HETERODOX AND ORTHODOX PIETY IN TENTERDEN, *c.* 1420 - *c.* 1540

Robert G.A. Lutton

University of Kent at Canterbury

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the nature of orthodox and heterodox piety in Tenterden, in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, by using testamentary materials together with a range of other sources. Recognising the limitations of past approaches, it offers a more adequate theory and method for using wills to reconstruct late medieval piety. From this basis, it argues that piety was diverse, subject to religiously significant changes, materially and socially based, and transmitted essentially within families. Chapter One re-assesses theories and methods currently or recently employed in the reconstruction of religious belief and practice, particularly in relation to testamentary analysis. It also argues that the family is the most appropriate unit of analysis for this work, and that current thinking on the nature of collective and individual piety is inadequate. Microscopic reconstruction of the testamentary practices of one family over three generations, in Chapter Two, demonstrates the familial continuity of piety. Chapter Three reveals that local environment, material culture and identity, had a profound effect upon belief, and created heterogeneity within parochial piety. Religious belief and practice, is shown in Chapter Four, to have been significantly different in Tenterden, compared to other places. Within the parish, traditions of testamentary piety varied markedly, between religiously generous and parsimonious families. Chapter Five argues that parsimony in testamentary piety and a reformist tenor to religious devotion, were linked to social mobility, the generation of wealth and the creation of urban identities. Finally, in Chapter Six, the strong tradition of Lollardy in the Tenterden area is examined against orthodox belief and practice. It concludes that heterodoxy and orthodoxy were different and distinct. Nevertheless, the appeal of heresy, frugal and restricted practices within orthodoxy, and shifts in religious devotion, are argued to have all been aspects of a mentality which anticipated religious reform.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Apart from the following, all bibliographical references are given first in full, then in abbreviated form.

Arch. Cant.	*Archaeologia Cantiana*
BIHR	*Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*
DNB	*Dictionary of National Biography*
EcHR	*Economic History Review*
EETS	Early English Text Society
EHR	*English Historical Review*
JEH	*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
KJV	*The Bible, King James Version*
L & P	*Letters and Papers*
P & P	*Past and Present*
SCH	*Studies in Church History*
TRHS	*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*

The following archives are represented thus:

BL	British Library
CCAL	Canterbury Cathedral Archive and Library
CKS	Centre for Kentish Studies
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library
PRO	Public Record Office

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Modern spellings are used for place names. The contemporary spelling of personal names has been standardized for families and individuals for which there are surviving wills. Words extended in quotations are underlined.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction. Method and Theory in the Reconstruction of Piety in Late Medieval England

With so many possible mediations, distortions and constraints, can these massive and poor documents be anything more, finally, than the reflection of the social pressure or conventions of the moment? By the same token, will the very weakness of these serial studies of the traces not be such as to leave us on the surface of things, confined to a superficial and generalized understanding which is limited to appearances? And can we really hope, on such a basis, to approach a phenomenon as secret as faith? (Michel Vovelle, 'Hearts and Minds: Can We Write Religious History from the Traces', in *idem*, *Ideologies and Mentalities* (Polity Press, Cambridge 1990; chapters 1-11 first published in France, 1982; chapter 12, 1985), p. 20)

Late medieval piety

Any investigation of heterodox and orthodox piety ought to aspire to the reconstruction of the whole gamut of belief, as it was practised and perceived locally. How else, for example, is one to say anything new or significant about religious dissent in this period? It is only through an understanding of its relationship to the pre-existing beliefs and practices of local people, that the appeal and meanings of heresy, may in turn, be apprehended. Equally, the close contextualization of dissent, provides an ideal opportunity to comment on the nature of orthodox religion, and not least, the changes which it was undergoing in this period. Above all else, heterodoxy and orthodoxy demand constant comparison and reflexive interpretation, as sometimes competing, but often overlapping aspects of late medieval piety.

More than religion is at stake here - or indeed, 'religiosity'. Furthermore, although 'devotion' and 'spirituality' form important elements of the subject of this study, on their own or together, these terms do not sufficiently describe or define it.[1]

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1 'Religiosity' has recently been defined as "an essentially individual construction of expressions of spiritual belief and action": R.N. Swanson, 'Introduction. In search of pre-Reformation English Spirituality', in *idem.*, *Catholic England. Faith, Religion and Observance before the Reformation* (Manchester, 1993), pp. cit. at 1, 1-3. Here, Swanson prefers to write about pre-Reformation spirituality, which he sees as a broader and more useful concept than devotion or religiosity, because it sums up both

'Late medieval piety', is a necessarily flexible and broad term, which is, for a number of reasons the most appropriate description of the range of attitudes, doctrines, emotions, identities and practices, which are explored in the following chapters. Furthermore, although generally used today in only a pejorative sense, when placed in its proper historical context, 'piety' is preferable to 'popular religion'. It is not so laden with the debates, theories and judgements about the relationship between élite and popular cultural forms, or the problems of where to locate 'popular', socially. Besides, 'piety' embraces more than just the religious.[2] It also has an advantage over 'traditional religion', which despite arguments to the contrary, fails to allow room for development, change and diversity in the interpretation and appropriation of late medieval religion.[3]

Piety is taken to be something more fundamental than the sum total of the religious mores of an individual, or group of people. It includes attitudes and sentiments, not all of which can be easily confined to the category of religion, but which nevertheless, have a strong bearing upon its practice. Defining piety in this way faces up to the integral nature of late medieval religious life, which was as much influenced by convention, fashion and social pressures as it was by possibly anachronistic notions of a discrete spirituality.[4] This is not to ignore the different and often competing motives for pious actions, but to admit the historical validity of all influences and sentiments, whether or not they concord with ideological presuppositions.[5] Here, piety is defined as including more than lay religious beliefs and practices. It encompasses moral attitudes and actions towards family, kin, neighbours and associates; attitudes to wealth and commerce; views about the nature and functions of the church and religious life; conceptions of the family,

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the interior personal, and the exterior communal aspects of Christianity. The citation is his own comment on Langmuir's conceptualization of religiosity: See *ibid.*, n.3, for reference.

2 For discussion of popular culture in an early modern setting, see Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (1978, revised edn, Scolar Press, 1994), esp., part 1. See also, N.Z. Davis, 'Some Tasks and Themes in the Study of Popular Religion', in C. Trinkhaus and H. Oberman, eds., *The Pursuit of Holiness* (Leiden, 1974); Vovelle, 'Popular Religion', in *idem.*, *Ideologies and Mentalities* (Polity Press, Cambridge 1990; chapters 1-11 first published in France, 1982; chapter 12, 1985); Imogen Luxton, 'The Reformation and Popular Culture', in Felicity Heal and Rosemary O'Day, eds., *Church and Society in England* (Hamden, Connecticut, 1977), pp. 57-77; Swanson, *Catholic England*, p. 8 n.22. For some comments on these issues, which wrongly collapse the distinctions between élite and popular, see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars. Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (Yale, 1992), pp. 1-3, and chs. 2, 3, 6, 7, 8.

3 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 3.

4 These are factors which are often considered to have distorted late medieval piety and which we should therefore seek to disentangle from 'purer' motives for charitable acts. See for example, Swanson, *Catholic England*, p. 25. Paradoxically, Swanson also writes of "the futility of trying to identify particularly 'spiritual' elements in individual lives": *ibid.*, p. 30.

5 An example of this type of pre-judged approach to late medieval piety can be found in F.R.H. Du Boulay, *An Age of Ambition. English Society in the Late Middle Ages* (London, 1970), ch. 8, esp. pp. 147, 157. See also on this issue, the comments in L.M.A. Higgs, 'Lay Piety in the Borough of Colchester 1485-1558', (University of Michigan, Ph.D. thesis, 1983), pp. 40-1, 45-7, and for a study which examines the interplay of religion and more 'worldly' values, N.Z. Davis, 'The Sacred and the Body Social in Sixteenth-Century Lyon', *P & P*, xc (1981), pp. 40-70.

kinship and the wider community, and the social identities which individuals and groups continually fashioned for themselves out of available cultural (including religious) forms.[6] Put another way, piety was made up of sets of values, held together in tension but never stationary in relation to one another. This conceptualization owes an obvious debt to the history of *mentalités*, what Robert Mandrou, and in turn what Michel Vovelle have termed the history of "visions of the world".[7] Such a definition posits piety as ethos, which, following Clifford Geertz, provides both a model *of* social relations, by which men and women make sense of their worlds, and a model *for* social relations which prescribe how they should (but by no means always do), conduct themselves within them. This latter element admits the potential of piety powerfully to refashion patterns of life.[8]

Theory and method

For over thirty years one of the most important sources for the study of late medieval piety has been the last will and testament.[9] The relative abundance of wills from the late fourteenth, and more usually from the early fifteenth century onwards, together with the richness of their content, has meant that they have formed the backbone of those works which have sought to piece together elements of lay piety in town and countryside.[10] By categorizing the religious content of large numbers of wills, and by subjecting the data to statistical analysis, some historians have attempted to reconstruct the religious preferences and practices of, in the words of Norman Tanner, "the mass of Christians".[11]

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6 On this last point, See A.P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (Chichester, 1985); M. Rubin, 'Small Groups: Identity and Solidarity in the Late Middle Ages', in J. Kermode, ed., *Enterprise and Individuals in Fifteenth-Century England* (Stroud, 1991), p. 134.

7 Vovelle, 'Ideologies and Mentalities - a Necessary Clarification', in *idem*, *Ideologies and Mentalities*, p. 5.

8 Clifford Geertz, 'Religion as a Cultural System', in *idem*, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973, this edn, Fontana, London, 1993).

9 The first English study to make extensive use of wills was W.K. Jordan's, *Philanthropy in England, 1480-1640. A Study of the Changing Pattern of English Social Aspirations* (London, 1959).

10 See for example, J.A.F. Thomson, 'Piety and Charity in Late Medieval London', *JEH*, xvi (1965), pp. 178-95; N.P. Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich* (Toronto, 1984); P. Heath, 'Urban Piety in the Later Middle Ages: the Evidence of Hull Wills', in R.B. Dobson, ed., *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1984), pp. 209-34; R. Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 1989); Higgs, 'Lay Piety'; R.B. Dinn, 'Popular Religion in Late Medieval Bury St Edmunds', (University of Manchester Ph.D. thesis, 2 vols., 1990); R. Po-chia Hsia, 'Civic Wills As Sources For The Study of Piety in Muenster, 1530-1618', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, xiv (1983), pp. 321-348; P.H. Cullum, "'And Hir Name Was Charitie': Charitable Giving by and for Women in Late Medieval Yorkshire', in P.J.P. Goldberg, ed., *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society c. 1200-1500* (Stroud, 1992), pp. 182-211.

11 Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, p. xvii. Tanner sampled 615 of the 1,515 lay men and women's wills that survive for Norwich from 1370 to 1532, and all of the 289 wills made by secular clergy during

More recently however, there has been a burgeoning of opinion, which has called into question the reliability and value of using wills as a source for religious attitudes, particularly without substantial and diverse corroborative evidence.[12] Those who now seek to make the most of testamentary materials, have to tread lightly. Anxiety to avoid the pitfalls of past approaches, has led to a climate where wills are no longer seen as offering relatively easily collectable and reliable evidence of religious attitudes.[13] Caution is of course welcomed, insofar as it works to correct past mistakes, but there is a danger that wariness will lead, not to a greater sensitivity in method, but to paralysing despair. Clive Burgess has quite rightly called for "a methodology which takes adequate account of the implications of alternative documentation", but his assertion that on their own wills "make very little sense", offers cold-comfort to those who would seek to make use of testamentary evidence in studies of parishes and regions for which "alternative documentation" of religious practice is on the whole lacking.[14] Whilst being warned not to risk using them on their own, we are counselled that "ultimately, the detail and variety of wills' content proscribes any thought of discarding them".[15]

This study is written from the not uncommon position of reading and analysing will materials, without churchwarden accounts. Nonetheless, it is supported by the records of ecclesiastical visitations and heresy trials, the Chantry Commissions of the late 1540s, the physical records of church building and furnishing, and a wide range of evidence of topography and social and economic relations.[16] There can scarcely be any

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this period. Compare this with Thomson, who used 622 London wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, for his study of London Piety and Charity; Heath's scrutiny of 355 for Hull and Dinn's marshalling of over a thousand for Bury (for refs. see n.10).

12 See in particular, C. Burgess, "By Quick and by Dead': wills and pious provision in late medieval Bristol', *EHR*, cccv (1987), pp. 837-58, together with what is to my knowledge, the most recent and comprehensive assault on the validity of past approaches to wills: C. Burgess, 'Late Medieval Wills and Pious Convention: Testamentary Evidence Reconsidered', in M. Hicks, ed., *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1990), pp. 14-33. See also, Swanson, *Catholic England*, pp. 30-1; E.M. Elvey, 'Introduction', to *The Courts of the Archdeaconry of Buckingham 1483-1523* (Buckingham Record Society No. 19, 1975), p. xxix; Beat A. Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community. The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish c. 1400-1560* (Aldershot, 1996), p. 4.

13 For an example of this attitude, see C. Marsh, 'In the Name of God? Will-Making and Faith in Early Modern England', in G.H. Martin and Peter Spufford, eds., *The Records of the Nation* (British Record Society, Woodbridge, 1990), p. 248.

14 Burgess, 'Late Medieval Wills', p.30. In his study of religious mores in Bristol, Burgess employes unusually abundant municipal and parish records, as well as deeds, alongside some 400 wills: 'By Quick and by Dead', pp. 838-40.

15 Burgess, 'Late Medieval Wills', p.15.

16 There are last wills and testaments for 261 lay people and three priests for Tenterden (one of these clerical wills (John Morer, priest, 1489, PRO: P.C.C. 20 Milles, fols. 161v.-162v.) is treated separately from the rest, and is discussed in Chapter Six), from 1449 to 1535. Occasional references are made to wills after the latter date, or those belonging to testators who lived in other parishes. 239 of the Tenterden wills are enrolled in the Canterbury Archdeaconry Probate Register; 13 are contained in the Canterbury Consistory Court Register; one is an Office Copy related to the Archdeaconry Register; and 10 are Prerogative Court of Canterbury wills. The value of wills, because of their survival where many other sources are lost, is noted by, G.J. Mayhew, 'The Progress of the Reformation in East Sussex 1530-

location for which wills have to be read in isolation from other sources which are germane to piety. The challenge is to work towards a method of testamentary analysis which is theoretically coherent, makes the most of available evidence, and attends to present anxieties.

Wills offer much in the way of religious content. This is usually formulaic however, and many bequests, whether outwardly religious or not, are very similar from one will to the next. This is especially the case with the dedicatory clauses or preambles with which testaments opened. It is now apparent that only the broadest changes in testamentary fashion and scribal convention can be identified from systematic statistical analysis of preambles, and in the pre-Reformation period, local conventions appear often to have been so uniform as to render these elements of wills meaningless That is, except when the occasional text diverges from the norm, and a glimpse is provided into individual sentiments, or more probably, the appropriation of a novel form from some outside source or connection. Often scribal or clerical influence, but sometimes kinship or trade links worked to introduce the testator to a new pattern of expression. It is now taken for granted that preambles should only be studied within the context of all the religious bequests of the will.[17] Only a handful of the Tenterden testaments depart from the normal dedication (with its occasional slight variations) of the soul to almighty God, the blessed virgin Mary and all the saints in heaven. These idiosyncratic formulae are only mentioned below, in certain specific cases, and then only in relation to the texts as a whole.[18]

1539: the evidence from wills', *Southern History*, v (1983), p. 57. For other manuscript and printed sources, see bibliography.

17 A number of studies have attempted to use preambles (sometimes in conjunction with the other religious contents of wills) to assess religious change during the Reformation period, with varying degrees of caution. For example: P. Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Religion, Politics and Society in Kent 1500-1640* (Sussex, 1977), pp. 58-9, 76-7; A.G. Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York, 1509-1558* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 171-2, 215-8, 220-1, 238; Claire Cross, 'The Development of Protestantism in Leeds and Hull, 1520-1640: The Evidence from wills', *Northern History*, xviii (1982), pp. 230-8; Mayhew, 'Progress of the Reformation', pp. 38-58; Po-chia Hsia, 'Civic Wills', pp. 327-330. There are many studies which emphasize the influence of scribes, parish clergy, ecclesiastical courts, the use of formularies, and the restrictions of local custom and fear of persecution in the choice and construction of dedicatory clauses, including: Margaret Spufford, *Contrasting Communities. English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 319-343; M.G.A. Vale, 'Piety, Charity and Literacy among the Yorkshire Gentry, 1370-1480', *Borthwick Papers*, no. 50 (1976), p. 6; M.L. Zell, 'The Use of Religious Preambles as a Measure of Religious Belief in the Sixteenth Century', *BIHR*, i (1977), pp. 246-9; Elvey, *Archdeaconry of Buckingham*, p. xxi-xxx; Cross, 'Development of Protestantism', pp. 231, 233; Mayhew, 'Progress of the Reformation', pp. 41-3; J.D. Alsop, 'Religious Preambles in Early Modern English Wills as Formulae', *JEH*, xl (1989), pp. 19-27; Marsh, 'In the Name of God?', *passim*; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 504-523; John Craig and Caroline Litzenberger, 'Wills as Religious Propaganda: The Testament of William Tracy', *JEH*, xliv (1993), pp. 415-431. See however, the dissenting opinion of Po-chia Hsia, 'Civic Wills', p. 327.

18 They are: William Cok, 1449, CKS: PRC 17/1/7; John Pette, *pannarius*, 1489, CKS: PRC 17/5/152; John Morer, priest, 1489, PRO: P.C.C. 20 Milles, fols. 161v.-162v.; John Guldeford, knight,

The standardized structure and the formulaic language of wills, has led some historians to argue that even beyond dedicatory clauses, the influence of clerks, notaries and the courts meant that their religious content is at best a highly distorted picture of individual wishes, or at worst, a series of suggested, imposed and filtered half-gestures to social, or more especially, clerical expectations.[19] It is however, generally acknowledged that individual testators exercised real choice in the will-making process, that their wishes were respected, and that whilst language, formulae and the watchful eye of the church courts obscured and often standardized aspirations, they by no means obliterated them.[20] There is little to indicate that scribal or clerical involvement in the making of wills at Tenterden, preconditioned their content, and the same can be said for other places.[21] One response to the formulaic and standardized character of these documents is to argue that they reveal a shallowness of faith.[22] Whilst this sort of conclusion is rightly resisted by some,[23] Eamon Duffy for one, has more questionably reacted to it, by arguing that "the formulaic character of most late medieval wills offers evidence..of overwhelming social consensus in religious convictions and priorities".[24] In other words, that the similarities of wills reflect a high degree of real uniformity of belief. It is however, easy to overemphasize the formulaic character of testamentary materials, and to miss the sometimes very marked, although more often subtle differences in content. As with all legal documents, a degree of uniformity is to be expected, and specifically religious bequests, of necessity tend to be expressed within the boundaries of a vocabulary of traditional orthodoxy, and legal convention. Despite these limitations, real differences do exist from the varying ways in which testators adopted and employed conventional language and form, according to, and in order to express not always harmonious sets of interests, affiliations and attitudes. The unoriginality of pious pronouncements or gifts, did not necessarily detract from their significance or perceived value.[25] It is what was meant by the use of certain forms and the replication of certain

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PRO: P.C.C. 29 Dogett, fol. 223; John Preston, 1507, CKS: PRC 17/11/54; William Stonehouse, priest, 1528, CKS: PRC 17/18/180.

19 Cross, 'Development of Protestantism', p. 230; Elvey, *Archdeaconry of Buckingham*, p. xxix; Swanson, *Catholic England*, pp. 30-1; Clive Burgess, "'For the Increase of Divine Service': Chantries in the Parish in Late Medieval Bristol', *JEH*, xxxvi (1985), p. 46; Burgess, 'By Quick and By Dead', *passim*; Vale, 'Piety, Charity and Literacy', p. 14; Rosemary O'Day, *The Debate on the English Reformation* (London & New York, 1986), p. 157.

20 Still refreshing on this score is, Margaret Spufford's discussion, in *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 319-344. Also compelling, is Marsh, 'In the Name of God?', *passim*. See also, Zell, 'The Use of Religious Preambles', p. 249; Mayhew, 'Progress of the Reformation', p. 39; Po-chia Hsia, 'Civic Wills', p. 327; Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, p. 117; Ralph Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People during the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1979), p. 101.

21 See for example, Chapter Two; Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 78.

22 Heath, 'Urban Piety', p. 229.

23 See for example, M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, p. 344.

24 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 355.

25 Marsh, 'In the Name of God?', p. 243.

traditional religious bequests in each specific context, which is important. More than once have we been reminded that a certain type of bequest had different meanings for different people,[26] but the search for meaning among the pious bequests in the wills of orthodox believers, has on the whole, been absent from past approaches to testamentary materials. In an indirect way this has been due to theoretical starting points, and more practically, it has to do with method.

Norman Tanner's *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, still stands as one of the most impressive and thorough studies of late medieval orthodox belief and practice in a specific local context. It is also a good example of the type of theoretical and methodological approach which has dominated the use of probate materials in work on late medieval lay religion. It is mainly based on a large-scale statistical analysis of testamentary materials, and is founded on the assumption that the late medieval will "in some ways..sums up a person's attitude to life".[27] In this way, at the same time as proposing that the will is an ideal source for the study of piety as it is defined here, Tanner reveals his somewhat uneasy place within the history of *mentalités*.[28] Moreover, in following the historians of *mentalités*, he adopted a method which typifies the quantitative approach to the history of late medieval English piety, and which beyond a certain point, is counter-productive.

Tanner's work on Norwich, represents just one example of the legacy of the reconciliation of religious history to historical sociology pioneered by Gabriel Le Bras in the 1950s. This marked the beginnings of a deliberate shift away from study of the Church as an institution and the élites within it, to concentration upon mass attitudes and behaviour, in specific regional or local contexts. Tanner aligns himself with these preoccupations and asks how movement "came from below through the choices which ordinary Christians made about how they practised their religion".[29] The move to the detailed study of religion as it was perceived and practised by ordinary people, has led to some surprising conclusions. Outstanding among these, was the discovery by Jacques Toussaert, of resistance to Christianity by the peasantry of French-speaking Flanders.

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26 For example, Vale, 'Piety, Charity and Literacy', p. 8; A.N. Galpern, *The Religions of the People in Sixteenth-Century Champagne* (Cambridge Mass., and London, 1976), p. 31.

27 Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, p. 116. Compare this with W.K. Jordan's description of wills as "mirrors of mens' souls": *Philanthropy in England*, p. 16.

28 Michel Vovelle, *Ideologies and Mentalities*, p. 5.

29 Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, pp. xv-xvi; Vovelle, 'Hearts and Minds: Can we write Religious History from the Traces', in *Ideologies and Mentalities*, pp. 15-6; F. Boulard, *An Introduction to Religious Sociology: pioneer work in France* (Translated and with an introduction by, M.J. Jackson, London, 1960); Higgs, 'Lay Piety', pp. 22-3. Also in this vein, is N.P. Tanner's, 'The Reformation and Regionalism: Further Reflections on the Church in Late Medieval Norwich', in J.A.F. Thomson, ed., *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1987), pp. 129-147. Stressing the importance of regional and local approaches, as well as religious change from below, is Swanson, *Catholic England*, pp. 2, 7, 27, 32, 40, 42.

Tanner himself refers to Toussaert's work, among others, as an example of the new approach to the history of religion which he himself adopted.[30]

Despite these theoretical links, the influence of historians of mentalities upon the writing of the history of late medieval piety in England has been limited. We have yet to see a study of mentality under the auspices of pre-Reformation lay piety. What the history of *mentalités* has provided however, is a methodology which is principally derived from the *Annales* school. Toussaert, was one of the first historians of religion to appropriate methods of quantitative social history which in the words of Simiand, "count, measure and weigh". His work represents a movement towards the quantification of particular 'indicators' of religious sensibility over time, using large-scale sampling techniques.[31] Such indices are especially present in wills, and it is partly for this reason that in the study of religion, it has been in the analysis of testamentary materials that the quantitative approach has left its most enduring mark.[32] Wills survive in large enough numbers to allow for such an approach; they are, to use Vovelle's terms, "a massive source", from which the "anonymous traces" of collective religious behaviour are gleaned, and organized into series.[33]

Almost all studies of pre-Reformation English lay piety, which have made extensive use of testamentary materials, have done so in this way. Various types of religious bequests, in large numbers of wills, have been classified and counted. The chosen indices, have included: payments for tithes forgotten, bequests for prayers and masses for the dead, endowments for temporary and perpetual chantries, funerary arrangements, bequests to saint's images and lights, to religious houses, parish churches and parish clergy, to hermits and anchorites, to craft gilds and pious confraternities, to hospitals, prisoners and charitable works, and in gifts to public works or civic projects which have their own religious overtones. The results gained from this approach have certainly been impressive, and have greatly increased our knowledge of late medieval Christianity, but on the whole they have been descriptive only, telling us 'how' and 'what', but rarely revealing 'why'. We are left with accounts of how many testators gave to any particular activity, institution, or individual, and how much they gave at any one time. Description is of course necessary, and a quantitative approach is often taken in the

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30 Jacques Toussaert, *Le sentiment religieux en Flandre a la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris 1960); Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, p. xv n.2.

31 Vovelle, *Ideologies and Mentalities*, pp. 10, 16-8.

32 As well as the examples of English studies which have used wills in this way, which are listed above, see also, Vovelle, *Piete baroque et dechristianisation, les attitudes devant le mort en Provence au XVIII siecle*, (Paris, 1973), which analyses elements such as the building of funeral monuments, funerary rituals, and masses for the dead, within 10,000 Provencal wills, in order to describe how attitudes to death changed over time.

33 Vovelle, *Ideologies and Mentalities*, pp. 19-22.

pages below, but it usually forms only a first stage to a more qualitative analysis.[34] In addition, where quantitative methods are employed here, they are usually related to the units of analysis which the evidence itself suggests are the most appropriate, such as the family, the locality and particular social groups, and not just the parish.

What is perhaps not so immediately apparent, but is for that very reason all the more unsettling, is the absence from the methodological framework of the testament and last will *as an integral text*, and as evidence in its own right. Once pointed out, the paucity of reproduction, and textual analysis of testaments and last wills in their entirety, in those works which rely so heavily upon testamentary materials, becomes alarmingly conspicuous. Moreover, the extraction of different categories of bequests in isolation, with very little infra-textual comparison between them, has inadvertently led to the dissection of wills into minute and incoherent pieces. Piecemeal analysis of wills, fails to respect their unity as cultural artefacts, and as texts. Wills arose out of complex processes of mediation upon the expression and representation of religious sentiment, and if they are to make sense, they must be read in their entirety.

One product of the piecemeal quantitative approach, has been the dislocation and fragmentation of the religious attitudes and aspirations of the individual testator. This is surprising considering that the debate about the value of wills as historical evidence, has hinged on whether or not they can be relied upon as expressions of *individual* piety.[35] In practice, individual piety has been lost among the "anonymous traces", which are meant to represent the attitudes of the masses. What is more, in attempting to reconstruct mass-piety the basic unit of analysis has been the individual testator taken in isolation, and yet whilst inadvertently enshrining the individual, this method has ignored the integral expression of his or her piety. This represents a perplexing set of contradictions, which may well have contributed towards a general reluctance to address the undoubtedly considerable problems surrounding the place of the individual, in the whole understanding of popular piety in the late middle ages.

If personal piety is located among the extracted bequests of so many thousands of wills, then much of what is known about their content, character, and processes of construction is ignored. One is hard pressed to find a will which does not, above all else, make provision for the nuclear family and household. In many, bequests to children, grandchildren, and brothers and sisters, form just one part of a whole series of gifts to

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34 Among those historians who have called for a return to qualitative approaches, are, Vale, 'Piety, Charity and Literacy', p. 8, and Galpern, *Religions of the People*, p. 31. In my opinion, however, they are somewhat over pessimistic in their assessment of the value of quantitative methods. See also, Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 84-6.

35 Christopher Marsh, in his 'In the Name of God?', p. 215, draws attention to this dominant issue of individual piety; see also, Alsop's article, 'Religious Preambles', p.20, which highlights the special methodological problems attached to the study of the religious convictions of particular individuals, in comparison to 'community belief'.

wider kin. On top of these priorities, there is often a wealth of provision for a wide range of other contacts, including servants, friends and neighbours, what might loosely be termed as business associates, and clergy. In addition to, and often intersecting with the beneficiaries of wills, were those who acted as witnesses, executors and feoffees on behalf of the testator. The increasing amount of evidence which is coming to light concerning the circumstances and processes of will-making, reveals that a wide range of people, including local clergy, gentry, and a whole circle of literate friends and acquaintances, could, and were called upon to help in writing a will.[36] The godly writers of the sixteenth century impressed upon will-makers the duty to provide for offspring, and the necessity of promoting peace among friends and relatives. As many testators were sick when they made their wills, the evidence of testamentary cause records reveals often intimate details of deathbed scenes and attitudes. Despite wide variations in the way in which a will came to be in its final form, family, kin, neighbours and friends all played an important role in the process. Deathbed gatherings were important social occasions which drew on bonds of kinship and neighbourliness. The full significance of the pastoral involvement of local clergy in the making of a will is yet to be investigated, as is the testator's choice of witnesses, executors and feoffees. Closer examination of these connections looks like providing one of the most fruitful ways of reconstructing local networks of religious affiliation and practice, within which to establish the character of, and the relationships between, individual, familial and household piety.[37]

Since the making of a will, was often as much a communal as an individual act, the form and content of the finished text is a product of not just the interests of an individual, but of all those who took part in the process. For this reason, those who use testamentary evidence to reconstruct piety cannot afford to disregard or downplay the familial and social connections which are visible within wills.[38] This means that alongside an emphasis upon the importance of communities of parish and gild, the family, household, and networks of biological and non-biological kin demand consideration as factors which also shaped and described lay belief and practice. Specifically, this involves reconstructing testators' families, households, kinship networks and family histories - which is, in a number of contexts, a major element of this present study.[39]

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36 C.W. Foster, 'Introduction', to *idem*, ed., *Lincoln Wills 1271-1530* (Lincoln Record Society, vol. x, 1918); M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 322-3; Marsh, 'In the Name of God?', pp. 226-36; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 322-3.

37 S. Coppel, 'Will-making and the Deathbed', *Local Population Studies*, no. xl (Spring, 1988), pp. 37-45; Marsh, 'In the Name of God', pp. 217-20, 226-36. See also p. 248, where the use of witness lists is suggested as a way of reconstructing local religious networks.

38 See for example, Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, pp. 105, 118, who readily admits that he excludes from consideration, those bequests made to family, friends and servants, despite acknowledging their paramount importance compared to giving which can be classified as religious.

39 For a contrary approach, see for example, Heath, 'Urban Piety', pp. 214-5, 218, and Burgess, 'By Quick and by Dead', *passim*, where familial continuity in chantry endowments and other religious

Although quantitative methods are by no means neglected in this work, the nature of the evidence and the questions which are asked of it, has necessitated the use of small-scale and microhistorical approaches. It is only by reducing the scale of enquiry that, for example, the relationships between individual and family piety, or identities of neighbourhood and parish become visible. As Carlo Ginzburg has argued, "a close reading of a relatively small number of texts, related to a possibly circumscribed belief, can be more rewarding than the massive accumulation of evidence".[40] Like much microhistory, there is a good deal of prosopography in this study, in the hope that from it, something of "the relationships, decisions, restraints, and freedoms faced by real people in actual situations would emerge".[41] Also in common with the work of microhistorians, is the scope which has been given to creative imagination, or to be more scientific, the interpretative method of abduction. Put simply, this is the suggestion of a hypothesis which explains a set of (usually) surprising facts, or in other words, conjecture. And, whilst every attempt has been made to prove hypotheses by induction, this has admittedly not always been fully possible. Where we are left with probabilities, it is hoped that they might inspire other imaginations. In the end, it seems to be worthwhile employing what is "the most fruitful" albeit "least certain method".[42] Finally, like many of those historians who adopt this approach, I have attempted to be as open as possible about the interpretative decisions which have been taken, and the investigative processes which have gone before conjecture and conclusion; at the same time that is, as trying not to overburden the flow of description, analysis and narrative.[43]

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bequests, is viewed largely from the perspective of the continuation of individual initiatives and aspirations, rather than as an expression of the religious practice of family and household.

40 Ginzburg, 'The Inquisitor as Anthropologist', in *idem*, *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi (Baltimore, 1989), p. 164.

41 Edward Muir, 'Introduction: Observing Trifles', in Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero, eds., *Microhistory and the Lost Peoples of Europe* (Baltimore and London, 1991), pp. ix-x.

42 Muir, 'Observing Trifles', p. xviii; On Pierce's theory of abduction, See K.T. Fann, *Pierce's Theory of Abduction* (The Hague, 1970), and, Umberto Eco and Thomas A. Sebeok, eds., *The Sign of Three: Dupin, Holmes, Pierce* (Bloomington, Ind., 1983).

43 Givanni Levi, 'On Microhistory', in Peter Burke, ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 106. See also, for a number of comments about the value of microhistorical methods to this sort of work: Christopher Marsh, *The Family of Love in English Society, 1550-1630* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 10-14. Of all the studies within this tradition, perhaps the most similar in approach to this study, is Paul Boyer's and Stephen Nissenbaum's *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge Mass., 1974).

Overcoming the problems of testamentary analysis

One of the most common criticisms of using wills to reconstruct religious sensibilities, is that they tell us little about life-time piety. This is based on the assertion that attitudes and activities in life were different from those in death; in particular, that wills focus on the cult of death, and make testators out to be more religious than they actually were.[44] To some extent this is true, but testamentary piety was not wholly removed from lifetime piety.[45] When the pious interests of wills are compared, where they exist, to records of parish and guild, they more often than not reflect the interests of life-time piety, and continue long-followed traditions into death, with the assistance of family and kin.[46] Although they do not always give an adequate representation of the extent and wealth of religious giving and other activities in life, neither do they depart wildly from life-time interests. Moreover it is possible to use testamentary evidence to chart piety across the life-cycle. The differences between the pieties of distinct cohort groups have yet to be fully investigated, but particularly if charted within families they may reveal the very strong relationship between testamentary strategy and age at death. This was an important factor at Tenterden, mainly because it entailed differing responsibilities to family and kin, and therefore, variations in the proportions of wealth available for disposal in religious acts.[47] This tends to undermine the notion that the priorities of the deathbed were wholly different from those of life. The value of probate materials is better appreciated, when the subject of study is broadened from religion alone to encompass ethos. In part, this is possible, because wills were also legal documents, which dealt with the devise of property and the distribution of personalty, and so reflect testators' social preoccupations.[48]

A further criticism which has been made of wills is that they reveal only a limited aspect of *post obit* provision, focusing mainly on the funeral and its immediate aftermath, and the small-scale and detailed provisions related to it, rather than longer-term services, which, it is argued, were usually arranged before making a will, and so were either

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44 Burgess, 'Late Medieval Wills', p. 16, and 'By Quick and by Dead', p. 840; J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984), p. 11. Higgs argues that wills exaggerate the intensity of lay piety, because they were partly vehicles for religious expression: 'Lay Piety', p. 199.

45 For a more balanced opinion which stresses that the testator "was drawing upon and emphasizing underlying feelings that were in him all the time", see Galpern, *Religions of the People*, p. 13. See also, Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 79-80.

46 This is true of the examples which Burgess himself employs for Bristol, such as the Chestres, whose testamentary endowments reflected a life-time commitment to the religious life of their parish church. The same can be said for the Bakers of Bristol, who also continued life-time traditions of piety in their wills: 'By Quick and by Dead', pp. 841-3, 845, 852, 842, 852-4.

47 See Chapters Two, Four and Five.

48 A point also made by Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 81, and Marsh, 'In the Name of God?', *passim*.

entirely absent from it, or only briefly and vaguely mentioned in passing. This rests on the view that the predominant characteristic of late medieval pious practices was their stability; a stability which fostered powerful and well established customs and conventions which operated without recourse to written instructions.[49] These conventions worked mainly within the family and in particular outlined the obligation of widows and heirs to carry out pious provisions for partners and parents, and to continue family traditions such as the maintenance of chantries and lights. Where wills are viewed in the context of family however, even in the absence of other sources, it is possible to trace bequests between partners and between generations, and by so doing, to identify conventions which worked to sustain familial piety.[50]

Examples have been used to try to show, once and for all, that wills are no more than a "blank facade disguising an intricate reality". However, these have tended to be untypical cases, made either in circumstances of sudden death, or where the testator died abroad, when normal processes would have been disrupted or foreshortened.[51] What is more, a particular town or community may have possessed its own pious practices and attitudes towards testamentary piety.[52] There is no reason to believe that the importance of the will in the provision of endowments and pious arrangements did not vary from one place to the next.[53] The importance of wills in the enactment of post obit piety in the parish of Tenterden may not have been as limited as it was for the wealthy citizens of Bristol, for example. This is suggested by comparison of the records of Archbishop Warham's visitation of the parish in 1512, with surviving wills.[54] Among other matters, seven cases of unfulfilled bequests or endowments were presented to the visitation. In all seven cases either executors, overseers, or people with no specified official role were charged with withholding a sum of money from the churchwardens, or from employing it in the particular purpose for which it had been designed. In four of these cases it is made

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49 Burgess, 'Late medieval wills', pp. 16-17; 'By Quick and by Dead', p. 840.

50 In his efforts to undermine the importance of testamentary evidence, Burgess does not concede, that in the cases of the Chestres and the Bakers, these conventions can be identified (even if the full extent of their enactment cannot be wholly retrieved) by tracing the fulfilment and continuance of provisions from one family will to the next, without having to resort to other types of evidence: 'By Quick and by Dead', pp. 841-854. Dinn makes the similar points that, "even in Bristol...memorial services excluded from the wills form a minority of all memorial services. Equally, Burgess's conclusion, that a general belief in purgatory was not waning before the Reformation, can be supported by the use of testamentary evidence alone": 'Popular Religion', p. 81.

51 Burgess, 'Late medieval wills', pp. 25-9.

52 Burgess himself admits that late medieval Bristol is indeed a special case. Bristol survived the economic slump of the fifteenth century, and the proportion of the wealthy in the town was unusually high. He writes, "findings concerning their religious aspirations are to be treated with considerable caution. So, too, must findings concerning parish life in Bristol": 'Divine Service', p. 47. This inspires caution towards Burgess's more recent judgements on the validity of wills, based on the same evidence.

53 See Burgess and B. Kümin, 'Penitential bequests and parish regimes in late medieval England', *JEH*, xliv (1993), pp. 610-630; Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, ch. 3.

54 *Kentish Visitations of Archbishop William Warham and his Deputies, 1511-12*, ed., K.L. Wood-Legh, Kent Archaeological Society: Kent Records, xxiv (1984), pp. 206-11.

explicit that the unfulfilled bequests are testamentary, and for three out of the four, there are surviving wills which account for the endowments.[55] Out of the remaining three cases, which do not refer to wills, no wills survive for the individuals who made the bequests. However, in the case of John Blechynden the origins of his bequest of 40s to the fabric of Tenterden parish church appear to lie in a reversionary arrangement within his mother's extant will.[56] Where wills survive then, the unfulfilled bequests can all be identified as being detailed in last wills and testaments. If pious practice in Tenterden operated as it did in the parish of All Saints' in Bristol, with oral, or at least extra-testamentary arrangements representing the norm, and wills fulfilling a merely cursory or allusive function, one would expect non-testamentary arrangements which cannot be explained by reference to a surviving will, to have shown up in presentments to the visitation. That this is in fact not the case, suggests that for the parishioners of Tenterden, the normal practice was to record their most important arrangements for *post obit* endowments in a will. Testamentary materials for Tenterden and quite probably many other parishes nation-wide, may be more valuable records of piety than they were in Bristol.

Those examples which have been employed in order to emphasize the limitations of testamentary analysis, have tended to be drawn from the most wealthy members of urban élites. They have been used to argue more generally however, without asking whether the relationship between their testamentary and their more general piety is representative of the majority of will makers.[57] It is probable that the most wealthy were more likely than most to have settled their pious provisions prior to making a will, because they were in a better position to do so than most. However, even allowing for this, wealthier testators are generally identifiable by the extraordinary value and range of their bequests, whilst choices made independently of the level of available resources are also visible.[58]

Besides the degree to which wills accurately record the bulk of a testator's post obit piety, even in those places where the function of the will does appear to have been relatively limited, most wills remain reliable indices of priorities and interests, and to

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55 Thomasyna Piers, 1508, CKS: PRC 17/12/73; John Donngham, 1505, CKS: PRC 17/9/51; William Tobill, 1501, CKS: PRC 17/9/70. John Williams's will, the fourth to be mentioned, has not survived.

56 Joan Blechynden, widow of Nicholas, 1511, CKS: PRC 17/12/30. No will survives for either William Piers or John Henley and so there is no way of knowing whether their endowments were recorded in a will or not.

57 All of those families considered by Burgess, such as the Chestres, Bakers, Fylours, Canynges, Fosters, and the Spencers, if not the most eminent of the parish, were at least ranked amongst the most wealthy: 'By Quick and by Dead'.

58 See below, Chapter Five, and Burgess, 'Late Medieval Wills', p. 21. There was also a clear relationship between testamentary piety and wealth and status at Bury St. Edmunds and Colchester: Dinn, 'Popular Religion', *passim*, and esp. pp. 64-8; Higgs, 'Lay Piety', pp. 197-217.

some extent, even of the intensity of religious commitments.[59] In this respect, and in terms of what is hoped to be gained from them here, it is relatively unimportant that testamentary materials record intentions rather than implementation.[60] Nonetheless, the difficulty of judging the *intensity* and character of *personal* piety from wills, remains as perhaps the central problem of testamentary analysis. In this respect the reconstruction of the piety of Agnes Brekynden and her kinsfolk in Chapter Two below, is an illustration of how, when read with sensitivity to the contexts of locality, family, kinship and gender, testamentary last wishes may be reinvested with meaning.

One of the most vexing problems in trying to judge the depth of a testator's religious sentiments, concerns the difficulty of assessing the proportion of an individual's resources which were expended on specifically religious bequests.[61] We are helped to some extent in this by the fact that the wills of the wealthiest testators are usually conspicuous for the value of both their explicitly religious bequests as well as those to family, kin, and associates, even if the full extent of the estate is not discernible.[62] Payments for tithes forgotten have been used by some to gauge the wealth of a testators but they are not relied upon here.[63] Instead, full use is made of other types of evidence such as taxation materials; property deeds; parochial and municipal records which indicate office holding and so status, and any other relevant sources. Considerable attention is also given to familial wealth and status, in order to assess an individual's resources, although the sometimes wide variations within families, and changes in wealth over time are fully acknowledged.[64]

There was little customary land in Tenterden and the Weald, and those who were free of the town of Tenterden could, and regularly did, devise freehold property in their last wills. Compared to many other, more rural and manorialized places, this probably makes it easier to gain a sense of individual and family wealth.[65] Even so, it is not

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59 For example, although the wills of Henry and Alice Chestre do not record all of the moveable and immovable property with which they endowed their parish church, the pious bequests of their wills strongly reflect their major religious priorities, and the ways in which they chose to fulfil them in life, as well as in death. Moreover, both of their wills display a considerable concern for post-obit endowment, in the arrangement for a five year chantry stipulated in Henry's will, and carried out by Alice in her own, at a cost of £30 - a very conspicuous sum, betraying more than meagre piety: Burgess, 'By Quick and by Dead', pp. 841-3.

60 A number of historians have drawn attention to this limitation of probate materials: Thomson, 'Piety and Charity', p. 179; Heath, 'Urban Piety', p. 219; Higgs, 'Lay Piety', p. 205; Swanson, *Catholic England*, p. 31. See however, Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 82, who takes a similar line to that followed here.

61 Burgess, 'Divine Service', p. 46; *idem*, 'Late Medieval Wills', p. 25; Elvey, *Archdeaconry of Buckingham*, p. xxix.

62 This is the case with the wills of the Chestres and Bakers of Bristol: see Burgess, 'Late medieval wills', pp. 841-54. It also applies up to a point, to the Tenterden testamentary materials.

63 For discussion of the use of payments for tithes forgotten in assessing wealth, see Chapter Five.

64 See Chapters Two and Five.

65 Swanson, *Catholic England*, pp. 30-31; Elvey, *Archdeaconry of Buckingham*, pp. xxiv-xxv; Burgess, 'Late Medieval Wills', pp. 25-6.

possible to make hard and fast judgements about the proportion of available resources which are devoted to religious concerns, for the reason that much property and wealth often went unmentioned. This notwithstanding, by taking each will in its own right and assessing the way in which interests are prioritized and balanced within the scope of available or allotted resources, it is often possible to perceive a hierarchy of interests, whether religious or social, which offer a representation of individual piety. In addition, a comparative method like the one adopted in the case studies scattered among the following chapters, to some extent, overcomes not only the problems of assessing the intensity of individual piety, but many of the other limitations of testamentary materials. For example, the question of the proportion of available resources which was expended on religious concerns can in part be settled by taking the median proportion of available cash which was intended for these bequests as opposed to other types of giving, across a set of wills made by members of the same family, and comparing this with other families' strategies.[66] A comparative approach allows for individual piety to be identified in the continuities and discontinuities with family traditions[67]; differences between the wills of different localities within the parish can be highlighted[68]; contrasts between the pious traditions of particular families and identifiable social groups can also be brought to light.[69] As indices of the *relative* intensity of belief and practice and contrasting patterns of piety within specific settings, last wills and testaments have scarcely begun to be exploited.

Admittedly, this is a method which is beset with its own problems, and which is often daunting in terms of the difficulties it involves in the step-by-step reconstruction of families, patterns of settlement, social status, occupation and so on. Given an awareness of the filtered and distorted nature of the 'traces' of religious sentiment which have been used in quantitative approaches however, one is faced with little alternative but to try. As Vovelle himself points out, if we are to continue with the quantitative methodology alone we are in danger of being left merely "on the surface of things, confined to a superficial and generalized understanding which is limited to appearances".[70] As already mentioned, this realization has had a profound affect on some approaches to the use of wills, with churchwarden and gild accounts, to name but one type of evidence, being pressed into service to test, and subsequently try to disprove the validity of the old indicators. In the process, some historians have judged the will too harshly.

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66 See Chapter Four.

67 See in particular, Chapter Two.

68 See Chapter Three, and Chapter Five.

69 Chapters Four and Five. Dinn, also argues for a comparative approach to testamentary analysis within a particular local or regional setting, although he goes about it in a somewhat different way to that taken here: 'Popular Religion', pp. 82-3.

70 Vovelle, *Ideologies and Mentalities*, p. 20.

Other sources are of course warmly welcomed by those who seek to decode the opacity of late medieval wills, but merely to look elsewhere, is to miss the obvious. Any one will is linked to others, and when the text itself makes these connections apparent, it is incumbent upon the reader to follow them. To understand the language of the text, with its many constraints, mediations and distortions, it must be read alongside others which share its vocabulary, as well as against those which do not. In this way a more correct reading can be made of the symbolic acts, the unwritten codes of behaviour, and the constraints and pressures which, whether internalized, or acting from without, worked to mediate the faith and feeling of the individual testator. A comparative approach attempts to understand piety from within, by decoding and untangling the symbolic and conventional vocabulary of the late medieval will. It resists the pressure to "count, measure, and weigh" testamentary piety by the use of incongruous, or even subjective scales, which in the past have produced often only bland categorizations. To come at testamentary piety "from the inside", is to attempt to approach it as the testator did; well aware of the priorities and allegiances of family, kin and community, making his or her own choices within those traditions, which provided the terms by which they could be made with meaning and significance. To put it another way, the testator engaged in a symbolic discourse, which is meaningless, without an awareness of the vocabulary in which it was conducted.

A final objection against the use of wills as a source for the reconstruction of piety, claims that they are unrepresentative of the sentiments and practices of any given population as a whole. Only the better off who sought to solve problems of inheritance or ensure the desired distribution of their estates made wills, and not all of these ended up copied into the registers of the church courts in which they are now largely found. In addition, many women did not make testaments or last wills.[71] In the case of Tenterden, this probably means that the extant wills were made by less than a tenth of all adults who died in the parish from around 1450 to 1535. This said, because not all people made wills, those which survive in the probate registers, comprise a larger proportion of all will-makers than all those who died, and so as a representation of testamentary piety they are considerably more reliable.[72] In addition, because surviving wills tend to be made by enduring families of moderate or high status, they provide a record of the piety of the

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71 Elvey, *Archdeaconry of Buckingham*, pp. xxi-xxx; Burgess, 'Late Medieval Wills', p. 15; K. Wrightson and D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700* (New York, San Francisco and London, 1979), pp. 96-7; Marjorie Kensiton McIntosh, *A Community Transformed: The Manor and Liberty of Havering, 1500-1620* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 87; Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, pp. 113-6; Po-chia Hsia, 'Civic Wills', pp. 324-6.

72 Tenterden's population was probably around 1000 and growing in this period, and with likely death-rates of around 40 per 1000, the 263 surviving wills over 85 years represent a little under a tenth of all those adults who died: M.L. Zell, *Industry in the Countryside. Wealden Society in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 52-87; Hatcher, 'Mortality in the fifteenth century: some new evidence', *EcHR*, 2nd series, xxxix (1980), pp. 19-38.

most dominant and influential section of local society. These families were most likely to have been the ones which set the parameters of devotion, dictated the pace of change in religious tastes, and encapsulated the ethos and identity of the community. As such they probably provide the most accurate representations of the general tenor of piety,[73] but they admittedly tell us less about the extent to which the less well-off, or the poor shared their preoccupations. Even so, some surviving wills were made by individuals who were more marginal.[74]

The importance of the family in the transmission of piety

Where attention has been given to the role of the family in orthodox religion, it has tended to be in studies of the better-documented nobility and gentry.[75] In terms of work on the rest of the population, it has been most adequately addressed not in the field of pre-Reformation orthodoxy, but in the area of Lollardy, and in the early modern period, other forms of religious dissent and Nonconformism. This began at the beginning of the century with W.H. Summers's work on Lollards and Nonconformists in the Chilterns. More recently, beginning with Anne Hudson, among others, and culminating in the work of a group of historians working under the direction of Margaret Spufford, "dissent as a phenomenon transmitted within the family", has been given much greater attention. This has established an awareness of the importance of the family, the wider household, and kin, in the promulgation and sustenance of heresy and Nonconformism. There is now compelling evidence for regional traditions of heretical belief, which were passed down within families over at least three generations.[76]

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73 Heath, 'Urban Piety', p. 228; P. Spufford, 'Mobility and Immobility', in M. Spufford, ed., *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 331.

74 Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, p. 115; Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 96-7, and see Chapter Five.

75 See in particular, R.G.K.A. Mertes, 'The Household as a Religious Community', in J. Rosenthal and C. Richmond, eds., *People, Politics and Community in the Later Middle Ages* (Gloucester 1987), pp. 123-39, and comments in Christine Carpenter, 'The Religion of the Gentry of Fifteenth Century England', in D. Williams, ed., *England in the Fifteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 1987), p. 69. On noble piety, see also, J. Rosenthal, *The Purchase of Paradise: Gift Giving and the Aristocracy, 1307-1485* (London and Toronto, 1972), and M. Hicks, 'Chantries, Obits and Almshouses: The Hungerford Foundations 1325-1478', in C.M. Barron and C. Harper-Bill, eds., *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society* (Woodbridge, 1985), pp. 123-42. On gentry piety, see Vale, 'Piety, Charity and Literacy', *passim*; P.W. Fleming, 'Charity, Faith, and the Gentry of Kent 1442-1529', in A.J. Pollard, ed., *Property and Politics: Essays in Later Medieval English History* (Gloucester, 1984), pp.36-58, particularly pp. 50-3; C. Richmond, 'The English Gentry and Religion *c.* 1500', in C. Harper-Bill, ed., *Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Careers in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1991), pp. 127-50.

