

The Rural Economy of a Kentish Wealden Parish 1650-1750¹

By C. W. CHALKLIN

LANDHOLDING and farming in the Weald of Kent had several unusual features. This was largely because the whole region originally consisted of dense forest, and because the predominantly clay soil is rather infertile and difficult to work. For these reasons the arable land had probably been enclosed from the beginning of the settlement of the area in the eleventh century, and by the seventeenth century there was only a little open meadow and pasture. As in other parts of England once covered by dense forest, like central Suffolk, farms in the Weald were very small. Even in the eighteenth century there were no signs of large-scale consolidation. The fields, too, were smaller than those in other parts of Kent, and were usually surrounded by copses. Further, the farming reflected the harshness of the soil. Oats were the main crop, little barley was grown, and the profits came as much from the raising of livestock as from arable farming. The region was slow to adopt new methods, like the use of sainfoin and lucern after the Restoration, and oxen were in use as draught animals long after the rest of the county had replaced them with horses.

As elsewhere in Kent, nearly all land was freehold, in comparison with the general English picture in which copyhold was as widespread as freehold. Lambarde, writing in 1570, said of the Kentish farmers: "neither be they so much bounden to the gentry by copyhold or customary tenures, as the inhabitants of the western counties be, nor at all endangered by the feeble hold of tenant right, as the common people in the northern parts be; for copyhold

¹ The principal sources used in the preparation of this article were as follows. (a) MSS. in Kent Archives Office: Rochester probate inventories (1687-1733); Canterbury probate inventories (1700); Rochester will registers; Deeds and manorial rentals from the Knocker and Weller Poley MSS., and other collections; Tithe maps, 1842. (b) MSS. in Public Record Office: Chancery Proceedings and Masters Exhibits; Exchequer Special Commissions and Depositions by Commission; Rentals and Surveys. (c) Printed: W. Lambarde, *Perambulation of Kent*, London, 1826, p. 7 (1st edition, 1570); G. Markham, *The Inrichment of the Weald of Kent*, London, 1649; E. Hasted, *A History of Kent*, Canterbury, 1782; J. Boys, *A General View of the Agriculture of the County of Kent*, London, 1796; G. H. Garrad, *A Survey of the Agriculture of Kent* (County Agricultural Surveys No. 1), London, 1954.

The writer would like to thank Dr W. G. Hoskins for his guidance in the preparation of this paper, and Drs Joan Thirsk, F. Hull, and H. G. Hunt, and Mr W. V. Dumbreck, for their helpful criticisms of the text.

tenure is rare in Kent, and tenant right not heard of at all." Landholding was free of many of the controls placed on it elsewhere by an active manorial administration, for most manors existed merely as machines for the collection of rents. This was partly owing to the prevalence of freehold tenure, and partly because the land, being enclosed, did not require any joint supervision such as the manor sometimes provided in open-field areas. It was also owing to the geographical distribution of the manor, which was seldom a unit, and was usually spread in parcels over several parishes. In the Weald, where parishes were often very large, there were usually several manors in a single parish.

By taking one large parish it is possible to study the economic significance of these features in detail. The ancient parish of Tonbridge lay near the south-west corner of Kent, its southern border adjoining the county of Sussex. It was by far the largest parish in the county, covering 15,378 acres and measuring some five and a half miles from east to west and eight miles from north to south. The River Medway runs from west to east across the parish and has formed a belt of water-meadows varying from under half a mile to nearly a mile in width, crossed by many small streams. To the south the country is hilly, and except in the valleys the soil is poor. The land to the north of the Medway is flatter, but the clay is wet and heavy and difficult to work.

In the middle of the seventeenth century there were probably a little under 2,000 inhabitants in the parish. Between 600 and 700 people lived in the little market town on the north bank of the Medway, through which ran the important road from London to the Sussex ports of Rye, Winchelsea, and Hastings. During the next hundred years there was little change; although by 1750 the population of the town rose to nearly 1,000, and another little town of about 100 households had appeared near the Sussex border, at Tunbridge Wells, there was no perceptible increase in the rural population.

In prehistoric and Saxon times the parish had probably been wholly covered by woodland, lying within the great forest which covered the Weald of Kent and Sussex. In the early sixteenth century at least half the parish was still forest and heath, enclosed in four paled parks. During the next hundred years, owing to the pressure of a growing population, they were disparked and converted into farmland. There was a little encroachment by existing holdings, but the principal factor was the building of farmsteads in the forest or waste, and the gradual clearance of the surrounding land. Two farms at least represented the conversion of the old keepers' lodges into farmhouses, and the forest they had once protected into farmland. The greatest change took place in the park of Southfrith, comprising 5,000 acres. In the middle of the sixteenth century all except 100 acres was forest land. Yet by 1664 there

were fifty farms covering three-quarters of its area, the remainder being coppice woodland sold off every fourteen years. By this time the great process of land clearance over the parish as a whole was probably almost complete. Apart from the tracts of woodland still remaining on the Southfrith demesne, there were only a few scattered parcels left elsewhere in the parish.

