

London and the Provinces: The Association between the Capital and the Berkshire County Gentry of the Early Seventeenth Century

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The number of recent studies of the English localities during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries began in the mid nineteen-sixties with the appearance of Professor Alan Everitt's work on the county community in Kent.¹ Up until that time, it had been widely assumed that all the important political developments could be understood by focusing attention on Whitehall or the Palace of Westminster, and events in the provinces had been largely ignored. Everitt, however, demonstrated that the county was the seventeenth century Englishman's 'country' and that most of the political events which affected him or were shaped by him could be profitably studied in a county context. Similar studies for counties in other regions which appeared after Everitt's work, in particular Dr J.T. Cliffe's work on Yorkshire, Dr J.S. Morrill's on Cheshire and Dr. A. Fletcher's on Sussex,² confirmed a number of his findings about local society in the early seventeenth century and, as a picture of provincial society emerged, the impression was given that local communities throughout the country shared a number of basic characteristics. It was generally agreed that the county communities were insular and xenophobic, that their governing oligarchies were stable and deeply rooted in their local area, that provincial opinion was conditioned as much by local as by national issues, and that national political allegiance was inexorably tied up with power struggles within the shires.

However, it has more recently been suggested by Peter Clark that this emphasis on counties some considerable distance from London may have distorted 'our general view of the English provinces in this period'.³ Until recently, the work on Kent was the only detailed study of local society in a Home County, and Everitt and C.W. Chalklin had convincingly argued that the community in Kent

corresponded to the other more outlying regions in its insularity and the stability and continuity of its power structure.⁴ However, subsequent briefer investigations of the south east have suggested that the Kentish picture was not typical of this region,⁵ and this suggestion has been confirmed by a detailed study I have recently completed on the local community in Berkshire,⁶ in which I have tried to show that in a number of significant respects the situation was quite different from Kent. In particular, while Kentish society appears to have been little affected by the nearness of London, in Berkshire the proximity of the rapidly expanding capital was a major influence upon the local community, with the result that Berkshire society was far from introverted and that power in the shire changed hands continually and often rapidly.

The eastern end of Berkshire was only twenty miles, or about a half-day's ride from London, and the main West Country road from the capital ran the whole length of the shire from Maidenhead in the east to Hungerford in the west. Windsor had long been a royal residence, and the Stuart court hunted regularly in the Berkshire walks of Windsor Forest. In addition, by 1640 the prosperity of the county had for many years depended heavily upon the marketing of its agricultural produce at London. The capital was already receiving considerable amounts of grain down-river from Oxfordshire and Berkshire at the beginning of Elizabeth I's reign,⁷ and subsequently the size and importance of this trade increased steadily. When the flow of grain was cut off by the Royalist governor of Reading during the civil war there was real concern in both London and Reading,⁸ and some of Reading's inhabitants claimed that the stoppage was costing the town at least £2000 'in ready money' each week.⁹

All these observations point to the closeness of the link between Berkshire and London. Perhaps the best way, however, to illustrate the influence of the capital upon the county community is to examine in detail the important group of county or magisterial gentry families which, in the absence of any strong indigenous noble influence, dominated the local community on the eve of the civil war. This county group contained thirty-eight families, or about one-eighth of the total of 300 gentry families in the county at this time.¹⁰ The central feature which characterized them and marked them out from the remaining lesser or parochial gentry was that, whereas the influence of the lesser gentry was by and large restricted to the parishes where they resided and the immediate area surrounding, the county gentry were all capable of exercising some

measure of influence over the affairs of the county community as a whole. This influence was produced by, reflected in, and operated through their possession of a landed estate in the shire, their involvement in a web of friendship and kinship connections both within the shire and with important figures outside, and their exercising of important county administrative office, i.e., the magistracy and the shrievalty.

Lay social groupings in seventeenth century England were not rigid castes; rather their composition was responsive to changes in the material circumstance of individuals and families, the most common variables affecting this for the gentry being financial standing, the pattern of family descent, cousinage connections and attitude to the established religious system. Between 1500 and 1640 the impact of these variables produced marked fluctuations in the fortunes of many Berkshire families and as a result the membership of the county gentry group changed continually and rapidly. Only just over half of the county families for 1640 had occupied a similarly elevated position in 1600, and only four of them in 1500.¹¹

One further result of this evolving pattern of circumstance was that, far from being homogeneous in terms of status, the Berkshire county group contained internal gradations of importance and power. At any given time one can find examples both of families who were increasing their status relative to their fellow county families, and of those whose position was declining. Right at the top of the social ladder in 1640 were families like the Dunches of Little Wittenham, the Forsters of Aldermaston, the Harrisons of Hurst, the Knollys of Battel, the Martens of Longworth and the Stonehouses of Radley. These were clearly the most important families in the shire, predominant politically, economically and socially. At the other end of the scale were families like the Powles of Shottesbrooke and the Wilmots of Charlton, both of which had achieved county status only very recently, and whose influence was relatively limited. Again, while the fortunes of the Dunches, Martens, Windebanks and others were clearly waxing in the period before 1640, others, such as the Hydes of Kingston Lisle and Darells of Kintbury, had suffered considerable progressive decline in status during this period, and in the case of the Darells this decline was sufficiently advanced by 1640 to threaten the family's position in the county group itself. E.P. Thompson had warned those who attempt studies of social groupings that

like any other relationship it [class] is a fluency which evades analysis if we attempt to stop dead at any given moment and anatomize its structure.¹²

When the situation was developing as quickly as it was in Berkshire in the early seventeenth century, this difficulty must be borne in mind; however, if caution is exercised, such study need not necessarily be rendered entirely unprofitable.