76 W.H. Summers, *The Lollards of the Chiltern Hills: glimpses of English Dissent in the Middle Ages* (London, 1906), pp. 74-142; W.H. Summers, *Our Lollard Ancestors* (London, 1904); A. Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 121, 134-7, 456-

The apparent English reticence to provide a larger place for the family in late medieval piety as a whole, has been in contrast to Continental scholars such as Canon Boulard, who in his work on cultural regions in France -in the words of Michelle Vovelle- "saw the family as the vital centre for the direct transmission of belief, and as the crucible in which historical continuities involving religion were shaped -or, indeed, in which traditions of rejection were perpetuated." Vovelle himself highlights "the importance of the family, both as a vital centre of acculturation and also as an area of resistance to compulsory acculturations". This has certainly been shown to be true for early-modern England, in spheres such as sexuality, marital customs and certain forms of collective behaviour.[77] Moreover, the historian of religion has an essential contribution to make to the fiercely contested debates over the nature and dynamics of the late medieval family.[78]

In late medieval England, one might reasonably expect the transmission of religious belief and practice to have been most strongly concentrated within the nuclear family.[79] Familial solidarity arguably ensured that parents' particular preferences and

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64; J.F. Davis, *Heresy and Reformation in the South-East of England, 1520-1559* (London, 1983), pp. 4-5; D. Plumb, 'The Social and Economic Spread of Rural Lollardy: A Reappraisal', *SCH*, xxiii (1986), pp. 111-29; A. Hope, 'Lollardy: The Stone the Builders Rejected?', in P. Lake & M. Dowling, eds., *Protestantism and the National Church in Sixteenth Century England* (London, 1987), pp. 1-35; R.G. Davies, 'Lollardy and Locality', *TRHS*, 6th series, i (1991), pp. 191-212; M. Spufford, 'The importance of religion' in *idem*, ed., *World of Rural Dissenters*, pp. 23-9; D. Plumb, 'A gathered church? Lollards and their society', in M. Spufford, ed., *ibid.*, pp.132-63; Plumb, 'The social and economic status of the later Lollards', in M. Spufford, *ibid.*, pp. 103-131; Nesta Evans, 'The descent of dissenters in the Chiltern Hundreds', in M. Spufford, *ibid.*, pp. 288-308. Also, Christopher Hill, 'From Lollards to Levellers', in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill, vol. ii: Religion and Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (Brighton, 1986), pp. 89-116; P. Collinson, 'Cranbrook and the Fletchers; Popular and Unpopular Religion in the Kentish Weald', in his, *Godly People: Essays in Protestantism and Puritanism* (London, 1983), pp. 399-428, and particularly p. 425, for suggestions of the existence of a tradition of household religion in Cranbrook in the latter half of the sixteenth century; and more recently, Shannon McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy. Women and Men in Lollard Comunities, 1420-1530* (Philadelphia, 1995), ch. 4. See also, Chapter Six.

77 Vovelle, *Ideologies and Mentalities*, pp. 167-8; Boulard, *Introduction to Religious Sociology*, *passim*. For some theoretical comments on the generational transmission of culture in pre-industrial societies, see E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (1991, this edn Penguin, 1993), pp. 6-10.

78 For one of the latest contributions to these unresolved discussions and for a comprehensive list of references, see Z. Razi, 'The myth of the immutable English family', *P & P*, cxl (1993), pp. 3-44. See also, R.A. Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450-1700* (Longman, 1984), p. 168.

79 Houlbrooke, *English Family*, pp. 18-20; Michael Anderson, *Approaches to the History of the Western Family 1500-1914* (Basingstoke and London, 1980), pp. 22-7; Razi, 'Myth of the Immutable Family', pp. 3-4; K. Wrightson, 'Kinship in an English Village: Terling, Essex 1500-1700', in Smith, R.M., ed., *Land, Kinship, and Life Cycle* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 323-6; McIntosh, *Community Transformed*, pp. 34-44; Alan MacFarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism* (Oxford, 1978). See however, M. Chaytor, 'Household and Kinship: Ryton in the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries', *History Workshop Journal*, x (1980), pp. 25-60, in conjunction with K. Wrightson, Critique: 'Household and kinship in Sixteenth Century England', *History Workshop Journal*, xii (1981), pp. 151 - 58 (and Richard Wall's letter in the same issue); O. Harris, 'Households and their Boundaries', *History Workshop Journal*, xiii (1982), pp. 143-52; R. Houston and R.M. Smith, 'A New Approach to Family History?', *History Workshop Journal*, xiv (1982), pp. 120-31.

commitments in spiritual matters, shaped their sons' and daughters' own choices and priorities as they reached adulthood. The evidence of religious instruction and education, reveals the perceived duty of parents to induct their children into the essentials of the faith from an early age. Despite the departure of some children in their teenage years to schools away from home, in the development of religious sensibilities, it was the overriding influence of parental control and every-day example which most impressed itself upon children.[80]

Once into their early or mid-teens however, a substantial proportion of young people, and in some areas, most of them, left home for good, or for a long period, in order to enter service or apprenticeship. There were of course always those who remained at home right up until the time they married, and it is perhaps among them that one should look for the strongest continuities of religious belief and practice.[81] Moreover, it is likely that the families which form the subjects of many of the case-studies herein, being the most prolific producers of surviving wills and belonging to the most stable element of local society, are the best place to start looking for familial continuities in belief. Even for the rest however, service by no means effected a complete break from the influence of parents. For the majority of servants, the strongest moral and emotional bonds remained those with parents. Most young people at least in part, remained under the authority and influence of parents, and so were still expected to conform to standards and patterns of family morality and devotion.[82] As the evidence of Lollardy shows, whilst service could sometimes herald a departure from parental piety, it could work both ways, with parents choosing masters or mistresses who would compound similar religious priorities to their own, in their children.[83] Even when service did herald a break in religious continuity between parents and children, the household and the family remain the most appropriate unit of analysis for assessing such shifts, and in particular the surrogate household into whose pious practices the young person was inducted.

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80 Houlbrooke, *English Family*, pp. 147-9, 150-2; Swanson, *Catholic England*, pp. 8-9; Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 143-153; M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 171-218. In the context of Lollardy, see for example, Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 134; Hope, 'Lollardy: The Stone the Builders Rejected?', p. 11; McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, ch. 4.

81 Houlbrooke, *English Family*, pp. 171-3; Anderson, *History of the Western Family*, pp. 22-7. See however, Chaytor, 'Household and Kinship', p. 47; McIntosh, *Community Transformed*, pp. 53-64. P.J.P. Goldberg, ''For Better, For Worse': Marriage and Economic Opportunity for Women in Town and Country', in *idem*, ed., *Woman is a Worthy Wight*, pp. 109-10, 127.

82 Houlbrooke, *English Family*, pp. 171-6. See for example, the bond of apprenticeship between William Heyman, barbour-surgeon of Tenterden, and Walter Coyf, son of Richard Coyf, 1522: BL: Add. Ms. 48022, fols. 27r.-28v.

83 Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 131; Hope, 'Lollardy: the Stone the Builders Rejected?', pp. 10-11.

Rather than providing young women and men with the freedom to make their own choices in marriage, and by extension, in other spheres such as religion,[84] in mid-sixteenth century East Kent, service, and any independence of choice which came with it, operated within, and was closely circumscribed by an all pervasive ideological and moral system of kinship.[85] This entailed values such as goodwill, family honour and respectability, dependence, reciprocity, and commitment, rather than a culture of individualism and self-determination. Our concern therefore becomes "the demarcation of the social and moral community and the location of the individual within them", by focusing upon "the psychological, social and economic pressures which constrained a real freedom of action and within which individual behaviour was contained".[86] Those who asserted their own preferences in the face of opposition did so at personal cost and with sometimes severe repercussions.[87]

Entry into, and time spent in service, involved a restructuring of relationships between families, households and social groups which called upon a vocabulary of kinship.[88] Links were established or strengthened between unrelated households and families through young people in service moving between them. The interplay of influences shared by family, kin and community, extended over the whole range of social relations, of which religious practice formed a part, and therefore reached into choices about devotional and liturgical life, charitable giving, affiliation to religious guilds, adherence to saints' cults, commitment to building projects. Other concerns, such as the proper use of family capital, which had a major impact on religious giving, were also passed on within families.[89] Central to this system was the nuclear family and the household, which remained the most intensified location of cultural transmission, and the primary and most interested employer of a vocabulary of kinship. It is argued that an

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84 As argued by P.J.P. Goldberg, in "For Better, For Worse'; *idem*, 'Marriage, migration, servanthood and life-cycle in Yorkshire towns of the later Middle Ages: Some York cause paper evidence', *Continuity and Change*, i (1986), pp. 141-169; *idem*, 'Female Labour, Service and Marriage in the Late Medieval Urban North', *Northern History*, xxii, 1986, pp. 18-38; *idem*, *Women, Work, and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy; Women in York and Yorkshire c.1300-1520* (Oxford, 1992), particularly pp. 324-356. Goldberg himself admits that the individualism of young women and men in York and its hinterland, may have been the product of an especially urbanized and particular regional culture, not necessarily to be found elsewhere: 'Marriage, migration, servanthood and life-cycle', p. 161.

85 For a powerful theorization and exploration of this kinship system, see Diana O'Hara, "Ruled by my friends': aspects of marriage in the diocese of Canterbury, *c.* 1540-1570', *Continuity and Change*, vi (1991), pp. 9-41. See also, the more general, and mould breaking, D. Cressy, 'Kinship and Kin Interaction in Early Modern England', *P & P*, cxii (1986), pp. 38-69.

86 O'Hara, 'Ruled by my friends', pp. 11, 12, 17.

87 O'Hara, 'Ruled by my friends', pp. 14, 15; Chaytor, 'Household and Kinship', pp. 41-3.

88 Although the incidence of service in the households of biological kin identifiable by the same surname is low, there is little known about entry into the households of affines. See for example, Houlbrooke, *English Family*, p. 46, and Goldberg, 'Female Labour, Service and Marriage', pp. 22, 23, for the paradoxical view that kinship networks were probably often relied upon to place servants with households. See also, Chaytor, 'Household and Kinship' p. 47.

89 The transmission of all of these elements is considered in Chapters Two, Four, Five and Six.

ideology of family operated within social groupings as a core aspect of a system of kinship, which informed and structured relations within religious life, and so the pious priorities of young people.[90]

This said, in light of the demographic scene of the fifteenth century, a family- and kin-centred view of late medieval religious life requires some justification. The erosion of the land-family bond among other factors, had, by the fifteenth century, created some local populations which were highly mobile, and by the sixteenth century, parishes predominantly made up of nuclear households which were isolated in terms of blood or marriage.[91] However, these developments did not apply to all social groups. Throughout the fifteenth century, arguably in all types of community, there were those families (usually the wealthiest) who retained their continuity for a number of generations. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, due to a combination of factors, there was a tendency, in certain areas towards a greater stability and continuity for some families.[92] This group's children did not generally have to resort to marrying outside the parish, and so

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90 Such a view runs counter to the argument that extended kinship ties operating within a supportive fraternity of contemporaries, who could be blood or 'friends', were much more important than the linear and nuclear family in religious life: J. Bossy, 'Blood and Baptism: Kinship, Community and Christianity in Western Europe from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries', in Derek Baker, ed., *Sanctity and Secularity: The Church and the World* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 129-43. As well as being important in its own right, the family provided a metaphor and vocabulary for such networks. Bossy's position fails to explain the evidence presented in the following chapters for a family specific and linear element within a number of features of piety in Tenterden, or for that matter, the fact that in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, nuclear families were admitted *en bloc* to perhaps the most archetypal fraternity of all, the York Corpus Christi guild: J.A.F. Thomson, *The Early Tudor Church and Society, 1485-1529* (London, 1993), p. 298.

91 R.J. Faith, 'Peasant Families and Inheritance Customs in Medieval England', *Agricultural History Review*, xiv (1966), pp. 77-95; Razi, 'Myth of the Immutable Family', pp. 4-5, 33-42; C. Dyer, 'Changes in the size of peasant holdings in some West Midland villages 1400-1540', in Smith, ed., *Land, Kinship, and Life Cycle*, p. 281; M.E. Mate, 'The East Sussex Land Market and Agrarian Class Structure in the Late Middle Ages', *P & P*, cxxxix (1993), p. 48; Wrightson, 'Kinship in an English Village', pp. 315-6; Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 79-82; Peter Spufford, 'The comparative mobility and immobility of Lollard descendants in early modern England', in M. Spufford, ed., *World of Rural Dissenters*, pp. 309-331; Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community. The Royal Manor of Havering, 1200-1500* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 131-2; McIntosh, *Community Transformed*, pp. 25-32; Cicely Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance in Transition; Kibworth Harcourt 1280-1700* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 240-3, 249. On the Weald, see M.L. Zell, 'Population and Family Structure in the Sixteenth-Century Weald', *Arch. Cant.*, c (1984), pp. 253-6, revised in Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, ch. 3.

92 C. Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a city. Coventry and the urban crisis of the late middle ages* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 148-57; R.M. Smith, 'Some issues concerning families and their property in rural England 1250-1800', in *idem*, ed., *Land, Kinship, and Life Cycle*, p. 60; Dyer, 'Size of peasant holdings', pp. 287-294; McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community*, p. 133; Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 81-2. In his excellent recent survey of the literature on geographical mobility in early modern England, Peter Spufford suggests that as little as 15 to 25 per cent of family name groups survived in one parish for as many as three generations, and that this may have been as true of the fifteenth, as of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He attributes family stability to a combination of wealth and landholding, ample economic opportunities and the natural ability of certain families to produce sons: *idem*, 'Mobility and immobility', pp. 314, 320-1, 323, 330.

more than any other, over a number of generations, made its presence felt upon the surrounding cultural and religious environment, setting the trend in patterns of devotion, and ensuring the transmission of traditions from one generation to the next. Secondly, demographic change varied in its intensity and consequences, from one region and locality to the next. For instance, in those areas which had a relatively high level of industrial activity, and an abundance of small parcels of land such as the Weald of Kent, growing availability of employment in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, worked to stabilise families for more than one generation, and led to increasing immigration and the establishment of new households in centres such as Tenterden.[93] The possibility that the family had a special place in sixteenth century Wealden society, is raised by Michael Zell, who writes: "Given the dispersed nature of settlement within Wealden parishes, families might be expected to have been even more important institutions of social and economic life than in regions with nucleated villages and strongly collective parochial institutions."[94]

Generally speaking, in a national context, the last quarter of the fifteenth century to the Reformation, formed the tail-end of, and followed on from, over a hundred years of demographic down-turn. This was a time when the family became more nuclear, when extended kin ties were weakened, and due to low replacement rates, there was a high turn-over rate of families in villages and towns.[95] In contrast, in the Weald, there was probably more of a demographic restructuring than a long-term slump.[96] Much of the evidence about family and kinship which is drawn on here, comes from the early to mid-sixteenth century, which saw rapid population growth, and in some places the reconstitution of extended familial kinship. This is not such a problem however, once it is acknowledged that the nature of kinship in the sixteenth century, owed its origins to the fifteenth century. In a time when familial kinship was less available, those links which did exist by blood or marriage, when feasible, were relied upon all the more heavily.[97] At the same time, in order to fill the gap left by the erosion of extended family ties, the ideology

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93 Smith, 'Some issues concerning families', p. 59. See also, I. Blanchard, 'Industrial employment and the rural land market 1380-1520', in Smith, ed., *Land, Kinship, and Life Cycle*, pp. 227-275; M.L. Zell, 'A Wood-Pasture Agrarian Regime: The Kentish Weald in the Sixteenth Century', *Southern History*, vii (1985), pp. 69-93; *idem*, *Industry in the Countryside*, chs. 2 and 3. By the 1540s, proabably because of high levels of disease due to its proximity to the marsh, but also possibly due to increasing social stratification, Tenterden was experiencing natural population decline, which was only off-set by an urban pattern of immigration and family formation from neighbouring parishes: Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, pp. 61-2. Tenterden's population may have grown sharply from immigration from the 1470s or perhaps earlier: J. Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses: A Study of the Domestic Buildings of a Kent Parish in their Social and Economic Environment', (University of Nottingham, Ph.D. thesis, 1990), pp. 23-4, Fig. 1.

94 Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, p. 75.

95 See n.91 above.

96 See n.93 above.

97 Razi, 'Myth of the Immutable Family', p. 28; Smith, 'Some Issues Concerning Families', pp. 56-8; Cressy, 'Kinship', *passim*.

and morality of the family became an ideal metaphor for the creation of a vocabulary of kinship which moved flexibly between real and fictive kin. The growing importance of fictive kinship can arguably be seen in the rise of religious fraternities in the fifteenth century. In this sense the definition of family becomes more subtle and flexible than physical actualities only, and takes on the structuring role of ideology and mentality.[98]

According to the vagaries of what has been termed the "demographic lottery", the influence of particular families over the religious attitudes of the next generation, and in the religious affairs of the parish rose and fell.[99] In another sense however, it allowed for greater familial continuity, as differences in the relationship between available land and family size were evened out. Because sons, more than daughters, tended to remain to take up family holdings, familial continuity was largely dependent upon the survival of a son to adulthood. This was especially the case, when arrangements emerged in the late fifteenth century which created a link between late coresidence with parents, and inheritance, which enhanced continuity in household identity through bonds of dependence and obligation, and which probably helped to maintain and strengthen pious traditions within families.[100] The implications from this are that, insofar as the religious identity of a community is an expression of the interests of its most enduring families (which to a large extent is likely to be the case), it can be explored through investigation of the continuities of household piety transmitted through inheriting and non-migrating sons.

Although it is probably right to regard the male line as the primary route of transmission for values, attitudes, and traditions from one generation to the next, women could also take a leading role in the passing on of inherited traditions to the next generation.[101] A woman's family could also have a strong influence in her marriage and

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98 For the theoretical basis of kinship as a flexible concept with situational content only, and the various types of 'pseudo-kinship', see A. Barnard and A. Good, *Research Practices in the Study of Kinship* (London, 1984), pp. 186-9, 150-4. Also, Maurice Bloch, 'The Long Term and the Short Term: the Economic and Political Significance of the Morality of Kinship', in Jack Goody, ed., *The Character of Kinship* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 75-87.

99 Mate, 'East Sussex Land Market', p. 48; Dyer, 'Size of Peasant Holdings', p. 281; Houlbrooke, *English Family*, p. 24.

100 Dyer, 'Size of Peasant Holdings', pp. 290-1; Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance*, ch. 10. See however, McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community*, pp. 119-122.

101 Swanson stresses the matrilineal nature of religious instruction within the household, but this is to concentrate on only one aspect of piety: *idem*, *Catholic England*, pp. 8-9. Men probably had a greater role in the transmission of affiliation to religious gilds, saints' cults and particular devotions, as well as attitudes about wealth and its correct uses. For the sometimes important roles which women played within Lollardy, see Hope, 'Lollardy: the Stone the Builders Rejected?', pp. 8-10, and Claire Cross, "'Great Reasoners in Scripture': The Activities of Women Lollards 1380-1530', in Derek Baker, ed., *Medieval Women, SCH, subsidia*, i, (Oxford, 1978), pp. 359-80, but see also, McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, and Chapter Six, for revision of some of Cross's claims, and details of male heads of households who took a leading role in teaching their children heresy. More general, and with particular relevance to service, is Felicity Riddy, 'Mother Knows Best: Reading Social Change in a Courtesy Text', *Speculum*, lxxi, no. 1 (1996), pp. 66-86.

over her husband; particularly fathers and brothers-in-law, with whom at certain stages in the life cycle, relationships could become very important and close.[102] Marriage was however, more likely to effect profound changes in religious sentiment for women, than it was for men, as women, on the whole bowed to their husbands' dictates. Moreover, parents sought to pass on their own particular religious priorities -their own household piety- through their sons, to their daughters-in-law and in turn to their grandchildren.[103] Transmission of piety could work both ways in the process of household formation, and the essential dynamic was the joining and merging of traditions through the coming together of families and their kin.

Attention to changes in the structure of households over time, reveals not only the differing experience and perceptions of household and family members, but also the ideological content of family relations and the distribution of power within households. This affords insight into the place of the individual within the family, and more importantly here, how individual piety was circumscribed and mediated by familial and kin relations. As Miranda Chaytor has stated, the task is not just to reconstitute families and households, but to deconstruct them.[104] This is reflected in the need to similarly deconstruct the seemingly 'individual' sentiments and attitudes revealed in wills, so that their relationship to family and household mentality can be better understood, and so that the place of the individual in religious life can be more adequately described.

The sometimes complex family histories which could be created by death, and remarriage, arguably led to dislocation and discontinuity in the transmission and practice of religious mentality. In communities where mortality rates and poverty were high, however, kin ties could be strengthened "to a point where the distinction between the conjugal unit and the wider kinship system was virtually eroded".[105] Active kinship bonds between families joined by marriage, whilst providing a degree of stability and continuity to family relations through crises of mortality and economic hardship, may also have worked to bring a greater degree of coherence and continuity to household piety. It was a common experience to lose a parent in childhood or adolescence, and the greatest change in the religious identity of a household was likely to occur with the death of a father in middle age or earlier.[106] If, as was usually the case, a widow remarried, then a

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102 Houlbrooke, *English Family*, pp. 19, 44; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 460.

103 J.M. Bennett, 'The ties that bind: peasant marriages and families in late medieval England', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, xv (1984), pp. 111-29; R.A. Houlbrooke, 'Womens' social life and common action in England from the fifteenth century to the eve of the civil war', *Continuity and Change*, i (1986), pp. 171-89; Hope, 'Lollardy: the Stone the Builders Rejected?', p. 10; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 135, 461; McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, ch. 4.

104 For a fuller development of these ideas as a methodological framework, but with a different application to my own, see Chaytor, 'Household and Kinship', pp. 51, 27, 29, 45-7, 30, 50.

105 See Chaytor, 'Household and Kinship', p. 38, and O'Hara's description of kinship in sixteenth century Kent: 'Ruled by my Friends', *passim*.

106 Houlbrooke, *English Family*, p. 20.

new husband would impress upon the household his own sense of what was important in matters of religion and morality. Clearly the opportunities for shifts in household piety came at such common crises as these, and yet it is unlikely that a widow would have exercised overriding freedom in her choice of partner. Through previous marriages, freedom of choice for widows was contained by a wider family and social network in which greater numbers of people had personal interests in a new marriage, than for those women marrying for the first time.[107] The familial and personal piety of prospective husbands, just like other credentials such as good name and reputation, would therefore be assessed and judged by widows' marital and biological kin. In this way, bonds of kinship worked to circumscribe potential discontinuities in household belief and practice.

Where widows were not quick to remarry or remained unmarried with young or adolescent children, their role in promoting and sustaining household piety demands attention. Also of great importance, were blood and affinal relatives such as brothers, and brothers-in-law, sisters and sisters-in-law, and nephews and nieces, who could grow in importance to both widows and their children in the absence of a father or mother. In terms of the continuance of religious traditions, the influence of uncles must have been especially significant over these households.[108] In periods of high adult mortality and high fertility such as the early sixteenth century, one would expect wide and dense kinship networks to have existed most of all between cousins.[109] In religious life, contemporaries, whether relatives or not, formed a pool of relationships from which bonds of kinship could be drawn, and by which religious identity could be found and shaped. Godparenthood represents a formalised aspect of figurative and fictive kinship which was not just established between generations, but often within them. The significance of godparenthood in the maintenance of traditions of piety, and its exact relationship to blood and affinal kinship, has yet to be examined. The mutual support which was offered by entry into a network of contemporary kin, whether formalised through common membership of a religious brotherhood or not, drew upon and was to some extent bounded by, links with blood and affinal kin. At Tenterden, it appears that pre-existing natural kinship ties were drawn upon in the formation of bonds of godparenthood to a greater extent than has previously been thought for late medieval England, and that relationships between uncles and nephews may have been especially important.[110]

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107 O'Hara, 'Ruled by my Friends', pp. 18-9.

108 Houlbrooke, *English Family*, pp. 44, 48; Wrightson, 'Kinship', p. 330.

109 Although the effectiveness of these links has been called into question, this has only been from the perspective of the inheritance and descent of property, which may not bear direct comparison to other spheres of social relations: see Smith, 'Some issues concerning families', pp. 56-8.

110 Bossy, 'Blood and Baptism', pp. 132-8. Bossy has not attempted to investigate the actual relationship between familial and spiritual kinship. Dinn however has gone part of the way to doing this: *idem*, 'Baptism, Spiritual Kinship, and Popular Religion in Late Medieval Bury St Edmunds', *Bulletin*

The heterogeneity of late medieval piety

Beat Kümin's recent study of the English parish in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, is a good example of one of the more dominant approaches to late medieval religion, and the continued drift towards a certain set of conclusions in this so-called 'post-revisionist' phase. Taking the parish as his unit of analysis, and churchwardens accounts as his major source, he finds that, among other things, parish spending on priests and clerks and their services, steadily increased from the early fifteenth century, and grew rapidly after 1500, reaching a peak in 1546-7. From this he concludes that Catholic religion remained buoyant up until the last years of Henry VIII's reign, and that "religious enthusiasm" and a "late medieval boom in traditional religious activities" typified lay piety in a time of beneficial socio-economic circumstances. Kümin argues that Lollardy could not prevent these developments, "that Lollard ideas had very little effect on everyday communal life", and that apart from "the possibility of significant pockets of nonconformity, at least in certain areas", "recent scholarship leaves little doubt that evangelical beliefs did not start to take root in local communities before the mid-1530s, and that it was a long and slow process to build anything like a Protestant culture".[111] What is not investigated, however, is which sections of parochial populations were responsible for this spending boom, and so for the admittedly widespread and generous enhancement of orthodox religious life in this period. This is partly due to the nature of the sources, but even so, Kümin's own comments that a parish élite became increasingly dominant in so-called 'communal' affairs, raise questions as to the extent to which all, or even the majority of parishioners, contributed to the institutions and practices of orthodox religion.[112]

The same criticism can be levelled against those historians, who have used wills, churchwarden and fraternity accounts with other evidence, to argue that "the ordinary religion of English parishes was in a vigorous and healthy state in the early sixteenth century", and if anything, Catholic Christianity was undergoing consolidation.[113] The

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John Rylands Library, lxxii, (1990), pp. 93-106. Definitions of these terms, as well as discussion of the significance of godparenthood in terms of kinship can be found in Barnard and Good, *Research Practices in the Study of Kinship*, pp. 150-4. Unfortunately there has not been the space to incorporate my findings for Tenterden here, and a separate article is in preparation for publication on this subject.

111 Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, pp. 136-7, 196-8, 257. Kümin bases these last points on a number of studies of the English Reformation, including, D. Palliser, 'Popular reactions to the Reformation during the years of uncertainty 1530-1570', in Heal and O'Day, eds., *Church and Society in England*, pp. 35-56, which is more generous in the weight it gives to regional differences in the reception of Protestantism, the role of Lollardy and divisions within communities over religion.

112 Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, p. 239.

113 Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations. Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 25-39, cit. at 39. See also, for example, Haigh, 'Introduction', to, *idem*, ed., *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 8-9; Scarisbrick, *Reformation and the English People*, pp. 1-39; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, *passim*; Ronald Hutton, 'The Local Impact of the Tudor Reformations', in Haigh, ed., *Reformation Revised*, pp. 114-138; Whiting, *Blind Devotion of the People*; *idem*, "'For the Health of my Soul': Prayers for the Dead in the Tudor South-West', *Southern*

evidence will always be available with which to paint such a picture, but it is much harder to ascertain whether or not it is representative of the beliefs, attitudes and practices of the majority of people throughout the country, within a given region, or even in a single town or village. Even the best studies of late medieval piety -those grounded in a specific context- have to be read with the awareness that what they describe might be atypical, and that there may be no 'typical' examples at all. Norman Tanner, for example, stresses that late medieval Norwich may have been unusually religious and for that matter, orthodox, up until the Reformation.[114] We are becoming increasingly aware that late medieval religion was far from homogeneous.[115] There has however, been scant regard for the relationship between variations and changes in what can be classified as pre-Reformation orthodox religion, and the more visible and obvious divergences of Lollardy, Protestantism and favourable responses to reform, even though it is clear that there was much overlap between them, and that the latter phenomena had a definite regional character.[116] Although there appears to be a move towards the integration of what have previously often seemed like irreconcilable areas of study, there remains a need for detailed local or regional studies which examine both orthodoxy and heresy within a shared social and cultural context.[117]

Tenterden, albeit as much a special case if not more so than somewhere like Norwich, is an ideal subject for just such a study. Although known principally as a centre of Lollard heresy, it was also a place which knew devout orthodoxy, most visible in the overly impressive church tower built there by parishioners in the late fifteenth century. From the outset, the contrasts in piety at Tenterden have all the potential of being extreme. This makes it all the more suitable a case-study of the discontinuities, fractures and changes in religion from below. It is simply not possible to interpret the practices of

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History, v (1983), pp. 66-72; A. Kreider, *English Chantries: the Road to Dissolution* (Cambridge Mass., 1979), pp. 86-92.

114 Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, pp. 138-40. See also, Tanner, 'Reformation and Regionalism', *passim*.

115 For a recent statement along these lines, see Swanson, *Catholic England*, pp. 7, 27, 32.

116 See for example, Rosemary O'Day, *Debate on the English Reformation*, pp. 133-65; Palliser, 'Popular Reactions', *passim*; M. Spufford, 'The Importance of Religion', in *idem*, ed., *World of Rural Dissenters*, pp. 40-64; Davis, *Heresy and the Reformation, passim*; M.J. Kitch, 'The Reformation in Sussex', in *idem*, ed., *Studies in Sussex Church History* (Sussex, 1981), pp. 77-98; Mayhew, 'Progress of the Reformation', pp. 38-67. The best discussion of the relationship between Wycliffite heresy and religious orthodoxy, can be found in Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 390-429. Despite the evidence to the contrary, some historians have gone so far as to relegate Lollardy to the status of a phantom within orthodox religion: for example, Swanson, *Catholic England*, pp. 36-8.

117 A.G. Dickens's, *The English Reformation* (1964, this edn, Fontana, 1967), pp. 13-56, is still one of the best discussions of these issues. See also, Arthur J. Slavin, 'Upstairs, Downstairs: or the Roots of Reformation', *The Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, xxxxix (1986), pp. 243-260; Higgs, 'Lay Piety'; Margaret Aston, 'Iconoclasm at Rickmansworth, 1522: Troubles of Churchwardens', *JEH*, xl (1989), pp. 524-552; L.R. Poos, *A Rural Society after the Black Death, Essex 1350-1525* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 263-279; Andrew D. Brown, *Popular Piety in Late medieval England: The Diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550* (Oxford, 1995).

the religiously extravagant alone, as being representative of the predominant character of parochial piety at Tenterden. Nonetheless, located as it is within the tradition of parish or single community studies, in order to do justice to the heterogeneity of the piety of Tenterden's inhabitants, this case-study is pitched against a weight of theory and opinion about the nature of local belief and practice.

The parish is now generally seen as the dominant religious community in both town and countryside in late medieval England.[118] However, as a religious community it has been variously defined. Especially noticeable in this diffuse conceptualization, is a gulf between those who claim an interest in religion for its own sake, and those who use it as a forum within which to discuss the nature of identity and community. So, on the one hand, Eamon Duffy writes about the parish in terms of its diverse unity, accommodating corporate nature, shared identity, invested emotions, and collective memory, and defines it most clearly as "the religious dimension of the community", epitomised in the belief "that the prayers of the parish assembled precisely as a parish...were more powerful than the sum of its component parts". On the other hand, Gervase Rosser faces up to the reality that late medieval society was diverse and highly mobile, in tension with inflexible parish boundaries, and he argues, in need of outlets for religious voluntarism and increased choice in devotion in the form of sub-parochial chapels and fraternities. He seeks to retain these developments within a modified concept of the medieval parish "as a more or less adaptable framework shaped by, and in turn shaping, the lives of its members". Furthermore, in her desire to deconstruct the whole notion of 'community', Miri Rubin argues that the use of the term at any level "obscures rather than reveals". In her opinion, what we should be looking for are the ways in which collective identities were constructed and negotiated in the religious idiom.[119]

However, despite their differences, these approaches have common recourse to a motif. This can be summarised as the free and voluntary choice of the individual in matters of collective or communal religion. This seems on the one hand to have arisen from an anxiety to present pre-Reformation piety as essentially voluntary, and therefore it is argued, vital, and on the other, to incorporate some of the more exaggerated claims about individualism in the economic sphere in late medieval England, into notions of collective religious action.[120] So, one approach to these issues configures the impulses of the so-called free individual and the community, as two essentially harmonious elements within parochial religion. For example, Duffy, writes, "late medieval Christians identified

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118 Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, pp. 4-5; D.M. Palliser, 'Introduction: the parish in perspective', in S.J. Wright, ed., *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion 1350-1750* (London, 1988), pp. 5-25; Thomson, *Early Tudor Church*, p. 265; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 131-54.

119 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 136; Gervase Rosser, 'Parochial conformity and voluntary religion in late-medieval England', *TRHS*, 6th ser., i (1991), p.173; Rubin, 'Small Groups', p.134.

120 On this last point, see in particular, MacFarlane, *Origins of English Individualism, passim.*

individual spiritual welfare with that of the community as a whole, an identification in which personal initiative and corporate action in pursuit of salvation could converge without any sign of incongruity or tension". And similarly, Kümin argues that "the coexistence of individual and communal dimensions" was a recurring feature of all parochial religion; dimensions which he identifies with voluntary and compulsory religion respectively.[121] Others have given individual choice and voluntarism pride of place. So, for Rosser, voluntary personal commitment and a desire for greater choice, produced both the religious gild and the sub-parochial chapel.[122] Similarly, in her investigations of fraternities and collective rituals, Miri Rubin is concerned to reveal *choice*, "in a historically powerful way". So, she asserts, people chose the communities to which they belonged, or negotiated "their places within groups when less freedom of choice was available". For Rubin, compared to the prescribed social arenas of the family or the village, religious practice in particular, afforded the individual discrimination in forming bonds with others.[123]

Within such a conceptual framework, it is natural that the parish and the individual parishioner have been the dominant units of analysis in the reconstruction of late medieval piety. For the same reasons, the beliefs of the parish have tended to be constructed from the sum, or even the lowest common denominator of what are seen as the discrete analytical building blocks of individual choices in religion. Where efforts have been made to explore groups within, or cutting across the parish, such as fraternities, these have usually taken an institutional approach, working outwards from gilds and viewing them as free associations of individuals, rather than as constituent elements in personal, familial and group piety which varied in meaning.

It is in terms of assessing the potential and significance of collective identity for religious diversity and change, that these approaches have been most stifling. Treatment of the parish as a more or less unified whole, as a force which bound sometimes disparate interest groups together, presents pre-Reformation lay religious belief and practice as diverse and yet essentially harmonious, and without potential for transformation from internal contradictions. The parish system it is argued, provided for a range of religious tastes which were woven together into an intricate and coherent tapestry of devotion. And, whilst it is acknowledged that there were social, geographical, occupational and life-cycle differentiations to participation in parochial institutions, these have rarely been seen as significant in religious terms, but as merely indicative of the variety of orthodox piety which is taken to be one of the mainstays of its vitality.[124]

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121 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p.141; Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, pp.181, 144.

122 Rosser, 'Parochial Conformity', pp.182-3; *idem*, 'Communities of parish and guild in the Late Middle Ages', in Wright, ed., *Parish, Church and People*, p. 44.

123 Rubin, 'Small Groups', pp.148, 134, 136.

124 See in particular, Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 131-54.

Those more sceptical about the social reality of the parish, such as Rubin and Rosser, have shown less interest in the religious significance of identity, than what religion can reveal about social relations. Rather than seeking piety, Miri Rubin aims "to appreciate the pragmatic and strategic action, the versatility in the use of current religious language". Borrowing from social anthropology, she laudably defines religion as a cultural system. However, in her work on pious groups as well as on the Eucharist, there is a greater eagerness to explore how, "religious action services identity", as a model *of* social relations, than as a model *for* them.[125] In a similar fashion, in a recent article on the fraternity feast, Gervase Rosser judges the significance of a ritualized religious event in terms of its social usefulness.[126] Here, I am more concerned to explore how identities gave rise to significant shifts in religious and moral sentiment. This makes the selection of the unit of analysis, whether the parish, locality, gild, family, or social group, crucial to understanding piety. Here, every attempt has been made to follow the most meaningful continuities and boundaries that can be identified from the available evidence.

The parish, and parochial religion, meant something different to different people in Tenterden, depending on a whole range of factors. As a concept it was therefore open to redefinition and increasing complexity, but not it seems as a result of an autonomous desire by the laity for a greater diversity in devotional choice. It was in the emerging collective identities which were the product of geographic, material and social developments and pressures, which had intensified from the late fifteenth century, that the fissuring of the parish community had its roots. The following chapters explore a number of significant pious groupings and dynamics operating between the levels of the parish and the individual, which are not identifiable by an essentially institutional approach to the sources. Family and kinship, the locality, and differences in material and social life present themselves as more fruitful lines of enquiry. The exploration of these influences upon piety, calls upon a range of sources other than wills. Here, detailed attention to place and boundary, has involved using property deeds and maps, as well as testamentary materials, for topographical reconstruction. These sources, together with records of taxation, municipal materials, accounts, and the records of central government, are all employed in the reconstruction of economic activity, wealth, status, office holding and social relations. This is with the intention of rooting piety in the social and the material.

Individual choice does not appear to be a sufficient analytical building block for the conceptualization of religious communities at Tenterden. Constraining and directing

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125 Rubin, 'Small Groups', pp.147,135; Geertz, 'Religion as a Cultural System'.

126 Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, xxxiii (1994), pp. 433.

choice, were sets of shifting boundaries, commitments, obligations, and collective rationalities, produced by certain knots in social relations and creating meaningful groupings and continuities in cultural transmission.[127] These groupings and continuities could be significant in religious terms, in ways which suggest real and potentially radical divergences and tensions within orthodoxy. Pre-Reformation piety was not just an idiom by which identities were negotiated. It had its own moral and religious ideals, which reinforced and shaped certain types of social behaviour. At the same time, those ideals were as varied and changing as the ways of life from which they developed.[128]

127 For these ideas, see C.J. Calhoun, 'Community: toward a variable conceptualization for comparative research', *Social History*, v (1980), pp. 105-129.

128 Geertz, 'Religion as a cultural system'; Thompson, *Customs in Common*, pp. 6-7.

CHAPTER TWO

Three Generations of Family Piety: the Brekyndens of Small Hythe, Tenterden

Very much of what, viewed from within parochial bounds, may appear to be a mere drip from the parish pump, will on more detached view turn out to be a local response to changing pressures in national water mains. (M.M. Postan, 'Glastonbury Estates in the twelfth century: A Reply', *EcHR.*, 2nd. series, ix (1956-7), p. 117.)

Investigation of general trends in piety at Tenterden begins here with the microscopic. That is, one family who lived and resided in Tenterden before, during and after the period covered by this study. There are a number of very good reasons for starting with a single detailed case study. Firstly, reconstruction of the piety of one family, provides a relatively un-prescriptive way of identifying the most important themes for inquiry. Without forcing the evidence every attempt has been made to let the issues come to the fore, which seem to have been most important to the Brekynden family in the expression of their religious sentiments. This has produced a relatively broad exploration which has touched on a whole host of subjects, including family tradition, marriage and household formation, kinship, neighbourhood, some of the institutions and structures of religion in the parish, changes in religious affiliation, individual piety, gender, economic and social life and political structures.

This has proved to be more than just an introduction to the themes of this study however, and stands in its own right as a story of piety at Tenterden, which in many ways may be especially representative of some of its wider trends and features within the parish as a whole. In later chapters the Brekyndens will be compared with other families' pieties. In this way, while seeking features common to the attitudes of all those families studied, the divergences between different families' pious sentiments will be allowed to assert themselves.

There is also a good deal of the polemical in this reconstruction of one family's piety. In relying heavily upon testamentary evidence, together with a range of other relevant sources, it is very much intended to be a demonstration of a method which makes the most of last wills and testaments. Also at stake, is the theoretical issue of

using family as the unit of analysis. I hope here, in some measure at least, to show how a model which locates cultural transmission primarily within the family is especially suitable to reconstructing late medieval piety. This however, like all models, is subject to modification according to the dictates of empirical investigation, and so I have tried, wherever possible, to begin to adapt theory to the realities of those factors which disrupted the continuity of tradition within families, as well as those which ensured it. This will be an enduring preoccupation within subsequent chapters.

Landholding, continuity and locality

By the early 1450s the Brekyndens were an established family in Tenterden. (See throughout, Figure 2.1 and Maps 2.1, 2.2 and 3.1) In 1453, Robert Brekynden (I) was elected to serve as bailiff of the town, only four years after it had been incorporated as a limb of the Cinque Port of Rye.[1] A year or so later, he was one of a number of Tenterden delegates engaged in negotiations with Rye "for the ende makyng off serteyn stryves and contraversies", and was appointed bailiff for a second term of office in 1462.[2] By the middle of the fifteenth century the Brekyndens' sphere of influence comprised Tenterden and its hinterland, and if only recent immigrants to the town itself, their prominence in the wider area probably ensured that they could move straight into office.[3]

It does appear that Brekynden was an old and relatively common Wealden name, becoming generally visible from the beginning of the last quarter of the fifteenth century. In Biddenden, the parish adjacent to Tenterden to the north west, four generations of Brekyndens are visible from the late fifteenth century to the middle of the sixteenth.[4] No less important were the Brekyndens at Cranbrook, one parish away from Tenterden to the west, who were still resident there in 1541.[5] There were other Brekyndens in

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1 Tenterden Custumal, list of bailiffs: CKS: Te/C1, fol. 140r.; K.M.E. Murray, *The Constitutional History of the Cinque Ports* (Manchester, 1935), p. 48.

2 H.T. Riley, ed., 'Manuscripts of the Corporation of Rye', in *Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Mss., Report and Appendix* (1876), p. 491; CKS: Te/C1, fol. 140r.

3 At Rye, in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the majority of jurats and mayors seem to have been second generation inhabitants of the town. Success in business and family connections were both important factors in an individual's rise into town government: G.J. Mayhew, *Tudor Rye* (Sussex, 1987), pp. 113-127. See also, Anne Reiber DeWindt, 'Peasant Power Structures in Fourteenth Century King's Ripton', *Medieval Studies*, xxxviii (1976), pp. 236-67; *idem*, 'Local Government in a Small Town: A Medieval Leet Jury and its Constituents', *Albion*, xxiii (1991); Eleanor Searle, *Lordship and Community. Battle Abbey and its Banlieu 1066-1538* (Toronto, 1974), pp. 432-7; McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community*, pp. 201-4.

4 There are four surviving wills for the Brekyndens of Biddenden, one for each generation: Richard, "butcher", 1475, CKS: PRC 17/2/397; John, 1507, CKS: PRC 17/10/258; Robert, 1523, CKS: PRC 17/15/285; John, 1552, CKS: PRC 17/28/23.

5 Richard Brykynden, of St. Swythine, London, who made his will in 1512, left money for tithes forgotten to the high altar of Cranbrook parish church, as well as other bequests there. He also left

Hawkhurst, the parish which abuts Cranbrook to the north east, in the early sixteenth century, as well as in High Halden, immediately north of Tenterden, and by the early 1530s, in Woodchurch, the parish to the east.[6] The proximity of these families suggests that they may all have stemmed from common ancestors, whilst their distribution over six adjoining parishes means that these Wealden origins almost definitely pre-dated the fifteenth century.[7]

Family success and longevity of this sort of order in the fifteenth century, not only owed a good deal to the fortunate survival through persistent outbreaks of epidemic and endemic plague, but probably more importantly, access to adequate amounts of land.[8] A little is known about Brekynden wealth, from which landholding can be inferred, outside of Tenterden. Together with a significant proportion of the Wealden population at this time, the Biddenden Brekyndens appear to have been smallholding or farmer-artisans.

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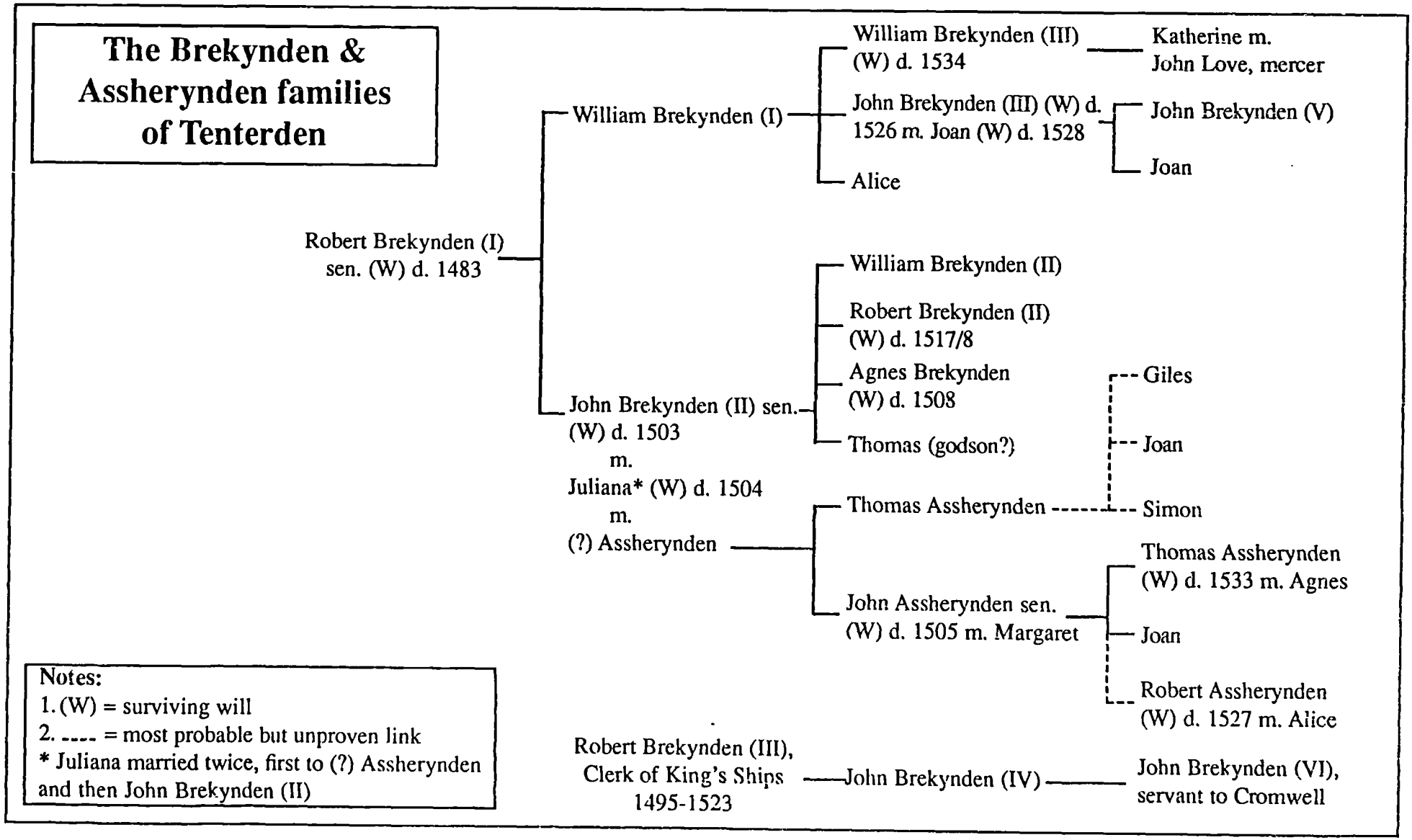
bequests to two brothers and two sisters and his mother acted as his overseer: PRO: P.C.C., 7 Fetiplace, fol. 48. Also: William Brickenden, Cranbrook, 1541, CKS: PRC 17/23/73.

6 William Brykynden, Hawkhurst, 1522, CKS: PRC 17/15/124; William Brikynden, Halden, 1524, CKS: PRC 3/5/69; Laurence Brikenden, Woodchurch, 1533, CKS: PRC 32/15/194.

7 From a search in the Kent Lay Subsidy of 1334/5 for the hundred of Tenterden, and the neighbouring hundreds of Blackburn, Barkley, Cranbrook, East Barnfield, Rolvenden, Selbrittenden and Oxney, only one reference to the name Brekynden turned up, namely John de Brickyndenne, who paid 10s, the second highest amount out of 75 individuals in the hundred of Barkley, who paid, on average, just under 3s 6d. Barkley hundred contained the parish of Biddenden, and so the family may have originated from there: 'The Kent Lay Subsidy of 1334/5', ed. H.A. Hanley and C.W. Chalklin, in *Documents illustrative of Medieval Kentish Society* (Kent Archaeological Society: Kent Records, vol. xviii, 1964), p. 106. The den of Brickenden which is recorded in 1327 is now lost: Alan Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization: The Evolution of Kentish Settlement* (Leicester, 1986), pp. 106, 122. It seems that the family may have held the lease of the manor of Wachenden (Washenden) in Biddenden, which held its own leet court, from Battle Abbey: Edward Hasted, *The History of Kent and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* (1798, this edn Wakefield, 1972), vol. vii, p. 137; M. Oppenheim, ed., 'Naval Accounts and Inventories of the Reign of Henry VII, 1485-8 and 1495-7', *Publications of the Navy Records Society*, viii (1896), p. xviii. It is probable that the name was locative (derived from the den of Brickenden), which means that the different Brekynden families found on the Weald by the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, may not have been monophyletic, that is, they may not have had a common ancestry. For comments on this issue, see P. Spufford, 'Mobility and immobility', p. 312. See also, n.27, below.

8 On plague and high mortality rates in general in the fifteenth century, see J. Hatcher, *Plague, Population and the English Economy, 1348-1530* (London, 1977), *passim*. For some specific references to severe mortality in late fifteenth century Kent, see Hatcher, 'Mortality in the fifteenth century', pp. 19-38. On the survival and continuity of families according to their access to land, see for example, Dyer, 'Size of peasant holdings', pp. 287-94.

Figure 2.1


The Brekynden & Assherynden families of Tenterden
Robert Brekynden (I) sen. (W) d. 1483
William Brekynden (I)
William Brekynden (III) (W) d. 1534
Katherine m. John Love, mercer
John Brekynden (III) (W) d. 1526 m. Joan (W) d. 1528
John Brekynden (V)
Joan
Alice
John Brekynden (II) sen. (W) d. 1503 m. Juliana* (W) d. 1504 m. (?) Assherynden
William Brekynden (II)
Robert Brekynden (II) (W) d. 1517/8
Agnes Brekynden (W) d. 1508
Thomas (godson?)
Giles
Joan
Simon
Thomas Assherynden
John Assherynden sen. (W) d. 1505 m. Margaret
Thomas Assherynden (W) d. 1533 m. Agnes
Joan
Robert Assherynden (W) d. 1527 m. Alice
Robert Brekynden (III), Clerk of King's Ships 1495-1523
John Brekynden (IV)
John Brekynden (VI), servant to Cromwell
Notes:
1. (W) = surviving will
2. ---- = most probable but unproven link
* Juliana married twice, first to (?) Assherynden and then John Brekynden (II)

Their namesakes in High Halden and Woodchurch did not rise above these modest heights, but the Cranbrook family was considerably wealthier. They probably combined activity in skilled crafts with more substantial farming.[9]

The Tenterden Brekyndens held lands within their own parish, and the majority of these were centred around Small Hythe. Now a hamlet on the southern boundary of the parish about two and a half miles from Tenterden town, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries it was a more substantial settlement, referred to as *oppidum de Smalhith* in 1505.[10] A reasonably detailed sense of the geography of landholding within the parish is made possible by the existence of defined areas which were common to the Weald of Kent, known as dens, and the identification in deeds and sometimes in wills, of the particular den upon which each parcel of land lay.[11] The Brekyndens held lands and tenements at Small Hythe itself or upon dens which either have been positively identified as lying within or near to Small Hythe or which are most likely, but as yet not absolutely proven to have done so. Nearly all of the Brekynden messuages which appear in deeds, wills or common recoveries can be located in the township, and a good deal of their lands seem to have lain in its immediate vicinity on or next to the den of Ekre.[12] The majority of the rest of their Tenterden lands appear to have been concentrated on the dens of Hearnden/Heronden and Dumborne, the former lying about a mile and a half away on either side of the road north to Tenterden, the latter only half a mile from Small

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9 This very rough assessment of social status and landholding is based on two subsidy returns: PRO: E179, 125/324 (1523-5); E179, 125/273 (1544-5), Barkley Hundred. For the grading of social groups from subsidy returns, see: J.C.K. Cornwall, *Wealth and Society in Early Sixteenth Century England* (London, 1988), pp. 22-28. To put this in its local context, see: Zell, 'Wood-Pasture Regime', pp. 73-84, and Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, chs. 2 and 5. See also, Chapter Five, below. PRO: E179, 125/324 (1523-5), Blackbourn Hundred. In the 1523-5 subsidy, William Brekynden, a tailor of Cranbrook, was assessed on 20 marks worth of goods, and in 1541-2 Richard Brekynden of the same parish paid 35s on goods valued at £70: PRO: E179, 125/324, Cranbrook Hundred; PRO: E179, 124/240 (1541-2), Cranbrook Hundred. The Cranbrook Brekyndens also had links with London: see n.5 above.

10 The reference is in a licence for the celebration of divine service in the chapel there, dated that year: Hasted, *History of Kent*, vol. vii, pp. 212-3; A.H. Taylor, 'The Chapel of St. John the Baptist, Smallhythe', *Arch. Cant.*, xxx (1914), p. 140.

11 According to Furley, from before Domesday these dens were districts attached to manors located elsewhere in Kent, mostly in the East of the county. In time the boundaries of these areas were more clearly laid down and they acquired names, some of which reflected the identity of the landholder. There appear to have been over thirty dens either wholly, or in part, within the parish of Tenterden by this period: R. Furley, *A History of the Weald of Kent*, (Ashford and London, 1874), vol. ii, pt. 2, pp. 690-698, 704; J.E. Mace, *Notes on Old Tenterden* (Tenterden, 1902), pp. 9-10; Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, pp. 122-6; K.P. Witney, *The Jutish Forest. A Study of the Weald of Kent from 450 to 1380 A.D.* (London, 1976), *passim*. There is a detailed description of the treading of the boundaries of dens in the nearby parish of Hawkhurst, dated 1507: W.J. Lightfoot, ed., 'Notes from the Records of Hawkhurst Church', *Arch. Cant.*, v (1863), pp. 79-84. See also, Chapter Three.

