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**UNIVERSITY OF KENT**

**Submission for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**THE IMPACT ON THE COUNTY OF KENT OF  
THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, 1789-1802**



**Cyril Cooper**  
**September 2004**

# UNIVERSITY OF KENT

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### ABSTRACT

This thesis is a contribution to the historiography of Britain and the French Revolution. Its distinctive aspect is its focus upon a region which, for this period, has received little scholarly attention.

The question is raised of why Kent was comparatively tranquil in the period 1789-1802. It is demonstrated that this was not attributable to Kent's rurality or its loyalism. County and town meetings had consistently opposed the continuance of the war, the suspension of *habeas corpus*, the Treasonable and Seditious Practices, and the Seditious Meetings Acts, 1795. Yet radicalism did not endure for long, even in the industrialised north-west of the county. The one exception to that was the ongoing development of a nascent form of trade unionism in the Royal Dockyards.

Although not loyalist, Kent was patriotic. Patriotism was evident not only in the county's response to the creation of Volunteer units and to the national Voluntary Contribution of 1798, but in the co-operation between individuals and local and central authorities in the operation of the Aliens Act, 1793.

It is shown that an important reason for Kent's quiescence arose out of gavelkind, its unique law of land tenure. Partible inheritance resulted in small estates with a high degree of landlord occupation, thus encouraging paternalism and an element of mutual respect and trust between different levels of society. Other factors contributing to that quiescence were the influences in Kent of the Church of England and of the county's press.

The thesis examines a subject on which historians are not agreed: the origins of the Nore mutiny. It is here contended that the mutiny resulted from genuine grievances arising from service on board ship and that the seamen were not manipulated by any external forces.

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## Abbreviations

Add. MSS	Additional Manuscripts, British Library
ADM	Admiralty Papers, Public Record Office
<i>Arch.Cant.</i>	<i>Archaeologia Cantiana</i>
ASSI	Assize Records, Public Record Office
BL	British Library
CCL	Canterbury Cathedral Library
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Journal of the House of Commons</i>
CKS	Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>Hist.Jnl.</i>	<i>Historical Journal</i>
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
HO	Home Office Papers, Public Record Office
<i>KG</i>	<i>Kentish Gazette</i>
<i>LJ</i>	<i>Journal of the House of Lords</i>
<i>MJ</i>	<i>Maidstone Journal</i>
<i>Parl.Hist.</i>	<i>Parliamentary History</i> (ed. W.Cobbett)
PC	Privy Council Papers, Public Record Office
<i>PP</i>	<i>Parliamentary Papers</i>
PRO	Public Record Office
<i>SP(Domestic)</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers (Domestic)</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>State Trials</i> (eds. TB and TJ Howell)
T	Treasury Papers, Public Record Office
TNA	The National Archives
TS	Treasury Solicitor's Papers, Public Record Office
WO	War Office Papers, Public Record Office

## Acknowledgements

I should, firstly, thank Dr Elizabeth Edwards and her colleagues of the School of History at the University of Kent who, through a part-time Diploma, first encouraged my interest in the history of the county of Kent. The work of the staff of the History Office is not always acknowledged. In the course of the thesis, whenever any point arose on the administrative side they were always more than ready to help. I should mention the role of Dr Grayson Ditchfield who became my supervisor and who, in what was little more than a passing remark at a seminar, suggested that there was a need for someone to write the history of that which has now become incorporated in this thesis.

I would wish to acknowledge with thanks the help which I have had from the staffs of the British Library, the Public Record Office, the Libraries of Canterbury Cathedral and the University of Kent, and the Centre for Kentish Studies at Maidstone. All of them, with unfailing efficiency and good humour, dealt with my many enquiries and requests for books and manuscripts.

The comments and criticisms of my examiners, Professor Hugh Cunningham of the University of Kent and Dr Michael Duffy of the University of Exeter were most helpful. I must, above all else, put on record how fortunate I have been to have had Dr Ditchfield as my supervisor. He was always ready to share with me his expertise and detailed knowledge of the eighteenth century. Without his advice, his time so freely given, and his patience the thesis would have been much the poorer. I am most grateful to him, both for the help which he has given throughout and for maintaining my enthusiasm until the end.

Finally, I should thank my wife, Elizabeth Stallibrass for her encouragement and patience over a long period of time but, especially, for undertaking the proof reading of the thesis, and for advice on its layout.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The thesis examines developments in the county of Kent from the time of the French Revolution of 1789 to the Treaty of Amiens of 1802, which brought the Revolutionary War to an end. A vast amount has been written about the impact on Britain of the French Revolution. Yet another contribution on the subject requires justification. It will be demonstrated that whilst what has been written by historians can often be supported by evidence from the county of Kent, in other respects it has to be qualified and there are instances when it is simply not applicable. Importantly, there were factors relevant to Kent which were not replicated elsewhere and which can explain Kent's particular reaction to events of the period. These qualifications validate the case for the present study and, it is suggested, provide a case for further similar studies.

Twentieth-century historians have contributed an abundance of county histories relating to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> That is not so in respect of the eighteenth century. A. Warne on Devon (although written more than thirty years ago it has produced little comparable work on other counties) and, for the last two decades of that century, D. Eastwood on Oxfordshire, are comparative rareties.<sup>2</sup> In the main, eighteenth-century studies have concentrated on specifics such as demography, agriculture, industry, or the economy, though hardly ever on a county basis. More generally, there are the essays in Reed, M., (ed.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880*, although these deal only briefly with the period from 1789-1802. Scarcely at all have the specific effects of the French Revolution on a county

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<sup>1</sup> Examples in respect of the county of Kent are Chalklin, C.W., *Seventeenth-Century Kent: A Social and Economic History*, and Zell, M., (ed.), *Early Modern Kent 1540-1640*.

<sup>2</sup> Warne, A., *Church and Society in Eighteenth-century Devon*; Eastwood, D., *Governing Rural Britain: Tradition and Transformation in Local Government 1780-1840*.

been considered. Most local and regional political studies of eighteenth-century Britain have been largely concerned with what was happening in towns.<sup>3</sup> J. Money's work on Birmingham and the West Midlands, despite its title, is no exception, since the West Midlands was largely urbanised.<sup>4</sup> It is important that 'stress and stability in late eighteenth-century Britain'<sup>5</sup> should be studied in respect of discrete areas of the country, since there is likely to be neither universality among the factors involved, nor in their bearing on particular parts of England. Such studies may serve to modify the general picture of England of the period. This has been recognised by economic historians, who have emphasized regional variations in such matters as enclosures, agriculture and prices; but even they have concentrated on regions rather than counties.<sup>6</sup>

Why was Kent particularly significant in the period 1789-1802? There had been a revolution on the other side of the English Channel. There was fear in the county and beyond of an invasion and the spread of revolution from France to Britain. A war was in progress for much of the decade, a radical movement, manifest in Kent as elsewhere, was engaging the attention of both State and Church, poverty and poor harvests were affecting the everyday lives of the population at large. Kent is England's nearest point to mainland Europe and it was generally thought to be the most likely location for a French invasion. The Kentish coast and hinterland constituted the front-line defence against an attack on

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<sup>2</sup> Warne, A., *Church and Society in Eighteenth-century Devon*; Eastwood, D., *Governing Rural Britain: Tradition and Transformation in Local Government 1780-1840*.

<sup>3</sup> Examples are Sweet, R., *The English Town 1680-1840: Government, Society and Culture*; Corfield, P.J., *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800*; McInnes, A., *The English Town, 1660-1760*.

<sup>4</sup> Money, J., *Experience and Identity: Birmingham and the West Midlands 1760-1800*.

<sup>5</sup> The title of I.R. Christie's study, *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain: Reflections on the British Avoidance of Revolution*.

<sup>6</sup> As examples, Wordie, J.R., 'Chronology of English Enclosure' in *Economic History Review*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, vol.36, November 1983; Thirsk, J., *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol.6, 1750-1850; Parker, R.A.C., *Enclosures in the Eighteenth Century*.

London, as it has continued to be over the years, as recently as the Battle of Britain in 1940.

Although Eastwood's study goes beyond the period dealt with here, its general themes and methodology, with an emphasis on rurality, regional and local identity, and relationships between central and local authorities, all have relevance to the study of power structures in Kent. Eastwood stresses that from time immemorial power and land ownership have gone hand in hand, with local government residing largely in the hands of the magistracy. These aspects will be developed in the context of Kent. The answers may not be the same as for Oxfordshire, since a key contention of the present thesis is that the law governing land tenure in Kent had a fundamentally different basis from that of any other county, and that its wider effects extended into the everyday life of the people.

Three unpublished theses have a bearing on the present work and deal with some of the aspects of county studies which Eastwood identifies, as these aspects apply to Kent. They are F.H. Panton, 'The Finances and Government of Canterbury, Eighteenth to mid-Nineteenth Centuries' (unpublished PhD., Kent, 1998), P.L. Humphries, 'Public Opinion and Radicalism in Kentish Politics, 1768-1784' (unpublished MA., Kent, 1979) and Humphries, 'Kentish Politics and Public Opinion 1768-1832' (unpublished DPhil., Oxford, 1981). Humphries's latter work remains a valid exposition of events in Kent during the last quarter of the eighteenth and the first quarter of the nineteenth centuries. This thesis has a different objective. It is to cover the period 1789-1802, and to deal specifically with how the county was affected, directly and indirectly, by events flowing from the French Revolution.

Kent was a largely agricultural county producing grain, market garden produce, hops and fruit, both for local consumption and as a large-scale supplier to the London market. 'With its million or more acres [it] was one of the largest, most populous and wealthy of the partially independent county-states or communities that made up England in 1640'.<sup>7</sup> The 1801 Census indicated a county population of 307,624; only Devon, Lancaster, Middlesex, and the West Riding of Yorkshire had greater numbers. At that time, 54,124 were employed in agriculture in Kent whilst 43,253 were engaged in trade and manufacturing. The latter group included many engaged in employment ancillary to agriculture, e.g., grain and hop factors, maltsters, wool merchants, sickle and scythe makers, blacksmiths and wheelwrights. Some 130 of these merchants and craftsmen can be identified from *Bailey's British Directory (Kent)* (1784) but this does not include their employees. Although almost the only contemporary source, it is unreliable. It includes only two blacksmiths and three wheelwrights in the whole of Kent, at a time when virtually every village had such craftsmen.

Despite the county's predominantly rural nature there was a degree of urbanisation. Deptford, Dover, Greenwich, Chatham, Woolwich, Canterbury, Maidstone and Rochester each had a population exceeding 6,000. Kentish towns of the period were, however, quite different from the expanding towns of the north of England and the Midlands. The former were not burgeoning examples of the Industrial Revolution as were, for example, Manchester and Birmingham. Kent's once flourishing industries of iron smelting, forging, and woollen goods, were virtually extinct by the early part of the

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<sup>7</sup> Armstrong, E., (ed.), *The Economy of Kent 1640-1914*. 3. Its borders remained unchanged until the administrative county of London was created in 1889, when Kent gave up numbers of townships south-east of the capital. It lost further areas to the Greater London Council in 1964.

eighteenth century. There were some fairly small-scale industries, including papermaking, brewing, distillation of gin, building materials (sand, sandstone, gravel, bricks and tiles), boatbuilding, salt, and copperas. The principal industries, however, were those in aid of the armed forces. Woodlands produced vast quantities of timber, much used in the construction of naval vessels, gunpowder was produced at Faversham, military equipment at the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, naval ships were built and repaired at the Royal Dockyards of Chatham, Woolwich, Deptford and Sheerness. Shipyards on the River Medway and on the coast, which in peacetime built ships for the merchant navy, were contracted to build naval vessels during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.

The Revolutionary War affected the economy of Kent, causing expansion in the construction of defences (although, as is shown in Chapter 7, they still remained inadequate), ship construction and provisioning, armaments manufacture, and the provision of lodging and sustenance for the soldiery and naval personnel stationed in and off the coast of the county. Four of the six Royal Dockyards were situated in Kent and they employed about one-half of all those engaged in the country's Royal yards between 1790 and 1814, 4157 in the earlier year and 7981 in the latter.<sup>8</sup> By 1788 the Navy Board had found that the Royal yards could not cope with all naval ship construction and much was contracted out to private yards in the Medway towns and at Sandwich, Dover and Gravesend. Barely one-tenth of the Navy's demands for wood for ship construction could be met from the royal forests and the greater part came from privately-owned

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<sup>8</sup> Coad, J.G., *The Royal Dockyards 1690-1850: Architecture and Engineering Works of the Sailing Navy*. 3.

woodlands.<sup>9</sup> The Woolwich Arsenal workforce was much augmented. In 1764 the number employed was 40, in 1780 it was 500, and by 1800 it had increased to 1,500. These figures exclude military personnel employed in the Arsenal, and convict labourers deployed there from the Woolwich prison hulks after a 1776 Act (16Geo.III,c.43) authorised the punishment of hard labour for those awaiting transportation.<sup>10</sup> Gunpowder was produced in increasing quantities in Kent.

The presence of large numbers of soldiers, sailors and industrial workers in the towns added to the spending power available there. Beer was produced in abundance by the many Kentish brewers. George Best of Chatham, the largest of them, was able to expand his ownership (freehold and leasehold) of inns from twenty-seven in 1787 to eighty-one in 1793. There were several producers of gin in the county, the largest of them, Bishop of Maidstone, having a London warehouse and engaging in the export market.<sup>11</sup> Fodder was required for the many army horses in the county at any one time and for those in London. Kent was one of the principal suppliers of oats and hay to the London market. Almost half of Britain's hop acreage was located in Kent. In 1805 John Boys, a Kentish farmer, was asked by the Board of Agriculture to conduct a review of agriculture in the county. In his report he referred to woodlands providing timber for shipbuilding and other purposes, 'but the most material part of their produce is the immense quantity of hop-poles cut out of the ... plantations.'<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Roberts, G., *Woodlands of Kent*. 126-7.

<sup>10</sup> Hogg, O.F.G., *The Royal Arsenal*. 451, 602, 1289.

<sup>11</sup> Melling, E., *Kentish Sources: Aspects of Agriculture and Industry*. 120-26; Bridge, J.W., 'Maidstone Geneva, An Old Maidstone Industry' in *Arch.Cant.*, vol.lxv (1952). 79-84.

<sup>12</sup> Boys, J., *General view of the agriculture of the County of Kent* (1805), ch.10.

The economic effects of the war on the county were mixed, as would be expected. The much increased number of soldiers resulted in an additional demand for food with thereby, at times, shortages and greatly increased prices. Such demands made the soldiery unwelcome in the county. On the other hand, defence works, shipbuilding, and various ancillary needs such as defence *matériel*, timber, hops, beer, and gin provided work alternative to agriculture, which had heretofore been the staple employment in the county. That it was important to sustain this degree of industrialisation is evidenced by the reaction in north-west Kent to the 1797 decision of the Bank of England to introduce notes in place of higher-value coinage. The Mayor of Rochester called a meeting to discuss the bank crisis. Patriotism led those present to express a desire 'to contribute to the support of the Public and Commercial Credit of their Kingdom at this important crisis ... and [we] will accept Bank of England notes in all payments as money.'<sup>13</sup> For Kent with its naval yards, its merchant shipyards converted to the building of naval ships for the duration, its armaments and explosive factories, production of clothing and *matériel* for the armed forces, beer and gin, and the expansion of agriculture, the net effect of the war was to bring greater overall prosperity to the county, although it was unevenly distributed. Furthermore, the government was tardy in paying for work which it had commissioned. This was a factor which led to the bankruptcy of several Kentish shipyards in the early 1800s.

Kent's industrialisation was not sufficiently concentrated to encourage the degree of radicalism evident in some northern and midland towns. Even something as 'radical' as a loose form of trade unionism was limited to the skilled workers of the dockyards and

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<sup>13</sup> TNA: PRO HO42/40, f.195.

the paper-making industry. Nevertheless, as is shown in Chapter 5, insofar as radicalism developed in Kent, it was largely in the industrialised areas of the county.

In the course of the analysis of disorder for the purposes of the thesis, a definition of key terms will be necessary. In particular, Chapter 4 presents a careful distinction between 'riots' and 'disturbances'. Of course, riots - however defined - were commonplace in many parts of Britain during the period, as indeed they had been throughout the eighteenth century. Food shortages and high prices, crimping and pressing, enclosures, excise duties and (in the 1790s) "Church and King" activity, were among the more frequent causes. Home Office files are replete with examples.<sup>14</sup> However, a major contention of this dissertation will be that in comparison with many counties, the population of Kent was largely quiescent at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. At most, there were minor local disturbances. The Nore mutiny was a serious occurrence but although it took place off the coast of Kent it owed little, if anything, to its geographical location nor was it sparked off by anything specific to the county. There were several centres of radicalism in Kent, yet even at their epicentre, the Medway towns, such politicisation was ephemeral and any enduring effect was never to amount to much.

An important purpose of this thesis is to explain this degree of quiescence. Many of the elements which led to eighteenth-century riots elsewhere were present in the county. It could have been anticipated that they would have led to uprisings against authority, just as these same factors led to such consequences in London and other parts of the country. One such factor was enclosures. In Northamptonshire, two-thirds of

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<sup>14</sup> TNA: PRO HO40/50 and 51, for example, show widespread food riots in the year 1800.

agricultural land was enclosed between 1750 and 1815. There was strong opposition to this development leading, at times, to riots. Although Northamptonshire was an extreme example of eighteenth century enclosures, it was not unique. Neeson writes that 'enclosure protest was not unusual or atypical and optimists like Chambers, Tate and Mingay would not have thought it rare had they cast their nets wider.'<sup>15</sup> This factor was absent from Kent. Enclosures there had occurred at a much earlier date.

The thesis explores developments in Kent at the turn of the century and explains why radicalism did not endure in any effective or long-term sense, save for an embryonic trade unionism in the naval dockyards. It demonstrates why the county was, in the end, patriotic and prepared to bear the burdens imposed upon it by war-time hardships, poverty and food shortages, rather than becoming involved in riotous assemblies. Patriotism, a love of country, did not, and does not, necessarily conflict with radicalism. It was, and is, possible to be both patriotic and to support radical causes.<sup>16</sup> The county was prepared to play its part in the defence of the country but whenever the issues were put to the test of county meetings a majority was opposed to a continuation of the war, to high taxes, to the Treasonable Practices and Seditious Meetings Acts, 1795, and to the suspension of *habeas corpus*. Hence, it could scarcely be described as firmly loyalist.

Patriotism was demonstrated by the county's response to the 1798 national 'Voluntary Contribution'. In a sense, this was a political act in support of the Pitt government's measures<sup>17</sup> and it would have been supported by loyalists but many radicals too, by 1798, were prepared to defend the country (*vide* the London

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<sup>15</sup> Neeson, J.M., *Commoners: common right, enclosure and social change in England, 1700-1820*. 287.

<sup>16</sup> Cunningham, H., 'The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914' in *History Workshop*, Issue 17 (1981). 8-33.

<sup>17</sup> Gee, A., *The British Volunteer Movement 1794-1814*. 202.

Corresponding Society; see p.226). It is not possible to say with certainty how much was given by Kentish (or any other) families since individuals gave not only to a local appeal but from their town house, directly to the Bank of England, or to a Volunteer unit of which they formed part. Most were one-off contributions but in a number of cases sums were pledged on an annual basis for the duration of the war. Some gave to more than one fund. Earl Romney, the Lord Lieutenant, gave only £100 to the Maidstone appeal, but he had pledged an annual donation to the Bank of £1000. He had given a further sum to St George's Parish, Westminster. Earl Camden was to give £7,000 a year from the profits of the Tellership of the Exchequer; Pitt pledged £2,000 which he may not have possessed.

The county's newspapers reports of contributions made were far from complete but what they did report totalled nearly £35,000 in the first five months of the appeal. Canterbury gave more than £5,600, of which the Dean and Chapter gave £500. Rochester and Dover each subscribed more than £2,000, whilst Maidstone residents gave more than £2,400. Domestic servants contributed, as did the pupils of several schools, and groups of workmen. An extract from a letter appearing in the *Maidstone Journal* (13 March 1798) read, 'The subscription has been very great, in the Dock Yard, towards the exigencies of the State, it is said to amount to Eleven Hundred Pounds.' Admiral Lutwidge and the officers and men of ships of the Nore Command and at Chatham gave ten days' pay. Even the Quakers of the Medway towns decided to collect for the Voluntary Contribution.

Whilst simple comparisons cannot be made with the contributions of other counties, it would seem that, even on the basis of the incomplete reports of newspapers, Kent was making a significant patriotic monetary contribution towards the country's

defence, with an average of more than 2s.3d. for every man, woman and child in the county.<sup>18</sup>

The county's unique continuance of the ancient common law of land tenure – gavelkind – was of paramount importance in engendering a situation in which the county as a whole was so remarkably quiescent by comparison with most other counties. Gavelkind attached to land and not to the landowner. It ran counter to the more general law in England of primogeniture, whereby the eldest son inherited the family lands. Where gavelkind applied, as it did in most cases in Kent, '(i) the land descends to all males in equal degree, in equal shares, (ii) the husband is tenant by the curtesy [*sic*] of his deceased wife's land ... , (iii) the widow is dowable of one-half instead of one-third.'<sup>19</sup> In default of sons, the land was divided among daughters whilst, if a son had died and left a daughter, she shared equally with the other sons, if any. An exception to gavelkind was land held on knight-service, or a similar service, from at least the Norman Conquest. This, however, amounted to only a small number of cases.<sup>20</sup> There were a few other parts of Britain, some small areas of Norfolk, Lancaster, Suffolk, and the Isle of Portland, for example, where a practice bearing a resemblance to gavelkind was in force, but there was a fundamental difference between those situations and that in Kent.<sup>21</sup> In the latter case, for legal purposes it was sufficient to show that lands lay in the county and that they were

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<sup>18</sup> The figures in this section are based on reports in the *Maidstone Journal* and the *Kentish Gazette*, January to May, 1798. Nationally, some sixty per cent of the total eventually reached was raised in the first four months of 1798, *CJ.*, 14 April 1798.

<sup>19</sup> Extract from *The Third Real Property Report relating to the Custom of Gavelkind*, 1832. As a result of this Report, gavelkind was abolished in Kent by the Copyright Enfranchisement Act, 1853 (15&16 Vict. c.51).

<sup>20</sup> 18 Hen.6 c.2 indicates that there were no more than thirty or forty such cases.

<sup>21</sup> Snape, M.F., in *The Church of England in Industrialising Society: The Lancashire Parish of Whalley in the Eighteenth Century*. 6, refers to the practice of partible inheritance in the demesnes of the medieval honor of Clitheroe. He suggests that it 'helped to create a local population of cottagers and smallholders by the end of the seventeenth century'.

of the nature of gavelkind, i.e. were not held by knight-service or one of its variants. Elsewhere it had to be proved that the custom of partition applied to the land in question and that this had always been the case. C.L. Elton expresses the point thus, 'We may establish the rule that gavelkind is proper to Kent alone, and that those places where a custom of partible descent prevails, are not gavelkind, in any strict legal sense.'<sup>22</sup>

One result of the Kentish system of land tenure was to create smaller landholdings than if gavelkind had not applied, since an estate had to be divided on the death of every landholder. In evidence to a Commission charged with examining the law of gavelkind, cases were referred to where the estate was divided and fractions as small as 'half a seventy-second' were involved, or where 'there were twenty-nine parties interested in property that was not worth above £300'.<sup>23</sup> Whilst the magnitude of such instances was atypical, it adds weight to the proposition that the Kentish law resulted in smaller estates. This also touched on the political situation since Kent's nine thousand 40 shilling freeholders - a large number notwithstanding the very large landownings of the cathedrals of Canterbury and, to a lesser extent, Rochester - outnumbered those of nearly every other county.

### **The structure of the thesis**

Chapter 2 is concerned with the historiographical context of developments in Britain from 1789 to the Treaty of Amiens and with how far what has been written relates to events in Kent. It is a historiography which is contested, and since I shall be modifying and in some cases challenging existing historiography, it is important to understand it. The twentieth century has provided ready access to source material and the

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<sup>22</sup> Elton, C.L., *The Tenures of Kent* (1867). 56.

<sup>23</sup> Extract from *The Third Real Property Report relating to the Custom of Gavelkind*, in Robinson, T.,

survey will be based, principally, on the writings of twentieth-century historians. The intention will be to consider how far what has been written relates to events in Kent and what of it is particularly relevant to the county, either because it is supported by developments there, or because it is not. There is not unanimity about attitudes prevalent in Britain in response to events in France at this period. Some see the country as being close to revolution, others as being overwhelmingly conservative, whilst yet others see a situation in which attitudes were constantly changing. It may be that conclusions, whichever path they follow, have been drawn too broadly from evidence which does not have universal application. Linda Colley in her article 'The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation' has rightly drawn attention to a perceived need in suggesting that 'the content, operation and interaction of plebeian, bourgeois and élite patriotism' requires 'local and grass-roots studies willing to examine public loyalism as well as public dissidence.' Although she asserts that 'such studies are extremely rare'<sup>24</sup> in fact an increasing number of local studies has appeared over the past few years. But save in respect of Yorkshire and the north west and south-western counties, work on localised rural studies has been limited.<sup>25</sup> The need for regional studies has, more recently, been pointed to in respect of church history:

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*The Common Law of Kent; or, The Customs of Gavelkind*, (1858). 188.

<sup>24</sup> Colley, L., 'The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760-1820' in *Past and Present*, no. 102 (1984). 97.

<sup>25</sup> C.f. Strange, N.E.J., 'Manchester loyalism 1792-98' (unpublished MPhil thesis, Manchester University, 1990); Pottle, M.C., 'Loyalty and patriotism in Nottingham 1792-1816' (unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1988); Booth, A., 'Reform, Repression and Revolution: Radicalism and Loyalism in the North-West of England, 1789-1803', (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Lancaster, 1989), and his 'Popular loyalism and public violence in the North-West of England 1790-1800 in *Social History*, vol.8, no.3 (October 1983), 295-313; Money, J., *Experience and Identity in Birmingham and the West Midlands* (1977). For rural counties there is Poole, S., 'Popular Politics in Bristol, Somerset and Wiltshire 1791-1805 (unpublished PhD., Bristol University, 1992), and 'Pitt's Terror reconsidered, Jacobinism and the law in two south west counties 1791-1803' in *Southern History*, vol.17 (1995); Bawn, K.P., 'Social protest, public order and popular disturbances in Dorset 1790-1838' (unpublished PhD., Reading University, 1984); Wells, R.A.E., *Dearth and Distress in Yorkshire 1793-1802*, Reed,

Regional history tries to place the history of a particular region in a broader setting, often through a comparative approach, by examining the ways in which developments in individual regions and localities mirrored or differed from developments elsewhere. It is, so it is maintained, only through this kind of approach that we can ascertain what was indeed general and common and what was distinctive about any individual region.<sup>26</sup>

By analysing the effects on the county of the French Revolution and the Revolutionary War the present thesis seeks, in respect of Kent, to fill the lacunae perceived by Colley and by Gregory and Chamberlain.

In Chapter 3 the power structures in the county are examined, as are the key Kentish influences on radicalism and loyalism. Power is shown to reside in the magistracy, the Established Church, the county's newspapers, the aristocracy, Members of Parliament, and town and county meetings. Evidence is given of the alliances which were formed between radicals and those who were constant anti-ministerialists, yet far from being radicals. The nobility is found to be divided throughout the period with Earls Stanhope, Thanet and Guilford combining in opposition to the government, and Earls Romney, Camden and the Duke of Dorset as the leading ministerialists. The county's two Members of Parliament for much of the time were on opposite sides, with Filmer Honeywood being a government opponent and Sir Edward Knatchbull a supporter. The composition of the magistracy is discussed and particular attention is given to the role played by the clergy, tradesmen and merchants. The Established Church is considered as an important element in fostering loyalism in the country as a whole, and specifically in the county. The important role played at both levels by Bishop Horsley of Rochester, and in the county by Dean Horne of Canterbury (until 1790 when he was promoted to the See

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M., and Wells, R., (eds.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside 1700-1880*; Wells, R., 'The Revolt of the South West' in Rule, J., and Wells, R., *Crime, Protest and Popular Politics in Southern England 1790-1950*. The contrast between most of these and Kent is striking.

<sup>26</sup> Gregory, J., and Chamberlain, J.S., *The National Church in Local Perspective: The Church of England and the Regions, 1660-1800*. 11.

of Norwich) are considered. In respect of Protestant Dissenters it is demonstrated that whilst they remained of religious significance in some parts of the county, in terms of a secular influence they were inconsequential. A majority of Kentish Dissenters were Baptists, Wesleyan Methodists or Congregationalists. In smaller numbers were Unitarians, Presbyterians who inclined towards the rationale of Unitarianism and eventually joined with that faith, and Kilhamite Methodists. The latter three groupings were more concerned than were other Dissenters with parliamentary reform and opposition to some aspects of the war with France, but they were neither numerous nor widespread in Kent. Despite many examples of local co-operation, hostility between the Church of England and Dissent had been revived by the American Revolution, and the French Revolution did nothing to diminish the antagonism. There was a widely-held view that Dissenters were not loyal Englishmen. However, the influence of Dissenters on electoral fortunes in Kent seems not to have extended beyond Maidstone (and even there it is far from certain) and just possibly Canterbury.

The county's newspapers are shown to have been supportive of the French Revolution until the outbreak of war, after which the *Maidstone Journal* and the *Kentish Gazette* became firmly loyalist. The influence of newspapers spread more widely than among immediate purchasers. At least in the towns, 'copies were to be found ... in the very "ale-house kitchens" where the illiterate could go to hear the papers being read aloud.'<sup>27</sup> There are indications that the contents of newspapers were widely known at an even earlier date. When the men of Commodore Cotes's squadron were given a month's leave on returning from the West Indies in 1756, they were told to watch the newspapers

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<sup>27</sup> Corfield, P.J., *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800*. 143.

for an announcement of where they should report for duty.<sup>28</sup> In the 1790s there was no anti-government newspaper in Kent on the lines of, for example, *The Cambridge Intelligencer*. This was significantly different from the situation in the 1770s when Kentish newspapers had been supporters of the American colonists.<sup>29</sup>

There was another element of power exercised in the county. Although Kent was virtually free from boroughmongers, government influence on elections is shown to have been strong in a number of areas such as dockyard towns, Queenborough, or the Cinque Ports, where it was an employer on a significant scale and where the electorate was small in number. Yet it is demonstrated that it did not always carry the day. Government influence was tempered by the desire for independence from central governmental control in matters which were seen as being local in character, and this desire remained strong among a number of Kentish electorates.<sup>30</sup>

In Chapter 4, the situation of the poor is examined, in a decade where there were poor harvests and high prices, especially in 1790, 1795 and 1800, exacerbated in the last two periods by the presence in the county of large numbers of the armed forces. The subject is considered critically, against the background of what has been written on the subject by Roger Wells and others. It is suggested in the thesis that there was a greater affinity between Kent's relatively small-scale landowners, having their origins in the law of gavelkind, and their tenants and labourers than was the case in counties such as, at the extreme, Bedford, Cambridge or Northumberland, which were dominated by *grands*

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<sup>28</sup> TNA: PRO ADM1/235, Cotes to Admiralty, 5 July 1756.

<sup>29</sup> Bradley, J.E., in *Popular Politics and the American Revolution in England*. 69n.28 refers to 'the numerous anti-ministerial editorials in *Kent[ish] Gaz[ette]*' in August and September 1775.

<sup>30</sup> Christie, I.R., in *Myth and Reality in Late-Eighteenth Century British Politics and Other Papers*, chap.14, 'Economic Reform and "The Influence of the Crown"', sets out the ongoing electoral struggle, including that in several Kent constituencies, between those acting on behalf of government and local interests.

*seigneurs*. Many other counties, even if not on this scale, had one or more highly influential landowners. It is shown that in Kent strenuous efforts, both public and private, were made to relieve hardship at times of shortages. In these acts of charity, mayors and corporations, the Church, country gentry and the aristocracy all played a part. These were clear demonstrations of sympathy and support for the poor, although it was also prudent to appease hunger, lest it should lead to riots. A combination of the poor law, corporate and private charity, together with the degree of trust between the different classes of society, was sufficiently ameliorative of hardship as to produce a relative degree of quiescence in the county. This relationship between the various levels of society in Kent, stemming indirectly from the land tenure laws of the county, is important to the themes of the thesis: the lack of rioting, the support for Volunteer units, and the generally patriotic attitude which prevailed, despite the challenge to order which reared its head on occasion.

Chapter 5 considers the influence of supporters of radicalism and of parliamentary reform and the leadership in the county of those opposed to the Pitt administration. It might seem that radicalism was strong in the county, if measured by the number of Corresponding Societies which came into existence there. Yet it is demonstrated that radicalism was largely limited to the north-west industrialised area of Kent and that, as in other parts of the country, it did not prevail over any long period. The one case where it did endure was among combinations of skilled workmen. In the naval dockyards and in papermaking in Kent they remained an ongoing force, largely undeterred by the Combination Acts. Whilst a distinction is made between radicals, reformers and oppositionists it is shown that they could come together to support parliamentary reform

or to oppose the war and high taxation. Radicals were prepared to go well beyond that and to lend their support to what was happening in France, some finding it possible to continue their support despite the 'Reign of Terror'.

Reported cases of sedition in the county were not numerous but several cases are examined. The Maidstone treason trial of O'Coigley, O'Connor and others, and the Kentish implications of the trial of Colonel Despard, are considered. The independence of juries is commented upon and it is questioned whether Despard had any support in Kent. The use made of town and county meetings and petitioning by combinations of radicals and oppositionists as well as, on occasion, by loyalists is considered. The former grouping could almost always carry the day in Kent, the one exception being a loyalist-convened county meeting in April 1794 which supported the creation of Volunteer units. The visit of John Gale Jones to the Medway towns on behalf of the London Corresponding Society is considered in some detail. It is suggested that his report, whilst throwing light on radicalism in that area of Kent, should be treated with a degree of caution. It is stressed that even, at a later date, when farm workers did take militant action at the time of the Swing Riots of 1830, it was not necessarily a sign of radicalism. It was something more akin to the concept of the 'moral economy', as delineated by E.P. Thompson. Most of the rioters were seeking to preserve the *status quo* in terms of employment opportunities, against the pressures of mechanisation and cheap Irish labour.

The manifestation of loyalism or what in the case of Kent can be seen as patriotism, is examined in Chapter 6.<sup>31</sup> The spread in Kent of the Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers (APLPR) is

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<sup>31</sup> Cunningham, H., 'The Language of Patriotism', *passim*, argues that patriotism in the eighteenth century was the legitimisation of opposition.

considered. Much of the evidence comes from the papers of John Reeves its founder. It is shown that loyalist Associations were widespread in Kent and that in some parts of the county, Rochester and Maidstone among them, the APLPRL and Corresponding Societies were operating within a year or two of each other. Examples are given of Kentish churchmen providing active support to the loyalist cause. In support of Linda Colley's proposition that the King and the royal family were seen as a rallying point for loyalism,<sup>32</sup> evidence is given of a royal visit to the troops in Kent. When the APLPRL generally came to an end loyalists, in Kent as elsewhere, concentrated on the creation of Volunteer units.

A more direct effect of the Revolutionary War is considered in Chapter 7. It is the presence of large numbers of members of the armed forces in the county and their impact on day-to-day life. Military opinion considered Kent to be most at risk from invasion. The defences are shown to have been seriously inadequate and, despite demands made by the army's leaders and others, there was little in the way of improvement until the time of the Napoleonic War. Parliament was reluctant to vote money for additional defence works until the very end of the century. The numbers of soldiers and sailors in the county created both social and economic problems. Aside from the demands made on food supplies, accommodation and transport, all much resented, there was the drunkenness, the prostitution and the increased number of bastardy cases, seemingly inseparable from the presence of troops. Sailors presented fewer problems. Traditionally the image of the navy was more favourable than that of the army. 'The navy and militia were seen as the most efficacious and constitutional methods of

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<sup>32</sup> Colley, L., 'Whose Nation? Class and National Consciousness in Britain, 1750-1830' in *Past and Present*, no.113 (1986). 97-117, *passim*.

protecting the interests of a “trading nation”.<sup>33</sup> The Nore mutiny is considered principally in the light of its impact on the area around Sheerness. However, one aspect of the mutiny itself is considered in detail because of its relevance to this thesis as a whole. Historians have been divided on whether or not the mutiny was encouraged or inspired by the United Irishmen and/or United Englishmen. Here it is argued that it was conditions of service on board ship which provided the motivation for mutiny, and that the strong likelihood is that external influences played little or no part. It is shown that the mutineers did not have the sympathies of the local population for long if, indeed, they ever had them.

Other parts of the country had been subject to riots over crimping, pressing and militia service. Not so in Kent. John Cannon suggests that urbanisation was the key to the development of radicalism. ‘The growth of each new town added to those who, emancipated from the conformist pressures of village life, were free for the first time to take part in political activity.’<sup>34</sup> In 1796 John Thelwall had written, ‘Whatever presses men together ... is favourable to the diffusion of knowledge, and ultimately promotive of human liberty. Hence every large workshop and manufactory is a sort of political society, which no act of parliament can silence, and no magistrate disperse.’<sup>35</sup> This, whilst true, perhaps misses the point that it could also aid the development of loyalism. Kent was a rural county with very few industrialised towns. Such as they were, their industries were closely associated with the war. The expansion of the dockyards and

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<sup>33</sup> Wilson, K., ‘Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon’ in *Past and Present*, no.121 (November 1988). 74-109.

<sup>34</sup> Cannon, J., *Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832*. 142.

<sup>35</sup> Thelwall, J., ‘The Rights of Nature’ in Claeys, G., (ed.), *The Politics of English Jacobinism; Writings of John Thelwall*. 400.

ordnance and gunpowder factories offered non-agricultural and better paid work to local labour. Workers in these establishments could hardly be expected to adopt an anti-war attitude when they could foresee that most of them would be discharged when the war ended as, indeed, was the case in 1815. Kent's relative quiescence cannot be attributed to its mainly rural character. Sussex or Somerset, for example, were rural counties but they were certainly not free from rioting. An important cause of the general quiescence of Kent is attributed in the thesis to the consequential effects of the unique law of gavelkind. There is another way in which Kent differed from some other counties. Since it is argued here that there were virtually no riots in Kent, it follows that the military was almost never used for crowd control in the county. Insofar as there were demonstrations the soldiery was, at times, passively or actively, on the side of the crowd. But they were in other ways a constant irritant to the people of Kent.

Chapter 8 is concerned with the almost unique role played by Kent in the operation of the Aliens Act, 1793, a measure which the government considered to be vital to the defence of the country. There were strict rules governing entry to and exit from Britain and from 1793 onwards almost all movements had to be by way of the Kentish ports of Dover and Gravesend. The chapter is a further demonstration of the patriotism which the thesis contends was manifest in the people of Kent. There were numerous occasions on which individuals did not comply with the terms of the Act, having evaded the attentions of the resident Alien Officer at the ports. Kentish folk were strongly urged by an address from the APLPRL in London and by Kentish Loyalist Associations to report any cases which came to their notice, and the chapter gives examples of this. It

also demonstrates, in respect of alien control, the affinity between local people, the local authorities and central government. All were able to unite in this particular cause.

Kent had more French refugee Catholic clergy than any other location, apart from the much larger numbers in London, Jersey and, for a time, Winchester.<sup>36</sup> At one time there were more than 400 at Dover alone. Kent was the point of arrival for French spies and of departure for British spies, as well as of Englishmen intent on supporting the French cause. Just as the county was the first line of defence against military invasion so, with the full support of its inhabitants, it operated the controls against entry by unwanted aliens throughout the Revolutionary War and beyond.

In conclusion, Kent was affected perhaps more than any other county by the French Revolution, and especially by the Revolutionary War. The thesis shows that it was at the forefront of Britain's defence, with all that flowed militarily, socially and economically from that fact. Kentish radical, reformist and oppositionist elements combined to oppose the war and the government's anti-radical legislation. The social problems inevitably associated with the presence of masses of soldiery and the unprecedented demands on the county's food supplies in times of shortage, were factors which might have led to riots just as, for cognate reasons, riots were occurring elsewhere in the country. In examining these issues in the context of the county of Kent, the thesis emphasises the relevance of Linda Colley's suggestion that there is a need for localised studies of this period. These need to embrace radicalism and loyalism, as well as those problems of everyday life which are dealt with in the following chapters. The thesis

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<sup>36</sup> The chapter is based on BL and PRO records but cf., Bellenger, D., *The French Exiled Clergy in the British Isles after 1789*.

seeks to explain why the county of Kent, which perhaps had more cause than most to react violently against manifold pressures, did not do so.

## 2. THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Chapter 1 points to the need for greater attention to be given to the history of communities at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and to their attitudes towards radicalism and loyalism.<sup>1</sup> Kent is particularly suitable for such a study with its unique land tenure law, as the hub of the Church of England, the front line of Britain's defences, and the central point for alien control. But a county cannot be looked at in isolation, account must be taken of what was happening elsewhere in the country. A starting point, therefore, will be an examination of what historians have written concerning the main issues in this period, notably the impact of the French Revolution. A principal consideration in the thesis is whether their portrayal of what was occurring in England at this time is universally applicable, whether it must be qualified or, to some extent, set aside. Were there considerations to be taken into account in respect of certain areas of the country which rendered generalisations – true elsewhere – invalid? They are questions which will be answered, in the context of Kent, as the thesis progresses.

### **Regional aspects**

It is necessary to consider Kent not only against the background of what was occurring in the country as a whole but to examine the issues of radicalism, loyalism and the avoidance of riots in the county against events in other counties.

Much has been written concerning radicalism. Among many contributions are Collins, 'The London Corresponding Society' and Thale, *Papers of the London*

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<sup>1</sup> Reed, M., in 'Class and Conflict in Rural England: Some Reflections on a Debate' in Reed, M., and Wells, R., (eds.), *Class, Conflict and Protest in the English Countryside, 1700-1880*, suggests that 'Rural history in England is not in good health. This is especially true of the history written about the period covered by this volume. For too long the most prominent historians of the English countryside have been obsessed with "ploughs and cows".'

*Corresponding Society*.<sup>2</sup> The documents of the LCS can explain the working of Corresponding Societies, since the London Society's correspondence with Kentish Societies provides the most authentic guide to what was happening to radicalism in the county. Jones's *Political Tour through Rochester, Chatham, Gravesend, &c.*, is useful in respect of the Medway towns, though his account has to be treated with a degree of caution. Elliott's 'French Subversion in Britain' is of general interest although it is argued in the present thesis that she is wrong in attributing an important Irish connection to the Nore Mutiny. J. Seed's article, 'Jeremiah Joyce' and Issitt's thesis on the same subject form a background to a leading Kentish radical. Booth's thesis, 'Reform, Repression and Revolution', concerned with north-west England is of interest as a comparison with Kent, a county where it could be said that there was no repression or revolutionary thought, though there was strong support at county meetings for parliamentary reform. It is contended in the present thesis that radicalism in Kent was of importance for only a relatively short period. The situation of Kentish radicalism is, in part, summarised in Humphries' thesis on 'Public Opinion and Radicalism in Kentish Politics' although, as its title implies, this is largely limited to one aspect only of the radical trend.

Loyalism in the regions has also been the subject of wide comment. The sermons delivered at Canterbury Cathedral by William Jones and Horne, or at Rochester by Horsley, together with the Charges to his clergy of the last-named, will have served to influence their audiences in the direction of loyalism, albeit that it is argued in the thesis that this was never to become a predominant force in the county. Money's *Experience and Identity* dealing with the Birmingham area, and Strange's thesis on 'Manchester

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<sup>2</sup> The original London Corresponding Society documents are at TNA: PRO PC1/23/A38.

Loyalism' show a vastly different picture of loyalism from Kent's patriotism, the latter, for the most part, not being tinged with loyalism. In particular, unlike Birmingham and Manchester, there were no 'Church and King' riots in Kent. Bellenger's writings on the exiled French clergy in England provides information on those resident in Kent and on those, including leading Kentish churchmen, who supported the religious exiles. The title of Pottle's thesis, 'Loyalty and Patriotism in Nottingham 1792-1816' is a little surprising since Thomis, in *Politics and Society in Nottingham* points to the riotous nature of Nottingham at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Whether or not Nottingham at this period was loyalist or riotous, either distinguishes it from Kent, which was neither.

Riots are dealt with in Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, Reed, 'Class Conflict in Rural England', Wells, *Wretched Faces*, in *Dearth and Distress in Yorkshire*, and 'The Revolt in the South West', and Bawn, 'Social Protest, Public Order and Popular Disturbances in Dorset 1790-1838'. Panton, 'Finances and Government ... of Canterbury', and Home Office documents (TNA: PRO HO40/50 and 51) give much information on food riots or, in Panton's work and to some extent that of Bawn, their avoidance. In general, what these works show is that riots were sparked off by grain shortages and a lack of urgent action to alleviate hardship on the part, particularly, of town authorities. Grain shortages were equally affecting Kent yet there were no such riots there. Chapter 4 of the thesis sets out reasons why this was the case and attributes it, not entirely but in large measure, to the effect of social relationships flowing from Kent's unique law of land tenure.

The regional studies here referred to cover the north east, north west and south west of England, together with the Midlands. In every case they serve to distinguish Kent as a region where there was neither enduring radicalism nor loyalism. The county displayed patriotism (though this was not, here, to be confused with loyalism), an absence of militia riots and, despite a few minor disturbances, no food riots either in towns or the countryside. A major purpose of the thesis will be to demonstrate why Kent which suffered from the same underlying factors as others - grain shortages, militia call-up, pressing, and increased taxation – reacted to them quite differently.

### **The National Scene**

Not much was written in the nineteenth century, or for some time thereafter, specifically on the impact of the French Revolution on Britain, apart from what can be gleaned from biographies of leading politicians and military men of the period. Those who did touch upon the subject did so briefly in general histories. J.R. Green in *A Short History of the English People* (1874, revised edition 1888) is in error in suggesting that English aversion to events in France dated from 1790. His statement that ‘the partisans of Republicanism were in reality but a few handfuls of men who played at gathering Conventions, and at calling themselves citizens and patriots in childish imitation of what was going on across the Channel.’<sup>3</sup> is a quite inadequate description of the radicalism of the period. Green much understates the extent of rioting in England when he says that ‘save for occasional riots, to which the poor were goaded by sheer want of bread, no social disturbance troubled England through the twenty years of the war.’<sup>4</sup> He suggests

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<sup>3</sup> Green, J.R., *A Short History of the English People*. 807.

<sup>4</sup> Green, J.R., *History of the English People*, 807.

that in 1796, 'the nation at large was still ardent for war.'<sup>5</sup> If this was true at all, it was certainly not true of Kent, if the reaction there is to be judged by the outcome of town and county meetings. C.G. Robertson in *England Under the Hanoverians* (1911) and G.M. Trevelyan in *History of Modern England* (1926) both produce a largely accurate outline of events of the period 1789-1802 but neither deals in any depth with reactions throughout Britain to the French Revolution.

One of the early authors to deal with the subject in some detail was G.S. Veitch in *The Genesis of Parliamentary Reform* (1913; reprinted 1965, with an introduction by I.R. Christie). He was concerned particularly with the involvement of ordinary working people in political movements of the time. He scarcely dealt with loyalism, but then nor did most historians until later in the twentieth century. He gives weight to continuity between reform movements before and after 1789 rather than to changes in their nature, in particular the movement from County Association reformism to Corresponding Society radicalism. The terms 'reform' and 'radicalism' have often been used by historians as though they were interchangeable. In Chapter 4 their respective meanings, for the purpose of this dissertation, will be distinguished.

Christie suggests that 'it is a weakness that he [Veitch] paid practically no attention to reflections upon social and economic discontent which some pamphleteers of the time clearly linked up with the demand for parliamentary reform.'<sup>6</sup> Christie is right to demonstrate that there were wider aspects to the radicalism of the 1790s than had earlier been envisaged by reformers. This was certainly true of attitudes at Kent's county meetings. But Veitch's dismissal of the possibility that there was widespread

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<sup>5</sup> Green, J.R., *History of the English People*. 809.

revolutionary disaffection either before or after 1793, save just possibly in Scotland, is tenable. He was correct when he cited, with approval, Talleyrand's message to the French government that there was no likelihood of an English revolution.<sup>7</sup> Talleyrand was more percipient than the English 'Establishment' who saw revolution as a real possibility in 1792, even if he was to change his views on the subject by 1795. The evidence of political attitudes in Kent certainly supports the view which Veitch expressed. Revolution was never part of the programme of even the most committed of Kentish radicals.

P.A. Brown in *The French Revolution in English History* (1918) emphasises that leading radical figures of the period, such as Charles James Fox, were not revolutionaries. Of Horne Tooke he says that 'he was not a revolutionary or even an advanced democrat; he did not believe in rights to universal suffrage or to anything else. His liberty was an old-fashioned vintage.'<sup>8</sup> Quite early on, Horne Tooke was to remonstrate that radicalism was moving too far and too fast. However, Brown sees William Godwin, whom he describes as 'a Jesuit of the Jacobins', as having influenced many young thinkers of the time through his *Political Justice* (1793).<sup>9</sup> Godwin was expounding a system of anarchism or 'universal benevolence' whereby the evils of law and government would wither away, wealth and property would be redistributed and, ultimately, Utopia would

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<sup>6</sup> Veitch, G.S., *The Genesis of Parliamentary Reform*. 218.

<sup>7</sup> Veitch, G.S., *The Genesis of Parliamentary Reform*. 209-11, quoting comments in a long despatch, signed by Chauvelin, but usually attributed to Talleyrand, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23 May 1792. It read, in part, 'Those curiously deceive themselves who regard England as on the eve of revolution; who believe that they see the elements of it prepared. ... Nothing is worse founded than this opinion.'

<sup>8</sup> Brown, P.A., *The French Revolution in English History*. 12.

<sup>9</sup> Brown, P.A., *French Revolution in English History*. 43.

prevail. It was a proposition which went beyond Jacobinism and there is no evidence that it made converts in Kent.

Brown suggests that the French Revolution made a great appeal to the young and that it was a stimulus to the organisation of working men's politics. It may be that the Revolution provided a stimulus to British working-class organisation, although loose combinations of skilled workmen had long preceded the Revolution, as they did in the Kentish dockyards and papermaking industry. Kent's leading radicals, Earl Stanhope and Filmer Honeywood, the latter one of the county's Members of Parliament, unlike their fathers, were radicals even though they had nothing in common with workers' combinations. Yet *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* does not provide an explanation for their radicalism, since this was in evidence long before the Revolution.

Brown doubts whether there was a valid case for the 1794 arrest of the leaders of the London radical societies, including Jeremiah Joyce a Unitarian minister and tutor to Stanhope's children at Chevening in Kent. Brown advances the credible theory that, at this time, panic was deliberately exaggerated by Pitt in order to detach Portland and his followers from the Foxite Whigs. He played the patriotic card in order to rally support for war with France. Brown concludes that despite the attitude of the remnants of radical societies in their dying days, it is possible 'to acquit the responsible leaders of the reform societies between 1790 and 1794 of the wish to use force. They meant what they said - parliamentary reform by an agitation of public opinion.'<sup>10</sup> He does, however, unduly narrow the scope of radicalism by suggesting that parliamentary reform alone was their

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<sup>10</sup> Brown, P.A., *French Revolution in English History*. 148.

concern. Brown considers reasons why the French situation resulted in revolution whilst the English one did not:

The strong hold of the landowners over the countryside, the slow progress of new ideas in an illiterate population, and the efficiency of the English Government, prevented the infection of the French Revolution from sweeping rapidly through England. The French War permanently inoculated the majority of Englishmen. Patriotism was far stronger than any criticism or grievance. Anti-Gallicism had a great and time-honoured appeal.<sup>11</sup>

His view on English illiteracy is not entirely borne out by the facts. César de Saussure, a visitor to England in 1726, (see p.95) commented on the literacy of the English working man in contrast with his continental counterpart. Illiteracy had not prevented the French peasant from supporting the Revolution, at least in its early days. Brown's comments on the war, patriotism and anti-gallicism would have struck a chord in Kent. 'Patriotism' was seen by both loyalists and radicals as underlying their beliefs, a point which is developed further in Chapters 5 and 6.

Whilst Kentish landowners exercised some influence in the county, it was a less dominant feature than in some other counties. There were no Kentish landowners to compare with *grands seigneurs* such as the Dukes of Bedford or Northumberland, with massive estates which contributed to their power. Kentish landowners, in the main, gained influence not from dynastic power but from their close identification with the occupiers and workers of their lands, a point which is elaborated in Chapter 3. Brown's summation of the English position ignores important features which distinguished England from France. Resentment at the role of the French aristocracy and the privileges of the Roman Catholic Church played a major part in the development of revolutionary thought in France. Religion in England was spread over a number of Christian faiths.

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<sup>11</sup> Brown, P.A., *French Revolution in English History*. 161

Huguenots remained in France, even if adherence to that religion was strictly speaking illegal, and Calvinism thrived across the border in Geneva but, as Voltaire had noted in 1733 when contrasting the English and French situations, '*S'il n'y avait en Angleterre qu'une religion, le despotisme serait à craindre; s'il y en avait deux, elles se couperaient la gorge; mais il y en a trente, et elles vivent en paix, heureuses.*'<sup>12</sup> Whilst he exaggerated the number of English religious tendencies and the extent to which they were tolerant of each other, the point which he was making remains valid. The Church of England was the State church (and not even that in Scotland) but it did not dominate everyday life, and did not have the same taxation privileges as did the Catholic church in France. 'France was the European focus for anticlericalism in the second half of the century.'<sup>13</sup>

E. Halévy in *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth-Century* (1913; translated, 1924) offers an alternative explanation of why conservatism generally prevailed at the end of the eighteenth century. He associates it with the spread of evangelism and, in particular, Methodism which he considered modified any tendency towards revolutionary thought. E.P. Thompson dissents from this proposition. He argues that:

On Wesley's death it was estimated that about 80,000 people made up the Methodist society. Even if we suppose that every one of them shared the Tory principles of their founder, this was scarcely sufficient to have stemmed a revolutionary tide. In fact, whatever Annual Conferences resolved, there is evidence that the Radical groundswell of 1792 and 1793 extended through Dissent generally, and into most Methodist societies.<sup>14</sup>

There is little evidence of a conjunction of Dissent and radicalism in Kent. Semmel suggests that the Halévy thesis is one which, 'imaginatively qualified and

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<sup>12</sup> Voltaire, F.-M.A.de, *Lettres Philosophiques*, Taylor, F., (ed.), 17-19, "Sixième Lettre, Sur les Presbytériens".

<sup>13</sup> Aston, N., *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe, 1750-1830*. 123.

<sup>14</sup> Thompson, E.P., *The Making of the English Working Class*. 49.

extended remains a highly stimulating one, worth further exploration.’<sup>15</sup> G.M. Ditchfield, suggests that as ‘originally propounded ... the Halévy thesis is at best not proven’,<sup>16</sup> whilst he accepts that it is not entirely negated by the evidence now available. John Wesley was politically (although not always socially) conservative, if not positively reactionary. Wesley regarded politics ‘as being of only peripheral importance in life ... [He] was deeply devoted to the monarchy ... considered a King a lovely, sacred name.’<sup>17</sup> A.D. Gilbert advances the view that ‘there is mounting evidence to suggest that even Wesleyism implied, for most of its adherents, a mildly radical socio-political commitment.’<sup>18</sup> In Kent, at the end of the eighteenth century, of about one hundred chapels (Dissenting, as well as Methodist) only fifteen were designated as Wesleyan or Methodist, and none were situated in the principal towns. Even if it were true that Methodism served to dampen down radical views, it could not have had such influence in the county, since it was not present in any strength. It is just possible that it exercised some small moderating effect out of proportion to its numbers. It might ‘have contributed to Britain’s avoidance of revolution, if not for the reasons suggested by Halévy.’<sup>19</sup> On present evidence, this has to remain a qualified judgment.

E.P. Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class* deals *inter alia* with the impact on England of the French Revolution. He provides a different explanation of why revolution was avoided in England

If there was no revolution in England in the 1790s, it was not because of Methodism but because the only alliance strong enough to effect it fell apart; after 1792 there were no Girondins to open the doors through which the Jacobins might come ... The French Revolution *consolidated* Old

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<sup>15</sup> Semmel, B., (trans. and ed.), *Elie Halévy: The Birth of Methodism in England*. 25.

<sup>16</sup> Ditchfield, G.M., *The Evangelical Revival*. 89.

<sup>17</sup> Hole, R., *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England 1760-1832*. 22-3.

<sup>18</sup> Gilbert, A.D., ‘Methodism, Dissent and Political Stability in Early Industrial England’ in *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 10.4, December 1979. 383.

<sup>19</sup> Ditchfield, G.M., *The Evangelical Revival*. 89.

Corruption by uniting landowners and manufacturers in a common panic; and the popular Societies were too weak and too inexperienced to effect either revolution or reform on their own.<sup>20</sup>

Thompson uses the subjective propagandist term of 'Old Corruption' as though it were an objective, universally accepted concept which, of course, it was not. J. Stevenson advances a more elaborate explanation, but one with which Thompson might not seriously have quarrelled:

There are a number of factors which might be considered as the requirements for an upheaval which extends beyond a *coup d'etat* in a narrow elite. Economic deterioration, particularly after a period of improvement, is usually necessary to provide significant mass support. There needs to be a group equipped with the kind of ideology to make them want to seize power when the opportunity arises. Lastly, there has to be some division or crisis in the ruling order which prevents it from suppressing opposition and operating the normal instruments of government. One can see one or more of these factors were present on occasions in the period in question, but never together in such a way as to turn possibility into reality. ... In themselves, popular disturbances were never sufficient to bring about a revolution without the coincidence of the other factors mentioned above.<sup>21</sup>

Evidence of radicalism in Kent supports the propositions of both Thompson and Stevenson. The necessary criteria for revolt were not present collectively in Kent since the radical societies there were weak and inexperienced and they did not have mass support.

Thompson describes English developments at this time as being founded in 'the popular traditions in the eighteenth century which influenced the crucial Jacobin agitation of the 1790s.'<sup>22</sup> He contends that whilst the Revolution precipitated agitation anew, what it brought into play were 'the long traditions of the urban artisans and tradesmen, so similar to the *menu peuple* ... the most volatile revolutionary element in the Parisian crowd.'<sup>23</sup> Gale Jones's report on his visit to north-west Kent (analysed in Chapter 5) emphasised the role played in radicalism there by artisans and tradesmen. Thompson

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<sup>20</sup> Thompson, E.P., *English Working Class*. 11.

<sup>21</sup> Stevenson, J., *Popular Disturbances in England 1760-1870*. 320.

<sup>22</sup> Thompson, E.P., *English Working Class*. 11.

<sup>23</sup> Thompson, E.P., *English Working Class*. 27.

points out that the concepts of 'liberty' and 'freedom' were used and, he suggests, misused by protagonists for both radicalism and loyalism. In the name of 'freedom', Burke denounced the French Revolution for the same basic reasons that Paine championed it. In 1791, "Church and King" rioters in Birmingham saw themselves as defending the Constitution. 'Patriotism, nationalism, even bigotry and repression, were all clothed in the rhetoric of liberty.'<sup>24</sup> Rioters were seen as 'hired bands operating on behalf of external interests', and R.B. Rose's comment that the events in Birmingham were 'an explosion of latent class hatred and personal lawlessness triggered-off by the fortuitous coming together of old religious animosities and new social and political grievances'<sup>25</sup> is endorsed by Thompson. There is no general agreement that class hatred played any part in the Birmingham riots, and there is really little evidence that it did. However, the point is of no consequence to the present study since "Church and King" riots never extended into the county of Kent. Nor were there hired bands at work in the county. Indeed, the thesis raises the question of whether there were significant riots of any kind in Kent.

Thompson contends that the events of 1793 - the execution of the French king, the defeat of the Girondins, the imprisonment of Paine in the Luxembourg - had a profound effect in England. It is unlikely that Paine's imprisonment made any impact at all on English attitudes. These were, nevertheless, developments which provoked disillusion among those British reformers who had identified themselves too closely with events in

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<sup>24</sup> Thompson, E.P., *English Working Class*. 111.

<sup>25</sup> Thompson, E.P., *English Working Class*. 80-92; Rose, R.B., 'The Priestley Riots of 1791' in *Past and Present*, November 1960. 84, but see the criticism of this proposition in Ditchfield, G.M., 'The Priestley Riots in Historical Perspective' and Wykes, D.L., 'The Spirit of Persecutors exemplified. The Priestley Riots and the Victims of the Church and King mobs' in *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, vol. xx (1), April 1991. 3-16, 17-39.

France. 'The unity between intellectual and plebeian reformers of 1793 was never to be regained.'<sup>26</sup> There had been some common purpose between these two groups but whether unity of organisation or action ever existed is open to doubt. In Kent, after 1793, some of the aristocracy and gentry (intellectuals were not numerous among Kentish radical elements, although Stanhope might just be considered as one such) neither abandoned entirely their pro-French and anti-war position, nor their support for parliamentary reform. It is a point which is enlarged upon in Chapter 5, where it is demonstrated that Earl Stanhope and one or two of the county's parliamentarians never departed from their support for radicalism, whilst other Kentish aristocrats opposed the Pitt ministry's policies without subscribing to the radical, or even the reformist, cause.

Thompson sees the food riots of 1795 and 1800 as linked, in part, to events in France. Drawing evidence from riots earlier in the century he suggests that in 1795 'the older popular tradition was stiffened by the Jacobin consciousness of a minority.' He argues that this led to attempts to reimpose 'the old morality', the customary market economy which was supposed to have prevailed in earlier times, in contrast to the economy of the free market. As to the Speenhamland decision of 1795 to subsidise wages in relation to the price of bread, he argues that this was a situation 'where the custom of the market-place was in dissolution [but] paternalists attempted to evoke it in the scale of relief.'<sup>27</sup> As is shown in Chapter 4 there were no serious food riots in Kent, although there were relatively peaceful demonstrations against food shortages and high prices. There is no evidence of a 'Jacobin consciousness' in Kent, although Earl Romney

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<sup>26</sup> Thompson, E.P., *English Working Class*. 125.

<sup>27</sup> Thompson, E.P., *English Working Class*. 70-3.

clearly thought that there was, whilst Thompson's theorising does not explain the absence of food riots in the county of Kent.

A. Goodwin in *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (1979) writes sympathetically on the evolution of radicalism in England. He emphasizes the Englishness of the radical movement. It was the centenary of the English revolution of 1688 which 'first dissipated the public apathy on the question of parliamentary reform which had followed the defeat of Pitt's proposals in 1785, rather than the French revolution, the effects of which on English politics were considerably delayed.'<sup>28</sup> In fact, apathy had preceded rather than followed Pitt's defeat on reform; a meagre total of two county and ten boroughs had sent in petitions in support of the Reform Bill.<sup>29</sup> When in 1792, Goodwin argues, apathy was overcome, the case for parliamentary reform had been urged 'in terms of dubious Anglo-Saxon "liberties" rather than French democracy. ... These were the ancestral rights which they claimed as "free-born Englishmen" and did not form part of any package importation of "natural rights" from France.'<sup>30</sup> Whilst Goodwin is right to disown a French connection, the Anglo-Saxon "liberties" proved less of a touchstone after 1792 than they had been with the reform movement earlier in the century. They are not a factor which is mentioned at all in the reports of post-1792 Kentish county and town meetings

Goodwin accepts that the government and its supporters may have had reason to see a French influence in a radical threat to the *status quo* in 1794, with the attempted

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<sup>28</sup> Goodwin, A., *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution*. 19-20.

<sup>29</sup> Cannon, J., *Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832*. 92. Not one was from Kent, or from the whole of southern England.

<sup>30</sup> Goodwin, A., *Friends of Liberty*. 21.

summoning of an English Convention. He goes on to suggest that at the close of the century 'the submerged and alienated remnants of British radicalism at length assumed the conspiratorial, treasonable and republican character which had been so vigorously repudiated by its former leaders.'<sup>31</sup> This reference to the last months of the London Corresponding Society and to the activities of Colonel Despard had only the most tenuous links with Kent, as is evidenced in Chapter 5. These were events of little or no importance as a revolutionary force, and certainly not in Kent.

Goodwin contends that provincial politics were vitally important to the radical cause in the 1790s. This was indeed so and the relationship between the Kentish societies and the London Corresponding Society is analysed in Chapter 5. Paine's republicanism found little favour with the Kentish Corresponding Societies. When some Whig parliamentarians, including Charles Grey and Sheridan, formed the Society of Friends of the People in April 1792 with a view to upholding, under 'respectable' auspices, the tradition of moderate reform, it had support from Clement Taylor, one of the two Maidstone MPs. He was a signatory to the original declaration of the Society and on 30 April he spoke in support of Grey's motion for parliamentary reform.<sup>32</sup> Taylor, however, generally adopted a rather more radical position than did the Society as a whole. He was to welcome Gale Jones of the LCS on his 'missionary' visitation to north-west Kent.

Reform suffered a major setback in the course of 1793 with the outbreak of war, government legislation designed to curb radical activities, the London treason trials and the conviction *in absentia* of Paine for seditious libel in Part II of *The Rights of Man*. Not until the autumn of 1793 did anti-war attitudes and demands for parliamentary reform

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<sup>31</sup> Goodwin, A., *Friends of Liberty*. 29.

<sup>32</sup> *Parl.Hist.*, vol.xxix. 1303 *et seq.*

begin to gain or regain strength. In Kent, as elsewhere, the radical/reformist cause was strengthened by the 'not guilty' verdicts in the London treason trials. Jeremiah Joyce, Earl Stanhope's protégé was one of those against whom a prosecution was withdrawn. Stanhope himself had followed the National Convention in adopting the symbolism of French revolutionary terms, by assuming the nomenclature of 'Citizen Stanhope' and removing the coronets from the gates of Chevening.

