

Educational Provision for the Kentish Poor, 1660–1811: Fluctuations and Trends

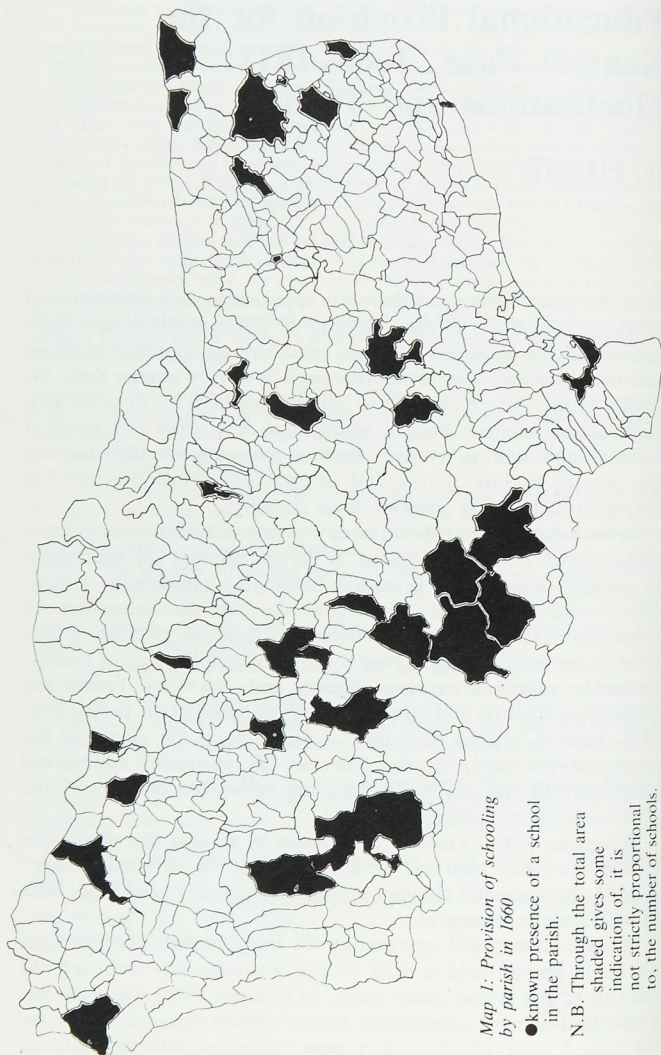
R. HUME

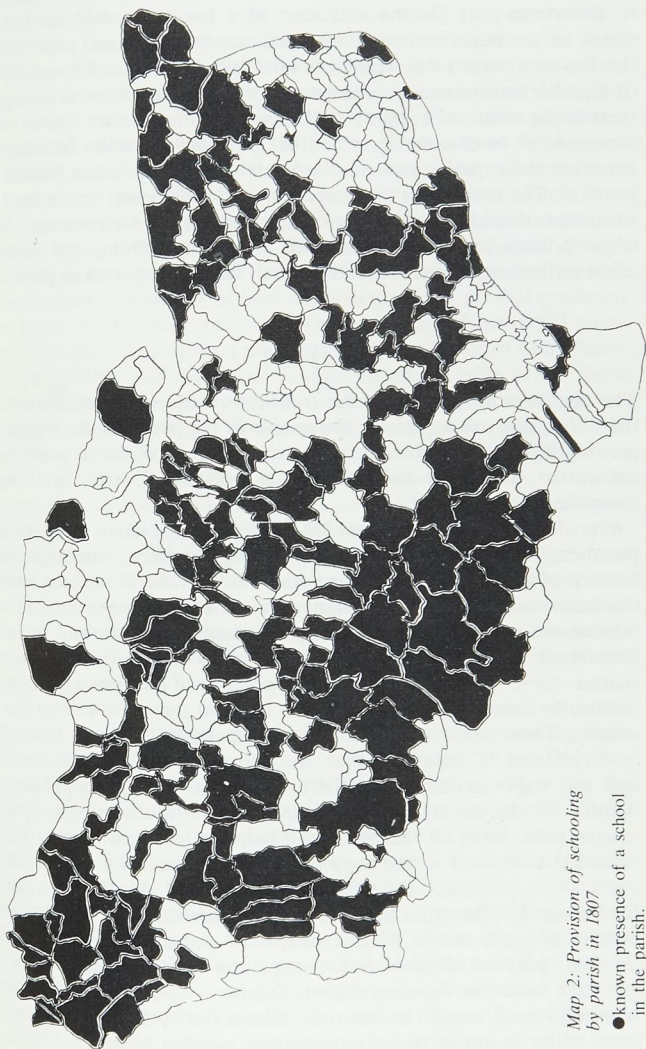
Over the past twenty years there has appeared a real proliferation of educational histories at the county level, a few of which have been published,¹ the majority, however, remaining as unpublished theses and dissertations. The trend has been a very welcome one, for studies of this nature are able to add depth and detail to those textbook accounts which have a tendency to leap from one piece of national legislation to another. Perhaps more importantly, they can also provide healthy contrast with an established general picture too simple to fit the very intricate local situation.

Nevertheless, there has still been a certain one-sidedness to those studies which have been written, as no real attempt has been made to *quantify* educational provision before the nineteenth century. This would appear to be largely due to the reluctance of investigators to juggle with the necessarily spurious population data prior to the period of the national censuses, and the lack of readily-accessible school attendance figures and roll sizes before the Committee Reports and other inquiries published in the period after 1816. Instead, studies have dwelt principally on the *quality* of the education provided, in the light of the particular educational philosophy of the day and within the immediate confines of the often makeshift buildings.

This paper aims to redress the balance by arguing that there were in Kent, between 1660 and the foundation of the National Society² in 1811, fundamental changes in educational extent *and* kind, both of which merit treatment.

