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## THE GEOGRAPHICAL PATTERN OF COACHING SERVICES IN KENT IN 1836

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The publication of Alan Bates' directory of stage coach services compiled for 1836 has provided historians and historical geographers with a valuable collection of raw data,<sup>1</sup> although it seems to have been surprisingly little used so far.<sup>2</sup> Of course, directory evidence has its limitations: practical details of daily working are not noted, nor is there any of the human detail, relevant to a social history of coaching, which is familiar from travellers' accounts and from the belletristic sources such as the novels of Charles Dickens. For all that, a good deal of information on the pattern of coaching may be gained, and Bates' compilation is used here to obtain a 'chronological slice', as it were, of coaching in Kent in its heyday. By 'Kent' is meant the whole county prior to the boundary change of 1888, whereby much of the north-west was lost to Greater London. The evidence is most effectively presented cartographically, and my text will for the most part be a commentary on the series of maps.

The great age of coaching was short-lived: for although coaching itself goes back to the seventeenth century, the great age began only after the Napoleonic Wars, reached a peak in the 1820s and '30s, and by the 1840s was 'disintegrating under pressure from the swiftly

<sup>1</sup> A. Bates, *Directory of Stage Coach Services 1836*, Newton Abbot, 1969.

<sup>2</sup> It has been used, along with other evidence (mostly from directories) in a series of papers by D.H. Kennett, 'The Geography of Coaching in early nineteenth-century Northamptonshire', *Northants. Past and Present*, v (1974), 107-20; 'The Pattern of Coaching in early nineteenth-century Norfolk', *Norfolk Archaeol.*, xxxvi, 355-72; 'Coaching Routes of the Cambridge Region, 1820-1850', *Proc. Cambridge Antiq. Soc.*, lxix (1978), 89-104. The approach of these valuable studies is different from that of the present paper, as are other local studies: 'The Coaching Age in Staffordshire', *Trans. North Staffs. Field Club*, lvi, (1921-2), 49-74; C. Noall, *A History of Cornish Mail and Stage Coaches*, Truro, 1963.

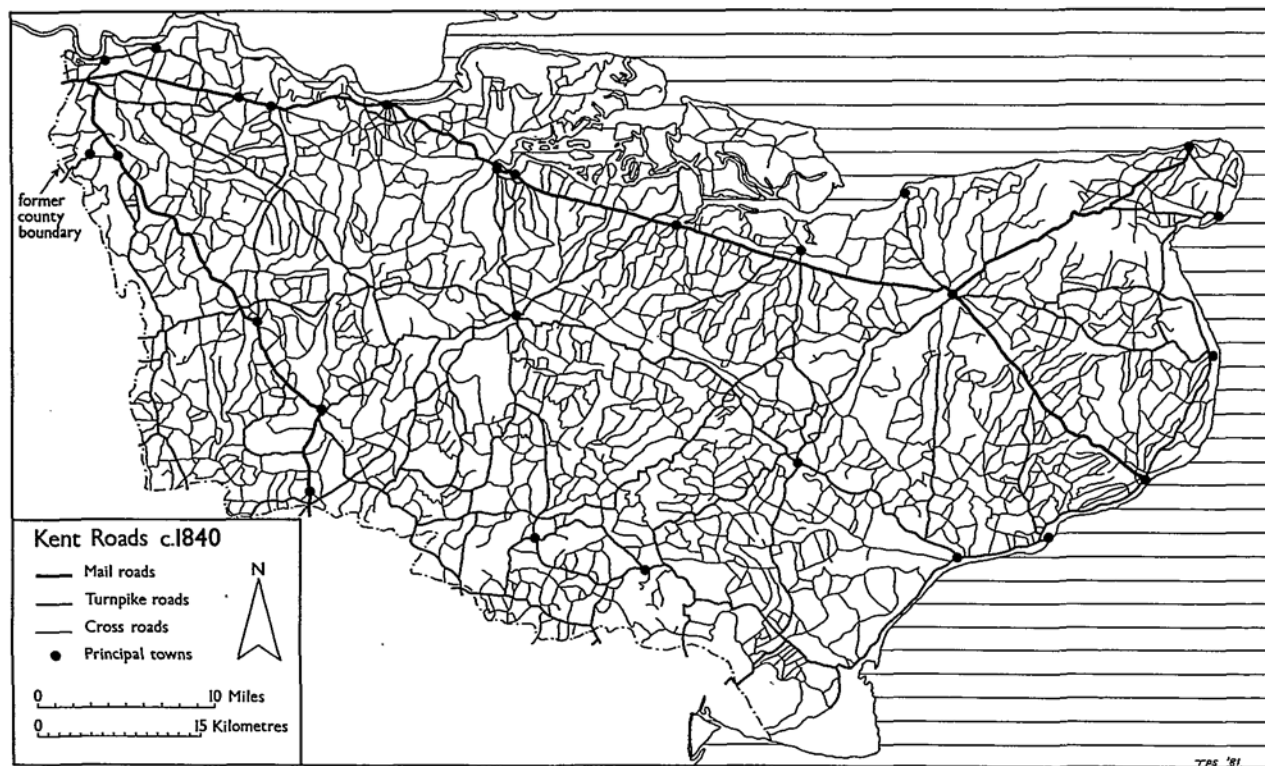


Fig. 1. Kent Roads in the first Half of the nineteenth Century.

spreading railways'.<sup>3</sup> It is for this reason that Bates chose 1836 for his directory, since 'in this year the business reached its peak' although 'the clouds of doom were well in sight'.<sup>4</sup> By this time a good network, focussed on London, had been established both by the Royal Mail and by private proprietors; supplementing this were a great many local services, sometimes running over the same routes as the long-distance coaches and sometimes infilling gaps left by the latter: so that, in 1836, there were few parts of the county without reasonable access to a coach service, even if not on every day of the week.

As a sort of visual propaedeutic to our examination of the situation in Kent, Fig. 1 shows the roads of the county at this time.<sup>5</sup> Many of the cross roads were no more than tracks, some of them terminating abruptly at streams or rivers or at parish or lathe boundaries.<sup>6</sup> It is clear, on the other hand, that local coaches worked over a few of these, which must therefore have been kept in reasonable repair even in the absence of turnpike trusts. More important, however, were the turnpiked roads, the tolls from which paid (or were intended to pay) for their maintenance. Turnpiking of roads began on a portion of the Great North Road in 1663,<sup>7</sup> developed rather slowly until the middle of the eighteenth century, and thereafter accelerated fairly rapidly. Although the turnpike trusts were not always assiduous in their duties, and passengers frequently complained (as passengers will), there can be little doubt that the innovation was an important one and still more that it was a *sine qua non* for the full development of coaching services.<sup>8</sup> In Kent,

<sup>3</sup> D. Mountfield, *The Coaching Age*, London, 1976, 11. This is poignantly illustrated in Henry Alken's chromolithograph of c. 1841-45, which shows a railway train passing the sad remains of an abandoned Midlands stage-coach: conveniently available in A. Briggs, *Iron Bridge to Crystal Palace: Impact and Images of the Industrial Revolution*, London, 1979, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Bates, *op. cit.*, Introduction (3rd unnumbered p. after title p.).

<sup>5</sup> This is traced from a map, bound with maps of all other English counties, in the writer's possession. It was published by Pigot and Co. and is undated, but may be assigned to c. 1840.

<sup>6</sup> Some impression of the condition of these roads may be gained by travelling the road to Harty Church in the Isle of Harty on Sheppey. Indeed, the church itself, which is lighted only by candles, is very evocative of the coaching and earlier ages.

