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DARTFORD 1660 TO c. 1720

K.M. ROOME

About 1697, Celia Fiennes wrote:

'I went to Dartford, much on the hills and all in sight of the Thames and see the shippes sail along to Dartfford 6 mile, a little neate town.'¹

The Hearth Tax Assessment of 1664 shows Dartford as having 303 houses, mostly with three or four hearths. The town was concentrated chiefly in the Highstreet, Overy Liberty, Spital Street (sometimes Upstreet) and Lowfield. The Constable, Henry Draper, had three hearths, William Huish at the Cocke Inn thirteen and John Twisleton, presumably at Horsman's Place, Lowfield, nine.

The Compton Census 1676 shows Dartford as 472 Conformists, no Papists and 28 Non-Conformists and this would imply a population of between 1,000 and 1,200, including children. There is nothing to suggest in the parish registers any substantial change in this estimate during the period under review. Illegitimacy was uncommon.

For some years after 1702 the practice was to note the deceased's trade or occupation in the burial register and these entries, coupled with the Rochester wills and inventories are the main sources of the following table, resulting in a general picture of the townspeople, say, about 1700 and just earlier.

ABBREVIATIONS

Ac:	Churchwardens' Accounts
B:	Burial Register
B & S:	Bargain & Sale
C:	Christenings Register
PI:	Probate Inventory
R:	Church Rate Book
WRF:	Will of Richard Feilder
WRG:	Will of Robert Glover
WTP:	Will of Thomas Pearcy

¹ *Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, Cresset Press, 1947.

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NAME	TRADE	DATE	SOURCE
Richard Richards	Ale seller	1709	B
Mary Stansted	Apple seller	1710	B
Henry Loaft	Baker	1698	R
William Blackwell	Baker	1700	Ac
William Cleare	Baker	1700	Ac
Robert Pead ²	Beliman	1707	Ac
Samuel Packer	Bellman	1708	Ac
Thomas Pain	Blacksmith	1706	B
John Clare	Blacksmith	1709	B
John Clare	Blacksmith	1712	B
Thomas Lemon	Blacksmith	1712	B
Richard Goldsmith	Blacksmith	1712	B
Daniel Ward	Blacksmith	1689	WRG
Thomas Strete	Blacksmith	1697	Ac
John Dickson	Borsholder	1670	Ac
William Smith	Bricklayer	1706	B
Nicholas Dixon	Bricklayer	1706	B
Thomas Stephens	Bricklayer	1710	B
John Sharpe	Bricklayer	1712	B
Phillip Needle	Bricklayer	1705	B
Henry Hastings	Butcher	1706	B
Solomon Pauley	Butcher	1718	B
Nathaniel Brandon	Carpenter	1706	B
William Franckwell ³	Carpenter	1699	Will
Thomas Miller	Carpenter	1698	Deed
Robert Pean	Chimney sweeper	1706	B
Henry Eldred	Chirugion	1702	B
George Eldred	Chirugion	1706	B
Jeremiah Edwards	Clerk	1710	B
Thomas Percy ⁴	Collar Maker	1694	Will
William Covell	Collar Maker	1694	PI
Abraham Hill	Cordwainer	1714	PI
William Hills	Cordwainer	1696	B & S
John Row	Coachman	1706	B
Stephen Weller	Crier	1706	B
William Constabul	Docktar	1669	C
Abraham Peeters ⁵	Dog whiper	1662	Ac
William Stephen	Dog whiper	1708	B
William Blazbe	Farmer	1705	B
Colin Burr	Farmer	1706	B
William Hazelwood ⁶	Farmer	1687	PI
Samuel Hazelwood	Farmer	1698	Deed
John South	Gardiner	1683	WRF
William Stanley	Gardiner	1710	B

² The parish provided a bell and six(e) hour(e) glass(e) and a new coat periodically.

³ K.M. Roome, 'Some Dartfordians of the Late Seventeenth Century', *Dartford H. & A. Soc.*, Newsletter no. 26.