As in the rest of the Weald, there is no evidence of open arable fields in the parish in the seventeenth century. There were, however, three open meadows surviving in 1650, lying beside the river. Although it is not clear whether the meadow was commonable after harvest, the parcels were not annually allocated among the owners. Eastmead, to the east of the town, included at least thirty acres. The seven holdings probably varied in size between fifteen acres and one acre and one yard. It was a shrinking meadow: in 1648 two and a half acres at the west end were described as "now divided from the mead, and enclosed with posts and rails at the two ends and one side thereof," and similar piecemeal enclosure was going on at the east end. By the 1770's it had ceased to be a common meadow. In the Common Mead near the west end of the parish parcels were probably smaller on the average; on the Tithe Map, surveyed in 1838, at least thirty-five parcels are shown, mainly rectangular, ranging from between two and three acres to a few perches. The other open meadow, Buddles Mead, lying on the north bank of the river between the Common Mead and the town, may have covered nearly 100 acres. Holdings probably again varied in size from a few acres to half an acre or less.

There was also some common pasture. At Nizells Hoath in the north-west corner of the parish eleven tenants of the manor of Dachurst had "common upon the heath there" in 1621. At Southborough, three miles to the south of the town, there was a common of at least 100 acres, on which the rights belonged to the freeholders of the manor. The remainder of the land was enclosed in smallish, irregular fields, surrounded by hedges or the copses which are still a striking feature of the rural landscape.

The farmhouses, usually isolated, lay normally in the lanes or on tracks several hundred yards off the main roads. Their site on the farm would appear to have been governed rather by the need for a regular supply of water than for a central position. Although not usually beside streams, one notices on later maps how often there are ponds adjoining, probably indicating the presence of a spring. Usually the fields of a farm lay together, rather unevenly, but occasionally they might be separated into two or three groups. Besides its barns and stables, the farmhouse had a garden, possibly a hemp plot, and an orchard about a half- or one acre in size. The messuages were of half timber, normally rectangular in plan, of two storeys with garret rooms in the gables.

There were four large manors in the parish, all of several thousand acres in size, a number of others dependent on them, probably little more than large farms, and at least three smaller ones not linked with them. As an example, the manor of Southborough covered about 2,000 acres in the south-west of the parish. Scattered parcels lay at Lodge Oak and Woodsgate, in the middle of the Southfrith demesne. Several hundred acres lay farther to the east in the parishes of Capel and Tudeley, and there were six acres of meadow in Hadlow parish, to the north-east of Tonbridge.

Nearly all the land in the parish, as in Kent as a whole, was freehold and leasehold, there being little copyhold land. Thus the manor of Southborough probably had only thirty-one acres of copyhold land, apart from twenty cottages held at the will of the lord. However, there is no indication that in the seventeenth century the distinction between freehold and copyhold land had much economic significance. Copyhold rents were trifling in amount, and had clearly become fixed by custom. In 1661 and 1714 thirty-three acres of copyhold land held of the manor of Southfrith paid a rent of only 6s. 8d. Fines for admission also remained constant: on a parcel of sixteen acres on the manor of Penshurst Halimote in an adjoining parish the fine and copyhold rent were both 6s. 8d. for the whole period 1563-1720. On the other hand, Kentish freehold tenure was burdened with the payment of a heriot. On the manor of Dachurst the custom was that "the freeholders do usually pay by way of a heriot upon every clear demise or death the best living good of every such tenant, and if the said tenant be not possessed of any such good, then the lord is to have 3s. 4d." A relief on descent or alienation was the custom on the freehold lands of some manors, as on the manors of Southborough and Sunningly. On the latter it was fixed at one year's rent. Thus the difference between freehold and copyhold land from the point of view of financial exactions was negligible: what the freeholder missed in terms of fines for admission he paid as heriots or reliefs on descent or alienation. In both cases the sums were hardly more than nominal.

It was the rents from leases of the manorial demesnes that were valuable to the lord, as they could be raised each time the leases expired. In 1625 the total annual value of the Tonbridge demesnes (including £66 13s. 4d. from the mill) was £1,777 16s. 8d. In contrast the quit-rents totalled only £7 4s. 5½d., and the copyhold rents, profits of the toll, fairs, and markets, the rents of the Shambles, and a few other special payments, were worth only £7 15s. 11d. On the manor of Southfrith in 1664 the copyhold rents were £2 13s. 8d. and the rents of the leasehold lands totalled £1,556 9s. 8d. The size of these rentals corresponded to the vast area of the demesnes. The Southfrith demesne was the largest, covering 5,000 acres, and the next big-

gest was the Tonbridge demesne, comprising 2,623 acres. Both had been largely converted from forest into farmland in the hundred years before 1650, and were geographical units. On the other hand, the farms on the demesnes of the manor of Dachurst (about 500 acres), and of the manor of Southborough (about 700 acres), were at least partly medieval in origin. Altogether, the demesne lands probably comprised about 9,000 acres.

