

A Wood-Pasture Agrarian Régime: The Kentish Weald in the Sixteenth Century

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In recent decades historians have looked with increasing sophistication into the regional variations to be found in all aspects of British history. Just as local historians have shown the complexity of political decision making in the English counties before and during the English Revolution, so historical geographers and agricultural historians have exposed the enormous variety in landscapes and in agricultural and tenurial structures to be found in early modern England. The most fundamental division between 'highland', wood-pasture regions on the one hand, and lowland, 'champion' districts has been accepted for many years. Since the 1960s, and the publication of Dr Thirsk's *Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640*, numerous historians have set to work on smaller areas within the broad upland and lowland divisions. They have found an enormous range of local variation but little to challenge the general pattern of 'mixed farming' systems and 'pasture farming' systems. This study looks at one of the 'wood-pasture' districts which happens to be well within lowland half of England. The Weald, which covers an extensive area stretching across Kent, Sussex and Surrey, can be compared on some criteria to the region composed of northern Essex and southern Suffolk, and on other grounds with districts like south Staffordshire or the Warwickshire Arden. What these all have in common is the absence of communally-organized farming on open fields and an emphasis on livestock husbandry rather than corn production.

In the pamphlet *The Inrichment of the Weald of Kent* of 1625, the author advocates a systematic programme for improving the productivity of the 'unapt' soils of the region. It was to be based on the regular spreading of marl (which was to be found commonly in the Weald) to enrich the ground, and, equally important, the introduction of ley farming to the enclosed fields which had previously been used for *either* pasture or arable. A complete

dressings of marl – the author recommended three hundred to five hundred loads per acre – would serve for twenty to thirty years: ‘your marleable grounds being ordered in this wise . . . will continually stand fruitfully either for corn or pasture’.² The improver did not go into much detail about the cost of systematic marling, but gave the game away when he referred to the sort of farms he had in mind. Under his scheme a ‘husbandman’ of 100 or 125 acres would plough a fifth or a sixth of his land, leaving the rest to pasture, and after a few years the former arable would become pasture again as former grassland was ploughed up for corn in turn. In the sixteenth century, however, the farm of 125 acres in the Weald was a rarity, and the improver’s prescription, had it been known, beyond the budget of most Wealden farmers. The question arises then, what was Wealden farming like in the age before the seventeenth century agricultural reformers with their gospel of convertible husbandry?

This paper attempts to describe the agrarian system of the Kentish Weald, mainly on the basis of surviving probate inventories. They cover the period 1565 to 1601, and are drawn from fourteen wholly Wealden parishes in Canterbury diocese.³ Inventories cover the great majority of farms with the exception of the largest, gentry-owned estates, and can be supplemented by wills and estate records for many points. In the Kent Weald at least, manorial records are of only limited use. In fact their main value is to demonstrate just how *un*-manorialized was Wealden agriculture and landholding. As is well known, land in the Weald was held in severalty, and there was no common agricultural organization. The two classes of manorial records that survive in some quantity, rentals and court rolls, depict a tenurial system as close to freeholding as was permissible within the conventional framework of feudal land law. In the main the rentals tot up the ground rents or quitrents payable by the freeholders to the nominal ‘lords of the fee’, while the court rolls only record the inheritance or sale of these lands – after the transfers have been completed. The lord’s benefit from holding such courts was the small number of reliefs payable upon alienations, occasional heriots and the quitrents, which are often found to be years in arrear. Relief is generally found to be half or one year’s rent, and the rents themselves were usually a half penny or a penny an acre.⁴ Thus land in the Weald is held of ‘manors’ but the manors have only a legal existence if located in the Weald, or are non-Wealden manors which collect rents from land in the Weald.

The other face of landholding in the area was the wide availability of farming land on short and medium-term leases at market rents. But little of this is reflected in the manorial records, and the real

dearth of continuous series of estate accounts from the larger estates in the region precludes a study of the movement of rent and leaseholding. However all the extant records agree that landowners wealthy and not so wealthy regularly leased out a large share of their holdings. There were indeed a number of aristocratic estates in the sixteenth century, although they were not based on a few large manors with consolidated demesnes as was usual in north Kent or the Midlands. Rather they were collections of scores or hundreds of individual parcels of farmland and wood in a number of neighbouring parishes, themselves held of a variety of different manors. We have no detailed surveys or rentals of the major gentry estates in the Weald for this period, but examples can be given to show that aristocratic landowners were not so thin on the ground as is sometimes suggested. There were the Sidneys around Penshurst and Tonbridge, the Lennards in and around Chevening, the Fanes (or Vanes) in the Hadlow area. Moving east there were the Bakers of Sissinghurst (in Cranbrook) and the Culpepers of Goudhurst. Earlier in the century the largest estate in the central Weald had been that of the Guildford family of Benenden, but the Guildford estate was reduced in size by the Elizabethan period.⁵ After 1550 the most extensive Wealden estate was that of the Bakers, which included land in about 20 Kent parishes. Middling gentry estates were usually limited to half a dozen or fewer parishes within the Weald, with perhaps some additional land in the Marsh. Thus Sir Anthony Mayne, of Lynton and Biddenden, who died an old man in 1611, owned about 1,200 acres in six Wealden parishes, as well as 700 acres in the Romney Marsh area. Or Walter Roberts, Esq. of Cranbrook, who died in 1580, holding about 1,500 acres in three adjacent Wealden parishes and 60 acres in Romney Marsh. Lesser gentry estates were smaller versions of the same. John Mayne of Staplehurst (d. 1588) was credited with about 500 acres in Staplehurst and Frittenden, plus 136 acres in the Marsh. Equally typical of many parochial gentry was John Drayner of Smarden, whose estate totalled about 580 acres, mostly in Smarden. He farmed directly only 63 acres around his seat and 29 acres in the Marsh. The rest of his estate, some 487 acres was let to 14 different tenants.⁶

By the second half of the sixteenth century there were resident gentry in most Wealden parishes, but in no case have I come across any family which owned most or even half of the land of any single parish, be it the larger estates like the Bakers or the less far-flung like the Fanes or the Roberts's. In many parishes there was a substantial gentry holding – Sir Anthony Mayne owned 600 acres in Biddenden or about 8 per cent of that parish, while his cousin John Mayne of

Staplehurst owned perhaps 8 to 9 per cent of that parish, 500 or 550 acres. But no Wealden parish was totally dominated by a single aristocratic estate, although in a few the combined holdings of three or four gentry families may have amounted to 30 or 40 per cent of the land. Many of the larger Wealden parishes – covering 6–10,000 acres each – could easily contain the estates – and the pretensions – of two or three gentry of the status of knight or esquire, as well as several smaller fry known only as ‘gent’. When it is possible to analyze the gentry estates in more detail, the apparently overwhelming size of their holdings is put into some perspective. The thousand acre estate of Sir William Campion in Goudhurst (c.1620) turns out to include about 300 acres of woodland, while the 1,500 acres of Walter Roberts, Esq. included a park of over 400 acres as well as other woodland.⁷ These same Wealden parishes supported scores of lesser landowners, most of whose land was neither wood nor waste.

