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THE POPULATION OF CHARTHAM FROM 1086 TO 1600

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The subject of this paper is the population of an east Kent rural community from 1086 to 1600. Much recent work has emphasised the importance of demographic trends in the economic and social history of the medieval period. It has been argued that very considerable population expansion took place in rural society between the eleventh century and c. 1300.¹ Much of the change in rural society in the later Middle Ages has been linked to major demographic decline. Some historians argue that this decline set in with a subsistence crisis in the first quarter of the fourteenth century.² Others date the downturn in the demographic trend from the first visitation of bubonic plague in 1348–49.³ A consensus of opinion is also absent with regard to the date of the upturn in population at the end of the Middle Ages. Estate and regional studies published in recent decades have reflected the increased emphasis on demographic change, but no systematic attempt has yet been made to investigate the population of a medieval community in Kent.⁴

The kinds of evidence and the methods utilised in demographic studies have varied considerably. A number of studies have concentrated on mortality figures, while others have attempted to derive generation replacement rates from a combination of birth and death

¹ See particularly the work of M.M. Postan, most recently in *The Medieval Economy and Society* (1978), 30–44. Also J.Z. Titow, *English Rural Society* (1969), 66–96.

² M.M. Postan, *op. cit.*, 39–43.

³ This is strongly argued by B. Harvey, 'The Population Trend in England between 1300 and 1348', *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, 5th ser., xvi (1966).

⁴ The two estate studies for Kent touch on demographic change only in passing. R.A.L. Smith, *Canterbury Cathedral Priory* (Cambridge, 1943), and F.R.H. Du Boulay, *The Lordship of Canterbury* (1966).

rates.⁵ One of the most recent attempts to investigate medieval demographic change is based exclusively on court roll material and claims that this provides the most reliable demographic evidence available to historians.⁶ There has been a trend towards the computerisation of data and increasing reliance on sophisticated quantitative methods using direct evidence of population figures. This is in contrast to studies which relied on a wide range of evidence, in particular on indirect evidence of population change such as changes in the value of land and settlement patterns, in addition to the available direct evidence of population figures.

It is the contention of this paper that the nature of medieval sources makes it imperative that a wide range of sources and all available types of evidence be used for the investigation of medieval populations. The scarcity of direct evidence and the problems with using statistical methods with such as is available, make it essential that full use be made of all indirect evidence of population change. Much advantage can be gained through basing such an investigation on the micro-study of a single community. An understanding of the natural resources available to a community is vital to the study of its demographic history. A longitudinal study also permits the long-term trends to be revealed.

i

One of the main attractions of Chartham is the quantity and variety of its documentary sources for the medieval period. Much of this study has been based on manorial records, the earliest of which date from the late twelfth century. There is a series of surveys of the manor, which was held by Christ Church Cathedral Priory, Canterbury, the earliest of which appears to date from the first decades of the thirteenth century.⁷ The other surveys consist of an early fourteenth-century custumal and a mid fifteenth-century survey, which includes information relating to the later fourteenth century, and an early sixteenth-century survey.⁸ The earliest account of the number of tenants in Chartham is contained in Domesday Book.⁹ While tenant numbers are a vital source, they must be handled with

⁵ Replacement rates are calculated by T.H. Hollingsworth, *Historical Demography* (1969), 375–80, and an attempt to calculate birth and death rates is made by C. Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a changing Society* (Cambridge, 1980), 218–35.

⁶ Z. Razi, *Life, Marriage and Death in a medieval Parish* (Cambridge 1980), 2–4.

⁷ Lit.MS.D4 ff.32–57. Canterbury Cathedral Archives and Library, (abbreviated to C.C.A.L.).

⁸ C.C.A.L., Register C ff.149–53, Miscellaneous Accounts vol. 32 ff.5–7, 9–18, vol. 31 ff.84–9.

⁹ *VCH, Kent* (1932) iii, 257, 258, 261.

care as indicators of the size of the total population. Under certain conditions, such as appears to have been the case at the end of the period under investigation, tenant numbers could run counter to general trends in the population. The manorial documents provide little indication of the size of the non-tenant population. However, some evidence can be derived from land charters which refer to the presence of sub-tenants. These charters survive for Chartham in considerable numbers for the period c. 1200 to c. 1350.¹⁰ Manorial accounts are available for the later thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, and manorial court rolls survive for the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹¹ These sources contain much indirect evidence of demographic change, particularly relating to the value of land which was largely determined by the demand for land and thus reflected the size of the population and pressure of numbers on available land resources. From the late fifteenth century, additional sources become available, including wills and in the later sixteenth century the parish register of baptisms, marriages and burials.¹² In the discussion which follows, the manorial surveys have provided the core of the evidence, but wherever possible other sources have been used to broaden the study.

ii

The parish of Chartham is situated approximately two miles west of Canterbury and is bisected by the valley of the river Stour. It extends to nearly four thousand acres. Topographically, Chartham contains a variety of soils and landscapes, stretching from level river meadow land in the valley which rises to chalk downland and heavy wet clays on the higher ground in the north and south of the parish. The higher wetter ground has always been extensively wooded, and the presence of extensive woodland in Chartham in the medieval period was of significance for its demographic history.

The earliest description of Chartham is provided by Domesday Book which shows that there were four manorial units in the parish in 1086. The largest of these, later evidence suggests that it may have contained between 2,500 and 3,000 acres, had been granted to the Archbishop of Canterbury in the ninth century for the clothing of the

¹⁰ C.C.A.L., Register C ff.154-202 and *Chartae Antiquae* C 418-684.

¹¹ C.C.A.L., Chartham Bedels Rolls and Church Commissioners Deposits U 15 Boxes 12 and 13.

¹² Details of all Chartham wills in K.A.O. up to 1558 are listed in A.M. Langridge, 'The Tenantry of Chartham from c. 1200 to c. 1550', University Kent unpublished M.A. thesis, 1982, (hereafter Langridge, thesis) 202-3. C.C.A.L. Chartham Parish Register from 1558.

monks at his priory in Canterbury.¹³ The Domesday Book assessment of the size of this manor was four sulungs. The other manorial units were much smaller, and probably totalled about 800 acres. It seems probable that there was also land in the parish not contained within the manorial units. Documentary sources survive in good numbers for the Christ Church manor, but only incidental records survive for the other manors. Thus, this work has concentrated on the Christ Church manor of Chartham. This manor, was, however, predominant in size and included a representative sample of all types of soil in the parish. It seems reasonable to suppose, therefore, that the changes on the Christ Church manor reflect those in the parish as a whole.

The earliest account of the tenant population of Chartham is given in Domesday Book, which lists the tenants of the Christ Church manor as consisting of 60 villeins, 1 bordar and 1 serf. The other manors accounted for 16 villeins, 1 bordar and 4 serfs. How far these figures are directly comparable with the number of tenants listed in later surveys is not clear.¹⁴ However, they do provide some indication of the size of the tenant population. To convert these numbers to give an indication of the total population it is necessary to use a multiplier based on the average size of the household. There has been much disagreement over the correct multiplier. Figures suggested vary between 3.5 and 5.¹⁵ Evidence drawn from eastern England for the thirteenth century suggests that the household size was around 4.5.¹⁶ Using this figure, the total population of Chartham may have been around 350 to 400 in the later eleventh century.