Thus in 1650 three-fifths of the land in the parish was in the hands of four owners. The break-up of all four demesnes after 1674, by partition among heirs and by sale, profoundly affected the pattern of landownership in the parish. The Tonbridge demesne was divided into eight sections in 1674 and 1676, as the result of the failure of the male line of the lords of the manor. One share, comprising the Old Trench Farm (275 acres) was bought by a syndicate of eleven local people, mostly farmers, and was sold almost immediately to the tenant, James Walter, yeoman. Another large parcel was acquired by William Eldridge, yeoman, in 1677. Of the other six parcels, all except the largest (1,118 acres) had been bought by local gentry or farmers by 1750. Before 1674 the whole of this huge demesne had been in the hands of an absentee owner: by 1750 much of it belonged to local people, and part was owner-occupied.

The demesne lands of Southfrith were divided and sold because of financial embarrassment. The earl of Buckingham began to sell in 1701, and the process was still not complete in 1710. The mansion of Somerhill, the home farm (130 acres), the park (400 acres), and the Priory Mead (fifty acres) were bought in July 1701 by Thomas Deakins, Esq., of Putney, a mortgagee. They were finally acquired, in 1712, by John Woodgate, Esq., of Stonewall in the neighbouring parish of Chiddingstone, who moved to Somerhill. Another large parcel was bought by the brother of the steward of the manor and the trustee for its sale. Two local yeomen acquired 150 acres and twenty-seven acres respectively. The estate was broken up into parcels of all sizes, from farms of several hundred acres down to single fields. Gentry and yeomen, owner-occupiers and absentee owners, were all among the purchasers.

Of the two smaller demesnes, the Dachurst lands were divided into two parts in 1713 as the ultimate consequence of the death of the last male Skeffington in 1684. The property was later further partitioned. Financial difficulties led to the selling off of part of the Southborough demesne after 1695. Thus in forty years all the four great manorial estates were divided. The smaller local gentry, and the substantial farmers, were among the chief beneficiaries.

Before 1750 no new estates had appeared which could compare with these old demesne properties either in size or in geographical unity. Several large

estates had been built up by Tonbridge people in Tonbridge and the neighbouring parishes, but they were usually the accumulation of several generations and their lands were well scattered. One of the biggest belonged to the Children family, who had moved from the yeomanry into the gentry in the 1690's. Their property had been growing in the district since at least the middle of the seventeenth century. The will of Richard Children, made in 1743, mentions holdings totalling 1,430 acres, in fourteen parishes, all within a ten-mile radius of Tonbridge town. The estate of the Hooper family, who had been lawyers and scriveners in the town since the beginning of the seventeenth century, had been built up over a similar length of time. In 1743 it consisted of 650-700 acres, within a radius of four or five miles of the town. The largest holding was the Cage Farm (400 acres), which had once belonged to the Tonbridge manorial demesne. But although in 1750 there were perhaps as many as half a dozen properties as large, most estates probably consisted of one or two farms. On the freehold lands of the manor of Southborough in 1743, in a total given area of 1,230 acres, there were thirty-two owners and thirty-eight tenants. Thus on this manor, an estate comprising a single holding was the norm. Altogether, the ownership of land in the parish in 1750 was far more widely distributed than in 1650.

It is impossible to estimate at any time the average size of the Tonbridge farm. One can only draw a few general conclusions concerning the extent of the cottage economy, the difference between the size of farms on the freehold and on the demesne lands, and the tendency towards the consolidation of holdings between the beginning of the seventeenth century and the middle of the eighteenth.

On the manor of Southborough in 1621, out of a given area of 1,044½ acres, there were forty-six freeholdings. Their sizes can be tabulated as follows:

	<i>Under 10 acres</i>	<i>10-19 acres</i>	<i>20-49 acres</i>	<i>50-99 acres</i>	<i>100-150 acres</i>
Number of holdings	21	11	9	3	2
Percentage of holdings	45.7	23.9	19.6	6.5	4.3

Thus nearly a half were holdings of under ten acres, two-thirds were under twenty acres, and only a tenth were over fifty acres. Holdings of the nineteen tenants at the will of the lord were even smaller, "a cottage and a garden," or "a cottage and a parcel of the waste" being the usual entry. From the couple of entries in which acreages were given one might assume that they ranged from possibly under half an acre for the garden holdings to two or three acres for parcels of the waste. Thus the cottager with no more than a garden or pasture for a cow was a significant element in the rural economy. That he was

still important in the middle of the eighteenth century may be seen in the court rolls of the manor of Dachurst: out of seventy different holdings purchased or inherited between 1734 and 1763 probably eighteen, or about one-quarter, were holdings of two acres or under.

