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POPULATION AND FAMILY STRUCTURE IN THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY WEALD*

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In the past decade historians have become increasingly interested in the relationships between demographic movements on the one hand and agricultural and economic development on the other. Strong disagreement continues between those who regard demographic change as the fundamental explanation for changes in economic and social structures, and those who see population movements as consequences of changing social and economic arrangements. Yet, most writers now accept that – at least at a very general level – different types of economies in the past were accompanied by demographic (and inheritance) systems peculiar to each type. The experience of the Kentish Weald in the sixteenth century offers an opportunity to examine a number of theoretical arguments proposed by historians, in particular the debate over rural manufacturing in the pre-industrial era, what some historians have labelled ‘proto-industrialisation’.¹ The Weald as a whole is normally described as one of the ‘wood-pasture’ regions of England, both because of its extensive forests and wastes and because the emphasis of its agriculture was definitely pastoral rather than arable.² Such regions – and the Weald is no exception – were generally settled later than many other parts of the country, had non-existent or weak manorial-seigneurial structures and human settlement (by the end of the

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¹ See in general, Rab Houston and K.D.M. Snell, ‘Proto-industrialisation? Cottage Industry, social Change and industrial Revolution’, *Historical Journal*, xxvii (1984), and the works cited therein.

² (Ed.) Joan Thirsk, *The agrarian History of England and Wales*, iv, 1500–1640 (1967), 57–9, and C.W. Chalklin, *Seventeenth Century Kent* (1965), esp. ch. 5.

Middle Ages) was dispersed among numerous hamlets rather than concentrated in nuclear villages. Therefore, the first question to be answered should be, did the Weald as a whole have a peculiar demographic experience in the sixteenth century? Moving beyond this, the historian would like to know if those parts of the Weald which supported extensive rural manufacturing (e.g. woollen cloth-making and iron production) showed any demographic characteristics special to themselves. In this short essay, only the demographic side of these theoretical problems can be explored in detail. The reader will have to take on faith the author's description of the Wealden economy and of the geographical distribution of manufacturing within the Weald, subjects which will be examined in greater detail elsewhere.³ Suffice it to say that cloth-making in the sixteenth-century Weald was organized and pursued in a 'domestic' or putting-out system similar to that which obtained in the West Country broad-cloth areas.⁴ The Wealden broad-cloth industry is, in many particulars, an apt illustration of Joan Thirsk's model of the development of manufacturing in wood-pasture regions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁵

Two techniques are used in this essay to analyse population movements and family/household structure. First, aggregative methods have been applied to all the surviving parish registers for Kentish Wealden parishes to produce an estimate of the total population of the region in the 1560s as well as the trends in the numbers of baptisms and burials in the individual parishes. The estimates derived from vital registration can be compared with estimates based on the numbers of communicants or numbers of households (or both) given in the 1563 ecclesiastical survey. The latter, however, are only extant for parishes in Canterbury diocese and, therefore, leave out the western Weald, the area also with more missing registers and no bishop's transcripts.⁶ From such materials we can estimate the overall Wealden population, its general trends between the 1560s and about 1600, the existence of mortality crises, and the relative density of population in different parts of the Weald.

³ A larger work tentatively titled 'Kentish Wealden Society in the sixteenth Century', now in progress. Also cf. M. Zell, 'Wealth, Trades and Agriculture in the Elizabethan Weald' in (Eds.) Alec Detsicas and Nigel Yates, *Studies in modern Kentish History*, (Maidstone, 1983).

⁴ G.D. Ramsay, *The Wiltshire woollen Industry in the sixteenth and seventeenth Centuries* (2nd edn., 1965).

⁵ 'Industries in the Countryside' in (Ed.) F.J. Fisher, *Essays in the Social and Economic History of Tudor and Stuart England*, (1961).

⁶ See Appendix for details of parishes. 1563 survey: Brit. Lib. Harl. MS. 594 fo. 63 ff.

Then, to analyse population growth in more detail and to examine household structure, several sample parishes have been selected, both because they are well-documented and because they lie within the Wealden manufacturing area. The families of two parishes with reasonably accurate and full registers – Brenchley and Staplehurst – have been reconstructed to produce information on infant mortality, birth intervals, age at first marriage and geographical mobility and turnover. Data from the parish registers can be combined with household lists for just two parishes – Staplehurst and Cranbrook, – although the latter is based on communicant lists from the early seventeenth century. From these data some suggestions are possible about the numbers and distribution of resident servants, and on the persistence and turnover of households and individuals. Combining these various types of evidence we can suggest whether or not this region of intense rural industry had demographic characteristics dissimilar to those reported for England as a whole during this era.

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The boundaries of the Kentish Weald have always been a matter for debate. A number of large parishes (e.g. Sevenoaks and Westerham) lie partly in and partly without the Weald. For this study, I have chosen about forty parishes, wholly or mainly in the Weald, which account for about 20 per cent of the land area of Kent (taking the figures from early nineteenth-century parish measurements). The population of the county as a whole at this period can be estimated only very roughly, on the basis of the ecclesiastical surveys of 1569 and 1603. The latter survey covers the whole county and suggests a total of some 130,000, of whom between 60 and 65 per cent lived in Canterbury diocese.⁷ Applying that same proportion to the figures given in the 1569 survey (for Canterbury diocese only) and using the number of 'families' rather than the reported number of communicants (and a 4.75 multiplier for the number of persons per 'family') produces an estimate for the late 1560s of 80–85,000 for the county. Needless to say, these estimates are crude and can only suggest a range. But better estimates could probably not be constructed from parish register data for the whole county, even if they existed. Estimates of the county's population earlier in the sixteenth century would be even more uncertain since they could only be founded on the evidence of the parliamentary subsidy for 1523–25, which for a

⁷ 1569 Visitation returns: Bodleian Lib. Tanner MS. 240 fo. 29 ff. 1603 survey: Brit. Lib. Harl. MS. 280 fo. 157 ff.

number of Hundreds has not survived. In addition, the share of the adult population included in the subsidy is highly problematic. Nevertheless, a glance at the rolls shows that the central Wealden Hundreds (e.g. Cranbrook, Barclay and Barnfield) were already heavily populated and comparable to the most densely populated areas of north and east Kent.⁸

By the parish register era the Weald was relatively densely populated, although the population was far from evenly spread across the Weald from west to east. The 40-odd sample Wealden parishes contained upwards of 25,000 people in the 1560s, that is about 31 per cent of Kent's population in approximately a fifth of the county's area. The total has been reached by calculating the mean annual total of baptisms for all the parishes with surviving vital registration during the 1560s, and by assuming that the birth rate approximated 35 per thousand persons. Population estimates for a handful of parishes with no extant register have also been made, to produce the Wealden total of about 25,000.⁹ Of course, if the Weald were defined more loosely to include more parishes partially within the Weald, the total would be larger. It is worth recalling that the population of the whole shire grew from about 80,000 to near 130,000 between the late 1560s and 1603, an increase of over half in under forty years. It should be interesting to see if numbers in the Weald matched or surpassed the rapid rise in Kent's population as a whole.

