the words "James Burcom, drunkard" have been written in the margin.

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<sup>670</sup> Elizabeth Petley, widow, was the proprietor of the Pied Bull in 1613 and this was probably the inn she held on her death in 1617



## Two Witnesses

This incident was seen by at least two witnesses. Widow Hall was walking near by when "at the house door of one Mrs. Petley, she beheld old Burcom and one Richard, his son, and one Crawley . . . striving together with Crawley lying on the ground and old Burcom lying upon him, his son standing by and then and there the said Crawley bled at mouth and nose and his hair of his head pulled off."

George Wymble was at Michael Weery's house when he "perceived through a window old Burcom lying upon (Crawley) and Richard Burcom, son of old Burcom, striking (Crawley) with his fist as hard as he could". Later Crawley came to Wymble and some others and showed them where his hair had been pulled out and his other injuries which had been bleeding<sup>671</sup>.

## The Outcome Unknown

What happened to Crawley and the Burcoms is not known. The breaking of the rules of the sabbath could have been tried at the Quarter Sessions but Crawley looks to have been a card-sharper, joining the players in the hope of winning some money from them. From this evidence it seems that, after Farnefould and the clothier had left, Crawley and Crofts continued drinking which, with the arrival of

the Burcoms, turned into a drunken brawl leading to a serious fight on the Monday.

## James Burcom, Farrier & James Burkham, Blacksmith

There is an item from the Quarter Sessions for July of the same year (1614) which may be connected<sup>672</sup>. Susan Olyver, wife of the butcher Joseph Olyver, and George Nicholas, sadler, both testified that John Wymble, borsholder of Sevenoaks, had appointed "James Burkham of Sevenoaks, blacksmith" to watch over Robert Romeney, another butcher, who was in custody. Burkham offered to "pick the lock of the door and let Romeney out of the chamber where he was kept prisoner" if Romeney would give him five shillings. But Romeney did not have that much "in his purse and gave him 18d" promising the remainder the next morning.

Whether or not Romeney escaped is not known but the interest comes from the similarity of the names and occupations of James Burcom, farrier and James Burkham, blacksmith, the connection being made more likely by the name being written "Burkham" in the account of William Crawley's testimony. Surely John Wymble would not have given the custody of one of his prisoners to someone who had, only six weeks previously, participated in a drunken brawl.

# Plague and the Gale Family

Plague was one of the most dreaded diseases; there are three main types, bubonic plague being the most common. A disease of rodents, it is spread to humans by fleas and is extremely infectious. On the first or second day of infection the victim develops a bubo, or swelling of the lymphatic glands, in the groin, armpit or neck. This is followed by coma, inflammation of the kidneys and heart failure with death occurring about five days after the first bubo appeared in between two-thirds and five-sixths of cases.<sup>673</sup>

Oxford suffered from a visitation of the plague in 1603<sup>674</sup> and, in Sevenoaks, although the parish records hardly ever mention the cause of death an exception was made twice when there were cases of the plague. Both times it struck only a few people. Even though the plague was infectious, it was not all that infrequent for it to strike just one or two families even if they were not isolated<sup>675</sup>.

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<sup>673</sup> Sharpe, p.53

<sup>674</sup> Clarke and Stoyel, p.140

<sup>675</sup> Dobson, p.485

## Plague in Sevenoaks in Autumn 1625

The first recorded case in Sevenoaks was in 1625 when there were seven deaths between July and December, the earliest being that of Johannes de Ainatten, an Italian who died at the house of Thomas Giles and was buried on 25th July. The next to die was Mary, the daughter of William Wilson, buried on 12th September. If Johannes brought the contagion to Sevenoaks, it was a long time before anyone else succumbed to it. William Wilson himself was buried on 30th September with three people from the almshouse also dying in September and October. The final burial recorded was that of Thomas, the son of Edward Stevens, on 31st December.

## It Strikes the Gales in 1637

It was apparently twelve years before the plague appeared again and this time it was just one family who suffered. Dorothy, wife of Francis Gale, was buried on 4th April 1637, followed by Francis himself on 20th April together with five of their children with "plague" added by the side of the entries.

## The Sole Survivor

One of the Gale children, Leonard, a youth of sixteen in 1637, survived and after a number of setbacks and great deal of hardwork became a prosperous Sussex blacksmith and ironworker with two sons, Leonard and Henry. In 1687, Leonard wrote an account<sup>676</sup> of his life so that his sons would know something of the "miserable world" they were coming into, "a world of fraud and deceit, a world of all manner of wickedness in all sorts of people".

This account first tells how the Gale family suffered during the illness, how Leonard coped with being an orphan and, eventually, became the founder of a very successful family who were "good and seriously minded men of the Puritan party" who prospered "mainly as the result of their own sagacity, industry and economical habits of life"<sup>677</sup>.

## The Gale Family

Francis Gale was a blacksmith who lived in Riverhead Street in Sevenoaks "in very good repute and (he) drove a very good trade". His wife, Dorothy, was the daughter of George Pratt, a yeoman from Chelsford and they had three sons and a

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676 the following extracts are taken from Blencowe, pp. 46-51

677 Blencowe, p.45, in his introduction to Gale's account

daughter. Francis also had an older son from an earlier marriage. See [Appendix 2](#) for details of the Gale family.

Leonard Gale, one of children from the second marriage, was nearly sixteen in March 1637 when his father and mother visited a friend at "Sensom", possibly Kemsing. "Quickly after they came home" his mother fell sick and died about six days later "nobody thinking of such a disease", that is, of the plague. "My father made a great burial for her and abundance came to it, not fearing anything, and notwithstanding several women laid my mother forth, and no manner of clothes were taken out of the chamber when she died, yet not one person took the distemper; this I set down as a miracle".

## **The Family Fell Sick**

After his mother's burial, "we were all well one whole week and a great many people frequented our house and we our neighbours' houses, but at the week's end, in two days, fell sick my father, my eldest brother, my sister and myself; and in three days after this my two younger brothers, Edward and John, fell sick and though I was very ill my father sent me to market to buy provisions."

"But before I came home it was noised abroad that it was the plague and as soon as I was come indoors, they charged us to keep in and set a strong watch over us. Yet all this while no one took the distemper of or from us and, about the sixth day

after they were taken, three of them died and were all buried in one grave. And about two days after the two youngest died both together and were buried in one grave."

"All this while I lay sick in another bed and the tender looked every hour for my death; but it pleased God most miraculously to preserve me, and without any sore breaking, only I had a swelling in my groin which it was long ere it sunk away and I have been the worse for it ever since. And when I was recovered, I was shut up with two women, one man and one child for three months. And neither of them had the distemper."

# Leonard Gale, Enterprising Blacksmith

Three months after all the rest of his family had died, that is August 1637, Leonard "came into the world, to shift for myself".

## Litigation Regarding his Father's Estate

On 22nd September 1637 John Stileman, who was appointed Leonard's guardian, was appointed to administer the estate of Francis Gale. Another of Francis's sons, probably from his first marriage and therefore Leonard's step-brother had also survived perhaps because, since he had been apprenticed out he may not have been with the family when the plague struck.

This brother "fell out" with Leonard regarding what had been left to him by his father. This could have been because Francis, having already spent money on apprenticing his elder son, left the majority of what remained to Leonard. Before this disagreement could be resolved, Leonard was put to "about £10 charge", presumably lawyers' fees.

When with the help of his guardian the portions had been sorted out, Leonard's "brother quickly spent all his portion and went to sea and died".



## Lawyers' Fees

Although there were many relatively small lawsuits, lawyers fees, then as ever, were not small. Writing in 1594, Thomas Lodge gives the following dialogue between a poor man who has a case in court and the lawyer who has come to defend him:

- Defendant: "Maister Lawyer, now for my ten shillings."  
Lawyer: "Faith, poor man, thy case is so bad, I shall but speak against thee."  
Defendant: "Twere good then I should have my ten shillings again."  
Lawyer: "'Tis my fee, fellow, for coming; wouldst thou have me come for nothing?"<sup>678</sup>

This sentiment would have been as applicable in 1637 as in 1594.

## Leonard Saved by the Lord

Leonard "entering into the world at this age (sixteen), worth about £200, within the space of two years and a half, ran out £150 of it, not with ill husbandry for I laboured night and day to save what I had left to me, but bad servants and

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678 T. Lodge and R. Greene; "A Looking Glass for London and England"; 1594 quoted by Hartley and Elliott, pp. 11-12

trusting was the ruin of me. And then I turned away both man and maid and lived stark alone for the space of one month in which time I cast up my accounts and found that I was not worth £50 if I sold myself to my shirt."

"Then I was in a great strait and knew not which way to steer but I cried unto the Lord with my whole heart and with tears. And He heard my cry and put into my mind to try one year more, to see what I could do, for I resolved to spend nothing but mine own and I resolved always to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man."

## **He Becomes a Thriving Man**

Since he could "cast up accounts" Leonard had been educated well and he had also learnt something about running a forge from his father. Having been taken advantage of by servants once, he determined to start again relying on no one in the future. "Then I took a boy to strike and to blow for me and a man to work by the piece but kept no maid nor woman in my house; and then I so thrived that, within two years and a half I got back all that I had lost before so that, by the time I came to twenty-one years of age, I had lost £150 and got it again."

"And I began to be looked upon as a thriving man, and so I was, for all the time I kept a smith's forge, I laid by £100 a year, one with another. And having gotten enough to keep me well, and being burdened with free quartering of soldiers, I left

off and came into Sussex." From his age, this must have been 1641 when the Civil War was just beginning.

## He Goes Into Partnership

Leonard soon established himself in Sussex, taking a forge "and so kept a shop to sell iron and let out the smith's forge . . . I had not been in the (county) one year but Mr. Walter Burrell, whom I looked upon as my mortal enemy, sent to speak with me. And when I came to him he told me he (had) heard a very good report of me and desired to be acquainted with me. And he told me, if I would let his son, Thomas, come into partnership with me, he would help me to sows nearer and better and cheaper than I had bought before."

"I told him I wondered to hear such things from him for I (had) heard he was my mortal enemy because I took that forge. And I told him that if he would let me go partners with him in the furnace, he should go partners with me in the forge. He desired time to consider of it and he presently rode into Kent to enquire of me and found such an account of me that he told me I should go partners with him in all his works."

"Sow" was an alternative name for "pig", used as a name for iron which was the blacksmith's raw material. Iron ore was smelted in a furnace and cast into a shape suitable for storage and transporting to the forge. They were given the

name of "pigs" or "sows" because stacked together they looked like pigs (or sows) lying side by side.

## **Sole Proprietor of the Forge**

After about fifteen years, with the trade in iron falling off, the partnership was dissolved and Leonard Gale became the sole proprietor of the forge. He continued to prosper so that, about 1667 and with an estate of between £5000 and £6000, he decided to "take a wife".

## **A "Very Great Miracle"**

It was twenty years later, when "God hath been pleased to send me five children (and) hath improved my estate to at least £16,000" that he decided to write the account of his life. It was a "very great miracle" to him how he should have come "to so great an estate, considering my small dealings, the bad times and my great losses by bad debts, suits of law, and by building, which enforces me to extol the name of the great God for He was always my director . . for I had no man in the world that would stand by me, either for advice or for money, when I wanted, which enforced me to be careful not to run beyond my own substance."

# Chapter 17

## Religious Practices; Catholics and Protestants

By the beginning of the seventeenth century religious beliefs ranged from those of the Dissenters and “the elect” who thought only they were predestined for salvation to those who wished to live as Roman Catholics of which there was a sizeable group in Sevenoaks.

### Attendance at Church

736

The number of people who regularly attended church is not known nor how reliably churchwardens recorded non-attendance. There were various reasons why people may not have attended, an important one being if their beliefs were different from those of the official church.

## The Treatment of Recusants

740

At the beginning of the reign of James I, the fines for recusancy were suspended but, at least for a short time, the Gunpowder Plot reversed this leniency. By 1620, it was the Puritans who were suffering but Parliament frightened that the King and Queen's support for catholicism was going too far, began to enforce fines again.

## Disseminating Religious Knowledge

743

Parish lectureships were a way of extending the knowledge of parishioners. From the 1590s onwards some parishioners requested that a sermon be preached at their burial, usually specifying the payment to be made for this service. A secular source of information was the petty chapman.

## 17th Century Preambles

748

These preambles are more varied than those from the previous century, some showing a tendency towards puritanical beliefs.

## Dissenters

752

There are two references to people from Sevenoaks attending conventicles which were particularly associated with Dissenters.

## The Mystical Body of Jesus Christ

754

Two gentlemen of Sevenoaks describe themselves as true members "of the mystical body of my lord and saviour Jesus Christ"

## The Elect

756

Three Sevenoaks testators show in their wills that they considered themselves to be predestined for salvation.

## Catholics in Kent

758

How rigorously the rules against recusancy were enforced depended on the political situation and it was between 1630 and 1642 that enforcement reached its height.

## Traditional Catholic Behaviour

761

The disappearance of many religious festivals was not popular with all the congregation even if they were neither Protestants nor Roman Catholics. The latter, however, had particular difficulty with regard to baptisms and burials.

## The Sevenoaks Recusants

766

The Lone household at Sevenoaks Park was a centre for recusancy in Sevenoaks. Samuel moved to Mereworth at the beginning of the seventeenth century but his son George remained in Sevenoaks. He continued to be indicted for recusancy and from the 1620s onwards had to sell land in order to be able to pay the fines.

# Attendance at Church

It is practically impossible to estimate what proportion of the population attended church on a regular basis and, even amongst those who attended, how much it meant to them. "But let the Preacher speak never so plain, although they sit and look him in the face, yet if you enquire of them so soon as they be out at the church doors, you shall easily perceive that (as the common saying is) it went in at the one ear and out at the other"<sup>679</sup>.

## Non-Attendance Reported by the Churchwardens

From the time of Elizabeth, it had been the duty of the churchwardens to note those who did not attend their parish church but how diligently they carried out this task varied both from parish to parish and from time to time. How many parishioners were presented by the churchwardens is difficult to estimate. When they met to discuss general matters concerned with the running of the church, "the names which came to mind . . . were not likely to be those of casual absentees from church. And even in the case of habitual offenders (their) memory was perhaps prompted by particular circumstances beyond our knowledge. They may

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<sup>679</sup> George Gifford, *A sermon on the parable of the sower* (1582); quoted by Collinson, 1982, p.201 (spelling modernised)



have found it hard to remember the names of persons of wealth and consequence but the poor and worthless may also have escaped their notice."<sup>680</sup>

## The Easter Offering

However lax a parish might have been throughout the year, attendance at church at Easter, together with an "Easter offering" was expected from everyone. The recording of those missing at this time would take on extra importance since the offering was a significant part of the local church's income. But not everyone who attended would necessarily behave with decorum. Collinson notes a contemporary comment<sup>681</sup>: "whether the parson's proctor reckoning up his fees during the service or the parishioner, hurrying through the Communion service so that he could get to the alehouse more quickly, should be looked upon in the worst light is debatable" but this example comes from Westmoreland and, no doubt, things were better organised in Sevenoaks.

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<sup>680</sup> Collinson, 1982, p.208

<sup>681</sup> Richard Leake, 1599, quoted by Collinson, 1982, p.214

## Reasons for Non-Attendance

Even if they had wished to, not everyone would have been able to attend every Sunday. Some would have had to stay at home to look after children; the wealthy gentlemen would not have wanted all his servants to be absent for a considerable time. Whilst growing crops may not have needed continuous attention, pastoral farmers could not neglect their charges for a day.

The sick and aged would be excused attendance but, with the size of parishes, many would have had difficult journeys to their parish church. Those living at Underriver in the south of the parish of Seal were at least three miles from their parish church and this included a steep climb up a wooded slope.

There were others, of course, who found more interesting things to do on the Sabbath. Alehouses, card-playing and bowls were attractive. Private dancing parties were organised on Sundays both in private houses and in taverns and inns, "with one or two hired musicians and a liberal supply of liquid refreshment". Whilst nothing is known to have survived for the Sevenoaks area, the records for the archdeaconry of Canterbury record that, if the host or minstrels were prosecuted for holding dancing on the Sabbath, "they usually offered the less than convincing defence that the entertainment had not interfered with Evening Prayer".<sup>682</sup>

## **The Special Case of Ralph Bosville**

As we have seen, in 1614 Ralph Bosville obtained permission to celebrate divine service in his own chapel near his house on the grounds that it was too difficult for the family to travel the mile or so to the parish church. This was by no means a long or particularly difficult journey and Bosville's must have been favoured to get such a dispensation.

Keeping his servants under his own control may have been as important a factor in Bosville's desire for this arrangement for the chapel as saving his family the journey to the parish church. Although it was allowed, at least in theory, only when the weather was bad, Bosville would have been able to choose a priest whose beliefs matched his own and this could have been an advantage at a time when, even within the Church of England with its standard prayerbook, there could be considerable variation in the type of service, for example, in the length and number of sermons preached. Few, even of the gentry, would be in a position to emulate Bosville.

## **Those Whose Beliefs Made Them Non-Attendees**

There were, however, people whose strongly held beliefs made them loath to attend their parish church. Those who refused to attend on such grounds were

called recusants, a term which could be applied to Puritans and Catholics alike although it generally refers to the latter.

## **Treatment of Recusants**

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the spectrum of beliefs ranged from the extreme Puritans to the open supporters of the Catholic faith. When James I came to the throne, he suspended recusancy fines for a year and a half but, at the same time, moderate Puritans seemed to have regarded themselves as reasonably secure. Committed Puritan preachers were at least ignored if not encouraged. There is practically no evidence of any Puritans in Sevenoaks although there are some interesting preambles to wills and a few mentions of conventicles.

In 1605, Gunpowder Plot by which a number of Catholics aimed to blow up the king and his Parliament, led to the return of penalties for those who refused to attend church services.

## The Attitude to Catholics Relaxes

From about 1620, the Puritans found themselves under growing pressure whilst Catholics were more likely to be tolerated. The Ropers, a Catholic family from Teynham, near Faversham, but with branches in Eltham and Farningham (seven miles north of Sevenoaks) had adhered to the old faith whilst keeping a low profile but, in 1619, one of their servants was confident enough to wish "[that all Protestants in England were hanged](#)". Between 1622 and 1626, the Ropers were even included among the JPs of Kent.

The marriage of Charles I to the French princess, Henrietta Maria, in 1625 encouraged the Catholics further and at the winter Assizes of March 1626 the indictments for recusancy included a large number of conforming males who had now joined their wives in open espousal of Catholicism<sup>683</sup>. This applied to Lord Abergavenny and Lord Wotton but not to George Lone of Sevenoaks who was first charged in 1624 whilst his wife did not appear until 1626.

## Attitudes Change Again

But Charles and his Catholic Queen with their sympathy for the Catholics, must be prevented from taking things too far and Parliament strived for the revival and enforcement of the laws against recusants. People could be charged at both the Quarter Sessions and the Assizes.

At the Quarter Sessions of 1631, following a recommendation from the judges of assize, the local justices were commanded in their "monthly meetings" (that is petty sessions) to require churchwardens to present recusants so that the statutory fine of 12d per week might be levied "whereby all ill affected to the religion now established and that the discipline of the church of England may be discovered and the poor relieved in these times of necessity and so great scarcity"<sup>684</sup>. This is a reference to the famine years of 1630 and 1631, the money collected in fines being used for the relief of the poor.

# Disseminating Religious Knowledge

Some of those attending their parish church, whilst not Dissenters, were interested in discussing their beliefs and listening to accomplished preachers. A secular source of religious knowledge for the ordinary parishioner was the petty chapman.

## Parish Lectureships

One way of extending the knowledge of parishioners was by organising a parish lectureship, a way for Protestants to project the Word of God to audiences outside the ordinary pastoral ministry but the lecturer had to be supported by the congregation<sup>685</sup>. One of these was set up in West Malling, a market centre and about nine miles from Sevenoaks. This was only one amongst many lectureships in various towns and market centres in Kent but most of the others were in the Canterbury diocese.

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685 Clark (1977); p.323

## Preachers and Sermons

From the 1590s onwards testators began to request the preaching of a sermon at their burial. Out of the 430 wills investigated for the Sevenoaks/Tonbridge locality dating from 1590 to 1649, thirty-eight wanted a sermon or a minister to preach; of these nine were from Sevenoaks. This is a similar proportion (just over 8 per cent) for both Sevenoaks and the complete sample.

The earliest Sevenoaks testator requesting a sermon to be preached at his funeral was Henry Gifford, yeoman, who died in 1604. The next year saw a similar request from John Lambe, tanner. Both men gave 6s 8d to the minister for this service.

William Turner was vicar from 1614 until 1642 and, of the seventy-six wills that have survived from this period, he was asked to preach at five funerals. Robert Vane, yeoman, in 1617, was the earliest of these testators and he left the vicar 6s 8d. In 1621, William Longe, also a yeoman, willed that his "[very good friend Mr. Turnar preach](#)" at his burial and, for his pains, I gave him ten shillings.



## Payment for Preaching

The amount left to the preacher seemed to have varied between the two amounts given by the above testators - 6s 8d and 10s (£0.33 and £0.50). This did not increase over the thirty years nor does it seem to have depended on the relationship between the vicar and his parishioner.

Two requests for the services of William Turner were made in 1624:

- William Lawrence, bricklayer, did "intreat and desire Mr. Turner, vicar of Sevenoaks, and appoint him to preach at my burial, to whom I give for his pains the full sum of ten shillings"
- Thomas Holmes, gent. willed that his "very good friend Mr. Turner preach" at his burial and "for his pains" he was to be given six shillings eight pence.

We shall see later that William Lawrence, though described as a bricklayer was by no means a poor man but, even so, the difference between the two requests is interesting, not only for the money to be paid but also for the wording.

The last surviving request for William Turner to preach at a funeral was a very straightforward one from Richard Besbeech, gent., who gave Mr. Turner, vicar, of Sevenoaks, the sum of ten shillings to preach at his funeral.

## Robert Holmden's Funeral

During Turner's ministry two testators wanted someone to preach at their funeral but did not specify a particular man. Robert Holmden, citizen and leatherseller of London, owned land in a number of parishes but, when he wrote his will, he was living in Sevenoaks and William Turner was one of the witnesses of the will.

The will, however, was very long and was probably written by a professional scribe. His nearest relatives appear to have been cousins. Even though he wanted to be buried in Sevenoaks, the will somehow seems to show a lack of knowledge or particular interest in the town but the details for his funeral show that Holmden wanted it to be impressive: "I give unto the preacher at my funeral, for his pains, five pounds. Item: I give unto the clerk for his pains ten shillings. To the gravemaker five shillings. To the ringers ten shillings." But why did he not ask the vicar to preach at his burial?

## "That Reverend Divine"

The last of these wills was that of Rose Petley, written in 1634. She bequeathed "unto that Reverend Divine who shall bestow a sermon upon me at my burial the sum of ten shillings". Again, why did she not ask William Turner to provide this service? Does the description "Reverend Divine" have some subtle meaning?

## The Petty Chapman's Offerings

The ordinary people of a town could have their knowledge of religion (and secular ideas) stimulated by the offering of petty chapmen of which Sevenoaks is known to have had two living in the town about 1620.

At that time the popularisation of the scriptures was one of the aims of reformers and one way of getting their message to ordinary people was via publications which could be sold in the villages and towns by the pedlars. Ballads were popular and many of those written in Elizabethan times were still in circulation fifty years later. "Solomon's Sentences" attributed to king Solomon, was first registered in 1586 and remained in stock until at least 1675. It gave general advice telling, for example, householders to pay their labourers promptly<sup>686</sup>.

## The Broadside Ballad

According to contemporary accounts, the broadside ballad was the most common form of printed decoration in humble households even if the members of the household could not themselves read them and, by the 1620s, the printed ballad could have been illustrated with a woodcut picture<sup>687</sup>. In this way, the villager of

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686 Tessa Watt in Spufford, p.248-9

687 Tessa Watt in Spufford, p.252, 254

the seventeenth century had access to more varied views of religious ideas than had his predecessor limited to images in the church.

## 17th Century Preambles

From the end of the sixteenth century the preambles of wills were more varied than they had been earlier showing that there was a more relaxed approach to religious expressions provided that they were not too extreme. Whilst the "standard" preamble was of the form: "I commend my soul to almighty god, my maker and redeemer, and I commit my body to the earth", there were some where the testators had stronger feelings which they wished to have recorded. The wording of some of these imply that the testators had puritanical beliefs.

### Moses Olyver

In 1606 Moses Olyver, a yeoman from the large Olyver family, expressed his wishes in an unusual way: "I do most willingly give up my soul into the hands of Almighty God, my creator, hoping that through the mercy of his only son, my saviour and redeemer, he will receive the same into his glorious kingdom. And my body even with a hearty good will, I recommend unto the earth from whence it

came, hoping also that at the general resurrection the same shall be transformed into an immortal and celestial body then to participate with my soul in the joys of heaven".

## **Martha Stanford**

Martha Stanford, widow, writing in 1640 also had a very individualised preamble: "I do, with a free heart and willing mind, render and give again into the hands of my lord god and creator, my spirit, nothing doubting but for his infinite mercies set forth in the precious blood of his dearly beloved son Jesus Christ, my Redeemer, he will receive my soul into his glory and place it in the heavenly company of his holy angels. Not for any merit of mine but of his mercy and favour unto me."

## **Peter Everest**

Whilst the will of Peter Everest, husbandman, written in 1644 is very short it includes a unique phrase in the bequeathing his soul to "[Almighty God who infused the same assuredly](#)".

## George Scott

The will of George Scott, citizen and grocer of the City of London not only has a long, unusual preamble but also a lengthy introduction both of which show him to have had "godly" or puritan beliefs. Written in 1645, it starts:

"In the name of god Amen. For as much as the soul of man hath no perpetual dwelling within the carnal body but is separable from it at the will and pleasure of Almighty God at his time appointed, which time to man is always uncertain, therefore it is requisite and most necessary that every Christian man prepare and make himself ready at all times to leave the same so that whensoever he shall be called he not found unprepared."