The earliest survey of the Christ Church manor of Chartham was probably drawn up in the early decades of the thirteenth century.¹⁷ This was an Inquisition into the tenant land of the manor and its holders, including outlying parts of the manor in the Weald and Romney Marsh. However, it is possible to distinguish between these lands and the land in Chartham. This survey names a total of 195 tenants holding land in Chartham. However, some land was held by groups of tenants, not all of whom were individually named, so that this may be a slight under-enumeration of the tenant population. While this figure is not directly comparable with the numbers listed in

¹³ C.C.A.L., Register C f.148.

¹⁴ For problems associated with the use of Domesday Book numbers, see C. Dyer, *op. cit.*, 85–6.

¹⁵ J.C. Russell, *British medieval Population* (Albuquerque, 1948), 22–3; J.Z. Titow, *op. cit.*, 67–9.

¹⁶ H.E. Hallam, 'Some thirteenth-century Censuses', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., xi (1958).

¹⁷ For discussion about the date of this survey see Langridge, thesis, 12.

Domesday Book, a multiplier of 4.5 gives a figure for the total population of the manor in the early thirteenth century of about 900 people.

The Inquisition also contains indirect evidence of population growth because it indicates that tenant land had been extended since the date of Domesday Book through the clearance of new land. There also appears to have been fragmentation of the traditional holdings. Land charters which date from the late twelfth century onwards show that there was an active market in village land in Chartham.

The earliest evidence of an expansion in the tenant land consists of a group of land charters which date from the last decades of the twelfth century.¹⁸ These record the granting of land by the priory to tenants for cash rents. Some relate to land in Romney Marsh, but they show that the period saw a phase of land clearance which increased the area of tenant land. The Inquisition also provides information about new tenant land. The land it describes is separated into land measured in yokes (*iuga*), the traditional unit of assessment which can almost certainly be identified as the Domesday assessment of the manor, and other land which was measured in acres. There was a total of 16 yokes of land, and as the Kentish yoke was one quarter of a sulung, this yugated land was equivalent to the four sulungs of land mentioned in Domesday Book. The other land totalled 165 acres. The Inquisition also reveals that the older land owed rent in both cash and produce in the form of hens and eggs, while the newer land paid predominantly cash rent. It should be noted that the land which was being granted in the series of twelfth-century charters by Christ Church, which it is suggested represents newly cleared land, owed only cash rent.

As Chartham contained considerable areas of woodland, the new land was probably cleared from the wood. It is likely that the hamlet of Chartham Hatch, which in medieval times was known as Bovehacch,¹⁹ which lies in the north of the parish virtually surrounded by woodland, was created in this period of land clearance which took place between the late eleventh century and the early thirteenth century.

The descriptions of tenant holdings in the Inquisition of c. 1220 show that there had been fragmentation of the traditional land units, which had probably also come about through population growth. Individual holdings in the early thirteenth century often consisted of

¹⁸ C.C.A.L., *Chartae Antiquae* C418, C419, C422, C423, C426.

¹⁹ The identification of Bovehacch with Chartham Hatch is based on the locational details contained in early charters and rentals and field names in later maps.

parts of a yoke. Although 22 holdings contained a complete yoke of land, another 19 holdings consisted of half a yoke, while a further 46 consisted of fractions of a yoke, some as small as one-twelfth. It seems that originally the yoke had been the unit which made up a family holding. A list of the obligations owed by each yoke refers to them by names which appear to be derived from personal names, which may have been the previous holders of the land.²⁰ The fragmentation of this system of family holdings must have been the result of population expansion, through the mechanisms of inheritance and the land market. Through these processes, differences in the size of holdings had come about, creating considerable economic stratification among the tenants by the early thirteenth century. There was a large number of smallholders, men such as Herbert 'piscator', who held only three acres of land. Such tenants must have depended on other sources of income in addition to these meagre land holdings which were clearly inadequate for subsistence.

Much of the evidence of early population growth in Chartham is contained in this early thirteenth-century Inquisition. It seems likely that it was in fact this growth in numbers and its effects on the tenant land which had led the priory administration to survey the tenant land in its manor.²¹ Thus, the very existence of this document emphasises the changes in the manor in this early period. It is possible that some of the increase in population may have come through immigration. A study of the surnames of tenants in the Inquisition reveals a small number derived from places outside the parish. However, much of the increase is likely to have come through natural increase and an expansion in the size of families. The evidence of fragmentation of holdings suggests that the late twelfth century saw a significant breakdown in the integrity of family holdings.²² The early break up of the yoke structure has been noted on several Kentish manors.²³ The relationship between this development and the nature of seigneurial control in Kent has not been fully investigated. While many histo-

²⁰ C.C.A.L., Lit.MS.D4 ff.64-7. See also A.R.H. Baker and R.A. Butlin, *Studies of Field Systems in the British Isles* (Cambridge 1973), 407-8.

²¹ There is a possibility that this document was drawn up in the aftermath of the Interdict of King John and seizure of Christ Church lands. However, this is unlikely in view of the evidence that the administrative system and officers of the monks appear to have been maintained during this period. See P.M. Barnes, 'Documents concerning Christ Church Cathedral Priory Canterbury 1207-1213', *Pipe Roll Soc.* lxxii, new ser., xxxiv (1958), 33-85.

²² B. Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and its Estates in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1977), 203-13, assigns fragmentation of virgate holdings into half virgates to pre-1225.

²³ A.R.H. Baker, 'Open Fields and partible Inheritance on a Kent Manor', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., xvii (1964).

rians have noted that service obligations were light in Kent, this should perhaps not be taken as evidence that seigneurial control was weak. It may rather reflect the populous nature of the Kent countryside at an early date, with large numbers of smallholders and landless men who could be employed by manorial authorities to carry out labour-intensive tasks on the land, which in less well populated regions had to be met through the imposition of labour services on the tenantry.²⁴

During the remainder of the thirteenth century the evidence suggests that the population level was sustained, and that there was very considerable demand for land. The size of the tenant population in the mid thirteenth century can be calculated from a list, detailing the labour obligations of tenants, which forms part of a custumal, apparently compiled in the early years of the fourteenth century.²⁵ Comparison of the tenants named in these lists with documents of known date suggests that the list is of tenants holding land in Chartham c. 1260.²⁶ A total of 176 tenants appears in the lists of men owing ploughing and reaping services. However, other sources suggest that services were owed only on the ancient tenant land. The list would, therefore, exclude those who held only recently cleared land. When an adjustment is made, based on the number of early thirteenth-century holdings composed entirely of new land, the total number of tenants in the mid-thirteenth century was about 213.

It is also possible to calculate tenant numbers for the later thirteenth century from the names of those appearing as participants and witnesses in land charters. Chartham has the largest collection of early charters of all the Christ Church manors, surviving partly as original charters and also as a collection copied into one of the Christ Church registers. A study of the names of those who witnessed charters suggests that they were almost invariably drawn from those holding land adjoining that being conveyed, together with a representative of the manor such as the sergeant or bailiff. For example, Richard son of Galfrid Levechild sold an acre of arable to John son of Nigel de Shamelesford. The land is described in the charter as lying between the land of Nigel Dudyng and of Ailward de Wercupe. Both Nigel Dudyng and Ailward de Wercupe witnessed the charter.²⁷ Also,

²⁴ M.M. Postan, 'The Chronology of Labour Services', *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, 4th ser., xxi (1937).

²⁵ For discussion of the dating and contents of this document see Langridge, thesis, 39-41.

²⁶ For example John son of the Clerk appears as Reeve on accounts 1261-62, 1269-70 and 1271-72.