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The length of time that a governing county group had resided in a shire was bound to be an important influence over both its character and its relationship with the county community it controlled. The families that constituted the county gentry group in Berkshire in 1640 were very recently settled in that shire. Only eight of the thirty-eight (21 per cent) were settled as rural landholders in the shire before 1500; another sixteen (42 per cent) had entered between 1500 and 1600; and the remaining fourteen (37 per cent) had settled there only after 1600. How this situation compares with that for the leading gentry in other counties for which work has been done can be seen in the table below. The figures are percentages for the leading gentry in each shire.¹³

	Pre 1500	1500-1600	Post 1600
Berkshire	21	42	37
Buckinghamshire	35	33	32
Cheshire	85	[..... 15	]
Essex	16	50	34
Hertfordshire	10	47.5	42.5
Kent	75	[..... 25	]
Norfolk	42	44	14
Suffolk	32	32	36
Suffolk	32	32	36
Sussex	77	[..... 23	]

Clearly the Berkshire county group was far less deeply rooted in its shire than its counterparts in Cheshire, Kent, Norfolk and Sussex; it was also somewhat more recently settled than equivalent groups in Suffolk or Buckinghamshire, but of slightly longer establishment than the leading gentry in Essex or Hertfordshire. Already the impression is given that the county gentry possessed the most shallow roots in those counties nearest to London. However, before investigating where these newcomers originated from, we need to consider how room was made for them.

Prior to the dissolution of the monasteries in the fifteen-thirties, Berkshire had contained two wealthy abbeys, at Reading and Abingdon, as well as a number of smaller religious houses, and thus a considerable amount of land in the county fell into lay hands at the dissolution. In fact, however, only five of the thirty-eight county families for 1640 had either initially established or considerably enlarged their Berkshire estates with monastic land.¹⁴ Thus while the dissolution was undoubtedly a contributing factor in the infiltration of the new families, both in respect of these specific cases and in its effect on the land market in general, it was neither the principal cause nor an essential pre-requisite of the process.

More importantly, the space which allowed newcomers to take up residence as landowners in Berkshire was created by the decline or disappearance of a number of prominent county families. The Norreys of Wytham, the Parrys of Hampstead Marshall, the Wardes of Hurst, the Essexes of Lambourn and the Untons of Wadley were all powerful Berkshire families in the sixteenth century, but they were to suffer from financial difficulties or the extinction of their male line and would disappear from the shire before 1640. In addition, a number of families which did still remain within the ranks of gentry landowners in 1640, nevertheless owned much smaller estates by that stage than they had during Elizabeth I's reign. Successive heads of the Fettiplace, Darell, Forster, Hyde and Englefield families had presided over the alienation of a considerable number of manorial estates between 1560 and 1640; Sir William and Sir Humphrey Forster in particular had between them parted with nine manors in Berkshire during the period 1600 to 1640.¹⁵

This rapid transfer of lands was noticed by at least one contemporary observer. In his *Worthies of England*, published in 1662, Thomas Fuller remarked

the lands in Berkshire are very skittish and often cast their owners which yet I impute not so much to the unruliness of the Beasts as to the unskilfulness of the Riders. I desire heartily that hereafter the Berkshire gentry may be better settled in their saddles so that the sweet places in this county may not be subject to so many mutations.¹⁶

While it is difficult to state with any certainty why there should have been such a marked trend towards estate disintegration in Berkshire, it is possible that the normal problems experienced by gentry landowners throughout the country more often resulted in alienation in Berkshire because of pressure applied by the land-

hungry wealth of London. Whatever the reason for the break-up, however, the result was that the average territorial holding of the gentry in the early seventeenth century was small,¹⁷ and that space was created for an influx of new landowners.

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What then were the social and geographical origins of the thirty county families which entered Berkshire after 1500?¹⁸ One family, the Nevilles of Billingsbear, was directly descended from a noble family, and another twenty can be definitely identified as off-shoots from established gentry families resident in other parts of the country. Of the remainder, only five had definitely been of below gentry status prior to their settlement as rural landholders in Berkshire. Thus the appearance of these families in Berkshire was more the result of a linear migration of established landed families than of any dramatic movement up or down the social scale.¹⁹

With respect to the circumstances surrounding the initial acquisition of Berkshire land by these thirty families, the salient point is that no fewer than twenty-one of them had preceded their entry with an interim period of residence at London. With the capital expanding at a tremendous rate between 1500 and 1640 and offering great opportunity for the accumulation of wealth, many of the new Berkshire families were founded by the younger sons of pre-existing gentry families who had been set up in a career at London and had subsequently acquired a landed estate within easy reach of the capital.