<sup>7</sup> C. Taylor, *Roads and Tracks of Britain*, London, 1979, 155; *id.*, *The Cambridgeshire Landscape*, London, 1973, 228; L.M. Munby, *The Hertfordshire Landscape*, London, 1977, 205. The relevant Act is 15 Cha.2, c. 1 (1663).

<sup>8</sup> For a valuable assessment of the contribution of the turnpikes *vide* H.J. Dyos and D.H. Aldcroft, *British Transport: an economic Survey from the seventeenth century to the twentieth*, Harmondsworth, 1974 ed., 73 ff. For faults in the system *vide* Mountfield, *op. cit.*, 41-5.

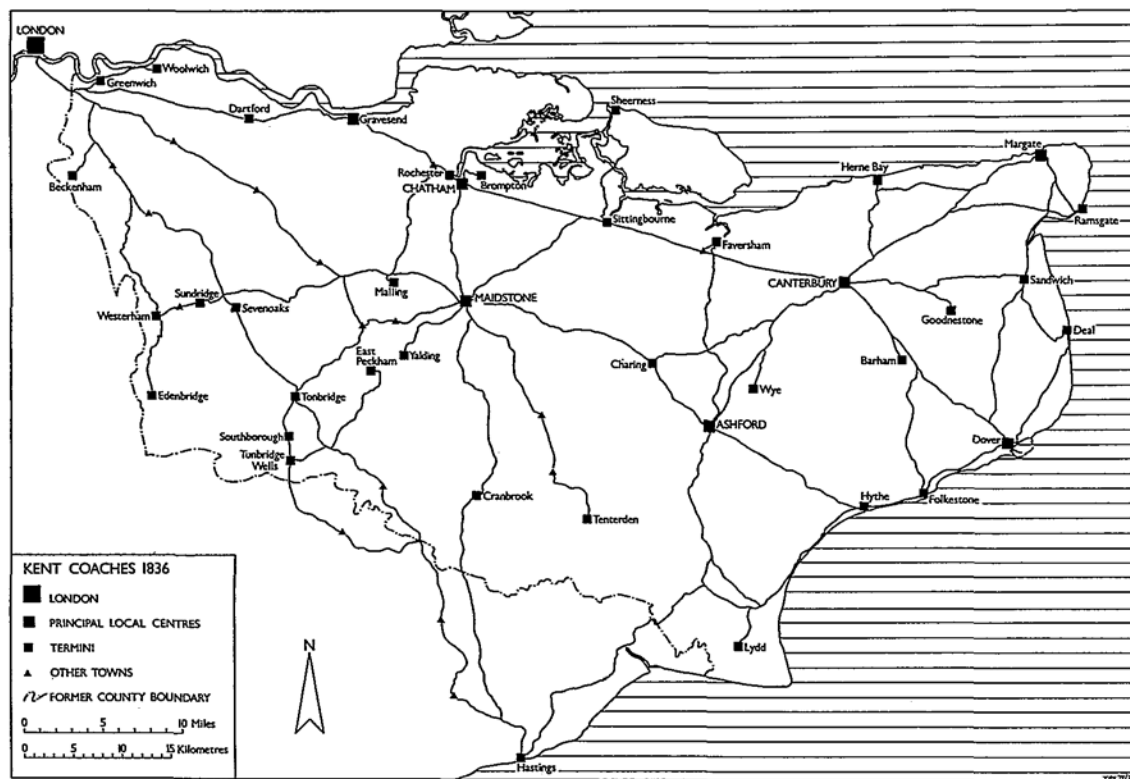


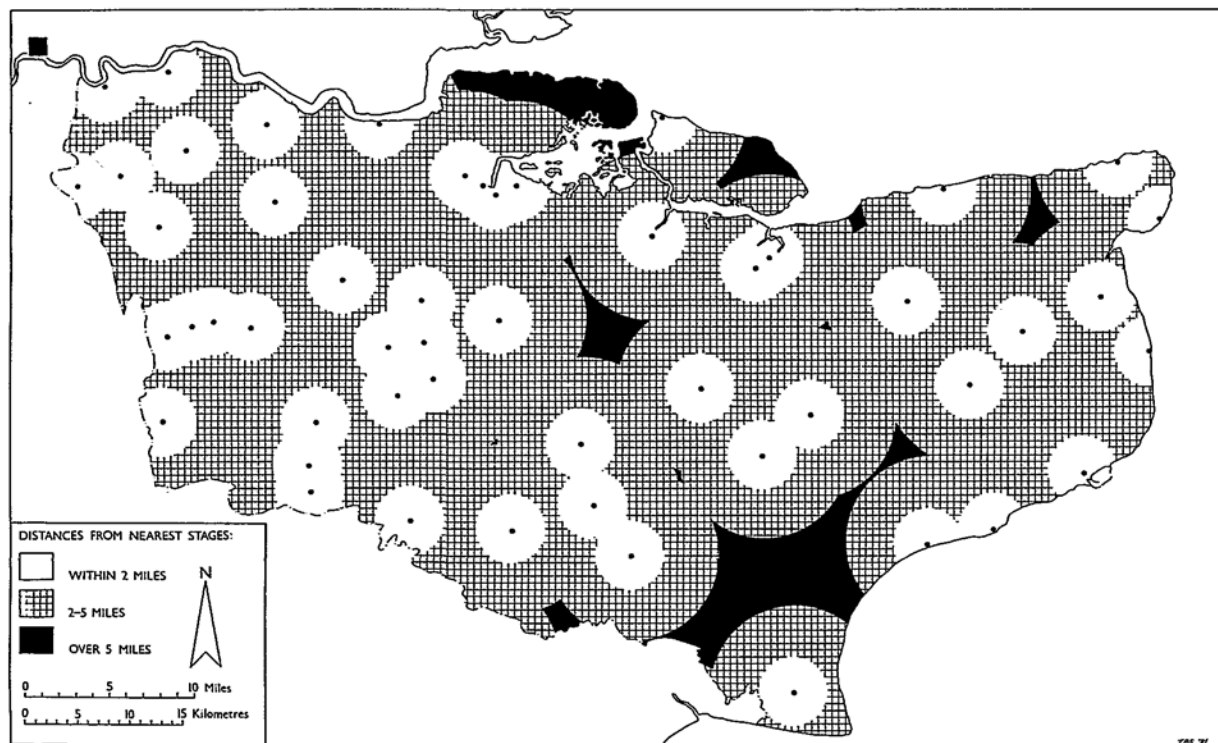
Fig. 2. Kent Coaching Routes in 1836.

turnpiking of roads began with an Act of 1709 for the road between Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells.<sup>9</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century the system was complete, and Fig. 1 shows how the roads then turn-piked formed a network criss-crossing the county, giving ready access to the riparian and coastal ports, and centring on two major foci: the county town of Maidstone and the cathedral city of Canterbury. In addition, Ashford and Tonbridge were subsidiary foci, as were the Medway Towns, although, of course, the latter had no routes going north. By this means a system was established which, if not perfect, was by general consent superior to that in neighbouring Sussex.<sup>10</sup> This nexus of roads, as we shall see shortly, formed the basis of the stage-coach service. As well as showing local foci, Fig. 1 also illustrates the importance of London, with three principal arteries radiating from the metropolis, one to Canterbury and thence to Dover and to Margate, one to Hythe, and one (of which only the Kent portion is shown on the map) to Hastings in Sussex. Of these, two were Royal Mail routes from the capital. The London-Dover road through the Medway Towns and Canterbury followed the line of the present A2 and the former Roman Watling Street, except that immediately east of Dartford it left the old Roman line and passed through Northfleet and Gravesend before resuming the old course at Strood – that is, it followed the line of the modern A226; by the end of the eighteenth century, and perhaps earlier, the section of Watling Street between Dartford and Strood had become no more than a footpath.<sup>11</sup> The other Royal Mail route was that through Sevenoaks, Tonbridge, and Tunbridge

<sup>9</sup> 8 Ann c. 20 (1709): E. Melling (ed.), *Kentish Sources: I. Some Roads and Bridges*, Maidstone, 1959, 27. The Kent turnpikes are discussed in F.W. Jessup, *Kent History illustrated*, Maidstone, 1966, 48 with map on p. 49, and in F.W. Jessup, *A History of Kent*, London and Chichester, 1974, 127–31 with map on p. 129. By 1709 Tunbridge Wells had become a major spa town, having been one of Kent's 'new towns' of the seventeenth century: cf. C.W. Chalklin, *Seventeenth-century Kent: a social and economic History*, London, 1965, 156–8.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Mountfield, *op. cit.*, 21–3. For the Sussex roads *vide* P. Brandon, *The Sussex Landscape*, London, 1974, 177–84.