²⁷ C.C.A.L. *Chartae Antiquae*, C634.

some of the most prominent land holders in the parish appeared again and again as witnesses of charters, for example Nicholas Forestar who had extensive lands in the manor as well as other lands in Chartham and elsewhere witnessed a total of 103 charters.²⁸ Thus, the names of participants and witnesses over a period of time should give a useful indication of the numbers of landholders. Using this method for the period 1250–70, for which 97 charters are available, the names of 104 individuals appear as participants and another 112 as witnesses, giving a total of 216 possible landholders. This figure is almost identical with the total of 213 derived from the list of services dating from the mid-thirteenth century. Comparing these figures with tenant numbers for the early thirteenth century of approximately 195 suggests that there was a continued upward trend. However, the evidence suggests that no further expansion of the area of the tenant land had taken place during the course of the century. Rent figures, which appear on manorial accounts in the second half of the thirteenth century, show no tendency to rise, as would be the case if more land was being added to the tenant land.

In addition to the evidence of tenant numbers, much additional information about the community at Chartham in the thirteenth century can be obtained by investigating the state of the village land market. This provides very clear evidence of pressure on landed resources as a result of the high level of population. Firstly, while both the early thirteenth-century survey and early fourteenth-century custumal concentrate on tenant holdings, the charters reveal that at least some of these holdings were actually being sub-let, often in minute parcels of land. These sub-tenants formed a group of smallholders who frequently had inadequate land and who must have lived in conditions of considerable poverty. For example a charter records the sale by John son of Henry, son of the Clerk, to Christ Church of rent valued at 4s. 11d. in 1267.²⁹ The land was being sub-let, one messuage was leased by Assore, 3 virgates of arable by Jordan, one messuage by the heirs of Thomas Albis, arable land (probably between 3 and 4 acres) by Henry 'piscator', one messuage by Alexander Franceys and arable land (probably between 1 and 2 acres) by Stephen Trendhamme.³⁰

The existence of the land charters testifies to an active village land market in Chartham from at least the early thirteenth century.

²⁸ The lands of Nicholas Forestar are discussed in Langridge, thesis, 32–3.

²⁹ C.C.A.L., Register C f.183.

³⁰ Rather than the 30-acre holding normally implied by the term, in Kent a virgate was usually equivalent to a quarter of an acre, see H.L. Gray, *English Field Systems* (Cambridge, Mass., 1915), 299.

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Although those which survive do not fully reflect the transfers of land between villagers, being largely charters of purchases by Christ Church, they do show that villagers were primarily interested in buying arable, in contrast with Christ Church. The priory was predominantly buying rents up until the middle of the century, but after the adoption of direct management of the demesne began to purchase all types of land, arable, meadow and woodland, in order to expand the demesne. An indication of the value placed on land at this time is the level of entry fines being paid on the acquisition of land.³¹ On some of the Winchester estate manors such as Taunton, fines as high as £10 and £20 per virgate have been noted.³² The details of entry fines at Chartham reveal that similarly large sums were being paid.

TABLE 1. CHARTHAM ENTRY FINES 1200-1349.

Date	Fine per Messuage	Arable	Fine Per acre Meadow	Wood
<i>Early Thirteenth Century</i>				
1. Christ Church Purchases		£1	(4s. 4d.) £2	£1 8s. 0d.
2. Inter-Villager Sales	6s. 8d.	£1	£1 12s. 0d.	(2s. 8d.)
<i>Later Thirteenth Century</i>				
1. Christ Church Purchases		£1 to £1 4s. 0d.	£1 6s. 0d.	£1 6s. 0d. to £2
2. Inter-Villager Sales		£1 to £1 12s. 0d.		
<i>Early Fourteenth Century</i>				
1. Christ Church Purchases		£1		
2. Inter-Villager Sales	6s. 6d., £10	£1 13s. 0d.		£2

The highest entry fines included £16 13s. 4d. paid in 1235 for the purchase of rent of 8s. 9½d. per annum, (equivalent to 39 times the value of the rent), £13 6s. 8d. paid in 1261 for 11 acres of arable and 9d. rent, and £10 paid in 1340 for a messuage and a garden.

The entry fines indicate that over the period from 1200 to 1349 the level of fines rose slightly. The payment of large individual fines must indicate that demand for land was considerable and that the rural population included wealthy villagers able to make large capital payments, even if, as seems likely, the sums were in fact paid over a period of years. A factor in the level of entry fines, however, may have been the seignorial involvement in the land market. The fact that Christ Church was heavily involved in buying land in Chartham is likely to have pushed up land values, but does not materially alter

³¹ B. Harvey, 'The Population Trend in England between 1300 and 1348', *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, 5th ser., xvi (1966), 25-7.

³² J.Z. Titow, *op. cit.*, 75.

the argument that high levels of fines indicate considerable demand for land and high population pressure. Entry fines appear to have been in the order of £1 or more per acre. Fines which appear to diverge from the general trend are shown in brackets in Table 1. The level of fines compares with rent levels of between 3*d.* and 5*d.* per acre. When these rent levels are compared with rents of as much as 1*s.* and 2*s.* per acre in some manors in southern England at this time, it appears that the entry fines may have been more sensitive to market forces.³³

The involvement of the priory in the land market also led to a reduction in the area of land available to villagers. In the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries Christ Church bought land in order to expand the demesne at Chartham.³² At least some of this land had previously been tenant land, for manorial accounts record lost rent of approximately £1 17*s.* 0*s.* per annum which had become part of the demesne land. Pressure on land could therefore only be eased through emigration to other villages, perhaps to places where population levels may have been somewhat lower than in anciently settled communities such as Chartham. Emigration could also have taken place to communities where urbanisation or industrialisation provided employment. Bad harvest years must have put the livelihood of poorer smallholders in jeopardy, and forced them to sell land in order to pay their rent and purchase grain for seed and sustenance.³⁵

This pattern of early population growth in the twelfth century and a high level of population sustained through the thirteenth century, an active land market and the fragmentation of holdings shows similarities with conditions in East Anglia.³⁶ Both east Kent and East Anglia had complex land-holding patterns. Among the wealthiest land holders in Chartham there appear to have been a small number with land in several villages. The holding of Nicholas Forestar was of this kind. There also appear to have been similarities in agricultural techniques. Complex crop rotations and efficient nutrition together with extensive cultivation of legumes were practised on some Norfolk manors and can also be found on Christ Church manors in east Kent,

³³ E. Miller and J. Hatcher, *Medieval England—Rural Society and economic Change 1086–1348* (1978), 44–9.

³⁴ 350 charters survive for Chartham for the period up to 1350, 304 of these were purchases by Christ Church.

³⁵ On the Christ Church east Kent manor of Ickham, for which pre-Black Death court rolls survive, the smallholders experienced just such economic difficulties, see C.C.A.L., Church Commissioners Deposits U 15. Also Z. Razi, *op. cit.*, 36–40.

³⁶ H.E. Hallam, *Rural England 1066–1348* (1981), 33–93, and E. Miller, *The Abbey and Bishopric of Ely* (Cambridge, 1951), 97–8.

although there is little direct evidence about the agricultural methods of the tenants.³⁷

Other similarities between east Kent and East Anglia include the lightness of tenant obligations and the absence of restriction on peasant mobility. The tenants at Chartham owed predominantly cash rents, with labour services involving only seasonal work.³⁸ Unlike Midland manors, there was no attempt to control or fine those wishing to leave the manor. These factors may have permitted greater freedom for villagers to emigrate to places where additional land was available or to urban centres which developed at an early date in Kent.