"Wherefore the eighth day of May in the year of our Lord god one thousand six hundred forty and five and . . . I, George Scott, citizen and grocer of the City of London, being in reasonable good health and in perfect mind and memory, laud and praise being given to Almighty God therefore. And intending by his grace to prepare and make my self ready to go forward in the universal journey of all flesh when it shall please his goodness to call me, do first revoke and make void all former wills and testaments by me at any time heretofore intended, declared or made. And do hereby make and declare this my last will and testament . . ."

This is followed by the religious preamble:

"because nothing is so precious as my soul nor any thing presentable to God besides it, first: I commit that into the hands of Almighty God, my maker, trusting that through his infinite mercy and love of his eternal council together with his elect he hath chosen me and will receive me to be saved through the merits of Jesus Christ, my redeemer, who is the blessed lamb of god sent by his father to take away the sins of the world."

"And he hath loved us and washed us from our sins with his blood by suffering death for us upon the cross. And he is that Lion of the Tribe of ?? that hath overcome and hath gotten the victory of death and hell and hath laid up a Crown of Immortality for me. And I believe that he shall come at the last ?? ?? And that I shall be raised again out of the earth with the rest of his elect and be clothed with my skin and with mine eyes shall see God."

# Dissenters

The only possible indication that there were any dissenters in Sevenoaks are references to the attendance of some people at conventicles.

## Conventicles

The term "conventicle" was applied particularly to private house meetings held for sermon repetition without the participants regarding themselves as dissenters<sup>688</sup> but it can be used in a more general way to mean any secret or forbidden religious meeting.

On 28 June 1646, William Jeffery, clothworker of Sevenoaks, was one of those who, "being recusant, attended a conventicle in the house of William Greene of Bearsted".

In March of the following year, he and the wife of Edward Stephenson attended a conventicle in Sevenoaks and again they were described as "recusant"<sup>689</sup>. Neither of them were mentioned in any of the other indictments but there is the possibility

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688 Collinson in Spufford, p.396

689 Cockburn (Chas.I); 2333, 2525



that there were, in Sevenoaks, at least a few people who were interested in the ideas of the dissenters although this would mean that the term recusant was being used here in its more general sense.

## **Dissenter or Disorderly Behaviour**

Another man who could have been either a dissenter or someone behaving in a disorderly fashion was James Hunt of Sevenoaks, yeoman, who was indicted for interrupting Richard Kentish, minister of Sevenoaks, while he was praying in the ordinary form on 11 July 1647. He put himself at the court's mercy at the winter assizes 1648 and was fined<sup>690</sup>.

# The Mystical Body of Jesus Christ

In approximately 370 West Kent wills dating from 1600 to 1649 which have been investigated, just two testators, both gentlemen from Sevenoaks but nearly thirty years apart, describe themselves "[as a true member of the mystical body of my lord and saviour Jesus Christ](#)". These are:

- Robert Gavell in January 1608
- Anthony Carleton in February 1636

Robert Gavell's will continues "[I do recommend my soul into the hands of God, my creator and redeemer. And my body I commit to earth at the discretion of my executors](#)".

Anthony Carleton's continuation is much longer but with no mention of his burial: "[I do, with a sure heart and willing mind, render and give again into the hands of my lord god and creator my spirit nothing doubting but for his infinite mercies set forth in the precious blood of his dearly beloved son Jesus Christ, my redeemer, he will receive my soul into his glory and place it in the company of his heavenly angels, not for any desert of mine but of his merit, mercy and favour unto me](#)".

## Thomas Sandell of Seal

The only other will found<sup>691</sup> with a similar preamble is that of Thomas Sandell of Seal written November 1632: "I commend my soul into the hands of Almighty God, my creator, believing assuredly that, through the death and passion of Christ Jesus, my saviour, I am become a member of his mystical body and shall, after the dissolution of my soul from the tabernacle of this my flesh, be received into the everlasting tabernacles of the just which Christ, my saviour, is gone before to prepare for me and all his elect."<sup>692</sup>

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<sup>691</sup> out of over 540 wills transcribed for the Sevenoaks/Tonbridge area and written between 1560 and 1649 (of these, 370 date from the seventeenth century)

<sup>692</sup> PCC: Rivers 153; Prob 11/194

# The Elect People

The mystical body leads on to the elect as it does in Thomas Sandell's will. These were the few who were thought (or thought themselves) to be predestined for salvation. This view was particularly associated with the views of John Calvin, the French theologian who lived in Switzerland and whose ideas became the basis of many future Protestant churches<sup>693</sup>.

From the 107 surviving Sevenoaks wills written between 1590 and 1649, there are three (a clothier and two yeomen) where the testator regards himself as of the chosen people. This is a higher proportion than that found by Margaret Spufford in wills for the diocese of Ely (31 out of 1600 wills)<sup>694</sup> but there are only a few surviving wills for Sevenoaks. and there are so few that the margin of error is large. Also Sevenoaks does not have any for labourers and husbandmen since they would have been proved in the Deanery of Shoreham where none have survived prior to 1610. One of these three was proved at the Deanery of Shoreham, the other two at the PCC.

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693 Gyford, p.34

694 Spufford, Margaret; *The Importance of Religion*, p.17; in *The World of Rural Dissenters 1520-1725*; CUP 1995

## William Burgis, Clothier & Thomas Burgis, Yeoman

The earliest is William Burgis, clothier, writing in 1594: "I bequeath my soul to the Almighty God in whose mercy I fully hope to have forgiveness of my sins and to enter into life everlasting prepared for all his elect and chosen people".

In 1620, Thomas Burgis, yeoman, who might be related to William but was not his son, bequeathed his "soul to the Almighty God in whose mercy I fully hope to have forgiveness of my sins and to enter into life everlasting prepared for all his elect and chosen people". Thomas was a young man since his mother, Margery, was still alive and his family seemed to live in the Uckfield area of East Sussex. Although he was described as a yeoman, he appears to have been a servant in the household of Mr. Binces.

## Thomas Wylde

The will proved at the Deanery of Shoreham was that of Thomas Wylde who, in 1617, expressed himself in a similar way to Thomas Burgis: "I give and bequeath my soul into the hands of god who hath made me and all the world and of Jesus Christ who hath redeemed me and all mankind and of the holy ghost who fortified me and all the elect people of god."

## The Resurrection

Two testators state their belief in the resurrection without mentioning “the elect”. In 1619, John Pococke, another yeoman, had a variation on the above theme: "And my body to the earth until the resurrection of the just and perfect men in Christ, my only saviour and redeemer with whom I hope to live eternally".

Some years later, in 1631, the gentleman, Walter Leigh, commended his "soul to god, father, son and holy ghost, and my body to be buried believing the resurrection hereof at the last day to eternal life through the merits of the precious death and resurrection of my blessed saviour and redeemer Christ Jesus".

## Catholics in Kent

The wish to remain part of a Catholic community had been held by many people from the time of the Reformation a hundred years earlier and some of these had suffered martyrdom for their adherence to the old faith.

In Kent, it was during the reign of Charles I, particularly from about 1630 to 1642, that the charges against recusants reached their peak. In January 1641, JPs throughout the country received orders from the House of Commons that the

churchwardens were to "certify the names of all recusants to the end that they might be proceeded against according to the law at the next Sessions". In addition, "if any, upon inquiry, refused to make known his name (he was) to be committed to prison till he found sureties for his good bearing"<sup>695</sup>.

## Indictments for Recusancy

At the Kent Assizes of 1641, 104 people were indicted for recusancy, fourteen of them at both the winter and summer sitting. The following year, 135 were charged, many of them the same people as the previous year. Compared with 9,000 in Lancashire in 1641 and over a thousand in Staffordshire<sup>696</sup>, these figures (which cover the whole of the county) are insignificant and certainly bear out Bossy's statement that there were very few Catholics in Kent. If, however, the space devoted to them in the surviving records can be taken as evidence of the time spent on their cases at the Assizes, they certainly caused a great deal of work, at least during the reign of Charles I. Not only were there the initial indictments but many received many writs of different types and some people, such as George Lone, of Sevenoaks, appear year after year.

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<sup>695</sup> Twysden, p.188

<sup>696</sup> Bossy, p.187

## **Limitations on a Catholic Gentleman's Civic Duties**

Being a recusant did not seem to stop a man using the title "Esquire" but it did prevent them being appointed a JP or otherwise serving the community. This avoidance of what was generally considered to be a gentleman's responsibility, led to more work being required from the orthodox members of the gentry which, in turn, could lead to the recusants becoming more unpopular than would have been the case if it had just been religion which set them apart.



# Traditional Catholic Behaviour

Many of the changes in religious behaviour advanced by the Reformers were advocated by reasons which appealed most to those members of the congregation who could read and wished to contemplate in quiet surroundings rather than celebrate their beliefs together. Thus, in the time of Edward VI, processions preceding the mass were banned to eliminate contention and strife and so that they could hear quietly what was said or sung. There was also much more emphasis on reading the scriptures and discussing them than on communal worship. These changes, regardless of the actual beliefs, did obviously not suit everyone.

Those wishing to continue in the Catholic faith wanted the ceremonies which punctuated their lives be performed with the ritual appropriate to their faith. The recording of baptisms, marriages and burials in the parish register was, however, not only a religious rite of passage but also a system for recording changes in the community within the parish. Those, at least of the gentry, who were Catholics generally supported the idea of a stable community and thus supported the administrative reasons for registration but, at the same time, did not want them to take place in the parish church which did not reflect their beliefs. Marriage did not cause the same problems as either baptism or burial since a valid, lawful, sacramental marriage could take place without the presence of a priest<sup>697</sup>.

## Feasts and Fasts

After the Reformation, the alternation of feasts and fasts which had previously been so marked became much less important. To those who retained their Catholic faith, the observing of days of abstinence was one of the religious practices which was of great importance to them. But abstinence can only be of relevant to those who have a sufficiency of food and choosing when to fast and when to feast was a decision which had to be made at the household rather than individual level. This could be one of the main reasons why Catholic communities seemed to be based round a gentleman's household. In addition, deciding on what the household would eat was generally the responsibility of the wife which meant that the women of the household were be directly involved in the ritual connected with the faith practised by the head of the household<sup>698</sup>.

## Feast Days

Feast-days - holydays - were also, like fast-days, important in the Catholic domestic cycle, particularly for the gentry. Work was forbidden, even if the servants had to work overtime on the evening before. Instead there was ritual followed by relaxation. There was the hearing of Mass celebrated with as much pomp as possible, supplemented with vespers on the eve of the feast-day,

confession, sermon, etc. depending on the devoutness of the household<sup>699</sup>. Then could come the feasting, dancing, games of cards or dice.

## Baptism

Baptism in a gentry Catholic household with a resident priest could be carried out soon after birth but a statute of 1606 imposed a fine of £100 for a clandestine baptism and this was in addition to the ecclesiastical penalties.

There was also an additional problem: if the baptism was not entered into the parish register, there might be difficulty later in proving who were the parents of a particular person. This could be of particular importance to the gentry where it was necessary to prove descent for inheritance purposes.

Methods of combining baptism by a Catholic priest and also having it entered in the parish records were devious. Probably the easiest way was either to bribe the parson to enter the child into the register as baptised by himself or to have the child baptised a second time<sup>700</sup>.

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699 Bossy, p.117

700 Bossy, p.134

## Indictment for Non-Baptism

Was George Lone of Sevenoaks adamant that he would have nothing to do with his parish church or unfortunate in that the vicar would make no concessions to him? At the March 1626 Assizes he was indicted, "as a popish recusant, for failing to have his child baptised, contrary to statute". George Lone was one of only three men recorded as being indicted for this offence in Kent.

In March 1627, Thomas Whettenhall of East Peckham, "a popish recusant", was indicted for failing to have his son baptised within a month of birth, according to statute, the indictment being endorsed by Francis Warren, vicar of East Peckham. A year later he was presented by the minister and churchwardens of East Peckham for "having his child, born on 16 Feb 1627 christened privately by, it is conjectured, a seminary priest". It was also recorded that several priests resorted to his house and that he himself had stood excommunicate since April 1626<sup>701</sup>.

Seventeen years later, in 1644, Zachary Lawrence, yeoman of West Malling, and another popish recusant was indicted for failing to have his child baptised between 1 Jun 1642 and 1 Jun 1643. No other details are given<sup>702</sup>.

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701 Cockburn, Chas I, 205 & 221

702 Cockburn, Chas. I, 2221

## Burial

The burial of Catholics was a particular cause of tension between Catholics and the parish church. Catholics wished to be buried in consecrated ground which meant in the parish churchyard. To the vicar and his Protestant congregation, if the person to be buried had been a recusant, they had died excommunicate and were therefore not entitled to a parish burial. Whilst in some places corpses were turned away from the churchyard, in many parishes discrete arrangements were made with the burial often taking place at night<sup>703</sup>. No mention has been found of recusant marriages or burials in Sevenoaks and there are no entries for Lone in the Sevenoaks parish registers.

# The Sevenoaks Recusants

The main centre of Catholicism in Kent was Eltham with Sevenoaks the next largest community, there being 35 and 18 people cited from these respective parishes in 1642 (57 and 23 indictments). The first recorded indictment for George Lone was in March 1624 and this was the beginning of series of indictments and writs imposed on him for his recusancy lasting over twenty years. The people of Sevenoaks mentioned at the Assizes for recusancy are listed in Appendix 14.

The proceedings taken against them were complex and the details surviving scanty. At the 1633 March Assizes, a grand jury presented a number of people including George Lone and his wife Bridget, Joyce Richards, widow, and Edmund Millineux and Edward Jones, gentlemen, of Sevenoaks as having been recusant for three months from 1 December 1632. They were proclaimed according to statute but defaulted at the 1633 Assizes when a writ was instituted for their appearance at the March 1634 Assizes<sup>704</sup>. Thus the legal process resulting from one indictment could continue for a considerable time.

## Catholic Households

The most usual charge was to be indicted for recusancy for a period, usually three months. Since Catholic customs affected the behaviour of the whole household, it was to the advantage of both the family and the servants if both practised the same religion. This could lead to the indictment of the head of the householder as, for example, Richard Stockwood who was charged with maintaining Joan Chapman and Catherine Hadley, both recusants, in his house at Sevenoaks from 1st December 1625 to 8th March 1626<sup>705</sup>.

This focusing of Catholics round a gentleman's household is found throughout Kent and was usual over the whole country. A gentleman's household could shelter a missionary priest even if life still was precarious both for the priest and the gentleman. It would have been much less easy for a priest to hide in Sevenoaks and Mereworth than it was in the dales of Lancashire and Yorkshire.

Much the largest such household in Sevenoaks was that of Samuel Lone and his son, George.

## Samuel Lone of Sevenoaks

After his release from prison at the beginning of the 1580s, the next mention of Samuel's continuing recusancy was his indictment at Rochester Assizes on 26th March 1599 when he and William Wyborne of Pembury (both described as gentleman) were indicted for recusancy for six months from 27th September 1598. Wyborne was fined but Samuel claimed that the indictment did not make it clear which church he had failed to attend for the six months in question. This did not seem to have saved him since, at the next Assizes in July 1599, his recusancy was "proclaimed according to statute"<sup>706</sup>.

## Samuel Lone of Mereworth

Between then and 1613 Samuel moved to Mereworth and, in that year, he was presented to a grand jury again because of his recusancy. After this, it was not until 1625 that any recusants were mentioned in Mereworth but, by that time, there was a small group of them based on the Lone household with Samuel (who was now Esquire) and his son Ralph regularly being indicted.

The Lone households in Sevenoaks and Mereworth obviously kept in close touch. Richard Stockwood and his wife Mary and the widow Joyce Richards were all



referred to as his cousins by Samuel Lone in his will of 1630 when he left the Stockwoods £1 each and the widow £2. He also left his servant Anne Palmer £5; in 1627 he had been indicted for maintaining Anne, a recusant, as his servant.

## George Lone of Sevenoaks Park

George Lone, gentleman and son of Samuel, became the owner of Rumshed manor after his father's move to Mereworth and the head of a group of Catholics in Sevenoaks based, however, at Sevenoaks Park rather than Rumshed.

George Lone had two recusant servants, John Butterfield and Elizabeth Steely, from at least December 1631 to the summer of 1632. John Butterfield, labourer, was charged as a recusant in 1631 and 1635 but there was also John Butterfield, yeoman, who was an active catholic from 1630 until 1642 and Elizabeth, wife of John Butterfield, from 1637 to 1642. Elizabeth Steely was also indicted on her own account in 1630 and 1631. Lone also employed Francis Shakerly, a recusant, as his servant from 1 May to 1 July 1638. Shakerly also appeared at the Assizes a number of times, first as a labourer in 1639 and then in 1642 and 1644 when he was described as a yeoman<sup>707</sup>.

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<sup>707</sup> Cockburn (Chas.I) 845, 907, 616, 712, 786, 1706, 616, 712, 786

## George Lone Forced to Sell Land

Whilst the records of the Assizes do not mention George Lone before 1624, he had sold land earlier than this, probably because he needed money to pay fines resulting from his objection to attending the parish church. In 1622 he sold to Nicholas Brattle, a local attorney and one of the Assistants to the Grammar School, a number of pieces of land:

- Brickfields and Solefields to the south of Sevenoaks Park where he lived.
- Wellmeade which could have been the broad valley at the northern end of the modern Grassy Lane.

Over the next thirty years George was forced to sell all his land ending, in 1654 when he was sixty-five, with the sale of Rumshed and "[all that impaled park and grounds or warren, commonly called or known by the name of Sevenoaks Park](#)" to Thomas Lambarde of Westerham<sup>708</sup>.

# Chapter 18

## The Artisans of Sevenoaks

"The artificers of this shire (Kent), they be either such as travail at the sea, or labour in the arts that be handmaidens to husbandry, or else do work in stone, iron and woodfuel, or be makers of coloured woollen clothes; in which last feat they excel as from whom is drawn both sufficient store to furnish the wear of the best sort of our own nation at home and great plenty also to be transported to other countries foreign abroad"<sup>709</sup>. There were also the more lowly artisans supplying leather goods and carrying out building, carpentry and blacksmithing for the town and it is these that are described here. Much the largest group were the shoemakers and it looks as if this was a thriving industry in Sevenoaks.

## Becoming an Artisan

774

Although in theory a man had to serve an apprenticeship before setting up as an artisan, the statutes were only enforced when it was hard to make a living as a yeoman or husbandman.

## The Artisan Testators

775

Only ten wills have survived for the artisans of Sevenoaks but some details can be obtained from the parish registers and a few other records. The description of their houses is amplified by extracts from the will of a Seal carpenter .

## Tanners

777

Tanning was a slow process requiring a considerable amount of capital. The wills of two tanners have survived and a tanyard at Kettles was mentioned in 1650.

## Shoemakers

781

Shoemaking was a highly skilled industry which grew in importance towards the end of the sixteenth century.

## Other Leather Craftsmen

786

The Masters (or Maisters) family included shoemakers, glovers and a currier. Other crafts practised in Sevenoaks included saddlery.

## Bricklayers, Masons and Glaziers

788

The only bricklayer for which any details have survived is William Lawrence, a wealthy man owning three messuages. Although there had been a considerable amount of glass-working near Knole at the end of the sixteenth century, there are hardly any references to glaziers.

## Carpenters

790

Carpenters appear in many more parishes in West Kent than any other artisan; the wills of two Sevenoaks carpenters have survived.

## Wheelwrights

793

Very few wills for wheelwrights have survived from West Kent probably because the value of their possessions did not warrant a will.

## Blacksmiths and Cutlers

795

Although most villages would have had a blacksmith's forge, there are very few references to them in the surviving records. Tonbridge seems to have become known for its cutlery.

# Becoming an Artisan

From a statute of 1563, anyone wishing to practice any "art, mystery or manual occupation" must first serve an apprenticeship for a given number of years. A yeoman or husbandman who tried to set up as a baker, tailor, or other craftsman without having had such training was liable to presentment at the quarter-sessions. In general, this statute was rigidly enforced only during years of stress when yeomen and husbandmen found it difficult to make a living from farming and thus wanted to find other means of adding to their income<sup>710</sup>.

By the 1610s/1620s, at least in the London area, it was easy for artisans to find work so that those trying to recruit them as emigrants for the colonies found them "settled in their communities and reluctant to emigrate". In 1619, a London recruiter for an expedition to Virginia wrote that "if I were to send 40 servants I could have them here at a day's warning" but he had difficulty in finding a single cooper or carpenter<sup>711</sup>.

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710 Campbell, p.158

711 Bush, p.vii

# The Artisan Testators

Only ten wills for Sevenoaks artisans have survived, three tailors, two tanners, a shoemaker, two carpenters, a bricklayer and a wheelwright, and these tell us practically nothing about the work carried out by these men. We also know a little about the artisans from the parish registers and other records which have survived. From the wills, the artisans appear to have been reasonably well off, often owning property, with the bricklayer, William Lawrence, having three messuages. But then the poorer artisans would not have written wills.

The paucity of surviving wills for the "ordinary people" of Sevenoaks is due to the parish being in the Deanery of Shoreham. In Tonbridge and Seal, one a town considerably larger than Sevenoaks and the other a village much smaller, less than a fifth of the wills which have survived from 1540 to 1650 were proved at the PCC<sup>712</sup>. In Sevenoaks, PCC wills account for over half the surviving wills for this period, implying that, if wills had been proved at Rochester instead of Shoreham, about 280 would have been available to us instead of the actual 47.

Working with the details available, we must remember that what has survived is a very partial picture. First we look at what can be deduced about those connected with the leather, building and iron working trades with the tailors being included with the rest of the clothing industry in the next chapter.

## The Houses They Lived In

The part of his house in which the widow of the bricklayer, William Lawrence, was to live was described as "the hall and chamber over the hall, the buttery, the mill house and chamber over the mill house and the kitchen". Unfortunately we do not know what other rooms were included in the whole house.

In his will of 1619<sup>713</sup> John Holloway, a carpenter who lived in the centre of the village of Seal near the "Town well", gives a more detailed description of his house which included a garden plot, backside and outhouses. On the death of his wife it was to be divided between his two daughters. Agnes was to receive the south end of the house which consisted of the hall with a little kitchen and parlour to the west with three upper chambers, one over the parlour, one over the hall and the third over the entry and "some little part more of upper rooms beyond the entry, that is to say to the cross beams or summer at the further end of the same chamber over the entry". A "summer" is a great horizontal beam or lintel especially one supporting a floor or roof and here John shows the specialised knowledge of a carpenter. Johane was to have the "residue of the said tenement and residue of the said garden plot" and also the hayhouse.

These brief descriptions give some idea of the type of house in which the more successful artisans lived. A document describing the division between two



brothers, in 1585, of a traditional type house in Lullingstone has survived<sup>714</sup> and this seems to be similar to that of the Holloways. Many of the yeomen, husbandmen and craftsmen of the area would have lived in houses built on the same lines varying in the number and size of the rooms and their furnishings depending on the wealth of the owner.

## Tanners

By the 1620s, part of the centre of Sevenoaks was designated as the "Leather Market". Leather was a product requiring capital investment. Tanning was a slow process with hides having to be bought a long time before they could be sold as leather and therefore much more money would be tied up in hides than in tools and equipment.

Labour costs, however, were relatively small since all the processes were carried out on the tanner's own premises by himself with the help of just one or two employees. The premises of two tanners is described in two wills from Essex. The widow of a tanner describes them as "a hoppet (yard or small close) where my limepits be, and all the implements and tools pertaining to tanner's craft, as fats, bark, my stock of leather and hides tanned and untanned, and all manner of skins

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714 CKS: U55 T274; details are given in Melling (1965), p.10

already within the fats or without". In 1585, the yeoman John Uphaveringe, who was to be buried in Hornchurch, left to his son Richard "the bark loft, the gatehouse with the vats, the three limepits in the yard and the tools and the bark to dress the leather in the yard withall"<sup>715</sup>.

## The Production of Leather

To produce leather from the hides of cattle, the basic necessity, other than the hides, is oak bark from which to make the tanning compound and of this there was plenty close to Sevenoaks. The hides were soaked in a solution of tan and water for six months to a year or more, producing an unsavoury smell as they matured.

Since there was a large amount of pastoral farming in the area, hides were available either directly or from London after the cattle had been driven there for slaughter. Most parishes in the central and eastern Weald had one or more tanners during the second half of the sixteenth century but, at least in the time of Elizabeth, the trade was more heavily concentrated in the Western Weald<sup>716</sup>. With just two very short wills, separated by over twenty years (1605 and 1628), very little is known of the tanners of Sevenoaks. Zell found that very few tanners were

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**715** wills of Joan Bowyar, widow of Braintree, Essex (1560) and John Uphaveringe, quoted by Emmison, 1976, p.79

**716** Zell (1994), pp.122 & 124

poor and that tanning in the Wealden parishes to the east of Sevenoaks seemed to be passed on, as a trade, from father to son<sup>717</sup>.

There was a tannery in Edenbridge at this time and five wills of tanners have survived from there with seven from Tonbridge. Even though Sevenoaks is not, like both these towns, situated on a river it must have had at least a small tannery managing to make do with a smaller source of water.

In 1650, Richard Rich who owned Kettles described it in detail in an indenture when part of it was leased to William Porter, a tanner from Seal, and the property then included a tanyard which Porter was to use.

## **John Lambe's Sons**

The heirs of John Lambe, tanner of Sevenoaks, were his two sons, Richard and John, whom he appointed his executors. They were apprentices in London when John wrote his will in 1605 and one of John's overseers was to be Michael Heath, citizen and clothworker of London. Perhaps it was to him that Richard and John were apprenticed. If so, it looks as if, as well as moving to London, they were taking up a different trade, possibly where more wealth could be made, certainly

with higher status. But their father's tanning business must have made enough profit for him to be able to start them in a new career.

## **Martin Overy**

Martin Overy, the other tanner, had a son William and a daughter but William was buried on the 6th July 1628 and Martin Overy, householder, on 7th July. When Martin made his wishes known to the vicar, William Turner, on 4th July, William had either already died or was obviously not going to recover so that Martin left everything to his wife instructing her to pay their daughter £5 when she reached the age of eighteen.