12 CKS: U442/T99 (1462-72); U455/T88 (1481); U410/T21 (1482, 1543). BL: Add. Ms. 48022, fol. 32v-r (1499). CKS: U410/T178 (1500); PRC 17/8/281 (1502); PRC 17/9/222 (1504); PRC 17/12/566 (1516); PRC 32/16/47 (1534); U455/T85 (1528); Tenterden Minute Book, Te/S1, fol. 17r.-v. (1539). It seems as though Small Hythe itself may have lain on the den of Ekre.

Hythe to the north east.[13] They also, at one time or another owned or rented land on the dens of Ashenden just north of Dumborne; Queryncote and Hawkherst which as yet have not been located but were almost certainly in the southern half of the parish; and the den of Marsham near to Small Hythe.[14]

With the bulk of their lands situated within an area of some four square miles which covered most of the southern half of the parish, it is not surprising that the Brekyndens actually lived in Small Hythe itself, rather than in Tenterden town. Apart from one exception they remained settled there for at least a hundred years from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century.[15] What is more, this was the case for both of the two distinct wings of the family in the parish. So Robert Brekynden (III, usually called Robert Brygandyne), a yeoman of the Crown, who served as Clerk of the King's Ships from 1495 to 1523, kept his home at Small Hythe throughout and beyond his time in office, and his grandson, John Brekynden (VI), appears to have been still living there in the 1530s, despite his involvement in crown and county service. From his accounts for the years 1495-7 it is apparent that Robert employed craftsmen from Small Hythe to work as far afield as Portsmouth in the construction of Royal vessels. He therefore seems to have made the most of his own social network and knowledge of local expertise while in office.[16]

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13 CKS: U410/T21; U442/T99. BL: Add. Ms. 48022, fols. 25v, 26v. CKS: U410/T178.

14 CKS: U410/T21; U410/T178; U455/T84; Te/S1, fols. 2r-v, 28r. On Ashenden, see, Hugh Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years* (York, 1995), p. 5. Those dens which have not yet been located are neither marked on the 6 inch Ordnance Survey maps nor is their location clear from deeds or wills. The den of Marsham is referred to as the location of six acres of land belonging to Small Hythe chapel in 1545-6, which had recently been flooded by salt water. These two clues suggest that the den was both near to the chapel and next to or on the levels of the old course of the Rother, at that time a tidal river which marked the southern east-west boundary of Tenterden parish as well as of Small Hythe: PRO: Chantry Certificates, Roll 29, 118, cited in Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', p. 151.

15 Most of the Brekynden wills are specific in stating Small Hythe, Tenterden, as the testator's domicile. By tracing the devise of lands and messuages from one generation to the next between wills it can be shown that the whole family were resident there, from the late fifteenth century onwards: Robert Brigenden senior, Tenterden, 1483, CKS: PRC 17/3/450; John Brikenden the elder, Small Hythe, 1503, CKS: PRC 17/8/281; Juliana Brigenden, Small Hythe, 1504, CKS: PRC 17/9/222; Agnes Brekenden, Tenterden, 1507, CKS: PRC 17/9/321; Robert Brigenden, Small Hythe, 1517-8, CKS: PRC 17/13/263; John Brykynden, Small Hythe, 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/207; Joan Brekynden, Tenterden, 1528, CKS: PRC 17/18/158. The one exception is William Brekynden (III) who moved to Goudhurst sometime between 1529 and 1534, but at the latter date still had a house and lands at Small Hythe: CKS: U410/T21, U455/T84, T85; William Brykenden, Goudhurst, 1534, CKS: PRC 32/16/47; William appears in a series of entries in the White Book of the Cinque Ports in 1528/9 as a resident of Small Hythe and jurat of Tenterden: *A Calendar of the White and Black Books of the Cinque Ports 1432-1955*, ed. Felix Hull, (Kent Archaeological Society: Kent Records, xix, 1966), pp. 96, 204, 206, 208-10.

16 Robert is described as being "of Smalhed, Kent, alias of Portsmouth" in his release from office, the latter location being his official residence during his time of service: *L & P*, vol. iii, 2992. For John, see: *L & P*, vol. vii, 630, 1251; BL: Add. Ch. 56981. CKS: U410/T21; Te/S1, fols. 17r.-v., 18r.-20v., 21v., 27r., 44r.-45v. On Robert Brygandyne, Clerk of Ships, his ongoing connections with Small Hythe, and for his accounts from 1495-7, see Oppenheim, 'Naval Accounts', pp. vii-xviii, xxxvi, 28, 143-335, and Chapter Three.

The continuity of the family in Small Hythe is significant for three reasons. Firstly, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries the rate of turn-over of families in any one parish was rapid enough to make the Brekyndens unusual. This in itself suggests that they had considerable assets in land and other resources.[17] Secondly, to the extent that they were exceptional for their presence in the locality for over a hundred years their influence would have been correspondingly outstanding - not least in terms of leading the way and setting trends in piety.[18] Brekynden family piety is likely to have been representative of either the predominant tenor of religious mentality at Small Hythe or an important strand within it. Thirdly, their presence there for so long a time is suggestive of the importance of Small Hythe as a centre with a number of roles in the local and regional economy. The township was well placed to take advantage of agricultural, industrial and commercial activities in Tenterden and the wider region, which helps explain why a family such as the Brekyndens remained and succeeded there for at least four generations.[19]

Although the surviving evidence provides only glimpses of the economic activities of the Brekynden family, it does give some impression of their diversity and range, and how they may have changed over time. Their landholdings seem to have been made up of a large number of small parcels of property, which as seen already, were scattered across the dens near to or at Small Hythe. As individuals, as family or in concert with other families, they bought, sold, rented and leased these parcels in transactions which are illustrative of a Wealden market in fenced closes of two to five acres, which meant that even large estates were dispersed across one, and often more than one parish.[20] There are however only a few specific references to lands outside Tenterden. For example, a messuage in Stone, three miles to the south east on the Isle of Oxney, which belonged to John Brekynden (II) in 1502, or William Brekynden's (III) lands, which partly as a result of his departure from the parish were spread at the time of his death, across the parishes of Goudhurst, High Halden and Tenterden. Among William's property at Small Hythe, was a lease, which he gained in 1511 for eighty years at 3s 8d a year, of part of the possessions of the Knights Hospitallers of St. John.[21] The other wing of the family also had lands and property beyond Tenterden due to their official involvement in the Royal Navy, military affairs and county government. Whilst Clerk of the King's ships, Robert Brekynden was based at Portsmouth, and in 1510 his

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17 See 'The importance of the family', in Chapter One.

18 On the trend-setting importance of the piety of leading burgess families, see for example, P. Heath, 'Urban Piety', pp. 227-228.

19 See Chapter Three for a full discussion of Small Hythe's economic significance.

20 CKS: U410/T21; U410/T21; PRC 17/14/295; U455/T84; U442/T99; U410/T178. Zell, 'Wood-Pasture Regime', pp. 72-73.

21 CKS: PRC 17/8/281; PRC 32/16/47. There are also two general references to lands outside the parish: CKS: U455/T84; PRC 17/8/281; Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, p. 54.

son John (IV) was granted three tenements with lands there, of a yearly value of 26s.[22] Royal and county service would probably have meant that John and his son (John VI) were able to extend the scope of their assets across Kent, a possibility illustrated by the fact that in 1539 the latter was seeking to buy the Customership of Sandwich.[23]

Even for those who were not involved in royal and county service however, a note of caution is required. It has only been possible to survey those surviving deeds which deal with lands in Tenterden, and the sources used here tell us little about customary and rented property. If deeds for other parishes and materials which tell us about the full range of property were consulted it is likely that a far wider pattern of landholding would emerge, perhaps across a number of neighbouring parishes, or even further afield.[24] This is not to say that the majority of the family's resources were not situated within the area around Small Hythe, but they were not limited to the immediate locality.

From what is known about Wealden agriculture after the middle of the sixteenth century it is likely that the Brekyndens leased the majority of their lands and that any single household probably farmed no more than thirty five to forty acres at any one time. The majority of this would have been pasture for the grazing of cattle, with perhaps only a third at most as arable. Out of all the Wealden parishes, Tenterden had the most extensive marsh lands which were suitable for the grazing of livestock.[25] There are however only the merest fragments of information needed to fill out the picture of their agricultural, or industrial activities. The only livestock to appear in the wills were cows and then only single animals, and there is no record of any grain stock. Farming equipment only features in William Brekynden's (III) last will and testament, such as it is suggesting that he farmed more than a smallholding.[26] He also bequeathed his "best shypps cofer" which is suggestive of a maritime trade or profession. It is difficult to imagine how any resident of Small Hythe could have avoided some degree of involvement in either shipping, boat-building or fishing. The name 'Brekynden' is often written as 'Brigenden' or variations on it, especially, but not exclusively with reference to Robert Brekynden (III) and his descendants, which may have been a pun on the family's occupation. The English word brigantine or its French precursor, *brigandin*,

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22 *L & P*, vol. i, 1327.

23 *L & P*, vol. xiii, 231.

24 An impression of the extent of Tenterden's hinterland and the geographical range of the lanholdings of its freemen is provided by, A.F. Butcher's study of the comparable town of New Romney, in *idem*, 'The Origins of Romney Freemen 1433-1523', *EcHR*, 2nd series, xxvii (1974), pp. 16-27.

25 Zell, 'Wood-Pasture Regime', pp. 72-86.

26 CKS: PRC 17/17/207; mentioned, are all his "wayns, carts, ploughs, coulters, shares, tyghts(sic), yaoks(sic), harrowes, horse harnes and all things thereto belonging": CKS: PRC 32/16/47.

were used to describe a two masted vessel of a type used extensively by the sixteenth century.[27]

Robert Brekynden's (III) skills as a shipwright, which were probably learnt at Small Hythe, paved his way to becoming Clerk of the King's Ships. Even before his appointment however, he appears to have been favoured by Henry VII, as not only was he a Yeoman of the Crown, but in 1490 he had been given an annuity of £10 for life, and allowed to purchase a seven year lease of the subsidies on cloth sold in Kent and half the forfeitures of those insufficiently sealed, for £20 3s 4d. Typical of the Weald however, Robert appears to have combined agricultural assets in Tenterden with his trade and professional activities, and with the help of his wife, these were prudently retained during his time in office. Sometime in the early sixteenth century she wrote to inform him that she had killed three of his oxen and sent them to the butcher, and with the letter, dispatched one bittern, twelve woodcocks, a mallard, two teals and twenty four snipes.[28] His son John (IV) served as a captain in the still embryonic Royal Navy, briefly indulged in some piracy against a Breton vessel and then appears to have run into debt. John's son (John VI) became servant to Thomas Cromwell, was probably a shipwright, and went on to a career as a soldier on the continent in the 1540s.[29] So much time away from Tenterden appears to have meant that he was predominantly a *rentier* landowner, but the sale of a dye house in 1537, and the lease of a brew house in 1539 amongst other properties and lands, provide a hint of some of the industrial activities in which he, and the Brekynden family as a whole may have engaged.[30]

The extent of Brekynden resources in Tenterden seems to have remained fairly stable over the period. There were some exceptions to the general rule however. According to Sir Christopher Hales, as already mentioned, John Brekynden (IV), ended his days "in evil thrift" sometime before 1533.[31] His son was not without his own financial difficulties, and if there was any trend in his interests at Tenterden it was for him to withdraw them in order to try and clear his own debts or to finance his designs on office.[32] From the 1530s it does appear that this wing of the family was decreasing in

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27 On the importance of sea fishing, sea-borne trade and attendant crafts and industries to the inhabitants of the nearby town of Rye, see Mayhew, *Tudor Rye*, pp. 6-9, 18-22, 139-172; Chapter Three. Robert Brekynden (I) left "i sprewse cofyr" in his will of 1483, but this was not necessarily something to be used aboard ship: CKS: PRC 17/3/450. On the origins of the name, see however, n.7 above. It is possible that there were originally two forms of the surname, one locative and the other occupational, and that over time they merged together through variant spellings and pronounciations.

28 *L & P*, Addenda, vol. i, 5; Oppenheim, 'Naval Accounts', p. xviii.

29 *L & P*, vol. i, 5720; *ibid.*, vol. ii, 235, 506, 1861; *ibid.*, vol. v, 1310; *ibid.*, vol. xxi, 171, 1133; Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, p. 51.

30 BL: Add. Ch. 56981; CKS: U410/T21.

31 *L & P*, vol. vi, 1574.

32 In 1537 John (VI) had sold numerous properties, thirty six acres of land and a piece of marsh, and may also have sold a yearly rent of 53s 4d. Between February 1539 and August 1543, he, farmed out or sold seven parcels of property, which included twelve houses, more than 240 acres of arable, pasture,

importance in the parish, although as late as 1543 John still had a substantial and diverse range of resources at Small Hythe, and he remained an important figure within local and regional society.[33]

The other wing of the family seem to have been more economically consistent. Their involvement in the land-market from the 1440s to the 1540s, provides in a very approximate way, one measure of the chronology of Brekynden economic activity in Tenterden. From 1440 to 1499, five of the forty seven Tenterden deeds which deal with land, record transactions of Brekynden lands. From 1500 to 1549, the proportion is five out of forty five, suggesting little significant change in the level of Brekynden involvement in the land-market from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century. If the number of deeds which mention Brekynden lands as neighbouring other lands and which record members of the family as witnesses to other families' transactions (which is a likely indication of neighbourhood), in addition to those dealing with Brekynden transactions are counted, then it emerges that from 1440 to 1499, nine out of forty seven deeds mention the Brekyndens in at least one of these three capacities. From 1500 to 1549 the proportion is ten out of forty five, which tends to indicate that Brekynden landholding and land-market involvement over the period as a whole remained robust.[34] An indication of the family's position by the late 1530s is provided independently of property deeds in the form of a surviving Corporation Minute Book for Tenterden, which contains information on thirty two separate property transfers in the form of common recoveries, from 23 September 1538 to 20 August 1543. A William Brekynden was enfeoffed of reasonably substantial parcels of lands and houses in and around Small Hythe on three separate occasions during these years, making the family one of the more frequently mentioned in these transactions.[35] He may have been the same individual as the William Brekynden who died in the late sixteenth century with goods valued at between £50 and £100.[36]

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wood and marsh, three brewhouses, three granaries, a dyehouse, thirteen gardens, and five crofts. The sales alone raised in excess of £200: BL: Add. Ch. 56981; CKS: U410/T21; Te/S1, fols. 17r.-v., 18r.-20v., 21v., 27r., 44r.-45v. In September 1539 it seems that he wanted to sell £14 or £15 worth of his lands, in order to try and clear his debts, and buy the Customership of Sandwich: *L & P*, xiii, 231. For his debts see: *L & P*, vol. ii, pp. 1487, 1489; *ibid.*, vol. iii, 3694; *ibid.*, vol. vi, 1574; *ibid.*, Addenda, vol. i, 6.

33 *L & P*, vol. vii, 630, 1251.

34 In both cases only those references to Wing 1 of the family have been counted, and where there is doubt as to which wing of the family is referred to, the instance has not been included.

35 He was probably the son of William Brekynden (II). CKS: Te/S1, fols. 2r.-v., 17r.-v., 28r. See also, Chapter Five.

36 Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', pp. 196-204.

Wealth and status

For one wing of the family, royal and county service led to considerable social advancement. However there can be little doubt that the family as a whole were substantial landholders in the parish and of high status. As mentioned above, Robert Brekynden (I) and his descendants appear in nineteen of the ninety two surviving property deeds made between 1440 and 1549, a proportion of just over a fifth.[37] A further measure of their social standing and breadth of connections at Tenterden is provided by probate evidence. Excluding their own, they appear in twenty wills from 1470 to 1535. In eight cases they acted as executors or overseers, in four as feoffees, and on nine separate occasions they were recorded as witnesses. Their prominence may have been even more marked at Small Hythe.[38]

Assessments on barons of the Cinque Ports on goods and chattels in Tenterden hundred and elsewhere, show that the Brekyndens were one of the wealthiest non-gentry families in Tenterden. In 1464 Robert Brekynden (I) paid 15s 8d on movable property in Tenterden. The average of all payments made at this date was 8s 8d and Robert paid the second largest amount, out of a total of thirty-three Tenterden men. In the same assessment Robert's son, William Brekynden (I) paid 6s 1d and John Brekynden (I), 2s 1d. The Brekyndens were unique in having more than two family members assessed in 1464.[39] In a similar assessment in 1512/13 on nineteen Tenterden men, Robert Brekynden contributed the joint highest amount of 40s, when the overall average of payments was 15s (This was possibly Robert Brekynden (II), although it may have been Robert Brekynden, Clerk of the King's Ships, and an indication of the wealth he had acquired in office).[40] In 1545-6, as either a tenth or fifteenth of the value of their goods and chattels in Tenterden hundred, John Brekynden (probably John Brekynden V) and Thomas Brekynden (II), paid 6s and 3s respectively, the average of the five amounts listed on this occasion being 2s 8d.[41] Finally, in an assessment on twenty-eight men of

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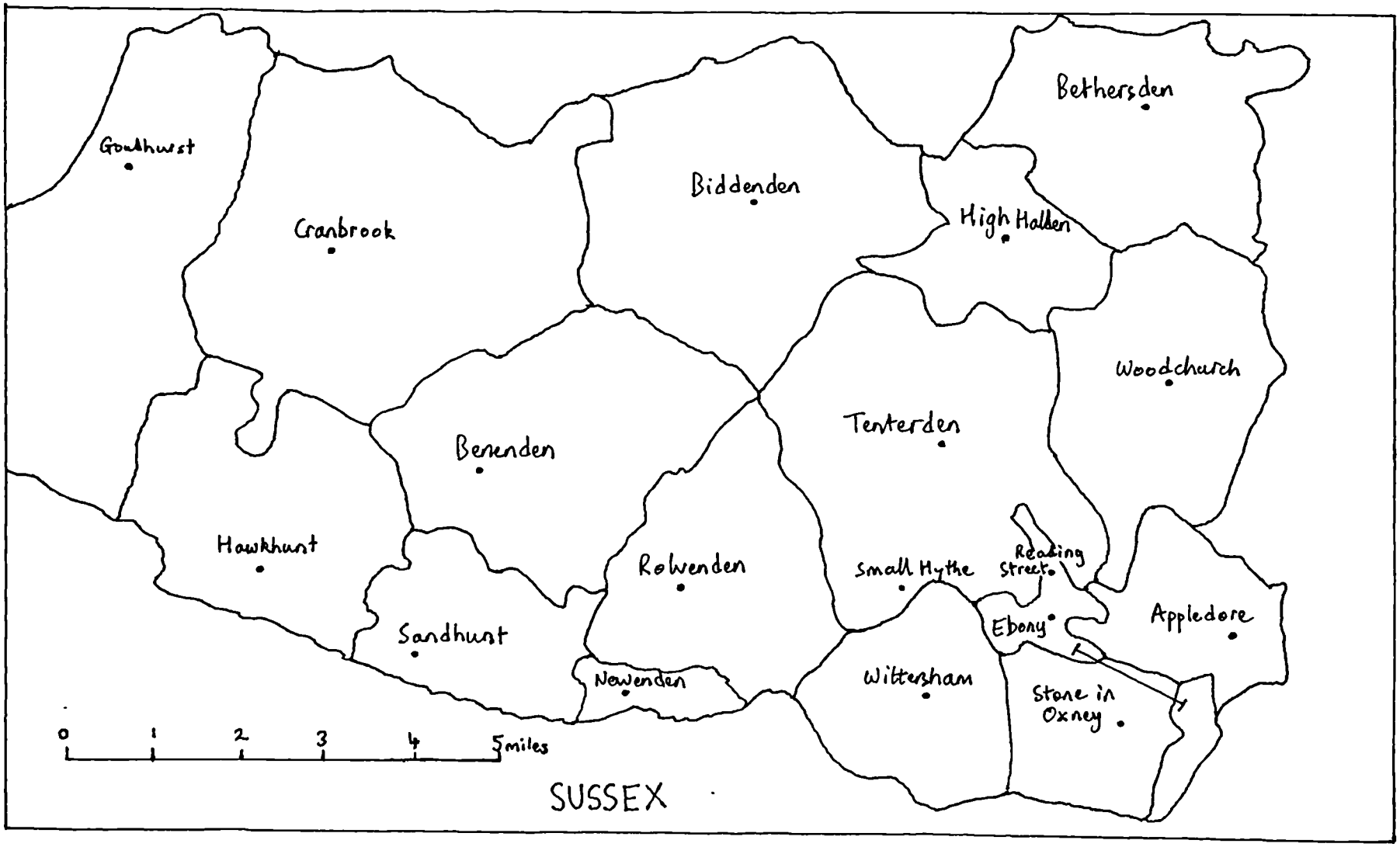
37 Either as land/property holders, lessees, former holders/lessees, feoffees to uses, holders of neighbouring lands, witnesses and sometimes in a combination of two or more of these functions. See Chapter Five for comparison with other important families.

38 Once again only references to Wing 1 of the family are included.

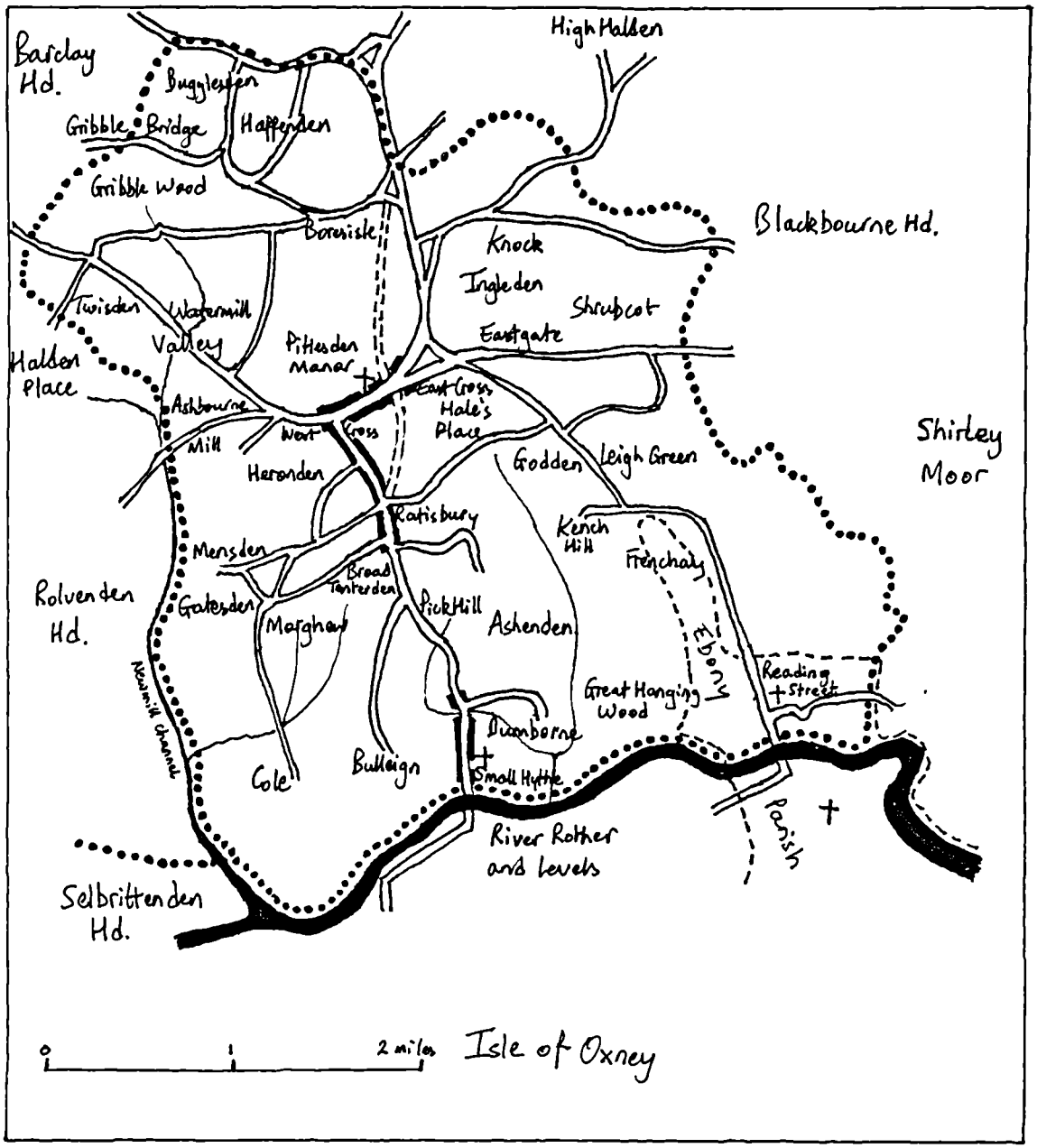
39 PRO: E179, 230/182. This assessment was on the basis of a fifteenth of evaluated goods and chattels. It is not clear at what stage the barons of the Ports were restricted to the bailiffs/mayors and jurats, rather than all freemen: Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, p. 34.

40 PRO: E179, 231/228. A William Brekynden paid 3s, John Brekynden (III) 2s and a Robert Brekynden 12d, as a tenth or fifteenth on goods and chattels which were assessed under the Hundred of Bewsborough near Dover. This was because this personalty lay within lands in Small Hythe which were part of the manor of Temple in Bewsborough Hundred, which were assessed separately: Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, p. 54. In 1542, William Brekynden was assessed at 4s 6d, and a John Brekynden at 3s 1d, under Bewsborough Hundred, alongside five others, the overall average on this occasion being approximately 2s: PRO: E179, 234/7.

41 PRO: E179, 230/177.



Map 2.1 *Tenterden and neighbouring Wealden parishes and centres*



Map 2.2 *Tenterden parish and hundred* (Traced and adapted from Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years* (York, 1995), p. 71.)

Tenterden in 1559, Thomas Brekynden (II) paid 8s 8d when the average contribution was 10s 2d and fourteen were less than Thomas's.[42] Although they provide only an impression of Brekynden family wealth, in relation to their fellow townsmen the assessments show that they were particularly wealthy in the 1460s, and that by the mid-sixteenth century they may have lost something of their position in local society, but nevertheless remained among the more substantial Tenterden dynasties.

This is confirmed by an examination of Brekynden office-holding in the institutions of both town and parish. It appears very likely that Robert Brekynden, Clerk of the King's Ships was bailiff of Tenterden in 1491-2, 1517-18 and 1518-19, and his grandson John Brekynden (VI) was bailiff in 1536-7, having become a freeman sometime between 1533 and 1535. Their kinsmen were however, no less prominent in local government. Robert Brekynden (I) was bailiff in 1453-4 and 1462-3. Robert's son, John Brekynden (II), was serving as a jurat and represented his town at a special meeting of the Brotherhood of the Cinque Ports at New Romney in 1486. John's son, William Brekynden (II) served as bailiff in 1506-7, and ten years later the same William or his cousin William Brekynden (III) was bailiff for a year. In 1528, a William Brekynden of Small Hythe (probably William III) was a jurat at Tenterden, and in 1534-5 another William became bailiff on entering the franchise of the town (possibly William II's son). He served as a jurat every year for the five years from 1538 to 1542 for which there is a full record of office holding, causing them to be the only family represented in office for all five years on the trot. John Brekynden (V), great grandson of Robert Brekynden (I), served alongside him in 1538 and 1539, as well as being a taxor of the scott in 1538. Finally, in 1548-9, John Brekynden (V), Robert Brekynden's (I) great grandson was elected bailiff, simultaneously becoming a freeman.[43] Robert Brekynden (I) and his descendants were therefore responsible for seven terms of office as bailiffs out of the hundred and four listed in the Tenterden Custumal from 1449 to 1554. Only two other families provided bailiffs for as many terms as this, namely the Pettes and the Parkers, and neither of them over as many years as the Brekyndens.[44] In fact, out of all Tenterden families the Brekyndens served for the longest time of ninety-six years in all.[45] They were the most dominant and enduring family in municipal office at Tenterden. If Robert Brekynden (III) and his grandson are included, then it emerges that a Brekynden was

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42 PRO: E179, 230/177.

43 CKS: Te/C1, fols. 140r.-141r., 116r.-v. *A Calendar of the White and Black Books of the Cinque Ports*, pp. 96, 204, 206, 208-10. CKS: Te/S1, fols. 1r., 19r., 27r., 32r., 39r.

44 The Brekyndens first entered office in 1453 and the last recorded term served by them before 1553-4, was in 1548-9, representing a period of 96 years. The Pettes entered office in 1472 and served on a number of occasions until 1501-2, a period of 30 years; the Parkers for 50 years, from 1492 to 1541.

45 The closest to this was the Gerves family's time of office-holding of 86 years, but they only served for 4 terms in all. After them, the Haleses had the next most impressive record of 6 terms over 79 years. Only 37 family surnames appear in the list of bailiffs, and only 19 of these more than once, and only 12 more than 3 times.

bailiff at Tenterden on no fewer than eleven occasions, over a period of almost a hundred years - an unrivalled record of municipal office holding.

The surviving records of parochial office holding are not nearly as continuous as those for the borough, but they also reveal Brekynden activism. In 1502 William Brekynden (probably I) and in 1505 Thomas Brekynden (probably I, the son or godson of John II) served as churchwardens at Tenterden.[46] As well as being outstanding in their municipal activism, the Brekyndens were also involved in the government of their parish church. Not least because of their office holding and activities as overseers, witnesses and foeffees to parishioners wills, their longevity and stability, and their wealth, for over a hundred years the Brekyndens were one of the most influential families in Tenterden and its hinterland.

Continuities in family piety

A sense of their place in Tenterden's social hierarchy, provides a good point from which to begin to explore the Brekyndens' piety. For this, one is largely dependent upon the eight surviving last wills and testaments of Robert Brekynden (I) and his descendants, dating from 1482 to 1533. The aim here, is to show that viewed as a whole, they reveal definite continuities in pious expression.[47] That is, identifiable elements in testamentary piety which can be followed through three generations, and yet which changed in form and expression according to a range of factors; a pattern of Brekynden family piety which carried elements of familial identity and tradition marking them out from other, but not necessarily all other families. In subsequent chapters I aim to show how such patterns were part of wider and more generally shared values (within defined limits), passed on from one generation to the next.

a) Small Hythe chapel

The Brekyndens' patronage of the chapel of St. John the Baptist at Small Hythe was one of the most continual elements within their testamentary piety. It took a variety of forms and held a prominent place in their wills for fifty years. It is first visible in 1482, in Robert Brekynden's (I) request that his son William, undertake for a chaplain to celebrate for Robert's soul and all the souls of the faithful deceased, for a quarter of a

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46 CCAL: Z.3.2, fols. 4v., 136v. Parochial office holders are listed in a total of 14 surviving visitation notices for the years 1498, 1499, 1500, 1502, 1505-8, 1514-16, 1521-23.

47 Seven of these wills are for Tenterden; one, that of William Brekynden (III) is for Goudhurst, as he had moved there sometime before 1533.

year in the chapel at Small Hythe. Elsewhere in his will, Robert devised William lands and bequeathed sums of money to his three children, and so this temporary chantry may in part have been William's side of a reciprocal arrangement with his father.[48] The next recorded Brekynden bequest to the chapel was made in 1507, by Agnes, Robert's (I) granddaughter. Quite different to his, it consisted of 3s 4d, with no indication as to the desired application of this money. Apart from 8d left to the high altar of Tenterden parish church "for tithes forgotten", this was her only religious bequest.[49] When Agnes's brother, Robert Brekynden (II) made his will in 1517, he left specific instructions as to how his money was to be employed. Twenty shillings were to go to the glazing of a window in the chapel, 6s 8d towards the building of a house for the priest who celebrated there to live in, and 20d to Sir Thomas Gryme, possibly the same priest at Small Hythe, to celebrate for the health of his soul.[50]

In 1526, Robert's cousin John Brekynden (III) bequeathed 6s 8d "to the use of the chapell of Smalehith", and stipulated that if his son John (V) died without heirs then "all my parte of pet feld remayne and go to the use of the chapell of Saint John baptist yn Smalehith forever".[51] It seems unlikely that this latter reversionary endowment was ever carried out, as John (V) was still alive in 1553/4 and had probably produced an heir.[52] However, the Brekyndens continued to support the chapel after 1526. Firstly, the wording of the arrangement in John's (III) will suggests that his "part of Pet Feld" which crucially, was to "*remayne* and go" to the chapel, had already been a lifetime endowment, and was to continue as such even if John (V) died without heirs. Secondly, John (V) does indeed seem to have supported divine service in the chapel during his lifetime, but with a different piece of land than that left by his father. In 1546, when the chapel and the property with which it was endowed was valued in the commission to carry out the Chantries Act, among the lands funding the chaplain's stipend was "an acre...called Mountaurye Garden lying in Tentwarden upon the den of Guylysham in the tenure of John Brykenden", with an annual value to let of 2s.[53] In maintaining familial commitment to the chapel, at some stage John (V) may have swapped his father's part of Pet Field for this new parcel of land. Of all the Brekyndens he may represent Small Hythe

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48 CKS: PRC 17/3/450. For other examples of this sort of arrangement, see Burgess, 'By Quick and by Dead', pp. 851-855.

49 CKS: PRC 17/9/321.

50 CKS: PRC 17/13/263. Sir Thomas Gryme was one of the witnesses of Robert's will, a fact which does suggest that he was on hand in Small Hythe. See also, A.H. Taylor, 'The Clergy of St. John the Baptist, Smallhythe', *Arch. C'ant.*, lv (1943), p. 27.

51 CKS: PRC 17/17/207.

52 John Brekynden (V) is listed in an assessment on the men of Tenterden who owned goods and chattels assessed under the Hundred of Bewsborough in 1553/4: PRO: E179, 270/48.

53 PRO: Chantry Certificates, Roll 29, 118, transcribed in Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', p. 151. This seems more likely to have been John Brekynden (V) than John Brekynden (VI), partly for reasons to do with the latter's absence from Tenterden during his exploits as a soldier in the 1540s (see above), and partly for reasons stated below (see n.54).

chapel's most ardent patron, for he led a petition in *c.* 1549 which saved it from destruction at the hands of its new owner, John Rowland, Page of the Robes to King Edward VI.[54]

The above evidence indicates that in the long-term, the level of support given by the Brekyndens to Small Hythe chapel may have grown in strength. However not all of the eight surviving Brekynden wills contain bequests to the chapel. One of the four which does not, belonged to William Brekynden (III), who had moved to Goudhurst a few years before writing his will in 1533. Not surprisingly he appears to have found more convenient and appropriate outlets for his piety.[55] Another, belonged to Joan Brekynden, John's (III) wife, who died only two years after her husband in 1528. In the light of his possible lifetime endowment and testamentary gift, she may not have felt compelled to make any bequests of her own to the chapel.[56] Juliana Brekynden's will, written in 1503, also gives no indication of her family's preoccupations, but neither does it reveal any alternative institutional focus for her religious sentiments.[57] More significantly however, her husband, John Brekynden (II) who pre-deceased her by less than a year, made only one non-obligatory religious bequest: 3s 4d to Master Peter Marshall, vicar of the parish church of Tenterden.[58] This means that of all the Brekynden households in Tenterden over the period who have left us a record of their piety, in only one case, namely John and Juliana's, does it fail to show support for Small Hythe chapel.

John's father's will may in part explain this discontinuity. It is already established that Robert desired his son William to undertake for a temporary chantry in the chapel of St. John the Baptist. John, on the other hand, was entrusted with arranging an identical chantry in the chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary in St. Mildred's.[59] It is possible that not only did John fulfil his duty on this count, but that he took it upon himself to continue in life and in death, what appears to have been his father's greatest religious preoccupation. This would explain the absence in John's will of any reference to his local chapel, and may indicate the precise purpose of his gift to the vicar of Tenterden. That is, to fund divine service in the chapel of the Blessed Virgin. This said, there is one link between his

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54 PRO: Augmentation Miscellaneous Books, 114, fol. 139, transcribed in Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', pp. 153-5, and see Chapter Three. Once again, it seems most likely that this was John Brekynden (V), rather than his kinsman John Brekynden (VI), as the former was bailiff of Tenterden about the same time of the petition in 1548-9 (see above), which corresponds with his place at the head of the list of those "pore and daylie orators" who put their names to the petition.

55 CKS: PRC 32/16/47.

56 CKS: PRC 17/18/158.

57 CKS: PRC 17/9/222.

58 CKS: PRC 17/8/281. John died some time between 26 October 1502 when he made his will, and 12 September 1503, the date of probate. Juliana's is dated 20 March 1503 and was proved on 11 September 1504.

59 CKS: PRC 17/3/450.

will and Small Hythe chapel: it was proved by the oath of William Edwardson, who was probably a chaplain there around 1503.[60]

Despite these discontinuities of greater or lesser significance, gifts and endowments to the chapel at Small Hythe remained a prominent strand within Brekynden piety for at least 70 years within the period studied here, during which, as residents of Small Hythe, the chapel increasingly took the foremost place in their religious commitments. Moreover, even as late as the early seventeenth century, the family sustained a special relationship with the chapel. From around 1585, gifts to the maintenance of the priest or the fabric, cease in the Tenterden wills, that is apart from two, in 1627 and 1628. In this latter year, William Brekynden left £6 13s 4d towards the building and repairing of seats in the chapel, and 50s to the poor of Small Hythe.[61] There could scarcely be better confirmation of the transmission of family piety over the generations.

Changes in the nature of the Brekynden bequests help to explain the chapel's growing importance, and tell a wider story of its developing role in the local community. This begins with Robert Brekynden's (I) aspirations for the establishment of a temporary chantry at Small Hythe. This was typical of endowments made before around 1500, during a time when permanent provision for divine service in the chapel seems to have been lacking, and arrangements for masses and prayers in wills were made *ad personam*.[62] By 1507 when Agnes made her bequest, circumstances had changed. The chapel's status had been enhanced and a more stable and continuous framework had been put in place for the celebration of divine service. This came about as a result of the bequest of a parishioner, namely John Tyler, in 1503, which led directly to Archbishop William Warham's grant of a permanent licence for the performance of divine service in February 1506. These developments may explain why Agnes left a cash gift for no express purpose - the official structures now being in place to administer such bequests. She may also have wanted to take advantage of the Archbishop's grant of forty days indulgence from any penances imposed upon those who "as often as they being truly penitent and confessed shall extend a helping hand to the erection, repair, maintenance, support or sustenance of the said chapel and of the chaplain for the time being - this to hold good in its own strength for all future time".[63] The fact that this was the only religious act in her testament is perhaps an indication of the growing importance of the

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60 William Edwardson is recorded as a witness in three Small Hythe wills around this time. In addition to John's they are: John Jacob, 1503, CKS: PRC 17/8/271; Anne Dowle, 1503, CKS: PRC 17/9/10. See also, Taylor, 'Clergy of St. John the Baptist', p. 27.

61 Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, p. 64.

62 For full discussion of this and what follows, see Chapter Three.

63 CKS: PRC 17/9/7; LPL: Reg. Warham, i, fol. 10, transcribed and translated in Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', pp. 140-1, 143-5.

chapel to the people of Small Hythe, attitudes expressed and bolstered by the recently attained licence.

By 1517, when Agnes's brother Robert made his considerably more elaborate gifts to the chapel, events had taken an even more dramatic turn. On 31 July 1514 there was a fire at Small Hythe, and it seems that the chapel did not survive unscathed.[64] The damage was extensive enough for the repair work to be going on three years later when Robert attended to the glazing of one of the chapel's windows and to the building of the priest's house. By the mid-1520s it seems that the immediate need of refurbishment had passed. So Robert's cousin John made his gift simply "to the use of the chapell of Smalehith" and had possibly arranged his own lifetime endowment in what seems to have been more stable circumstances than those of the previous decade. His and his son's endowments of lands suggest that there was a greater degree of permanency and continuity to the chapel's role in Small Hythe, than is indicated in the earlier wills. These arrangements also represent a growing sophistication and degree of planning in the family's religious giving, which reflected changes in pious expression among families in the parish as a whole.[65] As shown in the next chapter, testamentary bequests for temporary or perpetual chantries in the chapel like Robert Brekynden's (I), were with one exception, all confined to the years up to and including 1501, and yet from the commission of 1549 it is clear that there were a number of parcels of land and property together valued at 100s a year, enfeoffed to the use of the chaplain's stipend. This suggests that far from dying out in the sixteenth century, endowments became more permanent and stable, and perpetual endowments in lands made during life rather than at death prevailed.

The Brekyndens are an extreme example of the changing relationship between the people of Small Hythe and their chapel. Essentially this relationship moved from a personal and familial level when patronage was largely haphazard, through the enhancement of status and the crisis of the fire, to a time when the chapel had become important enough to warrant the establishment of more organised and permanent collective endowment. Patronage was on the whole confined to residents of Small Hythe, and so the example provided by the Brekyndens also hints at a growing sense of local identity symbolically expressed through, and in, the chapel of St. John the Baptist. These observations serve as a useful introduction to more in-depth exploration of these issues in Chapter Three, and demonstrate how the testamentary traditions of a single family can reveal something of the essence of the tenor of local piety.

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64 According to a note in the list of bailiffs in the Tenterden Custumal, "Smalithe was burnte" on this date: CKS: Te/C1, fol. 140v.

65 On these developments, see Chapter Five.

b) The parish Church of St. Mildred

Not as important to them as the chapel at Small Hythe, the parish church of St. Mildred was nevertheless, at times, a significant outlet for Brekynden testamentary piety. Before the end of the fifteenth century St. Mildred's may even have provided the main focus for family devotion. Robert Brekynden's (I) will of 1482 reveals strong affiliation to the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary, located within the chapel dedicated to her in the parish church. In his testament Robert made the rare request among Tenterden testators that his body be buried within this chapel.[66] In addition, he left a silver chain to the image of the virgin. Commemorative services requested by Robert for the health of his soul would probably have been conducted near to where his body lay in the same chapel. Robert left 20s for the expenses of his funeral, 26s 8d for his month mind, 20s for the anniversary of his death, and 3s 4d each year for a further two years. In addition, his son John was to undertake for a temporary chantry for a quarter of a year in the chapel.[67] From other wills it is clear that there was a fraternity or Brotherhood of the Blessed Virgin at Tenterden by 1479, and that this was still in existence although perhaps struggling to maintain its services ten years later in 1489.[68] Judging by Robert's bequests he was probably a member of the Brotherhood, and the requested burial and services, if carried out, would have provided a considerable boost to its activities in the early 1480s. His will suggests that he had played an important role in this cult in life as well as in death.

The rest of the Brekynden wills, which are all later than Robert's, do not mention the cult of the Virgin and neither do they indicate much support for the parish church as a whole. John Brekynden, Robert's son did leave money to Master Peter Marshall, vicar of St. Mildred's in 1503, but apart from this, for five decades the Brekyndens made no other testamentary bequests directed specifically to their parish church.[69] This marked contrast between Robert Brekynden's (I) will and later family testamentary piety demands explanation. Robert's displays not so much a commitment to St. Mildred's, as to the cult of the Virgin therein. The decline of the Brotherhood of the Virgin before the end of the fifteenth century, may have meant that in the early sixteenth century the Brekyndens no longer saw their parish church as providing the main outlet for their

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66 Only one other testator, Thomas Pette, requested burial in this chapel, in 1489: CKS: PRC 17/6/108. Unusually, only a handful of Tenterden testators asked to be buried inside St. Mildred's.

67 CKS: PRC 17/3/450.

68 Thomas Wormeslee, Tenterden, 1479, CKS: PRC 32/2/480; John Pette, *pannarius*, Tenterden, 1489, CKS: PRC 17/5/152; John Morer, vicar of Tenterden, 1489, PRO: P.C.C. 20 Milles, fols. 161v.-162v. See Chapter Four.

69 They all left sums of money for tithes forgotten to the high altar at St. Mildred's but these were not voluntary offerings. CKS: PRC 17/8/281. As suggested above, John Brekynden may have been fulfilling his father's request for a temporary chantry at St. Mildred's with this gift to Peter Marshall.

testamentary giving. Instead they appear to have turned to the chapel of St. John the Baptist at Small Hythe, which was growing in importance around the same time as the cult of the Virgin declined in popularity. This was however not a sudden shift. After all, long term Brekynden support for their local chapel can be seen in Robert Brekynden's (I) will. The change in affiliation seems to have taken place over two generations, so that by the time Robert's grandchildren came to make their wills, Small Hythe chapel was no longer subordinate to the parish church in their interests, but took pride of place. This presumably had much to do with a growing sense of identity among residents of the township, in which as one of its most enduring families, the Brekyndens patently shared.

As shown in Chapter Three, the Brekynden wills are an extreme example of what was in fact a general, but not total shift in affiliation from the parish church toward the chapel at Small Hythe for a significant number of Tenterden families. Concentrating for the time being upon the Brekyndens, this begs the question as to whether there was a real conflict of interests between the parish and the locality, which was not least to do with differing economic activities and resources. Firstly, on the level of religious practice , throughout the period, despite the licence granted to Small Hythe chapel, St. Mildred's remained, with the help of some bolstering of its rights by the Archbishop, the central focus of the liturgical year and the official place for the enactment of the life-cycle rituals of baptism, marriage and burial for all parishioners. Secondly, the tithes and offerings of all Tenterden residents continued to be paid to the parish, and so the Brekynden wills all contain payments for "tithes forgotten" to the high altar of St. Mildred's. However, Robert's (I) considerable offering of 6s 8d was never matched by the rest of the family.[70] Thirdly, as far as can be known from their wills, all of the Brekyndens were buried either inside or in the churchyard of St. Mildred's. It follows therefore, that the masses and prayers which they procured for the health of their souls were performed in the parish church, although it is possible that at certain times of the year, for reasons of convenience, they were conducted at Small Hythe.[71] The Brekyndens appear to have kept up a certain level of commitment to their parish church, which perhaps satisfied their own as well as others' expectations, but surprised no one.

It is probably impossible to measure the degree to which the Brekyndens remained enthusiastically integrated with the religious life of the parish whilst at the same time giving increasing support to their local chapel. In the first decade of the sixteenth century there are indications that they were still taking an active and prominent part in

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70 Whereas Robert (I) gave 6s 8d, John (II) gave 20d, Juliana 12d, Agnes 8d, Robert (II) 3s 4d, John (III) 16d and Joan 16d. See Chapter Four for comments on the relationship between these payments and wealth, and their potential voluntary element.

71 See Chapter Three. As well as those services already mentioned for Robert (I), Robert (II) left 3s for eight masses at every altar of *Scala Coeli* (probably confined to St. Mildred's in Tenterden or perhaps at this date to London only); John (III) left 20s for his funeral, and 13s 4d for his "*trigintale*" and Joan, his wife, left 20s for her funeral and 20s for her month mind.

parochial organisation. As already mentioned, in 1502 William Brekynden, possibly Robert's (I) son or one of his grandchildren, was churchwarden at Tenterden, as was Thomas Brekynden (I) in 1505.[72] After this date however, there is no record of Brekynden service in the office of churchwarden nor as *parochiani* who made presentments at visitations. This suggests that sometime after 1505 the family withdrew from parochial service, a step which is not out of accord with the pattern of bequests in their wills.[73] It does seem that as the expression of local identity through Small Hythe chapel filled their pious vision, the parish church somewhat receded into the background. For other families, as well as for the Brekyndens, by the early sixteenth century there appears to have been a conflict of interests between the inhabitants of the parish's two main centres of population. Whether social, economic or to do with where families invested their pious resources, in the late 1540s these tensions became clearly visible.[74]

A broader definition of piety

As yet, I have concentrated on the relative importance to the Brekyndens over time of different outlets for pious expression. As a result, little has been said about the religious intensity of Brekynden piety itself, or to put it another way, the degree to which they show religious commitment. The treacherously ambiguous nature of the evidence rules out categorical statements on this issue, but nevertheless it cannot be ignored, and some historians have rightly or wrongly been preoccupied with it.[75] I will attempt to show that this problem may be approached in a meaningful way by adopting a broader definition of late medieval piety than has usually been taken by historians of religion.[76]

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72 CCAL: Z.3.2, fols. 4v., 136v.

73 Admittedly, the surviving presentments offer only a fragmented record of nine separate years after 1505 until the last in 1523: see n.46 above. Because of this, there may have been other instances of parochial service by members of the family after 1505 of which there is no record.

74 There was not only a clash of interests over the most desirable place to worship in the parish. There may also have been a conflict between competing jurisdictions in which the Brekyndens played a central role. In 1528, William Brekynden of Small Hythe, a jurat of Tenterden (probably William III), was called to appear before the next meeting of the Brotherhood of the Cinque Ports, because of objections made against him by Tenterden Corporation "for keeping a court": *A Calendar of the White and Black Books of the Cinque Ports*, pp. 204, 206, 208-10. See Chapter Three for a full discussion of this episode.

75 For example, Norman Tanner, who has recently been working on a new book entitled 'How Christian were the middle ages?', and whose *Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, deals with the same issue in a similar context to the present discussion. See Chapter One.

76 Heath in particular fell into the trap of so narrowly defining piety that the testators he studied were made to appear drab and tired in their religious convictions: Heath, 'Urban Piety', pp. 209-234, esp. pp. 228-229.

To begin with, one might look for exceptional or unusual elements in Brekynden testamentary piety. Robert Brekynden's (I) devotion to the Virgin and affiliation to her cult and fraternity certainly mark him out from other testators. It has also already been pointed out however, that his bequests may have been exceptional partly because of the short-lived or unstable nature of this particular cult.[77] In addition, whereas exclusivity might indicate genuine devotion, it may just as much have been employed as a mechanism of social closure. Fashions in piety, which were peculiarly the pastime of families of high social standing and wealth may not be the best barometers of religious zeal, but then again, it is questionable whether the two can, or ever should be separated.

It is because any attempt to separate the outward expression of late medieval piety from social relations is flawed from the start, that the intensity of Robert's piety is best assessed in the context of his own family and wider social status group. So on the one hand, although Robert was wealthy, the resources at his disposal in the making of his will were no greater than for some of his descendants who themselves did not devote so much of their available wealth to such particular traditional religious bequests.[78] On the other hand, when compared with other Tenterden wills made in the late fifteenth century by individuals of a similar social standing to Robert, his bequests look restrained and unostentatious and become notable for their specificity rather than their size; most especially, for the unity of devotion in his burial and temporary chantry in the chapel of the Virgin, and the gift of a silver chain to adorn her image. It is difficult not to read these gestures as the symbolic display of exclusivity, but at the same time one would be equally hard pressed to deny that they reveal a focused intensity of piety which is uncommon in the Tenterden wills.

Robert Brekynden's (II) will of 1517 was also exceptional, in this case because of the novelty of one of its bequests. This reads: "I bequeith to won or ij honest preests celebrating viij masses for the helth of my soule my father and mother soules uppon evry auter wher th'auctorye of scale coeli is licensed and had iiijs". The celebration of masses "at *Scala Coeli*" as they were commonly called, was a new development in the early sixteenth century. Based on the legend of St. Bernard's vision of the souls for whom he prayed ascending to heaven by a ladder - this literally being the *Scala Coeli* - it took the form of an indulgence, effected for the dead through the celebration of requiem masses in specially licensed churches. It is first visible in England by 1510, and by the 1520s was a common bequest in wills.[79] Robert's will represents the second recorded occurrence of the mass at Tenterden, the first being only a year before. In all there are only six such bequests, four of which were made before 1521 and the remaining two in 1526 and

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77 Whereas patronage of the cult of the virgin continued throughout our period in the form of bequests to her image and light, any mention of the Brotherhood of the Blessed Virgin ceased in 1489.

78 See below.

79 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 375-6, and see Chapter Four.

1531.[80] Unlike the Jesus mass (the other liturgical development at this time), the mass at *Scala Coeli* seems to have appealed to only a very small minority of will-makers at Tenterden.[81] Neither does it appear to have had much of an air of social exclusivity about it, as two testators left only 12d for two celebrations apiece.[82] Robert's bequest was much more ambitious, with eight masses to be celebrated at an unspecified number of altars. In fact he possibly devoted more money than any other Tenterden testator to this liturgical innovation. His early and outstanding patronage of the new celebration is suggestive of a keen religious taste, which was perhaps, ironically, informed by an awareness of pious fashions further afield, at the same time as being fuelled by a genuine intensity of devotion.[83]

Apart from these bequests, there is nothing exceptional about the Brekynden wills, which are in fact relatively unostentatious in terms of traditional religious arrangements when compared to many of those made by families of similar social status.[84] If there is anything extraordinary about them, it is that they contain so few religious gifts, and that these are so humble for such a wealthy and influential family.

Simple comparison of the amounts of money left for different purposes helps to illustrate the general character of the family's testamentary piety. In total the Brekyndens left a minimum of £13 15s in religious bequests,[85] and at least £36 3s 10d to family and kin.[86] They therefore apportioned just over a quarter of their available cash resources at

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80 John Donet, 1516, CKS: PRC 17/12/566; Robert Brekynden, 1517, CKS: PRC 17/13/263; Thomas Smyth, 1518, CKS: PRC 17/14/7; Deonys Davy, widow, 1520, CKS: PRC 17/14/285; Thomas Wode, 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/158; Thomas Syre, 1531, CKS: PRC 17/19/54.

81 The Brekyndens stand out as one of those families who did not make testamentary bequests to the Jesus mass. This may have had something to do with their preoccupations with the chapel at Small Hythe. See Chapter Five for a full discussion of the Jesus mass at Tenterden.