It is unlikely that reform could have occurred at this period or for some time to come. J. Cannon, in *Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832*, argues that 'it has long been a commonplace of British historiography that the French Revolution delayed reform in this country for a generation and that to challenge or even question that assumption may seem foolhardy. ... It presumes that the reform movement was in a promising position in 1789 until the shadow of the Revolution fell across it.'<sup>33</sup> He suggests that had there been no French Revolution there might have been some minor reform, but the ruling class would have seen serious reform as a threat in 1789, just as it did in 1819 when there was no external terror threatening Britain. But this was a mere four years after the end of the Napoleonic War. The memory of the French Revolution did not fade entirely within a time-scale of thirty years and it is probable that taken together with the recent war it conditioned thinking on matters such as a broadening of the parliamentary franchise.

In Cannon's view the Revolution in its early stages gave a stimulus to reform, kindling enthusiasm in groups which had never before shown interest, but this in turn stimulated repression which succeeded in snuffing out the reform movement. Historians have, he suggests, tended to write as though the absence of the French Revolution would

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<sup>33</sup> Cannon, J., *Parliamentary Reform*. 140.

have meant no obstruction to reform, without taking into account that it would have meant no initial encouragement to reform either. It was a widely-held contemporary view that what was happening in France was an emulation of the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688. But there was no unanimity in Britain on whether the 1689 Constitution represented a final settlement. 'Most loyalists were content simply to assert that Britain enjoyed the best constitution that human wisdom could contrive.'<sup>34</sup> Radicals and reformers, on the other hand, had always seen the Constitution as a gateway to further reform. So that both groupings, at least in the early days of the French Revolution, could share the view that what was happening in France matched Britain's earlier experience. That was certainly a view held by the Kentish newspapers of the time.

Goodwin stresses that there was a change in the nature of the reform movement in 1795. Whereas it had earlier concentrated on parliamentary reform it now added a social agenda. There were general food shortages, rising prices and economic distress among the poor. Although temporarily suppressed by the 'Gagging Acts' of December 1795:

Mass meetings of protest were to become one of the distinguishing features of nineteenth-century radical agitation. [They were] used by the radical societies to urge the need for measures to alleviate the economic misery of the poor, by the Foxite Opposition, in association with metropolitan and provincial radicals, to resist Pitt's 'Reign of Terror', and by the leaders of the naval mutinies in 1797 to ventilate the grievances of British sailors.<sup>35</sup>

There was nothing new about mass meetings but they were no longer occasional, they had become a tool of radical agitation. Mass meetings in Kent were concerned with food shortages, whilst county meetings were opposed to the 'Gagging Acts', but the principal concern of county and town meetings was to express opposition to the war or, on one occasion, to support the formation of Volunteer units. It is argued in Chapter 7

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<sup>34</sup> Dickinson, H.T., 'Popular Loyalism in Britain in the 1790s' in Hellmuth, E., (ed.), *Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*. 510.

<sup>35</sup> Goodwin, A., *Friends of Liberty*. 360-1.

that the Nore mutiny was not a radical agitation, whilst mass meetings (as distinct from shipboard meetings and, at the beginning, parades on shore) played no part in the mutiny.

Goodwin notes that whilst radicals and radical sympathisers were able to coalesce around specific causes such as the 'Gagging Acts', the possibility of facing charges of sedition or treason resulted in support for radicalism waning. By the beginning of 1796 the London Corresponding Society was once again in decline and its Executive Committee agreed to conduct a provincial tour to bolster morale more widely and to assist newly-formed provincial societies. The Society responded to requests to send representatives to the Medway towns and to Portsmouth. Some of their activities might reasonably have been considered injudicious and the government was convinced, given the large naval presence in both locations, that they were engaged in treasonable activities. The government's concern was, perhaps, understandable.<sup>36</sup> It was not difficult to claim, with an apparent degree of credibility, that the LCS had incited the naval mutinies at Spithead and the Nore. No evidence of this was found by a contemporary enquiry into the Nore mutiny carried out by two magistrates appointed by the Home Office, and nor has any significant contrary evidence since emerged.<sup>37</sup> In August 1799 some saw further government repression in the passing of the Combination Act, designed to curtail the organisation of trade unions. However, when it and the minor amending Act of 1800 were before the Commons only two Members voted against the measure. Thompson suggests that in Lancashire and Yorkshire the Act of 1799 'jolted the Jacobins and trade unionists into a widespread secret combination, half political, half industrial, in

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<sup>36</sup> The subject of the visit to the Medway towns is dealt with in Chapter 5.

<sup>37</sup> TNA: PRO HO42/41. Report to the Duke of Portland, 24 June 1797.

emphasis.<sup>38</sup> Baxter and Donnelly argue that Thompson, in fact, under-stated the revolutionary underground. Dinwiddy contends, with I would suggest greater cogency, that it is 'a distortion' to conflate trade union activity and political subversion at this time. He denies the existence of a revolutionary movement either in the West Riding or in Lancashire in the early years of the nineteenth century.<sup>39</sup> The 1799 and 1800 Acts made little difference to Kentish skilled workers' combinations in the dockyards and the paper-making industry. In the Kentish dockyards, informal combinations of skilled workmen to press their work-based demands were as active after 1799 as they had been before, despite the fact that disciplinary action was occasionally attempted against the ringleaders.

Jennifer Mori in *William Pitt and the French Revolution 1785-1795* (1997) comments, to some extent, on loyalism. In reviewing earlier biographies of Pitt the Younger she appears to endorse the view of J.H. Rose, as expressed in *William Pitt and the Great War*, that 'it was the emergence of radical reform societies at the beginning of 1792, not Burke's *Reflections*, that set Pitt against the French Revolution and all its works.'<sup>40</sup> Although there is some conjunction between Burke's views and Pitt's actions over the decade, it is certain that Pitt was not swayed by Burke's rhetoric and, unlike Burke, he never saw the war as a crusade against Jacobinism.

Lord Mahon (from 1796 the third Earl Stanhope) had praised Pitt's stance on limited parliamentary reform in 1782, whereas Goodwin contended that with his

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<sup>38</sup> Thompson, E.P., *English Working Class*. 500-1.

<sup>39</sup> Dinwiddy, J., 'The "Black Lamp" in Yorkshire 1801-2'; *Debate*. Baxter, J.L., and Donnelly, F.K., 'The Revolutionary "Underground" in the West Riding: Myth or Reality?'; *Debate*. Dinwiddy, J., 'A Rejoinder' in *Past and Present*, no. 64 (August 1974). 113-135.

<sup>40</sup> Mori, J., *William Pitt and the French Revolution 1785-1795*. 7.

opposition to the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1787 Pitt had turned against reform.<sup>41</sup> True, in 1792 Archbishop Moore thanked Pitt for ‘the able and effectual support which on all occasions you have given to our Church establishment.’<sup>42</sup> But G.M. Ditchfield sees Pitt as a reformer in the context of ecclesiastical legislation. He argues that Pitt was not embarking upon a defence of the confessional state but, rather, his ministry ‘by its legislative enactments and, at times, by its refusal to legislate, contributed in no small degree to religious pluralism and thus to the long-term decline both of the ideology and the practical implementation of the confessional state.’<sup>43</sup> The proposition that Pitt had turned against secular reform in the late 1780s is questionable. He had supported Wilberforce’s Reform Bill in 1786 and he expressed support for a similar Bill in 1788. He supported Stanhope’s Electoral Districts Bill in 1788 and tried, unsuccessfully, to prevent its repeal in 1789.

Mori comments on changes which came about in British attitudes towards France between 1789 and 1792. The revival of the Society for Constitutional Information, the formation of the London Revolution Society in 1788, and the addresses sent to the National Assembly in 1789 and 1790 had caused no particular alarm to ministerial supporters, who had adopted an attitude of cautious neutrality towards the French Revolution. They had seen no danger in a French constitutional monarchy, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, and other changes which the early stages of the Revolution had brought about. They regarded them as unsuitable for England and most unlikely to be supported by Englishmen. They saw the Revolution as weakening France as a

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<sup>41</sup> Goodwin, A., *Friends of Liberty*. 81.

<sup>42</sup> TNA: PRO 30/8/161, f.10. Moore to Pitt, 19 January 1792.

<sup>43</sup> Ditchfield, G.M., ‘Ecclesiastical Legislation during the Ministry of the Younger Pitt, 1783-1801’ in Parry, J.P., and Taylor, S., (eds.), *Parliamentary History: Parliament and the Church 1529-1960*. 80.

political and commercial rival. By 1792, the government was becoming more alarmed at developments in France. In Britain, in May of that year, a Royal Proclamation was directed against 'divers seditious and wicked publications' which, it was claimed, served 'to drive the people to riot.'<sup>44</sup> As Mori contends, it is difficult nowadays to find good reason for the proclamation, since radical tracts had caused no riots. Tracts had been circulated in the Medway towns at this time but they had led to no disturbances there. But even if radical publications produced no such reaction, it is less easy to deny that they might reasonably have been seen as likely to excite latent riotous attitudes. Soon after the proclamation was issued the government began to receive loyal addresses, some doubtless organised by the Ministry and others probably by conservative Whigs.

September 1792 saw the beginning of the massacres in France and an enhanced influx of *émigrés* to England. Subscription campaigns in support of the *émigré* clergy were sponsored by Samuel Horsley, soon to become Bishop of Rochester, and by Burke and Windham among others. The government continued to maintain an attitude of neutrality towards France but, Mori records, the British domestic scene in October was a disturbing one. Radicals were celebrating the news of French military victories, a poor harvest was anticipated and riots and strikes were widespread. Although the government introduced the Aliens Act and required magistrates to keep watch for seditious literature, the case for punitive action against the radical organisations remained weak, since there was no evidence that they were directly involved in the riots. By the beginning of December proclamations were issued calling out the militia. The government at that stage, perhaps wishing to keep down the cost of law enforcement and remaining wary of

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<sup>44</sup> *Parliamentary Register*, xxxii, 21 May 1792. 130-2.

arming the people, sought assistance from the Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers (for APLPRL, see Chapter 6). Pitt wanted to keep loyalism under a firmly élite leadership. He had no sympathy with the *ancien régime* of France but was concerned not to encourage militant loyalism - perhaps having in mind the damage which it had caused earlier in Birmingham - and, in the event, the APLPRL was used only to distribute and collect petitions of support for the government's actions.

Mori expresses the opinion that with the long-awaited emergence of popular radicalism, 'what remains surprising about the British government's domestic policy in 1792 is its moderation. ... The crises of 1792 set the British government firmly on the path of deterrence rather than repression.' This is in contrast to Thompson's statement that 'Pitt's long-delayed decision to prosecute Paine signalled the era of repression.' 'Repression' is a relative term, but Mori suggests that the government generally avoided punitive legislation. Thompson justifies his assertion with examples of the encouragement of mob violence against radicals, the burning of Paine effigies, prosecutions for sedition, and the posting of spies in popular societies.<sup>45</sup> Mori's proposition is, to some extent, at odds with her later statement that:

Pitt and his colleagues were reluctant to persecute radicals not because they might rise in pursuit of French liberty, but rather because the government was uncertain about the legal forms that new legislation on sedition and treason could take. This was a subject which was under discussion by Grenville and the Solicitor-General, Sir John Scott, as early as 18 October 1792.<sup>46</sup>

If not the government, then numbers of its supporters did engage in a degree of harassment, both overt and covert, of radicals. Thompson only slightly exaggerates in

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<sup>45</sup> Mori, J., *William Pitt*. 133-4; Thompson, E.P., *English Working Class*. 121-3.

<sup>46</sup> Mori, J., *William Pitt*. 179. Grenville had been Home Secretary but was, by 1792, Foreign Secretary.

talking of 'a counter-revolutionary assault backed by the resources of established authority'<sup>47</sup> at this time.

By the beginning of 1794 the need to augment the armed forces had become more fully recognised and the government was encouraging the setting up of Volunteer forces. These were to serve the dual purpose of a defence against invasion and as riot control units. Although admitting the second of these intentions Mori, perhaps not altogether consistently, suggests that 'the volunteer corps were not established as a special police force to persecute radicals.'<sup>48</sup> As J.R. Western writes, 'Many corps were founded to keep in order some locally suspect group: either Radicals, or demonstrators against the high price of corn, or "laboring manufacturers who are occasionally deprived of their Employ, over whom some Controul [sic] may be very necessary.'" Almost all the Volunteers who saw service did so as police.'<sup>49</sup> Whether to 'control' or to 'persecute' radicals would seem to be little more than a narrow exercise in semantics.

Mori points to the fact that, by May 1794, the government was convinced that a Jacobin conspiracy was afoot, and a further repressive step was taken with the temporary suspension of *habeas corpus*. The London Militia Bill, and the actions of the press gangs led to riots in London. These were attributed to radical societies although there seems no evidence to support such an attribution. The press gangs were active in Kent as elsewhere, but their activities produced no riots. The nationwide demonstrations of 1795 had stemmed largely from the effects of the poor harvest of 1794. Riots had occurred

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<sup>47</sup> Thompson, E.P., *English Working Class*. 123.

<sup>48</sup> Mori, J., *William Pitt*. 190.

<sup>49</sup> Western, J.R., 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force' in *EHR.*, vol.lxxi (1956). 608. The quotation is from TNA: PRO HO50/332, a case at Ashburnham, Dorset.

just beyond the borders of Kent, in London and at Newhaven in the adjoining county of Sussex, but they did not impinge upon the county itself. In the light of genuine grievances associated with the 1794 harvest Pitt 'was not prepared to endorse the intervention of the government in the provisions market.' Mori suggests that 'this is not to say that Pitt was insensitive to the sufferings of the poor.' She points out that a sliding scale of relief payments tied to the price of bread figured in Pitt's Bill of 1796 (eventually defeated) for bettering the conditions of the poor. It may be that, by 1796, Pitt's attitude had changed, but in the previous year he had suggested that if the price of bread was too low it would 'ultimately encrease [*sic*] the Mischief by preventing the Poor from narrowing their Consumption, which they ought to do in some degree.' In the same year he had opposed a bill to empower magistrates to fix minimum wages, on the ground that they were best left 'to find their own level.'<sup>50</sup> In respect of wage levels he was, of course, expressing what was, both then and in more recent times, a widely-held view. Although high wheat prices continued in 1796, it was in the preceding year that urgent action had been most needed to help the poor.

Mori suggests that following the large-scale London meeting organised by the LCS in October, and the later attack on the King's coach, when Parliament introduced the Treasonable and Seditious Practices Bill and the Seditious Meetings Bill in 1795, 'a note of apology can be detected in Pitt's attempt to justify the Two Acts. ... This was deterrence legislation.'<sup>51</sup> The new laws served to stall the movement for parliamentary reform; a state of affairs which was as much to be desired in peacetime as in wartime by a

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<sup>50</sup> Mori, J., *William Pitt*. 249-50, quoting HA 119T 108/42, Pitt to Tomline, 29 June 1795; *Parliamentary Register*, xliii, 8 December 1795. 689.

<sup>51</sup> Mori, J., *William Pitt*. 253.

majority of parliamentarians. But as Mori concludes, 'Pitt's conclusions were often illusions. The Foxites were not in the pay of the French. The radicals did not, from 1792 to 1795, represent a fifth column. When proved frightfully wrong by events, Pitt's world began to crumble at the edges.'<sup>52</sup> Whether reference is made to the activities in Kent of the radicals, Earl Stanhope and Filmer Honywood, the Earls of Guilford and Thanet with their anti-Pitt stance, or to the Corresponding Societies in the county, this is a proposition which certainly applies fully to the situation in Kent. Romney's obsession with Jacobinism there (see p.129) was as ill-founded as Pitt's more general supposition.

As Clive Emsley in *British Society and the French Wars 1793-1815* (1979) rightly points out, the central government did not have the personnel to regulate day-to-day life throughout the country. County administration fell within the purview of the Lord Lieutenant and justices of the peace or, if it was a town, the mayor. When, for example, it came to suppression of the food riots at the end of the century, the government was not able to order the use of troops. It could do no more than respond to local authorities' requests for such assistance.

Emsley emphasizes that there was a time when support for the French Revolution extended well beyond militant radicals. Towards the end of 1792 the Society for Constitutional Information, 'a more genteel society than the LCS', was supportive of the Revolution.<sup>53</sup> The liberally-minded Association of the Friends of the People was equally opposed to the war with France as were the more extreme radicals. Prior to the French Revolution some highly respectable individuals had been drawn into membership of reform societies. At the trial of Horne Tooke in 1794, the Duke of Richmond confessed

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<sup>52</sup> Mori, J., *William Pitt*. 279.

<sup>53</sup> Emsley, C., *British Society and the French Wars, 1793-1815*. 14.

reluctantly that he had once been a member of the Society for Constitutional Information, whilst Pitt admitted attending a meeting at the Thatched House Tavern in May 1782, called for the purpose of planning the petitioning of Parliament on parliamentary reform. Pitt, however, denied Horne Tooke's claim that it was a Convention of delegates from towns and counties throughout England.<sup>54</sup> Attendance at a radical Convention would have carried Pitt farther than he would have wished to go, even in 1782.

The *Morning Chronicle*, an opposition Whig newspaper, in January 1793 had described those whom it saw as being opposed to the war as thinking men, manufacturing industry concerned at rising costs of raw materials and demands for wage increases, traders who feared interference with their profits, landed gentry fearful of increased taxation and the need to sustain the poor, and 'the great mass of the people' who felt that the French were following the lines of the British Constitution.<sup>55</sup> Emsley contends that men of property could be expected to be ready for war whilst, if it came, the lower orders would be torn between loyalty to country and long-standing hostility towards France on the one hand, and fear of conscription and of increases in the price of necessities on the other. Once the war had begun, one of its effects was to cause a degree of economic disruption, with the closing down of British trade with a number of overseas markets and with financial uncertainty. Industries directly or indirectly concerned with the war effort thrived, but several banks failed and bankruptcies in 1793 numbered twice those of the preceding year.<sup>56</sup> So it cannot be assumed, as Emsley does, that 'men of property' as a whole wanted war. The proportion of bankruptcies occurring in Kent, however (at

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<sup>54</sup> *S.T.*, vol. xxv, 21 August 1794. 394.

<sup>55</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 30-31 January 1793.

<sup>56</sup> Hoppit, J., *Risk and Failure in English Business 1700-1800*, App. 1 and 2. 182-4.

around 2% of the national total), scarcely changed throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>57</sup> By early January 1795, the City of London was deploring 'the calamitous effects of the present war on the trade, manufactures and commerce of the British Empire.'<sup>58</sup>

The end of 1797 had seen the introduction of an unpopular budget as taxes were raised to pay for the war but by the beginning of 1799 the economy was starting to improve, partly by reason of expanded trade with the West Indies and America. Yet many were far from contented. Thomas Jones, the M.P. for Denbigh, moved a motion in December 1800 that H.M. Ministers should be dismissed. He contended, with an attitude redolent of early eighteenth-century Toryism, that 'war is life to the contractor, and death to the landed man. War is life to the loan jobber, and death to the peasant; life to the jobber, and death to the mechanic; life to the remitter, and death to the shopkeeper; life to the clothier and death to the labourer.'<sup>59</sup> R.B. Robson, a west country Whig supported the motion to which no Minister bothered to reply. It was lost by 66 votes to 13. Among the minority was Henry Tufton, the Opposition Whig member for Rochester. Emsley suggests that although Jones had a point, many craftsmen and labourers were, in fact, doing well. That was true of the situation in Kent. Tufton's support for the motion was motivated by a desire to get rid of the government rather than by the state of the Kentish economy.

Early in 1799 a Commons Committee of Secrecy suggested that there existed insurrectionary links between some British radicals and the United Irishmen and thus, indirectly, the French revolutionaries. Action ensued to ban the United Societies and the

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<sup>57</sup> Hoppit, J., *Risk and Failure*. 182-4.

<sup>58</sup> Emsley, C., *British Society*. 28-9, 51, 57.

<sup>59</sup> *Parl.Hist.*, xxxv (1800). 697-713. Robson had Kentish connections. In 1808 he considered contesting Sandwich and in 1818 he was nominated at Dover, although he withdraw before the election.

London Corresponding Society. Emsley suggests that these assaults on the industrial and political means of expression of the lower classes may have, as Thompson had argued, 'worsened the internal crises of the last three years of the war against revolutionary France by driving such organisations further underground and heightening their members' sense of injustice.'<sup>60</sup> Emsley concedes that historians are divided as to whether or not this was the case. He suggests that sedition and popular disorder largely arose from the poor harvests of 1799 and 1800 and that these displays of militancy may have presented a threat to society.<sup>61</sup> In Kent there was neither then nor, as far as can be ascertained, at any other time, an underground revolutionary tendency, unless the alleged activities of Colonel Despard in the Medway towns could be considered as such. As is shown in Chapter 5, there is grave doubt whether there was any such activity, and it is certain that there was none of any consequence.

A more recent work dealing with loyalism is M. Morris, *The British Monarchy and the French Revolution* (1998). She argues that 'the labouring classes [at this time] acquired a political life of their own and demanded a freedom of expression bordering on licentiousness.' This, she suggests, added a sense of underlying menace to political controversy but did not become a serious ideological threat until the outbreak of the French Revolution.<sup>62</sup> The actions of the Kentish dockyard workers lend little support to this line of thought, since there was no correlation between their militant action on issues of pay and working conditions, and the French Revolution. They were exploiting the power of skilled workers to disrupt naval shipbuilding and repair in the middle of a war -

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<sup>60</sup> Emsley, C., *British Society*. 82-4.

<sup>61</sup> Emsley, C., *British Society*. 87-9.

<sup>62</sup> Morris, M., *The British Monarchy and the French Revolution*. 34. She relies, in part, on Rogers, N., *Whigs and Cities: Popular Politics in the Age of Walpole and Pitt*, chap. 10.

the Revolutionary War - just as they had done earlier during the American War and would do, later, in the Napoleonic War. Morris examines the Burke-Paine controversy and the writings of loyalist members of the APLPRL. She analyses the varying views of historians on the subject of loyalism and attaches importance to H.T. Dickinson's acceptance that 'conservative ideology developed in reaction to radical thought. Nevertheless, [he had insisted], the conservative position had more integrity than the radical, and it won overwhelming support within the political nation in consequence.'<sup>63</sup> She notes that others disagree with this analysis and cites Eastwood and John Dinwiddy in that connection.<sup>64</sup> She could also have mentioned J.C.D. Clark, who shows that 'conservative' thought (though not, of course, 'conservatism'), much of it Anglican, was considerably older than the French Revolution.<sup>65</sup> There was a conservative reaction against radicalism in the early 1790s, although it would scarcely be true to describe this as the first emergence of conservative ideology. That was already well-established. In essence it saw no reason for change in the existing constitutional order of things, but that was not an idea which came to it anew in the 1790s.

A more valid explanation of developments in the 1790s would seem to be that radical ideology developed as a reaction against prevailing conservative thought which, throughout the century, was one of the principal elements underpinning the monarchical, constitutional, parliamentary, and social *status quo*. It is far from obvious that the conservative position had more 'integrity' than that of the radicals. Arguments for

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<sup>63</sup> Morris, M., *British Monarchy*. 57, quoting Dickinson, H.T., *Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ch. 8.

<sup>64</sup> Dinwiddy, J., 'Interpretation of anti-Jacobinism' in Philp, M., (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*. 38-49.

<sup>65</sup> Clark, J.C.D., *English Society 1660-1832*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. 5-6.

parliamentary reform surely had this quality. The 'overwhelming support within the political nation' for conservatism had more to do with self-interest on the part of the 'Establishment' than with logic, although that is not to suggest that these two factors are ineluctably inconsistent with each other. Morris accepts Dickinson's view that the Association could be seen as a true expression of public opinion.<sup>66</sup> Of the many pamphlets replying to Paine's *Rights of Man* which she examined, it seems that the great majority of writers could be categorised as having personal reasons for being on the side of the 'Establishment' although there was the occasional one of whom this was not true. The pamphlets (and sermons) produced in Kent, and referred to in Chapter 6, were all loyalist in character.

Morris suggests that Thompson, with a vision of class consciousness, had seen 'potential revolutionaries brutally repressed by draconian legislation. ... A democratic tradition had been established and continued to flourish underground.' Others had emphasised the moderation of the radical movement. She suggests that 'only a small minority of radical extremists formed a revolutionary underground in the latter part of the decade.'<sup>67</sup> In a sense, the issue had been tested a decade before, at the time of the American Revolution. British reformers had then taken a firmly pro-colonialist stand and were fully committed to a programme of change in the nature of Parliament. But there was no revolutionary aspect to their campaign. They claimed to be defending traditional rights and saw the British government, rather than themselves, as the innovator.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Morris, M., *British Monarchy*. 59, referring to Dickinson's argument in 'Popular Loyalism'. 503-33.

<sup>67</sup> Morris, M., *British Monarchy*. 80. Morris attributes these views to E.P. Thompson in 'his work of the 1960s.' The second quotation is Morris's own words.

<sup>68</sup> The ways in which different groupings saw the constitution developing and extending is fully discussed in Price, R., *British Society 1680-1880* and, in particular, ch. 7, 'Exclusion and inclusion: the political consequences of 1688'.

Divergent views on whether things had changed and whether there was possibly a revolutionary situation in the 1790s are captured in a collection of essays edited by M. Philp, *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*. In this, Wells sees Britain as narrowly avoiding revolution, Christie sees it as overwhelmingly conservative and united in support of King, Constitution and Country, whilst Philp depicts conditions as continually shifting; like loyalism, radicalism was not 'a discrete entity.'<sup>69</sup> It seems that Wells overstates the impact on political opinion of what he calls 'the famines'. He makes the case for death and starvation caused thereby, but it is one which rests upon too broad an interpretation of largely west country evidence, not necessarily of more general application, and certainly not so in Kent. His descriptions of political and trade union radical activity seem to fall far short of demonstrating any revolutionary intent. Christie, conversely, seems to take insufficient account of the radical movement and in particular the Corresponding Societies. This might seem odd from the author of *Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform*.

It seems that Philp is nearest to the truth when he asserts that 'popular discontent and a radical popular politics may be necessary conditions for revolutionary transformation, but they are not by any means sufficient.'<sup>70</sup> The situation in Kent lends support to this proposition, although it is important to observe that popular discontent and radical popular politics did not always form an alliance. Food riots were evidence of popular discontent but, as is argued in Chapter 4, demonstrations were not usually a sign of radical politics in Kent. As often as not they were harking back to the past, in the

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<sup>69</sup> Morris, M., *British Monarchy*. 80-1; Philp, M., (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*. 188-226, 169-187, 50-77.

<sup>70</sup> Philp, M., 'The fragmented ideology of reform' in Philp, M., (ed.), *The French Revolution*. 77.

shape of the 'moral economy'. There was popular discontent almost throughout the period of the Revolutionary War and radical popular politics held sway for at least a short time in the county. Yet there was never, at any time, a revolutionary tinge to the attitudes adopted by the generality, or even a minority, of county folk.

Morris suggests that 'the support network formed by the triad of monarchy, church and law tied in with the entire social hierarchy.' As it had done throughout the ages, she might have added. 'Support of the social status quo was a subtext in a great many of the sermons and trials.'<sup>71</sup> A similar conjunction is pointed to by J.C.D. Clark in his chapter on 'national identity' at the end of the eighteenth century, in *English Society 1660-1832*, where he shows conclusively that 'religion was indeed important in the re-emphasis on the monarchical nature of English identity, and that the law too played a key role in that process.'<sup>72</sup>

Morris draws attention to the ways in which both Pitt and the loyalist press used Court events to buttress their political aims and objectives. The press constantly carried reports of loyal addresses to the King, the doings of the Court, royal weddings and galas, birthdays, military reviews and victory celebrations, all designed to instill a loyalist spirit in the populace. Provincial celebrations of royal anniversaries often meant a day off work, a break from routine, extravagant festivities and gestures of generosity by the gentry to the ordinary people. It is little wonder that such events were popular among working people. Because of bad weather the King's attendance at a display by the Fleet at the Nore in 1797 did not take place. Nevertheless, the *True Briton* had established, two weeks beforehand, what would be its effect, with descriptions of the grand display

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<sup>71</sup> Morris, M., *British Monarchy*. 133.

<sup>72</sup> Clark, J.C.D., *English Society 1660-1832*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. 237. Ch. 3 is germane to the argument.

which those attending would witness.<sup>73</sup> National Thanksgiving Day at St. Paul's Cathedral in December 1797 took place, Colley has suggested, at the initiative of the King and included contingents of sailors and marines, even more popular than usual after the naval victories at Camperdown and St Vincent.<sup>74</sup> Thus were naval mutinies and growing discontent with the war to some extent countered. The *Maidstone Journal* was assiduous in reporting royalist events. 'Opposition newspapers [though there were none such in Kent] had their work cut out for them undermining the impact of royal ritual.'<sup>75</sup> Morris concedes that despite the constant drip of royalist propaganda, 'a significant degree of low-grade discontent, or even disaffection, lay beneath the surface, waiting for a catalytic issue to spark expression. ... Republicanism cannot be dismissed as insignificant, given the impact it had on the cult of loyalism that dominated the 1790s.'<sup>76</sup> This was true of the situation in Kent. There was discontent which, at times, might have seemed close to radicalism, evidenced in strong opposition to the war and the Pitt Ministry, criticism of the King, and attacks on anti-radical legislation. But for the most part such discontent was coloured by patriotism, rather than developing into a solidly-based radical movement.

A work devoted solely to loyalism is R.R. Dozier's *For King, Constitution and Country: The English Loyalists and the French Revolution* (1983). He advances the proposition that 'the greatest impact [of the radicals] was the creation of the loyalists.'<sup>77</sup> Only in the sense of the creation of Associations to express their views is this correct.

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<sup>73</sup> *True Briton*, 16 October 1797.

<sup>74</sup> Cookson, J.E., *The British Armed Nation 1795-1815*. 215, suggests that Colley is mistaken in saying that the King instigated the event.

<sup>75</sup> Morris, M., *British Monarchy*. 143-9.

<sup>76</sup> Morris, M., *British Monarchy*. 159.

<sup>77</sup> Dozier, R.R., *For King, Constitution and Country: The English Loyalists and the French Revolution*. x

Conservative thought, expressed as loyalism, did not need to be created; it was ever-present well before it was stimulated by radical activity in the 1790s. Dozier agrees that the English intellectual response to the early days of the Revolution was a highly favourable one. 'In these early days, if there were Englishmen other than Burke who thought differently, their thoughts did not gain notoriety.' In saying this, he fails to acknowledge that in the autumn of 1789, Dean Horne and the Rev. William Jones, clerics with strong Kentish links, had preached sermons in Canterbury Cathedral decrying the Revolution. Dozier's contention is open to question when he says that the "Church and King" riots in Birmingham in 1791, 'directed at Dissenters and others favouring the French Revolution, had been deplored by those concerned with stability and order.' This contrasts with a widely held view, expressed by Morris and others, that the 'local Anglican ruling elite neglected to act against the rioters, and even egged them on. The Treasury solicitors then obstructed the victims' efforts to press misconduct charges against the magistrates.'<sup>78</sup> At national level the riots had, belatedly, been deplored by those in power; at local level, less so. The central government, particularly Henry Dundas at the Home Office, did openly disapprove of the Birmingham riots, although it is clear that some elements of the local élite did not. Ditchfield argues that the government was not involved in the Birmingham riots but, rather, that these events developed from the incompetence or acquiescence of local magistrates. Wykes suggests that 'intimidation, threats of violence and actual attacks became important weapons for loyalists in suppressing reformers and radicals. The gentry often took the lead through local loyalist associations in organising individual attacks by giving "Church and King"

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<sup>78</sup> Dozier, R.R., *King, Constitution and Country*. 5; Morris, M., *British Monarchy*. 152.

mobs money and drink to assault the property of local reformers.’<sup>79</sup> Although he gives several examples of violence being exercised against Dissenting ministers, only one of these incidents appears to have involved the gentry.

Dozier suggests that the creation of loyalist societies must have gratified the desires of Lord Grenville, the Foreign Secretary, who had expressed a wish that such bodies should be set up.<sup>80</sup> Dozier cites with approval Reeves’s denial that the government had anything to do with the creation of the APLPRL. From London, the loyalist Associations spread rapidly until there were, Dozier suggests, almost one thousand five hundred throughout the country. Whether or not this figure is accurate, they vastly outnumbered the radical societies.

Dozier indicates that the argument about parliamentary reform and a wider suffrage was ‘one about means not rights. The political community was not a closed caste, and the opportunity to enter it was available to all. Its badge of membership was birth, ability, or wealth ... [whilst] the opportunities of meeting the standards of political participation were multiplying daily and would increase in the future.’<sup>81</sup> Parliamentary involvement, other than by way of petition, was not open to all or even to most, until well into the nineteenth century. The loyalist Crown and Anchor Association had no sympathy with parliamentary reform, even at some time in the future. The *Morning Chronicle*, in November 1792, carried an address from the Association explaining why it had been set up. ‘We ... think it expedient and necessary to form ourselves into an Association for the purpose of discouraging, in every way that lies in our power, the

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<sup>79</sup> Ditchfield, G.M., ‘The Priestley Riots’. 3-16; Wykes, D.L., ‘The Spirit of Persecutors exemplified’. 25.

<sup>80</sup> Dozier, R.R., *King, Constitution and Country*. 55.

<sup>81</sup> Dozier, R.R., *King, Constitution and Country*. 89.

progress of such nefarious designs as are meditated by the wicked and senseless Reformers of the present time.’<sup>82</sup> Not much sympathy for reform is indicated there.

Dozier suggests that the period towards the end of 1794 signified a turning point in the progress of the Revolution. ‘As the radicalism of the Revolution fluctuated, so would the activities and enthusiasm of those supporting it in England. Finally, because the loyalists, the third link in this chain of causal sequences, were prompted by the second, their reason for being would fluctuate also.’<sup>83</sup> It is not obvious that loyalist organisations should have come to an end whilst the nation was still at war, simply because radicalism was waning. It might have been expected that this would have been a time when they would flourish. Dozier suggests that events had reached the stage when loyalist Associations were no longer necessary, loyalism could successfully be subsumed in patriotism. Yet organisations have seldom gone out of fashion because they are winning the battle for hearts and minds. Might it be the case that loyalist Associations dissolved because of a general discontent with the progress of the war and with high taxation to finance it?

Dozier suggests that the treason trial defendants of 1794, ‘could have won by losing.’ A conviction would have proved their point that the Constitution was a tyranny. ‘It was their supreme moment, their time on the national stage, where they could demonstrate dramatically to all Englishmen that change was necessary and that principles were more important than personal safety.’ As it was, ‘they won the battle but lost the

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<sup>82</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 23 November 1792, quoted in Duffy, M., ‘William Pitt and the Origins of the Loyalist Association Movement of 1792’ in *H.J.*, vol. 39, no. 4 (1996). 950-1.

<sup>83</sup> Dozier, R.R., *For King, Constitution*. 159-62, 163.

war.<sup>84</sup> It was indeed the case that the conviction and vicious sentences resulting from the Scottish treason trials had resulted in a public reaction which was supportive of the radicals. But it may be that even this reaction had extended little beyond those already holding radical or reformist views. In response to Fox's condemnation of the sentences, loyalists such as Pitt, Dundas, Loughborough, and even Wilberforce, had strongly supported the outcome of the Scottish trials, which they considered to have served the cause of justice. It is far from certain that a conviction in the English trials would have proved that which Dozier suggests. Had the defendants lost, it is beyond doubt that the government and its loyalist supporters would have widely publicised the fact that traitors had got their just desserts.

Dozier does finally concede that the anathematisation of the radicals, bent as they were seen to be by loyalists on insurrection and revolution, was unsupported by the evidence. 'No one is sure that the radical artisans ever seriously contemplated such a drastic step. One might argue that no plans were made because the loyalists were armed and ready for them, yet the loyalists were not ready and armed until the Revolution took a decided turn towards moderation and the radical artisans became decidedly less radical.'<sup>85</sup> In the later chapters of the thesis dealing with radicalism and loyalism, it will be demonstrated that in respect of Kent, Dozier's concluding proposition accurately described the situation there.

Two more recent works on the subject of loyalism and radicalism are E.V. Macleod's *A War of Ideas: British Attitudes to the Wars against Revolutionary France, 1792-1802* (1998) and J.Graham's *The Nation, the Law and the King: Reform Politics in*

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<sup>84</sup> Dozier, R.R., *For King, Constitution*. 168-9.

<sup>85</sup> Dozier, R.R., *For King, Constitution*. 171.

*England 1789-99* (2000). Macleod is concerned with loyalism and radicalism, the role of the church, of women and of public opinion. She contends that there were two groups of loyalists, ill-defined and with an overlap of activities and attitudes. There was the broad mass of conservative elements who more or less supported government policy and another smaller group of what she describes as 'crusaders'. This latter group accepted the Burkean view that there could be no peace until revolutionary principles were extinguished in France itself. For them, 'the French Revolution, not its military armies, was the primary foe.'<sup>86</sup> There is little evidence that 'crusaders' were a force in Kent. Some might consider Bishop Horsley as one such, for as he said in opposing the Treaty of Amiens in a speech in the House of Lords on 4 November 1801 at 3 o'clock in the morning, 'What is any peace ... which contains in it the seed and germ of everlasting wars?'<sup>87</sup> Whilst 'crusaders' saw the war as a fight to the death, it would be difficult to argue that those opposed to the peace treaty were all hard-liners who wanted the war to continue until France was restored to what they saw as normality. For, in the event, those opposing the Treaty were right. It resulted in little more than a lull in the fighting. It brought peace only for a matter of months.

Macleod argues that the pro-war factions benefitted from 'the inherent traditionalism of the majority of the population, which buttressed the monarchy, the landed hierarchy and the Church of England.'<sup>88</sup> Opposition to the war resulted, principally, from personal experiences. 'Popular anti-war sentiment was produced mainly by the hardships of the wartime experience and partly, especially for the literate

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<sup>86</sup> Macleod, E.V., *A War of Ideas: British Attitudes to the Wars against Revolutionary France, 1792-1802*. 85.

<sup>87</sup> Horsley, H., (ed.), *The Speeches in Parliament of Samuel Horsley*, vol.2. 115.

<sup>88</sup> Macleod, E.V., *War of Ideas*. 181.

classes, by a simple desire, for whatever reason, to criticise the government.’<sup>89</sup> That attitudes were volatile is beyond doubt. In Kent, whereas county meetings usually adopted anti-war resolutions, a crucial county meeting in 1794 was strongly in favour of the creation of Volunteer units. Though to wish to bring a war to an end, yet be prepared to resist the threat of an invasion were not necessarily conflicting attitudes. Medway towns which at times were centres of radicalism at other times fell under the sway of loyalism.

J. Graham’s is a disappointing work for, despite its size (it extends to two volumes and to more than one thousand pages), it adds very little which is new or of substance. It reproduces the minutiae of myriad events of the period but they do not, to any real extent, carry the arguments forward. A further weakness is a lack of attention to the role of the King, or the changing nature of the monarchy throughout the period, notwithstanding the title of the work. She attaches a revolutionary intent to the reformers of 1791-2 and criticises those historians who do not appear ‘to see in Paine’s writings, and those of his political allies, the revolutionary appeal which constituted the essence both of the reception they were accorded, and the reaction they provoked.’<sup>90</sup> This is a contention which is not supported by the direction taken by radicalism in Kent in the 1790s and it is, perhaps, too broad a proposition even when considered nationwide. The reaction provoked among those who supported much of Paine’s writings was not a revolutionary one. Republicanism was an aspect of *The Rights of Man* which went too far for many sympathisers with Paine’s general themes. Graham writes that ‘what, above all, demoralised the radical movement (before the last stages of disenchantment with

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<sup>89</sup> Macleod, E.V., *War of Ideas*. 188.

<sup>90</sup> Graham, J., *The Nation*. 23.

France resulted in its own final disillusion, loss of internal cohesion, and recantation by some of its most prominent members) was the violence and intimidation of the loyalists.’ She refers to ‘the scope and ferocity of the conservative response.’<sup>91</sup> This would be a valid description of the “Church and King” riots but not of too much else. It would be fair to say that the conservative legislative response demoralised the radical movement but it would be an exaggeration to describe it as violent or ferocious.

Graham asserts that ‘the movement for reform in England was, both in its inception and its development, more extreme in its implications than is generally allowed.’ She suggests that the libertarianism of the 1780s was a component of reform agitation of the 1790s, one of her arguments being that the influence of the middle class reformers of the early 1790s continued throughout that decade. She contends, nevertheless, that ‘the exponents were conscious from the outset of the universal revolutionary appeal of France; and inspired by her experiment in popular sovereignty.’ She sees, as did Goodwin and some other historians, a strong Irish influence among reformers in the later 1790s and suggests that the Irish and, probably, the English societies were instrumental in the naval mutinies, as a precursor to revolution.<sup>92</sup> She provides no new evidence to support a proposition which was rejected at the time and which its protagonists have not since found it possible to demonstrate satisfactorily. Her emphasis on the revolutionary nature of radicalism in the 1790s seems considerably and consistently overstated. As Carla Hay comments on Graham’s work, ‘it regrettably will

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<sup>91</sup> Graham, J., *The Nation*. 24-5.

<sup>92</sup> Graham, J., *The Nation*. 869, 821, 872-3.

not serve as the definitive account of “reform politics” during the era of the French Revolution.’<sup>93</sup>

There has, thus far, been little general study of factors affecting life in Kent at the end of the eighteenth century, and none at all of the effects on the county of the French Revolution and the Revolutionary War. From the historiography of the period, it would appear that there are few factors of universal application which would entirely explain attitudes towards radicalism and loyalism in Kent or, possibly, in other discrete areas of the country. For that it is necessary to examine local or regional developments against a background of national developments and it is suggested that a county study is a useful way of achieving this objective. Against the national background the thesis examines in depth the power structure in the county, the Church and Dissent, the food shortages of 1794-5 and 1800-1, the industrialisation of north-west Kent, the county as the gateway to and from mainland Europe, the virtual occupation of the county by troops from 1793 onwards, and the role played by the county in the operation of the Aliens Act. It will demonstrate that Kent’s reaction to events having their origin far beyond the county was quite different from that of the reaction to them in many other parts of the country. Whether there is such a distinction to be drawn in the case of other counties is a question which is beyond the scope of the present thesis, and one which remains to be explored.

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<sup>93</sup> Hay, C.H., Review of Jenny Graham, *The Nation, the Law and the King: Reform Politics in England 1789-99* in *Albion*, vol.33, no.3 (2001). 480-2.

### 3. THE EXERCISE OF POWER AND INFLUENCE IN KENT

In the 1790s the people of Kent, just as in the country at large, were subjected to the influences of loyalism, patriotism, radicalism and anti-Ministerialism, each faction with its powerful supporters. As the thesis develops it will be demonstrated that loyalism did not prevail in the county but neither, despite some appearances to the contrary, did radicalism. The county was free from riots. It will be shown that anti-Ministerialist forces were of importance in the county but that, at the end of the day, it was a combination of patriotism (though not simply loyalist patriotism) and, doubtless, francophobia which held sway. In order to assess these tendencies, and the ways in which they were able to influence opinion, it is necessary to consider where power and influence lay in the county.

Apart from the Cinque Ports, the exercise of control over the day-to-day lives of the population of Kent was no different from that of any other county. Power resided in the Lord Lieutenant (the Lord Warden, *ex officio*, in the Cinque Ports) as the agency through which the Crown, and hence the government, operated. Directly affecting the individual were the justices of the peace who, aside from their role as administrators of law and order, acted as local government officials, petitioning for Acts of Parliament for, among other things, the upkeep of roads, bridges, paving and gaols. Having a widespread effect on many individuals was the justices' oversight of poor law administration, the everyday operation of which was in the hands of parish officials. In the towns, many of the administrative functions of the county justices were the responsibility of the mayor and corporation. At one remove, Kent's Members of Parliament exercised power. The county had eighteen parliamentary seats but rather more MPs (twenty-three in total)

resided in the county and, thus, had some interest in Kentish affairs. Whenever Parliament was petitioned for an Act to deal with a local need, the county or borough MPs would be members, and usually the influential members, of the Commons Committee appointed to examine the proposals.<sup>1</sup> Power was exercised by the military when putting down riots, although it will be shown that this was a function which was not needed to be deployed in Kent.

In many counties land ownership was synonymous with power. This was not the case in Kent. The aristocracy and Members of Parliament were the leading influences at county and town meetings. The Established Church was a powerful influence, but Dissenters were neither great in number nor widespread in the county at the end of the eighteenth century. The county's newspapers played some part in opinion-forming although, from 1793, they were most often at odds with the decisions reached at county and town meetings.

Throughout the thesis it will be contended that despite the presence of what in other counties had been causes of rioting, the population of Kent was generally quiescent in the period 1789-1802. There were disturbances but they never assumed the character of riots. An important reason why this was so derived indirectly from gavelkind, the law of land tenure in the county. This had resulted in relatively small landownings and a consequentially closer relationship between the rural population and the landowning gentry. This was a factor of great importance in what was essentially a rural county. In Kent, landowning ran alongside influence rather than power. Before turning to the effect

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, *CJ.*, 22 February 1791 (County gaol should not be a charge to the West Division only); 25 February 1799 (Margate pier repair); 12 February 1799 (Thames tunnel, Gravesend – Tilbury).

which various elements had in opinion-forming, it is necessary to consider the land law which distinguished Kent from all other counties.

### **Land ownership in the county**

Kent was a county of relatively small landholdings. J. Boys, in his 1805 report on Kentish agriculture, refers to larger farms of over 300 acres which were to be found in the poorest agricultural districts, whilst smaller farms of 10-14 acres with few exceeding 200 acres were to be found in the areas of richer soils.<sup>2</sup> In Britain as a whole, some four hundred 'great landlords' at the end of the eighteenth century had estates varying in size between 10,000 and 20,000 acres. The greatest of these *grands seigneurs* such as the Dukes of Bedford, Bridgewater, Devonshire and Northumberland each owned more than 50,000 acres.<sup>3</sup> There was nothing remotely approaching an estate of this size in Kent. The Duke of Dorset and Earl Camden had estates at Knole, and Seal and Bayham respectively, yet these were not large enough to be synonymous with power. Dorset and Camden, despite their considerable influence in government circles, were relatively uninfluential at county level. Only once, in April 1794, was Dorset able to carry the day at a county meeting, and that on the issue of Volunteer companies (see Chapter 6). The size of Kentish estates derived from the customary law of gavelkind with a system of partible inheritance, in force in the county over very many centuries. There were some minor changes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by way of disgavelling statutes, voluntary sale of land, and seventeenth-century enclosures, but these modifications did not lead to the large landownings to be found in some other parts of the country. Prior to 1853, when gavelkind was abolished by the Copyright Enfranchisement Act (15 & 16

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<sup>2</sup> Boys, J., *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Kent*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1805. 36-9.

<sup>3</sup> Mingay, G.E., *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century*. 19-20.

Vict. c.51), to prove that land in Kent was not subject to gavelkind involved a long and complex legal process which was undertaken only relatively infrequently. For at least three-quarters of the 1,000 gentry 'their sphere was the parish rather than the county.' ... 'Perhaps four-fifths of the major gentry who formed the backbone of Kentish society were confined, not only to the one county, but to a few parishes within it.'<sup>4</sup>

In Kent 'the gentry were numerous but possessed only modest estates. Each family was represented by many branches; hence the saying that "all Kentish men are cousins."<sup>5</sup> One effect of this prevalence of small landholdings was that the county's gentry lived on their estates to a greater extent than did the largely absentee landlords of the great English estates. A.H. Johnson has shown that in 1798, in thirty-seven Kentish parishes, of 685 landowners with more than six acres and 175 with smaller holdings, more than two-thirds (459 and 123, respectively) were themselves in occupation of their land.<sup>6</sup> In Kent, landlords were closer to their tenants and labourers than was the case where land stewards, bailiffs and overseers managed large holdings in the absence of the landlord. The result was a paternalistic form of society. As Hasted noted:

Each son succeeding on his father's decease to a division of his freehold, by the custom of *gavelkind*, which everywhere prevails, every man becomes a freeholder, and has some part of his own to live upon. *This distribution of freeholds* cements a good understanding between the gentry and yeomen ... nor are the latter so much dependent on the gentry as the inhabitants of most other counties ... which state of freedom is productive of good will and kindness from the one sort to the other, there being no part of the kingdom where the people are more quietly governed, or submit with more pleasure to the laws and magistracy of the country. ... The number of freeholds in the county of Kent are supposed to be about nine thousand.<sup>7</sup>

Hasted here refers to 'gentry and yeomen' but it is the labouring classes who would have been more prone to law-breaking and rioting. Yet as he goes on to suggest, Kent was to a

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<sup>4</sup> Everitt, A.M., *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion 1640-60*, 33-36. 42.

<sup>5</sup> Thirsk, J., *The Rural Economy of England: Collected Essays*. 344

<sup>6</sup> Johnson, A.H., *The Disappearance of the Small Landowner: Ford Lectures, 1909*, Table X. 152.

<sup>7</sup> Hasted, E., *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (1797-1801), vol.1. 301.

greater extent than elsewhere 'quietly governed' and law abiding. This was true in both the decades before and after the Revolutionary War. The one exception was the Swing Riots of 1830. But there were two new factors which then came into play. The riots were concerned with avoiding significant job losses by reason of farm mechanisation, and possible wage reductions resulting from the import of cheap Irish labour. They amounted to a trade union activity, but one carried to extremes at a time when no formalised system of agricultural labour relations had yet developed.

The specific relationships between some 9,000 relatively small-scale landowners or tenants and their labourers remains generally undocumented. It is not possible to provide evidence in respect of a representative sample; indeed, such a sample could not be constructed. It follows that whilst it is predicated in the chapters concerned with 'The Poor and Charity' and 'The Armed Forces' that this was a major factor in keeping the peace in Kent when in other counties the population was rioting, the argument rests upon the proposition that the day to day relationship between employer and employed in Kent was wholly different from that where the large-scale landowner was remote from those working on his lands and hence the relationship was one between a paid servant of the landowner and the labourer. Some support for the concept of the benign effect of the law of gavelkind is to be found in Hasted's contemporary perception thereof and, to a lesser extent, in Pitt's letter to the Privy Council (see p.133), where he averred the trust which the people of Kent had in their 'superiors'. The contention is buttressed by the reports in Chapter 4, where examples are given of Kentish magistrates and mayors making clear to the government that they had no need of external assistance to control the mood of the people, even in the most difficult times. The absence of a dominant landowner in the

county meant that there was no such figure of authority against whom opposition might coalesce. Unlike the position in much of the country, virtually never did the authorities need to call upon the military to maintain law and order. There were counties, such as Devon, where there was no dominant aristocracy and to some extent the gentry were residential. Yet, as is shown in chapter 4, Devon, like Cornwall and Somerset, was beset by food riots for a variety of reasons, among them the fact that overwhelmingly small landholdings, as in Kent, were not prevalent in Devon and an affinity there between employer and employee, the authorities and the ordinary man, was not of the particular significance that it was in Kent.

Riots seem generally to have occurred in towns<sup>8</sup> where, of course, they were more likely to be noticed and recorded. Yet just as in rural Kent, there were no riots in Kentish towns. Towns in Kent could not entirely avoid the effects of gavelkind since partible inheritance resulted in most middling families, including mayors, jurats and justices, being landholders. Their relationships with their labourers in rural areas was likely to influence, to some extent, an attitude towards the poor in the towns. Whilst there were occasions when riots might have occurred in Canterbury (1795), Rochester and Maidstone (1800), the mayors were able to disperse the demonstrators without assistance from the forces of law and order (see pp.129-30, 132-3). It is suggested in chapter 4 that the absence of riots was attributable to a degree of trust between the governors and the governed in Kentish towns, evidenced by the fact that the authorities acted timeously in

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Bohstedt, J., *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales 1790-1810*; Wells, R.A.E., *Dearth and Distress in Yorkshire 1793-1802*; Wells, R., *The Revolt in the South West 1800-1: A Study in English Popular Protest*; Stevenson, J., *Popular Disturbances in England 1700-1832*.

aid of the ordinary man in times of distress, unlike the situation in the south west, for example, where such help as was given by the municipalities was often laggardly.

### **The Electoral Structure of Kent**

With land ownership diversified in Kent the influence of the individual landlord was highly localised. The degree of power which great landowners elsewhere could exercise at election times was not matched in Kent, where the powerful elements seeking to influence parliamentary elections did not rely for their effect upon substantial landownings. In Kent in the latter part of the eighteenth century there was no borough-monger akin to the Earl of Lonsdale or the Duke of Newcastle. Nor were there nabobs like Clive in Shropshire. The 1792 petition of the Society of Friends of the People in favour of parliamentary reform, presented by Charles Grey, MP. to the House in 1792 and 1793, listed those exercising electoral influence. The Earl of Lonsdale nominated for seven seats, Mount Edgumbe, Newcastle, Buckingham and Elliott for six each. The only one named in Kent was Sir Edward Deering who nominated for the two seats at New Romney.<sup>9</sup> In Kentish urban areas the influence was not primarily that of landowners but of merchants and traders, or a department of government in those cases where it was a large employer.

The number of adult males eligible to vote in the Kentish county elections was exceeded only by Yorkshire where the three Ridings in total accounted for 20,000 voters, whilst Somerset could match Kent's numbers. In Somerset the Seymour family (the Dukes of Somerset and Earls of Egremont) was influential and numbers of freeholders

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<sup>9</sup> TNA: PRO TS24/3/102; *Parl.Hist.*, vol.xxix (1972). 1300-1341; vol.xxx (1973). 787-925. Although written as 'Deering', this was Sir Edward Dering.

hardly mattered since there was no contested election between 1715 and 1807.<sup>10</sup> Were Kent's county and borough elections of 1790, 1796 and 1802 affected by individual or collective influences, and did radical or loyalist tendencies play any part in the results?<sup>11</sup> Earlier in the century family influences had played some part in elections at New Romney, Sandwich and Hythe.<sup>12</sup> By the 1790s this remained true only of New Romney where, through his wife, Dering owned estates.<sup>13</sup> The Romney electorate was limited to the mayor, jurats and common council, numbering less than 20. When Dering was seeking a peerage in 1794, he claimed to have been responsible for the return at New Romney of the nabobs Sir Elijah Impey and Richard Joseph Sullivan in 1790, 'by the particular recommendation of Mr. Pitt'. It was rumoured that he had received £10,000 for the transaction and that 'Impey's seat had cost £1,000 more than Sullivan's because of his reputation'.<sup>14</sup> At the time of Warren Hastings's impeachment, Impey, formerly Chief Justice of Bengal, had also been impeached. The charges against him were dropped but it would seem that they had not been entirely forgotten.

Nationally, at the end of the eighteenth century, 11,075 votes, controlled by fewer than two hundred great landowners, were said by Oldfield to have elected 257 Members

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<sup>10</sup> Thorne, R.G., *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1790-1820*, II, *Constituencies*. 214, 435, 341. J. Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832*, App.4. 291, includes Lancaster as equal in number to Kent in 1754. Namier, L., and Brooke, J., *House of Commons, 1754-1790*, vol.1, *Introductory survey, constituencies, appendices*. 312, gives the numbers of voters in Kent and Somerset as 8,000.

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed study of these elections in Kent see Humphries, P.L., 'Kentish Politics and Public Opinion, 1768-1832', unpublished DPhil. thesis, Oxford, 1981.

<sup>12</sup> Humphreys, P.L., 'Kentish Politics'. 6.

<sup>13</sup> That New Romney was the only Kentish constituency is confirmed in Namier, L., *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. 144-8. Dering's influence is confirmed in a letter from the Duke of Portland to William Adam, 4 June 1790, in which he wrote, 'I take Romney and Rye to be quite out of the question', reproduced in Ginter, D.E. (ed.), *Whig Organisation in the General Election of 1790: Selections from the Blair Adam Papers*. 173.

<sup>14</sup> Ginter, D.E., 'The Loyalist Association Movement of 1792-3 and British Public Opinion' in *Hist.Jnl.*, vol.ix.2, (1966) 170, 173.

of Parliament. Not one of these seats was in Kent, where there were no large estates with loyal retainers and tenants willing to do the bidding of their master. 'The Duke of Dorset possesses the first individual interest [but] the nobility and gentry are too numerous to suffer it to gain an ascendancy.'<sup>15</sup> Of the principal boroughs, 'Canterbury is entirely independent in its election of members, and is neither under the influence or control of any patron or leading man.'<sup>16</sup> It had some 1500 voters and the electoral influences were the merchants, tradespeople and local gentry. At Maidstone the Earls of Aylesford and Romney were powerful figures, as were the Finches, but none could control the outcome of voting in the constituency. Writing earlier in the century Defoe, referring to the small towns and villages of West Kent, noted, 'These clothiers and farmers, and the remains of them, upon the general election of members of parliament for the county ... are so considerable, that whoever they vote for is always sure to carry it, and therefore the gentlemen are very careful to preserve their interest among them.'<sup>17</sup> There were other important influences. In the Cinque Ports 'when the lord warden was a member of the government, as was Pitt, ... the influence of the government was very strong.'<sup>18</sup> In the 1796 county election, 'a great number of Freeholders in the interest of Sir William Geary, breakfasted and were otherwise entertained at the Mote, the seat of the Right Hon. Lord Romney.'<sup>19</sup> Such entertainment was a commonplace of the period, but it could not guarantee the result since it was an activity which was open to both sides.

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<sup>15</sup> Oldfield, T., *An Entire and Complete History, Political and Personal of the Boroughs of Great Britain*, vol.ii. 144.

<sup>16</sup> Oldfield, T., *An Entire and Complete History*. 155.

<sup>17</sup> Defoe, D., *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, Rogers, P., (ed.), Penguin edition. 132-3.

<sup>18</sup> Thorne, R.G., (ed.), *History of Parliament*, vol.ii. 464.

<sup>19</sup> *MJ.*, 14 June 1796.

The Church exercised an influence over the voting of the clergy, although that did not necessarily ensure success for its favourite. Samuel Horsley, Bishop of Rochester, when Bishop of St. David's in 1789, had urged upon his clergy who they should vote for or against. In the 1790 Kent county election Charles Marsham, Romney's son, was the sitting Member from the western side of the county. The other candidates, Filmer Honeywood and Sir Edward Knatchbull both came from the eastern side. The county conventionally returned one Member from the western side and one from the east and Marsham could, therefore, have expected to be re-elected, yet he was defeated. The clergy had cast 410 votes, of which 133 went to Marsham, 190 to Knatchbull and only 87 to Honeywood. If lay voters had voted as did the clergy, Marsham would have been elected.<sup>20</sup>

In the 1802 election Geary was proposed by the Hon. and Rev. Jacob Marsham, another of Romney's sons. Honeywood came top of the poll and Knatchbull was defeated. The clergy voted 201 for Geary, 187 for Knatchbull and 62 for Honeywood. Honeywood's radicalism made little appeal to the clergy, but their votes made no difference to the outcome of the election. In Canterbury itself the Cathedral was a powerful influence with its widespread landownings and ownership of much property but its effect on elections was largely nullified by the fact that Canterbury was a freeman borough and clergy could not vote.

Whether Dissenting freemen were sufficiently numerous to affect the outcome of any of the Kentish elections is doubtful. Maidstone, a freeman borough with some 700 electors, had considerable numbers of Dissenters. Not all of them would have been

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<sup>20</sup> Gillman, W., (ed.), *The Poll for Knights of the Shire to represent the County of Kent, 1790; 1796; 1802*, (Rochester, 1791, 1797, 1803).

radically inclined; Unitarians would have been, with Particular Baptists less so.<sup>21</sup> Of those Dissenters whom J.A. Phillips was able to identify 'anti-Ministerialist candidates won the preponderant share of their votes at each election after 1780, but too few could be identified for a strong inference.'<sup>22</sup> In 1780 the successful Rockingham Whig candidate, Clement Taylor, had been elected. J.E. Bradley is emphatic in saying that 'the Dissenting elite and the laity combined had a strong determinative influence' in Maidstone and among other large freeman boroughs.<sup>23</sup> It is doubtful if this can be shown with any certainty. In 1796 Taylor stood down and Christopher Hull was the radical candidate. He had been examined by the Privy Council in 1794 in the context of the treason trial of Hardy and others. Although the voting was close (328 to 281) the seat was gained by General de Lancy, a government supporter who had commanded the military presence in Birmingham immediately after the "Church and King" riots there. Independents regained one seat in 1802 but not until 1806 was Matthew Bloxham, a government supporter first elected in 1790, defeated.

Bradley makes the general comment that, 'even a slight religious component could have swayed results.'<sup>24</sup> This could scarcely have been the case in Kent. The 1790 elections in Maidstone and Canterbury were decided by large majorities. In 1796 the voting in Canterbury was close but the election was declared void. In the re-run election the Opposition Whigs, John Baker and Samuel Elias Sawbridge, obtained more than twice the votes of Sir John Honeywood and George Gipps, the Ministerial candidates. The

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<sup>21</sup> An incomplete return of support for the Unitarian Petition of 1792 gives a figure of 82 signatures from Maidstone. J.R.L. MSS, Lindsay to Rowe, 6 March 1792, John Rylands University Library of Manchester. I am indebted to Dr. Ditchfield for drawing my attention to this reference.

<sup>22</sup> Phillips, J.A., *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*. 290.

<sup>23</sup> Bradley, J.E., *Religion, Revolution and English Radicalism: Non-Conformity in Eighteenth-Century Politics and Society*. 98.

<sup>24</sup> Bradley, J.E., *Religion, Revolution and English Radicalism*. 98.

result was overturned by Parliament on a petition. Whilst it is possible in Maidstone, and just possible in Canterbury, that Dissenters may have influenced election results, the evidence necessary to support a definite conclusion is lacking and it seems more likely, on balance, that they did not. There is no evidence that elsewhere in Kent Dissenters were a significant electoral factor; certainly they were not a determining one.

The government sought to influence Kentish elections in constituencies where it was the principal employer. These included ports and dockyard towns where the Navy, Customs, civil government or the Ordnance were involved. Four of the five original Cinque Ports were situated in Kent. The Lord Warden, appointed by the King, had the same authority over Romney, Hythe, Dover and Sandwich (together with Hastings in Sussex and some subsidiary ports) as had the Lord Lieutenant and Sheriff over the rest of the county. From 1792, when William Pitt was Lord Warden, he could command the votes of most of the government employees, but this was not always enough to carry the day. In 1784 two government supporters had been elected at Dover. John Trevanion, an Independent (although he generally supported the government on the issue of war) was returned in a 1789 bye-election and he was re-elected in 1796 and 1802. On the latter occasion another Independent, John Spencer Smith, brother of the war hero Sir Sydney Smith, defeated a ministerialist candidate. Dover, like Canterbury and Maidstone, was at times prepared to assert its independence and to exercise control over its own affairs. The size of the Dover electorate, some 1,500 (of whom 700 were non-resident), ensured that it could not be controlled by any one interest. There was a considerable degree of

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independence 'in favour of local men and of Members willing to take an interest in the town, rather than in favour of Whigs or Radicals.'<sup>25</sup>

Rochester and Sandwich were boroughs where the Admiralty was the key governmental electoral influence, whilst at Queenborough it was the Ordnance. As at Dover, government support could not always guarantee that its candidates would be elected. In 1790, ministerialists retained one seat at Rochester whilst George Best, a brewer and an Independent defeated a Whig, the Marquis of Titchfield, heir of the Duke of Portland. Best hardly spoke in the House and he was defeated at the 1796 election. For several parliaments, up to 1790, the government held the seats at Sandwich but in that year they lost one to Sir Horace Mann, an Independent, a seat which he retained in 1796 and 1802. Like Trevanion at Dover, he was not notably anti-ministerialist; he voted only once with the Whig opposition. The *Kentish Gazette* offered an explanation as to why government candidates were not always successful:

Of late the power of a ministerial candidate is found at that place to be on the decline [by reason of] a want of impartiality in the present Members towards their constituents, and an overbearing spirit in some of the Bench, to keep the principal tradesmen and freemen in general out of their share in the representation, to which as men of spirit and property they are likely no longer to submit.<sup>26</sup>

At Queenborough (as at Seaford and Shoreham in Sussex) electoral campaigning was in the hands of the Ordnance. In March 1796 James Marsham, a son of Lord Romney, proposed - as had his father in the 1784 Parliament - the disenfranchisement of employees of the Navy and Ordnance, on the grounds that Crown servants were subject to a conflict of interest at the polls. He argued that 'the Ordnance had instituted public works projects for no other purpose than the control of the local workforce and, thence,

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<sup>25</sup> Thorne, R.G., *History of Parliament*, vol.ii. 464.

<sup>26</sup> *KG.*, 20-23 April 1790.

the return of an MP.<sup>27</sup> In August 1788 Richmond, perhaps trying to extend Ordnance influence, wrote to Pitt regarding ‘various Plans I have to submit to you concerning the next General Election upon which I have had offers but cannot engage in any of them without feeling that I have the means of undertaking them with a reasonable Prospect of success.’<sup>28</sup> Although there were only about 150 electors, and despite the fact that the Corporation was supportive of the government and most freemen were in Admiralty or Ordnance employ, ministerialists were defeated, albeit by a margin of less than ten votes. Government supporters were usually elected unopposed at Hythe but in 1802 Independents won both seats. They were supported by tradesmen and mariners, including James Simmons of Canterbury. Simmons, through his newspaper the *Kentish Gazette*, although opposed to the government in the 1770s, had given it his support from the 1790s onwards. He had been active in the Canterbury APLPRL. He, as were others, was motivated at Hythe by a desire to make a local choice and to nullify centralised control of local affairs, rather than by any fundamental disagreement on policy.

Whether either radicalism or loyalism affected voting patterns in Kent is uncertain. That ministerialist candidates were sometimes defeated in seats largely in the government’s gift should not be taken as representing a swing towards radicalism, for it was not.<sup>29</sup> In most such cases, just as in Maidstone and Canterbury where there was no significant government influence, the overwhelming factor was a demand for local independence, reflecting a much older attitude. Maidstone in 1790 had two local

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<sup>27</sup> *Parliamentary Register*, vol.xx, 30 March 1786. 36-38.

<sup>28</sup> Olson, A.G., *The Radical Duke: Career and Correspondence of Charles Lennox, Third Duke of Richmond*. 87. Richmond to Pitt, 29 August 1788; TNA: PRO 30/8/171, ff.143-5.

<sup>29</sup> A study of the conflict between the government and other electoral interests is contained in Christie, I.R., ‘Private Patronage versus Government Influence’ in *EHR.*, vol.lxxi (1956). 249-55.

businessmen as Members, the anti-ministerialist Clement Taylor and the government supporter Matthew Bloxham.

