

THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF
BEDFORDSHIRE AND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

1524 - 1674

(2 volumes)

VOLUME 1

by

JOHN HENRY BURGESS

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (D. Phil.)

University of York

History Department

June 1978

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME 1

	<u>Page</u>
Acknowledgments	i
Abstract	ii
List of Tables in the text	iii
List of Maps in the envelope at the back cover of Volume 2	v
List of Abbreviations	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1. THE TOPOGRAPHICAL AND ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK	8
1. TOPOGRAPHY	9
2. COMMUNICATIONS	12
(i) Roads	12
(ii) Rivers	15
(iii) The Market Towns	17
3. AGRICULTURE	19
(i) General Description	19
(a) Bedfordshire	19
(b) Northamptonshire	22
(c) Conclusion	28
(ii) More Specialised Aspects of Agriculture	29
(a) Land Use	30
(b) Land Tenure and Rents	32
(c) Enclosure	34
4. INDUSTRY	38
(i) Bedfordshire	38
(ii) Northamptonshire	40
5. CONCLUSION	43
CHAPTER 2. DEMOGRAPHY, SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH	44
1. DEMOGRAPHY	46
(i) Population Growth, 1377-1674	46
(a) The County as a whole	46
Bedfordshire	46
Northamptonshire	49
Comparison of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire	51
(b) Variations within the Counties	52
Bedfordshire	52
Northamptonshire	54
(ii) Density of Population	56
(a) The County as a whole	56
(b) Variations within the Counties	57
Bedfordshire	57
Northamptonshire	59
2. SOCIAL STRUCTURE	62
(i) The County as a whole	62
(ii) Variations within the Counties	67
Bedfordshire	67
Northamptonshire	71
3. DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH	81
(i) The County as a whole	81
(ii) Variations within the Counties	82
Bedfordshire	82
Northamptonshire	86
4. CONCLUSION	91

CHAPTER 3. THE GENERAL STRUCTURE OF LANDOWNERSHIP	92
1. CROWN LAND	95
(i) Bedfordshire	95
(ii) Northamptonshire	96
(iii) Conclusion	97
2. LAND OWNED BY CORPORATE INSTITUTIONS	99
3. THE ARISTOCRACY	102
4. THE LAND MARKET	105
5. SOCIAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY	107
6. FREEHOLD AND COPYHOLD	113
7. CONCLUSION	116
CHAPTER 4. THE GENTRY	118
1. SOME PROBLEMS OF DEFINITION AND SOURCES	121
2. SOCIAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY	124
3. THE GENTRY IN 1642	132
(i) The Nobility	132
(ii) The Baronets	134
(iii) The Knights	134
(iv) Families which had possessed knighthoods between 1558 and 1641	135
4. INCOME AND SIZE OF HOUSE	136
(i) Income	136
(ii) Size of House	139
5. RISING AND DECLINING GENTRY	140
(i) Rising	140
(ii) Declining	142
(iii) Conclusions	145
6. INVESTMENT IN COLONIAL ENTERPRISE, AGRICULTURAL IMPROVEMENT, AND ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY	147
7. THE RELIGION OF THE GENTRY	149
(i) Puritanism	149
(ii) Catholicism	151
(iii) Conclusions	153
8. ROYALIST AND PARLIAMENTARIAN	154
9. RELIGION AND CIVIL WAR LOYALTY OF PEERS, BARONETS AND KNIGHTS	164
10. A CASE STUDY: THE KNIGHTLEYS OF FAWSLEY	165
11. CONCLUSION	169
CHAPTER 5. THE PERSONNEL OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION	171
1. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT	173
2. THE PERSONNEL	176
(i) Military Office	176
(ii) Legal Office	179
(iii) Fiscal Office	189
(iv) Other Offices	190
(v) Conclusions	194
3. PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION AND ELECTIONS	195
(i) Parliamentary Representation	195
(ii) Elections	198
a) County Elections	198
b) Borough Elections	202
(iii) Conclusions	204

CHAPTER 6. EDUCATION, HOUSING, AND LIFE-STYLE	205
1. EDUCATION	207
(i) Schools	207
(ii) Higher Education	210
2. HOUSING	215
3. CONCLUSIONS ABOUT EDUCATION AND HOUSING	218
4. SOME OTHER ASPECTS OF GENTRY LIFE-STYLE	219
(i) Funeral Expenditure	219
(ii) The Continental Tour	220
(iii) Books	220
(iv) Instructions to Sons and Courtship	220
(v) Household Expenditure	221
(vi) Sports and Pastimes	223
CHAPTER 7. THE PATTERN OF DISSENT	225
1. RELIGION	227
(i) Lollardy	227
(ii) Puritanism, c.1570-1642	227
a) Bedfordshire	227
b) Northamptonshire	229
(iii) Catholicism	234
a) Bedfordshire	234
b) Northamptonshire	235
(iv) Quakerism	238
a) Bedfordshire	238
b) Northamptonshire	239
(v) Nonconformity and Separatism (excluding Quakerism), c.1660-76	241
a) Bedfordshire	241
b) Northamptonshire	245
(vi) 1851 Religious Census	250
(vii) Witchcraft	251
2. POLITICS	253
(i) Bedfordshire	253
(ii) Northamptonshire	256
(iii) Northampton	265
3. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC	269
(i) Up to 1607	269
(ii) The Midland Revolt of 1607	273
(iii) After 1607	280
(iv) Conclusions	281
4. CONCLUSION	282
CHAPTER 8. THE MARKET TOWN: A STUDY OF DUNSTABLE AND WELLINGBOROUGH	283
1. TOPOGRAPHY AND ECONOMY	286
(i) Topography	286
(ii) Industry and Commerce	287
2. DEMOGRAPHY, SOCIAL STRUCTURE, AND DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH	291
(i) Demography	291
a) Dunstable	291
b) Wellingborough	294
(ii) Social Structure	296
a) Dunstable	296
b) Wellingborough	298
(iii) Social and Geographical Mobility	300
(iv) Distribution of Wealth	303
(v) Conclusions	304

3.	LANDOWNERSHIP	306
	(i) General Description	306
	(ii) Court Cases involving Dunstable and Wellingborough inhabitants	309
4.	THE PERSONNEL OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT	312
5.	THE PATTERN OF DISSENT	314
	(i) Religion	314
	(ii) Social and Political	320
6.	CONCLUSION	325
	CHAPTER 9. CONCLUSION	327

VOLUME 2

APPENDICES	Page
1. DISTRIBUTION OF SHEEP IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, 1547-1641	1
2. CASES OF ENCLOSURE IN BEDFORDSHIRE AND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE	3
3. POPULATION ESTIMATES, AND THEIR SOURCES, FOR EVERY PARISH IN BEDFORDSHIRE AND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, 1524-1676	8
4. THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE, AND ITS SOURCES, OF EVERY PARISH IN BEDFORDSHIRE AND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, 1524-1674	31
5. PARISHES WITH AN ESTIMATED POPULATION OF MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED, 1524-1671	55
6. PARISHES WITH THE HIGHEST DENSITIES OF POPULATION, 1524-1671	57
7. PARISHES WITH THE GREATEST AND SMALLEST INCREASE OF POPULATION, 1563-1671 (BEDFORDSHIRE), AND 1524-1670 (NORTHAMPTONSHIRE)	59
8. THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE MOST POPULOUS SETTLEMENTS IN BEDFORDSHIRE (1544/6 and 1671), AND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE (1662, 1670)	62
9. PARISHES WITH THE HIGHEST AND LOWEST PROPORTION OF HOUSES EXEMPTED FROM THE HEARTH TAX, AND WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF EXEMPTIONS	65
10. SIZE OF GENTRY HOUSES RECORDED IN THE HEARTH TAX	67
11. LIST AND ANALYSIS OF THE LEADING GENTRY FAMILIES OF 1642	70
12. ESTIMATED INCOMES OF BEDFORDSHIRE AND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE GENTRY IN 1642	74
13. LIST AND ANALYSIS OF GENTRY FAMILIES WHICH CAN BE CLASSIFIED AS RISING OR DECLINING	78
14. LIST AND ANALYSIS OF INVESTORS, ENTREPRENEURS, AND AGRICULTURAL IMPROVERS AMONG THE GENTRY	83
15. LIST AND ANALYSIS OF PURITAN AND CATHOLIC GENTRY FAMILIES	87
16. LIST AND ANALYSIS OF ROYALIST AND PARLIAMENTARIAN GENTRY, 1642-9	93
17. THE JUSTICES OF THE PEACE	107
18. SCHOOLS IN BEDFORDSHIRE AND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE	117
19. DUNSTABLE AND WELLINGBOROUGH POPULATION GRAPHS FROM PARISH REGISTERS Figure A: DUNSTABLE Figure B: WELLINGBOROUGH	119
20. A COMPARISON OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH AMONG SETTLEMENTS WITH MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED INHABITANTS, 1524-1649	120
21. CASE STUDIES: BRIEF ACCOUNTS OF THE ORIGINS, POLITICS AND FINANCES OF THE LEADING GENTRY FAMILIES OF 1642	125
BIBLIOGRAPHY	152
MAPS (IN ENVELOPE AT BACK COVER)	

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am particularly grateful to the Archivists and staff of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire County Record Offices for their advice and assistance during prolonged periods of study at these depositories; and my thanks are also extended to the staff of the British Museum and Public Record Office.

The staff of Huntingdonshire, Leicestershire, Staffordshire, and Warwickshire County Record Offices; the National Register of Archives; Northampton Public Library, and the Brotherton Library, Leeds, helped me during shorter and less frequent visits, or answered my written enquiries.

The Earl of Warwick, Lady Hesketh, and the Headmaster of Kimbolton School kindly allowed me to see manuscripts in their possession; and I am grateful to the Librarians of the College of Arms and the Inner Temple for providing me with research facilities at their respective institutions. Canon Methuen-Clarke allowed me to examine the parish registers of Wellingborough at All Saints Church.

I am indebted to Dr. W.J. Sheils and Dr. C. Kightley for considerable advice and numerous suggestions, in addition to giving me frequent access to their theses; and my fellow research students, Mr. D.P. Massarella and Mr. P.R. Newman, have answered several queries and provided continuous encouragement. Above all, I am grateful beyond what can be expressed in words to my supervisor, Professor G.E. Aylmer, not only for his advice and assistance at every stage, but for stimulating my original interest in early modern English history.

Finally, I must thank the Social Science Research Council, whose three year Studentship enabled me to undertake this thesis.

ABSTRACT

This thesis was conceived as an attempt to add two more counties to the list of those which have been studied for the early modern period. Extensive use has been made of statistical tables and maps, because they are the best way of embodying a vast amount of research.

Chapter one examines the topographical and economic framework, and concentrates on communications, agriculture and industry. Chapter two uses various taxation assessments including Subsidy Rolls and Hearth Taxes, and some ecclesiastical censi to establish the demographic history and social structure of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, and the geographical distribution of wealth. Chapter three discusses the general structure of landownership, and Chapter four focuses on the gentry of the two counties, particularly upon the changing composition of this group; their income; their economic situation; their religion, and their Civil War allegiance. Chapter five analyses the personnel of local government, and parliamentary representation, with a detailed examination of several county and borough elections. Chapter six is a fairly short chapter which looks at developments in education, both schools and higher education; in housing; and in some other aspects of gentry life-style.

Chapters five and six are primarily sequels to the study of the gentry in chapter four, and look at the political, educational, and domestic spheres of gentry life.

Chapter seven attempts to relate religious, political, and social and economic dissent and unrest to the economic geography of the two counties, which was established in chapters one to three.

Chapter eight is a microcosmic study of two market towns which were the location of Digger colonies in 1650. Its structure is very similar to that of the whole thesis.

Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire underwent a profound social and economic transformation between 1524 and 1674, and the influence of London was especially marked in this development.

LIST OF TABLES IN THE TEXT

	<u>Page</u>
I (a)	46
(b)	46
II (a)	49
(b)	49
III	51
IV	52
V	54
VI	54
VII	56
VIII	57
IX	59
X	59
XI	62
XII	64
XIII	67
XIV	68
XV	71
XVI	76
XVII	77
XVIII	82
XIX	84
XX	86
XXI	97
XXII	100
XXIII	100
XXIV	102
XXV	105
XXVI	124
XXVII	127
XXVIII	127
XXIX	136
XXX	138
XXXI	139
XXXII	140
XXXIII	143

XXXIV	Analysis of Investors, Agricultural Improvers, and Entrepreneurs	147
XXXV	Analysis of Puritan gentry families	149
XXXVI	Analysis of Catholic gentry families	151
XXXVII	Analysis of Date of Settlement, economic situation, and religion of royalists and parliamentarians	156
XXXVIII	Income and entrepreneurial activity of royalists and parliamentarians	159
XXXIX	Income of royalist and parliamentarian peers, baronets, and knights	159
XL	Family position and education of royalists and parliamentarians	161
XLI	Date of entry of royalists and parliamentarians to University or Inn of Court	161
XLII	Analysis of Some Commissions of The Peace, 1542-1663	181
XLIII	Admissions of young men from gentry families to Oxford and Cambridge Colleges, 1540-1660	210
XLIV	Admissions of gentlemen to the Inns of Court	213
XLV	Demographic History of those parishes which provided more than three rebels in the Midland Revolt	277
XLVI	Analysis of Dunstable Parish Registers	291
XLVII	Analysis of Wellingborough Parish Registers	294
XLVIII	Analysis of the religious formulae in Dunstable and Wellingborough wills, 1536-1650	315

LIST OF MAPS IN THE ENVELOPE AT THE BACK COVER OF
VOLUME 2

- A. The Hundreds of Bedfordshire
 - B. The Hundreds of Northamptonshire

 - 1. Topography and Communications in Bedfordshire
 - 2. Bedfordshire Soils
 - 3. Topography and Communications in Northamptonshire
 - 4. Bedfordshire Farming Regions
 - 5. Distribution of Sheep in Northamptonshire, 1547
 - 6. Distribution of Sheep in Northamptonshire, 1595
 - 7. Deserted Villages in Northamptonshire
 - 8. Density of Population in Bedfordshire, 1544/6
 - 9. Density of Population in Bedfordshire, 1563
 - 10. Density of Population in Bedfordshire, 1603
 - 11. Density of Population in Bedfordshire, 1671
 - 12. Density of Population in Northamptonshire, 1524
 - 13. Density of Population in Northamptonshire, 1674
 - 14. Social Structure of Bedfordshire, 1671
 - 15. Social Structure of Northamptonshire, 1524/44
 - 16. Social Structure of Northamptonshire, 1674
 - 17. Northamptonshire 'Gentlemen' disclaimed at the 1681 Visitation
 - 18. Royalist and Parliamentary Gentry in Bedfordshire
 - 19. Royalist and Parliamentary Gentry in Northamptonshire
 - 20. Bedfordshire Schools
 - 21. Northamptonshire Schools
 - 22. Lollardy, Puritanism, and Nonconformist Clergy in Bedfordshire, c.1400-1662
 - 23. Lollardy, Puritanism, and Nonconformist Clergy in Northamptonshire, c.1400-1662
 - 24. Catholic and Puritan Gentry in Northamptonshire, c.1570-1640
 - 25. Catholicism in Bedfordshire
 - 26. Quakerism in Bedfordshire
 - 27. Quakerism in Northamptonshire
 - 28. Nonconformity (excluding Quakerism) in Bedfordshire, c.1660-76
 - 29. Nonconformity (excluding Quakerism) in Northamptonshire, c.1660-76
 - 30. Political Disaffection in Northamptonshire, c.1604-42
 - 31. The Places of Origin of the rebels of the Midland Revolt of 1607
 - 32. The Parishes of Bedfordshire
 - 33. The Parishes of Northamptonshire
- } (Copies of Record Office maps)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

These abbreviations refer to the footnotes of the text (Volume 1); and the key to those abbreviations which have been used in some of the appendices is given in the relevant appendix. The Bibliography lists the class numbers of Public Record Office documents, and the abbreviations for County Record Office collections.

A.B.P.	Archdeaconry of Bedford records in Bedfordshire Record Office.
Addit. MSS	British Museum, Additional Manuscripts
<u>Ag. H.R.</u>	<u>Agricultural History Review</u>
<u>A.H.R.</u>	<u>American Historical Review</u>
<u>A.P.C.</u>	<u>Acts of the Privy Council, 1542-June 1631</u>
B.H.R.S.	Bedfordshire Historical Record Society
<u>B.I.H.R.</u>	<u>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</u>
B.M.	British Museum
B.R.O.	Bedfordshire County Record Office
C.	Public Record Office, Chancery records
<u>Cal. Patent Rolls</u>	<u>Calendar of Patent Rolls</u>
<u>Cal. S.P.D.</u>	<u>Calendar of State Papers Domestic</u>
<u>Cal. State Papers Venetian.</u>	<u>Calendar of State Papers Venetian</u>
<u>C.J.</u>	<u>Journals of the House of Commons</u>
C.R.T.	County Record Office Transcripts in the Bedfordshire Record Office
D.L.	Public Record Office, Duchy of Lancaster documents
<u>D.N.B.</u>	<u>Dictionary of National Biography</u>
E	Public Record Office, Exchequer records
<u>Ec. H.R.</u>	<u>Economic History Review</u>
(ed)	edited
<u>E.H.R.</u>	<u>English Historical Review</u>
FAC	Facsimile
<u>H.M.C.</u>	<u>Historical Manuscripts Commission</u>
H.S.A.	Bedfordshire Record Office, Assize records of the old Norfolk circuit
<u>L.J.</u>	<u>Journals of the House of Lords</u>
MSS	Manuscripts
N.R.O.	Northamptonshire County Record Office
<u>Northants Past and Present</u>	<u>Northamptonshire Past and Present</u>
N.R.S.	Northamptonshire Record Society
<u>P.C.R.</u>	<u>Privy Council Registers, June 1637-August 1645</u>
P.C.R. (Micro)	Privy Council Registers, July 1631-May 1637, on microcards produced by the Public Record Office
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
PROB. 11	Public Record Office, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills
Q.S.R.	Northamptonshire Record Office, Quarter Sessions Rolls
Req.	Public Record Office, Court of Requests records
S.P.	Public Record Office, State Papers
STAC.	Public Record Office, Court of Star Chamber records
<u>T.R.H.S.</u>	<u>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</u>
<u>V.C.H.</u>	<u>Victoria County History</u>

Dates are given in the Old Style, except that the year is taken to begin on the first of January.

In verbatim quotations the original spelling has been preserved; but occasional punctuation necessary to the sense has been supplied.

INTRODUCTION

An examination of the Institute of Historical Research's annual publication, Theses in Progress, illustrates the dramatic growth of research into the early modern English county during the past decade. There has also been a less dramatic, but nevertheless significant, increase in the amount of published work relating to various counties in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. (1)

This thesis was primarily conceived in order to add two more counties to the list of those which had been covered because, although some aspects of their history had already been described by other historians, there was no comprehensive survey of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire in this period. This obviously influenced the selection of these particular Shires, and interest was stimulated by their proximity to my birthplace.

My commitment to comparative history encouraged me to study two counties. At several stages, this thesis has processed material or investigated themes which are not directly comparable with those of other county studies, and at least it was possible to compare Bedfordshire with Northamptonshire. In addition, a comparative approach can often overcome the unreliability of certain sources or methodologies. For example, the Exchequer Lay Subsidies are inaccurate indicators of personal wealth after the mid-sixteenth century, and the use of subsidies to estimate individual wealth, which is discussed in Appendix 12, is a decidedly uncertain business. However, although the basis of the assessment is unreliable, if one gentleman is assessed at ten pounds and another at twenty pounds, one can assert with a degree of certainty, that the latter was the wealthier of the two. Similarly, in chapter eight, religious formulae from wills are analysed, and, although the methodology may be uncertain, the comparative distinctions between Dunstable and Wellingborough are clear.

In the event, it was fortunate that both counties were chosen because it emerges at almost every stage of the thesis that the Bedfordshire sources are relatively meagre. The most useful subsidy to the social historian, that of 1524/5, is virtually non-existent for Bedfordshire; the Diocesan and Archdeaconry records are miserable compared to those of Northamptonshire; and at several junctures I am forced to point out that either paucity of sources underestimates the manifestation of a certain characteristic in Bedfordshire, or it was actually less apparent than in Northamptonshire.

1. See Chapter 4, note 1 for a list of many of these county studies.

This imbalance of sources is partly explained by the size of Bedfordshire as the fourth smallest in England, and by the fact that it was much less of a county of magnates than Northamptonshire. A considerable part of our knowledge of early modern England is based on the private collections of the Peers and greater gentry of that period, and the Bibliography demonstrates that Bedfordshire possesses markedly fewer of these archives than Northamptonshire.

The terminal dates of the thesis are determined by two of the most important sources, the 1524/5 Subsidy and the Hearth Taxes of 1670-4, which are fundamental to the construction of an economic geography of the two counties. However, occasionally the time-scale has been extended for purposes of comparison and assessment of degrees of continuity in certain aspects. Chapter two includes some population estimates from the fourteenth century; chapters three and four contain brief analyses of the structure of landownership, particularly within the gentry, in the late nineteenth century; and some forms of late medieval religious and political dissent are examined in chapters seven and eight. The former also includes a very short discussion of the mid-nineteenth century religious census. Apart from these examples, and a few isolated references, the content is concerned with the period 1524-1674.

However, a thesis which covers one hundred and fifty years of English history, and in which two counties are involved, cannot possibly discuss the effect of every major national event upon provincial society, or investigate all features of the counties themselves without being prohibitively long. I am conscious that some readers may be disappointed to find that there is virtually no analysis of the Interregnum or of the Dissolution of the Monasteries; and, apart from an examination of royalist and parliamentarian gentry and membership of county committees and Commissions of the Peace between 1642 and 1649, no narrative account of the Civil War is given. Despite these omissions there is still the danger that the attempt to cover so much ground in two counties will result in a too impressionistic analysis of too many themes, rather than in an intensive study of a few basic aspects. That is for others to judge, but I have endeavoured to prevent this wherever the sources and my own efforts allow.

There are three broad sections to this thesis, although there is considerable overlap between them. First, Chapters 1-3 attempt to construct the social and economic framework of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire by describing the topography; economy; population

history and density; social structure; distribution of wealth; and general structure of landownership. Second, Chapters 4-6 concentrate upon the elite of county society, the gentry, and survey their economic fortunes; their entrepreneurial activities; their religion and politics; their role in local government and as members of parliament; and their education, as well as providing more fragmentary accounts of their income, their houses, and other facets of their life-style. Third, chapters seven and eight are a concerted attempt to place religious and political dissent and social and economic unrest within the context of the economic geography which was established in the first part of the thesis. This is one of the main aims of the study: to try and relate these types of radicalism and dissent to topography; communications; social structure and geographical distribution of wealth. Dunstable and Wellingborough were originally selected for detailed analysis in Chapter eight because of their ancient radical traditions and because they were the location of the only Digger colonies of 1650-1 in these two counties. As the thesis progressed, this proved a particularly appropriate choice in view of the central role of the market town in the communications and economic framework; because of the more marked demographic growth and population density in market towns than in the rest of the county; and because of the especially heavy concentration of poor people in these towns.

Neither the structure of the thesis, nor most of the methodology behind it is original. Indeed, the initial purpose, as I said earlier, was to add two more counties to the list of those which had been examined, and, therefore, to pose the same questions that had been posed in earlier local studies, and thereby enable comparisons to be made. I am indebted to all those local historians, whose works are listed at the beginning of Chapter four, for their ideas which determined the method of approach of much of this thesis. More specifically, my calculations of geographical distribution of wealth use the methodology of Mr. J. Buckatzsch; Chapter three is largely based on the thesis of Dr. T. Hallinan; the work of Dr. J.T. Cliffe and Professor A. Everitt determined the format of Chapter four; and those historians who have related dissent in forest parishes to the social and economic framework provided the stimulus for Chapters seven and eight. (2) The debt which I owe to other scholars for their

2. Buckatzsch, J., 'Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1086-1843', Ec. H.R., 2nd s., iii; Hallinan, T., 'The Changing Composition of the Class of Larger Landowners in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire between the Reformation and the Civil War, with particular reference to the manorial holdings of the Dormer, Spencer, and Verney families', University of Oxford, D. Phil, 1956; Cliffe, J.T., The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War; Everitt, A., Suffolk and the Great Rebellion, Suffolk Record Society, iii, The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion,

methods or ideas is made apparent in other parts of the thesis.

However, historical demography and the use of Hearth Taxes and other taxation assessments to ascertain social structure, regional wealth, or personal income are so fraught with pitfalls and uncertainties that they are perhaps cases where methodological innovation is a dangerous virtue. Throughout Chapter two, the section on gentry income in Chapter four, and in the analysis of parish registers of Dunstable and Wellingborough in Chapter eight, accepted methods of calculation have been scrupulously adhered to. Appendices 3, 4 and 12 contain detailed discussion of methodology, and other methods of approach are examined in the text.

Chapter eight and Appendix 20 contain one form of analysis which has not been used in other research, and which is unsupported by any secondary authority. This relates to distribution of wealth among towns with more than five hundred inhabitants. Mr. Buckatzsch's formula of dividing taxation assessments into acreage is appropriate for a large area like a county or hundred, but when applied to a concentrated urban settlement of small acreage it seems less valid because the ratio will merely reflect size rather than distribution of wealth. Therefore, I have related taxation assessments to the population of towns on a pence per person basis. The results show that the most populous towns were certainly not the richest ones according to this formula; but I am reluctant to place too much importance on the results of this unsubstantiated approach, although it does confirm the relative poverty of Dunstable and Wellingborough, a feature which emerged from a more established method of analysis of Hearth Tax returns.

The text contains numerous statistics and tables, since these are the best means of embodying vast amounts of research from composite sources. Appendices 3 and 4, and 11-16 contain the raw material for the tables and analyses in Chapters two and four, which, together with Chapter three, are the most heavily statistical chapters. These Appendices not only enable the tables and conclusions to be checked,

2 Cont'd. The Local Community and the Great Rebellion, Historical Association, General Series, lxx.

For forests, see Thirsk, J., 'Industries in the Countryside', in Fisher, F., (ed.) Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England; Everitt, A., Change in the Provinces in the Seventeenth Century, and The Pattern of Rural Dissent in the Nineteenth Century, University of Leicester, Department of Local History, Occasional Papers, 2nds, i and iv. Hill, C., The World Turned Upside Down, chapter called 'Masterless Men'.

but they were also compiled with the aim of providing a useful body of material for subsequent students of these two counties. It is one duty of the social historian to process these sources and bequeath the results to his colleagues, and I think the lists of population estimates; of density of population and demographic growth calculations; of social structure categories; and of the economic fortunes and religious and political affiliations of the gentry, may be particularly useful.

Extensive use has also been made of maps, which are not only an important aid to the reader, but they have also assisted enormously in the assessment of any regional variations in relation to particular themes. Like tables, they also facilitate the embodiment of large amounts of data which would be an incumbrance if they were inserted in the text. These maps have been drawn on tracing paper which, although rather fragile, allows some correlations to be gauged immediately by superimposition of one or more maps on top of another.

The Appendices and Bibliography have been bound in a separate volume to allow the reader to make constant reference to them, which is essential when reading the text in volume one, and the maps have been kept loose at the end cover of volume two for the same reason. It was more practical to place footnotes at the end of each Appendix, rather than at the bottom of the page, to prevent fragmentation of the lists and tables, and I trust that these practices have helped to ease the problem for the reader of continuous cross-reference to so many parts of the thesis.

A thesis of this kind necessitates an examination of the entire range of sources, both primary and secondary, relating to English history in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and, more specifically, to every source concerning these two counties. The Bibliography is as comprehensive as possible, but it is stated there that it would be very misleading to include sources which have yielded only an isolated reference on an equal footing with the major bases of the thesis. The Bibliography contains the latter, and the textual footnotes contain the former. Equally, it is almost impossible to single out the most important sources, but the Lay Subsidies and Hearth Taxes are obviously crucial. The various collections of family manuscripts at the respective County Record Offices constitute the largest general source.

In essence, then, this thesis is the application of the methods and sources, which have been used by other historians, to two counties which have not been studied in such depth before. I hope that all the

conclusions will be useful, and that Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire examples can now be added to those from other counties, and contribute to a greater understanding of early modern provincial England. But perhaps the most important conclusion to emerge is that these two counties underwent a fundamental social and economic transformation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The communications and marketing network expanded and assisted agricultural and industrial development. Demographic growth was pronounced, particularly in the urban sector; the structure of landownership altered radically, and social and geographical mobility within the gentry was acute. A regional entity developed among the counties of the Midland Plain in the economic sphere, and was assisted by common fen drainage schemes and by the patterns of gentry origins, marriages and landholding. London influence was decisive in the economy, in the landownership structure, and in the composition of the gentry of these two counties.

My own predilections lead me to single out, in addition, the section on the Midland Revolt in Chapter seven, which suggests that the focus of the uprising was related to parishes with especially pronounced demographic growth and density, large populations, and absence of a resident gentry landowner. Indeed, one of the important conclusions of the thesis is that religious and social and economic dissent can be correlated with these characteristics, and that they were particularly evident in parishes where the forces of social control were weakened. This, of course, reinforces the assertions of those historians who have studied forest parishes, but this thesis seems to place more emphasis on market towns and populous settlements, rather than on forest villages, which, although prominent in social and economic unrest, were not the location of very pronounced religious dissent.

This conclusion is reinforced by the analysis of the Diggers of Dunstable and Wellingborough in Chapter eight, which relates the location of the Diggers, who, in Wellingborough, were almost entirely local inhabitants, in these towns, rather than in other parishes in their respective counties, to acute population density and demographic fluctuation or growth, to a particularly high proportion of urban poor, especially those receiving poor relief, and to other characteristics of a populous market town which weakened the forces of social and juridical control.

Also, the extent of catholicism and of Civil War royalism in Northamptonshire, a county more usually noted for its puritanism and parliamentarianism, is a point of importance.

It should be apparent that the stimulus behind this thesis, and its structure and content mean that the sources for comparison with it are numerous. It can be related, at various stages, to all the studies of other counties, some of which are mentioned in Chapter four (note 1), and others which are noted during the course of the thesis. Perhaps one day some person or some institution will attempt a synthesis of all the theses and published works on English counties in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and compare, for example, their respective population histories, their social structures, or the economic, religious and political characteristics of their gentry. Such a venture would be of enormous value and, in conclusion, I can only hope that this thesis would merit such a use.

CHAPTER 1

THE TOPOGRAPHICAL AND ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

The main purpose of this chapter is to describe the geographical features and the economic framework of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The reader is recommended to make constant reference to Maps 1 to 4 during the course of this chapter, and the use of other maps is indicated in the text.

The geography and topography of the counties will be considered first. Secondly, there is a section on the development of communications, which concentrates upon the spread of major roads and the extension of navigable river facilities. It emerges that both counties were ideally situated within the national communications network.

The third section discusses the agriculture of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire and finds evidence of dramatic changes and expansion, particularly in the seventeenth century. Enclosure and the development of specialised farming were particularly important.

Finally, the industries of both counties are discussed.

The spread of communications and the improvement in the marketing structure, together with the influence of the expanding consumption centre of London, appear to have been the most important determinants of the economy of both counties. Agrarian capitalism was widespread and the beginnings of industrial capitalism were evident by the end of the seventeenth century. Change is the keynote of the economy in the period between 1500 and 1700, but agriculture remained the most prominent feature of this economy. The industries which had blossomed were all dependent upon the fruits of local farming.

The account is mainly narrative rather than statistical, and secondary sources have played an important part, as well as a wide range of documentary material. The distribution of sheep in Northamptonshire is the only part which is based upon mathematical calculation. Appendix 1 and Maps 5 and 6 embody the results of this.

1. TOPOGRAPHY

Bedfordshire is the fourth smallest county in England. In 1841, its total acreage was 297,632 and at its greatest extent it is about thirty six miles long and twenty one miles wide. Luton and Dunstable, in the extreme south, are only about thirty miles from London and the county is described, usually, as belonging to the south east Midlands of England, or even the Home Counties. Its irregular outline is not determined by natural characteristics but originated from accidents of feudal ownership. Its situation, together with a lack of important mineral wealth, makes it rather a thoroughfare from one part of England to another than a centre of special culture, and its physical regions resemble those of surrounding areas. (1)

Apart from the Chiltern downlands at the southern tip of the county, most of Bedfordshire is below five hundred feet high. Indeed, most of the eastern side and the central part, which are the valleys of the rivers Ouse and Ivel, are below two hundred and fifty feet, and it is the southern end and the extreme north western edge which constitute the highest areas of the county. (2)

The soil of most of Bedfordshire is composed of clay, which is particularly heavy in the north and this made cultivation more difficult. In the south, the clay is mixed with the Chalk of the Chiltern Hills and is even less fertile than the heavy clay of the north west. The best soils are those in the valleys of the Ouse and Ivel rivers and they form an immensely fertile belt of alluvial sands and gravels which stretches in a broadly north east to south west direction through the eastern and central parts of the county. A tongue of this rich soil belt also stretches north west along the Ouse valley and passes through Bedford. Seven of the ten Bedfordshire market towns are situated in this belt, and an eighth, Toddington, is very close to it. Eastern and central Bedfordshire had the best soils. (3)

1. The acreage is taken from British Parliamentary Papers; Population 3, 1841 Census. V.C.H. Bedfordshire, ii, p.129, gives a useful description.
2. Map 1 portrays the topography of the county. It is drawn from an ordinary contour map.
3. Map 2 is a soil map of Bedfordshire, upon which are marked the ten market towns. Tranter, N., 'Demographic Change in Bedfordshire, 1670-1800', University of Nottingham, Ph.D., 1966, Appendix III, reproduces Thomas Batchelor's soil map of Bedfordshire of 1808. Map 2 is drawn from this. The market towns are enumerated by Everitt, A., 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce', in Thirsk, J., (ed.), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, pp. 473-5. See also, V.C.H. Bedfordshire, ii, pp. 17 and 146, and Bedfordshire Magazine, i, p. 237, for more topographical detail.

Most of the woodland of the county grew on this sandy range which crossed Bedfordshire from Woburn in the south west to Potton in the east. But in comparison to Northamptonshire, there was very little woodland.

Geologically, the main divisions are between a clayey north in which there are limestone outcrops similar to those of eastern Northamptonshire; the sandstone range across the centre of the county; and the chalk of the south.⁽⁴⁾ The distinction is well reflected by the churches of Bedfordshire. North of Bedford, most of them possess limestone spires, but south of the county town, sandstone, particularly Totternhoe stone, towers replace the spires.⁽⁵⁾

Northamptonshire is a much larger county than Bedfordshire. In 1841, it consisted of 649,020 acres. The awkward elongated shape of the county necessitated a separation into two divisions, east and west, for the purposes of administration. The breadth of the county is approximately seventy miles at its widest point, whereas its northern and southern extremes are only about thirty miles apart. Northampton is sixty seven miles from London, and the southernmost point of the county is approximately fifty five miles from the capital. Northamptonshire is part of the Midland Plain and has no peculiar features that separate it from adjoining counties. In fact, it is bordered by more counties, nine in all, than any other county in England. However, its boundaries are determined by physical characteristics to a greater extent than those of Bedfordshire. The course of the river Welland determines the whole of the northern boundary, and the rivers Nene and Cherwell form the extreme south eastern and south western frontiers, respectively. But the whole of the southern boundary does not follow any clear physical feature.

Contrary to the impression of many people who are unfamiliar with the county, Northamptonshire is not a flat county. The extreme eastern hundred of Nassaburgh was largely fenland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the eastern part of the Nene valley is very low-lying. But most of the north, centre, and west of the county is over three hundred feet high and wider areas of the western division are above the five hundred foot contour. The Northamptonshire Heights in the west have much in common with the Cotswold area of England; both consist mainly of limestone plateau. The highest part is between Daventry and Byfield on the western boundary, and the valley of the Nene, which extends down the eastern side and through the southern half of the county, is the lowest.

4. From V.C.H. Bedfordshire, ii, p.129.

5. An article in Bedfordshire Magazine, ii, pp. 305-7, gives a good analysis of the stone architecture of the county and relates it to geology. A detailed map is also provided.

The lower part of the Ise valley in the centre of the county, before the river joins the Nene, is also below two hundred feet. (6)

The term upland county is a description that is more appropriate to Northamptonshire than to Bedfordshire, although the Chiltern downlands in the southern tip of the latter county, are the highest part of either county.

There was much more woodland in sixteenth and seventeenth century Northamptonshire than in Bedfordshire. The royal forests of Rockingham, in the north east, and Salcey and Whittlewood in the south west covered approximately fifteen per cent of the county. (7)

Most of the soil of Northamptonshire, like that of Bedfordshire, is composed of clay. In the forests, it was particularly heavy and waterlogged as it was in the fenland on the eastern edge. The most fertile soils are in the alluvial river valleys, but there is not the exceptionally rich belt of Greensand sands and gravels that characterises the east and centre of Bedfordshire. In the west, the clay was less heavy and more suited to mixed husbandry, whereas there was little arable farming in the wetter clays of the forests and fenland. (8)

Throughout the county, there are limestone outcrops which caused a flourishing quarrying industry to develop by the sixteenth century. (9)

Northamptonshire is famous for its stone church spires.

6. The 1841 acreage is taken from British Parliamentary Papers; Population 3; 1841 Census. Map 3 shows the topography and physical features of Northamptonshire. It is drawn from an ordinary contour map. Map B shows the location of the hundreds and the boundary between the western and eastern divisions. The origin of the county is discussed by Hart, C., The Hidation of Northamptonshire, University of Leicester, Department of Local History, Occasional Paper, 2nd s., iii.
7. Pettit, P., The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire, 1558-1714, N.R.S., xxiii, Tables XXII and XXIII, lists the county's forest villages. I have totalled their 1841 acreages from the source in note 6 and it equals 96,900. This is approximately fifteen per cent of the acreage of the whole county. However, the existence of woodland is most possible in some other areas and so the overall proportion of woodland in Northamptonshire was probably slightly higher than this. These forest villages are listed in Appendix 3. Dr. Pettit's book is a superb study of the economy of these royal forests.

For the extent of Northamptonshire forest in the middle ages, see Bazeley, M., 'The Extent of the English Forest in the Thirteenth Century', T.R.H.S., 4th s, iv., pp.140-1, and also Northants Past and Present, v., p.211.

Morton, J., The Natural History of Northamptonshire, (1712), is a useful survey of the topography of the county.

8. Because the soil divisions of Northamptonshire correspond so closely with the four main topographical divisions of fenland, forest, river valley, and upland, it seems unnecessary to draw a separate soil Map. Map 3 illustrates these distinctions.
9. See Section 4, for discussion of the building stone industry.

2. COMMUNICATIONS

(i) Roads (10)

At the turn of the sixteenth century, Northamptonshire was better placed in relation to major road links than Bedfordshire. In the east of the former county, Peterborough was situated at the junction between the old Roman Ermine Street, which ran due north from Peterborough towards Lincoln, and the Great North Road, which ran north-west from Peterborough through Stamford. The latter road was the most important link between London and the north of England.

The London to Nottingham road passed through the centre of Northamptonshire via Northampton and at Stony Stratford, which was just outside the southern boundary of the county, it joined Watling Street. This road, the major link between London and the north west of England, traversed the western side of Northamptonshire and passed a few miles to the west of Northampton via Towcester and Daventry. In all, then, four major roads crossed Northamptonshire, from north to south, according to Miss Thomson's 1603 list.

However, most of early seventeenth century Bedfordshire was a considerable distance from an important road. The Great North Road passed through the eastern edge, via Eaton Socon and Biggleswade; and Watling Street crossed the south western corner through Dunstable and Woburn. But the broad mass of the county, including Bedford, had no important road across it. The Great North Road crossed the river Ouse at Great Barford after the opening of a new bridge in the early sixteenth century, and this diverted trade away from Bedford, which was three miles upstream. This was accentuated by the fact that the Ouse was only navigable as far westwards as Great Barford until 1638. At least for road facilities, the county town of Bedfordshire was much worse off than its Northamptonshire counterpart in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

But by 1675, according to John Ogilby's catalogue, the situation in Bedfordshire had improved. The London to Richmond route ran from south to north almost exactly through the centre of the county, via Luton, Silsoe, Bedford and Shillington. There was at last an important road which passed through Bedford in a west to east direction, the Oxford to Cambridge route.

10. This account is based on two sources. Thomson, G.S., 'Roads in England and Wales in 1603, E.H.R., xxxiii, pp.234-43, which lists the major roads of the early seventeenth century; and Ogilby, J., Itinerarium Anglicae or a book of roads, (1675). This lists the major roads of the second half of the seventeenth century and there are several additions to the earlier list which affect these two counties.

These major roads are drawn on Map 1, (Bedfordshire), & Map 3, (Northamptonshire).

There were also two additional roads which crossed Northamptonshire. The London to Richmond one went through Wellingborough, Kettering and Rockingham, and the Coventry to Cambridge road was the only one to cross the county in a west to east direction. It ran through Watford, Northampton and Higham Ferrers.

By the second half of the seventeenth century, both counties were particularly well served with road links and this clearly had important repercussions for their economy, and although Bedfordshire was less well provided with roads than Northamptonshire in 1603, both counties bestrode two of the most important trade routes in England in the sixteenth century, Watling Street and the Great North Road.

It has been suggested that Bedfordshire was the subject of the earliest turnpike bill in England.

"An Acte for the Repaire of the Greate Roade and Highway to London from the Northe parts of England Between Biggleswade and Baldock..." was passed in 1622. It concerned Edworth Hill, just south east of Biggleswade and a toll was levied on every user. Twelve years earlier, a similar bill had been rejected by the House of Commons by one hundred and forty votes to ninety seven and the change of heart may reflect an increasing commercial traffic on the Great North Road that compelled some attention to be paid to its repair above and beyond the usual local levies for maintenance of the highways. (11)

There was also increasing concern over the state of Watling Street between Hockliffe and Woburn, Bedfordshire, in the first half of the seventeenth century. A complaint was lodged against Sir Edward Duncombe of Battlesden, who was presumably a local highways overseer, in 1633 for not repairing this stretch. He told Secretary of State Windebank, that he intended to lay four hundred and fifty loads of gravel and stone each year, in future. (12)

In 1655, the whole village of Battlesden was indicted at the local Quarter Sessions for neglecting the same stretch of road, and it is interesting to note that the first length of Bedfordshire road to be

11. Emmison, F., 'The Earliest Turnpike Bill, 1622', B.I.H.R. xii, especially pp.110-11. The Act was passed on February 21st. 1663 is usually regarded as the date of the first Turnpike Act (Chartres, J.A., 'Road Carrying in England in the Seventeenth Century: Myth and Reality', Ec.H.R., 2nd s, xxx, p.74.)
12. Cal. S.P.D., 1633-4, p.6.

turnpiked when the great wave of turnpike acts began in the eighteenth century was Watling Street between Hockliffe and Woburn.⁽¹³⁾ Perhaps a heavier road traffic stimulated this increased concern for the repair of these lines of communication.

Finally, the spread of communications links and increased road traffic caused a mushrooming growth of the town inns and alehouses.⁽¹⁴⁾ The market place or the edge of the town, which was convenient for the drovers who brought livestock down the roads to market, were the most popular places. In Northampton in 1577, there were four taverns, seventeen inns and thirty one alehouses and growth was so rapid that in 1629, the constables were ordered to report the names of new innkeepers every month.⁽¹⁵⁾ Several prominent Northampton innkeepers became aldermen and mayors and in the eighteenth century, definite innkeeping dynasties were established as prestigious members of the community.

The inn was often the scene of trading, and it developed as a centre of local administration and provincial politics. The Northamptonshire Petition to the House of Commons in 1642 was launched from the Swan Inn in Northampton and in the late seventeenth century, this same Inn became the headquarters of the local Whigs, and the Goat Inn, the headquarters of the Tories.⁽¹⁶⁾ Excluding Northampton, the whole of Northamptonshire contained eight taverns, thirty inns, and four hundred alehouses in 1577, and the growth of the urban inn is inextricably linked with the spread of major roadways and the increasing volume of traffic which used them.⁽¹⁷⁾

13. Calendar of Volume 1 of Sessions Minute Books, 1651-60, Bedfordshire County Records, i, p.36. B.R.O., C.R.T. 130/Dunstable 7; this stretch was turnpiked in 1706.
14. Professor Everitt has pioneered investigation into the urban inn. Everitt, A., 'The English Urban Inn, 1560-1760', Everitt, A., (ed), Perspectives in English Urban History, pp.94-126, is based primarily on the example of Northampton. My discussion of the inn, owes much to this. See also the same author's 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce', in Thirsk, J., (ed), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, p.559. Professor Everitt says that the main distinction between an inn and an alehouse was that the latter theoretically, did not take boarders. A tavern was a larger inn which served meals.
15. P.R.O., S.P.12/118/1. Census of drinking houses of 1577. Unfortunately, returns for Bedfordshire do not survive. Everitt, A., 'The English Urban Inn', op.cit., p.121.
16. Everitt, A., 'The English Urban Inn', op.cit.
17. P.R.O., SP.12/118/1, fo.11. 1577 Census.

(ii) Rivers

There was also much greater interest shown in the possibility of making the local rivers navigable in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

The river Ouse was only navigable from the port of King's Lynn to St. Ives, in Huntingdonshire, in 1600, but in 1608, the town of Huntingdon urged the county gentry to stop the delay in the progress of navigation because it was detrimental to the trade of the town. Nine years later the first letters patent were granted to John Gason of Finchley and work began. The following year the patent was assigned to Arnold Spencer, a younger son of a gentry family of Cople in Bedfordshire, and he is the most important protagonist in the story of the Ouse navigation in the seventeenth century.

Bedford also exerted considerable pressure to clear the Ouse to river transport. In 1627, the town undertook to bear the cost of an Act of Parliament for the navigation from St. Ives to Bedford. This would obviously enhance the prosperity of the town and offset the need to use St. Ives or St. Neots as embarkation points for Bedfordshire grain on its journey to King's Lynn. By 1636, Spencer, despite some opposition from locals who used the river banks for common pasture, had allowed river transport to reach St. Neots in Huntingdonshire, and by 1638, he had reached Great Barford, three miles east of Bedford. Then, the momentum stopped, partly because Spencer was bankrupting himself through his additional grandiose plans to make the river Stour navigable from Sudbury to Manningtree in Suffolk, and partly because of the worsening political situation. All improvements ceased during the Civil War and Interregnum, and it was not until the second half of the seventeenth century that river navigation as far as Bedford was possible. But throughout the 1640's and 1650's, the town of Bedford kept petitioning for Parliament to authorize a new start to the improvements. (18)

18. Navigation of the Ouse is examined by Willan, T., The Navigation of The Great Ouse between St. Ives and Bedford in the seventeenth century, B.H.R.S., xxiv. See also the same author's River Navigation in England, 1600-1750. The Francklin manuscripts at the B.R.O., contain a great deal of information about the improvements, notably F.N. 1,289, which outlines developments between 1617 and 1626; F.N. 1,292; 1,295; 1,297; 1,330-4; and 1,261.

The town of Huntingdon's 1608 request is P.R.O., E178/Hunts./3912; Bedford's 1627 undertaking in B.R.O., F.N. 1,330. Parsloe, G., (ed), The Minute Book of Bedford Corporation, 1647-64, B.H.R.S., xxvi, entries 19 vi 50, and 4 ii 53, shows the persistence of the town in trying to have improvements restarted. According to B.R.O., F.N. 1,261, fo. 121, Spencer spent £10,000 of his own money upto 1638, and F.N. 1,295 and 1,297 are examples of him mortgaging some of his interests in the 1640's and 1650's to pay his debts.

B.R.O., F.N. 1,261, says that the Ouse was finally made navigable as far as Bedford by about 1690.

Progress was less swift with the Northamptonshire Nene, primarily because there were more technical problems to surmount. Whereas east Bedfordshire is relatively flat, the Nene descends at least one hundred and thirty feet between Northampton and Peterborough. In 1638, it was estimated that about twenty locks would be needed for this stretch of about forty miles, and even in the early eighteenth century, the same objections of expense and too many locks which would mean that road transport was still quicker, were voiced. (19)

Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the river was navigable as far as Alwalton, just west of Peterborough, but no further progress was made until 1713, when an Act was passed to extend navigable facilities as far as Northampton. In 1606, Sir William Fleetwood of Aldwinkle had surveyed the Nene between Alwalton and Oundle but had concluded that the costs were prohibitive, and in 1638, a Commission of Sewers did propose to start on the Peterborough to Wellingborough stretch, but no doubt the onset of Civil War suspended operations. (20)

However, as in Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire, the towns urged that the improvements be started because of the beneficial effect on their commerce. Northampton petitioned the Earl of Salisbury in 1613 and it is interesting that one of its arguments was that the roads were decayed because of too much traffic. In 1638, Higham Ferrers, Raundes and Ringstead were quick to support the decision of the Commission of Sewers to begin work. (21)

19. B.R.O., St. John MSS., J. 1,353, mentions the costs and technical problems of 1638. N.R.O., Isham MSS., I.L. 2,588, contains an impressive list of early eighteenth century objections.
20. Morton, J., The Natural History of Northamptonshire, (1712), p.5, notes that navigation extended as far as Alwalton. The Act of 1713 is in Northampton Public Library, Local History Room, 1.183. Sir William Fleetwood's survey and estimates are B.R.O., Francklin MSS., F.N. 1,254, No. 40. The 1638 Commission of Sewers decision and the costs are B.R.O., St. John MSS., J., 1,352-3.
21. The Northampton petition is N.R.O., Finch-Hatton MSS., F.H. 3,503. The Higham Ferrers, Raundes and Ringstead support are B.R.O., St. John MSS., J. 1350-2.

More information on Nene navigation is contained in P.R.O., K134/16 Charles I/Michelmas 28.

However, not all towns supported the improvements and there was obviously some local jealousies and rivalry. N.R.O., Fitzwilliam MSS., F(M) Misc. Papers, 272 and 275, show that Peterborough opposed the extension. It feared that it would signify its demise and a movement of commercial prosperity to Oundle, Wellingborough and Northampton. The town also believed that the mass of new locks would drain the old navigable stretch in summer and virtually empty the Nene.

So most of Northamptonshire did not have a navigable river until the eighteenth century. On the northern boundary of the county, the Welland was only opened to transport as far west as Stamford in 1673.⁽²²⁾ Apart from the eastern end, the county had to rely upon the road network.

(iii) The Market Towns (23)

The role of the market town as a distribution and marketing centre for its immediate locality, and its function as a social and political centre makes it worthwhile to consider the situation of such towns in both counties. Their importance and their prosperity was inextricably linked to the spread of the communications network in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Five of the ten Bedfordshire market towns were in the southern end of the county. Dunstable and Woburn were situated on Watling Street, and Leighton Buzzard and Toddington were a few miles to the west and east, respectively, of this road. Luton stood on the London to Richmond road, which had developed by 1675.

Three of the others were on the eastern side. Campton/Shefford was on the river Ivel and was a few miles west of the Great North Road, whereas Biggleswade stood on this route. The Cambridge to Oxford road passed through Potton. In the centre of the county there was Ampthill, on the river Ivel, and the Richmond road passed close by. Bedford was the only market town in the north of the county and it stood on the Ouse. However, it was said earlier that the Ouse was not navigable to Bedford until about 1690, and until the 1670's it was situated on no major road. This probably explains why Bedford was never much larger than Leighton or Luton, between 1524 and 1671, in the way that Northampton eclipsed the other market towns of Northamptonshire, in size of population, between 1524 and 1670.⁽²⁴⁾

Ten of the fifteen market towns of Northamptonshire were located in the eastern division. Peterborough, Oundle, Thrapston, Higham Ferrers and Wellingborough stood on the river Nene, and the latter was at the junction between the Nene and the Ise. King's Cliffe and Weldon were placed on a small river and were in the heart of Rockingham Forest, together with Rockingham, which also stood on the London to Richmond road.

23. See Note 3 for the source for the list of market towns. They are plotted on Maps 1 and 3, which show their relationship to roads and rivers.

24. Appendix 5 shows the relative size of the market towns according to population estimates, the sources for which are contained in Appendix 3. It seems that Luton was more populous than Bedford in 1544, and in 1671, Bedford was only slightly larger than Luton or Leighton.

Kettering and Rothwell were located on the river Ise, and the same Richmond road also passed through Kettering and Wellingborough. Peterborough was centrally situated on the Great North Road, and the route between Coventry and Cambridge passed through Higham Ferrers.

In the west, Aynho stood on the Cherwell, and Brackley on another small river, while Watling Street passed through Daventry and Towcester. Northampton was only a few miles east of this road and was placed on an unnavigable length of the Nene. By the second half of the seventeenth century, two major roads passed through it.

In 1524, Northampton dwarfed the other market towns in size of population and although Peterborough contained more than three thousand inhabitants as well, in 1670, the nearest one to these had only just over two thousand inhabitants.⁽²⁵⁾ Northampton was a far more dominant county town than Bedford, in this sense, although Peterborough expanded its population much more dramatically than Northampton between 1524 and 1670. The fact that the Nene was navigable as far as Peterborough may have been important to this difference between them.

In conclusion, both these counties saw a considerable improvement in the communications network in the seventeenth century. Increased road traffic stimulated a concern for repair of existing routes and a creation of new ones, both road and river. The commercial possibilities of river transport were recognised and pressures were exerted, accordingly. In both counties, the population of the market towns, whose location was fundamentally determined by their position in relation to roads and rivers, increased much more between 1524 and the 1670's, than that of the whole county.⁽²⁶⁾ Obviously, these changes influenced the agricultural and industrial economy of the two counties.

25. See Appendix 5. In 1524, Northampton had an estimated population of 2,665 and the second largest town had only 1,067 inhabitants.

26. See Tables IV and VI in Chapter 2. Relative population increase in various parts of both counties is examined in depth in Chapter 2, Section 1, part (i).

3. AGRICULTURE

(i) General Description

(a) Bedfordshire

The Ouse Basin had been renowned for its corn since the middle ages. During a tour of the county in the early eighteenth century. Danid Defoe said of Bedfordshire

"the whole product of this county is Corn".⁽²⁷⁾

Barley was the main cereal crop and the best yields came from the lighter soil mixture of chalk and clay in the southern end of the county, rather than from the heavier clays of the north. This southern region, stretching, approximately, from Eaton Bray in the south west to Barton le Clay in the south east, was the only part of either county to be outside that agricultural region known as 'The Midland Plain'. It was more akin to the mixed husbandry, mainly corn but with some livestock, of other upland chalk areas and Dr. Kerridge has described this farming region as 'Chiltern type'.⁽²⁸⁾ The Ouse Basin, had become the leading corn export producer of England by the early seventeenth century and most of this was shipped through King's Lynn.⁽²⁹⁾ Obviously, this was an important stimulus behind the development of navigation along the Ouse. Bedfordshire wanted direct river linkage with King's Lynn.

This 'Chiltern type' area was also suitable for dairy cattle. Most yeomen in this region had a few dairy cows.⁽³⁰⁾

The rest of Bedfordshire lay in the 'Midland Plain' type of agricultural region. This was the classic area of mixed farming. Although it was most plentiful and of best quality in the south, corn was grown in the rest of the county, particularly in the north, around Bedford, and on the eastern edge. The Vale of Bedford was a secondary region of good quality barley.⁽³¹⁾

Although there was some dairying in the 'Chiltern' region, the alluvial soils of the Ouse and Ivel valleys and the sands and gravels of the Greensand belt provided the most luscious pasture for dairy cattle. In a broad belt stretching from Pertenhall in the north east to Salford in the south west, dairying was the most important agricultural activity.⁽³²⁾

27. Defoe, D., A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain, 2 vols, (1927 edition), p.512.

28. This description of farming regions is based on Kerridge, E., The Agricultural Revolution, especially the frontespiece map, and Thirsk, J., 'The Farming Regions of England', in Thirsk, J., (ed), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, pp.1-113. Bedfordshire farming regions are drawn on Map 4.

29. B.R.O., CRT 160/72.

30. Fussell, G., The English Dairy Farmer, 1500-1900.

31. This point is made in The Directory of Bedfordshire, 1853, introduction.

32. See Godber, J., A History of Bedfordshire, 1066-1888, p.275.

But at the eastern end of this belt, in the Ivel valley between Biggleswade and Shefford, sheep and poultry were the most prominent livestock.

This eastern edge of the fertile sands and gravels of the Greensand and river valleys was also the location of the most intensive and specialised form of agriculture in seventeenth century Bedfordshire: market-gardening.⁽³³⁾ This dominated the farming of a narrow strip of the eastern side of the county from Eaton Socon in the north to Shefford in the south, and it then turned westwards as far as Ampthill. The first mention of gardening uncovered by Dr. Beavington is at Sandy in 1610. It used to be thought that it was protestant refugees who had introduced this form of agriculture, but the names of early Sandy gardeners are solidly English: Palmer, Cooper and Wortley, for example. Although Sandy was a considerable distance from a market town, the navigable part of the Ouse flowed just outside its boundaries by the 1630's which enabled its produce to be transported. Also, the Great North Road was very close to this eastern market-gardening strip.

It seems to have been quite a family business in these early years. In 1577, Thomas Palmer bequeathed his three acres to his son Richard, whose 1618 will describes him as a gard^ener, and in 1662, a John Palmer of Sandy died and was described as a gard^ener.⁽³⁴⁾ By 1841, Sandy and Biggleswade were the main centres. At this date, the former contained seventy nine gard^eners and the latter forty nine.⁽³⁵⁾ By 1957, thirty parishes in this belt were actively involved.⁽³⁶⁾

The alluvial river valleys were also ideal for the cultivation of woad and Bedfordshire was one of the major national producers in the late sixteenth century. Milbrook, just west of Ampthill, on the river Ivel, was an important centre.⁽³⁷⁾

33. This account of market gardening is based largely on Beavington, F., 'Early Market-Gardening in Bedfordshire', Transactions of The Institute of British Geographers, xxxvii, pp. 91-100, and an article in The Bedfordshire Magazine, xiv, particularly pp. 148-50. See Map 4 for the extent of these farming regions.
34. B.R.O., CRT 130/Sandy 11 and 13, and CRT. 160/55.
35. B.R.O., Pym MSS, P.M., catalogue, 1841 Census.
36. Beavington, F., op. cit., pp. 91-2.
37. Thirsk, J., 'Farming Techniques', in Thirsk, J., (ed), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, p. 175, and Thirsk, J., 'Seventeenth Century Agriculture and Social Change', Ag. H.R., xviii, Supplement: Land, Church and People, p. 161.

The market towns were thoroughly involved with this agricultural pattern. Dunstable, Bedford, Luton, Pottton, Biggleswade and Shefford all possessed thriving corn markets. Biggleswade, Bedford, Pottton and Leighton had important cattle markets, and Shefford, Luton and Pottton sold wildfowl and poultry. Woburn situated at the western end of the dairying belt, dealt with cheese and butter.⁽³⁸⁾ The greater population increase in these towns than in the rest of the county in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries created a much heavier urban demand for food within Bedfordshire and the development of agricultural specialisation in the form of dairying and market gardening can be related, in part at least, to this growth of the urban sector.⁽³⁹⁾ The multiplication in the numbers of urban inns, which was examined earlier, encouraged the production of barley for malting purposes. The spread of communications links was partly the result of commercial pressures to assist the marketing of produce and in turn, it eased transport problems and made available a wider market and therefore stimulated increased agricultural output.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Until the navigation of the Ouse as far as Great Barford, Bedfordshire corn was transported by road to St. Ives or St. Neots, in Huntingdonshire, for shipment from King's Lynn and this port played an important part in the economy of the county. Many of the early seventeenth century leases of the Earl of Kent's estates at Blunham and Flitton contain a provision that the tenant must fetch a certain number of loads of sea coal from St. Ives which had arrived from King's Lynn.⁽⁴¹⁾ The growth of the Bedfordshire population, and the fact that this part of England was among the most densely populated regions of the country, meant that some of the livestock which passed through on the Great North Road and Watling Street on its way to London was for Bedfordshire consumption. The Ickniel Way, the ancient east-west thoroughfare of England passed through Dunstable and Luton, and Stourbridge fair in Worcestershire, one of the largest in England, was a favourite venue for some of the local gentry. So Bedfordshire was part of a wider commercial network, which expanded in association with the spread of communications.

38. For markets, see Everitt, A., 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce', in Thirsk, J., (ed), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, pp. 466-593.

39. For a detailed discussion of population growth, see Chapter 2, Section 1, part (i).

40. See Section 2 of this chapter.

41. B.R.O., Lucas MSS, particularly L.1/14.

But the most significant influence upon Bedfordshire was exerted by the growth of London as a centre for agricultural consumption.⁽⁴²⁾ The south of the county was only thirty miles away and was traversed by Watling Street. The growth of London encouraged the production of barley to make malt for the capital's brewers and Bedfordshire dairy produce was sent in increasing amounts in the early seventeenth century. The larks from Dunstable downs and pigeons from the county found their way to London eating houses.⁽⁴³⁾ The Great North Road passed through the market-gardening belt of the east and enabled fruit and vegetables to be easily transported to London.

(b) Northamptonshire

In the sixteenth century, William Camden described the county as "overrun with sheep", and as late as 1939, the most outstanding feature of Northamptonshire farming was the amount of acreage laid to grass. It had more sheep per one hundred acres of grass crops and rough grazings than any other lowland county in England.⁽⁴⁴⁾ The county has always been noted for its sheep.

Mrs. Thirsk explains the reasons for this: Firstly, much of Northamptonshire is heavy clay soil and it is difficult to grow arable crops on such soil. No part of the county is remarkable for its arable fertility. Secondly, more than half of the county was forest in the middle ages and was under grass. This acted as a brake upon agricultural improvement. Thirdly, between about 1460 and 1550, wool prices were higher than those of arable products. Finally, the lack of a navigable river meant that it was difficult to export grain because transport costs were higher than the value of the corn.⁽⁴⁵⁾ There was a predilection for pastoral farming.

In 1547, the large flocks of sheep in Northamptonshire were listed for the purposes of payment of Purveyance. From this, it is possible to calculate an approximate distribution of sheep.⁽⁴⁶⁾ It is clear that the heaviest concentration was in the most hilly parts of the county, particularly the south west and the north west. The hundreds of Sutton,

42. The influence of London is examined by Fisher, F.J., 'The Development of The London Food Market, 1540-1640, Ec.H.R., v; and in Carus-Wilson, E.M., (ed.), Essays in Economic History, i, particularly pp. 138-9.

43. Thirsk, J., 'Farming Techniques', in Thirsk, J., (ed.), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, p. 168, says that Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire possessed the most pigeons.

44. Camden, W., Britannia, (1695 edition), p. 430. Thirsk, J., 'Enclosure and Engrossing', in Thirsk, J., (ed.), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, pp. 250-1.

45. Thirsk, J., op.cit.

46. See Appendix 1: Distribution of Sheep in Northamptonshire. The list is in B.M., Addit. MSS, 25,084, fo. 1-11v. Purveyance was the statutory obligation of counties to provide livestock for the needs

Norton, Fawsley, Guilsborough and Rothwell contained the greatest concentration. The centre and east of the county were relatively lightly populated with sheep. The western division appears to have contained over two and a half times the number of sheep that the east possessed.

The same general distribution is true for 1595.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Again, the south western and north western hundreds of Sutton, Norton, Guilsborough, Fawsley and Rothwell, contained the heaviest concentration. The Nene valley, which passed through the east and south of the county contained the smallest proportion of sheep. However, the eastern division as a whole had increased its total number of sheep, whereas the numbers in the west division had declined overall. The fenland hundred of Nassaburgh had much larger flocks of sheep in 1595 than it had possessed in 1547. Indeed, by 1610, the eastern division contained 48,650 sheep, which was more than the west had possessed in 1547.⁽⁴⁸⁾ It seems that after 1550, the east gradually replaced the west as the area of largest numbers of sheep, although the heaviest concentrations remained in the north west and south west.

However, it would be a mistake to overestimate the place of sheep in the agriculture of Northamptonshire. After 1550, the relationship between wool prices and the price of arable products altered in favour of the latter and the trade depression of the 1620's and the collapse of Sir William Cokayne's cloth-finishing project adversely affected the woollen market.⁽⁴⁹⁾ The Spencer family abandoned direct sheep farming in 1628, reduced their flock by a third, and leased many of their estates. The Brudenells appear to have abandoned sheep farming altogether.⁽⁵⁰⁾

Also, Northamptonshire was situated in the 'Midland Plain' farming region of England and this was the classic area of mixed husbandry. In 1610, John Norden said that Northamptonshire had

"Manie and notable sheepe pastures, rich feedings for Cattle, fertile Corne groundes and lardge feilds greatly enrichinge the industrious husbandman and which made me most to marvayle were the great herdes of Swyne ..." (51)

46. of the royal household. See Mc. Gurk, J., 'Royal Purveyance in the Shire of Kent, 1590-1610', B.I.H.R., 1, pp. 58-69.

The distribution is plotted on Map 5.

47. See Appendix 1. The 1595 list is taken from N.R.O., Miss Jane Dore's suitcase of notes on the Elizabethan gentry of Northamptonshire. It seems that her notes are taken from some Montagu manuscripts.

The distribution is plotted on Map 6.

Finch, M., The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families, 1540-1640, N.R.S., xix, shows the importance of sheep to prominent gentry families like the Ishams, Brudenells, Spencers, Treshams and Fitzwilliams.

48. See Appendix 1.

49. Sir William Cokayne's project, a new form of treatment for raw wool, would have stimulated woollen production had it succeeded. For full detail, see Price, W., The English Patents of Monopoly.

50. Finch, M., op. cit.

51. Norden, J., Speculi Britanniae pars Altera or a Delinication of Northamptonshire being a brief historical and cheoreographical description of that county, (1610), (1720) edition; p.24.

John Morton in 1712, said that grain was the chief product of the county's agriculture.⁽⁵²⁾ The upland plateau of the west contained extensive arable acreage, particularly corn, as well as its sheep pasturage. Barley was not as important as in Bedfordshire and Wheat vied with barley for supremacy. Peas and beans were the main legumes and were grown primarily for consumption by pigs. In 1597, two hundred quarters of peas and beans were sent from Northamptonshire and Rutland to relieve distress in Somerset.⁽⁵³⁾

By the mid seventeenth century, woad was being cultivated at Charwelton, on the river Cherwell, and in the Nene valley.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Hempseed, rapeseed, linseed and flax were ideally suited to the rich soils of the river valleys and to the watery fenland soils. Hemp was grown at Nassington on the Nene and at Charwelton, on the river Cherwell, hemp and flax were grown.⁽⁵⁵⁾ In 1578, Lord Burghley made a detailed study of the financial potential of planting flax, hemp, rape and linseed on his fenland estate at Burghley, near Stamford. He concluded that flax would produce a five pound profit per acre and hemp, three pounds twelve shillings. He also contemplated the growth of poppies and radishes.⁽⁵⁶⁾ Flax was also grown on the wetter clays of the forest areas.

Market-gardening was not as important as in Bedfordshire. There was no Greensand ridge to assist its development. However, there may have been a purely local centre around Northampton and in the Ivel valley, to provide vegetables for the nearby market towns.⁽⁵⁷⁾

There was plenty of other livestock besides sheep. The waterlogged clays of the forests supported grass rather than arable crops and cattle, pigs and horses were plentiful. Northamptonshire was renowned as a horse

52. Morton, J., The Natural History of Northamptonshire, (1712 edition) p. 13.
53. A.P.C., xxv, 1596-7, p. 505.
See Thirsk, J., 'The Farming Regions of England', in Thirsk, J., (ed), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, pp. 89, 92-4, for a description of the mixed farming of Northamptonshire.
54. N.R.O., Northampton Public Library MSS, N.P.L. 168.
55. Thirsk, J., 'The Farming Regions of England', op.cit, p. 13; N.R.O., Northampton Public Library MSS, N.P.L. 168.
56. B.M., Lansdowne MSS, 26, fo. 140.
57. Thomas Browne of Northampton was described as a gardener in the 1630's, and Lewis Matlock in 1650. Thomas Glover of Burton Latimer on the Ivel was so described in 1667.
N.R.O., XYZ. 1,966; Wake, J., (ed), Quarter Sessions Records of the County of Northampton, N.R.S., i, p.56.

breeding centre in Henry VIII's reign. On one expedition to the county, his agents purchased two hundred and ninety eight horses for his wars, and in 1639, the county provided eighty post horses for Charles I. In 1644, the Earl of Manchester bought horses to the value of £1,756 at Northampton horse fair.⁽⁵⁸⁾ This was the greatest horse market in England, and there were other secondary ones at Rothwell and Fotheringhay. These three places are close to the royal forests, which were centres of horse breeding.⁽⁵⁹⁾

However, an analysis of those people selling horses at the Boughton Green horse fair of 1627, just outside Northampton, shows that the great majority came from Rothwell and Orlingbury hundreds, followed by another group from Guilsborough, Fawsley and Newbottle hundreds.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Therefore, it seems that the upland north and north west of the county was equally as important for horses as the forests.

Like the forests, the heavy fenland soils were used for sheep and cattle and pigs rather than for arable crops, and wildfowl were common in the marshy areas. Dairying was less prominent than in Bedfordshire, although there was some in the fertile Nene valley.

Commercial exploitation of rabbits was widespread. Brackley was a famous area for warrens and the strongest hares in England were said to come from Raundes near Higham Ferrers. Between October 1631 and January 1632, the Cokaynes of Rushton sold six thousand four hundred and fourteen rabbits to London buyers for twelve and six a dozen and they were paid another fifteen pounds fifteen and threepence for the skins.⁽⁶¹⁾

Northamptonshire contained more parks than any other county. There were twenty seven in 1610, and it is likely that venison was sold, commercially.⁽⁶²⁾ Certainly the larger landowners exploited the abundant timber on their estates. Between 1593 and 1594 Lord Burghley received nearly two thousand pounds from timber sales from Cliffe Park, and in 1647, Edward Heath of Collyweston sold about two thousand trees. However, the abundant timber resources of the royal forests were largely untapped until the 1660's because of administrative inefficiency.⁽⁶³⁾

58. N.R.O., Finch Hatton MSS, F.H.3,717; Everitt, A., The Local Community and The Great Rebellion, Historical Association, general series, lxx, p. 14. Northants Past and Present, v, p. 153.
59. Defoe, D., A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain, 2 vols., (1927 edition), p. 486, described Northampton as "the Center of all the Horse-Markets and Horse Fairs in England, there being here no less than four fairs in a Year", in the early eighteenth century.
60. N.R.O., ZA 2,455.
61. Morton, J., The Natural History of Northamptonshire, (1712), p. 10; N.R.O., Cokayne MSS, C. 2,811.
62. Steane, J., 'The Medieval Parks of Northamptonshire', Northants Past and Present, v, pp. 211-13.
63. N.R.O., Photostats of Exeter MSS at Burghley, 57/9 and 57/12. N.R.O., Society of Genealogists MSS, S.G.72. Pettit, P., The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire, 1558-1714.

There was, therefore, a very varied, flourishing mixed agriculture in Northamptonshire which was typified by Sir Thomas Tresham of Rushton, who sold horses, pigs, oxen, corn, hops, cheeses, pigeons, hides, timber and rabbits during his lifetime, as well as possessing six thousand seven hundred and eighty sheep in 1597.⁽⁶⁴⁾

The same development of specialised market towns in conjunction with the spread of communications links that was apparent in Bedfordshire also took place in Northamptonshire. The horse fair towns have been mentioned, but in addition, Brackley, a great Staple town in the middle ages, still maintained a flourishing woollen market, and Kettering had an important pig market. Peterborough, the only market town in the county situated on a navigable river, was the most important corn market and it had close links with King's Lynn, the port for the export of corn. For example, in the 1550's, John Rayner of Peterborough purchased iron and soap from King's Lynn and had it delivered via the navigable river Nene.⁽⁶⁵⁾

Northamptonshire's position astride five major north-south roads and one important west-east route by the 1670's meant that its agricultural economy was incorporated into that of a much wider area than just the county itself. Northampton became a major distribution centre for the whole of the East Midlands and although the majority of the dealers at the Boughton Green Horse Fair of 1627 came from within the county, there was a large contingent from Buckinghamshire, smaller ones from Leicestershire, Warwickshire and Hertfordshire, and a handful of dealers from Oxfordshire.⁽⁶⁶⁾ Stourbridge Fair was a favourite shopping ground for local gentry like the Shirleys of Astwell and local wool was sent to the Wiltshire and Norfolk cloth industries. Because of Northamptonshire's location in the middle of nine adjoining counties, there were other market towns nearer at hand. The Shirleys of Astwell made regular visits to Banbury, across the south western boundary, in the 1590's.⁽⁶⁷⁾ There were no less than thirteen market towns within a few miles of the county boundaries and many more were slightly longer distances away.⁽⁶⁸⁾

64. Finch, M., The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families, 1540-1640, p. 46. No map of Northamptonshire farming regions has been drawn because they were not as specialised or as distinct as those of Bedfordshire. Maps 5 and 6 show the sheep distribution. The forests and fenland were largely pastoral areas. But corn and other livestock apart from sheep were apparent everywhere, particularly in the west and north. The river valleys contained some specialised farming like dairying and flax and other cash crops. This summary and the text should be sufficient.

65. P.R.O., C1/1384/39.

66. N.R.O., ZA 2,455.

67. Leicestershire Record Office, Ferrers MSS, 2,329(6). A superb account book of the Shirleys, 1592-6.

68. Everitt, A., 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce', in Thirsk, J.,

An Overstone lease of 1593 contained a clause which necessitated the collection of coals each Whitsun from Bedworth, Warwickshire. (69)

The market towns were the centres of greatest population growth in the county between 1524 and 1670 and this increase stimulated agricultural production and was undoubtedly related to the spread of communications. (70)

But it was the magnetic influence of London that was the most important factor in the local agriculture. It was not as important as in Bedfordshire because the latter was nearer to London. The live Northamptonshire sheep was as important as its meat and its fleece, and many of the finest specimens were used as breeders by other sheep farmers, or were sent to London for some special feast. Local wool was sold to London in contracts such as that entered into by Edward Griffin of Dingley in 1591, when he agreed to supply one hundred and twenty todods a year. In 1560, the wool merchanting business of the Isham family transferred its headquarters from London to Lamport in Northamptonshire. (71)

Carriers left Wellingborough and Kettering for London every week, and the weekly Stamford carrier passed through Peterborough on the Great North Road. The Shirleys of Astwell purchased the family coaches, their wines and spices, and their hawks and falcons from London. By the 1650's, prominent Northamptonshire gentry were even sending liquid cash to London by the carriers and this became common practice after the Restoration. Northamptonshire pigeons, horses, pigs and cattle were all transported to the capital in increasing numbers after 1540. Cattle on their way south to London often used local pastures to fatten up on for a brief time and wool and dairy produce from the north of England and from north Wales passed through the county on Watling Street, the Great North Road, or the Richmond road. (72)

68. (ed), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, pp. 473-5. The thirteen were Crowland, Market Deeping, and Stamford (Lincolnshire); Uppingham (Rutland); Hallaton, Market Harborough and Lutterworth (Leicestershire); Rugby (Warwickshire); Banbury and Deddington (Oxfordshire); Olney and Stoney Stratford (Buckinghamshire); and Yaxley (Huntingdonshire).
69. N.R.O., XYZ 4,939.
70. See Chapter 2, Table VI for the population increase of the market towns. Appendix 3 contains all the population estimates for these towns.
71. Finch, M., op. cit., p.46. P.R.O., REq.2/212/72. Ramsey, G., John Isham: Mercer and Merchant Adventurer, N.R.S., xxi, introduction.
72. Cal. S.P.D., 1623-5, p. 180. The carrier left Kettering every Wednesday, and Wellingborough every Monday. N.R.O., Northampton Public Library MSS, N.P.L. 1,364. Leicestershire Record Office, Ferrers MSS, 2,329(b), fo.122-3, 118v, and 73. Davies, M., 'Country Gentry and Payments to London, 1650-1714', Ec.H.R., 2nd s, xxiv. Thirsk, J., 'Farming Techniques', in Thirsk, J., (ed), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, p. 168. Hill, C., Change and Continuity in Seventeenth Century England, p.3, mentions the increasing trade that took place between London and the north of England and Wales. Chartres, J.A., 'Road Carrying in England and Seventeenth Century: Myth and Reality', Ec.H.R. 2nd s, xxx, demonstrates the spread of London influence throughout England, by a survey of carrying services from the capital.

(c) Conclusion

In both counties, the great variety within the classic mixed husbandry of the Midland Plain was amply demonstrated. The spread of communications was vital to their agrarian economy and it made both counties part of an agricultural region that extended far beyond mere county boundaries. Urban population growth, transportation improvements and farming specialisation are all completely interrelated.

But above all else, the influence of London was paramount.

Dr. James has recently concluded that the Great North Road made even Durham county much less isolated from the capital than was once believed.⁽⁷³⁾ The proximity of Bedfordshire and to a lesser extent, Northamptonshire, to this centre of urban consumption helped to mould their agriculture into the form it took in the seventeenth century, with much more specialization in the type of crop grown, in the use of livestock, and in the marketing structure.

These changes were reflected in the social structure. The geographical position of both counties, especially Northamptonshire's boundaries with nine other counties, laid the foundation for their incorporation not only within the Midland farming area, but also within the influence of London. At least two thirds of all Northamptonshire gentry families which held titles of knighthood or above between 1558 and 1642 owned land in neighbouring counties. Over half of the gentry of both counties appear to have found brides from outside the county and the proportion of London matches steadily increased. Six Lord Mayors of London and thirteen other prominent London merchants established gentry families in Northamptonshire between 1490 and 1680, and five Lord Mayors and eleven metropolitan merchants did the same in Bedfordshire. According to the Visitation of London of the 1630's, Northamptonshire provided the fourth highest number of first members of the gentry families to settle in London from the English counties. Only approximately one quarter of the gentry of either county in 1642 had settled in the county before 1500.⁽⁷⁴⁾

Agricultural and social change went hand in hand and were, no doubt, partly both cause and effect of each other.

This is also true in another sense. Dr. Thirsk has suggested that there was a predominance of large farmers in corn areas and small

73. James, M., Family, Lineage and Civil Society: Durham, 1500-1640.

74. These points are taken from Chapter 2, Section 2, where they are examined in more detail and where the sources are given. They have been included here to reinforce this impression of agricultural change and growing influence of London.

holdings in pastoral districts.⁽⁷⁵⁾ This is logical in view of the fact that arable areas were usually situated on the best soils. The investigation of social structure in the next chapter reveals the truth of this argument. The greatest proportion of largest houses in Bedfordshire in the seventeenth century were in the market-gardening belt on the eastern side of the county and in the barley region of the south. The largest proportion of smallest houses were in the north of the county, the area of heavy clays where arable farming was less fruitful. Similarly, the most prosperous area of Northamptonshire in 1674 and the region with the greatest proportion of larger houses was the southern side of the county, the rich soils of the Nene valley and the south west, where arable farming was more prominent. Similarly, the smallest houses were more concentrated in the forest and the north west and north of the county, the classic regions of sheep grazing and horse breeding.⁽⁷⁶⁾

Finally, the opinion of an anonymous writer of the early seventeenth century summarises the most important feature of the agriculture of these two counties. He undoubtedly exaggerated, but he was convinced that Northamptonshire and five neighbouring counties sent more produce and animals to London than all the rest of the kingdom.⁽⁷⁷⁾

(ii) More Specialised Aspects of Agriculture

The purpose of this part of the section is to pursue the investigation of agricultural developments by concentrating upon some more technical and specialised aspects. Because it is not intended to be a history of farming in either county, much of the evidence, with the exception of the analysis of enclosure, is fragmentary and not every possible source has been examined. However, a general impression is obtainable.⁽⁷⁸⁾

75. Thirsk, J., 'Seventeenth Century Agriculture and Social Change', Ag.H.R., xviii, Supplement, Land, Church and People, pp.148-177.
76. See Chapter 2, Section 2, part (ii), where these points are discussed in greater detail.
77. B.M., Hargrave MSS, 321, 'Causes of Poverty and Abuses in Northamptonshire, fo. 266.
78. Of prime importance to this part is the controversy between Dr. Kerridge and Messrs. Chambers and Mingay. Kerridge, E., The Agricultural Revolution, argues that it took place in the seventeenth century. Chambers, J., and Mingay, G., The Agricultural Revolution, 1750-1880, date the Agricultural Revolution after 1750. There is also controversy on the forces which fuelled the Revolution. Tawney, R.H., The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century, singled out the rack-renting of the private landlord and the lack of security of copyhold tenure, which enabled easy eviction and enclosure. Kerridge, E., Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth Century and After, says that copyhold was secure, eviction was rare, and Revolution was achieved with peasant cooperation, not at his expense. See also, Appleby, A., 'Agrarian Capitalism or Seigneurial Reaction? The North-West of England, 1500-1700', A.H.R., lxxx, pp.574-95.

(a) Land Use

The variety of mixed farming which was a feature of both counties enabled local landowners to adapt more easily than those of monoculture areas to the changing conditions of the sixteenth century. When the price of arable produce increased in relation to that of sheep in the second half of the sixteenth century, local conditions could accommodate the change of emphasis. It has already been mentioned that several prominent sheep farmers of Northamptonshire changed to a rentier existence in the 1630's and diversified their interests. In 1649, David Papillon of Thorpe Lubbenham wrote that he was going to rear sheep, sow cereals and market butter, milk and cheese. (79)

In the main, the inflexible three field course of permanent grass and tillage seems to have remained the most common form of crop rotation in the Midland Plain until the second half of the seventeenth century. Had there been convertible husbandry, the advantages of enclosure would have been almost non-existent. A terrier of Northill, Bedfordshire, in 1632 says that the county had but the three fields of "tilth, breache and fallow". In 1649, David Papillon placed thirteen hundred yards of hedging around his pasture, which illustrated its permanence.

However, there were some exceptions. There was some convertible husbandry at Ampthill and Chicksands in Bedfordshire, and at Bampton, Hardwick, Gretton, Apethorpe, and Duddington in Northamptonshire in the early and mid seventeenth century. There was also some at Hellidon, Grafton, Charwelton and Greens Norton in Northamptonshire and turnips and clover were grown at Rothwell, Kettering, Geddington and Hellidon in the late seventeenth century. But permanent enclosure rather than convertible husbandry was the prevalent form of agricultural improvement in the Midland Plain. (80)

Dr. Kerridge also considers that the production of commercial crops like rape and linseed was part of the Agricultural Revolution. Such crops were grown in the Northamptonshire fenland and river valleys in the seventeenth century. (81) In the parts of Bedfordshire where woad was grown, it seems to have been incorporated into a system of convertible

79. N.R.O., Papillon MSS, P(L)5.

80. Kerridge, E., The Agricultural Revolution, pp. 92, 104, 108, 184, 188, 193, 204-5, 289-90. On Page 40 he says that a change to convertible husbandry was one criterion for the term Agricultural Revolution to be applied. P.R.O., SP. 46/88/241-69. "Tilth" means cereals, and "breache" means peas and beans, N.R.O., Papillon MSS, P(L)5.

81. See Section 3 of this chapter.

husbandry. It was a good first crop while the pasture was being broken up over a period of years for arable use.⁽⁸²⁾ Also, meadows were being watered at Weekley, Aynho and Deene in Northamptonshire, and Turvey in Bedfordshire in the seventeenth century.⁽⁸³⁾

The high quality of Northamptonshire sheep as breeders has been mentioned earlier and new strains were experimented with, continually.⁽⁸⁴⁾

On the Bedfordshire estates of the Earl of Kent, the leases sometimes included stipulations about manuring. Thomas Fowler of Shillington undertook to turn half of his straw into manure, and in 1639, a Flitton lease specified that the tenant must manure his land every six years according to the custom of the country. As early as the 1540's, Richard Fisher of Northill settled a debt by payment in manure. Pigeon dung was apparently valued most highly and both counties were particularly well endowed with pigeons.⁽⁸⁵⁾

But the most revolutionary change in land use centred on the greatest technological achievement of the period in these two counties: the drainage of the fens. The possibilities of this were broached at the end of the sixteenth century. George Carleton, a Northamptonshire puritan gentleman, proposed drainage to Lord Burghley and the Commissioners of Sewers in 1584, but they decided that renovation of existing drains was more feasible. In 1597, an Act for the recovery of three hundred thousand acres of fenland is recorded in the Lords' Journals, but work did not begin in earnest until the entrepreneurial genius of Francis, fourth Earl of Bedford was brought to bear.⁽⁸⁶⁾

He was perhaps the greatest aristocratic entrepreneur of the first half of the seventeenth century. In the 1630's, he masterminded the first planned housing scheme in London on his Covent Garden estate, which was the prototype of the London square and of middle class urban architecture in Britain for the next two hundred years. He also began

82. Thirsk, J., 'Seventeenth Century Agriculture and Social Change', Ag. H.R., xviii, Supplement, Land Church and People, P.161.

83. Kerridge, E., op.cit., p. 252. Watering meadows was also a criterion of Revolution.

84. See Section 3. Finch, M., The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families, 1540-1640, p. 46, notes that the Spencer flock contained 5,537 breeders out of a total of 13,229 in 1576. Kerridge, E., op.cit., p.322.

85. B.R.O., Lucas MSS, L.14/50, L.5/1106. P.R.O., Cl/1307/54. Thirsk, J., 'Farming Techniques', in Thirsk, J., (ed), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, p. 168.

86. B.M., Lansdowne MSS, 41, 50-2; 44, fo. 196. L.J., ii, p. 208.

the rebuilding of Woburn, the family seat. (87)

In 1630, it was agreed to begin the drainage of the Bedford Level, three hundred thousand acres of fenland. Most of the land was in Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and Lincolnshire, but a little of low-lying eastern Bedfordshire and much of Nassaburgh hundred, Northamptonshire, was involved. The Earl of Bedford was to receive ninety five thousand acres, of which forty five thousand were to bear the costs of the enterprise. The Crown would receive twelve thousand acres. The Earl was also granted a weekly market and two yearly fairs on his Cambridgeshire manor of Thorney, while in Lincolnshire the Earl of Lindsey was to receive twenty four thousand acres. A Corporation was formed in 1634 and Vermuyden was brought over from Holland. The Earl of Bolingbroke of Bletsoe in Bedfordshire was also an important undertaker. (88)

However, the outbreak of Civil War delayed progress and not until 1663, when an Act for the Great Level was passed, did large-scale operations begin. The opposition to improvements in river navigation was repeated in this case and there was widespread rioting. (89)

This common purpose united the various counties involved and increased the development and feeling of regional unity within the east midlands, which was suggested earlier as a feature of the seventeenth century. (90)

(b) Land Tenure and Rents

Dr. Kerridge argues that many of the changes of the Agricultural Revolution were pioneered by copyholders, who would not have done so had they not possessed security of tenure. (91) Most of the energetic

87. See Appendix 21. Case Studies of certain families, for more detail of the activities of the fourth Earl of Bedford (d.1641). But important, here, is Olsen, D., Town Planning in London: The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, p.40.
88. The standard work on this subject is Darby, H., The Draining of The Fens. But also of special use is The Lock Gate; journal of the Great Ouse Restoration Society, 1, pp. 118-20, and B.R.O., Bagshawe MSS, X.171/1,4, and 15. 48th Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records, pp. 480, B.M., Harleian MSS, 5,011, fo.75. In the 1620's Sir William Aylofffe and Sir Anthony Thomas undertook to drain to some fenland within three years and to reopen the rivers Nene and Welland, which had silted up, and keep them dredged. (Cal. S.P.D., 1619-23, p.141). There is no record of their progress or achievement.
89. For consideration of this rioting, see Chapter 7, Section 3, part (iii).
90. See Section 3.
91. Kerridge, E., Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth Century and After, pp. 33-4, 65-74. A copyholder was a tenant holding a piece of land by "copy of court roll according to the custom of the manor". A tenant at will is often called a copyholder and vice versa and he usually held his tenure by custom of the manor. However, he was more vulnerable than the copyholder because his title was not in his own keeping and the "will" of the manorial authority could remove him. See Tawney, R.H., The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century, pp. 47-8, and Simpson, A., An Introduction to the History of Land Law. A freeholder of course was not a tenant and was completely secure.

enclosers before the 1517 investigation appear to have been copyholders on lay land. My investigations into various classes of court records have uncovered only two cases of potential copyhold eviction. One of these was due to forgery of a court roll and the other was about a supposed agreement to transfer copyhold lands from one family to another.⁽⁹²⁾

But demographic increase and agricultural change, which were causing a growth in the urban density of population created a large group of people who had no rights at all. These were wasteland squatters or tenants at will who had the least security that anyone except villeins could have had. Tenants at will were common on the demesne lands of the Midland Plain and it seems that the shadowy distinction between copyhold and tenantry at will was the source of most evictions. In the 1580's there were fierce riots on Sir Valentine Knightley's manors of Badby and Newnham in Northamptonshire because he had seized the common. The tenants claimed common rights as copyholders, but Knightley insisted that they were tenants at will.⁽⁹³⁾

The Wilcox family seized the common as demesne in Shillington, Bedfordshire, in the 1550's, but the tenants claimed their assumed rights as copyholders, and in the 1540's the Watson family of Rockingham, Northamptonshire, summarily evicted their demesne tenants at will and enclosed it. At Luton, Bedfordshire, the movement of poor to the town was so great by 1618 that landlords were busy converting single dwellings into cottage tenements and even pulling some down to replace them with smaller tenements so that they could squeeze more rent from more people.⁽⁹⁴⁾ Appendix 2 indicates the heavy number of legal cases about disputed tenures and common rights which engulfed the courts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. If the Agricultural Revolution was based on security of copyhold, it was also founded upon deprivation of common rights and eviction of many tenants at will and cottagers.

The history of rents in these two counties seems to have followed the national pattern. There was a sharp rise in rents in the early sixteenth century, which could have helped to create the widespread

92. Leadam, I, (ed), The Domesday of Enclosures, 1517-18, i, p. 43. P.R.O., STAC.5/51/4, 1595; and P.R.O., DL.4/41/15 and DL.4/50/2, 1600-7. My investigation has been far from exhaustive. The major sources I have used are Requests, Star Chamber, Duchy of Lancaster, Chancery Proceedings, and Exchequer Bills and Answers. There are virtually no Assize or Quarter Sessions Records for either county.
93. Kerridge, E., op. cit., p. 45. P.R.O., STAC.5/K1/16, STAC.5/K10/17, STAC 5/K.15/13.
94. P.R.O., C1/1348/27; S.P.14/97/110; P.R.O.E 315/130. An Act of 1589 had tried to curb the spread of cottages by insisting that each one possessed four acres of land and was inhabited by only one family. But cities and market towns were exempt. Statutes of The Realm, iv, pt.ii, pp. 804-5.

inflation of the period between 1540 and 1640. On some Montagu estates in Northamptonshire rents went up by fifty per cent in the 1540's. However, it largely took the form of increased entry fines and this is most evident from the papers of the Earls of Kent. The excellent series of leases which survive for Blunham illustrate a doubling of entry fines about 1628. It was only in 1655 that they abandoned entry fines and increased the basic rent. Land which had previously had a fine of thirty six pounds a year and an annual rent of two pounds ten shillings, had a rent of eight pounds ten shillings a year in 1655. (95)

During the long dispute between the tenants of the Mulshoe family at Finedon between 1494 and 1538, the family raised the entry fines of those tenants who resisted their enclosures. In 1585, the tenants of Flitwick in Bedfordshire prosecuted William Fishe for charging entry fines against the custom of the manor. (96)

It would appear that the rents of Crown estates were less exploitative than those of private estates, which was the case in most of England. When the Honour of Grafton in Northamptonshire was about to be leased to Sir Francis Crane in the 1630's, the tenants opposed it because it would mean an increase in rent. (97)

(c) Enclosure

It was said earlier that enclosure was the most common form of agricultural improvement in the Midland Plain. The predilection for pastoral farming in much of the Plain which was caused by the soil composition, by the price of wool, and by the lack of suitable grain export facilities, ensured that enclosure would be important. (98)

95. See Kerridge, E., 'The Movement of Rent, 1540-1640', Ec.H.R. 2nd s., vi, particularly pp. 19, 25, 26, 27 and 30. Bowden, P., 'Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits, and Rents', in Thirsk, J., (ed), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, pp. 593-696. Dickens, A., Estate and Household Management in Bedfordshire c.1540, B.H.R.S., xxxvi, pp. 38-45 says that Sir John Gostwick of Willington told his son not to raise rents unless his tenants raised those of the subtenants. B.R.O., Lucas MSS, Ll/14. An entry fine was paid by the inheritor of a copyhold tenure before he was allowed to take it.
96. Leadam, I, (ed), Select Cases before the King's Council in Star Chamber, 1477-1509, Selden Society, xvi; Select Cases before the King's Council in Star Chamber, 1509-44, Selden Society, xxv, and P.R.O., REq. 2/83/33, E112/1/19. Finch, M., The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families, 1540-1640, pp. 49 and 73, says that the Tresham and Spencer revenue, between these dates, was largely increased through fines rather than rents.
97. P.R.O., E134/11 Chas. I/Michelmas 36. This point is made by Kerridge, E., op.cit., p.30, and by Appleby, A., 'Agrarian Capitalism or Seigniorial Reaction? The North-West of England, 1500-1700,' A.H.R., lxxx, pp. 590-2.
98. See Section 3.

Northamptonshire was among those counties most affected by enclosure. The 1517 Commission for Depopulation concluded that at least fourteen thousand acres of the county had been enclosed, which is approximately two per cent of the county. Between 1578 and 1607, a further twenty seven thousand acres were enclosed, which is about four per cent of the county. Between 1635 and 1638, Northamptonshire ranked third in the amount of fines paid by English counties in enclosure compositions. Professor Everitt estimates that the acreage of land enclosed in the county was possibly more than twice that of any other Midland county.⁽⁹⁹⁾

Out of a total of eighty two villages deserted between 1350 and 1900, forty nine were deserted between 1450 and 1700. The vast majority of the forty three which were deserted between 1500 and 1700 were in the south-west, west and north of Northamptonshire, or in the fenland hundred of Nassaburgh. There were only four desertions in the rich alluvial soils of the Nene valley on the southern side of the county. The upland west and north, then, which were the strongholds of the sheep farmer and horse-breeder and the pastoral area of the fenland appear to have been the regions of greatest enclosure, or certainly those of the most dramatic instances of depopulation.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

Bedfordshire was less affected by enclosure because sheep were not as important as barley, dairy cattle or market-gardening in local agriculture. The 1517 Commission reported that just over four thousand acres had been enclosed, which was approximately one and a half per cent of the county, and between 1578 and 1607 another two and one third per cent, or six thousand seven hundred acres, were enclosed. As late as 1794, only eighteen per cent of Bedfordshire parishes were enclosed. It also had the lowest proportion of deserted villages of any Midland county. Unfortunately, no dates of desertion exist but fifteen of the

99. For enclosure, see Tate, W., 'Enclosure Movements in Northamptonshire', Northants Past and Present, i; Leadam, I., The Domesday of Enclosures, 2 volumes; Gay, E., 'The Midland Revolt and Inquisitions of Depopulation, 1607', T.R.H.S., N.S., xviii; Gay, E., and Leadam, I., 'The Inquisition of Depopulation in 1517 and the Domesday of Enclosure', T.R.H.S., N.S., xiv; Thirsk, J., 'Enclosure and Engrossing', in Thirsk, J., (ed), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640; Everitt A., The Local Community and the Great Rebellion, Historical Association, general series, lxx, p.22.

For total acreage of the county, see Appendix 3. The percentages are my calculations.

100. From Allison, K; Beresford, M; and Hurst, J., The Deserted Villages of Northamptonshire, University of Leicester, Department of Local History, Occasional Paper, xviii. This contains a Gazetteer of all 82 villages. I have plotted the 43 which were deserted between 1500 and 1700 on Map 7. When compared to Map 3 it shows that most of these are in the upland west and the fenland east. The rating of 1.3 desertions per 10,000 acres in Northamptonshire was more than Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Huntingdonshire and Lincolnshire, the same as Leicestershire, but less than Oxfordshire, Rutland and Warwickshire.

