

**Title: The Communities of the Manor of Epworth in the
Seventeenth Century**

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The Communities of the Manor of Epworth in the Seventeenth Century

The manor of Epworth in the Isle of Axholme experienced protracted resistance to drainage and enclosure schemes in the seventeenth century. The thesis places the disputes in the context of the wider social and economic development of the manor during the period, while also comparing the experiences of the manor's member parishes.

The history of the drainage is outlined in the introduction. Chapter one surveys the economy and demographic history of the manor, concluding that the wealth of local resources and flexible agrarian system protected the manor from subsistence crises. In chapter two, wills, church court records and parish registers are used to investigate marriage and the role of family, neighbours and kin in forming and sustaining households. The third chapter makes use of wills to examine inheritance strategies as a means of providing for the perpetuation of viable households. Inheritance patterns varied with wealth and proved an important mechanism for social mobility in the manor.

Chapter four shows how the flexibility of the manor's economy and inheritance strategies allowed social mobility, resulting in growing social differentiation and some differences between parishes. The fifth chapter explores the religious history of the manor via the church court records, noting the different experiences and reactions to religious change in each parish and revealing something of the unity or divisions among their leading groups. Chapter six details the course of the drainage disputes in the context of changing patterns of social relations within the manor.

The conclusion discusses the concentric, intersecting and overlapping communities of the manor, within which the drainage disputes produced their own shifting alliances and loyalties, impinging on other solidarities and cleavages and contributing to the diverging experiences of the manor during the century.

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Abbreviations

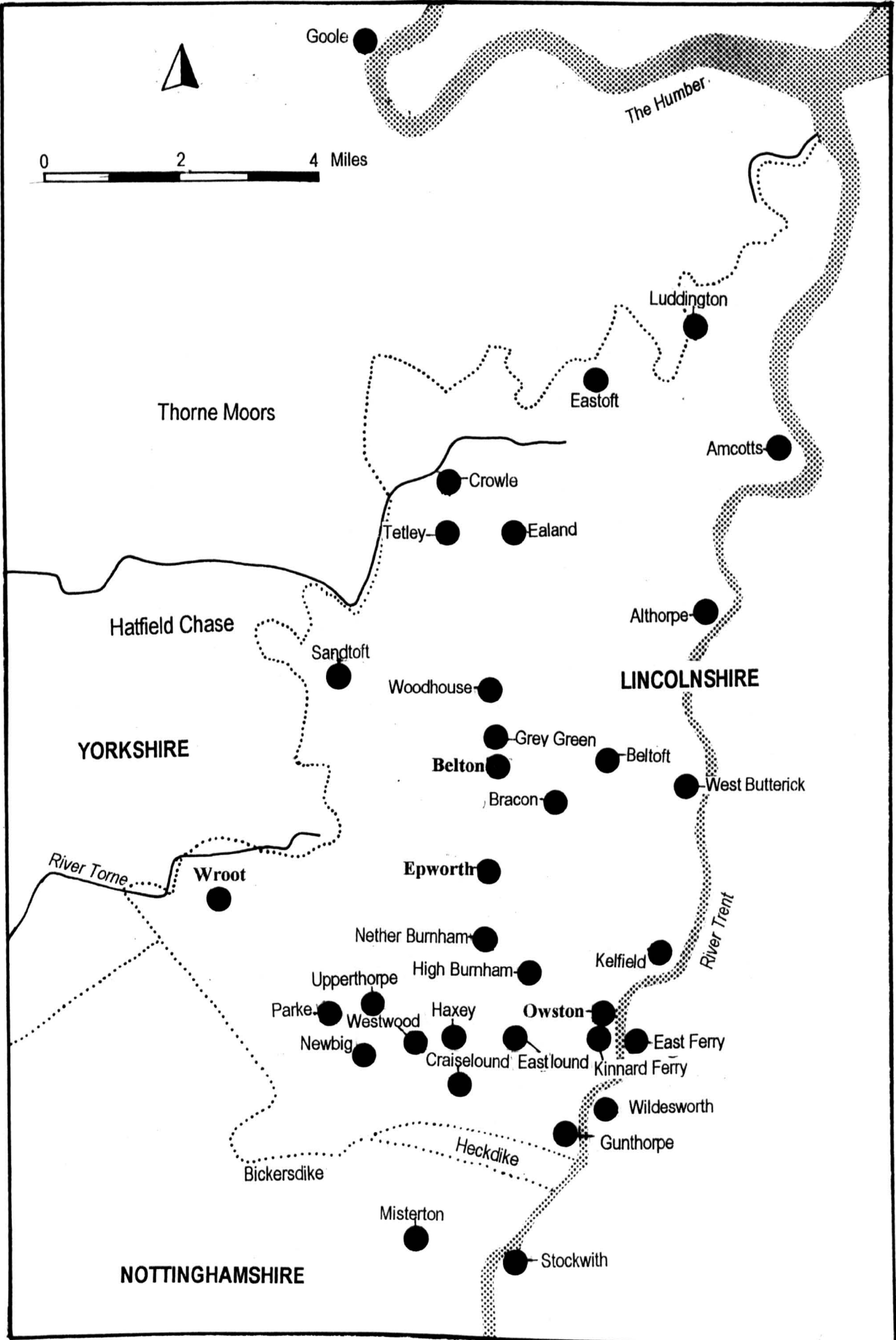
HLRO. House of Lords Record Office.

LAO. Lincolnshire Archives Office, Lincoln.

PRO. Public Record Office.

Throughout, direct quotations from manuscript materials are in the original spellings.

Dates given are according to the old style calendar, except that the year has been taken to begin on 1 January, rather than 25 March. Place of publication is London unless otherwise specified.



Introduction

The history of the drainage of Hatfield Chase and the Isle of Axholme, and the long-term resistance by the inhabitants of the manor of Epworth in the Isle, have been investigated by a number of historians. Joan Thirsk has provided an account of the basic fenland economy that existed in the Isle to explain the inhabitants' resistance to the drainage. In the nineteenth century, both Stonehouse and Read provided narratives of the disputes, and more recently Keith Lindley has produced a comprehensive account in the context of general fen drainage and resistance. He emphasises the importance of the role of the fenland gentry in leading actions against the drainers and the focus on specific local issues. He sees little evidence for a heightened political consciousness among the mass of commoners. Clive Holmes has discussed drainage schemes in the Isle and elsewhere in relation to the central governments of the period, and the role, attitudes and development of a political consciousness among the 'middling sort', whom he sees as crucial to local resistance.¹

I am attempting to contextualise the effects of the drainage and the resulting disputes by setting these within a broad picture of the development of the social relations that characterised the manor and its settlements over the course of the seventeenth century. Rather than presenting a view of a 'structural community' with an existing set of traditions and a way of life that were affected by an agent of 'change', I argue for a more fluid model of conflict and community, one that recognises identity and community as processes in which continuity and change are constantly interacting within individuals and in their relationships with one another. I shall here briefly summarise the history of the drainage, then describe the principal sources used during the course of the thesis, along with their limitations, and finally give an outline of the

¹ J. Thirsk, 'The Isle of Axholme before Vermuyden', *Agricultural History Review*, I (1953), pp. 16-28; W. B. Stonehouse, *The History and Topography of the Isle of Axholme* (1839); T. C. Fletcher (ed.), *Read's History of the Isle of Axholme: its Manors and Parishes* (Epworth, 1858); K. Lindley, *Fenland Riots and the English Revolution* (London, 1982), pp. 13-15, 19-20, 25-33, 61-2, 71-9, 137, 146-57, 188-222, 233-59; C. Holmes, 'Drainers and fenmen: the problem of popular political consciousness in the seventeenth century' in A. Fletcher & J. Stevenson (eds.), *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 166-195.

chapters and indicate how my analysis of the drainage disputes differs from that of Lindley and Holmes.

The manor of Epworth was a royal manor containing until 1628 the whole of the Isle of Axholme, an area of over 51,000 acres. The Isle is situated in northwest Lincolnshire, north of Nottinghamshire, and separated from the rest of the Lincolnshire by the River Trent to the east and from Yorkshire, before the drainage, by the Idle, Torne and Don to the west and north. The area was fenland, the low-lying ground flooding in the winter and mostly draining off again by May Day, providing extensive common grazing land, peat resources, fishing and fowling. The high ground lies mostly on a central ridge running north to south, with other areas along the Trent and a small area in the western parish of Wroot, and this ground contained the villages and settlements of the manor surrounded by rich arable land. Most parishes were large and contained a number of settlements, usually within a mile or two of others. Belton, Haxey and Epworth parishes each held more than 8000 acres.²

An agreement was signed in May 1626 between Cornelius Vermuyden and Charles I, as lord of the manors of Epworth, Misterton, Hatfield Chase and thirteen adjacent manors, to drain approximately 70,000 acres of fenland. In 1628 the manor of Crowle, containing the northern quarter of the Isle of Axholme, was conveyed to the City of London by the king and then sold on. Epworth manor now consisted of Epworth manor itself, containing the parishes of Epworth and Belton, the member manors of Haxey and Westwood and Haxey Hall Garth, containing the parishes of Haxey and most of Owston parish, and the small member manor of Wroot. Vermuyden began work almost immediately and pronounced his work completed before the end of 1628.

From early summer of 1627, however, riots began in Hatfield Chase. All the areas affected by the drainage stood to lose portions of common land. Hatfield and Crowle entered into agreements with the drainers in 1629 to a reduction in their commons. In the manor of Epworth, commoners were originally to retain only 1/3 of their commons, the rest going in equal

² See map.

shares to the king and to Vermuyden. The king's share was later reduced, so that the commoners were to retain 6,000 of the original 13,400 acres of common. Riots began in the manor in August 1628 and continued intermitantly until 1634. As the result of an agreement by 370 commoners, said later to have been obtained under duress and misrepresentation, an Exchequer decree of 1636 awarded 7400 acres to Vermuyden and the Participants, investors in the scheme, and from this period settlers entered the manor to farm the newly available drained lands. These included some Dutch and many French Huguenots, most of whom settled in the area in and around Sandtoft, in the far western part of Belton parish, where a church with a French pastor was established. Settlers also appeared in Wroot, likewise on the western boundary of the manor adjacent to Hatfield Chase. The lands allocated for settlement were sited on the western and southern boundaries of the manor, connecting to allocated areas in neighbouring manors.

The outbreak of the Civil War provided opportunities to Epworth commoners opposed to the settlement of 1636 with the opportunity to attempt to oust the settlers and regain the whole of the 13,400 acres of common land. Increasingly violent attacks were launched on settlers on the Levels, especially on Sandtoft, but attempts also continued to pursue the case in the national courts. Activity against the settlers from 1650 became a concerted effort to drive them out, and it was in 1650 and 1651 that the Leveller leaders, John Lilburne and John Wildman, were brought in by the commoners' solicitor Daniel Noddel to serve as legal advisors in the continuing pursuit of the commoners' court case. Most of the settlers left, and during the rest of the 1650s the commoners' efforts were directed against attempts to extract rates for the maintenance of the drains. With the Restoration, renewed attempts to settle the disputed 7400 acres produced resistance by the commoners, until attempts at an arbitrated settlement resulted, in 1691 and 1692, in a rejection of the terms accepted by the commoners' representatives, the selection of new leaders, and continued direct action until the commoners lost their final appeal in 1719. The final settlement was that agreed in 1691, reducing the Participants' share of the 7400 acres to

2868 acres, with responsibility to maintain the drainage. It was this protracted and sustained dispute that has attracted the attention of historians.

In order to examine the social and economic history of the manor and the social relations of its inhabitants, I have used the records of the dispute itself, manorial rentals and surveys, census materials, church court and quarter sessions records, the Gainsborough Area Meeting minute book of the Quakers, Quaker registers, parish registers, approximately 500 probate inventories and administration accounts and 1650 wills from the manor. The survival of church court records and, especially, quarter sessions records is patchy, so that it is only possible to gain a glimpse of what is, at best, a surface indication of underlying conflicts relating to varieties of religious belief and ceremony and concepts of order, acceptable behaviour and discipline. I have dealt with the major difficulties and limitations in the use of census materials, parish registers, wills and probate inventories in Chapter I and in Appendixes I and II. Survival of probate inventories is limited, particularly in the first half of the century. The survival of wills appears to be less of a problem, with few blank pages in the volumes of Stow wills. Both wills and inventories are skewed in favour of the better-off, are affected by the stage in the life-cycle, and can obscure as much as they reveal. Only part of the estate is covered in either source, so that total landholding or total wealth cannot be ascertained. Inventories can, however, give an indication of the type of goods contained in the household, the type and extent of activities carried out, the amount of land farmed, the range of crops and the type and numbers of livestock. Wills can give an indication of strategies employed to provide for the ongoing maintenance of dependents, provision for the next generation, and the relationships within the community that were called upon to ensure the desired outcome. Wills, inventories and administration accounts can provide evidence of the variety of credit relationships and the goods and services involved. Because of the limitations of the sources, however, statistical analysis is often inappropriate, and a more impressionistic account is necessary. A close reading of a large number of wills can reveal patterns, regularities and variations that shed light on the motives and strategies of individuals in different economic and social categories and at different stages in the

life-cycle. The 1650 wills of the manor provide a qualitative basis for the impressionistic statements about social relations, inheritance patterns, motives and the bases for decisions.

Chapter one of the thesis outlines the basic fenland economy of the manor, along with its demographic history during the seventeenth century, and mortality crises. Chapter two investigates household formation, marriage, kinship and neighbourhood connections as the basis for individual support and community relationships. The third chapter considers inheritance as the mechanism for the formation of new households, through the passing on of land, goods, money, training and relationships to the next generation, providing them with a start in life. In chapter four, the economy of the manor is examined throughout the century, revealing the perpetuation of the underlying flexible agrarian system and traditional crafts, along with the development of some specialisation, both within households and between parishes. Status is considered, as are changes in consumption patterns during the course of the century, leading to a more obvious differentiation between the better-off and the rest of the population. Chapter five considers the religious changes experienced in the manor, giving rise to divergent groups and different attitudes towards discipline. The parishes of the manor responded in different ways to these changes, revealing aspects of the unity or divisions among the leading groups.

The final chapter examines the drainage and the resulting disputes. The thesis offers an interpretation based on a close analysis of the community of the manor and its constituent communities. Previous studies have tended to regard the manor as a unit. This is how the king and Vermuyden saw it, and also how the commoners presented themselves when engaged in actions in the national courts. I will argue that the manor had points of cleavage along parish and member manor boundaries that produced different responses and actions, resulting in different histories of the disputes in different parts of the manor. An important aspect in these differing responses was the question of leadership, considered by both Lindley and Holmes. Holmes questioned Lindley's emphasis on the importance of gentry leadership, pointing out that 'the men directly involved were invariably parochial gentry, barely distinguishable from their yeoman neighbours from whose ranks their families had, in some cases, recently risen', and

prioritising the involvement of the 'middling sort'.³ It is clear that involvement of the parish elite, whether gentry or yeomen, was vital to continued successful resistance in the manor. But this involvement represented neither automatic deference towards those of higher status nor 'the basic village unity which was essential to successful opposition' to the drainers.⁴ Neither Lindley nor Holmes, I feel, considers sufficiently the capacity of the 'followers' to pressure and manipulate their leaders, taking advantage of splits among the parish elites to influence the course of events. Gentry were involved in most of the direct actions in the manor because most of those actions emanated from Epworth and, especially, Belton parishes, where gentry were more numerous. In these two parishes, however, the local elites were less unified and more competitive than the yeoman leadership of Haxey parish. Haxey parish, I will argue, came to a settlement with the drainers in 1636. This was engineered by some of the leading yeomen who had previously opposed the drainage. It was the lack of unity among the leadership of Belton and Epworth parishes that provided opportunities for those commoners wishing to continue direct action to find leaders to support them. These leaders could not expect automatic support, and alternative leaders could be found if the motives of the former became suspect.

The common description of the fens as 'relatively egalitarian' can be deceptive. The thesis provides evidence that the general social and economic polarisation characteristic of the seventeenth century applied in the manor of Epworth too. Holmes describes the manor gentry as barely distinguishable from the yeomen. This may be true when viewing them from outside, but within the manor itself the distinction was important. Many of the yeomen were striving to enable their sons or grandsons to achieve gentry status.⁵ Local gentry too were anxious to retain or enhance their own and their children's prospects. It was the leading groups who were subject to conflicting pressures to further the interests of their immediate families and also to fulfil the

³ C. Holmes, 'Drainers and fenmen', p. 183.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 195.

⁵ H. W. French points out that the 'middle sort' did not see themselves as such, but referred to themselves as the 'better sort' or 'chief inhabitants', and aspired to a gentry lifestyle and status: H. W. French, 'Chief inhabitants and their areas of influence: local ruling groups in Essex and Suffolk parishes, 1630-1720' (unpublished Ph D dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1993), p. 37, chapter 5.

obligations to the community that were an intrinsic part of their local standing and authority. The rest of the population, aware of this dichotomy, kept a suspicious eye on its leaders and ensured that pressure to prioritise community interests was maintained.

Production, Reproduction and Mortality

The manor of Epworth was located in an area that provided its inhabitants with a variety of resources for subsistence and, for more substantial landholders, for production for the market. Different soil types, varied forms of landholding, subletting and the use of enclosed lands allowed a range of choices of farming techniques and crops. The extensive fen commons afforded rich resources of food, fuel, pasture and raw materials, available to all inhabitants. Overall, the manor experienced a period of population growth up to the 1640s, followed by stagnation to the end of the seventeenth century. The area, like other fen areas, attracted migrants during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, complicating the picture of population change. Migration strained resources but, despite this, and the effects of the drainage in the late 1620s, there is no evidence of a subsistence crisis at any point. This chapter will look first at the rural economy of the manor, then at population change, and finally at periods of crisis mortality during the century.

i. The Rural Economy

The Isle of Axholme, before the drainage in 1628, was an area of mixed farming with a large pastoral component based upon the extensive fenland commons. The arable ground, most of which lay on a central ridge running the length of the Isle, made up approximately one-quarter of the total area. The manor of Epworth comprised the southern three-quarters of the Isle, bounded by the River Trent to the east, the Rivers Torme and Idle to the west, and the Bickersdike to the south.¹ Streams cut through the area, and several dikes and sewers were in existence before 1600, providing drainage and facilitating transport. Settlements were scattered on the high central ridge and along the rivers Trent, Torme and Idle.²

The manor possessed 13,400 acres of fen common, unstinted and intercommoned by all the parishes in the manor. Depositions from commoners taken in 1649 and in the mid-1680s list some of the resources enjoyed by the inhabitants of the manor before the drainage. In addition

¹ J. Thirsk, 'The Isle of Axholme before Vermuyden', *Agricultural History Review*, I (1953), pp. 17-18.

² PRO: MPB 16.

to pasture, peat turves and wood (including subterranean) were taken from the commons for fuel and building repairs, reeds were gathered for thatch, rushes for basket, mats, chair seats and rushlights, hay was harvested at times from the common, and fish and wildfowl were caught. Wildfowl were hunted with fowling nets 'and otherwise' (birding pieces appear in some probate inventories, along with one bow and arrows).³ A deposition of 1648 refers to commoners 'Duckinge...with boats and Doggs' before the drainage. Another deponent said that 'he had knowne sundrie persons to goe a Swaninge into the said Carrs with boates hookes and other tooles to p'sue them upon the water which they usually did every yeare till the draynage of the said Levell'.⁴ Individual fishing rights were held along both the Trent and Idle, and these appear as legacies in a number of wills. Small pieces of land were attached to the fishing rights themselves. The Epworth widow Elizabeth Pilsworth in 1602 left a fishgarth 'in the water of Idle', and in 1620 William Davie, husbandman of Belton, bequeathed his lodge and fishing at Lamberacke, located on the Idle in Belton parish. Depositions from the late 1640s and the 1680s describe fishing lodges on stilts before the drainage. Thomas Fitting, gentleman from Luddington, in a 1631 deposition said that there were several small fishing houses in the waste with a small piece of land to each one 'of verye smale continent wch have bene heretofore within the memorie of man erected and sett upp by ffysher men for the safetye of their netts and for surroundinge of them selves in a Storme'⁵. However, all inhabitants had the right to set nets and take white fish on Wednesdays and Fridays, and the dikes and streams afforded fishing and eeling opportunities for all. Turbary rights were also vital. Virtually all probate inventories include a stack of turves in the yard.

As well as providing most of the fuel in the manor, turves along with clay were taken from the commons to manure the arable lands. This was considered vital, according to several 1649 deponents, in avoiding the necessity of a fallow year on much upland ground. A survey of

³ PRO: E 134/1649/Mich 11; E 134/1 & 2 James II/Hilary 25; E 134/2 James II/Mich 35. For uses for rushes, see J. M. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700-1820* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 167-8.

⁴ PRO: E 134/24 Charles I/Easter 4, fol.3.

⁵ LAO: Stow Wills 1599-1602/268-270; 1616-20/59-60. PRO: E 178/5412.

the manor in 1633 states that 'much the greater parte' of the arable land in the common fields was a 'black Sandy ground yat they sowe every yeare, one yeare Hempe, the nexte yeare Barley, the nexte Hempe againe, and the nexte Rye'.⁶ Ashes and manure were also essential sources of fertiliser, and both of these items appear as legacies in wills. Manure in the yard is listed in most probate inventories. Too few probate inventories from the 1610s give a breakdown of crops into acreage and type to give a precise indication of their relative importance. It seems clear that barley was the most important, but wheat, rye and peas were grown in quantity, as well as hemp and flax. Joan Thirsk, using sixteenth-century probate inventories from the manor, found oats and flax in store but not growing in the fields, and suggested that these were probably less usual crops grown in small quantities.⁷ The 1610-19 inventories show line and linseed in store, and line brakes, but no specific reference to flax in the field. Most inventories, however, simply list 'the crop on the ground' without further identification. Oats never appear in these inventories. Hardly an inventory fails to mention hemp in some form: hemp growing, hemp seed, hemp in store, hemp yarn, sackcloth, hemp heckles and hemp brakes.

Land was held in small, scattered parcels, either freehold, copyhold or leased. Copyhold tenure was copyhold by inheritance, and customary rents, as in other royal manors, were low.⁸ In 1633, the surveyor valued arable land in the common fields at 12s and 16s per acre, and demesne land of all types was valued at between 7s and 13s per acre. There is no information available on rents in the open fields, but demesne tenants were paying rents that, although doubled since 1620, were between 1/3 and 1/6 of the assessed rental value of their lands. The values of demesne lands given in the 1650 survey were similar to those of 1633, and tenants were still paying similar proportions. Since demesne rents could be increased more easily than

⁶ PRO: E 315/390, fols. 36-7.

⁷ J. Thirsk, 'The Isle of Axholme before Vermuyden', p. 21.

⁸ Myddle, with a private landlord, experienced a large increase in entry fines in the mid-seventeenth century: D. Hey, *An English Rural Community: Myddle under the Tudors and Stuarts* (Leicester, 1974), pp. 75-83.

could customary tenures⁹, it is likely that copyhold tenants were paying at least as low a proportion of the market value for their lands as were demesne tenants. The Crown could attempt to increase its revenues through raising entry fines, especially where these were arbitrable at the will of the lord. The 1633 survey of the Manor of Epworth stated that fines were arbitrable. Stewards could demand bribes to keep entry fines low, so as not to set a precedent to the future disadvantage of tenants, but this was less likely when copyholds were held by inheritance. D. Thomas states that, in the 1560s, the rents on Crown estates in Lincolnshire were not revalued, and that entry fines remained at four times the annual rent.¹⁰ In the 1650 survey of the manor, the fines were included for copyholders 'upon descent or alienation', and these were very low: '4s for every acre of arable land, 6s 8d for every acre of meadow or pasture, 3s 4d for every acre called Wastground...the steward sometymes at descretion hath used to assesse lesse then after ye rate of 6s 8d for meadowe or pasture ground and sometymes more or lesse then after the Rate of 4s for arable meadowe or pasture or halfe ye Rate upon Revercon'. Parish lands in Haxey, rented out by the churchwardens for poor relief, bore rents of 2s 6d per acre for arable and 3s per acre for meadow during the period 1601 to 1625, with an entry fine of one year's rent. This was a three-fold increase over the rents for 1594-1600.¹¹

The parcels of land held could be very small; plots in the large fields as small as 1/2 rood were mentioned in wills. Partible inheritance resulted at times in the division of individual parcels as well as of overall holdings, and the process can be observed in some wills. This can also be observed in the sizes of the existing plots mentioned. A common unit of land measure in the manor was a 'three-rood', and many parcels contained 1 1/2 roods, indicating an earlier division of a three-rood plot. One acre, 1/2 acre and one rood parcels were also numerous.

⁹ D. Thomas, 'The Elizabethan Crown lands: their purposes and problems', in R. Hoyle (ed.), *The Estates of the English Crown, 1558-1640* (Cambridge, 1992), p.62.

¹⁰ R. Hoyle, 'Customary tenure on the Elizabethan estates', pp. 207, 210, and D. Thomas, 'The Elizabethan Crown lands: their purposes and problems' p. 76, in *ibid.*

¹¹ PRO: E 317/Lincs 16; LAO: 23/58 Haxey Rental Book, 1594-1625. In the manor of Terling Place, annual market rents charged ranged from c 6s 8d per acre in 1600-1620, to between 4s and 9s per acre in the 1690s (on different farms). Copyhold rents on mainly marginal lands ranged from 4d to 1s 6d per acre per year in 1678: K. Wrightson & D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 26-7

As well as the parcels of arable scattered in the open fields, parcels of meadow were held. There were particular areas of meadow ground, usually termed 'intakes' or 'ings', presumably taken in at an earlier date from the lower lying ground. As Joan Thirsk has noted, wetter areas in the common fields could also contain meadow.¹² A number of wills refer to parcels of 'arable and meadow' or 'half land, half meadow' or 'arable with all grass and meadow at both ends' lying within particular fields. Occasionally, there is a reference to a parcel of 'arable and pasture' (in the Far Field of Gunthorpe), or 'arable, meadow or pasture' (the Low Field of Belton). Several testators mention 'meadow or pasture' lying within a common field, and Charles Lund, yeoman of Belton, in 1671 bequeathed a close of meadow or pasture in Lincroft field. In Owston parish, too, there are indications of closes within fields of arable or meadow. In 1649, William Norfolk, yeoman, left meadow lands that he leased from Lord Sheffield in Milne Ings 'in a close lately inclosed by me'. John Otter, keelman, in 1659 left a little close in the Milne Field, and Thomas Robinson, husbandman, left a close of meadow in Gunthorpe Ings in 1650.¹³ Epworth parish contained an area of 'waste meadow' in Messie Meares, an area of the common on the far west of the parish and manor boundary. Twenty acres of this ground was demesne land, but other parts were individually owned.¹⁴ This area was, before the drainage, cut off by water from the rest of the common, and therefore from access by cattle. Fishing rights in the River Idle were also held in this region, often in conjunction with ownership of a piece of meadow ground.

Each parish also contained areas of individually held closes, supplementary to the closes adjoining houses and crofts in the settlements themselves. Much of the demesne land was in this form. These closes were used as arable, meadow, pasture, or a combination of two or three of these. Closes could be subdivided and new closes created within larger ones. Several testators left a close, usually 'meadow or pasture', to two or three children, sometimes with instructions as to who was to have responsibility for erecting and maintaining the new fencing

¹² J. Thirsk, 'The Isle of Axholme before Vermuyden', p. 22.

¹³ LAO: Stow Wills 1669-71/609; 1640-50 II/505; 1660-63/589; 1640-50 II/603.

¹⁴ PRO: E 315/390, fols. 36-7.

necessitated by the division. As Joan Thirsk has noted, the surveyor of the manor in 1633 drew attention to the practice (of which he disapproved) by demesne tenants of using closes in a form of up-and-down husbandry.¹⁵ He was forced, he said, to describe these lands as meadow, pasture and arable

promiscuously and valued equally. The reason is that those Lands are all inclosed and at noe tyme use in Common, and in one entire Close the Tennant useth to mowe parte, feede parte and plough other parte, as is most advantagious for him, nor doth he constantly use any one pte of the Close for meadowe pasture or Tillage, but that parte which nowe is pasture, may the next yeare be plowed upp for Tillage, and that parte which nowe is arable the nexte yeare laid downe for pasture as he shall thinke most Convenient for him.¹⁶

It is clear from closes described in wills that individually-owned closes could also be used in this way. Some land listed in the 1607 survey of Haxey and Westwood was described as arable, meadow and pasture, so it seems that convertible husbandry was practised by that date. It would appear, then, that there existed a considerable amount of flexibility and opportunity for individual decision-making in the use of land within the manor.¹⁷

This flexibility and exercise of strategic choice was not limited by the ownership or long-term holding of particular parcels or types of land. Although buying and selling of land was common, it was not necessary to own a particular plot to have use of it. Land could be leased, either from the manor or from other landholders, and many individuals were both leasing land and letting houses and lands to others. A rental of 1620 records the rents paid by each person, both for his or her own land and for that of others.¹⁸ Lists of debts owing in administration

¹⁵ J. Thirsk, 'The Isle of Axholme before Vermuyden', p. 20.

¹⁶ PRO: E 315/390, fols. 36-7.

¹⁷ PRO: LR 2/256. The early adoption of convertible husbandry in closes within a basically unchanged agricultural framework was noted in Terling: K. Wrightson & D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, p. 20, 24. Also see P. Bowden 'Agricultural prices, wages, farm profits and rents', in J. Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1640-1750* (Vol. 5, II, Cambridge, 1985), p. 8; V. Skipp, *Crisis and Development: An Ecological Case Study of the Forest of Arden, 1570-1674* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 44-6; C. Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance: Kibworth Harcourt, 1280-1700* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 106-11; P. Large, 'Rural society and agricultural change: Ombersley, 1580-1700', in J. Chartres & D. Hey (eds.), *English Rural Society, 1500-1800* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 130-1.

¹⁸ PRO: SC12/10/44/17 James I. Medieval fen and woodland parishes generally were characterised by an active land market in tiny parcels of land and by subletting, which 'created an intricate tenurial pattern in which landholders were at the same time both lessees and lessors': C. Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance*, p.252.

accounts usually include rents, and most of these were owed to fellow freeholders and copyholders resident in the manor. These sources indicate a large amount of subletting, but the actual extent of the practice was probably greater still.¹⁹ The 1650 parliamentary survey of the manor states that copyholders could let their copyholds for four years without making any surrender; longer leases required licence of the manor court. Demesne land too could be sublet. Pieces of land in the common fields or meadow areas, closes or mills that were demesne property were left as legacies by the holding tenants. All types of leases could be of varying length. Several testators mentioned 999-year leases, and several leased meadow on 21-year leases from Lord Sheffield, a major landholder in the manor. He himself held demesne property (sublet to 'diverse tenants') on a 99-year lease.²⁰ Often lands left to minor children for their maintenance were rented out for the number of years remaining until the child reached 21.

The variety of forms of landholding could lead to occasional confusion on the part of a testator, especially when lands of various types had been inherited. William Sandall, yeoman of Belton, in his will of 1621, included a clause to cover any inadvertent error: 'yf it happen that their appeare any mistakinge for or concerninge any of the lands which I have given unto any of my children, as that it doe appeare to be copyhold which I have given for freehold or be not rightly bounded as is herein expressed, that then it shalbe lawfull for my supervisors or either of them to sett out soe much of other of my freehold land ungiven in any other place accordinge to their discretions as shalbe of equall vallue of the land sett downe and intended by me...'. William Moody, another Belton yeoman, used his will in 1666 to sort out a confusion in his bachelor brother's will of 1653, involving land inherited from their father. William left two nephews 'all that three acres of arable land which was given to them by John Moody my brother as freehold land

¹⁹ Subletting was common in other parishes: M. K. McIntosh, *A Community Transformed: The Manor and Liberty of Havering, 1500-1620*, pp. 99, 116-17; D. Hey, *An English Rural Community*, pp. 72-5. David Hey also points out that the subletting of freeholds would not appear in the manor court records. Levine and Wrightson make the same point: D. Levine and K. Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society: Whickham, 1560-1765* (Oxford, 1991), p. 85, as does M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 56, 144. Neeson comments that the subletting of strips was likely to be more common in common-field villages with scattered strips: J. M. Neeson, *Commoners*, p.61.

²⁰ PRO: E317/Lincs 16.

and it proving leaseground I being executor to Gregory Moody my father, therefore my will is and I give the said [two nephews] all my interest and title thereof according to the Intent and meaning of the said will of John Moody'.²¹

The amount and type of land actually held, in freehold or copyhold tenure or long-term lease, is therefore only part of the total picture of land-use. Ownership or long-term tenure can be seen as the individual's stake in the system, providing land that could be farmed or let to others.²² It afforded an income and a basis for credit, either directly in the form of collateral, or more generally as an indication of a foundation for a larger estate or of a commitment to remaining in the community and retaining one's 'credit' there. For those with access to enough land to produce a surplus over subsistence requirements, the availability of land to rent of different types, location and quality enhanced opportunities to produce for the market.²³ The hemp, barley, hemp, rye rotation on the more valuable sandy soil, mentioned in the 1633 survey, not only removed the necessity of a fallow year for those with access to this land, but also allowed a marketable crop of hemp to be produced every other year. Those who grew crops mainly for their own subsistence could, of course, sell their hemp crop and buy grain, but would be forced to sell at a time when prices might not be favourable. Two administration accounts from the 1610s indicate that prices could be volatile. The flax crop of the Gunthorpe yeoman William Moody was appraised at £3 6s 8d in May, 1616, but sold for only 20s later that year. There was an even greater discrepancy between the appraised and sale price of the 1614 crop of hemp in the estate of Gregory Kelsey, yeoman of Haxey. The 2 1/2 acres of hemp had been valued at £1 13s an acre, but sold for only 5s an acre. In both cases, these men were widowers

²¹ LAO: Stow Wills 1621-23/118-119; 1666-68/403; 1660-63/832.

²² Donald Ginter notes that 'farmers might be 'small' as owners but 'large' as tenants': D. E. Ginter, 'Measuring decline of the small landowner', in B. A. Holderness & M. Turner (eds.), *Land, Labour and Agriculture, 1700-1920* (1991), p. 44. R. Wall discusses the release and acquisition of land through leasing in adjustment to family size: R. Wall, 'Real property, marriage and children: the evidence from four pre-industrial communities' in R. M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 447-51.

²³ See M. K. McIntosh, *A Community Transformed*, pp. 118-19, on flexible land use and production for the market.

with young children, and their deaths might well have precipitated a sale that would otherwise have been deferred until a more favourable price could be obtained.²⁴

The opportunities to rent land from a variety of individuals and for varying lengths of time, along with an active land market and the availability of enclosed lands, enhanced the choice of crops, land-use and strategies and afforded chances for individuals to increase their own wealth and to provide a preferential stake for their children. Partible inheritance could, and often did, result in a son receiving less land than his father had inherited. But a father who had started with a better-than-average inheritance was in a good position to increase his holdings during his lifetime, ensuring that one or more sons began with at least as much land as he himself had. The number of surviving siblings would have an obvious effect on the individual child's inheritance, but fortuitous deaths were likely to have an especially large impact on the fortunes of the children of the better-off. Childless uncles or aunts of the better-off were also likely to be comparatively wealthy, and legacies of land or larger sums of money would normally be bequeathed to nieces and nephews.

Throughout the manor, by-employments, making use of local resources and providing products for primarily local requirements, were important elements in the local economy. Manufacture of hemp, linen and woollen yarn and cloth, fishing, milling, malting, brewing, butter- and cheesemaking, woodworking and carpentry, leather work and shoemaking were the main occupations carried out alongside farming activities. Alehousekeepers, butchers, grocers and mercers also, especially in the first half of the century, worked land.

The basic rural economy, then, was based on mixed arable and pasture farming, aided by extensive fen commons and a range of available by-employments. Smallholders were numerous, and subletting was common. Convertible husbandry, different soil types and manures, a variety of forms of landholding and areas of enclosed lands provided flexibility and an element of choice to the inhabitants.

²⁴ LAO: Ad Acc 8B/425; 8B/222.

ii. Demographic Sources

A fundamental problem in demographic study in the seventeenth century is that of the availability, accuracy and interpretation of source material for population figures. The sources available for the manor of Epworth are parish registers, the Protestation Returns, ecclesiastical censuses and household and population estimates from depositions in 1686.²⁵ Each of these has its own advantages and drawbacks, but none on its own can be expected to reveal an accurate estimate of population. The sources must be used in conjunction, but even then, inaccuracies, uncertainties, and variations in the proportions of the population included can make correlation difficult. The best result that can be achieved is an estimate of population totals at particular points, along with general trends in population increase and decrease during the course of the century.

As a demographic source, parish registers have the advantage of recording the baptisms and burials of, in theory, all the inhabitants of the parish. They are continuous, and so are particularly useful in providing figures for natural increase and decrease in the population. They do not, however, reveal the total population at any date. In addition to gaps in parish registers caused by loss, illegibility or failure to record, it is necessary to attempt to determine the accuracy of the recording that exists.²⁶ While the census sources can be used to provide estimates for the total population of the parishes at particular dates, each source presents problems. Anne Whiteman, in a critical edition of the Compton Census of 1676,²⁷ points out difficulties that exist regarding the accuracy of the returns. She stresses that the figures must not be used uncritically in demographic studies, and emphasises the need for local studies using parish registers to provide a more critical evaluation of the returns. She also points out that the 1603 census returns, the 1642 Protestation Returns and the Compton Census returns are all

²⁵ No Hearth Tax returns survive for the manor.

²⁶ See Appendix I for a detailed discussion of the parish registers, their completeness, accuracy and reliability.

²⁷ A. Whiteman (ed.), *The Compton Census of 1676; A Critical Edition*, (1986).

likely to underestimate the actual population.²⁸ This is of particular concern in the parishes of Epworth manor, where four of the parishes are large, with inhabitants scattered throughout a number of settlements. Both of the ecclesiastical censuses, in 1603 and 1676, were taken at a time when it appears that recent immigration may have made it particularly likely that individuals would be missed out. The 1686 depositions include a total of houses for each parish, provided by a local carpenter, and problems of reliability and the use of a suitable multiplier to obtain an population estimate arise.

iii. Population in the Five Parishes

a. 1603 Ecclesiastical Census

Wrigley and Schofield compared the total adult population indicated by the 1603 census with the population figures for 1603 obtained by back-projection and found that between one-quarter and one-fifth of adults were likely to have been missed by the census nationally.²⁹ In four of the five manor of Epworth parishes, individuals could be considered likely to be missed because of the large geographical size of the parishes and the number of settlements in each. Indications that returns are based on fairly rough estimations in three of the parishes are the very round totals. Whiteman says that figures ending in '0' are not necessarily suspicious because counting in scores was common, as was rounding up when unsure.³⁰ However, figures ending in '00' would seem to give greater grounds for suspicion, and this is the case for the three largest parishes: Haxey, Belton and Epworth.

²⁸ A. Whiteman & M. Clapinson, 'The use of the Compton Census for demographic purposes', *Local Population Studies*, 50, (Spring, 1993), pp. 61-3; A. Whiteman, 'The Compton Census of 1676' in K. Schurer & T. Arkell (eds.), *Surveying the People* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 78-96.

²⁹ E. A. Wrigley & R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 569.

³⁰ A. Whiteman (ed.), *The Compton Census*, p. xlv.

Table 1.1**1603 Census³¹**

Belton	Haxey	Epworth	Owston	Wroot
700 + 1 rec.	700	500	438	52

Whiteman also indicates that it is not known whether the returns for Owston include the chapelry of West Butterwick. Owston's parish registers in 1608 and 1609 show that 25.64% of baptisms and 31.69% of burials in those two years were attributed to residents of West Butterwick, so that if the chapelry was not included in the 1603 returns, it would be likely that the total missed out at least one-quarter of the adult population, and the figure for Owston should be in the region of 585.

A further problem is accounting for the proportion of the population who would have been under sixteen at the time and therefore not included in the census totals of communicants. Wrigley and Schofield's back-projection figures for 1601 indicate that 35.0% of the population would have been under sixteen.³² I have looked at the parish registers for the three parishes whose records survive from an early enough date to attempt an estimate of the numbers of children under sixteen, by totalling the baptisms for the sixteen years prior to 1603, eliminating those children amongst them who died before that date.

Wroot produced the very high total of 48 children in 1603, which would mean that children accounted for 48% of the population. By eliminating those families who may have left the parish by 1603 because neither the child nor the parents appear in the registers from that date, the number of children remaining is 35, or 40%. This is, however, almost certainly an underestimate, since there is no way of ascertaining precisely when families might have left, and, of course, new families with children already baptised were likely to have moved in. The total of surviving children in Belton in 1603, discounting the possibility of outmigration, was 467,

³¹ C. W. Foster (ed.), *The State of the Church in the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I* (Lincoln Record Society, Vol. 23, Lincoln, 1926), pp. 340-51.

³² Wrigley & Schofield, *Population History*, p. 569.

or 40% of the total population, in spite of a mortality crisis affecting children in 1597. In that year, 50 children died, in contrast to the average annual total of 15 in the period. It is probable that outmigration of families in Belton at this time would have been lower than in Wroot. Wroot in 1603 was a riverside parish, containing little arable land before the drainage, and only four families persisted throughout the century, two in substantial numbers, indicating that they were likely to have been the principal landholders. Fishing and carriage on the River Torne, along with ancillary craft occupations, would have employed substantial numbers of inhabitants who were likely to have been more transient. Belton, on the other hand, like Haxey and Epworth, was a large arable and pastoral parish. Thirsk says that the common rights, along with fishing and fowling opportunities, in the Isle of Axholme attracted migrants during the late sixteenth century.³³ It would seem likely, then, that a parish like Belton would have gained more families with children than it lost at this time. Haxey's registers indicate the proportion of children to have been 581, or 45% in 1603, but this is certainly too high, as the years from 1596 witnessed a severe under-recording of child burials in the parish. In fact, if one were to attribute to the defective years a 'normal' child burial figure of 14 per year (based on the 1585-89 figures, prior to the 1590-91 mortality crisis), the proportion of surviving children would again work out at 40%.

These higher than average figures could mean either that the proportion of children in these parishes was higher than that for the nation as a whole, or that the figures in the 1603 census underestimated the number of adult inhabitants. The registers for Belton and Haxey show the annual number of baptisms to have been increasing reasonably steadily from 1585, allowing rapid demographic recovery from crisis years. 1590-91 in Haxey resulted in a net loss of 140 from the population, but surplus baptisms over burials in 1592-95 meant that 94 of these would have been replaced by 1596. In Belton, 1590-91 depleted the population by 62, and the following year produced a deficit of 24, but surplus baptisms had reduced the shortfall to 23 by 1597, when in that year there was a net loss of 42. Natural increase from 1598 meant that the population would have more than recovered its pre-1590 level by the end of 1604, excluding any

³³ J. Thirsk, 'The Isle of Axholme before Vermuyden', p. 26.

effects of migration. Another indication of growth is the surplus of 654 baptisms over child burials in Haxey from 1585 to 1595, and surplus of 473 baptisms over child burials in Belton from 1585 to 1604, keeping in mind that 'child burials' could include those over twenty-one who were single and living with their parents. It appears that, in spite of periodic crises, the underlying trend was that of increase and could have resulted in a somewhat higher proportion of children in the population by 1603.

I will take three possible estimates of population for Haxey and Belton and compare them with the average number of baptisms over the period 1600-1604 in the two parishes. Wrigley and Schofield consider it unlikely that one would find a crude birth rate of under 28 or over 40 per 1000 in pre-industrial England, other than in cities or in recently settled areas.³⁴ Belton's baptisms for the five-year period averaged 46.2, and those of Haxey 55.4. If one were to take the 1603 figures and assume a 35% proportion of children in the population, the population figure for both parishes would be 1077. This would result in crude birth rates for Belton of 42/1000 and for Haxey of 51/1000. With an allowance of 40% for children, the total population figure would rise to 1167. The crude birth rates then become 39/1000 for Belton and 47/1000 for Haxey. The third estimate is based on assuming that the actual number of children under sixteen (467), as calculated from the parish register in Belton, comprised 35% of the population, and that the census underestimated the number of adults. This would give a total population figure of 1334, and result in crude birth rates of 34/1000 for Belton and 41/1000 for Haxey.

It seems that the third estimate is the most likely of the three, and might well be an under-estimate, as the proportion of children could quite possibly be over the 35% national average. Wroot, too, although a smaller parish, might have been prone to an under-recording of inhabitants because of the transient residence of many. This leaves the parishes of Epworth and Owston to consider. Neither of their registers survives from the period before 1599, so it is impossible to estimate the number of children aged sixteen in 1603 from the registers. The

³⁴ Wrigley & Schofield, *Population History*, p. 174.

average number of baptisms in Epworth was 40.4 for the period 1600-1604. If the census figure of 500 is taken for adults, and an assumption is made that children under sixteen comprised 35% of the population, the population figure would be 769, and the crude birth rate would be 53/1000. If children were assumed to make up 40%, the total population figure would be 833 and the crude birth rate 48/1000. If the census figure is increased by the same per centage as the highest figure for Belton, the total population would be 953, and the resulting crude birth rate 42/1000. It again seems that the highest estimate is the most likely and may be an underestimate.

Owston is the most problematical parish, given the uncertainty surrounding the inclusion of its chapelry and its geographical position. The parish was long and relatively narrow, lying alongside the River Trent. The parish, like those of Haxey, Belton and Epworth, consisted of mixed arable and pastoral farms, mainly in small units, but also had four riverside settlements. The parish registers in 1608-11 list the occupations for a number of men, and these include yeomen, husbandmen, labourers, butchers, millers, smiths, tailors, websters, horsekeepers, wheelwrights, carpenters, chapmen, chandlers, fishermen and watermen. Along with the stable landholding population, there was likely to coexist a proportion of transient individuals and families. Owston's average figure for annual baptisms for 1600-1604 was 35.4. Again, if one takes the census figure as given and assumes children to have made up 35% of the population, the population for Owston would be 674 and the crude birth rate would be 53/1000. Assuming a proportion of 40% children would produce a population total of 730 and a birth rate of 48/1000. A per centage increase over the census figure in line with Belton's highest estimate would give a total population of 835 and a crude birth rate of 42/1000. If it is assumed the chapelry of West Butterwick was left out of the total census figure and 25% is added to the census total, the adult population total would be 584. Carrying out the same three estimates on this revised total results in crude birth rates of 39/1000, 36/1000 and 32/1000. It seems not unlikely West Butterwick was included in the census figure. In any case, a figure somewhere in the region of 850 might be a reasonable estimate for the total population.

A 'best guess' for the population of the five parishes must, it seems, be based on the assumption that there was some omission in the census totals and would be at the high end of the range. The census totals and range of total population estimates for the five parishes are listed below.

Table 1.2

Population Estimates - 1603

Parish	Haxey	Belton	Epworth	Owston	Wroot	Total
1603 census	700	700	500	438	52	2390
population estimate	1077-1350	1077-1350	770-950	675-850	80-110	3679-4610

If figures are calculated based on Wrigley and Schofield's suggestion that between one-fifth and one-quarter of adults were missed out of the census, the population estimates for the parishes are:

Parish	Haxey	Belton	Epworth	Owston	Wroot	Total
population estimate	1346-1435	1346-1435	962-1025	842-898	100-107	4596-4900

These figures tend to confirm that the higher estimates in the previous table are likely to give a more accurate reflection of the population in 1603.

b. 1642 Protestation Returns

The second source to consider is the list of Protestation Returns of 1642. These included all men over eighteen who signed the returns on the one, or in the case of Epworth, two days in March when they were collected. Wroot, Belton and Epworth note that 'none refused', but this is, of course, no guarantee that all signed. Whiteman states that the Returns tend to give an underestimate of the population.³⁵ One way of checking the completeness of the returns is to compare the list for each parish with the names of men who appear in the registers shortly before and shortly after spring of 1642, and who therefore might be assumed to be resident at the time. The only parish for which I have been able to carry out this exercise is Wroot. I found only one man who 'ought' to have signed and whose name is missing from the list. At this time,

³⁵ A. Whiteman (ed.), *The Compton Census*, p. lxi.

however, Wroot was an unusual parish in the manor, and not only because of its smaller size. The diversion of water courses during the course of the drainage, and the appearance of a great area of new arable land in the parish, altered its occupational activities, its size, its resident families and its demographic character. This is reflected by the fact that, of 76 men who signed, only 18 had been baptised in the parish. Four others married a woman who had been baptised in the parish or the widow of a man who had. The vast majority of the rest first appear in the registers, marrying or having children baptised, in the 1630s and 1640s. The surnames are overwhelmingly from outside the manor of Epworth, and some seem to be French. Four of the surnames are shared by those listed in the Sandtoft returns in Belton parish as the 'names of the french that tooke the p'testacon inhabiting within the p'ish of Belton in the Isle of Axholme'. It would be unwise, therefore, to make assumptions about the completeness of the other parish returns on the basis of those from Wroot.

The Protestation Returns included men only. Anne Whiteman suggests that, as numbers of men and women in the population were roughly equal in the period, it is appropriate to double the number in the Returns to arrive at a figure for the total number of adults.³⁶ It remains to make an allowance for children, this time those under the age of eighteen. Assuming that those aged 15-24 were spread evenly throughout the age group, the proportion of 15-17 year olds would have made up 5% of the total population. Altogether, those under eighteen in 1641, according to Wrigley and Schofield's table, would have accounted for 37.5% of the population.³⁷ Since Sandtoft was an extremely small settlement before the drainage, the immigrant community in 1642 constituted a new and separately identifiable community. In presenting the figures for Belton, therefore, I have given the total including Sandtoft and also listed the Sandtoft figure in parentheses. It should be remembered that the estimates based on the 1642 Protestation Returns are likely to underestimate the population.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. lxi.

³⁷ Wrigley & Schofield, *Population History*, p. 528.

Table 1.3

Population Estimates - 1642³⁸

Parish	Haxey	Belton	Epworth	Owston	Wroot	Total
1642 Protestation Returns	462	452 (S: 72)	308	287	76	1585
population estimate	1500	1460 (S: 230)	1000	930	245	5135

c. Compton Census of 1676

The Compton Census of 1676 involves similar difficulties to the earlier ecclesiastical census, but the figures give less immediate cause for concern, as they are considerably less 'round' than those of 1603. Whiteman indicates few problems with the returns from Lincoln and Stow (the archdiocese in which the five parishes were situated).³⁹ Returns for these areas included men and women conformists, papists and nonconformists, and it is assumed these included only those of communicable age, sixteen and over. Again, there is the question of whether the chapelry of West Butterwick was included in Owston's returns.

Wrigley and Schofield's age structure tables indicate that children under sixteen made up 31% of the population in 1676.⁴⁰ It would seem likely that the proportion was no higher than that in the five parishes, since Haxey, Epworth and Owston showed a pattern of natural decrease during the latter half of the seventeenth century and a decline in the average number of baptisms. (Belton's figures were unreliable for most of that period, and Wroot's demographic history was overwhelmingly influenced by migration from the 1630s, a result of the drainage.) If the figures for total adult inhabitants are inflated to include a figure of 31% for children under sixteen, and these are compared to the average number of baptisms per year for 1675-79, the crude birth rates are: Haxey: 34/1000; Belton: 32/1000; Epworth: 36/1000; Owston: 42/1000; Wroot: 48/1000. Wroot, it should be noted, was a very small parish, which meant that individual events could exercise a disproportionate effect on the figures, but Wroot did not show the same

³⁸ LAO: Protestation Returns, 1641/2, Lincolnshire.

³⁹ A. Whiteman (ed.), *The Compton Census*, p. xlvii.

⁴⁰ Wrigley & Schofield, *Population History*, p. 528.

demographic decline as did the other parishes prior to 1676, so that a higher crude birth rate was likely in the parish. Owston's birth rate was rather high, but as a riverside parish at a time of increasing activity on the Trent, it was in a position to offer employment opportunities to migrant families. Its birth rate might therefore have been somewhat higher, but it might also mean that an allowance of 31% for children is too low, both for Owston and for Wroot. The possibility that West Butterwick was excluded from the census figures is, I think, unlikely. Owston's returns show 49 'nonconformists' (compared with 57 each for Belton and Epworth, and 24 for Haxey), and many of these at this time were likely to have been Quakers. West Butterwick was the centre for Quaker activity in the parish, and the Quaker registers record a number of burials there.⁴¹ If returns for West Butterwick were excluded, so were the Quakers there, and a figure of 49 for other nonconformists, while not impossible, seems less probable without the Quakers.

I have felt it wise, then, given their demographic history and their particular geographical locations, to include a second estimate for Owston and Wroot, based on a slighter higher proportion of children, 35%. The 'best guess' total population figures for 1676 are:

Table 1.4

Population Estimates - 1676⁴²

Parish	Haxey	Belton	Epworth	Owston	Wroot	Total
1676 census	867	750	604	598	104	2923
population estimate	1250	1100	875	870-920	150-160	4245-4305

d. 1686 Depositions

While the previous sources are likely to have underestimated the population, the indications given in the 1686 depositions by the commoners are likely to have been an over-estimation. Not only were the commoners attempting to emphasise the numbers dependent on the commons and therefore their need for the whole of the original 13,400 acres, but they were also trying to discredit an agreement of 1636 to which 370 commoners' names had been

⁴¹ H. W. Brace (ed.), *First Minute Book of the Gainsborough Monthly Meeting* (Vol. III, Lincoln, 1941), pp. 2-7; LAO: Lincolnshire Quaker Registers.

⁴² A. Whiteman (ed.), *Compton Census*, pp. 360-1.

appended. Several deponents estimated the number of commoners as over 1000 or over 1100. The latter figure was given by Thomas Snowden, yeoman of Misterton, who suggested a total population for the manor of 5000.⁴³

Christopher Jervis, a carpenter from Owston, gave a figure of 'about 1180' as the total number of commoners in the manor, and included the number of houses in each parish. These totalled 1188.⁴⁴ Considering Anne Whiteman's opinion that 4.25 might be a reasonable multiplier for the second half of the seventeenth century, and that deponents were likely to inflate numbers to some extent, I have used Christopher Jervis's household numbers and the multipliers 3.7 and 4.5 to give a range of population estimates. As the 1670s and early 1680s were periods of particularly high mortality, both for children and adults, average household size might well have been especially low in 1686. I would regard the 'best guess' estimates to be towards the lower end of the range.

Table 1.5

Population Estimates from 1686 Depositions⁴⁵

Parish	Haxey	Belton	Epworth	Owston	Total
no. of households	353	325	262	248	1188
population	1300-1590	1200-1460	970-1180	920-1115	4390-5345

A comparison of the population estimates from the four sources can be seen in the following table:

⁴³ This indicates an average household size of 4.5. Peter Laslett, 'Mean household size in England since the sixteenth century' in P. Laslett & R. Wall (eds.), *Household and Family Size in Past Time* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 136-42, found that a mean household size of 4.75 held up over time and region from 1574 to 1821, but that individual settlements were likely to vary widely. R. Fieldhouse, 'The Hearth Tax and other records' in A. Rogers (ed.), *Group Projects in Local History* (Folkestone, 1977), p. 74, recommends a figure of 4.5, but again warns of local variations. Anne Whiteman (ed.), *The Compton Census*, p. lxxvii, argues that Laslett's figure of 4.75 is too high for the second half of the seventeenth century, and that 4.25 is more suitable, although she emphasises that this is only an approximate figure. Tom Arkell, 'A method for estimating population totals from the Compton census returns' in K. Schurer & T. Arkell (eds.), *Surveying the People*, p. 98, suggests a mean household size of 4.3 for the same period, with a range of 3.7 to 5.2.

⁴⁴ By this date, Wroot was no longer a part of the manor.

⁴⁵ PRO: E134/1 & 2 James II/Hilary 25, fols. 25, 28, 40, 44, 50.

Table 1.6

Population Change

Parish	Haxey	Belton	Epworth	Owston	Wroot	Total
1603	1077-1350	1077-1350	770-950	675-850	80-110	3679-4610
1642	1500	1460	1000	930	245	5135
1676	1250	1100	875	870-920	150-160	4245-4305
1686	1300-1590	1200-1460	970-1180	920-1115		4390-5345

In all five parishes, the pattern was one of a rise in population from 1603 to 1642. The 1676 figures indicate a decline in the population from 1642, while the 1686 figures suggest a population nearer in size to that of 1642. Both the 1676 and 1686 figures show a slight shift in the demography of the manor, away from Haxey and Belton and towards Owston.

iv. Natural Population Change

If we now turn to the figures for natural increase and decrease, based on the parish registers, the pattern for the early period is the same as that indicated by the census returns of 1603 and 1642. Those from the period after 1642, in all parishes except Wroot, show the decline suggested by the 1676 Compton Census returns, and the natural decrease appears to have continued and, in fact, accelerated in all the parishes between 1676 and 1686. Figures for the parishes are given for the periods in which records are available and trustworthy.

Table 1.7

Natural Change

Parish	Haxey	Belton	Epworth	Owston	Wroot
1603-41	+450 (+488)	+390			+89
1603-22	+186 (+224)	+232	+213 (+253)	+115	+48

1642-76	-263 (-186)				+26
1647-76	-243 (-166)		-134 (-63)		+15
1660-76	-106 (-52)		-38 (+1)	-73 (-31)	+14
1677-86	-199 (-168)	-111 (-86)	-113 (-94)	-170 (-150)	-12

Figures in parentheses take account of possible inclusion of burials of unbaptised infants during periods when these were unspecified. If they were, in fact, included in the burial register, then the resulting figures would show too small a natural increase in population or too large a decrease. I have calculated alternative figures on the assumption that 7% of baptised children

per year died unbaptised. This was the average percentage found in Belton during the period, 1609-1645, when unbaptised infants were recorded. However, Haxey's percentage was only 5.5% from 1620-50, and Owston's only 4.2% from 1607-1622. I have left these actual figures unaltered. I remain unconvinced that most unbaptised children would have been included in the registers when not specified as such, but since some may well have been, the figures in parentheses may be regarded as an extreme corrective for this possibility. Wroot included unbaptised children from 1642-1660, but as its annual baptismal totals were so small outside this period, any attempt to apply a percentage would have involved distortion.

Wroot, as indicated earlier, was unusual in having an earlier transient population, followed by immigration in the late 1630s and 1640s and the subsequent departure of many of those families. The apparently large increase in population up to 1622 was partly the result of the baptism of children whose families left before they could contribute to the burial statistics. The baptismal rate more than doubled during the 1640s with the post-drainage migration, dropping again in the 1650s when the burial rate rose. As a result, as can be seen from the above figures, there was virtually no net change between 1647 and 1660. The increased amount of arable land in the parish had allowed some families to remain in Wroot, and the registers show that they were often able to make sufficient provision for more than one son to marry and continue to live in the parish. These families were, by the end of the century, marrying into the older established families. It seems to have been the case that Wroot's isolation, with a common that had been separated from other common land areas by the River Idle before the drainage, had allowed a peaceable settlement on the new arable lands by incomers who were able to remain and become incorporated into the community. The parish was therefore capable of sustaining a somewhat larger population than had been possible at the beginning of the century, in spite of the loss of its riverside position.

All of the four larger parishes would have surpassed their estimated 1642 population by 1622 through natural increase. All show somewhat different patterns, however. Owston is the most difficult to interpret, both because its riverside position would have made a partly transient

population likely and because its records are so scanty. It shows the same pattern as the other parishes up to 1622, but differs in the later period. Its natural decrease from 1660 to 1676 accounts for a somewhat larger percentage of its estimated 1642 population (7.8%) than does that of Haxey (7%) during the same period, and over twice that of Epworth (3.8%). Yet Owston's population, judged by either the 1676 or 1686 figures, was higher relative to that of 1642 than were either of the other two parishes. The average annual number of baptisms in Owston, as in the other parishes, had decreased by 1660 when compared to the earlier period, but in Owston this was less marked. The percentage decrease for annual baptisms between the two periods was 4% in Owston, 7% in Epworth and 8% in Haxey. It seems to be the higher burial rate in Owston that accounts for the greater natural decrease during the period and this, along with the less severely affected baptismal rate, might well indicate a continuing supply of incomers to supplement its established landholding families.

The difference between Haxey and Belton in the period up to 1642 is particularly interesting. Belton showed the more marked growth up to 1622, but then slowed down while Haxey accelerated. (If Haxey's burial registers did include some unbaptised children during the earlier period, then Haxey's growth may have been somewhat nearer that of Belton.) This is even more striking when figures from Sandtoft are taken into account. The fact that, on the basis of the 1642 returns, Sandtoft accounted for 230 of Belton's 1642 total, means that Belton's population without the French and Dutch community at Sandtoft would have been 1230, a loss of about 120 from its 1603 population. The natural increase, based on the parish register, includes Sandtoft inhabitants. Their names are readily identifiable, and from 1630-1641 they account for 78 baptisms and 22 burials (excluding unbaptised children), the vast majority of events occurring after 1635. This means that 56 of the total natural increase in Belton during the period 1622-41 (158) is attributable to Sandtoft residents. This contrasts with Haxey, which showed a growth of 264 in the same period. Both parishes must have lost some of their population to out-migration, since Haxey's growth would have led to a population larger by 250 than its 1642 estimate of 1500, and Belton and Sandtoft together would have been larger by 280 than the estimated total

of 1460. It would appear, however, that Belton lost more of its native residents to migration than did Haxey. Without Sandtoft, both its natural increase from 1622 (102 against Haxey's 264) and its population estimate from the 1642 Returns (1230 against 1500 for Haxey) indicate a greater departure. There also appears to have been less migration into Haxey. The baptismal registers do not show the rise in baptisms in the late 1630s and 1640s that characterise those of Wroot and Belton, and from 1630-1641, only 14 baptisms in Haxey can be attributed to new sumames. Haxey's Protestation lists contain very few 'outside' names (27 individuals out of 462, compared to 72 new names at Sandtoft, aside from immigrants into Belton itself), and the vast majority of signatories had sumames that were common in the parish early in the century. Haxey's rate of growth accelerated after 1622, while Belton's declined. Over 35% of the growth that did occur in Belton after 1622 was due to the contribution of its foreign settlement, dating in the main from 1635. If it is true that native Belton residents were finding greater difficulty remaining in the parish after the drainage than were residents of Haxey, it may indicate greater pressure on land, resources and employment opportunities in Belton and may well help to explain the vehemence of the subsequent attacks on Sandtoft by native Belton parishioners.

The decrease in population shown to 1676, from 1642 in Haxey and from 1647 in Epworth, is almost exactly equal to the estimated population change based on the census returns. The decrease in both parishes appears to be accounted for by a decreased baptismal rate and by an increased mortality rate. Moreover, the decreased baptismal rate indicates, in a population that had been rising rapidly, a decreased fertility rate. As the increased birth cohorts of the earlier half of the century came to marriageable age, the baptismal rate should have increased markedly and continued to do so as the century progressed. It appears likely that, in addition to earlier migration out of the parishes, those who remained were less likely to marry or married later. While child mortality rose, as it did nationally in the period, adult mortality too showed a marked increase, and this might well be expected in a population that had expanded earlier. Those adults who remained in the parish, then, swelled the burial statistics but contributed proportionately less to the baptismal figures.

There are no usable figures from Belton's parish registers between 1642 and 1676 to indicate natural change, but the 1676 census figures indicate a somewhat larger percentage decrease from the 1642 figure than any of the other parishes except Wroot. If the Sandtoft figures are omitted from the 1642 figure, however, the percentage decrease is slightly smaller than the other parishes. It is impossible to say how many of the community at Sandtoft were still resident in the parish at the later date. The church at Sandtoft had always served a much wider area, particularly neighbouring Hatfield Chase, which also contained substantial numbers of French and Dutch settlers. The Archbishop of York would not allow a church following the French ritual to be located in his diocese, and complained that large numbers of people living in the Chase were attending the church across the boundary in the Lincoln diocese.⁴⁶ After the attacks on the settlement at Sandtoft, large numbers of residents moved into adjacent areas, and the church continued to be used until the early 1680s. It is doubtful that many people were actually living in Sandtoft by 1676, although some may have moved back after the Restoration.

The population estimates based on the 1686 figures indicate little demographic change from 1642, while the 1676 figures and the figures from the parish registers both suggest a decline. Anne Whiteman believes that both the 1642 Protestation Returns and the 1676 Compton Census are likely to have underestimated the population, and this might be considered particularly likely in these large parishes, where accurate figures would be difficult to obtain. The 1686 depositions, on the other hand, may have exaggerated the numbers in the manor. But the 1670s may have seen another period of migration into the manor. Joan Thirsk cites a 'contemporary observer' in 1675, commenting on the numbers of poor, attracted by the peat fuel resources, in the Isle of Axholme: 'The liberty the common people have of graving in the common is that which draws multitudes of the poor sort from all the countries adjacent to come and inhabit in the Isle'.⁴⁷ If this is an accurate observation for the manor of Epworth, the immigration may account for at least part of the discrepancy between the 1676 and 1686 figures.

⁴⁶ J. Thirsk & J. P. Cooper (eds.), *Seventeenth Century Economic Documents* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 722-4.

⁴⁷ J. Thirsk, *The Rural Economy of England* (1984), fn p. 133.

New migrants would be less likely to have been included in the Compton Census figures, and they may have continued to enter the Isle during the later 1670s and 1680s. Certainly the 1686 deponents commented on the shortage of peat for the poor in the manor. If there was migration into the manor during this period, the migrants may have added to the increased mortality figures, but did not contribute to the baptismal figures in the way that earlier migrants had, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and as the settlers on the newly drained land had, in the late 1630s and early 1640s.⁴⁸

The overall picture, then, is of substantial and sustained population growth during the first half of the century, leading to an increased population in all five parishes by 1642. The natural increase in all but Wroot, however, was too great to be absorbed within Epworth manor. Belton seems particularly to have lost people from its native population, to be partly replaced by foreign residents. The picture in the second half of the century is less clear. The population appears, at the most, to have retained its 1642 level with the aid of immigration. The two largest parishes, Haxey and Belton, had lower population totals relative to Owston in comparison to the earlier part of the century. Owston, probably owing to its position on the Trent, appears to have offered more employment opportunities than the other two parishes. In those parishes where it is possible to judge, the natural population decrease in the second half of the century appears to have resulted from a combination of slightly lowered baptismal rates and an increase in mortality. The mortality increase, in turn, was a result of a rise in child mortality and the increase in the adult burial rate produced by the natural mortality of a portion of the earlier surplus and possible migrant burials.

Given the difficulties of the demographic sources, the impossibility of accounting accurately for inward and outward migration, and the small samples involved, precise population figures for the five parishes at any point in the century cannot be obtained. Nevertheless, the outlines of population change during the course of the century that emerge are similar to those

⁴⁸ In Arden, Skipp's five parishes maintained a stable population between 1650 and the mid 1670s, but the parish registers showed a natural increase, indicating net outmigration, an experience opposite to that of the Epworth manor parishes: V. Skipp, *Crisis and Development*, pp. 76-7.

found in the country as a whole. Wrigley and Schofield's work indicates that, nationally, population rose substantially from the beginning to the mid-seventeenth century, followed by a decline in the later part of the century.⁴⁹ However, the manor's population history is complicated by migration, both inward and outward. Wroot before the drainage and Owston throughout the century appear to have contained considerable numbers of transients within their populations. Migration into the manor as a whole seems to have occurred late in the sixteenth century when incomers were attracted by the extensive commons. The natural increase of the early seventeenth century and the population estimates of 1642 indicate that some net outmigration took place during this period. The drainage and the newly available arable land for rent attracted new migrants in the mid-1630s, most of whom appear to have departed following the attacks upon them during the 1640s. A further influx of immigrants may have arrived during the 1670s, attracted by the fuel resources of the commons, and this, rather than natural increase, supported any population increase between 1676 and 1686.

v. Mortality Crises

Mortality crises are usually defined as years in which burials were at least twice the normal level for the period. To obtain the normal level, I have averaged five non-crisis years either side of the year in question. The method is crude, and there is a danger that random fluctuation may be included as a crisis but, as Walter and Schofield point out, any definition of crisis is necessarily arbitrary. Wrigley and Schofield have noted that crises did not always coincide with calendar years, and there could be occasions when a crisis could be indicated by an unusually large number of burials within a few months or even one month, or when increased mortality extended over portions of two calendar years.⁵⁰ I have also found indications in some years of crisis mortality among children. These years did not necessarily produce total burials of twice the normal level, but child burials, especially in certain months, were well above that ratio.

⁴⁹ Wrigley & Schofield, *Population History*, pp. 207-12.

⁵⁰ See the discussion of the problem in J. Walter & R. Schofield, 'Famine, disease and crisis mortality in early modern society' in J. Walter & R. Schofield (eds.), *Famine, Disease and the Social Order in Early Modern Society* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 5-6. Wrigley & Schofield, *Population History*, p. 336.

It seems important, therefore, to examine individual years in detail rather than simply to compare annual totals.

a. 1590-1591

The severity of the mortality crisis of 1590-1591 can be fully appreciated only if both years are examined. In Haxey, each of these years showed a burial total more than twice that of the average for the five preceding years. The nine-month period extending from August 1590 to April 1591, however, contained more than three times the average annual number of burials. Belton had burial totals in 1590 and 1591 that were 1.5 and 2.33 times the average, but burials within the seven-month period from September 1590 to March 1591 exceeded the average annual total by a factor of 2.6. These are the only parishes in observation during the period other than the small parish of Wroot. Here small numbers demand caution in drawing conclusions, but there are indications of a crisis in 1591. In that year, the total number of burials (9) was 7.5 times the average, 6 of the deaths occurring from July to October.

Table 1.8

Mortality Crisis: 1590-1591

Parish	Burials in 1590	Burials in 1591	Average annual burials	Burials in crisis months (a)	Average burials in same months (b)	Crisis mortality ratio (a/b)
Haxey	102	100	42.6	138	36	3.8
Belton	45	70	30.0	77	19	4.0
Wroot	2	9	1.2	6	0.5	12.0

The extended crisis period in both Haxey and Belton, beginning in late summer/early autumn and continuing into the following spring, suggests that a succession of epidemic infections may have been responsible. Wrigley and Schofield found evidence for this pattern of crisis mortality in a number of parishes in the 1550s and considered the likely cause to have been a series of infectious diseases. Carmichael emphasised the synergism between diseases, with secondary infections or lowered immune defences due to existing chronic conditions

causing increased mortality. That infectious disease was involved is further indicated by 27 instances in Haxey in which two or more members of the same nuclear family died within the period. There was not, however, the large proportion of families with three or more deaths that Slack found to have been characteristic of plague mortality. Nor was the seasonality of the crisis in these parishes typical of plague. Plague deaths tended to cease with the coming of cold weather, whereas the increased mortality in Haxey and Belton continued through the winter. The increased number of burials in Wroot occurred later in 1591, after the crisis had subsided in the other two parishes. Wroot's geographical position made it relatively isolated at this time from the rest of the manor. Its riverside location meant that disease was more likely to be brought in through movement on the Tome and Idle, and the deaths in Wroot may have had no direct connection with those in the other two parishes. Increased migration in the later part of the sixteenth century, the two navigable rivers on the manor boundaries, and the attraction of the Isle's resources for immigrants made it likely that communicable diseases would enter the manor from time to time. Malaria was common in fen areas, and tuberculosis could be contracted through cattle. These chronic infections were not normally likely to lead to death, except among older adults, but they could make individuals more vulnerable to new infections.⁵¹

b. 1597

The crisis of 1590-91 affected both adults and children. In 1597, a crisis occurred in Belton that caused an increase primarily in the deaths of children. Records for Owston and Epworth have not survived for this year, and 1597 was part of a nine-year period in Haxey when child burials appear to have been under-recorded. Wroot shows no sign of a crisis in the year. In Belton in 1597, total burials were 2.4 times the average, but child burials exceeded the average by 3.3 times. While adult burials were concentrated in the winter months, child burials increased markedly during the period from April to August. During these five months, 34 children were buried, along with only 8 adults. That this was normally a season of low child

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 666; A. G. Carmichael, 'Infection, hidden hunger and history', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XIV:2 (Autumn, 1983), pp. 253-64; P. Slack, *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (1985), pp. 177, 70.

mortality can be seen by a comparison with the same months during the ten surrounding non-crisis years. The average number of child burials for these months during normal years was 5.

Table 1.9

Child Mortality Crisis, Belton: 1597

Child burials in 1597	Average annual child burials	Child burials in crisis months (a)	Average child burials in same months (b)	Crisis mortality ratio (a/b)
50	15.1	34	5	6.8

The disease that was particularly likely to cause deaths in young children was dysentery, but this appeared in late summer and required warm conditions. The summer of 1597 was cold and wet, and the period of the crisis extends from the spring, so that dysentery would not appear to be responsible. Wrigley and Schofield pointed out that airborne infections like measles, whooping cough or diphtheria, endemic at a national or regional level, would have occurred locally in an epidemic form, since the infection would die out once everyone in a small population had been infected.⁵² It would be possible, therefore, that if an infectious disease that had appeared earlier in the parish, as in 1590-91, were to have been re-introduced in 1597, only children too young to have been exposed would have been susceptible. However, 12 of the children who died in the crisis months of 1597 were at least seven years old. Smallpox was not a likely epidemic disease before 1600. Plague tended to peak rapidly in late summer, affecting adults and children alike. Typhus most commonly appeared in winter and killed mainly adults. Influenza was characterised by low mortality, and normally ran its course in seven weeks.⁵³ None of the likely epidemic diseases seem to fit the mortality pattern in the parish.

1597 was a year affected by a series of bad harvests beginning in 1594, and the harvest of 1596 was especially disastrous. Grain prices rose by up to 83% in the south, and burials rose nationally by over 25%. Appleby found evidence of famine mortality in the northwestern part of the country, with mortality rising in the winter or early spring, continuing into the winter of 1598

⁵² Wrigley & Schofield, *Population History*, p. 656, fn 27.

⁵³ A. B. Appleby, *Famine in Tudor and Stuart England* (Liverpool, 1978), pp. 119-20.

after another bad harvest in 1597. Deaths included a high proportion of infants and children and the poor. Belton's figures show a high level of child mortality and a seasonal incidence spreading from spring to the next harvest in 1597. However, the children affected were spread across the age range, and the majority were from the stable, land-holding families of the parish, least likely to suffer famine mortality. Belton's conception rate was slightly higher than normal in 1597, and Appleby stated that conceptions always decline during famine. Wrightson and Levine considered that Whickham suffered a famine crisis in 1596-97 without a fall in the conception rate, but that parish had a large proportion of poor, young unmarried migrants among whom the malnutrition may have been concentrated. Belton's deaths were not concentrated among the poor, and ten Belton couples who lost children in the five crisis months (including three couples who lost two children) also conceived a child during those months. Outright famine would have seemed unlikely in the Isle, given its subsistence resources. The northwestern parishes studied by Appleby were upland pastoral settlements, not normally self-sufficient in grain, and isolated from an efficient communications network. Grain was unlikely to reach them in a year of severe national dearth. The Isle, on the other hand, was normally self-sufficient in grain for its human and animal inhabitants, had good river communications with a large corn market at Gainsborough across the Trent, and contained ample supplies of fish, eels and wildfowl.⁵⁴

While it seems unlikely therefore that the Isle suffered famine mortality in 1597, it would not have been likely to escape the effects of the adverse weather conditions. Not only would the harvest of 1596 have been deficient, but the wet summer of 1597 must have substantially reduced the amount of available pasture on the fen common. Thirsk indicated that, by this period, the commons were already suffering from overstocking,⁵⁵ and it is probable that the herds would have been culled, leading to a reduction in dairy products. Hay, less adversely affected than grain crops by wet years, might well have provided ample winter fodder for the

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 118; Wrigley & Schofield, *Population History*, p. 653; K. Wrightson & D. Levine, 'Death in Whickham' in J. Walter & R. Schofield (eds.), *Famine, Disease and the Social Order*, pp. 143-4.

⁵⁵ J. Thirsk, 'The Isle of Axholme before Vermuyden', pp. 24-5.

reduced herds. Areas of fen too wet for grazing during the summer could still have provided a hay harvest.

Grains grown were barley, wheat and rye, in that order. Wheat was the most expensive and preferred food grain, but mixed grains were eaten by the poor and more generally in dearth years.⁵⁶ It is likely that most inhabitants of Belton would have been on a mixed diet of grains by the spring of 1597, including some grains that would normally have been used as animal fodder. A possible cause of the increased child mortality from April to August might have been rye mould poisoning. A rye mould, ergot, according to Matossian, sometimes formed on rye in cold, wet years and could remain active for up to 17 months in storage. The grain was not recognised as spoiled, as the mould did not have an unpleasant taste or smell. Symptoms developed gradually and were extremely varied, stemming from an attack on the central nervous system. Those most likely to be affected were children and adolescents.⁵⁷ This condition, then, would fit the weather conditions, the overall grain shortage, the seasonality of the crisis and the age group affected by the mortality of 1597.

c. 1608

1608 showed an unusually high number of child burials in Belton and Haxey, concentrated in late summer and autumn. Epworth's child burials were higher than normal in August and September, but were equally high in 1612 and 1613. No crisis was indicated in Owston or Wroot in 1608.

⁵⁶ A. Everitt, 'Farm labourers: domestic life' in J. Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640* (Vol. IV, Cambridge, 1967), p. 450.

⁵⁷ M. K. Matossian, 'Mold poisoning: an unrecognised English health problem, 1550-1850', *Medical History*, 25 (1981), pp. 73-84.

Table 1.10**Child Burials in 1608**

Parish	Crisis months	Child burials in crisis months (a)	Average child burials in same months (b)	Crisis mortality ratio (a/b)
Haxey	Sept-Nov	26	4.3	6.0
Belton	Aug-Oct	33	4.4	7.5
Epworth	Aug-Sept	9	2.6	3.5

The timing in Belton and Epworth indicates dysentery as a likely cause, but child deaths in Haxey built up from September to peak in November, almost certainly too late in the year for dysentery to have been responsible. The children affected were mainly aged 1 to 5. All of the four large parishes had periods of higher than normal mortality, involving both adults and children, in the period extending from the end of 1601 until late 1603. Owston and Epworth's registers show burials exceeding the seasonal norm, in late 1601 and early 1602, by three to four times. Belton in 1602 and Haxey in 1603 had annual burial totals more than twice normal. Epworth in late 1603 again showed burials three times the seasonal normal for the period. It is possible, therefore, that an epidemic disease that had spread through the manor in 1601-1603 returned in 1608, this time attacking those too young to have experienced it before.

d. 1614-1616

The spring of 1614 and the late summer through early winter of 1616 were periods of high mortality in the manor. Haxey and Belton were affected in 1614 and again in 1616, when Epworth too showed an increase in burials. In both years, adults and children were affected. Creighton found 1616 to have been a year of high mortality nationally.⁵⁸ Belton suffered particularly severely in March and April of 1614, but less than the other two parishes in 1616.

⁵⁸ C. Creighton, *A History of Epidemics in Britain* (Vol. I, 2nd edition, 1965), (originally published 1884), pp. 536-7.

Table 1.11**Mortality in 1614 and 1616**

Parish	Year	Crisis months	Burials in crisis months (a)	Average burials in same months (b)	Crisis mortality ratio (a/b)
Haxey	1614	March-June	41	12.3	3.33
Belton	1614	March-April	37	6.5	5.69
Haxey	1616	Aug-Nov	50	13.1	3.82
Belton	1616	Sept-Dec	30	11.6	2.59
Epworth	1616	July-Dec	50	15.3	3.27

1614 in Belton and 1616 in Haxey and Epworth were years in which the annual burial totals were over twice the normal for the period. It may have been that the greater severity of Belton's crisis in 1614 involved the deaths of some of the more vulnerable, lessening the impact of the crisis there in 1616.

The 1620s, which contained years of high national mortality, appear to have left the manor relatively unscathed. Records for Owston and Epworth are unavailable after 1622, but Belton's registers show no crisis during the period. Haxey had periods of high mortality in the early months of 1620 and again in the spring of 1625, but in neither year did the annual total of burials reach 1.5 times the normal for the period. The highest annual total in the decade was 64 in 1625, but this was well below the 88 burials that occurred in 1616.

e. 1633

Haxey again suffered high mortality in the early months of 1633, especially in February when deaths averaged more than one a day. Belton's mortality in March and April was more than 2.5 times the normal for those months. Records are not available for Owston and Epworth.

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Table 1.12**Mortality Crisis, Haxey: 1633**

Crisis months	Burials in crisis months (a)	Average burials in same months (b)	Crisis mortality ratio (a/b)	Burials in February (c)	Average burials in February (d)	Crisis mortality ratio (c/d)
Jan-April	66	11.4	5.79	33	2.7	12.22

It is possible that this epidemic spread to Misterton, the adjacent parish to the south of Haxey. Complaints of flood damage in that parish could not be investigated until September of 1633 because of an epidemic in the town.⁵⁹

f. 1644

The crisis that occurred in 1644 was likely to have been the result of an epidemic carried into the Isle by soldiers. A major battle was fought across the river at Gainsborough in 1643, following a siege of the town, and mortality was high there in both 1643 and 1644. The Isle was occupied by troops during the period, and armies passed through on their way to and from Yorkshire. A bishop's transcript survives for Epworth for the year 1643-44, and this records the deaths of two 'common soldiers' in August and October of 1643. However, the epidemic of 1644 appears to have originated in a hospital camp set up in the Isle of Axholme during the siege of York in July. Sick soldiers were sent from York, where mortality had been high since the spring of 1643, increasing to new levels during the siege.⁶⁰ No record of 1644 survives for Epworth or for Owston, but records from both Haxey and Belton show high mortality from August, 1644, a month after sick soldiers began to be brought into the Isle. Belton's burial total for the year was 2.78 times normal. The crisis interfered with the recording in Haxey, and there is a break in the register between November 1643 and August 26, 1644. It is likely, therefore, that the figures from Haxey underestimate the severity of the mortality there.