The continuation of land charters for Chartham shows that the land market remained active in the early fourteenth century. However, as a consequence of the Statute of Mortmain, Christ Church increasingly made use of nominees in buying land from about 1300 onwards, and these need to be distinguished from purchases by villagers. The level of entry fines appears to have remained high. Elsewhere the evidence of an early fourteenth-century crisis has been based largely on figures of heriots and on grain prices.³⁹ The former are almost totally absent on Kentish manors, and there is no evidence that heriots were ever collected at Chartham. An alternative source of information on tenant mortality is the figure for reliefs which were paid on the transfer of land, which were listed with the perquisites of court on the manorial accounts.

Reliefs were paid at Chartham on land transfers resulting both from inheritance and sale. Details of reliefs were given on the court rolls, which are available from the 1360s, including the name of the new owner and how he had acquired the land, a description of the land and the amount of the relief. Court rolls also provide evidence of defaults for non-payment of reliefs and occasionally show that the relief was doubled following distraint for non-payment. Reliefs at Chartham were in the order of 1*d.* to 2*d.* per acre, approximately half the level of rent per acre. Thus, total annual figures for reliefs of 7*s.* or more would represent a large number of transfers, particularly as most involved only one or two acres of land. As reliefs were paid on land transfers both *inter vivos* and *post mortem*, the total will not

³⁷ See Langridge, thesis, 78-80 and table p. 52, and B. Campbell, 'Agricultural Progress in medieval England; some Evidence from East Norfolk', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., xxxvi (1983).

³⁸ Services at Chartham involved ploughing and reaping. For most tenants they probably represented only 2 or 3 days work a year. See C.C.A.L., Register C ff. 152-3.

³⁹ M.M. Postan and J.Z. Titow, 'Heriots and Prices on Winchester Manors', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., xi (1959).

relate directly to tenant mortality, but poor harvests are likely to have resulted in an increase in sales of land.

During the period 1307-08 to 1340-41 there does not appear to have been an upward trend in reliefs, although there was clearly variation from year to year. 1317-18 was noticeably high. Here is an indication of a crisis, affecting the tenantry either by forcing small-holders to sell land or by abnormally high mortality, or most probably a combination of the two. However, although the decade 1320-30 is poorly documented, the crisis appears to have been short-lived, and reliefs soon reverted to their former level. Additional evidence about the extent of the crisis is provided by the prices for grain sold from the demesne. These show a sharp rise in prices for all grains between 1315 and 1318. However, the increase of up to double the normal price at Chartham was much lower than the rise in prices by four and five times their normal level in some parts of northern England.⁴⁰ Also prices quickly fell back to their previous level. Prices were also high in 1310. On the Winchester estate, Postan and Titow, found that heriots rose in the years 1310-12 and tenant deaths were also more than twice their normal level at Halesowen in these years.⁴¹ However, reliefs were not high in Chartham in 1309-10, although the figure for 1311-12 may reflect this poor harvest.

TABLE 2. TOTAL RELIEFS AT CHARTHAM 1307-08 TO 1340-41.*
(From Manorial Accounts).

1307-08	£0 4s. 3½d.	1324-25	
1308-09	£0 1s. 4½d.	1325-26	
1309-10	£0 3s. 9d.	1326-27	
1310-11	£0 6s. 11½d.	1327-28	£0 2s. 11d.
1311-12	£0 12s. 11½d.	1328-29	
1312-13		1329-30	£0 0s. 11½d.
1313-14	£0 3s. 0d.	1330-31	£0 3s. 3¾d.
1314-15	£0 8s. 7¾d.	1331-32	£0 3s. 9¾d.
1315-16	£0 3s. 5½d.	1332-33	£0 2s. 5d.
1316-17	£0 2s. 8½d.	1333-34	
1317-18	£0 18s. 1¾d.	1334-35	
1318-19		1335-36	£0 10s. 1½d.
1319-20		1336-37	£0 2s. 6½d.
1320-21	£0 1s. 1¾d.	1337-38	
1321-22		1338-39	
1322-23	£0 11s. 5¾d.	1339-40	
1323-24		1340-41	£0 4s. 5½d.

* After 1340-41 reliefs were not listed separately from perquisites of court on manorial accounts.

⁴⁰ I. Kershaw, 'The great Famine and agrarian Crisis in England 1315-1322; *Past and Present*, no. 59 (1973).

⁴¹ M.M. Postan and J.Z. Titow, *op. cit.*, and Z. Razi, *op. cit.*, 35, 38-9.

The figures for reliefs suggest that there were indeed severe harvests in the early fourteenth century, particularly between 1315 and 1318. These pushed up grain prices and did result in an increase in transfers of land, probably both from a rise in mortality and an increase in sales of land. The rapid return to normal total relief figures suggests that this rise in mortality was short-term, and the continuation of high entry fines suggests that any mortality was followed by land being rapidly taken up by other villagers.

iii

There is no direct mention of the Black Death in the Chartham documents, but all indications suggest that this was the decisive factor in the change in numbers in the later Middle Ages. Information about the effect of this first visitation of plague on Chartham is contained in a survey, which was made in the fifteenth century, but which includes also details of the land and tenants soon after the Black Death.⁴² Comparison of tenant names in this part with late fourteenth-century court rolls, which survive from 1364 onwards, suggests that the survey refers to the tenantry in the early 1360s. It is impossible to know, however, whether the survey was made before or after the second plague outbreak of 1361-62. Additional evidence about demographic conditions in the later fourteenth century is provided by court rolls for the period 1364 to 1397.⁴³ These are useful for investigating the effect of later outbreaks of plague, following the Black Death.

Before discussing the tenant population in c. 1360, it should be emphasised that changes in the tenant numbers must be used with caution as an indication of the scale of mortality caused by the Black Death. It is likely that the death of tenants was followed rapidly by the taking up of the land by new tenants. Rapid transfer of land would be all the more likely where the pre-plague situation was one of considerable pressure for land.⁴⁴ The total number of tenants holding land in the early 1360s was about 95. This must be compared with a tenant population of about 215 between 1250 and 1270, which had probably been maintained through the first half of the fourteenth century. This suggests a mortality of around 50 per cent among tenants from the Black Death, and possibly also as a result of the plague outbreak of 1361-62, if the survey was made after that date.

⁴² This survey is discussed in Langridge, thesis, 81-3.

⁴³ C.C.A.L., Church Commissioners Deposits U 15 boxes 12 and 13.

⁴⁴ C. Howell, 'Peasant Inheritance Customs in the Midlands 1280-1700', in (Eds.) J. Goody, J. Thirsk and E.P. Thompson, *Family and Inheritance; Rural Society in western Europe 1200-1800* (Cambridge, 1970).

The size of the tenant population in the later decades of the fourteenth century can be calculated from a list of tenant names attached to the court roll for 1380–81. This shows the names of about 113 tenants.⁴⁵ The tenant population seems to have made little recovery from its major fall in the middle of the century. No returns for the Poll Tax of 1377 for Chartham have been located to corroborate this evidence.

The explanation for the failure of the population to recover from the Black Death mortality seems to have been the effects of further outbreaks of plague. These occurred nationally in 1361, 1369 and 1375.⁴⁶ A source of evidence on later fourteenth-century tenant mortality is the details of land transfers *post mortem* in the court rolls. These are shown in Table 3. The Chartham court rolls begin in 1364, thus no information is available relating to the plague of 1361. There is also a gap covering the period June 1369 to October 1370, so that the third outbreak of plague also cannot be investigated. Figures for reliefs *post mortem* do indicate exceptional mortality in 1375–76 which coincides with the fourth national plague outbreak. Only in this year did the number of reliefs *post mortem* exceed those for

TABLE 3. NUMBERS OF LAND TRANSFERS FROM COURT ROLLS
1364–1397.