Nineteen were located on the very rich soils of the Greensand ridge and the Ouse and Ivel valleys. Presumably, some were pastoral enclosures and some were arable enclosures because this was the region of the dairying and market gardening farming regions. There were a larger number of arable enclosures in Bedfordshire than in Northamptonshire. (101)

Density of population was heavier in midland England than in most other parts of the county and so the combination of particularly heavy enclosure and particularly high population growth between 1524 and the 1670's in Northamptonshire provoked widespread resistance. I doubt if Dr. Kerridge is correct when he asserts that the progress of agrarian capitalism produced "the greatest happiness of the greatest number". (102)

William Palmer of Warden, Bedfordshire, believed, in 1616, that "enclosed groundes are beneficiall many wayes both for the county and common weale where men live in a more civill life and conversation, and where cattell both bigge and strong are breded and where woode and fuell are mayntayned and thereby the poore not onelie relieved with fire but also by hedging, ditching and planting supported by setting to worke". (103)

But the local cottagers and labourers, for whom common grazing rights were an important means of subsistence, did not agree. Cottagers at Oundle, in Northamptonshire celebrated the seizure of a yeoman's wheat from their common in James I's reign by ringing the church bells, playing music and tossing their hats up from the steeple, and by immediately erecting tenements on the common and holding an illegal manor court without the Steward. In 1599, Sir Arthur Throckmorton's seizure of Whittlebury common was so violently opposed that he threatened to send the rioters to the wars at the next Musters. Northamptonshire was the centre of The Midland Revolt of 1607, in which enclosure played a large part, and there was sabotage to the river navigation improvements and fierce rioting against the drainage of the fens. In 1640, there was

101. Gay, E., *op.cit.* p.233; Godber, J., *A History of Bedfordshire, 1066-1888*, p. 180, *V.C.H. Bedfordshire*, II, p.130. Allison, K., Beresford, M., and Hurst, J., *op.cit.* Bedfordshire's rate of desertions was 0.5 per 10,000 acres. Those located in the dairying and market gardening belts are Hulcot, Segenhoe, Higham Gobion, Lower Gravenhurst, Cainhoe, Stondon, Astwick, Eyeworth, Stratton and Holme, Little Barford, Wyboston, Wilden, Colmworth and Chellington. The others are Yelden, Souldrop, Hockliffe and Chalgrave, see also B.R.O. CRT. 120/49.
102. Kerridge, E., *Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth Century and After*, p.127. He also believes that most enclosure after 1550 was not depopulating as Tawney, R., *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century*, had maintained. See Kerridge, E., *op.cit.*, pp.124-127.
103. P.R.O., E.112/68/49. Also B.M., Hargrave MSS, 321, fo.264ff., and H.M.C. Beaulieu MSS, pp.108-9, contain early seventeenth century tracts in support of enclosure.

an attack upon Sir Christopher Hatton's enclosure at Corby, Northamptonshire, that was said to have involved two hundred people. (104)

The lack of navigable rivers in either county until the fourth decade of the seventeenth century meant that both counties were short of fuel. This, together with increasing commercial exploitation of timber by the gentry, deprived the poor of their firewood. Six Bedfordshire towns petitioned that various landowners were stockpiling timber in 1634, and in 1603 there was rioting in Cliffe Park against the felling of timber. Clearance in the royal forests was violently opposed by the poor, together with any extension of forest boundaries because under forest law they had no fuel provision.

Depopulating enclosure did take place in Northamptonshire between 1524 and 1670. In 1606, Sir Walter Montagu was accused of reducing the population of Hanging Houghton, near Lamport, from one hundred and forty to twenty eight; in 1632, the Vicar of Preston Deanery claimed that the parish church was "utterlie demolished and most of the towne depopulated". In 1607, the Rector of Stottesbury had prosecuted the Washington and Pargiter families for pulling down the church and using the town as a grazing ground. Among the parishes whose estimated population is calculated to have declined the most, some residences of notable sheep farmers and enclosers appear: the Copes of Canons Ashby, which declined most of any Northamptonshire parish between 1524 and 1670; the Fitzwilliams at Marholm; the Onleys of Catesby; the Humphreys of Barton Seagrove; the Lanes at Sulby; the Osbornes of Kelmarsh, the Montagus of Boughton and the Knightleys of Fawsley. There are several others as well. (106)

Depopulation was less evident in Bedfordshire. (107)

104. P.R.O., STAC.8/121/20; STAC.5/R5/27; N.R.O., Brudenell MSS, Bru 0, vi, 2. Appendix 2 includes many more enclosure riots, but for most detail on these and on the Midland Revolt and opposition to river navigation and fen drainage, see Chapter 7.
105. P.R.O., C2/James I. P9/24, P.C.R., i-ii, 30lv., 1638; P.C.R., (Micro), 1634-5, p.56, P.R.O., STAC.8/121/3; STAC.8/127/17; E178/5549; Req. 2/36/99. Pettit, P., The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire, 1558-1714.
106. N.R.O., Isham MSS, I.L.3,006; P.R.O., E.112/226/75; E.112/226/11, E.112/110/176. Appendix 7 lists the parishes with greatest increases and greatest decreases in estimated population in Northamptonshire between 1524 and 1670. It is compiled from the estimates and calculations embodied in Appendix 3. Beresford, M., 'Habitation versus Improvement: The Debate on Enclosure by Agreement', in Fisher, F., (ed), Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England, Appendix, pp. 397-400, shows that of all depopulation cases in the court of Exchequer between 1518 and 1568, Northamptonshire had the highest proportion of any Midland county with 17 per cent of them. But 86 of the 103 Northants cases were before 1548.
107. Beresford, M., op.cit., Bedfordshire was seventh among the Midland counties with 10 per cent of all cases. 45 of the 55 Bedfordshire cases were before 1548.

4. INDUSTRY

(1) Bedfordshire

The excellent quality barley of the Chiltern region of south Bedfordshire provided the basis of flourishing malting industry in this area. The influence of London was crucial here and Luton and Dunstable supplied the capital. The great brewing family of Whitbread originated as small yeomen farmers in Gravenhurst in this part of the county. (108)(a)

It also formed the basis of a straw-plait industry in south Bedfordshire, which was centred upon Luton. The demand for luxury headgear from London was an important stimulus. In 1630, paupers were farmed out to a Hitchin hat manufacturer in Hertfordshire, a few miles north east of Luton. But the period of greatest expansion was in the late seventeenth century. In 1689, hat-makers of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Hertfordshire petitioned against a parliamentary bill to encourage the wearing of woollen caps and said that more than fourteen thousand persons owed their livelihood to the industry in these three counties. The figure seems a wild exaggeration, but in the early eighteenth century, Defoe said that the manufacture of straw-plait was "wonderfully encreas'd within a few Years past". Luton and Dunstable were the main Bedfordshire centres. The former was situated on the London to Richmond road, and the latter on Watling Street. (108)(b)

Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Northamptonshire together constituted one of the two major bone-lace manufacturing regions of England. Bromham and Stevington, a few miles north west of Bedford, were early centres in the sixteenth century, but in the seventeenth century, the main foci were in the centre and south of the county, particularly in villages and towns on the very fertile Greensand ridge and in the Ivel valley. Some flax and hemp were grown on these rich alluvial soils. In 1618, Woburn churchwardens were paying children to make lace, and in 1615, an Ampthill woman apprenticed her six year old daughter into bone-lace manufacture. A petition of lace-makers in

108a. The Whitbreads achieved social prominence in the eighteenth century. See Rapp, D., 'Social Mobility in the Eighteenth Century: the Whitbreads of Bedfordshire', Ec.H.R., 2nd s, xxvii.

108b. Freeman, C., Luton and The Hat Industry, Luton Museum, p.9; and The Romance of the Straw Hat, Luton Museum, p.14. Defoe, D., A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain, 2 vols., (1927 edition), p.513. Tranter, N., 'Demographic Change in Bedfordshire, 1670-1800', University of Nottingham, Ph.D., 1966, pp. 28-42, gives a useful survey of Bedfordshire industry. He says that by the eighteenth century, the main centres of straw-plait making were Dunstable, Luton, Houghton Regis, Leighton Buzzard, Totternhoe, Eaton Bray, Sundon, Toddington, Hockliffe and Caddington (page 33).

1698 suggests that Cranfield was the main centre with six hundred and fifty two persons said to be engaged in production, and Defoe said that "thro the whole South Part of this County the people are taken up with the Manufacture of Bone-Lace".

This area was close to London and was crossed by two major London roads. (109)

Defoe also said that there were very few manufactures other than malt, straw hats and bone-lace in the early eighteenth century. There was some cotton spinning at Kempston and Goldington, near Bedford; and some rush-matt making at Pavenham on the Ouse. There were extensive deposits of Fuller's earth, an essential cleansing agent for the woollen manufacturing industry, in west Bedfordshire, particularly at Woburn and Aspley; but apart from a wool-cleansing mill much further away at Eaton Socon in the north east, there is no evidence of much woollen manufacture. Bedfordshire was not renowned for its sheep. (110)

Equally, only the smallest beginnings of the great Bedfordshire brick industry are apparent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A Luton man had many "tyle brick crests" vandalised and two hundred "loads of clay ready digged" stolen in 1541 and there was a clay pit at Marston Moretaine in 1579. In the same year a licence was issued to Edmund Bollesworth of Leighton Buzzard to make bricks and tiles. Wootton became the main eighteenth century centre, and there was a tile kiln here in 1655 and in 1663, large numbers of bricks and tiles were purchased from here. But it was the coming of the railways that really fostered the industry's growth. (111)

Before 1800, Bedfordshire was very much an agricultural county and the main industries that did exist were developed from agricultural products. (112) The proximity of London and the accessibility of major

109. Buck, A., 'The Teaching of Lace-Making in the East Midlands', Folk Life, iv, pp.39-40. Freeman, C., Pillow Lace in the East Midlands, Luton Museum; N.R.O., General Notes, Box L-M., a transcript of the 1698 Petition of Lace-Makers. The original is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Defoe, D., op.cit., p.513.
110. Defoe, D., op.cit., p.512. Kennett, D., 'A Pauper Cloth-Making Account of the Seventeenth Century', Textile History, iv., p.1. B.M., Lansdowne MSS., 110, fo.2; B.M. Addit MSS, 34,374, fo.6 v. See also, Kennett, D., 'Lace-Making by Bedfordshire Paupers in the late eighteenth century', Textile History, v.
111. B.R.O., CRT.130/Luton 7; B.R.O., Pym MSS., P.M. 2,564-7; B.R.O., ABP/R 13., fo.155; B.R.O., X53/99; K.K.11. Tranter, N., thesis, op.cit., p.30.
112. This point is made by Tranter, N., thesis, op.cit., p.42.

road links helped to foster these industries and to determine their location in the same way that they had shaped the agriculture of the county.

(ii) Northamptonshire

Despite the abundance and fame of its sheep, there was no large scale woollen manufacturing industry in the county until the late seventeenth century. Northamptonshire wool was predominantly coarse and its main market was the worsted industry, which was already firmly established in East Anglia. The lack of Fuller's Earth and of a navigable river in the pastoral centres of the west contributed to this absence. John Morton mentioned a woollen industry in Peterborough in 1712, and it was pointed out earlier that the Nene was navigable as far as Peterborough, and the fenland was a prominent pastoral area of the county. ⁽¹¹³⁾

It was the export of raw wool that was more important. Dr. Chalklin says that Northamptonshire was the second most important wool-producing county in England according to packs per square mile in 1700. ⁽¹¹⁴⁾

The one exception to this absence of woollen manufacture was the Northampton glove industry. It appears to have had an early beginning because in the middle ages some local leases were paid for in gloves. In 1596, Sir Edward Montagu sold four hundred todde of wool to a Northampton grocer. ⁽¹¹⁵⁾

On a much smaller scale, there was some stocking-knitting and woollen weaving of tammies and shalloons in Rockingham Forest and around Kettering in the early seventeenth century, but it was on a cottage handicraft level. ⁽¹¹⁶⁾

There also appears to have been some cotton manufacturing in the fenland and in Rockingham Forest, the wetter soils of which were ideal for flax growing. A colony of Dutch weavers petitioned Lord Burghley to provide them with houses at Stamford on the edge of the fenland of Nassaburgh hundred in the late sixteenth century, and in 1630, Sir Francis Crane proposed to make tapestries at Grafton Regis, in the

113. Morton, J., The Natural History of Northamptonshire, (1712), p.24.

114. Chalklin, C., Seventeenth Century Kent: A Social and Economic History, p.102.

115. H.M.C., Dean and Chapter of Lincoln MSS., Report xii, part ix, p. 569. Bowden, P., The Wool Trade in Tudor and Stuart England. Thirak, J., 'Industries in The Countryside', in Fisher, F., (ed), Essays in The Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England, p. 71, notes that Northamptonshire was more renowned for wool export than for manufacture.

116. Thirak, J., 'The Farming Regions of England', in Thirak, J., (ed), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, pp. 96-7.

A tammy was made of thin woollen material, but a shalloon was much coarser.

heart of Whittlewood Forest.⁽¹¹⁷⁾ Northampton was very well served by road links; Stamford was on the Great North Road which was not far from Rockingham Forest; and Watling Street passed through the heart of Whittlewood Forest. Communications were obviously very important.

Bone-lace manufacture was very important by the late seventeenth century. Wellingborough was by far the largest centre with an estimated one thousand one hundred and forty six inhabitants engaged in it in 1698. Towcester was second with five hundred and ninety one. The main foci according to the 1698 Petition were the Nene valley between Northampton and Wellingborough, and the royal forests of the south. In 1610, a Fitzwilliam house at Peterborough in the fenland had bobbins for bone lace.⁽¹¹⁸⁾ All these areas had the wet soils which were suitable for flax and hemp growing and transport facilities were excellent.

Peterborough, the only town on a navigable river, and therefore the only major corn market in the county, was also an important malting centre. Six thousand quarters of barley a year were said to be processed here, in 1712. The Great North Road and Ermine Street allowed easy carriage to London or to the north.

Malting appears to have been most prominent in the eastern hundreds of Nassaburgh, Willybrook, Polebrook, Corby and Navisford, which lay near these roads. In 1636, the Privy Council told Northamptonshire justices that the existence of too many maltsters in this part of the county was causing a shortage of bread corn. A register was to be drawn up and other maltsters were to be suppressed. The local market may also have stimulated this development because six of the fifteen market towns of the county were in these five hundreds.⁽¹¹⁹⁾

Northamptonshire possessed some of the finest building stone in the country. Stanion, Weldon and King's Cliffe, in Rockingham Forest, were the main centres for greystone. Barnack was virtually exhausted by 1500. Roofing slate was quarried at Collyweston and Easton, just on the edge of the forest. The Great North Road was but a few miles to the east.

117. Alexander, A., and York, M., Handloom Weavers of Corby, Corby Historical Society, bulletin 1, p.11. Cal. S.P.D., 1629-31, p. 442; P.R.O., S.P.12/43/11.
118. N.R.O., General Notes, Box L-M, Transcript of 1698 Petition. Other figures are Yardley Hastings, 442; Grendon, 259; Denton, 257; Whittlebury, 206; Blakesley, 154; Earl's Barton, 127; Ashton, 101; Wilby, 69; Castle Ashby, 64, Lt. Houghton, 60; Ecton, 44. N.R.O., Fitzwilliam MSS, F(M)M.895.
119. Morton, J., The Natural History of Northamptonshire, (1712), p.24. H.M.C., Buccleuch MSS, 1, p. 275. The six market towns were Peterborough, Oundle, King's Cliffe, Weldon, Rockingham, and Thrapston.

Between 1588 and 1589, thirty thousand slates were dug at Collyweston. This figure had risen to seventy three thousand nine hundred by 1648, and fifty two thousand, five hundred the following year. (120)

I have found no evidence of other mining activity such as open-cast iron mining. In 1603, the Company of Mines Royal obtained a patent to mine for precious metals in Northamptonshire, among other counties, but there is no record of success. A meeting of the Mineral and Battery Works in 1622 mentioned certain mines near Stamford, and they may have been coal mines because in 1664, the Earl of Exeter exchanged lands near here in the hope of finding coal. (121)

But the most important industry of all was the Northampton boot and shoe industry. It owed its existence to the same mixture of natural resources and geographical location that we have seen before. There were plentiful supplies of leather from the surrounding countryside, and population growth and drift to the towns, coupled with the decline of the woollen industry, except for gloves, provided an available labour force. Mr. Mounfield says that the old emphases upon cattle and oak bark from the local forests as the keys to the industry's growth are misplaced. Other areas had both of these and a plentiful labour supply. The crucial reason was Northampton's accessibility to London. It was only a few miles east of Watling Street, and it stood on the London to Nottingham road. The Civil War was the great stimulus to the industry. Between March 1642 and 1648, it provided the armies of the mainland and Ireland with at least seventeen thousand pairs of shoes and three thousand five hundred and thirty four pairs of boots. (122)

So the communications network and the influence of London played the same formative role in the development of Northamptonshire industry that it had played in Bedfordshire. Equally, with the exception of the building stone, all these industries had agricultural roots: barley for malting; flax and hemp for lace and cotton manufacture; wool for tammies and shalloons; and leather and bark for boots and shoes.

120. V.C.H., Northamptonshire, ii, pp. 293-8; N.R.O., Society of Genealogists MSS, S.G.85; P.R.O., E112/32/65. Also, Raundes and Stanwick, in the Nene Valley, produced chimney marble, and Culworth and Byfield, in the extreme west, provided marble and black stone. Bedfordshire had much less building stone, but 'Totternhoe sandstone' was the key to the church towers of the south of the county (see Section 1).
121. A.P.C., xliv, p.241. Cooper, J., and Thirsk, J., (ed), Seventeenth Century Economic Documents, p. 217. N.R.O., Catalogue of Exeter MSS at Burghley, 49/26.
122. Mounfield, P.R., 'The Footwear Industry of The East Midlands', East Midlands Geographer, iii, pp. 396-409.

5. CONCLUSION

Therefore, it can be said that local resources, the spread of communications, the influence of the capital, population growth and relative increase of the urban sector against the rural sector, were all interwoven in this pattern of fundamental economic change in both counties in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

It is difficult to place one element above another. However, the communications and marketing network, is, I think, the most important. As Dr. Appleby says, there was widespread enclosure in the north west of England, but without this marketing pattern and proximity to large centres of consumption, it symbolised seigneurial reaction and not agrarian capitalism.⁽¹²³⁾ In Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, agrarian capitalism did develop in the form of more specialised crop production; of vast undertakings like the drainage of the fens; of enclosure; and of many of the criteria which Dr. Kerridge established for a seventeenth century Agricultural Revolution.

Close on the heels of agrarian capitalism came industrial development. By the last decade of the seventeenth century, lace manufacture, straw-plait making and malting were large scale industries whose workers numbered thousands. The Northampton boot and shoe industry reached its take-off point half a century earlier.

The keynote of the period between 1500 and 1700 was constant, massive economic development and fluidity. It has already been hinted that this was reflected in the demographic and social structure spheres. The next chapter analyses these aspects, and the following two assess the extent of change and mobility in the landownership pattern of the two counties.

123. Appleby, A., op.cit.

CHAPTER 2

DEMOGRAPHY, SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH

This chapter attempts to construct an economic geography of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. The main sources for this are lay subsidy rolls, ecclesiastical censi, and Hearth Tax returns. A detailed discussion of these sources, their problems and meaning, is given in Appendices 3 and 4. These Appendices embody the mass of statistics and calculations from which the tables in this chapter have been constructed. The reader is recommended to make constant reference to these. Some methodological problems are discussed in the text, but it needs to be said at the outset that to draw too rigid conclusions from such records and such statistical analysis is dangerous. The various categories of taxation assessments and divisions at various dates do not always exactly correspond and there are some significant gaps in the surviving documents. However, general trends and patterns and comparative distinctions can be drawn, I think. Also, the tables and the data in the relevant Appendices may be useful to subsequent historians of these two counties. It is one duty of the social historian to provide a source of reference for his colleagues, and to attempt, at least, an analysis of the material.

The reader is also recommended to make constant reference to Maps 8-16.

The chapter is divided into the three sections indicated by the title. In each section, the county is considered in its entirety, first, and comparisons between the two counties are made. Wherever possible, evidence from other counties is introduced to assess any similarities or distinctions. Then variations within each county are examined and regional differences are pointed out. At all stages, chronological changes in the county as a whole and within regions of each county are analysed. The period covered is approximately that between 1524 and 1674, but these limits are extended in some parts, of the chapter, notably in the sections on population increase and distribution of wealth.

As the table of contents at the beginning of the thesis points out, the main themes to be examined are population increase between 1377 and 1674; density of population; social structure, and geographical distribution of wealth. The conclusion finds that all these themes can be correlated and that a pattern does emerge.

Basically, this pattern portrays a richer, more heavily populated Bedfordshire, compared to its neighbour, with a definite division between a less densely settled, poorer northern region, and a richer, more thickly inhabited south and east part of the county.

Northamptonshire, although less heavily populated and poorer than Bedfordshire, did undergo greater population increase in the period 1377 and 1674, and it contained a distinctly more prosperous and more densely inhabited eastern region, and a much poorer, more lightly settled north and west area.

1. DEMOGRAPHY

(1) Population Growth, 1377-1674

(a) The county as a whole
Bedfordshire

Table I (a): Population Estimates for (a) Bedfordshire (1)

	1377 (2)	1524	1544/6	1563	1600	1603	1671
The County	20,339		26,989 including 17 parishes	21,896 including 3 parishes		33,640 including 5 parishes	38,817
34 parishes covered in 1524, 1563, 1603 and 1671		7,437	23,938	5,158		8,408	9,217
Parishes covered in 1544/6, 1563, 1603 and 1671			26,989	17,519		29,773	30,080
Parishes covered in 1544/6 and 1671				3,143	5,589	33,070	35,676
Miss Godber's 15 parishes, 1563, 1600 and 1671 (3)				19,629		33,640	5,277
Parishes covered in 1563 and 1603							33,817
Parishes covered in 1603 and 1671							

Table I (b): Percentage Changes in Population Estimates for Bedfordshire

	1377 -1563	1377 -1671	1524 -1563	1524 -1603	1524 -1671	1544/6 -1563	1544/6 -1603	1544/6 -1671	1563 -1600/3	1563 -1671	1600/3 -1671
The county	+13.2	+90.86	-30.64	+13.05	+23.93	-26.82	+24.38	-25.65	+63.01	+65.43	+3.79
34 parishes covered in 1524, 1563, 1603 and 1671									+69.93	+78.7	+9.62
Parishes covered in 1544/6, 1563, 1603 and 1671									+71.67	+71.67	+1.03
Parishes covered in 1544/6 and 1671									+77.8	+67.9	-5.60
Miss Godber's 15 parishes									+68.47		+0.53
Parishes covered in 1563 and 1603											
Parishes covered in 1603 and 1671											

Notes to Tables on previous page.

1. The estimates for 1524, 1544/6, 1563, 1603 and 1671 are derived from Appendix 3. An explanation of the methodology and discussion of the sources are found there.
2. From Dobson, R.B., The Peasants Revolt, p.55. The figure is derived from Poll Tax returns.
3. Godber, J., A History of Bedfordshire, 1066-1888, p. 216. She estimated the population of 15 parishes in 1600 using parish registers. She took 5 populous ones, 5 medium sized ones, and 5 lightly populated ones. I have estimated their population in 1563 and 1671.

The estimates of John Rickman, a nineteenth century demographer, are printed in British Parliamentary Papers, Population, 3, 1841 Census, pp. 36-7. His estimates are substantially higher than mine for the whole county. (1570: 33,611; 1600: 44,429; 1630: 54,902; 1670: 48,928). This is probably because he assumed a constant baptism rate based on that of 1801 and from this he worked backwards using parish registers. He is now considered an unreliable authority. For a critique of his method, see Hollingsworth, T., Historical Demography, p. 153 especially, and Glass, D., and Eversley, D., (ed), Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography, pp. 222-5.

Taken together, these estimates suggest that the population of Bedfordshire increased by between two-thirds and three quarters between 1563 and 1603, but that the growth between 1603 and 1671 was much less. Indeed, growth appears to have ceased at some point between these dates. These results are similar to those reached in the counties of Hertfordshire and Leicestershire, but are significantly higher than estimates for Cambridgeshire and Kent.⁽⁴⁾ Unfortunately, the sources do not allow us to establish whether population continued to rise until the 1620's or 1630's and then halted until the 1670's, which is the pattern confirmed by most demographic experts.⁽⁵⁾

The estimates also suggest that Professor Fisher was correct when he asserted that the population of England declined by about a quarter during the influenza epidemic and bad harvests of the late 1550's.⁽⁶⁾ The Bedfordshire population appears to have decreased by between a quarter and a third between 1524 and 1563, and between 1544 and 1603. The Cambridgeshire population also fell during these years, although that of Leicestershire increased by about a third.⁽⁷⁾ Perhaps Bedfordshire was more seriously affected by the epidemic than these counties. The epidemic may explain why the Bedfordshire population increased by less than a quarter between 1524/44 and 1603, despite the rapid growth after 1563, whereas Dr. Cornwall has estimated a 63% increase between 1524 and 1603 for England as a whole.⁽⁸⁾

4. Munby, L.M. 'Hertfordshire Population Statistics, 1563-1801', Herts. Local History Council, p. 21: a 58% rise between 1563 and 1603. V.C.H. Leicestershire, iii, pp. 137-145; 58% rise between 1563 and 1603 and a 5% increase between 1603-70. Hoskins, W., 'The Population of an English Village, 1086-1801: Wigston Magna', Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society, xxiii, : a 60% rise 1560-1620 and a tailing off after 1620. Spufford, M., Contrasting Communities, pp. 14-17, : Cambridgeshire population increased by only 34% between 1563 and 1664. Chalklin, C.W., Seventeenth Century Kent: A Social and Economic History, p. 27, : a 15-20% increase in rural Kent between 1550 and 1600, and little or no change after 1610.
5. For instance, Hollingsworth, T., op.cit.; Cornwall, J., 'English Population in the early Sixteenth Century', Ec.H.R., 2nd s., xxiii; Hoskins, W., op.cit.; Chalklin, C., op.cit.
6. Fisher, F.J., 'Influenza and Inflation in Tudor England', Ec.H.R., 2nd s., xviii; Hollingsworth, T., op.cit., pp. 236-7, quotes Fisher's estimate of a 23.7% decline between 1557 and 1558.
7. Spufford, M., op.cit., p. 14, : Cambridgeshire's population decreased by 6%; V.C.H. Leicestershire, iii, pp. 137-145. The population rose by 31% between 1524 and 1563.
8. Cornwall, J., op.cit., p. 44.

Between 1563 and 1671, the population appears to have risen by between 60 and 79%, which is similar to the rise experienced by Leicestershire; but approximately double that of Cambridgeshire, and approximately half that of Staffordshire.⁽⁹⁾

It seems that in the three centuries between the Poll Tax of 1377 and the Hearth Tax of 1671, the Bedfordshire population rose by 90.86%.

Musters Certificates have also been used as sources for population estimates.⁽¹⁰⁾ The only General Muster return for Bedfordshire that I have found is for 1638 and it records a total of 8,100.⁽¹¹⁾ The figure is suspiciously rounded to the nearest hundred, but if one adopts a multiplier of between 4 and 5, it reinforces the conclusion derived from the Liber Cleri of 1603 and from the Hearth Tax of 1671 that the Bedfordshire population totalled between 35,000 and 40,000 in the period 1603-71.

Northamptonshire

Table II (a): Population Estimates for Northamptonshire (12)

	1377	1524	1603	1665-1674
The county	40,225	64,420 (except for 4 parishes)		1670 : 97,328 1674 : 94,964
Diocese of Peterborough (Northants and Rutland)	46,219	71,668	90,305	1665/1670 : 109,763 1665/1674 : 107,399

Table II (b): Percentage Changes in Population Estimates for Northamptonshire

	1377 -1524	1377 -1603	1377 -1665/74	1524 -1603	1524 -1665/74	1603 -1665/74
The county	+60.15		1670: +142 1674: +136		1670: +50.59 1674: +46.92	
Diocese of Peterborough	+55.07	+95.4	1665/70 +137.5 1665/74 +132.3	+26.01	1665/70 +49.86 1665/74 +53.16	1665/74 + 18.9

9. V.C.H. Leicestershire, iii, pp. 137-145; Spufford, M., op.cit., p.16, Palliser, D., 'Dearth and Disease in Staffordshire, 1540-1670', in Chalklin, C., and Havinden, M., (ed), Rural Change and Urban Growth, 1500-1800, p. 72. In 1563, Staffordshire had 9,000 householders, and in 1665 nearly 21,000. Chalklin, C., op.cit., p. 27, notes that Kent had an estimated 130,000 inhabitants in 1603 and 150,000 in 1676, which is an increase of approximately one-sixth.
10. Rich, E., 'The Population of Elizabethan England', Ec.H.R., 2nd s, ii, uses Musters to estimate population. He suggests a multiple of 4, which is echoed by James, M., Family, Lineage and Civil Society: Durham, 1500-1640, p. 7. Hoskins; W., Local History in England, pp. 146-7, suggests a multiple of between 6 and 7, and this one is used by Watts, S.J., and Susan, J., From Border to Middle Shire: Northumberland, 1586-1625, p. 40, and by MacCaffrey, W., Exeter 1540-1640, p. 12.

The population of Northamptonshire and of the Diocese appear to have increased by between 55 and 60% in the period 1377-1524, and by 46-53% between 1524 and 1674. Overall, the county and the Diocese rose in population by between 132 and 142% in the three centuries after 1377. Unfortunately, the absence of any population source for 1563, - the Census returns of that year have not survived for the Diocese of Peterborough, - make it virtually impossible to compare these results with those of other counties, most of which use the 1563 Census as a basic denominator for estimates. It also prevents any tentative assessment of the effect of the epidemic of the mid-sixteenth century. However, the Diocese of Peterborough appears to have expanded in population much less than England as a whole between 1524 and 1603, but it increased more than Leicestershire, between 1603 and 1670, and at approximately the same rate as Kent. ⁽¹³⁾

The General Musters Certificate of 1638 appears to be drastically incomplete. It totals only 7,678 and even if the multiplier of 7 is used, the resulting figure is merely half the estimated population of Northamptonshire in 1670 and 1674. ⁽¹⁴⁾

11. P.R.O., 30/26/48. The multiplier of 6 or 7 gives a much higher figure than my estimates suggest.
12. The 1377 estimate is taken from Dobson, R., op.cit., p. 55. For Northamptonshire, the estimates of 1524 and 1670 and 1674 are taken from Appendix 3, which gives a detailed discussion and description of the methodology and sources. Because of the existence of the Liber Cleri of 1603 and a total of communicants recorded on it for the Diocese of Peterborough, a separate set of estimates for the Diocese have been calculated. The Liber is in B.M., Harleian MSS, 280, fo. 160, but it is printed by Hollingsworth, T., op.cit., p. 83. It records a total of 54,182 communicants and the multiplier 5/3 has been used to estimate the population (See Appendix 3, Note 4, for explanation of this multiplier for lists of communicants.) For 1377, Professor Dobson's estimates for Northants and Rutland have been added together. Cornwall, J., op.cit., p. 42, estimated the 1524 Rutland population at 7,248 and this has been added to that of Northants. The 1665 Hearth Tax for Rutland (P.R.O., E179/255/10) records a total of 2,926 inhabited houses, which, when multiplied by 4.25, totals 12,435 persons. (See Appendix 3, Note 2, for explanation of this multiplier.) This has been added to the estimate from the 1674 Hearth Tax of Northamptonshire. The 1670 Northamptonshire Hearth Tax has also been used for that county as a comparison with that of 1674. The estimates of John Rickman (See Note 3) for Northamptonshire are: 1570, 73, 782; 1600: 100,604; 1630: 108,498; 1670: 101,056. Although his final estimate is fairly close to mine for the 1670's, the rest of them, like those for Bedfordshire, appear to be much too high.
13. Cornwall, J., op.cit., 44, estimates a 63% rise in England, 1524-1603. V.C.H. Leicestershire, iii, pp. 137-145, estimates a 5% rise in that county, 1603-70. Chalklin, C., op.cit., p. 27, estimates an increase of approximately one-sixth in Kent, 1603-76.
14. P.R.O., 30/26/48. See Note 10 for their use. Another General Muster of 1592 records only 3,216 able-bodied men and multiplication of this total results in an absurdly low figure. (H.M.C., Bucleuch MSS, iii, p. 29).

Comparison of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire

The absence of exactly parallel sources for the two counties means that a comparison is only possible for a few limited periods. These comparisons are taken from Tables I and II(b) and are embodied in the table below.

Table III: Percentage Changes in Population Estimates:
A Comparison of Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire
and The Diocese of Peterborough

	1377-1665/74	1524-1603	1524-1665/74	1603-1665/74
Bedfordshire	+90.86			+ 3.79
The 34 parishes of Bedford- shire		+ 13.05	+ 23.93	+ 9.62
Northampton- shire	$\frac{1670}{1674}$: + 142 + 136		$\frac{1670}{1674}$: +50.59 +46.92	
Diocese of Peterborough	$\frac{1665/70}{1665/74}$:+137.5 +132.3	+ 26.01	$\frac{1665/70}{1665/74}$:+49.86 +53.16	$\frac{1665/74}{+ 18.9}$

Northamptonshire and The Diocese of Peterborough underwent a markedly greater population increase than Bedfordshire between 1377 and 1670. Indeed, they appear to have expanded more than Bedfordshire in all the periods tabulated above. Table VII in the next section on population density illustrates the fact that they were less densely populated than Bedfordshire in 1377, but that by the sixteenth century they had virtually caught up and were more densely settled by the 1670's. (15) This comparison of population increase explains these changes. Perhaps the most significant difference is that of the period 1603-1665/74, when the Diocesan population expanded much more than that of Bedfordshire. But nevertheless, this expansion represented a marked decrease in the rate of acceleration in previous periods, and reinforces the general view that at some point in the early seventeenth century, population increase ceased. The evidence of Bedfordshire and of other counties suggests that the greatest period of population explosion between 1377 and 1670 was in the period 1563-1603.

The comparison indicates the same relative population changes for all three areas. Substantial growth between 1377 and 1670; the second highest growth period between 1524 and 1670; a smaller increase between 1524 and 1603. The years between 1603 and 1670 saw the lowest increase of all. The three areas conform to a broadly similar demographic pattern. But it has been demonstrated that in certain periods, their change is markedly different from that of other counties. Certainly, Bedfordshire, & Northamptonshire did not expand to the same degree.

15. See Table VII.

Regional variations are plentiful in the history of demographic change and it would be dangerous to draw conclusions of too general a form from these results. The next section reveals this regional variation even within a county.

(b) Variations within the counties

Bedfordshire

Table IV: Estimated Population Changes within (16)
Bedfordshire, 1563-1671

	1563-1603			1603-71			1563-1671		
	*Est. Pop.	Est. Pop.	% age	Est. Pop.	Est. Pop.	%	Est. Pop.	Est. Pop.	%
	1563	1603	Change	1603	1671	change	1563	1671	change
Stodden hundred	1,761	2,935	+66.67	2,935	2,643	- 9.88	1,761	2,645	+50.2
Willey hundred	2,434	3,252	+33.61	3,252	3,855	+18.54	2,604	4,063	+56.02
Barford hundred	1,047	1,594	+52.24	1,594	1,460	- 8.41	1,706	2,580	+51.24
Wixantree "	1,809	3,374	+86.52	3,374	2,735	-18.94	1,809	2,735	+51.19
Biggleswade "	1,720	3,065	+78.20	3,285	3,178	- 3.26	2,225	3,774	+59.34
Clifton hundred	1,528	2,872	+87.96	2,872	2,488	-13.37	1,528	2,488	+63.36
Redbornestoke "	2,800	4,727	+68.82	5,077	5,777	+13.79	2,800	5,161	+84.31
Flitt hundred	2,336	4,330	+85.35	4,330	4,610	+ 6.47	2,336	4,610	+97.43
Manshead "	3,225	5,199	+61.19	5,199	5,394	+ 3.75	3,858	6,274	+62.62
Bedford Borough	1,070	1,722	+60.91	1,722	1,892	+ 9.87	1,070	1,892	+76.83
Market Towns	3,420	6,537	+91.16	6,537	1,030	+ 7.54	4,758	8,606	+80.87

* Est.Pop. = Estimated Population

Between 1563 and 1603, the four eastern hundreds of Flitt, Clifton, Biggleswade and Wixantree experienced the greatest population increase, with Flitt and Clifton in the south-east, undergoing a slightly greater rise than the other two. Willey and Barford hundreds in the north

16. This table has been compiled from material in Appendix 3. The hundreds are listed in an order which corresponds, approximately, to a North to South descent through the county. See Map A For the position of the hundreds. In all calculations of population change between two dates, only those parishes for which estimates are available at both dates have been included. This is an obvious precaution against unrepresentative figures. Appendix 3, reveals the gaps in available estimates and this principle explains the different figures for some hundreds in the table at the same date. For example, Biddenham, in Willey hundred, is not recorded in the 1603 source. Therefore, it has been removed from the hundred total of 1563 in column 1 of the table, and from the hundred total of 1671 in column 5. However, it is recorded in 1563 and 1671, and therefore it is included in the hundred total in columns 7 and 8. So the total population of Willey hundred in 1563 (column 1) and 1563 (column 7) is different. The same practice has been used with all the other hundreds, and for the earlier Tables I and I(b). The case of the market towns is another example. Leighton Buzzard is absent from the 1563 list in Appendix 3. So it has been removed from the market town total population of 1603 and 1671. Biggleswade and Dunstable are absent from the 1603 list, so they have been removed from the 1563 total (column 1) and the 1671 total (column 5), but, clearly, not from the direct comparison between 1563 and 1671 (columns 7 and 8), where only Leighton is absent.

experienced the smallest growth and, overall, these two hundreds together with Stodden, which comprise the northern part of the county, increased their population less than the rest of the county.

The population of many hundreds seems to have declined between 1603 and 1671, and apart from Willey and Redbornestoke hundreds in the north-west and west of the county, none of them increased by very much.

Overall, in the century or so between 1563 and 1671, the four southernmost hundreds of Flitt, Manshead, Clifton and Redbornestoke increased their population more than the northern and eastern five. Stodden, Barford and Wixantree underwent the smallest growth. South Bedfordshire contained the best agricultural land and of course, was geographically closer to the booming economy of London. Chapter 1 revealed the mushrooming influence that London exercised upon the economy of Bedfordshire, particularly in the south. The northern part of the county was less noteworthy for its agriculture because of its heavy clay soils.⁽¹⁷⁾ The density of population section shows that the north was less havily settled and it was less inviting to newcomers and it was further away from London.⁽¹⁸⁾ Seven of the ten market towns of Bedfordshire were located in the four southern hundreds.

The market towns grew considerably more than the county taken as a whole. Between 1563 and 1603, the seven for which estimates are available in both years, nearly doubled their population, compared with a growth of between 63 and 78% for the county. It is interesting that the increase in the county town was less than that for the other market towns and this may reflect Bedford's position in the north of the county, away from London, or it may simply be a result of its much earlier growth. The towns of the south had more scope for expansion because they started the period, in many cases, as large villages rather than towns.

Between 1603 and 1671, the growth of the market towns was not greater than that of the county as a whole. This was the period during which population increase appears to have halted altogether. However, in the century between 1563 and 1671, they increased by 80.87% compared to 65.43% for the whole county. During this period, Bedford's growth was not much less than that of other market towns and so it expanded proportionally more than the others after 1603.⁽¹⁹⁾

17. See Chapter 1, for more detail on the economy and the influence of London.

18. See part (ii), (b) of this section.

19. The market towns of both counties are indicated in Appendix 3. A list can be found in Everitt, A., 'The Marketing of Agricultural Produce', in Thirsk, J., (ed), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, pp.473-5. The figures for the whole county are taken from Table I(b).

Northamptonshire

Table V: Estimated Population Changes within (20)
Northamptonshire, 1524-1674

WEST DIVISION	Est. Pop. 1524	Est. Pop. 1674	% change	EAST DIVISION	Est. Pop. 1524	Est. Pop. 1674	% change
Sutton hundred	3,765	5,611	+49.02	Rothwell hundred	3,598	5,168	+43.63
Warden hundred	1,789	2,716	+51.82	Corby hundred	6,468	8,054	+24.53
Norton hundred	1,772	2,928	+65.22	Orlinsbury "	3,094	3,532	+14.16
Towcester "	1,633	2,622	+60.56	Hamfordshoe "	2,406	4,513	+87.56
Cleley hundred	2,588	4,241	+63.87	Higham Ferrers "	3,728	4,709	+26.32
Fawsley hundred	3,302	6,757	+104.6	Huxloe hundred	5,291	6,235	+17.84
Guilsborough "	2,061	4,675	+125.4	Navisford "	1,376	1,623	+17.95
Newbottle "	2,367	4,637	+95.9	Polebrook "	2,425	3,213	+32.49
Spelhoe hundred	1,874	2,673	+42.64	Willybrook "	3,322	4,284	+28.96
Wymersley "	3,562	4,785	+34.35	Nassaburgh "	5,334	8,181	+53.38
The West Division overall	24,713	42,327	+67.22	The East Division overall	37,042	47,948	+29.43
NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH	2,665	3,413	+28.06				

Table VI: Estimated Population Changes in Forest (21)
Parishes, and Market Towns of
Northamptonshire, 1524-1670

	Estimated Population 1524	Estimated Population 1670	Percentage change
Market Towns	10,846	19,795	+82.47
Forest Parishes	10,029	15,628	+55.82
Rest of the County	43,545	61,587	+41.43
The Whole County	64,420	94,646	+46.92

By far the greatest increase in population took place in the three north-western hundreds of Fawsley, Guilsborough and Newbottle. These constituted the bulk of the upland part of the county and their economy was dominated by sheep and horses. The section on density of population reveals that they were the most thinly populated area of the county in 1524, and so there was much greater scope for expansion than elsewhere. (22)

Closely behind Newbottle hundred in percentage expansion between 1524 and 1674 was the small central hundred of Hamfordshoe, which was traversed by the valleys of the Nene and Ise rivers and which was dominated by the market town of Wellingborough, the second largest town

20. This material is taken from Appendix 3. The methodology explained in note 16 of this chapter has been used. For example, there is no estimate for Ellington in Guilsborough hundred in 1524. Therefore its estimate for 1670 has been removed from the hundred total for 1674. The hundreds can be found on Map B. In all, only 4 parishes in the county are absent from 1524.

21. For this table, the 1670 Hearth Tax has been used because this is the one from which I calculated individual parish estimates. I calculated only hundred totals from the 1674 Tax. Forest parishes are indicated in Appendix 3. But a list can be found in Pettit, P., The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire, 1558-1714, Tables XXII and XXIII.

22. See part (11), (b), Northamptonshire, of this section.

in the county in 1524. The eastern hundreds of Orlingbury, Huxloe and Naviaford had the smallest increase of any, but the extreme eastern hundred of Nassaburgh had the highest percentage increase of any hundred in the eastern division. There was an extensive tract of fenland in this hundred and historians have remarked that fenland parishes, which tended to be larger in area and have less social controls than fielden villages, were particularly liable to expand their population.⁽²³⁾

The same has been said of forest parishes,⁽²⁴⁾ but the second table reveals that although they did grow more than the fielden parts of the county, it was the market towns that underwent the most pronounced demographic change. Sheer size diluted the force of social controls and they were magnets to the increasing number of people displaced from rural villages by population growth and by enclosure. The percentage increase of the market towns was double that of the rest of the county, excluding forest villages as well. The increase for Northampton of less than 30% was much lower than that for the market towns as a whole. Its heyday had been before the sixteenth century.

It was the western division that expanded more than the eastern one and its population, nearly 13,000 less in 1524, was only 6,000 less by 1674.

In both counties, the market towns were the centres of greatest population increase and in both, the county town underwent a much slower expansion. But the growth of towns was much more advanced in Northamptonshire than in Bedfordshire. There were 15 parishes with an estimated population of more than 500 in 1524 Northamptonshire compared to only 9 in 1544 Bedfordshire and only 6 in Bedfordshire in 1563. By 1670, there were 44 in Northamptonshire, with 11 of these containing over 900 inhabitants, compared to 20 in Bedfordshire, with only 4 containing over 900.⁽²⁵⁾ However, it should be remembered, perhaps, that Northamptonshire was over twice as large in area than Bedfordshire.

23. See Map 3 for a topographical picture of the county. Everitt, A., Change in the Provinces in the Seventeenth-Century, University of Leicester, Department of Local History, Occasional Paper, 2nd s, i. Thirak, J., Fenland Farming in the Sixteenth Century, University of Leicester, Department of Local History, Occasional Paper, 2nd s, iii, and 'Industries in The Countryside', in Fisher, F., (ed), Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England.

24. Everitt, A., op.cit., and Pettit, P., op.cit.

25. See Appendix 5 for a list of towns with an estimated population of over 500. The material for that Appendix is embodied in more detail in Appendix 3.

(ii) Density of Population

(a) The County as a whole

Comparison of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire

Table VII: Persons per square mile in Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and the Diocese of Peterborough, 1377-1801 (26)

	1377	1524	1544	1563	1603	1665/1674	1801
Bedfordshire	43.82		64.76	47.19	78.94	1671: 83.64	142
Northamptonshire	39.67	64.42				1670: 95.98 1674: 93.69	138
Diocese of Peterborough	39.64	61.46			77.45	1665/ 74: 92.10	

As early as 1377, Bedfordshire, and Northamptonshire were among the most densely populated counties in England and until the 1640's, Midland and South-eastern England retained this preeminence. (27) This is important when one discusses comparisons between them, which should not obscure this general unity of the two counties.

However, there are clear distinctions. Bedfordshire was the more densely settled in 1377, but by 1603, Northamptonshire and the Diocese of Peterborough had almost caught up. By the 1670's, they were more densely populated than Bedfordshire and this change emphasizes the greater percentage increase of population that these two areas underwent between 1377 and 1674, which was discovered in the previous section. (28)

But by 1801, Bedfordshire had regained its lead which suggests that it had a greater demographic growth in the eighteenth century. (29) However, at all dates, the difference between the three areas was never very great.

26. The population estimates for the various dates are taken from Appendix 3. See note 12 for the estimates for Rutland. The acreages and square miles of every parish in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire are also in Appendix 3, and the acreages were taken from British Parliamentary Papers, Population 3, 1841 Census. The square miles column is made up of my calculations. The same source gives an acreage of 97,500 for Rutland, which is 152.4 square miles. This has been added to the Northamptonshire area to establish that of the Diocese.

The 1801 densities are taken from Darby, H., (ed), The New Historical Geography of England, p. 311. If a population estimate for a parish is absent at a particular date, the square miles of that parish have been removed from the number to be divided into the population estimate. This is another obvious precaution to avoid a distorted result.

27. This point is made by Thirsk, J., in 'Enclosing and Engrossing', in Thirsk, J., (ed), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, p. 347, and in Darby, H., (ed), op.cit., p. 191.

28. see particularly Table III.

29. Marshall, L., The Rural Population of Bedfordshire, 1671-1921, B.H.R.S., xvi, says that the Bedfordshire population rose more sharply in the eighteenth century than that of England as a whole.

These figures suggest that both Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire were more densely populated than Cambridgeshire, Leicestershire and Rutland in 1524, but that Cambridgeshire and Leicestershire had overtaken Bedfordshire by 1563. This may be further evidence to suggest that Bedfordshire suffered particularly badly during the epidemic of the 1550's. Neither Bedfordshire nor the Diocese of Peterborough were as densely populated as Kent in 1603, but by the 1670's Northamptonshire had almost caught up with Kent. However, both Bedfordshire and the Diocese were much more heavily settled than the northern counties of Northumberland and Yorkshire in the late sixteenth century.⁽³⁰⁾

(b) Variations within the counties

Bedfordshire

Table VIII: Persons per square mile in the hundreds of Bedfordshire, 1544-1671 ⁽³¹⁾

<u>Hundred</u>	<u>1544</u>	<u>1563</u>	<u>1603</u>	<u>1671</u>
Stodden	57.11	40.87	68.11	61.38
Willey	53.79	41.23	55.75	64.31
Barford	56.82	41.71	54.74	63.08
Wixamtree	71.90	44.35	82.71	67.07
Biggleswade	71.64	56.87	87.46	87.74
Clifton	64.19	54.31	102.1	88.45
Redbornestoke	63.40	50.53	85.41	97.18
Flitt	58.49	38.56	71.47	76.08
Manshead	69.55	57.37	78.25	100.3
BEDFORD BOROUGH	337.2	311.1	500.5	549.9
Market Towns	96.34	83.95	132.6	148.2
The Whole County	64.76	47.19	78.94	83.64

30. Spufford, M., op.cit., p. 16, gives the densities of population in Leicestershire and Cambridgeshire in 1524 and 1563. She gives the former at 12.3 households per 1,000 acres in 1524 and 16 households per 1,000 acres in 1563. The latter she estimates at 19.2 and 18 in 1524 and 1563, respectively. Using a multiplier of 4.25 (see Appendix 3, note 2, for the use of this multiplier) per household, I have translated these into persons per square mile. My results are Leicestershire: 32.64 in 1524 and 56.32 in 1563, and Cambridgeshire: 51.84 in 1524 and 48.64 in 1563.

Chalklin, C., op.cit., pp. 7 and 27, gives the acreage of Kent at just over 1 million, and he estimates the population in 1603 at 130,000 and in 1676 at 150,000. I have calculated these into densities of 83.18 persons per sq. mile in 1603, and 95.98 in 1676.

Watts, S.J., and Susan, J., op.cit., p.40, estimate the density of Northumberland at about 35 per sq. mile in 1584, and Cliffe, J., The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to Civil War, p. 2, estimates that of Yorkshire as 40 per sq. mile in the late sixteenth-century.

Cornwall, J., 'The People of Rutland in 1522', Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society, xxxvii, p. 8, estimates the density of Rutland at about 50 persons per square mile.

31. The material for this table is derived from Appendix 3. The results are plotted on Maps 8-11 which give a pictorial indication of the density of population within Bedfordshire, at these four dates. Only parishes with available population estimates at any date have been included for calculation of density. Missing parishes have had their area removed from the hundred total square mileage. Similarly,

In 1544, 1603 and 1671, the three northern hundreds of Stodden, Willey and Barford were the most sparsely settled. In 1563, Flitt hundred, in the south, was less heavily populated than even these three, but by 1603 it had overtaken them. In general, then, the north of Bedfordshire, the uninspiring clay soils where there was no market town and where the only substantial town was Eaton Socon, remained the most thinly settled part of the county between 1544 and 1671. In 1671, the distinction between the density of these hundreds and that of the rest of the county was more marked than at any other date.

The eastern hundreds of Wixantree and Biggleswade were the most densely populated in 1544, with Manshead, in the south-west, close behind. But gradually, between 1563 and 1671, the centre of heaviest settlement moved south as Clifton, Redbornestoke and Manshead hundreds became the most densely populated. The influence of London and the availability of rich agricultural land was clearly important to this movement. But Flitt hundred, in the extreme south-east, remained proportionally less thickly populated than south Bedfordshire as a whole. This hundred contained the greatest amount of land over 500 feet, the chalk downlands of the Chilterns, which was unsuited to intensive arable agriculture and this may explain its less dense settlement. ⁽³²⁾

At all dates, the market towns were much more heavily populated than the county as a whole. Most of these were in the south. Dunstable had by far the highest density of any of these towns in 1544, 1563, and 1671, with Bedford in second place, and Compton and Shefford in third. ⁽³³⁾

But the most important regional variation to emerge is that between the more thinly populated northern hundreds and the more heavily settled south of the county. This was the same distinction to emerge from the previous section about population growth. The north increased its population significantly less than the south. ⁽³⁴⁾

31. the square mileage of Leighton Buzzard in 1563, and of Biggleswade, Dunstable and Leighton in 1603, have been removed from the total area of the market towns for calculations at these dates because there are no population figures for them. In 1544, and 1671, there are population estimates for all 10 market towns.

32. see Map 1 for the topography of the county; and refer to Maps 2 and 4, for soil and farming regions.

33. see Appendix 6, for the heaviest densities among the Bedfordshire parishes.

34. see part (i), (b), Bedfordshire, of this section, and particularly Table IV.

Northamptonshire

Table IX: Persons per square mile in the hundreds (35)
of Northamptonshire, 1524-1674

HUNDREDS OF THE WEST DIVISION	1524	1674	HUNDREDS OF THE EAST DIVISION	1524	1674
Sutton	56.97	77.71	Rothwell	53.95	77.49
Warden	53.60	81.37	Corby	69.69	86.80
Norton	51.37	84.87	Orlingbury	66.92	76.38
Towcester	80.52	129.3	Hamfordshoe	93.19	174.8
Cleley	62.24	102.0	Higham Ferrers	78.39	99.04
Fawsley	42.97	87.94	Huxloe	80.41	94.73
Guilsborough	31.77	69.18	Navisford	69.01	81.39
Newbottle	44.35	86.90	Polebrook	76.81	101.7
Spelhoe	68.00	97.01	Willybrook	75.61	97.50
Wymersley	63.25	85.00	Nassaburgh	64.57	99.06
The West Division as a whole	52.07	85.22	The East Division as a whole	70.82	91.68
NORTHAMPTON Borough	1,125	1,441	THE WHOLE COUNTY	64.42	93.69

Table X: Persons per square mile in the Forest (36)
Villages and Market Towns of
Northamptonshire, 1524-1670

	<u>1524</u>	<u>1670</u>
Forest Villages	64.65	103.20
Market Towns	144.7	264.0
Rest of the county	56.28	78.59
The Whole county	64.42	95.98

In 1524, the three north-western hundreds of Guilsborough, Fawsley and Newbottle were the most thinly populated in the county. This area contained the largest tract of upland in Northamptonshire and was a region dominated by sheep and horses. Although, Guilsborough was still the most lightly populated hundred in 1674, the other two had increased their density, dramatically, and overall, this north-western area was no less heavily populated than the extreme west or the north central hundreds of the county. The previous section revealed that the highest percentage increase of population between 1524 and 1674 had taken place in this north western region. (37)

35. This is composed from population estimates and acreages embodied in Appendix 3. If a population estimate is absent for a particular parish at either date, the square mileage of that parish has been deducted from the total for the hundred. These results are pictorially displayed on Maps 12 and 13.
36. This is also compiled from material in Appendix 3. The square mileage of forest villages totals 151.42, and that of market towns, 74.95.
37. see part (i), (b), Northamptonshire, of this section, and Table V.

The most dense areas of settlement in 1524 were in the small hundreds of Towcester and Hamfordshoe, both of which were dominated by a large market town.⁽³⁸⁾ Behind these, came the Nene valley hundreds of Polebrook and Higham Ferrers, and Willybrook hundred, a large area of which was covered by Rockingham Forest.⁽³⁹⁾

In 1674, the small hundreds of Towcester and Hamfordshoe were still the most heavily populated. Behind these were the Nene valley hundreds of Nassaburgh, Willybrook, Polebrook, Huxloe, and Higham Ferrers, and Cleley hundred, which together with Willybrook, was composed largely of forest villages. In general, then, it was the market town dominated hundreds, the forest hundreds, and the hundreds of the low-lying, rich soiled, Nene valley, which had the highest density of population. Nassaburgh hundred, in the extreme east of the county, contained a substantial acreage of fenland and several fenland villages. It was the upland parts of the county, the west and north-west and the north central hundreds of Rothwell and Corby, which were the least heavily settled in 1674.

Overall, the mainly upland western division was much more thinly populated than the lower-lying east in 1524. It reduced the gap in the period between 1524 and 1674 but even at this later date, it was less heavily settled than the east. One reason for this, apart from topography and soil distinctions, maybe the fact that ten of the fifteen market towns of Northamptonshire were situated in the eastern division. Table X shows that in 1524 and 1670, the market towns possessed a dramatically heavier density of population than other parts of the county.

The forest villages were well behind the market towns in population density, and in 1524 they were not much more heavily settled than the rest of the county, excluding the market towns. Their density in 1524 was the same as that of the whole county. By 1670, they were substantially more densely populated than the rural parts of the county and this indicates that they did undergo a greater population increase than the fielden parts of the county.⁽⁴⁰⁾ But their 1670 density was not markedly higher than that of the whole county, and it is really the market towns that stand out as the foci of compact populations rather than these forest villages.

Some historians have concentrated on forest areas as regions of mushrooming population in the sixteenth century because of their large

38. Towcester, and Wellingborough.

39. see Map 3 for the topography of the county.

40. see Table VI for population growth in forest villages.

acreage and the absence of the close political and juridical supervision that existed in the open field areas. Such villages have even been seen as more likely to display traces of political and religious radicalism because of their distinctive settlement pattern and the increased pressure of population increase upon their resources. But although their population did increase more than that of open-field Northamptonshire, more attention should be paid, perhaps, to the market towns, where population explosion and high density were most marked. (41)

It is interesting to note that Northampton had a density of population almost three times that of Bedford in the early sixteenth century and in the 1670's. It was the most heavily populated town in either county at both dates. (42)

In conclusion, population density seems to have followed topographical features quite closely in both counties, with upland areas and regions of poor soil quality being the least heavily populated.

41. see Everitt, A., op.cit.; Thirsk, J., op.cit.; Everitt, A., The Pattern of Rural Dissent in the Nineteenth Century, University of Leicester, Department of Local History, Occasional Paper, 2nd s, iv, discusses forest areas and religious radicalism, and Hill, C., The World Turned Upside Down, particularly the chapter, 'Masterless Men', expresses the thesis that forest areas were more prone to political radicalism. One purpose of my chapter on Dunstable and Wellingborough (Chapter 8) is to concentrate on the market town.
42. see Table IX. For the heaviest densities of parishes, see Appendix 6.

2. SOCIAL STRUCTURE

(i) The County as a Whole

The nature of the sources means that little direct comparison between Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire can be made. I have used the 1524 Subsidy for Northamptonshire to assess its early sixteenth century social structure, and only fragments of this subsidy covering three hundreds survive or are legible for Bedfordshire. Equally, I have used the 1544/6 Subsidy for Bedfordshire social structure in the sixteenth century, but this one is very fragmentary and many returns are illegible for Northamptonshire. Therefore, the Hearth Taxes of the 1670's are the only direct sources of comparison.

Table XI: The Social Structure of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire from the Hearth Tax (43)

	Bedfordshire 1671	Northamptonshire 1674	Northamptonshire 1670
Total Houses	9,131	22,345	22,877
Total Hearths (excluding exemptions)	16,743	36,860	
Exempt	2,284	8,698	8,518
% age	25	38.9	37.2
Non-exempt 1 Hearth	3,045	6,627	
% age	33.3	29.7	
2 Hearth	1,669	3,314	
% age	18.3	14.8	
3 Hearth	950	1,594	
% age	10.4	7.1	
4 Hearth	465	852	
% age	5.1	3.8	
+ 4 Hearth	718	1,260	
% age	7.1	5.7	
% age of exempt 1 and 2 Hearths	76.6	83.4	
% age 3 and 4 Hearths	15.5	10.9	

Hearths per house

	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Excluding Exemptions</u>
Bedfordshire, 1671	2.08	2.44
Northamptonshire, 1674	2.04	2.70

43. The material for analysis of social structure is detailed in Appendix 4. There is also a discussion of sources and a guide to interpretation of these sources in this Appendix. The Hearth Taxes are complete for every parish in each county. For Northamptonshire, I have used the 1670 return to assess the social structure of every parish, but I have only analysed the 1674 Hearth Tax in hundreds rather than parishes. Perhaps the best examples of the use of Hearth Taxes in this fashion are Styles, P., 'The Social Structure of Kington Hundred in the reign of Charles II', Birmingham Archaeological Society Transactions, lxxviii, and Spufford, M., 'The Significance of The Cambridgeshire Hearth Tax', Proceedings of the Cambridgeshire Antiquarian Society, lv.

The most striking distinction is that between the proportion of exemptions. In 1670 and 1674, Northamptonshire had a much higher percentage of exempted houses than Bedfordshire. It is generally assumed that exemptions may be equated, approximately with the labouring section of the population.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Therefore, it seems that Northamptonshire contained a greater proportion of labourers. This is possibly related to the more pronounced topographical extremes of that county. Approximately, fifteen per cent of its acreage was forest and the eastern parts were very low-lying and merged into fenland. Much of the west was upland, predominantly pastoral plateau. By contrast, Bedfordshire, apart from Chiltern downlands in the extreme south, and some low-lying parts in the east, was mainly classical fielden clayland, with varying degrees of fertility, traversed by river valleys. Woodland and pastoral farming were much less evident. This extent of forest and the much higher stage of urban development in Northamptonshire meant that there were very many more ex-rural poor congregated in the forest villages and market towns.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Nearly a quarter of Bedfordshire's houses contained three hearths or more, compared to only 16.6% in Northamptonshire. This suggests that Bedfordshire contained more considerable yeomen and prosperous craftsmen and overall, it seems that Bedfordshire was a more prosperous county in its social structure than Northamptonshire. The former possessed a greater proportion of the wealthier groups in society and the latter contained a higher percentage of the poorer social strata. Bedfordshire was nearer to London and this may partly explain this distinction. But it is interesting to note that in 1642, Northamptonshire contained many more peers of the realm and baronets and substantial gentry families than Bedfordshire.⁽⁴⁶⁾ Perhaps the distinction between rich and poor was much more marked in Northamptonshire. Section 3 of this chapter shows that for most of the period 1334-1707, Bedfordshire was richer than its neighbour in terms of central taxation assessments per square mile. The only exception was in 1524, when Northamptonshire was richer in terms of lay wealth according to the Lay Subsidy. But if clerical and lay wealth were combined, Bedfordshire may have been the more prosperous.⁽⁴⁷⁾ The conclusions from the Heath Tax social structure confirm this pattern.

44. Everitt, A., 'Farm Labourers', in Thirsk, J., (ed), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, p. 397.

45. see Maps 1 and 3, for the geographical and topographical framework of the two counties.

46. see Appendix 11, and discussion of this point in Chapter 4, Section 3.

47. The section on distribution of wealth, Section 3. Detail of sources and their meaning is provided there.

A correlation of the evidence from the Hearth Tax and evidence from probate inventories can amplify some of these points.

But, first, it must be pointed out that both Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire were among the twelve richest counties in England according to wealth per acre in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. (48)
The flourishing agriculture and embryonic industry of the two counties, which were outlined in Chapter 1., explain this relative prosperity. (49)

Table XII: Analysis of Probate Inventories from Bedfordshire (50) between 1617 and 1619, and from Northamptonshire between 1630 and 1642.

BEDFORDSHIRE 1617-19	Median Value	Average Value	NORTHAMPTONSHIRE 1630-42	Median Value	Average Value
16 yeomen	£130	£149/11/7	40 yeomen	£111/4/0	£128/17/1
17 husbandmen	£121	£123/18/6	76 husbandmen	£ 67/13/0	£ 91/ 1/11
23 artisans and craftsmen	£ 22	£ 41/14/5	43 artisans and craftsmen	£ 34/3/10	£ 50/1 /7
22 labourers	£16	£ 38/ 3/6	30 labourers	£22/ 5/0	£ 27/14/4
Overall	£26/19/0		Overall	£50/15/4	

48. Buckatzsch, J., 'The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1086-1843', Ec.H.R., 2nd s, iii, Table 1. He concludes that Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire were in the top 12 according to wealth per acre between 1341 and 1693, with the exemption of the period, 1641-9. But Schofield, R., 'The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1334-1649', Ec.H.R., 2nd s, xviii, says that Buckatzsch's use of the 1641 Subsidy as a means of assessing wealth per acre is unsatisfactory, because by this time Subsidies were notoriously underrepresentative, they included only the wealthiest inhabitants and in many cases the assessment remained unaltered from one generation to the next. A much more comprehensive and reliable survey of taxation between 1648 and 1660 is in Everitt, A., Change in the Provinces in the Seventeenth Century, p. 53. He found that Northamptonshire was one of the richest counties in the country at this time and it had a very high assessment, whereas Buckatzsch had regarded it as one of the poorest in the 1640's. It seems fair to conclude that both counties were among the richest in England. Further detail is provided in Section. 3.
49. see Chapter 1. Sections 3 and 4.
50. The Bedfordshire inventories are the only survivals from the period 1600-50, and they are printed in Emmison, F.G., (ed.), Jacobean Household Inventories, 1617-19, B.H.R.S., xx. Barley, M., The English Farmhouse and Cottage, p.150, has calculated the median values for each social group, and the overall median value.
The Northamptonshire inventories are taken from N.R.O., Northamptonshire Wills, Series 2, Books A-E. These are from wills proved in the Archdeaconry Court of Northampton and are more likely to represent inhabitants from the centre and west of the county. Inhabitants of the east were more likely to have their wills proved in the Consistory Court of Peterborough. There are a great many probate inventories of Northamptonshire which are held at the County Record Office and Series 2 covers only the period 1610-44, upto about Book M. The Books from which I have taken my inventories cover the period 1630-42 and therefore their wealth may not be representative of the wealth for the whole period. Equally, I have not analysed every inventory in these Books and so it would be incorrect on both counts to call this group a sample. It is rather a random compilation of enough inventories, I hope, to justify statistical analysis for comparative purposes. The calculation of median and average values are mine.
A good example of the use of probate inventories is Havinden, M., (ed.), Household and Farm Inventories in Oxfordshire, 1550-90.

These figures tend to contradict some of the conclusions reached from the comparison of the Hearth Taxes. Those, together with assessment on a wealth per acre basis, had suggested that Bedfordshire was more prosperous than Northamptonshire. Also, the greater preponderance of noble families and baronets in the latter county had suggested a wider polarization between rich and poor in this county. Professor Everitt has said that there was probably a sharper distinction between the status and life-style of the small gentleman and the richer yeoman in Northamptonshire than in Kent, Devon or Leicestershire.⁽⁵¹⁾ But it appears that there was a more pronounced distinction between the wealth of the yeomen and the husbandmen of Bedfordshire on the one hand and that of the craftsmen and labourers on the other. Northamptonshire craftsmen were certainly wealthier than their Bedfordshire counterparts and the median values suggest that the labourers were also more prosperous. Certainly, Bedfordshire yeomen and husbandmen appear to have been wealthier than their Northamptonshire neighbours, but the overall values indicate that these social groups, taken as a unit, were more prosperous in the latter county. However, this may be nothing more than a reflection of the fact that the Northamptonshire inventories are from a later period and may have been boosted by inflation since the Bedfordshire ones were recorded. Indeed, the use of probate inventories is a precarious business. There is a substantial element of change in their survival and many small craftsmen, husbandmen and labourers did not make wills. At an individual level, they are completely unsafe. The range of values for Northamptonshire yeomen was from £17/6/8 to £407/7/6; for husbandmen, it was from £10/17/10 to £569/9/4, and one labourer's inventory totalled £255/17/10.

Mrs. Spufford has found that correlation of inventories with the Hearth Tax can be misleading. The area of highest median values in Cambridgeshire was also the region with a remarkable grouping of villages with over 50 per cent of houses containing only one hearth.⁽⁵²⁾ Also, the Bedfordshire inventories represent a mere fragment of the population at that time and those for Northamptonshire may be a very unrepresentative random compilation. In view of this, it would be dangerous to describe these conclusions as 'more than tentative.'

But despite this, one further point from the table should be made. It does appear that the economic distinction between husbandmen and yeomen was less pronounced in Bedfordshire than in Northamptonshire.

51. Everitt, A., Change in The Provinces in the Seventeenth Century, p.56.

52. Spufford, M., 'The Significance of The Cambridgeshire Hearth Tax', op.cit., p. 59.

Comparable median values for Nottinghamshire at this time enable a comparison to be made. Here, the distinction between yeoman and husbandman was as pronounced as it was in Northamptonshire and the median values of these two groups are very similar to those of Northamptonshire. Nottinghamshire yeomen and husbandmen were not as wealthy as their Bedfordshire counterparts. However, its craftsmen and labourers were much less prosperous than their Northamptonshire fellows and slightly less wealthy than those of Bedfordshire. The economic distinction between Nottinghamshire yeomen and husbandmen on the one hand and craftsmen and labourers is much more similar to that of Northamptonshire. Polarization was not as great as in Bedfordshire. At this time, Nottinghamshire was a much poorer county than the other two in terms of wealth per acre.⁽⁵³⁾

Some median values of inventories are also available for Lincolnshire and Essex. The former county had a median value of £34/7/9 in 1635 and the latter, £53 at the same time.⁽⁵⁴⁾ It is to be expected that Essex, a rich south-eastern county very close to London, would furnish richer inventories than Bedfordshire or Northamptonshire, but it is surprising that Lincolnshire's median value should be more than that of Bedfordshire. Lincolnshire was ranked 27th-32nd among the English counties on a wealth per acre basis. This may be a result of the inadequacy of Bedfordshire's small number of surviving inventories.⁽⁵⁵⁾

53. Barley, M., 'Farmhouses and Cottages, 1550-1725', Ec.H.R. 2nd s, vii, p.293, gives median values of 50 Nottinghamshire yeomen's inventories between 1575 and 1639 as £111; 69 husbandmen; £61; 48 craftsmen; £18; 94 labourers; £13. Buckatzsch, J., op.cit., Table 1, ranks Nottinghamshire between 16th and 28th in wealth per acre among the English counties between 1636 and 1843.
54. Barley, M., 'Farmhouses and Cottages, 1550-1725', op.cit., p.293. Barley, M., The English Farmhouse and Cottage, p. 150.
55. Buckatzsch, J., op.cit., Table 1.

(ii) Variations within the Counties

Bedfordshire

Table XIII: Social Structure of Bedfordshire from the 1544/6 Lay Subsidy (56)

HUNDRED	Total of Taxpayers whose Assessments are legible	Assessed at up to £2	%	Assessed at Between £3 & £10	%	Assessed at over £10	%
Stodden	432	294	68.05	123	28.47	15	3.48
Willey	604	383	63.42	194	32.12	27	4.46
Barford	411	253	61.56	139	33.83	19	4.61
Biggleswade	372	229	61.56	122	32.80	21	5.64
Wixantree	518	353	68.16	145	28.00	20	3.84
Redbornestoke	232	162	69.82	65	28.02	5	2.16
Clifton	320	207	64.71	98	30.63	15	4.66
Flitt	307	187	60.91	99	32.25	21	6.84
Manshead	529	334	63.13	175	33.08	20	3.79
BEDFORD BOROUGH	206	124	60.19	60	29.13	22	10.68
Market Towns	950	568	59.78	312	32.85	70	7.37
TOTAL for the County	3,931	2,526	64.24	1,220	30.96	185	4.79

It is very difficult to draw many conclusions about any regional variation in social structure. Distinctions in the table are mainly orientated around individual hundreds rather than clearly defined geographical regions. The central hundreds of Redbornestoke and Wixantree together with the extreme northern hundred of Stodden possessed the highest percentages of those assessed at upto £2. This category is usually defined as that which comprises poorer cottagers and labourers. They also possessed the smallest percentages of the middle category and broadly speaking, of the top category, although Manshead hundred in the south also had a small percentage of the richest social group. Flitt hundred in the south-east contained the highest

56. This table is compiled from material in Appendix 4. The 1524 Subsidy is too fragmentary, but the 1544/6 one is complete except for some gaps in Flitt, Manshead and Redbornestoke hundreds. It is complete enough to attempt an analysis. Unfortunately, unlike the 1524 Subsidy, this one does not include wage earners. For discussion of this source and for method of interpretation, see Appendix 4. Only those whose assessments are legible are recorded and so the total number of taxpayers for each hundred in this table do not necessarily correspond to the total used for population estimates in Appendix 3. Often a name survives without the assessment. Map A, shows the geographical location of the hundreds.

Table XIV: Social Structure of Bedfordshire from the 1671 Hearth Tax (57)

HUNDRED	Total Houses	Hearths per House	Exempt % age	1 HEARTH (excluding Exempt)	% age	2 HEARTH	% age	3 HEARTH	% age	4 HEARTH	% age	+4 HEARTH	% age	% age Exempt + 1 & 2 HTH
Stodden	622	1.89	169	215	34.6	126	20.3	51	8.2	27	4.3	34	5.4	82.1
Willey	956	1.83	274	362	37.9	160	16.7	64	6.7	27	2.8	69	7.2	83.3
Barford	606	1.96	155	232	38.3	88	14.5	60	9.9	27	4.4	44	7.3	78.4
Biggleswade	911	2.10	164	336	36.9	184	20.2	101	11.1	50	5.5	76	8.3	75.1
Wixamtree	643	2.13	115	258	40.1	138	21.5	50	7.8	30	4.7	52	8.0	79.5
Redbornestoke	1,359	2.04	331	500	36.8	233	17.1	138	10.2	56	4.1	101	7.5	78.2
Clifton	586	2.15	110	213	36.4	101	17.2	79	13.5	34	5.8	49	8.3	72.4
Flitt	1,085	2.22	350	235	21.7	209	19.3	130	12.0	68	6.3	93	8.4	73.3
Manshead	1,918	2.17	471	593	30.9	354	18.5	240	12.5	115	6.0	145	7.5	74.0
BEDFORD BOROUGH	445	2.29	145	101	22.7	76	17.1	37	8.3	31	7.0	55	12.3	72.4
The Whole County	9,131	2.08	2,284	3,045	33.3	1,669	18.3	950	10.4	465	5.1	718	7.9	76.6
Market Towns	2,467	2.33	688	627	25.4	424	17.2	300	12.2	187	7.6	241	9.7	70.5

57. This table is compiled from material in Appendix 4, where a detailed discussion of the Hearth Tax as a guide to social structure can be found. These results are plotted on Map 14, which gives a pictorial picture of these regional variations.

percentage of taxpayers in the richest category.

The market towns contained a smaller percentage of the lowest category than the county as a whole, and a higher proportion of the other two groups. Bedford had over 10 percent of its taxpayers assessed at more than £10 compared to only 4.8 percent for the county as a whole. Market towns, and county towns in particular, were social, economic and juridical centres and some gentlemen preferred to live in town, and the thriving economic framework produced rich artisans and businessmen. It is to be expected that they would contain a greater proportion of the very rich than rural areas.

The three northern hundreds of Willey, Barford and Stodden and the central western hundred of Redbornestoke contained the highest proportion of exempted and 1 hearth houses combined. These two categories can be equated, broadly, with the cottager and labourer sections of the population. This was the region of heavy clay soils and relatively poor agricultural resources. At the other end of the scale, they had proportionally fewer houses with more than 4 hearths than the south and east of the county. These four hundreds, together with neighbouring Wixamtree hundred, also had a smaller percentage of houses with three hearths and above than the remaining four hundreds in the east and south of the county.

Therefore, the northern half of the county does seem to have been less prosperous than the southern half. The average size of a house in the northern hundreds of Willey, Barford and Stodden was less than 2 hearths, whereas, in every other hundred, it was more than 2. This is also the conclusion reached by Mr. Alcock in his study of the timber-framed buildings of north Bedfordshire. He says that if the post-medieval houses of this area are compared with those of other regions, they appear very mean and resemble houses in some of the backward parts of northern England rather than most of southern England. He concludes that this must be due to the poor quality of the soil, which meant that individual holdings were very small.⁽⁵⁸⁾

The three eastern hundreds of Biggleswade, Clifton and Wixamtree contained the smallest percentage of exemptions, but their percentage of one hearth and exempted houses together was similar to that for the two southern hundreds of Flitt and Manshead. Therefore, the proportion of labourers and poorer cottagers, represented by exemptions, was smaller in the east than in the north-west, and south, but the percentage of cottagers, represented by the one hearth category, was greater than in other areas. These three hundreds also possessed the highest percentage

58. Alcock, N., 'Timber-framed buildings in north Bedfordshire', Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal, iv, pp. 57-9.

of houses with more than four hearths. This area corresponds, approximately, to the fertile belt of sands and gravels which traverses the eastern side of the county. Market-gardening was the main agricultural occupation, together with some dairying. Because of its fertility, holdings were larger in the east than in the north.

The greatest proportion of houses with three hearths or more was in the four hundreds of Clifton, Biggleswade, Flitt and Manshead. These are situated on the southern and eastern extremes of the county. With market gardening in the east, and dairying and rich barley yields in the south, these were the best agricultural areas.⁽⁵⁹⁾

Flitt hundred deserves special mention. It demonstrates the greatest polarization of any hundred because it possessed the highest percentage both of exemptions and of houses with more than four hearths. Its peculiarity may have been due to the existence, in the southern half of the hundred, of the widest expanse of Chiltern upland in the county, which meant that luscious arable land and large holdings coexisted with infertile pastoral areas and heathland, where holdings were small.

But the market towns exhibited the widest social polarization of all. They possessed an above average percentage both of exemptions and of houses with more than four hearths. It was most acute in Bedford, where nearly a third of the population appear to have been poorer cottager and labouring families. At the opposite pole, over 12 percent of the houses contained more than four hearths. Clearly, market towns were reception centres for the rural poor and for the wealthy. The urban oligarchy of prosperous tradesmen was, well represented, no doubt, in this top bracket. It is to the market towns, it seems, that we must look for evidence of political and religious dissent because they appear to have the widest social polarization and, therefore, the most likely triggers for unrest. This evidence is discussed in depth in chapters seven and eight.

To summarize, the 1671 Hearth Tax suggests that the north and west of Bedfordshire contained the greatest proportion of labourers and poor cottagers and the smallest percentage of larger houses. The east and south east possessed the greatest percentage of largest houses, and the east had the smallest percentage of exempted houses. The basic division is between a poorer North-west and a more prosperous south and east. This is also the basic division in density of population. The north-west was the most thinly settled part of Bedfordshire, and the south was the most heavily populated.⁽⁶⁰⁾

59. See Maps 2 and 4, for soils and farming regions in Bedfordshire.

60. See part (ii), (b), Bedfordshire, of this chapter, and Table VIII.

Northamptonshire

Table XV: The Social Structure of Northamptonshire from the Lay Subsidy of 1524 (61)

WEST DIVISION HUNDREDS	TOTAL OF TAXPAYERS WITH LEGIBLE ASSESSMENT	ASSESSED ON WAGES	% AGE	OTHERS ASSESSED UP TO £2	% AGE	TOTAL ASSESSED UP TO £2	% AGE	ASSESSED BETWEEN £3 & £10	% AGE	ASSESSED AT OVER £10	% AGE
Sutton	582	219	37.6	138	23.7	357	61.3	176	30.2	49	8.5
Wardon	311	111	35.7	61	19.6	172	55.3	102	32.8	37	11.9
Norton	308	111	36.0	52	16.9	163	52.9	117	37.8	28	9.1
Towcester	287	107	37.3	62	21.6	169	58.9	85	29.6	33	11.5
Cleley	418	143	34.2	92	22.0	235	56.2	140	33.5	43	10.3
Fawsley	583	113	19.4	113	19.4	226	38.8	317	54.4	40	6.8
Gulfsborough	357	17	4.8	83	23.2	100	28.0	208	58.0	49	13.7
Newbottle	418	92	22.0	85	19.4	177	41.4	210	50.2	31	8.4
Spelhoe	331	177	53.5	52	15.7	229	69.2	83	25.1	19	5.7
Wymersley	622	309	49.7	93	14.9	402	64.6	187	30.1	33	5.3
The West overall	4,217	1,399	33.2	831	19.7	2,230	52.9	1,625	38.5	362	8.6
HUNDREDS OF THE EAST DIVISION											
Rothwell	498	45	9.0	214	43.0	259	52.0	204	41.0	35	7.0
Corby	1,142	199	17.4	570	49.9	769	67.3	313	27.4	60	5.3
Orlinsbury *	277	-	-	-	-	127	45.8	130	46.9	20	7.8
Hamfordshoe *	399	-	-	-	-	205	51.4	156	39.1	38	9.5
Higham Ferrers *	582	-	-	-	-	275	47.2	266	45.7	41	7.1
Huxloe	934	138	14.8	416	44.5	554	59.3	283	30.3	97	10.4
Navisford	244	107	43.9	30	12.2	137	56.1	85	34.8	22	9.1
Polebrook	412	-	-	-	-	247	59.9	119	28.9	46	11.2
Willybrook	587	126	21.5	248	42.2	374	63.7	179	30.5	34	5.8
Nassaburgh	795	26	3.3	476	59.9	502	63.1	225	28.3	68	8.6
The East overall	5,870	641 out of 4,200	15.3	1,954 out of 4,200	46.5	3,449	58.8	1,960	33.4	461	7.8
NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH	470	212	45.1	86	18.3	298	63.4	119	25.3	53	11.3
The Whole County	10,557	2,252 out of 8,887	25.3	2,871 out of 8,887	32.3	5,977	56.6	3,704	35.1	876	8.3

* 1544 (see note 61)

Note to Table on previous page.

61. This table is compiled from material in Appendix 4. The 1524 Subsidy is well preserved for 17 of the 20 hundreds. But I have been unable to find a good 1524 return for the hundreds of Orlingbury, Higham Ferrers and Hamfordshoe. For the population part of this chapter, I filled the gap by consulting Sheail, J., 'The Distribution of Regional Wealth in England as indicated in the Lay Subsidy Returns, 1524/5', University of London, Ph.D., 1968, Volume 2, which lists the total taxpayers for these hundreds in 1524. But he does not record their individual assessments, obviously. Therefore, I have used the returns for these three hundreds from the 1544/6 Subsidy. This material is also embodied in Appendix 4, where the sources are discussed in more detail together with the method of analysis for these subsidies and what they can tell us.

Unfortunately, the 1544/6 Subsidy does not record assessments on wages and also the Polebrook hundred of 1524 is defective in that it omits to say whether the assessment was on wages or goods or lands. So there are no figures of those assessed on wages in these four hundreds. Column 6 in the table includes those assessed on wages. Some of the data in the table is plotted on Map 15.

It is generally assumed that those assessed on wages in 1524 are equivalent, approximately, to labourers and poorer cottagers.⁽⁶²⁾

Therefore, although the assessments on wages are incomplete for the eastern division, it seems that the upland, pastoral west of Northamptonshire had a significantly larger percentage of labourers and poorer cottagers, particularly in the south of the division, than the east of the county.

However, the three north-western hundreds of Fawsley, Guilsborough and Newbottle, possessed a relatively small percentage of these social groups than the rest of the west division, and in the east, the fenland hundred of Nassaburgh was almost devoid of wage-assessed taxpayers. The small, Nene valley hundred of Navisford seems to have contained an abnormally high proportion of labourers and poorer cottagers compared to the east division as a whole.

The two divisions were fairly similar in the overall proportion of persons assessed at upto £2, therefore the upper stratum of cottagers, those assessed upto £2 but not on wages, were much more prominent in the east division than in the west, although the combined percentage of labourers and cottagers was similar in both halves of the county. But in Nassaburgh hundred, nearly 60 percent of all taxpayers were assessed at upto £2, but not on wages. The upper stratum of cottagers was particularly concentrated in this hundred.

The three north-western hundreds contained the smallest percentage of cottagers and labourers in the county and the highest proportion of taxpayers assessed at between £3 and £10. But the figures for this middle category are very similar for both divisions of the county.

There is even more similarity in the percentage of taxpayers assessed at over £10, but within the divisions there are numerous distinctions. Guilsborough hundred, which in previous categories has been equated with neighbouring Fawsley, contained twice as large a percentage in the highest category than its neighbour, and indeed, it contained the highest percentage of any hundred.

There is a great deal of blurring at the edges with regard to these variations. The hundreds with the highest proportion of taxpayers assessed at upto £2 were not necessarily those with the lowest proportion in the top category. However, it does seem that the upland west, with the exception of the three north-western hundreds, possessed a greater proportion of labourers and poorer cottagers, and that the east had the greater proportion of non-wage assessed cottagers, especially in the

62. See Appendix 4. But the point is made by Everitt, A., 'Farm Labourers', in Thirsk, J., (ed), op.cit., p.397.

fenland. The greatest proportion of those assessed on wages was in two hundreds close to Northampton, and the classic horse-breeding and pastoral areas of Rothwell, Guilsborough, west Corby, and north Huxloe hundreds, contained very low proportions of labourers.

The north-west, the area of thinnest population,⁽⁶³⁾ of greatest extent of upland, and of few large settlements, had the lowest proportion of cottagers and labourers, the highest proportion of the middle category, and in Guilsborough, an unusually large concentration of the very wealthy. The area was characterized by a majority of independent shepherds or horse breeders, and prosperous yeomen or husbandmen, rather than by a mass of closely packed cottagers.

The county town possessed a greater proportion of those assessed on wages than the county as a whole, which is to be expected in a large market town with developing industry.⁽⁶⁴⁾ But the proportion of those assessed on wages in Spelhoe hundred is abnormally large and exceeds even that of Northampton. Perhaps the proximity of the county town influenced the occupations of the inhabitants of Spelhoe hundred and determined the hundred's economy. Social polarization was more acute in Northampton than in the rest of the county, with nearly half of the taxpayers assessed on wages, and over 11 percent assessed at more than £10. But this proportion in the highest category was exceeded by Towcester, Guilsborough and Wardon hundreds and nearly equalled by another. This is perhaps a surprising feature and suggests that Northampton was in a period of decline or in the trough between a past era of wealth and a future period of economic expansion. Usually, one would expect the county town to possess a greater proportion of the very wealthy than the more rural parts of the county.

In 1524, about 8 percent of Cambridgeshire taxpayers were assessed at over £10, which is an almost identical proportion to that of Northamptonshire. But over 50 percent of those recorded in the subsidy were assessed on wages, compared to just over 25 percent in Northamptonshire. Mrs. Spufford calls this Cambridgeshire figure astonishing and she

63. See part (ii), (b), Northamptonshire, of this section, and Table IX.

64. Northampton was a nascent industrial centre in 1524. Clarkson, L., The Pre-Industrial Economy in England, 1500-1750, pp.88-9, gives an occupation list for the town from the 1524 subsidy for 390 taxpayers. 10.5 percent were in textiles; 15.0 percent in drink and food processing; 7.5 percent in building and allied trades; 6.2 percent in distribution and transport; 5.1 percent in clothing; 3.0 percent in metal-working; and 23 percent in leather and allied trades. Already, leather was its predominant industry. See Chapter 1, Section 4, (ii) for consideration of the Northampton boot and shoe industry.

suggests high density of population as one possible cause. However, it was established earlier in the chapter that Northamptonshire's density appears to have been heavier than that of Cambridgeshire in 1524. Her second possible cause, the amount of seasonal labour required by a rich corn growing area, seems more likely.⁽⁶⁵⁾ Cambridgeshire was more renowned for its corn than Northamptonshire, where pastoral farming or mixed agriculture were more predominant. If this is true, it is possible that south Bedfordshire, a renowned barley producing region, may have possessed an unusually high proportion of seasonal wage labourers.⁽⁶⁶⁾

Mrs. Spufford also cites some figures for other counties. Leicestershire, in 1524, had only 22 percent of its taxpayers assessed on wages, which is slightly less than the figure for Northamptonshire, but Lincolnshire's proportion was between 28 and 41 percent, and Devon's was 36 percent. So both these counties appear to have contained more labourers and poorer cottagers than Northamptonshire. The latter county, with its proportion of 25.3 percent assessed on wages, conforms to the national average, which appears to have been between 25 and 33 percent.⁽⁶⁷⁾

65. Spufford, M., Contrasting Communities, pp.14-16 and 28-33.

66. I have analysed the fragments of the 1524 subsidy which do survive for Bedfordshire. The material for the analysis and the sources are contained in Appendix 4. The results show that 223 out of 437 taxpayers in Flitt hundred whose assessments are legible were assessed on wages. This is a percentage of 51.02 and since Flitt is a southern hundred in the barley growing area, this evidence may support the possibility. In neighbouring Manshead hundred, 92 out of 298 were assessed on wages, a proportion of 30.87 percent. This is much lower and Manshead was in the corn growing area. In Willey hundred in the north-west, the only other hundred to possess legible assessments, 220 out of 534 were assessed on wages, a proportion of 41.2 percent. Willey was situated in the heavy clay belt of the north where holdings were smaller and where agriculture was less prosperous. It is difficult to draw many conclusions from this, but all three hundreds did have a higher proportion assessed on wages than Northamptonshire as a whole and Bedfordshire was renowned for its corn.

67. Spufford, M., op.cit., pp. 28-33.

Table XVI: The Social Structure of Northamptonshire from the Hearth Tax of 1674 (68)

HUNDREDS OF THE WEST DIVISION	TOTAL HOUSES	HEARTH PER HOUSE	EXEMPT	% age	1 HEARTH (excluding exempt)	% age	2 HEARTH	% age	3 HEARTH	% age	4 HEARTH	% age	+ 4 HEARTH	% age	% age of EXEMPT and 1 & 2 HTH
Sutton	1,413	1.69	591	41.8	334	23.7	213	15.1	109	7.7	74	5.2	92	6.5	80.6
Wardon	639	1.57	253	39.6	188	29.4	99	15.5	45	7.0	23	3.6	31	4.9	84.5
Norton	689	1.54	308	44.7	188	27.3	87	12.6	52	7.5	21	3.0	33	4.9	84.6
Towcester	617	1.62	267	43.3	165	26.7	73	11.8	48	7.8	24	3.9	40	6.5	71.8
Cleley	998	1.53	394	39.5	324	32.4	130	13.0	71	7.1	30	3.0	49	5.0	84.9
Fawsley	1,590	1.56	594	37.4	523	32.8	234	14.7	104	6.5	58	3.6	77	5.0	84.9
Guilsborough	1,110	1.49	423	38.4	369	33.6	175	15.9	60	5.4	29	2.6	44	4.1	87.9
Newbottle	1,091	1.45	473	43.4	330	30.2	173	15.9	47	4.3	34	3.1	34	3.1	89.5
Spelhoe	629	1.51	282	44.8	163	25.9	102	16.2	36	5.7	22	3.5	24	3.9	86.9
Wymersley	1,126	1.53	489	43.4	318	28.3	161	14.3	69	6.1	32	2.8	57	5.1	86.0
The West Overall	9,892	1.55	4,074	41.2	2,902	29.3	1,447	14.6	641	6.6	347	3.4	481	4.9	85.1
HUNDREDS OF THE EAST DIVISION															
Rothwell	1,216	1.51	517	42.5	362	29.8	182	15.0	59	4.9	34	2.8	62	5.0	87.3
Corby	1,895	1.51	825	43.5	564	29.8	238	12.6	114	6.0	69	3.6	85	4.5	85.9
Orlinsbury	831	1.51	395	47.5	203	24.5	125	15.0	46	5.5	24	2.9	38	4.6	87.0
Hamfordshoe	1,062	1.58	499	47.0	232	21.8	155	14.6	90	8.5	39	3.7	47	4.4	83.4
Higham Ferrers	1,108	1.58	376	33.9	390	35.2	158	14.3	95	8.6	40	3.6	49	4.4	83.4
Huxloe	1,467	1.60	615	41.9	396	27.0	204	13.9	114	7.8	57	3.9	81	5.5	82.8
Navisford	382	1.67	129	33.8	124	32.4	52	13.6	37	9.7	18	4.7	22	5.8	79.8
Polebrook	756	1.80	150	19.8	319	42.2	102	13.5	80	10.6	42	5.6	63	8.3	75.5
Willybrook	1,008	1.59	360	35.7	318	31.6	169	16.8	76	7.5	44	4.4	41	4.0	84.1
Nassaburgh	1,925	1.76	509	26.5	684	35.5	320	16.6	164	8.5	85	4.4	163	8.5	78.6
The East Overall	11,650	1.61	4,375	37.6	3,592	30.8	1,705	14.6	875	7.5	452	4.5	651	5.0	83.0
NORTHAMPTON	803	2.15	249	31.0	133	16.6	162	20.2	78	9.7	53	6.6	128	15.9	67.8
The Whole County	22,345	1.65	8,698	38.9	6,627	29.7	3,314	14.8	1,594	7.1	852	3.8	1,260	5.7	83.4

68. This table is compiled from material contained in Appendix 4. Some of its results are plotted on Map 16.

Table XVII: The Social Structure of Market Towns and Forest Villages in Northants, 1670 (69)

	TOTAL HOUSES	EXEMPT	PERCENTAGE
Market Towns	4,658	1,669	35.8
Forest Villages	3,679	1,548	42.1
The rest of the county	14,453	5,301	36.7

The western division contained a greater proportion of exempted houses and a smaller percentage of houses with three hearths or more than the eastern division. This had been the case in 1524, when the west had contained a much higher proportion of taxpayers assessed on wages and it suggests that, at both dates, there were proportionally more labourers and poorer cottagers in the west than in the east. The eastern half of Northamptonshire, then, seems to have been more prosperous in 1674, and the average size of one of its houses was slightly larger than its western counterpart.

Within the west division, the north western hundreds of Wardon, Fawsley and Gillsborough, which approximately coincide with the largest extent of upland in the county, and the southern hundred of Cleley, most of which was forest, possessed a smaller percentage of exemptions. Also, within the eastern division, the fenland hundred of Nassaburgh, and the low-lying, Nene valley hundred of Polebrook, contained a considerably lower percentage of exemptions than the rest of the county. Navisford and Higham Ferrers hundreds, also in the Nene valley, and Willybrook hundred, much of which was forest, contained a lesser proportion of exemptions than the other five hundreds in the east division.

So it seems that the upland parts of the county, some of the forest areas, and the lowest lying eastern part of the county had proportionally less labourers and poorer cottagers than the rest of the county.

With the exception of Higham Ferrers hundred, the low-lying east of the county also contained the lowest percentage of all houses, including exemptions, with one hearth, in the east division. In the west, Sutton hundred possessed the lowest proportion of one hearth houses.

These same low-lying eastern hundreds, Nassaburgh, Polebrook and Navisford, and the western hundreds of Sutton and Towcester, contained the smallest percentage of houses with two hearths and below, and the largest proportion of houses with three hearths and above. Polebrook and Nassaburgh possessed a considerably greater proportion of the biggest houses, those with more than four hearths, than the rest of the county.

69. This table is also compiled from material in the same Appendix. The 1670 Hearth Tax is used for this table because I have analysed it on a parish basis, whereas the 1674 tax has been analysed by hundreds.

Taken as a whole, the results suggest that the eastern division was more prosperous than the west, but within the east division, the fenland and the Nene valley were the richest parts of all.

If we compare the 1674 situation with that of 1524, it emerges that at both dates the western half of Northamptonshire contained the greater proportion of labourers and poorer cottagers. But in 1524, the west had possessed a higher percentage of those assessed at between £3 and £10 and of those assessed at over £10.⁽⁷⁰⁾ However, in 1674, the east division contained a higher proportion of houses in the three hearth, four hearth, and more than four hearth categories. In other words, the west had retained its predominance of the poorer strata of society, but the east had gained preeminence in the percentage of the richer social groups. In both respects, it seems fair to say that the east had increased its prosperity much more than the west between 1524 and 1674, and by the later seventeenth century, it was considerably richer than the western half of the county, particularly in the fenland and the Nene valley.⁽⁷¹⁾

This pattern corresponds with the density of population distinctions discussed earlier. The low lying fenland and river valley hundreds of the east, which contained the greatest proportion of the largest houses, were also the most heavily populated parts of the county. Their soils were more fertile and their agricultural possibilities were more promising. The western division, which contained proportionally more of the lower social groups, and where the average house was smaller and the soils less fertile, was the more thinly populated half of the county.⁽⁷²⁾

Table XVII shows that the forest villages of Northamptonshire contained a greater proportion of exemptions than the market towns and the rest of the county. This evidence supports the contention that their larger acreage, which helped to dilute the forces of law and order, and the opportunity for a fresh start by forging a new life in the forest, attracted many labourers and poorer cottagers, who were forced out of the fielden villages by enclosure and demographic pressure. The market towns contained an almost identical percentage of exemptions to that of the rest of the county, excluding forest villages. Concentration of labourers and poorer cottagers does not appear to have been greater than in other areas, which is surprising in view of their abnormally high population

70. See Table XV.

71. See Map 3, for geography and topography of Northamptonshire.

72. See Table IX. Density of population is plotted on Map 16, for 1674.

growth compared to these other areas and in view of their industrial opportunities for the rural poor.⁽⁷³⁾

But it seems that it is social polarization rather than heavy concentration of poorer social groups which is the keynote of the market towns as a group. In Bedford and Northampton, the proportion of exemptions was approximately one third, another approximate third of the houses contained non-exempt one hearth and two hearths, and the final third possessed three hearths or more. In Northampton, nearly 16 percent of the houses had more than four hearths, a much higher proportion than that of Bedford, which is understandable in view of the former's heavier population and more flourishing commercial and industrial framework.⁽⁷⁴⁾ Coexistence of large numbers of very rich and very poor was more apparent in the market towns.

This comparison of Bedford and Northampton indicates a general similarity in social structure that was not apparent between their respective counties. Certainly, Northampton had a higher percentage of very large houses with more than four hearths, which suggests a more pronounced social polarization, but the broad tripartite division mentioned above seems accurate. Some comparison can be made with other towns:

Both Bedford and Northampton contained a lower proportion of exemptions than Colchester, Norwich, Newcastle and Exeter, but a higher proportion than York. Northampton and Bedford contained a slightly higher percentage of exemptions than Leicester. The broad similarity between Leicester, Bedford and Northampton suggests a possible regional pattern for the East Midlands.⁽⁷⁵⁾

Both Bedford and Northampton contained a smaller proportion of one hearth houses, including exemptions, than Newcastle, which suggests that industrial development in these two towns was not as advanced as in

73. Pettit, P., The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire, 1558-1714, Appendix IV, calculated the proportion of exemptions in forest villages to be between 43 and 44 percent in 1670. He says that the average in fielden parishes was 35 percent. I have used my own calculations in Table XVII, which give results of 42.1 percent for forest villages, and 36.4 percent for the rest of the county, excluding market towns as well. Although we differ slightly, I think the difference is negligible. It is worth pointing out that Everitt, A., 'Farm Labourers', in Thirsk, J., (ed), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, p. 398, concluded that the proportion of agricultural labourers in the east division, which included Rockingham Forest, was 31 percent. This is, I think, comparable to the 37 percent figure of exemptions, which are roughly equivalent to labourers and poorer cottagers, for the east, in 1674.
74. See Table XIV for Bedford's social structure in 1671.
75. Clark, P., and Slack, P., English Towns in Transition, pp. 113-14. Howell, R., Newcastle and The Puritan Revolution, pp. 9-13.

Newcastle. Indeed, Norwich, Colchester and Exeter as well, with their higher proportion of exemptions, appear to have contained many more labourers and poorer cottagers, a possible urban labour force.