To the small freeholds in Tonbridge the leasehold lands show a striking contrast. Far larger were the newly cleared leasehold lands of Southfrith, in the survey of 1664. The fifty holdings totalling 4,065 acres may be grouped as follows:

	<i>Under 10 acres</i>	<i>10-19 acres</i>	<i>20-49 acres</i>	<i>50-99 acres</i>	<i>100-199 acres</i>	<i>200-320 acres</i>
Number of holdings	5	2	21	10	8	4
Percentage of holdings	10	4	42	20	16	8

A quarter were therefore large farms of over 100 acres, and all except 14 per cent were at least medium-sized holdings of over twenty acres. Although the evidence for the Tonbridge demesne is more scanty, it seems clear that the four parks had been converted not into farms of five or ten acres but into medium-sized and large farms ranging from twenty to 200 or 300 acres.

By the middle of the eighteenth century the freehold farms had become considerably larger. On the Southborough manor the average size of a holding rose from 22.7 acres in 1621 to 31.8 acres in 1743. This was largely owing to the amalgamation of several holdings of about ten acres or less. Thus the farm that George Hooper let in 1743 included a parcel comprising a half of a barn and four acres, another called Boxsons and Pickrells Grove, twelve acres called Westfield, and several other parcels called Bentham lands, all of which had been separately owned in 1621.

The increase in the size of farms is shown even more clearly by a comparison of the holdings on a large estate of the early eighteenth century with those on a property in about 1600. The lands on the earlier estate belonged to Sir George Fane of Badsell in Tudeley. They consisted of 1,245 acres in the parishes of Tudeley, Capel, Brenchley, Marden, and Tonbridge, and were held by thirty-nine tenants. Twenty-three tenants held 1,222 acres on the estate of Richard Children in 1743. The average size of the holding on the first estate was 31.9 acres, and on the second, 53.1. It is possible to see the consolidation taking place on an estate of about 2,500 acres, in 1725, which had belonged to Richard Goodhugh, gentleman. A holding of twenty acres in Hildenborough included "a platt of ground or staddle on which a messuage formerly stood, now taken down and carried away;" and in Brenchley another messuage on the estate was "now demolished and razed down."¹

¹ The influence of the Kentish custom of gavelkind, or partible inheritance, on the size of holdings and estates has been a subject of controversy. Gavelkind only came into effect if a man

We have already noticed the comparative infertility of the soil. Without artificial aids the crops would be poor: Gervase Markham wrote that "the good mould exceedeth not six inches in depth at the most, and therefore it wanteth convenient substance to nourish corn any long time, but will faint and give over after a crop or two." A further handicap was, and still is, the small size of the fields, with their surrounding coppices "which in unseasonable weather do keep both the sun and the wind from the corn, so as for want of that succour and comfort, it groweth and many times rotteth in the earth." But with careful manuring and management the land has always been capable of high production. Tenants were usually required by a covenant in their leases to rot down the stubble and other remains of the corn harvest and spread all the dung on the land. Marl and lime were the principal fertilizers. Marl could be obtained locally, in plenty, sometimes on the premises. In his lease in 1652 of a farm on the Southfrith estate Peter Mercer, husbandman, was permitted to dig for marl on his land, and use it on the property, but not to remove it without the landlord's consent. Lime on the other hand was brought from the North Downs, where it was burnt at the quarry. Probably the manner in which they were applied varied from farm to farm according to the nature of the ground and the views and resources of the landlord or tenant. The two or three leases that have survived containing clauses on this subject show that landlords were often careful to see that their tenants adopted some regular system. In his lease of 1739 Robert Williamson was not to plough or sow more than three times before spreading 250 cart-loads of marl, each containing ten bushels, or four loads or carriages of lime, each containing thirty-two bushels, or fifty loads of dung, on every acre; if he chose to marl he might not plough or sow six times before re-marling, or if he laid on dung or lime he should repeat the process after four sowings. On the other hand, on probably very different soil the lord of the manor of Southfrith in the lease of 1652 required Peter Mercer to lay on only fifty cart-loads

died intestate. In this case, while partition of individual holdings might take place, they were more often preserved intact by a settlement among the heirs. More usually property was bequeathed by will, in which the testator could dispose of his lands as he liked, as in other parts of England. He might either (i) leave all his land to one son, with only money bequests to the others, or (ii), if he held more than one holding, he might distribute them among his sons, or (iii) leave the property to them to inherit equally. The third method was the least common, and in the case of a single holding, the heirs normally tended to sell to one of themselves, or to an outsider, rather than make a partition. The practice of distributing holdings among the sons did undoubtedly help to reduce the size of estates. Yet a study of wills proved outside Kent showed that this method of bequeathing property was common in other parts of England and its use in Kent was probably not owing to the influence of gavelkind. It seems likely, then, that the custom was of little economic importance in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Kent.

of marl and twenty loads of lime or dung in the last three years of his lease.