In 1802 the *Kentish Chronicle* hazarded the opinion that ‘the changes which have occurred at Rochester, Dover, Hythe, Queenborough and Maidstone, show the spirit of independence is again roused, and we have no doubt that Sir William Geary owes his success to the exertions used in his favour by the friends of Mr Honywood.’<sup>30</sup> In the county elections in 1796 Knatchbull and Geary had been successful, the latter describing himself as ‘strongly attached to our King and Constitution, a firm friend of Mr Pitt and the present administration.’<sup>31</sup> He had changed significantly by the time he came to be allied with Honywood in 1802. Geary had taken a small step towards radicalism in 1797 when he favoured a check on electoral expenses and a splitting of the counties, although he declined to support Grey’s reform motion because he thought it came too close to advocating universal suffrage. Geary said that he would ‘divide the country into districts, each of which would send one member to Parliament, every person to be qualified to vote who paid poor rates to the amount of 10 or 20 l.’ He indicated that ‘he might propose this at a later date if he could gain support for the idea.’<sup>32</sup> The continuance of the war was an issue in many constituencies in 1796 and, to a lesser extent, in 1802. At the county meeting in 1796, Honywood was forthright on the subject:

If he had not been elected the last time, the County would have been no better than a Government Borough, and the Government was a Mass of Corruption and would soon be putrified. He had uniformly opposed, in all its stages, the very ruinous and disastrous War in which we were involved, by the Wickedness and Ambition of Ministers, the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act and the two Arbitrary Bills which so much affected the welfare and Liberty of the British subject.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Kentish Chronicle*, 23 July 1802.

<sup>31</sup> *Canterbury Journal*, 23-30 March 1794.

<sup>32</sup> *Parl.Hist.*, vol.xxxiii, 26 May 1797. 686.

<sup>33</sup> *MJ.*, 25 May 1796.

Of his 4285 votes in the ensuing election, Honeywood received 3346 plumpers but he ended 133 short of Geary's vote, despite receiving 1184 more votes than in 1790. His opponents had poured money into the campaign and Geary had taken on much of the expense of the ministerial candidates. This was said to amount to £20,000.<sup>34</sup> Much bribery and corruption had taken place but a petition against the result was rejected by the Commons.

In the elections of 1790, 1796 and 1802 the government, on occasion, failed to ensure the success of its candidates but the defeat was in some cases short-lived, as at Queenborough. Honeywood's voting strength throughout the period might seem to suggest that candidates with radical sympathies were acceptable to the electorate. In fact, the principal factors governing the voting strength of those opposed to the government would seem to have been a strong desire for local independence, and disenchantment with the war and the high taxation and social disruption flowing therefrom. At election times loyalist or, more accurately, patriotic inclinations were stronger in Kent than would be apparent from the anti-war declarations adopted at county meetings and from the return of opposition parliamentary candidates from time to time.

### **The Magistracy**

Justices were the one part of the county's administration with which many men, women and children came into contact, directly or indirectly. Justices supervised the parish vestries in their administration of the poor law. In August 1795 justices at the East Malling petty sessions 'very strongly recommended' parishes to pay poor relief temporarily to all applicants, irrespective of the laws on Settlement, 'to prevent the

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<sup>34</sup> Thorne, R.G., *History of Parliament*, vol.ii. 214.

necessity of many expensive removals extremely detrimental to the poor and particularly inconvenient to the farmers at this time of year without an ultimate advantage to any parishes concerned.<sup>35</sup> It may well have been the interests of Kentish farmers (most justices had farming interests) rather than those of the poor which motivated the decision but, be that as it may, the viewpoint of the magistrates prevailed.

Justices were empowered to enforce Elizabethan legislation on minimum wage rates for labourers but by the dying years of the eighteenth century the practice had largely fallen into disuse and the Statute of Artificers (5Eliz.c.4) was to be repealed in 1813-14. The Kentish justices at petty sessions devised their own schemes for poor relief in the county and these are examined in Chapter 4. They exercised a degree of severity in sentencing whenever disloyalty to the State was demonstrated. Yet there was leniency shown and sympathy with the problems facing the poor in those cases where demonstrations arose from food shortages and high prices. It was a tendency with a long history. P. Collinson writing of grain riots in Kent in the period 1585-1603 notes that ‘justices of the peace (themselves perhaps men with little enthusiasm for grain merchants) [were] often negotiating with the rioters and showing a willingness to defuse further trouble by bringing prices down. Conversely, authority acted very quickly and decisively when it was faced with rumours of rebellion.’<sup>36</sup>

Commissions of the Peace were enrolled in Kent in 1791 and again in 1799.<sup>37</sup> Interim appointments were made when numbers fell significantly. The aristocracy was

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<sup>35</sup> CKS., PS/Ma., 3 August 1795.

<sup>36</sup> Collinson, P., (ed.), *The Short Oxford History of the British Isles: The Sixteenth Century*. 38-9.

<sup>37</sup> CKS., Q/JC60, 61; Black, S.B., *The Kentish Justice 1791-1834* and Keith-Lucas, B., *Parish Affairs: The Government of Kent under George III* contain useful short analyses of Kentish justices of the period. A study by N. Landau, *The Justices of the Peace 1679-1760* deals particularly with Kent and much relating to this earlier period forms a useful background to the 1790s and early 1800s.

included, together with most Kentish Members of Parliament and members of the leading county families as, for a short period in 1791, was Edward Hasted, the historian of Kent. There had been a small number of appointments from outwith the ranks of the aristocracy and gentry earlier in the century but the number of merchants and tradespeople appointed in the final decade showed a marked increase. They included George Best, brewer of Chatham, Minet Fector, merchant and banker of Dover, James Whatman of Maidstone and John Larkin of East Malling, paper manufacturers, George Children, banker of Tonbridge, and George Norman of Bromley, timber importer. These families, in total, provided eleven justices in the 1799 Commission. In the previous Commission of 1777, only two of the names, Best and Fector, appear.<sup>38</sup> An Act of 1792 (32Geo.III.c.53) introduced stipendiary police magistrates, appointed by the Home Secretary, to serve in suburban Middlesex and Surrey.<sup>39</sup> Their appointment was later extended to Kent and among those included in the Kent Commission were Richard Ford and William Wickham, both of whom figured prominently in the alien matters examined in Chapter 8. Few stipendiaries acted as justices in Kent, just as only a minority of those included in the Commission were active. In order to officiate as a magistrate it was necessary to take out a writ of *dedimus potestatum*. Only 165 of the rather less than 500 in the 1791-8 lists and 215 of rather more than that number in the 1799 Commission and its supplements did so.<sup>40</sup>

The number of clergy included in the Commission is noteworthy.<sup>41</sup> In 1791 there were twenty-one and this rose to thirty in 1799. The clergy who took out the writ of

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<sup>38</sup> CKS., Q/JC59.

<sup>39</sup> *Parl.Hist.*, vol.xxix, 1178, 1464 *et seq*; *CJ.*, 19 February, 16 March 1796.

<sup>40</sup> Black, S.B., *The Kentish Justice*, list of magistrates, 1791-1803.

<sup>41</sup> Virgin, P., *The Church in an Age of Negligence: Ecclesiastical Structure and Problems of Church*

*dedimus* amounted, throughout the period, to about 14% of the total number of magistrates who did so. These figures, however, do not tell the whole story. The evidence shows that clergy devoted more time to the bench than many others. Of the fifteen or so regular members of the bench at East Kent Sessions five were clergy, including the Archdeacon of Canterbury, a Prebendary of Rochester and the Headmaster of King's School, Canterbury. The situation in West Kent was rather similar. The Chairman from 1778 to 1795 was a clergyman, the Rev. Pierrepoint Crompton. He had married a Kentish heiress and had lands in Frinsted. His livings were in Nottinghamshire and it is likely that he was appointed to the Bench as a country gentleman rather than as a clergyman. At the Michaelmas Sessions of 1786 the Bench was composed of Crompton and six other justices. One was the Rev. Denny Fairfax, nephew and heir of Lord Fairfax (himself one of the six), the others included Thomas Best Senior and Junior. The Bests were related to the Fairfax family by marriage. In both the West and East Divisions of Kent the clergyman magistrates played an active part, to a greater extent proportionately than their numbers would have justified. As E.J. Evans suggests, clergymen magistrates 'were usually more literate and often more conscientious attenders to magisterial duty than their lay colleagues.'<sup>42</sup>

### **The Church and dissenters**

Kent was unique in containing two dioceses of the Church of England, Canterbury and Rochester. The county had 413 parishes according to Hasted.<sup>43</sup> Towards

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*Reform 1700-1840*. Ch.5 deals with the clergy and magistracy, although it says nothing directly related to Kent.

<sup>42</sup> Evans, E.J., 'Some Reasons for the Growth of English Anti-Clericalism c.1750-c.1830' in *Past and Present*, no.66 (February 1975). 101.

<sup>43</sup> Hasted, E., *History of Kent*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, vol.1. 253-65.

the end of the eighteenth century both Church and State in England saw in religious Dissent and Jacobinical atheism a danger to the civil and religious *status quo*. In Kent, the High Church Hutchinsonian tendency had its strong supporters. George Horne, Dean of Canterbury from 1781 to 1790 and Bishop of Norwich from then until his death in 1792, was one such. William Jones (known as Jones of Nayland), after 1777 perpetual curate of Nayland in Suffolk, had earlier spent a year as Vicar of Bethersden and twelve years as Rector of Pluckley in Kent. Archbishop Secker, who had appointed the Hutchinsonian George Berkeley as a prebend of Canterbury Cathedral, had appointed Jones to a Kent living because of his High Church writings.<sup>44</sup> He had been an undergraduate contemporary of Horne at Oxford and they both played a leading role in opposition to the post-Revolutionary French régime and English radicalism. 'At Canterbury the influence of this group was very strong.'<sup>45</sup> Samuel Horsley was Bishop of St David's (1788-93), Rochester (1793-1802) and St Asaph (1802-6). During his time at Rochester he held, in addition, the office of Dean of Westminster. Horsley could not be described as a Hutchinsonian. With his Cambridge education in the sciences and his active membership of the Royal Society he would hardly have been anti-Newtonian. Yet his political opinions differed in no important respect from those of the Hutchinsonians.

In September 1789, well before any of the excesses of the French Revolution had become manifest, Jones preached a sermon in Canterbury Cathedral in which he identified the Revolution as the most horrible threat, not merely to a particular political regime but to Christian civilisation. The destruction of the world in the Flood, the

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<sup>44</sup> Ditchfield, G.M., Keith-Lucas B., 'Reverend William Jones "of Nayland" (1726-1800): Some new Light on his Years in Kent' in *Notes and Queries*, vol.238, no.3, September 1993. 337.

<sup>45</sup> Gregory, J., 'Canterbury and the *Ancien Régime*: The Dean and Chapter, 1620-1828' in Collinson, *et al.*, (eds.), *A History of Canterbury Cathedral*. 222-3.

destruction of Sodom, and the destruction of Jerusalem were postulated as historical parallels. Government was a divine gift to restrain 'the turbulent passions of men'.<sup>46</sup> In 1783 he affirmed support for a widely-held contemporary view when he preached that the social laws of God prescribed condescension, compassion and almsgiving from the rich and contentment, industry and submission for the poor. Horne's views were similar, as when he 'insisted that the inequality of mankind was the result not of chance but of God's ordinance'.<sup>47</sup>

Archbishop Moore strongly influenced the outlook of the Church in Kent by his right of nomination to many Kentish livings. Other than that, like most other early modern Archbishops he had little to do with Kentish affairs save to preach at the Cathedral at the great religious festivals. He was occupied in matters of the House of Lords and the Court, whilst his residence was at Lambeth Palace. The centre of power at Canterbury Cathedral was, as it had long been, the Dean. George Horne in his 1769 Assize Sermon at Oxford, well before his appointment as Dean of Canterbury, had stressed the divine nature of monarchy. He resiled to some extent from this position in an October 1788 Accession Day Sermon at Canterbury, when he accepted that monarchs came to power through an ordinance of man. Once so established, submission to the King was a religious duty which admitted of no exceptions. In October 1789, the French Revolution an accomplished fact, Horne reiterated the point which he had made in an English context in 1788, that rebellion could only result in disaster.

More mischief will be done by the people, thus let loose, in a month, than would have been done by the governor in half a century ... Happy are we of this nation (did we but know our own

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<sup>46</sup> Jones, W., *Popular Commotions considered as Signs of the approaching end of the World. A Sermon Preached in the Metropolitan Church of Canterbury, On Sunday, September 20, 1789, (London, 1789).* 2-3; 5.

<sup>47</sup> Horne, G., *The Works of the Right Reverend George Horne*, (1818), 4 vols., vol.iii, 'The Duty of Considering the Poor'. 73-88.

happiness!) in possessing a constitution so framed by the wisdom of the ages, as almost to preclude the necessity of nice questions and disputes upon this topic.<sup>48</sup>

As a recent academic authority has said of Horne, he was ‘a stalwart controversialist for the Church and an inspiration to those who carried on the fight against infidelity and Jacobinism into the 1790s.’<sup>49</sup> Aside from his sermons, when the lack of rights for Dissenters was raised in 1790 Horne published a pamphlet, *Observations on the Case of the Protestant Dissenters with reference to the Corporation and Test Acts*. He was against any extension of rights for Dissenters.<sup>50</sup>

Despite his Whig background, Bishop Horsley might be seen in his Westminster Abbey sermon of 30 January 1793 as representing reactionary royalism and anti-republicanism. He chose as his text ‘Let every soul be subject to the higher powers’ (Romans, xiii, 1), a familiar text for clergy preaching order and obedience. He averred that the Constitution would:

render the transgression of the covenant, on the part of the Monarch, little less than a moral improbability. ... The power of the estates of Parliament ... takes away the pretence for a spontaneous interference of the private Citizen, otherwise than by the use of the election franchise, and of the Right of Petition for the redress of grievances. ... Having thus excluded all probability of the event of a systematic abuse of Royal Power ... our Constitution exempts Kings from the degrading necessity of being accountable to the Subject. ... [They were not to be rendered accountable] by that coarser expedient of Modern Levellers, a reference to the judgment and the sentence of the multitude – a wise judgment I ween.<sup>51</sup>

Included in the sermon was the admonition ‘O my country! Read the horror of thy own deed in this recent heightened imitation.’ Here, referring to the execution of Louis XVI, he saw it as emulating the fate of Charles I.

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<sup>48</sup> Horne, G., *Works*, vol.iii, ‘Submission to Government’. 387-9; 391-9.

<sup>49</sup> Aston, N., ‘Horne and Heterodoxy: The Defence of Anglican Beliefs in the Late Enlightenment’ in *EHR.*, vol.cviii (1993). 917.

<sup>50</sup> CKS., K.242, vol.10.

<sup>51</sup> Horsley, S., *A Sermon Preached before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, in the Abbey Church of St. Peter, Westminster, On Wednesday, January 30, 1793: Being the Anniversary of the Martyrdom of King Charles the First. With an Appendix, Concerning the Political Principles of Calvin, 1793*. Extracts from the Sermon were printed in *MJ.*, 2 April 1793.

Horsley had not seen the sermon as a eulogy of the divine right of monarchy but as a defence of the existing constitution, 'its Basis, Religion; its End, Liberty,' against 'that god of the republican's idolatry the consent of the ungoverned millions of mankind.'<sup>52</sup> The sermon, reproduced at length in the *Maidstone Journal*, came only nine days after the execution of the French king and at a time when there was concern on the part of government ministers at the possibility of Jacobinism taking hold in England. In his 1788 sermon Horsley had echoed Dean Horne in contending that whilst there was a temporal element present in kingship, the duty to obey the king's government stemmed from the will of God. Mather says of Horsley's King Charles's Day Sermon that 'when the content of his discourse is examined, the moderation of his opinions stands revealed.'<sup>53</sup> Compared with the attitudes adopted by many of his episcopal brethren and by High Churchmen, Horsley's stance was a moderate one, allowing a limited role for Parliament and petitioning, whilst the sermon must be judged by late eighteenth-century, rather than present day *mores*. Although its content now seems reactionary that is not how it appeared to a contemporary audience. But given the way in which Horsley sweeps aside any radical argument, together with his contemptuous attitude towards the masses, it is not easy to subscribe without reservation to Mather's interpretation of the sermon.

In his 1796 *Charge* to the clergy of his Rochester diocese, Horsley referred to the utility of religion to the State and condemned the hostility towards religion in France and on the part of English Jacobins. His 1800 *Charge* went much further. He then equated

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<sup>52</sup> Mather, F.C., *High Church Prophet: Bishop Horsley 1733-1806 and the Caroline Tradition in the Late Georgian Church*. 228-30.

<sup>53</sup> Mather, F.C., *High Church Prophet*. 229.

the French Republic with the Beast of the Apocalypse, whilst he saw the Methodists as a tool of the Jacobins. The official Methodist position at the time was a loyalist one although not all Methodists followed the official line; a small minority adhered to Paineite views. More radical Methodism was not widespread in Kent, and it would seem that Horsley's language was exaggerated even as a categorisation of Methodism at large. Later, in a speech in the House of Lords, he opposed the Treaty of Amiens but, it is suggested in Chapter 6, with good reason.

Yet in some respects Horsley was more tolerant, progressive even, than many other churchmen. He opposed the slave trade. He welcomed Sunday Schools in 1785 although by 1791 he saw them as a possible vehicle for the propagation of revolutionary thought. He had sympathy with the cause of the Scottish Episcopalians, he supported the 1791 Catholic Relief Bill and had much sympathy with the French *émigré* clergy. His tolerance did not extend to support for the English Protestant Dissenters in their campaign against the legal restraints upon them, although he favoured toleration (but not full civil equality) for orthodox Protestant Dissenters.<sup>54</sup> He opposed toleration for Unitarians and was against repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. He supported the Treasonable and Seditious Practices Bills of 1795. He saw these as 'merely directed against those idle and seditious public meetings for the discussion of the laws where the people were not competent to decide upon them. ... Assemblies of people, for the purpose of discussing public measures, were illegal, and calculated only to do mischief. ... Individuals had nothing to do with the laws but to obey them.'<sup>55</sup> Many writers on the subject - J.C.D. Clark is an exception - have ignored the fact that in his 1793 Westminster

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<sup>54</sup> Hole, R., *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England*. 166; 169.

Abbey sermon Horsley had at least conceded the right of the individual to petition against unjust laws.<sup>56</sup>

Horsley as bishop of a Kent diocese and a member of the House of Lords, carried weight in the county and he encouraged no radical ideas. His clergy were adjured to follow his ideas in temporal matters and from their support for loyalism (see Chapter 6), it is clear that they did. Radicalism in Kent could expect no support from the Established Church, and it received none. A high proportion of the clergy was beholden to Church or State for their livings. At Canterbury Cathedral, the offices of Dean and most of the prebends were in the gift of the Crown. Those which were not were in the gift of the Archbishop. Because of this the community was 'a stronghold of Establishment ideology.'<sup>57</sup> The Church authorities were religious patrons on a massive scale in Kent. The Archbishop was patron of 122 out of the 248 livings in the diocese of Canterbury. The Archdeacon appointed to a further eleven and the Chapter to twenty livings. In the diocese of Rochester there was not quite the same degree of Cathedral involvement but, even there, the Bishop and the Chapter controlled 45 out of a total of 135 livings.<sup>58</sup> Many Kentish incumbents were born or were married into the peerage or the families of county gentry.<sup>59</sup> In 1790, one quarter of Kent's benefices had incumbents who were either members of the patron's family or were the clergyman patron himself. It was hardly an atmosphere in which radical thought was likely to thrive.

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<sup>55</sup> *Parl.Hist.*, vol.xxxii (1795). 258.

<sup>56</sup> Horsley, Samuel, *A Sermon*, Westminster, 30 January 1793.

<sup>57</sup> Gregory, J., 'Canterbury and the *Ancien Régime*'. 215; 217.

<sup>58</sup> Gregory, J., (ed.), *Speculum of Archbishop Thomas Secker*, *passim*.

<sup>59</sup> Virgin, P., *Age of Negligence*. 24.

The clergy's influence extended well beyond their spiritual function. Gregory writes of the Canterbury Cathedral community:

It was intimately connected to the locality through its ownership of land and its use of patronage, and, through the activities and careers of those of its members who were bound up in the world beyond the Precincts, it provided an important link between provincial and national society, and so often it was the demands and concerns of that outside world which shaped the underlying assumptions and constraints within which the community operated.<sup>60</sup>

The clergy were actively involved in the magistracy. They played a leading role in the parish Vestry and in the appointment of the civil parish officials. Among effective weapons in the struggle for religious and civil orthodoxy was the education of children. Anglican clergy predominated in the grammar and village schools and they were often tutors to the children of nobility and the leading gentry. Samuel Horsley had, in 1767, been tutor to the children of the Finch family of Eastwell, among the larger landowners in Kent.<sup>61</sup> The extensive charitable role of the clergy will be evident in Chapter 4. Their support for parliamentary candidates has been analysed earlier in this chapter. In Kent, as elsewhere, the Anglican clergy were watchdogs, spiritually and politically, for the *status quo* in society. They did not contend that kings possessed absolute power. Horsley and many other churchmen claimed that monarchy was founded on a duality of divine providence and the British Constitution. From the apex of the church down to its lowest level the loyalism of the clergy was of great importance at a time when radicalism and loyalism were dividing issues in the county and the country.

Kent had a considerable history of religious Dissent. In 1552 the Duke of Northumberland had written to Sir William Cecil indicating that he 'wishes the King

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<sup>60</sup> Gregory, J., 'Canterbury and the *Ancien Régime*', 204.

<sup>61</sup> The Rev. Joseph Price refers in detail to Kentish cases of clergy in charge of schools or acting as tutors to children of the aristocracy and gentry. See Ditchfield, G.M., and Keith-Lucas, B., *A Kentish Parson: Selections from the Private Papers of the Revd Joseph Price, Vicar of Brabourne, 1767-1786*.

would appoint Mr Knox to the bishopric of Rochester. He would be a whetstone to the Archbishop of Canterbury and a confounder of the Anabaptists lately sprung up in Kent.<sup>62</sup> Even earlier, the Lollards had received support, notably from Sir John Oldcastle of Cooling Castle. In the seventeenth century, Puritanism had taken hold in parts of Kent.<sup>63</sup> In 1676, of 259 parishes listed in Canterbury diocese and 94 in Rochester, there were six where Dissenters outnumbered Anglican communicants and a further twenty-four where as many as one-fifth of churchgoers were non-conformists. No other English diocese at that time had as high a proportion of non-conformists as did that of Canterbury, where there were 6,287 non-conformists and 59,596 conformists - a ratio of 1:9. The next highest figures were London (1:12) and, again in Kent, Rochester (1:15).<sup>64</sup> Dissent was a significant force in Kent in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

M.R. Watts shows that in the early part of the eighteenth century there were some 14,150 Dissenters spread amongst 75 chapels in Kent.<sup>65</sup> The largest grouping was Congregationalists, numbering almost 5,000 according to Watts's calculations. There were 4,890 Baptists (both Particular and General), 3,600 Independents, and 670 Quakers.<sup>66</sup> By the latter part of the eighteenth century the number of chapels had declined and by 1801 there were forty-six dissenting chapels located in forty-one towns or villages; thirty-one of these were Baptist chapels. The predominance of Baptists is significant in that, later in the eighteenth century, they were generally to be numbered among loyalists. Canterbury had three chapels and the Medway towns four. In

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<sup>62</sup> *Calendar of SP., Domestic*, vol.xv. 35, Northumberland to Sir William Cecil, 28 October 1552.

<sup>63</sup> Gregory, J., 'Canterbury and the *Ancien Régime*'. 231.

<sup>64</sup> Whiteman, A., *The Compton Census of 1676: A Critical Edition*, 'The Province of Canterbury', 19-35. 406-8, 2.

<sup>65</sup> Watts, M.R., *The Dissenters, From the Reformation to the French Revolution*, ch.III. 2. Watts draws upon the Evans list of 1715. (Dr. Williams's Library, MS.38. 5,6.) Josiah Thompson made a further survey in 1772-3.

Maidstone, 'The Dutch Church' founded by Walloon refugees had closed down but it reopened as a Dissenting chapel in 1640. Among other seventeenth-century chapels were Deptford (Quaker and Baptist), Greenwich, Woolwich, Sandwich, Deal, Ramsgate and Westerham.

By no means all religious Dissenters were supporters of secular reform; a majority either were not, or else did not make reform a priority. Reform was supported by Unitarians and by a minority of Methodists. The latter numbers in Kent were small since there were hardly any Kilhamite or Primitive Methodists there. The Strict Baptists, the most numerous sect, were opponents of reform. It follows that no more than fifteen chapels, and probably fewer than that, could be numbered as falling within the influence of reformers, whilst the principal centre of reformist dissent was Maidstone. The number of Dissenting reformers was reduced by those who had followed in the footsteps of the leading Unitarian Joseph Priestley and emigrated to America. In March 1795 a letter records the departure of one such unnamed Kentish family. The ship 'was carrying a minister of Kent with his family and friends amounting to upwards of twenty persons ... that they might worship God unmolested.'<sup>67</sup> Kent had been a stronghold of religious Dissent in former times, and in the latter part of the eighteenth century this remained of religious significance but, by then, Dissent in the county offered little support for secular reform.

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<sup>66</sup> Watts, M.R., *The Dissenters*, table xii. 509.

<sup>67</sup> Wykes, D.L., 'The Spirit of Persecutors exemplified. The Priestley Riots and the Victims of Church and King mobs' in *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, vol.xx (1), April 1991. 30-31.

## The County's Newspapers

Just as the Established Church sought to influence county opinion in the direction of loyalism, so did the Kentish newspapers after 1792. Provincial newspapers flourished in the eighteenth century and by 1740 Kent had no fewer than three such: *The Kentish Post or Canterbury Newsletter* (later, *Journal*) (1717) one of the earliest provincial papers, *The Maidstone Mercury* (1725), and *The Maidstone Journal* (1737). *The Kentish Gazette*, a Canterbury paper, was first published in 1768. Its proprietor was James Simmons, a respected local businessman, politician and benefactor. He was, at various times, Sheriff of Canterbury, Distributor of Stamps for Kent and, briefly, a Member of Parliament for Canterbury. He was returned unopposed in 1806 but died within three months of his election. J. Blake, the owner of the *Maidstone Journal*, was a bookseller and printer. He played some part in local politics. He was a jurat who became Mayor of Maidstone in 1799. In the 1790 county election he had voted for Knatchbull and Marsham and was certainly a loyalist.<sup>68</sup> No Kentish town other than Maidstone and Canterbury had its own newspaper until 1830. It seems surprising that neither the busy and cosmopolitan port of Dover, nor the fashionable spa town of Tunbridge Wells had its own publication at an earlier date. J. Black suggests that the development of newspapers in the Home Counties had been limited by the ready accessibility of London papers. Most London papers, especially the tri-weeklies, appear to have circulated in the south-east.<sup>69</sup> *The Sussex Weekly Advertiser* (1773) was published in Lewes but circulated in parts of Kent. *The Maidstone Journal* indicated that it could be ordered from booksellers in the counties of Kent and Sussex, at an address in St Paul's Churchyard and another in

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<sup>68</sup> *Bailey's British Directory, 1784*; Gillman, W., (ed.), *Poll for Knights of the Shire, 1790*.

<sup>69</sup> Black, J., *The English Press 1621-1861*. 114-5.

Fleet Street, at Peele's Coffee Houses and at St Clement's, Virginia. Those residing in the county could have the paper 'left where they please to appoint', or it could be sent free of postage to any part of Great Britain.<sup>70</sup>

Foreign news coverage (much of it having its origin in the London press) was extensive. From the beginning of 1789 the *Maidstone Journal* printed detailed reports on events in France. It gave every indication that it sympathised with the revolutionaries, not so much by overt commentary as by a news selection which was wholly favourable to the Revolution. As did many others, it saw a connection between contemporary events in France and those in England in 1688-9. It published a despatch from Cherbourg which suggested that the general cry there was 'LIBERTY AND AN ENGLISH CONSTITUTION.'<sup>71</sup> In issues dated 25 August, and 1, 8, 15 September, the newspaper published a lengthy history of the Bastille. It included a letter from W. Laplain, with correspondence between himself and de Marsane, a *député* of the *Assemblée Nationale*, urging the restoration to Protestant heirs of the estates taken from their *émigré* ancestors at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. This was of considerable local interest since many Huguenots had settled in Kent. Marsane's representations were successful and he wrote, in February 1791, that 'after having combatted, without relaxation, during ten months, in their favour, it is with a sincere delight that I received the success which crowns my efforts.'<sup>72</sup>

On domestic matters, both the *Maidstone Journal* and the *Canterbury Journal* had been supporters of reform. On 9 March 1790 the *Maidstone Journal* published a report

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<sup>70</sup> The nature and much bibliography of the provincial press is dealt with by Barker, H., in 'Catering for Provincial Tastes: Newspapers, Readership and Profit in Late Eighteenth-Century England' in *Historical Research*, vol.69, February 1996.

<sup>71</sup> *MJ.*, 4 August 1789.

on the proposal to repeal the Test Act. Whilst Fox's speech was reported at considerable length, that of Pitt in reply was reported much more briefly. On 30 March 1790 a letter was published reproducing the Earl of Chatham's 1772 speech in the Lords urging Dissenting relief from subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles. On 19 July 1791 reports were published on the "Church and King" riots in Birmingham and elsewhere. The *Maidstone Journal* produced a special supplement on the subject and this was followed up in the succeeding week, together with the text of a letter from Dr Priestley which had been published in the London papers. With the outbreak of war in 1793 the *Journal* brought to an end its benign reportage of French developments and thereafter, with occasional reservations, it strongly supported both the war and the Pitt Ministry's general programme. The Kentish press from then on was an enemy of radicalism, whether in France or Britain, but especially in Kent.

It was not only the gentry who had access to newspapers. A French gentleman resident in Switzerland wrote to his family from East Sheen, near Richmond, in 1726:

What attracts enormously in these [London] coffee houses are the gazettes and other public papers. All Englishmen are great newsmongers. Workmen habitually begin the day by going to the coffee rooms in order to read the latest news. I have often seen shoeblocks and other persons of that class club together to purchase a farthing newspaper. Nothing is more entertaining than hearing men of this class discussing politics and topics of interest concerning royalty.<sup>73</sup>

Even if provincial life was not as sophisticated as that of London, the capital's workmen were not unique. Their provincial counterparts were equally interested in the latest news, whether of events in France or the latest scandal. Skilled workers in the dockyards, in the nature of their work, were literate and numerate. Both they and labourers had opportunities to hear readings from newspapers. John Gale Jones refers to a circulating

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<sup>72</sup> *MJ.*, 24 August, 28 December 1790, 1 February 1791.

<sup>73</sup> Mme Van Muyden, (trans. and ed.), *A Foreign View of England in the Reign of George I and George II: The Letters of César de Saussure to his Family*, 29 October 1725. 162.

library in Rochester. The London papers arrived there at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. 'Such of the inhabitants as choose to subscribe assemble in a little back parlour, to converse and read the news.'<sup>74</sup> The part played by the newspapers after 1793 was of some importance to the growth and nature of loyalism in the county, as is demonstrated in Chapter 6, even if that tendency was never to command majority support.

### **County and Town Meetings**

In 1769 in the aftermath of the Middlesex Elections freeholders of Kent had been on the side of John Wilkes. John Sawbridge, MP for Hythe, 1768-74 (and the City of London, 1774-95) and brother of Catherine Macaulay, had been one of the founders of the Society of Supporters of the Bill of Rights. He, together with John Calcraft and William Gordon, MPs for Rochester, encouraged by the Earl of Chatham, were the sponsors of the Kent petition in support of Wilkes, against the opposition of the country gentry. Sir John Honeywood, MP., father of Filmer Honeywood the radical Kent MP of the latter decades of the century, was one of the leading opponents of the petition. In the event there were 2825 signatories to it, more than any other of the fifteen petitioning counties, save for Derbyshire and Yorkshire. But they included not a single MP (the sponsors had signed petitions elsewhere: Sawbridge, in Middlesex), knight or baronet, no clergy and only ten of the justices.<sup>75</sup> So Kent, at this time was, on balance, on the side of liberty and, probably, reformism, if not radicalism. In the following three decades, with the occasional exception, there was a degree of constancy among opinion-formers in the county, as is shown by attitudes adopted at the county meetings. These were official

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<sup>74</sup> Jones, J.G., *A Political Tour*. 12.

<sup>75</sup> Rudé, G., *Wilkes and Liberty: A Social Study of 1763 to 1774*. Ch.iv, vii, viii, App.vii.

meetings, 'recognised as having a status and sanction based on constitutional law'.<sup>76</sup> Meetings were called by the Sheriff and only freeholders could speak and vote. However, by 1800, to offset the influence exercised at county meetings by the aristocracy and Members of Parliament, radicals were in favour of general assemblies which included not just the freemen but the population of the county more widely.

Whether at county meetings or general assemblies there were, over the period 1780-1802, common strands running through the issues dividing the protagonists. At the county meeting in February 1780 the issues were the high cost of the American War which also extended to France and Spain, the allegedly undue influence of the Crown, the perceived burden of taxes, the creation of sinecures, and the payment of pensions unmerited by public service. In 1794 the issues, differing only in detail, were concerned with the prosecution of war and the independence and powers of Parliament. In 1797 the issues were the war against France and the disastrous state of the economy with the increasing financial burden on taxpayers. On this last occasion the opposition to government policy was expressed in more forthright tones, a call being made for the King to dismiss his Ministers.<sup>77</sup>

The county meeting held on 4 March 1780 was opened by Lord Mahon (later to become Earl Stanhope). A petition was proposed by Filmer Honeywood, later one of the county's Members of Parliament and a particular opponent of the Pitt administration.<sup>78</sup> He pointed to the need to 'enquire into the enormous expense of government, retrench the undue influence that prevailed, and abolish those places which are burdensome and

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<sup>76</sup> Keith-Lucas, B., 'County Meetings' in *Law Quarterly Journal*, vol.xxx (1954). 109-114.

<sup>77</sup> *KG.*, 4 March 1780, *MJ.*, 15 April 1794, 25 April 1794; *KG.*, 28 April 1797.

<sup>78</sup> *KG.*, 4-8 and 8-12 March 1780 contained full reports of the meeting.

useless.’ He expressed the opinion that ‘the undue influence of the Crown controlled even Parliament and the principle only of our constitution was left.’ Although the clergy of the Established Church could generally be counted on to support the administration, the petition was seconded by the Rev. Ralph Drake Brockman, a member of an old Kentish family, but not a beneficed clergyman. His sister was to marry Filmer Honywood’s nephew and heir. Sir Horace Mann, one of the Kentish Members of Parliament, presented an alternative petition which subscribed to the idea of an enquiry on government expenditure but condemned any plan for an Association.

The Lord Lieutenant (then the Duke of Dorset), Sir Edward Dering, Lord Dudley and others asserted that they were not opposed to petitions in principle but were opposed to County Associations. These they considered derogated from the powers of Parliament. It was reported that Sir Edward Knatchbull and the Earl of Guilford (Lord North’s father), neither of whom could be present, supported a petition but were opposed to any Committee or Association. A Mr Townsend, not more closely identified in the press report,<sup>79</sup> in a speech strongly in favour of the Honywood petition, was concerned at the influence exercised by the Crown. In his opinion ‘there is an influence in Kent the constitution never meant to give, the influence of armies and navies.’ Most of the arguments of the 1780s (the point about County Associations apart) were to be replicated in the county meetings of the 1790s. From only a minority was there support for the continuance of the war until such time as the King and his ministers saw fit to bring it to an end.

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<sup>79</sup> It is likely that it was Thomas Townsend, MP for Whitchurch, later to become Lord Sydney and Home Secretary in the 1780s. His was a Kentish Whig family and he had chosen to remain in opposition during the Grafton and North ministries.

In 1780 the Honywood petition was adopted and a committee was set up to promote its objectives. The committee included Lord Camden, the Earl of Chatham, Viscount Mahon, Earl Stanhope, Filmer Honywood, Sir John Honywood, John Baker, Clement Taylor, John Sargent, all of whom (the nobility apart) were then, or in the 1790s were to become, Kentish Members of Parliament. Sixteen clergy were included in the committee. Many of the names involved with the 1780 petition were later associated with the county meetings held in the 1790s, although by then it was sometimes the next generation which was involved, not invariably on the same side. Guilford was one whose politics were very different from those of his grandfather.

The county meeting held on 8 April 1794 began on a different footing from those of 1780 or 1797. Its purpose was to enable the Duke of Dorset to present plans for the creation of Volunteer units, in accordance with resolutions which had been agreed upon by some Kentish gentry at a meeting held in the St. Alban's Tavern in London. In an echo of the 1780 meeting, the Earl of Thanet criticised Ministers and their supporters for taking 'every opportunity of pushing the prerogative of the Crown as far as it would go.' He urged that Parliament should take steps to bring the war to an end. He was supported by the Earl of Guilford (Lord North's son). Sir Edward Knatchbull and William Geary supported Dorset's proposals. Geary, who was to become one of the county Members in 1796, seconded a motion that 'the most effectual means of obtaining a speedy and honourable peace, will be by a vigorous [*sic*] prosecution of the war.' The committee appointed to implement the resolution included Romney, Knatchbull, Geary, Best (who was to become Member of Parliament for Rochester) and Samuel Sawbridge, a member

of a radical Kentish family. He was later to become MP for Canterbury.<sup>80</sup> Sawbridge's father had been Lord Mayor of London and as an MP he had strongly opposed press gang warrants and had supported the American colonists. He had persisted, unsuccessfully, with Bills for shorter parliaments. Although in 1794 there were no clergy on the sponsoring committee, many of them contributed to the funds to finance the creation of the Volunteer units.

The county meeting of April 1797 was requested by, among others, Thanet, Guilford, Tufton (one of the Rochester Members of Parliament), Baker and Sawbridge, the Canterbury Members. A motion before the meeting called for peace and an end to 'the most disastrous war, in which this nation is now engaged, perhaps the most bloody, but certainly the most expensive which ever existed.' It was seconded by J Roper Head (a radical who was to oppose Sir Sydney Smith in the 1802 election at Rochester, in which he secured a derisory ten votes) and supported by the Earl of Thanet. The petition, which was carried overwhelmingly, called for the dismissal of His Majesty's Ministers and the exclusion from the King's councils of 'all those men who are systematically hostile to peace.' It was resolved that the petition should be presented to the King by Thanet, Stanhope, Guilford, James Roper Head and Filmer Honywood, all of them opponents of the Pitt Ministry. A counter-petition was drawn up outside the meeting by Knatchbull and his supporters who included the Duke of Dorset, Lord Romney, and Archbishop Moore, although the last-named was not present at the meeting. Even the loyalists felt it necessary to take account of public opinion and to subscribe to the popular issue of peace. Hence they expressed the opinion that 'we feel that we should be

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<sup>80</sup> *MJ.*, 15, 29 April 1794.

unworthy of the character of Englishmen, if we did not express our further confidence that your Majesty ... will prosecute the great object of Peace with every due consideration of our honor, our interest, and our future security.’<sup>81</sup>

The make-up of the protagonists had hardly changed from 1794 or, even, from 1780. It is significant that both the *Maidstone Journal* and the *Kentish Gazette*, which had published extensive reports of the 1780 and 1794 meetings, now simply reported the content of the 1797 petition and counter-petition. By then, both newspapers were strong supporters of the government. The *Kentish Gazette* went further. Although it had found no room for details of the debate at the county meeting, it printed a long editorial entitled ‘An Address to the Nation on the subject of the Petitions to His Majesty to dismiss his Ministers.’ Whilst a virulent attack on the majority of those present at the county meeting, the address ended with a rather unconvincing defence of the government.<sup>82</sup>

The trend at county meetings was followed at town meetings. In November 1795, Charles James Fox had called for petitions against the Seditious Meetings Bill and on 5 December there was a meeting at Maidstone, open to all townspeople. The Earl of Thanet was in the chair and Earl Stanhope spoke against the continuance of the war and the Treason and Seditious Bills. Sir Edward Knatchbull supported both the continuance of the war against France and the ‘Two Bills’. When it was clear that the mood of the meeting was against Knatchbull he, together with a small number of his supporters, left the meeting. The Thanet/Stanhope petition was carried.

Of a Maidstone town meeting held on 22 April 1797 the *Maidstone Journal* in a well-worn phrase in newspaper reporting of the time (surely not to be taken literally),

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<sup>81</sup> *MJ.*, 25 April 1797; *KG.*, 28 April 1797.

<sup>82</sup> *KG.*, 28 April 1797.



reported that it was ‘the most numerous and respectable Meeting of this Town and Parish ever yet remembered.’ The proposed petition referred to ‘the calamitous effects of a War unparalled in the British Annals’ and to its disastrous effects on the economy. It called upon the King to dismiss his Ministers.<sup>83</sup> The principal supporters were Stanhope, Guilford and Thanet, whilst Knatchbull was again one of its leading opponents. His supporters attempted to move an amendment and when this tactic failed, they withdrew to the Bull Inn and prepared a counter-petition, even though, according to the press report, the petition had been carried by a majority of twenty to one. The counter-petition deplored the encouragement to the enemy which the majority petition would give and went on to express the view that ‘although we deplore the calamities of War in common with all our fellow-subjects’ those involved would rely ‘on His Majesty’s endeavours, supported by the wisdom of his Councils and the valour of his Forces, to bring it to a successful conclusion’.

On 14 April 1797 a meeting of freemen in Canterbury agreed a petition which went farther than the Maidstone petition, with an implied criticism of the King himself. It concluded ‘We again most humbly implore your Majesty to attend to our petition, because we have seen the bad consequences of a Sovereign’s neglect to correct abuses, and because we wish to see both your Majesty and the people in the full enjoyments [of] their indisputable rights.’<sup>84</sup> Whether this was a reference to events of 1688, to the example of Louis XVI, or both, is uncertain. In any case it presented a direct challenge to

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<sup>83</sup> *MJ.*, 25 April 1797.

<sup>84</sup> *MJ.*, 18 April 1797, 25 April 1797.

George III. The Kentish press reported the bare bones of the town petitions, but virtually no details of the discussion which had preceded them.

With the exception of 1794, there was majority opposition to the war at Kentish county meetings, and a condemnation of Ministers for leading the country to what was seen as economic ruin. The anti-Ministerialist leadership centred around the three Earls, Thanet, Stanhope and Guilford, supported most often by Filmer Honywood and, from time to time, by one or two of the other Kentish Members of Parliament. Not only was this grouping to the forefront at county and town meetings, its actions in Kent reflected its consistent stand in Parliament. The defence of the administration rested very largely on the two county Members, Knatchbull and Geary, although the latter was to change his position materially by the time of the 1802 election. He then favoured some parliamentary reform and allied with Honywood to defeat Knatchbull for one of the two county seats. Geary was one of the few leading Kentish figures who did change his political position; most did not. It should be emphasized that the fact that the Earls and Honywood carried the day at mass meetings with anti-government motions, may or may not indicate that there was a trend towards radicalism in the county. Such an outcome at the meetings could, as likely, have represented a feeling of ennui with long drawn-out wars devoid of notable successes, reaction against the high level of taxation and the unhappy social and personal effects of the wars. Even if it could reasonably be considered that radicalism had been the principal motivation, and it is not the contention here that it was the sole or even the main driving force, it was something which did not endure over any long period of time. This is a subject which is dealt with in more detail in the chapters on 'Loyalism' and 'Radicalism'.

## The Influence of Individuals

Those individuals exercising an influence in the county were able to command attention at county and town meetings both from their platform as members of the Lords or Commons and from their standing in the county. Whether loyalist, radical or anti-Ministerialist, they provided leadership for the supporters of each such tendency. It is necessary to distinguish between those oppositionists who were radicals, such as Earl Stanhope and Filmer Honywood, and anti-Ministerialists such as the Earls of Guilford and Thanet, who were in no way radicals. Stanhope's life is dealt with in A. Newman, *The Stanhopes of Chevening* and G. Stanhope (revised and completed by G.P. Gooch), *The Life of Charles, third Earl Stanhope*. He was Pitt the Younger's brother-in-law and, before succeeding to the Earldom, Member of Parliament for Chipping Wycombe from 1780-86, on Shelburne's nomination. He was one of the most unswerving radicals in the Parliament of the period and an ardent supporter of the French Revolution in all its phases. At the London Corresponding Society public meeting at St George's Fields on 29 June 1795 a resolution was passed recording 'thanks to Citizen Stanhope for his manly and impartial conduct in the House of Lords and that the public had reason to congratulate themselves that they had, at least one honest man in Parliament.' As something of an afterthought, Sheridan's name was joined with that of Stanhope.<sup>85</sup>

Stanhope was among those initiating the call for county meetings to oppose the continuance of the war, to urge an end to Pitt's Ministry, and to oppose the Treasonable Practices and Seditious Meetings Bills. But otherwise his influence, whether in the county or the House of Lords, was negligible. The other consistent radical was Filmer

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<sup>85</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol.lxv, July 1795.

Honywood, Member of Parliament for Kent from 1790-1796 and 1802-6. Although he showed more political sense than Stanhope, his position on the issues of the day was much the same as that of the Earl. He was a supporter of parliamentary reform, and on numerous parliamentary occasions and in the county itself, he urged non-intervention in the affairs of France and an end to the war.

The two individuals with whom Stanhope and Honywood were allied at county meetings were the Earls of Guilford and Thanet. Guilford's grandfather had been created an Earl in 1753. His father was Lord North who was to become First Lord of the Treasury in 1770. The first Earl lived until 1790 and towards the end of his life he supported North's coalition with Fox. North succeeded to the earldom and at his death in 1792 it passed to his son. He it is with whom we are here concerned. He was Member of Parliament for four different constituencies between 1778 and 1792, during which time he held minor ministerial offices. Latterly he was a broadly Foxite anti-Ministerialist. In March 1797 he and the Earl of Thanet supported the Earl of Oxford's motion in the Lords in favour of a negotiated peace settlement. The Earl of Thanet seems to have been of a fiery temperament. After O'Coigley, the Irish priest, had been found guilty of high treason at Maidstone and Arthur O'Connor had been acquitted, the latter was immediately detained on another charge (see Chapter 5) Thanet was one of those who then attempted forcibly to rescue O'Connor from custody. Richard Brinsley Sheridan who had given evidence on behalf of O'Connor at the trial, wrote of:

the Fray which ensued on their attempting to execute a second warrant the moment the Verdict was given. He [O'Connor] had no thought of escaping himself, but three or four injudicious Friends provoked at this unexpected second proceeding, endeavour'd to hustle him out of Court. There were many blows struck Swords drawn: and when the soldiers got in I thought there would have been some serious mischief – which I was of some use in preventing for which Buller thanked me.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Price C., (ed.), *The Letters of Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, vol. II. 94. Sheridan to his wife, 23 May 1798.

Thanet was tried for this offence together with one of riot. He was sentenced in June 1799 to a year's imprisonment in the Tower and was fined £1000. He and Guilford were constant opponents of the government.

In 1797 Earl Romney, the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, asked the Duke of Portland to obtain the King's agreement to the appointment of a number of Deputy Lieutenants for the county. Four of the nominees were supporters of the Ministry but included in his recommendation were Guilford and Thanet, who were poles apart politically from Romney himself. Also included was Sir Horace Mann who had defeated the ministerial candidate at Sandwich in 1790. He had perhaps redeemed himself politically, since only once thereafter did he vote with the Whig Opposition. Family connections clearly overrode everything else when it came to filling important posts in the county.<sup>87</sup>

The Pitt family resided at Hayes Place from 1756. As First Lord of the Treasury, Pitt the Younger exercised an oversight of government for much of the period with which we are here concerned. In 1782, 1783 and 1785 he had moved motions in the House on parliamentary reform. He had attended a meeting of delegates from towns and counties throughout England, held at the Thatched House Tavern in London, to consider how best to advance the cause of parliamentary reform.<sup>88</sup> Pitt was Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports and, as such, he was involved in the raising of Volunteer units there and, on several occasions, he inspected the troops stationed in Kent. Out of office in 1803, he allowed his Cinque Ports base of Walmer Castle to be used by spies and plotters opposed to the French Republican government. 'It can be shown that he knew the details and allowed

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<sup>87</sup> TNA: PRO. HO42/41, f.174.

<sup>88</sup> *S.T.*, vol.xxv, 21 August 1794.

Walmer Castle, where he was then living as lord warden of the Cinque ports, to be used as a meeting place for those crossing the Channel.’<sup>89</sup>

There were numbers of Kentish men (the term is here used in a general sense and not as denoting whether born east or west of the River Medway) who were active supporters of Pitt’s Ministry. Earl Camden of Bayham Abbey was one such. Prior to his accession to the title he was Member of Parliament for Bath and, at the outbreak of the French Revolution, a Lord of the Treasury. His most important post was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, an office in which he succeeded Earl Fitzwilliam in March 1795. The latter had occupied the post for only three months when he was dismissed for showing sympathy with Catholic emancipation. Camden continued in the post until June 1798. Thereafter he was Minister without Portfolio until 1801.

The Duke of Dorset, resident at Knole, was another government supporter. Whilst heir to the title he was a Member of Parliament for Kent for a short period (1768-9) after which he became Lord Lieutenant of the county until 1797. At the time of the French Revolution he was Ambassador to Paris. Earl Romney of the Mote was, perhaps, the most active of the nobility in supporting the Ministry in Kent itself. Before succeeding to the title, as a member of the Marsham family he was Member of Parliament for Maidstone from 1768-74 and for Kent from 1774-1790. His political position had changed markedly by the time he succeeded to the Earldom and became Lord Lieutenant of the county. He was by then an ardent royalist and loyalist. In the course of the 1784 Parliament he had displayed more ‘democratic’ tendencies. He had proposed that government employees at Queenborough should be disenfranchised, on the grounds that expenditure there was designed simply to garner votes for government

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<sup>89</sup> Sparrow, E., ‘Secret Service under Pitt’s Administration 1792-1806’ in *History*, vol. 83 (1988), 280-94.

candidates. On that occasion he was supported by Filmer Honeywood. He opposed the Bill for Farming the Post Horse Duties with the argument that 'he had not altered his sentiments respecting the impolity of introducing so dangerous a system as farming the public revenue.'<sup>90</sup> Romney was a strong supporter of the militia and served in it for twenty years. The most constant and vocal supporter of the government was Sir Edward Knatchbull. His was an old Kentish family which had provided many Members of Parliament. He was a Member for Kent from 1790 until his death in 1819, save for the period 1802-6. His influence was widespread. He raised a Volunteer unit and was the leading figure on the Bench in the East Kent division for a very long period at the turn of the century.

An element in the exercise of power was the extent to which the control of the military in the county rested in the hands of a limited number of the gentry and nobility. The Duke of Dorset had been Colonel of the West Kent Militia, a post which he relinquished in 1799. But it was more in the Volunteer units that county families were involved. Dorset, as Lord Lieutenant, had been instrumental in initiating recruitment and subscriptions for Volunteer companies at the county meeting in April 1794. By July of that year Sir Edward Knatchbull, Lord Darnley, Earl Camden, William Honeywood and Sir John Honeywood among others, as well as the Duke himself, had raised Volunteer companies. Filmer Honeywood was a leading opponent of the raising of Volunteer corps without prior parliamentary approval, whilst his father was active in raising such units.<sup>91</sup> Given his opposition to the war and his antipathy towards the Pitt Ministry, Filmer

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<sup>90</sup> *Parl. Hist.*, vol.xxv, 30 March 1786. 1323-1338; vol. xxvi, 2 May 1787.

<sup>91</sup> Humphries, P.L., 'Kentish Politics'. 168.

Honywood would have opposed the raising of Volunteer units even had the issue been placed before Parliament.

To summarise the situation in the county. At the end of the eighteenth century the power and influence which county families had for long exercised had waned, although it remained to some extent. The county officials, Members of Parliament, justices of the peace, and commanders of county regiments still came largely from county families and often from the nobility. This source remained the origin of many of the clergy. There is no evidence that political tendencies, whether loyalist, radical or anti-Ministerialist, were proletarian movements, and certainly not in their leadership, with the single exception of the dockyard 'trade unions'. County landowners, whether aristocracy or commoners, were unable to exercise the overweening power which was at the command of their counterparts in some other rural counties. This was, indirectly, a factor which influenced Kent's general quiescence at this period. The influence of landowners in the parish - for it seldom extended beyond that - stemmed from the paternalism which they could display towards those with whom, as relatively small-scale landlords and employers of farm labour, they came into day-to-day contact. Much power resided in the justices (themselves numbered among the landowners or, in some cases, merchants) with their oversight of crime and punishment, initiation of legislation by way of parliamentary petitioning, and general administration of the poor law. But, as is shown in Chapter 4, they generally adopted a sympathetic attitude towards the poor, especially at times of food shortages and high prices. Once matters reached Parliament by way of petition, the

county Members were closely involved in the development of law affecting the county. They defended the county interest against any adverse effects of national legislation.<sup>92</sup>

Whenever issues such as continuance of the war, or confidence in His Majesty's Ministers, were put to the test of county or town meetings in Kent, anti-war, anti-Ministerialist views would usually prevail. Yet, with some important exceptions, the government could secure the election to parliament of its supporters, particularly in those towns where it was the principal employer. Where that was not the case, as in Maidstone or Canterbury, as well as in the County elections, tradespeople and merchants (the developing source of economic power, particularly in banking) could combine to exercise a strong influence and the government's electoral position was less secure. The Church played a significant part in opinion-forming and in the administration of justice in the county, whilst Dissenting elements played little part in the development of radical thought. Despite the county's declared support, from time to time, for those wishing to bring the war to what government supporters saw as a premature end, Kent was as patriotic as any other county when it came to the formation of Volunteer units and, more generally, to the defence of the country.

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<sup>92</sup> *CJ.*, 20 December 1790. Sir Edward Knatchbull opposed the Malt Tax Bill because of the effect it would have on Kent grain producers. Lambert, S., *Bills and Acts, Legislative Procedures in eighteenth-century England*, 160, indicates that actions such as this were essential for county members. Referring to a Bill to improve navigation on Chester rivers she says, 'Cholmondeley's position as knight of the shire made it inevitable that he should chair the committee and then bring in this bill even though he had always been opposed to the project on public grounds.'

#### 4. THE POOR AND CHARITY

Abnormal hardships faced by the poor in much of the last decade of the eighteenth century contributed to widespread rioting and demands for controls on food prices. There were poor harvests with a consequential shortage of basic foodstuffs and in 1789-90, the mid-1790s and 1800-01 much increased prices for the staple commodities of flour and bread. This chapter examines how the poor in Kent were affected by factors which were common throughout the country, whilst demonstrating those additional factors which were peculiar to the county. In particular there were the demands made upon the county's food supplies by reason of its role as a major supplier of food to London and by demands made upon it by the armed forces stationed in or passing through the county. The chapter emphasises the degree of confidence and trust between the relatively small-scale landowners of Kent and their tenants and labourers. It argues that this was a key to the general quiescence in the county at this time.

Until 1766, Britain was a net exporter of grain but, thereafter, it was a net importer of wheat, oats and rye; for malt and barley it remained, marginally, a net exporter.<sup>1</sup> This changed situation had an effect on the prices of flour and bread, particularly in times of shortage. In a rural county such as Kent, poverty was both widespread and seasonal. In 1795, writing of Ashford and of Kent generally, Sir F.M. Eden confirms this:

Poverty here, is generally ascribed to the low price of wages, and the high price of provisions: they suit each other very well in summer, but not in winter. The Poor in most parts of Kent, ten years ago, always eat [*sic*] meat daily: they now seldom taste it in winter, except when they reside in a poor house. ... The Poor drink tea with all their meals. This beverage, and bread, potatoes, and cheese, constitute their normal diet.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ormrod, D., *English Grain Exports and the Structure of Agrarian Capitalism*, 22.

<sup>2</sup> Eden, F.M., *The State of the Poor*, vol.ii. 280.

Kent was not unique in this respect but there were factors peculiar to the county which caused its population to react to situations rather differently from that of many other counties. In a number of areas of the country, food shortages and high prices resulted in riots in the 1790s. In Kent there were disturbances at times, but these were hardly ever of a nature which required the forces of law and order to restore peace. This lack of rioting in Kent, when it was common elsewhere, poses questions for historians, and there is a need to explain why it was the case.

### **Food shortages and prices**

The Revolutionary War affected the poor in a number of ways. Recruitment into the armed forces removed the main breadwinner from mostly poor families. With a shortage of male labour, agriculture relied to a greater extent on female and child labour. Family incomes were consequently at a lower level and they were generally inadequate. The menfolk having gone to the wars, the parish had to maintain their families when, as was most often the case, they were unable to sustain themselves. The financing of the war led to increased taxation and import duties and it was not only the better off who suffered thereby. It was not without its effect on the relatively poor, and even the very poor. All were having to pay higher food prices which reflected increased duties. The *ad valorem* duty on tea rose from 12½% in 1790 to 30% in 1797 and 65% in 1803. Tea was the usual drink, apart from beer, of the labouring classes. The duty on sugar rose by 22½% in 1791 and it had risen by almost 150% by 1800. These large increases affected rich and poor alike, and prices were to advance yet further during the Napoleonic War. T.L. Richardson has shown that in the thirty-four years up to 1825 there was only one

year when the real wages of Kentish agricultural workers were above the level of 1790. For much of the time they were significantly lower than in that year.<sup>3</sup>

‘Calculator’ writing in the *Kentish Gazette* of 15 July 1800 considered the causes of the scarcity of provisions and corn. He suggested that if these were divided into ten parts, five arose from the war, three from taxes, and ‘if the remaining two are occasioned by the shortness of the crop and the inclemency of the late seasons, it is as much as they are.’ The correspondent concluded, ‘After considering these things, let any one *deny* that this uncommon war does not in large measure contribute to the enormous unequalled price of these articles.’ Whether or not the proportions which he attributed to each factor were correct - and he is doubtfully right about the effect of the poor harvests - the generality of his analysis is one which was widely accepted at the time. Cookson takes the contrary view and suggests that ‘war-induced inflation of the price of bread thus seemed relatively unimportant ... and no one could seriously pretend that there was a close correlation between price movements and the pressure of war.’<sup>4</sup> Yet in the fifty years from 1793 onwards, only in eighteen years did the annual average price of wheat exceed 70s. per quarter, and fourteen of those years coincided with the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. The effect of the wars on food prices was significant.

The war provided opportunities for profiteers to manipulate the prices of commodities. There was hoarding of grain by farmers in the expectation of future price rises. R.B. Rose suggests that there were four causes of grain riots: looting, checking the export of grain from the district, enforcing ‘fair’ prices, or requiring magistrates to fix

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<sup>3</sup> Richardson, T.L., ‘The Agricultural Labourer’s Standard of Living in Kent 1790-1840’ in Oddy, D.J., and Miller, D., *The Making of the Modern British Diet*, Fig.II. 110.

<sup>4</sup> Cookson, J.E., *The Friends of Peace: Anti-War Liberalism in England 1793-1815*. 73.

'fair' prices.<sup>5</sup> E.P.Thompson and P.King define the last of these categories as constituting, 'labourers and poorer artisans [using] the traditions and framework of the law in many different situations – to support and legitimise their activities during food riots for example.'<sup>6</sup> On the more immediate point of grain hoarding Christie adds a fifth cause to those set out by Rose, the riot 'directed against farmers or millers ... with the purpose of coercing them into release of stocks of grain, cheese, or flour suspected of being held back from the market in order to force up the price.'<sup>7</sup> In 1800 the *Kentish Gazette* reported that several persons of landed property having discovered that 'some of their tenants have most of the corn the produce of their farms for 1798 and 1799 yet in their granaries, were resolved to raise their rents; and those who were about to renew or grant leases of farms, were determined to have a clause inserted preventing their tenants keeping wheat longer than twelve months.' It was suggested by landlords that this would ease, to some extent, the burden on the poor of increased prices.<sup>8</sup> There is the possibility that landlords seeing their tenants deriving an uncovenanted benefit from grain shortages saw no reason why they themselves should not share in that benefit. In February 1800 Samuel Waddington a Tonbridge hop factor, Chairman of several London meetings to organise petitions for peace in 1795, was charged in the King's Bench Division with forestalling in a case which was of great interest to Kent, since the county was the principal English producer of hops. It was alleged that:

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<sup>5</sup> Rose, R.B., 'Eighteenth-century Price Riots and Public Policy in England' in *International Review of Social History*, vol. vi (1961).

<sup>6</sup> King, P., 'Decision-Makers and Decision-Making in the English Criminal Law, 1750-1800' in *Hist.Jnl.*, vol.27,1. 34, citing Thompson, E.P., 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century' in *Past and Present*, vol.50 (1971). 76-136.

<sup>7</sup> Christie, J.R., *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain: Reflections on the Avoidance of Revolution*. 153.

<sup>8</sup> *KG.*, 11 February 1800.

From the beginning of the year 1798, the price of this commodity had become extravagant beyond all former precedent, not from a failure of crops, but from the illegal and boundless speculation of this gentleman ... He had declared that, in order to create a scarcity, and to have the command of the market, he would lay out every shilling of 80,000 l. he had by him, and would borrow more, if necessary; that he had, in fact, monopolised the crops, and had even purchased up the greatest part of the next crop.<sup>9</sup>

Lord Kenyon found that whilst an Act on forestalling had been repealed, this remained an offence under common law and he allowed an information to be laid. Another reason for artificially high prices resulted from regrating, an illegal arrangement whereby a conditional purchase was made in advance of a genuine sale with a view to resale in the same market, on the same day, at a higher price. Possibly in the light of the Waddington case and an important regrating case originating in the London wholesale grain market (Rusby, King's Bench Division, July 1800), the details of which were reported at length in the Kentish press,<sup>10</sup> the *Kentish Gazette* on 12 September published abstracts of all the Acts in force against artificially inflating food prices.

Kent was no different from other counties in being subject to 'the moral economy of the crowd' in times when the price of food was deemed to be at an unreasonably high level. E.P. Thompson defines this as 'a pattern of social protest which derives from a consensus as to the moral economy of the commonweal in times of dearth.' He explains that, 'there is [then] a deeply-felt conviction that prices ought, in times of dearth, to be regulated, and that the profiteer puts himself outside of society.' The view of the crowd was that prices should remain at a customary level.<sup>11</sup> Whilst there is no general acceptance of Thompson's marxist theorising on what it was that motivated working-class actions, his 'moral economy' proposition remains largely valid. It should be noted,

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<sup>9</sup> *KG.*, 12 August 1800.

<sup>10</sup> *MJ.*, 11 July 1800.

<sup>11</sup> Thompson, E.P., 'Moral Economy'. The quotations are at 126 and 112.

however, that 'moral economy' was reactive and traditional, rather than progressive. It sought to go back to what was perceived as the fair pricing of the past. Of itself it was not a radical protest. When radicalism is considered in the following chapter, food riots will not be seen as evidence thereof, unless in a particular case there are additional factors which lead to that conclusion.

Grain prices rose sharply in the course of the 1790s and the early 1800s. The effect of poor harvests was marked in 1794-5 and even more so in 1800-01.<sup>12</sup> The general effect on wheat prices (per quarter) in England and Wales is shown in the following table:

1788	46s. 9d.	1793	49s. 3d.	1798	51s. 10d.
1789	52s. 9d.	1794	52s. 3d.	1799	69s. 0d.
1790	54s. 9d.	1795	75s. 2d.	1800	113s. 10d.
1791	48s. 7d.	1796	78s. 7d.	1801	119s. 6d.
1792	43s. 0d.	1797	53s. 9d.	1802	69s. 10d. <sup>13</sup>

Price levels were also affected by the Revolutionary War, one effect of which was to impede the flow of imported grain. Britain was by then dependent on imported wheat. P.O'Brien devised a national index of food prices for the years 1688-1800, taking 1660 as the base year and assuming average purchases to be grain 56%, animal products 37% and vegetables 7%.<sup>14</sup> The resulting average overall percentages were:

1660	100	1792	162	1797	186
1788	145	1793	161	1798	185
1789	153	1794	182	1799	261
1790	155	1795	213	1800	282
1791	143	1796	185		

<sup>12</sup> Stratton, J.M., *Agricultural Records AD220-1968*, Whitlock, R., (ed.), 91-94.

<sup>13</sup> Mitchell, B.R., *British Historical Statistics* (1988), 756.

<sup>14</sup> O'Brien, P., 'Agriculture and the home market for English industry 1660-1820' in *EHR.*, vol.100 (1985). 789.

A more reliable indicator of how the poor were affected by high prices is the wheat price index. It was bread rather than meat which formed a substantial part of their diet and a weighting of 37% for animal products would be unrealistic. The two tables reproduced above agree that 1794-5 was a period of exceptionally high prices and in the case of wheat that trend continued into 1796. The tables also coincide in showing that it was in 1800 that prices rocketed upwards and whilst O'Brien's table ends in that year, Mitchell's statistics show that, for wheat, the upward movement was sustained in 1801. It should be stressed that the prices shown are annual averages and these should be treated with caution. They may or may not be precisely, or even approximately, relevant to specific situations of time and place.

A closer guide to the price of wheat in Kent is given by the series of returns for each county reported monthly (but irregularly) in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. The figures for 1789-99 are shown in the Appendix. Those for 1800 and 1801 (per quarter) were as follows:

	<u>1800</u>		<u>1801</u>			<u>1800</u>		<u>1801</u>	
	s.	d.	s.	d.		s.	d.	s.	d.
January	98	0	133	8	July	130	6	144	3
February	105	8	141	0	August	112	6	112	6
March	106	6	150	9	September	118	0	86	3
April	112	6	146	3	October	111	2	71	0
May	117	8	106	6	November	123	10	68	8
June	126	3	122	6	December	135	10	74	10

Problems arise from a reliance on annual averages. In April 1795 the price of a quatern loaf in Canterbury was 8d., whilst in July it was 11d. In August 1800 a loaf was 1s.3¼d., whilst at Christmas it was 1s.7d.<sup>15</sup> Yet tables of average annual prices give only

<sup>15</sup> Panton, F.H., 'Finances and Government of Canterbury, Eighteenth to Nineteenth Century' unpublished PhD thesis, UKC, 1998. 143.

one figure for each of the years 1795 and 1800. From the variations in the monthly tables it would seem possible that the poor in Canterbury could afford bread every day in some months but not every day in others. Since the need for sustenance is a daily experience rather than one resting on statistical averages, variations upwards in prices assumed real importance for those at the extremes of poverty. Averages may tell little about the effect of price movements on daily expenditure in a particular geographical area. The *Kentish Gazette* of 3 October 1800 made the point that the difference in the price of provisions at Faversham and Canterbury 'was astonishing'. A quartern loaf at Faversham cost 1s., whilst at Canterbury it cost 1s.2¼d. Yet these were towns only ten miles apart. It would seem unwise to draw any conclusion from averages, other than that they demonstrate general trends.