⁴ Newsletter no. 26, *supra*.

⁵ Paid for whipping the dog(g)s out of the church 1662/4.

⁶ He had five horses harnis [harness] and chaise for hire. Newsletter no. 26, *supra*.

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NAME	TRADE	DATE	SOURCE
Henry Whitehead	Gardiner	1712	B
William Fawcett	Gent	1696	C
Henry Elwood	Gent	1699	C
John Browne	Glazier	1716	PI
William Clare (Cleare)	Glazier	1699	Ac
John Blackwell	Grocer	1706	B
James Mappin	Gunsmith	1710	B
Simon Alder	Hatter	1706	B
Edward Duffen	Hoyman	1711	B
Phillip Ellery	Hoyman	1712	B
John Ward	Hoyman	1684	WTP
William Cotterell	Husbandman	1679	B
William Painter Jun	Husbandman	1706	B
George Swift	Inn holder	1711	B
Abram Hill (of the Swan)	Inn holder	1718	B
William Huish Cocke Inn	Inn holder	1693	WTF
Francis Eldred	Inn holder	1690	PI
Wid. Eldred	Inn holder	1690	PI
William Johnson ⁷	Inn holder	1700	PI
Thomas Combe	Labourer/Labor	1705	B
James Mohun	Labourer/Labor	1706	B
Richard Streate	Labourer/Labor	1708	B
John Williams	Labourer/Labor	1709	B
John Wheeler	Labourer/Labor	1709	B
John Birt	Labourer/Labor	1710	B
John Brazier	Labourer/Labor	1710	B
Thomas Peach	Labourer/Labor	1711	B
Henry Percy	Labourer/Labor	1711	B
Mis Tulie	Landlady at the Paper Mills	1686	Ac
William Baker	Locksmith	1708	PI
Richard Shott	Maltster/Baker	1675	Will
Samuel Hazelwood Sen.	Maltster/Baker	1698	Deed
Robert Huckford	Maltster/Baker	1688	Ac
Ralfe Blackwill	Maltster/Baker	1685	Ac
Wid ^o Hockford	Maltster/Baker	1689	Ac
William Durnell	Maltster/Baker	1692	Ac
Thomas Dean	Maltster/Baker	1693	Ac
William Mullender	Mariner	1704	B
William Pettett	Merchant	1710	B
Henry Franckwell ³	Millwright	1699	Will
William Hills	Musicianer	1696	B&S
— Spence	Officer of Excise	1716	B
Ambrose Wood	Papermaker	1709	B
Thomas ffarnell	Papermaker	1710	B
George Blackwell	Papermaker	1710	B
James Matthew	Papermaker	1712	B
William Wood ⁸	Papermaker	c. 1700	Deed
William Hinton	Pentioner	1706	B

⁷ He was connected with several inns. Newsletter no. 26, *supra*.

⁸ Occupied a mansion house and three mills.

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NAME	TRADE	DATE	SOURCE
John Eve	Pentioner	1712	B
William Jefferies	Pipemaker	1710	B
William Clare	Plumer	1697	Ac
Henry Hopkins	Plumer	1697	Ac
Simon Beadle	Sawyer	1709	B
Henry Marsh	Sawyer	1687	Ac
Thomas Walston ⁹	Scavelman	1713	PI
Mrs Johnson	Semstris	1690	R
Edward Darke	Servant	1693	WRF
Thomas Shaw	Shoemaker	1709	B
Thomas Carries	Shoemaker	1710	B
William Pierce	Shopkeeper	1706	B
Andrew Shelley	Soldier	1697	C
John Coleman	Soldier	1688	B
Edward Hutchison	Soldier	1706	B
Thomas Shorin	Smith	1702	B
Daniel ffrankwell	Tanner	1706	B
Charles Lunt	Tanner	1709	B
Sampson Wood	Tanner	1696	B&S
John Wood	Tanner	1678	B&S
Adam Pye	Tapster	1709	B
Thomas Gurrey	Taylor	1709	B
William James	Taylor	1710	B
Thomas Cross	Taylor	1696	PI
Robert Thompson	Taylor	1696	Dunkin p. 394
Robert Swift	Victualler	1706	B
Robert Glover, the elder ¹⁰	Victualler/Vintner	1689	WRG
William Baker	Watchmaker	1708	B
John Holden ¹¹	Waterman	1688	PI
James Goldsmith	Wheeler	1708	B
Richard Feilder ¹²	Yeoman	1693	WRF