More importantly in terms of agricultural practice, the gentry landowners in the Weald never farmed directly more than a fraction of their estates. Outside of woodland and parks and a small home farm, most of their agricultural land was leased out to a bewildering variety of tenants. Since few Wealden manors had real demesnes, it followed that most of the gentry’s tenants were relatively small operators. When the actual occupiers of the various parcels of large estates are noted in wills, IPMs or Wards schedules, very few appear to be farming more than 100 or 150 acres each. And most are tenants of a messuage and 20, 30 or 50 acres and no more.

And farms for lease were provided not only by the gentry. Lesser landowners frequently leased out all or part of their holdings as well. The evidence for this Wealden proclivity to lease land can be found in wills, and in the IPMs of lesser gentry and other medium-sized freeholders. Prominent among the latter were merchants and clothiers in the central Weald. Alexander Dence of Cranbrook (d. 1574), a clothier among other things, owned two or three hundred acres in Cranbrook, Frittenden, Hawkhurst, Goudhurst and Benenden; as well as at least a dozen tenements and cottages. He received rents from dozens of tenants, and had clearly amassed his estate by numerous purchases of smallholdings and small farms, which seem always to have been available on the market. Likewise, Stephen Sharpe, a Cranbrook clothier, died in the 1570s leaving a dispersed estate which included ten messuages and dozens of parcels of land in Cranbrook, Goudhurst and Horsmonden; most were let. In a similar fashion, the conglomerate estate of Thomas Sheffe of Cranbrook (d. 1604) included 37 messuages and 980 acres, spread

over 9 Wealden parishes and 6 in Romney Marsh. Most of these houses and lands were leased to local occupiers.⁸

In terms of agricultural practice, the student of Wealden farming is dealing mainly with small and medium-sized farms. Quite modest holdings also dominate the lists of ground rents shown on manorial rentals. Unfortunately it is next to impossible to match up farms described in probate inventories with holdings shown on the rentals, both because land is never described in wills as being held of such-and-such manor or manors, and because most medium or large landholders held of several different manors.⁹ Nonetheless, all the sources for both landownership and for the occupation of land combine to present a picture of remarkable variety and complexity of landholding.

The numerous smallholdings and relatively small farms are the most characteristic feature of the Wealden agrarian system. In an age when in many parts of England the numbers of smallholders and husbandmen were allegedly declining, at least relatively, in the Weald they were thick on the ground. The reasons for their survival here are complex. To begin with, the whole area was in practice originally settled by individual smallholders and farmers; perhaps they should be called 'peasant individualists'. The Kentish custom of gavelkind specified partible inheritance and the free alienation of land, which tended to produce an active market in small parcels of land, as shown by numerous deeds going back to the fourteenth century and earlier. The fact that land had always been held in severalty – usually in fenced closes of two to five acres – also encouraged a busy land market, and made possible the acquisition of at least a smallholding by quite poor families. In the high middle ages at least, the availability of additional land for assarting from the still extensive rough woodlands meant that partible inheritance did not result in ludicrously tiny farms as the generations passed. The combination of partibility *and* surplus land encouraged demographic growth as well as the continued existence of small farms. By the time that population began to grow steadily, in the early sixteenth century, there was the local broadcloth industry to provide additional employment and thus allow the survival of small family farms. Using probate inventories as one indicator, Table 1 shows that a clear majority of deceased persons represented by inventories had carried on some farming activity just before they died. The figure would be higher if we could calculate the numbers of retired farmers as well. This is not to postulate that a majority of adult males in the Weald held a farm, for it is likely that most of the adults whose deaths went unnoticed by the probate courts were landless artisans or labourers.

Table 1

FARMING ACTIVITY IN WEALDEN INVENTORIES, 1565-99¹

Parish:	Benen.	Beths.	Bidd.	Cranb.	Goudh.	Hald.	Hawkh.	Mard.	Rolv.	Sandh.	Smar.	Stapl.	Tent.
<i>Farmer</i>	33%	47%	29%	22%	26%	61%	21%	47%	52%	63%	41%	44%	38%
<i>Farmer/ Tradesman</i>	28%	17%	20%	20%	24%	10%	22%	17%	15%	9%	24%	16%	13%
<i>Smallholder</i>													
<i>plus?</i>	7%	14%	8%	5%	12%	6%	16%	11%	14%	7%	14%	1%	11%
<i>Tradesman</i>	14%	6%	24%	31%	20%	4%	14%	4%	6%	7%	8%	13%	11%
<i>Labourer or retired</i>	18%	15%	19%	22%	18%	19%	27%	21%	13%	14%	13%	26%	27%
Total nos.	118	105	98	143	105	48	95	84	109	56	91	70	158
(1,280)													

¹ Source : inventories cited in note 3: all inventories for sample parishes, except those of widows not practicing a trade nor farming.

Nevertheless, the large number of inventories which show a small farm (whether in conjunction with a craft, or not), or which suggest a smallholding, together enforce the conclusion that agriculture in the Weald was not dominated by the large producers. (Table 1)

That smallholders and husbandmen were plentiful in the Weald is also indicated by the rate books and lists which record the occupiers of land in a given parish (although the only examples we have are of the early seventeenth century). They reinforce the results of an analysis of the size of farms based on probate inventories. In most Wealden parishes there were scores of smallholders, a goodly number of family farmers, and a small number of larger holdings of sixty acres to at most a few hundred acres (Tables 2, 3). Farm land was widely, but not evenly distributed. Admittedly, neither rate books nor probate inventories record the distribution of land *ownership*. However, the rentals which do survive in some numbers suggest that land ownership – like occupation – was widely but unevenly distributed. In the parish of Sandhurst, 1,600 acres which owed quitrents to the cast Kent manor of Aldington, were divided into no less than 33 individual holdings. Fourteen of the landowners held land in more than one den of this manor (and no doubt many held land of other manors as well). Over 56 per cent of the 1,600 acres was held by five owners of 100 acres or more; four estates of 50 to 99 acres accounted for 18 per cent of the land; eight holdings of 20 to 49 acres made up a further 16½ per cent of the total. Finally, half the holdings (16) were under 20 acres each, and accounted for less than a tenth of the total area covered by the rental. The 1603 rentals of six Cranbrook dens, whose quitrents were paid to the Roberts family, show a majority of small freeholders alongside much smaller numbers of medium and larger freeholdings.¹⁰

Smallholders comprised a substantial share of Wealden households, and thus represent a very real element in the agricultural structure of the region, even if their output was commercially insignificant. From their inventories it can be shown that many smallholders were labourers or rural artisans who supplemented their money wages with their own produce. They must have depended to a much greater degree than the farmers on parochial wasteland and commons for their pasture. For many, their only farming activity consisted of keeping a couple of cows, a few sheep and usually a few swine, and here they would have been in competition with the totally landless for the small area of Wealden commons. For the heroic days of Wealden settlement, when thousands of acres remained unclaimed and available to all for wood or for grazing, was long since past by the late sixteenth century. Most woodland areas, except in the Lowy of

Tonbridge, were privately held and not open to squatters (except on leases at market rates). With the growing demand for wood from clothmakers and ironmasters, forests were far too valuable to be left open to all and sundry by landowners. Parochial and manorial wastes existed in the Elizabethan period but they were small and scattered unevenly; there was more common and wasteland in the less populated western Weald and along the Sussex border than in the populous central Wealden parishes. In the villages in and around Cranbrook it is unlikely that the limited commons could have accommodated the livestock of the thousands of poorer residents of those parishes. Indeed it is doubtful if all inhabitants, as opposed to all landholders, had equal access to commons and wastes. While some parochial wastes appear to have been open to all residents, certain 'commons' seem to have been restricted to landholders.¹¹ Although evidence about the degree of access to common grazing land is slender, it looks as if common land did not play a very important role in sustaining the region's burgeoning population. Nevertheless, to the extent that smallholders produced some of the foodstuffs they consumed, the numbers which depended wholly on the market were reduced. This would be of real significance in a region which even at the best of times never produced food surpluses (other than beef).