⁵⁹ K. Lindley, *Fenland Riots and the English Revolution* (1982), p. 14.

⁶⁰ I. Beckwith, 'The Civil War in Lincolnshire' in S. Bennett & N. Bennett (eds.), *An Historical Atlas of Lincolnshire* (Hull, 1993), p. 64; C. Holmes, *The Eastern Association and the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 168, 174; C. Galley, 'Growth, stagnation and crisis: the demography of York' (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Sheffield, 1991), pp. 222-8.

Table 1.13**Crisis Mortality: 1644**

Parish	Crisis months	Burials in crisis months (a)	Average burials in same months (b)	Crisis mortality ratio (a/b)
Haxey	Aug 26-Nov	65	16.2	4.0
Belton	Aug-Nov	114	19.1	5.97

The large numbers of children among the dead in these months, 58 in Belton and 40 in Haxey, make typhus, the disease most commonly associated with the Civil War armies, not too likely to have been the cause. In Belton, the total number of unbaptised infants buried in 1644 was three times the average over the previous five-year period. Typhus rarely killed very young children. Holmes suggests that the disease, described as a 'feaver and flux', affecting the Parliamentary troops during and after the siege of York may have been typhus. Creighton referred to a 'spotted fever' causing mortality in the north in autumn of 1644, including an outbreak at Leeds, occupied by Parliamentary troops, beginning in August of that year. Plague too was carried by troops, and outbreaks occurred at Salisbury, Worcester, Newcastle and Hull in 1644.⁶¹ Whatever the disease carried into the manor of Epworth, it appears to have been sudden, virulent and disruptive.

g. 1657-1659

Wrigley and Schofield noted crisis years in the midlands and Yorkshire in 1657/8 and 1658/9, and Creighton found evidence for outbreaks of fevers in autumn of 1657 and 1658 and in spring of 1658 and 1659.⁶² Haxey, Epworth and Wroot, the only parishes in the manor in observation during these years, show indications in these periods of increased mortality. Wroot's small size makes a study of monthly totals largely meaningless, but its burial rate appears to have risen in November of 1657 and to have remained higher than normal through 1658.

⁶¹ Wrigley & Schofield, *Population History*, p. 669; C. Holmes, *Eastern Association*, p. 169; Creighton, *History of Epidemics*, p. 558; P. Slack, *Impact of Plague*, p. 62 (table 3.4).

⁶² Wrigley & Schofield, *Population History*, pp. 680, 678 (figure A10.9); C. Creighton, *History of Epidemics*, p. 562.

Epworth and Haxey show evidence of distinct periods of increased burials, the first beginning in October 1657 and lasting through April 1658. Following a respite during the summer, the burial rate rose again in October in both parishes. In Epworth, the burials remained high through the winter, peaking in March 1659 and then returning to a normal rate. In Haxey, burials were somewhat lower January through March, rising to another peak in April and May 1659, before returning to normal.

Table 1.14

Crisis Mortality: 1657-1659

Parish	Burials (a)	Average burials (b)	Crisis mortality ratio (a/b)
Haxey	127	44.38	2.86
Epworth	81	40.22	2.0
Wroot	18	7.4	2.43

h. Later seventeenth century

The final periods of high mortality in the century, according to Creighton, occurred in 1667-1671 and in 1679-1684. Wrigley and Schofield point to the period from July 1678 to June 1681 as the beginning of six years of exceptionally high mortality.⁶³ Again, the parishes of Epworth manor follow the national pattern reasonably closely. These were the last years of high mortality in the century.

⁶³ Wrigley & Schofield, *Population History*, pp. 341, 680-1, 679 (figure A10.10); C. Creighton, *History of Epidemics*, p. 570.

Table 1.15

.Years of High Mortality: 1668-1682

Year	Crisis months		Parish
1668	April -June, Oct-Dec		Owston
	July-Sept	children	
1669			Wroot
1670	Jan-Feb		Epworth
	Jan-March		Haxey
	March-April		Owston
1671	Jan-April, Nov-Dec		Haxey
	Feb-May		Epworth
	March-April		Owston
1672	Jan-June	large numbers of children	Haxey
	Feb-June	mainly children	Epworth
1679	Jan-April		Haxey
	Aug-Sept	children	Owston
1681	April-Dec		Haxey
			Wroot
1682	Jan-April		Haxey
	Jan-April		Owston

Belton's registers were too unreliable to use until 1678, and no year from then on would qualify as a crisis year (twice the normal annual total of burials). In the rest of the parishes in these years of high mortality, burials tended to be concentrated in the winter and early spring. These were the months of highest mortality in normal years as well. Without knowing the age structure of the population, it is impossible to tell how much of the increase in adult mortality may have been due to deaths of the elderly at the time of year when they were most vulnerable.

Young children, too, were more susceptible to respiratory complaints in the winter and early spring. However, the only years in which child burials exceeded baptisms in the course of the century were 1671, 1672 and 1679 in Haxey; 1668, 1671 and 1682 in Owston; and 1671 and 1681 in Epworth. From the seasonality, it appears that dysentery might have been responsible for many of the child deaths in Owston in 1668 and in 1679. During 1672 in Haxey and Epworth, children in particular appear to have been susceptible in the winter, and this may have resulted from the return of an epidemic to which most of the population were immune. Deaths from airborne infections peaked in late winter, a pattern typical of most of these years.⁶⁴ Whatever the causes, 1670-74 and 1680-84 showed the highest five-year mortality rates in the manor during the century. If the manor did retain the population size suggested by the 1686 depositions, immigration would have been necessary, and the immigrants may have both brought disease and contributed to the burial statistics. The natural decrease continued beyond 1676, showing signs of an upturn by the end of the century.

vi. Conclusion

Each decade, from the 1590s through the 1680s, with the exception of the 1620s, seems to have contained a period of high mortality in at least one part of the manor. The lack of a crisis in the early 1620s, a period of high national mortality associated with harvest failure and famine in the north in 1622-1623, illustrates the relative security of the Isle against the graver effects of scarcity. Some crises, like that of 1590-91 and those of the 1670s and 1680s, were extended and appear likely to have resulted from more than one disease factor. Haxey in 1633 and the manor more generally in 1644 experienced particularly concentrated periods of increased mortality, indicating the arrival of a virulent epidemic that ran its course rapidly through the parish. Child mortality appears to have increased during the 1670s and 1680s, usually coinciding with periods of high adult mortality. The manor did not seem prone to dysentery among children in the summer months, these producing consistently low burial figures for both adults and children throughout the century. A variety of epidemic diseases were likely to have

⁶⁴ J. Walter & R. Schofield. 'Famine, disease and crisis mortality', p. 54.

been involved in periods of high mortality, augmented perhaps by secondary infections contributed by tuberculosis contracted through cattle, chronic malarial infestation before the drainage and bacterial pneumonia developing when immune responses were low.

Throughout the century, mortality crises appear to have resulted from disease rather than from famine, reflecting the success of the mixed arable/pastoral economy and the relative abundance of subsistence resources in the manor. Regular periods of epidemic disease did not affect the long-term secular growth of the population before the 1640s. From the late 1650s until the early 1680s, mortality crises became more frequent and more severe, usually affecting both adults and children. Population showed a natural decline, reflecting both the increased mortality and, more importantly, a decrease in the baptismal rate in comparison with the earlier part of the century, so that any recovery was dependent on net immigration.

The population rise up to 1642 was assisted by immigration in the late sixteenth century and, in Belton and Wroot, in the late 1630s following the drainage, although migration out of the manor, especially from Belton, also occurred. It appears that further immigration may have taken place in the 1670s and 1680s, but these migrants did not contribute to the baptismal statistics in the way that earlier settlers had. The average five-yearly number of baptisms in each parish fell during the 1670s and 1680s, below both the averages during the 1660s and those of the period before 1640. In spite of periodic immigration of poor into the manor and any adverse effects of the drainage, there is no evidence of a subsistence crisis at any period from 1590 to the end of the seventeenth century. Although it is impossible to identify particular diseases involved, mortality crises appear to have been caused by epidemic disease, at times possibly operating in combination or acting upon chronic conditions.

The parishes of the manor shared a basic mixed-farming economy, a similar pattern of crisis mortality and population history. The one large parish that stands out in the first half of the century is Belton, where the early population increase among the indigenous population levelled out in the 1620s, about twenty years before the other parishes showed a similar pattern and before the drainage of the manor. Its population had been swelled by 1642 by French and Dutch

immigrants into Sandtoft from the mid-1630s. The small parish of Wroot, by 1642 no longer a riverside settlement, had lost its more transient population but also gained a substantial number of new settlers. The drainage had resulted in a temporary addition to settlements in the far western part of the manor, but does not appear to have been responsible for the loss of some of Belton's native population.

Household, Marriage and Family

The community, whether of the settlement, the parish or the manor, was an 'association of households'.¹ Households in the manor were centres for production, reproduction and consumption. Household production provided for the needs of the household itself and for marketing, mainly within the local community. The contribution of both husband and wife, assisted by older children and servants, was necessary to sustain the household and to bring up the next generation. For this reason, irregular marriage, marriage breakdown and illegitimacy were seen as threats to the community: purposeful, willful ignoring of responsibilities and of the basic household structure on which local society depended. Death was unavoidable, but steps could be taken to minimise its practical effects. The death of one of the partners often resulted in remarriage, but not all bereaved partners remarried, and men had to provide for the maintenance of their widows, and ongoing care of their young children. Kin and neighbours, often overlapping categories in the manor, were called upon to take on supervision of dependents and their property, and were generally important in borrowing and lending of goods and services between households. They could also be useful in settling conflicts that arose within families, especially the mixed families resulting from remarriages. Family, kinship and neighbour relations, then, connected households and formed overlapping networks of association that bound individuals into the community and helped to define their place within it.

i. Choice of partner

The extent to which individual choice and sentiment determined the selection of a marriage partner has been examined by many historians, especially with reference to the views of Lawrence Stone and Edward Shorter, who detected a change in the later eighteenth century towards an emphasis on romantic love and personal courtship. The assumption of an earlier pattern of marriages arranged by kin was challenged initially by John Hajnal, Peter Laslett, E. A. Wrigley and R. Schofield, who found that at least by the early sixteenth century, England was

¹ K. Wrightson, 'The politics of the parish in early modern England' in P. Griffiths, A. Fox & S. Hindle, *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke & London, 1996), p. 13.

characterised by nuclear family households, late age at first marriage and a small gap in age between partners. Others, including R. Houlbrooke, Alan Macfarlane, Keith Wrightson, Martin Ingram and Jack Goody, have found evidence for personal choice and an emphasis on mutual affection throughout the early modern period.² Evidence from the manor of Epworth tends to support this view.

Wills indicate that it was unusual to place conditions on the portions of daughters that were designed to restrict their choice of marriage partners. One testator imposed a delay on the payment if a daughter married without consent. John Singleton, a yeoman of Belton, in 1600 left his daughter £20 in money or moneyworth in two years' time 'always provided that if the said Dorithie my daughter doe joyne herselfe in matrimony without the full assent and consent of my executor [his son] and supervisors my will is the aforesaid legacie of twentie poundes nor any thereof shall not be payed till the full end and teame of foure yeares next after my death'. Three men directed that the portions be reduced under these circumstances. The knight, Sir John Stanhope of Melwood Park in Owston parish, in 1627 bequeathed his eldest daughter £400 when she reached the age of twenty-four or married with the consent of her mother, but 'if my said daughter Margaret shall marry or contract her selfe in marriage without the consent and good likeing of her mother then my will is that she shall have one hundred pounds onely to her porcon'. Henry Scott of Parke in Haxey, yeoman, in 1633 left the residue of his estate to his wife, his daughter and his youngest son, 'provided alwayes if the said Marie will bee governed in her marriage by her mother and her two brethren or els my will is that the said Mary shall have

² L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (1977); E. Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (1976); J. Hajnal, 'European marriage patterns in perspective', in D. V. Glass & D. E. C. Eversley (eds.), *Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography* (1965), pp. 101-43; P. Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations: Essays in Historical Sociology* (Cambridge, 1977) and 'Mean household size in England since the sixteenth century' in P. Laslett & R. Wall (eds.), *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 125-58; E. A. Wrigley & R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction* (1989), pp. 255-69; R. A. Houlbrooke, *The English Family, 1450-1700* (London & New York, 1984); A. Macfarlane, *The Culture of Capitalism* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 129-41; K. Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (1982), pp. 66-118; M. Ingram, 'Spousals litigation in the English ecclesiastical courts c 1350-1640' in R. B. Outhwaite (ed.), *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (1981), pp. 33-57; J. Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge, 1983).

but five shillings'. The 1658 will of Edward Everatt, yeoman of West Butterwick, whose wife was dead, indicates some prior conflict with his daughter over her choice. He left her an acre and a half, £40, a bed and bedding, 'provided always that if she be advised and ruled by her two uncles...in her marriage then she shall have the land and portion before expressed, but if she be stouborne and retractory and will not be governed by them in her marriage Then my will is that she shall have but £10 to her portion and no more'. His eldest son was to have the land, and the other £30 was to be divided amongst his other children 'if she fail of her promises'.³ The threat to withhold a portion, then, could be used to control a daughter's choice of marriage partner, but was very seldom used in wills.⁴ There is no instance of such a threat being made with regard to sons' portions.

When a marriage had been contracted but not yet solemnised, the intended wife could be provided for in a will. Gregory Barker, bachelor (described as labourer in his probate inventory) left all his lands and goods to Elizabeth Jaques '(whome I by Gods grace meane and purpose to take to be my wyfe)' in 1616. He married her the same day, but died a month later. In Wroot in 1659, John Barrowe, husbandman, left a five-acre close, two acres of peat moor and the residue of his goods to 'Mary Barrowe of the parrish of Haxey my dearly beloved intended wife'. The nuncupative will of John Newland, gentleman of Haxey, in 1661 describes a tender scene: 'Hee speaking to one Sarah Hill then with him desired her to give him his bretches to take there out one half shilling which was broken between him and one Mrs Jane Ramsey as a contract of marriage between them. And when hee had taken the said halfe shilling into his hands hee said blessed bee the day in which this shilling was broken And God Almighty blesse her that hath the other halfe of it'. He left her £200. A house carpenter of Owston, Thomas

³ LAO: Stow Wills 1599-1602/93; 1627-31/102-4; 1634-5/286; 1660-3/803.

⁴ Levine and Wrightson suggest that, in Whickham, settled, propertied parents rarely initiated the matches of their children, but that 'they and their kin took a very active role in the approval and furtherance of courtships': D. Levine & K. Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society: Whickham, 1560-1765* (Oxford, 1991), p. 301. Martin Ingram points out that the sending out of children into service reduced the influence of parents on a child's marriage partner. It was rare for marriages to be blatantly arranged, but children were expected to seek the consent of family members, and parents did sometimes veto a child's choice. The ideal was 'multilateral consent': M. Ingram, 'The reform of popular culture?' in B. Reay (ed.), *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (1988), pp. 134-6.

Burton, in 1662 gave three acres to his brother on condition he pay £20 to his intended wife, and Henry Woodliffe of Belton in 1693 left his house and three closes to his mother, entailed on his brother, on condition they pay an annuity of 40s for life to his 'dearly beloved frind' Alice Rose. In 1666, David Everatt, yeoman of Kinnall Ferry left 'unto Sarah which was the wife of John Otter...marrinner which is my onely best beloved frind in all the world for I doe remember a passag that hath beene declared that aman shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife one mansion house with fouer acres of ground'. He also left her the residue of his goods, 20s each to her five children and £5 to her son-in-law, whom he named executor.⁵

There may have been some obligation to provide for an intended wife once a contract of marriage had been entered into. It is possible that in some cases a dowry had already been transferred. (In his will of 1604, James Marshall, curate of Haxey, referred to the lands his wife 'gave to me before our marriage', although this may have been immediately before, at the church door.)⁶ But Gregory Barker, who had inherited land from his father, made his future wife his sole heir and was not therefore simply fulfilling a contractual obligation. The yeoman David Everatt would have been unlikely to have been gaining a large dowry from a mariner's widow with five children. The sentiments expressed indicate that provision for these women was based at least as much on affection as on obligation.

Several Haxey wills indicate that overseers or guardians might occasionally, amongst the better-off, have been assigned in anticipation of a marriage that the families might hope would take place. Robert Tankersley, Haxey yeoman, in 1615 left the guardianship of his son Vincent to his brother and to Thomas Phillips, yeoman, whom he termed his 'cossip', so was probably Vincent's godfather.⁷ Thomas Phillips died in 1617, leaving the wardship of Vincent Tankersley, aged fifteen, to his daughter Elizabeth, who was fourteen at the time, 'and in case the said Vincent Tankersley and she hereafter be married together, the charges which he had

⁵ LAO: Stow Wills 1616/115; 1660-3/781; 1663-4/62; 1660-3/11-12; 1695-9/262; 1666-8/6.

⁶ LAO: Stow Will 1603-6/118.

⁷ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a 'cossip' was another adult with whom one shared a relationship through godparenthood, one being godparent to the other's child or both standing as godparents to the same child.

beene at about the wardshippe to be made three hundred pounds and in case the marriage succeeded not she to have CCC£ and the wardshipp to remaine to the executors' (one of whom was Vincent's uncle, his other guardian). The two did not marry one another, in spite of the hopes of the families. A more successful outcome was achieved in the same Tankersley family, employing similar tactics, later in the century. In 1682, Vincent's son Robert, gentleman, left the care of the estates of his grandchildren, children of his deceased daughter, after the death of his wife to three 'cousins', one of whom was Anthony Maw, who was himself still a minor. When Robert's wife died seven years later, the grandchildren were grown. She left the largest portion to her great-granddaughter, the child of her granddaughter and Anthony Maw, gentleman, the young 'cousin'. The naming of a potential marriage partner as a guardian or trustee could involve him or her at an early stage in family business and help to maintain contacts. In this case, the survival of Robert's wife in an influential position perhaps increased the chances of a successful outcome.⁸

The evidence from the Tankersley family may indicate the sort of informal pressure and guidance used by families more generally to influence the choice of marriage partner. However, the wills of the manor show a marked disinclination to impose penalties on children in their choice of marriage partner and some indication that marriage choice was based to a considerable extent on affection. The element of choice is similar to that indicated in the references to fatherless children being free to choose their guardians at fourteen and in the instances of boys exercising a choice over apprenticeships.⁹ In all cases, supervisors, guardians or overseers were hovering nearby to guide and influence these choices.

Marriages tended to occur between individuals of similar social and economic status. There were groups of better-off yeomen in each parish who were related to one another, often

⁸ LAO: Stow Wills 1615/32; 1616-18/363; 1681-3/263; 1687-90/245. Rushton, in an examination of matrimonial disputes in Durham between 1560 and 1630, found that 'parental power was exercised both to direct children into approved relationships and to prevent them forming unsatisfactory liaisons': P. Rushton, 'Property, power and family networks: the problem of disputed marriage in early modern England, *Journal of Family History*, XI, 3 (1986), p. 209.

⁹ See chapter 3.

through more than one marriage, or who shared 'cousins'. There were also marriages between parishes that connected these groups, extending kinship ties throughout the manor and beyond.¹⁰ These connections tended to be renewed through further marriages down the century. As some of the branches of these families rose to gentry status, some of their offspring married within this more confined group.¹¹ Other branches of these families, often quite closely related to the rising group, were descending into husbandman or lower status. In this group, too, intermarriages were likely between families linked by earlier marriages or shared kin. There were also many outside marriages in all these groups, so that kinship networks were simultaneously broadened and strengthened. It is much more difficult to detect similar patterns amongst those lower down the social/economic scale, since these individuals were not only less likely to make a will, but also much less likely to name numerous relatives.

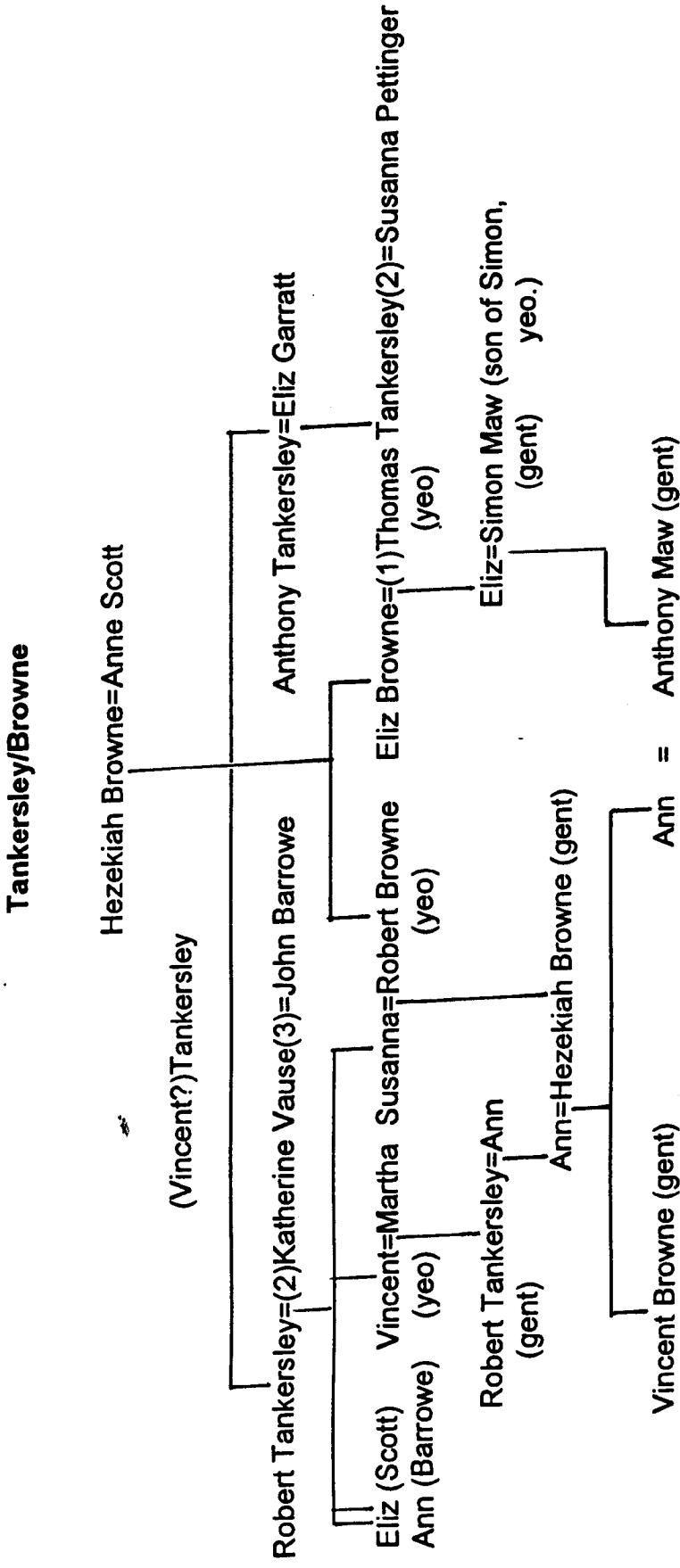
One such group of yeomen/rising gentry can be followed in Haxey, also marrying into a similar family in Belton/Epworth. The Brownes in Haxey were mainly yeomen, with one gentleman early in the century. The Tankersleys at this time were mostly yeomen, as were a branch of the Maws in Belton/Epworth. In Haxey, the Tankersleys and Brownes were likely to intermarry with the other better-off families amongst the Scotts, Barowes, Torkseys, Pettingers, Garratts, Coggans and Turrs. The diagram indicates how these ties were maintained through the century, and reinforced as individual members of the families rose into the gentry.¹² What is noticeable is the way in which the families reinforced their ties at the point at which they were rising to gentry status, as well as marrying into another family in a similar position. The

¹⁰ Anne Mitson extends the concept of 'core' families to 'dynastic' families, 'a stable group of core families resident over several generations in the same parish or, more significantly, dispersed over a group of contiguous parishes'. She found that members often chose marriage partners from other dynastic families: A. Mitson, 'The significance of kinship networks in the seventeenth century: south-west Nottinghamshire' in C. Phythian-Adams (ed.), *Societies, Cultures and Kinship, 1580-1850: Cultural Provinces and English Local History* (Leicester, 1993), pp. 25, 38.

¹¹ McIntosh found that around 1/3 of gentlemen and esquires in early seventeenth-century Havering were from local families that had risen. As in Epworth manor, 'upward mobility through a gradual increase in wealth was possible, but it took time': M. K. McIntosh, *A Community Transformed: the Manor and Liberty of Havering, 1500-1620* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 116. In Wigston Magna too there were a few risen gentry, and also yeoman families continually marrying with one another, 'the greater with the greater, the lesser with the lesser': W. G. Hoskins, *The Midland Peasant* (1957), pp. 198, 204.

¹² See figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1



connection was further reinforced in the following generation, when Ann Browne and Anthony Maw married.

ii. Age at First Marriage

Age at first marriage in the manor is difficult to determine because of the problems of missing or defective registers for substantial periods and because the tendency for many families to have several branches in the same parish makes identification of individuals particularly problematic. From a survey of Haxey in the early part of the century and of Wroot, based on family reconstitution from parish registers, it appears that most women married for the first time in their early to mid-twenties, while men were likely to marry in their mid- to late twenties.

Table 2.1

Age at First Marriage

Parish	Mean age-men	Median age-men	Range-men	Mean age-women	Median-women	Range-women
Haxey (1600-30)	25.23	25	19-32	21.75	22	15-28
Wroot	25.21	25	18-37	23.97	23	18-35

Source: family reconstitution from parish registers

Children of better-off yeomen seem to have married slightly earlier, but this could be considerably earlier if their father had already died. There are a number of instances in which women married in their mid-teens and eldest sons in their late teens under these circumstances.¹³ William Forte, who married aged nineteen, was the elder son of a yeoman who died in 1603 when his sons were small. The younger son was twenty-five when he married. John Torksey, yeoman, who died in 1602, left two daughters and three sons, the youngest born posthumously. The eldest son married at eighteen, the second son at twenty-one and the third at twenty-two. The two daughters were twenty-two and twenty-three when they married. Vincent Tankersley was the only son of a well-off yeoman, and he married when he was twenty. Two of his sisters married at sixteen, one at seventeen and one at twenty. Elizabeth Phillips, who

¹³ This discussion is based on family reconstitution from the Haxey parish registers, with confirmation of identity and relationships obtained from wills.

received a £300 dowry from her father in his will of 1617, married when she was fifteen, both her parents having died the previous year. Her brother, however, had been to university, returning as the curate of Haxey, and was twenty-five when he married the vicar's daughter in 1631. It appears, then, that if an estate was ample, the death of the father before the children were of age could encourage an early marriage for his eldest son, whose portion would already be available for him to take up. He might well already have been farming the land himself by eighteen, along with the lands left to other siblings. If other children's portions could readily be procured, either in lands or in income from the estates, those children too could marry at an early age. The picture, however, was quite different in those families with little or no land, reliant on earnings from labouring or by-employments, where the early death of the father was likely to mean impoverishment and late marriage or none at all for the children.¹⁴

Marriage then, while a matter of individual choice, could be guided along lines that would add to and reinforce a useful network of kinship relations and help to solidify a rise in status. Partners were usually chosen from those of similar social and economic standing, and established families were likely to be connected in several ways to one another. Age at first marriage was influenced not only by the inherited portion, based on the wealth of parents and number of siblings, but also by the timing of the availability of that portion.

iii. Marital Offences; Clandestine Marriages, Infidelity, Separation

The increase in the reporting of clandestine marriages to the church courts in the later seventeenth century has been noted often. Possible reasons were the avoidance of attempts by parish authorities to prevent a marriage between impoverished partners, escaping detection for bridal pregnancy, the existence of contract litigation affecting one of the partners, or opposition to the marriage by family members.¹⁵ The later part of the century witnessed some increase in

¹⁴ For a discussion of age at first marriage and the 'need to fill a vacant position in the village economy', see D. Levine, *Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism* (New York & London, 1977), p. 148.

¹⁵ Wrigley & Schofield, *Population History*, p. 263; R. A. Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 86; A. Kussmaul, *A General View of the Rural Economy of England, 1538-1840* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 33-4; M. Ingram, 'Spousals litigation', pp. 55-7. Martin Ingram suggests that clandestine marriages became a serious problem partly as a result of the disruption of the system of marriage regulation during the

clandestine marriage in Epworth manor, although there were instances earlier: one Haxey couple had been married without banns or licence in 1623 by the neighbouring vicar of Owston, and two couples in Belton were presented in 1640 for being clandestinely married further afield.¹⁶ In the early 1660s, the visitation records reveal a concern with unmarried Quaker couples living together, and no reports of clandestine marriages were made, nor were they at the visitation of 1672. In 1684 and 1685, these charges reappear, in larger numbers than earlier in the century. William Smyth of Haxey had clandestinely married Katherine Peate 'his now wife who is an excommunicate person' in 1684. Three Belton couples and a Haxey couple were presented for clandestine marriages in the following year, although the location of the marriages was not given. At the same visitation, a second Haxey couple were 'married clandestinely at Scotter by one William Smyth Clerk, as appeareth by a Certificate under ye said William Smyth's hand bearing date ye 18th day of October 1685'. William Smyth was presented in Scotter for refusing to attend his parish church and was standing excommunicate. In 1684, William Smyth of Scotter had been presented for 'presuming to marry' a Yorkshire couple 'in ye dwelling house of Henry Dobson, being a publick Alehouse in Scotter...being not in holy orders and presuming to give a Certificate under his hand for ye said marriage as Curate of Scotter'. Henry Dobson and his wife were also presented 'for suffering ye said marriage to be prophaned in his house' and being in attendance. Henry said he had not been present, 'but knew of it and did give consent that ye said partys should be married in his house'. Alehouses were a common venue for these marriages at the time, and it appears that William Smyth and Henry Dobson had become widely known and were doing a brisk business.¹⁷

The church court records indicate that occasionally marriages could run into trouble or break down completely. At the visitation of 1604, three cases of adultery were reported in Haxey,

Interregnum and of the growing availability of private ceremonies: M. Ingram: *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 217-18.

¹⁶ in Cantley, Yorkshire by the minister there and 'by what minister and in what place wee knowe not'. LAO: Viiij/1, fol. 34; Vj/31, fols. 46, 58.

¹⁷ LAO: Viiij/5, fols. 66, 120, 101, 133, 60-1, 63. P. Clark, 'The alehouse and the alternative society' in D. Pennington & K. Thomas (eds.), *Puritans and Revolutionaries: Essays in Seventeenth-Century History presented to Christopher Hill* (Oxford, 1978), p. 60.

and in Belton parish Katherine Foster, wife of William, was presented 'for one notably suspected of an incontinent life'. In Haxey in 1607 a couple were presented 'for being suspitiously founde in the nighte and to have admitted adulterie'. In 1623, Epworth, Haxey and Owston each reported a married couple living apart, and Epworth had a couple presented 'for comittinge Adulterie againe'. Francis Seaton of Epworth and the wife of his brother Richard Seaton were accused of committing incest in 1640.¹⁸ Henry Taylor and his wife's daughter were accused of incest in 1604 in Belton, but she claimed that 'Richard Simpson of Howden in Yorkshire did begett her of that child in her mothers p'lor on Saturday next after midsomer last was twelvemoneth'. In 1611 Henry Taylor was again presented, this time for living apart from his wife. He answered 'yt they live A sonder by consent and yt he alloweth hir maintenance'. The reference to his wife's parlour (bedroom) in 1604 indicates that they were already living apart by that date. The fact that Henry Taylor was living apart from his wife may have made him a more likely suspect as the father of his step-daughter's child, or suspicions of his interest in his step-daughter may have been responsible for the separation. In any case, couples living apart were a threat to the stability of the family and provided a particular risk of illegitimate children.

iv. Provision for Widows

The great majority of marriages remained intact, happily or unhappily, until the death of one of the partners. Since the property of a married couple was vested in the husband, an important consideration on his deathbed was provision for his widow.¹⁹ In common law, the widow was entitled to one-third of the lands, goods and chattels her husband had held during his life, and testators often refer to the wife's 'thirds or dower', sometimes adding, 'as the law doth require'. A frequent condition on the payment of money or an annuity to a widow is that she

¹⁸ LAO: Vj/18, fols. 159, 161-2; Vj/21, fol. 93; Vj/19, fol. 53; Vii/1, fols. 4, 6, 11; Vj/31, fol. 26. This evidence tends to confirm Ingram's findings in Wiltshire. He concludes that separated couples were most likely to be presented when either or both were suspected of 'lewdness', when the husband was failing to support the wife, or when they were living apart without 'just cause': M. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, pp. 185-8.

¹⁹ Cicely Howell has found that, in Kibworth, provision for the widow was the almost over-riding consideration in a married man's will. This was a parish in which the eldest son inherited, but in which the custom of the manor was the granting of the entire holding to the widow: C. Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance: Kibworth Harcourt, 1280-1700* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 255-7.

relinquish her right and title to her thirds in the house or particular lands. It appears that copyhold land was subject to the same entitlement. Read sets out the 'customs of the manor, rights and privileges of tenants, ascertained and defined by inquisition, 1776', which state that 'every femme covert, being a widow, and every husband of a woman having inheritance in the Manor, is to have the same interest in copyholds as they have in freeholds at common law'.²⁰

Of the ten wills made by the French and Dutch settlers at Sandtoft that leave provision for widows, three of the French wills left one-third of the residue as well as cattle, money or grounds to the wife. Another three French wills left all goods to the wife. Two French and both Dutch testators left half their estates to the wife and half to be divided equally amongst the children. Jacob Verney, gentleman of Haxey and a tenant of the Participants²¹, left provision in his will of 1650 for his estate to be divided into two parts, half to his wife and half to be divided equally amongst his four minor children. No other residents of the manor who made wills during the course of the century left their estates in this way.²²

In most wills, no reference is made to the widow's thirds as such. Many men, although landholders, did not bequeath land at all in their wills, and the widow's provision, like that for children, would already have been arranged. That such a widow was not normally left landless is indicated at times by bequests in the will of cattle or seed corn, and by the widow's own will or probate inventory including grain on the ground or cattle. A gentleman of Belton in 1657 left to his son when twenty-one 'All those lands...which I the said Thomas Medley have heretofore passed and conveyed unto Susanna my now wife by Indenture of ffeoffment'²³ Fragmentary

²⁰ T. C. Fletcher (ed.), *Read's History of the Isle of Axholme: Its Manors and Parishes* (Epworth, 1858), p. 126. For a discussion of married women's and widows' property rights, see A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (1993), pp. 5-6, 23-9. The husband's common law right in his wife's estate, known as *courtesy*, would also apply to his life only, but provided there was issue of the marriage: W. Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England: Of the Rights of Things* (Vol. II, Chicago, 1979) (facsimile of the first edition of 1765-1769), pp. 126-8.

²¹ These were the investors, originally mainly Dutch, and their successors, in Vermuyden's drainage of the Isle of Axholme and Hatfield Chase, begun in 1626. As such, they claimed 7400 acres of the 13,400 acre drained common in Epworth manor, letting the land to tenants, and it was this land that remained in contention into the next century. See Chapter 6.

²² LAO: Stow Will 1640-59/176.

²³ LAO: Stow Will 1660-3/812.

manorial records indicate that land was frequently held jointly by husband and wife. Further evidence of this joint ownership is contained in Exchequer Court depositions from the mid-1680s recording transfers of houses.²⁴ Some men left a house and/or an acre or two to the widow for life, entailed on a child. Childless men often left the widow some land outright, and better-off yeomen with children occasionally did the same. In the latter case, this may have been given to guard against the need to sell off possessions if available resources proved insufficient to pay off debts. Land was often specifically bequeathed to the wife or the supervisors with instructions that it be sold for the payment of debts.

Amongst the less well-off as well, some flexibility could be granted to the widow. Henry Wates, of Kinnall Ferry in Owston parish, in 1604 left his son and two stepdaughters each a bed and bedding and a few items of household furniture, but added, 'if it shall please god to viset ether Anne my wife or anie of my children with sickness whereby their poore estaytes shalbe wakned then I will that Anne my wife shall take of one everye of the portyons of my fore named childrens some part therof towards hire and their mayntyenace accordinge to the disscretion of some towe honeste neabors'. In 1629, Francis Hough, a childless husbandman of Wroot, left a total of £10 11s to a number of relatives after the death of his wife, but 'if it shall please God to visit her with sicknes or by other necessitie, shee be constrained to decrease my estate towards her maintenance so that at the day of her deathe there shall not remaine so much as will dischargd the above given legacies', then the legatees were to divide the residue proportionately. In the event, when she died one year later, she was able to leave 12 pecks of grain, a crop of hemp, £2 10s and a residue as additional legacies.²⁵

As well as bequests of land, usually for life, widows were normally left all or part of the residue of the goods and chattels, and were named sole or joint executor of the estate.²⁶ The

²⁴ PRO: E 134/1 & 2 James II/Hilary 25; E 134/2 James II/Easter 31. From Elizabeth's reign, the settling of jointures at marriage was a popular method for fixing the wife's dower: L. Bonfield, 'Marriage settlements, 1660-1740: the adoption of the strict settlement in Kent and Northamptonshire' in R. B. Outhwaite (ed.), *Marriage and Society*, pp. 106-9.

²⁵ LAO: Stow Wills 1603-6/131; 1627-31/194; 1627-31/105.

²⁶ While, as many others have concluded, I would agree that the appointment of the wife as executrix indicates faith on the part of the husband in her ability to administer the settlement of the estate, I would

residue was almost always left outright, but sometimes household items were directed to particular individuals after her death. John Wilson of Belton, who made his will in 1623, was unusual in leaving his wife all his goods and chattels for her life only, 'excepting the somme of twenty shillings that my wife shall have to give where it shall please her'.²⁷ When some or all of the children were minors, the widow was normally left the children's lands and houses until they came of age, with the use of the rents and profits, in order to bring them up.²⁸ If she was their stepmother, however, others might be appointed guardians of the children and their portions. Usually these were relatives of the children, but sometimes friends of the testator. If her own child was left a monetary portion, this could prove to be an asset or a liability to the widow. In most cases, a child was left a sum of money to be paid when the child reached twenty-one, if a son, or twenty-one or marriage, if a daughter. This would need to be built up from the income of the children's and widow's estates, over and above living expenses. If, however, a sum of money was left to be invested on behalf of a child, the widow was sometimes given the income from the investment to help with his or her maintenance. Usually the money was to be 'put forth' and the child was to receive the interest, along with the capital, when reaching twenty-one.

If a marriage had been of short duration, or the widow was not the mother of any of the testator's children, it was likely that legacies 'in lieu' of her thirds would be given. It was often the case that this was a second or third marriage for the widow as well. Her marriage portion would have consisted of an amalgam of her original dowry incorporated into the entailed thirds of one

not draw the negative conclusions on joint executorship or the exclusion of the wife from that position that Amussen does: S. D. Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 81-5. The wills of Epworth manor indicate that the appointment of the executor related exactly to those who were left the residue of the estate. A share of the residue often was obviously given to a one or more children to make up their portions. At times, the only executor appointed was a young child. When a wife was excluded from the position, it was because she had been given a specific portion in lieu of her thirds or an annuity, and therefore did not share in the residue.

²⁷ LAO: Stow Will 1621-3/101.

²⁸ This was the pattern found in the Cambridgeshire fen village of Willingham, but was not true of either Orwell or Chippenham: M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 161-2. In Erickson's more general study, this pattern was rare, but fen parishes accounted for two-thirds of instances found in Lincolnshire: A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 169.

or two previous marriages.²⁹ To avoid 'acrimony', a purpose not infrequently cited in the making of a will, especially important in mixed families of step-brothers and sisters and half-siblings, it was preferable to leave the widow the lands and goods she brought to the marriage, most often with additions. The goods left her are often described as those 'unaltered' or 'untransposed'.

In a few wills, there are indications of a marriage settlement involving a cash payment to the widow upon the death of the husband. John Tomson of Belton in 1617 left his wife the residue of his goods 'in full satisfaction of ten pounds which I was to give her at my death as doth appeare by certain articles made by me the said John Tomson and George ffoster of Belton, brother to the said Isabell before the mariage of me and the said Isabel And likewise in consideracon of the thirds of my coppinghold house and ground'. In other wills, a cash payment or an annuity was made 'in consideration' of the widow's thirds, sometimes with the provision that she make no further demands on the estate. The requirements could be more specific: that she 'retume in the title deed' to the grounds of the house (Peter Moody, husbandman, Gunthorpe in Owston parish, 1650) or, if the son so demands, 'seale a writeing or release under her hand of all her thirds or dower which may be due or pretended due to Issue out of the remander of the Lands or house' (Peter Bernard, gentleman, Belton, 1659). Often, as was the case with Peter Bernard, this 'consideration' or legacy 'in lieu' of the widow's thirds was made up of a combination of money, land, house or houseroom, livestock and household goods.³⁰

Annuities could form part or all of a widow's portion, and these could be particularly favoured if the widow was elderly.³¹ These annuities would have to be met out of the lands bequeathed, and often specific lands and the individual in receipt of them were charged with the

²⁹ There was a general expectation that a woman would take out of a marriage what she had put into it. A separate estate for the wife, indicated in wills, was more common in settlements negotiated by the bride on her own behalf, usually on her second marriage. Such a settlement would nullify the wife's claim to her 'thirds', but offered more security because it constituted a debt to be deducted from her husband's estate, whereas her 'thirds' were allocated from the estate after debts had been paid: *Ibid.*, pp. 122-3, 132.

³⁰ LAO: Stow Wills 1616-20/410-11; 1640-50 II/623; 1640-59 II/592-3.

³¹ Annual maintenance payments are discussed in A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property*, pp. 162-5, where they are found to have been rare. Holderness, on the other hand, found that annuities remained popular, although confined mostly to the better-off: B. A. Holderness, 'Widows in pre-industrial society: an essay upon their economic functions' in R. M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 437.

payment. An annuity was not necessarily payable in cash. Robert Elmer the elder, yeoman of Belton, instructed his two sons in 1606 to pay their mother yearly a quarter of barley, three bushels of rye, one bushel of peas and two pecks of wheat in consideration of her thirds of his lands and meadows. In addition, she received two cows, three sheep and one-third of the residue. It is quite likely, of course, that an annuity to the widow was frequently paid in kind even if specified in cash terms if she continued to live nearby, since most of her expenditure would be on grain and animal fodder, aside from rent if she had not been left house provision. But the fact that annuities were almost always expressed as cash payments left the widow free to move where she wished, or where she could find suitable accommodation, and still receive her income. Maintenance of the widow could also be ensured by placing a labour obligation on a son or sons. Thomas Burton, yeoman of Kinnall Ferry, in 1677, having left lands to his wife, left an obligation on his son and his heirs to 'till plow and sow all the said arrable Land and load the hay to be growing on the meadow ground hereby devised to her and all such Turves and fewell as shee shall have necessarily occasion every yeare to spend and burne...without expectation of any reward for ye same'. The son was also to maintain two of her cows with his own.³²

Most wills did not make provision for the housing of the widow after the testator's death. The table below shows the number of wills in which testators made bequests to wives and the percentages making various types of housing provision or none.

³² LAO: Stow Wills 1607-11/64; 1675-8/172.

Table 2.2**Percentages of Wills with Provision for Widow's Housing, 1600-1699**

Parish	Total number of wills	House for life	House outright	House-room	House during widowhood	House until children 21	No provision
Haxey	373	10.99	0.80	1.34	0.27	4.83	81.77
Belton	290	18.62	1.72	2.76	1.03	7.93	67.93
Epworth	192	9.38	2.08	1.56	0	6.77	80.21
Owston	194	18.04	2.58	4.12	1.03	5.67	68.56
Wroot	17	5.88	11.76	0	0	0	82.35
Total	1066	13.98	1.78	2.25	0.56	6.10	75.53

Testators in Belton and Owston were somewhat more likely to make housing provision, but in no parish did as many as a third do so. In most of the wills that failed to make such provision, no mention of a house was made at all. In many of these cases, the house was probably rented. If the widow had young children and had the use of their lands as well as her own, she might well have been in a position to take over the tenancy or rent alternative property, at least until the children were grown. In other cases, the house would have been copyhold and transferred via the manor court. Freehold houses, like freehold land, were frequently transferred by deed or gift during the lifetime of the owner, and a cottage for the widow or houseroom in a child's house might already have been arranged.

With a large enough annuity, a widow could make her own provision. The annuity could be an alternative to houseroom. Thomas Laughton, yeoman of Kinnall Ferry, directed in 1610 that his wife was to 'have her findinge of meate and drinke and lodginge duringe hir lyfe, yf she wilbe content to staye with my sonne William, but yf she be not content to staye with my sonne William that then my sonne William shall give everie moneth duringe hir lyfe six shillings and eighte pence owt of my landes to fynde hir with'. Another solution to the possibility of a future loss of harmony in the household was that of the weaver Richard Thorpe, who made his will in

Epworth in 1652: 'yf my sayd wife and sonne William cannot accord and agre to live together that then my sayd sonne shall buld her up achemney in the kitching where one hath ben before at his owne cost', thereby creating separate facilities. Some testators carefully set out precisely which rooms each was to occupy, including portions of outbuildings and yards, with rights of egress and regress. There could also be a return to an earlier arrangement, but with the facilities accorded to parent and child reversed. William Moody, yeoman of Gunthorpe in Owston parish, in 1612 willed that 'my said sonne William shall lett my wife his mother have, yt end of my howse which hee and his wife had, duringe her life to dwell in'.³³

Although many widows were provided, through wills or by other means, with housing, either independent accommodation or shared with children, or with the means to acquire it, many could be left struggling to arrange shelter. Those taking over a husband's tenancy of a house or cottage could sometimes manage by taking in lodgers. The Haxey rent book of parish-owned lands and houses, rent from which was used for poor relief, gives an example of such an arrangement. In 1621, John Well began renting one of the houses at 13s 4d for the year, the same rent as that of the previous tenant. The next year the rent was 10s, presumably negotiated on the basis that he would maintain 'the north bank', judging by the condition upon the rent mentioned in 1625. In 1624, Widow Well was renting the house at 10s, but the following year she was paying 6s 8d and two men were together paying 3s 4d for the same house. It was stated that in 1625 two men would each pay 20d rent and that they must repair the north bank. The widow thus was able to meet the maintenance condition and reduce her rent further by lodging the two men. There would undoubtedly be further arrangements regarding cooking and the provision of food and fuel from the commons.³⁴

Wives of labourers or craftsmen with very small holdings or none at all were especially vulnerable to hardship, since a substantial part, if not all, of their income ceased upon the

³³ LAO: Stow Wills 1607-11/1; 1640-59 II/440; 1612-15/5. In Terling, if the widow was to live with a married child, 'alternatives were always provided for in the event of cohabitation proving fragile or disagreeable': K. Wrightson & D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700* (Oxford, 1995), p. 97.

³⁴ LAO: 23/58 Haxey Rental Book, 1594-1625, 23/58.

husband's death. Even if a man died without unpaid debts, administrative costs, funeral and burial charges could take up a large share of the widow's portion. Those married to men with larger holdings, however, could also find themselves with inadequate portions. Debts were usual, and the residue that most often made up part or all of the widow's legacy in the will had to meet outstanding debts first, as well as funeral charges and any shortfall in other legacies. These could at times amount to more than the residue itself. Administration accounts show how dramatically an apparently healthy residue of goods and chattels could diminish or disappear into arrears when an estate was settled.³⁵

Wills too can demonstrate these strains on the estate. William Well the elder, husbandman of Belton, making his will in 1629, left a close to be sold 'and out of the price thereof, and with my other goods' to pay four of his children and to eight men the 20 shillings each bequeathed to them by his late father. He also owed to two men 'certayne somes of money, for which they have land in mortgage...As heretofore I have found them my loving freinds, so I doubt not but they will hereafter deale favourablie with my poore distressed wife and children, and in charity give them according to the woorth of the land, I not being able to redeeme the same'. While the expression of these sentiments is an obvious attempt to gain sympathetic treatment from his creditors, and there is no indication that he had no land left, he might well have been experiencing genuine concern for the future of his wife and six children under these circumstances. Widows and fatherless children were common recipients of legacies, especially from the childless or those with grown children. The childless husbandman Francis Hough left the three widows in the parish of Wroot in 1629 2s each. Elizabeth Drury of the same parish, herself a widow, in 1673 left 'to all ye poore widowes in Wroote' sixpence each,

³⁵ Even a woman's generous marriage portion could rapidly diminish. Ann Torksey was left three acres of land, a cupboard and one-third of the residue of her wealthy widowed mother's estate in 1613. She married John Coggan the following year, and he died seven months later. His administration account states that Ann brought to the marriage money and goods worth at least £80, but 'that he the sd John Coggan hath left her no other means, lease house to dwell in, or p'ferment, but onlie the said Remainder of 36:12:4 and her thirds of 2 acres of land...and neyther hath ye dec'd anie childe": LAO: Ad Acc 8B/217.

and named all seven of them. Aside from small cash legacies, individual widows were most usually left grain or articles of clothing.³⁶

The wills of the manor indicate a concern to provide, as far as the estate would allow, for the maintenance of the widow for life and the means to bring up the children. In most cases, she was entrusted with the settling of the estate and any debts, the management of the children's and her own lands, and the arrangement in due course of the children's portions. Elderly widows were likely to have an annuity arranged or to have their maintenance assigned to a grown child, but with alternative arrangements allowed for. A man with little or no land was likely to leave legacies to his children to be received after the death of his wife. The portions assigned to better-off widows often formed their dowries for subsequent marriages.

v. Remarriage

Remarriage appeared to be common. This is confirmed by the wills of all the parishes, which indicate frequent mixed families with children of previous marriages of both parents.³⁷ The interval between the death of the spouse and remarriage could be as short as one month or as long as several years, but most remarriages seem to have taken place within a year of bereavement.³⁸ Men were somewhat more likely to remarry and to do so more quickly than were women, but it appears that those, of either sex, who had young children were more likely to remarry and to marry after a shorter interval. Widows with a sizeable dower would stand a better chance of remarriage, but a widow left with little, especially if young and without too many children, could find a new husband who would stand to benefit from her experience and skills in

³⁶ LAO: Stow Wills 1627-31/165; 1627-31/194; 1672-4/499

³⁷ For the effect of remarriage on household complexity, see M. Chaytor, 'Household and kinship: Ryton in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries', *History Workshop Journal*, 10 (1980), pp. 25-60; S. Akerman, 'The importance of remarriage in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' in J. Dupaquier, E. Helin, P. Laslett, M. Livi-Bacci & S. Sogner (eds.), *Marriage and Remarriage in Populations of the Past* (1981), pp. 163-75.

³⁸ The intervals appear somewhat shorter than Schofield and Wrigley's aggregate findings from 14 parishes for 1600-1799, dominated by the town of Gainsborough. These produced median intervals of 12.6 months for men, 19.4 months for women, and mean intervals of 24.9 months for men and 36.1 months for women. 48% of men remarried within one year, as did 37% of women. R. Schofield & E. A. Wrigley, 'Remarriage intervals and the effect of marriage order on fertility' in J. Dupaquier, *et. al.*, (eds.), *Marriage and Remarriage*, pp. 211-26.

household management and agricultural work. For example, John Draper, labourer, died in Haxey in 1620, leaving a widow and three-month old daughter. His widow, with only one young child, was able to remarry two months after his death.

Robert Sailes, husbandman of Owston, appears to have taken his wife's remarriage for granted in 1672: 'when it shall please god that Liddia my wife shall change from my name'.³⁹ The most frequent condition men placed upon the remarriage of the wife was the securing of the children's legacies. Land left to a child was secure, but money or goods were more vulnerable. Usually a money legacy was to be paid out when the child came of age and was based on anticipated future income from the estate. To secure the legacies, the wife was to enter into a bond to secure the child's money or goods at the time of the marriage, or pay the legacy to the child or to trustees at that time. However, this condition was made infrequently. Only 23 of the wills contain an instruction to this effect, and these were distributed throughout the century, the largest proportion (7 wills) in the first decade. This indicates that the matter was not one causing great concern to testators. The widow, of course, was capable of making such an arrangement herself upon her remarriage as part of the marriage settlement. Anthony Morris, Quaker chandler of Beltoft in Belton parish, who made his will in 1694, revealed that 'before our Marriage I gave Bond ffor ye payment of ten pounds to ye said Mary my wife to have in her disposing at her death And also A Bond of twenty pounds for ye use of Robert Godfrey her Son when he should accomlishe ye Age of twenty one yeares being also for his Education During his minority'.⁴⁰

Even fewer wills (7) made housing conditional on widows remaining unmarried. Simon Nelson, Kinnall Ferry, in 1666 left his wife his house, toft, croft and hempgarth for life so long as she did not remarry; if she did, she was to have the thirds 'which falls unto her by the lawe'. In the other six cases, the wife lost the accommodation altogether. The same condition was placed

³⁹ LAO: Stow Will 1672-4/186.

⁴⁰ LAO: Stow Will 1695-9/139. For a discussion of marriage settlements and bonds to secure children's portions, see A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property*, pp. 129-36. Susan Amussen notes that widows were among the most careful in negotiations about their own remarriages: S. D. Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, p. 72.

on housing for sisters and unmarried or widowed daughters. On occasion, housing was made available for married sisters or daughters in case they became widowed. In all these cases, the aim appears to have been to provide housing for the woman while necessary, but to free it for the next heirs once the necessity was past. John Whittakers the elder, yeoman of Epworth, 1657, put no condition on his wife's remarriage, but left her a chamber in his house and a 'little new house...provided always yt Alice my wife shall not lett or sett over ye little house or chamber'. Again, the accommodation is given to provide essential shelter, not supplementary income. Only two testators, both in Epworth, left land conditional on the wife remaining unmarried. Thomas Clarke, butcher, in 1690 left three roods to his wife 'during her widowhood and no longer', but also left her all his goods, chattels and money unconditionally. Richard Whiteley, yeoman, left his wife in 1603 his house and croft, an acre of meadow and all his arable lands in Epworth without conditions, as well as an additional two acres 'duringe her widowheade'.⁴¹

In all these cases of conditions being placed on the widow's remarriage, whether securing the children's legacies, or the use of housing or land, the rest of the widow's portion was unaffected. William Reade, husbandman of West Butterwick, in 1612 left his wife the residue of his goods 'so longe as she doth keepe her in my name', but if she remarried, she was to have £20 'and no more'. This was not, however, an ungenerous legacy; he left his daughter a £25 marriage portion. One will, however, gives the impression that the testator was intending to make his wife's remarriage highly unlikely. A husbandman of Epworth in 1637, Thomas Thorpe, left his wife an annuity of grain, hemp, turves and 40s in lieu of her thirds during her widowhood, 'And as soone and when as shee shalbe assured, or married, to any other man, my will is that the legacies shall forever, wholie remain too mine executor to dispose of' [his executor was his son]. On the other hand, Tobias Theaker, webster of Owston, made provision, albeit on contingency, for the issue of his wife's next marriage. He left three houses in 1643. His current dwelling went to his elder son, the second house to his wife until his younger son was twenty-

⁴¹ LAO: Stow Wills 1666-8/474; 1663-4/208; 1687-90/63; 1603-6/85-86.

one, and the third house to his sister, entailed on his unborn child 'If my wiffe be with Child now'. If the younger son died without heirs, however, the second house was to go to to his wife 'and the heires of hir Body for ever if any such be with any other man after my decease'. Overall, then, men appeared to be concerned with adequate provision for their wives during their widowhood, but did not attempt to prevent or reduce their chances of remarriage by conditional legacies.⁴²

vi. Illegitimacy

The registers of the parishes of the manor reveal that some children were born outside marriage. All the parishes indicate a low bastardy rate, seldom rising above 3% over a 5-year period and most commonly remaining just over 1%. There was some variation between parishes and over time. Epworth recorded only two illegitimate baptisms for the entire period from 1599 to 1622. Owston in the same period never had a bastardy rate of more than 1.1%. Belton and Haxey both had rates of under 2% during the period, except that Haxey's rose to 2.5% in the early 1610s. Both Belton and Haxey showed increases in the 1620s and 1630s, although never reaching 4%. All the parishes in observation in the later part of the century showed a very low rate of illegitimacy. Wroot had somewhat higher rates, consistently over 2% from 1615 until 1655 and again from 1665 to 1685, but these involve actual figures too small to have any significance. What is noteworthy is the apparent absence of bridal pregnancy in Wroot in the earlier period. Up to 1640, I was able to identify 24 first marriages in Wroot that produced children baptised in the parish. In no case was a child born less than eight months after the marriage. In Haxey, where identification is less certain, an estimated figure for pregnant brides for the period to 1620 is approximately 30%. Bridal pregnancy was relatively rare in the families of the better-off yeomen.⁴³

⁴² LAO: Stow Wills 1616-20/96-97; 1636-8/94; 1640-59 II/538. Other studies too have found a lack of disapproval or obstacles placed upon a widow's remarriage, e.g.: G. Nair, *Highley: The Development of a Community* (Oxford, 1988), p. 49; A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property*, pp. 166-7; M. K. McIntosh, *A Community Transformed*, pp. 75-6; Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, p. 97. Todd, however, found that in Abingdon, Berkshire, this pattern was true in the sixteenth century, but by 1600 men of all ranks were including penalties against remarriage in their wills: B. J. Todd, 'The remarrying widow: a stereotype reconsidered' in M. Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society, 1500-1800* (1985), pp. 72-3.

⁴³ This was found to be true more widely: M. Ingram, 'The reform of popular culture?', pp. 149-50; Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 131-3.

In both Haxey and Wroot, there are instances of baptismal entries giving the name of the mother only, but with no indication that the child is illegitimate. In Haxey these are concentrated in the 1580s. There is no indication in the burial register of a man of the same surname dying in the previous nine months in any of these cases to indicate that these might have been posthumous births. It is possible that these women might have been widows returning to their home parish, although it might be expected that their status would be recorded, as it normally was at that time at the burial of a widow. It is also possible that they could have been unmarried and the child the result of an interrupted courtship, and that there was an unwillingness on the part of the recorders to stigmatise these births. Most of these women share surnames with many others in the parish. The instances in Haxey appear too early in the registers to determine whether the women were baptised in the parish and closely related to others there, but of the seven baptisms recorded as sons or daughters of women, six involved women who shared surnames with large numbers of others. Of the four cases of this type in Wroot, two women were baptised in the parish (both were aged twenty-four when their children were baptised), one was a widow who had lived for eleven years in the parish, and one woman was a member of an immigrant family who first appear in the registers eleven years previously. Of the eleven recorded baptisms of bastards in Wroot, only five were to women from established families, and two of these were members of the 'bastard-prone' Lindall family. It is possible, therefore, that the recorders might at times in these parishes have been less willing to enter 'spuria' or 'spurius' alongside the names of the illegitimate offspring of women from respectable parish families.

In Haxey, over 70% of women having bastards up to 1620 had a surname shared with no one else in the parish or with only one or two others.⁴⁴ Amongst these was an illegitimate child who herself produced a bastard thirty-one years later. One surname was shared by a widow and by one man and one woman, both of the latter producing a bastard child. In the 1620s and 1630s, when bastardy rates rose somewhat in the parish, the proportion of those with few or no

⁴⁴ This was the same percentage suggested for bastard-bearers who were domestic servants in the Salisbury court in the 1580s: M. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, p. 264.

obvious family connections in the parish went down to 45%.⁴⁵ One of these had two illegitimate children, as did two women who were baptised in the parish. It appears that the increase in bastardy rates during this period was due to an increase in illegitimate births amongst women in the settled families of the parish. One of these, Margaret Goldsmith, was twenty-five when she had her bastard daughter Elizabeth baptised in 1628 and was still unmarried when she died twelve years later. The status of 'spinster', included in her will, was therefore not simply an occupational designation. She left all her goods to her daughter, naming her brother-in-law as guardian, and included a list of debts owing to her of 47s 6 1/2d, owed by five people.⁴⁶ It seems that women who never married, especially those with ties in the community, were able to bring up adequately one or more children on their own.

Other unmarried mothers, along with their babies, were taken in and supported by their parents. Ann Stainton, having been impregnated by the son of the household in Belton in which she was in service, was turned out by her master. She and her child then returned home to Haxey and were supported by her father.⁴⁷ While some women married after producing one bastard child, others did not, a few producing subsequent bastard children. This, along with the rise in the bastardy rate amongst the settled families, may indicate either interrupted courtship or an inability to find a marriage partner.⁴⁸ Where ages can be determined, mothers of bastards were usually in their mid-twenties to early thirties when producing their first child. The population in the parish was increasing substantially during the period and may have been placing a strain

⁴⁵ Generally, illegitimacy rates declined from 1600: P. Laslett & K. Oosterveen, 'Long-term trends in bastardy in England, 1561-1960', *Population Studies*, XXVII (1973), p. 256. In some places, rates remained high (south Lancashire) or increased (Wylie in Wiltshire): K. Wrightson, 'The nadir of English illegitimacy in the seventeenth century' in P. Laslett, K. Oosterveen & R. M. Smith (eds.), *Bastardy and its Comparative History* (1980), pp. 180-1; M. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, p. 278. In Terling, where rates declined after the early years of the seventeenth century, 'increasingly the poor and obscure were involved as time advanced': Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 127-30.

⁴⁶ LAO: Stow Will 1640-50/12.

⁴⁷ LAO: Stow Will 1640-50/164; Lindsey Quarter Sessions 1630, No. 1, petition of Robert Stayntonn of Haxey.

⁴⁸ Illegitimacy as marriage frustrated is discussed in: D. Levine, *Family Formation*, pp. 127-30; P. Laslett, 'Illegitimate fertility and the matrimonial market' in J. Dupaquier, *et. al.* (eds.), *Marriage and Remarriage*, pp. 461-70; M. Ingram, 'The reform of popular culture?', pp. 150-1, 154-155; Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 131-2.

on the resources, exacerbated by the practice of partible inheritance. The coming of the drainage in the later 1620s and the loss of commons it entailed would be expected to have increased the pressure substantially. The increase in the bastardy rate may therefore reflect these difficulties.⁴⁹ It is always possible, however, that the apparent increase in bastard-bearing by women from locally-established families reflects an increase in the return to their home parish by local women who had become pregnant while in service elsewhere.⁵⁰

In addition to the women from the settled 'respectable' families who produced illegitimate children, there continued to be women without apparent family in the parish who did so. These must most often have been servants; having had their child baptised and sometimes buried shortly after, they normally disappear from the registers. There is occasional evidence of a 'bastard-prone' family, where more than one family member produced illegitimate offspring. Wroot had one bastard-prone family that covered three generations. Alice Lightwayte had a 'son', with no father recorded, in 1613, and the child died soon after baptism. She married Richard Lindall three years later and had three sons before Richard the first died in 1625. In 1631, a bastard daughter of widow Lindall's was baptised and buried. Her legitimate son Richard the second was the 'reputed father' of the son, also named Richard, born to Anne Hutton in 1651. Two years later he produced the first of two legitimate children from an unrecorded marriage, and later, three children from a second recorded marriage. His daughter produced an illegitimate child in 1700. It is possible, however, that this family was not so much bastard-prone as prone to unofficial marriages. It may be significant that the child born to Richard the second and Anne Hutton was designated 'son'. No marriage was recorded in the parish, but the first wife

⁴⁹ Wrigley notes the connection between age at first marriage, bastardy rates and bridal pregnancy. Circumstances that could have prevented a pregnant woman marrying were the inability to find housing, the hostility of parents or parish authorities to the marriage, a change of heart, the death of the man or his removal by the courts: E. A. Wrigley, 'Marriage, fertility and population growth in eighteenth-century England' in R. B. Outhwaite (ed.), *Marriage and Society*, pp. 146-61.

⁵⁰ This possibility has also been pointed out by S. Stewart, 'Bastardy and the family reconstitution studies of Banbury and Hartland', p. 129 and K. Wrightson, 'The nadir of English illegitimacy in the seventeenth century', pp. 178-9, both in P. Laslett, K. Oosterveen & R. M. Smith (eds.), *Bastardy and its Comparative History*. Both also emphasise the vagaries in recording and changes in attitudes on the part of parish authorities that can affect apparent changes in bastardy rates taken from parish registers.

of Richard the second was named Anne at her death in 1654. No entry, for either marriage or burial, exists for Anne Hutton after the birth of her son Richard Lindall the third, but he married in the parish, was named in his father's will as the eldest son in 1674, and was still living in the parish when he died in 1692. Both Richard the second and Richard the third are described as labourers, the former in his will and the latter in his burial entry. The family was not impoverished; three of Richard the second's four surviving sons married and remained in the parish. He left a house and five acres of meadow in his will, the house and three acres to his wife and an acre each to his two eldest sons. Considering the amount left to his wife, and the fact that he did not mention his younger children, this was unlikely to have been his entire estate. In spite of an occasional bastard member, therefore, this family at least managed to remain settled and reasonably successful.⁵¹

While Wroot's registers usually included the father's name in the baptismal entry for a bastard child, Haxey's registers failed to include this information in any entry until 1635, and then for only half of the entries.⁵² The first such instance records the baptism of a son (the only time this term was used under the circumstances in this period) to 'Dorothy Simson begotten by Richard Lyghton Clerk and he confesseth he is the father of the sonne'. It may be that the addition of the confession was felt necessary, given the occupation of the father, but it may have been a peculiarity of the recorder, who recorded only part of one month. In the parish of Belton, however, at least during the period from 1610 to 1645, recorders were conscientious in their recording of the 'reputed father's' name and felt it necessary to record an explanation if they failed to obtain the required information. A note accompanying the entry of the baptism of the bastard son of Margaret Emerson in 1639 says, 'The mother of this child at the birth thereof would not grant to tell the name of the ffather, and therefore wee canot Register the ffathers

⁵¹ LAO: Wroot parish register; Stow Will 1672-4/442.

⁵² From this date too the mother's name was recorded at the baptism in the three parishes for which records survive. The visitation record for 1635 includes presentments of past churchwardens in all the parishes, from 1631 on, for failure to maintain the registers completely. Haxey parish's failure to record reputed fathers of bastards had obviously been noted. Ingram discusses the role of the church courts in pressuring churchwardens to record this information: M. Ingram: *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, pp. 261-2.

name'. The only case of a wife producing a bastard child in any of the registers was that of Dorothy Tomson, wife of William, whose bastard daughter was baptised in Belton in 1631. It must have been clear to the community that William could not have fathered the child. The note accompanying the entry reveals both the distress of the woman and the pressure placed upon her to reveal the father's name: 'The mother of this child in time of her labour would not confess to the midwife and other women then present that she was with child, and after the birth she said that Tho: Ashmall was ffather to it'.⁵³ Belton's bastardy rate increased, like Haxey's, in the 1620s and 1630s, but those with few or no family in the parish made up a higher proportion, approximately 56%. The reputed fathers, however, were more likely to be from established families. The fastidious recording is likely to reflect the desire to keep these women and children off the poor rate by identifying the fathers. In only one will in the manor during the century is a legacy left by a father specifically to a bastard child. William Burton, a Haxey husbandman, in 1603 left £3 and a calf to his 'bastarde sonne' Roger Burton.⁵⁴

Illegitimacy, then, while a matter of concern to parish authorities, was not a problem experienced by most families in the manor. Recorders varied in their tendency to label illegitimate children as bastards, apparently at times being reluctant to do so when their mothers were members of established, respectable families. The recording of reputed fathers also varied between parishes and at different times. There is little indication of acknowledgement of illegitimate children or portions left to them by their fathers. Of the two instances found, Richard Lindall's son may have been the offspring of an unofficial marriage. William Burton did not appear, from either the parish register or from his will, to have had children other than his bastard son. In both cases, the illegitimate son carried his father's surname and so appears to have been publicly acknowledged. Mothers of illegitimate children often later married, sometimes the father of the child but more often someone else. With the support of her family,

⁵³ LAO: Haxey and Belton parish registers.

⁵⁴ LAO: Stow Will 1603-6/29.

an unmarried mother could manage to raise her child successfully and retain a place in the community.

vii. Maintenance and Care of Children

The great majority of children were born to married couples. Birth intervals were most commonly two to three years, although these could be considerably longer at times, possibly due to miscarriages and stillbirths, or to periods of ill health on the part of one of the parents. The considerable chance of the early death of one of the partners meant that a marriage was unlikely to produce a large number of children, although the frequency of remarriage increased the possibility that the surviving partner might have more offspring. But child mortality was high, particularly in the later part of the century, so that it was unusual for a parent, even if married two or more times, to be survived by more than six children.⁵⁵ In addition to provision for widows, the maintenance and portions of children were the main concern of married testators.

Responsibility for the maintenance of minor children, along with land or investment income for their support, was usually given to the wife if she was their mother. Occasionally this was qualified. Robert Coakes, yeoman of West Butterwick in Owston parish, in 1620 left the care of his daughters to his wife 'if she their mother use them kindly and with their likeinge and to their content'. In 1638, Robert Sampson, husbandman, also of West Butterwick, was concerned about his unborn child if his wife should remarry. If she did, she was to put in bonds to pay the child £20 at the age of fifteen 'and that then the said child shall have libertie, to chuse an other gardiner, if the said child shall find iust occasion to complaine against his mother'. Other fathers stated their concern in a more positive fashion. Haxey yeoman Thomas Robinson, 1623, left the custody and bringing up of his three children to his wife 'not doubting but she will...like a loving mother provide for them according to her ability'. Thomas Caister, yeoman of Belton, in 1614, also expressed confidence: 'for the love I beare unto the said Margaret my wyfe knowing she will be a loveing and a most kind naturall mother'.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Laslett says that completed family sizes in preindustrial England ranged from four or five to six, seven or eight: P. Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love*, p. 203.

⁵⁶ LAO: Stow Wills 1616-20/131-4; 1636-8/91; 1621-3/62; 1612-15/209-210.

If a man's wife was still living, care of minor children was most often entrusted to her, even if she was not their mother. Men, relatives or prominent members of the community, were frequently appointed to oversee the children's estates or to invest their portions whether or not the children's mother survived. This could provide additional expertise and supervision to assist the widow, especially useful if the children's portions were relatively large or included dispersed estates. It could also help to prevent disagreements about the size of portions when the children ultimately came into their inheritance. Lands or investments were meant to provide maintenance for the children during their minority, often training in the form of schooling or apprenticeship, some provision for the widow, and sometimes any surplus was to be added to the portion. These varied demands were a source of potential conflict, and relatives of the children who could represent their interests, along with trusted friends, were useful in preventing or settling disputes. The concern exhibited by testators in wills for the welfare and good treatment of their children indicates that children were desired and valued after they arrived.

It is noticeable that, while there are a number of wills in which wives or guardians were exhorted to bring up the children well and to treat them kindly, only a French testator from Sandtoft left instructions to his children concerning their behaviour. John du Chattellett, like other testators, wished to ensure harmony in the settling of his estate in 1650. His goods were to be divided equally among his wife and two married daughters 'without any dispute nor contention betwixt them for to take noe vantage one over another'. However, his instructions to his daughters went further: 'I...doe exhort my childrens to live together in peace and love and to give to their mother my wife aforesaid the duty which they are bound to doe'.⁵⁷ Although testators left instructions at times that their children be brought up in virtue and honesty and in the fear of God, this is the only reference to the obligation of children to behave obediently or dutifully found in any of the wills.

Even the treatment of a child who had incurred parental disapproval could be mild. The 1682 will of Robert Barker the elder of Wroot placed a condition that was designed to control the

⁵⁷ LAO: Stow Will 1640-59/117.

behaviour of his apparently profligate son, whose outstanding debts, totalling £26 9s plus interest, his father directed be paid out of the estate. The son was married with a son of his own. The will left the main house and 23 acres to two sons-in-law in trust for the grandson, and a 'A Lease for A long Terme of yeares' to the two sons-in-law during the lifetime of the son, entailed on the grandson. During his life, the son was to 'receive and take to his owne use the Rents Issues and profitts thereof soe long As hee behaves himselfe civilly and quietly and doth not misspend the same att the discretion and Judgmt' of the two sons-in-law, who were also executors of the will. A memorandum attached to the will declared that 'in case my sonne Robert Barker bee not contented and pleased with what I have heere by this my will done for him but doe and shall give trouble to ye said [sons-in-law] by suite or suites in the Law for touching and concerning my Estate and ye disposall thereof...that ye bequests and all other benefitts and advantages intended to my said sonne...shall cease determine and bee utterly voyd'.⁵⁸ The arrangement is similar to the more usual one of leaving land to a son for life, entailed on a grandson, but in this case the son's use of the profits was controlled and potentially limited by leaving the land in trust to the grandson, naming sons-in-law as trustees. The intention of the testator was clearly not to deny the usual benefits to his son, but rather to encourage responsible and civil behaviour. While it is possible that some children were disinherited and not mentioned in wills for that reason, there is no evidence in the wills themselves that this occurred.

Grandparents, too, showed frequent concern for their grandchildren's future. As well as bequeathing them small legacies to add to their portions, they sometimes left substantial amounts to the children of deceased sons or daughters. They were, at times, bringing up grandchildren who had lost both parents. Grandparents could also be guardians of grandchildren whose father was absent. Richard Johnson, glover of Epworth, in 1601 left his wife one acre for eight years to bring up his grandson Charles, son of his son Thomas, then in Ireland. After eight years, the acre was to be shared between Charles and another grandson, the son of his other son Francis. He left his son Thomas 'one hide of white leather, one foale skin, fiteene calfe

⁵⁸ LAO: Stow Will 1681-3/174.

skinner And I will that if the said Thomas Johnson doe not returne forth of Ireland or be not nowe livinge', the skins were to go to his grandson Charles.⁵⁹

The concern of parents and grandparents was not only to provide for the physical care of children, but also for their kindly treatment, training and moral tuition. Emphasis was placed on the responsibilities of those entrusted with the care of the children, not on the duties of the children towards their guardians.

viii. Mixed Families

The step-parent/stepchild relationship could be difficult, but there is evidence in the wills that this was by no means always the case. Many bachelors and spinsters left generous amounts to step-parents and named stepfathers as executors. Several testators referred to an only child and one or two stepchildren as 'my children', left portions to stepchildren in addition to those left by their fathers, and a number named stepchildren, in preference to relatives, in contingency clauses attached to their own children's legacies. Many widows left legacies to their stepchildren, sometimes as 'remembrances'. Occasionally, however, the stepparent could fail to fulfil the parents' bequest to the children. In 1663, John Crosland of Belton, second husband of his deceased wife, was accused in the church court of refusing to pay the legacies owing to her first husband's children.⁶⁰ It was in these cases that the presence in the locality of kin, neighbours and friends of the children's parents were especially important. They would be aware of the parents' bequests, especially, as in this case, if there was a will, and were likely to watch out for the children's interests.

Some wills indicate that the mixed families resulting from remarriages could give rise to conflict, at least when it came to the division of the estate. Nicholas Barker, husbandman of Haxey, in December of 1611 left legacies to the two sons and daughter of his first marriage, the son and two daughters of his second, and to his third wife, whom he had married the year before, and her son. All of the children, except the youngest daughter, were over eighteen at the time.

⁵⁹ LAO: Stow Will 1599-1602/166.

⁶⁰ LAO: Vj/32, fol. 140.

The will involves complex conditions on legacies, and is itemised in a distinctly disorganised fashion, with many afterthoughts and belated additions to individual portions. Three supervisors were appointed, 'givinge them power to end all contrinforses and acrimonye'. Nicholas was still alive in the following April, when he made a codicil. In this, he established that his eldest son was to have most of the agricultural equipment; his second son, in consideration of land bequeathed to him, was to pay the third son 40s; his youngest daughter was to have the contents of a chest, and a nag given to his wife was to go instead to his eldest son.⁶¹ The will may simply reflect the testator's concern to give an adequate portion to all, but one gets the impression that a certain amount of prodding was taking place.

Those with large families and limited resources could find it difficult to provide support and adequate portions for all the children. Many wills include complicated conditions on legacies and the careful allocation of small amounts of land, livestock and goods in an attempt to make an estate stretch to provide for a large family. In a society in which inheritance was all-important to one's start in life, the ultimate economic and social position of a child, and its own likelihood of marriage, was strongly affected by the number of surviving siblings. If half-siblings, step-siblings and a step-parent, especially one recently introduced, were involved, the potential for conflict was considerable. But half-brothers and sisters were left legacies in wills, and half-brothers were named as supervisors and occasionally as guardians of children, so lack of harmony seems to have been far from inevitable. There could be life-long relationships between step-siblings too. Francesca Bernard in 1678 named, as executors in trust for her daughter, her half-sister and 'my Brother Edmond Maw'. Edmond was the stepson of Francesca's mother by a previous marriage.⁶²

⁶¹ LAO: Stow Will 1612-15/17.

⁶² LAO: Stow Will 1675-8/230.

ix. Sibling Relationships

Harmony or conflict could also characterise relationships between full brothers and sisters.⁶³ They and their children were the most likely recipients, after children and grandchildren, of legacies. Even in poorer families, brothers were frequently left clothing. Brothers and brothers-in-law were commonly entrusted with the responsibilities inherent in the supervision of wills, investing of children's portions, selling land to settle debts and serving as guardians of minor children. Debts involving small amounts were frequent between brothers or between brothers and sisters. Reciprocal obligations were inherent in these sibling relationships, and the benefits of social, practical and emotional support could well outweigh the disadvantage of a diminished inheritance. Older siblings had sometimes brought up younger ones or given them training.⁶⁴ They might have been sharing land amicably before taking possession of it, as in the case of the two sons of George Clarke of East Lound, Haxey, who were left the lease of ground on which their father then (1607) lived, 'boath my sonnes doinge one to the other in that behalfe, as heretofore they have donne'. Thomas Chapman, husbandman of Owston, ensured that his younger brother would have a home to return to when required. In his will of 1613, he specified that his wife, pregnant and with three small children, was to grant 'George Chapman my brother free libertie for himselfe to come and have a beddroom and such meate and drincke as god doth send, at such times as he shalbe out of service or stande neede duringe the space of eight yeares'.⁶⁵

Relationships between siblings, however, were not always supportive. Ann Wood, spinster of Craiselound, caused something of an upset with her will of 1658. She revealed that she held a mortgage of £16 on her brother's house that was due in three years' time. If he failed to pay, he would lose the house to two men (relationship unspecified); if he paid, they would receive the £16 along with other legacies and the residue, and she named them executors. She

⁶³ In Terling, Wrightson & Levine found that sibling conflict could be bitter, but that trust was more common: Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, p. 95.

⁶⁴ See Chapter 3.

⁶⁵ LAO: Stow Wills 1606-11/85-6; 1612-15/149.

also willed to one of them the £4 'which is in my Brother James Woods hand' and to each of them a stock of bees kept at her brother's house. James and his son were each left 2s, his wife and daughter 1s each. The will was challenged in a suit of law by James, who 'being naturall brother unto the said deceased...entred or putt in his caveat in expectation of haveing some certen Allowance made or given him by the said Court out of her p'sonall estate of the said Ann which hithertoo hath hindred the p'secution in order of pruveing the abovesaid will'. He eventually settled out of court: 'that for divers good causes and consideracons me thereunto moveing and by the mediacon of good ffreinds used, I the abovesaid James Wood have fully and absolutely compinsed ended and agreed the said difference and controversy'.⁶⁶

In 1664 the yeoman Richard Shaw, of Nether Bumham in Haxey, left 'all that Ever hee had' to his two brothers, living in Sheffield. The nuncupative will goes on to relate, 'being asked by Christopher Bate of Haxey, if hee would give his sisters anything, hee replyed, Noe, not hee, but if they (meaning his brethren Robert and William) will give them anything they Maie'.⁶⁷ This may not have been as dismissive of his sisters as it appears, however. As there was no time to obtain the services of a scribe before Richard died, he might have been simply too weary to bother with detailed bequests. Another nuncupative will, that of the gentleman Ashton Manning of Belton, in 1650, appeared accusatory of any potential beneficiaries claiming blood ties. He left his whole estate to his cousin Francis Thornton of Woodhouse in Belton, explaining that 'the reasons that induces mee thereunto are becaus and that I have none of my kindred that looketh after mee but only hee'. The reciprocal nature of kinship ties, and the accompanying expectations, are clearly indicated here.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ LAO: Stow Will 1660-3/46.

⁶⁷ LAO: Stow Will 1660-3/19. This 'prodding' can be observed in other nuncupative wills. While this may have been particularly necessary when the testator was near death, it is likely that will-making was a more participatory process than is apparent in the orderly format of those wills that were written down in time for the testator to sign. Wills as 'the outcome of a complex round of familial diplomacy' are discussed in Levine & Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society*, pp. 288-90.