Manuring was accompanied by a crop rotation. On the best soils of the Weald Markham recommended that two sowings of wheat should follow the marling; afterwards it should rest five or six years, "all of which time it will bear a very good and sweet pasture, well set with a white clover, or three-leaved grass, most batning and profitable, both for sheep and bullocks;" then the process should be repeated. In fact from the terms of the leases land would seem to have been often more heavily cropped. But landlords were at least concerned to see that, especially towards the end of a lease, part of the arable was left unploughed. On the Postern Farm in his lease of 1714 Augustin Taylor, yeoman, was to lay down one parcel called the Postern Heath with cow grass for four years before the end of the demise, and the adjoining Hempland field (six acres) for the last three years, and ten acres of arable with clover or cow grass in the last year but one, and ten acres more of arable in the last year. Often, too, the tenant was restricted in the amount of land that he could plough up at any time. His covenant might contain penal clauses against the ploughing up of meadow or pasture.

Despite the need to lay part of the arable down to grass, most farmers managed to have some arable under cultivation every season. This is shown by the surviving inventories, 1687-1733. Out of seventeen made for Tonbridge farmers between mid-April and the beginning of August, covering the period between the sowing of the spring corn and the harvest, only two do not mention corn on the ground. Thirteen of them give details as to crops, from which it is possible to estimate approximately the acreages under the various types of corn (Table A). Oats and wheat stand out as the chief crops; a little over half the land was sown with oats and a third with wheat. Barley, peas, and tares grew on the remaining one-eighth. Thus oats almost entirely took the place of peas and beans as a cattle fodder, and because of the predominantly clay soil there was no rye. There would appear to have been no wide differences between farm and farm: most farmers grew both oats and wheat and most more oats than wheat. While the average area sown was a little under twenty acres, about half the farmers probably had only one field for each crop, like John Polhill with two acres of wheat, three acres of barley, and three acres of oats; although larger farmers like William Snashall and Thomas Kenward, with forty and fifty-five acres sown respectively, may have had as many as ten fields under crops.

Inventories made during the winter show that the majority of farmers had wheat "on the ground," only about a quarter being without. On 7 March 1701 Richard Fulmer was found to have four acres of wheat, and on 3 December 1703 Jane Coife, widow, had seven acres.

TABLE A
THE ACREAGES OF ARABLE LAND CULTIVATED BY TONBRIDGE FARMERS, 1687-1720

Name	Occupation	Date	Acreages				Total Acreage
			Wheat	Barley	Oats	Peas	
Richard Curde	yeoman	2 May 1687	9	[1½]*	[18½]*	[2½]*	32
James Sharpe	yeoman	30 July 1687	3	—	6	—	9
Robert Foreman	—	9 June 1692	3½	1	4	—	8½
William Mercer	husbandman	14 July 1692	5	—	10	—	15
John Polhill	yeoman	27 May 1700	2	3	3	—	8
Joseph Puxty	tanner	7 May 1702	—	—	2½	6	8½
John Meopham	malster	22 May 1704	1½	2½	—	—	4
William Snashall	yeoman	17 April 1705	16	—	16	4	36
John Jeffery	yeoman	21 April 1708	7	—	19	—	26
Thomas Kenward	yeoman	27 April 1713	18	—	37	—	55
John Meopham	yeoman	31 May 1714	2½	[½]*	[1½]*	—	4½
Thomas Hills	husbandman	22 June 1717	—	—	1	—	1
James Saxby	yeoman	27 June 1720	9	7	17	—	33
Total			76½	15½	136	12½	240½
Percentage of total sown acreage			31·9	6·5	56·7	5·2	Total 100·3%

* approximate figures, as the inventory gives only the total acreage of the spring corn.

The average area sown on Tonbridge farms (18·5 acres) was far lower than in that part of Kent lying outside the Weald. The average acreage in twenty inventories taken in the summer months on farms in north and east Kent in the year 1700 was 28·1. While there were eight farms with very small sown acreages (4 acres, 2 acres 3 roods, 8 acres, 3 acres 2 roods, 1½ acres, 1 acre, 1 acre, 1 acre 3 roods), the contrast with Tonbridge lay principally in the presence in the sample of four farms with over fifty acres sown (98 acres, 66 acres, 72 acres, 79 acres), and there were five others with between twenty-five and fifty acres. Probably the reason for the difference was partly that farms in these parts of Kent were larger than in the Weald: Boys, in *A General View of the Agriculture of the County*, 1796, said that the Weald was "parcelled out generally into small farms," compared with "the best cultivated parts of East Kent . . ." consisting of large farms. But considering the difficulties which faced arable farming in the Weald it is reasonable to conjecture that the average arable acreage on the Tonbridge farm was smaller in proportion than on farms lying outside the Weald. This is certainly the case today, the percentage of the land under wheat, barley, oats, beans, and peas for stock feeding being 20·7 on the high weald and 20·4 on the weald plain, compared with 31·3 on the chalkland of the North Downs and 27·3 in the arable fruit belt of east Kent.