The geographical distribution of population within the Weald can be tackled first. Comparative figures have been produced to give the number of persons per thousand acres for each parish, based mainly on the parish register estimates for the 1560s. Quite clearly, this measure of population density leaves a good deal to be desired. It takes no account of the topographical differences between one parish or district and another, nor the extent of privately-held woodland or enclosed parks and forests in particular parishes. Goudhurst had extensive woodland in this era, and much of the vast Tonbridge Lowy was unavailable for general settlement in the 1560s: thousands of acres were still enclosed within Postern, North and South Frith Parks. With such provisos in mind, one can look at the rough variations in Wealden population densities. The range is quite large, from as little as 72 persons per thousand acres (Tonbridge) to over 190 per thousand acres (Cranbrook). In the Kentish Weald as a whole (about 212,000 acres or 332 square miles or 860 sq. km.) the average density was about 117 persons per 1000 acres (or 75 per square mile or 29 per

⁸ Public Record Office E 179/125/324.

⁹ See Appendix for details of registers.

sq. km.). Aside from Woodchurch in the east, most of the parishes with relatively low population densities are in the western Weald: Tonbridge (72), Leigh (about 70), Chiddingstone (79), Brasted (84), Chevening (87), Cowden (79), Edenbridge (90), Sundridge (102), and Westerham (112). At the opposite extreme, the parishes with the highest densities are to be found in the central Weald, and most of them were clothing parishes: Cranbrook (192), Hawkhurst (180), Brenchley (154), Goudhurst (153), Biddenden (146) and Benenden (142). The only non-clothing parishes with relatively high densities were prosperous East Peckham (152), Pluckley (137) which had some cloth-making, and Tenterden (141) with its incorporated town and special privileges as a limb of the Cinque Ports. Parishes very near to populous cloth-making centres could have only average or below average population densities: Sandhurst (91), Halden (107) and Rolvenden (126). The only puzzles in the list are several central Wealden parishes which supported some cloth-making activity throughout the period and yet did not experience the high densities seen in their immediate neighbours: Marden (100), Staplehurst (110) and Frittenden (114). The most likely explanation for such anomalies is probably to be found in the relatively large size of farms in these parishes (especially in Marden and Staplehurst) and the greater degree of resistance to smallholder and cottager settlement by the larger landowners. The general picture is clear, notwithstanding the exceptions: high population densities in the parishes with rural industry (mostly High Weald parishes) and relatively lower densities in the predominantly agricultural parishes, especially those between Tonbridge and the Surrey border. The existence of iron-making in a given parish, by itself, made little difference to the population density (e.g. Tonbridge). Horsmonden, which supported iron-works as well as some rural cloth-making, still registered only an average population density (120).¹⁰ In the course of the seventeenth century this stark contrast between a densely populated district centring on Cranbrook and a much more lightly settled region in the south-western district of the county would become considerably lessened, in part because many areas in the western Weald were opened up to more intensive settlement for the first time, but also because the Wealden broad-cloth industry slowly petered out.¹¹

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¹⁰ Cf. map (fig. 38) in A.R.H. Baker, 'The Field Systems of Kent', University of London Ph.D. thesis (1963).

¹¹ See C.W. Chalklin, 'The rural Economy of a Kentish Wealden Parish, 1650-1750', *Agricultural History Review*, x (1962) and his *Seventeenth Century Kent*.

Throughout the Elizabethan period almost all Kentish Wealden parishes registered a surplus of baptisms over burials. Notwithstanding deficient registration in a few parishes and the loss of registers in a handful of others, the general trend is clear. After some difficult years in the 1560s, the next two decades saw substantial population growth, and even in the difficult 1590s – a period of poor harvests, rapid inflation and occasional epidemics – most parishes still recorded a clear surplus of christenings over burials. From the very few parishes with registers surviving from the 1540s, there is also an indication of substantial expansion in that decade and most of the next. Both Biddenden and Staplehurst (the first predominantly, and the second partly, cloth-making parishes) registered mean annual baptism totals in the 1540s as high or higher than during several five or ten year periods in Elizabeth's reign. Growth was interrupted, however, by the only widespread mortality crisis of the entire sixteenth century, the influenza outbreaks of 1557 to 1559. Its severity was recorded in almost all the extant registers which cover the 1550s. In general, therefore, so far as can be gauged from aggregative methods, the national demographic trends outlined by Wrigley and Schofield are mirrored quite closely in the Kentish Weald. The crucial fact is that the Weald – like many other rural areas in England – was producing a 'net' population increase from at least the 1540s.¹² If one arranges the baptism and burial returns into five year periods beginning about 1560 (the date by which most of the extant registers have begun), the net 'surplus' or 'deficit' population in each parish for every quinquennium can be extracted for comparison. The calculation obviously ignores migration, which, as we shall argue later, is crucial to any overall conclusions about the population of the Weald and of Kent as a whole. But, for the moment, it is an important step to examine the figures produced by counting christenings and burials alone. Only one parish for which there is reasonably accurate vital registration produced a net 'deficit' over the years 1560 to 1600: the partially urban Tenterden. Between 1544 and 1556, there was a net 'deficit' of 85, in a period when most other areas probably saw considerable population growth. In the short crisis of 1557–59, there was a further net 'deficit' of 111, and the succeeding decade also showed a surplus of burials over baptisms. Only two decades produced net 'surpluses', the 1570s and the 1590s, while the decade between recorded a very small deficit. Over the whole period 1544 to 1601, there was a net 'natural decrease' in Tenterden's population,

¹² E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541–1871: A Reconstruction* (1981), 207–212.

which was only offset by immigration from the nearby 'net natural increase' areas. A few other Wealden parishes recorded little or no growth (from natural increase) in the 1560s (Bethersden, Halden, Headcorn, Rolvenden and Smarden), but they were not predominantly clothing parishes. The west Weald parishes with extant registers, as well as all the mid-Weald and clothing parishes, all recorded net 'increases' in the 1560s as in all the remaining decades of the century. *All* parishes (except Tenterden) showed net 'surpluses' in the 1570s through the 1590s, although there was a definite region of only minimal natural increase, including of course, Tenterden, but also represented by Halden and Rolvenden. Neighbouring Woodchurch probably also saw little growth, but the registers are too patchy to be very definite. A number of parishes, on the other hand, recorded major surpluses of baptisms over burials throughout the Elizabethan period: Hawkhurst (net 'surplus' of about 675), Goudhurst (about 700), Brenchley (about 740, although the burial figures are suspiciously low), Penshurst (about 350), Staplehurst (about 380), Benenden (about 470), Marden (about 340), Biddenden (about 450), Pembury (about 350) and Cranbrook (about 1,070). But for the absence of figures for the large parish of Tonbridge (due to defective recording of baptisms) one could mark out a large region of the Kentish Weald from Penshurst in the west to Benenden in the east which was producing a large and fairly constant net natural increase. Tonbridge, too, was probably beginning to grow in this period, although its main expansion would come only after 1600.