## **Other Sevenoaks Tanners**

Three other tanners are mentioned in the Sevenoaks parish registers:

- Henry Cronk was buried in March 1618
- Robert Scott had a child baptised in April 1624
- Richard Hall had children in the years 1624 to 1627.

# Shoemaking

In 1597 Thomas Deloney's book "The Gentle Craft" was published, shoemaking having become known by that description in the 1590s. Two years later Thomas Dekker wrote the play "The Shoemakers' Holiday" with Simon Eyre, a master shoemaker, the leading character. Perhaps the timing of these two publications showed the growing importance of shoe manufacture at the end of the sixteenth century.

After tanning, the leather had to be curried, that is dressed and coloured, before it was ready to be turned into shoes. This process was sometimes carried out by the shoemaker himself, sometimes by a specialist such as John Wood, currier, who had a child in 1564.

Between 1569 and 1650 about twenty shoemakers are recorded in a variety of contexts. This is much the largest group of artisans and indicates that there was a thriving shoemaking industry in the town.

## A Highly Skilled Industry

Shoemaking was a highly skilled and labour-intensive industry. A number of shoemakers would work together, probably the master with a journeyman and one or two apprentices, and this allowed for a division of labour, each man carrying out one operation on the shoe and then passing it on to another.

Both the soles and uppers of shoes were generally made from leather with strong leather from cattle hides being required for the sole whilst a lighter leather such as cordwain or even cloth could be used for the upper which needed to be flexible. The sixteenth century saw the introduction of the welted shoe which had a space between the sole and inner sole filled with a cork mixture which made the shoe more comfortable. Wooden heels also came in at the end of the sixteenth century but shoes were made "straight", that is the same shape for both the right and left foot.

The cutting out of shoe was the most skilled operation since as many shoes as possible had to be cut from each piece of leather and the uppers needed to be cut in such a way that the leather would stretch in the right direction<sup>718</sup>. Craftsmen such as shoemakers (and also tailors) often carried out their work, under the

public eye, sitting under the prentice of their shop with the master sitting in the centre of a trestle table with his apprentices at either end<sup>719</sup>.

## The Shoemakers of Sevenoaks

We have already mentioned:

- William Wilde and William Walklyn who quarrelled with fatal results in 1594,
- Roger Walle who was murdered in 1607
- George Lownes who lived in a house belonging to Thomas Wylde in 1617

In addition there were:

- William Taylor whose wife was buried in October 1569
- Richard Blande who occupied a messuage in Sevenoaks in 1590
- Richard Wall who sold a messuage in 1590
- William Burd who was indicted for petty larceny in 1595<sup>720</sup>
- Thomas Masters and John Masters - see the Masters Family below
- Roger Walle who was murdered at the beginning of 1607<sup>721</sup>
- in 1608, William Ware, one of three brothers - see below
- Edward Mills who was buried in November 1620

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719 Thirsk (1967), p.485

720 Cockburn (Eliz.I) 2254

721 Cockburn (James I) 212

- Godwyn Smith who had a child buried in February 1624
- John Shorie of Riverhead who was buried in October 1626
- Thomas Smith from whose house a man was buried in 1626; he had children from 1626 to 1633 and was a churchwarden in 1634
- Edmond Winter\* and George Weery whose wills have survived - see below
- James Norris indicted for assault in 1635 - see below.
- John Waies, junior, who was buried in May 1640

## The Will of George Weery

One of the wills surviving for the large group of shoemakers is that of George Weery written on 3rd June 1628 with George Weery, householder, being buried five days later. This was just a month before the burial of Martin Overy who, as a tanner could have supplied George with leather.

George mentions neither wife nor children but he had two sisters: Elizabeth Weery whose nuncupative will of 1616 survived and Agnes/Anne, who married Richard Hills, yeoman, whose will of 1641 has also survived. George's executor was his brother Robert Weery, husbandman, of Otford to whom he left his "[messuage or tenement in Sevenoaks . . now in the occupation of Thomas Rumney of Sevenoaks . . . tailor](#)". \*See More Families & Transcripts for Edmond Winter's will (1627).



## The Ware Brothers

William Ware, yeoman of Chiddingstone died sometime before the summer of 1608 leaving his land in Chiddingstone to be divided between his three sons, William Ware, shoemaker of Sevenoaks, John, a husbandman from Chiddingstone and Solomon, a waterman from Gravesend. They decided to sell it to Stephen Theobald who, after surveying it in considerable detail, paid £250 for it<sup>722</sup>. It is not known which Steven this was.

## Indictment for Assault

Like many other local people, shoemakers could travel considerable distances but we often only know about this when a crime was committed. On the night of 16th June 1635, two shoemakers, James Norris from Sevenoaks and James Browne from Penshurst assaulted Edward Harris in the highway at Tonbridge<sup>723</sup>. Journeys such as these must have been made many times without any crime being committed and so they went unrecorded.

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<sup>722</sup> Gordon Ward, *Everlands 2*, p.43; details of the land are given on p.41

<sup>723</sup> Cockburn (Chas.I) 1252

## Other Leather Craftsmen

In addition to shoemakers, there were glovers, curriers and saddlers in Sevenoaks.

### The Masters Family

The Masters (or Maisters) family seems to have specialised in leather craft:

- Thomas Masters, shoemaker, who had a child in 1605 and another in 1606
- Thomas Masters, glover, with children born between 1606 and 1609.
- John Masters, glover, buried in 1611 who could have been the John Masters who was churchwarden in 1607 and 1608.
- Thomas Masters, currier, who had a child in 1632
- another Thomas Masters, glover, one of whose children was buried in 1645
- John Masters, shoemaker, buried in 1648.

Another member of the family, John who died in 1628, was a mercer and his family is described later.

## Saddlers

Richard Sackville and Lady Anne, who spent a considerable time at Knole at the beginning of the seventeenth century and were both keen riders, could have often required the services of a saddler. Before their time, the saddler, John Wood, one of the large Wood family, had had children between 1565 and 1590. Saddlers of the seventeenth century included:

- John Smith and George Nicholas whose burials were recorded in 1615 and 1625 respectively.
- John Bagshaw, who died in 1635 was living in a "messuage or tenement" in Sevenoaks belonging to John Maister, mercer, in 1626.
- Joshua Allen, a prosperous saddler; was a churchwarden in 1638, he had an apprentice, John Oliver, buried in 1648.
- another John Wood who was buried in 1632.

# Bricklayers, Masons and Glaziers

At the beginning of the seventeenth century many men, yeomen as well as gentlemen, were rebuilding or extending their houses. Chimney stacks needed to be made of brick or stone and brick was also used for other walls. Glass was now found in the windows of the wealthy yeomanry as well as those of rich gentlemen.

## William Lawrence, Bricklayer

The will of William Lawrence, bricklayer, was written on 2nd May 1627 and William signed it clearly and affixed his seal to it. He was buried on 8th May, the will being proved on 24th May. It was probably this William Lawrence who had been churchwarden in 1610. His signature is shown in [Appendix 4](#).

William owned land and three messuages in Sevenoaks, one in which he lived himself, one occupied by William Turner, baker, and another near the pound partly occupied by Thomas Ashdown which included a shop, occupied by Elizabeth Rogers, widow. If William Lawrence was a typical bricklayer, there were large amounts of money to be made by it.

From his will his three daughters, Agnes, Elizabeth and Helen, none of whom were married, were to receive £20, £2 and £16 respectively with nothing to indicate why they should be treated so differently. William Lawrence's four sons each received some property but he divided his "tools of husbandry" and ladders equally between two of them - William and George.

A William Lawrence had a child buried in 1629 and a John Lawrence had a number of children between 1615 and 1631; both were bricklayers and could have been sons of the testator. There were other Lawrences in Sevenoaks at this time including John Lawrence, mason, John Lawrence, baker, and John Lawrence, blacksmith.

## Masons

Only two masons have been found in the Sevenoaks records. John Lawrence, mason, who had a child baptised in 1633, may have been one of those who worked on the stone bridge built at Longford between Riverhead and Dunton Green in 1636. The only other Sevenoaks mason found in the records is William Coleman who was indicted for grand larceny in March 1606 but found not guilty<sup>724</sup>

## Glaziers

Percival Smith, in his will of 1616, mentions Nicholas and Thomas Johnson, both described as glaziers whilst eleven years later, in June 1627, Robert Stanley, glazier, was buried. These are the only references to glaziers in Sevenoaks other than those concerned with the glass-working near Knole at the end of the sixteenth century which was described earlier.

## Carpenters

Not only have more wills survived in West Kent for carpenters than any other other artisan but they also appear in more parishes and this is excluding the ship's carpenters of which there were a number in Woolwich, Dartford and other seaport parishes. From Seal, the wills of five carpenters have survived, dating from 1540 to 1635 with John Holloway's house having already been described. From Sevenoaks, we have only two.

Besides the testators described below, two other carpenters are noted in various documents.:

- Stephen Knowles, carpenter, was indicted, with two labourers, at the July 1598 Assizes for stealing two sheep and three lambs from William Olyver. All three confessed and were sentenced to hang<sup>725</sup>.
- John Charman, carpenter, leased two acres of land called Kettles in the 1630s

## Richard Webb

Richard Webb, carpenter, is unusual (at least for testators in the Sevenoaks area) in that he actually details some of the wood working tools he used in his will of 1606 - or rather in a postscript to it. "I give unto William Foster all my box of tools I did use to work with myself and a level. Item: I give unto Evans Wynne all the box of tools he worketh withall usually and a level. Item: I give Ralph Brize all my thock pins and a holdfast. Item: I give unto Paul Wood a crowe of iron and what planes he shall think well of."

Presumably Evans Wynne worked for Webb with tools provided by Webb. Levels and planes are the usual carpenter's tools, a "holdfast" could be a type of vice, a "crowe of iron" an iron crow bar and "thock pins" a variation on "thole pin" or "thowel pin" - a peg.

## William Floate

Elyas Garland "from William Flote's" was buried on 28th June 1625 and his nuncupative will has survived. Elyas, who was the brother of William's wife, could have been another carpenter. In 1627 William was one of the witnesses to the will of the bricklayer, William Lawrence.

In 1634 William Floate, carpenter, owned a house called Gatiers with a barn, stable, close and yard, in which his brother Augustine (Austen or Anthony) lived. This was one of six houses or cottages just to the south of the Sevenoaks almshouses with a hop-garden nearby<sup>726</sup>.

When William Floate died, in 1640, he was living in a house "near unto the Market Cross" which he had recently purchased from Thomas Becket of Chiddingstone. The Floates do not seem to have had any children since William gave his house, on the death of his wife, to his nephew, son of his brother Richard Floate of Herstmonceux in East Sussex.



# Wheelwrights

Most parishes would have required the services of a wheelwright (or wheeler as they were sometimes described) but only about twelve wills for wheelwrights from before 1650 have survived for the whole of West Kent. This was probably because the value of the possessions of most of them would not have been sufficient to warrant a will although, in some cases, the making and repairing of wheels would have been carried out by carpenters. Of these wills, four were members of the Godwyn (or Goodwyn) family of Shipbourne, two in the 1580s, one 1625 and one 1645.

## Selection of the Wood

Both wheelwrights and carpenters had to select the right type of wood for the particular job they were doing. Different trees had different characteristics which made them suitable for different applications.

Well seasoned elm was used for the hub of a cartwheel because it was the only wood which, after being weakened by the spokes having been slotted into it, was still strong enough to stand up to years of use. "Heart of oak" wood, from the centre of the tree where the grain was strongest, was the most suitable for the spokes which had to bear the weight of the cart. The outer circle of the wheel,

called the felloes, was made from ash which can stand great strain without being weakened.<sup>727</sup>

## Percival Smith

Percival Smith, although described as a yeoman in his will dated 2nd July 1616, was recorded as a wheelwright at his burial on 17th November of the same year. His house, at some time while in his possession, had been divided into two with a tenement having been "[severed and divided](#)" from the part in which he was living when he wrote his will.

Amongst his bequests was £15 left to his daughter and her husband which was to be paid to them within two years of his death "[at or in my now dwelling house](#)". If it was not paid, they were to have, during the term of their natural lives, his tenement which was then occupied by Nicholas Johnson, glazier. Percival's son, William, was to be his executor and to inherit the residue of his estate which included the messuage with the tenement attached to it. Although Percival was not particularly wealthy, his money bequests totalling less than £20, he did sign his will himself and he was one of those who left money to the poor.

His son, William, also a wheeler, had already had four children before his father died and he was to go on and have another four. There were other Smiths in Sevenoaks including John Smith, senior, wheelwright of Weald, who was buried on 20th June 1630. Others were William Smith, victualler, Henry Smith, labourer, Edward Smith, tailor and the shoemaker and sadler already mentioned. With a name as common as Smith, they were probably not all related.

## Blacksmiths and Cutlers

Most villages would have had at least one practising blacksmith but, although there were blacksmiths in Sevenoaks, the only one for whom we have any details is Leonard Gale who, as already described, managed to progress from the disaster inflicted by the plague to become very successful but only after moving to Sussex.

John Stone, cutler, of Tonbridge whose will was written in October 1597 by Nicholas Hooper<sup>728</sup>, had a son called Timothy which is not a common name. The cutler's son could have become the blacksmith of Sevenoaks and part time scriptor whose will writing activities were also described earlier.

Not only were there horses to shoe, the blacksmith was the man who made and repaired farm implements such as the metal parts of the plough and hatchets. Occasionally, a smith would specialise in making one particular kind of tool, as did the two scythe makers in Horsmonden in the 1560s.

## Blacksmiths of Sevenoaks

The following blacksmiths are known from various records.

- Robert Perygoe, smith, was indicted for grand larceny in 1585<sup>729</sup>.
- John Kyng, blacksmith, was one of the six men sentenced to hang for the murder of William Pynden of Seal in 1590; this murder has already been described.
- two blacksmiths who quarrelled in 1599 - see below
- John Lawrence had a child baptised in 1616 and was himself buried in 1625.
- Michael Boreman, blacksmith, received a bequest from Richard Besbeeck in 1633.

## A Quarrel Between Blacksmiths

No doubt like many other workmen, quarrels could break out but, in the case of blacksmiths, these could turn very dangerous because of the tools they had to hand. In September 1599, two blacksmiths, Henry Draper and John Hawle were making a horse-nail in the house of Thomas Whyte. They quarrelled over the work and Draper, "in anger, struck Hawke in the stomach with an iron rod, inflicting injuries from which he died 10 hours later". Although Draper was found guilty of felonious killing he escaped punishment by being allowed clergy<sup>730</sup>.

## Cutlers

Cutlers are to be found in a number of market towns and villages and three are mentioned in the wills or parish records of Sevenoaks: Roger Thomas (1617), Thomas Johnson (1632) and James Beacher (1648).

The John Stone, cutler of Tonbridge, may, however, have been one from a larger group since the number in Tonbridge between 1550 and 1620 seems to have been large enough to give them a reputation further afield. "I was born near unto

Tonbridge where fine knives are made" says a character in William Bullem's "Dialogue against the Pestilence"<sup>731</sup>.

# Chapter 19

## The Woollen & Clothing Industries

The Kentish clothing industry expanded in the latter half of the fifteenth century and was still growing in the time of Henry VIII. Whilst Cranbrook, about eighteen miles southeast of Sevenoaks, and other towns further into the Weald were the centre of this trade, there are indications from the scant records of a clothier's shop, some weavers and at least one shearman in Sevenoaks that there was some activity in the town in this industry dating at least from the time of John Tebold at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

### Cloth Making

802

The manufacture of cloth consisted of a large number of different processes and these were usually organised by a man with capital - a clothier. Up until Elizabeth's reign, cloth had been exported to Flanders for "finishing" but the export of unfinished cloth was prohibited in 1566 and this marked the beginning of the gradual decline of the clothing industry in Kent.

## Clothiers

805

It was the clothiers who supervised all the processes carried out including arranging the export of the cloth. The Tebolds had a clothier's shop in Sevenoaks at the beginning of the sixteenth century whilst William Burgis, clothier of Great Kippington was active towards the end of the century.

## Spinning

810

The next stage after dying, spinning was a slow process and one clothier could find work for a considerable number of people, particularly since it was seen as a spare time activity for women and sometimes children.

## Weaving

811

To become a weaver a man served an apprenticeship and could then become a master craftsman. No wills have survived for weavers in Sevenoaks but, between 1560 and 1608 six weavers from the nearby village of Seal wrote wills.

## Fulling and Shearing

814

These were also male occupations. The shearman required a a more extensive range of tools and equipment than the minimum needed by a weaver.



## The Mercers

817

Local mercers were country shopkeepers dealing in cloth of various kinds. The wills of three mercers have survived with a total of eight mercers of Sevenoaks being mentioned in various records. There is also the short will of a haberdasher, a related trade.

## Tailors

821

The wills of three tailors have survived, two of them nuncupative. Other tailors are briefly mentioned in various records.

## Hosiers

823

Only one reference to a hosier has been found in Sevenoaks - George Wymble in 1616. By that time cloth stockings were being replaced by knitted ones

# Cloth Making

A large number of separate processes were involved in the manufacture of cloth, some labour intensive and some requiring specialised skills. The production was organised by clothiers, men with capital who "put out" their raw materials to independent spinners, weavers, fullers and shearmen who carried out the various processes in their own homes and provided their own equipment.

By the early sixteenth century two types of cloth were being produced in the Weald:

- concentrated in the central Weald, heavy broadcloths; in the reign of Edward VI an act had been passed ordering that "every piece of broadcloth that should be made in the Shire of Kent must contain in length, when thoroughly wet, between 28 and 30 yards, in breadth 1.75 yards at least, and, when thickened, scoured, milled and fully dried, should weigh 84 lbs at the least"<sup>732</sup>.
- in the Chartland to the north, kerseys, that is cloths weighing 19 or 20 lbs and measuring only 16 to 17 yards in length<sup>733</sup>.

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732 quoted by Pile, p.7

733 Zell (1994), p.154

## The Export of Cloth

At the time of the act of Edward VI, much of the cloth was exported to Flanders in an unfinished state with the final processes being carried out there before it was sent from Antwerp to all parts of the world. This arrangement seemed to be of benefit to the clothiers and during Elizabeth's reign, their wealth and independence led to them being viewed with suspicion by the queen and her ministers.

As William Cecil, her Secretary of State, said "[those who depend upon the making of cloth are of a worse condition to be quietly governed than the husbandman](#)". The export of unfinished cloth was prohibited in 1566, possibly in order to undermine the power of the clothiers and, although those in other parts of the country were able to obtain some concessions, all the cloth made in Kent and Essex could only be exported in a finished state. One of the reasons why unfinished cloth could find an overseas market more easily than finished was that Europe had more sophisticated methods for producing fashionable finishes than did the clothiers of Kent.

This ruling may have reduced the clothiers' power but it also marked the beginning of the gradual decline in the clothing industry of Kent. Lord Cobham, the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, aware of the problems, petitioned the government and a licence was granted for the export of 2,000 unfinished cloths per year. But,

according to the petition, two thousand was less than a fifth of those made each year.<sup>734</sup>

## Types of Cloth

Whilst the majority of cloth was made from wool, other materials were required by the gentry and a glimpse of this trade is given in the Assize indictments. In March 1646 the house of John Sweazeland was burgled and 10 pairs of stockings valued at £1, 20 ells (25 yards) of holland (£3), 60 yds of Philip and Cheyney (£5) and 480 yards of silk ribbon (£10) were stolen. "Philip and Cheyney" sounds like a luxury material but at 20d a yard it was less than holland, a coarse linen fabric, valued here at nearly 30d a yard. Silk ribbon was only 5d a yard but it would have been much narrower than the other materials.<sup>735</sup>

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734 Pile, pp. 7 & 8

735 Cockburn (Chas.I) 2316

# Clothiers

Wool, the basic raw material had to be carded, spun and woven and then there was the fulling and shearing with the dyeing being carried out either before of after the weaving. Since most of these tasks were carried out by different people, the various workers had to be provided with the wool in its intermediate stages towards a finished product.

When finished, or even if the cloth was to be exported unfinished, its disposal so as to give the maximum profit had to be arranged. Agents had to be appointed both in London and Antwerp and the collection and delivery of the wool as it went through the various stages had to be organised. This obviously required a large amount of capital which could be tied up for considerable periods.

The clothier was himself usually responsible for the washing and sorting of the raw wool and also generally prepared and dyed the wool for individual cloths. Whereas in the West of England the clothiers usually dyed the cloth after it had been woven, in Kent and Surrey the wool was generally dyed before being woven<sup>736</sup>. Kentish cloth was famous for its colours of which a great variety were used. The colours mentioned for cloth made in Cranbrook included scarlet, russett, damson, ginger, blue medley, grey, orange tawny and green medley<sup>737</sup>.

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736 Chalklin, p.118

737 Pile, p.12

## The Tebold Shop

The Tebolds had a clothier's shop in the market place of Sevenoaks from at least the end of the fifteenth century until the middle of the sixteenth and also had connections with Cranbrook. The shop which had been left to John in 1501 by his father was passed to his son Thomas in 1545<sup>738</sup>. Thomas, the scholar, spent the end of his life at the University of Louvain where he died in 1550 and the shop had probably been sold by then. When he died Thomas still owned a considerable amount of land mainly in Seal but including lands and tenements in Sevenoaks.

The Tebold wealth probably came from the cloth industry with the John Tebold who died in 1501, if not founding the business, at least building on what he had inherited. This was the time when clothmaking was expanding in the Weald and, in his will, John mentions sheep, pastures and feeding places and left a shop in Seal, as well as the one in Sevenoaks, to his son.

## Clothiers as Wealthy as the Local Gentry

By the 1520s the tax assessments of the major Cranbrook clothiers placed them on the level with the local gentry<sup>739</sup> and we have already seen that John Tebold was

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<sup>738</sup> will of John Tebold, 1501, PCC: Blammyr 5; will of John Tebold 1545, PCC: Alen 17

<sup>739</sup> Zell (1994), p.153

assessed for the loan of 1542 without any other men from Sevenoaks being included. But neither of the two John Tebolds was described as a clothier in either their wills or other documents, the John who died in 1545 being given sometimes as a yeoman, sometimes as a gentleman.

John Tebold was about seventy when he died in 1545; from the amount of land and the household items mentioned in his will, he was a wealthy man and, when in 1558 he was on his deathbed one of his sons-in-law, Thomas Palley, a warden of the Company of Fishmongers, came to Seal from London, bringing with him a scrivener.

## **William Burgis, Clothier**

In December 1583, the clothier William Burgis had 100 lbs. of wool stolen from him by a fuller from Gravesend. This was valued at £5 (5p per lb.) but the indictment does not say what stage of processing had been reached<sup>740</sup>. When he wrote his will in 1594, Burgis was "old and weak" and therefore the fact that nothing connected with a clothier's business is mentioned in his will may be because he had retired by that time; he does appear to have been reasonably wealthy being owed £400 by one of his sons-in-law.

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740      Cockburn (Eliz.I), 1284

Great Kippington, where William Burgis lived at the end of the sixteenth century, was later owned by the dyer, Richard Cooper, so that Burgis probably had his dyehouse there.

## Dying the Cloth

Dying was a skilled and important operation and, depending on the dyes used, could increase the value of the cloth considerably. For example, in the 1580s, raw fleece wool in clothier's stocks was valued at 2s 10d (14p) per quarter, and after it was culled and cleaned at about 3s 6d (17.5p) per quarter. After it was dyed this value had increased to between 4s 4d and 9s (22p to 45p) depending on the colour with blue being much more expensive than red<sup>741</sup>.

Heating the dyeing vats required the availability of timber and, whilst there was a considerable amount of it in the area, these vats would have had to compete with other industries such as the glasshouses to which John Lennard sold a great deal of the timber produced by the Knole estate. The inventory of a clothier of Cranbrook who died in 1601 included 60 loads of wood and faggots to fuel the dye-vats and domestic fires. Although this clothier also had a substantial farm,

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741 Zell (1994), p.165



one of the fields was taken up with "2 **hardles**" used for drying washed and dyed wool and the tenter frame used for drying fulled cloth<sup>742</sup>.

## **A Seventeenth Century Clothier**

The only mention found of a Sevenoaks clothier in the seventeenth century is a passing reference to John Pococke, clothier, son of Thomas Pococke, yeoman, Thomas's will of 1624 having survived.

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742 Singleton, Tony; From Dyehouse to Brewhouse; The Cranbrook Journal, No.4, February 1991, p.6

# Spinning

Generally carried out by women, spinning was the next stage but it was a slow process and a successful clothier needed to have a large number of spinners ready to work for him. The spinning of the 86 pounds of wool required for one broadcloth is estimated to have taken 86 working days<sup>743</sup> so that, to produce sufficient wool in a six-day week the clothier, would have required fourteen to fifteen workers.

Given that spinning was often carried out by women with many other duties to perform, the production of the yarn for one broadcloth could easily have required either twice as long or the labour of twice as many people. Thus one clothier in a town or village could have provided work for a considerable number of its inhabitants.

Spinning was, however, very badly paid - between 2d and 3d per pound of wool at the end of the sixteenth century - probably because it was seen as "spare time" activity for women and, possibly, children.

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743 Zell (1994), p.166

# Weaving

Weaving was practically always carried out by men who had served an apprenticeship as distinct from spinning which was regarded as a relatively unskilled occupation. Even so, whilst clothiers needed a considerable amount of capital, all that a weaver required was a loom which cost between £1 and £2.50 although his parents would have had to find twice this for his apprenticeship premium.

## Independent Master Craftsmen

Many professional weavers also cultivated their land being independent master craftsmen not directly employed by the clothiers for whom they wove the cloth. Looms for the weaving of broadcloth required two operators who could, together, produce about two yards per day. It would therefore have taken the weaver and his assistant, working on a single broadloom, just over two weeks to produce a thirty-yard Kent broadcloth<sup>744</sup> for which they would have been paid between 8d and 12d per yard (3.33p to 5p) depending on the quality of the cloth. In April 1628, a servant of James Gadwell, broadweaver, was buried in Sevenoaks but nothing more is known of Gadwell.