Both the monthly table and press reports show that by August 1800 the situation in respect of the supply of bread was changing. The *Kentish Gazette* reported that 'owing to the very great fall in the price of wheat and flour in this city [Canterbury] the Mayor ... ordered bread to be reduced *five* farthings, to the great joy and relief of the poor and industrious inhabitants. So large and quick a reduction is not within the memory of the oldest person living.' A few days thereafter the price was reduced further to 11¼d. The report continued, whimsically, 'barbers throughout the county are charging those dealing in corn and flour double price for shaving, as their faces are full *twice as long* as they were a month since.'<sup>16</sup> The price reduction was only a temporary one as the table shows. This is also indicated by the fact that on 19 September the *Gazette* congratulated the Canterbury millers, on this occasion, 'for at the present price of wheat they are certainly

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<sup>16</sup> *KG.*, 8 August 1800.

losing from ten to fifteen shillings by every sack of flour they now sell at the above price [eighty-eight shillings a sack].’ This could not continue for long.

In 1795, and especially in July and August of that year, representations were made to the Privy Council by mayors and magistrates from far and wide, in the light of the shortages of wheat. Kent’s towns and villages, no less than others, made insistent demands for additional supplies. Correspondence from Orpington, Woolwich, Canterbury, Maidstone, Rochester and Sandwich indicated that there was virtually no wheat available throughout the county. Dover millers who normally sent flour to London each week were now having to purchase it from there. They had only 700 quarters of wheat, which had been allocated to them by the Privy Council. In mid-August the Mayor and Justices of Rochester wrote that the 200 quarters which the Privy Council had authorised was almost exhausted, they had only enough left for five days. A petition from the authorities at Chartham stressed that only four quarters had been available for sale there on the last market day. A Canterbury miller who usually supplied flour to London indicated that his stock was almost exhausted.<sup>17</sup>

Shortages and high prices gave rise to attempts to defraud the public. In February 1796 an Aylesford miller was prosecuted for adulterating flour. He was fined £5. Half was given to the informer and half to the Overseers of the Poor. In January 1796, Mr Justice Russell and the peace officers of Greenwich visited all bakers in the parish and weighed their bread. Many loaves were deficient and these were given away at the door of the bakeries to the poor, not in receipt of any relief.<sup>18</sup> In July 1797 Edward

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<sup>17</sup> TNA: PRO PC1/27/55 contains letters from all parts of the country seeking help to relieve the shortages of grain. The Privy Council had nothing to offer excepting grain seized from captured neutral ships bound for enemy ports.

<sup>18</sup> *MJ.*, 13 January 1796.

Shove, a Justice of the Peace, in a letter to a friend, indicated that he had dealt with Pollatt, a baker selling underweight bread. He had been fined and some of the bread was given to the poor of Sheppey and Minster.<sup>19</sup>

Lord Auckland, a Kentish resident who was to join the Grenville Ministry in 1806 as President of the Board of Trade, sent a memorandum to Pitt indicating that the 1795 wheat crop was said to be about one-fifth, ‘many accounts say one-quarter’, below a “medium” crop.<sup>20</sup> He concluded that the next harvest would be one million quarters short of what was needed. He suggested that one-third of families should reduce their demand for wheaten bread to two-thirds of normal consumption, but he urged that this ‘ought not to bear on the indigent and the labouring classes.’<sup>21</sup> The government broadly adopted the suggestion.<sup>22</sup> At the January 1796 Quarter Sessions, Kent Justices pledged to follow the government’s recommendation and to urge its general acceptance. The Mayor of Maidstone encouraged a meeting of townsfolk on 18 January to adopt a proposition that ‘we will reduce the consumption of Wheat in our families by at least one-third of the usual quantity consumed in ordinary times.’<sup>23</sup>

In July 1795 the Privy Council reminded Quarter Sessions of the terms of a 1773 Act which allowed them to prohibit sales of fine wheaten bread for a period of three months. For it could be substituted a ‘Standard Wheaten Loaf’ made from coarse wholemeal flour with only the bran removed.<sup>24</sup> The members of the Privy Council decided to confine their own bread consumption accordingly until 1 October. This

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<sup>19</sup> CKS., U3446.01. E. Shove to N. Williams, 31 July 1797.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Medium’ was an eighteenth-century term for ‘average’. Where relevant, “medium” is used in quotations in this chapter.

<sup>21</sup> CKS., Stanhope MSS., U1590.S5.01.5. Memorandum, Auckland to Pitt, 10 November 1795.

<sup>22</sup> *CJ.*, 11 December 1795; *Parl.Hist.*, vol.xxxii. 687-700.

<sup>23</sup> *MJ.*, 5 January, 26 January 1796.

<sup>24</sup> 13 Geo.III, c.62.

practice was, at least in theory, widely followed. In March 1796 the Home Office enquired of urban authorities about the effect of the measures taken thus far to conserve grain. Replies showed that they had been far from successful. In Kent, 'millers at ... Gravesend were among the many who "proved refractory".'<sup>25</sup>

In the context of the 1800-01 food crisis, Kent Justices considered a communication from the Duke of Portland to Lords Lieutenant in which he reminded them of their powers to implement the terms of the 1773 Act. The Kent Quarter Sessions agreed to defer a decision until a House of Commons Committee had decided whether to alter or amend the Act. It concurred in the government's decision that no bread should be sold unless it had been kept for twenty-four hours after baking to allow it to become staler and thus last longer. They also agreed with a government suggestion that relief for the poor ought not to take the form of bread, flour or money. Instead it should consist of 'soup, rice, potatoes and other articles, which may in some degree be used as substitutes for bread.'<sup>26</sup> These alternatives were designed to reduce demands for grain, but the suggestion of rice is surprising since it would have to be imported at a time when, with demands on its manpower by the Navy, the merchant navy was finding difficulty in manning ships. In the 1795 food crisis, to conserve stocks the Privy Council had issued an order prohibiting the re-export of rice.<sup>27</sup> The government wished to extend the operation of the 1773 Act to the whole country but London's Lord Mayor had not supported the idea. A House of Commons Select Committee declined to adopt the proposal, probably from fear of an adverse reaction in London. It did report, *inter alia*,

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<sup>25</sup> Wells, R., *Wretched Faces., Famine in Wartime England 1793-1801.* 203-213.

<sup>26</sup> *KG.*, 4, 18, 21 February 1800; *CKS.*, Q/SO.E.10.

<sup>27</sup> TNA: PRO PC1/27/55.

its very great concern 'that from the mistaken charity of individuals, in some parts of the country, flour and bread have been delivered to the poor at a reduced price.'<sup>28</sup> In Kent it had been a common practice for flour and bread for the poor to be subsidised by individuals, corporations and churches, and this practice continued, notwithstanding the concern of the Commons.

Some factors relevant to Kent which affected food shortages and prices applied equally to other counties but they did not exist elsewhere, in combination, to anything like the same extent. One Kentish factor was that grain was being shipped out of the county in large quantities, Kent and East Anglia being large-scale suppliers of grain to London. Mark Lane, London's wholesale flour and grain market, had fifty-eight authorised stalls and eight of these were possessed by hoymen from Kent. They differed from most other stallholders who, in peace time, were either large-scale merchant-importers, or salesmen working on commission for farmers and dealers.<sup>29</sup> The Kentish men shipped Kentish grain. A cause of riots and disturbances was the reduction in the availability of grain and flour by reason of its despatch to the London or some other lucrative market, but this had long been a common practice in Kent and it had not led to riots.

Another factor especially affecting Kent was that in most of the decade at the end of the eighteenth century, and until the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the county had to feed many thousands of soldiers and their horses, as well as sailors, both those stationed in the county and those in transit to overseas postings from Gravesend. J.E. Cookson indicates that one-sixth of the army and militia were stationed in Kent and Sussex at this

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<sup>28</sup> *Parl.Hist.*, vol.xxxiv. 1430-33; 1489-1505.

<sup>29</sup> Wells, R., *Wretched Faces*. 25-6.

time, a proportion which had increased to one-third by 1804-5.<sup>30</sup> The more general effects of this are considered in Chapter 7. Cookson acknowledges that the armed forces constituted a population of high consumption relative to civilians but contends that ‘the difference between the consumption of a military population of several hundred thousands and that of a civilian population of equivalent size could be of little significance in a total population of several millions.’<sup>31</sup> Yet this generalisation ignores variations between locations. When as large a proportion as one-sixth or more of the ‘several hundred thousands’ was concentrated in Kent and Sussex, food supplies there were bound to be affected by the presence of the military. Making additional demands on the county’s food supplies was the Navy stationed at Chatham and the Nore, and merchant shipping at Kentish ports and anchored off the coast. In times of shortage the aggregate of military and naval demands on food stocks exacerbated the situation by reducing the food available to Kentish people and by enhancing the price of such food as did remain. With the shortages and high price of food in the middle and at the end of the decade it was not unnatural for the population to perceive a link between these factors and the presence of troops; the war was unpopular for this as well as for other reasons.

A further factor especially affecting Kent was the cost of poor relief. This will be dealt with in more detail later in the chapter but it is convenient here to make a general comment. The end of the Revolutionary War threw large numbers of demobilised soldiers, sailors and dockyard workers on to the labour market. Between 1801 and 1802 the country’s military establishment was reduced from 288,786 to 132,308. The Navy was reduced from 130,000 men to 70,000 and there were plans to reduce it further.

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<sup>30</sup> Cookson, J.E., *The British Armed Nation 1793-1815*. 41.

<sup>31</sup> Cookson, J.E., *British Armed Nation*. 72.

Workers in the dockyards were laid off.<sup>32</sup> Very many of those then demobilised were already located in the county, whilst those serving overseas returned principally through Kentish ports. Work was not readily available to them. As will be shown later in the chapter, the costs of poor relief rose to a level higher than that of most other counties. Kent had more burdens placed upon it than did many other counties at this time yet the county did not suffer from riots as did numbers of other counties. It is necessary firstly to demonstrate that this was the case, and then to suggest why it was so.

### **Riots and Disturbances**

It is important to define what is here understood by the term 'riot', since it is insisted throughout the thesis that Kent did not experience riots. Much has been written concerning riot, rebellion and disturbances and there is no universal agreement on the meaning to be attached to the various terms. For the present purpose 'riot' is considered as 'an outbreak of temporary but violent mass disorder.'<sup>33</sup> There were undoubtedly cases where 'riot' would be a correct description of what was happening in parts of south-east England, and the militia riot over the county border at Newhaven, mentioned later in the chapter, is one such. There are no recorded examples in Kent of 'violent mass disorder'. There would need to be three elements in a riot. Firstly, it would be crowd activity rather than that of a very small number of individuals, imprecise as that definition may be. The Riot Act of 1715 defined a riot as one in which as many as twelve people were involved.

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<sup>32</sup> Emsley, C., *British Society and the French Wars 1793-1815*. 94-5.

<sup>33</sup> One of the definitions given in Stevenson, J., *Popular Disturbances in England 1700-1870*. 8, quoting from *The Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* (1948), xiii. 386.

But there cannot be an exact arithmetical test to determine what is a riot. There were cases in Kent where the press reported that hundreds or even thousands (though contemporary reports of numbers ought not to be taken literally) were involved in a food demonstration yet, on an appeal from the mayor or other authority, the crowd dispersed. Secondly, a riot would include behavioural as well as numerical elements. There would be a degree of law-breaking which extended beyond unfulfilled threats or something as trivial as the breaking of a window or two. It may involve unlawful seizure of goods, or a threat so to do if a demand is not met. It may be accompanied by violence against the person, or serious damage to property. Thirdly, there has to be a grievance, real or imaginary, which unites, or can be deployed by self-appointed leaders to unite, those taking part in the event. It was very seldom, if at all, that these factors in combination were met with in Kent.

Whilst riots in England over the period of the French wars occurred in towns rather than the countryside there were no such riots in Kent. Bawn suggests that Dorset was generally free of riots yet he records that, even so, there was 'a spate of food riots' in the summer of 1800.<sup>34</sup> Whenever the poor were suffering by reason of food shortages the Kentish town authorities would generally act with alacrity to alleviate distress to the extent that this was possible. This was not the case in some other counties. Throughout 1800 Kentish towns were active in providing relief, either directly by way of subscriptions or through the cathedral authorities. In the south west, on the other hand, the town authorities of Exeter did not put into effect the Parish Relief Act of December

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<sup>34</sup> Bawn, K.P., 'Social Protest, Public Order and Popular Disturbances in Dorset 1790-1838', (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Reading, 1984). The thesis concentrates on the nineteenth rather than the eighteenth century.

1800 until mid-April, whilst Plymouth did not do so until June. As a Devon magistrate, Colonel A.J. Taylor, wrote in May 1801, 'those who have the Management of the poor in the Towns have never done their duty by proper provision for them, and have studied, to throw all the Odium of starving the people on the Farmers.'<sup>35</sup> The result was a degree of trust in the municipal authorities in Kent and an avoidance of town riots; a lack of trust in the south west and riots.

Stevenson suggests that post-1789 radicalism was not important in food riots and that 'such organisation as riots had owed far more to the similarity of regional circumstances and spontaneous reactions to movement in the price of grain'.<sup>36</sup> Yet if this was the complete explanation there would have been riots in Kent, just as there were in the adjoining county of Sussex. There were other factors in play and it is here suggested that the degree of trust or mistrust, based on past and current experience, between the local authorities and the working man was one such important factor. Another factor in the south-western counties was, as Wells suggests, that 'the duration, and perhaps the extent of mass action, must be sought in the reluctance of town authorities firstly to make adequate provisions for their poor.'<sup>37</sup>

The shortages and high price of bread, the most important item of food for those living in poverty, led to a number of disturbances in Kent and the south-east generally. Panton suggests that riots were generally avoided in Canterbury, since the burghmote consisted of middling folk who were in close touch with the people and adept at crisis

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<sup>35</sup> Letter to General Simcoe, quoted by Wells, R., in 'The Revolt of the South West, 1800-1: A Study in English Popular Protest' in Rule, J., and Wells, R., *Crime, Protest and Popular Politics in Southern England*. 26.

<sup>36</sup> Stevenson, J., *Popular Disturbances in England 1700-1832*. 135.

<sup>37</sup> Wells, R., 'The Revolt of the South West'. 48.

management. In September 1795, for example, when there were signs of what might turn into a riot in the town, the situation was calmed by entreaties from the mayor and constable. In the event, butter was sold at 14d. rather than 18d. per pound and butchers reduced the price of meat.<sup>38</sup> In considering Kentish press reports (and probably most others) of the period it has to be borne in mind that a demonstration of any kind was almost invariably described as a riot, even if no one was hurt and no goods were taken forcibly. But these were not riots by the definition here adopted.

There were understandable reasons why the armed forces sometimes banded with townsfolk in actions to reduce the price of foodstuffs. Not only were the monetary allowances to soldiers for food inadequate but, at times of shortage, prices rose to such an extent that some victualling contractors were unable to supply food at the contracted prices. A Woolwich baker who had been supplying the dockyard and the Royal Artillery was unable for this reason to continue so to do. He informed the Privy Council that he had only enough flour for one day's consumption. He was advised to purchase more on the London market, yet he was situated in a county which was normally a major supplier to London. In March 1795, striking Chatham shipwrights and the Norfolk Militia took action on several occasions to force a lowering of food prices. Actions of this kind, although not violent, might have been seen by the authorities as threatening. They resulted in the local Justices demanding the removal of the militia from the town. The Commanding Officer responded, 'I think we have hitherto had tumults of a very gentle & mitigated Nature. I hope that it will continue so.'<sup>39</sup> This is some limited confirmation that Kent was not suffering riots, albeit that pressure was being brought to bear on

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<sup>38</sup> Panton, F.H., 'Finances and Government of Canterbury'. 142.

<sup>39</sup> Wells, R., *Wretched Faces*. 101; TNA: PRO WO1/1084 ff.241-2; 1/1085 ff.151-4; 1/1088 ff.33-4.

shopkeepers and stallholders deemed to be overcharging. In Canterbury, in 1795, the Somersetshire and South Hants Militia stationed there insisted that butchers reduce the price of meat, and bakers the price of bread. Arising from what were seen as the dangers of such activity on the part of the soldiery, and of the continuing high price of bread, the government authorised a temporary payment of 9d. per week for each private soldier.<sup>40</sup>

Wells suggests that the press was prevailed upon to keep quiet about disturbances such as those which occurred at Canterbury and that 'stories of further military involvement in riots was vigorously and repeated denied. Kentish disturbances at the start of May received no publicity. By contrast, field days and army alacrity received copious coverage.'<sup>41</sup> The evidence from the *Maidstone Journal* and the *Kentish Gazette* supports this statement to some extent, but there is little evidence that military involvement in disturbances was 'vigorously and repeatedly denied.' Military involvement was hardly reported upon and evidence that it occurred has generally to be gleaned from War Office documents. But riots and disturbances, whether in Kent or elsewhere, were reported in the Kentish newspapers. It seems likely that the county newspapers held back from reporting military involvement in disturbances from a loyalist desire to demonstrate an impression of order, whilst playing up the incidence of 'riots', both to sell newspapers, and to emphasize a revolutionary danger, hence justifying oppression.

Wells plots the spread of demonstrations in the year 1800 from Yorkshire (27 August), then in September the Midlands (early in the month to the 13<sup>th</sup>), northern Home

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<sup>40</sup> *MJ.*, 28 April 1795.

<sup>41</sup> Wells, R., *Wretched Faces*. 105.

Counties (9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>), London (15<sup>th</sup>), Home Counties generally (by the 22<sup>nd</sup>). In Kent the protests started in Rochester (10<sup>th</sup>), reached Sheerness, Canterbury, Deal (20<sup>th</sup>), and then Margate, Sandwich, Tunbridge Wells (22<sup>nd</sup>). He suggests that the 1800-01 winter saw a resurgence of Jacobin sloganising combining with concern about food prices. He sees this as a sentiment stretching from industrial Yorkshire to rural Kent. Romney, the Lord Lieutenant, certainly claimed that Jacobins were involved in a Rochester food demonstration. He advised Portland that 'you may depend upon it that the most desperate and abandoned Jacobins are now taking advantage of the high price of Corn.'<sup>42</sup> But whilst there were demonstrations on occasion, sparked off by high food prices, there is no evidence supporting the proposition that Kentish folk were engaged in Jacobinical activity.

In response to food disturbances, Kentish justices acted no differently from their counterparts elsewhere in the country. They were not intent on exacerbating situations in which there was popular support, even among the soldiery, for those who were breaking the law by challenging high food prices. In January 1795 when shortages and high prices were affecting the availability of flour, a demonstration was directed against the export from the county of milled flour from Lamberhurst. It was said by Miller Jacques that the crowd had indicated that they would destroy the mill if the flour was not sold locally at a reduced price. This he promised them. Jacques visited the War Office and asked for help from the militia. Sir Edward Dering, a magistrate and local landowner, himself talked to the ringleader of the mob. So assured was Dering by the response which he received that he wrote to the War Office indicating that he did not anticipate that any trouble would occur and that there was no need for military intervention. This was one of the few

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<sup>42</sup> TNA: PRO HO42/51, f.278, Romney to Portland, 19 September 1800.

occasions on which the deployment of troops in Kent had been considered necessary to quell a disturbance; without cause, as it ultimately appeared. The justices did not treat the matter particularly seriously since the ringleaders were fined 1s. each.<sup>43</sup>

At Tunbridge Wells there was a demonstration against secretive dealings in grain at a house where such practices had become customary. A few windows were broken. The constable reported the names and descriptions of several of those involved to Lord Boyne, a local magistrate. He delivered a severe reprimand to those involved and ordered the display of a notice stressing the need for peaceful conduct. He also ordered that farmers must bring grain to the public market and not fix prices in private.<sup>44</sup>

On rare occasions Kentish justices did take a hard line against food demonstrators. In 1801 William Scott, a labourer of Wye, was involved in a food demonstration. He was sentenced to two years in gaol and on his release required to give a surety in the sum of £50 for two years' good behaviour, with two additional sureties of £10 each. This was a remarkably heavy sentence for such an offence but he had been charged with uttering seditious words in a demand to reduce the price of provisions. At the same Quarter Sessions, Thomas Butcher was sentenced to 12 months' hard labour for uttering seditious words. Yet the justices appeared to regard sedition as a lesser offence than stealing for at the Michaelmas Quarter Sessions, 1800, Thomas Pegden and Thomas Tong had been sentenced to seven years' transportation, having stolen two quarters and six bushels of wheat.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *MJ.*, 3 February 1795; TNA: PRO WO1/1088, f.33.

<sup>44</sup> TNA: PRO HO42/51, ff.474, 491.

<sup>45</sup> CKS., Q/Sma.E9, East Kent Court Minute Book.

In the early part of 1795 in the adjoining county of Sussex there was a serious riot brought about, initially, by the delivery of bad meat to troops stationed at Seaford. In the light of strong protests the meat was replaced by some of better quality. The local army commander insisted on deductions from pay to meet the additional cost. This seemed a genuine grievance but the protests then extended to the transport of flour out of the county from the port of Newhaven. The riot was led by militiamen and on 15 April more than three hundred soldiers took over the town and commandeered almost three hundred bags of flour which had been loaded for shipment to London. Peace was restored only when the regular army with Artillery and Yeomanry support was brought in.<sup>46</sup> The riot did not receive widespread coverage in the Kentish press. Perhaps it was thought too close to home, as well as constituting particularly bad publicity for the army. At the urging of the Duke of Richmond, who was commanding troops in south-east England, cash allowances were replaced by bread and meat rations. Nothing on the scale of the Sussex riots occurred anywhere in Kent, either at this or any other time. Kent was well used to the shipment of grain to London and even though, as in the Lamberhurst case, this occasionally led to disturbances at times of shortage, they were on a small scale seldom requiring more than the intervention of the mayor, the constable, or one of the justices in order to pacify the crowd.

There are very many letters in the Home Office files for August and September 1800 reporting food riots in different parts of the country. But even in this worst period of rioting, authorities in Kent could usually disperse gatherings without reading the Riot Act or calling in the military. In general, the authorities were confident that they could

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<sup>46</sup> TNA: PRO WO71/170; 1/1088 ff.117-9; *Kentish Chronicle* 24, 28 April 1795; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 20, 27 April, 1 June; Wells, R., *Wretched Faces*. 103.

control the situation. There was what might have turned into a riot in Maidstone in October 1800, but this was a rare occurrence.<sup>47</sup> In the event there was no riot. The Mayor of Rochester wrote to Portland in September 1800 ‘We are all very quiet at present and I hope they [*sic*] will continue so.’ He reported that wheat was now in the market to be sold to poor people on the basis of not more than two bushels a family, and not less than half a peck. Most millers had agreed to grind it for them *gratis*.<sup>48</sup> On 19 September Romney met the Mayor to discuss the large protest meeting which had taken place in Rochester. The Lord Lieutenant became persuaded that such demonstrations had stopped for the moment. The Mayor wrote again to Portland telling him of a further mass meeting. ‘With a great deal of talking I got them to disperse.’ The Mayor did not think that they would meet again in any numbers.<sup>49</sup> Aaron Graham (a Sheerness magistrate earlier commissioned by Portland’s office to investigate the background to the Nore mutiny) reported a disturbance, with the mob seeking to force traders to sell butter at 1s. a pound instead of 1s.5d. ‘Before nine o’clock the utmost good order was restored in the Market Place and butter was sold at fourteen pence a pound by the voluntary consent of the owners to whom I assured protection. ... You need not be under the least apprehension for the Peace and safety of this place’.<sup>50</sup> It might be doubted how far the reduction in price was a voluntary action on the part of the traders. However that may be, the matter was settled peaceably. Graham wrote again concerning a rumour that a strong attempt would be made to reduce the price of butcher’s meat. ‘I have not the least fear of

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<sup>47</sup> *KG.*, 10 October 1800.

<sup>48</sup> TNA: PRO HO42/51, f.4.

<sup>49</sup> TNA: PRO HO42/51, f.289, letter undated, probably 19 September 1800.

<sup>50</sup> TNA: PRO HO42/51, f.308, Graham to King, 2 September 1800.

being able to disperse it without mischief in case it should take place.’ In fact, no demonstration took place.<sup>51</sup>

In the same month Romney wrote to Portland, ‘I think at present everything here appears very quiet tho’ I am convinced the desperate Jacobins are endeavouring everything in their power to make confusion.’<sup>52</sup> Romney had left his ‘democrat’ days far behind him and now seemed obsessed by a Jacobin threat, even though there was no evidence of this in Kent. Yet even he agreed that everything was quiet, at a time when it was far from quiet in other parts of the country. Pitt in an unaddressed and undated letter received at the Privy Council Office on 31 July 1800, had written that ‘I have no doubt that the inhabitants of this County will continue perfectly peaceable and quiet, believing that they are all convinced that the scarcity is real and not caused by any unfair proceedings’.<sup>53</sup> This was at a period when widespread riots were imminent (they began in September) and there were many counties in respect of which Pitt’s prediction would have been proved to be false. Yet it was correct in respect of Kent. Whilst it may have overstated the contentment of the Kentish poor, it does confirm the general point that even at this unhappy period there were no signs of revolt in the county.

### **Poor Relief and Charity**

Against the background of war, food shortages and demobilisation the cost to the country of poor relief, which had been £1,679,585 in 1776, had risen to £2,100,587 in 1783-5 and to £5,161,813 in 1802-3.<sup>54</sup> The poor rate in the earlier years included an

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<sup>51</sup> TNA: PRO HO42/51, f.452, Graham to King, 25 September 1800.

<sup>52</sup> TNA: PRO HO42/51, f.326, 21 September 1800.

<sup>53</sup> TNA: PRO PC1/27/56.

<sup>54</sup> *PP.*, *Abstract of the Answers and Returns Relative to the Expence (sic) and Maintenance of the Poor*, (1804).

element for gaol and county rates and the cost of militia substitutes, but it has been suggested that nine-tenths of the amount raised in Kent was for poor relief.<sup>55</sup> In Kent in 1776 the cost to parishes of poor relief was £77,895. The “medium” net figure for Kent in the years 1783, 1784 and 1785, had risen to £106,606.7s.11d. At this time, a yearly expenditure of even £80,000 was exceeded by only five other counties, Devon, Essex, Lancaster (marginally), Norfolk and Middlesex.<sup>56</sup> Thus even before the great influx into the county of soldiers and sailors from 1793 onwards, Kent had more of a burden in coping with the poor than did most other counties. This might be attributed to its proximity to London and to the fact that there was seasonal work to be had in the county, with numbers of itinerants staying on after sowing and harvesting were completed. By 1803, with demobilisation of the armed forces and the running down of the dockyards in Kent, there were 9,227 adults and 10,939 children on outrelief, 6,337 in workhouses and another 15,129 on occasional relief, in total some 41,632 or nearly 14% of the county’s population. Of these numbers, the 14,075 who were not parishioners but in receipt of poor relief were ‘largely vagrants’. The total raised in 1803 was £257,467 of which approximately £42,000 was for church and county rates, and militia and sundry payments. Six other counties had exceeded an amount of £200,000; Essex, Lancaster, Middlesex, Norfolk, Sussex and the West Riding.<sup>57</sup> The cost to Kent in 1803 had actually been exceeded in 1801. Poor relief in Kent then had approximated to £300,000 even though, unlike the situation in 1803, unemployment had not yet become an important factor. The trebling of poor relief between 1776 and 1803 was mainly an

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<sup>55</sup> Keith-Lucas, B., *Parish Affairs: The Government of Kent under George III*, 157.

<sup>56</sup> *PP.*, *Expence of the Poor* (1804).

<sup>57</sup> *PP.*, *Expence of the Poor* (1804).

indirect effect of the war from 1792 onwards. The year 1801 was an exception. Prices then had begun from the already high level engendered by the war and, additionally, there were the unprecedented food shortages in that and the preceding year. In 1800 the price of wheat was some two-thirds higher than in the preceding year, and in 1801 the general average rose to a level which had never before been approached, let alone attained. Baugh, writing of the period up to 1834, indicates that if figures are adjusted for population change 'it is clear that in Essex and Sussex *per capita* spending on the poor never again approached the level in 1801. In Kent the 1801 level was equalled, but not surpassed, in 1818.'<sup>58</sup>

It is extremely difficult to give representative or comparative figures for parish expenditure and receipts. There were many local factors influencing the level of poor rates.<sup>59</sup> In general, it was based on the rental value of land and property. The assessment (the 'cess' as it was called in Kent) might be levied on one-half, or some other fraction, of the rental. The rate might be levied once or twice a year, or even more frequently. The basis of the rental might be revised as there was need for augmentation or, rarely, diminution of parish funds. The poor account might be allowed to run into debt and this would distort the assessment both for that and the succeeding year. There was no consistency in the increased amount of poor relief paid by parishes in 1803, compared with 1783-5. The increase ranged from 1.3 times in Woolwich, 1.7 times in Maidstone, to twice in Canterbury. Two parishes where the increase was even greater were

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<sup>58</sup> Baugh, D.A., 'The cost of Poor Relief in South-East England, 1790-1834' in *Economic History Review*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, vol.xxviii, no.1, (1975). 54.

<sup>59</sup> The difficulties in producing accurate comparisons of rate receipts and revenue are well-illustrated in Baugh, D.A., 'The cost of Poor Relief.'

Chatham, 2.5 times and Rochester, 3.5 times. Given the rundown of the armed forces and dockyard personnel in 1802-3, this is what would be expected in those locations.<sup>60</sup>

The poor rate was the only formal way of meeting the cost of poor relief, but increases in the rate were resented. Those having to pay increased rates were never the destitute, but it was not only the comparatively well-off who were affected. It was particularly burdensome for those just above the level of eligibility for poor relief, and that included numbers of small tenant farmers and some craftsmen. They neither benefited from parish relief nor were they exempt from paying the poor rate. W. Frend in 1793 had commented on this problem: 'the class just above poverty, just above want themselves, but by means of rates, reduced to a worse situation, than those who receive their benefactions.'<sup>61</sup> Widespread ongoing resentment was often dressed up in arguments that poor relief encouraged indigence and fecklessness, that it removed the incentive to work, or that it sustained improvidence and imposture. The *Maidstone Journal* of 3 May 1791 commented that 'the plan now on foot for the employment of all vagrants and ex-Parochial poor, promises at length an actual remedy, to the numerous Grievances which the association of paupers in their vices and their Miseries brings on the county at large.'

In 1696 John Cary had produced *An Account of the Proceedings of the Corporation of the Poor of Bristol*, commenting favourably on an experiment with a workhouse. This encouraged a more general interest in the subject and, early on, Kentish parishes were to move in this direction with the Ashford workhouse erected in 1705 and another at Maidstone in 1719. In 1722 Sir Edward Knatchbull, one of the Kent county

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<sup>60</sup> PP., *Expence of the Poor* (1804).

<sup>61</sup> Frend, W., *Peace and Union recommended to the Associated Bodies of Republicans and Anti-Republicans*. 29-30. Frend was a Kentish Church of England priest who converted to Unitarianism.

Members, sponsored an Act enabling parishes to provide workhouses and to refuse relief to any able-bodied claimant who declined to enter therein.<sup>62</sup> When the workhouse at Maidstone had been built a notice was issued to claimants that 'all who came for weekly pay should go hither. ... Little more than half the Poor upon the list came to the overseers to receive their allowance.'<sup>63</sup> The workhouse had clearly served the intended purpose. In the two previous years the expenditure on the poor had been £929 and £1062 respectively. By 1724 the amount had been reduced to £530. Reductions in expenditure of much the same order were the result of the introduction of workhouses at Chatham and Tunbridge.<sup>64</sup>

By 1776 there were 132 workhouses in Kent accommodating almost 6,000 inmates. Some, including that at Canterbury, had been authorised by local Acts.<sup>65</sup> By 1803 the number in workhouses had not increased materially from 1776. A return for the year 1813, however, showed that 36% of paupers being maintained in Kent were accommodated in workhouses; the highest figure for any county outside London and twice the national average.<sup>66</sup> The explanation will, in part, have been the perceived financial advantages of the workhouse, but that was not peculiar to Kent. The large number of workhouses there may have resulted from it being considered that this was the best way to control the London itinerants who entered and remained in the county. They could be a source of some small income to the parish, either by way of farming them out or employing them on road maintenance or parish farms. The harshness often associated

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<sup>62</sup> 9 Geo.I, c.7.

<sup>63</sup> Eden, F.M., *State of the Poor*, vol.1. 284.

<sup>64</sup> Eden, F.M., *State of the Poor*. 272-3.

<sup>65</sup> PP., *Abstract of Answers* (1804), based on Parliamentary Returns, 1776. On Kentish workhouses, see Keith-Lucas, B., *Parish Affairs*. 110-127; 1 Geo.II, c.20.

<sup>66</sup> Keith-Lucas, B., *Parish Affairs*. 117.

with farming out and the authoritarian regime of many workhouses were themselves likely to prove a deterrent.<sup>67</sup> from 1795 onwards

In May 1795 Berkshire Justices meeting at Speenhamland considered the current high food prices but decided not to provide relief by revising wage rates for labourers. Instead they offered scales of poor relief related to the price of wheat and size of family. This practice was followed in some parts of the country but it was not adopted to any significant extent in Kent. In 1799-1800 the Malling Justices did adopt a scale of relief based on family size, the price of flour, the cost of rent, and a payment in lieu of beer or cider<sup>68</sup> but there were few such instances in the county. Possibly it was not material to the levels of poor rate or the total relief paid in the county whether or not Speenhamland scales were adopted. Baugh in a study of poor relief in Essex, Sussex and Kent was unable to amass a sufficiency of information to draw precise conclusions prior to 1801. He demonstrated that from 1801 to 1834 there was virtually no difference in *per capita* expenditure between Speenhamland and non-Speenhamland parishes, whilst in Kent the latter increased expenditure more than did the former. He suggests that, 'in sum, the statistical evidence offers no support for believing that the momentum of the Speenhamland system had any impact on trends of post-war relief expenditure.'<sup>69</sup> It does not necessarily follow that what was true after 1800 was equally true from 1795 onwards. But there is no obvious reason why that five-year period should produce results markedly different from the first thirty-four years of the nineteenth century. Baugh concluded that, 'the Speenhamland system did not matter much at any time, either during or after the

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<sup>67</sup> Keith-Lucas, B., *Parish Affairs*, 112-4.

<sup>68</sup> CKS., PS/Ma.4 and 5.

<sup>69</sup> Baugh, D.A., 'The cost of poor Relief'. 62-3.

war.<sup>70</sup> He was referring to the Napoleonic War, but the comment would seem equally valid in respect of the period from 1795 onwards.

It is not entirely clear why the Speenhamland system was not more widely adopted in Kent. It allowed some discretion in dealing with individual cases and there was no automatic right to relief. But scales of relief based on wages and bread prices were less flexible than arrangements which expressly involved neither. Furthermore, a scale may itself have encouraged an idea among the poor that they had a right to a defined level of entitlement. As Eastwood says of the 1795 Speenhamland decisions in Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, 'Once this was done, though, the die was cast and magistrates were in effect establishing minimum entitlements and diminishing the effective authority of parish officers.'<sup>71</sup> This seems a likely explanation for the reluctance of Kentish parishes to adopt the system.

The poor were given some additional assistance other than by payments of poor relief. The Friendly Societies Act of 1793 had encouraged the setting up of such bodies. Eden, writing in 1801, makes reference to 5,117 clubs in England of which 161 were in Kent. In the south of England generally subscriptions ranged from 1s. to 2s.6d. per month. A small payment would be made in time of sickness or in cases of accident, whilst some societies made payments to widows.<sup>72</sup> It is unlikely that the poorest could afford to be members and the contribution of Friendly Societies to the alleviation of poverty was only slight. By 1803 there were 198 societies in Kent, with 12,633 members and, of these, six societies with 344 members were limited to females. These were

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<sup>70</sup> Baugh, D.A., 'The cost of poor Relief'. 67.

<sup>71</sup> Eastwood, D., *Government and Community in the English Provinces 1700-1870*. 130-1.

<sup>72</sup> Eden, F.M., *Observations on Friendly Societies for the maintenance of the industrious classes during sickness, infirmity, old age and other exigencies* (1801). 7, 9.

miniscule figures compared with counties such as Lancaster, with more than 1,000 societies.<sup>73</sup> Friendly societies did not flourish in Kent for, by 1818, only Herefordshire and Sussex had lower proportions than Kent of the population belonging to such societies.

Many parishes had endowed charities, mostly of sixteenth or seventeenth century origin. Hasted in his *History of Kent* listed them against the parishes to which they related. Charities had often been instituted for the upkeep of hospitals, almshouses or free schools and to these ends they made an important contribution. Some charities took the form of a gift of loaves or, occasionally, of small sums of money to the poor. Where it consisted of loaves of bread, few charities gave out more than a total of twelve loaves a week. Aid by way of the provision of almshouses was on a quite limited scale, although of real value to those fortunate enough to benefit from them. In terms of relieving hunger, endowed charities made little impact on the problem and, by the early nineteenth century, their contribution was insignificant as a proportion of parochial relief. In 1815 charitable donations provided an amount of £3,742 for parish schools and £7,560 for other purposes, against the £394,754 raised in the county by the poor rate.<sup>74</sup>

Unlike endowed charities, spontaneous charity in the mid-1790s and in 1800-01 made an important impact. The concept of *noblesse oblige* was one which still held sway with many of the Kentish nobility and gentry. That their generosity received publicity by way of reports in the county newspapers may have been a further encouragement. A quite different motivation is suggested in a letter from Auckland to Pitt. 'The measures against the Movers of Sedition would be much aided in their impression thro' the

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<sup>73</sup> *PP.*, *Abstract of Answers* (1804).

<sup>74</sup> *PP.*, *Returns Relative to the Expence and Maintenance of the Poor* (1818).

Country, if it were possible to carry into early execution our project for reducing the consumption of wheat, so as to secure an abundance & at a reduced price to the lower Classes.’ Of the implementation of a law to require bread to include substances other than wheat, he continued, ‘Beside that Plan extend [*sic*] to the Lower Classes, and would create a general extent [?] & alarm & possibly even a disease among the lower People, who might not be able to support themselves in the way proposed’.<sup>75</sup>

Individual giving will have been operative to some degree, throughout the country. Kent was not unique in that respect. What distinguished Kent, as is emphasized throughout the thesis, was a derivative of gavelkind; small estates and a high proportion of resident landowners. This had created a greater degree of community between landowner and tenant, and tenant and labourer, than was the case more generally. In consequence, there was a greater understanding of, and sympathy with the difficulties faced by ordinary people. There is some support for this proposition in both Hasted’s description of relationships (at p.68) and to a lesser extent in Pitt’s letter to the Privy Council referred to above. There was a degree of confidence and trust shown between the lower classes and those above them in the social order which was not necessarily matched in the country at large.

Individual help to the poor of Kent began as early as February 1794 when Lord Le Despenser provided 200 stone of beef for the relief of those in the environs of Mereworth Castle. In January of the following year he gave two oxen and flour and fuel for a week for relief of the local poor. A week later he made similar provision for the poor of the villages of Tudeley and Capel. He undertook to continue with assistance on a

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<sup>75</sup> TNA: PRO 30/8/110, ff.279-80, Auckland to Pitt, 15 November 1795.

weekly basis. A subscription was opened for further relief in these villages, whilst similar action was taken at Langley, the vicar heading the list of patrons. In Boxley the poor were provided with cheap bread and flour and in East and West Malling subscriptions were opened for a similar purpose.<sup>76</sup> As succeeding examples show, these actions were typical of the aid which was forthcoming.

By December 1794 more than £250 had been subscribed in Maidstone, with the expectation that further amounts would be forthcoming, 'in consequence of the present high price of bread corn.' It was anticipated that it would be possible to relieve distress there during the following two months, and nine hundred families were provided with flour at a reduced price.<sup>77</sup> Early in 1795 the Canterbury city authorities together with the Dean and Chapter raised the sum of £500, which was sufficient to provide 2,500 of the poor with tickets for bread and flour, given out over four weeks. A further £191 was raised in July and this was used to subsidise the price of the wheaten loaf. Lord and Lady Romney were described in the press as having made 'liberal', but unspecified, gifts and they also gave forty chaldrons of coal to the poor. The Mayor of Maidstone called a meeting of townsfolk 'to take into consideration the propriety of a subscription for purchasing coals to be given to the poor of the town and parish.' Sir Charles Style gave 100 stone of beef and the Rev. Robert Style a large quantity of bread. In Chatham free bread was provided for three hundred poor families, whilst those who were just a little better off were offered bread at the reduced price of 1s. a gallon loaf. The *Maidstone Journal* remarked on 'the spirit of emulation among the nobility and gentry in efforts to

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<sup>76</sup> *MJ.*, 27 January, 18 February, 3 February, 1795.

<sup>77</sup> Panton, F.H., 'The Finances and Government of the City and County of Canterbury in the Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries' in *Arch. Cant.*, vol.cix (1991). 296.

outvie in charitable donations for the poor.’<sup>78</sup> Yet it seems that aid was being provided from genuine concern for the plight of the poor rather than for the sake of appearance. That is not to say that there was only one reason for giving. It is possible that fear of the disturbances which might result from unrelieved poverty may have played some part. The authorities could not guarantee protection against riotous behaviour and it may have been thought well to avoid the possibility arising. It was well-known that the soldiery were themselves sometimes involved in food riots and neither the militia nor the regular army could, with certainty, be relied upon to suppress what were, after all, popular causes.

At the time of the 1800 food shortages *ad hoc* charitable aid was widespread. Subscriptions raised in Maidstone enabled 3,000 poor persons to be supplied weekly with flour at 1s.6d. per gallon as well as ‘an excellent and nutritious soup at 1d. per quart. Upwards of 1,500 quarts had been made at a cost of twelve guineas’. The Dowager Countess of Darnley supplied the poor of Bidborough, Southborough and Tonbridge with soup, rice and meat twice weekly throughout the winter of 1799-1800.<sup>79</sup> Lord Gwydir and Lady Willoughby supplied 572 poor persons of Beckingham and Wickham with bread, broth, rice pudding and meat every second day in the week, besides providing forty entire families with comfortable clothing. A considerable quantity of bread was distributed to the poor of Chislet and Reculver, paid for by an informer who had received ‘part of the penalties imposed upon two persons in those parishes, for sporting without game certificates.’ A Mr Jacob had given ten guineas for weekly portions of beef, bread

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<sup>78</sup> *MJ.*, 6, 20, 13, 27 January 1796.

<sup>79</sup> *KG.*, 2 February, 11 April 1800.

and fuel for the poor of Shepherdswell.<sup>80</sup> Sir Henry Oxenden gave 500 quarts of soup weekly to the poor of Broome. In January 1800, 110 families at Minster, Birchington and the Ville of Wood were each provided with one bushel of coal and one quarter loaf. In the parish of St John's, Margate, upwards of £236 was raised by 'the middle and higher classes of its inhabitants (every subscriber having the liberty of attending distribution).' More than 500 poor people were supplied twice-weekly with a large portion of soup and a quantity of potatoes, whilst coals were sold to them at nine pence a bushel.<sup>81</sup> In March the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral initiated a subscription for relief of the poor, with the intention that it should consist of a soup ration. The Mayor and Commonalty added support and it was resolved that soup should be provided at ½d. per quart. A poor person was allowed one pint up to three times a week, a man and wife two pints with an additional one pint for each child up to a maximum of three children. The churchwardens of each parish within the city were required to recommend paupers. Each was given a ticket with their name written thereon.<sup>82</sup>

From these examples it can be seen that the rich, the corporations and the church all saw the problems facing the poor of Kent as serious and requiring action on their part. Panton's suggestion that 'crisis management of this kind was one of the most important contributions to social stability undertaken by the local government of Canterbury'<sup>83</sup> had relevance throughout the county.

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<sup>80</sup> *KG.*, 28 January 1800.

<sup>81</sup> *KG.*, 10 January, 11 February 1800.

<sup>82</sup> *KG.*, 11 March 1800.

<sup>83</sup> Panton, F.H., 'The Finances and Government of the City'. 109.

## A General Quiescence

It has been demonstrated that there were factors which resulted in abnormal pressures being brought to bear on Kent's food resources. The resultant price increases greatly accentuated the day-to-day problems of those living in poverty. Although some factors, such as poor harvests and Kent's role as a major exporter of food to London, had little or nothing to do with events in France, the war had a significant impact, both directly and indirectly, by inhibiting imports and, especially in Kent, increasing pressures on available food supplies. It might seem that the reduction in the standard of living of the mass of the people, at a low level even in peace time, would have provided a *prima facie* cause for rioting, as food shortages and high prices did in some other counties.

A combination of factors can be held to explain why there were no serious riots, indeed really no riots at all, in Kent. Panton suggests that they were avoided in Canterbury by reason of the understanding attitudes towards food demonstrators of those responsible for law and order.<sup>84</sup> This was a factor which was equally true of other Kentish towns. County magistrates in rural areas were, in general, just as understanding. The extensive *ad hoc* charitable provisions, particularly in the crucial period of 1800-01 when food was in very short supply and prices rocketed, played an important part in ensuring that the poor, even if they were doomed to a sub-standard existence, were not actually starving. It was not necessarily the case that more was done in Kent than elsewhere. Wells records that in Yorkshire 'gifts of food and clothing were made by many farmers and their landlords. The press teemed with reports of such benevolence.' In the south west 'the relief operations undertaken by subscriptions and poor relief

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<sup>84</sup> Panton, F.H., 'The Finances and Government of the City' 297-8.

officials, combined with capitalist market conditions, were of fundamental importance.<sup>85</sup> Yet there were serious riots both in Yorkshire and the south west; in Kent there were not. The explanation has to be sought otherwise than simply in the degree of local poor relief. It is contended in the thesis that in Kent there was some rapport between the authorities and the ordinary man, as Hasted had suggested in his description of the indirect effects of gavelkind. There was not the antipathy towards authority which appeared to exist in some other parts of the country. Life was especially hard in 1800-1, yet the nobility, the gentry, the church, the corporations and the justices of Kent could all be seen to be playing an active part in attempting to offset the dire effects of the poor harvests. That there were shortages and inadequate assistance in cash or kind for the poor led, at times, to demonstrations against those thought to be responsible for the state of affairs. Yet notwithstanding food-related demonstrations which occasionally resulted in relatively minor disorders, there was little that happened in the county in this period which could be described as a riot. Such disorders as did take place were brought about by the endeavours of the poor to secure for themselves a minimal daily level of sustenance.

There is no evidence to show that Jacobinism played any part in the organisation of demonstrations even though, as will be indicated in Chapter 5, the county did not become entirely free from radical influences until towards the end of the eighteenth century. Perhaps more importantly, in 1800 in particular, the year in which food riots were most prevalent throughout the country, the central authorities were assured of tranquility in Kent by those in authority, from the Lord Lieutenant downwards, persuaded

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<sup>85</sup> Wells, R.A.E., 'Dearth and Distress in Yorkshire 1793-1802'. 16; Wells, R., 'The Revolt of the South West, 1800-1' in Rule and Wells, *Crime, Protest and Popular Politics*. 23.

as they were of their good relationships with the ordinary people of the county and convinced of their ability to handle peacefully any demonstration which did occur.

The experience of Kent in this period goes a long way to supporting several of Christie's propositions in *Stress and Stability*. He had contended that the poor law provisions 'contributed greatly to the degree of social peace in the country, and that without it the elements of instability would have been far more formidable.' In Kent, private and corporate charity played a particularly important part in encouraging a relative degree of quiescence. Christie suggests that the object of food riots (in Kent it is necessary to substitute the concept of demonstrations) was 'to make the system work in its traditional mode, according to a familiar pattern of prices and supply, and to eliminate what were regarded as aberrations. There was nothing revolutionary in their nature. This was an essentially conservative process.' Far from there being anything revolutionary in Kent's food demonstrations there was nothing which was even radical. Christie concluded that, 'in one way or another, the poor who engaged in food riots did gain a considerable measure of satisfaction'.<sup>86</sup> What is more he suggests that rioters were on the whole treated with sympathy and leniency. In Kent this was the case in respect of demonstrators. His description of the objectives of food demonstrations exactly matches what was occurring in Kent. Contrariwise, Wells's description of 'Famine in Wartime England 1793-1801'<sup>87</sup> much exaggerates the effects on the poor of Kent of food shortages and their reactions to them, even if his analysis may have been correct in respect of some other parts of Britain.

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<sup>86</sup> Christie, I.R., *Stress and Stability*. 155.

<sup>87</sup> Sub-title of Wells, R., *Wretched Faces*.

## CHAPTER 4 - APPENDIX

### Average Price of Wheat in Kent (Source: *Gentleman's Magazine* 1789-99)

	1789		1790		1791		1792		1793		1794		1795		1796		1797		1798		1799	
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
January	5	7	6	3	5	7	5	3	5	4	n/a	n/a	100	2	51	4	47	10	50	6		
February	5	9	6	1	5	10	5	0	5	2	n/a	n/a	94	10	40	0	44	9	50	10		
March	5	11	6	3	6	0	5	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	110	7	n/a	n/a	48	3	51	2		
April	5	11	6	5	5	11	4	10	5	7	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	49	4	56	10		
May	n/a	n/a	6	10	5	7	4	9	5	11	n/a	n/a	73	0	n/a	n/a	48	6	60	3		
June	6	0	6	7	5	10	4	9	5	11	n/a	n/a	77	0	n/a	n/a	50	6	62	0		
July	6	10	6	7	5	10	4	9	44	9	n/a	n/a	76	10	49	10	51	2	66	4		
August	6	5	6	8	n/a	n/a	5	0	44	6	n/a	n/a	65	2	51	8	50	2	68	6		
September	6	3	6	7	5	4	5	1	44	4	n/a	75	6	56	4	61	1	50	1	71	2	
October	6	3	6	2	n/a	n/a	6	4	n/a	n/a	n/a	82	11	55	3	53	9	50	3	94	2	
November	6	5	5	10	5	4	6	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	88	9	50	0	54	0	47	7	91	1	
December	6	3	5	7	5	3	5	10	n/a	n/a	n/a	91	1	52	2	46	0	n/a	n/a	91	2	

Notes:

- i. Prices are per quarter from July 1793. Prior to that, no measures are indicated in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. They will have been per gallon, i.e., one-eighth of a quarter.
- ii. Where n/a is shown in the tables, there is no entry in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

## 5. RADICALS, REFORMERS AND OPPOSITIONISTS

Kent had been involved in radical and reformist movements earlier in the eighteenth century. Chapter 3 demonstrates that in 1769 the freeholders of Kent were on the side of Wilkes and liberty. In March 1780, in response to the call for a national association to be set up to foster parliamentary reform, Kent was represented at the subsequent London meeting. The role of the clergy was, at this stage, quite different from what it had been in 1769 and what it was to be in the 1790s. On those occasions most clergy were ardent loyalists, unlikely to be associated with reform, even less with radicalism. In 1780 the Kentish motion to participate in the projected association was seconded by the Rev. Dr. Richard Rycroft, and the committee of just over one hundred which was set up to support the concept of parliamentary reform included sixteen clergymen.<sup>1</sup> Three years later, at the time of Pitt's unsuccessful motion for parliamentary reform, Kent was one of the twelve counties, and Rochester one of the twenty-four boroughs, to petition on the subject.<sup>2</sup>

With that as a background, this chapter examines attitudes in the county towards the French Revolution both in its early stages and after 1792. It distinguishes radicalism from reform and examines how supporters of both these tendencies, together with Kentish individuals who were associated with neither grouping, combined to oppose the policies of the Pitt administration and, in particular, almost all aspects of the war against France. It demonstrates that radicalism was largely centred on the industrialised north-west of the county and that it did not endure for long. It argues that the apparent

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<sup>1</sup> *KG.*, 4-8 March 1780.

<sup>2</sup> Christie, J.R., *Wilkes, Wyvill and Reform: The Parliamentary Reform Movement in British Politics 1760-85*. 169-70.

radicalism of the county, as indicated by the number of Corresponding Societies and attitudes adopted at county and town meetings in the 1790s, was both transient and eventually overtaken by patriotism. It is emphasised, however, that it would be mistaken to confuse the patriotism which was manifested as being synonymous with loyalism. For just as Kent was not on any long-term basis radical, neither was it loyalist.

### **The Reaction to the Revolution**

There is widespread agreement that it was not the French Revolution which sparked off a radical movement in Britain towards the end of the eighteenth century, but the centenary of the English revolution of 1688. Nevertheless, for a time until the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, events in France ran alongside the spread of radicalism in England. Contrariwise, from 1793 onwards, French developments led to setbacks for the radicals, with the vigorous reaction of the government and its supporters to what they saw as the danger of Jacobinism spreading to England.

The immediate reaction of the Kentish press to the 1789 Revolution was an enthusiastic one. On 21 July the *Maidstone Journal* had reported from Paris, "For as England", say the people, "is free so will France be." 'They propose our Constitution to be the model of theirs. ... The Executive Power to be so limited – the Legislative Body so blended - with General Representation - Free Election - Trials by Jury - a Habeas Corpus - and above all a Free Press!' This attitude towards events in France continued throughout the year and on 21 December a congratulatory poem, *The Triumph of Freedom*, was published. On 18 January 1790 readers were told that 'France has set a glorious example to all the world by granting to all denominations the rights of citizens without distinction.' On 2 February, Rochester Theatre announced a performance of *The*

*Triumph of Liberty: or the Destruction of the Bastille*. It might seem from its published commentary that the *Maidstone Journal* would wish to emulate the French example by repealing the Test and Corporation Acts and extending the parliamentary franchise. It is, however, most unlikely that the proprietor of the *Journal* would have considered that what was to be praised in France was to be encouraged in England.

The Kentish newspapers reproduced correspondence of 6 November 1789 between Earl Stanhope the radical Kentish peer and the Duc de la Rochefoucault, in which Stanhope asked that the resolutions of the London Revolution Society applauding the Revolution in France, should be conveyed to the *Assemblée Nationale*. Rochefoucault's reply to this and a similar request by Dr Price, the leading Unitarian, was prefaced in the *Maidstone Journal* with the comment 'See, with pleasure, how this distinguished Member of the National Assembly answered these two spirited, liberal, and philosophical English citizens.' It was a judgment of Stanhope and Price which did not endure for long. Within a matter of two or three years their views were to be execrated. By January 1791 the *Journal* was critical of the Civic Oath of the Clergy but as late as July of that year it was advertising a weekly reportage of news from France, *The French Senator, or Exact Weekly Journal*. From 1789 until at least mid-1791, readers of the *Maidstone Journal* would have found that the French Revolution was to be welcomed. Those of a radical or reformist bent would have been given encouragement to continue their proselytising for the more modest changes which they sought in England.

### **Radicals and Reformers**

It is necessary to define what is here meant by radicalism, since it is not a term which was current in a political sense at the end of the eighteenth century. The OED

reference to the earliest political usage of the word is 1802. It is clearly distinguishable from disaffection, which could equally well sponsor a reactionary movement. As Royle and Walvin emphasise, there can be no absolute definition of the term, even now that it can be considered in retrospect.<sup>3</sup> To some historians it had libertarian implications, but that cannot serve as a defining feature since loyalists would have claimed that it applied equally to them. For the present purpose 'radicals' will be distinguished from 'reformers', whilst noting that the terms have often been used interchangeably. That this should be the case is understandable. Radicalism and reform were broad churches with much overlap between them, whilst parliamentary reform was a primary aim of both radicals and reformers.

'Radicalism' began to be used to describe a specific trend in political thought in the early part of the nineteenth century. J.C.D. Clark defines it as:

Combining the central themes of ... a theoretical critique of revealed religion, an institutional critique of the Church, and a political attack on the Church's main supports: the unreformed parliament, the monarch and the landlord. It was not utopian. Bentham was explicit that radicalism logically *could not* entail the destruction of private property or any of society's other features (including the pre-eminence of its élite, men like Bentham himself), once the Church, the King and the nobility had been removed.<sup>4</sup>

He suggests that not until the 1810s, with the writings of David Ricardo, did radicalism issue a challenge to the inequality of landownings. That being the case, the radical agenda of the 1790s presented no problem for Stanhope or Honywood, even though they were landowners of substance. Clark's definition the more readily allows a distinction to be made between radicals and reformers. Whilst they had some shared objectives,

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<sup>3</sup> Royle, E., and Walvin, J., *English Radicals and Reformers 1760-1848*. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Clark, J.C.D., *English Society 1660-1832: Religion, ideology and politics during the ancien régime*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). 499-500.

Wyvill and his supporters had seen parliamentary reform as an objective in itself. They did not see it as embracing broader objectives such as a developing Constitution, the role of the Church, the King and the aristocracy, still less as a means towards redistribution of wealth. Parliamentary reform was desired by them primarily for defensive reasons, as a safeguard against the Crown and an over-mighty executive; an older 'Country' theme.

Just as a century later it can be seen that Methodism rather than Marxism played a major role in the development of the Labour Party, religious dissidence played a part in the development of radicalism. Unitarianism not only radicalised religion, it adopted a radical secular position. Wesley was not in the radical camp but a minority of local Methodist circuits, Kilhamites in particular, were closer to radicalism than to Wesley's adoration of kingship. This is a factor which is likely to have caused Bishop Horsley concern. In his 1800 Charge to the Rochester clergy he pointed to the fact that:

In many parts of the kingdom new conventicles have been opened in great number, and congregations formed of one knows not what denomination. The pastor is often, in appearance at least, an illiterate peasant, or mechanic. ... It is very remarkable, that these new congregations of non-descripts have been mostly formed, since the Jacobins have been laid under the restraint of those two most salutary statutes, commonly known by the names of the Sedition and Treason Bill. A circumstance which gives much ground for suspicion, that Sedition and Atheism are the real objects of these institutions, rather than religion. ... The Jacobins of this country, I very much fear are, at this moment, making a tool of Methodism.<sup>5</sup>

Horsley was not alone in urging the suppression of these congregations, although it is significant that the government did not choose to take action on these lines. The more Dissent and radicalism spread, the more they narrowed the ground on which the Established Church stood. To the extent that the State Church's position was challenged, so the foundation of government was weakened, for the Church was an important element in the tripartite "Establishment". The secular influence of Dissent was most evident in

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<sup>5</sup> CCL. H/Y-8-2 (6).

towns such as Norwich, where politicised Dissenters were numerous and radicalism and Dissent ran alongside one another. In Kentish towns, in general, this was not the case although, as was suggested in Chapter 3, it may be that there was some such influence in Maidstone and, just conceivably, in Canterbury.

It is possible to see earlier eighteenth-century reformism to have been backward-looking, whilst radicalism was progressive. For much of the century reformers had looked to the past, to what were thought to be popular liberties in Anglo-Saxon times which endured until cast aside by the “Norman yoke”<sup>6</sup>, to John Hampden, the Glorious Revolution, and the liberating influences of the 1688 Constitution. Radicals, insofar as they prayed in aid the past, were far from seeking to foment revolution anew. They were concerned to remedy a previous revolution betrayed. They saw 1688 as being a starting point for reform, rather than as something cast in stone. They looked to the future, at its most extreme (as with Tom Paine) to republicanism and, in a more moderate form, to a broadly-based parliamentary democracy with a reduced role for the King and the nobility. By the late 1780s and the 1790s, both reformers and radicals saw their respective claims as resting on British tradition rather than on contemporary events in France. Radicals every bit as much as loyalists claimed to be the true patriots, and they had grounds for so doing. Both groups could, and did, claim that they were acting in the best interests of their country.

Whilst radicals of the 1790s were less concerned with appeals to the past, they could scarcely have ignored the American Revolution (which had itself appealed to earlier values) nor, contemporaneously, Tom Paine’s writings and the French

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<sup>6</sup> For the “Norman yoke” concept, see Thompson, E.P., *The Making of the English Working Class*. 94-5, 254; Hill, C., ‘The Norman Yoke’ in Saville, P., (ed.), *Democracy and the Labour Movement*. 42-54;

Revolution.<sup>7</sup> Paine in *Common Sense* (1776) had addressed an American audience on the need for an extended franchise, for the predominance of an elected parliament, for a Constitution which effectively controlled monarchical and aristocratic tyranny, and equal treatment for all religious tendencies. These propositions were to a considerable extent in tune with the thoughts of British radicals, even though only a minority was ready to go along with Paine's republican ideas or with equality for all religions. The deism of *The Age of Reason* (1795-6) would have chimed with some, but certainly not all, radicals opposed to the doctrine and practices of the Established Church. Unitarians positively believed that their views were supported by Holy Scripture, and they would have been among the last to endorse deism.

Whilst radicals would not have seen the French Revolution as the touchstone for changes in Britain, they considered that the ousting of the *ancien régime* and its replacement by a constitutional system was desirable in itself. Although it was not necessary to be a radical in order to hold that particular point of view. Radicals were opposed to the war against France in 1793, seeing it as an attempt by British monarchists and reactionaries to negate what were desirable changes to an autocratic system. Some were prepared to overlook the execution of the French king and the excesses of the Reign of Terror. In that, they were no different from twentieth-century communists and 'fellow-travellers' who were prepared to overlook, when they did not deny, the reality of Stalinist purges and collectivisation, either considering them as justified, or concentrating on the broader picture of what they saw as the good brought about by the 1917

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Dickinson, H.T., *Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. 64.

<sup>7</sup> Thomis, M.J., and Holt, P., *Threats of Revolution in Britain 1789-1848*. 5-6.

Revolution, rather than on those regrettable aspects which they may have considered as inseparable from it.

Radicalism embraced a programme for parliamentary reform but there was a fundamental difference between reform and radicalism. Reformers hoped that their aims could be achieved through petitioning whilst radicals were prepared to adopt extra-parliamentary methods to achieve their objectives, notably the summoning of mass meetings and the concept of a People's Convention. Mass meetings were not the sole prerogative of radicals. County meetings were used not only by radicals but by reformers and loyalists, each for their own purpose. The difference lay in the declared purpose of radical meetings and, in particular, how they were intended to be perceived and how they were in fact perceived. Clark writes that 'Proletarian mass meetings, violence and threats were ... still widely perceived as merely the first steps towards insurrection, as indeed they were in Ireland in 1798.'<sup>8</sup> Threats were sometimes made, as in the address adopted at the 1797 Canterbury meeting (see p.102). In this the King had been reminded of what had happened to past kings who had 'neglected to correct abuses'.<sup>9</sup>

When radicals attacked the Constitution, it was not the Constitution *per se* which was the objective of their attack, but rather what they saw as the violation of it by the King and his advisers. They wished, above all, to secure a position where decision-making did not rest with an all-powerful King and his armies. Both radicalism and reform sought extra seats for counties, and a redistribution of parliamentary

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<sup>8</sup> Clark, J.C.D., *English Society*. 499.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Cannon, J., (ed.), *The Letters of Junius* (Oxford 1978). Letter xxxv (19 December 1769), a fantasy address to the King: 'The Prince ... while he plumes himself upon the security of his title to the crown, should remember that, as it was acquired by revolution, it may be lost by another.'. 173. At one time the *Exeter Flying Post* (22-9 December 1769) rumoured (probably wrongly) that Junius was the Rev. Edmund Marshall of Charing in Kent.

representation to those areas with large populations which were to remain unenfranchised until the reforms of 1832. It may be that the campaign for reform, insofar as it attracted support from beyond the core of radicalism, was as much concerned with individual interests as with constitutional aims. 'Crippling wartime and post-war taxation, especially during economic recessions, rather than doctrines of personal representation, still created most of what political mileage there was in the issue of parliamentary reform.'<sup>10</sup> Thus it was possible for radicals such as Stanhope and Honywood to find common cause with the anti-Ministerialist Earls of Guilford and Thanet in opposition to the war, high taxation and anti-libertarian legislation, even though there were many elements of the radical, or even reformist, programme with which those Earls disagreed. The franchise was defined far more by a property qualification than by religious denomination, but there was a limited demand that Dissent should no longer be a bar to voting rights. There were some demands to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts but relatively few reformers favoured extending the vote to Catholics in England.

Few dedicated radicals were committed to anything as fundamental as universal suffrage, even if limited to men. As to representation in Parliament by all, John Thelwall, who was seen by the government as a dangerous radical, saw no place for working men in a reformed parliament. 'They are not qualified to find out and make proper use of places, occasions, moments. This is beyond their capacity.'<sup>11</sup> If given the vote, he was sure that they would elect their superiors rather than their fellows. There was no pressure to abolish the property qualification, even less to extend the vote to women. Mary Wollstonecraft, the leading campaigner for women's rights, recognised

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<sup>10</sup> Clark, J.C.D., *English Society*. 443-4.

<sup>11</sup> Claeys, G., (ed.), *The Politics of English Jacobinism: Writings of John Thelwall*. 32-4.

the near impossibility of securing votes for women and she did not even bother to campaign for this.<sup>12</sup> The term 'democracy' was not always used in a favourable sense and Thelwall's views are evidence of that. Few indeed were those who could envisage government by all of the people. Even if the contemporary aims of parliamentary reform had been achieved, the property qualification would have remained, women would not have had the vote and Catholics would have remained unenfranchised save in Ireland, where Hobart's Act of 1793 gave the vote to those who were otherwise qualified.<sup>13</sup>

To see the radical movements of the 1790s simply as campaigns for parliamentary reform 'would be too narrow and too restricting, for [they were] concerned with political rights in the abstract as well as in their realisation through the particular machinery that Britain had developed.'<sup>14</sup> During the Revolutionary War many radicals, but not radicals alone, adopted an anti-Ministerial stance and campaigned for peace with France. Libertarians were intent, as they had been over the years, on safeguarding the citizen against government measures such as the Treason and Sedition Acts and the suspension of *habeas corpus*. Radicalism was itself a coalition of a variety of causes and not every radical supported each and every aspect of it. The two largest groupings were undoubtedly those concerned with parliamentary reform and with peaceful relations with France on the one hand and, on the other, combinations of working men in industrialised areas who, at times, could be drawn into campaigns with political objectives but who did not have these as their primary aim. Women played little part in mainstream radicalism,

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<sup>12</sup> Dickinson, H.T., *Liberty and Property*. 252-3.