The Weald in general, and the central Weald area especially, should on the above figures have grown significantly in the latter half of the sixteenth century. The net 'surpluses' of the four decades from 1560 to 1600 in many of the parishes amounted to about half their *total* populations of the 1560s (e.g. Benenden, Biddenden, Brenchley, Cranbrook, Goudhurst, Hawkhurst, Marden, Pembury, Staplehurst). However, except for Cranbrook, the average annual numbers of baptisms in the 1590s were no higher or even less than in the 1560s. Unfortunately, there are no detailed parochial figures in the 1603 ecclesiastical survey (comparable to those in 1563 and 1569) against which we could test our own estimates of total population for 1600 based on parish register data. But using what evidence is available there are no grounds to suggest that the Wealden population grew at the same rate as that of Kent in general (about 52 per cent between 1560s and 1603). Several explanations present themselves to explain the apparent discrepancy between rather large 'net natural increases' and the rather low mean annual number of baptisms in the 1590s. First, the sizeable 'natural increases' of the 1570s and 1580s had not yet made an impact on total numbers before

1600 or 1620 (but then what of the probable growth of the 1540s and 1550s?).¹³ Secondly, that the relatively low average annual baptism figures for the 1590s are a reflection of the difficulties of family formation in that depressing decade. Thirdly, that infant mortality was so high that the effect of the surplus baptisms was rapidly nullified. And finally, there is the possibility that substantial numbers of Wealden residents were emigrating to the metropolis and to other parts of Kent. A certain amount of migration from rural areas to towns within the Weald was also undoubtedly taking place, without which it would be difficult to explain how Tenterden's and especially Cranbrook's population continued to increase. The third explanation, high infant mortality, appears to be a non-starter,¹⁴ but all the others remain possible although impossible to place in order of priority.¹⁵

What about crisis mortality? Could occasional disastrous outbreaks of disease or famine have wiped out most of the net 'natural increase' shown in the parish registers? The answer is almost certainly no. The only widespread mortality crisis, during which normal burial figures were doubled or trebled occurred in 1557-59, *before* the substantial net 'surpluses' of the Elizabethan period. In all the extant registers the highest burial figures occurred in one or two years between 1557 and 1559 (Benenden, Edenbridge, Hadlow, Horsmonden, East Peckham, Tenterden, Tonbridge and Woodchurch). In the Elizabethan decades, when most parishes are represented by full registers, there is a scattering of 'crisis' years (in which burials doubled compared to the average of the preceding five years) visible in one or two parishes, but nothing again approaching the crisis of the

¹³ If most of the additional people born in the 1560s-1580s has remained in their parishes, there should have been a correspondingly large increase in baptisms by the first decade of the seventeenth century. I extracted the mean annual number of baptisms in the period 1601-10 for 20 parishes and compared them to the means of each parish during the 1560s. In 13 cases (Benenden, Biddenden, Brenchley, Cranbrook, Goudhurst, Hadlow, Headcorn, Lamberhurst, East Peckham, Penshurst, Sandhurst, Sundridge and Tenterden) baptisms were higher than in the 1560s, but significantly higher (over 20 per cent) in only four: Cranbrook (38%), Goudhurst (23%), Lamberhurst (35%) and Penshurst (27%). There was no change between the 1560s and the 1600s in three parishes (Brasted, Pluckley, Staplehurst), and absolute decreases, although small, in four others (Chevening, Halden, Pembury and Rolvenden). As a whole, the mean annual baptism total of the decade 1601-10 was just 12 per cent higher than the total of these parishes of the 1560s: a much smaller rise than the 'net natural increase' might suggest.

¹⁴ See below, 00.

¹⁵ Note V.H.T. Skipp's suggestion of emigration from Arden, Warwickshire, also a region of high natural increase: 'Change in the Forest of Arden, 1530-1649' in (Ed.) Joan Thirsk *Land, Church and People*, (Reading, 1970), 108.

late 1550s. In Staplehurst burials in 1591/92 were about double that of the recent past; in Brenchley burials doubled in 1586/7; and the years 1565/6 and 1566/7 were bad years in two or three parishes. However, the only substantial plague outbreak of the later sixteenth century was that which struck Cranbrook in 1597–98. During the Old Style calendar year 1597 there were 224 burials recorded of which 180 were listed as plague victims, in all about 10 per cent of the parish population. Occasional plague burials are recorded in a few of the region's other parishes, but the Weald seems generally to have escaped the major outbreaks seen in Elizabethan and early Stuart London and several other towns (including Maidstone) in this era. Certainly, the levels of mortality in most Wealden parishes were higher, on average, than during the previous two decades. Most parishes recorded one or two years of heightened burials in that decade, although in some it occurred in the early 1590s rather than during 1594–97, the years of national harvest failure and dearth. There is no evidence of famine in the Kentish Weald, although many registers note the burials of a handful of 'poor travelling men' or women and of demobilised soldiers during the 1590s.

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To put some flesh on the bare bones of numbers and trends – and to explain them – it is useful to analyse the experience of a few parishes in greater detail. Those selected are not necessarily the ideal choices from every point of view; but the state of the parish registers and the availability of other evidence dictated that Brenchley, Cranbrook and Staplehurst should be chosen. Biddenden, too, could have been used, but that would have added another clothing parish to the two already included. Ideally, a west Weald parish should have been analysed in the same detail, but those parishes were either not populous enough to produce meaningful statistics or their registers were deficient. Also, there are no surviving census-type records for that area, which could compare with the household communicant lists for Cranbrook and Staplehurst. Therefore, much of what follows will be of particular interest to the study of the demographic and family experience of wood-pasture regions which developed rural industry.

The three parishes varied in size, population and the extent to which they were centres of rural manufacturing. Cranbrook was the largest of the three (10,400 acres), the most populous (at least 2,000 in the 1560s and probably 2,500 to 2,700 in the 1590s) and the most densely populated (192 persons per thousand acres in the 1560s). Cranbrook's residents lived in at least eight separate hamlets in

addition to 'Cranbrook Town', which, though unincorporated, was the only sizeable market town between Tonbridge and Tenterden and Ashford, with an urban population of perhaps a thousand in the 1560s. Cranbrook was the centre of the Wealden broad-cloth industry, both in terms of cloth production and of the economic primacy of its clothiers and merchants. Clothmaking was carried on in the town and in the surrounding hamlets. The parish supported a wide variety of occupations (as shown in the probate inventories of its residents), several inns, and it was – outside of Tenterden – the most important market in the Kentish Weald. The parish contained the seats of at least three substantial gentry families (Baker, Hendley and Roberts), but their landholdings only made up a substantial minority of land in the parish. Even with the terrible toll of the 1597–98 plague outbreak, Cranbrook recorded a net 'surplus' of baptisms over burials in every decade from the 1560s (when it was only about 85) to the 1590s. The most substantial surpluses were in the 1570s (about 300) and the 1580s (about 560). Cranbrook's register, although apparently accurate, is not suitable for reconstitution. For much of the late sixteenth century, the clerks failed to record the full names of fathers in the baptism register. Thus, Cranbrook is mainly useful to this study for its overall statistics and the information contained in an almost unique communicant register or rate book, which is organised by households and divided into the several hamlets, with annual lists between 1608 and 1612. It is possible from the lists to compare the household sizes and structure and the distribution of servants within households with that of the next parish, Staplehurst. Information on short term mobility and persistence can also be gained from the communicant lists.