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744 Zell (1994), p.169

The only other records of weavers in Sevenoaks were:

- at the summer Assizes of 1609, Thomas Watkins was indicted for grand larceny having stolen 6 yards of kersey valued at 16s (£0.80)<sup>745</sup>
- Richard Thornton whom Beatrix Spratt appointed as one of her overseers in 1615
- Ananias Higham buried in February 1624
- Francis Everest buried in September 1632.

## The Swaynslands of Seal

Six weavers of Seal who died between 1560 and 1608 left wills which have survived. Two of these were Swaynslands, a family with connections throughout the county.

Thomas Swaynsland of Gravesend wrote his will in 1540 and this shows a man owning land and having connections over a large area of the county: Gravesend, Northfleet, Seal and Kemsing and paying John Sharpe in Cranbrook for land owned in Seal. His occupation or standing is not given but he makes five bequests each of five mother sheep (and also one of a "cow with one eye"). He left "his frame" to his son John so that both Thomas and John could have been at least part-time weavers. John wrote his will in 1553 when he was living at Fullers

Street in Seal which he had inherited from his father. Like his father, he owned land in many parts of the county.

Edward Swaynsland, weaver of Seal, wrote his will in 1560 as did another John, a broadweaver, in 1568. Edward and yet another John whose will of 1555 has survived both owned land in Blackhall which could have been part of the manor of Blackhall in Sevenoaks on the boundary with Seal. All the testators were reasonably wealthy men but, unfortunately, all these wills are mainly concerned with land and do not give any information about weaving.

References to these wills are given in [Appendix A](#) and transcripts in [Families and Extra Transcripts](#).

# Fulling and Shearing

Next came fulling and shearing also, like weaving, carried out by independent craftsmen paid piece rates by the clothier.

## Fulling

Fulling is done by pressing or kneading the cloth which closes up the woollen threads of the woven fabric. The process was assisted by using a soap or acid or, in particular a clay called fuller's earth. This cleansing and pressing of the cloth was described by G.D. Ramsay as:

"the newly woven fabric, scoured by fuller's earth, was thickened by the fuller or tucker who steeped and battered it in a vat of urine"<sup>746</sup>

or, much earlier, in Langlands's *Piers Plowman* written in 1362:

"Cloth that cometh from the weaving  
Is nought comely to wear  
Till it be fulled underfoot  
Or in fulling stocks"<sup>747</sup>

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746 G.D.Ramsay, *English Woollen Industry*, p.10, quoted by Zell, p.179

747 quoted by Pile, p.5

## The Fulling Mill

It was the Flemish weavers who came to England in the first half of the fourteenth century who introduced the use of a water power to drive a wheel which raised a heavy oak hammer to pound the cloth. After its use to grind corn, the fulling mill is one of the earliest examples of the use of water power in industry<sup>748</sup>.

If the hammers used to batter the cloth were to operate efficiently, a fast running stream was required. As already described, there was a fulling mill on a stream running through the Bradbourne estate in the north of the parish of Sevenoaks from at least the end of the thirteenth century. Although one has not been clearly identified, tradition has it there was a fulling-mill in Seal and there might also have been a deposit of fuller's earth there.

## Shearing

The shearman's work was also described by G.D. Ramsay:

"The nap (of the cloth) was then raised by passing teasels, mounted on a frame, across the fabric, a process known as rowing or barbing, after which a smooth surface was created by the shearman who, with a large and heavy pair of shears, clipped off the fluff or rough wool. To improve the surface, the nap raising and shearing were several times repeated"<sup>749</sup>.

Not all Kent broadcloths were finished by local shearmen; some went to London first and some were exported directly after fulling as they had to be towards the end of the sixteenth century by government regulation. Since the finishing added considerably to the value, local clothiers must have tried to find customers for the fully finished product, selling unfinished cloth only when forced to do so.

John Wood, shearman, had children baptised in Sevenoaks between 1571 and 1589 but his burial was not recorded. Even if he had written a will, it would probably have been proved at Shoreham and therefore not survived. The tools and equipment required by a shearman included a number of pairs of shearman's shears, handles, shearboards, a press, tenter and hurdles and, in the latter half of the sixteenth century, these cost between £5 and £8, considerably more than the minimum required by a weaver<sup>750</sup>.

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749 G.D.Ramsay, *English Woollen Industry*, p.10, quoted by Zell, p.182

750 Zell (1994), p.185 quoting from a number of inventories



# The Mercers

Eight mercers were recorded in Sevenoaks between 1588 and 1634 with three wills surviving. The Mercers Company, the earliest of the London Livery Companies, was founded in 1393 and its members were exporters and importers dealing in luxury fabrics. Woollen cloths were their chief export, silks and fine linens from Flanders, their chief imports<sup>751</sup>. There is no recorded connection between the Company and Sevenoaks and ordinary mercers were the country shopkeepers of the time having a standard of living similar to that of a substantial yeoman<sup>752</sup>. It is probable that all the Sevenoaks mercers, except possibly Blome who has already been described, came into this category.

The mercers other than Blome whose wills have survived were John Masters (or Maisters) and Edward Knight. Whilst these two were by no means poor, they could not aspire to the position and wealth of John Blome. Perhaps this was because Blome lived longer and therefore had more time to build up his wealth.

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751 Watney, p.1

752 Chalklin, p.245

## John Maister

John Maister, mercer, had three children baptised in Sevenoaks between 1588 and 1600: Ann, Sarah and Mathew, the latter being baptised on 2nd March 1600 and therefore twenty-six when his father wrote his will in May 1626, making him his executor and heir. John also mentions three other sons and a daughter but their baptisms were not recorded in Sevenoaks. In 1626 John owned a messuage with a shop adjoining it and some other "[shops and shambles](#)" in Sevenoaks; he died in December 1628.

Over forty years earlier, In 1582, Edmond Mills, a mercer from Shipbourne, had sold to "[John Maisters of Sevenoaks, mercer, one messuage or house and a garden and a backside in the town of Sevenoaks](#)"<sup>1753</sup>. This John was probably the father of the mercer who died in 1628. In his will Edmond Mills asked two of his "[trusty friends](#)" to help to put his son "[to some good trade as to a mercer or to a pewterer or Glover](#)". Does this imply that he considered these occupations as of equivalent standing?

## Edward Knight

Edward Knight was one of eight children orphaned when their father, John Knight, a wealthy yeoman of Cowden (about ten miles south-south-west of Sevenoaks), died in 1618. Their stepmother, who had a son of her own, was the executrix of her husband's will in which he left money for Edward and his brothers and sisters but made no mention of how they were to be educated or set up in professions.

Edward obviously made a good start since, by 1634 he was established as a mercer in Sevenoaks where, in the summer of that year, he died when was only in his twenties. His will was very short and proved only thirteen days after it was written, presumably on his deathbed where he was attended, in his sickness, by Alice White and Grace Tomlinson to each of whom he left £2. He also left £30 to John Swaysland, another mercer of Sevenoaks, who perhaps belonged to the Swaysnland family described above.

## Other Sevenoaks Mercers

The other Sevenoaks mercers were:

- George Wood known from the baptism of his daughter in 1593 and his burial on 7th May 1612
- John Rogers who was buried in May 1615
- Thomas Wickenden whom George Weery appointed his overseer in 1628
- Edward Lawrence, church warden in 1629 who was buried in November 1631.

## Richard Turner, Haberdasher

A haberdasher dealt in smaller items connected such as ribbons, buttons and other trimmings. The nuncupative will of Richard Turner, haberdasher, written on 21st June 1634 has survived but it is very short. He left all his land to his brother and a total of £50 in money bequests including £30 to his sister.

# Tailors

Whilst the surplus cloth produced in Sevenoaks would have been sold in London, local people would have needed garments made locally by professional tailors. As with other occupations, there is practically no information available on local tailors.. Two of the three wills that have survived, those of Francis Brown and John Mantle, are nuncupative; Francis Brown was a churchwarden in 1630-31.

## Martin Rebankes

The third testator, Martin Rebankes, describes himself as "of Sevenoaks Weald" but the messuage at Idehill which he left to his two daughters was in the parish of Sundridge and he left a chest "standing in Brasted" as well as the one "standing in the Weald" without mentioning any dwelling in either of these places. He probably leased a house, which he also used as a workshop, in Sevenoaks Weald whilst leasing out the messuage he owned at Idehill.

## Other Tailors

Three of the tailors mentioned appear in a bad light: James Crosse and Michael Tompson who were charged with receiving some cloth and Richard Harborowe who stole one of William Pococke's sheep.

Other tailors were mentioned in various records without any details being given:

- in 1613 John Romney occupied a messuage near the Butchers Shambles in Sevenoaks which belonged to George Pococke.
- in 1616 Walter Edmond lived in part of Eme White's house
- in 1617 William Wright had "lately purchased" some land from John Chapman, a tailor of Riverhead.
- James Smith was buried in September 1619
- Edward Thomas was buried in March 1622
- Thomas Cotton was buried in April 1623
- a child of Henry Thomson was buried in April 1624
- Richard Cronke had a child baptised in May 1624
- Edmond Smith had a child baptised in February 1627
- in his will of 1639, John Turner, citizen and draper of London, mentions Thomas Wheeler of Sevenoaks, tailor.

# Hosiers

The only mention of a hosier in Sevenoaks is in one of the testimonies taken for the Quarter Sessions in 1614, George Wymble (or Wimbell), hosier, being one of the witnesses to a drunken brawl<sup>754</sup>.

Amongst the various types of cloth stolen from John Sweazeland were 10 pairs of stockings. Up to the end of the fifteenth century men wore a garment, known as “hose” which combined both breeches and stockings, each part being made separately and then stitched together. The stockings were made from cloth cut on the cross to allow them to stretch. An alternative, often worn by workmen, was to have the stockings attached to pants similar to the “tights” worn by women today; these were worn under a tunic.

## Knitted Stockings

During the sixteenth century, cloth stockings came to be replaced by knitted ones generally made from wool but also, for those able to afford them, from silk. By the time of George Wymble, the knitting of stockings had become an industry with centres throughout the country and international connections but with no record of it having been carried out on a large scale in the Sevenoaks locality.

Knitting centres were often found in pastoral areas since such farming need not occupy the work force full time and knitting could provide a supplementary income not only for the farmers but also the labourers. Stockings became items of fashion, being made from varieties of yarn, in different designs with a wide range of colours and types of decoration. Skilled craftsmen took pride in producing stockings to their own individual designs thus giving the merchants selling them the opportunity to persuade their customers to buy something different.

Worsted stockings, such as those left by the gentleman Robert Gavell in 1608, were finer than those made from coarser yarns which were more hard-wearing. Made from combed wool from long wool sheep, they were worn by those who took a pride in being well-dressed and could afford the higher cost.<sup>755</sup>



# Chapter 20

## Agriculture and the Tradespeople of Sevenoaks

Pastoral farming and butchery were where wealth was to be made but some crops were grown by practically all landowners.

### Centres of Commerce

829

The market area of Sevenoaks included the Corn Market, the Leather Market and Butchers Row.

### Smallholdings

830

Land was often leased out in relatively small parcels. Smallholders could supplement what they made from selling produce from their land with money wages but some of them were artisans making most of their money from their trade.

## Arable Farming

833

Even pastoral farmers would have some land where they grew crops if only for their own use. Dung was important for making the soil more productive and marl was also used to make it easier to work.

## Arable Crops

836

The main crops were wheat and oats but barley, roots, peas, hemp and hops are all mentioned in the records.

## Pastoral Farming

842

Pastoral farming was less labour intensive than the growing of crops but required more specialist skills. William Longe who owned land in the Chatham area, leased Panthurst Park where he grazed his cattle.

## Horses and Oxen

845

Most farmers would have had at least one horse although for tasks such as ploughing and the pulling of carts over heavy clay ground oxen had some advantages.

## Cattle and Other Animals

849

The term “cattle” included many more types of animal than it does now - sheep, horses and hogs all coming within its jurisdiction. Game birds and bees are mentioned in some of the other records.

## Butchers

853

Butchers were a wealthy group with families like the Everests from Tonbridge and the Olyvers from Seal owning shops in the Butchers Shambles of Sevenoaks.

## Bakers

858

Although there must have been other bakers in Sevenoaks, William Turner is the only one for whom any details have survived.

## Brewing and Brewers

861

The usual drink was ale or beer since it was often difficult to find uncontaminated water. Brewing could be carried out by the housewife as part of her domestic duties but a large establishment such as Knole would have its own professional brewer with a range of specialise equipment.

## Barbers

863

There seems to have been at least one practising barber in the town at least between 1570 and 1650. In Tudor and Stuart times, barbers often carried out tasks such as blood-letting and minor surgery and the will of a barber-surgeon has survived from West Malling.

The success of a yeoman or husbandman often depended on the abilities of his wife.

Because inventories have not survived for the Sevenoaks area much less is known about it than for North Kent parishes in the Sittingbourne area investigated by Monk and the eastern Wealden parishes investigated, in particular, by Zell. Since, however, the main topographical and geological divisions run in several belts from east to west, Zell concluded that farming in the western Weald was unlikely to have differed significantly from that in the east<sup>756</sup>.

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756 Zell (1994), p.90

# Centres of Commerce

"Most Kentish towns were centres not of industry, but of commerce, and their most distinctive feature was the market". Each market probably served an area from about three to five miles in area although many farmers dealt at more than one. Such a one was Thomas Everest, butcher of Tonbridge, who owned a shop in the Shambles in Sevenoaks in 1598.

## The Centre of Sevenoaks

In 1624, the mercer, John Blome, left property to his son Edward which gives a picture of the crowded central area of Sevenoaks:

- a "messuage or tenement, with the stable, backside and garden now thereunto belonging . . . next the Corn Market"
- a "tenement with three shops under it likewise situated over against the Corn Cross . . . towards the south, together with two corn shops in the Butchers Row and the stable adjoining to one of the same long shops"
- three other shops in Butchers Row
- "And all that my part, purport and portion of and in two other shops in the Butchers Row aforesaid next the Leather Market".

## The Corn Market

The farming community from the surrounding area would bring their produce to sell in the weekly market but the corn shops there, with even part of the area being designated as the Corn Market, imply that there were middle men collecting agricultural products from the surrounding farms and selling them on. Since most farms were orientated to the rearing and fattening of cattle rather than the growing of crops, the corn shops in the market may have brought in corn from other areas to sell to the local populace. Was the Corn Market already there as a specialised area when Lambarde was organising the selling of corn to the poor during the famine of 1587?

## Smallholdings

The wills and deeds for the Sevenoaks area show that land was leased out, in relatively small parcels, to a number of tenants. This is the pattern shown for the Wealden parishes in the See of Canterbury where much more data is available. The custom of gavelkind also meant men inherited small farms and this led on to an active market with small areas changing hands not only amongst the gentry and yeomen but also with the participation of artisans. Rate books and lists

which have survived for Chiddingstone show that 30% of its farms were under 10 acres with only 18% of 60 acres or more<sup>757</sup>.

Those too poor to own or lease any land, and therefore completely dependent on what they could earn by their labour, were at the mercy of market prices whereas having even a small amount of land could go some way to making the family self-sufficient for food. Very little is known about those who lived in this way.

## Smallholders

Smallholders could make most of their living from their land, perhaps supplemented by money wages, or they could be labourers or artisans with money wages but growing produce for their own use. In both cases, they would generally have only a small surplus, if any, to sell in the local market. How successful they were here often depended on the skill of their wives to produce butter and cheese or look after chickens so as to be able to sell eggs and it was also often the wife who took their goods to market.

They could possibly have kept a pig on the land attached to their cottage but, to produce milk and cheese, they would have needed to be able to pasture their one or two cows on the common. By the sixteenth century, common and wasteland

was in short supply and in the Weald, including the Sevenoaks area, most waste land was woodland. Wood, as we have seen, was in great demand by, amongst others, glaziers and clothiers and, by the sixteenth century, a great deal of this was privately owned and owners were not keen to see it used for grazing.

## **John Bearding, Husbandman**

One of those who supplemented the income from his smallholding by working for others was John Bearding a husbandman whose nuncupative will of 1640 has survived. He was not, however, married and could have been quite young and, although he described himself as a husbandman of Blackhall, he may not have had much land of his own.

He had money owing to him from:

- his master, Robert Olyver, amount unspecified, to go to Nan Cruft; her relationship to John is not specified. If he had lived, was he hoping she would be his wife?
- John Porter, £16. William Carter was to have the use of this for one year and then it was to be equally divided between his brother and sisters.

For his burial John allowed the wages due to him, his wearing apparel and one ewe sheep. Presumably these wages were in addition to the money owed him and bequeathed as above.



# Arable Farming

William Lambarde described the soil of Kent as "for the most part bountiful, consisting indifferently of arable, pasture, meadow and woodland, howbeit of these, wood occupieth the greatest portion even till this day". As for the orchards of apples and gardens of cherries these were "of the most delicious and exquisite kinds that can be, no part of the realm (that I know) hath them, either in such quantity and number, or with such art and industry, set and planted"<sup>758</sup>.

In the Sevenoaks locality, most farms of any size were mixed arable and pastoral with the rearing of beef cattle being one of the more productive enterprises.

## Ploughing

Ploughing was a heavy, time-consuming job with the method used depending on the type of soil. On stiffish clay soils, the land had to be thrown up into high ridges before sowing so as to lift the seed out of the damp, waterlogged furrows. It was often necessary to provide additional drainage which was done by directing the water from the end of the furrows into gutters, by cutting cross-gutters to

drain the water to the sides of the fields and by trenching<sup>759</sup>. No wonder that much of the land in the Sevenoaks locality was used for the rearing and fattening of cattle.

## **“Dung, Compost or Soiledge”**

Dung was an important by-product of the keeping of animals with cattle being put onto the fallow field in the spring and moved to the meadow after the hay had been cut. Pigeon dung and mud from ponds were also good sources of manure. Hill pastures on the Downs were used for the grazing of sheep folded on the lower arable fields at night. Sheep dung was often the best and strongest dung to be had and sheep were valued as much, if not more, for their manure as for their wool and meat since this made possible the growing of wheat and other crops on the arable land<sup>760</sup>. Richard Besbeech's will ends with instructions regarding his land at Riverhill: none of the ground or lands there were to be let or parted from the farm and all "the dung, compost or soiledge" made there was to be used only upon the farm itself.

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759 Thirsk (1967), p.165

760 Thirsk; pp. 168 & 56

## The Use of Marl on the Land

In the Weald the soil was not particularly suitable for arable farming and the use of marl and other substances in an endeavour to make it more productive were common from at least the sixteenth century. Deposits of marl occurred at various places in the locality and this could sometimes have unpleasant consequences for travellers.

In 1610 Jeffrey Pawley of Shipbourne was charged with having "digged and drawn marl in the highway . . . in Shipbourne leading from Ightham to Tonbridge . . . And thereby hath made a pit in the aforesaid highway continuing in length 20 feet and to the depth of some 8 feet to the annoyance of the king's leige people"<sup>761</sup>. This digging for marl in the highway occurs at other times and places - at least when the cart was loaded it would already be on the road.

## Instructions for its Use

A book published in 1625 entitled 'The Enrichment of the Weald of Kent' gave instructions for marling land. It was written, by Gervase Markham, for the benefit of gentlemen and yeomen farmers who were working to a long timescale and were farming at least 100 acres.

The marling was to be carried out at intervals with oats or wheat as the first crop followed by peas or a summer fallow. Then another wheat crop after which the land was to lie in a clover ley for five or six years during which it was used for fattening bullocks and sheep. After this it needed ploughing with two wheat crops to follow. The farmers were warned against taking quick profits from the high price of corn: “To raise a short gain . . . will bring a long a perpetual loss”. Markham also pointed out that the price of butter, cheese, mutton and beef had also risen “equally if not beyond wheat, rye, barley and other grains”<sup>762</sup>

## Arable Crops

Practically all farmers would have grown some crops at least for their own use even if the majority of their land was pasture. In the eastern Weald, about half the arable land was sown in the winter, usually with wheat. For the spring sowing, the cereal chosen was generally oats which was the most suitable cereal for the heavy, poorly drained clay<sup>763</sup>. Then there were the more unusual crops such as hemp.

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<sup>762</sup> Markham, pp.6-12, 15-16; quoted by Thirsk, J. pp.92-93 in Zell (2000)

<sup>763</sup> Zell (1994), p.99

The crops mentioned by the Sevenoaks testators included barley, corn, wheat, hay, hops, oats, peas and roots but corn and hay are the only ones which appear in more than one will. Wheat was obviously important to William Douglas (1649) since it was the only item he mentioned specifically; his sons-in-law were to share equally between them "[all the half of my wheat and all my goods and debts in whose hands soever they remain](#)". Another example of its mention in a will from the locality is that of William Carpenter of Leigh who, in 1631, gave to the poor of Leigh three bushels of wheat which was to be baked into loaves and bestowed amongst them<sup>764</sup>.

The only one of the testators who mentioned crops other than the ones to be expected such as wheat and oats was the bricklayer, William Lawrence, who, when he died in 1627, had roots, peas and barley in addition to oats to leave to his wife. Barley could be used for bread, as animal feed and for brewing but probably the latter was its main use in the Sevenoaks area.

## Root Crops

We do not know what kind of root crop William Lawrence had grown. In 1542 Andrew Boorde advised his readers to eat vegetables such as turnips, parsnips

and carrots but there is little in the surviving records to show that many took his advice.

The extensive archives for Ingatestone Hall in Essex, the home of Sir William Petre, Secretary of State to Queen Elizabeth give a great deal of detail about the household but there is only one entry connected in any way with vegetables and this notes that the gardener was supplied, in 1550, with a variety of seeds including those for parsley, cucumbers, parsnips, white beet and radishes.<sup>765</sup>

## Peas

Various types of pea were grown in England with each area having its own local variety and peas were generally chosen over beans for the lighter soils. Their principal use was for feeding horses, sheep and for fattening pigs<sup>766</sup> but they were eaten by people and not necessarily by those in dire need. Perhaps Thick Pea Pottage was served by the Sackvilles at Knole as a delicacy:

"To boil young peas or beans: first shale them and seethe them in fair water, then take them out of the water and put them into boiling milk, then take the yolks of eggs with crumbs of bread, and ginger, and strain

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<sup>765</sup> Brears, p.6; Emmison, 1964, p.46

<sup>766</sup> Thirsk (1967), p.171

them through a strainer with the said milk. Then take chopped parsley, saffron and salt and serve it forth for pottage".<sup>767</sup>

Does the adjective "fair" to describe the water show how extra care was needed at this time to ensure that water used for cooking was not contaminated? In 1642 "oats and peas to the quantity of 3 or 4 quarters" taken from the granary at Knole by a Parliamentary force were valued at £4 but that may have been an exaggerated price to get more compensation<sup>768</sup>.

## Hemp

Hemp, which requires a rich, alluvial soil was grown in some areas of Kent particularly along the Medway near Maidstone. When the house in which Anne Lone, widow of Richard Lone, was burgled in 1587, one of the items stolen was 6lbs of hemp valued at £0.03 per lb.

George Pococke (1613) had a hemploft in his house but it could be, not that he grew the hemp, but that he was concerned with the process of turning it into thread. Hemp, however, was definitely being grown at Kettles in 1650 when the

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<sup>767</sup> A.W., A Book of Cookrye Very necessary for all as such delight therein, printed by Edward Allde (London 1591) [Bodleian Library, Oxford, Douce W.23]; quoted by Brears, p.37

<sup>768</sup> Mulling, p.16

"hempland in the said orchard" was mentioned<sup>769</sup>. Much earlier than this, John Wood, hempdresser, had a number of children baptised between 1605 and 1613.

## Hops

Hops were a crop grown by some of the Sevenoaks men. John Blome (1624) mentions hop poles and a hop garden, John Hope (1632) had a stock of hops and hop poles and Richard Besbeech, in 1633, instructed that his hop garden and two long meads were "at no time hereafter to be ploughed up or fallowed" or put "to any other use than now it is at this present". If these provisions were disregarded then his executor was to "pay yearly unto the poor" of Sevenoaks £10 "it being demanded within one year after my decease by the said poor of the parish of Sevenoaks or any for them".

Hops had been introduced into England over a hundred years before these wills were written and Thomas Hendley, a gentleman of Otham (about three miles south east of Maidstone) noted that his second child was born on 15th April "being Hop Monday" 1532. Since it was recommended that poles were erected in the spring as soon as the hops were above ground, a Monday in the middle of April would be appropriate to become known as Hop Monday<sup>770</sup>. Hops were a

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769 Gordon Ward Notebooks, Polhill X, p.69

770 CKS: U1044 F1; Thomas Hendley's Book; Filmer, Richard; Hops and Hop Picking; Shire Publications 1984 quoting from a book published in England in 1574



labour intensive crop but, where the farmer had suitable well-drained soil, could lead to high financial returns<sup>771</sup>.

## The Introduction of New Crops

Other new crops were being introduced into the area. At the beginning of the seventeenth century flax-growing developed rapidly in the Maidstone area and in a Hadlow will of 1608 flax growing in the ground is mentioned<sup>772</sup>. The only Sevenoaks will in which it is mentioned is that of Clemence Pearson who, in 1606, left six ells of flaxen cloth to her sister.

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771 Thirsk (1967), p.176

772 Clark, p.301; will of Thomas Reynolds, PCC: Wingfield 43

# Pastoral Farming

Zell found that the "wealthiest farmers were rich in cattle, not in cereals". The sample inventories he investigated for the Eastern Weald showed that, although there was a good deal of local variety in farming, by no means all farmers sold or slaughtered all of their cattle in the late autumn. Instead, many were able to feed at least some of their livestock during the winter months on hay from their meadows and cheap grain which they had grown themselves. They were thus able to sell their cattle at a time when they could get a higher price for them.<sup>773</sup>

Panthurst Park was one of the areas used for the rearing and fattening of cattle with Moses Olyver having the lease at the beginning of the seventeenth century and William Longe subsequently.