Messrs. Clark and Slack have said that approximately one quarter of the urban population of England lived in houses of more than two hearths.⁽⁷⁶⁾ The proportion of this group in Bedford (27.6 percent) and Northampton (32.2 percent) was slightly higher than this average and they may have been more prosperous towns than average. Conversely, their proportion of poor was slightly lower than Messrs. Clark and Slack have suggested.

75. These give analyses of the Hearth Taxes in other towns. Colchester had 52 percent exemptions; Norwich 62 percent; Newcastle 41 percent; York 20.4 percent; and Leicester 27.4 percent. Bedford's proportion was 32.6 percent and Northampton's 31 percent. Newcastle had an overall proportion of 62 percent one hearth houses, including exemptions.

76. Clark, P., and Slack, P., op.cit.

3. DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH

Taxation returns can also be used to obtain an idea of the geographical distribution of wealth on an assessment per acre or per square mile basis, as well as for population and social structure analyses. The pioneering work in this field was undertaken by Mr. J. Buckatzsch and this section owes much of its methodology to his work.⁽⁷⁷⁾

(1) The County as a Whole

In 1334, Bedfordshire was assessed at £21.7 per square mile compared to £17.2 for Northamptonshire. This made the former the fourth richest county in England and the latter was ranked tenth. If lay and clerical wealth are combined, Bedfordshire was ranked eighth and Northamptonshire, fifteenth.⁽⁷⁸⁾

By 1515 the gap in lay wealth had narrowed. Bedfordshire was assessed at £125.6 per square mile and was ranked thirteenth in England, whereas Northants was assessed at £115.3 per square mile and was ranked fifteenth. But the combination of lay and clerical wealth gave Bedfordshire a much higher overall ranking at eight, and Northamptonshire was placed fourteenth.⁽⁷⁹⁾

The second survey of the 1524 lay subsidy places Northamptonshire in front. It was assessed at £1.78 per square mile compared to Bedfordshire's £1.65.⁽⁸⁰⁾ However, because of Bedfordshire's very rich monastic

77. Buckatzsch, J., 'The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1086-1843', Ec.H.R., 2nd s, iii. Schofield, R., 'The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1334-1649', Ec.H.R., 2nd s, xviii, criticized the assessments Buckatzsch chose for analysis but accepted his statistical methodology. Watts, S.J., and Susan J, From Border to Middle Shire: Northumberland, 1586-1625, p. 39, use Buckatzsch's list of county rankings and have been criticized for doing so by Beckett, J., in Local Historian, xii, no. 1, pp. 53-4, but I believe that his methodology remains valid.
78. The figures for lay wealth are taken from Darby, H.C., (ed), The New Historical Geography of England, pp. 139-41. I am sure they refer to lay wealth alone because they are very similar to the figures given by Schofield, R., op.cit., in Table 2. £21.7 per square mile is equivalent to £33.9 per 1,000 acres and Dr. Schofield gives £33.6. £17.2 per square mile is equivalent to £26.9 per 1,000 acres and Dr. Schofield gives £26.3. Dr. Schofield ranks Bedfordshire fourth and Northamptonshire twelve, but this slightly lower ranking for Northamptonshire, compared to that in Darby, results from his subdivision of Lincolnshire into three separate regions.
79. Schofield, R., op.cit., Table 2. Lay and clerical wealth combined made Bedfordshire's assessment £200.3 per square mile and that of Northamptonshire £181.6.
80. The assessments for each hundred of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire in the second survey of the 1524 Lay Subsidy are given by Sheail, J., 'The Distribution of Regional Wealth in England as indicated by the Lay Subsidy Returns of 1524/5', University of London, Ph.D., 1968, Volume 2. Bedfordshire's assessment totalled £767.9, and Northamptonshire's £1,802.2. The square mileage of each county is given in Appendix 3.

houses and because of the 1515 combination of lay and clerical wealth, it seems likely that Bedfordshire would have remained richer when the two forms of wealth were added together. Certainly, a series of other taxation returns between 1544 and 1689 show that it was the richer county throughout this period. In 1707, it was assessed at £62 per square mile and ranked fifth in England, whereas Northamptonshire was assessed at £49 and was ranked ninth.⁽⁸¹⁾

This reinforces the conclusion reached by analysis of the social structure of the two counties. Bedfordshire was a richer county than its neighbour. But it is worth remembering that in the national context, both counties were among the richest in England.

(ii) Variations within the Counties

Bedfordshire

Table XVIII: Distribution of Wealth within Bedfordshire in 1524⁽⁸²⁾

HUNDREDS	ASSESSMENT 1524	ACRES PER £ 1524	RANKING
Stodden	£43.9	628.4	10
Willey	£96.55	419.1	7
Barford	£56.4	463.8	8
Wixamtree	£69.9	373.4	4
Biggleswade	£85.75	329.5	3
Clifton	£47.05	382.5	5
Redbornestoke	£77.55	490.6	9
Flitt	£128.85	318.3	2
Manshead	£135.25	384.9	6
BEDFORD BOROUGH	£33.65	65.39	1

81. The 1707 figures are from Darby, H., (ed), op.cit., p.308. A series of other taxes give the following results:

1544 Benevolence	(H.M.C., Bath MSS, ii, p.11)	Bedfordshire £2.15p/sq.m.	Northants £2.09
Ship Money) my calculations from figures in Thirsk, J., and Cooper, J., (ed), <u>Seventeenth Century Economic Documents</u> , pp. 800-1.	£6.45	£5.95
1647 Monthly Tax		£46.3	£33.7
1660 Tax		£60.2	£49.6
1689 Poll Money		£5.63	£5.51
1689 Excise		£119.3	£97.7

Lay Subsidies after the mid sixteenth century have not been analysed. Between about 1560 and 1642, their assessments are related less and less to real wealth and they record a progressively smaller proportion of the population. The lowest social groups and the nobility are omitted altogether. Schofield, R., op.cit., says that it was one of Buckatzsch's faults that he used the 1641-2 Lay Subsidy in his analysis and thereby obtained a distorted picture (See note 48, for further discussion of this point). Darby, H., The Draining of The Fens, p. 65, used the 1640-1 Lay Subsidy to assess distribution of wealth in Cambridgeshire.

82. Assessments are taken from the second survey of this subsidy, and are taken from Sheail, J., op.cit., Volume 2. The acreages are found in Appendix 3, and the method of calculation is the same as the method used by Buckatzsch, op.cit. He divided the acreage by

This table suggests that the eastern side of Bedfordshire, the hundreds of Flitt, Biggleswade, Wixamtree and Clifton, was the richest part of the county in 1524. This conclusion was also reached by Dr. Sheail, who found that the southern part of Flitt hundred and Clifton hundred were the richest parts of Bedfordshire.⁽⁸³⁾

The poorest part of the county consisted of the three northern hundreds of Barford, Willey and Stodden, and the central western hundred of Wixamtree. This region was the area of poorest soils, poorest agriculture, smallest holdings, and of least heavy concentration of population in the first half of the sixteenth century.⁽⁸⁴⁾

The eastern and southern parts of the county were the most heavily populated in 1544, and Flitt, Biggleswade and Clifton hundreds contained the largest percentage of persons assessed at more than £10 in 1544.⁽⁸⁵⁾ The same basic division emerges from all sections of this chapter; early sixteenth century Bedfordshire was clearly divided into a richer southern and eastern section, and a much poorer, less heavily populated north and west.

In general, the distribution of wealth in Bedfordshire in the mid seventeenth century was similar to the early sixteenth century situation. The three northern hundreds of Barford, Willey and Stodden were firmly entrenched as the poorest part of the county.

The southern hundreds of Manshead, Clifton, Flitt and Redbornestoke were the richest part in the 1640's, although by 1678, the centre of gravity of the wealthiest region had moved towards the east of the county. At this date, Clifton, Biggleswade and Wixamtree, in the east, together with Manshead, in the south, were the wealthiest hundreds. Flitt, in the south east, and Redbornestoke, in the centre west, declined in relative prosperity between 1649 and 1678. By 1678, Biggleswade hundred had regained the very high ranking it had held in 1524, but which it had lost in the mid seventeenth century.

82. the assessment to give the number of acres per £. The smallest figure in acres per £ is that of the richest area, and they are ranked in order of wealth. The richest is ranked 1 and the poorest is ranked 10, in my table.
83. Sheail, J., *op.cit.*, p.140. His figures of shillings per square mile are as follows: Barford 27; Stodden and Willey 26; Redbornestoke 25; Wixamtree 35; Biggleswade 37; most of Manshead 38; Clifton 47; south-east Flitt and south Manshead 49; central Flitt 30; and north Flitt 11. Although these differ in some respects from my conclusions, the overall picture of a richer south and east and much poorer north and west is exactly the same.
84. See Tables XIII and VIII.
85. See Table XIII.

Table XIX: Distribution of Wealth within Bedfordshire, 1640-1678 (86)

HUNDREDS	1640's MILITARY TAX			1649 4 MONTHS TAX			1678 POLL TAX		
	ASSESSMENT	ACRES per £	RANKING	ASSESSMENT	ACRES PER £	RANKING	ASSESSMENT	ACRES PER £	RANKING
Stodden	£166.95	165.3	9	£118.45	233.0	9	£160.65	171.8	9
Willey	£212.0	190.8	10	£150.6	268.6	10	£234.25	172.8	10
Barford	£161.9	161.6	8	£118.25	221.4	8	£154.2	169.6	8
Wixamtree	£166.1	157.1	7	£125.05	208.7	6	£259.55	100.6	5
Biggleswade	£188.6	149.8	6	£132.65	213.1	7	£299.35	94.4	3
Clifton	£140.75	128.5	3	£ 94.35	191.6	3	£209.8	86.2	2
Redbarnesstoke	£279.1	136.3	4	£192.05	198.1	4	£360.6	105.5	6
Flitt	£261.2	148.5	5	£192.05	201.8	5	£318.55	121.7	7
Manshead	£405.95	128.1	2	£288.05	180.7	2	£545.6	95.4	4
BEDFORD BOROUGH	£ 49.65	44.3	1	£ 49.65	45.2	1	£111.05	19.82	1

86. The same methodology has been used as in the previous table. The 1640's military tax is from B.R.O., T.W. 1,008 (a); the 1649 Tax is in P.R.O., E179/72/293; the Poll Tax is from B.R.O., B.W.1,349.

The greatest changes since 1524 included the significant increase in the relative wealth of Manshead hundred in the south, and Redbornestoke in the west. Together, this represented a substantial increase in the prosperity of the western half of the county. Clifton hundred, in the east, improved its position, whereas Flitt hundred in the south east and Willey hundred, in the north, became relatively poorer.

But, overall, the majority of changes involved an exchange of rankings between western and eastern hundreds. The six southernmost hundreds of Bedfordshire, were, individually, increasing or losing their positions of relative wealth, but as a region, these six hundreds were the richest in 1524, in the 1640's, and in 1678. The changes did not alter the basic division between a poorer north, and a richer south, particularly south east, of Bedfordshire, at all three dates.

This is the same division which emerged in the earlier discussion of population and social structure. The northern part of the county was the least densely populated in 1544, 1563, 1603 and 1671, and in 1671, it contained a higher proportion of houses with two hearths and less. South and south east Bedfordshire was more heavily populated than the north, and the south east and east contained the greatest proportion of persons assessed at over £10 in 1544, and the highest percentage of houses with more than four hearths in 1671. It is also the same basic division as that between agricultural regions. The north was poorer in agricultural resources because of its heavy clay soils, but the south was a leading corn growing region of England, and in the east, there was the fertile sand and gravel belt that gave rise to market gardening.⁽⁸⁷⁾

87. See the earlier sections of this chapter, and see Maps 8-11, for population density; Maps 2 and 4, for soils and farming regions. Chapter 1 discusses agriculture in more detail.

Northamptonshire

Table XX: Distribution of Wealth in Northamptonshire, 1524-1644 (88)

HUNDREDS OF THE WEST DIVISION	1524 LAY SUBSIDY					1644 MILITARY TAX					
	1st SURVEY		2nd SURVEY		SHILLINGS per Sq.M.	ASSESSMENT	ACRES per £	RANKING	ASSESSMENT	ACRES per £	RANKING
	ASSESSMENT	per £	ASSESSMENT	per £							
Sutton	£128.8	374.8	12	£129.1	374.6	10	£ 61.05	790.2	6		
Wardon	£ 69.65	306.8	6	£ 61.85	345.4	9	£ 16.65	1,283	21		
Norton	£ 51.8	426.2	17	£ 51.8	426.2	14	£ 29.3	753.4	2		
Towcester	£ 47	276.2	4	£ 44.8	289.7	4	£ 12.55	1,035	17		
Cleley	£ 65.05	409.3	15	£ 61.85	430.3	15	£ 31.2	853.1	9		
Fawsley	£115.1	427.4	18	£ 98.9	497.4	18	£ 49.15	1,001	15		
Guilfordborough	£110.05	393.2	14	£ 92.55	467.6	17	£ 52.15	829.6	8		
Newbottle	£ 69.25	493.4	19	£ 57.75	591.6	21	£ 35	976.1	14		
Spelhoe	£ 42.95	410.9	16	£ 41.85	421.7	13	£ 17.3	1,021	16		
Wymersley	£ 60.6	595.0	21	£ 64	563.3	19	£ 30.3	1,191	20		
The West Overall	£760.25	411.5		£704.45	444.1		£332.65	931.3			
HUNDREDS OF THE EAST DIVISION											
Rothwell	£112.15	380.4	13	£ 98.35	433.5	16	£ 54.65	780.2	4		
Corby	£162.4	365.8	10	£148.4	400.5	12	£ 56.25	1,056	18		
Orlinsbury	£ 85.3	346.9	9	£ 86.2	343.4	8	£ 32.95	898.2	11		
Hamfordshoe	£ 49.2	334.2	8	£ 49.5	333.9	6	£ 21.85	756.5	3		
Higham Ferrers	£103.3	294.5	5	£ 99.25	306.6	5	£ 32.85	926.2	13		
Huxloe	£136.05	307.3	7	£124.7	337.8	7	£ 38.65	1,081	19		
Navisford	£ 35.55	368.1	11	£ 33.4	382.0	11	£ 16.1	812.8	7		
Polebrook	£ 74.7	270.3	3	£ 76.4	259.6	3	£ 25.2	787.2	5		
Willybrook	£ 57.7	504.8	20	£ 47.65	590.0	20	£ 30.1	913.3	12		
Nassaburgh	£280.85	188.2	2	£253.6	208.4	2	£ 59.6	863.2	10		
The East Overall	£1,097.2	305.1		£1,074.5	329.1		£368.2	906.3			
NORTHAMPTON	£ 91.2	16.7	1	£ 78.75	19.3	1	£ 21	72.38	1		

Note to table on previous page.

88. The 1524, assessments are taken from Sheail, J., op.cit., volume 2. He gives hundred totals for both surveys and so both have been analysed. Column 7 contains Dr. Sheail's own calculations from page 273 of his thesis. Although his conclusions vary from mine in several respects, the overall picture of a richer eastern division is the same. He also singles out the Nene valley as the richest part of Northamptonshire, and the forest areas and upland of the north and west of the county as the poorest. Although the subsequent analysis of the table is based on my figures, we broadly concur in these findings.

The 1644 Tax is in P.R.O., E179/157/424 and 429. The assessments in Column 8 of the table are the original ones in the documents multiplied by ten. This was done for purposes of easier calculation. The richest areas have the lowest rankings.

The Nene valley hundreds, an expression that will be used quite frequently in this section, comprised Nassaburgh, Willybrook, Polebrook, Navisford, Hamfordshoe, and Higham Ferrers and part of Huxloe hundred. See Maps B and 3, for the location of the hundreds and the topography of the county.

In 1524, the eastern division was considerably wealthier than the west. Within the east, the Nene valley hundred of Polebrook, and Nassaburgh hundred, which lies next to the Nene and part of which was fenland, were the richest regions. Indeed, those eastern hundreds which lie next to the river Nene, or form part of its valley, were all ranked in the first eleven wealthiest hundreds. Clearly, this low-lying, very fertile belt was the most prosperous part of Northamptonshire. Mrs. Spufford found that the Cam valley, south of Cambridge, was the richest and most heavily populated part of Cambridgeshire in 1524.⁽⁸⁹⁾ The river Ivel in Bedfordshire flowed through the very rich market gardening belt of eastern Bedfordshire, but the Ouse valley was in the poorer northern part of the county.

Within the western division, Towcester and Warden hundreds were the richest, by far. Towcester was a small hundred dominated by the market town of the same name and it is apparent that the presence of large towns contributed to the wealth of many hundreds. Northampton was richer than any hundred in the county, as Bedford was for its county, and the four other Northamptonshire towns with an estimated population of over one thousand, in 1524, were situated in hundreds ranked 2, 3, 4 and 5 in wealth.⁽⁹⁰⁾ Although there are some differences in the rankings between the two surveys of the 1524 subsidy, this broad distinction of the richest areas is true for both.

The same may be said for the poorest parts of the county. These appear to stretch across the north and north west of the whole county, from Willybrook in the east, a hundred composed largely of forest, through north Corby, Rothwell hundred, and into Guilsborough, Fawsley and Newbottle in the north-west. This was essentially upland Northamptonshire, the land of the grazier and the horse-breeder. Another region of relative poverty was Wymersley hundred in the south and its neighbour Cleley hundred. These two were also composed largely of forest.⁽⁹¹⁾

So the distribution of wealth in early sixteenth century Northamptonshire appears to consist of a major distinction between a richer^{river}/valley, fenland and low-lying area together with those hundreds dominated by a large market town, and a poorer upland and forest area.⁽⁹²⁾

In the main, this corresponds to the conclusions reached in the earlier sections of this chapter. The upland west and north west of the

89. Spufford, M., Contrasting Communities, p. 29.

90. See Appendix 5, for the largest towns in 1524. Wellingborough was in Hamfordshoe hundred; Peterborough in Nassaburgh hundred; Oundle in Polebrook hundred.

91. See Map 3 for topography.

92. Sheail, J., op.cit., p. 273, says that the Nene valley may have been one of the most developed parts of the east Midlands.

county were the most thinly populated parts of the county and the west division contained a far higher proportion of labourers and poorer cottagers than the east division. The Nene valley was the most heavily populated area, and Nassaburgh hundred, the richest one in terms of acres per pound, contained the lowest proportion of labourers and poorer cottagers in the county. With the exception of Guilsborough hundred, which contained an unusually high number of people assessed at more than £10 in 1524 for this poor north-west region, the hundreds with the next highest proportion in the top assessment category were in the rich eastern part of the county. The Nene valley again stands out.⁽⁹³⁾

It should be pointed out that the example of the forest villages does not contradict these findings. In 1524, they were not more densely populated than the county as a whole and were only slightly more heavily settled than open field villages.⁽⁹⁴⁾ In their case, the relative poverty of forest hundreds indicated by this table does not coincide with particularly high population density. They conform to the general pattern.

There were some dramatic changes in the rankings between 1524 and 1644. Wardon hundred slumped to become the poorest in the county, whereas neighbouring Norton soared to become the richest. Towcester hundred declined markedly, together with Higham Ferrers and Nassaburgh hundreds in the east. Rothwell and Willybrook hundreds appear to have become dramatically richer.

The overall change is to a more fragmentary pattern. The clear regions which emerged in 1524 had broken up. The great preeminence which the Nene valley hundreds had possessed in 1524 had gone. But Hamfordshoe, Polebrook, Navisford and Nassaburgh hundreds were still ranked in the top ten in 1644, and Willybrook and Higham Ferrers hundreds, which adjoin the Nene, were ranked twelve and thirteen, respectively. So it was still a very rich region. But the south-western corner of the county comprising Norton, Sutton and Cleley hundreds had become a very rich region.

In fact, these three south western hundreds, together with Towcester hundred were richer than the six Nene valley hundreds mentioned above when assessed as a region. The former had 821 acres to the pound, and the latter had 855.7 acres to the pound. The south western tip had become the richest region of Northamptonshire and it is this change that explains the much smaller difference between the wealth of the two divisions in 1644. The west was still poorer but not nearly so markedly as it had been in 1524.

It is difficult to assess the changes in the forest hundreds. Cleley and Willybrook certainly became more prosperous, but Wymersley hundred remained very poor and Corby hundred, the eastern half of which was in Rockingham Forest, declined in relative wealth.

93. See Table XV.

94. See Table X.

Despite the relative improvement of Guilsborough and Rothwell hundreds, the northern half of the county was still the poorest in 1644 and the same parallels with the distribution of population and with social structure that were made in 1524 can also be made for 1644.⁽⁹⁵⁾

The south western and Nene valley hundreds were certainly more densely populated than north Northamptonshire in 1674. The poorer north and north west remained the regions of lightest settlement. The dramatic improvement in the relative wealth of the western division when compared to that of the east division almost exactly parallels its improvement in relative density of population between 1524 and 1674.⁽⁹⁶⁾

The Nene valley and south-western hundreds contained the lowest proportion of one hearth houses, including exemptions, in 1674, and they contained the highest proportion of houses with three hearths or more, and indeed, of houses with more than four hearths.⁽⁹⁷⁾

By the mid seventeenth century, therefore, there was a clear distinction between a richer, more heavily populated region in the low-lying east and in the south west of Northamptonshire, and a less prosperous, more thinly populated region in the upland north and north west of the county.

95. It is interesting to note that a comparison of Tables XVIII and XX shows that Northampton was much richer than Bedford, in 1524, according to the second survey of the Lay Subsidy. Northampton's assessment meant a figure of 19.3 acres per pound compared to Bedford's 65.39 acres per pound. But this may be more a reflection of population than of acreage.

96. See Table IX and Map 13.

97. See Table XVI.

4. CONCLUSION

After such a mass of statistical detail and analysis, it is encouraging to find that the three sections of this chapter broadly correspond in their results and can be combined to produce a detailed economic geography of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire.

It appears that Northamptonshire underwent a larger increase in population than Bedfordshire in the three centuries after 1377. However, despite the presence of more towns with over five hundred inhabitants in the former county, only in the second half of the seventeenth century was it more heavily populated than its neighbour. In the main, it was less densely populated. Bedfordshire was more prosperous in terms of social structure because it had a considerably smaller percentage of exemptions and a considerably higher proportion of houses with three hearths or more in the 1670's. It was also richer in terms of acres per pound from assessments levied on the counties between 1377 and 1707, with the possible exception of 1524.

Within the counties, a division emerges between a poorer, more thinly populated north Bedfordshire, and a very prosperous, more densely settled south and south east Bedfordshire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In Northamptonshire, there is a distinction between a poorer, more thinly populated western division and a richer, more heavily settled, more low-lying, eastern division. The Nene valley was the most prosperous area in 1524, and this same region together with the south western corner were the richest regions in the mid seventeenth century. At both dates, the upland north west and north were the most thinly inhabited and poorest parts of the county. Density of population, social structure, and distribution of wealth knit together in a very satisfactory and rewarding fashion. (98)

98. Apparently, the same conclusion was reached by Stephens, R., 'Gwynedd, 1528-47: Economy and Society in Tudor Wales', University of California, Ph.D., 1975. I have found an abstract of this in Dissertation Abstracts International, xxxvi, no. 5, November, 1975, p. 3029A. He, too, uses subsidies to assess social structure and distribution of wealth and concludes that population density can be correlated with both.

CHAPTER 3

THE GENERAL STRUCTURE OF LANDOWNERSHIP

The purpose of this relatively small chapter is to consider the distribution of landed property in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire and the changes in this distribution in the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries.

The extent of Crown land is considered first. This is followed by a discussion of land in the possession of monastic houses and foundations of 'secular' clergy, particularly Oxford and Cambridge colleges, Eton and the cathedrals. Of course the Reformation dissolved the religious orders of 'regular' clergy and most of their property was seized by the Crown, but 'secular' clergy foundations retained their estates and in some cases, with the creation of new cathedrals out of the old monasteries, increased their landed property. Together, the monastic houses and foundations of 'secular' clergy have been termed corporate institutions.

For the purposes of this analysis, all property outside the ownership of the Crown and the corporate institutions has been termed the private sector and some consideration is given to its proportion of landownership. But most attention, within the private sector, is given to the aristocracy. The next chapter examines the gentry, as landowners, in more detail.

Changes in the structure of landownership also involve consideration of the activity of the land market, especially at the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries, when large amounts of property changed hands. However, although some reference is made to the sale of Crown lands during the Civil War and Interregnum in the earlier section on Crown land, the section about the land market does not consider changes during the period, 1642-60, in the private sector. I do not have sufficient evidence to comment on the controversies concerning landownership in this period.⁽¹⁾

Changes in landownership also imply a social and geographical mobility of landowners and this is also examined. Finally, manorial surveys can be used to assess the proportion of freehold and copyhold land in various regions and to study inheritance patterns, which may alter the structure of landownership.

1. These controversies particularly concentrate on the issue of whether large amounts of private property changed hands between 1642 and 1660. See Gentles, I., 'The Debentures Market and Military Purchases of Crown Land, 1649-60', University of London, Ph.D., 1968; Gentles, I., 'Sales of Crown Land during the English Revolution', Ec.H.R., 2nd s, xxvi; Kishlansky, M., 'The Sales of Crown Lands and the Spirit of The Revolution', and rejoinder by Gentles, I., Ec.H.R., 2nd s, xxix; Madge, S., The Domesday of Crown Lands; Thirsk, J., The Restoration; and 'Sales of Royalist Land during the Interregnum', Ec.H.R., 2nd s,

The results of this investigation complement the conclusions of Chapter 1. There was widespread change in the pattern of landownership as well as in the economy of both these counties in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The size of the armigerous gentry and the yeomanry dramatically increased, but the greatest qualitative change was in the position of gentry families which had settled in the county before 1500. They developed much wider contacts with the neighbouring counties and with London. The proximity of London and the growing urban sector of both counties generated a greater demand for land and great change within the landowning class. Many of these points are examined in more detail in the following chapter, but this one is a useful preliminary to that account.

Much of the statistical content of this chapter is based upon the counting of manors and the results and conclusions owe much to the unpublished thesis of Dr. T. Hallinan. This was a study of landownership in the counties of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire between the Reformation and the Civil War and it was based on the counting of manors.⁽²⁾

This quantitative method of analysis has created a storm of controversy. Professor Tawney's account of gentry landholding in 1941, which used manor counting, precipitated the debate. In 1956, Cooper pointed out that manor counting ignored demographic considerations like female or collateral descent of property and the extinction of the family could simply indicate geographical consolidation of an estate rather than financial difficulties. Also, a landowner's property in adjoining counties is ignored in a study of a particular county. Professor Stone's book on the aristocracy, which was published in 1965 and which contained a body of statistics based on manor counting, inaugurated a new wave of debate.⁽³⁾

Dr. Hallinan's thesis was completed before Mr. Cooper's assault upon the counting of manors, but, although the criticisms are valid, I believe that it remains the easiest way to gauge movements of landed property. The results of his thesis and of this chapter must be treated with caution because of these criticisms, but it will emerge that the results conform to modern revisions of Professor Tawney's ideas rather

1. v; and 'The Restoration Land Settlement', Journal of Modern History, xxvi; and Habbakuk, H., 'Landowners and The Civil War', Ec.H.R., 2nd s, xviii. Some consideration is given to royalist delinquency and landownership in the next chapter.
2. Hallinan, T., 'The Changing Composition of the Class of Larger Landowners in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Northamptonshire between the Reformation and the Civil War with particular reference to the manorial holdings of the Dormer, Spencer and Verney Families', University of Oxford, D.Phil, 1956.

than to his original hypothesis. Also, because Dr. Hallinan examined landownership in three neighbouring counties, two of which are considered in this chapter, the last of Mr. Cooper's ^{criticisms} mentioned above is slightly less appropriate.

3. Tawney, R.H., 'The Rise of The Gentry, 1558-1640', Ec.H.R., xi, and 'Postscript', Ec.H.R., 2nd s, vii; Cooper, J.P., 'The Counting of Manors', Ec.H.R., 2nd s, viii; Stone, L., The Crisis of The Aristocracy, 1558-1641; Hexter, J., 'The English Aristocracy, its Crises and the English Revolution, 1558-1660', Journal of British Studies, viii; Thompson, C., 'The Counting of Manors Reconsidered', and reply by Stone, L., 'Counting Manors Again: a reply to Mr. Thompson', Ec.H.R., 2nd s., xv; Cullen, M., 'Lawrence Stone and The Manors', and rejoinder by Stone, L., Ec.H.R., 2nd s., xxiv; and Russell, C., 'English Land Sales, 1540-1640: A Comment on the Evidence', and reply by Stone, L., Ec.H.R., 2nd s., xv.

1. CROWN LAND

(1) Bedfordshire

The amount of Crown land in Bedfordshire remained fairly small until the Dissolution of the Monasteries. In the fifteenth century, it was certainly less than in neighbouring Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire. In 1480, the Crown possessed six Bedfordshire manors compared to twenty-three in Buckinghamshire and twenty-nine in Northamptonshire.⁽⁴⁾ But Bedfordshire contained an unusually large proportion of monastic land in relation to its size, and since most of these were still in Crown lands in 1560, following the Reformation, mid-sixteenth century Bedfordshire contained forty-nine Crown manors, only six less than in Northamptonshire.⁽⁵⁾

Forty eight of these forty nine were in the central part of the county. Dunstable was the only one in the south and Podington, which had been the only one north of Bedford, had been alienated in 1557. Most of these manors were embraced in the Honour of Ampthill, which had been established in 1542.⁽⁶⁾ All but two of the thirty to forty manors which constituted the Honour were within the central part of the county between Bedford and Chalgrave.

There was another group of royal manors at the eastern end of central Bedfordshire which were not within the Honour. Of these, Sutton and Potton contained Duchy of Lancaster manors and the Crown acquired manors at Biggleswade, Dunton and Wrestlingworth during the second half of the sixteenth century.

By 1640, only twelve manors remained with the Crown, compared with twenty seven in Northamptonshire. This suggests that alienation of royal property was more marked in Bedfordshire than in Northamptonshire, although Buckinghamshire contained only two Crown manors in 1640.⁽⁷⁾ At least

4. Godber, J., History of Bedfordshire, 1066-1888, p. 172, and Hallinan, T., Thesis, op.cit., Map p. 86.
5. Hallinan, T., Thesis, op.cit., Map p. 86.
6. The 'Honour' was a complex of royal manors with higher jurisdiction than an ordinary manorial court, and administrative convenience was the probable motive behind its foundation. The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire and Duchy of Lancaster manors possessed their own administrative authorities, (see Pettit, P.J., The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire, 1558-1714, N.R.S., xxiii, and Somerville, R., History of the Duchy of Lancaster, i, 1265-1603), and the 'Honour' may have been a similar centralisation of control in another group of neighbouring royal possessions. The foundation of 'Honours' was possibly one aspect of the general administrative reforms of Henry VIII's reign, but I have found no source which discusses these possibilities. (See Elton, G.R., The Tudor Revolution in Government). A list of the manors in the Honour of Ampthill is contained in the instrument of foundation in Letters and Papers of Henry VIII, 1542, xvii, p. 12.
7. Hallinan, T., Thesis, op.cit., Map p.86.

twenty four of the manors in the Honour of Ampthill had been alienated to private landowners and proximity to London may explain the greater disinvestment that took place in Northants. In 1628, seven of the Honour's manors were given to the Corporation of London in return for the royal loan of that year, and seven years earlier, Cranfield had been given, appropriately it seems, to Lionel Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex. (8)

Dr. Gentles has calculated that Bedfordshire contained Crown land to the value of between twenty thousand and forty nine thousand pounds, in 1649. Ten English counties and Wales contained a higher value of royal property and ten contained about the same amount. Most of this Bedfordshire land was concentrated in the various parks owned by the Crown rather than in the manors. In 1650, Beckerings Park, Ridgmont, was sold for £8,311/1/0, and Brogborough Park, Ridgmont, was sold for £11,208/12/6. Most of the Honour of Ampthill, of which these parks were part, was purchased by Colonel John Okey's regiment. (9)

(ii) Northamptonshire

Northamptonshire had always contained a sizeable amount of royal land because of the royal forests. In 1480, there were twenty nine Crown manors and this had risen to fifty five by 1560. (10) These were mainly concentrated in three areas. First, there were about a dozen in the forest of Rockingham in the north east of the county. Second, there was the group of Duchy of Lancaster manors in Higham Ferrers hundred, notably Rushden, Raundes, Irchester, Ringstead, Wollaston, and Higham Ferrers itself. The jurisdiction of this hundred lay with the Duchy and there were other Duchy manors at Daventry and Passenham in the west of the county. Third, there was the largest group of all in the south west, on the Buckinghamshire border, in the hundreds of Norton, Cleley, Towcester and Wymersley. This group contained approximately thirty manors and it embraced the royal forests of Salcey and Whittlewood. Many of these were included in the Honour of Grafton, which had been founded in 1542 and which contained about thirty two Northamptonshire manors and several in Buckinghamshire. All of the Honour's manors were in these south western hundreds. (11)

8. V.C.H., Bedfordshire, topographical sections, have been used throughout this chapter to trace the history of manor ownership. The seven granted to London were Flitwick, Lidlington, Ridgmont, Warden, Wootton, Chalgrave, and Barton.
9. Gentles, I., 'The Debentures Market and Military Purchases of Crown Land, 1649-60', University of London, Ph.D., 1968, Map on p. 131, and pp. 283, 315. Four counties possessed royal property worth more than £100,000; six and Wales possessed crown land worth between £50,000 and £99,000.
10. Hallinan, T., Thesis, op.cit., Map on p. 86.
11. For the foundation of the Honour of Grafton and its manors, see Letters and Papers of Henry VIII, xvii, p. 12, and see Note 6. The history of some of these manors have been traced in V.C.H., Northamptonshire, topographical sections; and Baker, G., The History and Antiquities of the County of Northampton, (1822-41), 2 vols.

In 1640, there were twenty seven Crown manors in Northamptonshire and it is clear that less royal property was alienated in this county between 1560 and 1640 than in Bedfordshire or Buckinghamshire. Twenty of these twenty seven were in the south west and the greater survival of royal land in Northamptonshire is due almost entirely to the fact that the Honour of Grafton remained much more intact than the Honour of Ampthill. Only approximately seven of its manors had been permanently released by 1640. Although most of Rockingham Forest had been distributed to royal favourites and office holders like the Brudenells of Deene, the Hattons of Kirby, the Montagus of Boughton, and the Mildmays of Apethorpe, the crown lands in the south west and the larger Duchy manors stayed in the monarch's possession. It does not appear that any of the Honour of Grafton manors were given to the City of London in 1628. Perhaps the royal hunting lodges in Whittlewood and Salcey Forests explain this. Both James I and Charles I regarded this part of Northamptonshire as prime hunting country.

In 1649, Northamptonshire was one of four counties which contained crown land worth more than one hundred thousand pounds. During the Interregnum, Holdenby House and Park were sold for twenty two thousand, two hundred and ninety nine pounds, and Grafton and Potterspury Parks were sold for eighteen thousand, two hundred and twenty eight pounds, but the Honour of Grafton still formed a sizeable patrimony for Charles II's illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, later Duke of Grafton, in 1675.⁽¹²⁾

(iii) Conclusion

Table XXI: Dr. Hallinan's calculations of the number and proportion of royal manors in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northants, 1480-1680.⁽¹³⁾

	1480	1520	1560	1600	1640	1680
Number of Crown manors	58	67	141	96	41	19
Percentage of all manors	4.7	5.2	10.8	7.3	3.2	1.5

12. Gentles, I., Thesis, op.cit., Map on p. 131, and pp. 251, 261, 278, 287. The other three counties with royal land worth more than £100,000 in 1649 were Lincolnshire, Middlesex, and Surrey. For the Duke of Grafton, see D.N.B., and Cokayne, G.E., Complete Peerage.
13. From Hallinan, T., Thesis, op.cit., p. 69. He examined a total of 1,335 manors in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Northamptonshire. He did not analyse those in the three Northamptonshire hundreds of Corby, Guilsborough, and Rothwell because their manorial histories are not included in V.C.H. Northamptonshire, topographical sections, nor in Baker, G., The History and Antiquities of The County of Northampton, 2 vols. The former is incomplete and covers only the hundreds of Nassaburgh, Willybrook, Polebrook, Navisford, Huxloe, Higham Ferrers, Spelhoe, Hamfordshoe, Orlingbury and Wymersley. The latter covers Newbottle, Fawsley, Wardon, Sutton, Norton, Cleley, and Towcester hundreds, as well as some of those in the V.C.H. However, a brief manorial history of the missing three hundreds is given by Bridges, J., The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire compiled from the manuscript collections of John Bridges by the reverend Peter Whalley, (1791), 2 vols.

It is probable that the monarchy owned considerably more manors immediately after the Dissolution of the Monasteries between 1535 and 1537, because research in other counties suggests that a large proportion of the ex-monastic land which came to the Crown had been redistributed to private landowners before 1560.⁽¹⁴⁾ But this table does illustrate the gradual alienation of the royal estate between the mid-sixteenth and late seventeenth centuries. This alienation appears to have been more pronounced in Bedfordshire than in Northamptonshire.

14. Youings, J., Devon Monastic Lands: Calendar of Grants, 1536-58, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, i, p. xx, says that 70 per cent of Devon monastic lands had been alienated by 1558. See also Habbakuk, H., 'The Market for Monastic Land, 1539-1603', Ec. H.R., 2nd s., x. On crown land sales, see Outhwaite, R., 'Who Bought Crown Lands? The Pattern of Purchases, 1589-1603', B.I.H.R., xlv, pp. 18-33.

2. LAND OWNED BY CORPORATE INSTITUTIONS

This section considers landed property held by the monasteries before 1536, and property owned by the Dean and Chapter of cathedrals and of Eton College, and land owned by Oxford and Cambridge colleges. Together, they have been termed corporate institutions. ⁽¹⁵⁾

Bedfordshire contained an unusually high proportion of monastic land for a county of its size. The gross general income, temporal and spiritual, of its ten largest religious houses was two thousand five hundred and ninety six pounds, one shilling and fivepence per annum on the eve of the Dissolution, compared with three thousand seven hundred and seventy four pounds, fifteen shillings and threepence per annum for the thirteen largest Northamptonshire monasteries. The gross temporal income of the Bedfordshire ones, was almost exactly half of that of those of Northamptonshire, which represents a proportionally greater figure for a county that was less than half the size of Northamptonshire. ⁽¹⁶⁾

Dr. Hallinan's figures, which include the foundations of 'secular' clergy as well, appear to reinforce this distinction. In 1480, Bedfordshire contained one hundred and thirty manors owned by corporate institutions, Buckinghamshire one hundred and seventeen, and Northamptonshire one hundred and sixteen. ⁽¹⁷⁾

15. The major distinction, here, is between foundations of 'regular' clergy, the monasteries and other houses of religious orders, and those of 'secular' clergy, the cathedrals, and Eton and Oxford and Cambridge colleges. The 'regular' foundations ceased to exist at the Dissolution between 1535 and 1537 and this accounts for the marked decline in ownership of land by corporate institutions. For these purposes, the monasteries, cathedrals, and colleges have been combined and called corporate institutions. There appears to have been no manorial ownership by local schools or hospitals and so these do not figure among the corporate institutions. Neither of these two counties are among the ten which form the basis of Jordan, W., Philanthropy in England, 1480-1660, which examines hospitals, local schools, and chantries in depth. I have found no evidence of landownership by other institutions which would add them to those under consideration in this section.

16. Savine, A., English Monasteries on The Eve of The Dissolution, Oxford Studies in Legal and Social History, i. For detail and location of the religious houses see V.C.H., Bedfordshire, i, p. 346, and V.C.H. Northamptonshire, ii, pp. 78-9.

Gross temporal income of Bedfordshire monasteries was £1,516/4/6 compared to £3,019/8/2½ for those of Northamptonshire, excepting Luffield Priory and Rothwell Abbey for which no figures are given. However, these two were very small.

Of course, the problem of treating counties as a unit occurs here. Some of these monasteries owned property in other counties, and some outside monasteries owned land within these two counties.

17. Hallinan, T., Thesis, op.cit., Map on p. 82, and statistics on pp. 85-7.

There was an especially strong concentration in the centre of Bedfordshire, as there was with royal property, and relatively few were in the north and south of the county. The monarchy received the lion's share of these manors, those owned by the monasteries, at the Dissolution. By 1560 there were only eleven manors owned by corporate institutions, which then comprised the cathedrals, Eton, and Oxford and Cambridge colleges, although the figure had risen to sixteen by 1640.

Peterborough monastery, in Northamptonshire, was by far the richest in either county and it possessed a large estate in the extreme east of the county.⁽¹⁸⁾ But Northamptonshire manors owned by corporate institutions were spread throughout the county in 1480. In 1560, there were twenty nine of these manors, and in 1640, twenty seven. Approximately half of these were owned by the Dean and Chapter of Peterborough Cathedral and were situated in Nassaburgh hundred. Most of the others were in the west of the county.

So after the Dissolution of the monasteries, property owned by the cathedrals, Eton, and the Cambridge and Oxford colleges was not a significant part of the landownership structure.

Table XXII: Dr. Hallinan's calculations of the number and proportion of manors owned by the Crown and by corporate institutions in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, 1480-1680 (19)

	1480	1520	1560	1600	1640	1680
Number of manors owned	411	434	217	171	128	103
Percentage of total manors	33	33.6	16.6	13	10	8.2

Table XXIII: Dr. Hallinan's calculations of the number and proportion of manors owned by private landholders in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, 1480-1680 (20)

	1480	1520	1560	1600	1640	1680
Number of manors owned	834	857	1,094	1,144	1,153	1,158
Percentage of total manors	67	66.4	83.4	87	90	91.8

18. Peterborough had a gross general income of £1,979/7/6. The next richest was Warden Abbey, Bedfordshire, with £442/11/1. Savine, A., op.cit.
19. Hallinan, T., Thesis, op.cit., pp. 65-75.
20. Ibid. It should be noticed that the total number of manors examined at these various dates by Dr. Hallinan is not the same in every case. This is because he could not trace the ownership of every manor throughout the two hundred years between 1480 and 1680. Also, some manors disappeared in the course of these two centuries by being merged with others, and some others acquired the status of manor during the period. So, although his thesis is centred on a basic number of 1,335 manors, because of these problems, his statistical analysis is based on a total number of manors of 1,245 in 1480, 1,291 in 1520; 1,311 in 1560; 1,315 in 1600; 1,281 in 1640; and 1,261 in 1680. I have checked his calculations. This helps to explain the percentages of the total number of manors in Tables XXI to XXIV.

These figures suggest a pronounced shift away from corporate landownership to private landownership during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

3. THE ARISTOCRACY

Table XXIV: Dr. Hallinan's calculations of the number and proportion of manors owned by the titular peerage in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, 1480-1680. ⁽²¹⁾

	1480	1520	1560	1600	1640	1680
Number of manors owned by peerage	186	176	167	153	223	243
Percentage of the manors in private hands	22.3	20.5	15.3	13.4	19.3	21.0
Percentage of the total number of manors	14.9	13.6	12.7	11.6	17.4	19.3

The proportion of manors in private hands which were owned by the peerage declined, substantially, between 1480 and 1600, but, by 1680, it had almost regained its earlier level. The percentage of all manors owned by the peerage did not decline very much between 1480 and 1600, and it underwent a marked increase in the eighty years after 1600. By 1680, the peerage owned a higher percentage of all manors than it had done two centuries earlier. Of course, the nobility were important beneficiaries of the old monastic property which was distributed by the Crown to its favourites and office-holders and this probably explains why the decline in the percentage owned of all manors was not as steep, between 1480 and 1600, as the decline in the percentage owned by the peerage of privately held manors.

The peerage was also a very fluid group. The increase in both percentages between 1600 and 1640 undoubtedly reflects the inflation of honours under the early Stuarts. ⁽²²⁾ Another problem with such statistics is that the nobility does not necessarily correspond to those families which owned the most manors and this group is not necessarily constituted, therefore, of all the largest landowners.

However, it does not appear that the proportion of property in private hands which was owned by the peerage decreased significantly between 1480 and 1680. Certainly, its percentage of all manors increased.

The proportion of property owned by the largest landowners can be assessed if the holdings of families which possessed more than sixteen manors are examined. In the three counties of Dr. Hallinan's study, this group owned twenty four percent of manors in private hands in 1480, and twenty percent in 1680. Like the peerage, their share declined substantially between 1520 and 1600, but unlike the nobility, their proportion of private manors did not increase much between 1600 and 1680. ⁽²³⁾

21. Hallinan, Thesis, op.cit., pp. 74-8.

22. For inflation of honours, see Stone, L., The Crisis of The Aristocracy, 1558-1641, Chapter 3.

23. Hallinan, Thesis, op.cit., p. 395. Families possessing more than sixteen manors owned 24.3 percent of private manors in 1480, 25.9 percent in 1520; 19.4 percent in 1560; 19.3 percent in 1600; 18.5 percent in 1640; and 20.1 percent in 1680.

It appears that the proportion of land owned by the greater land-owners remained fairly constant in these three counties in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. (24)

My own research reveals that as many manors were owned by non-resident peers as by local noblemen, in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire in 1540. In Bedfordshire, resident peers owned eighteen and non-residents, nineteen. The Earl of Kent possessed most of the resident portion and Lord Braye, the only other resident nobleman, owned the other seven. Lord Vaux of Northamptonshire, Lord Latimer, and the Earl of Derby were the outsiders who owned the largest number of manors in Bedfordshire.

By 1600, resident peers owned thirty five Bedfordshire manors. This increase was largely due to the addition to the peerage in 1559 of the St. John family, who owned a large estate in north Bedfordshire. Non-residents owned eighteen manors, half of which constituted the estate of Lord Mordaunt. This family had recently moved from Bedfordshire to Lowick, in Northamptonshire. In 1640, resident aristocrats owned thirty four manors and non-residents, twenty four. (25)

In Northamptonshire, resident peers owned thirty one manors, in 1540, and non-residents owned thirty nine. Lord Vaux was the largest local landowner with nineteen manors. Of the outsiders, Lords Mountjoy and Latimer owned five manors; the Earls of Oxford, Rutland and Worcester, four each, and the Earl of Derby, three. By 1600, local noblemen owned forty five manors, but the number owned by non-residents had dropped, sharply, to twelve. In 1640, resident peers owned an estimated seventy nine manors, compared to twenty one owned by outsiders. Of the resident noblemen, Lord Montagu appears to have owned fourteen manors; Lord Vaux, thirteen; Lord Spencer, twelve; the Earls of Peterborough and Exeter, ten each; and Lord Fitzwilliam, six; and the Earl of Westmorland, six. The Earls of Rutland and Bridgwater possessed the largest number of manors among the outsiders, with four and three, respectively. (26)

24. The same conclusion is reached for the Whole Country by Cooper, J., 'The Social Distribution of Land and Men in England, 1436-1700', Ec.H.R., 2nd s., xx; and by Thompson, F., 'The Social Distribution of Landed Property in England since the sixteenth century', Ec.H.R., 2nd s., xix. Cornwall, J., 'The Early Tudor Gentry', Ec.H.R., 2nd s., xvii, estimates that in Buckinghamshire, in the 1520's, the gentry owned 35.7 percent of all land, and the nobility, four percent. He says that in Rutland the percentages were 37.7 and 1.3, respectively. It has proved impossible to make similar calculations in this study, but these neighbouring counties may give some insight into the Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire position.

25. These calculations have been made from V.C.H. Bedfordshire, topographical volumes, which trace the history of manors. I do not claim absolute accuracy, but I think they illustrate the relationship between resident and non-resident peers. Of the resident peers in 1640, the Earl of Kent owned sixteen manors, and the Earl of Bolingbroke, twelve. The Earl of Peterborough owned more than any other outsider with six. For a list of resident peers in both counties in 1642, see Appendix 11.

26. Calculated from V.C.H. Northamptonshire; and Baker, G., op.cit., and Bridges, J., op.cit.

Therefore, the number of manors owned by non-resident peers in Bedfordshire remained almost the same between 1540 and 1600, and increased between 1600 and 1640. It remained a high number in relation to the number of manors owned by resident peers throughout the century between 1540 and 1640. By contrast, there was a marked decline in the number of Northamptonshire manors owned by outside noblemen between 1540 and 1600, although there was an increase between 1600 and 1640. But in both 1600 and 1640, resident noblemen owned many more than non-residents, which was a different situation to that in Bedfordshire.

A census of landowners taken in the late nineteenth century enables some comparisons to be made between Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. In 1873, the peerage, both resident and non-resident owned fifty eight thousand, two hundred and seventy nine acres of Bedfordshire, which is equivalent to 19.6 percent of the county. In Northamptonshire, they owned one hundred and thirty five thousand and eleven acres, which equals 20.9 percent of the county. Eton and Oxford and Cambridge colleges owned six thousand seven hundred and eighty seven acres, or 2.3 percent of Bedfordshire, and eight thousand five hundred and seventy acres, or 1.3 percent of Northamptonshire. The church owned only six hundred and ninety nine acres in Bedfordshire, but because of the large estates of the Dean and Chapter of Peterborough, it owned eight thousand three hundred and nineteen acres in Northamptonshire, or approximately 1.3 percent of the county.⁽²⁷⁾

27. Return of owners of Land, 1873, 2 vols. These are my calculations. The acreage of Bedfordshire in 1841 was 297,632, and Northamptonshire's was 649,020, according to British Parliamentary Papers, Population 3, 1841 Census.

4. THE LAND MARKET

It has been possible to trace the history of seventy two Bedfordshire manors and ninety Northamptonshire manors which were owned by monasteries before the Reformation through the topographical volumes of the Victoria County History.

Table XXV: Dates of alienation of ex-monastic manors by the Crown in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, 1537-1640. ⁽²⁸⁾

	1537-1560	1560-1600	1600-1640
Number of manors alienated in Bedfordshire	40	20	7
Percentage of the total of seventy-two	55.6	27.8	9.7
Number of manors alienated in Northamptonshire	49	12	6
Percentage of the total of ninety	54.5	13.3	6.7

It seems that over half of the newly acquired monastic land had been redistributed by the Crown by 1560 in both counties. In Devon, the proportion was seventy percent alienated by 1558. ⁽²⁹⁾ The lower figure in these two counties may be a result of the foundation of the royal Honours in 1542, in which many old monastic manors were incorporated. Perhaps Devon did not have as much Crown land in this form and so the recently acquired estates were disposed of more quickly.

However, much more of this type of property was alienated in Bedfordshire, between 1560 and 1640, than in Northamptonshire. This supports the earlier assertion that disinvestment of crown land as a whole was much greater in Bedfordshire. There was still a large royal estate in southern Northamptonshire in 1640. On the eve of the Civil War, only about seven percent of these manors remained in royal hands in Bedfordshire, compared to approximately one quarter in Northamptonshire.

But the market for monastic and crown land was only one, if a very important, part of a much wider land market. ⁽³⁰⁾ Dr. Hallinan analysed two hundred and seventy nine manors in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Northamptonshire and found that less than ten percent were sold between 1400 and 1480, eighteen percent were sold between 1481 and 1520; forty nine and two thirds percent changed hands between 1520 and 1560; thirty percent between 1560 and 1600; and twenty seven percent between 1600 and 1640. So, the land market had been expanding even before the Reformation. The decades of greatest sales were 1621 to 1630, when a decennial average of one hundred and eight of the two hundred and seventy nine were sold; 1541-50, with a decennial average of one hundred and one; 1601-10 with eighty six; and 1591-1600, with eighty three. ⁽³¹⁾ The importance of the

28. This is not a complete survey of all ex-monastic manors because the history of all of them is not obtainable, but I think it involves a large enough number to justify analysis.

29. Youngs, J., Devon Monastic Lands: Calendar of Grants, 1536-58, p. xx. (see note 14).

30. This point is made by Kew, J., 'The Disposal of Crown Lands and The Devon Land Market, 1536-58'. Ag.H.R., xviii, particularly p. 104.

31. Hallinan, Thesis, op.cit., Chapter 12. There were more sales between 1591 and 1640, than between 1511 and 1560.

private sector in the land market is clearly shown by the higher turnover of property during the economic depression of the 1620's than in the decade immediately after the Reformation.

5. SOCIAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY

Chapter 1 showed that the most important influence on the economy of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was exercised by the growth of the London food market. London's influence was also important in the landownership structure.

In 1449, Thomas Chalton of Dunstable was Lord Mayor of London, and in 1484, William Stocker of Eaton Socon was Lord Mayor. Dr. Jones has demonstrated that prominent Londoners were increasingly buying copyhold land in south Bedfordshire, particularly at Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard, during the course of the fifteenth century.⁽³²⁾ It was mentioned earlier that seven royal manors in Bedfordshire were given to the City of London, in 1628, in return for a loan to the King, and, in 1629, the joint Lords Lieutenant of Bedfordshire complained to the Privy Council that some citizens and companies of London, who owned local property, were escaping their musters duties by claiming non-residence.⁽³³⁾

The increasing number of merchants and lawyers who moved from the capital to establish gentry families in both counties in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is examined in detail in the next chapter, but it is useful to mention some of them here. In Bedfordshire, the fortunes of the families of Astrey of Harlington; Beecher of Renhold; Jones of Liddington; Monoux of Wootton; Osborne of Northill; and Rowe of Clapham had been founded by Sheriffs or Lord Mayors of London. The most prominent of all was Sir Robert Napier, who refused to serve as Sheriff of London in 1613 and who purchased Luton Hoo. He was one of the first two Bedfordshire baronets in 1611.

In Northamptonshire, the gentry families of Browne of Walcot; Cokayne of Rushton; Craven of Winwick; Fitzwilliam of Milton; Janson of Ashby St. Ledgers; Kirton of Thorpe Mandeville; Langham of Cottesbrooke; and Matthew of Bradden; are only the most prominent of those founded by the fortunes of Sheriffs or Lord Mayors of London. Others like the Enions of Flore; the Fermors of Easton Neston; and the Tryons of Bulwick; had been founded by metropolitan merchants. In 1647, Samuel Jones, a London merchant, purchased Courtenhall in Northamptonshire, and in 1652, Sir John Robinson, later Lord Mayor of London, purchased Grafton Underwood. In 1625, Sir Henry Finch, an important London lawyer and father of Heneage, Lord Chancellor in 1675 and first Earl of Nottingham in 1681, was given

32. Jones, A., 'The Customary Land Market in Bedfordshire in the fifteenth century', University of Southampton, Ph.D., 1975, pp. 51-3, 207-110, and 204.

33. Cal. S.P.D., 1629-31, p. 116.

Daventry manor. ⁽³⁴⁾

The number of manors in both counties which were purchased by Londoners, particularly between 1600 and 1660 are too numerous to list them in full. ⁽³⁵⁾

But the influence of London caused a marked transformation in the pattern of landownership in both counties.

Internally, there was a pronounced expansion of the yeomanry. Dr. Hallinan estimated that it increased threefold between 1555 and 1590 in Bedfordshire and between 1530 and 1603, twenty two Bedfordshire parishes doubled their number of taxpayers on the subsidy rolls and another thirty five parishes increased their number by half. ⁽³⁶⁾

Many of the gentry families of 1642 which are analysed in the next chapter and whose origins and source of wealth are untraceable may have risen, over a number of generations, from the yeomanry of both counties or of surrounding counties. However, both Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire Record Offices contain the papers of several families which can be classified as rising yeomen:

The Orlebar family moved to Bedfordshire from Northamptonshire in the mid-sixteenth century and received a grant of arms in 1652. In 1657, they purchased Hinwick Hall, Poddington, for two thousand five hundred pounds, and today they are one of the most notable families in the county. The Whitbread family of Cardington are also one of the leading Bedfordshire families today, and they were yeomen at Gravenhurst in the sixteenth century. In 1639, they sold their farm in Gravenhurst and purchased one in Cardington. Between 1660 and 1800, they became the sole landowner in this parish and achieved social prominence through the brewing industry. ⁽³⁷⁾

In 1632, Nicholas Jackson of Duddington, in Northamptonshire, was described as a yeoman. By 1660, William was termed a gentleman, and in 1691, an esquire. The manor was purchased in 1798. Between 1652 and 1657, John Wykes of Haselbeach, yeoman, purchased over three thousands pounds worth of property in this parish, and he was termed, gentleman, in 1667.

34. See Chapter 4. For a detailed study of some of these families, see Appendix 21: Case Studies. Appendix 11 lists the nobility, baronets and knights of both counties in 1642 and some of these families were amongst them. For Sir Robert Napier, see Appendix 21, and for Sir Henry Finch, see D.N.B., and Cokayne, G., Complete Peerage.
35. Examples of some are B.R.O., MC.48 (Chalgrave, 1629); X95/100 (Higham Gobion, 1656); N.R.O., XYZ 130 (Overstone, 1599); C(A)166 (Aynho, 1545); S(G)803 (Harpole, 1570); R(C)3 (Grafton Underwood, 1659); Th.1, 767 (Cold Ashby, 1623); G(H)293 (Horton, 1625); SS.4,289 (Thrapston, 1650).
36. Hallinan, Thesis, op.cit., p. 308. Godber, J., History of Bedfordshire, 1066-1888, p. 213.
37. B.R.O., Orlebar MSS., OR: Whitbread MSS., W. Other examples of rising yeomen are the Francklin family of Thurleigh (Francklin MSS., FN), although they appear to have been in some financial difficulty before the Civil War; the Hanscombes of Shillington (Hanscombe MSS., HE); the Dillinghams of Dean (Parsons MSS., PA); and those without separate

John Wyne of Pytchley was called a yeoman in 1610, and his son, Henry, a gentleman in 1649. In 1584, the Henseman family of Ecton were called husbandmen, but by 1637, they were described as gentlemen.⁽³⁸⁾

One indication of this rise of many yeomen is the fact that one hundred and seventy self-styled 'gentlemen' were disclaimed by the Heralds at the 1681 Visitation of Northamptonshire. This figure was over half the entire amigerous gentry of the county in 1642. This distribution of these disclaimed gentlemen is plotted on May 17, and it shows distinct regional trends.⁽³⁹⁾

Only fifty seven of them came from the Eastern Division, and forty two of these were in parishes within the Nene valley from Peterborough to Wellingborough. The majority of the remainder were in the northern hundreds of Corby and Rothwell.

Thirty one of the one hundred and thirteen in the west division were in Guilsborough hundred in the north west, and there was a particularly strong concentration in the south western hundreds of Warden, Norton, Towcester, and Sutton.

The previous chapter revealed that the western division was the poorer of the two in the late seventeenth century and it is surprising to find that it contained more disclaimed gentlemen than the east. The north western corner of the county was the poorest region of all, but Guilsborough hundred contained more disclaimed gentlemen than any other hundred. However, the Nene valley and the south western corner of Northamptonshire were the richest regions of the county and it is to be expected that they contained strong concentrations of prosperous yeomen. The poorer north of the county was the great area of sheep farming and horse breeding and so it may be that the strong concentration of disclaimed gentlemen in this region represents the prosperous, independent, pastoral farmer near the top of the social ladder in this part of Northamptonshire.

Unfortunately, there appears to be no list of disclaimed Bedfordshire gentlemen from any of the Visitations, but Miss Godber discovered in her study of local wills that the poorer northern hundreds had relatively fewer yeomen compared to husbandmen than the richer central and eastern parts of the county. The sixteen parishes which she said contained the

37. manuscript collections include the Beaumonts of Pulloxhill, the Bromsalls of Sandy; Brownes of Arlesey; Dentons of Houghton Conquest; Stauntons of Woburn; and Taylors of Clapham. B.R.O., CRT120/38, is a Record Office article about the Bedfordshire yeoman.

38. N.R.O., Jackson MSS., Wykes MSS., see also the Taylor MSS., for another example. Other rising yeomen included the Adams family of Weldon; the Bartons of Brigstock; Claypoles of Northborough; Judkins of Heyford; Maidwell of Geddington; and a spectacular example in the Barkers of Easton Neston, who are discussed by Hallinan, T., Thesis, *op.cit.*, pp. 291-8.

39. Rylands, J., (ed), List of Persons who were Disclaimed as gentlemen of Coat-Armour by the Heralds at Visitations. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the strict legal criterion of a 'gentleman'

largest number of yeomen in relation to area are in the centre and east of Bedfordshire.⁽⁴⁰⁾ These were the regions of very fertile sand and gravel soils which were the base of the dairying and market gardening belts. It was the most fertile part of the county. The reason why the poorer north of Bedfordshire had so few prosperous yeomen compared to the poorer north of Northamptonshire may be because pastoral farming was much less evident than in this part of Northamptonshire. Holdings were much smaller and there were not the independent, substantial sheep graziers and horse breeders that characterised the upland north of Bedfordshire's neighbour.

At a more individual level, there is further evidence of social and geographical mobility. Forty seven taxpayers in Towcester hundred, Northamptonshire, in 1524 had disappeared from the subsidy roll of the following year. Of ninety one taxpayers who had been assessed on wages in 1524, thirty one had disappeared by 1525, and of the forty two new taxpayers in 1525, twenty eight were assessed at one pound. Dr. Sheail concluded that there were some extremely mobile poor in this part of Northamptonshire.⁽⁴¹⁾ Watling Street passed through this hundred and may explain this high mobility.

The same conclusion was reached by Messrs. Harrison and Laslett in their study of Cogenhoe, a Northamptonshire parish on the river Nene, a few miles east of Northampton. They found that there was a fifty two percent turnover of individuals between 1618 and 1628, and that domestic servants were especially mobile because three quarters of them left the village between 1618 and 1620. Most startling of all was the transfer of whole households. Eight out of thirty three left Cogenhoe between 1618 and 1628. Recent research has destroyed the myth of the immobility of the pre-industrial villager and the poor appear to have been the most mobile section of the community.⁽⁴²⁾

39. was that his family possessed a coat of arms, - the term 'armigerous', is used, therefore. For discussion of this, see Squibb, G., Visitation Pedigrees and The Genealogist. But social mobility meant that many rising yeomen called themselves 'gentleman' and it was the Herald's job to check these claims and aspirations. My criterion for my gentry totals in the next chapter is armigerous, and therefore, I estimate that there were 335 gentry families in Northamptonshire in 1642.
40. Godber, J., op.cit., p. 209. The sixteen are Lidlington, Houghton Conquest, Houghton Regis, Marston, Sandy, Toddington, Shillington, Barton, Chalgrave, Roxton, Potton, Tempsford, Biddenham, Elstow, Eaton Socon and Pulloxhill.
41. Sheail, J., 'The Geographical Distribution of Taxable Population and Wealth in England in the early sixteenth century', Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, lv, p. 123.
42. Harrison, J., and Laslett, P., 'Clayworth and Cogenhoe', in Bell, A., and Ollard, R., (ed), Historical Essays, 1600-1750, pp. 177-80, especially. See, Clark, P., 'The Migrant in Kentish Towns, 1580-1640', in Clark, P., and Slack, P., (ed), Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700, Cornwall, J., 'Evidence of Population Mobility in the Seventeenth Century', B.I.H.R., xl, Beier, A., 'Vagrants and the Social Order in Elizabethan England', Past and Present, lxiv; Sussex Tapes, History Series, H.6, Laslett, P., and Wrigley, E., on the pre-industrial population and social structure.

Both Towcester hundred and Cogenhoe were fairly close to the royal forests in southern Northamptonshire and in view of the marked population increase in forest villages between 1524 and 1670, and their larger acreage and less rigid social and legal controls, their proximity may explain part of this mobility. Equally, the proximity of the market towns of Towcester and Northampton may have contributed to it.⁽⁴³⁾

Miss Marshall discovered a pronounced degree of mobility within the taxpaying population of Bedfordshire. In fifty nine parishes, less than half of those recorded on the Subsidy Roll of 1580/1 reappear in the 1671 Hearth Tax, and in only seven parishes do more than half reappear. In eighty two parishes, less than half of the taxpayers of 1596/7 reappeared on the 1628 subsidy roll, and in only twenty five did more than half reappear. Similarly, more parishes had a survival rate of less than half between 1628 and 1671, than had a survival rate of more than half.⁽⁴⁴⁾

But if these changes were caused by migration over short distances, distant emigration to the American colonies was also at work. Approximately, ten percent of all such travellers between 1620 and 1650 are recorded in C. Banks' Topographical Dictionary.

Place of origin is given for forty eight Bedfordshire emigrants. The largest contingent was eight from Cranfield, including six members of the Wheeler family. Five originated from Dunstable. These thirteen and nine others came from seven towns which had an estimated population or more than five hundred in 1671. The other twenty six originated from sixteen parishes scattered throughout the county.

Place of origin is given for sixty seven Northamptonshire emigrants. Northampton provided the largest amount with ten. In all, twenty nine of the sixty seven originated from towns which had an estimated population of more than five hundred in 1670.⁽⁴⁵⁾

So in both counties the emigration from urban centres where population pressure was at its highest was an important part of this movement to the colonies.

43. See Chapter 2, Tables VI and X, and note 41, for discussion of this.
44. Marshall, L., The Rural Population of Bedfordshire, 1671-1921, B.H.R.S., xvi, Tabulated figures. She does not cover every parish because the subsidies vary in completeness, but the results are sufficient to gauge trends.
45. Brownell, E., (ed), C.E. Banks' Topographical Dictionary of Two Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty Five English emigrants to New England, 1620-50. Bridenbaugh, C., Vexed and Troubled Englishmen, 1590-1642, p. 465, says they represent 10.5 percent of all emigrants. Unfortunately, Hotten, J., (ed), Original Lists of Persons of Quality who went from Great Britain to the American Plantations, 1600-1700, does not include places of origin. See Appendix 5 for parishes with an estimated population of more than five hundred.

Finally, inheritance patterns have an effect on social and geographical mobility. Primogeniture often meant that the younger sons had to leave the family estate to make their living in the towns or in another area and partible inheritance could be beneficial to all concerned and give them a good start or it could cause all the beneficiaries to supplement their patrimony by moving away from the family estate. Certainly, partible inheritance may have contributed to overpopulation by keeping more members of a family in the same village.

Partible inheritance was common in the Northamptonshire forests and may have contributed to the heavy population in these areas. In Brigstock, Stanion and Corby, for example, in Rockingham Forest, the system of 'Borough English', with descent to the younger son, prevailed. This was also the case in parts of Northampton. Chapter Eight demonstrates that partible inheritance was common in Dunstable, and since this Bedfordshire town had the highest density of population of any parish in either county, this may have been important. Dr. Thirsk found that only forty percent of Bedfordshire wills which survive for the period 1498-1526 stipulate primogeniture and this may partly explain why Bedfordshire possessed a higher density of population than Northamptonshire in the sixteenth century. It does appear that inheritance patterns other than primogeniture are associated with areas of particularly high population density and demographic increase, but the evidence is so fragmentary that it is difficult to draw many conclusions. (46)

46. Thirsk, J., 'Industries in The Countryside', in Fisher, F., (ed), Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England, p. 78, V.C.H. Northamptonshire, iii, pp. 2-57. See Chapter 2, Tables VI and X, for population increase and density in the market towns and forest villages.

6. FREEHOLD AND COPYHOLD

Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire lay within the area of Scandinavian influence during late Anglo-Saxon times, as part of the Southern Danelaw. Because of this the proportion of free tenants was high from the earliest days of Norman settlement. In fifteen of twenty five Bedfordshire villages covered by the late thirteenth century Hundred Rolls, the free tenants outnumbered the rest. Most of these villages lay within the northern hundreds of Barford, Stodden and Willey and forty six percent of the land was free compared to an average of approximately thirty percent for most of the areas covered by the work of Professor Kosminsky.⁽⁴⁷⁾

This pattern seems to have continued in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although the picture gained from manorial surveys is very fragmentary, copyhold seems to have been virtually absent from Bedfordshire north of the county town. There was none on the extensive St. John estate in this area.⁽⁴⁸⁾

It is interesting that this is also the area of Bedfordshire where the Crown owned least land. The greatest concentration of royal property was embodied in Ampthill Honour in the centre of the county, and it is these manors that furnish the majority of surviving surveys. There were variations within the Crown estate. Dunstable, Ridgmont, Campton, Shefford, Wrestlingworth, and the royal holdings in Bedford seem to have contained no copyhold. But Biggleswade, Cranfield, Barton, Clophill, Liddington, Millbrook and Shillington were nearly all copyhold. In Elstow, Kempston and Wilhamstead, freehold was dominant, whereas in Woburn, Westoning, Eversholt, Potsgrave and Toddington, there were similar amounts of freehold, copyhold and tenancy at will.⁽⁴⁹⁾

47. Kosminsky, E., Studies in the Agrarian History of England in the Thirteenth Century, especially p. 92. See also, Dodwell, B., 'The Free Tenantry of Hundred Rolls, Ec.H.R., xiii.
48. The absence of copyhold in the north is noted in a Bedfordshire Record Office article about the yeoman of the county in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. (B.R.O., C.R.T.120/38). The surveys of the St. John estate, 1623-8, are B.R.O., C.R.T. 110/34. P.R.O., L.R.2/208, and B.R.O., C.R.T. 100/25, show that there were no copyholders in Eaton Socon or Podington. There were five copyholders at Dean, in the extreme north, in 1541, but even here, they are in a distinct minority (P.R.O., E.315/357). Court rolls would provide a definitive answer but they are beyond the scope of this study.
49. P.R.O., L.R.2/276; L.R.2/208; L.R.2/276; E315/396; E315/357; B.R.O., C.R.T.100/25.

Other private manors in the centre and south exhibit similar variations. Leighton Buzzard and its hamlets were overwhelmingly copyhold together with Warden. Blunham was fairly evenly divided between copyhold and other tenures, but Stagsden contained no copyhold at all.⁽⁵⁰⁾

The only general points to emerge about Bedfordshire seems to be the absence of copyhold in the north, and the enormous variation on the Crown estate. In 1705, there were two thousand two hundred and thirty three freeholders in Bedfordshire.⁽⁵¹⁾

Similar variations existed on the Crown lands of Northamptonshire, which provide most of the existing surveys. However, two distinct patterns emerge. There was very little copyhold within the Honour of Grafton, in the south of the county.⁽⁵²⁾ But the Duchy of Lancaster manors in Higham Ferrers hundred were overwhelmingly copyhold.⁽⁵³⁾ Higham Ferrers hundred bordered on the north of Bedfordshire, which was free from copyhold, and so the contrast is dramatic and must be related to the earlier history of the Duchy. Daventry, Long Buckby, and Possenhams, the Duchy manors in west Northamptonshire, appear to have possessed no copyhold at all.⁽⁵⁴⁾

Crown manors in the east of the county like King's Cliffe, Collyweston, Brigstock, Geddington, Warmington, and Little Weldon were also dominated by copyhold; and even further east, some of the manors of the Dean and Chapter of Peterborough like Eye, Gunthorpe, Paston, Peterborough, Walton and Werrington were also heavily copyhold.⁽⁵⁵⁾

These surveys are concerned, primarily, with Crown or corporate manors rather than private ones, and they do not indicate a clear regional pattern. However, they do suggest that copyhold was more prevalent in eastern Northamptonshire than in the west. This is supported by a late seventeenth century total of the number of voters, or forty shilling freeholders, in each division. The west provided two thousand seven hundred and thirty eight, and the east, one thousand six hundred and thirty eight. In 1674, west Northamptonshire had an estimated

50. P.R.O., LR2/276; B.R.O., KK 778; W.2593/1; L24/166, N.R.O., SS.3,637.

51. This is according to Mr. St. John Cooper's nineteenth century researches. At the end of his discussion of each parish, he lists the number of freeholders. I have totalled them.

B.M., Addit. MS., 34,364-383.

52. P.R.O., DL.42/115; E315/419; LR2/201; LR2/221; LR.2/228; LR.2/290-292.

53. P.R.O., DL.42/117, LR.2/292; E317/Northants 45.

54. P.R.O., DL.42/117; DL.42/115.

55. P.R.O., LR2/221; LR.2/228; LR.2/270; LR.2/291, E.317/Northants 48.
N.R.O., M(T.)8.

population of nearly seven thousand less than that of the east, and so freehold seems to have been more prevalent in the west of the county. (56)

56. N.R.O., Isham MSS, I.L.2,571. It is undated. See Chapter 2, Table V, for 1674 population estimates. The west had an estimated population of 41,327, and the east, 47,948.

Lennard, R., Rural Northamptonshire under the Commonwealth, Oxford Studies in Legal and Social History, V., analyses many of these Crown manors in great depth, but some of his statistical errors are pointed out by Madge, S., The Domesday of Crown Lands, pp. 156-159. Wake, J., (ed), Musters, Beacons and Subsidies in the county of Northampton, 1586-1623, N.R.S., iii, pp. 111-17, is a list of freeholders in the eastern division in 1603 (excluding Nassaburgh hundred). It totals only 359. The discrepancy between this figure and that for the late seventeenth century is probably explained by the fact that the 1603 list was compiled for jury purposes and the other for elections. See Hirst, D., 'The Seventeenth Century Freeholder and the Statistician: A Case of Terminological Confusion', and reply by Thompson, F., in Ec.H.R., 2nd s., xxix, pp. 306-10.

7. CONCLUSION

Since much of this chapter has relied upon the work of Dr. Hallinan, it is important to state his conclusions. He found that the most significant shift in landed property in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was not from the larger landowners to the smaller ones, but from the Crown, corporate institutions and older families to more recently established private landowners. If families established in the three counties he studied by 1480 owned all the private manors at this date, they owned only fifteen and three quarters percent of private manors in 1640. The so-called 'rise of the gentry' referred to only a small proportion of landed families and the rise that did take place was over by 1600. Between 1521 and 1560, the advantage lay with the lesser families; between 1561 and 1600, with the larger families; and with the smaller landowners, again, between 1601 and 1640. The real qualitative change in the character of the landed class came from the altered position of the older families. This meant increased social and financial contacts with London, and increased interaction between the landed and monied interest.⁽⁵⁷⁾

Many of these points, particularly the dispute over the 'rise of the gentry', are considered in more detail in the next chapter, but the dramatic change in the agrarian and industrial framework, which was demonstrated in Chapter 1, appears to have been reflected in the structure of landownership. The land market was very active; the taxpaying population appears to have been geographically mobile; and within the landowning class there was a dramatic expansion in the yeomanry, which was reflected in the numbers disclaimed as armigerous gentry by the Heralds. The number of families owning one or two manors in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Northamptonshire increased from one hundred and seventy two, in 1480, to three hundred and seventy three, in 1640.⁽⁵⁸⁾ London exercised the same important influence on landownership in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire that it exercised on the economy.

The emphasis, throughout, is on change and fluidity. Demographic factors were very important to this social and geographical mobility. Mr. Kew has estimated that up to a fifth of Devon's landowning families failed in the male line in each generation and that marriage was the commonest channel of social mobility after 1536.⁽⁵⁹⁾ Miss Naughton found that only six of twenty seven Bedfordshire gentry families, which she

57. Hallinan, Thesis, op.cit., pp. 466-75. See Chapter 4, note 1, for bibliography of the 'rise of the gentry' controversy. This same chapter discusses the controversy and attempts to assess the validity of the concept in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire.

58. Hallinan, Thesis, op.cit., p. 458.

59. Kew, J., 'The Disposal of Crown Lands and the Devon Land Market, 1536-58', Ag.H.R., xviii, p. 105.

studied, survived into the fifteenth century from the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. Fourteen of them died out through having no male heir.⁽⁶⁰⁾ In Northamptonshire, the aristocratic Zouche family, and the Knightly, Mildmay, and Throckmorton families are just three prominent families which died out through failure in the male line; and the second Earl of Exeter died with no direct male heir. The title descended to a nephew.⁽⁶¹⁾

Landownership is another aspect of these counties which was radically transformed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

60. Naughton, K., The Gentry of Bedfordshire in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, University of Leicester, Department of Local History, Occasional Paper, 3rd s., ii, pp. 16 and 24.
61. See Cokayne, G.E., Complete Peerage, and D.N.B.

CHAPTER 4

THE GENTRY

The previous chapter showed that there were fundamental changes in the general structure of landownership in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The most important landowners were the gentry, the most prominent members of county society, and this chapter attempts to analyse the gentry of both counties and to consider the amount of transformation which took place within this group during the same period.

The historiographical debate called 'The Gentry Controversy', which dominated English historical research into the early modern period, during the 1950's, heralded a plethora of local studies and individual monographs, and focused attention on the social and economic environment of the provinces. ⁽¹⁾ The net is gradually widening to cover more and more

1. The debate was precipitated by Tawney, R.H., 'The Rise of the Gentry, 1558-1640', Ec.H.R., xi, 1940. (See also his 'Postscript', Ec.H.R., 2nd s., vii, 1954). He argued that the Civil War was caused by the demand for political power by a gentry class which was essentially puritan, and which had increased its economic wealth through agrarian capitalism. 'Rising', 'puritan', and 'parliamentarian' were equated. Trevor-Roper, H.R., 'The Gentry, 1540-1640', Ec.H.R., Supplement 1, 1953, argued that only gentry who were involved in trade, law or office holding prospered, and the Civil War was promoted by 'mere' farming gentry, who were declining rather than rising. Stone, L., The Crisis of The Aristocracy, 1558-1641, (1965), was a summary of his contributions to the debate. See also, Trevor-Roper, H., 'The Elizabethan Aristocracy, an Anatomy Anatomized', Ec.H.R., 2nd s, iii, 1951. For the debate over Tawney and Stone's counting of manors, see Chapter 3, note 3. Further contributions include Hexter, J., 'The Myth of the Middle-Class in Tudor England', in Reappraisals in History, (1961); Coleman, D., 'The Gentry Controversy and The Aristocracy in Crisis, 1558-1641', History, li, 1966; and reviews of Stone's book by Aylmer, G., and MacCaffrey, W., in Past and Present, xxx and xxxii, (1965).

Local studies and monographs include Batho, G., 'The Finances of an Elizabethan Nobleman: Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland', Ec.H.R., 2nd s., ix, 1957; Clark, P., English Provincial Society from the Reformation to Revolution: Religion, Politics and Society in Kent, 1500-1640, (1977); Andriette, E., Devon and Exeter in the Civil War, (1974); Barnes, T., Somerset, 1625-40, (1961); Cornwall, J., 'The Early Tudor Gentry', Ec.H.R., 2nd s., xvii, 1964; Cliffe, J.T., The Yorkshire Gentry From the Reformation to The Civil War, (1969); Everitt, A., Suffolk and The Great Rebellion, Suffolk Record Society, iii, (1960); The Community of Kent and The Great Rebellion, (1966), The Local Community and The Great Rebellion, Historical Association, general series, lxx, (1969), Change in The Provinces in The Seventeenth Century, University of Leicester, Department of Local History, Occasional Paper, 2nd s., i, (1969); Ferris, J., 'The Gentry of Dorset on the Eve of The Civil War', Genealogists' Magazine, xv, 1965; Finch, M., The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families, 1540-1640, N.R.S., xix, (1956); Fletcher, A., A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex, 1600-60, (1975); Holmes, C., The Eastern Association and The Civil War, (1974); Morrill, J., Cheshire, 1630-60, (1974); James, M., Family, Lineage and Civil Society: Durham, 1540-1640, (1974); Lloyd, H., The Gentry of South West Wales, 1540-1640, (1968), Manning, R.,

counties and this thesis was inspired, primarily, to further that end. But this chapter, in particular, is intended as a contribution to this controversy. Although some historians are pleased that the gentry debate has gradually died down, by posing the same questions that other local historians have asked in the past, comparative analysis with other counties can be attempted. Also, these two counties can be placed within the gentry debate and the issues in this controversy can be related to these counties. Therefore, the method of approach in this chapter is not original. It relies, heavily, on the work of Dr. Cliffe and Professor Everitt.⁽²⁾

The body of material is heavy with statistics. These have the great asset of embodying a mass of cumbersome, disparate research in a compact form because the basis of an analysis of the gentry is the composite nature of the sources. Virtually every class of record is useful. The problems of definition, particularly of a family and of a gentleman, and problems of sources are discussed in Section 1. Other discussion of sources is given where they occur in the chapter. Appendices 11 to 16 contain the vast amount of research that has been undertaken and they list the various categories of family which will be examined. Most of the tables in this chapter have been compiled from these Appendices and they are an essential accompaniment to the chapter.

After the discussion of problems of definition and sources, social and geographical mobility within the gentry is examined. Then the leading gentry of 1642, the peers, baronets, and knights, and recent knightly families, are discussed with particular relation to their origins and political power. Income and the size of gentry houses constitute section four, and then rising and declining gentry are examined. Entrepreneurial activity and religion are analysed in sections six and seven, and the loyalties of the local gentry in the Civil War, in section eight. Section nine is a very brief amplification of several points which were raised in the religion and Civil War loyalty sections, with particular reference to the leading families of 1642. Section ten is composed of a case study of the Knightley family of Fawsley, Northamptonshire, an especially interesting family because of their long tradition of political and religious radicalism.

1. Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex, (1969); Mousley, J., 'The Fortunes of Some Gentry Families of Elizabethan Sussex', Ec.H.R., 2nd s., xi, 1958-9; Pennington, D., and Roots, I., The Committee at Stafford, 1643-5, (1957); Simpson, A., The Wealth of The Gentry, 1540-1660, (1961); Smith, A.H., County and Court: Norfolk, 1558-1603, (1974); Smith, R., Land and Politics in the Reign of Henry VIII: The West Riding of Yorkshire, 1530-46, (1969); Underdown, D., Somerset in The Civil War and Interregnum, (1974); Watts, S., and S.J., From Border to Middle Shire, Northumberland, 1586-1623, (1975); Hoskins, W., 'The Estates of The Caroline Gentry', in Hoskins, W., and Finberg, H., Devonshire Studies, (1952). Dates have been included in this footnote to enable the reader to gauge the chronology of the debate.
2. Cliffe, T., The Yorkshire Gentry from The Reformation to The Civil War;

Their example confirms the conclusions of the chapter, as a whole, and shows that the old equations formulated by the main protagonists in the 'Gentry Controversy' are no longer applicable. The Knightleys were an old family, but they were puritan and parliamentarian, and they experienced serious decline before 1640.

But if the old categories of the 'Gentry Controversy' are invalid, it is equally wrong to say that the dramatic social transformation within the gentry, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which this chapter illustrates, caused a radicalization of the counties as a whole. Catholicism and royalism were especially strong in Northamptonshire, despite its reputation as a puritan, parliamentarian county, par excellence.

This chapter is best summarized by the phrase 'continuity and change', and the history of the gentry of these two counties reflects both the changes and the stable elements which we have already seen in the economy, population, social structure, and structure of landownership in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire.

2. Everitt, A., particularly The Community of Kent and The Great Rebellion, and Suffolk and The Great Rebellion.

1. SOME PROBLEMS OF DEFINITION AND SOURCES

John Norden's use of the phrase "Herald's Garden" to describe Northamptonshire is a well-known indicator of the number of prominent gentlemen within the county. The same could be said of Bedfordshire. In 1724, it was described as "crowded with gentry".⁽³⁾

But the definition of gentleman was as varied to contemporaries as it is to modern historians. Dr. Smith used the economic criterion of income and Miss Mousley used the criterion of local office-holding.⁽⁴⁾ I have adopted the method of Dr. Cliffe and included those families whose pedigrees were registered by the College of Arms: an armigerous definition, as far as possible. The major source for this is the series of Heraldic Visitations. But they are notably incomplete. The Northamptonshire Visitation of 1618-19 omits several prominent families, whose pedigrees were recorded in 1564 and which were still resident; and the Bedfordshire Visitation of 1634 omits such armigerous families as the Gostwicks, the Dyves and the Lukes, all of which had knightly status. Indeed, the Heralds recorded only forty five families in the 1669 Bedfordshire Visitation.⁽⁵⁾

The problem is compounded for Northamptonshire because of the lack of a Caroline Visitation. Many families are known to have entered the county between 1619 and 1642 including Sir Robert Bannister of Passenham, Sir Clement Edmonds of Preston Deanery, and Sir Francis Crane of Grafton. Some of these can be traced from the 1681 Visitation, but others had left the county by then. Therefore, even with the supplementary information of knighthoods, baronetcies, and subsidy rolls, it is difficult to reach a definite figure. Some indigenous families were granted arms between 1619 and 1642, including the Manleys of Spratton and the Maidwells of Geddington. The Brownes of Walcot and the Enions of Flore, who obtained baronetcies in 1641 and 1642, respectively, appear on no Visitations at all.⁽⁶⁾

3. Norden, J., Speculi Britanniae pars Altera or a Delineation of Northamptonshire, written in 1610, (1720 edition), p. 28; Moll, H., A New Description of England and Wales with the adjoining Islands, (1724), p.106.
4. Smith, R., Land and Politics in The Reign of Henry VIII: the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1530-46; Mousley, J., 'The Fortunes of some gentry families of Elizabethan Sussex', Ec.H.R., 2nd s., xi.
5. Blaydes, F., (ed), The Visitations of Bedfordshire, Harleian Society, xix; Longden, H., (ed), The Visitation of Northamptonshire, 1681, Harleian Society, lxxxvii; Metcalfe, W., (ed), Northamptonshire Visitations, 1564 and 1618-19; College of Arms, D24, Bedfordshire Visitation of 1669.
6. Cokayne, G., (ed), Complete Baronetage; Shaw, W., The Knights of England; Metcalfe, W., A Book of Knights, 1426-1660; P.R.O., E.179; Rylands, W., (ed); Grantees of Arms to The End of the Seventeenth Century, Harleian Society, lxvi.

Therefore, my figures for the total number of gentry in 1642 may contain some non-armigerous gentry, but they have been calculated with the aid of several useful checks. I have used Professor Everitt's figure of three hundred and thirty five gentry families in Northamptonshire in 1642.⁽⁷⁾ In 1668, Sir Robert Charnock listed one hundred and sixty-eight Bedfordshire gentlemen, and Dr. Hallinan listed one hundred and fifty eight non-noble gentry families from the 1590 subsidy roll.⁽⁸⁾ I have estimated the Bedfordshire gentry of 1642 at one hundred and seventy families.

In both counties, to allow for a possible overestimate, I have included the nobility in these figures, but it needs little emphasis that these results are tentative. It is mainly because of the unsatisfactory nature of the Visitations that I have abandoned any attempt to calculate the overall number of gentry between 1558 and 1642, which Dr. Cliffe did estimate for Yorkshire. Elizabethan England was frugal with its honours and there is less scope for reinforcement with knight-hoods. Also, the subsidy rolls for Bedfordshire are almost non-existent between 1550 and the late sixteenth century. So I have concentrated on the situation in 1642, when my statistics have at least some accurate foundation.

It should also be pointed out that it has proved impossible to study all these five hundred and five families in the same depth, and in most cases the gaps in the knowledge of one family are not the same gaps in the knowledge of another. Religion and income may be lacking in some cases, and political allegiance and date of settlement in the county in others. In general, there is fairly complete information about approximately one hundred Bedfordshire and two hundred Northamptonshire gentry families. Inevitably, these tend to be the most prominent of them.

An equally important problem is the definition of a family. The subsidy rolls are invaluable for establishing place of residence, and I have used the household as the unit. If a younger brother of the head of the family had an adult son and was established in other household, I have counted two families. This was the case with Sir Charles Compton

7. Everitt, A., The Local Community and The Great Rebellion, Historical Association, general series, lxx, p. 13; Morrill, J., Cheshire, 1630-60, p. 14, says that Everitt used Visitations, but also included those whose arms are difficult to trace, but who were styled, 'gentlemen'. Therefore, his figure, which is my total, may include some strictly non-armigerous families. My own calculations reached a total of 343 Northamptonshire gentry in 1642, but I decided to adopt Everitt's figure. I removed my eight most doubtful cases.

8. Blaydes, F., (ed), op.cit., pp. 206-7; Hallinan, T., 'The Changing Composition of the Class of larger landowners in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northants from the Reformation to the Civil War', University of Oxford, D.Phil., 1956, pp. 433-8.

of Grendon, a brother of the Earl of Northampton, and notably with the St. John family of Bletsoe, Bedfordshire. Four brothers of the first Earl of Bolingbroke established themselves in Bedfordshire and all were knighted.⁽⁹⁾ A fifth, Sir Rowland, purchased an estate at Woodford, Northamptonshire.

There are several cases of father and son being knights in 1642, but they have been taken as one family because there is no evidence that they lived away from the family home.⁽¹⁰⁾ The same practice has been used for fathers and sons within the nobility.

Finally, the crucial criterion of residence has been used. Many prominent outsiders owned lands in these two counties, but if their main residence was outside the county they are obviously excluded.

Because the influence of the gentry and aristocracy pervaded every aspect of provincial society, it is difficult to decide what to include in this chapter. However, local government and parliamentary elections have been left to Chapter 5, and a brief account of the life-style of the gentry is found in Chapter 6. Also, there is a much more detailed examination of the political opposition of the gentry towards the taxes and innovations introduced by the monarchy between 1610 and 1640 in Section 2 of Chapter 7. However, some description of the disaffected gentry before the Civil War is given in this chapter.

Finally, it must be stressed that the incompleteness of the material means that conclusions should be treated with some caution. However, I believe that sufficient evidence has been assembled to gauge general trends and make some assertions.

9. Sir Henry St. John of Sharnbrook; Sir Beauchamp of Tilbrook; Sir Paulet of Shelton; and Sir Alexander of Thurleigh. This was also true of Sir Lewis Watson of Rockingham, Northamptonshire, and his brother, Sir Edward of Stoke Dry; and of Sir Thomas Alston of Odell, Bedfordshire, and his brother, Sir Edward of Wymington. In both cases, two families have been counted.
10. For example, Sir John Burgoyne of Sutton, and his son, Sir Roger; Sir Oliver and Sir Samuel Luke of Cople; and in Northamptonshire, Sir Thomas and Sir Richard Cave; Sir William and Sir Toby Chauncey; Sir Rowland and Sir John Egerton; and Sir John and Sir Justinian Isham.

2. SOCIAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY

(11)

Table XXVI: Date of Settlement in Bedfordshire and
Northamptonshire of Gentry families of 1642.

	Total of Traceable Families	Before 1500		1500-1603		After 1603	
		Number of Families	% age	Number of Families	% age	Number of Families	% age
Bedfordshire	154	44	28.6	58	37.7	52	33.7
Northamptonshire	261	69	26.4	140	53.6	52	20.0

Professor Everitt has also quantified the date of settlement of Northamptonshire gentry, and of the two hundred and seventy four families which he traced, thirty three percent had settled after 1603, and forty percent had settled between 1485 and 1603. He said that most of the indigenous families had acquired their arms in the sixteenth century.⁽¹²⁾ My figures show a less dramatic settlement in Northamptonshire after 1603, but the general pattern is the same.

In both counties, nearly three quarters of the gentry of 1642 had settled in the county after 1500, but Bedfordshire appears to have undergone proportionally greater settlement in the early Stuart period. This is clearly a remarkable social transformation and it is a radically different picture to that in Leicestershire and Kent, where most of the gentry of 1642 were established before 1500. Similarly, Dr. Holmes estimated that only thirteen point six percent of Norfolk gentry, and eighteen point six percent of Suffolk's gentry had settled after 1603. But in Hertfordshire, forty two percent were established after 1603, and thirty four percent in Essex, and thirty percent in Dorset.⁽¹³⁾ So, it is a case of widespread regional variation.

The Visitations reinforce this picture of change in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire; of one hundred and fourteen families in the 1681 Northamptonshire Visitation, sixty seven appear for the first time, and only eighteen families appear on both the 1564 and 1681 Visitations.

Of forty five families on the Bedfordshire Visitation of 1669, twenty seven appear on that of 1634, and only eleven on that of 1566.⁽¹⁴⁾ Only ten of a list of one hundred and six mid-fifteenth century Bedfordshire gentlemen survived into the mid-sixteenth century.⁽¹⁵⁾ Miss Naughton has

11. The sources for this table are numerous, but the most important are V.C.H. Bedfordshire; V.C.H. Northamptonshire; the Visitations (see note 5); and various family histories.
12. Everitt, A., The Local Community and The Great Rebellion, Historical Association, general series, lxx, p. 21.
13. Everitt, A., op.cit.; Holmes, C., The Eastern Association and The Civil War, Appendix 3; Ferris, J., 'The Gentry of Dorset on the Eve of The Civil War', Genealogists Magazine, xv.
14. But, as was pointed out earlier, the Visitations are inaccurate, and need treating with caution.
15. Blaydes, F., (ed), The Visitations of Bedfordshire, pp: xii-xiv: Return of gentry, 12 Hen. VI.

calculated that only six of twenty seven Bedfordshire gentry in the fourteenth century survived into the following century.⁽¹⁶⁾ The great transformation of Bedfordshire society after 1603 is illustrated by Sir Robert Charnock's list of one hundred and three gentlemen of quality who sold their estates and left the county between 1618 and 1668.⁽¹⁷⁾

However, it is dangerous to overstate the extent of this transformation. In Bedfordshire, two of the five noble families of 1642, the Greys and the St. Johns, and two of the five baronets, the Burgoynes of Sutton and the Gostwicks of Willington, had been established in the county well before 1500. In Northamptonshire, three of the eleven noble families of 1642, the Brudenells, the Montagus and the Vauxes; six of the sixteen baronets; and ten of the twenty eight knights, were from families which had settled in the county before 1500.⁽¹⁸⁾

This prominence of relatively old families is an equally important characteristic of the two counties as the influx of newcomers. The greater gentry who had risen over centuries from freeholders and minor gentry of the middle ages, and the numerous squires who had risen from the ranks of the sixteenth century yeomen, were as common as the nouveaux riches families of office-holders, merchants and lawyers. The former constituted at least half of the Northamptonshire gentry in 1642.⁽¹⁹⁾ Certainly, many of the prominent older families owed much of their wealth to legal and official fortunes acquired after 1500, but it is true that the old, indigenous gentry were an important part of the leading gentry of 1642.

It was suggested in chapter one that the developing economic and communications network within these two counties gave a regional cohesion to the Midland Plain. The geographical basis for this trend is apparent, especially since Northamptonshire was bordered by more counties than any other English shire. A survey of some of the estates of the greater gentry reinforces this theme. At least fifty of the seventy two Northamptonshire gentry families with the status of knight or above in 1642, or which had once possessed knighthoods between 1558 and 1642, owned land in neighbouring counties.⁽²⁰⁾ For example, the Earl of

16. Naughton, K., The Gentry of Bedfordshire in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, University of Leicester, Department of Local History, Occasional Paper, 3rd s., ii, p. 16.

17. Blaydes, F., (ed)., op.cit., pp. 206-7. 6 of the 103 were non-resident, in fact.

18. Appendix 11 lists the nobility, baronets and knights of both counties in 1642.

19. This point is made by Everitt, A., The Local Community and The Great Rebellion, p. 22.

20. This information was obtained from the V.C.H. Northamptonshire, and the V.C.H., volumes which cover those hundreds of neighbouring counties which immediately adjoin Northamptonshire. Also the P.R.O., Catalogue of Feodaries Surveys (Round Room, Wards 5) which lists the estates of those families affected by wardship.

Northampton was Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire and was more prominent in the affairs of that county. The Shirleys of Astwell had an equally important residence at Staunton, Leicestershire; and Sir Justinian Isham, the son of Sir John of Lamport, possessed a large estate at Shangton, Leicestershire. John Cartwright of Aynho was Sheriff of Oxfordshire in 1654; the first Lord Brudenell took his title from his estate at Stonton, Leicestershire; and Lord Spencer owned an important residence at Wormleighton, just across the Warwickshire border. Other Northamptonshire families like the Copes of Canons Ashby; the Fermors of Easton Neston; the Hampdens of Rothwell; the Haslerigs of Alderton; and the Dormers of Thorpe Underwood were cadet lines of famous families in neighbouring counties.

The same is true for Bedfordshire. The St. John Family of Bletsoe owned large estates in Huntingdonshire, where they had been Lords Lieutenant. The mausoleum of the Earls of Bedford was at Chenies, Buckinghamshire; and Sir Roger Burgoyne of Sutton was M.P., for Warwickshire, where he owned a substantial estate, from 1645-8. Sir William Becher of Renhold owned Fotheringhay Castle, Northamptonshire; and the Dyers of Colmworth were a branch of the baronet family in Huntingdonshire.

These are but some of the countless examples which convey an impression of regional interrelation of estates among the more prominent gentry.

The process also worked in reverse. The Popes, Earls of Downe, of Wroxton, Oxfordshire, owned Sutton in Bedfordshire, and Lord Brooke of Warwick owned an important Wellingborough manor in Northamptonshire. The Montagus, Earls of Manchester, of Huntingdonshire, and the future Montagus, Earls of Sandwich, of Huntingdonshire, were descended from the Northamptonshire Montagus. The Dormers, Earls of Carnarvon, of Wing in Buckinghamshire, owned several Bedfordshire manors, as did the Egerton, Earls of Bridgwater, of Ashridge, Hertfordshire, and they also owned Brackley in Northamptonshire. Sir Thomas Leigh of Stoneleigh, Warwickshire, possessed the important Bedfordshire manor of Leighton Buzzard.

Of course, it was mainly among the greater gentry that this interrelation took place. The estates of the minor gentry were, ipso facto, smaller and more insular. Dr. Holmes estimated that, on average, eight percent of the manors of five Eastern Association counties were owned by persons not resident in the county in question, but who did live in nearby shires.⁽²¹⁾ I cannot compare the situation in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, quantitatively, but the evidence suggests that the proportion may have been higher in these two counties.