⁶⁸ LAO: Stow Will 1640-50 II/576. Rushton points out that the ownership of property by the childless gave the power of choosing heirs from within the family circle, 'thus imposing obligations of respect upon them': P. Rushton, 'Property, power and family networks', p. 210.

x. Wills: Witnesses and Supervisors

The choice of witnesses and supervisors has been investigated by historians as indicative of the relative importance of kin, neighbour and friend relationships. Christopher Marsh and others have regarded the 'choice' by will-makers of witnesses as significant.⁶⁹ I remain unconvinced that the frequent observation of neighbours fulfilling this role indicates a positive choice on the part of the testator, rather than the need on the part of the scribe to find a convenient witness who was not a major beneficiary. The testator, usually 'sick in body', could be in a vulnerable position, unable to dictate who had access to the house at the time. One nuncupative will from Epworth, that of Alexander Caister, mercer, in 1675 indicates that the witnesses he might have preferred were actually sent away when his original will was made. The second will relates that:

Thomas Holland and George Brumitt of Epworth goeing to visitt the said Alexander Caister in the time of his sicknes the said Alexander speaking to Thomas Holland calling of him Gossap said hee wondred he had not seene him all this time of his illnes before to whome the said Thomas Holland replied he had come to have seene him before but he heard he was making of his will to whome the said Alexander Caister answered that it was true he had made his will but was since resolved it should not stand but hee would have it torne and cancelled and hee did and would Leave his whole Estate to the disposall of his wife.⁷⁰

Supervisors, guardians and tutors, on the other hand, held positions of great trust and were definitely chosen by the testator, and these relationships can be assumed to have been significant. In most wills, the relationship of the supervisor to the testator was not given, other than the term 'friend' or 'neighbour' (testators in Haxey parish were particularly likely to use these terms). At times, some of these can be firmly identified as kin.⁷¹ Of those appointed as supervisors who were specified as kin, brothers and brothers-in-law accounted for about half, cousins and sons/sons-in-law for about 20% each, uncles for about 6%, and the remainder were fathers and fathers-in-law. Only in Haxey were spiritual kin, described as such, named as

⁶⁹ C. Marsh, 'In the name of God? Will-making and faith in early modern England' in G. H. Martin & P. Spufford (eds.), *The Records of the Nation* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1990), pp. 232-3.

⁷⁰ LAO: Stow Will 1675-8/30.

⁷¹ The use of 'friend' to denote kinship is discussed by P. Rushton, 'Property, power and family networks', pp. 211-12.

supervisors: two testators appointed 'cossips' and one a godson. Wrightson noted that in Terling, brothers and brothers-in-law were often named as supervisors and that this suggested that uncles may have been significant.⁷² In the manor of Epworth, the appointment of uncles themselves adds to this impression. Here cousins were chosen quite frequently and these were usually men living in the same parish, reflecting the fact that many testators had wider kin in the locality.

Brothers and in-laws were also often named guardians and mentioned as legatees in wills. They were given responsibility for permanently dependent or unreliable children. Debt relationships with in-laws were numerous and were often forgiven in wills.⁷³ Property could be borrowed or jointly owned, especially it seems, between father-in-law and son-in-law. Three will-makers referred to horses and/or equipment shared with sons-in-law. Richard Thomton, husbandman of Belton, in 1602 left his daughter 'the parte of my draught, cart and horse geare, that is betweene me and my sonne in lawe William Picocke'. Similarly, the labourer John Hallifax the elder of Epworth in 1635 gave to his son-in-law 'all that my pte or right which I have in a Cart plough and other things belonging to his draught'. Robert Drury, labourer of Wroot, left 'to Anne Whitlam my daughter my part of that guylding that belongeth to my sunn Whitlam and me' in 1670. The borrowing of goods is indicated in the 1614 will of Thomas Trout, yeoman of Kinnall Ferry. His wife 'shall have the towell which is in the custody and keeping of my daughter And that my daughter shall have the twilte which is at my house. And my will is that my wife shall have the swine trough which is at Christopher Wilkinsons [the daughter's husband] and he to have the swine trough which is at my house'. Sons-in-law might be expected to have been especially important to men without sons, but all of these men also had sons whom they named in their wills. The relationship between father-in-law and son-in-law could outlive the woman who

⁷² K. Wrightson, 'Kinship in an English village: Terling, Essex, 1500-1700' in R. M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle*, pp. 324, 330; Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, p. 92.

⁷³ The role of kinship in debt relationships, maintenance of the elderly and the permanently dependent, assistance, support and guardianship of children is noted in Levine & Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society*, pp. 335, 337-8. David Cressy indicates that debts were more likely to be forgiven if they were contracted between kin: D. Cressy, 'Kinship and kin interaction in early modern England', *Past and Present*, 113 (1986), p. 52.

had originally connected them, especially if there had been children of the marriage. Hezekiah Browne, gentleman of Haxey, named both his current father-in-law ('my father Killam') and the father of his first wife ('my father-in-law') in his will of 1679.⁷⁴

The frequent naming of both brothers-in-law and sons-in-law in wills, especially in positions of trust, indicates that these were often important relationships. Marriage of one's offspring within the locality, then, produced the potential for a number of mutually beneficial relationships close at hand. The marriage of a daughter not only secured a son-in-law, but also brothers-in-law for sons. This could extend quite widely: 'brothers' or 'brothers-in-law' frequently included a wife's sister's husband or a sister's husband's brother. The number of cousins or kinsmen, also commonly named in wills, were increased by marriage as well. The importance of these relationships can be seen in the complex kin ties connecting many of those actively involved in opposition to the drainage of the manor and in regaining the common lands.⁷⁵

xi. Kinship and Neighbourhood

Both the marriage registers and the wills of the manor indicate that many families were likely to intermarry several times, creating still more complex kinship and neighbour connections. Wrightson says of Ryton that the parish was large, 'providing a large pool of eligible young people and making intermarriage more likely'.⁷⁶ This was true of all four of the larger parishes of Epworth manor. Some settlements, like East Lound, Nether Burnham, Beltoft, West Butterwick, or the group of settlements in the western part of Haxey parish, were large enough and sufficiently far from the main township in their parish to have been, in other areas, separate parishes. The four large parishes of Epworth manor are comparable, in fact, to the 'neighbourhood areas' made up of clusters of parishes found by Anne Mitson in southwestern

⁷⁴ LAO: Stow Wills 1599-1602/235; 1640-50/234; 1672-4/324; 1612-15/350; 1681-3/249.

⁷⁵ See chapter 6. David Cressy notes the imprecise and inconsistent use of kinship terms. He also argues that 'the English kinship system was valuable, versatile and wide-ranging', rather than the narrow, shallow and loose kinship found in Terling: D. Cressy, 'Kinship and kin interaction', pp. 66, 38-69; K. Wrightson & D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 85-6, 89, 91-2, 187-97.

⁷⁶ K. Wrightson, 'Household and kinship in sixteenth-century England', *History Workshop Journal*, XII (Autumn 1981), p. 155. Ryton also offered a variety of employment opportunities and extensive commons that encouraged the young to remain.

Nottinghamshire, with their kinship networks connecting them.⁷⁷ Most individuals in Epworth manor had kin beyond the nuclear family resident in the manor. Partible inheritance and the resources of the commons made for greater stability of settlement. Younger sons were more likely to remain in the manor, and it is possible that daughters who inherited land were especially likely to marry locally.⁷⁸ Their portions could make valuable additions to the holdings of men with land in the vicinity.

One indication of the extent to which younger sons stayed on, forming further branches of the family, is the number of men over eighteen sharing a surname in the Protestation Returns of 1642. While surname alone is no guarantee of kinship, it is noticeable that particular surnames cluster within parishes, sometimes within settlements. There were nineteen Kelsey men in Haxey parish; the only Kelsey man anywhere else in the manor was William, in Owston. Even the more common surnames were found much more frequently in some parishes. There were nineteen Taylor men in Haxey parish, but only two each in Belton and Epworth and none in Owston. Aside from Thomas Browne in Belton, the only Brownes were in Haxey (19) and Owston (11) parishes. The only Glew outside Belton parish, where there were sixteen Glew men, was Charles Glew in Haxey. All sixteen Barrow men lived in Haxey parish. The Burtons were concentrated in Owston (15), with two in Haxey. The Maws were more dispersed: there were two men of that name in Haxey, three in Belton, eight in Owston, but especially numerous in Epworth, where there were nineteen. All eight of the Ducker men lived in Nether Burnham, and all seven of the Naylor men lived in East Lound, both settlements in Haxey parish.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ A. Mitson, 'The significance of kinship networks in the seventeenth century', pp. 24-76.

⁷⁸ Margaret Spufford found that, in the fen village of Willingham, younger sons were more likely to be able to live on their holdings than were younger sons in non-fen parishes: M. Spufford, 'Peasant inheritance customs and land distribution in Cambridgeshire from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries' in J. Goody, J. Thirsk & E. P. Thompson (eds.), *Family and Inheritance* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 168.

⁷⁹ LAO: 1642 Protestation Returns. David Hey emphasises the importance of the stability of 'core families', who remain in the same parish for generations, connected with one another through marriage, encouraging a sense of identity and community in local societies: D. Hey, *The Fiery Blades of Hallamshire: Sheffield and its Neighbourhood, 1660-1740* (Leicester, 1991), pp. 197-201, 301. Similar findings are noted in: M. K. McIntosh, *A Community Transformed*, pp. 107-9, 115-116.

As Plakans points out, genealogical links traced through parish registers and active, functioning, reciprocal kinship ties may not be identical.⁸⁰ Wills indicate that these relationships were often significant and carried obligations for care, supervision and responsibility for family members and their property. Kin relations could remain important across status boundaries. In 1678, Ellis Hart, carpenter of Belton, appointed his 'good ffreind and uncle' Robert Bernard, gentleman, to have the care and government of his two sons, Ellis and Thomas. In 1666, Robert Bernard's brother Alexander, yeoman of Belton, having provided for his wife and various nieces and nephews, had left one acre of arable land to Ellis Hart, son of Ellis Hart.⁸¹

Neighbours and friends often were also kin. People had many neighbours. Land was held in small parcels, scattered about in large fields, and each parcel was adjacent to the parcels of others. Testators on their deathbeds apparently had no difficulty naming those holding adjacent land, however many parcels were mentioned. These parcels were often divided in wills, so that siblings inherited adjacent lands, and neighbours were inherited along with the land. Local historians' arguments over the relative importance of kin or neighbour relationships become less significant where the two categories overlap. As Wrightson argues, there did not appear to be strict rules governing relations between kin, but a 'highly flexible and permissive system', involving adaptation to specific circumstances and personal preferences.⁸² Kinship and neighbour ties were both significant and carried expectations of reciprocity, but when individuals were connected by both, the relationship was intensified.

However, neighbours and friends who were not kin were clearly important. In debt relationships, while kin were noticeable, neighbours, friends, parish leaders and clergy were also involved. They could at times be favoured over kin, even in matters of family property. Property was overwhelmingly inherited by family members,⁸³ but supervision of the estate was often

⁸⁰ A. Plakans, *Kinship in the Past: An Anthropology of European Family Life, 1500-1900* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 32, 75, 103.

⁸¹ LAO: Stow Wills 1675-8/216; 1663-4/278.

⁸² K. Wrightson, 'Household and kinship', p. 156.

⁸³ This has been found in other studies of wills: C. Howell, 'Peasant Inheritance Customs in the Midlands, 1280-1700' in J. Goody, J. Thirsk & E. P. Thompson (eds.), *Family and Inheritance*, p. 141; C.

shared between a relative and non-relative or entrusted entirely to individuals outside the family. Neighbours, friends, parish leaders or members of the clergy were often selected, and these, as disinterested parties, might have been particularly useful if conflicts were anticipated.

Kinship relations, then, were significant, incorporating expectations, responsibilities and obligations, especially in relation to property and the care of orphaned children. But the possibility of conflicts always existed, and the frequency of remarriage and the complex kin relationships that resulted increased the likelihood of disputes. Kinship ties were only part of a complex network of relationships that extended within and between the parishes of the manor, holding the community together and offering help and support to the individuals and families within it. Friendships, neighbourly relations, master/servant or worker and patron/client obligations provided a range of alternatives. The institution of the manor court, through its local jury, settled grievances and enforced neighbourly behaviour in matters relating to use of the land and commons, and the parish church, through the churchwardens and overseers of the poor, acted to discourage unacceptable behaviour and provide assistance for the poor. Informal arbitration performed by friends and neighbours could avoid a disagreement ending in a formal suit in court. The manor of Epworth, like other seventeenth century communities, was made up of individuals for whom family, kin and the wider community provided a web of reciprocal obligations, restrictions on behaviour and sources of potential support.

xii. Conclusion

Wills of the manor and other evidence reveal that marriage was normally a matter of personal choice, but one which families would sometimes attempt to influence and that there was no inhibition about remarriage. First marriage tended to take place when women were in their early- to mid-twenties, and men in their mid- to late-twenties, but the better-off were likely to marry earlier if their father died young. Although illegitimacy occurred, especially in the 1620s and 1630s, it was minimal. The sources reveal concern on the part of testators to provide

Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance in Transition*, pp. 255-7; Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 92-9; D. Cressy, 'Kinship and kin interaction', pp. 53-9.

ongoing support for widows and children. They further reveal the importance of the household/family as a structuring feature of local life. Marital irregularities (adultery, irregular marriage, separation) were matters of concern to the whole community. Beyond the household and immediate family were the flexible but important relations with kin and neighbours, helping to sustain the household, mediate in disputes and provide help and guidance, both on a regular basis and in emergencies.

Inheritance Strategies

The opportunity to marry and set up an independent household was strongly influenced by inheritance, including skills and training, but in particular the 'portion' received in lands, money or goods. In the seventeenth-century manor of Epworth, the transmission of property from one generation to the next was an on-going process, beginning with the birth of a child, including time and income spent on its upbringing and training and the passing on of resources to enable independence. Less tangible legacies, of status, position and of relationships within the family and the wider community, were also passed on. Particular inheritance practices were affected by legal requirements, by local and family custom, by current expectations and perceived entitlements, as well as by the number of children, the resources of the family and future expectations, both of the family estate and of the 'station' in life the children would occupy.¹ Inheritance customs, then, can reveal the hopes and struggles of parents and grandparents to make adequate provision for their descendents' futures and the relationships with the wider network of kin, neighbours and friends, who might become heirs of the childless, receive small gifts or be placed in positions of trust and responsibility on behalf of the family. Inheritance strategies were designed to ensure the perpetuation of viable households, concentrating in particular on provision for the next generation.

There are limitations on the use of wills as a source for the study of inheritance strategies. Wills are not representative of the population of the manor as a whole, but appear to be skewed towards the better-off. Wills rarely dealt with the whole of the testator's estate, but represented the final stage in a process of transferring property, through various means, over many years. It is not normally possible to determine the size of the estate held by the testator at the time of death, still less the amount of property and goods already transferred.² The source is therefore inappropriate for quantitative analysis, and a more impressionistic approach is

¹ Wrightson & Levine found no rigidity in the inheritance customs of Terling, but some regularities within a range of options based on three factors: the types and amount of property to be disposed of, the family-cycle stage of the testator and the demographic fortunes of the family: K. Wrightson & D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700* (Oxford, 1995), p. 95.

² See Appendix II for a detailed discussion.

necessary. By close study of a large number of wills, patterns and regularities can be detected, throwing light on a variety of testators' concerns and the strategies they employed.

i. Provision for orphaned children

The concern to provide for the rearing of young children was particularly pressing for widows and widowers. It was usual for them to appoint one or more individuals, relatives or friends, to bring up the child with 'meat, drink and apparel' until either aged twenty-one or when 'of an age to choose a guardian', usually fourteen. Land or money for investment went along with the child to provide for its maintenance and eventually its portion, if sufficient. Often instructions were given to sell the residue of the estate to provide the necessary capital.

High mortality, especially in the later part of the century, could mean that children might lose not only their parents, but their guardians as well.³ One example is that of Anne Davie, five years old when her father Edward died in 1645. Her mother, Edward's second wife, had already died. Anne was given three acres of land and a cow to provide for her maintenance until she was fifteen, after which she was to have the profits until she was twenty-one or married. Her guardian was her father's 'friend', Edward Hawcon. Two years later, Edward Hawcon died, revealing that Anne Davie was his goddaughter and leaving her 13s 4d when she turned twenty-one, and instructing that her land continue to be let to the existing tenant for eight more years. Anne Davie, now aged seven, had lost her mother, father and guardian.⁴

High mortality, combined with remarriages of widowed parents, meant that the result for many children was periodic upheaval and change of household well before they were old enough to enter service. Altogether 30 widows' wills and 31 widowers' wills made arrangements for the care of minor children. Fifteen married men made similar provision for their children, either to place children for whom the wife was not the mother, or as contingency arrangements if the wife

³ One estimate for parental mortality throughout the early modern period is that one-third of children had lost at least one parent before the age of 21: A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (1993), p. 93. Laslett estimates that 2/5 to 2/3 of girls could be expected to have lost their fathers by the time they married. The figure would be higher for boys, who married later on average: P. Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations* (Cambridge, 1977), pp.162-3.

⁴ LAO: Stow Wills 1640-59/328; 1640-50/333.

died. But in 27 further wills, testators named guardians, often their wives, and passed on portions, for children for whom they had taken on responsibility. These wills deal with settlement of children who were now about to lose a guardian, having already lost both parents and possibly a previous guardian. Parents sometimes anticipated this by specifying contingent choices if the first died.

Guardians had to be not only suitable in the eyes of the parent, likely to bring up the child and train it according to the parent's wishes and deal wisely with its inheritance, but also be willing to take on the responsibility. For these reasons, relatives and close friends were most suitable, expected to share to a large extent the testator's outlook and attitudes, to be familiar with the children and to carry a sense of obligation to the testator and his or her family.

Table 3.1

Relationship to Testator of Children's Guardians—Number of Occurrences in Wills

1600-1699	
brother	25
friend	19
son	18
brother-in-law	11
cousin	9
son-in-law	8
father/father-in-law	6
mother/mother-in-law	4
sister	4
uncle	4
niece/nephew	3
daughter	2
godfather	2

Guardians were most frequently chosen from amongst brothers and brothers-in-law, friends or sons.⁵ Guardianship, however, would not be assigned to married women, so that the appointing of brothers-in-law, sons-in-law or fathers-in-law would most often involve sisters, daughters or mothers-in-law in the responsibility for the children. When those appointed were married with children of their own, children from a family were usually split up and sent to different households, since it would have proved easier to find homes for single children than for a number.⁶ If the testator's parents were alive and able to care for the children, or if there were older single children, the younger children could often be kept together. Both of these options could be short-term solutions, however. Agnes Clarke, widow of Epworth, left her six children, all under twenty-one, to the care of her parents in 1603, along with the lease of a house, land and meadow. Less than a month later, her father died, passing on the care of the children to his wife. In Haxey in 1671, the widowed yeoman William Gibson left the care of his son Anthony to his father-in-law Thomas Dalby, yeoman, also of Haxey. In the same year, Thomas Dalby's son William died, followed three years later by William's widow. She also left the care of her daughter to her father-in-law Thomas. In 1678, Thomas Dalby himself died. His wife had predeceased him, and he left the guardianship of his two grandchildren to two of his unmarried daughters.⁷

Grandparents of the children, then, even if available, were likely to die or become incapacitated before the children were independent. Older siblings could be suitable guardians and might continue a role they were already partially fulfilling. Christopher Vause, yeoman of Belton, left the care of his younger son in 1694 to his elder son, who was to 'Instruct him the best that he can in the way he now is'. However, circumstances could change, especially if the older child wished to marry. This was anticipated by Edward Everatt, yeoman of West Butterwick, in

⁵ It should be noted that 'friends' could also include kinsmen. They might also be godparents of the children. In the case of Anne Davie, cited above, the guardian Edward Hawcon was described by the testator as friend, but in his own later will referred to the child as his godchild.

⁶ In Havering, McIntosh found that orphans were commonly separated from their siblings: M. K. McIntosh, *A Community Transformed: the Manor and Liberty of Havering, 1500-1620* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 49.

⁷ LAO: Stow Wills 1603-6/44; 1603-6/49; 1669-71/611; 1669-71/617; 1672-4/445; 1675-8/292.

1658. He left his eldest son the care of the two youngest until they reached the age of fourteen, and they were to remain with him until that time, unless 'by reason of marriage or other causes of disagreements fall out or happen to be amongst my children'. In that case, each of the younger sons was to be cared for by one of two uncles.⁸

Several 'friends' were named as guardians by more than one testator. In Haxey, Simon Mawe, gentleman, was named by two testators, and in Belton, John Barnard son of John, gentleman, and Thomas Kay were each named by two. Thomas Kay, a childless yeoman, left the care of three children to his wife when he died in 1668.⁹ Robert Whiteley of Epworth, yeoman, was named as guardian by three testators. All of these men were also commonly named as supervisors and appointed to invest children's portions. All were members of prominent, long-standing yeoman/gentry families in the manor, with numerous kinship and friendship ties throughout the manor and were obviously trusted to see to the children's proper upbringing and to care for their estates.

Particular care was necessary when providing for children who would never be capable of looking after themselves. Elizabeth Tong, widow of Belton, designated her two daughters as guardians of her son in 1618, with the use of the rents and profits of the lands and tenements he had already been given by his father until he reached the age of twenty-one. Then the daughters were to 'have the goverment and tuition of my sonne Jervis duringe his naturall life mayntayninge hime as before (if the lawe will p'mitt) and the receivinge of his rents and profitts'. Neither the widow nor the scribe of the will appear to have been sure of the legal position when the son was already the owner of the property. This problem was resolved by William Thompson of Haxey in 1628, when he left two tofts and a six-acre croft to his youngest son, entailed on one daughter of each of three sons-in-law and his eldest son. These four men were to have the letting and disposing of the land, paying the profits annually to the youngest son, but if he 'shall at any tyme hereafter sell the said rents and p'fitts of the said grounds...without the consent and

⁸ LAO: Stow Wills 1695-9/245; 1660-3/803.

⁹ LAO: Stow Will 1666-8/84.

agreement' of the four, the gift would be void. It would then be lawful for the eldest son and three sons-in-law to receive the rents 'to their owne p'per uses and benefitt, during the life of the said Israell Thompson, unlesse they please to relieve him out of the same which I referre to their consciences'.¹⁰

Christopher Colt, husbandman of Haxey, used another method. He left his second son 1 1/2 acres and £20 to be invested, assigning his third son to hold the legacy in trust to maintain the second son. If the second son outlived the third, two daughters were to take over the trusteeship. The weaver Anthony Otter of Owston in 1683 made a similar arrangement. He left his eldest son half of his house and close, but 'if hee shall prove so weake in his intellectualls as that hee shall be unable to manage his estate', the second son was to have the management of it 'and shall have ye custody also of his p'son allowing him what is fit for him as well for meat and drinke as apparell'. If the second son died first, the third son was to take over the responsibility.¹¹

These obligations, as was the case with the guardianship of minors, could be passed on in wills. John Young, yeoman of Belton, in 1630 left, along with other lands, 30 acres to his wife and son, entailed on the son. He instructed that his executors (his wife and son) 'shall give and allowe unto William ffox my wyfe's brother sufficient maintenance with meate, drinke and lodginge during his lyfe naturall And yf my said executors refuse to give or allow [this] then I doe give unto the said William ffox one Anuytie or yearly rent of three pounds...yssuinge out of the said thirty acres'. Anne Meggott, widow of Epworth, left her daughter household goods and her son Robert the residue, with an obligation to pay his sister a 20s annuity for life in her will of 1639. Robert, a soldier, made a nuncupative will in 1645, when he was about to embark upon a 'designe against Belvoir Castle'. He left the residue of his estate to a kinsman, James Maw of Epworth, yeoman, 'to dispose of for benefitt of Elizabeth Meggott his sister, whom also hee appointed to be her gaurdian and overseer shee being a woman nun compos mentis'.¹²

¹⁰ LAO: Stow Wills 1616-20/659-60; 1627-31/131-2.

¹¹ LAO: Stow Wills 1640-59/156; 1684-6/253.

¹² LAO: Stow Wills 1627-31/80-1; 1640-59/71 (detached); 1640-59/72.

Wardship of the better-off, however, could be profitable. Ann Torksey, widow of Haxey, in 1613 left the wardship and marriage of her son to her son-in-law 'withall and singler profitts, rents and advantage to the same in any wise app'teyninge', provided he pay her debts and bring up her son. The widow Lucy Johnson of Belton in 1605 left her nephew six cows in part payment of the £36 she owed him, along with the wardship and marriage of her stepson 'to bestowe him at his likinge in full satisfaction of the aforesaid sume'.¹³

ii. Provision of children's portions

Once maintenance for widows and minor children had been assured, testators were concerned to provide those children for whom arrangements had not already been made with their portions. The wills confirm that in the manor of Epworth, as in other fen areas, partible inheritance was the norm. More unusually, however, men with sons frequently left land to their daughters as well. Erickson found in her study that men in Lincolnshire and Sussex rarely gave land to daughters if they had sons, while 26% of men in Yorkshire who left land and had children of both sexes (or, if no children, siblings or siblings' children) gave land to both females and males.¹⁴ In the manor of Epworth, those with sons and daughters who devised land in wills were even more likely than were Yorkshiremen to leave land to daughters.

¹³ LAO: Stow Wills 1613/18; 1603-6/169. See also the benefits of wardship reaped by Sir Miles Sandys and Hezekiah Browne from the will of Thomas Phillips, chapter 6.

¹⁴ A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 61.

Table 3.2

Percentage Leaving Land to Daughters, 1600-1699

Parish	Percentage to sons only	Percentage to daughters & sons	Percentage of total wills	Total number
Haxey 1600-49	60.53	39.47	13.70	38
1650-99	42.31	57.69	18.07	52
Belton 1600-49	43.18	56.82	24.23	44
1650-99	28.26	71.74	19.87	46
Epworth 1600-49	50.0	50.0	15.42	24
1650-99	50.0	50.0	9.19	16
Owston 1600-49	62.86	37.14	23.75	35
1650-99	40.63	59.37	21.90	32
Wroot 1650-99	50.0	50.0	13.79	29

It can be seen that the proportion of wills in which daughters as well as sons were left land tended to be higher in the later part of the century. It must be noted that the portions of land left in some cases was very small, but this could be true of land left to sons as well as to daughters. The demographic picture of the manor during the second half of the century shows a decrease in the indigenous population. Higher mortality, for both adults and children, and reduced fertility are both indicated. Complaints by commoners in the mid-1680s stressed that the drainage and the reduction in the area of common available had resulted in poorer pasture and a shortage of fuel, particularly for the poor who relied on peat exclusively. There is also evidence that some individuals, particularly those few who had risen from yeoman families to gentry status, had managed to acquire comparatively large estates and to maintain large herds of horses and cows. Others who held enough land to produce a surplus were able to devote more time and resources to traditional by-employments, maintaining a reasonably secure standard of living. This was particularly true for those who had inherited not only enough land,

but who also had received an apprenticeship and/or schooling.¹⁵ For many, however, this period must have seemed particularly insecure and full of uncertainty. The reduced fertility indicates either a later average age at first marriage, an increase in the numbers never marrying, or both. If increasing numbers of fathers were concerned about their daughters' marriage prospects, the securing of their portions might become particularly crucial. A portion in the form of land could be a more secure legacy than the uncertainty of a money legacy to be paid out at a future date. The high mortality of the period made it likely that the legacy would pass through the hands of several administrators before the child came of age. The profits from land would provide maintenance if the child were to be orphaned and, if a daughter failed to marry, a piece of land with its attendant common rights, even if impoverished, could provide some cushion against destitution.

Wrightson noted that arrangements were often made, when land was left to several children, for one child to buy the land back from the others when they came of age. Such arrangements were very rare in the wills of Epworth manor, so it would not seem that daughters were normally expected to relinquish their lands to a brother for cash, although this might have been carried out by mutual agreement.¹⁶ References to purchased lands and instructions to sell land were frequent in wills, indicating an active land market, so that land and cash legacies were readily interchangeable.¹⁷ Occasionally, instructions were given to sell land to provide cash

¹⁵ See Chapters 1 and 4.

¹⁶ K. Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (1982), p. 111. Amy Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 62, found that, in Yorkshire, men did not leave their land with the expectation that one child would buy back the portions of others.

¹⁷ It has been noted that the existence of a land market, along with the need to provide portions for all children out of the estate, mitigated the difference between systems of partible and impartible inheritance: R. M. Smith, 'Some issues concerning families and their property in rural England, 1250-1800' in R. M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 50-67; K. Wrightson, 'Kinship in an English village: Terling, Essex, 1500-1700' in *ibid.*, p. 329; C. Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance in Transition: Kibworth Harcourt, 1280-1700* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 261, 269-70; M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 85-7, 106-11, 159-61; M. Spufford, 'Peasant inheritance customs and land distribution in Cambridgeshire from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries' in J. Goody, J. Thirsk & E. P. Thompson, *Family and Inheritance* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 157-8.

portions for daughters. The Haxey yeoman William Torksey, for example, in 1633 left 31 acres to be sold to provide a total of £200 in cash legacies for three daughters.¹⁸

Wills frequently did not deal with land at all, or only with residual amounts, and even cash portions might already have been invested on behalf of a child. Sums of money were often left to children to be 'put forth' immediately or to be given to the child at a specified age (as young as four) and then invested until the child came of age. It is reasonable to assume that similar arrangements were made at times for children while their fathers were still alive. Older children often were already married and had received most, if not all, of their portions.¹⁹ Most wills, therefore, give only a limited indication of how the estate was divided. It is clear that children, male or female, were the preferred recipients of land and substantial sums of money. Only when children had already been provided for, or had died leaving children of their own, would land be left to grandchildren.²⁰

iii. Allocation of portions

Land or other substantial legacies were left to siblings, nieces and nephews or other relatives almost exclusively by the childless. It is also apparent that less well-off testators (labourers, weavers, tailors) were more likely to leave equal sized portions to all their children. They would either specify that the estate was to be equally divided, or the portions made up of small parcels of land, money, livestock and household goods appear to be roughly equivalent. This coincides with Erickson's conclusions.²¹ Husbandmen's wills are the most difficult group in which to determine proportions because most often no land or only residual amounts are mentioned, or sons are left 'the rest of my freehold lands'. In those where it is possible to judge,

¹⁸ LAO: Stow Will 1634-6/316.

¹⁹ David Hey found that marriage in Myddle did not have to be delayed until after a man's father had died: D. Hey, *An English Rural Community: Myddle under the Tudors and Stuarts* (Leicester, 1974), p. 204.

²⁰ This is the same pattern found in other local studies: K. Wrightson, 'Kinship in an English village', pp. 324-6; C. Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance in Transition*, p. 255

²¹ A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property*, pp. 68-78. Margaret Spufford says that, in Willingham, 'the smaller and more negligible the holding, the more likely the dying man was to divide it between his sons': M. Spufford, 'Peasant inheritance customs and land distribution', p. 168. In Terling, while there was a bias in favour of male primogeniture, 'the inheritance strategies of many fathers may have operated in such a way as to set children forth fairly equally': Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 98-100.

it appears that, like yeomen, husbandmen were most likely to give the eldest son a somewhat larger portion than the other children received. This usually included the only or main house and croft. It also appears that, the wealthier the testator, the more likely there was to be further differentiation among sons. Among the less well-off, sons other than the eldest tended to receive similar portions to daughters, while better-off yeomen and parish gentry might often leave decreasing portions to sons until reaching the fourth son, who would receive a similar legacy to his sisters. Complicated contingency clauses could then redirect these portions in order of seniority. If the eldest son died, his portion was inherited by the second son, whose portion went to the third, whose share was then divided amongst the remaining sons. Seniority could occasionally, in these families, extend to daughters, with the eldest receiving a somewhat larger portion than her younger sisters.

Provision for unborn children reflects these detected patterns. Erickson has found in her study that 'No ordinary man ever said in his will "to the child in my wife's womb, so much if it be a boy, but only so much if it be a girl" '. She defines 'ordinary' men as all who were not part of the aristocracy or gentry nor in chronic poverty.²² Among the wills in the manor of Epworth, there are some wills that do differentiate between unborn sons and daughters. In no case did a childless testator do so. Amongst 23 testators who made provision for an unborn child and who already had at least one son, 16 made no distinction between an unborn son or daughter. The portion was the same as that given to daughters when these existed. Three yeomen, eight husbandmen, a labourer, a webster, a chandler and two of unspecified status comprised the group. Seven testators with sons made some addition to the legacy of the unborn child if it proved to be a son. One husbandman added a table, and a cook entailed the leased house he left his existing son on his unborn child if male, the lease to be shared with his two daughters if the child was a daughter. A husbandman added half a close for a son to the £20 and three acres he left to the child of either sex, and a yeoman left two acres to his unborn child, with an additional 1 1/4 acres if the child was a boy. Three yeoman gave an unborn daughter the same

²² A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property*, pp. 73, 14.

cash amount as the other daughters received, but increased the amount for a son, in one case to twice the amount, the same as the second existing son received.²³

Of the nine testators making provision for an unborn child who had daughters but no son, only two labourers left the same bequest to the child regardless of sex. One labourer left £3 to his daughter, and his unborn child was to share the residue of his estate with his wife. The other left an acre to his only daughter after the death of his wife, but if his wife had another child, the two children would share the land. One husbandman used his will to leave three acres of copyhold to his daughter if his unborn child proved to be a son. It appears that the custom of the manor would have granted all his copyhold lands to his son and divided them equally between his daughters. The testator wanted his daughter to have at least three acres, but not three acres more than her sister if the child were a girl. One husbandman and one yeoman, each with two daughters, gave their unborn daughters a cash sum or portion of land, altering this to a house, croft and more land for a son. A yeoman left his house and croft to the unborn child of either sex, but added 1 3/4 acres for a boy and only one rood for a girl. One husbandman and two yeomen, each with only one daughter, left all their lands to the unborn child if a son, with a cash portion for the daughter. If the child was another daughter, the lands were to be shared equally.²⁴

The not infrequent reference to unborn children in wills, including the unconfirmed 'if my wife be with child', reflected the likelihood of posthumous births at a time when high mortality among young adults and remarriage meant that men often died when their wives were in their child-bearing years. Childless men were not simply expressing the hope for an heir when providing for the contingency. The presence or lack of a child would affect the direction of the estate, sending it into collateral lines if no direct heir existed, and could alter provision for the widow as well. But the failure to provide a legacy for any unborn child could cause considerable

²³ LAO: Stow Wills 1599-1602/262; 1599-1602/219-20; 1640-59/315; 1669-71/75; 1612-15/209-10; 1691-4/226; 1599-1602/228-9.

²⁴ LAO: Stow Wills 1620/79; 1672-4/291; 1640-59II/525; 1624-6/217; 1638-40/11; 1640-50/358; 1669-71/489; 1660-3/832; 1666-8/402.

problems for the widow. Christopher Hallifax, husbandman of Haxey, had two daughters and three sons when he made his will in 1616, and referred to Hezekiah as his youngest son. All the children were or had already been provided for, and his probate inventory shows a residue worth £35 2s 5d, clear of debts. His widow Mary was to 'bring up my said children well and sufficiently with meate, drink and apparel'. When Mary made her will in 1620, however, she had four sons. Hezekiah was now described as the third son, and Christopher, who had been born seven months after his father's death, was the youngest. His mother had managed to obtain a lease on two acres of land which 'my said sonne Christopher shall have duringe the terme of twelve years towards his education'. Her two eldest sons, aged sixteen and eighteen, however, would have to meet the rents owing on their lands that she had been unable to pay since their father died. The elder children's portions, having been already assigned, could not be diminished by the widow to provide for the youngest, nor could new conditions easily be placed upon them, but the widow had found a means, through rent arrears, of ensuring the upbringing of the youngest from the lands inherited by the two eldest. Although she left no specific instructions for the provision of a portion for Christopher, she named her brother and a neighbour as executors and left the residue of her estate to them, and they would have been expected to make suitable arrangements. In one instance, that of Mary Taylor of Haxey who made her will in 1682, a widow made provision for 'my child now in the wombe'.²⁵

It appears, both from the indications of the portions left to children and from the provision for an unborn child, that those with small estates were likely to bequeath reasonably equal portions to their children, regardless of sex or birth order. There might be very little scope for differentiation if children were to receive a legacy worth anything at all. It is also apparent that the eldest son of better-off testators was likely to receive more than his siblings and that his share almost always included a house, either already given, to be received immediately or upon the death of the widow, or to be shared with the widow or a sibling. Sons were more likely to receive land and to receive somewhat larger portions than their sisters even if they were the

²⁵ LAO: Stow Wills 1616-18/94; 1616-20/137-8; 1681-3/163.

second or third son, if the estate was large enough. The wills of better-off grandparents can substantiate this impression. John Snowden, yeoman of Haxey, left two houses and crofts and all his freehold lands to his son in 1651, entailed on the son's four daughters, 'in case the said Thomas dye without issue male of his bodie, otherwise if it shall happen that the said Thomas shall have one sonne or more I give and bequeathe all the above said premisses...unto such eldest sonne of his'. Cash legacies were also given to the four daughters of his son, as well as to the children of his two married daughters.²⁶

The difference in provision for unborn children, except for the less well-off, was particularly marked when the testator already had daughters, but no sons. However, portions for daughters were by no means negligible, often being the equivalent of those for younger sons. The primary concern among testators was the provision of portions that would give children, where possible, a reasonable start in life, commensurate with their 'station'. Larger portions were allocated to the eldest son once this primary aim had been achieved. For the wealthier, additions to the portions of the second or even third son were made when the estate was adequate.

iv. Inheritance and social mobility

In the case of better-off yeomen, it was particularly advantageous to be the sole surviving son. Although daughters often inherited land and/or sizable sums of money or goods, among this group second or sometimes third sons tended to receive larger portions than their sisters. As in Cambridgeshire, the better-off frequently attempted to provide for younger sons (and in Epworth manor, daughters) through purchase of extra land.²⁷ It is noticeable that, among those who rose from the yeomanry into the gentry, many were only sons, and many were born in the 1620s. They were benefitting from their fathers' and grandfathers' ability to increase their estates during periods of high grain prices and to provide their sons with an education. They were also likely to be the beneficiaries of land that had been accumulated to provide for more

²⁶ LAO: Stow Will 1640-59/431.

²⁷ M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 85-7, 106-11, 160.

than one son. The resulting 'engrossing' may at times have been the consequence of a demographic accident.

For example, Robert Tankersley was a yeoman who died in 1616. He was literate, wrote his own and others' wills, was a churchwarden and a juror of the court of the sub-manor of Haxey and Westwoodside, drawing up the survey of the sub-manor in 1607. His inventory does not survive, but his will indicates something of his estate. He left a total of two houses and crofts and eight acres of land to his three youngest daughters, and £30 each to all four of his daughters. He left an acre of land to the poor and the rest of his lands and property to his only son Vincent, along with 'all my milne timber both axeltrees, saw made cogs and spindles'. Vincent, also a yeoman, died in 1630 and had increased his estate further. He still owned property in Haxey, but was living in Wildesworth, on the other side of the Trent, where his wife's family lived. He had purchased a gentleman's estate in Hayton and Clarborough in Nottinghamshire in 1625 and half the 'fferrye and passage of the River of Trent called Kinall fferry' from his wife's brother in 1626, all of which he left to his only son Robert along with the rest of his lands, his books and his writings. His two daughters received £150 each. Like his father, he left an acre of land to the poor. Young Robert, who was eight years old when his father died, was brought up in the household of a gentleman. His mother remarried, a month after Vincent died, the Belton gentleman Henry Vavasour. This probably aided his rise to the gentry. When he died in 1682, his inventoried goods totalled £850 17s, including £100 in purse and apparel, £320 in debts owing to him and £308 in mortgages. He left two houses, a cottage, crofts and 44 1/2 acres of land to his two granddaughters, along with £100 each. His only grandson received his house and the rest of his lands in Haxey, Owston and Wroot. He left two acres of land to the poor. A number of testators during his lifetime mentioned land lying near 'Robert Tankersley's mill', so it appears that he was able to benefit from the materials left by his grandfather.²⁸

²⁸ PRO: LR 2/256, fol. 194; LAO: Stow Wills 1615/32; 1627-31/117; 1681-3/263; Pro. Inv. 183/327.

Marriages among the group of rising gentlemen also aided the process of wealth accumulation. Several married the daughters of better-off yeomen or newly-risen gentry who had no surviving sons. Robert Tankersley the younger inherited lands and tenements in Owston and Gainsborough from his maternal grandfather. His daughter, his only surviving child, married another first-generation gentleman. Their only son, Vincent Brown, the main beneficiary of his grandfather Robert Tankersley's will, died in 1696, leaving two young sons. He left one house and croft, four cottages and crofts, six closes and 21 1/2 acres of land to pay off his debts. His elder son received all the rest of his houses and lands, paying to the younger son £900, and the lands were also charged with the payment of £3 'per Annum forever' for the use of the poor. The will indicates that substantial property remained to be passed on and that there was a desire to ensure that the estate remained intact for the elder son. It also demonstrates that debts, even for those highly favoured by inherited wealth, could diminish the estate, especially when a man died before he was able to consolidate his position.²⁹ The factors in upward social mobility were, as in Terling, the slow accumulation of wealth over two to three generations, good marriages and not too many children.³⁰

v. Entailed legacies and contingency arrangements

Both entailment and contingency clauses were used as a means of redirecting a legacy to a particular individual or group. Entailment of land on an individual or on 'heirs of the body lawfully begotten' also restricted possession of the land to the lifetime of the legatee, although this did not provide absolute assurance that the land would descend as intended. Entailed land was liable to be charged with debts or sold to pay debts incurred by the life holder and could be alienated through a common recovery or the entailment destroyed 'by certain special modes'.³¹ But with those limitations, an entailed legacy was a legacy for life only, and its future destination, to existing or potential individuals, was predetermined by the testator. Entailment was usual in

²⁹ LAO: Stow Wills 1632-3/199-200; 1695-9/25. For decline of families, see M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 107-8; D. Hey, *An English Rural Community*, p.57.

³⁰ Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, p. 107.

³¹ W. Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England: Of the Rights of Things* (Vol. II, Chicago & London, 1979) facsimile of the first edition of 1765-1769), pp. 178, 113-19, 165-75.

land or houses given to widows, but was used in bequests to children and other relatives at times, although outright gifts were more common. Houses and lands were likely to be entailed on unborn heirs when left to an only child or by a childless man to an unborn child, and occasionally to cover the possibility that all the children might die without heirs. Entailment enabled the testator to redirect the legacy to an individual of his choice if the line should fail. Four testators adopted the method to direct part or all of their estate to stepchildren if their own children died without issue. The widowed labourer Thomas Holland of West Butterwick, for example, in 1644 left his estate of three acres and goods and chattels worth £13 6s 4d to his only son, entailed on the heirs of his body. If he died without such heirs, 1/2 acre was to go to two stepdaughters, along with the 'goods belonging and which I received with my wife upon our marriage', the rest of the land and goods going to two brothers. Goods were infrequently entailed, but these and money could be protected from sale or dispersement in this way. The minister of West Butterwick, John Rhodes, in 1618 left to his son 'all my bookes to be reserved unto his sonne when yt shall please god to bless hime with one'.³²

Entailment was also frequent when land or a house was left to a married daughter or sister, ensuring a reversion to the testator's heirs if the woman died without issue, rather than the legacy being incorporated into her husband's estate and passing to his children from another marriage or to his relatives. Occasionally, a house or land was given to a son and his wife; in these cases too, for the same reason that applied in gifts to married daughters, the land was entailed on the son's children. Childless men and women could use this form of legacy to provide housing for a succession of family members, perhaps a mother first, followed by a brother and then a niece. Like contingency clauses, entailment could be used to redirect a legacy to a particular child or group of children. Daughters' lands could be given to other daughters, sons' to other sons, or younger children's legacies could be directed to other younger children whose portions were likely to be less than those of their older siblings. Childless testators and grandparents especially were likely to entail and redirect gifts of land, since the

³² LAO: Stow Wills 1640-50/96; 1616-20/308.

number of potential heirs could make the legacy, if divided amongst them, of little value to any of them. Contingency clauses enabled legacies to be redirected if the child died before entering upon the inheritance, but entailment extended this to the lifetime of the child. Entailment would normally ensure that a house or lands remained to be passed on to an alternate legatee or remained in the family. However, it restricted the flexibility of the heir, which was probably why most land was left unentailed.

Unmarried daughters were no more likely to be left entailed land than were sons, and, while it may be that an outright gift was given to make purchase of daughters' lands by their brothers easier, there are very few wills in which such an expected outcome is indicated. Unentailed land or a house could be sold by a recipient of either sex who wished to move or marry outside the area, who preferred a cash annuity, or to purchase land in a different position or of a different type. Women's intended husbands might prefer her marriage portion in a different form. If women did keep their land and then marry, the land could still be entailed in the marriage settlement. An indication of such a settlement is recorded in the 1667 will of Thomas Tankersley, yeoman of Craiselound in Haxey parish. Two of his three married daughters had died childless by this time, and he left his third daughter's two sons 'in renercon expectant', after the deaths of his sons-in-law, the lands 'formerly given and granted by me the said Thomas Tankersley' to his two deceased daughters before their marriages. It appears that the lands were settled in jointure for the lives of the husband and wife, entailed on her children, returning by reversion to the grantor if she died childless.³³

The entailment of estates was never limited to the male heirs of children or grandchildren. Only three wills specify male entail, in all cases applying to collateral inheritance. George Tong, yeoman of Belton, in 1614 left his house and all his lands (except for 3 roods which he had purchased, bequeathed to his two stepdaughters) to his daughter, his only child, and to her heirs. If she died without issue, the house and lands were to go to his brother's son and his heirs male; if none, to a second brother and his heirs male; if none, to a third brother and

³³ LAO: Stow Will 1666-8/241.

his heirs forever. In 1692, the yeoman Thomas Hill the elder of Epworth gave his house and all the copyhold lands he had inherited from his father to the infant son Thomas of his nephew, Thomas Hill, and his heirs male; if none, to the nephew's other son and his heirs male; if none, to the nephew and 'ye right Heirs of him ye said Thomas Hill (male or female) for ever'. There seems to be a desire in these two wills to retain the patrimony in the male line if there were no direct descendants of either sex, but no other wills showed such a preference. The 1681 will of John Laughton, yeoman of Owston, was eccentric. He left four acres to his niece Elizabeth Moody and her heirs, for lack of which the land was to go to John Laughton, son of John of Epworth, and his heirs male of the name of John Laughton. If there were none, the land then descended to that heir's cousin John Laughton and his heirs of the same name in Epworth, 'and for default of such a name theire' to a series of John Laughtons and their heirs of that name in Retford, Tickhill and Firbeck. He left 1 3/4 acres to a second niece, Sarah Peacock, and her heirs, for lack of which this land was to descend as before, 'and so: to all ye aforesaid Jo: Laughtons which shall hapen and to their heires of that name', and 5 3/4 acres to the first John Laughton of Epworth, entailed in the same way.³⁴

Given the high child mortality in the period, contingency clauses were common to redirect portions if a child failed to reach adulthood. The form this redirection took tends to confirm other evidence for the allocation of portions. Less well-off men were most likely to specify that a deceased child's portion be divided equally amongst the surviving children or, if an only child died, that the portion be given to the wife, reflecting the tendency amongst these testators to bequeath roughly equal portions to their children. The better-off usually divided the children into groups by sex and seniority, giving a deceased daughter's portion to be divided equally amongst her surviving sisters or amongst younger sons if an only daughter. Younger sons' portions would be redistributed amongst them, omitting the eldest son, who had received a larger portion. A typical arrangement was that made by John Foster, yeoman of Epworth, in his will of 1610. Having already provided for his eldest son and married daughter, he left his second

³⁴ LAO: Stow Wills 1612-15/270; 1691-4/108; 1681-3/17.

son a toft, croft and 11 3/4 acres of land. The third son received a toft, croft and 9 1/2 acres, and the youngest, 7 1/2 acres of land. Each of the three was also given £10. The unmarried daughter received 3 roods and £80, roughly equivalent to the youngest son's portion. If any of the three youngest sons died, his portion was to be divided between the other two, and if either of the surviving two died, the now increased portion was to be divided equally with the eldest son. If the daughter died before twenty-one or marriage, £40 of her portion was to go to the wife and £40 to the three youngest sons to be divided equally.³⁵ Contingency clauses could also be used to redirect legacies to other relatives if all the children died.

vi. Apprenticeship

Provision for sons who would not receive enough land to support them could be supplemented by a cash sum to pay for an apprenticeship. In 52 wills, such provision was made, often for several children. Younger sons of yeomen and better-off husbandmen, and all sons where possible of craftsmen and labourers, might be given money for the purpose. The most common age for a boy to receive his apprenticeship fee was fourteen, although fifteen or sixteen were sometimes specified. Amounts given varied, but 20s to 40s were the usual figures mentioned in the first half of the century, rising to 40s to £3 later. Larger sums were given, including the £100 to be paid by the elder son of Vincent Browne, gentleman of Haxey, to his younger brother at fifteen 'to put him forth apprentice or to breed him in some calling which I desire might be'. The will was made in 1696.³⁶ Erickson found a median placement premium of £4 before 1650 and £10 after, with a range overall of £1 to £21 for girls and £1 to £20 for boys.³⁷ The figures given in the wills of the manor of Epworth produce a median figure of £2 in both periods, with a range of £1 to £10, except for the £100 given by Vincent Browne. Testators in the manor, therefore, appear to have been leaving legacies for apprenticeship placement skewed more towards the lower end of the range. Given the occupational structure in the Isle, those who were apprenticed locally were most likely to have gone into agricultural service or into

³⁵ LAO: Stow Will 1607-11/108.

³⁶ LAO: Stow Will 1695-9/25.

³⁷ A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 52.

a lower-earning craft like weaving, and the placement fee would be expected to be commensurately low.³⁸

Rarely was a particular occupation designated; only two testators, a husbandman and a widow, directed that sons be trained in a specific trade (in both cases weaving). The widow, Katherine Newton of Belton, however, was leaving her youngest son to the care and training of her second son, who was to 'educate and maintayne him duringe his mynoritie and teach him the weavers trade'. Two carpenters left their tools to their eldest son if he followed the same trade. A third carpenter, Thomas Newcombe of Kinnall Ferry, in 1693 asked his two brothers to place his two middle sons in trades as soon as possible and left his eldest son 'all the Toolles and instruments belonging to my Trade as I am a Carpenter And I desire my said two brothers would take care that he may be made a perfect workman, I having already something instructed him therein'.³⁹

In the other wills, no trade was named. Often men, supervisors, guardians or others, were to help to place a child in an apprenticeship, but it appears that the child could have a say in the matter. In 1634, Christopher Otter, butcher of Kinnall Ferry, left instructions that his elder son at fourteen was to receive 50s 'to an Apprentice such as my friends and he shall affect', and that his younger son was to receive the same amount at the same age to 'be put to some trade such as my friends and he shall like best'. The choice of whether to be apprenticed at all could be considered to be that of the child. John Townend, husbandman of Belton, gave his grandson

³⁸ R. M. Smith states that the poor sent their children into service at an early age to eliminate the cost of supporting them: R. M. Smith, 'Some issues concerning families and their property', pp. 69-72. Amy Erickson argues that only pauper or orphan children were sent into service younger than 13 or 14, since it was not until that age that they would be able to earn their keep. The younger the child, the larger the premium required to place it in service; therefore, a young poor child would need to be aided by poor relief. There was no incentive for a family to attempt to minimise costs by sending a young child into service: A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property*, pp. 49-53. W. Newman Brown found that, in Aldenham, the average age for leaving home to take up an apprenticeship was 13 years, 11 months for boys; 13 years, 7 months for girls: W. Newman Brown, 'The receipt of poor relief and family situation: Aldenham, Hertfordshire, 1630-1690' in R. M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle*, pp. 418-19. R. Wall found a number of factors influencing the age of departure from home: marital status and occupation of parents, sex of child, place in the birth order, but that relatively few left before the age of 15: R. Wall, 'Real property, marriage and children: the evidence from four pre-industrial communities' in *ibid.*, p.453.

³⁹ LAO: Stow Wills 1627-31/102; 1691-4/152.

in 1667 £4 'towards putting him Apprentice if he be so minded', and in 1650 a labourer of Kinnall Ferry, John Allanby, left provision for part of his son's legacy to be paid 'to helpe to putt him to a traid if he desire to goe to any traid and not else'. Those who left placement premiums often left a further sum to be given when the apprentice was 'loose' from service. Sums were also left by masters to be given to their apprentices when they had finished their term of service, and a childless craftsman might leave his apprentice his tools.⁴⁰

Only one testator, the Belton yeoman Peter Chessman, 1682, left money for an apprenticeship to a girl. He gave £3 each at sixteen to his younger children, his daughter and three sons, 'towards the putting them forth to some trades or Callings'. Robert Broughton the elder, yeoman of Belton, indicated in his will of 1604 that, if his wife wished to place his younger daughter in service for a year or more, 'I am contente shee doe it, so it be with consente of my supervisors, whome and her allso I woulde have in this case verye curious in chuseinge where to place them', but left no cash provision for the placement. Girls' portions were normally given at twenty-one or marriage, 'whether first happened', although orphaned girls were sometimes to come into their portion at fourteen, when they were of an age to choose their guardian. It appears that girls would normally go into service when they were old enough to have developed the skills necessary to earn their keep, or, if orphaned, with whatever provision had been made for their maintenance. If this had been inadequate, an orphan could end up in debt. In 1674, the widow Elizabeth Saull of Haxey demanded that 'Elling Harrison my neece shall pay unto my executors Twentie six shillings eight pence for her cloathing and diett for every yeare that I have kept her'.⁴¹

⁴⁰ LAO: Stow Wills 1634-5/43; 1669-71/112; 1640-1650 II/514. Keith Wrightson sees the sharing in the choice of occupation as a gradually developing participation in decision-making, part of the socialisation process in the household: K. Wrightson, 'The politics of the parish in early modern England' in P. Griffiths, A. Fox & S. Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke & London, 1996), p. 17.

⁴¹ LAO: Stow Wills 1681-3/222; 1603-6/123-9; 1675-8/17.

vii. Education

For some children, an increasing number during the course of the century, maintenance included formal schooling. At the beginning of the century, literacy tended to be confined to the clergy, gentry and some yeomen.⁴² At least some women amongst the better-off were able to read and write. Robert Broughton the elder of Belton, who wrote his own lengthy will in 1604, was a godly yeoman and the owner of 'all my books, printed and written, globe, mappes, printed and written...and other things and necessaries to studye and learninge belonginge'. He authorised his wife to lend out his books to suitably godly and trustworthy persons, instructing her to keep a record of the name of the book, name of the borrower, the date borrowed and the date the book was due for return. His daughters could at least read, since he allowed all his children, one son and two daughters, 'convenient libertye in usinge anye of my bookes at anye tyme under their mothers government, for inculcament of knowledge and their profittable pastime'. Both Robert Broughton and William Medley, another Belton yeoman who died in 1602, were confident that their sons could be kept at learning within the Isle of Axholme until they were twenty-one. Robert Broughton referred to Belton, Epworth, Haxey, West Butterwick, Althorpe and Crowle as suitable locations, and he mentioned Timothy Ellis (later vicar of Owston) as a teacher at Amcotts.⁴³

A number of yeomen in each of the large parishes in the early part of the century signed the parish registers as churchwardens, signed probate inventories and wills as witnesses, or wrote their own and neighbours' wills. Belton was not the only parish in which men provided for the formal schooling of their sons. In Haxey, the widowed yeoman Gregory Kelsey, who died in May 1613, left the care of his two young sons to two friends. One of the guardians, his administrator, recorded a charge of 20s which he had paid by February, 1615, for the eight-year-

⁴² This was the pattern David Cressy found. 'Literacy was a powerful marker of social and economic position': D. Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 141-54. Margaret Spufford found the same pattern in Willingham, which had a permanent school, but not in Orwell, which did not: M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 199-203.

⁴³ LAO: Stow Wills 1603-06/123-129; 1599-1602/175-6. Margaret Spufford suggests that many of the schoolmasters around 1600 were very likely to be the products of the bulge in university entrants from the 1560s to the 1580s unable to find a benefice: M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, p. 186.

old elder boy's schooling. Robert Wilson, yeoman of Epworth, in his will of 1601 left 20s each to his godchildren, except for one godson 'for whose teaching at scoole I have alreedy paid twenty shillings to Richard Wheatley'. It is not completely clear from this whether Richard Wheatley, another Epworth yeoman, was himself teaching children, but it is quite likely. His own will of 1603 referred to his books, papers and desks, with arrangements for the lending of his books with the consent of one of his supervisors, Robert Broughton of Belton. The Haxey husbandman William Drewry left provision in 1623 for his orphaned grandson to be kept by his sons-in-law for four years with 'learning and to find him bookes and to pay ye wages for his learninge'. Joseph Barker, mercer in the same parish, left his two sons in 1625 to his brother to bring up and to 'keepe them at ye schoole two years'. While opportunities for schooling in the manor appear to have been ample for those who could afford it, the parish of Wroot, some distance across the fens from the other settlements, was less fortunately placed. When fifteen prominent men of the parish witnessed the rector's tithe document in the parish register in 1628, all fifteen made a mark.⁴⁴

Those who were able to send sons on to university could obtain suitable preparatory schooling in the vicinity. Before 1600, free grammar schools were established at Kirton-in-Lindsey and at Gainsborough. Thomas Pinder, born in 1631, second son of John of Kinnal Ferry in Owston parish, had attended school at Kirton before going to Magdalene College, Cambridge and entering the clergy. A later pupil at Kirton was William Torksey, born in 1682, son of Richard, gentleman of Owston, and he also went to Magdalene. Others who attended Cambridge received their schooling in the manor. Darcy Stanhope, born in 1654, son of John, esquire, of Mellwood Hall in Owston, went to school at Belton, under 'Mr. Baldwin', the curate there. Marmaduke Coggan, youngest son of John, the rector of Wroot, was born in 1661 and was schooled in Epworth. His father died a year after he went up to Cambridge, but made provision for his continued education. He left Marmaduke 'my whole library of bookes' along with

⁴⁴ LAO: Stow Wills 1613/22; 1599-1602/164-5; 1603-6/85-6; 1621-3/102-3; 1624-6/134; Ad. Acct. 8B/222; Wroot parish register.

six acres and three roods of land to be sold 'for the use and maintenance of Marmaduke, my son, now at the university of Cambridge'. Marmaduke received his degree in 1686/7 and became vicar of Tetney in Lincolnshire five years later. Both Marmaduke and his father were admitted as sizars, 'or servants who paid their way through college by waiting on the dons and their fellow students'⁴⁵

From the 1640s, there was the occasional provision in manor wills for the son of a labourer or weaver to be kept at school. If a period of study was mentioned, it was most commonly until the boy was fourteen or fifteen, sometimes with an apprenticeship to follow. There was a schoolhouse in existence in Haxey at least by 1658, since it is mentioned in a will of that date as lying adjacent to bequeathed land, and it appears again in a will of 1679. Several men in the manor during the course of the century were presented at ecclesiastical visitations for teaching school without a licence, and in 1684, Elizabeth Harrison, wife of Robert of Owston, was presented for this offence.⁴⁶

No will provides for the specific schooling of girls, although several mention 'learning', along with food, lodging and clothing. This term, however, like 'education', appears to have been used broadly, including practical and moral training. Books, especially Bibles and testaments, were left to daughters and in turn were bequeathed by widows and spinsters, or books that 'were their mother's' were left to children by men. This does not necessarily mean that the women could read them, but it is likely, as has been suggested by others, that women were more likely to be taught to read than to write. The ability to read could carry the spiritual benefits of reading scripture, but writing was a practical skill. Sewing was a more useful skill for women, and girls, if they were taught to read, were more likely to go on to instruction in sewing than writing.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ G. A. J. Hodgett, *Tudor Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1975), p. 146; J. Venn & J. A. Venn (eds.), *Alumni Cantabrigienses: Earliest times to 1751* (Part I, Cambridge, 1927); LAO: Stow Will 1684-6/94; D. Hey, *The Fiery Blades of Hallamshire: Sheffield and its Neighbourhood, 1660-1740* (Leicester, 1991), p. 276.

⁴⁶ LAO: Stow Wills 1663-4/262; 1679-80/26; Viiij/5, fol. 60.

⁴⁷ David Cressy says that books, especially Bibles, could easily fall into the hands of people who could not read them: D. Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order*, pp. 50-2. For women, reading and writing, see *ibid*, pp. 41, 59, 127-129; A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property*, pp. 56-8. Martin Ingram finds that 'good

viii. Conditional Legacies

Schooling, apprenticeship, land, livestock and goods, money and upbringing together constituted E. P. Thompson's 'grid of inheritance' that gave children their start in life.⁴⁸ All legacies had ultimately to come out of one estate, and to provide sufficient portions for all legatees, conditions on legacies were common. The most frequent condition was the payment of a sum of money to another individual (usually a sibling or the widow) upon taking possession of a house or lands, or within a specified period thereafter. The payment might, alternatively, take the form of the payment of an annuity or support of a dependent. Cicely Wells, spinster of East Lound, Haxey, left her house and croft in 1602 to one nephew for twelve years 'for and in consideracon of the kepinge and orderinge of my mother duringe her lyffe naturall'. The property would then descend to a second nephew. Very occasionally, a son might be given the option to purchase his sister's land for a specified sum when she came of age. Edward Davie, yeoman of Belton, in 1645 left his daughter three acres and 1/2 rood, but if his son paid her £30 when she turned twenty-one, he was to have the land. The land, however, was to ensure her maintenance by her godfather until she reached the age of fourteen, after which she received the income.⁴⁹ The testator used the land, which was immediately available, to ensure his daughter's upbringing, while retaining the land for his son if he was able to redeem it. Much more often, land was left to a son on condition he give a daughter a cash payment at twenty-one or marriage. If he refused or failed to do so, she was entitled either to the use of the land until the profits had yielded the required sum, or was to have part or all of the land. The same condition could be placed on legacies to provide sums of money for other sons, widows, mothers or other relatives. Childless testators could provide a large number of small legacies by leaving a house or land to one individual, on condition the legacies were paid out.

learning' could include moral and religious instruction, academic knowledge, training in crafts or trades or the skills of husbandry and housewifery: M. Ingram, 'Reformation of manners in early modern England' in P. Griffiths, A. Fox & S. Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority*, p. 53.

⁴⁸ E. P. Thompson, 'The grid of inheritance: a comment' in J. Goody, J. Thirsk & E. P. Thompson, *Family and Inheritance*, pp. 330-59.

⁴⁹ LAO: Stow Wills 1599-1602/242; 1640-59/328.

As with guardianship and the care of permanently dependent individuals, annuities and as yet unfulfilled conditions would be passed on with the property. Particularly likely was the inheritance of an obligation to provide an annuity or support for the testator's mother or stepmother, usually given to the testator's wife if he had one. The Epworth yeoman Robert Byrd, for example, inherited a windmill from his father in 1636, carrying an annuity obligation. Ten years later, Robert left the windmill to his wife on condition she discharge 'the annuitie due to Ann Byrd my mother out of the same and all other duties, which the said Mill shall be charged withall' until his eldest son came of age, after which he took over the mill and any remaining obligations. William Hurde, husbandman of Belton, in 1604 stipulated that 'my mother shall have howse roome as she nowe haith during her naturall life and that my whife shall enter bond for the performance therof'. A testator need not have inherited an obligation to take on responsibility for an elderly relative. Christopher Hallifax, a Belton husbandman with two children, left his maternal grandfather half an acre of land for life in 1652. Hezekiah Browne, gentleman of Haxey, left to his wife thirteen acres of land and other legacies unconditionally in 1679, plus four acres of land 'If the said Mary my wife shall supervise Susanna Browne my mother'. Hezekiah's father had provided for Susanna in 1667, leaving her half the cattle and horses, £100 and the residue of the estate. No land was devised in the will, but she had presumably had her thirds arranged. Although she therefore had an income of her own, Susanna was now two months short of 70 years old and quite likely in need of care, which the four-acre gift was designed to ensure.⁵⁰

A legacy of property could carry an obligation to pay an outstanding debt of the testator or to fulfil an obligation. In 1686 Thomas Wakefield, yeoman of Belton, left part of his son's lands on condition he 'shall seall to adede to conferme an estate to Robert Poplewell of a howse and closes that I sould to him' (there were costs involved in such a transaction). William Jaques of Overthorpe, Haxey, in 1668 left 1/2 acre to his younger son until his elder son and wife 'confirm and make sure and a good estate poss'ion in seasson of one cottage house in Belton

⁵⁰ LAO: Stow Wills 1636-8/127; 1640-59 II/513; 1603-6/144; 1660-3/297; 1681-3/249; 1666-8/314.

with a croft' to the younger son, at which point the 1/2 acre would be released to the elder. There might be a condition to redeem a mortgage on the land or make a final payment on purchased land. A Belton bachelor yeoman, Edward Meggott, in 1635 had bought a copyhold toft, but it had not yet been surrendered to him as there was still £10 owing on it. In his will, he left instructions that the toft was to be surrendered to his nephew, on condition the nephew pay the outstanding £10.⁵¹

Conditions could be placed guaranteeing others' rights in the property. As well as house room, rights of egress and regress over land or storage space in the yard were specified. In 1658, Robert Robinson the elder, yeoman of Kinnall Ferry, left his elder son the cottage and croft in which he already lived, on condition the younger son 'shall and may peaceably and quietly without the molestation of [the elder son] have and enjoy with free ingress, egress and regress one convenient way or passage through the yard or backside belonging to the cottage house aforesaid with his draught horses as occasion shall serve'. The younger son, in addition to a house, was given 1/2 acre of land on condition that the elder 'shall without molestation have free liberty at the time of the year convenient to bleach cloth at the low end of the half acre'. Simon Nelson of Kinnall Ferry left the Trent garth with buildings to his younger son in 1666, on condition that his elder son 'have egress and regress to drive or head his cattle or beasts to water them at Trent, forever, the said Simon maintaining and upholding from time to time and at all times of the years, and the said James the other year'.⁵²

Occasionally, property could carry a perpetual obligation. This was normally the case when land was given for poor relief, all the profits of which were to be used by the vicar and churchwardens for the purpose. Elizabeth Coggan, childless widow of Haxey, left her house and croft to two nieces, on condition that 'there shall be paid out of the said house... five shillings every year for ever unto the poor people of the parish of Haxey'. An obligation that might have been expected to produce eventual conflict and confusion was imposed by Robert Barker,

⁵¹ LAO: Stow Wills 1684-6/241; 1669-71/205; 1634-5/185-6.

⁵² LAO: Stow Wills 1660-63/728; 1666-8/474.

yeoman of Parke in Haxey, in his will of 1613. He left property to two sons and their heirs forever, imposing a condition on both that they and their heirs pay to the third son and his heirs 20s a year forever.⁵³

ix. Wills of Widows and the Childless

It has been noted in other studies that widows tended to leave legacies to a long list of people. In Epworth manor, it appears that widows with children made wills that were very similar to those of men with children. Their main concern was for their children, especially if they were minors, and grandchildren, and few other relatives or others received even small legacies unless the testator, male or female, was especially well-off. Those who were childless, however, did distribute their possessions more widely, and an occasional will lists 30 or more legatees.⁵⁴ In determining childlessness among married men, I have included those who bequeathed their house or substantial lands to other relatives, or where it seems likely that the bulk of an estate was bequeathed in the will. In the case of widows, I have considered all those to be childless who did not mention children or grandchildren in the will. This may mean that, in some cases, these figures include those whose children had already been provided for. I have not included in the figures bequests to the poor, although these were more common in these wills than in others.

⁵³ LAO: Stow Wills 1634-5/179-180; 1614/134.

⁵⁴ In most studies, widows have been compared with all men, married, widowed or single, and regardless of the existence or age of any children. A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property*, pp. 212-13, found that women tended to leave bequests to a wider range of kin than did men, but that most women divided their property exclusively among children and grandchildren. In their study of Whickham, Levine and Wrightson noted that the widowed and unmarried were likely to leave token legacies more widely and that there was no significant difference between male and female testators: Levine & Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society: Whickham, 1560-1765* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 285-6. In Kibworth Harcourt too, grandparents, widows, widowers and the childless left legacies more widely: C. Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance*, p. 255.

Table 3.3**Average Number of Legatees in Wills of Childless Testators 1600-1699**

	Average no. of legatees	Number of wills
Childless widows	11.5	33
Childless married men	7.7	63
Bachelors	8.3	120
Spinsters	7.4	26

It appears that childless widows were likely to name a somewhat larger number of beneficiaries than were others without children, but that all those without children tended to disperse their gifts quite widely. Widows without children were more likely to have received a larger portion from their husbands, including unentailed land and the whole of the residue, than were those who had produced a number of children. However, they were also left without the support of children, so that other ties of kinship and friendship took on greater significance. Legacies to a larger number of beneficiaries, therefore, reflect both the capacity of the childless widow to provide at least small amounts for a large number, and her need for ties in the community.

A comparison can be made between childless widows and those widows who named children and/or grandchildren in their wills by looking at the average number of other legatees these testators named.

Table 3.4**Average Number of Other Legatees Named by Widows with Children/Grandchildren****1600-1699**

Parish	Ave. no. of legatees other than children/grandchildren	Number of wills
Haxey	1.36	72
Belton	1.44	45
Epworth	1.31	36
Owston	1.64	22

Although a few individual widows with children, especially those who were well-off, did leave legacies to a long list of beneficiaries in addition to children, many included no others in their wills. This was especially true of those with minor children, most concerned with their provision and portions, and those whose children and grandchildren on their own comprised a substantial number.

x. Other Legatees

Other than to direct descendents, legacies were most commonly left to brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, in-laws and parents and 'cousins' or kinsmen. Small amounts of money or goods were sometimes left to servants and godchildren. On occasion, more generous gifts could be given. Thomas Romsley, 'laboring man' of Haxey in 1615 left a wife, but mentioned no children. He left half an acre of land to one godson after the death of his wife, 40s to a second godson, and a cupboard to his goddaughter (who was also his niece). In addition, he gave 10s to the poor and 20s to his female servant. Robert Newborne of Haxey made his will in 1668, naming no wife or children, and left £20 to his sister and land to several nephews and nieces. He left to Jane Codd, his servant, a bed and bedding, grain, 'all the goods she bought at Mary Turner saile', and a close of arable land for life, entailed on the poor.⁵⁵ Generally, those without children to provide for were much more likely to leave legacies for the poor and to godchildren. Godchildren were not often mentioned, less so in the latter half of the century, although nephews and nieces could also be godchildren. They and other children who were left small amounts in wills may have been godchildren although not specified as such.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ LAO: Stow Wills 1612-15/405-6; 1666-8/75. It appears that Jane Codd was being provided by her master with a marriage portion and that he had already begun the process. Amy Erickson notes that those intending to marry could purchase goods to set up home at sales, usually occurring when orphan children had to be provided for: A. Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 66.

⁵⁶ Wrightson and Levine found that, in Terling too, more distant kin and godchildren were left legacies most often by the childless: Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 93-4.

xi. Conclusion

The wills of the manor indicate the final working out of a lifetime's strategy in providing for oneself and dependents, and the continuation of that strategy into an uncertain future.⁵⁷ The current condition of the estate had to be assessed, allowing for often complex debts owing and owed, and its potential predicted. Testators needed to provide maintenance for widows and minor children, plan for their education and training and possibly arrange for the support of parents, wards, fiances or disabled relatives. An often inadequate estate had to be stretched to supply marriage portions and a means of permanent support for all the children, and their uncertain survival made multiple contingency arrangements a prudent precaution. Further complications were introduced when the family was the product of a second or third marriage, resulting in stepchildren and half-siblings, adding to the possibility of 'acrimony' upon the division of portions. Testators utilised obligations inherent in ties of kinship and friendship in settling their estates and providing care for dependents, and in turn fulfilled obligations in their legacies.

Wills from the manor indicate how inheritance patterns provided a crucial mechanism for social mobility. The favouring of the eldest son by those with moderate estates and the differentiation between sons amongst the better-off helped to consolidate larger estates for eldest, and sometimes second, sons. Demographic accidents could then enhance these estates still further. A sole surviving son could benefit from lands purchased with the intention of providing estates for younger sons. The tendency among the better-off to separate contingency arrangements between the offspring of different sexes could also result in a larger portion for a daughter whose sisters died before they could inherit. Wealth would then tend to be consolidated further through marriage to those in a similar economic position and by the possibility of inheriting sizable amounts from childless well-off relatives. The system also resulted in downward mobility for younger sons in large families.

⁵⁷ Jack Goody terms wills the written version of the 'dying words': J. Goody, 'Inheritance, property and women: some comparative conclusions' in J. Goody, J. Thirsk & E. P. Thompson (eds.), *Family and Inheritance*, p. 15.

The Rural Economy and Family Strategies

The economy of the manor of Epworth throughout the seventeenth century was based on mixed arable/pastoral farming, with extensive smallholding supplemented by extensive common land grazing. Although the commons were reduced in area following the drainage in the late 1620s, the land actually in use as common grazing remained generous during most of the period. Most men were described in wills, probate inventories and, occasionally, in parish registers as yeomen, husbandmen and labourers. By-employments largely made use of locally produced raw materials and provided goods to meet local requirements. A fundamental feature of the local economy was reliance on credit, and debts were widespread. During the later part of the century, there is evidence of growing differentiation, in wealth and consumption, between the better-off and the poorer members of the community and increased opportunities for investment and expansion of non-agricultural employments.

As indicated in the two preceding chapters, household production, marriage and inheritance played important parts in family strategies, both for the less well-off, attempting to provide for the subsistence requirements of their households along with a small start in life for all their children, and for the better-off, trying to maximise production to provide ample portions enabling good marriages for all their children while enhancing the opportunities for one or more sons to retain or build upon the wealth and status of their father. In chapter one, it was seen that the local economy provided a flexible system for the inhabitants of the manor, with varied forms of landholding, subletting, different soil types and the use of enclosed lands. This allowed a range of choices of farming techniques and crops that, along with by-employments and the resources of the commons, allowed population growth in the first half of the century without subsistence crises. This chapter investigates how this flexibility, in conjunction with family strategies, could enable adaptation to new economic circumstances and provide opportunities for social mobility.

i. Crops

The main arable crop in the early part of the century was barley, with wheat, rye and peas also grown extensively. Hemp was important, grown both in the open fields and in hempgrounds. Flax too was grown, but seemingly in smaller quantities. In the later seventeenth century, the type and proportion of crops remained similar. Barley continued to be the chief grain crop, followed by wheat and rye, and peas were the other main field crop. Beans are mentioned only very occasionally. Oats, however, appear in many of the inventories in the latter part of the century, both as a crop in store and on the ground. This is an additional crop, appearing with barley, wheat, rye and peas, rather than a replacement. Oats are mentioned, both in inventories and in references in depositions, as an important crop in Sandtoft among the French and Dutch settlers there. Rape was also grown extensively on the drained land by the settlers, but this crop appears infrequently in the inventories of the commoners. Thomas Reade of Belton, one of the few commoners who rented land from the Participants, boasted of his crop yields in a deposition taken in 1648. He rented 40 acres altogether and had reaped 50 quarters of rape seed from 10 acres in one year, 'which he soude for thirtie shillings per quarter at the least', and yields per acre of 3 1/2 quarters of wheat, 3 quarters of rye and 8 quarters of oats, 'And for Oats he hath had for six years together seaven quarters of an acre on the same ground.'¹ Oats were considerably more popular among the commoners than was rape. Oats may have become more useful as a fodder crop for horses if there was less hay available from the commons, especially during the warm, dry years of the 1680s.² However, oatmeal stored in the chamber is often listed in inventories, so at least part of the crop may have been grown for human consumption. The occasional inventory includes a Dutch plough, particularly suited to fen soil.³

¹ PRO: E 134/24 Charles I/Easter 4.

² Oats, however, was the grain most vulnerable to drought: P. Bowden, 'Agricultural prices, wages, farm profits and rents' in J. Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1640-1750* (Vol. V, 2, Cambridge, 1985), p. 46.

³ Oatmeal could be made into 'pottage, hasty pudding, gruel, washbrew and gertbrew': J. Thirsk, 'Farming techniques' in J. Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640* (Vol. IV, Cambridge, 1967), p. 171. For Dutch plough: *ibid*, p. 164 & Plate I.

Hemp and/or flax continues to appear in most inventories, and flax during the second half of the century appears as a growing crop, as well as in store. Orchards are mentioned, in connection with houses, more frequently in wills of the later period, with two men referring to orchards they had planted (David Popplewell, Belton yeoman, 1659 and Thomas Newcombe, Owston carpenter, 1693). Some inventories in the 1670s and 1680s list fruit or apples in store.⁴ Gardens are included with bequests of some houses from the 1650s onwards. In the period from 1664 to 1691, except for flooding several years in the 1670s, there was a run of warm, dry summers, when grain was plentiful and grain prices low. People spent proportionately more on other products during such periods, and farmers, if they were able, would be inclined to expand their output of livestock, fodder crops, or horticultural produce.⁵ The larger herds of cattle kept by gentlemen, yeomen and craftsmen during the 1680s, the continued production of hemp and the increase in flax, the addition of oats as a field crop and the increase in orchards all support this picture. The possibilities that existed to vary land use, especially in crofts and closes, and the large extent of subletting of land gave individuals the flexibility to adjust production in response to market changes. Expansion of craft production, under these conditions, offered additional opportunities.

ii. Livestock in the Early Seventeenth Century

To investigate the stock-keeping of various status groups, I have used the status given in the inventory, eliminating bachelors, widows, the obviously retired and those whose status is not given. Herd sizes include all animals, young and old. Too many inventories either fail to break down herds by age or fail to differentiate between yearling animals and the young of the current year.⁶ When the information is given, it is clear that many summer herds do not include calves

⁴ LAO: Stow Wills 1640-59 II/601-603; 1691-94/152. The growing of fruit trees was popular generally during the Commonwealth period and continued after the Restoration: J. Thirsk, 'Agricultural policy: public debate and legislation' in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Agrarian History, 1640-1750*, p. 344.

⁵ P. Bowden, 'Agricultural prices', pp. 57-9, 84.

⁶ For a discussion of the problems inherent in the use of probate inventories, see Appendix 2; also M. Spufford, 'The limitations of the probate inventory', in J. Chartres & D. Hey (eds.), *English Rural Society, 1500-1800* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 142-74; also D. Levine & K. Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society: Whickham, 1560-1765* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 89-90.

or foals, while suckling calves can appear in winter inventories. Surplus animals could be sold off at any time, not only at Michaelmas. Commoners were only to keep the number of animals on the common that they could afford to overwinter, along with the young of that year.⁷ While summer herds might have been somewhat larger than winter herds, the difference was likely to be marginal.

Table 4.1

Stock-keeping by Status, 1610-20

	Cows			Horses			Number
	mean	median	range	mean	median	range	
Yeomen	14.00	12.50	3-25	7.38	7.00	5-13	8
Husbandmen	5.47	5.00	1-14	4.73	5.00	0-9	15
Labourers	3.00	3.00	3-3	0	0	0-0	3
Crafts/Trade	2.67	3.00	1-5	0.17	0	0-1	6

Two widows with sizable herds of cows, one in Owston with eleven and one in Epworth with nine, each had a steer mentioned in their inventories. Three yeomen, one from Belton and two from Epworth, two Belton widows and one Belton man of unspecified status left steers in their wills. Bulls appear in the inventories of two yeomen, one bull in Epworth and two in Owston. None of the inventories mention beef in store, although bacon is common. Pigs are mentioned in most inventories, although usually fewer in number than the total number of cattle. Winter inventories often list no pigs, but include bacon. Poultry appears in most, again in small numbers, usually three to ten. When specified, geese and hens were the poultry kept. Only two inventories mention ducks. Sheep appear infrequently. Out of 56 inventories, only 9 mention sheep. Flocks were very small: they ranged from three to seven sheep, except for one containing fourteen. Pigs, poultry and sheep, then, appear to have been kept for household subsistence and a local market. Cattle too, except for the better-off, were kept in numbers

⁷ J. Thirsk, 'Farming techniques', p. 183.

sufficient to meet household needs, with only the occasional surplus animal or animal products to market. Horses, however, appear in sufficient numbers to indicate production for the market. Colts and foals are mentioned frequently in both inventories and wills. Horses bred in the Lincolnshire fens were sold on to the coalpits of Nottinghamshire, the leadmines of Derbyshire and to Yorkshire breeders.⁸ The arable product most likely to be marketed on a regular basis and further afield was hemp.

iii. Livestock in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century

The next period for which probate inventories are available in sufficient numbers is the 1650s. I have investigated these and the inventories from the 1670s and 1680s, and again looked at stock-keeping by different status groups.