In 1660 educational opportunity for the genuinely poor in Kent was quite limited, and in rural areas it was especially restricted. At the end of the period under study, in contrast, there was a modest proportion of new, subscription-based, schools designed wholly for the poor,³ some of which were now connected with the National





Society. These existed alongside other schools with legacies attached to them expressly for the education of a few poor children. The status of the benefactors had changed, too, during these years. In the Restoration era they tended to be drawn from the titled sections of Kentish society and from the wealthy merchants of the adjoining metropolis alone; whereas by 1811 there was a far greater degree of community involvement, with the benefactors now including amongst their ranks men and women of a much more humble position. The curriculum for the poor, when it *did* exist, was inclined to consist of reading only at the earlier date. By the early nineteenth century, however, it had broadened to embrace writing and quite often arithmetic, also. How and why had these changes taken place?

I

The apparent magnitude of the transformations which occurred in the educational scene during the course of the period under review are highlighted very clearly if the distribution of Kent parishes known to have had such facility in 1660⁴ and circa 1811⁵ is considered.

For 1660 there is documented provision in a mere thirty-two parishes. The spread, far from being uniform, included a battery of six adjoining parishes with schools in the Weald, an area characterized by a high population density of thirty-five to forty-five inhabitants per square mile, many of whom were involved in its flourishing cloth manufacture. In an otherwise fairly disparate scatter, there were two further concentrations of parishes with some provision: one in the north-west, the other in the north-east of the county. These areas embraced the principal port-towns of Milton-by-Gravesend, Dartford, Dover and the new town of Deal,⁶ and had all, once again, substantially above the average population density for the county, with thirty-five to forty-five inhabitants per square mile. Most of the remaining parishes in which schools are recorded contained within their bounds part or all of a substantial town — Ashford, Canterbury, Faversham, Maidstone and Rochester. On the other hand, in those areas with a low population density of some ten to twenty inhabitants per square mile — the infertile Isles of Graine and Sheppey in the Thames estuary, together with the Romney Marsh district — only one school is *known* to have existed at this date. Schools in 1660 tended, therefore, to be found in the more populous parishes alone.

In 1807 it is possible to say with certainty that there was a school of some description in very nearly one half, 172, of the Kent parishes. The scatter, though more general than at the earlier date, still reveals some very well endowed as well as some very poorly provided-for parts. The most densely-schooled regions were those of a century and a half earlier. In the Weald, where the population remained rather static during the period on account of the decay of its cloth industry, the number of schools had perhaps doubled over these years: quite a modest increase when set aside the rapid rates of expansion which had taken place in Thanet and, even more conspicuously, in the north-west. Here the number of parishes with provision may have more than quadrupled as the region grew in importance as a centre of light manufactures and market gardening to serve the London consumer. The more sparsely-provided areas, much as above, comprised the waste lands south-east of Canterbury; those parishes radiating from Faversham on the edge of the North Downs; and the Romney Marsh district — all with a relatively low number of inhabitants. The presence, though more especially the absence, of a school in any given parish at this date also thus bore quite a close correlation to its population. Indeed, with the exception of a mere eight parishes — Boxley, outside Maidstone; Frindsbury, near Rochester; Lydd; Minster in Sheppey; Sittingbourne; Speldhurst and Hadlow by Tonbridge; and Westerham — nowhere with one thousand or more inhabitants was without a recorded school. There were, in addition, and especially in the more finely populated east, several parishes like Kingsnorth near Ashford, and Preston-by-Wingham, with far fewer inhabitants which nevertheless had some provision by this time.

In the thirty-two parishes above in which some documented attempt was being made to school children at the Restoration, there was a total of some thirty-eight schools. Of these, 80 per cent may have been in receipt of a perpetual endowment by will, whilst the remainder were established or maintained by individuals during their own life-time as private enterprises. At least half of the endowed schools are known to have taught a classical curriculum and were to be found in the urban parishes, with outstanding institutions in evidence at Canterbury (re-established 1541), Rochester (1542) and Sevenoaks (1432). Here, the prosperous tradesmen saw in a university-orientated curriculum for their sons, a means of making their social standing more commensurate with the family's newly-acquired wealth. In contrast, the endowed English schools, teaching reading and writing, tended more often to be a

feature of the generally less-populous rural parish where the study of Latin and Greek was seen as wholly irrelevant to the needs of children who were destined to work in the fields.

By 1807 the educational picture in the county was a very much more complex one, consisting of numerous different types of schools suited to all levels of society. There were academies and private boarding schools catering for young ladies and gentlemen, day, boarding and evening schools for the various 'middling classes' (perhaps about one sixth of these with legacies attached to them for the education of poor children); other schools with an endowed foundation for the poor but of such a limited extent that the master was obliged to take in a number of relatively well-to-do fee-payers; and, finally, several schools intended for instructing poor children alone.

An important change had taken place in relation to the endowed schools during this interval. Whereas those teaching the classics and those offering an English curriculum in existence in 1660 had been fairly equal in number, by 1807 the latter outstripped the former by a factor of three to one. Geographically, the north-west, the Weald, Thanet and the principal towns were especially well provided for by this date, with new English schools at Greenwich and St. Mary Cray; Goudhurst and Rolvenden; St. Peter's and Birchington; and Rochester and Maidstone, respectively. Significantly, the number of endowed classical schools had hardly increased at all during the period (a mere two having been established at Goudhurst and, nominally, at Leybourne). On the other hand, the number of endowed English schools had soared to over five times the 1660 figure. The period hence witnessed a move away from the educational bequest solely for a minority. By means of a less university-influenced curriculum, instruction was being matched (through a multitude of private schools, subscription schools and new 'Schools of Industry') to the humbler ambitions of those lower down the social order.