<sup>11</sup> This was due to the pull of Gravesend itself. From before 1293 the Long Ferry from London had terminated at Gravesend, causing continental and east Kent travellers to make for the town: R.H. Hiscock, 'The Road between Dartford, Gravesend and Strood', *Arch. Cant.*, lxxxiii (1968), reprinted in M. Roake and J. Whyman (eds.), *Essays in Kentish History*, London, 1973, 255–73; this ref. to 255, 259. See also J. Whyman, 'Water Communications: Margate and Gravesend as coastal Resorts before 1840', *Southern History*, iii (1981), 112, 134, n. 7.



Wells to Hastings (the present A21).<sup>12</sup>

Fig. 2 shows all coaching routes in Kent in 1836. It will be clear that there is a similarity between this map and Fig. 1, with coaches operating over all the principal roads, with, in addition, a few operating over minor or cross roads. Once again Maidstone and Canterbury appear as major local foci. The former was on the important route to Hythe and was, of course, the county town. Canterbury, even more importantly, was on the London-Dover mail coach road as well as being ideally situated as a local centre for coaches to and from Herne Bay, Sandwich, and the Thanet coastal towns, notably Margate. By means of this route-system a good coverage of the county was achieved, as shown in Fig. 3. In using this map, it has to be remembered that not all local services operated daily, so that some country districts were more remote on some days than on others. Nevertheless, there were few parts of the county which were not within reasonable walking distance (5 miles) of a service: a small area between Maidstone and Sittingbourne, the northern part of the Hoo peninsula, part of north-east Sheppey, and a large part of the Romney Marsh area, as well as a few insignificant areas. These were largely areas of sparse population, as indeed they still are. All urban areas had a service, many of them direct to London as well as a choice of local routes.<sup>13</sup>

The London connection is brought out more particularly in Fig. 4, which isolates the long-distance routes and omits all local services.<sup>14</sup> Particularly well served, not surprisingly, were the towns within a 30-mile or so radius of the metropolis, with Bromley receiving no fewer than twenty-four coaches daily,<sup>15</sup> some of them terminating, some passing through. Not far behind were Dartford (twenty),

<sup>12</sup> The situation had not changed from the seventeenth century, when the London-Dover road was the most important, the London-Hastings (and Rye) road the second most important, and the London-Hythe road the least important of the three: *vide* Chalklin, *op. cit.*, 164-6 and map on p. 114.

<sup>13</sup> The widespread nature of the service must not mislead us into assuming an equally wide *social* availability: coach travel was far from cheap, and therefore only feasible for the relatively well off. The more sparsely populated areas mentioned in the text may have been shunned by the gentry because of a (not unfounded) fear of the 'ague': cf. W.D.L. Smith, 'Malaria and the Thames', *The Lancet*, 270, 1956, 433-6.

<sup>14</sup> The routes from London to Beckenham, Blackheath, Greenwich, and Woolwich are counted in Bates, *op. cit.*, 140-160 as local routes; because of the large numbers involved, and so to avoid overcrowding of the map, this has been followed here; however, Bromley, counted by Bates (p. 142) as a local route, is included in Fig. 4.

<sup>15</sup> 'Daily' here means 'each day Monday to Saturday'; Sunday services were operative on many routes.



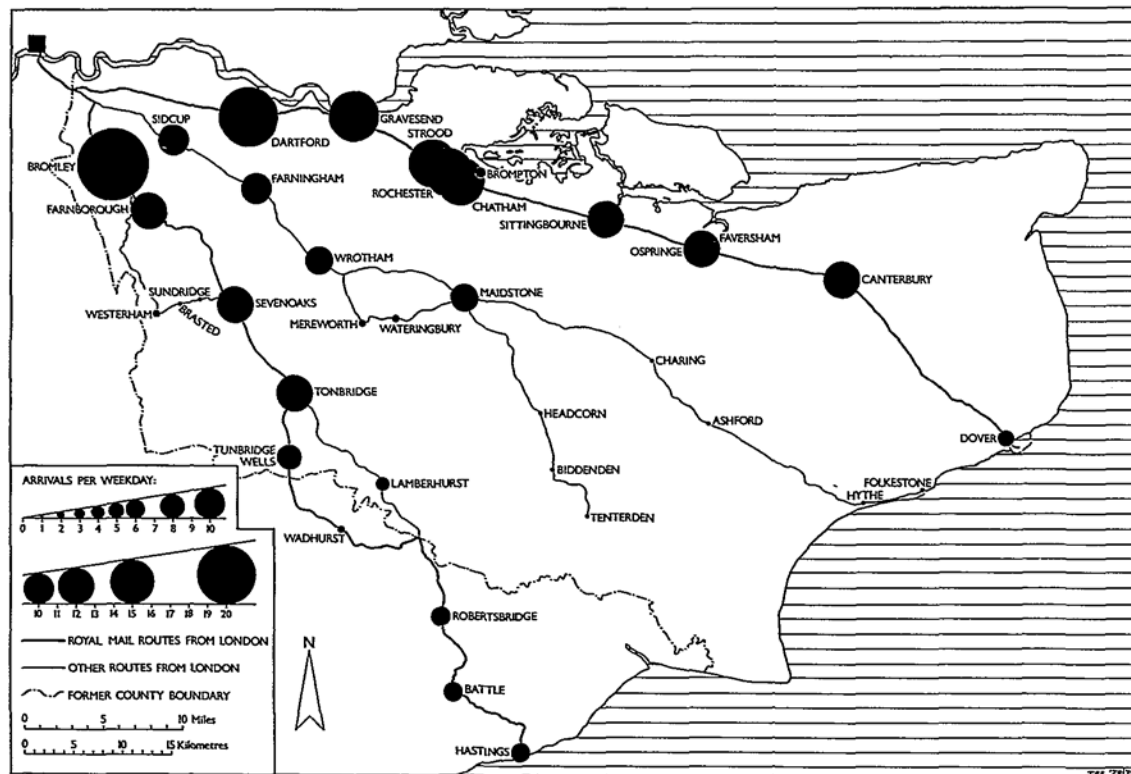


Fig. 4. Long Distance Services from London in 1836.

Gravesend (seventeen), and the Medway Towns (sixteen, with three terminating at Brompton, the rest continuing). Twelve coaches daily arrived at Sevenoaks and Tonbridge, nine at Maidstone. Intermediate stages at Farnborough, Sidcup, Farningham, and Wrotham were also well served.