Table 4.2

Stock-keeping by Status, 1650-59

	Cows			Horses			Number
	mean	median	range	mean	median	range	
Gentlemen	8	8		8	8		1
Yeomen	9.5	8.0	3-19	4.86	4.0	2-13	6
Husbandmen	6.62	6.0	2-13	5.33	5.0	0-11	21
Labourers	3.0	3.0	3-3	0	0	0	1
Craft/Trade	3.17	3.0	1-6	0.83	0	0-3	6

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

Table 4.3**Stock-keeping by Status, 1670-79**

	Cows			Horses			Number
	mean	median	range	mean	median	range	
Gentlemen	10.25	8.0	1-26	5.63	4.5	0-17	8
Yeomen	11.17	7.0	2-41	5.0	5.0	0-10	23
Husbandmen	7.44	6.0	1-16	4.19	4.0	0-8	32
Labourers	3.47	3.0	1-6	0.27	0	0-2	15
Craft/Trade	3.25	3.0	0-8	1.18	1.0	0-5	28

Table 4.4**Stock-keeping by Status, 1680-89**

	Cows			Horses			Number
	mean	median	range	mean	median	range	
Gentlemen	25.38	22.5	2-52	8.5	8.5	0-16	8
Yeomen	12.55	11.5	4-25	5.8	5.0	2-13	20
Husbandmen	7.31	6.5	2-22	4.88	4.5	2-8	16
Labourers	2.43	3.0	0-5	0	0	0	7
Craft/Trade	6.65	5.0	0-19	1.24	0	0-7	17

Any change in the sizes of herds kept by different status groups during the course of the century would appear to be minimal, given the limitations of the surviving probate material. Some inventories do not give the status and others do not give the numbers of animals kept. Information for each decade is limited by the individuals who happened to die in the period and the stage in the life cycle at the time of death, as well as the patchy survival of the inventories themselves. The range of herd sizes within each category is considerable for yeomen and husbandmen. It is therefore notable that herd sizes of husbandmen and labourers, in terms of

mean, median and range, appear reasonably consistent throughout the period. Husbandmen tended to have five to seven cows and four to five horses, while labourers had approximately three cows and no horses.⁹ The range of yeomen's herd sizes, too, was similar throughout the period. If the exceptionally large number of cattle (41) in the inventory of the Belton yeoman Thomas Popplewell were to be left out of the figures for the 1670s, the range for that decade would be two to twenty-four. Steers and bullocks appear more frequently in the inventories of the better-off from the 1670s, as do beef in store and meat safes.

The reduction of the available pasture on the commons due to settlement by the tenants of the Participants varied over the period, depending on how successfully commoners, through direct action, were able to dissuade those who attempted it. Those parish registers in which evidence of the arrival of settlers can be detected, those of Wroot and Belton, indicate that settlement became noticeable in the period following the decree of 1636, which allocated 7400 acres of common to the Participants for settlement. However, the depositions of 1648 and 1649 refer to the drowning of the commons by the commoners after the Civil War broke out. Later depositions of Sandtoft residents describe the increasingly violent attacks on the community by commoners during the late 1640s and early 1650s, and during the same period many of the recent migrants disappear from Wroot's registers. Joan Thirsk notes that some French and Flemish refugees from Sandtoft moved to Thorney in Cambridgeshire after the riots of 1650-51. Keith Lindley states that, during the 1650s, the commoners used most of the land as commons.¹⁰ There was a renewed attempt to install settlers again after the Restoration, but they remained vulnerable to attack. After the attempted agreement of 1691-92, the Participants' share was reduced to 2800 acres. It was thirty years, however, before this was accepted by the

⁹ In the fen parish of Willingham in the 1660s, the median number of horses for those who kept them was two. The median herd of cows owned by husbandmen was eight for the whole Cambridgeshire fen area: M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974), p.131.

¹⁰ J. Thirsk, 'Agricultural policy', p.323; K. Lindley, *Fenland Riots and the English Revolution* (1982), p. 233.

commoners; settlers continued to suffer attacks on their property and the commoners used some of this land for varying periods.

The effect of the reduction of the commons is difficult to detect in the livestock figures. Again, it must be stressed that the survival and representativeness of the probate inventories is problematic, but herd sizes within the different status groups seem not to have varied greatly over the period until the 1680s, when the number of cattle kept by gentlemen, yeomen and craftsmen appear to have increased. This was the very period when pasture and hay was likely to have been most depleted due to the weather conditions. Commoner deponents in 1686 referred to the poor state of the pasture on the commons at the time. They were, of course, attempting to substantiate both their rights to the whole of the land and the claim that the drainage and settlement had been detrimental to them. However, the hot, dry weather and the likelihood that peat shrinkage was already causing problems make most of the description believable. There is also a recognition of the effects of the loss of the natural warping previously provided by the flooding of the land by the Trent. A number of commoners made the same points, but John Bett, labourer of Epworth expressed himself more clearly than most:

before the said pretended dreanidge horses Cowes Swine and other Cattle were fed fatt on the wasts in Epworth Mannor and that Cowes then milked farr beter then they doe now...and there being then great plenty of grasse and now litle or none to be gotten on the said wasts...and saith that since the dreaneage when the Inhabitants enjoyed the whole Common Cowes milked as well as they did before the Dreanidge...the overfloods which over topt the bancks descending from the hilly cuntryes bringing with them a thick lying skudd did fatten and make the ground much more fruitefull where the water stept whereas the waters that now overflowes and drowne the same is a thin hungry staveing water.¹¹

The claim that the common pasture had suffered appears to be based on the depletion of grass due to the reduction in the area available, and on the lack of soil fertility, leading to lower numbers of stock, caused by the lack of warping. The 'thin, hungry' water that now flooded the commons, it was explained, came from the Participants' lands in Hatfield Chase and resulted from the inadequacy of the drainage works. Two yeomen from Crowle who had carried out a survey reported a new drain that had been made by the Participants. A great part of the

¹¹ PRO: E 134/1 & 2 James II/Hilary 25, fol. 15.

common was lower than this drain, causing the water to overflow onto the commons, and 'there the water must remaine till drunke upp by the heate of Sumer'. The poor state of the drainage had caused particular problems, according to the depositions, 'above three yeares agoe' when the Participants' balks broke near Thorne twice in one year, drowning the commons.¹² Several commoners referred to cattle that 'dye of the rott'; the 1680 will and probate inventory of Francis Monkton, gentleman of Belton, mention sheep 'supposed to be rotten'. This was a condition exacerbated by flooding.¹³

According to William Shuttleworth, labourer of Epworth, 'the Inhabitants of the said Manner are much distressed for want of pasture for their Cattle and some of them have constrained to pasture their meadow grounds to keepe their Cattle alive and others have beene constrained to hire Jyst in Yorkshire for their Cattle or in other places farr distant from them and others was forced to part with their stock'.¹⁴ Some indication of a possible increase in the use of meadow grounds for pasture may be found in the description of land bequeathed in wills. I have looked at those wills in which land was left as a legacy. The following table gives the percentage of wills in which land of each type was mentioned, not the percentage of land bequeathed. In some wills, land of more than one type was bequeathed; all are included in the figures.

Table 4.5

Percentage of Testators bequeathing Meadow, Pasture

	Meadow	Pasture	Meadow or pasture	Arable meadow or pasture	Total number of wills
1600-49	42.48	4.90	3.27	2.61	306
1650-99	31.31	2.18	12.62	5.58	412

The wills concerned constitute less than half the total sample, and even these do not specify all or most of the land held at the time the will was made. Closes of indeterminate use were also

¹² *Ibid.*, fols. 36-7. The lack of expenditure on drainage channels in the drained fens was the source of many complaints in the Ancholme, Holland and Deeping Fens during the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries: J. Thirsk, 'Agricultural policy', pp. 374-5.

¹³ LAO: Stow Will 1679-80/231; Pro Inv 220A/15. J. Thirsk, 'Farming Techniques', p. 188.

¹⁴ PRO: E 134/1 & 2 James II/Hilary 25, fol. 19.

mentioned in these wills: 12.75% of testators in the earlier period and 15.78% in the later period included these. It does seem, however, that testators were more likely to describe land as 'meadow or pasture' or 'arable, meadow or pasture' in the latter half of the century than earlier. This could confirm the claims that commoners were using their meadow grounds to pasture their cattle. Several testators refer to new closes. In 1649, William Norfolk of Kinnal Ferry left five rigs of meadow in Milne Ings 'in a close lately inclosed by me'. A few men, like Thomas Tankersley, yeoman of Graiselound in 1667, refer to land exchanges in their wills. He left 'All that new enclosure I have had lately upon exchange from Robert Kelsey and others adioyneing upon my said Mesuage'. Land exchange, especially that involving several parcels, could facilitate new enclosure by consolidating a holding within a larger unit.¹⁵

Several of the deponents in the 1680s also mention the loss of hay from the commons. On the other side of the dispute, Farmery Maw of Thorne, who farmed 100 acres as a tenant of the Participants, claimed that the poor state of the commons was due to overstocking by the commoners, who, he said, 'Generally keeps more Cattle upon their Comons then their ffarmes or Tenemts are able to Maintaine and that hee better knowes itt by reason severall of them came into the Levell in sumer time to buy ffodder for their Cattle'. He does not, however, indicate whether this fodder was purchased for cattle kept on the commons or for those pastured on meadow ground or pastured elsewhere outside the manor.¹⁶ It seems, then, that the better-off, while complaining of the reduction of both the quantity and quality of the common pasture, were able to make use of alternatives. Probate inventories indicate that the size of cattle herds amongst the better-off was actually increasing during the 1680s.¹⁷

But for those who were able to maintain or enhance their position in the later part of the century, a variety of arable and pastoral activities could continue to provide subsistence for the household and often a marketable surplus. Aside from cows and horses, pigs, bees and poultry

¹⁵ LAO: Stow Wills 1640-50 II/505; 1666-68/241.

¹⁶ PRO: E 134/3 James II/Mich 42.

¹⁷ Low grain prices at the time would have encouraged greater emphasis on cattle-rearing: P. Bowden, 'Agricultural prices', pp. 59, 84; J. Thirsk, 'Agricultural innovations and their diffusion' in J. Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History, 1640-1750*, p. 586.

continued to be kept in small numbers. The types of poultry were still chickens, geese and the occasional duck, but a few inventories included turkeys from the 1650s onwards. Sheepkeeping, however, underwent a change from the earlier part of the century, when the few who kept sheep had flocks of three to seven, except for one flock of fourteen. In the 1650s, only a few inventories included sheep, but one Haxey yeoman owned 120. By the 1670s, sheepkeeping was becoming characteristic of Belton parish. In Haxey parish, no yeomen's inventories included sheep, while three of the twelve husbandmen kept flocks of 11, 25 and 40. The vicar's widow had 15 sheep, the subsequent vicar had 11, a labourer left 10, and a badger had three sheep. In Owston parish, one labourer had 19 sheep, and a man whose status was not specified held 80 sheep when he died. Two yeomen in Epworth had flocks of 14 and 20. In Belton, most inventories included sheep, with flocks ranging from three sheep to a gentleman's 510. Four inventories listed flocks of over one hundred. In the 1680s, this trend continued. No Haxey inventory in this period included sheep. One husbandman in Owston had 62 sheep, and one man of unspecified status had 150 sheep. The only Epworth inventories that included sheep were those of two butchers, one of whom had five sheep and the other 300.¹⁸ Again, most of Belton's inventories listed sheep, with flocks ranging from two to 200.

While many of these sheep were likely to have been pastured on the common, some, especially the larger flocks, might well have been pastured on some of the enclosed grounds. Bowden states that the fleeces of sheep grazed on enclosed pastures in Lincolnshire and Leicestershire were much heavier than those of downland shortwool breeds.¹⁹ Those in Belton with a few sheep might have been able to run them with a larger flock on enclosed pastures, in return for help at lambing or shearing or for the sheep droppings.²⁰ They would also benefit from participation in marketing arrangements made by those keeping larger numbers. Residents of Belton parish appear to have been increasing their sheep raising during a period when wool

¹⁸ Margaret Spufford found that sheep were 'surprisingly unimportant in the probate inventories of the late seventeenth century' in Willingham: M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, p. 129.

¹⁹ P. Bowden, 'Agricultural prices', p. 28.

²⁰ J. M. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700-1820* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 66, 69.

prices declined. Wool prices fell sharply in the 1650s and still further in the 1680s,²¹ although the local market for wool appears to have been increasing. Sheep, however, would also have been kept for their manure, possibly being folded on the arable, and for mutton (hence, the three hundred sheep owned by one of the Epworth butchers). The folding of sheep on the light, sandy soil (as in Ombersley, Worcestershire) might well have supplemented or replaced the use of peat from the commons as manure,²² especially if peat supplies were restricted, as the depositions from the 1680s indicate. The heavy clay soils, on the other hand, became less profitable for growing corn in the second half of the century, and may well have been converted to pasture for sheep.²³

iv. Non-agricultural Occupations in the Early Seventeenth Century

Although most men were described by status terms based on their agricultural activities, some were defined by other occupations. These were activities that both served the subsistence requirements of the community and made use of the raw materials produced locally. The occupation appearing most frequently in the wills and inventories of the early part of the century was that of weaver. Of those men making wills between 1600 and 1630, twenty-five were described as weavers, seventeen of these from Haxey parish. There were also five tailors. This reflects the importance of hemp and flax production in the local economy as well as the community's needs for clothing, bedding and sacks for grain.²⁴ Millers and butchers processed

²¹ J. Thirsk, 'Agricultural policy', p. 364.

²² For the importance of sheep manure, see P. Large, 'Rural society and agricultural change: Ombersley, 1580-1700' in J. Chartres & D. Hey (eds.), *English Rural Society*, p. 126. See also Bowden, 'Agricultural prices', p. 12, and J. Thirsk, 'Farming techniques', p.168. Joan Thirsk notes more use of sheepfold as fertiliser from the 1660s: J. Thirsk, 'Seventeenth-century agriculture and social change' in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Land, Church and People* (Reading, 1970), p. 153.

²³ as in Leicestershire: D. Levine, *Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism* (New York & London, 1977), p.90.

²⁴ As David Hey points out, hemp and linen goods could be finished within the parish, as they did not require fulling or dyeing: *An English Rural Community: Myddle under the Tudors and Stuarts* (Leicester, 1974), p. 155. Hemp and flax were also more labour-intensive and provided more work than did wool: J. Thirsk, 'Agricultural policy', p.339; D. W. Sabeian, *Property, Production and Family in Neckhausen, 1700-1870* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 55. As the hemp harvest came after the other harvests, additional work opportunities were provided: J. Thirsk, 'Farming techniques', p. 177. Skipp comments on the employment hemp and flax afforded for women and children: V. Skipp, *Crisis and Development: An Ecological Case Study of the Forest of Arden, 1570-1674* (Cambridge, 1978), pp.57-9.

the grain and surplus cattle produced by the dual arable/pastoral agricultural system, and animal hides were used by shoemakers and glovers, and probably by tailors, since a number of wills refer to clothing made of leather. Blacksmiths provided shoes for the many horses kept within the manor, household requirements like gallowbalks and hooks, and agricultural tools. Owston's registers between 1608 and 1611 include the burials of a horsekeeper and a pinder. There were carpenters for building and repairing houses and making furniture, and wheelwrights for making wagons and carts. Fishermen were concentrated in Owston parish, on the Trent, along with a waterman. Other occupations mentioned were a tumer in Belton, a woollen draper and a mercer in Haxey, and a chapman and a chandler in Owston.

Whatever the occupation or status used to describe the individual, most households continued to engage in farming to a greater or lesser extent throughout the period. Probate inventories from the 1610s reveal that craft or trade occupations in the early part of the century were carried out mainly as by-employments. There is little in the inventories of craftsmen or traders to distinguish them from labourers or husbandmen; the type or quantities of goods and equipment were similar. Some labourers, husbandmen and yeomen had looms or fishing boats and nets listed in their inventories or left them as legacies in wills. The quantity of sackcloth and sack yarn in the three weavers' inventories was very small, with one loom in each worth 10s. These weavers, like tailors, would probably normally have been producing goods with materials provided by the customer. One husbandman, on the other hand, George Green of Epworth, had two looms together worth £2 4s, along with hemp, sackcloth, and sacks valued at £4. He also had five cows, four horses, two ploughs, carts and harrows, seven sheep and a wool wheel, poultry, and 5 3/4 acres of com planted in April 1616. His farming appears to have been on a scale large enough to support an expansion of the weaving enterprise beyond the level possible for most weavers. The single carpenter's inventory included his tools, but no wood in store. It may be that wood was often supplied by the customer. Some husbandmen and yeomen had timber stored for carts, wagons or for use on the house, along with axes, chisels, hatchets, saws and grindstones. The inventory of the Epworth wheelwright, Richard Green, however, listed,

along with his tools, oak and ash timber in his shop and yard worth over £6. Thomas Bamby of Haxey, described as a woollen draper in his will, had no cloth at all in his inventory when he died in 1617, although he did have cows, pigs, poultry, hemp, flax, yarn and brewing equipment.²⁵ Clothing and bedding are often described in greater detail in wills. Although woollen or carsey clothing and blankets appear, clothing is more commonly described as russet, fustian or leather, and featherbeds, sheets and coverings of hemp or flax are much more common than blankets in this period. Almost everyone had a featherbed: the plentiful wildfowl provided a free supply of feathers, and the ticks would have been made of hempen cloth.²⁶ The demand for woollen cloth was probably limited. Both demand, for goods or skills, and the necessary capital or credit were prerequisites to expanding a by-employment into a larger-scale enterprise.

It is clear that households were frequently the location for a number of occupations. William Reade, husbandman of West Butterwick, bequeathed the lease on a mill and his boat. The Kelfield fisherman Brian Robinson left his boat and nets and a windmill. The inventory of the Epworth yeoman Robert Whiteley included, along with his horses, cows, sheep and agricultural equipment, two looms, 'toolles belonginge to a joiner trade', and an old boat and five nets. A number of yeomen and husbandmen owned windmills or horse mills. William Davie, Belton husbandman, left his boat along with his fishing lodge and fishing rights on the Idle. The Haxey labourer Christopher Moody also had a boat, nets and a lease of fishing on the Idle. Robert Jackson, labourer of Kinnall Ferry, in his will forgave Elizabeth Bimitt the £7 she owed him for 'cureinge her desease'.²⁷

Women's occupations, like the by-employments of men, were likely to be more visible in the inventories of better-off husbandmen and yeomen. Although most inventories show evidence of hemp growing and processing, and hemp and flax in store, and many contain some hemp yarn, spinning wheels are rarely mentioned. Spindles would presumably be included in

²⁵ LAO: Pro. Invs. 110/122; 221A/11; 221A/34; 221A/40; 221A/41; 221A/60; 221A/109.

²⁶ J. Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1978), p.73.

²⁷ LAO: Stow Wills 1616-20/96-97; 1616-20/588-590; 1616-20/59-60; 1599-1602/19; 1621-23/121; Pro. Inv. 133/64.

'and other small things' normally appended to the contents of a room. In spite of a minimal amount of sheep-keeping, eleven inventories included wool wheels, wool cards and/or wool yarn. In only three cases did the inventories list sheep as well. There would appear to have been a local market for wool, then, to be spun for knitting stockings or other garments, or to be made into cloth by a weaver like Henry Jefferson of Low Burnham in Haxey parish, whose loom had gears for linen, fembles (hemp), sack and wool.²⁸ Woollen cloth, however, was mentioned in only one inventory, whereas linen, fembles, harden and sackcloth were much more common. Butter and cheese in store were itemised in only one quarter of the inventories. All of these inventories included at least three milk cows, and all but one were appraised in the summer months, when the cows would have been producing milk. Cheeses and cheese-making equipment were only likely to appear when they were of sufficient value to be noted separately. Those with only two or three cows were likely to be making cheese, not necessarily pressed, for their own household consumption.²⁹ Brewing vessels, malt querns and supplies of malt also appear infrequently in the inventories of the less well-off, although barley is usually mentioned. Barley could be made into porridge or bread, and barley water drunk. Barley could also be sprouted and fermented without malting.³⁰ Bee-keeping too was likely to be carried out by women. Bees were not listed in most inventories (a stock of bees was worth about 4s, so may not always have been itemised), but several widows and spinsters had a number of stocks of bees in their inventories, providing them with a useful supplementary income.

v. Specialisation and Diversification in the Later Seventeenth Century

The increase in sheep rearing and wool working in Belton parish in this period appears to have coincided with an increase in local demand. Clothes made of wool or linsey-woolsey and woollen blankets were mentioned more frequently in wills during the second half of the century.

²⁸ LAO: Stow Will 1599-1602/17.

²⁹ Susan Amussen suggests that dairy production was likely to lead to a major involvement with the market, and that women might have had a higher status in these areas: S. D. Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 68-9. See also: women's involvement in the drainage dispute, Chapter 6; 'scolding' and 'railing' women, Chapter 5.

³⁰ C. Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance in Transition: Kibworth Harcourt, 1280-1700* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 164-6.

The 1658 will of Ann Wood, spinster of Graiselound, indicates that women could be involved in weaving as well as spinning wool. She appeared to be considerably better off than most spinsters, holding a £16 mortgage on her brother's house, and left, along with money, geese, bees, clothes and furniture, 'a paire of Carsay blankitts and the Bed Cloth which were of my owne makeing and...a paire of Blankits which I wove'.³¹ Several legacies to the poor took the form of land, the profits from which were to provide woollen cloth for the poor. Epworth's woollen drapers appear to have been operating on a larger scale than was the Haxey woollen draper earlier in the century. Haxey's burial register records that burials in wool began in 1678.³² The concentration of sheep rearing in Belton parish is reflected in the spinning activities revealed in the inventories. In the inventories of the other three parishes during the latter half of the century, sack yarn or linen yarn appears two to five times more frequently than does wool yarn or wool wheels, while in Belton the reverse is true. There, indications of wool spinning are two to three times more frequent than that of other yarns.³³

Like the increase in keeping sheep in Belton, other parishes too indicate specialisation in certain activities in the later seventeenth century. These are also occupations that were traditional by-employments in the manor.³⁴ Owston parish after the drainage had a monopoly on fishing and water transport. Inventories of two fishermen, one seaman and one waterman from the 1670s and 1680s reveal that these men were actively farming, with four to eight cows and two or three horses. Epworth had, along with mercers, grocers, butchers, woollen drapers, an apothecary and a baker, innkeepers and victuallers. Brewing and provision had been developing for some time in Epworth. The only men described as brewsters in their wills before the 1670s,

³¹ LAO: Stow Will 1660-63/46.

³² This was a statutory requirement from this date. Failure to comply resulted in a fine of £2 10s, to be distributed to the poor: A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (1993), p. 177.

³³ This was an occupation open to the poor, who could gather wool from the pastures and thorn bushes: J. M. Neeson, *Commoners*, pp. 168, 283.

³⁴ Margaret Spufford notes a similar development in the fen village of Willingham: *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 157-9. David Levine points out that population pressure and a system of divided inheritance 'often formed the backdrop to the establishment of rural industries in the countryside': D. Levine, *Family Formation*, p. 13. Kussmaul also mentions the contribution of improved transportation: A. Kussmaul, *A General View of the Rural Economy of England, 1538-1840* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 137-9.

John Rose in 1635 and William Taller in 1648, lived in Epworth. John Webster, vintner, was renting the four shops beneath the courthouse in Epworth in 1650.³⁵ Later victuallers' inventories give evidence of brewing, but others in Epworth in the 1680s were brewing on a scale larger than necessary to meet household requirements. Alexander Coggan, yeoman, had brewing vessels, hogsheads and bottles, ale and beer, and 42 quarters of malt in his inventory; in total, this was worth £41 15s. William Huntington, butcher, had brewing vessels, casks, ale and beer in the cellar and malt together valued at £24 10s. Neither of the two victuallers had malt listed. They both had brewing vessels, but only one had ale in store, worth £1. Other parishes also had those carrying out larger scale brewing. Two Haxey men, Thomas Taylor of East Lound in 1672 and Robert Taylor of Haxey in 1693, were described as brewsters in their wills. A Haxey wheelwright in 1690 had brewing equipment and malt worth £14 5s 6d, and the Belton yeoman John Bernard had brewing vessels in the brewhouse, £37 worth of barley in store and 36 quarters of malt in his kilnhouse in 1684. He seems to have operated as a maltster: he was owed a total of £35 5s for malt by eight men.³⁶

While all parishes had weavers, Haxey parish continued to exhibit more weaving activity, especially of sackcloth. Much of this remained on a small scale, but some were able to expand their enterprise. Thomas Read, webster of Nether Burnham, died in 1659, leaving two looms together worth £5 10s and warp and weft sackyam worth £5 12s. He employed an apprentice. He had 6 1/2 acres of crops planted in April, kept five cows and two pigs, but his weaving accounted for nearly one-quarter of the total value of his inventoried goods. Robert Kelsey, husbandman, who died in 1658, had £17 worth of sackcloth, 'wrought and some that are yet for to worke'. A bachelor from Haxey parish, Thomas Kelsey of Graiselound, who also died in 1658, appears to have been dealing in sackcloth, hemp and flax, and over some distance. He had very little in household goods and would seem to have been boarding, probably with his

³⁵ LAO: Stow Wills 1634-35/34; 1640-50 II/346; PRO: E 317/Lincs 16.

³⁶ LAO: Stow Wills 1687-90/51; 1687-90/116; 1679-80/198; 1681-83/114; 1672-74/78; 1695-99/223; Pro. Invs. 188/466; 184/80. Seventeenth-century Havering displayed a similar occupational pattern, with an emphasis on provision of drink and food: M. K. McIntosh, *A Community Transformed: the Manor and Liberty of Havering, 1500-1620* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 130-9.

stepfather in Graiselound. His inventory included two mares, fifteen scores of sackcloth, nineteen stone of rope hemp, seven stone of braked hemp and ten stone of flax. The supplies of hemp and flax suggest he may have been putting out raw materials for spinning, weaving and ropemaking. As was the case with most bachelors, he was owed money by several people. Two of these individuals lived in South Scarle, Nottinghamshire, and Doncaster. The drainage, while making transport by boat more difficult to the west, had facilitated carriage in that direction by packhorse. The Haxey badger Anthony Bamby, who died in 1672, had four acres of crops planted in May, but his inventory listed no cattle. He did have four horses, a wagon and a cart, as well as a plough and harrows. The only item listed in his shop was sackcloth. From at least the mid-century, then, and probably before, if the crop rotation on the more fertile ground mentioned by the surveyor in 1633 is indicative, it appears that sackcloth was being exported from the Isle.³⁷

While the parishes show some evidence of specialisation in the later part of the century, each continued to sustain a variety of agricultural, craft and trading activities. Most men were still engaged in farming as their main occupation, supplemented by by-employments. Robert Robinson the elder, yeoman of Kinnal Ferry, for instance, indicated some of the activities engaged in by his household in his will of 1658. He left two houses, arable and meadow land, horses and cows, his wright's tools, his fishing gear, a brew pan and a turf spade, among other goods. He also directed that his elder son was to 'have free liberty at the time of the year convenient to bleech cloth at the low end' of a piece of land given to the younger son. The 1659 will of the gentleman Peter Bernard of Belton provides evidence of the same activity, bequeathing 'all the cloth upon the grasse'. Some individuals were able to expand a by-employment into a more profitable enterprise, but continuing other occupations within the household. Robert Dowson, house carpenter of Haxey, had his working tools and more than £6 worth of wood, but also had three cows and seven acres of crops (corn, hemp and flax) planted

³⁷ LAO: Pro. Invs. 157/119; 221B/66; 221B/64; 220/57. The crop rotation indicated a crop of hemp on the sandy soil every other year: PRO: E315/390, fols. 36-7. (See Chapter 1)

in May, 1674. Gregory Foster, Haxey webster, had eight cows, five horses, two wagons, a plough and harrows, crops sown and in store, along with a loom, sackcloth and yarn in his shop worth £4 6s 8d in 1680. The blacksmith Richard Morrison of Haxey had, in addition to the tools and goods in his shop, four cows and 5 1/2 acres of crops planted in August, 1678. A blacksmith in Epworth, Richard Goldsmith, owned goods in his shop, seven cows, three horses, pigs, corn sown, a wagon, a plough, brewing vessels and malt, and butter and cheese in store. John Taylor, Haxey wheelwright, had £20 worth of wood and tools when he died in 1671, as well as four cows and four acres of crops sown. In addition to his sown crop, the tailor Robert Well of East Lound had brewing vessels, malt and ale in his inventory in 1671. The Kinnal Ferry fisherman William Revill owned a fishing boat with nets, and also eight cows and three horses, a cart, wagon and harrow, and had over £12 worth of corn sown in June, 1671, along with hemp and flax. These inventories show that the varied activities of the earlier period continued through the century. Unlike villages like Colyton in Devon, where the local supply of raw materials became insufficient to meet an increased market demand for wool cloth and where outside merchants gained control of craft production, undermining the viability of smallholdings, the inhabitants of Epworth manor had access to a range of raw materials from a multiplicity of local producers throughout the century, giving smallholders a number of options to supplement their incomes.³⁸

Occupations within the manor, as described in wills, probate inventories and parish registers, continued to be the traditional weavers, tailors, carpenters, wheelwrights, butchers, shoemakers, millers, blacksmiths and, in Owston, fishermen of the earlier part of the century. Belton's parish registers between 1630 and 1641 list the status or occupation of men buried, and these include two glassiers and a mason. Belton appears to have had more gentlemen and well-off yeomen resident in the parish during this period in comparison with other parishes (one esquire and one knight were buried in the parish during these years), so that these occupations

³⁸ LAO: Stow Wills 1660-63/728; 1640-59 II/592-93; Pro. Invs. 178/61; 181/160; 178/257; 220/37; 173/514; 171/18; 220/342. D. Levine, *Family Formation*, pp. 104-9.

might have been particularly in demand here. However, glass windows were named as house fixtures in a growing number of testators' wills by this period throughout the manor. A mason died in Owston in the 1670s and a bricklayer in the 1690s. In the early eighteenth century, Benjamin Huntsman, born in 1704 to an Epworth Quaker family, was apprenticed to a clockmaker in Epworth.³⁹ The only occupation attributed to women, other than the term 'spinster', apparently used only for women who had never married, was that of midwife. The widow Alice Allilee of Epworth was so described in her will of 1683, and an 'obstetrix' was buried in Haxey in 1700.⁴⁰

During the 1680s, there is evidence that expansion of activities within the household often occurred in more than one area. A Haxey wheelwright, Thomas Browne, owned fourteen cows and six horses, two wagons, a plough and harrows, had corn and hemp on the ground, the wood and tools belonging to his trade, valued at £15 15s, and also brewing equipment worth over £7 and malt worth the same amount. It appears that substantial farming and brewing was taking place, in addition to a flourishing wheelwright business. The Epworth butcher William Huntington, with a stall in the market place, had nineteen cows, seven horses, thirty swine, three hundred sheep and 'grass on the ground' listed in his inventory, and his household was also brewing on a large scale and had a store of cheeses. The inventory of Thomas Crosby, cordwainer of Kinnal Ferry, lists the lasts and hammers in his shop, a mare with saddle and bridle, eleven cows, cheeses worth £1 5s and five pots of butter weighing 72 pounds.⁴¹ Spinning necessitated more, and more varied, equipment in some households in this period. As well as the wool wheels and little wheels of the earlier part of the century, spinning wheels, Flanders wheels, Hull wheels and gig wheels were present.⁴² It appears that the expansion of production

³⁹ D. Hey, *The Fiery Blades of Hallamshire: Sheffield and its Neighbourhood, 1660-1740* (Leicester, 1991), p. 194.

⁴⁰ LAO: Stow Will 1684-86/28.

⁴¹ LAO: Pro. Invs. 188/466; 188/289; 187/276.

⁴² These were most often found in chambers (upstairs rooms). Looms, in other parts of England, were often installed in chambers: M. W. Barley, 'Rural housing in England' in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Agrarian History, 1500-1640*, p. 761.

of goods for sale, whether agricultural produce or craft products, could help to finance further expansion in other areas, particularly activities in which women traditionally engaged.⁴³

The inventories of the better-off craftsmen, in terms of total value of goods, type and amount of household goods, and total number of livestock, look similar to those of better-off husbandmen or less well-off yeomen. These craftsmen tended, however, to farm less land, not to own a plough, and to keep a larger proportion of their livestock in the form of cattle in comparison with husbandmen of the same financial standing. Those craftsmen who were moderately well-off showed the same pattern when compared to the less well-off husbandmen. The total number of animals kept was similar, but the craftsmen kept only cows, with possibly one horse, and farmed relatively little land. The Haxey carpenter Vincent Taylor had eight cows and one horse. He had about three acres of corn in store in October and no winter crop sown, but his tools and wood were valued at £10. Richard Robinson, Haxey roper, owned twelve cows and no horses and had three acres of crops sown in July, half of the area sown with hemp. Richard Kirshaw, weaver of Owston, had nine cows, one mare with saddle and bridle, cheeses, two looms in his shop and a modest amount of corn in store in September.⁴⁴ For all these craftsmen, the better-off and the moderately prosperous, the income generated by the craft activity seems to have provided a considerably higher standard of living than the amount of arable land they had access to would suggest. Increasing a herd of cattle, providing a further source of income through dairying and the sale of surplus stock for beef and hides, was not dependent on access to arable land or the produce from it. Meadow could be owned or rented, or hay could be purchased, but pasture could be obtained without cost on the commons.

⁴³ Multiple occupations in households have also been noted in Terling: K. Wrightson & D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700* (Oxford, 1995), p.23; and in Hallamshire: D. Hey, *The Fiery Blades of Hallamshire*, pp. 53-4. In Havering, in contrast, an increased scale of production by 1620 was seen to have forced women out of their traditional commercial activities. McIntosh, *A Community Transformed*, pp. 289-92.

⁴⁴ LAO: Pro. Invs. 219B/75; 220B/59; 188/309.

vi. Investment and Trade in the Later Seventeenth Century

Investment in craft equipment, premises and raw materials could increasingly be an alternative to investment in land, ploughs and horses. Those with sufficient land could purchase more brewing equipment, using their barley crop to extend their brewing activity into a commercial venture. Even those with very little land might accumulate the capital through labouring or inheritance to expand into brewing. Thomas Taylor of Haxey, whose status was unspecified, had three cows, no horses, and about two acres of crop in his laith in October 1681, but his household appeared comfortably furnished, and he had brewing equipment and malt worth a total of £6, as well as a pair of malt querns. This was an option open to women with sufficient means too. The Haxey widow Dorothy Ducker in 1689 left her son the brewing pan she had bought.⁴⁵

Not all craftsmen were improving their financial position. There were many, especially weavers and tailors, whose inventories indicate a lifestyle similar to labourers, with a small amount of land, two or three cows and minimal household goods. As with farming, inherited wealth in the form of money, household goods, occupational equipment or land was important in setting up a viable craft enterprise. Profits from a successful craft occupation could, like profits from farming, then be invested in other profitable activities. It is possible to see why apprenticeships were becoming increasingly part of a legacy left to a son, grandson or nephew.⁴⁶

Modest investment could also bring fruitful returns. A horse or two and sufficient capital enabled some to deal in sackcloth by overland transport, but river transport was increasingly important, both for import and export of goods. In the early seventeenth century, Gainsborough became a port of entry for raw materials and 'London wares'. In 1683, the town had thirty sail of shipping from thirty to eighty tons burden. In the year June 1704 to June 1705, the Hull port books show that ninety-eight ships from Stockwith (the village immediately to the south of Owston parish) and Gainsborough were cleared through Hull customs. There were river boats

⁴⁵ LAO: Pro. Inv. 219B/59; Stow Will 1687-90/71.

⁴⁶ See Chapter 3.

transporting goods too: Humber keels, single-masted vessels operated by one man and his family, and 'catches', flat-bottomed boats drawn by men or horses.⁴⁷

There were men in Owston parish participating in this activity by the 1670s. Already in the 1660s, two men were described in the parish registers as 'sailors', and from the 1670s onwards, there are several men termed 'seamen' or 'mariners'. John Dawber of Kinnal Ferry was a seaman who died in 1673, leaving a small keel worth £15. He also owned a house and croft, a close and meadow land, and kept six cows and three horses. Thomas Robinson, a waterman of Kinnal Ferry, who died in 1680, operated on a smaller scale. He left a house, a hempground and one acre of arable to his son in his will. He had four cows, and his inventory listed butter, cheese, sackcloth, yarn and made sacks. He also owned one-fifth part of a boat, the share worth 15s. This part-ownership is reminiscent of similar arrangements in the agricultural sphere: sharing a plough and draught team, a cart or a flock of sheep. For the well-off, opportunities existed to invest surplus cash in the expanding river traffic, again through part-ownership. Thomas Vavasour, Belton gentleman, owned one-eighth of a vessel, the share worth £40 when he died in 1671, and Richard Parnell, a grocer who had traded in Epworth in the 1660s, but who was trading in Haxey when he died in 1675, owned one-fourth of a vessel, his share valued at £100. Robert Whaplate, yeoman of Kelfield in Owston parish, in 1689, and Richard Torksey, gentleman of Owston, in 1696, each left one-sixteenth of a vessel in their wills and named the masters of the vessels. These larger vessels were likely to have been the two-masted brigs operating on the river, with a crew of captain, cabin-boy, mate, man before the mast, cook and one other.⁴⁸

Local grocers and mercers benefitted, as did those with a marketable surplus, from the increase in river trade.⁴⁹ Ships from the Trent travelled down the Humber and then along the coast. The 1676 administration account of the Epworth mercer Alexander Caister shows debts

⁴⁷ I. Beckwith, *The Book of Gainsborough* (Buckingham, 1988), pp. 96-9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.99. LAO: Stow Wills 1672-74/422; 1679-80/189; 1691-94/226; 1695-99/228; Pro. Invs. 176/282; 220A/63; 173/539; 178/346.

⁴⁹ Nair notes the importance of increased river traffic on the Severn for Highley: G. Nair, *Highley: The Development of a Community* (Oxford, 1988), pp.137-8.

owing to merchants in Gainsborough, Thorne, Norwich, Hull and London. These included two mercers, a haberdasher, a grocer, two merchants, a chandler, a milliner, two smokers and a silkman. His inventory lists his wares as mercery ware, grocery ware, silk ware, ironmonger ware, salt, 'bodyes of all sorts', candles, Manchester ware⁵⁰ and linen drapery, buttons and other small goods. Richard Parnell, Haxey grocer, had similar wares in his inventory in 1675: mercery wares, haberdashery, grocery wares, iron ware, bodyes, silk wares, salt, pitch and tar. While Alexander Caister appeared to be earning a living entirely from his trade, keeping only one cow and a nag and growing no crops, and the Belton mercer Charles Viccars kept one cow and a filly and had only about an acre of corn and flax sown, other tradesman engaged in additional activities. Richard Parnell had no cows, one riding mare, but had six acres of flax, one acre of wheat and two acres of oats planted in July, held two acres of meadow, and had brewing equipment and three quarters of barley in store. George Gilby, yeoman of Belton, in 1686 owned one bull, thirteen cattle, eight horses, one hundred and twenty sheep, wagons, ploughs and harrows, corn planted and in store, and 'goods of Merchandice as Merceryes Grocerye and other matters p'teyninge to the trade he in his life time used' in his shop. He also appears to have held half the advowson of the parish, as he had in store his half part of the tithe grain and his part in the tithe debt book.⁵¹

The appraisers of the goods of the Epworth apothecary, Henry Maw, had to bring in a specialist to value his wares in 1677. The goods in his shop had been 'viewed by Mr. George Rassinde an Apothecary' and appraised at £9. He also owned an old nag and nine pigs, and had about an acre of corn on the ground in June. He had brewing equipment and malt and owed money for five quarters of malt. Francis Hawcon, victualler of Epworth, kept nine cattle, two horses and a wagon, and four pigs, but had only 10s worth of crop on the ground in April, 1680. Another Epworth victualler, Richard Peck, had only one cow and five pigs and no crops planted or in store in May, 1684. He did have brewing equipment and ale in store. Like the craftsmen,

⁵⁰ Woollen cloth manufactured in Lancashire. See J. Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects*, pp. 145-6.

⁵¹ LAO: Ad. Acc. 35/121; Pro. Invs. 178/346; 174/274; 184/21.

the type, quantity and value of the household goods of these tradesmen was similar to those of yeomen or husbandmen, but their farming activity, in particular the use of arable land, was minimal or non-existent, except in the case of the yeoman who was also operating as a mercer. Some of these men may have owned land that they rented out, providing additional income, although those wills that survive for these men do not mention land, except for the 1 1/2 roods left by the victualler Francis Hawcon. It seems that non-agricultural occupations were increasingly capable of providing all or the major part of the income of a household.⁵²

Although the less affluent tradesmen, like the craftsmen of varying fortunes, were mainly local men, the better-off grocers, with the exception of Alexander Caister, were not from local families. However, some of the wealthier local men were providing for younger sons through a combination of land, money and apprenticeship. The sons of the better-off yeomen in the manor who were trained as craftsmen were likely to be set up where the opportunities were greater. Reuben Laughton, weaver of the City of Lincoln, died unmarried in 1644. He came from a yeoman family in Owston parish and still held four acres of land there, which he left to his brother's children. He left the residue of his estate, which included £93 owing to him, to his married sister in Belton. The joiner Robert Popplewell of Gainsborough came from a prosperous Belton family. In his will of 1670, he left his messuage and farm in Belton parish and the rest of his freehold lands there to his two daughters after his wife's death, and also left each of them £40, a piece of silver plate and six silver spoons. But opportunities for the better-off to set up a son in trade locally were increasing. Robert Whiteley, yeoman of Epworth, in his will of 1686, left legacies for his two younger sons, having already provided for the eldest. He left a one-acre close of meadow and one acre of arable to his second son along, with £250. His third son received two closes of meadow or pasture containing five acres, five rigs of meadow and five acres of arable and £150, some of which was to be used to put him to a trade at the discretion of the eldest son and the supervisors. He left an acre of land 'to be Letten And the yearely Rent

⁵² LAO: Pro. Invs. 178/127; 220A/71; 186/117; Stow Will 1681-83/114. In Terling, too, some craftsmen were living on their craft income alone, while most continued to hold and/or farm land: Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, p.22.

theare of Arraised to bye wollon Cloth with it...in every year ffor ever and give the same to ye poore ould people or Children of ye said parish who shall stand ye most nede of Clothing'. If the yearly rent 'at aney time heare after be Employed to Aney other use what soever that then this Gift shall be voyd' His second son died three years later, and his occupation was listed as a woollen draper. It appears that a cash legacy was given to set the second son up in trade, and the charitable legacy served the dual purpose of providing clothing for the poor and custom for the son.⁵³

vii. Poverty

The effects of the drainage on the poor are very difficult to detect. The inventories show no apparent reduction in the number of cattle kept by labourers, but these constitute a very small sample. The same bias towards the better-off exists in the inventory sample as in that of the wills.⁵⁴ Those without the ability to support a cow or two were unlikely to have left a large enough estate to be worth assessing. One opinion on the degree of poverty in the manor and the effect of the drainage on it is the 1648 deposition of Thomas Reade of Belton. As he was the commoner who was renting lands from the Participants and giving evidence on their behalf, his account was not likely to be neutral:

before the Drayninge of the said Common...he hath seene ten poore people on a Day then begginge at his ffathers Doore for releefe And since the lands Improvement there is scare to be seene three poore people goinge begginge in a weeke...the estats and Condicons of the poore people is very much bettered and the number thereof much lessened, for that they are sett on work by Dayly employment in the Levell by weedinge Corne Lyne burninge of ground pulling Lyne gatheringe harvest Thrashinge Dikeinge and other husbandry and haveinge great wages paid unto them for there said labour.⁵⁵

Without surviving poor law records, sources that might give some insight into poverty are those parish registers that recorded paupers at burial. As this was not a legal requirement, the assiduousness with which the information was included was likely to vary with the recorder. The picture is complicated by the possibility of poor immigrants into the manor in the 1670s.⁵⁶

⁵³ LAO: Stow Wills 1640-59/ 80; 1675-78/7; 1687-90/263.

⁵⁴ As Neeson points out, small commoners might share a close: J. M. Neeson, *Commoners*, p. 102.

⁵⁵ PRO: E 134/24 Charles I/Easter 4, fol. 6.

⁵⁶ See Chapter 1.

The only information from the earlier period is provided by the registers of Owston parish for the years 1608 to 1611, in which 11.11% of men who were buried were described as 'poor men', although no women were described as poor. Haxey's registers from the 1660s note paupers with some regularity, and these indicate that paupers constituted an even larger proportion of the population during this period. In the 1660s, 12.40% of men and 9.56% of women who were buried were so designated. In the 1670s, although there were pauper burials in every year except 1676, the percentage for the decade went down again to 11.11% of men and 5.99% of women. The percentage dropped even lower in the 1680s, accounted for by no paupers being recorded in 1680, 1684, or for the years 1686 to 1692. In the 1690s as a whole, however, paupers accounted for 12.37% of male and 13.79% of female burials.⁵⁷ These were presumably the people whose estates would not cover their funeral expenses and who had no relatives able to meet the costs. Many of these individuals would have suffered from 'life-cycle' poverty, especially the elderly and landless widows with children. Many of the entries in the registers refer to poor old men or women. Long-term illness or disability and indebtedness could also tip the balance between subsistence and poverty. However, there were periods when those on the borderline were more likely to find their resources stretched past the limit.

If these figures are looked at in the light of the harvest conditions noted by Bowden, it can be seen that the run of good wheat harvests between 1664 and 1672 coincides with a large number of pauper burials.⁵⁸ Although weather conditions were ideal for grain, they were not good for grass. Those with very little or no land, relying on the common for pasture and hay, would often have found it impossible to retain even one cow when the pasture was deteriorating and settlement by tenants of the Participants was renewed. The total number of paupers buried in the 1670s, 28, was exactly the same as in the 1660s, but the total number of burials rose in the decade. The 1670s had mainly warm, dry summers, but there was heavy rainfall and flooding in several years of the decade. The proportion of poor men buried was higher in these

⁵⁷ In the registers of Wigston Magna in the years 1698-1701, 16% were described as 'poor': W. G. Hoskins, *The Midland Peasant* (1957), p. 212.

⁵⁸ P. Bowden, 'Agricultural prices', pp. 55-57.

decades than the proportion of poor women. The years immediately prior to this, 1656 to 1663, had been poor harvest years, as had 1645 to 1651. Those buried in the 1660s and 1670s may have lost ground in those years, especially if they had gone into debt, and poor immigrants may have added to the total. The same problems might be expected to have occurred in the earlier years of the century as a result of the poor harvests of the late 1590s.

The years 1685 to 1691 were again exceptionally good for wheat, and these were the years when virtually no pauper burials were recorded in Haxey. It is possible that the information was simply not recorded in these years. The registers of Epworth and Owston, which otherwise failed to mention paupers, did record a few during this same period. The evidence from the depositions of the mid-1680s is mixed. The paucity of pasture is noted as a problem for those who had meadow grounds to use as a substitute or who were able to pay for pasture elsewhere. The problem cited as relating specifically to the poor is the loss of turbarry for fuel. Several deponents, like Thomas Grainger, labourer of Belton, aged eighty, said that, before the drainage, there were 'not soe many poore people within Epworth Mannour as now there are'.⁵⁹ The period before the drainage was, of course, over fifty-five years before. The 1680s was a period when grain harvests were good in most years, prices were low and work was likely to be reasonably available, but there are also suggestions of recent poor migrants into the manor, attracted by the peat resources.⁶⁰ The high proportion of pauper burials shown by the Haxey registers for the 1690s coincided with the unusually cold and wet weather after 1691. This resulted in crop failures in 1692 to 1699, and would have affected the hay crop as well as grain, bringing higher grain prices and making wintering of animals much more difficult. In this period, the proportion of women paupers, mainly widows, was slightly higher than that of poor men. All would have suffered from higher prices and reduced employment opportunities.

Not only were the very poor suffering during the period. William Thornhill, gentleman of Owston, in 1682 left the guardianship of his daughter to his wife, 'not doubting but my wife will for

⁵⁹ PRO: E 134/1 & 2 James II/Hilary 25, fol. 33.

⁶⁰ See chapter 1.

my daughter performe and give unto her such proportion of that small estate I leave as shee can well spare'. His probate inventory suggests he was not being unduly modest. Although his house was large and included a study, four chambers, garrets and a brewhouse, his total inventoried goods were valued at £39 13s 8d. However, the hall and great parlour seem sparsely furnished, and it may be that those goods considered to be his wife's goods were not included.⁶¹ Although cows and horses, a plough and three harrows were listed, there were no crops on the ground or in store, so that his land would appear to have been rented out. His land, of course, would not have been included in the inventory. However, his debts were not listed either, and his purse and apparel were valued at only £2. William Thornhill had possibly seen better days.⁶²

viii. Illness

Weather conditions, grain prices and indebtedness could all affect the ability of the individual or the household to remain economically viable and provide adequately for the next generation. Another factor was illness. The illness of a productive member of the household not only deprived the household of his or her labour, but was also likely to involve other members in nursing the patient, along with money spent on medicines and treatment. Ashton Manning, gentleman of Belton, was living with his cousin and his wife when he became ill and then died in 1650. His administration account includes the expenses incurred during his illness. £3 had been 'disbursed and paid to Watchers that attended the deceased in the time of his sicknes and for their dyett' and a further £7 'disbursed for Phisique for the deceased'. Not only the well-off, however, incurred these expenses. In 1621, Elizabeth Bimitt, a labourer's daughter, owed £7 to the Kinnall Ferry labourer Robert Jackson for curing her disease. John Healey of Epworth, whose goods when he died in 1679 consisted of 'two old pair of linings and one old wastcoate and one pair of old boots and one pair of old stockings and one pair of old shooes', together worth 6s 8d, and purse and apparel worth £1 10s, had spent £1 12s 3d 'Paid to ye Apothecary'. In the

⁶¹ as suggested by M. Spufford, 'The limitations of the probate inventory', p. 145, and by A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property*, pp. 144-5.

⁶² LAO Stow Will 1681-83/162; Pro. Inv. 183/340.

previous century, the inventory of Katherine Rud of Haxey records a debt of 16s 8d to William Coggan that he bestowed upon me in the tyme of my sickness when I had noe help but of God and him'. The Haxey widow Mary Harrison in 1671 left £5 to her daughter, to be 'expended and laid out towards the cureing of a susposed disease now uppon her called the Kings Evill'. In the 1682 administration account of William Blaby of West Butterwick, it was recorded that £4 had been spent to cure Isabel Blaby's eyes of 'a pearle'. It is possible to see why Henry Wates of Kinnall Ferry left instructions 'if it shall please god to viset ether Anne my wife or anie of my children with sickness whereby there poore estaytes shalbe wakned' in 1604. For the literate, some self-help was available. The books in the library in the Haxey church vestry, inventoried by the vicar William Dalby in 1607, included *Drye's Surgerye* and *Tumer's Herball*. Richard Massey, Epworth gentleman, bequeathed to his married sister *Barrowe's Method of Phisicke* in 1675.⁶³

If illness or accident resulted in death, further expenses were incurred. The cost of food and drink at the funeral varied with the capacity of the estate, but was usually more than £1 and sometimes considerably more. Ashton Manning's funeral cost over £27. Burial fees added another 10s and administration £1 to £3 plus expenses for administrators and supervisors. If an infant's mother died, nursing charges were likely, and these amounted to about £2 a year. The untimely death of a productive member, of course, had longer term consequences for the capacity of the household to support itself and to provide an adequate start in life for the children.

ix. Credit and Debt

Throughout the century, an important factor in the economic viability of a household and in an individual's ability to maintain or improve his or her economic position was the ability to obtain credit when necessary without becoming overburdened with debt. Debts, large and small, were common, and administration accounts reveal the extent to which indebtedness could

⁶³ LAO: Ad. Accs. 40/203; 44/50; Stow Wills 1621-21/121; 1672-74/149; 1603-06/131; 1675-78/6; Pro. Invs. 181/134; 76/254; Haxey parish register.

deplete or completely overwhelm even an apparently viable estate. Debts could be incurred for a variety of reasons, but the land market was particularly likely to be involved in both the incurring of debts and in their repayment. Wills contain frequent instructions from testators to sell land to clear debts and many references to lands recently purchased. Sometimes purchased lands could not be retained if the buyer died soon after. Robert Whaplate, yeoman of Kelfield, in his will of 1689, explained that 'whereas by reason of my late purchase made of the aforesaid lands and some other lands at East Butterwick I have contracted several debts but am aminded that they should be honestly paid and discharged and do acknowledge it as a great favour in all them persons that they would give me that credit', some of the lands should be sold to pay the debts. Mortgages were common, both for the purchase of land and to raise capital on land already owned.⁶⁴ Land sales and mortgages often took place between relatives. John Lindley, gentleman of Kelfield had bought land from his wife's yeoman brother, Robert Broughton of Belton, 'by way of morgage'. John left the land to his brother in 1627, giving his brother-in-law the option to repurchase the lands for £120 within five years. Ann Wood, spinster of Craiselound, in 1658 held a £16 mortgage on her brother's house. William Raven, yeoman of Kelfield in Owston parish, left his daughter in 1695 the £10 owed to him by her husband on mortgage.⁶⁵

Mortgages were usually held by gentlemen or yeomen in the manor itself, often for land purchased from them. Samuel Taylor, husbandman of Craiselound in Haxey, in 1602 owed £20 on a close of land to Thomas Phillips, Haxey yeoman, to whom it was mortgaged. The curate of Haxey, James Marshall, instructed in his will of 1604 that a deed of mortgage held on two acres of meadow in the possession of William Tompson be released on payment of £6. Robert Tankersley, Haxey gentleman, held £628 in bonds, bills and mortgages when he died in 1682,

⁶⁴ LAO: Stow Will 1691-94/226. Margaret Spufford notes the importance of credit, and particularly the role of mortgages in building up the estates of engrossing yeomen in Chippenham: M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 78, 80. Holderness discusses the wide use of borrowing on the security of land in the seventeenth century: B. A. Holderness, 'Widows in pre-industrial society: an essay upon their economic functions' in R. M. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 433-4, 437-9.

⁶⁵ LAO: Stow Wills 1627-31/68-69; 1660-63/46; 1695-99/184.

but he had been holding mortgages for some time before. Henry Taylor, husbandman of Nethergate in Haxey, left his wife a close in 1659, on condition she pay to Robert Tankersley the outstanding debt and 'lose the mortgage which he hath of me for the same'. Robert's widow Anne inherited part of the mortgages and bonds still owing, £250 worth of which she passed on to her infant great-granddaughter in 1689. One of the mortgages was an £11 debt owing by William Barker of Haxey, who passed on the debt to his two daughters in his will of 1688, along with the 1 1/2 acres which were mortgaged. It is possible to observe a growing differential between the wealthier and less well-off through these transactions. William Barker's daughters' legacies were conditional upon paying a substantial proportion of the value of the lands they received, while Anne Tankersley's great-granddaughter was left £250 worth of debts owing, as well as the interest accruing until she reached twenty-one.⁶⁶

Bachelors and well-off, especially childless, widows frequently had a substantial proportion of their wealth owing to them. Loans at interest provided an income, and small sums lent without interest built up goodwill and credit for possible future needs. Some of the wealthier yeomen, mercers and gentlemen resident in the manor appear frequently in lists of creditors, providing small loans without specialty. These seem sometimes to be in the nature of neighbourly or charitable assistance, without expectation of repayment, to those in financial difficulties. For example, both Thomas Crookes of Haxey, whose goods in 1683 were worth £3 18s 2d and who owed a total of £8 15s 11d, and the Haxey widow Mary Taylor, with goods valued at £11 13s and debts totalling £20 16s in 1682, owed small sums to Mr. Browne of Haxey and George Bromitt. The mercer Alexander Caister was owed £100 when he died in 1675; £40 of this amount was listed as 'uncertain debts'. Robert Whiteley, Epworth yeoman, was owed

⁶⁶ LAO: Stow Wills 1599-1602/265; 1603-06/118; 1681-83/263; 1660-63/497; 1687-90/245; 1691-94/25. The development of the principle of equity of redemption by mid-century provided greater security for those borrowing: C. Clay, 'Landlords and estate management in England' in *Agrarian History, 1640-1750*, p. 150. For increased moneylending by gentlemen, on mortgages and bonds, after the Civil War, see F. Heal and C. Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Basingstoke & London, 1994), pp. 125-7. Interest rates fell during the course of the century from 10% to 8% in 1624, to 6% in 1651, and to 4% by the 1680s: *ibid*, p. 162.

£200 with specialty and £100 without when he died in 1687, and his name appears as a creditor in many lists.⁶⁷

Larger amounts, however, were normally owed by bill or bond, unless they involved a close relative. Three testators in Epworth at the end of the century found George Whichcott, esquire, of Mellwood Hall in Owston parish, a source of loans or mortgages. Edmond Maw, Belton gentleman, in 1689 left ten acres to his son, on condition he pay £25 due to George Whichcott on a mortgage on a house and lands in Kinnall Ferry. An Epworth woollen draper, Henry Pettinger, with inherited lands in Haxey parish, instructed in 1693 that his farm in Burnham (Haxey) be sold 'for the payment of a certain sume of money due upon a mortgage of the same to George Whichcott Esquire, or otherwise as Councell Learned in the Law shall advise for the redemption of the same'. But George Whichcott was a borrower too. In 1693, William Midwinter, gentleman of Epworth, was still owed by George Whichcott '£216 or thereabouts being the residue or remainder of a £1000 the purchase-money for the Lordshipp of East Stockwith'. It was common for mortgages, bonds and bills to be held by other prominent yeomen or gentlemen for safekeeping.⁶⁸

At times, however, it appears that mortgages and loans needed to be procured from slightly further afield. The mercer Robert Kirk of Gainsborough fulfilled this function in the earlier part of the century. In 1615, John Starkey, yeoman of Epworth, owed him £70, and the Belton widow Mary Sandall owed him £10 by bond in 1626. Administration accounts from the 1610s show Robert Kirk, mercer of Gainsborough, appearing as a creditor almost every time the deceased owed a large sum; a total of £102 9s was owed on bond to him by seven residents of the manor. The individual sums, ranging from £5 10s to £22, were too large to be believable debts for goods, so that the money appears to have been advanced to his debtors. Robert Popplewell of Belton in 1624 left his daughter a cottage house on condition she pay to Robert Kirk £18 3s. Robert Kirk was one of the two men holding the mortgage on lands in the

⁶⁷ LAO: Pro. Invs. 183/376; 183/394; 178/85; 219B/146.

⁶⁸ LAO: Stow Wills 1687-90/164; 1691-94/161; 1691-94/143.

possession of William Well the elder, husbandman of Belton, which he was unable to redeem in 1629. Thomas Pillsworth, yeoman of Epworth, instructed his wife in 1637 to 'redeme my howse and ground which is morgast to Mr. Kirke'. At a later stage, a Matthew Kirk, gentleman of Gainsborough, appeared in the will of Thomas Jaques, bachelor of Epworth in 1662. The executor of the will, Thomas's brother, was to pay Matthew Kirk £10 'which I owe unto him and Louse ye Copie hold Estate which he hath for Secuerety for ye said money'. An earlier Matthew Kirk had lent money to William Torksey, yeoman of Owston, in 1619. Assuming some connection among these men, the Kirks of Gainsborough seem to have been doing well out of their lending activities in the manor.⁶⁹

Most debts, however, involved much smaller amounts, borrowed from friends, neighbours and relatives, on specialty or on a more casual basis.⁷⁰ These debts were often forgiven by testators or repaid, with additions, in wills. Frequently children were left the money owed by their parents. At times legatees were left a horse or cow, cloth or grain they had bought from the testator, but not yet paid for. Tradesmen too were operating largely on credit, both owing money to suppliers and themselves supplying goods on credit.⁷¹ Alexander Caistor, mercer of Epworth, for example, who died in 1675, had shop goods worth a total of £178 7s 10d, but owed a total of £207 9s 4d to a long list of suppliers. He, in turn, was owed a total of £100. Debts, in addition to loans and goods received, often included unpaid rents, unpaid wages and legacies owing by executors or the parents of minor legatees. The payment of dowries, too, was sometimes deferred until long after the marriage. Margerie Brownley, widow of Belton, had made a formal agreement with her son-in-law that £40 of her daughter's dowry be paid upon her own decease. Her will of 1617 set out the terms of the repayment in unusual detail, no doubt

⁶⁹ LAO: Stow Wills 1612-15/399-400; 1624-26/145; 1624-26/6; 1627-31/165; 1636-38/162; 1660-63/610; 1616-20/85. For comparable lending of large sums and mortgages, see M. K. McIntosh, *A Community Transformed*, p. 158.

⁷⁰ E. P. Thompson describes petty indebtedness as 'a sort of "swapping" ...sometimes as a part of a reciprocity of services': E. P. Thompson, 'The grid of inheritance: a comment' in J. Goody, J. Thirsk & E. P. Thompson (eds.), *Family and Inheritance* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 347.

⁷¹ McIntosh notes that payment was often deferred on delivered goods in medieval Havering, with balances going uncollected for years as long as goodwill lasted between the parties: M. K. McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community: Royal Manor of Havering, 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 168-9.

influenced by her other son-in-law, 'the learned counsell in law my executor'. There appears to have been a similar arrangement between Richard Maw, yeoman of Epworth, and his father-in-law Thomas Codd over the payment of his wife's dowry, although no formal agreement is mentioned. Richard, in his will of 1627, left his youngest daughter a cash legacy, part of which was to come out of his own estate and the rest to be paid by his father-in-law from what was 'behind and yet unpaid of my wives porcon'.⁷²

Debts owing formed part or all of many legacies. Some idea of the debt relationships between family members and the final reckoning can be gained from the will of Helen Aire, widow of Belton, in 1625. She left money legacies to her four married daughters and four married sons and their children, all to come out of the £19 owed to her by her son Robert. Robert originally owed a total of £26 to his mother in three bills, which she had delivered into the keeping of her son-in-law John Copperwite. Robert had paid £7 of this to date. Two years before, she had given to John Copperwite £10 to use for his children, on condition he acquit another son-in-law, Charles Pye, of 20s he owed John for a horse he had bought from him. Charles Pye, with whom she apparently was living, was to receive the residue of the £19 and the residue of her goods, as well as a trunk and its contents 'yt is in the custody of John Copperwite (of Mattersey Thorpe) my sonne in law'. In a memorandum to the will, she added that her son Robert also owed her £3 6s 8d in rent, out of which she wished her funeral expenses to be paid and 'such debts as I owe to my sonne Pye for my diet'. The will also demonstrates how a widow left with sufficient land (the rent owing by Helen Aire's son covered half a year) or an annuity could live independently or with whichever of her children was mutually suitable.⁷³

Another example, the 1638 will of a cooper of Belton, John Grave, shows a similar pattern of debt relationships within the family. One of his sons-in-law, William Leggat, owed him 50s, 25s of which was to be paid to William's wife, with the remaining 25s forgiven, provided William pay one shilling to his own mother. A second son-in-law owed him 40s, 20s of which

⁷² LAO: Ad. Acc. 35/121; Stow Wills 1616-20/403-404; 1627-31/33-34.

⁷³ LAO: Stow Will 1625-26/36.

was to be distributed amongst the five children of a third son-in-law and the remaining 20s forgiven. John Broughton of Owston in 1640, having left 13 1/4 acres of land and the residue of his goods to his grandson John Everatt, gave the £20 'which is due upon bond sealed and delivered by John Everatt my grandchilde' to his daughter Helen Percy. Her husband was forgiven the £6 debt he owed. The unmarried Kinnall Ferry house carpenter, Thomas Burton, in 1662 left his sister £10 'besides ffouer pounds her husband oweth me that I owe her after'.⁷⁴

Debts owed by those outside the family were also common legacies to family members, the relationships being passed on by the legacies along with the debts. In many cases, debts were listed, either in a list appended to the will or to the probate inventory. Some would then cancel out others, and any remaining debts would be paid either by the sale of land, specified in the will, or would be paid out of the residue of the goods and chattels by the executor. Debts were the first claim on the estate of the testator, prior to any legacies or gifts. If the estate proved insufficient, the legatees would share the residue, after debts and charges, in proportion to the legacies granted in the will. Included in debts were the obligations the testator already held to pay out previous legacies granted by others. Executors of wills and parents of children who had received legacies from relatives, to be paid out at a future date, held these obligations. Often stepfathers passed on legacies in cash or kind owing to stepchildren from their father's estate, or fathers included the legacies that grandparents or uncles and aunts had bequeathed to children. These obligations could become quite complex. Thomas Turr, yeoman of Haxey, died intestate in 1616, leaving a widow and four children. His widow Katherine had two sons from her first marriage to Henry Forte and had remarried James Marshall the curate, who died four months after the marriage. She had then married Thomas Turr and bore his four children. She had, in fact, three husbands within the year August 1603 to July 1604. Her two eldest sons had been left 6s 8d each by their paternal grandfather Henry Forte the elder in 1603 and £2 each by their maternal grandmother in 1604. Their father's will does not survive, but arrangements had obviously been made for their portions, possibly partly by Katherine in the marriage settlement

⁷⁴ LAO: Stow Wills 1638-40/94; 1640-50/238-239; 1660-63/11-12.

with the curate. When James Marshall died in April, 1604, he left them £40, 'which I am bound to paye to Henrie ffoortts children'. Thomas Turr's father Gregory died in 1615, leaving the four children of Thomas and Katherine the £40 Thomas owed him in rent. All of these legacies turn up again in Thomas's administration account as debts to be paid out of the estate, along with £8 13s 4d which he owed for rent on the land of the elder of Henry Forte's sons.⁷⁵

x. Cash and Kind

Although this was a money economy, and valuations were made in cash terms, the exchange and transmission of goods and services also appear to have been conducted without the use of coin. Basic subsistence requirements could be met, in the main, from dealings within the manor itself. Food and drink, clothing and bedding, fuel, furniture and equipment were all produced locally from local raw materials. Payments could be deferred or be made in a variety of forms, since people were dealing mostly with individuals known to them and whose creditworthiness was also known. Probate inventories indicate that most people did not hold quantities of coin. The item 'purse and apparel' rarely exceeded £5 and was usually considerably less. It appears, from inventories of the manor, to have been an approximate assessment, being multiples of either pounds or marks.⁷⁶

Transactions, although expressed in cash, could have in fact involved payment in another form. Tithes were apparently normally paid in kind. Rents, too, were likely often to have been paid in grain or other produce. The Haxey rental book of parish lands, the rent from which was used for poor relief, lists all the tenants, the acreage rented, entry fines and rents for each year between 1594 and 1625. In 1615, the accounts of the Westwoodside part of the parish were still to come in, but the total value of the peas and rye was entered. It appears that the

⁷⁵ W. Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England: Of the Rights of Things* (Vol. II, Chicago & London, 1979), (facsimile of the first edition of 1765-1769), pp. 511-13. LAO: Ad. Acc. 8B/209; Stow Wills 1603-06/37; 1603-06/121d; 1603-06/118; 1612-15/363.

⁷⁶ Craig Muldrew cites an estimate of £3 worth of coins per person in England in 1696: C. Muldrew, 'Interpreting the market: the ethics of credit and community relations in early modern England', *Social History*, XVIII, 2 (1993), p. 171 fn.

rents were paid in kind, although recorded as cash payments.⁷⁷ Wages too could be paid in kind. In a 1634 court case involving the theft of corn from the vicar of Haxey, reference is made to 'task wheat which was due for wages' to a young servant and 'task wheat and task rye' owing to two labourers.⁷⁸ Labour services could also serve in lieu of cash payments (alternatively, this can be seen as wages paid in a form other than cash). In the same Haxey rental book, the rent on one of the parish houses was reduced when a condition was imposed that the north bank be maintained by the tenant, so that a labour service formed part of the rent. Adrian Hall notes that, at the turn of this century, Epworth smallholders paid for the hire of horses from one another with their labour. It seems likely that similar arrangements would have operated in the seventeenth century, particularly between labourers with very small holdings of land and husbandmen with horses, ploughs and harrows.⁷⁹

Wills also indicate that payments expressed in cash form might at times be made in kind. In those wills in which earlier legacies were passed on, it is possible to see that the form in which legacies were given, whether in land, cash, livestock, grain or household goods, was not necessarily significant. The interchangeability of legacies in cash or in kind was apparent. Many legacies were expressed in the form 'in money or in moneyworth'. Given the small amount of cash held, legacies in cash would need to come out of the estate, either through the sale of goods, livestock, grain or land, or through the payment of debts owing to the testator. The payment of a debt, of course, might also be made in kind, or in the transfer of a debt owing to the debtor.

⁷⁷ LAO: 23/58 Haxey Rental Book, 1594-1625. Before 1660, it was not uncommon for a large proportion of farms let at rack rents to be paid in kind: C. Clay, 'Landlords and estate management in England' in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Agrarian History, 1640-1750*, p. 224 fn.

⁷⁸ LAO: Gainsborough Quarter Sessions, 1634, Recog. 32.

⁷⁹ A. Hall, 'Fenland worker-peasants', *Agricultural History Review*, Supplement 1, (1992), p. 7, citing Slater, 1907. Hoskins notes that in seventeenth-century Wigston Magna, although money was coming to play an increasing part in the economy, this was a matter of degree. 'The old peasant economy thought all the time in terms of goods and services, and not of money': W.G. Hoskins, *The Midland Peasant*, pp. 188, 193). Mick Reed illustrates the complexity of debt relationships between neighbours in the nineteenth century and states that debts, while accounted in money, could be repaid in other forms: M. Reed, 'Class and conflict in rural England: some reflections on a debate' in M. Reed & R. Wells, *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880* (1990), pp. 13-21.

When cash legacies owing to a child were passed on by testators, they were often paid, at least partially, in kind. William Moore, husbandman of Haxey, in 1606 left to William Mosgrave, son of Robert, deceased, a table, a pair of querns, a bedstead, a chest and its contents, £3, six sheep, two ratepits and one acre of arable land which had been purchased, 'all in consideration of all such parcells of goods and sumes of money which I have received to his use of anie p'son since his fathers death'. Thomas Pettinger of Haxey in 1604 bequeathed to his stepdaughter 'to make up hire childs portion which is twelve pounds one cowe and one ewe and one lambe, soe much more of my goods, corne and cattell as to make it up to twentie pounds'.⁸⁰

Other debts could also be repaid in kind. Brian Robinson, fisherman of Kelfield, in 1618 left his son 'one bay colt of a yeere old and upward in full satisfaction of six yeeres rent due unto him for one acre of arable land given unto him by William Trout of East fferrie deceased'. William Moody, Gunthorpe yeoman, in 1616 left his father-in-law 'in full satisfaction of all the debts which I owe him one baye colt'. As indicated by the will of Thomas Meggatt, webster of Haxey, a more formal assessment of the value of the substitution could be considered necessary. In 1619, Thomas left to William Newbome so much of his goods as 'being apprysed by indifferent men would extend or be worth thirtie three shillings', the amount he owed to William. This independent assessment was more likely to be considered necessary when the goods were to repay someone not closely related to the executor.⁸¹

Although cash became a more prominent feature in the inventories and the legacies left by the wealthier inhabitants of the manor from the Restoration, payments in kind continued to be made during the course of the century. Tithes were still paid in grain. The Quakers' list of sufferings includes accounts of the distraining of goods for nonpayment of tithes. In 1663, Charles Tate of Haxey had hemp taken for the tithe owing on his rye, 'altho the priests servants took tithe of the rood of rye on the land'.⁸² George Gilby, Belton yeoman, had half the tithe grain

⁸⁰ LAO: Stow Wills 1603-06/237-238; 1603-06/134-135.

⁸¹ LAO: Stow Wills 1616-20/588-590; 1616-20/34-36; 1619/179.

⁸² H. W. Bracc, *First Minute Book of the Gainsborough Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends, 1669-1719* (Vol. III, Lincoln Record Society Vol. 44, Hereford, 1951), p. 144.

(barley, wheat, rye, oats, peas, hemp and flax) in his inventory when he died in 1686. Cash legacies were still sometimes passed on in other forms. The Belton yeoman Peter Medley in 1665 left his daughter 1/2 acre of land 'in lieu of £10 given to her by Elizabeth Moody her grandmother'. Edward Moody, husbandman of Gunthorpe, left his daughter three butts of arable land 'in lieu of fortie shillings that was given to her by her grandmother Laughton which was received by me her father and gave my brother laughton a receipt for the same' in 1677. Robert Whaplate, yeoman of Owston, in 1689 gave his second son a farm in lieu of £80 left to him by his uncle. Other gifts in kind could also be substituted for money legacies. Roger Phillipson, Haxey husbandman, in 1664 left his daughter two bedsteads and the bedding belonging to them 'in lieu of all such moneys as I formerly received to her use'. The widow Mary Harrison of Haxey in 1671 left to her son three horses, two carts, a wagon, two ploughs and a pair of harrows 'in full lieu and satisfaction of two legacies given unto him...and Elizabeth Harrison one of my daughters late deceased by ...Margaret Kelsey my mother'. Margaret Kelsey had left the two children 40s each fifteen years earlier.⁸³

The interest or profits due on children's portions could also be paid in kind. Elizabeth Saull, widow of Haxey, in 1674 left her daughter the £10 bequeathed to her by her father, along with a milk cow in lieu of the interest. Christopher Norton, yeoman of Gunthorpe, left his nephew in 1670 1/2 acre of arable land 'in consideration of ten pounds which was given him by my father and in lieu of what interest is due for ye said portion'. Debts other than unpaid legacies, especially informal debts, might also be paid in kind. The widow Elizabeth Johnson of Belton in 1679 left to Rachel Knight 'one good cow instead of twenty shillings I owe her, and my will is that she shall have the Cow, when she shall accomlishe the age of twenty one yeares'. Richard Merryman, Owston labourer, in 1673 left Ann Laughton 'one brown heifer of three years old in consideration of forty shillings which I owe her'.⁸⁴

⁸³ LAO: Pro. Inv. 184/21; Stow Wills 1666-68/402; 1675-78/164; 1691-94/226; 1664-65/6; 1672-74/149; 1660-63/78.

⁸⁴ LAO: Stow Wills 1675-78/17; 169-71/403; 1679-80/70; 1672-74/289.

In some of the cases of land substitution for money legacies, the original legacy might well have been used to purchase land for a child, although none of the wills indicate this. Other substitutions in kind seem to have been more common earlier in the century and amongst widows. Legacies in the form of alternatives, however, continued to occur throughout the century. As well as cash legacies to be paid in 'money or moneyworth', several testators left livestock or a cash equivalent, with either the executor or the legatee to choose. All legacies will have had to come out of an estate composed of land, grain, livestock, household goods, agricultural or craft equipment, craft or trade goods, and debts owing to the estate. Probate inventories from the later part of the century indicate that most continued to hold very little coin, but some of the wealthiest did possess considerable amounts of ready cash or silver. Legacies from grandparents and bachelor uncles were likely to have been converted to cash when their estates were settled and passed on in that form, but a father's estate, if he left a widow and minor children, could not be converted so easily without affecting the income necessary for the maintenance of the family. The form legacies took, both the child's portion from the father and any earlier legacies he passed on, would be affected by the length of time remaining before the child received its portion, the anticipated income of the estate, the date at which debts could be called in, and the amount of land or goods that could be spared. Widows especially might have to make substitutions if their husbands had miscalculated or died recently.

Legacies in kind, other than gifts of land, could be given for a variety of reasons. The labourer without land or holding very little land was likely to leave household goods to his children because there was little else to leave. These legacies often were to be paid after the death of the wife. Widows or widowers were inclined to divide up household possessions, cattle and clothing in their wills when their death meant the end of a household. Testators often left widowed mothers, aunts or sisters immediately useful legacies like grain, turves, animal fodder or hemp. Married daughters who had already received their portions could be left pots and pans as legacies, and married sons in the same position might be left agricultural equipment. In addition to portions of land and/or money, children were commonly left a bed and bedding as

part of their portion. Household linens, pewter, brass pots and pans, candlesticks and chests were particularly useful for those marrying and setting up a new household and were often included in the portions of unmarried children. Debts in the form of bonds and bills could be transferred from the creditor to a legatee or could be used as payment for the creditor's own obligations.

xi. Consumption in the Early Seventeenth Century

In the early part of the century, the household goods listed in inventories and bequeathed in wills appear to differ little in type, whatever the social or economic position of the individual. All inventories, except for some who were boarding with others, contain tables, chests, cupboards, arks, brass and pewter, wood vessels and ironware, (especially gallowbalks, spits and hooks), beds, feather beds, linen, fumble and harden sheets, coverings and pillows and/or bolsters. Many include quilts and mattresses and a few, blankets. Stools, chairs and cushions were common, as were table napkins. Some beds, chests and stools were joined, and Flanders chests were mentioned in a number of wills. The 'painted cloths' noted from sixteenth century inventories appear infrequently in the inventories from the 1610s. The Haxey webster William Wyatt in 1603 bequeathed 'paynted clothes above and aboute the bedd'. Bed hangings, a table carpet, and a press each appear only once in inventories.⁸⁵ Wills provide more detailed descriptions of household items, and indicate that most households possessed pots and pans, candlesticks, pewter doublers and dishes and a mortar and pestle. Chargers, saucers, salts, kettles, bowls, spoons, trenchers and salting troughs were also mentioned. Some yeomen and their widows possessed silver spoons and silver or gold rings, but ownership of these items was not confined to the wealthiest. Brian Nicholl, labourer of Kinnall Ferry, bequeathed two silver spoons, a silver whistle and a silver ring in 1612, along with a 'towell wrought with silke', and in 1615 John Mawe, Epworth husbandman, left his son two silver spoons, 'one of them hath his name of'. Raphe Fletcher, shoemaker of Belton, in 1610 left his spectacles with a case.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ LAO: Stow Will 1599-1602/277. The picture is similar to that indicated by the inventories of Whickham at the same period: Levine & Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society*, pp. 101-4.

⁸⁶ LAO: Stow Wills 1612-15/18; 1612-15/392; 1607-11/10-11.

Clothing, not itemised in inventories, was often bequeathed in wills. Both sexes wore hats, hose and shoes. Men also left cloaks, coats, doublets, jerkins, shirts and britches. Women had gowns, petticoats, smocks, aprons, rails, neckerchiefs, safeguards and bodies. Those who left clothing in wills, including labourers, usually indicated that they possessed more than one suit of clothes: 'my best' hat, gown, doublet, etc. was a frequent bequest, as was 'my workday apparel'.

In this period, inventories do not invariably specify the rooms within which goods were kept. Houses appear to have consisted of a hall or house, a chamber, and often a parlour and/or kitchen. A second parlour was unusual, even in the houses of the better-off. Parlours were normally used as bedrooms, but tables, forms and chairs were often kept there as well as beds and chests. Chambers, too, often contained beds, but doubled as storage places for grain, scythes, rakes and sieves. A buttery or milkhouse might also contain a bed or be used for general storage. Shops appear rarely, and these were usually rooms used for several purposes. The shop of John Pearsey of Epworth in 1615 held a table and form as well as a loom. The shop did not need to be a room in the house. The Belton shoemaker Raphe Fletcher's shop stood next to his stable in 1610.⁸⁷

The inventories suggest little differentiation in house size or in type of household goods in the manor, at least for those below gentry status. The better-off were likely to possess somewhat more items, and those individual items were likely to be valued more highly, than the less well-off, but lifestyles appear similar.

xii. Consumption in the Later Seventeenth Century

It is possible to observe an increase in the variety of household goods mentioned in probate inventories and left as legacies in wills, especially from the 1670s onwards, chiefly, but not exclusively, in the households of the better-off. A greater range of furniture and more luxury goods became available to augment the basic items available earlier in the century. Tester beds and half-headed beds appeared, complete with bed hangings, curtain rods and valances,⁸⁸ and

⁸⁷ LAO: Stow Wills 1612-15/343; 1607-11/10-11.

⁸⁸ Although bed curtains are commonly listed in the inventories of well-off yeomen and gentlemen, references to window curtains are rare. M. W. Barley, 'Rural Building in England' in J. Thirsk (ed.),

chairs of different types were listed: wanded, bass-bottomed, spindle, couch, covered and leather. Settles were added to forms and benches in halls, and footstools replaced arks at the feet of beds in parlours. Tables too came in a variety of shapes and sizes. As well as the long tables and little tables of the earlier periods, square, round and oval tables were added. Chests now were sometimes described as wainscot, three- or four-panelled or were chests of drawers. Livery cupboards, clothes presses and smoothing irons with heaters indicate some extra care taken with the appearance of clothing, perhaps encouraged by the looking glasses kept in a number of households.

Similar items of apparel to the earlier period are mentioned in wills, but the occasional well-off woman bequeathed a silk petticoat, a bonnet, a Mantua gown or a gown trimmed with lace. Riding suits or cloaks, pillion cloths and pillion seats were left by several women, and a husbandman and a blacksmith each left a riding coat. A husbandman and a gentleman each had a pair of spurs. Administration accounts show more debts owing for cloth and clothing. Michael Monkton, junior, Belton gentleman, whose inventoried goods in 1670 were worth the modest amount of £39 19s 8d, owed more than £4 altogether to Robert Partridge of Bawtry for a hat, to Richard Brewer of Gainsborough for cloth, and to William Garland of Gainsborough and Richard Parnell of Epworth for mercery.⁸⁹ Furniture is sometimes differentiated by its user in inventories. Children's beds and bed linens and 'a little child's chair' appear occasionally, and cradles and servants' beds are often mentioned. Flax and hemp remained the chief materials for bed and table linen, but a few inventories and wills mention Holland sheets and Scotch cloth⁹⁰ sheets, and damask and diaper table linen are sometimes listed amongst the goods of the wealthy.

Agrarian History, 1640-1750, p. 656, refers to the ' "window cloths" (presumably curtains)' found in many inventories in the late seventeenth century. There are frequent references to window cloths in the inventories of Epworth manor, but here it is clear that these were winnowing cloths, not curtains. They are found in chambers, along with sacks, scythes, rakes and baskets. One one occasion, the term used is 'windowing cloth', and on another 'winnow cloth'.

⁸⁹ LAO: Ad. Acc. 33/210

⁹⁰ a cheap linen: J. Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects*, p. 122.