In the case of fourteen of the families, the first member of the family to settle in Berkshire had previously pursued a successful career as a courtier or civil servant.²⁰ In another five cases the first entrant had previously been engaged in some commercial enterprise,²¹ and in the last two cases the career involved was the law.²² As for the other nine families which had had no contact with London, six had inherited Berkshire lands or married into gentry families there while resident elsewhere in the provinces, one was initially involved with the cloth trade at Newbury, one originated from a Berkshire township and acquired land through service for the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and the last simply purchased Berkshire property and moved its main residence there.²³

The twenty-one London families achieved county status in Berkshire not as a result of a long association with the local community but because their wealth, social status, and good connections acquired outside the county guaranteed them swift

elevation to the top of local society. Sir Edmund Sawyer, the revenue auditor, purchased land in 1623 and was appointed to the county bench of justices in 1624;²⁴ William Trumbull senior acquired Easthampstead in 1628 and was appointed a justice in March 1628/29.²⁵ John Thorowgood settled at Billingbear in 1630 and was appointed to the bench in 1632;²⁶ Sir Thomas Manwaring took up residence at Bradfield in the mid sixteen-thirties and was added to the bench in March 1637/8;²⁷ and Lawrence Halstead was granted Sonning in 1628 and appointed a justice in the mid sixteen-thirties.²⁸ A number of other county gentlemen who had settled only very recently in the shire, i.e. Edward Wray, Sir Peter Vanlore, Sir Robert Pye, John Packer, Sir Henry Pratt and Sir Benjamin Rudyerd were not active as county justices before 1640, one reason for this being their heavy commitments outside the shire. Nevertheless they have been considered members of the Berkshire county group because their wealth, territorial holding in the shire, and influence at London gave them a social parity with any other leading family in Berkshire, and they therefore possessed the capability of influencing the political life of the whole county community. While their relative lack of active involvement in county administration might perhaps exclude them from the ranks of the county gentry in some other counties, in Berkshire they constitute an important element of the county's governing élite.²⁹

The newcomers in general and those appearing after 1600 in particular, 'jumped the queue' of indigenous Berkshire families of longer standing with aspirations to county status which might well have been achieved elsewhere in the country. Thus, unlike many other counties where the governing oligarchy evolved naturally out of the body of the indigenous county community over a number of centuries, in Berkshire this oligarchy was to a great extent grafted onto the local community by outside pressure, principally from London. As a result the outlook of the group reflected this association with London, as well as the newer association with Berkshire.

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Evidence of the influence of the capital over the Berkshire county gentry and of their resultant 'cosmopolitanism' can be found not only in their origins and family traditions, but also in their interests and involvements on the eve of the civil war. Unlike in Kent, where Everitt found that the vast majority of the leading gentry owned land only in their own shire,³⁰ twenty-seven of the thirty-eight

Berkshire families possessed property outside the county. Altogether forty-nine manors in eleven different counties, some as far afield as Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, were held by Berkshire county gentlemen in 1640.³¹ Thirteen of them owned property at London; this usually consisted of one or two residences only, but Sir Henry Pratt owned extensive property there, estimated to have a rent value of £700 annually in the sixteen-forties.³²

Individual members of a number of families also continued to be involved in professional or business activities in London. Six county gentlemen were still active as central office-holders during the sixteen-thirties, Sir Francis Windebank as secretary of state, Sir Robert Pye and Sir Edmund Sawyer as exchequer officials, John Packer as a clerk of the privy seal, William Trumbull junior as a clerk of the signet, and Sir Benjamin Rudyerd as surveyor of the Court of Wards. Another six were involved in commercial enterprise. Sir Henry Pratt and Lawrence Halstead were both important London cloth merchants operating on a very large scale. Sir John Backhouse was heavily involved during the sixteen-thirties in the administration of the New River Company, which was responsible for the cutting of a canal to bring water to the capital from Hertfordshire; he owned nine of the company's thirty-six shares and began to receive dividends after 1633. Other shareholders included Richard Neville of Billingbear and John Packer of Shellingford. Sir Francis Knollys was involved with the activities of the Virginia Company. A further four gentlemen, John Harrison of Beech Hill, Sir Thomas Manwaring of Bradfield, Anthony Barker of Sonning and Sir Henry Marten of Longworth were engaged in legal work.³³

The presence within the Berkshire governing élite of so many individuals who maintained a regular contact with metropolitan society and whose fortunes were heavily dependent upon their activities at London was bound to strengthen the connection between the governors in the county and the powerful circles in the capital. Influential figures like Sir Francis Windebank and Sir Edmund Sawyer could hold down important administrative office at London and at the same time participate actively in local affairs as justices of the peace. In fact, during the sixteen-thirties, Sawyer liaised frequently with Windebank and between them these two attempted to keep Charles I's privy council informed of events and attitudes in the shire.³⁴

This close contact between the London authorities and members of the governing élite in Berkshire can also be observed during the sixteen-forties when the proximity of the capital allowed the