Beyond this area of 'metropolitan pull', places were less well served, with Tenterden, Hythe, Folkestone and localities between receiving only one coach each daily from London. Tenterden was a small country town, whilst Hythe and even Folkestone at this period were of no great importance.<sup>16</sup> Places on the Royal Mail route to Hastings – especially the fashionable spa at Tunbridge Wells – were better served; four coaches by-passed Tunbridge Wells to call at Lamberhurst before rejoining the road to Hastings through Robertsbridge and Battle in Sussex. But the best served route was the Royal Mail through Sittingbourne, Ospringe, and Canterbury to Dover. Dover was the embarkation point for the packet ships which carried passengers as well as the mail and, because of its excellent harbour, developed more quickly than the seaside resort towns.<sup>17</sup> And yet many of the long-distance coaches did not travel the full distance, terminating at Canterbury, as is shown more clearly in Fig. 5. This indicates proportions of terminating and through traffic as well as daily arrivals for this important road. A quite small proportion went no further than Dartford, which was a stage on the main road, not a local centre in its own right. More proceeded to Gravesend, where only a few terminated, the rest continuing to the Medway Towns. All London coaches arriving at Strood and Rochester continued their journey, though some terminated at Chatham. Of those continuing, some went no further than Brompton, off the main route, whilst others continued through Sittingbourne and Ospringe, whence a few each day travelled the short distance to Faversham, where they terminated, and the rest continued to Canterbury. Like Dartford, both Sittingbourne and Ospringe/Faversham were more important as stages on the main route than as local centres of coaching. Well over half the coaches arriving at Canterbury ter-

<sup>16</sup> Folkestone's development was both as seaside resort and as rival to Dover as a cross-Channel port, and was notable only after the arrival of the railway in 1843. The population figures are: 1811 – 4,200; 1821 – 4,500; 1831 – 4,300 (a decrease); 1841 – 4,400; 1851 – 7,550: Jessup, *op. cit.* (1974), 146; that is, between 1841 and 1851 there was an increase of nearly 72 per cent.

<sup>17</sup> Jessup, *op. cit.* (1974), 144–5. For an earlier period cf. W. Minet, 'Extracts from the Letter-Book of a Dover Merchant, 1737–1741', *Arch. Cant.*, xxxii, (1917), reprinted in Roake and Whyman, *op. cit.*, 135–69.

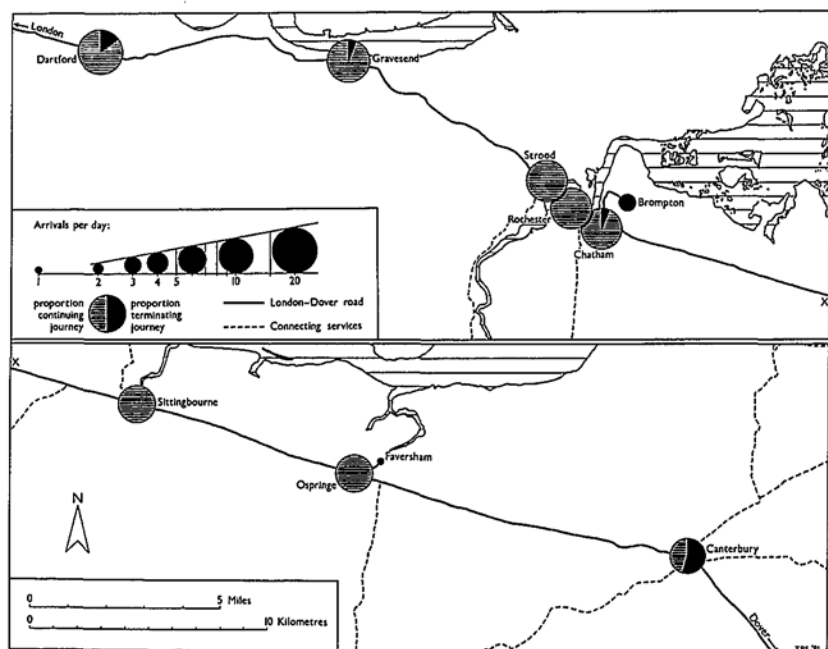


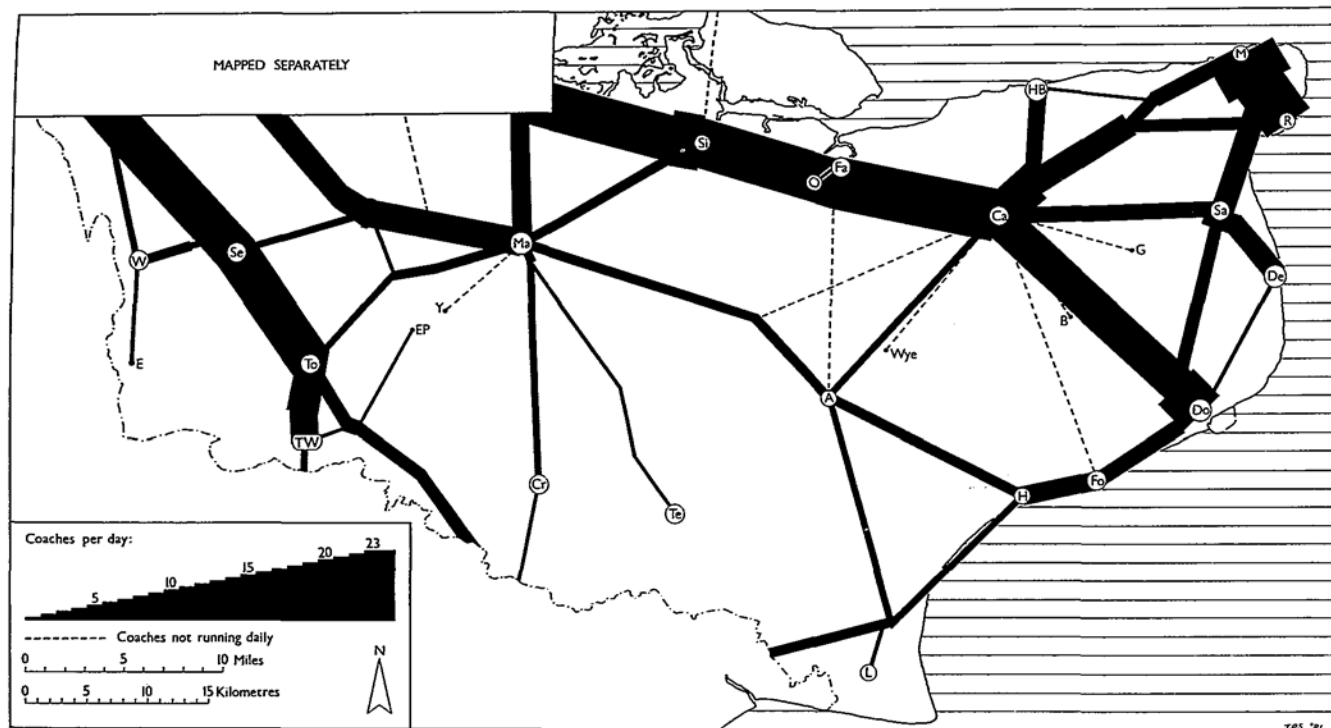
Fig. 5. The London-Canterbury-Dover Road: Coaching Services from London in 1836.

minated there, marking the importance of the city in general terms as well as a local centre for coaching; the rest continued to Dover.

Faversham, on this principal communication line, is somewhat anomalous. Its position as a minor estuarine port pulled it towards the river and its creeks, hence away from the main road.<sup>18</sup> Thus Ospringe, on the main road and less than a mile from the centre of Faversham, became the principal stopping point for the stage coaches.

The great importance of the London-Canterbury-Dover mail coach road is also brought out in Figs. 6 and 7, which show the

<sup>18</sup> For the earlier history of the port of Faversham *vide* J.H. Andrews, 'The Trade of the Port of Faversham, 1650-1750', in Roake and Whyman, *op. cit.*, 127-33.