The Wealden smallholders were a group distinct from the labourers or poor artisans whose inventories show neither livestock nor gardens. Both groups – smallholders and landless labourers and artisans – are seriously under-represented in the probate records, but the few who were noticed give a reasonable picture of what must have been the living standard of between a third and a half of all households. These are the men whom some parish registers label 'poor householder' at the occasion of their burials.¹² Although some were minimally involved in agriculture of a kind, none were 'farmers' in the sense we must adhere to in the rest of this essay.

The analysis of farming practices which follows is based on farms of those above the smallholders on the social ladder, and all will be referred to as 'farmers' or 'farmer/tradesmen'. In both cases the inventories of such persons (including widows) show substantially greater farming involvement and goods than those of the smallholders. The line between peasant or family farmers or husbandmen and smallholders may be difficult to draw, but logically it should be between those with farming activities (and land) extensive enough to maintain a small household, and, on the other hand, farming which is no more than supplementary. The farms of many tradesmen and artisans are also included in most of the tables, if their

Table 2

SIZE OF FARMS IN THE KENT WEALD FROM PROBATE RECORDS (1565-1601)

Parish	Arable Acreage ¹		Range of acreage in crop:				Over 20a.	Pasture Acreage ²		Range of Pasture Acreage:			Over 40a.
	Mean	Median	Up to 4a.	Up to 6a.	Up to 10a.	Up to 20a.		Mean	Median	Up to 10a.	Up to 20a.	Up to 40a.	
High Weald:													
Benenden	10a. (48 farms)	7.5a. (48 farms)	38.5%	15.4%	23.1%	18%	5.1%	24.9a (69 farms)	17a.	33.3%	23.2%	28.9%	14.5%
Cranbrook	14a. (30 farms)	12.5a. (30 farms)	34.5%	6.9%	13.8%	34.5%	10.4%	27.2a. (53 farms)	18a.	22.6%	32.1%	22.6%	22.6%
Hawkhurst	9.5a. (31 farms)	6.5a. (31 farms)	41.9%	25.8%	12.9%	12.9%	6.5%	17a. (39 farms)	13.5a.	38.5%	41%	10.3%	10.3%
Low Weald:													
Bethersden	10.5a (44 farms)	8a. (44 farms)	30.2%	20.9%	23.3%	23.3%	2.3%	28.3a (39 farms)	17.5a	17.3%	40.4%	23.1%	19.2%
Biddenden	11a. (39 farms)	11a. (39 farms)	25.6%	15.4%	33.3%	23.1%	2.6%	21.4a. (44 farms)	17a.	25%	38.6%	31.8%	4.6%
Marden	15a. (37 farms)	12a. (37 farms)	10.5%	21.1%	21.1%	42.1%	5.3%	25.8a (40 farms)	20.5a	22.5%	32.5%	25%	20%
Staplehurst	13a. (34 farms)	11.5a. (34 farms)	15.6%	21.9%	37.5%	28.1%	3.1%	23.7a. (40 farms)	15.5a.	37.5%	22.5%	20%	20%
Totals													
High Weald:			38.4%	16.2%	17.2%	21.2%	7.1%			31.1%	30.4%	22.4%	16.2%
Low Weald:			20.8%	19.5%	27.9%	28.6%	3.3%			25%	34.1%	25%	15.9%

Notes: 1. The first 2 columns include an estimate for fallow at 25% of total arable. 2. On stocking estimates of 1.5a. per head of cattle or horse, .5a. per sheep or colt, and not counting calves or other livestock.

Table 3

THE OCCUPIERS OF LAND IN 5 WEALDEN PARISHES

	Chiddingstone (1625)	Horsmonden (1619)	Pluckley (1628)	Bethersden (1614)	Headcorn (1640)
Total acreage assessed	3,957a.	2,779a.	2,077a.	3,618a.	3,696a.
No. of occupiers	130	96	83	144	116
By Size of Holding:					
1) Occupiers of 60a. or more	24 (18.5%)	12 (12.5%)	8 (9.5%)	12 (8.3%)	24 (21%)
Who account for	2,195a. (55.5%)	1,171a. (42%)	884a. (42.5%)	1,256a. (34.5%)	2,116a. (57%)
Mean holding	91.5a	98a.	110a.	105a.	88a.
2) Occupiers of 30a. to 59a.	23 (18%)	22 (23%)	12 (14.5%)	29 (20.1%)	17 (15%)
Who account for	888a. (22%)	848a. (30.5%)	488a. (23.5%)	1,134a. (31.5%)	719a. (19.5%)
Mean holding	39a.	38.5a.	40.5a.	39a.	42a.
3) Occupiers of 10a. to 29a.	43 (33%)	34 (35%)	32 (38.5%)	68 (47.2%)	38 (33%)
Who account for	686a. (17%)	636a. (23%)	540a. (26%)	1,063a. (29.5%)	683a. (18.5%)
Mean holding	16a.	19a.	17a.	16a.	18a.
4) Occupiers of less than 10a.	40 (31%)	28 (29%)	31 (37.5%)	35 (24.3%)	37 (32%)
Who account for	188a. (5%)	125a. (4.5%)	165a. (8%)	165a. (4.5%)	178a. (5%)
Mean holding	4.7a.	4.5a.	5.3a.	4.7a.	4.8a.
Size of largest holding	200a.	120a.	280a.	250a.	184a.
Mean acreage per occupier	30a.	29a.	25a.	25a.	32a.

Sources: Chiddingstone: microfilm of parish register in K.A.O. at fos. 49-50; Horsmonden: K.A.O. U71/01; Pluckley: K.A.O. P 289/5/1;

Bethersden: manuscript volume in church safe labelled 'Churchwardens and Overseers Accounts, 1576-1647' at fo. 104. The local rates analyzed above appear to cover all *occupiers* of pasture and arable, be they freeholders or tenants, residents and non-residents alike, Headcorn: KAO P184/4/1 fo. 14.

farms, taken on their own, might have supported a small family. Most of the farms on which the study is based were mixed arable and pastoral enterprises. Only a small minority were wholly devoted to livestock. Such purely livestock enterprises were not limited to very small farms, or the farms of tradesmen and craftsmen only, but are to be found among all categories and levels of farmers, albeit in quite small numbers. Though not represented in some of the tables, they should not be lost sight of; if anything they were pointers to the future, more specialized, husbandry best suited to the Weald.