Berkshire parliamentary committeemen to take an active part in county administration and also put in regular appearances in the Commons. Unlike Kent and Cheshire where only a small percentage of active parliamentary committeemen were also M.Ps.,³⁵ in Berkshire seven of the nine 'core' committeemen sat at Westminster at some stage between 1642 and 1648.³⁶

The impression that the Berkshire ruling oligarchy was less insular or introverted than élites in some other parts of the country is also confirmed by a study of the marriage connections developed by the forty-five county gentlemen. Only twelve of the forty-nine identifiable marriages contracted by these men were with families resident in Berkshire.³⁷ Many of the remaining thirty-seven brides dwelt in shires adjacent to Berkshire, but some lived as far afield as Monmouthshire, Shropshire, and in one case the Netherlands.³⁸ As marriage into a landed family was generally preferred, only six of the brides belonged to London families without county estates, but in a number of other cases the contact between families which led ultimately to inter-marriage was initiated through acquaintance developed at the capital. For example, Richard Neville of Billingbear married Anne daughter of Sir John Heydon of Norfolk, Charles I's lieutenant of the Ordnance; both families had a tradition of central government officeholding, and the paternal grandfathers of both Richard and Anne had been implicated in Essex's revolt in the fifteen-nineties.³⁹ The Whitmore family of Shropshire, into which Sir Edmund Sawyer the revenue auditor married, retained what Dr Pearl has called 'important London connexions', and Sir William Whitmore, Sawyer's father-in-law, was still engaged in commercial activities there in the early seventeenth century.⁴⁰ Several members of the Leicestershire Harrington family, into which Sir Benjamin Rudyerd married, held crown office under Charles I,⁴¹ and Sir Henry Pratt's father-in-law, Sir Thomas Adams of Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, was a master of the Drapers Company and, like Pratt, an alderman of the city of London during the sixteen-thirties.⁴²

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This study has attempted to show that unlike their counterparts in some other parts of the country, the Berkshire county gentry were far from insular or introverted, but rather were in continual contact with gentry society beyond the borders of their own shire, and in particular upheld a close association with London, the most dynamic political, economic and cultural centre in the kingdom. This

association was reflected both in their roots, for many of them acquired the wealth which enabled them to establish themselves in Berkshire through a bureaucratic, commercial or legal career in London, and also in their preoccupations, for many too still possessed residences at the capital and were engaged in a variety of business, professional or political activities there.

There was perhaps one important political repercussion of this situation. During the sixteen-forties, a number of those Berkshire county gentlemen who supported Parliament were able to remain active as parliamentary committeemen and continue to direct county affairs throughout the decade. By contrast, in Cheshire and Kent the county gentry had, as early as the middle of the civil war, effectively surrendered power to activists of a lower social position.⁴³ It might be suggested that this retention of power by the Berkshire county gentry was to some extent attributable to the fact that they were an especially new and outward-looking ruling élite, well aware of developments at London and thus more likely to exhibit a wide spectrum of views concerning the conflict between Charles and his parliament. Certainly Henry Marten, a staunch republican and a committeeman of great influence and popularity in Berkshire, is one striking example of a county gentleman well attuned to the more radical ideas emanating from the capital.⁴⁴

Clearly though, both by origin and outlook, many of the leaders of Berkshire society in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries must be considered infiltrators from London. Kentish society had not been influenced to this degree by the capital, a fact which Everitt attributes partly to the relative inaccessibility of that shire.⁴⁵ Dr. Holmes' preliminary look at Essex and Hertfordshire,⁴⁶ however, suggests that these counties on the other hand were similar to Berkshire, in that there too local society became dominated by 'new gentry' from the capital. Only further detailed work will fully establish whether the Berkshire county group was *sui generis*, or whether it corresponded to ruling oligarchies in most of the south-eastern counties, and thus formed part of a distinct Home County region within which the burgeoning London of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries had a major and lasting influence upon the shape of provincial society.

Notes

¹ A.M. Everitt, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion* (Leicester, 1966). For more recent work on Kent, see Peter Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution. Religion, Politics and Society in Kent, 1500-1640* (Sussex, 1977).

² J.T. Cliffe, *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War* (1969), J.S. Morrill, *Cheshire, 1630-1660, County Government and Society during the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1974), A. Fletcher, *A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex, 1600-1660* (1975).

³ Clark, *English Provincial Society*, p.411, n.5.

⁴ Everitt, *Kent*, pp.33-45, and C.W. Chalklin, *Seventeenth Century Kent* (1965) pp.192-6.

⁵ In his work on East Anglia, Dr Clive Holmes discovered that the leading gentry of Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk were far less deeply rooted in their local areas than their Kentish counterparts — *The Eastern Association in the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 1974) p.231. Dr. A.M. Johnson came to similar conclusions for the gentry in Buckinghamshire — 'Buckinghamshire, 1640-1660' (unpub. M.A. thesis, Univ. of Wales 1963) p.10. Both of these works, however, concentrate on the political developments in these counties and deal only briefly with social structure.