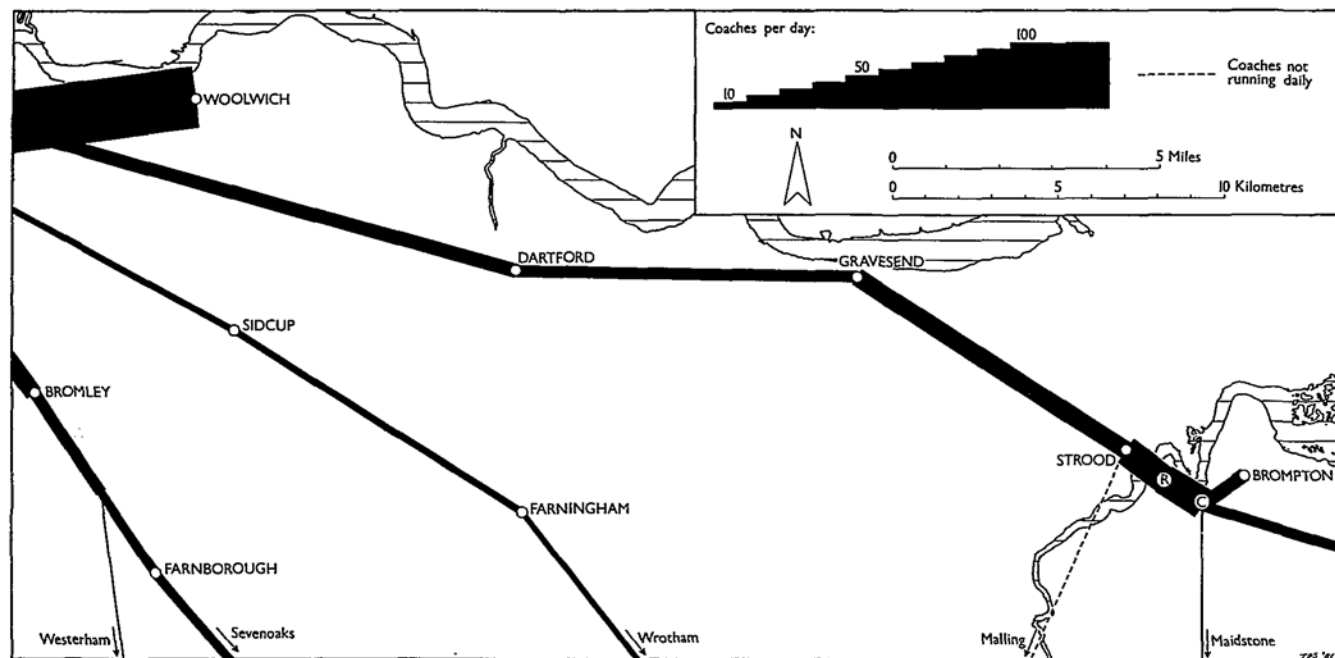


Fig. 7. Daily Services in north-west Kent, 1836. See also Fig. 6.

amount of daily traffic on all roads, including local services.<sup>19</sup> Greenwich is omitted from Fig. 6 since the vast number of coaches between that place and London – some three hundred daily! – is too large to be mapped. A large number of coaches also plied the roads between Greenwich/Blackheath and Woolwich (some ninety-four daily), a third of them being local services between the two places, the rest being London coaches. Beyond the metropolitan area the busiest section of the London–Dover road was between the individual Medway towns, which had a vigorous local traffic as well as being, collectively, a minor focus for routes from Malling (non-daily), Maidstone, and Brompton. No fewer than forty-six coaches passed between Rochester and Chatham, forty-three between Rochester and Strood. Between the metropolitan area and the Medway Towns there was a relatively high traffic, especially from London to Dartford and between Gravesend and the Medway Towns. Deeper into the Kentish countryside, Sittingbourne, though not a local centre of importance, was the connecting point for coaches to Sheerness on Sheppey (non-daily) and for Maidstone, so that a quite high traffic density resulted, particularly on the short stretch of road between the centre of Sittingbourne and Key Street to the west. A great many coaches continued to Canterbury, a smaller number to Dover. From Canterbury, too, a number of local coaches ran to the coast, including the Thanet towns. Within this whole area also there was a network of local services, linking all the main settlements one to another, all but Goodnestone having a daily service. Especially lively were the roads between Margate and Ramsgate and Sandwich, with Deal only slightly less well served. From Canterbury to Deal (*via* Sandwich) was a Royal Mail local route. At other times the road between Canterbury and Margate was also a Royal Mail local route,<sup>20</sup> though not in 1836.

The second most important route, as already indicated, was the Royal Mail route to Hastings. Twenty-six coaches reached Bromley each day, though ten of these continued no further. Of the rest, a few went on to Westerham, whence was a local route to Edenbridge, but most continued on the main road through Sevenoaks to Tonbridge. From here most continued on the Royal Mail route to

<sup>19</sup> On these maps (and in the accompanying paragraphs) a return journey is counted as *one* journey between places, as, of course, is a single journey. Thus, if one return journey and one single journey were made daily between X and Y, this is taken as a total of *two* (not three) journeys between X and Y.

<sup>20</sup> See map in R.C. and J.M. Anderson, *Quicksilver: a Hundred Years of Coaching, 1750–1850*, Newton Abbot, 1973, 10, which shows the mail routes in May 1807; cf. also Fig. 1.

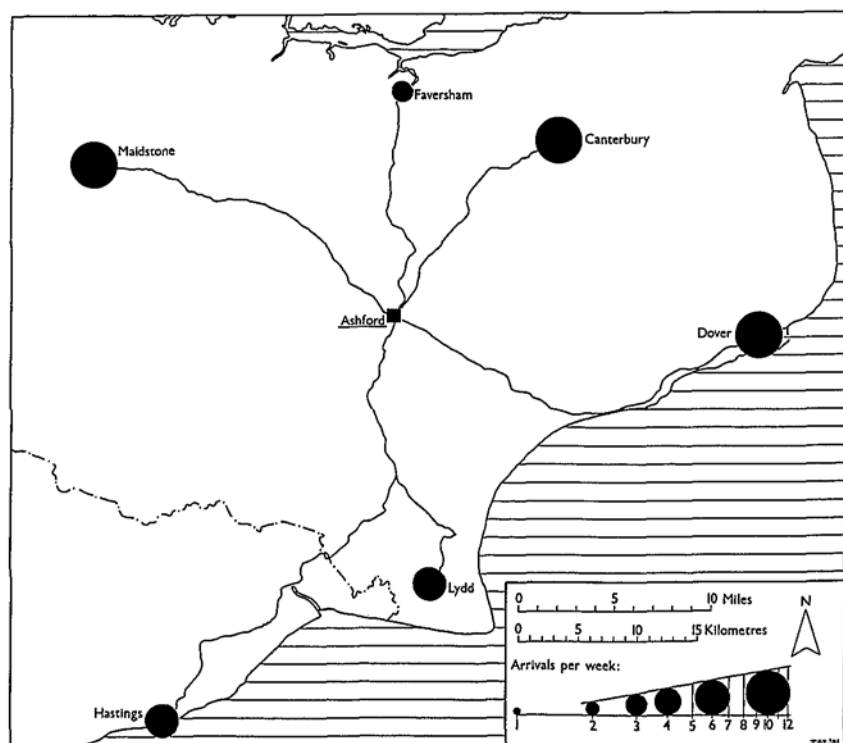


Fig. 8. Ashford as a local Centre, 1836.

Tunbridge Wells, where a great proportion terminated. A smaller number continued and were rejoined between Wadhurst and Robertsbridge by those which had branched off at Tonbridge to pass through Lamberhurst (cf. Fig. 4 and accompanying text).