The predominance of small and medium-sized farms is apparent in both High and Low Weald parishes, even when smallholders are ignored (Tables 2, 3). More than two-thirds of farmers in both High and Low Weald parishes had under ten acres in crop (and hence well under 15 acres of arable land). At the same time, six in ten Wealden farms had under 20 acres of pasture. And, if many of the smaller farmers pastured some of the stock shown in their inventories on parish wastes, then their pasture acreage was somewhat less than the averages shown in the tables. The number of large farms was small indeed. In seven sample parishes covering High and Low Weald, between 1565 and 1601, only 12 inventories showed either 10 acres or more of winter cereals or 20 acres or above in the summer. The few gentry estates would add only a handful of additional large farms at any one time to those included in these records. Measured in terms of pasture area, only about 15 per cent of farms (between 1565 and 1601) in the same seven parishes had 40 acres or more of meadow and pasture, 53 farms to be precise. And farms with over 100 acres in all were quite rare: only 15 farms (between 1565 and 1601) had pasture estimated at 75 acres or over, which might suggest a total farm acreage of more than 100 acres. At any one time a medium-sized Wealden parish (of 5 – 7,000 acres) would boast no more than two or three farms of more than 100 acres (excluding woods). What percentage of these large farms were operated by tenants of the gentry and what percentage by freeholding yeomen farmers, we cannot estimate, but it's certain that at least some of the larger leaseholders were also substantial freeholders.

The typical Wealden farm (including many run by tradesmen) had no more than six to nine acres in crop, representing eight to twelve acres of arable. From one parish to another there was a good deal of variation with mean summer acreages from only six acres in Benenden to over a dozen in Sandhurst with its quite small sample. From the few inventories which record fallow acreage, it would appear that most Wealden farms planted about 75 per cent of their arable each year. The inventories show no evidence of ley farming

whatsoever. On almost all Wealden farms pasture acreage considerably exceeded arable. Though averages again varied from one parish to another, the 'typical' Wealden farm contained 15 to 20 acres of grassland, somewhat less than twice the arable acreage. The majority of farms, therefore, totalled 25 to 35 acres, with a sizeable minority ranging up to 75 acres or so. In addition, of course, there would have been dozens of smallholdings in most Wealden parishes, along with two or three large farms by local standards.

The Weald in the broadest sense was a pastoral farming district. Nevertheless, most farms had some arable. Wealden farmers tended to stick to a fairly traditional balance of cereal crops, with little indication that the novel cash crops or new fodder crops had made any impact before the end of Elizabeth's reign. By and large, about half the sown acreage was devoted to a winter grain – usually wheat – and most of the other half was sown with the most appropriate spring cereal for the heavy, poorly-drained clays, oats. In a few of the sample parishes oats actually accounted for more than half of the crop acreage in all the summer inventories combined. In none of the parishes did wheat comprise as much as 50 per cent, but in five of them there was nevertheless more wheat than oats. The crop acreages given in the inventories covering the 1560s to the 1590s have been treated as a single unit, because there appears to have been no real change in the choice or balance of crops which farmers planted during the whole period. Wheat and oats were dominant throughout the Weald, with the exception of Tenterden, a parish that was also exceptional in the amount of marshland within its bounds. Peas and beans were the next most common crops, with many farms showing up to one or two acres of these grains, planted as fodder crops. Only in Goudhurst and Hawkhurst (both High Weald) were peas and beans a major part of the spring sown arable. Why these two parishes should differ in this way from neighbouring Benenden and Sandhurst is not clear. Rye appears occasionally in the inventories, usually sown in small quantities alongside wheat. Barley only very rarely occurs, in very small amounts, and hops do not figure in the inventories (although as crops planted in gardens do not figure in most inventories, and since hops were first planted in gardens, it may be that hops had already been introduced in small way before 1600). The predominance of wheat and oats is the region's hallmark, as has also been shown in studies of Sussex farming.¹³ It followed then that of necessity malting barley was imported into the Weald from Sussex or from east Kent.

There is little evidence about crop rotation in the documentary sources for this period. It is probable that the small arable fields were

Table 4

ARABLE AND LIVESTOCK ON WEALDEN FARMS, 1565-1601¹

Parish	No.	Wheat	Summer inventories w/known acreage			Livestock:		Winter inventories	
			Oats	Peas/Beans	Other	Corn value	No.	Livestock:	Corn value
Benenden	16	47%	46%	1%	6%	3.4:1	20	3.0:1	3.0:1
Bethersden	20	46%	53%	1%	-	3.0:1	10	4.2:1	4.2:1
Biddenden	18	48%	52%	-	-	2.5:1	16	3.2:1	3.2:1
Cranbrook	12	43%	49%	2%	6%	3.7:1	13	3.2:1	3.2:1
Goudhurst	6	44%	39%	15%	2%	2.1:1	9	3.0:1	3.0:1
Halden	13	42%	57%	-	1%	3.7:1	13	4.6:1	4.6:1
Hawkhurst	13	48%	41%	11%	-	2.1:1	12	3.9:1	3.9:1
Marden	26	47%	48%	3%	2%	2.3:1	12	2.2:1	2.2:1
Rolvenden	20	47%	43%	4%	6%	3.7:1	30	3.3:1	3.3:1
Sandhurst	10	42%	54%	3.5%	.5%	3.5:1	13	3.6:1	3.6:1
Staplehurst	12	47%	47.5%	4%	1.5%	2.7:1	13	2.3:1	2.3:1
Tenterden	16	48%	32%	14%	6%	5.3:1	18	4.4:1	4.4:1

¹Source: inventories cited in note 3. Very small farms have been excluded. 'Other' among the cereals covers rye and barley. The livestock to corn ratio is the ratio of the value of all livestock to all corn (excluding hay) in each estate; the ratios for each farm in a parish have been averaged for both summer and winter figures.

cropped in the most simple of rotations, including a fallow. The one Elizabethan lease which has anything to say about farming methods specifies only that the farmer must not sow oats in two consecutive years in the same fields. Hardly a remarkable demand!¹⁴

Arable farming, however, was by no means the main business of the Wealden farmer. In this region of heavy clays and frequent hills and valleys, the balance of the agrarian regime was heavily tipped in the direction of pastoral husbandry, more especially towards cattle rearing and fattening. This can be demonstrated in a variety of sources, from sixteenth and seventeenth century husbandry treatises to estate records and the probate inventories. Almost without exception, the inventories which show any type of farming always include cattle. It is exceedingly hard to find an inventory with crops but no livestock but relatively common to see small farms with livestock but no corn. At the other end of the scale, the wealthiest farmers were rich in cattle, not in corn. The balance between livestock and corn can be measured in a number of ways, and these are shown in the tables. One method is to compare the money value assigned to livestock in probate inventories with that placed on all corn, whether in the barn or on the ground. This can be presented either as a livestock to corn ratio, or as the percentage share of, say livestock, of the value of animals and corn combined. Another method is to compare the estimated amount of land devoted to crops with the amount of pasture necessary for the livestock listed on the inventory. Table 4 allows a comparison of the livestock to corn ratios (in money values) in both summer and winter inventories. It might be hypothesized that the livestock: corn ratio would be relatively lower in the spring and summer since it included the value of both winter and spring sown crops. On the other hand the reverse might also be argued, that there would be more animals to be valued in the spring and summer than in valuations made in autumn or winter. The sample inventories from Wealden farms show that both in the winter and in the months between spring sowing and harvest the value of farmers' livestock was at least twice that of their corn. The variations amongst the ratios, both as between seasons and as between parishes, suggest a good deal of local variety in farming, but also puts paid to the old chestnut that farmers regularly sold or slaughtered most of their cattle at the beginning of winter. In half the parishes the mean livestock: corn ratio was higher in the summer than in the winter inventories; in the other half the situation was reversed. But in all the parishes the mean ratio of livestock to corn was at least two to one. The mean ratio of all the parochial averages was over three to one. If the value of hay had been included, the margin between livestock and