Earthenware pots and dishes were becoming more common. Specialised items for food preparation and storage included cleavers, pie plates, ladles, skillets, broiling irons, baking plates, a toasting prick, a fish kettle, a salt box, meat and meal safes, mustard pots and a weaver's 'little mortar for to beat Spices in'. Beef in store was a common addition to bacon among the better-off. Glass cases and glasses, bottles, flagons, ale pots and tankards augmented the pewter doublers of the earlier period, and hogsheads and barrels were kept in the cellars, brewhouses or kitchens of those brewing on a larger scale. The wealthiest often had more silver listed than the earlier silver spoons. Silver dishes, bowls, cups, tumblers and wine vessels were additional items. Richard Massey, gentleman of Epworth, owned a pair of garden shears. One inventory, that of the wealthy Belton widow Mrs. Francesca Bernard, includes a tobacco box. She also had a sword and belt and a case of pistols.⁹¹ Guns and the occasional sword are found somewhat more frequently from the 1650s on, some possibly kept from the Civil War, although others were described as fowling or birding pieces.

Also appearing in the inventories of the well-off are clocks, pocket watches and one hour-glass. This, as Lorna Weatherill suggests, can be seen to reflect the greater organisational requirements of professional people and the clergy.⁹² A vicar's widow and a gentleman, John Pinder, who had acted as a steward of the manor and lawyer, along with six other gentlemen and two well-off yeomen, were the clock owners. However, more precise measurement, of quantities of goods as well as of time, is indicated by the possession of more widely-held items. Containers are sometimes described as having a specific capacity: pint, quart or multiples of gallons. Pairs of scales and weights, for hemp and for butter, indicate a greater need for precision, especially when produce was marketed on a larger scale and for export out of the immediate area. Supplies of hemp, flax and, occasionally, butter were increasingly likely to be described in pounds or stones rather than indeterminate 'parcels'.

⁹¹ LAO: Pro. Invs. 178/78; 178/259.

⁹² L. Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (1988), p. 180.

The final item listed in inventories is normally the goods in the yard, especially manure and fuel. In most, this continued to consist of manure, a stack of turves and perhaps some wood for firing. For some of the wealthy in the 1670s and 1680s, these items remain, but were supplemented. A gentleman and two yeoman had dove manure from their dovecotes. Coals are listed in the inventories of two blacksmiths, a mercer, eleven yeomen, three gentlemen and three widows. Coal was an imported commodity and appears in the inventories of the wealthiest residents and the blacksmiths, for whom it was an occupational requirement.⁹³ The depositions of the 1680s refer to the suffering of the poor due to loss of turbarry, as they had no other source of fuel. The inventories indicate that the better-off did have supplementary sources, and that the greater number of rooms and 'ranges' in some of the houses made larger quantities of fuel necessary. Those with more luxurious furnishings might also have preferred a form of fuel less likely to produce quantities of damp smoke.

Another item stored in the yards of two yeomen, one mercer and two gentlemen was a parcel of bricks. One gentlewoman, Ann Tankersley, had a quantity of tiles in a chamber. Among the men who died in Owston parish during the 1670s and 1680s were bricklayers and a mason. These indications of building in brick during this period support an impression of rebuilding suggested by the increased number of rooms cited in the inventories of some of the wealthy. The inventories of the 1650s reveal houses similar to the more spacious dwellings of the 1610s, with a hall, a chamber, most with one or sometimes two parlours and a second chamber, and usually a kitchen or buttery. An occasional will mentions a shop. An Epworth weaver had a shop in 1635, and the Belton weaver William Wray mentioned a shop in 1644, which also contained a trundle bed. In the 1670s and 1680s, most houses remained within this size and type. While some weavers had only one parlour and kept their looms in the kitchen, others had a second parlour, often called a shop, in which they kept their weaving equipment. As in the earlier period, the shop might also contain a bed or table, and this was true of others

⁹³ At the end of the sixteenth century, the Willoughby family, owners of coalmines near Nottingham, had warehouses for coal at Gainsborough: I. Beckwith, *The Book of Gainsborough*, p.95.

with shops. Grocers and mercers, an apothecary, a carpenter and a cordwainer all had rooms called shops. An Epworth butcher mentioned a shop in his will of 1694, but butchers were more likely to bequeath stalls. William Otter, butcher of Kinnall Ferry, in 1627 had left 'all my stalles wheresoever'. John Taylor, Haxey butcher, left his brother 'my stall in Epworth markt' in 1699, and the Epworth butcher William Huntington left his kinsman 'my stall in ye markt place' in 1689. The wheelwright John Gringley may have benefitted from Epworth's development as a market town by 1669, when he left his son 'all those my three shops together adjoining upon the street north towards the Markt place'.⁹⁴

A few yeomen and gentlemen had three parlours in their houses. A second or third parlour was sometimes used as a dining room and occasionally described as such.⁹⁵ Six gentlemen, two yeomen and a vicar used a room for the purpose. Others, six gentlemen and two yeomen, used a downstairs room as a study. Only one gentleman had both a study and a dining room, leaving one room used as a parlour. A yeoman and a gentleman each had three parlours in addition to a study. While some beds were kept on the ground floor in the other parlour or parlours in these houses, more of the beds were found in the chambers. The number of chambers tended to increase with the number of downstairs rooms, and were also located above additions to the house or outbuildings like brewhouses, storehouses, kilnhouses and turfhouses. In these larger houses, there was a tendency to differentiate between corn chambers and furnished chambers, unlike most houses in which chambers still served as joint storage, sleeping and working (especially spinning) rooms. The larger houses sometimes had bedrooms called the maids' room and the men servants' room and, in the house of one Belton gentleman,

⁹⁴ LAO: Pro. Inv. 188/349; Stow Wills 1640-50/127; 1691-94/140; 1627-31/41; 1695-99/238; 1687-90/116; 1669-71/277.

⁹⁵ In the counties north of Leicestershire, 'the principal distinction throughout the period [1640-1750] between the smallest peasant houses and their more pretentious neighbours was that the latter...had two or occasionally three parlours, one if not more still used for sleeping': M. W. Barley, 'Rural building in England', p. 656. 'The most interesting change in England in the late seventeenth century was that the parlour, formerly a best bedroom with some seating and storage became a best living room...used in new ways, [sometimes] as a room for meals': L. Weatherill, 'Probate inventories and consumer behaviour in England, 1660-1740' in G. H. Martin & P. Spfford (eds.), *The Records of the Nation* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1990), p. 265.

the shepherd's chamber. Some inventories refer to garret chambers or high garrets, suggesting a third storey. Cellars are mentioned occasionally, as are closets. Francis Monkton, gentleman of Belton, kept silver glasses, linens and some cheeses in his closet. Another Belton gentleman, Thomas Brewer, had a room called the gallery, in which thirty-seven cheeses, two pots of butter, two bacon flicks and some apples were stored.⁹⁶

The inventories from the 1670s and 1680s indicate a growing differential in lifestyle between the wealthy and the rest. Most continued to live in houses of the same size as those of the earlier part of the century, with similar furnishings supplemented by a few new items of practical and/or ornamental use. Some craftsmen had rooms that were used primarily or exclusively for their work. A few, some of the better-off yeomen and gentlemen, had acquired substantial houses with two or more living rooms and additions like brewhouses and kilnhouses, and were building in brick. These houses were elaborately furnished, including numerous luxury items imported from outside the locality.⁹⁷

xiii. Status

It appears that the means and the desire to display wealth through housing, furnishings and clothing were increasing in the later part of the century for some. However, wealth was not the sole determinant of status.⁹⁸ Status of one's father, stage in the life cycle, landholding, lifestyle and education were all factors. Many men whose wealth, judging from probate inventories and wills, was on a par with most moderately well-off husbandmen, were termed yeomen if their fathers were accorded the status. Thomas Phillips of Haxey, one of the most prominent men in the community and holder of the advowson of the parish, left all his lands to

⁹⁶ LAO: Pro. Invs. 220A/15; 174/265.

⁹⁷ For similar findings in the later seventeenth century, see D. Hey, *An English Rural Community*, pp. 121-5; M. Spufford, for Chippenham, in *Contrasting Communities*, p. 75; V. Skipp, *Crisis and Development*, pp. 82-4; Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 37-9; Levine & Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society*, pp. 232-9; G. Nair, *Highley*, pp.95-7; W.G. Hoskins, *The Midland Peasant*, pp. 196-200. M.K. McIntosh, in *A Community Transformed*, pp. 42-4, sees the same pattern emerging somewhat earlier in Havering.

⁹⁸ The compound qualities of rank, the 'permeable membranes' separating status groups and the 'constant reality of individual social mobility' are discussed by K. Wrightson, 'The social order of early modern England: three approaches' in L. Bonfield, R. M. Smith & K. Wrightson (eds.), *The World We Have Gained* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 177-201, and *English Society, 1580-1680* (1982), pp. 17-38.

his son and £300 to his daughter when he died in 1617; his status was recorded as yeoman. The possible inability to sign his name, indicated in the mark he made in a list of jurors of the manor in 1605, may have been a factor in his status.⁹⁹ However, although wealth alone was insufficient to lead to a rise in status, it does appear to have been necessary. Those who were accorded a status higher than that of their fathers were invariably, as far as one can judge, holding wealth commensurate with at least the average within that status. The exceptions to this pattern were the clergy and lawyers; they were normally given the title 'Mr.', regardless of wealth. Once a status had been accorded an individual, it seems not to have been diminished by declining fortunes. Edmund Coggan, gentleman of Haxey, who appears to have inherited his status, and his eldest son John, also gentleman, retained their status although their inventories indicate very moderate estates. William Thomhill, gentleman of Owston parish, whose inventory and will indicate that his financial position was somewhat perilous, retained his inherited status.¹⁰⁰

The precision of boundaries between status categories can be investigated by comparing the status attributed to an individual in different sources. The status given in the will may be assumed to have been the testator's own assessment of his status, or that of the scribe, and may have been different than that attributed by others. One source that can reveal the assessment of an individual's status by others is the probate inventory. The table below compares the status given in the will with that given in the probate inventory in those cases where the status is included in both documents.

⁹⁹ LAO: Stow Will 1616-18/363; PRO: LR 2/256, fol. 194.

¹⁰⁰ LAO: Pro. Invs. 221A/105; 157/4; 183/340; Stow Will 1681-83/162.

Table 4.6**Status Designation in Wills and Probate Inventories**

	Same status	Status higher in will	Status higher in inventory	Status not given	Total
1610s	17	0	0	13	30
1650s	19	2	0	15	36
1670s	83	3	1	25	112
1680s	49	2	4	33	88

It can be seen that, while in most cases the same status was attributed in both the will and the probate inventory, differences did occur, and the status could be higher in either source.

Differences appeared at all levels. Of those given a higher status in their wills, four yeomen were described as husbandmen in their inventories, one gentleman as a yeoman, and one husbandman and one webster were both termed labourers. Of those whose status was higher in their inventories, one man designated yeoman in his will appeared as a gentleman in his inventory, and four husbandmen were described as yeomen.

Another source of comparison is the parish register during periods when status terms were recorded at the burial. Belton's registers provide this information for most individuals between 1630 and 1641. Of the 33 male will-makers in Belton who died between 1630 and 1641 and included a status in their wills, 23 used the same status description as did the parish register. These were nine husbandmen, five yeoman, three labourers, two carpenters, one gentleman, one shoemaker, one tailor and one cooper. Five were given a higher status in their will. Four husbandmen in the register were yeomen in their wills, and a webster was a husbandman. George Todd, described as a labourer in his will, was not given a status in the register. However, the four remaining testators used a lower status category than did the register. One yeoman in the register was described as husbandman in his will, one husbandman as a weaver, and two husbandmen were described as labourers. In one of these wills, that of Israel Glew,

'husbandman' was originally inserted, but crossed out and replaced with 'labourer', presumably at the testator's request.

Owston's registers included status terms at the burial from the 1660s, although with decreasing frequency into the 1680s. Of those men who made wills in the 1660s and 1670s, seven were not given a status in the register. Forty-eight men had the same status attributed to them in both their wills and in the register, and seven men were given a higher status in the register. None had a lower status in the register than in the will. Of those men given a higher status in the register, five men termed husbandmen in their wills were described as yeomen, one labourer as a husbandman and one labourer as a roper. Three of the husbandmen/yeomen were Moodys from the small settlement of Gunthorpe; two of them were brothers. All three were descended from a line of Moody husbandmen in Gunthorpe, although all three, judging from the lands left in their wills, the amount of livestock held and the total value of their inventories, had estates and wealth comparable to most yeomen. Peter Moody was especially well-off, leaving his house, all his field land and 16 acres of enclosed lands in his will, and an inventoried total of £136 14s 6d in April, when his crops would have been valued at a minimum.¹⁰¹ It seems that the Moodys were considered husbandmen within their own settlement (the same status was used in their probate inventories) because their fathers had held the status, and also because there was a family of yeoman Moodys in Gunthorpe. In cases like this, a status term could be used as an means of identifying individuals within a small community. For the individual keeping the register in Owston, however, the landholding and scale of farming of these men seems to have determined the status term used.

The status categories most likely to be mentioned in the parish registers and used to describe neighbours and relatives in wills throughout the century were the higher status terms of gentleman, esquire and clerk. Gentry in the parishes of Haxey, Owston and Epworth were largely parish gentry, at any given time consisting of one or two individuals from each of a few

¹⁰¹ LAO: Stow Wills 1669-71/489; 1669-71/71; 1675-78/164. Pro. Invs. 171/117; 172/354; 178/155.

established yeoman/husbandman families.¹⁰² None of these parishes appear to have had more than a few men in these categories, especially during the earlier part of the century. In Belton, however, the impression given by both the registers and the wills is that gentlemen seem to have been more numerous there, along with the occasional esquire or knight. In the 1620 rental of the manor, one knight, three esquires and thirteen gentlemen are listed as renting and/or renting out land in Belton. Haxey's records, on the other hand, indicate that very few were accorded gentry status. In the 1620 rental, Lord Cavendish and four gentlemen are listed in Haxey.¹⁰³ Belton's high and Haxey's low proportion of gentry will-makers, therefore, appear to reflect a difference in proportions of resident gentry between the two parishes in the earlier period.¹⁰⁴

What can be observed is that status categories were not strictly defined.¹⁰⁵ Not only was there a difference at times between the status given in the will and that assigned in the register, the second being either higher or lower than the first, but both wills and probate inventories indicate that status was not clearly defined by land ownership or apparent wealth. Labourers commonly left land in wills, sometimes more than one house, and the occasional labourer left books or silver spoons to his children. Some yeomen appeared, from the money legacies left to daughters or younger sons, to have had considerably fewer assets than many husbandmen. Probate inventories indicate a considerable overlap in total valuations, land use and numbers of livestock between different status categories. Sometimes this was due to the stage in the life cycle. Retired men would have relinquished lands to their children, living off the income from a minimal holding or from a previously arranged maintenance agreement. An example of such an agreement is that between the Belton yeoman Thomas Bernard and his yeoman son John in 1665. Thomas gave all his messuages and lands in Belton to his son on condition he pay to

¹⁰² 83% of those claiming gentry status in Lincolnshire in 1642 rose to that status after 1500: F. Heal and C. Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales*, p. 27.

¹⁰³ PRO: SC12/10/44/17 James I.

¹⁰⁴ See Appendix II.

¹⁰⁵ But as Heal and Holmes say of the distinction between gentry and yeomen, 'the almost total fluidity of marginal classifications does not mean that this boundary was not real': F. Heal & C. Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales*, p. 16. The same point is made by Keith Wrightson, 'Aspects of social differentiation in rural England, c. 1580-1660', in *Journal of Peasant Studies*, V (1977), p. 35; and by Margaret Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 37-41.

Thomas and his wife £10 annually during their lifetimes.¹⁰⁶ Other methods to ensure maintenance were the 'sale' of goods or stock to a son or son-in-law, the payment forming an annuity or maintenance in the household of the child, and the renting of land to a son for the same purpose. Some men were not yet retired, but had already provided marriage portions in the form of land, household goods or money for several children, so that their probate inventories give a valuation of only part of the estate they once held.

Although there was no absolute correlation between status and wealth, the latter was an important element. Those with a larger surplus could obtain larger landholdings and the means to a more impressive lifestyle. They could also fund the education and training of their children, offering them additional means to increase their incomes and, at times, to rise to a higher status. Partible inheritance made it possible for several sons of a well-off yeoman to hold the same status as their father, but made it less likely for any of them to move up into the gentry. Many of those individuals from yeoman families who did become gentry were sole surviving sons. This would have made a substantial difference to their inheritance, even if they had sisters. While daughters, amongst the better-off yeomanry, were frequently left land, their portions appear to have been smaller than those given to second and third sons. Livestock, agricultural equipment and other occupational equipment or the means to acquire it were also important factors influencing wealth and status. One fairly distinct status/wealth boundary that can be detected using probate inventories is that between husbandman and labourer. Labourers normally held some land and owned two or three cows. Most husbandmen owned four to six cows and farmed more land. What seems to particularly demarcate the two groups is that, with few exceptions, husbandmen possessed horses and ploughs, while labourers did not. Status could alter during an individual's lifetime, with a young man who began as a labourer acquiring enough land, horses and equipment to be considered a husbandman later. Younger sons of yeomen were often designated husbandmen and younger sons of husbandmen, labourers. In the earlier part of the century, especially, a craft designation was likely to be used for those who were engaged

¹⁰⁶ LAO: Stow Wills 1669-71/387-388.

and, above all, by the resources offered by the commons in the form of pasture, fuel, hay, fertiliser, wildfowl and fishing. Although it is apparent that some families and individuals were enhancing their economic and social position during the late sixteenth and early part of the seventeenth century, while others were declining, all were dependent on the commons. The commons formed a vital part of the inheritance of all the inhabitants of the manor. The impact of the drainage in 1628 was dramatic. A landscape that had been alien, sinister and threatening to outsiders, but familiar and valued by its inhabitants, became the opposite. Outsiders, many of them alien foreigners, now altered this familiar territory with its well-known landmarks, its existing streams, dikes and rivers, and replaced it with a grid of new, ruler-straight water courses, permanently dry pasture and geometrically laid-out areas for settlement. A vast expanse of over 60,000 acres had become comfortably familiar to outsiders, but alien to its existing inhabitants. The drainage and its aftermath exercised the collective efforts of many of the commoners for the rest of the century and beyond.

While attempts to regain the full use of the commons continued, individuals and households still had to make their own living, attempting to maintain their own position, possibly enhance it and provide an adequate inheritance for their children, adjusting to the changes in the resources of the commons and to other changes experienced during the remainder of the century. The Civil War brought some looting, increased taxation and an epidemic, but also afforded the opportunity to regain use of most of the commons during the Interregnum. The adverse effects of the drainage on the commons, inadequate drainage, peat shrinkage, loss of warping and depletion of fuel, were exacerbated by weather conditions, leading to flooding and animal disease in the late 1670s and impoverished pasture in the 1680s.

The better-off were able to mitigate some of these problems by using enclosed pastures, renting joists elsewhere, and using imported fuel. Other opportunities were opening up through the increase in river transport on the Trent. Produce from the Isle could reach a wider market, and goods from far afield began to appear in the manor, especially in the growing market town of Epworth. The wealthy were able to obtain luxury items and increase the size of their houses,

in a craft as a by-employment if they did not hold enough land to be considered husbandmen. Husbandmen in this period often had equipment for other occupations in their inventories, although the occupation itself may have been carried out by others in the household. However, later in the century, men with estates comparable to husbandmen were sometimes described as craftsmen. It appears that better-off craftsmen, who were trained in their craft and devoting more attention to it, were more likely to be identified by their craft occupation than by their agricultural activities later in the century, and that the status of craftsman was coming to be ranked more highly than before.

xiv. Conclusion

During the course of the seventeenth century, the manor of Epworth was subjected to a range of changes, difficulties and opportunities to which its inhabitants had to adapt. The early part of the century was a time of steadily increasing population, occasional mortality crises, varying weather conditions, and volatile prices, especially of hemp and flax. The landholding customs, involving varieties of tenure, including subletting, different soil types, a selection of fertilisers, and both open field and enclosed arable, meadow and pasture land, offered a range of choices for those with access to enough land. This access was affected by the individual's stake in the form of long-term landholding, in turn facilitating the generation of a surplus and credit to increase the stake and the choices available still further. Inheritance and marriage were crucial in obtaining a substantial holding, although wills indicate that even those with very modest estates had sometimes managed to purchase land. The amount inherited depended not only on one's father's wealth, but on the number of siblings, the timing of parents' deaths, the fortuitous deaths of childless relatives, and whether the inheritance was encumbered with debt. It was during the earlier part of the century that several families were able to consolidate and build on a favoured landholding position to enable some individuals to rise from the yeomanry to join the existing yeoman/gentry families.

For those with a small inheritance, the opportunity for independence and marriage was enhanced through labouring, craft by-employments, part-ownership of livestock and equipment

making a differential of wealth and lifestyle more obvious, but the less well-off gained opportunities too. Their houses also increased in size, and a greater variety of utensils and some luxury goods were obtained to furnish them. Apprenticeships became increasingly important in providing a start in life for sons, and crafts and trade could be alternatives to larger landholdings in maintaining a comfortable standard of living. Craft activities were expanded for both men and women, allowing greater production for the market.

Although changes occurred during the course of the century, the basic way of life remained. Livestock and crops, with the addition of oats, some rape and an increase in fruit orchards, were those produced at the beginning of the century. The crafts carried out locally were those traditionally pursued in the manor. Households continued to be venues for a variety of activities, engaged in to fulfil subsistence requirements or to market. Part-ownership and locally procured credit remained mainstays in the local economy, and payments in kind continued. Inheritance, whether in the form of land, money, goods, training or status, was a crucial factor in determining one's economic and social position. Throughout the century, reliance on the resources of the commons was part of the manor's economy and way of life. Even the wealthy, with alternative sources of fuel and pasture, still had supplies of peat in store and pastured animals on the common. For most, the commons remained a vital part of their inheritance and their ability to sustain a household.

The manor in the seventeenth century, then, retained its traditional household production while experiencing increasing differentiation in wealth, occupational emphasis, lifestyle and status, along with fluctuating individual and family fortunes. Each of the parishes represents a somewhat different variation on the common experience of increasing specialisation of production, both within households and within parishes. Belton, a parish with a larger gentry contingent and a more static population in the second quarter of the century, appears to have increased its sheep-rearing during the second half of the century. This activity was likely to be attractive to those with larger estates using hired labour, since it required few labourers and so maximised profits. Both the better-off, with large flocks, and smallholders, with a few sheep,

were more likely in Belton than their counterparts in the other parishes to be keeping sheep. Sheep were reared for both meat and wool, and possibly for folding on arable land. Wool-working too was characteristic of Belton parish, supplying an increased market for wool within the manor.

Haxey parish, with few gentry and a large number of smallholders, continued to concentrate on hemp and sack-cloth weaving, usually still an occupation engaged in as a by-employment by those with little land. Hemp production and processing were labour-intensive, well-suited to a parish with many looking for supplementary employment. Some in Haxey were dealing in sackcloth, exporting it beyond the Isle, and may have been engaged in buying in yarn to supply local weavers. Owston specialised in fishing and expanded activities in river transport, responding to new opportunities provided by increased traffic on the Trent and local demand for imported luxury goods. Epworth's growing market provided opportunities for tradesmen, especially grocers, mercers, butchers and woollen drapers, again responding to increased local demand for their wares. Epworth also specialised in brewing, malting and suppliers of provisions, activities essential to a flourishing market centre.

Dissent and Dissension: Religious Change and Social Control

Family strategies and changing economic conditions produced some social differentiation and some contrast between the parishes within the manor of Epworth during the course of the seventeenth century. Another source of shifting solidarities and conflicts was religious change. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Church of England was an often uneasy alliance of a spectrum of opinion ranging from quasi-Catholic to near-separatist puritan, with perceived threats from Catholic recusants, presbyterians and the influence of religious variants from Europe. This range of theological views incorporated a variety of concepts of the form of ritual, community, acceptable behaviour and the exercise of authority that could, and did, give rise to conflict both on the national level and within local communities. Individual opinion was influenced by upbringing and family traditions, by the inclinations and personality of the local clergy and by the attitudes of influential laymen. Since religious ideas and allegiance were a prominent feature in public debate, and a community was made up of individuals subject to a variety of influences both from within and from outside the community itself, several of the strands of religious thought present in the nation as a whole were likely to be represented locally.

The friction within the community that arose as a result of differences in attitudes towards doctrine, discipline and religious practice was expressed through the secular and church courts, through presentments by clergy and churchwardens, and at times in direct confrontation within the building and yard of the parish church itself. The parish church was the public building in which the whole community was expected to gather regularly, in acknowledgment of a collective identity and adherence to a common belief, rules of behaviour and discipline. Failure to conform to these requirements, or disagreement about their form or substance, was an offence against God and the community. But religious issues were intimately entwined with all aspects of personal and public life. The use of language, sexual behaviour, relations and living arrangements between husbands and wives, drinking or working on the Sabbath, the behaviour of one's children and servants, teaching, practising medicine, tale-bearing, unneighbourly

conduct and permissible association were all matters coloured by religious attitudes and subject to scrutiny and attempted control by local officials. The disagreements and conflicts that were acted out within the setting of the church or the church courts contained elements of personal animosity, private revenge, social or authoritative ambition and self-protection, as well as disinterested moral concern and religious scruples.

Questions of religious conformity, public order and individual behaviour, then, were closely connected and perceived as such by authorities, secular and religious, higher and local. All of these matters were dealt with together, at the quarter sessions or the periodic ecclesiastical visitation. The following discussion includes everything of concern brought to the courts, although I have dealt in detail with marriage and sexual offences in chapter two.

i. Varieties of Belief: c 1600

The manor of Epworth was located in an area where religious debate and sectarianism were already strong in the early years of the century. Watts describes this area of radical puritan activity as 'the lower Trent valley, at a point at which the boundaries of Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire converge', concentrated in several north Nottinghamshire villages and in Gainsborough.¹ John Smyth, who was appointed lecturer at the Lincoln Corporation Church of St. Peter at Arches in 1600, but dismissed in 1602 for his militant puritanism, moved to Gainsborough in August, 1604. He was in trouble with the authorities in that year for preaching 'notwithstanding being inhibited by the Bishop of Lincoln', and before the court again in 1606 for the same offence and for practising physic without a licence.² By 1608, Smyth and his Gainsborough followers, and the associated congregation of north Nottinghamshire puritans meeting at Scrooby, had decided upon separation from the established church and emigrated to the Netherlands.³

Richard Bernard, curate of Epworth 1597-1601, was a radical puritan who came near to separatism, losing his living as vicar of Worksop in 1605 for refusing to subscribe to the

¹ M. R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1978), p. 41.

² B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 117-21. LAO: Cor/B/26.

³ M. R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, pp. 42-3.

canonical requirements of 1604, but who conformed in 1608. In autumn of 1607, he wrote letters opposing the views of John Smyth of Gainsborough and in 1608 wrote *Christian advertisements and counsels of peace* attacking Smyth's separatist arguments. For a time, however, he had spoken in favour of separating and even possibly going into exile.⁴ Richard Bernard was probably a native of Epworth, where there were a number of well-off yeomen and the occasional gentleman with that surname. In his first published work, a translation of the plays of Terence, written in 1598 while he was at Epworth, he described himself as 'Epwortheas' and dedicated the work to the patronesses who had sent him to Cambridge, 'the vertuous and true religious ladies, the Lady Bowes and the Lady Sanctpoll'. 'My Lady St Poll' was mentioned as a creditor by the Epworth yeoman John Starkey in his will of 1615.⁵

Another radical puritan who served as curate of Epworth from 1604 to 1606, then becoming curate of Belton (Belton had a perpetual curacy), was Henry Langley. In 1610, he became vicar of Treswell in Nottinghamshire, where he died in 1636. Both he and Richard Bernard had made sufficient impact during their short periods serving in the manor to be remembered after they left. The only clergyman mentioned in the 1604 will of Robert Broughton the elder of Beltoft, a yeoman of strong puritan views, was Richard Bernard, vicar of Worksop. An associate of Robert Broughton and his godly contingent, the Epworth yeoman Richard Whiteley, also remembered Richard Bernard in his will of 1603. Bernard's influence may have been strengthened by the fact that the rector of Epworth was not resident during his curacy. In 1627, seventeen years after the departure of Henry Langley from Belton to Treswell, the godly magistrate Sir John Stanhope of Melwood Park in Owston parish left a legacy to, among other clergymen, 'Mr Langley preacher of Truswell in the County of Nottingham'. Robert Coakes of

⁴ LAO: Box 68/1/33. K. Fincham, 'Episcopal government, 1603-1640' and 'Introduction' in K. Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642* (1993), pp. 83, 7; B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition*, pp. 121-2, 130.

⁵ LAO: Stow Will 1612-15/399-400. J. K. Johnstone, 'Richard Bernard', *Lincolnshire Notes and Queries*, I (1888-9), pp. 106-8.

West Butterwick in 1620 recorded in his will: 'my desire is to have Mr Langley exercise att my funerall'.⁶

The assessment of individual piety or religious viewpoint presents considerable difficulties. The church court records provide lists of those standing excommunicate, but seldom give any indication of the reason for excommunication. Wills are another potential source of information, containing religious preambles, charitable bequests and legacies of religious books. The problems inherent in this source have been noted by others.⁷ Religious preambles cannot be assumed to have been composed or chosen by the testator; in most cases, the precise wording will have been left to the scribe. Among the wills of Epworth manor, there is often a strong correlation between the appearance of an individual signature among the witnesses to a will and a particular wording of the preamble. There were many individuals who signed wills in these years and many forms of preamble, but the correlation is strong enough to provide confidence in the use of the preamble in a great many cases to identify, if not the scribe, the composer of the preamble.⁸ These formulaic preambles, then, are not usually very helpful in determining individual religious sentiments. Most vary from a simple bequeathing of the soul to Almighty God to a generally Protestant reference to assurance of salvation through the merits and passion of Christ. In a few cases, however, the form of the preamble or other elements contained within the will can be more revealing. As Christopher Marsh suggests, charitable bequests, gifts to the church and clergy, and requests for burial sermons can be a stronger indication of personal piety than the contents of the religious preamble.⁹

⁶ LAO: Stow Wills 1603-6/123-9, 1603-6/85-6, 1627-31/101-4, 1616-20/131-4; Ch P/1601-3, Epworth, 1602. J. Plumb, 'Early Nonconformity in Lincolnshire' (unpub. MA dissertation, University of Sheffield, 1940), p. 78; J. Venn & J. A. Venn (eds.), *Alumni Cantabrigienses: Earliest Times to 1751*, Vol. I (1927).

⁷ e.g., M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 333-5; C. Marsh, 'In the name of God? Will-making and faith in early modern England' in G. H. Martin & P. Spufford (eds.), *Records of the Nation* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1990), p. 218.

⁸ This strong influence of scribes on preambles, and the use of manuals for models, has been noted by C. Marsh, *ibid.*, pp. 216-28, 237-41; M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 321-334; S. D. Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 77-8.

⁹ C. Marsh, 'In the name of God?', p. 225.

The will of Robert Broughton the elder of Beltoft, written in 1604 by himself 'at this tyme in heathen and of good memorye (god be thanked)' is unusually informative about both his personal religious beliefs and those who formed part of his select circle. The preamble itself is short: 'I bequeath and committ my sowle to allmightyie god my mercifull father in Jesus Christ'. However, the will is peppered with indications of his godly sentiments, beginning with the disposal of his body. He wished to be buried where his wife 'shall thinke good, so that it be out of the churche, and I wishe it to be rather on the northe syde, and my funerall to be without all vayne expenses, iangleinge of belles and suche like'. He later referred again to his wish for moderate funeral expenses 'for avoydeinge of Popishe superstition'. His wife was given detailed instructions as to the lending of his books, 'But to Papistes and such like I will have none lent: ffor what good shall we looke in dealinge with that generation...We owe no trust to them that will one cosen an other, and are all conspired adversaries to us'. If his wife wished to place his daughters in service, he had no objection, provided she and his supervisors were

verye curious in chuseinge where to place them, for verye fewe howsefathers nowe a dayes saye and perfourme with JOSHUA I AND MY HOWSE WILL SERVE THE LORDE. And fewe dames that doe like dame HESTER, I AND MY MAYDES WILL DOE THE LIKE. Popishe and prophane howses I would have shunned as hell, although theire governours be called reputed civill howsemen. In this perilous worlde, where securitye, vanytye and excesse of ryott labour to deface and destroye all true religion, Christs small flocke, whose simplicitie and harmeles behaviour the worlde scorneth at, had neede be wise as serpents. Mans providence cannot prevent all evill, but we must doe our beste and leave to god the reste.¹⁰

Members of this 'small flock' can be found among those named in the will. Some, like his nephew Robert Broughton the younger, Henry Glew and his son Nathaniel, and John Medley had witnessed wills in the company of Robert Broughton the elder. Another fellow witness was the deceased Richard Whiteley, yeoman of Epworth, whose daughter was named in Robert Broughton's will. Richard Whiteley had named Robert Broughton as one of his supervisors, with particular responsibility for the overseeing of the lending of his books. Robert Broughton almost certainly wrote the wills he witnessed; the preambles were the same as his own, as was the characteristic description of the supervisors as 'my beloved in Christ', otherwise appearing only

¹⁰ LAO: Stow Will 1603-6/123-9.

in some of the wills witnessed later by Nathaniel Glew. Others mentioned in Robert Broughton's own will, Peter Theaker 'sometyme my servant', John Leggatt, William Foster and Thomas Bernard, later witnessed wills in the company of Nathaniel Glew. The main beneficiary in the event of all of his children dying before coming of age was his step-daughter. He mentioned 'Mr. Barnard, the minister of Wyrksop' (Richard, formerly curate of Epworth), and his four supervisors were the two Glews, William Foster and Timothy Ellis 'nowe teacher of Amcotts'. Both Glews and the wife of William Foster stood excommunicate on more than one occasion, and Henry was presented in 1604 for attending church in Althorpe. It can be seen that this group extended across parish boundaries, with connections in Belton, Epworth and Althorpe parishes. Richard Whiteley, one of the group in Epworth, left small legacies to two of those mentioned in Robert Broughton's will: Richard Bernard and Peter Theaker. He appointed as supervisors, along with Robert Broughton, Henry and Nathaniel Glew of Belton.¹¹

Another associate of Robert Broughton the elder, having witnessed two wills with him, was James Popplewell of Belton. His own will in 1605 named Robert Broughton, nephew of the elder, as a supervisor. Another supervisor was John Singleton, a later excommunicate. James Popplewell's preamble contained a statement on the nature of the Trinity and a decidedly Calvinist conclusion. Unlike the Glews, he was not alienated from the parish church at the time and expressed a wish to be buried within the church of Belton. He also left money 'towards the buying of a booke to the use of the church', as well as a legacy for the poor. His request for a sermon, however, did not name the parish clergyman John Melton, but simply left 3s 4d 'to that man which shall preach at my buriall'. James Popplewell seems to have conformed sufficiently to remain in good standing with the church, but to have been less than enthusiastic in his support for the curate.¹²

Other strands of religious opinion are more difficult to detect. Roman Catholics were reported to have been entering northern Lincolnshire during the late sixteenth and early

¹¹ LAO: Stow Will 1603-6/85-6.

¹² LAO: Stow Will 1603-6/174-6.

seventeenth centuries, receiving sympathetic treatment under Lincoln bishops Whickham (1584-95) and Chaderton (1595-1608). Lord Burghley complained that 'part of Lincolnshire is more dangerous than the worst part of Yorkshire'. Edmund Lord Sheffield was one of the largest landowners in the manor of Epworth as a result of the purchase by his father in 1565 of a large estate from Lord Clinton, who had leased the manor from Elizabeth I. Lord Sheffield had married a Roman Catholic and was suspected of being one.¹³ As we have seen, Robert Broughton the elder, in his will of 1604, expressed concern lest 'papists' borrow his books or influence his children. His uncompromising puritanism, however, may have led him to regard anyone outside his own 'small flock' as a potential papist.¹⁴ No Catholic recusants were presented as such at visitations in the Manor of Epworth in the early years of the century. In the ecclesiastical census of 1603, the only parish to list recusants was Belton parish, with only one recorded. 'Church papists' or crypto-Catholics could be difficult to detect, however. Catholics could conform sufficiently not to come under suspicion, or their absence from church services might not be noticed. This was especially true in large parishes like those in the manor, where usually only the better-known or more prominent absentees were likely to come to the attention of the authorities. The attitude and conscientiousness of the churchwardens and clergy in detecting absentees and suspicious behaviour also varied. In a churchwardens' certificate from Epworth in 1609, the churchwardens of previous years were presented for, among other laxities, failing to note the parishioners present at the beginning of morning and evening prayers, or to know the communicants at Easter and other times.¹⁵

¹³ LAO: Sheff/A/48/1; J. Plumb, 'Early nonconformity', pp. 58, 114. Lord Sheffield acted as arbitrator in the dispute between John Smyth and the Corporation of the City of Lincoln in 1603, earning the gratitude of Smyth, who dedicated his next work to him: B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition*, p. 117.

¹⁴ The Earl of Clarendon said that some of the 'Calvinian faction' called 'every man they do not love, papist': J. Maltby, ' "By this Book": parishioners, the Prayer Book and the Established Church' in K. Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church*, p. 120.

¹⁵ LAO: Ch P/11. Foster, C. W. (ed.), *The State of the Church in the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I* (Vol. XXIII, Lincoln Record Society, Lincoln, 1926), p. 359.

ii. Dissent and Dissension: 1604-1640

The visitation records for 1604, 1607 and 1611, and the churchwardens' certificate of 1609, reveal that the parishes of the manor varied in the extent and type of reported offences and in the degree of dissent indicated.¹⁶ Haxey's presentments concerned one habitual drunkard, one man withholding rents he owed for poor relief, three cases of adultery and one case of suspected adultery. The last offence was attributed to the vicar in 1604, John Newland, who must have been over 60 at the time. Owston parish appeared to be more troubled by scolding women: two Gunthorpe women were presented for scolding and profaning the Sabbath in 1607, and a third woman 'for rayling against divers of her neighbours on the sabboth daie' in 1611. In addition, there was one case of bastardy, one of incontinency before marriage, one man selling meat on Sunday, and three Gunthorpe men were presented for absenting themselves from church. They, however, explained that 'the waters are suche betweene Gunthorpe and Owston their p'ishe Church that many times they cannot come to the service', but when the waters are down 'they doe diligently frequent it'.¹⁷

The parish of Belton too presented cases of unneighbourly or immoral behaviour. In 1604 there were four cases of sexual incontinency and two men, one from a prominent yeoman family, were presented as drunkards, and both admitted their fault. But other presentations are indicative of more fundamental dissension within the parish. Six persons were standing excommunicate. Two of these, Henry Glew, sr., and Nathaniel Glew, were named as supervisors in the will of the puritan Robert Broughton, sr. Nathaniel Glew was excommunicate with inhibition, and his servants were presented for keeping company with him. Henry Glew, sr. was presented 'for going continually to the p'ish church of Althorpe to divine service and sacram'ts neglecting his owne parishe church'. James Pitts was presented for not receiving communion at Easter, as was the gentleman Humphrey Darnell, also presented 'for verie ill and

¹⁶ Wrightson and Levine found that, in Essex, the overwhelming majority of cases brought to the church courts in the early seventeenth century were brought freely by churchwardens, not in response to purges from above: K. Wrightson & D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700* (Oxford, 1995), p. 116.

¹⁷ LAO: Vj/18, fol. 159; Vj/19, fols. 49, 53, 171; Vj/21, fol. 94.

Raylinge words geven to John Singleton ye cunstable on ye sabaoth day in ye church yarde' and 'for not causing his familie to come to churche to bee catachised'. These transgressors, particularly the Glews, the father and son who formed part of Robert Broughton the elder's godly group, seem to have been absenting themselves quite deliberately from the parish church and the ministrations of the curate John Melton. Henry Glew, sr. had found a more congenial form of worship in the neighbouring parish of Althorpe.¹⁸

In 1607, when the puritan Henry Langley had succeeded John Melton as curate in Belton, the only presentments were two cases of bastardy. By 1611, Henry Langley had departed, and the presentments bear some resemblance to those of seven years before. Henry Taylor, earlier presented for incest, was presented for living apart from his wife. Nathaniel Glew was presented for not coming to church, and the three excommunicates included Henry Glew, sr. It appears that the two Glews had been able to conform to the parish church during the curacy of Henry Langley, but absented themselves again after he left. One of the other excommunicates, William Chessman, was cited 'for disturbing the congregacon by coming into the church in time of divine service being excommunicate 14 of Julie 1611 and wold not departe being desired by the churchwardens'. No other information survives about this case, but William Chessman quite clearly did not accept the validity of his excommunication, nor was he willing to subject himself to the authority of the churchwardens in enforcing it. He was married to the sister of William Brocke, who made his will in 1615, making the children of William Chessman his heirs if his son died, and naming William Chessman as one of his supervisors. The preamble to William Brocke's will was one of only four in the manor during the century that referred to the elect. He left his soul 'unto Almightye god beleivinge faithfully and hopinge assuredly to be one of his electe and chosen people'. It seems that in 1604 and 1611, when Belton alone of the parishes had people standing excommunicate, most of them had some connection with a group of puritans in the manor. Members of the group in other parishes did not, however, feel it

¹⁸ LAO: Vj/18, fols. 161, 170.

necessary to separate from their parish churches, nor did the Belton puritans during the curacy of Henry Langley.¹⁹

Although there were few presentments from Epworth in these years, the churchwardens' certificate of 1609 indicates considerable dissension over the question of parish discipline on the part of different groups of churchwardens. The only offenders presented at the visitations were Jenet wife of John Growby 'for a comon sower of contention and debate amonge her neighbors' and three women for exercising the office of midwife without licence, one of them the wife of a previous churchwarden who was himself presented for laxity in 1609. The churchwardens of 1609 had found many lapses. Previous churchwardens had neglected to repair the church roof, clock, the churchyard gate, and the church generally appears to have been in a disgusting state: 'ye church and seats are arrayed with durst, dust and dunge and the floar is uneven and unpaved and diverse of the seats is broken and ye ministers seat inconvenient...ye communion table is undecent with crales and holes in it, the linnen cloathes are rent and stayned, ye carpitts are defyled with dunge the stoope is to smale for the number of communicants...and ye common Beere for buryalls is broken'. Worse, their predecessors 'neglect to search out comon prophanors of ye Saboth by typling both in service tyme and out...buying and selling in open places and other unlawfull games and exercises, but themselves do frequent alehouses on such days and accompany others in p'phanes.' As well as failing to note absentees from services, they had not 'observed them which depart the church especially at ye tyme of Baptisme'.²⁰

Ceremonial conformity was not a priority of the church courts at this time, especially in the diocese of Lincoln, where Bishop Chaderton tolerated a certain degree of nonconformity after 1605. But the form of baptism was a contentious issue generally, with puritans objecting to the

¹⁹ LAO: Vj/19, fol. 53; Vj/21, fol. 93; Stow Will 1612-15/391. Martin Ingram found that, in Wiltshire, while a small number of presentments for gadding to hear preachers in neighbouring parishes appeared regularly, there was no instance in the county where the godly dominated for an extended period: M. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 94-5. Margaret Spufford found references to election in Cambridgeshire religious preambles 'very rare indeed': M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 289, 343-4.

²⁰ LAO: Vj/19, fol. 53; Vj/21, fol. 93; Ch P/11.

sign of the cross and the use of a font, while others ('Prayer Book Protestants'²¹, conforming Catholics) regarded these ritual elements as desirable, if not essential. Whatever the current practice in the local church, individuals leaving the service at the point of a controversial ceremony might be regarded as absenting themselves on principle. The noting of such people would be a means of identifying outward conformists. All the criticisms contained within the certificate point to it having been drawn up by a group of churchwardens concerned about enforcing godly discipline, so that the identification of closet papists is a likely motive for the watchful concern at the time of baptism. It is also possible there was a suspicion of a more fundamental objection to infant baptism itself. White says it seems likely that John Smyth had adopted his support of baptism of believers by 1607. At this time he was still in Gainsborough, and there may have been concern, justified or not, that his influence was still active in the area after his departure in 1608.²²

In 1623, the date from which the next visitation records are available, there is a marked difference between the parishes in the numbers standing excommunicate. Haxey had only one man excommunicated, while there were twelve such persons in Owston. In 1620, Timothy Ellis had become vicar of Owston. He had been named as supervisor by the godly Robert Broughton the elder and was subsequently one of the preachers left a small legacy by the godly Sir John Stanhope. The number of excommunicates may reflect a greater attention to attendance and discipline than that shown by his predecessors. There were fourteen standing excommunicate in Belton, along with ten others standing suspended and nine more presented for refusing to come to church. Among the excommunicated in Belton were again the Glews: Henry, Nathaniel, sr. and his wife; and Nathaniel Glew, jr., was standing suspended. Katherine Foster wife of William, presented in 1604 for living an incontinent life, was also excommunicate. There were no excommunicates listed for Epworth, where one man was standing suspended and two presented for absenting themselves from prayer. Belton, aside from the many listed as being in

²¹ J. Maltby, 'By this book', pp. 115-37.

²² C. Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1980), p. 94; B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition*, p. 131.

some way alienated from the church, had no presentments listed. In the other parishes, there were again a small number presented for sexual offences. Epworth's offenders also included Matthew Winder, teaching without a licence.²³

At this 1623 visitation, alehouse tipping on the Sabbath and misbehaviour in church, sometimes connected, were prominent offences. Haxey presented Robert Halliwell 'for misbehaviour in ye Church vizt for Cominge staggering into ye Church in ye time of Comon prayer and Sittinge in ye Church with his hatt on'. Owston cited Edward Lawton 'for beinge often overgone in drincke and beinge drunke as ye Comon fame goeth' and Thomas Bate for keeping company in his house during prayer time. In Epworth, Katherine Whittakers wife of John 'seldome goeth to her p'ish Church to heare divine prayer but keepeth company in her owne house beinge an Ale house in tyme of prayer'. Ann Whittakers was presented 'for the like'. Edward Hewitson of Epworth was accused of drinking in the alehouse in prayer time. In Epworth, church misbehaviour and alehouse tipping at times created real disruption. One man and one woman were presented for 'strikinge in the Church' and three men for 'Comittinge disorder in the Church'. Thomas Hallifax had come up with an enterprising scheme: he was presented for 'troublinge his neaghbors with colourable citacons for not sittinge in their owne seates as he pretendeth and takinge money of them for agreement'. On one occasion, the alehouse crowd appears to have retaliated in an action reminiscent of a rough riding. Mr. Thomas Lawton and eight other men (one of them the husband of Katherine Whittakers, presented for keeping an alehouse on the Sabbath) were presented 'for goeing about with a droome and loude beatinge the same all or the most of eveninge prayer uppon the Saboth daye...to the disturbance of the congregacon that were then in the Church to heare divine service'.²⁴

²³ LAO: Viiij/1, fols. 1-2, 7, 11-12, 17-18, 23, 32, 36.

²⁴ LAO: Viiij/1, fols. 5-7, 12, 21, 23, 30-2, 36. There was a similar case to that of Thomas Hallifax in Myddle during the later seventeenth century: D. Hey, *An English Rural Community; Myddle under the Tudors and Stuarts* (Leicester, 1974), pp. 219-20. For the role of alehouses and attempts to control them, see: P. Clark, *The English Alehouse, 1200-1830* (1983); K. Wrightson, 'Alehouses, order and reformation in rural England, 1590-1660' in E. Yeo & S. Yeo (eds.), *Popular Culture and Class Conflict, 1590-1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure* (Brighton, 1981), pp. 1-27.

Alehouse tipping on the Sabbath was also a matter of considerable concern to Sir John Stanhope of Melwood Park in Owston parish, whose will of 1627 shows clear evidence of his godly outlook. He served as justice of the peace, and the Lindsey quarter session records of 1625 contain nine cases of men of the manor indicted for keeping alehouses open on the Sabbath, all tried before Sir John. One of these, that of Robert Fish of Kinnall Ferry in Owston parish, was noted by the justice of the peace as 'upon my owne veiw and sight'. Two alehouse keepers of Haxey were indicted for allowing two labourers of Melwood Park to drink on the Sabbath. These two labourers on Sir John's estate had travelled to the far end of the manor for their Sunday tipping, but not far enough to escape the notice of the magistrate. Men from Owston, Haxey and Epworth parishes were brought before the court for both keeping and frequenting alehouses. Those named as drinking in the alehouses included labourers, a number of yeomen and Richard Thomhill, a gentleman from Owston. John Whittaker of Epworth, whose wife was presented in 1623 for keeping an alehouse on Sunday and who was himself presented for taking part in the drum-beating incident, was indicted as an alehouse keeper. John Starkey, another of the drumming crowd, was one of the tipplers named at the quarter sessions. He was the son of the yeoman of the same name who was one of the past churchwardens accused in 1609 of tipping in alehouses. Another of the Sunday drinkers was Matthew Winder, presented to the church courts for teaching without a licence. It seems clear that at this time a godly discipline was attempted by some of those in authority and that it was strongly resisted by others. Both the secular and church courts could be used in an attempt to bring offenders to compliance, but allies in resistance could be found, some of them of considerable status and substance.²⁵

The visitation records of 1631, 1635 and 1640 show increasing discord in all the parishes. One point of contention continued to be sabbath-breaking, especially alehouse-tipping

²⁵ LAO: Stow Will 1627-31/102-4; Lindsey Quarter Sessions LSB 1625, nos. 30-2. Friction between reforming puritans and their defiant neighbours has been noted frequently at the local level, especially in the first quarter of the century; e.g., C. Hill, *Society and Puritanism* (1964), pp. 227-40; D. Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (Oxford, 1987), chapter 3; K. Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (1982), pp. 199-214; W. Hunt, *The Puritan Moment: The Coming of Revolution in an English County* (Cambridge, Mass, 1983), pp. 144-54; K. Fincham, 'Introduction' in K. Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church*, p. 12-20.

during prayer time. In Haxey, two men were presented for allowing drinking in their alehouses on Sunday and four millers for grinding corn on the sabbath in 1635. In 1640, one of these millers was again presented for grinding com. In Owston, Thomas Robinson, indicted in the quarter sessions in 1633 as a victualler selling over-priced ale, was presented in 1631 for 'causing his men to seane his nets upon the sabbath day' and for 'keepeing company in his house in tyme of divine service, drinking upon the sabbath day'. One woman and two men were also presented for the latter offence. Nicholas Wilson was accused of drinking in time of divine service, and Matthew Heath for 'imoderate drinking and p'phaneing the Sabboath'. In 1635, Jane Huitson who was excommunicate with inhibition, was also presented for keeping company at her alehouse on the sabbath, and in 1640 William Lumbe, excommunicate in 1631, was cited for 'beinge drunke and abusinge himselfe'. Robert Troute, accused of keeping company with the excommunicate Jane Huitson in her alehouse in 1635, in 1640 was presented for grinding corn on a Sunday 'in time of noe great necescitie'. Richard Lumbe was cited for the same.²⁶

In Belton, Peter Burton was presented 'for turning hempe upon the sabboath day' in 1631. Three men were presented for similar offences in 1635: Reonald Hardslie 'for usually selling meat upon Sunday in time of divine service (being a butcher)', Thomas Read for sabbath-breaking 'by using servile labour namely in greazing and Clouting and rep'ing his wanne or Carte thereupon' and John Bernard 'by using servill labour and mowing of grasse especially upon sonday'. Thomas Burton was keeping company in his alehouse on the sabbath in 1635, and in 1640 previous churchwardens were in trouble for failing to present the 'many alehouses with entertainment [and] stronge drinkinge in prayer time'. In Epworth, Thomas Farr was keeping company in his alehouse on the Sabbath in 1635, and in 1640 John Whittakers, the alehouse keeper in trouble with both the church court and at quarter sessions in the 1620s, was presented for 'suffering his servant who was bigge with childe to goe away from him without givinge any

²⁶ LAO: Viiij/2, fols. 16-17; Viiij/3, fols. 57-8, 129; Vj/31, fols. 50-1.

satisfaction to the Church'. He claimed that the servant had left his house under the pretext of obtaining a warrant from the justice of the peace against the father of the child.²⁷

It is apparent that the attraction of the alehouse as an alternative venue for Sunday gatherings was still perceived as a problem by the local church authorities and that presentments continued to be used as means to solve it. Sabbath-breaking itself was sufficient reason for the authorities to deplore the frequenting of alehouses, but the associated 'entertainment' and the drunken behaviour that could lead to brawling and disturbing the church services themselves were additional reasons for vigilance and continued attempts to control the activity. The further danger of sexual licence being tolerated or even encouraged within the alehouse is clearly spelt out in the Epworth presentations of 1640. The alehouse servant Bridget Crosbie, having had sexual liaisons with two named men and heavily pregnant with a bastard child, managed to escape her master without performing any penance.²⁸

The alehouse was not the only focus of anxiety or location of uncivil behaviour. Haxey parish, relatively peaceful before, was showing evidence of more acrimony, particularly within the church itself. In 1631, Margaret Husband, wife of William, was presented 'for scolding and being unquiet amongst her neighbours'. In 1635, it was Henry Taylor who was 'sowing discord and variance amongst his neighbours in time of divine service in the church usually upon sundayes' and 'did quarrell and chide with Robert Browne who did strike him in the Church'. Robert Browne was also presented for striking for a seat in the church 'and thereupon passed some chiding words'. His wife Margaret was 'a comon scolder and often brawling with her

²⁷ LAO: Viiij/2, fol. 11; Viiij/3, fols. 57, 63, 66-7, 124; Vj/31, fols. 47-8. Some of the concern over alehouse tippling may reflect a concern over the use of grain for brewing at a time of scarcity, as Wrightson suggests, and may also account for increased hostility against millers: K. Wrightson, 'Alehouses, order and reformation', p. 11. A yearly grain price index is given by P. Bowden, 'Statistical appendix' in J. Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640*, (Vol. IV, Cambridge, 1967), p. 821. In Terling, most of those prosecuted for selling ale without a licence, or selling too dear, were also presented for other offences (e.g., tolerating disorders, allowing drunkenness, music, dancing, failure to attend church, sheltering sexual offenders): Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, p. 137.

²⁸ Martin Ingram suggests this charge reflected the evidently stock practice for masters to force out servants in this condition. Most local authorities were pleased to be rid of pregnant servants, so that such a presentment might have been brought because the master was suspected of getting her pregnant, but alehouse keepers were likely harbourers: M. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, pp. 285-9.

neighbors and...a tale carryer and maker of contentions and strifes betwixt neighbour and neighbour'. John Burdsall was accused in 1640 of 'not behavinge himselfe reverently in the church in time of divine service...that hee did bungle one Nicholson in the church and therebie did dis[turb] divine service'. William Coggan was presented for brawling with his neighbours, although he denied this, admitting only to exchanging angry words with the wife of Robert Torksey. The wife of Robert Torksey was the sister of the curate.²⁹

Even the parish of Wroot by 1640 was showing signs of the fractiousness apparent in the larger parishes. Wroot had had no problems that came to light in the earlier visitations, but by 1640 Wroot was hosting a population substantially enlarged by incoming settlers, and it might be expected that differences would result. The only man baptised in the parish mentioned in the presentments was Edmund Drewry, presented for 'teaching schollers without a license'. Three men were standing excommunicate, two with inhibition. One of these, William Saunderson, was presented for 'nersinge a child and bringinge of it to bee buried at our Church whose parents wee know not and whose names wee cannott certainly leame'. The charge indicates a suspicion of connivance at the escape from performing due penance by the parents of an illegitimate child.³⁰

In these years there is increasing evidence in the manor of more determined absence from church attendance and of parishioners standing excommunicate at more than one visitation. From 1626, there was a General Baptist congregation in Lincoln, extending its influence into other parts of the county, particularly the northern areas, during the 1630s. The Isle of Axholme was considered by church authorities to be an area of Anabaptist activity by 1634, with possible centres at Epworth, Butterwick and Crowle. Watts suggests that John Smyth's connections with the county might have helped the General Baptist cause there. Certainly Gainsborough was troubled by sectarian activity. In 1635, ten people stood

²⁹ LAO: Viiij/2, fol. 15; Viiij/3, fols. 48-9; Vj/31, fol. 66. Disputes over seats, assigned on the basis of rank, was a common occurrence in other parishes: D. Hey, *An English Rural Community*, pp. 219-220; M. K. McIntosh, *A Community Transformed: the Manor and Liberty of Havering, 1500-1620* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 198-9, 239.

³⁰ LAO: Vj/31, fols. 52, 60, 67. Martin Ingram found presentment for this offence to have been rare, probably because such behaviour was uncommon: M. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, p. 285.

excommunicate there, in addition to four recusant papists, two Brownists and one Anabaptist. Twenty-one were standing excommunicate in 1640.³¹

Within the manor of Epworth, excommunicates continued to increase. Haxey, with only one man standing excommunicate in 1623, had seven excommunicates in 1631, twelve in 1635 and five in 1640. Two men each appeared at two visitations. In Wroot, three men stood excommunicate in 1640, as did two Frenchmen in Sandtoft. Epworth listed six in 1631, nine in 1635 along with one non-attender and a further six presented for keeping company with those excommunicated with inhibition, and ten appeared in 1640. Also in that year, in a reverse of the 1604 charge against Henry Glew of Belton for attending church in Althorpe, four people from Amcotts were presented for being 'a comon resorter to our Church' in Epworth. Owston had fourteen standing excommunicate in 1631, in addition to Thomas Slingsby and his wife Margaret, presented for recusancy. These two had stood excommunicate in 1623. In 1635 there were fifteen, six of whom had been cited in 1631, including Thomas Slingsby and his wife. Margaret Slingsby was still excommunicate in 1640 along with ten others, one of whom was Anne Portington, described as a popish recusant. Of the eleven, nine were women. In Owston it was also women who were accused of railing at the vicar, although these were not listed among the excommunicates. Scolding women were presented earlier in the century. Women either were, or were seen by the authorities to be, particularly troublesome in the parish. It may be that the riverside settlements, with more marketing opportunities for dairy products and ale, gave some women more independence and confidence, enabling them to defy authority more readily and presenting an especially obvious threat to orderly government of the community and to the maintenance of religious conformity.³²

³¹ B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition*, p. 165; M. R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 283; K. Lindley, *Fenland Riots and the English Revolution* (1982), p. 195. LAO: Viiij/3, fol. 46; Vj/31, fol. 47. McGregor suggests that the major source of popular heresy in the Lincolnshire fens was 'probably the Anabaptists among the Dutch engineers imported to drain' in the first half of the century. Given the general unpopularity of the drainage schemes, I think Watts's suggestion the more likely: J. F. McGregor, 'The Baptists: fount of all heresy' in J. F. McGregor & B. Reay (eds.), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1988), p. 35.

³² LAO: Viiij/2, fols. 5-6, 12, 16-17; Viiij/3, fols. 46, 49-50, 63, 92, 123-4, 127, 129; Vj/31, fols. 26, 47, 50-2, 60, 62, 67. David Underdown connects the 'crisis of order' of 1560-1640 with male alarm about a

Belton's list of excommunicates grew especially large during the period. Eleven were included in 1631 with one non-attender. One of the excommunicate, Frances wife of Thomas Appleby, had been presented for refusing to come to church in 1623. Philip Montaine's two daughters had been presented for the same offence in that year, and he and his wife were standing excommunicate in 1635. Altogether thirteen were excommunicate in 1635, five of whom had also been in 1631. Five more were presented for keeping company with Philip Montaine, gentleman. Mrs. Williamson was described as a popish recusant in 1640, and a total of thirty-six additional people were standing excommunicate, eleven of them listed previously. A total of nine men and women of gentle status in Belton were standing excommunicate at one or more of these three visitations. Obviously status was no protection against discipline in this parish, but nor was excommunication, even with inhibition, necessarily effective. Men and women, not themselves excommunicated, were presented for buying, selling and conversing with those who were, or for hiring them as labourers.³³

The curate of Epworth, John Hage, caused an upset during a Sunday church service in Epworth in 1631. The account of his words is somewhat confused, made worse by tears in the manuscript, but the gist is clear. He used 'threatening words, vizt I have made a paire [---] betwixt the p'son and his farmers, whereby they have [---] them: I know nohow, in higger migger, my learning [---] mee money therefore lett mee have my money [---] will take such course for it, as the law will afford [---], with divers other rayleing speeches'. Mr. John Hage was then presented 'for a comon drunkard'. In 1635, John Hage, clerk, was standing excommunicate with inhibition. By 1640, John Hage was no longer listed as excommunicate, but neither was he the curate. Nicholas Massey was now in this position, but the Protestation Returns of 1642 show both of them in the parish. Nicholas Massey signed at the end of the list as curate, while John

variety of forms of disorder and rebellion among young people, social inferiors and women, including witches, masculine women and scolds: D. Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion*, pp. 102, 110-11 and *A Freeborn People: Politics and the Nation in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 60-7.

³³ LAO: Viiij/2, fols. 3, 11; Viiij/3, fols. 43, 54, 56, 66, 128; Vj/31, fols. 46-7, 58-9, 68. Collinson found that in later sixteenth-century Cranbrook in Kent, the very wealthy did not escape presentment: P. Collinson, *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (1983), pp. 411-12.

Hage signed as 'clerk' in the middle of the list. He died in the parish in December of 1647 and was described as 'clerk' in the bishop's transcript recording his burial. The large numbers standing excommunicate in the manor and John Hage's continued residence in Epworth in the capacity of a clerk but without an official position, suggests the possibility of a conventicle.³⁴

The imposition of Laudian ceremonial reforms may well have increased religious disagreement and dissent during this period. Bishop Williams of Lincoln had been reasonably tolerant of puritan preachers and some degree of ritual nonconformity. The 1634 visitation of the diocese, however, was carried out by Laud's agents. At the 1635 visitation, the Epworth churchwardens were presented for failing to certify the railing in of the communion table. Attempts to discipline the congregation now extended beyond the earlier concerns about drunken brawling and fisticuffs over seats to include quieter offences. Robert Cranshaw was presented in Epworth in 1635 'for usually sleeping in the Church in time of divine service and sermon and for not standing up at the Creed nor observing the rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England'. In 1631, also in Epworth, Richard Hallifax was accused of perhaps a more purposeful failure to conform: 'vizt for not standing upp at the Creede, the Gospell, and glory bee to the father etc'.³⁵ Another determined display of contempt for the discipline of the church was that of Nathaniel Brownloe, gentleman, who in 1640 was presented for coming to church while excommunicate with inhibition, refusing to depart, and 'disturbed ye whole congregacon and caused the prayers to be stayed and the people to depart'. An unusual act of sabotage by a former churchwarden was reported in Owston in 1635. He was presented for 'mingling the wine, which came to the

³⁴ LAO: Viiij/2, fol. 3; Viiij/3, fols. 46, 124, 129; Vj/31, fol. 48; 1642 Protestation Returns; Epworth Bishop's Transcripts. Collinson notes that a minister could be directly supported from voluntary offerings of his flock or by a patron. The origins of separatism, Independent and Baptist, in Cranbrook in Kent were to be found in the 1630s, under pressure from central policies: P. Collinson, *Godly People*, pp. 537, 427. For a conventicle in Terling, see K. Wrightson & D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, p. 160.

³⁵ (Canon 18), one of Laud's requirements: K. Fincham, 'Episcopal government, 1603-1640', p. 79. Sleeping and wandering thoughts too were condemned: P. Lake, 'The Laudian style: order, uniformity and the pursuit of the beauty of holiness in the 1630s' in Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church*, p. 166. LAO: Viiij/3, fol. 122; Viiij/2, fol. 12.

Communion [---] with ale'. Unless this was the result of an accident or confusion, it would seem to be an act of determined desecration of the sacrament.³⁶

The large number of excommunicates in the manor in 1635 and 1640, many of them having stood excommunicate previously, suggests both a rejection of Laudian ceremonial innovations and a more determined break into sectarian groupings. Very few were labelled as recusants or dissenters, but then neither were the later Quakers usually listed as such. Quakers were presented for non-attendance, producing bastard children and standing excommunicate, again repeatedly. Some of the earlier excommunicates, therefore, are likely to have been the 'Anabaptists' noted in 1634 and others those who at various times found the form of service in the local parish church unacceptable. The two popish recusants may have been only the most obvious, notorious or ill-liked of a larger number with similar sympathies. A change in clergy and in churchwardens, the latter normally a yearly occurrence, could lead to changes in emphasis in matters of discipline and in the individuals targeted. Churchwardens, along with their friends and relatives, could find themselves on the receiving end of church discipline once they no longer held office. Thomas Vavasour, a prominent Belton gentleman born in the parish, was excommunicate in 1631 and 1635, but had served as churchwarden almost continuously in the early years of the century. Nathaniel Glew, jr., standing suspended in 1623, served as churchwarden at the end of the 1630s; his wife stood excommunicate in 1640. The Belton gentleman Peter Bernard was presented in 1640 for failing to pay his church rate, but challenged the assessment on the basis that it 'is una'qually made and levied and not according to Law...it is soe generally laid that he cannot give a lawful answer to it and...all the churchwardens make themselves p'ties against him'. He himself had served as churchwarden the year before, when presumably his assessment had been to his satisfaction.³⁷

³⁶ Holmes, *Seventeenth Century Lincolnshire*, pp. 116-17. LAO: Viiij/3, fol. 58; Viiij/2, fol. 6; Vj/31, fol. 59.

³⁷ LAO: Vj/31, fol. 59.

Disputes directly involving the local clergy are particularly noticeable during the 1630s and 1640,³⁸ although some acrimony is apparent earlier. The Epworth churchwardens in 1609 found cause to criticise their parish clergy. 'Neither the parson nor his curate be licenced to preache or teach schole', they claimed, 'as it is comonly beleaved'. In fact, the rector Richard Massey was described as 'preacher' in the *Liber Cleri*, 1604, and the curate Thomas Orwell was labelled, perhaps pointedly, in the 1610 recording of his burial as 'curat and pedagog'. The rector was further accused of not keeping hospitality at his own house and of letting his glebe land to a gentleman from outside the parish 'and his other profits unto others of ye next towne p'tending distrustfullnes of neighbours'. Timothy Ellis, who became vicar of Owston in 1620, had been mentioned in the puritan Robert Broughton's will in 1604 as a teacher at Amcotts and was one of the preachers remembered by the puritan knight John Stanhope in 1627 and so appeared to have met with the approval of the godly. In 1623 he was attacked by Anne Backhouse, who was accused of 'misusinge Mr Ellis our minister with most viled wordes'. He was also presented in Haxey for performing a marriage between two Haxey residents without a licence or the calling of banns.³⁹

Both Richard Massey and Timothy Ellis continued to have difficulties with their parishioners. In 1631, the wife of Nicholas Thompson called Mr. Ellis a 'drunken whoremaister' and Ann Raven was presented 'for wishing a knife at Mr Ellis heart, and abuseing him with base tearmes'.⁴⁰ The abuse could come from the clergy too. Timothy Ellis's curate John Rhodes was

³⁸ Foster notes an increase in antagonism between the laity and the clergy of all opinions under Charles I: A. Foster, 'The clerical estate revitalised' in Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church*, pp. 139-40, 155.

³⁹ LAO: Ch P/11; C. W. Foster (ed.), *The State of the Church*, p. 344; Epworth Bishop's Transcripts; Viiij/1, fols. 23, 34. Clergy obtaining temporary employment as teachers, then acquiring the necessary connections to gain a living, are noted in: R. O'Day, 'The reformation of the ministry, 1558-1642' in R. O'Day & F. Heal (eds.), *Continuity and Change: Personnel and Administration of the Church of England, 1500-1642* (Leicester, 1976), pp. 68-70.

⁴⁰ LAO: Viiij/2, fol. 6. Timothy Ellis had equally strong supporters. The Owston yeoman Edward Otter, in his will of 1644, left money for the poor, land to provide 2s yearly for four of the 'most needfull' widows of the parish, and also 10s each to the five children of 'M'ris Ellis', 5s each to the two sons of Mr. Ellis, 40s each to the daughter and lame grandson of Mr. Ellis, and 5s to 'my loveing minister and teacher Mr. Ellis whome I entreat to preach at my buriall': LAO: Stow Will 1640-59 II/351. Martin Ingram comments that evidence of resentment against clergy is often offset by positive sentiments: M. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, p. 111.

presented 'for abusing the Church wardens of Althorpe with uncivill speeches in the Church yeard and railing and scolding against them'. By 1640, the rector Richard Massey was experiencing problems again in Epworth. Thomas Barrowe of Epworth and William Popplewell of Belton were presented 'for pluckinge Mr Richard Massie Rcor of Epworth out of the Chancell and arrestinge him in the Churchyard upon a Sunday or holyday'. William Popplewell said that Thomas Barrowe had arrested Mr. Massey and then brought him to his house. No further information survives about this case, but it seems clear that the arrest was designed to be as public and humiliating as possible. Richard Massey had earlier been involved in complaints against malicious suits. John Coggan and Thomas Whiteley had brought an indictment against Edmond Hewitson of Epworth in 1633, accusing him of 'being a common gossip, stirring up lawsuits and causing affrays and fights at Epworth'. The quarter session records list as the first item under 'Articles against Edmund Hewitson: 1. Concerning one Richard Massie clerk to multiplicity of suits against his neighbours'.⁴¹ Richard Massey in 1640 also had to contend with railing from one of the French settlers disputing the paying of their church assessment. Peter Verhage was accused of 'abusing the Minister of our parish by words namely by callinge himould roane and sayinge I seased the levell and Mr. Massie away'.⁴²

Epworth's curate Nicholas Massey, the son of the rector, in 1640 had troubles of his own. He was presented for fathering a bastard child, but had compounded his offence by allowing another man to be named by the mother of the child at the delivery and to be prosecuted by the court. This man had since 'gone out of the Country'. Nicholas Massey was presented in both Epworth and Belton for administering holy communion and doing prayers in the church after he was excommunicate 'and notice given him of it'. The churchwardens were also in trouble for allowing him to administer communion. He was no longer excommunicate at the time of the visitation, but was also presented 'for his neglect of prayers upon the Sunday'. In Wroot in 1640,

⁴¹ LAO: Viiij/2, fol. 4; Vj/31, fol. 48; Lindsey Quarter Sessions 1633, Nos. 27, 33. Other examples of people charged with similar lists of offences, including the bringing of malicious suits are cited in D. Hey, *The Fiery Blades of Hallamshire: Sheffield and its Neighbourhood, 1660-1740* (Leicester, 1991), p. 241.

⁴² LAO: Vj/31, fol. 67.

one of those excommunicate with inhibition, Richard Carforth, was cited 'for railing upon and abusing Mr Newland our Minister as hee came from Church on Sunday...calling him unconshionable and malitious man with other disgracefull words'.⁴³

The visitation records indicate some evidence of increasing friction within all the parishes, whether over doctrine, liturgy or acceptable behaviour. Alehouse tipping became of particular concern during the 1620s, and continued to be presented during the 1630s, along with other sabbath offences. Misbehaviour in church, including failure to conform to new liturgical requirements, caused problems, and excommunicants, especially in Belton, increased, with many standing excommunicate repeatedly. Clergy in Epworth, Owston and Wroot experienced 'railings', accusations, and even excommunication and arrest.

iii. The Role of the Clergy

The parish clergy varied not only in their theological views and attitudes to church ceremony and parish discipline, but also in the extent of their personal involvement in the parish, their lifestyles, wealth and education. There was a considerable difference in the tendency of clergymen to witness wills. Aside from the witnessing of three wills by John Melton early in the century, no Belton curates in the first half of the century appear as witnesses. In Epworth, Richard Bernard witnessed two wills between 1600 and 1601, when he left for Worksop, the curates John Hage and Nicholas Massey each witnessed one, and the rector Richard Massey, during his long incumbancy, likewise witnessed only one. The vicar of Haxey, John Newland, witnessed no wills from the beginning of the century until his death in 1605. In contrast, his curate James Marshall witnessed 28 wills before he died in 1604. William Dalby, the succeeding vicar, signed seven wills in his first decade in the parish, but then ceased. He witnessed the codicil to a Belton will in 1621 along with the testator's brother and brother-in-law, and this may well have been done in response to a need for an independent and reputable witness to the alteration. In Owston, the vicar Robert Charlton witnessed seven wills in the first six years of the century. The next incumbent, Robert Markham, witnessed none in the fourteen years before his

⁴³ LAO: Vj/31, fols 48. 52.

death in 1620. During the next twenty years, the vicar Timothy Ellis witnessed fifteen. He also witnessed two wills in Haxey parish, both of residents of East Lound, a settlement closer to Owston than to Haxey. The curates of Owston parish were frequent witnesses. They lived in West Butterwick, where there was a chapelry, and witnessed most of the wills from that settlement. The rectors of Wroot witnessed, and almost certainly wrote, all the wills in the years down to 1641, when John Coggan became rector; no wills exist for the first decade of his incumbency.

In most cases, the witnessing clergyman was probably the scribe of the will. In some cases, clergy may have written or witnessed a will without appending a signature, but it seems clear that some were more frequent participants in the process of will-making than others. One factor was the availability of other scribes. In all these parishes except Wroot, several literate laymen capable of composing wills were available by the beginning of the century. This was particularly true of Belton, where there was a higher proportion of resident gentry and rising yeoman families and a reasonably compact settlement pattern, making it easier to obtain a scribe when required. Epworth was even more compactly settled. This may be one reason why these two parishes appear to have relatively little clerical involvement in the will process. William Dalby's diminishing participation in Haxey by the 1620s might well reflect a growing number of scribes available in a parish with a large number of scattered settlements.

There could, however, be another motive for writing a will aside from the provision of a necessary service to parishioners. The fee could be a useful addition to a poor living and especially vital to curates. It is possible to see that this factor might apply particularly to Owston parish by examining the glebe terriers of 1601. That for Belton does not survive, but Haxey's reveals a vicarage with orchard and 21 1/4 acres of glebe land, while Epworth had over 27 acres of glebe land and, according to a later terrier, a house, dovecote, barn, stable and other outhouses. At Owston, 'There is not any Composition or hathe bene within the mynde of any man nowe livinge belonginge to the aforesaide vicaredge but a simple house with an orchard the garth, the Church yarde and fower pence at a mariage. And also a Pention of twentye pounds

yearly'. Later in the century, it was reported that it had been impossible to obtain the services of a resident vicar for many years because of the dilapidated state of the house. No vicar had been able to afford to keep it in repair because of the poor living provided. The temptation of the 4d fee for performing a marriage may explain why Timothy Ellis found himself presented by the Haxey churchwardens in 1623 for performing the clandestine marriage of a Haxey couple. The curates living in West Butterwick had financial problems too. John Rhodes, curate from c. 1597 until his death in 1618, left £6 to his son 'to be paid out of my wages which is oweing me in the towen of Butterwick'. John Dennys, when he died in 1655 after 30 years as curate there, left to his wife and unmarried daughter the residue of his estate. This consisted of goods valued at £20 16s, of which £16 was in money owing to him.⁴⁴

The educational standard amongst the clergy of the manor in the early years of the century varied, but was generally high. Robert Dobson, rector of Wroot 1577-1617, was neither a graduate nor a preacher. Neither the vicar (Robert Charlton, 1587-1604) nor the curate (John Rhodes, ?1597-1618) of Owston parish were graduates. Robert Charlton was described in 1603 as 'of meane learning'. The next incumbent, Robert Markham, however, was a Master of Arts and a preacher, as was his successor Timothy Ellis. The curates of Belton John Melton, (?1582-1606) and Henry Langley (1606-1610) were graduates, but Mark Somerscales (1610-18), although a preacher, did not have a degree. John Baldwin (1618-40) was a Master of Arts. The vicars of Haxey (John Newland, 1562-1606) and William Dalby (1606-1641) and the rector of Epworth (Richard Massey, 1595-1640) were all graduates, as were the Epworth curate Richard Bernard and the curate of Haxey, James Marshall, who died in 1604.⁴⁵

Except for Richard Bernard, these men were all outsiders. As Rosemary O'Day points out, the basis of much of the anti-clerical feeling in the mid-seventeenth century was clerical arrogance, arising from a feeling of separateness and superiority through education. This in turn

⁴⁴ LAO: Glebe Terriers, Vol. V, fols. 29, 33, 41; Glebe Terrier Box 14/16; Ch P/1686/1, fol. 31; Stow Wills 1616-20/308; 1660-3/572; Pro. Inv. 157/89.

⁴⁵ LAO: PD/1607/10 dorso; LC/3, fols. 101-04; Venn & Venn (eds.), *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, C. W. Foster, *State of the Church*, pp. 344-346.

produced irritation and jealousy amongst their parishioners, who tended to view them as parasites.⁴⁶ This is evident in the complaints against Richard Massey in Epworth, who was resented for leasing his glebe land to a gentleman from outside the parish and being distrustful of his neighbours. Higher education, however, was not necessarily divisive or a bar to a successful and peaceful incumbency. A clergyman who energetically and diplomatically fulfilled his pastoral role was likely to satisfy most of his parishioners and avoid much of the disharmony that other, less skillful, clergy engendered. 'Historians know much about disruptive ministers but little about their pastorally-sensitive colleagues, since secular and ecclesiastical courts were there to investigate complaints, not to hand out awards.'⁴⁷

A notable exception to the railing and accusations suffered by many of the clergy was William Dalby, vicar of Haxey from 1606 until his resignation in 1641. He had served as parson of St. Peter at Arches in Lincoln (John Smyth's former cure) from 1604, and continued to hold his position there until 1612. In 1611 it was noted that 'he wanteth a preaching curate admitted' in Lincoln. Although holding a plurality, Dalby appears to have been active in Haxey. William Dalby's predecessor in Haxey, John Newland, also a pluralist, left pastoral duties to his curate. It is probably not coincidental that the year in which John Newland was presented for suspected adultery was the year in which his curate died. William Dalby could not therefore expect automatic support and compliance in Haxey.⁴⁸

Dalby, on his arrival, appears to have taken over many of the pastoral functions carried out by his predecessor's curate. He witnessed wills, assessed probate inventories, helped to administer parish lands and invariably signed the parish registers. As a godly and educated man, he also concerned himself with the church library, carrying out an inventory of the books there soon after his arrival and recording them in the parish register. In most of the wills he witnessed, the testator left money for books for the church. He farmed his glebe lands in the

⁴⁶ R. O'Day, 'The reformation of the ministry', p. 75.

⁴⁷ K. Fincham, 'Introduction' in K. Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church*, p. 18.

⁴⁸ LAO: Biog PD/1604/1; PD/1606/20; PD/1607/10 dorso; RES/1641/10 & 11. Martin Ingram notes that charges of suspected adultery were likely to have been brought as the result of gossip by malevolent neighbours: M. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, pp. 242-3.

parish himself, with the aid eventually of his son Thomas, who remained in the parish for the rest of his life as a yeoman. William supported his parishioners when they were in trouble with secular authorities or with wealthy and powerful men outside the parish. In 1630, William Dalby wrote a letter to Sir John Munson, 'on behalf of a poor man, his parish clerk who has been summoned to the sessions for in grossing'. The vicar and his neighbours had earlier petitioned the Justices to allow this man and another 'to make malt because of the fear of the nearness of sickness to the markets'.⁴⁹ Also in 1630, William Dalby and others signed a certificate supporting the petition of a parishioner, Robert Staynton, whose daughter had gone into service in Belton parish and was, after having been promised marriage, impregnated by the son of the household. 'Then Gregory [her master] put her out of his house and forced her poor father, who already had six children, to support her'.⁵⁰

Some of the relative lack of irreconcilable differences in Haxey might be due to a somewhat more egalitarian social composition in that parish, especially when compared with Belton, where more gentry are apparent. However, strife influenced by social position was visible in Haxey at times. The churchwardens in 1627 sent a letter to the bishop, complaining that Elizabeth Coggan had been guilty of malicious slander against Susan Coggan. Elizabeth was the kinswoman of 'Mr Doctor ffarmery', and 'thereby she taketh occasion to abuse her neighbours upon assurance of impunity'.⁵¹ William Coggan's presentment in 1640 for brawling with his neighbours was based on an angry exchange with the wife of Robert Torksey, a member of a prominent yeoman/gentry family, and herself the sister of the curate. Local church officials obviously took sides in these disputes, but they were manifested in charges of unneighbourly behaviour and did not result in excommunication. Another reason for less obviously serious

⁴⁹ LAO: Lindsey Quarter Sessions 1630, No. 228. The harvests of 1629 and 1630 had been bad and corn prices were high, leading to instructions to justices to prevent hoarding and the diversion of grain into brewing. There was also an outbreak of plague in Lincolnshire at the time: C. Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire*, p. 110.

⁵⁰ LAO: Lindsey Quarter Sessions 1630, No. 1. 'It was a commonplace that vicars should help their parishioners settle disputes': C. W. Brooks, *Pettyfoggers and Vipers of the Commonwealth: the 'Lower Branch' of the Legal Profession in Early Modern England*, Cambridge (1986), p. 47.

⁵¹ LAO: Ch P/12/1612-33. Dr. Farmery was the chancellor of the diocese in the 1630s: Holmes, *Seventeenth Century Lincolnshire*, p. 60.

dissent in the parish might have been its sizable and dispersed settlement, in which dissenting opinion would seem less threatening to the community at large. However, the large numbers of Quakers in Haxey in the 1660s and the extent of their persecution make it apparent that the parish was not immune from religious rebellion or controversy. William Dalby's assiduous attention to pastoral activities and his close relationships with the leading yeoman families in the parish were likely to have contributed to the relative calm in his parish during his incumbency. It is reasonable to assume that Haxey had its share of disputatious neighbours, less-than-eager church attenders, alehouse tipplers and other offenders. Local mediation, arbitration and reparation were always the preferred methods of dealing with disputes and disorderly behaviour; if these remained adequate, there was no need to present matters to outside authorities.⁵² Maintaining discipline and order through traditional means relied on parish authorities who were themselves united and co-operating, who reflected local views of proper behaviour, and who retained the trust and respect of the community at large.