Less frequent services occurred on the London–Maidstone–Ashford–Hythe route, although there was still a very good service as far as the county town. This was also a local focus, connected with the two Royal Mail routes at Tonbridge, the Medway Towns and elsewhere, and with other places such as Cranbrook and Tenterden which were not on the Royal Mail routes. Beyond Maidstone the service was much diminished. Only three coaches per day reached Ashford from the county town, although the former was once again

a local centre with a direct route through to Hythe and Folkestone, and with connections for Ospringe/Faversham, Canterbury, and Dover, Lydd, and Hastings. Thus, Fig. 7 brings out much more clearly than Fig. 2 the fact that that portion of the county east and south of Tunbridge Wells, Maidstone, Sittingbourne, Faversham, Canterbury, and Dover was much less well served than the regions to the west and north of that line. Within the area only Ashford was at all important as a local centre, although Hythe was passed through by a number of coaches *en route* to other destinations. Only a few terminated, or started, there.

The position of Ashford as a local centre is shown in Fig. 8, which, like all the succeeding maps of local services, omits the through-routes from London. The most frequent services were, expectedly, to the county town, to Canterbury and to Dover, with less frequent services to Hastings, Lydd, and Faversham. Of these services those to Faversham and Lydd were run by Ashford proprietors whilst the others were operated as return journeys from the towns shown on the map. All except Faversham had a daily (Monday-Saturday) service. The Ashford-Faversham coach ran only on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Clearly, Ashford owes its importance as a local centre to its position at the focus of a number of roads to important neighbouring towns and villages, and this in turn is due to its geographical position at the foot of the North Downs scarp and at the entrance to the Great Stour gap which gives direct access through the North Downs to Canterbury. This position makes it suitable not only as a local market but also as a Wealden outlet.

The local traffic out of Dover (Fig. 9) was much busier. Canterbury was excellently served, whilst Margate (*via* Sandwich), too, had a good service. Frequent coaches also journeyed to Hastings, Hythe, Deal, and Herne Bay (*via* Canterbury). Dover's importance as a port and its position at the end of the principal Kentish route from London are sufficient explanation of the town's importance as a local centre for the coaching business.

Margate as a local centre (Fig. 10) was much more limited, its coaches following the north and east coastal roads except on the journey inland to Canterbury. There was an extremely busy traffic to the nearby town of Ramsgate and very good services to Canterbury and Dover. Since the Deal and Dover coaches passed through Sandwich that town also was very well served, although only those coaches which terminated at Sandwich are indicated by the proportional circle on Fig. 10. By the beginning of the nineteenth century not only was Margate within a densely populated part of the county (Thanet), but to its minor importance as a port had been added a



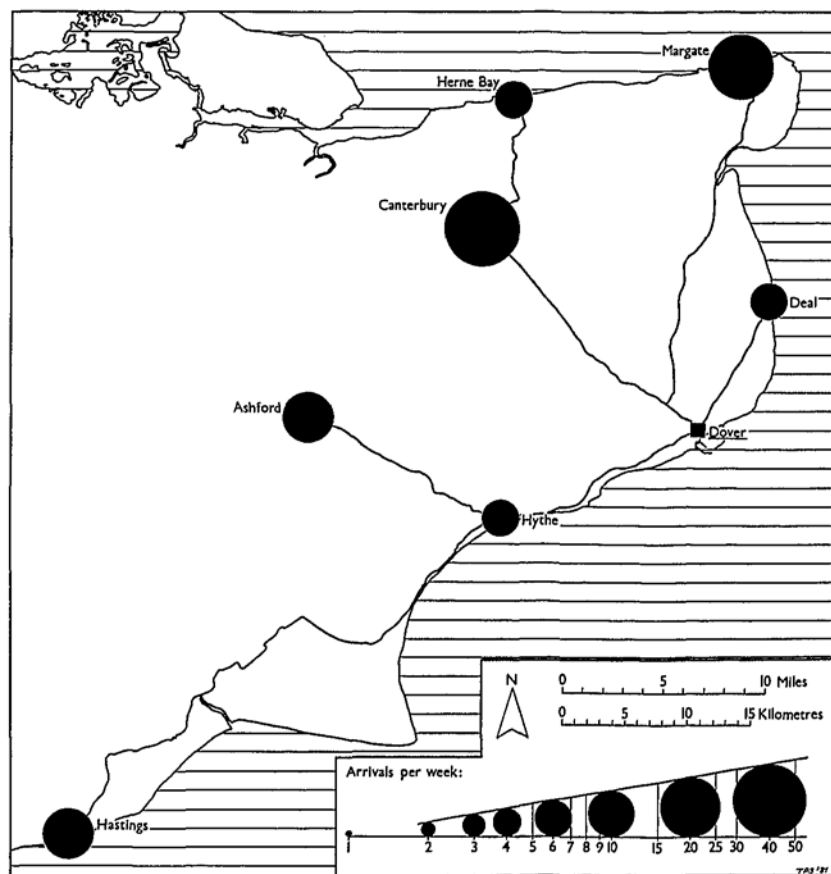


Fig. 9. Dover as a local Centre, 1836.

new function as a seaside resort town, along with Ramsgate.<sup>21</sup> Visitors to one of these towns frequently journeyed to the other. Furthermore, travellers by steamboat from London to Ramsgate preferred not to round the North Foreland, but to disembark at

<sup>21</sup> Jessup, *op. cit.* (1974), 143. Effectively, Margate was already a hundred years old as a seaside resort in 1836; by the 1830s, however, coaching services along the Dover Road and to Thanet were being threatened by steamboat competition.

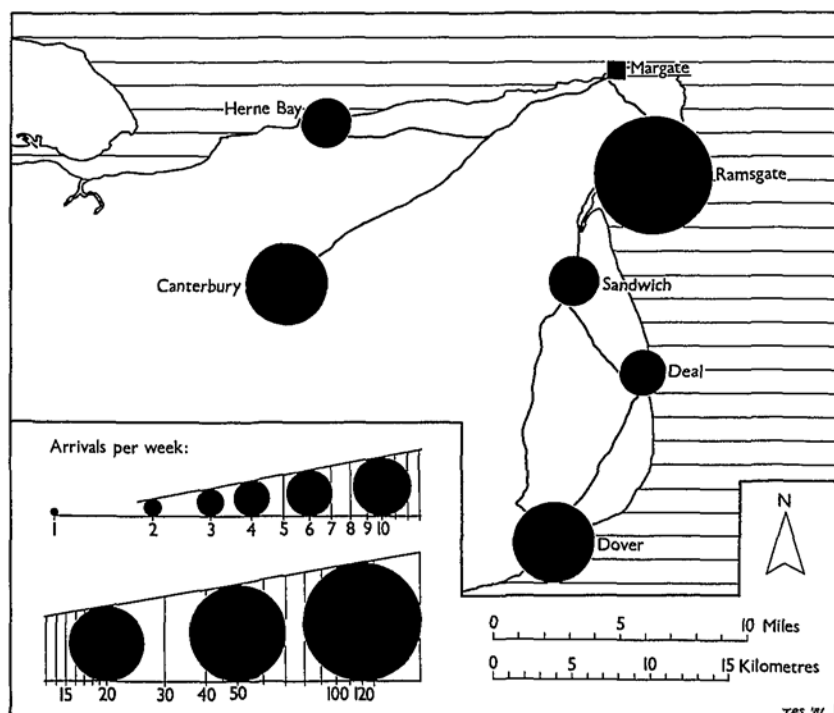


Fig. 10. Margate as a local Centre, 1836.

Margate and continue overland. The route between them could thus support a good local coaching service in 1836.