82 Thomas Smyth, CKS: PRC 17/14/7, and Deonys Davy, CKS: PRC 17/14/285.

83 Local clergy may have used their influence at the deathbed to promote new outlets for piety. Sir Thomas Gryme, priest at Small Hythe witnessed Robert's will, but there is no clear causal link between his presence and the bequest, since Gryme witnessed other wills which do not mention masses at *Scala Coeli*. Of the six testators who did support the new celebration, three appear to have made their bequests in the presence of clergy: namely, John Donet, Robert Brekynden, and Thomas Syre. Clergy did have an influence over the contents of wills, but usually not to such an extent that individual choices were suppressed: M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, p. 333; Marsh, 'In the Name of God?', pp. 235-6; and Chapter One.

84 See Chapters Four and Five.

85 Charitable and civic works (although the Brekyndens requested none) are included in this category, as are payments for forgotten tithes. Temporary chantries to which a specific sum is not attached in the will (usually because they were to be funded by heirs), are also included and evaluated on the basis of their intended duration - a year's chantry usually costing £6 13s 4d.

86 All non-religious cash bequests are included. Some gifts, particularly to unspecified numbers of godchildren are especially difficult to quantify, and have been counted as only two bequests where the sense is clearly plural. Cash maintenance arrangements for wives of the deceased are included in two cases, but are likely to be greatly underestimated, as they have been evaluated on the basis of only a single year. However, these arrangements were dependent on the incomes of heirs, and in any case, our concern is not so much to quantify the full amount of family wealth which was apportioned to widows, as to assess the level of commitment of male testators to their wives, which can be represented, in a comparative way, by the yearly value of annuities.

death to openly religious concerns, and the rest - the larger portion of just under three quarters - went to family and kin. Expressed in a more sensitive way, the average of the distribution of cash in all of each of the seven family wills, comes to 37 per cent (but a median of only 13 per cent) in religious bequests. This represents testamentary giving which might be construed as being close to the traditional model taught by the Church, of a third in religious bequests, a third to one's wife and a third to one's heirs.[87] However three of the Brekynden wills belonged to women and these cannot be expected to follow this pattern, and what is more, hidden within these aggregate figures are divergent individual strategies of will-making.

Robert Brekynden (I) for example, bequeathed almost two thirds of his cash in explicitly religious gifts. He could leave so large a proportion to such concerns probably because he was a widower and so did not have a wife to undertake for. Neither did he have any dependent children. His two sons had already established their own households. In terms of immediate family he was faced with less pressing needs than many younger testators. He was, however, a grandfather at least five times over, and these grandchildren (as well as a servant with his son John) took up most of his cash not devoted to religious matters. Robert also left not insubstantial amounts of household goods and land to family. In addition, he willed that his two sons pay for two temporary chantries, each for a quarter of a year, which would have cost them a total of around £3 6s 8d. This may have been a way to ensure that he could express his commitment to a more diverse range of pious obligations by freeing up some cash. Robert seems to have employed a strategy of will-making which balanced his affiliations to religious institutions and aspirations for divine services on the one hand, with ties and obligations to family on the other. This was however, not so much a case of trading family off against personal piety, as the practical management of resources, for the expression of an integral set of religious and moral commitments, which in effect would allow for the elaboration of his own piety through the actions of his sons. This was a common strategy of will-making which calls for a necessarily broad definition of testamentary piety.

Robert's son John Brekynden (II) appears to have employed a rather different approach. He left only 5s in religious bequests but £9 to immediate family.[88] John seems to have been less zealous than his father to express his piety in explicitly religious terms. To begin with, whereas Robert left the unusually large sum of 6s 8d for his tithes forgotten, John gave 20d, only a quarter of this amount. It is unlikely that such a large discrepancy

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87 Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, pp. 116-7; Burgess, 'Late Medieval Wills', p. 25; For some useful insights into the advice of godly writers in the sixteenth century, on the importance of settling one's estate in such as way as to provide for family, clear one's debts and express one's pious sentiments, see Marsh, 'In the name of God?', pp. 217-226.

88 Robert's cash bequests total more than John's.

was solely due to a difference in available wealth. In fact, John's cash bequests exceed his father's by a few shillings. Whereas Robert seems to have been unusually conscientious in settling any possible omissions and perhaps used the opportunity to express his piety, John's payment appears to be more run-of-the-mill, perhaps even below the level expected of him.[89]

John's gift of 3s 4d to Master Peter Marshall vicar of St. Mildred's Tenterden, is the only non-obligatory element of religious giving in his will. When clergy are specified by name in this way, it is reasonable to suspect a personal link with the testator, although as suggested above, this money may have been intended for masses or prayers.[90] In either case, there is not here the concentration of funds in funerary and commemorative services found in his father's will. He seems to have been more concerned to settle his debts, leaving instructions that "the parte of my messuage in Stone shalbe sold And the money therof remainyng to be delivered to my executors to pay my detts". Payment of debts had a definite religious content. The personal dimension of this equation meant that debts left outstanding would have to be settled in purgatory. Fear of suffering in the life to come was not however the sole religious motivation. Justice and charity had to be maintained through reconciliation with neighbours.[91] Conscientiousness in worldly affairs also sprang from a morality of mutual assistance and obligation to family, kin and associates and the desire to maintain a good name and reputation for oneself and one's family.[92] Any one testator might have acted on a number of impulses, of which the threat of purgatorial pain was just one. In John's case the complete lack of any other religious bequests which explicitly express a concern for his welfare after death suggests that for him purgatory was perhaps not uppermost in his mind, or at least was only one constituent factor within a wider moral framework, which was predominantly concerned with good reputation.

The most pressing need of all though seems to have been his daughter's dowry. Eight pounds or 12 marks, the vast majority of his available cash, was left to Anne (also referred to as Agnes) for this purpose. This was a good sized dowry by the standards of the day, and was above the average of those recorded in contemporaneous Tenterden

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89 See Chapter Four for comments on these payments.

90 See for example, Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, p. 126. The more personal nature of this bequest is emphasized by the rarity of gifts to named clergy for no specified purpose in the Tenterden wills.

91 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 322-3. On the maintenance of charity, see John Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 57-75.

92 Protestant writers of the late sixteenth century, not surprisingly put an emphasis on motivations for payment of debts at death, which were not linked to personal spiritual welfare, but the roots of these more social and moral elements stretched back into the late medieval period: Marsh, 'In the Name of God?', pp. 217-226; and, for example, Poos, *Rural Society*, p. 276; Ben R. McRee, 'Religious Gilds and Regulation of Behaviour in Late Medieval Towns', in Joel Rosenthal and Colin Richmond, eds., *People, Politics and Community in the Later Middle Ages* (Gloucester, 1987), pp. 108-22.

wills.[93] The fact that John had to provide for an unmarried daughter does not *per se* explain his particular strategy of testamentary piety however. He appears to have exercised deliberate choice in devoting nearly all of his available cash to a relatively large dowry for his daughter, at the exclusion of the rest of his family, and more overtly religious bequests. He clearly wanted to secure a good marriage for Anne, and thereby an alliance with a suitably well-heeled family. For John, the interests of family welfare and influence took precedence over other concerns. This is not to say that he was religiously passive, but rather that he subscribed to a set of values which centred upon the family, expressed in personal and relational terms, with their own pious intensity.

The differences between John's testamentary piety and that of his father cannot be explained solely in terms of different circumstances at death. John's wife's will supports the notion that their household piety had moved away from his father's religious preoccupations. This suggests that there was a shift in Brekynden piety from the 1480s to the early 1500s not just from one religious institution to another as seen in the other family wills, but also away from the institutionally religious altogether, towards a piety centred around the family and the household.

John's son, Robert Brekynden (II) who died in 1517, facing very different pressures, took an approach to will-making which had a strong element of continuity with his own, whilst incorporating certain modifications. In all, Robert left a minimum of £12 11s, nearly all his available cash, to no less than ten different individuals, who were either family, kin, friends, neighbours or associates, whereas his (neither insubstantial nor mundane) religious gifts came to a total of only £1 15s 8d. As has been shown, Robert's overtly religious bequests did not lack meaning, and as such, represent an element of pious expression absent from John's will. They were though especially timely and linked to developments peculiar to the years after John's death, namely the growth of local identity at Small Hythe and the destruction by fire of its chapel, as well as the new liturgical development of masses at *Scala Coeli*. Robert also had half as much more disposable cash than his father which he could apportion in his will to a variety of beneficiaries and concerns, which perhaps in part accounts for the greater diversity of his gifts.

Within this diversity, like John, Robert had one main concern in his will, and being single at the time, this was not to provide for a dowry, but for his prospective wife.

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93 According to Barbara Hanawalt's survey of 319 Bedfordshire wills in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, money bequests for dowries ranged from 13s 4d to £40. Twenty shillings was typical of the humbler will makers: 'Peasant Women's Contribution to the Home Economy in Late Medieval England', in *idem*, ed., *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe* (Indiana, 1986), p. 5. Dowry payments in Tenterden wills range from between 20s and £20, but most are in the order of 2 to 5 marks.

He was intending to marry a widow by the name of Margery Bechyng, to whom he left a total of £6 13s 4d to be paid within two years after his death. Robert was no older than fifty and probably in his forties when he made his will, and yet it seems that he had never married, or at least had no children, as none are mentioned in his will. After providing for Margery Bechyng, he made the most of what must have been a relatively large degree of freedom for a man of his years to dispose of his remaining cash and his realty, not in an array of extravagant religious bequests, but in a series of endowments and gifts to his brother, his half-brothers' children, his godchildren, and to others who may have been kin, friends, or neighbours.

Robert had inherited his father's house and the bulk of his lands jointly with his brother William in 1503.[94] It is possible that they lived within the same household up to the time of Robert's death. William acted as executor to the will and was left all Robert's lands and tenements, provided that he pay all his debts and fulfil his bequests. Robert left a total of £4 10s to at least six of his nephews and nieces, one of whom was his godson. These were the children of his half brothers, John and Thomas Assherynden, who were probably both dead by 1517.[95] He seems to have been concerned to make the most of these kinship links, and perhaps felt a certain degree of responsibility and affection for the young Assheryndens. In fact two of them, Thomas and Robert, the two sons of John Assherynden, witnessed Robert's will. They had not yet reached twenty and this may also have been the case with Thomas Assherynden's children. Robert's gifts are therefore probably best understood as making provision for marriage for these kin.

Robert referred to Thomas and John in his will, as his brothers rather than his half-brothers, and their are indications of the closeness of the relationship between the two families in other Brekynden wills. In 1504, their mother, Juliana Brekynden, had left to Thomas and John Assherynden, and Robert, William and Anna (Agnes/Anne) Brekynden, two messuages in Small Hythe with appurtenances, without indication of how they were to be divided. They may already have apportioned the properties or were perhaps trusted to do this after Juliana's death.[96] In 1508 Robert's sister Agnes also made bequests to members of the Assherynden family, two of whom appear to have been Simon, Thomas Assherynden's son and Joan, John Assherynden's daughter.[97] Robert

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94 CKS: PRC 17/8/281.

95 John Assherynden the elder, Tenterden, 1505, CKS: PRC 17/9/137; Thomas Assherynden, who is mentioned in John's will in 1505, is unlikely to have lived until 1517, given that he was a product of their mother's marriage to an Assherynden, which pre-dated her marriage to John Brekynden (II).

96 CKS: PRC 17/9/222.

97 CKS: PRC 17/9/321. Anne (or Agnes as she is called in her will), also made bequests to "Raff Assenden" and "yong John Assynden", who are not named in any of the Assherynden wills.

therefore appears to have been reinforcing already strong links between the Brekyndens and Assheryndens, links stemming from shared blood and neighbourhood.[98]

Finally, Robert made four bequests to two households not apparently within the compass of his blood relations. To be precise, 10s to Robert Harryson of Tenterden, and 3s 4d to Elizabeth his wife; and immediately following, identical amounts to Thomas Robyn and his wife. Robert Harryson, appears to have been a tailor and died in 1534/5 and his wife in 1541/2.[99] They were almost certainly younger than Robert Brekynden, perhaps in their thirties in 1517, and may have been among his neighbours in Small Hythe.[100] The Robyns do not appear to have lived nearby, but may also have been a relatively young married couple. The ordered and almost formulaic nature of these gifts suggests that they had a particular pious content, and sprang from Robert's sense of social and moral responsibility toward respectable young households in Small Hythe.

By applying a broad definition of piety, Robert's testamentary strategy is revealed as possessing more than just a desire to effect spiritual benefits from overtly religious bequests. These are certainly present, and as I have argued, somewhat independently of their relatively low monetary value they show a real religious intensity and genuinely engaged commitment. However, other more moral concerns which were less openly religious, were equally if not more important factors in structuring his giving. Like his father before him, these were to do with the establishment and sustenance of good marriages. In John's case it was his daughter's marriage that loomed large at his deathbed, in Robert's the future prosperity and longevity of his nephews, nieces and young neighbours, not to mention his concern for the welfare of Margery Bechyng.

Nine years earlier in 1508, Robert's sister Agnes had also died unmarried.[101] This fact and indications of her age in the other Brekynden wills put her in her early twenties at death.[102] There is nothing immediately striking about her will, apart from cash bequests

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98 None of the Assherynden wills have Small Hythe as domicile, and there do not appear to be any references in them to property in the immediate area, either before or after 1508. There are however indications in two Assherynden wills made in the late fifteenth century, of lands lying nearby, and from other evidence, it is clear that they lived at Ashenden, less than a mile from Small Hythe: Nicholas Assherynden, Tenterden, 1484, CKS: PRC 16/1; Stephen Assherynden, Tenterden, 1491, CKS: PRC 17/5/275; see also, Chapter Three.

99 CKS: PRC 17/20/168; PRC 17/22/220. His profession is revealed by the following bequests in his will: "Item I give to Robert Munde my old fetherbed and my flemyshe taylors sheres and my best pressyng iron. Item I give to John Dewar my other pressyng iron and my other sheres".

100 George Harryson who died in 1527, was a resident of Small Hythe, although there are no apparent familial links between him and Robert Harryson: CKS: PRC 17/17/334.

101 CKS: PRC 17/9/321.

102 It is likely that the number of adults in Tenterden who never married was very small, and the daughters of wealthy families like the Brekyndens, who could afford to provide them with large dowries, were less likely than any to remain single. Given that the mean age at first marriage for women in three Wealden parishes in the mid to late sixteenth century was just over 23.5, it is probable that Agnes died

totalling £9 4s 8d. Of this, she dedicated only 4s, including 8d for tithes forgotten, to overtly religious causes - which if viewed in a narrow sense is hardly an indication of profound personal piety. However, the singular nature of her bequest of 3s 4d to Small Hythe chapel is a reminder not only of an enduring strand within Brekynden familial piety, but also of the recent enhancement of the status of the chapel in 1506.

Eight pounds, by far the majority of Agnes's bequeathed cash was left to her brother William. To her brother Robert she gave a table-cloth. Only four years before Agnes herself had received £8 (12 marks) in dowry from her father.[103] It is highly probable that this was one and the same sum which she now left with William. It seems that because Agnes had not married, neither she nor her family considered her dowry as belonging to her, in the sense that she could dispense with the money as she pleased. Since she bequeathed it in her testament however, it could not have been a foregone conclusion that she would leave the money to the family. If anything this action was based on a general understanding (at least general to this family at this time) that dowry was a family resource, which if unused, was to be employed strategically to bolster the remaining familial unit. William appears to have been the elder of her two brothers, which perhaps explains why the money was entrusted to him.[104] Robert, was left the table-cloth, another family resource, which was, like dowry, symbolic of the establishment of a household.

Agnes left 4d to her third brother Thomas, and 20s to Elizabeth Ingram. The Ingrams had lived in Small Hythe from before the 1470s and so Elisabeth may have been a neighbour.[105] In addition she gave 4d to Juliana Pelland who also belonged to a family which by the late fifteenth century was in part, based at Small Hythe.[106] Lastly, she shared her brother Robert's sense of responsibility for her young Assherynden relatives, leaving them a "a budde of a yere age" and some belongings, including a decorated girdle and tableware.

Agnes's bequests to family and kin formed an important part of her testamentary piety. The relative paucity of her conventionally religious arrangements might best be explained by the acceptance of family traditions which constrained individual action with

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in her early twenties: Zell, 'Population and Family Structure', pp. 241-3, and in revised form in Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, pp. 70-1.

103 See above.

104 William's seniority is suggested by the fact that he, rather than Robert, acted as overseer of Agnes's will.

105 John Ingram, 1474, CKS: PRC 17/2/342.

106 Juliana herself is untraceable, but there is a wealth of information on the Pellonds as a whole, and a good deal of evidence for the residence of one branch of the family in Small Hythe: CKS: PRC 17/16/179, U410/T21, U442/T99. BL: Add. Ms. 48022, fol. 25v. It was around the time of Agnes's death that one member of the Pellond family was getting involved in heresy: Chapter Six.

regard to the disposal of her dowry.[107] This does not mean that Agnes should be seen as having reluctantly resigned herself to the expectations of her family, but rather, that through a process of negotiation with convention and expectation her personal piety was mediated in the making of her will. Whilst dealing with the matter of her dowry, Agnes seems to have made the best of available resources, by balancing gifts to real and fictive kin against patronage of Small Hythe chapel. Together, these made up a set of bequests, not all conventionally religious, but predominantly expressing a commitment to an idea and reality of local collective identity, of which the chapel of St. John the Baptist seems to have formed one increasingly important focus.

Agnes's will contains a number of the elements which are in the Brekynden wills as a whole. Firstly, the family's tradition of patronage of Small Hythe chapel is present as her sole voluntary expression of affiliation to religious institution. Secondly, dowry, as a weight of responsibility, and as a door to successful marriage focused her bequests. This had restrained her father in his testamentary strategy; successful marriage, in both a personal and corporate sense, was in the forefront of her brother Robert's mind as he made his will, and her grandfather had taken care to provide for his grandchildren as they came of age. Thirdly, and lastly, there are the demands of ties of blood and marriage and proximity - of local identity - which seem to have grown in strength within the Brekynden wills over time. Read together in this way and compared one to another the Brekynden wills reveal something of a pattern of testamentary piety which is broader than that suggested by overtly religious bequests alone, and more meaningful than that provided by any single, isolated will, or for that matter, a large number of wills.

This approach also has implications for the pursuit of *individual* piety. To begin with, on a negative note, it is quite right to heed familiar warnings about the difficulties which the testamentary text poses to historians of popular piety.[108] However, the choices of the individual testator, and his or her sense of priorities in religious matters, are not entirely lost to the dry formalities of these documents, but lie submerged within their text. The task of bringing them to the surface, remains, and this is best achieved by close reading, and comparison with attendant family wills. In this way, the difficulty of judging the *intensity* and character of personal piety - is partially overcome. In Agnes Brekynden's case, at first sight her will conveys no intensity of piety, but when read with sensitivity to its context of locality, family and kinship, her last wishes are re-invested with meaning. As a young unmarried woman Agnes may be exceptional among the Tenterden testators whose wills survive. For this reason, it is not possible to compare her with other individuals who had to deal with the problem of dowry vis-à-vis the

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107 I am indebted in these thoughts, to Diana O'Hara's work on the internalization of norms of behaviour, by young women involved in the marriage process in Kent. See her, 'Ruled by my friends', pp. 9-41.

108 See Chapter One.

expression of more openly religious affiliation. This not withstanding, her testament tells us that the strategy she employed was within the scope of local practice, in other words, that what she did was possible, although perhaps unusual. In the terms employed by microhistorians, her testament qualifies as a particular type of 'normal exception'. Although it should be noted that Agnes belonged to a socially dominant group within the parish, her identity as a young unmarried woman was more marginal, and it was probably this which was instrumental in producing a rare insight into the negotiation between individual and familial expectations.[109]

Household piety, the individual and gender

The Brekynden wills reveal the generational transmission of values and preoccupations, as well as how familial tradition was shaped and moulded in practice by individual circumstances. The interrelationship of these two elements can be seen perhaps most clearly within the context of the household. In this setting it is apparent that whereas shifting circumstances and varying pressures were important variables in the strategy of will-making adopted, individual testators nevertheless acted within certain parameters. It is these which provide a way of identifying and describing particular household pieties. Because this involves the comparison of wills made by women and men who were married, it raises the additional issue of the influence of gender upon testamentary piety.

Our first example is John Brekynden (II) and his wife Juliana. Juliana made her will five months after her husband, when he was possibly still alive.[110] Apart from leaving 12d for her forgotten tithes, Juliana made no religious bequests, a not dissimilar approach to that taken by her husband, who as mentioned already, confined his to the benefit of Master Peter Marshall, vicar of Tenterden. In John's will, this is followed by the all important matter of his daughter's dowry; Juliana began hers by leaving 6s 8d, what seems to have been all her remaining available cash, together with a pair of linen sheets, a bedspread, a blanket and two measures of russet cloth "to the marriage of Joan Freyman". This is the only detailed and specific bequest in her testament. Although Joan Freyman's identity and the nature of her relationship with Juliana remain a mystery, the Freyman family were living at Small Hythe in the 1520s.[111] Whether a blood or affinal relative, neighbour, or perhaps a servant in the Brekynden household, Joan's successful passage into marriage

109 Muir, 'Observing Trifles', pp. xiv-xvi; Ginzburg and Poni, 'The Name and the Game', pp. 7-8.

110 CKS: PRC 17/9/222. John's will was not proved until 12 September 1503, six months after Juliana wrote hers.

111 John Freyman, Small Hythe, 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/74.

seems to have been as important to Juliana as her own daughter's marriage had been to her husband John when he wrote his will five months earlier.

These two different testamentary strategies appear to have resulted from the way in which changing circumstances mediated the expression of values common to the one household. In fact it is possible to see them as two parts of one household strategy of will-making. For John the uppermost priority was to provide for his daughter, which meant that when Juliana came to make her will she could rest assured that Agnes already had a good dowry. This said, she did make one important bequest to Agnes, of all her appurtenances, but her cash, and certain household items were bestowed not to any of her immediate family but to Joan Freyman to help her, like Agnes, on her way to marriage. Bequests to women on the threshold of marriage, were often conscious charitable acts, usually made to those who, due to their want of resources, were most vulnerable to alternatives such as prostitution.[112] Juliana's concern for Joan may have had just this sort of pious content, borne out of a sense of moral responsibility towards those, whether biological, affinal, or fictive kin, who needed assistance in establishing a household. It was perhaps this shared sense of value which made John and Juliana concentrate first and foremost upon providing for Agnes and Joan. A preoccupation with familial stability and longevity, as well as a desire for moral propriety expressed by John in his daughter's dowry, was not confined to the family unit, but could be turned outwards to others perhaps less fortunate than Agnes. Indeed these were values which as shown already, appear to have featured strongly in Brekynden family piety as a whole. Notwithstanding this, Juliana's charity toward Joan, whilst part of a coherent household piety, may also have been gender specific. That is something her husband was unlikely to have done himself had he the resources, and so dependent upon Juliana's relationship with Joan, whatever that may have been.[113]

John Brekynden (III), his wife Joan and their two children, provide a second example of how the dynamics of household piety could work. John and Joan were Robert and Agnes's cousins. John being one of the sons of Robert Brekynden's (I) son, William Brekynden (I), they formed a separate branch of the family within the parish.

The Brekyndens' commitment to Small Hythe chapel was shared by John and Joan and after them, by their son. The testamentary strategy adopted by John and Joan differed however, from the rest of the family. Unlike their kinsfolk, rather than devoting most of their available liquid wealth to family, kin and neighbours, or even balancing these concerns with religious bequests, they seem to have been overwhelmingly

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112 Cullum, 'And Hir Name Was Charite', pp. 197-8.

113 Cullum, 'And Hir Name Was Charite', pp. 182-7. See also, Houlbrooke, 'Women's social life and common action', *passim*.

preoccupied with securing commemorative services for the health of their souls. Perhaps this can be put down to circumstances - in other words that there was relatively little demand on their resources from family and kin. There seems to be some truth in this, as neither John nor Joan provided a dowry for their daughter in their wills, probably because she was already married.[114] However, some of their kinsfolk were also without such immediate pressures on limited resources, and yet they were not so concerned with the acquisition of prayers and masses for their souls, as with provision for relatives and friends.[115] A better explanation is that they took a different attitude to testamentary piety than their kinsfolk. Perhaps they even subscribed to a different pious tradition, forming as they did, a branch apart from the rest of the family.[116]

Returning to the dynamics of household piety, John made his will in July 1526 and was dead by the September following, and Joan made hers in September 1528, and had died before the end of October.[117] Comparison of their bequests is revealing. John and Joan both left 16d in tithes forgotten, a similarity which could have had as much to do with available wealth at death as with any deliberate household continuity. John went on to leave 6s 8d to Small Hythe chapel, whereas Joan made no such bequest. However, in both wills the next bequest was of 20s, to be distributed at their funerals. Following this, John left 13s 4d for his month mind, and this is paralleled by 20s left by Joan for her month's commemoration. The difference between these last two amounts can be precisely accounted for by John's initial gift of 6s 8d to Small Hythe chapel. This means, that John and Joan gave exactly the same amount in specifically religious bequests, in almost exactly the same form and order.

The next items in both wills concern gifts of money and goods, to family and kin in the broadest sense. John left his "next best gowne" to his daughter, which bears a striking similarity to Joan's gift to the same daughter of her "best gowne and best kyrtell". John's testament then contains bequests of money to John, Robert and Thomas Clement (6s 8d, 3s 4d and 3s 4d respectively), whilst leaving his "best jakett" to Katherine Clement. Joan only gave to Katherine, leaving her some household goods. So, on the one hand, both John and Joan had strong connections with the Clements, and yet on the other, Joan only gave to Katherine, whereas John also remembered John, Robert and Thomas. These differences suggest that their household commitment to the Clements

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114 According to the will of Agnes Bocher, their daughter had been born some time before 1498, so at the very youngest she would have been twenty nine in 1526, the year John made his will: CKS: PRC 17/7/250.

115 For example, Juliana Brekynden, Robert Brekynden (I) and, to a lesser extent, Robert Brekynden (II).

116 Had William Brekynden's (I) will survived then the necessary clues may have been provided to unravel these differences. As his brother John Brekynden's (II) reveals a new emphasis on attitudes focused around family and kinship since their father's death in 1483, so his may have revealed a shift in the opposite direction towards more explicitly religious concerns.

117 CKS: PRC 17/17/207; PRC 17/18/158.

worked along gender specific lines. This is reinforced by the fact that whereas at this stage in his testament, John turned to the business of providing for his wife and son, Joan made two further bequests to women, leaving her "second best kyrtell" to "the wydowe of Thomas Ralbyn", and her "workedaye kirtell" to Agnes Drynkar.[118]

Given the stigma attached to making a will, and the evidence of the timing of will-making, it is probable that the couple did not draw up their wills at the same time to have them individually worked up into fair copies at a later date.[119] It is more likely that John made his first, and then Joan only attended to hers near to the time the enregistered copy is dated - that is two years after her husband's death. The two texts are however similar enough to suggest that she based the structure of her testament upon her husband's, and modified it in order to incorporate her own personal choices. It is therefore possible that the similarities between the two might have more to do with Joan's dependency on John's testament than the existence of any shared household piety. However, her modifications of the text are far from slavish, and radical enough to make form subservient to content. In addition, her bequests, when read together with John's, describe a shared set of interests and concerns, which are differently focused according to gender, and probably, to changing household needs and circumstances.

Some light can be shed on the mechanics of the process of modification of John's testament to Joan's specific needs. Sir Thomas Crake, priest of Small Hythe, is mentioned in the witness list of both these wills, and so may have been scribe for husband and wife. Is it possible that the similarities between the two texts are due to his authorship and that the differences are the result of individual preferences within an imposed framework? By comparing the two texts with other wills to which Crake was a witness, and so possibly scribe, it is possible to assess his influence. It emerged that these other wills are no more similar to John and Joan's than those written around the same time which make no mention of Crake. The only thing they have in common is that they all contain bequests to Small Hythe chapel, but this probably has as much to do with the testators' residence in the locality as Crake's involvement.[120] If Crake did play a significant role in the continuity between John and Joan's testaments, it was as a cultural intermediary and repository. In other words, he may have been able to help Joan to read and remember her husband's last will, of which he may well have possessed a copy, and

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118 The Clements appear to have been a Tenterden family but there is very little record of them in the parish, and no surviving wills for them in neighbouring parishes, suggesting that they did not share the Brekyndens' status: Richard Clement, 1526, CKS: PRC 3/6/19. "Thomas Ralbyn" probably refers to Thomas Robyn who died in 1513 leaving a wife and children: CKS: PRC 17/12/218. The identity of Agnes Drynkar remains entirely unknown.

119 Coppel, 'Willmaking on the Deathbed', pp. 37-45; McIntosh, *Community Transformed*, pp. 88-91.

120 For example: Robert Hovynden, 1527, CKS: PRC 17/17/324; Lore Blossom, widow, 1532, CKS: PRC 17/19/365; Agnes Broke, widow, 1536, CKS: PRC 17/20/235.

to guide her in using it as a model for her own pious aspirations. It was after all, a record of family and household tradition. In this way, scribes (who were often local clergy) may have self-consciously performed an important function in the transmission of family piety.[121]

The Brekyndens do not provide the only examples of husband and wife will-makers at Tenterden. There are at least sixteen such pairs of wills for this period, and a number of them, although not all, reinforce the notion of a coherent household piety which set the boundaries for individual and gendered expression of sentiments. John and Lucia Bisshopynden, for example, who made their wills in 1496 and 1519 respectively, both paid only the smallest amount of attention to religious concerns, Lucia leaving 4d to the Jesus mass and John, 5 marks for the foundation of a chantry for half a year, but only if his son failed to inherit.[122] Twenty-three years separated the making of William's and Katherine Foule's testaments, and yet they reflect a similar set of interests and approach, probably in part due to Katherine's use of her husband's will as a template for her own. They both apportioned 5 marks for a priest to sing for their souls in St. Mildred's for half a year; William left 5 marks and Katherine 10, to repairs on a footway and highway; and they both left money for repairs to West Cross in the parish, 6s 8d in William's case, 3s 4d in Katherine's.[123] John and Agnes Hasill made their wills in quick succession in 1522, and both gave 12d for forgotten tithes, 4d to each of their godchildren and whereas John left his obsequies to the discretion of his executors, Agnes apportioned 26s 8d.[124] In 1526, Thomas Mede left a total of 36s 8d in cash to religious concerns, and in 1531, his widow, Helwyse, gave 40s. Thomas gave 6s 8d for forgotten tithes, 3s 4d to the Jesus mass and 26s 8d for his funeral. Helwyse left only 20d in tithes forgotten, but also gave 3s 4d to the Jesus mass, 13s 4d to each of her funeral and month mind, 6s 8d for her anniversary, and 20d for repairs to St. Mildred's.[125] William and Anne Stonehouse, who both wrote their wills in 1513, apportioned exactly the same amounts to their obsequies, that is, 13s 4d to each of their funerals and month minds and 10s to their anniversaries. They both gave 8d for forgotten tithes, and whereas William left 8d to the fabric of High Halden parish Church and a bushel of wheat to poor people for the health of his soul, Anne gave 4d to the Jesus mass and 10d to the light of St. Mildred in Tenterden parish Church.[126]

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121 For some very useful information and comments on the role and influence of scribes in will-making, see M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 319-343, and more recently, Marsh, 'In the Name of God?', pp. 226-236. See also, McIntosh, *Community Transformed*, pp. 88-91.

122 CKS: PRC 17/7/157; PRC 17/14/33.

123 CKS: PRC 17/6/281; PRC 17/15/64.

124 CKS: PRC 17/15/230; PRC 17/15/242.

125 PRO: P.C.C. 17 Porche, fol. 131v. CKS: PRC 17/19/177.

126 CKS: PRC 17/12/227; PRC 17/12/182.

There are other examples however, of wide discrepancies between the testamentary bequests of husbands and wives. For instance, on the one hand, in 1489, Thomas Pette bequeathed 10s for repairs to the nave of St. Mildred's, 33s 4d for a quarter year's chantry in the same, 20d to the Carmelite friars of Lossenham, 12d to the Trinitarian friars of Mottenden and 12d to the brothers of Winchelsea. On the other, his widow Joan, in 1497, made no religious bequests at all in her testament. Both made extensive arrangements for family however, but Joan's only cash bequest was for tithes forgotten which suggests that for her, restricted access to cash ruled out explicitly religious gifts.[127] These sort of factors worked both ways however, with many widows actually apportioning a greater proportion of their available cash resources to religious matters than their husbands, mainly because they did not often have to provide dowries for their daughters.[128] In one extreme case, Thomas Weste made no cash bequests at all but in a very short testament, provided for his wife and daughters from his estate. In the same year, his widow Joan also undertook for her daughters, but in addition, devoted a total of 50s to obsequies. Examples like this suggest that the widow carried out a joint arrangement in her testament on behalf of her husband as well as herself when the amount of available resources after provision for heirs was known. This means that only when viewed together do the wills of some married couples reflect their household piety.[129]

Because widows were often afforded a greater freedom to express their individual interests, some gave to a much wider range of religious institutions and concerns than their husbands. Lore Blossom for example, gave to Small Hythe chapel and St. Mildred's in addition to remembering daughters, sons-in-law and grandchildren. Stephen Blossom, however, was only able to make reversionary and residue arrangements for bequests to the parish Church because of the more pressing needs of family.[130] Women's testamentary strategies tended on the whole to be more diverse, involving a greater number of smaller bequests than men's, not just to religious concerns, but to family, kin and neighbours. They had a greater propensity to look beyond the household in their giving, and women in particular often predominated as the recipients. Many of these were daughters and granddaughters, but others were more distant family or fictive kin. As with the Brekyndens, these gifts frequently appear to have been of a charitable nature to poor young female neighbours on the threshold of marriage.[131]

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127 CKS: PRC 17/6/108; PRC 17/6/211.

128 In fact, in 12 out of 16 cases, widows devoted a larger share of their money to these matters than their husbands. For further comments on women's testamentaty strategies, see Chapter Four.

129 CKS: PRC 17/14/304; PRC 17/15/15. For examples of these sort of arrangements in Bristol, see Burgess, 'By Quick and by dead', *passim*.

130 CKS: PRC 17/19/365; PRC 17/15/128.

131 Compare, for example, John and Deonyse Davy (CKS: PRC 17/5/330; PRC 17/14/255); Julyan and Jacob Donne (CKS: PRC 17/15/38; PRC 17/9/280); Margaret and John Pette (CKS: PRC 17/14 26;

Compared to their husbands, women will-makers also show a more local emphasis to their piety, which probably reflects gendered differences in social and economic spheres of activity. For instance, whereas Thomas Chapman apportioned 10 marks from lands to the Grey Friars of Beaulieu, Joan Chapman gave 4d to the work of the chapel in Small Hythe. Similarly, William Foule left 6s 8d to the brothers of Lossenham, but his widow Katherine gave 3s 4d to the Jesus mass in St. Mildred's, a coverlet and 6s 8d for the purchase of a pair of silver candlesticks for the same Church. Among the residents of Small Hythe, whereas seven out of ten female testators gave to the local chapel, only just over half of the men did.[132]

The two Brekynden households, as well as many of the others mentioned above, appear to have had their own coherent values, which were shared by husband and wife and expressed in different ways according to the vagaries of personality, gender and circumstances. It should come as no surprise that the deathbed piety of spouses was so similar, especially when they died in quick succession, but even when very considerable lengths of time had elapsed similarities are sometimes still visible. The very fact that this can be shown by comparing last wills and testaments, is compelling evidence of the value of these documents as records of pious mentality. Gendered and perhaps more importantly, individual piety can also be clearly seen through a comparative reading of testamentary evidence. The Brekyndens provide a useful case study which demonstrates the validity of a comparative method which works along familial lines, for the reconstruction of late medieval piety. In terms of the wealth of evidence which survives for the family, they are admittedly somewhat unusual, but not so atypical as to make this exercise unrepeatable. Similar case studies have been employed elsewhere in this study, and if space had allowed, many more could have been incorporated.

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The Brekynden family was unusual - outstanding even - for its size, longevity, wealth and political dominance. It is for these reasons that the family can be successfully reconstituted over three generations. Because they represent more of an exception than a rule however, the question remains, of how typical their piety was of the majority of Tenterden families. As a stable and dominant family their attitudes may of course have been especially representative of the general tenor of parochial piety, and nowhere more so than at Small Hythe. The whole question of identity at Small Hythe, and emerging

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PRC 17/5/152). Similar differences have been observed between men's and women's testamentary approaches in Yorkshire: Cullum, 'And Hir Name was Charite', *passim*.

132 CKS: PRC 17/5/9; PRC 17/5/76; PRC 17/6/281; PRC 17/15/64. Cullum, 'And Hir Name was Charite', p. 185; McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, ch. 3; Houlbrooke, 'Women's social life', *passim*.

tensions between its residents and the town and parish of Tenterden will be explored in the next chapter. The extent to which the Brekyndens' testamentary practices were typical of parochial piety as a whole, and whether there was one type of parochial piety at all, is an issue which re-emerges in different contexts throughout the rest of this study.

Take just one aspect of this problem. For example, the recurring motif in the Brekynden wills is the noticeable degree to which responses to the demands of family and kin - mainly to do with marriage and household formation - asserted themselves as a feature of the family's testamentary piety, to the extent that traditional religious bequests became less of a priority to individual testators. For such a wealthy and important family, their religious bequests are conspicuously reserved and unelaborate. It may be that this was an inevitable feature of the wills of an old and large Tenterden family. As much as any other, the Brekyndens had an abundance of family and kin in the parish, and these links and the moral and social obligations they entailed, would have multiplied as family size, and therefore population, began to grow at the end of the fifteenth century. Clearly, what is needed, is comparison of their wills with those belonging to other old and established families in the parish, in order to begin to isolate the most important factors in the formation of distinct familial traditions. In particular, the ideological content of the Brekyndens' fixation with marriage and the social advancement of family and kin also demands careful scrutiny, as it may have been part and parcel of a set of values shared by others in the parish, which inhibited participation in traditional notions of religiosity, not least because of the demands it placed upon available resources.

The continuities of Brekynden testamentary piety have been presented as evidence for the presence of strong traditions passed on by one generation to the next. This of course needs to be tested for other families, to see if they had their own distinctive pious traditions, and if these can at all be grouped into meaningful wider trends in religious affiliation. Notwithstanding the need for corroborative examples, the above reconstruction stands as a compelling illustration of the validity of testamentary evidence for the reconstruction of late medieval piety, as well as prosopography. Through careful and close comparative reading and microscopic reconstruction, wills have a lot to offer the historian of religious belief and practice. Not least among their advantages, is what they can tell us about the interplay between individual, gendered and household piety.

CHAPTER THREE

Boundaries, Identities and Symbols: Piety at Small Hythe, Tenterden

Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set. (*Proverbs* 22:28 (KJV), in John Norden's *Surveiors Dialogue* (1607), cited by Maurice Beresford, in his 'A Journey along Boundaries', in *idem*, *History on the Ground; Six Studies in Maps and Landscapes* (London, 1957), p. 50.)

St. John drew him towards Bethany, upon the river or desert, not far from Jerusalem; there preached he, and taught and baptized them that would amend their life, and said to them that the Saviour and health of the world was nigh. (*The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints as Englished by William Caxton*, ed. F.S. Ellis, (London, Temple Classics, 1900), vol. iii, p. 259.)

Beyond the household and the patrilineal family, it was not the parish, but the local environment, economy and community of Small Hythe, which provided the most immediate context for the articulation of Brekynden piety. Here therefore, the concern is to describe Small Hythe's natural, social, economic and cultural features in order to better understand the Brekyndens' pious acts; to assess whether other Small Hythe families shared in the Brekyndens' prioritization of local religious affiliation; to gain insights into how the people of Small Hythe viewed themselves in relation to the rest of the parish, and to ascertain how they expressed their collective identity.

Because Small Hythe lies within the parish of Tenterden, one of the concerns here, is to show how it was a centre capable of fostering its own sense of identity. Perhaps the best way to begin to do this is to lay out the geographical, jurisdictional and mental boundaries which defined Small Hythe as a distinct area and people-group within the parish. Also important was Small Hythe's growing role in a regional economy, which strengthened the township's identity and linked it to centres and influences other than Tenterden. These developments caused a shift in the relationship between Small Hythe and Tenterden which is most visible in the religious sphere.

There was a local framework of devotion at Small Hythe, which underwent rapid development and even transformation in this period. It was focused primarily upon Small

Hythe chapel. Local people perceived and used their chapel in a different way to their parish church, not least because they employed it as a symbolic expression of the essence of their community. For these reasons, residence in Small Hythe involved a heightened degree of pressure upon the limited resources of the will-maker, which was resolved through a range of testamentary strategies. Both in will-making and in the wider compass of social relations, Small Hythe families were not only able to find a position of considerable subtlety in relation to both the parish and the locality, but when necessary, were determined to defend it.

Origins, place and boundaries

Tenterden probably existed as a settlement from at least the eighth century, and the Church of St. Mildred may originally have been a Saxon foundation of the same era.[1] Small Hythe, on the other hand, enters the records relatively late, in the early thirteenth century; and from what is known of the landscape history of the district, it is probable that it only became a centre of any great significance from the early fourteenth. This is chiefly because late medieval Small Hythe owed its importance to its position on the river Rother, which before this time had mostly flowed not north of the Isle of Oxney but south through Wittersham Level. (See Map 3.1) It was only as a result of a programme of drainage and embankment from 1289 to 1348 which culminated in the construction of the Knelle Dam across the head of Wittersham Level, that the course of the river was re-directed north past Small Hythe, Reading Street (known at the time as Reding) and Appledore. The main reason for this sustained effort was the reclamation of the Rother Levels which had largely been under water and subject to periodic tidal inundation as far as Bodiam. Small Hythe therefore received the double benefit of gaining a hold on the river's trade, at the same time as gaining access to substantial new tracts of marshland which provided ideal pasture. Whereas the outflow of the estuary had been diverted from Lympe to Romney, and then in a series of violent storms in the late thirteenth century, to Rye, because of the damming of Wittersham Level, its upper reaches did not shift their passage past Small Hythe until the late sixteenth century when Appledore channel became irreversibly silted up and the Knelle Dam was breached.[2] Small Hythe actually

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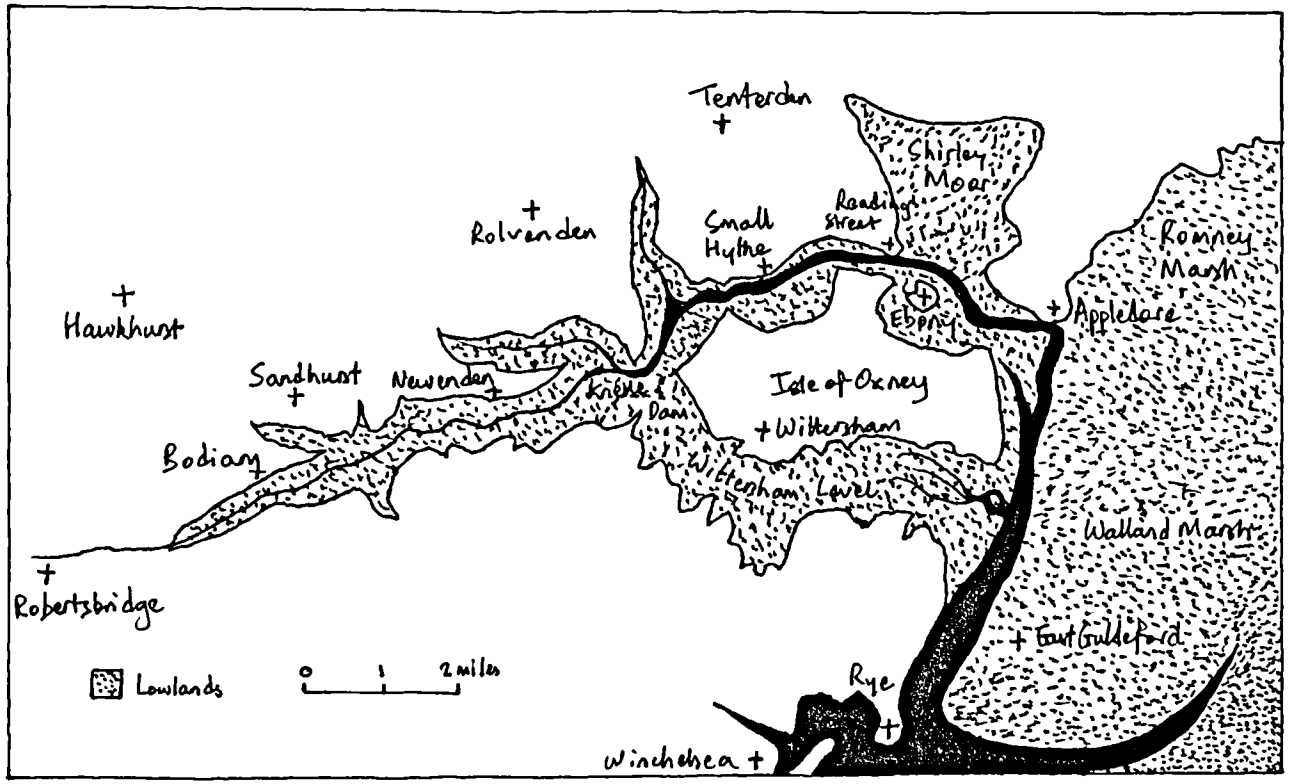
1 For further discussion, see Chapter Four.

2 In 1252, one "Henry de la Smalelide alias Smelelide" was killed in a riot in Tenterden parish church sparked off by a dispute over the appointment of the rector: *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Henry III, 1247-1258, p. 169; Robert Furley, 'The Early History of Tenterden', *Arch. Cant.*, xiv (1882), pp. 40-2; Furley, *History of the Weald*, vol. ii, pt. i, pp. 251-4; Jill Eddison, 'Developments in the Lower Rother Valleys up to 1600', *Arch. Cant.*, cii (1986), pp. 95-108; Witney, *Jutish Forest*, pp. 147-8; Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, pp. 12, 49; Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', pp. 343-4.

Map 3.1 *Small Hythe, Tenterden and the Rother Levels in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries* (Traced and adapted from J. Eddison, 'Attempts to Clear the Rother Channel,1613-1624', in *idem*, ed., *Romney Marsh. The Debatable Ground* (Oxford, 1995), Fig. 12.1, p. 149.)



means 'small harbour', and the adoption of this place-name element may have followed Hythe and New Hythe, two other ports in Kent.

By the middle of the fourteenth century there is evidence that Small Hythe's role as Tenterden's port was of considerable importance, Edward III complaining to Tenterden's bailiff that the passage into the port had been made unnavigable by the lastage dumped there by ships. After the Great Rising of 1381 it was found and noted that men from Small Hythe as well as from Tenterden had joined with the rebels - an indication that Small Hythe was perceived as a centre in its own right.[3] At the beginning of the fifteenth century, the settlement was substantial enough to be occasionally called a town, a description which survived for at least another hundred years.[4] And yet, it never ceased to play a subservient role in its relationship with Tenterden, a factor which shaped the identity of the people of Small Hythe throughout this period.

Like the Reading Sewer, which is all that remains of the old channel of the River Rother at Small Hythe, the town was presumably once much bigger than the hamlet there today. Its buildings may have extended half a mile to the west as far as what is now called Great Bulleign, but there is no proof of this.There can be more certainty that like the present-day hamlet, the medieval township lay either side of the road stretching north to Tenterden for a distance of about three quarters of a mile from the Rother. According to Hasted, the houses of Tenterden town were said to have extended south along the same road, to within perhaps only three quarters of a mile from the upper limits of Small Hythe. Unlike the present day town which is concentrated to the north of the parish church, this area of settlement, known as Broad Tenterden, was probably the most populous.[5] When Small Hythe is also taken into account, then it becomes apparent that the road was not only the main artery of the parish's economy but the backbone of its settlement.

The relative closeness of Small Hythe to the fringes of Tenterden town probably meant that it was not far enough removed - beyond a certain "safe distance" as Maurice Beresford has termed it - to allow the establishment of its own completely distinct identity.[6] (See Plate 3.1) However, despite their proximity, definite boundaries existed between the two towns. To begin with there were significant natural frontiers which for

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3 Furley, 'Early History of Tenterden', pp. 56, 60.

4 Commission *de walliis et fossatis*, Jan. 28, 1400: *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Henry IV, vol. i, 1399-1401, p. 216. See also, *ibid.*, Henry V, vol. i, 1413-16, p. 345; *ibid.*, Henry V, vol. ii, 1419-22, pp. 222, 224, 225-6. It was described as "*Oppidum de Smalhith*" in archbishop William Warham's licence for the celebration of divine service in the chapel there in 1506: LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 10, transcribed and translated in Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', pp. 140, 143.

5 Hasted, *History of Kent*, vol. vii, pp. 212-3.

6 Writing on the parish boundaries of Northamptonshire, Beresford suggests that two and a half miles seems to have been a "safe distance" from any existing settlement, at which to establish a new village and parish: Beresford, 'A Journey along Boundaries', in *idem*, *History on the Ground; Six Studies in Maps and Landscapes* (London, 1957), pp. 38-9.

Plate 3.1 *The bell tower of the parish church of St. Mildred, Tenterden, from the Small Hythe to Tenterden road, looking from Broad Tenterden*

periods of the year made the journey from Small Hythe to Tenterden arduous, and sometimes even impossible on foot. Before the road was raised some time before the middle of the sixteenth century, the stream which today passes under it twice between Small Hythe and Broad Tenterden, seems periodically to have formed a barrier to the passage of all but riders and carts.[7] Other physical features divided Small Hythe from nearby settlements. To the south lay the parish of Wittersham on the Isle of Oxney, but the Rother passed between and in the early sixteenth century the only way across was by ferry.[8] Although connected by the river to the east and the west, overland, the going was harder as after half a mile or so, higher ground gave way to marshes.

The limits of parishes were set down on the Weald before the end of the thirteenth century, but even earlier jurisdictional and possessional boundaries existed which underlay and in many cases cut across subsequent parochial identities.[9] The hundred of Tenterden, a judicial unit which formed part of the Seven Hundreds of the Weald, originated from before the Conquest and probably provided the basis for the parish boundary.[10] This was divided up into six boroughs (known as tithings in most other counties), and whereas Tenterden proper lay within Town Borough, Small Hythe was part of the Borough of Dumborne. Borsholders were elected to represent each borough and to ensure that every holder of a tenement did suit and service at the Hundred Court, every three weeks, and at any manorial courts with jurisdiction within the borough. For example, much of the land in Small Hythe was part of the manor of Temple, near Dover, and the Knights Hospitallers of St. John owned substantial amounts of property in the locality. These courts dealt with minor matters such as cases of nuisance, disputes over boundaries, and breaches of the assize of bread, ale and wine, as well as robberies, manslaughters and murders. Within this system of justice the householders of Dumborne Borough would often have acted for, and been bound to one another in law, in a number of capacities. The leading men were responsible for the good

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7 On the state of the Wealden roads, see Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, pp. 53-4.

8 In his will of 1467, John Davy (PRO: P.C.C. 25 Godyn, fol. 193v.) left the 'verye' at Small Hythe to his son Richard, and in 1501, William Davy left 10 marks to "thamending of noyes wayes betweene the Churche of Tentreden and Smalehithe fery": CKS: PRC 17/8/221. This was established by the late fourteenth century, as according to Hasted, shortly after the twentieth year of Edward III, the manor of Palstre in Wittersham and Ebony to the south of the Rother, came into the hands of the family of Basing "together with a moiety of the passage of Smallhythe ferry, adjoining to it": Hasted, *History of Kent*, vol. viii, p. 489; Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, pp. 54-5.

9 Furley, 'Early History of Tenterden', p. 46; Everitt, *Coninuity and Colonization*, p. 205. On the timing of the setting of parish boundaries in a wider context, see: Beresford, 'Journey Along Boundaries', *passim*; Desmond Bonney, 'Early Boundaries in Wessex', in P.J. Fowler, ed., *Archaeology and the Landscape: Essays for L.V. Grinsell* (London, 1972), pp. 168-9; Palliser, 'Parish in perspective', pp. 9-10; Rosser, 'Communities of parish and guild', p. 31.