⁶ C.G. Durston, 'Berkshire and its County Gentry, 1625-1649' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of Reading 1977).

⁷ Professor F.J. Fisher, 'The Development of the London Food Market', *Economic History Review*, 1st ser. V (2) (1935) p.50.

⁸ The trade was suspended during the winter of 1643/4 and was resumed in the early summer of 1644, after parliamentary forces had captured Greenland House and Reading. At the end of May, the *Parliament Scout* reported

'That poor town [Reading] no doubt is in as much joy that they have trade again with London as Antwerp was when the Staple of English cloth returned to them . . . they rang bells and made bonfires for joy.' B(ritish) L(ibrary) Thomason Tracts E.49.33.

And in July, a report in the *Kingdom's Weekly Intelligencer* read

'Though they at Oxford do boast of relieving Greenland House yet it is yielded unto Major General Browne, and his soldiers maintain a garrison in it, which is of great concernment to the city for by that means great quantities of provisions may be conveyed by water into London from Oxfordshire and Berkshire'. B.L. E.2.11.

⁹ B.L. Harleian MSS. 6804, ff.162-4. The information is taken from a report to Sir Edward Walker at Oxford outlining the reasons why the townspeople at Reading were reluctant to raise a regiment of auxiliaries to defend the town for the king. Admittedly, whoever suggested this particularly high figure had some incentive to exaggerate, but it would not have been in their interests to suggest a totally implausible sum.

¹⁰ The families were Ashcombe of Lyford, Backhouse of Swallowfield, Barker of Sonning, Blagrove of Southcote and Sonning, Clarke of Ardington, Darell of Kintbury, Dolman of Shaw, Dunch of Little Wittenham and Pusey, Fettiplace of Childrey and Fernham, Forster of Aldermaston, Halstead of Sonning, Harrison of Hurst and Beech Hill, Hoby of Bisham, Hyde of Kingston Lisle, Knollys of Battel, Manwaring of Bradfield, Marten of Longworth and Beckett, Moore of Fawley, Neville of Billingbear, Packer of Shellingford, Pile of Compton Beauchamp, Powle of Shottesbrooke, Pratt of Coleshill, Purefoy of Wadley, Pye of Faringdon, Reade of Barton, Rudyerd of West Woodhay, Sambourne of Moulsoford, Sawyer of White Waltham, Stonehouse of Radley, Thorowgood of Billingbear, Trumbull of Easthampstead, Vachell of Coley, Vanlore of Tilehurst, Wilmot of Charlton, Windebank of Haines Hill, Wray of Wytham, and Yate of Buckland.

As seven of these families contained more than one individual who enjoyed county status, there were in fact forty-five county gentlemen in 1640. Durston, thesis, vol.II contains detailed dossiers on each of these families.

¹¹ This situation contrasted markedly with Cheshire about which Morrill has written: 'In the fifteen-forties John Leland drew up a list of what he termed the thirty-five chiefest gentlemen in Cheshire. On the eve of the civil war twenty-five of these families were still represented on the Commission of the Peace'. Morrill, *Cheshire*, p.3.

¹² E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1965) p.9.

¹³ They are taken from Johnson, thesis, p.10, Everitt, *Kent*, p.36, Everitt, 'Suffolk and the Great Rebellion, 1640-1660', *Suffolk Records Society Publications*, III (1960) p.20, Morrill, *Cheshire*, pp.3-4, Holmes, *The Eastern Association*, p.231, and Fletcher, *Sussex*, p.25. Dr Holmes uses the dates 1485 and 1603 as dividing lines and his figures refer specifically to families of the gentlemen included in the 1642 commissions of array for Essex, Hertfordshire, Suffolk and Norfolk. Dr Morrill's figures concern pre- and post-Reformation settlements, and Dr Fletcher's refer to the forty-five families of county status from 1580 to 1640.

¹⁴ These families were the Blagraves, Dunches, Hobys, Reades and Stonehouses. They did not always acquire the land direct from the crown, but in all cases it had come into their possession by 1560. See Durston, thesis, II, pp.22, 44, 79, 158, 185.

¹⁵ For more details, see Durston, thesis, II, pp.32-6, 51-63, 84-8.

¹⁶ Thomas Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England* (1662) p.112. This fragmentation was still evident in the early nineteenth century. In 1809 William Mavor wrote

'but great landowners are rare either among peers or commoners. We see several handsome seats with land not exceeding 100 acres. In the parish of Winkfield consisting of 10,000 acres the largest is under 400 acres, nor is this moderate distribution unusual in many of the parishes of Berkshire'.

W. Mavor, *A General View of the Agriculture of Berkshire* (1809) pp.49-50.

¹⁷ The average size of the estates held by county gentlemen in Berkshire in 1640 was only three manors, and as many as fifteen of them owned only one complete manor in the shire.

¹⁸ Of the eight others which had settled before 1500, three, the Fettiplaces, Yachells and Hydes had resided in the county since the thirteenth century, but the other five, the Clarkes, Darells, Moores, Sambournes and Yates had only appeared during the fifteenth. Two of these eight, the Darells and the Moores, had married into important Berkshire families, and another two, the Fettiplaces and Yates, had previously pursued successful commercial enterprises. Adam Fettiplace was active as a merchant at Oxford in the mid-thirteenth century and John Yate was trading as a staple merchant at Calais at the end of the fifteenth century. The backgrounds of the other four families are unclear.