A much more inclusive service, and one spreading over a much wider area, was operated out of Canterbury (Fig. 11), the pre-eminent town of east Kent. Coaches thence reached to all the important coastal towns from Herne Bay round to Folkestone, as far east as Rochester and Maidstone, southwards to Ashford, and to a number of smaller places as well: Charing, Wye, Barham, and Goodnestone. The coastal towns were the best served, reflecting Canterbury's importance as an interchange for many of the London coaches. Folkestone's relative unimportance may be gauged by the small number of local coaches arriving from Canterbury (three per week) compared with the large numbers arriving at Herne Bay, Margate, and Ramsgate (twenty-eight each), and Deal (thirty-five) and Dover (forty-four). Ashford and Maidstone were the next best

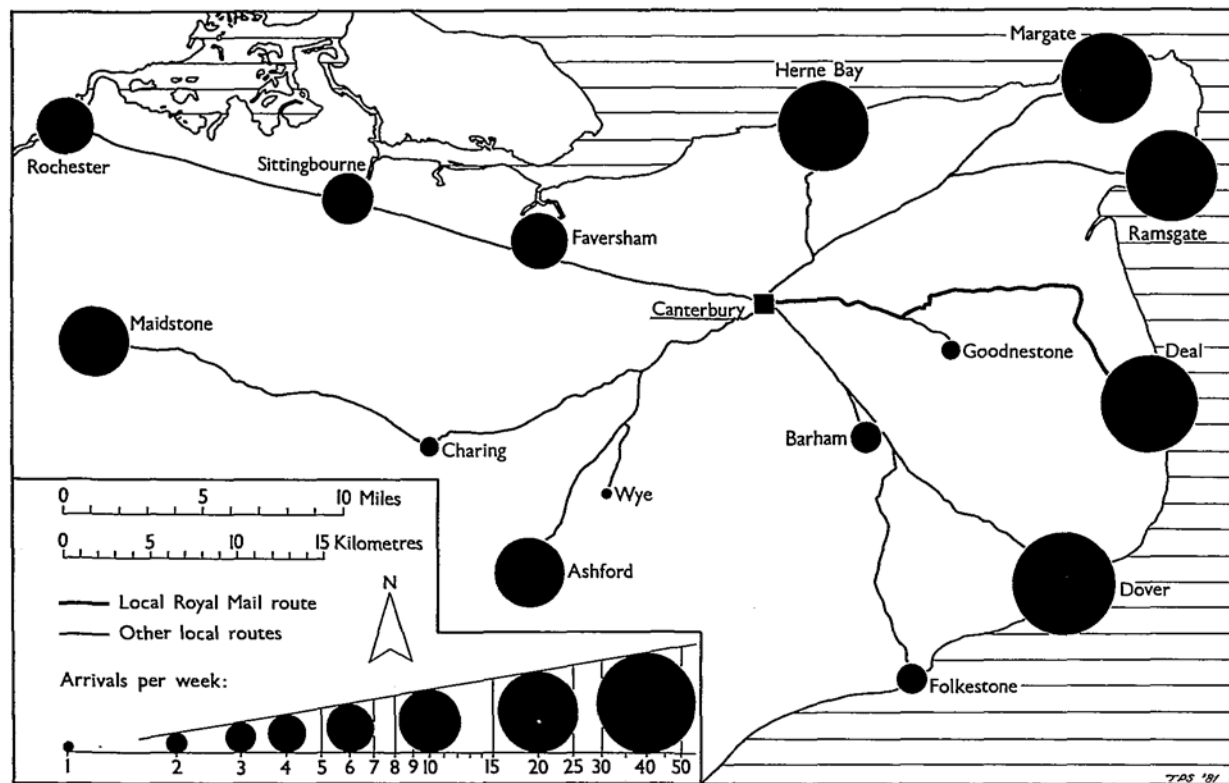


Fig. 11. Canterbury as a local Centre, 1836.

## THE PATTERN OF COACHING SERVICES

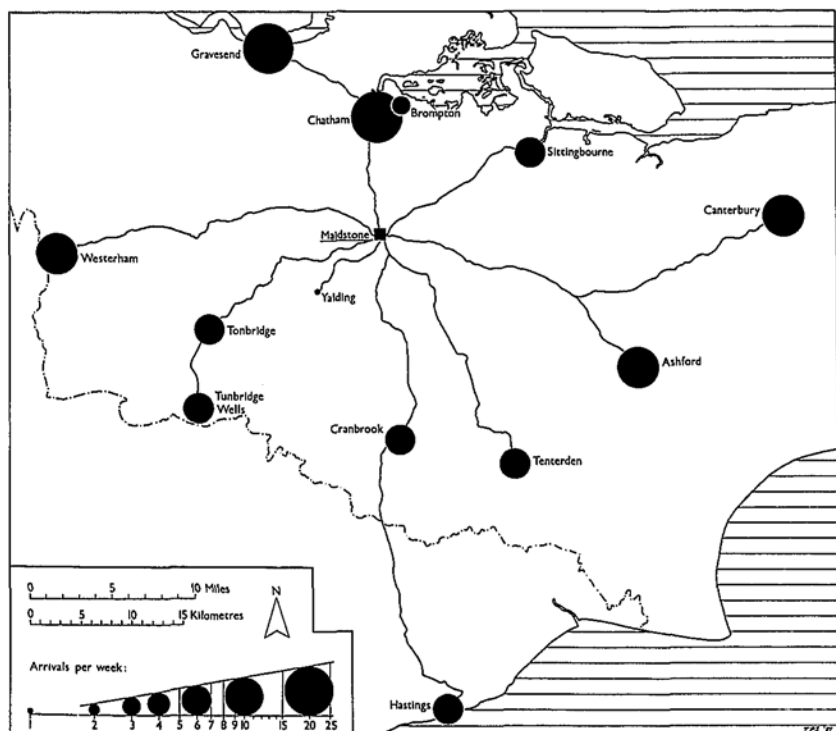


Fig. 12. Maidstone as a local Centre, 1836.

served, followed closely by Faversham, Sittingbourne, and Rochester (the first two augmented by the Rochester coach which passed through them).<sup>22</sup> The smaller and less important localities were served correspondingly more meagrely: none had a daily service (cf. Fig. 7).

The most extensive local service was that centred on Maidstone (Fig. 12), a reflection not only of that town's status as regional capital of west Kent and the principal Wealden outlet, but also of its proximity to the Medway Towns with their important military and

<sup>22</sup> Strictly speaking through *Ospringe* and Sittingbourne.

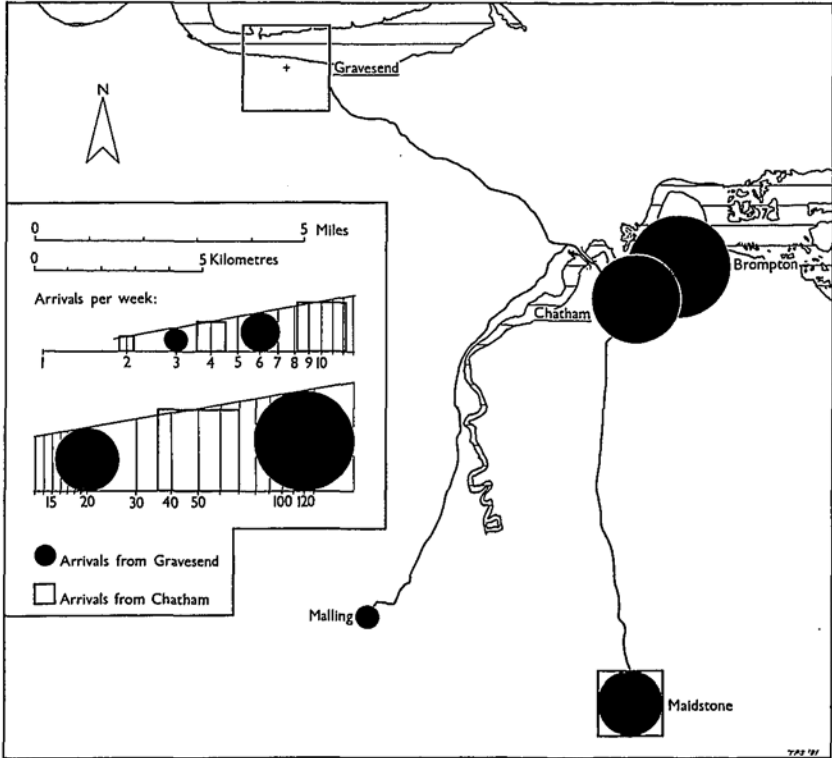


Fig. 13. The Medway Towns as local Centres, 1836.