10 However, we know that the hundredal boundary was not coterminous with the parish, because Reading Street was one of the six boroughs, and yet lay within the old boundaries of the parish of Ebony, before this parish became part of Stone-cum-Ebony, and Reading Street was incorporated into Tenterden parish.

behaviour of others, the borough acting as a tightly knit mechanism of social control.[11] In 1449, when Tenterden was annexed to Rye as a Limb of the Cinque Ports, it ceased to be subject to the jurisdiction of the Seven Hundreds, and became a corporation with its own bailiff and courts which were held fortnightly. There is however, no reason to believe that the six boroughs did not remain the units which together constituted the jurisdiction of the town and hundred.[12] Even if, like tithings, their role had declined in importance by the late fifteenth century, the boroughs probably provided an ongoing focus for local identity.[13]

The quarters provided another set of boundaries which identified distinct units within the parish. Their origins, locations, identities and purposes are far from clear, but Small Hythe Quarter is mentioned in two wills in 1490 and 1503, and Haffenden Quarter is mentioned by Furley.[14] The quarters were probably not as old as the boroughs, but the most ancient divisions of all in Tenterden are the dens. These are common to the Weald of Kent and originated as rights of pannage granted by the late Saxon kings of the county mainly to ecclesiastics and religious houses. Over time, as settlement occurred their borders were more clearly defined, they received names, and survived the formation of hundreds and parishes intact. Mostly attached to manors in East Kent belonging to Christ Church Priory, Canterbury, at least thirty of Tenterden's original dens survived into the thirteenth century and many of these still existed after 1500. Their boundaries were defined much like those of parishes, by crosses, trees, stones and other markers, and according to Furley, the bounds of some were beaten as late as the reign of Henry VII.[15]

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11 Furley, 'Early History of Tenterden', pp. 41-5; Witney, *Jutish Forest*, pp. 143-4; Roberts, *Tenterden.The First Thousand Years*, p. 54. In the Tenterden Custumal, drawn up in the 1557/8, "the precept" for holding an inquest dictated that eighteen men from each borough would be summoned by the sergeant: A.H. Taylor, 'The Municipal Records of Tenterden, Part I', *Arch. Cant.*, xxxii (1917), p. 289. On frankpledge, tithings and other similar systems, see for example: E.B. Dewindt, *Land and People in Holywell-cum-Needingworth* (Toronto, 1972), pp. 206, 215, 243; A.R. Dewindt, 'Peasant Power Structures', pp. 250-1; C. Dyer, *Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society; The Estates of the Bishopric of Worcester, 680-1540* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 356, 358-60; J.A. Raftis, *Warboys: Two hundred years in the life of an English Mediaeval Village* (Toronto, 1974), p. 214; Razi, 'Family, Land and the Village Community', pp. 12-15.

12 Copy in English of the charter of incorporation granted by Henry VI, in the Tenterden Custumal: CKS: Te/C1, fols. 13r.-16v.

13 See for example, E.B. Dewindt, *Land and People*, p. 274; Raftis, *Warboys.*, pp. 219-224.

14 Joan Turnor, CKS: PRC 17/5/310; John Tiler, CKS: PRC 17/9/211. Haffenden Quarter was most probably in the north-western part of the parish where Haffenden Farm is now situated: Furley, 'Early History of Tenterden', p. 41. For some interesting comments on the way in which space within the parish church and churchyard could be divided up according to quarters, see Rosser, 'Parochial conformity', pp. 187-8. For gilds identified with particular districts within the parish, see Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 150-1.

15 Furley, *History of the Weald*, vol. ii, pt. 2, (1874), pp. 690-698, 701-724; *idem*, 'Early History of Tenterden', p. 53; Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, pp. 122-6; Witney, *Jutish Forest, passim.* On the marking and beating of the parish bounds see Beresford, 'Journey Along Boundaries', passim; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 136-7; D.M. Owen, *Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire*, (Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, History of Lincolnshire, v, Lincoln, 1971), pp. 108-9.

Of the many which appear in the wills and deed materials, it has been possible to identify seven which lay either at Small Hythe itself or within a radius of one mile, namely, Ekre (which seems to have comprised the immediate area of the town), Dumborne, Emelisham, Hawkherst, Marsham, Queryncote, and Ashenden (parts of this last den may have developed into the manors of East Asherinden and Lights Notinden).[16] (See Map 2.2)

Because they provided the most ancient of Tenterden's boundaries it is likely that boroughs and quarters were roughly formed out of clusters of dens in such a way as to tie together a number of intensely local identities, already linked through the pattern of landholding. By at least the second half of the fifteenth century families like the Brekyndens possessed land across several adjacent dens. Efforts to preserve them suggest that the dens retained considerable importance. Primarily, this was because they still dictated lordship - however far removed - and so continued to provide the basic framework of tenure.[17] In the Tenterden deeds, parcels of land are first identified by the den they lay upon and are then more specifically placed by naming the tenants or owners of neighbouring lands. The dens supplied a nomenclature of neighbourhood by which to identify local, as opposed to parochial or hundredal interests.

In 1501, there are the first instances of Small Hythe testators beginning to identify themselves not just as parishioners of Tenterden, but as inhabitants of their own township. So, William Davy's testament began: "*In dei nomine amen. xxviij die mensis Octobre Anno domini millesimo quingentensimo primo. Ego Willelmus Davy de Smalehithe in parochia de Tentreden*".[18] It is apparent that this was a local initiative and not merely a change in scribal convention at the final stage of copying and enregistering of wills in the archdeaconry court, for three reasons. Firstly, not all of the Small Hythe wills written after 1501 carry such a description of local domicile, and those that do are spaced fairly evenly from 1501 to the early 1530s. Secondly, one of the wills which mentions Small Hythe, was proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.[19] Thirdly, John Brekynden (II) senior's testament, written in 1502 reveals that the scribe making the final en-registered copy was not familiar with the new form of identification adopted by residents of Small Hythe. As a result he made a mistake, which presumably, on noticing the wording of the fair copy of the original will, he immediately corrected. The finished text reads: "*Ego Johannes Brikenden senior ~~de parochia~~ de Smalehit in parochia de Tentreden*".[20]

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16 Hasted, *History of Kent*, p. 209.

17 Furley, *History of the Weald*, pp. 696-7.

18 CKS: PRC 17/8/221.

19 William Carpenter, 1530, PRO: P.C.C., 20 Jankyn, fol. 154.

20 CKS: PRC 17/8/281. For information on the writing, copying and enregistering of wills, see M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 320ff., esp. p. 323 on office copies; Elvey, ed., *Archdeaconry of*

The appearance of a textual boundary in the Small Hythe wills from 1501, suggests that for some time before that date the majority of Small Hythe's inhabitants had begun to see themselves, as members of their own town, as much as parishioners of Tenterden. What had caused this growth in local identity?

Economic Growth

Small Hythe owed its economic importance to its role as Tenterden's port. From the thirteenth century Tenterden was one of the most important market towns on the Kentish Weald, with an annual fair on the eve and day of the Feast of St. Mildred, and no doubt a weekly market.[21] However, both centres relied on the navigability of the River Rother and thereby, links with the coast and Continent.

Small Hythe was a significant enough port in the fourteenth century to attract the concern of the crown. In the 1350s English and Continental ships which sought to avoid the king's customs on the purchase of firewood and other commodities at Winchelsea, were sailing up the Rother and filling their holds illegally with wool, woolfells and hides, and covering these over with billets before passing back out to sea via Rye and Winchelsea without paying any dues.[22] In the second half of the fourteenth century quite substantial ship-borne trade was being conducted at Small Hythe.[23] The township's place in Tenterden and the Weald's overseas trade meant that foreign immigrants, particularly from the Low Countries, took up residence there in order to do business.[24] If the national economic climate is anything to go by, when Tenterden was incorporated as a Limb of the Cinque Ports in 1449, Small Hythe's trade was probably not so buoyant as it had been in the late fourteenth century, but in the long-term, exemptions from tolls and customs which this brought could only have nurtured commercial growth.[25]

Buckingham, pp. xxi-xxii; C.W. Foster, ed., *Lincoln Wills 1271-1530* (Lincoln Record Society, vol. x, 1918), pp. xiv-xv; Marsh, 'In the Name of God?', pp. 226-230.

21 Furley, 'Early History of Tenterden', p. 43; Zell, 'Population and Family Structure', p. 240; Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, pp. 61-2, 116-121, 147-50.

22 See p. 3, above; *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Edw. III, vol. x, 1354-58, p. 70.

23 In 1364, a London merchant and ship owner, had £74 and goods stolen from a ship of his at "Smallyde": *Cal.Pat.Rolls*, Edw. III, vol. xiii, 1364-67, p. 72-3.

24 In 1436, a number of aliens dwelling at Small Hythe were licensed by the crown, namely, Henry Lyon of "Oldewater", Holland; Wayn Rychard of "Utright", Holland; Henry Waynes of "Seintreweyn, Almain"; William Pers of "Issilstayne", Holland: *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Hen. VI, vol. ii, 1429-36, pp. 561, 576.

25 Hasted, *History of Kent*, p. 200; Copy of Charter of Henry VI, Tenterden Custumal, CKS: Te/C1, fols. 13r.-16v.; *A Calendar of the White and Black Books of the Cinque Ports*, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii. On the long-term dynamics of trade in the fifteenth century, see for example, J.L. Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy 1150-1500* (London, 1980), pp. 287-319, and M.M. Postan, 'The Fifteenth Century', *EcHR*, ix (1938), pp. 160-7.

Renewed economic expansion at Small Hythe, probably began before the end of the fifteenth century, reflecting a general Wealden trend. By 1500 the Weald's population was beginning to rise, large areas of remaining wood were being cleared and land settled. Felled timber and charcoal were taken overland and by sea to London and the Continent; stock-raising of cattle to feed a growing metropolitan market and sheep-rearing for the manufacture of cloth were already taking place on a large scale. Although Tenterden was not central to the Wealden cloth and iron industries which mushroomed at this time, Small Hythe more than likely benefited commercially from these developments.[26] As well as playing a role in expanding London and Continental markets, the port served as a crucial link in the internal trade of Kent and Sussex, acting as a redistribution point between the interior of the Weald and the coastal towns.[27]

Of all these coastal towns, Small Hythe was most directly linked with Rye, and these connections were strengthened when Tenterden became a Limb of this Cinque Port in 1449. Small Hythe's increasing prosperity was heavily reliant upon trade between the two centres. Rye's commercial growth was already under way by the late fifteenth century, was rapid in the first half of the sixteenth, and had reached its peak by the 1550s, when it had the largest mercantile fleet on the south coast. Rye's overseas trade was mainly with the Low Countries and France, goods from which were re-distributed up the Rother to Tenterden through Small Hythe and other riverside centres deeper into the Weald. French wine, beer, dyestuffs and teasels for clothiers, luxury commodities such as oil, Flemish bricks, pitch, coal from Newcastle and grain from elsewhere in the country were just some of the things which passed through on their way to Tenterden and beyond.[28]

Small Hythe was also centrally involved in Rye's export trade to France and the Low Countries. The manufactured goods of the Wealden iron industry, charcoal, leather and skins, horses, locally brewed beer, tallow, reasonably large amounts of cloth and most importantly, timber, perhaps the Weald and Rye's largest export passed out through Small Hythe, Appledore, Reading Street, Newenden and Robertsbridge. (See Map 3.1) Calais was the chief recipient of firewood, timber and logs, stimulating a trade which took off from the end of the fifteenth century and peaked in the early 1530s. Some of the overland traffic between the south coast, and the Medway Valley and London may have passed through Small Hythe. Despite the gradual silting up of the Rother in the sixteenth century, the township's trade does not appear to have been seriously damaged, as smaller vessels such as lighters laden with iron could still navigate as far as

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26 Clark, *English Provincial Society*, pp. 7-9; Furley, 'Early History of Tenterden', pp. 52-3.

27 Clark, *English Provincial Society*, pp. 10-11.

28 Mayhew, *Tudor Rye*, pp. 236, 50, 238-41, 247, 252; Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', p. 347.

Robertsbridge in the 1560s.[29] The road which lay just to the south of Small Hythe and which followed the course of the Rother would have provided access to the quayside for the scattered settlements in the southern half of the parish by way of a series of carefully maintained cross lanes which branched out east and west from the road up to Tenterden and came south to the river. John Ingram may have been referring to this road when he mentioned his "wode tower that is by the stronde syde" in his will of 1474.[30]

As well as being an important commercial centre, Small Hythe was host to considerable industrial activity; principally large-scale ship-building from at least the middle of the fourteenth century. Vessels were constructed for a range of customers from the Corporation of New Romney to private owners at Rye and Tenterden.[31] After 1449, Tenterden's commitment to provide ships for Rye more than likely strengthened the industry, but even before 1420 Henry V built men-of-war at Small Hythe, including *The Jesus*, a 1000 ton ship built there in 1416.[32] In 1497 Robert Brekynden (III), Clerk of the King's Ships presided over the construction of the *Mary Fortune* there. She cost £110 17s, and although only a small vessel, she was technically advanced. Brekynden's accounts have survived for the construction of the *Mary Fortune*, and they reveal something of the nature of this sort of medium-scale venture. Brekynden had to hire an area referred to as "the Grounde" within which to make the ship, together with a workhouse for 6s 8d, from a woman named "Ales Brygandyne", to whom he was presumably related. This was probably an area on the quays which was normally used for smaller scale ship-building and repairs. The details of the work describe Small Hythe's place in a larger network of industries and connexions. Timber was bought from Rye, dealers in Tenterden and as far afield as Beaulieu near Southampton; a sawyer was hired from Cranbrook, and iron work was brought up from Rye to Small Hythe. The masts appear to have been built at Winchelsea and brought up the Rother, and Brekynden brought in eight skilled workmen to make the sails, probably from Portsmouth, and paid for their board and lodging in Small Hythe for two weeks. The canvas for the sails was

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29 Mayhew, *Tudor Rye*, pp. 237-44, 247, 252, 6, 308 n.8; Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', pp. 348-9; Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, pp. 13, 49-51.

30 CKS: PRC 17/2/342; Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', pp. 14, 48.

31 In 1342, four vessels from Small Hythe sailed in a large fleet under Edward III to Brittany, and in 1394, the 100 ton *Marie* of Small Hythe was recorded in a fleet list: *VCH, Kent*, vol. ii, pp. 268, 271; Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', p. 347. In 1364 a ship called *La Gabriel*, of "Smalelid", was owned by Rye vintners: *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Edw. III, vol. xiii, 1364-67, pp. 16. In 1400-1, a barge called "Eneswithe" was built and launched at Small Hythe for New Romney, costing £40 6s 8d, and in 1396 Romney had spent £53 6s 8d on a vessel built there: Riley, ed., 'Mss. of the Corporation of Rye', p. 536; Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', p. 347. John William of Small Hythe was the master of the barge built in 1401, and in 1403 illegally seized 89 tons of wine of "Paitowe" from a Flemish ship: *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Hen. IV, vol. ii, 1401-1405, p. 281. In 1411, a ship of the "ryver of Smalhethe", captained by William de Yorke, and owned by Thomas Foule (probably of Tenterden), was commandeered by the crown: *Cal. Close Rolls*, Henry IV, 1409-13, p. 167. The jurats of Hythe hired a Small Hythe ship for their "service" in 1412: Riley, ed., 'Mss. of the Corporation of Rye', p. 434.

32 *VCH, Kent*, vol. ii, p. 336; Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, p. 14.

conveyed by boat from "Shoram" (probably Shoreham, on the river Darent in west Kent), and the oars from Portsmouth. Numerous other workers were housed in the locality, and between eight and seventeen shipwrights worked on the vessel at any one time. When the *Mary Fortune* was launched from Small Hythe, Brekynden spent 5s on bread and ale to be distributed to those who helped - a thoroughly modest celebration.[33]

Due to his connexions with Small Hythe and the township's reputation as a ship-building centre, even when Brekynden was working on the dock and making repairs to *The Regent* in Portsmouth in the late 1490s, he employed craftsmen and bought materials from the Small Hythe and Reading Street area, paying considerable amounts to transport them by land and water.[34] Larger scale ship-building continued on the Rother in the reign of Henry VIII. In 1545 the *Great Galley*, a three-hundred ton royal vessel, capable of carrying two hundred and fifty men was built at Small Hythe under the supervision of Brekynden.[35] Also in the early sixteenth century, two of the king's barks appear to have been built there, as well as other relatively large vessels, and it was around this time that the king's smiths were operating at Small Hythe.[36] These years may have marked the height of the township's ship-building industry, which, because of the large amounts of capital investment and labour involved, probably had an especially collective nature which may have helped to cement cooperative relationships in the township between its major families.[37]

Brewing is the only other local industry for which there is evidence, an almost ubiquitous activity in England in this period. Two brewhouses appear in the Small Hythe deeds, one from 1517 and one in 1539.[38] Salt may have been made at Small Hythe but there is no direct evidence of this.[39] It is also very likely that fishing was a major occupation of the inhabitants of the town.[40]

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33 Oppenheim, 'Naval Accounts', pp. xxvii, 312ff.

34 Oppenheim, 'Naval Accounts', pp. 145-50, 218-239.

35 Small Hythe's neighbour, Reading Street, in the Hundred of Tenterden and parish of Ebony, also had a ship-building industry at this time. *The Regent*, a 600 ton vessel which carried 225 serpentines, one of the largest ships yet built for the Crown, was built there under the oversight of Sir Richard Guldeford shortly after 1487: Oppenheim, 'Naval Accounts', pp. xxi-xxv. The King's "Second Gallion" was also made at Reading Street - 200 tons and able to hold 150 men: *L & P*, vol. iii, 2964; *ibid.*, vol. xx, 543; *ibid.*, Addenda, i, 140, 142, 1697; Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, pp. 48-51.

36 Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', p. 157; *L & P*, vol. i, 3422; *ibid.*, Addenda, i, 101. Henry VIII constructed at least one man-of-war at Small Hythe: *VCH, Kent*, vol. ii, p. 300. Anchors were sent for repair, from Portsmouth to Small Hythe, either late Henry VII or early Henry VIII: *L & P.*, Addenda, i, 68.

37 On investment in ships in this period see G. Scammel, 'Shipowning in England *c.* 1450-1550', *TRHS*, 5th series, xii (1962), pp. 105-22.

38 CKS: U455/T85; U410/T21.

39 Furley noted how salt formed part of the rent paid by tenants on Saltkendene, and surmised that it may have been manufactured in the vicinity. It is probable that this den lay near the Rother, and so Small Hythe, but its location is now lost: Furley, *History of the Weald*, p. 724. In his will of 1464,

The development of Small Hythe as a port is also illustrated by the architectural features of Small Hythe place which was built about the same time as the new chapel, *c.* 1514. Its large heated "parlour-like" room has glazed windows some of which would have looked south over the river, and were originally fitted with shutters. The room once contained wall paintings, including a figure of a man. With its combination of domestic and administrative features it may well have been built for an official of the port. Both Small Hythe Place and the misnamed Priest's House just to its north are examples of the type of well-built properties which probably stemmed from the profits of trade and industry.[41]

In addition to its commercial and industrial roles, Small Hythe was also an important agricultural centre, being the natural focus of the parish's most fertile lands towards its southern boundary. On the whole, these were farmed as grass for the pasture of cattle and to a lesser extent sheep, and comprised some clay but mostly rich alluvium soils on and around the marshes which flanked the Rother to the south, Newmill Channel to the west and Shirley Moor to the east. Added to these resources, most of the parish's wood lay between Tenterden town and the river. Stock-raising of cattle, increasingly for the London market, was probably the most important aspect of Tenterden's agriculture, and Small Hythe was ideally placed for this, with relatively easy access to grazing on Romney marsh, in addition to areas within the parish.[42] As was the case with the Brekyndens, industrial and professional activities were conducted alongside involvement in agriculture, and it is probable that capital regularly moved between ships, trade, land and live-stock.[43]

Small Hythe, along with the rest of the Weald, experienced rapid population growth from perhaps as early as the fourth quarter of the fifteenth century, not least

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Thomas Franke, who probably lived in Small Hythe, ordained that all his salt was to be sold and the proceeds be used for dowries to his daughters, totalling at least £7: CKS: PRC 17/1/99.

40 For fishing at nearby Rye, see Mayhew, *Tudor Rye*, *passim*. A royal grant of 1471 of large amounts of lands and property in the eastern Weald and the Marsh to a number of local men, included "feedings, stanks, fleets, fisheries and stews" in Tenterden and Rolvenden: *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Edward IV, Henry VI, 1467-77, p. 283.

41 Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', pp. 99-101; Sarah Pearson, *The Medieval Houses of Kent: An Historical Analysis* (Royal Commision on the Historical Monuments of England, London, 1994), pp. 112-4, 134; Anthoney Quiney, *English Domestic Architecture: Kent Houses* (Woodbridge, 1993), p. 173; John Winnifrith, 'The 'Priest' House at Smallhythe: A False Identification', *Arch. Cant.*, xcvi (1980), pp. 363-6.

42 Hasted, *History of Kent*, vol. vii, p. 202; Zell, 'Wood-Pasture Regime', pp. 72-86; Furley, 'Early History of Tenterden', pp. 52-3. There are two references to Shirley Moor in the list of bailiffs in the Tenterden Custumal, the first in 1469, reading, "This yere Sharley more brake owt", and the second in 1509, reading, "Sharley more was made": CKS: Te/C1, fol. 140r. The Small Hythe wills also suggest that there was a mainly pastoral agrarian regime in this part of the parish. Whereas they contain only two references to barns and two to grain, cows, heifers, and calfs are bequeathed in six wills.

43 The buying and selling of shares in ships is discussed in Scammel, 'Shipowning in England', pp. 116-9.

because of an influx of migrants from elsewhere in Kent and the Continent.[44] Given the incentives for settling there, its population may have increased at a faster rate than that of the rest of the parish. By the late 1540s there were probably around two hundred more or less permanent inhabitants, and the total population of the parish of Tenterden has been estimated at around 1,300 to 1,400. On this basis, it is conceivable that Small Hythe was home to something approaching a quarter of the parish's residents by 1535.[45] Of course this does not take into account the spasmodic swelling of the community by those who were involved in ship-building or trade.

Economic growth and the expansion of population does not however, appear to have greatly increased the town's share of the parish's wealth. In an assessment on men of Tenterden in 1464, five of the thirty-three assessed were inhabitants of Small Hythe, and they accounted for thirteen per cent of the total rating. Almost fifty years later, in 1512-13, Small Hythe men numbered seven out of thirty-four assessed, and were rated at nineteen per cent of the total. So, the wealthiest residents had done little more than hold their own amongst their parochial counterparts by the second decade of the sixteenth century, and for reasons that will be made clear below, they did not retain their position for long. In 1542-3, only three out of thirty-two men assessed lived at Small Hythe and they accounted for only two per cent of the total rating. What is more, throughout the whole period, Small Hythe's wealth appears to have been concentrated in only a small number of families, the Brekyndens being by far the most prominent. Much of the profits from economic growth probably went into their hands, along with merchants, graziers and ship-owners in Rye and Tenterden town.[46]

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44 On national population growth, see Julian Cornwall, 'English Population in the Early Sixteenth Century', *EcHR*, xxiii (1970), pp. 32-44, but see also, Bruce Campbell, 'The Population of Early Tudor England: a re-evaluation of the 1522 Muster Returns and the 1524 and 1525 Lay Subsidies', *Journal of Historical Geography*, vii (1981), pp. 145-54. On the Weald, see Clark, *English Provincial Society*, pp. 7-12; Zell, 'Population and Family Structure', pp. 233-8 and *idem*, *Industry in the Countryside*, ch. 3.

45 The figure for Small Hythe is based on a statement in a Petition of 1549 to save Small Hythe chapel from destruction, reading: "there is in the said hamelet (of Small Hythe) comonly cc people" (PRO: Court of Augmentations Miscellaneous Books, 114, fol. 139, cited in Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', p. 154), and conservative estimates by deponents hostile to the chapel in the same year, that there were between sixty and a hundred "houseling people" (communicants) living in Small Hythe (PRO: Aug. Misc. Books, 114, fol. 140, cited in Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', pp. 159-62.). The figure for the parish as a whole is from Zell, 'Population and Family Structure', pp. 233-5, 257, and *idem*, *Industry in the Countryside*, pp. 57, 86; Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', p. 24, Fig. 1. Hasted numbers 586 communicants in Tenterden in 1588: *idem*, *History of Kent*, vol. vii, p. 218.

46 PRO: E179, 230/182: 4 Edward IV, Barons of the Cinque Port of Rye, on goods and chattels in Tenterden Hundred; PRO: E179, 231/228: 4 Henry VIII, Barons of the Cinque Port of Rye with goods and chattels in the hundreds of Tenterden, Barkley, Rolvenden and Bewsborough; PRO: E179, 234/7: 34 Henry VIII, Men of Tenterden with goods and chattels in hundreds of Tenterden, Bewsborough, Oxney, Aloesbridge, Longport, Rolvenden and Hope. Roberts notes that the development of Small Hythe as a port was a contributory factor "in creating the economic and social environment in which men felt secure enough to invest capital in building": Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', p. 20, and p. 350.

This notwithstanding, the rapid growth of a number of markets from the end of the fifteenth century at the same time as a flurry of ship-building activity were the driving forces behind the rising aspirations of local leading families such as the Assheryndens, Blossoms, Brekyndens and Davys. These developments undoubtedly brought a new sense of identity to the town, which many of its inhabitants wished to declare in the opening clauses of their wills.

The Chapel of St. John the Baptist: origins, devotional piety and symbolism

The present day chapel of St. John the Baptist dates from 1514-17. Before it was destroyed in a fire on 31 July 1514 the original chapel, possibly a wooden structure and probably rebuilt over successive generations, had existed from at least the beginning of the fifteenth century.[47] The origins of this first foundation are far from clear, but there are a number of clues which help to date it.[48]

The dedication to St. John means that it could have been founded as early as the seventh century or as late as the fourteenth.[49] Its liminal position next to the Rother and the man-made boundary of the parish, is suggestive of the adoption of an ancient pre-Christian holy site. An enduring local knowledge of the sanctity of ancient sites could influence the positioning of a church or chapel as late as the thirteenth century.[50] At first a way-side missionary cross, or a saint's shrine may have stood on the spot, and then a chapel was built, probably in order to meet the spiritual requirements of what was an

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47 Inserted beneath the name for the year 1514-15 in the list of bailiffs copied into the Tenterden Custumal *c.* 1558, is a note which reads: "the which yere ~~Sma Smathe~~Smalithe was burnte on the last day of Julye": CKS: Te/C1, fol. 140v. We know that the chapel was destroyed in this fire from evidence given by deponents in a Chantries Commission of 1549: PRO: Aug. Misc. Books, 114, fol. 140, cited in Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', p. 157. In 1400-1 an offering of 3s 4d was made to the chapel by New Romney, at the launch of their barge, the "Eneswithe", made at Small Hythe: Riley, ed., 'Mss. of the Corporation of Rye', p. 536.

48 According to Kilburne, "by tradition" it was "said to have been founded by one Shepherde", but this probably stems from the fact that Robert Sheppard recovered the chapel lands and re-endowed it in the late sixteenth century: R. Kilburne, *A Topographie or Survey of Kent, with some Chronological, Historicall, and other matters touching the same; And the several Parishes and Places therein* (London, 1659), p. 271, cited in Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', p. 134 and also mentioned by Furley, 'Early History of Tenterden', p. 56; Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, pp. 64-5..

49 According to Richard Morris, St. John the Baptist comes within "the older or, more strictly, timeless stratum" of saints to which religious foundations were dedicated: R. Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (London, 1989), p. 91. See also, Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, pp. 185-219.

50 Rosser, 'Parochial conformity', p. 183; Bonney, 'Early Boundaries', pp. 171-2; Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, pp. 91-2. A number of Kent's early baptismal churches are sited on river banks, and Everitt writes of this phenomenon, "there are grounds for suspecting an older tradition behind it, perhaps stemming from the pagan cults of the county and their links with local water-spirits": Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, pp. 195, 295-6.

outlying settlement.[51] Although as Tenterden's port, Small Hythe was more than likely an established settlement by the eleventh century, there is reason to believe that the chapel came later. Apart possibly from Kilburne, there is nothing to suggest that it had the characteristics of an early foundation - that is, by the initiative of a lay or monastic lord. In the late fifteenth century it belonged to the "strete" of Small Hythe - the collective of people who lived there. Its position next to the road and waterfront suggests that the chapel was originally a collective venture - partly intended to be a roadside, and indeed waterside sanctuary for travellers, which would reap the benefits of offerings from those passing through for the purposes of trade. Communal foundations of this kind tend to date from the late thirteenth or fourteenth century.[52]

St. John the Baptist was, for a number of reasons, an especially suitable dedicatee. One of the principal dedications of the late-founded churches and chapels of Kent's Wilderness areas, St. John the Baptist was probably considered by the inhabitants of these inhospitable areas, to be "most able to protect them in a hostile environment". As at Small Hythe, the dedication is also frequently connected with landing-places or hithes.[53] His legend resonated with meaning for the local inhabitants, and provided them with a pious vocabulary of the imagination by which to represent their identity. This was however, firmly grounded in a distinctive quotidian material base. In Voragine's Nativity of St. John the Baptist, it is told that he was born "two miles nigh to Jerusalem", offering a clear allusion to the two mile journey which the people of Small Hythe must have frequently made on the difficult road to Tenterden town. This was probably the greatest reason for the original foundation of the chapel and was used more than once by the inhabitants as the chief justification for its continuing role. As it unfolds the legend offers a poignant imaginary landscape, providing a vivid sense of place and distance for the people of Small Hythe. Having left his father's house in his early teens and lived in solitude in the desert on the river Jordan, John began his ministry at the age of twenty-

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51 For comments on way-side chapels and crosses, especially those situated on ancient droveways, see Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, pp. 186-7. For the probable early origins of West Cross, in the north-west of the parish, see, Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, p. 5, and Chapter Four.

52 Owen, *Church and Society*, pp. 1-12; Rosser, 'Parochial Conformity', pp. 175-83; Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, pp. 185-6, 205-6; Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, pp. 210, 219, 367-8; Owen, *Church and Society*, pp. 18-9; G.H. Tupling, 'The Pre-Reformation Parishes and Chapelries of Lancashire', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, lxvii (1957), p. 7; Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, p. 171.

53 Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, pp. 250-54, *cit.* at p. 253, and see map. p. 306 for examples. St. John the Baptist was also used as a dedication at the landing-place settlements of New Hythe, New Romney, Hythe, Halling and Erith; *ibid.*, pp. 253, nn.62, 63. Small Hythe may have followed a fashion for the adoption of this dedication by ports and river-side settlements. In a recent survey of bequests to saints' cults in East Kent listed in A. Hussey's *Testamenta Cantiana: East Kent* (London, 1907), it was found that St. John the Baptist was the most popular saint in coastal areas: G. Draper, J. Hosking, C. Richardson and A. Wiggins, 'The Fitting of the Altars: Gender and Popular Piety in East Kent', (Paper given at the Summer Conference of the Ecclesiastical History Society, University of Kent at Canterbury, 1996).

nine, at which time he "drew him towards Bethany, upon the river or desert, not far from Jerusalem" where he preached to, taught, and baptized those who came to him. If anywhere in the surrounding Wealden countryside was evoked by this sort of imagery, it was Small Hythe and the marshes of the Rother levels - bleak, expansive, inhospitable and slightly removed from the main centres of population - a fitting home for St. John. Striking a chord in the hearts of local people, this picture may have lent a certain asceticism to their piety, and contributed towards a religious rationale for their community. (See Plate 3.2) Pious austerity could have been further buttressed by the details of John's lifestyle in the wilderness: his simple clothing and exotic but basic diet, for which he had left "riches, honours, dignities, noblesse, and all the world".[54]

John's most important role was as baptiser, and this was probably the main reason he was chosen as dedicatee of Small Hythe chapel, standing as it did near to the River Rother. John's part in the story of Christ, played out at the Jordan, formed a central strand in the Christian symbolism of water. This could not have been lost on the inhabitants of Small Hythe, for whom the river was the life of their community, the very reason for its existence. St. John served as an ideal guardian of that prosperity.[55] St. John's role as missionary may also have led to his selection, especially if the chapel was founded after Tenterden parish church, perhaps on the site of a roadside preaching cross, and so taking the form of a religious outpost. John was also "the lantern", showing the way and revealing the saviour. For the many ships and travellers passing in and out of Small Hythe, this was symbolism enough to make him an appealing advocate, and the town itself would have had the important role of ensuring that ships passed safely along the river at night. Finally, John dressed in "the skin of a camel..girded..with a girdle of wool, or of leather, cut out of an hide or a beast's skin". Excepting the camel skin, these were common commodities in Small Hythe and central to its pastoral agriculture. John's adoption of these as his prophetic garb, may have been perceived as providing a special blessing upon the everyday activities of Small Hythe graziers and tradesmen.[56]

Mirk tells us that people were given to fasting on the eve of the Nativity of John, and to lighting three types of fire "yn the worschip" of the saint. This is substantiated by other evidence of celebrations on St. John's Eve. The first fire was of bones - the "bonnefyre" - which produced a stench believed to drive into water, dragons which caused diseases. Due to its low-lying position, Small Hythe was an unhealthy place in this period, and the Rother may have been considered a suitably watery grave for pestilent

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54 *The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints as Englished by William Caxton*, ed. F.S. Ellis (London, Temple Classics, 1900), pp. 258-9. See also, *Mirk's Festial: A Collection of Homilies by Johannes Mirkus*, ed., Theodor Erbe, EETS, extra series, xcvi (London, 1905), pt. 1, p. 184.

55 *The Golden Legend*, pp. 259-61. On the symbolic significance of water, and its influence on the location of both pagan and Christian sites, as well as on dedications to St. John, see Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, pp. 88-92.

56 *The Golden Legend*, pp. 253, 259; *Mirk's Festial*, pp. 183-5.

Plate 3.2 *Looking south-west to Wittersham Level from Bulleign*

forces.[57] The second fire was of wood, a "wakefyre", intended to be seen from afar, alluding to the prophetic predictions in the Prophets of John's ministry and his own foretelling of the Messiah. Once again this supplied identification with travel and the beacons lit for ships at Small Hythe. The third was of bones and wood together, and was called "Saynt Ionys fyre", acting as a reminder of the burning of John's bones by the Emperor, Julian the Apostate.[58] Within the local cultural context of the everyday, the annual re-enactment of the drama of St. John's legend served as a verification of a religious conception of the world, which perpetuated a distinctive ethos.

The chapel which still stands today was built at a time when Small Hythe was enjoying a commercial and industrial boom. As such it is a physical record of the collective expression of a prosperous community. Unusually in this period, it was constructed of red bricks from Flanders, "an expensive material funded by a community well able to afford the considerable capital expenditure this would have involved".[59] There was something very significant about a Flemish red-brick chapel at Small Hythe. It symbolised and was a product of commercial links with the Low Countries which had fuelled local trade, industry and agriculture, and therefore said something about the town's horizons and its place in the regional urban hierarchy. (See Plates 3.3 and 3.4)

The construction of the chapel provided an ideal opportunity for the wealthy families of Small Hythe to express their collective identity. There are glimpses of their efforts in the wills. For example, when writing his in 1516 John Donet appears to have already given a substantial amount of money "to the beldyng of the chapell" and bequeathed the remainder "of that sume of money therto by me graunted at the first foundation of the same suche sume", as well as a further 23s 4d. A year later Robert Brekynden (II) left 20s to the glazing of one of the windows, and 6s 8d towards the building of the priest's house.[60]

The chapel's stepped east and west gables betray cultural influences from the Low Countries, arising from long-term trade links and immigration and possibly, the employment of Continental bricklayers.[61] It was built without a tower, porch and

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57 See for example, Hasted, *History of Kent*, p. 200; Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, p. 62; Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, p. 62. *Mirk's Festial*, pp. 182-3. Unfortunately, as a result of this ritual, the waters were considered to be made venomous to any who entered them. See also, Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 137-8, and Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 37-9, on St. John's Eve fires.

58 *Mirk's Festial*, pp. 182-5.

59 Citation from Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', p. 48; Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, p. 52. Small numbers of Flemish bricks were imported at Rye, but in 1508-9 imports temporarily rose to five times the annual average, perhaps reflecting an increasing fashion for their use: Mayhew, *Tudor Rye*, pp. 241.

60 CKS: PRC 17/12/566; PRC 17/13/263.

61 E. Tyrrell-Green, *Parish Church Architecture* (London, 1924), p. 70; J.C. Cox, *The English Parish Church* (London, 1914), pp. 243-252.

Plate 3.3 *The west front of the Chapel of St. John the Baptist, Small Hythe, from the Small Hythe to Tenterden road*

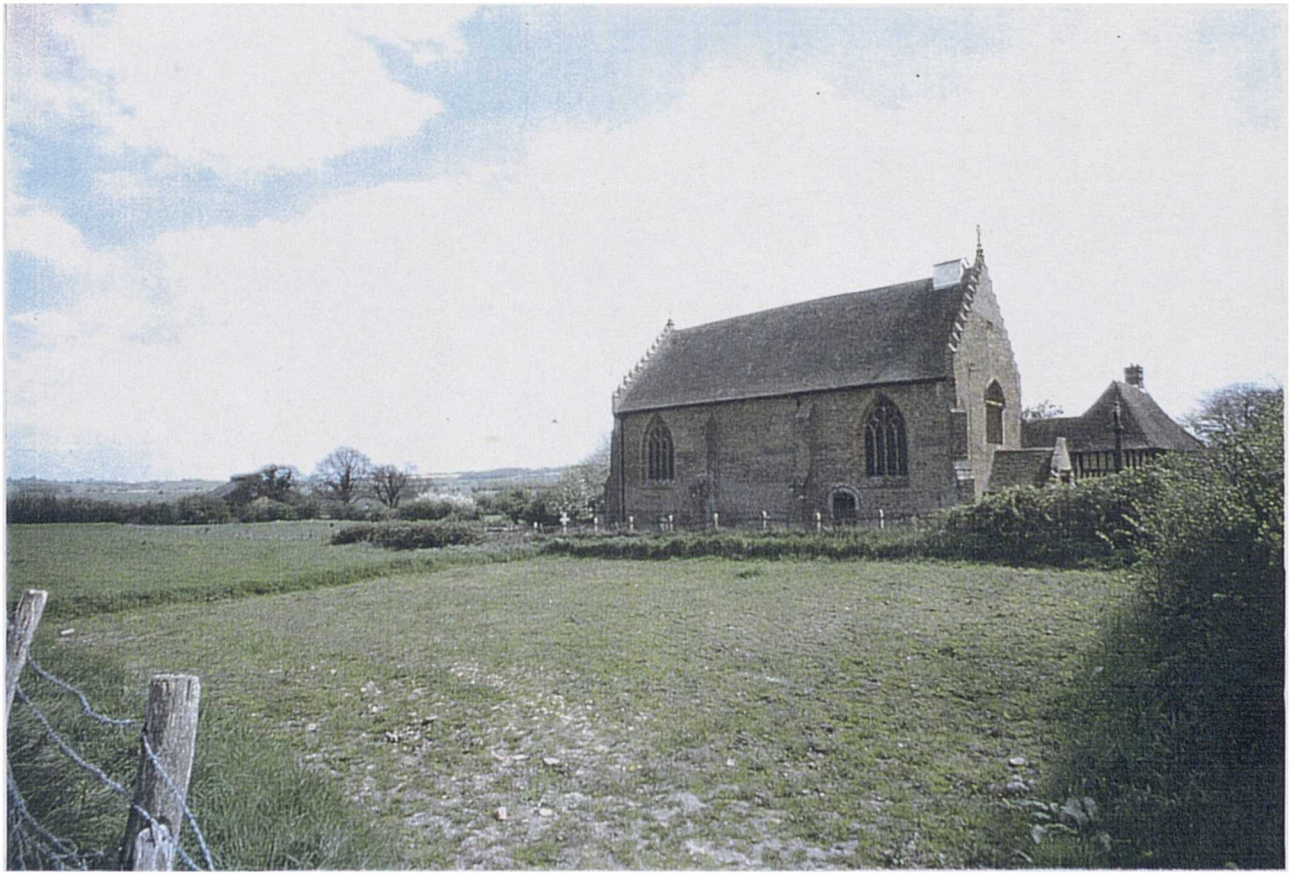

Plate 3.4 *Small Hythe Chapel from the north, showing the Rother Levels beyond*

structural chancel, although the east end may have been separated by a surviving oak screen which is said to be medieval. There may intentionally never have been a rood-loft and the screen is without decoration. In its plain and simple design, it is similar to the one in the Church at Appledore, and does little to break up the austerity of the chapel's interior.[62] Unfortunately none of the Tudor glass has survived. Overlooking the street, in a small niche above the west window and door, is an image of St. John the Baptist (about half a metre in height). The whole building cannot be any larger than seven metres wide and twenty-two metres long, and stands about ten metres high. It could comfortably hold no more than about a hundred people, and so was a suitable size to serve the two hundred or so permanently resident adults and children. It is probable that the chapel of East Guldeford, built by Sir Richard Guldeford at the turn of the century in the newly reclaimed parish of the same name, provided some inspiration for the Small Hythe building. They share a similar position by the water-side, and both are made of red brick to a simple design. Indeed, given the Guldeford's influence in Tenterden, one cannot rule out the possibility that they lent their patronage to the new venture at Small Hythe.[63]

If one is to look for an architect, then William Roper may be the best candidate, as he is responsible for the similarly styled red-brick Roper Gateway in St. Dunstan's Street, Canterbury, although this was not begun until 1530 at the earliest. Small Hythe chapel's crow-steps may in fact have marked the introduction of this style into Kent, making it an altogether *avant-garde* venture. The possibility that Roper had a hand in its design and construction, his divergence into Lutheranism by the early 1520s and the building's positively Continental references all hint at the type of cultural milieu which had evolved in Small Hythe and Tenterden by the early sixteenth century.[64]

Both the new building and its predecessor were maintained and furnished by the collective efforts of the inhabitants and visitors, and occasionally by parishioners who lived outside Small Hythe. The ideal, at least, was that it "be decently furnished with books, chalices, lights and other ecclesiastical ornaments necessary for divine worship".[65] Testamentary bequests provide a fragmented picture of provision. For example, in 1503, John Jacob, a local resident, stipulated that at his daughter's inheritance of her estate she

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62 John Newman, *West Kent and the Weald: The Buildings of England* (Penguin, 2nd edn, London, 1980), p. 531; Canon Scott Robertson, 'On Kentish Rood-Screens', *Arch. Cant.*, xiv (1882), pp. 371-3.

63 Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, pp. 68-9.

64 T.P. Smith, 'The Roper Gateway, St. Dunstan's Street, Canterbury', *Arch. Cant.*, cviii (1991), pp. 171-81. Smith writes that Archbishop Warham built Small Hythe chapel but provides no reference to documentary sources which support this assertion (p. 172). He may have assumed (incorrectly) that Warham's grant of a license for the celebration of divine service there in 1506 and the subsequent Ordinance of 1509 point to his involvement in its construction.

65 This was a stipulation of the licence for the celebration of divine service in the chapel, granted by archbishop William Warham in 1506: LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 10, transcribed and translated in Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', pp. 140-141, 143-145.

was to buy "at her owne propre charge a candellsticke of laten with iiij or v braunches, and sett it in the Chappell of Saint John baptist in Smalhed".[66] The altar was probably decorated with fine pieces of cloth donated by townsfolk such as the "good sheet" left by Agnes Grenestrete in 1523, the table-cloth and three "kerchers" bequeathed by Margaret Pellond in the same year, or the "best dyaper Table clothe" given by Lore Blossom in 1533, "to the haultre in the Chappell of Smalithe".[67] In 1526 John Wayte left 6s 8d for the purchasing of a chalice for use there, and Margaret Pellond gave two silver rings and a "bedestone of silver", probably to adorn the image St. John which would have stood within the chapel.[68] In 1509, Warham ordered that the local inhabitants "have the Lord's Body duly and honourably enclosed and placed suspended above the altar...not in a burse or small box, on account of the risk of being broken, but in a most beautiful pyx adorned with white linen within, under lock and key and faithful guardianship".[69] In 1533, Lore Blossom desired to further enhance the pyx and willed that "if the strete of Smalhith wyl bye a conopye for the Sacrament to hyng over the aulter there I bequethe to the bying of it 3s 4d more or ells not". It may be of significance here, that the cult of St. John's head had eucharistic associations in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.[70]

In 1527, George Harryson left 3s 4d to the light of St. Barbara in the chapel, this being the only reference to a saint's cult at Small Hythe.[71] The apparent lack of cults was perhaps due to the limitations of space for side altars, but Small Hythe residents did not compensate for this by adhering to cults at St. Mildred's. Only twelve Small Hythe testators - under a fifth for whom there are wills - gave to saints' cults, lights, fraternities or special masses at St. Mildred's or elsewhere, whereas around two fifths of those who lived outside Small Hythe did so, which in a national context was itself low.[72] The Jesus mass for example, the largest cult at Tenterden, was only half as popular at Small Hythe as it was in the rest of the parish. From 1513, only five out of a total of twenty-six Small Hythe wills gave to the Jesus mass, which may be compared to the thirty-seven out of ninety-one Tenterden town wills made from 1513 which contain bequests. The remaining Small Hythe bequests to cults or special masses, comprise three to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and one to the Rood Light in St. Mildred's, one to the image of St. Mary the Virgin at Ebony and two for masses at *Scala Coeli*. Robert Brekynden (I) was quite unusual among the townsfolk for his devotion to the Blessed Virgin at St Mildred's.

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66 CKS: PRC 17/8/271.

67 CKS: PRC 17/16/25; PRC 17/16/179; PRC 17/19/365.

68 CKS: PRC 17/17/49; PRC 17/16/179.

69 Ordinance made by Warham in 1509 which confirmed and elaborated on the Licence of 1506: LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 338v., transcribed and translated in Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', p. 145.

70 CKS: PRC 17/19/365; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 142.

71 CKS: PRC 17/17/334.

72 See Chapter Four.

Devotional piety at Small Hythe seems to have been rather sparse - centred around the daily celebration of the offices and the mass and perhaps the cult of St. John the Baptist, but little else. This was probably in part because of the distance from the parish church and to some extent, the financial limitations upon a relatively small population in providing a rich devotional framework. It may also have been the result of an ingrained local sentiment which viewed religious expression as necessarily austere, perhaps partly because only a simple devotional pattern had existed there for generations. A desire, whether conscious or not, on the part of the inhabitants to emphasise their otherness from Tenterden town, and a worldly asceticism shared by those who saw themselves as chosen to embrace the rigours of an economic calling which eschewed the comforts of town life, may also have played their part. One cannot help feeling that the bleak physical environment and landscape around Small Hythe contributed to a distinctive ethos. In many ways it was similar in enviroment to the marshland settlements of Kent, some of which have been noted for "their oddly localized forms of Nonconformity, their fatalism and fierce dislike of outsiders". Professor Everitt also writes of similar features in the *mentalité* which lay behind the foundation of non-parochial chapels in this period; in particular, a "certain independence of mind" and "a tendency to press individual rights beyond their legal limits".[73] At Small Hythe, it is possible to perceive the coming together of individual aspirations into collective rights which were certainly pressed, although perhaps not deliberately beyond legal limits.

The development and consolidation of religious provision

The growth of Small Hythe's collecive identity is most visible in the changing role of its chapel. From the 1460s through to the 1540s the emphasis of what it provided for the community shifted in a definite direction, its status was enhanced, its relationship with the parish church was formally settled, and the townsfolk ensured that it survived two major crises.

The endowments and bequests in the wills tell a vivid story of these developments. From the early 1460s to 1505 the majority of testators who remembered the chapel, were concerned with the establishment of temporary or permanent chantries, which ensured that a priest sang or prayed for the health of their souls or the souls of their families and kin. So, for example, in 1463 William Bate ordained that when his heirs inherited his messuage at Small Hythe they were to pay 13s 4d for a priest to celebrate in the chapel of St. John the Baptist there. In 1467 John Davy left 26s 8d for a priest to

73 Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, pp. 64-5.

celebrate in the chapel for his soul.[74] John Ingram, in 1474, willed that one of his kinsmen "pay to the chapel quarterly yf a preste syng there iiijd a yere so that the preste that saith masse pray for the soules rehersyd the names iiij tymes in the quarter of John Ingram, William Ingram, William Dolekynden and Isabell Elyotte".[75]

Prior to 1505 five testators either established permanent chantries in the chapel, or secured prayers by making endowments of lands and tenements to the support of the priest. For example, in 1466, Robert Ponte willed that after the death of his wife all yearly profits from two pieces of land, a barn and two gardens were to go to the use of the chapel for ever, "so that the priest of that chapel on Sundays after reading the Gospel, publicly by name, shall pray for my soul and all the faithful deceased".[76] When John Ingram made his will in 1474, he appears to have already endowed the chapel with lands, devising to his kinsman, "ij Acres of land lying in the mersh that belongeth to the chappell of Smallhyth paying yerely whan there is a priste there fonnde yn the chappell to the fyndyng of the priste as doth the next Acre in the East parte or ellis as the Acre that lyeth next in the west parte".[77] In 1490, Joan Turnor willed that the "..wardens of the chapel of Smallhith forth (quarter) with the Strete of Smallhith paye v marcs to her feoffees to the fynding of a preste syngyng in the said chapell by the space of half a yere to praye for my soule and all cristen souls." In return she ordered her "..feoffees to deliver a piece of land callid Petfeld to the wardens and to other good men of the said strete att theyre advyce and content of the use and behoff of the said chapell."[78] In 1501, William Jamyn stipulated that "viij honest men of Smalehith" be enfeoffed in four acres of marshland, to the intent that they allow the wardens of the chapel (or other local inhabitants if there were no wardens) to take the profits "to the use of a priest there to sing dyvine service as parcell of his salary to pray for the soules of me the said William Jamyn and Margaret my wif, Stephen Jamyn and Agnes his wif, William Eliot and Isabell his wif, and all cristen soules, and if no suche prest then therbe, to the use of the works of the same chapell for ever".[79] These endowments not only secured masses and prayers for the benefactors and their kin, but sustained the celebration of divine service for the entire community.

Not one Small Hythe or Tenterden testator made an endowment of this sort to St. Mildred's.[80] They were peculiar to Small Hythe, and were concentrated in a late fifteenth-century effort to bolster the poorly endowed chapel. From the 1460s to around

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74 CKS: PRC 17/1/628. PRO: P.C.C. 25 Godyn, fol. 193v.
75 CKS: PRC 17/2/342.
76 CKS: PRC 17/1/170.
77 CKS: PRC 17/2/342.
78 CKS: PRC 17/5/310.
78 CKS: PRC 17/8/199.
80 If they did devise property to the parish Church it was indirectly by way of a sale and distribution of the proceeds. For example, Robert Ponte, CKS: PRC 17/1/170.

1500, instead of there being a priest celebrating divine service only by means of *ad hoc* arrangements for temporary chantries, a permanent stipend was gradually built up for a chaplain to minister to the whole community as well as particular families.

The development of more permanent religious provision, driven by collective initiative was manifested in other ways. From 1480, a few testators began to leave sums of money or, as already mentioned, goods, simply "to the work" or "to the use" of the chapel or without any such specification at all. So, for instance Richard Davy gave 3s 4d; from a piece of land called "the Tod" Nicholas Assherynden established a legacy of 20d a year for twenty years to the chapel; and Joan Chapman bequeathed 4d.[81] This development indicates that a framework was now in place for these funds to be properly administered for the sake of all householders, whilst the benefactors were no doubt well aware that they would get special mention in the priest's prayers after the celebration of the mass.[82] In addition, the names of successive Small Hythe chaplains start to appear in the wills from the late 1480s, the first being "Sir John", and in 1490, chapel wardens who administered funds from endowments appear, or when the continuous appointment of wardens is doubted then "other good men of the strete" of Small Hythe are called upon. The wardens, presumably elected from among the male inhabitants, represented and worked in concert with the community. So in 1490, as payment for lands alienated to the chapel, Joan Turnor willed that the "wardens of the chapel of Smallhith forthe with the Strete of Smalhith paye v marcs to the fynding of a preste syngyng in the said chapell by the space of half a yere".[83]

With the permanent provision of divine service firmly in place, in 1503 the wheels were set in motion for the chapel to gain official status. Curiously enough, for all their local loyalty, the Brekyndens do not appear to have been central to subsequent developments. In fact, it was not even a resident of Small Hythe who got things moving, but one John Tyler, a bachelor of Tenterden, who may have originated from the neighbouring parish of Woodchurch. Tiler was one of only three Tenterden parishioners who gave to the chapel, and did not live either at or in the immediate vicinity of Small Hythe. He stated in his will, that if the quarter of Small Hythe purchased "a perpetual lisens from the courte of Rome to have a prest singyng in the chapell of seynt John at Smalhed" within three years after his death, then seven marks were to be paid from his estate to the wardens.[84] This

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81 1480, CKS: PRC 17/3/365; 1484, CKS: PRC 16/1/1; 1488, CKS: PRC 17/5/76

82 For further discussion, see Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 153-4; 330-7.

83 Called variously, *"Magister Johannes capellanus de Smallhith"*, *"dominus Johannes de Smalhith"* and "Sir John, chaplain of Smallhith Chapel": William Crotehole, 1488, CKS: PRC 17/5/77; John Morer, clerk, 1489, PRO: P.C.C. 20 Milles; Joan Turnor, 1490, CKS: PRC 17/5/310.