21. Holmes, C., op.cit., Appendix 2.

Table XXVII: Marriage patterns of the heads of Bedfordshire⁽²²⁾ gentry families, 1566-1669, and of the heads of Northamptonshire gentry families, 1564-1681

	TOTAL OF TRACEABLE MARRIAGES	MARRIED WOMEN FROM WITHIN THE COUNTY		MARRIED WOMEN FROM ADJOINING COUNTIES		MARRIED WOMEN FROM OTHER AREAS	
		NUMBER	% AGE	NUMBER	% AGE	NUMBER	% AGE
Bedfordshire, 1566-1669	458	198	43.2	129	28.2	131	28.6
Northamptonshire, 1564-1681	977	407	41.7	352	36.0	218	22.3

The marriage patterns of the heads of gentry families further illustrate this interrelation with other counties. The fact that more Northamptonshire gentry married women from neighbouring counties than Bedfordshire gentlemen must be due, partly, to the greater number of adjoining shires around the former county, but it appears that less than half of the marriages were contracted with brides from within either county.⁽²³⁾ The gentry of these two counties clearly spread their marital connections further than their Lancashire counterparts, who took over seventy percent of their brides from within the shire, and fifteen percent from neighbouring counties; and their Dorset fellows, of whom only eleven percent married a bride from outside the county.⁽²⁴⁾

Table XXVIII: Place of origin of those gentry families of 1642⁽²⁵⁾ which had settled in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire after 1500

	TOTAL OF TRACEABLE FAMILIES	ADJOINING COUNTIES		NORTH AND NORTH WEST		EAST ANGLIA		LONDON AND THE SOUTH EAST		MIDLANDS, SOUTH AND SOUTH WEST	
		NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
Bedfordshire	94	32	34.0	19	20.2	15	16.0	13	13.8	15	16.0
Northamptonshire	149	57	38.2	37	24.8	17	11.4	20	13.4	18	12.2

Over a third of the newcomers to both counties, after 1500, came from adjoining shires and so this strengthened the economic links between the region. The majority of those which are untraced are lesser gentry who probably rose from the yeomanry, some, no doubt, from neighbouring counties, and so the proportion may have been even higher.

22. This is calculated from the Visitations (see note 5). Only the head of the family has been considered.
23. Northamptonshire was bordered by nine, and Bedfordshire by five counties.
24. Blackwood, B., 'The Marriages of the Lancashire Gentry on the eve of the Civil War', *Genealogists Magazine*, xvi, p. 321, Ferris, J., *op.cit.*, p.108.
25. This is compiled from composite sources. The counties of England have been grouped into these regions according to the classification in *The Times Atlas of Great Britain*, p. 158. Everitt, A., 'Social Mobility in Early Modern England', *Past and Present*, xxxiii, emphasizes the number of families which rose from the yeomanry of neighbouring counties.

So, we can see two underlying, interrelated themes emerging from this mass of statistics. On the one hand, there was a dramatic social transformation and rapid turnover of gentry families. Landownership, marriage patterns, and county origins suggest a sort of regional entity which embraced the greater gentry and which reinforced the collective economy of the Midland Plain. The social milieu of the gentry was wider spread than in some other counties, and the presence of arterial roads undoubtedly contributed to the influx of families from the north and from London and the South east.

But on the other hand, there was the continuing power and importance of some older families, and the majority of gentry estates were confined to one county, and over forty percent of gentlemen chose local brides. Localism was still a very important visceral sentiment among the gentry. (26) This contrast generated tensions. The Dyve and Boteler families had a violent quarrel in the 1580's, when the Botelers tried to establish an estate in the Dyve manor of Bromham, Bedfordshire. Sir Lewis Dyve, descendant of an illustrious Northamptonshire medieval family, regarded his neighbour, whose fortunes were founded by a Lord Mayor of London in the 1530's, as an upstart. Ironically, the Botelers had been landowners in Bedfordshire since 1313, whereas the Dyves moved to the county after 1500. (27)

There were tensions within the nobility. In a famous slanging match in the House of Lords, the Earl of Arundel ridiculed Lord Spencer of Althorp, Northamptonshire, for his sheep-rearing ancestry. Similarly, the Earl of Exeter, of Burghley in Northamptonshire, ordered his steward to scour the family archives in search of writs which termed his grandfather an esquire, because someone had called his half-brother, the Earl of Salisbury, the grandson of a sieve-maker in 1605. (28)

The massive infusion of commercial and legal wealth into the gentry, after 1500, also generated tensions. In 1655, Sir Justinian Isham of Lamport received a letter advising him against a certain match for his daughter:

"in these degenerating times, the gentry had need to close nearer together and make a bank and bulwarke against that Sea of Democracy w^{ch} is over running them and to keepe their descents pure and untainted from that Mungrill breed w^{ch} would faigne mixe wth them." (29)

26. Holmes, C., 'Lincolnshire and Colonel King, 1642-6, 'Historical Journal, xvi, p. 451 ff, attacks what he regards as excessive localism in the work of Professor Everitt, and stresses the effect of central legislation on the provinces. This should, perhaps, be borne in mind.
27. B.R.O., Trevor-Wingfield MSS, Catalogue, pp. ii-iv.
28. Gardiner, S., History of England from the accession of James I to the outbreak of Civil War, iv, pp. 114, 116; B.M., Harleian MSS., 374, fo.32.
29. N.R.O., Isham Correspondence, I.C.353.

This correspondent, who is unnamed, unfortunately, believed it was better to have a lesser estate and honour, than a greater one with no gentility. But the needs of a declining nobleman or gentleman necessitated an end to endogamy. There was a protracted legal dispute, at the end of the sixteenth century, when the spendthrift Lord Compton, later first Earl of Northampton, married the daughter of a Lord Mayor of London against the wishes of his father. This was an attempt to restore diminishing wealth. (30)

One aspect of change in these two counties, which has become very evident so far in this thesis, is the increasing influence of London. A list of those families which were founded by Sheriffs, Lord Mayors, and prominent merchants of London was given in the previous chapter. (31) But of the gentry of 1642, they included the noble families of Cokayne of Rushton, and Fitzwilliam of Milton, in Northants; and the baronet families of Napier of Luton, in Bedfordshire; and Enion of Flore; Browne of Walcot; Fermor of Easton Neston; and Isham of Lamport, in Northamptonshire.

Legal office in the central courts meant a London base, and of the Bedfordshire gentry of 1642, the Alstons of Odell, baronets; and the knightly families of Luke of Cople and Crawley of Luton, owed their wealth to legal fortunes.

In Northamptonshire, the Brudenells of Deene; the Crewes of Steane; the Danvers' of Culworth; Griffins of Dingley; Heaths of Collyweston; Montagus of Boughton; Nicholls of Faxton; and Yelvertons of Easton Maudit, were the most prominent families to have been founded on legal wealth.

The Court also involved connections with London. In Bedfordshire in 1642, the Bruce, Earls of Elgin; the Russell, Earls of Bedford, the Wentworth, Earls of Cleveland; the Gostwicks of Willington; and the Osbornes of Chicksands; were the most important of those families which owed their prominence to Crown office. In Northamptonshire, the same was true of the Cecil, Earls of Exeter; the Compton, Earls of Northampton; the Mordaunt, Earls of Peterborough; Lords Stanhope and Vaux; the Caves of Stanford; the Fleetwoods of Aldwinkle; the Hattons of Kirby; the Staffords of Blatherwick; and the Watsons of Rockingham. (32)

This process also worked in reverse. The Brudenells; Crawleys; Botelers of Biddenham, Bedfordshire; Ishams; Montagus; and Knightleys of Fawsley, Northamptonshire, were very old indigenous families which made their fortunes in London based commerce, law, or office after 1520.

Ms. Grant has analysed the origins of the London gentry of 1633-5, and she found that of eight hundred and sixty three who were the first

30. See Stone, L., 'The Peer and The Alderman's Daughter', History Today, xi.

31. See Chapter 3, section 5.

32. See Appendix 11, for the leading gentry families of 1642.

members of their family to settle in London, forty eight came from Northamptonshire, and twenty nine from Bedfordshire. This placed Northamptonshire fourth in terms of numbers emanating from English counties, and Bedfordshire, equal thirteenth, which is a higher position than expected for the fourth smallest English county. Only four of these seventy seven originated from prominent gentry families, which suggests that London influence was permeating through the lesser gentry, as well. (33)

The practice of transporting liquid cash to London, which was particularly prevalent after 1660, is another link with the capital. The Brudenells sent over one thousand pounds in the late 1650's. (34)

Finally, the marriage patterns of the gentry reveal a chronological increase in the number of London matches. Between three and five percent of Bedfordshire heads of gentry families married Londoners according to the 1566 and 1634 Visitations. By 1669, it was ten percent. The Northamptonshire Visitations of 1564 and 1618-19 indicate a three percent figure, which had risen to seven percent in 1681.

Therefore, the history of the gentry reflects the social and economic change that took place in these counties between 1500 and 1700. Professor Everitt has pointed out that gavelkind inheritance made almost all the Kent gentry 'first cousins' and this increased cohesion between them. He said that the same was not true in Northamptonshire, where primogeniture reduced the incidence of cadet lines. In 1619, only two families had more than three branches. (35)

The same is true of Bedfordshire. Only the St. John family possessed more than three branches, and only the Botelers and Greys had three. In this respect, too, the insularity of gentry connection in these two counties was less marked than in some other counties.

To conclude, it is profitable to pursue this discussion of change and mobility further in time. By 1873, only four of the fifty two Bedfordshire families which possessed the title of knight or above in 1642, or had possessed these titles between 1558 and 1642, still owned substantial estates in the county. The Alstons and Burgoynes owned more than two thousand acres, but their main residence was outside the county.

Survival was more pronounced in Northamptonshire. Twelve of the seventy two families in the same category continued to administer substantial estates. This included six of the eleven noble families of 1642. The Blencowes of Marston Lawrence; the Cartwrights of Aynho; the Maunsells of Thorpe Malsor; the Thorntons of Brockhall, and the Tryons of Bulwick still possessed large holdings as well, together with the Mordaunts and

33. Grant, J., 'The Gentry of London in the Reign of Charles I', Birmingham University Historical Journal, viii, pp. 197-202; Howard, J., and Chester, J., The Visitation of London, 1633-5. 2 vols., Harleian Society, xv and xvii.

34. Davies, M., 'The Country Gentry and Payments to London, 1650-1714', Ec.H.R., 2nd s., xxiv, p. 15.

Palmers, but the last two lived outside the county.⁽³⁶⁾

So, social transformation had continued apace in Bedfordshire, but the Northamptonshire greater gentry demonstrated more capacity for survival. Part of the reason was because Northamptonshire had become a county of magnates, a trend that was highly advanced even before the Civil War.⁽³⁷⁾ In 1642, there were eleven resident noblemen in Northamptonshire compared to only five in Bedfordshire. In 1873, the figures were thirteen and four, respectively.

To the twentieth century visitor, Northamptonshire is still remembered as the county with palatial country houses like Apethorpe; Boughton; Drayton; Deene; Althorp; Castle Ashby; Burghley; Rockingham; Kirby; Rushton; Lamport; and Milton, in the same way that seventeenth century observers regarded it as 'The Herald's Garden'.⁽³⁸⁾

35. Everitt, A., 'Social Mobility in Early Modern England', Past and Present, xxxiii, p. 61.

36. Return of Owners of Land, 1873, 2 vols.

The four Bedfordshire survivors which owned considerable estates were the Crawleys of Luton; Osbornes of Chicksands; Russells, Dukes of Bedford; and St. Johns, Lord St. John. The six noble families of 1642 in Northamptonshire which survived to 1873 were the Brudenells, Earls of Cardigan; the Comptons, Marquesses of Northampton; the Cecils; Marquesses of Exeter; the Fanes, Earls of Westmorland; the Spencers, Earls Spencer; and the Fitzwilliams of Milton, who were not noble in 1873.

(These are their 1873 titles.) See Appendix 11 for the nobility of 1642.

37. See Habakkuk, H., 'English Landownership, 1680-1740', Ec.H.R., x., for the reassertion of the magnates, after 1680, in county society. It is largely based on Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire examples.

38. Of these, only Burghley, Deene, Rockingham, Castle Ashby, Lamport, Althorp, Boughton, Milton, and Drayton are still lived in as county houses.

3. THE GENTRY IN 1642 (39)

In 1642, there were an estimated three hundred and thirty five gentry families in Northamptonshire, and one hundred and seventy in Bedfordshire. It was explained earlier that the criterion of definition is armigerous.

(i) The Nobility

There were five resident noble families in Bedfordshire in 1642. The most senior of these were the Grey, Earls of Kent, who had acquired their barony in 1325. The only other noble family to have settled in the county before 1500 were the St. John, Earls of Bolingbroke, who had been established by a marriage with a Beauchamp heiress in 1415. The Bruce, Earls of Elgin, had entered the county in 1613 as stewards of the Honour of Ampthill; the Wentworth, Earls of Cleveland, had acquired Toddington by marriage in 1614; and the Russell, Earls of Bedford, had only settled permanently at Woburn in 1625.

So three of the five were very recent admissions to Bedfordshire society and they were Tudor and Jacobean nouveaux riches families. But none of the five exercised that territorial dominance which the Herberts had in Wiltshire, or the Stanleys in Lancashire. Bolingbroke was the largest landowner in the county with approximately fifteen manors, but his influence was confined to Bedford and the North of the county. His political attentions were mainly centred on Huntingdonshire, of which the family were Lords Lieutenant for most of the early seventeenth century.

Similarly, the Earl of Bedford's political influence lay primarily in Devon. The Earl of Elgin's personal estate was too small to form the basis of political influence, and the Earls of Kent, despite their role as Lords Lieutenant of Bedfordshire from 1586 to 1639, had been in financial and political eclipse since the early sixteenth century. The Earl of Cleveland was also in severe financial difficulties and although he was Lord Lieutenant in 1642, his political influence was not great.⁽⁴⁰⁾

There were eleven noble families in Northamptonshire in 1642. Two of these, the Fitzwilliams, Lord Fitzwilliam; and the Cokaynes, Viscount Cullen, held Irish titles. Three of them, the Brudenells, Lords Brudenell; the Montagus, Lords Montagu; and the Vauxes, Lords Vaux, had been established in the county since the fourteenth century, and were the only ones to have settled before 1500. But even these had made their fortunes in the early

39. Appendix 11 is a list of the gentry of 1642 which held knightships, baronetcies, and peerages. This gives their date of settlement in the county and the date of their titles, as well as other information which will be used later.

40. See Cokayne, G., Complete Peerage; Stone, L., Crisis of The Aristocracy, 1558-1641, and Sainty, J., Lords Lieutenants of Counties, 1558-1642, B.I.H.R., Supplement. Also see Appendix 21, which analyses these families in detail among the Case Studies.

sixteenth century through legal and central office. The most senior peer was Lord Vaux, who had received his barony in 1523.

There was no dominant aristocrat in Northamptonshire, either, and nor was there the factional rivalry between two noble families that existed in Leicestershire. As in Kent, Suffolk and Bedfordshire, political power was exercised by a broad body of the greater gentry. This was usually personified by one knight of the shire elected from the west division, and one from the east, at each election.

The Comptons, Earls of Northampton, had the highest income, but their main political influence was in Warwickshire, where they had been Lords Lieutenant since 1603. The Cecils, Earls of Exeter had been Lords Lieutenant of Northamptonshire between 1603 and 1640, but their influence was mainly confined to Nassaburgh hundred in the extreme east, and to their pocket borough of Stamford, Lincolnshire. The Mordaunts, Earls of Peterborough, and the Fanes, Earls of Westmorland, also possessed estates in the east of the county, and the former were in severe financial trouble, and the latter had made an unsuccessful attempt to influence county politics in 1626.⁽⁴¹⁾

The Lords Montagu had an influence in Northampton similar to that of the St. Johns in Bedford, and their voice was important in the choice of the eastern knight of the shire in the same way that the Lords Spencer controlled the western choice. But it was a strictly localised dominance. The Lords Brudenell and Vaux were recusants and were barred from political office, and Charles Cokayne, Viscount Cullen, had not even been a J.P., when he was named sheriff in 1636.⁽⁴²⁾ The Lords Stanhope were very minor local figures, and the second Lord is thought to have been insane. The influence of the Lords Fitzwilliam was confined to Peterborough, in the east.⁽⁴³⁾

41. See Chapter 5 for detailed examination of these points about local government and parliamentary elections. The influence of the nobility is examined, there.

42. Gleason, J., The Justices of The Peace in England, 1558-1642, p. 80.

43. For all these noble families, see Appendix 11, and Appendix 21: Case Studies, in which each one is examined in some detail. Also, see Cokayne, G., Complete Peerage; Stone, L., op.cit., and Sainty, J., op.cit.

By comparison, there were 4 resident noblemen in Cheshire; 8 in Kent; 1 in Dorset; a large number in Sussex; and one in Herefordshire. Morrill, J., Cheshire, 1630-60, Everitt, A., The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion; Ferris, J., op.cit.; Fletcher, A., A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex, 1600-60; I am grateful to Professor Aylmer for the Herefordshire figure.

Sir Lewis Watson of Rockingham was created Lord Rockingham in 1645, and Sir Christopher Hatton of Kirby was created Lord Hatton in 1643. John Crewe of Steane was made Lord Crewe in 1661.

It is a case of small pockets of power among the nobility and greater gentry rather than of dominance by a single magnate. The very elongated shape of Northamptonshire emphasized this trend.

So, in both counties it was, essentially, a peerage of Tudor and early Stuart foundations. The Greys, Earls of Kent, were the sole survivors of the medieval nobility. In Northamptonshire, the 1323 barony of Zouche had died out in 1625.

(ii) The Baronets

There were five Bedfordshire baronets, in 1642. One of these, Sir John Fishe of Southill, possessed an Irish baronetcy; and two of them, Sir John Burgoyne of Sutton, and Sir Edward Gostwick of Willington, were from families which had settled in the county before 1500. But the family fortunes of all had been founded after 1530.

Northamptonshire contained sixteen baronets in 1642. Six of these were from families which had settled in the county before 1500, but the fortunes of only two, the Norwiches of Brampton, and the Treshams of Lyveden, had been founded before 1500. The Norwiches married two rich fifteenth century heiresses, and the Treshams were a scion of the extinct main line, which had lived at Rushton, and which had been established by an Attorney-General of Henry V, and a Comptroller of the Household to Henry VI. ⁽⁴⁴⁾

(iii) The Knights

There were twenty six Bedfordshire knights, in 1642, but only twenty four were the head of their family. Of these, only six were from families established in the county before 1500, and three of these were the St. John brothers. ⁽⁴⁵⁾

Twenty eight resident knights have been found in Northamptonshire, in 1642; but only twenty three were the head of their family. Of these, six came from families which had settled in the county before 1500. The fortunes of two had been founded before 1500: Chauncey of Edgcote by a Clerk of the Peace in the 1480's, and Danvers of Culworth by an early fifteenth century Judge of King's Bench. ⁽⁴⁶⁾

44. See Appendix 11, and Appendix 21: Case Studies.

45. Sir Roger Burgoyne was son and heir of Sir John, baronet; and Sir Samuel Luke was son and heir of Sir Oliver. See Appendix 11.

46. Sir John Andrews was son and heir of Sir William, baronet; Sir Richard Cave was son and heir of Sir Thomas, baronet; Sir Toby Chauncey was son and heir of Sir William; Sir John Egerton was son and heir of Sir Rowland, bart.; and Sir Justinian Isham was son and heir of Sir John, bart. See Appendix 11.

So there were thirty four Bedfordshire gentry families with the status of knight or above, compared to fifty in Northamptonshire. These numbers are equivalent to twenty percent and fifteen percent, respectively, of the total gentry of 1642. Only twenty five of the eighty four had settled in the county before 1500, and the vast majority had founded their fortunes after this date.

(iv) Families which had possessed knighthoods between 1558 and 1641

In this survey of the leading gentry, those families which had possessed knightly status between the accession of Elizabeth and the end of 1641 should be considered. Many of them were as prominent, both politically and financially, as their titled colleagues, and only the timing of the death of the head or failure in direct male line excluded them from the gentry with the highest legal status.

There were sixteen of these families in Bedfordshire, and twenty two in Northamptonshire. Ten of these thirty eight had settled in the county before 1500, but only three can be positively identified as being based on pre-sixteenth century wealth.⁽⁴⁷⁾

It should be said that these are the only families which possessed knighthoods between 1558 and 1641 which have been found. There may have been others.

Therefore, twenty nine percent of the Bedfordshire gentry of 1642 held the title of knight or above, or had possessed them since 1558, compared to twenty one percent of the Northamptonshire gentry families.⁽⁴⁸⁾ These most prominent families were based, overwhelmingly, on sixteenth and seventeenth century wealth, even in the case of the families which had settled in the county before 1500.

47. The Bedfordshire ones were Anderson of Eyeworth; Astrey^{*} of Harlington; Blundell^{*} of Cardington; Cheyne of Sundon; Crofts of Toddington; Duncombe of Battlesden; Hillersdon of Elstow; Rotherham^{*} of Luton; Rowe of Clapham; Russell of Ridgmont; Piggott^{*} of Stratton; Snagge of Marston; Staunton of Woburn; Tyringham^{*} of Farndish; Ventris of Campton; Winche of Everton.

The Northamptonshire ones were Brooke of Oakley; Carey of Cottesbrooke; Claypole of Northborough; Crewe of Steans; Dove of Upton; Edmonds of Preston; Freeman of Higham Ferrers; Gifford of Northampton; Hampden of Rothwell; Hanbury of Kelmarsh; Harvey of Weston Favell; Knightley^{*} of Fawsley; Lane of Courtenhall; Nedham of Lichborough; Onley of Catesby; Osborne^{*} of Kelmarsh; Ouseley of Courtenhall; Pemberton of Rushden; Saunders^{*} of East Haddon; Stafford^{*} of Blatherwick; Robinson of Cransley; and Tate of Delapre.

(* Signifies settlement in the county before 1500)

This is taken from numerous sources, but especially Visitations (see note 5); knighthood records (see note 6); and Subsidy Rolls (P.R.O., E.179).

48. These calculations have not been made for other counties, so comparison is impossible.

4. INCOME AND SIZE OF HOUSE

(i) Income

Table XXIX: Estimated Income of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire gentry families in 1642 ⁽⁴⁹⁾

	<u>BEDFORDSHIRE</u>		<u>NORTHANTS</u>	
	NUMBER OF FAMILIES	% AGE OF TOTAL 1642 GENTRY	NUMBER OF FAMILIES	% AGE OF TOTAL 1642 GENTRY
Income of over £1,000 p/a	15	8.8	38	11.3
Income of £800-£1,000 p/a	7	4.1	15	4.5
Income of £500-£800 p/a	22	12.9	26	7.8
Total covered by these estimates	44	25.8	79	23.6

This table illustrates the immense difficulty of estimating the income of the gentry of these two counties. Material is so scarce that only approximately a quarter of the gentry families of 1642 are covered by this table. Appendix 12 discusses the problems and uncertainties which arise even when there is some evidence available. In fact, most of the more prominent families have been covered. It has proved impossible to estimate the income of only eleven of the eighty four Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire families which possessed the title of knight or above in 1642. It is amongst the mass of lesser gentry that evidence is most scarce.

It does seem that Northamptonshire contained a greater proportion of gentlemen with more than a thousand pounds a year income. This is to be expected in view of the higher number of noblemen and baronets which inhabited Northamptonshire. But even in this county, famous for its magnates and country houses, the proportion was not significantly more than that of Yorkshire, where Dr. Cliffe has estimated that ten and a half percent of the gentry had incomes of more than a thousand pounds a year.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Although a few wealthy gentlemen may be missing from my Northamptonshire figure, it is unlikely that there are many. It is easier to find evidence of the income of the most prominent gentry than it is to estimate that of their less illustrious colleagues, as was said earlier.

One definite assertion that can be made from a consideration of income is that economic wealth did not correspond to legal status. The wealthiest

49. This is compiled from Appendix 12. Sources and a discussion of problems are given there.

50. Cliffe, J.T., *op.cit.*, pp. 27-30. However, it was a considerably higher proportion than that of Lancashire, where only 3.1 percent of the gentry had annual landed incomes of more than £1,000, and only another 11.5 percent had incomes of between £250 and £1,000. (Blackwood, B., 'The Economic State of the Lancashire gentry on the Eve of the Civil War', *Northern History*, xii, p.58). In Northumberland, 8 percent of the gentry had incomes of over £1,000 p/a (Watts, S., and S.J., *From Border to Middle Shire; Northumberland; 1586-1623*, p. 63.)

landowner in Bedfordshire was the Earl of Bedford with eight thousand five hundred pounds a year, but the Andersons of Eyeworth and the Duncombes of Battlesden, families which possessed no title in 1642, had an income at least as high as that of the Earls of Cleveland and Earls of Elgin. The poor Earls of Kent had an income of only five hundred pounds a year, which placed them below most of the forty four Bedfordshire families in the table. Three Bedfordshire baronets had an income of less than one thousand pounds a year, and at least four knights had incomes of more than one thousand.

In Northamptonshire, the wealthiest landowner was the Earl of Northampton with approximately six thousand three hundred pounds a year, and behind him were the Spencers, Lords Spencer, and the Fanes, Earls of Westmorland. But the Fitzwilliams, Lords Fitzwilliam, and Vauxes, Lords Vaux, had incomes of between eight hundred and a thousand pounds a year. The Enions of Flore and the Andrewes of Denton, which held baronetcies, had incomes of less than eight hundred pounds a year; and among the knights, Sir Rowland St. John and Sir John Washington had incomes of well below five hundred pounds. Conversely, the Staffords of Blatherwick and the Palmers of Carleton, which had no title in 1642, were among the twenty wealthiest gentry for which estimates have been made.⁽⁵¹⁾

Similarly, income did not correspond in every case to political office or power. Certainly, most of the magistracy, Deputy Lieutenancy, and membership of parliament in these two counties was composed of gentry with incomes of more than eight hundred pounds a year, but the Cokaynes, Viscounts Cullen, and the Jansons of Ashby Ledgers were not Northamptonshire Justices of the Peace before 1660. The Greys, Earls of Kent, had been Lords Lieutenant of Bedfordshire from 1586 to 1639, despite their paltry financial standing.⁽⁵²⁾

It appears that this lack of correlation between wealth, status, and political power reflects the high pitch of social and economic mobility in these two counties, which has been highlighted in this thesis, so far.

51. See Appendix 12.

52. See Chapter 5 for more detailed discussion of local government and its personnel. Appendix 17 shows membership of the Bench.

Table XXX: Average Income of the Peers, Baronets, and Knights⁽⁵³⁾ of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire in 1642

	BEDFORDSHIRE			NORTHANTS		
	TOTAL IN COUNTY	NUMBER OF ESTIMATED INCOMES	AVERAGE INCOME	TOTAL IN COUNTY	NUMBER OF ESTIMATED INCOMES	AVERAGE INCOME
Peers	5	5	£3,210p/a	11	11	£3,062 p/a
Baronets	5	5	£1,220p/a	16	16	£1,150 p/a
Knights	26	16	£718.75 p/a	28	21	£818 p/a

This table shows very little difference between the two counties except in the knightly category. It suggests that Northamptonshire knights were richer than Bedfordshire ones. Taken as a whole, there was a clear economic distinction between the three groups, but, as was said earlier, at an individual level, there were many exceptions to this distinction.

This table suggests that the average wealth of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire peers, baronets and knights was less than that of their counterparts in Leicestershire and Yorkshire.⁽⁵⁴⁾ However, in view of the uncertainty of income calculations, particularly from subsidy assessments, this may be an exaggerated distinction. But, on the other hand, section five of this chapter shows that many of the prominent gentry of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire were in economic difficulties in the generation before 1642.

53. This is compiled from material in Appendix 12, but the incomes have been listed next to the names of peers, baronets and knights in Appendix 11.

Where the estimate ranges between two figures (for example, the Bruces, Earls of Elgin: £1,750-£2,000) the half-way point between the two has been taken as the income (in the example of the Bruces, it is £1,875).

The total income of five Bedfordshire peers was £16,050; of five baronets, £6,100; and of sixteen knights, £11,500. The total income of eleven Northamptonshire peers was £33,680; of sixteen baronets, £18,400; and of twenty one knights, £17,180.

Unfortunately, not all the knights are covered.

54. Everitt, A., Change in The Provinces in the Seventeenth Century, University of Leicester, Department of Local History, Occasional Paper, 2nd s., i. The average wealth of Leicestershire and Yorkshire peers was between £3,817 and £4,089; baronets between £1,4505 and £1,536; and knights between £873 and £1,097.

(ii) Size of House

Table XXXI: Average size of the houses of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire Peers, Baronets and Knights of 1642 according to the Hearth Taxes of 1671 and 1662 ⁽⁵⁵⁾

	BEDFORDSHIRE, 1671			NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, 1662		
	TOTAL IN 1642	NUMBER TRACEABLE IN 1671	AVERAGE NUMBER OF HEARTHES IN HOUSES IN 1671	TOTAL IN 1642	NUMBER TRACEABLE IN 1662	AVERAGE NUMBER OF HEARTHES IN HOUSES IN 1662
Peers	5	5	54.4	11	11	46.2
Baronets	5	4	27.5	16	11	26
Knights	26	9	18.2	28	14	16.8

The size of a gentleman's house is another aspect which can be related to income and status. Although the social mobility in these two counties meant that many prominent families of 1642 had died out or left the county by Charles II's reign, a large number of them, particularly the peers and baronets, can be traced.

This table suggests that, as a whole, the distinctions between the income of the three groups was matched by a distinction between the size of their houses. It is perhaps surprising in view of the reputation that Northamptonshire possessed for palatial country houses to see that the size of the Bedfordshire nobleman's house was larger than his Northamptonshire counterpart's. The Earl of Bedford's house at Woburn was by far the largest in either county with eighty two hearths.

But, overall, Northamptonshire's reputation is justified. Only eight Bedfordshire houses had more than thirty hearths in 1671, compared with nineteen in Northamptonshire in 1662.

However, if the complete figures reinforce the distinction between the three status groups, at an individual level there are many exceptions. The Napiers of Luton, a baronet family in 1642, possessed the second largest Bedfordshire house in 1671, and only two Northamptonshire houses of 1662 possessed more hearths. In Northamptonshire, the size of the houses of the Lords Fitzwilliam and Lords Stanhope was smaller than that of many non-noble families, and the Elmeses of Lilford, who had not possessed a title in 1642, owned the fifteenth largest house in the county.

55. This is compiled from material in Appendix 10, where sources are noted. The total of hearths in the houses of Bedfordshire noblemen is 272; of baronets, 110; and of knights, 164. The corresponding totals for Northamptonshire are 508, 286, and 236. See Appendix 11 for lists of these families.

5. RISING AND DECLINING GENTRY

(i) Rising

The nature of the source material makes the identification of rising families much more difficult than identification of their opposite numbers. A steady increase of property over a century or more received much less attention than proceedings for debt, and the disappearance of families and wholesale alienation of estates is better documented. For this reason, my list of rising families is small and dominated by those whose ascent was rapid. Rising families have been defined as those which are known to have been purchasing property in more than one parish in the thirty years or so before the Civil War, or who are known to have increased their income in the same period.

Table XXXII: Analysis of Rising families in Bedfordshire⁽⁵⁶⁾
and Northamptonshire

	BEDFORDSHIRE	Percentage of Rising families	NORTHANTS	Percentage of Rising families
Number of Rising families	21		31	
% of Total Gentry of 1642	12.3		9.2	
<u>SETTLEMENT IN COUNTY</u>				
Before 1500	2	9.6	6	19.4
1500-1603	9	42.8	12	38.8
After 1603	10	47.6	13	41.8
<u>RELIGION</u>				
Puritan	2	9.6	11	35.5
Catholic	0	0	2	6.4
<u>CIVIL WAR LOYALTY</u>				
Parliamentarian	9	42.8	15	48.4
Royalist	4	19.07	12	38.8
Neutral or changed	4	19.07	1	3.2
Unknown	4	19.07	3	9.6

In both counties, very few of the 1642 gentry families have been identified as rising. This is undoubtedly due to the paucity of the evidence, but, nevertheless, it is an important premise to begin with in view of the 'Gentry Controversy'. The great majority of these families had settled in the two counties after 1500, and the post-1603 proportion is particularly high. In Northamptonshire, a larger proportion of older families seem to have been increasing their estates. Among these were the prominent families of Brudenell of Deene, Isham of Lamport, and Palmcr of Carleton. The two Bedfordshire rising families which had settled in the

56. This is compiled from material in Appendix 13; but religion and Civil War loyalty have been inserted in this Appendix from material in Appendices 15 and 16.

county before 1500, the Botelers of Biddenham, and the Blundells of Cardington, were also leading gentry.

There were more puritans than catholics among the rising gentry, particularly in Northamptonshire where over a third were puritan families. However, even recusants like the Brudenells of Deene were able to enjoy increased prosperity, and the majority of the rising families clearly conformed to the established church. Puritanism cannot be equated with increased wealth, although puritans were more likely to be rising than catholics.

There were more parliamentarians than royalists amongst the Bedfordshire rising gentry, but in Northamptonshire there was a more even division of Civil War loyalty. Again, rising gentry were more likely to be parliamentarian than royalist but the equation is not absolute. Overall, less than half sided against the king during the Civil War.

Although this definition of a rising family is based on the situation immediately preceding the Civil War, there were various means which enabled a family to increase its prosperity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a whole.

The Dissolution of the Monasteries had a prominent circle of beneficiaries. The beginnings of the Cecil estates were acquired by the first Lord Burghley's grandfather, who had been bailiff of several monastic manors. George Carleton of Overstone, and Richard Cave of Stanford were officers under Thomas Cromwell, and Edmund Knightley of Fawsley and the Burgoynes of Bedfordshire were Commissioners of the Dissolution, and took their share of the spoils. Sir Edward Montagu of Boughton was legal adviser to the Abbot of Peterborough before becoming Chief Justice, and Sir William Parr of Horton, later Lord Parr, was the prime mover of the dissolution of this rich monastery. Sir John Gostwick of Willington, Bedfordshire, was Treasurer of the First Fruits and Tenths in the 1530's, and monastic land established his family as major landowners. The Russells, Earls of Bedford, are the best example of a family founded on ex-monastic wealth and possessions.

The extensive tracts of royal land in the forests of Northamptonshire and in the Honours of Grafton and Ampthill were a great source of favours to courtiers and office-holders. Sir Walter Mildmay, Elizabeth's Chancellor of the Exchequer; Sir Christopher Hatton, her Lord Chancellor; and Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, Ambassador to France in the 1550's, established Northamptonshire homes at Apethorpe, Kirby, and Paulerspury, respectively. The Fleetwoods of Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire, hereditary Receivers of the Court of Wards, and the Osbornes of Chicksands, Bedfordshire, Lords Treasurers Remembrancers, acquired their estates with official wealth. The Watsons of Rockingham, and noble families like the Bruces; the

Greys, the Mordaunts; the Vauxes; and the Comptons founded their wealth on royal service.

Law was an equally important source of initial establishment and some of the prominent lawyers who settled in these counties have been mentioned earlier.⁽⁵⁷⁾ Also mentioned were the metropolitan merchants who acquired estates in these two counties, but local commerce also played its part in the foundation of the gentry. The Adkins' of Overstone; the Manleys of Spratton; and the Washingtons of Thrapston had been established by mayors of Northampton; and the Abbis' of Stotfold and the Wallers of Bedford were founded by mayors of Bedford. The Claypoles of Northborough had been Stamford Aldermen in the 1490's.

Marriage was another source of advancement. Sir Oliver St. John had married a Beauchamp heiress in 1415; and Sir Francis Fane married the Mildmay heiress in the early seventeenth century, thereby acquiring Apethorpe and enough land to finance the Earldom of Westmorland, in 1642. Sir Ralph Lane acquired Horton by marriage with Lord Parr's heiress, and the estates of the Norwiches of Brampton were based upon a union with a niece of Lord Hastings in the late fifteenth century. The first Lord Vaux obtained thirteen manors by marriage to a coheiress of Sir Thomas Green.

Marriage was also a means of restoring flagging fortunes. Sir Edward Griffin of Dingley married a daughter of Lord Audley in 1604 and gained a twelve thousand pound portion, and the Earl of Bolingbroke obtained seven thousand pounds by a Cavendish marriage in 1654.

The church established the Rotherhams of Luton, who were descended from a fifteenth century Archbishop of York; and the Doves of Upton, who were descended from an early seventeenth century Bishop of Peterborough.

But for most families the source of their position was gradual enhancement through estate management and perhaps some local office, which involved a slow progress from the yeomanry. Unfortunately, documentary evidence for such families is very scarce. However, few families enjoyed the spectacular rise of the Spencers of Althorp to a peerage in 1603 based, primarily, on the receipts of sheep-farming.

(ii) Declining

The families which have been identified as declining in the generation or so before the Civil War are those which were selling property in more than one parish. This evidence has been supplemented by incidence of severe debt and lease or mortgage of the main family property. Because

57. See Section 2, of this chapter. The illustrative evidence from various gentry families in this account is based on numerous sources. But see, in particular, D.N.B.; V.C.H.; Hallinan, Thesis, op.cit.; Cokayne, G., Complete Peerage; and family histories.

of the concentration of surviving land deeds and family papers around the greater gentry, the more prominent families dominate this group, as they dominated the rising gentry.

Table XXXIII: Analysis of Declining families in Bedfordshire⁽⁵⁸⁾ and Northants

	BEDFORDSHIRE	Percentage of Declining Families	NORTHANTS	Percentage of Declining Families
Number of declining families	34		55	
% of total gentry of 1642	20.0		16.4	
<u>SETTLEMENT IN COUNTY</u>				
Before 1500	14	41.2	23	41.8
1500-1603	13	38.2	23	41.8
After 1603	7	20.6	5	9.1
<u>RELIGION</u>				
Puritan	6	17.6	14	25.5
Catholic	5	14.7	22	40
<u>CIVIL WAR LOYALTY</u>				
Parl't	9	26.5	17	30.9
Royalist	10	29.4	22	40
Neutral or changed	2	5.9	7	12.7
Unknown	13	38.2	9	16.4

In both counties, more families have been identified as declining than rising, but this may be due, partly, to the more abundant information about declining gentry.

In neither county were the older families in the majority of the declining gentry. Families which had been established after 1500 were equally likely to have been in decline, and there was a relatively strong concentration of post-1603 families which were in economic decline in Bedfordshire, compared to Northamptonshire.

Similarly, there were many puritans in financial difficulties as well as Catholics, although the latter were especially noticeable among the declining gentry of Northamptonshire. Section seven of this chapter demonstrates that Catholicism was much more prevalent among Northamptonshire gentry than those of Bedfordshire and this, no doubt, partly explains the higher proportion of them amongst the declining families of Northamptonshire. The Greys, Earls of Kent; the St. Johns, Earls of Bolingbroke; and the Fitzwilliams, Lords Fitzwilliam, are examples of

58. This is compiled from material in Appendix 13, but religion and Civil War loyalty have been inserted in this Appendix from material in Appendices 15 and 16. Appendix 13 also contains those families which had died out by 1642 but which had been declining before their extinction. However, this table is only concerned with those still extant in 1642. In the Northamptonshire date of settlement columns, the total is only 51 because four families date of establishment is unknown.

prominent puritans is severe financial decline before the Civil War.

Nor does it appear that declining gentry were more likely to be royalist than parliamentarian. Their loyalties are fairly evenly divided, with a greater preponderance of royalists among the declining families of Northamptonshire, than among those of Bedfordshire.

In fact, it is very difficult to make any firm divisions within this body of gentry families. It was made up of fairly evenly balanced parts from every category in the table.

If the sources of wealth of the gentry were diverse, the roots of decline were equally numerous. The experience of the gentry of these two counties shows that central office could lead to decline as well as found families. Sir Christopher Hatton of Kirby died in debt to Queen Elizabeth by an amount of some forty two thousand pounds. The family never recovered and as late as 1655, another Sir Christopher was outlawed for debt.⁽⁵⁹⁾ The Comptons, Earls of Northampton, prominent courtiers and office-holders had debts of thirty thousand pounds in 1642; and the Staffords of Blatherwick were courtiers in the late sixteenth century, but declined after 1600. Some financial problems of the Spencers, Lords Spencer, seem to have arisen with the first Lord's assumption of courtier duties. The eleventh Lord Zouche of Harringworth, Northamptonshire, a prominent official of James I, was in severe debt when he died in 1625. The family died with him. Bedfordshire families like the Wentworths, Earls of Cleveland; the Dyves of Bromham; the Gays of Bushmead; and the Savages of Cardington were courtier or office-holding families which suffered marked decline. The Cheney, Lords Cheney of Toddington, and the Gascoignes of Cardington had been in acute financial difficulty before they died out in the late sixteenth century.

Recusancy fines, after 1581, were undoubtedly a burden, but they should not be overestimated. There were nearly as many puritan families in trouble as catholic, and the Brudenells are a good example of a recusant family which was able to increase its income. In the case of the Treshams of Rushton, extravagant building programmes and an abnormally large retinue caused their ruin, rather than recusancy.

Bad estate management undoubtedly cause the demise of some families, but, unfortunately, evidence of this is less easy to find. In the 1650's the rents on the estates of the Elmes family of Lilford, Northamptonshire, were said to be too low, and the father of the present head was said to have been a bad farmer.⁽⁶⁰⁾

59. See P.R.O., E.112/325/46, for 1655 outlawry.

60. N.R.O., Dryden MSS, D(CA)925.

The demands of too many younger sons seems to have contributed to the decline of the Knightleys of Fawsley, Northamptonshire, and the St. Johns, Earls of Bolingbroke. Five sons of the first Earl established gentry families. Also, daughters' portions and succession of minors embarrassed some families. The second Earl of Exeter left three daughters and the title passed to a junior line, and Sir William Cokayne of Rushton had at least four daughters who married noblemen and commanded considerable portions. Wardship may have been an influence in the decline of some families. At least thirty percent of the declining families of these two counties were affected by wardship after 1600, whereas only fifteen percent of the rising ones were similarly affected.⁽⁶¹⁾

Opposition to the Crown could aggravate economic difficulties. Robert Catesby of Ashby St. Ledgers was fined posthumously, for his part in the Gunpowder Plot, as was Francis Tresham for his role in the Essex Rebellion of 1601. Lord Mordaunt was also fined for his complicity in the Gunpowder Plot, and the Earl of Bedford for his involvement in the Essex Rebellion. The Knightleys of Fawsley suffered twice; first in the 1590's, for their patronage of the Marprelate Press, and in 1605 for their prominence in the Northamptonshire Petition against the deprivation of puritan ministers.⁽⁶²⁾

(iii) Conclusions

Only thirty two percent of Bedfordshire gentry families of 1642 and twenty six percent of those of Northamptonshire have been positively identified as rising or falling. This suggests that we should talk more of the expansion of the gentry rather than in terms of rise or decay. The Heralds recorded only fifty one Bedfordshire families in 1566, and ninety five Northamptonshire ones in 1564; but in 1634 they recorded one hundred and sixty in Bedfordshire, and in 1619, one hundred and ninety in Northamptonshire.⁽⁶³⁾

Certainly, the old categories of the 'Gentry Controversy' are inapplicable. Office-holders were as likely to decline in wealth as to augment their wealth. Wardship was more likely to be associated with declining families, but some coped with it and rose. Older families were more likely to be declining than rising, but they were not the majority of the declining gentry. Puritan as much as catholic were in decline, and rising gentry were as likely to be royalist as parliamentarian, just

61. This is based on P.R.O., Catalogue of Feodaries Surveys of the estates of those families affected by wardship. (Round Room, Wards 5). 8 Rising families were affected, and 28 declining ones, after 1600.

62. This whole account has numerous sources, but especially V.C.H., D.N.B., Cokayne, G., Complete Peerage; Hallinan, T., Thesis, op.cit., and family histories and manuscript collections.

63. See Note 5 for Visitations.

as declining gentry were as likely to be parliamentarian as royalist. The problem is compounded by the chronological aspect. Some families which had made great fortunes in commerce, law or office, later suffered decline and even extinction. Others, after gradual rise through estate management, declined once they entered office.

6. INVESTMENT IN COLONIAL ENTERPRISE;
AGRICULTURAL IMPROVEMENT, AND ENTRE-
PRENEURIAL ACTIVITY

All families which are known to have been members of trading companies, or investors in overseas enterprise; or to have been extensive enclosers or agricultural improvers; or to have generally financed or pioneered entrepreneurial schemes, have been included in this category.

Table XXXIV: Analysis of Investors, Agricultural Improvers, and Entrepreneurs ⁽⁶⁴⁾

	BEDFORDSHIRE	Percentage of these families	NORTHAMPTON-SHIRE	Percentage of these families
Number of such families	38		80	
% of Total Gentry of 1642	22.4		23.9	
<u>SETTLEMENT IN COUNTY</u>				
Before 1500	10	26.3	25	31.2
1500-1603	15	39.5	40	50.0
After 1603	13	34.2	11	13.7
<u>ECONOMIC SITUATION</u>				
Rising	10	26.3	14	17.5
Declining	17	44.7	31	38.8
<u>RELIGION</u>				
Puritan	6	15.8	26	32.5
Catholic	1	2.6	17	21.2
<u>CIVIL WAR LOYALTY</u>				
Parl't	15	39.5	28	35
Royalist	8	21.0	32	40
Split changed or neutral	7	18.4	7	8.7

A very similar proportion of the 1642 gentry of both counties appear to have been engaged in this form of activity. Between a quarter and a third of these were older families which had settled in the county before 1500, and estate improvement was not monopolised by the new gentry. In Northamptonshire, very old families like the Ishams of Lamport; the Humphreys of Barton Seagrave; and the Brudenells of Deene, were fierce enclosers, as were the Botelers of Biddenham, and the Greys, Earls of Kent, in Bedfordshire.

It does appear that this type of family was more likely to be in financial difficulties than increasing its prosperity. This is probably due to the prominence among them of many office holders and courtiers who were involved with colonial ventures. These included the Dyves of Bromham; the Osbornes of Chicksands; the Wentworths, Earls of Cleveland; the Comptons,

64. This is compiled from material in Appendix 14, which gives a list of major sources and shows the activity associated with each family. Material on economic situation, religion and Civil War loyalty have been inserted from Appendices 13, 15 and 16. Appendix 14 also contains families which were extinct in 1642, but these have not been counted in the table.

Earls of Northampton; the Fanes, Earls of Westmorland; and the Stanhopes, Lords Harrington. Equally, it is not true that enclosure was the preserve of the rising gentry. The Treshams of Rushton are the most famous enclosers of Northamptonshire in the sixteenth century, and are said to have been the most hated landlords in the county, but they are a classic example of a family which ruined itself and died out. In their case, and in the case of the Comptons, Earls of Northampton, who were raising rents in the 1630's, economic decline seems to have prompted estate reform.

There were more puritan entrepreneurs than catholic ones, in both counties, but the proportion was not more than a third, even in Northamptonshire. In this latter county there was a strong concentration of catholic enclosers like the Treshams; the Brudenells, the Bawdes of Walgrave; and the Mordaunts, Earls of Peterborough; and catholic investors in overseas expeditions like the Hackes of Peterborough; the Stanhopes, Lords Stanhope; and the Treshams of Lyveden.

In Bedfordshire, entrepreneurial gentry were more likely to be parliamentary than royalist in the Civil War; but in Northamptonshire, the two sides were fairly evenly proportioned. Agricultural improvers were as likely to be royalist as parliamentary, and in Bedfordshire, the two most extensive enclosing families of the sixteenth century, the Dyves of Bromham and the Hillersdons of Elstow, were both royalists in the Civil War.

Ireland was an important scene of service for many families. Sir George Blundell of Cardington, Bedfordshire, was Constable of Limerick Castle in 1605, and his son was a Commissioner for disarming Irish Catholics in 1639. The Fishe family of Southill obtained an Irish baronetcy in 1622, after a period as Irish members of parliament between 1613 and 1615. Sir William Fitzwilliam of Milton was Lord Deputy in the late sixteenth century, and Charles Fleetwood, brother of Sir William of Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire, was Cromwell's Governor of Ireland in the 1650's. The Savages of Cardington, Bedfordshire, owned Raban Castle, and others like the Snagges of Marston; the Winches of Everton, in Bedfordshire; and the Shirleys of Astwell, Northamptonshire, had seen legal service in Ireland. After 1645, the O'Briens, Earls of Thomond, resided at Great Billing in Northamptonshire.

7. THE RELIGION OF THE GENTRY

(i) Puritanism

It has proved more difficult to identify puritan families than catholic ones. The strong governmental attack upon recusancy, after 1580, has bequeathed the Exchequer Recusant Rolls and Churchwardens' Presentations of recusants, but the less wholehearted persecution of puritanism has left fewer sources. Fortunately, the Northamptonshire Petition of 1605, in favour of the deprived puritan ministers, which was signed by forty five gentlemen, is an invaluable source; and the thesis of Dr. Sheils has proved very useful. Also, the records of the Diocese of Peterborough are among the most complete of any English diocese for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

However, no such petition survives for Bedfordshire and the records of the Archdeaconry of Bedford, which formed part of the vast Diocese of Lincoln, are very fragmentary. The number of identified Bedfordshire puritans is very small, therefore, and undoubtedly incomplete. It is a fair assumption that a county which became a stronghold of Nonconformity, after 1660, had some puritan roots to this strength, but I have been unable to trace more than a handful of these families.⁽⁶⁵⁾

Table XXXV: Analysis of puritan gentry families⁽⁶⁶⁾

	BEDFORDSHIRE	Percentage of Puritan families	NORTHAMPTON-SHIRE	Percentage of Puritan families
Number of Puritan families	13		48	
% of Total Gentry of 1642	7.6		14.3	
<u>SETTLEMENT IN COUNTY</u>				
<u>Before 1500</u>	5	38.5	20	41.7
1500-1603	6	46.2	20	41.7
After 1603	2	15.4	6	12.5
<u>ECONOMIC SITUATION</u>				
Rising	2	15.4	13	27.1
Declining	6	46.2	14	29.2
<u>CIVIL WAR LOYALTY</u>				
Parl't	7	53.9	28	58.4
Royalist	0		10	20.8
Split/changed				
Neutral	1	7.6	1	2.1
Unknown	5	38.5	9	18.7

65. Appendix 15 contains the list of sources. The first part of footnote 1 in Appendix 15 discusses the inadequate sources for Bedfordshire puritanism.

66. This table is compiled from Appendix 15. This Appendix also contains puritan families which had died out before 1642, but the table is only concerned with those which were still present in 1642. Detail of economic situation and Civil War loyalty has been inserted from Appendices 13 and 16.

The Bedfordshire total of puritan families is really too small to be statistically significant, but the figures for both counties show that older families were an important part of the puritan gentry. In Bedfordshire, the puritan Greys, Earls of Kent and St. Johns, Earls of Bolingbroke, were established in the county well before 1500. In Northamptonshire, the proportion of older families is particularly high and they included the Catesbies of Whiston; the Danvers' of Culworth; the Elmes' of Greens Norton and Warmington; and the even more ancient Ishams of Lamport and Montagus, Lords Montagu. Among the Northamptonshire puritan families, which had died out before 1642, were the Foxleys of Blakesley and the Zouches, Lords Zouche, which had been established in the county in the fourteenth century. Puritanism was certainly not the exclusive ideology of newcomers.

Nor was puritanism mainly the religion of the rising gentry. In Bedfordshire, the Greys, Earls of Kent, and the Lukes of Cople were in economic difficulties; and in Northamptonshire, the Fitzwilliams, Lords Fitzwilliam; the Knightleys of Fawsley; and the Staffords of Blatherwick are prominent examples of puritan families which were declining.

The case of the neighbouring families of Cope and Dryden of Canons Ashby, Northamptonshire, demonstrates that both decline and increased prosperity could affect puritans. Both families had signed the Petition of 1605, but when Michael Cope died, in 1661, his estate was placed in the hands of trustees for payment of his debts, and, four years later, the family manor was sold to the Drydens, who had been increasing their landholdings since the 1630's.⁽⁶⁷⁾

However, puritans were more likely to be parliamentarian than royalist in the Civil War. Indeed, more than half in both counties fought against the King. Among the notable exceptions were Sir Miles Fleetwood of Aldwinkle, who 'breathed fire and brimstone in matters of religion', but cooed 'like a dove of peace on political questions'.⁽⁶⁸⁾ Edward, first Lord Montagu, had been deprived of his Deputy Lieutenancy for his part in the 1605 Petition, but he executed the royal Commission of Array and died in the Tower of London, a prisoner of the Parliament, in 1644.⁽⁶⁹⁾

67. N.R.O., Dryden MSS., D(CA) 33, and 603-49.

68. Aylmer, G., The King's Servants, p. 381.

69. See Cokayne, G., Complete Peerage.

(ii) Catholicism

Table XXXVI: Analysis of Catholic gentry families⁽⁷⁰⁾

	BEDFORDSHIRE	Percentage of Catholic families	NORTHAMPTON-SHIRE	Percentage of Catholic families
Number of Catholic families % of Total Gentry of 1642	12 7.1		60 17.9	
<u>SETTLEMENT IN COUNTY</u>				
<u>Before 1500</u>	7	56.6	18	30.0
1500-1603	3	25.0	24	40.0
After 1603	0	0	3	5.0
<u>ECONOMIC SITUATION</u>				
Rising	0	0	2	3.3
Declining	4	33.3	23	38.3
<u>CIVIL WAR LOYALTY</u>				
Parl't	2	16.7	5	8.3
Royalist	4	33.3	18	30.0
Split, changed				
neutral	0	0	8	13.3
Unknown	6	50.0	29	48.4

Again, the number of Bedfordshire families is too small to justify many assertions about this county, but in view of the existence of the Exchequer Recusant Rolls, which cover both counties, and the fact that the number of Northamptonshire recusants recorded on these is consistently higher than for Bedfordshire, it seems clear that Catholicism was much less prevalent in Bedfordshire. Other evidence supports this conclusion. Between 1625 and 1641, only ninety recusants were convicted in Bedfordshire, compared to two hundred and thirty in Northamptonshire.⁽⁷¹⁾

Indeed, one of the most important features of sixteenth and seventeenth century Northamptonshire was the continued strength of gentry catholicism. This is often neglected, and the county has the reputation of being a puritan shire, par excellence. More catholic families have been found than puritan ones, and although this is partly the result of the imbalance of available evidence, the old religion was very strong. The relative strengths of the two religions among the greater gentry is examined briefly, in section nine.

Some prominent Northamptonshire catholics like the Fermors of Easton Neston; the Griffins of Dingley; and the Comptons, Earls of Northampton, outwardly conformed to the established church. An anonymous early

70. This table is compiled from Appendix 15. Sources are listed, there. It also contains catholic families which had died out before 1642, but this table is only concerned with those which still existed in 1642. Detail of economic situation and Civil War loyalty has been inserted from Appendices 13 and 16.

71. P.R.O., S.P.16/478/69.

seventeenth century satirical poem said that Sir George Fermor

"goes to Church and not receives
soe the Kinge and lawes deceaves
and he ever cleaves to those
w^{ch} for papysts the worlde knowes." (72)

The Gunpowder Plot had been almost a Northamptonshire family undertaking. The Treshams of Rushton and Catesbies of Ashby St. Ledgers, who were ruined and sold their estates in the early seventeenth century, were among the chief plotters, and the Mordaunts, Lords Mordaunt in 1605; the Fermors; and the Stanhopes, Lord Stanhope, had been implicated. They tried to use Lewis Pickering of Tichmarsh a puritan, as a decoy to throw blame upon the puritans, but the plan misfired. (73)

The Throckmorton Plot, in the 1580's, had involved the Ardens of Evenley; and the Jesuit missionaries of the late sixteenth century made frequent visits to the homes of the Vauxes, Lords Vaux; the Treshams; and the Griffins of Dingley.

Old established families like the Charnocks of Holcot; the Conquests of Houghton Conquest; and the Fitzgeoffreys of Thurleigh, in Bedfordshire; and the Ardens of Evenley; the Bretons of Ravensthorpe; the Brudenells; the Griffins; and the Poultons of Desborough, in Northamptonshire, were an important group within the catholic gentry. But even in the latter county, they formed less than a third of the entire group. Unfortunately, the dates of settlement of fifteen Northamptonshire catholic families are unobtainable. Catholicism was not primarily associated with older families.

However, the evidence suggests that catholic families were much more likely to be declining than rising. The Catesbies; Treshams; Saunders' of Harrington; and Wakelyns of Eydon were Northamptonshire catholics who completely sold out. The Griffins of Dingley sold at least five manors between 1608 and 1618, and, in 1647, they sold their ancient estate at Braybrooke. In Bedfordshire, the Conquests had debts of five thousand pounds in 1637, and Sir Richard was imprisoned for debt, in 1645.

It also seems that they were more likely to be royalist than parliamentarian. But some families with long-standing recusant traditions were parliamentarian in the Civil War. John Breton of Ravensthorpe, the head of an ancient catholic family whose arms had been seized in 1612, was on the Northamptonshire parliamentarian committee, and Sir John Norwich, baronet, the head of a famous recusant family, was parliamentarian Governor of Rockingham Castle. In Bedfordshire, the Charnocks of Holcot had been prosecuted for recusancy as late as 1617, but they sided against the King.

72. Brotherton Library, Leeds, Ms. Lt.q.17. Manuscript poem ca.1605 satirising the foibles of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace of Northamptonshire.

73. Oldmixon, J., History of England during the Reigns of the Royal House of Stuart, p.25. The Vauxes, Lords Vaux, were also suspected of complicity.

However, it is apparent from the table that the Civil War loyalty of approximately half the catholic families is unknown. Dr. Lindley has said that the vast majority of catholics were neutral and this lack of knowledge for half of these families may support his argument.⁽⁷⁴⁾ Certainly, composition records show that the Allicocks of Sibbertoft; the Andrewes' of Denton; the Poultons of Desborough; and the Vauxes of Harrowden, were Northamptonshire catholic neutrals. The case of Thomas, first Lord Brudenell, is uncertain. He was not sequestered as a delinquent, but he was present in royalist garrisons.⁽⁷⁵⁾ But neutralism should not be overstated. Nearly forty percent of Northamptonshire catholic gentry took an active part in the Civil War.

(iii) Conclusions

So, puritan and catholic families were composed of fairly even proportions of old and new families. Puritans were equally likely to be declining as rising, but catholic ones were much more likely to be in economic difficulties. More puritans were parliamentarian than royalist, but catholics were more likely to be royalist, although it seems that many were neutral. At least nearly eighteen percent of Northamptonshire gentry families were catholic in 1642, and this is not much less than the proportion of catholic families in Yorkshire, a county usually more famous for its catholic strongholds.⁽⁷⁶⁾

But there are exceptions to all these general impressions. The situation was enormously complex and changeable. Illustrious catholic families like the Catesbies of Ashby St. Ledgers sprouted a puritan branch at Whiston. Puritans like the Fitzwilliams, Lords Fitzwilliam, and the Knightleys of Fawsley, developed recusant branches at Glapthorne, Northamptonshire, and Offchurch, Warwickshire, respectively. The puritan Throckmortons of Paulerspury, Northamptonshire, who had died out before 1642, were an offshoot of the famous recusant conspirators of Coughton, Warwickshire. John Mordaunt, first Earl of Peterborough, was the first of his family to be a protestant, and this was partly due to his marriage with the daughter of the puritan Lord Howard of Effingham.

74. Lindley, K., 'The Part played by the Catholics in the Civil War', in Manning, B., (ed)., Politics, Religion and The English Civil War, p. 159 ff. He also says that 25 percent of Northamptonshire catholics were royalist, a figure which corresponds closely to mine. He states that the catholics of this county were more inclined to be royalist than their Buckinghamshire and Suffolk counterparts.
75. Green, M., (ed), Calendar of The Committee for Compounding with Delinquents, 1643-60, pp. 88, 1739, 1884, 2011, 2925, 1078.
76. Cliffe, J.T., The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to The Civil War, p. 186.

8. ROYALIST AND PARLIAMENTARIAN

The role of the gentry in the opposition to the forced loans, compositions for knighthood; and Ship Money, between 1614 and 1640, is examined in section two of chapter seven, which deals with political dissent and disaffection.

Here, we are concerned with those gentlemen who were activists on either side, during the Civil War, after the erection of the king's standard at Nottingham, in August 1642. 1649 has been taken as the end point for the criterion of loyalty. Events in the 1650's moved further than many of the parliamentarians of 1642 had wanted, and the supporters of the execution of the King, and of the Commonwealth, were qualitatively different political animals from the parliamentarians of the first Civil War.

In total, two hundred and fifty five gentlemen from two hundred and nineteen families have been positively identified as royalists or parliamentarians in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire.⁽⁷⁷⁾ Therefore, evidence of the loyalties of less than half of the gentry families of 1642 has been discovered. Lack of available material particularly among the lesser gentry, may account for some of the absentees; but it may be that the majority of landowners of these two counties were neutral, as Professor Habakkuk has suggested.⁽⁷⁸⁾ Catholics like the Andrews of Denton; the Poultons of Desborough; the Treshams of Lyveden; and the Vauxes, Lords Vaux, in Northamptonshire, were definitely neutral, together with Sir Edward Gostwick, baronet, of Willington, Bedfordshire; William, first Lord Fitzwilliam; and Charles, second Lord Stanhope, of Northamptonshire. Anthony, ninth Earl of Kent, who died in 1643, was a clergyman and played no active part.

Others are known to have changed sides. These included Sir William Boteler of Biddenham; Sir William Briers of Pulloxhill, Henry Chester of Tilsworth; Sir John Rolt of Ravensden; and William, fifth Earl of Bedford, in Bedfordshire; and Mildmay, second Earl of Westmorland; Henry, second Earl of Peterborough; Edward Onley of Catesby; and Henry, third Lord Spencer and first Earl of Sunderland, in Northamptonshire. The Brudenells, Lords Brudenell, were only sequestered as recusants, but the first Lord had been captured in a royalist garrison, and although Sir Robert Napier, baronet, of Luton, Bedfordshire, was member of parliament for Peterborough between 1640 and 1648, his parliamentarianism was decidedly lukewarm and he was suspected of secret royalist sympathies.⁽⁷⁹⁾

77. These are listed in Appendix 16, where sources are listed and discussed.

78. Habakkuk, H., 'Landowners and The Civil War', Ec.H.R., 2nd s., xviii, p. 147.

79. See Appendix 16, and Appendix 21, Case Studies of some of these families.

Some families were completely divided. Sir William Fleetwood of Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire, was a royalist, but two of his brothers, including Charles, the famous Cromwellian General, were parliamentarians. Edward, first Lord Montagu, was a royalist who would 'live and die for maintenance of his Majesty's right', but his son and heir was a firm opponent of the King.⁽⁸⁰⁾ Sir Rowland Egerton, baronet, of Farthinghoe, Northamptonshire, was a royalist, but his son and heir, Sir John, was a parliamentarian. Sir Humphrey Orme of Peterborough fought for parliament, but his son was a royalist; and although the first Lord Fitzwilliam was neutral, his son and heir, who succeeded to the barony in 1644, was a prominent parliamentarian.

(See Table XXXVII, and note 81 on next page)

The next section of this chapter examines the Civil War loyalties of the peers, baronets, and knights of these counties in more detail, but these overall figures suggest that the greater gentry, who form the major part of this table because more evidence is available about them, were fairly evenly divided in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. Parliamentarianism appears to have been stronger than royalism in Bedfordshire, but more royalist gentry than parliamentarian have been identified in Northamptonshire.⁽⁸²⁾ Certainly, textbook generalisations which include these shires in a so-called parliamentarian half of England neglect the latent strength of royalism.⁽⁸³⁾ It was only because three quarters of the Northamptonshire royalists went to Oxford, unlike their Leicestershire counterparts who travelled to more local garrisons, that the Parliament was able to gain control of the administration of that county.⁽⁸⁴⁾ Also, unlike Kent, there was no military necessity to be parliamentarian. Both counties were frontier shires, like Somerset, for example, and were contested by armies of both sides. The gentry were more able to follow their own inclinations and this undoubtedly increased the split within the gentry.⁽⁸⁵⁾

The proportion of parliamentarians who were from families established before 1500 was higher, in both counties, than that of their royalist counterparts. More Northamptonshire royalists than parliamentarians had entered the county after 1603, and so, it is most definitely untrue to say that royalists came from more ancient families than those who fought against the King.

Nor is it true to say that parliamentarianism was especially associated with rising families. In Northamptonshire, the proportion of rising and

80. H.M.C., Buccleuch MSS, iii, p. 411.

81. (See next page)

82. Everitt, A., The Local Community and The Great Rebellion, identified 103 royalist families in Northamptonshire, but I have kept to the figures achieved by my research.

83. for example, Hill, C., The Century of Revolution.

84. Everitt, A., op.cit., makes this point.

85. These points are made by Underdown, D., Pride's Purge, p. 31.

Table XXXVII: Analysis of date of settlement, economic situation, and religion of royalists and parliamentarians (81)

	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL GENTLEMEN	NUMBER OF GENTRY FAMILIES	PERCENT OF TOTAL GENTRY OF 1642	FAMILY DATE OF SETTLEMENT			ECONOMIC SITUATION OF FAMILY			RELIGION	
				BEFORE 1500	1500-1603	AFTER 1603	RISING	DECLINING	PURITAN	CATHOLIC	
<u>ROYALISTS</u>											
BEDFORDSHIRE	37	30	17.6	8	17	8	5	13	0	4	
% age of Individual gentlemen				21.6	45.9	21.6	13.5	35.1	0	10.8	
NORTHANTS	95	85	25.4	24	40	22	15	33	15	25	
% age of Individual gentlemen				25.3	42.1	23.2	15.8	34.7	15.8	26.3	
<u>PARLIAMENTARIANS</u>											
BEDFORDSHIRE	47	39	22.9	15	19	12	8	15	12	3	
% age of Individual gentlemen				31.9	40.4	25.5	17.0	31.9	25.5	6.4	
NORTHANTS	76	65	19.4	26	35	12	21	22	34	5	
% age of Individual gentlemen				34.2	46.1	15.8	27.6	28.9	44.7	6.6	

81. This table is compiled from the lists in Appendix 16. The percentage figures for date of settlement, economic situation, and religion, are percentages of the number of individual gentlemen in column one. The percentage in column three is a percentage of royalist and parliamentarian families (in column 2) out of the total gentry families of 1642.

declining parliamentarians was very similar, but in Bedfordshire, twice as many were in economic difficulties as those which were increasing their estates. There was virtually a similar proportion of declining royalists as declining parliamentarians in both counties. However, royalists were proportionally more likely to be in decline than increasing their estates, in both counties.

Puritans were more likely to be parliamentarian than royalist, in both counties, and, similarly, Catholics were more likely to be royalist than parliamentarian. In Northamptonshire, just over a quarter of all royalists were catholic, and nearly a half of all parliamentarians were puritan.⁽⁸⁶⁾ But there was a sizeable group of royalist puritans, including the first Lord Montagu; the Ishams of Lamport; Sir John Washington of Thrapston; the Pargiters of Getworth; and the Staffords of Blatherwick.

Central office holders and courtiers formed an important part of the royalist side. There were twenty four of these on the royalist side in Northamptonshire, which is about a quarter of the total royalists. They included Sir Robert Bannister of Passenham, Master of the Household to James I; Sir William Fermor of Easton Neston; Councillor to the Prince of Wales; Sir Lewis Watson of Rockingham, Master of the Royal Buckhounds; Sir William Fleetwood of Aldwinkle, Receiver of the Court of Wards and royal cupbearer; Sir Thomas Roe of Bulwick, Chancellor of the Order of the Garter; Sir Edward Griffin of Dingley, reversionary holder of the Treasurership of the King's Chamber; Sir Christopher Hatton of Kirby, Comptroller of the Household and first Lord Hatton in 1643; Sir Bryan Janson of Ashby St. Ledgers, a Groom of the Bedchamber; Sir John Lambe of Rothwell, Chancellor to Queen Henrietta Maria; Richard Lane of Courtenhall, Attorney General to the Prince of Wales in 1634; and the Palmers of Carleton, Cofferers to the King. There were only five central office holders or courtiers on the parliamentarian side, in Northamptonshire.

In Bedfordshire, Sir William Palmer of Warden, Royal Carver; Sir Peter Osborne of Chicksands, Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer; and William G^{er}ny of Bushmead, Gentleman of the Privy Chamber, were royalists together with courtiers like the Wentworths, Earls of Cleveland, and Sir Lewis Dyve of Bromham. Only Edward, first Earl of Elgin, and Edmund Wingate of Harlington, mathematics teacher of the Queen and member of parliament for St. Albans in 1640, were parliamentarian courtiers, although the parliamentarian St. Johns, Earls of Bolingbroke, and Greys, Earls of Kent, had been Lords Lieutenant of counties until 1639.⁽⁸⁷⁾ Central office

86. Cliffe, J., *op.cit.*, p. 355, found that the puritan element was very important within the parliamentarian gentry of Yorkshire.

87. Central office holders and courtiers are listed in column 5 of Appendix 16, and sources are given, there.

holders and courtiers were much more prevalent in Northamptonshire than in Bedfordshire, but this group was much more likely to be royalist than parliamentarian, which is not surprising in view of their close connection with the existing political framework of Caroline England.

(See Table XXXVIII, and note 88 on next page)

It appears that those gentry families which engaged in entrepreneurial activity; or improved the estate management of their property; or invested in overseas enterprise, were more likely to be parliamentarian than royalist, in both counties. But this is not to say that royalists were not engaged in this type of activity. In Northamptonshire, the number of parliamentarians and royalists which were involved in this is identical, although the proportion of parliamentarians is higher than that of royalists.

This table also suggests that royalists were richer than parliamentarians, on average, in both counties, but particularly in Northamptonshire. The median income of Bedfordshire royalists was six hundred pounds, compared to five hundred pounds for parliamentarians, and the figures for Northamptonshire are six hundred and four hundred pounds, respectively. So, the median figures reinforce the average ones in the table. If we examine the incomes of the peers, baronets, and knights of both sides, further support is given to this distinction:

(See Table XXXIX, and note 89 on next page)

For each of the three status groups, the average and median incomes of royalists are higher than those of their parliamentarian counterparts in these two counties. So, despite the uncertainties involved in estimating income, and the lack of available estimates for some of the knights, all these figures appear to indicate that royalists were wealthier than parliamentarians. (90)

90. Klotz, G., and Davies, C., 'The Wealth of Royalist Peers and Baronets', E.H.R., estimated that the average wealth of royalist peers was £2,019, and royalist baronets, £741. So, my figures for these two counties are markedly higher, which may suggest that the peers and baronets of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire were richer than average for the Whole county.

Table XXXVIII: Income and entrepreneurial activity of royalists and parliamentarians (88)

	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL GENTLEMEN	I N C O M E				NUMBER FROM FAMILIES KNOWN TO BE INVESTING OR IMPROVING	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
		NUMBER WITH AVAILABLE INCOME ESTIMATES	% age of TOTAL	TOTAL INCOME	AVERAGE INCOME		
<u>ROYALISTS</u>							
BEDFORDSHIRE	37	18	48.65	£11,375	£631.7	9	24.3
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE	95	59	62.1	£52,360	£887.4	43	45.3
<u>PARLIAMENTARIANS</u>							
BEDFORDSHIRE	47	30	63.8	£18,325	£610.8	20	42.5
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE	76	51	67.1	£29,525	£577.8	43	56.6

Table XXXIX: Income of royalist and parliamentarian peers, baronets, and knights (89)

	NUMBER WITH AVAILABLE INCOME ESTIMATES	ROYALISTS			NUMBER WITH AVAILABLE INCOME ESTIMATES	PARLIAMENTARIANS	
		TOTAL INCOME	AVERAGE INCOME	MEDIAN INCOME		TOTAL INCOME	AVERAGE INCOME
<u>BEDFORDSHIRE AND NORTHANTS COMBINED</u>							
Peers	4	£13,555	£3,388.7	£2,587.5	5	£9,475	£1,895
Baronets	9	£11,950	£1,327.8	£1,200	7	£6,550	£935.7
Knights	20	£17,680	£ 884	£ 800	9	£6,050	£672.2

88. This table is compiled from Appendix 16, columns 7 and 10.

89. This table is also compiled from Appendix 16, column 7. The list of peers, baronets, and knights, is in Appendix 11.

(See Table XL, and note 91 on next page)

It seems that a slightly higher proportion of Northamptonshire parliamentarians than royalists were not the head of their family in 1642, but the difference is not very marked and there was little overall distinction in the position within the family between the two sides.

Similarly, a slightly higher proportion of parliamentarians appear to have had a higher education at Cambridge or Oxford Universities, an Inn or Court, or both. The distinction between royalist and parliamentary education is greater in Northamptonshire, but, even here, it is not very marked.

(See Table XLI, and note 92 on next page)

Professor Stone says that it is very difficult to establish a general age of matriculation at University in the period between 1580 and 1640. Students came at all ages between eleven and thirty, but the typical young gentleman entered college at about the age of fifteen and a half.⁽⁹³⁾ Although, it is a tentative method of analysis, the dates of matriculation can be used to gauge the relative ages of active parliamentarians and royalists.

Table XLI suggests that a markedly higher proportion of royalists than parliamentarians were under the age of twenty seven in 1642. Almost double the number of royalists than parliamentarians had matriculated after January, 1631. Messrs. Brunton and Pennington concluded that royalist members of the Long Parliament were younger, on average, than their parliamentary counterparts; and Mr. Newman has discovered that royalist colonels in the armies of the north of England were significantly younger than their parliamentary opposite numbers.⁽⁹⁴⁾ This table appears to confirm their findings and indicates that royalism may have been more attractive to younger university gentlemen in these two counties.

Equally, a significantly higher proportion of parliamentarians than royalists matriculated between 1621 and 1630, which is approximately equivalent to an age of between twenty seven and thirty six. The proportion of older gentlemen, those who had matriculated before 1600, was virtually identical for both sides. But Northamptonshire had a markedly higher proportion of older men who were active on both sides in the Civil War than Bedfordshire. Among those who had matriculated before 1600 in Northamptonshire were the royalist first Lord Montagu; Sir Lewis and Sir Edward Watson; Sir William Wilmer; Sir Robert Bannister; and Sir John Isham;

93. Stone, L., 'The Size of Composition of the Oxford Student Body, 1580-1910', in Stone, L., (ed), The University in Society, i, pp. 32-6, 74.

94. Brunton, D., and Pennington, D., Members of The Long Parliament; Newman, P., research into 'Royalist Armies of the North, 1642-6', for a University of York, D. Phil.

Table XL: Family position and education of royalists and parliamentarians (91)

	P O S I T I O N I N F A M I L Y				TOTAL OF ROYALIST AND PARL'TARIAN GENTLEMEN	NUMBER WHICH ENTERED OXFORD OR CAMBRIDGE OR INN OF COURT OR BOTH	% AGE
	NUMBER OF GENTLEMEN WITH POSITION ASCERTAINABLE	NUMBER WHICH WERE HEAD OF FAMILY	NUMBER WHICH WERE NOT HEAD	% AGE			
<u>ROYALISTS</u>							
BEDFORDSHIRE	35	26	9	74.3	37	25	67.6
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE	83	62	21	74.7	95	50	52.6
<u>PARLIAMENTARIANS</u>							
BEDFORDSHIRE	41	30	11	73.2	47	34	72.3
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE	66	43	23	65.2	76	48	63.2

Table XLI: Date of entry of royalists and parliamentarians to University or Inn of Court (92)

Total gentry who entered	<u>ROYALISTS</u>		<u>PARLIAMENTARIANS</u>	
	<u>BEDFORDSHIRE</u>	<u>NORTHANTS</u>	<u>BEDFORDSHIRE</u>	<u>NORTHANTS</u>
	25	50	34	48
	NUMBER WHO ENTERED	NUMBER WHO ENTERED	NUMBER WHO ENTERED	NUMBER WHO ENTERED
Before 1600	1	9	2	8
1601-10	2	7	7	9
1611-20	9	11	7	8
1621-30	4	8	10	14
1631-45	9	15	7	8
	PERCENT OF TOTAL	PERCENT OF TOTAL	PERCENT OF TOTAL	PERCENT OF TOTAL
	4.0	18.0	5.9	16.7
	8.0	14.0	20.6	18.7
	36.0	22.0	20.6	16.7
	16.0	16.0	29.4	29.2
	36.0	30.0	20.6	16.7

91. This is compiled from Appendix 16, where sources are listed.

92. This is compiled from Appendix 16. The date of matriculation of one Bedfordshire and one Northamptonshire parliamentarian is not available.

and the parliamentarian Sir John Dryden; and Sir John Danvers. The elder statesman of Bedfordshire parliamentarianism was Sir Oliver Luke of Cople, and he was followed in seniority by Oliver, first Earl of Bolingbroke.

Maps eighteen and nineteen illustrate the geographical distribution of royalist and parliamentarian gentlemen.⁽⁹⁵⁾ There was a particularly heavy concentration of Bedfordshire royalists in the centre of the county, especially around Ampthill. This was also the region with the greatest amount of crown land, and perhaps the two points are related. Bedfordshire parliamentarians were mainly concentrated in the north, where the St. John family were the largest landowners, and centre of the county. There were relatively few in the south.

Northamptonshire royalists were fairly evenly scattered throughout the county, but there was a very heavy concentration of parliamentarians in the west of the county. This was the region most affected by enclosure, and by puritanism, and, as section two of chapter seven shows, it was the most hostile area to the loans and taxes of the 1620s and 1630s. In addition, there were only two resident noblemen of the eleven in Northamptonshire who lived in the west division, and only one lived west of Northampton.⁽⁹⁶⁾ It appears that the religious and political radicalism, in this part of the county, in the early seventeenth century, may have cemented together a group of parliamentarian squires whose influence was unimpeded by a resident aristocrat.

Finally, it is worth examining some aspects of the period between the outbreak of Civil War and the Restoration.

In some counties like Somerset, the old leadership of the parliamentarian county committee was pushed aside, in 1645, by new figures from lower down the social scale, who were often radical puritans.⁽⁹⁷⁾ But the Northamptonshire committee of 1647 was still dominated by the greater gentry of the early seventeenth century. Only eight out of thirty members had not been pre-war justices of the peace, compared with seven out of thirty-two of the 1642 committee. In 1649, only thirteen out of thirty five committee men were from families which had not been pre-war magistrates.

There was similar stability in Bedfordshire until 1647, when only six out of twenty six committee men were not from a pre-war magisterial family. But by 1649, thirty eight out of forty five were from families which had not provided pre-war justices of the peace.⁽⁹⁸⁾ About the same time, there was a fierce struggle in progress in Bedford borough between the burgesses and more radical freemen over control of the Corporation,

95. They are made up from the lists in Appendix 16.

96. The Spencers, Lords Spencer, lived west of Northampton; and the Comptons, Earls of Northampton, in the west division.

97. Underdown, D., *Pride's Purge*, p. 31.

98. These figures are from committee lists in Firth, C., and Rait, R, (ed), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-60*, i, pp.49, 960, ii, pp. 293, 304. See Appendix 17 for list of J.P's.

and so, there appears to have been greater turnover in the governing élite of Bedfordshire, in the late 1640's, than in Northamptonshire.⁽⁹⁹⁾ This was probably because Northamptonshire had a larger number of greater gentry to exercise social and political control.

There was little active support for the Commonwealth among the greater gentry of these counties. Of the ten local members of the Long Parliament, only two, Sir Gilbert Pickering of Tichmarsh, and Sir John Dryden of Canons Ashby, both of Northamptonshire, were not secluded at Pride's Purge.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ Parliamentarian families like the Charnocks of Hulcot; the Monoux of Wootton; the Winches of Everton; and the St. Johns of Woodford, were given baronetcies between 1660 and 1661, and the Beverleys of Eaton Socon; the Caters of Kempston; the Huxleys of Eaton Bray; the Bernards of Abington; and the Knightleys of Fawsley, were parliamentarian families which were given knighthoods at the Restoration. John Crewe of Steane, Northamptonshire, a parliamentarian, was given a peerage in 1661.⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Only two very minor gentlemen were among the thirty six Bedfordshire signatories of a letter from the county congratulating Cromwell on his dissolution of the Rump, in 1653.⁽¹⁰²⁾

Conclusions

Therefore, it is not true to state that Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire were overwhelmingly parliamentarian. Both counties were fairly evenly divided, at least among the gentry. A greater proportion of parliamentarians were from more ancient families than royalists, and although royalists were more likely to be declining than rising as many parliamentarians were declining as increasing their estates.⁽¹⁰³⁾ Puritans were an important part of the anti-royalist faction, just as catholics and central office-holders were influential among the King's supporters. Parliamentarians were more likely to be engaged in entrepreneurial activity than royalists, but the latter were wealthier and possessed a greater proportion of men below the age of twenty seven than their opponents.

99. Parsloe, G., 'The Corporation of Bedford, 1647-64', T.R.H.S., 4th s., xxix.
100. Underdown, D., op.cit.,
101. See Appendix 11, notes 2-4, for 1660-1 creations of peers, baronets and knights.
102. Nickolls, J., (ed), Original Letters and State Papers addressed to Oliver Cromwell concerning the affairs of Great Britain from 1649-58 found among the political collections of John Milton, (1743 edition), Letter of May 13, 1653.
103. Antler, S., 'Quantitative Analysis of The Long Parliament', Past and Present, lvi, pp. 154-8, found that royalist members were much more likely to be declining than rising, and that parliamentarian members were much more likely to be rising than declining.

But this article has since been criticised from a statistical point of view by Schofield, R.S., in Past and Present, lxxviii, (1975). (This also contains Mr. Antler's reply).

9. RELIGION AND CIVIL WAR LOYALTY OF PEERS, BARONETS AND KNIGHTS

This section is designed to amplify some of the points made in Sections seven and eight by reference to the leading gentry families, in terms of status, of 1642.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

Religion

The suggestion that Catholicism was much more prevalent among the Northamptonshire than Bedfordshire gentry is confirmed by analysis of the leading families. Five of the eleven Northamptonshire peers were catholic, and six of the sixteen Northamptonshire baronets, compared to none in either category in Bedfordshire. Only two peers and five baronets in Northamptonshire have been identified as puritan, and so catholicism remained remarkably strong among the leading gentry of a county which is more usually noted for its puritanism.

Civil War Loyalty

Of the thirty six Bedfordshire peers, baronets and knights in 1642, thirteen were parliamentarian and seven were royalist. Of the equivalent gentry in Northamptonshire, fourteen were parliamentarian and thirty were royalist.

This supports the figures in Table XXXVII, which suggested that parliamentarianism was slightly stronger than royalism among the Bedfordshire gentry, and that the reverse was true of the Northamptonshire gentry. Indeed, the leading Northamptonshire families were much more likely to be royalist than parliamentarian and this is an important correction to the generalisation which often places this county in a parliamentarian half of England. In both counties, there was a marked schism within the greater gentry, but since positive information of loyalty is absent for only one of the fifty five peers, baronets, and knights of Northamptonshire, compared to an absence for nine of the thirty six equivalent Bedfordshire gentlemen, there may have been a greater tendency to neutralism among the leading gentry of Bedfordshire than among those of Northamptonshire. Seven of the thirty six in Bedfordshire are known to have been neutral, or to have changed sides, or to have had uncertain loyalties, compared to only ten of the fifty five in Northamptonshire.

104. It is taken from Appendix 11, where the peers, baronets and knights are listed.

10. A CASE STUDY: THE KNIGHTLEYS OF FAWSLEY

The example of this particular Northamptonshire family personifies the invalidity of the old equations of the 'Gentry Controversy'.

They entered the county from Staffordshire in 1416 and possessed the status of knight from the late fifteenth century through to 1618. They were knights of the shire in the eighth year of Henry V's reign, and the second year of Henry VI's, and Sir Richard, knighted in 1494, was sheriff in 1487, 1508 and 1511. Dr. Hallinan termed them intermediate landowners in 1480, owning between six and ten manors.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾

The family fortunes were further enhanced by Sir Edmund, Attorney-General of the Duchy of Lancaster between 1522 and 1526, and a Commissioner for the Dissolution of the Monasteries. This Sir Edmund began a tradition of political radicalism that was characteristic of the family through to the 1640's. Professor Scarisbrick has earmarked him as a potential leader of a Northamptonshire faction that could have joined the Pilgrimage of Grace.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ In 1532, he was imprisoned for making illegal proclamations which claimed that the King had no right to the lands of Sir William Spencer, by wardship, for knight service.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ Sir William Parr led the opposing faction, and he requested that Knightley be barred from the office of sheriff. Although the northern rebels reached Stamford, the loyalists stood between them and Knightley in the south west of the county and they were defeated. He was excluded from the monastic spoils at the Dissolution because of his activities.

The family were prominent enclosers and Fawsley was heavily depopulated by the late fifteenth century. In 1547, Sir Valentine Knightley was the largest sheep owner in the county, but their financial problems appear to have begun very soon after this.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ In 1558, a licence was granted to alienate two Warwickshire manors, and in 1590, the entail on the ancient Snoscombe patrimony was revoked. The following year six manors were sold, and between 1601 and 1603, the Samwells purchased Upton from the Knightleys for six thousand three hundred and sixty six pounds.

105. See Barron, O., Northamptonshire Families, V.C.H., Genealogical Volume, D.N.B., xi, p. 268, Official Return of Members of Parliament, 2 vols; Sheriffs of England and Wales, P.R.O., List and Index, ix; Hallinan, T., Thesis, op.cit.

106. Scarisbrick, J., 'Northamptonshire in the reign of Henry VIII', Northants Past and Present, v, pp. 85-95.

107. Merriman, R., The Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell, pp. 348-9.

108. B.M., Addit MSS., 25,084.

Woodford rectory was sold in 1615, and the manors of Badby, Helmdon, Norton, and Plumpton were sold after 1603. The entail of Fawsley was revoked in 1629, and as late as 1662, the manor of Fawsley was given to trustees for five hundred years to pay the debts of three generations of Knightleys. ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

It is a sorry tale of decline. In 1600, Sir Richard wrote to Sir Robert Cecil pleading for postponement of a hundred pound payment to the Court of Wards, and in 1609, he was still requesting a delay in the payment of a fine which had been imposed in the 1580's for his patronage of the Marprelate Press. ⁽¹¹⁰⁾ However, the family income appears to have remained over a thousand pounds a year between 1600 and 1641, because at both dates they were assessed at twenty pounds for the subsidy. ⁽¹¹¹⁾

It was the fierce puritanism which characterised the Knightleys that compounded their financial problems. Sir Richard was fined two thousand pounds for his part in the Marprelate controversy, and he admitted allowing the Marprelate press at Fawsley. ⁽¹¹²⁾ He was also fined for his role in the 1605 Petition against the Deprivation of puritan ministers and he was temporarily removed from local office. John Dod, the nonconformist divine of Fawsley, had been one of the casualties of the 1605 removal of puritan clergy.

Another contributory element in their decline was their amazing fertility. Both Richard, who died in 1476, and his successor, Sir Richard, who died in 1538, had thirteen children. His heir, Sir Edmund, had six daughters, and Sir Edmund's brother, Sir Richard, had five daughters. Sir Richard, who died in 1615, had no less than fifteen children. Cadet branches were equally productive: this Sir Richard's two brothers had eleven and fourteen children, respectively, and it has been estimated that Sir Valentine, who died in 1566, had at least forty eight grandchildren. ⁽¹¹³⁾ It would have been a very wealthy family indeed that could have coped with this number of portions to provide.

But, despite financial decline, they remained politically prominent. They provided members of parliament for Northampton throughout the 1580's and 1590's, and again between 1640 and 1648; and they were knights of the shire between 1621 and 1629, and between 1659 and 1660. Four of Sir Richard's (d 1615) sons were knighted, and in 1661, Richard was given a knighthood of the Bath. ⁽¹¹⁴⁾ It was probably financial decline

109. N.R.O., Knightley MSS., K.CII, 1048; CI, 1006; XXXVI, 388; XLV, 500; LV, 584; N.R.O., Thorton MSS, TL.433; Dryden MSS, D(CA), 568; N.R.O., S.41.

110. N.R.O., K. 2,690; 2,696.

111. P.R.O., E.179/254/2; 157/360-1; E.179/157/421-3.

112. Howell, T., (ed), A Complete Collection of State Trials, i, pp.1263-70.

113. Barron, O., op.cit.

114. Sir Valentine, Sir Seymour, Sir Francis, and Sir Ferdinando; Shaw, W., The Knights of England.

coupled with rebellious political activities that prevented them from obtaining a peerage until 1892, when they owned over eight thousand acres in Northamptonshire.⁽¹¹⁵⁾ In 1662, their house at Fawsley contained twenty hearths, which was not very many for a family of their prominence.⁽¹¹⁶⁾

They remained the most politically radical of Northamptonshire families. In addition to Marprelate, Sir Richard (d. 1615) appears to have been a sympathiser of the Earl of Essex's rebellion. In September 1600, he wrote to the Earl that the

"joyfull news of yo^r L^p's libertie did so muche gladden my harte as that I could not chuse but take my journeie towards London both to use and present my dewlye unto yo^r honour".⁽¹¹⁷⁾

Sir Richard's son was serving in Ireland in 1601.⁽¹¹⁸⁾ This same Sir Richard married, as his second wife, a daughter of the Lord Protector Somerset of the 1540's, and thereby he was connected with the Seymour claim to the throne upon the death of Elizabeth. He seems to have been involved in the puritan wing of the 1603 Bye Plot, because William Clarke wrote to Sir Griffin Markham, the leader of the recusant wing of the plot, that Sir Richard Knightley had proclaimed Lord Beauchamp, the heir apparent of the Seymour, Earls of Hertford, King at Northampton.⁽¹¹⁹⁾ Certainly, Lord Beauchamp was under house arrest in Knightley's custody in 1600.⁽¹²⁰⁾

Sir Richard's grandson, Richard, was imprisoned, in 1626, for resisting the Forced Loan, and to keep him out of parliament he was appointed sheriff for that year.⁽¹²¹⁾ The tradition of radicalism was continued by his cousin and heir, Richard, who was an important political figure in the 1640's. He was on the central executive committee of the Parliament, the Derby House Committee, which had succeeded the Committee of Both kingdoms, in 1648.⁽¹²²⁾

The Knightleys also continued their enclosures into the early seventeenth century. In 1590, there were serious riots on their Badby and Newnham estates, and in 1608, they were prosecuted for depopulation and enclosure.⁽¹²³⁾

115. Cokayne, G., Complete Peerage, vii, p. 344.

116. See Appendix 10.

117. N.R.O., K. 2,693.

118. H.M.C., Carew MSS., 1600-3, p. 375

119. H.M.C., Salisbury MSS, xv, pp. 222-3. The Seymour claim to the throne descended from Lord Beauchamp's marriage with a Grey, daughter of Brandon, Duke of Suffolk.

120. H.M.C. Salisbury MSS, x, pp. 102, 152.

121. See Gleason, J., The Justices of The Peace in England, 1558-1640.

122. H.M.C., Seventh Report, House of Lords MSS., p. 28.

123. P.R.O., STAC.5/K1/16, and see Appendix 2.

So they are a classic example of an old family, in serious economic decline, who were still agricultural enclosers and improvers, and also fierce religious and political radicals. They illustrate the crudity of the equation of new, rising, and parliamentarian families, which was such an important part of Professor Tawney's precipitation of the 'Gentry Controversy'.

11. CONCLUSION

This study of the gentry has served to demolish many of the old historical shibboleths which were built up during 'The Gentry Controversy'. Professor Tawney's original thesis that parliamentarians were primarily from new rising, and essentially puritan families, together with Professor Trevor-Roper's argument that they were mainly backwoods, declining gentry, have been disproved. Many families were rising through means other than estate management and some office holding and commercial families were in marked decline. If this disproof of theories propounded in the 1940's and 1950's now seems, in the late 1970's, to be an historical platitude or truism, at least this evidence from two new counties forms a useful body of material to compare with that for other counties. In general, only a few correlations either positive or negative between date of settlement; income; economic fortune; religion; entrepreneurial activity; and political loyalty have been discovered.

This is to be expected. Earlier chapters have revealed the mobility and fluidity that was characteristic of the economy, population, and structure of landownership in these two counties. The gentry reflected these changes, and the changing composition of this élite paralleled these other developments. It was not so much that the gentry were declining or rising, but that they were expanding.

The gentry were increasingly influenced by London, as were the economy and pattern of landownership. Metropolitan-based legal, commercial, and official wealth was infused into the gentry; and, conversely, local families sent younger sons to settle in London, or to be educated in London.

If an embryonic regional entity was developing in the Midland Plain in the economic sphere, it was also developing in the marriage patterns and landed estates of the gentry.

But against these new developments must be placed the continued influence of more ancient families. Their adaptation to the changes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a vital constituent of the developments in these counties, and was symbolised by prosperous squires and noblemen like Sir John Isham, or the first Lord Brudenell.

However, if the old equations of the 'Gentry Controversy' are invalid, it is equally dangerous to adopt a more modern generalisation that these social and economic changes resulted in political and religious radicalization of the counties as a whole. (124) Catholicism and Civil War

124. I think Professor Everitt approaches this generalisation in 'Social Mobility in Early Modern England', Past and Present, xxxiii, particularly p. 64; and The Local Community and The Great Rebellion.

royalism were very strong in Northamptonshire, and neither county was overwhelmingly parliamentarian, despite their dramatic social transformation.

Although the phrase 'Continuity and Change' is an excessively fashionable historical description, these days, for early modern English history, it is an admirable shorthand term to summarize this study of the Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire gentry.

CHAPTER 5

THE PERSONNEL OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION

This chapter is intended to be a sequel to the previous one, by considering the role of the gentry in the various spheres of local government, and in parliamentary elections. Several local studies of recent years have concentrated on the county administration, and especially on the composition of the Commission of the Peace.⁽¹⁾ Mr. Boynton pointed out that military duties constituted the most important part of the life of a sixteenth century gentleman, and there is abundant material for a survey of the Northamptonshire militia in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.⁽²⁾ However, the virtual non-existence of Quarter Sessions and Assize records for both Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire makes it impossible to write a history of local government.⁽³⁾ Consequently, the chapter concentrates on the personnel of local government, rather than on its history, and most attention is given to the gentry. But the role of non-gentry in the lesser local offices is also introduced. The part played by local officials in the implementation of royal policies like Forced Loans; knighthood Compositions, Ship Money; and Billeting and Coat and Conduct levies, and their part in opposition or resistance to these policies, are discussed in section 2 of chapter seven, which is devoted to political dissent.

After a brief description of local government in these two counties, the personnel of the major positions are discussed in three categories. First, the military personnel, the Lord Lieutenant; the Deputy Lieutenant;

1. For example, Barnes, T., Somerset, 1625-40; Morrill, J., Cheshire, 1630-60: County Government and Society during the English Revolution; Smith, A.H., County and Court: Government and Politics in Norfolk, 1558-1603; Fletcher, A., A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex, 1600-60. The Appendices of Dr. Fletcher's book are dominated by analysis of Justices of the Peace.
2. Boynton, L., The Elizabethan Militia, p. 7. Material on the Northamptonshire militia includes Wake, J., (ed), Musters, Beacons and Subsidies in the county of Northampton, 1586-1623, N.R.S., iii, (Sir Richard Knightley's Musters Book); Wake, J., (ed), The Montagu Musters Book, 1602-23, N.R.S., vii; Goring, J., and Wake, J., (ed), Northamptonshire Lieutenancy Papers and other documents, 1580-1614, N.R.S., xxvii, (Sir Christopher Hatton's Lieutenancy Book); N.R.O., Cartwright MSS, C(A)7,506, The Cartwright Musters Book, 1631-6, N.R.O., Miscellaneous MSS, ZA 2,251, Sir Thomas Cave's Musters Book, 1620-32, and a lot of information in H.M.C., Salisbury MSS; Buccleuch MSS; Montagu of Beaulieu MSS.
3. The only pre-1660 fragments are Wake, J., (ed), Quarter Sessions Records of The County of Northampton, 1630, 1657, 1658, N.R.S., i, N.R.O., Q.S.R., some Sessions of the 1650's; and B.R.O., H.S.A., some Assize records of the 1650's.

and other musters officers. Second, legal officials the Custos Rotulorum; the Clerk of the Peace; the Justice of the Peace; the Sheriff; the Under-sheriff; and the Coroner. In view of the particular attention paid to the Justice of the Peace in several recent county studies, this office is given an especially detailed analysis. Third, fiscal officials like the Escheator, and Commissioners and Collectors of the Subsidy, are examined.

Then, other local positions like the Stewardship of Crown manors; Hundred Constable and Bailiff; Grand Juror; and municipal or parish office are discussed.

This is followed by an examination of the patronage and representation pattern of parliamentary elections, with some detailed accounts of particular elections.

The analysis of the personnel of local government shows that the greater gentry dominated the most important local offices. The Lord Lieutenancy and office of Custors Rotulorum, and Stewardship of crown Honours, were staffed by the nobility. The greater gentry occupied the offices of Deputy Lieutenant, Sheriff, Justice of the Peace, and various other Commissions. These were the gentry of county status. Just below them in status were the Clerks of the Peace and coroners. The status of the gentry who filled the other offices descended in conjunction with the rank of the office until, at the very bottom, the lowest social groups were sent to fight the foreign wars. The positions in local government corresponded in prestige to the status of the person who occupied them.