## Thomas Tusser's Advice

Whilst pastoral farming was not as labour intensive as arable farming, looking after the animals required people with more skills than did the weeding of fields and the harvesting of crops. Thomas Tusser had advice on how to look after cattle in the winter months:

"Get trusty to tend them, not lubberly squire,  
that all the day long hathe his nose at the fire.  
Nor trust unto children poor cattle to feed,  
but such as be able to help at a need.

Serve rye straw out first, then wheat straw and pease  
then oat straw and barley, then hay if ye please.  
But serve them with hay while the straw stover last,  
then love they no straw, they had rather to fast."<sup>774</sup>

## Roads Became Tracks for Cattle Drivers

Cattle from the larger herds were probably driven to the London markets but the smaller farmers would have had no problem in selling their animals in Sevenoaks, Tonbridge or the other nearby towns as the number of local butchers show. Eight wills have survived for Tonbridge butchers between 1589 and 1646, more than for any other parish in West Kent. There was also a ready market for hides in the local tanneries.

For the ordinary traveller wishing to move about the area, generally on horseback, this movement of cattle "on the hoof" along what were not very good roads, meant

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774 Tusser, p.56; "lubberly" - lazy, awkward; "stover" - winter food for cattle

that journeys took longer and could be hazardous. Inclines, such as those at Riverhill, together with the clay soil would, in any case, have made them difficult particularly in winter. As late as the mid-eighteenth century, a traveller on the Wealden roads complained that they were "[more truly the tracks of cattle drivers](#)"<sup>775</sup>.

## William Longe's Land and Cattle

All the land which Longe mentioned in his will of 1621 was in Chatham and Aylesford, his connection with Sevenoaks seeming to be only his lease of Panthurst although Sevenoaks is where he chose to be buried. In Chatham he had two tenements or dwelling houses with "[barns, outhouses, orchards, gardens, stubies](#)"<sup>776</sup> [and outhouses](#)", another orchard of about an acre, a field and wood of sixteen acres together with another 46 acres of land. The land in Aylesford was not itemised.

All William Longe's stock of cattle which he had in his "[farm called Panthurst or elsewhere](#)" were to be sold to pay his debts. The cattle could have been reared in the Park, fattened there and then driven to the Chatham area for slaughter, a

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775 Dr. Burton of Cambridge, quoted by Thirsk (1967), p.55

776 stubbles - reaped fields?

distance of about twenty miles. Alternatively they could have been reared in Chatham and driven both ways. This was not something new for the area. A thousand years earlier, cattle were being driven along the droves ways from villages to the north of Sevenoaks to the woodland in its vicinity.

## Horses and Oxen

Horses kept by the farmers - yeomen and husbandmen - would have been used as packhorses and for working, pulling the plough and carts. When a horse was ill and more specialised help than that which could be provided by the farmer was required, the "expert" to whom they turned was called the horseleech. At least in the North Kent area round Sittingbourne, there is some evidence of the farmers breeding horses which was unusual in that this was considered the prerogative of the gentry<sup>777</sup>.

Whilst horses were valuable animals, they are mentioned rarely in the Sevenoaks wills. In 1510, Peter Newman left his gelding to the vicar to cover the payment due to him on the death of a parishioner. Robert Gavell left his little nag to his brother and William Pococke, in 1596, left his "colt, twelve monthling stoned" to his son. They do, however, appear often in the indictments for grand larceny.

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<sup>777</sup> Monk, pp. 15,14

## Oxen

Oxen had a number of advantages over horses for both ploughing and pulling carts, a team of six to eight oxen being needed for the heavy soils of the Weald. In general, ploughing with oxen was much slower than with horses which obviously meant extra work for the farm worker. But oxen did have some advantages. They could live on poorer pasture than horses and, when fed on oats, required only half the quantity of that needed by horses. Even so, if the oxen were to be fit for work, they had to be put out to lush grass which was available only in closes and if this was not available the farmer might have to use horses. Another advantage of using oxen was that they could be slaughtered for meat when they were too old for work whilst horsemeat was not very popular<sup>778</sup>.

## Richard Besbeeche's Oxen

Richard Besbeeche had "two white back working oxen" which he gave to his tenant John Stringer of Goudhurst with "two great steers"<sup>779</sup> which went to another tenant, Thomas Tourt of Horsmonden. But this was on condition that they would "at all times necessary and convenient from the first of May lend the said oxen to my executors to carry . . . to my farm at Riverhill" and also that they would "lend

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778 Clutton-Brock, p.155

779 a steer was a young, usually castrated, ox

the said oxen to remove the goods out of the house where now I dwell (after the expiration of the lease) to Riverhill".

Goudhurst and Horsmonden seem a long way (between 15 and 20 miles) to bring oxen; could they not have been hired locally? If it was necessary for them to be returned on these occasions would not Richard's heirs (or tenants) have needed such animals for running the land in Sevenoaks? It could, however, have been that although the men were designated as of Goudhurst and Horsmonden, that the land they rented from Besbeeche was in the locality of Sevenoaks.

With the clay soil of Riverhill and the steep slope of the hill, the oxen would be particularly useful for moving Richard's goods from the house since the weight of the oxen would make it easier to control a cart going downhill. Where the ground was thin and stony, horses were more likely to be used since they were less likely to slip.

## **Four-Wheel Wagons**

Wagons, which had four wheels and were able to carry heavier loads than two wheeled carts, began to appear at the end of the sixteenth century and, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, their use by farmers in Kent was much

more widespread than in the Midlands<sup>780</sup> but they are not mentioned in any of the wills.

John Blome had a "cart house" adjoining one of his barns and he also mentions the "carrying way for carts and other carriages" on one of his pieces of land. But there is no other mention of carts in the wills such details having been lost with the inventories which would have been produced.



# Cattle and Other Animals

Some testators, when they came to the residue of their goods, etc. use the phrase "cattals and chattels". Although "chattels" (moveable items such as plate, money, furniture) could include cattle, where this phrase occurs the testator must have wanted to draw particular attention to the cows and other pasture animals which he owned. Moses Olyver, one of the pastoral farmers, specified that his sons were to have "straw to fodder their cattle".

The term "cattle", however it was spelled in the various documents, included many more animals than does the present usage. George Pococke showed the wide meaning of the term when he described his "cattle such as horses, kyne, sheep and hogs". William Lambarde wrote that "touching domestic cattal, as horses, mares, oxen, kine and sheep, Kent differeth not much from others: only this is challenged as singular, that it bringeth forth the largest of stature in each kind of them".

## Dairy Cows

Although there was not the same distinction as now between beef cattle and dairy cows, the large herds were reared mainly for meat and their hides. Many

husbandmen would have one or two cows so that they could be self-sufficient in dairy products and possibly sell the excess in the local market.

When leaving a cow as a bequest, testators often described them, for example: the "great red cow" or the "white-faced heifer" (a young cow). Kyne (or kine) was used as a general term for cows and bulls by five testators with five others including one or more cows amongst their legacies. Clemence Pearson was one of the latter, leaving her cow and calf to her mother and father-in-law (probably her stepfather). In 1636 the husbandman, John Turner, left to his daughter and son-in-law "three milch kine and two young bullocks and one mare and five sheep and three lambs".

## Sheep

Whereas cows (or kyne) were mentioned as often as sheep by the Sevenoaks testators, sheep appear more prominently in the wills for surrounding towns and villages. It could be that the particular Sevenoaks men whose wills have survived prized their one or two milch cows for their provision of dairy products for the household and so regarded them as warranting special mention. In contrast, their sheep may just have been included with the rest of their "cattels and chattels".

## Thomas Wylde's Tegn

One of the eight testators mentioning sheep was Thomas Wylde who had bought ten "tegn or sheep" at Lewes the Whitsuntide of 1616 (a teg was a sheep in its second year). This was practically a year before he wrote his will and, soon after purchasing them, Wylde would have had to have his tegn shorn, normally done about mid-June. At Michaelmas came the movement of sheep from breeding to feeding grounds and from feeding grounds to the butcher, adding to the congestion on, and damage done, to the roads.

Generally, unless fodder was in particularly short supply, the sheep slaughtered in the autumn were those which had been fattened up for this purpose and here we see Wylde keeping his tegn (or at least ten of them) over winter. When he wrote his will on 9th April, these tegn would have been just about due to give birth, lambs usually being born about mid-April.<sup>781</sup>

## Other Animals

Other animals mentioned in the wills are hogs (Thomas Pococke 1587), pigs (Rachel Carrier 1639) and poultry (Peter Everest 1644).

Rabbits (conies) were not mentioned in any of the wills but when Lambarde was writing in 1570 the number of warrens for gray conies "[continueth if it do not increase daily](#)". Parks of fallow deer were kept for pleasure but "[as for red deer . . \(Kent\) nourisheth them not, as having no forests or great walks of waste ground](#)" for them.<sup>782</sup>

In November 1595 Simon Leonard, Esq. had stolen from him 17 partridges valued at 8s (£0.40) and a pheasant (£0.20). This looks as if game birds were being reared, probably for use in the kitchen. The thief, a labourer from Eynsford, had also stolen 12 pigeons from a place in Kingsdown<sup>783</sup>. This is not the only occurrence where thieves took similar items when carrying out a number of crimes indicating that they had planned ahead with a particular objective in mind.

Bees were kept for their honey and, in 1600, John Partridge had "2 stocks of bees" stolen from him. A beehouse and a henhouse was mentioned at Kettles in 1650 but there must have been many others of both in Sevenoaks<sup>784</sup>.

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782 Lambarde, p.4-5

783 Cockburn (Eliz.I.); 2348; Simon Leonard, particularly since the name included the title "Esq." was probably Sampson Lennard, Esq.

784 Cockburn (Eliz.I.), 2843; Gordon Ward Notebooks, Polhill X, p.69

# Butchers

Butchers were amongst the wealthiest group of tradespeople and this is shown by the wills of two butchers of Tonbridge with a shop each in Sevenoaks.

## Richard Pratt and Thomas Everest

Both Richard Pratt, the elder, and Thomas Everest owned a mansion house in Tonbridge and a shop in the flesh shambles of Sevenoaks as well as having other land. Both wills were written by Nicholas Hooper, Pratt's in 1591 and Everest's in 1598<sup>785</sup>. Presumably they also had somewhere to sell meat in Tonbridge.

The £60 dowry which Everest left to his youngest and only unmarried daughter is more than that left to their daughters by the yeomen of Sevenoaks. Even more indicative of his wealth is the value Thomas put on the residue of his estate which was to be divided between his second wife, Alice, and their son Thomas who was underage when his father died. If Alice remarried before Thomas came of age, she was to enter into a bond of £600 for Thomas's half.

There was a Thomas Everest, the elder, butcher, in Tonbridge in 1633 and he could have been the son of the Thomas who died in 1598. Francis Everest from whom John Blome bought two of his shops in Butchers Row in the 1620s could have been another member of the same family.

## The Olyvers

One branch of the Olyver family lived at Fawke with their ownership of land there going back at least to 1440 when a William Olyver owned some land "[called Falkden in the parish of Seal](#)"<sup>786</sup>. When another William Olyver wrote his will in January 1527, he owned a shop in the market place of Sevenoaks.

For centuries cattle had been driven from Fawkham, about eleven miles north-north east of Sevenoaks, to Fawke Common to be fattened up on the pasture land there. In Seal, on 4th May 1598, Thomas Olyver married Agnes Hacket of Fawkham "[the bans three times proclaimed](#)"<sup>787</sup>. It looks as if this branch of the Olyver family made their wealth from the farming of cattle and this was to continue into the seventeenth century.

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786 Gordon Ward, ???

787 CKS: parish records of Seal

Moses Olyver with his cattle at Panthurst has already been mentioned as has also the William Olyver who died in 1634 owning a shop in the Butchers Shambles which had a loft over it and a stable adjoining. At that time, this shop was rented out<sup>788</sup>.

In addition, another William Olyver, butcher, was buried in 1625 and Joseph Olyver, butcher, is known because his wife was one of those who testified about the attempted escape of another butcher, Richard Romeney, who was in custody in 1614..

## The Walters

The Walters look like another family of butchers. In February 1559, the barn of John Walter at Sevenoaks was broken into and three breasts of beef, valued at 5s (£0.25), and six other pieces of beef, valued at 4s (£0.20) were stolen. Henry Smythe, a labourer from Chevening, was indicted for this crime but was found not guilty<sup>789</sup>.

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788 PCC: 59 Sadler

789 Cockburn (Eliz.I); 34

It looks as if John was a butcher and at the beginning of the seventeenth century Thomas Walter, butcher of Sevenoaks, sold some land in Seal. Sometime before 1626, John Blome bought a shop in Butchers Row from a Thomas Walter.

John Walter's will of 1630 does not give his occupation or position and the John Walter who was buried in April 1631 (probably the testator) was described as a yeoman. He does, however, leave all his “[goods, cattell and chattels](#)” to his wife. John was a prosperous man owning land in Sevenoaks and Farnborough and part of a mortgage of other land in Sevenoaks which would provide a total of £240 for his daughters at various times after his death.

## Other Butchers

In 1617, Adam Adamson, butcher, was indicted for grand larceny being accused of having stolen a sheep valued at 16s (£0.80); he was found guilty but allowed benefit of clergy<sup>790</sup>.

In April 1624 another of John Blome's shops was occupied by William Davies, butcher. In September of that year, William Davies's house was burgled by two women but the house may have been separate from the shop.

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790 Cockburn (James I); 774



A John Hills, butcher, had a child buried in 1616 and John Hills, junior, also a butcher, a child baptised in 1640. These were, presumably, father and son but their connection, if any, with the Hills whose wills have survived is not known.

Thomas Martin, butcher, was buried in May 1645. He could have been the Thomas Martin to whom Thomas Wylde, in 1617, left the messuage with a garden "as the same is now divided" half of which Martin was already occupying with Roger Thomas, cutler, in the other half.

Other butchers mentioned in the records but without any details being given are:

- John Rumney who had a child buried in 1625.
- Thomas Thomson, butcher, was buried in December 1643
- in 1644 Peter Everest, husbandman of Sevenoaks, appointed Thomas Rigby, butcher, as one of his overseers

## Bakers

Thirty-six surviving West Kent wills written prior to 1650 are for men described as bakers; of these, all except two from Tonbridge, come from towns in north-east Kent: five from Dartford, seven from East Greenwich, six from Gravesend and five from Strood. This example, however, shows the problems of working, usually inadvertently or because of the impossibility of examining all possible sources, with incomplete data.

In Sevenoaks, John Lawrence, baker, was killed in the spring of 1530 by being struck on the head with a bat as described earlier. Another John Lawrence, baker, had a child baptised in November 1631. These are the only bakers mentioned in the parish other than William Turner described below.

### William Turner

The will of William Turner of Sevenoaks, written on 24th August 1638, gives no description of him and he is thus not included in the thirty-six. It is only from the parish records that we know that the William Turner who was buried on 15th September 1638 was a baker. The will was proved on 10th October 1638 so that it is reasonable to conclude that it is that of the baker. The twenty shillings he left

to the poor of Sevenoaks was to be distributed as bread, yet another pointer to the testator being the baker.

Sometime between 1616 and 1624, William Turner, baker, was given as having a place at the Clerks' Table in the Hall at Knole<sup>791</sup> and his will was probably written by Thomas Poore who was also at Knole. Was Turner, at least as a young man, in charge of the bakehouse at Knole?

Turner married in 1621 and, in November 1624 a child of William Turner, baker, was buried. In 1627 he was living in a house belonging to William Lawrence, bricklayer, whose will he witnessed in that year. Not long afterwards he purchased the house in which he was living in 1638 and possibly another one but some disaster struck the family in the winter of 1631 since a son, daughter and servant of William Turner, baker, were buried on the 10th, 22nd and 24th of January 1631.

His first wife and mother of his children also died since when he wrote his will he appointed his son Michael aged sixteen to be executor jointly with his second wife who was not Michael's mother. William had another son, Henry who was old enough to decide whether or not he lived with William's widow. If he did, she was to "provide all needful things for him" but if he refused she was to pay him £2 a year.

## The Baking of Bread

The Ordinances of the York Bakers Company for the Tudor Period have survived. Whilst procedures in Sevenoaks and, in particular at Knole, would have differed somewhat from those of a town in the north of England, they give some idea of the progress from raw grain to bread.

The grain had first to be milled and the resulting flour was then "boulted" or sieved to remove the bran. This was done by shaking it through a piece of rough canvas or linen. The fine flour was then kneaded with salt, yeast and water in a long wooden dough-trough and worked into loaves which were then left in a warm place to rise. If this was a commercial bakehouse, the loaves had to be carefully weighed since there were regulations covering the weight of loaves sold by bakeries.

Usually a bee-hive oven was used for the baking. This was a large domed masonry structure and, whilst the loaves were rising, a fire of fast-burning kindling was lit inside it so that its floor, walls and roof were brought up to a high temperature. The fire was then raked out, the bread swiftly inserted and the oven door sealed in place with mud so that the bread was baked by the heat retained by the masonry. After a suitable interval, the oven door was broken open and the bread withdrawn and allowed to cool<sup>792</sup>.

# Brewing and Brewers

Generally very little water was drunk mainly because, unless there was a local spring or deep well, it was difficult find any which was not contaminated. Ale and beer were the usual drink with the name "beer" indicating that hops had been used to flavour the liquor. In the ordinary family, brewing was one of the general household tasks carried out by the wife whilst a large establishment employed a brewer and sometimes, as at Knole, an under-brewer. Those who kept alehouses would have brewed to sell to their customers but there would, by the sixteenth and seventeenth century, have been households in a town like Sevenoaks who wished to purchase their ale and beer rather than brew it themselves.

## Equipment Used in Large Brewhouses

The equipment used by Sir William Petre's brewer, in the the sixteenth century, indicates what was required if the process was to be carried out in a "professional" way. He had "rowers (in which to stir the barley), scavel (spade), jets (large ladles), mashing vat (in which hot water was added to the malt to form wort), sweet wort tun, copper for boiling wort, cooler, chunk (into which the wort ran), yealding vat (in which it was left to ferment), cowls (big water-carrying tubs), yeast-tubs, roundlets (yeast-casks), leaden troughs, skeps (baskets), iron-hooped stuke

(handle) and pulley (for loading the casks to be carted to the buttery)". Sir William also had two hopkilns.<sup>793</sup>

Whilst every housewife brewing for her family obviously did not have all this equipment, Knole would have needed, at least in the time of the third Earl, similar facilities.

## Brewers in Sevenoaks

There were also a number of inns in Sevenoaks but whether they brewed their own beer or relied on one of the brewers in the town is not known. Three of the four brewers recorded in Sevenoaks belonged to the Wood family: John who had children in the 1580s, George who had children between 1589 and 1604 and was buried in 1620 and another John who had a child baptised in 1639.

The fourth was John Juers of Riverhead who was buried in September 1641.

# Barbers

We have already seen that, in the first half of the seventeenth century, the rent of the Farm on the Vine included the unusual provision of a barber to "to shave and pull and trim the head and beard of Sir Ralph Bosville, knight, as often as need shall require".

## Barber-Surgeons

Here the barber was carrying out tasks we would consider appropriate for a barber but, in Tudor and Stuart times, many barbers were "barber-surgeons" to whom, together with the cunning man or woman, many people turned when in need of medical treatment. The barber-surgeons, as their name implies, were those called upon when surgical treatment was required. This could range from the relatively simple but harmful remedy of bleeding and the provision of ointments for sores and ulcers to treatment of those suffering from major diseases such as "the stone" or having had serious accidents.

The association between care of the hair and beard and blood letting may go back to the days of the monasteries. Whilst physicians believed that diseases could be cured by getting rid of bad blood, monks believed that a man could rid himself of his sins by ejecting the evil ingredients in his blood. Barbers were regularly

employed in monasteries to cut the hair and shave the heads of the monks so as to give them a clerical tonsure and it was to the barber that the monks turned to bleed them so as to get rid of their bad blood<sup>794</sup>.

Would not a barber, shaving beards and cutting hair, have had to learn how to cope when, by accident, he cut his customer and had to stench the bleeding? Thus he would have built up knowledge (or been taught it during his apprenticeship) which would have made him capable of progressing to bloodletting.

## West Kent Barbers

There are ten West Kent wills for barbers surviving from before 1650. Of these, three, from Milton-next-Gravesend (1608), West Malling (1624) and Dartford (1620), are designated as barber-surgeons. Those where the designation is just "barber" come from the Dartford/Greenwich/Rochester area except for the wills of a Tonbridge barber (John Walter, 1585) and one from West Malling (Vincent Willard, 1595).



## Sevenoaks Barbers

Although no wills have survived for barbers from Sevenoaks, Mr. Adam Bradford, barber, was part of the Knole household between 1616 and 1624. Four other barbers were mentioned in the parish records and again we see members of the extended Wood family engaged in yet another trade:

- John Wood, barber, had three children baptised between 1570 and 1577, the youngest being another John who could have been the John Wood, barber, who had children between 1609 and 1612.
- Henry Lone (or Love) buried in July 1629
- William Cooke whose son was baptised in December 1647.

It looks, therefore, that in Sevenoaks there was at least one barber for most of time between 1570 and 1650. Details of the Wood family are given in section 2.

# The Mistress of the Household

Whilst the gentleman or lawyer may have chosen his wife for her wealth, the yeoman and husbandman needed a woman who could run the household, bear and look after the children and had the physical endurance to cope with all her duties.

For the wife of the husbandman, these included the brewing, baking, cleaning, washing, preparing meals for the family and any servants they had and she may even have been expected to look after the chickens and do some spinning "in her spare time". The yeoman's wife probably had servants to carry out some of this work but these needed supervision. The family's success could depend on her abilities:

"For husbandry weepeth,  
Where housewifery sleepeth,  
And hardly he creepeth,  
Up ladder to thrift"<sup>795</sup>

When her husband was away, she had to be able to take control:

"When husband is absent, let huswife be chief,  
and look to their labour that eateth her beef".<sup>796</sup>

## The Wife's Responsibilities

The dairy and poultry were her responsibility and having made the butter and cheese, collected the eggs and looked after the fowls, she then took them to market. But, at least, it was the custom for her to keep the profits from these activities to spend as she chose<sup>797</sup>.

Even when it was time to celebrate there would be plenty of extra work for the housewife whether it was cooking the supper for the harvest home or decorating the house with evergreen ivy trimmings at Christmas.

Practically nothing has survived regarding the work of such women. The only hint of it is in the will of the widow Rachel Carrier who left all the things belonging to the dairy, some kine, a dozen sheep, two pigs, all her hay and wood, a harrow and ladders, to her daughter. Her husband Edward, who died only about nine months before Rachel, was described as a householder when he was buried. He could,

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796 Tusser, p.159

797 Plowden, p.133

therefore, have been a yeoman, husbandman or an artisan but he must have left Rachel a reasonably well-equipped house.

# Chapter 21

## Houses and their Contents

The wills give only a snapshot of the Sevenoaks houses and their contents.

### Details Only for the Better-Off

872

The most detailed will is the one written in 1626 by the rich Sevenoaks mercer John Blome and the first of a number of extracts is given here.

### Messuages, Tenements and Houses

873

Houses were generally timber-framed but chimneys built of brick were usual in most houses by the end of the sixteenth century. Some testators specified that certain items should remain as “standers” or “heirlooms” to their house and this is one way in which we can gain some knowledge of the contents of a house.

### Kettles in 1650

880

In 1650 Kettles was leased to two men who seemed to be sharing the barns and stables.

## Beds, Bedding and Household Linen

882

Beds were one of the most valuable items of furniture and the sheets, pillows and blankets making up the majority of the household linen.

## Furniture and Furnishings

885

Chests, tables and chairs and cupboards were the main items of furniture, after beds, mentioned by the Sevenoaks testators.

## Pewter, Brass and Plate

890

Although pewter and brass items must have been much more common than plate, the latter is mentioned by nearly a fifth of the testators, twice as many as those who mention pewter.

## Clothes and Wearing Apparel

894

The Sumptuary Regulations which affected men much more than women are described. About a fifth of the testators mentioned clothes in their wills with the most detailed wills in this respect being those of Clemence Pearson and John Hills. The clothes worn by Lady Anne Clifford are also described.

## Miscellaneous Items

903

A variety of utilitarian and luxury possessions were left by the Sevenoaks testators some of whom left money to buy gloves for some of the mourners.

A number of testators mention gardens and orchards in their wills but without giving any details. Richard Sackville, and possibly his wife Anne, visited Penshurst Place and details of the gardens there have survived.

## Details Surviving Only for the Better-Off

To give an idea of how people such as John Blome lived a short section of his will is quoted in its entirety: "the drawing table, six joined stools, the court cupboard, the andirons, fire shovel and tongs with copper heads and the window curtains standing and being in the great parlour, the joined table, joined stools and the court cupboard in the little parlour, the long table and the form in the hall, the new cupboard in the pantry, the iron jack, the half hundred weight four spits, the pair of iron racks and two great iron dripping pans with the table, form and dresserboard in the kitchen, the cupboard, kneading trough and moulding board in the bakehouse, the cheese press and the long table in the milkhouse." Bread and cheese were the staple foods even of well-to-do households so that the bakehouse and the dairy (or milkhouse) were two important parts of the house.

In Essex, the majority of the Elizabethan testators probably lived in a single-storey cottage with two rooms: the hall used for cooking and eating with the second, known as the parlour or chamber, being the bedroom of the husband and wife, other members of the household sleeping in the hall<sup>798</sup>. This would have been how the majority of people lived in the Sevenoaks area but, because no wills have survived for the ordinary people from before 1610, most of the Elizabethan testators described here lived in larger houses, many with two storeys.



# Messuages, Tenements and Houses

Although the term "house" appears in some wills, the usual description was "messuage or tenement", a messuage being a house larger than a cottage whilst tenement referred to a holding (usually a residence) but not an apartment in the way the word is often used now. Three gentlemen, Anthony Carleton, Giles Cranewell and William Wright, use the description "[mansion house](#)".