This extensive growth was effected by a massive outpouring of largely private philanthropy. The overall sum made available to education between 1660 and 1786,⁷ either in the form of uninvested legacies, annual returns on invested stock and rents on land, might be estimated at £128,228 10s 7d. This was more than twice the 'great total' given to education in the period 1480-1660, studied by Professor Jordan.⁸ Indeed, the proportions of money donated to several charitable causes had undergone quite a significant change between these two periods. Table 1 illustrates how a little over half of the total available funds between 1660 and 1786 was channelled

into poor relief, this representing an increase of nearly one third as much again on the corresponding proportion between 1480 and 1660. Nevertheless, it was towards education that most money was being drawn, a trend aided in part by the redirection of funds from dissolved chantries. Indeed, the share allotted to this activity rose quite spectacularly from 23 per cent to 39 per cent (i.e. by well over one half) during the period.

Table 1:

<i>Deployment of total charitable endowments 1480-1660, after W.K. Jordan.</i>	<i>Deployment of cash made available through charitable bequests 1660-1786</i>
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Poor relief	40.72%	Poor relief	52%
Religion	26.77%	Education	39%
Education	23.14%	Almshouses	
Almshouses	4.78%	& Hospitals	6%
Unspecified	4.59%	Apprenticeship	3%

If, as seems likely, there was a very marked increase between 1660 and 1811 in the number of Kent parishes with educational provision of some kind, at what pace was this achieved? Was development steady; or did it proceed in spasms, determined by changing economic conditions and contemporary ideology?

For the endowed schools, it is possible to examine the number of bequests made by will and deed to education per annum over the period alongside the number of schools established per annum from these bequests. Both sets of data show an uneven distribution beginning, as they do, with a lengthy, relatively calm (though it need be emphasized far from sluggish) period to about 1700, followed by a shorter burst of activity peaking *circa* 1710-25 in each instance. They differ in that there is much greater uniformity in the spread of (the more plentiful) bequests than of new schools. Especially pronounced is the complete absence of new schools in the period 1736-52 inclusive, though as many as fifteen endowments were made for education during these years. There was, however, a much improved ratio of new schools to bequests between 1781 and 1800 with occasionally, as at Benenden in 1787, sums serving to set up more than one school. With the fervour of the so-called 'Charity School' era spent, the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies seem to have witnessed in Kent for the most part smaller, augmentary,

endowments given to already established schools. The Stanhope subscription school in Deptford, for example, received three of these augmentations for the teaching, clothing and binding apprentice of a set number of scholars. Elsewhere, as at Woolwich and at St. Paul's Cray, Mrs Wiseman's and Mrs Kingsman's respective legacies merely bought 'places' for poor children at private schools.

It is much more difficult, on the other hand, to chart the growth of unendowed schools in the county during this period. Only very seldom do the visitation returns for the diocese of Canterbury and the peculiar deanery of Shoreham give the exact year of their foundation, therefore making it impossible to obtain from them anything more than cumulative totals for such schools at specific points in time, namely 1758, 1786-8 and 1806-7. Their usefulness is further restricted by the characteristically unsatisfactory form of the article set which, by focusing on the so-called 'Free' and 'Charity School', failed to identify the full range of provision. What appears to have happened in both the diocese and the peculiar, however, is that the subscription-based schools grew up alongside the endowed schools, with their peak periods of growth, circa 1710-20 and again circa 1780-90, being coincident. Drawing conclusions of the diocese of Rochester is even more difficult due to the complete absence of visitation articles of enquiry and the paucity of information yielded in the short-lived and very incomplete *libri cleri* and subscription books. Our knowledge of unendowed schools in this diocese is therefore confined to the large urban subscription schools recorded in the earliest trade directories covering the county published at the end and turn of the eighteenth century, and more particularly if they were subsequently endowed. Of the smaller and more occasional, we have been left no trace.

What proportion of poor children at the opening and close of the period under study were touched by the changing extent of this educational provision? This question, which is absolutely fundamental, can only be addressed by breaking the task down into four manageable units. First, some estimate of the population as a whole must be derived for the earlier and later dates; required then is the percentage of children of school age in that population; thirdly, the extent of poverty needs to be assessed and so the number of 'poor children' determined; which, finally, can be compared to the total number actually receiving (formal) education.

The Compton Census of 1676, compiled in order to estimate the feared growth of Nonconformity, is able to supply the investigator with a record of the absolute numbers of Conformists,

Nonconformists and Roman Catholics, most probably of sixteen years of age and over, in each diocese (though omitting the deanery of Shoreham). Population estimates calculated simply by adding these figures together are clearly quite crude in comparison with the exact data available at the end of the period in the national censuses; but they are, nonetheless, still useful. For our purposes, they must form the basis of an estimate of the number of children of an educable age, which at this period might be taken as from five to fifteen years.

On the basis of data collected from Lichfield in 1695, Gregory King concluded that circa 40 per cent of the population were under sixteen years of age, a figure which agrees with that computed for a sample of twelve parishes around Wingham in east Kent during the opening years of the eighteenth century.⁹ Of this 40 per cent, King further reckoned that 63 per cent (i.e. circa 25 per cent of the entire population) were aged between five and fifteen years,¹⁰ a figure which closely resembles the proportion of this age group in the population at the time of the 1841 census, the earliest in which age distributions are recorded.¹¹

Using the Hearth Tax assessment of 1664, it is possible to examine the distribution of poverty throughout the county. Those households entirely exempt from the Tax, normally due to the low rateable value of their property, were clearly poor, as were the (chargeable) one hearth premises — the normal abode of labourers; but, as Professor Hoskins convincingly maintains, even the journey-men-craftsmen, in possession of two hearth properties though living on the very fringe of subsistence, ought really to be included under this head also.¹² In the 212 parishes which the Hearth Tax covers,¹³ the average poverty rate determined by this method is almost exactly two-thirds (66.93 per cent). Of these, sixteen parishes might be classified as 'urban' in that they held a market.¹⁴ The average poverty rate for these parishes is not significantly different (66.0 per cent) from the remaining 'rural' parishes (67.01 per cent); yet the urban rates are very much more homogeneous. Whereas there are both a number of very poor country parishes (e.g. Halsted, 96 per cent; Womenswold, 95 per cent; Lyminge, Ewell and Chillenden, 91 per cent; and St. Margaret at Cliffe and Lydden, 90 per cent), and also a number of relatively very well off ones (e.g. Hackington, 33 per cent; Chalk and Lee, 36 per cent; and Tonge, 38 per cent), in the urban parishes, by contrast, the number of poor inhabitants never falls much below one half (48 per cent at Sittingbourne), nor rises above four-fifths (80 per cent at Cranbrook). In estimating the

number of poor children of school age in each parish it follows that these individual ratings should be employed.¹⁵