84 CKS: PRC 17/9/211. John Tyler is mentioned as one of four Tenterden men who purchased nine acres of land on the den of Hokynden in Tenterden from Sir Richard Guldeford in 1498: CKS: U410/T12.

bequest seems to have motivated the inhabitants to obtain formal recognition of their chapel, because in response to their petitions, on 10 February 1506 archbishop William Warham granted a licence for the celebration of divine service there. This document stressed the benefits of the chapel, not just to inhabitants of Small Hythe but also to sojourners (*commorantes*), underlining the significance of the transient element of the population, who from time to time relied upon local religious provision. It also mentioned "other faithful Christians" who were helping to support the chaplain, some of whom may have been sojourners, and others, parishioners like John Tyler. The archbishop provided an incentive of forty days indulgence, to all who extended "a helping hand to the erection, repair, maintenance, support or sustenation of the...chapel and...chaplain".[85]

This indulgence may have influenced the character of bequests from 1506, by helping to shift attention further away from the procurement of temporary chantries for the health of the testator's soul alone, towards maintenance and support of the chapel and chaplain in the everyday administration of services, sacraments and sacramentals to the community as a whole.[86] From 1506 to 1533 there were only three bequests for temporary chantries, and two of these were only to be carried out in the event of heirs not inheriting.[87] Significantly, there were only two endowments of lands and tenements, and these were made simply "to the chapel" and "to the onely use and mayntenance of the preest's wage that shall syng in the Chappell at Smalhithe".[88] Fifteen of the eighteen testators who remembered the chapel in their wills after 1505 made bequests wholly of this character. For example, in 1506, Richard Figge ordained that after the death of his wife, his son was to buy his lands and tenements and give 6s 8d to the chapel. In 1519, Moyse Pellond, of Tenterden, left 6s 8d to its "reparation", no doubt contributing to the ongoing building work after the fire of 1514. As seen already, others such as Margaret Pellond and Agnes Grenestrete left possessions to enhance the furnishings.[89]

The grant of indulgence and the need to rebuild after the fire of 1514, do not however, on their own explain the shift in emphasis from personal and familial bequests for temporary chantries before 1505, and particularly in the 1460s and 70s, to the more

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85 The grant can be found in LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 10. I have made use of the transcription and translation by Taylor: 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', pp. 140-1, 143-5.

86 See 'Identity under threat' below, for a description and definition of the duties of the chaplain and rights of the inhabitants.

87 In 1517, Robert Brekynden (II) bequeathed 20d to Sir Thomas Gryme to celebrate for the health of his soul. The others were: John Hoore, 1509, CKS: PRC 17/11/306; Joan Weste widow, 1521, CKS: PRC 17/15/15.

88 John Hoore, 1509, CKS: PRC 17/11/306; John Wayte, 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/49. This also applies to two arrangements for lands to revert to the use of the chapel in the event of heirs not inheriting between 1506 and 1533: John Brekynden (III), 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/207; William Blossom, 1527, CKS: PRC 17/17/269.

89 CKS: PRC 17/10/119; PRC 17/14/47.

collective gifts of the early sixteenth century. The complete absence of arrangements for temporary chantries after 1505, suggests that the perceived role of the chapel substantially changed over the period, from little more than a chantry chapel for the discontinuous expression of household piety, to a foundation serving the spiritual needs of the collective inhabitants and the more transient elements of the township. This development makes all the more sense when it is remembered that it took place over a period of time, when Small Hythe was growing as a settlement, and commerce, industry and agriculture were expanding there.

There are glimpses of life-time endowments in the wills of the early sixteenth century, which indicate that additions may have been made to the lands built up for the chaplain's stipend by 1506. For example, part of a field called "Petfield" may have been designated by John Brekynden (III) for this purpose during his lifetime, and William Blossom, in his will of 1527, mentioned "the other land now perteynyng to the said chapel".[90] When the stipend was valued in 1546, there was adequate provision from endowments, one of which can be traced back to its benefactor in the 1460s. Over fifteen acres in seven separate parcels in the tenure of a number of leading Small Hythe men were listed, presumably mostly granted in the late fifteenth century.[91]

In addition to its religious function, the chapel of St. John the Baptist may also have been used as a common meeting place for townsfolk, particularly in their capacity as the Borough of Dumborne and Quarter of Small Hythe.[92] Overlapping spiritual and secular roles can be seen at the beginning of the fifteenth century, when the Cinque Port of New Romney made an offering of 3s 4d to the chapel, at the launch of the barge which had been built for them at Small Hythe.[93] In the early sixteenth century a court may have been held within the chapel. In 1528, William Brekynden of Small Hythe, a jurat of Tenterden, was called before the Brotherhood of the Cinque Ports on pain of £20, to answer objections made against him by Tenterden Corporation, "for keeping a court".[94] There is possibly only one piece of evidence pertinent to this dispute, in an indenture dated 14 January 1521 between William Brekynden of Small Hythe and John Frencham, which records how William had granted to farm to John, lands and tenements in the parish of Tenterden for a term of two years at an annual rent of 40s. It was agreed that if on 11 January 1522 "betwene the houres of ix and xij before none of the same day *in the chapall of smalhith*", John or his heirs and assigns paid £10 over and above the

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90 CKS: PRC 17/17/269; PRC 17/17/269.

91 PRO: Chantry Certificates, Roll 29, 118, transcribed and translated in Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', p. 151.

92 On the secular use of church buildings, see for example, R.N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 257-8; Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, p. 53.

93 Riley, ed., 'Mss. of the Corporation of Rye', p. 536.

94 *A Calendar of the White and Black Books of the Cinque Ports*, pp. 204, 206, 208, 209-10. This was probably William Brekynden (III).

two years' rent of £4, then William would make full and sure estate in the property to John.[95] In itself this does not prove that Brekynden was using the chapel as his court, as many bonds were made in church buildings or in cemetaries in this period without any such intention. Nevertheless, William Brekynden's unauthorized court may be an example of the way in which powerful local men could capitalize on strengthening local identity at Small Hythe, at the expense of the privileges of Tenterden town.

The pattern of bequests

Not all of the wills made by inhabitants of Small Hythe are readily distinguishable from those made by individuals who lived either in Tenterden town or other smaller settlements in the parish. Fortunately, from 1501 if a testator was resident locally then this tended to be indicated in the opening clause of his or her testament. In one instance this occurred before 1501. All told, twenty-seven wills carry the formula: "I XXX of Small Hythe in the parish of Tenterden", with some insignificant variations in wording.[96] This leaves us with the task of identifying the remaining Small Hythe testators. That is, all but one of those who wrote their wills before 1501, and a number who did so after this date but omitted to mention that they lived locally. Both Agnes and Joan Brekynden fall into this last category, for example.[97]

In many cases, by cross-referencing the wills and systematically searching the deed materials and other sources, Small Hythe testators have clearly emerged from their counterparts elsewhere in the parish.[98] For example, John Davy made his will in 1467,

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95 CKS: U410/T21. Italics my own.

96 John Ingram, 1474, CKS: PRC 17/2/342 (indicated in the opening of the last will, rather than the testament); William Davy, 1501, CKS: PRC 17/8/221; William Jamyn, 1501, CKS: PRC 17/8/199; John Brekynden (II), 1502, CKS: PRC 17/8/281; John Jacob, 1503, CKS: PRC 17/8/271; Juliana Brekynden, 1503, CKS: PRC 17/9/222; Anne Dowle, 1503, CKS: PRC 17/9/10; Peter Andrewe, 1504, CKS: PRC 17/9/79; Richard Figge, 1506, CKS: PRC 17/10/119; John Jamyn, 1506, CKS: PRC 17/9/237; John Hoore, 1509, CKS: PRC 17/11/306; John Donet, 1516, CKS: PRC 17/12/566; Robert Brekynden (II), 1517, CKS: PRC 17/13/263; William Beche, 1518, CKS: PRC 17/14/50; Thomas Lawles, 1520, CKS: PRC 17/14/110; Giles Fordman, 1522, CKS: PRC 17/14/337; Margaret Pellond, widow, 1523, CKS: PRC 17/16/179; John Braynford, 1523, CKS: PRC 17/16/26; James Oldam, priest, 1523, CKS: PRC 17/16/53; John Brekynden (III), 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/207; John Wayte, 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/49; John Freyman, 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/74; Garard Beringham, 1527, CKS: PRC 17/18/28; William Blossom, 1527, CKS: PRC 17/17/269; George Harryson, 1527, CKS: PRC 17/17/334; James Tanner, 1529, CKS: PRC 17/18/185; William Carpynter, 1530, PRO: P.C.C. 20 Jankyn, fol. 154.

97 1507, CKS: PRC 17/9/321; 1528, CKS: PRC 17/18/158.

98 The deeds are particularly useful because of their references to the dens upon which messuages, gardens, lands and other property lay, as well as containing frequent references to lands or houses "at Small Hythe", or to individuals as being "of Small Hythe". Last wills also sometimes mention dens. By using the 6" Ordnance Survey maps (Kent Sheets: lxxi, S.E. (71); lxxii, S.W. (72); lxxi, N.E. (71); lxxix, N.E. (79); lxxx, N.W. (80) in combination with J.K. Wallenberg's, *The Place-Names of Kent* (1934), and *Kentish Place-Names* (1931), and by looking for clues as to the location of dens in the deeds

leaving 20s 8d for a temporary chantry for a quarter of a year in the chapel of St. John the Baptist. Bequests to the chapel, have not however, been used as evidence for local residence. Instead, independent indications have been sought. So, John Davy, devised two messuages situated at Small Hythe in his last will; some time before 1462 he had jointly held a messuage and garden at Small Hythe, on the den of Ekre; one of his four sons identified himself in his will of 1501 as a resident of Small Hythe, and another two almost certainly lived there.[99] In John Davy's case, there is more than enough evidence to show that he lived at Small Hythe, and including him, seventeen testators qualify as easily identifiable inhabitants.[100]

Another thirteen testators can with reasonable certainty be established as inhabitants.[101] For example, in her will of 1490, in return for 5 marks paid by the chapel wardens to her feoffees and half a year's chantry in the chapel, Joan Turnor enfeoffed the chapel wardens or other good men of the street of Small Hythe in a piece of land called Petfeld which probably lay in or near to Small Hythe, to the use of the chapel. Together with her husband Hewe, Robert Brekynden acted as executor, and he was also one of her feoffees with Robert Davy, William Beche and Stephen Blossom - all Small Hythe men. Two of these were also her witnesses, along with another local man, William Newlond, John Hychecoke, vicar of Tenterden, and Sir John, the local chaplain. It is reasonable to assume that Joan resided at Small Hythe.[102]

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and other sources, it has been possible to identify those which lay at, or within a mile of Small Hythe. These alone have been used to locate testators and their property and they are as follows: Ashenden, Dumborne, Ekre, Emelisham, Hawkherst, Marsham and Queryncote. See also, Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, chs. 1, 3, 7, 8, 9.

99 John Davy, 1467, PRO: P.C.C. 25 Godyn, fol. 193. CKS: U442/T99; William Davy, Small Hythe, 1501, CKS: PRC 17/8/221; Thomas Davy senior, 1483, CKS: PRC 17/3/498; Robert Davy, 1494, CKS: PRC 17/6/110.

100 William Bate, 1463, CKS: PRC 17/1/628; Thomas Gerves, 1464, CKS: PRC 17/1/97; Robert Ponte, 1465, CKS: PRC 17/1/170; John Davy, 1467, PRO: P.C.C., 25 Godyn, fol. 193v.; Robert Brekynden (I) senior, 1483, CKS: PRC 17/3/450; Thomas Davy senior, 1483, CKS: PRC 17/3/498; Nicholas Assherynden, 1484, CKS: PRC 16/1/1; Stephen Jamyn, 1487, CKS: PRC 17/4/127; Stephen Assherynden, 1491, CKS: PRC 17/5/275; Robert Davy, 1494, CKS: PRC 17/6/110; Agnes Brekynden, 1507, CKS: PRC 17/9/321; Joan Davy, 1509, CKS: PRC 17/11/48; William Newlond, 1510, CKS: PRC 17/11/188; Laurence Felip, 1510, CKS: PRC 32/10/124; Stephen Blossom, 1522, CKS: PRC 17/15/128; Joan Brekynden, 1528, CKS: PRC 17/18/158; Lore Blossom, widow, 1532, CKS: PRC 17/19/365.

101 John Godday, 1471, CKS: PRC 17/2/66; Stephen Donet, 1477, CKS: PRC 17/3/184; Richard Davy, 1480, CKS: PRC 17/3/365; Thomas Chapman, 1487, CKS: PRC 17/5/9; Joan Chapman widow, 1488, CKS: PRC 17/5/76; Joan Turnor wife of Hewe Turnor, 1490, CKS: PRC 17/5/310; John Assherynden sen., 1504, CKS: PRC 17/9/137; Thomas Weste, 1521, CKS: PRC 17/14/304; Joan Weste, widow, 1521, CKS: PRC 17/15/15; Agnes Grenestrete, 1523, CKS: PRC 17/16/25; Robert Hovynden, 1527, CKS: PRC 17/17/324; Robert Assherynden, 1527, CKS: PRC 17/17/277; Thomas Assherynden, 1533, CKS: PRC 17/19/358.

102 The presence of a Small Hythe priest during the making of a will does not however, prove that it was made at Small Hythe. For instance, local priests witnessed 12 out of 27 - just under half - of those wills which record Small Hythe residence in their opening clauses. They were, it seems, occasionally present when wills were written by testators who lived elsewhere in the parish. This said, only another 19 witness lists, in over 200 remaining Tenterden wills, carry the names of Small Hythe priests. What is more, two of these were clerical wills and from independent evidence, it appears that another 7 were

Lastly, there are eight individuals for whom there is less conclusive evidence that they were inhabitants, but who are nevertheless more satisfactorily placed at Small Hythe than anywhere else in the parish.[103] One of these was Philip Blossom, who in his will of 1471 made bequests to the chapel.[104] There is only one other reference to Philip, but this is suggestive: in John Davy's will of 1467, lands are mentioned which were next to the lands of "Philip Blomssom (*sic*)", and it has been established already, that Davy lived and held lands in and around Small Hythe.[105] In addition, Philip may have been the father of Stephen Blossom, one of his executors who probably lived at Small Hythe. This also applies to William Blossom, who was possibly one of Philip's sons.[106] These pieces of evidence do not prove, but they do suggest that Philip, like his sons or kinsmen after him, dwelt in the township.

These three groups amount to thirty-nine testators, which when added to the twenty-seven whose wills tell us that they lived at Small Hythe, produce a total of sixty-six individuals. Of course this is not to say that none have escaped unnoticed. However, judging by the number which have been identified and what is known about the size of Small Hythe's population in relation to the parish as a whole, perhaps only a handful remain hidden.[107]

Having isolated the Small Hythe wills, it is possible to chart the geographical pattern of bequests to the chapel of St. John the Baptist. Forty Tenterden testators made bequests to the chapel between 1467 and 1535, and thirty-seven of these lived in, or near to Small Hythe.[108] Of the three who did not, one was John Morer (or Moeer), vicar of Tenterden,

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more than likely made by inhabitants of Small Hythe. In addition, neither does the presence of a Small Hythe priest at the making of a will, appear to have increased the likelihood of the testator making a bequest to the chapel. Nine out of the 20 Small Hythe testators who made their wills under the eye of a local chaplain, did not remember the chapel in their bequests. This can be compared to the 20 Small Hythe testators who failed to support their chapel, out of the 46 who wrote their wills seemingly without the influence of local chaplains. This suggests that the presence of chaplains had little influence over whether or not local residents remembered the chapel in their wills.

103 Thomas Franke, 1464, CKS: PRC 17/1/99; Philip Blossom, 1471, CKS: PRC 17/2/54; Stephen Jan, 1471, CKS: PRC 17/2/131; William Crotehole, 1488, CKS: PRC 17/5/77; Philip Jan, 1491, CKS: PRC 32/3/303; Richard Jan, 1495, CKS: PRC 17/6/133; John Fletcher, 1510, CKS: PRC 17/17/20; John Pellond, 1511, CKS: PRC 32/10/154; John Hammond, 1525, CKS: PRC 17/17/71.

104 CKS: PRC 17/2/54.

105 PRO: P.C.C., 25 Godyn, fol. 193v.

106 1522, CKS: PRC 17/15/128; U455/T84; Lore Blossom, 1532, CKS: PRC 17/19/365; 1527, PRC 17/17/269.

107 See n.45 above.

108 All but two of the 37 lived at Small Hythe itself. The exceptions are Nicholas and Stephen Assherynden, who dwelt at Ashenden, which lies about three quarters of a mile north of Small Hythe chapel (1484, CKS: PRC 16/1/1; 1491, CKS: PRC 17/5/275). The rest are as follows: William Bate, 1463, CKS: PRC 17/1/268; Thomas Gerves, 1464, CKS: PRC 17/1/97; Thomas Franke, 1464, CKS: PRC 17/1/99; Robert Ponte, 1465, CKS: PRC 17/1/170; John Davy, 1467, PRO: P.C.C., 25 Godyn, fol. 193v.; Philip Blossom, 1471, CKS: PRC 17/2/54; John Godday, 1471, CKS: PRC 17/2/66; Stephen Jan, 1471, CKS: PRC 17/2/131; John Ingram, 1474, CKS: PRC 17/2/342; Richard Davy, 1480, CKS: PRC

whose reasons for remembering the chapel in his will should be judged differently from those of lay testators.[109] The vast majority of bequests were made by individuals and families who lived and died within a mile of the chapel.

Local loyalty to the almost ubiquitous sub-parochial chapels of late medieval England has been well documented.[110] Before the Black Death, Kent's five hundred parishes contained an estimated three hundred chapels in addition to their parish churches.[111] This present exploration, may however, represent the first investigation of the geographical pattern of patronage of one these chapels, which in this case was intensely local. It is of course to be expected that a chapel was supported predominantly by those who made use of it. What is more remarkable is not so much the fact that the chapel was almost entirely maintained by the people of Small Hythe, but its near universal failure to have an impact on the testamentary priorities of other parishioners. This may in some small part, have been because the people and clergy of Tenterden town would probably have preferred those on the extremity of the parish to throw in their lot with their fellow parishioners at St. Mildred's. However, it would not do to over-dramatize this, as a formal relationship was worked out between the two worshipping communities by 1509. The devotional framework of cults and services at St. Mildred's was probably adequate enough for testators without them giving to Small Hythe chapel, however this does not explain why the godly residents of Tenterden town neglected to support religious provision for less fortunate parishioners. A more subtle explanation is that this pattern of patronage was rooted in customs deriving from an awareness of the territorial and geographical boundaries which defined Small Hythe as a self-conscious

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17/3/365; Robert Brekynden (I) senior, 1483, CKS: PRC 17/3/450; Thomas Davy senior, 1483, CKS: PRC 17/3/498; Joan Chapman widow, 1488, CKS: PRC 17/5/76; Joan Turnor wife of Hewe Turnor, 1490, CKS: PRC 17/5/310; William Davy, 1501, CKS: PRC 17/8/221; William Jamyn, 1501, CKS: PRC 17/8/199; John Jacob, 1503, CKS: PRC 17/8/271; Peter Andrewe, 1504, CKS: PRC 17/9/79; Richard Figge, 1506, CKS: PRC 17/10/119; Agnes Brekynden, 1507, CKS: PRC 17/9/321; John Hoore, 1509, CKS: PRC 17/11/306; John Fletcher, 1510, CKS: PRC 17/17/20; William Newlond, 1510, CKS: PRC 17/11/188; John Donet, 1516, CKS: PRC 17/12/566; Robert Brekynden (II), 1517, CKS: PRC 17/13/263; Joan Weste, widow, 1521, CKS: PRC 17/15/15; Agnes Grenestrete, 1523, CKS: PRC 17/16/25; Margaret Pellond widow, 1523, CKS: PRC 17/16/179; John Brekynden (III), 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/207; John Wayte, 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/49; Garard Beringham, 1527, CKS: PRC 17/18/28; William Blossom, 1527, CKS: PRC 17/17/269; George Harryson, 1527, CKS: PRC 17/17/334; Robert Hovynden, 1527, CKS: PRC 17/17/324; Lore Blossom widow, 1532, CKS: PRC 17/19/365.

109 PRO: P.C.C., 20 Milles, fols. 161v.-162v. The other two were, Moyse Pellond (1519, CKS: PRC 17/14/47) and John Tyler (1503, CKS: PRC 17/9/211). Although Moyse Pellond does not appear to have been a local resident, some of his kinsfolk were: John Pellond, 1511, CKS: PRC 32/10/154; Margaret Pellond, widow, 1523, CKS: PRC 17/16/179.

110 The most recent survey that I know of is Rosser's 'Parochial conformity', pp. 173-189. See also, Tupling, 'Parishes and chapelries', pp. 1-16; Owen, *Church and Society*, pp. 5-6, 8, 10-12, 19, 99-100, 134, 140.; *idem.*, 'Medieval chapels in Lincolnshire', *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*, x (1975), pp. 15-22; C. Kitching, 'Church and chapelry in sixteenth century England', *SCH*, xvi (1979), pp. 279-90; Swanson, *Church and Society*, pp. 256, 259; Brown, *Popular Piety*, pp. 68-77; Palliser, 'Parish in perspective', p. 10.

111 Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, pp. 184, 205-6.

community. In other words, it was not customary for an inhabitant of Tenterden town to interfere in, or even contribute to, the maintenance of religion at Small Hythe.

Whatever its causes, it is difficult to reconcile this pattern with Gervase Rosser's suggestion that the driving force behind the "elevation in status of some anciently venerated site" or the acquisition of a wholly new local chapel, was the desire for "a diversification and enrichment of opportunities to exercise a degree of choice in religious behaviour".[112] If Small Hythe chapel was founded for these reasons, then it was on the whole, only the local inhabitants who took advantage of the choices which it offered. Meanwhile, the rest of the parish seems to have remained largely unaware of this opportunity for diversification in religious affiliation.[113] As Rosser rightly stresses, there were other reasons for the existence of chapels. These were to do with the practicalities of attending a mother church situated some miles from home, the veneration given to ancient holy sites, and the need to form and express emerging local identities.[114] These factors seem to have provided the rationale for a chapel at Small Hythe, rather than aspirations for greater choice in religious observance. When seen in their proper material context, at least some of the new chapels of the later middle ages speak less of "an increasingly 'natural' (and by implication inevitable) lay control over church affairs" than the fluctuating pattern of people and wealth across the landscape.[115]

The story of Small Hythe chapel has implications for parallel examples of new or enhanced chapels in the locality and in late medieval Kent as a whole. At Reading Street in the south east corner of the Hundred of Tenterden but within the parish of Ebony, a new chapel appears to have been built by the late fifteenth century. Although Ebony already had its own large parish Church of St. Mary on the island of Chapel Bank, because the Rother separated it from the inhabitants of Reading Street, they presumably felt it necessary to build a convenient local chapel, which in relation to the river, would have been in a very similar position as the chapel at Small Hythe. Bequests in the Ebony wills to this new foundation date from 1466 to 1533 and then disappear. Some of the testators who gave to their local chapel, like those at Small Hythe, also made bequests to St. Mary's. The chronology of references to Reading Street chapel, and the little that is known about ship-building and river-trade at Reading Street all suggest that it arose out

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112 Rosser, 'Parochial conformity', pp. 176, 182-3.

113 In contrast, see Rosser, 'Parochial Conformity', pp. 179-80, for an example of mutual support between two sub-parochial communities of one another's religious foundations which had rival claims to parochial status. However, both parties were careful to emphasise the voluntary nature of their gifts, thereby underlining that by so doing they were not acknowledging each other's claims - a point which Rosser fails to mention.

114 Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, p. 123. See also, *ibid.*, p. 174, n.141, for Blickle's assertion that "communal endowments always have the parallel purpose of elevating the sacral atttibutes of the political community".

115 For the citation, see Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, p. 182.

of similar economic developments as the chapel of St. John the Baptist.[116] More dramatically, in Gravesend, a chapel appears to have been built from the 1450s in the increasingly economically important and populous river-side settlement on the northern edge of the parish where it meets the Thames. The parish Church of St. Mary lay a mile inland, and after the 1490s, apart from those for burial, it received no more bequests. By the late sixteenth century, the chapel of ease, dedicated to St George had completely superceded the older foundation.[117] The chapel of St. John the Baptist at New Hythe on the Medway (a chapel of ease, or lacking parochial rights like the one at Small Hythe), which was planted from the Church of St. James in East Malling Parish, may have had similar origins.[118]

Testamentary strategies

In the last chapter it was suggested that the Brekynden family's attitudes to their parish church vis-à-vis Small Hythe chapel changed over the period. To summarise, between the early 1480s and some time in the first decade of the sixteenth century, the focus of their testamentary bequests, and perhaps also their involvement in parochial office, shifted from the parish church to the chapel. Whilst they maintained the minimum of expected commitment to St. Mildred's, increasingly, their interests, expressed in gifts to the chapel, lay closer to home, and they did not make a single recorded voluntary bequest to their parish church for five decades. To what degree was this a wider phenomenon among Small Hythe families and therefore a possible source of financial difficulty for St. Mildred's? If the Brekyndens are indicative of a general trend, then did this give rise to any significant conflict of interests between on the one hand the incumbents and parishioners of Tenterden, and on the other, the residents and chaplains of Small Hythe?[119] Can any tension, arising out of a sense of obligation to both of these

116 Sir John Winnifrith, 'The Medieval Church of St. Mary, Ebony, and its Successors', *Arch. Cant.*, c (1985), pp. 159, 162-3.

117 Paul Lee, 'Parish settlement, church-building and traditional religion in late medieval and early Tudor Gravesend', (unpublished paper). I would like to thank Paul Lee for allowing me to read and make use of his preliminary findings on these developments at Gravesend, which form part of his doctoral work on piety in west Kent.

118 Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, p. 213, map. Tupling has noted the links between chapel foundation and the growth of population, wealth and industry in the countryside in late medieval and Tudor Lancashire: *idem.*, 'Parishes and chapelries', p. 9. See also, Kitching, 'Church and Chapelry', p. 279, who notes the multiplication of chapelries in areas of rapidly expanding population in the early sixteenth century.

119 Kitching remarks that "the creation of any sort of chapel threatened the integrity of the parish, not only as a worshipping community but also as a viable economic unit": *idem*, 'Church and Chapelry', p. 281. For general comments on, and examples of the strained relationship between parishes and chapelries, see Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, pp. 171-9.

religious foundations be seen in the way the inhabitants of Small Hythe made their wills, and if so, how did they resolve this, if at all?

Twenty-nine out of thirty-seven of the Small Hythe testators who gave to their chapel, also made bequests to their parish church.[120] This concurs with Rosser's assertion that the foundation of a local chapel did not involve "wholesale secession from the parish". Rather than forsake their mother church, the inhabitants of Small Hythe, perhaps more than any other group within the parish, enjoyed the diversity offered by a reasonably flexible parochial system.[121] In this context the Brekyndens emerge as unusual for their increasingly single-minded approach to testamentary giving.

Notwithstanding Chapter Two, which demonstrated how qualitative analysis often reveals where quantitative methods obscure, on the way to a better understanding of the quality of Small Hythe piety, it is necessary here to resort to a more quantitative approach. Comparison of the amounts of money, land and goods which individuals left to each institution reveals that the distribution of resources at death between church and chapel was rarely equal and followed an overall trend. Sixteen of the twenty-nine favoured their chapel over their parish church, two left exactly the same to both and eleven gave most to St. Mildred's. Of those who gave more to the chapel, nine of them made only cash bequests. So, for example, in 1527, on the one hand George Harryson bequeathed 3s 4d to Small Hythe chapel, another 3s 4d to the light of St. Barbara within, and on the other, left 8d to the maintenance of the Jesus Mass in St. Mildred's.[122]

Eight testators permanently endowed their chapel with lands at the same time as making cash bequests. Joan Turnor's endowment in 1490 provides the clearest indication of the sorts of sums of money these grants may have been equivalent to. Effectively, she sold a piece of land to the chapel and ordered that the proceeds be used to pay for a temporary chantry therein. The land probably had a market value of at least the 5 marks (£3 6s 8d.) paid for it by the wardens. The other endowments comprised two pieces of land, a barn and two gardens; two acres of marsh land; a garden; four acres of marsh land; a tenement; and an unspecified parcel of lands and tenements at Small Hythe.[123] In all eight cases it is likely that these endowments were intended to express a greater

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120 Included, are gifts to the upkeep and elaboration of buildings, for ornaments and lights, for masses, obits and chantries which are specifically requested to be conducted at either place, or which are known to have been exclusive to one or the other, and gifts simply "to the use of" or "to the work of" the church or chapel. All reversionary bequests are also included. Payments for tithes forgotten are *not* counted as voluntary gifts to the parish church.

121 Rosser, 'Parochial conformity', pp. 176 and *passim*.

122 CKS: PRC 17/17/334. Nicholas Assherynden, however, established a legacy of 20d a year for twenty years from a piece of land: CKS: PRC 16/1/1.

123 Joan Turnor, 1490, CKS: PRC 17/5/310. The others are: Robert Ponte, 1465, CKS: PRC 17/1/170; John Ingram, 1474, CKS: PRC 17/2/342; William Davy, 1501, CKS: PRC 17/8/221; William Jamyn, 1501, CKS: PRC 17/8/199; John Hoore, 1509, CKS: PRC 17/11/306; John Wayte, 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/49.

material commitment to the chapel of St. John the Baptist than to St. Mildred's, even when quite large sums of money were bequeathed to the parish church. The arrangements probably provided a way of expressing affiliation to both the chapel and St. Mildred's, by leaving enough cash available to give to the latter, while alienating lands in perpetuity to the former. For example, in 1501, William Jamyn devised four acres of marsh to the use of the chapel, and also left the considerable sum of 40s to purchase a new chalice for St. Mildred's.[124] All eight wills took this approach, leaving lands (and usually also cash) to the chapel and money to the parish church. Only two Small Hythe wills contain arrangements for lands to go to the use of the chapel, and do not contain cash bequests to St. Mildred's, and in both cases the arrangements were only to come into effect in the event of an heir not inheriting.[125]

Eight out of a total of sixty-six Small Hythe testators gave only to their chapel. Some of these, like Agnes Brekynden or the widow, Joan Chapman confined their gifts to cash, leaving 3s 4d and 4d respectively. Others, such as John Jacob and Margaret Pellond failed to give money to either institution, but favoured their local place of worship with bequests of goods or church ornaments. It should be remembered that three of these eight wills were made by members of the Brekynden family. As a family, they alone produced more than one will containing gifts to the chapel and not to St. Mildred's.[126]

The Small Hythe residents who remembered St. Mildred's without leaving anything to their chapel, also numbered eight, illustrating how when faced with a choice, some testators decided for their parish church, and some for their chapel. In fact, exactly the same number of testators (twenty-nine, or 44 per cent) failed to give to the chapel as those who did not remember St. Mildred's. These can be compared with the sixty-one out of 196 (31 per cent) wills made by parishioners who did not live at Small Hythe which do not contain specific bequests to the church. The eight Small Hythe testators who gave only to their chapel are almost wholly responsible for the overall lower level of support of the parish church in wills made at Small Hythe.

The inhabitants of Small Hythe were it seems, faced with more choices when making their wills than most of their fellow parishioners. Some appear to have made

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124 CKS: PRC 17/8/199.

125 John Brekynden (III), 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/207; William Blossom, 1527, CKS: PRC 17/17/269. One resident, Robert Ponte, endowed the chapel with the proceeds in perpetuity from lands and a barn, and ordered that after the death of his sister his messuage in Small Hythe was to be sold and the profit given to St. Mildred's in four parts: 1465, CKS: PRC 17/1/170.

126 Joan Chapman, widow, 1488, CKS. PRC 17/5/76; John Jacob, 1503, CKS: PRC 17/8/271; Richard Figge, 1506, CKS: PRC 17/10/119; Agnes Brekynden, 1507, CKS: PRC 17/9/321; Robert Brekynden (II), 1517, CKS: PRC 17/13/263; Margaret Pellond, widow, 1523, CKS: PRC 17/16/179; John Brekynden (III), 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/207; William Blossom, 1527, CKS: PRC 17/17/269 (who, admittedly, requested burial within St. Mildred's). In addition, outside the will sample: Agnes Broke widow, 1536, CKS: PRC 17/20/235.

every effort to balance their gifts between locality and parish, others opted for one or the other. What factors caused individual testators to make the decisions they did, and was there any tension in the way they apportioned their giving between competing causes? An answer can be arrived at by comparing the average amounts given to religious concerns in different categories of wills.[127] The 196 will-making parishioners who did not live at Small Hythe left an average of £3 1s 9d in religious bequests.[128] This may be compared to an average of only £2 1s 9d (or median of 16s 2d) left by Small Hythe testators. However, the twenty-nine who gave to both their chapel and their parish church, apportioned on average, a much higher £3 10s 3d (or median of 40s). Those who remembered both their local and their parochial place of worship, were therefore, the relatively wealthy, and/or those prepared or able to devote reasonably large sums to strictly religious obligations.

This is confirmed by the relatively small amounts of money left for religious purposes by those sixteen Small Hythe testators who only remembered either their chapel or their church. On average they devoted only £1 2s to religious concerns. Some of course gave more than others, and limitations on available resources at death seem to have been the deciding factor for a number. For example, in 1494 Robert Davy left 12d to the light of the Blessed Virgin Mary in St. Mildred's, 4d to each of his unspecified godchildren, and 20d for forgotten tithes. He also left household goods to his children and devised lands and tenements, including a beer-house to his sons.[129] Richard Figge does not appear to have had the necessary cash when he made his will, to fulfil his familial and religious obligations, and so stipulated that after his wife's death, his son John was to buy his lands and tenements for 40s and pay a total of 90s to his three daughters' dowries, 6s 8d to Small Hythe chapel, and 20d to the high altar at Tenterden for tithes forgotten. Margaret Pellond left what were presumably some of her most personal and treasured belongings to the chapel, whilst using what little available cash she had to pay 4d for tithes owing and 4d to each of her godchildren.[130] Limitations on disposable wealth meant that these testators had to make hard choices, rather than having the luxury of spreading their gifts between both chapel and parish church.

That decisions were generally quickened only by a dearth of available liquid capital at death, rather than any real poverty, is shown by the case of William Blossom, whose bequests amounted to 3s 4d for his forgotten tithes (a considerable amount for

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127 Quantifiable cash bequests for masses, prayers, chantries, to lights, images, churches, church personel, religious houses, charitable gifts to the poor and for public works such as repairs to highways have all been included. Reversionary bequests are excluded.

128 Not including Sir John Guldeford's will (PRO: P C.C., 29 Dogett, fol. 223) which is very much wealthier than any other made in Tenterden, and so would have had the effect of artificially inflating the average.

129 CKS: PRC 17/6/110.

130 CKS: PRC 17/5/76; PRC 17/10/119; PRC 17 16/179.

this purpose) and the same to the chapel of St. John the Baptist, and yet he requested burial within the parish church - a privilege enjoyed only by the relatively wealthy. His firm support of the chapel is revealed by the stipulation in his last will that if his son failed to inherit his lands and tenements, then a parcel of land worth 6s 8d a year was to go to the use of the chapel "..for evermore yn suche manner and forme as the other land now perteynyng to the said chapell doth".[131] Others appear to have made their choices under different sorts of pressures. Having passed her unused dowry back to her family, Agnes Brekynden presumably felt that the little she had left herself for the health of her soul would be better employed solely in the chapel, rather than divided between there and the parish church. An even greater element of choice appears to have been exercised by Robert Brekynden (III), who could have afforded to give to St. Mildred's, and yet within the constraints imposed by obligations to family and kin, opted to help rebuild the recently destroyed chapel and priest's house, and to avail himself of new forms of intercession.[132] Laurence Felip gave 6s 8d to the purchasing of a pair of organs for St. Mildred's, and a further 60s to his burial, monthly and yearly commemorations without specifying where these were to be performed. In addition, he had to provide for his daughter, leaving 10 marks for her dowry.[133]

Whether prior obligations or limitations on disposable resources created a focused approach to giving, an element of choice never appears to have been absent. Also helping to force choices however, was a preference for giving a certain amount to one religious foundation, rather than fractions of that amount to a number. This may well have been to do with the practicalities of providing enough to procure a certain number of masses and prayers, or to make a significant contribution to church fabric or accoutrements - more could be achieved from a concentrated larger amount than dispersed smaller sums. However, this attitude may have stemmed from a value system which one might term materialistic. That is, gifts were not so much esteemed for their functional potential, as they were for their objective monetary worth. Some testators may have felt embarrassed to leave small amounts and so preferred to lump their piety together into single, more impressive gestures.[134]

Over half of the Small Hythe testators did not have the luxury of spreading their testamentary piety between the two competing institutions of chapel and parish church.

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131 For a recent case-study of the social stratification of space in burial, see Robert Dinn, "Monuments Answerable to Mens Worth': Burial Patterns, Social Status and Gender in Late Medieval Bury St. Edmunds', *JEH*, xxxxvi (1995), pp. 237-55. CKS: PRC 17/17/269.

132 See Chapter Two.

133 1510, CKS: PRC 32/10/124.

134 There were outlets for small gifts at Tenterden, such as lights and the Jesus Mass, but on the whole, bequests to church fabric or for divine service had a minimum limit. For comments on the recording of small gifts on parish bede-rolls, see Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 334-5. It is possible that the shortage in small coins in this period was partly to blame: Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, p. 83.

However, a small minority of these deliberately chose to support one or the other, even when they had the available resources to make respectable bequests to both. Diversity in testamentary giving appears to have been available only to the relatively wealthy with plenty of disposable resources, or to those not over-pressed by other concerns. As a result, less than half of the residents of Small Hythe took advantage of parochial diversity.[135] What appears to have been deeply entrenched convention ensured that only a handful of people who lived outside Small Hythe did. This is an important qualification of the idea that an expanding free-market in piety lay behind and resulted from the proliferation of sub-parochial chapels.[136]

There was a general trend in the level of patronage of the chapel of St. John the Baptist. (See Table 3.1) In the 1460s three out of five residents favoured the chapel. During the 1470s and 1480s however, nine out of twelve individuals gave priority to St. Mildred's. From then until 1509 there was a marked change, with ten out of twenty putting the chapel first, four of these giving to it alone. During these twenty or so years, only one individual favoured St. Mildred's. This was a time when the chapel loomed large in the pious obligations of the inhabitants of Small Hythe, although, it must be said, this was by no means to the exclusion of the parish church. For the majority, there is no evidence to suggest that greater interest in the chapel went hand in hand with decreasing commitment to St. Mildred's. The increasing strength of affiliation to the chapel during these years concords with the development of Brekynden testamentary giving outlined in the last chapter, and marks a period of time when the chapel grew in importance to the people of Small Hythe, spanning the time before and immediately after the acquisition of the licence for the celebration of divine service there, in 1506 - the culmination of a number of years of lay initiative.

Although the Brekyndens were symptomatic of a radical change in attitude by 1509, in their increasingly undivided loyalty to the chapel as the sixteenth century progressed, they were somewhat exceptional. This is because from 1510 to 1535 there was a reversal of priorities in the Small Hythe wills, with the relatively distant parish church remaining an essential part of religious life. Over these years only eight out of thirty testators favoured their chapel over St. Mildred's, whereas ten gave priority to the latter. Given that the chapel and priest's house were destroyed by fire in 1514, and that the task of rebuilding them lay with the people of Small Hythe, it is surprising that despite some visible efforts in the rebuilding process, testamentary gifts to the chapel

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135 The people of Small Hythe were no more conscientious in supporting their institutions than other parishioners. 21 out of 66, or 32 per cent of testators gave to neither St. Mildred's nor the chapel of St. John the Baptist. This was about the same proportion as the 61 out of 196, or 31 per cent of parishioners who lived outside Small Hythe and failed to specifically support a parochial institution.

136 Rosser, 'Parochial conformity', *passim*.

Table 3.1 *Bequests by Small Hythe residents*

Date	Name	SHC	MI	Religious bequests in pence	Priority given to:
1463	Bate, William	■	■	320	SHC
1464	Gerves, Thomas	▒	■	12	MI
1464	Franke, Thomas	■	■	172	SHC
1465	Ponte, Robert	■	■	12	SHC (L)
1467	Davy, John	■	■	3133	MI
1471	Blossom, Philip	▒	▒	0	SHC
1471	Godday, John	▒	▒	0	MI
1471	Jan, Stephen	▒	▒	0	MI
1474	Ingram, John	■	■	244	SHC (L)
1477	Donet, Stephen		■	400	MI
1480	Davy, Richard	■	■	80	
1483	Brekynden, Robert sen.	■	■	880	MI (G)
1483	Davy, Thomas	▒	■	60	MI
1484	Assherynden, Nicholas	■	▒	1220	SHC
1487	Chapman, Thomas			1600	
1487	Jamyn, Stephen		■	80	MI
1488	Chapman, Joan wid.	■		4	SHC
1488	Crotehole, William			0	
1490	Turnor, Joan	■	■	1640	SHC (L)
1491	Assherynden, Stephen	■	■	1040	SHC
1491	Jan, Philip			0	
1494	Davy, Robert		■	12	MI
1495	Jan, Richard			0	
1501	Davy, William	■	■	5040	SHC (L)
1501	Jamyn, William	■	■	480	SHC (L)
1502	Brekynden, John			40	
1503	Brekynden, Juliana			0	
1503	Dowle, Anne			560	
1503	Jacob, John	■		400	SHC
1504	Andrewe, Peter	■	■	308	SHC
1504	Assherynden, John			0	
1506	Figge, Richard	■		80	SHC
1506	Jamyn, John			480	
1507	Brekynden, Agnes	■		40	SHC
1509	Davy, Joan			480	
1509	Hoore, John	■	■	60	SHC (L)
1510	Fletcher, John	■	■	1440	MI
1510	Newlond, William	■	■	320	MI
1510	Felip, Laurence		■	800	MI
1511	Pellond, John		■	696	MI
1516	Donet, John	■	■	916	MI
1517	Brekynden, Robert	■		388	SHC
1518	Beche, William		■	560	MI
1520	Lawles, Thomas			0	
1521	Weste, Thomas			0	
1521	Weste, Joan wid.	▒	▒	600	
1522	Blossom, Stephen		▒	80	MI
1522	Fordham, Giles			0	
1523	Braynford, John			0	
1523	Grenestrete, Agnes	■	■	120	MI
1523	Oldham, James priest		■	160	MI
1523	Pellond, Margaret wid.	■		0	SHC (G)
1525	Hammond, John			264	
1526	Brekynden, John	■		480	SHC
1526	Freyman, John			0	
1526	Wayte, John	■	■	2600	SHC (L)
1527	Assherynden, Robert			0	
1527	Beringham, Garard	■	■	944	MI
1527	Blossom, William	■		40	SHC
1527	Harryson, George	■	■	340	SHC
1527	Hovynden, Robert	■	■	1472	SHC
1528	Brekynden, Joan			480	
1529	Tanner, James			216	
1530	Carpynter, William			280	
1532	Blossom, Lore wid.	■	■	900	SHC
1533	Assherynden, Thomas			120	

Key

SHC: Small Hythe Chapel.
MI: St. Mildred's.

■ Bequest of money, goods or lands.

▒ Reversionary gifts.

(L): endowment of or from realty.

(G): Bequests of goods which prioritized one or the other institution.

Note: Amounts given in religious bequests include all religious gifts.

waned in comparison to those to St, Mildred's. However, there appears to have been a degree of recovery in local affiliation from the mid-1520s.

It was only during the temporary phase when the chapel of St. John the Baptist was the foremost priority in the Small Hythe wills, that on average, testators gave more to the chapel than to St. Mildred's. Before the 1490s they left an average of 16s to St. Mildred's. From then until 1509 this fell to 12s 8d. However this was largely to do with a sharp increase in the proportion of testators who gave to neither institution, rather than the growth in patronage of the chapel. Those who did remember St. Mildred's during these years, gave only slightly less than those before 1488. At the same time, fewer testators gave to the chapel from the last decade of the fifteenth century, but this was off-set by a 60 per cent increase in the average amount left to it by those who did. They ensured that giving increased slightly from a mean of 11s 7d 1463-1487, to 14s 9d 1488-1509. The fall in material support of St. Mildred's was it seems, only to a very small extent caused by increased giving to the chapel, and was probably the result of other factors, which may have had an effect on parish-wide testamentary practice.[137] Testamentary giving to St. Mildred's stayed low after 1509: on average Small Hythe testators left only 13s 8d to their parish church from then until 1535. But giving to the chapel fell well below this to a mean of 6s 1d over these years, indicating that there was a general slump in patronage of parochial institutions.

The threat of identity

Nonetheless, it appears that at least some of the parishioners of Tenterden perceived Small Hythe chapel to be a threat to the vitality of religious life at St. Mildred's in the early years of the sixteenth century. A series of presentments to archidiaconal visitations, preserved in the clerks' books and visitation acts of the archdeacon's court, Canterbury, reveal that St. Mildred's was in a not unfamiliar state of decay at this time.[138] In 1502, the roof of the chancel of St. Katherine the Virgin was in need of urgent repair. Also, in more than one place the perimeter of the churchyard was not secure and pigs and other animals had strayed in daily to graze, and had even entered the church.[139] Some time between 1501 and 1508, in addition to the problems of maintaining the churchyard, other

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137 Without knowing anything about life-time patronage it is not possible to make any final judgement as to whether or not giving to the chapel damaged parish revenues.

138 For similar cases in neighbouring Wealden, and more distant Kentish parishes, see *Kentish Visitations*, pp. 144, 158, 160, 162, 199, 200, 218-9, 220, 272-5, 283.

139 CCAL: Z.3.2, 1501-8, fol. 136v.

faults were brought to light, such as the fact that the font and "chrysmatory" were unlocked.[140]

In 1507, a presentment was made, touching on some of the above problems as well as some new ones, and making reference to the people of Small Hythe. This has survived in the form of a loose fragment, presumably a rough draft of the kind which would be later copied into the court books:[141]

> Tenterden. The chirche wardens there presente that the high auter chaunsell there is fawte for/
>
> [ ][142]ake of coveryng and also the stone of the gretewyndow is parte brokyn and leke to/
>
> [ ][143]downe with owte a remedy be shortely hadde in the fawte of the parson and patron/
>
> Also they presente that the Sonday westyment/
>
> Also they present that the Antefoners be rente in certen levys and also be in dyverse/
>
> [ ][144] nygh blynde be caduke Inke [145]
>
> Also they presente that the body of chirche is not repeyred for lak of cavyriyng and/
>
> [ ][146] of brokyn glasse wyndey in defawte of all the parishoners there/
>
> Also they present ~~that~~ that the chirche yarde is fawte with the high strete in the/
>
> [ ][147] the parisshoners there
>
> Also they present that chirche yarde is fawte ~~for lak~~ all the west syde in defawte/
>
> [ ] the vycar there as the parisshoners sey/
>
> ~~Also they present that the more parte of the pepill dwellyng in Smaleheth/~~
>
> ~~have commyth nott duly to ther parisshe chirche as ther dute is for lak wherof/~~
>
> ~~the reparations of ther parisshe chirche is na nat~~[148] ~~maynteyned as it hath been acustumed/~~
>
> Also they present a woman callid Annes is Ilnamed and dempt of /

The churchwardens in 1507, William Browne and Edward Felip, were it seems, both Tenterden men, although the latter may have had family connections with Small

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140 CCAL: Z.3.2, fol. 4r.

141 CCAL: Z.3.2, fol. 9r. Much of this manuscript is legible only under ultra-violet light, and even then some of the text was not retrievable. Despite this, the basic sense is clear. In a number of places, from what has gone before it has been possible to fill in some of the lost words without risking any significant distortion of meaning. Where this has been done the words are underlined.

142 Illegible.

143 Illegible.

144 Illegible.

145 "caduke" probably means perished or corrupted, from the Latin *caducus* : James A.H. Murray, ed., *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, vol. ii (Oxford, 1843). In 1508 the parishioners were charged to repair the defective choir books before the next visitation on pain of a fine of 13s 4d: CCAL: Z.3.2, fol. 82v.

146 Illegible.

147 Illegible.

148 "na " and "nat" are separately crossed out and "the wors" is inserted above with a caret.

Hythe.[149] They appear to have tried to draw a link between the problems of maintenance and the alleged non-attendance of the residents of Small Hythe. Why was their claim crossed out? There may, at this time, have been some confusion as to what the precise duties of the people of Small Hythe were to their parish church. It was only a year since the archbishop had licensed the chapel of St. John the Baptist, and the churchwardens, cautious not to ride rough shod over its terms, may for the time being, have been forced to backpedal. Nevertheless, the complaint found its way to the archdeaconry court, fully legible but officially retracted. It is testimony to a belief held by at least some of the parishioners that the inhabitants of Small Hythe had been neglecting their parish church. It is hardly surprising that such feelings arose when they did, towards the end of the period during which testamentary giving to St. Mildred's by residents of Small Hythe, fell by almost a half. If the grumblings of the churchwardens are to be believed then attendance may also have declined, especially since there seems to have been much better provision of services at Small Hythe over these years. Even though lower testamentary giving to St. Mildred's was only to a very small extent caused by increased giving to the chapel, some parishioners at Tenterden burdened with the difficulties of maintaining their parish church, looked on as Small Hythe chapel prospered and jumped to understandable conclusions.

The duties and privileges of the inhabitants of Small Hythe vis-à-vis their parish church do not appear to have been made very clear by the License of 1506. It begins by acknowledging that due to the distance of Small Hythe from St. Mildred's, the condition of the roads, floods (*magnas aquarum inundationes*), the severity of the weather, and sickness and infirmity, the inhabitants and sojourners (*Ipsi Inhabitantes et ibidem Commorantes*)[150] at Small Hythe, were "unable, except at very great danger to themselves" to attend the parish church of Tenterden, "as they ought" and were "bound by law to do". As a result they were "compelled to relinquish altogether those things which have respect to true religion", and even more deplorable, many sick people living

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149 Neither do the two *parochiani* in 1507, John Hogge and Bartholomew Foule appear to have lived at Small Hythe: CCAL: Z.3.2, fol. 55r. Laurence Felip, who died in 1510 (CKS: PRC 32/10/124), was a resident of Small Hythe, but there is no definite link between him and Edward.

150 Distinction is made between the long-term inhabitants and temporary residents of the township, both here, and in the phrase: "*ipsorum ac ceterorum Christianorum fidelium predictorum*", used to describe those who had, and were to maintain the chaplain. In 1549, Small Hythe men told how their "hamelet is scituate harde to the sea coast where there dyvers tymes moche resorte as well of strangers as other the the (sic) Kings subjects", and in the depositions of the same year, George Felip witnessed how the chapel "is a chapel of ease not onely for thinhabitantes ther', but also for all other straungers as watermen, shipwrights and suche other": PRO: Aug. Misc. Books, 114, fols. 139, 140, cited from transcriptions in Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', pp. 154, 156.

there were dying without sacraments and sacramentals (*Sacramenta et Sacramentalia*),[151] "to the grave peril of their souls".[152]

Although this should probably not be taken on face value, it portrays a situation which was neither satisfactory to the people of Small Hythe, nor to the incumbents and parishioners at Tenterden. Moreover, the ambiguous terms of the License failed to provide a clear-cut solution. For instance, it ruled that in addition to divine service,[153] the sacraments and sacramentals were to be ministered to the inhabitants and sojourners there by the chaplain "at least in times of necessity; provided, however, that nothing be done prejudicial to the rights of the rectors and vicars of the parish church or of their successors, and that there be no canonical impediment in the way". At least there could be no misunderstanding about who was responsible for the maintenance of the chaplain and chapel: the residents of Small Hythe "and other faithful Christians", some of whom were already "extending a helping hand towards the maintenance", had sole responsibility, which ensured that the incumbents and parishioners of Tenterden were not additionally burdened. There was however, potential for conflict in the deceptively simple and ultimately naive assertion that chaplains at Small Hythe were to be "chosen by authority of the ordinary or his deputy".[154]

When the Licence is read in conjunction with the archbishop's Ordinance of 1509 - his attempt to put the situation right - the thinly veiled grumblings of 1507 read like a guarded reaction to a deteriorating relationship between the two communities. The ambiguities of the Licence may have actually made things worse, by allowing the chaplain and inhabitants of Small Hythe to disregard what, in the past, had been their duties to the mother church. The Ordinance of 1509 was then, very much a tightening up exercise, setting out on the one hand the rights and duties of the people and chaplain of Small Hythe, and on the other, the privileges of St. Mildred's. It repeated verbatim, much of the Licence, but re-worked the most important section, and inserted a number of

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151 Taylor described this as "a comprehensive expression, without intention of any careful distinction between the two words": 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', p. 143, note. The sacraments referred to here were probably the Eucharist and Extreme Unction. Sacramentals would have included holy water, holy oil and the sign of the cross - all important in rites of the late medieval craft of dying. According to the depositions of 1549, holy bread (the blessed loaf distributed after the mass to the congregation) also appears to have been included in the sacramentals which were administered at Small Hythe: Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', p. 159; see also, F.A. Gasquet, *Parish Life in Medieval England* (London, 1906), pp. 155-8.

152 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 10r., transcribed and translated in Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', pp. 140-1, 143-5 The reasons given in the licence are similar to many given for the establishment of chapelries elsewhere. Kitching, 'Church and Chapelry', pp. 280; Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, p. 167.

153 Divine service (*Divina*), included the celebration of the mass, as well as daily matin and evensong, but the commonest practice in outlying chapels in this period was for mass to be said or sung on Sundays, all feast days and perhaps on Wednesdays and Fridays: Kitching, 'Church and Chapelry', p. 284.