Being on Watling Street, a main highway, a day's journey from London and the last port of call from the Channel ports, Dartford suffered badly from the plague of 1665/6. The mortality rate began to rise in the autumn of 1665 and, in June and July of 1666, there were funerals almost daily, sometimes two or three in one day.¹³ A tenth of the population perished. A child of Henry Lawrence was buried on the 2nd of September 1665, his wife and another child on the 4th of September, a maid on the 7th of September and three children on the 24th, 25th and 26th of October. Mr Lawrence was presumably a person of some consequence, his house having seven hearths. Many well-

⁹ A scavelman was employed to scour waterways.

¹⁰ K.M. Roome, 'Robert Glover Vintner of Dartford', Newsletter no. 24.

¹¹ Newsletter no. 26, *supra*.

¹² K.M. Roome, 'The Goods of Richard Feilder', Newsletter no. 22.

¹³ *Vide* Newsletter no. 22, and John Dunkin, *History and Antiquities of Dartford*, 1844, 383, 386.

known families were bereaved, e.g. ffeilder, Lurchin, Careless, Glover, Pearcey, ffrye, Ellery, etc. There was a peste house, a new Buckett, a Roape and Irons to the well there being paid for in July 1666.

A sharp increase in mortality occurs in the registers in 1719/20 when the more or less average of fifty a year rose to 93 and 73. The highest was between late July and mid-September 1719. This indicates an epidemic of some kind.

As authorised by the laws first intended as a protection for grain, the Churchwardens paid for the heads of creatures specified as vermin.¹⁴ Of the many designated animals, foxes, badgers and hedgehogs were exterminated in Dartford. Hedgehogs were the most common, sometimes ten or more a year. The statutory rate for a badger or fox of 1s. was paid, but 4d. for a hedgehog instead of the official 2d. From 1696, polecats were included (without any apparent reason why not before) but 1s. was paid instead of the statutory 1d. Once in 1676, 4d. was given for Bould Finches heads and Tom Tits heads. Bullfinches 'or other Byrde that devoureth the blowth of Fruite' were classified as vermin by the Act of 1566 (8 Eliz. 1 c. 15) as extended. An unusual entry in 1665 reads 'pd. Wid^o Welland's man for three hedgehogs and waiting for one'. 1s. 4d. was paid, i.e. for four.

A vast number of people were given poor relief, the standard rate being 2d. a head. It is not always clear from the Churchwardens' accounts (which appear sometimes to have been written retrospectively and possibly duplicated in some entries) on what dates money was paid and descriptions of poor(e) man, and poor traveller may be synonymous. However, many soldiers and seamen passed through the town and the record of them is somewhat clearer.

Distinguishing between civilian and service categories, four poor(e) men were described in 1667 as burnt out by the fire in London and women with children from Ireland were assisted at various times. One woman, with two children, en route for Canterbury was burnt out in Ireland and landed at Haven in Cumberland.

To and from London and Dover and other Kent ports, Deal and Sandwich, were regular destinations. So was Flanders. Also mentioned are Northampton, Summerzet [Somerset], Sheere, Kinstone [Kingston], Weymouth [Weymouth], Scotland, Calgrave in Leicestershire, Eddingeborough [Edinburgh], Dunkirk, Ostend and Ghent. From farther afield, were three 'Polonia' men, four poor(e) men that were slaves in Turkey, and a family from the West Indies.