Date of Session	Reliefs <i>Inter Vivos</i>	Reliefs <i>Post Mortem</i>	Total Reliefs	No of Sessions
December 1364–July 1365	5	0	5	4
October 1365–July 1366	6	3	9	3
September 1367–October 1367	8	0	8	2
October 1368–June 1369	10	2	12	5
October 1370–February 1371	6	0	6	2
October 1373–June 1374	15	5	20	5
December 1375–June 1376	10	15	25	3
October 1376–November 1376	8	2	10	2
November 1377–May 1378	5	3	8	4
October 1378–September 1379	15	2	17	3
October 1379–March 1380	26	1	27	4
September 1380–April 1381	12	6	18	4
September 1381–April 1382	17	1	18	4
October 1385–July 1386	16	0	16	4
October 1395–Whitsun 1396	11	0	11	5

⁴⁵ For discussion of this list see Langridge, thesis, 85–6.

⁴⁶ J. Hatcher, *Plague, Population and the English Economy 1348–1530* (1977), 25–6. For discussion of plague in Canterbury, particularly in 1375, see A.F. Butcher, 'English Urban Society and the Revolt of 1381', unpublished paper, Past and Present Society Conference (1981), 16.

transfers *inter vivos* in the later fourteenth-century court rolls. Tenant deaths in this year were five to six times above their normal figure. While emigration may have also helped keep the population from recovering its previous level, plague certainly continued to be an important factor keeping mortality high and preventing losses being made good.

It has been argued that the significance of the later outbreaks of plague lay in the fact that they caused greater mortality among children and young adults and thus brought about a long-term check on recovery from the initial mortality.⁴⁷ It is impossible to investigate the effects of plague on the age-structure of Chartham. There is evidence, however, of exceptionally high turnover in surnames in the second half of the fourteenth century. The evidence is shown in graph form in Fig. 1. Some of this turnover may reflect an increase in mobility, high mortality in towns in particular may have created demand for labour and opportunities which rural inhabitants migrated to meet. Some of this turnover, however, probably resulted from the failure of some families to produce a male heir. There was probably also an increase in marriages with outsiders by heiresses, and as this would have resulted in the disappearance of the surname, such marriages could also be reflected in the graph. Failure to produce male heirs could have been the result of a high death-rate among the younger members of the community. Some of the surnames which disappeared in this period were those of wealthy tenants. For example, one of the largest holdings in the 1360s was held by William Chartham, who continued to increase the size of his holding in the following decades.⁴⁸ However, no tenant of this surname appears in the later records, and it appears that William had no son. Similarly, the Nolding family were wealthy land holders in the 1360s when Thomas Nolding had one of the largest holdings in the manor.⁴⁹ The surname disappears from the court rolls after 1364 and later the holding was split up among the holdings of several tenants.

The graph showing continuity of surnames was compiled from all references to names in the later fourteenth-century court rolls. It shows that of the 73 families who survived the Black Death, 59 had disappeared by the early fifteenth century. They were replaced by new families, who presumably came from the surrounding area. Many of these, however, failed to survive in Chartham for more than

⁴⁷ Z. Razi, *op. cit.*, 139-51.

⁴⁸ Court rolls record purchases by William Chartham in 1380 and 1381. C.C.A.L., Church Commissioners Deposits U 15 boxes 12 and 13 and see Langridge, thesis, 95-6.

⁴⁹ C.C.A.L., Miscellaneous Accounts vol. 32 f.7 and Langridge, thesis, 97-8.

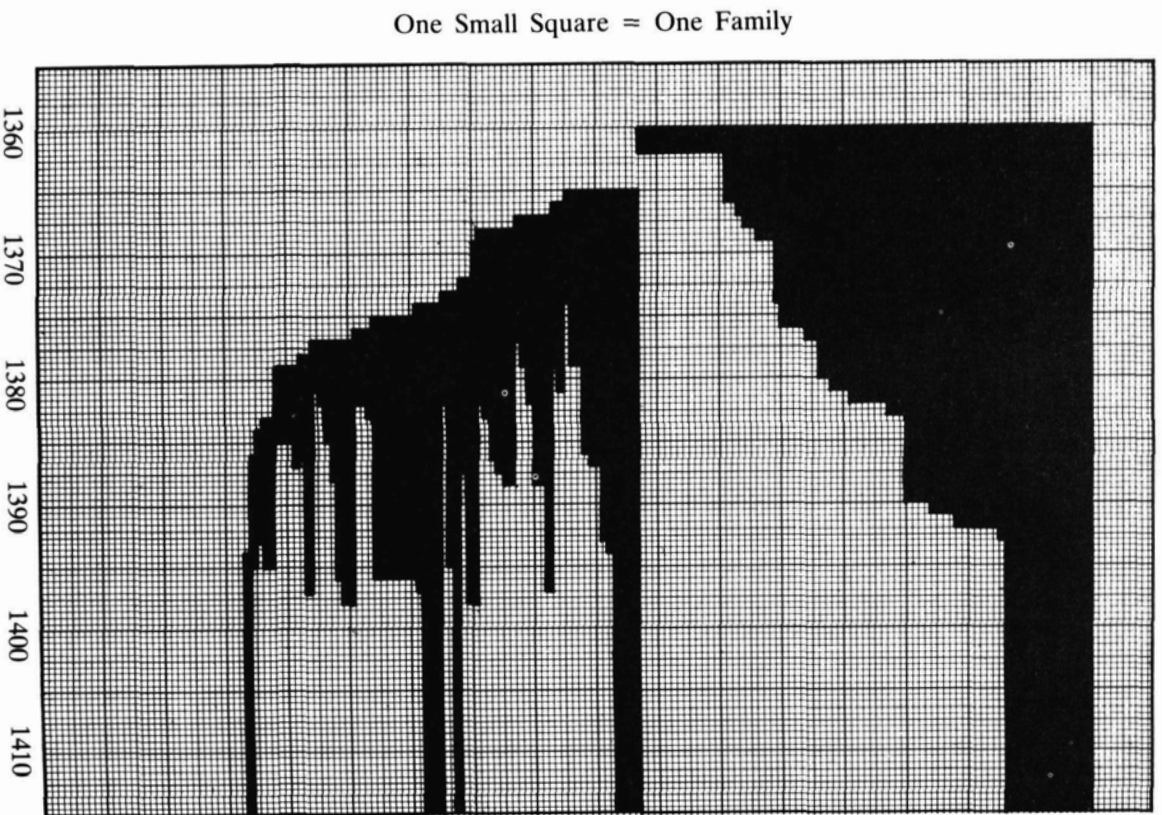


Fig. 1. Continuity of Surnames, 1360-1415.

a decade or two. Thus, the demographic changes of the late fourteenth century appear to have brought about an increase in mobility, as newcomers were drawn in to take up the land of families without heirs, and to marry heiresses. The evidence suggests that this process continued into the early fifteenth century, and that little stability in inhabitants had been achieved before that date.