When we can be quite certain of the exact number of poor children on roll in the non-classical schools¹⁶ of a given parish, this can be expressed in relation to their probable extent in the population.¹⁷

On analysis, it emerges that those Kent parishes which had no facility for the education of their poor either in 1660 or circa 1811 (apart from Tenterden and possibly also Sutton Valence with the adjoining parish of Headcorn) were invariably rural. On the other hand, many of those rural parishes able to offer no school places to the poor in 1660 had very good provision by the early nineteenth century, with sometimes, as at Keston and Milsted, in excess of 50 per cent of poor children being educated.¹⁸ In strict contrast, the towns had generally coped much less well to provide for the vast increases in population which had occurred within their bounds.¹⁹ Though the percentage of poor children schooled never seems actually to have deteriorated during the period, only if the town possessed a substantial 'School of Industry', as did Sevenoaks,²⁰ is it likely to have approached the 50 per cent level at the later date. Normally, urban provision appears to have been *very* much less adequate than this, with rates of the order of a mere 5 per cent being commonplace.²¹

II

Who was behind this very mixed achievement? In the absence of a central body with both sufficient interest *and* means to fund educational provision,²² support needed to be forthcoming from the parishes or from those who had connections with them by birth.

Of the total of 145 benefactors who provided for the education of poor children in Kent between 1660 and 1811, Hasted recorded in his *Topographical Survey* the place of birth or residence of sixty, principally those of knightly, gentle, or yeoman status. The overwhelming strength of paternalism becomes very evident from such a ready analysis, for in forty-one of these sixty instances (i.e. about two thirds), endowments were bestowed on the benefactor's native parish, and on a further four occasions, grants were made for a neighbouring parish. This finding underlines the gentry's orientation towards their own estates in the Kent countryside throughout these years, where it was expected that they should take the poorer classes under their protective wing and help alleviate their

condition.²³ A testator's bequest would therefore very often go beyond simply providing education for poor children and extend to the parish poor as a whole. For instance, a number of the parents of children attending the Reverend Richard Forster's school at Crundale in the second and third quarters of the eighteenth century qualified to benefit from the other part of this man's charity, either as 'poor labourers' or as 'poor widows'; whereas a portion of Sir Eliab Harvey's charity, in addition to the £10 per annum to be applied for teaching twenty poor children, was to be set aside to purchase boats for poor fishermen of Folkestone.

There was, however, a change in the status of benefactors to Kent education as the period proceeded. Before 1700 the larger landowners and wealthy London merchants were predominant amongst their ranks. After this date, the clergy appeared for the first time in strength, to make a marked impression between 1702 and 1729.²⁴ Their relative absence after this date was accompanied by a significant withdrawal on the part of the nobility from the educational scene. In contrast, the squirearchy, together with those of a comparatively modest social status, including women and an increasingly prosperous yeomanry, continued or even redoubled their number of contributions towards providing the poor with (a restricted) education.

Subscription presented an alternative means of raising and maintaining a school in Kent. It was, however, a potentially more precarious source of finance, for sums might vary so considerably in total extent as the climate of opinion changed, or, more mundanely, purses simply became exhausted. When funds were high, as they were in 1720 at Deptford where a figure of £60 was collected, it was possible to admit more children into the school.²⁵ When they were low, on the other hand, salaries paid to the masters and mistresses might be reduced and such 'services' as clothing the children curtailed.

What is particularly noticeable in the case of two of those three subscription schools whose accounts still survive (namely Deptford and Greenwich) is, amid the fluctuations, the *general* tail off in this source of income which began at some point between 1722 and 1731. This finding cannot be adequately attributed to the *short-term* economic fluctuations reported by T.S. Ashton.²⁶ It might better be explained in terms of the diminished popularity of the schools by this date when they were allegedly seed-beds of Jacobitism. The Low-Church and frequently dissenting tradesmen of Deptford, on whose support the enterprise depended, had evidently become

disaffected.²⁷ Likewise, contributions towards the Greenwich Blue Coat School, ever ailing when it was on a day foundation, began to decline seriously once again immediately after its re-establishment as a boarding school in 1748.²⁸ The subscription profile of the school established in the Chapel at Tunbridge Wells by 1680, on the other hand, is more uniform than those of Greenwich and Deptford due, it would seem, to the fact that the contributors were the visiting nobility and gentry alone during the first three-quarters of the century rather than the now alienated tradesmen.²⁹ Between 1770 and 1790, a period during which the Church managed to stimulate a renewed interest in education, an upward trend in the subscription rate is evident for all three schools. By this time, it is likely that the financial base of the Tunbridge Wells school bore closer resemblance to those of the other two schools, for attempts had been made in 1775 to encourage the principal tradesmen to contribute.³⁰

Elsewhere, problems experienced in sustaining subscriptions into the second quarter of the eighteenth century had more severe consequences for the schools. At Ashford, for instance, the S.P.C.K. correspondent tells us in 1725 'that the Charity School. . . is unhappily sunk by the total withdrawing of the subscriptions which supported it'.³¹ Similarly, at St. Mary Cray in the north-west of the county 'the late violent opposition to charity schools and collections. . . and the covetous discouragement of the rich, (had) ruined the school'.³²

In more rural parishes where there were no tradesmen, the subscription enterprise might barely even be able to get off the ground. Such was the situation at Orpington where there was 'a strange want of religious zeal and publick spiritedness' amongst the inhabitants.³³ When they did materialize, the existence of subscription schools seems to have been fleeting. The schools at Boughton under Blean and Hollingbourne, for example, both of which are recorded in the 1758 episcopal visitation for the diocese of Canterbury, fail to appear in that of 1786.