<sup>13</sup> 33Geo.III c.21.

<sup>14</sup> Clark, J.C.D., *English Society*. 1.

or even on its fringes. Mary Wollstonecraft, who attacked Burke's diatribe against the French Revolution, was very much the exception. Hannah More was equally an exception as, among other things, a leading loyalist pamphleteer. Otherwise, women were engaged in humane and charitable causes such as the provision of clothing for men on military service, relief for the poor, and anti-slavery. They were something of a force in Methodism but, in general, they had little opportunity to be involved in political and parliamentary matters or issues of war and peace.<sup>15</sup> An exception was the presentation of banners to Volunteer units. The *Sporting Magazine*, over a short period, published reports of these events. Those involved were usually the wives of nobility or of the commanding officer. Of examples from Kent, Lady Hood presented colours to the Greenwich and Blackheath Volunteers 'provided by a subscription of the ladies of Greenwich and its neighbourhood', whilst Mrs Parker, the wife of the commandant, performed a similar service for the Maidstone Volunteers.<sup>16</sup>

### **Radicalism and Reform in Kent**

Kent was a largely rural county and radicalism made little headway amongst its agricultural workers. Farm workers had more in common with their employer than was the case in an industrial environment. Farmers and labourers both lived and worked with their end-product, whether in animal or agrarian small-scale farming. They could see the outcome of their joint efforts flourish or diminish, day by day, throughout the year. They could take pride in their personal achievements. They were not likely to be in the

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<sup>15</sup> Macleod, E.V., in *A War of Ideas*. 158, suggests that women played a rather greater part than is suggested here but, apart from references to More and Wollstonecraft, her argument rests largely on private correspondence, novels and poems. C.f., Midgley, C., *Women against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780-1870*.

<sup>16</sup> *Sporting Magazine*, August and October 1798.

vanguard of radicalism. Farm workers were involved in disturbances in the 1790s and the early 1800s but these manifestations were not always, or even usually, synonymous with radicalism. Throughout Britain, at this time, disturbances were engendered by the introduction of toll gates, enclosures, food shortages and high prices, and by pressing and crimping. They originated as well in a rural conservatism, the defence of custom and tradition, a desire to retain a day-to-day life unchanged, as a reaction against the 'moral economy' of emerging capitalism combining with religion to teach man that he must be subordinated to the discipline of the machine, that he 'must expect his chief happiness, not in the present but in a future state.'<sup>17</sup> The Swing Riots of 1830 were concerned to counter the employment implications of the increased mechanisation of farming and the importation of cheap Irish labour. They had no necessary connection with radicalism, they were a form of rural conservatism.

The last decade of the eighteenth century saw a significant revival of pressure for political change in Britain, albeit that it faded as the Revolutionary War progressed. Sir Francis Burdett 'was [then] one of the only national spokesmen of reform capable of being heard at all.'<sup>18</sup> Not until the general election of 1807 did reform once again come to life. Radicalism of the 1790s had one feature in common with the County Association movement of the 1780s, inspired by the Rev. Christopher Wyvill of Yorkshire, in that it organised from provincial bases rather than being simply an offshoot of a London initiative. Provincial radicalism had a spontaneity of its own, although the London Corresponding Society (LCS) provided a focus for nationwide radical activity.

Earl Stanhope, one of the two most constant Kentish radicals, led anti-government

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<sup>17</sup> Thompson, E.P., *English Working Class*, Ch. 11, and particularly 391-8.

<sup>18</sup> Thompson, E.P., *English Working Class*, 499.

attacks at county meetings in the 1790s but he became more and more isolated on the general political scene. He resigned from the Chairmanship of the London Revolution Society in August 1790, ostensibly because of a decision taken in his absence which purported to bind all members, whether present or not. It is possible that he was offended that he had not been consulted about the decision. Samuel Pipe-Wolferstan, a Staffordshire gentleman and Unitarian sympathiser, in his diary for 14 July 1790, cast doubt on whether Stanhope's leadership of the movement was anything more than a manifestation of his own self-importance:

Was not at Crown and Anchor till nearly 4½, when on entering the great room I felt a fear of getting no place at all ... Lord Stanhope entered contrary to yesterday's expectation, with thundering applause – and Sheridan with almost equal – all went swimmingly for about 6 or 7 toasts till Sheridan proposing to carry one into a resolution, and J.H. Tooke rising to caution to guard against misrepresentation on his pronouncing the words “that the timbers of our ship were sound”, so infamous an uproar ensued for an hour that I was heartily sick of the Vox Populi and could not but think of this morning's paper “that some Lords to be at the head would dine in any company”.<sup>19</sup>

In 1789 Stanhope had advanced a rational case to relieve members of the Church of England from penalties imposed by archaic laws, and Quakers from payment of tithes. Both proposals were rejected by the Lords. His one legislative success, a 1788 Act introducing County Electoral Registers - a small move in the direction of parliamentary reform - was repealed the following year in the light of resistance by landowners to meeting the cost of setting up the registers. Thereafter he could command virtually no support in the Lords. In the light of his general inability to carry the House with him, he withdrew entirely from Parliament between 1794 and 1799. In 1795 a Stanhope Medal was struck by his friends. On its obverse it had the head of Stanhope and the words ‘The Minority of One’. He had firm beliefs and he was not afraid to expound them, but he

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<sup>19</sup> Diary of Samuel Pipe-Wolferstan, 14 July 1790, quoted in G.M. Ditchfield, ‘Some Aspects of Unitarianism and Radicalism, 1760-1810’, unpublished PhD. thesis, Cambridge, 1968.

little understood how any of them might fructify. After he resumed attendance in the Lords, it was apparent that he had learnt nothing. In 1804 he spoke in a debate on the slave trade. His support was seen as the kiss of death. Wilberforce described it as 'a wild speech'. It was with horror 'that I heard that he was about to divide the house.' On a plea from Wilberforce he gave up the idea.<sup>20</sup>

A Kentish Unitarian minister who was close to Stanhope was the Rev. Jeremiah Joyce. He was tutor to Stanhope's sons. John Seed attributes Joyce's radicalism to the period which he spent at the Unitarian Hackney College.<sup>21</sup> In June 1792 he was a committee member of the Society for Constitutional Information. When, on 6 June of that year, the Society circulated Paine's *Letter to Dundas*, Joyce was involved in its dissemination; 150 copies were sent to Canterbury, 100 to the Rev. Mr. Wyke, a Unitarian minister at Maidstone, and 100 to Joyce at Lord Stanhope's residence.<sup>22</sup> In May 1794 Joyce was arrested on a charge of high treason, together with the Secretaries of the London Corresponding Society and the Society for Constitutional Information. The *Maidstone Journal* reported that:

Joyce was lately appointed Secretary to a Meeting that was to be held in London in the month of June (intended to be called the British Convention) which was to consist of a Delegate deputed from all the different Jacobin Clubs in various parts of England, such as Sheffield, Norwich, Manchester, Birmingham. &c. &c. ... Luckily the plot was discovered before the completion of the plan. ... Repeated applications were made by Earl Stanhope in the course of the day, for permission to see Mr Joyce, but the [Privy] Council determined that no person should have access to him.<sup>23</sup>

After separate trials, three of the leaders were found not guilty and the Crown did not proceed with the charges against the remainder of them. Joyce's release was

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<sup>20</sup> Wilberforce, R.I. and S., *The Life of William Wilberforce*, vol. iii. 183.

<sup>21</sup> Seed, J., 'Jeremiah Joyce, Unitarianism and the Radical Intelligentsia in the 1790s' in *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, vol. xvii, No. 3., April 1981. 98.

<sup>22</sup> SCI minutes, 15 June 1792; *S.T.*, vol. xxv. 157-167; Issitt, J., 'A Network for Radical and Political Education in the 1790s' in *Publishing History*, 54 (2003). 10-13.

<sup>23</sup> *M.J.*, 20 May 1794.

celebrated by a dinner at Chevening attended by some four hundred persons.<sup>24</sup> There is no evidence in the contemporary Kentish press of support for Joyce, but the large attendance at the dinner indicates that neither was there overt condemnation of his actions. The Chevening event was eclipsed by a dinner for thirteen hundred ‘respectable citizens’, presided over by Stanhope, on 4 February 1795 at a Strand tavern.<sup>25</sup> In May a fund was set up to defray defence costs. This originated in London but names were given in the *Morning Chronicle* of individuals in the provinces to whom contributions could be made. J[ohn] Simmons of Rochester, the solicitor who was to represent O’Connor at the Maidstone treason trial in 1798, was one of those so named.

In January 1792 Thomas Hardy, a Scottish shoemaker, had formed the radical London Corresponding Society (LCS) which with its low subscription set out to attract artisans and working men into membership. Provincial Corresponding Societies followed, mainly of their own volition rather than by encouragement from London. Nevertheless, it is principally from the London Society’s records that it is possible to trace the advent and final demise of the radical movement in Kent in the 1790s.<sup>26</sup> Goodwin suggests that it is clear from the LCS rules and from Hardy’s reminiscences that ‘the society’s business was conducted from the start in an orderly, methodical but, above all, in a thoroughly democratic manner.’<sup>27</sup> Certainly it seemed democratic and there is much evidence that it was, but all was not plain sailing. On 30 June 1796, the report of a meeting of the LCS General Committee included a letter from Rochester which

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<sup>24</sup> *MJ.*, 30 December 1794.

<sup>25</sup> *Substance of Earl Stanhope’s Speech on the 4<sup>th</sup> February 1795 to celebrate the happy event of the late Trials for supposed Treason* (1795). 1.

<sup>26</sup> LCS records are in Thale, M., (ed.), *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society 1792-1799* and TNA: PRO PC1/23/A38.

<sup>27</sup> Goodwin, A., *The Friends of Liberty*. 196.

announced the 'total annihilation' of the Society there. This was attributed to the disadvantages of the place (presumably the strong government influence in the dockyard and barracks at Chatham), the preponderance of enemies to reform and the absconding of 'that Villain Jno. Mascall' with books and money of the Society. The writer of the letter, John Smallfield, promised to attempt to get subscribers to the LCS magazine and to continue to collect for the defence of Binns and Jones, the LCS members on trial in Birmingham for alleged breaches of the Two Acts.<sup>28</sup> It might have been expected that Smallfield's offer would have been welcomed and that he would have been given assistance to get the Rochester Society going again. The LCS committee, however, was not surprised at the development; they had seen 'so much of the weakness of Men who ... have deserted on meeting the first difficulty that we now [rely] very little on promises of Fidelity'. It rejected Smallfield's explanation for the collapse of the society and considered that 'the large number of the enemy should be an argument for redoubling vigour rather than repressing reform spirit.' As for Mascall, 'it [is] a melancholy thing that one Traitor should be able to ruin a whole Society.' This unhelpful, indeed admonitory, reply might be thought to have rather more of the ring of centralised authoritarianism than of democracy.<sup>29</sup>

There is no complete information on the radical societies which existed in Kent prior to 1797, other than at Maidstone and Gravesend. However, *A Report of the Lords' Committee on Secrecy relative to a Treasonable Conspiracy, May 27, 1799* contains a 'list of the United Corresponding Societies of Great Britain in the year 1797, found in the

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<sup>28</sup> Thale, M., (ed.), *London Corresponding Society*, 359; TNA: PRO PC1/23/A38.

<sup>29</sup> Thale, M., (ed.), *London Corresponding Society*, 359.

possession of a person, sometime a member of the Executive Committee.’<sup>30</sup> The individual involved would have been a government spy and there was a time when the acting President of the LCS, Powell, was one such. There were seventy-four societies named in the list and of these, eight were in the county of Kent, located at Chevening, Gravesend, Maidstone, Rochester, Chatham, Bromley, Woodchurch and Tunbridge [*sic*]. Information was also given in the report on societies with which the LCS was in correspondence and these included the eight named Kent societies, with the exception of Chatham. Of sixteen other locations where contact had been made, three were in Kent, at Dartford, Woolwich and Sevenoaks. The lists may not have been entirely accurate, since a report from Powell on the LCS General Committee meeting held on 15 October 1795 indicated that there was contact with Chatham. It noted ‘a letter read from Chatham ... Refer’d to Ex Com’.<sup>31</sup> There was a report in the minutes of a General Committee meeting of 9 November 1797 of a society being established at Tunbridge Wells, ‘the worst place for Democrats’. The Tunbridge Wells society was not to be confused with that at Tunbridge, since there was a separate item in the same minutes: ‘Read a letter from Tunbridge appointed Dawe to answer it.’<sup>32</sup>

Assuming that the locations in the second list (those with which the LCS was in correspondence) harboured radical societies of some kind, there were ninety provincial societies in total in 1797, at a time when radicalism had reached its nadir. Goodwin thinks it probable that there were over one hundred societies in 1795, the peak year.<sup>33</sup> That, in 1797, eleven out of ninety societies throughout the whole country (or only

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<sup>30</sup> *Parl.Hist.*, vol.xxxiv. 1005-6.

<sup>31</sup> TNA: PRO PC1/23/A38, report of General Committee, 15 October 1795.

<sup>32</sup> TNA: PRO PC1/41/A138, report of General Committee, 9 November 1797.

<sup>33</sup> Goodwin, A., *Friends of Liberty*. 514.

eighty-one if the Scottish societies are excluded) were situated in the county would suggest, on the face of it, that Kent was, if not a hotbed of radicalism, at least fertile ground for its transmission. Of the eleven locations, Chevening was the domain of Earl Stanhope, whilst Rochester, Chatham, Deptford and Woolwich were urban, industrialised areas, each with a naval dockyard or ordnance factory. Maidstone was the county town and Gravesend was the port from which very large numbers of troops were trans-shipped overseas. Only Chevening, Bromley, Tunbridge, Sevenoaks and Woodchurch were rural towns or villages. This gives some support to the idea that radicalism was, in Kent as elsewhere, more an urban than a rural development. Or it may be that evidence for radical activity is more likely to have survived from urban than from rural areas.

In considering radical penetration in the county it is necessary to examine the extent to which Societies which existed in 1797 were anything other than transient. It is difficult to find solid evidence but it was certainly the case generally that the number of Societies and Divisions<sup>34</sup> fluctuated considerably over quite short periods of time. Corresponding Societies had been set up at Sydenham and Greenwich in 1795. The LCS was informed by twenty-two 'inhabitants and housekeepers' of Greenwich that a Society had been formed. They asked that an LCS deputation should attend the inaugural meeting. The importance of Greenwich is evident in the LCS General Committee appointment of no less than sixteen members to attend. Two months later, a letter was sent to Portland, the Home Secretary, enclosing 'papers [relating to the Greenwich society] brought to us at a public meeting of Justices of the Peace by a publican who received them through the post'. The letter was signed by four Justices and was sent, 'so

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<sup>34</sup> A Division consisted of not more than 30 members.

that measures may be taken.<sup>35</sup> There is no further reference to the Sydenham or Greenwich Societies in the LCS records and it is possible that they had ceased to exist by 1797.

In London, at the time of Hardy's arrest, the total number of Divisions was forty-eight but this had fallen to seventeen by March 1795. In July of the same year the number of Divisions was twenty-nine and a month later, forty-one. By October, the number had increased to between seventy and eighty.<sup>36</sup> A few months thereafter, at the beginning of 1796, sixteen Divisions of the LCS had ceased to meet at all and there was a marked slump in attendances at the other Divisions.<sup>37</sup> The Treason and Sedition Acts which had received Royal Assent in December 1795 undoubtedly had an adverse effect on radical activity. In the absence of clear-cut evidence to the contrary, it is unwise to suppose that because Divisions or Societies existed at a particular point in time, they were in existence at other times. All that can be said with certainty is that the number of Societies in Kent in 1797 was remarkably large; as many as in the whole of the remainder of the southern coastal counties, extending from Cornwall to Sussex. The explanation may be that, unlike the situation in most southern counties, four of the Kentish locations were urban and industrialised, that Dissenters had some influence in Maidstone, whilst Stanhope had influence at Chevening and the nearby town of Sevenoaks.

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<sup>35</sup> TNA: PRO PC1/23/A38, report of General Committee meeting, 13 August 1795 (Sydenham); 16 July 1795 (Greenwich); Letter from Greenwich justices to Portland, 16 July 1795.

<sup>36</sup> Goodwin, A., *Friends of Liberty*. 373. He suggests that 'although reliable figures for 1796 – the peak year – are difficult to come by, a total of over 100 societies may be taken as probable, not reckoning the separate divisions of the Sheffield and Norwich societies and those of the London Corresponding Society and its "break-away" offshoots.', 514.

<sup>37</sup> TNA: PRO PC1/23/A38, report of Committee, 7 January 1796.

To discover whether radicalism had taken any significant or ongoing hold in Kent it is necessary to look at other available evidence, apart from the LCS records. This includes those Kentish cases of criminal offences which involved sedition or treason. From the records it would seem that there were few such cases. But as with all crime, the records take account only of those cases which came before the courts. Another source is reports of county and town meetings, whilst there is also John Gale Jones's detailed report on his tour of the Medway towns and the surrounding areas. To deal first with convictions. In 1793 John and Stephen Clarke of Leigh were convicted of fixing a treasonable paper to the parish church door and of selling Paine's *The Rights of Man*. Thomas Bowdler, a Tunbridge solicitor who was representing the Crown, wrote to the Treasury Solicitor 'It has been hinted to me that their defence will be taken up by a well-known Society in London and that it is not unlikely Mr. Er----- might be down but I don't give any credit to it.' Thomas Erskine, a Fox supporter, and Lord Chancellor in 1806-7, had appeared on behalf of Tom Paine at his trial for sedition and he was to represent Thelwall when he was before the courts in 1794. In the event, the Leigh accused were represented by London counsel although not by Erskine personally, so it is possible that the LCS was involved in their defence.<sup>38</sup>

In 1794, David Masters and William Chittenden, labourers of Warehorne, attempted to organise a combination of workmen. They were reported as having hoped that the French would soon land when the accused and many others would join them. It was alleged that 'the principal ringleader has a list of several persons, who were to form

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<sup>38</sup> TNA: PRO TS11/954, 31 March, 9 April 1793.

the association for this wicked and treasonable purpose.<sup>39</sup> At the Maidstone Lent Assizes in 1800, Joseph Dix and Francis Humphrey were convicted of uttering treasonable and seditious words.<sup>40</sup> A Kentish yeoman who was, perhaps, drunk was ordered by a constable to keep the peace in the King's name. His answer was 'D... you and the King too!' The Quarter Sessions sentenced him to twelve months' imprisonment. As evidence of a determination by the government to stamp out radicalism, an appeal to Lord Chancellor Loughborough, a Portland Whig, against this sentence was rejected with the words 'To save the country from Revolution the authority of all tribunals high and low must be upheld.'<sup>41</sup> Apart from those cases involving the collective actions of workmen, it does not seem that the instances here cited were anything other than actions on the part of individuals. There are no signs that there was any concerted action and it is unlikely that any of the criminal acts had wider, more serious implications. Of the hundreds of cases before the Kent Assizes and Quarter Sessions between 1793 and 1801, seven clearly involved sedition or treason. However, Court records are not necessarily definitive. Poole, in respect of Somerset and Wiltshire, records thirteen such prosecutions but points to a further twenty five cases (wrongly totalled as fifteen) where arrests were made but it is not clear whether prosecutions followed.<sup>42</sup>

Inflammatory handbills were being distributed to soldiers and marines stationed in the county. Ashley, sometime secretary of the LCS, in a memorandum to the French *Directoire* in 1798, indicated that 'one particular object of the London Corresponding

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<sup>39</sup> TNA: PRO ASSI 35/234, Lent 1794; *MJ.* 11, 18 February, 25 March 1794.

<sup>40</sup> *KG.*, 18 March 1800.

<sup>41</sup> Stanhope, Earl, *The Life of the Right Honourable William Pitt*, vol. II. 210-11.

<sup>42</sup> Poole, S., 'Pitt's Terror Reconsidered: Jacobinism and the Law in Two South-Western Counties, 1791-1803' in *Southern History*, vol.17 (1995). 72.

Society has been to attach the soldiery to its interest; To this end they have always been plentifully supplied with pamphlets free of expense ... upon all occasions ... The society recommended its members to associate with them to converse and fraternise with them.<sup>43</sup> The *Anti-Jacobin*, in December 1797, published a verse on the subject of propaganda aimed at the soldiery. The first two stanzas read:

#### THE SOLDIER'S FRIEND

Come, little Drummer Boy, lay down your knapsack here:  
I am the Soldier's Friend – here are some Books for you;  
Nice clever Books, by TOM PAINE the Philanthropist.

Here's Half-a-crown for you – here are some Handbills too;  
Go to the Barracks, and give all the Soldiers some:  
Tell them the Sailors are all in a Mutiny.<sup>44</sup>

A handbill designed to encourage insurrection was distributed by Henry Fellows in 1797 to troops stationed in Maidstone. Fellows was arrested in May 1797 and charged with seeking to suborn the soldiery stationed in the town. In March 1798 he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment and required to find two securities of £250 for his good behaviour. The government supposed that he was authorised to act by the LCS but there is no reference to him in any extant LCS correspondence until December 1796. Fellows then ordered, among other items, 'one hundred more copies of the Ulster Address, which met the Approbation of the Citns here particularly the Irish soldiers.' He also requested fifty copies of what he described as 'Buonaparte's address' and fifty of Paine's *Agrarian Justice*. However, it appears that not every radical publication was welcome, for he returned, '7 dozen of magn., ... for we do not want any, for they do not

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<sup>43</sup> *The Times*, 5 May 1797 (Marine barracks, Maidstone); *Morning Chronicle*, 8 June 1797 (various regiments, Dover); Stevenson, J., *Popular Disturbances in England 1700-1870* (Royal Artillery, Woolwich), 26 May 1797; *Parl.Hist.*, vol.xxxiv (1798). 635; Graham, J., *The Nation, the Law and the King*, vol.1. 9, quoting *Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères*, 53. 159-62.

<sup>44</sup> Gifford, W., (ed.), *The Anti-Jacobin or Weekly Examiner*, vol. 1. 169, The distribution of handbills is also referred to at 251-2.

go off here'. He asked that the items which he had ordered should be charged to the Maidstone Society, whether or not with its authority is uncertain.<sup>45</sup>

In response to the 1797 leaflet the soldiery sought to counter such seditious activity. A detachment of the 14<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons quartered in the town offered a reward for information concerning the culprit. The quartermaster contributed one guinea, each non-commissioned officer, half a guinea, and the ninety-six privates, one shilling.<sup>46</sup> This was a remarkable sum of money to be contributed by soldiers below commissioned rank. Similar ranks in the Marines offered a reward of fifty guineas as well as preparing a riposte to the handbill. This was signed by thirty-nine sergeants and nineteen corporals and was distributed in the town. The *Maidstone Journal*, loyalist as ever at this time, printed not one word of Fellows's handbill but reproduced in full that of the Marines. The East Kent Militia other ranks offered a reward of forty guineas for conviction of those engaging in sedition. In the case of the Dover Cinque Port Volunteer Infantry, officers and men wrote to Pitt, the Lord Warden, offering to raise a reward of one hundred guineas. It is unlikely that these various monetary rewards were purely coincidental. It is possible that they were encouraged by the authorities, although there is no direct evidence of this.

It is not certain whether Fellows acted with the authority of the LCS, the Maidstone Society, or on his own initiative. The note in respect of the General Committee meeting at the end of December 1796 refers to him as a member of the LCS in London, but since that report was provided by the spy Powell it may or may not be

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<sup>45</sup> TNA: PRO PC1/23/A38; Thale, M., (ed.), *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society 1792-1799*. 380.

<sup>46</sup> *MJ.*, 25 May 1797.

entirely accurate. The Maidstone Society wrote to the LCS telling them that Fellows was in gaol there and indicating that they were not intimidated thereby. 'Threats against the Division were of no avail but the contrary more numerous'. (*sic*)<sup>47</sup> Presumably they were still attracting members.

The Rev. Vicesimus Knox, Master of Tonbridge School, was a staunch Kentish opponent of the war. He saw all wars as an affront to Christianity. Knox was a Whig and one of the small number of Anglican clergy in favour of Catholic emancipation. He was opposed to fast days in support of the war and he considered recruitment to the armed forces as akin to slavery. On 18 August 1793 he preached a sermon at Brighton parish church, the theme of which was the gospel teaching on peace. Some days later he and his family attended the Brighton theatre. Officers of the Surrey Regiment (who he claimed had not been at the service) objected to the nature of the sermon and forcibly evicted Knox, his wife and daughter from the theatre to the accompaniment of threats against them.<sup>48</sup> He confined his opposition to war to sermons and learned writings based on biblical texts. He played no part at all on the wider canvas of Kentish radicalism and his ministry at the parochial chapel of Shipbourne seems not to have afforded him a platform for disseminating his views more widely in the county.

Towards the end of 1795 the principal causes of concern for radicals were the Treasonable and Seditious Practices, and the Seditious Meetings Bills which were

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<sup>47</sup> *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxxiv (1799). 636, *Report of the Committee of Secrecy of the House of Commons*, Appendix 6; TNA: PRO PC1/23/A38, Report of General Committee, 28-29 December 1796; Executive Committee, 27 and 30 December 1796; PC1/23/A38, report of Northern District Committee, 29 January 1796.

<sup>48</sup> Knox, V., *A Narrative of Transactions relative to a Sermon preached in the Parish Church of Brighton with short extracts from the Sermon and Occasional Remarks.* (1793).

currently before Parliament.<sup>49</sup> A contemporary view was expressed by Francis Place, a London radical but in no sense a Jacobin. He wrote that, 'Nothing need be said of this barbarous bloodthirsty act. The time will come when people will be filled with pity for those who could submit to such a law.'<sup>50</sup> Nationwide, there were eighty-eight petitions against the Bills and seventy petitions in support of the Two Acts.<sup>51</sup> In addition, 169 of the 530 patriotic addresses expressing abhorrence at the attack on the King added support for the legislation. There was a single Kentish petition in support of the legislation, from 'some inhabitants of Maidstone'.<sup>52</sup> There were petitions against the Two Acts from Rochester, Canterbury, Maidstone and Hythe. The people of Rochester carried in procession an effigy of Bishop Horsley with a label on his chest reading 'The People have nothing to do with the Laws but obey them'. In one hand there was a bible and in the other a lighted taper. Each of the minor Canons was compelled to view the procession, after which the effigy was burnt.<sup>53</sup>

The involvement of Filmer Honeywood was deemed to be of some importance in the degree of support forthcoming for a petition<sup>54</sup> and in February 1796, together with Stanhope, he had presented petitions to the King from the county of Kent and the town of Margate. In these the King was beseeched to use his utmost endeavours towards restoring peace in the nation by entering into a treaty with the French government. 'A

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<sup>49</sup> 36 Geo.III c.7; 36 Geo.III c.8.

<sup>50</sup> BL., Add.MS. 27808, ff.65-66. Place Papers, vol.xx. It was, of course, a subject on which Place would have been *parti pris*. He was not an impartial witness.

<sup>51</sup> *CJ.*, 11 November to 10 December 1795.

<sup>52</sup> *CJ.*, 20, 23, 27 November 1795.

<sup>53</sup> Jones, J.G., *A Political Tour*. 81-2.

<sup>54</sup> John Randolph to Rev. Thomas Lambard of Ash, 3 November 1796: 'Your Kentish petition I should think from what I hear of it can come to nothing for I hear that neither Honeywood himself nor any of his principal friends are concern'd in it.' Bodleian, M.S. Top. Oxon. D. 354/1, f.60. Randolph was successively Bishop of Oxford, Bangor and London. He was married to Lambard's daughter. I am indebted to Dr. Ditchfield for this reference.

True Friend to Margate', seeking to put the petitions in what he claimed was their context, wrote that the county petition drawn up by Sir Edward Knatchbull had congratulated the King on his escape from harm. It was signed by more than three hundred in Margate, 'the few who are independent and by *almost* all the reputable tradesmen and shopkeepers'. The Margate petition for peace, the writer claimed, had obtained about thirty signatures only and ignorant people had been encouraged to sign it. That such a petition had gone forward in the name of Margate was 'so cruel an accusation of a town that is so far from being disloyal, that it is a pity that it should be under such an imputation.'<sup>55</sup>

Reports of county and town meetings indicate that there were varied attitudes towards the government's support for the war, with both radical and some non-radical tendencies seeking to bring the war to an end, and Ministerial supporters being prepared to leave the matter in the hands of the King and his Ministers. Some of the leading Kentish figures seeking to bring the war to a speedy end, Guilford and Thanet in particular, were not radicals, although they were opponents of the Pitt government. An argument always deployed in the eighteenth century against continuance of a war was the high level of taxation which it entailed. To be opposed to increased taxation did not necessarily, or at all, imply support for any form of radicalism

An important event in Kentish radicalism was John Gale Jones's visit to the Medway area in February 1796. Rochester had been, for some time, a centre of Kentish radicalism. In November 1792 a small radical society there had called on the French revolutionary government to break off communication with the British Cabinet until it,

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<sup>55</sup> *KG.*, 26 February 1796.

‘acknowledged the sovereignty of the French people.’<sup>56</sup> In January 1795 the Rochester Corresponding Society asked the LCS to send them someone who could provide advice to what was a newly-formed organisation. An offer was made to bear his expenses to the extent of four guineas a week.<sup>57</sup> The Rochester Society had been in existence for three months and had already expanded to six Divisions, or some 180 members. The report of Gale Jones’s visit ought, on the face of it, to be the most authentic evidence available of events of the period in this part of the county. His account was reasonably contemporary, being published some five months after his return to London. There is, however, a reservation which must be made. Jones was firmly committed to radicalism. The partisan is, by definition, not an impartial observer; he may see signs of encouragement for his cause which would not be apparent to others; he may exaggerate the evidence, not necessarily in the sense of deliberate falsification but from unwarranted optimism. It is necessary, therefore, to exercise caution in taking everything which Jones wrote as representing the plain unvarnished truth. Although there is a great deal of contemporary evidence on the activities of Corresponding Societies, it must be interpreted with some caution for, on the one hand, it consists of reports by government spies who, although certainly privy to the doings of the LCS and other Societies, will have had their own agenda and, on the other, by Jones a zealot for the cause.

The Mayor and Recorder of Rochester were both sympathetic to reform and opposed to the Convention Bills. Jones reports that ‘the inhabitants in general were attached both to the Whig interest and to the London Corresponding Society.’<sup>58</sup> This was

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<sup>56</sup> Goodwin, A., *Friends of Liberty*. 251-2, quoting *Archives des Affaires Etrangères*, Paris, CPA683 f.263.

<sup>57</sup> TNA: PRO PC1/23/A38; Thale, M., *London Corresponding Society*. 340, 342.

<sup>58</sup> Jones, J.G., *A Political Tour*. 4.

not materially different from what the LCS had been told by the Rochester Society itself: 'The town was full of good citizens they had a patriotic mayor and magistrates.'<sup>59</sup> This is an interesting contemporary perceived correlation between radicalism and patriotism. Although there were Foxite Whig sympathies in the town, it would be far from true to say that they existed to the near exclusion of all other political tendencies. In the 1790 elections, George Best as an Independent had defeated the Whig Marquis of Titchfield, but the second elected Member, Richard Bickerton, had stood in the Admiralty interest. In a 1792 bye-election Nathaniel Smith had defeated the Admiralty nominee, Richard King, but in another bye-election, in 1794, King was returned unopposed. In 1796 Best and Longley, the latter the Recorder and a radical (he had opposed the candidature of King in 1794 on the grounds that he was a government nominee), were defeated by King and Henry Tufton, the latter a Foxite Whig and brother of the Earl of Thanet. Both Jones and the Rochester Society exaggerated the influence of radicalism in parliamentary elections in the town.

Jones's visit was dominated by discussions with middling folk rather than working people. His meeting at Brompton was attended 'especially by the millers and farmers of the adjacent parts.' He met 'a most intelligent person, a farmer, from Gillingham' and a 'Democrat' who was a British naval officer on board a prisoner-of-war ship. Jones attended a dance organised by the Chatham Assembly, where several gentlemen informed him that 'the general sentiment of the inhabitants of Rochester, Chatham, and even of all Kent, was decidedly against the present Minister and the present war'. That was certainly true, judged by decisions of county meetings at the time. His contact at Gravesend was evidently a man of some standing since, he having signed a

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<sup>59</sup> TNA: PRO PC1/23/A38, LCS Northern Division Committee, 12 July 1795.

petition against the Convention Bills, the Mayor in retaliation 'had refused to pay him a just debt of about thirty pounds.' At Luton, near Gillingham, Jones breakfasted with 'a wealthy miller' who was sympathetic to the cause. At a meeting at Maidstone the audience was 'of the most respectable inhabitants of the town.' Two gentlemen accompanied Jones to meet an important contact, the owner of a paper manufactory who was sympathetic to the cause. This was Clement Taylor who was one of the Maidstone Members of Parliament. He was a strong advocate of the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. As to ordinary working people, Jones makes only a brief reference to workmen at Chatham Dockyard who refused to sign an address to His Majesty congratulating him on his recent escape from attack and praising him for supporting the two Convention Bills. Instead, they signed a petition against the Bills.<sup>60</sup> Apart from the radicalism of the dockyard workers and those engaged in papermaking, the radical movement in the Medway towns was dominated by the middle ranks of society.

Jones had some ongoing, if relatively brief, successes. He played a part in setting up a Society at Gravesend, whilst another was set up in Maidstone at the end of August. As early as June 1796 the Rochester Society had been 'totally annihilated'. John Smallfield, who had announced this development to the LCS, informed them in December 1797 that a society called 'The Friends of Truth' had been formed there.<sup>61</sup> Nothing more is known of this society. The radical movement in Kent seems to have been in need of encouragement at this time since, according to a letter from the Duke of Portland:

'The inhabitants of Rochester ... have had a second visit there from two Missionaries, of the names of Bone and Webbe, no business was done ... great circumspection is necessary in the

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<sup>60</sup> Jones, J.G., *A Political Tour*. 15, 20-25, 25-6, 29, 34, 36-8.

<sup>61</sup> TNA: PRO PC1/141/A138, summary of letter, Smallfield to Sykes, 3 December 1797.

mode of their proceeding. The name of Corresponding Society is so "obnoxious" that they have assumed the title of Convivial Britons. [No] report has been made to the London Corresponding Society of the progress which had been made in the organisation of a similar Society at *Maidstone*, since Bone ... had been at Rochester.<sup>62</sup>

Radicals were involved in two important treason trials with a Kentish connection. The first of these demonstrates the importance of Kent, with its proximity to the continental mainland, to those engaging in clandestine activities. It was as convenient in the 1790s to Jacobins as it had earlier been to Jacobites who had used this route to and from France.<sup>63</sup> Four Irishmen were arrested having travelled by boat from London to Whitstable and from thence to Margate, where they enquired about the possibility of sailing to France from Whitstable, Margate or Deal. Their trial also demonstrates that an English jury, just as in the treason trials of 1794, was prepared to give a fair hearing to those accused of treason, even in war time. The commentary on the second trial questions whether the accused, Colonel Despard, had any support in Kent.

The trial at Maidstone of the Irish prisoners took place in May 1798. Since it involved an intended contact with the enemy in wartime, the law officers of the Crown would have striven to eliminate radical sympathisers from the jury.<sup>64</sup> The government may also have feared either that the accused would escape or that there would be disturbances arising from their presence in Maidstone gaol. On 15 April, the West Kent Militia, numbering 173, were despatched from Canterbury to Maidstone, together with 92 grenadiers and two troops of Light Dragoons. This was a very large contingent of troops

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<sup>62</sup> TNA: PRO HO42/41, Portland to Romney, Lord Lieutenant of Kent, 30 September 1797.

<sup>63</sup> The case for the transport of Jacobite supporters by Kentish smugglers is made in Monod, P., 'Dangerous Merchandise: Smuggling, Jacobitism, and Commercial Culture in South-East England' in *Journal of British Studies*, 30 (April 1991). 150-182.

<sup>64</sup> Thompson, E.P., *English Working Class*, citing TNA: PRO TS11/333; in one such list the names from which the jury was to be drawn were marked 'G' (good), 'B' (bad) or 'D' (doubtful). Thompson writes that 'shopkeepers and tradesmen had made intractable juries in the 1790s.'. 509.

to have been engaged in guarding the gaol. Until its arrival, the Maidstone gaol guard had been provided by the Maidstone Volunteers alone. The Militia and others stayed for only a few weeks. They returned to Canterbury on 10 June.<sup>65</sup> It may, indeed, have been that their presence in Maidstone was a psychological move, a show of strength on the part of the government in a town with some radical sympathies.

The principal accused in the case were O'Coigley and O'Connor. O'Coigley, whose real name was James Fevey, had other aliases such as Captain Jones. O'Connor, who used the alias Colonel Morris, was described as proprietor of a Dublin newspaper, *The Press*.<sup>66</sup> O'Coigley had contact with John and Benjamin Binns who either were LCS members or had been until quite recently. Benjamin Binns was another of the accused in the Maidstone trial. The LCS had sent a supportive address to the United Irishmen in January 1798 and this was used as evidence that there was link between English radicalism and support for Irish Home Rule.<sup>67</sup> Such a link, if it existed, would have been of importance in the trial since the alleged treason was concerned with support for what were undeniable links between the French and the Irish republicans. O'Connor was represented at the trial by John Simmons, the Rochester solicitor.<sup>68</sup> There was hardly a doubt of O'Coigley's guilt, whilst Pitt was certain of the guilt of O'Connor (correctly, as it eventually turned out) and wished to see him convicted. Every effort was made to this end. Cornwallis, himself a Kentish resident and then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, wrote to Pitt from Dublin Castle:

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<sup>65</sup> Bonhote, J., *The Historical Records of the West Kent Militia*. 167-8.

<sup>66</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, March 1798.

<sup>67</sup> BL., Add.MS., 27808, ff.105, 106. Francis Place records these facts in his notebook, 30 January 1798. He comments, however, that by this stage, 'what remained of the Society was [with the exception of several named individuals] the refuse.'

<sup>68</sup> *S.T.*, vol.xxvi, 1796-8. 1199.

You will see from a letter I wrote yesterday to the Duke of Portland that the State Prisoners have proposed to acknowledge their treasonable practices, and especially their correspondence with the enemy, in their answers to questions which are to be asked of them by the Secret Committee, and I have no doubt that the Chancellor will so conduct the examination as to relieve you of any uneasiness from the supposed innocence of Arthur O'Connor.<sup>69</sup>

O'Connor was able to bring as character witnesses such notables as the Duke of Norfolk, Fox, Sheridan and the Earl of Thanet. The jury found O'Coigley guilty but acquitted O'Connor and the others charged with him. There are late twentieth-century Official Secrets Act prosecutions where the accused was acquitted in the face of overwhelming evidence of guilt, perhaps because the jury did not agree with the law or because it considered the action of the accused to be praiseworthy, justifying over-riding any legal constraints. In the case of O'Connor, the jury may have been impressed by the importance of those testifying on his behalf. As P. King suggests of the period 'It is clear that juries were often able to put their own notions of justice into practice.'<sup>70</sup> Wilberforce noted in his diary that 'I should have acquitted O'Connor on Buller's charge; but doubt on the evidence.' Since O'Connor later admitted his guilt, went to France and became a Lieutenant-General in the French army, Wilberforce's second thoughts were correct. He was sufficiently incensed by the evidence given at the trial by Opposition leaders that on the day before Parliament re-assembled in November he wrote, 'All the opposition but Mr Fox mean to attend tomorrow. It requires more than common power of front for all who were at Maidstone, to hold up their heads without blushing.'<sup>71</sup>

The second trial occurred in the dying days of English Jacobinism, such as it was. In 1802, Colonel Despard was tried for treason before Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough

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<sup>69</sup> CKS., U1590.S5/02.4, Cornwallis to Pitt, 8 August 1798.

<sup>70</sup> King, P., 'Decision-Makers and Decision-Making in the English Criminal Law, 1750-1800' in *Hist.Jnl.*, vol.27, 1, (1984). 52.

<sup>71</sup> Wilberforce, R.I., and S., *The Life of William Wilberforce.*, Diary, vol. ii., letter to W. Hey, 19 November 1798.

under a Special Commission, as the alleged leader in England of the United Irishmen and the United Englishmen. It is uncertain to what extent the United Englishmen existed in any organised or formal sense in England or, if they did, to what extent Despard was their leader.<sup>72</sup> It is possible that there was a conspiracy of some sort (whether realistic or not) to engage in armed action at some unspecified time in the future. There was said to be a plot to kill or capture the King and take over key buildings and barracks. It was alleged that Jacobin guardsmen at both the Chatham and London barracks had enrolled a considerable number of followers and were ready to take action. Two Army privates gave evidence of approaches which they said had been made to them at Chatham by a soldier who was among those tried with Despard. John Emblin, a London watchmaker, said that in conversation with Despard he had been told that 'if the people come forward in the way I have been given to understand they will; we have a great number in the army, and there are a great number in all parts of the kingdom.' Emblin's evidence indicated that 'Chatham was mentioned as another place.'<sup>73</sup> This seems far from conclusive and there is no other evidence to link Chatham with militant Jacobinism as late as 1802 or, indeed, at any other time.

In the course of a Privy Council examination in 1801 of Joseph Baker's membership of the LCS a notebook was discovered among his papers. This contained names of individuals who had been contributors to a State prisoners' relief fund. Those

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<sup>72</sup> The name of 'United Britons' appears not to have been publicly assumed until August 1798, TNA: PRO HO42/45; BL., Add.MS., 27808. Francis Place records that in January 1798 he was closely in touch with Benjamin Binns and Thomas Evans (then Secretary of the LCS), both of whom he held in contempt. It was they who attempted to form the United Englishmen as a revolutionary body. Place was invited to the meetings, although he declined to attend. He considered that the organisation was never really set up and that it probably numbered no more than nine people.

<sup>73</sup> *S.T.*, vol. xxviii,(1802-3). 514. Extract from Lord Ellenborough's summing up.

from Kent included R Fellowes, cooper of Chatham, J Smallfield, taylor (*sic*) of Rochester (presumably, the John Smallfield who had advised the LCS of the demise of the Rochester Society), Curtis of Strood, and Horsley, workhouse master of Frindsbury, as well as two other individuals at Maidstone and Chevening respectively.<sup>74</sup> Given this evidence that there remained elements with radical sympathies in the Medway towns, it is possible that Despard's alleged comment to Emblin did accurately represent the situation at Chatham, but there must be at least considerable doubt on the point. Despard was found guilty and sentenced to death.

O'Coigley's trial had demonstrated how Kent served as a departure point for British and Irish citizens engaged in clandestine activity. (Chapter 8 shows that it served a similar purpose for French agents seeking to enter England.) Radicalism in Kent, as elsewhere, was waning by 1798. Furthermore, among O'Connor's character witnesses neither the Duke of Norfolk nor the Earl of Thanet was a radical, certainly not a Jacobin. The Despard trial had produced some slight suggestion of radicalism in Chatham and this may tie in with Ashley's assertion that the LCS attached importance to suborning the soldiery. If so, its efforts had little success in Kent.

### **Trades Unions and Radicalism**

The radical movement in Kent was largely confined to the west and north of the county. Towns located there were the only part of the county where urbanisation and industrialisation had developed to any extent. In this respect they were similar to the principal centres of 1790s provincial radicalism, Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield and Norwich. Those towns had to an extent become industrialised by the late 1790s, and to

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<sup>74</sup> TNA: PRO PC1/3526, examination of Joseph Baker. The notebook is dated 24 April 1801.

the demand for parliamentary reform they added a strengthening of the rudimentary trade union organisation which had its origin among groups of skilled workers in the preceding century. Urban and industrial development did not lead ineluctably towards radicalism, either in Kent or elsewhere. It could equally facilitate not only loyalism but mob violence far removed from radicalism, as evident (though not in Kent) in the “Church and King” riots. As will be shown in Chapter 6, not only were the Medway towns centres for radicalism they were, then and at other times, centres of loyalism and patriotism. The bringing together of large numbers of workpeople in concentrations such as the dockyards assisted in the development of a degree of radicalism among them and the advance of an embryonic form of trade unionism, the one form of radicalism which was to develop and endure into the nineteenth century and beyond.

By 1776, Adam Smith had taken the existence of workers’ combinations for granted and by the 1790s these were becoming to some small extent a political as well as an economic force. There developed a degree of co-ordination between skilled workers of the several Royal Dockyards in the demands which they made on the Board of Admiralty. It has been suggested that whilst combinations themselves were ephemeral ‘continuity essentially rested in the workplace or village club and in the habit of association.’<sup>75</sup> In north-west Kent, workers’ combinations were strong in the naval dockyards and in papermaking but they hardly existed anywhere else in the county. There were no such combinations among the largest group of Kentish workers, those engaged in agriculture.

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<sup>75</sup> Rule, J., *The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England 1750-1850*, 256.

As J. Rule writes 'it has often been suggested that trade unionism developed as a consequence of the industrial revolution; in fact by 1750 it was already well established among groups of skilled workers'.<sup>76</sup> This was certainly true of the skilled workers in the royal dockyards, Chatham amongst them. Not until well into the nineteenth century did trade unionism make any real impact amongst unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Nor, of course, was trade unionism necessarily synonymous with radicalism. Strikes and attempts to bring about combinations of workmen were an ongoing trend in the 1790s. It has been noted that there was a tradition, going back to the sixteenth century, of strikes among shipyard workers. During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars skilled dockyard workers were one of the most strike-prone groups in the country.<sup>77</sup> The possibility of alternative employment in the shipyards on the Medway and Thames facilitated strike action in the Kentish dockyards since there were greater alternative sources of employment than elsewhere. Private Kentish yards produced twice as many naval ships during the period of the French wars as did those of Devon, and half as many again as those of Hampshire.<sup>78</sup> As a typical example of how quickly the naval authorities would give way to strikes, in May 1795 a dispute took place at Chatham dockyard arising out of an order of the Board of Admiralty which authorised the employment of house (indoor) carpenters on work which was traditionally that of shipwrights. The shipwrights ceased work. A day or two later they were met by the Surveyor to the Navy who was accompanied by four Commissioners. The men were told that the Board's order could not be rescinded and that those who did not return to work by the afternoon would be

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<sup>76</sup> Rule, J., *The Labouring Classes*. 255.

<sup>77</sup> Thomis, M.I., and Holt, P., *Threats of Revolution in Britain 1789-1848*. 126-7.

<sup>78</sup> Friel, I., *Maritime History of Britain and Ireland, c.400-2001*. 175-7.

dismissed. This brought forth cries of 'Discharge us, and pay us our wages'. A further meeting was quickly arranged and a compromise was reached.<sup>79</sup> There was industrial militancy not only in the dockyards. In 1796 the whole of the Maidstone paper-making industry was on strike. The *Maidstone Journal* was alarmed at this development and suggested that 'it is to be feared, that the frequent recurrence of attempts among artificers, of various descriptions, to enhance the price of their labour will, unless effectively resisted, eventually lead to the Ruin of the Manufactures of this Kingdom'.<sup>80</sup> Newspapers, of course, had a vested interest in the price of newsprint.

But these were groupings having a common objective in defending wages and working conditions. Whilst combinations could form a nucleus around which wider radical causes could sometimes coalesce in the shape of parliamentary reform and opposition to what were seen as oppressive measures, such as the Combination, or Treason and Sedition Acts, it was industrial issues above everything else which attracted the interest and concern of the dockyard and paper-making workers. In that context they received little parliamentary support. Whilst their politicisation was at an early stage, Rule is right to point out that the Combination Acts were 'not simply an attempt to deal with a *new* threat ... [they were also] against what was perceived as a spreading menace, which under the influence of the French Revolution was seen as acquiring a political as well as an industrial dimension.' In this he differs from Christie who takes the view that, at this time, there was a tolerant attitude towards trade union activity, and that Thompson was wrong in attributing to the Combination Acts the intimidation of political reformers,

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<sup>79</sup> *MJ.*, 5 May 1795.

<sup>80</sup> *MJ.*, 5 May 1796.

when they were clearly intended to deal with industrial issues.<sup>81</sup> It was certainly the case that some employers had every intention of applying the Combination Acts quite strictly. Master papermakers of Kent and Surrey met in Maidstone in May 1796 and resolved, 'that we take the earliest opportunity of convening our Men to acquaint them with the Consequence of transgressing the Act pending in Parliament, for the more effectual Suppression of Combinations, and with our determination to enforce that Act, when passed into a law, with the utmost Rigour.'<sup>82</sup> This casts some doubt on Christie's suggestion of any universal tolerance towards trade unionism at this time.

### **The decline of Radicalism**

By 1798 with the important exception of a nascent trade unionism, radicalism in Kent had, for the time being, markedly declined. It has been argued by Thompson and some other historians that radicalism went underground at this time, and continued in a more revolutionary fashion. Whether or not that was so elsewhere, there is no evidence that it was the case in Kent. The history of Kentish radicalism of the period raises no expectation of such a development. Even at its peak it was far from revolutionary in character whilst, as elsewhere, the Treason and Sedition Acts played a part in damping down anti-government activities, and the 1799 Acts continuing the suspension of *habeas corpus* and suppressing secret societies by name, rendered them less able to continue in viable form.

Not until 1830, with the economic problems thrown up for the county by the ending of the Napoleonic Wars, the repatriation of large numbers of troops and

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<sup>81</sup> Rule, J., *The Labouring Classes*. 266; Christie, J.R., *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain*. 148n38.

<sup>82</sup> *MJ.*, 17 May 1796.

coincidentally the importation of cheap Irish labour and the intensification of mechanisation in farming practices, did serious manifestations of what might seem to be industrial radicalism return to the county. In Kent there were the Swing Riots, designed to counter what were seen as attacks on the livelihood of agricultural workers. Yet even these riots did not stem from radicalism as it is generally understood. True, it was a radicalised action - it was mass action, it was unlawful, and it engaged in the destruction of the property of those engaged in bringing about unwelcome change - yet, in reality, it was a conservative movement designed to maintain the status quo, to resist the introduction of mechanisation which was resulting in a loss of employment opportunities, and the importation of cheap labour which was likely to result in attacks on the workers' standard of living.

In summary, radicalism was a force in at least some parts of the county in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Yet it was to have little ongoing influence, save in respect of workers' combinations and the campaign (by radicals and non-radicals alike) to bring the war to an end. Why was this so? The leading radical in Kent, Earl Stanhope, had a high profile attributable to his aristocratic status, his extensive estates (in Kent and elsewhere), and his platform in the House of Lords. He was an eccentric with no powers of leadership and little or no concept of a strategy which might be successful in bringing about political change. The Earls of Guilford and Thanet were rational in their opposition to the government and the war, but they largely confined their activities to the Lords and to county meetings. They played no part in any radical movement in the county and, indeed, would not have supported one. Among Kentish Members of Parliament, only Filmer Honeywood could be counted upon consistently to support radical

causes, and his activities scarcely extended beyond the sphere of Parliament and county meetings. The radical societies in Kent, such as they were, lacked charismatic leaders, but then most Societies outside London were in like case. There was not, in the 1790s, as there had been in times past in Kent, the inspiration of a Wat Tyler, John Ball or Jack Cade to lead Kentish peasants against religious and secular princes or, as in 1830, the doubtless fictitious Captain Swing, around whom radicalism could coalesce. Yet radicalism in Kent, and probably elsewhere, did not fail primarily because of the lack of such leadership. It failed partly because government legislation made the overt support of radicalism both more difficult and more dangerous, and partly because propaganda, an ongoing war, a Constitution under attack and francophobia came together in a form of patriotism (meaning, as always, different things to different men) which led to support for steps directed towards defeat of a foreign invasion, were it to come. For loyalists this implied a defence of the King, the Church, the Constitution, and the *status quo*. Yet, in the end, neither loyalism nor radicalism prevailed in Kent. Patriotism, considered as a love of country and a determination to defend it against external enemies could be fostered by both loyalists and many radicals. Even the London Corresponding Society, in its dying days, recommended its members to join Volunteer units in defence of the country (see p.226).

## 6. LOYALISM OR PATRIOTISM IN KENT ?

In the last decade of the 1790s there were times when radicalism seemed to have taken hold in Kent, although this was a transient phenomenon and one which did not in the end prevail. It would seem, as well, that loyalism held sway at times, as when a county meeting against the strong opposition of radicals and anti-Ministerialists, endorsed the formation of Volunteer units to defend the county and the country against the possibility of a French invasion. Yet that opposition was more a gesture of antipathy towards the Pitt government than a display of radicalism. But just as Kent could not be counted on as a supporter of radicalism neither should it be seen as a supporter of loyalism. That neither tendency could prevail for any length of time was one factor which kept the county largely free from either "Church and King" riots or Jacobinical influences. In the ultimate, the dominant trend in the county was a form of patriotism, but not one which was entirely compounded with loyalism.

Loyalism in the 1790s involving, as it did, support for the King and the Constitution, the Church of England, the war with France, the "Two Acts" and the suspension of *habeas corpus*, never commanded majority support at county meetings. Hugh Cunningham makes a compelling case for patriotism as an adjunct of the radical cause in the eighteenth century, at least until the time of war against Revolutionary France.<sup>1</sup> Loyalism required that once the nation was at war it was necessary, to adopt present-day terms, to rally behind "our brave boys, who are prepared to risk their lives for Queen and Country". In opposing the war and urging parliamentary reform, radicals

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<sup>1</sup> Cunningham, H., 'The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914' in *History Workshop*, Issue 17 (1981). 8-33.

could, and did, claim to be patriotic. They were demanding what seemed to them to be in the best interests of the country; precursors of, in more recent times, those opposing Suez or the Vietnam and Iraq wars.

### **The Nature of Loyalism**

Before examining loyalism and patriotism in Kent it is necessary to consider general aspects of both tendencies. Dickinson suggests that modern historians who are sympathetic to the radical cause have exaggerated the popularity of reforming ideas and played down the strength of loyalism among all sections of society and in all parts of the country.<sup>2</sup> Until the last fifty years, historians certainly wrote little about loyalism as a characteristic of late eighteenth-century Britain and what they did write was often hostile.<sup>3</sup> This could be, as Dickinson argues, because of the radical sympathies of some historians, but it could also be that those who in the eighteenth century were seeking fundamental social and political reform appeared a more interesting study than those who were defending the *status quo*. It may be, too, that historians of late eighteenth-century radicalism saw this, correctly, as a preamble to those party politics which were to develop in the succeeding century.

Dickinson defines loyalism as a defence of the British Constitution, *inter alia*, by 'emotional appeals to a simple patriotism'.<sup>4</sup> But loyalism went much beyond this. Factors other than patriotism played a part in loyalism, whether real or simulated. There

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<sup>2</sup> Dickinson, H.T., 'Popular Loyalism in Britain in the 1790s' in Hellmuth, E., (ed.), *Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*. 532-3; 'The Impact on Britain of the French Revolution and the French Wars 1789-1815' in Dickinson, H.T. (ed.), *Britain and the French Revolution*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Philp, M., 'Vulgar Conservatism' in *EHR.*, 1995. 42-69 which questions what is seen as the more extreme interpretations of loyalism in recent writings on the subject. A useful list of published works dealing with loyalism is at pp. 42-3n.3.

<sup>4</sup> Dickinson, H.T., *Popular Loyalism*. 511.

was fear of invasion, fear of ostracism or worse if one declined to sign loyalist petitions, or the self-interest of property-owners who might lose from a radical change in the power structure of Britain, as had their French counterparts. K. Watson suggests that what motivated people was 'a sense of loyalty to what they themselves held dear - family, home, religion and country.'<sup>5</sup> Anti-French feeling, a long-standing phobia, was doubtless yet another element in the loyalism of the period.

Dickinson in 'Popular Loyalism' refers to the achievement of loyalists as they developed 'a persuasive intellectual and moral defence of the *status quo*, established organisations which rallied mass support, and ... created the means of replying ... to every political tactic adopted by the radicals.' Loyalism carried conviction with 'a far greater proportion of the middling and lower orders than was ever won over to the radical cause in the 1790s.'<sup>6</sup> Philp in 'Vulgar Conservatism' questions 'the recent over-emphasis on the intellectual vigour of conservative doctrine and the natural loyalty of the British people.'<sup>7</sup> When put to the test at county and town meetings in Kent between 1789 and 1802, on only one issue – that of support for Volunteer units - was a majority ever won over to what at first sight was loyalist patriotism. Yet defence of the country could chime with radicals as well as loyalists, or those who were neither. It may have been fear of invasion on the part of a southern coastal county as well as francophobia which were the main factors in carrying the day on Volunteers.

This chapter will consider the background to and the nature of loyalism, the means employed to sustain it and the penetration in Kent, in 1792-93, of the Association

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<sup>5</sup> Watson, K., 'Liberty, Loyalty and Locality: The Discourse on Loyalism in England, 1790-1815' unpublished PhD thesis, Open University, 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Dickinson, H.T., 'Popular Loyalism'. 507.

<sup>7</sup> Philp, M., 'Vulgar Conservatism'. 44.

for the Preservation of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers (APLPRL). There was not always a clear dividing line between loyalism and radicalism. A meeting at Faversham, on Boxing Day 1792, affirmed strong adherence 'to the present Constitution of Great Britain' and its intention 'to use every effort in its support against the folly and wickedness of those who may attempt to injure it'.<sup>8</sup> Both county Members of Parliament subscribed to these sentiments. Filmer Honeywood was a Foxite Whig and a radical, he supported parliamentary reform in May 1793 and was among the minority on Grey's reform motion in 1797. He voted to bring the war to an end on every occasion when the issue was raised in Parliament or the county between 1794 and 1796, and he opposed the raising of Volunteers without prior parliamentary sanction. Sir Edward Knatchbull was the staunch defender of King and Constitution who never deviated from a loyalist position. To Honeywood it was the King and his supporters who were suborning the Constitution, whilst to Knatchbull it was the radicals who were seeking so to do.

Philp suggests that 'participation [in loyalism] was not acquiescence, those who embraced it quickly came to exercise their voice and to make demands on the system. In doing so they further consolidated and extended the role for a broader public in the political life of the nation.'<sup>9</sup> In this respect alone, the side-effects of loyalism were hardly different in practice from those of radicalism. Whilst radicals positively encouraged a broader involvement in politics, for loyalists this was an unwelcome by-product of their own efforts. But in either case the end result of pamphleteering, in particular, was to involve the public in political issues. N. Rogers's view was that 'loyalism did not necessarily rule out reform but it was a very small minority of Associations which

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<sup>8</sup> *KG.*, 1 January 1793.

<sup>9</sup> Philp, M., 'Vulgar Conservatism'. 66-67.

mentioned reform in their declarations.<sup>10</sup> Ginter saw the loyalist movement as embracing reform, albeit in the medium rather than the short term. He claimed that there was a real difference between the declarations of the Crown and Anchor Association at the birth of the APLPRL, and the less conservative, reformist even, declaration of a group of businessmen and others held a few days thereafter in Merchant Taylors' Hall.<sup>11</sup> Ginter contends that many loyalist associations adopted declarations more in line with the latter than the former.

Jenny Graham goes further by contending that 'the difference in tone, however, [of the Merchant Taylors' resolution] from the Declaration of the Association and from many of the loyal addresses is very striking.'<sup>12</sup> The Merchant Taylors' declaration did contain the word 'reform', but in a context which rendered it almost meaningless. It expressed concern at 'opinions contrary to the dearest interests of Britons, and subversive of those principles which have procured our most invaluable privileges'. It supported the Constitution: 'A Constitution wisely framed for the diffusion of happiness and true liberty, and which ... has on former occasions been, and we trust will be in future, found competent to correct its errors, and reform its abuses.' This did not differ markedly from the Crown and Anchor declaration (although expressed in less strident terms), concerned to 'preserve the true liberty and unexampled prosperity we happily enjoy in this kingdom' and to discourage 'in every way that lies in our power, the progress of such

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<sup>10</sup> Rogers, N., *Crowds, Culture and Politics in Georgian Britain*. 198-9.

<sup>11</sup> Ginter, D.E., 'The Loyalist Association Movement of 1792-3 and British Public Opinion' in *Hist.Jnl.*, ix, 2 (1966) *passim*. I have discovered only one case where an Association recorded that it was adopting, quite specifically, the Merchant Taylors' resolution, BL. Add. MS., 16930, f.31, Newcastle-upon-Tyne Association, 22 December 1792; Graham, J.G., in *The Nation, the Law and the King, Reform Politics in England, 1789-99*, vol. 1. 435-6, gives several other examples of the adoption of resolutions on the lines of the Merchant Taylors' Declaration, but they are declarations from groups dissenting from the resolution which was adopted in their respective towns.

<sup>12</sup> Graham, J.G., *The Nation*. 435-6.

nefarious designs as are meditated by the wicked and senseless reformers of the present time.’<sup>13</sup> The two declarations differed in intent, for the Merchant Taylors’ was a one-off declaration, whilst the Crown and Anchor resolution was to be the prelude to setting up loyalist Associations throughout the country. The distinction which Ginter and Graham see between the two statements is more one of semantics than of fundamentals. Of course, it is possible to express general support for a Constitution whilst seeking to reform it in particular respects. Both loyalists and radicals could declare allegiance to the Constitution (whatever they severally considered it to mean) but save in the sense to which Philp points, that both opened up public debate, the two groupings were poles apart.

The French Revolution, the subsequent humiliation and execution of the French king and the Reign of Terror, the outbreak of the Revolutionary War and fear on the part of the government and its supporters of Jacobinism gaining a foothold in Britain, all encouraged the spread of loyalism. It was a loyalism which saw the benefits of the British Constitution as founded in the King, the Lords and Commons, and a form of society sanctioned by the Church of England. In 1790 when the French Revolution was either commanding support or meeting with indifference in Britain, the Anglican Church had opposed repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, whilst the 1791 “Church and King” riots in Birmingham and Manchester in 1792 were seen by those involved as expressions of loyalism. These were events which may have represented no more than ‘a stoking of

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<sup>13</sup> Ginter, D.E., ‘Loyalist Association Movement’. 181-2; Mitchell, A., ‘The Association Movement of 1792-3’ in *Hist Jnl.*, vol.iv, 1(1961). 58.

the embers of religious discord that had informed politics during the American War and two generations earlier.’<sup>14</sup>

Encouragement of patriotism, in the sense that in Britain all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds, served the cause of loyalism most readily. For loyalists, the existing social order worked in the interests of the country and would not be improved by parliamentary reform, by encouraging freedom of religious thought, or by the concept that all men were equal and should have equal rights. Even most radicals blanched at this last proposition. To allow the French model to take hold in England could only result in disaster. By the latter part of 1792, Tom Paine’s writings had crystallised the debate about both the French Revolution and the British Constitution, although not all radicals went as far as did Paine in seeking change. Radical Corresponding Societies were being set up throughout the country but, at the end of November and the beginning of December, there was a coincidence of several decisions designed to stem the radical tide. One royal proclamation emphasised the importance of the law against sedition, whilst another mobilised the militia. In November 1792 Mr Justice Ashurst delivered a Charge to the grand jury of Middlesex. He called for a halt to the sedition which he saw sweeping the country. The Charge was published throughout the loyalist network, in Kent by the Maidstone and Canterbury Loyalist Associations.<sup>15</sup>

**Association for the Protection of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers (APLPR)**

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<sup>14</sup> Rogers, N., *Crowds, Culture and Politics*. 191; Knight, F., *The Strange Case of Thomas Walker: Ten Years in the Life of a Manchester Radical*, ch. ix.

<sup>15</sup> *Mr Justice Ashurst’s Charge to the Grand Jury for the county of Middlesex. The truth addressed to the People at large containing some strictures on the English Jacobins*, Canterbury, 1792.

The organised loyalist campaign was largely inspired by John Reeves who at a meeting at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in London on 20 November 1792 had proposed the formation of an Association for the Protection of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers. An initial task of the Association was to publish anti-Jacobin pamphlets, consisting of reprints of Justice Ashurst's Charge and arguments against radicalism. These made little impression on one target audience - the lower orders - and pamphlets thereafter frequently represented a loyalist artisan or farm worker addressing what purported to be compelling arguments to a radically-inclined fellow-worker. The loyalist argument ineluctably won the day. But to have a supposedly working-class narrator actually cut across the loyalist objective of political élitism. It encouraged a more general dialogue on political issues, whilst it attributed political common sense to some of the lower orders and ran the danger of implying thereby that they had a valid claim to a political voice. As Philp and others have pointed out, the challenge to radical ideas could not fail to promote a general discussion of political issues. This would have seemed to loyalists not to be a suitable subject for plebeian discussion, since it might lead to a questioning of the validity of the *status quo*.<sup>16</sup>

It is from correspondence between local Associations and the Reeves Association that it is possible to form a view on the coverage of Associations in the county of Kent. Early on, such Associations were formed at Margate, Dover, Deal, Lewisham, Woolwich, Westerham, the Isle of Sheppey, Faversham and Deptford. At Deptford 'a well-known and violent promoter of seditious meetings' recanted before the Association committee, which then used him to spy on radicals.<sup>17</sup> This was a particularly active Association. It

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<sup>16</sup> Philp, M., 'Vulgar Conservatism'. 68.