Staplehurst was the smallest of the three parishes (5,900 acres), the least populous (about 650 in 1560s) and the least densely populated (about 110 per thousand acres). There was some cloth-making in Staplehurst, but it does not seem to have been so prominent as it was in Cranbrook. There was no dominant aristocratic landowner, although one gentry family resided and held land in the parish. Its agriculture was prosperous and it had no significant urban centre. Like Cranbrook, its people lived in a number of settlements, but we have no evidence about their relative sizes. The Staplehurst probate inventories and wills show the conventional spread of rural occupations plus one draper, a few tanners (common in most Wealden parishes) and a number of weavers and clothiers. By the standards of some other parts of Kent, it was a wealthy parish, lacking only the top layer of rich men to be found only in Cranbrook. Staplehurst's register begins in 1539 and, apart from a frustrating gap in 1558–59, is complete and usually records fathers' full names. Staplehurst

produced net increases in population of over a hundred in the 1560s, 1570s and 1580s, with a reduced net 'surplus' in the 1590s. Staplehurst's families have been reconstructed as far as they can, given the high degree of personal mobility, and these data can be related to an almost perfect household communicant list compiled in late 1563 and early 1564. The vital data, generated by the reconstitution of Staplehurst's families can be compared with equivalent figures and trends from our third parish, Brenchley.

Brenchley was a large parish (7,800 acres), relatively populous (about 1,200 in the 1560s) and one of the more densely populated (154 persons per thousand acres). It, too, had no significant urban core, its population was involved in both agriculture and cloth-making, but its clothiers were mainly much smaller operators than many of those in Cranbrook. There were no major resident gentry families. Being in Rochester diocese, there are no surviving probate inventories, so we are ill-informed about Brenchley's occupational structure. However, its parish register is apparently accurate and full enough to reconstruct families in the Elizabethan period. According to the register, Brenchley produced a considerable and steady net increase in population in all decades between 1560 and 1600. There must be some doubt about the size of these surpluses because the ratio of baptisms to burials is suspiciously high. Undoubtedly, there was a surplus but it may have been less than the register suggests due to inadequate recording of burials.

The accompanying graphs illustrate the raw annual totals of christenings and burials in the three parishes, showing at a glance the gap between baptisms and burials that was normal throughout most of the Weald. Certain other measures of family formation are illustrated in the tables that follow. Age at first marriage was relatively low in both parishes. The figures may be somewhat lower than reality because they include data taken from the early years of the registers and, thus, miss the baptisms of some who married at a relatively late age during the early decades of registration (and therefore are not included in the figures). There was some inter-registration between Brenchley and its smaller neighbour, Horsmonden, and the families in both were reconstructed. There remains one crucial variable which cannot be obtained from such parish registers: the percentage of young men and women who failed to marry. On purely theoretical grounds, the answer might be that the number of adults in the Weald who never married was extremely small, because of the existence of a variety of employment prospects, a fluid market in small parcels of farmland both to rent and to purchase and the normal practice of partible inheritance among most landholders, except the gentry. But we cannot demonstrate that this was the case.

Nevertheless, if the age at which women married is a crucial determinant of fertility, and therefore of demographic patterns – as Wrigley and Schofield argue – then the relatively low ages seen in these sample Wealden parishes help to explain the substantial net increases recorded in so many parishes.

Illegitimate births did not contribute measurably to the growth of population in the Elizabethan Weald, if the recording of ‘bastard’ in the parish registers can be trusted. Some registers note so few illegitimate christenings that they cannot be taken as accurate evidence. Those registers which appear to list regularly the baptisms of bastards show that illegitimacy ratios were fairly low in the period 1550 to 1600. In Brenchley, for example, there were just 36 illegitimate baptisms during 1560–1600, or 2.2 per cent of all infants baptised. There the share of bastards was highest in the 1570s (2.7 per cent) and lowest in the 1590s (1.8 per cent). Likewise in Cranbrook, the number of illegitimate baptisms remained relatively small in the sixteenth century, although it was growing in the 1590s (unless the clerks were simply becoming more candid). The Cranbrook register notes a big jump in base births in the decade 1601 to 1610, as does that of Goudhurst:

Cranbrook, 1591–1600:	13 illegitimate baptisms (1.5 per cent)
1601–1610:	23 illegitimate baptisms (2.4 per cent)
Goudhurst, 1591–1600:	9 illegitimate baptisms (1.8 per cent)
1601–1610:	23 illegitimate baptisms (3.3 per cent)

These sample Wealden figures are not wildly different from those recorded in a national sample of 98 parishes. In those the illegitimacy ratios varied between two and three per cent from the 1570s to 1600, then rose to a peak of about 3.4 per cent in the years 1600–04.¹⁶ Even these low ratios exaggerate the real demographic impact of extra-marital fertility. In the Weald, at least, the likelihood of illegitimate children surviving beyond infancy was much lower than the chances of infants in general. The burials of bastards soon after their christening are a feature of most Wealden registers.

¹⁶ Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost – further explored* (1983), 159.

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AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE

Parish	Females		Males	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Brenchley and Horsmonden (persons baptised in 1560s-1570s)	23.7 (N = 79)	23 yrs.	25.3 ¹ (N = 92)	25 yrs. ¹
Staplehurst (persons baptised in 1540s-1570s)	23.5 (N = 64)	23 yrs.	26.3 (N = 45)	26 yrs.

¹ Thirty of 92 examples are based on the date of first child baptised minus one year; if the average interval between those two events was longer, then average age would be higher: just under 26 years.

Some Comparable Data:

Terling, Essex (1550-1624)	24.5	23.8 yrs.	25.9	25 yrs.
Twelve English Reconstitutions (1600-49)	26 yrs. (Mean)		28 yrs. (Mean)	

Sources: K. Wrightson and D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village* (1979), 68; Wrigley and Schofield, *The Population History of England* (1981), 255.

Another measure of marital fertility is the length of intervals between marriage and first baptism and then between subsequent baptisms: the shorter the intervals the higher the number of children likely to be produced. The figures for several Wealden sample parishes are given below, and again there is little difference between the two areas, although the Staplehurst example is drawn from a wider time span. These can be compared to the experience in other English parishes.