Since there was little good building stone in the area, houses in Kent were generally timber-framed often with exposed oak timbers and an infilling either of lath and plaster or part brick, part plaster. By Tudor times, houses were being built using stone, brick, hanging tiles and timber with Kentish ragstone being used for the foundations, hearths and chimney breasts. Usually either isolated farm-houses or grouped into a number of hamlets within the parish, each house had a relatively small, enclosed piece of land cultivated individually.

The testators often refer to "[writings](#)" and deeds which gave information about their holdings but no investigation has been made of any of these which might survive. In any case, these were concerned, in the main, with details of legal title and a description of the buildings only came into them if it was necessary from the point of view of identification, etc.

## Timber-Framed Hall Houses

From the fourteenth century onwards there were yeoman throughout Kent wealthy enough to build for themselves hall houses of some pretension. These timber framed houses had a central hall open to the roof with two storeys at each end, one for living rooms and the other for service rooms, the plan being based on those for a medieval manor house, smaller but with advanced construction techniques being used for the building. In these smaller hall houses known as Wealden type houses, the projections at each end for the wings were reduced with the upper floors jettied out to give more space for the upper rooms.<sup>799</sup>

## Early Houses in Sevenoaks

Substantial houses were being built in Sevenoaks in the early fifteenth century and parts of some of these have survived to the present day. One of these, to the west of the market was possibly built by Archbishop Chichele about 1430 for his reeve, his resident representative in Sevenoaks. This house, which until recently was Outram's shop, has a fine Tudor fireplace with the coats of arms of two archbishops: Chichele and Warham. Dunlop suggests that Warham reconstructed

the house using brick and adding the fireplace on the spandrills of which he had carved his own arms together with those of his predecessor.<sup>800</sup>

About 1530 an open hall house, part of which has survived to the present day, was built at what is now 21, 23, and 25 London Road, just to the north west of the market. This was a two-bay hall with open roof trusses over the central area but it was not of the Wealden type since it was flush fronted.

There may have been a second storey only at the south end in which case the service rooms would have been on the ground floor with the owner's private quarters above them. This layout may have been fairly common in the Sevenoaks area at the beginning of the sixteenth century even in houses of quite high quality. A two-bay west wing was added in 1596, the date of this having been dated by dendrochronology.<sup>801</sup>

## The Introduction of Chimneys

By the end of Elizabeth's reign most houses belonging to the gentlemen and yeomen would have had chimneys which were beginning to be installed a hundred years earlier. In 1512 **Robert Tottisherst**, gentleman, detailed a large

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<sup>800</sup> Dunlop, p.91

<sup>801</sup> Stoyel (1990); pp.16-17

number of items which his wife was to inherit amongst which was a "water chafer of laten standing in the hall chimney".

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the demand for wood for smelting, glass making and building was putting it in short supply yet it was still the main fuel for domestic purposes. The use of logs required a very large open fireplace, over 3 feet deep and as much as 10 feet wide, built of brick with a fire-back, often ornamented, to protect the brickwork where the fire was hottest and possibly a brick oven built at the side<sup>802</sup>.

It was the introduction of the chimney which allowed the upper storey to be continuous over the whole house with a staircase constructed in one of the spaces at the side of the broad chimney stack. Julian Wills, the wife of Walther, was to have the use of the chamber "next to the staires". The space on the other side of the chimney stack could be used as another small room such as a buttery. The house of the bricklayer, William Lawrence, included a hall, buttery and mill house with chambers above them.

## The Rooms in a Large House

Because there are no inventories it is rare for us to know the details of the rooms in the houses. **John Blome**, however, when describing the contents of the houses he left to his sons, gave the furniture for most of the rooms. The house he left to William had a great and little parlour with chambers above them, a hall, kitchen, pantry, bakehouse, milkhouse and brewhouse.

## Associated Buildings

Sometimes other buildings associated with the message are listed, one example being **George Weery** who left to his brother "[all that my message or tenement in Sevenoaks aforesaid commonly called or known by the name of the White Lion together with one barn and all the yards, gardens and backside thereunto belonging. And all the outhouses, edifices and buildings thereunto belonging withall and singular their and every of their appurtenances](#)". The White Lion, from its name, sounds like an inn but, whilst there was a White Hart to the south of the town, there is no mention of a White Lion except in this will.

## Heirlooms to a House

The items in the houses which **John Blome** to his sons William and George were to remain as heirlooms within each messuage (see **Appendix 15** for these). These were to be "expressed in inventories indented and interchangeable" signed by George and William and the overseers of the will and kept as a record of the heirlooms associated with the messuage for "such persons successively" as would inherit it.

Some of the richer testators specified that certain items should remain as "standers" or "heirlooms" to a particular house. These would now be called fixtures although books, which **Henry Bosville** included in his house at Bradbourne which "were not to be sold or removed" but remain unto his "heir male as heirlooms" hardly come within the definition of fixtures.

**John Blome** had window curtains in the great parlour of his newly built messuage. and some testators, but none in Sevenoaks, stipulated that glass for the windows should remain with the house. One example is Richard Pratt of Tonbridge whose will written 10th March 1591<sup>803</sup> includes some other interesting items which were to remain as fixtures to his house:

- the furnace standing in the kitchen

- everything in the hall and parlour of the mansion house "except the harness and furniture which I am charged with for muster"
- all the shelves and benches within the mansion house
- all the glass in the windows.

## Overcrowding and Pollution

The poorer people living in much smaller cottages must often have suffered from overcrowding with the subsequent consequence of pollution such as that which occurred in the summer of 1648. At the September Assizes, held that year in Sevenoaks, John Coggar, husbandman, was indicted for maintaining John Buntinge, Edward Stringar, Elizabeth Bright, widow and Joan Mugglett, widow, as undertenants in his house from 1 June to 5 September.

One of these, Edward Stringar also a husbandman, was indicted for "erecting a house of office near a stream in Sevenoaks so that excrement polluted the water there on 1st September 1648 and other occasions"<sup>804</sup>.

# Kettles in 1650

There is an indenture of 1650 which details Kettles<sup>805</sup>, the house on the Seal/Sevenoaks border which was sold after the death of John Olyver. By 1650 it was owned by Richard Rich, a gentleman from Chevening.

Rich appears to be leasing half to William Porter, a tanner from Seal, with Thomas Chawkley already occupying the other half. "Viz: the rooms called the parlour, the little buttery and the sink, the rooms called the stovehouse beside the hall door and the milkhouse which the said Thomas Chawkley now useth and half the washhouse. And also three chambers following, viz: the parlour chamber, the hall chamber, the chamber over the stovehouse and the chamber on the top of the stairs".

"And also half the corn barn, half the tann barn, half the stable, half the stall, half the chaff barn, half the hayloft over the stable . . . half the longhouse standing in the north side of the tanyard and half the carthouse, half the gatehouse, half the hayloft over the stall and over (the) fothering house<sup>806</sup> and . . . half the fothering house and half the old carthouse in the close and also half of all the closes and yards about the house and barns and other buildings".

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805 Gordon Ward Notebook, Polhill X, p.69

806 "fother" is a variation of "fodder" so that the "fothering house" is presumably where the fodder was stored



"And free liberty in the tanyard as in or shall be necessary to use his tanning vessels. And three parts or quarters of the herb garden and the use in common together with the said Thomas Chawkey of the beehouse and henhouse there and also the lower orchard and the upper hempland in the said orchard and half the fruit growing in the upper orchard and half the nuts there and half the walnuts growing upon the premises".

This sharing of the house, particularly when it came to half the washhouse, half the stable and half of the various barns, must have called for considerable cooperation between Chawkey and Porter.

Claypits Mead which had been devised to Chawkey was to be "measured and fenced with double posts and rails at the cost of Thomas Chawkey and William Porter within six months after the date hereof".

# Beds, Bedding and Household Linen

"Bedsteads, beds, bedding and furniture", as **John Jylbert** put it, included the most valuable household items with a bed being mentioned by about a quarter of the Sevenoaks testators. The most luxurious bed described was that belonging to **Robert Holmden**: "the walnut tree bedstead in the great chamber with the featherbed, bolster, the best tapestry coverlet with the curtains and furniture belonging to the same. And also two mens chairs and four low stools covered with velvet suitable to the bed with one long velvet cushion also suitable"<sup>807</sup>. Wooden bedsteads of this period could be elaborately carved.

## John Blome's Bedding

John Blome bequeathed to his wife "one other bedstead standing in the chamber over the little parlour . . . with the mats, cord and curtain rods to the same bedstead belonging. And I give unto her one of my best featherbeds, one good feather bolster, two feather pillows, a pair of good blankets, a green rug and a pair of green say curtains"<sup>808</sup>. Also I give her the best flockbed and the flock bolster, a pair of blankets and one coverlet of the value of 13s 4d". This was in 1624 and is

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**807** the word transcribed here as "suitable" was written "suteable" in both cases; did it mean that the stools and cushion matched the bed curtains?

**808** a woollen material like serge

one of the very few times when the value of an item was given but, being a mercer this was probably something of which he took particular note.

John Blome also included in his will two joined bedsteads and trundle beds, the latter being a low bed on wheels which was pushed underneath the main bed during the day. The basic bedstead consisted of a rectangular wooden frame on four legs. There were holes in the sides and ends through which cords to support the mattress (and/or bed) were threaded. These bedsteads had valences and curtains of green say.

## Mattresses and Bedsteads

The only testators to use the word mattress were **Clemence Brook** in 1510 and **Robert Tottisherst** in 1512. Robert had at least three featherbeds and mattresses leaving the best and third featherbed and mattress to his wife. The second best ones must have been included in the residue which went to his son. Flockbeds were mentioned less often than featherbeds.

"Joined" was the most usual description of a bedstead. In the middle chamber of the house **Thomas Holmes** lived in there was a joined bedstead and a "half-headed bedstead", that is the bedhead was only a low one. **Robert Vane** had within the chamber in which he lay "one bedstead, one featherbed, one feather bolster, one pillow, one flockbed lying under the featherbed, one mat, one blue covering and

one pair of blankets and three chests" which contained linen and woollen items. A standing bedstead was one which could accommodate a trundle bed. Pillows were sometimes described as "of feather" whilst John Blome had bolsters of feathers, good feathers and flock.

## Household Linen

The items of household linen which Robert Tottisherst bequeathed to his wife were generally just some "of the best" so that he must have had a large stock from which they could have been selected. Two of the three blankets she was to receive do not, however, sound very special since they were of fustian, a coarse twilled cotton incorporating other materials. His was the only Sevenoaks will to mention towels.

John Potkyn had a "fine coverlet with daycerne praised at £3 6s 8d" whilst John Blome had a homemade and a tapestry coverlet in addition to the one valued at 13s 4d. The alternative term "coverlid" was used by Thomas Turner in 1640.

Rachel Carrier bequeathed to her daughter a pair of holland sheets and a pair of flaxen ones; William Coxe's sheets were hempen and flaxen. The labourer whose will has survived, William Wimbell, left "beds and pewter and nine sheets with feather bed and two blankets and two pillows".

**Rebecca Sharpe** had a long damask tablecloth and a trunk of linen which was in the care of one of her brothers. Since she was a single woman, she may have been building up a stock of linen ready for when she married. **Agnes Wimble**, a widow who, in contrast, had married at least twice, left to her daughter Margaret Tomlin three pairs of sheets, a fine tablecloth and a dozen napkins.

Some testators just mention "linen" in general and there must have been many cases where the residue of all their goods included household linen.

## **Furniture and Furnishings**

Out of the twenty-five people mentioning beds, there were nine gentlemen but of the fifteen with chests only two were gentlemen (36% for beds, 13% for chests). Given that gentlemen, in general, would have had more goods to store, this seems unusual. Did they have other means of storage? Were other items of furniture of more significance so that chests were just relegated to the residue? Is the difference due to only a few wills having survived so that they do not give true picture? This is just another example of the difficulty of interpretation when only a small amount of data has survived.

## Types of Chests

Some chests were "joined", that is they had a jointed framework and panels, but that of Elizabeth Weery was "plain boarded", made from boards nailed or pegged together. Paul Farrow's chest was "bound with iron bars" whilst the linen John Turner (the citizen of London) left to his nephews was to be accompanied with "convenient boxes and chests to put the same linen into". He also mentioned a trunk for the storage of linen.

Boxes were also mentioned by John Blome and Robert Holmden and trunks by William Coxe and Walter Hall. Robert Tottisherst had a little coffer, that of Henry Bosville was "strong with three locks" and he probably took this with him when he travelled abroad.

## Tables and Chairs

Early tables consisted of a board resting on trestles and the yeoman John Pococke, in 1619, had a great plank table resting on trestles. By this time "joined" or "framed" tables were becoming common and the wheelwright, John Smith, had a "broad, joined table standing in the parlour with two forms belonging to it". Joined stools were mentioned in four wills and Robert Holmden had a low stool covered with velvet.

Two mens chairs were mentioned by Robert Holmden and the husbandman, **Walter Hall**, left his wife a chair. Although cushions would have been needed to make the hard benches more comfortable, the only one included in a will was Robert Holmden's velvet cushion which went with his bed. They are, however, mentioned in a few wills from local towns and villages. Thus some, if not all, Sevenoaks testators would have had them but without considering them necessary of special attention in their will.

## **Shelves and Cupboards**

Shelves were mentioned by **John Blome**, **John Walter** and **Rachel Carrier**. **Thomas Holway** in 1512, **Robert Holmden** in 1619, **John Blome** in 1624 and **Peter Everest** in 1644 mentioned cupboards. The original "cup-board" was a board on which cups and plates were displayed. This might just be when they were set out for special visitors with valuable items usually kept for security in locked chests.

The space below the board could be closed with panels at the side and doors at the front to give what we would now call a "cupboard" but was then known as an "aumbry" and used for the storage of food. Court cupboards, of which both Robert Holmden and John Blome had a number, were two or three open shelves the wood sometimes, like the beds, richly carved.

## Wall Hangings

In the period covered by these wills carpets, usually made of wool, were laid on tables but none appear in the Sevenoaks wills. Mats were mentioned by **John Blome** and **Robert Vane** but, in both cases, they seem to be connected with a bed.

Much earlier, John Isley of Sundridge who owned Bradbourne in 1493 left his son all the hangings in his great parlour at Sundridge and "[tapets of verdur and other](#)" (green and other coloured tapestries), and the hangings in the chamber over the parlour and the bed of silk of cloth of bawdkin with three curtains of sarcenet<sup>809</sup>. Bawdkin (or baldachin) was silk brocade and sarcenet a very fine silk. Maybe Bradbourne was furnished in a similarly rich style.

Cloths were hung on the walls both as decoration and as a means of keeping the rooms warm. Some of these were painted which might have been block-printed or had a pattern stencilled on them, often in a number of colours. There were painted cloths at Kettles in the 1580s but John Blome is the only one to mention wall hangings; there were painted cloths and wainscot "[in and about the house](#)" he bequeathed to his son George.

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809 will of John Isley (PCC: 21 Vox), quoted by Phillips p.10



## Robert Vane's Chamber

Robert Vane, yeoman, in his will of 1615, tells us what was in the room in which he lay and, at the same time, brings together many of the items described above:

"I give and bequeath unto Alice Vane, my wife, all those moveables, bedding and householdstuff hereafter particularly named, now being and standing within the chamber wherein now I lie, that is to say: one joined standing bedstead, one featherbed, one feather bolster, one pillow, one flockbed lying under the featherbed, one mat, one blue covering and one pair of blankets, three chests standing in the said chamber withall the linen and woollen whatsoever in them being (except only two gowns hereafter mentioned)".

He also left her a black cow, a brass pan and a little, square, joined table.

# Pewter, Brass and Plate

At the end of the fifteenth century, the owner of Bradbourne, John Isley of Sundridge, was in a position to leave to his son "my great chain of gold and my two gilt pots of silver and the best basin of silver and the best ewer and three gilt bowls with covers, two little gilt salts, my great spits in the kitchen and various brass utensils". Not many of the Sevenoaks testators, even from a later period, could match this display of wealth.<sup>810</sup>

About 10% of the testators mention pewter, 15% brass and 18% items of plate which includes those described as "silver". At the beginning of the sixteenth century, an Italian who visited England said that all the shops of Milan, Rome, Venice and Florence put together could not provide such gold and silver as he had seen on sale in London. During the Tudor period a collection of silver was regarded principally as an ostentatious method of storing riches<sup>811</sup> and, by the end of Elizabeth's reign, the use of silver, at least for display, had become common throughout the upper and middle classes and there is evidence of this in the Sevenoaks wills.

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<sup>810</sup> will of John Isley (PCC: 21 Vox), quoted by Phillips p.10

<sup>811</sup> Honour, Hugh; Silver in Edwards & Ramsey, p. 65

## Robert Tottishert's Pewter, Brass and Candlesticks

Robert Tottisherst (1512) must have had a fine collection of pewter vessels: his wife, Alice, was left "2 quart ale pots of pewter, 2 quart wine pots of pewter, 2 pint pewter pots, 2 pint pewter pots for wine, 2 half pint pewter pots for wine". What was the difference between a "pint pewter pot" and a "pint pewter pot for wine"? He did not mention much brass, just "4 of the best brass pots except the greatest brass" but he had a "water chafer of latten standing in the hall chimney".

Although candlesticks must have been common in most households Robert was the only Sevenoaks testator to mention them, leaving a dozen of the best to his wife. But the two items which indicate the position this gentleman held in the town at the beginning of the sixteenth century are his "goblet of silver parcel gilt, the best maser parcel gilt with the cover to the same".

## Pewter

Pewter used for plate was toughened tin, hammered or planished (polished or flattened) to give rigidity and compactness; it could be distinguished from cast and turned pewter by its bell-like ring when struck. When newly bought, domestic pewter was highly burnished with a lustre resembling silver<sup>812</sup>. Many

kitchen utensils were made of brass: kettles, cauldrons, chafers (a vessel used for heating water, meat, etc., a chaffing dish holding the burning charcoal or wood embers), pans, etc.

Practically half the gentlemen included plate in their wills but only two mentioned pewter and three brass. It is most unlikely that their households did not include utensils made from both materials but the plate was special and the rest ordinary. For a similar reason, wooden tableware was not mentioned although it would have featured in most households.

## Brass

Of the brass items included, **Eme Beale** had a brass pot with a capacity of two gallons and **Thomas Morley** a kettle holding three gallons. **Walter Hall**'s chaffer was made of iron but he had a little brass kettle and a brass skillet (a long handled metal pan with legs).

## Plate

Of the twenty gentlemen of Sevenoaks and the four men who were citizens of London and prosperous merchants, thirteen mentioned at least one piece of plate in their will and although **William Wright** did not, his wife **Johane** left her

daughter "all my plate whatsoever". In addition the mercer, John Blome, mentioned plate without giving any details.

The leatherseller, Robert Holmden, had gilt and ungilt plate whilst the grocer, George Scott, had a standing cup of silver with a gilt cover, white silver plate and silver and gilt plate, some of which was in his house at Riverhead. John Jylbert (1621) left to his wife, Alice, "a gilt salt with a cover, one dozen of silver spoons with square knobs at the end and all other my silver spoons (saving my thirteen apostle spoons) with one great beer bowl of silver and one little drinking pot of silver"; he also had other plate.

Two other gentlemen included bowls in their bequests: William Seyliard's wife (1632) was to choose two silver bowls for herself and Richard Lone (1581) gave to his eldest son "one great gilded bowl without a cover, one white silver bowl, my great white silver salt parcel gilt with the cover, one silver drinking cup and one dozen silver spoons". Robert Warcopp (1625) had a silver basin and ewer and Martha Stanford a small silver cup.

Paul Farrow (1578) was also a wealthy man who had a considerable amount of plate; in addition to his best bedstead, he left one son his "silver and gilt salt, five gilted spoons, one black pot covered with silver and one chest being bound with iron bars" and his other son his "second joined bedstead and two silver spoons". The only other person to mention spoons was Clemence Brook who left six silver spoons to Thomas Brook, possibly her son.

## Robert Leighton

The items Robert Leighton left to his wife in 1558 give the impression he was reasonably well-to-do without having reached the position of investing in plate:

"2 featherbeds, 2 bolsters and 2 pillows of feathers, 3 coverlets, 2 blankets.

**Item:** I give unto the said Elene, my wife, 2 kettles, one brass pot, one platter, 2 pewter dishes, one saucer and a scomer".

Saucers were shallow dishes for sauces and condiments<sup>813</sup>; was a scomer a scummer, that is a skimmer, a large wooden spoon with holes in it?

## Clothes and Wearing Apparel

### Sumptuary Regulations

Sumptuary regulations had imposed restrictions on what people of different ranks could wear as early as the fifteenth century but these became more extensive in the reign of Henry VIII. No one under the rank of a knight or a lord's son could wear a silk shirt unless he owned land worth £20 a year in rents and if the land was worth less than £5 a year, he could not wear any garment that was scarlet or

violet in colour. If any husbandman, labourer or shepherd who did not own goods worth £10 wore hose which cost more than 10d a yard, he was to be put in the stocks for three days.<sup>814</sup>

The regulations became more severe in the time of Queen Mary and continued throughout the reign of Elizabeth and into the time of the Stuarts. Queen Elizabeth herself had been renowned throughout her reign for her elaborate dress, used to emphasise her position as both head of the country and of the church.

The application of these regulations to women was, however, ambiguous. The Act of 1483 did not apply "for any woman excepted the wives and servants of labourers" and the Act of 1510 exempted all women. Men dressing above their station threatened the social order; a woman doing the same just suffered ridicule and disapproval<sup>815</sup>.

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814 Ridley, p.186-7

815 Ridley, p.188

## The Making of Clothes

In 1606 **Clemence Pearson**, contracted to marry but dying before doing so, left a large number of items of clothing - see Table 21.1 below. Many of these, such as **coifs of cambric and wrought with the Italian cutwork**", would have been expensive to buy - or had Clemence (or someone else in the family) made them herself?

In the Tudor household of Sir William Petre, Secretary of State, who built Ingatestone Hall in Essex between 1540 and 1545, the maids made the ordinary clothes for the family as well as their own<sup>816</sup>. Clemence was living fifty years later but there would not have been many changes in the way households worked although she was obviously not as wealthy as the Petres.

Although "cambric" came from the name of the French town Cambria, by this time it was being used for any fine linen and so could have been produced locally by a skilled, specialist weaver from flax which had been spun by Clemence. Either she, or one of the other women in the family, would then have been able to make an embroidered bib or even, perhaps, a coif "wrought with the Italian cutwork". From Clemence's will, both holland and flaxen cloth was kept in the household.



Table 21.1 - Items Left by Clemence Pearson

	no.	To:
gowns	2	}
a kirtle with two laces	1	}
neckcloths	4	} sister Anne
ruffs of cambric or lace	5	}
a little wrought (embroidered) bib	1	}
quaives (coifs)		
- cambric	5	sister Anne
- holland	5	sister Anne
- of cambric and wrought with the Italian cutwork	2	niece
smocks: -	3	sister Anne
- fine	1	Thomas's wife
- wrought with black	1	niece
aprons:- white	4	sister Anne
- green	1	sister Anne
- taffata	1	Thomas's wife
- taffata	1	niece
best flannel petticoat with four laces	1	mother
a new pair of bodyes (bodices?)	pair	niece
a girdle		Frances's wife

purse		Frances's wife
pair of gloves		brother Frances
a handkercher	1	brother Thomas
a wrought handkercher	1	brother Walter
new cloth	a piece	sister Anne
crosscloths	12	sister Anne
holland cloth	1 ell <sup>817</sup>	mother
flaxen cloth	6 ells	Thomas's wife
sheets	3 pairs	sister Anne
sheets	2 pairs	Thomas's wife
pillow	1	Frances's wife

## The Sevenoaks Testators

About a fifth of the testators mention wearing apparel or an item of clothing with coats and gowns being those included most often.

**Elizabeth Weery** (1617) was another woman who, in her nuncupative will, mentioned a number of items of clothing: "her best gown and her best hat, her

best band and her purse" were left to her niece, "her best apron being of russet taffeta" to the wife of one of her brothers and "another apron next unto her best being of mingled stuff, a medley petticoat and her band next to the best" to her sister.

Peter Newman, in 1510, left his "tawny gown lined with satin of Cypress" to the wife of one of his brothers and another tawny gown to Thomas Tailin. William Constable's clothes have already been described. The gentleman, Robert Gavell (1608) left his "best doublet and hose together with a fur jerkin, a cloth jerkin with silver lace, my sword, my best hat, pair of worsted stockings and a pair of shoes" to his nephew Edward. The chests in Robert Vane's chamber (1615) contained two gowns, the cloth gown of silk russet colour being left to a daughter and the black stuff gown to a granddaughter.

## John Hills, Yeoman

The man who itemised his clothes in most detail was the yeoman, John Hills:

Table 21.2 - Items of Clothing Left by John Hills in 1645

brother Thomas	my best suit my best long coat and my best short coat my best hat except one and my best shirt
Ralph Hartwell	my long russet coat and one doublet a short coat one pair of breeches and one pair of stockings
Thomas Masters	my other long coat my best white doublet and my best hat.

John was a single man and, perhaps, had the money to be a "bit of a dandy".

These are just tantalising glimpses into the clothes worn by the testators of Sevenoaks. Nobody mentioned a coat of goose turd green - a popular colour in Tudor times.

## Lady Anne Clifford

As befitted a lady of her standing, Lady Anne Clifford, wife of the third Earl of Dorset, had a large number of expensive dresses. At Knole in November 1616, she wrote that "all this time since my Lord went away I wore my black taffety night gown and a yellow taffety waistcoat" but in December, when she went up to London, she had a new black wrought taffety gown made for her by Lady St. John's tailor. Back at Knole in January 1617 she wore a plain green flannel gown with her yellow taffety waistcoat.<sup>818</sup>

On 14th March 1617 Anne put on her "mourning gromogram gown and intended to wear it till my mourning time is out"; gromogram is a coarse cloth made from silk and mohair. But, on Easter Sunday she wore a white satin gown and a white waistcoat which would still have not been a year after her mother's death in the previous year. In May 1617, when Anne would have been about to come out of mourning, the tailor came from London to measure her for a new gown.