The electoral history of the two counties illustrates the growth of political and religious tensions in the twenty years or so before the outbreak of Civil War; during the war; and immediately after the Restoration. It amplifies many of the points made in the previous chapter, and serves as a useful sequel.

1. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Despite its small size, Bedfordshire appears to have been divided into three divisions. A list of county officials of 1575 mentions this tripartite division and each one had its own coroner. The northern hundreds of Barford, Stodden, and Willey constituted one division, the eastern hundreds of Biggleswade, Wixamtree, and Clifton were another; and the southern and western hundreds of Flitt, Manshead, and Redhorne-stoke, formed the third division. No evidence has been found to determine the date of establishment of these divisions, but all the Exchequer Subsidy Rolls for Bedfordshire between 1524 and 1641 conform to this pattern of three hundreds grouped together on a single roll, and so it appears to have been the system at least by the early sixteenth century.⁽⁴⁾

Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire shared a single sheriff until 1575. The county Assizes were normally held at Bedford, though occasionally they were held at Ampthill or Leighton Buzzard. Bedford possessed its own justices of the peace and Quarter Sessions, separate from those of the rest of the county, and it also seems that Leighton Buzzard possessed some juridical independence. The Victoria County History of Bedfordshire calls Leighton 'a soke', which meant that the lord of the manor, which was the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, in Leighton's case, was in charge of the administration of the law. In contrast, Dunstable had lost its juridical independence at the time of the dissolution of its important monastery.⁽⁵⁾ The existence of the Honour of Ampthill meant that crown manors in this Honour, although included in the wider context of county government, were nominally under officials appointed by the monarch for parochial affairs.

Northamptonshire was divided into two divisions, east and west, which each contained ten hundreds. But, unlike the two divisions of Sussex, they were not autonomous for purposes of legal administration. Whereas each Sussex division held separate Quarter Sessions for three quarters of the year, Northamptonshire, with the exception of the Soke of Peterborough; the borough of Northampton; and the Duchy of Lancaster boroughs of Daventry and Higham Ferrers, had just one Quarter Sessions,

4. P.R.O., S.P. 12/104: 1575 List of County Officials, fo. 89-89v; P.R.O., E.179.

5. See List of Sheriffs, P.R.O., List and Index, ix; Cockburn, J., A History of English Assizes, 1558-1714, p. 32, V.C.H., Bedfordshire, iii, p. 402 ff; See Chapter 8, for Dunstable's loss of juridical independence.

at Northampton Castle.⁽⁶⁾ The division between east and west, in Northamptonshire, was partly because of the awkward elongated shape of the county. It would have been a prohibitively long journey for the trained bands to have marched to one mustering centre, and so Kettering was the rallying place for the trained bands of the east division, and Northampton was the centre for those of the west.⁽⁷⁾ But the division appears to have applied to financial as well as military matters. The Exchequer Lay Subsidy Rolls of 1600 and 1641, for Northamptonshire, are separated on the basis of division. One roll covers the west, and one covers the east.⁽⁸⁾ Section three of this chapter shows that the division also gradually penetrated electoral policy; and section two of chapter seven demonstrates that it became accepted as the norm for taxation distribution. Ship Money and Purveyance were expected to be levied, equally, upon east and west, regardless of the differences in wealth between them.⁽⁹⁾ Gentry localism was not merely county orientated by the 1630's, but divisional as well.

The beginnings of this division are hard to date. It was certainly in force by 1575, and it seems that by the early seventeenth century, a Deputy Lieutenant was responsible for five of the hundreds within his division.⁽¹⁰⁾

However, Northamptonshire local government was much more complex than a simple east-west division. The dominance of Peterborough monastery within Nassaburgh hundred bequeathed administrative independence to the Soke of Peterborough. It possessed its own Quarter Sessions and justices of the peace. After 1576, the Cecils, Earls of Exeter, Lords of the hundred, and the Dean and Chapter, Lords of the City, vied for political power.⁽¹¹⁾

6. Fletcher, A., op.cit., p. 134, Sessions in East and West Sussex were held at Epiphany, Easter and Michelmas, whereas full county sessions were only held at Midsummer. Wake, J., (ed), Quarter Sessions Records of The County of Northampton, 1630, 1657, 1658, N.R.S., i, p.1. It was Sir Francis Fane's attempt to move the Sessions from Northampton to Kettering, in 1625, that caused such a furore. See Gruenfelder, J., 'The Northamptonshire Election of 1626', Northants Past and Present, iv, pp. 159-164.
7. Palmer, M. and J., A History of Wellingborough, p. 92, make this point.
8. P.R.O., E.179/254/2, 157/360-1; are the 1600 Subsidy Rolls; P.R.O., E.179/157/421-3, are those of 1641. There was a separate roll for Northampton.
9. See Chapter 7.
10. Wake, J., (ed), The Montagu Musters Book, 1602-23, N.R.S., vii, Map between pp. xlii and 1.
11. Until 1576, the Bishop was also Lord of the hundred, but in that year he surrendered it to the Queen, who gave it to the Cecils.

The county town possessed its own Bench and Sessions, and the Duchy lands of Higham Ferrers hundred, Daventry, and Long Buckby, were governed, partially at least, by the Duchy officialdom.

Northampton, Higham Ferrers, Peterborough, Daventry, and Brackley, were incorporated boroughs, and all but Daventry returned members of parliament.

Their corporations ran day to day affairs, and Peterborough and Wellingborough were towns whose general administration was run by a group of feoffees, rather than by a Mayor or corporation.⁽¹²⁾ In addition, there were the extensive tracts of crown land embodied in the Royal Forests and the Honour of Grafton, which were nominally under officials appointed by the Crown.⁽¹³⁾

Normally, Northamptonshire Assizes were held at Northampton, but, in 1575, they were held at Wellingborough.⁽¹⁴⁾

12. For Peterborough, see Mellows, W., (ed), Peterborough Local Administration, N.R.S., ix and x; The Foundation of Peterborough Cathedral, N.R.S., xiii; The Last Days of Peterborough Monastery, N.R.S., xii, Mellows, W., and Gifford, D., (ed), Elizabethan Peterborough, N.R.S., xviii; For Wellingborough, see Chapter 8.
13. For forest officials, see Pettit, P., The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire, 1558-1714, N.R.S., xxiii.
14. Cockburn, J., A History of English Assizes, 1558-1714, p. 31.

2. THE PERSONNEL

(1) Military Office

Lord Lieutenant

This was an office usually reserved for the nobility, and Sir Christopher Hatton, Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire between 1586 and 1591, was the only non-noble to possess this position in either county. Despite its size, Northamptonshire only had one at any given time, but, for most of Charles I's reign, the Bedfordshire Lord Lieutenancy was exercised jointly.⁽¹⁵⁾ William Cecil, second Earl of Exeter, was Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire between 1623 and 1640, and the Complete Peerage says that he was a catholic before 1586. He married a daughter of the catholic Manners, Earls of Rutland, but it is uncertain if he remained a catholic until his death in 1640.⁽¹⁶⁾ If he did, it is clear that catholics were not excluded from high office in this county.

Deputy Lieutenant

Since the Lord Lieutenant was invariably a peer, and often a Privy Councillor, he was frequently away from the county, so, the office of Deputy evolved, after 1586, for local squires, who were the real workhorses of military administration in the counties.

In Northamptonshire, the Deputy appears to have had a territorial area of influence, and at the end of the sixteenth century, the ideal number was four or five.⁽¹⁷⁾ But this figure was gradually increased.

15. Sainty, J., Lords Lieutenant of Counties, 1558-1642, B.I.H.R., Supplement. Bedfordshire ones were Henry Grey, sixth Earl of Kent (1586-1615); Charles, seventh Earl of Kent, (1615-23); Henry, eighth Earl of Kent, (1621-3, in conjunction with his father, 1623-5, alone; 1625-7, in conjunction with Thomas, first Earl of Cleveland; and 1629-39, in conjunction with the first Earl of Cleveland); Thomas Wentworth, first Earl of Cleveland, (1625-7; 1627-9, alone; 1629-39; and 1639-42, alone). Northamptonshire Lords Lieutenant, apart from Hatton and the second Earl of Exeter, were Thomas Cecil, second Lord Burghley and first Earl of Exeter, (1603-23); and John, first Earl of Peterborough, (1640-2). Fletcher, A., op.cit., p. 176, says that Sussex usually had three or more Lords Lieutenant at one time.
16. Cokayne, G.E., Complete Peerage, v., p. 217 ff.
17. H.M.C., Buccleuch MSS., iii, p. 28, shows that there were four in 1589: Sir Thomas Cecil and Sir Edward Montagu, in the east division; and Sir Richard Knightley and Sir George Fermor, in the west. Wake, J., (ed), The Montagu Musters Book, 1602-23, N.R.S., vii, Map between pp. xlii and 1, shows that there were usually four in the early seventeenth century.

Seven or eight was the norm for James I's reign, and by the 1630's, it had risen to ten or eleven.⁽¹⁸⁾ When he succeeded his father as Lord Lieutenant in 1623, the second Earl of Exeter thought the number of Deputies was too high, and he noticed that other counties were well governed by three or four. But he did not reduce the number because each one had such a weight of "worthe".⁽¹⁹⁾ This suggests that the office was much sought after by the greater gentry, which was itself so numerous in Northamptonshire. Certainly, when Sir William Spencer was left out of the list of Deputies, in 1624, the others requested his reinstatement rather than applauding a reduction of an overstaffed office.⁽²⁰⁾ Sir Richard Knightley was over eighty years old before he finally relinquished his post.

The Northamptonshire Deputy Lieutenancy was dominated by the greater gentry, and not until 1614 was anyone under forty years of age appointed.⁽²¹⁾ Sir George Fermor of Easton Neston was a Deputy between 1589 and 1607, and Sir Hatton Fermor between 1627 and 1639. This was a famous catholic family who were outward conformists to the established church, but their office demonstrates that prominent catholics were not removed from local positions in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries.

There are no surviving musters books for Bedfordshire, and consequently, only a few Deputies have been discovered. But even this handful shows the dominance of the office by the greater gentry. In 1625, Sir Oliver Luke of Cople, Sir John Osborne of Chicksands, and Sir Edward Duncombe of Battlesden, were Deputies; and at the Restoration, a proposed list included Thomas, Lord Wentworth of Toddington; Sir Robert Napier and Sir Thomas Alston, pre-1642 baronet families; and Sir William Palmer of Warden; Sir Samuel Luke; Henry Chester of Tilsworth;

18. Wake, J., (ed), op.cit., p. 244, A List of Deputies between 1607 and 1619; and various other lists in the musters books mentioned in note 2.

19. N.R.O., Misc. MSS, Z.A.2,251, fo.48. Sir Thomas Cave's Musters Book, 1620-32.

20. N.R.O., Z.A.2,251, fo. 57.

21. Wake, J., (ed), The Montagu Musters Book, 1602-23, N.R.S., vii, p. 244. The greater gentry who served as Deputy Lieutenants between 1607 and 1640 included Sir Anthony Mildmay of Apethorpe; Sir Edward Montagu of Boughton; Sir Richard Knightley of Fawsley; Sir William Tate of Delapré; Sir Robert Wingfield of Upton; Sir Arthur Throckmorton of Paulerspury; Sir Francis Fane of Apethorpe; later first Earl of Westmorland, and his son, Mildmay, Lord DeSpencer; Sir William Spencer of Althorp; Sir Lewis Watson of Rockingham; Sir Thomas Brudenell of Deene; Sir Robert Bannister of Passenham; Sir John Danvers of Culworth; Sir Miles Fleetwood of Aldwinkle; Sir Richard and Sir Valentine Knightley; Sir Rowland Egerton of Farthinghoe; the Fermors; Charles Cokayne of Rushton, later Viscount Cullen; and the Elmeses of Lilford, and Cartwrights of Aynho. A virtual roll-call of the greater squirearchy.

and Sir Humphrey Winche of Everton.⁽²²⁾

Other Musters Officials

The greater gentry also dominate the surviving lists of Commissioners for Musters.⁽²³⁾ In addition, they were more directly connected with military affairs as Captains of the various troops of horse and foot. Families like the Catesbies of Whiston; the Burnabies of Watford; the Elmeses of Lilford; the Montagus of Boughton; the Chaunceys of Edgcote; the Griffins of Dingley; the Ishams of Lamport; the Staffords of Blatherwick; and the Pickerings of Tichmarsh, provided Captains of Foot and of Horse.⁽²⁴⁾ This office seems to have been prized. In 1600, Sir Arthur Throckmorton replaced Sir William Lane as Captain of the western horse, but Lane petitioned against the decision and the hundred men were divided equally between the two gentlemen.⁽²⁵⁾

In Bedfordshire, a Harvey of Thurleigh; a Conquest of Houghton Conquest; and a Newdigate of Hawnes, were gentry Captains of Horse or of foot.⁽²⁶⁾

Members of local gentry families also served as Muster-Masters. These included a Watson of Rockingham; a Knightley of Fawsley; a Lane of Horton; a Fitzwilliam of Milton; and a Catesby of Whiston; in Northamptonshire; and a Blundell of Cardington, in Bedfordshire. Indeed, in 1599, Northamptonshire petitioned against the imposition of an outsider in this office by the Privy Council. Perhaps it was a desirable local position, but it is more likely that they wished to preserve their military independence and localism.⁽²⁷⁾

The background of the trained bands, themselves, is more difficult to trace. There were very few subsidy payers in the Northamptonshire bands, but, in 1612, the Privy Council directed that gaps should be filled with "freeholders, farmers, owners of land, or householders."⁽²⁸⁾ So, they were presumably men of some property.

Certainly, they do not seem to have been the same type of person who was levied for overseas wars. In 1625, one hundred Northamptonshire soldiers were sent to Plymouth ready for embarkation. One was classed

22. P.R.O., S.P. 29/11/141.

23. Some of these lists are B.M., Addit MSS, 25,079, fo. 7v-8v, (1558); Boynton, L., The Elizabethan Militia, p. 83, (1580's); H.M.C., Buccleuch MSS, iii, pp. 33 and 48, (1593 and 1596); Wake, J., (ed), The Montagu Musters Book, 1602-23, N.R.S., vii, p. 244, (1605); A.P.C., xxiv, p. 392, (1595-6).

24. Wake, J., (ed), Musters, Beacons and Subsidies in the county of Northampton, 1586-1623, N.R.S., iii, p. 9.

25. A.P.C., xxx, 1600-1, pp. 382, 476.

26. H.M.C., Fifteenth Report, pt v, p. 104.

27. Wake, J., (ed), op.cit., p. 9; Wake, J., (ed), The Montagu Musters Book, 1602-23, N.R.S., vii, p. xxix; N.R.O., Cartwright MSS, C(A)7,506, The Cartwright Musters Book, fo. 53v; H.M.C., Salisbury MSS, v, p. 523; H.M.C., Montagu of Beaulieu MSS, p. 7; H.M.C., Buccleuch MSS, iii, p. 36; A.P.C., xxxvi, p. 120; H.M.C., Salisbury MSS, ix, p. 363.

28. Boynton, L., op.cit., p. 109; Wake, J., (ed), The Montagu Musters Book, 1602-23, p. xxvi.

as a yeoman; thirteen were husbandmen; three were shepherds; thirty nine were artisans, craftsmen, and petty tradesmen; and thirty eight were labourers.⁽²⁹⁾ The majority were clearly of the 'lowest sort', and if the gentry and propertied classes staffed and organised county musters and militia, they sent the lowest groups of society to fight their national wars for them.

(ii) Legal Office

Custos Rotulorum

He was the titular head of the Quarter Sessions and ordered the Sessional meetings. As Custos of Northamptonshire, the first Earl of Westmorland changed the location of the Michelmas Sessions from Northampton to Kettering, nearer his home at Apethorpe in the east division, and it provoked a storm of protest.⁽³⁰⁾ The office appears to have been the preserve of the nobility. Lord Mordaunt was Custos of Bedfordshire between 1547 and 1552, successive Lords St. John occupies it between 1562 and 1618; and from 1618 to 1642, the post was held by Thomas, Lord Wentworth and first Earl of Cleveland.

In Northamptonshire, Sir Thomas Cecil, later first Earl of Exeter, held the position in 1585, and in 1625, the Earl of Westmorland replaced the Earl of Rutland. Lord Spencer was Custos in 1630. Richard Knightley was Deputy Custos Rotulorum and to some point in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries, which suggests that the greater gentry acted as Deputies to the nobility.⁽³¹⁾

Clerk of The Peace

By the seventeenth century, the Clerk of the Peace was a pivotal figure in county government. As Clerk to the Quarter Sessions, he set the agenda of the court; decided how its business should be handled, and decided when each case should be called. It was a lucrative office, and several landed families were founded on its profits. In Northamptonshire, the Chaunceys of Edgcote; the Haslewoods of Maidwell, which obtained knighthoods in the early seventeenth century; and the Freeman family of Higham Ferrers, were founded by Clerks of the Peace. In addition, the Gents of Norton; the Bretons of Ravensthorpe; the Gages of Raundes; and, in Bedfordshire, the Paynes of Poddington and Spencers of Cople, were armigerous families who owed much of their rise to this office.

29. B.M. Addit, MSS., 34,217, fo.15. The papers of Sir Francis Fane, a list of one hundred soldiers to be sent from Northamptonshire.

30. See note 6.

31. B.R.O., C.R.T.120/44; H.M.C., Buccleuch MSS, iii, pp. 25, 255; Wake, J., (ed), Quarter Sessions Records of the County of Northampton, 1630, 1657, 1658, N.R.S., i, p. 161; N.R.O., Northampton Public Library MSS, N.P.L.559.

Francis Gray of Wellingborough, Northamptonshire Clerk from 1623 to 1642, purchased two Wellingborough manors during the Interregnum; and Robert Guy of Isham built his manorial estate during his period of office between 1646 and 1660.⁽³²⁾

As in Somerset, the office was filled by gentlemen on the threshold of 'county' status, just below the top rank of justices of the peace or Deputy Lieutenants; or by men on the verge of gentle status, whose position as Clerk laid the foundations for their rise to armigerous rank.⁽³³⁾

Justice of The Peace

It is the justice of the peace who has commanded most attention from historians, and he is seen as the embodiment of gentry participation in local government.

(See Table XL11, and note 34 on next page)

In both counties, the Commission of the Peace gradually expanded between 1542 and 1636. The average number of justices on the seven Commissions in the table, between 1542 and 1583, in Bedfordshire, was approximately twenty five. The eight Bedfordshire Commissions, between 1604 and 1636, averaged approximately forty members. In Northamptonshire, the eight Commissions in the table, between 1545 and 1584, averaged thirty six justices; and the seven between 1604 and 1636, excluding the abnormal 1626 one, averaged fifty eight members. This growth reflects both the increasing work load thrust upon the localities by the revenue-seeking early Stuarts, and the expansion of the gentry, which meant that there were more men seeking the office. Even the two Interregnum Commissions which have been examined, from which royalists were excluded, are larger than those of the sixteenth century. There appears to have been another marked expansion of the magistracy after the Restoration, particularly in Bedfordshire. In both counties, the 1663 Commission contained more members than any previous one in the table, with the exception of the abnormal 1626 Northamptonshire one.

This expansion was not due to an increased number of non-resident dignitaries because, as column two of the table demonstrates, the number of resident justices grew in proportion to the overall growth of the Commission.

The greater gentry clearly dominated the magistracy, particularly after 1600. In both counties, the proportion of resident peers and knights on the Commissions of the sixteenth century was usually considerably less than half of the number of resident justices. Of course, this is a result of the frugality of honours in Elizabethan England. But, between 1604 and 1636, the proportion of resident peers, baronets,

32. See Barnes, T., The Clerk of The Peace in Caroline Somerset, University of Leicester, Department of Local History, Occasional Paper, xiv; Cockburn, J., (ed), Somerset Assize Orders, 1640-59, Somerset Record Society, lxxi, p. xvi; Fletcher, A., op.cit., p. 144;

Table XLII: Analysis of some Commissions of The Peace, 1542-1663 (34)

DATE	BEDFORDSHIRE				NORTHAMPTONSHIRE						
	TOTAL ON COMMISSION	NUMBER RESIDENT IN COUNTY	RESIDENT PEERS	RESIDENT BARONETS	RESIDENT KNIGHTS	DATE	TOTAL ON COMMISSION	NUMBER RESIDENT IN COUNTY	RESIDENT PEERS	RESIDENT BARONETS	RESIDENT KNIGHTS
1542	24	15	0	-	4	1545	36	30	2	-	4
1549	30	21	0	-	6	1549	35	30	2	-	5
1558/9	23	15	1	-	2	1558/9	39	32	3	-	10
Dec. 1561	22	13	1	-	3	Dec.	28	21	3	-	9
1573/4	19	13	2	-	1	1573/4	29	23	2	-	11
1579	32	23	2	-	0	1579	40	31	5	-	9
1583	21	17	3	-	0	1583	36	31	4	-	9
1604	32	23	2	-	7	1584	43	35	4	-	9
1608	40	29	3	-	11	1604	48	38	5	-	23
1621/2	53	39	4	1	21	1608	53	41	6	-	22
1625	40	25	6	1	12	1621/2	60	45	5	3	23
Jan. 1626	38	23	6	1	11	1625	68	50	8	3	23
1626	39	23	6	1	11	1626	113	93	9	5	33
Oct. 1626	37	22	4	1	11	Oct. 1626	64	49	7	3	25
1636	38	26	4	1	8	1630	53	40	4	2	19
1650	37	25	1	0	4	1636	57	43	5	3	18
1657	41	25	1	1	1	1650	55	37	2	5	0
1663	71	60	7	4	12	1657	51	35	1	2	1
						1663	79	68	12	10	5

34. Appendix 17 contains the sources for all these Commissions, and it also tabulates the appearance of families on these various commissions.

A Sir John Boteler, baronet, appears on the Commissions of the 1620's for Bedfordshire, but he was non-resident. Capell Bedell, and Sir John Hewett, baronets, were on the Northamptonshire Commission of 1626, but were non-resident. Lord Thomas Alston is on the 1650 Bedfordshire Commission, but this was a Cromwellian peerage, and so he has been omitted from the peers column in the table. The Earl of Kent was the only hereditary peer of 1642 to appear on it in 1650. Charles, Lord Fleetwood, and John, Lord Claypole, were Cromwellian peers who are on the 1657 Northamptonshire Commission. They have also been excluded from the resident peers column. Lord Montagu was the only 1642 nobleman on this Commission. In column three for Bedfordshire, the 1625-6 Commissions record 6 resident peers, although there were only five noble families. This is explained by the presence of Lord St. John, son and heir of the Earl of Bolingbroke.

and knights was well above half of the number of resident justices. The families with the most number of appearances on the Commissions between 1542 and 1636 indicate the preponderance of greater gentry on the Bench. In Bedfordshire, they were the Greys, Earls of Kent; the Russells, Earls of Bedford; the St. Johns, Earls of Bolingbroke; the Conquests of Houghton Conquest; the Lukes of Cople, and the Osbornes of Chicksands. The Astreys of Harlington also had a good record of appearances, and although they were of a lower social status than these other families, they possessed an income of between six hundred and seven hundred pounds, in 1642.

The Northamptonshire families with the most appearances on the Commissions examined in the table, between 1545 and 1636, were the Cecils, Earls of Exeter; the Montagus, Lords Montagu; the Mordaunts, Earls of Peterborough; the Spencers; Lords Spencer; the Ishams of Lamport; the Elmeses of Lilford; the Lanes of Horton; and the Knightleys of Fawsley, all very prominent gentry families.⁽³⁵⁾

The most notable feature of the Bedfordshire families' appearances on the Commission was the virtual absence of four of the five baronet families of 1642. Only the Napiers of Luton appeared on more than two of the Commissions, which have been examined, between 1604 and 1636, and the Alstons of Odell, and the Burgoynes of Sutton appeared on none. Unfortunately, there is no evidence to explain this. None of the virtually absent baronets were catholic, and they do not appear to have been at the forefront of political disaffection.

The proportion of resident peers, baronets, and knights fell dramatically in the Commissions of 1650 and 1657, and, although there was a marked increase in the number of titled gentry on the 1663 Commission, the proportion of resident peers, baronets, and knights, despite the post-Restoration flood of new creations, was considerably less than half of the total of resident justices. In view of the pronounced social and geographical mobility within the gentry, which was discussed in the previous chapter, it is not surprising that the magistracy reflected these transformations. Appendix Seventeen shows the turnover of families which provided justices. New ones were constantly appearing; and some dropped out of the Commission for a generation or two to reappear later; and other families died out or left the county. The constant influx of legal, commercial, or office-based families to these counties widened the choice of magistrates.

32. A list of Clerks is Stephens, L., The Clerks of The Counties, 1360-1960; see also P.R.O., S.P.12/104: 1575 List of Officials.

33. Barnes, T., op.cit., p. 9.

35. See Appendix 17. For income of Astreys, see Appendix 12.

The previous chapter also concluded that there was greater change in the governing elite of Bedfordshire, after 1647, than in Northamptonshire, where the old, pre-1642, greater gentry continued to predominate upon the County Committee.⁽³⁶⁾ A survey of the 1650 and 1657 Commissions reinforces this distinction. In Bedfordshire, only seven of the families on the 1650 Commission had provided a pre-1642 justice of the peace on the Commissions that have been examined, whereas seventeen had not. The figures are six, and sixteen, respectively, for the 1657 Bedfordshire Commission.

The 1650 Northamptonshire Commission contained at least twenty one local families who had provided a pre-Civil War magistrate, and only fourteen that had not. In 1657, the figures were at least fifteen, and thirteen, respectively. Only four of those which had appeared on Commissions before 1642 had only been on the abnormally large 1626 list of magistrates.

So, the continuity of administration in Northamptonshire throughout the first sixty years of the seventeenth century was much greater than in Bedfordshire, where a larger proportion of new, lesser gentry appear to have been in local positions of prominence during the Interregnum. In Northamptonshire, prominent families like the Montagus, Lords Montagu, the Drydens of Canons Ashby; the Pickerings of Tichmarsh; the St. Johns of Woodford; the Samwells of Upton; the Brookes of Oakley; the Cartwrights of Aynho; and the Knightleys of Fawsley; appear on both the 1650 and 1657 Commissions. In Bedfordshire, only the Alstons of Odell, and the Charnocks of Hulcot, of the 1642 peers, baronets, and knights, or families which had held knighthoods between 1558 and 1651, appear on both the 1650 and 1657 Commission. But neither of these had been on any of the pre-1642 lists of justices which have been examined.⁽³⁷⁾

Turnover within the magistracy could also be affected by the political and religious policy of the central government. Dr. Smith believes that a purge of Marian justices took place in the first years of Elizabeth's reign. In Northamptonshire, he says that a third of the eligible Marian justices were excluded in 1558, and that it had risen to nearly sixty percent by 1564. The main motivation for the purge appears to have been religious,

36. See Chapter 4, Section 8.

37. This analysis is taken from Appendix 17, which lists the appearances on Commissions of various families.

a desire to remove catholic magistrates. (38)

After the introduction of strict recusancy laws between 1580 and 1582, it is usually assumed that recusants were excluded from local office. The evidence from these two counties presents rather an uncertain picture. The most prominent recusant families in Bedfordshire, in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, were the Charnocks of Holcot, and the Conquests of Houghton Conquest. Ironically, the former first appeared on a Commission, which has been used in the table, in 1650, when St. John Charnock, one of the first to be a protestant in his family, was a parliamentarian. They do not appear on any of the Commissions between 1542 and 1636.

In contrast, the Conquests, who had been prosecuted for recusancy as late as 1620, appear on every Bedfordshire Commission between 1579 and October 1626.

Other recusants like the Colbecks of Tempsford appeared on the four Commissions between 1542 and 1561, but appeared on no subsequent ones. The Hewetts of Ampthill, and the Hunts of Roxton were not on any of those which have been examined; but the Mordaunts of Oakley appeared on the 1604 and the 1608 Libri.

The Northamptonshire picture is less confusing. Recusants like the Brudenells, Lords Brudenell, and the Vauxes, Lords Vaux, do not appear on any Commission, after 1584, with the exception of the peculiar circumstances of the 1626 one, which will be discussed later. Recusant baronets of 1642, the Andrewes of Denton; the Brownes of Walcot; the Norwiches of Brampton; the Shirleys of Astwell; and the Treshams of Lyveden, were not on any Commission between 1549 and 1636. The Bretons of Ravensthorpe, the Kenwicks of Sutton, the Kinnesmans of Loddington; and the Hackes of Peterborough, are recusant families which were only justices of the peace under the unusual 1626 situation. The Stanhopes, Lords Stanhope, and the Morgans of Heyford only appeared on the 1604 and 1608 Commissions, after 1582, and the Griffins of Dingley, although they were justices on four Libri between 1583 and 1608, do not appear again until 1663, despite their prominence in the county.

However, there were exceptions to this apparent exclusion of recusants. The Mordaunts, Earls of Peterborough, were absent from only one Commission, between 1545 and 1636, and the Treshams of Newton were justices between 1604 and 1630. In addition, church papists like the Comptons, Earls of Northampton, and the Fermors of Easton Neston had a fairly continuous record of service. (39)

38. Smith, A., 'The Personnel of Commissions of The Peace, 1554-64: A Reconsideration', Huntingdon Library Quarterly, xxii, pp. 303-11.

39. See Appendix 17, and Appendix 15, for List of Catholic families.

So, although Mr. Gleason says that religion was not decisive in the appointment of magistrates, it does seem that the majority of recusants were excluded from the Bench, although there were one or two exceptions in both counties.⁽⁴⁰⁾

But puritans were also liable to exclusion, albeit more temporarily than catholic recusants. In Northamptonshire, Sir Edward Montagu and Sir Richard Knightley were deprived of their local offices, because of their presentation of the 1605 Petition against the deprivation of puritan clergy. Sir William Spencer lost his Deputy Lieutenancy in 1624 because of his alignment with the Opposition in the 1623-4 Parliament, and Richard Knightley was made Sheriff, in 1626, to keep him out of parliament. In Bedfordshire, the Earl of Kent and the Earl of Bolingbroke were deprived of the Lord Lieutenancy of Bedfordshire, and Huntingdonshire, respectively, between 1627 and 1629, because of their opposition to the Forced Loan of 1626. In all these cases, exclusion only lasted a year or two, and it was much less severe than the generations of exile from local office endured by many catholics.⁽⁴¹⁾

However, it was trouble from puritan gentry, in the main, that caused the crown to nominate the abnormally large Commission of 1626, in Northamptonshire, and even recall recusant catholics. This Libri of one hundred and thirteen members was by far the largest Commission at any time within the counties studied by Mr. Gleason. Resistance to the Forced Loan, in Northamptonshire, was widespread in 1626, particularly among the puritan squires of the west of the county. The nobility, who lived mainly in the east, were angry that their eagerness to contribute was counteracted by western reluctance. At the same time, the Earl of Westmorland's intervention into electoral politics, and his attempt to move the Quarter Sessions from the west of the county to the east, had generated fierce factional rivalry. The county was riven with internal power struggles and jealousies, and so, the government expanded the Bench to include a counterweight to the puritan opponents of the Loan, and to balance the factions. Recusants like the Brudenells and Vauxes reappeared, and others like the Bretons, Hackes, Kenwricks, and Mountstephens of Paston, made their sole appearance on any of the Commissions examined, between 1542 and 1663. It is clear that the choice of justices in 1626 extended beyond the greater gentry and usual 'county' families. Lesser gentry like the Blencowes of Marston; the Moles of Culworth; the Shuckburghs of Naseby; and the

40. Gleason, J., The Justices of The Peace in England, 1558-1640, p. 71.

41. See Chapter 7, Section 2. For Sir William Spencer, see N.R.O., Z.A.2,251, fo. 57, and Ruigh, R., The Parliament of 1624.

Wizemans of Bozeat made their only appearance on any of the Libri, which have been analysed. Some greater gentry like the Egertons of Farthinghoe; the Doves of Upton; and the Tryons of Bulwick, made their only appearance on a pre-Civil War Commission. The crisis passed and the Bench of October 1626 was a more usual size.⁽⁴²⁾

Table XLII suggests that opposition to the Loan in Bedfordshire, or factional rivalry, may not have been as great as in Northamptonshire. The equivalent Bench which numbered one hundred and thirteen in Northamptonshire, totalled only thirty nine, in Bedfordshire, which was no larger than normal.

Sheriff

Like the magistracy, the shrievalty was dominated by the more prominent gentry. Fifty two Northamptonshire families provided sheriffs, between 1541 and 1641, and forty two Bedfordshire ones filled the office between 1575 and 1641. In Northamptonshire, the Spencers of Althorp were sheriff six times; the Montagus of Boughton, and Andrewes of Harlestone, five times; and the Knightleys and Treshams, four times. Among those who were sheriff three times were the Chaunceys of Edgcote; the Caves of Stanford; the Brudenells of Deene; the Fermors of Easton Neston; the Ishams of Lamport; and the Elmeses of Lilford and Greens Norton.

In Bedfordshire, the Botelers of Biddenham; the Charnocks of Holcot; and the various St. John families, were sheriff four times; and the Conquests of Houghton Conquest; the Dyves of Bromham; the Lukes of Cople; and Rotherhams of Luton, were sheriff on three occasions.⁽⁴³⁾

Taking both counties together, approximately three quarters of the ninety nine families had possessed the title of knight or above between 1558 and 1642, and so the predominance of the greater gentry is apparent in the shrievalty as it is in the Deputy Lieutenancy and magistracy.

This is not surprising in view of the expense associated with the office of sheriff. Sir John Isham's term is believed to have cost him over five hundred pounds, in 1610, and, in 1605, Sir Arthur Throckmorton of Paulerspury submitted a claim for one hundred and sixteen pounds, spent in the search for the Gunpowder Plotters.⁽⁴⁴⁾

The shrievalty could also be manipulated by the crown. The example of Richard Knightley has been mentioned, and in 1635 and 1638, Charles Cokayne and Philip Holman, respectively, were appointed because of opposition to Ship Money in Northamptonshire. Neither had been a justice of the peace, and it was hoped that they would be more energetic in collecting the tax.⁽⁴⁵⁾

42. See Chapter 7, Section 2, Appendix 17; Gruenfelder, J., The Northamptonshire Election of 1626, Northants Past and Present, iv; and Section 3 of this Chapter, on parliamentary elections.

43. From List of Sheriffs of England and Wales, P.R.O., List and Index, ix, pp. 3, 94.

Recusants appear to have been largely kept out of the Sherifffdom, after 1582. In Northamptonshire, only George Shirley of Astwell, (1602-3); Sir Thomas Tresham of Newton, (1610-11); and Sir Simon Norwich of Brampton, (1618-19), were recusant sheriffs, after this date. The Brudenells and Griffins were notable absentees, after 1582, although the Fermors of Easton Neston, church papists, were sheriff from 1589-90, and from 1617-18. However, in Bedfordshire, the Charnocks were sheriff four times between 1587 and 1637, and the Conquests, three times between 1582 and 1618. Like the justices of the peace, there were exceptions, but, in the main, recusants were absent from the list of sheriffs after 1582, especially in Northamptonshire. But the exclusion was not as strict, perhaps, as in the case of the magistrates.

The Undersheriff

Mr. Hartley has said that the sheriff's personal involvement in affairs was not very great, and that the undersheriff was primarily concerned. Most were gentlemen, although they were of lower social status than their masters.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Eighteen out of twenty six Bedfordshire undersheriffs who have been identified, between 1562 and 1640, were from armigerous gentry families; and fifteen out of twenty five in Northamptonshire.⁽⁴⁶⁾ Some of the others may have been gentlemen who are absent from the notoriously inaccurate Visitations, but some prominent yeomen did hold the office. George Gamble of Pulloxhill was Bedfordshire undersheriff in 1637 and 1640, and John Browne of Arlesey, in 1636. The Brownes did not acquire arms until 1660.

It is also clear that men from surrounding counties could be appointed. Thomas Astrey of Huntingdonshire was Northamptonshire undersheriff in 1587; Richard Shute from Cambridgeshire, in 1578; Anthony Wheelowes of Northamptonshire was Bedfordshire undersheriff in 1615; and in 1624, Sir John Isham of Lamport recommended one of his neighbours for the Buckinghamshire post.⁽⁴⁷⁾

44. Hallinan, T., Thesis, op.cit., pp. 462-76; H.M.C. Salisbury, MSS, xviii, pp. 38-40. See also, N.R.O., Isham MSS, 1(L) 1,859, List of expenses of Sir William Saunders in 1610 for the Assizes.
45. Hartley, T., 'Undersheriffs and Bailiffs in some English Shrievalties, c.1580-1625', B.I.H.R., xlvii, pp. 164-8, especially.
46. This, and the following account, is based on P.R.O., Exchequer Memoranda Rolls, E.368/350, 354, 370, 378, 386, 402, 417, 433, 449, 465, 481, 497, 513, 528, 543, 582, 590, 598, 563, 551, 575, 614, 606, 621, 645, 629, 660, 505, 521, 535, 457, 473, 486, 410, 425, 441, 394, 362. Where possible, the undersheriff for every fourth year between 1560 and 1640 has been identified. See also, P.R.O., E.112, for odd references. A manuscript list of Bedfordshire undersheriffs is held by Colonel Orlebar at Hinwick Hall, but I was, unfortunately, unable to see it (see B.R.O., OR).
47. N.R.O., Brudenell MSS, BRU J. XXXIV, 3, Isham Correspondence, I.C. 3,227.

A degree of family specialisation is apparent. Charles and William Ireland were successive Northamptonshire undersheriffs in 1618 and 1619, and three Iremongers occupied the post in Bedfordshire, in the early seventeenth century. It was not unusual for the same man to occupy the position more than once. Francis Cook of Northamptonshire held it four times between 1628 and 1640, and William Ireland was undersheriff of the same county in 1618, 1622, and 1632. At least four others held the office more than once in the early seventeenth century.

There are also several instances of a particular family exercising the office of sheriff and undersheriff in the same year. These included Richard and George Conquest, (1582-3); Richard and Ambrose Charnock, (1586-7); Ralph and William Astrey, (1588-9); and George and Nicholas Rotherham, (1590-1), in Bedfordshire. Northamptonshire examples include Edmund and John Brudenell (1564-5); Thomas and Edward Andrewes, (1568-9); Sir Edward and Henry Montagu, (1588-9); and Thomas and Francis Mulshoe, (1596-7).

This practice seems to have ceased after 1600, at the same time as less prominent persons began to take over the undersheriffdom. The Jacobean and Caroline undersheriff, in these two counties, was less prominent in county society than his Elizabethan predecessor, which may reflect the massive expansion of the yeomanry and gentry in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. More and more families were eligible for the office.

The Coroner

Unfortunately, detail about this office is scarce because of the absence of Assize and Sessions records, but the names that have been identified suggest that this, too, was a position monopolised by the gentry. John Fosbrook of Cranford; John Newport of Welton; and Gregory Warner, probably of Thorpe Lubbenham, were Northamptonshire coroners in the 1570's, and all were armigerous families. Robert Sculthorpe of King's Cliffe occupied the position in 1606, and was styled 'gentleman', and Michael Styles of Paston was coroner of the Soke of Peterborough in the 1620's. The Styles family were armigerous.

In 1622, a Mr. Gostwick, probably from the prominent baronet family, was Bedfordshire coroner, and Mr. Foster, coroner in 1658, was possibly from the gentry family of Cardington.⁽⁴⁸⁾

48. P.R.O., SP.12/104; STAC.5/17/14; C.242/22/24 (Thomas Roe, Northamptonshire coroner in 1632, was probably from the gentry family of Bulwick); Catalogue of Requests 2/296/124; N.R.O., Microfilm 196, Quarter Sessions for the Soke of Peterborough 1623-32; Isham Correspondence, I.C. 3,516; Finch-Hatton MSS, F.H. 3,456; Cal. Patent Rolls, 1572-5, p. 142; Bedfordshire County Records, 1651-60, Catalogue of Volume i, Sessions Minutes, 1651-60, p. 47.

The prominence of the gentry is understandable in view of the fact that the medieval coroners, according to Dr. Hunnissett, were only just below the social status of the knightly class.⁽⁴⁹⁾

(iii) Fiscal Office

Escheator

The escheator was responsible for supervising the payment of dues to the crown from wardship or from the tenants of the crown by knight service tenure, who had died intestate. The office always seems to have been filled by gentlemen and the pattern of the office paralleled that of the undersheriff. Prominent families like the Drydens; Kirkhams; Nicholls; Spencers; Pickerings; Wakes; and Watsons, in Northamptonshire, held the office in the second half of the sixteenth century, but in the first half of the seventeenth century, it was filled mainly by gentlemen of the second rank. After 1600, only three escheators from Northamptonshire, and only one from Bedfordshire, were from families which possessed the title of knight or above between 1558 and 1642.⁽⁵⁰⁾

A single escheator covered Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, and one was responsible for Northamptonshire and Rutland. Because of the relative sizes of these counties, more Northamptonshire than Rutland men, and more Buckinghamshire than Bedfordshire men, served as escheator.

The Subsidy and Loans

Commissioners for the Subsidy appear to have been mainly the same greater gentry who dominated the magistracy, and military offices. A Northamptonshire list of 1523 includes a Brudenell; a Fitzwilliam; a Montagu; a Parr; a Stafford; and a Tresham. Sir Robert Bannister and Thomas Elmes were Commissioners in 1628, and in Bedfordshire, a St. John; a Dyve; a Rotherham; a Newdigate, a Conquest, a Boteler; an Osborne; and an Earl of Kent are among sixteenth century commissioners.

Also, the 'county' gentry acted as collectors of subsidies and loans. Sir Edward Montagu and William Lane were collectors of the 1590 Northamptonshire loan; and Sir Lewis Tresham, and Richard Cartwright of Aynho, collected the 1626 loan, and the 1628 subsidy, respectively. Sir Robert Napier was responsible for the 1626 Bedfordshire loan. In 1550, William

49. Hunnissett, R., The Medieval Coroner, p. 174.

50. From Escheators for England and Wales, List and Index Society, lxxii. I regret that an oversight on my part led me to ignore Court of Wards Feodaries, another local fiscal officer. Some account of this office is given in Bell, H.E., Introduction to the History and Records of the Court of Wards and Liveries.

Boteler of Biddenham was chief collector of the Bedfordshire subsidy.⁽⁵¹⁾

But at the hundred level, it was minor gentry and yeomen who collected the subsidy. For example, Thomas Negus of Shelton, yeoman, and William Adams of Turvey, yeoman, in Bedfordshire in 1550.⁽⁵²⁾

(iv) Other Offices

Commissioners of Sewers, of Charitable Uses, and of Array, and others.

Lists reveal that the Commission of Sewers in the early seventeenth century, which was particularly involved with fen drainage, the Commission of Charitable Uses of 1603 and 1655, and the 1642 Commission of Array, all for Northamptonshire, were also dominated by the greater gentry. Knightleys, Spencers, Fitzwilliams, Fanes, Watsons, Fermors, Ishams, and many others are evident on these lists, and clearly, the 'county' gentry mainly filled these offices.⁽⁵³⁾ There is little evidence for Bedfordshire, but there is no reason to suggest that the position was any different.

In addition; a 1530's list of Commissioners for the valuation of monastic lands in Northamptonshire includes a Parr; a Tresham; a Montagu; a Cave; a Cecil; and a Brudenell.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Again, it is dominated by greater gentry.

Offices associated with Crown lands

The large extent of crown land in these counties, particularly in Northamptonshire, provided another rich source of local office for the gentry. Stewardship of the Honours of Grafton and Ampthill, and Wardenship of the Royal Forests was usually reserved for the nobility. The Marquess of Northampton (c.1560); the Earl of Leicester, (1571), and the Earl of Dorset, (1630), are known to have been Stewards of Grafton Honour; and Lord Hunsdon, (1568); Viscount Fenton, (to 1613); and Lord Bruce, later

51. B.R.O., CRT. 100/9; Trevor-Wingfield MSS, T.W.875; N.R.O., Cartwright MSS, C(A) 7,498; 7,501; Knightley MSS, K CLVII, 1,380-5, 1640's Commissioners for the Poll Tax in Northamptonshire; Misc. MSS, YZ 1,061; P.R.O., C.267/11/23; E112/226/11; E.179/71/131, 149a; E.179/72/238; E.179/156/196, 243; Mellows, W., (ed)., The Last Days of Peterborough Monastery, N.R.S., xii, p. xxxviii.
52. B.R.O., T.W.875; and P.R.O., C.267/11/23, (Thomas Parrott, yeoman, collector in 1577, for three eastern hundreds).
53. Kirkus, A., (ed)., The Records of the Commissioners of Sewers in Parts of Holland, 1547-1603, Lincolnshire Record Society, liv., pp. xxiv, and 17, by 1571 there was a forty pounds per annum property qualification for sewers Commissioners; Mellows, W., (ed)., Peterborough Local Administration: Feoffees Accounts, 1614-1714, N.R.S., x, pp. 207, 233; B.M., Addit MSS., 34,217, fo. 69v, Sir Francis Fane's papers, 1642 Commission of Array. A.P.C., xx, p. 187.
54. Mellows, W., (ed)., The Last Days of Peterborough Monastery, N.R.S., xii, p. xxvi.

Earl of Elgin, (from 1613), were Stewards of Ampthill Honour. However, one non-nobleman, Sir Francis Crane, was Steward of Grafton in the 1630's.

The gentry family of Wake of Salcey were hereditary Rangers of Salcey Forest, in Northamptonshire, and gentry dominated the administration of Rockingham Forest. The Hattons of Kirby were Stewards of all Duchy land in Northamptonshire for most of the first half of the seventeenth century, and the Gages of Roundes were their deputies in the 1630's. (55)

Sixty two individuals have been identified as Stewards of individual Crown manors between about 1570 and 1660, and approximately three quarters have been positively identified as being from gentry families. But the vast majority of these were from the second rank gentry families. These included the Flamsteads of Denton; the Bernards of Abington; the Pargiters of Gretworth; the Ekinse, of Irchester, and the Conyers' of Wakerley, in Northamptonshire; and the Potts' of Chalgrave; the Wingates of Harlington; the Harveys of Thurleigh; the Childs of Podington; and the Bromsalls of Sandy, in Bedfordshire. The only 'county' status gentry to have been discovered are the Palmers of Carleton; the Watsons of Rockingham; and the Fermors of Easton Neston. (56) Too few bailiffs of crown manors have been found to justify consideration of them, but certainly, stewardship appears to have been the domain of the lesser gentry.

Hundred Constables and Bailiffs

These were responsible for supervising military and fiscal affairs within their jurisdictional area. There were two constables for each Northamptonshire hundred and each appears to have possessed a territorial influence within that hundred. If a 1571 Bedfordshire list represents the common practice, there was only one constable for each hundred in that county. (57)

In 1618, Sir Arthur Throckmorton recommended "a petty clerk, a freeholder" as constable of Cleley hundred in Northamptonshire, and Miss Wake classed the Northamptonshire constables as yeomen. (58)

55. Stewards of the Honours have been found mainly from Cal. Patent Rolls, (before 1572), and P.R.O., E.112; For forest administration, see Pettit, P., The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire, N.R.S., xxiii; N.R.O., Finch-Hatton MSS, F.H.2,025; 3,113; 3,455.

56. This figure is obtained from all references to Stewards which have been found during the examination of family papers. An exhaustive study of Court Rolls would give a more complete picture, but that is beyond the scope of this thesis. Forty four of the sixty two are definitely gentry, but ten have not been traced. Similarly, for the twenty one names of stewards of private manors which have been discovered, thirteen, at least, were lesser gentlemen.

57. B.M. Sloane MSS, 3,560, fo. 11; B.R.O., Trevor-Wingfield MSS., T.W.877.

58. Wake, J., (ed), The Montagu Musters Book, 1602-23, N.R.S., vii, pp.xxiii, 178.

Twelve of the twenty constables of the Eastern division, in 1607, were from families which appear on a 1605 list of freeholders in that division. Seven other Northamptonshire constables at various dates were freeholders, and William Bromsall; Edward Whiston; and Thomas Thoroughgood, Bedfordshire constables, were designated 'yeoman' on the Subsidy Roll. Indeed, the presence of some gentlemen in this office suggests that it was strictly a position for the propertied classes. The Styles' of Paston; the Birds of Bainton; the Mountstephens of Paston; the Maidwells of Geddington; the Judkins of Heyford; and the Roanes of Wellingborough, were gentry constables of hundreds in Northamptonshire; and in Bedfordshire in 1571. Thomas Rolt and Lawrence Cobb were probably from the gentry families of Milton Ernest and Sharnbrook, respectively. (59)

Evidence is more scarce for hundred bailiffs, but Miss Wake said that the occupant of this office was slightly inferior in social status to the constable. In Northamptonshire, none of the ten eastern division bailiffs of 1607 appear on the freeholders' list of 1605. (60)

Grand Jurors

Dr. Morrill has recently concluded that Cheshire grand jurors represented the lowest ranks of the gentry, with an income and status well below that of the magisterial gentry, although most had an income of not more than ten pounds a year which made them economically indistinguishable from the yeomen below them. (61) It is very difficult to compare these two counties with Cheshire because of the absence of Assize and Quarter Sessions records, but a list of freeholders of the east division of Northamptonshire, which was probably compiled for jury purposes, contains an overwhelming majority of minor gentlemen and families who do not appear on the Visitations at all. But because of the unreliability of the Visitations, it is impossible to say how many were yeomen and how many were armigerous gentry. Without doubt, they were mostly minor gentry or yeomen. (62)

59. N.R.O., Fitzwilliam MSS., F(M) Misc. vol. 47; Wake, J., (ed.), Musters, Beacons, and Subsidies in the county of Northampton, 1586-1623, pp. 111-17, List of Freeholders, 1605.
60. Wake, J., (ed.), The Montagu Musters Book, N.R.S., vii, p. xxiii; N.R.O., F(M) Misc. vol. 47.
61. Morrill, J., The Cheshire Grand Jury, 1625-59; A Social and Administrative Study, University of Leicester, Department of Local History, Occasional Paper, 3rd s., i, pp. 6, 17-19.
62. Wake, J., (ed.), Musters, Beacons, Subsidies in County of Northampton, 1586-1623; N.R.S., iii, pp. 111-17; Also see Hirst, D., 'The Seventeenth Century Freeholders and The Statistician: A Case of Terminological Confusion', and reply by Thompson, F., Ec.H.R., 2nd s, xxix. Probably all Grand Jurors were freeholders, but it is a case of whether they were gentry or yeoman.

Municipal and Parish Offices

In the larger towns, in both these counties, administration was dominated by the wealthy elite. The mayoralty of Bedford, Northampton, Higham Ferrers, and Brackley was filled by a commercial oligarchy. Fifty two surnames constitute the list of one hundred Northampton mayors, between 1542 and 1641, and almost half of these occupied the post more than once. A Rainsford; a Mercer; and a Manley were mayor six times each in this period. At Bedford, an Abbis was mayor seven times between 1584 and 1626, and a Hawes ten times between 1589 and 1620. At least ten of these mayoral families of both towns established themselves as county gentry before 1640, and others must have been what Professor Everitt called 'pseudo-gentry'.⁽⁶³⁾

In Peterborough and Wellingborough, where a group of feoffees ruled municipal affairs, the elite of the inhabitants were also represented. All fourteen of Peterborough's first feoffees of 1575 appear on the subsidy roll, and local gentlemen in the form of two Hackes, a Worme; a Dickenson; and a son of the Bishop were among them. The Ormes; the Birds; the Carriers; the St. Johns; the Delavals; and the Wildbores, were gentry who joined the feoffees in the 1640's and 1650's.⁽⁶⁴⁾

In ordinary rural parishes it seems that the middle social group monopolised local office. Miss Godber found that the group which owned between one and twenty nine acres were the main office-holders in Pulloxhill, Bedfordshire. Presumably, those with no land were excluded, and the eight persons who possessed between thirty nine and one hundred and ten acres qualified for wider service as hundred constables, or even as county officers. Churchwardens lists for Toddington; Clifton, Northill; and Shillington, and a list of constables for Arlesey, in Bedfordshire, contain about forty to fifty percent of officials who can be found on the subsidy rolls, and most of these were assessed at between twenty shillings and three pounds, which would place them in this middle group of parish society.⁽⁶⁵⁾

63. Markham, C., and Cox, J., Records of The Borough of Northampton, ii, List of Mayors at the back; B.R.O., List of Bedford Mayors. The mayoral families which established country gentry status were the Bannisters; Paradynes; Abbis'; and Faldos, (Bedford); and the Hopkins'; Manleys; Judkins'; Rainsfords'; Stretleys; and Washingtons, (Northampton); Everitt, A., 'Social Mobility in Early Modern England', Past and Present, xxxiii.
64. Mellows, W., (ed), Peterborough Local Administration: Churchwardens Accounts, 1467-1573, N.R.S., ix, p. lvi; for other Peterborough local government studies, see note 12. For Wellingborough, see Chapter 8.
65. Godber, J., A History of Bedfordshire, 1066-1888, p. 280; Farmiloe, J., and Nixseaman, R., (ed), Elizabethan Churchwardens Accounts, B.H.R.S., xxxiii; B.R.O., C.R.T. 130/Toddington 1; CRT. 130/9.

(v) Conclusions

This social analysis of the offices of local government has demonstrated that there was a distinction in these counties between the offices held by the greater gentry of county status, and the lesser gentry and the yeomanry. The nobility dominated the Lord Lieutenancy; the post of Custos Rotulorum; and the Stewardship of royal Honours and Wardenship of Royal Forests. The greater gentry of 'county' status were the predominant members of the Deputy Lieutenancy; Commission for Musters and Captains of the trained bands; Commission of the Peace; Shrievalty; Commission for the Subsidy; and Commissions for Charitable Uses, of Sewers, and of Array.

The Clerkship of the Peace and the office of coroner appear to have been filled by gentry who were just below county and magisterial status. The offices of undersheriff, particularly after 1600; escheator; and steward of crown manors, were usually occupied by gentry of the second rank.

Minor gentry and yeomen were members of the trained bands; collectors of the subsidy within a hundred; hundred constables; and grand jurors.

Slightly below these were the men who filled the office of hundred bailiff and most of the rural parish offices like constable and churchwarden, and probably Overseers of the Poor and Surveyors of Highways, although I have no evidence of these.

At the very bottom were the lowest ranks of society whose only role appears to have been that of cannon-fodder for the foreign wars and expeditions.

The position of the greater gentleman is obviously predominant. The burden of office upon him is apparent, together with the truism that early modern England relied upon the local gentry for sound government in the provinces. Unfortunately, the lack of surviving court records makes it impossible to assess the conscientiousness of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire gentlemen, or to see if the burden resulted in refusal of office. The existing evidence suggests that office was not refused, or that there was always a large body of gentry with which to replace troublesome magistrates. In the last resort, catholic recusants, who were largely excluded from office, could be appointed to balance any anti-government faction, as in 1626.

3. PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION AND ELECTIONS

(i) Parliamentary Representation

In 1540, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire each returned two members for the county and two for the county town. But by 1558, Northamptonshire had three more constituencies and five more members of parliament. They were Brackley with two members, (1547); Peterborough with two, (1548); and Higham Ferrers with one, (1558).⁽⁶⁶⁾

Patronage and Personnel

The knightship of the shire was monopolised by the greater gentry. Only twelve families appear on the Official Return of Members of parliament for Bedfordshire, between 1541 and 1641. A St. John held one of the seats between 1541 and 1545; between 1559 and 1567; and from 1588 to 1629, in eleven consecutive parliaments. Sir Oliver Luke held a seat in all parliaments between 1621 and 1648.

The knightship was more widely distributed in Northamptonshire, with twenty one families represented between 1541 and 1641, but the greater gentry monopolised it. Sir Walter Mildmay held one of the seats from 1557 to 1589; Sir William Spencer was a member of the four parliaments between 1621 and 1626; and a Knightley sat in six parliaments between 1588 and 1629.⁽⁶⁷⁾

The nobility and more prominent gentry contested control of the nomination. In 1587, the Earl of Sussex wrote to Lord Mordaunt requesting the election of his son as member for Bedfordshire. Although unsuccessful at the time, Edward Ratcliffe had secured a seat by 1598. The Lords, St. John, later Earls of Bolingbroke, always commanded a seat when they wished, and in 1601, the nineteen year old son and heir to the barony was elected. In Northamptonshire, in the late 1580's, the Lord Lieutenant, Sir Christopher Hatton, obtained his wish of having Mildmay and Knightley returned; but by the late sixteenth century, the Spencers and Montagus controlled most of the knightship nominations. It was Montagu whom Sir Richard Knightley asked for favour to his son, in 1604, and he was duly elected. When Lord Mordaunt canvassed for Sir Anthony Mildmay in 1604, and the Earl of Westmorland for his son, in 1626, neither was able to

66. For reapportionment proposals, 1640-60, see Snow, V., 'Parliamentary Reapportionment Proposals in the Puritan Revolution, E.H.R., lxxiv, pp. 410-36; and Cannon, J., Parliamentary Reform, 1640-1832, pp.264-8, 291, especially.

67. Official Return of Members of Parliament, 2 vols., and additions at the Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, London.

disturb the ascendancy of the Spencers and Montagus, and their nominees were defeated. (68)

The electoral history of Bedford and Northampton illustrates the gradual takeover by the gentry of borough representation. By 1563, they had captured both seats of each town. Certainly, the seat was usually reserved henceforth for the Recorder or his representative, but by the late sixteenth century this office, itself, was staffed by gentlemen. The Yelvertons were Northampton Recorders, whose nephew Christopher Shurland succeeded them to the Recordership and to the parliamentary seat in 1624. The St. John family were honorific Recorders of Bedford, and they held one seat continuously from 1621 to 1648. The other Bedford seat was held by their deputy, Richard Taylor, a gentleman from Clapham, Bedfordshire, between 1621 and 1640. (69)

Edward, first Lord Montagu held great influence in Northampton and his sway was said to turn

"everything at his beck and the multitude of vulgars flock'd about him when he came to town, as if he had been there tropical deity". (70)

Usually, the corporation followed his wishes, but in 1626, it was so incensed at the transfer of Quarter Sessions to Kettering that it refused to countenance the nomination of an easterner like Lord Montagu. The Spencers of Althorp, a few miles from Northampton, also possessed influence in the county town. In the 1604 campaign, they were said to have secured the borough, and Richard Spencer was member between 1621 and 1629. The Knightleys could count on a seat, if required, as between 1584 and 1598, and again in 1640. (71)

Power in Peterborough was divided between the Cecils, Lords of the Soke, and the Dean and Chapter, Lords of the City. But Cecil attentions were mainly concentrated upon Stamford, because only two members of the family represented Peterborough between 1547 and 1640, Richard in 1598 and 1604, and David in the Short Parliament. The Fitzwilliams of nearby Milton were represented in nine parliaments in this period, and the Wingfields of Upton, and the Fanes, Earls of Westmorland, in four each. But despite divided patronage, gentry, rather than townsmen, were in firm control of Peterborough's two seats by the 1560's.

68. N.R.O., Stopford-Sackville MSS, SS.239; Mort, M., 'The Personnel of the House of Commons of 1601', University of London, M.A., 1952, p. 265; H.M.C., Montagu of Beaulieu MSS., pp. 21, 32; H.M.C., Buccleuch MSS., iii, p. 74; Gruenfelder, J., 'The Northamptonshire Election of 1626', Northants Past and Present, iv.
69. B.R.O., C.R.T. 160/72, In 1661, Bedford Corporation said they had lived under the shadow and protection of the St. Johns, Recorders of the Town, for forty years.
70. Quoted in Markham, C., and Cox, J., Records of The Borough of Northampton, ii, p. 108.
71. See Gruenfelder, J., op.cit., H.M.C., Buccleuch MSS., iii, p. 74.

Higham Ferrers was under the patronage of the Duchy of Lancaster, and this is reflected in the domination of its one seat by courtiers. Henry Montagu, later first Earl of Manchester and Lord Privy Seal, was member of parliament between 1593 and 1611, and his brother Charles, between 1621 and 1625. Sir Christopher Hatton, later Lord Hatton and Comptroller of the Household, was member for Higham Ferrers in the two parliaments of 1640, and he was the only Northamptonshire member of the Long Parliament to be an active royalist in the Civil War. Other office-holders like Sir Thomas Dacres and Sir George Sandes, who were not resident in the county, represented the borough in 1626 and 1628-9, respectively.

Brackley was part of the estate of the Earls of Derby until the early seventeenth century, when it passed to the Egertons, later Earls of Bridgwater. Their patronage was decisive, as in the election of Sir Thomas Wenman between 1621 and 1625; Sir John Hobart in 1626; Wenman again in 1628; and Sir Martin Lister in 1640.⁽⁷²⁾ All these were notables from outside Northamptonshire who probably had court connections with the Egertons. But the Spencers were able to exert influence and secure one of Brackley's seats in 1597, and between 1604 and 1625. The Crewes of Steane, a few miles away, gained one seat in Charles I's reign, and even Montagu influence could be important in this south-western corner, because they secured a seat in 1593, and in 1601.

So, in general, the Montagus and Spencers dominated the electoral patronage of Northamptonshire, with the Knightleys to a lesser extent. The St. Johns were preeminent in Bedfordshire, with the Lukes some way behind. A striking feature is the lack of influence wielded by the Lord Lieutenant. Sir Christopher Hatton held some sway in 1588, and the Wentworths, Earls of Cleveland's son was knight of the Shire for Bedfordshire in 1640; but the Greys, Earls of Kent, had no family representative as member of parliament in Bedfordshire between 1541 and 1640, and Sir Thomas Cecil, in 1593, was the only member of the Cecils, Earls of Exeter, to represent Northamptonshire in the same period.

This, of course, is a bird's eye view, and inescapably conveys the impression of magnates manipulating the voter like chess pieces on a board. The recent study of Dr. Hirst illustrates the dangers inherent in this impression. He suggests that the House of Commons became more representative during the first half of the seventeenth century. Inflation devalued the forty shilling freehold qualification for the county voter

72. Ruigh, M., The Parliament of 1624, p. 115, describes Wenman as Egerton's man. James Crofts, M.P. for Brackley, 1584-5, and 1586-7, was third son of James, Comptroller of the Household, and was elected through the Earl of Derby's patronage. Gabriel, R., 'Members of The House of Commons, 1586-7', University of London, M.A., 1954. For Egerton influence see N.R.O., Egerton MSS., E.B. 573, 576, 585, 613-14.

until some cottagers were included, and gentry competition for places and fear of crown 'packing' of parliaments led to extension of the borough franchises.⁽⁷³⁾ He cites various examples from Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire in support of his thesis. By 1641, all Bedford's inhabitants were eligible to vote, and during the 1650's a fierce municipal struggle was waged between the burgesses and freemen. The so-called 'Levelling Act' removed burgesses from the Common Council and gave freemen equal status. But by 1663, counter-revolution had triumphed and all freemen were removed from the Council, thereby reversing a democratic trend which had begun in 1610. As Mr. Parsloe says, the freemen's cause had flourished and withered as the royalist cause had declined and revived.⁽⁷⁴⁾ The struggle was undoubtedly linked with the tensions which led to Civil War.

However, the tensions were not necessarily marked out on party lines. Northampton's franchise was limited to the governing oligarchy, who were fiercely puritan and parliamentarian, and they were opposed by a more politically moderate group of freemen.⁽⁷⁵⁾ In Higham Ferrers, the magistrates voted for a future parliamentarian, and the wider group supported Sir Christopher Hatton, a royalist. But the tensions were apparent. The Corporation of Northampton was able to reject its patron's nomination in 1626, which has been mentioned; and as electoral behaviour became volatile; and the House of Commons achieved its representation of approximately one third of the adult male population, according to Dr. Hirst; and an expanding gentry vied for membership of parliament, the number of contested elections increased.⁽⁷⁶⁾

(ii) Elections

(a) County Elections

Dr. Hirst notes that the 1604, 1626, and Short Parliament of 1640 elections for the knights of the shire of Northampton were contested. Lord Mordaunt's unsuccessful canvassing for Sir Anthony Mildmay, in 1604, has been mentioned, and the contest caused Sir Edward Montagu to remark

73. Hirst, D., The Representative of The People? Voters and voting in England under the Early Stuarts.

74. Parsloe, G., 'The Corporation of Bedford, 1647-64', T.R.H.S., 4th s., xxix.

75. Hirst, D., op.cit., p. 135. He calls John Bernard, whom the freemen supported in 1640 against the radical Richard Knightley, an 'arch-neutral', But he appears on the Parliamentarian County Committee between 1642 and 1649, although it is true that he was more moderate than Knightley, and he was not a puritan. Firth, C., and Rait, R., (ed), Acts and Ordinances of The Interregnum, 1642-60, e.g. i, p.49.

76. Hirst, D., op.cit., p. 157.

that he little thought there would be such speedy labouring for places.⁽⁷⁷⁾
The precedent was clearly set, because it seems that the 1614 election was
also contested and that Euseby Isham was the unlucky candidate.⁽⁷⁸⁾

But the 1626 example is the cause celebre and it deserves close attention. Mr. Gruenfelder's study has given rise to the belief that it was an age-old custom for each Northamptonshire division to provide one of the county members of parliament.⁽⁷⁹⁾ Certainly, the Montagues in the east, and the Spencers in the west, dominated the patronage of the county seats, but the actual pattern of representation belies the idea. In only nine of the twenty one parliaments between 1547 and 1625 was this distribution evident. The parliaments of 1624 and 1625 contained two county members from the west division, and between 1559 and 1588, both members were from the east division. In January 1624, Lord Spencer wrote to Lord Montagu concerning this "new erected custom", and mentioned the long duration of the Hattons, Mildmays, and Cecils of the east as members of parliament: "But what do I speak of divisions, there were none in those times".⁽⁸⁰⁾ This was written at the time of the 1624 election, which appears to have been contested because in the same letter Spencer asks Montagu to persuade Watson to stand down. A Spencer and a Knightley, both from the west division, were subsequently returned.

The trouble in 1626 was not the threat to an ancient electoral custom, but the intervention of Francis Fane, first Earl of Westmorland, on behalf of his son Mildmay. This threatened to disturb the supremacy of the Spencers and Montagus. Richard Knightley had been appointed sheriff to keep him out of parliament, so Westmorland thought he could secure the vacant seat, especially since Sir William Spencer had declared his unwillingness to stand again. Westmorland's transfer of the Quarter Sessions to Kettering in 1625, which provoked the trouble, angered the town of Northampton, and prompted them to refuse Montagu's nomination of Sir Edward Watson of Stoke Dry, in the east division, brother of Sir Lewis of Rockingham. But it did not disrupt the so-called electoral division. Montagu nominated Sir John Pickering of Tichmarsh, another eastern gentleman, as well as Watson, and, initially, Spencer agreed. In the long run, it was the removal of the Quarter Sessions, which meant that the west division had lost this symbol of prestige to the east, that persuaded Spencer to re-enter the fray. Watson was dropped, and Spencer and Pickering,

77. Hirst, D., op.cit., p. 220; H.M.C. Buccleuch MSS., iii, pp. 74-5.

78. H.M.C., Buccleuch MSS., iii, p. 172.

79. Gruenfelder, J., 'The Northamptonshire Election of 1626', Northamptonshire Past and Present, iv, especially p. 159. The belief is repeated by Ruigh, R., The Parliament of 1624, p. 114.

80. H.M.C., Montagu of Beaulieu MSS, p. 105.

Montagu's nominee, won the election. Westmorland had to be content with a Peterborough seat for his son. Mr. Gruenfelder says that Northampton's initial rejection of Watson was because it would not tolerate two eastern members of parliament, but the town's interests were more parochial, and were concerned with the loss of the Quarter Sessions. The election is more properly seen in the context of an attack on the traditional patronage of the Montagus and Spencers by a newcomer to the county, the Earl of Westmorland. However, feelings ran so high that Francis Nicholls described Northamptonshire as "torn in pieces".⁽⁸¹⁾ A Star Chamber suit ensued between Montagu and Westmorland.

The developing political tensions were dramatically reflected in the Northamptonshire county election to the Short Parliament of 1640.⁽⁸²⁾ The main contest was between William Elmes and Sir Gilbert Pickering, baronet. Elmes was rumoured to have the support of the Catholics, but this seems to have been a piece of electoral propaganda on the part of Pickering, and an example of the manipulation of popular fears by the gentry. Elmes had a very puritan pedigree. His family had signed the 1605 Petition against the deprivation of puritan ministers, and in 1672, an Elmes house at Warmington was licensed for conventicles. He had the support of Sir Rowland St. John, a noted puritan.⁽⁸³⁾

Elmes appears to have conceded first place to John Crewe of Steane, without a poll, but it was a protracted dispute between Elmes and Pickering which lasted several days.⁽⁸⁴⁾ The entire election may have been manipulated. The account says that, at one time, Elmes had three hundred and fifty voices, and Pickering one hundred and sixty four, and at the end of proceedings, Elmes was going to petition against his defeat. In terms of contestants, it was a faction fight among local Puritans, and, at one point, there was said to be an electorate of nine hundred and forty.

National issues were evident. There was great hostility to the Scottish War and the levies for it, and cries of 'Wee'll have noe Deputy Lieutenants' echoed through Northampton Castle.⁽⁸⁵⁾ At least thirteen men were summoned before the Privy Council for rebellious behaviour, and the victorious members of parliament were entrusted with a freeholders' petition against Laudianism; Ship Money; monopolies; coat and conduct money; and forest law.⁽⁸⁶⁾ The electorate were capable of responding to national politics, and these issues permeated the county community.

81. H.M.C. Buccleuch MSS., iii, p. 262.

82. B.R.O., St. John MSS., J.1369, which gives a very complete account and a good insight into the workings of an election. Although a Northamptonshire election, the document is part of Sir Rowland St. John of Woodford, Northamptonshire's, collection of papers in the St. John manuscripts at Bedfordshire Record Office.

83. B.R.O., St. John MSS., J.1363; P.R.O., S.P.14/12/69, (1605 Petition); Bate, F., The Declaration of Indulgence, 1672.

84. H.M.C., Ninth Report, pt. ii, p. 498.

85. Quoted by Hirst, D., op.cit., p. 151.

86. P.C.R., xii, p. 25; Cal. S.P.D., 1640, p. 7.

The Interregnum saw other disputed elections. In 1656, Northamptonshire witnessed a contest between the friends of Major General Boteler and Richard Knightley, who was nominated by Colonel Benson. Once again, the procedure was dubious. Boteler merely rode around Kettering heath, urging support for his nominees, and then he ordered the sheriff to elect Sir Gilbert Pickering, John Claypole of Northborough; a Crewe; James Langham of Cottesbrook; Major Blake of Peterborough; and himself. The split may represent the Protectorate supporters against the old parliamentarians excluded at Pride's Purge: republican versus moderate. This Knightley was probably the same man who had been excluded in 1648, and he was made knight of the Bath, in 1661, after supporting the Restoration. (87)

But in 1660, the old divisions of the first Civil War reemerged in Northamptonshire, and illustrated the depth of the schism within the county. Despite his reluctance to stand, Sir Justinian Isham of Lamport was elected with a Clerke of Watford. Both families had been vigorous royalists. They had been opposed by a Mr. Knightley, no doubt the same one who had been involved in the 1656 election, with the support of Sir Richard Samwell and Sir Robert Dryden. All three families had been fiercely puritan and parliamentarian. A correspondent of Isham likened the situation to that of 1640 "at ye beginning of these troubles at ye election between Sir Gilbert Pickering and Mr. Elmes", and another talked of the Knightley faction as cohorting with Presbyterian clergy, Anabaptists and Quakers, and posing a future threat because of their dislike of the result. (88) Old loyalties, died hard, and in an attempt to heal these organic divisions within the county, Sir Justinian Isham advocated the revolutionary step of a paper ballot. He said that factious, canvassing and tumultuous elections were among our late miseries and he proposed a similar practice to that which he said was carried out in other counties.

"The Chief Gentlemen in every Hundred or Division to meet at some publick place a little before the Election, and such of them as shall have most of the Gentlemen's voices or rather votes in paper (to avoid any observation of the choosen) at such meeting from thence by common consent to be only recommended to their Neighbours and Countrymen in their several Hundreds without more trouble of Riding about or abusing the voted party's modesty to seek farther by himself or friends". (August 23rd, 1660) (89)

87. Bridges, J., The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire compiled from the manuscript collections of John Bridges by the reverend Peter Whalley, ii, p. 383; See also, Hardacre, P., 'William Boteler: Cromwellian Oligarch', Huntingdon Library Quarterly, xi, p. 8. For Knightley, see Chapter 4, Section 10.
88. N.R.O., Isham Correspondence, I.C. 515, is the result of the election; I.C.503(a), 4,011, refer to Sir Justinian Isham's reluctance to stand. See also I.C.499.
89. N.R.O., Isham Correspondence, I.C. 4,011.

Information about Bedfordshire county elections is less plentiful, but the by-election to the Long Parliament, caused by Lord Wentworth's move to the House of Lords, reveals the political tensions of the period. It was contested by Sir Roger Burgoyne, an Opposition supporter, and Sir Lewis Dyve, a courtier and vigorous future royalist. A House of Commons Committee was instituted to examine the malpractices of Dyve, who confessed to concealment of the election writ until the appointed day was past. The Committee said that Dyve was a Catholic, but this is doubtful and probably results from his association with his brother-in-law, the catholic Lord Digby.⁽⁹⁰⁾

(b) Borough Elections

The Bedford election to the Short Parliament of 1640 mirrors the same conflicts. Sir Beauchamp St. John of Tilbrook, a puritan and opponent of the court, won one seat, and the other was contested between Sir Samuel Luke, the future parliamentarian Governor of Newport Pagnell, and Sir William Boteler of Biddenham. Boteler joined the parliamentarian county committee in 1644, but in 1640 he was still aligned with the King. As sheriff in 1638, he had vigorously prosecuted the collection of Ship Money. There is evidence of a religious and political split between the supporters of Luke and Boteler. Seven of eight clearly identifiable future members of John Bunyan's Bedford Congregation voted for Luke, together with two St. Johns and a Cokayne, all puritans. Sir Lewis Dyve and a Crawley of Luton, both future royalist families, supported Boteler.⁽⁹¹⁾

At Northampton, the Short Parliament contest was between a radical and moderate future parliamentarian. Zouch Tate, a puritan, took one seat, and the Corporation also ensured the victory of Richard Knightley over the more moderate John Bernard of Abington, who was supported by the freemen. This was the same Richard Knightley who was mentioned in connection with the 1656 and 1660 county elections.⁽⁹²⁾

At Higham Ferrers, this political tension on the eve of the Civil War was illustrated in both municipal and parliamentary elections. For the Short Parliament, the main contest was between Sir Christopher Hatton,

90. B.R.O., C.R.T.120/Memorandum 4, p. 7.

91. Hirst, D., op.cit., pp. 123-4; B.R.O., Trevor-Wingfield MSS, T.W.890. For Luke's Governorship, see Philip, I., (ed), The Journal of Sir Samuel Luke, Oxford Record Society, xxxiii; and Tibbutt, H., (ed), The Letter Books of Sir Samuel Luke, 1644-5, B.H.R.S., xlii, and H.M.C., Joint Publication, iv. For Boteler and Ship Money, see Emmison, F., (ed), The Ship Money Papers of Sir Henry Chester and Sir William Boteler, 1637-9, B.H.R.S., xviii.

92. N.R.O., Finch-Hatton MSS., F.H. 3,501, and Hirst, D., op.cit., p. 135. See note 75 for Bernard, and Chapter 4, Section 10, for the Knightleys.

Steward of the Duchy of Lancaster and future royalist, and Edward Harby of Adstone, who became a parliamentarian. Hatton won, but only because of extension of the franchise since Harby polled thirteen of the nineteen members of the Corporation. Whilst this further illustrates the fallacy of assuming that the commons of the boroughs were radical, it does not detract from the political polarization between the two candidates.⁽⁹³⁾

The election for Mayor of Higham Ferrers immediately before the Long Parliament electoral contests emphasize the point. Thomas Rudd, a later royalist defeated Twyford Worthington, a puritan whose house was licensed as the site of a conventicle in 1672, by one vote after heated controversy.⁽⁹⁴⁾

At Peterborough in 1654, Mayor Blake was elected, but he had been opposed by the royalist Humphrey Orme, one of whose supporters had violently pulled down the bailiff when the latter attempted to read The Instrument of Government.⁽⁹⁵⁾

In 1660, Orme turned the tables and won the election, together with Lord DeSpencer, heir of Mildmay, second Earl of Westmorland, who had begun the Civil War as a royalist, but had later changed sides. Lord DeSpencer defeated Francis St. John of Longthorpe, son of Cromwell's Chief Justice. But this was only after an investigation had reversed the original vote by adding fourteen to the votes for DeSpencer.⁽⁹⁶⁾ There is the possibility that this was a case of gerrymandering against a Cromwellian family, but it secured a victory for the loyalists over the old parliamentarians, as in the county election of 1660.

There is evidence of other bitter struggles between the old Civil War factions in borough elections between 1660 and 1661. At Bedford, in May 1661, Sir Samuel Luke; Richard Taylor of Clapham, from a royalist family; and John Keyling of Southill, a lawyer associated with the court and Chief Justice of King's Bench between 1665 and 1671, contested two seats. A Commons Committee had to resolve it.⁽⁹⁷⁾

There was a similar triangular contest for Brackley's two seats, at the same time. Sir Thomas Crewe, from a parliamentarian family, was competing with Sir William Fermor and Robert Spencer, from old royalist families.⁽⁹⁸⁾

93. Groome, A.N., 'Elections for Higham Ferrers, 1640', Northants Past and Present, ii, pp. 243-51; N.R.O., Finch-Hatton MSS, F.H. 3,467. A third candidate, the mayor, who was probably the nominee of the Queen's Council, received only one vote. Harby's house was licensed as the site of a conventicle in 1672 (Bate, F., The Declaration of Indulgence).

94. Groome, A., op.cit., Bate, F., op.cit.

95. N.R.O., W. Mellows' notes, M(T).37.

96. N.R.O., M(T)1. At first, St. John polled 83 to DeSpencer's 71.

97. C.J., ix, p. 250. For Keyling, see D.N.B., and Cokayne, G., Complete Peerage.

98. C.J., ix, p. 252. The Spencers were parliamentarian in 1642, but then they changed sides and were rewarded with the Earldom of Sunderland in 1643.

The most bitter conflict of all was at Northampton, also in May 1661. Sir James Langham of Cottesbrook, son and heir of Sir John, baronet, who had been a royalist prisoner in the tower in 1648; Sir John Norwich of Brampton, baronet, a parliamentarian; and Francis Harvey, who appears to have been a religious radical, were the contestants for the two seats. Initially, Langham and Norwich were returned, but the Mayor did not fix his seal to the indenture. He returned his own indenture, which named Langham and Harvey as victors. In June, the election was declared void and a new writ issued; but the Mayor used menacing threats against the anti-Harvey voters, and on the day of the poll he was said to have released and armed Quaker prisoners to keep his opponents from voting. He adjourned the poll to the Church, and profanely climbed on to the communion table. In this new election, a Rainsford of Dallington, another royalist, was a candidate, and the Mayor said he should be defeated because he supported the Common Prayer Book. The radical Mayor was arrested at this point.⁽⁹⁹⁾

Northampton was still a centre of radicalism in the nineteenth century. In 1886, it returned Charles Bradlaugh, the first avowedly atheist member of parliament in England.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

(iii) Conclusions

The electoral history of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire between 1626 and 1661 reflected the developing political and religious tensions both within the counties and in the country at large. The lines of Civil War division were already drawn in the contests of the 1640 elections, and in 1661, the old loyalist faction used every possible means, some of them dubious, to exclude their former parliamentarian opponents from parliament. Equally, some radicals, like the Mayor of Northampton, resorted to violence to try and stem the royalist tide.

In this sense, this study of parliamentary politics provides a sequel to the analysis of the gentry, and its religious and political divisions, in the previous chapter.⁽¹⁰¹⁾

99. C.J., ix, pp. 257, 270. There were other disputed elections at Northampton in 1662, 1663, and 1664, see C.J., ix, pp. 414, 468, 544.

100. Foster, J., Class Struggles and Industrial Revolution: early industrial capitalism in three English towns. Northampton is one of them. For more detailed discussion of this town, and its radical tradition, see Chapter 7, Section 2, part (iii).

101. For gentry opposition and resistance to Forced Loans, Compulsory, knighthood, Ship Money, and other royal policy of the 1620's and 1630's, which played a part in the development of these tensions, see Chapter 7, Section 2.

CHAPTER 6

EDUCATION, HOUSING, AND LIFE-STYLE

The purpose of this chapter is to consider developments in education, housing, and other examples of life-style, in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The structure of the surviving evidence means that information about the gentry predominates throughout the chapter, and, therefore, this chapter also forms a sequel to the analysis of the gentry, which was undertaken in chapter four. However, wherever possible, an attempt has been made to consider those social groups below the gentry, although success has only been achieved, in any detail, in the section on housing.

It is not the intention to write a history of education and housing in these two counties. Where evidence allows, various themes have been selected for analysis, and they have been related to the changing social and economic framework of these counties, which has been highlighted in earlier chapters. The main aim of this chapter is to see if these changes were reflected in the cultural and domestic spheres.

The section on education considers the spread of schools within the two counties, and also considers those which were favoured by the local gentry for the education of their children. Some of these schools were outside Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. This is followed by a consideration of higher education, its expansion, and the institutions which were most frequented by the young men of these two counties. Cambridge and Oxford Universities, and the Inns of Court are examined separately.

The section on housing examines the building activities of the greater gentry, particularly Sir Thomas Tresham of Northamptonshire, and also considers the development of the manor house, the home of the lesser gentry. Although material is scarce about the lowest social groups, the use of inventories facilitates some assessment of housing trends among the yeomanry and husbandmen.

The conclusion to these two sections suggests that both counties were affected by the so-called 'Educational' and 'Building' Revolutions. The spread of schools and the expansion of higher education was pronounced. The houses of the mass of the rural population appear to have developed from either one storey to two storeys, or from one room to two rooms. These changes can be combined with the transformation in other aspects of these two counties, which have already been highlighted. However, there were

important qualitative distinctions between the experiences of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire.

Finally, a much more fragmentary, because of the nature of the evidence, and descriptive account of some other facets of gentry life-style is given. These include funeral and household expenditure, and sports and pastimes. They help to illuminate the life of the governing class of provincial England and to complement the detail in Chapter 4.

1. EDUCATION

(i) Schools

Appendix 18 lists the schools for which references have been found. The matriculation registers of Cambridge colleges record a number of schools which are not contained in the published lists; but the Appendix is probably not comprehensive. Only members of gentry families which entered Cambridge have been traced in the Venns' matriculation registers, and an exhaustive survey of these may reveal more references. However, by 1670 there were at least one hundred schools in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. Less than a fifth of these had pre-Reformation origins, and the evidence indicates a marked increase in the number of schools after 1600.⁽¹⁾

Mrs. Spufford has suggested that there is a correlation between social structure and educational institutions in Cambridge^{shire}. Rising prosperity, especially among yeomen, and demographic growth resulted in increased demand for education.⁽²⁾

The distribution of Bedfordshire schools, shown on Map 20, demonstrates a fairly even spread throughout the county, but there was a particularly heavy concentration in the richer eastern and southern parts, and a correspondingly lighter incidence in the central and north west regions, which were the poorest areas of Bedfordshire.

In Northamptonshire, Map 21 shows that there were thirty seven schools in the richer eastern division, compared to only twenty seven in the poorer western division. There were very few in the forest regions of the county; but in regional terms, the correlation between wealth and educational facilities is not exact. The north western and northern hundreds of Fawsley, Guilsborough, Rothwell, and Corby, which constituted the poorest and most upland part of the county, contained twenty four of the sixty four schools, and clearly had an especially heavy concentration of educational facilities. The very prosperous Nene Valley and south-western parts of the county were not particularly well endowed with schools. Indeed, the western division, which was by far the poorer of the two divisions in the early sixteenth century, contained more of the schools which were founded before the Reformation.⁽³⁾

1. See Appendix 18, where sources are listed. Venn, J., (ed)., Alumni Cantabrigienses, pt. i, 4 vols., was a coeditorship venture of father and son.
2. Spufford, M., Contrasting Communities, pp. 171-213.
3. See Maps 20 and 21. Chapter 2 discusses the relative wealth of the various regions of the two counties. See Map 3 for the forest areas, and Map B for the hundreds of Northamptonshire.

So, although there is some general correlation, at a regional level in Northamptonshire, the relationship between wealth and incidence of schools is not clear, and the only definite assertion that can be made is that there was a dramatic expansion in the number of schools, especially after 1600.

It was suggested in the studies of the economy and the gentry that a regional unity developed between these two counties and their neighbours, through cooperation in fen drainage; through agricultural links; and through the landholdings and marriage patterns of the gentry. This is also apparent in the educational sphere. Nearly one quarter of the gentlemen of these two counties, who have been discovered in the Venns' Cambridge registers, went to school in a neighbouring county. Hertfordshire appears to have been very popular, and the schools at Bishop's Stortford, Hitchin and Hertford took three each. Two are known to have attended schools at Uppingham in Rutland, Huntingdon, Thame in Oxfordshire, and the Perse School, Cambridge.⁽⁴⁾

Another nine went to Eton, five to Westminster, and one each to Rugby, Winchester, and Merchant Taylor's School, London.

A study of the Eton College register shows that admission to this prestigious school was not the exclusive prerogative of the nobility and greater gentry of these two counties, between 1540 and 1660. Fifty nine Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire boys are known to have registered, and twelve were from noble families; twenty eight were from the gentry of county status; but nineteen were from the lesser gentry. Edward Francklin of Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, was at Eton between 1560 and 1566, and his family had only recently risen from the yeomanry. John Guy of Isham, Northamptonshire, registered in the early 1660's, and his family had acquired gentle status merely ten years before. Equally, many local aristocrats shunned Eton. Only the Fanes, Earls of Westmorland, Comptons, Earls of Northampton; Mordaunts, Earls of Peterborough; and St. Johns, Earls of Bolingbroke, were represented. The Montagus, Lords Montagu, were content with regular attendance at Oundle, and Thomas, first Lord Brudenell, was educated at Huntingdon.⁽⁵⁾

Lists of alumni of local schools are scarce, but Mr. Walker's study of the early seventeenth century Oundle register may indicate the admission trends of the area. In 1626, at least half of the sixty eight boys came

4. From Venn, J., op.cit. 126 local gentlemen have been discovered. 13 went to school in Hertfordshire; 3 in Cambridgeshire, Buckinghamshire and Rutland; and 2 each in Huntingdonshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, and Oxfordshire.

5. Sterry, Sir W., The Eton College Register, 1441-1698.

from Oundle and the immediate neighbourhood, but during the next ten years Oundle boys were outnumbered by three to one, and more and more admissions were from the rest of the county or even further afield. Of two hundred and fifteen matriculations between 1626 and 1636, the outsiders included three sons of noblemen; twelve sons of baronets and knights; four of esquires; thirty two of gentlemen; sixteen of clergy; ten of London merchants; twenty of urban freemen; nine of farmers; and five of tradesmen. From Oundle, itself, came the sons of the Vicar; the schoolmaster; the two lawyers; the veterinary surgeon; three gentlemen; eight tradesmen; and a long list of freemen.⁽⁶⁾

Twenty one out of fifty seven known scholars at Peterborough School have been identified. They included Nicholas Howland, in 1597, probably a son of the Bishop; two members of the Forrest family, prominent officials of the Dean and Chapter, in 1570; a relative of the schoolmaster, Francis Standish, in 1647, and a member of the Catesby family, who were constables of Nassaburgh hundred in the 1630's. The other sixteen were from official families of the borough, who were usually prominent tradesmen. Those who are unidentifiable may have been outsiders.⁽⁷⁾

The majority of schools for which an approximate total of pupils survives appear to have contained between twenty and thirty. Brigstock in Northamptonshire had thirty; Houghton Regis and Dunstable, Bedfordshire, and Peterborough contained twenty. But Lidlington in Bedfordshire had only six at its foundation; Blisworth contained twelve pupils in 1594; and Oundle had sixty eight in 1636.⁽⁸⁾

Mr. St. John Cooper, an eighteenth century historian of Bedfordshire, said that Woburn School contained fifteen girls and thirty boys at its foundation. If this is true, it is the only school where evidence indicates a female presence; but he gave no reference for his source and no document at Bedfordshire County Record Office mentions the girls.⁽⁹⁾

An inventory of Thomas Hinchard, schoolmaster of Fotheringhay, in 1589, gives an idea of the size of a rural school. The school house contained a hall, kitchen, two parlours, three butteries, and nine other chambers as well as the school room. It was clearly a boarding school, and there were extensive farm buildings; one hundred and sixty sheep, fifteen pigs, thirty

6. Walker, W., History of Oundle Schools, pp. 135-140.

7. N.R.O., Diocesan Records, Episcopal Visitation Book 2 (1570), p. 20; Book 5, (1597); fo.3; X.959 (Copy of a 1647 Survey of Peterborough), fo.38. These give lists of pupils.

8. B.R.O., C.R.T.130/Lidlington 1; C.R.T.130/Dunstable 1; Facsimile 18/5; N.R.O., R.O.P. 1,101; Larrett, W., History of the King's School Peterborough, p. 12.

9. B.M., Addit. MSS., 34,369, fo.47v-48; B.R.O., C.R.T.130/Woburn 12.

six oxen and cattle; and ten horses. The household goods were dominated by one hundred and sixty nine pewter vessels.⁽¹⁰⁾

Education does not appear to have been a very expensive undertaking. The largest annual expenditure upon it recorded in Fitzwilliam accounts was fifty nine pounds nine shillings and ten pence between 1594 and 1595, and it was even less for the Ishams of Lamport. The figure represented less than one sixteenth of total Fitzwilliam expenditure for the year. Richard Taylor of Clapham, Bedfordshire, allocated fifty pounds a year to his son, during his attendance at university and Inn of Court, in his will of 1667; and George Lee, son of a former London merchant who had settled in Northamptonshire, was given the same amount in the early seventeenth century. Lee's expenses for nine years schooling before higher education were only two hundred and fifteen pounds, including food and clothes, and although his university books cost thirty pounds, and his chamber eighty pounds, the total costs of education were very small compared to the income of prominent gentlemen and merchants like these.⁽¹¹⁾

Education was a pawn in the power struggle within Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, between the Charnock family, Catholic bailiffs of the crown manor, and a rebellious puritan group. Religious antipathy had developed into a wholesale attack upon the Charnocks as corrupt officials. Ralph Smith, one of the leaders of the puritan group, established an unlicensed rival school to the Grammar School, of which a William Charnock was master, in the 1570's. By 1575, the rival institution had at least forty pupils, and an affray resulted when Roger Charnock, the bailiff, tried to close the new school, which was sited in the church. Smith had been the leader of those who opposed the jurisdiction of the Crown in the regulation of the market, and the affair was part of the general political and religious conflict in the town.⁽¹²⁾

(ii) Higher Education

Table XLIII. Admissions of young men from gentry families to Oxford and Cambridge Colleges, 1540-1660. ⁽¹³⁾

	BEDFORDSHIRE		NORTHAMPTONSHIRE	
	1541-1600	1601-60	1541-1600	1601-60
Oxford	10	25	101	85
Cambridge	58	125	157	152
TOTAL	68	150	258	237

10. N.R.O., Fitzwilliam MSS, F(M)351.
11. Finch, M., The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families, 1540-1640, N.R.S., xix, pp. 124-5; B.R.O., Ashburnham MSS., S/AM 75; N.R.O., Thornton MSS., Th. 1,832.
12. P.R.O., STAC.5/S.3/30. See Chapter 8 for more detail about Wellingborough.
13. This is compiled from Venn, J., Alumni Cantabrigienses, pt. i, 4 vols.; Clark, A., (ed), Register of the University of Oxford, 1571-1622, 3 vols.,

The expansion of higher education in Elizabethan and early Stuart England has led Professor Stone to use the term 'Educational Revolution'. His figures for decennial average of admissions to Oxford colleges show a dramatic increase between 1560 and 1640, and the number of undergraduates at Cambridge is said to have doubled between 1574 and 1622.⁽¹⁴⁾ In the early sixteenth century very few gentlemen attended the universities, and even the briefest survey of matriculation registers confirms that this was true of the gentry of these two counties.⁽¹⁵⁾

The table illustrates this expansion after 1540, but it suggests a qualitative distinction between Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. The number of gentlemen attending Oxford and Cambridge from Bedfordshire increased much more dramatically between 1601 and 1660, than between 1541 and 1600, but, even allowing for possible underestimation, it did not increase after 1600. The 'Educational Revolution' seems to have affected Bedfordshire considerably later than it affected Northamptonshire. The reasons for this distinction are difficult to ascertain. Bedfordshire was richer than its neighbour on a wealth per acre basis, it was more heavily populated, and it underwent a similar expansion of the yeomanry and gentry. Perhaps the existence of only four pre-Reformation schools in Bedfordshire, compared to thirteen in Northamptonshire, was a contributory element; and Northamptonshire certainly possessed a larger proportion of greater gentry than Bedfordshire. Also, the relationship between the price of wool and the price of arable produce favoured the sheep farmer in the first half of the sixteenth century, and since sheep farming was much more important in Northamptonshire, there may have been a wider group of prosperous farmers to take advantage of educational facilities in this county, in the second

13. Oxford Historical Society, which is more reliable than Foster, J., Alumni Oxonienses, 1500-1714, 4 vols. However, Foster has been used for the periods 1541-71, and 1623-60. Only the 335 Northamptonshire and 170 Bedfordshire gentry families of 1642 have been checked, and because Foster, and to a lesser extent, Venn, are undoubtedly incomplete, this table is not an exhaustive list. Equally, some names may have been confused with those of outside families. However, I think the results are large enough to justify examination, but complete accuracy is impossible.
14. Stone, L., 'The Educational Revolution in England', 1540-1640', Past and Present, xxviii; for admissions, see Stone, L., 'The Size and Composition of the Oxford Student Body, 1580-1910, in The University in Society, vol. i, pp. 91-2; and Curtis, M., Oxford and Cambridge in Transition, 1558-1642. Also, Cresey, D., 'Social Composition of Caius College, Cambridge, 1580-1640', Past and Present, xlvii; Curtis, M., 'The Alienated Intellectuals of Early Stuart England', Past and Present, xxiii; Simon, J., 'The Social Origins of Cambridge Students, 1603-40', Past and Present, xxvi; and Education and Society in Tudor England.
15. This point is made by Stone, L., The Crisis of The Aristocracy, 1558-1641, p. 687.

half of the sixteenth century. The heavy concentration of schools in the pastoral upland or north Northamptonshire has been mentioned. Similarly, the expansion of Bedfordshire arable farming, after about 1580, may have contributed to the increase in the number of local gentry who attended university, after 1600. By then, the prices relationship favoured the arable farmer, and enabled his prosperity to increase. However, these are only possibilities, and the distinction is difficult to explain. ⁽¹⁶⁾

Very few Bedfordshire gentlemen went to Oxford. Cambridge was the nearer institution and accounted for the overwhelming majority of Bedfordshire undergraduates. Only the Tyringhams of Farndish; the Potts' of Chalgrave; the Fowlers of Tilsworth; the Rotherhams of Luton; and the Wingates of Harlington; favoured Oxford rather than Cambridge.

Among the Northamptonshire gentry, there was a more even distribution between the two universities, but Cambridge accounted for over sixty percent of the undergraduates between 1541 and 1660. There appears to have been a broad geographical pattern to the attendance at the two institutions. Most of the gentry in the eastern half of the county, like the Fans of Apethorpe, the Cecils of Burghley; the Claypoles of Northborough; the Dudleys of Clapton; the Fitzwilliams of Milton; the Fleetwoods of Aldwinkle, the Heaths of Collyweston; the Ishams of Lamport; the Kirkhams of Fineshade; the Montagus of Boughton; the Pickerings of Tichmarsh; the Quarles' of Ufford; and the Sawyers of Kettering, favoured Cambridge. But many of the families in the west of the county, like the Andrewes' of Harlestone; the Cages of Stanford; the Chaunceys of Edgcote; the Clerkes of Watford; the Danvers' of Culworth; the Drydens of Canons Ashby; the Fermors of Easton Neston; the Knightleys of Fawsley; the Pargiters of Gretworth; and the Samwells of Upton, sent most of their sons to Oxford.

There were some exceptions to this pattern. The Staffords of Blatherwick, in the east, favoured Oxford, while the Comptons of Castle Ashby, in the west, favoured Cambridge. Other families like the Copes of Canons Ashby; the Griffins of Dingley; and the Spencers of Althorp, divided their education between the two universities. However, this broad geographical distinction is clear from the study of the registers, and it is to be expected. Oxford is less than twenty miles from the south western boundary of the county, and Cambridge is some thirty to forty miles from the eastern and south eastern boundaries.

16. See Chapter 2 for relative wealth of the two counties, and for population growth and density. Chapter 1 discusses the agriculture, and Chapter 4, the gentry, of the two counties.