The one surviving visitation record for Haxey that shows greater discord in this period is that of 1635. Twelve people stood excommunicate, one of whom had been under the same penalty in 1631. Two men were presented for striking for seats in the church and six for sabbath-breaking. The pressure brought by Laud's agents at the time would seem unlikely to have resulted in an increase in presentments for this last offence, since Laudians opposed sabbatarianism, although in Wiltshire the period saw an increase in presentments for working on Sundays and holy days (holy days are not mentioned in Haxey's presentments).⁵³ At this time,

⁵² Martin Ingram, in accounting for laxity in presentments, points to negligence, fear of reprisals, neighbourly tolerance and a reluctance to stir up tensions and bitterness that would threaten local harmony. Mediation and arbitration by the parish minister was often used: M. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England*, pp. 31-4. David Hey notes the preference for informal methods of dealing with disputes and minor crimes over the use of the secular courts: D. Hey, *The Fiery Blades of Hallamshire*, pp. 239-48; and the role of gossip and ridicule to deter antisocial behaviour, before turning to the rector or finally the church courts: *An English Rural Community*, p. 228, 230. Wrightson and Levine found that churchwardens were often mediating figures. If they acted with excess vigour, they could set off conflict within the village and might dislocate their own personal relationships. Order might be as well served by failing to prosecute: Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 137-40.

⁵³ P. Lake, 'The Laudian style: order, uniformity and the pursuit of the beauty of holiness in the 1630s', p. 172; M. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, p. 371.

William Dalby's curate may have been playing a more prominent role than usual. In 1636, William Dalby was an official of Howden in Yorkshire, so that his attention in 1635 may have been directed there. His curate, Thomas Phillips, had married Dalby's eldest daughter in 1631. Three of their children were baptised in the parish and two buried there between 1632 and 1636. The fact that Dalby's curate was also his son-in-law could well have made him more inclined to allow the curate to exercise more responsibility in the parish, so that the somewhat stricter attention to discipline at this time may reflect the activity of the curate rather than that of the vicar.

But there were reasons why Haxey might have been experiencing greater disharmony in 1635. A matter of overriding concern in Haxey in that year was the engineering of an agreement to a settlement with the investors of the drainage scheme to enclose over half the commons. Those later accused of having been chiefly responsible for this agreement were closely bound by this time to both the vicar and the curate. The vicar had worked to develop a close relationship with the leading group of Haxey yeomen who formed the leadership of the parish and supplied most of his churchwardens. This relationship was confirmed and intensified when two of his children married into this group. The curate, his son-in-law, was the son of a deceased Haxey yeoman, and in 1634 his son married the daughter of Hezekiah Browne, another prominent yeoman and the lessee of the tithes of the parish. Hezekiah was one of the men pressing for the settlement. Another was William Torksey, brother of the husband of the curate's sister. In 1634, Haxey people had still been participating in the destruction of the drainers' ditches and fences.⁵⁴

It might be expected that the pressure to sign an agreement would meet with considerable resistance, and that the usual informal methods to restore harmony and maintain order would prove inadequate. This was especially true when the vicar, curate and lessee of the tithes were so closely connected to one another and to those favouring a settlement. The offences presented at the 1635 visitation hint at disharmony in the parish and pressure applied.

⁵⁴ PRO: KB 29/295/74-74 dorso; KB 29/284/152; KB 29/284/187 dorso. See chapter 6. This type of 'oligarchy' of leading yeomen was found in Terling in the early seventeenth century: Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 104-106.

Three people were presented for, variously, 'sowing discord and variance amongst his neighbors...passed some chiding words...a comon scolder and often brawling with her neighbors...a tale carryer and maker of contentions and strifes'. Two alehouse keepers were presented in a parish which had not previously, in the surviving records, presented for alehouse keeping or tipping. While there may have been a concern over the use of scarce grain, alehouses provided oportunites for the exchange of opinion, plotting and the bolstering of others in resistance to authority, so might have been regarded with particular suspicion at this time.⁵⁵

Although the usual placid appearance of Haxey parish was somewhat disturbed in 1635, William Dalby, his curates and churchwardens all seem, throughout the period, to have escaped the criticism and abuse suffered by many of their colleagues in other parishes. In those parishes, there is periodic evidence of controversy within the authority structure of the local church itself, with opposing groups of churchwardens gaining ascendancy. Haxey, on the other hand, presents a picture of greater consistency, with the vicar and churchwardens working to maintain a reasonably disciplined, orderly and above all harmonious community. Disagreements, lack of order or indiscipline would appear to have been dealt with within the parish itself whenever possible, without recourse to outside courts. Success in this depended not only on the willingness of the parish authorities to expend the necessary effort, but also on the respect and confidence of the rest. '[I]n the politics of the parish, as in those of the State, it was when chief men lacked effective unity that they risked losing control of the situation.'⁵⁶ In all the parishes, the importance of a good curate to an incumbant who was frequently absent is apparent. Richard Massey got into trouble with his parishioners at times when his curates were

⁵⁵ LAO: Viiij/3, fols. 48, 57-8, 129; Vj/31, fol. 48.

⁵⁶ K. Wrightson, 'The politics of the parish in early modern England' in P. Griffiths, A. Fox & S. Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke & London, 1996), p.32. Similarities to Belton's experience can be observed in Havering. There, conflict among elite families, exacerbated by religious differences introduced by ministers, contributed to an increase in presentments in the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century. 'When the dominant families lacked unanimity, they were unable to keep their control': M. K. McIntosh, *A Community Transformed*, pp. 251-8, 379-89. On parish discipline, see S. D. Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, pp. 173-6.

also criticised. Later in the century, the churchwardens of Epworth reported that the rector lived in Lincoln, but that he 'hath a sufficient and able Curate to assist him...who is resident upon ye place' and were well satisfied.⁵⁷

It is evident that, throughout the parishes of the manor, positions of status, wealth or authority were no protection against personal attack or official discipline. Those seen to be trying to take undue advantage of their position or high connections were brought to account. Richard Massey's favouring of a gentleman from outside the parish, Nicholas Massey's attempt to shift the blame for fathering a bastard child and Elizabeth Coggan's arrogance because of her highly-placed kinsman all met with disciplinary action. There were expectations of neighbourly and orderly behaviour that applied to the upper echelons of the local community as well as to those lower down. Those who exercised authority were not only answerable for their conduct in office to the higher church authorities, but that conduct was also subject to local scrutiny.

Churchwardens could have their lapses noted by their successors or find themselves before the courts for personal transgressions when they no longer held office. Clergymen needed considerable skill to negotiate the minefields of personal alliances and animosities and range of opinion that existed in these parishes. Their personal conduct and pastoral performance were open to judgment by their parishioners, who expected the clergy to fulfil their obligations properly. When they were judged to have failed, the result was likely to be abuse, disruptive activity, flouting of church authority, or separation by some parishioners from the church altogether. If, however, the leading group remained solidly allied with one another and with their clergy, keeping order more through mediation and persuasion than through formal presentment to an outside authority, their own authority remained more secure even when dissension arose in the parish.

iv. Clerical Conformity: 1635-1662

Local clergy and churchwardens had to conform to a discipline imposed by higher authorities, and this could cause difficulties when the disciplinary requirements changed.

⁵⁷ LAO: Ch P/1686/1.

Laudian reforms in the 1630s were succeeded by puritan requirements during the Interregnum, and these in turn were followed by the reimposition of ecclesiastical authority at the Restoration. Clergy could find it difficult or impossible to accommodate themselves to a sudden change of position, and some found themselves expelled. In the manor of Epworth, most remained in position. No manor clergy appear to have been sequestered in the 1640s. Vacancies arose either through death or resignation to take over a new living.

At the Restoration, many incumbents appointed in the 1640s and 1650s were unsure of the legitimacy of their titles and petitioned the king for confirmation. One of these was Richard Pearson, who had become rector of Epworth during the Interregnum, and he was granted a presentation to the living on August 12, 1660. A Commons act then granted unconditional confirmation to incumbents who had been in position on December 25, 1659, with certain exceptions. This secured the livings of most clergy in the manor. Thomas Healey arrived in Haxey in 1641, remained throughout the Interregnum and continued as vicar until he died in 1670. Wroot also had a long-serving clergyman during the period. John Coggan became rector in 1641 and retained his position until his death in 1684. John Baldwin was curate of Belton from 1618 until 1659, when he was replaced by a second John Baldwin who, according to the parish register, 'came to settle at Belton' on June 24, 1659, where he remained ten years before becoming vicar of Haxey. Only Owston had a vicar ejected.⁵⁸

At the first visitation of the manor after the Restoration, in autumn of 1662, the vicar of Owston was recorded as Mr. Anthony Allen. At this visitation, enquiries about the qualifications of incumbents were made, but minimally, in spite of the passage of the Act of Uniformity in the summer. The period allowed for enforcement was too short to allow for the printing and delivery of the new Prayer Book to which incumbents were required to assent. A further requirement was episcopal ordination, unavailable during the Interregnum. It was not until December 1663 that the visitation of Owston required 'Mr. Anthony Allen pretended vicar there to show his orders and

⁵⁸ A. G. Matthews, *Walker Revised (Sufferings of Clergy during the Grand Rebellion, 1642-60)* (Oxford, 1948); I. M. Green, *The Re-establishment of the Church of England, 1660-1663* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 53, 241, 48.

by what authority hee is Vicar there and Exerciseth the Ministeriall function', but the *Liber Cleri* of 1662 noted that the living had been sequestered and was vacant. The other manor clergy, however, appeared to have retained their positions through changes in the regime and to have found accommodation possible.⁵⁹

v. The Growth of Sectarianism

During the Civil War and Interregnum, the strands of religious radicalism and dissent detectable in the north Nottinghamshire/Gainsborough/Isle of Axholme area from the early part of the century were free to develop, and a variety of opinion was open to discussion and debate.⁶⁰ Many of the ideas and questions that had given rise to earlier dissent and separation were those that were also present in the personal histories of many of the early Quaker leaders. George Fox and Richard Farnsworth, for instance, were both raised in puritan households, but later rejected what appeared to be a formal adherence to set religious practice and obedience to a moral code. Both were associated with the Baptists for a time and met with Seekers. The Quaker rejection of Calvinist predestination and message of the presence of the light of Christ in everyone were concepts already familiar through the teachings of John Smyth in Gainsborough early in the century. He rejected predestination, opposed the taking of oaths, and emphasized the supremacy of the Spirit over scripture. The General Baptists followed this tradition, regarding the outpouring of the Spirit through prophesying to be the proper purpose of public worship, rather than set prayers and sermons. However, they also placed great emphasis on believers' baptism and other ceremonies. It was a tendency towards literalism and stress on a

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.136-7, 144-5; LAO: PD 1657; MCD 337; Vj/32, fols. 37, 116; LC 5/1662, fol. 76.

⁶⁰ Anne Whiteman describes the period under Cromwell as a 'curious kind of ecclesiastical anarchy': A. Whiteman, 'The restoration of the Church of England' in G. F. Nuttall & O. Chadwick (eds.), *From Uniformity to Unity, 1662-1962* (1962), p. 28. The continuity of radical ideology is stressed by: C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (1972), pp. 21-31, 121-47; M. R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, J. F. McGregor, 'The Baptists: fount of all heresy', pp. 26-31 and B. Reay, 'Quakerism in society', pp. 142-4, both in J. F. McGregor & B. Reay (eds.), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*; R. T. Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism, 1655-1755* (Cambridge, Mass, 1969), pp. 12-27. Collinson stresses the opportunities in the 1640s and 1650s that 'liberated forces and tendencies previously suppressed', but distinguishes these from the 'puritan mainstream': P. Collinson, 'The English conventicle' in W. J. Sheils & D. Wood (eds.), *Voluntary Religion* (Studies in Church History, XXIII, Oxford, 1986), p.255.

single transforming experience amongst the Baptists that repelled the early Quaker leaders. The Quakers' advocacy of some of the basic principles that had inspired early Baptist thought made their missions to the Baptists particularly productive. Some separatists near Doncaster had reached a Quaker position independently of Fox.⁶¹

In the late 1640s and early 1650s, George Fox was active among the puritans, Independents and 'shattered' Baptist groups in north Nottinghamshire. He toured Lincolnshire in 1652, and in 1653 Richard Farnsworth was leading meetings and conducting discussions with local Anabaptists in the Isle of Axholme, with particular success reported at Haxey. Fox, Farnsworth and other Quaker leaders were 'moving through the northern rural areas, linking together groups of separatists'. Richard Farnsworth and other Friends met with a group of Manifestarians near Gainsborough in 1655.⁶²

By 1660, there were groups of Quakers in all four of the large parishes of Epworth manor. The persecution of Quakers, for attending meetings, non-payment of tithes and refusing to swear oaths, was particularly vehement in the 1660s, following the Quaker Act of 1662 and the first and second Conventicle Acts of 1664 and 1670. However, as in other areas, the authorities acted against Quakers earlier.⁶³ In 1659, Richard Parnell, grocer of Epworth, had goods distrained by the churchwardens, 'agents under Richard Pearson, priest'. In the same year Alexander Chessman of Belton had a cow taken from him for non-payment of tithes. In 1660, goods for non-payment of tithes were distrained in Belton and Gunthorpe in Owston parish, and sixteen men from the manor were taken prisoner in Lincoln Castle 'because, in obedience to Christ's command, they could not swear at all'. A total of eighty-one were imprisoned from the county and

they suffered much hardship, being put so many together in roomes where they could not at some times all lye downe at once, & for severall daies shutt up close, not having

⁶¹ M. R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, pp. 186-92, 200-6; B. Reay, *Quakers and the English Revolution*, (1985), p. 8.

⁶² C. Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire*, p. 205; K. Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, p. 196; B. Reay, *Quakers*, p. 8; H. W. Brace (ed.), *First Minute Book of the Gainsborough Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends, 1669-1719* (Vol. III, Lincoln Record Society Vol. 44, Hereford, 1951), pp. 129-30.

⁶³ B. Reay, *Quakers*, p. 105.

any liberty to take the aire, noe, not so much liberty as fellons & murtherers usually had. And at sometimes friends & relations were hindred to visit them, & from bringing them victualls & other necessaries, & though some came many miles, yet were not suffered to come into them within the Castle gates.⁶⁴

Authorities in Belton and Owston took goods from Quakers in 1661 and those in Haxey and Epworth in 1662. In 1662, under the first Conventicle Act which imposed penalties for meeting with five or more and for refusing to swear oaths, those attending meetings in October and December were fined, and twelve men from the manor were again committed to prison for a month for refusing to swear.⁶⁵

In 1663, four men were arrested at a meeting at Epworth and taken before a Justice of the Peace at Messingham, George Healey. One of these men was from Gunthorpe and three from Haxey. The fact that George Healey was the brother of the Haxey vicar Thomas Healey was probably not coincidental. Two months later a group who had attended a meeting at Beltoft in Belton parish were arrested, imprisoned and fined, and Michael Monkton, a Quaker Justice of the Peace, was arrested at his own house at Beltoft and imprisoned 'until he find sureties for the good behaviour. And they were put into the pitt amongst the fellons'. More goods were distrained for non-payment of tithes in 1664, and in 1665 Michael Monkton was again imprisoned for not giving a bond when charged with 'frequenting seditious conventicles, & suffering such at [his] house'.⁶⁶

In 1670, heavy fines were levied on those who held meetings in their houses, under the second Conventicle Act which imposed heavy fines for preaching and for harbouring a conventicle, with lesser fines for those attending meetings. As with tithes, it was claimed that goods distrained were always worth more than the amounts owing. John Urry, who was fined for a meeting at his house in Epworth, had £18 worth of goods taken 'in horses & waggon beds & bedding linnens brass & pewter besides other houshold stufte'. Christopher Edwards of Epworth lost even more for the same offence: £33 10s 'in coves, sheep, horses, bedding brass & pewter,

⁶⁴ H. W. Brace (ed.), *Gainsborough Minute Book*, Vol. III, pp. 133-5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 135-7; M. R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 225.

⁶⁶ H. W. Brace (ed.), *Gainsborough Minute Book*, Vol. III, pp. 143-4, 150-1; Venn & Venn (eds.), *Alumni Cantabrigienses*.

wearing apparrell with other houshold stufte'. John Clarke of Haxey, who also held a meeting at his house, lost only £8 worth of goods. All of these fines, along with those levied on those who attended meetings, were collected by the local constables. The book of Sufferings comments: 'All these warrants were issued out by one Justice above named. Strange! there is no Justice above named but probably it was that wicked impe: Masterman'.⁶⁷ Justices, local constables, churchwardens, clergy and tithe impropiators were named by the Quakers in their list of sufferings, invariably with evidence of the unfairness with which they operated. They were accused of levying goods worth far more than the tithes or fines owing, and sometimes of fines being imposed for offences which had not been committed.

Some men lost considerable amounts in goods in these years, as well as their liberty at times, and a few lost their lives. Richard Parnell, the Epworth grocer, was fined in 1659, imprisoned in 1660, fined and had 24s worth of pepper distrained in 1662 and again in 1663, was taken prisoner in Lincoln Castle in 1664, where he was kept 'above foure yeares', and in 1670 had goods distrained, including blue linen and bodies and dimethy because he, his wife and servants had attended meetings. Vincent Barrow, yeoman of Parke in Haxey, was imprisoned in 1660, fined in 1662, was fined again and had a heifer and four young bullocks distrained in 1662, was imprisoned and fined in 1663, and imprisoned again in 1664 in Lincoln Castle, where he died. His widow, who held meetings in her house after his death, had four horses distrained in 1667. Less prosperous men did not escape. Charles Tate of Haxey, 'a poore man' was imprisoned in 1660, fined in 1662 and had a cow distrained, and had hemp taken in 1664. His widow, too, was targeted after his death. In 1670, goods worth 12s were taken from her for attending a meeting. The Epworth shoemaker John Pilsworth, 'being a very poore man', in 1670 had 10s worth of boots and shoes taken, and later in the same year another four pairs of new shoes were distrained.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ M. R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, pp. 226-7; H. W. Brace (ed.), *Gainsborough Minute Book*, Vol. III, pp. 157-9.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 133-7, 144, 150-2, 158-9, 164.

By 1662/63, the time of the first church court records following the Restoration, the effects of this activity can be seen from the viewpoint of the officials in the manor.⁶⁹ Although only in Epworth parish were Quakers presented as such and only at that visitation, other sources reveal that most of those presented for non-attendance and standing excommunicate in 1662/63 and at subsequent visitations were Quakers.

Table 5.1

Excommunicates and Non-attenders. 1662-1686

Year	Epworth			Owston			Belton			Haxey			Manor Total
	Exc	N-A	Tot	Exc	N-A	Tot	Exc	N-A	Tot	Exc	N-A	Tot	
1662	7Q	18	25	0	32	32	12	23	35	0	41	41	133
1663	12Q +9	9	28	0	23	23	6	24	30	31	7	38	119
1664	25	5	30	30	3	33	19	5	24	36	8	44	131
1673	0	45	45	0	40	40	0	22	22	0	9	9	116
1676			57*			49*			57*			24*	187
1683	37	6	43	0	27	27	2	28	30	0	6	6	106
1684	31	0	31	25	0	25	25	2	27	10	3	13	96
1685	38	2	40	25	0	25	26	8	34	16	4	20	119
1686	42**		42		16	16		24	24		8	8	90

*'nonconformists'

**'notorious dissenters'

Exc = excommunicates

N-A = non-attendance

Tot = total

Sources: LAO Vj/32, Vj/33, Viiij/4, Compton Census 1676, LAO Viiij/5, Ch.P. 1686/1

The figures in the table have been obtained from visitation records, except for the 1676 figures from the Compton Census and the 1686 figures from the churchwardens' presentments. It is immediately apparent that the 1676 Census figures are unusually high for all the parishes when compared with the visitation records of three years earlier. It can also be observed that only non-attenders, not excommunicates, were listed at the 1673 visitation in all parishes. This may be a result of the Declaration of Indulgence of March, 1672, in which dissenters who obtained a licence could meet freely. Although Quakers refused to take out licences, they were no longer troubled. The Indulgence was withdrawn a year later, but Watts says that the result of

⁶⁹ Excommunication was readopted slowly from 1662: I. M. Green, *The Re-establishment of the Church*, p. 140.

the period of toleration was not completely eradicated.⁷⁰ If other nonconformists had applied for licences, they may not have been presented at the 1673 visitation. The 1676 census returns were submitted as a numerical total rather than as a list of named individuals. These figures are likely to include partial conformists, possibly Anabaptists or other sectaries, who attended the parish church frequently enough to avoid presentment or who had applied for a licence to meet during the period of toleration. The particularly large discrepancy between Belton's 22 non-attenders in 1673 and its 57 nonconformists in 1676 is intriguing when it is recalled that Belton had a large list of excommunicates in 1640, many of whom had been in the same condition five years earlier.⁷¹ There is no detectable connection between this group and the Quakers, and it is possible that a continuation of the earlier group still existed in the parish. If an independent congregation had got established in Belton before the Civil War, the toleration of the Interregnum would have allowed it to thrive. By the 1660s, any threat from such a group would have seemed minimal in comparison with that posed by the Quakers.⁷²

The visitation records exhibit differences in the experience and response to dissent in the four parishes, particularly between Epworth and Haxey. The impact of Richard Farnsworth's visit and the success reported in Haxey can be seen in the high numbers presented there for non-attendance in 1662, most of these by 1664 standing excommunicate. Nine years later, the unbelievably low figure of nine non-attenders was recorded. Haxey's Compton Census figure was the lowest of all the parishes, although in total population Haxey was the largest parish, and low numbers of presentments continued in the 1680s. Epworth, on the other hand, presented more people in the 1670s and 1680s than it had done earlier.

This contrast between the parishes in the recording seems to reflect a difference in the history of dissent in the two parishes. Haxey showed little of the religious conflict that seemed to afflict Belton and Epworth earlier in the century, and it may be that Haxey was less prone to

⁷⁰ M. R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, pp. 247-9.

⁷¹ In Cambridgeshire, it was often the case that parishes with a noticeable number of absentees were later dissenting centres: M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, p. 259.

⁷² 'Once dissent or separatism in any form existed, it was likely to be spread by argument and debate, and further fragmentation was likely to follow': *ibid.*, p. 295.

Anabaptist-type nonconformity, or at least that it was not perceived to be so much of a problem in Haxey parish. The Quaker records indicate fewer residents of Haxey among the members from the 1670s. A number of factors appear to have been involved. There were some early returners to the established church, as indicated by the Haxey baptismal registers. As early as 1662, one family of three children, born in 1657, 1660 and 1662 were baptised together. In the 1680s, three more Quaker families had their children baptised. Others left to marry outside the faith or because they had drifted away. Crucially, a number of Haxey Quakers from prominent yeoman families died in the 1660s, depriving the group of vital leadership. Three of these: Vincent Barrow, Thomas Torksey and Robert Kelsey, died imprisoned in Lincoln Castle. The Pettinger brothers, James and John, were both bachelors when they died, as was Robert Kelsey.⁷³ As membership was very much associated with family connections, and the continuation of the sect relied on children being born and raised in it, the failure of only a few to reproduce could have a disproportionate effect on the survival of a small local group.⁷⁴

Epworth's larger numbers of excommunicates and non-attenders in the 1670s and 1680s contain a substantial majority who cannot be identified as Quakers. Although not all Quakers appear in these sources, the majority of those presented in the other parishes can be so identified. It appears that Epworth's presentments may well contain many of the type of nonconformists that, in Belton parish, were included in the Compton Census but excluded from the visitation presentments. Samuel Wesley, who became rector of Epworth in 1695, reported 'That there are about 40 Quakers and above 70 Anabaptists that insult him everywhere'.⁷⁵ As in the earlier part of the century, the attitudes and rigour of the parish clergy and churchwardens are likely to have affected the numbers presented. Both Haxey and Epworth had a change in

⁷³ LAO: Lincolnshire Quaker register; Stow Wills 1666-8/376; 1666-8/492; 1666-8/168; 1666-8/4.

⁷⁴ Watts suggests that, for Quakers, 'a marginal loss of membership which might be imperceptible in an urban meeting could be fatal for a rural one': M. R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 288.

⁷⁵ H. W. Brace (ed.), *First Minute Book of the Gainsborough Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends, 1669-1719* (Vol. I, Lincoln Record Society, Vol. 38, Hereford, 1948), p. xxii; Venn & Venn (eds.), *Alumni Cantabrigienses*. Samuel Wesley, in the early eighteenth century, engaged in a pamphlet attack on dissenters and dissenting academies (having attended such an institution himself before conforming in 1683): E. A. Payne, 'Toleration and establishment: a historical outline' in G. F. Nuttall & O. Chadwick (eds.), *From Uniformity to Unity*, p. 265.

clergy between the visitations of 1664 and 1673. Richard Herring served as vicar of Haxey from 1672 to 1712, and the presentments during his incumbency, even allowing for a reduced membership among the Quakers, were at times so low as to indicate that only the most notorious were likely to be targeted. In Epworth, James Gardiner served as non-resident rector, and from 1679 until 1693 Henry Clifford was curate there, simultaneously serving as rector of Wroot from 1684.⁷⁶ While the attitude of the clergy will have been influential, that of the churchwardens was also important.

In the churchwardens' presentments from all the parishes in 1686, only the total in Epworth parish was higher than the figure recorded at the 1685 visitation. Only the churchwardens signed the 1686 Epworth presentments; neither the rector nor the curate signed. The presentments for the other three parishes listed those 'not coming to church', but in Epworth the list was said to be that of 'notorious dissenters'. The differences between the parishes in the numbers of detected nonconformists reflect the attitudes of the local church authorities as well as the extent of dissent. The attitude of the Epworth churchwardens may have been affected by the performance in the parish church in August 1686 of 'a Confirmation (performed by Thomas Lord Bishop of Peterbrough visitor for William Lord ArchBishop of Canterbury) at which place were confirmed (according to computation) a thousand persons of several ages'. This was recorded in the Belton parish registers by the curate, John Upsall, who proudly added, 'the greatest number of any one parish within the manner of Epworth was from this p'sh'.⁷⁷

Aside from non-attendance and standing excommunicate, Quakers were also presented for working on Sundays and holy days, for failing to baptise their children, for cohabiting without marriage, for having bastard children and, in the case of William Clarke of Haxey in 1662, of burying a child in his garden. At the same visitation, William Clarke was presented for cohabiting with Elizabeth Fish. He said they had been married by Michael Monkton in Haxey in

⁷⁶ In Terling, a new vicar had a dramatic effect on the numbers presented for nonattendance in 1679, although the vicar may have decided to conduct his own enquiry into nonconformity because Terling had not made a Compton Census return: Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 165-6.

⁷⁷ LAO: Ch P/1686/1, fol. 14; Belton parish register.

February 1659/60. As a Justice of the Peace, Michael Monkton would have been empowered to perform marriages during the Interregnum, and did so in Beltoft, according to the Belton parish registers. It is quite likely, however, that by early 1660 Michael Monkton was already a Quaker. In 1662/63, Michael Monkton, gentleman, was presented in Belton for non-attendance, refusing to pay his assessment and for standing excommunicate with inhibition. The presentments also included: 'Beltoft, Mr. Michael Monkton & [____] uxor eius for living together as man & wife being never lawfully married together. When he brought her first into the country here, hee invited divers of his neighbours to a dinner with him, & then told them, & declared she was his wife, & they had agreed to be man & wife together & wished them thenceforth to take notice of it. This is all the marriage that is known, they both Quakers'.⁷⁸

Many of the Quakers were from long-established, respectable yeoman families, and the distraining of goods by churchwardens and constables, imprisonment with common felons, and the presentment for immoral conduct indicates the extent of the division between them and the parish authorities.⁷⁹ Excommunication was imposed on other members of prominent families earlier in the century, but the more determined separation of the Quakers led to a multiplicity of charges against them, deepening the mutual resentment and the retreat of the Quakers into a separate community.

⁷⁸ LAO: Vj/32, fols. 52, 138, 8, 51, 91, 141. Vann says that one or two men of wealth and influence among the Friends gave them some protection against persecution by justices: R. T. Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism*, p. 14. Since Michael Monkton himself was imprisoned, his involvement does not seem to have aided the Friends of the manor.

⁷⁹ This early involvement of well-off and respectable members of the community contrasts with the experience of Sheffield, where early Quaker converts were from the poorest sections, richer families attracted only 'once the movement became sober and respectable': D. Hey, *The Fiery Blades of Hallamshire*, p. 271. Reay found that, with regional variation, most early Quakers belonged to the middle or slightly wealthier groups: B. Reay, 'The social origins of early Quakerism', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XI (1980). Vann found the core of early Quaker support to be amongst yeomen and traders, with converts after 1670 generally of a lower social status than the original ones: R. T. Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism*, pp. 50-78. Margaret Spufford discovered that the Quakers and Congregationalists of Willingham and Cottenham came from the comfortable middle section of the community, while Orwell's dissenters were distributed throughout every layer of village society: M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 300-6.

vi. Quaker Organisation and Discipline

The separation of the Quakers was focused on their distinction as a religious community, divorced from the established church, its priesthood, its buildings, its rituals and its discipline. In 1667, George Fox set up the Quaker organisation that enabled the local groups to withstand persecution and maintain regular contacts with one another. Lincolnshire was divided into four Monthly Meetings, the Gainsborough Meeting corresponding to the Archdeaconry of Stow and including the Isle of Axholme. Within the Gainsborough Meeting, the manor was subdivided in 1667 into the Haxey Meeting, including the towns of Haxey, Epworth and Gunthorpe (Owston parish), and the Crowle Meeting, including the towns of Belton, Beltoft, Butterwick (Owston parish) and Ealand (manor of Crowle).⁸⁰ The manor was thus divided into northern and southern sections, with the northern part associated with the adjacent manor of Crowle. Neither Owston nor Kinnard Ferry, the two largest settlements in Owston parish, are mentioned in the division, and this corresponds to the records contained within the minutes of the Gainsborough Meeting, in which all the Quakers mentioned from Owston parish resided in either Gunthorpe or Butterwick. These two settlements were at the southern and northern extremities of the parish, furthest from the parish church and its authorities and from a concentration of population. In other parishes, too, more remote settlements afforded greater opportunities to meet away from watchful authorities. In Haxey parish, meetings were held at the house of the Barrows in Parke, on the western fringe of the parish. In Belton, the settlement of Beltoft, about midway between Belton and West Butterwick, and Robert Reeder's house at Temple Hall were sites of meetings.⁸¹ The population distribution in the Isle, characterised by settlements separated by a mile or two from others, afforded both connections between parishes and some opportunity for clandestine activity on the fringes of the settled area. Both of these factors were of benefit to the Quakers in establishing and maintaining themselves as a distinct group.

⁸⁰ H. W. Brace (ed.), *Gainsborough Minute Book*, Vol. I, p. xvi; Vol. III, p. 153.

⁸¹ Margaret Spufford found that dissenters in Buckinghamshire took advantage of isolated farms and hamlets: M. Spufford, 'The importance of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' in M. Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 59.

A number of the leaders of the Quaker community in the manor were outsiders who came to reside in the Isle, and some of these were likely to have entered in association with Richard Farnsworth's missionary activities. Richard Pamell, grocer of Epworth and later Haxey, was not from a local family. He was resident in Epworth by 1659, and at the 1662 Visitation he and his wife, presented under her maiden name of Elizabeth Hudson, were both cited as Quakers. She was noted as having been twice previously excommunicate and he, three times. Meetings were held at his house, he was presented for holding conventicles, and he was imprisoned in Lincoln Castle.⁸² He remarried in 1674 Mary Bettaly, daughter of John Killam of Balby. Balby was part of an area around Doncaster, including Scrooby and Tickhill, characterised by early dissent. Richard Farnsworth came from Tickhill and was part of a group at Balby, including John Killam, which had developed many of the ideas that characterised Quakerism and who were early associates of George Fox. Braithwaite describes the Balby group as the 'mother-church' of Yorkshire, and John and Thomas Killam as 'men of stanch service and ripe judgment'. John Killam lent his orchard for a large meeting of Friends in the ministry on Easter Monday 1660, described by Fox in his journal: 'Many thousands of people and Friends was gathered there. And Friends met in a great orchard of John Killam's'. John's wife Margaret 'travelled and suffered much', and corresponded with George Fox. Richard Pamell himself may have been a relative of James Pamell, who came from Retford, about fifteen miles to the south of Epworth manor and about twelve miles from the Tickhill/Balby group of Quakers that Braithwaite suggests was the group James Pamell joined. Farnsworth included a message of love to 'little James' in a letter to George Fox in 1653. In 1654, James Pamell went on a preaching tour to Cambridgeshire, and Margaret Spufford notes that Margaret Killam visited James Pamell in prison in Cambridge in September, 1654. He moved to Essex the next year and was eventually imprisoned in Colchester Castle, where he was kept under harsh conditions and died in April 1656, aged twenty. Although he claimed his relatives disowned him

⁸² LAO: Vj/32, fols. 54, 92-3, 95; H. W. Brace (ed.), *Gainsborough Minute Book*, Vol. III, p. 151.

when he left, aged fifteen, in search of a like-minded group, this may not have remained true permanently of all of them.⁸³

Other incomers were several members of the staunchly Quaker Wressle family of Winteringham in north Lincolnshire. Thomas Wressle was resident in West Butterwick by 1660, when he was imprisoned in Lincoln Castle. He was the cousin of John Wressle of Thealby and his brother Thomas of Winteringham, both of whom served as overseers of the Winteringham Meeting. John's house was later licensed as a Meeting House for Quaker worship, and his daughter Mary and her husband Anthony Morris of Thealby moved to Beltoft after their marriage in 1686. Thomas of Winteringham had been a Baptist and became a Quaker in 1655. Thomas Wressle of Butterwick frequently hosted Monthly Meetings at his house and was usually one of those appointed to counsel, admonish and seek the return to the Truth of straying Quakers in the Isle and to arrange for the relief of the poor. The Wressles' continued association with the Quakers, the manor of Epworth and Thealby/Winteringham helped to maintain ties between these Quaker groups. In 1689, William Harrison of Winteringham and Susanna Browne of Epworth published their intention to marry, and 'shee being a widdow & has children left her by a former husband they have both joyntly chosen Thomas Wresle of Botterwick & Thomas Wresle of Winteringham, to set out what portions her children shall have more than was given by there father last will'. Thomas Wressle of Butterwick moved to Beltoft sometime between March 1690 and April 1691. After he died in 1693, his widow held a meeting at her house in Beltoft in April 1694 and another after she had moved back to Butterwick in September 1695. His main heir was his kinsman Thomas Wressle, son of his cousin John. This Thomas then moved to Beltoft, becoming a trustee of Crowle burial ground and of Beltoft Meeting House and burial ground.⁸⁴

These early leaders were important not only in maintaining contact with groups over a wide area, but also in sustaining the Quaker communities within the manor and resolving internal

⁸³ W. C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (2nd edition, revised by H. J. Cadbury, Cambridge, 1955), pp. 58-9, 369, 334, 188-91; M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 281 fn, 282.

⁸⁴ H. W. Brace (ed.), *Gainsborough Minute Book*, Vol I, pp. 131-2; Vol. II, pp. 2, 14; Vol. III, pp. 38, 50, 135, 207-8; LAO: Stow Will 1691-4/224.

disputes. The fact that both Richard Parnell and Thomas Wressle moved from one parish to another within the manor might well be indicative of this aspect of their ministry. Richard Parnell moved his grocery business from Epworth to Haxey sometime between September 1672 and September 1673. This was the time when the Visitation records indicate that Quaker activity had diminished markedly in Haxey parish. The Gainsborough Meeting minutes illustrate particular instances. In December 1671, two of Richard Parnell's former servants who now lived in Haxey were reported as having strayed from the Truth. Joseph Cooper had been married by a priest, and William Emley had 'severall wayes dishonored Truth'. After several visits by a number of Friends, Thomas Wressle and Christopher Edwards reported in March 1672 that 'they found Joseph Cooper meek and low in his mind and loving to Friends...and that he hoped to overcome such things as at present were impediments unto him...And they report of William Emley that his behaviour was very high, too much savouring of scornfulness, & derision wondring why Friends would soe needlesly trouble themselves about him, desireing to be let alone, as a man resolved what to doe, beareing himselfe (indeed) as if he were above all reproofe'.⁸⁵ By December 1674, however, after Richard Parnell's move to Haxey, William Emley was seeking the Quakers' permission to marry, and this was granted the following month. In May 1673, William Clarke of Haxey, who had been imprisoned in 1660, had visits from Richard Parnell and Christopher Edwards, who were instructed to 'admonish him to return to the Truth'. In August, William Clarke appeared and made a written confession to the meeting that 'I have beene misled...and...comitted lewdness with Margarett Browne'. At the September 1673 meeting at Richard Parnell's house at Haxey, Thomas Wressle and Thomas Markham were asked to 'againe vissitt John Barrow & advise & exhort & reprove him in all meekness & gentleness, to the intent he may be brought backe into the unity of the Truth & Freinds from whence he is gone'. John Barrow was the son of Vincent, an early convert from Haxey who died in Lincoln Castle and whose widow held meetings at her house in Parke. John had married Alice Tate, widow of Charles, both Quakers, but both John's mother and his wife had died the previous year, he had

⁸⁵ H. W. Brace (ed.), *Gainsborough Minute Book*, Vol. III, pp. 21, 28; Vol. I, pp. 16-19.

moved to Gainsborough, and he was obviously lapsing. Richard Parnell may have moved to Haxey to attempt a revival of the flagging Quakers in the parish.⁸⁶

Thomas Wressle, constantly in demand for the provision of poor relief and the settlement of disputes in the area, and hosting frequent meetings, may have found Beltoft a more central location, convenient for both West Butterwick and Belton. In Belton parish, disputes over the venues of meetings had occurred from time to time before he moved there. In February 1673, the Meeting admonished Michael Monkton for 'owneing Peter Moody in his disorderly marryage & also hard speeches given out by the said Michaell in opposition to Truth'. The following month Michael Monkton attended the meeting and 'desired Meetings might still contynue att his house [in Beltoft] & att present Freinds assented to him'. Exactly four years later, the difficulty arose again. This time, a letter was recorded to those 'who refraine meeting with Friends at the house of Michael Monkton in Beltoft...upon occasion of some offence taken against him...we doe with our heart, in the feare of God,...(in the bowels of brotherly love) desire and admonish you not to absent your selves' until a complaint had been made and Monkton had an opportunity to answer. Two months later, Henry Hudson of Butterwick attended and said 'that on a tyme when Michael Monkton was newly come from London, he the said Henry went to him gave the hand & asked how he did, to which Michael replied "You are all nought" '. The matter was still festering in September 1678, and Thomas Wressle of Butterwick was asked to bring to the next meeting the reasons why a number of Friends were still absenting themselves from meetings at Monkton's house. Their answer was that they were willing to attend, 'but the abovesaid M: Monkton very shortly removeing his family that Meeting fell of itselife and that which was an offence to the abovesaid Freinds in M: Monkton was by that means taken out of the way'.⁸⁷

Although that impasse had been neatly settled, a series of charges was building up during the same period against another Belton Quaker, Edward Chessman. In 1677 he was

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 25, 27-8.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 24-5, 55-7, 65-6.

twice ordered to put an end to the difference between himself and his neighbour 'otherwise the Meeting doth intend to withdraw from him as one that walks disorderly'. This was concluded satisfactorily, but in 1679 a complaint had been received from Hull Friends that Chessman refused to pay an annuity owing to his mother-in-law. Two months later, he had failed to go to Hull after promising to do so, and now 'process at law is issued out against him, to the great scandall of the Truth'. He was ordered to sort the matter out and to bring a certificate from Hull Friends that he had done so, which he did the following month. Later in the same year, Chessman was again in trouble for some 'unequall proceedings' with a neighbour in Butterwick, and in 1681 the Meeting received a complaint that he had cut down trees on a close which he was renting for only one year. It is perhaps not surprising that at the same meeting 'some Friends have moved for the discontinuance of the Meeting at Edward Chessmans house, by reason of the many scandalls and reproaches that are cast upon the Truth and Friends by his miscarriages'. This was left to the discretion of the Isle Meeting.⁸⁸

The overriding concern, evident in the treatment of these disagreements, was to provide all sides with a hearing and to allow sufficient time for emotions to subside. But ultimately the public admission of guilt and sorrow and the rectifying, where possible, of the fault, were necessary when an offence was adjudged to have been committed. This was necessary for the spiritual well-being of the offender, to avoid a bad example to the weak, and to defend the reputation of the Quakers for honest dealing and moral conduct. Neighbours and relatives, Quakers or not, were to be treated fairly and honourably. Many of the offences cited were the same as those listed in the church court records relating to the conforming community: drunkenness, fornication, fighting, slander, failure to fulfil obligations and refusal to attend meetings. The penalties imposed were also similar to those used in the established church: public admission of guilt and repentance, or ultimately exclusion from the community.

The Quaker minute books afford greater detail of the process leading to the imposition of a penalty. An accusation was dealt with initially by the appointment of two or more Friends either

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 58-9, 69-71, 74-5, 87.

to make enquiries or to exhort and reprove the offender. The matter might be settled by a satisfactory report from the enquirers or by a personal appearance by the accused, providing an explanation or a confession. Often many visits were made, sometimes with repeated refusals to speak to the representatives of the Meeting, before any resolution was obtained. Instructions were given to visit the wife of John Pilsworth, jr., of Epworth on ten separate occasions between July 1691 and August 1695. It was initially claimed that she had stopped coming to meetings because of a difference between herself and her husband. She then claimed that 'Freinds had left her by takeing the Meeting from there house'. Eventually the problem was said to lie in a difference between her and her father-in-law. The final settlement was an agreement between her husband and father-in-law to 'let the difference fall'. Mary Moody of Gunthorpe, whose commitment and attendance at meetings were waning, was visited repeatedly during 1695 and 1696, with instructions to the visitors to speak 'in tenderness towards her for Truth sake'. Patient, repeated and sustained efforts were made to resolve differences and to retrieve a wandering member.⁸⁹ It is likely that similar informal attempts at reconciliation were made by the parish authorities as well, before presentments were made to the church courts.

Other offences penalised by Quakers were counterparts to those for which Quakers in good standing with the Meeting were presented to the church courts. The church courts presented Quakers for living together without marriage and for non-payment of tithes. As far as the Quakers were concerned, 'disorderly' marriage by a priest was a serious offence, as was the payment of tithes. It is within these areas that it is possible to observe the pressures on the members of these small groups of Quakers that led some of them to return to the established church. Although the Quakers separated themselves as a religious community, they remained part of the larger community as well. Quakers looked after their own poor and arranged for the apprenticeship of orphaned children within their community. But most had non-Quaker relatives, all had neighbours who were not Quakers, and business dealings extended beyond the Quaker

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 16, 19-23, 28, 42-3, 50, 52-4, 56-7, 59-60, 63. The dissenters in Cambridgeshire showed the same pastoral care and patient attention to members: M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 346-7.

community. Richard Parnell ran a grocery business in Epworth and then Haxey from at least 1659 until his death in 1675. His probate inventory gives the total value of his goods as £522, £100 of which was the value of the quarter part of a ship, and £120 was in debts owing to him (including £20 'Debts questionable'). He had six acres of flax growing, one acre of wheat, two acres of oats and two acres of meadow, and £211 in mercery wares, silk wares, haberdashery, bodies, grocery wares, ironware, salt, pitch, tar and other shop goods. Although the debts he owed are not included, his business was obviously thriving. In spite of his excommunicate status with the church, his customers presumably included more than the small number of Quakers who lived in the area.⁹⁰

The requirement to marry within the sect produced frequent problems for Quakers, who could find it difficult to find a suitable partner within a restricted group. A number found themselves in trouble for marrying outside the membership or for being married by a priest. Peter Moody, of the small settlement of Gunthorpe, was in trouble in 1672/73 for his 'disorderly marriage' to Mary Portington. Michael Monkton was also cited for 'owneing' Peter Moody in his marriage. Peter Moody succumbed to other pressures in 1678, when it was reported that he 'hath contrary to the order of Truth and to the weakning of the testimony of faithfull Freinds hath from time to time paid tyths notwithstanding the councell & advice of Freinds to the contrary'. He confessed 'that once he did give way that the impropiator should take them but did acknowledg he had therein acted contrary to Truth in his own conscience & did hope he should not doe the like any more'.⁹¹ It was his widow, Mary Moody, who was sought so assiduously 'in tenderness' in the 1690s.

vii. Relationships between Quakers and Non-Quakers

Both the established church authorities and the Quakers, then, as part of the same broad community, exhibited similar attitudes towards unacceptable behaviour and methods to ensure

⁹⁰ LAO: P. I. 220/292. Terling nonconformists, although few were Quakers, interacted with conformists in economic affairs. Like the manor of Epworth Quakers, they preferred their co-religionists as witnesses and overseers of wills: Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 169-70.

⁹¹ H. W. Brace (ed.), *Gainsborough Minute Book*, Vol I, pp. 23-5, 65-6.

conformity, and had similar problems in retaining allegiance of members and maintaining order and discipline.⁹² That kinship, friendship and neighbour relations could withstand religious differences can be seen in the case of Richard Parnell's widow Mary. One month after Richard's death, a Meeting was held at Mary's house. Exactly one year later, in August 1676, there was a complaint that 'some Freinds of Epworth Meeting have not freedome to meet at the house of Mary Parnell because of her accompanying with one Hezekiah Browne whereby the Truth is very much scandalis'd'. At the next meeting, it was recorded that 'Whereas Thomas Wresle & Henry Hudson was ordered to speake to Mary Parnell concerning her intended marryage with Hezekia Browne her answer was she was resolved to marry with the said Hezekia & it appeareing that the man is nott soe much as a professor of Truth this Meeting concludeth that the said intended marryage is contrary to Truth & Freinds cant butt condemn it'. The marriage did take place. Hezekiah, a gentleman, died in 1682, remembering in his will 'my father-in-law' Robert Tankersley (father of his first wife), 'my father Killam' (John, the early Balby Quaker leader and father of Mary) and 'Emanuell Killam my wifes brother'. He left his mother in the care of his wife Mary, and gave the tuition of his son (from his first wife) to Henry Clifford, curate of Epworth, and William Barrow, yeoman of Parke. William was his kinsman (William's grandmother and Hezekiah's mother were sisters) and was the son of Vincent Barrow, one of the Quakers who died in Lincoln Castle. William had stood excommunicate in 1664 and was presented for non-attendance in 1683. He made his will in 1678, but lived for another ten years. He left land to his brother John who had lapsed as a Quaker, legacies to his Quaker aunt and cousin, and named as guardians of his children his father-in-law and Hezekiah Browne, his 'lovinge friend'. William's death is not recorded in the Quaker records, but these appear incomplete. Whatever his

⁹² Reay characterises this as 'in the tradition of the puritan "reformation of manners" ', characteristic of the middling sort: B. Reay, *The Quakers*, p. 118. Most offences brought forward at the Gainsborough area meetings seem not to be those of specifically puritan concern, but rather focus on unneighbourly behaviour and failure to fulfil obligations.

religious allegiance, either at the time he made his will or at the time of Hezekiah Browne's will, both men appear to have maintained ties across the religious divide.⁹³

Mary Browne, widow, was presented for non-attendance in Haxey in 1683 along with William Barrow. While it is impossible to be sure that this Mary Browne was Hezekiah's widow, no other Brownes had been presented in Haxey for non-attendance or for standing excommunicate. In 1684, Mary Browne, widow, was again presented, this time as a dissenter. Mary Browne does not appear in Haxey's list in 1685, but Mary, wife of Robert Whiteley, was presented in Epworth for non-attendance in December of that year.⁹⁴ By this time Mary Browne had married Robert Whiteley. When he died in 1686, having been predeceased by Mary, he left a ewe and lamb 'of the best' to his 'daughter-in-law' (i.e., stepdaughter) Elizabeth Parnell, who signed her name as witness to his codicil. He also left land for poor relief, 'to ye Minister, Churchwardens & Overseers of ye poor of Epworth'.⁹⁵ Robert Whiteley served as churchwarden in 1675 and was scribe to many wills in Epworth, a few written for those who had stood excommunicate. He was a prominent yeoman of the parish, entrusted with the guardianship of children and the supervision of wills across a range of the inhabitants of the parish. He, too, appears to have retained ties regardless of religious differences.

Mary Killam/Bettaly/Parnell/Browne/Whiteley, although apparently unable to find a suitable husband among the Quaker community after the death of Richard Parnell, did find it possible to find two men who were willing to allow her to follow her own religious inclinations.⁹⁶ It

⁹³ H. W. Brace (ed.), *Gainsborough Minute Book*, Vol. I, pp. 39, 51-2; LAO: Stow Wills 1681-3/249: 1687-90/54; Vj/33, fol. 94; Viiij/5, fol. 6.

⁹⁴ LAO: Viiij/5, fols. 6, 15, 56, 155. At the same visitation, Eleanore, wife of Edmund Mawe, gentleman, was presented for the same offence. Edmund was chief constable of Epworth. Neither he nor Robert Whiteley was listed.

⁹⁵ LAO: Stow Will 1687-90/263.

⁹⁶ As the daughter of a woman who 'travelled and suffered much', Mary might be supposed to be somewhat independent. Reay noted that Quaker women during the Interregnum were allowed more independence than in society at large. They 'preached, proselytized, wrote and printed tracts, participated in church government': B. Reay, 'Quakerism and society', pp. 144-5. Thomas found that women were offered spiritual equality during the Interregnum, but that attitudes changed after 1660, when patriarchal authority was re-established, with strict insistence on intermarriage within the sect: K. Thomas, 'Women and the Civil War sects', *Past and Present*, XIII (1958), pp. 42-62. The case of Mary Killam indicates that intermarriage, although disapproved of, was possible, particularly for a woman who had lived through the period of greater independence and whose own mother had been active.

is important, then, to be aware that the condemnations of church officials and Quaker leaders do not reflect the more flexible attitudes of those tied into a web of relationships in the manor and subject to the pressures of a variety of obligations. While the purposeful separation of a section of the community could, and undoubtedly did, cause animosity and resentment, the division was not absolute. Ties were maintained, and some individuals moved across the boundaries more than once.

Even those firmly in one camp could be found to honour traditional expectations. John Pettinger, bachelor of Haxey, in his will of 1664 left £30 to six Quakers (three of whom died in Lincoln Castle) 'to dispose as they shall see fitt unto such as may be in want either by imprisonment or otherwise who are in the truth of God & by the world in scorne called Quakers', but also gave £3 to 'the poore of Haxey p'ish'. This will was written at a time when the persecution of the Quakers by parish officials and higher authorities was at its height, but still John Pettinger extended a gift to the poor of the entire parish. Earlier in the century, the Slingsby brothers of Owston parish provide an example of a family split by religious differences, but with some ties retained. Thomas Slingsby and his wife Margaret were the only individuals labelled 'recusants' in the manor at the time, and stood excommunicate in 1623, 1631 and 1635. Margaret retained the status in 1640. Thomas made his will in 1638, remembering his brother William and his daughters Hannah and Martha. The year before, his brother Edmond made his will. He also left small sums to his brother William and to Hannah and Martha, but did not mention Thomas. He left ten shillings to his 'good freind Mr. Timothie Ellis vicar of Owston'. While Thomas and Edmond seem to have been alienated from one another by religious differences, William managed to maintain a relationship with both of them.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ LAO: Stow Wills 1666-8/4; 1636-8/177; 1636-8/193; Viiij/1, fol. 12; Viiij/2, fols. 6, 17; Viiij/3, fols. 50, 127; Vj/31, fols. 51, 60, 67. Christopher Marsh found that members of the Family of Love in Cambridgeshire often left money to the poor of their communities: C. Marsh, ' "A gracelesse, and audacious companie"?' - the Family of Love in the parish of Balsham, 1550-1630' in W. J. Sheils & D. Wood (eds.), *Voluntary Religion*, p. 206. For examples of contacts between Quakers and their non-Quaker neighbours, see Bill Stevenson, 'The social integration of post-Restoration dissenters, 1660-1725' in M. Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters*, pp. 369-83.

viii. Conclusion

The inhabitants of the manor were subject to a variety of religious opinion and influences through the course of the century. In the early years, the wider area around the manor was characterised by religious sectarianism, and the parishes of Belton and Epworth both had puritan clergy. By the 1620s, some of the local authorities, both in the church and secular courts, were attempting a godly discipline, especially towards sabbath tippling in alehouses, and were meeting resistance. Through the 1630s, excommunicates and non-attenders increased in the manor, along with presentments for sabbath-breaking and unneighbourly conduct, and disputes with the clergy became more frequent. The reported presence of Anabaptist activity in the Isle, along with reaction to the imposition of Laudian reforms, would have been likely to increase religious factionalism. At the same time, local disagreements became more likely with the arrival of settlers on the drained fen common and the pressure for an agreement with the drainers.

Most of the clergy in the manor were, even in the early years of the century, university graduates. In some cases, their higher level of education could serve to alienate them from their parishioners and increase the likelihood of attacks against them. But their expertise could be useful in writing wills and drafting petitions and letters of support for parishioners. Except for Anthony Allen in Owston, the clergy of the manor managed to accommodate the variety of disciplinary requirements imposed by higher authorities during the century and remained in good standing with the church.

From the 1650s, the Quakers were the religious sectaries dominating the attention of the local church authorities in the manor, although other nonconformists (presumably the 'Anabaptists' who troubled Samuel Wesley) persisted. Leaders from outside the manor and from resident leading families were instrumental in keeping groups of Quakers together in the four large parishes and in maintaining contacts with groups outside the manor. By the 1670s, some Quakers, especially in Haxey, were returning to the established church. Others managed to remain in the sect while maintaining close ties with those outside. It is clear that Quakers

managed to do business, rent lands and retain neighbourly relations with non-Quakers in the manor.

The manor, like other fen areas, was characterised by weak seigneurial control. Rather than dominance by a single powerful individual, there were a considerable number of men exercising degrees of local authority and capable of providing patronage and employment. There were also a large number of smallholders who retained a considerable amount of independence, even with the reduced resources of the commons, with a choice of wealthier and more powerful individuals to whom they could ally themselves. Friends, relatives and neighbours at all levels provided useful support, especially for the many who retained life-long ties in the manor. All of these relationships, extending throughout the manor, offered potential ties to be activated for those holding minority religious views and who felt compelled to separate to some extent from the majority. This freedom was also attractive to outsiders who held strong religious views and wished to propagate them. Not only were the inhabitants more likely to consider alternative views and act upon them, but the manor provided opportunities for preaching and meeting in isolated locations. The wider area was characterised by religious dissension and debate, with groups forming in various locations, often maintaining contact and gaining support from one another. Throughout the century, however, most people in the manor conformed at least minimally to their parish church. Some were strong supporters, serving repeatedly as churchwardens, and accommodating themselves as best they could to the frequent changes in attitude, direction and discipline imposed by the higher church authorities and the central government. Whatever their religious beliefs and allegiances, most inhabitants of the manor shared a basic sense of what constituted acceptable moral and neighbourly behaviour and an acceptance that discipline was necessary to bring offenders to acknowledge and repent of their offence, the ultimate aim being the restoration of harmony.

Within this overall pattern, each parish experienced and reacted to the religious changes of the century differently and exhibited its own pattern of difficulties in maintaining discipline and harmony. The small and isolated parish of Wroot normally reported 'omnia bene' at visitations,

the only exception in the earlier part of the century being 1640, when three immigrants were standing excommunicate. This was a time of considerable migration into the parish by settlers on the drained common lands, presumably leading to some strained relations. In the same year the rector, William Newland, was railed against by one of the excommunicate. In the later part of the century, Wroot appears not to have been troubled by the religious sectarianism occurring in the larger parishes in the manor. The only presentments at the later visitations relate to lacking a surplice and required books and the 'embezzlement' of a book of homilies.

Owston parish showed an increase in those standing excommunicate during the incumbancy of Timothy Ellis, a preacher favoured by the godly, who may have been enforcing a stricter discipline than former vicars had attempted. A number of men and women were presented at visitations for sabbath-breaking and alehouse tippling. The women accused of 'railing' against the vicar indicate he may have met resistance, and some of the excommunicates and non-attenders might have attempted to avoid an onerous discipline by absenting themselves. A few people, including a couple labelled 'recusants', stood excommunicate at more than one visitation, and may have found an alternative to the parish church. The vicar had strong supporters, however, and the churchwardens appear to have been supportive both of the vicar and of one another: the only churchwarden presented by his successors was one who had mixed ale with the communion wine. Owston was characterised throughout the early period by misbehaving women: scolding, railing against the vicar, keeping alehouses and standing excommunicate, possibly reflecting the greater independence of women in this riverside parish and the perceived threat to discipline this represented.

Epworth and Belton in the early years of the century had strongly puritan clergy for short periods, and both parishes contained connected groups of godly individuals. Both of these parishes exhibited signs of dissension, based on religious or other differences, that not only alienated the authorities from individuals or groups within the parishes, but also at times divided the authorities themselves. In Epworth, those subject to discipline retaliated noisily, and previous churchwardens were accused by their successors of a long list of lapses, indiscipline

and improper behaviour. There were relatively few standing excommunicate in Epworth, although they were more likely in this parish to have others presented for associating with them. The clergy were particularly prone to find themselves under attack. Two curates were excommunicated, one for a railing speech and being drunk, the other for fathering an illegitimate child. The rector had his qualifications questioned, was taken out of church and arrested, as well as being railed against.

Belton was the only parish to have had people standing excommunicate in 1604 and 1611, and these appear to have been members of the group of puritans there. The tendency to excommunicate continued and the numbers increased through to 1640, many standing excommunicate on more than one occasion. As in Epworth, people were presented for associating with them. Again as in Epworth, churchwardens presented their predecessors for lapses. But in Belton, past churchwardens could find themselves excommunicated, along with other prominent parishioners. There is no indication in the surviving evidence that the curates of Belton were subjected to the difficulties experienced by the clergy in Epworth. But dissension in Belton, whether based on religious dissent or personal differences, appears to have split the leading groups in the parish. Churchwardens in the first 40 years of the century came predominantly from the gentry and leading yeoman families, and individuals from these same groups were noticeable among the excommunicate.

Haxey parish exhibited little of the acrimony and dissension observable in the other large parishes. The vicar from 1607 until 1641, William Dalby, was pastorally active, and he and his churchwardens appeared to act harmoniously together, enforcing sufficient discipline to maintain neighbourly order but avoiding divisiveness. The vicar became more closely allied to the leading yeoman group who supplied the churchwardens when his son and daughter married into the group. However, in 1635, when members of this group were urging an agreement to a settlement of the drainage dispute with the drainers, some loss of the usual harmony is apparent. By 1640, the parish again appeared to have few disciplinary problems. The basic solidarity of the large group of leading families in Haxey seems to have survived even the disruption of the

Quakers among these families in the 1650s and 1660s. While numbers of Quakers in the other large parishes remained at similar levels or increased in the 1670s, there was a decided falling away in Haxey.

The religious history of Epworth manor reveals not only the divergence of groups within each of the parishes, bound together by common religious views and attitudes towards discipline, but also the diverging paths of the four parishes. While subject to the same overall influences, each parish responded in its own way and, in the process, revealed something of the unity or divisions among the leading groups in the parishes, the effectiveness of the clergy in retaining the loyalty and support of parishioners, the success of alternative sectarian leaders, and attitudes towards dissent and dissension. Throughout the century, Haxey parish appeared least troubled by dissension, had a strongly united leadership, and problems of religious dissent were concentrated in the 1650s and 1660s. Owston parish, although having more disciplinary difficulties than Haxey, seems to have had little disagreement among parish leaders, and its Quaker dissenters were concentrated in outlying settlements. Both Belton and Epworth exhibited signs of early religious dissent, strong divisions relating to parochial discipline and a divided leadership vying for positions of authority and the opportunity to exercise control, striving to gain individual benefits and to retaliate against opponents.

The Common Land Disputes

During the course of the seventeenth century, the manor shared a common experience of a basically continuing way of life that was subjected to changes that needed to be incorporated and accommodated. This process was carried out within the lives of individuals and acted out in their relationships with one another, primarily within their own more immediate communities within the manor. Since the process was individual and interactive, it involved at times conflicting interests and perceptions, not only between individuals and between groups, but within individuals subject to conflicting loyalties and expectations. Therefore there were at times minor but significant divergences between family interests, the interests of the parish or settlement and religious groupings. This ongoing process of accommodating change intersected with the progress of the drainage of the manor, and the responses to it, to produce complex, shifting alliances.

The initial response to the drainage united men and women, wealthy and less well-off, from all the parishes in the manor and beyond, in opposition. Once the drainage works were completed, however, and the neighbouring areas of Hatfield and Crowle had reached a settlement with the drainers, cleavages can be detected within the manor of Epworth. While the manor as a whole continued to engage in legal action in an attempt to regain the whole of the commons, the parishes differed in their willingness to engage in direct actions against the settlers on the drained lands. Differences, both in attitudes on the part of individuals and in the responses of different parts of the manor, can be detected particularly around the time of proposed settlements in 1636 and 1691. Splits occurred between the member manors of Haxey and Westwood and Haxey Hall Garth, containing Haxey and the southern part of Owston parish, and the northern parishes of Belton and Epworth. Haxey, with its strongly integrated and united yeoman leadership, appears to have engineered a settlement in 1636 that its inhabitants continued to honour. Some of these men were enhancing their family fortunes, enabling children and grandchildren to rise to gentry status, and could see advantages in settlement over continued resistance.

Continued direct action emanated from, and was predominantly participated in by, men from Belton and Epworth parishes. Both of these parishes were marked by religious dissent and dissension in the early part of the century, and Belton, where most direct actions began, had a particularly fractious and competitive gentry and yeoman leadership. Active participation in the dispute offered a sense of solidarity to those taking part, often continuing from father to son, backed up by a strong sense of right. Commoners in these parishes who were eager to carry on the struggle to regain the whole of the manor's commons could find some among the disunited leading men of their parishes who were willing to remain involved. Throughout the second half of the century, active commoners were wary of outside legal advisors and manor officials, useful but risky allies, who might be attempting to direct the dispute to serve their own ends. As the century progressed, and differentials in wealth and lifestyle became more apparent in the manor, activists became suspicious of their own parish leaders. In 1691, they turned against these leaders, suspecting them of putting their own individual and family interests before the collective interests of the commoners. Activists then turned to members of the same prominent but disunited group in Belton and Epworth to which the now discredited leaders belonged. Throughout the century, parish leaders were expected to fulfil traditional obligations within their communities, while they were also under pressure to advance their own family's prospects in the changing circumstances of the period, and at times these demands could prove conflicting and difficult for the individual to reconcile.

The chapter is in three sections, dealing with three different stages of the dispute. The first deals with the manor before the drainage, early resistance, the events leading to the first settlement and the decree of 1636, which was partly secured by pressure but also by appealing to the individual interests of some local inhabitants. The second section looks at the re-opening of the dispute and the attacks on the settlers, the involvement of the Leveller leaders and the relationship between settlers and commoners. The third section covers actions after the Restoration, growing economic, social and religious divisions in the manor, the deterioration of

the commons in the 1680s, the settlement of 1691, and a comparison between responses to this settlement and that of 1636.

Section I: 1600-1642

i. The Manor of Epworth before the Drainage

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the manor of Epworth was, like other manors, principally defined by its lord's ownership and its administration as a unit through the steward and the manor court. The manor was large, both geographically and demographically, with scattered settlements. However, the geography of the manor also provided a natural unity to complement its legal boundaries. It was bounded on three sides by navigable waterways, and settlements were concentrated on the high ground extending down the middle of the manor and along the River Trent. The fen commons, intercommoned by the parishes, lay mainly to the west and south of the settled area. Settlements on parish boundaries linked the parishes of the manor, and the town of Epworth was a natural focus for the manor, lying in the geographical centre and serving as the location for regular meetings of the manor court and for markets. In a Parliamentary Survey of the manor in 1649/50, it was recorded that there was 'a great Court Baron kept every three weeks at the Mannor house in Epworth...also a Court Leete kept twice a year at the usual times...also a Court Baron kept twice a year at the usual times ...at Westwood for ye manors of Westwood and Haxey'.¹ The manors of Westwood and Haxey were members of Epworth manor, as was the small manor of Haxey Hall Garth.² Both of these member manors contained land in each of Haxey and Owston parishes. Larger landholders often held land in the fields of more than one settlement or parish, but smaller landholders, especially those in settlements on parish boundaries, could also hold land in the fields of an adjacent parish. Individuals had relatives and debt relationships across settlement and parish boundaries throughout the manor, and a group of puritans early in the century had religious ties that

¹ PRO: E 317/Lincs 16. The court baron was the customary court, called by the authority of the lord of the manor. Courts leet administered common and statute law and were held by the authority of the Crown: C. W. Brooks, *Pettyfoggers and Vipers of the Commonwealth: the 'Lower Branch' of the Legal Profession in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 39.

² J. Thirsk, 'The Isle of Axholme before Vermuyden', *Agricultural History Review*, I (1953), pp. 18-19.

extended beyond their own parishes. Later Quakers had similar ties across parishes and beyond the manor.

Originally the manor of Crowle, comprising the northern quarter of the Isle of Axholme, was a member of Epworth manor and remained so until leased to the Corporation of the City of London by Charles I in 1628.³ According to the survey of the manor of Westwood and Haxey in 1607, Lord Sheffield was Chief Steward of the manors of Epworth, Crowle and Westwood. The survey describes the boundaries of the commons belonging to the manor of Epworth. These extended up to and included Garthorpe and Luddington Moors, in the northern part of the manor of Crowle. All tenants of Westwood and Haxey Manor had rights of common in all these commons.⁴

While the manor provided a certain degree of social cohesion for the inhabitants, its large size and dispersed settlement pattern meant that the individual settlement and parish were the normal foci for community activity and communal identity. Many families remained in the same settlement for generations, retaining ties with other longstanding families through marriage and neighbourly relations.⁵ Each parish in the manor, while sharing broadly similar economic, social and religious experiences, formed a distinct community with its own variations on these shared experiences. Each had a different radius of connections with neighbouring settlements, both within and outside the manor. Although all commoners within the manor had 'free Comon of pasture for all manner of Cattle and Turbarie without stint: at such tymes as the waters ar low, for most of the Comons is often Drowned...And the said Inhabitants is free to digge stocks, Clay or Earth and to grave Sodds, to fish and to fowle, to gett Tack, Rishes and fodder or anie other Comodities in anie of the Comons moores, Marrishes, Waiste, Waters, Rivers or streames belonging to the said Manner', each parish had areas of commons which its inhabitants normally

³ *Ibid*, pp. 17-18.

⁴ PRO: LR 2/256, fol. 194. Lindley, citing Stonehouse, suggests that Crowle had been annexed after the dissolution of the monasteries to Hatfield Chase and was under the control of its officers. This appears to be mistaken: K. Lindley, *Fenland Riots and the English Revolution* (1982), p. 24.

⁵ These 'core' families are characteristic of local communities. See A. Plakans, *Kinship in the Past: An Anthropology of European Family Life, 1500-1900* (Oxford, 1984), p. 190, 200-1; D. Hey, *An English Rural Community: Myddle under the Tudors and Stuarts* (Leicester, 1974), pp. 4-7, 141--2, 200-5.

made use of and which were identified with that parish.⁶ The right to intercommon was useful in avoiding disputes within the manor, especially for those settlements located on parish boundaries. When, in the 1590s, there was a dispute over rights to the commons to the south of Haxey parish with the neighbouring parish of Misterton, lying outside the manor, the suit was engaged between Misterton and Haxey, not the manor of Epworth as a whole. Although the bill of complaint was brought on behalf of the Lordship of Epworth, deponents in 1631 referred to the case being between the inhabitants of Haxey and of Misterton.⁷

Wills of the manor reveal that different settlements had different networks of ties with other communities. Inhabitants of Haxey and the southern settlement of Craiselound had relatives, friends and debt relationships with people in Misterton, and several Haxey testators before the drainage named relatives in Misson, although none did after. Misson lies to the west of Misterton in Nottinghamshire, but separated from it by the River Idle. This gives some credence to Read's description of a permanently flooded area of Haxey Carr extending towards Finningley and Wroot, since Misson would have been far more directly accessible by boat than by road. Wroot had connections with settlements in the western part of Haxey parish. The riverside settlements of Owston parish had connections up and down the River Trent and on the other side of the river. Many residents of Belton parish were associated with those of Crowle. People in Belton complained after the drainage that new water courses cut them off from the next market town to the north, which was Crowle.⁸

In the early part of the seventeenth century, all the parishes had experienced a steady rise in population, with signs of a strain on resources, particularly in the 1620s. Thirsk and Lindley point to the dispute over Haxey's south commons as evidence that the pressure was already detectable in the late sixteenth century,⁹ and, as we have seen, the parish registers indicate that population continued to rise. The registers of Belton and Haxey, the only two of the

⁶ PRO: LR 2/256, fol. 194.

⁷ PRO: E 178/5412, 5 & 6 Charles I.

⁸ Fletcher, T. C. (ed.), *Read's History of the Isle of Axholme* (Epworth, 1858), p. 47. Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, p. 19.

⁹ Thirsk, 'The Isle of Axholme before Vermuyden', pp. 24-5; Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 17-18.

larger parishes whose registers survive for the 1620s, also show an increase in the illegitimacy rate, accounted for by a greater number of women from local families bearing bastard children, suggesting growing difficulties in obtaining the means to marry. That this period led to a growing differentiation, between those able to benefit from scarcity and higher prices and those losing out, can be seen more clearly later in the century throughout the manor when more fortunate families consolidated their gains and built upon them, while others declined into poverty.¹⁰

The records of Belton, however, show signs that the pressures could have had an earlier effect in that parish. The early pattern of a large natural increase in population, shared with the other parishes, lessened from the 1620s. The 1642 Protestation Returns indicate that only Belton among the manor's parishes had a lower population (excluding the French and Dutch settlement at Sandtoft) than in 1603. Belton's records also show a larger number of gentry holding land in the parish. It is possible that the apparent decline in the population of Belton between 1603 and 1642 indicates reduced landholding and employment opportunities in Belton parish, resulting in fewer opportunities to marry and greater out-migration.

The contrast with Haxey is especially interesting. Haxey sustained its rate of natural increase during the 1620s and 30s and supported more people in 1642 than it had in 1603. Resident gentry were few in Haxey and, unlike their counterparts in Belton, they did not appear to be among the larger landholders in the earlier part of the century. Surviving probate inventories, subsidy returns, and depositions of 1649 and later all indicate that the more substantial landholders in Haxey in the early years were described by their neighbours as yeomen. A survey of the member manor of Haxey and Westwood in 1607 reveals a large number of smallholders in Haxey parish, most holding fewer than five acres.¹¹ Haxey contained a substantial number of will-makers in the first half of the century who were described as weavers. These appear to have been men who farmed small amounts of land, supplementing

¹⁰ See Chapters 1, 2 and 4 above.

¹¹ PRO: E 179/138/583; E 179/139/724; E 134/1649/Mich 11; E 134/2 James II/ Easter No. 31; LR 2/256. J. Thirsk, 'The Isle of Axholme before Vermuyden', p. 19. Unfortunately, there is no comparable information on Belton at the same period.

their farming with weaving on a small scale. It seems that more men in Haxey, in comparison with Belton, were able to maintain a stake in landholding that encouraged them to remain in the parish, marry and be able to raise a family there.¹² This picture is supported by a surname analysis of the 1642 Protestation Returns. While this evidence is crude, and those sharing a surname were not necessarily related to one another, surnames in the manor did tend to cluster in parishes and even in individual settlements, and so can give a rough guide to stability of settlement. In Haxey parish, 89% of men resident in 1642 shared a surname with at least one other man; in Belton, only 66% of men shared a surname.

The church court records also indicate some differences between the parishes in the earlier part of the century. Differences in religious outlook and attitudes towards permissible behaviour and discipline, especially involving a group of puritans in Belton and Epworth, resulted in accusations against churchwardens and clergy and excommunications in these parishes. Scolding and railing women were perceived as a problem in the riverside parish of Owston. Haxey, on the other hand, exhibited few disciplinary problems or religious differences that were brought to the attention of the higher church authorities. The local leaders within the parish, in harmony with the vicar of the parish, appeared able to maintain acceptable discipline and settle disputes informally within the parish.

The existence of a separate court baron for the manor of Haxey and Westwood, meeting at Westwood in Haxey parish, along with its jury, meant that this section of Epworth manor retained a distinct identity. This member manor included not only the settlements of Haxey parish, but also the settlements of Owston, Ferry and Gunthorpe, all in the southern part of Owston parish. The 26 jury members listed in the survey of 1607 were equally divided between the two parishes, and most also served at some time as churchwardens within their own parish. In both parishes, these men were often connected in other ways. Brothers, brothers-in-law and cousins served on the jury together, and many jury members were appointed supervisors of one another's wills or were joint supervisors for a third party.

¹² See Appendix II.

These positions of leadership within the parish communities, dependent largely upon property and status, tended to be inherited. As with inheritance of property and the opportunities for marriage it afforded, there is evidence that men who were young when their fathers died could take up responsibilities of leadership early, filling the positions vacated by their fathers. In Haxey, William Forte and Vincent Tankersley were the sons of well-off yeomen who died when their sons were young. Both married young and both became churchwardens in 1623, when William was twenty-three and Vincent, twenty-two. Both men's fathers had been churchwardens, and Vincent's father Robert had also been a member of the manor court jury and had himself drawn up the survey of 1607.¹³

The manor, then, constituted a set of concentric communities. It was divided into southern and northern sections by the existence of the member manor of Haxey and Westwood, containing the parish of Haxey and the bulk of Owston parish. Each of these sections of the manor was further divided into parishes and, within these, separate settlements, each with its own identity and set of relationships. Belton parish was characterised by a diminishing native population up to 1642 and a large number of gentry, and church court evidence suggests that both Belton and Epworth experienced dissension among the leadership of the parishes. Haxey, on the other hand, had few resident gentry, a growing population, and a united yeoman leadership able to maintain order and control without confrontation.

ii. Early Resistance

Both Vincent Tankersley and William Forte (above) were named as leaders in the early risings against the drainage workers. As a result of an agreement on 24 May 1626 between Charles I, as lord of the manors of Hatfield, Epworth, Crowle, Misterton and thirteen adjacent manors, and the Dutch engineer and entrepreneur Cornelius Vermuyden, the whole of Hatfield Chase was to be drained, with the Isle of Axholme subsequently included.¹⁴ There was opposition to the scheme, both to the drainage itself and to the loss of common land that

¹³ See chapter 2 above; PRO: LR 2/ 256, fol. 194; LAO: Haxey parish register.

¹⁴ Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 23-4; C. Holmes, *Seventeenth Century Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1980), pp. 122-4; L. E. Harris, *Vermuyden and the Fens* (1953), pp. 41-50.

accompanied it, throughout the area. The first direct action came from Hatfield Chase. In June 1627, the Privy Council reported that 'some ill disposed people have attempted, in very outrageous, and unlawfull maner to hinder the said workes, by violent assaylings of the workemen, and fying the Carts, with other threatnings and outrages'. Deputy lieutenants and soldiers were ordered into the area, and warrants were issued for the arrest of four men. Further outbreaks occurred in the Chase in the winter of the following year, but both Hatfield and Crowle capitulated in 1629, accepting a reduction in their commons. Hatfield Chase was a recently disafforested royal forest with less established common rights, and the manor of Crowle had been leased to the corporation of the City of London, which in turn had sold the lease to three men, able to put pressure on the commoners who were mainly copyholders.¹⁵

In August 1628, drainage work began in Haxey Carr. On the 13th, men and women from Haxey attacked the drainage workers in 'severall insolent Riotts comitted with great multitudes at or about Hexey, upon pretence of hindering the drayning, and laying drye of the surrounded and wast grownds there wherein the Riotters pretend to have Comon'. Two days later, the workmen had been armed with muskets, and when a crowd from Haxey gathered, Robert Coggan, a Haxey commoner, was killed. Local justices were instructed by the Privy Council to proceed against eighteen named men, seventeen from Haxey and Vincent Tankersley of Wildsworth, considered to be 'the Cheefe Actors in these Ryotts'. It was left to the justices' discretion as to 'what Course to take with them, whether to bynd them to appeare before us, or else to have them brought upp by the Warrant, or else to comitt them to the Goale in the Country, or such other Course as in your discretions you shall find most fitting, for the peace to be kept, and the works to be p'ceeded in'.¹⁶ Vincent Tankersley of Wildsworth was the man of that name referred to above. He had lived in Haxey until at least February 1625/26 when his infant daughter was buried there, but had moved to Wildsworth across the Trent, where his wife's family lived, sometime before his next daughter was baptised there in April, 1628. He retained property in

¹⁵ PRO: PC 2/36, fols. 8-9; E 178/5960; Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 23-5, 71-2, 76.

¹⁶ PRO: PC 2/38, fols. 491, 418. Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, p. 72.

Haxey, however, in addition to a gentleman's estate in Hayton and Claborough in Nottinghamshire purchased in 1625, and he had purchased half of the ferry and passage at Kinnall Ferry in Owston parish from his wife's brother in 1626. He was buried in Haxey in June 1630, in accordance with the instructions in his will that he be 'buried in Haxey Church yard as neare unto my father as may be'.¹⁷ Another man cited was Hezekiah Browne. In 1626 his only son Robert had married Vincent Tankersley's sister Susanna, and the following year Hezekiah's daughter had married Vincent's first cousin Thomas Tankersley.

There were many connections among the group of 'Cheefe Actors'. Matthew Scott was listed along with his father-in-law, Richard Kirshaw. The mothers of Willam Forte (mentioned above) and Richard Taylor, both men listed, were sisters. A third sister was the mother of Thomas Tankersley, Vincent Tankersley's cousin and Hezekiah Browne's son-in-law. Richard Taylor was also Vincent Tankersley's brother-in-law, having married Vincent's sister Katherine. She had died, and Richard had since remarried the sister of Israel Medley, another of those listed in the warrant. Although Richard had remarried in 1624, he was still mentioned as 'brother-in-law' in Vincent Tankersley's will in 1630 and named as one of his supervisors. The fact that the first marriage had produced a surviving child, Vincent Taylor, would have helped to sustain the relationship.

The fact that so many of those taking a leading part in the dispute were related illustrates the importance of kinship ties in the parish and the overlapping nature of those ties.¹⁸ It is apparent too that women were most often the connecting links: brothers-in-law, fathers- and sons-in-law and men who were cousins on the maternal side are all prominent in the warrant, although no pairs of brothers or father-and-son pairs appear. Women were also active participants in the riots, and when heavy fines were levied 'for riotous opposeing and destroyeing

¹⁷ LAO: Stow Will 1627-31/117; Parish registers of Haxey & Laughton.

¹⁸ David Hey comments that, in Myddle, 'community ties must have been greatly strengthened by inter-marriage between the old families of the parish', producing an intricate web of relationships: D. Hey, *An English Local Community*, 203-4. Hoskins found the same in Wigston Magna. Frequent intermarriage amongst the long-standing families in the village produced a "huge number of 'cousins' ": W. G. Hoskins, *The Midland Peasant* (1957), pp. 195-6.

the dreyne workes in Lincolnshire' in 1631, nine of the fourteen who were fined were women. One of these was Vincent Tankersley's sister Susanna, wife of Robert Browne (500 marks), fined along with her father-in-law Hezekiah (£1000) and her sister Elizabeth, wife of Robert Scott (500 marks). It may be, as Lindley suggests, that women were placed at the forefront of the action because it was believed they would be treated more leniently by the authorities. The fines were presumably designed to disabuse the commoners of any such idea. However, women continued to participate in later actions in spite of this attempted deterrent. Lindley argues that 'women participated in these disturbances at the dictate, and under the direction, of their menfolk'.¹⁹ Wills and administration accounts indicate how frequently women were left land as part or all of their portions, subsequently contributing this with attendant rights of common in the marriage settlement. Depositions in the 1680s and early eighteenth century refer to a number of men holding property in the right of their wives or inherited through their mothers.²⁰ Of the 676 commoners listed as plaintiffs in 1686, over 100 were women. Women were frequently the recipients of legacies of cattle, and widows and mothers were often left peat turves.²¹ Women's occupation in dairying, brewing and cooking made the pasture and fuel resources of the commons particularly vital to them, and women might be expected to participate willingly in defence of their rights of common. It could at times have been the women who were doing the urging.

The early actions in 1628 were concentrated in Haxey Carr and seem to have involved mainly, if not entirely, residents of Haxey parish. All the warrants issued were against Haxey men, except for Vincent Tankersley, a former resident of Haxey whose main property in the manor was located there. By July 1629, Belton commoners were also engaged in direct action against the drainage works and workmen in their common. Warrants were issued against Humphrey Popplewell and Peter Bernard, gentlemen, who were first cousins and members of

¹⁹ PRO: SP dom 16/362, fol. 103. Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, p. 63.

²⁰ 'In the right of his wife' indicates that the land concerned was hers before the marriage: A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (1993), p. 114.