BIRTH (BAPTISM) INTERVALS (in months)

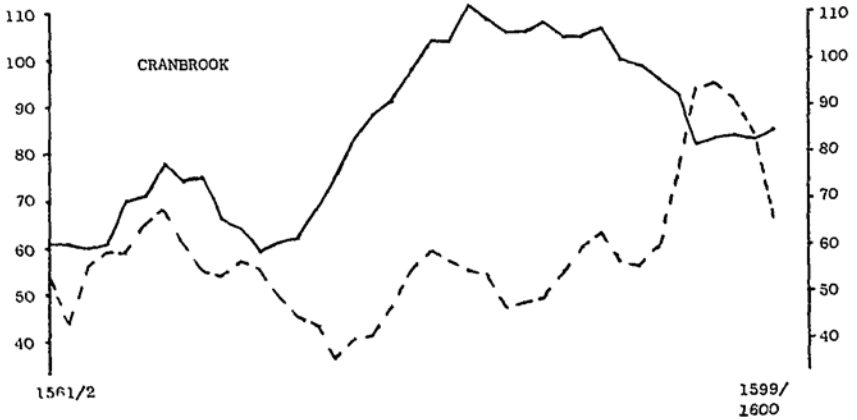
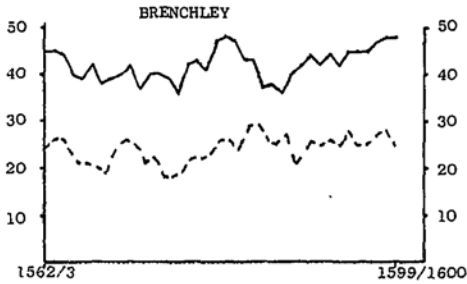
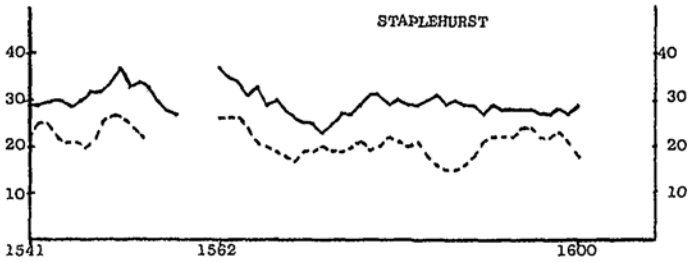
Parish	Marriage to 1st Baptism	1st to 2nd Baptism	2nd to 3rd Baptism	3rd to 4th Baptism	Mean of Intervals 1-4
Brenchley and Horsmonden (1560-1600)	14.7 (N = 166)	25.5 (254)	27.4 (222)	29.6 (177)	27.3
Staplehurst (1540-1600)	14.9 (N = 105)	26.5 (171)	28.6 (146)	30.5 (126)	28.3

Some Comparable Data:

Colyton, Devon (1560-1640)	11.3	25.2	27.4	30.1
Terling, Essex (1550-1724)	14.9	29.5	37.0	38.1

Sources: Colyton, quoted in Roger Finlay, *Population and Metropolis* (1981), 136; Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, 52.

BAPTISMS AND BURIALS (5 Year Moving Averages)



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The figures for the sample Wealden parishes are definitely on the low side, although very similar to the intervals recorded in Colyton. They definitely suggest relatively high marital fertility in the Weald. The average intervals between baptisms were not as low as in many London parishes, where many children were put out to nurse soon after birth, a practice apparently not common in the rural Weald. The Wealden birth intervals were comparable to those found in Arden, Warwickshire, during the period when rural manufacturing employment was becoming available. There, in 1600–24 the mean interval between births one to four was 27.7 months, very close to the average in the Weald in the late sixteenth century.¹⁷

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The seasonal distribution of vital events can also be measured, and the year-to-year fluctuations ironed out. The table and graph below show the monthly distributions of christenings and burials in eighteen and fourteen Wealden parishes respectively, during the period 1560 to 1600. The raw numbers have been converted to monthly index numbers, whereby 100 represents the number of events which would have occurred had the baptisms (and burials) been distributed evenly throughout the year. On the first table the time of conception is assumed to be nine months before baptism, since there is no evidence that christenings were postponed beyond a week or so in the sixteenth century.

SEASONAL DISTRIBUTION OF BIRTHS (BAPTISMS): MONTHLY INDEXES

In 18 Kent Weald parishes, 1560–1599¹

(Conception):	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M
Baptism:	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
	107	117	123	119	98	85	77	87	94	97	96	100

In National 404 parish sample:²

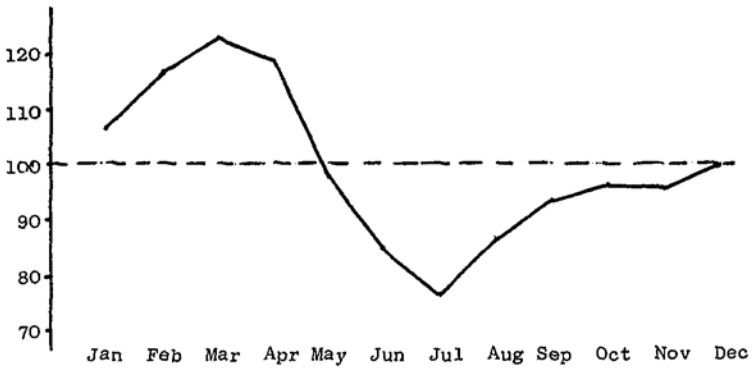
1504–99:	111	123	123	111	89	81	78	89	105	100	101	91
1600–49:	110	125	124	112	92	82	77	88	97	100	99	97

¹ Total number of events included is 22,178, from Benenden, Biddenden, Brenchley, Chiddingstone, Cranbrook, Goudhurst, Hadlow, Hawkhurst, Headcorn, Marden, East Peckham, Pembury, Penshurst, Rolvenden, Speldhurst, Staplehurst, Sundridge, Tenterden.

² Source: Wrigley and Schofield, *The Population History of England* (1981), 286.

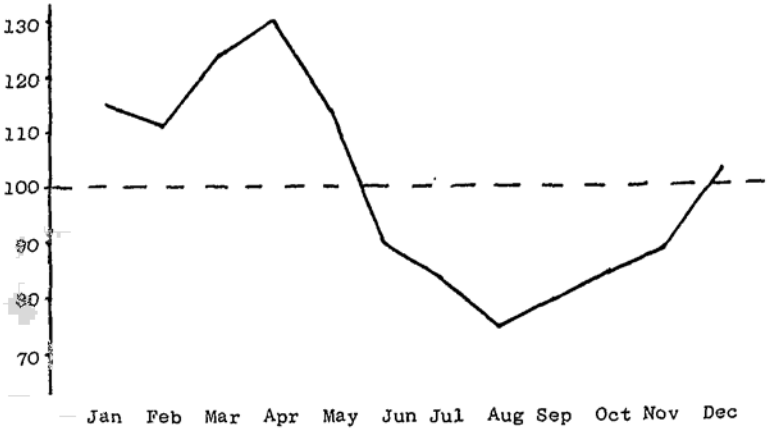
¹⁷ On low birth intervals in London, Roger Finlay, *Population and Metropolis* (1981) 137; Victor Skipp, *Crisis and Development: An ecological Case Study of the Forest of Arden, 1570–1674* (1978), 14.