154 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 338v., in Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', p. 144.

much more detailed and specific points which reveal where the areas of conflict may have arisen over the previous three years.[155]

Even greater emphasis was placed upon the responsibilities of the community of Small Hythe for their chapel, which was "to be maintained entirely at the costs and charges of the inhabitants and other faithful Christians". The procedure for appointing the chaplain was clarified: unusually, the inhabitants were to present their choice to the vicar of Tenterden for his approval.[156] If he delayed or refused for more than six days, then they were authorized to present their nominee to the ordinary, and with his approval, their choice would be made to stand. However, according to canon law the chaplain had to take the oath of obedience to the vicar of Tenterden before the latter was obliged to declare his decision. This included a promise that he would neither "prejudice the rights and income of the parish church", nor "encourage, sustain or favour hatred, scandal or gossip against the rector or vicar".[157] The only sacraments to be administered at Small Hythe were Penance and the Eucharist, and then only to the elderly and infirm. Purification of women was allowed in cases of weakness. Only the bodies of lepers, plague victims and the shipwrecked cast up at Small Hythe, were to be buried in the cemetery there.[158] And all this was provided that "no prejudice accrue to the rectors and vicars of the parish church...nor anything to the detriment of the parishioners of Tenterden". A great deal of attention was given to the privileges of the parish church. The inhabitants and sojourners at Small Hythe were to go to St. Mildred's for the sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony, "for all other things" and for the burial of all but those outlined above. On principal feast days, after celebrating mass in the chapel, the chaplain was to be present at high mass at St. Mildred's. The inhabitants of Small Hythe, except the elderly, infirm, pregnant and servants left to look after their houses, were to "go as they have hitherto been wont to the parish church on all festivals". They were to make their offerings at the four principal feasts, and pay any dues such as "le scot" for the building of the church and the fencing of its graveyard, "just as they have been accustomed of old". If they broke, failed to fulfil, or went beyond any of the premises in the Ordinance, then all of the privileges granted to them would be null and void.

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155 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 338v., in Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', pp. 141-3, 145-6. A formally registered 'ordination' which set out the responsibilities of each party was normal procedure in these cases: Kitching, 'Church and Chapelry', p. 282.

156 Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', p. 147; Kumin, *Shaping of a Community*, p. 171.

157 P. Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (London, 1969), p. 26.

158 Principally because it was an important source of revenue, right of burial, was always a closely guarded privilege by parish churches which had subordinate chapels to contend with, and was a common source of conflict. See for example, C. Lutgens, 'The Case of Waghen vs. Sutton: Conflict Over Burial Rights in Late Medieval England', *Medieval Studies*, xxxviii (1976), pp. 145-184; Owen, *Church and Society*, pp. 16; F. Johnson, 'The Chapel of St Clement at Brundall', *Norfolk Archaeology*, xxii (1924-5), pp. 194-205; Kitching, 'Church and Chapelry', p. 283

It is surprising that the archbishop had not followed the usual procedure of strictly safeguarding Tenterden parish church's right to all parochial offerings when he first licensed the chapel.[159] It was clearly felt to be necessary to stress these rights in the Ordinance. They concerned perhaps the most contentious issue which had arisen since 1506 - that of revenue and the maintenance of St. Mildred's. Emphasis was also placed upon St. Mildred's as the primary place for the administration of the sacraments and the celebration of divine office in the parish. This was probably because according to Canon Law the parish church "was the church in which divine office was heard and the sacraments were administered".[160] The parishioners and incumbents of Tenterden and therefore also the archbishop, would have been extremely reluctant to ever allow Small Hythe to claim parochial status.

The Ordinance appears to have had the desired effect. None of the seven archidiaconal visitations of the parish of which there is a record after 1509 (including the extensive presentments to Warham's own visitation of 1511), mention Small Hythe. Neither do any of them reveal problems of maintenance of church fabric at Tenterden.[161] This is not to say that renewed offerings from Small Hythe enabled the churchwardens to do the necessary work - this was probably more a result of redoubled efforts on the part of the people of Tenterden town. To suggest otherwise would be to over-dramatise the events of 1506-9, at the expense of the long-term, and relatively unspectacular difficulties facing the churchwardens and parishioners of St. Mildred's. Equally this does not rule out the likelihood that non-attendance of the parish church increased among Small Hythe residents from the late 1480s and particularly after 1506, and that as the churchwardens so guardedly suggested in 1507, this was doing nothing to alleviate the problems faced by St. Mildred's.

We saw how the Brekyndens appear to have withdrawn from parochial office in the first decade of the sixteenth century. To what extent was this a general phenomenon among Small Hythe families who served as churchwardens, and as *parochiani* to visitations at Tenterden?[162] Until 1505, Small Hythe men appear to have served regularly as parochial

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159 Owen, *Church and Society*, p 16

160 Lutgens, 'Waghen vs Sutton', p 179 The Small Hythe Ordinance conforms to the normal sort of arrangement that was reached between churches and chapelries in this period: Kitching, 'Church and Chapelry', p. 282; Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, pp. 168-9.

161 CCAL: Z.3.3, fol. 15v. (1514), fol. 51v. (1515), fol. 83v. (1516); Z.3.4, fols. 20r., 48v. (1521), fol. 68r. (1522), fols. 94v., 108r. (1523) *Kentish Visitations*, pp. 206-211.

162 Writing on the diocese of Salisbury, Andrew Brown has drawn attention to bishop Grosseteste's measures in 1238/9 to improve the effectiveness of visitations, which included the introduction of the practice of swearing in laymen to make presentments. Brown suggests that this practice had become established by the end of the thirteenth century, and it probably explains the function of *parochiani* at Tenterden: Brown, *Popular Piety*, p. 78; *Councils and Synods with other documents relating to the English Church, II, A.D. 1205-1313*, pt 1, ed. F.M. Powicke and C.R. Cheney, (Oxford, 1964), pp. 261-5; Emma Mason, 'The Role of the English Parishioner, 1100-1500', *JEH*, xxvii (1976), p. 26.

officers. They numbered five out of the ten churchwardens for the years 1498, 1499, 1500, 1502 and 1505, and two of the *parochiani*. After 1505 there was a marked change in the domicile of office-holders. In 1506, 1507, 1508, 1514 and 1515 not one of the churchwardens or *parochiani* was from Small Hythe. In the visitations of 1516 and 1521 Thomas Fordman was sworn in as a *parochianus*. He was possibly of Small Hythe, but there is no proven connection between him and Giles Fordman who was a resident there. In 1522 and 1523 none of the names indicate Small Hythe domicile. However, Thomas Assherynden, who lived near to the township, was a churchwarden in 1527.[163]

Small Hythe men stopped serving as churchwardens or as *parochiani* just at the same time as the Licence for the permanent celebration of divine service was granted to the chapel. The sudden absence of Small Hythe men amongst the church officers at Tenterden, may have been the result of a formal arrangement worked out between the two communities. To begin with, Small Hythe chapel had its own wardens as early as 1490, and although there are indications that this office may not have been continuously filled, they are mentioned in wills in 1501 and 1503. The job of warden may have grown in status after 1506, and so captured the attention of men who had previously served as churchwardens of St. Mildred's.[164] In addition, one of the roles of the Small Hythe men who served as Tenterden churchwardens may have been to negotiate and regulate the duties and privileges of the inhabitants in relation to their chapel. With the setting down in writing of the relationship between church and chapel in 1506 and 1509, it may have been felt that this was no longer necessary. Finally, the office was an onerous task, even though it conferred a certain amount of prestige and appealed to a desire to serve the community.[165] The two mile journey from Small Hythe to St. Mildred's may have tipped the scales against the benefits of service and ensured that the major householders of

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163 CCAL: X 8 2, pt. 2, fol. 13r. (1498); Z.3.2, fol. 41r (1499); Z.3.37, fol. 83r. (1500); Z.3.2, fol. 136v. (1502), fol. 4v (2nd section) (1505), fol 25v. (1506), fol 55r. (1507), fol. 82v. (1508); Z.3.3, fol. 15v. (1514), fol. 51v. (1515), fol. 83v (1516); Z.3.4, fol. 20r. (1521), fol. 68r. (1522), fol. 108r. (1523). Giles Fordman, 1522, CKS: PRC 17 14 337 Thomas Assherynden, churchwarden: CKS: U410/T179.

164 Joan Turnor, 1490, CKS: PRC 17 5 310; William Jamyn, 1501, CKS: PRC 17/8/199; John Tyler, 1503, CKS. PRC 17 9 211. See Owen, *Church and Society*, pp. 93-9, 115-120.

165 The best recent survey, albeit on the early modern period, is Eric Carlson, 'The origins, function, and status of the office of churchwarden, with particular reference to the diocese of Ely', in M. Spufford, ed., *World of Rural Dissenters*, pp. 164-207, which concludes that "the office...was faced by candidates with an understandable mixture of attraction and repulsion" (*ibid.*, p. 191). On the later medieval period, see: Charles Drew, *Early Parochial Organisation in England: The Origins of the Office of Churchwarden* (Borthwick Paper 7, London, 1954); Gasquet, *Parish Life*, ch. 5; Mason, 'Role of the English Parishioner', p. 26 Clive Burgess argues that prior to the Reformation, the office was attractive because it was a burden, with its own pious content: *idem*, "'A Fond Thing Vainly Invented': An Essay on Purgatory and Pious Gesture in Later Medieval England', in Wright, ed., *Parish, Church and People*, p. 78. However, others stress that by the early sixteenth century, the hazards outweighed the benefits: Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People*, p. 152, and Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1975), pp 18, 230.

Small Hythe from now on channelled their pious ambitions into the administration of the chapel of St. John the Baptist.[166]

It is harder to explain the absence of representatives from Small Hythe among the *parochiani* to archidiaconal visitations after 1505. There is no evidence that Small Hythe had its own visitation from this date onwards, and so it should probably be concluded that any presentments concerning the residents or chapel were still dealt with alongside those for the parish as a whole.[167] The apparent lack of involvement in visitations by representatives of Small Hythe from 1505 suggests that attitudes there toward the parish as a whole had been changing for some time, and that the events of 1506 to 1509 hastened the shifting identity of its inhabitants who had begun to consider themselves as much a part of the local community as parishioners of Tenterden. This change notwithstanding, they still remembered St. Mildred's in their wills, and appear to have abided by the premises of the archbishop's Ordinance.

Identity under threat

In 1546, along with all chantries, free chapels, colleges, hospitals, fraternities, guilds and other such institutions, Small Hythe chapel was surveyed and valued by the Commission appointed under the Chantries Act of 14 February of that year.[168] A record of the survey and valuation survives among the Chantry Certificates of Henry VIII.[169] All things being well, endowments provided the chaplain with a stipend of £5 3s 2d, which was just below the maximum - albeit by the 1540s much deflated - wage of 8 marks without food, set by statute in the reign of Henry V, for chaplains with cure of souls.[170] The people of Small Hythe had ensured that their chapel was sufficiently endowed over the years, not allowing the chief symbol of their collective identity to go to ruin.

However, there were greater threats than apathy or decay in the late 1540s. In 1547, shortly after the Edwardian Chantries Act, Small Hythe chapel was seized by the

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166 This is not to suggest that those Small Hythe men who served as churchwardens up to 1505 had no interest in their parish church, or that this interest dissipated after that date. In fact, William Beche, who was churchwarden in 1499 and was sworn in as *parochianus* in 1502, gave only to St. Mildred's in his will: CKS: PRC 17/14/50. Stephen Blossom, *parochianus* in 1505, also failed to remember Small Hythe chapel in his will: 1522, CKS· PRC 17 15 128. We have already seen how inhabitants of Small Hythe continued to support their parish church right up to 1535.

167 Certainly, from 1571 presentments concerning Small Hythe chapel were heard in Archidiaconal visitations of Tenterden, and there is no reason to believe that there had been any change in practice between 1507 and that date: Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', pp. 182-3.

168 See for example Dickens, *English Reformation*, pp 284-94; Kreider, *English Chantries*, pp. 165-208; Kitching, 'Church and Chapelry', *passim*

169 PRO: Chantry Cert., Roll 29, 118, transcribed in Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', p. 151.

170 Heath, *English Parish Clergy*, pp. 22-4.

crown, thus becoming a potential victim of what A.G. Dickens has called the "stupid drafting" of the legislation. It may be of considerable significance that Sir James Hales, a member of the gentry family whose seat had moved from the parish of High Halden to neighbouring Tenterden in the latter half of the fifteenth century, was responsible for this Act.[171] There were several applicants to purchase the chapel, and shortly after March 1549, John Rowland, Page of the Robes to King Edward VI was successful. Rowland planned to have the chapel demolished and it seems, to lease the chaplain's house and the land around it. It appears that since being alienated to the crown, there had been no chaplain at Small Hythe and so the chapel had probably not been used.[172] Not surprisingly the inhabitants were not to take the impending events lying down, and a number of them, on behalf of "all the other inhabitants of the said hamlett" petitioned the Chancellor of the Court of Augmentations.[173]

Four of the petitioners, John Brykenden (V), Peter and Bartholomew Pellond, and Nicholas Beche all belonged to long standing Small Hythe families.[174] Another, William Henden may have been descended from the old Tenterden family of Harrenden, but the rest appear to have been first generation immigrants to Small Hythe, from neighbouring parishes such as Hawkhurst, Cranbrook, Wittersham, Staplehurst, Benenden, Appledore and Woodchurch, as well as further afield.[175] John Brekynden (V) was bailiff of Tenterden in 1548-9, the year of the petition, and so brought a measure of weight to their demands from outside of Small Hythe.[176] Brekynden must have been at least in his forties by this date and it is clear from the depositions later that year, that Bartholomew Pellond was about sixty, and Stephyn Forde, another petitioner was

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171 Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', pp. 150-1; Dickens, *English Reformation*, pp. 284-5, 293-4, esp. 294; Kitching, 'Church and Chapelry', pp. 285-9. *DNB*, Hales, Sir James; Clark, *English Provincial Society*, p. 81, and see Chapter Six

172 Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', pp. 150-3, 159-162. Was this the same John Rowland, professional gambler, who was banished from Rye with a billet nailed to his left ear in 1540, after leading townsmen astray with his dice and cards?: Mayhew, *Tudor Rye*, p. 223.

173 PRO Aug Misc Books, 114, fol 139, transcribed in Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', pp. 153-5.

174 For Brekynden, see Chapter Two. John Pellond, Small Hythe, 1511, CKS: PRC 32/10 154; Margaret Pellond, widow, Small Hythe, 1523, CKS: PRC 17/16 179; in 1543, Peter Pellond bought land etc. at Small Hythe from his half brother by their mother Katheryn, whose first husband had been John Pellond, who died in 1511 (CKS: U410/T21) William Beche, Small Hythe, 1518, CKS: PRC 17/14/50; the Beche family first appear in the deeds at Small Hythe in 1462 (CKS: U442/T99) and in 1543, Nicholas Beche witnessed the sale of property at Small Hythe to Peter Pellond, mentioned above (CKS: U410/T21).

175 William Harynden, Tenterden, 1479, CKS: PRC 17/3/194; Bartholomew Harrenden, Tenterden, 1533, CKS: PRC 32/16/8,78. John Clayse is mentioned in Moyse Pellond's will of 1519: CKS: PRC 17/14/47. The remaining names were checked in *Index of Wills and Administrations now preserved in the Probate Registry at Canterbury, 1396-1558 and 1640-1650*, ed. H.R. Plomer, (Kent Archaeological Society: Kent Records, vol. vi, London, 1920). This accords with what we know about immigration into the parish of Tenterden during the slightly later period from the 1540s to the end of the century: Zell, 'Population and Family Structure', pp. 236-7.

176 CKS: Te/C1, fol. 141r., and see Chapter Two.

around thirty.[177] In addition to Brekynden, many of these men were of considerable standing. Stephen Forde and Nicholas Beche were already freemen of Tenterden by 1549 and two others entered the franchise in the 1550s. Because the surviving list of freemen only begins recording admissions in 1529 there is no record of those who may have become freemen before this date.[178]

The petition began by stating that more than thirty years before the inhabitants of Small Hythe had built "at their cooste and charge and for their use and comoditie a certen chaple called St. John Baptist Chaple wherein theye...did fynde a prieste to mynyster". They were of course referring to the later building which still stands today. The usual justifications for a chapel at Small Hythe were given, such as the distance from Tenterden, the poor state of the roads, and that the sick would suffer the neglect of a minister in times of need. They also asserted that not including strangers who stayed there from time to time, there were commonly two hundred people living in the town. Lastly, they pointed out that Archbishop Warham had granted "certen sacraments and sacramentals" be ministered there, and that a record of this grant could be produced if required.

Having set out the history of the case, they proceeded to tackle Rowland's plans on two bases. Firstly, they went back to the initial alienation of the chapel to the Crown, under the Chantries Act of 1547, pointing out that all chapels of ease were excepted, and rather ambiguously asserted that "yt..manyfestlie and reasonlie appere" that Small Hythe Chapel "is a chapple of ease". Secondly, they warned that if Rowland was not stopped, then the inhabitants would be forced to worship at their parish church, allowing enemies in time of war to land and burn not only Small Hythe, but to destroy and capture vessels in the haven. This was of course a commonly used device in the battle to preserve chapels under threat from the chantry commissioners.[179] The petitioners then requested a commission to enquire, whether the chapel was a chapel of ease, how far it lay from the parish church of Tenterden, whether sometimes due to floods, the journey could only be made on horseback, whether "the contrye thereabouts is very fowle", whether Small Hythe "be scituate upon the sea syde", whether the archbishop had granted sacraments and sacramentals to be ministered there, and if so, what they were.[180]

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177 Brekynden's minimum age can be gauged from his father's will of 1526 (CKS: PRC 17/17/207); Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', p 158.

178 CKS: Te/C1, fols. 116r.-117r

179 For example, the guild of St George at Weymouth in Dorset, employed a very similar objection to the suppression of their chapel in 1548 This may be compared to the case of the chapel of Deritend, next to Birmingham, whose fraternity protested - also like the men of Small Hythe - that they lived two miles from the parish church, and that in winter the journey became perilous: both in Rosser, 'Communities of parish and guild', p 35 See also, Kitching, 'Church and Chapelry', pp. 280-1.

180 Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', pp. 153-5.

In response to the petition, on 4th October 1549, John Baker and Walter Hendley, knights, sat to take evidence from twelve witnesses. Sir John Baker of Sissinghurst, Cranbrook, Attorney General, and Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1545-8, since the latter part of the reign of Henry VIII had built up his estates in and around Tenterden. He was one of the leading figures among a group of Catholic gentry families on the Weald, and was to become infamous in Mary's reign for the way he single-mindedly pursued and condemned to the stake, five women and two men of Cranbrook for heretical opinions. Walter Hendley, a senior official in the Court of Augmentations, also of a Cranbrook family, was son-in-law of the religiously conservative Canterbury lawyer, Sir John Hales (whose kinsmen had their seat at Tenterden) and had himself, along with Baker, been one of the lawyers in the anti-Cromwellian group of magistrates, of which Hales's cousin Christopher, was a key player in the late 1530s. Hendley's sphere of influence lay predominantly in Cranbrook, but he had benefited greatly from the dissolution of the monasteries, gaining a good deal of territory in the Tenterden region.[181]

Depositions were taken from twelve men aged between twenty-six and sixty years old, with most in their forties or fifties. Stephen Forde and Bartholomew Pellond were two of the original petitioners and they along with John Pellond probably lived at Small Hythe. Robert Assherynden belonged to a local family, and George and John Felip may well have done - Laurence Felip being an inhabitant before his death in 1510.[182] There is no evidence to suggest that the remaining six were inhabitants of Small Hythe, and most of them appear to have been first generation immigrants to Tenterden.[183] Two of them appear to have belonged to slightly older, but by no means well-established Tenterden families.[184] It seems that on this occasion the commissioners heard evidence from six Small Hythe men and six Tenterden men. This may have been a deliberate step

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181 Baker acquired part of the estate of Heronden in Tenterden, and had been granted the manors of East Assherinden and Lights Notinden in the parish, by Henry VIII. In 1545, Baker acquired the lease of the demesnes of Halden manor in Rolvenden, lands in High Halden and the manor of Pitlesden in Tenterden, to hold *in capite* by knight s service Hendley was granted marsh land in Tenterden, Woodchurch and Appledore in 1539 and manors in Ebony with appurtenances in Woodchurch, Appledore, Tenterden, Stone, Wittersham and Kenardington, in 1540. In 1541, he obtained the manor of Great Maytham in the neighbouring parish of Rolvenden, which lay less than two miles to the west of Small Hythe on the river Rother, and in 1546 was granted further lands in Tenterden: Hasted, *History of Kent*, vol. vii, pp 206-10, 186-7; Sheila Kaye-Smith, *Weald of Kent and Sussex*, (Regional Books Series, London, 1953), pp 47, 179; *L & P*, vol xx, 1336; Mayhew, *Tudor Rye*, pp. 66-7; Clark, *English Provincial Society*, pp. 41, 55, Collinson, 'Cranbrook and the Fletchers', p. 401; *L & P*, vol. xiv, 113, 831; *ibid.*, vol. xxi, 717.

182 See above, and Table 3.1. CKS PRC 32/10 124. A "John Fyllyp of Smalyd" is mentioned in the Tailor's Accounts of 1536-8, which have survived with the Tenterden Custumal: CKS: Te/C2, fol. 13v.

183 Robert Wytheman died in 1551 Robert Rayner begins appearing in the wills as a witness in 1526, Robert Foche in 1532, and William Bestfielde in 1534· CKS: PRC 17/27/158; PRC 17/17/145; PRC 17/19/273; PRC 17/20 153

184 Edmund Lakener: William Luconor, London and Tenterden, 1517, PRO: P.C.C. 33 Holder, fol. 260. Thomas Mannyng: PRO: P.C.C. 8 Holder, fol. 59.

on their part to secure a balanced set of depositions, but in light of subsequent events it probably had much more to do with the efforts of the inhabitants of Small Hythe to broaden their campaign. The survival of the chapel was clearly an issue of importance to all the inhabitants of the parish, and as long as the people of Small Hythe could rely on the support of a group of Tenterden men, the enquiry was less likely to develop into a shouting match between the two communities - an eventuality which could only serve to weaken their case.

George Felip gave evidence first. He was bailiff of Tenterden in 1542-3 and 1546-7. Of the rest, Bestfielde, Foche, Mannyng, Forde, Assherynden and Pellond all became freemen before 1549.[185] Together, these witnesses represented a section of the leading men of both communities within the parish. The depositions concur on nearly all points - a further indication that the twelve witnesses were carefully picked to provide a solid case for the survival of the chapel. For example, they all agreed that the chapel was a chapel of ease, and that it lay closer to two miles than a mile and a half from the parish church. Obviously, there was concurrence on the township's position on the Rother, and two of the deponents mentioned some of the more important ships which had either been made, or had put in to the port in the past. However, opinions differed somewhat on the condition of the road to Tenterden town. The first three witnesses, agreed that at one time the journey could only safely be made on horseback at certain times of the year, but that more recently the road had been raised allowing people to now pass on foot. The rest, however, all appear to have considered the effect of the "rage of waters" to have been as inconvenient as ever.

Turning to the privileges of the chapel, most of the deponents drew attention to archbishop Warham's grant, to which they reserved themselves without going into its contents.[186] Two made the point that the present chapel had replaced another which had been destroyed by fire and "had the prehemynence that this nowe hathe". Robert Rayner also told how he had been clerk of the chapel, had "hade the booke there", and knew that divine service had been celebrated. Robert Foche declared how for some time the inhabitants of Small Hythe had usually attended matins and evensong. George Felip and Robert Assherynden both confessed to never being present at the ministering of any sacraments or sacramentals, but the former had heard of men being houseled and "anheled" there, and the latter knew that several persons had been houseled at Easter as well as women purified, including his wife. Stephen Forde's wife had also been purified in the chapel, and he testified to having been married there. Assherynden and Robert Foche gave some substance to this last claim, by telling of reports that several people had

185 CKS: Te/C1, fols 141r., 116r - 117r

186 Four deponents actually mentioned the grant, five simply agreed with their testimony and the last three obviously did not feel it necessary to draw attention to it again.

been married at Small Hythe. Lastly, Bartholomew Pellond said that Margaret Vyne was buried there. Apart from claims of matrimonies, the first set of depositions read like a credible account of the day-to-day activities and occasional additional provisions in times of necessity granted to the inhabitants by Warham's Licence and Ordinance some forty years earlier.[187]

Two weeks later a second set of depositions were taken, as unanimous as the first, but this time much less favourable to the future of the chapel. Seven of the witnesses were, or had been Tenterden men, namely, George Castelyn, yeoman, John Forsett, Thomas Holme, John Mantell, Richard Morlyn, yeoman, John Foule, gent, and now of London, and Thomas Syre, yeoman. They were aged between around twenty-six and forty, most being in their thirties - younger on the whole than the first group of deponents. The rest, significantly, were from the neighbouring parish of High Halden. These were older men, all but one in his early fifties, but none appear to have belonged to old established families, and only one seems to have originated from the Weald.[188] Of the Tenterden men, Castelyn and Foule were firmly within the ranks of leading Tenterden (*not* Small Hythe) families.[189] Predictably, none of the others seem to have been inhabitants of Small Hythe. One of them (Thomas Holme) belonged to a long-resident Tenterden family, and the remaining four appear to have been first generation members of the parish.[190] Most of these deponents were of relatively high status, on the fringes of the lesser gentry. One described himself as "gent", seven as "yeoman", one as "husbandman" and another as "clerk". John Foule was bailiff of Tenterden in 1535-6 and 1539-40, and Castelyn, Mantell, Morlyn and Syre were all freemen of the town.[191] A concerted effort appears to have been made to produce an impressive array of deponents. If they were drawn from John Rowland's circle there is no evidence as yet to show that this was the case. He does not appear to have had much influence in the area. However, he may have canvassed opinion, and assembled a group of men who were prepared to speak against the continuing existence of the chapel.

The presence of George Castelyn among the deponents is suggestive of religiously motivated machinations. The Castelyns had produced one of the Tenterden heretics tried in 1511, and since at least the late fifteenth century, they had had connections at Tenterden with the extensive Hales and Guldeford families. Although the Haleses were known for their religious conservatism in the late 1530s, a decade later

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187 Burials in Small Hythe are recorded from 1549 in the Tenterden Parish Registers: Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, p. 64.

188 Ascertained by searching for surnames in *Index of Wills*, ed. Plomer.

189 See Chapter Six

190 William Holme, Tenterden, 1501, CKS PRC 17 9 180; John Holme, Tenterden, 1522, CKS: PRC 3/5/29.

191 CKS: Te/C1, fols. 141r., 116r.-117r.

they were more renowned for the activities of the radical Protestant lawyer, James Hales, who drafted the 1547 Chantries Act and subsequently clashed with the Marian regime. The Guldefords had acquired "a local reputation for unorthodoxy" at Tenterden by the 1530s.[192] Did Castelyn see the destruction of Small Hythe chapel as a religiously justifiable consequence of the chantries legislation? The Act of 1547 explicitly called for an end to the superstitious activities of chantries, namely masses and prayers for the dead, which sustained adherence to the doctrines of purgatory. Although Small Hythe chapel served the local inhabitants in more ways than this, it retained something of the character of a chantry chapel. Castelyn may have viewed it as little more than a glorified chantry for certain of the residents of Small Hythe who clung to the ways of the old religion.[193] If so, this was wilful distortion of the privileges granted to the people of Small Hythe by the archbishop early in the century, and yet, one cannot help feeling that the strict control that St. Mildred's had exercised upon those rights had left the chapel vulnerable to just this sort of assault. The chapel of St. John the Baptist belonged to an ambiguous category of foundations which were unjustly threatened by the legislation of 1547, because despite the assertion of the inhabitants of Small Hythe to the contrary, it was not a chapel of ease, and yet for good reason, to some extent it served as their local church. It was probably this last factor which saved it.[194] Whatever the motivations of Castelyn and the others, they do not appear to have been widely shared by the parishioners of Tenterden. That the weight of opinion at Tenterden was against them, is suggested by the presence of the five men from High Halden among the deponents.

Whereas the first twelve depositions were in the form of answers to the questions put forward in the petition, this time a more rigourous set of interrogatories was used. No actual record of the six articles has survived but their substance can be arrived at by induction, from the replies. Whilst remaining within the bounds of credibility, the deponents made a unified assault on the chapel, in many cases giving evidence which was diametrically opposed to that provided by the first set of witnesses. For example, all but three agreed that it was definitely not a chapel of ease,[195] and although these three could not say for certain, two of them thought that it probably was not. In the strictest sense, they were of course right, despite the fact that Small Hythe chapel had performed many of the functions of a chapel of ease for some considerable time. They also concurred that it was closer to a mile and a half, than two miles to the parish church, and that the inhabitants of Small Hythe could conveniently pass to St. Mildred's at all times of the

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192 The phrase is Peter Clark's, from his *English Provincial Society*, p. 51. See Chapter Six.

193 Kitching, 'Church and Chapelry', p 281.

194 Dickens, *English Reformation*, pp. 285, 293-4.

195 George Castelyn seems to have been the only one who made the effort to provide a reason for this judgement, stating that "there was never any Sacramente or Sacrementalls there mynistered but only by the license of the Viccar or Curate of Tenterdyn".

year. There was some common ground here with the earlier depositions, which suggests that thanks in part to numerous bequests in wills, considerable improvements had been made to the road since the early sixteenth century.[196]

There was near unanimity on the subject of sacraments and sacramentals which had been ministered in the chapel. All agreed that in the normal course of events, these had been limited to mass, matins, evensong, and holy bread and holy water, and then only by licence of the vicar or curate of Tenterden. However, one deponent added that in some urgent cases other sacraments or sacramentals had been ministered, and that he remembered how licence had been given to purify one woman, christen one child and marry one couple. John Foule, on the other hand, asserted that for the twenty-five years he had lived in the parish there were to his knowledge no burials, christenings or weddings at Small Hythe, and George Castelyn likewise stated that "he never knew any there". Once again, there was some concurrence with the other twelve deponents, but this was a very conservative assessment of the services provided by the chapel to the local population. There is for instance no mention of the houseling of those too sick or elderly to make the journey to Tenterden, provided for by the Archbishop's grant. Finally, the witnesses attempted to undermine the scale of demand for the chapel's services, by estimating that there were only between sixty and a hundred communicants at Small Hythe. In fact, the higher end of these less than objective estimates may not only square with the no doubt optimistic statement in the petition that "there is commonly in the hamlet cc people", but also with what is known about Small Hythe's population from other sources. They also asserted that there was no harbour for ships but "only a creke of salt water". Castelyn and Mantell claimed that only lighters could use the channel for such purposes as fetching wood, and then only at high tide. Forsett admitted that there was still something of a ship-building industry at Small Hythe, but only inadvertently by his comment that "one lytell pynnace of the king's" had been mended there. This was probably an exaggerated picture of the decline of Small Hythe as a haven and ship-building centre.[197]

In the event, the inhabitants of Small Hythe were successful in preserving their chapel, which was restored to them along with its endowments. The leading men of Small Hythe should be credited with saving the strongest symbol of their local identity from Rowland's acquisitive schemes, because although many outlying chapels such as

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196 All but one of the nine testators who made donations for repairs to the road or footpath between Tenterden and Small Hythe, lived either at Small Hythe or nearby. The one who did not, lived on the road at Heronden, Broad Tenterden

197 It was only four years since the three hundred ton "Great Galley" had been made at Small Hythe: *L & P*, vol. iii, 2964, *ibid*., vol xx, 543; *ibid*., Addenda, i, 140, 142, 1697. Some of the ships which were said by the first twelve deponents to have been made at Small Hythe or to have put in there however, dated from what had probably been a more prosperous time: Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', p. 157; *L & P*, vol. i, 3422, *ibid*., Addenda, i, 101.

this one survived the Chantries Acts, it was not an official chapel of ease and some of the most prominent of Tenterden's citizens appear to have had an interest in its dismantling.[198] This said, one should not forget the probably crucial role of the religiously conservative Baker and Hendley. This immediate victory notwithstanding, religious provision at Small Hythe was dealt a near fatal blow by the buffeting it received in the late 1540s. For the next twenty years there is no evidence of a minister serving in the chapel. After this time a reader performed a very limited amount of duties until the restoration of the chaplaincy in the early seventeenth century.[199] In the wake of the threat of the Chantries legislation the inhabitants of Small Hythe may have decided to play a careful waiting game during the vicissitudes of the remaining Reformation years, before pressing for more adequate provision. Probably just as importantly, the decline of the chapel was precipitated by the waning of the ship-building industry at Small Hythe, even though trade seems to have continued largely unaffected by the gradual silting up of the Rother.[200]

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Since the early medieval colonisation of the Weald, Small Hythe had been separated by boundaries from the rest of the parish of Tenterden. These were reinforced over time, served real tenurial and jurisdictional purposes and were actively remembered in this period. They probably contributed to and expressed a reality of local, as opposed to parochial, community and identity. Around 1500, many Small Hythe testators began to define themselves as inhabitants of their township as well as parishioners of Tenterden. This was it appears, a result of the physical and economic growth of the community, as a commercial, industrial and agricultural centre of some regional and even national importance from the late fifteenth century. This said, it is possible that the intense assertion of distinctiveness by Small Hythe in this period was due more to the growth and development of Tenterden town and the threat which this posed to the port's identity.[201]

The chapel of St. John the Baptist, was more than likely founded in the late thirteenth or fourteenth century as a collective venture to serve the spiritual aspirations of local people and sojourners. The choice of St. John for dedicatee was an overwhelmingly rational expression of local environment and ethos, which provided a pool of images and motifs upon which the inhabitants could draw in the re-creation of identity over the generations. The surviving building was symbolic of economic success

198 Dickens, *English Reformation*, pp. 294.
199 Taylor, 'Chapel of St. John the Baptist', pp. 162-3, 178-9.
200 See n.29 above.
201 Cohen, *Symbolic Construction of Community*, esp ch. 4.

and long-standing commercial and cultural links with the Low Countries, and as such it represented an element of Small Hythe's otherness from Tenterden town.

As will become even clearer in Chapter Four, compared to Tenterden town, piety at Small Hythe was austere, even in the wills of its most wealthy inhabitants such as the Brekynden and Assherynden families. Most striking is the near absence of saints' cults from the pious preoccupations of the port's inhabitants. This in itself may reflect Continental influences, the role of the landscape or perhaps even of a certain commercial and industrial regime upon religious mentality. The residents were almost wholly responsible for building, maintaining, furnishing and staffing their chapel. In the last decades of the fifteenth century they worked together to enhance and secure divine service at Small Hythe, and over these years the perception of the chapel shifted from that of a chantry foundation to a chapel of ease for the community as a whole. This in itself was an expression of growing collective identity. The chapel was no doubt used for more than religious purposes throughout this period, which by the second decade of the sixteenth century may have posed a threat to Tenterden's jurisdictional rights.

Less than a handful of parishioners who lived over a mile from Small Hythe showed an interest in their wills in Small Hythe chapel. Beyond the immediate locality, the chapel does not appear to have been considered as an option within parochial piety. The local inhabitants were left with the task of supporting their foundation, whilst continuing to patronise the parish church. In fact, less than half of them could afford to, or were prepared to do both, with finite disposable resources at death and the pressures of familial responsibilities being the chief limitations upon diversity in testamentary piety. Those who patronised only one or the other institution did so mainly because of these strictures, but this said, still exercised a degree of choice which may have been informed by materialistic attitudes. The only period in which Small Hythe testators on the whole favoured their chapel over St. Mildred's was from the late 1480s to around 1509. Increasing support for the chapel coincided with, but was not the cause of declining testamentary giving to the parish. Gifts to both institutions fell on average to around half of what they had been before 1488, but in the case of the chapel this general trend took longer to come into effect.

Probably as a result of parish-wide revenue problems, the burgeoning of local identity expressed through the formal recognition of the chapel's status and ambiguities in the duties of the inhabitants of Small Hythe to their parish church, the churchwardens at Tenterden unsuccessfully attempted to make a scapegoat of the community. These differences were resolved by the archbishop in 1509 and a formally negotiated relationship appears to have been arrived at, resulting in the withdrawal of Small Hythe men from parochial office. This left the chapel's status very much dependent upon the parish church, and as such, vulnerable to the Chantries Legislation, and possibly, to the

religiously hostile motivations of a group of Tenterden men. The families of Small Hythe were not however without allies at Tenterden, and succeeded in protecting their chapel from destruction, although not from considerable damage to its services. These events probably had as much to do with the port's long-term economic decline as the religious reforms of the mid-sixteenth century.

CHAPTER FOUR

Family Piety and Urban Identity in Tenterden

For she teacheth to govern the peoples, the cities, and the commons. ('The Life of St. Katherine', *The Golden Legend*, vol. vii, p. 28)

Widening the focus to the parish as a whole, what follows forms the core of the more descriptive side of this exploration of family piety in Tenterden. In order to make the evidence of testamentary piety in Tenterden comparable to what is known about piety in other urban centres and more rural areas in this period, to a large extent the methods employed in earlier studies have been used here. Without such an approach it would be impossible to put Tenterden's religious culture in perspective. It was felt that unless this was done, the following two chapters would lose a great deal of their relevance, meaning and significance to those interested in and working on the changing nature of piety in late medieval England prior to the Reformation. For this reason, a considerable amount of attention in the second part of this chapter is given to a quantitative description of the level of popularity over time of various categories of bequests, which traditionally have been used by historians of late medieval religion in the analysis of probate materials. Just as in those works which have taken this approach, there is also a good deal of qualitative description of the institutions and devotions of parochial piety. In this way, the nature of orthodox religious culture is described and all the time compared to religious belief and practice in other places.[1]

This is only one aspect of what follows however, as the chapter begins, in Part One, with an attempt to draw distinctions between different families in terms of their testamentary strategies, and most importantly, the extent of their more traditional religious preoccupations as opposed to other concerns. This makes it possible, in Part Two, to show how commitment to the forms and fashions of orthodox piety varied markedly and consistently between different families. In this way, a basis is established

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[1] The principal studies of urban centres and more rural areas used here for comparative purposes are: Dinn, 'Popular Religion'; Heath, 'Urban Piety'; Higgs, 'Lay Piety'; Tanner, *Church in Norwich*; Thomson, 'Piety and Charity'.

for the exploration in subsequent chapters of divergences in parochial piety and the possible social, cultural and political roots of these shifts.

A further strand within this discussion, concerns the representation and construction of identity and community at Tenterden through sets of symbols.[2] Some of the most potent symbols were the saints whose cults were already established or became established in Tenterden in this period. Other aspects of piety such as church building were also employed in the recreation of identity. Both here and in subsequent chapters, the structures and forms of piety are set against and in part interpreted in the light of social and political change, in order to make sense of the shifting symbolism of devotion.

Part one: pious priorities and testamentary strategies

Chapter Two demonstrated how the Brekynden's testamentary strategies were formulated in response to the interplay of competing pressures and priorities upon the disposal of available resources. Whilst varying according to the particular circumstances of individual family testators, there was nevertheless, a general character to the Brekynden's testamentary practices. Most noticeable was the extent to which attention to traditional religious concerns was restricted by responses to the demands of family and kin, and in particular, a preoccupation with good marriage and successful household formation for family, kin and neighbours. This was illustrated in a statistical way, albeit rather crudely, by comparing the relative amounts left in cash bequests to, on the one hand, religious matters, and on the other, to family, kin, neighbours and associates. So, the Brekyndens devoted a median of 13 per cent of their bequeathed cash (which in total, averaged £7 2s 8d) to spiritual concerns.[3] Coupled with this, for one of the most enduring, wealthy, and politically active families in Tenterden, in traditionally pious terms, their wills were surprisingly sparse.

There are twenty-three Tenterden families for which there are at least three extant last wills and testaments which apportion sufficient amounts of cash to make them comparable. In order to gain an impression of a family's testamentary piety, at least three wills are required.[4] Together, these families have left 114 wills.

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2 For the theory of the construction of community and identity through symbols, see Cohen, *Symbolic Construction of Community*, *passim*, and Chapters One and Three.

3 This, and subsequent figures were obtained by taking the median of the proportions of cash left in each family will, to religious matters. This has the advantage of smoothing out the effects of the more extreme distributions in some wills, and is therefore a better method than comparing the total amounts of cash left by each family for religious and non-religious purposes. The median is a more robust indication of a family's strategy than the average, where small numbers of wills are involved.

4 Wills which contain no cash bequests whatsoever, or a gift for forgotten tithes alone, fall within this category. The Weste, Jan, Harynden and Hoore families are not included, because, in the case of the Jans, two out of four of their testaments are of this type, and in the others, one or two, out of three.

Each of the twenty-three families was ranked according to their relative combined assessment on four criteria. Firstly, the median percentage of cash devoted by individual testators to religious concerns was taken for each family.[5] (See the fourth column of Table 4.1) This provides an indication of the weight placed upon traditional religious outlets for giving, in relation to obligations to family, kin and associates. However, in order to put the distribution of resources into perspective, the median absolute amount of cash left in religious bequests by each family's testators was used as the second criterion. This was considered necessary, in order to moderate the impression that families like the Smyths and Chapmans laid great stress on the religious in their wills, when in fact, in absolute terms, the sums they left were rather small. At the other end of the spectrum, the Strekynbolds apportioned a relatively small share of their cash to spiritual aspirations but actually devoted more than any other family to these ends.[6] (Table 4.1, comparing columns 3, 4 and 5)

The proportion of testators in any one family who made bequests or endowments for temporary or perpetual chantries provided the next index. (See column 7 of Table 4.1) Chantries demanded a greater financial and familial commitment than most other forms of religious expression funded in wills, and were perhaps the most ambitious way of demonstrating traditionally orthodox piety. It is for these reasons that they have been employed as one of the four criteria for distinguishing between family pieties. Lastly, so as to give weight to other types of devotional bequests, the proportion of family testators who requested masses, prayers or religious services (including funeral and commemorative ritual), or gave to lights, images, cults or fraternities was employed.[7] (See column 8 of Table 4.1)

By expressing each of these proportions or figures as a percentage, and then by adding them together, a 'score' was arrived at for each family, and they were ranked accordingly. (Table 4.1, column 9) It is emphasized that in no way is this intended to provide a hard and fast *measurement* of family piety. Rather, the aim is to arrive at an *initial indication* of a family's testamentary approach, and its relationship to other strategies within a spectrum of orthodoxy. In these terms, the method is reasonably successful. It provides a firm, if somewhat crude and largely quantitative (as opposed to qualitative) base from which to begin to describe and decode varying traditions in family piety in Tenterden.

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5 See Chapter Two, nn.85, 86, for details of what is included in 'religious concerns'. Payments to executors, overseers and feoffees for their 'labour' or 'expenses' are excluded from calculations.

6 All, wills, including those which contain no cash gifts and those leaving money for forgotten tithes only, were included in these calculations. For the sake of comparison, and so that they did not dominate the overall assessment of family strategies, the median absolute amounts were converted to indexed percentages, where 2867d, the largest amount given, is equivalent to 100.

7 As with chantries, gifts and endowments of lands and goods, in addition to cash, were included when assessing these proportions.

Table 4.1 *The spectrum of testamentary piety across twenty-three Tenterden Families*

1. Family	2. No. of Wills	3. Median amount of all cash left.	4. Median % of cash left to religious concerns	5. Median absolute amount of cash left to religious concerns	6. Indexed[1] amount to religious concerns	7. No. (and %) of family testators who gave to chantries	8. No. (and %) of testators giving to masses, prayers etc.	9. Sum of '4,6,7 & 8'.
Foule	4	3296	81	2270	79	3 (75)	3 (75)	310
Strekynbold	3	14684	34	2867	100	2 (67)	3 (100)	301
Stonehouse	4	4622	71	2176	76	1 (25)	4 (100)	272
Carpynter	3	852	67	840	29	2 (67)	3 (100)	263
Jamyn	3	488	67	488	17	2 (67)	3 (100)	251
Preston	4	3542	52	1174	41	2 (50)	4 (100)	243
Davy	8	472	94	432	15	3 (37)	5 (62)	208
Couper	5	604	89	424	15	1 (20)	4 (80)	204
Donne	6	596	58	354	12.3	1 (17)	6 (100)	187
Smyth	6	80	61	60	2	1(17)	4 (67)	147
Piers	6	1028	20	184	6.4	2 (33)	4 (67)	126
Hylles	5	12	54	12	0.4	0 (0)	3 (60)	114
Pette	5	856	25	80	3	1 (20)	3 (60)	108
Pellond	7	1060	22	12	0.4	1 (14)	5 (71)	107
Brekynden	7	2216	13	428	15	1 (14)	4 (57)	99
Gerves	4	1649	10	356	12.4	1 (25)	2 (50)	97
Assherynden	5	1644	28	132	4.6	1 (20)	2 (40)	93
Bisshopynden	5	972	1	18	0.6	1 (20)	3 (60)	82
Castelyn	7	244	35	26	1	0 (0)	3 (43)	79
Gibbon	5	44	29	20	0.7	0 (0)	2 (40)	70
Chapman	4	828	50	11	0.4	0 (0)	0 (0)	50
Blossom	5	1000	4	80	2.8	0 (0)	2 (40)	47
Hoke	3	676	12	64	2	0 (0)	1 (33)	47

1. Where 2867d = 100.

By using the family as the unit of analysis it also has the advantage of smoothing out some of the more marked variations in individual testamentary piety, which resulted from the minutiae of differing circumstances. Important as these could be, the aim here is to foreground what is common to a set of testaments produced by a group of related individuals, and thereby to identify a shared piety. Finally, what may be termed a more 'scientific' type of framework such as this, whilst allowing for subsequent modification and qualitative analysis, is more rigorous and less subjective than some other approaches.[8]

For the sake of comparison, and not wholly arbitrarily, the twenty-three families can be divided into three groups as shown in Table 4.1. They range from nine families which gave frequently, generously and diversely to religious concerns, through eight which were moderately preoccupied with these matters, to six which gave occasionally, sparingly and conservatively. Whilst there was some overlap at their boundaries, the groups are polythetically distinguishable; that is, each is defined in terms of a set of characteristics, such that each family exhibits most of the characteristics, and each characteristic is shared by most of the families.[9]

Within this comparative framework, the Brekyndens emerge as lying within the middle of the spectrum of Tenterden family piety, which provides us with some idea of the levels of traditional religious preoccupation above and below their own. Given their wealth and status, the character of their piety also suggests that there was no straightforward relationship between available wealth, and the material value of religious bequests. To some extent, among these families, the amount of cash left in wills provides a good indication of family wealth, and can be used comparatively as such. Among other things, Table 4.1 shows the median amount of cash left in all types of bequest for each family (see column 3). Across all twenty-three families the median of these sums was £3 11s 4d. Only the middle-group of families - the moderately generous in their religious giving - produced a median higher than this, at £4 7s. The figures for the top and bottom groups are both slightly lower and very similar, at £3 11s and £3 2s 8d respectively. There were families with relatively little amounts of wealth at their disposal when making their wills, within top, middle and bottom groups, and some with considerable resources at the lower and mid-range of the pious spectrum. Generous religious expression was not

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8 For example, Higgs classifies individual Colchester testators into three groups, according to their different levels of concern for piety (a term which she defines somewhat differently to how it is used in this present study), partly on a similar basis to that used here, but also by employing some questionable indicators such as the naming of a cleric as executor or supervisor to a will, or the presence of bequests to godchildren. Apart from anything else, she provides no description of how the different indicators were weighed and combined in order to categorize each testator: Higgs, 'Lay Piety', pp. 197-217.

9 For brief comments on polythetic groups, see Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 32. For further discussion, see R. Needham, 'Polythetic Classification', *Man*, x (1975), pp. 349-69.

just the preserve of the richest families, and neither was a more frugal tenor of testamentary piety confined to those families with less than moderate wealth.

However, this notwithstanding, the families who had most resources at their disposal also tended to be most unsparing in their religious giving, the four who left a median of over £12, all lying in the top-group. In addition, whereas three out of the six families at the bottom of the spectrum left a median of more than £4, five out of eight in the middle-group did, and the best resourced family in the former only disposed of 12s more than the median for all twenty-three families. From this it may be concluded, that whilst available wealth played an important part in setting levels of religious giving, independently of this, individuals and families prioritized between competing concerns and responsibilities in ways which produced a distinctive character to their testamentary piety.

The extent to which the individual testator had to fulfil obligations to family, kin and associates, was of course, dependent upon his or her family situation at death. In particular, the stage in the life-cycle at which an individual died, had a large part to play in determining demands upon resources. In addition, women faced different types of pressures to men in writing their wills, especially given the fact that most female testators were widows.

Twenty-six of the 114 wills produced by these families, were made by women, and of these, twenty-one can be identified as widows. They display some clear patterns in testamentary strategy which in part, appear to have arisen from the common circumstances in which they made their wills. Eleven of them apportioned between 80 and 100 per cent of relatively large amounts of available cash (in all but one case, ranging from £1 17s to £13 18s 4d in total) to religious bequests. Five left between about a tenth and two-fifths of their available cash to religious concerns, which in all but one case totalled no more than 12s. The remaining five gave only very small sums for their forgotten tithes, although in two cases, this was together with a few pence to the Jesus mass. There seems to have been a general rule that if widows had access to anything more than mediocre cash resources they would deploy these largely for the health of their souls, rather than redistribute them among family and kin. This was probably because most widows did not have to provide dowries for daughters or inheritance parcels for sons, as these had either already been furnished by husbands, or heirs had already married and/or left home. Widows were therefore free to dispose of their wealth in 'works of charity'.

So, for example, Katherine Carpynter made her will in 1510, twelve years after her husband's death, arranging for lands to be sold to fund a half year's chantry and to pay for a light of three pounds in wax to burn before the image of St. Mary. She also left

her "best dyaper towell" to St. Mildred's. One can presume that it was because her husband had provided for their four daughters' dowries twelve years earlier, that she left household goods only, to them and to godchildren. They were probably already married and had families of their own by 1510.[10] Similarly, Anne Stonehouse was relatively free to devote her available cash to religious bequests in 1513. She left 4d to the Jesus Mass, 10d to the light of St. Mildred, 13s 4d to each of her funeral and month mind, and 10s to her year's mind. To her daughters she left household goods, and put her sons in the custody of one Merton Wood until they were twelve. Her husband's will is dated two months earlier than her own, and in addition to his religious provisions, he undertook for their daughters' dowries which they were to receive when they reached twenty, and made other cash bequests to kin and associates.[11]

However, the degree to which widows had access to anything more than meagre amounts of money when writing their wills, whilst being partly to do with family wealth, was also a result of the different approaches to testamentary practice followed within the three groups of selected families. The six widows who belonged to the most religiously active families, all devoted nearly all of relatively substantial sums (upwards of £1 17s) to fulfilling spiritual aspirations, and not all of them belonged to exceptionally wealthy families.[12] In the middle-group of families, strategies were more diverse, covering the whole spectrum outlined above. Four apportioned all, or the vast majority of similarly large sums (in one case only around 13s) to religious bequests; four left between around a tenth and a third of smaller sums ranging from 1s to about 12s (in one case, £3 11s 4d), and one left 12d for forgotten tithes only.[13] Widows in the bottom pious group were less diverse in their approaches. Only one, Lore Blossom, left a substantial amount of cash, totalling £3 18s, and nearly all of it to religious concerns. Katheryn Castelyn left 2s 4d in religious gifts and 3s 4d to clearing a debt left by her husband.[14] Another four left between only 8d and 18d, mostly for tithes forgotten, but in two cases, to the Jesus mass

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10 CKS: PRC 17/11/182; Thomas Carpynter, CKS: PRC 17/7/48.

11 CKS: PRC 17/12/182; William Stonehouse, 1513, CKS: PRC 17/12/227. Other cases where the husband's will reveals arrangements for dowries and inheritance portions to children, include: Joan Blechynden, widow (1511, CKS: PRC 17/12/30), and her husband, Nicholas Blechynden (1510, CKS: PRC 17/11/250); and possibly, Helwyse Mede, widow (1531, CKS: PRC 17/19/177), and Thomas Mede (1526, PRO: P.C.C. 17 Porche, fol. 131v.).

12 Judging by their families' wills, the following belonged to some of the wealthiest families in Tenterden: Katherine Carpynter, 1510, CKS: PRC 17/11/182; Katherine Foule, 1519, CKS: PRC 17/15/64; Anne Stonehouse, 1513, CKS: PRC 17/12/182. Others, were undoubtedly of high status within the community, but less affluent: Deonys Davy, 1520, CKS: PRC 17/14/255; Joan Davy, 1509, CKS: PRC 17/11/48; Julyan Donne, 1521, CKS: PRC 17/15/38.

13 Respectively: Joan Brekynden, 1528, CKS: PRC 17/18/158; Joan Gerves, 1504, CKS: PRC 17/10/19; Joan Piers, 1471, CKS: PRC 17/2/29; Agnes Smyth, 1534, CKS: PRC 17/20/95; Juliana Brekynden, 1503, CKS: PRC 17/9/222; Margaret Pellond, 1523, CKS: PRC 17/16/179; Godlena Piers, 1495, CKS: PRC 17/6/111; Margarete Pette, 1518, CKS: PRC 17/14/26; Joan Pette, 1497, CKS: PRC 17/6/211.

14 1532, CKS: PRC 17/19/365; 1510, CKS: PRC 17/11/183.

also. Importantly, the families to which those widows who had only the smallest cash amounts at their disposal belonged, were by no means the least wealthy in terms of the amounts of cash left in other family wills.[15]

Whereas the women in the top-group had access to reasonably large sums of cash and devoted all or most of it to religious ends, most of those in the lower two groups of families did not have such resources at their disposal. It is suggested that although this was partly to do with family wealth, it was also a product of different attitudes to the use and disposal of surplus cash. That is, among mid-group families, and especially in the bottom-group, many widows simply did not have access to surplus cash sums, and/or they themselves chose not to employ family resources in traditional pious expression, but channelled wealth back into the family at some stage prior to making their wills. In all three groups, circumstances alone did not determine these widows' testamentary strategies - the character of their testaments was also moulded by traditional practice in the moral economy.