The concern for the wellbeing of their community observed amongst those who left charitable benefactions in their wills (though doubtless tainted once again with less noble sentiments of self-aggrandizement) is also detectable amongst the subscribers who were, for the most part, resident in the parish their contributions were supporting. Nowhere is this community interest more evident than in the case of three late eighteenth century schools at Deal (est. 1792), Dover (est. 1789) and Margate (est. 1787). Here, the minute

books contain full lists of subscriber-nominators whose exact status it is possible to pinpoint from early trade directories. With Clarkson's warning that 'occupational specialization was not highly developed in pre-industrial England'³⁴ borne firmly in mind, one might, nevertheless, be excused in drawing up three very *broad* social categories for purposes of analysis (Table 2).

Table 2: The backgrounds of subscribers contributing to three Kent subscription schools: 1792-1805 (rounded percentages)

	Titled	Professional	Trading etc.	Unknown Men	Women (unless titled) known/unknown
Deal	10%	17%	32%	28%	13%
Dover	15%	23%	26%	22%	15%
Margate	8%	16%	24%	28%	23%

The relative proportions of the three groups subscribing were very approximately 1:2:3 for each community, though with a larger number of bankers and attorneys contributing in the more commercial Dover. Over all, there is evidence of a significant trading interest in all three schools. The larger proportion of women and of unknown men subscribing at Margate makes it tempting to speculate that the school here was especially highly favoured by those early visitors to the resort whose contributions gave them the right to nominate children. The women visitors appear to have been particularly willing to undo their purse-strings, for twelve of those twenty-two women who subscribed did not have local names, in contrast to just four of the twenty at Deal, and three of the fifteen women subscribing at Dover.

The involvement of local inhabitants went beyond this simple nominating function, for they also obtained the contracts for the maintenance of the children while they were at school. At Margate, for instance, in 1802, Mr John Hollams, a local 'slop-seller',³⁵ was directed to make up coats, waistcoats and breeches; Mr John Brooman (who combined banking with linen-drapery³⁶) was enlisted to provide stuff for gowns; and Messrs Rowe and Tenant were to be paid for caps, tippets and linen for aprons to clothe the children at the town's subscription school.³⁷ At Deal, on the other hand, the bakers Thomas Hadley and Thomas Long could depend upon receiving the orders for penny cakes for the children at the time of the annual charity sermon in St. George's church.³⁸

This parochialism is apparent too in the appointments of masters and mistresses, many of whom in the established schools we know

to have had very local origins. At Crundale, for example, the first four mistresses at the Reverend Richard Forster's school: Mary May, Mary Bolding, Susanna May and Jane Sutton, were all born in the parish; the first three of these were wives of labourers receiving benefit from another part of the founder's charity, and Jane Sutton was married to a Crundale man who sold door hooks.³⁹ Elin Jarvis, the first mistress of the school established at Birchington in 1708 under Anna Crispe's endowment, had relatives in the village, a Daniel Jarvis appearing in the parish records as overseer of the poor.⁴⁰ At least two of the masters at Thomas Paramore's school founded at St. Nicholas-at-Wade, Thanet, in 1640 were certainly indigenous, John Wallis having been born in the parish in 1697 and John Coleman, master from circa 1770, being the son of the village shoemaker.⁴¹

A very similar picture emerges in urban parishes. Thomas Cullen, master at the Harvey School in Folkestone between 1770 and 1778, came from a local family;⁴² at Greenwich, Mrs Moor who kept a day school in the town succeeded the ageing Mrs Hodder in 1748.⁴³ In neighbouring Deptford, though the teachers' places of coming are not indicated in the trustees' minutes, here too their local origins are suggested both by the fact that the subscribers were to inform their 'friends' as to the vacancy of the mastership⁴⁴, and how as late as 1804 the situation of mistress seems to have been advertised in the two parish churches alone.⁴⁵

Elsewhere, as at Dence's School, Cranbrook; Dr Breton's School, Deptford; the Chapel School at Tunbridge Wells; and the 'Free School' of Milton-by-Gravesend, there are documented instances of son succeeding father as schoolmaster. At Yalding, for example, the mastership of Mrs Alchorn's School was passed down through three generations during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.⁴⁶ Similarly, the Roan School at Greenwich was for long in the charge of the Herringham dynasty, a very old Greenwich family whose members held the mastership in succession from 1702 until 1785.⁴⁷ This near-to incestuous arrangement also prevailed at the Deal Charity School in 1797 when in January five candidates were considered for the vacant post of master, and one was specifically excluded for 'not being a parishioner'.⁴⁸ Elsewhere, although those who played a part in the management of the institution might be willing to employ an outsider, they could be placed under considerable local pressure to choose otherwise. The installation of Mr and Mrs Good as managers of the workhouse school at Strood, for instance, proved far from easy, 'most of the Inferiour Sort of People

being for a Drunken sort of Man only because he (was) a Native of the Parish'.⁴⁹ For those remaining teachers whose origins are known, most had journeyed across only one or two parishes to take up their position, and were almost certainly already well-known where they were about to teach.