¹⁹ The place of origin has been ascertained for twenty-seven of the thirty. Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, Herefordshire, Norfolk, Oxfordshire, Kent and Hampshire had provided two families each, and Cumberland, Staffordshire, Lancashire, Cheshire, Middlesex, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Buckinghamshire, one each. Two families had previously resided in one of the boroughs in Berkshire and two had lived for many years at London. The remaining family originated from the Netherlands.

²⁰ These families were the Dunches, Hobys, Knollys, Nevilles, Packers, Powles, Pyes, Rudyerds, Sawyers, Stonehouses, Thorowgoods, Trumbulls, Windebanks and Wrays. William Dunch, an auditor of the mint for Henry VIII and Edward VI and esquire of the body to Elizabeth I, purchased in the mid-sixteenth century a number of Berkshire manors previously the property of Abingdon Abbey. Sir Philip Hoby, son of William Hoby of Leominster, was Henry VIII's master of the ordnance in the north in the fifteen-forties, and he too acquired monastic land in Berkshire after the dissolution. The Berkshire lands of the Knollys family were acquired originally by Sir Francis Knollys the Elizabethan privy councillor. Henry Neville, a prominent courtier during Edward VI's reign, received a grant of Billingbear Park in 1552. John Packer, clerk of the privy seal and secretary to the Duke of Buckingham, purchased Shellingford manor in Berkshire in 1620, and Richard Powle, registrar of the Chancery court, purchased Shottesbrooke manor between 1580 and 1600. Sir Robert Pye, auditor of the receipt in the Exchequer under James I and Charles I, bought Faringdon manor in 1622, and Sir Benjamin Rudyerd, surveyor of the Court of Wards, purchased West Woodhay in 1634. Sir Edmund Sawyer, a revenue auditor,

purchased Heywoods manor in 1623 and George Stonehouse, clerk of the Green Cloth in the mid-sixteenth century, purchased Radley manor at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign. Sir John Thorowgood was employed as secretary to the Earl of Pembroke during the 1620s; in 1630 he received the wardship of Richard Neville of Billingbear Berkshire from the earl, and he shortly afterwards married Richard's widowed mother and took up residence in the county. William Trumbull senior, a clerk of the privy council for Charles I, received a grant of Easthampstead Park from the king in 1628. Thomas Windebank, a signet clerk during Elizabeth's reign, purchased Haines Hill before 1593. Edward Wray, a groom of the bedchamber to James I, acquired extensive property in Berkshire in 1623 on his marriage to Elizabeth Norreys, daughter and heir of the lately deceased Francis Norreys, Earl of Berkshire.

For more details of all these families, see Durston, thesis, II, pp. 43-50, 78-83, 89-95, 116-29, 135-39, 151-56, 162-68, 176-200, 216-27.

²¹ These were the Backhouses, Blagraves, Halsteads, Pratts, and Vanlores. Thomas Backhouse of Whiterigg, Cumberland, apprenticed his son Nicholas at London in the mid-sixteenth century and by the fifteen-seventies Nicholas was prominent as a merchant in the city. Nicholas' son Samuel acquired Swallowfield manor in Berkshire in 1582. Robert, a younger son of Ralph Blagrave of Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, was a prosperous London merchant during the reign of Henry VIII. Robert's son John inherited property in Berkshire, acquired after the dissolution by his mother's second husband William Grey. At the end of the sixteenth century Lawrence Halstead, a younger son of John Halstead of Rowley, Lancashire, was apprenticed to the Merchant Adventurers in London. During the early part of the seventeenth century he was one of the most important cloth traders in that company and in 1628 he obtained a grant from Charles I of Sonning manor in Berkshire. Henry Pratt, son of Francis Pratt of Ryston, Norfolk, was also established in a commercial career at London towards the end of Elizabeth's reign and by the sixteenth-twenties was a prominent member of the Merchant Taylors company; in 1620 he purchased Newton manor and in 1626 Coleshill manor in Berkshire which became his main county seat. Peter Vanlore was born in Holland in 1547. Before 1578 he had established himself as a jewel merchant at London and he subsequently amassed a considerable fortune supplying jewellery to the courts of Elizabeth and James I. He purchased Tilehurst manor in Berkshire in 1604 and during the next twenty-three years acquired a further eight manors in the county, both by purchase and annexation when creditors defaulted on debts. For more details see Durston, thesis, II, pp. 7-13, 21-26, 64-70, 140-45, 207-11.