Entries from the 1670s onwards seem to reflect the Dutch and French

¹⁴ Vide generally F.D. Johns and K.M. Roome, 'Payment for Vermin in Churchwardens' Accounts', *Journal of Kent Local History*, no. 16.

wars. Seamen who had lost their ships (sometimes by fire) came followed increasingly by a procession of soldiers and seamen singly, in pairs or groups of a dozen or so. Mostly they came back from France or Flanders via Dover, Deal and Sandidge [Sandwich]. Some were sick, lame or wounded. Sailors came through en route for other ports, Yarmouth, Hull, Leaverpool [Liverpool] and Portsmouth. In June 1679, there was a poor soldier from Tangiere [Tangiers].

From 1708/9, presumably following the successful campaigns of the Dukes of Marlborough and Ormond, parties of French prisoners were given assistance, about 200 in all.

Another traveller, James Brome, visited Dartford at the end of his tour, and wrote:

'But on the 21th of September the Festival of St Matthew, our Journey began to draw near to an end for our last Stage being by Gravesend (a town notorious as well for its Block-Houses opposite each other, as the great conveniency of a passage in Wherries every Tide up and down the River Thames) to Dartford, a market town of no small account for all sort of Grain, by reason of its Vicinity to the Grand Emporium of this Nation, we departed thence to the City, and arrived again in London in great Health and Safety, after some months Circuit about the Maritime Coasts of Great Britain'¹⁵

There was a market house at the Church end of the Highstreet, (with the Grammar School in the room above). Prices for wheat are quoted in Rider's *Almanack* in 1676,¹⁶ i.e.

1676 5 Quarters of Wheat sold at Dartford £7 10s.

1676 6 Quarters of Wheat sold at Dartford £8 11s.

1677 Sold 6 Quarters of Wheat £9

Disappointingly little detailed evidence of local agriculture appears to be available. Wheat, misling, rye, oats, barley, pease and hops were grown on Richard Feilder's farm at Stanham,¹⁷ four acres of the parish land in the saltmarsh were under hay which was mown and sold regularly and bean(e)s were sold from other parish land.¹⁸ There was a cherry orchard in Overy Liberty.¹⁹ The Twisleton Estate Map 1707 in Dartford Central Library shows hop gardens almost bordering the Highstreet and cherry orchards at Wilmington where there is documentation of hops, oats, barley, wheat, flax and turnips being grown.²⁰ Doubtless there were similar crops in other villages in the Darent Valley. Madder was introduced in 1660.²¹

¹⁵ James Brome, *Travels Over England Scotland and Wales*, London, 1700, 287 (Courtesy British Library).

¹⁶ Dunkin, 251-2.

¹⁷ Newsletter no. 22 *supra*.

¹⁸ Churchwardens' accounts.

¹⁹ Church Rate Book 1701.

²⁰ I.E. Morris and K.M. Roome 'Seventeenth Century Wilmington', 1984.

²¹ Dunkin, 388.

There was a fish market understood to be in Lowfield more or less on what is now One Bell Corner.²² Also, there was a butter market, site uncertain. In 1682, Goodi Holden paid 4s. to the Churchwardens for 'stand in the butter house', and there are several references to repairs to it in their accounts.

The market tolls were leased out to different people from time to time and the leaseholder was assessed for poor rate on them, the usual assessment being £20.²³

In Stuart times the papermills at Bignores founded by Sir John Spilman, and believed to be the first commercial mills in England, were still working. There was also a brazell mill (formerly a cornmill) up the Creek by the millpond.²⁴

Dartford had four wharves or quays, and the Creek is navigable on the tide. There were watermen and hoymen living in the town. There is evidence in the Churchwardens' accounts of building materials for church repairs being brought up and carried from the Waterside, e.g. deales, sheet lead, sand and paving-tiles. By inference and no particular proof, corn and other market produce could have been carried by water from Dartford up to London.

A strange entry in the Churchwardens' accounts in 1664 reads: 'pd. a Waterman for bringing the Turnepick in the Chyd which was flung down the Creake . . . 6d.'