²¹ Amy Erickson notes that women were more commonly bequeathed animals in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire than in Sussex: *ibid.*, p. 68.

local yeoman/rising gentry families.²² Like those in Haxey who were issued with warrants, these men had relationships with most of the other prominent yeoman families in their parish. The constable, Richard Mole, was also cited. At the same time, over 350 Haxey commoners, mostly women, were engaged in similar attacks in Haxey North Carr. There is a predominance of spinsters among the women listed, along with wives and the occasional widow. None of the men mentioned were husbands or fathers of the women on the list, except for William Pettinger and his wife. Many of the women were related. Katherine Reade, wife of John, was listed along with her married daughter Katherine Gunby. The married sisters Susanna Browne and Elizabeth Scott were the sisters of Vincent Tankersley, cited the previous year for leading attacks. Several Meggatt and Pettinger spinsters were included, among them Susanna Pettinger, whose mother had been a Meggatt, and also Margaret Thornhill, nee Pettinger. Susanna Pettinger's sister's husband, William Torksey, had been involved in 1628. As in the all-male list of the previous year, the connections through or among women appear prominent.²³

iii. Breakdown in Solidarity

Local opposition to the drainage was not unanimous, however. One month after the actions against the drainage began in Haxey Carr, on 29 September 1628, William Newland, rector of Wroot, entered into the parish register a detailed formula for the paying of tithes. It is clear the rector received the tithes directly: 'Hay and all manner of grains in kind; Hemp and flax when it is raked, dried and brought up...in lew of the seed therof', and animals (foals, calves, cows, lambs and wools, pigs, geese, chickens and ducks) in kind where there were at least five ('then the parson must have halfe or the value thereof, as he and the owner can agree').²⁴ The timing of this document was not coincidental. In Wroot, the drainage would result in a substantial increase in the available arable and dry pasture land in the parish. The rector could

²² PRO: PC 2/38, fol. 418; PC 2/39, fols. 412, 422.

²³ PRO: KB 9/789, fol. 5; KB 9/789/114.

²⁴ LAO: Wroot parish register.

anticipate a greatly enhanced income and ensured that there would be no doubt as to his entitlement.²⁵

William Newland had served as curate of Haxey from 1624 to 1626 and then as rector of Wroot until he died in 1641. In 1624 William married Elizabeth Tankersley, probably the widow of Anthony who had died the previous year, thus tying him, with his continued landholding in Haxey parish, more firmly into the leading yeoman group in Haxey. In 1630, the labourer Simon Sampson of Craiselound left his son 'all my grounds which I have of a lease of Mr. Newland of Wroote, Vincent Tankersley, Tho: Billam and Tho: Tankersley'. (Thomas Tankersley was the eldest son of the late Anthony).²⁶ The only other Newlands to appear in Haxey parish were John, the earlier vicar of Haxey, and John Newland, gentleman, who was amongst those cited in the Haxey warrants and who served as bailiff of the manor at the time. He was the brother of Elizabeth Coggan, presented by the churchwardens of Haxey in 1627 for taking advantage of her connection with her highly-placed kinsman Dr. Farmery. It is likely that these men were related; both John and William held land in Craiselound, in Haxey parish. (William Newland of Wroot was also, according to a 1629 subsidy return, the holder of substantial lands in Epworth parish.) The only creditors listed by Thomas Lee of Craiselound in 1627, aside from his daughter-in-law, were Mr. John Newland and Mr. William Newland.²⁷

John Newland's views about the drainage appear to have changed after his early opposition, and he would have been in a strong position to influence others. He may have been born in the parish. He claimed in 1631, aged fifty-three, to have known the commons in the manor for thirty years, but deponents normally did not claim knowledge of the commons in their childhood. In 1617, he and John Farmery and 'other honest men' witnessed the will of Thomas

²⁵ Although common lands were exempted from tithes for the first seven years after improvement, there are some indications that fenland did not qualify: E. J. Evans, 'Tithes' in J. Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1640-1750* (Vol. V, 2, Cambridge, 1985), p. 401. David Hey found that the tithe value in Myddle greatly increased as more land was brought into cultivation and the population of the parish increased: D. Hey, *An English Local Community*, p. 220.

²⁶ LAO: Stow Will 1627-31/59-60.

²⁷ PRO: E 178/5412; E 179/139/724. LAO: Stow Will 1634-5/179-80; ChP 12, fol. 24; Stow Will 1627-31/87.

Phillips of Haxey. These witnesses had in fact reproduced 'the effect thereof', since the original will had been lost. Thomas Phillips, the holder of the lease on the tithes of Haxey and Owston, had strong connections with the group who later were leaders against the drainage. He was the guardian of Vincent Tankersley, and his executors were Anthony Tankersley and Hezekiah Browne (whose daughter subsequently married Anthony's eldest son). Vincent Tankersley, his two sisters and Hezekiah Browne were all prominent in the early actions against the drainage. In 1625, William Coggan appointed Mr. John Newland (his brother-in-law) joint supervisor of his will along with Richard Kirshaw, another of those cited in the early warrant. As bailiff from about 1623 and as a wealthy gentleman (his was the highest subsidy assessment in the parish in 1629), John Newland was in a position to pressure others, especially those in debt to him or needing credit.²⁸ Several wills and probate inventories in Haxey list John Newland as a creditor.

Already in 1629, the year in which both Hatfield and Crowle settled, it seems that some tenants of Epworth manor were similarly inclined. Exchequer commissioners, meeting in Gainsborough in September, reported that 'many of the better sort' of commoner were prepared to agree to the King's proposal to enclose and improve 7,400 acres of the 13,400 commons, but 'the poorest and meanest sort' were opposed. The commissioners then attempted to enclose the allotted portion, leading to renewed riots, in turn leading to the imposition of the massive Star Chamber fines on five men and nine women in 1631. At the same time, penalty fines were set on Haxey and other towns for destroying enclosures. In 1632, John Newland 'who, though a Commoner, was underhand Solicitor for the Participants', was accused of encouraging four of the convicted commoners to enter into a form of agreement to the enclosures, on behalf of the tenants of Haxey. The rest of the commoners took proceedings against them for acting without their consent, and more rioting occurred. The following year, some of the largest landholders in the manor: Edmund, Lord Sheffield, Ralph Eure of Washingborough, Robert Ryther, esquire, of Belton and William Gregory, esquire, of Bamby upon Don, exhibited an Exchequer bill on behalf of the Epworth commoners to establish how Vermuyden had put pressure on some of the

²⁸ PRO: E 178/5412; E 179/139/724. LAO: Stow Wills 1616-18/363; 1624-6/207.

commoners by threatening to implement the 1631 fines. Lord Sheffield himself, along with another large landholder in the manor, Robert Eure, esquire, had received allotments out of the enclosed commons, and permission was given to other tenants of the manor to do the same, provided they could reach an agreement.²⁹

More attacks on drainage works and enclosures took place in 1634, involving, it was said, inhabitants of all four parishes, resulting in the award of £2500 damages leviable by distress on all villages in the manor. Those who agreed to the award of enclosures to the Participants were to be immune. A document of agreement to the award collected 370 names, but commoners later claimed that these had been fraudulently obtained or were procured under duress. It was stated that some names were those of children (Christopher Bate of Nether Bulnham in 1686 said that his name appeared without his consent; he would have been nine years old at the time), others held property in the right of their wives only, some had no rights of common (William Shuttleworth claimed his name had been added without his consent, when he was a servant at the time), some were tenants only, some held in tail, and some names appeared 'severall times over when there were not soe many in the p'ish at the time'. The solicitor was said by the deponents to have received bribes to collect names, and to have misrepresented the contents of the document. Some who signed did so because of the fear of distraints towards the £2500 damages, as was claimed by several Belton deponents in 1649. Peter Clarke of Belton in 1686 admitted to signing, but 'had not they imposed a fyne upon him this Depon't and the sume seemed to be soe verie great a sume he should not have Subscribed'. Others, however, went further. Hezekiah Browne and William Torksey, both of Haxey, were accused of putting not only their own names, but also those of their neighbours.³⁰

²⁹ PRO: E 178/5960; E 178/5430. Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 28-9. J. Thirsk, *English Peasant Farming* (1957), p. 127.

³⁰ PRO: KB 29/295/74-74 dorso; 29/284/152, 187 dorso; E 134/1 & 2 James II/Hilary 25, fols. 22, 45, 48. A third man, William Robinson, was accused of adding others' names by William Shuttleworth, his servant. As no other deponent mentioned William Robinson, and William Shuttleworth's accusation referred specifically to the addition of his own name, it is likely that this was simply a case of a master including the name of his servant along with his own. It does indicate that those in favour of an agreement were pressing for all the names they could muster.

Many in 1686 recounted the story of Hezekiah returning to inform his neighbours of his action, to be told he was 'more bold than welcome'. Christopher Bate claimed to have actually witnessed this when Hezekiah came to his father's house in Nether Bumham in Haxey parish, the two men being, he said, 'Calling Cozens'. He also claimed that Hezekiah 'soe did this by contrivance with Vermudon or Newland his agent'. Many others claimed John Newland's complicity. Although those who signed their neighbours' names were blamed for going beyond the understandable signing of the document on their own behalf when faced with impossible fines, it was John Newland, 'agent for the Participants', who was particularly reviled. He had misled his fellow commoners and betrayed their trust. But in 1629, if the commissioners were right in their assessment, others besides John Newland might have been considering a settlement. In 1631, William Ferne, esq., of Belton, Thomas Troute of Owston, yeoman, and William Medley of Belton, gentleman, were prepared to assert, along with John Newland, that the commons would benefit from being drained. Three of these four men, however, were officials of the manor at the time. William Ferne was deputy steward, John Newland was bailiff, and William Medley was steward of the member manor of Haxey Hall Garth.³¹ The reaction to the setting out of the enclosures made it clear that capitulation was widely unacceptable, both in Haxey and in the manor as a whole.

Those officials of the manor who were resident in it were in an awkward position. They had loyalties and responsibilities to the lord of the manor, to the high steward and to the decisions of the courts, but they were also subject to pressure from neighbours, friends and relatives.³² It was not until 1633 that the high steward, Lord Sheffield, publicly took the side of the commoners against those who were exerting pressure upon them. Another bailiff, John Bernard, found himself in a difficult position the following year. In 1649, he claimed that the £2500 levied on the inhabitants in 1634 for damages to the drainage works and enclosures was

³¹ PRO: E 178/5412; E 134/ 2 James II/Easter No. 31, depositions of Robert Whiteley, John Pinder; E 178/5412, deposition of John Newland.

³² Hainsworth points out the difficulty of the resident steward's role, avoiding antagonising the lord while gaining the trust and respect of tenants: D. R. Hainsworth, *Stewards, Lords and People: the Estate Steward and His World in Later Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 49-50.

unreasonable and 'that there was noe such damage of £2500 as is supposed to bee done at that tyme'. Yet, as a warrant had been directed to him as bailiff, he 'did distrayne many of the Inhabitants goods and held the same' until £300 had been paid.³³

iv. Haxey and the Decree of 1636

John Newland seemed to be putting pressure particularly on the residents of Haxey parish, with whom he had an established relationship. Those who were persuaded to sign an agreement in 1632 did so on behalf of the tenants of Haxey. Those who were accused of signing their neighbours' names to the document that led to the decree of 1636, confirming the division of the commons, were Haxey residents and so most of the names they added would have been those of their Haxey neighbours. With some of the leading men of Haxey having entered into an agreement, enforced or not, to the drainage and the enclosures on behalf of the commoners, Haxey might have held to a relatively peaceful settlement as did Crowle. There, Henry Rutter had entered into an agreement on behalf of the Crowle commoners and, while this was resented and some disorder resulted, the settlement held until 1651. Crowle was subject to pressure from its three new manorial lords who had recently leased the manor from the City of London.³⁴

It is possible that similar pressure might have been exerted on some Haxey inhabitants who held lands in the member manor of Haxey Hall Garth. The lord of this manor was the Archbishop of York, and the lease at the time was held by Sir Miles Sandys, who had already been rapaciously active in enclosing fen common in the Isle of Ely.³⁵ There was a closer, albeit indirect, connection between Sir Miles and Haxey than might be indicated by his position as absentee lessee of a small member manor, and this involved the three major proponents of the

³³ PRO: E 134/1649/Mich. 11.

³⁴ Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 79-82. Susan Amussen says that parish leadership gave leaders an opportunity to define the interests of the village in a way that sustained their own interests: S. D. Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1988), p.29.

³⁵ PRO: E 134/2 James II/Easter 31. C. Holmes, 'Drainers and fenmen: the problem of popular political consciousness', in A. Fletcher & J. Stevenson (eds.), *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 193; M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 122-7. As Keith Lindley notes, both Sir Miles, sr., and his son, Sir Miles, jr., were actively involved in fenland drainage: Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 12, 37-40.

settlement: John Newland, Hezekiah Browne and William Torksey. Thomas Phillips, the wealthy Haxey yeoman who was impropiator of the tithes of Haxey and Owston under the Archbishop of York earlier in the century, left the tuition of his son Thomas to Sir Miles Sandys. His will in 1617 was witnessed by John Newland, and one of his executors was Hezekiah Browne.³⁶ His son Thomas returned to Haxey as curate and married the vicar's daughter in 1631. Four years later, the vicar's son married one of the daughters of Hezekiah Browne, who was impropiator of the tithes of Haxey. Thomas Phillips the elder had left 'the advowson of the vicarige of Haxey' to his executors if the beneficiary 'lived not to reape the benefitt', and Hezekiah Browne had the lease by 1623. The impropiator of the tithes at Owston was Sir Miles Sandys. The sister of the curate Thomas Phillips was married to Robert Torksey, brother of William, who with Hezekiah Browne was accused of putting his neighbours' names to the agreement. Thomas Phillips, former ward of a powerful man strongly in favour of fen drainage and enclosure, was in a far better position to influence local opinion than his status as curate would imply. He had his father's connections both in Haxey and in Owston, and marriages had tied him more closely still into the leading families of Haxey parish.

Pressure on the leading group of Haxey yeomen and women to agree to a settlement had built up during the early 1630s from a number of intertwined sources. The heavy fines placed upon some of the early protagonists and upon the settlements were only one aspect of this pressure. John Newland, whether or not he had been bribed, had clearly come to favour the drainage and enclosure. William Newland, rector of Wroot, was anticipating a greatly increased tithe income as a result of the drainage, and he had strong ties with Haxey through landholding and his marriage into the Tankersleys. Others who might have been considering their tithe incomes were Hezekiah Browne, impropiator at Haxey, and Sir Miles Sandys, impropiator at Owston and leaseholder of the manor of Haxey Hall Garth. Continuing connections between these two men can be observed. By 1633, Sir Miles was leasing 52 3/4 acres of demesne arable and pasture in the common fields of Haxey, along with a windmill, all of which had been rented

³⁶ LAO: Stow Will 1616-18/363.

by 'the heirs of Thomas Phillips' in 1620. (In the 1633 survey, the surveyor's figures for the acreage and the value of Sir Miles's lease had been erased and lowered; at the time, John Newland was bailiff) In 1650, the tenant listed in the survey was still Sir Miles Sandys of the Isle of Ely and his sub-tenants were two Haxey yeomen, one of them Hezekiah Browne's son Robert, whose own son Hezekiah rose to gentry status.³⁷

Some of the other better-off commoners might also have been reassessing their attitudes once the lands had been drained. The re-allocation of lands, while removing a large portion of common land, would also make potentially productive arable land and dry pasture available for renting by those who could afford it, provided a settlement could be agreed. If some of the commons in the western part of the parish had been permanently flooded, the enclosure of land there would not be seen to be a loss of pasture or fuel.³⁸ It must have been obvious by 1635 that continued attacks on the drainage works could not restore the commons to their former state. Thomas Read, a commoner who did rent land from the participants, claimed in 1649 that 'he and divers others of the Inhabitants of the Isle Did willingly Subscribe and submitt unto the said Award And he doth not know nor hath heard that any one of the said Inhabitants was constrained thereunto'.³⁹

³⁷ PRO: SC 12/10/44/17 James I; E 315/390, fols. 36-7; E 317/Lincs 16. J. Venn & J. A. Venn (eds.), *Alumni Cantabrigienses: Earliest Times to 1751* (Part I, Cambridge, 1927). By 1641, Sir Miles also had the tithes at Haxey: W. J. Sheils, 'Profit, patronage, or pastoral care: the rectory estates of the archbishopric of York, 1540-1640' in R. O'Day & F. Heal (eds.), *Princes and Paupers in the English Church, 1500-1800* (Leicester, (1981), p. 105.

³⁸ Joan Thirsk points out that 'in permanently flooded areas, it was admitted by all parties that drainage promised greater gain through the increase of cultivable land than loss from the disappearance of fish and fowl': J. Thirsk, *English Peasant Farming*, p. 120. Even before fowl had disappeared from Epworth manor, inhabitants experienced restrictions. At a 1630 Lindsey quarter sessions, four men were indicted for shooting ducks in the manor with handguns, powder and hailshot. One was originally from Crowle, and had been hunting in Belton parish, but three local yeomen were charged, all by one John Redferne. One was Gregory Tankersley, second son of Anthony, born in Haxey but who had moved to Owston parish upon his marriage to Deborah Ellis, daughter of Owston's vicar Timothy Ellis. Another was a native of Owston, Anthony Otter, and the third was Richard Taylor of Haxey, one of the men cited in the early warrant as a leader in the riots: LAO: Lindsey quarter sessions file 1625-30, nos. 197-201. This traditional duck hunting was now illegal, presumably because of the restriction on going armed issued the previous year: Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, p.77.

³⁹ PRO: E 134/24 Charles I/Easter 4.

In the years when pressure towards an agreement was building up in Haxey, some indications of friction can be detected. In 1630, a charge in the quarter sessions indicates that John Newland was not universally popular, nor was he unassailable, especially away from his home ground. In June of that year he was attacked in Scotter by Henry Vavasour, gentleman, of Belton, and two yeomen from Wildsworth, one of them Richard Everatt. Henry Vavasour's father Thomas was a prominent Belton gentleman, and Henry's son Thomas, as the heir to his grandfather's Belton estates, was to become an active opponent of the Participants and their tenants in Belton. The incident took place shortly before Henry married Richard Everatt's sister Martha, widow of Vincent Tankersley, (Like Vincent before him, Henry later moved to Wildsworth where his wife's family lived.) The charge, brought by John Newland, was 'gathering together...illegally to cause an affray, and at the same time making an affray and assaulting a certain John Newland'.⁴⁰ Evidence of unusual conflict in the parish of Haxey during the period when the agreement with the drainers was procured can be found in the church court and quarter sessions records. The church court records in the earlier part of the century indicate a state of harmony within the parish, with little of the acrimony between churchwardens, religious dissension or conflict with the clergy evident in the other parishes. In 1631 one woman, and in 1635 two men and one woman, were cited for quarrelling, brawling, or making 'contentions and strifes betwixt neighbour and neighbour'. In the 1634 quarter sessions, of five charges of breaking the peace involving men from the manor, four were directed against Haxey men: Thomas Barrowe, yeoman, against Henry Taylor; John Browne, yeoman, against Elizabeth Robinson (Hezekiah Browne gave recognizance for John Browne); and Henry Taylor and John Turr, both against David Kirkegarth.⁴¹ Henry Taylor was one of those cited in the church

⁴⁰ LAO: Linsey quarter sessions file, 1625-30, no. 204. While this incident cannot be connected to the dispute directly, it does indicate that Newland had enemies. In Havering, 'a good deal of physical violence' was directed against the bailiff, whose various unpopular duties included delivering legal writs and summonses: M. K. McIntosh, *A Community Transformed: the Manor and Liberty of Havering, 1500-1620* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 317.

⁴¹ LAO: Viiij/2, fol. 15; Viiij/3, fols. 48-9; Lindsey Quarter Sessions, 1634, nos. 14-15, 29-30. Hindle comments that local violence could be both a cause and a symptom of conflict; wider issues were often at stake. For discussions on the use of binding over to keep the peace to stabilise conflicts, when informal settlement had proved unsuccessful, see S. Hindle, 'The keeping of the public peace' in P. Griffiths, A. Fox

visitation record for the following year for sowing discord amongst his neighbours. While none of these cases can be shown to be directly connected to disagreements surrounding an agreement to enclose part of the commons, an increased fractiousness in Haxey, compared to the other parishes and especially to its own recent past, is apparent. The pressures and counter-pressures acting on the leading families, and in turn on the rest of the parishioners, that led the strongest early opponents of the drainage to agree to a settlement a few years later, could be expected to result in an acrimonious atmosphere at times during the period.

v. Limitations of the Settlement

Although many in Haxey appear, like those in Crowle, to have acquiesced to a settlement, this settlement continued to be challenged. Crowle manor was dominated by the town of Crowle, and once agreement had been reached there, it was difficult for opposition to be sustained. The settlement in Epworth, although engineered in Haxey, had signatories from other parts of the manor too. The joint operations against the drainage works in 1634, involving all four parishes, had led to the levying of damages on all the settlements of the manor, and some commoners gave way under the threat. The settlement was meant to apply to the whole of the manor. Epworth manor had four centres and, although each of the four large parishes had its own identity and its own area of common, and the member manors of Westwood and Haxey, and Haxey Hall Garth, constituted separate units within the larger manor, all inhabitants had rights of common extending throughout the manor, and the original agreement between the king and Vermuyden had dealt with the manor as a unit. Haxey could not make an agreement without involving the rest of the manor, and opponents of the drainage and the loss of commons could gain support from others across parish boundaries.

Epworth manor also possessed the Mowbray deed, dating from the fourteenth century, in which the then lord of the manor, Lord Mowbray, having made some incursions into the commons, gave an undertaking that no further 'improvements' or alterations would be made to

& S. Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke & London, 1996), pp.217-27; K. Wrightson & D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village, 1525-1700* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 124-5.

the commons without the commoners' consent, and this undertaking bound his successors as lords of the manor. The 1607 survey of the manor of Westwood and Haxey referred to the liberties and rights the commoners 'have had and enjoyed sence the tyme of the late lord John Mowbray as may appeare by testimonie in Writing'. In 1631, John Newland claimed to have a copy of the deed in his possession, 'which charter doth purport libertie of Comon ffishinge Turberie and other p'vileges within all and everye the said waste and Comonable grounds without anie interuption of ye said John de Mowbrey and his heires'. Others claimed to have seen the deed, and the deputy steward, William Feme, had seen and read it. The document was kept in the parish church of Haxey in an iron-bound chest, under a window containing a depiction of Sir John Mowbray.⁴² The deed, while applying to the manor as a whole, seems to have had particular associations with Haxey, and it may have been that the drainers were especially keen to gain agreement from Haxey commoners to counter any claims based on the deed. The commoners claimed that the Mowbray deed's guarantee of liberties 'without anie interuption' by the lord of the manor meant that the king had no right of improvement in their common without their consent. This view was supported by the original grant by the king to Vermuyden, in which it was stated that work was to begin three months after agreement with the commoners had been reached.⁴³ Since Vermuyden had failed to secure this, the agreement by 370 commoners that led to the decree of 1636 was crucial. The drainers and their supporters were in need of validation to counter the claims based on the Mowbray deed, while the commoners in opposition to the scheme in turn later worked to discredit the agreement and challenge its validity.⁴⁴

After June 1634, major actions ceased in the Isle until the outbreak of the Civil War.

The levying of damages by distress for destruction of drainage works, the subsequent agreement by some of the commoners and the decree of 1636 confirming the enclosure of 7400 acres had

⁴² PRO: LR 2/256, fol. 194; E 178/5412; C. Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire*, p. 124; Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 26-8.

⁴³ The agreement stated that the king 'shall have agreed and concluded with such person or persons as shall have claim to drain any estate, interest, or common of or in the said grounds', quoted in L. E. Harris, *Vermuyden and the Fens*, p. 44. Vermuyden began his works before an agreement could be sought: *ibid.*, p. 50.

⁴⁴ Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 26-7.

reduced active opposition to the occasional minor skirmish. The parish registers indicate increasing numbers of settlers entering the manor, especially Wroot and Sandtoft, from the mid-1630s, many of them French Huguenots and Dutch. During the 1630s, they found themselves victims of Dr. Farmery, chancellor of the diocese of Lincoln and kinsman of John Newland (who named his second son Farmery), architect of the settlement at Haxey and now said to be 'agent' of the Participants. Dr. Farmery 'employed his authority in a heavy-handed blackmail attempt against the unfortunate...refugees... [who] were threatened into the purchase of privileges and immunities which never materialised, but for which they paid heavily'.⁴⁵

Section II: 1642-1660

i. Attacks on the Settlers

In the late 1630s and early 1640s, legal challenges and attempts to get a trial of title to the enclosed commons were cut off to the commoners, while the general upheaval provided opportunities to regain their lands by taking action against the settlers. During 1641 and early 1642, other drained fen areas, in Lincolnshire and beyond, experienced direct actions by commoners attempting to regain enclosed lands.⁴⁶ In June 1642, enclosures in Haxey Carr were attacked, fences torn down and cattle driven into growing crops, but the perpetrators were men from Misterton, not from Epworth manor. Haxey and Misterton had disputed part of the commons between the two parishes in the 1590s, and a court decision went in Haxey's favour. However, the area continued to be intercommoned by the two parishes, and inhabitants of Misterton still laid claim to part of the commons to the south of Haxey. The dispute over commoning rights between Haxey and Misterton had now become absorbed into the larger dispute relating to the recovery of the commons from the settlers. Misterton was therefore strengthening its claim over the commons by exercising its right to defend them. Misterton

⁴⁵ C. Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire*, p. 60.

⁴⁶ Buchanan Sharp found riots occurring in forest areas that had been subjected to enclosure during the same period: B. Sharp, *In Contempt of all Authority* (Berkeley, Cal., 1980), pp. 8, 220-7. A. Wood noted the same among the free miners in Derbyshire and in the Forest of Dean, who reoccupied the fields from which they had been ejected: A. Wood, 'Custom, identity and resistance: English free miners and their law, c. 1550-1800' in P. Griffiths, A. Fox & S. Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority*, pp. 265-6.

commoners were not affected by the 1636 decree.⁴⁷ Haxey inhabitants do not appear to have participated. They may, as Lindley suggests, have refrained because of the decree, but it is also apparent that the impetus for direct action waned in Haxey after the early years. In later actions the leaders and most of the participants came from other parts of the manor, especially from Belton and Epworth.

At the beginning of the Civil War, sluices were pulled up on the Byckersdike and Snow Sewer at high tide and then shut to keep the waters on the land. Both of these watercourses predated the drainage and ran through Haxey and Owston parishes. Those who pulled up the sluices were men from Owston and Epworth. Again, Haxey inhabitants appeared not to have taken part in the action. William Wroot of Belton, a tenant of the Participants, claimed that an application was made to Robert Browne and Thomas Tankersley [of Haxey - the son and son-in-law of Hezekiah Browne] 'to take off the water asked what they meant and they were soe much ashamed of it, that the water had beene taken off but Peacocke and Burton [of Owston] would not give way to it'.⁴⁸

The action was said by those participating to have been aimed at preventing Royalist forces from entering the Isle, and they were officers and men serving in the Parliamentary forces. But these men were also involved in actions later against the settlers, and the settlers were convinced that the drowning of the low-lying lands was designed to drive them out. They complained of thousands of pounds worth of damage to their crops and, because the waters were held on the land for ten weeks, 'the Land generally was spoyled, soe that they could not sowe the next yeare following'. Edward Hill of Sandtoft, another of the Participants' tenants, said the commoners drowned the Level 'of purpose to expell the Participants and Tenants from those Improved Lands as they themselves declared', and William Wroote claimed that Thomas

⁴⁷ Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 18, 114-37.

⁴⁸ PRO: SP dom 18/37, fol. 11 III.

Peacock and Thomas Burton 'said keepe them drowned deepe enough and they wilbee poore enough'.⁴⁹

Further riots occurred in autumn of 1645, when fences were tom down, cattle driven into crops, settlers' houses tom down, ploughs destroyed and settlers themselves attacked. Actions were directed against settlers in Epworth and Belton by commoners from those two parishes, and again enclosed grounds in Haxey Carr were attacked by men from Misterton, not Haxey. Jacob Verney (described as yeoman in his affidavit, but as gentleman in his will four years later), a settler resident in Haxey parish, described the inhabitants of Misterton, coming 'all together Armed with pitchforkes, Staves and Clubbs' into Haxey Carr where he and his father rented land from the Participants. In November 1645, Peter Berchet, the French minister of the Huguenot church at Sandtoft, with John Barrell and John Amory, petitioned the House of Lords 'on the behalfe of themselves as other the french and dutch inhabitants of ye newe improved groundes lyinge in the levell', complaining of the attacks upon the settlement by the commoners and asking for satisfaction 'for all the damages so done by those Inhabitants which consists in this. In destroying of rape and grasses, in cutting of ploughs and other instruments of husbandry, filling of rivers and ditches. In spoyling of the Church, in breaking all the seats, and burning them; breaking all the glasse windows, pulling downe the lead of the Church and steeple'.⁵⁰

In addition, they asked 'That Our Church may be established, and our Congregation settled...That our Minister may have his allowance duely payd him, according to the promises of the Participants...And likewise...all the arrears due to him'. It was requested that the money owing to the minister be collected from those who were members of the congregation and who could afford to contribute, 'Because if these sums were to be levied by a generall tax upon the lands of the sayd Levell, whereof a great part is possessed also by Englishmen, it would breed a great disturbance betweene them and the strangers'. An earlier arrangement over the payment

⁴⁹ PRO: SP dom 18/37, fol. 11 III. HLRO: Main Papers, 10 February 1646, affidavit of Edward Hill of Sandtoft.

⁵⁰ HLRO: Main Papers, 10 February 1646, affidavits of Robert Palmer of Epworth, Edward Hill of Sandtoft, Jacob Verney of Haxey; 15 November 1645, petition of Peter Berchet, *et al.*

of church rates to Epworth and Belton parishes, whereby half of the rates owing on the settled land went to the parish church and half to the church at Sandtoft, had already caused friction between the French settlers and the commoners (it was in connection with the church rates that one of the French settlers called the Epworth rector 'old roan' in 1640). The beleaguered Sandtoft residents, styling themselves 'The poore strangers' in their petition, were taking care not to alienate themselves from their English settler allies.⁵¹ The Sandtoft church was an important focus for the French community in the whole area, including those who lived in Hatfield Chase. It was also, as the French Huguenots were well aware, a symbol of their distinctiveness as a foreign community, separating them from the other settlers and increasing their vulnerability.

A legal battle was being waged at the same time between the commoners and the Participants, and the commoners were permitted, in Hilary term 1646, to proceed to a legal trial of their title to the 7400 acres of former common land. This success may have had an effect on the inhabitants of the manor. In July 1646, Misterton men had again demolished banks and fences in Haxey Carr, and in May of the following year men and women from the manor attacked workmen and filled in drains. Of the twenty-four rioters convicted and fined at Gainsborough, about half were from Epworth, and the remainder about equally divided between Belton and Owston. In June 1647, Haxey commoners were prepared to engage in direct action. David Zealand, resident in Haxey parish, labourer and 'being one appointed by the Participants to Keepe the grounds that were soe enclosed', described the gathering. Daniel Noddell, a gentleman resident in Owston parish, formerly an officer in the Parliamentary army and now acting as full-time solicitor for the commoners, came into Haxey Carr accompanied by three prominent Haxey yeomen: Gregory Turr, Robert Browne and Thomas Tankersley, the latter two those whom William Wroote had described as ashamed of the lifting of the sluices to drown the level in 1642. Along with these men were 'diverse other persons To the number of above ffiftye on horsebacke and after them a multitude of other persons To this Depon'ts thinking ffive

⁵¹ LAO: Vj/31, fol. 67. HLRO: Main Papers, 15 November 1645, petition of Peter Berchet, *et al.*

hundred armed with Clubbs, long Staffes and fforkes and one of them on horsebacke had before him gunnes'.⁵²

Daniel Noddell himself listed those with him as 'to the number of Two hundred men or thereabouts whereof was Thomas Tankersley, Robert Browne, Thomas Turre, Robert Tankersley, Robert Medley of the p'ish of Haxey yeomen.' These last two were the sons of Vincent Tankersley and Israel Medley, leaders in the early actions in Haxey Carr and now deceased. Noddell claimed he had gone 'in ayde and assistance of the Constables of Owston and Haxey and others...to see the due execution' of a warrant against John Gibbon for attacking an Owston inhabitant, Edward Staving. The crowd was made up of commoners from throughout the manor. They had entered Haxey Carr looking for John Gibbon, who had bought out Vermuyden's interest and had attempted to recover the enclosures in Epworth. Daniel Noddell had led action against this attempted recovery from Epworth and had now organised a combined ambush against John Gibbon in Haxey Carr. The planned confrontation was averted by the intervention of the deputy steward of the manor, William Geery, esquire.⁵³ It seems that some success in the courts and the direction of Daniel Noddell, both in the court action and in direct action, encouraged the commoners to combine into a formidable force. This included the previously inactive Haxey residents, some of whom, like Robert Browne, later admitted to having signed and being bound by the decree of 1636. But this action, unlike the others in the 1640s, was not aimed against the settlers. The otherwise reticent Haxey leaders were able to participate in this endeavour because, as an attempt to execute a warrant, it had official sanction.

The commoners had gained from the support of local officials. The deputy steward William Geery managed to retain the trust of both the commoners and the tenants and used his contacts among both to prevent bloodshed. He described a conversation at Belton with Peter Clarke, 'discourging about their Comon and righting themselves and to take a Course and hee

⁵² PRO: KB 9/838/528; HLRO: Main Papers, 6 July 1647, affidavit of David Zealand.

⁵³ PRO: SP dom 18/37, examination of Daniel Noddell of Owston, gentleman; KB 9/839/199-200; KB 29/297/27. Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 153-5.

[Geery] wished them to call on him before they proceeded'. When several of them came to him the next morning and said they were going 'to meete those of Haxey, hee diswaded them from goeing' and then went to Sandtoft to speak to the Participants' tenants, whom he forbade to go to meet the commoners. Some local officials were distinctly biased. Peter Bernard, high constable resident in Belton, not only refused to act upon a warrant to suppress riots and arrest the rioters, but participated in many actions himself and encouraged his son John to take part. Richard Mawe of Belton, a constable, was also a 'chiefe man' among the rioters.⁵⁴

Confidence amongst the commoners was growing, and threats and intimidations against the settlers increased, along with the occasional physical assault. Edward Hill, a tenant of enclosed grounds at Sandtoft, reported a meeting with Richard Starkey and the two sons of Robert Cutforth, all of Epworth, the day after the attempted ambush of John Gibbon in June, 1647. They told him that Mr. Noddell had five hundred men in his company 'and the bancks lyned with men to hem us in dureing the parley and that if Mr Gibbon and they did not agree; Mr Gibbon, this deponent, and one Edmund Awkeland, should have dyed for it, scape all the rest as they could, and this I tell you for your Comfort. And that if wee cannot get our Comon by lawe we will gett it by Clubbe lawe'. They also claimed that Daniel Noddell had a licence from Sir Thomas Fairfax to pull down all the houses on the level, including that of John Gibbon, if Gibbon did not allow the commoners the grounds they had entered and reclaimed.⁵⁵

Edmond Aukeland of Wroot described physical attacks by the commoners a week earlier. He was employed, with others, by the Participants to rebuild the fences and drains destroyed by the commoners. The sheriff had sent men to protect them, but men and women from Epworth parish 'to the number of about fforty p'sons...Armed with pitchforks Clubbs staffes and stones and there did the first day beat off this deponent with the rest of ye workmen and wounded George Hill and George Lawley in such sort as yt they were both in danger of death

⁵⁴ PRO: SP dom 18/37. In the Western forest riots too, local constables, sheriff's posse and Parliamentary forces were ineffectual because of sympathy with the rioters, fears of reprisals or reluctance to act against neighbours: B. Sharp, *In Contempt of all Authority*, pp. 228-9.

⁵⁵ HLRO: Main papers 6 July 1647, affidavit of Edward Hill.

and the second day sorely wounded the Sheriffs servant...in two places in the head with a sword and broke two of his Ribbs whereby hee was in danger of death likewise and hurt the horse of another'. Edmond Aukeland himself was attacked: they 'did riottously assault the Person of him this Deponent in the Towne of Epworth then in the Company of the sd Shiriffs Deputy Crying out, kill him kill him, knock him downe lett him never goe futher - Whereupon this depon't was inforced to ride into a yard and forsake his horse and leave him behind and gett over divers hedges and through the River of North fferry to save his life. In which fflight, they pursued him Very Close'. Meanwhile, the Undersheriff was under attack as well: 'above Three score p'sons pursued him...to the place all Armed with Pitchforks, long Clubbs and Staffes'. Two Epworth men, John Granger and John West, were arrested by the sheriff but 'within two daies released and sent home by some of ye Justices of ye Peace of that County (as this depon't was credibly informed)'. Edmond Aukeland also recounted an attack on his servant coming from the mill, in which he was pulled from his horse and arived home 'with his face all broken and bloody and gave him so many blowes on ye head, yt his head was very much swelled, telling him that if they had his master there, they would have killed him.'⁵⁶

While the accounts may well be exaggerated, it seems clear that intimidation and force were becoming frequently-used weapons and were proving successful. Many of the common lands had been reclaimed by drowning, destroying drainage channels and by pulling down fences, destroying crops and agricultural implements. With court decisions beginning to favour the commoners and local officials and justices of the peace favouring their cause, they had little to fear even from the sheriff and his men. In the 1630s, the appearance of the sheriff and an armed force, the reading of proclamations, along with a command to depart, had been an effective deterrent. Now the commoners, 'insteade of giving obedience, strooke at ye Sheriffs deputy and did hitt his horse with a staffe'.⁵⁷ By 1647, many of those who had signed the agreement that backed up the decree of 1636 were dead. Others were able to claim that they

⁵⁶ HLRO: Main papers 6 July 1647, affidavit of Edmond Aukeland, Wroot.

⁵⁷ HLRO: *Ibid*; Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 75-8; Holmes, *Seventeenth Century Lincolnshire*, p. 124.

had been tricked into signing or had done so to escape from heavy financial penalties, or that their names had been added without their consent. The successes that the circumstances of the 1640s had allowed made any idea of loss of commons through a voluntary settlement with the Participants and their tenants unthinkable for many of the commoners, and earlier accommodation could only be accounted for by unfair financial pressure, duplicity or treachery.

Small-scale actions against tenants and enclosures by a group of Epworth men took place in 1649, but from the second half of 1650, there was a concerted attempt to expel the Participants and their tenants from the lands, approximately 3,400 acres, they still held. Men from Belton began a series of attacks in October, impounding cattle, levelling enclosures and attacking tenants and their servants. With them were Daniel Noddell and Richard Mawe the constable, and later in the month they were joined by men from Epworth. The attacks came to focus particularly on the destruction of tenants' houses and outbuildings in a largely successful attempt to drive them from the manor. These actions were said to have been encouraged by Daniel Noddell, but were led increasingly from Belton, with men mainly from Belton and Epworth taking part. Edward Hill, one of the tenants, said that the rioting 'was as ordinarily done as for men to goe to their labour and some of those men were dayly in it'. A prominent Belton landholder, the justice of the peace Michael Monkton of Beltoft, esquire, was accused by the settlers of favouring the commoners and encouraging the rioters.⁵⁸ Two witnesses claimed that John Bernard 'showed a note under Mr Moncktons owne hand to claime his right to throw downe the fences and to make his clayme to his right'. Anthony Massengarb, a Fleming, 'having applyed himselfe to Mr Monckton to have Justice done, saith hee told him there was noe Lawe for him and hee asked what will you not doe right, said right? you have had their Comons too long'. Eustace le Grande, a Walloon, gave a similar account. John Mylner claimed that, having been beaten by a group of commoners, he was carried by them 26 miles to Lincoln to go before

⁵⁸ PRO: KB 9/869/288; SP dom 18/37. Michael Monkton was the later Quaker - see chapter 5. In 1656 Monkton was described as 'of Thornham Abbey', Lincolnshire, and during the 1650s he is recorded in the Belton parish registers as performing marriages at Thornholme and at Beltoft, so that he probably had houses in both these locations. Thornholme Abbey was situated to the east of the Isle of Axholme.

Mr. Monkton, 'hee desiring to goe to another Justice of peace but they refused it although many Justices of the peace lived nearer'.⁵⁹

Those commoners taking part in the direct action in this period were primarily Belton men, aided by allies from Epworth. As with the Haxey men who were active in the earlier period, many of the Belton and Epworth men were related to one another or had other connections. A number of men from prominent yeoman/gentry families took part. Thomas Bernard, the brother of Peter Bernard, the high constable active in the riots of the 1640s, was one of those involved, as was Peter Bernard's brother-in-law, Jeffrey Whittacre of Epworth. John Johnson, yeoman of Belton, his son John and brother Robert all took part. John Brocke and his kinsmen Edward and Alexander Fox, all of Belton, were active, as were Thomas Hallifax, Epworth yeoman, and his son-in-law John West. Two prominent participants in the riots were William Robinson, Belton husbandman, and the Belton bellman William Wash. William Robinson left the bringing up of his son and daughter in 1653 to William Wash. John Watson, sr., Belton yeoman, his son-in-law Henry Woodliffe, John Watson, jr. and his son-in-law John Artus were all involved. The men named ranged from well-off yeomen through husbandmen to labourers like George Peacock, third son of a Belton weaver.⁶⁰

ii. The Contribution of Lilburne and Wildman

In autumn 1650 the Leveller leaders John Lilburne and John Wildman appeared in the manor, having been recruited by Daniel Noddell. They were first involved as legal advisors for the commoners' case in the Exchequer and then in direct action after their arrival in the Isle. An Exchequer decree of February 1651 left the commoners in possession of the 4000 acres they had regained in 1642 and granted the Participants the remaining 3400 acres of the original grant pending a trial of title by the commoners. The decree arrived in the manor in May, and the sheriff ordered that the 3400 acres be restored to the Participants and their tenants. Although the decree was generally favourable to the commoners, they had decided to defy it and, when it

⁵⁹ PRO: SP dom 18/37.

⁶⁰ HLRO: Main Papers 10 February, 1646, affidavit of Edward Hill, Sandtoft; 6 July, 1647, affidavits of Edward Hill, Sandtoft and Edmond Aukland, Wroot; PRO: SP dom 18/37; LAO: Stow Will 1660-3/757.

was read out to a group of Belton men, they rejected it without hearing it through. Direct action to drive the settlers out continued.⁶¹

Since Noddell was aware that this action was prejudicial to the commoners' legal case, as Lindley points out, 'the events of May and June 1651 in fact raise serious doubts about Noddell's ability to control, or effectively direct, commoner action in the Isle and serve as a caveat against the temptation to view rioters through the eyes of the authorities who almost invariably regarded them as manipulated from above'.⁶² The commoners had had salutary experience in placing too much faith in the advice and assistance of professional experts. John Newland was seen to have used his knowledge and contacts to betray the commoners' interests and to have led some of them into betraying their neighbours. By 1651, the commoners' success in regaining their lands had been achieved primarily through their own efforts. Although the right to proceed to a trial of title had been gained in 1646, court victories were minimal and slow in coming when compared with direct action. Daniel Noddell, although resident in the manor, was not a native of it and had now introduced two outsiders to intervene in the cause. While their experience and contacts were potentially useful, these men could not be entirely trusted to put the interests of the commoners before their own. The commoners were determined not to allow the course of the dispute to be taken out of their direction nor to risk being manipulated to further the economic or political interests of men whose main ties lay outside the manor.

The commoners who were especially active and determined to retain control of the direction of the dispute were again those from Belton, aided by some from Epworth. It was the parish of Belton that had shown greater religious dissent and independence from the early years of the century and a willingness to discipline individuals regardless of status. Belton too appears to have suffered a loss of population among its native families and to have experienced a

⁶¹ A parliamentary committee report drawn up by William Say and Henry Darley, members of the committee and friends of the Participants, misrepresented the decree as establishing the whole of the 7400 acres with the Participants: Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 191-3; C. Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire*, pp. 211-12.

⁶² Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, p. 199.

greater polarisation of wealth than the other parishes. Given these fracturing forces in the parish community and the existence of a separate, foreign community within the parish boundary farming enclosed common land, direct action to reclaim the land and expel the foreign settlers could serve as a unifying focus for some of the commoners of the parish. Noddell and Lilburne, attempting to distance themselves from some of the more violent episodes, and aware that these were harming the commoners' legal actions, offered the excuse that the commoners had become discouraged by the extremely lengthy legal proceedings.⁶³ It may also have been true that Belton commoners found their own direct methods at this stage to be both more effective and a more satisfying display of solidarity than a reliance on the courts.

Meanwhile, attacks continued and were directed particularly against the settlement at Sandtoft. In June 1651 over 80 houses were pulled down, including that of the minister, aside from stables and barns, according to John Amory, a French settler. John Mylner recalled that, in October 1650, eight or nine men came 'with Clubbs, Staves, Shovells & Spades & Strooke downe men dead & beate this Depon't almost dead in his owne garden soe that hee hath never beene his owne man to this day', a doubtless exaggerated account, since no one else mentioned deaths. The following May he was taken prisoner and beaten, and it was then he was carried twenty-six miles to appear before Michael Monkton, J.P. He too referred to the destruction of over eighty houses in June 1651, and added that the rioters chopped them to pieces and carried the materials away. He was then forced to live in a dry dike with his three children and four other children for most of the summer, and 'they came by him the morneing and evening with fire in their hands and flung the fire amongst them and said wee will roote you out, you shall stay noe longer there'. Lilburne moved into the minister's damaged house. As Lindley points out, the depositions imply that Noddell, Lilburne and Wildman directed or were responsible for the riots, but no evidence was put forward for this, and both Lilburne and Wildman had expressed

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 202.

disapproval of the actions. Noddell had written two letters warning the commoners against rioting. The contents were made public in Belton, but did not stop the rioting.⁶⁴

The commoners appear to have been in charge of the assaults on the settlers and their property, but ceased their activities after June 1651. In October things changed. The commoners obtained a favourable Exchequer verdict on their title, brought in the name of Thomas Vavasour. Thomas, who was only seventeen at the time the verdict was received, was the grandson and heir of Thomas Vavasour, gentleman of Belwood in Belton parish. Young Thomas was the son of Henry, who predeceased his father, and the widow of Vincent Tankersley of Haxey. He was born and grew up in Wildsworth, his mother's home parish, across the Trent from the manor, but he was a major landholder in Belton after his grandfather's death in 1644. As soon as the verdict on the commoners' title was given, the Participants attempted to undo it.⁶⁵

This legal success for the commoners, although threatened by the Participants, may have enhanced the standing of Noddell, Lilburne and Wildman and helped them to gain some control over the direction of the dispute. The commoners were persuaded to enter into an agreement with their legal advisors in October 1651 to continue to pursue action through the courts. A contract was drawn up between the commoners and Lilburne, Wildman and Noddell whereby Lilburne and Wildman received a 999-year lease on 2000 acres of common land 'for a settling of a peace and to p'tect them from suites in regard of a great Charge that they had heretofore'. Daniel Noddell received 200 acres for past and future services, including the financing of a trial of title, after which Lilburne and Wildman were to seek an Act of parliament recognising the commoners' title. The commoners at this stage were effectively claiming joint ownership of the commons rather than simply use-rights, sub-letting their lands to be farmed in severalty in return for legal services. One of the items in the proposals stipulated that Lilburne

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 201-2. PRO: SP dom 18/37. Morrill and Walter give more credence to the depositions. They state that Lilburne was 'certainly not averse to breaking heads or burning houses' of the settlers, although the Levellers' 'role remains mysterious': J. S. Morrill & J. D. Walter, 'Order and disorder in the English Revolution' in A. Fletcher & J. Stevenson (eds.), *Order and Disorder*, p. 161.

⁶⁵ PRO: E 134/1 & 2 James II/Hilary 25, fol. 30; E 134/2 James II/Easter 31; LAO: Laughton parish register; Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 204-5.

and Wildman 'should quitt us of or agree with the Lord of the Mannor for the right of the Soyle'. Most of those agreeing on behalf of the commoners were named at some time as participating in riots. They were described as 'the p'ties agreed upon in behalfe of the Townes' and listed by parish: for Epworth, Thomas Hill, John Mawe and John Thorpe; for Haxey, Robert Browne, Thomas Tankersley, James Turr and Vincent Barrow; for Owston, William Moody, Thomas Peacock and Robert Robinson; and for Belton, Peter Clarke, John Bernard and Mr. Michael Monkton. Michael Monkton, the justice of the peace accused by the settlers of favouring the commoners, also drew up the proposals and showed them to Lilburne and Wildman in Belton Church. The first item in the proposals was the setting up of a commission to divide the common into four parishes, and the second to bring a suit 'to make a division betwixt Misterton and Haxey' (the still-contested case arising in the 1570s).⁶⁶ While this agreement was a joint undertaking on the part of the commoners, it is clear that the commons were still viewed as parish commons, to be divided as such, and that each parish had its own distinct representation in the agreement.

Wildman was reported to have said, at the time of the sealing of the agreement, 'that hee was soe farre from anymating the Ryotts that hee told them they would Undoe themselves'. He left the Isle soon after, concentrating on acting for the commoners in London, leaving the organisation of the setting out of the 2000 acres to Lilburne. Lilburne was now resident in Sandtoft in the minister's house. John Amory, one of the French settlers, said that on Sunday 19 October 1651, Lilburne and Noddell went to Sandtoft church, where 'Mr Noddell spoke latin to the Minister which hee could not understand, hee being a frenchman. Lilborne said this is our Comon, you shall come here noe more unles you be stronger then wee and this he spoke to the Minister and the Congregacon'. Lilburne and the 'lads and men' with him had swords at their sides. Lilburne then proceeded to pray and preach; 'they would not let the Minister preach'. Later, 'they have made a Cowhouse of the Church and spoyled it, hewed downe the pulpitt, tooke downe the windowes and totally defaced the Church, and that hay is layd there ever since'.

⁶⁶ PRO: SP dom 18/37.

One witness claimed that 'an Oxe was killed in the Church and hung upp there by the direcon of Lilborne and Noddell'. This detail, however, was not mentioned by John Amory, who described the rest of the spoliation of the church, nor by any other witness.⁶⁷

The depositions recording the events were obtained mainly from the Participants' tenants, and the aim was to imply the sinister direction of riotous and violent behaviour by the Leveller leaders, bent ultimately on the overthrow of Parliament itself. But even these depositions indicate that Lilburne was more likely to have been attempting to exercise a moderating influence on the commoners. One of the Participant's tenants, Edmund Griffith, said that during the confrontation at Sandtoft church in October 1651 'Mr Noddell was passionate on the behalfe of the Ryotters and argued against the Decree [of February 1651] and Mr Lilborne told him hee should not bee passionate for they would have the more advantage against us'.⁶⁸ It seems that Lilburne was putting on a sufficient show of strength, intimidation and solidarity (his reference to 'our' commons, now that he himself was a landholder in the manor) to satisfy the commoners, while preventing the sort of violent action against settlers and their property that would harm their case in the courts. Not only did he urge restraint on Noddell, but his prayers and preaching in the church may have been designed to lower the temperature of the more heated commoners. The later attack was confined to the church, a satisfyingly symbolic attack on the Sandtoft community, but one that involved minimal property damage and no injury to persons. Both Lilburne and Noddell were prepared to lease some of their lands to certain of the Participants' tenants, including the French Sandtoft residents.⁶⁹

iii. The Commons in the 1650s and Relationships with the Settlers

Lilburne left the Isle at the end of 1651 and was eventually banished by Parliament. Wildman continued to act for the commoners in London until the end of 1652. Although the council of state officially endorsed an order to award the Participants the 7400 acres of Epworth common in June 1653, the order was not executed, and the commoners were left in possession

⁶⁷ PRO: *ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, p. 207.

⁶⁹ PRO: SP dom 18/37.

of the land. The commissioners of sewers now attempted to collect taxes from the commoners for the maintenance of the drainage works, with a predictable response from the commoners, who had been opposed to the drainage in the first place. Throughout the 1650s, the dispute centred around these taxes. Livestock was distrained for nonpayment, taken to Hatfield and impounded, and in turn rescued by commoners riding across the fens. The commoners involved were again mainly from Belton and Epworth, with four from Owston parish (one of these was Henry Glew; the Glews were a prominent Belton family, not otherwise represented in Owston). They were a particularly mixed group, consisting of yeomen, husbandmen, labourers, miller, weaver, carpenter, blacksmith, butcher, fellmonger and mercer. Central in these events was Nathaniel Reading, originally from London, who changed sides several times. He began as the commoners' legal adviser, then worked for the Participants until he fell out with them, became an adviser to the commoners again and then agreed to work as a salaried tax collector for the Participants in 1655. In one episode, he had distrained 155 cows and young beasts, 45 horses, mares and foals and 9 score sheep. Again, the commoners were made aware of the risks attending involvement by outside legal advisers.⁷⁰

In January 1656 Belton commoners once more attacked Sandtoft church, which had been repaired at the order of Reading. The attack was organised by Noddell, Robert Ryther, esquire, of Belton and Thomas Vavasour, in whose name the trial of title was obtained. These three departed before the attack began. The following June an attack was organised from Epworth against John Dillingham, gentleman, of Low Mellwood in Owston parish. He claimed this was because he was acquainted with Reading. He was threatened and verbally abused, and cattle were let into his enclosed meadow under the leadership of James Mawe of Epworth and his two sons along with 'divers others of the Richest sort' of commoners. He said there was a conspiracy to kill him and that 'the next Justice of peace' [presumably Michael Monkton] was not willing to act against the commoners.⁷¹ Both James Maw and John Dillingham appeared a few

⁷⁰ PRO: KB 9/871/345. Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 212-15.

⁷¹ PRO: SP dom 18/128, fol. 80. Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, p. 220.

years later in the church court records of 1662/63. John Dillingham, an outsider who had purchased his estate from Sir Phillip Tirwhit, was again under attack for dissociating himself from the community and his obligations towards it. He was presented for absenting himself from church in Owston and refusing to pay his assessment of £1 13s 6d for church repairs. He claimed that he 'nor hath or Enjoyeth any Lands or Tenem'ts within that p'ish, whereby hee may bee Lyable or Legallie chargeable to pay the pretanded assessm't', and furthermore, 'is noe p'ishioner of the said p'ish of Owston and therefore ought not to frequent or resort to that parish as his p'ish Church and soe is Uniustly presented by the Churchwardens of Owston'. The churchwardens reiterated their assurance 'that Mr Dillingham is of their p'ish and ought to frequent and repayre to their p'ish Church as a p'ishioner'. In Epworth, James Mawe was proving equally unpopular with his churchwardens. He was presented for living apart from his wife, 'for a factious seditious and comon troubler of his neighbours', and he and one of his sons were two of the former churchwardens accused of mishandling the church accounts and church lands. He alone was presented 'for converting the said Church lands to his owne use and benefitt'.⁷² Other actions in the 1650s tended to be led from Belton, but this attack came from Epworth, the parish adjacent to Low Mellwood. If James Maw was as 'factious' as later churchwardens claimed, and John Dillingham less than popular, this may have been an instance of the common land dispute serving partially as a venue for the display of personal animosity.

The attacks on the settlers, particularly the increasingly violent attacks upon the settlement of Sandtoft in the late 1640s and early 1650s, succeeded in driving many of the settlers from the manor, some into adjacent areas like Hatfield Chase and some further afield into Cambridgeshire.⁷³ Others stayed on, struggling to keep their rented lands enclosed in spite of periodic damage to fences and crops. Not all contacts between the commoners and the

⁷² PRO: E 134/1 & 2 James II/Hilary 25. LAO: Vj/32, fols. 6, 18, 55-6, 138, 142-3.

⁷³ Small freeholds in the drained fen around Thorney were taken up by refugees from Sandtoft: J. Thirsk, 'Agricultural policy: public debate and legislation' in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Agrarian History, 1640-1750*, p. 323. Twenty thousand acres of fen there had been drained by the earls of Bedford and Portland, purchased from their tenants, and then let: B. Manning, 'The peasantry and the English Revolution', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, II, 2, (January 1975), p. 146. The Thorney estate was to be planted with French and Dutch settlers by 1640: Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, p. 42.

settlers were unfriendly. A few commoners at times rented land from the Participants. One of the appraisers in 1666, along with three Participants' tenants, of the probate inventory of the Sandtoft resident Mark Coney was Charles Viccars, mercer of Epworth. William Newton, who wrote many wills in Belton, performed the same service for two of the French settlers, Stephen Depon in November 1642 and Phillip Depon in April 1649, both of whom were resident in Sandtoft when they died, but had lived in Wroot in spring 1642. It seems William Newton may have had a particular relationship with this family. Other Sandtoft wills were written in French by the French pastor Peter Berchet and translated into English by John Amory, or written in English by John Amory or one of the other French settlers. Of eight French or Dutch settlers who specified a place of burial in their wills between 1642 and 1650, only two asked to be buried in the churchyard at Sandtoft: Francis Gouy in 1647 and Cornelius Cloye in 1649. The rest specified the parish church or churchyard of the parish in which they lived: four in Belton and one each in Epworth and Haxey. Gifts to the poor, however, appear to have been affected by the attacks on Sandtoft. Adrian Hampe, who made his will in February 1642, before flooding of the level later that year, left 20s each to the poor of Belton and to the poor of the Level. Phillip Depon in 1649, although he used a Belton scribe and asked to be buried in Belton churchyard, left 'to the poore people belonging the congregation of Santofte all the rest of my apparrell', and James Becamps in 1650 left 'to the poor of Santoft Church beinge in the place wh[ere] I now dwell foure pounds'. John Watson, jr. of Belton, who had taken part in the attacks on Sandtoft with his son-in-law, left a legacy in his will of 1659 of a sack of rye and barley and 'a cow which she pleaseth to make choice of amongst my cattle' to Mary Amory. The only Amorys in the manor were John, James (who died in 1648), Isaac and their families, Isaiah and Peter, all of Sandtoft. John Amory had a wife and a twelve-year-old (in 1659) daughter named Mary. He had had a house and a mill destroyed in 1651, and it may be that the legacy was a form of compensation or even contrition on the part of John Watson.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ LAO: Stow Wills 1640-59II/475; 1640-50II/558; 1640-50II/326; 1640-50II/319; 1640-50/206; 1640-59/120; 1660-3/622; Pro Inv 218B/14. PRO: SP dom 18/37. HLRO: Main papers: 10 March, 1661, affidavit of John Amory.

Some of the French and Dutch settlers moved around within the manor. John Fountaine lived initially at Sandtoft, moved to Wroot where two of his children were buried in 1643 and 1644, and was a witness of Jacob Verney's will in Haxey in 1650. One of the Verneys who lived in Haxey parish in 1642 and who were tenants of the drained lands, Bartholomew, died in Wroot in 1674. Datus Shankster was born in Wroot in 1648, and both his father and his mother's family were tenants of the Participants. He was resident in the Epworth level when he died 20 years later. Most of the French settlers married into other French families exclusively in the early years, but some were intermarrying into English settler families. Phillip Depon's daughter by 1649 had married John King, and if the family spoke English, as the marriage indicates, this would have assisted its association with William Newton. James Amory's brother-in-law in 1648 was Robert Holmes. John Amory was bilingual, and it seems his brother James was too. The Amorys remained in the area throughout the period of the dispute. Isaac, brother of John and James, had moved to Goodcoff on the Belton level by the time he died in 1687. The witnesses to his will were two English settlers and his nephew Abraham Amory. By this date Abraham had moved to Hatfield, but in 1699 he was still farming land in the Belton level. In 1719 his son Abraham, also resident in Hatfield, was a tenant in Belton, as was Samuel Amory, sr., son of Isaac, and a John Amory.⁷⁵

Sandtoft from an early date had other than French residents. Thomas Usher, who died in 1649, farmed there and also owned land in Hatfield parish. The witnesses to his will included prominent men from Belton, including William Newton. John Moody, a native of the manor, owned lands in Owston parish, but lived at Sandtoft in 1653 when he made his will. The departure of French settlers from Sandtoft reduced its size, and the closing of the French church sometime in the 1680s made the settlement less distinctly French. The two deponents in 1719 who gave their address as Sandtoft were Francis Oxley and Thomas Hudson, both tenants of the Participants. The English settlers who immigrated in the 1630s, many of whom, like the French,

⁷⁵ LAO: 1642 Protestation Returns; Wroot parish register; Stow Wills 1640-59/176; 1666-8/128; 1640-50II/558; 1640-50II/388; 1687-90/5. PRO: SP dom 18/37; E134/2 James II/Mich 35; E134/5 George I/Easter 18.

moved out of the manor after the attacks on enclosed grounds, had intermarried with one another in the early years. By the end of the seventeenth century, those who stayed on in Wroot were just beginning to marry into the indigenous families.⁷⁶

There is some evidence that members of commoner families who wished to rent lands from the Participants might find it more comfortable to move away from their home parish, farming land taken from another parish's commons. The scribe of the will of Datus Shankster, who migrated from Wroot to the level in Epworth, was Robert Whiteley, a prominent yeoman of Epworth who wrote many wills and who was an active opponent of the Participants. The other two witnesses were William and Thomas Otter, bearers of a surname common throughout the century in Owston parish. Thomas Otter, resident in Epworth parish when he made his will in 1678, named Robert Whiteley as his cousin, but also mentioned his sister Elizabeth, wife of Peter Foster, and their son Cornelius. The Christian name of the son is revealing, and it may be that Peter Foster's wife was the Elizabeth Foster who gave evidence in 1647 and in 1660 of the commoners' attacks against her and her family. It seems likely that William and Thomas Otter had migrated to Epworth parish to rent land on the level. It is also likely that Robert Barker, the supervisor of the immigrant John Rushforth's will, and his cousin John Barrow may have migrated to Wroot from Haxey after the drainage for the same purpose. Neither man was born in Wroot, and both names were common in Haxey parish. Barrows and Barkers were especially associated with the settlement of Parke in the western part of the parish, where the families continued as neighbours. John Barrow, when he died in Wroot in 1659, left his lands there to 'Mary Barrowe of ye parrish of Haxey my intended wife'. Robert Barker seems to have prospered in Wroot. When he made his will in 1682, his children were already married and provided for, and he left his grandson the 30 acres he held on a 99-year lease that he had received from Cornelius Rushworth (son of the man for whom he acted as supervisor), his house and 23 acres of freehold land in Wroot. His daughter married two successive gentlemen, and his

⁷⁶ LAO: Stow Wills 1640-50II/386; 1660-3/832; Wroot parish register. PRO: E134/5 George I/Easter 18.

son was styled 'Mr.' in the parish register at the recording of the baptism of his second daughter in 1683. None of the Haxey Barkers managed to achieve this status.⁷⁷

iv. Diverging Responses

Throughout the 1650s Haxey appears to have remained uninvolved in any direct action. The parish representatives who signed the agreement with Lilburne and Wildman in 1651 were from the interrelated group associated with the agreement that led to the decree of 1636, granting the 7400 acres of common land to the Participants. Robert Browne and Thomas Tankersley were said to have been embarrassed by the initial flooding of the manor in 1642, although they both later took part in the 1647 action with Daniel Noddell. They were the son and son-in-law of Hezekiah Browne, who put his neighbours' names to the agreement. Robert Browne's wife was also the cousin of Thomas Tankersley and the aunt of Vincent Barrow, another of the representatives. The fourth representative, James Turr, was another of Thomas Tankersley's first cousins. These men were part of the large but interconnected group of yeoman families in Haxey parish that provided overall leadership, none of whom in this period seem to have been inclined to initiate action against the settlers.

The early riots in Haxey were directed against the drainage works and workmen and appear to have had strong female influence and participation. The attacks against settlers and their property were conducted solely by men, and Haxey women may have been less enthusiastic in urging violence on families and homesteads than on workmen or drainage officials. There may also have been fewer immediate targets; Haxey appears, from the 1642 Protestation Returns, to have had few settlers resident within the parish boundaries. As the earlier church court records indicate, the leadership in Haxey appears to have worked to achieve a relatively harmonious atmosphere in the community, apparently re-established after the more fractious period around the time of the settlement, and it may be that the need for the unifying effect of attacks on a group of outsiders was not as compelling as in Belton and Epworth parishes. There are indications that at times feeling in Haxey might have been mobilised had

⁷⁷ LAO: Stow Wills 1666-8/128; 1675-8/217; 1663-4/128; 1660-3/781; 1681-3/174.

the local leadership been more active. The attack involving Haxey leadership and extensive participation in 1647 had its origins in Epworth. Haxey leaders became involved in the attempted execution of a warrant by Noddell and the constables of Haxey and Owston on John Gibbon, which then attracted a large following. The one incident after 1650 involving people from Haxey was an assault by over thirty men and women on the much-loathed Nathaniel Reading in Haxey in September 1656, and Lindley describes this as 'bearing all the appearance of a spontaneous demonstration of hatred', unlike the planned and directed action originating in Belton and Epworth throughout the period. Those cited were husbandmen, two with their wives, and spinsters, armed with 'Clubbs forkes staves'. Again, two local justices of the peace, Michael Monkton and John Bernard, were accused of failing to act against the commoners. They had ignored the offences, neither of them coming to Haxey to arrest the offenders.⁷⁸

Owston too seems to have taken little part in direct actions during the period. Sir Miles Sandys' involvement in the parish as impropiator of the tithes may have had an effect here too, encouraging agreement to a settlement. The only man from the manor, other than manor officials, who declared himself in favour of the drainage in the 1631 depositions was an Owston yeoman, Thomas Troute. Thomas Peacock and Thomas Burton from Owston, who pulled up the sluices in 1642 to drown the commons, were officers in the Parliamentary forces with Daniel Noddell. Although the settlers believed that their motive was to flood them out, Peacock and Burton claimed that the flooding was intended to keep out the Royalist armies. Owston men took part in riots against drainage works and workmen in 1647, but they, like Haxey men, did not appear to engage in direct attacks on settlers and their property. Daniel Noddell's presence in Owston parish may have discouraged participation. While the settlers suspected that he and Lilburne encouraged the attacks, especially after their appearance at Sandtoft, both men were primarily concerned with the commoners' legal case and were aware of the adverse effect the attacks on the settlers would create.

⁷⁸ PRO: KB 9/871/394; KB 9/869/288. Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, p.221.

Section III: 1660-1719

i. Renewed Attacks on Settlers

As the outbreak of the Civil War gave an opportunity to the commoners to take action to regain their commons, so the Restoration served as a comparable chance for the Participants and their tenants. In May 1660, there was again violent confrontation between commoners and Reading over the distraint of goods for tax arrears. Once again, Belton men led the attacks. Robert Ryther, esquire, had been involved in actions in the 1650s. His father, also Robert, was not a native of the manor, but had inherited his Belton estates from his mother, daughter and heiress of Mr. Thomas Browne. Another participant in these 1660 actions was George Gilby, who later married Ryther's sister, Belton yeoman and grocer and receiver of half the tithe income of Belton parish when he died in 1686. As in earlier confrontations, the commoners were supported by local officials. Thomas Wakefield, Belton constable, refused to act against them, and Michael Monkton, by now in trouble as a Quaker, was said to have declared the commoners' actions to have been lawful and justifiable.⁷⁹

Former Sandtoft residents began to return to farm the lands again as the Participants strove to gain legal title to the 7400 acres recovered by the commoners. The church at Sandtoft was repaired, and the result was a yet another attack on the church in August. This was described in an affidavit by Elizabeth Foster. She saw 'severall of ye Inhabit'ts of ye Mannor of Epworth Drag a Cow that dyed in ye Church yard into ye Church...they said they would burye her in ye Church for ye honour of ye Cow...and that they buried her where ye Comunion Table use to stand'. They also broke the windows, seats and pulpit. Some days later 'they did drive their sheepe into ye said Church and pickt their maggetts out of them leaving greate quantities of them in a most offensive manner in ye sd Church'. The commoners had pulled down her house, 'struck her cruelly when shee was with Child and would have fflung a young Child of hers into ye fier but that shee catcht hold of it'. In December 1660 an order of the House of Lords confirmed

⁷⁹ PRO: E 134/1 & 2 James II/Hilary 25, fol. 31; LAO: P. I. 184/21; Maddison, *Lincolnshire Pedigrees*, iii, 841-2; Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 233-4.

the Participants' possession of the 7400 acres, and Nathaniel Reading directed the re-enclosure of the grounds.⁸⁰

In May 1661 the commoners began to seize the tenants' cattle, demanding payment for their return, taking damages for trespass in defence of their title. They were making use of the same tactics employed against the commoners earlier by Reading. Attacks against the tenants, impounding of their cattle and driving cattle into their crops continued throughout the summer, culminating in an attack on the sheriff and his men in August. A common purse was organised in Belton to mount guards in Sandtoft and other towns in the manor and to pay the fines of the rioters. Those involved were men from Belton, Epworth and, from outside the manor, Misterton and Stockwith. Again, there is no indication of involvement from Haxey or from Owston. Some of those taking part, like Richard Mawe and John Thorpe, had been involved in earlier actions in the 1650s. Others were related to earlier activists: Thomas Hill's father Thomas, Robert Bernard's brother John and father Peter, and Richard Massey's brother-in-law John Bernard, son of Peter, had all been involved at some time in the 1640s and 1650s. (John Bernard was by this date high constable, as his father had been, but there is no indication that he became involved in these riots as he and his father had in the 1640s.) As with previous groups of rioters, many were related. John Mawe and his kinsman Edmund Mawe, Peter Clarke and John Rose, married to sisters, and John Thorpe and his nephew Robert Whiteley were all active. Robert Whiteley was a cousin of petitioner Simon Mawe and activists Richard Massey and John Mawe. As before, many of those involved were prominent men of their parishes, having held office as churchwardens or constables, and several gentlemen were involved: Thomas Vavasour, in whose name the trial of title had been pursued, Richard Massey, Edmund Mawe, Richard Kingman, John Mawe and Robert Ryther, esquire.⁸¹

⁸⁰ HLRO: affidavit of Elizabeth Foster, 23 August 1660; Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, p. 237.

⁸¹ HLRO: (undated) petition of Simon Mawe, William Tong, Robert Bernard and George Gilby; 7 March 1661 petition of Participants. Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 237-9. In the long struggle of the free miners of the Forest of Dean, the knowledge of the past actions of their forebears served as justification for continued action and formed an 'ideological resource': A. Wood, 'Custom, identity and resistance', p. 277.

ii. Economic, Social and Religious Divisions

The continuity of involvement from the 1640s of many of the Belton and Epworth activists is mirrored by the continued lack of participation in direct action by inhabitants of Haxey and Owston. By 1660, the leading group of families in Haxey had continued to intermarry and retained connections as kin, neighbours and friends. The basic solidarity evident in the earlier part of the century, however, had been weakened. Some individuals among the better-off yeomanry had risen to gentry status, a development visible earlier in Belton. The descendants of the early activists who become gentlemen were Robert Medley (son of Israel), Robert Tankersley (son of Vincent), and Hezekiah Browne (son of Robert, grandson of Hezekiah). Robert Tankersley had taken part in the attempted execution of a warrant on the Participant John Gibbon in 1647, along with his uncle Robert Browne and his kinsman Thomas Tankersley (son and son-in-law of Hezekiah Browne, who helped to procure the 1636 settlement), both of whom lived until 1667. Robert Tankersley, noted by many deponents in the 1680s as one of the largest landholders who had not signed the agreement, was only fourteen years old in 1636 and living in Wildsworth. Robert Tankersley's daughter married Robert Browne's son Hezekiah in 1666. These risen gentry were intermarrying within this smaller elite group: Robert Medley was the brother-in-law of Gregory Turr, also a gentleman from a Haxey yeoman family. (Gregory was the brother and heir of Thomas, who also took part in the 1647 action.) They were also marrying into gentry families from other parishes. The eldest daughter of Thomas Tankersley (himself a yeoman) married Simon Mawe, a gentleman from a yeoman family in Belton, who petitioned the House of Lords on behalf of the commoners in 1660 and 1661. Robert Medley married the sister of Robert Ryther, esquire, the Belton activist. Robert Tankersley's wife had gentry kin in Owston: John Pinder and William Raven. Hezekiah Browne's sisters had married John Farmery of Storthorpe, esquire, and Robert Farmery, gentleman, of Low Burnham in Haxey (the estates at

Burnham had been purchased by the Robert Farmery's father from Sir Thomas Williamson, non-resident in the parish).⁸²

The newly-risen parish gentry were becoming a more socially exclusive group within the parish, but were extending their ties, through marriage and landholding, over a larger geographical area, still primarily within the manor.⁸³ Most of the men continued to fulfil traditional community obligations (serving as churchwardens and overseers of the poor, writing wills, acting as supervisors). Robert Medley and Gregory Turr wrote most of the wills in their respective settlements of East Lound and Low Burnham. Simon Mawe, who moved to Craiselound, wrote most of the wills there after the death of his father-in-law Thomas Tankersley, who had performed this service. Robert Tankersley and Hezekiah Browne, however, witnessed no wills. Hezekiah was named as supervisor by two kinsmen (one of them the son of the Quaker Vincent Barrowe), but Robert Tankersley (aside from being a recipient of legacies - Gregory Turr left him a desk) appears in wills only as a creditor, especially for rents and mortgages.

The group of leading yeoman families in Haxey were further and more deeply split at this time by religious dissent. The Quakers had made their presence felt especially strongly in Haxey by 1660 and were being subjected to persecution.⁸⁴ Membership came from all levels of society, but included a number from the closely connected yeomanry. Vincent Barrowe, who died in Lincoln castle, was a first cousin of Robert Tankersley and of Hezekiah Browne. Thomas Tankersley's second wife was Susanna Pettinger, and her nephews James and John Pettinger and Thomas Torksey were Quakers. Thomas Torksey also died in Lincoln castle. He was the son of William Torksey, who with old Hezekiah Browne had helped to procure a settlement in 1636. During the 1660s, when the persecution of the Quakers under the vicar Thomas Healey was at its height, the conforming members of the yeoman/gentry group were especially likely to

⁸² LAO: Laughton & Haxey parish registers; Stow Wills 181-3/249; 1687-90/245; Maddison, *Lincolnshire Pedigrees*, iii, pp. 841-2. PRO: E134/2 James II/Easter 31.

⁸³ Lawrence Stone notes the tendency for the recently-risen in the social scale to 'slam the door behind them' through exclusive marriage patterns: L. Stone, 'Social mobility in England, 1500-1700', *Past and Present*, XXXIII (1966), p. 36.

⁸⁴ See chapter 5.

display their allegiance by naming the vicar in their wills. Thomas Tankersley and Robert Browne both did so. Robert Medley made him his supervisor, along with William Forte, clerk of Blyton, a member of another Haxey yeoman family of long standing. Gregory Turr also named William Forte, clerk of Blyton, who was also his brother-in-law, as joint supervisor with Gregory's uncle, another clergyman.⁸⁵

The combination of an emergence in Haxey of an elite among the leading yeoman group and the formation of a separate religious community within the parish seems to have occurred considerably later than had been the case in Belton. In Belton, the larger number of gentry, both those originating from outside the parish and those rising from the yeomanry, suggesting larger estates held by a few reducing the landowning opportunities for many others, appears to have led to a reduced population and greater competition, both amongst smallholders and amongst the elite group trying to maintain or enhance their position. Early religious dissent in Belton and Epworth brought disagreement over religious ceremony and appropriate discipline, resulting in rival factions, mutual resentment, and disharmony within these parishes. While some, especially in Belton, found solidarity in mutual exclusion from the parish church, others became actively involved in attacks on settlers, especially the foreign settlers at Sandtoft. The continuity of involvement by individuals, the family ties between members of the group, and the tendency for involvement to be inherited were characteristic of both religious sectaries and of the activists in the dispute. Both groups were also characterised by a strong sense of right. The actions in the 1650s to rescue impounded cattle kept the activists together and maintained involvement at a time when the commons had been effectively regained.

Haxey in the early part of the century, in contrast to Belton, had a large number of smallholders who appear to have been better able to remain in the community, marry and raise families there. There were very few resident gentry, but a large number of interrelated yeoman families. Individuals within this group were working to enhance their landholding and their status (Thomas Phillips placed his son under the powerful tutelage of Sir Miles Sandys; Vincent

⁸⁵ LAO: Stow Wills 1666-8/241; 1666-8/321; 1660-3/15; 1660-3/238,

Tankersley purchased a gentleman's estate in Nottinghamshire and half the ferry crossing at Kinnal Ferry). All of them, however, retained the status of yeoman and their wills indicate that their significant ties were with their friends, neighbours and relatives within the parish. There seems to have been little disharmony in the parish until the period of the settlement leading to the decree of 1636, after which harmony seems to have been restored.

Religious dissent does not appear to have been perceived as a problem in Haxey until the separation of the Quakers in the 1650s. By this time, some of the yeoman group had become more obviously differentiated into an elite, and this may have made the Quaker rejection of the demonstration of status differentiation particularly attractive for others. The impact of the Quakers in Haxey was especially strong. Included in their number were members of the leading yeoman families, and many were subjected to repeated persecution. In Belton, the Quakers were the latest in a history of prolonged problems with religious dissent and alienation from the parish church; there were no more people standing excommunicate in 1662 than there had been in 1640. In Haxey in the 1660s, then, growing distinctions in wealth and status and religious dissent, threatened to fracture the community. But the ties that united the leading group in Haxey had, by the mid-1670s, exerted sufficient pressure on the separatists to diminish the Quaker presence in the parish. Haxey, in spite of being the most populous parish in the manor, by 1676 had fewer nonconformists than any of the other parishes. That same pressure to conform among the integrated leadership of Haxey also encouraged a distance from active involvement in the dispute in that parish following the agreement of 1636.

iii. Legal and Direct Action in the 1660s

Daniel Noddell continued to act as solicitor for the commoners in London until mid-1662, after which he became a steward of the manor. Whether he lost interest in the commoners' cause, or the commoners no longer desired his services, or whether he simply needed the income of the stewardship, he did not attempt to combine the roles of steward and advocate of the commoners as John Newland had. At the beginning of 1662, Thomas Vavasour, Simon Mawe, Edmond Coggan and Robert Whiteley went to London to present the commoners' case

against a Bill for settling the Participants' grounds. On 10 March, still in London, the four petitioned the House of Lords against complaints made against them by the Participants. The petitioners complained that these charges had purposely been delayed until the Lords were engaged in important business, and the petitioners '(if now apprehended and taken into custody by reason of pretended Contempt to yo'r Lo'pps said Order) should not onely be restrained from their severall lawfull Imployments but put to intollerable charge w'ch is the Participants desire'. They offered security for their appearance and asked that they not be taken into custody. Thomas Vavasour and twelve others were, however, kept in custody until 12 May, when an order for their release on bail was made. Attached to the copy of the order was a note: 'The Sollicitor whose name is Noddle had agreed & P'mised to paie a sume of mony to discharg the Clerke of ye Parl'ts office and take out this Order. Butt ye Serg't hath Lett them Loose upon some private agreem't without the order and to the Losse of the Clerke of the Parl'ts ffees'. An attachment of a second copy on 27 May noted 'That the p'ties were all runn away and gone home'. In March 1663 Thomas Vavasour and Peter Clarke, along with the other eleven held earlier, were again under arrest and petitioned the Lords 'for their Libertie some of them to attend the said bill now before ye hon'ble house of Commons and the rest to follow their lawfull imploym'ts in seed tyme'. They said that most of them were 'very poore men & some of them undone by the last restraint'. The lengthy periods in London were likely to have resulted in considerable financial burdens for this group. In June 1663, Robert Ryther, Thomas Vavasour and John Bernard submitted a petition to the Lords on behalf of 'above a thousand householders & tenants and Inhabitants within the Mannour of Epworth', in which they claimed that 'some of them have been put to neare 300£ charges'.⁸⁶

The Participants failed to obtain legislation securing their possession of the 7400 acres, but enclosed 2000 acres in Belton parish in June 1664, and the tenants proceeded to plant crops. The following August and September, commoners, again from Belton and Epworth, carted away

⁸⁶ HLRO: 10 March 1661 petition of Thomas Vavasour *et al*; 12 May 1662 order for release on bail; 31 March 1663 petition of Thomas Vavasour and Peter Clarke; Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 240-241.

the freshly harvested rape (already threshed), oats, wheat, rye, rape-seed and flax, under the supervision of Robert Ryther, Thomas Vavasour and Robert Bernard. Not only these three men, but a number of others had taken part in attacks in the 1640s and 50s. Again, pairs of brothers, fathers and sons, and fathers-in-law and sons-in-law took part. Others were sons of men who had been involved earlier.⁸⁷

In 1666 the commoners won further legal battles against the Participants, and the Mowbray deed was upheld in one action as a bar to further 'improvement' of the commons. The Participants again effectively surrendered their grounds to the commoners. Conflict from this point was focused once more on Nathaniel Reading. Although an Epworth law of sewers had been repealed, Reading continued to attempt to collect taxes and to distrain cattle for nonpayment. He claimed to be owed over £2000 in salary and expenses by the commissioners of sewers and used continued collection of taxes to recover it. He attempted to levy taxes not only in Epworth manor, but also in Hatfield and other parts of the drained lands, against commoners, Participants and tenants. In August 1668, this led to an alliance between a large contingent of men from Hatfield, four Belton men and three men from Epworth in an attack against Reading's house at Sandtoft. Robert Ryther, Robert and John Bernard, Edmund and Robert Mawe had all been involved in earlier actions. Another of those taking part in the attack was John Bradborne of Hatfield, gentleman, who was a leading Participant, accompanied by some of his tenants. Only two years before, an action had been brought against John Bradborne by Thomas Vavasour, on behalf of the commoners. With the Participants having relinquished their claims in the manor, former protagonists were brought together in mutual hostility against the unfair exactions of the widely hated Reading. Throughout the 1670s, the manor remained calm while Reading concentrated his attempts at tax collecting in Hatfield.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ PRO: P.C. 2/57, fol. 175; KB 9/902/3-5, 34-42.