Table XLIV: Admissions of gentlemen to the Inns of Court⁽¹⁷⁾

	BEDFORDSHIRE		NORTHAMPTONSHIRE	
	1559-1600	1601-42	1559-1600	1601-42
Middle Temple	6	12	65	99
Gray's Inn	24	61	56	73
Inner Temple	21	48	51	72
	1563-1602	1603-42	1563-1602	1603-42
Lincoln's Inn	5	43	34	29
TOTAL	56	164	206	273

Admissions to the Inns of Court parallel, almost exactly, the pattern of university entrance. There was expansion in the period between 1559 and 1642 because the number of admissions of local gentry before 1559 was very small, but the greatest expansion in Bedfordshire occurred after 1600. The number of Bedfordshire gentry admitted after 1600 was nearly treble the admissions between 1559 and 1600. However, expansion was much less in Northamptonshire, where the number of entrants after 1600 was only just over thirty percent higher than total admissions between 1559 and 1600. The spread of common law education among the Northamptonshire gentry had been most marked in the second half of the sixteenth century.

So, in terms of admissions to Inns of Court, as well as in terms of university entrance, the 'Educational Revolution' within the gentry affected Bedfordshire later than it affected Northamptonshire. Only the tentative, possible reasons for this distinction, which were posed earlier, can be applied again. But it is clear that a greater proportion of the Northamptonshire gentry had a higher education at a much earlier date than their Bedfordshire counterparts.

Very few Bedfordshire gentlemen attended Middle Temple between 1559 and 1642, and throughout this period Gray's Inn and Inner Temple were the most popular. But there was a dramatic increase in the admissions of Bedfordshire gentlemen to Lincoln's Inn, after 1603, and it almost achieved the same popularity as Inner Temple.

17. This is compiled from Sturgess, H.A., (ed.), Register of Admissions to the Middle Temple, i, fifteenth century to 1781; Baildon, W., (ed.), Records of Lincolns Inn, i, Admissions, 1420-1799; Foster, J., (ed.), Register of Admissions to Gray's Inn, 1521-1889; Typescript copy of admissions in the Inner Temple Library, for which I am grateful to the Librarian for the availability of this typescript. Aylmer, G., The State's Servants, pp. 187-8, discusses the accuracy of these registers. Clearly, they vary in accuracy and my lists may not be complete, but I think the figures are large enough to justify analysis. The opening date for the study of Lincoln's Inn is 1563, rather than 1559, because no place of origin is given before this date and identification is difficult. Although the Gray's Inn register gives few places of origin before 1581, enough local people can be identified to justify commencement at 1559.

Middle Temple was the most popular Inn of Court for Northamptonshire gentry between 1559 and 1642, and Lincoln's Inn was the least popular. Gray's Inn and Inner Temple admitted roughly the same number from this county. (18)

18. See Prest, W., 'Legal Education of The Gentry at the Inns of Court, 1560-1640', Past and Present, xxxviii, for a survey of this form of higher education.

2. HOUSING

Professor Hoskins has referred to the period between 1570 and 1640 as 'The Rebuilding of Rural England', and Dr. Barley used the term 'Housing Revolution'.⁽¹⁹⁾ Rising population was undoubtedly related to the rebuilding, and the rising prices of agricultural produce, in the second half of the sixteenth century, enabled prosperous freeholders and gentry to rebuild their homes and improve their interior comforts. Professor Hoskins believes that most of the reconstruction was undertaken by freeholders.⁽²⁰⁾

The surviving mansions of the Northamptonshire nobility and greater gentry were listed in Chapter 4.⁽²¹⁾ The county possesses one of the finest series of stately homes in England, and Dr. Pevsner has pointed out that the history of domestic architecture in England, between 1566 and 1700, could be illustrated with examples from Northamptonshire, alone.⁽²²⁾ It is a classic example of the building of the greater^{gentry} of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Sir Thomas Tresham of Rushton was probably the most prolific of all, and his work combined religious zeal with the customs of the age. In addition to the magnificent hall at Rushton, he commissioned the Triangular Lodge, in the grounds, which symbolised the Trinity. This amazing building, which was more than just a folly since the gamekeeper is thought to have lived there, is an equilateral triangle, in plan, with three storeys, with three windows on each side on each floor. Each side has three gables, rising to three tapering pinnacles, and at the intersection of the roof is a three-sided chimney stack. In addition, his Lyveden New Building was constructed in the shape of a cross, to symbolise the passion of Christ.⁽²³⁾ The catholic inscriptions and formulae, which are visible everywhere, followed the precedent of Sir Edward Griffin, who had rebuilt Dingley in the 1550's.

The interest which seventeenth century gentlemen possessed in heraldry and genealogy is reflected in their building. Sir Christopher Hatton is said to have painted the arms of all the Northamptonshire gentry on the walls of one of his rooms at Holdenby House, and the Earl of Bedford constructed a

19. Hoskins, W., 'The Rebuilding of Rural England, 1570-1640', in Provincial England, pp. 131-48; Barley, M., The English Farmhouse and Cottage.
20. Hoskins, op.cit., p. 139.
21. See Chapter 4, Section 2, and note 38.
22. Pevsner, N., The Buildings of Northamptonshire, pp. 48-9. For example, Burghley (1560's), Kirby (1570's); Rushton (1590's); Castle Ashby (1600-35); Stoke Bruerne (1629-35); Lamport and Thorpe (1650's); Boughton (1680's); Easton Neston (Hawksmoor, finished in 1702).
23. See Isham, Sir G., Rushton Triangular Lodge, Dept. of Environment Guidebook, (London, 1970), pp. 6-9. Its design was copied from Longford Castle, Wiltshire. See D.N.B. for Tresham.

grotto of shells and stalagmite forms with coats of arms, at Woburn. The Earl of Westmorland's second house, at Badsell, Kent, contained a "closet where evidences are kept", and he was probably only one of many to possess a muniment room.⁽²⁴⁾

The dining room as a separate eating chamber seems to have begun to appear in the 1630's. The 1639 inventory of Robert Tanfield of Loddington, and the 1650 inventory of Richard Knightley of Fawsley, mention this room.⁽²⁵⁾

It has already been pointed out that country houses are much less evident in Bedfordshire.⁽²⁶⁾ The Russells', Earls of Bedford, mansion at Woburn is the notable exception, and Melchbourne, the home of the St. John family, and the ruined Houghton House, in Ampthill, were built in the early seventeenth century. Toddington was pulled down in 1745, having been constructed in the 1570's, but the Greys, Earls of Kent, house at Silsoe, owed most of its grandeur to post-1650 building, and it, too, no longer survives. In fact, it is not just lack of surviving examples that accounts for this difference between Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. There was much less building work, on a large scale, undertaken by the Bedfordshire gentry, with the exception of the few mentioned examples. This is probably because there were fewer magnates and greater gentry in Bedfordshire.

But it was not merely the greater gentry who were improving their living quarters. Although most of the modern surveys of architecture are concerned with those buildings which survive, and the evidence of a lot of construction work has been lost through fire, modernisation, or demolition, a study of Dr. Pevsner's books reveals widespread activity among the lesser gentry and yeomanry. Nine surviving Bedfordshire manor houses were built in the late sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries, compared to twenty three recorded in Northamptonshire.⁽²⁷⁾ This disparity is further evidence to suggest that either survival has been much less pronounced in Bedfordshire, or that the building process was much less widespread among the Bedfordshire gentry.

Lower down the social scale, similar improvement in housing seems to have taken place. The only series of Northamptonshire inventories which

24. Thomson, G.S., Life in a Noble Household, 1641-1701, pp.22-3, N.R.O., Westmorland MSS, Box 6, Parcel 5 No. 1-2.
25. N.R.O., Young MSS., Y0.668; Knightley MSS., K CXXV, Misc. 1,142.
26. See Chapter 4, Section 2.
27. Pevsner, N., The Buildings of Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire, and the Soke of Peterborough, (1968 edition), and The Buildings of Northamptonshire, (1961 edition). The manor houses of Barnwell (built by the Montagus); Canons Ashby (Drydens); and Passenham (Bannisters), have been excluded from the Northamptonshire figure because they were built by greater gentry. The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments has yet to survey these two counties, with the exception of Peterborough New Town, H.M.S.O., 1969.

survive for the second half of the sixteenth century are in a volume of wills proved in the Consistory Court of Peterborough between 1570 and 1575. Detail exists about thirteen houses and none possessed two storeys.⁽²⁸⁾ But of ninety five inventories of 1630's, which give a breakdown of rooms, and which are from a random selection of inventories in the Wills of the Archdeaconry of Northampton, seventy four mention upper rooms.⁽²⁹⁾

Only one out of fifteen inventories for Elizabethan Bedfordshire definitely portrays a house with an upper storey, and this was the residence of a branch of the greater gentry Gostwicks of Willington. In contrast, thirty two out of one hundred and sixty six houses in a series of Jacobean inventories had upper chambers, and another twenty six had lofts over the lower rooms. The Parliamentary Surveys of 1649-52 show that many houses had two storeys.⁽³⁰⁾

So, in both counties, the early seventeenth century saw the development of the two storey house as the home of the yeomen and husbandmen.

However, wills and inventories were rarely made by the lowest sections of society, the cottagers and labourers; and manorial surveys do not analyse the size of the rural cottage. But the growth in population; the 1589 Act to control the erection of cottages; and the example of prosecutions for building on waste or common land, suggest that an increase in numbers of cottages did take place. Dr. Barley says that one-roomed cottages, though still common, were beginning to give way to two rooms.⁽³¹⁾

28. N.R.O., Peterborough Wills, Book 4, 1570-5.

29. N.R.O., Northampton Wills, 2nd series, Books A-E, 1630's. In fact, books A-M contain original inventories for the early seventeenth century, but I have taken books A-E (217 in total) as a selection.

30. Freeman, C., (ed.), Elizabethan Inventories, B.H.R.S., xxxii; Emmison, F., Jacobean Household Inventories, 1617-19, B.H.R.S., xx. As far as I know, these are the only surviving Bedfordshire inventories between 1560 and 1640.

Parliamentary Surveys are P.R.O., E. 317. Virtually all those for Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire have been examined.

31. See Chapter 2 for growth in population; Statutes of The Realm, iv, pt.ii, pp. 804-5, for 1589 Act; and P.R.O., SP.14/97/110, for an example of converting houses into tenements. Barley, M., op.cit., p. 123.

Hoskins, W., op.cit., p. 138, notes that 40 houses were built in Brigstock, Northamptonshire, a forest parish, between 1600 and 1637.

Steane, J.M., 'The Development of Tudor and Stuart Garden Design in Northamptonshire', Northants Past and Present, v, (1977), pp.383-407, is a very recent article which describes another aspect of gentry building and life-style. Sir Thomas Tresham, who was mentioned earlier, figures prominently, and between 1684 and 1707, the Montagus of Boughton designed what was probably the finest formal garden layout in England.

3. CONCLUSIONS ABOUT EDUCATION AND HOUSING

Since the sections about education and housing are the most important analytical parts of this chapter, it seems relevant to pause and summarize their findings before considering the more fragmentary evidence and more descriptive account of some other aspects of gentry life-style.

In both counties, the 'Educational' and 'Building' Revolutions were very important. There was a dramatic expansion in the number of gentlemen attending university and Inn of Court after 1550; there was a marked growth in the number of Schools after 1536; and the greater gentry were rebuilding their country houses, many lesser gentry were extending their manor houses, and the homes of yeomen and husbandmen were gradually changing from one storey to two storeys. Developments in education and housing can be linked with the changes in communications, agriculture; industry; population; structure of landownership; and in the composition of the gentry, which have been examined earlier. Yet another facet of these two counties was in a state of transformation between 1550 and 1660.

However, there are several important distinctions between the two counties. The spread of higher education among the Bedfordshire gentry took place considerably later than in Northamptonshire. Also, the extent of housing reconstruction, both at palatial level and at manor house level, appears to have been much less pronounced. Northamptonshire was a county of magnates, and this is reflected in its buildings.

4. SOME OTHER ASPECTS OF GENTRY LIFE-STYLE

This section is much more fragmentary, because of the nature of the source material. Its aim is more descriptive than analytical.

(i) Funeral Expenditure

Parish churches are littered with the symbols of the importance that sixteenth and seventeenth century gentlemen attached to their exit from the temporal world. The Grey mausoleum at Flitton, and the Spencer Chapel at Great Brington are probably the finest examples of this practice in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, whereas the tomb of Sir Anthony Mildmay, at Apethorpe, Northamptonshire is arguably the best individual example.

The funeral ceremony was a great occasion. Francis, Second Earl of Bedford's funeral cost approximately one thousand seven hundred pounds, with the mourning accounting for five hundred pounds.⁽³²⁾ The burial of Henry, Earl of Kent, in 1614, was even more grandiose. The mourning alone cost seven hundred and fifty seven pounds, and it affords a classic example of the structure of a nobleman's funeral. His heir was chief mourner, followed by four other peers; the local squirearchy; his household officials; the Heralds; fifteen gentlemen; eighty seven yeomen; and at least fifty six representatives from parishes in which he had possessed land. In all, there were nearly three hundred people in the procession.⁽³³⁾

There was obviously a dinner after the burial. Sir William Fitzwilliam's funeral included a dinner worth £40/9/10. But for the smaller gentry the expense was much less. William Ellesborough of Brixworth's funeral cost £21/5/0, and in 1605, Robert Hartston was buried at a total expense of £1/8/6. No status is recorded, but he was not an armigerous gentleman. His coffin cost only eight pence, and the largest cost was fourteen shillings and eight pence for the dinner, and ten shillings for the choir.⁽³⁴⁾

Weddings were equally well celebrated. In 1581, the nuptial breakfast for a son of Lord Wentworth, and Lord Burghley's daughter, cost six hundred and thirty pounds.⁽³⁵⁾

32. Thomson, G.S., Life in a Noble Household, 1641-1701, p. 42; L., Crisis of The Aristocracy, 1558-1641, p. 784. Stone, op.cit., p. 785, notes that the first Lord Burghley's funeral cost about £1,000 in 1598, and that of Elizabeth, Countess of Kent, in 1651, cost £1,592.

33. B.R.O., Lucas MSS., L.28/48; Stone, L., op.cit., p. 785.

34. N.R.O., Fitzwilliam MSS, F(M)M.850, (1576 or 1599); N.R.O., Isham MSS., I.L.192, (n.d.) N.R.O., Diocesan Records, Misc. Box X.950, 21(f).

35. B.M., Lansdowne MSS., 33, No. 71.

(ii) The Continental Tour

The small number of gentlemen travellers abroad, which have been found, suggest that the continental tour was not the exclusive preserve of the nobility. Eight of the sixteen were from aristocratic families, but another six, including Arthur Throckmorton of Paulerspury; Richard Knightley of Fawsley; Lawrence Bannister of Passenham, Northamptonshire; and Nicholas Luke of Cople, Bedfordshire were from the greater gentry. The other two, Edward Harby (1624-6) of Adstone, and Francis Bannister of Bedford (1618-20), were from lesser gentry families. (36)

In 1561, the puritan Lord Burghley told his son Thomas to recite the Lord's Prayer before going out every morning and to remember that before God he was "a piece of flesh y^t shall be carrion". Sir Francis Fane was told to turn to the Bible if ever in doubt, and to read the history of times most like his own rather than of the ancient era. (37)

(iii) Books

A library became an increasingly important part of a gentleman's house in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Theology was the predominant interest. Most of Sir Thomas Brooke's early eighteenth century collection of about one hundred and forty were religious, together with the majority of the second Earl of Bedford's library of one hundred and sixty two, and those of the Hatton family at Kirby. However, the Fitzwilliams of Milton seem to have had a penchant for classics and history, which dominated their library of nearly seven hundred books, in 1655. The Earl of Westmorland had more than two hundred and ten volumes at Apethorpe, in 1629. The sixteenth century collection of Sir Thomas Tresham of Rushton indicates the interests of the greater gentry of the period. (38)

(iv) Instructions to Sons and Courtship

The example of the first Lord Montagu and the first Lord Burghley's instructions to their sons provide an insight into the code of behaviour expected by two puritan noblemen.

Religious principle was the guiding influence in Montagu's life, and his directives are a mass of biblical quotations. He told his son not to

36. Most of these 16 have been obtained from the examples of licences to travel abroad in A.P.C., various volumes.
37. B.M., Harleian MSS, 3,638, fo. 106; Cal. S.P.D., 1631-3, p. 405, (Letter of Sir Thomas Roe).
38. N.R.O., Brooke MSS., B.4, fo. 2-16; Finch-Hatton MSS., F.H. 642, 2,444, 2,652; Fitzwilliam MSS., F(M)Misc. Vol. 418; Westmorland MSS., Box 6, Parcel 5, No's. 1-2. Notes and Queries, clxi, p. 289; Tresham's library contained 256 theology books; 124 history; 61 philosophy; 56 rhetoric; 52 constitutional; 51 dictionaries; 43 tracts; 43 architecture; 32 poetry; 31 Maps; 17 War. (B.M., Addit. MSS., 39,830, fo. 155 and 167; analysis done by Dore, J., notes in a suitcase in N.R.O.).

try too hard to be rich; not to borrow money; nor to raise fines or rents too steeply. He said that to be a rentier was better than being master of ten thousand sheep. These values were against the mainstream of seventeenth century economic practice, and he had been a fierce encloser in the early years of the century. It may be that his advanced age created nostalgia for a previous age.⁽³⁹⁾

Burghley told his son not to spend above three quarters of his income, nor to lay out more than a third of that upon household expenditure. His grandchildren were not to pass the Alps, beyond which there is nothing but pride, blasphemy and atheism. In contrast to Montagu, he emphasised the importance of direct farming as a means to raise cash, rather than having to use capital.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Even the courtship of some gentlemen seems to have been conducted on religious lines. The love letters of John Maunsell of Thorpe Malsor, Northamptonshire, to his future wife, between 1599 and 1602, are composed of verses built around the letters of her name, and they are completely biblical and spiritual in content.⁽⁴¹⁾

(v) Household Expenditure

The number of surviving account books are too few to allow a comprehensive survey of the standard of living of the gentry, but a few insights can be obtained.

Among the nobility, conspicuous consumption was an accepted social responsibility. The Earl of Bedford's household costs, in 1641, were £4,400, and this was a year of mourning for the death of the fourth Earl. His income was over seven thousand pounds, but annuities and dowry payments forced his expenditure up dangerously close to his revenue.⁽⁴²⁾

The joint cost of maintaining Theobalds, in Hertfordshire, and a London residence, was £2,704 a year for Lord Burghley in the 1580's, and this was when he was at court. The cost was considerably higher when he was in residence, and this excludes his palatial mansion at Burghley. His income was probably around six thousand pounds at this time.⁽⁴³⁾

39. Stone, L., 'Lord Montagu's Directions to his son', Northants Past and Present, ii, pp. 222-3. He was over 80 in 1644.

40. Peck, F., Desiderata Curiosa or a collection of divers, scarce, and curious pieces relating chiefly to matters of English History, (1779), i, pp. 64-6.

41. N.R.O., Maunsell MSS., M(TM)636.

42. See Stone, L., Crisis of The Aristocracy, 1558-1641, Chapter X, and Appendices XXIII-XXIV; Thomson, G., Life in a Noble Household, 1641-1701, p.65; Stone, L., op.cit., pp. 760-1.

43. Read, C., 'Lord Burghley's Household Accounts', Ec.H.R., 2nd s., ix; Peck, F., op.cit., p. 30, Stone, L., op.cit., p. 760.

The second Earl of Westmorland's expenditure between October 1649 and October 1650 was £2,468/14/1, which was less than half of his estimated income of between £4,400 ~~and~~ £6,599; and the first Lord Spencer's expenses were between £1,100 and £1,800 in the early seventeenth century, which probably represents an outlay of less than a third of his income. (44)

Gentry account books are even more scarce. However the ruin of the Tresham family was mainly caused by conspicuous consumption. Sir Thomas tried to maintain the old traditions of hospitality, and kept an almost feudal type of household, with lesser gentry like the Vavasor family acting as his officials. In 1605, he possessed fifty two servants, which was more than the Spencer entourage, and his housekeeping and building projects, rather than recusancy, precipitated his economic decline. (45)

The finest and most complete account book that has been discovered is that of George Shirley of Astwell, between 1592 and 1596. Its two hundred and seventeen folios give an excellent breakdown of the budget of a Northamptonshire squire. Between 1592 and 1595, his household expenditure was approximately nine hundred pounds a year, compared to an average income of £1,362/10/8. But by 1596, his income had risen to over two thousand five hundred pounds, because of investment in new property, increased entry fines, and a dramatic rise in his revenue from animal sales. He was clearly moving into a more healthy position, and, no doubt, this helped to finance the construction of a forty room mansion at Astwell in the early seventeenth century. However, the Shirleys appear to have overreached themselves. By 1609, George was in severe debt, and the extensive Derbyshire estates were gradually alienated before the Civil War. (46)

It is unlikely that many gentlemen could truthfully boast the claim of David Papillon of Thorpe Lubbenham, a Huguenot emigre who moved to Northamptonshire in the late 1640's. He said that he and his one servant lived on eight shillings a week. (47) If this is even remotely near the correct figure, it suggests an asceticism completely alien to the customs of the age.

Entertainment of the monarch was a further expense for the nobility and greater gentry. Elizabeth hardly ever visited Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, but James I instituted a regular Royal Progress. (48) James visited

44. N.R.O., Westmorland MSS., Misc. Vol.15, fo.80v; Stone, L., op.cit., p.761. Finch, M., The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families, 1540-1640, Appendix V.

45. Finch, M., op.cit., pp. 80-1. For Tresham buildings see Section 2 of this chapter.

46. Leicestershire Record Office, Ferrers MSS., 2,329(b). His animal sales rose from £144/14/8 in 1595, to £950 in 1596. His rents rose from £635/6/4 in 1595 to £987/11/11 in 1596; fines increased from £122 to £186/11/8. For more information on the family, see D.N.B., Cokayne, G., Complete Baronetage; Complete Peerage (Earldom of Ferrers in the early eighteenth century).

47. N.R.O., Papillon MSS, P(L)5.

48. Nicholls, J., The Progresses and Public Processions of Elizabeth, 3 vols., vol. 4, pt. i; (1788-1821), and The Progresses, Processions and Magnificent Festivities of King James I, his Royal Consort and Family, 4 vols., (1973, New York edition).

the St. Johns of Bletsoe; the Comptons of Castle Ashby; and the Cecils of Burghley seven times each during his reign, and also stayed with Lord Mordaunt at Drayton; Lord Vaux at Harrowden; the Earl of Kent at Wrest; and Lord Spencer at Althorp, once. But the squirearchy were expected to be hospitable. Apethorpe, first the home of the Mildmays and then of the Fanes, Earls of Westmorland, was visited seven times, together with the Hattons of Kirby. The Griffins of Dingley and the Haslerigs of Alderton, Northamptonshire received the King three times and twice, respectively. The Watsons of Rockingham; the Fermors of Easton Neston, in Northamptonshire; and the Rotherhams of Luton; the Conquests of Houghton Conquest; the Newdigates of Hawnes; and the Harveys of Thurleigh, in Bedfordshire, were hosts on one occasion.

A letter to Sir Dudley Carleton epitomises the financial and administrative burden posed by such visits

"The Progress holds on Towards Northamptonshire, as unwelcome to those parts as rain in harvest, so as the great ones begin à remeuer mesnage and to dislodge." (49) (1608)

Lord Spencer had gone to see his daughter in Kent, and others had temporarily left the county. There were still six full-scale Jacobean Progresses to come!

Visiting dignitaries also had to be entertained. In 1620, the Spanish Ambassador toured Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire and was said to have been royally feasted. Lord Burghley spent £362/19/11 on a meal for the French Ambassador, in 1581. (50)

(vi) Sports and Pastimes

Absence of Quarter Sessions records precludes an analysis of the social life of the lower orders comparable to the excellent studies of Essex by Mr. Emmison. Examination of Diocesan Court Books would provide some detail, perhaps, but this is beyond the scope of this thesis. (51)

Among the gentry, field sports were the most popular leisure activity. The Northamptonshire forests had been prime hunting areas since the twelfth century, and in 1632 Northampton horse races were inaugurated annually at Easter. Twenty years earlier, two members of the Throckmorton family of Paulerspury had organised a horse race at Brackley for a stake of twelve

49. The letter was written by Chamberlain on July 8th, and is quoted by Nicholls, J., The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities of King James I, his Royal Consort and Family, ii, p. 200.

50. H.M.C., Thirty Ninth Report, Hodgkin MSS, p. 41; B.M., Lansdowne MSS, 33, No. 70.

51. Emmison, F., Elizabethan Life: Disorder; and Elizabethan Life: Morals and The Church Courts; a more general survey is Brailsford, D., Sport and Society: Elizabeth to Anne.

quarters of oats.⁽⁵²⁾ The Wentworth, Earls of Cleveland, possessed a tennis court, fencing room, and billiard table in 1644, and the Hillersdons of Elstow, Bedfordshire, owned a bowling alley.⁽⁵³⁾

Poaching was endemic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and surviving records indicate that gentry participation was widespread. Sir Thomas Tresham; Sir Edward Griffin; Sir William Lane; Sir Baldwin Wake; Sir Robert Charnock; Anthony Elmes; and Richard Ouseley were among local gentlemen prosecuted for deer stealing.⁽⁵⁴⁾

Rabbit warrens were also vulnerable. William Saunders of East Haddon, a cadet line of a prominent Northamptonshire gentry family, was prosecuted in 1601 for raiding the Long Buckby warren of the Attorney-General; and two Helmdon gentlemen poached rabbits on the Shirley manor at Astwell.⁽⁵⁵⁾

The gentry could hardly complain if their social inferiors emulated their exploits. Sir Thomas Tresham's gang of poachers numbered at least twelve, and gentry and yeomen tended to operate in fairly large bands.

In the main, poaching by the lower orders appears to have been more individual. Although a group of thirty husbandmen and artisans attacked Tresham deer at Lyveden in 1595, this was more likely a side effect of the main aim of destroying enclosures around a park or warren.⁽⁵⁶⁾ Deer stealing was more a perk that often resulted from enclosure riots. But gentlemen tended to gather a group of friends and servants for the specific purpose of poaching.

The situation became so bad that a royal warrant for preservation of the game was issued in 1620, which noted the increased losses of deer. The appointed Overseers were all prominent gentlemen, and they included Sir Francis Fane; Sir Thomas Brudenell; Sir John Wingfield; and William Fitzwilliam.⁽⁵⁷⁾ In view of the widespread poaching activities of the gentry, this seems like an application of the adage of setting a poacher to catch a poacher!

52. V.C.H. Northamptonshire, ii, p. 382; Baker, G., The History and Antiquities of the county of Northampton, i, p. 573; The Royal Buckhounds originated in Northamptonshire.

53. Blundell, J., Inventory of Toddington Manor House, 1644, B.H.R.S., xi, pp. 129-35; B.R.O., Polhill MSS, P.O.1.

54. P.R.O., STAC.5/C2/30; STAC.8/178/14; STAC.8/105/13; STAC.8/225/9; STAC.8/33/2; STAC.8/27/15; B.M., Addit. MSS., 48,057, fb. 24. See Larkin, J., and Hughes, P., (ed.), Stuart Royal Proclamations, i, pp. 609-10, for the arrest of Edward Ekins of Stanwick, Northamptonshire, yeoman, for deer-stealing.

55. P.R.O., STAC.5/A.23/34; STAC.5/S.2/10.

56. P.R.O., STAC.5/T.8/31. For other examples of this side effect of enclosure riots see P.R.O., STAC.5/T.31/12; STAC.5/K8/16.

57. B.M., Addit. MSS., 34,217, fo. 6. Papers of Sir Francis Fane.

CHAPTER 7

THE PATTERN OF DISSENT

This chapter is an attempt to place manifestations of dissent and unrest within the social and economic framework. 'Dissent' and 'unrest' are ambiguous terms which can mean many things to different people at different times. However, the analyses in this chapter fall into three broad categories.

First, religious dissent is considered. For the purpose of comparison, the time-scale has been extended in this section. It begins with a discussion of lollardy; then non-separatist puritanism between 1570 and 1642; Catholicism; Quakerism; and Nonconformity and separatist movements between 1660 and 1676. It is, basically, an examination of those religious movements which opposed the established Church. Finally, the picture at the time of the 1851 Religious Census is looked at, together with a brief consideration of witchcraft. It is not intended to discuss at length the structure, programme, or personnel of these movements, but rather to focus on their geographical distribution in relation to topography and social structure, and in relation to each other.

Second, political dissent is examined. This concentrates on the developing tensions of the first half of the seventeenth century: resistance to arbitrary taxation; forced loans; compulsory knighthood; and extension of forest law. It is heavily biased towards the gentry because of their importance in these pressures. Each county is examined separately, and in conclusion, there is a brief analysis of the town of Northampton, which had a strong radical tradition.

The third section is entitled social and economic unrest and it considers the Peasants' Revolt of 1381; local incidents during the popular revolts of the sixteenth century; enclosure riots; and, particularly, the Midland Revolt of 1607. In this case, chronological treatment has been thought best, as a means of highlighting any continuity.

Some division on these lines is essential because of the sheer weight of material, but there is considerable overlap of these categories. Puritans played a leading part in the political resistance to Charles I, and the political aspirations of the gentry were part of wider social and economic unrest.

Once again, extensive use has been made of maps. Not only are these an aid to the reader, but they help enormously in the formation of a picture of the regional distribution of these features for the benefit of the writer. Maps 22-31 are the most important ones for this chapter; but reference to Maps 1 and 3, which convey the topography of the two counties; and Maps A and B, which plot the location of the various hundreds, will be of great assistance.

The chapter provides another example of the influence of the spread of communications, and the growth of the market town. After 1650, the focus of religious dissent moved from a gentry-led puritanism, to non-conformity in the market towns and rich agriculture of the river valleys, in which urban artisans and prosperous yeomen appear to have been prominent. Presbyterianism was virtually extinct by 1672, among the gentry. Similarly, the political leadership of the puritan gentry of Northamptonshire in the opposition to Charles I ended at Pride's Purge. The recalcitrant west of the county was won to the royalist cause by 1661.

The market town and more populous settlement, where social controls was diluted, were prominent in social and economic unrest by the time of the Midland Revolt of 1607.

The influence of the growth of the urban sector within these two counties is apparent in the pattern of dissent, as it has been evident in the other aspects of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, which have been examined in this thesis.

(i) Lollardy

Bedfordshire Lollardy appears to have been confined to the south of the county, and it was part of the great centre in the mid-Thames valley between Drayton Beauchamp, St. Albans, High Wycombe and Hitchin. Dunstable and Stanbridge, a hamlet of Leighton Buzzard, produced rebels for Oldcastle's 1414 Rebellion, and the Vicar of Pulloxhill was prosecuted for heresy in 1418. The tradition of lollardy survived, or was revived, in Dunstable in the sixteenth century, and Wyclif was cited in a Petition of Bedfordshire freeholders against tithes in 1659.⁽¹⁾

However, lollardy took a much stronger hold in Northamptonshire. Sir Thomas Latimer's manors of Braybrook and Chipping Warden became centres of heresy, together with Northampton and Byfield, a parish near Chipping Warden. Three main areas are revealed. First, Braybrooke in the north of the county, which was the southernmost point of a strong lollard region centring on Kibworth in south Leicestershire; second, Northampton and nearby parishes like Brixworth, Holcot, Harlestone, and Pitsford; and third, the extreme west of the county, at Byfield; Warden; Daventry; Blakesley and Towcester. Lollardy was notably absent from the low-lying east of the county and, as in Bedfordshire, it seems to have been confined to more upland parts of the county.⁽²⁾

Northampton almost outdistanced Leicester as a centre for heresy, and All Saints' Church was the focal point of Lollard demonstrations under the tutelage of Mayor John Fox. Social and economic considerations clearly overlapped, because, at Braybrooke, Robert Hoke was preaching a species of lay communism.⁽³⁾

(ii) Puritanism, c. 1570-1642

(a) Bedfordshire

It was pointed out in Chapter 4 that lack of sources prevents an extensive analysis of Bedfordshire puritanism. The Archdeaconry records

1. Godber, J., History of Bedfordshire, 1066-1888, p. 152; Kightley, C., 'The Early Lollards, 1382-1428', University of York, D.Phil., 1975, Map in the back cover envelope, which forms the basis of this account of the incidence of lollardy. I am grateful to Dr. Kightley for use of his thesis, and for much verbal advice.
- Aston, M., 'Lollardy and the Reformation: Survival or Revival?', History, xlix, discusses this particular debate. B.M., Thomason Tract, 669 f.21 (51); See Chapter 8 for more discussion of Dunstable lollardy. See Map 22 for incidence of lollardy.
2. See Map 23 for incidence of lollardy. MacFarlane, K., Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights, has useful information on Northamptonshire Lollard gentry. See Maps 1 and 3, and Chapter 1, Section 1, for topography.
3. MacFarlane, K., John Wyclif and the Beginnings of English Nonconformity; Kightley, C., op.cit., p. 126.

are fragmentary and very few puritan gentry have been positively identified.⁽⁴⁾
The information that has been gleaned is plotted on Map 22.

The thirteen puritan gentry families were distributed throughout the county, although four of them were in the northern corner, which was no doubt influenced by the presence of the largest Bedfordshire landowners, the puritan St. Johns of Bletsoe. The clergy presented for Nonconformity in 1603 were also scattered throughout the county.⁽⁵⁾

Bedford was clearly at the forefront. It was an important centre of puritan 'Prophecyings' in the 1570's, and in 1578, the incumbents of all three parishes were presented for Nonconformity.⁽⁶⁾

At Cranfield and Studham, it was reported that there were Brownists in 1617, and both were later centres of Quakerism, and Cranfield had a licensed Baptist conventicle in 1672. Northill possessed a pronounced puritan tradition. Its parson was the only one of the eleven presented as nonconformist clergy to be suspended in 1603, the resident puritan squire, the Barnardistons, were prosecuted in 1625 for letting the chancel fall into disrepair; and John Wilmer was the puritan incumbent from 1622 to 1665. In 1672, Baptist, Congregational and Quaker conventicles were licensed at Northill.⁽⁷⁾

A sect called 'The Martynists' were mentioned at Houghton Conquest in 1589, and these were probably either puritan supporters of the Marprelate press or a slang name for Lutherans.⁽⁸⁾

Bedfordshire puritanism was assisted in the 1620's and 1630's by the apparent favour shown to it by the Bishop of Lincoln.⁽⁹⁾ But this description of local puritanism is very fragmentary, and in view of the strength of separatist Nonconformity in Bedfordshire, after 1660, it seems

4. See Chapter 4, Section 7, and Appendix 15.

5. B.H.R.S., xxxiii, p. xlii. The clergy of Hawnes, Northill, Eversholt, Thurleigh, Holwell, Tingrith, Colmworth, Blunham, Bletsoe, Dunstable, Woburn were presented. They are plotted on Map 22.

6. Clark, P., and Slack, P., (ed.), English Towns in Transition, 1500-1700, p. 150; for 'Prophecyings' see Collinson, P., The Elizabethan Puritan Movement; B.R.O., ABC 3.

7. Bessie, J., (ed.), A Collection of The Sufferings of People Called Quakers, i; Turner, G., (ed.), Original Records of Early Nonconformity under Persecution and Indulgence, 3 vols., (for 1672 Conventicles); B.H.R.S., xxxiii, p. xlii.

8. B.R.O., Russell Estate MSS, R.O.5/55A. I am grateful to Dr. M.C. Cross for pointing out the meaning of 'Martynist'. For Marprelate see Pierce, W., An Historical Introduction to the Marprelate Tracts.

9. For this favour, see Cal. S.P.D., 1631-3, pp. 209-10; Cal. S.P.D., 1625-49, Addenda, p. 559.

fair to assume that lack of records hides much more widespread puritanism.

(b) Northamptonshire

There is no such lack of material for Northamptonshire. The excellent series of Diocesan records has inspired several studies of the religion of this county.⁽¹⁰⁾ Dr. Sheils has demonstrated the spread of puritanism from its beginnings in Northampton, in the 1570's, into the west of the county under the patronage of the Knightley family, and later into the east. In another study, he concluded that gentry support was the main reason why puritanism developed in the Diocese of Peterborough, which is the identical conclusion reached by Dr. Kightley in his study of lollardy.⁽¹¹⁾

This spread of puritanism is reflected in the deprivation of clergy, which is plotted on Map 23. Four of the five deprived in 1574, the clergy of Weston Favell, Hardingstone, Great Billing, and Collingtree, were from the Northampton area, but by 1605, five of the eight deprived, the ministers of Byfield, Fawsley, Charwelton, Moreton Pinkney, and Preston Capes, were in the extreme west, two, Weston Favell and Whiston, were near Northampton; and only one, Brigstock, was from the east division. As Dr. Sheils says, puritanism was strongest and more extreme in the west of the county, where it involved a full commitment to political puritanism on the part of a caucus of essentially local gentry. The Marprelate Press was at Fawsley in the 1590's.⁽¹²⁾

Puritanism in the east of the county was more patronised by court gentry like the Mildmays and Montagus, and noblemen like Lord Burghley and Lord Zouche. This tended to moderate it. However, the Hackett conspiracy, led by William Hackett and Giles Wigginton of Oundle, which culminated in Hackett's execution in 1591, was an example of extreme millenarian puritanism that took place in the east of the county. They planned to depose the Queen and destroy episcopacy, and to install the New Jerusalem.

The government regarded the attempted insurrection as a threat to social order as well as a religious movement. Indeed, fear of class conflict seems to have dominated the Solicitor-General's mind at the trial.

10. Notably Sheils, W.J., 'Puritans in Church and Politics in the Diocese of Peterborough, 1570-1610', University of London, Ph.D., 1974. I am indebted to Dr. Sheils for use of his thesis, and for a great deal of advice and many references to documentary material. Mr. M. Jones of New College, Oxford, is working on the Church Courts of this diocese, and he has helped me, particularly with the Compton Census of 1676, which is discussed later.
11. Sheils, W., 'Some Problems of Government in a new Diocese: the Bishop and the Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough, 1560-1630', in O'Day, R., and Heal, F., (ed.), Continuity and Change: Personnel and Administration of the Church of England, 1500-1642, Kightley, C., Thesis, op.cit., abstract.
12. Deprivations are taken from Sheils, W., Thesis, op.cit., pp. 81, 157-9; H.M.C., Salisbury MSS, x, p. 135, possibly indicates a Marprelate pamphlet of 1600 printed at Fawsley.

"no treason was so dangerous to the estate as that proceeding from so base puddelles shadowed with the glosse of a pretended holliness, forasmuche as yf a nobleman rebell, his meaninge ys onelie to usurpe the Crowne, not impayringe the governmente; but ther can be no means to these peasants to accomplishe their purpose, excepte by the absolute extirpation of all government, magistracy, nobility and gentry".⁽¹³⁾

He went on to compare the conspiracy with Cade's revolt in the fifteenth Century and the Anabaptist rising at Munster in the sixteenth century. I think Dr. Sheils has underestimated the importance of this conspiracy, at least in the eyes of the Privy Council. It was more than just a lunatic revolt by a few extremists. The search of Wigginton's chambers revealed one thousand pamphlets ready to be sent to "the brethren in Warwickshire, Northamptonshire, Essex, and Hertfordshire".⁽¹⁴⁾ There is no evidence of its effect in the county at large, but it clearly had the potential to become a comparable movement to the regional revolts of 1549-51, and the Midland Revolt of 1607, especially in view of their attempt to raise London, where poverty and social tensions were most pronounced, on their behalf. In addition, the 1590 harvest of all grains was of dearth quality. However, the 1591 yield was good and perhaps this explains the apparent absence of support for the revolt in the counties.⁽¹⁵⁾

Wigginton had been presented to the living of Sedbergh, Yorkshire, by Sir Walter Mildmay, and in 1597 he requested the patronage of Lord Burghley and referred to Sir Edward Montagu as a "well-willer".⁽¹⁶⁾ But it is unlikely that they continued to support him after this affair, although influential patronage may explain how he escaped execution which was the fate of Hackett.

This conspiracy is a good example of an ostensibly religious movement that possessed social and political undertones, and although it was the most extreme example of puritan eruptions in Northamptonshire, it was an isolated case, and the general impression remains that eastern puritanism was more moderate and less prevalent than that of the west. The absence of noblemen

13. For some detail of the conspiracy, see Sheils, W., Thesis, op.cit., and the trial of Hackett is in H.M.C., Fourth Report, pt. iv, pp. 607-9. This quote is taken from page 609.
14. H.M.C., Fourth Report, pt. iv., p. 608.
15. Harrison, C., 'Grain Price Analysis and Harvest Qualities, 1465-1634', Ag. H.R., xix; He covers all grains, whereas Hoskins, W., 'Harvest Fluctuations and English Economic History, 1480-1619', and '1620-1759', Ag. H.R., xii, covers only wheat. Hackett was tried in July 1591, just as the good harvest of that year was ready for reaping.
16. B.M., Lansdowne MSS., 84, fb. 238.

in the west may have contributed to the fiercer development of puritanism in that region.⁽¹⁷⁾

Although Map 24 reveals that twenty eight out of the fifty seven known puritan gentry families lived in the east division, the strongest concentration was in the rectangle of which the four corners comprised the parishes of Charwelton, Pattishall, Paulerspury, and Edgcote, an area between fifty and sixty square miles in the south west of the county. No less than twenty one of the fifty seven families were within this rectangle, the equivalent of approximately six percent of the county's area. Five of the eight deprivations of 1605 also fell within this rectangle.⁽¹⁸⁾

Map 23 shows that twenty nine of the forty six cases for presentment for not wearing the surplice or not catechising, which have been found, occurred in the west division; and thirteen of these twenty nine were in this small rectangle.⁽¹⁹⁾

The position of the cathedral and Diocesan head quarters at the extreme eastern tip of Northamptonshire undoubtedly helped the growth of puritanism in the west, as Dr. Sheils points out in both his thesis and his published article. It was approximately seventy miles from Peterborough to the south-western corner.

It does seem that puritanism increased in strength in proportion to the gradual ascent from the lower-lying east to the more upland west. Apart from the first Lord Burghley; the Fitzwilliams of Milton; and the Claypoles of Northborough; Nassaburgh hundred was relatively free from puritan influence. The eastern half of the eastern division contained less than twenty percent of the forty six cases of presentment for nonconformity between 1570 and 1630, which are marked on Map 23. No doubt the proximity of Peterborough was a major influence.

However, not all the more upland parts of the county were fiercely puritan. Guilsborough, Newbottle and most of Fawsley hundreds, with the exception of the south of Fawsley, show little evidence of radical beliefs.

Also, there was a tightly knit group of puritan gentry in Rockingham forest, in the east, and the whole congregations of Geddington, a forest village, and Stoke Doyle, in the Nene Valley, are said to have refused to bow at the name of Jesus. In contrast, the Royal forests in the south-west appear to have been less radical.⁽²⁰⁾

17. See Chapter 4, Section 8, note 96. Only one nobleman lived west of Northampton.

18. Puritan gentry are listed in Appendix 15. See Chapter 4, Section 7, for more details. Northamptonshire's area was 1,014.03 square miles (see Appendix 3).

19. These 46 cases are taken from N.R.O., Diocesan Records, 1570-1630's, Visitations and Court Books. I have by no means studied them all, but in so far as I have taken certain years, rather than regions, as a basis for analysis, I think they are representative. Even on this limited data, the preponderance of the west, and particularly this rectangle, is demonstrated.

20. Allen, E., 'The State of The Church in the Diocese of Peterborough,

There appears to be no correlation between puritanism and population density; social structure; or distribution of wealth. Although the west division was less heavily populated than the east, Guilsborough hundred, the least affected by puritanism, was the least densely settled. Although the west division had a higher proportion of wage labourers and poorer cottagers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Northampton, a great puritan centre, had a smaller proportion than the rest of the county. The west division was poorer than the east, on a wealth per acre basis, but Northampton was much richer than both.⁽²¹⁾

The west was the area of most extensive enclosure and sheep farming, and the south west had a particularly heavy concentration of deserted villages, but Nassaburgh hundred, in the extreme east, which was relatively free from puritanism, was also a noted pastoral region, and it possessed the equal highest number of deserted villages of any hundred.⁽²²⁾

There were more schools in the less puritan eastern division than in the west, with a particularly heavy concentration in the centre of the county. The rectangle of greatest puritan strength was well endowed with eight schools, and six more on the surrounds; and the Rockingham forest area contained thirteen schools; but even these regions contained fewer than the less puritan centre of the county.⁽²³⁾ Certainly, there were schools in most of the larger market towns, which became radical centres, but this was a product of size, and does not seem to be directly related to puritanism. In general, geographical distribution of educational facilities cannot be correlated with radical religious beliefs.

The question of social control seems to be the important determinant in the analysis of puritanism. In the large market towns, control was weakened by sheer size, and their function as commercial centres and their position near communications links facilitated the circulation of radical ideas. They were the scene of the most pronounced population growth in Northamptonshire between 1524 and 1670.⁽²⁴⁾ They became the foci of the classis movement, especially Kettering, Daventry and Northampton. Chapter eight outlines the radical tradition of Wellingborough; and Rothwell was a puritan stronghold, where the presence of the home of Sir John Lambe, Laudian Chancellor of the Diocese in the 1630's, increased the tensions.

20. 1601-42', University of Oxford, B. Litt., 1974, p. 135. See Map 3 for extent of forests.

21. See Chapter 2 for detail on population, social structure, and distribution of wealth.

22. See Map 7, and Chapter 1, Section 3, part ii, for discussion of enclosure.

23. See Chapter 6, Section 1, part (i) for discussion of schools. Map 21 plots their distribution, and Appendix 18 lists them.

24. See Chapter 2, Section 1, part i, Table VI, and discussion.

In 1634, seven Rothwell inhabitants were arrested for attending what Lambe called a conventicle, and, seven years later, the town petitioned against the oppressions of the Chancellor. Oundle was the home of the Hackett conspiracy. In 1670, these six towns were among the eight most populous ones in Northamptonshire.⁽²⁵⁾

The puritan complexion of the Northampton corporation encouraged dissent, whereas in contrast, the presence of the diocesan administration in Peterborough restrained puritan development. Rockingham forest was characterised by large parishes where the degree of social control was much less than in the fielden villages. Brigstock, a forest village with no resident lord of the manor, was said to contain a population which was half puritan and half catholic, in 1604.⁽²⁶⁾ Although the fenland parishes were equally large, the proximity of Peterborough prevented puritanism from establishing a firm hold.

In the west of the county, the reverse process is apparent. Here, it was the commitment to religious radicalism of a prominent group of resident gentry that stimulated growth. Their social and political control carried their parishes with them. Nine puritan gentry families, which held knight-hoods or baronetcies in the sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries lived within the rectangle of greatest puritan strength. They were the Andrewes of Charwelton; the Chaunceys of Edgcote; the Copes and Drydens of Canons Ashby; the Danvers' of Culworth; the Knightleys of Fawsley; the Tanfields of Gayton; the Throckmortons of Paulerspury; and the Washingtons of Sulgrave, until they moved to Thrapston in 1620. The Butlers of Preston Capes; the Blencowes of Marston Lawrence; the Elmes of Greens Norton; and the Harbys of Adstone, were other prominent gentry in this region.⁽²⁷⁾

In this respect, the parallels with Lollardy are clear. It, too, flourished in market towns like Northampton, Daventry and Towcester, or under the patronage of gentry like Sir Thomas Latimer. There is evidence to suggest some continuity between Lollardy and puritanism. Northampton and the surrounding area was one of the strongest regions of both types of radicalism within the county, and Byfield, Warden, Towcester, and Blakesley, Lollard centres, lay within the rectangle of strongest puritanism in the west of the county. Mr. Welch has described the Leicestershire and Northamptonshire border region around Market Harborough as one of the most

25. See Appendix 5 for largest towns. For the classis movement, see Collinson, P., The Elizabethan Puritan Movement; for Lambe, see D.N.B. H.M.C., Fourth Report, pp. 30, 33, 38, covers the 1634-41 Rothwell incidents. Pettyt, W., Miscellanea Parliamentaria, (1680), p. 161, catalogues the exactions of Lambe, as Chancellor, and his unpopularity.

26. Sheils, W., Thesis, op.cit., p. 12.

27. Haigh, C., Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire, pp. 313-15, also concluded that social and political control were crucial to the spread of puritanism. His attempt to relate puritanism and catholicism to the social and economic framework partly inspired me to try and do the same.

pronounced areas of sixteenth century nonconformity, and Lollardy was prevalent here, notably at Wigston, in Leicestershire, and Braybrook, in Northamptonshire.⁽²⁸⁾ But the most striking evidence of continuity is the example of All Saints' Church, Northampton. It was the focus of Lollard demonstrations in the town, and it became the 'cathedral' of puritanism in the county. In 1641, an observer stated that between five and six hundred people attended lectures, there every Thursday, and that eight hundred attended one sermon, where they entered within the communion rail, refused to kneel, and received the sacraments sitting down.⁽²⁹⁾

(iii) Catholicism

(a) Bedfordshire

It was suggested in section seven of chapter four that catholicism was much less prevalent among the Bedfordshire gentry than among Northamptonshire gentry. A survey of Exchequer Recusant Rolls shows that this was true for the county as a whole. Although not every recusant is recorded on these rolls, they do indicate geographical distribution and relative strength of catholicism. Only approximately one quarter of the number that appear under Northamptonshire appear under Bedfordshire in the rolls that have been consulted.

Map 25 shows the distribution of catholicism in Bedfordshire and demonstrates that its major strength was in the north, and western part of central Bedfordshire. There was hardly any in the four eastern hundreds.

No correlation can be made with farming regions; population density; social structure; or educational facilities.⁽³¹⁾ But the area of Chiltern downland in the extreme south of the county, which was the highest part of Bedfordshire, appears to have been relatively free from catholicism before 1660, although there were thirty one recusants presented at Eaton Bray, in 1668.

One must again conclude that the influence of the resident gentry is the vital consideration. Roxton, Tempsford, Turvey and Westoning, the strongholds of catholicism between 1590 and 1642, were average sized parishes both in terms of acreage and population, but all possessed resident recusant gentry. These were the Hunts of Roxton; the Colbecks of Tempsford and the non-armigerous Richardsons of Turvey and Taylors of Westoning.⁽³²⁾ In

28. Welch, C., 'Early Nonconformity in Leicestershire', Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society, xxxvii.

29. Cal. S.P.D., 1640-1, p. 351.

30. P.R.O., E.377. I have looked at those for every other year between 40 Elizabeth and 17 Charles I. Also, Calthorp, M., (ed.), Recusant Roll 1, 1592-3, Catholic Record Society, xviii; Bowler, H., (ed.), Recusant Roll 2, 1593-4; Recusant Rolls 3 and 4, 1594-6, Catholic Record Society, lvii, and lxi.

31. See Maps 1, 4, 8, 11, 14, and 21.

32. See Appendix 15 for list of armigerous catholic gentry. Chapter 4, Section 7, part ii, gives more detail. Hilton, J., 'Catholicism in Elizabethan Durham', Recusant History, xiv, p. 6, concluded that it was not so much the extent of recusancy as its hold on the gentry that worried the authorities.

addition, the catholic Mordaunts, Lord Mordaunt, owned a house at Turvey, where they had lived before moving to Northamptonshire. These four parishes consistently contained the largest number of recusants on the rolls which have been consulted. Ampthill was the only market town to retain much loyalty for the old religion, and this was no doubt because of the presence of the recusant Hewett and Watson families.

(b) Northamptonshire

Catholicism maintained a surprising resilience in Northamptonshire. Map 24 shows that the centre of the county, the hundreds of Corby, Huxloe, Rothwell, Orlingbury, Hamfordshoe, and the eastern end of Wymersley hundred, was the stronghold. Thirty three of seventy four identifiable catholic gentry families lived in this region, compared to twelve in the five eastern and southern hundreds of Nassaburgh, Willybrook, Polebrook, Navisford and Higham Ferrers; and compared to twenty nine in the nine western division hundreds plus the western half of Wymersley hundred.⁽³³⁾ Twenty eight out of the forty four catholic gentry houses searched for arms, in 1612 and 1613, were within this central area, compared with eleven in the western division, excluding the eastern half of Wymersley hundred, and five in the five eastern and southern hundreds.⁽³⁴⁾ If the number of individual appearances on the Recusant Rolls is analysed, the concentration is even more impressive. Three hundred and three out of four hundred and seventy seven were from parishes within the hundreds of Corby, Huxloe, Rothwell, Orlingbury, and Hamfordshoe. One hundred and seventeen were from the western division, of which forty six were from Spelhoe hundred at the eastern end of the division; and fifty seven were from the five eastern and southern hundreds of the eastern division.⁽³⁵⁾

This central area was one of gentle upland in the north, bisected by the Ise valley, and it contained the Nene valley in the south and east. Catholicism was fairly thin in the low-lying east and the upland west.⁽³⁶⁾ It was probably more easily attacked in the east because of the proximity of Peterborough; and in the west, the presence of the nucleus of puritan squires may have discouraged catholicism, and may explain its relative absence from this region.

33. Appendix 15 lists these families. The same part of Chapter 4 gives more detail.

34. Wake, J., (ed.), The Montagu Musters Book, 1602-23, N.R.S., vii, pp. 224-5.

35. N.R.O., Anstruther, G., Index of Recusants, (a filing cabinet drawer), and P.R.O., E.377. All this data is plotted on Map 24.

36. See Map 3.

The royal forests are clearly important. Many of the houses searched in this central area were in Rockingham Forest, or on the borders of it. The strongest concentration of catholicism in the west centred on a group of gentry within Whittlewood and Salcey Forests, or on the western edge of them, in the extreme south-west. They were led by the Shirleys of Astwell. The extended settlement patterns of the forest villages, and diluted social control encouraged dissent of all kinds. It has already been mentioned that Brigstock was said to be completely split between catholic and puritan. However, Willybrook hundred, a large part of which was in Rockingham Forest, was noticeably free from recusancy. Perhaps proximity to Peterborough explains this absence.

Central Northamptonshire was the richest agricultural area of the county, thanks to the fertile valleys of the Nene and Ise rivers. It was a classic area of mixed husbandry, whereas the wetter soils of the east, and the more upland west were mainly noted for pastoral farming. It was one of the richest parts of the county on a wealth per acre basis, and there was also a secondary area of catholic concentration in the very prosperous south western corner of the county. Seven of the eleven noble families of 1642 lived in these five central hundreds, and the Comptons and Fanes lived just outside. The Hattons of Kirby and Watsons of Rockingham, ennobled in the mid-1640's, also lived in this area. But as well as the nucleus of very rich, there was a large body of very poor. As a unit, these five hundreds had nearly forty five percent of their houses exempted in 1674, which was higher than the proportion for the west division, overall; the east division, overall; and the county, as a whole. The wealth of the area was reflected in the incidence of schools. The heaviest concentration of educational facilities was in the centre of Northamptonshire. (37)

The influence of forest settlement patterns was apparent, but Northamptonshire catholicism appears to have survived best in a very prosperous agricultural region, with pronounced social and economic polarization, and where educational facilities were particularly numerous.

The presence of this rich body of nobility and gentry was important. The strength of catholicism in the local peerage has already been mentioned, and the parishes with the highest number of individual recusants on the Exchequer Rolls were the seats of members of these families. (38) Lord Vaux possessed houses at Boughton, near Northampton, and at Harrowden, which

37. See Chapter 1, Section 3, for agriculture; Chapter 2, Sections 2 and 3, for social structure and distribution of wealth, particularly Table XVI, for exemptions in 1674. Map 21 shows the schools.

38. See Chapter 4, Section 9, for religion of the nobility. Appendix 11 shows the religion of individual noblemen.

provided forty three and forty one recusants, respectively; and the Mordaunts, Earls of Peterborough, lived at Lowick, which provided thirty one. At a lower level of incidence of recusancy the Brudenell parish of Deene provided sixteen recusants. Harrowden functioned as a Jesuit College, and a free catholic press seems to have existed in the county, probably at Harrowden, to rival the more well-known puritan Marprelate press.⁽³⁹⁾

Other parishes which provided a substantial number of recusants were the residences of the catholic gentry families of Lawe of Ashton; Cheney of Irthlingborough and Woodford; Tresham of Rushton; Poulton of Desborough; Charnock of Wellingborough; and Darcy of Gt. Addington. In addition, there was a catholic hospital at Rothwell, run by Owen Ragsdale.

The examples of Rothwell and Wellingborough illustrate the combination of developing religious radicalism with pronounced survival of the old religion in a market town environment, where we have already noticed that social control was less marked.

Dr. Lindley's conditions for the survival of catholicism are apparent in this analysis. Natural aid was afforded by the undulating landscape of Rothwell and Corby hundred, and by the size of towns like Rothwell, Irthlingborough and Wellingborough. The example of the allegiance of the politically dominant nobility and local gentry was an important stimulus, and the organization of education at Harrowden, and protection given to Jesuits are apparent.⁽⁴⁰⁾ But, in the last resort, the consolidation of recusancy around a gentry mansion was the determining factor.

The strongholds of Northamptonshire puritanism and catholicism were in different regions of the county in the same way as those of Tudor Lancashire.⁽⁴¹⁾ But unlike the Lancashire case, the catholic areas were not geographically remote. The main London to Derby and London to Richmond roads traversed the central part of the county, and this region was rich in agricultural resources and underwent similar population growth to the rest of the county. There were puritan gentry within this catholic area and occasionally, sectarian friction erupted. The Ishams of Pytchley were chased by a group of catholics from Harrowden to Wellingborough, and later to Bozeat, and at the search of Lord Vaux's Boughton house, in 1625, he attacked the puritan Sir Richard Knightley.⁽⁴²⁾ Chapter 8 demonstrates puritan-catholic tensions in Wellingborough.

39. N.R.O., Biographical Notes, Vaux of Harrowden, pp. 17 and 34. Henry Owen is mentioned as a local printer of catholic pamphlets.

40. Lindley, K., 'The Lay Catholics of England in the Reign of Charles I', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, xxii. See also, Bossy, J., The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850.

41. Haigh, C., Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire, pp. 328-32.

42. P.R.O., STAC.8/184/26; N.R.O., Anstruther, G., Index of Recusants, (under Vaux).

(iv) Quakerism

(a) Bedfordshire

William Dewsbury is said to have brought the doctrines of the Quakers to Bedfordshire when he visited John Crook at Beckerings Park, Ridgmont in 1654. At the same time, a handful of converts were made at Dunstable.⁽⁴³⁾ The development of the movement is plotted on Map 26, which shows that the area of greatest strength was the centre of the county, between a line from Kempston to Wrestlingworth in the north, and a line from Woburn to Stotfold, in the south. Twenty one of the thirty three meetings and conventicles, between 1654 and 1672, were within this region.⁽⁴⁴⁾ There was a strong concentration at Bolnhurst and Keysoe, in the northern hundred of Stodden, and at Houghton Regis and Sundon, in the south, but Quakerism was generally less prevalent in the north and south of the county.

This area of greatest strength bears a strong resemblance to topography and farming regions. Essentially, the central body of the county was that between the valleys of the Ouse and Ivel rivers, and it was characterised by specialised market gardening and dairy farming. Bolnhurst and Keysoe in the north were also within the dairying region. The most fertile soils of the county were in this area and it suggests some correlation between progressive agriculture and Quaker beliefs.⁽⁴⁵⁾

However, there was no distinctive social structure. The twenty two towns and villages where Quaker meetings or conventicles were held had almost the same proportions as the whole of the county in the various groupings by hearth in 1671. But in terms of population growth, the twenty two expanded by thirteen percent more than the county as a whole between 1563 and 1671.⁽⁴⁶⁾

This impression of social disruption is accentuated by the fact that of the twenty two, only Clifton possessed an important resident gentleman, and he was a junior member of the Rolt family of Milton Ernest.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Bedfordshire parishes tended to be larger in acreage and contain more manors than their Northamptonshire counterparts, and some of the villages, where Quaker meetings were held, were fragmented into numerous manors. But it is

43. Penny, N., (ed.), The First Publishers of Truth, pp. 6-7.

44. The period under consideration is that between 1654 and 1672, the year of the Declaration of Indulgence. The main sources are Besse, J., (ed.), A Collection of the Sufferings of People Called Quakers, i, (1753); Turner, G., (ed.), Original Records of Early Nonconformity under Persecution and Indulgence, 3 vols.; Cal. S.P.D., 1672, for conventicles; Bate, F., The Declaration of Indulgence, omits several conventicles from his Appendices, and Turner is preferred.

45. See Maps 1, 2 and 4.

46. The 22 parishes had 24% houses exempt; 35.2% of 1 hearth; 29.6% of 2-3 hearths; compare Table XIV, and see Chapter 2, Section 2, on Social Structure. Their population expanded by 78.3%, compared to 65.4% for the county. See Table I(b), and Appendix 3.

47. This is taken from V.C.H., Bedfordshire, topographical sections.

tautological to relate nonconformity to the size of a parish. Large villages ipsofacto contained more manors, and the likelihood of educational facilities was increased in larger villages. Larger settlements also tended to contain more dissenters, and the important feature is the degree of social control. This was clearly lacking in the areas of Bedfordshire Quakerism.

These twenty two parishes varied in acreage and population, and ranged from Bolnhurst with an estimated one hundred and thirty two inhabitants in 1671, to Cranfield with seven hundred and thirty five. Quaker meetings were held at market towns like Woburn, Shefford and Biggleswade, and at other larger settlements like Kempston, Cranfield, and Maulden, where the degree of social control was modified. In the other parishes, the absence of a dominant resident gentleman had the same effect. But it would be incorrect to draw too determinist a conclusion. Bolnhurst, Carleton, and Little Staughton were villages with relatively small population and little manorial subdivision.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Also, the conversion of prosperous yeomen and non-armigerous gentry like the Gambles of Pulloxhill; the Rushes of Kempston; and the Samms of Clifton, undoubtedly played a part in the dissemination of Quaker ideas.

The absence of complete documentation for the growth of puritanism in Bedfordshire makes it impossible to compare the areas of Quakerism with those of puritanism. Northill's puritan tradition has been mentioned, and there was a Quaker conventicle, there, in 1672. Eversholt, Woburn, and Dunstable had both Quaker meetings and clergy presented for nonconformity in 1603, but that is all that can be said.

Pulloxhill, Dunstable, and Houghton Regis had been parishes where Lollardy had gained adherents, and Pulloxhill had a Quaker conventicle licensed in 1672; Dunstable was the scene of the earliest conversions in the south of the county; and the main Quaker burial ground in the south was at Sewell, within Houghton Regis. So there was a continuity of religious radicalism in some parts of the county.

In national terms, Quakerism was relatively strong in Bedfordshire. It was seventh in county ranking for the number of conventicles in 1669, but eighteenth out of thirty one for the number of individual conventiclars.⁽⁴⁹⁾

(b) Northamptonshire

Quaker historiography says that William Dewsbury brought the Friends' doctrines to Wellingborough in 1654, at the request of Francis Ellington, a

48. Appendix 3 gives population estimates for every parish.

49. Turner, G., op.cit., iii, p. 129.

local woollen manufacturer.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Map 27 shows that it took strongest root in the Wellingborough-Finedon area; around Northampton; and in parishes close to Watling Street, although there were a few meetings in the north of the county. It was virtually absent from the low-lying east, except for three arrests in Peterborough. On the whole, it appears to have been relatively less prevalent than in Bedfordshire. There were no Quaker conventicles licensed in Northamptonshire, in 1672.

The communications and marketing network was clearly the common denominator. Wellingborough, Isham, Finedon, and Geddington, where meetings were held, lay on the London to Richmond road. Northampton, Brockhall and Hardingstone were on the London to Derby road, and Dingley and East Farndon were within a few miles of it. Towcester, Bugbrook, and Heyford were situated on Watling Street, and Farthingstone was close by. This obviously assisted the spread of ideas, and Northampton, Wellingborough, and Towcester were large market towns, where the circulation of beliefs was accentuated and where social control was lessened. Geddington and Finedon were towns with more than five hundred inhabitants in 1670.⁽⁵¹⁾

This is the most important feature of Northamptonshire Quakerism. The parishes where Quaker meetings were held did not increase more dramatically in population than the county as a whole; and although Wellingborough and Finedon had a relatively high proportion of exemptions from the 1670 Hearth Tax, Northampton had a relatively low percentage, so there is no apparent correlation with social structure. Certainly, the market towns and larger towns had a heavy population density, but this is a reflection of their size and does not seem to have been an important influence. Other heavily settled parishes had little incidence of Quakerism. The size of the parishes concerned varied. Brockhall had less than one hundred inhabitants in 1670, and Farthingstone, less than two hundred, whereas Wellingborough, Northampton, and Towcester possessed more than a thousand. Geddington lay within Rockingham Forest, and Towcester and Dingley were on the outskirts of forests, but otherwise there is no evidence of Quakerism in the royal forests.⁽⁵²⁾

Absence of a resident gentleman does not appear to have been as important as in Bedfordshire. The Thorntons lived at Brockhall; the Morgans and Judkins' at Heyford; the Mulshoes at Finedon; the Dillons at Farthingstone; and the Tates at Hardingstone. It is interesting that Dingley, where

50. Penny, N., (ed.), The First Publishers of Truth, p. 194; Besse, J., op.cit., p. 518.

51. See Map 3, and Chapter 1, Section 2. Appendix 5 lists the largest towns in 1670.

52. They increased by 52% compared to 50.6% for the county as a whole, between 1524 and 1670. (see Table II(b)). For population, social structure, and density, see Chapter 2, Sections 1 and 2. Appendix 6 lists the parishes with highest population densities. Appendix 5 lists the largest towns. Appendix 3 gives population estimates for every parish. Map 3 shows the extent of the forests. Appendix 4 lists social structure material for every parish.

the resident squire was the catholic Griffin family; Heyford, where the Morgans were catholic; Geddington, where the Treshams owned a manor; Towcester, which was dominated by the catholic Fermors of Easton Neston; and Wellingborough, where the recusant Charnocks were farmers of the royal manors, were Quaker centres. Perhaps the presence of prominent recusants fostered a religious reaction towards radicalism. Wellingborough; Isham; Finedon; Geddington; Cottingham; Dingley and East Farndon, were all within the region of strongest pre-Civil War catholicism. (53)

Continuity with earlier radical movements is varied. Northampton had been a Lollard and puritan stronghold; and Dingley and East Farndon were close to the Lollard Centre at Braybrook; and Towcester had produced rebels in 1414. Wellingborough had been radical in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. But there was no evidence of Quakerism in the Lollard areas of the extreme west, nor was there much, except for Farthingstone, in the rectangle of strongest puritanism in the west. There were a few arrests in the extreme south-west, at Aynho, another market town with a puritan tradition.

It does seem that Northamptonshire Quakerism was intimately associated with proximity to communications links, and with the relative freedom of a market town. The influence of Peterborough, the diocesan headquarters, probably explains its absence from the low-lying east of the county, where there were also major roads and market towns.

In Bedfordshire, Quakerism was less closely linked to communications, and was less of a market town phenomenon, but even here, the absence of resident landlords and, therefore, lack of social control was equally apparent. Also, the fertility of central Bedfordshire may have provided a rich yeomanry or urban artisan group, who were receptive to Quaker doctrines. Some converts on the borderline between yeoman and gentleman status have been mentioned, and Francis Ellington of Wellingborough was a small-scale industrialist. But these possibilities await confirmation from an analysis of the personnel of the Society of Friends, which is beyond the scope of this study.

(v) Nonconformity and Separatism (excluding Quakerism), c. 1660-1676.

(a) Bedfordshire

In England, as a whole, in terms of the number of licensed conventicles, Presbyterianism was the largest form of dissent, and Baptism was the smallest. But Bedfordshire was in an opposite position. Forty one Congregational conventicles were licensed under the Declaration of Indulgence; nineteen Baptist ones, and only nine Presbyterian ones. This was a similar distribution to that of neighbouring Cambridgeshire. (54)

53. See previous part of this Section - on catholicism.

54. Conventicles are listed in Turner, G., op.cit., supplemented by Cal. S.P.D., 1672. Spufford, M., Contrasting Communities, pp. 225-9, analyses Cambridgeshire, and pp. 318-21, are an example of an attempt to relate dissent to the social and economic framework.

Map 28 shows that Congregationalism was most prevalent in the north of the county, and in the area around Bedford. There were no conventicles of this sect in the south. The great majority of Congregational conventicles lay in the low-lying valleys of the Ouse and Ivel rivers, and some were in the very fertile market-gardening and dairying regions. But the majority were in the areas of clay soils. Its great strength was in the north-west, where mixed farming predominated, and where holdings were smaller because the clay was harder to work. The north west was the poorest region of the county in terms of distribution of wealth and social structure; and it was also the least densely populated area.⁽⁵⁵⁾

Unlike Quakerism, Congregationalism was not a primarily urban movement in Bedfordshire. It was strong in the county town, but Biggleswade was the only other market town to contain a conventicle. Southill; Kempston; Blunham; Cranfield; Maulden; and Cardington possessed over five hundred inhabitants in 1671, but of the twenty eight parishes with Congregational conventicles in 1672, fourteen had less than three hundred people in 1671. Population growth was not more dramatic, between 1563 and 1671, in these parishes than in the county as a whole, and Cardington; Milton; Renhold; Cokayne Hatley; and Hawnes all contained resident gentlemen of prominent social status.⁽⁵⁶⁾

Congregationalism appears to have been much more rural, and more a feature of poorer, less densely populated areas of smallholdings on clayey soils than Bedfordshire Quakerism.

Baptism, the second largest sect, was spread more evenly throughout the county, as Map 28 demonstrates, but there was a notable concentration around Bedford.⁽⁵⁷⁾ It was much more a product of larger towns than Congregationalism. Bedford; Dunstable; Luton; Potton; and Shefford were market towns with conventicles or organised Baptist churches, and Cranfield; Kempston; Maulden; Cardington; and Blunham, contained more than five hundred inhabitants in 1671. Only seven of twenty one parishes with Baptist conventicles or churches had a population of less than three hundred. Once again, the majority were situated in the low-lying parts between the Ouse and Ivel rivers, and, although the south is sometimes regarded as the stronghold of Baptism, the sect was confined to the Dunstable, Luton, and Houghton Regis area of the south.⁽⁵⁸⁾

55. See Maps 1, 2, and 4. See Chapter 2, Section 1, part (ii), Sections 2 and 3 for population density, social structure, and distribution of wealth. Map 11 shows population density in 1671.
56. Appendix 5 lists the largest towns; Appendix 3 gives complete population estimates. Appendix 7 lists the parishes of greatest and least demographic increase, 1563-71.
57. Conventicles are in Turner, G., op.cit. Other sources are White, B., 'The Organization of Particular Baptists, 1644-60', Journal of Ecclesiastical History. xvii; Tibbutt, H., Keysoe Brook End and Keysoe Row Baptist Churches; Stevington Baptist Meeting, 1655-1955; Cranfield Baptist Church, 1660-1960; Page, G., Some Baptist Churches in the

The nine Presbyterian conventicles licensed in 1672, were scattered throughout the county. Four were in the market towns of Potton, Woburn, Luton, and Leighton Buzzard; two were in the large towns of Kempston and Cardington; and the others were at Deane, in the extreme north; Odell, in the north-west, and Keysoe, in the north, parishes with between two and three hundred inhabitants.⁽⁵⁹⁾

So, unlike Quakerism, which was confined to the centre and south of Bedfordshire, which were the most densely populated areas, these three types of nonconformity were mainly prevalent in the north of the county. This is reinforced if the ejections of nonconformist clergy, in 1662, are considered. Only two of the fourteen were from parishes south of Ampthill. Eleven were situated in the low-lying ground of the river valleys of the centre and north east.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Non-Quaker nonconformity, after 1660, was predominantly a phenomenon of low-lying Bedfordshire, with special concentration in the larger towns; although Congregationalism was more of a rural movement in the poorer north of the county. Cardington, Cranfield, and Bedford were centres of all three types of dissent, and Cranfield was also a Quaker centre. But the most striking parishes for dissent were Bolnhurst and Keysoe, with only four hundred and forty inhabitants between them, in the extreme north. They possessed three Quaker, five Congregational, and one Presbyterian conventicle in 1672, and also had a Baptist Church. Proximity to nonconformist centres in neighbouring Huntingdonshire, and the absence of a dominant resident gentleman were no doubt important. This case illustrates that, although nonconformity was more likely to be strong in larger towns, it did take firm root in the rural smallholdings and area of thin population in north Bedfordshire.

Bedfordshire dissent cannot be termed a primarily upland movement.

The extent of nonconformity can also be gauged from the Compton Census of 1676.⁽⁶¹⁾ As a guide to actual numbers of nonconformists, the Census is undoubtedly unreliable. Occasional conformity, and the fear of prosecution

57. Bedford Area; 'Some Baptist Churches on the borders of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire', Baptist Historical Quarterly, xi; Whitley, W., (ed.), Minutes of the General Assembly of General Baptists, 1654-1728; Baptist Historical Society.

For Bedford nonconformity, see Tibbutt, H., (ed.), The Minutes of The First Independent Church (now Bunyan Meeting) at Bedford, 1656-1766, B.H.R.S., lv. For county nonconformity, see Greaves, R., 'Organizational Response of Nonconformity to Repression and Indulgence: The Case of Bedfordshire', Church History, xlv.

58. Appendix 3 gives complete population estimates; Appendix 5 list largest towns; Godber, J., A History of Bedfordshire, 1066-1888, regards the south as the Baptist stronghold.

59. Appendices 3 and 5.

60. Ejected clergy in 1662 are plotted on Map 22. They are taken from Matthews, A.G., Calamy Revisited: being a Revision of Edmund Calamy's account of ministers and others rejected, or silenced, 1660-2, Oxford, (1934).

61. This is printed in Wigfield, M., Recusancy and Nonconformity in Bedfordshire, 1622-1842, B.H.R.S., xx.

engendered by a census, led to underestimation. But it does reflect, fairly accurately, the distribution of dissent within a county.⁽⁶²⁾

Seven and three quarter percent of the total number of communicants recorded in the Census for Bedfordshire were returned as nonconformists.⁽⁶³⁾ In terms of hundreds, Map 28 shows that the area of greatest dissent was that of Manshead and Flitt, in the south; Redbornestoke in the centre west; and Stodden in the extreme north east. There is no absolute correlation between dissent and population or social structure. Stodden was thinly populated, but Manshead and Flitt were densely settled, in 1671. The thirty two parishes in which more than a tenth of the listed communicants were nonconformists are evenly distributed throughout the county.⁽⁶⁴⁾ They varied in size from Cokayne Hatley, Edworth and Salford, with less than one hundred inhabitants, to Maulden, Blunham and Cardington, with over five hundred. In general the larger towns possessed a smaller proportion of nonconformists. Even Bedford had less than ten percent. But they did have the highest total of individual nonconformists. Similarly, educational facilities played little part. The three hundreds with the greatest proportion of dissenters contained only five of the thirty six known schools. The fragmentary evidence of pre-1642 puritanism prevents any assessment of the tradition of nonconformity; Pulloxhill, where a Lollard Vicar had been deprived in the fifteenth century, had nearly a quarter of its communicants returned as nonconformists in 1676, and the Dunstable Lollard area remained a strong nonconformist region in the 1670's, but it is impossible to say more.⁽⁶⁵⁾

The most important service rendered by the Compton Census is to correct the impression obtained from analysis of conventicles and nonconformist churches that dissent was predominantly in the centre and north of the county. It shows that nonconformity at an individual, less organised level was strong in the south as well.

62. For discussion of the Census, see Chalklin, C., 'The Compton Census of 1676: Diocese of Canterbury and Rochester', Kent Records, xvii, pp.153-75.
63. A total of 24,389 communicants (excluding 4 parishes with no returns), of which 1,908 were nonconformists. This equals 7.8%. Cambridgeshire only had 4-5% according to Spufford, M., Contrasting Communities, p. 223. Tranter, N., 'Demographic Change in Bedfordshire, 1670-1800', University of Nottingham, Ph.D., 1966, p. 50, says about 8% of the population were dissenters. See Appendix 3 for parish list of communicants.
64. The thirty two are Salford (c.40%); Ridgmont (c.33%); Edworth (c.30%); Caddington (c.28%); Bolnhurst, Keysoe, Houghton Regis, Pulloxhill, Cokayne Hatley (23-25%); Stotfold, Oakley, Cardington, Pavenham (19-21%); Blunham, Maulden, Goldington; Studham, Steppingley, Sundon (c.15-17%); Clapham, Shelton, Lt. Staughton, Totternhoe, Aspley, Turvey, Westoning, Henlow, Langford, Felmersham (11-12%); Flitton, Hawnes, and Chalgrave (10-11%). See Map A for hundreds.
65. Appendix 3 contains parish population estimates, and Map 20 shows the geographical distribution of Bedfordshire schools.

So, overall, this survey has demonstrated that nonconformity at an individual level was apparent throughout the county, but organised conventicles and dissenting churches were mainly located in the centre and north of Bedfordshire.

(b) Northamptonshire

Unlike Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire conformed to the national distribution of conventicles. Presbyterianism was the strongest sect with forty seven licensed in 1672. There were thirty three Congregational ones; five Baptist; and, as we have seen, no Quaker conventicles. ⁽⁶⁶⁾

Map 29 indicates that Presbyterianism was heavily weighted towards the market towns and more populous settlements. Northampton had six conventicles; Peterborough and Daventry, four each; Oundle three; Kettering two; and Higham Ferrers one. Another twelve of the twenty seven parishes with conventicles had over three hundred inhabitants, in 1670. Excluding Northampton, only thirteen were licensed in the west division; and Presbyterianism was completely absent from the forests of the south, and only five were licensed in Rockingham Forest. Some of these parishes had no resident landlord, but at Adstone and Great Oakley, the households of the gentry families of Harby and Brooke, respectively, were licensed as conventicles. There seems to be no correlation with population density, population growth, or social structure, but the bias towards market towns and larger settlements is unmistakable. ⁽⁶⁷⁾

Fourteen of the thirty three Congregational conventicles were in market towns, four at Northampton; three at Wellingborough and Rothwell; and one at Kettering, Oundle, King's Cliffe, and Towcester. Six of the other parishes with conventicles possessed more than five hundred inhabitants, and only five contained under three hundred. So this sect was heavily concentrated in larger settlements. Excluding Northampton, only four were licensed in the western division, and there were none in the fenland hundred of Nassaburgh. Twenty three of the thirty three were located in the central hundreds of Corby, Rothwell, Huxloe, Hamfordshoe, Orlingbury, Navisford, Higham Ferrers, and the eastern part of Wymersley hundred. This was the region of the valleys of the Nene and Ivel rivers, and it was the most fertile and productive agricultural area, and it had also been the centre of pre-1642 catholicism. High population density was characteristic of the Congregational centres. Only three of the twenty two parishes with conventicles had a density of less than ninety persons per square mile in 1670, and eleven had more than one hundred and twenty persons to the square

66. Turner, G., op.cit., lists the conventicles.

67. Appendix 5 lists towns with over five hundred inhabitants. Appendix 3 contains parish population estimates.

mile. The overall density of the county was 93.6 persons to the square mile in 1674. But there is no correlation with population growth between 1524 and 1670, or with social structure.⁽⁶⁸⁾

Variations of manorial control were also visible. At Thorpe Malsor, Twywell, and Tichmarsh, the houses of resident gentry, the Maunsells, Mulshoes, and Pickerings, were licensed as conventicles, and they obviously gave the lead to their parishes; but in the larger settlements social controls were relatively absent.

The incidence of established Congregational Churches gives more weight to the western division. Excluding Northampton, six of the ten were in the west. They were mainly in larger settlements. Rothwell, Wellingborough, Daventry, Kettering, and Northampton, were market towns, and Crick and Weedon contained more than five hundred inhabitants. Flore and Yardley Hastings contained more than four hundred, and Creaton and Ashley over two hundred. Eight of the eleven places had a density of more than one hundred and twenty persons per square mile, and only two were below the overall density for the county. A notable feature was the complete absence of established churches in the eastern part of the county.⁽⁶⁹⁾

Four of the five Baptist conventicles licensed in 1672 were in Nassaburgh hundred. Three were at Eye, a suburb of Peterborough. The fifth was at Sibbertoft, in the north of the county. Eye and Peterborough were in the heart of the fenland, and Sibbertoft was on the banks of the Welland, and so the small incidence of Northamptonshire Baptism was confined to low-lying parishes in the same way that all but a few of the nineteen Bedfordshire Baptist conventicles were in parishes on or near the rivers Ouse and Ivel.

Established Baptist Churches and congregations show a somewhat different pattern. Harringworth, Wakerley, Peterborough and Wollaston were on rivers, but Moulton and Ravensthorpe were in the upland west.⁽⁷⁰⁾ All but Wakerley and Ravensthorpe had over four hundred inhabitants, and all but Wakerley had densities of over one hundred and twenty persons to the square mile. But social structure was varied.

Overall, then, the upland west had relatively few licensed conventicles of any sort in 1672. The majority were in the eastern half of Northamptonshire. But the division was more even in terms of established nonconformist

68. Appendix 6 contains the parishes with highest densities of population. Table IX shows the population density of the county.

69. V.C.H., Northamptonshire, ii, p. 75 lists established Congregational Churches.

70. See note 57 for Baptist sources. Also, Goadby, J., Baptists and Quakers in Northamptonshire, 1650-1700.

churches. In all three types of dissent there was a predominance of market towns and larger villages with a suggestion of high density of population. Baptist meetings tended to be associated with riverside parishes. When the links between Quakerism and communications are considered, as well, it is clear that the communications and marketing network played a considerable part in the incidence of dissent. Ideas were easily transmitted, and the relative absence of social control created a willing audience. Even in Peterborough, the Dean and Chapter were unable to eradicate Baptist meetings.

A notable feature is the virtual absence of conventicles in the rectangle of greatest pre-1642 puritan strength, in the south west of the county. Those that did appear were Presbyterian. Puritanism in this area had been a political movement generated by the greater gentry. Most of these who were parliamentarian in the Civil War were so-called Presbyterians in their politics. They did not support the ideas of the sects; with the exception of the Harbys of Adstone, a gentry family who did license their house in 1672. It does seem that nearly all the prominent puritan gentry of this part of Northamptonshire conformed to the Church of England, after 1660. The nucleus of nonconformity moved from the gentry to the market towns and more populous villages, after the Restoration.

It is not the intention to give an exhaustive social analysis of nonconformists, but some Quarter Sessions records are invaluable in that they list the status of those convicted for illegal attendance at conventicles between 1665 and 1670. At fourteen conventicles in this period, the status of sixty two people is given. Twenty five were artisans and craftsmen; sixteen were yeomen; ten were husbandmen; six were labourers; three were gentlemen; and two were shepherds.⁽⁷¹⁾ If this is a representative sample, it supports the impression that urban artisans must have been prominent because of the focus of nonconformity in market towns and larger villages. The wealthy section of the peasantry was important, and the presence of a few gentlemen emphasizes the patronage given to conventicles by families like the Harbys, Mulshoes, Pickerings, Maunsells and Brookes. The sample also reinforces the role of communications in the dissemination of nonconformity. At a Dingley conventicle in 1665, persons from Tadcaster in Yorkshire, Hertford; and Market Harborough, in Leicestershire, were arrested. At Wellingborough, in 1670, an inhabitant of Podington, Bedfordshire, was seized.⁽⁷²⁾

71. N.R.O., Q.S.R.1/60, and 1/37.

72. N.R.O., Q.S.R.1/37, fo.5. Dingley was on the London to Derby Road; Q.S.R.1/60, pt. ii, fo. 15. Wellingborough was on the London to Richmond road. See Map 3.

The Compton Census shows that individual nonconformity in Northamptonshire was on a much smaller scale than in Bedfordshire. Only 2.4 percent of the communicants returned in 1676 were dissenters, and only six parishes had more than ten percent of their communicants noted as nonconformists.⁽⁷³⁾ All but Harringworth were adjacent to major roads. Bugbrook and Farthingstone were near Watling Street; Kettering and Cranford were on the London to Richmond road; and Hartwell was on the London to Derby road. Harringworth was on the river Welland; Kettering and Cranford on the river Ise; Hartwell on the smaller river Tove; and Bugbrook and Farthingstone were on the river Nene. But they varied in size, density of population, and social structure. Three were in the west division, and three in the east, and Cranford and Hartwell had not contained licensed conventicles in 1672.

In terms of hundreds, Map 29 shows that individual nonconformity was strongest in Hamfordshoe and Huxloe, in the centre of the county, with a less strong concentration in Cleley and Towcester, in the south. All these four were traversed by or bordered upon major roads. Nonconformity was strong in the royal forests of the south, of which Hartwell was a parish; but it was noticeably weak in Rockingham Forest, although Harringworth was on the outskirts. The southern forests were bisected by two major roads, but most of Rockingham Forest was away from a road link.⁽⁷⁴⁾

Although Northampton was the home of ten licensed conventicles in 1672, only 1.7 percent of its communicants were returned as nonconformists. This is a startlingly low figure in view of its pre-eminence as a radical centre within the county. Underestimating undoubtedly took place in the census, but this low proportion could also reflect the town's possible role as in institutional focus to which nonconformists came from other areas. It was the commercial centre of the county, and was centrally placed in the communications network.

The overall conclusion is that both institutional nonconformity and individual dissent, as recorded in the Compton Census, were primarily based in the central part of Northamptonshire. Twenty three of the fifty five ejected ministers of 1660-2 were from Rothwell, Corby, Huxloe, Hamfordshoe, and Orlingbury hundreds.⁽⁷⁵⁾ Only eighteen came from the ten hundreds of the west division, and Northampton; and only three from Nassaburgh hundred, in the east. Nonconformity was much stronger in the centre of the county than in the upland west, the low-lying east, or the Royal Forest. Its

73. The Northamptonshire Compton Census is in Staffordshire Record Office, William Salt Library, Salt MSS., 33. But there are no returns for 34 parishes. Of those recorded, the highest number of individual nonconformists were in Kettering (300); Wellingborough (193); Bugbrook (100); Cranford (70); Harringworth (43); Hartwell (42); Tichmarsh (40). The six parishes with more than ten percent nonconformist are Cranford (c.29%); Bugbrook (c.25%); Kettering (c.18%); Harringworth (c.13%); Hartwell (c.12%); and Farthingstone (c.10%). 2,004 out of a total of 84,695 communicants were nonconformist.

74. See Map 3.

75. From Matthews, A., Calamy Revisited (see note 60).

matrix was the market towns of Kettering, Wellingborough, and Rothwell. Together with Quakerism, the importance of the communications and marketing network was crucial. Larger settlements tended to predominate in all types of dissent. In both Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, dissent was not an upland, fenland or forest phenomenon per excellence.

The central part of Northamptonshire was also the area of greatest concentration of schools, and, unlike Bedfordshire, nonconformity and educational facilities may have been related.⁽⁷⁶⁾

Far from being the centre of pre-1642 puritanism, this region had been the stronghold of catholicism. Post-1660 nonconformity was notably weak in the south west, the bastion of sixteenth and early seventeenth century puritanism. This central belt with its numerous market towns, and rich agricultural resources had a large number of artisans and prosperous yeomen who appear to have provided the largest membership of the dissenting conventicles.

However, it would be incorrect to assume a total absence of continuity between puritanism and post-1660 nonconformity. Puritan families like the Pickerings, Mulshoes, Maunsells, and Brookes, obtained licensed meeting houses in 1672. The Elmes family of Warmington, another early seventeenth century puritan gentry family, did the same. Northampton, the focus of Lollardy and the 'cathedral' of sixteenth century puritanism, remained the institutional headquarters of nonconformity, if not the dominant centre in terms of actual numbers of dissenters. Daventry and Towcester produced Lollards and conventicles in 1672. Haringworth, the home of the puritan Lords Zouche, until their extinction in 1625, remained a nonconformist focus until at least 1676. Twyford Worthington, the defeated puritan candidate for the mayoralty of Higham Ferrers in 1640, licensed a conventicle in 1672.⁽⁷⁷⁾ William Foxe, John Ponder, and Thomas Wells of Rothwell, who were prosecuted for nonconformity by Sir John Lambe in 1634, were three of the founder members of Rothwell Congregational Church in 1656; and the house of Susanna Ponder was licensed as a conventicle in 1672.⁽⁷⁸⁾ Chapter eight examined Wellingborough's long tradition of radicalism.

This central part of the county was also the home of the great majority of the rebels of the 1607 Midland Revolt, for whom records survive, and so there was a tradition of both religious and social and economic

76. See Map 21 for distribution of schools.

77. See Chapter 5, Section 3, part (ii), Borough Elections, for more detail of the election.

78. Glass, N., The Early History of The Independent Church at Rothwell; H.M.C., Fourth Report, p.30.

dissent in the region.⁽⁷⁹⁾

Nonconformity replaced catholicism in the central region, which, in turn, replaced the south-west as the focus of religious radicalism. It represented a replacement of gentry-led political puritanism in the uplands, remote from diocesan headquarters, by nonconformity centred on the yeomen and artisans of the very fertile and prosperous agriculture of the river valleys and the market towns. Radical traditions eased this replacement. In the same way that other features of local society adapted to developing commercialisation and transport facilities, the pattern of religious dissent changed from a nucleus of gentry laagers in the western upland to a concentration focused on marketing centres and communications links. Despite Professor Everitt's and Dr. Hill's suggestion that forest areas were particularly prone to religious and political radicalism, in Northamptonshire, at least, the forests played little part in the pattern of religious dissent.⁽⁸⁰⁾

(vi) 1851 Religious Census

To round off this survey of dissent, the situation in 1851 is worth noting. Bedfordshire was the eighth strongest nonconformist county, and Northamptonshire was seventeenth.⁽⁸¹⁾ The ascendancy which Bedfordshire had held over its neighbour, in 1676, remained in 1851.

To explain the reasons for this difference in strength requires a much greater knowledge of nonconformist movements than research for this study has given. But some possibilities can be suggested. Both counties were part of the Midland Plain farming region; both possessed communications links and flourishing market towns. Both had similar demographic histories in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and their density of population was virtually the same. However, their social structures were distinct. Bedfordshire had a quarter of its houses exempted from the Hearth Tax of 1671, and another third were of one hearth. But Northamptonshire had thirty nine percent of its houses exempted in 1674, and another thirty percent were of one hearth.⁽⁸²⁾ Bedfordshire had a significantly greater

79. See Map 31 for Midland Revolt rebels, and Section 3, part (ii) of this chapter.

80. See Chapter 2, Section 1, part (ii) for discussion of this point in relation to population density. Chapter 2, note 41, mentions this suggestion. See particularly, Everitt, A., The Patter of Rural Dissent In The Nineteenth Century, University of Leicester, Department of Local History, Occasional Paper, 2nd s, iv; Hill, C., The World Turned Upside Down, chapter entitled 'Masterless Men'.

81. From Everitt, A., 'Nonconformity in Country Parishes', Ag.H.R., xviii, Supplement, Land Church and People. See also Pickering, W., 'The 1851 Religious Census: a useless experiment?', British Journal of Sociology, xviii. Everitt (p.189) notes a remarkable prevalence of dissent in Kent forests in 1851. Perhaps it was true of those of Northamptonshire, but I have tried to show that upto 1676, at least, this was certainly not the case. The Compton Census records only 0.6% and c.3% nonconformists out of communicants in Rockingham Forest villages, and Whittlewood/Salcey forest villages, respectively. Appendix 3 lists forest villages.

82. See Chapter 2, Section 2, and Table XI.

proportion of houses with two hearths or more, and since artisans and yeomen seem to have comprised the major part of nonconformist conventicles, Bedfordshire appears to have possessed proportionally more of these social groups, and therefore a wider circle of likely converts. In addition, Bedfordshire parishes, on the whole, had a much larger acreage than those of Northamptonshire. Their manorial structure was more fragmented, and social control may have been less strong. But these are only possibilities.

(vii) Witchcraft

The absence of Assize and Quarter Sessions Records for these two counties is a severe hindrance to any assessment of witchcraft.

Material relating to Bedfordshire is particularly sparse. According to John Stearne, the assistant of Matthew Hopkins, Witchfinder-General, there were twenty witches at Tilbrook, in the extreme north of the county, in 1648. William Marshe of Dunstable was said to be the head of a college of witches in 1649; and, in 1667, Elizabeth Pratt and Ursula Clarke of Dunstable were witches. Elizabeth Ocle of Pulloxhill was hanged for witchcraft in 1596, and two women from near Bedford were hanged in 1612.⁽⁸³⁾ Dunstable, Pulloxhill, and Bedford were centres of nonconformity after 1660, and Tilbrook adjoined the strong nonconformist parishes of Bolnhurst and Keysoe, so, perhaps a tradition of religious radicalism encouraged greater persecution of magic and ancient practices, here, than elsewhere in the county.

Northamptonshire witchcraft cases occurred in two broad regions. There were several along the Nene valley at parishes like Oundle; Raundes; Woodford; Stanwick; Thrapston; and Denford, in the east of the county. The second broad region was the more upland north-west, where four Gillsborough women were said to be witches, and there were incidents at Brixworth, Bowden, Maidwell, and Welton. There was also a case at Pattishall, on the Nene, just west of Northampton.⁽⁸⁴⁾

There is the possibility of an undercurrent of puritan-catholic antagonism. Oundle, Raundes, Woodford, Maidwell, and Brixworth had resident

83. Thomas, K., Religion and The Decline of Magic, pp. 445, 517, 520, 523, 635; Stearne, J., A Confirmation and Discovery of Witchcraft (1648), Rota Press, Exeter, 1973, p. 11; Godber, J., A History of Bedfordshire, 1066-1888, p. 223; Ewen, C. L'Estrange, Witchcraft and Demonianism, pp. 204, 453.

84. Thomas, K., op.cit., pp. 511, 533; Ewen, C. L'Estrange, op.cit., pp. 37, 306, 362, 381, 382, 456; Stearne, J., op.cit., pp. 20, 21, 23, 31, 34; Rosen, B., (ed.), Witchcraft, Stratford Library, vi, pp. 344-56, reprint of 'The Witches of Northamptonshire..... executed at Northampton, 1612'; Smith, C., 'Northamptonshire in the History of Witchcraft', Northamptonshire Past and Present, iv; B.M., Sloane MSS, 972, fo. 7, 'Brief Arraignment of Nine Witches at Northampton, 1612'; Notestein, W., History of Witchcraft in England, 1558-1718, New York, 1965 edition, pp. 184, 405; Tracts, chiefly rare and curious reprints relating to Northamptonshire, (1876), one on witchcraft; N.R.O., Isham MSS., I(L) 1,421.

catholic gentry; Thrapston, Denford, and Stanwick were in the area of strongest pre-1642 catholicism; and Welton adjoined the Catesby parish of Ashby St. Ledgers, and Bowden was sandwiched between the Griffin family manors of Braybrook and Dingley. Conversely, Oundle, Denford and Thrapston were within the sphere of influence of the puritan Montagu family; Sir Gilbert Pickering of Tichmarsh, a prominent puritan, had the reputation of a witch-hunter in the early seventeenth century; and the puritan Mulshoes of Twywell helped Sir Thomas Brooke of Oakley, a puritan, arrest Helen Jenkinson of Thrapston, in 1612.⁽⁸⁵⁾

The most famous case of Northamptonshire witchcraft in the seventeenth century was the case of Guilsborough in 1612, where four women were said to have bewitched Elizabeth Belcher, who was probably a member of the gentry family which owned the manor at the time. A brother of Dabridgecourt Belcher, the owner in 1612, went to New England in 1630 and he was one of the founders of Boston, and so, the family appear to have had puritan sympathies.⁽⁸⁶⁾

But apart from this possibility of puritan-catholic tensions, and the high proportion of riverside parishes which had witchcraft cases, there are no other general points which can be made.

85. Catholics also arrested witches: Sir Thomas Tresham seized Mary Barber of Stanwick in 1612.

86. Renton, E., Records of Guilsborough, Nortoft, and Hollowell, p. 80.

2 POLITICS

The nature of the sources means that the gentry predominate in this account of political disaffection. They were singled out for imprisonment or deprivation of office, and records refer to opposition in the lower orders only in general terms. Parliamentary elections were also arenas where political resistance could be concentrated, and part (ii) of Section 3 of Chapter 5 should be considered in relation to the following account. There, the rising crescendo of opposition to the crown, which culminated in the 1640 election campaigns, is demonstrated.

In addition, there is much more surviving evidence of disaffection in Northamptonshire than in Bedfordshire, as was the case in several other sections of this thesis. Either Bedfordshire was less affected by political opposition among the gentry, or the surviving sources underrepresent its actual extent.