²² These were the Manwarings and Martens. Thomas Manwaring, son of George Manwaring of Ightfield, Shropshire, studied at the Inner Temple from where he was called to the bar in 1626. Subsequently he resided in the capital and pursued a successful career as a lawyer there. In the mid sixteen-thirties he married the widow of Sir Edward Stafford of Bradfield, Berkshire and took up residence in the shire. Sir Henry Marten's background is somewhat obscure. After studying at Oxford he entered Doctors Commons at London in 1595 and by the sixteen-twenties was the most powerful civil lawyer in the country, acting as a judge of the Admiralty Court, High Commission and the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. From 1599 onwards he invested much of his legal wealth in the purchase of Berkshire land, and by the sixteen-thirties owned one of the largest individual estates in the county. Durston, thesis, II, pp. 96-109.

²³ These nine were the Ashcombes, Forsters, Harrisons, Purefoys, Reades, Wilmots, Barkers, Dolmans and Piles. For details of their individual cases, see Durston, thesis, II, pp. 1-13, 37-42, 58-64, 71-77, 130-4, 146-50, 157-61.

²⁴ *V(ictoria) C(ounty) H(istory) of Berkshire*, ed. William Page and Rev. P.H. Ditchfield, Vol. 3 (1923), p. 174, P(ublic) R(ecords) O(ffice) Crown Office Docquet Books C.231/4 f.168.

²⁵ *Deputy Keeper of the Public Records 43rd Annual Report*, App.I, pp. 58, 95. P.R.O. C.231/4 f.266, C.193/13/12.

²⁶ P.R.O. C.231/5 f.85.

²⁷ V.C.H. Berks., 397, P.R.O. C.321/5 f.283.

²⁸ *Deputy Keeper of the Public Records 43rd Annual Report*, App.I, 112. Halstead's name is included in the list of Berkshire justices for 1635 - P.R.O. C.193/13/12, but according to the government's entry book he was only appointed in March 1636/7 - C.231/5 f.236.

²⁹ Members of most of these families occupied important local administrative office in the sixteen-forties and sixteen-fifties. For details see Durston, thesis, I, pp.173-85.

³⁰ Everitt, *Kent*, p.42.

³¹ The county gentry between them owned twenty manors in Oxfordshire, six in Hampshire, four in Wiltshire, Kent and Hertfordshire, three in Buckinghamshire and Yorkshire, two in Somerset and one in Bedfordshire, Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire.

³² Those owning London residences were Sir John Backhouse, Humphrey Forster, Lawrence Halstead, Sir Henry Marten, Henry Moore, John Packer, Sir Henry Pratt, Sir Robert Pye, Sir Benjamin Rudyerd, Sir George Stonehouse, Sir John Thorowgood, Sir Peter Vanlore and Sir Francis Windebanks, see Durston, thesis, II, pp.10, 61, 68, 98, 107, 113, 141, 155, 165, 188, 194, 211, 220. For a rental of Sir Henry Pratt's London property, see Leeds University Brotherton Library, Loder-Marten MSS. Box 37 (unfoliated - top sheet).

³³ For more details and references for all these individuals, see their family dossiers in Durston, thesis, II.

³⁴ In 1636, for instance, Sawyer, who had been accused in the shire of conspiring to over-assess the county for Ship Money, wrote to the council informing them of all the various ways in which the government's chief opponents in the shire, Sir Francis Knollys and Sir Thomas Vachell, had been obstructing the crown's wishes over the previous ten years. These obstructive activities included hindering the collection of forced loan money and contributions towards the repair of St. Paul's cathedral, and refusing to assist the carriage of timber for the navy as well as objecting to Ship Money — P.R.O. State Papers Domestic, S.P. 16. 341/50, Petition of Sawyer to the Council. For more details of the pre-war politics in Berkshire, see Durston, thesis, I, chapter II: 'The Growth of Resistance, 1625-1642'.

³⁵ Everitt, *Kent*, p.145, Morrill, *Cheshire*, pp.82-9.

³⁶ Durston, thesis, I, pp.185-6. Edmund Dunch and Henry Marten sat as M.Ps. for Wallingford and Berkshire respectively between 1640 and 1648 (though Marten was suspended for three years after 1643). Along with Tanfield Vachell, elected for Reading in 1645, they were responsible for liaising between Westminster and Berkshire during the war. They were later joined by Robert Packer, Sir Francis Pile, William Ball and Daniel Blagrove.

³⁷ This contrasts markedly with marriage connections developed elsewhere. In Cheshire two-thirds of all marriages contracted by the gentry between 1590 and 1642 were with gentry of the same county and for the same period 48 per cent of all marriages contracted by the county gentry were with members of other county gentry families. In Kent two-thirds of the gentry married locally. Morrill, *Cheshire*, pp.4, 16, Everitt, *Kent*, p.42.

³⁸ Six of the brides came from London and six from Hampshire. Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire provided three each: Middlesex, Kent, Buckinghamshire and Herefordshire two each: and Suffolk, Worcestershire, Wiltshire, Norfolk, Monmouthshire, Cambridgeshire, Somerset, Leicestershire, Shropshire, Essex and Antwerp one each.

³⁹ Durston, thesis, II, pp.117-21, and G.E. Aylmer, *The King's Servants* (1961) pp.289-91.

⁴⁰ Valerie Pearl, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution: Government and National Politics 1625-1642* (1961) pp.306-07.

⁴¹ Aylmer, *King's Servants*, pp.286-7.