corn would have been further increased. In percentage terms the predominance of livestock within the agrarian regime is shown just as strongly.¹⁵ Wealden meadow was regularly mown, and the resulting hay along with the cheaper grain grown by Wealden farmers sufficed to feed most of their livestock during the winter months, and allowed them to sell their real cash crop – cattle – when the return was highest. Only two parishes show a consistently lower ratio between livestock and corn, Marden and Staplehurst. Both are in the less hilly, Low Weald area, and the farmers there seem to have planted somewhat larger cereal crops than their neighbours in other parishes.

Land use in the Weald, as estimated from the inventories, clearly demonstrates the bias towards livestock. In both High and Low Weald parishes the average arable acreage is only about half the estimated pasture acreage. In fact the livestock: corn ratios correlate quite well with the equivalent ratios between pasture and arable land. Marden's farms appear again to have had a much closer balance between corn and livestock, while Hawkhurst had, in general, exceptionally small farms. The general rule appears to be, the greater the share of small family farms in the sample, the greater the likelihood that farmland will be more evenly divided between arable and pasture (and the livestock: corn ratio lower).

Wealden farmland was not ideal for corn. However, in this period before the 'agricultural revolution' and before convertible husbandry had made any widespread impact, specialization had not advanced to such a degree that clayland farmers had given up arable farming. As yet no national – or even regional-market structure was so advanced that that would have been a practical possibility. The small farmers who planted wheat at least insulated themselves from the vagaries of the market, for their bread, even if yields on Wealden soils were lower than elsewhere. For many farmers wheat was a useful cash crop, especially in a region with many landless mouths to feed, and where wheaten bread seems to have been the norm for rich and poor alike in most years. Oats actually grew well in Wealden soils, and although worth only half as much as wheat per acre, it could be fed to animals and served as a bread grain for the local poor in years of high wheat prices. The Wealden farm, therefore, remained a mixed enterprise for a number of good reasons, but with livestock probably providing the largest share of the cash income. In general, as the size and value of farms moved upwards, so the ratio between livestock and corn grew larger. The wealthy commercial farms in the Weald were rich in livestock, while their cereals acreage was only two or three times that of the typical small farmer's. A few examples, chosen

from the more informative inventories can illustrate the range of Wealden farms as well as the typical farming regimes.

Family farms abounded. Typical of such small mixed farming units was the estate of Thomas Turner of Marden (June 1571), worth in all under £25. His crop consisted of 3a. of wheat, 4a. of oats and a half an acre of barley, and he still had £1 12s in corn on hand in June. His livestock included 2 kine, 2 heifers, a calf, one mare and 3 hogs, which were worth only slightly more than his corn. His holding probably comprised 9–10 acres of arable and an equal amount of pasture. A different balance was struck by Richard Allen of Goudhurst (April 1573), whose chattels were worth just over £25. His winter wheat crop was just two acres (implying arable of 5–6 acres in all), but his livestock came to £14 10s, and consisted of 5 kine, 2 heifers, 2 buds, 2 bullocks, 1 calf, a mare and a colt, 8 sheep and 3 hogs. For his livestock Allen would have needed 20–22 acres of pasture.¹⁶ Neither of these farmers possessed his own plough or ploughteam, nor did most small and medium-size Wealden farms. In a sample of farms from seven Wealden parishes, based again on inventories, 113 out of 295 (38 per cent) had two or more oxen. The percentage varied from 28 per cent (Benenden) to 58 per cent in wealthy Cranbrook¹⁷

Typical of the medium-size farms was that of Edmund Baker of Rolvenden (April 1572), whose goods totalled £69. He owned 11 kine or heifers, a bull, 3 buds, plus a mare, 6 sheep and 3 hogs. The livestock: corn ratio for his farm was 2.7:1, and his holding had about 9–10 acres of arable and 25–30 acres of grass. Equally typical was the farm of John Smith of Benenden (April 1593), whose chattels came to £54 in all. He had 5a. of wheat and 4a. of oats, and his livestock included 4 steers, 3 one-year bullocks, 3 kine, 2 heifers and a calf, as well as a mare, 8 ewes with lambs and some swine. His arable acreage would have come to twelve acres and his stock grazed on 20–25 acres. The livestock:corn ratio was 2.9:1.¹⁸

A small number of large, commercially-oriented farms dotted the Wealden countryside. They must have played a leading role in the commercial life of the parish as well as being a significant source of domestic and agricultural employment. It is equally likely that the large farms produced the bulk of the livestock that entered the flows of long-distance trade, in this case the trade with London. The few surviving accounts of the bailiff of husbandry to Thomas Willoughby, Esq. of Bore Place, Chiddingstone, give an idea of the scale of operation of a large, gentry-owned farm, in this case in the western Weald. At the year ending 25 March 1519 the stock remaining on the home farm amounted to 26 oxen, 5 steers, 31 kine, 3 bulls, 19 ewes,

15 wethers, 1 ram, 9 horses and mares and 6 colts. During the year the bailiff had sold 18 oxen, 14 steers, 25 kine, 8 calves, 2 bulls, 17 lambs, a colt and two horses. In addition 9 oxen, 6 steers, 14 kine, 19 calves, 32 ewes, 19 wethers, 2 rams and 9 lambs were accounted for by household consumption! Just to carry the stock remaining at year's end would have required upwards of 130 acres of grassland: considering that neither calves or lambs are included in the March account, Willoughby's pasture was probably closer to 150 than 130 acres. In the 1518 account is a note of the farm's arable crops: 16a. of wheat and 24a. of oats, indicating arable land of 50–55 acres. In 1518–19 Willoughby's bailiff realized about £60 from livestock sales, which was probably the second most important source of rural income, after rent from Willoughby's tenanted lands.¹⁹

A stray surviving Prerogative Court of Canterbury inventory of the goods of Dame Constance Culpeper, dated 1542, gives one other rare example of gentry farming operations. The farm goods on the Culpeper estate in Goudhurst were valued at almost £100 – this at a date just before the mid-century price rise. The sown arable was 14a. of wheat and 34a. of oats, representing 65–70 acres of arable. The livestock was mainly cattle – in fact about 100 head of cattle – along with 40 adult sheep. On my estimate the pasture for the stock would have been about 160 acres, more than twice the arable. In all the Culpepers' home farm totalled about 225 acres, which from late sixteenth and early seventeenth century evidence based on rates, was about as large as any farm in the Kent Weald.²⁰