(1) Bedfordshire

The Forced Loan of 1614 was the first visible occasion of prominent gentry opposition. Lord St. John's name was absent from a list of free-givers, and later, as first Earl of Bolingbroke, he became a leading Opposition peer and fierce parliamentarian in the Civil War. He refused the 1626 Loan, and was removed from the Lord Lieutenancy of Huntingdonshire between 1627 and 1629.⁽⁸⁷⁾

Resistance grew in 1621 and 1626. In 1626, Sir Beauchamp St. John, brother of the Earl of Bolingbroke, was sent to the Gatehouse for refusal, and Sir William Beecher of Renhold, Sir Oliver Luke, and Edward Duncombe of Battlesden, were distrained for refusal. Henry, eighth Earl of Kent, was deprived of the Lord Lieutenancy of Bedfordshire between 1627 and 1629. Kent, Bolingbroke, Luke, and St. John were puritans, and, together with Ralph Mallory of Shelton and the Harveys of Thurleigh, refusers in 1626, were parliamentarians in the civil war. But William Briers of Pulloxhill, Sir Edward Gostwick of Willington, and the Botelers of Biddenham, who resisted the 1621 loan, were neutral or changed sides in the civil war; and the Hillersdons of Elstow, who refused to pay in 1621, were royalists. The majority of those who resisted the Loans were puritans and future parliamentarians, but not all.⁽⁸⁸⁾

In part (ii) Section 2 of Chapter 5, in the analysis of the justice of the peace, it was pointed out that resistance to the 1626 Loan in Northamptonshire resulted in a massive enlargement of the Commission of

87. A.P.C., xxxii, p. 582; B.M., Addit. MSS., 5,847; Sainty, J., Lords Lieutenant of Counties, 1558-1642, B.I.H.R. Supplement.

88. P.R.O., S.P.14/127/82: 1621, 8 gentry resistors; S.P.16/55/83: 1626, 10 gentry resistors, but they exclude Duncombe, St. John, Luke, Beecher, and Earl of Kent. Sainty, J., op.cit. See Appendix 15 for puritan families, and Appendix 16 for royalists and parliamentarians.

the Peace, in that year. However, there was no comparable increase in the Bedfordshire magistracy of 1626, which suggests that opposition was less serious. However, the Bedfordshire Commission of 1621-2 does suggest a reaction by the Crown to resistance to the 1621 Loan. Table XLII shows that the 1621-2 Commission contained far the largest number of justices of any Bedfordshire Commission, in the table, between 1542 and 1657. It was an increase in the number of resident justices, rather than of non-resident dignitaries, and it may represent an attempt by the Crown to pack the Bench with supporters, or at least an attempt to offset resistance. Bedfordshire resistance in 1621 appears to have been regarded more seriously than that of 1626.⁽⁸⁹⁾

However, the lower administration of the county seems to have been almost unanimous in its opposition to the 1626 Loan. At a meeting of the subsidy collectors and constables of the county in Bedford, in August, the justices of the peace called for a division. Those who would loan were to move to the right, and those who refused were to move to the left:

"whereupon all the whole Company went to the left hand, Mr. Church only standing in the right hand".⁽⁹⁰⁾

Resistance to the 1626 Loan appears to have been concentrated in the north of the county. Of twenty two resisters who have been traced, ten came from the extreme north, and four from villages adjoining Bedford. Five lived in the centre of the county, and the other three in parishes near Leighton Buzzard, in the south-west. The St. Johns were the largest landowners in the north, and their example of resistance probably encouraged others.⁽⁹¹⁾

There is little evidence about the knighthood Composition controversy of the early 1630's. An Exchequer Special Commission of 1631-2 returned only two Bedfordshire people who refused to pay: George Underwood of Langford and Ralph Mallory of Shelton.⁽⁹²⁾ Mallory had resisted the 1626 Loan, and his plea of poverty may have been an excuse for continued opposition to Crown policy.

The levy of Ship Money began promisingly for the King. Only about seventy pounds of the 1635 writ of three thousand pounds was uncollected. But by 1638, nearly two-thirds was uncollected, and in 1640, only ten

89. See Table XLII in Chapter 5. Appendix 17 lists the sources.

90. Gilmore, G., (ed.), The Papers of Richard Taylor of Clapham, c.1579-1641, B.H.R.S., xxv, pp. 108-9.

91. from P.R.O., S.P.16/55/83.

92. P.R.O., E.178/5146. All gentry with landed incomes over £40 p/a who had not come up to be knighted at the Coronation in 1626 were fined or forced to pay compositions.

pounds was paid.⁽⁹³⁾ Richard Child, a lesser gentleman of Podington who had not been a justice of the peace, was appointed Sheriff in 1639, in an attempt to increase the revenue. He was the least illustrious of the local sheriffs in the Ship Money years.⁽⁹⁴⁾

Coat and Conduct levies for the Scottish War received a similar reception. Bedfordshire was one of the counties which the Earl of Northumberland described as restive, in 1640, and he doubted if he would obtain the required number of men. At the same time, the Earl of Cleveland lamented that the county had only contributed one hundred pounds by the summer of the same year.⁽⁹⁵⁾

The reluctance of gentry to perform their military duties increased. Future royalists like the Gerys of Bushmead and the Conquests of Houghton Conquest were musters defaulters in 1624 and 1635, respectively.⁽⁹⁶⁾

The previous section showed that both catholicism and puritanism, despite the paucity of material, appear to have been weaker in Bedfordshire than in Northamptonshire. Bedfordshire had little connection with the Gunpowder Plot. Percy and Wright passed through Hockliffe during their escape, and a relay of horses was provided for them by Lord Mordaunt. The county has been described as the English shire least addicted to Jacobitism after 1688, and, at the opening of the eighteenth century, Bedfordshire was the only county to return two Whigs as knights of the shire, and both were unopposed.⁽⁹⁷⁾

The Earl of Bedford, Lord Braye of Eaton Bray, and Lewis Dyve were the only prominent gentry to support Lady Jane Grey's succession in 1553, and there was no cohesive movement of puritan gentry on the lines of the 1605 Northamptonshire Petition against the deprivation of puritan ministers. The number of hard core resisters to the Forced Loans was less than in Northamptonshire. There was a radical tradition in the Russell family, Earls of Bedford. As well as the first Earl's support for Lady Jane Grey, the second Earl was a prominent puritan, the third Earl was involved in the Essex Rebellion of 1601; and the fourth Earl was tried in Star Chamber, in 1630, for spreading rumours that the King intended to rule without

93. Gordon, M., 'The Collection of Ship Money in the Reign of Charles I', T.R.H.S. 3rd s., iv.

94. See Appendix 17 for J.P.'s; The Child family were not J.P.'s between 1542 and 1661.

95. Cal. S.P.D., 1640, pp. 206, 294.

96. Cal. S.P.D., 1623-5, p. 110; Defaulters are also listed in A.P.C., and P.C.R.

97. Cal. S.P.D., 1603-10, p. 245, B.R.O., C.R.T.120/Memorandum 5; Speck, W., 'Computer Analysis of Poll Books: A Further Report', B.I.H.R., xlvi, p. 67; See also, Cardigan, Earl of, 'King James' Questionnaire: a prelude to the 1688 Revolution', Bedfordshire Magazine, ii, pp.123-7, for James II's attempted purge of the Bedfordshire Deputy Lieutenancy.

parliament, and he was a leader of the Opposition in 1640. (98)

But until the early seventeenth century, political opposition was limited in Bedfordshire, and even during the crises of Caroline England, it did not achieve the extent of gentry disaffection in Northamptonshire. However, as Table XXXVII in Chapter 4 illustrated, the Bedfordshire gentry were significantly more parliamentarian and less royalist than those of Northamptonshire, and this suggests that paucity of evidence underestimated the extent of early seventeenth century political disaffection.

(ii) Northamptonshire

The case study of the Knightley family in Section Ten of Chapter four highlighted their prominence in the radical movements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They clashed with the Crown for the first time in the Pilgrimage of Grace, and this was the first example of the leading part played by the south-west in radical opposition in Northamptonshire, a trend which became increasingly apparent. Edmund Knightley's supporters were Sir William Newnham of Catesby; the Andrewes of Charwelton; the Lovetts of Astwell; and the Bernards of Abington. Richard Fermor of Easton Neston was also antagonistic towards ^{the} monarchy because of his belief in papal supremacy. Including Knightley's home at Fawsley, and excepting Abington, a suburb of Northampton, these parishes were in the south west of the county. (99)

The support for Lady Jane Grey in 1553 was much stronger than in Bedfordshire, particularly among the gentry. The Pardon Rolls show that Rockingham Forest and Nassaburgh hundred, in the east, were the areas of greatest concentration, but there was another large group in the west. Only one was from the centre of the county. (100) They included future puritans like the Knightleys; the Chaunceys of Edgcote; the Brookes of Oakley; the Staffords of Blatherwick; Sir William Cecil; and Sir Walter Mildmay; but also catholics like the Brudenells, and catholic sympathisers like the Watsons of Rockingham, and the Kirkhams of Fineshade.

For the rest of the sixteenth century, political opposition was sporadic and isolated. Knightley sponsored the Marprelate Press, and puritan gentry like George Carleton of Overstone and the Copes of Canons Ashby were vociferous in parliament. Recusant gentry welcomed Jesuit

98. Cal. Patent Rolls, 1553-4, Pardon Rolls; For the 1630 Trial, see Howell, T., (ed.), A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason, iii, pp. 387-99. See Appendix 21: Caste Studies, for more detail about the Russells.

99. See Section 10 of Chapter 4; Scarisbrick, J., 'Religion and Politics in Northamptonshire in the Reign of Henry VIII', Northants Past and Present, v, pp. 85-95. Knightley's niece married George Lumley, who was executed after the Pilgrimage of Grace, and his sister had married Lord Latimer, leader of the uprising. P.R.O., S.P.1/80, fo.22, Sir William Parr urged Cromwell to exclude these supporters of Knightley from office.

100. Cal. Patent Rolls, 1553-4, Pardon Rolls. Of identifiable gentry, fifteen were from these eastern areas; ten were from the west; and one from the centre.

priests and organised a counter press to Marprelate, at Harrowden, and the Ardens of Evenley were involved in the Throckmorton Plot of the 1580's. Local catholics were also prominent in the Essex Rebellion. Francis Tresham and Robert Catesby were fined two thousand and three thousand pounds, respectively, and John Arden appears on a list of prisoners. (101)

But we have seen that Sir Richard Knightley was an admirer of the Earl of Essex, and the co-conspiracy of recusants and puritans was evident in the 1603 Bye Plot. The catholic wing wanted to put Arabella Stuart on the throne, whereas the puritans wished to see Edward Seymour, Lord Beauchamp, made King. Knightley was prominent in the Seymour faction. (102)

The Gunpowder Plot was virtually a Northamptonshire family undertaking, but even this conspiracy tried to implicate Lewis Pickering, a local puritan, to throw blame upon the puritans. This same Lewis Pickering was prosecuted in Star Chamber, in 1605, for a puritan libel. (103)

But it was the Petition against the Deprivation of Puritan Clergy of 1604-5 which mobilised a widespread opposition movement for the first time since 1553. Not all the gentry who signed it were puritans, some merely followed the tide of opposition which had developed, but, in all, it was signed by forty-five gentlemen. Puritans were the leaders of the Petition. Sir Edward Montagu; Sir William Lane of Horton, Sir Valentine and Sir Richard Knightley, and Sir Erasmus Dryden of Canons Ashby were briefly imprisoned or temporarily deprived of local office. Map 30 shows that nineteen of the twenty nine families represented on the Petition lived in the puritan rectangle in the south-west of the county, which was examined in the previous section of this chapter. Only six of the twenty nine resided in the eastern division. (104)

The late Elizabethan Loans were paid with no sign of resistance, but, in 1609, Northamptonshire was described as backward in service for the Loan compared to the liberality of the Huntingdonshire gentry. The west of the county was troublesome again in 1612, when Sir Anthony Mildmay of Apethorpe wrote of the contrary attitude of men on the other side of the county to the Loan of that year. (105)

101. List of prisoners in B.M., Egerton MSS., 2,884, fo. 4.
102. See Chapter 4, Section 10, for Knightleys and Bye Plot.
103. See Chapter 4, Section 7, and note 73, for Gunpowder Plot and Pickering. His 1605 trial is in Baildon, W., (ed.), Les Reportes Del Cases in Camera Stellata, 1593-1609, from the original manuscripts of John Hawarde, pp. 222-8; also, Cal. S.P.D., 1603-10, p.206.
104. P.R.O., S.P.14/12/69; See Also, Sheils, W., 'Puritans in Church and Politics in the Diocese of Peterborough, 1570-1610', University of London, Ph.D., 1974, pp. 249-50.
105. N.R.O., Finch-Hatton MSS., FH.124, fo.143 (1589 Loan); B.M., Addit. MS., 25,085, show that resisters of the 1626 Loan like the Knightleys, Danvers', Kenwrickes, Chaunceys, and Pargiters, all paid late Elizabethan loans. Cal. S.P.D., 1603-10, p. 308; H.M.C., Montagu of Beaulieu MSS., p. 89.

In 1624, Sir William Spencer of Althorp, in the west of the county, was left out of the Deputy Lieutenancy after opposing royal policy in the 1624 Parliament.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾

But it was the 1626 Forced Loan which provoked a massive resistance. Thirty five armigerous gentlemen are known to have refused to contribute including Sir Erasmus Dryden and Sir William Tresham, baronets, and Sir John Pickering; Sir William Wilmer, Sir William Samwell, Sir William Chauncey; Sir John Danvers; Sir Edmund Hampden; Sir Anthony Haslewood; Sir Arthur Throckmorton; Sir Henry Longueville; Sir Thomas Cave; Sir William Tate; Sir Robert Osborne; Sir Christopher Yelverton; Sir Anthony Mildmay; Sir Edward Griffin; Sir William Lane; Sir Augustine Nicholls; Sir Edward Watson; Sir Robert Lane; Sir John Isham; and Sir Thomas Tresham of Geddington.

Dryden, Pickering, Wilmer, Chauncey, Samwell, and Richard Knightley of Fawsley, Thomas Elmes of Green's Norton, and George Catesby of Whiston, were gentlemen who were imprisoned in London, and then sent to various counties for confinement. Richard Farmer of Daventry was a non-armigerous gentleman who was sent to the Fleet prison for "factious and scandalous speeches".⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ All eight armigerous gentry were puritans and six were from families which had signed the 1605 Petition. Only one, Sir William Wilmer, was a future royalist. All the other seven families were parliamentarian.

Another nine gentlemen, Danvers; Hampden; Haslewood; John Blencowe; John Breton; Richard Kenwricke; William Pargiter; John Wyrley; and Francis Nicholls, were confined to London for a time. Danvers, Blencowe, Pargiter and Nicholls were puritans, but Breton, Kenwricke, and Wyrley were from ancient catholic families. Danvers, Blencowe, Breton, Wyrley and Nicholls were future parliamentarians, but Haslewood and Pargiter were royalists.

Of the other eighteen gentlemen, six were known catholics, including Sir William and Sir Thomas Tresham, and seven were future royalists, and five more were neutral in the Civil War.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾

It is clear that puritans and future parliamentarians formed the hard core of the Northamptonshire resistance to the 1626 Loan. At Northampton

106. N.R.O., Misc. MSS., Z.A. 2,251, fo.57; Cal. S.P.D., 1623-5, p. 268. He was second son and heir of Robert, first Lord Spencer. See Ruigh, R., The Parliament of 1624.

107. A.P.C., xliii, p. 103.

108. Those imprisoned or confined are mentioned in A.P.C., xlii, xliii, 1626-7; P.R.O., S.P.16/68/76 lists other refusers. Gleason, J., The Justices of The Peace in England, 1558-1640, also discusses some of the prominent refusers. Appendix 15 lists puritan and catholic families; Appendix 16 lists royalists and parliamentarians.

in January 1627, the Crown's representatives found twenty two gentlemen who "drew after them nearly half the shire".⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ It was undoubtedly this resistance by the Knightage, the dominant group in the Deputy Lieutenancy and the magistracy, which caused the crisis. Knightley was made sheriff to keep his turbulent influence out of parliament, and the Bench was enlarged to one hundred and thirteen members to secure support for the Loan.⁽¹¹⁰⁾

Once again, it was the west which led the resistance. In February 1627, the Privy Council wrote that the east division gave "good satisfaction", but in the west there was "much contradiction".⁽¹¹¹⁾ Seventeen of the thirty five gentlemen who are known to have resisted came from the east division, but only one, Sir John Pickering, of the eight who were confined in other counties, and only three of the nine who were confined in London, Sir Edmund Hampden, Sir Anthony Haslewood, and Francis Nicholls, lived in the eastern division. Map 30 shows that most of the imprisoned and confined gentry lived in the four extreme western and south-western hundreds, which had also been the area of greatest commitment to the 1605 Petition.

Compulsory knighthood precipitated more discontent. Since the requisite lands worth more than forty pounds a year had to have been held for three years or more, the preliminaries for knighthood compositions were probably undertaken at the same time as the Loan controversy. It was Richard Knightley, sheriff in 1626, who bore the brunt of the Privy Council's anger. He returned only three people liable for knighthood when he should have returned three hundred. John Wyrley of Dodford, sheriff in 1628, was also prosecuted for naming only six people.⁽¹¹²⁾ Both men had been confined for refusing the 1626 Loan.

There is evidence that the Deputy Lieutenants of the west division refused to send out warrants for the levy of musters money, between 1629 and 1632. The Earl of Exeter threatened to report them to the Privy Council, but they refused to be cowed. When the constable of Towcester Hundred was presented to the Council in February 1632 for nonpayment, he claimed that the Deputy Lieutenants of the west had taken his warrant and refused to return it. Sir Robert Bannister of Passenham was dismissed because he possessed the warrant, but "will not be known of it".⁽¹¹³⁾

109. P.R.O., SP.16/49/8.

110. See Chapter 5, Section 2, part (ii), Table XLII.

111. N.R.O., Z.A.2,251, fo. 55v.

112. P.R.O., E.112/226/46, Bill of 6 Chas I against them and their under-sheriffs. H.M.C., Buccleuch MSS., iii, pp. 350-2, 358, 360-1, 363, contains a lot of information about knighthood compositions.

113. N.R.O., Cartwright MSS., C(A)7, 506, fos. 5 and 32; Z.A., 2,251, fos. 72, 77v, 88.

At this time, Sir John Danvers was the only puritan deputy of the five, and Bannister, Sir George Fermor, Sir Thomas Cave, and Charles Edmonds, were future royalists.

There was also increasing reluctance to carry out military duties among the gentry. By the 1620's, musters default had become serious, particularly among the squirearchy. Sir Euseby Isham defaulted in 1617; Sir Baldwin Wake, Sir Rowland Egerton, and Sir William Chauncey in 1624. The Copes, Wingfields, Elmeses, Hattons, Caves, Haslewoods, Knightleys, Yelvertons, and Tates were defaulters between 1628 and 1635, and Lord Fitzwilliam was involved. The Wakes, Caves, Hattons, and Haslewoods were future royalists and were not puritans; but the radical element was important. Isham, Chauncey, Egerton, and the Knightleys, Elmes', and Tates, were puritans who resisted the 1626 Loan. (114)

In 1635, Northamptonshire was objecting to the payment of Purveyance; and Ship Money resulted in a new explosion. The same pattern of declining returns as occurred in Bedfordshire is visible. About five percent was uncollected in 1635; ten percent in 1636; thirty percent in 1637; forty percent in 1638; and over ninety nine percent in 1640. Sir William Wilmer, the Loan refuser, was again prominent in resistance, and once more the west seems to have been the focus of discontent. Sir John Dryden, sheriff in 1635, wrote that the greatest part of the arrears were in Towcester and Fawsley hundreds, and that in three villages in the former hundred women attacked his servants with forks, stones and staves. (115)

This opposition overlapped with the resistance to Coat and Conduct money for the Scottish Wars of 1639-40, and with the eruption of popular feeling at the recall of Parliament after eleven years. Yet again, the west paved the way. In 1640, the Earl of Exeter told Lord-General Northumberland that the east was willing to pay coat and conduct, but the west refused, and that the levied soldiers of the east were willing to be ordered by outside officers, but that those of the west utterly refused to be disciplined by any other commander than those of the trained bands. (116)

114. There was also reluctance to carry out military duties in the early seventeenth century, see Goring, J., and Wake, J., (ed.), Northamptonshire Lieutenantcy Papers and other documents, 1580-1614, N.R.S., xxvii, Goring's introduction, pp. xi-xii. But it increased after 1620. A.P.C., and P.C.R., and P.C.R. (Microcard), record the defaulters.

115. B.R.O., St. John MSS., J.1332, for resistance to Purveyance; Gordon, M., 'The Collection of Ship Money in the reign of Charles I', T.R.H.S., 3rd s., iv. The total levied on Northamptonshire was £6,000. N.R.O., Cokayne MSS., C. 2,857 (written in 1637). John, Earl of Peterborough; John Claypole; and the Cartwrights of Aynho, were future parliamentarians who resisted Ship Money. See Marcott, E., 'Shrieval Administration of Ship Money in Cheshire in 1637: Limitations of Early Stuart Governance', Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, lviii, pp. 137-71, for comparison.

116. Cal. S.P.D., 1640, p. 195.

Map 30 shows that three of the four persons imprisoned for resistance to Coat and Conduct, Samuel Danvers of Culworth, son of the refuser of the 1626 Loan; William Pargiter of Gretworth, who had been confined in 1626; and Thomas Emyley of Helmdon, were from the extreme south-west. The fourth was Francis Freeman of Wilby. Eleven of the twenty two opponents of Ship Money and Coat and Conduct, whose names have been traced, came from Sutton hundred, the extreme south-western one. (117)

There was a serious riot at Long Buckby in the north-west, when the Sheriff's bailiffs, who were collecting Ship Money arrears, were attacked by a group of women and children. At Higham Ferrers in 1638, only eleven of one hundred and forty or so burgesses appeared for musters, and the same constable of Towcester Hundred, who had been prosecuted in 1632, refused to pay Ship Money in 1637. Again, puritans were the leaders of resistance. The constable of Burton Latimer, who had tried to collect Ship Money, was drafted into the army by puritan manoeuvring, and the four who were imprisoned for refusing Coat and Conduct were puritans. Sir Richard Samwell of Upton and John Crewe of Steane were puritans who were removed from the magistracy, in the 1630's, and were only restored by the Long Parliament. (118)

Another aspect of gentry opposition in the 1630's was the resistance to the imposition of fines for disafforestation. In 1635, the Earl of Holland supervised a scheme for the revival of forest law which involved a wider perambulation of Royal Forests than had hitherto existed. Some formerly disafforested land was now classed as forest and fines were exacted from the owners. Only a fraction of these fines was ever paid, but it was another extra-parliamentary imposition which aggravated the local gentry. (119)

We have seen that this growing opposition culminated in the fervour of the 1640 elections. Only one of the Northamptonshire gentry elected to the Short or Long Parliaments of 1640, Sir Christopher Hatton, was a royalist in the Civil War. The other seven were parliamentarians. (120)

117. From A.P.C., P.C.R., B.C.R. (Microcard), and Cal. S.P.D. This list of twenty-two is undoubtedly incomplete, but it shows the predominance of the west.

118. Cal. S.P.D., 1637-8, p. 198; L.J., iv, pp. 136-7; Groome, A.N., 'Elections for Higham Ferrers, 1640', Northants Past and Present, ii, p. 244; Cal. S.P.D., 1639, pp. 23 and 184. For additional western resistance, see Cal. S.P.D., 1640, p. 192; and N.R.O., Knightley MSS., K. CLVII, 1,380.

119. For detail, see Pettit, P., The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire, espec. Table IX. In Salcey fforest, six forest villages were turned into forty two. Holland was Chief Justice in Eyre south of the Trent.

120. See Chapter 5, Section 3, part (ii). The seven were Sir John Dryden and Sir Gilbert Pickering, baronets; Zouch Tate; Richard Knightley; William Fitzwilliam (later second Lord); John Crewe; and David Cecil (later third Earl of Exeter). See Official Return of M.P's.

There is a strong continuity in this catalogue of political opposition in the first forty years of the seventeenth century. Throughout the period, the west of the county, especially the four most western hundreds, dominated this opposition, together with the town of Northampton. Map 30 reveals the extent of this domination. The same families were involved at all stages. The Danvers, Knightley, Wilmer, Chauncey, Samwell, Pargiter, Elmes and Blencowe families signed the 1605 Petition, and were confined for refusing the Loan of 1626. Two were imprisoned for refusing Coat and Conduct, and several were musters defaulters. All these were puritans and there is a definite link between religious and political radicalism. Puritans formed the vanguard of political opposition, and the close proximity of the residences of many of them, in the west, and their service on the Bench, or in the Deputy Lieutenancy, must have given them some of the cohesion of a political party. The south west was the stronghold of a gentry-directed political puritanism, which was essentially absent in the east, and this account of political opposition has reinforced the idea of unity of religion and politics in this region.

This undoubtedly continued into the Civil War. Map 19 shows that there were twenty two known parliamentarian gentry in the four westernmost hundreds of Northamptonshire, compared to twenty in the six other hundreds of the western division, and thirty three in the whole of the eastern division. The west, particularly the south-west, was the focus of religious and political radicalism throughout the period between 1570 and 1649. Indeed, as early as 1536, political opposition to the Crown had been centred in the south west. The second strongest concentration of parliamentarian gentry was in the area around Northampton, which had been the second focus of puritanism and political opposition in the county.

The previous section demonstrated that the focus of religious dissent moved away from the south-west in the 1650's and 1660's to the market towns, and the river valleys of the centre of the county. This was reflected in the political sphere. In 1661, Sir Justinian Isham remarked that a great part of western Northamptonshire had been won to the royal cause in the election of that year.⁽¹²¹⁾ The Knightleys were still the focus of a radical group, but their commitment was waning. Richard was created knight of the Bath in 1661, for his support for the Restoration, and, by the eighteenth century, the family were fiercely Tory.⁽¹²²⁾ ~~Richard was created knight of the Bath in 1661, for his support for the Restoration, and, by the eighteenth century, the family were fiercely Tory.~~

121. N.R.O., Isham Correspondence, I.C. 515.

122. Forrester, E., Northamptonshire County Elections and Electioneering, 1695-1832, notes their Toryism. See Chapter 4, Section 10, for more discussion of the Knightleys, and Chapter 5, Section 3, part (ii), for 1661 elections.

With the triumph of constitutional monarchy over potential absolutism, and the removal of the final obstacles to the development of agrarian capitalism, together with the spectre of social unrest unleashed by the Civil War, the revolutionary potential of puritanism was exhausted.

With it went the political radicalism of the south western gentry, and the location of dissent moved to the artisans and yeomen of the market towns and rich agriculture of the centre of the county. In both Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, the licensing of conventicles in 1672 shows that Presbyterianism had almost died as an ideology of dissent.

Political opposition continued after 1660. After the Rye House Plot of 1683, a Grand Jury investigated "a disaffected party" in Northamptonshire, which was said to have presented a seditious address at the last election, supporting the exclusion of James, Duke of York, from the succession. Fifty one supporters of the Whig Exclusionists were presented by the Grand Jury, and they were headed by Ralph Montagu, later first Duke of Montagu, of Boughton. Most of those listed were newcomers to the county, and only six are known to have fought for the parliament in the Civil War. These were the Chaunceys, the Samwells, the Catesbies of Whiston; the Butlers of Preston Capes; the Brookes of Oakley; and the Thorntons of Brockhall. The list included old royalists like the Fleetwoods of Aldwinkle; the Langhams of Cottesbrook; and the Wilmers of Sywell. Of these nine families, only the Thorntons of Brockhall, and the Langhams of Cottesbrook were not pre-1642 puritans, but only the Chaunceys, the Butlers, and the Wilmers came from the stronghold of pre-1650 political puritanism in the south west of the county. The vast majority of the fifty one radical Whigs had settled in Northamptonshire after the Civil War, and old puritans, parliamentarians and royalists had coalesced into a new type of dissent, for which the old pre-1650 categories were not applicable. Only nine of the fifty one were from pre-1642 Presbyterian families: Ralph Montagu, the seven which have been listed, and Francis St. John of Longthorpe, son of Cromwell's Chief Justice. (123)

However, although there was a strong continuity in the political opposition of the period between 1605 and 1640, it would be mistaken to regard it solely as an apprenticeship for the future parliamentarians. We have seen that several future royalists, particularly Sir William Wilmer, were prominent in the opposition to forced loans and Ship Money. Although by 1640, only a few diehards supported the King's determined obstruction of reform, and a large majority welcomed the opening of the Long Parliament, a Royalist party gradually crystallised between 1640 and 1642, and embraced

123. B.M., Addit. MSS., 25,302, fo. 156 and 156v.

former opposition leaders like Sir William Wilmer of Northamptonshire. (124)

One reason for this crystallisation was the spread of popular unrest in the countryside, and the threat to gentry property. The next section of this chapter examines the social and economic discontent in these two counties, before the Civil War, and section 3 of Chapter Five has outlined the popular turmults in the 1640 elections, but some evidence of an antagonism between the gentry and the lower orders, which cuts across a simple Court versus Country division, and which may explain the actions of men like Wilmer, is visible in the resistance to taxation. Sir Thomas Tresham was as unhappy about the implications of compulsory knighthood for the debasement of the knightage as he was about its constitutional aspects. He said that "some landless, many base and dosser headed clowns" were liable, and not one in forty was worthy of that degree. (125)

In 1634, Sir Rowland St. John of Woodford, a puritan opponent of the Crown, said that

"the comon sort of theise country people are bred up with a secret kind of envey against persons of better quality being especially jalous of great mens actions"

The same St. John was responsible for obtaining the evidence against a Mr. Hills who preached a rebellious sermon at Thrapston, in 1640, and as late as September 1st 1642 he was still searching for a peaceful settlement. (126)

Some riots against Ship Money have been mentioned, and the atmosphere of the times can be gauged from the statement of the constables of Burton Latimer that it was rumoured that sixty six constables had been hanged in Northamptonshire for collecting Ship Money. In 1640, Sir Christopher Yelverton wrote that the inhabitants daily increased their resolution to oppose the service of the King. In Bedfordshire, the opposition of the lower ranks of the county administration to the 1626 Loan was directed at the wealthy, who gave much less than their means justified, as much as at the principle of extra-parliamentary taxation. The tenants and poor cottagers of Shelton, Bedfordshire, petitioned against the parson and lord of the manor, in 1637, because the latter assessed themselves at less than they did the petitioners for Ship Money. (127)

124. Russell, C., (ed), The Origins of The English Civil War: Manning, B., (ed.), Politics, Religion, and the English Civil War, are useful introductions to the outbreak of Civil War, and the changing situation between 1640 and 1642. The Bibliography of this thesis contains the other important secondary works about the Civil War.

125. H.M.C., Various Collections, iii, p. 55.

126. B.R.O., St. John MSS., J. 1,368; 1,394; 1,446.

127. Cal. S.P.D., 1635-6, p. 229; Cal. S.P.D., 1639-40, p. 466; L.J., iv, pp. 138-9; Gilmore, G., (ed.), The Papers of Richard Taylor of Clapham, c. 1579-1641, B.H.R.S., xxv, pp. 108-9. P.C.K. (Microcard), 1636-7, p. 476.

The 1630's was the worst decade for wheat harvests between 1620 and 1690, and there was a general trade depression. Statements like that of a Northamptonshire sectary who hoped within a year to see no more gentlemen in England, in 1643, alarmed the gentry, and, as the Hackett Conspiracy showed, popular revolts were regarded much more seriously by the Government than those of the nobility or gentry.⁽¹²⁸⁾ It may have encouraged some opposition leaders to support the King in 1642, but it is clear that the 1630's resistance was more than just a gentry revolt, and it was more complex than a simple Court versus County division.

(iii) Northampton

The radical roots of the county town were very deep. In the 1260's, the town was a strong supporter of Simon de Montfort, and it set up its own rival university, but the battle of Northampton in 1264 was a setback for the rebels. It was a consistent supporter of Edward IV during the Wars of the Roses.⁽¹²⁹⁾

Northampton's estimated population in 1524 was 2,665, and forty five percent of the taxpayers on the Lay Subsidy Roll of that year were assessed on wages. It was over twice as populous as the second largest town in Northamptonshire, and the proportion of taxpayers assessed on wages emphasizes the strength of petty crafts in the town. There were already twice as many shoemakers as any other trade.⁽¹³⁰⁾

Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was the most densely populated town in both Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, and its position near Watling Street, and its location on the post-1603 London to Derby and Coventry to Cambridge roads encouraged migrants. In Chapter One, it was demonstrated that Northampton developed as a commercial centre for the Midlands, and the Civil War caused a dramatic expansion of the boot and shoe industry. Its function as the administrative centre of local government made it a social and political focus for the gentry. So, it was a centre of economic development and of social and geographical mobility, which not only brought the plague in 1603, 1605, 1638, and 1647, but also encouraged the circulation of radical ideas.⁽¹³¹⁾

128. Hoskins, W., 'Harvest Fluctuations and English Economic History, 1620-1759', Ag. H.R., xvi, p.17; Hill, C., The World Turned Upside Down, p. 19.

129. Trehearne, R.F., 'The Battle of Northampton, 1264', Northants Past and Present, ii, pp. 18-19. See also, Markham, C, and Cox, J., Records of The Borough of Northampton, 2 vols; V.C.H., Northamptonshire, iii, pp. 1-68.

130. Appendix 5 lists the most populous towns; Chapter 2, Table XV, gives the 1524 social structure; Chapter 2, note 64, lists the 1524 trades in Northampton. See Clarkson, L., The Pre-Industrial Economy in England, 1500-1700, pp. 88-9.

131. Appendix 6 lists the parishes with highest densities. See Map 3 for roads. See Chapter 1, Section 4, for industry.

But despite its industrial advance, the Reformation caused a sharp decline in the fortunes of Northampton, an important religious centre before the Dissolution of the Monasteries, after which it never recovered its complete predominance over the rest of the county. By 1670, Peterborough had a population only four hundred and sixty four less than Northampton's estimated population of 3,481. Its population increased by only half as much as that of the whole county between 1524 and 1674, and twelve of the other fourteen market towns underwent greater increase of population, between 1524 and 1670, than Northampton. (132)

The most distinctive feature of Northampton's social structure in 1662 was the fact that it contained a greater proportion of houses with more than four hearths than any other of the twenty four parishes in Northamptonshire with more than five hundred inhabitants in 1670. (133) This is to be expected of a county town which was a commercial, industrial, social, and administrative centre.

The roots of Northampton's radicalism probably lay in this contextual background of acute population density, and the town's role as a focus of geographical and social mobility. The growth of inns and alehouses in Northampton has already been examined in Chapter one, and the sheer size of the town helped to dilute the forces of social and juridical control. (134)

In 1540, there was a disturbance at the election of a Deputy Recorder of the town when Edward Montagu defeated Edmund Knightley, who had led the anti-royalist faction during the Pilgrimage of Grace. Some members of the Corporation supported Knightley. But radicalism really prospered in the corporation-inspired puritan movement of the 1570's. In 1571, the Order of Northampton was established, which was a unique attempt to amalgamate religious and political institutions on the lines of Calvin's Geneva. After a year it was suppressed, but the town was the first great centre of puritanism in the county, before radicalism moved into the gentry area of the south-west. The tradition remained because the corporation was committed to puritanism, and formed the vanguard of dissent. This probably explains why the corporation remained an oligarchy of mayor; aldermen; 'the Twenty-Four' ex-bailiffs; and 'the forty-eight' non-office holding burgesses, and why the franchise was confined to them, from the late fifteenth to the nineteenth century. There was less

132. Appendix 5 lists the most populous towns. See Chapter 2, Tables V and VI, for population increase 1524-1670/74. Appendix 3 contains detailed population estimates for every parish, and calculations of population increase, 1524-1670.

133. See Appendix 8.

134. See Chapter 1, Section 2, part (i). Everitt, A., 'The English Urban Inn, 1560-1760', in Everitt, A., (ed.), Perspectives in English Urban History, pp. 94-126, is based on Northampton.

resistance to the corporation in a revolutionary period, because it led the radical movement, whereas other towns were forced to widen their franchises and official bodies. (135)

Peter Wentworth, the leading Elizabethan puritan radical, was member of parliament for Northampton between 1586 and 1593, and we have seen that All Saints Church, which had been the scene of Lollard demonstrations, remained the focus of puritanism until the 1640's. The Marprelate Tracts were stitched somewhere in the town. In 1579, a local inhabitant was imprisoned for sedition, and the tabular abstracts for the 1626 Forced Loan reveal that there were four times as many defaulters in Northampton as in the county at large. In 1640, the mayor was presented to the Privy Council for refusing to collect Coat and Conduct Money, and the corporation refused to give a ceremonial reception to the Earl of Northumberland, General of the Army. The tumultuous borough elections of 1640, and those immediately after the Restoration, were discussed in chapter five. (136)

During the Civil War, the town was solidly parliamentarian, and it was one of the major Midland garrisons for the Parliament. After the Leveller Mutiny of 1649, Captain William Thompson made for Northampton with two troops of horse, but was shot near Wellingborough. Presumably, he was confident of a sympathetic reception in the town. (137)

In 1672, there were ten licensed conventicles in Northampton, and several Quaker meetings had been held in the 1650's. The radical tradition continued to the 1880's, when Northampton was the first town to elect an avowedly atheist member of parliament, Charles Bradlaugh. (138)

It is often forgotten that some seventeenth century English towns were still walled on the model of French cities, where the walls symbolised an independence from the monarchy. Northampton was one of these towns, and its political and religious dissent was similar to that of some Huguenot towns in France, which Richelieu was opposing in the 1620's and 1630's. When Sir Thomas Tresham arrived at Northampton, in 1603, to proclaim the new King he was forced to dismount at the south gate and enter on foot. The town was seething with rumour and activity, and the mayor

135. P.R.O., Req.2/4/235; See Chapter 4, Section 10, and Section 2, part (ii) of this chapter for the Pilgrimage of Grace. Sheils, W., 'Puritans and Politics in the Diocese of Peterborough, 1570-1610', University of London, Ph.D., 1974, has a chapter on Northampton puritanism. Hirst, D., The Representative of The People?, discusses borough franchises in the build up to Civil War.

136. Official Return of Members of Parliament; See Section 1, parts (i) and (ii) of this chapter for Lollards and puritan demonstrations; V.C.H., Northamptonshire, ii, p. 12; A.P.C., xi, p. 183; P.R.O., SP.16/83/56, 48 loan refusers in the county, 191 in Northampton, H.M.C., Ninth Report, pt. ii, p. 498.

137. Abbot, W., (ed.), Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, i, p.70.

138. Foster, J., Class Struggles and the Industrial Revolution, p. 2. Northampton is one of the towns studied.

refused to meet Tresham, who was a recusant, and the latter was forced to leave the reading of the proclamation in the market square until later, because of the unstable nature of the town. It was even suggested that he wait until evening when there would be fewer people about. At this time, Sir Richard Knightley, a puritan favourite of the town, was supporting the Seymour claim to the throne.⁽¹³⁹⁾

At the Restoration, Northampton's walls were demolished with those of Coventry and Gloucester. This was undoubtedly an attempt to curb its support of radical movements. The Earl of Westmorland described the walls as

"an invitation to mutinous and turbulent spirits, as we have had sufficient evidence by the late desperate designe of some disaffected persons to possesse themselves thereof".⁽¹⁴⁰⁾

This was written in 1662, the year the walls were demolished, and may indicate a fear of similar outbreaks in Northampton to the attempted Fifth Monarchist Rising of 1661. Certainly, the borough elections of 1661 were violent affairs. Northampton had paid the penalty for a long tradition of political and religious radicalism, and the 1675 fire was the final demise of the old Northampton.⁽¹⁴¹⁾

139. See Huxley, A., The Devils of Loudon, for the role of city walls in the development of French Absolutism; B.M., Addit MSS., 39,829, fos. 96-102. See Chapter 4, Section 10, for the Knightleys and the Bye Plot of 1603.

140. B.M., Addit MSS., 34,222, fo. 23; see also N.R.O., Isham Correspondence, I.C. 3,612-13; and H.M.C. Finch MSS., i, p. 206, for wall demolition.

141. See Chapter 5, Section 3, part (ii), for elections. Defoe, D., A Tour through the whole Island of Great Britain, (1927 edition), 2 vols., p. 485, described early eighteenth century Northampton as "the handsomest and best built town in all this part of England.... all their public buildings, are the finest in any County Town in England, being all new built".

3. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC

The main concern of this section is an analysis of agrarian unrest in both its localised form, such as an enclosure riot, and in its more general shape, such as the Midland Revolt of 1607. Dr. Clark's definition of a riot as a collective action or demonstration of at least five people joining together to voice a communal grievance, or remedy a communal wrong, has been used.⁽¹⁴²⁾ A major problem is the unsatisfactory nature of the catalogues of Elizabethan Star Chamber, an important source for enclosure riots. There are undoubtedly some which have not been uncovered by my researches.

An important point to remember throughout the following account is that both Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire were among the most densely populated counties of England, and both were in the Midland Plain farming region, an area of heavy enclosure. In 1377, the two counties were among the five most densely populated counties, and, about 1600 both were among the fourteen most heavily settled English shires.⁽¹⁴³⁾

(i) Upto 1607

Professor Hilton has concluded that the Peasants Revolt of 1381 was centred in areas of densest population, most complete manorialization, and of production for the market. Both counties were affected, and the outbursts at Dunstable and Wellingborough are examined in Chapter Eight, but there was also resistance to the Abbot of Peterborough, to customary dues at Strixton, Northamptonshire, and revolt by several artisans at Luton, Bedfordshire.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾

Increased wool prices at the end of the fifteenth century stimulated the spread of enclosures, particularly in the Midland Plain. The survey of enclosure in chapter one found that Northamptonshire was more seriously affected than Bedfordshire, but both counties were among the worst affected by depopulating enclosure before 1607, although, in absolute terms, the acreage enclosed was small. The number of deserted villages was much smaller in Bedfordshire than in Northamptonshire, and depopulation was much less pronounced in the former county. The 1517-18 Inquisition about enclosure recorded one thousand four hundred and five persons displaced in

142. Clark, P., 'Popular Protest and Disturbance in Kent, 1558-1640', Ec.H.R., 2nd s, xxix, p. 366. This is a superb study, and is useful for comparative purposes.

143. Darby, H., (ed.), A New Historical Geography of England, pp. 191, 252.

144. Hilton, R., Bondmen Made Free, p. 145; Reville, A., Le Soulevement des Travailleurs d'Angleterre en 1381, pp. cvii, xxxix, 40-1, 276; Dobson, R., The Peasants' Revolt, p. 237.

Northamptonshire, and three hundred and nine in Bedfordshire; and the 1607 Commission recorded one thousand four hundred and forty four and two hundred and fifty nine, respectively.⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ This may explain the relatively fewer examples of agrarian unrest which have been found in Bedfordshire. This county certainly played a smaller part than Northamptonshire in the social and economic unrest of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and, although the relative paucity of evidence may partly account for this, the qualitative distinction in the extent of enclosure and depopulation between the two counties seems important.

In 1538, more than sixty rioters broke down Thomas Brooke's enclosures at Blisworth, about ten miles south-west of Northampton; and between 1540 and 1541 there were attacks on the Rushton enclosures of Sir Thomas Tresham, whose grandson became one of the most hated landlords of the late sixteenth century.⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ But these were isolated incidents in years of very good harvests.

However, the years between 1549 and 1551 saw severe harvest crises and rocketing grain prices. There were serious rebellions in Norfolk, and in the west of England, and Northamptonshire and Rutland were also affected. Sir John Harrington wrote to Lord Admiral Clinton, in September 1551, that there was expected to be insurrection of "divers evil disposed persons of Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland". It was to have been centred on Uppingham, in Rutland, where four hundred were to have gathered, but the ringleaders were arrested before any concerted action could be taken. One Appleyard was executed at Northampton for stirring the people to rebellion, however his guilt was doubtful. He was acquitted by an Uppingham jury, and was only convicted at Leicester through political pressure from the Privy Council, who were determined to make an example of him. Sir Robert Stafford believed Appleyard was the victim of a miscarriage of justice.⁽¹⁴⁷⁾

There is no evidence of disturbance in Bedfordshire, but 1551 was a year of dearth. A group of gentry were appointed to enquire why food was so expensive.⁽¹⁴⁸⁾

145. See Chapter 1, Section 2, part (ii), Enclosure; Leadam, I., (ed.), The Domesday of Inclosures, 1517-18, pp. 38, 261, 456; Gay, E., 'The Midland Revolt and Inquisitions of Depopulation, 1607', T.R.H.S., N.S. xviii, p. 233.
146. P.R.O., E.321/2/51; P.R.O., STAC.2/28/11.
147. For harvests, see Hoskins, W., 'Harvest Fluctuations and English Economic History, 1480-1619', and '1620-1759', Ag.H.R., xii, and xvi. These only consider wheat harvests, but Harrison, C., 'Grain Price Analysis and Harvest Qualities, 1465-1634', Ag.H.R., xix, considers all grains. Haynes, S., (ed.), A Collection of State Papers relating to Affairs in the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth from 1542-70 left by William Cecil, Lord Burghley, (1740), p.115; Cal. S.P.D., 1601-3, and Addenda, 1547-1565, pp. 407-8.
148. B.M., Addit. MSS, 34,380, fo. 55.

There had been a great disturbance at Glapthorne, Northamptonshire, in June 1548, which Sir Robert Brudenell had been asked to suppress. No details are given, but it is possible that it was a symptom of the unrest of the late 1540's. (149)

Although Wyatt's Rebellion of 1553-4 was primarily directed against the Queen's marriage, some spontaneous outbursts of the lower orders of the west of England did occur. But the overall harvest of 1553 had been average and there was no dramatic rise in grain harvests. Consequently, the revolt did not reach the proportions of that of 1549-51. Robert Rudston of Oundle was the one Northamptonshire participant to have been found. Since he was pardoned upon payment of a thousand pounds, he was obviously fairly wealthy. (150)

Five individual enclosure riots have been found in Bedfordshire between 1567 and 1607. In 1567, more than eighty people are said to have destroyed the fences of William Markham of Luton. Thirty two Swineshead copyholders attacked Sir Edward Wingfield's enclosures in an undated riot, and Thomas Leigh's Bedford enclosures were destroyed in a similar undated assault.

But the most serious case occurred on the Earl of Kent's Blunham manor. In 1581, at the instigation of George Keynsham, a Tempsford gentleman, seventeen men dug a ditch on the Earl's land and destroyed his grass. In 1604, Robert Ball led a similar attack, which exhibited a feature of many agrarian rebellions from that of 1381 through to the Midland Revolt: one of the rioters, in this case a vagrant called Thomas Reyner, was termed Captain, and his battle-cry was "Now for King James and the commons of Blunham". Dr. Clark found that such deferential character, and claims to be acting in the Prince's name were present in popular disturbances in Kent. (151)

In these three dated cases, the harvests had been good or average.

More examples have been uncovered for Northamptonshire. In 1570, about twenty people from the Buckinghamshire parish of Stoke Goldington attacked Sir Robert Lane's enclosures across the border at Horton; and eight years later there was a riot at Fineshade, near Corby. In 1581, approximately forty Braunston inhabitants pulled down a cottage which Euseby Isham had erected on land which they claimed as common. Sir William Fitzwilliam's crops in Helpston were forcibly removed in several

149. P.R.O., SP.46/1/171.

150. Walker, W., History of Oundle Schools, p. 21.

151. P.R.O., STAC.75/M3/15; STAC.5/W66/37; STAC.5/B65/26; for Blunham, see B.R.O., Lucas MSS., L.24/27, British Records Association MSS, B.S.1380; Godber, J., (ed.), Some Documents Relating to Riots, B.H.R.S., xlix, p. 152, and A History of Bedfordshire, p. 179. Clark, P., op.cit., p.380.

violent exchanges between 1591 and 1592, and about forty persons destroyed James Claypole's hedges and fences at Northborough in 1594. Four years later a similar occurrence took place on Sir Arthur Throckmorton's Silverstone estate. We have already seen that the Hackett conspirators planned to distribute pamphlets for a potential rural uprising in the late 1580's, and, at the same time, there was a serious riot of between sixty and eighty inhabitants, who claimed common, on Valentine Knightley's estates at Badby and Newnham.⁽¹⁵²⁾

As it happens, all these Northamptonshire examples involved puritan landlords, but section six of Chapter four showed that enclosure was not exclusively practised by puritans. Catholics like Sir Thomas Tresham were equally inclined to this form of land use.

In both Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, these riots were scattered throughout the length and breadth of each county. In addition, 1586, the year of the beginning of the Hackett conspiracy, and of the first riot in Badby and Newnham, was the only year of bad overall harvest of any of the years in which these riots took place. 1590, towards the end of the Hackett affair, was deficient, but the following year, in which Hackett was hanged, was a good harvest. All the other dated cases mentioned above took place in years of good or average yields. This is an important distinction. The years of widespread unrest, 1549-51; 1596-7, when a revolt took place in Oxfordshire, and 1607, the year of the Midland Revolt, coincided with bad harvests. But individual enclosure riots took place, in general, in years of good or average yields, and it has been suggested earlier that the failure of the Hackett conspiracy to galvanise rural unrest could have been due to this fact. There was no close correlation between riots and national indices of dearth and distress in Kent, either.⁽¹⁵³⁾

The personnel of these disturbances appear to have been mainly smallholders, craftsmen, or landless labourers, who were especially hard hit by the spread of agricultural capitalism, by raging price inflation, by reduction in demand for the products of farming or handicraft industries and by the seasonal vagaries of the agricultural year. Appleyard was described as "as tall a yeoman as ever I saw bred in Northamptonshire", and the rebels who gathered at Uppingham in 1551 were termed "light knaves, horsecorsers, and craftsmen". Three labourers led an undated attack on enclosures at Cransley, and there were five labourers, four husbandmen, and

152. P.R.O., STAC.5/H6/36; STAC.5/L.33/7; STAC.5/J.21/11; STAC.5/F8/2; STAC.5/C.45/23; STAC.5/R5/27; STAC.5/T.26/29; STAC.5/K10/17; STAC.5/K15/13. For the Hackett conspiracy, see Section 1, part (ii) of this chapter.

153. See note 147, for sources for harvests. Clark, P., op.cit., pp.377-8.

four yeomen in the attack at Swineshead. The 'Captain' of the Blunham riot was a vagrant. The leaders of the Oxfordshire Rising of 1596 included a miller, a carpenter, a carter, and a smith. (154)

As in Kent, a striking feature was the role of women. Eleven were participants in 1541 Rushton assault, and eighteen of the thirty-two Swineshead rioters were women. Eighteen of the twenty who destroyed the Silverstone enclosures were women, and seven were the wives of labourers, seven of craftsmen, and one of a husbandman. Women enjoyed greater general immunity from the law than men, and special immunity may have existed for women who were unable to fulfil their familial role of feeding their household because of food shortage, and who rioted as a result. (155)

(ii) The Midland Revolt of 1607 (156)

This was the most serious outbreak of agrarian unrest in the Midlands between 1500 and 1640. At Hillmorton, in Warwickshire, three thousand rebels assembled, and five thousand gathered at Cottesbach, in Leicestershire. Both these places are a few miles from the north-western boundary of Northamptonshire. On June 26th, the Venetian Ambassador wrote that

"the rising of the peasants has gone on growing from day to day to such an extent that they only required a leader to make it formidable and open rebellion. The flame burst out in the county of Northampton first, but spread so rapidly to other parts that they began to suspect it must have been fomented and arranged from high quarters.

Accordingly they are using the greatest vigilance here (London) and keeping a watch on all who may be suspected on religious or other grounds. The City guard has been reinforced, owing to the alarm, caused by the number of Catholics in the city." (157)

154. Cal. S.P.D., 1601-3, and Addenda, 1547-1565, pp. 407-8; Haynes, S., (ed.), op.cit., p. 115; P.R.O., STAC.5/C24/25; The Oxfordshire Rising of 1596 came during the sequence of bad harvests between 1594 and 1597. For detail, see Cal. S.P.D., 1595-7, pp. 342-4, and Allan, D., 'Agrarian Discontent under the early Stuarts and in the last decade of Queen Elizabeth', University of London, M.Sc., 1950, pp.16-31.

155. Clark, P., op.cit., p. 376, who makes these points about women's immunity.

156. The pioneering study of the revolt was Gay, E., 'The Midland Revolt and Inquisitions of Depopulation, 1607', T.R.H.S., N.S., xviii, (1904) Allan, D., 'Agrarian Discontent in the last decade of Elizabeth and under the Early Stuarts', University of London, M.Sc., 1950, pp.36-59, is a very full account; and a good summary is given by Thirsk, J., 'Enclosure and Engrossing', in Thirsk, J., (ed.), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, pp. 233-6. Passing reference is given by Davies, C., 'Les Revoltes Populaires en Angleterre, 1500-1700', Annales, xxiv; and Finch, M., The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families, 1540-1640, N.R.S., xix. But Gay and Allan are the fullest, standard accounts.

It is not my intention to rewrite the history of the Revolt. Allan and Gay are essentially narrative accounts to which I can add little. But neither has attempted to explain the location of the centre of the Revolt, and, although Allan does give some social analysis of the rebels, my main purpose is to place the uprising within the social and economic framework.

157. Allan, D., op.cit., pp. 49, 53; Cal. State Papers Venetian, 1607-10, (1970 reprint), p. 8.

The uprising began on April 30th, 1607, and the main Northamptonshire battle was at Newton, in Corby hundred, where forty or fifty rebels out of an assembly of a thousand were killed. This battle was fought on June 8th, and by July 4th, the Venetian Ambassador was writing that

"The peasants' rising has died down as quickly as it sprang up". (158)

Unlike the 1549-51 Rebellions, the Midland Revolt did not take place in a period of immediate harvest crisis. The harvests of 1602, and 1604-7 were good, that of 1603 was abundant, and that of 1601 was average. Wheat prices rose dramatically in 1607 and 1608, but overall grain prices remained well below the thirty one year moving average, between 1601 and 1608, and were nowhere near as high as those between 1594 and 1600.

It was the harvest of 1607, after the Revolt was over, that was the worst for several years. However, the cumulative effects of the crises of the 1590's may still have been evident. In a report to the Justices of Assize, about 1608, local Justices of the Peace believed that dearth of corn had played a part in the uprising. (159)

Religion and politics also seem to have contributed. In 1605, Northamptonshire had been riven with religious conflict over the Gunpowder Plot, whose main protagonists were from the county, and over the Petition against the Deprivation of Puritan Ministers. The Earl of Dorset believed that the libellous manifestoes of the rebels were drawn up by a puritan minister, and Sir Edward Montagu, a leader of the 1605 Petition, was thought to be very slack in suppressing the rebels at Pytchley, although he helped to win the battle at Newton. On June 21st, 1607, county dignitaries attended Northampton Church, where they were addressed by Robert Wilkinson, a popular divine. He personified the attitude of the Church, and, indeed, of puritans. Enclosing landlords, "some Circe heere that hath transformed men into beasts", were abhorrent, but popular rebellion was even more heinous, since it threatened the social order, which, even in Presbyterianism, contained strict rules between the elders and the mass of the governed. (160)

Antagonism towards Sir Thomas Tresham, a leading catholic encloser, certainly played a part in the Revolt, and in a conversation with Sir Charles Cornwallis, in August 1607, one Creswell was thankful that there

158. Allan, D., op.cit., p.53, says that Newton was near the Huntingdonshire border. This is Newton Bromswold in Higham Ferrers hundred. The other Newton is in Corby hundred, which was the centre of the Revolt in Northamptonshire, and which was owned by the Tresham family, against whom much of the rioting was directed. I think Mr. Allan has mentioned the wrong Newton. Cal. State Papers Venetian, 1607-10, p.9. (This source was not used by Gay or Allan). Map 31 shows the location of Hillmorton, Cottesbach, and Newton.
159. For harvests, see Harrison, C., 'Grain Price Analysis and Harvest Qualities, 1465-1634', Ag.H.R., xix, espec. p.154. N.R.O., Isham Correspondence, I.C. 3,209.
160. See Section 1 of this chapter for religious conflict. H.M.C., Salisbury MSS., xix, p.150; H.M.C., Buccleuch MSS., i, p.245. For Wilkinson's sermon, see White, H., Social Criticism in Popular Religious Literature of the Sixteenth Century, pp. 172-3, and more extensive extracts in Allan, D., op.cit.

were no catholics among the rebels, and he wished the King would moderate his treatment of them to prevent their inclination to rebel.⁽¹⁶¹⁾

But enclosure dominates both contemporary writings and the later accounts of the Revolt. The Royal Proclamations of May 30th and June 28th make it clear that the Government regarded enclosure and depopulation as the main causes. The submission of the rebels acknowledged their offences "upon pretence of Depopulations and unlawful Inclosure". A Commission of Depopulation was set up immediately after the Revolt, and Professor Gay concentrated upon its findings.⁽¹⁶²⁾

Enclosures were certainly the physical structures upon which the rebels concentrated their attacks. Cottesbach had been enclosed by a London merchant, before 1604, and the population was reduced by half; and in Northamptonshire, the rebels marched to Rushton, Pytchley, Haselbeach, and finally, Newton. With the exception of Pytchley, they were all part of the Tresham estates, which had been enclosed in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Sir Thomas Tresham, who had died in 1605, was the most hated landlord in the county. In 1603, there had been a riot against Tresham at Brigstock, and his notorious recusancy heightened the antipathy towards him. In the suspicious atmosphere after the Gunpowder Plot, it was easy to make Tresham the posthumous scapegoat for the Revolt, and easy to focus the attention of the rebels upon his enclosures. Miss Finch has suggested that his financial problems, which prompted his enclosures, were primarily responsible for the Midland Revolt.⁽¹⁶³⁾

But he was not the only villain of the peace. At Pytchley, the Isham family were fierce enclosers, and the Montagus were equally culpable. Sir Edward had to destroy Boughton enclosures in 1608; Sir Walter was prosecuted in 1606 for depopulating Hanging Houghton; and William Montagu had enclosed at Little Oakley and Geddington.

Surprisingly, no one has fully analysed the only surviving list of rebels; the one hundred and forty three who surrendered between August and September 1607.⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ Although the rioters made for the centres, mentioned

161. Sawyer, E., (ed.), Sir Ralph Winwood: Memorials of Affairs of State in the Reigns of Queen Elizabeth I and James I, (1727), ii, p. 336. Letter of Cornwallis to the Earl of Salisbury.
162. Larkin, J., and Hughes, P., (ed.), Stuart Royal Proclamations, vol. i, 1603-25, pp. 152-7 H.M.C., Buccleuch MSS, iii, p. 118. Gay, E., op.cit. The findings of the Commission are discussed in Chapter 1, Section 2, part (ii), Enclosure, and in part (i) of this Section of this chapter.
163. For Cottesbach, see Parker, L., 'Agrarian Revolution at Cottesbach, 1501-1612', Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society, xxiv. Pettit, P., The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire, 1558-1714, N.R.S., xxiii, pp. 172-4, discusses the Brigstock riot of 1603. Finch, M., op.cit., pp. 87-8.
164. Full list of names and place of origin in N.R.O., Photostat 847; Abstract in H.M.C., Buccleuch MSS., iii, p. 118. They are plotted on Map 31.

above, three of which were Tresham manors, none of these one hundred and forty three lived in these centres. Indeed, none came from a Tresham estate. However, a large group came from Kettering, a town close to the Montagu residence and under their tutelage; thirteen came from Broughton, where the Montagus possessed lands; six came from Thrapston, which was close to their castle at Barnwell; and another came from their estate at Little Oakley. The Montagus owned Brigstock manor, where the 1603 riots took place, and Tresham property at Rushton and Newton adjoined the Montagu manors of Little Oakley, Brigstock, and Weekley. Sandwiched between them was the parish of Geddington, where both families owned a manor. There was a constant legal battle between the two families, and in 1608, an Exchequer Special Commission was instituted to settle a wrangle over 'The Brand', waste ground between Newton and Geddington.⁽¹⁶⁵⁾

Therefore, it is possible that the rebels were attacking Montagu enclosures as much as those of the Treshams, and it was clearly in the interests of the former to blame their recusant antagonist, and so add weight to their legal claims. Over half of the known rebels originated from parishes which were part of the estates of the Hatton family.⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ There is no evidence that the Hattons were enclosing at this time, but it further demonstrates that it is an oversimplification to single out the Treshams as the sole cause.

The root of this oversimplification lies in exclusive attention paid to the villages where most of the fighting took place: Haselbeach, Rushton, Newton and Pytchley. Dr. Thirsk has called them the ringleaders of the Revolt.⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ But none of the known rebels came from these villages. One hundred and forty three is certainly not a full complement of the participants, but it is the only list we have, and it deserves fuller analysis:

Map 31 shows that the great majority lived in the central part of the county.⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ This was the region of richest agriculture, and was characterised by classical mixed husbandry, with sheep and horses in the north, and grain in the fertile valleys. Enclosure was common, but the west,

165. P.R.O., E.178/4318, see also P.R.O., C2/Eliz.T.4/55 (a dispute between them).

166. 39 from Weldon; 29 from Corby; 9 from Benefield.

167. Thirsk, J., 'Enclosure and Engrossing', in Thirsk, J., (ed.), op.cit., p. 232.

168. The 143 rebels came from Weldon* (39); Corby* (29); Kettering (27); Broughton (13); Benefield (9); Desborough, Thrapston, Harrowden (6); Naseby (3); Stanion, Lowick (2); Middleton, Thorpe Malsor, Lt.Oakley, Cransley (1); N.R.O., Photostat 847.

(* = forest villages) Appendix 3 notes forest villages.

with its mass of deserted villages, seems to have escaped trouble. A crucial feature was the presence of Rockingham Forest, where both enclosure and profitable agriculture were less pronounced. Eighty one of the one hundred and forty three were from forest villages, and another thirty five were from parishes on the outskirts. This immediately lends support to the thesis that forest areas were more liable to be rebellious because of their larger acreage, extended settlement patterns, and diluted social controls. (169)

The social structure of those parishes which provided more than three rebels on the list of one hundred and forty three was not particularly distinctive, either in 1524 or 1662, compared to the east division as a whole. Similarly, thirty nine percent of their houses were exempted from the 1670 Hearth Tax, compared to thirty six percent for the east division, as a whole, and forty percent for the west division. Although forest villages, as a whole, contained a greater proportion of exemptions than fielden parishes, these particular rebel parishes were not distinctive, in this sense. (170)

The distinctive feature of these parishes lay in their demographic history.

Table XLV. Demographic History of those parishes which provided more than three rebels in the Midland Revolt (171)

	ESTIMATED POPULATION IN 1524	DENSITY OF POPULATION IN 1524 (persons per sq.m)	ESTIMATED POPULATION IN 1670	DENSITY OF POPULATION IN 1670 (persons per sq.m)	PERCENTAGE INCREASE OF POPULATION 1524-1670
Weldon	391	68.0	769	133.8	96.68
Corby	242	55.38	514	117.6	112.4
Kettering	744	167.6	1,449	326.4	94.75
Broughton	221	55.25	285	71.25	28.96
Benefield	391	49.06	701	87.94	79.29
Desborough	327	87.42	395	105.6	20.80
Thrapston	208	134.2	450	290.3	116.3
Harrowden(both)	306	74.27	373	90.53	21.90
TOTAL	2,830	78.74	4,936	137.3	74.40
All Market towns	10,846	144.7	19,795	264.0	82.47
All forest villages	10,029	64.65	15,628	103.2	55.82
WHOLE COUNTY	64,420	64.42	94,646	95.98	46.92

169. This thesis is propounded by Thirsk, J., 'Industries in the Countryside', in Fisher, F., (ed.), Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England; Everitt, A., Change in the Provinces in the Seventeenth Century; Hill, C., The World Turned Upside Down; and is repeated by Clark, P., op.cit., p. 378.

170. From Appendix 4 and Table XV. 1524/44: rebel villages 60.4% assessed upto £2 (East division, 58.8%); 6.4% over £10 (7.8%); 1662: rebel villages 52% houses of 1 hearth (East division, 53.5%); 35.9%, 2-3 hearths (33.8%); 12.1%, + 3 hearths (13.7%). See Appendix 4 for 1670 Hearth Tax; and Table XVII for forest village exemptions.

171. The population figures are taken from Appendix 3, which also lists parish densities and increases of population. The total square mileage of these eight rebel parishes was 35.94. Population figures

Although the density of population in these rebel parishes was not as high as in the market towns, it was significantly higher than that of the forest villages and the county, as a whole. Their population increased between 1524 and 1670 almost as much as that of the market towns, where demographic increase was most pronounced. Indeed, Corby and Thrapston more than doubled in size, and Weldon and Kettering nearly doubled. All these villages had more than two hundred inhabitants in 1524, and only Broughton had less than three hundred in 1670. Weldon, Kettering, and Thrapston were market towns, where social control was diluted, and of the eight, only Desborough and Harrowden possessed resident lords of the manor. In both these cases, the residents were recusant gentry, the Poultons of Desborough, and the Vauxes, Lords Vaux, of Harrowden. This no doubt increased the antagonisms, and this central part of the county, where most of the rebels originated, was also the stronghold of pre-1642 catholicism in Northamptonshire. (172)

So, the homes of most of the known 1607 rebels were characterised by lack of social controls, coupled with very high population density, very pronounced demographic increase, and a relatively populous size.

Although enclosure became the justification and the target of the Revolt, this social context seems to form the essential background to the rebels, for whom price inflation added to their overcrowded situation, and their location within a socially dislocated environment. We have seen that the forests played little part in religious dissent, but Rockingham Forest was an important constituent of this social and economic uprising.

The same predominance of smallholders, craftsmen, and labourers, which we saw in earlier riots, is evident. The occupations of one hundred and forty of the rebels are given. 43.4 percent were labourers; 35.7 percent were craftsmen or artisans; 14.7 percent were husbandmen; five individuals were shepherds; and one was a woman. (173) There were also the same stress on loyalty to the King, and an alliance of Crown and commons as was apparent in the Blunham case of 1581, and in the Kent examples studied by Dr. Clark. The same nominal leadership of a 'Captain', in this case John Reynolds, alias Captain Pouch, is also visible. (174)

171. and densities for the whole county, market towns, and forest villages, are taken from Chapter 2, Tables VI and X. In the list of rebels, no distinction is made between Great and Little Harrowden, so the two parishes have been combined in this table (see Appendix 3 for each village of Harrowden).

172. See Section 1, part (iii) of this chapter.

173. 62 were labourers; 51 were craftsmen and artisans; 21 were husbandmen; 5 were shepherds; and there was one woman.

174. For this unity of Crown and commons in the Revolt, see 'The Diggers of Warwickshire to all other Diggers' (1607), B.M., Harleian MSS., 787, fo. 9v, or printed in Halliwell, J., (ed.), The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom, pp. 140-1. Clark, P., op.cit.

An element of class conflict was involved, and it emerged in the form which the Government had feared during the Hackett Conspiracy. A libel was thrown into Caistor church, in Lincolnshire, entitled 'The Poor Man's Friend and the Gentleman's Plague', and in his sermon, Wilkinson said that the rebels planned to "levell all states as they levelled bankes and ditches", and "to accompt with Clergie men ... and to kill up Gentlemen".⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ The authorities were unable to use the trained bands to crush the Revolt, and it was left to an irregular body of servants and friends of Sir Anthony Mildmay and Sir Edward Montagu to fight at Newton. Presumably the trained bands, which were composed largely of smallholders and craftsmen, the same social groups as many of the rebels, were sympathetic to the Revolt, or might have gone over to the rebel side if summoned to crush them.

The use of the terms 'Diggers' and 'Levellers' looks forward to the struggles of the Civil War, and there is a continuity. The social programme of the Levellers was that of the small property holder, and their leaders were artisans and younger sons of gentry, who had been apprenticed.⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ Chapter eight shows that the 1650 Diggers of Dunstable and Wellingborough operated in a similar context of very high population density, and social dislocation in a market town environment.

Evidence of Bedfordshire involvement in the Revolt is scarce. But we do know that it was affected. In July 1607, the Earl of Kent sent a list of offenders enclosed in a letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury. Unfortunately, only the letter survives and it is impossible to gauge the extent of the unrest.⁽¹⁷⁷⁾

So, the Midland Revolt must be seen as more than a generalised enclosure riot. An examination of the origins of the few rebels, for whom documentation survives, suggests the importance of demography, settlement patterns, and the extent of social control in its occurrence; and it is too simple to blame it on a single catholic gentleman and his enclosures. Equally, it has a place in the long history of English social unrest between 1381 and 1650, even if Sir Charles Cornwallis did

175. H.M.C., Rutland MSS., i, p. 406; White, H., op.cit., and Allan, D., op.cit. (for Wilkinson's sermon). Hill, C., 'The Many-Headed Monster' in Change and Continuity in Seventeenth Century England, and The World Turned Upside Down, discusses class conflict in other popular revolts.

176. See Aylmer, G., The Levellers and the English Revolution; and MacPherson, C., The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism.

177. Printed in Gay, E., op.cit., p. 244. I have looked at the original letter in the Talbot MSS., vol. L., fo. 89, in the College of Arms, but there is no sign of the enclosed list.

describe it as "a clowde of Dust than of Raine", and say in August 1607, that it was now so dispersed that no memory of it was left.⁽¹⁷⁸⁾

(iii) After 1607

Evidence of rural unrest after 1607 is scarce. There were isolated riots at Sandy, Bedfordshire, in James I's reign, and at Creaton, Northamptonshire. In the 1630's, enclosures were destroyed at Caddington, Bedfordshire. In 1638, Arnold Spencer complained of "persons of meane condition", who damaged his river navigation projects on the Ouse, and, although the most serious riots against Fen Drainage were in Cambridge-shire and Lincolnshire, unrest reached Glatton and Whittlesey, on the Northamptonshire border. In 1606, Fenlanders had complained that they would be impoverished by the private engrossment of fenland by drainage undertakers.⁽¹⁷⁹⁾

But the most serious incidents were in the vicinity of the Midland Revolt region. In the 1620's, a group of Oundle inhabitants attacked the property of Daniel Deeve,

"with bagpipes playing and ringinge of bells by the Space of one Whole day and night with hollowinge and throwinge upp of hattes from the top of the steeple".⁽¹⁸⁰⁾

They even held their own Court Leet without the steward. Oundle was a large market town where social controls were diluted.

In 1631, there was another riot at Brigstock in Rockingham Forest, which involved about fifty inhabitants.⁽¹⁸¹⁾ Like Oundle, it was large in acreage and in population, and it possessed no resident landlord.

The reimposition of Forest Law in 1635 provoked a fierce reaction. At Weldon, one of the main homes of the 1607 rebels, Lord Montagu commented on the assembly of many poor people at the forest court to protest. Nororious deer-stealers like Jack 'O' Lantern of King's Cliffe, and Jumping Jack of Gretton, both populous forest parishes, flourished in the absence of social controls.⁽¹⁸²⁾

178. Sawyer, E., (ed.), Sir Ralph Winwood: Memorials of Affairs of State in the Reigns of Queen Elizabeth I and James I, ii, p. 336.

179. P.R.O., C.2/Jas.I.B6/60; C2/Jas. I.K4/4; P.C.R., iii-iv, pp. 40v, 113v, 116v; P.C.R., iii-iv, p. 15; Allan, D., op.cit., p. 117; B.M., Addit. MSS., 34,218, fo. 91.

180. P.R.O., STAC.8/121/20.

181. N.R.O., Finch-Hatton MSS., FH. 1,150.

182. Pettit, P., The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire, 1558-1714, N.R.S. xxiii, pp. 85, 92-4.

The biggest riot of all took place at Corby, another home of many 1607 rebels, and a populous forest parish, in 1640. Sir Christopher Hatton's recent enclosures provoked about two hundred copyhold tenants into violent destruction. The contunity with 1607 is strikingly apparent. Of twenty nine rebels from Corby in 1607, eleven of their surnames recur in this 1640 riot, and four possess the same Christian names. (183)

During the Civil War, Mercurius Aulicus reported that an Independent regiment had emerged in east Northamptonshire under the patronage of Sir Gilbert Pickering. It was led by John Wollaston of Barnwell, on the outskirts of Oundle, who was described by this royalist newspaper as "a strong desperate clowne like Jack Cade". (184) No doubt many of his recruits came from the Oundle area, which had a radical tradition that stretched back to the Hackett Conspiracy.

The next chapter outlines the location of Digger strongholds in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, which were market towns with long radical traditions, and were characterised by social dislocation, and absence of social controls.

(iv) Conclusions

Although enclosure was important as a physical focus for social and economic unrest among the small property holders and labourers, its importance is too easily overestimated. Less than ten percent of either county had been enclosed by 1640. The wider social and economic context must be examined, and it has emerged that the larger parish, both in population and acreage, often a market town, and invariably with no resident landlord, played a crucial role in the outbursts of this type of discontent. After 1600, agrarian unrest largely disappeared from west Northamptonshire. The market towns and Rockingham Forest villages became its focus, and clear continuity is apparent in location, and even in personnel, in some cases.

183. N.R.O., Brudenell MSS., BRU I, XIV, 15, and O, VI, 2. Compare Photostat 847 (1607 rebels). The four are Gilbert Collier, Robert Latimer, Thomas Rowlett, and William Tanner.

184. N.R.O., Fermor-Hesketh (George Baker) Collection, FH.704. Transcripts of Civil War Tracts, p. 75, Mercurius Aulicus, June 1643.

4 CONCLUSION

The pattern of religious dissent was transformed after about 1660. In both counties, its focus moved from a gentry-led political puritanism to nonconformity, based primarily on the artisans of the market towns, and the yeomen of the rich agricultural regions. Because of the wider body of evidence which survives for Northamptonshire, the transformation is easier to observe in this county. Before 1650, the gentry of the south west were in the forefront of religious dissent, but between 1660 and 1676, Presbyterianism virtually died among the gentry, and the market towns and river valleys of central Northamptonshire, which had been the stronghold of pre-1642 catholicism, replaced the west as the centres of nonconformity.

The same change is noticeable in political dissent. Political Presbyterianism among the radical gentry of the west was almost extinguished at Pride's Purge in 1648. Most of them gradually supported the restoration of the monarchy as the 1650's progressed, and, although some of the old fervour was revived in the elections of 1660 and 1661, even the Knightleys became progressively more conservative. The Northamptonshire Whigs of 1683 were a qualitatively different group from the veterans of the 1605 Petition, the 1626 Forced Loan; Ship Money, and Coat and Conduct controversies, and from the parliamentarians of the Civil War. Political puritanism lost its revolutionary potential after 1648.

In both religious dissent after 1660, and in social and economic unrest after 1607, the importance of market towns and populous parishes is apparent. The larger settlement, both in population and acreage, which often had no resident landlord, and which was heavily populated and underwent pronounced demographic increase, was crucial in both these types of dissent. Although forest villages played little role in religious radicalism, Rockingham Forest was a centre of social and economic discontent.

We have seen that the spread of communications, which, together with population growth, assisted the development of the market town, influenced the agriculture and industry of the two counties; the structure of land-ownership, and the composition of the gentry. It also allowed the easy transmission of radical ideas, and, therefore, influenced the pattern of dissent. This was particularly true of a marketing and commercial centre like Northampton, which possessed an ancient radical tradition. The market town became the industrial focus, and the centre of religious and social and economic dissent, between 1600 and 1676, and it is to a microcosmic study of two particular market towns that we must turn for a clarification of this pervading theme.

THE MARKET TOWN : A STUDY OF DUNSTABLE AND WELLINGBOROUGH

The importance of the market town has emerged at various points in this thesis. In chapter one, we saw that it developed a specialist economic function, both as a distribution centre for agricultural produce, and as a proto-industrial centre, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Its strategic location in relation to communications links was very influential in this development. Chapter two demonstrated that demographic increase in the market towns was considerably greater than in other parts of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, and greater than the increase for the two counties, as a whole. Their importance in local government, particularly in parliamentary elections, was illustrated in chapter five; and, in chapter seven, their role in the pattern of dissent was highlighted. The market town was an important focus of social and economic unrest in the early seventeenth century, and, after 1660, it became the stronghold of religious nonconformity. The borough of Northampton, the most populous town in either county, possessed an especially strong and ancient radical tradition. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the market town had a community function and impact beyond the immediate limits of the town and its inhabitants.⁽¹⁾

The initial selection of these two towns for analysis was made in the light of the presence of Digger colonies in 1650.⁽²⁾ It was hoped to locate this manifestation of social and economic radicalism within the social framework of the town, and possibly discover the reasons for the presence of these colonies. However, in view of the comments above, the choice of two market towns has proved even more appropriate.

Objectively, the surviving records of the two towns are not the most complete for the market towns of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. Bedford, Leighton Buzzard, Northampton, and Peterborough possess much larger collections of municipal documents. The Bedfordshire Record Office hold no Dunstable Court Rolls before 1743, and those for Wellingborough, in the Northamptonshire Record Office, and among the Brooke Manuscripts at Warwick Castle, are very fragmentary. Consequently, it is impossible to trace the changes in copyhold tenures, and the relative pressure of land transactions over certain periods, which have proved so informative to social historians. However, the use of national taxation and legal

1. Tables IV and VI illustrate the demographic increase in the market towns, and Tables VIII and X show their heavy density of population. Clark, P., and Slack, P., (ed.), Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700, p. 4, outline the four characteristics of a pre-industrial town, which are summarised above.
2. See Section 5, part (ii) for the Diggers.

records, and of the extensive series of wills which remain in the Public Record Office, and in the County Record Offices, enable a fairly detailed analysis to be made. Churchwardens' Accounts, Overseers' Accounts, and Feoffees' Books do survive for Wellingborough, and although Dunstable possesses virtually no parish records before 1660, its position within the royal estate means that several surveys of the manor are extant among the surveys of Crown property.⁽³⁾

Throughout the chapter, an attempt has been made to compare both towns with other market towns and populous settlements in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, to ascertain whether they possessed distinctive characteristics.

The structure of the chapter is broadly similar to that of the thesis as a whole. The first section discusses topography, communications, and the industrial and commercial framework. Section two analyses the demographic history of the two towns, and their social structure, and relative wealth according to taxation returns, compared to the other populous parishes in their respective counties. Some consideration is also given to social and geographical mobility, particularly in relation to surname recurrence at various dates, and to London influence. Section three examines the structure of landownership, and concentrates upon inheritance patterns, type of tenure, and London influence. A brief consideration of the court cases involving Dunstable and Wellingborough inhabitants amplifies some of these points. This is followed by a short survey of the personnel of Wellingborough local government, and some analysis of the wealthier social groups within the town. Lack of material prevents a similar study

3. The major sources are as follows. B.M., Addit, MSS., 34,368, fos.24v-26, Mr. St. John Cooper's (1741-1801) notes on Dunstable; P.R.O., Chancery Proceedings; Exchequer Bills and Answers, Special Commissions, and Lay Subsidy Rolls; Requests and Star Chamber Proceedings; B.R.O., Archdeaconry of Bedford Wills; Transcripts of Dunstable Records (C.R.T. 130/Dunstable); Dunstable Parish Records (P.72); FAC.7, Facsimile of Cambridge University MSS, Ec. 3, 34: Survey of Dunstable, 1624; Transcripts of Ministers' Accounts for the Honour of Ampthill, 1542, which includes Dunstable (CRT.100/25); Chew Foundation MSS., about a Dunstable school. N.R.O., Wellingborough wills proved in the Archdeaconry Court of Northampton, and the Consistory Court of Peterborough; Wellingborough Feoffees Book, 1599-1672, (M.L.792); Wellingborough Overseers of the Poor Book, 1650-1713, and Wellingborough Churchwardens' Accounts, 1617-1716, (these are uncatalogued, and had only recently arrived from the custody of the parish church when I consulted them. They may have been returned, by now); Wellingborough Parish Records (Parish Records 92); Maps of Wellingborough, 1803 (Maps 3 and 155); Finch-Hatton MSS., F.H.357, 412, 543, 296, (Court Rolls); SB.209-10, X.4,580, G.I.326-31, (Court Rolls). All Saints Church, Wellingboro, Parish Registers, 1586ff. Warwick Castle, Brooke MSS., Wellingborough Records, (the Brookes owned a Wellingborough manor from 1613), Boxes 411-14 (general family accounts); BB.401, 3 boxes; BB.402, boxes 580-8, 592-3 (mainly Court Rolls and surveys); Wellingborough

of Dunstable parochial administration. Section five examines dissent in its religious and in its social and political form. In an attempt to demonstrate the ancient radical traditions of both towns, some medieval examples have been used. There is an especially detailed analysis of the Diggers of Wellingborough, but absence of evidence again prevents a parallel study of the Dunstable Digger colony.

The chapter shows that dissent was equally likely to be found in market towns as in forest villages. In Dunstable and Wellingborough, population pressure and the problem of poverty were acute; geographical position and commercial function made them open to immigration and to social and geographical mobility; and neither had a resident lord of the manor after 1536. Both towns possessed ancient traditions of religious and of social and political radicalism, of which Digger colonies were only one, if a very important, manifestation.

The social and economic context helps to explain why the Diggers were located in these towns, rather than in others in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, but this should not be overemphasised. Other parishes had even more intense demographic pressure and a greater proportion of poor in the population.

It is hoped that the chapter reinforces the point made in chapter two that historians should concentrate upon the market town, as a potential source of dissent, as much as upon the forest village.

3. Court Rolls, boxes 44-6, rolls 687-713; BB.470, Court Book, 1623-42; Box T.D.76/29. These records were transferred to Warwickshire Record Office for examination, and this last box number is the Record Office reference.

Also, P.R.O., Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, (PROB.11) Bedfordshire Parish Registers, xlii, (Dunstable); Cole, J., History and Antiquities of Wellingborough, (1837); Lambourn, J., (ed.), Dunstablegia, (1859); Nicholls, J., Collections Towards the History and Antiquities of Bedfordshire, being Luton, Podington, and Dunstable, vol. iv of Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica, (1780); Peyton, S., (ed.), Ecclesiastical Troubles at Dunstable, c.1616, B.H.R.S., xi; V.C.H., Bedfordshire, iii, pp. 349-68; V.C.H., Northamptonshire, iv, pp.135-40; Derbyshire, W., A History of Dunstable, (1882); Palmer, M. and J., History of Wellingborough, (1972), (no manuscript sources are cited in the bibliography of this book); Historic Notes on Wellingborough, (1899); Stephens, T., Congregationalism in Wellingborough, (1892); Banfield, L., 'Dunstable in an Age of Revolution', Dunstable Historical Society Report, (1963).

For the Diggers, see Hill, C., The World Turned Upside Down, Thomas, K., 'Another Digger Broadside', Past and Present, xlii; 'A Letter Taken at Wellingborough', and 'A Declaration of the Grounds and Reasons why we the Poor Inhabitants of the Town of Wellinborrow, in the county of Northampton, have begun and give consent to Dig up, Manure and Sow Corn upon the Common, and Waste Ground, called Bareshanke, belonging to the Inhabitants of Wellinborrow, by those that have subscribed, and Hundreds more that give Consent', in Sabine, G., (ed.), The Works of Gerard Winstanley, pp. 439-41, 649-51.

Other sources are listed as they occur in the text.

1. TOPOGRAPHY AND ECONOMY

(1) Topography

The geographical location of both towns was the key to their development. The Roman settlement of Durocbrivae was approximately a mile and a half to the west of present day Dunstable, and it was sited on the intersection of Watling Street and Ickniel Way. This strategic position astride these major roads even outweighed the lack of water in the Chiltern chalklands. The town lies on the slopes of the Chiltern hills, which form the highest part of Bedfordshire. Dun is the Anglo-Saxon word for hill, and when the modern Dunstable was founded in 1119, and the Priory begun in 1132, Henry I gave the town a market, or a staple, and so the name, Dunstable, was conceived.⁽⁴⁾ The intersection of the main roads determined the structure of the town. It consisted of four major streets, which corresponded to the four points of the compass, and sixteenth and seventeenth century wills record that most of the prominent inhabitants lived in these four streets, which gave Dunstable a cruciform shape. The road from London, through Bedford and Nottingham, to Richmond, in the north, also ran a few miles east of Dunstable, in the second half of the seventeenth century.⁽⁵⁾

Wellingborough is situated at the point where the rivers Nene and Ise meet, and it contained at least three important bridges in the seventeenth century. The same London, Bedford, Nottingham, to Richmond road passed through the town, by 1675, and the Coventry to Cambridge road ran a few miles to the south.⁽⁶⁾ The quality of Wellingborough water made the town a spa in the early seventeenth century. In 1628 and 1637; Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria stayed in the town and partook of the waters of Redwell spring. In 1624, the Duke of Buckingham was so pleased with the spring water that he talked of building a house in Wellingborough, and other prominent people like Sir Francis Nethersole and the Mantuan ambassador drank the waters in 1625 and 1627, respectively.⁽⁷⁾

The existence of these wells is one possible origin of the town's name, but it may also be derived from the Teutonic word 'Vandalen' or 'town of wanderers', a name well suited to an early modern English market town, which lay on important trade routes.⁽⁸⁾ Unlike Dunstable, Wellingborough is

4. Beresford, M., New Towns of The Middle Ages, p. 394.

5. See Map 1 and Ogilby, J., Itinerarium Anglicae, (1675)

6. See Map 3 and Ogilby, J., op.cit. For bridges, see Palmer, M. and J., History of Wellingborough, pp. 42-6.

7. Historic Notes on Wellingborough, p. 17; Cal. S.P.D., 1623-5, pp. 327, 329; Cal. S.P.D., 1625-6, p. 62; V.C.H., Northamptonshire, iv., p. 138.

8. Historic Notes on Wellingborough, p. 17.

low-lying, and it bestrides the two hundred foot contour. Unfortunately, no sixteenth or seventeenth century map of the town survives, but an 1803 map shows most of the streets which are mentioned in wills between 1530 and 1650.⁽⁹⁾ Wellingborough did not possess Dunstable's cruciform shape. It had two main centres. First, a rectangular group of streets around the Church and market square; and second, a group of streets running north-south around Broad Green, to the north-east of the Church. The town centre was larger and more widespread than that of Dunstable, and the two important commercial streets, Gold Street and Silver Street, were at opposite ends, west and east, of the town.

(ii) Industry and Commerce

The medieval economy of Dunstable was dominated by the Priory, which had been established in 1132, thirteen years after the foundation of the town. In 1536, Dunstable Priory was the third wealthiest of Bedfordshire's religious houses.⁽¹⁰⁾ Until the Reformation, the Prior controlled local government in the town, and the Sheriff had no jurisdiction within Dunstable. But it was an ecclesiastical type of self-government, rather than self-government of the mayor and corporation type, in which the leading inhabitants governed. Therefore, the Dissolution of the Monasteries was a great setback to Dunstable. The flourishing woollen market declined, and, in 1628, only twenty eight inhabitants were assessed for the lay subsidy, compared to at least sixty in 1524. If the proposed bishopric had materialised, the decline might have been averted.⁽¹¹⁾ Dunstable's juridical independence was ended, and the town was absorbed into the regular county administration.

Wool was also important to Wellingborough's economy in the Middle Ages, and it formed part of the estates of Crowland Abbey until 1536. The Abbot's representatives exercised a similar authority to the ecclesiastical officials in Dunstable, but there was no self-government as in Dunstable, and the Dissolution of the Monasteries had a less damaging effect in Wellingborough.⁽¹²⁾

Dunstable was only thirty two miles from London and by the late sixteenth century its economy was expanding. Even in the fifteenth century, it had links with London, and Thomas Chalton of Dunstable was Lord Mayor of the capital in 1449. There was also a brewing industry in the fifteenth century because William Murlie, a very prosperous local brewer, joined the Lollard uprising of 1414.⁽¹³⁾ But both these features expanded rapidly after 1580.

9. N.R.O., Maps 3 and 155.

10. Savine, A., English Monasteries on the Eve of the Dissolution, Oxford Studies in Legal and Social History, i, 1909, pp. 200-13.

11. Godber, J., History of Bedfordshire, 1066-1888, p. 202. This also mentions the proposed Bishopric, and B.R.O., C.R.T.130/Dunstable, contains a note about it.

12. V.C.H., Northamptonshire, iv, pp. 137-8.

13. B.M., Addit MSS., 34,368, fo. 26; Nicholls, J., Collections Towards the History and Antiquities of Bedfordshire, vol. iv of Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica, pp. 198, 231.

The excellent quality barley of south Bedfordshire stimulated the malting industry, and six of the Public Record Office and County Record Office wills of Dunstable inhabitants, between 1580 and 1626, record maltman and brewer as the occupation of the testator.⁽¹⁴⁾ Before his death in 1606, Henry Fletcher, maltman, had purchased about fifty acres of freehold property.⁽¹⁵⁾

The barley of south Bedfordshire also furnished the raw material for the straw hat industry of Dunstable, Luton, and the surrounding area. But the greatest period of growth for this industry was after 1660. Larks from Dunstable downs were a delicacy in the London eating-houses, and by the late seventeenth century, fifty thousand a year were sent to the capital.⁽¹⁶⁾

Proximity to London and to communications links, particularly Watling Street, together with the products of local agriculture determined the economy of Dunstable. In the next section, we shall see that there was also an available labour force.

Wellingborough's economy also expanded after the late sixteenth century, and particularly after 1660. In 1610, John Norden noted that the town was distinguished by its flourishing market, and it held two annual four day fairs. One at Easter was for horses and dogs, and one at Whitsun was for sheep, cattle and grain. Wellingborough was situated in the centre of the most fertile part of Northamptonshire, and these fairs reflect the prosperity of this region's mixed husbandry. The wool market continued to thrive after the Reformation, and it appears to have promoted some small-scale textile manufacturing. John Ball and Simon Rogers were called glovers in 1539 and 1600, respectively; and the Edlatt family were glovers at least between 1568 and 1646. George Richard was called an embroiderer in 1584.⁽¹⁷⁾

In 1632, William Eason was termed a lace-maker, but it was after 1660 that this industry really expanded. According to the 1698 Petition of lace-makers, Wellingborough was the largest centre in the county, with one thousand one hundred and forty six employees.⁽¹⁸⁾

Francis Ellington, the town's first Quaker, was an upholsterer and employer of woollen workers in 1654.⁽¹⁹⁾

14. B.R.O., ABP.W/1602/76; ABP.W/1620/121; ABP.W/1626/100; ABP.W/1580/228; P.R.O., PROB.11/98, fo. 40v.-41v; PROB.11/107, fo. 11.
15. P.R.O., PROB.11/107, fo. 11.
16. Freeman, C., Luton and The Hat Industry, esp. p.9; V.C.H., Bedfordshire, iii, p. 363.
17. Norden's remark is quoted by Palmer, M. and J., History of Wellingborough, p. 75, and on page 79 they discuss the fairs. P.R.O., PROB.11/27, fo.252, N.R.O., Archdeaconry of Northampton Wills, Series 1, Book W, fo. 190; Series 1, Book S, fo. 55; Series 3, Book B, fo. 222; Consistory Court of Peterborough Wills, Book 2, fo. 39v.
18. N.R.O., Northampton Wills, Series 2, Book F., fo. 26; N.R.O., General Notes, Box L-M, Transcript of 1698 Petition. For lace, see also N.R.O., Wellingborough Parish Records, 92/2.
19. Cadbury, H., (ed.), Letters to William Dewsbury et alia, Journal of the Friends' Historical Society, Supplement 22, p. 17.

However, Wellingborough's industrial development was undoubtedly delayed by the absence of navigable facilities on the Nene before the eighteenth century, and the London to Richmond road, via Nottingham, did not become a major trade route until the mid-seventeenth century. The town did not possess Dunstable's advantage of an ancient arterial road, and it was considerably further from London. But as early as 1624, a carrier left London every Monday for Wellingborough, and, when Thomas Hackney made his will in 1626, he was about to embark on a voyage to the East Indies, as a member of the East India Company. So Wellingborough did have some wide-ranging commercial connections.⁽²⁰⁾

Professor Everitt has pioneered the study of the urban inn as a reflection of the commercial development of the market town, and both Dunstable and Wellingborough contained important inns. In 1537, Henry VIII refused the hospitality of the Priory and lodged at 'The White Horse' in Dunstable, and the town possessed at least thirteen inns in 1542. Camden described late sixteenth century Dunstable as "full of inns".⁽²¹⁾

'The Swan' at Wellingborough was used by the royal family during their visits to take the waters, and local justices of the peace dined at 'The Hind' in the 1640's, and it was used as an administrative office by Major-General Boteler in 1655.⁽²²⁾

Professor Everitt mentioned the growth of innkeeping dynasties, which were prominent in borough affairs, in Northampton, and a smaller-scale version of this is apparent in these two towns. William Ordway owned 'The Volte' in Dunstable and he was one of the four highest taxpayers in 1597. William Heath owned 'The Crown' and bequeathed eight hundred pounds cash in 1613. The Typlady and Knightley families were innkeepers who figure prominently in the Subsidy Rolls. In Wellingborough, Thomas Henseman, owner of 'The Angel', was one of the top twenty taxpayers in 1600; and John Freeman, owner of 'The Swan', was a leading taxpayer in 1544. Both these families regularly filled municipal offices in the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries. Edward Wingate, a member of the

20. For river navigation, and for general discussion of the industry and agriculture of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, see Chapter 1, Section 2, part (ii), and Sections 3 and 4.

Cal. S.P.D., 1623-5, p. 180; P.R.O., PROB.11/155, fo. 116-17.

21. Everitt, A., 'The English Urban Inn, 1560-1760, in Everitt, A., (ed.), Perspectives in English Urban History, pp. 94-110; Hayward, M., The Story of Dunstable, p. 11; Godber, J., op.cit., p. 201; V.C.H., Bedfordshire, iii, p. 355; B.R.O., CRT.130/Dunstable 7; B.R.O., Chew Foundation, MSS., Catalogue, which quotes Camden. Unfortunately, the 1577 Census of Inns does not survive for Bedfordshire, and no separate figure is given for Wellingborough (P.R.O., SP.12/118/1).

22. King, P., and Wake, J., 'The Matter of Isham Cross, 1642', Northants Past and Present, i, p. 19.

armigerous gentry family of Harlington, Bedfordshire, owned 'The Red Lion' in Dunstable in 1597. Of approximately one hundred and fifty Dunstable wills in the Public and County Record Offices, between 1535 and 1650, seventeen are those of innholders. The proportion may have been higher in view of the absence of occupation in several wills, and the fact that many refer to a landed family without mentioning the origin of their wealth.⁽²³⁾

The growth of the inn was a result of the location of these two towns on major road links. The inn became a meeting place of a wide social and geographical spectrum; and it reflected the function of these towns as regional industrial, commercial, political, and social centres. The influence of London was particularly important. In 1671, a Yorkshireman, on his way to London, met a drover at Doncaster, and together they herded twenty sheep south to Dunstable fair.⁽²⁴⁾

23. Everitt, A., op.cit.; This account is taken from P.R.O., and B.R.O., Wills and Lay Subsidy Rolls.

24. B.R.O., H.S.A. 1671. W.101.

2. DEMOGRAPHY, SOCIAL STRUCTURE, AND
DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH

(i) Demography

(a) Dunstable

Table XLVI: Analysis of Dunstable Parish Registers (25)

	TOTAL BAPTISMS	ESTIMATED POPULATION	OTHER POPULATION ESTIMATES	
			1544	527
1561-3, 1566-70 (8 yrs)	164	615	1563	633
1571-8, 1580 (9 yrs)	267	890		
1581-8, 1590 (9 yrs)	311	1,036		
1591-6, 1598-1600 (9 yrs)	306	1,020		
1601-2, 1604-10 (9 yrs)	303	1,010		
1611-20 (10 yrs)	296	880		
1621-30 (10 yrs)	269	807		
1631-40 (10 yrs)	292	876	1671	880
1682-9 (8 yrs)	329	1,230		

Before analysing the demographic history of Dunstable, it must be pointed out that aggregative analysis of parish registers is very difficult for urban centres because of their position on major roads, and the constant migration of which they were a focus. (26) The registers do not record this migration, and, therefore, they should be treated with some caution.

25. The Parish Registers commence in 1558 and are printed in Bedfordshire Parish Registers, xlii. Baptism figures have been used as the basis for population estimates because epidemics caused great fluctuation in burial figures, and not all burials had religious services. Marriage rates varied with changes in prosperity, and an indefinite number of outsiders came to a parish to be married, particularly in market towns. (Tate, W., The Parish Chest, pp. 80-2.). The multiplier used is that of decennial average of baptisms multiplied by 30, which is suggested by Tate, W., op. cit., and Hoskins, W., Local History in England, p. 143. However, in Dunstable's case, baptism figures are incomplete for 1564-5, 1579, 1589, 1597, and 1603. Therefore, for the decades of which they were part, the population estimate is calculated by the average number of baptisms, for those years which are complete, multiplied by 30. For example, 1561-70 has only 8 complete years of baptisms, which total 164. The average is 20.5, which, multiplied by 30, equals 615. Page v of the printed registers says that all baptisms between 1643 and 1681 are unreliable; therefore the eight years, 1682-9, have been used in the table, after 1640. Baptisms, burials, and their decennial averages are plotted on a graph in Appendix 19, (Figure A).

The other population estimates are taken from Appendix 3, where a complete list of sources, and method of calculation are given. However, it should be stated, here, that my 1671 estimate, which is derived from a multiplication of the inhabited houses on the Hearth Tax, differs from that of Miss L. Marshall in The Rural Population of Bedfordshire, 1671-1921, B.H.R.S., xvi, (1934), which prints this particular Hearth Tax. Using the same multiplier (4.25), she arrived at a total of 680, but I have counted 207 inhabited houses in Dunstable, which equals an estimated population of 880. Her figure may be a misprint, but in any case, throughout the thesis, I have used my own calculations and estimates.

26. This point is made by Clark, P., 'The Migrant in Kentish Towns, 1558-1640', in Clark, P., and Slack, P., (ed.), Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700, p. 152.