Paternalistic notions are in evidence for admission to the schools, the normal practice being for a school to take in only those children living within the parish boundary. Alexander Dence, for instance, in his will of 1568, had made over tenements and lands in Cranbrook for teaching children of the 'same town and parish'. Likewise, the £30 per annum given by Lady Margaret Boswell in 1675 and the residue of Lady Joanna Thornhill's estate, bequeathed in 1708, were to be employed in the teaching of children solely from the respective parishes of Sevenoaks and Wye. The subscription schools applied similar restrictions. At Deal, for instance, it was firmly laid down that 'no resident Subscriber shall be permitted to nominate a Child who is not an Inhabitant of this Parish'.⁵⁰ The trustees of the Deptford subscription school were only a little less resolute in their requirement 'that Children of Parishioners have the preference before any other Person'.⁵¹ Beyond this, it would usually be felt sufficient to exclude the children of the parish's 'undeserving' poor, already on relief. Occasionally, however, much narrower restrictions on occupational background might be imposed in the deployment of individual legacies. A bequest, for example, made to the Deptford subscription school in 1752 by the shipwrights William Sherwin and William Collins, was not designed for the maintenance of the whole spectrum of children but for fraternalistically supporting the offspring of decayed men in their own trade.

The curriculum taught was also given shape by the demands arising from the unique socioeconomic structure of *individual* parishes or regions in the county. As Table 3 indicates, the tendency was for schools teaching reading alone to be much more rarely found in the towns than in the countryside; this was in strict contrast to those schools teaching the casting of accounts, a skill in high demand by tradesmen and merchants, which were predominantly urban.

Table 3: The prevalence of particular skills in the curriculum of rural and urban schools educating the Kentish poor, 1660-1811

Reading/Working only		Arithmetic/Accounts
Rural (n=111)	48%	32%
Urban (n=51)	27%	57%
n=sample size		

The availability of the less-advanced skill of writing varied a little less starkly between schools in rural and urban parishes — 53 per cent of the former and 71 per cent of the latter teaching it.

Over and above this dichotomy, special subjects, designed to fulfil local needs, made their appearance in some schools. In several of the port-towns, for instance, navigation was introduced into the curriculum. At the Green Coat School in Greenwich the master was required not only to teach the children to read, write and cast merchants' accounts, but to 'make them capable of the art of navigation'.⁵² Similarly, at the Royal Hospital School founded in the same town in 1694, the children studied 'the Elements of Navigation'.⁵³ One of the schools for boys founded at Dover in 1721 by Sir Henry Furnese, M.P. offered this subject.⁵⁴ It was also available during the last quarter of the eighteenth century at the town's subscription charity school by way of reward for proficiency amongst the senior boys. It was at about this time, too, when Folkestone's Harvey School rejected Latin, its trustees reasoning that 'for the boys of this place we consider the art of navigation more useful'.⁵⁵

The developing importance of the trade in local hops with London, as of market gardening in the area, was reflected in the unashamedly vocational subject-matter studied by Canterbury's Grey Coat Scholars who spun hop-bagging 'at proper seasons' in the new workhouse, and who may also have been taught 'something of Gardning'.⁵⁶

In other ways, too, regional differences made themselves felt in the curriculum. In nearly all the Wealden parishes around Cranbrook where religious radicalism was especially strong (Goudhurst, Hawkhurst, High Halden, Rolvenden and Smarden), it seems likely that (High-Church) Catechetical instruction was

omitted from the curriculum and that Bible-reading was emphasized in its place. Only the teaching of 'reading and writing' is mentioned by Hasted at the school founded by the Anabaptist James Tilden at High Halden circa 1725, and 'reading, writing and arithmetic' at Stephen Dadson's school (est. 1716) in Smarden. In Cranbrook itself during the first quarter of the eighteenth century, it is almost certain that the Church of England Catechism was not taught, for John Hassell, master at Dence's School, was presented by the churchwardens in June 1716 for failing even to take his scholars to church;⁵⁷ and indeed, Tarbutt in his mid-nineteenth century of this school, reported the widespread contemporary belief that 'at this School, neither Creed or Catechism is taught'.⁵⁸ Only in the great Nonconformist centre of Maidstone, however, do distinct subscription schools erected and maintained by Dissenters seem to have existed during the period.⁵⁹

A change began to take place in the composition of the curriculum taught in Kent schools as the eighteenth century progressed and the economy developed. Whereas bequests made during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century tended to lay down that reading alone be taught (e.g. for Hartlip, 1678; Cliffe, 1679; Lee, 1683; Hayes, 1693; Birchington, 1709; Lamberhurst, 1712; Trotters-cliffe, 1712; Bredgar, 1718; Eastchurch, 1721; Milsted and Frinsted, 1722; Saltwood, 1723; Crundale, 1729; Preston-by-Faversham, 1730; and Gillingham, 1733), those made after 1760, with very few exceptions,⁶⁰ provided for the teaching of writing and/or arithmetic also, in response to the call for more clerks and better educated fine craftsmen.

Another important transformation was occurring in relation to the curriculum of the grammar schools of Kent where classical teaching was coming to be undermined by an ever more vociferous demand for a form of learning genuinely beneficial to the parish. Such was its effect that at Sutton Valence only one boy was being instructed in the classics when the Charity Commissioners made their visit;⁶¹ and at Benenden, where the inhabitants consisted of farmers and labourers, the subject had been dispensed with altogether.⁶² At Sandwich and at Tenterden there were specific complaints made that the curriculum was not suited to the needs of the poor.⁶³ Indeed, so insistent had they been at the latter that some of the Free Grammar School's funds had been diverted to maintain six scholars at its National School, for 'as a grammar school, it was no longer of any use in the parish'.⁶⁴

The teaching of religion in the Kent schools also underwent a

change in emphasis during the course of the period. On analysis, it emerges that perhaps no more than about a quarter of schools providing for the poor throughout these years were using the Catechism of the Church of England (an interesting antidote in itself to the textbook view of affairs). At issue, however, is the very differing extent of its employment in the two halves of the eighteenth century. Indeed, the concern to use the schools primarily to inculcate Anglican doctrine lapsed to such an extent with the waning of the High Church party, that whereas twenty-four of those fifty-eight schools (i.e. 41%) founded in Kent between 1701 and 1750 required that the Catechism be taught, at only sixteen of perhaps seventy-two schools founded in the county between 1751 and 1800 (i.e. 22%) was it prescribed.⁶⁵