Estates like the Willoughbys' and the Culpepers' were exceptional in the Weald during any part of the century. Lower down the social scale, although often equivalent in terms of their direct farming operations, were the estates of the minor gentry and prosperous yeomen. Only a very few of these were comparable to the farms of the wealthy east Kent arable farmers, many of whom owned agricultural goods worth three to five hundred pounds and more. Nevertheless, there were Wealden farmers who were as well-off as almost all of their neighbours except the most successful clothiers or the leading gentry. Robert Willard of Rolvenden died late in 1572, leaving an estate valued at £161. His winter wheat alone extended to 13a., and he also had £14 worth of corn in store. But his livestock was worth almost half his total estate: 4 oxen, 9 kine, 6 young steers, 8 one-year bullocks, 10 weaners and a bull, as well as 68 sheep, 3 mares and a colt. His farmland consisted of about 35a. of arable and approximately 80a. of pasture. In neighbouring Benenden, Thomas Sharpe's total estate came to £323 in December 1586. His winter wheat covered 12 acres, and his livestock included 4 oxen, 4 steers,

14 'two-years', 8 'one-years', 11 Welsh bullocks, 12 kine, a bull and 10 weaners, plus 62 sheep and lambs, 4 horses and 4 colts. Sharpe's farmland would have comprised about 30 acres of arable and at least 100 acres of grass; the livestock: corn ratio was 4.3:1. A final example is Stephen Gibbon of Rolvenden, whose family would soon be recognized as gentlemen. His 1570 estate totalled £339, including debts due of £85. He had 8a. of wheat in the ground and £13 worth of corn in his barns, itself more than the total value of corn harvested by most Wealden farmers. But that was small beer compared to his livestock, rated at more than £110. He owned 54 head of cattle and a large sheep flock by Wealden standards, 81 animals. Gibbon's farm was thus made up of about 20a. of arable and 125a. of pasture.²¹ If only runs of estate accounts from any of these large farms had survived, a much more detailed account of the commercial agriculture of the Weald might have been possible.

Raising and fattening cattle for the market was the mainspring of Wealden agriculture, and involved most farmers in exchange transactions, even if only within the local market sphere. For those with access to substantial acreage and cash, fattening store cattle purchased either in the metropolitan markets or at the main Kentish cattle markets was an important as rearing their own stock. The inventories of the wealthier farmers often include non-local breeds, the most favoured being 'Northerns' and Welsh. Stephen Gibbon, mentioned above, had 10 'Northern runts', and another prosperous grazier, Thomas Boone of Biddenden, had both Northern heifers and bullocks among his herd. Boone also owed £17 to 'the Welshman' for cattle, while Thomas Sharpe of Benenden counted 11 Welsh bullocks among his stock.²² Many of the specialist graziers not only occupied scores of acres of grass in the Weald, but also owned or hired summer grazing in Romney Marsh or in Tenterden parish.²³ And even at the level of the family farm, the emphasis was on beef even if the farmer was selling only half a dozen beasts a year at a Kentish market. The small farmer – like the cottager/smallholder – usually kept one or two dairy cattle, but what distinguished the farmer from the cottager was the presence of bullocks and steers. Dairying, especially cheese and butter making, is in evidence on most farms, but there is little indication of commercial dairy production or sales to London.

A large share of the Wealden beef cattle was probably destined for the London market, although cattle may have passed through several hands on that journey. Kentish steers and bullocks were driven to the London and Southwark markets, but since the trade in beef was unregulated until it reached the capital's official markets there is no documentary evidence from which to estimate the volume of cattle

sent by various regions to London. It is also likely that Wealden cattle were sold to butchers and graziers from Ashford, Maidstone and the North Kent towns. A simple flow chart of agricultural trade within Kent would show livestock from the Weald moving north and east, while grain – especially barley – moved in the opposition direction. Within the Weald itself there was a market for livestock, probably drawing heavily on the animals reared by the smaller farmers who never considered sending their stock to London. Certainly the local butchers of the larger Wealden villages and towns had a convenient market for their surplus hides, for most parishes supported one or two tanners. In fact there was a concentration of the leather industry in the Western Weald, in such parishes as Tudeley, Brasted, Sundridge and Edenbridge.²⁴

Table 5

LIVESTOCK ON WEALDEN FARMS, 1565–1601

<i>Parish</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Cattle</i> ¹		<i>Sheep</i> ²		<i>Horses</i> ³	
		1 or <i>more</i>	10 or <i>more</i>	1 or <i>more</i>	30 adults or <i>more</i>	1 or <i>more</i>	3 or <i>more</i>
Benenden	73	100%	38%	59%	19%	89%	26%
Cranbrook	57	100%	56%	40%	14%	84%	35%
Hawkhurst	41	100%	37%	32%	7%	81%	15%
Rolvenden	55	100%	60%	71%	29%	82%	40%
Bethersden	54	100%	46%	80%	11%	89%	39%
Biddenden	46	100%	36%	56%	7%	84%	31%
Marden	43	98%	44%	77%	14%	88%	42%
Staplehurst	41	100%	49%	51%	12%	83%	46%

Notes: 1: incl. calves, oxen. 2: excluding lambs. 3: incl. colts.

The ubiquity of cattle in the Weald – as compared to other livestock – is shown statistically in Table 5, based on inventories from both High and Low Weald farms. Cattle were universally kept, with moderately sizeable herds owned by between forty and fifty per cent of farmers. Most farmers also owned at least one mare: the sale of her offspring would have been a useful addition to the income from cattle sales each year. The more specialized and large scale breeding of horses, however, remained an activity for gentlemen and royal officials.²⁵ Although horses were not used for ploughing, they were in constant demand for carrying goods and timber and for personal transport. A mare could be had for £1 in the 1560s, within the reach of most householders, although fine geldings were valued at £2–3 or more at the same period. Finally, a majority of Wealden farmers

owned some sheep. In most cases they seem to have been kept for household use, for the table and for domestic spinning of wool. Well under a fifth of farms carried medium-size flocks of 30 sheep or more, and it is rare to find flocks of a hundred or more. In the more important sheep-breeding regions of Kent, both in the North and in Romney Marsh, flocks numbering in the hundreds were common. Wealden grassland was not ideal sheep country, and even the considerable market for wool offered by the Wealden broadcloth industry could not alter the agricultural ecology of the region. Indeed the few Wealden graziers who owned large flocks tended to acquire marsh grazing for them.

The backbone of the Wealden economy was fundamentally agricultural in the widest sense, despite the presence of both cloth and ironmaking. The distinction often made in occupational studies between 'craftsmen and tradesmen' on the one hand and 'farmers' on the other is not a useful one for the Weald, or for other similar regions. The widespread combination of active farming with artisanal or trade employment may well be emphasized more strongly than the comparatively large share of the Wealden population which lived by some non-agricultural occupation. In the sixteenth century all manner of tradesmen and craftsmen combined farming with their trade or handicraft. This applies not only to domestic workers in the cloth industry, but to most crafts from the metal and leather trades to tailors and carpenters. More than half the identified tradesmen were also farmers, and that does not include the poorer rural artisans who kept a couple of cows or swine only. Higher up the social ladder, most of the wealthier tradesmen and clothmaking entrepreneurs financed their commercial operations in part by the profits of farming. Many of them were rentiers as well, as an examination of their wills discloses. This dual economy of the clothiers was described in the mid-sixteenth century, as a social evil. In the well-known Debate between the Heralds of England and France of 1549, the French herald is made to comment:²⁶

Your clothiers dwell in great fermes abroad in the countrey, having howses with commodities lyke unto gentylmen, where aswel they make cloth and kepe husbandry, and also grasse and fede shepe and catell.