There was a further contrast with north and east Kent in the crops under cultivation. Again there was almost no rye grown (under 1 per cent), and about a third of the land was devoted to wheat. But there was almost as much barley grown as wheat (about 32 per cent). Peas and beans (about 18 per cent) had replaced oats (about 15 per cent) as the major cattle fodder. The small quantity of barley grown in Tonbridge compared with these other parts of Kent finds a close parallel today. It is doubtless owing to the clay soil of the Weald.

A study of nine inventories made between August and December, before an appreciable quantity of the harvest had been consumed, offers a means of estimating very roughly the value of the crops grown in the parish. Of the arable crops, wheat was the most valuable, followed fairly closely by oats, while barley and peas constituted a rather small proportion. From inventories in which both the value and amount of the corn crop are given, one can deduce that (very roughly) wheat was normally worth about £1 a quarter, barley probably about the same, and oats about 10s. a quarter. Taking these three crops alone the percentage *yield* was as follows:

	<i>Oats</i>	<i>Wheat</i>	<i>Barley</i>
(approximately)	54·3	33·3	12·3

Thus oats comprised just over half the yield and wheat one-third. A comparison with their sown acreage suggests that the yield per acre for these crops was very similar.

Acreages of land under grass were rarely given in the inventories, so that there is no means of estimating the average amount of meadow land in use on the Tonbridge farm. But Table B brings out clearly the high value of the hay crop, it being worth almost as much as the oats and over twice as much as the barley. Of the artificial grasses Markham implied that clover was in use in the Weald when he wrote in 1649. Inventories which mention either (very rarely) acreage or more usually seed or fodder would seem to suggest that it was in common use in the parish at the end of the century. Thus John Children of Lower Street, 15 September 1687, had five bushels of clover seed worth £4 10s., besides his hay and clover worth £60. James Saxby, 27 June 1720, had four acres of clover as well as thirty-three acres of corn and twenty-two acres under grass. Tares we have noticed as occasionally in use. James Sharpe, husbandman, 30 July 1687, had three acres of buckwheat, a type of vetch (the only example). There is a single mention of rye grass, and a couple of references to cow grass, a wild species of trefoil; but their use was probably far less common than clover. Lucern and sainfoin do not appear, although they are known to have been grown in England not long after the Restoration.

Hops and fruit usually appear in inventories only when they have been harvested, and timber only when it has been felled. Probably as vines or trees with a minimum life (in the case of hops) of five years they were not regarded as personal estate.¹ It is impossible, therefore, to assess their importance in the agrarian economy of the parish. All farms, and many town houses, had orchards varying usually from one-quarter to half an acre in size, but there is a little evidence to show that some farms had orchards of several acres.

Only one reference to a hop-garden has been found before 1650. During the following hundred years deeds refer occasionally to hop-gardens and oasthouses. Those mentioned vary in size from one to seven acres. Thus a deed mentions "three acres lately planted with hops" near Southborough Common in 1653. In a lease from the earl of Westmorland to Richard Williamson, innholder, in 1737 of the Bull Inn and fifty-four acres, he was allowed to convert seven acres of pasture into hopground besides the seven acres already planted with hops. Many people grew them on a small scale,

¹ According to R. Burn, *Ecclesiastical Law*, IV, London, 1781, p. 242, grass ready to be cut for hay, and fruit on the trees were treated as part of the real estate, because they grew without man's assistance. On the other hand, corn was included in inventories, because it was sown. Hops should also legally have been entered; possibly their omission was owing to the fact that the plants remained in the ground for several years.

TABLE B
THE VALUE OF THE CROPS GROWN BY TONBRIDGE FARMERS, 1687-1733

Name	Occupation	Date	Wheat	Oats	Barley	Hay	Peas	Tares	Total
George Pawley	yeoman	8 Nov. 1687	£ s. d. 40 15 0	£ s. 60 0	£ s. 40 0	£ s. 26 0	£ 14	£ s. —	£ s. d. 180 15 0
John Children	yeoman	15 Sept. 1687	[17 0 0]	[8 10]	—	[4 0]	[1]	—	—
Walter Crouch	yeoman	1 Dec. 1692	35 0 0	22 0	10 0	62 0	—	—	159 10 0
Mercy Bristow	widow	30 Sept. 1699	7 10 0	6 0	—	7 0	—	—	20 10 0
Thomas Archer	husbandman	24 Sept. 1707	23 0 0	9 0	5 0	—	—	1 10	38 10 0
William Head	yeoman	24 Sept. 1707	20 0 4	1 0	—	16 0	—	—	50 10 4
Thomas Oliver	butcher	13 Jan. 1715	[8 10]	[11 15]	[4]	7 0	[1]	[- 5]	36 10 0
William Osbourne	yeoman	21 Nov. 1715	17 10 0	6 0	5 5	7 10	—	—	20 1 0
John Waite	—	14 Feb. 1733	32 0 0	12 10	20 0	20 0	5	—	89 10 0
			47 0 0	46 5	—	21 10	5	2 4	121 19 0
	Total value of crops		£241 1 4	£191 10	£84 5	£171 0	£26	£3 19	£717 15 4
	Percentage of total value		33·3	26·7	11·7	23·1	3·6	0·6	99