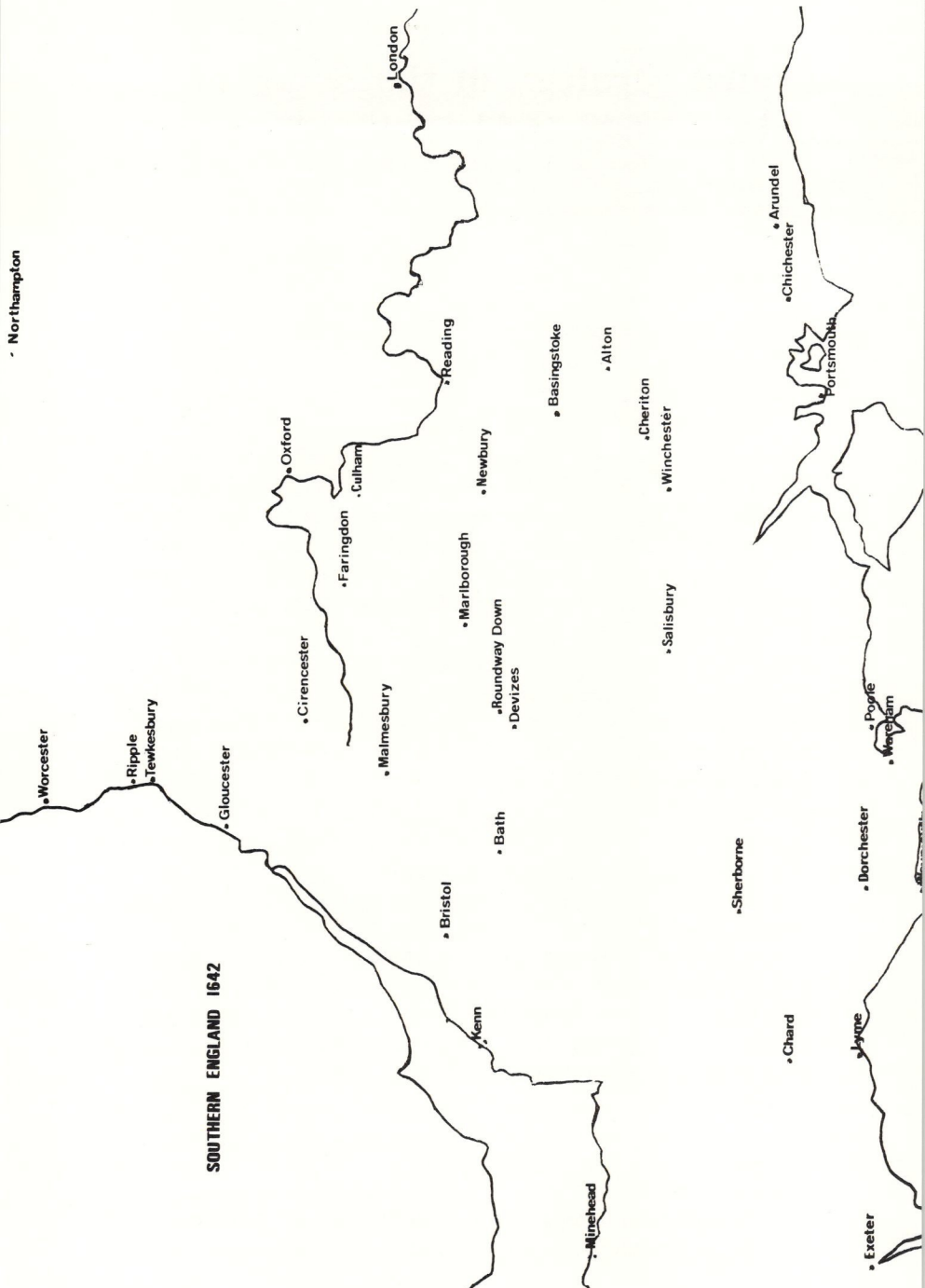
⁴² Pearl, *London*, pp.292-3.

⁴³ Everitt, *Kent*, pp.146-55, Morrill, *Cheshire*, pp.82-9.

⁴⁴ For more detail on Marten, see Durston, thesis, I, Chapter IV, *passim*; II, 100-09, and C.M. Williams, 'The Political Career of Henry Marten' (unpub. D.Phil. thesis, Oxford Univ. 1954), *passim*.

⁴⁵ A.M. Everitt, 'Kent and Its Gentry, 1640-1660. A Political Study' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, London Univ. 1957) p.27.

⁴⁶ Holmes, *Eastern Association*, p.231.



SOUTHERN ENGLAND 1642

Northampton

Worcester

Ripple

Tewkesbury

Gloucester

Cirencester

Oxford

Faringdon

Culham

Malmesbury

Bristol

Bath

Kenn

Marlborough

Roundway Down

Devizes

Newbury

Reading

Basingstoke

Alton

Cheriton

Winchester

Salisbury

Sherborne

Chard

Lyne

Exeter

Dorchester

Poole

Weymouth

Portsmouth

Chichester

Arundel

London