The Wealden agrarian regime – which provided the setting and the opportunities for clothmaking and other rural manufacturing – was fundamentally different from the farming systems of the manorialized and champion districts of England which normally occupy the attention of historians. In much of England farmers operated within a

system of communally-organized agriculture. The holdings of most small farmers, especially the copyholders, were spread over two or three village fields, each man's strips dispersed among those of other holders. His choice of crops and rotations and his access to pasture were normally fixed by village agreement and manorial custom, and his lands were subject to communal grazing after harvest and when fallow. The real rents of copyholders at least were not negligible and were beginning to rise again in the second half of the century. By contrast, in the Weald (and in a few similar regions), the farmer's holdings were separate and enclosed, mainly in small, irregular fields. The only limitations on land use were the natural advantages and disadvantages of each separate piece. The manor or manors of which a farmer held his lands freely – for only a miniscule, fixed ground rent and very limited reliefs – had no part to play in the organization of farming. There were also no seigneurial restrictions on the leasing of land by Wealden freeholders, and because each estate was in practice a conglomeration of a number of enclosed parcels of land, the landholder could easily vary the proportion of his estate which he kept in hand and that part which was leased out for long or short periods. The availability of land was also increased by the Kentish custom of partible inheritance (which most farmers followed in this period), as well as by the ease with which landholders could mortgage all or part of their holdings.

The contrast with the Midlands and much of south central England is equally noticeable in the balance between arable and pastoral farming. Wealden agriculture was different from both the sheep-corn husbandry of Norfolk and the Downlands and the mainly arable, champion farming of many Midland and Eastern regions. The Wealden system was predominantly pastoral, and its pasture was mainly grazed by cattle. In contrast to what appears to have been the national trend towards large farms and the disappearance of small, subsistence holdings, both smallholders and small, family farms abounded in the Weald and showed no signs of extinction in the sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries.²⁷ The explanation for their survival has to do both with its gavelkind custom and weak manorial control, and with the economic possibilities of combining farming with a craft or trade and/or the availability of part-time wage labour in the broadcloth industry.

Wealden farming could accomodate itself to different types and degrees of non-farming employment. By the sixteenth century the mixed agricultural and manufacturing economy was a success, if population growth through both a natural increase and immigration are measures of economic success. The possibilities of dual

Table 6

INVENTORY VALUES OF ESTATES OF FULL-TIME
FARMERS AND GRAZIERS, 1565-1599

Total Estate	1565-79	1580-89	1590-99	1565-1599
£10 - 20	21 (10.1%)	6 (4.1%)	9 (5.4%)	36 (6.9%)
£20 - 30	45 (21.6%)	13 (9%)	19 (11.4%)	77 (14.8%)
£30 - 40	32 (15.4%)	23 (15.9%)	14 (8.4%)	69 (13.3%)
£40 - 50	19 (9.1%)	13 (9%)	19 (11.4%)	51 (9.8%)
£50 - 60	18 (8.7%)	13 (9%)	18 (10.8%)	49 (9.4%)
£60 - 80	22 (10.6%)	10 (6.9%)	23 (13.8%)	55 (10.6%)
£80 - 100	13 (6.3%)	19 (13.1%)	22 (13.2%)	54 (10.4%)
Over £100	38 (18.3%)	48 (33.1%)	43 (25.8%)	129 (24.8%)
Totals	208	145	167	520

employment encouraged the formation of more families. In turn, Wealden industry flourished on the basis of relatively cheap labour based on an expanding rural population – at least so long as overseas markets for Kentish broadcloth were buoyant. By the late sixteenth century, however, that prosperity was under threat. Those families with land could readily supplement farming with a trade or part-time work in clothmaking, if their holdings did not produce a marketable surplus. But the number of landless was growing. For them the ability to combine part-time spinning, a craft or trade and work as agricultural labourers was crucial to their survival. And here, of course, the nature of Wealden farming, generally small-scale and not heavily dependent on inputs of hired labour, worked to the disadvantage of the landless in search of work.

Without significant increases in agricultural productivity – and there are no signs that sixteenth century Wealden farmers were practicing the kinds of techniques advocated in *The Inrichment of the Weald of Kent* – or renewed expansion of the demand for Kentish cloth, the economic system of the Weald could not provide a satisfactory living for all its expanding population. The limit seems to have been reached in the early seventeenth century. The evidence for this is the steadily rising level of poor relief in these same ‘proto-industrialized’ Wealden parishes. The Cranbrook churchwardens’ accounts show payments to the local poor of over £100 p.a. in 1611 and the six succeeding years, with a peak of £146 in 1615-16.²⁸ This is significantly higher than during the ‘crisis’ decade of the 1590s. The Wealden broadcloth trade suffered alternating periods of stagnation and slump in the early seventeenth century, and after the interregnum slowly disappeared. Ironmaking too, in the Kent and

Sussex Weald, offered less employment after its largest customer, the Crown, made peace with Spain in 1604. The farming regime, however, was more resilient. With the increasing use of convertible husbandry, the adoption of cash crops like hops, and the growing food demands of the metropolis, the Wealden agricultural system continued to flourish in the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century.²⁹

Notes

¹ The research for this study was supported by a grant of the Social Science Research Council. The full findings will appear in due course as *Kentish Wealden Society in the Sixteenth Century*. A version of this paper was presented to the early modern social and economic history seminar of the History Faculty, Oxford in 1982, for whose comments the author is indebted.

² *The Inrichment of the Weald of Kent*, frequently attributed to Gervase Markham (1625), p. 19.

³ Inventories: Kent Archives Office (hereafter KAO) PRC 10/1–29, PRC 21/1–16, PRC 28/1–4. Parishes: Benenden, Bethersden, Biddenden, Cranbrook, Frittenden, Goudhurst, Halden, Hawkhurst, Marden, Rolvenden, Sandhurst, Staplehurst, Tenderden.

⁴ Lands held of many manors also paid a heriot after the holder's death, e.g. Pembury Parva: KAO U249/M13: court of 15 Dec. 19 Eliz; Sundridge: KAO U1000/M16, M32.

⁵ The best source for large gentry estates are (in the Public Record Office) feodaries' surveys, inquisitions *post mortem* and Court of Wards schedules; wills are often less full, especially if the testator had only one son. The biggest estate, by far, was the Baker's: IPM of Sir Henry Baker (d. 1623): PRO Wards 7/70 no. 159. Sidney estate receivers' accounts: KAO U47/M12 and others; lands of Sir Thomas Fane (1574): KAO U282/M14; IPM of John Lennard (1591): PRO C 142/229 no. 143.