mainly for home brewing. In the parish of Goudhurst, lying in the Weald fifteen miles east of Tonbridge, a terrier of 1714 listed thirty-one growers on thirty-seven acres of hopland; twenty-eight grew on an area of under two acres, and nine on less than one acre.

Probably a hop-garden of several acres was normally accompanied by an oasthouse; one of the covenants in the lease of the Bull lands just mentioned stipulated that if the earl of Westmorland provided sufficient timber Williamson should erect a hopkiln and provide the bricks and tiles for it, before next Michaelmas. Hop poles were another expensive item of equipment, for at this period two poles were used normally for each plant. Robert Rawlins, yeoman, 29 November 1728, was found to have hop poles worth £8 10s., his other husbandry tackle being valued at £15 12s. John Borne, 28 December 1723, had hop poles worth £10 16s., the rest of his implements being valued at £2 10s. and his total personal estate at £53 2s. 6d. Yet heavy capital expenses were matched by high profits: William Walter, yeoman (19 November 1713), who had "hop poles on the ground at Tonbridge and several other utensils belonging to the hopground and coachhouse" worth £24, had eleven bags of hops and three pockets weighing 27 cwt, worth £91 2s. 6d., out of a total inventory of £448 2s. 0d. This is the highest valued single item concerning crops in any of the surviving Tonbridge inventories.

At this period, as today, most of the woodland in the parish was coppice. The 1,214 acres of woodland on the Southfrith demesne in 1664 was all coppice wood, saleable at fourteen years' growth: probably this represented almost the maximum length of time that coppice wood was left before being cut. On the other hand three acres of woodland in the adjoining parish of Pembury was said to have been cut in about 1730 after only four or five years' growth. It was perhaps a rather poor investment: after fourteen years the Southfrith coppices produced only £2 10s. per acre. A similar low yield was received for nine acres of woodland in Pembury about 1730, for which the period of growth is not given:

	£	s.	d.
3½ cords of wood per acre @ 9s. a cord	1	11	6
400 hop poles per acre @ 5s. a hundred	1	0	0
½ load of hoops per acre @ 16s. a load		8	0
spray @ 4s. per acre		4	0
<i>Total yield per acre</i>	<u>£3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>6</u>

Returns came only after a long period, and a large acreage was needed for a good profit. None of the inventories mention timber of much value: most

often a farmer's felled wood was worth £2 to £3, and only two cases were noted where it was valued at over £10. Probably the copses which surrounded many of the fields provided just enough for domestic consumption.

Nevertheless, despite the comparatively low returns, it is clear from the covenants in the leases that timber was a valued product. In many wood was reserved to the landlord, as in the leases of the Halfields by the Weller family already mentioned. In others the tenant might take it under special conditions. The mature oaks, ashes, birch, or beech might be reserved to the landlord while the coppice was taken by the tenant. In his thirty-one-year lease of Cage Farm from George Hooper in 1733, John Simonds, yeoman, agreed that "as often as the coppices, underwoods, shaws, or hedgerows be cut he shall and will leave growing dispersedly upon each acre sixteen oaks or ashes good for stadles or wavers fit to grow and more." Other landlords attempted to ensure that there was at least some coppice partly grown at the end of the lease: John Wood, yeoman, in his lease of ninety-four acres at Cage Green was required to have growing at the end of his lease two acres of wood at four, three, and two years' growth respectively.

The reason for this careful preservation was its wide range of uses. It was the only domestic fuel. Though the use of sea-coal was not unknown in the district, the difficulties of transporting it were too great to allow its wide use. Much was converted into charcoal for heating in the remaining iron works and in hopkilns. William Hartnup sold "a great number of cords" from his wood in Pembury to a collier of St Paul's Cray, in north-west Kent; while the timber bought from Burchen Coppice by George Herbert, the local iron-master, was coaled on the spot, "as is usual in such cases." The general use of tiles and the development of brick building led to a further need for fuel, and there was a constant demand for fencing and for hop poles.