⁸⁸ PRO: KB 9/911/180; E 134/1 & 2 James II/Hilary 25; Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 241-3.

iv. The Commons in the 1680s

In 1681, Reading directed his attention again to the manor of Epworth. In obtaining a writ of assistance from the Exchequer to protect his house at Sandtoft against the commoners, he extended the writ to cover the 7400 acres of commons granted to the Participants by the decree of 1636. The following year the sheriff's men drove the commoners' cattle from the grounds to allow Reading to enclose, with predictable results. Fences were pulled down and cattle turned into the lands, and Robert Ryther appeared before the Exchequer in January 1683 to answer for his part in the action.⁸⁹ Court action in the Exchequer continued in defence of the commoners' title, with the commoners denying the legitimacy of the 1636 decree. A common purse was again organised to pay the legal costs, including payments to the man now acting as their solicitor, John Pinder, gentleman, of Kinnall Ferry in Owston parish. Robert Ryther said in January 1683 that £25 had recently been paid by the inhabitants of Belton to John Pinder 'for and towards the Defrayinge the Chardges about ye Suites for ye said Lands'. John Pinder was steward of the manor of Haxey Hallgarth, having succeeded to the post on the death of his father, also John, in 1672. The elder John Pinder originally lived in Blyton, across the Trent from the manor, but acquired property in Owston parish before moving there. He purchased a messuage and farm in Kinnall Ferry in 1630 from Mr. Robert Torksey of Stowe. Years later Robert Torksey's son sold a messuage and farm in Owston to the younger John Pinder, who had also inherited the property in Kinnall Ferry. John, junior, also obtained another messuage and lands in Owston in 1665 and, in 1673, purchased the Vavasour messuage and lands at Temple Belwood from John Vavasour, brother and heir of Thomas. All of this property was still held by John Pinder in 1686.⁹⁰

Reading, meanwhile, continued to distrain the commoners' livestock, leading to indictments against him for impounding cattle and horses in the commons of Haxey, Epworth and Belton. Commoners retaliated by taking Reading's horses and harvested oats, and in May

⁸⁹ PRO: E 134/34 & 35 Charles II/Hilary 13; Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, p.244.

⁹⁰ PRO: E 134/1 & 2 James II/ Hilary 25; E 134/2 James II/Easter 31; E 134/2 James II/Mich 35; E 134/3 James II/Mich 42; E 134/34 & 35 Charles II/Hilary 13.

1686 Robert Ryther led an action to fill in his ditches. The following year horses and cattle of Reading's tenants were impounded at Belton, and Robert Ryther led two attacks on Reading's house, the second involving an assault on his wife, daughters and servants. John Pinder was one of those cited as taking part. Two years earlier Reading's wife Sarah had, in company with two other Sandtoft women, thrown stones at some of the commoners and set dogs on them. The two attacks on Reading's house included a number of women, some with their husbands. Women had not taken part in earlier attacks against houses and families, but Reading and his family were, not surprisingly, an exception. Robert Ryther and nine gentlemen from Belton, Epworth and Owston, including John Pinder, were accused of masterminding the attacks and raising funds. Ryther and Edmund Mawe, now chief constable of Epworth, had themselves taken part in actions in the 1660s, and most of the other men can be identified as the sons, cousins or brothers-in-law of earlier activists.⁹¹

v. The Search for a Settlement

The next few years were taken up with attempts to reach a negotiated settlement between the commoners of the manor and the Participants. Prominent local men were used as arbitrators, including Sir Willoughby Hickman of Gainsborough and George Whichcot, esquire, of Mellwood Hall in Owston parish, when representatives of both sides met in 1688. Henry Clifford, clerk, at this time living at Epworth where he was curate, but also serving as rector of Wroot, was one of the signatories to an agreement made by the arbitrators, who awarded the commoners a total of 4075 acres of the disputed 7400 acres, and 3325 acres to the Participants, who were to be responsible for maintaining the drainage works. Henry Clifford said that he 'was desired by several Gentlemen and Inhabitants within ye mannon to attend at Bawtry in Order to ye makeing of ye said Agreement'. This agreement, however, was not generally acceptable to the commoners, nor was it to the inhabitants of Misterton, whose claims to part of Haxey Carr had not been considered, and it was not put into effect.⁹²

⁹¹ PRO: KB 11/10/part 1; KB 11/13/parts 1 & 3; Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 245-6.

⁹² PRO: E 134/5 George I/Easter 18; Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 246-7.

An Exchequer hearing was held on 13 April 1691, and both sides again were asked to reach an agreement. Representatives for the commoners were chosen at a meeting in Owston, attended by 'many of the principal commoners from all parts of the manor', according to John Laughton, maltster of Epworth, who was present. This witness and several others later claimed that these representatives were expressly instructed not to enter into any agreement. The representatives: John Pinder, gentleman, of Owston, acting as the commoners' solicitor; Robert Ryther, esquire, of Belton; and John Maw and Robert Coggan, gentlemen of Epworth, 'and others', travelled to London with instructions to 'proceed to hearing the Cause'. In London these men agreed to a settlement in which the 7400 acres were divided into 3868 acres for the commoners of Epworth manor, 664 acres for Misterton commoners and 2868 acres for the Participants, who were to retain responsibility for maintaining the drainage and safeguard the commoners against any claims that might be made by Nathaniel Reading. The agreement resulted in an Exchequer decree on 14 May 1691.

As in the 1630s, a decree based on a settlement agreed to by some of the leaders of the commoners was discredited and rejected by large numbers of commoners and other leaders. As in the earlier period, there were accusations of bribery, treachery and self-serving persuasion against some of those who had agreed to the settlement. Upon the return of the representatives from London, it was apparently made clear to them that large numbers of commoners were opposed to the terms agreed. John Maw promptly recanted, accusing Ryther, Coggan and Pinder of having accepted bribes, and was claimed to have said that, although he 'was there and consenting or did not Obstruct the same it was merely thro ye said Mr Pinders perswations and ag't his own Inclinations and Judgm't'. Robert Ryther was reported to have been offered 100 acres out of the Participants' allotment, and over twenty years later his former servant and tenant claimed to have heard Ryther admit to it. Ryther was also accused of revealing the commoners' secrets to their opponents. Robert Coggan was to receive 50 acres, and John Vause, Epworth yeoman, said that 'to Confirm ye said report and to Induce this Depon't to believe ye same, He

very well remembers That ye said Mr Coggan Did begin to Inclose his said ffifty Acres which is ever Since called Coggan's peice'. John Pinder was said to have been offered 1000 guineas.⁹³

vi. Reactions to the 1691 Decree

The response to the 1691 decree, like that to the decree of 1636, revealed differences of opinion and priority among the commoners, the local leaders and the parishes. A commission was set up following the decree to set out 1000 acres of the commoners' allotment. This produced an immediate conflict between the parishes of Belton and Epworth, on the one part, and those of Haxey and Owston, on the other, as to where the allocation was to be made. Throughout the dispute, there had been a tendency for Belton and Epworth residents to act together and to operate in a more determined manner against the settlers. The common lands of the two parishes were adjacent to one another on the western side of the manor. Haxey and Owston were united by their membership in the manors of Haxey and Westwood and Haxey Hall Garth and had neighbouring commons in the south of the manor, although Haxey also had common lands to the west. The unity that the manor had displayed in the trial of title and the struggle to regain legal possession of the whole of the original commons broke down when only a portion came to be shared out. There may well have been some feeling on the part of Epworth and Belton inhabitants that their parishes had borne the bulk of the direct action that had driven out the settlers, risking fines and imprisonment, and had contributed most frequently to a common purse to cover these costs. The final siting of the 1000 acres of common land within the manor was not agreed until October 1692. The allocation was complicated by the agreement that Misterton was to receive 664 acres of Haxey Carr. In 1631, a number of deponents for the King and the Attorney General from Belton, Haxey, Misterton and other places outside the manor of Epworth referred to the court case in the 1590s between Haxey and Misterton over the disputed commons between the parishes, and all agreed that Haxey had won the verdict and recovered damages. Francis Thornhill of Misterton had copies of court orders relating to the case which he had 'lately delivered to some of his neighbours'. As a result, the area was

⁹³ PRO: E 134/5 George I/Easter 18; Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, p. 247.

included in Epworth manor's allocation of commons by the drainers. Inhabitants of Misterton had continued to assert a right in these commons and had been active in defending them against the settlers. Now Misterton had been awarded 664 acres of these same commons as a result of a settlement agreed to by the Epworth manor representatives.⁹⁴

The response to the attempted settlement of the dispute in 1691 illustrates further splits among the commoners and their leaders. Not all the commoners disagreed with the representatives' reported opinion that the settlement 'was as they thought ye best way for ye Comoners in Order to be at peace'. The numbers opposed were described variously, from 'several' to 'the commoners generally'. Given the hot, dry weather during the 1680s, continuing into 1691, the depleted state of the commons, and the demand among the better-off for enclosed pasture, there were likely to be some commoners who would welcome the opportunity to rent some of the land without fear of molestation.⁹⁵ The feeling against the settlement, however, was strong enough for John Mawe to repudiate his part in the agreement. (About twenty years later, he was one of the commoners who rented land from the Participants (50 acres), ten years before the final settlement.) As in the 1630s, an agreement leading to an Exchequer decree led to accusations of treachery and betrayal, with particular resentment of the persuasive powers of a manor official acting as legal advisor: in 1636 John Newland; this time John Pinder, steward of the member manor of Haxey Hallgarth since the death of his father in 1672, and still serving at least to 1686. The men accused of signing their neighbours' names to an agreement in 1636, Hezekiah Browne and William Torksey, had been prominent leaders in direct actions against the drainers. In 1691, of the men accused of taking bribes, John Pinder, Robert Ryther and John Mawe had been among those said to have masterminded attacks on Sandtoft and the level, and Robert Ryther had a long history of leading actions against the settlers. These representatives who entered into the agreement on the commoners' behalf in 1691 were now discredited and ceased to act for them.

⁹⁴ PRO: E 178/5412; Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, pp. 18, 247.

⁹⁵ See Chapter 4.

Those commoners who rejected the agreement, and who had rejected one set of leaders, were able to find alternatives. Three Belton gentlemen, Richard Taylor, Robert Popplewell and Richard Kinman, 'and several other Commoners' brought a Bill in the Exchequer court against Pinder, Ryther, Coggan and Mawe 'for a Discovery of their Irregular and fraudulent proceedings', but failed to get the decree reversed. Richard Kinman had been involved in actions in the 1660s, his brother had led actions in the 1680s, and his father William had earlier been an activist. Richard Kinman was a cousin of Robert Popplewell, and Robert Popplewell was a second cousin of Richard Taylor. Robert Popplewell was married to Robert Ryther's daughter Katherine, and both husband and wife were to become leaders in subsequent actions. In this court action, the commoners employed Mr. Edmund Whitehead 'of Furnival Inn, London' to act for them, but later used Robert Popplewell, who was serving as steward of the manor in 1694. Popplewell acted as the commoners' solicitor until his death, shortly before the final settlement in 1719. Another man prevailed upon to aid the discontented commoners was Mr. Thomas Mawe, probably the Epworth gentleman of that name listed among the ringleaders in 1687. According to Richard Massey, chapman of Epworth, the commoners approached Thomas Mawe, who brought a suit against the Epworth representative Robert Coggan for starting to enclose his 50 acres, whereupon Coggan desisted. Robert Bird, Epworth husbandman, said he had heard 'Mr Thomas Maw and some other Comoners complaine of ye Manner of obtaineing it [decree], to the said Mr Ryther, Mr Pinder and Mr Coggan and Asked them by what Authority they consented to it'.⁹⁶

vii. Comparing Responses to the Decrees of 1636 and 1691

Although it is likely that there were disagreements throughout the dispute as to the wisdom of particular courses of action, attempts at settlement brought into the open uncertainties and cleavages, producing altered alliances and allowing new leaders to emerge. Looking at the two occasions in which agreements resulted in Exchequer decrees, it is possible to see both parallels and distinctions. In 1632, a suit was brought on behalf of the commoners against four

⁹⁶ PRO: E 134/5 George I/Easter 18.

Haxey leaders who had entered into an agreement with the drainers. A similar suit was entered against four of the commoners' representatives after the 1691 agreement. In both cases, the settlements were repudiated by large numbers of commoners and action, both legal and direct, continued. But in the 1630s, and thereafter, the blame for the agreement was placed firmly on Cornelius Vermuyden and his 'agents', especially John Newland. In 1633, several of the largest landholders in the manor, including Robert Ryther's father, were prevailed upon to bring an Exchequer bill to establish the pressure Vermuyden had placed upon the commoners who were threatened with heavy fines. Even when Hezekiah Browne and William Torksey were accused of adding their neighbours' names to the agreement, they were seen to be acting under pressure or to have been misled by Newland. Only their solicitor was accused of having accepted bribes. In 1691, not only the solicitor John Pinder was so accused, but two of the representatives, the long-time activist leader Robert Ryther of Belton and Robert Coggan of Epworth, were similarly charged.

Although the 1636 settlement was repudiated in the manor as a whole, there is no evidence that it was seriously challenged in Haxey itself. Of the nine deponents in 1686 who accused Browne and Torksey of adding names to the agreement, only one, Christopher Bate, who claimed his own and his father's names had been subscribed without their consent, lived in Haxey parish. Those whose names appeared on the document seem to have felt bound by it. In February 1651, those who had subscribed were barred from proceeding to a trial of title by the Exchequer court, but Haxey and Owston people seemed disinclined to lead or take part in direct attacks after the 1636 decree. Only the excuse of executing a warrant for the arrest of a Participant brought out Haxey leaders and a substantial number of followers in 1647. The threat of heavy individual Star Chamber fines suffered by fourteen of the leading Haxey men and women in 1631 apparently contributed to some of the names on the settlement agreement, but could not account for the majority of the 370. Although it was later claimed that the document was misrepresented to the commoners, many must have been aware of its contents. It does appear that the comparative inactivity in Haxey and Owston after the decree was based on a

consensus, at least among the leading families, that a settlement had been agreed and that active opposition was no longer appropriate. This inactivity gave opportunities for Misterton commoners to renew their claims in Haxey Carr, first through helping to pull up sluices to flood the lands, then through attacks on the settlers and, in the 1660s, through petitioning the House of Lords, claiming that 'there was never any Decree against the ffreeholders or Commoners of Misterton and Stockwith'. At the same time, the Participants were claiming that some commoners of the manor of Epworth had 'upon p'tence they were not bound by the Decree invaded and destroyed the workes'.⁹⁷

In Haxey and Owston, the Archbishop of York's interests continued to give opportunities to those on the side of the Participants to further enrich themselves and to exert influence. Cornelius Rushworth or Rushforth, baptised in Wroot in 1654, was the son of John, who was described as a husbandman in his will of 1663 and who had migrated into Wroot in the 1630s. Cornelius, the only surviving son after his brother died a year after his father, must have been granted his father's tenancy, and presumably the supervisors, Robert Harrison and Robert Barker, were responsible for supporting the children from the income. By 1682, Cornelius had handed over a long-term lease to Robert Barker, and was living in Haxey parish when he died in 1694. In 1685 he was noted in the visitation records of Owston parish as 'Cornelius Rushforth Gent, Reciever of the fruits of the Rectory there'. He continued to hold lands and tenements in Wroot and left legacies to the poor of both Wroot and Haxey. Cornelius had ties that cut across parish and community boundaries by the time he died. He left a £5 legacy to John Drewry, from a long-established Wroot family, and named Robert Farmery, gentleman, resident in Haxey, and Peter Beccuda, a descendant of one of the French settlers, as guardians of his son if his wife died. Witnesses included Jacob Collis, a frequent scribe of Haxey wills, and John Pettinger, from an old Haxey family.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ HLRO: (undated) petition of John Crosse, *et al*; (undated) petition of Symon Mawe, William Tong, Robert Bernard and George Gilby. Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, p. 151.

⁹⁸ LAO: Wroot parish register; Stow Wills 1663-4/128; 1681-3/174; 1691-4/166; Vii/5, fol. 135. Cornelius Rushforth also left £10 to the two now-orphaned children of his father's second supervisor Robert Harrison and made them the heirs to his lands and £200 if his son should die without issue. It is

Following the 1636 decree, a distinction within the manor itself is evident, between the mostly inactive parishes of Haxey and Owston and the active parishes of Belton and Epworth. These latter two parishes now provided the leadership, with men like Robert Ryther and Edmund Mawe continuing to be involved through the 1680s, while others succeeded their fathers, and contributed almost all of the participants. Leadership and involvement in the dispute, as with other, more formal positions of local leadership, had tended to become hereditary. The active involvement of many of the better-off inhabitants of these parishes was vital. The commoners' legal claims were fortified by the inclusion of the 'greatest' landholders in the manor, and the costs of legal action, fines and the personal expenses of those travelling to London and, at times, imprisoned there, made the involvement of those with disposable wealth essential. The £2500 fines for damages levied on the settlements of the manor resulted in the distraint of goods to enforce payment. Since exemption was allowed for those submitting to the 1636 decree, continued opposition relied on the support of the better-off, as did the common purse organised to pay the fines of activists and to post guards. Some among the wealthier yeomanry and gentry were also involved in personal expense. Petitioners to the House of Lords in the 1640s and 1660s emphasised the expense involved in remaining in London and the consequent neglect of their estates. The continuing pursuit of the commoners' legal claims depended on obtaining legal expertise and the services of a solicitor, most often from within the manor itself. Simon Mawe, gentleman, one of those who had been active in London on behalf of the commoners in the early 1660s, in 1675 bequeathed to his son Anthony 'All my Lawe bookes and other bookes'.⁹⁹ Simon was not, however, the commoners' solicitor; Daniel Noddle served in that capacity at the time. Officials of the manor were useful allies, both because of their position and

likely that these children were his nephew and niece. Their mother's name was Anne, and Cornelius's sister Anne would have been 22 when Robert and Anne Harrison's first child was born. If this is the case, John Rushforth seems to have been employing the same tactic as the Tankersley family did, by appointing a suitable and eligible man as supervisor, along with an older man, in hopes that a marriage might ensue with his daughter (see chapter 2).

⁹⁹ LAO: Stow Will 1675-8/128.

because of their expertise.¹⁰⁰ John Newland in the late 1620s and John Pinder in the 1680s, down to 1691, were officials involved as activists and advisors.

When the attempted settlement of 1691 broke down, the resulting split occurred not only between two pairs of parishes (as it had after 1636) with the allocation of 1000 acres of common lands, but also within the leadership of the active parishes of Belton and Epworth. Rather than accepting the decree and virtually ceasing active resistance, as the inhabitants of Haxey and Owston had in 1636, the residents of Belton and Epworth chose new leaders in 1691 and continued. The new leaders were from these same two parishes. Unlike Haxey in the 1640s, where alternative leadership of the dispute failed to emerge and where direct action all but ceased, the parishes of Belton and Epworth provided those who wished to continue the struggle with a number of prominent men willing to lead.

viii. Diverging Paths

In all four parishes, economic and social differentials were widening during the course of the century. Each parish had a number of individuals who had risen to gentry status from yeoman families. The process had involved astute marriage alliances and contacts with well-placed and powerful people. Hezekiah Browne in Haxey during the 1620s had seen two of his children marry into the Tankersleys, another rising yeoman family, and in the 1630s his daughter married the vicar's son, whose brother-in-law was the highly-connected curate. His grandson Hezekiah Browne and his granddaughter Elizabeth Tankersley Maw were both members of the Haxey gentry. He and the other Haxey yeomen in the early part of the century, however, maintained strong ties with one another and with their husbandman and labourer kin and neighbours. Hezekiah Browne's father was described as a husbandman in his will, and Hezekiah himself, in his will of 1643, named two yeoman friends as supervisors. His will was witnessed by three 'loving neighbours', a yeoman and two husbandmen. The yeoman group in Haxey appears to have maintained its basic solidarity in the 1630s, so that in spite of opposition to the

¹⁰⁰ Clive Holmes indicates the value of this expertise in the phrasing of petitions and depositions attuned to the concerns of the central authorities at various times: C. Holmes, 'Drainers and fenmen', pp. 169-71.

agreement being evident in 1632 and fractiousness appearing in the parish in 1634 and 1635, most seem later to have felt bound by the decree of 1636. Actions against the settlers were not led from Haxey.

In Belton, the rise of some yeomen into the gentry appears to have occurred earlier. The church court records suggest that the parishes of Belton and Epworth had a history of division among their leaders in the first half of the century. Churchwardens presented their predecessors for serious lapses, and several former churchwardens stood excommunicate for years. Gentlemen and their families in Belton were often subjected to church discipline. Most often these were gentlemen who originated from outside the parish. In Epworth, the rector was accused of renting his glebe lands to a gentleman from outside the parish. The presence of wealthy outsiders in these parishes, and of influential puritan clergy in the early years, encouraged friction within the community and led to a more fractious atmosphere and competitive alliances. The leadership in these parishes never seems, throughout the century, to have been as integrated as that of Haxey.

While some of the leading men in Epworth and Belton appear to have signed the agreement leading to the decree of 1636, others, like Thomas Vavasour the elder, did not. Some were not bound by the decree because, although commoners through inheritance from fathers who had died before 1636, they themselves were children at the time and so did not sign the agreement. This was true of the Belton activist Robert Ryther. It was also true of Robert Tankersley and Gregory Turr of Haxey, but these men, although lending their names to court actions, appear to have taken no part in direct action, except in the attempt to execute a warrant on the Participant John Gibbon in 1647. While these two men did not sign the agreement themselves, they were closely connected to others who did. In Belton and Epworth, there were many men, at all levels of society, who clearly did not feel bound by the decree and who were prepared to act against the enclosures and the settlers.

By the time of the attempted settlement of 1691, economic and social differentiation had increased throughout the manor. This gave rise at times to conflicts over attempts to enhance

status. One of the gentlemen accused of masterminding the attacks in the 1680s, along with John Pinder of Owston, the commoners' solicitor, was Richard Torksey of the same parish. He was presented to the church court, in 1686, for removing some old seats in the parish church, altering the position of the pulpit, and moving his pew from the choir into the church, an action designed to enhance his status. (Another Owston gentleman, William Raven, from a local yeoman family, was also presented. In his case, the offence was constructing a new pew.) Some of the recently risen gentry were increasingly concentrating their marriage alliances and ties of reciprocal obligation to other newly risen gentry and to higher gentry, both within and outside the manor. The longer-established gentry were also working to enhance their standing.¹⁰¹

Two of the commoners' representatives who were accused of taking bribes in 1691 were gentlemen who, in spite of a history of activity on the commoners' behalf, might well have been seen to have become more interested in their own families' economic and social standing than in the pursuit of the commoners' interests. John Pinder, possibly already suspect as steward of the manor of Haxey Hall Garth, was moving towards a closer alliance with the Stanhopes of Mellwood Park. John Pinder and his father had been the only witnesses to the will of Darcy Stanhope's father John in 1664. John Pinder's son Robert married Elizabeth, daughter of Darcy Stanhope, esquire. One of the men acting as arbitrator between the commoners and the Participants at the time when John Pinder was a representative for the commoners was George Whichcott, esquire. He was resident at Mellwood Park in 1719, when he served as guardians to the two daughters of Darcy Stanhope's deceased son John. John Pinder's developing association with the Stanhopes and in turn their friend George Whichcott (who before 1693 had bought the lordship of East Stockwith for £1000), would have helped to bring his allegiance and motives under suspicion when he agreed to a settlement arbitrated in part by George Whichcott. Robert Ryther, esquire, another of the commoner's representatives, had one surviving son in 1691. This son, Robert, served as deputy steward of the manor, 'Councillor-at-Law', and Deputy

¹⁰¹ LAO: Viiij/5, fols. 133-4.

Recorder of Lincoln before his death in 1696. Robert Ryther, too might well have been suspected of greater concern for his son's ambitions, both within and outside the manor, than for the commoners' cause.¹⁰²

ix. Control of the Dispute

Holmes discusses the commoners' developing political and legal expertise, both before the drainage, through service on the jury of sewers and in the dispute between Misterton and Haxey in the later sixteenth century, and during the course of the drainage dispute itself.¹⁰³ The commoners, however, employed specialists: officials of the manor, local attorneys, and the Leveller leaders, to assist them. Their experience taught the commoners more than the skillful dealing with central authority exhibited by the literate elite. The commoners learned, during the course of the dispute, to be wary of betrayal by their own leaders: not only their legal advisors, but also those involved in direct action, who appeared committed to the cause. Their solicitors: John Newland, Nathaniel Reading, Daniel Noddell, John Lilburne, John Wildman and John Pinder, were outsiders. They, or their fathers, were born outside the manor and their local friends and kin, if any, were concentrated among the better-off inhabitants of the manor. Newland and Pinder were officials of the manor while acting as solicitors for the commoners, and Daniel Noddell subsequently became a steward.¹⁰⁴

During the actions against the settlers in the 1640s and early 1650s, the commoners appeared suspicious of their outside leaders and determined to retain control of the course of the dispute. During the latter half of the century, the better-off among the native families of the

¹⁰² LAO: Stow Wills 1663-4/75; 1691-4/143; Maddison, *Lincolnshire Pedigrees*. PRO: E134/5 George I/Easter 18.

¹⁰³ C. Holmes, 'Drainers and fenmen', pp. 186-91, 194. Elsewhere, he indicates that this growing political education made them accept 'both the leadership of the Leveller leaders and their theories, to the extent of planning to join forces with other victims of exploitation', and that the crucial period for the creation of a collective consciousness was the 1630s and 1640s: C. Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire*, p. 26. Others, e.g., Lindley, Morrill & Walter, are less convinced of the appeal of Leveller ideology in the Isle.

¹⁰⁴ Suspicion may have been heightened if these men, like stewards generally, behaved diplomatically within the manor but normally made use of persuasion, threats and bribery in pursuit of the lord's interest outside: D. R. Hainsworth, *Stewards, Lords and People*, pp. 150-1. For those stewards who were also attorneys, stewardship provided access to both potential clients and the patronage of locally important families: C. W. Brooks, *Pettyfoggers and Vipers*, p. 260.

manor were becoming increasingly differentiated in wealth, status, lifestyle and social contacts from the rest of the inhabitants. This made more apparent the possibility of some of the commoners' leaders putting their own individual and family interests before the common cause.¹⁰⁵ It was in the depositions of 1686, when the commoners were still struggling to discredit the agreement entered into by their predecessors, that the tales were related of Hezekiah Browne and William Torksey, under the influence of John Newland, setting the names of their neighbours to a settlement fifty years earlier. This earlier settlement, now seen as a betrayal, was fresh in the minds of the commoners in 1691, when their leaders entered into another settlement on their behalf.¹⁰⁶

The inhabitants of Belton and Epworth found their continued defence of the commons, after 1636, curtailed by the decree based on a settlement engineered in Haxey. Those who were, or felt themselves to be, less bound by the decree took advantage of the upheaval of the Civil War to engage in direct action to remove the settlers and regain the commons. The leadership in these two parishes had been less unified than that of Haxey, and the inhabitants were able to find leaders willing to break ranks with those who had signed and accepted the agreement. The dispute could serve some members of the more competitive leadership in Belton and Epworth with a means to court popularity and gain local support, while the active commoners were able to retain control over the dispute through a choice of leaders. Well-placed and wealthy leaders were necessary for success, but alternatives could be found in these parishes if a group of commoners felt their leaders were acting against their interests.

¹⁰⁵ Keith Wrightson warns against overestimating the internalisation of deference on the part of common people. This 'could dissolve when a relationship became too exploitative, or expectations of proper conduct were betrayed': K. Wrightson, 'The social order of early modern England: three approaches' in L. Bonfield, R. M. Smith & K. Wrightson (eds.), *The World We Have Gained* (Oxford, 1986), p.194.

¹⁰⁶ In speaking of Exchequer decree of 1636, Fox says: 'fifty years later ancient men could still remember how they were persuaded to sign away their rights, regarding the decree as a symbol of their loss': A. Fox, 'Custom, memory and the authority of writing' in P. Griffiths, A. Fox & S. Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority*, p. 109.

x. Leadership

The leadership within each parish consisted of, as Holmes points out, the 'middling group' of minor gentry and yeomen. These were men who served as parish officials and sometimes as officials of the manor, often possessing sufficient legal knowledge to act as legal advisors and solicitors for the inhabitants. Some of them, along with the local gentry and clergy, acted as 'brokers' between the local communities and the larger national society.¹⁰⁷ Although the group was 'middling' in a national context, it formed the top layer of local society in these fen parishes. The 'relatively egalitarian social structure of the fens'¹⁰⁸ also meant that relatively small differences in status and wealth were significant. Status and the exercise of influence and authority depended on landholding and wealth, but also upon kin, neighbour and friendship relations involving reciprocal obligations. Leadership, to be effective, depended upon inspiring trust in one's capacity to offer disinterested service and to act in the best interests of the community. This was especially true with regard to the leadership of the drainage dispute, when leaders were not sanctioned by any higher authority. Men could only lead where others were willing to follow, and only if their motives were trusted. The middling groups, attempting to maintain and enhance their own and their families' economic and social position, were subject to pressure from above and below. Local standing depended upon sustaining local relationships, offering traditional service and patronage to less well-placed friends, neighbours and relatives. But individuals who were ambitious for themselves and their children also needed to foster ties with wealthier and more powerful people outside the immediate locality from whose patronage they might benefit. These ties, in turn, could produce a conflict between personal interest and obligations to the community and give rise to suspicion and hostility on the part of other parishioners. The conflicts and pressures that operated on the parish elites of the manor, and

¹⁰⁷ C. Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire*, pp. 46-7, (citing R. Redfield, *Peasant Societies and Culture* (Chicago, 1960), pp. 36-8). Joan Thirsk describes the fenland village as having an 'aristocracy' of middling-rich yeomen: J. Thirsk, *English Fenland Farming*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁸ C. Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire*, p. 26. '...the manor of Epworth...was relatively egalitarian, like most of the Lincolnshire fens': Lindley, *Fenland Riots*, p. 194.

the suspicion and resentment this created among some of the rest of the inhabitants, were evident at times during the course of the dispute, especially when a settlement was attempted.¹⁰⁹

Further pressure arose from within the parish middling group itself, striving to maintain mutual support, reciprocal obligations and solidarity within the ranks of the governing elite. The activity throughout the century against the drainage and enclosure on the part of Belton and Epworth contrasts with the lack of direct action emanating from Haxey after 1634. Haxey had the appearance of an archetypal fen parish. It was a large parish with dispersed settlements, relatively egalitarian, with many smallholders, very few gentry, and a large group of yeomen with strong ties of kinship, neighbourhood and friendship throughout the community, who comprised the leadership of the parish.¹¹⁰ It is this picture that Holmes and Thirsk suggest is descriptive of the manor as a whole and that accounts for the prolonged struggle to regain the commons. Holmes also notes religious dissent flourishing in the 1660s in Lincolnshire fen and marsh areas, and in the Isle in particular, and suggests it may have done so because, 'in the absence of a resident gentry it was difficult to suppress'.¹¹¹ At two periods during the century, the picture of Haxey presented in this chapter conforms to these generalisations. In the late 1620s, it was residents of Haxey, with strong female involvement and led by their yeoman leaders, who began and were at the forefront of direct action against the drainage works and workers. These actions

¹⁰⁹ The tension between social convention and market opportunity experienced by the gentry during the century is discussed in F. Heal and C. Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Basingstoke & London, 1994), pp. 102-3.

¹¹⁰ C. S. L. Davies, 'Peasant revolt in France and England: a comparison', *Agricultural History Review*, XXI (1973), p. 129; J. Thirsk, 'Seventeenth-century agriculture and social change', *Agricultural History Review*, XVIII (1970), pp. 148-77. The two instances Holmes cites from the disputes in Epworth manor to support his contention that gentry were seldom involved both involved Haxey leaders. One was the early action in Haxey Carr in 1629 and the other the attempt to execute a warrant on the Participant John Gibbon in 1647: C. Holmes, 'Drainers and fenmen', pp. 182-3.

¹¹¹ He adds, 'or because fenmen chose to thumb their noses at the religious policies of a central government which had displayed so scant a respect for their traditional economy and legal rights': C. Holmes, *Seventeenth Century Lincolnshire*, pp. 45-6, 123-4; J. Thirsk, 'The Isle of Axholme before Vermuyden', pp. 19, 28. Spufford found a connection between larger parishes with dense populations, whether fen or not, and dissent, although warning against determinism: M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, 300-15. Alan Everitt found dissent occurring with a conjunction of large parishes with scattered settlements, weak manorial structure and changing structure of population: A. Everitt, 'Nonconformity in country parishes' in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Land, Church and People* (Reading, 1970), pp. 189-91.

give every appearance of subsistence riots, targeting outsiders who threatened an established pattern of agriculture and the subsistence resources upon which the whole community depended. In the 1660s, Haxey had a strong Quaker presence, with men and women from all levels of local society prepared to separate from the majority, meeting in settlements on the fringes of the parish, and supporting one another through a period of persecution. Following each of these periods, however, the integrated yeoman leadership of the parish was able to apply pressure successfully to secure conformity.

Strong ties united the leading families of Haxey with one another and with large numbers of their poorer fellow parishioners through kinship, neighbour relations, friendship, land rental and debt relationships.¹¹² Effective control by the leading group over the widely dispersed population of the parish was aided by their own dispersement. Those listed on the subsidy returns of 1629 were spread throughout the settlements.¹¹³ Large numbers of parishioners turned out, in the late 1620s and early 1630s, to oppose the drainage under the leadership of this group. When the leaders entered into a settlement, it appears to have bound the parish sufficiently to inhibit the organisation of further direct action. The solidarity of the leading yeoman families of Haxey aided the imposition of conformity, within their own group and upon their less well-off neighbours, in their response to the drainage as in religious allegiance.¹¹⁴ Although Haxey and Owston continued to support court actions, the impetus for direct action remained with Belton and Epworth. In the earlier part of the century, disagreements among the leadership had led to the formation of alliances, indiscipline and greater independence in this part of the

¹¹² As in Haxey, in Wigston Magna in the later seventeenth century, a few rising gentry gradually became estranged in wealth and lifestyle from the rest of the villagers, but this was mitigated by the fact that nearly all had less well-off relations in the village: W. G. Hoskins, *The Midland Peasant*, pp. 197-9.

¹¹³ PRO: E 179/139/724. In contrast to the settlements in Haxey parish, Joan Thirsk notes that in many of the dispersed settlements in forest and fen, the population consisted of one class only, unlike nucleated villages where rich and poor lived near one another. In many parishes with separate settlements, it was usual to find that half had mixed classes, while half were segregated: J. Thirsk, 'Seventeenth-century agriculture and social change' in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Land, Church and People*, p. 167.

¹¹⁴ In Myddle, David Hey found that, in the absence of a resident lord, the combined influence of the freeholders was comparatively greater 'so long as they had a united viewpoint': D. Hey, *An English Rural Community*, p. 26. In Terling, the leading families, sharing a common puritan ideology, higher standard of living and the holding of village office, were able to enforce a godly doctrine and effect a puritan 'reformation of manners': Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 175-83.

manor, and religious nonconformity was a problem. The more differentiated, competitive and less integrated leadership in these parishes made a binding and permanent settlement of the drainage dispute more difficult to achieve, 'for in the politics of the parish, as in those of the State, it was when chief men lacked effective unity that they risked losing control of the situation'.¹¹⁵ Both in the middle of the century when leaders struggled to control direct action, and late in the century when leaders attempted a settlement, commoner activists remained in effective charge, able to dictate the course of action or to choose alternative leaders from among a divided elite. It was in Belton and Epworth that the dispute became a cause, inherited along with family lands and rights of common.

¹¹⁵ K. Wrightson, 'The politics of the parish', p. 32.

Conclusion: Conflict and Community

This investigation of the manor of Epworth has been a study of the various communities within it, as well as of the community of the manor itself. The manor has emerged as, firstly, a number of concentric communities based on geographical propinquity and administrative boundaries. Settlements, especially those at some distance from others, had their own open fields, their own internal social relationships, and their own 'core families'. Parishes, although possessing the right to intercommon throughout the manor, had their own areas of common pasture and turbary, their own chief town with its parish church, their own officials, and their own set of interrelated leading families and social relationships. The northern and southern parts of the manor constituted still larger communities, coinciding with the member manors of Epworth, in the north, and of Haxey and Westwood and Haxey Hall Garth in the south. The whole of the manor, with periodic meetings of the manor court at Epworth, made up a wider community still, and the manor itself was contained within the Isle of Axholme. The Isle might be seen as a 'country', like David Hey's Hallamshire: 'a division of England, larger than a town or village, to which people felt they belonged and which was recognized as a distinctive unit by outsiders'.¹ All of these communities had boundaries, and any of them might be the focus for communal identity and activity at any given time, depending on where common interests lay and where points of conflict appeared.

Secondly, while geographically-bound communities provided one set of foci for loyalties and common identity, they were intersected by other, often conflicting and contrasting, identities and interests, forming still other sets of communities that overlapped the geographical. Solidarities coalesced among those of similar wealth, social status, religious affiliation, kinship and length of residence. Although providing bases for commonality, these groups also contained within them tensions, competition and disharmony. They were defined by boundaries that,

¹ D. Hey, *The Fiery Blades of Hallamshire: Sheffield and its Neighbourhood* (Leicester, 1991), p. 300. Charles Phythian-Adams suggests that the Isle and the area to the east, between the Trent and the Ancholme, may have constituted a distinct 'cultural province': 'Introduction: an agenda for English local history' in C. Phythian-Adams (ed.), *Societies, Cultures and Kinship, 1580-1850: Cultural Provinces and English Local History* (Leicester, 1993), p. 12.

although constructed along perceived lines of differentiation, were permeable and subject to continued negotiation and redefinition.

During the course of the seventeenth century, there were diverging experiences among particular interest groups within each settlement and parish within the manor. Each settlement and parish had diverging experiences within a broadly similar way of life shared by the manor as a whole. Patterns of household formation, inheritance and economic change produced social differentiation within parishes and contrasts between the experience of settlements in different parts of the manor. The parishes differed in the degree of unity among their leaders and in the extent of the integration of the leadership into the parish as a whole. The development of the whole manor was affected by connections to the outside world through trade, religious affiliation, ties of patronage and migration. Identities, both individual and collective, were developmental processes formed by interaction and renegotiation of shared perceptions and understandings. Changes that affected the manor throughout the century entered, not as impersonal forces, but through individual relationships, and were experienced differentially. These changes were gradually accommodated, absorbed, resisted and in turn altered within the lives of the individuals of the manor and worked out in their relationships with one another.

Within the larger manorial identity, there were multiple communities with which individuals identified and a number of potential lines of cleavage along which conflicts could occur.² The drainage of the manor impinged on all of these solidarities, cleavages and diverging experiences and also affected their development. The drainage was one of a number of processes by which identities were formed and conflicts prompted, acting reciprocally with the development of these local identities. The consequent resistance and disputes acquired an independent historical momentum, producing shifting alliances and generational and familial loyalties. The resistance began as part of a widespread opposition to the drainage and the alteration and reduction of common lands, participated in by large numbers of men and women

² Anthony Cohen sees communities as mental constructs, ' "symbolic" worlds where the finer the differences between you and your neighbour, the more tightly you clasp them to your bosom': A. Cohen, *Symbolising Boundaries: Identity and Diversity in British Cultures* (Manchester, 1986), p. 16.

throughout the manor. Through pressure, both from outside the manor and within, the early solidarity broke down and some of the strongest early opponents of the drainage came to favour a settlement. Within each part of the manor, responses to the settlers on the drained lands, involvement in direct action and reactions to proposed settlements varied. There were reasons to support a settlement as well as reasons to resist. Although a settlement involved a reduction in common grazing lands and peat resources, arable and pasture to rent could be attractive to those who could afford it. At times when the commons were rented out to pay for legal costs, both under the Leveller leaders in the early 1650s and under Robert Popplewell in the later years of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, there appeared to be no shortage of tenants among the commoners. For some of the less well-off, too, the opportunities for labouring on the drained lands could offset the reduction in common resources. Individual attitudes would be influenced by the effect of the drainage and allocation of enclosed lands on their own parish commons, by any perceived individual benefits or disadvantages to a settlement, and by the attitudes and opinions of those in their own communities, and all of these were fluid and subject to change.

Economic and social differentiation within the manor led to altered priorities for some individuals and families and to suspicions and mistrust on the part of others. Leaders, whether leaders of the dispute, manor officials, lawyers, prominent leaders of the parishes, leading figures among religious sectaries or members of the clergy, were subject to often conflicting pressures. Positions of leadership entailed obligations, and those who were seen to be failing to fulfil these or to be putting their personal and family ambitions ahead of community responsibilities could find resistance among those they were attempting to lead. It is clear that deference to 'betters' could not be counted upon in the manor. Leaders also had an important mediating role, and this could embroil them in conflict if they were less than skillful in negotiating differences or suspected of favouritism. Leaders who remained united, maintaining and building on strong reciprocal ties with one another and with others in their communities, were more likely to remain successful, respected and trusted.

The manor of Epworth was only one of the many communities that helped to form the social, economic, religious and neighbourhood identities of its inhabitants. The manor, subdivided by member manors, geographically large and with a large, scattered population, was not normally the most significant of these communities.³ The drainage and the defence of the commons brought that community into prominence, and the fight in the national courts provided a focus for unity. But active resistance and attempts at settlement revealed divisions and fluctuating alliances. This study of the manor, by looking at a variety of communities within it, has attempted to shed further light on the dynamics of the dispute itself and to place it within the context of the developing identities and shifting alliances of the manor. In the process, the study has also investigated a group of five parishes, selected not to provide contrasts or to examine a particular theme, but as an attempt to discover how contiguous and interconnected parishes responded and adjusted to the changes of the seventeenth century. The parishes of the manor and the communities within them exhibited broadly similar responses and adaptations, but there were significant diverging experiences that shed light on the operation of continuity and change as a single dynamic and interactive process.

In spite of changes, the fundamental way of life for the inhabitants of the manor remained broadly the same. Households continued as centres of production, often with multiple occupations and almost always including farming and dependence on common lands. Craft activities were the traditional crafts of the manor, making use of local resources. Crops and livestock remained the same, with minor additions. Parents continued, where possible, to leave land to all their sons and, often, to their daughters, and inherited portions maintained their importance in determining the individual's start in life and ability to marry and sustain a household. Communities retained concepts of order and proper behaviour based on adherence to reciprocal obligations within family and household, neighbourhood and community. Conflict

³ In the Essex and Suffolk parishes studied by French, the parish of residence was the 'hub' of communal life and the networks that connected individuals: H. R. French, 'Chief inhabitants and their areas of influence: local ruling groups in Essex and Suffolk parishes, 1630-1720' (unpublished Ph D dissertation, University of Cambridge, 1993), p. 102.

was an always present possibility, both within and between groups, and conflict resolution was an important aspect of leadership and authority, whether within the household, the wider family, the neighbourhood, the parish, alternative religious grouping or the manor itself. The diverging paths of the multiple, overlapping communities of the manor: parishes, settlements, religious groupings, kinship, those of similar wealth and status, incomers and natives, those actively resisting enclosure and those accepting settlement, produced variations on a theme of a continuing way of life which formed and sustained the identities of the inhabitants of the manor, a way of life with which they, in turn, interacted and which they modified.

Appendix I: Notes on Parish Registers

i. Reliability of Parish Registers

The five sets of parish registers associated with the five parishes included in my study have produced a variety of problems related to completeness, defectiveness and reliability. The best of the registers in all three respects is that of Wroot, which is however a very small parish. The records survive from 1573 and appear to have been well kept in the main. There are years in the early period (prior to 1616) when there are either no baptisms or no burials recorded, but this is not unrealistic in a parish so small. Five-yearly averages during this period ranged from 2.6 to 4.6 for baptisms, and 1.0 to 2.0 for burials. The ecclesiastical census of 1603 gave the population of communicating adults as 52. In some years, it was noted in the register that either no baptisms or no burials took place. The years 1598 to 1612 are missing in the burial register. The burials of 1613 are entered, in a new hand and now in Latin, immediately under the entries for 1597. However, the bishop's transcripts survive for the years 1598 to 1612. The baptisms to 1611 match those recorded in the registers, so it seems safe to use the totals from the transcripts for the missing years. The new scribe appearing in 1613, while not entering any events occurring before that date in the burial or marriage registers, seems to have attempted to recreate the baptismal entries for 1612. Four entries were made, but all appear among the seven entries for 1611. The 1612 bishop's transcript was, as were those for the other years down to the rector's death in 1617, in the rector's hand and signed by him, including "bie me". In 1612, he recorded no burials or marriages, but two baptisms. One was a baptism that had also been recorded in 1611, but not included in the recreated register. The other was that of his grandson. I have therefore included only that one baptism for 1612. Recording continued during the Civil War and through most of the Interregnum. There is a gap between October 1651 and October 1653 in the baptismal register, where a page was left blank, but again the bishop's transcripts survive.

The parish registers for Owston survive intact from 1599 to 1622, and these have been collated with the churchwardens' book in a typed copy lodged in Lincolnshire Archive. During the

years 1606 to 1609, some entries in the baptismal register are entered out of chronological order, and most of these (judging from 1608 and 1609, when addresses were recorded) can be attributed to late entries from West Butterwick, where there was a chapelry. I shall address the problem of chapelries more thoroughly later. Generally, the registers in this period appear to have been well kept, with entries in the burial register recorded for "infant", "crisom child", "unbaptised child" and "stillborn". One transcript exists for 1643, but there is then a gap until August, 1659. The parish register records that the old register was burnt in the house of Lionell Newton, parish clerk, on 11 August, 1659. No churchwardens' register or bishop's transcripts survive for the missing years, so that the period from 1623 to 1660 must remain excluded altogether from any calculations. From 1660, part of the 1661 parish register, all of that of 1664, 1668, part of 1669, all of 1671, 1686, 1692, 1694 and 1697, and part of 1700 are missing, but churchwarden's registers are available to supply the missing information. Again, both the parish and churchwarden's registers appear to have been well and carefully kept, including both addresses and occupational status with the entries. The large gap is unfortunate, especially as it covers the early period of the drainage of the area, but figures from the early and late periods can at least give a picture of trends for comparison with the other parishes during those same periods.

Epworth's parish registers are totally nonexistent for the period, having been lost, according to William Read, in the fire that destroyed the rectory in 1709.¹ However, bishop's transcripts survive for much of the century, and these must of necessity therefore be relied upon. The transcripts survive continuously from 1599 to 1622. One exists for 1627, but there is then a gap until 1643. 1644 and 1645 are missing, as are 1661, 1664, 1668, 1697, 1698 and 1700. Parts of transcripts from 1693 to 1696 are illegible because of damp, but it is possible to count events and to determine whether burials relate to adults or children, even if names cannot be deciphered. I have used figures for the later period from 1646 to 1696. The Interregnum

¹ T. C. Fletcher (ed.), *Read's History of the Isle of Axholme: Its Manors and Parishes* (Epworth, 1858), p. 137.

appears to have continued to be reasonably recorded, as does the remainder of the period. There are, however, three missing years in this period: 1661, 1664 and 1668. The change of year at Lady Day means that information is lost from two adjacent years for every missing year. In order to make the fullest use of the available material for the purpose of investigating population trends, I have used the actual figures that exist for each of the two-year periods when information is missing, and added a figure for the missing months based on an average for those months from the nearest five years that will yield actual figures. While accepting that this could lead to distortion, it seems less likely to do so than if the years were left out of the calculations altogether, thereby minimising any prevailing trend. Again, the period for which no information can be obtained or estimated, that between 1623 and 1645, covers the early years of the drainage, but the years 1646 to 1659, missing in Owston, are available for Epworth.

Belton, at first glance, appears to offer a complete record of the century. Parish registers survive from 1582, and there are no gaps in the recording. The registers down to 1645 appear to have been carefully kept, with marginal notes relating to information that had been unobtainable, and unbaptised infants were specified from 1609. After 1645, however, the recording degenerated. Burials were particularly affected; a total of only nine were recorded in the ten-year period from 1649. This contrasts with the five-yearly averages from 1600 to 1645, ranging from 34.4 to 82.6. Recording of baptisms was less severely affected, but averaged less than one-third those of the previous period. By 1660, recording appeared to return to normal, but from 1662 until 1678 the recording of burials again appears suspect. Baptismal rates appeared similar to both the earlier, pre-Interregnum period and to the later period. The appearance of under-recording of burials can be illustrated by the five-yearly averages of 12.4 for 1667 to 1671, and 12.2 for 1672 to 1676. Based on figures from the Protestation Returns of 1642 and the Compton Census of 1676, and allowing a conservative estimate of one-third for the proportion of children, the population of Belton can be assumed to have been at least one thousand at this time. Any suggestion that these low burial figures may have indicated out-migration is counterbalanced by the baptismal rates recorded during the period. Five-yearly averages for

baptisms show 34 for 1667 to 1671, and 40.6 for 1672 to 1676. A very rough indication of the discrepancy can be gained by calculating the percentage of total child burials to baptisms each year. This shows, across all parishes and all periods, to have rarely dropped below one-third when averaged over five years. The lowest non-suspect figure was 28.7% of child burials to baptisms (years 1630-34 in Haxey). The figure in the neighbouring parishes tended to be higher in the latter half of the century, and child mortality increased nationally at this time.² The percentage of child burials to baptisms in Belton during this period was 8.17% per year for 1665 to 1669, 6.94% per year for 1670 to 1674, and 5.3% per year for 1675 to 1677. It seems, therefore, wise to regard the parish registers as an unreliable source from 1646 until 1678. The bishop's transcripts offer duplicate information, so it seems safest to disregard the figures for this period altogether. From 1678 until the end of the century, the registers appear reliable. However, the months of December, 1680 and January, 1681 are missing, and I have again included an average figure for those months based on a five-yearly average for the same months in adjoining years. I have had to exclude the 1690s altogether. The fact that Belton's registers for burials, baptisms and marriages are combined into one register makes the problem of illegibility more severe. There are times when the names can be read clearly, but it is impossible to determine whether the children listed were baptised or buried. At other times entries can be counted, but again cannot be attributed to an event. 1690, 1692, 1693 and 1695 are all affected by this problem. Bishop's transcripts for these years have either not survived or are even less possible to read. Altogether then, data from Belton can be used from 1582 to 1645, and from 1678 to 1689.

Haxey's parish registers prove to be the best of the larger parishes, but they too pose difficulties at times. The only major gap is during the Interregnum, where the registers cease from September, 1653 to Lady Day of 1660. Bishop's transcripts were submitted and survive for these years, but the records of some months for the burials listed in 1653 and 1654 are so poorly

² C. Galley, 'Growth, stagnation and crisis: the demography of York', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, (1991), p. 132.

preserved that is impossible to obtain total figures. I have again estimated totals on the basis of averages from surrounding years for these months. Another gap appears in all three registers from November, 1643 to 26th August, 1644. It is obvious from all the parish registers that a common practice was to enter events at widely spaced intervals, from notes. There are times when several entries are crossed out, only to be re-entered below the name of the next month. It appears that a mortality crisis in 1644 resulted in the permanent gap in the register.

Approximately two-thirds of a page was left blank in the burial register after the November 1643 entries, and new entries were made on the facing page, beginning on 26th August, 1644. From that date until the 31st December, 1644, 74 burials were recorded, a total that would have been a very high yearly total for the period. Belton, the only one of the larger parishes for which figures are available for 1644, shows a total of 173 burials for the year. While Belton's burial recording is suspect at times, the highest figure recorded in any other year is 89 burials, in 1642. It seems likely that the disruption in normal activity caused by the exceptionally high mortality in Haxey in 1644 resulted in the loss of the notes relating to the earlier part of the year. No bishop's transcript exists for 1644. As appears to have been the case in Haxey, the crisis in Belton began in August, peaked in September, and finished in December. I have therefore assumed that events in Haxey before the end of August would have been unaffected. In order to avoid the effects of post-crisis adjustment, I have estimated totals for the missing months from an average based on the five previous years. One further, and unusual, problem appears in the Haxey registers. In the years 1596 to 1604, while the recording in other respects appears reasonable, child burials seem to have been seriously under-recorded. They returned to normal levels in the year following the death of the curate, who had signed the registers in the last two years. Throughout these nine years, no more than two children, and no fewer than one child, were recorded as having been buried. A calculation of the percentage of child burials to baptisms for 1595 to 1599 and for 1600 to 1604 reveals figures of 6.55% per year for the first period and 2.95% for the second. A check of names indicates that it was not simply a failure to record "son" or "daughter" with the entry. All but three female names are accompanied by "widow" or "wife",

and in no case was the only individual of that name a child at the time. The lapse seems too difficult to allow for over a time-span of nine years, especially as child mortality can vary a great deal, sometimes increasing with adult mortality, sometimes not, and sometimes independently of it. I have therefore started with 1605 in calculations for population change.

ii. Unbaptised Infants

A problem in most registers is the uncertainty regarding the recording of burials of unbaptised infants. C. Galley discusses this matter, and points out its crucial importance in estimating infant mortality rates. E.A. Wrigley in 1977 assumed any unbaptised infant would be recorded, but he was working with particularly reliable registers. Wrigley and Schofield in 1983 agreed the topic required further investigation, but in 1989 they again indicate that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the burial of an infant would be recorded even if it had not been baptised. Galley found, in his work with York parish registers, that specific recording of unbaptised infants varied with time and parish. He discovered a ratio of unbaptised burials to total baptisms of 7.1, similar to ratios found in rural areas, and inflated the infant mortality rates that had been obtained by simple nominal linkage accordingly. When some unbaptised children were recorded, that number was inflated only if it fell below 7%.³

This whole area appears to require further study, especially to determine the extent to which variation in endogenous infant burial rates was due to variation in registration. This requires further information on whether unbaptised children were in fact included in the burial registers in those periods when they were not specified as such. The assumption that they were is based in the main on the discovery in family reconstitution studies of the burial of children for whom a baptismal entry cannot be found, but who fit into a "gap" in the parents' series of children. It is always possible that some of these children were baptised outside the parish at an

³ *Ibid*, pp. 110, 120-4; E. A. Wrigley, 'Births and baptisms: the use of Anglican baptism registers as a source of information about the numbers of births in England before the beginning of civil registration', *Population Studies*, xxxi (1977), pp. 281-312; E. A. Wrigley & R. S. Schofield, 'English population history from family reconstitution: summary results, 1600-1799', *Population Studies*, 37 (1983), pp. 157-184; E. A. Wrigley & R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 99.

earlier date and did not die of endogenous causes. In any case, it is impossible to quantify unbaptised children from family reconstitution studies, since these include only a minority of individuals. The recording of the burial of unbaptised children, who were not, strictly speaking, entitled to Christian burial, was not a legal requirement, and it seems reasonable to assume that individual recorders would vary in their inclination to do so. This uncertainty causes particular difficulties in comparing periods in which the burial of unbaptised infants is specified with those in which they are not. These burials need to be discounted when calculating the difference between baptism and burial totals for the establishment of figures for population change, but it is not possible to eliminate any who are not specifically labelled as unbaptised. In my own calculations, I have discounted these burials without making any corrections for periods when unbaptised children are not mentioned. As this may have the effect of inflating the burial figures during these periods slightly, I have therefore provided alternative calculations where appropriate, as indicated in the text.

Wrigley and Schofield point out the widespread deterioration in parish registers during the Civil War and the Interregnum. Nationally up to 1640, the standard of recording was generally high, with only 5 to 7% of monthly totals defective. After 1640, the marriage series was most affected and the baptismal least. From 1653, the aggregate baptism and burial registers were still three times more defective than those prior to the Civil War, and it was not until 1663 that the two series returned to their earlier levels of accuracy. The increase in nonconformism was another cause of under-registration, particularly during the second half of the century, affecting the marriage registers especially. In the case of Quakers, all vital events will have been omitted from the parish registers. Figures for the number of nonconformists in each parish are given in the 1676 Compton Census, but the criterion for inclusion is unclear. Quakers would certainly have qualified, but they are not separately totalled. Others included in the figure may have been "Anabaptists" or General Baptists, who would have been more likely to appear in the burial registers than in the baptismal.⁴

⁴ Wrigley & Schofield, *Population History*, pp. 24-8.

iii. Nonconformity

The percentage figures for nonconformists in the five parishes in my study indicated by the Compton Census are: Wroot (the smallest parish): 1.9%; Haxey: 2.8%; Belton: 7.9%; Owston: 8.2% and Epworth: 9.4%.⁵ Quaker registers exist for the area I have studied from the 1660s, but the marriage and birth registers are certainly defective. The records of deaths appear to be more complete, and reflect the proportions of nonconformity in the various parishes, although the totals of adult Quaker deaths recorded for each parish between the date of the census and 1730 are less than half the figures given in the Census. Anyone included in the Census figures would have been at least 16 years old in 1676, and therefore at least 70 in 1730. But age at death is not given in the Quaker records, and many of those dying in the eighteenth century are likely to have been too young to have been included in 1676, so the totals arrived at are maximum figures. The fact that these still constitute only a minority of the nonconformity figures given in the Census indicates a number of possibilities. The Quaker registers may be defective, the majority of those listed as nonconformists in the Census may have been other separatists or non-attenders, the number of Quakers may have diminished after 1676, or the number of nonconformists may have been over-estimated in the Census. Several or all of these possibilities may have been true. Owston's parish register, between its records for 1698 and 1699, includes a "register for dissenters" recording seven births and four deaths occurring between 25 December and 21 April. Three entries are marked "Quaker" and one, "Anabaptist". In the parish registers of all four of the larger parishes during the later part of the century, there is the occasional appearance of the simultaneous baptism of several older children from the same family. This indicates the possibility of some return to the established church. It is also possible, of course, that others were leaving the established church during the same period to join the Quakers or other groups.

⁵ Eversley regards a figure of 10% or less for all nonconformists within a group of parishes as giving little cause for concern when using parish registers for demographic purposes: D. E. C. Eversley, 'Exploitation of Anglican parish registers by aggregative analysis' in E. A. Wrigley (ed.), *An Introduction to English Historical Demography* (1966), p. 51.

iv. Chapelries in Owston Parish

Wrigley points out further difficulties in parishes that included chapelries. Many baptisms were recorded separately in chapelry registers, and were not always reliably transferred into the parish registers.⁶ Owston parish was involved with two chapelries. It had its own chapelry at West Butterwick, and a chapelry existed directly across the River Trent from Owston, at East Ferry. East Ferry was a chapelry of Scotton, but the greater convenience of Owston, especially for transporting bodies for burial, meant that Owston church was frequently used by East Ferry residents, at least in the last half of the century. The Owston parish registers include the address for baptisms and burials in 1608, 1609 and 1659-1700. I have calculated the percentage of total baptisms and burials accounted for by each of the two chapelries for each year in order to determine any distortion in the figures due to higher recording of burials. This is a very rough indication, since the age structure of the two settlements is unknown, and the riverside location would make immigration and a transient element in the population likely. The two years in the early part of the century have no entries for East Ferry (although one burial was recorded in 1613, when no addresses were given for baptisms), while West Butterwick accounted for 25.6% of total baptisms in the parish and 31.7% of burials. As these figures are an average for only two years, no significance can be attached to the slightly lower figure for baptisms. As yearly totals are small (total baptisms for the whole parish range from 14 to 42 per year during the period; burials from 15 to 74 per year), I have calculated the mean percentages over 10-year periods from 1659 to 1698 for baptisms and burials for the two settlements.

Table 1A.1

Mean Percentages for Chapelry Settlements

Years	East Ferry		West Butterwick	
	Baptisms	Burials	Baptisms	Burials
1659-1668	6.2%	10.7%	16.4%	19.2%
1669-1678	2.5%	6.9%	15.1%	21.4%
1679-1688	1.6%	8.4%	10.5%	19.3%
1689-1698	0.0%	5.8%	18.5%	18.9%

⁶ E. A. Wrigley, "Family reconstitution" in E. A. Wrigley (ed.), *An Introduction to English Historical Demography*, p. 106.

As can be seen, there is a small but reasonably consistent discrepancy in favour of burials. If five-year averages are considered, the pattern remains the same except for the beginning and end of this period. From 1659 to 1663, baptisms and burials for East Ferry are both approximately 12% of the total, while baptisms for West Butterwick, at an average of 20.4%, are actually a higher percentage of the total than are burials, at 15.7%. From 1687 to the end of the century, there are no baptisms from East Ferry recorded in Owston parish, while a few burials each year continue. During the period 1694 to 1698, West Butterwick again shows a higher average percentage of baptisms, 27.8%, than of burials, 15.6%. This may, of course, especially as the percentage of baptisms is high, indicate immigration into the settlement. It seems reasonable to allow an adjustment figure of 10% for the 1665 to 1695 period when calculating population change, to take account of possible under-recording of West Butterwick baptisms and greater use of Owston church for East Ferry burials than for baptisms.

v. Note on Haxey Registers

Haxey is one of the 404 parishes included in the aggregative sample used by the Cambridge Group as the basis for the work published in *The Population History of England, 1541-1871*. Dr. R.S. Schofield kindly sent me a photocopy of the tabulation sheets used for Haxey (and for Gainsborough). In comparing the Haxey sheets with my own figures and checking any discrepancies, I found few errors in the monthly and annual totals, and those generally of small magnitude.

A gap was noted on the sheet for baptisms from November 1654 to February 1659 and during the whole of 1661. On examining the register, I found a gap extending from November 1654 to February 1660. My monthly and annual totals for 1660 and 1661 tally with the Cambridge Group's figures for 1659 and 1660. The sheet for marriages showed a gap after the entries of September 1652 until one marriage recorded in July 1657, followed by three marriages in February 1658 and three in February 1659. I found the gap in the register to extend from the entries of September 1653 (followed by the notation, "here entred the Rump Register") until March 1660. My monthly and annual totals coincide with the tabulator's until 1643. My totals for 1645 tally with hers for 1644 and remain a year behind until the gap. The year's difference between the Cambridge Group's sheet and the parish register appears to be accounted for by the tabulator having combined the marriages for 1643 (all occurring in the early part of the year) and those from 1644 (all in the later part of the year) and attributing them to 1643, putting the totals out by one year. By 1660, our totals agree again, mine augmented by 3 marriages in February and March obtained from the bishop's transcript. The tabulator recorded one marriage in July 1657 (1658 by my calculations), three in February 1658 (1659) and three in February 1659 (1660). I found the parish register blank during this period.

The Cambridge Group's sheet for burials shows no gap at all during the 1650s, but does show a gap between March 1683 and April 1689. A careful check of the parish register revealed a blank page facing the burial entries ending with 7 August 1653. The back side of this blank page began with the entry of 3 March 1659/60. I found no gap in the 1680s. The register pages

gave the year at the change on March 25, as well as noting the year(s) at the top of each page. I found that my monthly and annual totals matched the Cambridge Group's from 1654, but were six years out. In other words, the tabulator's totals for 1654 were identical to mine for 1660. The two sets of totals continued to be six years out until after the 1683-1689 'gap'. The burial totals collected from the bishop's transcripts, normally identical to those from the parish registers, were completely different from the tabulator's totals for the years 1654 to 1659. As I was recording totals from the parish registers, I noted at the time the names of Robert Tankersley and his son-in-law Hezekiah Browne, who died within a month of one another in 1682. The names were familiar to me as I had previously transcribed their wills. Both wills, and Robert Tankersley's probate inventory, are dated 1682. The totals for the year that I had defined as 1682 are the same as the Cambridge Group's totals for 1676.

One effect of the discrepancy in year totals is that crisis years are misattributed during the thirty-year period from 1653 to 1683. The *Population History* shows Haxey as parish without a crisis in 1657-1659 or in 1678-1681,⁷ when the register totals indicate crises in both these periods. It appears from an examination of the registers that a gap occurred in the marriage and burial registers from August/September 1653 and in the baptismal register from November 1654. All three registers came back into operation in February/March 1660. The Cambridge Group's tabulator indicated that her counting was done from a handwritten transcript from 1559 to 1679, and then from the original registers. The handwritten transcript is not in the Lincolnshire Archive, although a handwritten transcript exists for a later period. It may well be that years were not clearly indicated in this original transcription.

⁷ E. A. Wrigley & R. S. Schofield, *Population History*, pp. 678-9.

Appendix II: Notes on Wills and Probate Inventories

Wills are the main source for the study of inheritance customs, but there are considerable limitations in their use and in the information they can provide. One difficulty is their representativeness; not everyone made a will. As wills in the early modern period were almost always made on the deathbed, those who died suddenly normally died intestate. But it is also clear that some individuals were more likely to make a will, and that categories of will-makers could vary from place to place and over time. Comparing the number of surviving wills made by men during the seventeenth century in the manor of Epworth with the number of male burials in the parish registers, one finds that wills exist for approximately 1/3 of the men who died.¹ The proportion does not appear to vary appreciably during the course of the century or between parishes.

i. Status of Testators

Most testators in these parishes were assigned a status in their wills. Takahashi has found that testators of the wills proved in the Ely Consistory Court in the period from 1600 to 1639 failed to give a status or occupation in 37% of wills in 1600-1609, falling to 29% of wills in 1630-39.² In the manor of Epworth, testators were generally more likely to declare a status. There is no consistent pattern over time or between parishes, although Epworth parishioners appear to have been slightly less likely to declare a status. I have not regarded 'bachelor' as an occupational or status term.

¹ In the fen parish of Willingham, a maximum of 45% of those who were tenants in 1575 made wills in the next 25 years: M. Spufford, 'Peasant inheritance customs and land distribution in Cambridgeshire from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries' in J. Goody, J. Thirsk & E. P. Thompson, *Family and Inheritance* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 172. The percentage was considerably lower in Havering between 1570 and 1619: 10% - 14%: M. K. McIntosh, *A Community Transformed: the Manor and Liberty of Havering, 1500-1620* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 87.

² M. Takahashi, 'The number of wills proved in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' in G. H. Martin & P. Spufford (eds.), *The Records of the Nation* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1990), p. 210.

Table 2A.1

Percentage of men's wills not giving status 1600-1699

Parish	Total no. of wills 1600-1649	Not declaring status 1600- 1649	Total no. of wills 1650-1699	Not declaring status 1650- 1699
Haxey	239	11.3%	243	25.5%
Belton	152	9.2%	210	12.9%
Epworth	117	23.9%	145	20.7%
Owston	124	12.1%	146	13.0%
Wroot	12	50.0%	25	16.0%
Total	644	14.0%	769	18.5%

Status categories in the period were notoriously variable and overlapping and may well have undergone redefinitions during the period. Testators might well be assigned a different status in their wills from that generally accorded them by their neighbours.³ But status or occupational categories can give some indication, however imprecise, of who was likely to make a will in this period. The table below indicates the percentage in each category of those men for whom status was recorded. The miscellaneous occupations are mainly those associated with rural parishes: millers, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, along with carpenters, coopers and tailors. The numbers of cattle in the area meant that butchers, shoemakers and glovers were also present. Fishermen, ferrymen and mariners made wills in the riverside parish of Owston, along with a mason and a bricklayer late in the century. Haxey and Epworth included mercers, victuallers and woollen drapers, and the wills and probate inventories of Epworth especially reflect its growing development as a local market. Innholders and a baker appear, and the wills of butchers too bequeathe their shops and market stalls. The sources indicate that most craftsmen and watermen farmed a bit of land and kept a cow or two. In the table, weavers are

³ See Chapter 4 .

included as a separate category. Weaving in the Isle was mainly of hemp, and this was a traditional by-employment, particularly important for those with inadequate holdings. Those termed husbandmen sometimes left looms in their wills, as did the occasional yeoman. Looms are also found in the inventories of husbandmen and yeomen. Weaving of sackcloth appears to have been a widespread activity, and the impression gained from the wills and inventories is that this occupational term could be used in preference to that of labourer by a man without enough land to convincingly style himself husbandman. Weaving required minimal training, readily gained at home, and little capital expenditure. Looms could easily be constructed (several wills left timber for the recipient to make a loom), and virtually everyone with a cottage to live in also had a hempground.

Table 2A.2

Declared status in Epworth manor wills, 1600-1699

Parish	Gent.	Clergy	Yeo.	Husb.	Lab.	Weaver	Misc.
Haxey 1600- 1649	0.82%	0.78%	18.28%	45.01%	16.38%	12.26%	6.46%
Haxey 1650- 1699	4.19%	0.74%	25.61%	36.06%	9.77%	8.16%	15.46%
Belton 1600- 1649	6.26%	0	34.41%	34.40%	11.53%	5.20%	12.63%
Belton 1650- 1699	5.42%	0.80%	41.29%	27.25%	7.32%	6.20%	11.73%
Epworth 1600- 1649	3.28%	0	38.10%	34.57%	8.19%	2.10%	13.75%
Epworth 1650- 1699	2.36%	0	45.23%	19.05%	7.0%	3.70%	22.65%
Owston 1600- 1649	3.0%	2.47%	23.88%	24.67%	18.90%	6.40%	20.04%
Owston 1650- 1699	4.93%	1.92%	37.60%	24.22%	7.81%	8.40%	15.32%
Wroot 1650- 1699	0	4.76%	9.52%	57.14%	28.57%	0	0

I have omitted the earlier period in Wroot since the small number of men making wills who declared their status would make percentages meaningless. This table can be compared with percentages extracted from Takahashi's figures for Ely wills, 1600-1639:⁴

Table 2A.3

Declared status in Ely wills, 1600-1639

Gent.	Yeo.	Husb.	Lab.	Misc.
1.78%	21.05%	28.15%	25.55%	23.46%

If these figures are used as a base, it can be seen that Owston's wills from the first half of the century come closest to this pattern. Haxey had an considerably larger percentage of husbandmen making wills, and Epworth's wills included very many fewer labourers. (Epworth also contained very few weavers who made wills, particularly when compared to Haxey.) Haxey, Belton and Epworth all show a higher percentage of will-making yeomen and husbandmen combined than do either Owston or the Ely figures.

The description of status in wills provides some indication of which categories were more likely to make wills, but does not provide information on how representative these will-makers were of the population within the parishes. A source that can reveal something of the proportions of various status and occupational categories within a parish is the parish register. The registers of two of the parishes, Owston and Belton, include status and occupational terms with burial entries for some periods. It is therefore possible to compile percentages for these periods that can provide an indication of the proportions of the population in each status category as assessed by the recorders of the registers. Unfortunately, Owston's registers have a long gap between 1622 and 1662, and Belton's registers only record status for a short period, but at least some idea can be gained of proportions. When compared with the information on status categories of will-makers of the same period, it is possible to see, for these limited periods, which categories within the population were more likely to make wills.

⁴ M. Takahashi, 'The number of wills proved', p. 211.

Table 2A.4

Percentage of Status Categories from Parish Registers

Parish	gent	yeo	husb	lab	misc	pauper	unspe	numbr
Belton 1630-41	5.26	7.52	23.31	31.58	21.05	0	11.28	133
Owston 1608-11	3.70	11.11	11.11	25.93	22.22	0	25.93	27
Owston 1660-69	2.47	9.88	7.41	12.35	33.33	0	34.57	81
Owston 1670-79	3.77	16.04	6.60	16.98	22.64	0	33.96	106
Owston 1680-89	3.92	7.84	0	15.69	11.76	3.92	56.86	102

Table 2A.5

Percentage of Status Categories from Wills

Parish	gent	yeo	husb	lab	misc	unspec	numbr
Belton 1630-41	2.78	25.0	30.56	16.67	16.67	8.33	36
Owston 1608-11	0	16.67	25.0	25.0	8.33	25.00	12
Owston 1660-69	7.41	18.52	18.52	3.70	22.22	29.63	27
Owston 1670-79	2.27	27.27	25.0	15.91	20.45	9.09	44
Owston 1680-89	8.82	38.24	25.53	2.94	14.71	11.76	34

Owston's later registers, although including status categories over the whole period, fail to include a status for everyone, and those whose status is unidentified are a particularly large percentage in the last ten years. Belton's registers include status for only a short period. Any conclusions must therefore be extremely tentative. However, it does appear that the percentage of yeomen and husbandmen tends to be higher, and of labourers lower, among will-makers than among the general population.⁵

⁵ Amy Erickson states that, except for the Cambridgeshire and Norfolk fens, in general men who made wills tended to be wealthier than those who did not. She found this to be true of men in the Lincolnshire fens: A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (1993), pp. 207-8. Margaret Spufford found that, in the Cambridgeshire fen parish of Willingham, the poor were more likely to make wills: M. Spufford, 'Peasant inheritance customs and land distribution in Cambridgeshire from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries' in J. Goody, J. Thirsk & E. P. Thompson (eds.), *Family and Inheritance*, pp. 169-72. Susan Amussen argues that Spufford did not include the landless in her

ii. Reasons for Making a Will

As well as status, and the economic condition that it tended to reflect, affecting an individual's decision to make a will, other factors were important. Those who were childless, either married or single, were more likely to make a will, directing land, money and household goods to a variety of relatives and friends. Those with minor children used wills to settle the children's portions and to leave instructions for their upbringing and sometimes for their apprenticeship. This was especially vital if the other parent had died, and wills in these cases usually named guardians for the children and left land or money for their maintenance, as well as for their eventual inheritance. A child or other relative who was expected to be permanently dependent, or for whom the testator had taken on responsibility, might be the principal reason for making a will. Some wills deal entirely or chiefly with the ultimate destination of the widow's portion, leaving land, the house and household items 'after the decease of my wife'. Others consist of lists of children and their child's portions or simply leave their entire estate to their wives, indicating that the settlement of the estate had been dealt with in other ways, the will confirming that the settlement was final.

Some wills appear to deal entirely with purchased land, others with making an estate of land already given, and others with the odd rood or two not yet settled. Sometimes wills give the impression of having been a last-minute desire to bequeathe a few small items to one or two individuals, again leaving the rest of the estate to the executor. A few wills consist of little other than lists of debts owed and owing. Debt settlement was an important item in winding up an estate, and it was common for instructions to be given to sell land or to bequeath land on condition that specified debts be paid. This too could provide a motive for making a will.⁶ For

estimates and found that, in the Norfolk fens, the will-making population mirrored the property-holding population: S. D. Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 78-80. In other communities, the better-off were found to have been more likely to make wills: Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700* (Oxford, 1995), p. 21; M. K. McIntosh, *A Community Transformed*, p. 87

⁶ Levine and Wrightson note that the duty to declare debts may have been a reason to make a will: D. Levine & K. Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society: Whickham, 1560-1765* (Oxford, 1991), p. 287 fn.

those with grown children, either widows, widowers or retired men with wives still living, who were still comfortably off, a will could provide the opportunity to provide additions to the portions of grandchildren and other relatives. Widows and widowers, provided their children were already independent, were likely to leave items to a long list of individuals. Their death meant the end of a household, and bits of land, household furnishings, cattle, grain and clothing could be widely dispersed.

In the parishes of the manor of Epworth, wills were rarely used to settle an entire estate.⁷ Not only had older children frequently received their portions before the will was made, but it is also clear that other methods of land transfer were used. Copyhold land is seldom mentioned in wills, being transferred through surrender to the manor court.⁸ Freehold land too, however, was commonly transferred to children by gift, deed or entailment, and these are sometimes referred to in the wills. Administrative accounts of those who died intestate allocated portions to the next of kin, and these took into consideration portions that had already been given to children. These accounts show that often infant children already owned land by the time the estate was settled and portions allocated. The main or only house, whether copyhold or freehold, will often already have been entailed, usually on the eldest son. The only indication of this in many wills is the bequest of household fixtures to the eldest son.

An example of how little of a man's property might be indicated in his will is that of Christopher Hallifax, husbandman of East Lound in Haxey parish, who died in August, 1616. He left his house and grounds to his wife until his youngest son came of age and two acres to his second son, along with £5 each to his two daughters when they turned 21 or were married. He made no provision for either his eldest or his youngest sons in the will. (His widow's will reveals that the house was entailed on the eldest son.) His probate inventory shows that he had crops

⁷ The importance of *inter vivos* transfer of property is discussed by L. Bonfield, 'Normative rules and property transmission: reflections on the link between marriage and inheritance in early modern England', in L. Bonfield, R. M. Smith & K. Wrightson (eds.), *The World We Have Gained: Histories of Population and Social Structure* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 155-75. See also D. Cressy, 'Kinship and kin interaction in early modern England', *Past and Present*, 113 (1986), pp. 60-1.

⁸ 'Copyhold land could usually be devised by will if the testator had previously paid a fee and surrendered the land to the lord to 'the use of his last will and testament': S. D. Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, p. 77.

on 13 acres, as well as an acre of hemp and £4 of hay harvested. Assuming 1/3 of his land was lying fallow, he must have held around 20 acres at the time of his death, copyhold, freehold or leased, possibly a combination of these. In this parish at the time, 20 acres was a sizable holding. Other means than the will had obviously been employed to transfer the land to the children. John Waterland, husbandman of Haxey, left a tenement, croft, one acre and £5 to one son, and a filly and £5 to the second son in 1644. Both sons were under 21, and his wife was to have the profits of *both* sons' lands until they came of age. Wills, then, were usually the final stage in a lengthier process of property transfer, whether land, money or goods, that went on during an individual's life. The type and size of legacies depended not only on the individual's economic circumstances, but also on the stage in the life-cycle and on what had already been transferred.⁹ Although many wills give only a small indication of inheritance strategies, it is possible, when studying a large number of wills, to observe common patterns and to note some of the diversity in choice of recipients and methods used.

For most testators, the primary concern was to provide sufficiently for the bringing up of the children and the provision of adequate portions when they came of age. Children could be very young when a father died, with many years to go before receiving their inheritance, and a variety of unforeseeable factors might affect the capacity of the estate to meet its ultimate obligations. Bad harvests, animal and crop disease or low produce prices could reduce the anticipated income of the land, key members of the household might become ill or incapacitated, or debts owing to the estate might prove impossible to collect. (The daughter of Alice Green, widow of Epworth, in the capacity of her administrator in 1618, requested allowance of a debt recorded in the inventory. The debtor 'is fled this Countrie without payinge the said debt so the said debt is not recoverable'.)¹⁰ Interest rates went down during the course of the century from 10% to 5%, and this in some cases would have adversely affected invested portions. The Isle was subject to troop movements and looting during the Civil War, and this too could have

⁹ LAO: Stow Wills 1616-18/94; 1616-20/137-8; 1640-50/17-18; Pro Inv 221A/6.

¹⁰ LAO: As Acc 8B/181.

reduced the portions of some. Royalist troops raided north-west Lincolnshire in May, 1643, and it was not until early 1644 that royalists were cleared from the Isle. Hezekiah Browne, Haxey yeoman, who made his will in 1643, left his wife 'a Chist late broken open by the Troopers'. The costs of billeting troops and taxation exacted from both sides during the war were especially high in this part of the county. There was a further plundering of the Isle by royalist forces in 1648.¹¹ On the other hand, high child mortality meant that not all the children were likely to live to reach their majority, and portions would be redirected to survivors. Testators had not only to attempt to provide adequate portions for dependents, but also often had to attempt to predict the capacity of the estate many years in advance.

iii. Probate Inventories¹²

As with wills, there are more likely to be probate inventories for the better-off. The survival rate of probate inventories is far worse than that of wills, with particular problems in the first half of the century, when virtually none survive for the manor between 1620 and 1650. Inventories are an unreliable guide to the overall wealth of the individual, since land was not included and debts owing were not usually listed. Land rented out remains unknown. The extent of land farmed can sometimes be gauged, but only in late spring and summer inventories and only if the acreage of crops planted is given. All too often 'all the crop on the ground' is the only information provided. Hay was included only after it was cut, so meadow and pasture are not included in the acreage farmed. Even livestock numbers are not always given, but occasionally described as 'all the horses, young and old'. The total valuation of crops on the ground, in store and livestock will be affected by the time of year the inventory was taken.

Even household valuations can be deceptive. Furniture was grouped for valuation, often in whole roomfuls, and figures were rounded. There was obviously room for manoeuvre, and neighbours may have taken family circumstances into account when valuing goods, especially

¹¹ LAO: Stow Will 1660-3/268. C. Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1980), pp. 167, 171-2, 177, 201.

¹² For a discussion of the limitations of probate inventories, see M. Spufford, 'The limitations of the probate inventory' in J. Chartres & D. Hey (eds.), *English Rural Society, 1500-1800* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 139-74.

when an elderly widow might be kept off tax assessment with a low valuation. If a wife had brought household goods to the marriage and these were 'untransposed' or still regarded as hers, these might not appear in a husband's inventory. Even if she had predeceased her husband, they may have been entailed on her children in a marriage settlement. Legacies might not always have been included, although a comparison between inventories and wills, where both survive for the same individuals, indicates that they normally were included, often valued separately and sometimes mentioning the name of the legatee.

As with wills, the value of probated goods will have been affected by the stage in the life-cycle. Since valuations are so likely to be deceptive, I have concentrated mainly on numbers of livestock and types of goods to give an indication of the extent of farming, the range of occupations carried out in the household, the size of house and consumption patterns.

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