The economy and society of individual parishes further affected the exact scheduling of school holidays and brought a seasonal toll on absenteeism. The trustees of the Dover subscription school, for instance, would habitually grant at least a fortnight's vacation during the wheat harvest, 'that the children may be enabled to glean';⁶⁶ whilst lessons at Sandwich would be discontinued during the hop season.⁶⁷ The trustees of the Reverend Richard Forster's charity at Crundale tolerated on the part of certain scholars regular and extended periods of absence. The Spain family was especially notorious in this respect, to the cost of the mistress who was paid according to weekly attendance. In 1730 Thomas Spain was absent for no less than ten weeks of schooling and in 1733 for five. His sister, Mary, was also absent for anything up to four weeks in any given school year.⁶⁸ Typical of this more liberal attitude towards absenteeism prevalent among trustees in a rural parish (where the demand for school places would have been much less great) is the candid reply of the Pluckley incumbent to Archbishop Secker's visitation enquiries of 1758:

'The Boys work at proper times, always in Harvest & Hopping time, & whenever their Parents particularly want them'.

III

Are these conclusions drawn about education for the Kentish poor consistent with the general pattern in the country as a whole? Do they add depth to or provide contrast with the established picture? A number of other English counties have been studied from an educational perspective during this period, with perhaps the most detailed appraisals outside the capital having been made for

Cheshire, Derbyshire, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Oxfordshire, Staffordshire and Yorkshire.

Comparing some of the findings for Kent with those for elsewhere, it becomes clear that in several respects the county did indeed conform to the national trend as it appears to date. Perhaps the most obvious of these was its possession of a small number of schools which catered for the poor even before the end of the seventeenth century. Moreover, throughout the century that was to follow, it too made some *attempt* to establish new schools where the need was greatest — in the most rapidly growing centres of population.

There were, however, ways in which Kent departed from what seems to be the developing national trend. The county seems to have been atypical, for instance, in the early date from which men of comparatively low birth, and in particular its unusually prosperous yeomanry, began to contribute towards the educational enterprise. Once set on foot, also, proximity to London and therefore City wealth, enabled the pace of educational charity to be much more uniform in Kent during the eighteenth century than in the other counties studied. The exact substance of the curriculum adopted in the county's schools was quite individual, too, and determined by local demand for skills and the incidence of Nonconformity in its immediate environs.

Unfortunately, the *numerical* work for Kent does not lend itself to such ready comparison. This serves to underline how important it is in the present writer's opinion, that future investigators of education in this period should give more equal prominence to the qualitative and quantitative facets of their study. Only in this way can a meaningful synthesis be prepared once all the county studies have been completed.

Notes

¹ e.g. D. Robson *Some Aspects of Education in Cheshire in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester, 1966); and B. Simon (ed.) *Education in Leicestershire 1540-1940* (Leicester, 1968).

² . . . for Educating the Church of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church.

³ They amounted to perhaps circa 8.5 per cent of the whole, or twenty-nine of 345 documented schools.

⁴ Using schoolmasters' nomination papers, subscriptions and licences, yielding a sample of *men* teaching at private and public establishments; Edward Hasted's *History or Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* (2 edns 1778-1801); and the *First and Second Reports of the Charity Commissioners* (C.C.R. I and II, 1819).

⁵ Based on the *Abstract of Returns Relative to the Expence and Maintenance of the Poor* (1803-4) B(ritish) L(ibrary) 433, i, 112 (2); trade directories; the incomplete visitation returns for the diocese of Canterbury, 1806, and the deanery of Shoreham, 1807 (Lambeth Palace Library VG 3/2a-d; VP II/2/2a-b); and C.C.R. I and II (1819).

⁶ The town was given corporate status in 1699.

⁷ *Charitable Donations — Abstract of Returns* (1786-8).

⁸ W.K. Jordan 'Social Institutions in Kent 1480-1660: Education' *Archaeologia Cantiana* LXXV (1961) pp. 66-98.

⁹ C.W. Chalklin (ed.) 'The Compton Census of 1676: The dioceses of Canterbury and Rochester' in *A Seventeenth Century Miscellany, Kent Records* XVII (1960) pp. 155-57.

¹⁰ D.V. Glass 'King's Population Estimate of England & Wales 1695' *Population Studies* III (Mar. 1950) pp. 358-70.

¹¹ B.R. Mitchell (ed.) *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1962) p. 12.

¹² W.G. Hoskins *Industry, Trade and People in Exeter 1688-1800* (Exeter, 2nd edn. 1968) p. 188.

¹³ The Tax was assessed at the level of the hundred and its divisions, which were often obscure boroughs rather than parishes.

¹⁴ A.D. Dyer 'The Market Towns of Southern England 1500-1700' *Southern History* I (1979) p. 123.

¹⁵ Unfortunately, no measures of 'poverty' as such (cf. the amount given in poor relief) are at hand for the end of the period under review, though it would seem safe to assume that, as at the earlier date, poverty rates would have fallen, throughout Kent, within the 50 per cent to 80 per cent range.

¹⁶ All the evidence points to the fact that the children admitted to the grammar schools in Kent were sons of tradesmen and above. See C.C.R. I (1819) Appx. p. 224; p. 234.

¹⁷ Normally by reference to C.C.R. for the 1660 data and the visitation enquiry of Archbishop Manners Sutton (1806-7) for the later figures. However, an adjustment needs to be made in so far as the resulting ratio takes into account only those five to fifteen year olds being educated at one particular moment, whereas there would, in addition, be a number either under school age or who had already been schooled. If the average length of schooling is taken as four years, estimated provision based on ten years of schooling might reasonably be multiplied by a factor of two and one half.