For a study of the livestock kept by Tonbridge farmers the inventories provide some interesting material. Of the forty-five inventories which have survived for farmers twenty-one were made in the winter and twenty-four in the summer. There was no significant difference in the number of sheep kept in the two seasons, which suggests that the great store of hay and oats kept was enough to obviate any wholesale slaughtering or selling off of flocks in the autumn. Only twenty-two farms, or just under half, carried any sheep; on these the distribution was as follows:

1- 9 sheep	4 farms
10- 19 "	3 "
20- 49 "	10 "
50- 99 "	4 "
100-199 "	1 farm (198 sheep)

Thus only one farmer out of forty-five had a large flock, and only one-third had a flock of twenty or more sheep. Wool is mentioned only four times, and always as a crop of small value, suggesting that it was not normally an important item even in the economy of the 50 per cent of the farmers who kept sheep. Probably, as the passage from Markham already quoted implies, the breeding and fattening of sheep were more important.

Oxen were probably still the main draught animals. The Tonbridge farms had from two to ten. George Pawley, 8 November 1687, one of the large farmers with crops in his barn worth £180, had eight working oxen. But horses, too, were used, as on the farm of Richard Bennett, husbandman, 1 September 1729, which had no oxen, but two horses valued with a waggon, two carts, and three harrows. Nearly all the inventories of farmers mention horses, two to five being the usual number, but they were probably more often used for riding and as pack horses than as draught animals.

Most farms had two or three cows. A number had between six and seven, one was noticed with ten cows, and another with nine. Normally, then, there were just enough to provide for the domestic requirements of milk, cheese, and butter. There are no signs that any farmer had a large surplus of these products for sale; the modern dairying industry of the area is a nineteenth-century development. On the other hand, breeding and the fattening of young cattle were important. Nearly every farm kept calves and young beasts, many having at least three or four and a few as many as eight. Sometimes there are references to "fattening beasts," and the frequent mention of bulls, bullocks, and heifers suggests the significance of breeding. Richard Curde, 2 May 1687, had eight oxen, five cows, four calves, four two-yearling bullocks, a bull, two heifers, and probably three yearling heifers.

The size of sheep flocks in north and east Kent was also fairly small. Only one farmer in the sample had over fifty sheep, a flock of 318 on a farm in Oare, near the Thames estuary, which lies, significantly, on marshland. There was little breeding or fattening of cattle, and less than half the farmers kept calves. The other main difference from the Weald was that horses were the draught animals, oxen being used only on the occasional farm.

'Husbandry tackling' was a substantial item in nearly every farmer's personal estate. Most farmers had one waggon and a few had two; nearly all had one or two carts, and two farmers had more; and there were about the same number of ploughs. Harrows were even more plentiful, three being the most common number. Yokes and tights, harnesses, and farming tools complete the picture.

It is difficult to throw much light on the marketing of the products of Tonbridge farms. Despite the small size of the acreages under crops the larger

farmers at least would have sold corn outside the district. Just before he died, (1 June 1704) George Walter had sold a load of oats at Bromley for £5 17s.; and a few days before his death, in about 1728, Thomas Hartnup's team fetched thirty-two bushels of clover seed from Brenchley, picked up eight bushels from his own house, and took them both up to London. Hops, too, may have been sold in London by the larger growers. Timber was another export. Wood was in demand both for building, for houses in the London area and ships at Chatham, and as fuel. In 1571 royal officials had bought twenty-nine tons of wood from the owner of Somerland Wood, probably for building in London, and intended to use the tops and lops for burning the queen's bricks at Greenwich, and about 1728 Thomas Hartnup sold "a great number of cords" to George Wyborne, a collier of St Paul's Cray. The sale of cattle which he had bred and fattened was yet another means of income for the Tonbridge farmer.

Thus a study of landholding and farming in the parish of Tonbridge between 1650 and 1750 reveals in detail most of the features of the rural economy of the Weald of Kent as a whole. In Tonbridge, as elsewhere in the Weald, although there was some common meadow and pasture, most of the land consisted of small, enclosed fields. The weak manorial organization and the small customary financial exactions hardly affected the tenure of land. Most holdings were small and the farming was mixed: while arable farming and the raising of cattle were the principal means of livelihood for most Tonbridge farmers, many also grew and sold some hops, fruit, and timber.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

J. Z. Titow, M.A., is an assistant lecturer in the department of Economic History, University of Nottingham. He is the author of three articles which have been published in the *Economic History Review*, and of a thesis, as yet unpublished, on the Winchester episcopal estates in the thirteenth century.

E. Hopkins, M.A., is head of the department of history and economics at Gillingham Grammar School, Kent. His other publications include papers on the bye-laws of Whit-

church in 1636 and on the Bridgewater estates in north Shropshire during the Civil War. These have appeared in the *Transactions* of the Shropshire Archaeological Society.

C. W. Chalklin, M.A., B.Litt., is an assistant archivist to the Kent County Council. He has published several papers on seventeenth-century Kent, and is also the author of a thesis on the history of Tonbridge from 1550 to 1750.