SEASONAL DISTRIBUTION OF BAPTISMS: WEALD, 1560-1599



Source: 18 sample parishes, total N = 22,178

SEASONAL DISTRIBUTION OF BURIALS: WEALD, 1560-1600



Source: 14 sample parishes, total N = 14,798

The seasonal distribution of baptisms (and, therefore, of conceptions) followed a very similar pattern in all the parishes, with a significantly high plateau of baptisms in February, March and April (indicating a high level of conceptions in the late spring and early summer months). The Wealden pattern was broadly similar to that shown in the national sample, except that the peak period in the

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Weald was one month longer than in the larger sample. The distribution of christenings in the Weald had not, at least in the sixteenth century, departed from the traditional English rural pattern, even though some have argued that proto-industrialisation (like urbanisation) should have produced a more even spread of conceptions because sexual relations should have been less tied to the rhythms of the farming year. It appears that in this region of rural industry the traditional seasonal rhythms still ruled. The mainly clothing parishes did not show any different seasonal distribution of baptisms from the mainly agricultural parishes. The explanation is straightforward enough. Most families in the Weald still had a toe-hold at least in farming. The inventories of numerous Wealden weavers and other artisans show that most were at least smallholders, and that many ran substantial farms alongside their industrial occupations.¹⁸

Death, too, in the Weald occurred in its traditional season, as the following table indicates:

SEASONAL DISTRIBUTION OF BURIALS: MONTHLY INDEXES

Month of Burial:	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
In 14 Kent Weald parishes, 1560-1600: ¹	115	111	124	130	114	90	84	75	80	85	89	103
In National 404 parish sample: ²												
1540-99:	107	111	121	120	99	87	81	89	92	97	97	99
1600-49:	112	114	115	116	102	90	83	85	91	93	98	102

¹ Total number of events included is 14,798, from Benenden, Biddenden, Brenchley, Cranbrook, Goudhurst, Hawkhurst, Headcorn, Marden, East Peckham, Penshurst, Rolvenden, Staplehurst, Tenterden, Tonbridge, but excluding 1597 and 1598 for Cranbrook.

² Source: Wrigley and Schofield, *The Population History of England* (1981), 294.

In all but one of the sample Wealden parishes the peak of burials occurred in either March or April. More generally, there was a long plateau of heightened mortality between January and May, very similar to the national sample, except that the period of high mortality only extended to April in the larger sample. The March-April peak is much more stark in the Wealden sample, but that may only be a reflection of the smaller number of events in the Kent sample. In the much larger, national, sample the distribution tends to be evened out. In the Weald, as in England at large, far fewer deaths

¹⁸ See *op. cit.* in note 3, esp. 212, 217.

occurred in the summer and autumn, and this suggests several points. First, plague with its late summer and autumn peak, had very little impact in the Weald, as in other rural areas by the late sixteenth century. Infections and maladies of the winter and early spring months were far more important causes of mortality. Second, to the extent that infant (and maternal) mortality was a part of mortality in general, the greater number of spring births were reflected in the greater number of spring burials. But this point could easily be exaggerated: adult burials made up a sizeable majority of all burials. As between parishes in the Kentish sample, there was a good deal more variation in the monthly distribution of burials than of christenings. In two parishes, Headcorn and Marden, burials were also high in November (index 113 and 110) while in East Peckham the number of burials was unseasonably low in February (index 80). Taking all the variations into account, the seasonal pattern of both births and deaths in the Weald was very similar to that noted in less 'industrialised' regions of rural England.

*

The level of infant mortality, alluded to earlier, could be a significant factor in overall demographic patterns. Infants buried within twelve months of their baptisms have been counted for Staplehurst and Brenchley and divided into successive ten-year periods, beginning at the start of registration. In Staplehurst there was much greater variation between the decades than in Brenchley, and yet the infant mortality rates over the whole period covered for each parish were surprisingly similar:

INFANT MORTALITY

Staplehurst:	1538-48	1548-58	1558-68	1568-78	1578-88	1588-98	1598-1608
Share:	17.5%	16.2%	22.2%	9.7%	13.1%	7.5%	11.4%
Total Baptisms:	228	296	306	259	282	280	316
Overall Rate for 1538-1608: 140 per thousand							
Brenchley:			1560-70	1570-80	1580-90	1590-1600	
Share:			15.8%	15.8%	14.2%	11.9%	
Total Baptisms:			398	387	387	438	
Overall Rate for 1560-1600: 144 per thousand							

In both parishes infant mortality was lower in the later decades than during the middle of the sixteenth century. The rates recorded in

these semi-industrialised Wealden parishes compare favourably with the results of Wrigley's study of infant mortality in sixteen wide-spread English parishes in the 1580s. In his sample, the mean infant mortality rate was 149 per thousand. In another study, based on twelve English reconstitutions between 1550 and 1599, which separated male from female infants, the rates were similar: 143 per thousand males and 127 per thousand females.¹⁹

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Sixteenth-century parishes were in a very important sense collections of families and households. What can be known about family structure and mobility in the sixteenth-century Weald? And, was there anything special about household structure in a region of 'proto-industry'? Any exceptional characteristics of household structure in regions like the Weald, of course, cannot be ascribed solely to the impact of rural manufacturing. Other factors, which must be taken into account, include the prevailing agricultural regime, the forms of inheritance of land, the social distribution of landholding and the openness of the local land market. The availability of non-agricultural employment is surely not the sole circumstance which mattered for family formation and household structure.

The theory of 'proto-industrialisation' might lead to two different – and contradictory – expectations about household size and family structure. Since the 'proto-industrial' family allegedly tried to maximise its total income by utilising the labour (and earning) capacity of the couple plus all economically productive offspring, we should expect large households in regions of rural industry. On the other hand, because young adults in 'proto-industrial' areas did not depend upon the inheritance of a holding before they formed their own households (upon marriage), and could sustain themselves through non-agricultural employment, we should expect them to leave the parental home earlier than their counterparts in purely farming regions, and thus households should, on average, be smaller than elsewhere. Needless to say, the theory takes little or no account of the widespread English tendency for economically productive, young adults to leave their own homes to go into service or apprenticeships in the households of neighbours. Such 'life-cycle' servants were ubiquitous in both farming communities and in regions of mixed agriculture and commodity production like the Weald.

¹⁹ Wrigley's study cited in (Ed.) Charles Webster, *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the sixteenth Century* (1979), 82; Laslett, *World We Have Lost* (1983), 112.

It has already been shown that the average age of first marriage in several Wealden parishes which supported rural industry was somewhat lower than that found in England in general. What then were rural Wealden households like, and how stable were they? The materials to answer these questions include two census type listings of communicants: for Staplehurst (of 1563-64) and for Cranbrook (1608-12) as well as the parish registers.

The Staplehurst listing is not quite complete: it records 114 households containing 399 persons of communicant age. The document, as it exists today, breaks off before the concluding totals, which would have shown that there were between 120 and 125 households in the parish. The extra five to ten households can be shown to have existed from contemporary entries in the register.²⁰ No very large households are missing from the list. The remaining 114 had an average of 3.5 communicants per household, and, if at this date communicants made up about 65 per cent or two-thirds of all persons, the mean household size in Staplehurst was of the order of 5.3 or 5.4 persons – rather large.²¹ The conventionally accepted average household size for late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England is 4.75 persons per household. Since Staplehurst had no significant urban area, and the list does not divide households into the different hamlets within the parish, we have to assume that household size was relatively equal in all settlements. In Cranbrook, it is possible to notice differences in household size in different areas of the parish. The households of Staplehurst were distributed in the following way:

Household Size	No. (Share)	No. of persons	(Share)
1 communicant	6 (5%)	6	(1.5%)
2 communicants	39 (34%)	78	(19.5%)
3 communicants	24 (21%)	72	(18%)
4 communicants	13 (11.5%)	52	(13%)
5 communicants	19 (17%)	95	(24%)
6 or more	13 (11.5%)	96	(24%)

In Staplehurst the majority of households contained three communicants or less, the majority of communicants were members of households with four or more communicants, and almost half were in households of five or more.