naval installations.<sup>23</sup> Its geographical position at the first crossing of the River Medway above Rochester Bridge also made it a natural meeting-point for roads – hence for coach traffic – from all over the county. It was Chatham, together with Brompton (non-daily), that was best served by the Maidstone coaches, although nearly as many

<sup>23</sup> “‘The principal productions of these towns,” says Mr Pickwick, “appear to be soldiers, sailors, . . . officers, and dockyard men.”’ C. Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers*, 1836–7, ed. R.L. Patten, Harmondsworth, 1972, 83. On Maidstone as regional capital of west Kent (and Canterbury as regional capital of east Kent) vide A. Everitt, ‘Country, County and Town: Patterns of regional Evolution in England’, *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, xxix (1979), especially 89–107.

reached Gravesend with its important local and continental shipping. Canterbury, Ashford and Westerham, at the extremities of the area served, received frequent coaches from the county town, whilst Sittingbourne, Tenterden, Hastings, Cranbrook, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells were all well served. There was also a non-daily service to Yalding (cf. Fig. 7).

The importance of the Medway Towns (Fig. 13), so far as coaching is concerned, lay in their position on the main London–Dover road; although receiving a good deal of traffic – much of it from London, but with a good service, as we have just noted, from Maidstone – they were themselves of less importance as local centres. Indeed, Strood and Rochester were not local centres at all, whilst Chatham sent local coaches only to Gravesend and Maidstone: the former was better served, doubtless because of the importance of the shipping. Gravesend itself had a large number of coaches running to both Chatham and Brompton, a smaller number to Maidstone, and just a few (three per week) to Town Malling. The importance of Gravesend arose from the expanding steamboat traffic of the 1820s and '30s, many passengers continuing their journeys into Kent by road from Gravesend.

Although some of the local services – particularly in the vicinity of London – were run by the large London-based proprietors as extensions of their metropolitan-centred routes, others were run by truly local men, who provided valuable connections with the principal lines of communication. The centres from which these local proprietors operated are shown in Fig. 14. Two patterns may be discerned, superimposed, in this map. In the first place, and expectedly, the towns already distinguished as local centres were important bases for local operators: on the main London–Canterbury–Dover road were Gravesend, the Medway Towns, Canterbury and Dover itself, together with Margate on the main connecting route with Canterbury; on the more south-easterly route were Maidstone and Ashford. Secondly, places at some distance from London, and predominantly on or close to the estuarine or sea coasts, provided business for local proprietors, whose coaches connected either with the London traffic or with the local services from the more important centres. The principal local centres of this second category were: Sittingbourne (four proprietors), Herne Bay (six), Ramsgate (ten), and Deal (five), with Faversham (two) of minor importance. Away from the coast, Westerham had three local operators, Greenwich, Woolwich and Tunbridge Wells two each. Other places, as indicated on the map, provided further infill of services by supporting only one operator each. These, too, fall into two categories: in the Maidstone area or between Canterbury and

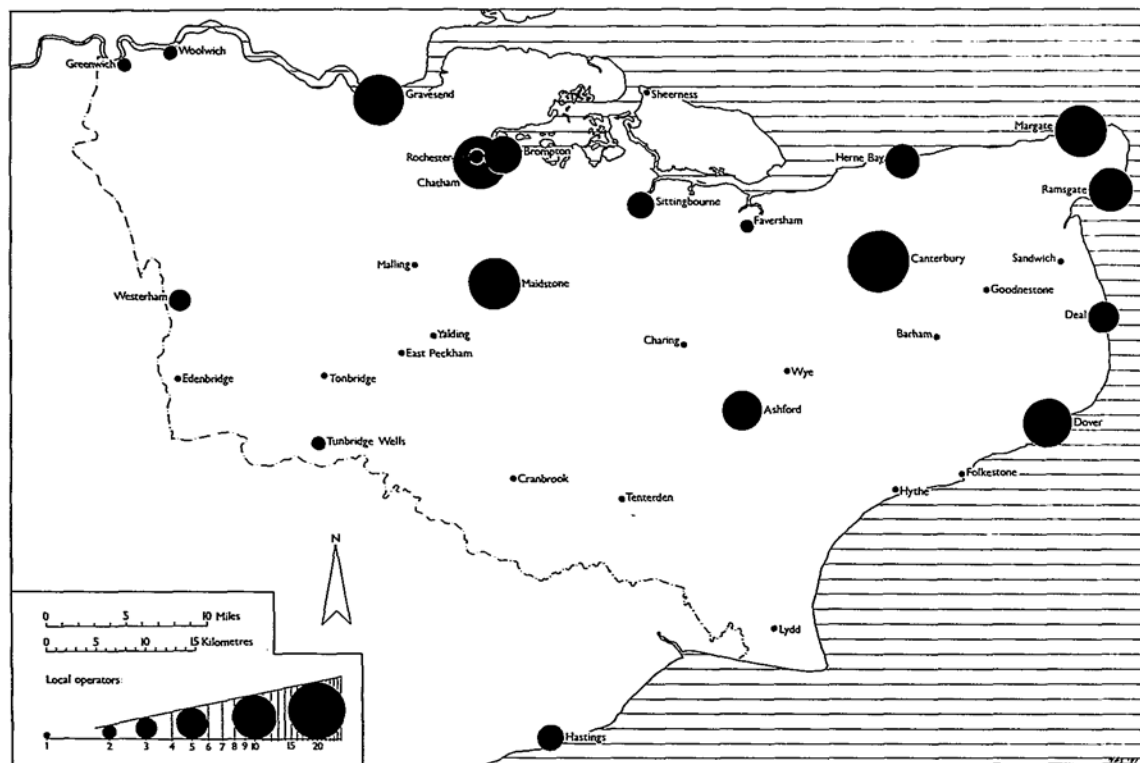


Fig. 14. Centres from which local Operators worked, 1836.

the north-east coastal towns the fairly busy trade was already pre-empted by the London-based proprietors or by local operators in the larger centres, and there was clearly but little scope for further stage-coach operation from lesser centres. The area closest to London – defined by a line joining Westerham, Tunbridge Wells, Maidstone, the Medway Towns and Gravesend – is a special case of this category: only on the periphery of this area were there local operators, and then only one each, at Edenbridge, Tonbridge, East Peckham, Yalding and Malling: the interior of the area was entirely empty of local operators, apart from those on the River Thames at Greenwich and Woolwich. Clearly the London-based services were fully adequate to the needs of the area. In the second category belong those regions where, as on Romney Marsh, the Hoo Peninsula and Sheerness, the population was so low, the settlement so sparse, that little in the way of local services was required: in particular, there were very few members of those classes well off enough to be able to travel by stage coach – never a cheap means of transport.

By this combination of metropolitan and local proprietors, working coaches to and from many parts of the county, a comprehensive coaching network existed in Kent in 1836. No part of the county was inhibitive far from a service – even though the more remote parts were not served on a daily basis – and there were specially good connections between the major towns, between these and the capital, and, *via* London, between Kent and the rest of the country. Indeed, it seems likely that some of the more important routes were actually overworked, with the various stage-coach services tending not just to complement but rather to reduplicate one another.