A month later two arrived, the first a sea water green satin gown and the second a damask gown embroidered with gold both of which had been made fit for her to wear "with open ruffs after the French fashion". In London in November 1617, "all

the time I was at the Court I wore my green damask gown embroidered without a farthingale".<sup>819</sup>

On 28th December 1617, in London, Anne went to church in her "rich nightgown and petticoat, both my ladies waiting upon me in their liveries"<sup>820</sup>. Both here and earlier the term "nightgown" is used in what we would consider an unexpected way.

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<sup>819</sup> Sackville-West/Clifford, pp.58,65,71,81

<sup>820</sup> Sackville-West/Clifford, p.83

# Miscellaneous Items

A variety of other possessions, some utilitarian and others luxuries were left by the testators.

## Household Utensils

Cooking-pots were suspended over the fire from a chain and pothook with a device for raising and lowering them as required. The tailor, **Martin Rebankes**, had a pair of pothooks and the husbandman, **Peter Everest**, a pair of pothangers. There would also have been a revolving spit supported by cobirons with a dripping pan beneath it. **Robert Tottisherst** had a "spit with a pair of coberds . . . one spit with a coberd thereto adjoining, one little bird spit, one pair of andirons and one pair of tongs, one fireback". Cobirons and coberds were used to support the spit and andirons were fire dogs used for supporting logs in a wood fire.

John Blome, Thomas Turner and Peter Everest had dripping pans, those of Blome and Everest being made of iron.

At Kettles, in the time of **Thomas Olyver**, the elder, (the 1570s) there was a salt, cheese press, malt quern, pothangers and shelves in the milk chamber. **Thomas Turner** had an iron bottle; the only other person to mention bottles was **Rachel Carrier**. It is unfortunate that her will (proved at the Deanery of Shoreham so that

only the original has survived) is so difficult to read since it lists a large number of items many of them with strange names. "kitele" was obviously "kettle" but what were "a cobbet, a tablet and a glass case"?

## Jewels and Rings

Henry Bosville, Esquire, and two of the citizens of London, George Scott and Robert Holmden mention jewels. Robert Holmden included them as part of his worldly goods - "moveables, money, plate, jewels, chattels, credits and substance whatsoever which it hath pleased god to bless and endow me withall". Henry's wife was to have "to her own use, all her jewels, the chain she commonly weareth being above three score pounds in value". George's wife was to have "all her wearing apparel, jewels, chains of gold and . . . rings for paraphernalia over and above the jointure I have heretofore made unto her".

John Potkyn (1545) had a "ring of gold with three stones in it, a diamond, a ruby and an emerald" left to him by his father. He also had a "ring of gold with a sapphire<sup>821</sup> which my father gave me 17 years past when I rode to Coventry weighing 45s in gold or thereabouts" and a "diamond triangled in a ring of gold".



**Robert Gavell** (1608) left £10 to buy a diamond for Dorothy, the wife of John Bromfield; her connection to Robert is not known but he regarded the whole of the Bromfield family with love and goodwill.

**Martha Stanford** (1640) left to the daughters of her cousin two rings which were no doubt not as valuable as those of John Potkin but, even so, they sound interesting: "to either of them a ring of gold, one a hoop with a death's head within it and the other the picture of death upon it, the eldest to have her choice". She also left £5 to another cousin "to buy her a gold ring".

## Rings and Gloves as a Remembrance

Other testators included in their bequests money to buy the recipient a ring and, in some cases, it was a pair of gloves that was given as a remembrance. **Robert Gavell** (1608) specified that twelve pairs of gloves were to be provided for various friends and relatives; those for the Gavells were to cost only five shillings with ten shillings being spent on the others.

Gloves were left to a number of mourners by **Thomas Poore** (1649); **Clemence Pearson** gave her brother a pair and **Elizabeth Weery**, in her nuncupative will, gave a pair of gloves to each of her three brothers "to be worn at her burial".

## Weapons

Weapons were only mentioned by two testators: the tailor, **Martin Rebankes** gave a halberd to the son of his youngest daughter whilst **Thomas Holmes** (1625) left each of his five sons a halberd and a javelin.

## Books

That the goods of John Spratt, the vicar, John Turner, citizen of London, and three gentlemen, Henry Bosville, Giles Cranewell and John Pett should have included books is not unexpected. It is much more surprising that **Mathew Everest**, husbandman, had a number of books; in 1616 he left his "best bible" and half his other books to one of his sons.

# Orchards and Gardens

Fourteen Sevenoaks testators mentioned gardens in their wills and ten orchards but say little about them. In 1585, Sylvester Page of Shipbourne left half of the "herbage and fruits" growing in his orchard to his godson <sup>822</sup>. At Kettles in 1650, as well as fruit, there were nuts in general and walnuts in particular growing in the orchard.

It does not follow that, because a testator did not mention gardens, orchards, etc., his land did not include those features since blanket terms such as "all my lands whatsoever" were often used. Thomas Tusser in "Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry" first published in 1557<sup>823</sup> advised:

"For gardens best  
is south southwest.  
Good tilth brings seeds  
evil tulture weeds.

. . .  
Young plants soon die  
that grow too dry."

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822 CKS: Drb/Pw 15; Drb/Pwr 17.285

823 Tusser, p.87

## The Garden at Penshurst

In July 1617, Richard Sackville had refused to let Anne accompany him on a visit to Lord and Lady Lisle at Penshurst. If she had have gone, Lady Lisle may well have taken her on a tour of the gardens. Anne would have been interested in the fruit trees since she made quince marmalade from those growing at Knole and she also gathered cherries.

At Penshurst there were walled terraces to protect the fruit and new varieties were being introduced as soon as they became available. In April 1605, Lord Lisle wrote to his steward at Penshurst to find out whether his apricots and peaches had suffered from the recent very hard frosts. In November 1608, 20 more cherry trees and a medlar tree were planted.

Anne would also have been interested in the plants at Penshurst where violets, primroses and sunflowers were planted to give a succession of colour among the clipped topiary trees. At a time when gardeners came cheaply there was no thought of labour saving and potted shrubs such as myrtle, which required regular watering in the summer, were used to fill gaps in the planting.

Day labourers at Knole received 1s 2d (6p) per day with women, who were occasionally hired in the summer, only receiving half this amount<sup>824</sup>. No similar

details have been found for Knole but Richard and Anne would have wanted their gardens at Knole to outshine those at Penshurst.

# Chapter 22

## Tobacco & Investing Abroad

Tobacco, brought to England at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, became a valuable import during the reign of James I, much of it coming from Virginia, an American colony in which Sir George Scott owned land.

### "Divine Tobacco"

912

James I made a formidable attack on the use of tobacco and followed this up by his setting up of an investigation into its use which was to be carried out by Thomas Sackville, the first Earl of Dorset. This did not stop its use and tobacco was grown in England as well as being imported. It was also sold in alehouses although this was supposedly forbidden.

### Investing in Land Abroad

917

The attempts to settle in America at the end of the sixteenth century were unsuccessful but by the beginning of the seventeenth century the settlers had more success and investors in England began to show an interest, in particular from the point of view of Sevenoaks, Edward Sackville and George Scott whose main interest was the Virginia Company.

## Raising Money with Lotteries

921

By 1615 the Virginia Company was looking for additional ways to raise money and lotteries were introduced for this purpose. These became popular and expanded both to towns other than London and for the benefit of other companies.

## Emigration to Virginia

925

Religious, political and economic ideals could inspire emigration but crossing the Atlantic was not to be undertaken lightly. This could take eleven weeks with many storms to be encountered on the way.

## Investing in Ireland

929

The king and his council pressurised potential investors into providing money for use in Ireland. When he died, George Scott had £125 invested in one of these schemes.

## "Divine Tobacco"

Tobacco was first brought to England from the New World about 1565 but it was another twenty years before it became fashionable. By 1620, it was the eighth most valuable import amounting to over £55,000; twenty years later this had risen to nearly £250,000 making it the most valuable of all. Possibly a similar amount was smuggled in. Most of this tobacco came from the English settlements in America, in particular, Virginia, a colony in which Sir George Scott owned land.

"Divine tobacco", as it was described by a character in a play by Ben Jonson first performed in 1598<sup>825</sup> had become very popular by that time. It was sold in taverns and alehouses, by grocers, chandlers and apothecaries not only in London and the ports where the ships returning from America docked but also in towns all over the country.

It was smoked by both men and women and the German traveller, Paul Hentzer, who visited England in 1598, noted that nearly all the spectators at bear-baitings and in the theatres in London were smoking tobacco in long clay pipes "into the farther end of which they put the herb, so dry that it may be rubbed into powder, and putting fire to it, they draw the smoke into their mouths, which they puff out



again through their nostrils like funnels; along with it plenty of phlegm and defluxion from the head".<sup>826</sup>

## The "Invention of Satan"

James I "professed that were he to invite the Devil to a dinner, he should have three dishes:

- a pig,
- a poll of ling and mustard
- a pipe of tobacco for a digestive".

He went on to make a formidable attack upon this "Invention of Satan" on which "precious stink", he said, some of the gentry were spending "three, sometime four hundred pounds a year"<sup>827</sup>.

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<sup>826</sup> P. Hentzer; A Journey into England in the Year 1598 (ed. Horace Walpole) (Aungervyle Society Reprints, Edinburgh, 1881-2) quoted by Ridley, 1988, p.333

<sup>827</sup> Brand, Vol.2, p.280-1

## An Investigations into the Use of Tobacco

By 1605 James came to the conclusion that his writings were not sufficient to halt the spread of its use and decided to set up "A Royal Commission" as we would now call it. This investigation was to be carried out by Thomas Sackville, the first Earl of Dorset, to whom James wrote:

"Wheras Tobacco, being a drug of late years found out, and by Merchants as well . . . as strangers, brought from foreign parts in small quantity into this Realm of England and our other Dominions, was used and taken by the better sort both then and now only as physic to preserve health, and is now at this day, through evil custom and toleration thereof, excessively taken by a number of riotuous and disordered persons of mean and base condition."

These "contrary to the use which persons of good calling and quality make thereof, do spend most of their time in that idle vanity, to the evil example and corrupting of others and also do consume that wages which many of them get by their labour and wherewith their families should be relieved, not caring at what price they buy that drug . . .

"by which great and immoderate taking of tobacco the health of a great number of our people is impaired and their bodies weakened and made unfit for labour, the estates of many mean persons so decayed and consumed as they are thereby driven to unthrifty shifts only to maintain their gluttonous

exercise thereof besides that also a great part of the treasure of our land is spent and exhausted by this only drug so licentiously abused by the meaner sort . . . which excesses we conceive might in great part be restrained by some good imposition to be laid upon it"

## An Import Tax

The instructions went on to command Dorset to impose an import tax of 6s 8d (£0.33) upon every pound of tobacco coming into the country in addition to the tax of 2d per pound previously paid; this duty to begin on 26th October following<sup>828</sup>.

Since the problem was stated as a fact and the remedy pronounced, this should have been a straightforward commission for Sackville. As usual, regardless of when such commissions were set up, the "better sort" were using the drug only for health reasons whilst those of "mean and base condition" were spending their time in idle vanity instead of working.

These efforts did not seem to reduce the popularity of tobacco and, by 1613, £200,000 was being spent annually on "this chopping herb of hell", most of it in London<sup>829</sup>.

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828 Phillips, p.223

829 Bridenbaugh, p.195

## Tobacco Growing in England

Perhaps because of the proposed import tax, the cultivation of tobacco in England which started about 1571 grew at such a pace that both James I and Charles I tried to suppress it in order to ensure a market for tobacco imported from Virginia. To no avail. Tobacco was grown in London and Westminster and many other areas from the Channel Islands to Yorkshire but, most importantly, in Gloucestershire with the acreage devoted to it increasing regardless of the aims of government.<sup>830</sup>

## The Sale of Tobacco in Alehouses

Although tobacco was sold in "every tavern, inn and ale-house" and many shops with some people keeping houses or opening shops with "no other trade to live by but selling tobacco"<sup>831</sup>, its sale was supposedly forbidden in alehouses. At least some regulations tried to control its sale and an ale-house licence granted about 1630 by six Kentish JPs has the following item at the bottom:

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830 Thirsk (1967), p.176

831 Bridenbaugh, p.195

"Item: you shall not utter, nor willingly suffer to be uttered, drunk or taken, any tobacco within your house, cellar or other place thereunto belonging."<sup>832</sup>

## Investing in Land Abroad

In the middle of the sixteenth century, it had been the trading companies such as the Muscovy Company selling goods to Russia and returning with furs and salmon which tempted the aristocracy and rich merchants to invest in them. By the beginning of the seventeenth, the trading companies had to compete with those wanting investment so that they could send out people to colonise various outposts particularly in America. Two people connected with Sevenoaks were interested in America: the Earl of Dorset and George Scott.

## The Earl of Dorset's Petitions

Towards the end of the 1630s, Edward Sackville, Earl of Dorset, made two petitions to the king, the first one for an island called Sandy (Hook):

"lying near the continent of America, in the height (latitude) of 44 degrees, was lately discovered by one Rose, late master of a ship, who suffered shipwreck and, finding no inhabitants, took possession. The Earl of Dorset prays a grant of the said island for thirty-one years and that none may adventure thither but such as petitioner shall licence".

At the end of December 1637 he made a second petition to the King for:

"Certain islands on the south of New England, viz: Long Island, Cole Island, Sandy Point, Hell Gates, Martin's [?Martha's] Vineyard, Elizabeth Island, Block Island, with other islands near thereunto, were lately discovered by some of your Majesty's subjects and are not yet inhabited by Christians. Prays a grant thereof with like powers of government as have been granted for other plantations in America"<sup>833</sup>.

## The Virginia Company

At the end of the sixteenth century, Sir Walter Raleigh organised expeditions to Virginia and North Carolina. One of the first prospectives for Virginia, named by Raleigh for the Queen, was "A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia" written by Thomas Marriot in 1590. These first English attempts to settle in America were unsuccessful but settlers who left England in 1606 managed to establish themselves and investors back in England began to take an interest in the colony which was to be England's answer to the Spanish empire.

Leading clerics, including John Donne, rector of Sevenoaks, preached about the value of the project<sup>834</sup> and over 600 people, mainly London merchants, subscribed to the 1609 charter of the Virginia Company. Those investing in the Company included many of the middling gentry; of the 96 JPs resident in Kent in 1608, some 26 invested in one or more of the Jacobean trading companies<sup>835</sup>.

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834 Bush, p.129

835 Clark, p.302

## Investment by the Livery Companies

Of the London Livery Companies which invested in the Virginia Company, the Grocers contributed the most: £487 10s compared with £200 each from the Mercers, Goldsmiths and Merchant Tailors.

In addition, the livery companies were invited to purchase shares at £12 10s each which they then sold to their members. This may have been how George Scott first came to be interested in Virginia. By 1645 his estate included "freehold or other lands, tenements, plantations, goods, chattels, hereditaments and adventures whatsoever of what nature or quality soever to me of right belonging, situated, . . . in the Kingdom or Dominion of Virginia" were to be divided between the three children of his brother Edmond.

"The representative London investor in Virginia was not a magnate . . . but a citizen, perhaps a smaller merchant, an official or one engaged in a professional occupation. . . It is significant, however, that many of the lesser merchants and citizens who invested in Virginia maintained close professional and personal links with the colony"<sup>836</sup>. George Scott could have been such a "smaller merchant"; he could also have had other connections with the Company.



## Charles Scott and Sir Francis Wyatt

Sir Francis Wyatt, grandson of Thomas Wyatt who led the rebellion against Mary Tudor, was an early Governor of Virginia. Francis's aunt Jane married Charles Scott and their daughter, Deborah married William Fleete of Chatham who was an investor in the Virginia Company in 1610. Four of their sons emigrated to Virginia in 1623 and this family history is one example of the close family links amongst the Kentish gentry who went to Virginia<sup>837</sup>. George could have been related to Charles Scott.

## Raising Money with Lotteries

After 1609, interest in Virginia declined with most companies failing to support expeditions even though they were subject to pressure from the Privy Council. By 1615, the Company had to look to other means of raising money: a "Great Standing Lottery" was the answer.

Its charter authorised it to hold lotteries and "Adventurers", together with their agents, were instructed to come to the house of Sir Thomas Smythe, one of the greater merchants connected with the Company; each agent received a

commission of 6s 8d for each £3 sold. Lack of interest led to postponement and at the end of June the Company, whilst destroying 60,000 unsold lots, announced £5000 in "certain prizes" and sundry rewards.<sup>838</sup>

Both "little standing lotteries" and "great running lotteries" were organised in the years 1613 to 1615 which, whilst not as successful as the Company had hoped, still seemed to have paid for a number of voyages to the colony.

Lotteries expanded to other towns in England and to English merchants on the Continent, generating publicity for the Virginia Company throughout the country. The drawing for prizes took place over a considerable period, a month in the case of the first lottery, and considerable publicity was given to the presentation of the prizes.

In 1621, however, the king refused the running of further lotteries partly because of petitions from a number of towns complaining of the demoralisation of business and industry caused by popular excitement over them<sup>839</sup>.

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838 Bush, pp. 136 & 137

839 Bush, pp. 139 & 140

## The Prizes

Thomas Sharplisse, a London tailor, won the grand prize of 4000 crowns (£1000) "in fair plate which was sent to his house in a very stately manner". The churches of St. Mary Colechurch won £1 for an adventure of £6 and St. Mary Woolchurch won £0.50 for its adventure of £2.50.

More ambitious (or generous) was the Grocers Company which adventured £62.50; it won £13.50 but was offered the choice of a saltcellar worth that amount or £10 in cash. These lotteries were thus organised first and foremost as means of raising money for the Company with very few, if any, of even the "successful" adventurers receiving more than a small amount of what they had staked. Scott could be referring to lottery investments when he mentions "adventures" connected with Virginia in his will.

## Publicising the Lotteries

The lotteries were publicised by means of broadsides with the livery companies being sent a letter from the Privy Council urging them to adventure "such reasonable sums of money as each of them may conveniently and can willingly spare". Sir Thomas Smythe requested the Merchant Tailors to participate "for the good of the land and the winning of souls to heaven that as yet knew no God". Another leading member of the Virginia Company also targeted the Merchant

Tailors, imploring them to adventure "for the general advancement of christianity and the good of the commonwealth". Thus were potential adventurers suborned by appealing to their patriotism, piety and greed.<sup>840</sup>

In order to interest a wide-range of people, the Company sponsored popular songs and ballads but, at the same time, it had to produce publicity aimed at the serious investors and prospective emigrants who were mainly based in London.

## Investing Outside America

Lotteries were not the monopoly of the Virginia Company. Thomas Randolph of Maidstone, a JP in the 1580s, devised to his second son "all share or parts adventured beyond the sea in 'Persia, Media, Russia or elsewhere now amounting to £300"<sup>841</sup>.

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840 Bush, p.138

841 Gleason, p.20

# Emigration to Virginia

Bush shows that emigration to Virginia and investment in the Company usually involved more than one member of a family with younger sons as active participants and, within the family, there was often an interest in many projects.

This was characteristic of the lesser Kentish gentry as well as the greater men of the county and there were extensive kinship and friendship links between the investors and emigrants to the colony<sup>842</sup>. Gentlemen of Kent were interested in the Virginia enterprise from its beginning in 1607 and a voyage there in 1619 which was sponsored by the Lord Warden attracted a large amount of support from Kent investors. It ended, however, in recrimination and failure and the Virginia Company itself collapsed in the early 1620s<sup>843</sup>. No mention of Virginia or emigration in general has been found for anyone from Sevenoaks other than George Scott.

At least some Kentish labourers and artisans emigrated to Virginia at the beginning of the century but no lists of passengers have survived for ships from Kent until 1635. In that year the *Hercules* sailed to New England and the

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842 Bush, p.126

843 Clark (1977), p.319

surviving passenger list includes yeomen, craftsmen and labourers from Sandwich, Dover, Canterbury, Tenterden, Maidstone and Ashford<sup>844</sup>.

## Did George Scott go to Virginia?

Since George owned land in Virginia, it is possible that either he himself, or perhaps a son who died out there, went to the colony. Emigration to Virginia seems to have been an individual decision, being made possible by the growth of literacy and publicity, the high degree of physical mobility of many Englishmen, and a set of religious, political and economic ideals that inspired colonial enterprise<sup>845</sup>.

The religious preamble to Scott's will shows that he regarded himself as one of the elect and this is likely to have made him open to the promotional tracts and publications of the Virginia Company which highlighted the religious argument for the establishment of the colony.

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844 Bush, p.86

845 Bush, p.ii

## Crossing the Atlantic

The crossing was not, however, to be undertaken without due consideration. Ships carrying passengers and cargo across the Atlantic were usually of 200 to 350 tons burthen with between 50 and 200 passengers.

By 1634, those able to afford extras could obtain advice from such as William Wood who published some hints from his own experience. Each passenger was allowed to take five pounds of provisions such as salted beef, pork and fish, butter, cheese, pease, water-gruel, biscuits and beer. Wood also recommended conserves, wine and salad oil as remedies for sea-sickness and sugar, eggs, bacon, rice, some poultry and a wether sheep as a relief from the salt diet.

Presumably the poultry and sheep did not count in the five pounds but, even so, this would have allowed very little of each of these provisions. Not to be forgotten was the lemon juice to prevent or cure scurvy. Passengers had to provide their own pans for cooking and their own bedding with long coats being recommended for wear during storms.<sup>846</sup>

Thus fortified, the affluent passengers could face the long voyage with slightly more composure than their less wealthy companions. Even with the hazards to be expected, all the passengers and crew could survive the journey, one example

from the early crossings being the ship which arrived safely at the end of November without any deaths on the way after an eleven weeks crossing during which it had encountered many storms in the autumn hurricane season<sup>847</sup>.

Once there, if they were to establish themselves, the emigrants were faced with mosquitoes, unknown diseases, the native Americans and a large amount of very hard work. By the 1640s, however, the colony of Virginia was beginning to prosper and it is thus likely that the children of George's brother prospered as a result of their uncle's investments.



# Investing in Ireland

Potential investors were also under pressure from the king and his council to invest in Ireland which at least was closer so that agents could be sent more easily to investigate the prospects. Neither Virginia nor Ireland looked good investments and subscriptions to both projects were evaded whenever possible.<sup>848</sup>

From his will, it would appear, that whether from choice or not, George Scott had subscribed "and paid into the Chamber of London, to the Treasurers for that purpose appointed" £125 "towards the reducing of the Irish Rebels according to several acts of Parliament in that case made and provided. . . All the benefit and profits of my said subscription and money paid into the said Treasurers with all shares . . which shall happen to fall by lot or otherwise by reason of my said subscription" he left to the children of his brother Edmond Scott.

# Chapter 23

## The 1640s

By the beginning of the 1640s, English society was changing and Laslett identifies two important characteristics which were appearing: the persistent pre-occupation with political speculation and the urge to create new societies in its own image. This urge dated from the end of Elizabeth's reign but took about fifty years to become reality when, about 1640, Virginia began to show the characteristics of American society in infancy.<sup>849</sup>

### Local Affairs

933

Roads had to be maintained if market towns were to prosper and the highway surveyors had to obtain the money required by raising a local tax.

## The Gentry of Kent

936

For many years, Kent, because of its wealth and geographical position, had played an important part in the government of the country. By the beginning of the 1640s the division between those supporting the King and those supporting Parliament were becoming clear.

## The Supply of Water

940

In 1640 the parishioners of Sevenoaks petitioned Parliament complaining that the rector had overridden their long established rights to water from a spring rising in the Glebe land of the rectory.

## Civil War Becomes Inevitable

942

The raising of taxes such as Ship Money and purveyance were one of the subsidiary differences between Parliament and the King who was forced to leave London at the beginning of 1642. A number of petitions were presented to Parliament by the gentry of Kent with some of those supporting the Royalist cause being imprisoned.

## The Civil War in West Kent

946

By the end of 1642, most of the active Royalists had joined the king leaving the county mainly in the hands of the Parliamentarians. But there were a number of sporadic attempts by the Royalists to gain control.

## The Second Civil War

952

The second civil war started in Wales in the spring of 1642. General Fairfax marched into Kent and defeated the Royalists at Maidstone who could then not raise enough support to join the Royalists in Essex.

## The Sackville Support for the Royalist Cause

955

Earl Sackville and his wife were friends of Charles I and obviously Royalists. In 1642, the Earl joined the King in Yorkshire taking with him a troop of men. He had built up a small arsenal at Knole which was captured by the Parliamentarians who did considerable damage to Knole.

## Baptisms and Marriages in Sevenoaks, Seal and Shipbourne

959

The number of baptisms and marriages were very different for these three parishes in the late 1640s compared with earlier years.

## Local Affairs

According to John Taylor, Kent in 1636 had "many fair market towns, impregnable castles, secure and safe havens and harbours for shipping, abundance of rich villages and hamlets so that, by the Almighty's blessings and the peoples' industry this county is for fruit, fowl, flesh, fish, cloth, corn, wood and cattle, in all and anything that is for use of man to maintain like and pleasure, (it) is and hath been renowned universally."<sup>850</sup>

In order for produce to get to the markets, roads had to be maintained and they needed to be constructed to a higher standard than earlier so that the carriages which were becoming more common could use them.

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<sup>850</sup> in "The . . . Cities, Towns, Castles . . . of Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, etc." quoted by Laslett, p.151

## A Bridge Across the Darent

When travellers from Hastings to London left Sevenoaks they had to cross the Darent and an alternative to the crossing at Chipstead was at Longford which is between Riverhead and Dunton Green. In 1636, the three parishes of Sevenoaks, Otford and Chevening all contributed to the building of Longford bridge with a new road from it up the North Downs to Star Hill. To the south the road continued through Riverhead to Sevenoaks<sup>851</sup>.