There are signs that the reduction in population in the fourteenth century had profound effects on the manor. The reduction in the number of holdings was accompanied by redistribution of land and increasing stratification, with the appearance of a number of larger holdings. There were also changes in the administration of the manor, which also appear to have been brought about by the demographic changes. There was a reduction in the number of rent days from the 1350s. In the later fourteenth century, tenant services were increasingly being performed in full rather than partly commuted for cash as in the pre-Black Death period. This was evidently a response to rising costs of labour. The court rolls show that the manorial authority was attempting to control wage levels by distraining those who demanded rates in excess of those stipulated in the Statute of Labourers.⁵⁰ This change in the relationship between prices and wages brought about by the decline in the population also probably lay behind an increase in antagonism between Christ Church and its Chartham tenants in the last two decades of the century. Friction appears to have resulted from the reimposition of full services and the attempt to control wage levels. Following the violence of the Peasants' Revolt, in which at least one Chartham man took a leading part in the Canterbury area, there was a change in manorial policy and the abandonment of direct management of the Chartham demesne in the 1390s.⁵¹

The fifteenth century survey provides a figure for the tenant population of Chartham in about 1450. At this time there were about 65 tenants. This shows a fall from about 95 tenants in the 1360s and about 113 in the 1380s. The continued decline in tenant numbers seems to indicate a continued decline in the population of the community as a whole during the first half of the fifteenth century. It should be noted, however, that the increasing size of the largest holdings was not merely the result of population decline; thus, it is possible that the number of people did not fall as much as the number

⁵⁰ C.C.A.L., Church Commissioners Deposits U15 box 13 (1379 and 1380), discussed in Langridge, thesis, 105.

⁵¹ W.A. Flaherty, 'The great Rebellion in Kent in 1381 illustrated from the Public Records', *Arch Cant.*, iii (1860). C.C.A.L., Prior's Accounts no. 2 (1396-97) and Langridge, thesis, 117-21.

of holdings. However, further evidence of this decline in population is the number of individuals appearing in court rolls. Although it can only be a rough guide, the numbers of people appearing at the manorial court and the amount of business would seem to relate to the overall size of the population. When the numbers of names and the number of cases appearing in court rolls of the early fifteenth century for Chartham are compared with those of the later fourteenth century, a noticeable decline is evident, although roughly similar numbers of court sessions survive for the two periods, eighty-nine sessions for the late fourteenth century and ninety-five for the early fifteenth century.

TABLE 4. MANORIAL COURT BUSINESS AT CHARTHAM 1364-1467

Type of Case	Number of Cases	
	1364-97	1406-67
Reliefs on Land Transfers	267	135
Debt/Breach of Contract	66	46
Trespass	113	22
Breach of the Peace	51	25
Other	24	2
Total	521	230

The names in the court rolls suggest that the total number of adult males in Chartham in the later fourteenth century was around 100, while by the early fifteenth century this had fallen to between 65 and 80. The decline in the business of the court appears to relate to this demographic decline rather than to any change in the function of the court. The continued reduction in the number of holdings saw continued polarization between wealthy tenant families amassing holdings of between 100 and 200 acres, who were also often involved in leasing demesne and in industrial enterprises such as tanning and fulling, while at the other end of the social structure were holders of medium-sized and smallholdings.⁵²

It has been argued that the continued decline of population in the early fifteenth century was also due to the high mortality due to recurring outbreaks of plague, and the long-term effects on the age structure of the population. John Hatcher, using the Christ Church obituary lists, argues that there were deaths from plague in Canter-

⁵² See Langridge, thesis, 129-37 and 144-6.

bury at least once a decade between 1410 and 1490.⁵³ There is little available evidence for Chartham which might indicate years of exceptional mortality. The court rolls which survive from 1405 to 1468 include a total of only nine reliefs on transfers of land *post mortem*. There may have been evasion of payment, or increased use of enfeoffment which would appear as a transfer *inter vivos*. It is noticeable, however, that four of the nine *post mortem* transfers concerned the transfer of land to a female rather than a male heir. A high proportion of female heirs would occur in a declining population. This backs up the decline in the tenant population and in the numbers of people appearing in the court rolls in indicating continued demographic decay in the early fifteenth century.

It is possible for the first time in the later fifteenth century to investigate family size, in order to try and calculate whether there was a positive replacement rate.⁵⁴ This can be done from wills which name children as beneficiaries. From these it is possible to calculate the average number of recorded children per family. However, as in many medieval documents, fewer daughters than sons are recorded. On the assumption that the girls are under-represented in wills and that in reality numbers of sons and daughters were roughly equal, a corrected average has also been calculated.

TABLE 5. FAMILY SIZE FROM WILLS 1466-1499

No. of Testators	No. of Recorded Children	Average No. Children Per Family	No. of Children Corrected *	Corrected Average
26	43	1.65	66	2.53

* Correction for under-representation of girls.

These results must be handled with some caution firstly because of the small size of the sample. Also, wills tend to over-represent the wealthier members of the community, whose families may have been slightly larger than those of other social groups.⁵⁵ However, the corrected average of 2.53 is very close to the figure derived from censuses of serfs in the West Midlands in 1476 of 2.32.⁵⁶ As the Chartham figure may be slightly higher than the figure for the whole

⁵³ J. Hatcher, *op. cit.*, 15-7 and 28.

⁵⁴ J. Hatcher, *op. cit.*, 26-9.

⁵⁵ Z. Razi, *op. cit.*, 140-3.

⁵⁶ C. Dyer, *op. cit.*, 230-2.

community, being based on the wealthier families, it seems that there was only slight capacity for growth in the late fifteenth century. Because there is so little evidence about mortality in Chartham in the late fifteenth century, it is necessary to use evidence about the demand for land and economic developments to show if there are any signs of an upturn in population by 1500.

What information is available shows a complex picture. There are certainly wealthy families who were building up large holdings in Chartham at this time, through continued purchase of land, often over several generations. These holdings may have been used for livestock production rather than predominantly for arable. The small group of families who created large holdings over several generations were clearly successful in producing male heirs. The continued acquisition of land does suggest that there was a market for agricultural produce for example from urban dwellers. Some of these prosperous families not only had tenant land, but also took up leases of the Chartham demesne. The first farmer of the demesne after direct management was abandoned in the 1390s was William Thruxsted, a later William Thruxsted was the largest tenant in the manor in the survey of c. 1450.⁵⁷ Some of the other wealthy tenants had connections with industrial activity. The Bolles, who were tenants and farmers of the demesne in several leases in the mid-fifteenth century, were also involved in tanning. Both Thomas and William Bolle appear in fifteenth-century court rolls for breaches of the assize of leather and were referred to as tanners.⁵⁸

The leasing of the demesne increased the land available in the parish, but this was not taken up by the poorer members of the community. Demesne land was one of the assets of the wealthier villagers, and assisted in the emergence of yeomen farmers. For this reason, the movement of arrears of the demesne farmers may bear little relation to general demographic or economic developments in the population as a whole, despite the attempt to show that a general peak in farmers' arrears on the Christ Church estates in the mid-fifteenth century reflects economic and demographic stagnation.⁵⁹

There are some other signs however, that demand for land had slackened since the late fourteenth century. This can be seen firstly

⁵⁷ C.C.A.L., Chartham Bedels Rolls (Farmer's Account 1400-01), and Prior's Accounts no. 2 (1396-97).

⁵⁸ The connection between the accumulation of capital by tenants and the leasing of demesne is discussed by B. Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and its Estates in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1977), 290.