Unfortunately, there is no reliable population estimate for early sixteenth century Dunstable, and so, it is impossible to see if the post-Reformation economic decline was reflected in the population.⁽²⁷⁾ The 1563 estimate is very similar to that derived from the register of baptisms, and the table suggests that Dunstable's population virtually doubled between 1544 and 1590. Even if the 1544 estimate, obtained from the Lay Subsidy of that year, is less reliable than the parish registers, the population certainly appears to have increased by approximately eighty percent between 1560 and 1590, which is a truly dramatic growth. Population growth seems to have stopped after 1590, and decline set in after 1610. Between 1610 and 1630, Dunstable's population fell by approximately twenty percent, and between 1630 and 1671, it seems to have remained relatively constant at roughly the same level that it was in the 1570's. But in the late seventeenth century, population growth recommenced, and, between 1671 and 1690, an expansion of more than forty percent took place. The parish registers show a marked increase in the number of baptisms between 1680 and 1720, and by 1690, Dunstable seems to have been more populous than at any time in the previous one hundred and fifty years. This later period of growth coincided with the development of the local straw-plaiting industry.

Figure A in Appendix 19 summarizes these changes. The decennial average of baptisms rose dramatically between 1563 and the late 1580's, it then levelled off until the early 1600's, when it fell continuously until the mid-1620's. By 1625, the decennial average of burials was almost identical to that of baptisms.

The halt in population growth after 1590 was undoubtedly related to the incidence of plague. Of two hundred and forty nine deaths from plague recorded in the registers between 1559 and 1642, one hundred and twelve occurred between 1581 and 1594. Forty one people died of plague in 1582, and sixty three in 1593 and 1594. The early seventeenth century population decline was partly due to another severe bout of plague. Ninety one persons died of the disease between 1625 and 1637. 1666 and 1681 were also bad years in which fifty one and seventy, respectively, died of plague. The increase of through traffic on Watling Street heightened Dunstable's vulnerability to disease, and fifty five 'strangers' were buried in the town between 1558 and 1642. Although the term was possibly a disguise for illegitimate children or chronic beggars, many of them were outsiders

27. Hayward, M., The Story of Dunstable, p. 13, says that the population in 1536 was approximately 1,000, but he gives no reference and I have found no source for such an estimate. The 1524 Subsidy Roll is incomplete for Dunstable, so that cannot be used (see Appendix 3).

because their place of origin is given. (28)

Appendix 5 shows that Dunstable was Bedfordshire's eighth largest town in 1544; sixth largest in 1563; and fifth largest in 1671. (29) Its overall increase in population between 1563 and 1671 of thirty nine percent, was smaller than that of any other Bedfordshire market town, with the exception of Leighton Buzzard, for which there is no 1563 population estimate upon which to base a calculation, and Biggleswade. (30) It may be that Dunstable was particularly hard hit by the plague, or the town may not have recovered from the setback of the dissolution of the Priory until the late seventeenth century.

However, the most distinctive demographic feature of Dunstable was its abnormally heavy density of population. The parish had the smallest acreage of any single Bedfordshire parish with five hundred and twenty acres. This meant that its density in 1544 was 650.6 persons per square mile; in 1563 it was 781.4; and in 1671, it was 1,086. Appendix 6 shows that Dunstable was by far the most densely populated parish in the county, and at all three dates it was about twice as heavily settled as Bedford. Only Northampton, of any parish in the two counties, possessed a greater population density, and it should be remembered that, at these three dates, Dunstable's population was not as large as it was between 1590 and 1610, when the density was even greater. (31) The effect of this upon the social framework of the town must have been profound.

28. I am grateful to Professor Aylmer for this point about strangers, who are discussed more fully in the social and geographical mobility section.
29. There is no 1563 estimate for Leighton Buzzard, but it is likely to have been considerably larger than Dunstable. See Appendix 5.
30. Appendix 3 lists the population increases of every Bedfordshire parish between 1563 and 1671, and Appendix 7 lists those parishes with the greatest and smallest percentage increase. The increases in the other market towns were:
Woburn, 213.5%; Potton, 135.8%; Luton, 128%; Campton/Shefford, 78.9%; Toddington, 86.4%; Ampthill, 81.06%; Bedford 76.83%; Biggleswade's population underwent a slight decline.
31. See Appendix 6. In 1590, when its population is estimated at 1,036 (see Table XLVI), the density was 1,308 persons per square mile. Acreages of every parish are listed in Appendix 3, and are taken from British Parliamentary Papers, Population 3, 1841 Census, which was before late nineteenth century local government reforms restructured many parishes. Thirsk, J., Sources of Information on Population 1500-1760, recommends the use of Directories and similar sources of the 1840's and 1850's to establish acreages for population density calculations.

(b) WellingboroughTable XLVII: Analysis of Wellingborough Parish Registers (32)

		TOTAL BAPTISMS	ESTIMATED POPULATION	OTHER POPULATION ESTIMATES	
				1524	1,067
				1544	854
1586-90	(5 yrs)	233	1,398		
1591-1600	(10 yrs)	496	1,488		
1601-10	(10 yrs)	501	1,503		
1611-20	(10 yrs)	572	1,716		
1621-3, 1628-30	(6 yrs)	339	1,695		
1631-2, 1634-40	(9 yrs)	564	1,881		
1641-50	(10 yrs)	672	2,016		
1651-9	(9 yrs)	597	2,142		
				1670	2,167
				1674	2,163

If the two earliest population estimates, which are derived from Lay Subsidy Rolls, are accurate, they suggest that Wellingborough suffered a decline after the Reformation. But between 1544 and 1590, the population increased by 63.7 percent, whereas that of Dunstable appears to have doubled in the same period. However, unlike Dunstable, population growth did not cease after 1590. In the thirty years after this date, it seems to have grown by another 22.75 percent.

Figures A and B of Appendix 19 show a striking similarity between the demography of Dunstable and Wellingborough in the 1620's. In both graphs, the decennial averages of baptisms and of burials virtually meet in the middle of the decade, which suggests that both towns were victims of a similar epidemic. Sixty eight Dunstable inhabitants died of plague between 1625 and 1630, and, although cause of death is not recorded in Wellingborough registers, there were two hundred and seventy six deaths in the town in the years 1621-4, and Figure B shows that the decennial average of burials rose steeply between 1616 and 1626. This probably explains the temporary halt of population growth in Wellingborough, in the 1620's.

32. The registers are at All Saints Church, Wellingborough, and they commence in 1586. See note 25 for methodology of calculating population. Baptisms for the years 1624-7, 1633, and 1660 are missing. For the decades of which they were part, population has been estimated by multiplying the average number of baptisms of those years which are available by 30.

Baptisms, burials, and their decennial averages are plotted on a graph in Appendix 19 (Figure B).

Other population estimates are taken from Appendix 3, where a full list of sources and method of calculation are given.

Unlike Dunstable, where population remained fairly constant between 1620 and 1670, Wellingborough's population continued to grow after 1630. Between 1630 and 1670, it increased by 27.84 percent.

Overall, the demographic history of Dunstable exhibited much wider fluctuations than that of Wellingborough. Dunstable expanded more dramatically than the latter between 1544 and 1590, and it suffered a more severe decline than Wellingborough in the early seventeenth century. Apart from the 1620's, Wellingborough's demographic history between 1544 and 1670 was one of gradual, continuous growth. In these one hundred and twenty six years, its population increased by 153.8 percent, compared to 67 percent increase in Dunstable, between 1544 and 1671.

However, the population of Wellingborough did increase more between 1544 and 1610, than it did between 1610 and 1674. The percentage increases are 75.98 percent, and 44.17 percent, respectively.

Despite the absence of cause of decease, Figure B of Appendix 19 gives a clear indication of the likely years of plague in Wellingborough. The years 1621-4 have been mentioned, but 1590, 1598, 1637-8, 1642, 1654, and 1657-9, were years of unusually high incidence of burials. There was a violent skirmish in Wellingborough in 1642, and this may partly account for the large number of deaths in that year. (33)

The population of the town slightly more than doubled between 1524 and 1670, and only four Northamptonshire market towns underwent a greater increase in the same period. (34)

In 1524, Wellingborough was the second largest town in Northamptonshire, after Northampton, but, by 1670, Peterborough had forced it into third place. (35)

Wellingborough possessed the seventh highest density of population in the county, in 1524; but in 1670, it had become the fourth most densely populated parish, and, apart from Northampton, which was by far the most densely settled, Wellingboroughs density was not much less than that of Kettering or Peterborough, which were second and third, respectively. (36) Whereas Dunstable had the smallest acreage of any parish in Bedfordshire, Wellingborough had the seventh largest acreage among Northamptonshire parishes, with four thousand four hundred and ninety acres. (37)

33. See Section 5, part (ii) of this chapter for the 1642 skirmish. There is no mention of plague in Dunstable and Wellingborough in Shrewsbury, J., History of Bubonic Plague in the British Isles.

34. See Appendix 7. The four were Daventry, 320.8%; Peterborough, 185.1%; Aynho, 141.9%; Thrapston, 116.3%. Increases in other market towns were Rockingham, 9.1%; Weldon, 96.7%; Higham Ferrers 14.8%; Kettering 94.7%; Brackley 74.8%; Oundle, 61.4%; Rothwell, 83.8%; Towcester, 58.9%; Kings Cliffe, 99.3%; Northampton, 50.6%; these increases are listed in Appendix 3.

35. See Appendix 5.

36. See Appendix 6. Wellingborough's density was 152.2 persons per square mile in 1524, and 309.1 in 1670.

37. See Appendix 3. Acreages are taken from British Parliamentary Papers, Population 3, 1841 Census.

So, Wellingborough's population increased more dramatically than that of Dunstable between 1544 and 1670; Dunstable was a much smaller parish than Wellingborough in acreage, and it had a considerably heavier density of population. However, both towns suffered particularly severe population increase or demographic fluctuation, and both were especially densely settled in comparison to other parishes of their respective counties. It is clear that social dislocation as a result of demographic characteristics must have been particularly marked in these two market towns.

(ii) Social Structure

(a) Dunstable

Appendix eight analyses the social structure of those parishes with more than five hundred inhabitants. Unfortunately, the returns for the 1524-5 subsidy are very fragmentary and it is impossible to gauge the early sixteenth century social structure of the most populous settlements. In any case, the Dunstable survey is incomplete.⁽³⁸⁾ But assessments for the 1544-6 Lay Subsidy do survive, and Appendix eight records these.

Compared to the other parishes with more than five hundred inhabitants, Dunstable was relatively prosperous in the 1540's. It had the second lowest percentage of taxpayers assessed at upto two pounds, and the second highest proportion of taxpayers assessed at between three and ten pounds. The town also possessed the third highest percentage of taxpayers assessed at more than ten pounds. This subsidy was levied less than ten years after the Dissolution of the Monasteries, and it is probable that Dunstable's pre-Reformation prosperity was still in evidence.

However, by 1671 the social structure had altered. Appendix eight shows that Dunstable had the highest proportion of inhabited houses exempted from the 1671 Hearth Tax of any Bedfordshire parish, which contained more than five hundred inhabitants. The percentage of exemptions was 45.9, and Woburn was a considerable way behind, in second place, with 34.3 percent. Those who paid neither Church nor poor rate; persons inhabiting a house worth less than one pound a year, and who did not have any other property exceeding that value, nor an annual income of more than ten pounds; and industrial hearths and smaller charitable institutions, were exempted. Exemptions are usually equated with labourers, and, so, it appears that Dunstable had a particularly heavy concentration of wage labourers and

38. See Appendix 3 for discussion of subsidies. Appendix 4 lists the numbers of taxpayers in each category of assessment for every parish.

paupers, compared to other Bedfordshire towns.⁽³⁹⁾ The lack of a complete 1524 Subsidy return for Dunstable, and the absence of the wage-assessed category from the 1544-6 Subsidy means that it is impossible to compare the 1671 proportion of wage labourers with any early sixteenth century one.

This 45.9 percentage of exemptions in Dunstable was greater than that in a social capital like York, and in stagnant market towns like Ashby de la Zouche or Melton Mowbray. It was also considerably larger than that of Bedford, Northampton, and Leicester, three county towns; and slightly larger than that of Exeter and Newcastle. Dr. Tranter has pointed out that the open lands surrounding Dunstable were an added attraction to the homeless, and from the reign of Henry III, there were constant proclamations against squatters who settled on the waste lands adjoining the town. Dunstable's position on Watling Street made it easily accessible to immigrants, and this relatively high proportion of exemptions suggests that the industry of the town was developing by the 1670's. But more prominent industrial centres like Colchester and Norwich, and weaving towns like Braintree and Bocking, in Essex, possessed considerably higher percentages of exemptions.⁽⁴⁰⁾

The proportion of non-exempted one hearth houses in Dunstable (10.6 percent) was the lowest of any of the Bedfordshire parishes with more than five hundred inhabitants. Clearly, the proportion of very poor within the overall one hearth category of exempt and non-exempt was greater in Dunstable than in any other populous settlement in Bedfordshire. Appendix Nine shows that only four parishes in the entire county, including those with more than five hundred inhabitants, and all the other parishes, had a higher percentage of exemptions than Dunstable.⁽⁴¹⁾

In 1616, there were one hundred and twenty eight recipients of poor relief in Dunstable, which is 14.5 percent of the estimated population at that time, according to the parish registers. This proportion is much higher than that in Salisbury, in 1635, or in York, in the Eighteenth

39. Appendix 4 contains the material from which Appendix 8 is compiled. Appendix 5 lists the most populous settlements. Meekings, C., The Surrey Hearth Tax, 1664, Surrey Record Society, xvii, pp. xii-xiii, discusses exemptions. Everitt, A., 'Farm Labourers', in Thirsk, J., (ed.), The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1500-1640, p. 397, says that most of those exempted were probably labourers.

40. Clark, P., and Slack, P., English Towns in Transition, 1500-1700, pp. 113-14; exemptions from the Hearth Tax were 20% in York; 23% in Ashby de la Zouche; 16% in Melton Mowbray; 52% in Colchester; 62% in Norwich; 67% in Braintree; and 81% in Bocking. Howell, R., Newcastle and the Puritan Revolution, pp. 8-12; 41% in Newcastle; 27.4% in Leicester; c.40% in Exeter. Appendix 8: 32.6% in Bedford; 30.4% in Northampton (1670). Tranter, N., 'Demographic Change in Bedfordshire, 1670-1800', University of Nottingham, Ph.D., 1966, p. 74.

41. See Appendix 9, which is compiled from material in Appendix 4.

42. B.R.O., X.78. Table XLVI gives population estimate of 880 in 1616. Slack, P., (ed.), Poverty in Early Stuart Salisbury, Wiltshire Record Society, xxxi, p.6. (5% of population); Pound, J., The Norwich Census of The Poor, 1570, Norfolk Record Society, 297, p.10, 2,311 out of a population of 10,625

century, but less than the proportion of the Norwich population of 1570, which was recorded as poor.⁽⁴²⁾ In his will of 1640, Richard Finche of Dunstable mentioned

"the multitude of poore people that are encreased and more are like to bee",

and he bequeathed two houses to them.⁽⁴³⁾ The presence of domestic servants, which constituted between about twelve and fifteen percent of the entire population, and may have constituted as much as a third of the population of some rich urban parishes, modifies the number of wage labourers. They had the basic requirements of a roof and food, and were not in the same dire circumstances as most of the urban poor.⁽⁴⁴⁾ But despite this qualification, the problem of poverty in Seventeenth century Dunstable must have been acute.

In addition to a particularly high proportion of exemptions from the Hearth Tax, there appears to have been pronounced social polarization in Dunstable in 1671. The town possessed the third largest percentage of inhabited houses with more than four hearths, of the parishes with more than five hundred inhabitants. Dunstable's proportion (12.1 percent) was only slightly less than that of Bedford (12.3 percent), in second place. But Bedford and Ampthill, which had the greatest proportion of houses with more than four hearths, possessed a considerably smaller percentage of exemptions than Dunstable. So, polarization between rich and poor was more marked in Dunstable than in any other populous Bedfordshire town.⁽⁴⁵⁾

(b) Wellingborough

The nature of the surviving subsidy rolls makes impossible a comparison of Wellingborough and other Northamptonshire towns in the early sixteenth century. Wellingborough is in one of the three hundreds for which there are no detailed 1524-5 subsidies, and, although the 1544-6 survey survives, the rolls for the rest of the county are incomplete.⁽⁴⁶⁾ However, it is possible to compare Dunstable and Wellingborough in the 1540's.

Wellingborough had almost the same proportion of taxpayers assessed at upto two pounds as Dunstable (54.3 percent to 54.8 percent). But it had fewer assessed at between three and ten pounds than Dunstable (31.6

42. or 21.8%. I am grateful to Professor Aylmer for the York reference (4%).

43. B.R.O., ABP.W/1640/85.

44. For the proportion of domestic servants in the pre-industrial population, see particularly Sussex Tapes, History Series, H.6.(1970), Laslett, P., and Wrigley, E., 'Changes in Family Structure in pre-Industrial and Industrial England'; Laslett, P., 'The Size and Structure of the Household over three centuries', Population Studies, xxiii, and The World We Have Lost, especially, p.71.

45. See Appendix 8.

46. See Appendix 3, notes 10 and 11, for discussion of 1524-5 Northamptonshire Lay Subsidy, and that of 1544-6. Appendix 4 lists the taxpayers in the various categories. 82 Wellingborough taxpayers were assessed at upto £2; 47 at £3-£10; and 22 at more than £10. (Compare Dunstable in Appendix 8).

percent to 36.6 percent). As a result, Wellingborough had a considerably higher proportion of taxpayers assessed at more than ten pounds (14.6 to 8.6 percent). In terms of social structure, Dunstable was one of the most prosperous Bedfordshire towns in 1544-6, and Wellingborough was more prosperous than Dunstable, but that is all that can be said.

In 1670, Wellingborough had the second highest proportion of inhabited houses exempted from the Hearth Tax of the market towns of Northamptonshire with 51 percent. Only Rothwell, with 52.9 percent, had a greater proportion of exemptions. Indeed, there was a greater number of exempted houses, two hundred and sixty, than in any other parish in the county. Northampton and Peterborough, the only Northamptonshire towns with more inhabited houses than Wellingborough, in 1670, possessed two hundred and forty nine and two hundred and five exemptions, respectively. (47)

This proportion of exemptions was higher than that of Dunstable in 1671, and it was close to the percentage in Colchester, an industrial town; but it was still less than that of Norwich and of the weaving towns of Essex. (48) However, perhaps industrial development was more advanced in Wellingborough than in Dunstable, in the 1670's, because of this greater percentage of likely wage labourers.

But 'The Declaration of the Diggers of Wellingborough', in 1650, had referred to a trade depression affecting the town, at this date. They said that, according to the return of the Justices of the Peace at the last Quarter Sessions, one thousand one hundred and sixty nine persons were receiving alms in 1650. This equals 58 percent of the estimated population of Wellingborough at this time, and it is an incredibly high proportion. (49) It may be that the figure was inflated for propaganda purposes, but even if it is only partially correct, it suggests that poverty was much more of a problem in Wellingborough than in Dunstable. Economic depression and severe unemployment may have resulted in the distribution of poor relief to virtually all the inhabitants whose houses were exempted from the 1670 Hearth Tax. The Diggers said that more than half of Wellingborough's population was receiving poor relief in 1650, and more than half of the town's houses were exempted in 1670.

47. See Appendix 8. Market towns are indicated. Appendix 4 contains the raw material for social structure calculations, and Appendix 9 lists the parishes with the highest number of exemptions.

48. See note 40. Dunstable's proportion was 45.9 percent.

49. 'A Declaration of the Grounds and Reasons why we the Poor Inhabitants of the Town of Wellinborrow.....(see note 3 for full title) in Sabine, G., (ed.), The Works of Gerard Winstanley, p. 650. Table XLVII gives an estimated population of 2,016 in 1650. See note 42 for other poor relief figures, which are dwarfed by this Wellingborough one.

Another six Northamptonshire parishes with more than five hundred inhabitants, in 1670, possessed a greater proportion of exemptions than Wellingborough; and, taking every parish in the county, Wellingborough was ranked equal thirtieth in percentage of exemptions.⁽⁵⁰⁾ So, Dunstable occupied a much higher position in its county, according to the proportion of exemptions, than Wellingborough occupied in Northamptonshire.

Also, social polarization was not as marked in Wellingborough as in Dunstable. Less than eight percent of Wellingborough houses possessed more than four hearths in 1670, and market towns like Northampton, Oundle, Towcester, Daventry, Brackley, and Higham Ferrers, contained a considerably greater proportion of houses with more than four hearths.⁽⁵¹⁾ In general, the social structure of Wellingborough in the 1670's suggests a poorer town than Dunstable. Its proportion of exemptions was greater and its percentage of larger houses was smaller than those of Dunstable. Even allowing for possible overestimation, the recipients of poor relief in Wellingborough appear to have constituted a significantly larger proportion of the population than their Dunstable counterparts. But, in both towns, the problems of poverty, and of a particularly heavy concentration of Hearth Tax exemptions, were added to those of demographic dislocation.

(iii) Social and Geographical Mobility

It has already been suggested that outbreaks of plague in these two towns may have been related to their position on major roads. Their geographical location and function as market towns encouraged mobility, and recent research has suggested that the lower classes, particularly in-servants, were the most mobile sections of the community.⁽⁵²⁾ The demographic increase in Dunstable and Wellingborough, and the heavy concentration of poor, was probably a result of the influx of rural wage labourers and migrant poor. Mr. Beier has said that there was an exceptional south-eastern drift of vagrants in Elizabethan England, towards London and the south-east.⁽⁵³⁾ Dunstable and Wellingborough were situated on important road links between the north and London, and were, no doubt, influenced by this movement.

50. See Appendices 8 and 9. Dunstable was ranked fifth in Bedfordshire.

51. See Appendix 8.

52. Particularly, Clark, P., 'The Migrant in Kentish Towns, 1580-1640', in Clark, P., and Slack, P., (ed.), Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700; Cornwall, J., 'Evidence of Population Mobility in the Seventeenth Century', B.I.H.R., xl; Harrison, J., and Laslett, P., 'Clayworth and Cogenhoe', in Bell, A., and Ollard, R., (ed.), Historical Essays, 1600-1750; Laslett, P., The World We Have Lost; Beier, A., 'Vagrants and The Social Order in Elizabethan England', Past and Present, lxiv.

53. Beier, A., op.cit., p. 20.

The parish registers reveal that there was a Welsh colony in Dunstable in the 1560's; and the place of origin of eighteen strangers, who were buried in the town, is given. Eleven came from adjoining counties and from the East Midlands and Home Counties; two came from London; two from Yorkshire; and from Wales; one from Newcastle; and one from Kent.⁽⁵⁴⁾ The place of origin of strangers buried in Wellingborough is not given, but twenty-three are recorded in the parish registers, between 1586 and 1650.

Mr. Emmison's transcript of Dunstable parish registers, which is in the Bedfordshire County Library, contains a chronological index of surnames.⁽⁵⁵⁾ From this, it is possible to trace the occurrence of surnames, between 1558 and 1642, for eighteen letters of the alphabet.⁽⁵⁶⁾ Of two hundred and ninety surnames which occur between 1558 and 1580, one hundred and eighty three (63.1 percent) recur between 1581 and 1603, and one hundred and thirty one (45.2 percent) appear between 1604 and 1642. 54.8 percent have disappeared by 1642. Of three hundred and sixty eight surnames which appear between 1604 and 1642, one hundred and sixty one (43.7 percent) do not appear between 1558 and 1603. The absence of non-conformists from the registers, and the probability of some underestimation, together with the absence of those families which did not have baptisms or burials between 1604 and 1642, must modify the second set of statistics, but there does appear to have been a marked mobility of population in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, due either to geographical movement or to demographic extinction.

Plague undoubtedly contributed to this. Five members of the Kitchen family and four of the Turpin family died of plague in 1582. Five Wilkinsons and five members of the Loadesman family contracted the disease in 1593. In 1603, the disease struck down seven members of the Wayne family, and six of the Royle family.

Miss Marshall's analysis of surname recurrence on the Subsidy Rolls and Hearth Tax reinforces this pattern of change.⁽⁵⁷⁾ Of twenty nine Dunstable names on the 1581 Subsidy Roll, eleven (37.9 percent) reappear in the 1671 Hearth Tax. Only eighteen Bedfordshire parishes had a higher survival rate, whereas forty five had a smaller one. Of the sixteen surnames on the 1597 Subsidy Roll, three (18.7 percent) recur in 1671.

54. Bedfordshire Parish Registers, xlii, pp. iv-v, and actual registers.
55. Bedfordshire County Library, County Hall, Bedford, Local History Room; Emmison, F., Transcript of Dunstable Parish Registers.
56. The letters not used are I, O, Q, U, V, X, Y, and Z. The numbers are too few.
57. Marshall, L., (ed.), The Rural Population of Bedfordshire, 1671-1921, B.H.R.S., xvi, results are tabulated at the rear for the whole county. The raw material for her analysis is contained in B.R.O., CRT.100/10. But I disagree with her Dunstable figures, I count 16 names on the 1597 roll, she records 11; and I count 25 to her 21 on the 1628 roll (P.R.O., E.179/72/230, E.179/72/269). Calculations are based on my figures.

Eighteen Bedfordshire parishes had a lower survival rate, compared to eighty four with a higher rate. Seven (28 percent) of the twenty five names on the 1628 Subsidy Roll reappear in 1671. Again, only eighteen parishes had a lower survival rate and nearly a hundred possessed a greater one than that of Dunstable.

So, although the town was not the scene of the heaviest turnover of surnames in Bedfordshire, only eighteen parishes underwent a greater Turnover. The Subsidy Rolls, of course, only record the wealthier members of society, and since mobility was more marked among the lower classes, these figures are even more dramatic.

The 1524-5 Subsidy probably covered all but a third of the population. However, it is incomplete for Dunstable. Of the fifty four surnames which do appear, thirty-three recur in the parish registers between 1558 and 1580 (61.1 percent); twenty two between 1581 and 1603 (40.7 percent); and nineteen between 1604 and 1642 (35.2 percent).⁽⁵⁸⁾ Dunstable was obviously a town of constantly changing inhabitants.

There is no similar chronological index of Wellingborough surnames, and, because of the size of the town, it would be a herculean task to undertake such a venture. In any case, without a similar analysis for the county of Northamptonshire to parallel that of Miss Marshall, it would be impossible to compare Wellingborough with the rest of the county. But some fragmentary evidence for Northamptonshire suggests that mobility was equally apparent. Forty one of two hundred and seventy eight taxpayers in Towcester hundred, in 1524, had migrated to other hundreds by 1525; and of one hundred and twelve persons on the Subsidy Roll for Corby hundred, in 1612, only forty one reappear in 1628.⁽⁵⁹⁾ There is no reason to suppose that mobility in Wellingborough was less striking than that in Dunstable.

No apprenticeship indentures survive for the two towns before the Restoration, and so we cannot assess mobility through the place of origin of apprentices; but there was some emigration to America. Dunstable provided the second highest number of emigrants to New England between 1620 and 1650, which are recorded in Banks' Topographical Dictionary, of any Bedfordshire parish.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Five of the fifty three Bedfordshire emigrants were from Dunstable. The Tyng family also travelled to the new town of 'Dunstable', Massachusetts, in Charles I's reign.⁽⁶¹⁾

58. See Appendix 3, note 2, for 1524-5 Subsidy and its analysis. P.R.O., E179/71/114.

59. Sheail, J., 'The Distribution of taxable population and wealth in England during the early sixteenth century', Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, lv, p. 123; Peyton, S., 'The Village Population in the Tudor Lay Subsidy Rolls, E.H.R., xxx, p. 250. Some further consideration of the recurrence of Wellingborough surnames on the Subsidy Rolls is given in Section 4 of this chapter, in connection with local government.

60. Brownell, E., (ed.), C.E. Banks' Topographical Dictionary of 2,885 English Emigrants to New England, 1620-50. Cranfield, in Bedfordshire,

Only one of the seventy Northamptonshire emigrants in Banks' list, Edward Jones, was from Wellingborough. Perhaps the much heavier density of population in Dunstable encouraged more emigration from this town than from Wellingborough.

(iv) Distribution of Wealth

Dr. Buckatzsch used taxation assessments to assess the geographical distribution of wealth.⁽⁶²⁾ But his wealth per acre formula is more appropriate for a large area, a county or a hundred, as applied in his article and in Section Three of Chapter Two of this thesis. When applied to a concentrated urban settlement, this wealth per acre ratio is misleading. The larger population and wider economic activity of urban parishes inevitably meant that they were more prosperous than rural ones. In addition, Dunstable had such a small acreage that its wealth per acre would necessarily be high. A more appropriate method of establishing the relative wealth of the most populous parishes would seem to be the establishment of per capita assessment, by dividing the total taxation levied upon the town by the estimated number of inhabitants. The results of this method, as applied to these parishes in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire which contained more than five hundred inhabitants, are embodied in Appendix Twenty. But these results should only be regarded as an approximate guide. The method itself is unproven, and the assessments for some towns are missing at various dates. Also, available population estimates do not exactly correspond to the dates of the assessments. For those taxes of 1637-1649, in the Appendix, the population estimates from the Hearth Taxes of 1670-1671 have been used.⁽⁶³⁾ However, some tentative conclusions are possible.

In both 1524, and the 1540's, Dunstable appears to have been one of the most prosperous towns on a wealth per capita basis in Bedfordshire. But by the 1630's and 1640's, it had declined to become the poorest of the towns with more than five hundred inhabitants. This change corresponds to the transformation which was evident in the section on social structure, in which a decline from relative prosperity to relative poverty was postulated.

60. provided 8 emigrants. The five Dunstable ones were Thomas Buckmaster, William Haynes, Thomas Lynde, Robert Long, and Zachary Symmes.

61. Derbyshire, W., A History of Dunstable, p. 49.

62. Buckatzsch, J., 'The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1086-1843', Ec.H.R., 2nds., iii; and see Schofield, R., 'The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1334-1649', Ec.H.R., 2nds., xviii, for comments on Buckatzsch's method. See also Chapter 2, Section 3.

63. See Appendix 20 for discussion of sources. This account is based on the figures contained in Appendix 20. I have found no other scholarly study which uses the methodology of wealth per capita.

It also reinforces the impression that the Reformation caused a dramatic decline in the wealth of the town, although the change was not apparent in the 1540's.

The various assessments, which have been analysed for Northamptonshire, portray a less clear picture. Wellingborough was only moderately prosperous compared to other populous towns in the county, in 1524. Eight towns had a higher wealth per capita, and five had a lower one. But it does seem that Wellingborough's relative prosperity declined between 1524 and the 1640's. With the exception of Rothwell in 1644, all the parishes which were poorer than Wellingborough, in 1524, were richer than the town in 1641, 1644, and 1649. In both 1641 and 1644, Wellingborough was one of the nine poorest of the settlements with more than five hundred inhabitants. The 1649 figures, which are only obtainable for the east division, are perhaps the most important of all. Dr. Schofield singles out the 1649 tax as the most accurate assessment for distribution of wealth calculations, in the 1640's. (64) This levy suggests that Wellingborough was the poorest town in the eastern division on a wealth per capita basis.

Despite the uncertainties of the method, Dunstable seems to have been a particularly poor parish, compared to other Bedfordshire towns; and Wellingborough was one of the nine poorest towns in Northamptonshire in the 1640's. Indeed, it appears to have been the poorest town in the east division, in 1649.

(v) Conclusions

This examination of the social framework of the two towns has revealed some striking results. Dunstable underwent a more fluctuating demographic history than Wellingborough, where the trend was one of gradual, continuous growth. But only four Northamptonshire towns experienced greater population increase than the latter between 1524 and 1670. Population density was pronounced in both towns, but particularly in Dunstable. The Hearth Tax returns show a heavy concentration of urban poor in these towns, in the 1670's, and their social structure suggests a decline from relative prosperity to acute poverty between the 1540's and the 1670's. The proportion of the population receiving poor relief was high in both parishes, but extraordinarily high, it seems, in Wellingborough in 1650. Examination of distribution of wealth confirms this decline from relative wealth to acute poverty, and by the 1640's, both towns were exceptionally poor, compared to the other populous settlements of their respective counties. In Dunstable, social polarization was an added problem.

64. Schofield, R., op.cit., He ends his survey in 1649 and criticises Buckatzsch for using the 1641-2 Subsidy instead of this one. So, the 1649 results may be more accurate than those of 1641, in which case the poverty of Wellingborough is highlighted.

Overall, both Dunstable and Wellingborough experienced particularly pronounced social and economic dislocation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Constant turnover of families, accentuated by plague, increased the transformation. The pressure of an ever-increasing mass of urban poor upon the resources of each town must have been intense, and the manifestation of radicalism in these parishes, in the form of 1650 Digger colonies, makes more sense in the light of this social and economic background.

3. LANDOWNERSHIP

(i) General Description

These heavy demographic and social pressures were also related to the landownership and inheritance pattern within Dunstable and Wellingborough.

A study of Dunstable wills between 1535 and 1650, shows that partible inheritance was the normal practice in the town, and this undoubtedly contributed to population density. John Wayne (1589) gave a house and four acres of land to each of his three sons; and Joan Typlady (1609) bequeathed 'The Three Swans' and two acres in Dunstable to her son, William, and gave her Houghton Regis farm, together with two Dunstable tenements, to her son, John. The lion's share of Ralph Brinkloe's property was bequeathed to his younger son, in 1587, whereas his heir received the house, abattoir, and only three acres in Houghton Regis. John Briggs (1644) gave Morrells Farm and six acres to his son, John; a Dunstable messuage and twenty one acres in Houghton to his son, Richard; and two Dunstable tenements and eighteen acres in Kensworth to his son, Thomas. Four more tenements and five acres were to be given to his daughter after the death of his wife.⁽⁶⁵⁾ This system of partible inheritance may also have stimulated the development of industry in Dunstable.⁽⁶⁶⁾

In Wellingborough, primogeniture was the normal custom, and this may partially explain its lower population density than Dunstable. In general, the younger sons only received cash payments. John Bowe (1557) bequeathed all his estate, except for fourteen acres reserved to himself, to his eldest son, who was to pay a cash allowance to his younger brother. Robert Hackney (1600) gave his entire holdings to his eldest son, and gave his younger sons an allowance of forty pounds a year; and William Dennett (1649) passed his property to his heir, and bequeathed his younger son an income of one hundred pounds a year.⁽⁶⁷⁾

However, there are some examples of partible inheritance in Wellingborough. William Page (1545) gave his copyhold estates to his eldest son, and his freehold land to his second son; and Edward Hackney (1652) divided

65. B.R.O., ABP.W/1588-9/78; ABP.W/1609/144; ABP.W/1587/99; ABP.W/1644/101. Other examples of partible inheritance in Dunstable are ABP.W/1602/76; ABP.W/1586-7/180; ABP.W/1597-8/61.

66. Thirsk, J., 'Industries in the Countryside', in Fisher, F., (ed.), Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England, argues that partible inheritance contributed to the development of industry, especially in forest areas.

67. N.R.O., Northampton Wills, Series 1, Book M, fo.213; Book W., fo.194v; Series 3, Book A, fo.102.

his freehold property in Irthlingborough and Wellingborough between his two sons. In 1607, Roger Charnock, the most prominent gentleman of the town, disinherited his eldest son, and divided his holdings among his other sons.⁽⁶⁸⁾ But this last case was a result of personal antagonism rather than local custom, and primogeniture was the usual inheritance pattern of Wellingborough.

The absence of complete series of Court Rolls makes impossible an analysis of the customary land market, to see if demand for property was as great as the density of population suggests. But demographic pressure on Dunstable's small acreage must have been acute. A survey of the town in 1624 is dominated by a list of tenements with no adjoining property, and the wealthier inhabitants had most of their holdings in neighbouring parishes. In 1542, more money had been spent on the repair of ruinous tenements in Dunstable than in any other manor within the Honour of Ampthill, and, although this may be partly a reflection of post-Reformation decline, it indicates the poverty of Dunstable.⁽⁶⁹⁾

Wellingborough's larger acreage facilitated more substantial holdings among the wealthy. A rental of the 1590's shows that the average size of portions of the demesne was over twelve acres, and three people possessed more than twenty acres.⁽⁷⁰⁾

The Ministers Accounts of the Honour of Ampthill in 1542 and the Parliamentary Survey of 1649 explicitly state that there was no copyhold land in Dunstable.⁽⁷¹⁾ This is important in the social and economic history of the town, because it means that the vast majority of inhabitants possessed no security of tenure or legal redress in the manor court or Court of Chancery. Dr. Kerridge has argued that security of copyhold was one of the mainsprings behind the Agricultural Revolution; but, in Dunstable, the absence of copyhold suggests that transfer of property was easier, because of the lack of security, and this may have contributed to the fluid social structure of the town, and to the build up of social tensions.⁽⁷²⁾

Wellingborough contained a considerable amount of copyhold land. One hundred and five copyholders are listed in a survey of 1542, and more than

68. N.R.O., Northampton Wills, Series 1, Book I, fo.33; Series 3, Book B, fo.87; Series 2, Book 5, fo. 70.
69. B.R.O., FAC.7, Facsimile of Cambridge University Library MSS., Ee 3,334: Survey of 1624; B.R.O., CRT.100/25, Transcripts of Ministers Accounts of the Honour of Ampthill, 1542, p. 83.
70. N.R.O., Finch-Hatton MSS., F.H.296, 27 holdings total 341 acres, 34 roods. This excludes the large holding of Roger Charnock, the acreage of which is not given.
71. B.R.O., CRT.100/25, p.70; P.R.O., L.R.2/276, fo.73.
72. Kerridge, E., Agrarian Problems in the Sixteenth Century and After; The Agricultural Revolution. See Chapter 1, Section 3, part (ii), for more discussion of these points.

one hundred appear on a rental of the 1590's. But by the 1670's, the number had fallen to about sixty five.⁽⁷³⁾ This, together with the lower density of population than in Dunstable, suggests that the land market may have been less active and less fluid in Wellingborough, than in Dunstable.

In 1542, there were twenty freeholders in Dunstable, compared to twenty five in Wellingborough. In both towns, the number of freeholders increased in the seventeenth century. Dunstable still had twenty in 1649, but, by 1705, it contained sixty three. In the 1670's, Wellingborough had between forty and fifty freeholders.⁽⁷⁴⁾

The economic influence of London was reflected in the pattern of landownership, and contributed to the familial mobility within the two towns. Since both Dunstable and Wellingborough were royal possessions immediately after the Reformation, courtiers and office-holders were granted estates within both parishes. John Lingard, a Sergeant of the Bakery Office, and Thomas Pinner, Clerk of the Kitchen, were given leases of a Wellingborough manor before it was granted to the Earl of Leicester, in 1574. Sir Christopher Hatton purchased it in 1579.⁽⁷⁵⁾

In 1565, the Rectory of Dunstable was leased to Edward Wingate, Clerk of 'The Check' of the Guard, and Thomas Medgate, Usher in Ordinary of the Chamber, but the manor remained in crown possession between 1536 and 1700. Sir John Walker and Sir John Trevor, Chief Barons of the Exchequer, owned a Dunstable house in 1649, and the first grant of the Priory had been given to a Gentleman Usher of Augmentations.⁽⁷⁶⁾

73. Warwick Castle, Brooke MSS., BB.402, Box 592, Survey of Wellingborough, 1542; N.R.O., F.H.543, Rental of 1590's; Warwick Castle, Brooke MSS., BB.402, Box 583(4), and Box 585(6), Court Rolls of the late 1660's and of 1672, which record 61 and 65 copyholders.
74. B.R.O., C.R.T.100/25; Warwick Castle, Brooke MSS., BB.402, Box 592, (Survey); P.R.O., L.R.2/276; fo. 71; B.M., Addit. MSS., 34,364-383, (Mr. St. John Cooper's lists of freeholders in 1705, which appear at the end of his accounts of the parishes of Bedfordshire); Warwick Castle, Brooke MSS., Box 585(6).
75. Cal. Patent Rolls, 1566-9, p. 153; Cal. Patent Rolls, 1569-72, p. 163. After Hatton's purchase of the crown manor, his nephew and heir had a daughter and heiress who married the Earl of Warwick. He owned the manor from 1613-16, when it was split. Half was sold to Lord Brooke in 1620, and the other half remained with the Earl, and eventually returned to the Hattons. Francis Gray of Wellingborough purchased the Hatton half in 1642. There was another Wellingborough manor, not owned by the crown, which passed through the Vaux and Gage families to Francis Gray in 1655. See V.C.H., Northamptonshire, iv, pp. 139-140; and Palmer, M. and J., History of Wellingborough.
76. Cal. Patent Rolls, 1563-6, p. 277; P.R.O., L.R.2/276, fo.72; E.321/27/48.

Several metropolitan merchants settled in Dunstable and Wellingborough. Thomas Finche, citizen and bricklayer, moved to Dunstable in 1611, and his son, Edward, was a Merchant Taylor of London. In 1588, three of seven Dunstable freeholders with rent arrears were Londoners. William Skelton, citizen and wax chandler, leased a Dunstable house and fifty eight acres. The reverse movement was also apparent. The son of Thomas Chalton, a Dunstable mercer, was Lord Mayor of London in 1449; William Beauchamp owned two London houses in 1559; and Edward Wilkinson, embroiderer of London in 1611, was from a Dunstable family.⁽⁷⁷⁾

The capital's influence on Wellingborough landownership is less pronounced, probably because it was further away from London than Dunstable. But Richard Westmore, a London ironmonger, made a bequest to Wellingborough church in 1541; John Vincent of Wellingborough chose a Londoner as his executor in 1559, and Sir Paul Pindar, the alum monopolist and creditor of Charles I, was born in Wellingborough.⁽⁷⁸⁾

Wellingborough's role as a spa, which was discussed earlier, increased these connections with London and the court. A colony of gypsies arrived at Dunstable from London, in 1552, and were ordered to be deported.⁽⁷⁹⁾ The geographical location of both towns on major communications links influenced their landownership pattern in the same way that it influenced their economy, population, and social structure.

(ii) Court Cases involving Dunstable and Wellingborough inhabitants

Demographic pressure and resulting activity of the land market, and disputes over property, are also suggested by the incidence of cases involving local inhabitants in the central courts of Chancery, Exchequer, Requests and Star Chamber. Even a cursory glance at the catalogues of these courts conveys an immediate impression that Dunstable and Wellingborough were involved at least as often as, and probably more frequently than, any other parishes in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, although a quantitative analysis has not been undertaken. Of seventy five cases which have been examined, the great majority concern property disputes.⁽⁸⁰⁾

77. B.R.O., SX.27,30; P.R.O., E.112/1/73; C3/297/7; PROB.11/42A, fo.228-229v; B.M., Addit MSS., 34,368, fo.26; Jones, A., 'The Customary Land Market in Bedfordshire in the Fifteenth Century', University of Southampton, Ph.D., 1975, demonstrates London connections with South Bedfordshire. Other London merchants who owned property in Dunstable made wills which are in P.R.O., PROB.11/28, fo.206; PROB.11/58, fo.202; PROB.11/98, fo.40-1; PROB.11/28, fo.280; PROB.11/65, fo.118v; PROB.11/80, fo.70v. Thomas Oliver of Dunstable was buried in London in 1549 (PROB.11/32, fo.208v).
78. P.R.O., PROB.11/28, fo.210v; PROB.11/42A, fo.192v-193. For Pindar, see D.N.B., and Price W., The English Patents of Monopoly.
79. V.C.H. Bedfordshire, iii, p.352. See Statutes of The Realm, iv,, pt. i, p.242, for 1554 Act punishing gypsies.
80. Dunstable cases are P.R.O., C.1/937/37; C.1/956/55; C.1/1095/6, (1547); C.1/1329/18, (1555); C.2/203/33, (1582); C.2/Jas.I. P.21/5, (1602-4);

The Wellingborough cases reveal a continuous undercurrent of political and religious tensions, and of factional conflicts within the leading families. There were numerous accusations of corruption against local officials. In 1597, the feoffees were prosecuted for misemployment of town funds, and in James I's reign, no wages were being paid to the schoolmaster; the schoolhouse had been allowed to decay; and no one seemed to be collecting town rents. There was some justification for the mistrust of officials. In the 1590's, the three elected fieldsmen, who were members of the socially prominent Ball, Fisher, and Page families, doubled the grazing allowance of sheep per yardland on the common, and broke open the parish chest and stole manorial documents to prevent discovery of the alteration.⁽⁸¹⁾

The factional conflict between the catholic Charnock family, bailiffs and farmers of the Hatton manor, and the puritan Smith family over the school has been mentioned in an earlier chapter. It symbolised the religious rivalry in Wellingborough and Roger Charnock's reputation as

"a common intermedler in other men's causes and a daylie disturber of the good and common quiet of his poore and honest neighboures" was partly a result of his unpopularity as a recusant. Complaints against him reached such a crescendo in 1579 that a Special Commission was sent out of the Exchequer to investigate the accusation that he was over-charging for copyhold entry fines.⁽⁸²⁾ During the struggle with

80. C.2/Jas.I. W.28/35, (1611); C.2/Jas.I. G.1/42, (1625); C.2/Eliz. H.23/60, (1597); C.3/45/88, (1565); C.3/15/83, (1560's); C.3/10/104, (1568); C.3/87/18, (1563); C.3/91/80; C.3/281/45, (1599); C.3/297/9, (1602); C.3/261/24, (1606); E.321/20/50; E.321/27/86, (1551); E.321/27/48, (1549); Req.2/25/236; Req.2/129/59; (1590); Req.2/72/90, (1577); Req.2/215/52; Req.2/240/18, (1577); Req.2/277/89, (1579); Req.2/45/37, (1591); Req.2/222/13, (1586); Req.2/206/66; Req.2/28/18; STAC.8/80/3; STAC.8/42/12. Those for Wellingborough are C.1/1403/5; C.1/937/37; C.2/Jas.I. H.3/2, (1602); C.2/Jas.I. G.11/28, (1608); C.2/Jas.I. B.28/14, (1611); C.2/Eliz. B.25/25, (1600); C.2/Jas.I. G.12/58, (1609); C.2/Jas.I. B.28/59, (1606); C.2/Jas.I. C.15/40, (1614); C.2/Jas.I. B.29/47, (1617); C.2/Jas.I. C.18/21, (1622); C.2/Jas.I. C.14/5, (1621); C.3/105/48; C.3/274/14, (1600); C.3/390/90, (1624); C.3/395/123, (1630); E.315/129, fo.130, (1551); E.321/12/46; E.321/16/47; E.321/19/27; E.112/110/173; E.112/110/250, (166); E.112/110/222, (1612); E.112/111/276; E.112/111/290, (1620); E.112/227/90, (1636); E.112/110/244; E.178/1650, (1579); Req.2/68/19, (1601); Req.2/163/95, (1594); Req.2/70/37, (1600); Req.2/163/95, (1601); Req.2/27/181, (1589); Req.2/64/103, (1602); STAC.5/B.20/22, (1575); STAC.5/W.51/40, (1588); STAC.5/M.51/35, (1599); STAC.5/53/30, (1575); STAC.5/P.21/39, (1575); STAC.8/104/18, (1612); STAC.8/102/15, (1609); STAC.8/150/16, (1608); STAC.8/153/5, (1615).

81. P.R.O., C.2/Jas.I. H.3/2; E.112/110/173. Section 4 discusses the Feoffees in more detail.

82. See Chapter 6, Section 1, part (i), for the controversy over Wellingborough school. P.R.O., STAC.5/B.40/26; E.178/1650. (STAC.5/5.3/30 covers the school dispute).

the Smiths, he was temporarily deprived of his bailiwick because of the abuse of his office.

A similar unpopularity dogged the catholic branch of the Ball family. In 1613, it was said that James Ball had been bound to good behaviour seven times by the Assizes, and he refused the Oath of Allegiance. In 1609, the family had been prosecuted for illegal occupation of a pasture, and during the 1613 suit, he was accused of corruption in his office as constable. Two years later, Eleanor Groby blamed Ball for a scandalous libel against her, which had been fly-posted around Wellingborough in an attempt to ruin her good name, and thereby obtain her property. The libel insinuated that she was one of the women who entertained travellers at 'The Hind' inn. The words are not explicit, but the meaning is clear that some sort of prostitution was involved.⁽⁸³⁾

In 1636, Lord Brooke prosecuted the bailiff and three of Wellingborough's most prominent inhabitants for non-payment of rents and for illegal transformation of copyhold land into freehold.⁽⁸⁴⁾

These political and religious tensions are not as evident in the Dunstable cases. Catholicism was much weaker than in Wellingborough. But the large number of cases about disputed landownership reflects the tensions produced by demographic pressure. In both towns, the conflicts and rivalries illustrated by these court cases were part of the pattern of dissent, which will be examined later and which was related to the social and demographic problems of the two towns.

83. P.R.O., STAC.8/104/18; STAC.8/153/5 (The Groby Libel); C.2/Jas.I.G.12/58.

84. P.R.O., E.112/227/90.

4. THE PERSONNEL OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The survival of several extensive lists of Wellingborough officials enables some consideration of the personnel of local government to be made.⁽⁸⁵⁾

There appears to have been less of a hierarchy in office-holding than in sixteenth century Peterborough.⁽⁸⁶⁾ The same Wellingborough men occupied the important posts of constable and churchwarden, as well as the offices of ale-taster, victual taster, and leather searcher. The Feoffees, created in 1596 to administer the town lands, were an exclusive group of the wealthiest inhabitants, but, in general, the prominent citizens served at all levels of the administration. In fact, Wellingborough seems to have been an oligarchy in which the same families dominated local government from the 1580's, when the surviving lists of officials begin, to 1660. Only forty-four separate surnames occur among one hundred listed Feoffees, Churchwardens and Constables, between 1584 and 1642. Families like the Hensemans; the Balls; the Clendons; the Hackneys; the Dennetts; the Pages; the Freemans; the Fishers; the Spencers; and the Harriatts, have more than one representative in the lists. In 1601, James Ball, Henry Clendon; Clendon; Henry Henseman, and Augustine Freeman, were constables; and representatives of the last three families were churchwardens in the 1650's.

These families were some of the most prominent in the town, and forty six out of fifty four churchwardens, between 1617 and 1642, appear on the Subsidy Rolls. Fifteen of the sixteen Feoffees of 1596 appear on the subsidy rolls of 1600 or 1630, and Thomas Mulshoe, the sixteenth, was a member of the armigerous gentry family of nearby Finedon. Wellingborough's parochial administration was dominated by the wealthy.

Continuity in office-holding also spanned the Interregnum years. Twenty one of the twenty seven Overseers of the Poor between 1650 and 1660, and twelve of the eighteen churchwardens, between 1647 and 1660, were from families which appeared on the 1642 Subsidy Roll, or had occupied a local office before 1642. There was no emergence of a less prosperous group of families in local government during the Interregnum.

85. N.R.O., M.L.792, Feoffees Book, 1599-1672; Overseers of the Poor Book, 1650-1713, and Churchwardens' Accounts, 1617-1716. These last two were uncatalogued and had only just arrived at the N.R.O., at the time of consultation. They may have been returned to Wellingborough, by now. Constables are taken from these sources, and from the various court rolls which are listed in note 3.

86. Mellows, W., (ed.), Peterborough Local Administration, Churchwardens Accounts, 1467-1573; and Feoffees Accounts, 1614-1714, N.R.S., ix and x. He observed a grading of office.

The subsidy rolls themselves parallel this local government continuity and oligarchy. Representatives of the Ball, Dennett, and Pratt families were three of the five highest taxpayers in Wellingborough in 1544, and all three families remained prominent in local government until 1660. Half of the thirty highest taxpayers in 1544 were from families which appear on the 1630 subsidy roll. Fourteen of the seventeen surnames on the 1600 subsidy roll appear in 1630, or in 1642; and sixteen of the eighteen names assessed for the subsidy in 1642 appear on an earlier subsidy.⁽⁸⁷⁾ The Feoffees were the élite of Wellingborough society. Thirteen of the original sixteen of 1596 were from families among the thirty highest taxpayers in 1544.

The absence of parish records precludes any analysis of Dunstable office-holding, but some consideration of recurrence of surnames on subsidy rolls and in parish registers of Dunstable was given earlier. There, it was concluded that there was a particularly pronounced turnover of families.⁽⁸⁸⁾ This is reinforced by consideration of subsidy rolls, alone. Only four of the fifty four surnames on the surviving part of the 1524 assessment appear on a later subsidy roll; and only five of the twenty eight names on the 1593 roll recur in 1628.⁽⁸⁹⁾

So, according to taxation assessments, there was a much greater turnover of wealthy families in Dunstable than in Wellingborough, and a more pronounced restructuring of the upper ranks of Dunstable society than in Wellingborough. The élite of the latter town, together with local office, remained an oligarchy between 1544 and 1660. In Dunstable, social and geographical mobility was evident in all sections of the community, but in Wellingborough, it was mainly confined to the lower classes.

87. The subsidy rolls used for Wellingborough are P.R.O., E.179/157/347, (1544); E.179/157/362, (1600); E.179/157/414, (1630); E.179/157/423, (1642).

88. See Section 2, part (iii) of this chapter.

89. Dunstable subsidy rolls are P.R.O., E.179/71/114, (1524, incomplete); E.179/72/214, (1593); E.179/72/230, (1597); E.179/72/269, (1628).

5. THE PATTERN OF DISSENT

Between 1536 and 1660, neither Dunstable nor Wellingborough had a resident lord of the manor. The Steward of the Honour of Ampthill controlled Dunstable, and he was usually a non-resident aristocrat. The Earl of Leicester, Sir Christopher Hatton of Kirby; the Riches, Earls of Warwick; and the ^{Grevilles} ~~Brookes~~, Lords Brooke, successively followed the crown as lords of the manor of Wellingborough. High population density, and particularly heavy concentration of urban poor, were other factors which contributed to the dilution of social controls. In addition, the sheer size of Wellingborough, which possessed the seventh largest acreage of Northamptonshire parishes, meant that social and juridical control was more difficult. Dunstable had the smallest acreage of Bedfordshire parishes, so size was not a problem; but in both towns, pronounced geographical mobility and continuous through traffic, coupled with their large population, outweighed the influences of legal and political jurisdiction.

In these respects, the two towns resembled forest parishes, which are the focus of modern interpretations about dissent.⁽⁹⁰⁾ The absence of social controls increased the likelihood of radicalism and unrest, and this, together with demographic pressure and problems of poverty, helps to explain the manifestations of dissent which are examined below.

(i) Religion

The tradition of religious radicalism in Dunstable originated in the fifteenth century. It was one of the strongest centres of Bedfordshire Lollardy. William Morley, a prosperous ale-brewer, was hanged after the 1414 Uprising.⁽⁹¹⁾ Nowhere in south Bedfordshire is the evidence of a continuity between Lollardy and later forms of religious dissent stronger than in Dunstable. Thomas Chase, described as a Lollard, was a local man hanged in Woburn jail during the reign of Henry VII, and, at the same time, the Bishop of Lincoln ordered William Tilsworth to be burnt for attacking image worship and for advocating a vernacular Bible, which were classic Lollard demands. As late as 1582, Mary Carter talked of her "corruptible body", which resembles Lollard emphasis upon the putrescence of the flesh, in her puritan will, which also mentioned the "holy elect".⁽⁹²⁾ The Quaker burial ground at Sewell, in Houghton Regis, which adjoined Dunstable, was a mile or so away from the main Lollard centre at Stanbridge.

90. See chapter 2, note 41, for bibliography of forest parishes as centres of dissent.

91. I am grateful to Dr. C. Knightley for his comments on Dunstable and Wellingborough Lollardy. B.M., Addit. MSS., 34,368, fo. 26.

92. B.M., Lansdowne MSS., 888, fo. 24; Derbyshire, W., A History of Dunstable, p. 84. B.R.O., ABP.W/1582-3/71. MacFarlane, K., Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights, outlines the characteristics of Lollard wills.

Fifteenth century Lollardy was not very noticeable in Wellingborough, but its tradition exercised an influence deep into the sixteenth century. The 1584 will of Thomas Cley, maltman, is a classic example of a Lollard will. He mentioned the elect, and therefore cemented the link with Calvinism, and also "the most vile, filthie, wretched, miserable and evil work I have done". He wanted "to dep^{te} from hence into my naturall countrie my mother, the earth and my brethren the wormes", and he stressed "the fylthie vesture of the fleshe".⁽⁹³⁾

An analysis of Dunstable and Wellingborough wills, between 1536 and 1650, helps to trace the progress of protestantism after 1536, and the progress of puritanism after about 1570. It can only be an approximate guide because the form of dedication in a will may simply reflect the beliefs of the scribe, or fashion rather than religious conviction. However, a general impression can be obtained:

Table XLVIII. Analysis of the religious formulae in Dunstable⁽⁹⁴⁾ and Wellingborough wills, 1536-1650

	TOTAL WILLS FOR WHICH DEDICATION FORMULAE SURVIVE		PROBABLY CATHOLIC		PROBABLY NEUTRAL		PROBABLY PROTESTANT		PROBABLY PURITAN		TRINITARIAN	
	D	W	D	W	D	W	D	W	D	W	D	W
1536-40	5	28	5	27	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
1541-50	27	37	23	22	4	15	-	1	-	-	-	-
1551-60	16	37	15	25	1	12	-	-	-	-	-	-
1561-70	8	8	4	2	4	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
1571-80	8	10	4	-	4	4	-	6	-	1	-	-
1581-90	14	15	1	-	7	8	6	7	2	4	-	1
1591-1600	9	17	-	-	3	6	5	11	-	5	1	-
1601-10	11	9	-	-	3	1	7	7	-	6	1	1
1611-20	13	17	-	-	4	4	9	13	1	6	-	-
1621-30	12	24	-	-	8	3	4	20	2	14	-	1
1631-40	7	41	-	-	4	6	3	34	1	17	-	1
1641-50	5	15	-	-	3	2	2	13	1	5	-	-
TOTAL	135	258	52	76	45	68	36	112	7	58	2	4
PERCENTAGE	100	100	38.5	29.4	33.3	26.4	26.7	43.4	5.2	22.5	1.5	1.5

93. N.R.O., Northampton Wills, Series 1, Book V, fo. 177v.

94. The method for this analysis is based on Spufford, M., Contrasting Communities, pp. 321-30. Dunstable Wills are B.R.O., ABP. W.; and P.R.O., PROB.11; Wellingborough wills are N.R.O., Northampton and Peterborough wills; and P.R.O., PROB.11. In the table, D equals Dunstable and W equals Wellingborough. Wills are probably catholic where the dedication uses such formulae as the Saints; the Angels; or our Lady. They are probably neutral where the soul is bequeathed to God, my maker and redeemer. Wills which mention the elect, or use the formula 'by the passion and merits of Christ', are probably protestant. Puritanism is probably indicated where the body's burial is left to the discretion of executors, or is given 'to christian burial'. The Trinitarian form of dedication is very unusual and does not appear to characterise a particular religious persuasion. However, Roger Charnock of Wellingborough, a catholic, used this formula in 1607 (N.R.O., Northampton wills, Series 2, Book S., fo.70). Analysis of these formulae

In Dunstable, the catholic formula persisted longer than in Wellingborough; the proportion of neutral wills was higher; and the proportion of protestant wills was considerably lower than in Wellingborough. But the most significant distinction between the two towns lies in the proportion of nonconformist wills. Only five percent of Dunstable wills were probably nonconformist, compared to twenty two percent of those of Wellingborough. In both towns, nonconformist formulae begin to appear in the 1570's and 1580's, but they became particularly prevalent in Wellingborough in the 1620's and 1630's. Overall, the table suggests that puritanism was more pronounced in Wellingborough than in Dunstable between 1570 and 1650.

However, there were puritan 'Propheesyings' in Dunstable in Elizabeth's reign, and John Richardson, rector of the town, was reported to Whitgift for nonconformity in 1603. There was also a notorious incident in 1616. Edward Alport, the orthodox local minister, had succeeded a nonconformist vicar, and he was being harangued by some parishioners. The two churchwardens, together with twenty seven others, baptised a sheep in the church and formed a confederacy to oppose orthodox religion. They destroyed the vicar's crops and physically assaulted him, and the constables of Dunstable were among the rioters. They refused to execute arrest warrants, and imprisoned the vicar, instead, at which point the Privy Council intervened. In 1642, a group of eighteen puritan lecturers visited Dunstable and preached to the inhabitants. (95)

Nonconformity was evident in Wellingborough in the mid-sixteenth century. William Blencoe, the vicar, was deprived under Mary in 1555, and the vicar was presented for not teaching the catechism, in 1574. The fact that the Grevilles, Lords Brooke, were lords of the manor after 1620 helped this puritan tradition, because they were one of the foremost puritan noble families in England. In 1634, John Burgess was presented for walking on and defacing the altar, and the vicar of Wellingborough was ejected for nonconformity in 1662. (96)

94. is taken from Spufford, M., op.cit.

The sum of the wills in the various categories does not equal the total number of wills for which dedications survive because some wills have formulae which correspond to two different types. Rather than arbitrarily inserting these in one category, they have been entered twice. Similarly, therefore, the percentage figures add up to more than one hundred percent because of some double entries.

In view of all the uncertainties, I think the table is most useful for comparing Dunstable and Wellingborough rather than as an absolute accurate guide.

95. B.H.R.S., xxiii, p.xlvii; Banfield, L., 'Dunstable in an Age of Revolution', Dunstable Historical Society Report, 1963, p.9; Peyton, S., Ecclesiastical Troubles at Dunstable, c.1616. B.H.R.S., xi; Shaw, W., History of the English Church in the Civil Wars and Commonwealth, 1640-60; i, p. 304.
96. V.C.H. Northamptonshire, iii, p.144; N.R.O., Diocesan Records, Archdeaconry 4, fo. 72; Archdeaconry 56, fo.20; Matthews, A., Calamy Revisited.

Surviving evidence does not reveal a very strong incidence of catholicism in Dunstable. No residents appear on those Exchequer Recusant Rolls which have been examined. But the catholic formula of will dedication did survive longer in Dunstable than in Wellingborough.

However, Wellingborough possessed a flourishing group of recusants in prominent positions. The Charnock family, bailiffs of the manor, were the most illustrious of them, and they also owned a house in neighbouring Great Harrowden, the home of the Vauxes, Lords Vaux. The proximity of this famous recusant noble family may have encouraged the persistence of catholicism in Wellingborough. The Charnocks were an armigerous branch of a Lancashire catholic family, and, in 1586, John of Wellingborough had been a member of the Babington Conspiracy. The Harrowden house of his brother, Roger, was searched for arms in 1612, together with the homes of many other recusants. The family underwent economic decline, and in 1628 Roger was given royal protection for a year against his avaricious creditors.⁽⁹⁷⁾

There were other prosperous catholics in Wellingborough. Anne Royden and Francis Cheney appear on the 1630 subsidy roll; and Thomas Hackney, a member of one of the leading families, was found in the house of Joan Gregory of Harrowden with other recusants, in 1614. Thomas Henseman, a leading taxpayer in 1600, did not receive the sacraments for two years in the 1580's. Agnes Lucas, possibly the wife or mother of Richard Lucas, one of the six highest taxpayers in 1630, was presented for recusancy, together with the Ball family, in the 1590's.⁽⁹⁸⁾ Catholicism remained strong in Wellingborough, which was in the middle of the region of greatest pre-1642 catholicism in Northamptonshire.⁽⁹⁹⁾ With the growth of puritanism, the development of factional rivalry between puritans and catholics in local government, which was outlined in the survey of court cases, is understandable.

Northamptonshire Quakerism is said to have originated in Wellingborough through the conversion of Francis Ellington, a local woollen manufacturer, in 1654. It took a firm hold in the town, and Besse mentions at least nineteen Quakers in Wellingborough between 1650 and 1660.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

97. P.R.O., S.P.12/192/41; Howell, T., (ed.), A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason, i, pt. i, p.154; P.R.O., C82/2027/812. Wake, J., (ed.), The Montagu Musters Book, 1602-23, N.R.S., vii, pp. 224-25.
98. N.R.O., Diocesan Records, X.3582, fo. 46v; X.648/1, fo. 18; X.610, fo.32; P.R.O., STAC.8/184/126.
99. See Chapter 7, Section 1, part (iii), and Map 24.
100. Penny, N., The First Publishers of Truth; Besse, J., (ed.), A Collection of the Sufferings of People Called Quakers, i, pp.174-92, 518-34.

Congregationalism also took root. In 1662, an established church was formed in Silver Street by the ejected vicar of Wilby, Vincent Alsop; and in 1670 there was an illegal conventicle at the house of Thomas Ellington, probably a relation of Francis, the Quaker. The homes of Richard Barnes and Richard Adkins were licensed as conventicles in 1672.⁽¹⁰¹⁾

Dunstable was the location of a meeting of Particular Baptists in 1658, and the town is said to have been the first home of Quakerism in south Bedfordshire. But no Dunstable conventicles were listed in the Episcopal Returns of 1669, nor were any licensed in 1672.⁽¹⁰²⁾

However, if Dunstable nonconformity between 1660 and 1672 was less prevalent than that of Wellingborough in terms of established nonconformist churches, meetings, and conventicles, the Compton Census of 1676 shows that it was as strong as that of Wellingborough in terms of individual dissenters. Twenty nine nonconformists were returned in the Census, out of a total of three hundred and eighty six communicants. This represents a percentage of 7.5, which is almost identical to the proportion of dissenters within the whole of Bedfordshire. Dunstable did not rank very high in this percentage of nonconformists of all communicants. Thirty two Bedfordshire parishes had more than ten percent of their communicants returned as dissenters; and nineteen parishes contained a greater number of individual nonconformists.⁽¹⁰³⁾

Wellingborough had the second highest number of individual dissenters of Northamptonshire parishes with one hundred and ninety three out of two thousand seven hundred and fifteen communicants. This represents a percentage of 7.1, which is slightly less than that of Dunstable. However, this figure is much higher than the proportion of nonconformists in the whole of the county, and Wellingborough was nearer the top of the Northamptonshire rankings than Dunstable was to the top of the Bedfordshire rankings. Only six Northamptonshire parishes had more than ten percent of their communicants returned as dissenters.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

101. Turner, G., (ed.), Original Records of Early Nonconformity under Persecution and Indulgence, p. 608; N.R.O., Q.S.R.1/60, Epiphany 1671, fo. 15; Stephens, T., Congregationalism in Wellingborough, p. 4.
102. White, B., 'The Organisation of Particular Baptists, 1644-60', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, xvii, p. 219; Penny, N., op.cit.; Turner, G., op.cit.
103. The Bedfordshire Compton Census is printed in Wigfield, M., Recusancy and Nonconformity in Bedfordshire, 1622-1842, B.H.R.S., xx. 4 parishes are not recorded. 7.7 percent of all Bedfordshire communicants were returned as nonconformists.
See Chapter 7, Section 1, part (v), for more detailed analysis of the Census.
104. The Northamptonshire Compton Census is in the Staffordshire Record Office, William Salt Library, Salt MSS., 33. There are no figures for 34 parishes. For the whole county, 2.4 percent of communicants were returned as nonconformists.

So, in direct comparison, nonconformity was marginally stronger in Dunstable than in Wellingborough, in 1676, in percentage terms. Both towns had a higher proportion of dissenters than the national average of between four and five percent.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ But Wellingborough was a much more important focus of dissent within Northamptonshire than Dunstable was within Bedfordshire.

The presence of educational facilities may have contributed to the tradition of religious dissent in both towns. Wellingborough Grammar School dates from the reign of Edward VI, but its activities were defined by a decree of 1596. A schoolmaster was to teach Latin, and his usher, English, writing and accounts. They were to be chosen by those inhabitants who were assessed for the subsidy.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾

Dunstable was to have had a grammar school in 1541, at the same time as the proposed Bishopric, but, although the see did not materialise, a school appears to have been formed. The Ministers' Accounts mention a schoolhouse in 1542, and John Riseley requested burial in the church in the place where he had taught school, in 1663. By 1678, Dunstable Grammar School was flourishing with twenty scholars of grammar and four divinity students.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

A striking feature to emerge from an analysis of the social background of some of the local dissenters is the prevalence of nonconformity among the wealthier inhabitants. The constables and churchwardens of Dunstable were among those who baptised the sheep and attacked the vicar in 1616. Seven of the twenty nine Dunstable nonconformists of 1676 possessed houses containing four hearths or more in 1671, and these included John Barnard, a gentleman with eight hearths; John Eames, an innholder with seven hearths; and two men with six hearths.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ Francis Ellington, Wellingborough's first Quaker, was a woollen manufacturer, and had been churchwarden in 1643 and constable in 1645. The Page, Vincent and Peake families had Quaker members, and they were among the Wellingborough taxpayers in the 1630 and 1642 subsidies. Thomas Cley's Lollard-style will of 1584 has been mentioned, and he was a prosperous maltman whose family provided a feoffee in 1596. In the previous chapter, it was demonstrated that catholicism centred on the parishes with resident recusant gentry, and Wellingborough catholicism was probably related to the presence of the Charnocks and the proximity of the Vauxes. The same

105. National average quoted by Spufford, M., Contrasting Communities, p.223.

106. Carlisle, N., A Concise Description of the Endowed Grammar Schools of England and Wales, ii, pp. 226-9.

107. B.R.O., C.R.T.130/Dunstable 1; CRT.100/25; ABP.W/1663/42: FAC.18/5, a facsimile of the Wase Enquiry into schools in 1678, which is in the Bodleian Library.

108. B.R.O., notes of W. Wigfield, which list the individual nonconformists of 1676. These notes formed the basis of his published work in B.H.R.S., xx. The 1671 Bedfordshire Hearth Tax is printed in Marshall, L., (ed.), The Rural Population of Bedfordshire, 1671-1921, B.H.R.S., xvi.

is true for local nonconformity in Wellingborough and Dunstable. Although the lower classes are largely ignored in surviving documents, which give a heavy bias towards the wealthy, it does seem that religious dissent may have owed its strength, partly, at least, to the radicalism of a group of prominent inhabitants.

So, both towns were important centres of religious radicalism throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and, in Dunstable's case, in the fifteenth century as well. They were not the foremost centres of dissent in their respective counties, but they were very important because of their ancient radical traditions.

(ii) Social and Political

The ancient tradition of religious radicalism in these towns is paralleled by the social and political spheres. Throughout the Middle Ages relations between the Prior and the town of Dunstable were poor. He refused to allow inhabitants to attend the Assizes at Bedford, and, in the 1220's, the townspeople threatened to refound the town on a new site. This was sufficient to persuade the Prior to concede the right to collect their own taxes. However, in 1263, the Prior joined the political radicals and welcomed Simon de Montfort, and Dunstable was the scene of tournaments where the barons plotted against the King. The tournaments of 1247 and 1265 were banned.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

South Bedfordshire was also affected by vibrations from the 1381 Peasants' Revolt. The Prior had prohibited the sale of fish and meat in Dunstable by the tradesmen of neighbouring towns, and this kept prices high. Thomas Hobbes led the inhabitants in opposition to these restrictions and won several concessions.⁽¹¹⁰⁾

The Peasants' Revolt affected Wellingborough as well. In the 1370's, the Abbot of Crowland claimed a custom called 'The Ayeld', which enabled him to charge tenants any rent that he wished. They were expected to finance the local tax collector, and to pay for the upkeep of the church. Those who claimed common rights were prosecuted. During the resulting disturbances considerable damage was done to the Abbey demesnes, and the dispute was taken to arbitration, which reversed many of the Abbot's policies.⁽¹¹¹⁾

Three Dunstable men were involved in the movement to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne in 1553; in 1588, four Dunstable freeholders refused to pay their rents; and in 1603, three pounds ten shillings in subsidy payments

109. B.R.O., CRT.130/Dunstable 7; V.C.H., Bedfordshire, iii, p. 353.

110. B.R.O., CRT.150/4.

111. Historic Notes on Wellingborough, pp. 32-5; V.C.H. Northamptonshire, iv, p. 135.

was withheld and Sir John Gostwick sent his servant to distrain the goods of the defaulters. Non-payment of Ship Money was more marked in Dunstable than in any other Bedfordshire market town, except Leighton Buzzard.⁽¹¹²⁾

In 1628, the Captain of a group of soldiers billeted in Wellingborough complained to the Privy Council that his men were assaulted by local inhabitants, and were continually insulted with the phrase "The Duke of Buckingham's rogues". Henry Freeman and his confederates rang the church bells backwards to summon the town to attack Powell's soldiers, and there was considerable violence. In 1636, Wellingborough refused to pay any Ship Money, and two years later, six inhabitants resisted the distraint of their goods for nonpayment. In 1640, four Wellingborough men refused to pay coat and conduct money.⁽¹¹³⁾

By 1643, both Dunstable and Wellingborough were firmly parliamentary in loyalty. The Earl of Essex billeted at Dunstable in 1643; Robert Lilburne's regiment was quartered in the town in 1647; and Bedfordshire was one of the headquarters of the Army during the constitutional crisis of 1647-9. In 1644, a group of royalists attacked Dunstable church, and the landlord of 'The Red Lion' was killed for denying them fresh horses.⁽¹¹⁴⁾

But there were royalist pockets in both towns. Michael Grigge and Francis Marshe, two of Dunstable's wealthiest citizens, compounded for delinquency, and there was a violent skirmish in Wellingborough on the night of the twenty sixth of December, 1642. Francis Gray, Clerk of the Peace for Northamptonshire, and Wellingborough's richest inhabitant, refused to contribute to the defence of the kingdom, and he led a royalist faction in the town. A group of parliamentarians were sent to arrest him, but the royalists resisted and rang the church bells backwards, which seems to have been a favourite rallying method, to summon their supporters. At least two parliamentarians were killed, and Mr. Sawyer of Kettering, a Deputy Lieutenant, was seriously wounded. The parish registers record that a Robert Freeman and Jacob Flint, vicar of Harrowden, were buried on the thirtieth of December and both are noted as 'slain'. Resistance was so successful that parliamentary reinforcements had to be fetched from Northampton.⁽¹¹⁵⁾ This incident shows that the political and religious factional rivalry, which was evident in Wellingborough in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and which has been mentioned earlier, continued into the Civil War period.

112. Cal. Patent Rolls, 1553-4, pp.435, 460; P.R.O., E.112/1/73; E.112/68/14; Godber, J., History of Bedfordshire, 1066-1888, p.269. 60 People in Leighton did not pay Ship Money; 51 in Dunstable; 40 in Luton; 3 in Pottton; and 2 in Biggleswade. But in proportion to total population, Dunstable had more pronounced non-payment than Leighton, which was over twice as populous in 1671. (See Appendix 5).

113. P.R.O., S.P.16/110/56; A.P.C., xlv, pp.43, 64; Cal. S.P.D., 1635-6, p.230; Cal. S.P.D., 1638-9, (Nov. 4th, 1638); P.R.O., SP.16/459/53.

So, the location of Digger colonies in these two towns, in 1650, was rooted in a long tradition of political and social dissent, in the same way that religious nonconformity, between 1660 and 1676, was grounded in an ancient tradition of religious radicalism.

The long journeys undertaken by Diggers, which are outlined in the tract 'Letter taken at Wellingborough', in order to spread their ideas might lead one to assume that it was a movement brought to certain towns from outside. This is especially likely in towns like Dunstable and Wellingborough, which were situated on major roads. But, although the Diggers visited other Bedfordshire towns like Barton, Bedford, Kempston, Cranfield, and Dunton, Digger colonies were only established at Dunstable and Wellingborough, in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire.⁽¹¹⁶⁾ Unfortunately, a rigorous search has revealed no names of members of the Dunstable colony; but the survival of the 'Declaration of the Diggers of Wellingborough', which was signed by nine men, proves that this colony was of local origin.⁽¹¹⁷⁾

Eight of the nine seem fairly conclusively to have come from Wellingborough. The Turner and Pitman families appear on the parish registers in the late sixteenth century, and Smith was a very common surname. A John Avery had five children baptised between 1636 and 1646; a Richard Pendred had a daughter baptised in 1646; and John Pye, Joseph Hitchcock; James Pitman; and Richard Smith all had children christened in the 1640's. The Tuis family appear on the registers in the early seventeenth century. Only the name of Fardin does not appear in the registers. The Pendred family had been in the county since the Norman Conquest.⁽¹¹⁸⁾

114. Abbott, W., Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, i, p.547; Hayward, M., Story of Dunstable, p. 12.
115. L.J., x, p. 197, Grigge was fined £1,060; Lambourn, J., (ed.), Dunstableogia, p. 44. An account of the Wellingborough skirmish is in Angliae Ruina, pt. vi, pp. 52-5; also, H.M.C., Portland MSS., i, p.82. Francis Gray was the second highest taxpayer in 1642; by 1655, he owned two Wellingborough manors; and in 1662, his house had 22 hearths and was by far the largest in the town (P.R.O., E.179/254/11). The Parish Registers are in All Saints Church, Wellingborough.
116. 'Letter Taken at Wellingborough', in Sabine, G., (ed.), The Works of Gerard Winstanley, pp. 439-41. This records the visits. Berens, L., The Digger Movement in the days of the Commonwealth, is a useful introduction to the movement. The source for the assertion that colonies were only established at Dunstable and Wellingborough, in these two counties, is Hill, C., The World Turned Upside Down, p.99. He also lists the other colonies in England.
117. Dr. Hill's mention is the only evidence I have that there was such a colony at Dunstable. I have searched the index of the court of Common Pleas, 1649-52; King's Bench records for 1650-1 (KB.9/846-52); and Exchequer Bills and Answers for the Interregnum (E.112/288), all in the P.R.O., without success, as well, of course, as Chancery, Exchequer Special Commissions, Requests, and material in Bedfordshire Record Office. I have uncovered no names, unfortunately. 'Declaration of the Grounds and Reasons why we the Poor Inhabitants of the Town of Wellinborrow... have begun and give consent to Dig up, Manure and Sow

It also seems clear that these Diggers originated from the mass of urban poor in Wellingborough. A Richard Smith, a John Avery, and a James Pitman were exempted from the 1670 Hearth Tax; and two members of the Tuis family, a Hitchcock and a Pendred were exempted from that of 1674.⁽¹¹⁹⁾ In 1658, a Richard Smith, labourer, was presented before the Court Leet for overcharging the commons with sheep, but since Smith is such a common name, it is only a possibility that this was the Digger.⁽¹²⁰⁾

James Pitman was presented at the same Court Leet for seizing sheep from another person, and, in 1657, he had been presented for trespassing on the common with his sheep.⁽¹²¹⁾ In fact, the fragments of court rolls, which survive for the period 1647-60; among the Brooke family manuscripts possibly refer at some dates to Diggers, although the references are not always explicit. In May 1650, two months after 'the Declaration of the Diggers of Wellingborough,' Richard Smith, possibly the signatory of the Declaration, and William Munes were presented for trespassing upon the common; and a William Pitman was probably related to the one who signed the Declaration, but Warrener is a fresh name. In 1647, twenty seven inhabitants were presented for offences of trespass upon the common, which is the highest figure on any of the surviving court rolls.⁽¹²³⁾ James Pitman was again an offender together with fresh names like Warner, Harman, Phillips, and Cox. Perhaps the Digger movement was the culmination of a developing concerted attempt to farm the common land of Wellingborough, which may have been evident in the late 1640's. Certainly, harvests were particularly bad in the 1640's, and this, together with the disruption caused by war, probably increased the problem of poverty in towns like Wellingborough.

However, if the Diggers were from the poorest groups in society, they had support among the wealthy. The Wellingborough colony was acquitted by

117. Corn upon the Common, and Waste Ground, called Bareshanke... '(see note 3 for full title) in Sabine, G., (ed.), op.cit., pp. 649-51. The nine who signed it were Richard Smith, John Avery, Thomas Fardin, Richard Pendred, James Pitman, Roger Tuis, Joseph Hitchcock, John Pye, and Edward Turner.
118. All Saints Church, Wellingborough, Parish Registers, 1586ff; N.R.O., Biographical Notes, Pendred Family.
119. P.R.O., E.179/157/446, (1670); E.179/254/14, (1674).
120. Warwick Castle, Brooke MSS., B.B.402, Box 585(6), 1658 Court Leet.
121. Warwick Castle, Brooke MSS., BB.402, Box 585(6), and Box 583(4), Court Rolls 1657-8; Pitman was also presented again in 1663.
122. Brooke MSS., BB.402, Box 580(1), Court Roll, May 1650.
123. Brooke MSS., BB.402, Box 583(4), Court Roll, 1647.

a Grand Jury in April 1650 despite strenuous attempts to secure a conviction by the Council of State. The Council had requested the names of justices of the peace who refused to act against "The Levellers", which implies that there was influential acquiescence in their activities. 'The Declaration of The Diggers of Wellingborough' mentions that Thomas Nottingham, John Clendon, and John Freeman had given their share of the common land to the Diggers. Nottingham had been a churchwarden in the 1630's and 1640's; he had a five hearth house in 1662; and in an undated account of the 1650's, he paid over one hundred pounds rent to Lord Brooke each year. John Clendon was a member of a leading taxpaying family, and he possessed a four hearth house in 1662. Freeman was the third highest Wellingborough taxpayer in 1642, and he was described as a gentleman in a court roll of 1657. He was probably from the same family as the Henry Freeman who led the 1628 attack on the billeted soldiers.⁽¹²⁴⁾

As well as the Diggers, there may have been Ranters in Wellingborough in the 1650's, according to Dr. Hill. However, it is possible that it was more a case of the Quakers expressing Ranter sentiments, because, in 1657, Francis Ellington, a Quaker, was indicted under the Blasphemy Act for saying 'confounded be thee and thy God and I trample thee and thy God under my feet'. Ranters were particularly prevalent in urban centres.⁽¹²⁵⁾

There is a suspicion that Wellingborough also contained persons sympathetic to the Levellers. After the mutiny and defeat at Burford, the Leveller William Thompson made for Northamptonshire, and was killed near Wellingborough. He may have been heading for either Northampton or Wellingborough, but, in either case, he could presumably count on some local support, or he would not have escaped in that direction.⁽¹²⁶⁾

The ancient radical traditions of Dunstable and Wellingborough culminated in the presence of Digger colonies in 1650. They were the only Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire towns to house such colonies, and, if the Wellingborough example was paralleled in Dunstable, there was widespread indigenous support and inspiration behind the Digger groups.

124. Thomas, K., 'Another Digger Broadside', Past and Present, xlii, p.59. This broadside says that there was a colony at Old Bosworth, Northamptonshire, but Bosworth is in Leicestershire; Berens, L., op.cit., p.106; 'Declaration of the Grounds and Reasons why we the Poor Inhabitants of the Town of Wellinborrow', in Sabine, G., (ed.), op.cit., p.650. Brooke MSS., BB.402, Box 583(4) Account of rents to Lord Brooke (N.d.), and 1657 Court Roll. P.R.O., E.179/254/11, (1662 Hearth Tax).
125. Hill, C., The World Turned Upside Down, pp. 83, 100. See also, Morton, A.L., The World of The Ranters.
126. Hill, C., op.cit., pp. 56, 100; Abbott, W.C., The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, i, p.70, says he was heading for Northampton.

6. CONCLUSION

This chapter enables us to understand why Digger colonies were located in these two towns, rather than elsewhere in Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire. Dunstable and Wellingborough experienced pronounced demographic dislocation between 1524 and 1670. The population of Dunstable fluctuated more than that of Wellingborough, where population increased fairly continuously, probably because of plague, but both were large market towns. Density of population was very heavy, particularly in Dunstable, where partible inheritance contributed to this density. The problem of urban poverty was very acute in both towns. They possessed an especially high proportion of houses which were exempted from the Hearth Tax, and the percentage of the inhabitants who were recipients of poor relief was exceptionally high in Wellingborough, even allowing for possible overestimate. Even in Dunstable the proportion of the population receiving poor relief was higher than in other towns like Salisbury and York, although it was less than that of Norwich, for example. The geographical location of both towns upon important communications links contributed to this problem of poverty. They were easily accessible to wandering bands of gypsies or vagrants, and to the rural poor, for whom the embryonic industrial development of Dunstable and Wellingborough, before 1660, was an added attraction as a potential source of employment. The rapid expansion of industry in these towns in the late seventeenth century may have been related, in part, to this existence of a mass of urban poor as an available labour supply.

The constant through traffic facilitated the free circulation of radical ideas, and increasing connections with London, both in commerce and in the pattern of landownership, assisted this circulation. Familial mobility was widespread in all levels of Dunstable society, although the wealthy elite of Wellingborough was more of an oligarchy. Social controls were diluted by other factors as well as demographic pressure and function as a market town. There was no resident lord of the manor in either town, after 1536, and Wellingborough's acreage larger than that of many forest villages. Dunstable's very small acreage probably outweighed by these other influences, particularly by population pressure, and by social and geographical mobility resulting from its market town status.

Finally, both towns had ancient and proud traditions as centres of religious, and of social and political dissent, of which the Diggers were only one manifestation.

However, if this survey of the social and economic framework of Dunstable and Wellingborough has shown that there were good reasons why the Diggers should have been located in these towns, the correlations must not be overemphasised. Other Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire parishes experienced greater population increase in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and, although Dunstable had the highest density of population in Bedfordshire, a few other Northamptonshire parishes were more heavily settled than Wellingborough. Equally, other settlements had a higher proportion of houses exempted from the Hearth Tax, and several Bedfordshire parishes experienced greater turnover of families than Dunstable. Other market towns possessed no resident lord of the manor, and seven Northamptonshire parishes had larger acreages than Wellingborough. The borough of Northampton probably had the most ancient and most prominent radical tradition of any Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire town. Also, the examples of religious and social and political dissent which have been mentioned in Dunstable between 1200 and 1536 took place at a time when there was a very powerful resident landlord, the Prior. Absence of social controls does not explain these incidents; but perhaps an over-restrictive and over-paternal resident landowner promoted discontent in the same way that the absence of a lord of the manor may have contributed to dissent.

Some of the reasons why the Diggers were in Dunstable and Wellingborough, rather than in other parishes in the two counties, may be partly accidental or partly dependent upon personalities, rather than upon the social and economic context. However, it does seem that religious and political radicalism were particularly characteristic of market towns, which were open to immigration because of their position; where demographic and social pressures and tensions were intense; and where the forces of juridical control were relatively absent. It was said in chapter two that the market town, as a potential focus of dissent, should be the concern of the historian equally as much as the forest village; and, hopefully, this chapter has helped, in a small way, to correct the balance.⁽¹²⁷⁾

127. See chapter 2, Section 1, part (ii), (b), Variations within the Counties, Northamptonshire.
See also note 41 in chapter 2.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire underwent a profound social and economic transformation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The spread of communications links, and the increased demand of an expanding urban sector fostered the development of specialised agriculture, particularly in Bedfordshire, and of a specialised marketing framework. Many of the criteria of Dr. Kerridge's Agricultural Revolution of the seventeenth century were present in both counties.⁽¹⁾ Although the total acreage affected was relatively small, Northamptonshire was one of the English shires where enclosure was most prevalent, and the fen drainage programme constituted a vast entrepreneurial undertaking. Greater agricultural productivity; more pronounced demographic growth in the towns than in the rest of the county; and the development of a particular economic function in each market town, stimulated urban industrial expansion, especially after 1660. As early as 1524, the boot and shoe industry was the most important in Northampton, and the Civil War gave a great impetus to its expansion. In almost every instance, industry was related to the agricultural produce of both counties.

Bedfordshire population increased by approximately two thirds between 1563 and 1671, and that of Northamptonshire by about a half between 1524 and 1674, and this contributed to the demand for land, which was reflected in the activity of the property market and in changes in the pattern of landownership. Bedfordshire possessed a particularly high concentration of monastic land before 1535, and Northamptonshire contained an especially large amount of Crown land in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the Reformation together with alienation of property by the monarchy during the search for more revenue, had important effects on the structure of landownership. These were reflected in the dramatic transformation within the ruling elite of these counties. Nearly three quarters of the gentry of both counties in 1642 had settled in the county after 1500, and only one of the sixteen noble families in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire in 1642 possessed a pre-1500 peerage. Coupled with this was the pronounced expansion of the yeomanry and gentry.

The development of a regional entity between Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire and their neighbours was part of this general social and economic transformation. Their common agricultural features and cooperation in projects like fen drainage and river navigation assisted this development.

1. Kerridge, E., The Agricultural Revolution.

The communications and marketing network contributed to this regionalization, and Northampton became a major distribution centre for the East Midlands. Most of the greater gentry owned property in neighbouring counties, and their marriage patterns, their education, both school and university, and the origin of many gentry of these two counties among the yeomanry or minor gentry of adjoining counties, reinforced the social and economic inter-relationship of the shires of the Midland Plain.

The influence of London was decisive. Its rapidly growing population provided an increased consumer demand which largely determined the development of specialised agriculture in Bedfordshire, particularly market-gardening in the south of the county to provide malt for the capital's brewers. Metropolitan fashions stimulated the straw-plait and lace-making industries of south Bedfordshire, and numerous prominent merchants, lawyers and central office-holders and courtiers established landed estates in both counties with London-based wealth. Northamptonshire's magnificent array of country houses was founded on the fruits of careers in the capital, and the proportion of property in both counties which was owned by Londoners steadily increased, and the proportion of London marriages contracted by local gentry progressively increased in the late-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Conversely, the number of local gentlemen who entered Inns of Court rose considerably between 1558 and 1642; the gentry of London in the 1630's included a relatively high proportion of members of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire families; and the practices of sending liquid cash to the capital, or purchasing essentials from London, became widespread among the squirearchy of these two counties, after 1650. By 1715, sixteen Bedfordshire and sixteen Northamptonshire parishes were served by regular road carriers from London.⁽²⁾

However, these developments should not be overstated. Several more ancient families, especially the Brudenells and Ishams of Northamptonshire, were able to adapt to the changing climate of post-1500 society and enlarge their estates, raise their income, and continue to play an important role in county affairs. Although the gentry of neither county were as inter-related or as insular as those of Kent, the estates, the marriages, and the social and political milieu of the lesser gentry were largely confined to their own county. They occupied local offices at hundred or parish level, and the county offices were restricted to the greater gentry or those gentlemen immediately below county status. National issues were important

2. Chartres, J., 'Road Carrying in England in the Seventeenth Century: Myth and Reality', Ec.H.R., 2nd s, xxx, p. 89.

in local elections, especially between 1640 and 1662, but more parochial matters like the transfer of Quarter Sessions from one Northamptonshire division to another; or a threat to traditional Northamptonshire electoral patronage; or concern for equitable distribution of taxation between the divisions of the same county, could provoke bitter arguments and generate acute factional rivalries.

However, a determinist assumption that these social and economic transformations led to complete radicalization of the two counties is incorrect. Bedfordshire gentry were more parliamentarian and less royalist than those of Northamptonshire, but in both counties there was an important royalist faction. In Northamptonshire, catholicism remained very strong, especially among the nobility and greater gentry, and thirty of the gentry with the title of knight or above were royalist, compared to only fourteen who were parliamentarian. Northamptonshire was far from being the overwhelmingly puritan-parliamentarian county which it is sometimes thought to have been.

Although the correlations are not exact, and throughout chapter seven in particular, I have tried to emphasize the need for caution, there is a strong case for the correlation of post-1654 Quakerism and other post-1660 religious nonconformity with the social and economic framework. Ever since fifteenth century Lollardy, religious dissent in these counties appears to have been gentry-led, especially catholicism and puritanism between 1570 and 1642. Northamptonshire puritanism centred upon a caucus of radical western county gentry and eastern court gentry, although Northampton puritanism was based on a radical corporation, and the strongholds of recusancy in both counties were parishes with resident catholic gentlemen. But gentry Presbyterianism almost died out in Northamptonshire during the English Revolution. Most of the puritan-parliamentarian gentry, with the notable exceptions of the Drydens of Canons Ashby and the Pickerings of Tichmarsh, opposed the execution of the King and supported the return of the monarchy by the late 1650's, and only a handful like the Harbys of Adstone, the Elmeses of Warmington, and the Maunsells of Thorpe Malsor had their houses licensed as conventicles in 1672. It appears that the experiences of the Civil War and Republic encouraged most of them to conform after 1660.

The focus of religious nonconformity moved away from the gentry to the populous settlements and market towns, which were close to communications links, and which possessed high densities of population and invariably had no resident lord of the manor. The fragmentary membership lists of conventicles which survive suggest that urban artisans and craftsmen and prosperous

yeomen of the more fertile agricultural areas were prominent in religious nonconformity. It was especially strong in parishes where the forces of social control were weakened, although the Northamptonshire forest villages do not figure prominently in religious dissent before 1677.

Therefore, as the spread of communications, and the more rapid population growth in the urban sector than in other parts of the county, encouraged the expansion of the market town and its industry, these settlements, because of the weakness of social and juridical controls, also became the foci of religious dissent. The beginnings of this process are visible in the sixteenth century, when Oundle was the location of the Hackett conspiracy, the most extreme example of religious dissent in Northamptonshire between 1524 and 1642.

Social and economic unrest after 1600 had the same background. Most of the Midland Revolt rebels of 1607 originated from populous settlements characterised by high demographic density and a history of rapid population growth, which invariably had no resident gentry-landowner. Rockingham forest villages were prominent in this type of dissent, which also appears to have had a marked relationship to the absence of social controls.

The study of Dunstable and Wellingborough supports this conclusion. It demonstrates that an examination of the wider social and economic framework of these towns is essential to an understanding of the location of Digger colonies in these parishes, rather than elsewhere in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. Both experienced pronounced demographic growth or population fluctuation; both were very densely populated, especially Dunstable; both had a relatively high proportion of houses exempted from the Hearth Tax compared to the rest of their respective counties; and both appear to have had severe problems of poverty. In addition, according to relative distribution of wealth, they were poor towns compared to the other populous settlements of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire; both were populous market towns which were situated on arterial roads, and expanding industrial centres; and Wellingborough was a town of particularly large acreage. Most of the known Diggers of Wellingborough were certainly local men.

These two conclusions highlight the importance of the more populous settlement, an importance largely determined by the spread of communications and economic development. 15.6 percent of the Bedfordshire population of 1563, and 13.4 percent of the Northamptonshire population of 1524 lived in settlements with an estimated population of more than six hundred; but by 1671, 35.7 percent of Bedfordshire inhabitants and 32.1 percent of the 1670

Northamptonshire population lived in such parishes.⁽³⁾ The more populous parishes became the centres of industrial expansion, and the centres of religious, political and social and economic dissent during the course of the seventeenth century. The decision of most Northamptonshire royalist gentry to go to Oxford in 1642, unlike their Leicestershire counterparts, for example, who remained in the county, is an illustration of the wider social and economic entity of which these two counties became a part.

The old categories of the 'Gentry Controversy' are not applicable to these counties, and the evidence suggests that we should consider the century before the Civil War as one of expansion of the gentry rather than rise or decline of certain elements within it. The Knightleys of Fawsley were an old-established family which became arguably the most consistently radical gentry of Northamptonshire both in religion and politics between 1536 and 1648; but they suffered severe financial decline and were fierce enclosers. There is no better example to illustrate the inaccuracy of the equations of the controversy, especially that which regarded parliamentarians as primarily rising, puritan, agrarian capitalists.

These conclusions, the most important of the thesis, relate to both Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire; but since this study was designed as a comparative exercise some distinctions between the two counties must be pointed out. Sheep farming and enclosure were clearly less extensive in Bedfordshire than in Northamptonshire, and Bedfordshire was slightly more densely populated and slightly more prosperous according to distribution of wealth from taxation assessments than its neighbour. The Hearth Taxes of the 1670's suggest a significant distinction between their social structures: Bedfordshire had a considerably lower proportion of exempted houses and a considerably higher proportion of houses with three hearths or more than Northamptonshire.

In both counties political power and patronage were divided among the broad body of greater gentry, rather than being concentrated in the hands of one or two noblemen, but Bedfordshire was much less of a county of magnates than Northamptonshire. A comparison of the surviving Tudor and Stuart country houses in each county demonstrates this, and it may help to explain the greater turnover of county officials during the Civil War and Interregnum in Bedfordshire than in Northamptonshire. More lesser

3. These figures are calculated from the estimates in Appendix 3, and the list of most populous settlements in Appendix 5. In Bedfordshire, the population of towns with more than 600 inhabitants in 1563 was 3,420 out of a total county population of 21,896 (excluding Leighton Buzzard); in 1671, it was 13,848 out of 38,817. The comparable Northamptonshire figures in 1524 were 8,641 out of 64,420; and in 1670, 30,422 out of 94,646.

gentry appeared on the Commissions of the Peace and County Committee of the former county between 1647 and 1660 than on those of the latter, where the pre-1642 'county' families retained control, possibly because there were more of them in Northamptonshire, even though the gentry were more evenly divided in allegiance in that county.

Bedfordshire was closer to London than Northamptonshire and the effect of the capital on the economy and landownership structure of the former was correspondingly greater. A significantly larger proportion of Bedfordshire gentry had settled in the county after 1603 than their Northamptonshire counterparts.

Finally, the expansion of gentry participation in higher education took place much later in Bedfordshire; pre-1642 catholicism was much weaker, and post-1660 nonconformity was much stronger in Bedfordshire than in Northamptonshire.

Overall, the history of these two counties in the early modern period is one of important change in almost every aspect, a change which marked a fundamental transition towards a more specialised, productive agriculture, and a more urban, industrial society, in which the influence of London was decisive.