The Staplehurst example can be compared with the much more

²⁰ The listing: Kent Archives Office PRC 43/13/31.

²¹ The 1569 visitation return for Staplehurst gives the total communicants as 440 and the number of households as 120, producing an even larger mean number of communicants per household: Bodleian Library, Tanner MS. 240, fo. 29 ff.

POPULATION AND FAMILY STRUCTURE IN THE WEALD

populous parish of Cranbrook, which had a large urban core and six to eight subsidiary settlements. Unfortunately, the comparison is not ideal since the Cranbrook lists record the names of communicants forty years later, between 1608 and 1612.²² The figures below summarize the list for 1608, and are broken down in two residential areas: 'Cranbrook Town' and all the remaining hamlets. The town area had a higher share of smaller households as well as a much smaller share of very large households – like other English towns. In the town, the mean household size was 2.9 communicants, in the rural settlements the mean size was 3.4 (the parish overall mean size was 3.2). For the non-urban area the distribution of households was as follows:

Household Size	No. (Share)	No. of persons	(Share)
1 communicant	34 (9%)	34	(3%)
2 communicants	121 (33%)	242	(19%)
3 communicants	95 (25%)	285	(22.5%)
4 communicants	45 (12%)	180	(14%)
5 communicants	28 (8%)	140	(11%)
6 or more	49 (13%)	384	(30.5%)

The rural settlements in Cranbrook parish, described forty years later than Staplehurst, showed a quite similar distribution of household sizes, although Cranbrook had a characteristic group of very large households. The biggest households in Staplehurst – there were four – had only nine communicants. In Cranbrook, there were seven with nine communicants as well as 13 others with 10 to 18 communicants in each. At the other extreme, the local tendency towards a relatively low age at marriage seems to be reflected in the fairly hefty percentage of small households of up to two communicants (39 and 42 per cent in the two parishes).

The composition of rural households in both parishes can be inferred to a certain extent from the two lists, although neither gives ages or the exact relationship of other persons to the householder. A very large majority of the households were headed by a married couple: about 89 per cent in Staplehurst and 79 per cent in Cranbrook (as a whole). Most of the rest were headed by widows: 8 per cent in Staplehurst and 12 per cent in Cranbrook (whole parish). The few single male householders were probably mainly widowers. There were no complex, three-generation households in Staplehurst; in Cranbrook, there were only one or two. The substantial bloc of

²² KAO P100/28/1.

two-communicant households were mainly nuclear families with perhaps two or three children below the age of communion (which in Staplehurst in the 1560s seems to have varied between 13 and 15, if the examples tracked down in the register are typical), or families whose teenage children had already left to go into service. In Staplehurst, 63 households out of 114 had at least one inmate described as a servant (55 per cent). Sixty-one households contained communicants with a surname different from the head of household; a number of 'servants' were relatives of the householder. The Staplehurst list does not distinguish apprentices or journeymen from other servants. In the rural areas of Cranbrook 40 per cent of households contained inmates with surnames different from the householder, most of whom were probably servants. In both parishes, therefore, a substantially larger share of households had servants than was common in England at large, where on average less than a third of households had servants.²³ The annual lists of Cranbrook communicants frequently describe individuals as apprentices ('pr') or journeymen ('ior'), although the practice varies from one annual list to another. The fullest of the listings from this point of view, that for 1612, records 208 apprentices and journeymen living in 110 households (19 per cent of households recorded in 1612).

Resident servants (including domestic and farm servants, apprentices and journeymen) appear to have been the norm in this area of the Weald both in the 1560s and in the early seventeenth century. Most of the large households are full of inmates with different surnames from the householder. Some undoubtedly were teenage children of the householder's wife by her previous marriage(s). But the majority must have been resident servants, and in a number of households relatives of the householder, who shared his name, were also his 'servants'. The Staplehurst listing includes several households where an inmate with the same surname as the householder is specifically referred to as 'servant'. Some households did contain sons and daughters of communicant age, but the majority of teenagers seem to have been life-cycle servants in households other than their own: the fact that almost half of all household contained 'servants' underlines this conclusion. Only the wealthier minority of households – those operating a substantial craft enterprise or large farm, or both – had resident servants working for normal wages. The great majority of servants were most likely teenage life-cycle servants and apprentices who received little or no wages. In a few cases, servants can be easily identified as the sons and daughters of near neighbours, but far

²³ Laslett, *World We Have Lost* (1983), 296.

more, especially in Cranbrook, may have come from further afield, although probably from within the Weald.

In Cranbrook, the very large households were of two types. A few were gentry establishments: the households headed by Sir Thomas Hendley and Sir Thomas Roberts contained 12 and 21 communicants, respectively. Sir Henry Baker's house had nine adults and Mr. William Plummer's eight. The remainder of the really large households were headed by wealthy clothiers and a few other tradesmen. Stephen Weller, a clothier, and his wife headed a household containing four journeymen, two apprentices, one other salaried male and three maids. John Holden's house included four journeymen (one a family member), two apprentices, one daughter and a maid. There were at least a dozen more households like these, but only a small minority of them contained teenage children of the householder. A larger number included inmates with the same name as the householder (often described or rated as journeymen or apprentices). Almost all the large households and most medium-sized households included at least one maidservant. There was, clearly, a transfer of young people out of poor households into the households of the better off, but at the same time many wealthy parents also sent their teenage offspring into friends' households for at least a number of years before they were old enough to marry and set up on their own.

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How stable were Wealden households and how mobile were those who lived in them? A number of different measures of stability and turnover have been attempted in this study and the results suggest that a very large share of the Wealden population did not spend their whole lives in the parish of their birth (nor in their parents' household until they were married). They moved between different households – mainly as teenagers and young adults – and, to a lesser extent, they moved from one parish to another even after they had set up their own families. Using the communicant listings and the parish registers, we can produce examples of both the levels of persistence and of mobility for different groups of the Wealden population. Other measures can suggest by inference the high levels of mobility in the population. The most obvious of these tests have been appreciated by historians for many years: the majority of persons born in a given parish cannot be shown to have married there, even in the case of females who were more likely to marry in their parents' parish. It is surely mobility on this scale which limits the meaningfulness of traditional single-parish reconstitution studies, since they inevitably

concentrate on the more stable families in the parish. If something like half of the families were not stable for a generation or more, then the figures produced on the basis of the stable ones may bear little resemblance to the demographic and family experience of the whole population.

A clear majority of the communicants resident in Staplehurst in 1563–64 were not buried there. Although a few females, who were unmarried at the time of the listing and who married in another parish but then returned to live in Staplehurst, may have escaped notice, only 37 per cent of the communicants recorded in 1563–64 can be traced to their burial in Staplehurst. Some groups of people were more likely to move than others. While almost two-thirds of the heads of households (including widows) of 1563–64 were buried in Staplehurst, only about 40 per cent of the wives of householders were, and only 20 per cent of all other communicants of 1563–64 (mostly unmarried young men and women) were buried there. Householders and their wives made up just over half the number of communicants in Staplehurst. They were on average older and less likely to move away, but even householders' wives were as likely to move from the parish before their deaths as householders (mostly male) were to stay.