<sup>17</sup> *KG.*, 1 January 1793; BL. Add.MSS.16923, f.10, Barnard to Reeves, 20 December 1792.

broke up a trade club among dockworkers and seamen. It investigated radical meetings held at the *Universe* and *Globe* Inns and in the light of loyalist threats the landlords refused permission for further Corresponding Society meetings on their premises. The Association offered 10 guineas reward for information on seditious meetings, 5 guineas for proof of seditious papers being read, and half a guinea for information concerning anyone defacing loyalist posters.<sup>18</sup> Loyalists at Woolwich informed Reeves that on the dock gates had appeared the words “the Heads of the Nation” and underneath a Gallows. “Damn the King” was inscribed on the gate of the Parsonage. The Association enquired of Reeves what legal action could be taken to deal with this sedition. Loyalism had evidently not taken a firm hold in Woolwich. The correspondent was concerned about paying for the legal action, ‘since we dread what may fall heavily on individuals, seeing the bulk of the Inhabitants might on frivolous pretences shrink from the charge.’<sup>19</sup>

An Association was formed in the Rochester area, whilst another covered East Kent and Canterbury. The Rochester Association published a number of pamphlets and flysheets.<sup>20</sup> The East Kent Association had a powerful governing committee which included the Mayor of Canterbury, the Recorder, Sheriff, the two Members of Parliament, the Archdeacon, two doctors of divinity and two other clergy.<sup>21</sup> The inaugural meeting decided to send copies of the loyal declaration to ‘the Minister, Churchwardens, and Overseers of every parish in East Kent; and that they shall be required to tender it accordingly, and to return it to the Clerk of the Justices of their respective divisions.’

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<sup>18</sup> Black, E., *The Association: British Extra-Parliamentary Political Organisation, 1769-1793*. 264; BL., Add.MSS.16923, f.57-60.

<sup>19</sup> BL., Add.MSS.16923, f.94.

<sup>20</sup> CKS., U1127.013.2-11 contains eight pamphlets and flysheets issued by the Association; KG., 1 January 1793; BL., Add.MSS.16931, f.32.

<sup>21</sup> BL. Add.MSS.16929.f.31.

Not surprisingly, the Association secured loyal addresses from every one of the parishes. Few would have been likely to have refused to comply with the invitation given the composition of the committee. The Canterbury Association informed Reeves that 1409 people had signed their resolutions. The East Kent Association in February 1793 urged the government to legislate to facilitate Volunteering as an adjunct to the militia.<sup>22</sup> In the previous month it had decided to print 10,000 copies of a speech by a Baptist clergyman of Folkestone in which he had declared attachment to King and Constitution.<sup>23</sup>

Publications issued by Reeves's Association were augmented in Kent by locally-produced pamphlets. John Jones, a leading light of the APLPRL in Canterbury and a partner in Simmons, Kirby and Jones, publishers of the *Kentish Gazette*, wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Reason of Man: With Strictures on Paine's Rights of Man and Some Other of his Writings*. The Rev. William Menzies, Chaplain in Ordinary to the King and Minor Canon of Rochester, printed two hundred copies of his loyalist sermon. Both he and Jones urged Reeves to encourage a wider distribution by financing the printing of further copies.<sup>24</sup> An anonymous clergyman sent Reeves copies of 'a sermon [which he had] delivered at a country church in Kent.' It had been written, he said, with the intention of promoting contentment amongst the lower orders of the people. A copy of the sermon is not with the correspondence but it was, presumably, on similar lines to William Paley's *Reasons for Contentment, addressed to the Labouring part of the British Public* (1792). That discourse had contended that the poor were, in truth, better off than the rich.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> TNA: PRO 30/8/245, f.94, Stringer to Pitt, 11 February 1793.

<sup>23</sup> BL., Add. MSS.16924, 17 January 1793; The Minister at Folkestone was the Rev. Francis Read.

<sup>24</sup> BL., Add. MSS.16922, ff. 47, 161; 16919, f. 136; 16922, f. 36.

<sup>25</sup> BL., Add. MSS.16928, f.21, Anon. to Reeves, 10 January 1793.

With earlier hostile invasions and incursions into England, the town of Dover had more cause than most to be concerned about the possibility of attacks from mainland Europe. However, the first of their several loyalist resolutions, before making any mention of defence against invasion, declared its purpose to be 'to assist the civil Magistrates in the preservation of peace and good order.' The Association's committee of six included a clergyman, the Rev. Anthony Hammond, Rector of Knowlton.<sup>26</sup> The county town of Maidstone did not, initially, set up a loyalist Association. In a letter to Reeves, the Mayor set out what, in the light of events of a few days thereafter, were specious reasons for not so doing. The letter was emphatic that 'this town is without any association or meetings tending to destroy the constitution or government, and I never knew the town more tranquil and unanimous than at present.' The Mayor undertook that if the jurats considered that an Association should be set up he would not oppose the idea. In this, as in every propaganda war, those on either side were prone to exaggeration. Despite his assertion that there was no radicalism in Maidstone, the Mayor distributed 560 copies of the Crown and Anchor resolution and, seven days later, he was concerned at the selling of Paine's writings and other radical pamphlets in the town and the display of radical handbills in public houses and other public places.<sup>27</sup> He had some 7100 copies of various loyalist pamphlets distributed in the town and its neighbourhood. By 18 December an Association had been formed, Earl Romney the Lord Lieutenant being

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<sup>26</sup> TNA: PRO 30/8/245, f. 91; *MJ.*, 26 February 1793.

<sup>27</sup> BL., Add.MSS.16920, f.28; 16921, f.69. Morgan, the Recorder, to whom the Mayor's later letter was addressed, sent it on to Reeves suggesting that 'it [may] be proper to employ a few stout fellows to pull down their papers, and knock down any fellows employed in such treasonable practices. ... I hope that I shall stand excused for the suggestion, as I mean well.'; Add.MSS.16922, f.20. The Mayor had caused the seditious literature to be withdrawn and of the forty-five inns within his jurisdiction, he had his printed papers up in every one. By 11 December, 'he had effectively curbed the few discontented spirits ... and they dared not show their heads.' Was this statement any more true than his original statement of 30 November?

present at the inaugural meeting. The Mayor was not alone in making exaggerated statements. John Jones of Canterbury wrote to Reeves, saying that 'your example in associating has been followed with much zeal in Canterbury and indeed in all the towns in Kent. The language of sedition is effectively suppressed and nothing but loyalty heard in our streets.'<sup>28</sup>

Many letters addressed to Reeves expressing loyalist sentiments were sent anonymously; not everyone was prepared to express a view openly. Peter Nouaille of Sevenoaks, a descendent of Huguenot refugees, who owned a silk mill near Sevenoaks, was one who made no secret of his views. He had received printed letters from the Association and had distributed them to his friends and to inns in the area. Four days later he was present at the first committee meeting of the Crown and Anchor Association. His later experience points to the likelihood that anti-French feeling was still rife in 1830, for the first farms to be attacked in the Sevenoaks area during the Swing riots were those of Nouaille and a Mrs Minuette, another of French descent.<sup>29</sup> It is possible that the fact that Nouille was a Justice of the Peace from 1814 was viewed as an additional incitement to the mob.

James Roper Head wrote to Reeves saying that he was prepared to start an Association in the Chatham, Rochester, Strode (*sic*) and Gravesend area but his later activities do not indicate that he was a consistent loyalist. He was among those, with Thanet, Guilford and Stanhope, in July 1797, demanding the calling of a County Meeting to oppose a continuance of the war. It was Head who there moved the motion that the

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<sup>28</sup> BL., Add. MSS.16922, f.161.

<sup>29</sup> BL., Add.MSS.16919, f.31, Nouaille to Reeves, 25 November 1792; CKS., U1127.O12/1, minutes of meeting of the Crown and Anchor Association committee meeting, 29 November 1792; *MJ.*, 7 and 14 September 1830.

King should dismiss his Ministers. In 1802 he contested the parliamentary seat of Rochester, being described by Thorne as then having radical tendencies; he secured a derisory ten votes of the 895 votes cast.<sup>30</sup> By mid-December 1792, Head had formed the Association and was a member of its committee. George Best, the brewer, had chaired the meeting and, among others, the Mayor of Rochester, three aldermen and two doctors of divinity had been present. Head reported that an open meeting was attended by 3,000 people, most of whom were tradesmen and mechanics. This, like so many figures bandied about by both sides, has to be treated with some reserve. No doubt figures erred in an upward direction when reported by adherents to the cause, whether radical or loyalist. It was not only local supporters who manipulated the figures. There was approval from the very top of the government for this practice. Referring to the creation of the APLPRL, Pitt enclosed with a letter to Dundas a Form of Declaration for signature at public meetings. He wrote that 'we hope to avoid the Inconvenience of much Public Discussion at Numerous Meetings, and yet to have the Impression and Effect of Numbers on our Side.'<sup>31</sup> Most often, loyalists and the press used phrases such as 'that so respectable a meeting as that on Wednesday in Merchant Taylors' Hall was not perhaps to be equalled since the days of the Revolution in 1688, or the time of the restoration.'<sup>32</sup>

Hugh Palliser was another of Reeves's correspondents. He had been Keppel's second-in-command at the naval engagement off Ushant in July 1778. He had subsequently resigned from the Navy but was promoted to Admiral and appointed as Governor of the Royal Hospital, Greenwich. He asked to be sent Association handbills

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<sup>30</sup> Thorne, R.G., (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1790-1820*, vol. 2. 221.

<sup>31</sup> Philp, M., 'Vulgar Conservatism'. 46-7n.5, quoting from Pitt Papers, University of Michigan, 25 November 1792.

<sup>32</sup> *The Times*, 9 December 1792.

and pamphlets, for which he would himself pay. He intended to distribute them to the inns of the parish and its neighbourhood. Ann Kane, the owner of a Kentish circulating library and stationers, offered to circulate any pamphlets or papers which Reeves's Association produced.<sup>33</sup> Kane was one of the very few females who engaged in correspondence with Reeves. Philp suggests that 'the correspondence from Sarah Trimmer and Hannah More, and one or two other women [one anonymous and the other, Kane], shows us that loyalism could also provide a vehicle both for female political participation and for a continuation and extension of the "reformation of manners" movement.'<sup>34</sup> Hannah More stood out as an exceptional contributor, male or female, to the loyalist campaign but, otherwise, the public contribution of women to loyalism seems to have been as slight as their contribution to radicalism. The writings of More and Wollstonecraft were of importance to loyalism and radicalism respectively because of their ability as propagandists, but they were unrepresentative of women of the period.

### **The Church and Loyalism**

Many clergymen wrote to Reeves expressing their support for loyalism. The sermon of Prebendary George Berkeley at the consecration of George Horne, erstwhile Dean of Canterbury, as Bishop of Norwich, was reprinted in 1795. Berkeley there referred to the Church as having been 'remarkable for their [*sic*] Loyalty and Attachment to the *Constitution of their Country*: whilst the *Sectaries* when they prevailed against the *Church*, prevailed likewise against the *State* and trampled *at once* upon the *Mitre* and the

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<sup>33</sup> BL., Add.MSS.16919, f. 69, Head to Reeves, undated; 16922, f. 73, 13 December 1792; 16921, f. 57, Palliser to Reeves, 7 December 1792; 16921, f. 76, Kane to Reeves, 8 December 1792.

<sup>34</sup> Philp, M., 'Vulgar Conservatism'. 53.

*Crown*. This constant Loyalty let it be our Care always to maintain.'<sup>35</sup> Some of the Kent Associations, such as St Nicholas, Deptford and St Mary, Woolwich were centred on their respective parish churches. The committee of the Association at Deal showed a strong clerical influence. The mayor, local magistrates and five naval officers were among its members whilst it included nine Anglican clergy. It resolved to suppress 'all Incendiaries, whether foreign or domestic.'<sup>36</sup> The loyalist committee at Rochester included the Archdeacon, two doctors of divinity and two other clergy. The allegiance of East Kent clergy is obvious from the entirety of parish responses to the loyal address. In the Faversham district there were nine clergy on what was admittedly a large committee. In Deptford, the Association sent the papers which they had received from Reeves to the churchwardens of both their parishes for them to deal with. As Black writes, 'Reeves did not have to arrange for support from the Church, that would come along without asking. ... Every committee of association included churchmen.'<sup>37</sup> Hence, Kent was typical in this respect and, given the awesome presence of the Church in the county, unsurprisingly so.

Whilst the Church of England was ready to defend the existing social and political order, an unnamed preacher at the parish church of Mersham was prepared to adopt a conciliatory tone in his sermon on the Day of General Thanksgiving, 1802. The sermon was loyalist in character, but he added a footnote: 'I shall not, I trust, be thought to depart from the Province of a Minister of the Religion of Peace, in expressing a wish that a

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<sup>35</sup> CKS., *Collective Sermons*, vol. 4. *An Enquiry into the Origin of the Episcopacy in a Discourse preached at the Consecration of George Horne, D.D., Late Bishop of Norwich, by the late Rev. George Berkeley, LL.D.* Reprinted in 1795.

<sup>36</sup> BL., Add. MSS.16929, f.54, 55.

<sup>37</sup> Black, E., *The Association*. 240-1.

general amnesty may be granted for all political offences committed before the signing of the Definitive Treaty.<sup>38</sup> This contrasted with a sermon preached in the same church in 1798 by the Rev. William Cole, the Rector, and chaplain to the Duke of Marlborough. He had asked rhetorically ‘What is it which these blaspheming, jacobinical, illuminated Societies have not planned?’<sup>39</sup> The Gravesend Burghmote resolved that ‘the thanks of the Corporation be given to the Rev. Mr Tucker for his excellent and Constitutional Sermon preached before the Court on Sunday last.’ It offered to print the sermon, if he did not do this himself.<sup>40</sup> The Rev. William Jones (of Nayland), sometime Rector of Pluckley, wrote a number of anti-French pamphlets based on correspondence between the fictitious John Bull and his cousin Thomas Bull.<sup>41</sup> There is the record of a sermon, entitled *The Happiness of Living under the British Government*, preached in 1793 by Thomas Lewis of Tunbridge Wells.<sup>42</sup> It is likely that there were other such Kentish sermons which have not survived.

Archbishop Moore did not play any significant part in the propagation of loyalism. In the House of Lords in March 1787 he had opposed any modification to the Test and Corporation Acts;<sup>43</sup> in 1791 he had supported a Bill for relief for Roman Catholics, possibly in the light of their persecution in France. Bishop Horsley, on the

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<sup>38</sup> CKS. *Collective Sermons*, K242, vol. 4. Anon. *A Sermon preached in the Parish Church of Mersham. The Civil and Religious Advantages resulting from the late War. The Day appointed for the General Thanksgiving, 1802.*

<sup>39</sup> CKS., *Collective Sermons*, vol. 5, *A Sermon preached on the General Fast, 7 March 1798 by W. Cole, D.D., Rector of Mersham.* By ‘illuminated’, he was presumably being ironic in respect of their claim to spiritual enlightenment.

<sup>40</sup> CKS., Gr/AC4, 10 December 1792.

<sup>41</sup> An example is ‘A Letter from John Bull, Esq., to his Second Cousin Thomas Bull’, CKS., K242, *Collective Sermons*, vol. 10. The pamphlet is not dated but from its content it is likely to be from the first half of the 1790s. It was reprinted in 1840.

<sup>42</sup> Emsley, C., ‘Revolution, war and the nation state: the British and French experiences 1789-1801’ in Philp, M., *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*. 111n40.

<sup>43</sup> BL. Add.MSS.34424, f. 284.

other hand, was at the forefront of loyalism. In his 1800 Charge to the Rochester diocesan clergy he had launched into a diatribe against France and French atheism. He strongly urged that Jacobinism should be overthrown. He saw value in educating the young in Christian ways. 'You should by all means in your power, promote the establishment of Sunday-schools in your respective parishes, and take the trouble to superintend the management of them.' He countered the misrepresentation of a speech on Sunday-schools, which he had delivered in the House of Lords. What he was opposed to, he asserted, were:

Schools of Jacobinical Religion, and Jacobinical Politics; that is to say, Schools of Atheism and Disloyalty ... in which the minds of the children of the very lowest orders are enlightened; that is to say, taught to despise Religion, and the laws, and all subordination. ... The proper antidote for the poison of the Jacobinical Schools will be schools, for the children of the same class, under the management of the Parochial clergy.<sup>44</sup>

Whilst the clergy had been particularly active in 1794 in the raising of Volunteer regiments, by way of financial donations to the funds set up to sustain them, Horsley was opposed to them playing an active role in the militia, but only because he thought that they would be inefficient soldiers. In the event of invasion he urged that they should confine their activities to humanitarian tasks, or assisting with a 'scorched earth' policy. Only *in extremis* should they be involved in the fighting.<sup>45</sup>

Dickinson contends that church support for loyalism went beyond the Established Church. Although he does not go as far as Halévy in arguing that the country was saved from revolution by Methodism, he points to the fact that the Wesleyan Methodist Conference regularly proclaimed loyalty to the Constitution. 'By the end of the 1790s official Methodism had become, on political matters, little more than a vehicle for

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<sup>44</sup> CCL., H/Y-8-2 (6), *Bishop Horsley's Charge to the Clergy of his Diocese, Second Visitation, 1800.*

<sup>45</sup> Hole, R., *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order.* 170, quoting Bodl., MS Eng Misc., d 156/1, f.179v., Horsley to the incumbent of Barming, Maidstone who was, at the time, the Rev. Mark Noble.

government propaganda.’<sup>46</sup> This was true of ‘official’ Wesleyanism, but not all Methodists followed the official line. In part, Dickinson’s contention is supported by Wells, although the latter correctly emphasises that ‘the Methodists were as divided over these two key issues [political reform and opposition to the war before 1794-5] as their host communities.’ He suggests, with justification, that ‘claims by Methodist and non-conformist apologists that their activities disciplined their converts, *thereby* also producing quietism and loyalism, are simply not supported by the evidence from the nineties.’<sup>47</sup>

Dickinson further suggests that Dissenting Churches declared their loyalty to the existing Constitution and that although Rational Dissenters were the intellectual backbone of the radical and liberal cause in the 1790s there is evidence that Dissenters, too, adhered to the Constitution. Folkestone Dissenting Baptists, for example, declared support for the Constitution but then many, although not all, Baptists were in the loyalist camp.<sup>48</sup> But when reference is made to the Constitution it is necessary to keep in mind that both loyalists and radicals declared their adherence thereto in accordance with their own interpretation of its purport. Given a widespread suspicion of disloyalty on the part of Dissenters, some may have subscribed to loyal addresses in order to clearly disassociate themselves from the utterances of Joseph Priestley. In a seminal work on Dissent, M.R. Watts contends that ‘the anti-war movement of the 1790s was a Dissenting affair, and its provincial basis often the local Unitarian chapel.’ He agrees that the Wesleyan Methodists were to be found in the loyalist camp. ‘Displays of political

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<sup>46</sup> Dickinson, H.T., *Popular Loyalism*. 515.

<sup>47</sup> Wells, R., ‘English society and revolutionary politics in the 1790s: the case for insurrection’ in Philp, M., (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*. 200.

<sup>48</sup> B.L. Add.MSS.16929,f.84.

radicalism were anathema to the Wesleyan leadership.’ Nevertheless, a minority of Methodists led by Alexander Kilham adopted a markedly more radical position.<sup>49</sup>

Radicalised Dissent was less evident in Kent than in some other parts of the country. The Rev. Jeremiah Jones, the Unitarian, was an exception as an important radical not only in the county but on the national scene. There were at least eight older Dissenting chapels in Kent which, in the eighteenth century, had become Unitarian chapels some, such as Maidstone (1736), of long standing. Several were in areas of Kent where there was some radical activity and there is evidence that Unitarian ministers at Canterbury, Chevening, and Maidstone were active, at times, in disseminating radical literature.<sup>50</sup>

Bishop Horsley of Rochester in the 1800 Charge to his clergy was much concerned either that there were highly undesirable religious influences operating within his diocese, or that they might be developing there. He pointed to the fact, as he saw it, that Jacobins were using Methodism for their own ends. Although he referred in the Charge to Methodists in general, it is likely that it was the Kilhamites who were causing him such concern. In England at large, had Dissent not posed what was seen by many as a challenge to the established order, it is unlikely that Bishop Horsley’s sermons and speeches would have been couched in such strident terms as they were. Nor would the “Church and King” groups have so readily sprung up, or their reaction to Dissent have been, on occasion, as violent as it was.

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<sup>49</sup> Watts, M.R., *The Dissenters*, vol. II, *The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity*. 349-50; 359.

<sup>50</sup> In all, there were 95 dissenting chapels which we know of in Kent at this time, located in 58 towns and villages. The Unitarian chapels were at Deptford, Chatham, Chevening, Maidstone, Rolvenden, Tenterden, Dover and Canterbury.

There was an obvious difference between the attitudes adopted by Dissenters towards the War of American Independence and the Revolutionary War. In the former case, most of the leaders of Old Dissent were on the side of their American co-religionists, whereas in the latter case Dissenters were divided. Unitarians were radical both in terms of theology and politics, and they were opposed to the Revolutionary War. Unitarianism, however, was not popular, even among other Dissenters. Other Dissenting sects were generally, although not absolutely, loyalist. Aside from Dissenters, Wesleyan Methodists were of a loyalist persuasion, although not all were wedded to Wesley's ardent loyalism. Kentish Methodists were principally supporters of Wesley rather than the more radical Alexander Kilham. Of fifteen Methodist chapels existing prior to 1800, ten were designated as Wesleyan whilst five were not. Of Sevenoaks it can be said with certainty that there were non-Wesleyan Methodists, since there were two Methodist chapels, one designated Wesleyan and the other not. In the other four cases (Shorne, Tenterden, Upstreet and Birchington) it is probable that they were non-Wesleyan.<sup>51</sup>

### **The Paths to Loyalism**

Support for resolutions expressing loyalty to the King or to the Constitution did not necessarily indicate an unquestioning loyalism. Apparent support might follow from a variety of reasons, not least a wish to avoid being seen as outside the pale of respectable society. The 'SOCIALS' of Bermondsey put on record that 'the professional principles of this Society are to avoid all political discussions, yet at a time when most Societies and Public Bodies are declaring their principles, this Society deem it also necessary to make

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<sup>51</sup> Roake, M., (ed.), *Religious Worship in Kent: The Census of 1851*.

known their [*sic*] sentiments, as their silence might be construed into a want of Loyalty.’<sup>52</sup>

The weapons available to loyalists in the confrontation with radicalism were manifold. Firstly, as Colley has shown, there was the deployment of the King as a rallying point for patriotism. ‘Almost all official celebrations tended to subsume national achievement in and connect it with glorification of the monarch.’<sup>53</sup> Whilst accepting this to be the case, Rogers points out that the celebrations of the King’s recovery from illness in 1789 were not entirely orchestrated and represented support for Pitt rather than the alternative of Fox. He suggests that ‘the politically partisan dimension of the 1789 celebrations’ is ignored by Colley in ‘The Apotheosis of George III’.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, Rogers accepts, grudgingly, that much public reaction was genuinely spontaneous. That is not to say that Royalist manifestations were accepted unquestioningly by the newspapers, but ‘court ceremony emerged triumphant. The opposition press did not exaggerate when it complained that support for the war had become requisite to any claim of loyalty to the king’.<sup>55</sup>

The King’s journeyings to the provinces and his reviews of troops could not fail to impress those who witnessed them. These were grand occasions with bands, colourful uniforms and all the pomp and ceremony of military parades. They provided the occasion for time off from work and, at times, free food. Kent was the host to an important royal manifestation. In August 1799 at Mote Park, Maidstone, the home of

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<sup>52</sup> B.L., Add.MSS.16929, f.13.

<sup>53</sup> Colley, L., ‘The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation’ in *Past & Present* No.102 (1984). 110.

<sup>54</sup> Rogers, N., *Crowds, Culture and Politics*. 189n.50.

<sup>55</sup> Morris, M., *The British Monarchy and the French Revolution*. 147; much of chapter 7, ‘Court Culture, Royalist Ritual, and Popular Loyalism’ is devoted to this subject.

Lord Romney, the King reviewed a parade and manoeuvres by the combined Kent Volunteers. As well as his consort and the princesses he was accompanied by Pitt, Dundas, Windham, the Lord Chancellor and others, all on horseback and wearing an 'oak branch' in their hats. It was a great occasion for the county. According to the newspapers 'the loyalty shewn by the inhabitants of Maidstone, was truly conspicuous'. The *Kentish Gazette* reported that the whole town was decorated and although it was an army occasion, Kent was a 'naval county' and opposite the town hall was a representation of the Goddess of the Sea, with a shield inscribed 'And long may our Navy of Old England protect its laws, constitution and King.' The Volunteers marched into town with drums beating, bands playing and colours flying. 'The whole county of Kent seemed as if it were uncommonly alive, and proud on the memorable occasion.' After the inspection, 5,258 Volunteers sat down to dinner, 'which was in a sumptuous style.' There was an ample supply of port, sixteen butts of ale and as much small beer, whilst a pump communicating with the cellar was fixed outside the house 'for the purpose of obtaining what more might be necessary.'<sup>56</sup> The cost to Lord Romney was considerable, but in terms of weighty propaganda for the cause of loyalism it was presumably thought worthwhile. The review inspired a poem, *The Lord of the Mote*, whilst the Volunteers were sufficiently impressed by Romney's efforts that they had a stone pavilion erected in Mote Park as a tribute to him.<sup>57</sup>

The naval victory at Camperdown in October 1797 offered the possibility of offsetting the damage to morale occasioned by the Nore Mutiny earlier in the year. To celebrate the occasion, the King was to sail down river from Greenwich to review the

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<sup>56</sup> *KG.*, 6 August 1799.

<sup>57</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1800. 467; November 1801. 1046.

fleet at the Nore. The prospective review was reported in the newspapers even though, due to bad weather, it was never to take place.<sup>58</sup> It was not even necessary for members of the royal family to be present in order to create a loyalist aura; pomp and ceremony were enough. In April 1797, over 5,000 people had assembled in Cobham Park on the occasion of the presentation of colours to two troops of Cavalry by Lady Darnley, the wife of their commander. The cavalry returned to Rochester where they were provided with 'an elegant dinner. ... They did not retire till they had [illegible] the greatest part of the night in the utmost [illegible] and conviviality.'<sup>59</sup> Similar events took place in June and November of the same year.<sup>60</sup>

Another example of the juxtaposition of royalty and loyalism was the introduction of "God Save the King" as a regular feature at the theatre. Between 1745 and 1781 it was said to have been performed in London theatres only ten times, yet between 1786 and 1800 the number of performances was more than ninety. Two decades later it had effectively supplanted "Rule Britannia" and become the national anthem.<sup>61</sup> This change was not universally acceptable and there were instances where the playing of "God Save the King" caused uproar. Kent was the venue for one of the more serious incidents, briefly reported by the *Maidstone Journal* on 5 August 1794. The Rochester theatre and the Royal Irish Artillery were involved. It was not uncommon for soldiers to demand that patrons should remove their hats during the playing of the 'anthem'. When, on this occasion, some did not do so, officers drew their swords and one man was wounded.

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<sup>58</sup> *The Times*, 17, 21, 24, 30, 31 October, 2, 3 November 1797.

<sup>59</sup> *KG.*, 28 April 1797.

<sup>60</sup> Baker, J.N., 'Theatre in the Provinces in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries, with Special Reference to Sarah Baker in Kent', unpublished PhD. thesis, University of Kent. 147.

<sup>61</sup> Colley, L., 'Apotheosis of George III'. 102-4.

Two officers were arrested and one was imprisoned. The following day the Irish Artillery assembled with field guns and demanded his release, whilst the people of Rochester gathered to support the action of the magistrate. The soldiers fired their weapons, dispersing the crowd. The Kentish press did not give undue publicity to the incident. The only mention was:

In consequence of the disturbance which happened on Saturday se'night at Rochester Theatre, between several Officers of the Royal Irish artillery and the inhabitants - The Mayor of that City, we understand, dispatched an express with the particulars of that unprecedented business to the war office, which has been referred from thence to the office of Ordnance and nothing, as we have yet heard, has transpired towards its final adjustment; - so stands the matter at present.<sup>62</sup>

No subsequent report appeared in the newspaper. On Easter Monday 1797 a tumult arose at the Maidstone theatre, with the demand for an encore of "God Save the King". Lord Romney's personal appeal did not quell the turmoil and the situation was saved only by one of the actors begging the audience to 'hear his simple song'.<sup>63</sup> The *Maidstone Journal* made no reference to the incident. Both of these events were considerably more newsworthy than most of the local items which appeared each week. The explanation can only lie in the fact that the editor suppressed this, and the news of the disturbance at Rochester, in the interests of not providing ammunition for those critical of the war in general and of the large military presence in the vicinity of the towns.

Among the means open to loyalists to counter radicalism were caricatures, newspapers, pamphlets, sermons, the theatre, petitions, a fostering of hatred towards France as the long-time enemy of Britain, intimidation by new laws or the abandonment of old ones, threats against booksellers, innkeepers and those who refrained from signing loyalist petitions, the use of informers and spies, and monitoring of correspondence by

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<sup>62</sup> *MJ.*, 5 August 1794; the fuller account is taken from Baker, J.N., 'Sarah Baker'. 127.n.46.

<sup>63</sup> Baker, J.N., 'Sarah Baker'. 127.

the Post Office. Most caricatures originated in London, but they circulated far and wide. Nevertheless, outside the handful of Kentish towns, it is unlikely that they would have been readily available to or have influenced the rural population.

One branch of the arts did have more of an effect in the county. Jean Baker has shown that the theatre and loyalism worked hand in hand in Kent.<sup>64</sup> In the early 1790s Sarah Baker, the Kentish theatrical manager, put on plays in praise of the French Revolution, although she was careful in the early days of the French Revolution to mingle with *The Triumph of Liberty*, a patriotic piece *British Loyalty or a Squeeze for St. Paul's*. Once the Revolutionary War began her theatres were loyalism personified. In September 1797 she presented *The Times; Or a Fig for Invasion* 'Being the Loyal Production of a British Officer in the Neighbourhood', to be followed in October by *Harlequin's Invasion* 'by desire' of Admiral Affleck of the Nore, and *The Boys of Britain; or a Fig for the French and Dutch*. At the end of that month the Tunbridge Wells theatre had a performance of *The Royal Visit to the Nore* albeit that, in reality, the visit did not occur. And so the pattern continued over the years.<sup>65</sup> Many of the theatrical performances at Canterbury, Maidstone and Rochester were 'by desire' of the Volunteers or Yeomanry. Richard Cumberland, the Commanding Officer of the Tunbridge Wells Troop of Volunteers, was a well-known dramatist and often supervised the production of his own plays in the Kentish theatres. The display of theatrical loyalism served both the government and the theatre well. For the government it provided a welcome boost to morale in a county whose anti-war sentiment was manifested at county and town

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<sup>64</sup> Baker, J.N., 'Sarah Baker', chap. 5, *passim*.

<sup>65</sup> There are many more such examples in Baker's thesis.

meetings whilst, for the theatre, it guaranteed that plays would be approved by the Lord Chamberlain, for without such approval they could not be staged. (10 Geo.II, c.28).

Philp records that he discovered several hundred propagandist ballads of this period, not all of them loyalist, although most were. They were more easily assimilated by the lower orders than solemn addresses, pamphlets or sermons. This was recognised by an anonymous writer to Reeves. As he put it 'They [the lower classes] are incapable of reading or understanding any good or serious address to set them right, but through the medium of *Vulgar ballads*, surely much instruction might be conveyed and much patriotic spirit awakened.'<sup>66</sup> Another fillip to loyalism and patriotism came in the form of doggerel. K.Watson quotes from a slightly later pamphlet, *Men of Kent* (1803):

When Harold was invaded/ No discipline he knew  
WILLIAM the NORMAN waded/ Through blood, and HAROLD slew  
The Counties round, in dread profound/ Bewail'd their lost conditions  
Their Lands to save, base homage gave/ But Kent showed no submission<sup>67</sup>

Such doggerel will have appealed to the pride of inhabitants of the county and encouraged a spirit of unity.

Newspapers varied in their political allegiance and a number of towns and counties produced radical newspapers. There was no such newspaper published in Kent. Kentish newspapers from 1793 were among those on the side of loyalism. On 26 September 1796 the *Maidstone Journal* made its position crystal clear when it included a note from the Publisher:

[Over nearly eleven years] he has devoted himself to its publication, during which length of time he has uniformly adhered to one object; the support of the present Government; as without a necessary respect to the laws, and a due regard to order and subordination, he is perfectly convinced that *no community* can exist with safety to itself or happiness to the individuals of which it is composed....The MAIDSTONE JOURNAL shall continue to support the same principles and conduct it has ever done; and which have recommended it to the liberal

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<sup>66</sup> Philp, M., 'Vulgar Conservatism, 1792-3'. 65; BL. Add. MSS.16920, f. 99.

<sup>67</sup> Watson, K., 'Liberty, Loyalty and Locality'. 114.

encouragement it has experienced, by bearing a firm and steady attachment to the KING and CONSTITUTION.

There could be no doubt that the *Kentish Gazette* was in the loyalist camp. This may have seemed natural in a paper published in the cathedral city of Canterbury. Nevertheless, it contrasted with the position in the 1770s when the *Kentish Gazette* was opposed to the North government and to the war with America. It had been founded in 1768 by James Simmons and he edited it until his death, thirty-six years later. He was Mayor of Canterbury on two separate occasions, he established the first bank in the city and, in 1795, he raised three companies of Volunteers and served as captain in one of them. In 1782 he was appointed Distributor of Stamps for East Kent, possibly as a reward for the newspaper's support of the Rockingham Whigs. In the last twenty-five years of his life, Simmons dominated the governance and community life of the city, and was then a staunch loyalist.<sup>68</sup> He did stray from support for the Ministry when he encouraged the successful Independent parliamentary candidates at Hythe in the 1802 election. This, however, scarcely put him in the radical camp. It was a move more in the interests of local merchants and traders and against Admiralty dominance in the constituency. When the Crown & Anchor Association was contemplating publishing a record of all Association resolutions the Canterbury Association indicated that whilst it could not contribute from its funds for this purpose, several named individuals and, collectively, Simmons, Kirby & Jones, of which Simmons was the senior partner, would make a contribution.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Panton, F.H., 'The Finances and Government of the City and County of Canterbury; Eighteenth to mid-Nineteenth Centuries', unpublished PhD thesis, UKC., 1998.

<sup>69</sup> BL., Add. MS., 16928, f.41.

A further indication of the *Kentish Gazette*'s tendency towards loyalism is given by an advertisement published in the issue of 28 January 1794. This was for a new weekly which was to be published, the *Constitutional Magazine, and True Briton's Friend*.<sup>70</sup> Among a list of contents, the first issue was to contain 'several valuable Papers recommended by the Constitutional Association at the Crown and Anchor in the Strand, for the Preservation of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers.' The publishers of the magazine purported to be politically neutral. Their only concern was 'the national good'. Loyalist propaganda could scarcely have been dressed up in more allegedly impartial wrappings. Radicalism was to gain no support from the Kentish press at this time.

### **The Loyalist Attack on Radicalism**

The demonisation of revolutionary France and the threat posed to Englishmen, women and children if Jacobinism ever took hold, exemplified in caricatures, pamphlets and the provincial press made an impression on the inhabitants of Kent since they would be the first to suffer the predicted dire fate were the French to invade. Contrariwise, radicals had something to fear from loyalists. The burning of effigies of Tom Paine in many towns and villages in the period from 1792 to 1796 evidenced militant opposition to radicalism and towards those who propagated it. The *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* reports an effigy of Paine being whipped through Tunbridge Wells on the day before Christmas, 1792, whilst a man concealed in the cart 'bellowed lustily at each stroke.' At Dover an

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<sup>70</sup> The advertisement claimed that it would contain articles which would form 'a proper Contrast between our Happy Constitution and that Anarchy and Confusion so much recommended by Jacobins and Levellers, and which is now the Bane of the French Nation. [It would be produced by] A Society of Independent Gentlemen. ... The Gentlemen engaged in this undertaking, are not to be influenced by private or partial views; it is not their intention to extol or depress any party, or individual, their object is general, and they mean to pursue it on general principles, for National Good.'

effigy was drawn through the streets with Paine's book in one hand and a pair of old stays in the other. It was finally committed to the flames amid choruses of "God Save the King".<sup>71</sup> Few such examples are recorded in Kentish newspapers of the period. A likely explanation is that just as violent radical activity was generally avoided in the county, for reasons given in earlier chapters, so was this equally true of violent loyalist activity. There are few examples of either. Nevertheless, in the minds of Kentish radicals there remained the possibility that with loyalist violence evident elsewhere, it always might spread to their county.

The "Church and King" riots will have instilled an ongoing fear in those - Dissenters and radicals - against whom they were directed, for they could present a danger to life and limb. The 1791 riots in Birmingham provided evidence of this. Nor was there any guarantee that those most at risk would be protected by the law, since they had received no such protection in Birmingham. There is no evidence that "Church and King" riots ever constituted a direct threat in Kent, although it would have been reasonable for those who considered themselves as potentially at risk to have had in mind that there was always a possibility that such riots might become a factor there. Neither Romney, as the Lord Lieutenant, nor Bishop Horsley would have given support to actions such as those which took place in Birmingham or Manchester, but their strongly expressed public opposition to Jacobinism and Dissent, and support for King and Constitution, might have had unforeseen results in the county. These did not, in the event, occur and the only example of violent action being recommended was the

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<sup>71</sup> Dozier, R.R., *King, Constitution and Country*. 91; *Kentish Chronicle*, 25 December 1792.

suggestion of the Recorder of Maidstone that 'a few stout fellows [should be employed to] ... knock down any fellows employed in ... treasonable practices'

A refusal to sign loyalist petitions could put individuals at risk, particularly if they were living in smaller communities. Not only could they be ostracised by loyalist fellow villagers. Even if they were not loyalist, they might be concerned that they could suffer a penalty if they did not actively demonstrate an apparent attachment to loyalism. The 'SOCIALS' of Bermondsey, cited earlier, is an example of how individuals conformed lest others should think badly of them. This throws into question the proposition that loyalism was popular among the middle and lower orders, that the figures show support among humbler folk, or that it was a movement which genuinely included all ranks.<sup>72</sup> It was not necessary for threats to be uttered. The mere possibility of repercussions was ever-present in the minds of those contemplating standing out against the loyalist stream. If they were innkeepers or booksellers their businesses could be damaged whenever loyalists saw that radicals, in the one case, were being allowed to meet on the premises, or that radical literature was being sold, in the other.

The Treason and Sedition Acts, although not introducing wholly new concepts into law, made radicals more aware of the risks which they ran if they contravened the stringent interpretations which were being introduced. The suspension of *habeas corpus* tightened the noose around those deemed to be campaigning on a radical programme. The Combination Acts although not particularly successful in holding back the development of an embryonic trade unionism, were designed to curtail the organisation

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<sup>72</sup> Dickinson, H.T., 'Popular Loyalism'. 516-7, 520-1; cf., Rogers, N., *Georgian Britain*. 214, talking of 1795 and the loyalist 'libations' laid on for the masses: 'The year of "famine" saw an upsurge in radical rhetoric, even in areas that seemed incurably loyalist. The loyalists might command festive space; they did not necessarily command the loyalties of the "people".'

of working men in their workplace. The Post Office played a part in combatting radicalism. Save for the period from 1793 to 1798, when the task was shared with the Secret Office of the Foreign Secretary, the Private Office of the Post Office Secretary had the responsibility of intercepting suspect inland correspondence.<sup>73</sup> His employees were deployed in the search for seditious matter and every postmaster was ordered to report on such material, as well as to engage in the distribution of loyalist tracts.

### **Kentish Loyalists**

Some individuals who adopted a loyalist position seemed to be seeking to curry favour with those in positions of authority. Thomas Callis wrote to Lord Romney from Bristol. He had recently inherited a small Kentish estate from his deceased brother and he lost no time in writing to the Lord Lieutenant. Being now a freeholder of the county he 'greatly approve[d] of the Address of our County presented to His Majesty to keep in the Rt. Honble. William Pitt with all the present Ministry.' He added a postscript:

The Reason of my troubling Your Lordship with This, I have the Misfortune of having a Nephew a Mr. Charles Callis Western, Member for Malden in Essex, who has allways [*sic*] been against the Ministry, and I have allways disapproved of his Conduct, and do condemn him very much, being determined myself allways to be firmly attach'd to my King and our most excellent Constitution, and to the utmost in my Power do everything to show my loyalty in discountinancing [*sic*] Faction and Sedition, abhorring Republicanism.<sup>74</sup>

Callis may, or may not, have been aware of a Kentish connection with the Malden constituency. The Strutt family of government supporters had controlled the two Malden seats from 1774 but in 1790 Western was prepared to stand in the Whig interest. The difference between the two sides was that he wanted a new town charter to extend the franchise, whilst the sitting Members and their supporters did not. In the event the parties

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<sup>73</sup> Ellis, K., *The Post Office in the Eighteenth Century*. 68-9.

<sup>74</sup> CKS., U1515.039, Callis to Romney, 12 June 1797.

compromised and in the discussions which followed Western was represented by Filmer Honeywood, the Kentish radical Member of Parliament. The Honeywoods were landowners in Malden. By the eventual agreement, Strutt and Western conducted a joint campaign and both were elected. The arrangement had broken down by 1802, when Western was described as 'obnoxious at the Treasury.' That did not stop him being re-elected and he remained the Member until 1812, when he decided to fight the county seat.<sup>75</sup>

Organised loyalist tactics were used in the campaign against the 1795 Kentish petition for an early end to the war. Sir Edward Knatchbull set up a chain of correspondents throughout the county to keep track of his opponents' moves to secure support for the petition. He was informed by one or other of his correspondents that seventy-one named persons had signed in Eastwell. From Betteshanger, J. Boyes's (or Boys's) bailiff had signed 'with all my labourers and servants in husbandry in that parish. This petition will probably be presented by Mr Honeywood who will exult in the great number of respectable signatures. But few of them freeholders, many not even housekeepers.' From St Peter's parish, Margate, 420 petition signatories had been noted. From New Romney it was reported 'Address was sent by Mr Honeywood. They have got a great many signatures in the Marsh.'<sup>76</sup>

A Kentish man who played an unusual role was Dr. Merry, a physician living at Ramsgate. Whilst walking in the Strand he decided to attend a Thelwall lecture. He said

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<sup>75</sup> Thorne, R.G., *Parliament: Constituencies*, vol. ii. 161-4.

<sup>76</sup> CKS., U951.C84/5, Joseph Banks to Knatchbull, undated; C84/6, J Boyes to Knatchbull, 5 December 1795 (J. Boys, as his name was generally spelt, was an important farmer in the county who, in 1805, was commissioned by the Board of Agriculture to produce a report on agriculture in Kent); Jacob Sawkins to Knatchbull, 14 December; R Cobb to Knatchbull, 14 December; C84/10, an undated and unsigned document gives the total number of signatures to the petition from East Kent as 2492.

later that the lecture seemed so treasonable that he did not remain to the end. He was visited in Ramsgate by William Miles, a government agent who had earlier been stationed in Liège and Brussels and who was well-connected to Ministers and senior government officials. He was in frequent correspondence with Pitt, whilst Portland had written to Miles on 10 May seeking an urgent meeting with him to plan how to combat Jacobinism. Miles reported to Pitt that 'if it will convict Thelwall he [Merry] will willingly give evidence.'<sup>77</sup> Almost all of the hundreds of potential witnesses on the Treasury Solicitor's list for Thelwall's trial were from London. Merry was the only one from Kent. It is clear from the correspondence that he was an ardent loyalist and it is surprising that he should have decided to go to Thelwall's lecture. It seems unlikely that Miles would have known that Merry had been present at the lecture unless he had been involved in encouraging him to attend. It would appear that Merry, knowingly or unknowingly, had been used with the deliberate intention that he would subsequently give evidence against Thelwall.

### **The End of the Association Movement**

The organised loyalist Association movement was comparatively short-lived. It was, for the most part, active only during part of the years 1792-3, although the London committee and possibly a few others - the Association at Canterbury being one such - continued, in a largely dormant state, until 1795. An attempt to resuscitate organised loyalism at the end of 1793, with a projected Society of Loyal Britons, came to naught. It received no support from the government. The government and its parliamentary supporters were antipathetic towards Associations and Societies. They saw them as derogating from the authority of Parliament. There was also a fear that élite control of

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<sup>77</sup> TNA: PRO 30/8/159, f.254.

the country could be lost if there were to be a popular movement which might be seen as an alternative. These were the reservations which Pitt had expressed at the time of the creation of the APLPRL. What is more, there was always the danger that even a loyalist group intent on one purpose could, as in the case of the Gordon Riots, speedily turn to another. This was a risk which was to be avoided.

When the APLPRL effectively came to an end in 1793 loyalists concentrated on the raising of Volunteer units. It has been shown earlier in the thesis that the raising of subscriptions for this purpose met with some resistance at the Kent county meeting, although the Duke of Dorset and his supporters easily carried the day. Volunteer units were speedily created at Dover, Deal and Folkestone.<sup>78</sup> There was more of a problem at Canterbury. A meeting was held with Hammond and Taylor who gave advice on setting up a Volunteer unit.<sup>79</sup> The Canterbury delegation was convinced by them and a letter was drawn up, there and then, and handed to the visitors. A few days later, the Secretary of the Canterbury Association wrote to Hammond saying that 'they are now convinced that their zeal carried them too far ... and that the haste with which it was penned ... led them into expressions which exceeded their powers.' It was explained that the Association's objects were to defend the King and government and to propagandise on their behalf. Whilst, as individuals, the committee favoured Volunteer companies 'the committee, as a committee feel themselves confined to these objects. ... They think it advisable to suspend for a short time any further steps.'<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> TNA: PRO 30/8/245, ff.89, 96, 100.

<sup>79</sup> TNA: PRO 30/8/245, f.94. They are not otherwise identified and I have found no other reference to them in connection with the formation of Volunteer units.

<sup>80</sup> TNA: PRO 30/8/245, f.04.

Dickinson points to what is the incontrovertible fact that, over a period of some years, loyalists were able to demonstrate massive support for their position. He accepts that 'only in the debate on the burden of the war did the critics of the administration appear to outnumber the loyalists.'<sup>81</sup> This can be explained by the fact that radical opponents of the war were joined by those opposed to it because it seemed to be proving unsuccessful, who resented the accompanying high levels of taxation, and those working people who wished to avoid the compulsion of military service.

Although figures on either side are not known with any accuracy, it is certain that organised loyalists much outnumbered radicals. That statement has, however, to be qualified. If Rochester is taken as an example, John Gale Jones, in 1795, was portraying the Medway area as steeped in radicalism. Even if allowance is made for some exaggeration on his part, there is corroborative evidence that radicalism had taken a firm, if temporary, hold there. Yet, three years earlier, in 1792, Roper Head had informed Reeves that there were 3,000 at the inaugural meeting of the loyalist Association held in the same town. There are several possible assumptions which can be made about this apparent conflict of evidence. It could be that there is much double counting or that, as Ginter pointed out, many who were, in truth, radicals signed the loyalist petition or went to the loyalist meeting either from curiosity or as a safeguard against accusations of disloyalty which might otherwise be made.<sup>82</sup> Yet when the opportunity arose for them to associate with a radical Society, and safety in numbers allowed them to feel less isolated, they were ready to join it. Another possibility is that loyalism was a fickle thing and that it is not to be assumed that a position adopted by individuals at any one point in time is a

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<sup>81</sup> Dickinson, H.T., 'Popular Loyalism'. 529.

position which they held to for all time. As has been demonstrated, Roper Head changed his position significantly between 1792 and 1797. The radically-inclined *Morning Chronicle* provided its own explanation: 'Some sign because they imagine their names will be seen by the king; Others, because their names are on the same paper, or parchment, with the knight or esquire of the parish; and not a few to show that they can write.' It is a sentence which is evocative of that used by Dr Johnson in his comments on the Wilkes Petition.<sup>83</sup>

In the light of assassination attempts on the King, loyalism was unlikely to be challenged in 1800 when a Kent county meeting resolved unanimously that an Address proposed by Sir Edward Knatchbull and seconded by Sir William Geary should be sent to the King, expressing the county's abhorrence at the 'attempt upon your Majesty's sacred person or Government, ( ... a Government under which we enjoy the blessings of internal order and public safety).'<sup>84</sup> Knatchbull did not ignore the opportunity to exploit George III's popularity at this time by including, in a loyal resolution which would meet with no real challenge, a declaration of support for the government which was by no means as popular as was the King at that time. There remains the question of constancy in personal, as distinct from collective, attachment to loyalism. Of the county Members, Knatchbull never deviated from his adherence to King and government, whilst Honeywood was equally constant in his clamour for parliamentary reform, an immediate peace and a change of government. Geary's position was more flexible. In the 1796 election he had stood as a county Member in coalition with Knatchbull. This had resulted

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<sup>82</sup> Ginter, D.E., 'Loyalist Association Movement'. 187.

<sup>83</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 25 December 1792; Samuel Johnson, *The False Alarm*, (1770). 42-3.

<sup>84</sup> *KG.*, 26 May 1800.

in defeat for Honywood. Yet in the 1802 election Geary stood in alliance with Honywood. 2,795 electors plumped for Honywood, compared with only 621 for Geary but shared votes saw Geary elected, thus defeating Knatchbull. At the 1807 election Geary had hoped to repeat the 1802 alliance, this time with Honywood's nephew and heir, but his failure to honour an agreement with Honywood's agents in 1802 rendered this impossible. He had then refused to meet an obligation to repay them for the cost of transporting supporters to the poll, and this had resulted in a lawsuit. Knatchbull, in 1807, had his revenge and he and the younger Honywood were returned.<sup>85</sup>

In a county which, uniquely, had two cathedral cities (one the seat of the Archbishop), where the government had influence as the largest employer in the Medway towns, Woolwich and Deptford, a county which was heavily populated by the military and navy, and whose only consistently radical members of Lords and Commons were Stanhope and Honywood (and Stanhope resiled from Parliament over a long period), it might have been expected that Kent would display an ongoing loyalism. That it did not is not to be attributed to its radical tendencies which, in truth, were limited. Various groupings had different reasons for not adhering to loyalism. Some were avowed radicals. Others were opposed to the war for one or other of a number of reasons. Some saw no reason at all to be at war with France, others were concerned that Britain seemed to be making no headway against the enemy, yet others opposed war because it was they who were required to forsake their employment and their family commitments to fight in the war. Many were concerned at the high levels of taxation, at high prices and interest rates, yet others at the effects of conscription on their labour force. There were those who resented having to accommodate and transport large numbers of troops, who were

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<sup>85</sup> Thorne, R.G., *Parliament: vol.ii, Constituencies*. 214-5.

concerned at the influx of soldiers into the county with their demands for food supplies at times of shortage, and with the inevitable consequence of many bastards having to be kept at the expense of the parish.

Although, at times, a Kent county or town meeting would give a superficial appearance of radicalism, as when it gave overwhelming support to anti-war petitions or urged that government ministers should be dismissed, this ought not to be taken as evidence that the county was generally inclined to radicalism on any ongoing basis, for it was not. Once the widely-held and long-standing loyalist attitudes towards the Constitution came under serious challenge there was an instinctive fear of change and ‘the defenders of the prevailing order began to develop a conservative ideology of considerable appeal, endurance and intellectual power.’<sup>86</sup> There was an element of patriotism in attitudes adopted not only by loyalists but also by radicals. The committee of the London Corresponding Society, having discussed the matter over the course of three meetings in 1798, had considered offering its members as a Volunteer corps. It decided not to do so only because it supposed that the offer would be refused. Instead, it deprecated the thought of a French invasion and recommended its members to join local corps.<sup>87</sup>

A combination of patriotism and, undoubtedly, francophobia prevailed over radicalism in Kent. It would be wrong to describe the prevailing attitude as loyalist, which would have required, among other things, support for the King, the Church of England, the Ministry, the “Two Acts”, the suppression of *habeas corpus*, and opposition

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<sup>86</sup> Dickinson, H.T., *Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth-century Britain*. 272.

<sup>87</sup> BL., Add. MSS.27808, ff. 89, 90. Place Papers, vol. xx, LCS committee meetings 5,12,19 April 1798.

to parliamentary reform.<sup>88</sup> Whenever put to the test at county and town meetings, Kent had come down against these propositions. Whilst majority opinion in the county opposed the war, this was not to be attributed to support for radicalism. That was only one, and probably not the most important strand in the many lines of attack. Nor, despite the Combination Acts, was loyalism able to hold back the combination of skilled workmen in defence of their conditions of employment. Nevertheless, more generally, loyalist propaganda, pageantry, coercion and appeals to patriotism served to suppress radicalism in Kent. It is likely that a latent patriotism was always present in the county in the 1790s, a tendency which became active and organised whenever the *status quo* was seriously threatened, or when invasion threatened, and which outlasted those radical tendencies which might otherwise, in the course of the decade, have threatened the tranquillity of the county.

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<sup>88</sup> Cookson, J.E., in *The British Armed Nation 1793-1815*. 15 and Chapter 8, emphasizes the distinction between patriotism and loyalism, although he sees the former more as an urban than a rural phenomenon.

## 7. THE ARMED FORCES AND THE COUNTY

The armed forces in the 1790s had a dual role as defence against both external and internal threats to the country. They were present in the south-eastern counties, as elsewhere, both as a counter to the threat of invasion and as riot control units. The Gordon Riots of 1780 and the food riots of the 1790s had extended into Sussex, the rural county adjoining Kent. Whilst there had been opposition in Kent to the Catholic Relief Act of 1778 (18Geo.III,c.60) with opposing petitions from the Protestant Associations of Rochester, Folkestone, Maidstone and their adjoining villages, and Sheerness<sup>1</sup>, there were no riots. The armed forces exercised the dual function in rural Sussex but not so in largely rural Kent where the presence of the forces was an anti-invasion measure. The large number of soldiers in the county was marginal in maintaining quiescence in the county though their very presence may just have acted as a deterrent to any who might have contemplated riotous behaviour.

The country's defence requirements had direct and indirect effects on the county of Kent, aside from the economic effects mentioned in Chapter 1. The military presence was of a magnitude which might have provoked protest and civil disorder but, as will be demonstrated, there were reasons why this did not occur. The effect on Kent of the nation's defence requirements was greater than that on virtually any other county, not only in terms of the expansion of Kent's armaments production and naval shipbuilding but also by reason of the micro-economic and social effects engendered by a massive influx of troops. Kent was at the forefront of Britain's defences during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. It was the gateway to London from mainland Europe and the front

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<sup>1</sup> Haydon, C., 'The Gordon Riots in the Provinces' in *Historical Research*, vol. 63 (1990). 355.

line defence against a potential attack from France. Some troops were stationed in barracks (military and naval), others in tented accommodation, whilst some were temporarily in the county in transit to battlefields overseas in Europe, the West Indies and India.<sup>2</sup> The provision of barracks and extensions of fortifications had for long been associated with a standing army and this was seen by many as bolstering the power of the Crown, as well as upsetting the balance of the Constitution and threatening traditional liberties.<sup>3</sup> In February 1793, M.A. Taylor, Member of Parliament for Poole, had initiated a debate in which he opposed a large standing army, and the building of barracks as a step in that direction, using a Kentish example to illustrate his point (see p.253).<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, by the 1790s the provision of barracks was being welcomed by loyalists who saw that soldiers would then be readily at hand in the event of civil unrest. With renewed threats of war, and the onset of war itself, the need to augment troop numbers and enhance defence works, as long as these did not result in increased taxation, was becoming widely accepted by the mid-1790s. Dangers had earlier been foreseen in arming the people, but increasingly after 1793 these were disappearing. As Linda Colley writes:

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- <sup>2</sup> For background to the army of the period, see Cookson, J.E., *The British Armed Nation 1793-1815*; Guy, A., (ed.), *The Road to Waterloo: The British Army and the Struggle Against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France 1793-1815*; Houlding, J.A., *Fit for Service: The Training of the British Army 1715-95*; Western, J.R., 'The Recruitment of Land Forces in Great Britain 1793-9', unpublished PhD thesis, Edinburgh, 1953; Western, J.R., 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force' in *EHR.*, 71(1956), 603-14; Western, J.R., *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century: The Story of a Political Issue, 1660-1802*.
- <sup>3</sup> Conway, S., *The British Isles and the War of American Independence*. 158; 'The Politics of British Military and Naval Mobilization, 1775-83' in *EHR.*, vol.cxii, no.449, November 1997. Wilson, K., argues in 'Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon' in *Past and Present*, vol.121 (November 1988). 74-109, that 'hatred of a "standing army" was grounded in patriotic and libertarian issues, particularly in the belief that land forces were the invariable agents of absolutism.'
- <sup>4</sup> *Parl.Hist.*, vol. xxx, 22 February 1793. 473-496. Dyer, G., in *The Complaints of the Poor People of England* (1793) considered that the navy was seen as necessary, even by 'those who think the army not only useless, but dangerous'. 48.

By entrusting firearms to men from every part of Great Britain and from all social classes, the authorities had taken a calculated risk. They had abandoned, at least for a while, the repressive attitude towards popular participation adopted in the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution. Even William Pitt, prime author of that repression, was prepared to concede in 1803 that "There was a time ... when it would have been dangerous to entrust arms with a great portion of the people of this country ... *But that time is now past*".<sup>5</sup>

Apart from meeting the day-to-day requirements of troops brought from far and wide the county had to provide its quotas of militia and, from its ports and coastal seafaring population, seamen for the navy. Yet notwithstanding the provocations ineluctably associated with the presence of large numbers of troops, there were seldom other than peaceful demonstrations against the presence of the military or the work of the crimping and press gangs. Where there were military and civilian confrontations they were most often engendered by troops rather than civilians. There were even occasions on which troops were seen as being on the side of the people, as when they acted as ringleaders in forcing down the price of bread and meat. Such actions on the part of the soldiery served to some extent to offset the adversities of the military presence and to assist towards preserving stability between military and civilian elements in Kent.

As the Revolutionary War continued, seemingly without victories or an end in sight, with taxation and customs duties rising and with more men being taken from their homes to serve their country, Kentish county and town meetings were expressing resentment at the continuance of the war and demanding that the government should sue for peace. Despite that trend, when a county meeting was called in 1794 to consider whether local Volunteer army units should be created and funds raised to sustain them, patriotism prevailed. A majority in Kent did not hesitate to endorse the creation of Volunteer forces, notwithstanding powerful opposition to the concept from some leading

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<sup>5</sup> Colley, L., *Britons: Forging the Nation 1797-1837*. 310.

members of county society. By 1801 Kent and the Cinque Ports had enrolled 1,350 cavalry and 4,093 infantry Volunteers. Only three counties, Cornwall, Devon and Lancaster provided greater numbers.<sup>6</sup> The west country counties doubtless had in mind the fear of invasion which had existed in that part of the country in 1779. It was principally patriotism, coupled with fear of a French invasion, which explains the high level of recruitment in Kent in the 1790s and beyond, rather than loyalism in the sense in which the term then had meaning.

There was an informed acceptance that if the French were to invade it was most likely that they would do so through the south-eastern counties and, probably, by way of a landing in Kent. In 1798 and 1801 (and in the course of the Napoleonic Wars), the French assembled fleets of small craft in the northern Channel ports, with the intention of launching an invasion of Kent or Sussex.<sup>7</sup> *The Anti-Jacobin* published a translation of a new song; 'Army of England' written by the *ci-devant* Bishop of Autun (Talleyrand). Its opening lines read, 'Good Republicans all/ The Directory's call/ Invites you to visit JOHN BULL/ ... Then away, let us over/ to Deal, or to Dover.'<sup>8</sup> Wordsworth's sonnet, 'To the Men of Kent' emphasised that if there were to be an invasion it would be in Kent. The opening lines read, 'Vanguard of Liberty, ye Men of Kent/ We are all with you now from shore to shore'. The sonnet ends with, 'Ye Men of Kent, 'tis Victory or Death.'<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> TNA: PRO WO30/65, f.26. Volunteer Forces, 1801.

<sup>7</sup> Gibson, R., *Best of Enemies: Anglo-French Relations Since the Norman Conquest*. 145. He reproduces a letter from Napoleon to the Directory, 23 February 1798, in which he discusses a landing in Kent or Sussex, but considers that the moment has passed for any invasion of England, although he urges that France should continue with the appearance of this as the objective.

<sup>8</sup> Gifford, W., (ed.), *The Anti-Jacobin, or Weekly Examiner*, 15 January 1798. 331-2.

<sup>9</sup> Hutchinson, T., (ed.), *The Poems of William Wordsworth*. 309.

An anonymous Lieutenant-General, probably in the year 1770, had examined the defences of the south coast from Land's End to Kent.<sup>10</sup> He reported that the only possible place for invasion was between Thanet in Kent and the Sussex coast. He concluded that if the enemy landed there they would be able to move inland, but that the road from Yalding (Kent) to London was very bad and there was no road south of Sevenoaks passable in winter for carriages on account of the depth of the soil. Although not mentioned in the report, this had presented problems for the King's Gunfounder at Brenchley/Horsmonden, at the time of the Civil War. Because of the state of the roads, he was seldom able in winter to deliver guns to Yalding for trans-shipment by river to the Tower of London. An enemy landing was seen as possible on the coast between Dungeness and Folkestone, or between Sandwich Castle and the river 'and the Country being open from there to Sandwich, Canterbury, Southbourne and Rochester, a Superior Force may march in all seasons of the year.'

In 1796 General Sir David Dundas, the Quartermaster-General, prepared a detailed memorandum on the defences of the south-east. Whilst he thought that the east coast of England was vulnerable, he asserted that the primary objective of the French would be to seize Dover and Canterbury. This would open up the route to London, via Chatham, Maidstone and Woolwich. He emphasised the importance of these locations principally to the navy, but also to the army. He considered that the dockyards were 'left ... in a state that those of no other power in Europe are left', and an enemy would see them as prime objectives. For the army's organisational purposes, England was divided into eight geographical units. The Kentish District then comprising Kent and Surrey had available to it some 2,000 cavalry and 16,000 infantry, more than anywhere else in the

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<sup>10</sup> CKS., U1473.01, Report of unnamed General to George III.

country save for the reserves in and around London. Dundas emphasized that 'this appears the most exposed, and the most important district.' He stressed the need for reinforcements to be stationed there.<sup>11</sup> He regarded the defences against invasion as ill-equipped even a year or two after the commencement of the Revolutionary War. He urged that 'the site of Dover Castle cannot be too much attended to ... it remains in a very defenceless and neglected state.' Yet this was the first line of London's defence.

In 1795 Colonel George Hanger, an American War veteran, had examined the military situation in Essex and Kent and in a book on the defence of London he set out the weaknesses. By the time of the Napoleonic Wars it seemed to Hanger that little had changed for in December 1803 he wrote to the Earl of Harrington, the officer commanding the London District, enclosing a copy of his earlier work and expanding upon his theories. In an introduction he wrote 'I hope that I have proved, that the capital was left in such a defenceless state in the year 1794, which I trust to God we shall never see it in again.'<sup>12</sup>

In 1797 Lord Howe, the southern naval commander, concluded a minute on the maritime defence of the British south coast by saying that 'being unacquainted with the Place and preparations of the Enemy for an invasion of this Country and no better informed of the means and intentions of Government for resisting such attempts, I am conscious these ideas must be very imperfect on the subject.'<sup>13</sup> That the commander of the British fleet at Spithead should have been uncertain of French intentions is

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<sup>11</sup> TNA: PRO WO30/65,f.1, Memorandum of General Sir David Dundas, undated, (1796).

<sup>12</sup> Hanger, G., *Military Reflections on the Attack and Defence of the City of London, Addressed to the Lord Mayor*, ( 1795), Extracts reprinted (1804) as, *Reflections on the Menaced Invasion and the Means of Protecting the Capital*, with, *A Letter to the Earl of Harrington, and other writings*, Facsimile reprinted by E & W Books, 1970, 34.

<sup>13</sup> CKS., U1473.02, Minute of Lord Howe on Maritime Defence of the South Britain Coast, 14 July 1797.

understandable. That he should be uninformed on how it was planned to repel an invasion, four years after the war had begun, does seem remarkable and it may be assumed that no such plan existed.

In 1798 the Duke of Richmond, the commanding General, put forward proposals for the organisation of the Southern District, then comprising Kent and Sussex with a contingent in the Isle of Wight. His estates were at Goodwood in Sussex and he had been Master-General of Ordnance until replaced by Cornwallis in February 1795. He, too, saw Kent as the front line of Britain's defence and urged that it should be strengthened. He conceded that maritime defence was not his responsibility but, nevertheless, he urged that apart from the main fleet there should be naval squadrons stationed off the Kent coast at Margate and Dungeness, with another at Selsey in Sussex. There should be gunboats at Margate, Ramsgate, Dover and the Sussex ports, as well as gun batteries on the coast. As to the army, Richmond was highly critical of the use of private contractors for the provision of horses and drivers for the heavy artillery. He regarded this as an 'ill-judged economy', for when called for 'the horses are never fit for service.' He suggested that farmers' teams of horses would be more reliable. He urged that the army in Kent should be not less than 12,000 men, and that if it had to retreat in the face of attack it should look to the defence of Dover rather than London. He considered that the hill to the west of Dover should be fortified and that Dover Castle's defences should be enlarged. Despite Dundas's urging in 1796 little had been done in the following two years to strengthen these defences. Richmond considered that for the defence of London 30,000 men should be stationed to the south of the capital.<sup>14</sup> Yet not until 1799 were small numbers of

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<sup>14</sup> CKS., U1473.03, 20 March 1798.

troops stationed on the southern outskirts.<sup>15</sup> By 1801 the numbers of soldiers in Kent and Sussex had been significantly augmented, a trend which accelerated during the Napoleonic War.<sup>16</sup> To summarise, in the late eighteenth century military commanders were agreed about the vital role which Kent would be called upon to play in the country's defence. There was widespread agreement that there were manifold deficiencies in this respect, one of them being the Dover defences. The importance of Dover was again stressed when General Dundas, in a report on army dispositions in 1801, wrote that 'troops about Canterbury must especially guard Dover which must be defended to the last extremity.'<sup>17</sup> Hence, it is not surprising that there were such heavy concentrations of troops in Kent in the 1790s.

### **The armed forces in Kent**

It is necessary now to examine the respective roles of the regular army, the militia and Volunteers. The emphasis will be on the last two categories, since it was these which were to make the main demands on the county's manpower. The section will also examine the extent to which the forces available were adequate for the tasks which lay before them.

Crimping for the army seems to have met with little resistance in Kent, if the absence of newspaper and court reports of such is to be believed. Aside from pressing, militia ballots, substitutes, Volunteers and recruitment to the army, some convicted of crime were allowed to commute their sentences by accepting, instead, service in the armed forces. In 1794, William Tanner was convicted at West Kent Quarter Sessions of

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<sup>15</sup> TNA: PRO WO30/65, f.26.