⁵⁹ M.N. Carlin, 'Christ Church, Canterbury and its Lands from the Beginning of the Priorate of Thomas Chillenden to the Dissolution (1391-1540)', University of Oxford unpublished D.Phil. thesis, (1970), 120-4.

from the reduction in the number of land transactions appearing in the court rolls. The number for the early fifteenth century was about half that recorded for the later fourteenth century. The length of the demesne leases, which remained usually less than 10 years up until the sixteenth century, may have also been the result of a fairly slack demand for land.⁶⁰

Conditions for the tenants of the smaller holdings were clearly very different from those of the wealthy yeomen group. Inability to accumulate capital would have prevented their purchase of land, while the changes in wages may have made by-employment an attractive way to increase the income derived from their small holdings of land. The presence of two fulling mills in Chartham from the late fourteenth century onwards indicates the growth of the rural cloth industry in the village. This may have supplemented the incomes of the smallholders and landless, as well as opportunities for wage-earning on the holdings of wealthy tenants and demesne farmers.

For the bulk of the fifteenth century there are no figures available relating to tenant rents and arrears, as the tenant rents were included with the lease of the demesne. However, from the early 1490s they appear separately on bedel's accounts, of which six consecutive accounts survive for the 1490s. Two items can be noted from these. Firstly, there was a fall in total tenant rent between 1493-94 and 1494-95, and also there were unusually high arrears in 1498-99 which totalled more than one year's rent. It is possible that this year may have seen a crisis such as epidemic disease.

TABLE 6. ASSIZE RENT AND ARREARS 1490s.
(From Bedel's Accounts)

Date	Assize Rent	Arrears
1492-93	£17 6s. 8d.	0*
1493-94	£17 0s. 0d.	£2 12s. 8d.
1494-95	£15 6s. 8d.	£2 3s. 0d.
1496-97	£15 6s. 8d.	£7 16s. 0d.
1497-98	£15 6s. 8d.	£8 4s. 8d.
1498-99	£15 6s. 8d.	£18 19s. 0d.

* No arrears this year because first account.

⁶⁰ C.C.A.L., Boxes in basement nos. 43 and 80.

The fifteenth century appears to have been a period of considerable and profound change in Chartham, as in other communities, with considerable restructuring of the community. These significant changes in social structure and in land holding must have stemmed from the continued downward trend in the population from the Black Death onwards. Certainly in the first half of the century there are no signs that this decline had ceased. The picture for the second half of the century is one that gives little indication of an upturn, although the will evidence from the last decades shows slight capacity for growth through the birth rate. If the high tenant arrears in 1498–99 were indeed the result of dislocation from disease, the population may have still been suffering from high mortality.

iv

While the tenant population continued to fall to a lower level, there are signs for the first time of a rise in the total population of Chartham in the course of the sixteenth century. It is, therefore, clear that at this time the tenant population was moving in opposition to the general demographic trend. There is evidence that this was happening in other areas in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.⁶¹ Economic factors must have been important at Chartham in determining the size of the tenant population. The survey dated 1500 reveals changes in the tenant economy.⁶² By 1500 a considerable number of outsiders can be identified holding land in Chartham. These included members of the gentry such as Elizabeth Lady Burgavenny, the widow of Sir George Nevill, who had owned extensive lands in Kent and elsewhere. Citizens of Canterbury also appear to have been extensively involved in the holding of agricultural land in this period. The third largest tenant holding was owned by a wealthy Canterbury man named Henry Gosebourne, who described himself in his will dated 1522 as 'Gentleman and Alderman of Burgate ward of the seid setie', and who had also accumulated lands in other rural areas, Shave, Bransett in Romney Marsh, Petham, Waltham, Hakyngton, Wingham, Goodneston and Monkton as well as property in the city of Canterbury.⁶³ Such men appear not only among the largest tenants; the will of Edward Bolney of Canterbury who had a small amount of tenant land in Chartham mentions land in several other rural parishes near Canterbury.⁶⁴

⁶¹ C. Dyer, *op. cit.*, 240–1.

⁶² C.C.A.L., Miscellaneous Accounts vol. 32 ff.84–8.

⁶³ K.A.O. PRC 32/13 f.109.

⁶⁴ K.A.O. PRC 32/15 f.90.

The will of one such outsider indicates that this land may well have been sub-let. Paul Rychmond, who had both tenant and demesne land in Chartham in the 1520s, referred in his will to the sub-tenants who were occupying his Chartham properties.⁶⁵ These tenants, therefore, appear to have been rentiers, whose interest in agricultural land may have been as a form of investment. This may in part reflect a lack of investment opportunities in the urban centres, but also suggests that there was a market for agricultural produce and a demand for land from smallholders and those with no land who took on sub-leases.

It is possible to use the early sixteenth-century wills to calculate numbers of children per family. As for the late fifteenth century, wills probably over-represent the wealthier sections of the community. For the less wealthy, it is likely that it was those heads of families who died leaving young children who had most reason to make a will. These facts may mean that the wills distort the real family size. However, they suggest slight capacity for growth in the early sixteenth century.

TABLE 7. FAMILY SIZE FROM WILLS 1500-58

No. of Testators	No. of Recorded Children	Average No. Children Per Family	No. of Children Corrected *	Corrected Average
28	53	1.89	62	2.21

* Correction for under-representation of girls.

There are also signs of improvement in the demand for land in the early sixteenth century. Bedel's accounts for the 1520s and 1530s suggest that arrears of tenant rents had fallen since the fifteenth century, although a sharp rise in 1531-32 and 1532-33 may have been due to a crisis in these years, perhaps disease.⁶⁶ Quickening demand for land may have also led to changes in the terms of the demesne leases. By the 1540s the lease of the demesne had lengthened to 21 years, while changes in the rent of the demesne with the grain rent being reduced while the cash rent rose from £10 to £20 per annum probably represent a real increase.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ K.A.O. PRC 17/27 f.248.

⁶⁶ C.C.A.L., Miscellaneous Accounts vol. 15 ff.29, 71, 141 and vol. 16 ff.19,76,117.

⁶⁷ C.C.A.L., Box in basement no. 43.

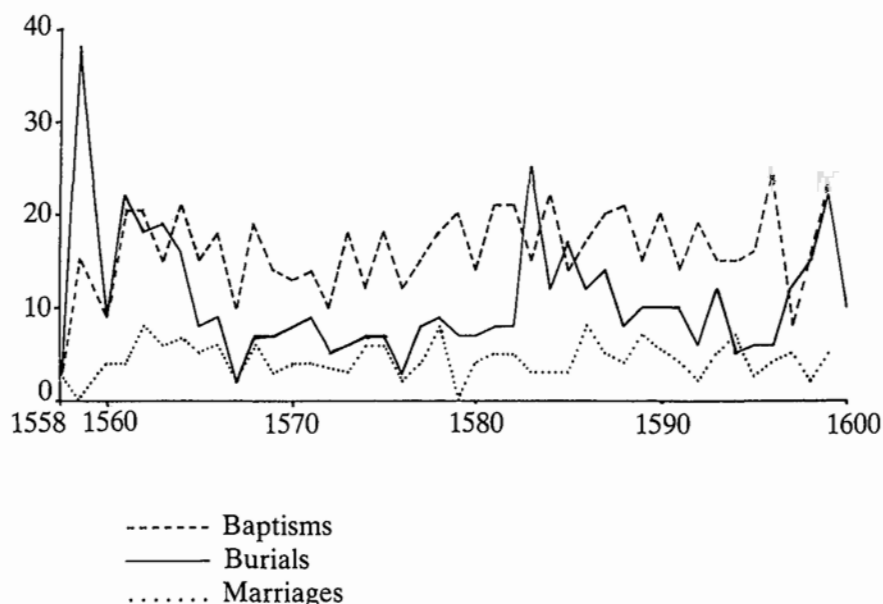


Fig. 2. Annual Totals of Baptisms, Burials and Marriages. November 1558 to 1599.