The series of annual communicant lists for the parish of Cranbrook can be used to test for mobility over a much shorter period. The question is simple: what proportion of people listed as communicants in 1608 were still in the parish in 1612? Of the 596 households of 1608 only 420 were identifiable just four years later (70 per cent). Four hundred and four of those were headed by the same householder and 16 by the widow of the 1608 householder. There had also been a good deal of movement between different settlements within the parish, besides the disappearance of 30 per cent of households altogether in this short period. The turnover in servants and other non-householders in four years was much higher. Of about 530 named servants (out of about 1,900 named communicants) in 1608, only 171 (32 per cent) were on the communicant list just four years later. Also, only a third of persisting 'servants' were in the same households in 1608 and 1612. Over half the 171 were listed in different households in 1612 than they had been in 1608. Some moved to other households within the parish, many others left the parish. Thirty of the 171 persisting 'servants' of 1608 had become householders themselves by 1612.

The fluidity of the Wealden population can also be inferred by noting the names of fathers of children christened in a given parish. The numbers of 'reproducing surnames' in ten-year periods can be compared. If new surnames continue to appear in later decades, then

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the presumption is that new families are arriving in the parish. If at the same time the total number of reproducing surnames remains substantially the same, then the inference may be that other families are leaving (or dying out). Take Staplehurst as an example:

	1538-48	1548-58	1558-68	1568-78	1578-88	1588-98	1598-1608
a. No. of surnames:	121	119	127	107	112	118	127
b. Surnames appearing first time:		54	67	44	31	41	52
c. b as a % of a:		45%	53%	41%	28%	35%	41%

The relatively high percentage of new reproducing surnames in the 1590s and early seventeenth century implies not just additional families in the parish but – since the total number of families in Staplehurst was only slightly higher at the end of the century than in the 1560s – the disappearance of many active families of the Elizabethan period as well. Figures like these suggest that not only the young and unmarried seldom stayed in one parish for long periods, but that married householders were also more mobile than used to be believed.

One final measure which highlights family mobility is the number of children of the same father baptised in one parish. The figures below in some cases include children of more than one wife.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN BAPTISED OF THE SAME FATHER

No. of Children:	1	2	3	4	5	6 or more
Staplehurst, 1548-98:	153 (35%)	86 (20%)	55 (12.5%)	28 (6.5%)	45 (10%)	69 (16%)
Brenchley, 1560-90:	106 (29%)	53 (14.5%)	47 (13%)	38 (10%)	35 (9.5%)	87 (24%)

Something approaching a third of families had only one child christened in the sample parishes, and almost a half were in those parishes only long enough to have had two offspring. Obviously, not all of those 400 families with just one or two baptisms recorded moved out of the parishes. A certain number represent men who died relatively young, or who failed to remarry after the deaths of their wives, and a few were residents of adjacent parishes who happened to have a child baptised out of their own parishes. But, whichever way the figures are interpreted, they suggest a high degree of family mobility. Most of the men either arrived in those parishes after producing children elsewhere or left the parishes, still quite young, presumably to have additional children christened in the parish they

migrated to after Staplehurst or Brenchley. There is a difference between the two sample parishes: a higher degree of mobility in Staplehurst and a somewhat greater degree of family persistence in Brenchley. The real difference between the two was probably somewhat larger than the numbers imply. Because the Brenchley sample begins very soon after the opening of the parish register, it artificially increases the percentage of fathers with just one or two children baptised, since a number of families would have already begun to produce offspring in the few years before the register begins. Nevertheless, the relatively small number of families who had five or more children baptised in these two parishes (26 per cent in Staplehurst and 33 per cent in Brenchley) points to a high level of adult mobility – and mortality – to a certain extent balanced by a minority of stable households.

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The population of Wealden parishes – especially those in the cloth-making region – was continually changing, both through emigration and immigration. Given the high rates of ‘natural increase’, particularly in the central Wealden parishes, and the relatively low level of infant mortality, there may well have been more people moving out than moving into the Weald by the late sixteenth century. The Wealden broad-cloth industry, which had probably attracted significant numbers of migrants as well as encouraged a high rate of family formation since the mid- or late-fifteenth century, had ceased to expand. The export trade in traditional woollens – the speciality of the Wealden industry – stagnated in the late sixteenth century. The ‘new draperies’, which might have provided additional employment for an expanding population, were not introduced into the Weald in the sixteenth century, when their manufacture was begun in other parts of Kent. Although Wealden agriculture seems to have remained prosperous, the countryside had simply filled up in many parts of the Kentish Weald. With opportunities expanding neither in the textile trades nor in farming, many young people moved elsewhere: to the western Weald, to Maidstone and to other regions of Kent, and probably also to London. There were still in 1600 areas in the Weald able to accommodate larger numbers, but they are definitely not the areas of rapid demographic growth during the preceding century. Rural industry, it seems, encouraged population growth only as long as there was a reliable and growing demand for its products. By the same token, the availability of a pool of cheap, rural labour by itself could not sustain a region’s prosperity, if

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the entrepreneurs and manufacturers (local merchants and clothiers in this case) stuck rigidly to their traditional wares.

APPENDIX: SAMPLE PARISHES

Parish (acreage)	1560s Population	Density	Register
Benenden (6,700)	950	142	Good
Bethersden (6,400)	700	109	Good
Bidborough (1,300)	?200	?	None
Biddenden (7,200)	1,050	146	Good
Brasted (4,450)	375-400	84	Some gaps
Brenchley (7,800)	1,200	154	Good
Capel (1,500)	?200	?	None
Chevening (3,900)	340	87	?Burials
Chiddingstone (6,000)	475	79	Good
Cowden (3,200)	250	77	?Burials
Cranbrook (10,400)	2,000	192	Good
East Peckham (3,350)	500	152	Good
Edenbridge (5,300)	475	90	?Burials
Frittenden (3,500)	400	114	Bishop's transcripts
Goudhurst (9,800)	1,500	153	Good
Hadlow (5,950)	600	101	Gaps
Halden (3,750)	400	107	Useable
Hawkhurst (6,500)	1,170	180	Good
Headcorn (5,000)	600	120	Good
Hever (2,650)	?300	?	None
Horsmonden (4,600)	550	120	Good
Lamberhurst (5,200)	475	91	Gap: 1587-95
Leigh (4,500)	?300	?	None
Marden (7,750)	770	99	Good
Newenden (1,000)	150	150	Good
Pembury (3,500)	525	150	Good
Penshurst (4,550)	550	121	Good
Pluckley (3,100)	425	137	Gaps
Rolvenden (5,750)	725	126	Good
Sandhurst (4,400)	400	91	Good
Smarden (5,400)	600	111	Bishop's transcripts
Speldhurst (4,000)	475	119	?Burials
Staplehurst (5,900)	650	110	Good
Sundridge (4,150)	425	102	Good
Tenterden (8,500)	1,200	141	Good
Tonbridge (15,350)	1,100	72	Gaps
Tudeley (1,600)	?200	?	None
Westerham (5,800)	650	112	Good
Woodchurch (6,950)	550	79	Gaps
Yalding (5,850)	725	124	Good