¹⁸ This exacting standard was achieved in these parishes even when they are arbitrarily assigned a high, 80 per cent, poverty level. See R. Hume 'The Schooling of the Kentish Poor from the Restoration until the establishment of the National Society, 1660-1811' (unpub. M.A. thesis, University of Keele, 1979) pp. 32-38.

¹⁹ Greenwich's population, for instance, had risen from circa 5000 in the late seventeenth century to almost three times this figure by 1801; and Deal's even more spectacularly from perhaps 1000 to well over 5000.

²⁰ Where 175 children were employed knitting, tempered probably only by a little reading. See *Abstract Relative to the Poor* (1803-4).

²¹ Hume, thesis, p. 37.

²² The material involvement of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, a small voluntary association, is now recognised as having been almost negligible. See W.K. Lowther Clarke *The History of the S.P.C.K.* (1959) p. 22. Still at issue, however, is its degree of co-ordination.

²³ C.W. Chalklin *Seventeenth Century Kent* (1965) p. 210.

²⁴ It was during these years that the S.P.C.K. was encouraging the clergy to solicit subscriptions for the setting up of a 'charity school' in every parish.

²⁵ 'First Order Book' 7 Aug. 1720 (Addey and Stanhope School, Deptford).

²⁶ T.S. Ashton *Economic Fluctuations in England 1700-1800* (Oxford, 1959) pp. 172-3 where, however, some relationship is shown to have existed between years of depression in the national economy, and lows in the rate of subscriptions to the

Deptford and Greenwich schools.

²⁷ It was almost certainly during these years that the undated *Appeal for the charity school at Deptford* was made. (S.P.C.K. Archives, Holy Trinity Church, Marylebone Road, London, N.W.1)

²⁸ 'Order Book (I)' 1712–1758 (Blackheath Blue Coat School).

²⁹ Hume, thesis, p. 82 where the profiles of each are graphed.

³⁰ 'Vestry Minutes No. 1' Memorandum, 1775 (Church of King Charles the Martyr, Tunbridge Wells).

³¹ A(bstract) L(etter) B(ook) XIII 8482 23 Sept. 1725 (S.P.C.K. Archives).

³² A.L.B. IX 5965 23 Feb. 1719.

³³ Original Letter File IV 5622 30 May 1718 (S.P.C.K. Archives).

³⁴ L.A. Clarkson *The Pre-Industrial Economy in England 1500–1750* (1971) p. 77.

³⁵ *Universal British Directory* (1792) p. 903.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 902.

³⁷ 'Minutes 1796' 18 May 1802 (Parish Church of St. John the Baptist, Margate). I gratefully acknowledge the help of Mr David Scurrrell for bringing this volume and other papers to my attention.

³⁸ Deal subscription school minutes *passim*. ((C)anterbury (C)athedral (L)ibrary U3/67/25/4).

³⁹ 'An Account of Mr Forster's Charity' (C.C.L. U3/116/25/1).

⁴⁰ I am indebted to Mr Alfred Walker, Treasurer of the Crispe charity, for this reference.

⁴¹ R. Parker *The Schools of St. Nicholas-at-Wade 1640–1957* (Canterbury, 1957) p. 13; p. 21.

⁴² J.H. Brown *A History of the Harvey Grammar School* (Folkestone, 1962) p. 52.

⁴³ 'Order Book (I)' 30 Jan. 1748.

⁴⁴ 'First Order Book' 28 Sept. 1722.

⁴⁵ 'No. 3 Order Book' 5 June 1804.

⁴⁶ C.C.R. I (1819) Appx. p. 250.

⁴⁷ J.W. Kirby *History of the Roan School and its Founder* (1929) p. 56 *et seq.*

⁴⁸ Deal subscription school minutes 24 Jan. 1797.

⁴⁹ S.P.C.K. A.L.B. XI 7082 5 June 1722. The 'Charity-School' here was situated in a room in the workhouse, one master and mistress thereby serving to instruct both the 'Charity-Children' and the 'Parish-Orphans' (See Anon. *An Account of Several Workhouses* (1st edn 1725) p.40).

⁵⁰ 'Regulations', X, enclosed in C.C.L. U3/67/25/4.

⁵¹ 'First Order Book' 27 Feb. 1715.

⁵² 'Rules, Orders and Constitutions' in J. Kimbell *Account of Legacies, Gifts etc. to the Poor of St Alphege, Greenwich* (Greenwich, 1816) p. 112.

⁵³ S.P.C.K. A.L.B. XIII 8713 14 Mar. 1726.

⁵⁴ S.P.C.K. Ac. 1721.

⁵⁵ C.C.R. I (1819) Appx. p. 161.

⁵⁶ S.P.C.K. A.L.B. XV 10294 11 Aug. 1729.

⁵⁷ C.W.P. (716) (C.C.L.).

⁵⁸ W. Tarbutt *An Historical Account of Dence's School and Schoolmasters from 1568–1865* (Cranbrook, 1866) p. 35.

⁵⁹ Visit. enq. Archbp. Manners Sutton (1806) where a school is reported managed by the Protestant Dissenters and another by the Independents and Baptists, each teaching and clothing twelve boys and twelve girls.

⁶⁰ Apparently only the Reverend William Hetherington's at North Cray (1771) and Thomas Buckland's at Benenden (1787).

⁶¹ C.C.R. I (1819) Appx. p. 228.

⁶² *Ibid.* Appx. p. 131.

⁶³ *Ibid.* Appx. p. 218.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* Appx. p. 232.

⁶⁵ Hume, thesis, pp. 256–9.

⁶⁶ 'Rules (1805) (Dover C.E. Primary School).

⁶⁷ 'Charity School Minutes' 15 July 1771 (Kent Archives Office Sa/QEc 1; 4).

⁶⁸ 'An Account of Mr Forster's Charity'.