⁶ Sir John Baker (1559): schedule of lands: KAO U24/T426; Ant. Mayne: PRO C 142/693 no. 26; Roberts: PRO C 142/221 no. 104; John Mayne: PRO Wards 7/22 no. 92; Drayner: PRO C 142/146 no. 116.

⁷ Campion: KAO U814/P1.

⁸ Rentals of Brasted and Sundridge with demesne farmers: KAO U1450/M35, M61; Sidney estate accounts in note 5; Dence: PRO C 142/169 no. 91; Sharpe: PRO C 142/164 no. 78; Sheffe: PRO Wards 7/37 no. 11.

⁹ E.g. the estate of Thomas Sheffe (d. 1604), described in atypically detailed fashion: he paid quitrents to 12 different lords: n.8 above.

¹⁰ Sandhurst: KAO U1220/M25; rents to Roberts' from dens of Cranbrook, Swatlingden, Thornden, Hartley, Badlingden and Hockridge: 16 holders with quitrents of 3s or more paid 63 per cent of all rents; 15 with rents of 1s 1d to 2s 9d paid 23 per cent; 41 with rents of 12d or less paid 14 per cent of rents (KAO U47/11/M9). Landholders holding of manors of Southborough and Bidborough: 25a. or less: 55 per cent; 25–50a.: 25 per cent; 50a. or more: 20 per cent (in all 49 landholders): KAO U442/M67 (dated 1621).

¹¹ Dispute over access to commons in Hawkhurst and Cranbrook, 1567–8, giving access only to certain landholders: PRO C 78/38 no. 12; C 3/27/5. A list of commons and wasteland can be assembled, but in most cases their size cannot be determined. Some examples are Cranbrook: Willesley common, 1611 (KAO QM/SIq/40); Frittenden: Frittenden Brook, 1570 (PRO C 54/836 m.48), Singsted Green (Edward Hasted, *History of Kent* (1797–1801), map of Cranbrook, vol. 7); Horsmonden:

Horsmonden Hoath, 1639 (KAO U86/P2; U180/P1); Hawkhurst: Seacock's Heath and the open land between the two main villages of the parish (KAO U1050/T1; Hasted, *History*, vii.146 and map of Gt. Barnfield and Selbrittenden hundreds); Goudhurst: Kilndown Common (Hasted, *History*, map of Marden hundred; as a waste, 1638, KAO U1006/M17); Marden: Marden Thorn, 1590s (British Library Add. MS. 33,889 fo. 154 and map of Marden hundred in Hasted, *History*); Brenchley: Pearson's Green and Low Waste (KAO U86/P2); Lamberhurst: Lamberhurst Down, Hock Green, Freeheath Common, all in Sussex (KAO U200/P1); Hadlow: Hadlow Common, 1621 (KAO U31/P3); Hunton: Cockshoath, 1563 (KAO U282/M9); Chevening: Chevening Heath and East Hoath, 1554 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1553–4 pp. 180–181); Leigh: Blackhoath alias Newberyhoath, 1519 and 1570 (KAO U908/T16/ 12, 19 and 21); Brasted: Brasted Chart, at least 300a., 1573 (KAO U1450/M35). In the sixteenth century the only unsettled woodland and waste in the Kent Weald was parkland in Tonbridge parish; it was cleared and divided into farmsteads in the seventeenth century. See C.W. Chalklin, 'The Rural Economy of a Kentish Wealden Parish, 1650–1750', *Agricultural History Review*, x (1962).

¹² Robert Bronger of Staplehurst was called 'poor householder' when buried in Jan. 1577: Staplehurst parish register. His chattels totalled £8 5s, and show no farming activities: KAO PRC 10/9/93.

¹³ C.E. Brent, 'Rural Employment and Population in Sussex between 1550 and 1640', *Sussex Arch. Collections*, cxiv (1976), esp. pp. 38–48; G.H. Kenyon, 'Kirdford Inventories', *ibid.* xciii (1955); J. Cornwall, 'Farming in Sussex, 1540–1640', *ibid.* xcii (1954). An early reference to hops in the Weald is in a nuisance case over damage to the 'hop garden' of Alex. Brickenden, gent. in 1606: KAO QM/SB/1350.

¹⁴ KAO U409/78.

¹⁵ Livestock as a percentage of corn and livestock combined (but excluding hay) in 7 parishes. High Weald: Benenden (69 farms): 75% Cranbrook (54): 77.5% Hawkhurst (35): 71%; Low Weald: Bethersden (56): 75.5%; Biddenden (44): 73% Marden (43): 66%; Staplehurst (41): 69.5%.

¹⁶ KAO PRC 10/5/240; 10/6/308^v.

¹⁷ From the total sample of inventories. Parochial totals were: Benenden (60 farms) 28% Cranbrook (36) 58%; Hawkhurst (32) 31%; Bethersden (47) 30% Biddenden (41) 41%; Marden (40) 45%; Staplehurst (39) 41%.

¹⁸ KAO PRC 10/6/224^v; 10/20/213.

¹⁹ KAO U1000/3/EII–12.

²⁰ KAO U660/F1.

²¹ KAO PRC 10/6/311; 10/15/281^v; 10/5/55.

²² KAO PRC 10/7/197: Boone's total was £227. See a case concerning a 'drover of Yorkshire' and the Northern steers he attempted to sell in Kent and Sussex in 1601: KAO QM/SB/376.

²³ E.g. Boone, n. 22; also Peter Piers of Tenterden (Apr. 1572), total estate £350; the appraisers mentioned 3 leases of marshland and much of his stock, especially the sheep, was pastured in Romney and Guildford Marshes: KAO PRC 10/6/151^v.

²⁴ Most of the tanners informed against for infractions of penal statutes who lived in Kent came from the west Weald: see PRO K.R. Memoranda Rolls (E 159) Recorda section, *passim* for the sixteenth century.

²⁵ Joan Thirsk, *Horses in Early Modern England* (University of Reading, 1978). The best documented example is the Sidneys at Penshurst.

²⁶ R.H. Tawney and Eileen Power eds. *Tudor Economic Documents* (1924). iii, p. 5. Dr Joan Thirsk very kindly reminded me of this text.

²⁷ For two examples among many of the disappearance of traditional subsistence holdings see Cicely Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance in Transition* (1983), and Margaret Spufford, *Contrasting Communities* (1974).

²⁸ Cranbrook: KAO P100/5/1 fos. 142^v, 148^v, 156, 160, 161^v, 166, 170. On non-farming employment in wood-pasture areas see Joan Thirsk, 'Industries in the Countryside' in F.J. Fisher ed. *Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England*, (1961). For similar regions where industry flourished in the

seventeenth century, Victor Skipp, *Crisis and Development: An Ecological Case Study of the Forest of Arden, 1570-1674* (1978), and Pauline Frost, 'Yeomen and Metalsmiths: Livestock in the Dual Economy in South Staffordshire, 1560-1720', *Agric. Hist. Rev.* xxix (1981).

²⁹ Cf. C.W. Chalklin, *Agric. Hist. Rev.*, x, (1962). The freeholders of one Wealden manor (Pembury Magna) were as numerous in the 1660s as in the 1520s: 26 freeholders in the 1520s (Public Record Office E 36/164 fo. 9^v) and 28 in 1666 (KAO U1823/37/M2).