<sup>16</sup> TNA: PRO WO30/65, f.28.

<sup>17</sup> TNA: PRO WO30/65, f.28.

stealing a sack and several pieces of iron. He was discharged on condition that he entered into His Majesty's Service. George Gidley and David Dibsall were convicted of together stealing a bushel of corn. The former was sentenced to three month's imprisonment and the latter to serve on board a man-of-war.<sup>18</sup> Many convicts were in the prison hulks at Woolwich and, in August 1794, a general muster of the convicts took place, 'since when it is reported some of the best disposed will receive the King's pardon, on condition of serving in the army until the end of the war.'<sup>19</sup> Richard Thomas was found guilty of a misdemeanour. Judgement was respited on condition that he entered the 'sea service'.<sup>20</sup> Yet not everyone wanted criminals in the army. Colonel Dering, a member of a county family and commandant of the New Romney Light Dragoons, urged in respect of one of his men found guilty of theft, that if he was discharged 'I think it will be a proper example to the rest of the men.'<sup>21</sup> This, however, was a rarely expressed view.

(i) The Militia

In the Revolutionary War, as in all subsequent wars, the defence of Britain was to be largely in the hands of those temporarily drawn from civilian life, either voluntarily or, more and more, by compulsion. The militia was essential to the defence of the south-east as is evidenced by the forces available to the Duke of Richmond in 1795. These were encamped at eighteen centres in Kent and Sussex, with one company in the Isle of Wight. From the regular army there were nine troops of cavalry, three artillery troops and a troop of horse artillery, and two regiments of light dragoons. There were twelve troops and

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<sup>18</sup> *MJ.* 22 July 1794.

<sup>19</sup> *MJ.* 12 August 1794.

<sup>20</sup> *MJ.*, 19 January 1797.

<sup>21</sup> TNA: PRO WO1/1085, f.361, Dering to War Office, 19 January 1797.

five regiments of fencibles, and twenty-nine companies and twenty-five regiments of militia.<sup>22</sup> The role of the militia heralded a national trend after 1793. The demands on manpower were higher than ever before and throughout the Revolutionary War the militia amounted to almost one-third of the country's military strength:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Army (including fencibles)</u>	<u>Militia</u>
1794	85,097	39,957
1796	111,996	52,088
1798	102,563	58,697
1800	140,798	63,321
1802	157,995	72,869

As Cookson writes 'The leading feature of the military organisation behind the British imperial state was not so much the regular army and its expansion as the non-regular forces it increasingly depended upon.'<sup>23</sup>

In 1789 Kent was required to provide 960 men; 339 from East Kent and the City of Canterbury, and 621 from West Kent. The same numbers were demanded in 1792.<sup>24</sup> But as time went by, it became more difficult to fill the militia quota. The problems arising are demonstrated in the following table:<sup>25</sup>

	<u>East</u>		<u>Present</u>	<u>West</u>		<u>Recruits</u>
	<u>Present</u>	<u>Wanting</u>		<u>Wanting</u>		
Feb. 1794	348	9	617	34	16	
Jan. 1795	497	49	692	82	12	
Jan. 1796	484	62	687	94		

By the Supplemental Militia Bill of 1796, Kent was called upon for 1,873 men, whilst in 1797 the number was 1,439.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *M.J.*, 31 March 1795.

<sup>23</sup> TNA: PRO WO1/903, f.33. Cookson, J.E., *The British Armed Nation 1793-1815*. 17.

<sup>24</sup> CKS., U410.05/1, Letter from Fairfax and 2 Deputy Lords Lieutenant to Receiver-General of Land Tax.

<sup>25</sup> TNA: Chatham MSS., PRO 30/5/244, f.1

<sup>26</sup> Western, J.R., *English Militia*, Appendix B; *M.J.*, 1 November 1796; TNA: PRO WO30/65, f.25.

Not only did Kent have to provide large numbers of men for service in the army and navy, there were the manpower demands of the royal dockyards, Woolwich Arsenal and the Faversham gunpowder factories. All of this had an effect on the Kentish economy, although it was not one which was being experienced for the first time. Conway, writing of recruitment to the militia during the American War of Independence, refers to the reluctance of employers to lose valuable workers or servants. 'The sensitivity to the labour requirements of landowners and their tenant farmers helped to scupper plans to double the size of the militia.'<sup>27</sup> The consequential loss of essential agricultural labour which would otherwise have occurred encouraged farmers and landowners, in the course of the Revolutionary War, to pay for militia substitutes in place of their balloted employees. Not only did they wish to retain experienced workers, who with all the other demands on manpower could not easily be replaced, but anything which further accentuated the shortage of labour on the land would have been likely to push up wage rates in agriculture and, perhaps indirectly, more widely. This was an unwelcome possibility for farmers and landowners.

Recruitment to the militia was usually on a county basis, with the task of finding the men being devolved by the justices to parishes. In November 1758 the West Kent regiment was among the first of the county regiments to be formed. The East Kent regiment did not come into existence until February 1760 and it was not embodied until 1778. Service in the ranks of the militia was seldom welcomed by those called up for service. However, even when service was compulsory, the identification with a county

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<sup>27</sup> Conway, S., *The British Isles*. 24. In a footnote he quotes from National Library of Wales, Bute MS., L93/13, where Lord Mountstuart expresses the view, even before the militia is embodied, that its assembling 'will be very detrimental to the hay harvest'.

(although substitutes might come from other counties) was likely to encourage a spirit of pride and unity. This nurtured social stability to a greater extent than could be sustained by a centralised national army. It was easier for the individual to identify with the West Kent Militia and to feel part of it, than to be part of that amorphous mass, 'the army' or even, say, the otherwise anonymous 14<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot. This was a factor which did not affect Kent alone. It was just as true of any other county.

The newspapers were not found wanting in drumming up a patriotic spirit in the context of recruiting. The *Maidstone Journal* published an article addressed to 'all true friends to their country', advising that sixty thousand well-trained militia were ready, at a moment's notice, to come to the defence of the realm. Such a force could leave no doubt that any contest would be brought 'to a speedy and successful issue.' All this would be done with little inconvenience to individuals, 'they would be paid a shilling a day and provision would be made for SUPPORTING THEIR FAMILIES'. The militia would only be called upon in the event of invasion, or the immediate expectation thereof, and in that event it was to be expected that 'no man who has any regard for himself, his family, or his Country, but would, of his own accord, stand forward for the common defence.' Furthermore, it was to be anticipated that the mere knowledge of these preparations would forestall any enemy invasion. 'God save the King, and protect Old England' the article concluded.<sup>28</sup> What the *Journal* editor wanted to protect was not just England but, quite specifically, 'Old England'. He was not an advocate for change in the Constitution.

Although Lords Lieutenant were required to assist the army in its recruitment they seem, at times, to have proved obstructive. The Duke of Richmond complained that his

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<sup>28</sup> *MJ.*, 15 November 1796.

officers who were assisting the 55<sup>th</sup> Foot in recruiting, were disgusted at the way in which 'the best men were weeded out and the army left with the refuse. Those who had enlisted were mostly drunk and were very sorry [that they had volunteered] afterwards.'<sup>29</sup> Recruitment to the army from the supplementary militia, when it was enrolled in 1798, was encouraged by a bounty of seven guineas. Even this was not initially a great success. A principal reason for this, in Kent as elsewhere, must surely have been that family relief paid by the parish would be lost on enrolment in the army since army families, unlike those of the militia, were not eligible for such payments. The families of embodied militia had been accorded an allowance in 1758, and in 1778-9 that arrangement was extended to substitutes and volunteers. There was no system of family allowances for the army. In May 1799, Henry Dundas had proposed that the families of militiamen who transferred to the army should continue to receive their allowances, but he was unable to carry his fellow Ministers with him on this proposal.<sup>30</sup> By 1799 patriotism had become a stronger force than in earlier years. This factor, together with an increase in the allowance to ten guineas and the fact that, to some extent, what the soldier could not claim from the army the family could claim from the parish led to an improvement in recruitment from the militia and the force which was mustered at Barham Down in Kent for the invasion of Holland in 1799 was, to a significant extent, raised from this source.

In 1794 there had been the Crimp House riots against what were perceived as the unfairnesses of the London Militia Bill whilst, in 1796, the Militia Acts provoked rioting in Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and Bedfordshire, although the riots then spread to other parts

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<sup>29</sup> TNA: PRO HO50/31, draft circulars of January 1798; HO.50/38, Letter from Duke of Richmond, 6 March 1798.

<sup>30</sup> Western, J.R., *English Militia*. 269-70.

of the country. J.R. Western suggests that these riots were ‘a warning against any rapid move towards universal military training.’ They were aimed at destroying the lists of those liable for service.<sup>31</sup> There was no recorded rioting against the 1796 Act in Kent. One possible explanation is that the county’s gentry, mainly resident middle-ranking families, were more in touch with their workers and villagers than was the case in those counties with great landowners, remote from their estates. It is not so much that there would be riots where there were absentee landlords and no riots where there were resident landlords. It is rather that, in the former case, the handling of day-to-day matters was in the hands of paid servants, bailiffs and agents. Their duty was to maximise their employer’s income and, in the nature of things, were unlikely to have become as friendly with, or be able to make concessions to tenants and labourers as were resident landowners. As is evident from Chapter 4, in many cases the gentry of the county looked after the lower orders in bad times by way of charity, whilst they protected many from militia service by paying for substitutes. This served as something of a stabilising factor.

It was not the case that the provision of substitutes was necessarily more of a factor in creating stability in Kent than elsewhere after 1796. Western points out that, quite generally, principals serving for themselves in the militia were very much in a minority. Even during the Napoleonic Wars, in 1807, ‘only about 12 per cent of those enrolled were principals, about 88 per cent being substitutes.’<sup>32</sup> After 1796 there was no significant rioting against militia service, hardly surprisingly since it had become more and more almost a voluntary act.

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<sup>31</sup> Western, J.R., *English Militia*. 291.

<sup>32</sup> Western, J.R., *English Militia* 212, citing *CJ*, lxiii, 613-4.

Western indicates that the militia of the later 1700s was adequately trained and had been taught as much about the art of war as they could have been expected to learn before going into action. He qualifies that by suggesting that 'this did not amount to much in those days.'<sup>33</sup> J.C. Houlding suggests, more generally, that 'we have found the army to be the victim of time and opportunity, insufficiently trained upon the outbreak of war to meet a regular enemy in the field'.<sup>34</sup> In 1792 the army still had no official drill book. The West Kent Militia was better off since it had its own manual which took in advanced forms of training. It also had a set of cards for new officers, with the words of command printed on them.<sup>35</sup> Not only was it doubtful whether troops generally were adequately trained in readiness for battle, they were ill-equipped with arms, accoutrements and clothing. The West Kent regiment was no better served in this respect than others. Lord Romney's son was serving as a captain with the regiment in Ireland. He wrote to his father that it was unfit for service, 'as one half of the men could not come on parade for want of breeches and gaiters which are owed them. ... Not an inch of cloth in store to mend the men's coats which are literally falling to pieces and the Colonel will not have any sent for.'<sup>36</sup> The Colonel at this time was Richard James, to whom further reference will be made later in the chapter. Ten years before the Revolutionary War, in 1782, Major-General Rainsford reported that of the arms of the 160 man unit which he had been inspecting, even those delivered during the current year had such bad locks and soft hammers that many of the troops would have been unable to fire in

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<sup>33</sup> Western, J.R., *English Militia*. 404-13.

<sup>34</sup> For a detailed study of the inadequacies of the 18<sup>th</sup> century army, see Houlding, J.C., *Fit for Service: The Training of the British Army, 1715-1795*.

<sup>35</sup> *A Regular Form of Discipline for the Militia, As it is Performed by the West Kent Regiment, 1759*, advertised in the *Kentish Post*, 14-17 March and sold throughout West Kent.

<sup>36</sup> CKS., U1515.C5, C. Marsham to Romney, 9 March 1799.

combat. 'Had actual service been required a great part of these troops would have been useless, except with their bayonets.'<sup>37</sup>

Lord Pelham, Home Secretary in the Addington ministry, in 1801 doubted whether the soldiery was adequate to the tasks which might face it. Building on his experience as a militia officer in the south-east, he despatched a detailed letter to Lord Camden and in this he adverted to Richmond's proposals on the defence of Kent.<sup>38</sup> He pointed out that troops had not been practised in marching and encampment for some eight years since the year 1793, that is to say virtually throughout the Revolutionary War. He insisted that, as a matter of urgency, attention should be paid to training and the implementation of what might nowadays be called a 'scorched earth' policy. Some steps had been taken between 1796 and 1798 to prepare for such a policy. The Home Secretary, Portland, had written to Lords Lieutenant of coastal counties in November 1796, urging that returns should be made of all live and dead stock within ten and twelve miles of the sea, and that plans should be drawn up to remove them further inland in the event of an invasion.<sup>39</sup> It is not certain how effective this directive was, since it was not until February 1798, two years after it was issued, that the Cinque Ports towns were asked by the Lord Warden to produce these details, together with information on the men and equipment which would be available in the event of an emergency.<sup>40</sup>

Pelham would have had those militia regiments which had been recruited from maritime counties returned thereto. Those discharged from service and still fit he would have encouraged to re-enlist by offering them a bounty, together with an undertaking that

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<sup>37</sup> TNA: PRO WO27/50, f.25. Report of Major-General Rainsford, 14 October 1782.

<sup>38</sup> CKS., U840.0234, Pelham to Camden, 23 September 1801.

<sup>39</sup> *MJ.*, 29 November 1796, reproducing letter from Portland to Lords Lieutenant, 5 November 1796.

<sup>40</sup> Young, M.C., 'The Population of Hythe in 1798' in *Journal of Kent History*, no. 52 (March 2001).

they would be called upon only if the enemy landed. They would be discharged when the enemy left the country. He would have reduced the number of exemptions from militia service and had training scheduled for after sowing time and before and after the hay harvest. At those times he would send the men home with an entitlement to half-pay. Availability of manpower at sowing and harvest times was of great importance to a rural county such as Kent, where more than one-half of all non-domestic employment was in agriculture.

Pelham's proposals would have gone a little way towards improving the professionalism of the militia. They would have made service more obviously temporary in nature and would have required only a minimum of interference with essential agricultural sowing and harvesting. They would have done away with the irrationality of substitutes which, in practice, had led to those from the lower orders with small, or no families being the ones who were usually conscripted. In 1786 Parliament had decreed that substitutes should have no more than one child, although this rule was relaxed for the supplementary militia.<sup>41</sup> Parishes had a direct interest in controlling militia recruitment since they were required to pay allowances to the families of militiamen. Pelham's ideas would also have reduced the manifold ways, for example the claim to be a Quaker, in which exemption from service could be obtained.<sup>42</sup> There is no evidence that they were acted upon.

His ideas would keep 'many Officers of considerable property in the Militia, who can not, under the present System, make so great a sacrifice of their private Interests as it

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<sup>41</sup> 26 Geo. III, c.107, s.24; 42 Geo. III, c.90, s.41; 37 Geo. III, c.3, s.8.

<sup>42</sup> *MJ.*, 22 November 1797. The Kent Militia Assurance Society gave mutual indemnity against the expense of providing a substitute. The cost was 1½ guineas until the following Michaelmas.

now requires.' It was, indeed, possible for militia service to be extremely burdensome for officers. Richard James had succeeded the Duke of Dorset as Colonel of the West Kent Militia in 1799. In the service of the regiment, James had been based in Portsmouth and Canterbury in 1797 and then Ireland in 1798. By 1802 James had been away from home with the regiment for 9½ years in total. He had served for 29 years all told and for 13½ of those years he had been embodied.<sup>43</sup> This may not have been entirely typical. Lord Romney served for two short periods, as Colonel from 1759-63 and Lieutenant-Colonel from 1778-1780. During this period of twenty years the regiment was embodied for seven years in total. The Duke of Dorset was Colonel from 1778-1795. He was with the regiment when it was embodied in 1778 and again in 1793, until his retirement in June 1795. The Lieutenant-Colonel was in day-to-day command of the regiment when Dorset was absent on parliamentary or other State duties. Colonel Dyke, James's successor had, by the time he retired in 1806, served with the regiment for twenty-five years. The local landowners' co-operation was crucial and had to be bought but it would appear that whereas high-ranking members of the nobility entered the militia more or less directly, into senior ranks, ordinary mortals had to work their way up from the bottom of the officer ranks.

#### (ii) Volunteers

In 1779 there had been a widespread preference for the creation of Volunteer units rather than those of the militia. So far as the parishes were concerned it was a cheaper way of meeting their commitments, particularly since the Volunteers were excused service in the militia. In an example of this practice, the Lord Warden had

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<sup>43</sup> Bowra, E., 'The Dutch James family of Ightham Court' in *Arch.Cant.*, vol.lxxxiv (1968). 199.

called a meeting to settle the terms and mode of raising a company of Cinque Ports Volunteers to serve for three years, in lieu of having the militia called out. It was agreed to raise 350 men at a bounty of five guineas each.<sup>44</sup> Volunteer units provided opportunities for patronage and social advancement to the rank of 'gentleman' for officers with the King's Commission. They, in practice, largely appointed themselves once they had recruited the requisite number of men. Volunteer units were to a great extent manned by the landowner's own tenants and labourers and thus, from the captain down to the rank and file soldier, there was a homogeneity and camaraderie to a much greater extent than was the case in the regular army or even the militia.

In 1794, Lords Lieutenant were asked to encourage the creation of additional Volunteer units and to raise the money to finance them. It was envisaged that they would not only be deployed to combat external threats but would also have a policing role. The Volunteer units in Kentish and other coastal towns had, as their primary objective, the defence of seaports rather than internal security, although the latter intent was not ruled out.<sup>45</sup> In Kent, a county meeting held at Maidstone in April 1794 decided that the most effective means of internal defence for the county was the provision of troops of cavalry. If there was an invasion they could be called upon to serve outside the county and it was specified that they would be 'liable to be called upon by order from his Majesty, or by the Lord Lieutenant or Sheriff of the county for the suppression of riots and tumults within the county.' A subscription for the creation of Volunteer Forces was opened, and included among those who gave large sums were the Duke of Dorset (£500), William Pitt, Lords Amhurst, Sondes and Darnley (£300 each), most of the county and borough

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<sup>44</sup> CKS., Te/S3.70. Tenterden Assembly minutes, 7 August 1779.

<sup>45</sup> Cookson, J.E., *British Armed Nation*. 25-6.

Members of Parliament, and the High Sheriff (£100 each). In the early lists of subscribers, no less than twenty-nine were for amounts of £100 or more.<sup>46</sup>

In May 1794 'the greatest concentrations of Volunteers were in Cornwall, Devon, Kent, the East and West Ridings and Inverness-shire.' At the beginning of 1797 Kent had 18 corps, this compared with 16 in Cornwall and Devon, 8 in Hampshire, or 2 infantry and 2 cavalry in each of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex.<sup>47</sup> In the country as a whole Kent, despite some opposition at a county meeting, was at the forefront of recruitment to the Volunteers, an example of the county's patriotism though not necessarily loyalism. When Volunteer units were augmented in 1798, Kent added two companies. In 1794, most sizeable Kentish towns had created Volunteer companies but Rochester and Chatham which had been centres of radicalism had not. By April 1798 radicalism had waned and Volunteer companies were raised in both towns.

In sermons and charges the clergy encouraged their flocks to support the fight against the French revolutionary forces. Clergy had a particular interest in frustrating a foreign power intent on emasculating the church, even if it was primarily the Catholic faith which was directly under attack. They were thus to the fore in subscribing to the upkeep of Volunteer units, with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury each giving £200, whilst their counterparts at Rochester gave £100. Donations were made by ten other senior clergy, several of them members of leading county families, who each gave between ten and thirty guineas.<sup>48</sup> In an appeal in 1793

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<sup>46</sup> *MJ.*, 5, 15, 29 April 1794.

<sup>47</sup> Gee, A., *The British Volunteer Movement, 1794-1814*. 36, 58; Cookson, J.E., *Hist. Jnl.*, no.32 (1989) suggests that both towns, and Dissenters who in normal times were denied social status by rural Anglican leaders, could acquire status through the medium of Volunteer units.

<sup>48</sup> *MJ.*, 15 April 1794, official report of meeting, inserted by Richard Carew, the High Sheriff.

for support for the Kent and Canterbury Volunteers, of £2,830 raised, £475 was donated by the clergy. In the April 1794 interim lists of donors, 153 individuals gave a total of £2,444 and, of these, 25 were clergy who gave, in total, £340. They included the Rev. Joseph Price, Vicar of Brabourne from 1767-87 and thereafter Herne, a one-time Dissenter noted for his parsimoniousness.<sup>49</sup> Aside from, at one remove, defending christianity against atheism, the clergy were likely to be among the staunchest defenders of war against France, since numbers of them were magistrates or scions of those principal county families engaged in raising Volunteer forces. As Gregory suggests, after 1660 there was 'a growing tradition of family clerical service and the creation of clerical dynasties'.<sup>50</sup> When the Lord Warden held a meeting at Dover Castle for the purpose of raising Volunteer forces 'a large subscription immediately took place'.<sup>51</sup>

In appeals for financial support for the raising of armed forces it was principally men who contributed. But in yet another appeal, this time for additional clothing for soldiers and sailors on active service, of one hundred and eighty contributors from the Maidstone area no less than sixty were women. In the Rochester district a similar list showed twenty-eight women contributors out of a total of one hundred and fifty.<sup>52</sup> It would usually have been thought unsuitable for women to contribute to warlike causes. They were, however, prepared to support those causes which were seen as having humanitarian objectives, be it comforts for soldiers and sailors or the campaign for the abolition of slavery.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *KG.*, 23 April 1793; 29 April 1794; Ditchfield, G.M., and Keith-Lucas, B., *A Kentish Parson, Selections from the Private Papers of the Revd Joseph Price, Vicar of Brabourne, 1767-87.* ch. 8.

<sup>50</sup> Gregory, J., 'Canterbury and the Ancien Régime: The Dean and Chapter, 1660-1828' in Collinson, P., *et al.*, *A History of Canterbury Cathedral.* 215.

<sup>51</sup> *MJ.*, 29 April 1794.

<sup>52</sup> *MJ.*, 10 December 1793; 14 January 1794.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Macleod, E.V., *A War of Ideas.* ch. 7 on the wartime role of women in this period. Midgley, C.,

(iii) Military and civilian problems

The armed forces, whether regulars, militia or Volunteers, had many problems with desertion from their ranks. A stipendiary magistrate estimated (how accurately is not known) that three thousand men deserted from the Middlesex Militia in the years 1793-9.<sup>54</sup> How many returned, or were forcibly returned, tended not to be recorded. As an example of how acute the problem was, in August 1795 36 soldiers of the 56<sup>th</sup> Regiment were returned from Ireland to Gravesend, one jumped overboard at Cork and was drowned whilst, of the remainder, ten deserted on the short nine miles march to Chatham.<sup>55</sup> It was common for the Kent newspapers to carry advertisements with names and detailed descriptions of deserters together with the offer of a reward for their apprehension. In 1790 the Adjutant of the West Kent Militia reported thirty-four such cases and thirty-seven in 1791.<sup>56</sup> In 1794 and 1795 the *Maidstone Journal* carried advertisements identifying individual deserters from regiments stationed in Kent and offering rewards to informers leading to their return. In the case of desertions from the New Romney Light Dragoons the reward offered was five guineas above the standard rate. In similar advertisements by the West Kent Militia and a recruiting party of the Lincoln Volunteers the supplementary amount was one guinea and three guineas respectively.<sup>57</sup> Regiments had some discretion in the level of payments which they were permitted to make for this purpose.

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*Women against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780-1870* gives no examples from Kent although she shows that by the 1830's some Kentish societies had been set up.

<sup>54</sup> Western, J.R., *English Militia*. 283.

<sup>55</sup> TNA: PRO WO1/1082, f.179, Antrobus to Lewis, 5 August 1795.

<sup>56</sup> *MJ.*, 13, 20 June 1790, 5 July 1791.

<sup>57</sup> *MJ.*, 16 September 1794; 27 January 1795.

The numbers of soldiers stationed in Kent and their intrusion on everyday life made for difficulties and resentment. Barracks were not everywhere available to house the troops and, even where they were, they often could not accommodate the many who descended upon them. In camps, troops were concentrated in very large numbers. The peak time for the creation of army camps had been in the period 1778 to 1782. They were then set up in Kent at Chatham, Waterdown near Tunbridge Wells, and Lenham. As in earlier wars, the most extensive camp was at Coxheath, near Maidstone. This stretched for a distance of 3½ miles and held 15,000 to 17,000 troops. Since even in 1831 the population of Maidstone was only 15,387, the doubling of that number was bound to cause difficulties. So well-known was this camp that it became a tourist attraction. Plays and musical entertainments such as *A Trip to Coxheath, with a distant view of the Camp* and *Harlequin Volunteer, Or a trip to Coxheath* were based upon it. A novel entitled *Coxheath Camp*, by A Lady, was published, whilst cartoons celebrated the attractions of Coxheath ‘the very name of which gave ample scope for literary allusion.’<sup>58</sup>

Chatham was a principal mustering point for troops embarking at Gravesend for overseas service. In the spring of 1791 upwards of 5,000 soldiers went from the one town to the other. In 1795 it was reported that recruits were coming in so fast at Chatham that the upper barracks were full, and they were quartered in the town. The South Hants Militia could not stay in barracks in Canterbury since there was no bedding for them. Innkeepers there, unexpectedly, had to cope with accommodating 700 men and 137 horses. In 1800, 7,000 troops arrived in Deal and quarters had to be found for those who

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<sup>58</sup> Conway, S., *The British Isles*. 120-2.

were not immediately embarking.<sup>59</sup>

The requirement for the authorities to billet soldiers in the local inns was the cause of much resentment. There was adverse reaction from the innkeepers whose regular trade was incommoded and whose recompense, when the military authorities chose to pay it, was inadequate. A Margate innkeeper demonstrated from detailed accounts that between April 1794 and March 1795 billeting had cost him £331.16s.6d. He had been reimbursed only to the extent of £133.1s.6d.<sup>60</sup> The numbers involved and the disinclination of the innkeepers to be helpful caused problems for the military, since troops then became widely dispersed and it was not easy to maintain discipline. Innkeepers and publicans of Canterbury urged that barracks should be erected outside the town or, as an alternative, that there should be a levy of 1d., based on the poor rate, to feed and accommodate land forces. They suggested that if nothing was done they would have to give up their licences.<sup>61</sup>

In January 1795 William Mainwaring, one of the Middlesex MP's, presented a petition to Parliament on behalf of the Innkeepers and Victuallers of England, stating the heavy grievances under which they laboured from having his Majesty's troops quartered on them in great numbers. There had been no change in the level of the billeting allowance for sixty years. A Committee of the House considered the petition and Kentish landlords were to the forefront in giving evidence. Henry Prime of the *White Hart*, Bromley, submitted that he had been forced to billet 2,000 soldiers in a period of sixteen

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<sup>59</sup> *MJ.*, 16 December 1794, 8 February 1795; TNA: PRO WO1/1084, f.9, Mayor of Canterbury to Windham, 4 January 1795; *KG.*, 18 March 1800.

<sup>60</sup> TNA: PRO WO1/1082.f.671, Branson to War Office, 30 April 1795.

<sup>61</sup> TNA: PRO 30/8/221, ff.42, 43. This was one of a number of requests of this kind from various parts of the country in the file.

months. He had suffered a heavy financial loss as a result. Valentine Simpson of the *Rose Inn*, Sittingbourne, had quartered 1,261 men and 348 horses in a year. Thomas Warton of *The Bull*, Dartford, had billeted 1,619 men in 1793 and 2,086 in 1794. The Committee concluded that there was a daily loss of at least 3d. per man in respect of each soldier who was accommodated, and 6d. a day for each horse. Revised billeting arrangements were included in the Mutiny Act which received the Royal Assent in May 1795. The daily rates for full board were increased from 4d. to 10d. per day. The Act was to be temporary, for a period of one year.<sup>62</sup> In fact it continued and, in 1800, the amount of 10d. was increased to 1s 4d.<sup>63</sup> Even so, billeting remained unpopular with innkeepers. They were deprived of their regular, more remunerative trade and required to fill their premises with the sort of guests they would prefer to be without, rogues, vagabonds and ex-convicts among them.

The prevailing civilian discontent against the military presence was not only the result of antagonism towards compulsory military service, or the serious inconvenience caused to innkeepers. Army personnel, unaccompanied by their families, had from time immemorial attracted large numbers of camp followers and there was the inevitable spate of immorality, drunkenness and fights. F.H. Panton in his thesis on late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Canterbury reports that a considerable amount, perhaps the major part, of each Sessions business consisted of the resolution of bastardy and settlement cases. He cites instances where the Canterbury Guardians sought to bring to justice departing soldiers accused of being the fathers of bastard children. He concluded that 'the presence of a large contingent of soldiers in Barracks in Canterbury, leaving

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<sup>62</sup> *CJ.*, 23 January, 13 February, 19 May 1795.

<sup>63</sup> Western, J.R., *English Militia* 388-9.

behind on posting away wives and children or bastards unprovided for must have been a constant source of worry to the Guardians.<sup>64</sup>

Regimental officers did what they could to exercise control over the extra-mural activities of their troops but this was proving to be a difficult task. In February 1793 M.A. Taylor, an MP for Poole, Dorset, devoted a speech in Parliament to the subject of army barracks. He drew attention to the actions of troops stationed at Chatham where 'no farther back than about three weeks since, the soldiers there had behaved so riotously and improperly that the commanding officer, on a representation from the inhabitants, had found it necessary to forbid them the use of side arms.'<sup>65</sup> Although martial law imposed fierce penalties on offenders against military discipline, it became difficult to enforce them when the men were not under immediate military surveillance but were spread around a town in quarters. In barracks, or even in tented camps, there was a greater degree of control. But despite all precautions, not infrequently there was trouble when soldiers were gathered together in large numbers.

Concern also arose over the frequent demands made by the military for horses, wagons and boats to transport troops and their equipment. Insofar as the authorities made any payment for services rendered it was usually on a modest scale and the payments were seldom made promptly. As an example of the difficulties caused, in 1800 some 7,000 troops were due to be embarked at Deal. The Kentish press reported that 'we are sorry to say that, from some misunderstanding, the last embarkation, our boatmen do not, at present, volunteer their services to ship them.' In 1795 the Mayor of Canterbury

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<sup>64</sup> Panton, F.H., 'Finances and Government of Canterbury, Eighteenth to mid-Nineteenth Century', unpublished PhD thesis, UKC., 1998. 126.

<sup>65</sup> *Parl.Hist.*, vol.xxx (1793). 473-496.

refused to supply wagons to move troops, or to billet foreign soldiers on the establishment of a British regiment. Three farmers at Whitstable and Seasalter were fined 40s. each for refusing to allow their wagons to be used to carry baggage for troops at Canterbury who were marching for embarkation. By the following week they had complied with the order.<sup>66</sup> The adverse social and economic effects occasioned by the influx of soldiery into the county meant that their presence was largely unwelcome. However, these ill-effects were irritants, in themselves not cause for violent reaction against the troops by civilians. They were, to some extent, offset by the fact that the troops were, at times, seen as being on the side of the populace, as when they spearheaded attempts to secure reductions in food prices.

### **The Navy in and around Kent**

The county of Kent was of great importance to the navy, with the major dockyard at Chatham and the smaller ones at Woolwich, Deptford and Sheerness, together with the naval base at Chatham. There was a significant Fleet presence, with ships of the Nore Command stationed off the Kent coast near Sheerness. The navy had found it no easier to recruit to its ranks than had the military, even though there were large numbers of merchant and in-shore seamen resident in the county. Some did volunteer for naval service whilst, for others, the press gangs enforced involuntary service on board naval ships. Relations between the press gangs and the municipal authorities were not always of the best since the gangs, on occasion, were given to exercising their powers illegally. In 1791 a lieutenant and four midshipmen were committed to Rochester gaol overnight

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<sup>66</sup> *KG.*, 18 March, 8 April 1800; TNA: PRO WO1/1085, ff.471, 475, Storr to Bayley, October 1795; *KG.*, 8 April 1800.

for 'illegally pressing in the city without the mayor's permission.'<sup>67</sup> On an earlier occasion an officer of the impress service had been shot dead on a collier moored at Rochester.<sup>68</sup> The press gangs would, not infrequently, compel service from apprentices, under-age boys and those who had never been seamen. In 1797 Rufus King, the American Minister in London, complained of the pressing of American citizens, both in England and the West Indies. At least one such case had occurred in Kent, at Ramsgate.<sup>69</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, writing of the Seven Years' War, suggests that pressing was neither legally nor practically possible save in those cases specified in the law 'and suggestions to the contrary are quite wrong, at least as relating to the mid-eighteenth century.'<sup>70</sup> There were few cases of pressing in Kent but there were such cases elsewhere. The Admiralty exercised a degree of control when wrongful acts were committed in the 1790s impressments. The Lords Commissioners ordered Admiral Lord St Vincent to discharge Daniel Ward and to call upon the Captain of the *Prince* 'to account for his having impressed a man enrolled as a Sea Fencible.' In the months of May to July 1800, St Vincent was required to explain pressing in respect of five Americans, three Swedes, a Prussian, a Dane and four apprentices.<sup>71</sup>

The navy was unable to recruit sufficient volunteers from 1791 onwards to bring it up to its authorised numbers and, in May of that year, orders were received at Chatham

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<sup>67</sup> *MJ.*, 19 April 1791.

<sup>68</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, 49 (1779). 213.

<sup>69</sup> TNA: PRO ADM1/4172, King to Greville, April, May, June 1797.

<sup>70</sup> Rodger, N.A.M., *The Wooden World, An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy*. 150. Gradish in *Manning the British Navy*. 54, 64, 66, suggests that during the Seven Years' War, there were times when all other than statutory protection was revoked. 'Press gangs ... were reckless and scornful of the ordinary rights of citizens'.

<sup>71</sup> BL., Add.MSS. 31172, ff.48, 54, 55, 64, 67, 71. If an ambassador, a commanding officer, an apprentice master or someone else with influence was involved, appeals were dealt with effectively by the Admiralty. There is no evidence that the individual appealing on his own behalf fared as well.

and coastal towns 'to pay rewards and conduct money to all peace officers in the county who shall bring seamen, or able-bodied land-men to the port, for the speedy manning of the fleet.'<sup>72</sup> By an Act of 1795 (35Geo.III, c.34) the justices were permitted to hand over for naval service 'rogues, vagabonds, smugglers, embezzlers of naval stores, and other able-bodied, idle and disorderly persons exercising no lawful employment and not having some substance sufficient for their support and maintenance.' This could include minor wrongdoers, or even those who had done no wrong but who were simply unemployed. Richard Parker, subsequently the leader of the Nore mutiny, had been released from a debtor's prison by Scottish magistrates to help towards the fulfilment of Perth's naval quota. He had been rewarded with a bounty of thirty pounds.<sup>73</sup> Pressing was stepped up and it was the maritime counties such as Kent which bore the brunt of such activity. By 1794 the intensified pressing of merchant seamen was beginning to have an adverse effect on overseas trade. Gradish had written of the position at the time of the Seven Years' War:

To allow the impressment of the crews of merchant ships ready to sail would have brought trade to a complete standstill. No government could have allowed the politically powerful merchant community to suffer in this way. But incoming ships which had completed their voyages were fair game for the press gangs.<sup>74</sup>

That the last sentence represented the position is evident from the fact that in 1791, at a time of peace, 'there are ten homeward-bound East-Indiamen now lying at Deptford and Blackwall, with their lading on board, not being able to get hands sufficient to unload them, owing to the press being so very hot, their hands being all pressed.'<sup>75</sup> With the urgent need to man up the Navy, what Gradish suggests had been an inhibition

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<sup>72</sup> *MJ.*, 17 May 1791.

<sup>73</sup> Dugan, J., *The Great Mutiny*. 200.

<sup>74</sup> Gradish, S.F., *Manning the British Navy*. 64n.1.

<sup>75</sup> *MJ.*, 12 July 1791.

in the 1750s was cast aside in the 1790s. In 1794 more than sixty outward-bound merchant ships were detained in the river with their lading on board, whilst seven outward-bound East-Indiamen were detained at Gravesend for want of hands to man the ships. In the following year, orders were issued 'to press every seaman from Deal to Land's End, whatever the destination of his ship.'<sup>76</sup> Decisions of this kind assisted with the manning of the navy but if large numbers of foreign-going merchant ships could not sail it is evident that there was, thereby, an adverse effect on the country's trade and its economy.

Pressing for the navy did not result in riots in Kent in the way that a combination of the Militia Act and crimping did in London in 1794. These London riots took place in the centre of the city and continued from 16 to 22 August, but they went hardly farther south than Charing Cross. Kent did not have the more immediate history of violent, although not necessarily radical, disturbances such as the Wilkes agitation of the 1760s and early 1770s, or the Gordon riots of the 1780s which encroached as far as Bermondsey but did not extend into Kent, less than a mile away. In the 1790s at Deptford, Woolwich and the Medway towns (among the principal industrialised areas), employment was largely in the dockyards, arsenal or the provision of services to the armed forces. It was the war which was providing the daily bread of many families and they could not be expected to riot against something so closely associated with their livelihood.

The Quota Act of 1795 required counties to produce 9,769 in total for service in the navy. Kent's quota was 440 and only Lancaster, Middlesex (marginally) and the West Riding were required to provide more. A supplementary Act required the seaports

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<sup>76</sup> *MJ.*, 20 January 1795.

of Britain to produce a further 19,867 men, the quota for Kentish ports being 606. In 1796 the coastal counties were allocated a yet further quota, Kent now being required to provide another 570 men.<sup>77</sup> Rochester, which had an initial quota of 134 men, claimed that it had recruited at six guineas a man less than any other port in the kingdom.<sup>78</sup> Whether that, if true, was cause for praise is less certain. Admiral Buckner at the Nore complained that of eighty men raised under the quota at Rochester, fifteen of them due to old age and various diseases were not fit for any form of service, whilst thirteen were fit only for Boys of 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, that is to be trained as seamen. He went on to say that 'many are entrapped and required to give false ages ... they had not undergone any examinations'.<sup>79</sup> That there was difficulty in obtaining recruits is evident from newspaper advertisements placed by the towns of Sandwich, Dover and Faversham. In 1795 each town was offering as bounties, over and above His Majesty's bounty of five guineas, twenty-five guineas for able seamen, twenty guineas for ordinary seamen and fifteen guineas for able-bodied landmen. These were amounts which must have seemed a small fortune to those at whom they were aimed, given that the gross pay of an able seaman was 24s. a month and that even this sum was reduced by various deductions. The bounty would have amounted to more than two years' net pay for some.

Kent, in common with other coastal counties, made a contribution to manning the sea fencibles. These units were, perhaps, the weakest element in Britain's defences for few fishermen or other seafaring men were prepared to man navy ships offshore; they feared that they might be kept on board involuntarily. In 1801 Lord Nelson examined the

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<sup>77</sup> 35 Geo.III c.5 and 9; 37 Geo.III c.4.

<sup>78</sup> *MJ.*, 19 May 1795.

<sup>79</sup> TNA: PRO ADM. 1/727, f.136. See Rodger, N.A.M., *op. cit.* 27-28; 363-5 for employment of boys on board ship. Although they should not, normally, have been under the age of thirteen this was often

situation in Kent of the sea fencibles. He had been given authority to assure men that if serving offshore they would be returned to their homes when the danger of invasion passed. In the event he decided not to press the point for 'they all have an occupation in the several towns where they are enrolled: that to the majority of them it would be little short of ruin were they to give up their businesses.'<sup>80</sup>

It was generally the case that the image of the navy found more favour with the public than did that of the army. It was, for long, the navy which had been seen as the staunch bulwark of Britain's defence, its Protestantism and its liberty. Sheridan suggested that 'if ever man loved man; if ever one part of the people loved another, the people of this country love the seamen'.<sup>81</sup> There is nothing relating to the army to match the words of the song, "Hearts of Oak are our ships/ Jolly Tars are our men."<sup>82</sup> Nor, in the eighteenth century, did the army produce popular heroes with the charisma of Nelson, Hood or Sir Sydney Smith, Wolfe and Wellington apart. But Wolfe had been a hero in an earlier age, in 1759, and Wellington was to become a hero more in the course of the Napoleonic Wars. The presence of the navy was, thus, acceptable to the people of Kent. It caused little in the way of problems for them, save for the short-lived fear that the French would take advantage of the Nore mutiny to launch an invasion.

The naval mutiny at the Nore in 1797 may have caused alarm in the area around the Isle of Sheppey but that apart, the presence of the navy, offshore and shore-based, in Kent did little to cause the annoyances or the social and economic problems associated

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ignored. In reality they were there as officers' servants more than apprentices.

<sup>80</sup> Nicolson, Sir N.H., (ed.), *The Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson*, vol.4, Nelson to St Vincent, 30 July; Memo to his Captains, 6 August; Nelson to St Vincent, 10 August 1801.

<sup>81</sup> *Parl.Hist.* vol.xxxiii, May 1797. 641.

<sup>82</sup> 1759, words by David Garrick.

with the soldiery. There were occasional exceptions. In Sheerness in 1795 a sailor and 'a loose woman' were removed from an inn in the town after a drunken brawl. The following day, fifty sailors from the seaman's ship took revenge on the innkeeper. They seriously damaged the inn and assaulted the landlord. In 1800 there was a report of a serious riot in Chatham, involving some Irish soldiers and marines. The inhabitants were greatly alarmed and shut up their shops. A picket from the barracks put an end to the disturbances and twenty-four of the Irishmen, who had been the aggressors, were severely punished. The marines played only a small part in the affray.<sup>83</sup> But reports of such disturbances involving mariners were few and far between.

The history of the Nore mutiny has been covered by Manwaring and Dobrée in *The Floating Republic* and by James Dugan in *The Great Mutiny*. The latter deals with the mutiny more fully but he does not generally identify the sources of his information. The purpose here will be limited to exploring whether there was any external involvement in the mutiny, and to considering how it affected Kentish folk in the locality. Whether or not English and Irish radical societies were involved in the mutiny has been the subject of dispute among historians. Pitt's government, with little or nothing in the way of evidence, considered that they were so involved. Contemporary accounts are emphatic that this was not the case. A member of the court-martial wrote of the trial of the ringleader Parker, 'The charges have been proved against him as strongly as might be expected, but nothing has appeared tending in any degree to show a connection or communication with any person on shore.'<sup>84</sup> In a valedictory speech at his hanging, Parker 'solemnly denied having the least connexion [*sic*] or correspondence with any

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<sup>83</sup> *MJ.*, 11 April 1800.

<sup>84</sup> TNA: PRO HO42/41, f.111, Litchfield to King, 23 November 1797.

disaffected persons ashore'.<sup>85</sup> King at the Home Office had written to two magistrates, Aaron Graham and Daniel Williams, at Sheerness, asking if they could discover any such contacts. They reported that 'Mr Graham and Mr Williams beg leave to assure His Grace that they have unremittingly endeavoured to trace if there was any connexion or correspondence carried on between the mutineers and any private person or any society on shore and they may with the greatest safety pronounce that no such connexion or correspondence ever did exist.'<sup>86</sup> C. Gill, an early writer on the subject, expounded arguments to the contrary, although they were based largely on assumptions.<sup>87</sup> Marianne Elliott, writing in 1983, suggested that William Duckett, a French agent, 'was widely suspected of having been implicated in the Nore and Spithead mutinies of 1797.' She contends that 'the prominence of such men [thousands of Irish rebels who were serving in the navy] in the Nore mutiny in particular is beyond dispute, as are the attempts of the United movement to keep it alive from onshore.'<sup>88</sup> She had earlier developed the point of the Irish presence in the Navy in *Partners in Revolution: The United Irishmen and France*. Her evidence on numbers is, of necessity, uncertain. Among other sources she quotes Dobrée and Mainwaring, who calculate that one-eighth to one-half of the Navy in 1797 were Irish. This might be thought to be an unacceptably imprecise statistic with which to support any argument. Jenny Graham is swayed towards a radical involvement but she does make the heavy qualification, 'That there were mutinous elements in the

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<sup>85</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, July 1797. 605-7.

<sup>86</sup> TNA: PRO HO42/41, f.208, King to Graham and Williams, 16 June 1797; f.213, Report of Graham and Williams, 24 June 1797.

<sup>87</sup> Gill, C., *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, (1913). ch.xxiv, *passim*.

<sup>88</sup> Elliott, M., 'French Subversion in Britain in the French Revolution' in Jones, C., (ed.), *Britain and Revolutionary France: Conflict, Subversion and Propaganda*. 43, 47; CKS., Q/SB 1797, Rickard, G., *Kent Enrolments Under the Navy Act, 1796*, shows that of 461 enrolments, 53 were Irishmen. Elliott provides no evidence that the United Irishmen were involved in the mutiny.

navy, prepared to capitalise upon the political embarrassments of the government, seems entirely possible; to what extent they were encouraged by political dissidents on shore must perhaps always remain uncertain.<sup>89</sup> Wells is clear that there was a political aspect to the mutiny: 'the involvement of democrats and revolutionaries in the mutinies cannot be denied'. But it has to be said that his arguments are almost entirely conjectural.<sup>90</sup> Elliott admits that 'there is no irrefutable evidence of a campaign by France and the English and Irish republicans to infiltrate the armed forces in the period before the 1797 mutinies; but the cumulative impression of the fragmentary information available is that such an attempt was made.'<sup>91</sup> This, too, is a long way from firm evidence of infiltration.

I have discovered two pieces of contemporary evidence which, superficially, support the proposition of external involvement. The first is a piece of hearsay evidence arising from the examination of John Snipe, surgeon of the *Sandwich* (one of the vessels involved in the mutiny), on 3 June 1797. He alleged that the crew had said that Parker had received £1,000 from the Corresponding Societies.<sup>92</sup> This would seem to have been a remarkably large sum for the Societies to have at their disposal and that, of itself, may cast doubt on the validity of the statement. The point does not seem to have been taken seriously by Admiral Keith, the naval commander, for there is no record that it was raised in the subsequent questioning of anyone from this or any other ship. The second piece of evidence appears in a letter from St Vincent to the Admiralty in August 1798. In the context of a mutiny in *The Prince*, one of the ships under his command off Cadiz, he wrote:

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<sup>89</sup> Graham, J., *The Nation, The Law and the King. Reform Politics in England 1789-1799*. 783-803.

<sup>90</sup> Wells, R., *Insurrection: The British Experience 1795-1803*. 90-99.

<sup>91</sup> Elliott, M., *Partners in Revolution*. 136-144.

<sup>92</sup> Lloyd, C., (ed.), *The Keith Papers*, vol. ii, Navy Records Society. 17.

It appears from the confessions of some of the unfortunate mutineers who have suffered death for their crimes, under sentence of Courts Martial and the acknowledgement of others, now serving in this squadron, that much of the mischief which has taken place in His Majesty's Fleet, arose from plans and combinations formed by the United Irishmen, who were sent on board the different depot ships, at Plymouth, Spithead and the Nore.<sup>93</sup>

Faced with death, it is possible that those involved would say what they thought the authorities wanted to hear. It may have simply been bombast on the part of the many Irishmen in the fleet, or it may have been a rumour which had spread throughout the Fleet, having no foundation in fact. It just may have been true, but it can scarcely be taken as conclusive.

It was at the Chequers Inn in Sheerness that, in the early stages, the mutineers' leaders held their meetings. The townspeople may have been entertained by the sight of the sailors parading through the town accompanied by brass bands. Yet even this may have had an air of menace about it, despite the fact that the bands were playing such airs as 'God Save the King' and 'Rule Britannia'. It was reported that the seamen were joined in due course by their relatives 'who made seaside holidays of the mutiny. ... Frolic and parades reigned at Sheerness, where they hold their conferences.'<sup>94</sup> Contrariwise, the *Annual Register* reported that 'they then parade the streets and ramparts of the garrison with a degree of triumphant insolence, and hold up the bloody flag of defiance as a mark of scorn to the military.'<sup>95</sup> It is possible that the truth lies in the description of an initial lightheartedness, whilst the suggestion of triumphalism may have more the tone of officially-inspired propaganda, or it may be that a flashpoint could have transformed the one mood into the other.

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<sup>93</sup> BL., Add.MSS. 31,171, f.172, St Vincent to Neapean, 10 August 1798.

<sup>94</sup> Dugan, J., *The Great Mutiny*. 189-90.

<sup>95</sup> Dugan, J., *The Great Mutiny*. 198-9, quoting from the *Annual Register*.

In the course of the mutiny the government despatched two militia regiments from Canterbury to Sheerness to strengthen the local garrison, and another from Chelmsford to Southend to defend the Essex side of the river. Dugan reports that when the soldiers arrived at Sheerness the sailors greeted them with 'violent proceedings'. Yet he goes on to write that 'there were no clashes between the two arms of his Majesty's services. The sailors marched alongside the soldiers, shaking hands and leading them in patriotic songs.'<sup>96</sup> It is difficult to reconcile these two statements. It seems likely that it is the latter which represented the true position, since Dugan writes that when the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty were on their way to Sheerness on 27 May, General Grey 'sent the militia to their barracks, to spare their Lordships the sight of his men fraternising with theirs.'<sup>97</sup>

Even if it was the case at the beginning that the townspeople had any sympathy with the mutineers, and it is not certain that they had, the initial cheering may have been a fearful response rather than enthusiasm for the mutineers' cause. Attitudes had crystallised by the latter part of May. On the 26<sup>th</sup> two boats from ships under the control of the mutineers landed their crews at Gravesend but the hostility shown by those on the waterfront sent them away again. On the 28<sup>th</sup> the Sheerness shipwrights who were initially sympathetic towards the mutineers, declined to repair ships flying the red flag and this was replaced by the loyal flag. On the 30<sup>th</sup> Parker and another came ashore with the intention of persuading the Sheerness authorities not to cut off the supply of victuals to the ships. They found the houses shuttered and the women and children being evacuated from the town. They met with a hostile reception. The following day the

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<sup>96</sup> Dugan, J., *The Great Mutiny*. 205.

<sup>97</sup> Dugan, J., *The Great Mutiny*. 228.

*Clyde*, the crew of which had resiled from the mutiny, sailed into Sheerness, 'where the townsmen cheered the anti-mutineers as fervently as they had cheered the mutineers a few weeks before.'<sup>98</sup> The townspeople were not suffering materially as a result of the mutiny. When the mutineers imposed a blockade on ships entering the Thames with the intention of proceeding to London they had regard for the needs of both local people and the citizens of London when they made an exception for boats carrying fish and market-garden produce from the Kentish ports.

After an initial freedom to go ashore the ships' crews were compelled to remain on board ship and from there they were not in the best position to exhort support from the townspeople. In the latter stages only the ships' delegates were to venture ashore for meetings with the naval authorities and General Grey eventually refused even this access. The town was full of soldiers, as were towns further up the Thames estuary. The townspeople had available to them not much more than the government's side of the story and this would have excluded any reference to those genuine issues in dispute which might have elicited wider support. 'The average Briton was forced to Mr Pitt's designed conclusions that it could be only Jacobins, French agents, or traitors who would continue a rebellion that no longer had a cause.'<sup>99</sup> Yet testimony to the moderation with which Parker and Davies had acted, in contrast to other leaders of the mutiny, is given in a letter written by a Kentish Justice of the Peace who had witnessed the execution of Parker from a boat alongside the *Sandwich*. He wrote:

No man ever left this world with more becoming fortitude and resignation than he did, and fortunate do I consider it for the Country at large but particularly for the Inhabitants of this Island [the writer was from Sheppey], that he and Davies who acted as Admiral and Captain were under

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<sup>98</sup> Dugan, J., *The Great Mutiny*. 245, 250.

<sup>99</sup> Dugan, J., *The Great Mutiny*. 288.

all the circumstances of the case possessed of so much Moderation, for had they been as sanguinary and violent, as the generality of the principal leaders were, God only knows, what would have been the consequence. Thomas Parker was moderate in comparison. Though he preserved by his conduct the lives of Many, yet the Country claimed the Sacrifice of his life as He in the first instance had not the least cause of protest for engaging in it.<sup>100</sup>

Some quite limited speculative or anecdotal evidence can be found to support the proposition of external involvement in the mutiny, but to elevate it to the prime cause of, or even an important element in, the mutiny cannot be sustained. Kentish folk played no part in supporting the mutiny and there is no solid evidence that others were using the Sheerness area for this purpose. It is here contended that the proposition that there was organised external aid to the mutineers merits no more than the Scottish verdict of 'not proven', and it is probable that even that is going much too far in the direction of external radical involvement. Dickinson seems to strike the right note when he writes that 'it is extremely doubtful whether these mutinies, dangerous though they were, can be interpreted as a genuinely revolutionary movement which might have brought about a radical reform of the constitution. When the authorities made concessions and acted promptly against the ringleaders the mutinies collapsed.'<sup>101</sup>

### **The Kentish reaction**

The situation of Kent relative to the armed forces was different from that of most other counties. With a large element of the fleet stationed off its shore and with a major naval base at Chatham, Kent suffered more than many others from pressing for the navy, aside from the demands made upon it to provide greater numbers of troops than a majority of other counties. As the key area in the country's defence it was almost literally swamped by soldiers, with the manifold problems which accompanied them in

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<sup>100</sup> Dugan, J., *The Great Mutiny*; CKS., U3446.01, Edward Shove to Nancy Williams, 31 July 1797.

<sup>101</sup> Dickinson, H.T., *Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. 26.

respect of billeting and demands for food and transport. There was the drunkenness, prostitution and bastardy seemingly inseparable from the presence of large numbers of troops. On the other hand, the war boosted the county's economy to some extent with increased opportunities for non-agricultural employment in the naval dockyards and the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, some barrack building and minor additions to the fortifications, apart from the provision of *matériel* for the armed forces and the production of beer and gin.

It was widely recognised that the defences of the county, and hence of the country, were seriously deficient. Yet, despite pleas from the Duke of Richmond and other army commanders, little was done to remedy the situation. Parliament was not sympathetic to the demands for finance to extend the physical defences. As Richmond wrote to Pitt in 1789, 'I perfectly agree with you that the popular prejudice in favour of the Navy and against Fortifications is so great that it would be much easier to avail oneself of the former than to combat the latter.'<sup>102</sup> Not until the Napoleonic War were serious steps taken to strengthen the defences, with modernisation of the dockyards and Arsenal, additions to the Dover defences, the installation of Martello Towers on the coast, the construction of the Royal Military Canal and further augmentation of the numbers of troops.

The county bore the military burdens which had been imposed upon it without reacting against them. The riots against pressing and crimping which had occurred in some other parts of the country were not replicated in Kent. It might have been that the county was unduly loyalist but there is really no evidence that this was the case; albeit

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<sup>102</sup> TNA: PRO 30/8/171, f.146, Richmond to Pitt, 13 September 1789.

neither was it a hotbed of radicalism. The rurality of Kent, the fact that there were few large towns, and even fewer which were industrialised, was one reason why the county was generally peaceable. The country gentry and aristocracy whose charity and understanding attitudes were instrumental in avoiding food riots, were often the same as those commanding the Militia and Volunteer units, and their influence in the one arena extended to the other. Insofar as there was radicalism in the dockyards, it was not to be expected that the workers would react strenuously against continuance of the war. Their livelihood was dependent upon it. Once it came to an end they would be dismissed as, indeed, happened in 1802 and, more disastrously for them, in 1815.

Troops stationed in Kent could not always be relied upon to uphold law and order but, on the whole, they were not given to rebellious actions, unlike those even as close at hand as the adjoining county of Sussex. Yet it would have been obvious, even to those of a militant radical disposition, that the forces on which the magistrates could, in the ultimate, draw were not only overwhelming but largely reliable in their loyalty. That the troops were an irritant was offset, to a limited extent, by their collaboration with the local population in keeping down the price of foodstuffs. Their constant demands were unwelcome although, on balance, they bolstered the economy of the county. The presence of the army in Kent was a factor, although a relatively unimportant one, in discouraging riotous behaviour on the part of the civilian population.

## 8. FOREIGNERS, ENGLISHMEN AND SPIES

By 1792 the presence of foreigners near the coast of Kent and particularly in places vital to the country's defence such as Dover was seen as presenting a potential danger to Britain. In response, the principal centres for alien control were situated in the county of Kent. Thousands of French citizens were seeking refuge from the excesses of the Revolution and there was concern that this exodus would provide opportunities to infiltrate agents into England to spy on Britain's defences or to engage in Jacobin propaganda. As Pitt averred in the debate on the Aliens Act 'A great many foreigners had come into it [England]; there were no means of discriminating their characters.'<sup>1</sup> Kent was in the front line of Britain's defence and the need for alien control was clearly in the forefront of the minds of the inhabitants of the county. It will be shown in this chapter that they played an active part in the tracking down of illegal immigrants. A recognition of the need to assist alien control in the interests of the country as a whole, combining with francophobia, never far from English minds, provides some evidence of the extent to which patriotism held sway in Kent during the 1790s and at the turn of the century. It was yet another factor encouraging the high degree of quiescence which was enjoyed by the county.

The chapter will be concerned with the detailed operation of alien controls, a subject which has not previously been examined on either a national or a more localised basis. A case study of their impact on Kent will cover activities at the principal immigration/emigration control points and, by analogy, will illustrate the procedures at

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<sup>1</sup> *Parl. Hist.*, vol.xxx, cols. 228-38, 4 January 1793.

other authorised ports, although they played a relatively minor role in alien control. References will be made to the attitudes of the people of Kent towards aliens, and the extent to which those Englishmen seeking to aid revolutionary France could expect local assistance in the 1790s is compared with the situation in the earlier 1700s, when Jacobites were using Kent as an entry and exit point to support a dispossessed king.

Jacobites operating from France and travelling to and from England could rely on some support from Kentish people. Francis Attenbury, the Bishop of Rochester, was the Stuart's official Resident in England. The county families of Hales, Roper, Campion and Hardres were to be numbered among Jacobite supporters. The Mayor of Dover was removed from office in 1718 for being a Jacobite, whilst a mayor of Folkestone was accused of being one such. P. Monod demonstrates that smugglers were the principal form of cross-channel transport for Jacobite agents, spies and correspondence.<sup>2</sup> The situation facing Jacobins in the 1790s was a very different one. Those acting in consort with the French revolutionary government could rely on some masters of neutral merchant vessels to transport them illegally across the Channel but they could not rely on help from Kentish families. Radicals such as Earl Stanhope limited their support for the French Revolution to spoken and written encouragement, and to efforts to bring the war to an end. They proffered no help to foreign or indigenous agents seeking to introduce Jacobinism into Britain. The one thing which had not changed from earlier in the century was the role played by Kentish smugglers. France needed gold to finance its wars in mainland Europe and smugglers engaged in 'guinea smuggling' on a large scale. Napoleon is on record on the part played by smugglers in aiding the French war effort:

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<sup>2</sup> Monod, P., 'Dangerous Merchandise: Smuggling and Commercial Culture in South-East England 1690-1760' in *Journal of British Studies*, vol.30 (April 1991).

All the intelligence I received from England came through the smugglers. ... At one time there were upwards of five hundred of them in Dunkerque. I had every information I wanted through them. They brought over newspapers and dispatches from the spies that we had in London. They took over spies from France, landed and kept them in their houses for some days, and then dispersed them over the country, and brought them back when wanted.<sup>3</sup>

It was not that there was any political or religious affinity between either Jacobites or Jacobins on the one hand, and smugglers on the other. It was simply that each perceived a mutual advantage in using the other. It was, in a sense, a purely commercial transaction, albeit illegal.

### **Aliens Act, 1793 and the Alien Office**

The Aliens Act, 1793 required that foreigners should reside within fifty miles of London and since Dover was the only authorised port of entry in the south-east, many either remained in Kent or were traversing the county on their way to London. Aside from the controls exercised by the Alien Officers it was important that Kentish residents should watch for aliens who had landed illegally, who were living in particular locations in the county without authority, or who were behaving suspiciously. They were strongly urged to do this by Loyalist Associations (see Appendix) and the authorities could rely on them to do so. There are few written examples of the work of informants but there are many cases in the Alien Office correspondence with its Kentish Inspectors where the information provided on landings other than at the authorised port of Dover, the presence of aliens in an unauthorised location, or of suspicious action by aliens could have come only from a Kentish magistrate, constable or resident.

French refugees had been under surveillance from the beginning of 1792. The Alien Office was established some six months prior to the passage of the Aliens Act in

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<sup>3</sup> O'Meara, B.E., *Napoleon in Exile: or a Voice from St. Helena. The Opinions and Reflections of Napoleon* (1822), vol. 1. 251-2.

January 1793, principally to monitor the activities of aliens already in Britain. This was effected through the London police offices set up under the Westminster Police Act of 1792, each with a stipendiary magistrate. In its early days the Office was concerned with the issue of visas to foreigners, the interception of their mail and observation of their movements, but in October 1794 with William Wickham, one of the London magistrates as Superintendent of Aliens, its operations were extended to Europe. In 1797 the Alien Office assumed responsibility for counter-espionage activities in Britain which had, until then, been the combined responsibility of the Foreign and Home Offices. Wickham, who at this time was located in Berne where he had been liaising with French counter-revolutionaries, returned in November 1797 and resumed the office of Superintendent of Aliens. He was appointed as one of two Under-Secretaries at the Home Office, possibly since the Alien Office was taking over the work on counter-espionage.

Eastwood suggests that surveillance was primarily the responsibility of the Home Office through a network of informers and local magistrates. He acknowledges the significance of the Alien Office but sees it as 'neither the permanent nor the most pervasive agency of state surveillance.' Emsley, too, attributes the collection and investigation of material on suspicious characters to the Home Office.<sup>4</sup> Only in the technical sense that the Alien Office was under the control of the Duke of Portland, the Home Secretary, was this the case. Wells makes a well-argued case that the Alien Office was at the centre of secret service work, a point made even more emphatically by Elizabeth Sparrow, when she writes that:

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<sup>4</sup> Eastwood, D., 'Patriotism and the English State in the 1790s' in Philp. M., *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*. 149; Emsley, C., 'The home office and its sources of information and investigation 1791-1801' in *EHR.*, vol.xciv (1979). 532-561. Much of what Emsley attributes to the Home Office was, in fact, the work of the Alien Office.

In fact between 1793 and 1806 it was the administrative office for the first comprehensive British secret service in the modern sense, therefore the forerunner of not only Special Operations Executive (S.O.E.) but also the euphemistically named Military Intelligence (M.I.5 and M.I.6), which provided a skeleton on which later organizations have hung their own bodywork.<sup>5</sup>

Sparrow's forward projection of the influence of the Alien Office is speculative, but the key role which both she and Wells ascribe to it at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is accurate. The role which Eastwood attributes to the Home Office represented the position in the early days of the Alien Office but from 1794, when Portland appointed Wickham as Superintendent, the Alien Office assumed a highly interventionist role. Wickham was an experienced government agent. He later became a Privy Councillor and Chief Secretary for Ireland. He was joined in the Alien Office by John King, a Home Office Under-Secretary from 1791 to 1806, and Charles Flint from the Foreign Office. Richard Ford became a fourth Superintendent of Aliens in 1800, the year when he was appointed as Chief London Magistrate.

Kent was the key to alien control throughout the period to the end of the Revolutionary War, and well beyond it. Entry to and departure from the country was permitted only at authorised ports. From September 1794 to January 1795, and again in January 1799, the ports of Harwich and Yarmouth were frequently in use for these purposes but it was the Kentish ports which, for most of the time, were concerned with the supervision of immigration and emigration.<sup>6</sup> At the beginning of 1796 it was decided that neutral vessels from France would be allowed to berth only at Dover. Foreigners were not to be allowed to land elsewhere in Kent, 'under any pretext whatever'.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Wells, R., *Insurrection: The British Experience 1795-1803*. ch. 2, 'The British Secret Service 1795-1803', *passim*; Sparrow, E., 'The Alien Office, 1792-1806' in *Hist.Jnl*, vol.xxxiii (1990). 362.

<sup>6</sup> For Alien Office correspondence with Harwich and Yarmouth see TNA: PRO HO5/1.

<sup>7</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/1, f.317-8. Alien Office to Customs, Deal, Ramsgate, Dover, 9 January 1796.

In March 1796 arrangements for entry to the country were codified in an Order in Council. Thereafter, this was to be permitted only at Yarmouth, Harwich, Gravesend, Dover and Southampton.<sup>8</sup> In practice it was generally the Kentish ports which were used. Initially, aliens ordered to leave the country were expelled through the port of Dover. This arrangement came to an end in July 1795 after General Sloper expressed concern that French prisoners of war exchanged for their British counterparts were able to view the Dover fortifications. All travellers to mainland Europe were, thereafter, required to depart from Gravesend.<sup>9</sup> Even when individuals from the West Country and the Isle of Wight were being expelled they were required to go from Gravesend rather than from the much nearer authorised port of Southampton.<sup>10</sup> With the exception of the return of French prisoners of war, travel from England was permitted only to a neutral port, usually Hamburg, a free port under Prussian influence.<sup>11</sup>

The Alien Office had for a short time worked in conjunction with Customs Officers who were stationed at all save the smallest ports. Philip Newport who had been Controller of Customs at Dover was appointed as the Alien Officer there. Portland, thought it necessary 'to send a confidential person to Gravesend to enforce supervision of the Aliens Act and departure of foreigners from the Kingdom.' John Mazzinghi, until then in the employ of the Lord Mayor as Alien Officer for the City of London, was appointed.<sup>12</sup> In March 1796 other appointments were made and 'a confidential person'

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<sup>8</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/1, f.402. Alien Office to Trinity House, Customs House, Chief Magistrates, Yarmouth, Harwich, Gravesend, Dover, Southampton, and twenty-seven other Chief Magistrates, 26 March, 1796, enclosing copy of Order in Council, 23 March.

<sup>9</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/1, f.237. Portland to Sloper, 30 July 1795.

<sup>10</sup> Examples are at TNA: PRO HO5/4, f.241 (a west country removal) and HO5/7, f.71 (removal from the Isle of Wight of Invalids discharged from French *émigré* regiments).

<sup>11</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/5, f.428. King to Waldegrave, 20 June 1800.