From November 1558 the parish register makes it possible to look more closely at movements in the population of Chartham. The annual totals of baptisms, marriages and burials are shown in graph form in Fig. 2. The graph shows that in the later sixteenth century there were three years when there was abnormally high mortality. In 1559, burials reached a peak of 38, and the year is also noticeable for the complete absence of marriages, a further indication of epidemic disease. While the number of burials fell in the following year, as might be expected following a year of high mortality, burials were again above average in 1561. Deaths in 1559 were concentrated during the winter and early spring months. This pattern is typical of an epidemic of influenza, and the date coincides with the national influenza epidemic of 1558–59.⁶⁸ A second year of high mortality can be identified in 1583 when 25 burials were recorded. The register shows members of the same family dying, which suggests again that epidemic disease was the cause. For example, Ellen the daughter of William Qusted was buried in January while her father was buried in

⁶⁸ F.J. Fisher, 'Influenza and Inflation in Tudor England', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., xviii (1965).

March. Deaths in this year were concentrated in the spring and early summer. Lastly, there were 22 recorded burials in 1599. In this year the deaths were also high in the winter and early spring and may have been due to influenza. This may have been related to the very poor harvests in the last decade of the century.⁶⁹

While the burial figures show that disease continued to affect the village in a number of crisis years in the sixteenth century, the most significant feature of the evidence is that apart from these three years of higher mortality, baptisms exceeded burials from the late 1560s to the end of the century. This evidence, which parallels that found in other sixteenth-century communities, indicates that the population was expanding at least from the middle of the century.⁷⁰

The early sixteenth-century wills show only a low replacement rate, but these may reflect somewhat distorted figures. In order to obtain a larger cross-section of the community, a small study of family size was made using the parish register. This traced references to children baptized to couples whose marriage is recorded in the first seven years of the register. The results are shown below.

TABLE 8. FAMILY SIZE FROM THE PARISH REGISTER 1558-87

No. of Families	No. of Baptisms	Infant Deaths Recorded *	Surviving Children	Average No. Children Per Family
16	57	7	50	3.12

* Deaths of Children in the first three years of life.

Of 35 marriages recorded between 1558 and 1565, baptisms can be traced for only 16 families. It is not possible to tell whether the remaining couples were childless or whether they had left the village before the birth of children. There was one very large family recorded in the register, eleven children were born to Laurence Farbrace and his wife, all of whom appear to have survived past their third birthday. The average number of children per couple does suggest that the birth rate was rising in comparison with the estimates

⁶⁹ P.J. Bowden, 'Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits and Rents', in (Ed.) J. Thirsk, *The agrarian History of England and Wales*, iv (Cambridge, 1967), 593-695, 815-57.

⁷⁰ M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities, English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974), 18-21, 23-6 for Cambridgeshire, and K. Wrightson and D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village, Terling 1525-1700* (New York, 1979), 45-7 for Essex statistics.

of family size available from wills for the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

The divergence between the evidence of a rising birth rate in the later sixteenth century and the static tenant population, which rent books between 1505 and 1591 show as remaining between 43 and 47 tenants, can only be explained on the basis that an increasing proportion of the population were wage earners or sub-tenants.⁷¹ This was clearly a very significant development. The appearance of absentee rentiers among the tenants and demesne lessees created a need for wage labour which had not existed when the land was farmed by its holders.

Some indication of the proportions of tenants and non-tenants can be obtained from the names appearing in the parish register. Two sample periods were taken, each of five years, to compare with the number of tenants listed in a rent book dated 1588. Between 1575 and 1579, the names of 71 adult males appeared in the parish register, while between 1580 and 1584 the names of 96 adult males were recorded. These figures compare with 45 tenants in the 1588 rent book. As many as one-half of the adult male population of late sixteenth-century Chartham appear to have been non-tenants.

The social structure in later sixteenth-century Chartham must have been affected by the number of landholders who were not resident in the parish. Such men appear to have played no part in administering the community and the burden of office holding fell instead on the holders of medium-sized and smallholdings who were residents of the village. At the same time the growth in the poorer sections of the community was accompanied by signs of increased poverty. There were bequests to the poor of the parish in several wills made in the 1540s and 1550s, although none appears before this date.⁷²

While there are clear signs of an expanding population in Chartham by the late sixteenth century, it is likely that the size of the population in 1600 had still not regained the level achieved by the thirteenth century. There is no evidence that the growth had put pressure on landed resources, or that demand had reached the level of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The long demographic decline of the later Middle Ages had had profound effects on the community. A major redistribution of land had taken place accompanied by increasing polarization between the wealthy yeomen farmers and the smallholders, and the creation of a number of very large holdings had apparently also been accompanied by the

⁷¹ C.C.A.L., Church Commissioners 70363.

⁷² K.A.O. PRC 17/23 f.25, 17/26 f.269, 17/29 f.299, 17/30 f.277, 17/32 f.221, 17/32 f.147, 17/19 f.182.

consolidation of land into compact units. This change in the nature of the holdings may well have been encouraged by greater reliance on livestock rather than arable production.

V

The most distinctive feature of the demographic structure of Chartham is the early date of expansion, which can be identified by the late twelfth century. It appears that in east Kent, as in East Anglia, early population growth was accompanied by advanced agricultural techniques and urban development.

The end of the twelfth century may have been a turning point in this process of population expansion. Up to about 1200 there appear to have been adequate natural resources within the parish to meet the needs of this internally generated growth. However, the process of extending the tenant land did not continue during the thirteenth century. During this period emigration may have become necessary in order to ease pressure on landed resources. The evidence discussed shows that the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries were characterised by considerable population pressure, with considerable demand for land and high levels of entry fines. Despite short-term difficulties in the early fourteenth century through poor harvests, there is no evidence of a reversal of the population trend before the middle of the century.

It seems that epidemic disease, in the form of bubonic plague, in the mid-fourteenth century broke this pattern and set in motion a downward trend which continued through the later Middle Ages. During the later medieval period the decline in population resulted in profound changes in the distribution of land, the agricultural system and the social structure. As well as disease, migration appears to have played a part in these changes. Some families may have emigrated, drawn to the urban centres where there were new opportunities to be grasped, while an influx of newcomers appears to have come in to take the place of those who died or left the parish.

It is difficult to date precisely the beginnings of an upward trend in Chartham at the end of the medieval period. An increase in numbers of births in the late fifteenth century may have coincided with continued high mortality,⁷³ and expansion in the first half of the sixteenth century may have been wiped out by the influenza epidemic

⁷³ For discussion of the effect of the sweating sickness in the last decades of the fifteenth century, see R.S. Gottfried, 'Population, Plague and the Sweating Sickness: Demographic Movements in late fifteenth Century England', *Journ. British Studies*, xvii (1977).

in the 1550s. However, there are signs of upward movement in the population through rising numbers of births in the later sixteenth century. By 1600, however, it is likely that the population of Chartham was still below that of the early thirteenth century.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to Mr. A.F. Butcher for his encouragement, criticism and advice over a period of years, to Dr. C. Dyer for his comments and suggestions on the preparation of this paper and to Miss A. Oakley, Archivist of the Canterbury Cathedral Archives and Library and her staff for providing many of the documents on which it was based.