At Easter 1638 the justices ordered the erection of a stone at the bridge to record the contributions made by the three parishes. According to a rubbing supposedly taken of the inscription on this stone when it was still legible, the bridge at Longford was “built at the charges of Sevenoaks, Otford and Chevening. Sevenoaks paid six pounds ten shillings, Otford two pounds, Chevening three pounds ten shillings.”<sup>852</sup>

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851 Watson, p.44

852 Dunlop, p.120

## Paying for Maintenance of the Highways

Sometimes such work had to be carried out at the expense of the highway surveyors who had been indicted because of the state of the highways in their parish. They then had to obtain a court order to levy a rate to recover their money and nearly all the highway quarter session orders were issued to enable parish officers to obtain redress from their parishes for the money they had already spent.<sup>853</sup>

Having to take on such commitments made it even more difficult for a parish to find men willing and able to take on the duties of such officials and, because there was little to be gained from holding the post, those that did take it on were not likely to be very good at it. One of the general orders agreed by the quarter sessions in 1631 addressed these problems giving justices the power to allow reasonable expenses to constables and borsholders "for execution of the statute in the punishment of rogues".<sup>854</sup>

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853 Clarke, R.D.; p.229

854 Clarke, R.D. p.234

## The Poor of the Parish

The Parish Vestry was still in charge of local affairs and at the beginning of the 1640s Sevenoaks must have been having problems with the poor of the parish. In 1644 the Vestry ordered them to wear a brass badge on their right arm and, if they were seen without it, they were to forfeit a month's pay<sup>855</sup>.

## The Gentry of Kent

In each county there were a number of groups of gentlemen, each distinct but interconnected by many individual relationships. One of the Kent families was the Scotts of Scott Hall to whom the grocer George Scott may have belonged. It was through these groups that political attitudes were formed and spread about and they could be in the position to bring pressure to bear against government.

The family ties between members of such groups, which were often extensive and complicated, were held together within a patriarchal structure. These strong relationships bound together town and country and also supported those who ventured overseas. By marrying into a landed family, the daughter or son of a city merchant, entered an authoritarian system which would tie not only themselves



and their children into a complex set of relationships but also their city cousins and nephews.

As the standard of living rose, younger sons expected to have a position similar to that of the heir and it was this ambition which could lead to them taking the opportunity for emigration<sup>856</sup>.

Because of its strategic position between London and the continent, its wealth and the close connections between the capital and the county, the gentry of Kent had for many years had considerable effect on government in general.

## **The Sevenoaks Gentry**

Whilst the Earls of Dorset at Knole were important men concerned intimately with the government of the country, they were not heads of a large family and their allegiance tended to be biased towards Sussex where they owned a considerable amount of land.

The other gentlemen of Sevenoaks were parish gentry rather than men of the county, providing JPs but not becoming well known or influential other than in their own locality. The Lennardes were perhaps the highest ranking family with

John being Sheriff in 1571 and Sampson in 1592 but their basic allegiance was to Chevening.

John Isley, who owned Bradbourne in 1493 and was another of the wealthier gentlemen connected with Sevenoaks, came from Sundridge. If it had not been for their adherence to the Catholic faith, the Lones might have reached a similar status to the Lennardes since, even with the problems resulting from their recusancy, they managed to hold on a considerable amount of land at least until the end of the Civil War.

## **To Support the King or Parliament?**

Although the names of the gentry of Sevenoaks do not appear in accounts of the time, their work in local administration and their travels locally and to London, gave them the opportunity to meet their peers from other towns, discuss with them the political, economic, social and religious problems of the period and thus participate in the forming of opinions regarding changes to the constitution.

The stresses and strains which were to lead to the Civil Wars of the 1640s had been building up throughout the reign of Charles I with taxation being of prime importance. By the beginning of 1640s, the parties of King and Parliament were polarising with the greater nobles, some of the lesser gentry and rich citizens and the poorer people supporting the king. Those for the Parliamentary party were the

peers and the greater gentry, the majority of the lesser gentry, the yeomen, lawyers and those involved with commerce and trade.

## **“Scandalous and Injurious Accusations”**

In 1639 Sir John Sackville was the subject of “[scandalous and injurious accusations](#)” to which Edward Carryer, a labourer of Sevenoaks, and his wife, confessed. Whether or not this was in any way connected with the division between Parliamentarians and Royalists or was a less political matter is not known since no details are given in the report of the quarter sessions.

Since Carryer and his wife were in no position to give any other satisfaction, they promised to make “[confession of their offence in the parish churches of Chevening and Sevenoaks . . . on two several Sundays in time of divine service](#)”.<sup>857</sup> Even with such few details, this does not look like a politically motivated episode.

# The Supply of Water

The Long Parliament, which first met in 1640, set up a parliamentary committee for the consideration of religious matters and parishes from all over England sent petitions to it describing their grievances. Only about 50 of Kent's 400 parishes submitted petitions and many of these were concerned with clerical pluralism and absenteeism, leading to charges of neglect and underpayment of the parochial clergy.

Whilst one of these 50 was Sevenoaks, its petition was concerned with the supply of water, the parishioners complaining that the rector, Dr. Gibbon, had overridden their long established rights.

## The Walling Off of a Public Spring

Gibbon had walled off a public spring which, although it was in his glebe, had been used by the townspeople for "time out of mind". He had been made to provide a piped supply to the public side of the wall but the petitioners complained that the pipe was often defective and that Gibbon sometimes turned off the water. Because of the rector's actions, the poor people were having to drink water from the well which made them "subject to infection and sickness". Details of the petition are given in [Appendix 17](#).

## John Blome's Water Pipes

Dr. Gibbon was obviously trying to ensure that he had pure water from the spring whilst denying his parishioners access to it. In 1624, John Blome was in the middle of carrying out various improvements to his houses and these included laying water pipes to one of these from the waterpit in the orchard. This would have reduced the likelihood of contamination and, at the same time, saved carrying the water to the house.

## Keeping Water Free From Contamination

Contamination of wells and, even more so, streams was difficult to control and illustrations of the problem are given in the Ightham Court Rolls. Although these are for the 1580s and 1590s, conditions must have been very similar throughout Tudor and Stuart times and not just in Ightham.

Geese and ducks seem to have been the main offenders. In 1587 Widow Beverley let her geese corrupt and contaminate the "common water necessary for the daily use of the inhabitants, to their damage". The following year Launcelot Woodden, mentioned earlier, allowed his geese to "disturb, dig and defile a certain water or spring used for the necessary purposes of life".

Whilst prevention of this contamination meant controlling the geese, Thomas Stretfield had no such excuse; he had "[placed a dead dog in the common water-course . . . to the inconvenience of the Queen's subjects](#)". Even so, he was fined only 4d whereas the widow was fined 6d and Woodden 12d.<sup>858</sup>

## Civil War Becomes Inevitable

Prior to 1640, Charles I used his discretionary powers to raise money without recourse to Parliament with a Forced Loan in 1627 and Ship Money from 1634 to 1639. Ship Money was originally an ancient right of the sovereign to impose a levy on coastal towns to be used to provide a ship of a certain tonnage with a crew of a certain size and provisioned for six months. This had been extended to inland towns and become a general tax levied on a land assessment.

## Purveyance

Purveyance, supplying the king's household with produce at a much reduced price, was another form of taxation and in 1641 an order at the Easter Quarter Sessions complained of its burden: "[the composition for the King's Majesty's](#)

Household is become so extreme burdensome to this county by season of the continual raising (the assessment for purveyance) that the county cannot well submit any longer thereunto". The court appointed a committee of nine justices to treat with the royal household.<sup>859</sup>

## Charles I Forced to Leave London

In January 1642, after appearing in the House of Commons with an armed guard with the aim of arresting some of the members of the House of Commons, the king was forced to leave London to which he was not to return until after his final defeat.

The March Assizes of 1642 offered an opportunity for those of the gentry who were JPs to meet and discuss the political position but the only Sevenoaks JP was Edward Sackville<sup>860</sup> who did not attend the Assizes.

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859 Clarke, R.D., p.235

860 Cockburn (Chas.I), 2001

## A Petition from the Gentry of Kent

It is likely that there were some men from Sevenoaks in lowlier positions who would have been able to relay back to the town the feelings of those in power in the county.

Earlier a petition organised by Sir Michael Livesey, a strong parliamentarian, had been presented to the House of Lords; one of the main points in this petition was its support for the exclusion of the bishops from the House of Lords.

The majority of those assembled at Maidstone for the Assizes disapproved of this petition and decided on 21st March to present one which, in their view, would be more representative of the opinion of the county. By 25th March, a petition had been drafted and accepted and plans made to circulate it so that it could be finalised when the county gentry met again at the Easter Quarter Sessions. It was planned to present the petition to the House of Commons at the end of April.

The speed with which a group of people scattered about the county could work is surprising given that, once they dispersed, their only means of communication was by horse and, unless a document was printed, there would be only a few copies at most available for circulation.



## Imprisonment of the Petitioners

By the end of March Parliament had heard about the petition, the judge who had presided at the Assizes was imprisoned and orders were made for the arrest of four other gentlemen who had been prominent in its support. Opinion in the county was divided and, at the Easter Quarter Sessions, some JPs put forward a petition supporting different views.

The original petitioners were not, however, dissuaded from their intention of presenting their wishes and this they did on 30th April but this led to further imprisonments. Parliament's treatment of the Kentish petitioners as criminals highlighted the differences between the Parliamentarians and the Royalists and can be considered as the time from which civil war became inevitable.<sup>861</sup>

# The Civil War in West Kent

With the City of London supporting Parliament, Kentish supporters of the king were divided from Royalists in the Midlands and West of England. Even so, Kent controlled the main routes from London to the Continent. Thus, in the summer of 1642, before war had officially been declared, the Parliamentary party acted quickly to neutralise the county by securing Dover Castle and arresting suspected royalists.

Orders were given to seize arms, ammunition, horses, money and plate and the men carrying out these instructions, who met with little resistance, caused a considerable amount of additional damage. In August 1642, Sevenoaks was occupied by a parliamentary task-force and a document has survived showing the damage done at Knole - see Table 23.1 below. In the same month, on 22nd, the king set up his standard at Nottingham and the war had officially begun.

## Parliamentarians in Control in Kent

By the end of 1642, most of the active Royalists had joined the king. Those left in power tended to support the Parliamentarians and this can be seen by the orders made at the Quarter Sessions to provide money from county funds to parliamentary victims of the fighting.

At this time, perhaps because of the dislocations resulting from wartime conditions, the Easter and Michaelmas Quarter Sessions were held at Maidstone and dealt with business connected with western Kent whilst the Epiphany and Midsummer ones were held at Canterbury and were concerned with matters from eastern Kent.<sup>862</sup>

## Royalists Meet in Sevenoaks

Even so there were some sporadic efforts by the Royalists to gain control. In the summer of 1643, people were particularly aroused by the attempt to make them take the Covenant to support the Parliamentary forces. The minister at Ightham was arrested for his refusal to administer the Covenant despite the support of his parishioners<sup>863</sup>.

At the end of July there was a meeting of local Royalists in Sevenoaks led by George Lone of Sevenoaks Park and Thomas Farnaby of Kippington. The hope was that a Royalist army would march from Oxford through Surrey into Kent but two days of continuous rain did nothing to raise their spirits even though "one Gransdon stirred up the assembly".

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862 Clarke, R.D., p.236

863 Melling (????), p.24

## Retaliation by Colonel Browne

Parliamentary troops under Colonel Browne marched to Bromley where they halted on 27th July with the assembly at Sevenoaks spending the day with discussions between the moderates who wanted talks with the Parliamentarians and the activists who wanted an immediate uprising.

Colonel Browne left them little time to reach a decision, resuming his march the next day but, when he reached Sevenoaks, he found the majority had returned home leaving only between 500 and 600 Royalists in the town. These he drove down Riverhill towards Tonbridge. Crossing Hilden Brook (about a mile from the centre of Tonbridge), they broke down the bridge and turned to fight.

The Royalists, summoned by Brown to surrender, replied that "[they stood for their ancient laws and customs without which they refused to lay down their arms but were willing to treat](#)". Brown was not for "treating" and there was some fierce fighting with, at one time, the Parliamentary forces being nearly annihilated by an ambush. The Tonbridge Royalists were expecting assistance from outside since, during the fighting, the church bells were "rung backwards".

Finally the Royalists were defeated and Tonbridge welcomed the Parliamentarians. Brown took 150 prisoners and, before his victory was complete, some five hundred "malignants" which had assembled at Yalding had to be dispersed but here his Tonbridge supporters were prepared to help. Also, Sir

George Sandys, who had undertaken to persuade a number of other towns and villages to support the king, was taken prisoner.<sup>864</sup>

## The County Committee of Kent

As a result of this rising, Parliament set up the County Committee of Kent, made up of local members of the gentry who were supporters of the Parliamentary cause. This Committee met at Knole which was the seat of local government for a year from autumn 1643.

This involved some of the members of the Committee staying at Knole and additional furniture, including beds, was brought from Kippington which had been taken over as a result of Thomas Farnaby's support for the king. There was a guard of between 75 and 100 men at Knole and also a guard at Sevenoaks Market House and, on fast days, at the church but the Countess of Dorset was allowed to continue living at Knole.<sup>865</sup>

In 1643 and 1644 orders were passed for the demolition of "monuments and objects of idolatry and superstition" and all representations of angels or saints were to be "utterly demolished" and all tapers and candles removed. The

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<sup>864</sup> Dunlop, p.115-116; Abell, p.221

<sup>865</sup> Dunlop, p.116

Committee at Knole did not have the support of the majority of the gentry who, whilst not openly supporting the Royalists, did nothing to support it and thus it had difficulty in getting its orders carried out.

## Parliamentary Forces Mutiny

In the summer of 1644, the commanders of the Parliamentary forces in Kent were warned to be ready to join with other forces preparing to intercept the Royalists marching towards Worcester. The Committee, perhaps by this time finding it had to take account of local opinion, complained of the excessive charge which the county had already borne for the levy of forces and objected that they should be sent into other counties, leaving Kent defenceless when they had raised £2,000 "out of our own purses without any additional help".

Whilst the Committee was sending its complaints to Parliament, others were showing their opposition more directly. Four thousand men assembled at Sevenoaks by the Parliamentarians mutinied protesting that they would not serve outside the county.<sup>866</sup>

Having suffered from heavy taxes under Charles, there was no relief under the Parliamentarians who, in 1643, introduced new taxes on many consumables

including meat, salt and beer. These were in addition to a land tax very similar to Ship Money and in 1645-6 Kent was paying more for each monthly assessment than in a whole year for Ship Money<sup>867</sup>.

## Support for the Parliamentarians Wanes

In Kent, support for the Parliamentary Party was waning and it was finding it difficult to control the men it already had and even more difficult to attract new recruits. From "Foreland Point to Westerham the people were fuming and setting their teeth and clenching their fists in an unmistakable manner which boded ill for a not very distant future".

In 1645, recruiting by Parliament was being actively resisted and five hundred recruits on their way to London stopped at Sevenoaks, rose upon their guards and marched to the house of Sir Percival Hart at either Orpington or Lullingstone. There, for a few days, they withstood a siege by two troops of horse and two cannon.<sup>868</sup>

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<sup>867</sup> Smith, David L., in Morrill, p.40

<sup>868</sup> Abell, pp.222-224

# The Second Civil War

The second civil war broke out in Wales in the spring of 1648 when the Parliamentary commander of Pembroke Castle, together with most of South Wales, declared for the King.

The Royalists did not, however, have an experienced commander who could unite supporters of the King throughout the country and the Parliamentarian General Fairfax was able to send forces and instructions to the various trouble spots and himself marched into Kent which he saw as posing the most serious problem.

## Fairfax Attacked the Royalists at Maidstone

Fairfax arrived at Rochester on 1st June to find the town held by the Royalists and the drawbridge over the Medway raised. To outflank them, Fairfax marched his men through Meopham and Malling with the intention of crossing the Medway at Maidstone. But this bridge, and the one at Aylesford, were both heavily defended so that the army had to march higher up the river to Farleigh before it could cross the river. It was evening and the army had been marching for three days but Fairfax immediately attacked the Royalists at Maidstone and had overcome them by midnight.



Unfortunately for the Royalists, although they outnumbered Fairfax's seven thousand men by about two or three thousand, their commander, Lord Norwich, had been appointed because of his rank rather than his military talent. As it was, his forces did not participate in the fighting at Maidstone and, with Fairfax in control of the road, Norwich decided to evacuate Rochester and move on London.

By this time, the king's supporters thought they were on the losing side and many of them decided to return home whilst they still had the opportunity. By the time Norwich arrived at Blackheath his army was reduced to about three thousand.

## **Support for the Royalists Dwindles**

At this time, the Royalist army at Blackheath was occupying the high ground to the south of London which also gave them control of the river and the Dover road and they were facing only the small force which Fairfax had left behind on his advance into Kent. There were reports of a Royalist revolt in Essex, Cromwell was tied up in Wales and there were hopes that the Scots would invade. Given a good commander, what could the Royalists have achieved? As it was, by the time Norwich had investigated the position in Essex and decided to join the Royalists there, only about five hundred men were prepared to swim their horses across the Thames<sup>869</sup>.

## The War's Effect on Sevenoaks

There is no mention of the effect of the Civil War in any of the Sevenoaks wills proved in the 1640s but obviously it must have had a considerable impact on the area. We have seen how Leonard Gale moved from Sevenoaks to Sussex in 1641 in order to avoid "being burdened with free quartering of soldiers".

In the early 1640s a number of soldiers were buried in Sevenoaks, two (also described as strangers) in 1640, five in 1644 and one in 1645. Soldiers were obviously being billeted in Sevenoaks at this time and Gale, and probably others, were not pleased to have this burden placed upon them. Sevenoaks did not suffer from the fighting in the same way as Tonbridge and Maidstone but some of its men must have been amongst Lord Norwich's original nine or ten thousand. Even so, there must have been many who suffered from the disruption and fighting, most of whom would have been ordinary people about whom nothing is recorded.

The imprisonment of Thomas Farnaby had already been described; it was reported that he had said it was better to have one king than five hundred. Another who had his property sequestrated was Dr. Nicholas Gibbon, the rector, who had cut off his parishioners' water. He was deprived of his living in 1644 and it is said that, in order to keep his family of eleven children, he took a small

holding which he farmed himself including hard work such as driving the plough and showing the callouses on his hands to prove it<sup>870</sup>.

## Sackville Support for the Royalist Cause

The 4th Earl and his wife, who was the governess of the royal children, were not only courtiers but also friends of Charles I and his family. They obviously supported the Royalist cause but they did not have any great influence in Kent partly because the main Sackville estates were in Sussex. When, in 1642, Charles set up his standard in the north of England, Edward joined him at York and evidently behaved with bravery and resolution in the subsequent fighting. He had taken with him a troop raised in Kent and equipped from Knole and this, no doubt, included some men from the Sevenoaks area.

## Arms and Equipment at Knole

Prior to his departure from Knole, Edward had built up a store of arms and equipment at Knole and that not required for his troop was left there under the

charge of Sir John Sackville. This small arsenal<sup>871</sup> came to the knowledge of the Parliamentarians and three troops of horse left London at midnight on 13th August with orders to capture the equipment.

They arrived at Sevenoaks on the Sunday as Sir John was leaving church after attending morning service. The local townspeople tried to help him but, after a running fight from the church to Knole, Sir John was captured and the Parliamentarians raided the house and seized the arms. Next day, the arms were loaded onto wagons and Sir John, under custody, left Knole for London. Considerable damage was done during the raid and this is detailed in a surviving document :

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871 details of this are given by Sackville-West, pp.104-105

**Table 23.1: Damage Done at Knole in August 1642<sup>872</sup>**

The damage done at Knoll house the 14th day of August 1642 by the company of horsemen brought by Colonel Sands	
There are above forty stock locks and plate locks broken open which to make good again will cost	£10
The ?? is of gold branched belonging to the cooch <sup>873</sup> in the rich gallery as much cut away as will not be made good by	£40
And in my lord's chamber 2 long cushion cases embroidered with satin and gold and the plumes upon the bed tester to the value of	£30
They have broken open six trunks, in one of them was money. What is lost of it we know not in regard the keeper of it is from home.	
They have spoiled in the painter's chamber his oil and other wrongs there to the value of	£ 2 <sup>874</sup>
They broke into Sir John, his granary, and have taken of his oats and peas to the quantity of 3 or 4 quarters	£ 4
The arms they have wholly taken away, there being five wagon loads of them	

<sup>872</sup> CKS: U269 E15; printed in Melling (????), pp.15-16 using original spellin which has been modernised here

<sup>873</sup> couch?

<sup>874</sup> given as 40s

## The Sackvilles

The House of Lords seems to have been very lenient in its treatment of the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl who, at that time, was using the arms he had taken with him against the Parliamentary forces: "Such as are rich arms shall not be made use of but kept safely for the Earl of Dorset, but such as are fit to be made use of for service of the Kingdom are to be employed and inventory to be taken and money given to the Earl of Dorset in satisfaction thereof".<sup>875</sup>

Subsequent events were not to be so favourable and the Sackvilles suffered a great deal for their support of the king. Edward's younger son was taken prisoner and then murdered by Parliamentary soldiers, the Dorset estates were sequestrated for the benefit of the Parliamentarians and the contents of 74 rooms at Knole were sold. In January 1649, however, the sequestration was suspended and the fine was reduced to £2,415.<sup>876</sup>

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<sup>875</sup> Dunlop, p.114-115; Killingray, p.6

<sup>876</sup> Dunlop, p.116-117

# **Baptisms and Marriages in Sevenoaks, Seal and Shipbourne**

Something strange happened in Sevenoaks in the mid-1640s concerning baptisms and marriages.

## **Baptisms**

From 1641 to 1646, the annual number of baptisms was about 60 with an average of about 50 for the earlier part of the century. In 1647, there were only 29 and by 1650 they had fallen to 18. By contrast, in Seal, baptisms more than doubled in the late 1640s and, in the Seal register of baptisms for the late 1640s, many of the fathers are noted as "of Sevenoaks".

## **Marriages**

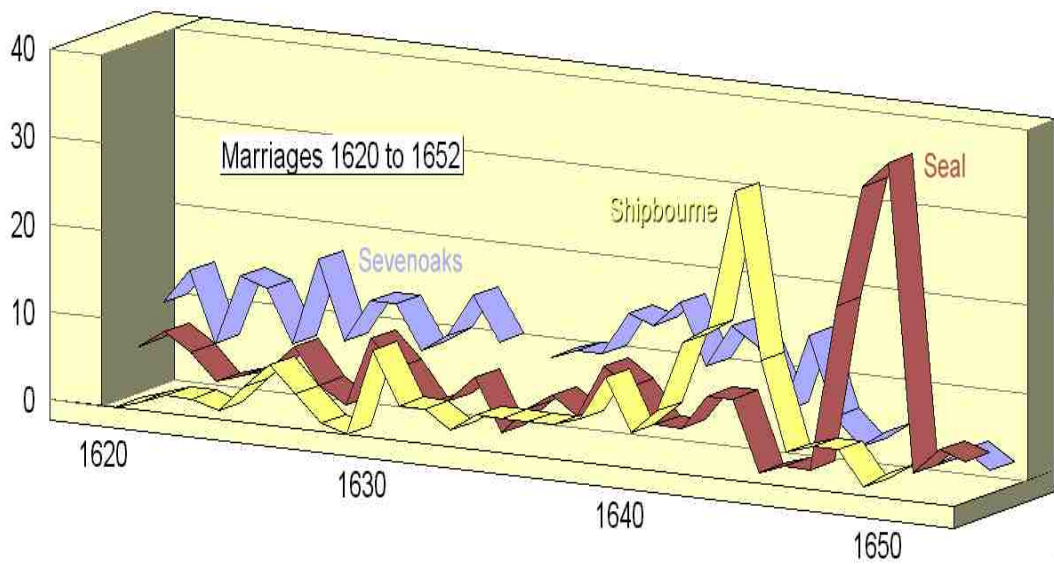
There was also a fall in the number of marriages with six or less some years compared with an average of 14 a year for 1640 to 1644. In Seal, the rise in the number of marriages was even more startling than that for baptisms, with less than four a year from 1640 to 1646 but 20 in 1647, 34 in 1648, 37 in 1649 but back to two in 1650.

## Shipbourne

In Shipbourne, another local parish, baptisms were markedly higher in the four years 1642 to 1645 when there were 15, 17, 33 and 14 marriages compared with an average of about five for other years. The names for these additional marriages are not names which otherwise occur locally.

Thus there were many more marriages than usual in Shipbourne in the early 1640s which was prior to the fall in the number in Sevenoaks.





## What Caused These Differences?

Many of the Sevenoaks parishioners seemed to have gone to a neighbouring parish for their marriages and baptisms of their children but, even so, the total number of marriages increased markedly in these years. Were there a large number of soldiers in the locality some of whom married women camp followers and then moved on?

The rector, Dr. Nicholas Gibbon, who was a Royalist, was deprived of his living in 1644 and his replacement was, Thomas Kentish, "[a preaching minister](#)", who accepted the Directory of Worship introduced in 1646<sup>877</sup>. Robert Baker was vicar of Seal from 1608 until the beginning of the 1640s but had been succeeded by John Baker by 1644.

At the beginning of his ministry, in 1616, a parishioner had requested Robert Baker to "[make a goodly sermon](#)" at his burial so that he seems to have been a preaching vicar. John Baker was not evicted from Seal until 1650 when he was replaced by one of Cromwell's parsons. Did these changes have anything to do with the number of marriages and baptisms recorded in the two parishes?

# Indexes to History

The pages numbers are consecutive throughout all the chapters.

## General Index

page 965

There is no guarantee that all occurrences of a particular word have been indexed.

## Index of Places

page 996

If no location is given, the place will generally be in Sevenoaks although there may be some entries where the location is not known

In many cases, in order to be able to differentiate between different people with the same name, a number of databases have been set up allocating a number to each person. This number is prefixed with a letter:

e	East Peckhams and the other Peckhams (West and Great)				
h	Hadlow	i	Ightham	k	Kemsing
p	Penshurst	s	Sevenoaks	y	Leigh
#	Seal	\$	Shipbourne		
x	a number of other parishes				

When people appear in wills, their names may be followed by one or more letters:

b	bequest to	e	executor	f:	feoffee
g	guardian to children				
o	overseer	t	testator		
w	witness	wr	writer		

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