<sup>12</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/1, f.361-4, Carter to Mazzinghi, 18 February; f.367, King to Hume, Custom House, 25 February 1796.

was sent to Deal ostensibly to assist the Customs to administer the Aliens Act at Ramsgate, Margate and other local ports. Newport was told to give all necessary help to the newly-appointed Inspector at Deal but he was warned that correspondence should not be encouraged.<sup>13</sup> Secret correspondence continued to be entrusted to Newport, so either discretion at Deal could not be relied upon or it was thought that letters in transit could be intercepted.

### **The Function of Inspector of Aliens**

Inspectors of Aliens quickly assumed the dominant role *vis-a-vis* Customs. The Alien Office was intent on demonstrating its precedence over other public authorities. In March 1800 an alien was ordered by the Office to quit the kingdom. En route, he was arrested for debt and placed in the custody of the Sheriff's Officer. This was not acceptable to the Alien Office and James Walsh, the Inspector at Gravesend, was ordered to remove the alien from custody and put him on board ship. In July 1801 an appointment was made of a Secretary to the Commissioner for [British] Prisoners of War. He embarked for France under an order from the Transport Board to its Dover agent. The Superintendent of Aliens reprimanded the Board and made clear that anyone leaving Britain must possess His Majesty's licence, which could be issued only by the Alien Office. Another example of Alien Office dominance involved two cutters on loan to the Alien Office from Customs. The Commissioners of Customs had ordered them to withdraw from Alien Office service, proceed to Deptford for repair and then continue to the Nore to supervise the destruction of a damaged cargo of tea. Walsh directed them to remain under his control at Gravesend. The Alien Office Superintendent wrote, 'I am at

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<sup>13</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/1, f.392. King to Chief Officers, Customs, Ramsgate, Deal, Margate, 19 March 1796; HO5/2, f.1, King to Newport, 26 July 1796.

the same time to express to you the Duke of Portland's entire approbation of the steps you have taken on this occasion.' In 1801 the Commissioners of Transports requested from an Alien Officer a list of all passengers arriving from France. Portland instructed that in no circumstances was this to be provided.<sup>14</sup> The powers of Commissioners were no match for those of the Duke of Portland. With his backing, Alien Officers' decisions prevailed over those of other government officials. Newport remained in office until his death in October 1799, when he was replaced by Benjamin Stow. Mazzinghi was succeeded in December 1798 by James Walsh, who had earlier been a Home Office spy and possibly a King's Messenger.<sup>15</sup>

When the Aliens Bill was introduced in December 1792, Grenville was concerned that some of those arriving from France were of 'the most abominable principles ... People of that kind had been sent to England in the hope that they might be able to raise an insurrection, and overthrow the government.' He indicated that the purpose of the Bill was not only to control alien entry but also to keep watch on those already here.<sup>16</sup> These objectives were confirmed in speeches by Dundas, the Home Secretary, and by Pitt.<sup>17</sup> To enter or depart from the country, a passport issued by the Alien Office was essential and baggage would be searched. Letters would be read and, if suspicious, sent to the Alien Office. English nationals residing in France without a British passport were liable to prosecution under the Traitorous Correspondence Act, 1793 if they returned to England. Vessels landing passengers illicitly were liable to prosecution and to confiscation of the

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<sup>14</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/5, f.303. Flint to Walsh, 17 March 1800; HO5/6, f.453. Flint to Stow, 9 July 1801; HO5/5, f.375-6. Flint to Walsh, 8 May 1800; HO5/6, f.351. Flint to Stow, 13 April 1801.

<sup>15</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/5, f.81. Flint to Stow, 5 October 1799; HO5/4, f.185, Wickham to Mazzinghi, 14 November 1798; HO5/4, f.217. Wickham to Reeves, 11 December 1798; f.216. Portland to Gravesend.

<sup>16</sup> *Parl.Hist.*, vol.xxx, 21 December 1792. cols.152-4; 156-8.

<sup>17</sup> *Parl.Hist.*, vol.xxx, 28 December 1792. cols.174-6, 228-238; 4 January 1793, cols.228-38.

vessel. If an alien wished to reside in a specific town, or to travel from one town to another, it was necessary to have a licence issued by the Alien Office, the mayor or a magistrate.

From time to time, suggestions were made by the Kent Inspectors for tightening controls on alien movements. They were not made from any fear of agitation in Kent but from a desire to improve the efficiency of the Service. In 1796 deployment of cutters had been suggested by Newport to prevent passage vessels (those authorised to voyage between Dover and Calais and *vice versa*) being approached by small boats which facilitated illicit landings of persons or letters.<sup>18</sup> The Alien Office decided that a Customs cutter should be loaned to the Inspector at Gravesend. This arrangement proved successful, as a second cutter was provided in September and a third was agreed at the beginning of 1799.<sup>19</sup> Their service was evidently deemed to be satisfactory since, in 1799, the crews were awarded gratuities of £20 to the captains, £10 to Chief Mates, £5 to Second Mates and £1.1s. to seamen.<sup>20</sup> In June 1797 the cutters were withdrawn from Gravesend as they 'were become necessary for the resistance of the mutineers at the Nore.'<sup>21</sup> Presumably they were sent to the Nore because the authorities felt that they could better rely on the loyalty of government-employed seamen who were unconnected with the Royal Navy. There is no known record of the cutters and their crews having played any part in quelling the mutiny. One of the cutters was sent urgently to Standgate (probably a misspelling of Sandgate) Creek. It was apparently required 'on quarantine

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<sup>18</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/2, f.78. In a letter from Carter to Newport, 6 August 1796, this was agreed.

<sup>19</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/2, f.135. King to Hume, Customs House, 12 September 1796; f.248. The third cutter was requested in a letter from Portland to the Lords Commissioners of HM Treasury, 4 January 1799.

<sup>20</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/4, f.317. Flint to Walsh, 30 March 1799.

<sup>21</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/2, f.420. Carter to Mazzinghi, 1 June 1797.

service.’ From 1720, quarantine had been a responsibility of Customs. If there was a possibility of disease being introduced from other countries, ships’ masters were compelled to bring their vessels to approved boarding stations and to make a health declaration on oath.<sup>22</sup> Sandgate, west of Folkestone, was a convenient boarding point before arrival at Dover, some ten miles away. Six months later the cutter had not been returned and Walsh was concerned that its absence was hindering alien control at Gravesend. In response to an Alien Office request, the Treasury gave orders for its return.<sup>23</sup>

In their dealing with individuals, Inspectors of Aliens operated on the basis of information supplied by the Alien Office, by Kentish magistrates or residents (directly or indirectly), by diplomats serving abroad, by spies and informers, or on their own initiative. The Office would issue instructions concerning individuals who should be detained when they arrived at a port. There was often a detailed description of the individual and perhaps some personal characteristics such as, ‘dressed like a Quaker both hat and clothes. Had a Suffolk accent but did not converse like a Quaker.’<sup>24</sup> There were complaints from magistrates ‘respecting the number of aliens, usually Italians, who under pretence of selling prints, images, etc., wander over the country either defrauding the people or in many instances dispersing seditious and improper publications.’ Over a few days in April 1797 forty three Italians arrived at Gravesend from Hamburg, and a further ninety-five in May. All were refused entry. The French army was steadily subjugating Italy, Napoleon occupied Milan in the Spring of 1796 and by 1798 the Papal States would

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<sup>22</sup> Douch, J., *Rough Rude Men: A History of Old-Time Kentish Smuggling*. 29.

<sup>23</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/4. F.493, 15 August 1799; HO5/5. F.286, King to Long, HM Treasury, 21 February 1800; HO5/5, f.297. Customs agreed to return the cutter after it had been repaired.

<sup>24</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/5, f.431. King to Stow, 23 June 1799.

be invaded. The Alien Office considered that Italians visiting Britain could be in the service of France. Mazzinghi was instructed to make known to ships' masters that they would not be permitted to land Italians at Kentish ports. If any Italian was set down 'the penalties of the Aliens Act including the forfeiture of the vessel will without doubt be enforced'. The instruction was not rigorously adhered to since, two years later, Wickham wrote to Sir James Craufurd, H.M. Minister at Hamburg, that there was 'a strong case to suspect that correspondence was carried on by Italian picture-frame makers and other travelling merchants of that nation who come over once or twice a year in great numbers.' The Alien Office re-affirmed that they should not be allowed to land.<sup>25</sup>

Much of the information concerning aliens who were already in the county came from Kentish residents. The information could not usually have been known in any other way. In December 1797 Mazzinghi reported his concern about aliens residing in the city of Canterbury. The Office advised the Mayor to deal with any treacherous or seditious schemes which were afoot, 'Canterbury being a very improper place for Foreigners who are not well known.' In the light of Mazzinghi's report, the Alien Office informed the Mayor that since it appeared that 'most lead very inoffensive lives and have been in Canterbury a long time', they could be allowed to remain. Two individuals only were to be removed.<sup>26</sup> There were very many cases where individuals were detained upon arrival at the Kentish ports, but quickly found to be above suspicion and allowed to proceed to London or elsewhere.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/2, f.371-2. King to Mazzinghi, 20 April 1797; Carter to Mazzinghi, 10 May; HO5/4, f.339, Wickham to Craufurd, 23 April 1799.

<sup>26</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/3, f.167-9. Carter to Mazzinghi and Mayor of Canterbury, 14 December 1797; f.181. Carter to Mayor of Canterbury, 29 December.

<sup>27</sup> Some of many examples are at TNA: PRO HO5/1, f.25; HO5/3, f.47; HO5/4, ff.176, 204, 281, 334, 349, 440, 451.

Neutral vessels frequently landed or embarked passengers at Kentish ports. An *arrêt* of the French *Directoire* at the beginning of 1797 specified those neutral and neutralised ships (those belonging to French subjects but sailing under a neutral flag) which would be permitted to voyage to England from French ports. Two neutral ships were nominated to sail between Calais and Dover. One was a Swedish vessel named the *Ingeborg*. This decision caused some concern at the Alien Office, for the *Ingeborg* had recently been detained at Dover after it had allowed a Frenchman to land illicitly at Deal, secretly bringing with him letters and papers. Consideration had been given to a prosecution against the master but, in the event, no charge was laid and the ship was returned to its owner. The British government considered that the French could not object to a reciprocal arrangement and it was decided to designate neutral vessels to sail from England to France. Mazzinghi was instructed to ensure that the British-nominated vessels 'must have reliable captains.'<sup>28</sup>

Foreign vessels might declare to the Kentish port authorities that they were sailing for one foreign port when they were actually going to another. An American ship, for example, could declare for New York but *en route* would sail to Rotterdam.<sup>29</sup> The Alien Office was concerned that those given a passport to Hamburg should not instead travel to France, or any country under French influence. Passports would be issued for 'Embden' (*sic*) but some recipients would depart on vessels which it was known would be going to Rotterdam. At the end of 1801, the Inspector at Gravesend was instructed that if masters

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<sup>28</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/2, f.249-50, Carter to Mazzinghi, 9 January 1797; f.206, 209, King to Newport, 14 and 16 November 1796; f.267-8, Carter to Mazzinghi, 30 January 1797.

<sup>29</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/2, f.8, King to Hume, Board of Customs, 28 April 1796. It was emphasized that this practice must be stopped.

cleared for a neutral port but landed passengers on the enemy coast, they should be taken into custody when next they returned to England.<sup>30</sup>

The attempted landing or departure of aliens without a passport was a constant problem for the Kentish alien authorities. Such arrivals would usually be refused entry and returned to their port of embarkation. Overland entrants to the town of Dover, intending to depart from there were required to produce not only a passport but also a permit to reside in the town. Kent's smaller ports were still being used for illicit entry and exit. In 1797, the Alien Office was complaining that 'frequently, without hindrance, those without passports repair to Margate to embark on neutral vessels to enemy country.' Foreigners were landing there from neutral vessels, and proceeding to London without a licence. Controls at Margate appear to have been lax, probably because there was not a resident Alien Officer. The Alien Officers at Dover and Deal had an oversight of the minor ports in Kent but they had to rely on Customs Officers at Margate, Ramsgate and Folkestone for day-to-day implementation of the Aliens Act. Port officials were instructed that disembarkation at Margate must be brought to an end and passengers must remain on board ship until the vessel reached Gravesend.<sup>31</sup> A similar problem existed at Folkestone where 'many persons, British subjects as well as Foreigners' were said to be passing clandestinely to and from France without licences or passports. A British subject was arrested on arrival at Folkestone, having come illicitly from Boulogne. The officer carrying out the arrest 'was violently assaulted and the prisoner illegally rescued by a

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<sup>30</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/7.f.105, Flint to Walsh, 24 September 1801.

<sup>31</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/2, ff.20, 21, King to Mayor of Dover, 13 May 1796; HO5/2, f.221, King to Newport, 29 November 1796; HO5/3, f.56, Alien Office to Customs, Margate, 19 August 1797; HO5/6, f.351, Flint to Stow, 13 April 1801.

number of people' when on the way to the magistrate.<sup>32</sup> This is the only example in the Alien Office correspondence of the rescue, or attempted rescue, of an illegal entrant at a Kentish or any other port. It seems, however, that once in the country the conduct of aliens was not everywhere peaceable. In October 1797 Grenville, as Foreign Secretary, sent the Commission concerned with aid to French refugees a copy of comments by the Duke of Portland, remarking that 'you will perceive his [Portland's] opinion of the necessity of correcting the dissolute course of the aliens in London.'<sup>33</sup>

Only in three cases does the Alien Office correspondence record that action was taken against a ship's master for illegally landing an alien, perhaps because they were not always detected. For such an offence, fines of £100 were imposed on an English smuggler and on the master of the brig *Success*. A Danish captain was fined the same amount. Penalties levied under the Aliens Act required that 'one moiety whereof shall be to the Informer or Informers, and the other moiety to the Parish or Place in which such offence shall have been committed.'<sup>34</sup> The Alien Office complained to Trinity House that pilots employed in the River Thames 'frequently land alien passengers clandestinely from on board ships they bring in and at places where they are forbidden to land.' A similar charge was laid against the Dover and Deal pilots in a letter from Portland to Pitt, the Lord Warden. 'I have His Majesty's command to desire that you will give a strict charge to all pilots in the above-mentioned stations' to abstain from a practice which enabled aliens to land illicitly.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/6, f.153, King to Mayor of Folkestone, 12 November 1800.

<sup>33</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/3, f.135-6, Grenville to Secretary, Commission for the Distribution of Secour [sic] to the French Emigrants, 17 October 1797.

<sup>34</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/5, f.258-9. King to Stow, 6 February 1800; HO5/7, f.103. Brooke to Mayor of Gravesend, 22 September 1801. Aliens Act 1793, 33 Geo. III c.4. The phrase was repeated throughout the Act, alongside each penalty.

<sup>35</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/3, f.145-6, Grenville to Elder Brethren, Trinity House, 25 November 1797; f.172.

Although legal action was seldom taken against the masters of vessels who breached the alien law, other sanctions may have acted as a deterrent. The Superintendent of Aliens codified arrangements for dealing with those who were required to quit the kingdom or, conversely, not allowed to land. Five pence *per diem* was to be allowed for those expelled who could not defray their expenses. This was for 'persons of a superior class'. 'Persons of the common class' were to have a single payment of 3s.6d. Where ships' masters brought over a foreigner who was refused permission to land they would have to return them at the expense of the individual 'or that of the Captain bringing them over.' Where the Government paid for the passage of impecunious individuals who were required to quit the kingdom, no sum exceeding three guineas, or five guineas for cabin passengers from Gravesend to Calais or Rotterdam was to be paid. Even when the Office was expelling undesirable aliens a kind of class distinction prevailed and the gentry were treated rather more generously than their supposed inferiors.<sup>36</sup>

### **The Post Office and Alien control**

The Post Office was responsible for the interception of suspect correspondence and for passing intelligence to the Secretaries of State. The Country Deputies (local postmasters) kept the Alien Office informed of 'all material transactions and remarkable occurrences.' Foreign correspondence was examined in a secret office under the control of the Foreign Secretary. Francis Freeling, Resident Surveyor to the Post Office, kept in

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Portland to Pitt, 20 December 1797.

<sup>36</sup> TNA: PRO. HO5/4, f.388. Flint to Walsh, 31 May 1799; HO5/6, f.447, King to Finch Hatton, Flint and Walsh, 28 June 17 1801.

touch on these matters with Wickham at the Alien Office.<sup>37</sup> Wickham also had his own sources. He wrote to Freeling, 'I have directed one of my correspondents to address all his letters to me under the name of Mr. Williams, Hampstead. Send them on to me.'<sup>38</sup> In 1793, whilst still Customs Collector at Dover, Newport had drawn attention to the fact that Chauvelin, the French government's sometime representative in London, was the recipient of many letters. Newport suggested that he should detain these and send them on to Dundas. Later, by now the Alien Officer, he proposed that neutral vessels sailing between Dover and Calais should be searched for illicit letters. He was advised by the Superintendent of Aliens that 'as it does not appear that there is any legal authority, which can justify detaining the vessels, you will only keep the letters which may be found, and send them to me.'<sup>39</sup> Newport was praised for his attention 'to the proceedings of the Commanders of Neutral Vessels, who carry on illicit correspondence with the enemy.' He had sent a batch of suspect letters to the Post Office but the clerk there had misunderstood why they had been sent and had distributed them to the addressees. The Alien Office was determined to avoid a repetition and instructed that such items should be sent to the Post Office by second-class post. Pre-warning should be given by first-class post that they were on the way, and this should avoid any further fiasco.<sup>40</sup>

Agreement was reached between the Alien Office and George Canning on how incoming foreign letters should be handled. All those intercepted at Dover from four named persons were to be sent under cover directly to the Under-Secretary of State.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> For a detailed account of the involvement of the Post Office in intelligence work, see Ellis, K., *The Post Office in the Eighteenth Century*, ch. 6, *passim*.

<sup>38</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/5, f.5. Wickham to Freeling, undated (July 1799).

<sup>39</sup> TNA: PRO HO.1/2, letter from Newport dated 12 January 1793; HO5/1, f.217, King to Newport, 24 June 1795.

<sup>40</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/1, ff.119,341, King to Newport, 20, 22 December 1794, 30 January 1796.

<sup>41</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/1, f.368-9, Carter to Newport, 25 February 1796.

Letters addressed to Minet and Fector, well-known Dover merchants and bankers, should be allowed to pass.<sup>42</sup> In March 1796, the Alien Office instructed the Postmaster-General that he should stop the practice of handling letters which had become a regular trade among the Innkeepers at Dover, 'and particularly (as I am credibly informed) by Mr Crow of the *London Inn*'. Baron de Nantiat was nominated by the Foreign Secretary to examine all correspondence with France. Grenville indicated to Newport that Nantiat was 'much in my confidence.'<sup>43</sup>

### Aliens in Kent

It is impossible to say how many aliens were resident in Kent at any point in time, but there is one group in respect of which information is available. Subsequent to the massacres of autumn 1792 many Catholic priests had emigrated from France to Britain, having refused to swear the Civic Oath. In France, in July 1790, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy had disengaged the Church from submission to Rome, given electors a vote in ecclesiastical appointments, and required the clergy to swear an oath of loyalty to the Constitution. Furet writes that 'Desormais, c'est l'ensemble de ses prêtres qui est mis en demeure de choisir entre Rome et Paris, universalité de l'Eglise et citoyenneté, conviction intérieure et autorité de l'Etat.'<sup>44</sup> T. Tackett, writing on religion and revolution in France in the eighteenth century, arrives at a figure of 48% of the 50,000 clergy who were non-jurors.<sup>45</sup> Not all of these left France - some gave up the ministry or followed it in secret -

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<sup>42</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/2, f.87, King to Captain of cutter, 11 August 1796.

<sup>43</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/2, f.322-3, King to Newport, 10 March 1797. Newport was told to co-operate with the Post Office; f.369, Grenville to Newport, 12 April 1797. de Nantiat was in frequent correspondence with Windham. In 1794 he was involved in despatching a group of *émigré* officers from England to the Vendée. He was often providing news, which he gleaned from friends and acquaintances, of what was occurring in France. BL., Windham Papers, vol.xiv, f.94, de Nantiat to Windham, 2 February 1792, and throughout 1794.

<sup>44</sup> Furet, F., *La Révolution de Turgot à Jules Ferry, 1770-1880*, 101.

<sup>45</sup> Tackett, T., *Religion, Revolution and Regional Culture in Eighteenth-Century France*, 41.

but of those who did, significant numbers came to England or the Channel Isles.<sup>46</sup> In December 1792 the Committee set up to deal with financial assistance to the needy French clergy and some laity then in Britain estimated that there were 6-7,000 *émigré* clergy, 3,000 in England and 3-4,000 in Jersey and other Channel Islands. Many of them required financial assistance. Dundas, at the Home Office, in response to an appeal for help from the Committee, initially offered none. He suggested that the public should be asked for donations to send them to Canada.<sup>47</sup> In February 1793 some four hundred French priests who had been residing at Dover did sail to Canada.<sup>48</sup> Minet, at Dover, had earlier suggested to the Committee that clergy should be offered passage to Brabant or elsewhere. 'It is a mode which we have followed toward the numbers who have landed here with such success having raised on the Tonn [*sic*] a small subscription for that express purpose.' Free passage was offered to those unable to pay for their own passage. The Committee and the government agreed with the suggestion and the masters of Post Office packets were ordered to take over such as wanted to go to Flanders and Holland, since these territories were still free from French control.<sup>49</sup>

The Bishop of St Pol de Léon acted throughout as intermediary between the authorities and the clergy. A degree of toleration of Catholics had resulted in the Catholic Relief Act of 1778, (18Geo.III, c.60), and further legislation of 1791 admitting Catholics to the professions and registering their places of worship. This fact encouraged the provision of aid to French Catholic refugees. Most of the money available to the aid

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<sup>46</sup> For details of how *émigré* clergy were received in England, see Bellinger, D.A., 'The *Émigré* Clergy and the English Church, 1789-1815' in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 34, no. 3, July 1983.

<sup>47</sup> BL., Add. MSS.18591, f.51-2.

<sup>48</sup> The APLPRL published *The Farewell Address of the French Emigrants to the Inhabitants of Dover on their Embarking for Canada*. The Address began, 'Four hundred French Refugees to whom your walls have given protection ...'.

<sup>49</sup> BL., Add. MSS.18591, ff.10-11.

Committee came from collections which had been authorised in Church of England churches by an edict of the King, and this was supplemented by financial contributions from local committees. The appeal was encouraged by, among others, Samuel Horsley, at this time Bishop of St David's. Although the Established Church was antipathetic towards Catholicism, its leaders in the cathedrals and universities, and many of the clergy were ready to provide aid to those who were seen to be opposed to an outright attack upon Christianity in the French Republic. Archbishop John Moore of Canterbury 'behaved handsomely' towards them.<sup>50</sup> However, 'Dissenters, radicals, inferior clergy, and ordinary parishioners were often hostile to efforts to raise funds on their behalf.'<sup>51</sup> By November 1792 the local aid committee of the cathedral city of Canterbury had collected the sum of £230.10s.6d. of which £93.9s.4d. had been disbursed.<sup>52</sup> On 10 December 1793 the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury gave £50, and their counterparts at Rochester £20 for relief. Few MPs made contributions; Filmer Honywood was one who did, making a donation of £10.<sup>53</sup>

For the purpose of making grants, the national Committee designated four groups of *émigré* clergy; those located in London, Winchester, Jersey, and 'Portsmouth, Dover, etc'. The great majority of these clergy were residing in Jersey, London and Winchester but, in August 1796, the government decided that the King's House at Winchester should be used as barracks and the clergy in residence were dispersed, mainly to the north of

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<sup>50</sup> Burke, E., to his son Richard, 1 October 1792, *Correspondence*, vol.vii. 224. The Archbishop gave £105 and £50; Bishop Horsley, £20 and £10.10s to the fund.

<sup>51</sup> Mather, F.C., *High Church Prophet: Bishop Samuel Horsley (1733-1806) and the Caroline Tradition in the later Georgian Church*. 104.

<sup>52</sup> BL., Add. MSS.18591, f.45.

<sup>53</sup> TNA: PRO T93/8.

England and the Reading area.<sup>54</sup> The national Committee reported, in December 1793, that 1,273 clergy were residing in London, each at a cost of 8s.6d. a week, and 455 in country towns at 9s. each. In total, £4,830 had been expended, of which £3,000 had been for those located in Jersey.<sup>55</sup> For the category of 'Portsmouth, Dover, etc.,' from December 1793, the monthly amounts varied very widely, from £341 to £1,809. Most often, the payments were of the order of £900 to £1,100. No breakdown of these disbursements was given. The Committee minutes give details for the month of November 1795 when there were 5,154 clergy who were being assisted financially. Of these, 1,719 clergy, 88 French nuns and 380 English nuns were in London. There were 1,860 being assisted in Jersey and 803 at Winchester. For the first time, the figures for 'Portsmouth, Dover, etc.' were broken down and numbers given for the clergy located in Kent. There were 52 at Dover, 17 at Canterbury, 7 at Lenham and 13 at Tunbridge Wells, amounting to 89, or almost 30% of a total of 304 for England, excluding London and Winchester.<sup>56</sup> These numbers included only those who were receiving assistance from the Committee, and financial help was given in accordance with strict terms. There were others in Kent who did not fall into this category. At the death, in August 1802, of Sir Edward Hales of Hales Place, near Canterbury, 'six of the French clergy, a body to whom he had been particularly bountiful, supported the pall.' Dr Thomas Cook, one of the former chaplains to Louis XVI, was among those residing at Hales Place.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/2, f.99, Carter to Bishop of St. Pol de Léon, 18 August 1796.

<sup>55</sup> BL., Add.MSS.18592, f.2-4.

<sup>56</sup> BL., Add. MSS.18592, f.66; TNA: PRO T93/45 and Bellenger, D.A., 'Seen but not heard: French Clergy exiled in Kent 1789-1815' in *Kent Recusant History*, nos. 6/7 (1981-2). 152-6 gives slightly different figures; Tunbridge Wells, 19 (August 1793), 16 (September), 10 in 1796; Lenham, 14 in 1793, 6 in 1797.

<sup>57</sup> *KG.*, 27 August and 10 September 1802; Bellenger, D., 'Seen but not heard', *Kent Recusant History*, nos. 6 and 7 (Aug. 1981 and Spring 1982). 152-3.

French priests were generally favourably received in England until 1795, when one, by name Couvet, engaged in proselytising in the town of Winchester. Couvet was ordered by the Bishop of St Pol de Léon to leave Winchester and the Alien Office ordered him to quit the kingdom.<sup>58</sup> William Jones of Nayland, formerly a parish priest in Kent, wrote in 1797 of the French clergy that ‘my own opinion of them is not so favourable to them as in times past.’ Mather points out that there was eventually a widespread Protestant backlash.<sup>59</sup> A secret letter from Grenville to Newport ordered that the Archbishop of Toulouse and his party were not to leave for France without a passport.<sup>60</sup> Bellenger suggests that French clergy in Kent made little immediate impact outside their own circles, since they were divided from the indigenous population by language, culture, religious tradition and history, and they were rarely seen in public.<sup>61</sup>

When Newport had suggested that all foreigners should be removed from Dover, the Alien Office had not been ready to go that far but it had considered that ‘the case of Priests and unmarried persons is very different. They are more likely to be concerned in intrigues.’ The Mayor of Dover was ordered to remove such persons from the town. By 1800 official attitudes had hardened. A number of French *émigrés*, both laity and clergy, were given passports to leave the country on condition that they did not return. The Inspectors of Aliens were instructed to arrest them if they ignored this condition.<sup>62</sup> The

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<sup>58</sup> BL., Add. MSS.18593, f.165.

<sup>59</sup> Mather, F.C., *High Church Prophet*. 106, *inter alia* quoting Horne MSS, D.6.I, W. Jones to Mrs G. Horne, 5 Dec. 1797.

<sup>60</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/2, f.195, Grenville to Newport, 1 November 1796.

<sup>61</sup> Bellenger, D.A., ‘Seen but not heard’. 152-3.

<sup>62</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/5, f.274, Flint to Capt. MacPherson, 14 February 1800; f.479, King to Blackburne, 22 July 1800; HO5/6, ff.19-20, 34, King to Cobb, 22 July (from its position in the correspondence book, it may be that this should have read August) 1800; Portman to Garrow, 1 September; f.36, Ford to Stow, Walsh and Hake, 4 September 1800.

Alien Office evidently regarded French priests with at least as much suspicion as it regarded members of the French laity.

### **Illegal entry and exit**

Numbers of illicit landings and departures are recorded in the Alien Office papers. The information will usually have been provided by Kentish residents. It is likely that other cases, possibly many others, remained undetected. In 1796 the officers of a privateer and some French prisoners of war were intending to board a Danish vessel bound for Hamburg. Mazzinghi was advised that 'there is good ground to suspect that there is a society of persons in London who supply these prisoners with money and assist them in making their escape.'<sup>63</sup> It is unlikely that this referred to the London Corresponding Society and there is nothing in the Society's extant records to support such a suggestion. If it was another society, its existence does not appear to be recorded, although in the letter reproduced on the following page there is the reference to, 'si par hazard quelques personnes de votre société veulent rentrer ...' [to France].

Magistrates at authorised ports were warned that Frenchmen were coming over to England purporting to be Swiss or other neutrals.<sup>64</sup> The Mayor of Rochester was reminded that 'Rochester is the place where the stages and their carriages particularly those that travel in the night may most easily be examined.' They could readily be stopped, since the passage for stages over the River Medway was at Rochester Bridge. The following month two foreigners travelling without passports were, indeed, arrested on the Dover to London road at Rochester.<sup>65</sup> At times, the arrangements at Gravesend in

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<sup>63</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/2, f.35, Carter to Mazzinghi, 4 June 1796.

<sup>64</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/2, f.57, King to Chief Magistrates, Harwich, Yarmouth, Gravesend, Dover, Southampton, 18 July 1796.

<sup>65</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/3, f.191, Carter to Mayor of Rochester, 6 January 1798; HO5/3, f.238, Carter to

on the Dover to London road at Rochester.<sup>65</sup> At times, the arrangements at Gravesend in respect of expulsions from the country were lax. Walsh was admonished after it was found that two individuals awaiting departure had each visited London twice, whilst another had allegedly written several malicious and anonymous letters, although it is not clear how it was known that he had written them. On another occasion Anthony la Riche who had been sent to Gravesend to quit the country, had been discovered riding to London.<sup>66</sup>

The three Alien Officers situated in Kent were very experienced, and judging from the Alien Office records the Kent operation was generally conducted efficiently in terms of what was asked of it by the Superintendents of Aliens. However, the arrangements did not always work smoothly. In January 1798 Thomas Carter, the Duke of Portland's private secretary, informed Nepean, the Secretary to the Admiralty, that Admiral Luttridge at the Nore had been advised of an individual who was particularly wanted by the authorities and who had absconded. The letter continued 'Will you be so good on the other hand to intimate to the Admiral that Mazzinghi is placed at Gravesend by Government and that any communications either on this or on similar subjects will deserve to be attended to.'<sup>67</sup>

Yet, despite the best endeavours of the Alien Officers, illicit traffic continued. A letter from an *émigré* to a friend in London, in August 1796, read:

Je me suis embarqué à Deal le 18 ct. à 10 h. du matin, et le lendemain samedi 19 nous étions en rade à 10 heures du matin, à 9 heures du soir nous étions tous débarqués ... Qu'il vous suffise de savoir qu le Havre passe pour la meilleure ville ... Si par hazard quelques personnes de votre société veulent rentrer, et plus particulièrement ceux de cette province, voilà la marche qu'ils doivent tenir: s'habiller en matelot, chercher un capitaine américain qui puissent vous prendre

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<sup>65</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/3, f.191, Carter to Mayor of Rochester, 6 January 1798; HO5/3, f.238, Carter to Mazzinghi, 14 February.

<sup>66</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/4, f.275, Flint to Walsh, 18 February 1799; f.474, Flint to Walsh, 31 July 1799.

<sup>67</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/3, f.218, Carter to Nepean, 29 January 1798.

comme d'équipage, ne pas se montrer beaucoup aux autres passagers de peur d'être reconnu ... Une fois dans le bassin du Havre vous travaillez aux cordages et le soir vous descendez avec vos effets sans rien craindre. Si l'on connaît la ville, l'on se rend chez un ami, on le peut, rien de plus aisé. ... Il faut qu'il s'informe s'il y a un capitaine qui doit aller en France, et surtout demander après William Cotton, qui est le capitaine avec lequel je suis passé.

[Further details as to this profitable trade in passengers, organised by French or American Merchantmen and Norman fishermen, could be obtained, we are informed], from 'Mr. Booth taylor [*sic*] No. 86 Little Tower Hill, six doors from the minories'.<sup>68</sup>

Napoleon at St. Helena, in conversation with O'Meara, his doctor, indicated that Englishmen in the pay of France:

assisted the French prisoners to escape from England. The relations of Frenchmen, prisoners in your country, were accustomed to go to Dunkerque, and to make a bargain with them to bring over a certain prisoner. All that they wanted was the name, age, and a private token, by means of which the prisoner might repose confidence in them. Generally, in a short time afterwards, they effected it.<sup>69</sup>

From these reports it is clear that any unauthorised person sufficiently determined and prepared to pay handsomely to cross the Channel had no real difficulty in so doing. This is scarcely surprising. All of the sophisticated methods of the twenty-first century cannot prevent it happening still.

Numbers of Englishmen maintained contact with France and were consequently under suspicion by the Alien Office. A man named Ridgway had gone from Dover on the *Felicity*, which was supposedly bound for Guernsey. It had gone instead to Calais, where he had landed. Newport was advised of other Englishmen who had resided in France in recent times, who were now back in England and were to be regarded with suspicion.<sup>70</sup> In September 1797 he was informed of a suspected person who had quit the country 'at the time of mutiny broke out in the Fleet.' No more is known of this particular individual and, apart from the dispatch to the Nore of cutters on loan to

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<sup>68</sup> Gilmour, D., (ed.), *Richard Cobb: The French and their Revolution*. Selected writings, quoting at 378-9, *Archives Nationales*, BB18 807 (Seine-Inférieure). Anon to anon, 27 August 1796.

<sup>69</sup> O'Meara, B.E., *Napoleon in Exile*, 253.

<sup>70</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/1, ff.169, 280, HO5/2, f.328, Alien Office to Newport, 7 March 1795, 20 October, 18 January 1796.

Mazzinghi at Gravesend, this is the only reference in Alien Office correspondence to the naval mutiny. The Alien Office was on the watch for dissident Irishmen, but there is no hint in the records of an Irish dimension to the mutiny. Newport took up with the Office the fact that many of those who arrived at Dover from France or Holland without licences to have gone there were calling themselves British although they clearly were not.<sup>71</sup>

The most important case of an attempted illegal exit from the country arose in January 1798. The Superintending Inspector of Aliens wrote to Newport as follows:

There being reason to believe that it is the intention of Mr Arthur O'Connor an Irishman now in London to pass over within a day or two either to France or to some other part of the enemy's territory. I am directed by the Duke of Portland to desire in case he should come by way of Dover that you will take such measures as appear to you best calculated to afford evidence of his intention, and consequently to subject him to the provisions of the Traitorous Correspondence Act. But should you find that impracticable you will at all events take care to prevent his embarking on board any vessel either entering for an Enemy's port, or which you have reason to know altho' entering falsely for a neutral port is actually bound to those of the enemy.<sup>72</sup>

On 28 February 1797 O'Connor had been arrested at Margate, together with others, and charged with treason. Found 'not guilty' he was immediately arrested on further charges, and in August he confessed his guilt. Tried in Dublin, he was imprisoned and subsequently transferred to Fort George in Scotland.<sup>73</sup> Why he was in London at this time is unclear. Following the Treaty of Amiens he was released, and served until 1803 as a Lieutenant-General in the French Army. In 1798, Newport was advised that Madgett, a native of Ireland, was likely to return from France to England and should be detained. He had been working at the French Admiralty as an intelligence officer.<sup>74</sup> There were numbers of other cases where British subjects returned from enemy territory

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<sup>71</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/3, ff.81, 139, Grenville to Newport, 26 September 1797; 25 November; King to Newport, 5 December 1797.

<sup>72</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/3, f.205, King to Newport, 20 January 1798.

<sup>73</sup> TNA: PRO HO42/45; PRO. HO100/76, f.252-3, Wickham to Castlereagh, 24 May 1798; *Parl.Hist.*, vol.34 (1799), 985.

<sup>74</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/4, f.145. Wickham to Newport, 20 October 1798.

having neither a licence to be there initially nor one to return to England. They were prosecuted for the offence in the Kentish courts.

Among those refused entry at the Kentish ports was a rather more unusual case. A number of French planters, resident in the West Indies, arrived at Dover from Calais *en route* to their homes. It was decided that they should be returned to France but it was then agreed that they could remain in London. They were not to be allowed to proceed to the West Indies.<sup>75</sup> Presumably it was thought better that they should be allowed to remain here rather than continue and thus, directly or indirectly, assist the French war effort. In another case, the government could have been expected to exercise a generous attitude towards refugees, yet it did not do so. In October 1797 the French government banished 'persons who they considered to be disaffected.' Since, by definition, they were opponents of the revolutionary government it would seem that they should have been welcome in Britain. Instead, the Alien Office wrote to Dover, Gravesend and thirty-one other south coast ports, indicating that whilst many might attempt to land, they were not to be allowed entry.<sup>76</sup> The Alien Office will have considered that the French government would intermingle government agents with those genuinely disaffected. The forty aliens who arrived at Gravesend from France over a period of two days were not allowed to land.<sup>77</sup>

### **Residence in sensitive areas**

The Act required that aliens should not reside within ten miles of the south coast unless they were vouched for by an English family and had a licence from the Alien

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<sup>75</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/6, f.157, 164. Flint to Stow, 14 November 1800; unsigned to Stow, 18 November.

<sup>76</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/3, f. 104. King to Mayors of Gravesend, Dover, Harwich, Yarmouth, Southampton, 20 October 1797.

<sup>77</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/3, f.114. Carter to Mazzinghi, 31 October.

Office so to do. There were Frenchmen who were illegally in the sensitive area of Dover. In September 1795 the Mayor was told that the considerable number of unlicensed aliens at Dover must comply with the Act and remove to at least ten miles from the coast. As a result, six were removed from the town. Those in possession of licences to reside there, and whose conduct was satisfactory, were allowed to remain. John Trevanion, one of the Members of Parliament for Dover, pleaded that one of those required to move should remain. His request was refused.<sup>78</sup> Newport had earlier urged that it would be desirable that all foreigners should be removed from the town but King had thought that this would be too harsh and, instead, had decided that only priests and unmarried persons need be removed. This instruction had proved to be ineffective and again the Mayor was told to remove the French priests and unmarried aliens. King's letter continued 'The peculiar situation of the Town of Dover, and the facility of intercourse from thence with the French coast make it a very improper place for the residence of any considerable number of foreigners.' The Mayor asked for time to carry out the removals but was told that the order represented Portland's firm intention and it was to be immediately enforced. An appeal from Peter Fector, the influential Dover merchant, that two of the foreigners should remain at Dover proved of no avail.<sup>79</sup>

It was not only Dover where the presence of aliens was considered undesirable. Mazzinghi was concerned at the number of suspicious aliens residing in Ramsgate. The Alien Office placed the blame for this on the magistrates. 'It is owing to some misconduct in the Magistrates of the Town that any foreigners can be there without

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<sup>78</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/1, ff.252, 281. King to Mayor of Dover, 3 September 1795; f.275. King to Town Clerk, Dover, 21 October. Alien Office to Trevanion, 31 October.

<sup>79</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/1, f.282-4. King to Newport, 2 November 1795; ff.284-6, 304-5. King to Mayor of

regular licences for they have been repeatedly directed to remove such.’<sup>80</sup> The position had become sufficiently serious that, in April 1798, Portland decided that all aliens should quit the sea coast by the 13<sup>th</sup> of that month. There were some almost immediate modifications to this order. A further two weeks was allowed for the aged and infirm, whilst those who were a *bona fide* part of a British family as servants or otherwise were allowed to remain. In mid-May Portland wrote to the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports demanding that aliens should be removed from there. This seems not to have been effective for, more than a year later, Pitt had to be reminded by Portland that aliens in the Cinque Ports continued to reside within ten miles of the sea coast, contrary to the law. Pitt was urged to deal with the matter and to arrange for their arrest.<sup>81</sup>

### **French and English Spies**

In times of war it was important both to keep out foreign spies and to give such assistance as would enable British spies to operate effectively. It is not possible to be certain from the Alien Office papers who were spies and who were not, although there are clear indications in a number of cases. To deal firstly with likely French spies, Newport was advised that a suspected agent, Majeur, had been landed near Ramsgate. The event will have been reported by a Kentish resident; it could hardly have been otherwise. Majeur was to be arrested if he attempted to return from Dover. Presumably because the Alien Office wanted to keep him under surveillance, the Alien Inspector was then told that ‘there are however reasons which make it improper that Mr Majeur should be detained. He should be given no reason to suppose he is considered as liable to

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Dover, 2 November and 3 December. f.290. King to Fector 10 November 1795.

<sup>80</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/3, f.153-4. Carter to Mazzinghi, 14 December 1797.

<sup>81</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/3, f.325-6. Portland to Lords Lieutenant of coastal counties, 30 April 1798; f.345. Wickham to Chief Magistrate, Ramsgate, 14 May; f.348. Wickham to Mayor of Dover, 15 May;

suspicion, or that directions have been received concerning him in particular.' Any search carried out in relation to him was to appear to be in accord with general instructions.<sup>82</sup> A Frenchman was arrested after he landed at Deal where letters and papers had been secretly landed. Here again, the discovery will have been reported by a local resident. A Frenchman with the improbable adopted name of John Goodluck was found in Dover with forged papers from the Prussian Minister. A Frenchman named Bason arrived at Dover from Calais with a packet of papers. The papers were sent to London whilst he was detained and returned to France. In September the Alien Office got to know that he had come back under another name. A circular was sent to the magistrates urging his arrest.<sup>83</sup> In March 1797, the Alien Inspectors were notified that a copy of *The Register of Ships* had been stolen from Lloyds Coffee House by some foreigners. There was concern at this since the information contained in the *Register* was thought to be of great value to the enemy. There is no record that it was recovered. Newport was asked to investigate a case where a suspected person was landed illegally near Margate and then set off for Dover.<sup>84</sup> A Frenchman named de Meyere had for some time been trying for a passage from Guernsey to England. He eventually embarked on a neutral vessel, posing as a German sailor. Cobb at Margate was advised of two aliens who were in the habit of going backwards and forwards to that town. He was told to bring them before the Mayor of Dover. Walsh was advised of a Mrs Walker travelling to England, whose real name was said to be Cecile le Grand, alias Galodier. Stow was told

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f.353-4. Portland to Pitt, 18 May; HO5/4, f.491. Portland to Pitt, 14 August 1799.

<sup>82</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/1, ff.267, 287. King to Newport, 8 October, 3 November 1795.

<sup>83</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/2, f.206, King to Newport, 14 November 1796; f.283. Grenville to Town Clerk, Dover, 16 February 1797; HO5/3, ff.24, 74. King to Newport, 28 June 1797, 14 September.

<sup>84</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/3, f.279-80. Wickham to Newport, Mazinghi, Walsh, 13 March 1797; HO5/4, f.344. Wickham to Newport, 24 April 1799.

to investigate Gouldsmith, a native of Leyden, who was carrying on a clandestine correspondence from Dover.<sup>85</sup> It seems likely that all of these individuals were in the employ of the French authorities.

The Inspector at Dover was required on occasion to give assistance to what may be assumed to have been British spies. Both Newport and the Mayor of Dover were instructed that 'you will not fail to permit the Bearer of this to proceed without let or hindrance, or the vessel he shall embark in on account of his being on board, he being furnished with the necessary passport for that purpose.' In another case King wrote that 'a person whose name is Herman, will go to Dover shortly with a passport to proceed to France. You will be so good as to give this man every assistance in your power to facilitate his journey as his business is not unknown to me.'<sup>86</sup> William Dutheil was the representative in London of the French Princes, and a British agent with important contacts in France.<sup>87</sup> Whilst in England in 1798, he had been provided with a licence which allowed him to travel to any part of the kingdom, excepting the royal dockyards. In 1800 he was the link between the Comte d'Artois and a secret Paris committee which, among its other activities, made an attempt on the life of Napoleon in that year. Customs at Margate were told that any person arriving with letters from Dutheil was to be permitted to proceed on his journey, notwithstanding that Margate was not an authorised port for landings. Some months later, Newport was told in a secret letter that Dutheil

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<sup>85</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/5, f.389. Unsigned to Walsh, 19 May 1800; f.504. King to Cobb, Margate, marked 'secret', 5 August 1800; HO5/7, f.33. Flint to Walsh, 17 August 1801. HO5/5, f.193, Flint to Stow, 11 November 1799.

<sup>86</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/2, f10. King to Newport and Mayor of Dover, 28 April 1796; f.167. King to Newport, 30 September.

<sup>87</sup> Dutheil was one of Wickham's most important contacts, through whom large sums of money were distributed to the counter-revolutionaries. The story of the role played by Dutheil is contained in Mitchell, H. *The Underground War against Revolutionary France: The Missions of William Wickham, 1794-1800. passim.*

would agree with him how letters were to be distinguished, and would give him prior notice of those persons to whom such letters should be brought or communicated verbally. Eighteen months later, things seem to have gone awry. In a letter to Newport, Wickham wrote that:

No foreigners ... under any pretence are to be permitted to proceed to London from Dover without the permission of the Secretary of State. All who said that they had anything material to communicate to Government must put it in writing and all former instructions that you may have received to the contrary from this Office with respect to any individuals coming with secret marks are to be considered void and particularly those which regard the persons sent over by Mons. Duteil.<sup>88</sup>

In December 1797 Carter had written privately to both Newport and Mazinghi, reminding them that 'some time since, I sent you a piece of paper with the name of the Duke of Portland cut thro' and desired that the person who might produce the counterpart should be permitted to pass and repass.' The arrangement had been employed only once and it was no longer to be regarded as valid. Anyone claiming to be allowed the privileges attaching to the counterpart was to be detained.<sup>89</sup> There were other cases which probably involved British agents. Charles Saladin, a naturalised subject, was returning from the continent. The Alien Inspectors at Yarmouth, Gravesend and Harwich were told that 'you will not fail to show him every attention in your power and facilitate his journey to London.' Walsh was told that George Nitson was embarking for Embden, having in his possession several private letters. 'He may not be searched or the papers examined.' His journey was to be facilitated. Theodore Muller was travelling to Hamburg and Walsh was told to provide him with passage and to advance six guineas to enable him to continue his journey. Madame Durand de Lenville was going to France for a short time. Stow was told that she would probably return by Dover. 'I am to desire that

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<sup>88</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/3, f.31. Greville to Chief Officer Customs, Margate, 11 July 1797; f.199-200, King to Newport (secret), 15 January 1798; HO5/5, f.15-16. Wickham to Newport, 25 August 1799.

you will not fail to allow her to land and proceed to London immediately upon her arrival.'<sup>90</sup> The provision of passage and other forms of assistance for government agents travelling to and from France or North Europe, and the obstruction of the efforts of their French counterparts were yet other ways in which Kent was central to the war effort.

### **Trading with France, Legal and Illegal**

It remains to comment on a number of incidental points before turning to the changes in alien control which occurred in 1800-01. Agencies of government and the Alien Office, on occasion, found it expedient to consider the economic and financial effects of their decisions on aliens and on trading with France. The Privy Council had received a petition from Wright and Beck, who had been given a licence to import a quantity of grain and seed direct from France. They needed a passport to travel from Dover to Calais and although in 1800 this was not normally allowed, it was granted. In the following month a similar concession was made to John Dutton, for the same purpose. Nathaniel Benjamin and a fellow trader were told that 'they may go to Brussels on their commercial affairs.'<sup>91</sup> A Mme Macey had been detained at Gravesend and ordered to quit the kingdom. Walsh was told, however, that 'three representatives of commercial transactions of material importance to them have necessity to converse with Madame Macey.' It was agreed that they should be allowed to do this in Walsh's presence. When La Haute arrived from France he was not to be allowed to land and, initially, was required to return to Calais. He had brought over a valuable cargo of

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<sup>89</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/3, f.176-7. Carter to Newport and Mazinghi, 23 December 1797.

<sup>90</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/4, f.225. Flint to Yarmouth, Gravesend, and Harwich Officers, 15 December 1798; *ibid.*, f.400. Flint to Walsh, 8 June 1799; *ibid.*, f.414. Flint to Walsh, 19 June 1799; *ibid.*, f.368. Flint to Walsh, 5 May 1800; *ibid.*, f.501. Flint to Stow, 2 August 1800.

<sup>91</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/5, ff.270, 305, 335, 295. Unsigned to Falkener, Privy Council Office, 11 February 1800; King to Sir S Cotterel, Privy Council Office, 8 March; Flint to Royle, 7 April; Flint to Benjamin, 28 February.

pictures 'which it would prove materially prejudicial to his creditors in this country if he were not allowed to dispose of them.' In these circumstances he was allowed to land. Lammens and his clerk when they arrived at Dover were, initially, in the same position as La Haute. However, Stow was advised that material injury would result for M. Lammens's creditors were the order to return to France to be immediately enforced. He was to be allowed to proceed to London for five days.<sup>92</sup> Some trade with, or via France was officially permitted during the war and, insofar as it occurred, the principal conduit for it was the Kentish ports.

The Kentish Alien Officers were required to keep watch for fraudsters. Only a few days after his appointment, Mazzinghi was told to look out for Brockleman, or de Haib (believed to be de Haine), or St André and to detain him 'upon the best ground you can devise.' He was wanted in connection with a variety of frauds. An alien named Blanc was detained at Dover for being in possession of forged banknotes. This was an ongoing problem. King advised the ports of Deal and Sandwich that several foreigners of bad character, suspected of having brought with them large quantities of forged notes, had landed at different times in the neighbourhood of Deal and had been able to return to France. The following month, several foreigners were charged with circulating such notes in England, and others arrived from the continent were found in possession of them. This may have been an attempt on the part of the French authorities to destabilise the British economy.

A Frenchman, Borkham, residing at Dover, was receiving, or pretending to receive, intelligence from France 'with a view to speculating in the Funds.' He had been

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<sup>92</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/5, f.372. Flint to Walsh, 8 May 1800; HO5/6, ff.370, 448. Flint to Stow, 25 April 1800; King to Stow, 26 June 1800.

successful in persuading the authorities of his *bona fides*, for he had been given a passport to reside anywhere in the country. The Mayor of Dover was told to revoke the passport and to arrest him. A passport for France had been issued to Lewis Dupouy. It subsequently appeared that he had defrauded mercantile houses of a considerable amount of money, and orders were given that he was to be detained.<sup>93</sup>

The part played by Kentish smugglers in alien affairs has been commented on earlier in the chapter. In general, it was the task of the Customs to deal with smuggling. Nevertheless, the Alien Office correspondence records several cases where its Kent Inspectors were involved in frustrating the efforts of smugglers who were transshipping money or other valuables to and from France. A secret communication to the Customs referred to correspondence from Newport concerning a smuggling transaction involving bills of exchange. In another case, Francis Olyanger, who was intending to go to France, was detained by Newport at Dover with 3,500 *louis d'or* in his possession. He was brought before the Mayor and charged with treason. Walsh was advised of the need to take action against Hultman and Jumac, masters of vessels plying from Gravesend to Calais. They were understood to be conveying specie, especially guineas, regularly to France. Although it was not a significant part of the operations of the Alien Inspectors, through actions against fraudsters and international smugglers the Inspectors in Kent played some small part in bringing criminals to justice.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/2, f.28. Carter to Mazzinghi, 17 May 1796; f.367. Grenville to Newport, 10 April, 1797; HO5/3, f99. King to Chief Officer, Customs, Deal, 17 October 1797; f.137-8. Grenville to Newport and Mazzinghi, 18 November; HO5/6, f40. King to Mayor of Dover, 5 September 1800; f.453. Flint to Walsh, 1 July 1801.

<sup>94</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/1, f.338; HO5/2, ff.132, 134, 164; HO5/6, f.220.

### **The rules for entry tightened?**

In mid-1800 it was decided to apply more rigorously the regulations governing alien residence on the south coast. There was no apparent increased threat to the country at this time and it may have been simply a determination on the part of Portland that magistrates and Lords Lieutenant should carry into effect the terms of the Aliens Act. They had been instructed to do so on many occasions, often without success. It remained the case that numbers of aliens who ought not to have been there were still resident on the coasts of Essex, Sussex, Norfolk, Suffolk, Kent, and Hampshire. Portland wrote to Chief Magistrates, pointing out that communication with France was being carried on by foreign agents who had often landed on southern coasts. He enclosed copies of the Aliens Act and emphasised that its provisions must be complied with. He indicated that he was instructing the Alien Office Chief Clerk to talk to all of them, to emphasise the importance which he attached to the matter.<sup>95</sup>

From mid-July 1801 the rules for entry to England and travel to the continent were significantly tightened. At this time the French had massed gunboats, small craft and troops at Boulogne and in August, to frustrate any possible invasion, Nelson set sail from Kent with a small convoy and 4,000 men. It was one of the few occasions on which he suffered defeat. The French lost 10 dead and 30 injured whilst the British had 44 dead and 126 injured. Portland directed that from 20 July no passport for travel to the continent was to be issued by the Alien Office other than to Embden, Bremen, or another neutral port. Brooke, the Chief Clerk, was sent from the Alien Office to Ramsgate to

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<sup>95</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/5, ff.460, 484. Brooke to Chief Magistrates of south coast ports, 12 July 1800; Portland to thirty-six Chief Magistrates, 24 July.

superintend alien control on the coast from Dover to Whitstable. The area from Dover to Lydd was to remain the responsibility of Stow at Dover. Portland asked the Treasury to instruct Customs that its local officers should communicate with Brooke and Stow and give every assistance in adopting the new measures. So important did he consider the whole operation to be that he offered to transfer funds from the Alien Office budget to Customs, to compensate for the financial burden which he would be imposing upon them. Portland asked also that a Revenue cutter should cruise at all times from Dover to the North Foreland to prevent illicit landings or embarkation.<sup>96</sup>

There is some support for the idea that this was in part a tactical move - a gesture, even - in the fact that although, formally, there was this strict control on the movements of individuals, in practice it was relaxed almost as soon as it was introduced. The decision that those who had arrived on 22 July, two days after the new arrangements came into force, must return to France, was almost immediately reversed. A few days later a number of Dutch jews were allowed to land and by 8 August other arrivals had been released on grounds of hardship or compassion. It was agreed that all who had been detained on board ship for a long time, or who were in a state of destitution, could land and be examined at the Alien Office for possible authorised entry to the country. At the end of August numbers were being allowed to land in Kent directly from France. By the beginning of October it seemed possible that the regulations would formally be eased, although Stow was advised that this was not so, particularly where it involved foreigners. Where British subjects were involved 'the regulations must not be enforced with too much vigour.' Consideration was given to allowing the issue of passports to be

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<sup>96</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/6, f.476. Flint to Walsh and Stow, 20 July 1801; f.477. Portland to Lords Commissioner of HM Treasury, 23 July.

undertaken by British diplomats in France and Holland. The Revenue cutter cruising off the North Foreland was deemed no longer to be necessary and it was returned to Customs.<sup>97</sup> The war was effectively over and there was some relaxation on alien control, but the Alien Office was reluctant to go too far. In November the French government decided that only their passage vessels could convey individuals from Calais to Dover. There had thus far been a joint operation in each direction. Stow and Walsh were instructed to operate reciprocal restrictive arrangements from Dover and Gravesend to Calais. The letter to Stow continued:

I am at the same time to acquaint you that His Lordship highly approves of your causing a number of extracts of the Traitorous Correspondence Act to be printed and distributed with as much publicity as possible along the coast, as that Act, and those of a similar nature, must be considered in force until disposed of by Parliament.

There was a mixture of rigidity and commonsense in the operation of alien control at this time, for on the following day Flint indicated that Read, an Englishman detained by Stow for having boarded a passage vessel to Calais without authorisation, could be set at liberty. The impropriety of his action should be made clear to him 'and his lordship's indulgence in overlooking it.'<sup>98</sup>

To summarise the effect of alien control on the county. The Aliens Act required that foreigners should remain at the port of entry until the Alien Office issued them with a passport to enter the country, if they were not already in possession of one. It forbade either foreigners or Englishmen to leave the country without having been issued with a passport so to do, and it allowed foreigners to be deported. In south-eastern England entry was limited normally to the port of Dover whilst, generally, departure could take

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<sup>97</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/7, f.2-3 and several other letters, f.17, Flint to Walsh, 3 to 8 August 1801; f.61, Flint to Stow, 31 August; f.122, Flint to Stow, 7 October; f.132, Flint to Walsh, 7 October; f.152 Pelham to Lords Commissioners of HM Treasury, 31 October.

<sup>98</sup> TNA: PRO HO5/7, f.158. Flint to Stow, 6 November 1801.

place only from Gravesend. Throughout the Revolutionary War and beyond it was crucial to the successful operation of the Act and to Britain's defences against French espionage that Kent should adequately fulfil the primary role in alien control. Whilst the ports of Gravesend and Dover were at the centre of this action, Deal, Margate, Ramsgate, Sandwich and Whitstable also played a part, not always effectively, in frustrating illicit landings or embarkation. Although there were three other ports authorised to deal with the entry of aliens - Harwich, Yarmouth and Southampton - save for short periods their role was a minor one compared with that of Kentish ports.

Had the people of Kent been less vigilant than they were in respect of those in the county illegally it is possible that Jacobin cells might have come into being or, at least, that the transient radicalism of north-west Kent and the anti-war movement might have been strengthened. As it was, the quiescence of the county remained undisturbed by external influences. Kent's mayors, magistrates and residents gave assistance in operating the Act by reporting illicit landings and suspicious movements of aliens. Their efforts were not perfect, particularly in respect of alien residence on the coast, but no other county faced a task of the magnitude of that which fell to the alien operations in Kent. Had these been allowed to fail to any significant extent the Aliens Act would have been largely ineffective. The chapter underlines Kent's role in the forefront of the country's defence, not only in a military sense but in other ways, and not least in respect of alien control.

## CHAPTER 8: APPENDIX

At a meeting held on 4 December 1792 the Crown and Anchor Association had adopted an Address which they circulated to all prospective local Associations. It read:

At a time when there is every Reason to believe, that among the considerable Numbers of French lately arrived in this Kingdom, many of them hold regular Correspondence and Communication with various ill-disposed Persons, in Clubs and other Meetings, instituted for the express purpose of overturning the Laws and Liberties of this Country; the Committee feel it to be their Duty to warn all good citizens to be watchful, and upon their Guard, in order to detect and bring to Justice such Persons, whether Foreigners or British subjects, who appear to plot and contrive against the Peace and good Order of this happy Country.

CKS, U1127.012/3, Inaugural Committee Meeting held on 18 December 1792.

Citizens were strongly urged to report all such cases to the authorities. The records of the loyalist Associations at Aylesford and Rochester are extant and these show that it was decided to ask all inhabitants to make known details of all foreigners residing in their districts, with information on how long they had been there.

## 9. CONCLUSION

In a number of respects the impact of the French Revolution on Kent did not differ from that which was experienced by the country as a whole. Mobilisation in the militia, service in Volunteer companies, pressing and crimping, food shortages, were all general experiences, although the reaction to them was different in Kent from that in many other counties. But apart from the common factors, there were additional factors arising from the Revolution and particularly the Revolutionary War, which affected Kent almost uniquely. The county was the first line of defence for London, not only militarily but in terms of immigration/emigration control. By reason of its role in the defence of the country there were very large numbers of troops stationed in Kent, numbers which were not generally matched elsewhere; there was a large naval base, with a major naval station offshore. It was home to four of the six royal dockyards and much of the *matériel* for the armed forces was manufactured either there, at the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, or at the Kentish gunpowder factories. Another distinguishing feature was that Kent was one of the principal suppliers of grain to London and as the war progressed this became an increasing burden to be borne by the people of the county. The food supplies available to the county itself were further reduced by the demands made upon them by the large number of troops and sailors located in the county. The thesis has demonstrated the combined effects in Kent of these various factors.

What is remarkable is that the county was virtually free from riots during the whole of the period from 1789 to 1802. This at a time when riots, for a variety of reasons but principally because of food shortages, high prices and taxation, to some extent war-induced, were common in other parts of the country. It has been shown that although

Kent had greater burdens to bear than most other counties, whether in terms of the problems arising from the massive military presence or from the abnormal food shortages and high prices exacerbated by the presence of the large army and navy contingents, it throughout reacted peaceably to events. This was far from the case in the country at large, where rioting was commonplace. Thomis points to the tumultuous nature of Nottingham in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He quotes the MP 'who remarked in 1803 that at Nottingham people were used to riots, riots at every election, riots at the assizes, and riots of every other kind.'<sup>1</sup> Newton in *Eighteenth-Century Exeter* refers to the Cornwall Militia in 1793 breaking into the Guildhall in an attempt to rescue a comrade under arrest for assault and to the Exeter Fencibles in 1795 'sympathising' with the inhabitants of Barnstaple who were demonstrating over food prices. He talks of local forces attending the execution of rioters, and to Exeter dragoons and a unit of Volunteers quelling a 'disturbance' at Crediton. Wells gives many examples of rioting in various parts of the country, especially in the south-west.<sup>2</sup> Stevenson in *Popular Disturbances in England 1700-1832* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) refers to many English food riots including a number in Sussex (at Seaford, Chichester, Lewes and Midhurst), the rural county adjoining Kent.<sup>3</sup> Reference has been made in the thesis to the many cases of riot referred to in PRO files HO40/50 and 51. The thesis identifies as one factor in Kent's relative quiescence, a particular relationship in the county between landowners, tenants and labourers, arising from the unique system of gavelkind - the land tenure law of Kent - which had the effect of producing relatively small landownings peopled, for the most

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<sup>1</sup> Thomis, M.I., *Politics and Society in Nottingham 1785-1835*. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Newton, R., *Eighteenth-Century Exeter*. 106-7; Wells, R., *Wretched Faces*. *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> Chapter 5, 'Food riots in England', sub-chapter, 'The location of disturbances'.

part, by resident landowners. As has been emphasised, this was not the only factor influencing quiescence; the Church and the Kentish press also played a part in maintaining a peaceful situation in the county.

The Kentish reaction to the French Revolution was, initially, a contentment that the *ancien régime* in France had been replaced by something which seemed, at the time, to be comparable with the British constitutional settlement of 1689. Although, only months after the Revolution, Dean Horne and the Rev. William Jones were using the pulpit of Canterbury Cathedral to decry the French developments and to point to what they foretold as the inevitable horrors which would flow from them, their attitudes did not represent majority Kentish opinion, even as expressed at this time by what were later to become staunchly loyalist newspapers. It is, however, noteworthy that these clerics foretold the 'Reign of Terror' some time before Burke was publicly to condemn the Revolution.

Once the war had begun in February 1793, attitudes in Kent were conditioned not by radicalism or loyalism but largely by patriotism. As the thesis has shown, this was not a patriotism which was synonymous with loyalism. County and town meetings adopted anti-Ministerialist, anti-war positions for what radicals and reformers, and some who were neither, saw as patriotic reasons. For Kent was not a loyalist county. Loyalism implied an identification with George III and the Church of England, support for the war, opposition to parliamentary reform, acquiescence in the legislation against treason and sedition, the suspension of *habeas corpus* and, at times, persecution of radicals and Dissenters. There were, however, no "Church and King" riots in Kent, unlike Birmingham in 1791 or those against Joshua Toulmin in Taunton. Majority opinion in

Kent supported none of these things. But neither did this place the county in the radical camp. Insofar as it was generally against continuance of the war and opposed to the Pitt Ministry it was no different from the Foxite Whigs, whilst the Earls of Guilford and Thanet differed from the Earl of Oxford only in the sense that he advocated parliamentary reform whilst they did not.

The thesis seeks to meet the need, as expressed by Linda Colley, for historians to consider British attitudes in this period not only on a national but also on a more local basis, a view more recently echoed by Gregory and Chamberlain in the context of church history. It has been demonstrated in this thesis that what was happening in England, even if it be on a widespread basis, did not necessarily indicate what was occurring in any one part of the country. Even in respect of an area as limited as the county of Kent it has been necessary to distinguish the industrialised north-west of the county from the generality of its rural areas. For the radicalism of the Medway towns, ephemeral as it was, in no way typified most of the rest of the county. Whether the history of a county simply confirms that it was no different from the generality of others, that it was the same but for different reasons, or that as in the case of Kent, it was markedly different, it would be a worthwhile subject for study, and one which will serve either to confirm or to qualify what was happening more generally in the country and to give greater depth to national generalisations.

The situation as it existed in Kent cannot be precisely replicated elsewhere. Its land laws were unique and there were few other counties which were exporters of grain on so large a scale to other parts of the country, notably London. No other county, apart perhaps from Sussex and to a lesser extent the East Anglian counties, was in the front line

of the nation's defences with all that this implied, whilst there was no other county which was at the centre of alien control. There may have been features peculiar to some other counties – a more clear-cut case of loyalism or radicalism than can be shown from Kent, for example – which resulted in a departure from the norm if, indeed, there is anything which could be designated as the norm. Even those counties which were relatively quiescent may have to be explained by reasons other than those which applied in Kent.

Additional county and regional studies are likely to elucidate these questions and to shed further light on whether there were widespread regional differences. Were relationships between landlords, tenants and labourers in any other county at all similar to those in Kent and, if so, did they result in a similar freedom from riots? Apart from further regional studies, a study might be made of those relatively small areas of the country, parts of Norfolk and Suffolk, the Isle of Portland, and a small part of Lancashire where there was no law of gavelkind yet where, very rarely and locally,<sup>4</sup> there was a practice in force of partible inheritance. Did this have any wider social implications as it did in Kent? To raise these points is not to prejudge the outcome but rather to suggest that further local and regional studies have an important part to play, alongside national studies, in forming views on how the country as a whole reacted to the French Revolution and the Revolutionary War.

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<sup>4</sup> C.f. Snape, M.F., *The Church of England in Industrialising Society: The Lancashire Parish of Whalley in the Eighteenth Century*.

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