Floods were not uncommon when the Darent overflowed into the centre of the town by the Church. In 1688, King James II returning from Faversham to London via Dartford 'finds the waters out' and was carried by men to the corner of Bullace Lane (across the river by the Church on the London side) when the women spread their aprons for him to walk thereon.²⁵ In 1698, the Churchwardens' accounts relate 'to several poor distressed persons that were undone by the waters drowneing and overflowing the houses'.

The Vicar, Vavassor Powell, from 1644 to 1646 was a strong Puritan whose influence may have remained for some time. In 1643, a powder magazine was constructed in the Church thought generally to have been in the North chancel, and gunpowder was brought from London.²⁶

During the Commonwealth the Church was neglected but after the Restoration things changed.

Soon after 1660, a new Royal Arms was set up; scaffolding and

²² Dunkin, 251.

²³ Newsletter no. 24 re Robert Glover and Dunkin, generally.

²⁴ K.M. Roome, 'A New Look at the Dartford Iron Mills', Newsletter no. 19.

²⁵ Dunkin, 396.

²⁶ Dunkin, 382.

horse hyre [hire] to fetch the painter were paid for. In 1668, there was a new sundial.

The Visitation of 1663 called for repair of windows and glazing particularly on the north side, the font to be leaded, the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments to be set up, gudging of the bells and repairs to the Vicarage.

The 1670 Visitation specifies the need for total repair of the windows, the Communion table to be set up in the east window of the chancel and to be railed in as at Rochester Cathedral, repair of pews and chancel roof. Mr Powle, the vicar, was to be given notice not to fodder cattle any more in the churchyard.²⁷

From the Churchwardens' accounts it would seem that most, if not all, of the work was done. The Lord's Prayer and the Creed were set up in 1664, Mr Rogers being paid in 1665 'for righting the sentences in the Church', and in the same year John Needle was paid for whitening and colouring the Church. There appears to have been considerable repair work to the pews and roof of the North Aisle.

The glazing was a continual problem. In 1667, Edward Noakes was granted a fifteen year contract for its maintenance and periodical renewal.²⁸ In 1688, the contract was granted to George Swift for seven years, and later William Cleare was paid regularly for glazing work. It should perhaps be mentioned that these difficulties with the glazing were there well before the local gunpowder mills existed.

One Visitation dinner at least took place at the Cocke Inn in 1694.

The bells of Holy Trinity were rung to mark the passage through the town of people of note. Returning from exile, Charles II came through on 29th of May 1660 en route for London and was presented with an address by the several regiments of horse stationed on Dartford Heath under General Monk.²⁹ He passed in 1660 again with the Queen and in 1673 with his brother, then Duke of York. King William came through regularly about once a year to Flanders or return, and once from Ireland. Other passengers for whom the bells rang were Admiral Rosel, the Duke of Marlborough and the Duke of Ormond.

Events too were marked by ringing, e.g. Gunpowder Plot, every year; Proclamation of Charles the Second and his Coronation Day;³⁰ Victory Against the Dutch; The Glorious Revolution; Proclamation of King William and Queen Mary; Birth of the Duke of Gloucester; When Namur town was taken and Namur 'Carsell' was taken; Upon the Peace

²⁷ K.A.S. *Records* (New Series), 1991.

²⁸ Dunkin, 392.

²⁹ Dunkin, 387.

³⁰ Per Christening Register. 23 April 1661 Charles son of John Mocke that day King Charles the sec(k)ond was crowned.

being signed in 1687; Victory of the Duke of Marlborough (Blenheim?); arrival of the fleet under Sir Cloudesley Shovel; the taking of Bruges, Brussels and Ghent; Prince Eugén's Victory in Italy; for the Duke of Marlborough two days (Ramillies?); Victory at Lille; the taking of 'Monce'; the Queen's sucksection to the Crown (Anne); 'when we entered Dunkirk'. The ringers usual fee was 10s., but for a visit by the bishop the ringers received the princely sum of half a crown(e).