To some extent, the family circumstances of all testators selected, can be ascertained from references in their wills to children. It is usually possible to identify unmarried daughters and on occasions, sons who were minors. For the purposes of this investigation, all unmarried daughters and any sons were counted for each will-maker and family medians were calculated, in order to come to some approximation of the level of dependency across a family's testators. Also, the proportion of testators in each family who mentioned unmarried daughters and/or sons was ascertained. Then, the distribution of both of these data sets was compared between all twenty-three, and each of the three groups of families.

Across all families each testator mentioned a median of two, possibly dependent children. However, in the most religiously generous group, each will maker had a median of three children to provide for. The middle-group of families did not depart from the rest, with a median of two, but those with the most religiously sparse wills, mentioned a median of only one child for every testator. The same pattern emerges from a comparison of the proportions of testators in families who mentioned children. A median of five in every six testators in all twenty-three families mentioned possible dependents. In the top-group of families a median of every testator did so, in the middle-group four in every five, and in the lowest group, only about three in every five family testators had children to provide for. So,it may be concluded that the likelihood of

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15 Those belonging to relatively wealthy families: Joan Pette, 1497, CKS: PRC 17/6 211; Joan Bisshopynden, 1531, CKS: PRC 17/19/235; Luce Bisshopynden, 1519, CKS: PRC 17/14 33; Joan Chapman, 1488, CKS: PRC 17/5/76. As we shall see below, Joan Castelyn's family were probably of equal status to the majority of those selected here for study, but judged on testamentary wealth alone they do not appear to have been as affluent: 1494, CKS: PRC 17/6/96.

testators mentioning possible dependents in their wills increased as they became more lavishly religious, as did the numbers of children mentioned.

To find that the families who apportioned the largest share of their surplus resources to religious concerns also had the most dependent children to undertake for is rather surprising. It shows that family circumstances did not produce the different testamentary strategies of the three groups, and emphasizes the influence of family piety upon those approaches. It also underlines the extent to which middle, and particularly lower group families concentrated generally more limited cash resources upon dependent heirs, when compared to the most religiously generous. However, some of the testators in the top-group were wealthy enough to undertake handsomely for dependent children and still make extensive religious bequests. For example, in 1498, Thomas Carpynter was able to bequeath twenty marks to each of two of his daughters and £20 to a third, in addition to making religious bequests totalling over ten marks.[16] Only a year earlier, William Preston had left eight marks to each of his five daughters' dowries in addition to five marks in religious gifts.[17] The most financially impressive arrangement for dowries of all was made by John Strekynbold in 1505. He bequeathed £120 to be divided equally between his six daughters. Such an ambitious settlement however, seems to have curtailed his spiritual aspirations, to which he devoted only just over £1, much less than the other two Strekynbold testators.[18]

In general, cash portions to dowries decrease in size as one moves down the testamentary spectrum, but even in the lowest group of families they could be substantial. For example, Christopher Castelyn left his daughter £10 to her marriage, and distributed over £5 in religious bequests. In 1460, Thomas Gibbon gave ten marks to each of his daughters and failed to make any religious bequests whatsoever.[19] Although families in the top-group accounted for three-quarters of cash dowries of eight marks and over, they were also responsible for two-fifths of those worth less than five marks. Among these, John Davy left his daughter only 13s 4d whilst employing just under £2 to fund a temporary chantry for a quarter of a year and a gift to the parish church.[20] Family circumstances certainly affected the apportionment of wealth by individual testators, but they were not a significant factor in determining the overall character of familial piety.

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16 CKS: PRC 17/7/48.

17 1497, CKS: PRC 17/7/50.

18 PRO: P.C.C. 39 Holgrave, fol. 308; Thomas Strekynbold, 1496, CKS: PRC 17/6/158; George Strekynbold, 1524, CKS: PRC 17/16/269.

19 1532, CKS: PRC 17/21/58; PRO: P.C.C. 21 Stokton, fol. 161.

20 1492, CKS: PRC 17/5/330. A total of 60 cash dowry portions were identified in the 114 wills belonging to the 23 families. The median sum was 5 marks. Top-group families left 28 of these with a median value of 8 marks, middle-group families 14, at a median of 5 marks, and the bottom-group, 18 dowries worth a median of 40s.

Most families display a good deal of coherence in their approach to will-making, and it is only to be expected that the idiosyncratic nature of the demands upon individual testators' resources could produce divergences within the one family. For example, whereas Isak Chapman had to provide dowries for his four daughters as well as apportion his estate to his sons, and so had very little to leave in religious bequests, Thomas Chapman, does not appear to have had to undertake for any children, and after devising the residue of his estate to his wife, ordered that lands be sold to the value of ten marks and the money be given to the Grey Friars of Beaulieu, in the New Forest.[21] John Donne, the one member of his family who departed markedly from family tradition by leaving only a tiny fraction of his cash in religious gifts, appears to have died very young, with not only a wife, daughter and son to provide for, but another child on the way.[22]

In some instances, as with the Brekyndens, differences in testamentary strategy are explicable in terms of generational shifts and the departure in pious attitudes of one wing of a family from another. As is shown in Chapter Five, the Pellonds, Castelyns, Bisshopyndens, and some other families became less religiously frugal in their will-making by the second decade of the sixteenth century than they had been before; a development, which is illustrative of a more general trend in parochial piety.

Part two: traditional religion and the construction of identity

Chantries

The greatest expenditure upon religious aspirations at Tenterden was devoted to securing priestly intercession in the form of temporary or permanent chantries. When relatively large amounts of cash, or lands or goods which could be sold, were set aside for spiritual concerns, they were usually, either wholly or in part, employed to this end. On the whole, apart from some notable exceptions, chantries were seen as the apogee of *post mortem* pious provision; an attitude observed in other centres and regions in this period.[23]

The nine families at the top of the testamentary spectrum excelled in the arrangements they made for chantries. Probate evidence alone shows that all nine were responsible for at least one temporary or permanent foundation, and that seven

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21 Isak Chapman, 1522, CKS: PRC 17/19/145; Thomas Chapman, 1513, CKS: PRC 17/12/221.

22 1523, CKS: PRC 17/16/81.

23 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 328; Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, pp. 100-106; Burgess, 'Divine Service', pp. 49-50. See also, K.L. Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries in Britain* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 314, who suggests that chantries helped pave the way for the Reformation.

established two or more over the period. Compared to all known testators, these families were exceptionally active in founding chantries. Seventeen of their forty extant wills (42.5 per cent), contain a total of twenty-three bequests, compared to sixty-two (24 per cent) of all 263 wills.[24] (See column 7 of Table 4.1, and Table 4.2) Only eight out of forty-five will-makers in the middle-band of families, and only one in the lowest group arranged chantries.

In order to put these figures into some kind of context it is helpful to compare them with the levels of chantry foundation in other places. A considerably smaller share of Tenterden's testators left bequests for chantries than in most of the other centres which have been studied. Over similar periods in Norwich, Hull, Bury St. Edmunds, Bristol and London, between just under a third and around two-fifths of lay testators made arrangements for intercessory foundations of this type.[25] To compare with non-urban centres, Tenterden also fell behind the level of endowment for chantries in the rural villages of Blackbourne deanery to the north of Bury St. Edmunds.[26] Without other rural studies to compare with, it is not possible to draw hard and fast conclusions, but it may tentatively be asserted that Tenterden's relatively low level of chantry foundation does not appear to have been the product of the parish's greater rural character when compared with the urban centres mentioned above. Other towns are comparable to Tenterden in their level of chantry endowment, Colchester, being one of them. Here, 21 per cent of testators made bequests for temporary or permanent chantries, during the period 1485-1529; actually lower than the proportion in Tenterden.[27] Sandwich, on the east Kent coast, a Cinque port and of similar size to Tenterden, sustained about the same level of provision, with about a quarter of lay testators making bequests for chantries, from the mid-fifteenth century to 1539.[28] These examples illustrate how towns, large or small, could be less prolific in chantry endowment than rural areas.

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24 The numerous arrangements for chantries which would only come into effect in default of inheritance by beneficiaries are not included in these figures. This is because they appear to have been of only secondary importance to testators' main preoccupations. However, it is possible, that given the fact that testators bothered to record these arrangements at all, they may reveal more about piety than the method adopted here admits.

25 Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, pp. 220-221, Appendix 11; Heath, 'Urban Piety', pp. 210, 220; Dinn, 'Popular Religion', Table 17.1a, p. 714; Burgess, 'Divine Service', pp. 47 n.4, 52; Thomson, 'Piety and Charity', pp. 179, 191-2.

26 Here, 39 per cent of wills made in three selected decades contain bequests for chantries: Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 86, Table 17.10, 753.

27 Higgs, 'Lay Piety', Table 18, pp. 231, 232-235.

28 This, and other information on piety at Sandwich, is based on 334 lay wills made from 1460 to 1539. It is kindly supplied by S. Sweetinburgh who is currently working on a doctorate at the University of Kent, on piety and charity in Sandwich and Dover.

Table 4.2 *Testamentary provision for obsequies and chantries, Tenterden, 1449-1535*

Date Range	Total number of wills	No. (and %) of wills containing one or more bequests for temporary or perpetual chantries	No. (and %) of wills containing one or more bequests for obsequies
1449-79	41	15 (37%)	12 (29%)
1480-99	49	17 (35%)	11 (22%)
1500-19	84	22 (26%)	35 (42%)
1520-35	89	8 (10%)	64 (72%)
1449-1535	263	62 (24%)	112 (46%)

There was a sharp slump from the early 1510s in the proportion of Tenterden will-makers who made arrangements for chantries, which was not off-set (as it was in London) by any increase in the length of foundations. Neither was the fall in the proportion of chantry founders at Tenterden a product of a general increase in the numbers of testators to include less wealthy individuals who could not afford chantries, as was partly the case in London.[29] In absolute terms, the number of will-makers establishing chantries fell by a half from the first to the second decade of the sixteenth century, rose a little again in the early 1520s, but then in 1527 dropped to zero for the remainder of the period. Even the nine families who were distinctive for their traditionally orthodox piety did not sustain the same level of chantry foundation after around 1510.

There was a similar decline in chantry foundations in Sandwich from the 1490s with a sharp fall in the 1510s,[30] in Bury, particularly by the 1520s, and in York. Dobson rejects the notion that the decline may have been due to a shift in doctrinal attitudes, "or mass revulsion against the concept of efficacy of prayers for the dead".[31] Likewise, Dinn argues that in Bury, rather than turning away from the doctrine of purgatory, testators favoured cheaper and newer forms of traditional Catholic devotion such as the trental and funerary arrangements, to an extent which compensated for the fall off in chantry endowments, and as is shown below, in some ways this was also the case in Tenterden.[32]

Not only were they less common, but in Tenterden, temporary chantries were much shorter on average than elsewhere. Only eight of the sixty-eight which are quantifiable, were for more than a year, thirteen were annuals of masses, twenty-two were for only half this time, and twenty-five were for a mere three months. Whilst the median length of foundation was half a year, the most common arrangement was for masses to be celebrated for three months. This is in stark contrast to other locations for which there is information.[33] Among the nine religiously unsparing families, the median duration of foundations was also six months but, being more generous than testators as a

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29 Thomson, 'Piety and Charity', pp. 191-2.

30 The proportion of testators leaving resources for chantries in Sandwich fell from around a third in the 1470s and 1480s, to only about a tenth by the 1520s and 1530s; the most dramatic drop occuring in the 1510s.

31 R.B. Dobson, 'The Foundation of Perpetual Chantries by the Citizens of York', in G.J. Cuming, ed., *The Province of York, SCH*, iv, (Leiden, 1967), pp. 35-6.

32 Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 718.

33 At Norwich, more than half of all chantries were for two years or longer, and in Hull the average was three years: Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, Appendix 11, p. 221; Heath, 'Urban Piety', p. 220. At Colchester, nearly all endowments were designed to secure the prayers of a priest for a year, while in Bury St. Edmunds, only 7 per cent were to last for less than a year, and 42 per cent for longer than twelve months. In the rural Blackbourne Deanery to the north of Bury, 65 per cent of chantries mentioned in wills were intended to last for at least a year: Higgs, 'Lay Piety', p. 232; Dinn, 'Popular Religion', Table 17.3, p. 720, Table 17.12, p. 755. The selected Blackbourne Deanery wills cover the decades, 1499-58, 1491-1500 and 1521-30.

whole, their most common arrangement was for the same time of half, and not quarter of a year.

The establishment of a perpetual chantry in any centre in England in the late medieval period was a rare occurrence, and Tenterden was no exception.[34] Only four are recorded in wills, they all belonged to residents of Small Hythe, and were all located in the chapel of St. John the Baptist. In fact, as seen in Chapter Three, two of these endowments appear to have been intended to augment the chaplain's stipend rather than establish a personal or familial chantry. The other two, which took the specific form of chantries to be celebrated for the founders' souls, were inaugurated by William Davy and William Jamyn in 1501, both members of traditionally religious families. However, even their endowments were meant to have the dual purpose of enhancing collective religious provision in Small Hythe.[35] Not one testator established a perpetual chantry in St. Mildred's, nor anywhere else.

There were however, two perpetual chantries in Tenterden; one founded in this period and another possibly already established, which do not appear in the probate evidence.[36] The most important of these was called "Peter Marshall's chantry" and was presumably founded by the vicar of Tenterden of the same name who served in the parish from 1494 to 1512.[37] By 1546, this was endowed with five messuages together with attached lands in Tenterden and Woodchurch, all at farm, and the rent from a messuage called "the Woolesack" (probably the Woolpack Inn on Tenterden High Street).[38] Rents from these properties were reckoned to amount to £17 1s 4d a year, of which £10 10s provided a wage for a Chaplain at St. Mildred's, for him to celebrate divine service there,

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34 Twelve of the 355 Hull wills studied by Heath contain arrangements for perpetual chantries, and only 1 per cent of lay testators in Norwich sought to establish them: Heath, 'Urban Piety', p. 219; Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, p. 221. Bristol was somewhat exceptional with 20 of the 140 chantries detailed in fifteenth century wills being in perpetuity: Burgess, 'Divine Service', p. 52.

35 John Ingram, 1474, CKS: PRC 17/2/342; John Wayte, 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/49; William Davy, 1501, CKS: PRC 17/8/221; William Jamyn, 1501, CKS: PRC 17/8/199.

36 A third perpetual chantry which was not located in Tenterden, but which from the 1450s was partly supported by the manors of Morgue and Gatesdene (Godden) in the south-west corner of the parish, was known as Sheryngtons Chantry. This was founded by Walter Sherrington, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the reign of Henry VI, and was one of the most important chantry chapels in St. Paul's Cathedral, with a library attached. Quite why the chaplains of this foundation decided to buy the two manors in Tenterden is not clear: Furely, 'Early History of Tenterden', pp. 50-1; *Kent Chantries*, ed. A. Hussey, (Kent Archaeological Society: Kent Records, vol. xii, 1932), part 1, pp. 306-7; Hasted, *History of Kent*, vol. vii, pp. 210-1.

37 Peter Marshall died in 1518/19 after resigning the Tenterden vicarage in 1512, the year after the heresy trials. He appears to have held also the vicarage of Faversham, Kent from 1498 and was Rector of St. Edmund the King, Lombard Street, London, 1510-16: A.B. Emden, *Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500* (Oxford, 1957-8), vol. ii, p. 1229; A.H. Taylor, 'The Rectors and Vicars of St. Mildred's, Tenterden', *Arch. Cant.*, xxxi (1915), p. 216.

38 The Woolpack Inn is situated on the north side of the High Street in front of the parish church. It, and perhaps other buildings listed in the chantry certificate which details the endowments, was part of the parsonage glebelands, from which rents were normally paid to the Abbot of St. Augustine's: Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', pp. 323-336, and Fig. 43, p. 335.

and to teach a Grammar School.[39] The excess revenue from endowments to Marshall's Chantry may have benefited the parish financially and perhaps even contributed to gifts to the poor.[40] Substantial as it was, there is no record of this chantry in the Tenterden wills, and so there is no chronology for what appear to have been separate endowments which built the foundation up over time.[41] The only possible reference to it apart from among the chantry certificates, is to be found in the last will of Peter Marshall's brother, William Marshall, rector of Warehorne from 1498 until his death in 1524, and vicar of Appledore from 1487. He ordained that "two substanciall chalyses" be made, and bequeathed one of these "to the use of the chauntry lately founded in the parishe church of Tenterden, there to deserve for the masses to be saide by the chauntrye prest as long as it shall endure". He also left £4 for the purchase of "a vestment with thapparell" for the chantry priest to wear on "the principall & festyvall daies", and two silver candlesticks to stand upon the chantry altar on the same occasions.[42]

We know comparatively little about the other perpetual chantry in the parish. According to Harris, it was founded by John Light, although he did not hazard a guess as to when, and went on to confuse Light's Chantry with Small Hythe chapel. It was endowed with part of the two small manors of Lights-Notinden and East Asherinden, which lay between Small Hythe and Tenterden town. The chantry itself, was probably located in the parish church, and existed up until its suppression in the late 1540s when both manors passed to Sir John Baker.[43]

Compared to Kent as a whole, and even in a national context, Tenterden appears to have been rather well endowed with permanent intercessory foundations.[44] In part,

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39 Furley, 'Early History of Tenterden', p. 52; *Kent Chantries*, p. 306. For a similar chantry foundation at Colchester, which because it was also a school, did not require the purchase of a licence, see Higgs, 'Lay Piety', pp. 234-5.

40 Indeed, in his will, dated 28 July 1518, Peter Marshall bequeathed 20s to the poor of Tenterden, and 10 marks in 'works of charity' (CKS: PRC 32/12/158), cited in Taylor, 'Rectors and Vicars of St. Mildred's', p. 216. For some comments on the ways in which parishes profitted from chantry endowments, see Burgess and Kümin, 'Penitential Bequests and Parish Regimes', p. 625; Alan Kreider, *English Chantries*, chapter 2, esp. pp. 66-9. For a different perspective which stresses the conflict of interests between incumbent and cantarist, see Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries*, ch. 11.

41 Only 7 out of 34 of the chantry or guild priests recorded in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* for the diocese of Canterbury, received a net annual income of more than £10: Kreider, *English Chantries*, Table 1.4, p. 22.

42 In his own will, Peter Marshall made no reference to the chantry named after him: Taylor, 'Rectors and Vicars of St. Mildred's', p. 216; William Marshall's will is transcribed in A.H. Taylor, 'The Will of a Medieval Kentish Parson', *Arch. Cant.*, xliii (1931), pp. 123-132, esp. pp. 123, 128-9.

43 John Harris, *The History of Kent in Five Parts* (London, 1719), p. 312; Hasted, *History of Kent*, vol. vii, p. 209; Furley, 'Early History of Tenterden', pp. 49-50.

44 Only fifty-six, or just over 15 per cent of Kent's 371 parishes possessed 'greater institutions', which included chantry foundations, in addition to guilds, free chapels, colleges, stipendiary services and hospitals, with an average of 0.20 of these institutions per parish across the county. In a total of twenty counties and including London and York, 22.7 per cent of English parishes had 'greater institutions', of which there were on average 0.47 per parish: Kreider, *English Chantries*, Table 1.2., pp. 16-18.

this was a product of its urban status and role within an essentially rural and less affluent hinterland.[45] However, there is little evidence that either of the parish's foundations were established, or indeed further endowed and augmented by local families.[46] They seem more to have been injections from outside the town, from clergy, possibly supported by St. Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury, and in the case of Light's Chantry, probably by gentry in the fourteenth or early fifteenth century. Local and county gentry were responsible for the two temporary chantries of any great substance, of which there is a record. Thomas Petlesden, in 1463, and Sir John Guldeford, Comptroller of the Household of Edward IV, in 1493, both established twenty year foundations.[47] Gentry families like the Petlesdens and Guldefords had considerable influence on the tenor of parochial piety, not least because they could afford to lead the way in the rich display of devotion.

Despite the considerable wealth of Tenterden's leading families by the sixteenth century,[48] on the whole, they were unusually inactive in establishing intercessory foundations. In relation to other places, even the most consistently committed traditionally religious families only barely came up to the average in their level of chantry provision. But, paradoxically, within their own community, they were conspicuous for their efforts to sustain the celebration of divine service for their own and others' souls.

In many instances lands and sometimes also messuages had to be sold in order to pay for chantries. So, for example, Katherine Carpynter willed that all her lands be sold and the proceeds go to half a year's chantry in the parish church at a cost of £3 6s 8d, and the residue be used to fund the rest of her bequests.[49] A more common arrangement was for heirs to pay for temporary foundations, often out of their inheritances. For example, William Davy stipulated that his heirs were to pay his feoffees a total of twenty marks for the performance of two temporary chantries, and William Foule's son, Bartholomew was to fund his bequest of five marks for a chantry.[50]

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45 Compare, for example, with Bury, where six perpetual chantries were mentioned in wills, and none in the Blackbourne Deanery which formed part of its hinterland. However, this disparity is probably partly due to the much smaller number of wills looked at by Dinn for the rural area: *idem*, 'Popular Religion', Table 17.3, p. 720, cf. Table 17.12, p. 755, also, p. 754.

46 In late medieval Bury, by adding endowments to existing perpetual chantries, the benefactor's soul could be prayed for in addition to those already named: Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 722-3.

47 Petlesden belonged to the family whose eponymous seat lay at the west end of the town, and whose estate passed to the Guldefords by the marriage of Stephen Petlesden's only heir and daughter Julian, to Edward Guldeford of Halden, in the reign of Henry VI. Thomas had the distinction of serving as Tenterden's first bailiff in 1449-50: CKS: PRC 17/1/141; Hasted, *History of Kent*, vol. vii, p. 208; CKS: Te/C1, fol. 140r. Sir John, was Edward Guldeford's great grandson: PRO: P.C.C. 29 Dogett, fol. 223; R.C. Jenkins, 'The Family of Guldeford', *Arch. Cant.*, xiv (1882), p. 5.

48 See Chapter Five.

49 CKS: PRC 17/11/182.

50 CKS: PRC 17/8/221; PRC 17/6/281.

It is not possible to judge what proportion of foundations were actually established. However, some wills attend to the fulfilment of the testamentary bequests by other family members, presumably when the testator was responsible as executor for their completion. So, for example, in 1482 Stephen Smyth apportioned ten marks to fulfilling his brother Richard Smyth's will, who had lived in Cranbrook. This included an arrangement for a temporary chantry in Cranbrook parish church.[51] Arrangements left in the hands of heirs seem to have been more secure than those entrusted to more distant kin or unrelated friends and associates.[52] Whatever the success rate of their aspirations, it is clear that throughout the period many testators were prepared to dispose of valuable resources in the form of land and buildings, and in particular, to rely on heirs to establish religious foundations. This suggests a considerable level of trust and cooperation between and within the generations; attitudes and strategies which operated in cooperative estate building and industrial activity within wealthy Tenterden families in this period.[53] These strategies also had the effect of reinforcing family continuities in piety, with the religious preoccupations of the testator being continued by his or her heirs.[54]

Almost two-thirds (fifty out of seventy-eight) of all chantries mentioned in the Tenterden wills were to be performed in the parish church of St. Mildred, with seven of them specifically attached to named altars.[55] Another ten were attached to the Chapel of St. John the Baptist. In six cases the location of the chantry is not stated, and in five of these it is most likely that St. Mildred's was intended. Only twelve bequests were to other parish churches, all but three of which either adjoined Tenterden or lay within a distance of ten miles. A further one was established at Tonbridge, twenty-five miles to the north-west, and another, near to Northhampton.[56] Only one endowment was attached to a religious house; Saint Augustine's Abbey, in Canterbury. This very local emphasis to chantry foundations was probably largely due to the fact that the vast majority of

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51 CKS: PRC 17/3/450.

52 Archbishop William Warham's Kentish Visitation of 1511 produced seven cases of executors who had not handed over sums of money to Tenterden's churchwardens which had been intended for religious endowments, and in three cases they were subsequently ordered to institute the temporary chantries which they had failed to establish. None of these executors appear to have been the testators' immediate relatives: *Kentish Visitations*, pp. 206-9.

53 See the examples given by Roberts, in her, 'Tenterden Houses', pp. 230, 251, 304-5.

54 For examples of this sort of continuity in fifteenth century Bristol, see Burgess, 'By Quick and by Dead', pp. 851-855.

55 Three were attached to the altar of St. Stephen, three to the altar and chapel of the blessed virgin Mary (called the 'Lady Chapel' on one occasion), and one to the cult of St. Katherine.

56 A single chantry was founded at each of Egerton, Biddenden, Cranbrook, High Halden, Woodchurch, Wittersham and Benenden, and two at Rolvenden. In 1513, Richard Aylond bequeathed 8 marks for a priest to sing for a year in the parish where his father lived, and 10 marks for a year's chantry in the parish church of "Oveston in the County of North", possibly Overstone just outside Northampton: PRO: P.C.C. 8 Holder, fol. 59v.

Tenterden testators requested burial within St. Mildred's, coupled with the belief that intercessions were most effective when made close to the deceased's body.[57]

In one sense, this in itself reveals the strength and continuity of local identity in Tenterden among the leading stable families. Only two of the chantries established by the twenty-three selected were in neighbouring parishes, both expressing family connections and/or origins.[58] Because they had all been resident in Tenterden from the 1490s at the latest, most did not have substantial familial links with other parishes. Among other testators, five out of eight who made bequests for chantries outside Tenterden did so because of family origins or links with the parish in which they were to be celebrated. The others held lands and may have once lived in the designated parishes.[59] On the whole then, chantry bequests to neighbouring or more distant parishes expressed testators' origins or kinship, and formed an element of parochial piety which should not be ignored. At the same time, seven of these testators also arranged for a chantry in Tenterden, stressing their membership of the urban community to which they now perceived themselves to belong.[60]

The only endowment attached to a monastery, although different in character from a regular chantry, was instituted by Thomas Strekynbold, one of the more traditionally generous testators. He ordained that his son John pay ten marks for a monk at St. Augustine's, Canterbury, to pray for his soul for two years.[61] This was an unusual bequest by any standards, which suggests that Thomas had special connections with St. Augustine's, perhaps arising from the monks' considerable influence in Tenterden,

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57 Dinn argues that this is the main reason why only 8 per cent of Bury's chantries were set up in parishes outside the town: *idem*, 'Popular Religion', pp. 736-740, ch. 15.

58 Robert Stonehouse founded two half-year chantries, one in the parish church of Egerton where he appears to have migrated from to Tenterden, where he still held lands, and where his brothers still lived, and one in Tenterden, together symbolising his dual identity. As late as 1528 the Tenterden branch of the family still had strong links with their original community, as the priest William Stonehouse made extensive religious bequests to the parish church of Egerton: 1472, CKS: PRC 17/2/65; PRC 17/18/180. Stephen Smyth's bequest for a chantry in Cranbrook was in fulfilment of the will of his brother Richard, who had been a parishioner there: 1482, CKS: PRC 17/3/450.

59 Robert Clerk (1495, CKS: PRC 17/6/156) held lands and tenements in Woodchurch, and his father had lived there (William Clerk, 1474, CKS: PRC 32/2/270); John Symme (1498, CKS: PRC 17/8/41) gave money for the son of his sister who lived in Tonbridge to sing divine service; Galfridus Shorte (1508, PRO: P.C.C. 31 Bennett, fol. 98v.) seems to have belonged to a family which lived in Wittersham (CKS: PRC 32/2/124, PRC 32/11/60); Richard Aylond arranged a chantry in the parish where his father had dwelt and less explicably, in Overstone near Northampton (PRO: P.C.C. 8 Holder, fol. 59v.); John Wayte held lands and had family in Benenden, and seven family wills survive for that parish dating from 1470 to 1533 (1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/49; PRC 17/1/377, PRC 17/2/28, PRC 17/5/64, PRC 17/5/241, PRC 17/6/73, PRC 17/16/292). John Donngham paid tithes forgotten to the high altar at Rolvenden and so probably had property there (1505, CKS: PRC 17/9/51); and this was probably also the case with William Iden and Robert Bregges (1470, CKS: PRC 17/3/20, 1483, CKS: PRC 17/4/18).

60 Similarly, half of Bury's testators who founded chantries outside the town, also requested chantries within Bury, and migration from a parish, land there, and family connections, were all factors lying behind the bequests: Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 739.

61 1496, CKS: PRC 17/6/158.

through the possession of substantial property there, as well as the advowson of St. Mildred's.[62]

In some quarters, chantries have been seen as expressions of an essentially individualistic piety, intended principally for the spiritual benefit of the founder. This was certainly the opinion of John Wyclif.[63] Recently, some scholars have challenged this notion, although finding it difficult to move wholly away from the conclusion that these bequests centred first and foremost upon the individual.[64] However, others have attempted to argue the case for re-assessment more forcefully, by stressing the practical contribution which chantry priests made to the religious and social life of the parish.[65] This seems to put too much emphasis upon the secondary benefits of chantries, at the expense of a frank analysis of their immediate meaning and significance for those who instituted them.

To some extent, analysis of the wording of bequests for chantries sheds light on this issue. The inclusion of others apart from the founder among those for whom masses were celebrated, has been seized upon as evidence of altruistic attitudes in these arrangements. In particular, when "all the faithful dead" or "all Chrysten sowlys" were incorporated in bequests, it is argued that they should not be seen as "necessarily an expression of religious or social individualism".[66] These latter clauses also appear in a substantial proportion of the Tenterden wills but it is likely that they were as much a product of scribal intervention when the wills were en-registered or made up into fair copies, as truly representative of testators' sensibilities.[67] As many as two-thirds to three-

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62 Very few bequests for chantries were made to regular clergy in Hull, and in Bury, only Babwell friary and not Bury abbey received endowments of this type, and then only 8 out of 263 for which the location is known: Heath, 'Urban Piety', p. 220; Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 738. Kilburne, *Topographie*, p. 262; Hasted, *History of Kent*, vol. vii, pp. 214-7; Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', pp. 16, 323-4; Furley, 'Early History of Tenterden', p. 46. The farm of the rectory was worth £20 a year in the 1460s: C. Cotton, 'St. Austin's Abbey, Canterbury. Treasurers' Accounts 1468-9, and others', *Arch. Cant.*, li (1940), pp. 74, 92, 103.

63 Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries*, pp. 303-14.

64 For example, Tanner suggests that testators "were not wholly selfish", but requested masses and prayers for relatives, friends, "all the faithful departed", and for those to whom they owed some sort of social or material debt: *idem*, *Church in Norwich*, pp. 105-6.

65 Kreider, *English Chantries*, pp. 38-70; Burgess, 'Divine Service', *passim*; R. Hill, 'A Chaunterie for Soules': London Chantries in the Reign of Richard II', in F.R.H. Du Boulay and C.M. Barron, eds., *The Reign of Richard II* (London, 1971), pp.242-55; Brown, *Popular Piety*, pp. 100-8; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 140-1, 369-70.

66 Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 740-3, cit. at p. 43. Only 20 per cent of testators establishing chantries in Bury, requested masses and prayers for their own souls alone; the majority also mentioned one of, or a combination of spouses, parent(s), benefactors, and friends, and 13 per cent included "all the faithful dead".

67 Evidence for this practice at the stage when wills were enrolled in the Canterbury archdeaconry register, is provided by the chance survival of the office copy of John Wayte of Small Hythe's will, in addition to the enregistered version: office copy: 1526, CKS: PRC 16/1/3; enregistered copy: 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/49. There are some helpful comments on office copies in M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, p. 323.

quarters of the Tenterden chantry endowments, either failed to specify who they were to benefit, mentioned only the founder, or employed the formulaic phrase, "for my soul and all Christian souls" or variants of it. Few mention additional specific individuals or groups of people. Twelve of the seventy-eight include both or one of the testator's parents, eleven mention siblings, other possible blood or affinal kin and/or fictive kin usually referred to as "friends", and only six include the founder's spouse. Tenterden's chantry founders give the impression of being less outward-looking and more individualistic in their spiritual aspirations than recent revisionism would allow.[68]

Funerary and commemorative ritual

The townsfolk and parishioners of Tenterden were much more likely to make specific arrangements in their wills for religious services and activities surrounding their funerals and at subsequent commemorative moments than they were to institute chantries. On the whole these were restricted to the three occasions of the funeral itself, the month mind and the anniversary (although a number of testators extended their obit for a further number of years or for perpetuity). Over the entire period, 46 per cent of testators (122 out of 263) left sums of money or made arrangements for funds to be released for one or more of these celebrations, and just over a quarter of them gave some sort of instructions as to the form they should take. They were more than twice as popular in Tenterden as they were in Bury St. Edmunds and were mentioned over half as frequently again as in the Sandwich wills.[69] In particular, anniversaries or obits were much more common in Tenterden than they were elsewhere, being mentioned in 28 per cent of wills.[70] These ceremonies should therefore be seen as a peculiar feature of the practice of traditional religion in Tenterden.

As Table 4.2 shows, the popularity of funerary and commemorative ritual as a pious outlet was not constant over the period. After declining somewhat in the 1480s and 1490s, bequests and arrangements increased markedly until almost three-quarters of all will-makers were choosing to express at least some aspects of their religious sentiment through these rituals. It is because of this growth at roughly the same time as

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68 In Bury, 26 per cent included spouses, 22 per cent parents, and 28 per cent friends. Benefactors or those to whom the testator was 'bound', were mentioned in 36 per cent of wills with chantry bequests. In Blackbourne deanery, 24 per cent mentioned spouses, 8 per cent parents, 23 per cent benefactors and 49 per cent friends: Dinn, 'Popular Religion', Table 17.8, p. 742, Table 17.15, p. 759.

69 Dinn, 'Popular Religion', Table 14.1, p. 539: only 18 per cent of Bury's will-makers mentioned mortuary provisions of this type.

70 Compare this to Bury, where only 5 per cent of testators mentioned obits: Dinn, 'Popular Religion', Table 14.11, p. 574; in Hull, 16 per cent requested obits: Heath, 'Urban Piety', p. 218; and in Colchester, a larger share of 21 per cent did so: Higgs, 'Lay Piety', Table 18, p. 231.

the decline in the popularity of chantries that bequests only began to supersede those for chantries in the first two decades of the sixteenth century. The same thing happened at Sandwich with a very similar chronology, and to a much lesser extent at Bury St. Edmunds.[71] These changes suggest that there was a definite shift in religious tastes in Tenterden in the early sixteenth century - and from the evidence relating to Sandwich - that this was a phenomenon occurring in at least one other town in Kent.

Forty-seven of the 114 wills made by the twenty-three families, mentioned funerary and commemorative celebrations. As was the case with chantry bequests, these are not evenly distributed across the testamentary spectrum, but tend to be concentrated in the top and middle bands. So, a median of one in two of the most religiously generous families' wills made such arrangements, and two in five of the moderately traditional, compared to a median of only one in every four among the families making the most religiously sparse wills.

To a small extent, these differences are due to the fact that a larger share of the wills belonging to families in the top-band were written after 1500, when these bequests were becoming more popular, but this notwithstanding, as one moves down the pious spectrum, arrangements for funerals and commemorative ritual become less frequent, a pattern which accords with that already outlined for chantries.[72] Only slightly more than half of the testators in the lowest band who wrote wills after 1500 made bequests to their funerals or extended funerals. For them, this was a less attractive pious outlet than for the majority of Tenterden's parishioners, who by the sixteenth century were increasingly preoccupied with this aspect of devotion, and none more so than those who were most concerned to prioritize the traditionally religious in their wills.

How can the apparent trend from chantry endowment to funerary ritual be explained? Firstly, it was clearly not just a move from one form of devotion to another. To begin with, by the 1500s arrangements for funerals and subsequent commemorations for the deceased had become more popular than chantries had ever been. This was no doubt partly because an individual could be assured of some degree of benefit from masses and prayers for less money than it cost to employ a priest to sing for what was generally considered to be the minimum time of three months. In this way, compared to chantry foundation, funerary ritual was more accessible to those with comparatively limited resources, and so developed a wider social base. Some Tenterden testators left as

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71 By the 1530s at least four-fifths of Sandwich's testators were mentioning their funerals and/or subsequent commemorations, and only about a tenth were founding chantries; Dinn, 'Popular Religion', compare Table 14.1, p. 539 with Table 17.1, p. 714.

72 Differences in the chronological distribution of wills between the three bands of families appear to have only a limited significance, as mid-band families made almost the same proportion of their wills after 1500 (27 out of 45) as the lowest band (17 out of 29) and yet, were more likely to mention funerals etc. Top-band families made 27 of their 40 wills after 1500, not significantly more than the other groups.

little as between 5s 4d and 13s 4d for their funerals, month minds and obits altogether, but most set aside at least 20s, with the median amount for all those who specify the sums to be given, being £1 13s 4d, the same amount required for a quarter year's temporary chantry (this does not include calculations for perpetual obits, and so to a small extent underestimates the level of investment). Overall though, this sort of provision was less demanding on family resources than the regular employment of a priest. Only eight testators left as much as ten marks, the sum required to secure the celebration of divine service for a year.[73] Accentuating this factor, by the 1510s and 1520s, because of inflation, chantries may have been becoming less secure and obsequies may have offered a more reliable way of gaining access to masses and prayers.[74]

This is not to give the impression that the funeral and subsequent services were necessarily considered as an alternative to chantry provision, for those who could afford the latter. More than half of all chantry founders also made bequests for celebrations to be conducted at one or more of their burial day, month mind and obit, and after 1520, every bequest for a chantry was accompanied by such arrangements. This suggests that, resources permitting, the two different types of provision were considered by some to be wholly complementary; offering a diverse strategy for intercessions which hopefully produced the most effective relief from purgatorial suffering.[75]

There were a number of religious and cultural attractions to funerary ritual, which help to explain its increasing popularity. The Office of the Dead, consisting of "*Placebo*", and "*Dirige*" followed by the Psalms of Commendation, which accompanied the funeral, and formed the prelude to the mass of Requiem were among the best known of all the Church's prayers among lay people. Together with the requiem mass, they were repeated at month minds and anniversaries. Included in most Primers in this period, these prayers could be recited by the literate lay person, and even for the less learned their general meaning was probably reasonably clear. In some cases funeral doles were partly to ensure the attendance of literate clerks and lay people who could adequately recite the Office.[76] There is then a case for arguing that part of the appeal of services performed at

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73 101 testators specified the amounts to be given for funerals, month minds and obits. Dinn makes the point that part of the attraction of funeral arrangements was that they were cheaper than chantries: 'Popular Religion', p. 718; see also. Higgs, 'Lay Piety', p. 228.

74 E.H. Phelps Brown and S.V. Hopkins, 'Seven Centuries of the Prices of Consumables, Compared with Builders' Wage-Rates', in E.M. Carus-Wilson, ed., *Essays in Economic History*, ii, (London, 1962), pp. 179-96; R.B. Outhwaite, *Inflation in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (London, Melbourne and Toronto, 1969), pp. 9ff; Y.S. Brenner, 'The Inflation of Prices in Early Sixteenth Century England', *EcHR*, 2nd series, xiv (1961-2), pp. 225-39; Heath, *English Parish Clergy*, pp. 23-5.

75 In actual fact, most chantries already included the regular repitition of the Office of the Dead and the mass of Requiem, the services which consitituted funerary and commemorative ritual: Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries*, pp. 296-7. For comments on these types of diverse intercessory strategies in Norwich, see Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, p. 100.

76 Higgs, 'Lay Piety', pp. 224-5, nn.26 and 27; Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 560-562; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 210, 220-1, 369.

the funeral and on subsequent commemorative days was the degree of lay participation which they allowed and encouraged. This participation probably exceeded the degree to which lay people had access to, and took an active involvement in the mass.[77]

The doctrinal rationales behind chantries and funeral celebrations were essentially identical, centred as they were around the Church's teachings about purgatory. The existence of purgatory and the efficacy of prayers and masses for those suffering therein, was not in itself widely questioned before the late 1520s in England, when Luther's doctrine of justification by faith supplied the basis for a wholesale assault on these notions. In the ensuing purge of what were considered to be erroneous practices surrounding erroneous doctrines, the Office of the Dead was eventually extinguished, along with other parts of the liturgy deemed to be for the benefit of the faithful departed.[78] Until the late 1520s, recorded doubts about purgatory are difficult to find, even in the records of heresy trials, and complaints tended to focus upon the "ostentatious folly" of chantry foundations, and what were seen as the avaricious motives of the clergy who staffed them.[79]

The fact that most of the Tenterden testators who left money for their funerals also devoted sums to subsequent services, and that more often than not the amounts specified for the latter exceeded those for the former, underlines the continuing centrality of ideas about purgatory in the religious mentality of the parishioners. They made considerable efforts to be remembered and prayed for a month, a year or longer, after their funerals.[80] If doctrinally identical to chantries, they were in form and practice rather different. In Tenterden at least, funerals seem to have offered parishioners the opportunity to exercise greater control over the composition of, and emphasis upon, the different elements within the services and commemorations, as well as the way funds were distributed. Whereas only two testators gave specific instructions about the form which their temporary chantries were to take,[81] thirty- five stipulated how bequeathed cash was to be distributed at funerals and obsequies.

Some will-makers limited their requests to rites within the church. So, for example, in 1523, Agnes Grenestrete requested five masses at her funeral, five at her

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77 For an argument strongly in favour of the notion of some level of active lay participation in the mass, but which nevertheless, describes a communal ritual less accessible than the Office of the Dead, see Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, ch. 3.

78 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 382; Kreider, *English Chantries*, pp. 117; Hutton, *Rise and Fall of Merry England*, pp. 80-1, 93.

79 Only one suspect examined in Archbishop Warham's heresy trials in Kent denied the existence of purgatory, and he did not live in Tenterden parish: Chapter Six; Kreider, *English Chantries*, p. 95 and ch. 4.

80 Practices were similar in Bury: Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 560.

81 Robert Clerk, 1495, CKS: PRC 17/6/156; John Tyler, 1504, CKS: PRC 17/9/211. Writing on perpetual chantries, Wood-Legh, states that if left to his own devices, a chantry priest would normally celebrate the mass of the day, according to the use he was following: *idem*, *Perpetual Chantries*, p. 281.

month mind, three at her year's mind, and three at her two year's mind. John Freyman stipulated three masses and diriges at his "berying" and the same at his month day, whereas Stephen Couper senior wanted six masses at each of his funeral, month and year's mind.[82]

The giving of alms to the poor was an important part of funerary ritual which was not mentioned in relation to chantries. This was requested by most of the individuals who left instructions. Duffy suggests that alms giving was as much a customary part of mortuary provision as the Requiem mass, but even so, when testators went to the trouble of mentioning such charitable works, it suggests a conscious emphasis was being placed upon them.[83] The giving of funeral doles had more than one type of value. It helped to ensure the salvation of the giver, simply by being an act of mercy in itself, but it was also intended to encourage the prayers of priests and literate clerks, and in particular, of the poor, for the deceased's soul.[84] Some of these bequests were part of fairly formulaic clauses, like that in Robert Swoffer's will written in 1507, reading, "in dirige masses and to poor people at my burial day and monthes mind at discretion of John Swoffer my brother", or in William Beche's testament of 1518: "To be distributed to priests and clerks and other mynysters of the seyd churche and to power people in the day of my sepulture xiijs ivd" and the same amount in a similar manner at his month and year's mind.[85] Julyan Donne put particular emphasis on the poor, when she left 20s to her funeral, "to priests, clerks and other mynysters and specyally to poore pepyll", and 26s 8d for her month day in the same manner. She also devised a parcel of land to her son John, and stipulated that he take from the profits 3s a year to be distributed every Lent in the parish church for her own and her husband's souls.[86] Similarly, in 1467, John Davy left 2d to every poor person at his funeral, 1d to every poor boy, and a penny to each poor person attending his month and year's minds.[87] In 1518, William Couper left at each of his funeral and month mind, 6s 8d divided between ten priests, and 3s 4d to clerks and poor people. He also bequeathed 4d "to evry dweller and his wiffe inhabyting betwyxt the mansyon of merieyn Hood and the mansyon of Wyllam lambyn at within the seid parishe at evry of the seid dayes of my sepulture trygyntale and annyversary". This type of discriminating charity to the local and respectable parish poor was a growing

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82 CKS: PRC 17/16/25; 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/74; 1527, CKS: PRC 17/17/277. See also, William Stonehouse, 1528, CKS: PRC 17/18/180.

83 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 359, 362.

84 Duffy, *ibid.*, pp. 357-66.

85 CKS: PRC 17/13/260; PRC 17/14/50. See also, Katherine Foule, widow, 1519, CKS: PRC 17/15/64; Margaret Pette, 1518, CKS: PRC 17/14/26; Robert Bisshopynden, 1523, CKS: PRC 17/15/258; William Preston, 1493, CKS: PRC 17/6/10.

86 1521, CKS: PRC 17/15/38.

87 PRO: P.C.C. 25 Godyn, fol. 193v.

trend in England in this period, possibly stemming from the notion that only the prayers of the truly Christian and devout were effective.[88]

A number of will-makers stipulated that food and sometimes also drink be provided on burial days and at obsequies. Sometimes this took the form of alms to the poor, as was the case for Thomas Syre, who in 1531, left 2s "to poor people in bread and vitell".[89] However, more usually, the provision of food and drink was in addition to alms and took the form of a funeral or commemorative feast. Instructions for these feasts only occur from 1519, when Moyse Pellond left 13s 4d "to be distrybuted to prists clerks power people and for a drynkyng to be had for the helth of my sowle in the day of my sepulture".[90] Others left money for meat and drink to be supplied in addition to alms.[91] Feasts like this were no doubt in part intended to remind family, friends and neighbours to pray for the testator's soul, but they also had a material and social aspect to do with the display of wealth, the promotion of good-neighbourliness through posthumous hospitality and the strengthening of ties between families. This was more of a collective ritual than the chantry.[92]

The first of these motives - the symbolic display of wealth and consequent signification of status - probably played a considerable part in the increasing attraction of funerary and commemorative ritual, as chantry provision declined in Tenterden.[93] Bell ringing through the town on the evening before the funeral may have attracted those seeking doles and encouraged parishioners to pray for the deceased, but it also publicly announced the departure of a significant member of the community.[94] Likewise, the procession to the church and the gathering of priests, clerks and the poor holding candles around the hearse at the funeral service, sometimes dressed in specially provided cloaks or hoods, whilst intensely religious, was sometimes also deliberately ostentatious.[95] Townsfolk of higher and middling status in Tenterden, enjoyed increasingly outstanding prosperity from the late fifteenth century, and this is likely to have shown itself in just this sort of display.[96] This said, there is only one reference to bell ringing in the

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88 CKS: PRC 32/12/174. Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 362-6.

89 CKS: PRC 17/19/54.

90 CKS: PRC 17/14/47.

91 William Gerves, 1525, CKS: PRC 17/16/274; Richard Pellond, 1525, CKS: PRC 17/16/244.

92 For the notion of mortuary feasts as reminders, see Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 562, and Higgs, 'Lay Piety', p. 142.

93 Dinn makes the point that "conspicuous consumption" "was much more evident in other late medieval funeral rituals, in particular the burial": *ibid.*, p. 762.

94 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 359; Higgs, 'Lay Piety', p. 142; Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 541-2.

95 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 361; Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 544-550. In addition, see P. Ariès, *Western Attitudes Toward Death from the Middle Ages to the Present* (London, 1976), pp. 11-12; Carpenter, 'Religion of the Gentry', p. 61; C. Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London, 1988), p. 29.

96 See Chapter Five.

Tenterden wills and only two to the funeral procession in the form of bequests to hearse bearers.[97] Equally striking is the complete lack of any references to liveries or candles for the poor or mention of hearse cloths for funerals.[98]

The influential Sir John Guldeford did not depart from parochial tastes when he made his conspicuously modest stipulations for mortuary provision. He wished his "out beryng to be made not pomposely", and on his burial day, month and year's minds willed that 4d be given to every poor household in Tenterden to pray for his soul, and in the same manner on just his month and year's days in the neighbouring parishes of Rolvenden, Benenden, Biddenden and Ebony. Also, presumably in all of these parishes, on all three occasions, five masses were to be celebrated: of the Trinity, Holy Ghost, Assumption of Our Lady, Our Lady and Requiem, with prayers for "me, my fadre and modre my parent and all Christian soules". At Guldeford's anniversary, he stipulated that a plain stone rather than a tomb was to be laid over him, with epitaphs devised by himself or his executors.[99] In requesting that his funeral was not to be pompous, Guldeford may have been reflecting a more general tenor of piety in Tenterden, but may equally have been subscribing to a devotional cult which sought humble burial and the denigration of the flesh, and which appears in a handful of wills in a number of places, as well as being infamously connected with the Lollard Knights.[100]

The most elaborate provisions were made by Thomas Wode who died in 1526. He devoted 66s 8d to his burial and month mind, and also arranged for two separate obsequies in each of four neighbouring parish churches within a year after his death, at 20s for each church. These were to be performed for his own soul and those of various kinsfolk. In addition, he left 6s 8d for obsequies at the churches where his two daughters were buried. Finally, he instituted a perpetual obit at Tenterden at 6s 8d a year, to be distributed,

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97 Robert Bregges, 1484, CKS: PRC 17/4/18; John Lilly, 1504, CKS: PRC 17/10/21; John Preston, 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/83.

98 There is a similar lack of probate evidence for lavish funerary display in Colchester, which Higgs suggests may have been due to the influence of Lollardy: *idem*, 'Lay Piety', p. 226. In Chapter Six below, I argue that in Tenterden, Lollardy and the comparative frugality of orthodox piety were part and parcel of a common outlook. A relatively small number of Norwich's testators made arrangements for elaborate ceremony at their funerals: Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, p. 99. In Hull, a high level of lavish funerary provision declined as the fifteenth century wore on: Heath, 'Urban Piety', pp. 217-8. Funerals of this type seem to have been more common in Bury: Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 546-550.

99 1493, PRO: P.C.C. 29 Dogett, fol. 223.

100 See for example, Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 641-2; Heath, 'Urban Piety', pp. 213-4; Gittings, *Death, Burial*, pp. 34-7; Vale, 'Piety, Charity, and Literacy', p. 11; K.B. McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 207-220. See also, however, Carpenter. 'Religion of the Gentry', pp. 61-2. Thomas Hicks of Tenterden, requested in his testament: "my body to be buried where it pleasith god" (1522, CKS: PRC 17/15/228).

in dirige massess and other charitable deds within fifteen days next aftre palmesunday evry yere for ever by discretyon of the curate for the tyme beyng and other discrete persones of the saide parisshe, 3s 4d under this manner, to the preeste that syngeth mass of requyem by noote 6d. To other three preestes synging four styll masses by evyn porcyons 16d. To the clerke 2d. To the sexton 8d, for offryng 5d, and to three children to helpe the preeste to masse 3d. Distributing also to power people of the said parishe yn evry of the dayes of the vigilis of the Byrthe of our Lord god Easter and pentycost 12d yerely for ever. Sum therof 3s whichis is the residue of the said 6s 8d.[101]

By contemporary standards, even Wode's obsequies were not elaborate, and Tenterden's leading townspeople appear to have had economical tastes in funerary provision. This is not to mention the majority who gave no specific instructions as to the form their mortuary arrangements were to take, which, on the evidence of those who did, is unlikely to have been especially lavish. By the late 1520s, the formulaic and almost obligatory nature of bequests for funerals and commemorative celebrations, suggests that there was little room for elaboration or development within the compass of accepted norms. Nevertheless, as was the case with chantry provision, the disparities in the level and elaboration of mortuary provision between families following different pious traditions *within* Tenterden are clearly apparent.

Examination of obits and the money expended on them allows us to make a direct comparison of this element of the town's testamentary piety with other places. As noted above, Tenterden's testators were unusually prolific at instituting obits, with 28 per cent doing so over the entire period. However, forty-nine of the seventy-three took the form of anniversaries for one year only. In fact, testators referred to a single year's obit as an "anniversary" or "year's mind" and the subsequent annual commemoration as a "two year's mind", and most made a distinction between these obsequies and commemorations which continued for a number of years following the funeral.[102] Of these latter obits, nine were to last for two to seven years, three for eight to twelve years, five for sixteen to twenty years, one for forty years and five were in perpetuity.[103] Compared to other places, obits may have been more common in the Tenterden wills, but on the whole, they did not last as long and in particular, there were fewer really lengthy or perpetual foundations.[104] Only three obits are recorded in the 1548 returns of obit and lamp rents

101 CKS: PRC 17/17/158.

102 Only about a third of Bury's recorded obits were for a year only, and at the very most, only about a quarter of those instituted in Hull: Dinn, 'Popular Religion', Table 14.7, p. 566; Heath, 'Urban Piety', p. 218.

103 A further one was to last until the testator's son reached the age of 22.

104 Compare with Dinn, 'Popular Religion', Table 14.7, p. 566, and Heath, 'Urban Piety', p. 218.

for Kent, two of which were founded by parishioners whose bequests can be found in their wills, and one by Peter Marshall, vicar of Tenterden, who probably also founded Marshall's chantry.[105] The other three perpetual obits were presumably never instituted or had lapsed by 1548.

The relative brevity of obits at Tenterden must be borne in mind when comparing expenditure on them with other places, as it is yearly amounts which have been recorded here and in other studies. For this reason, the sums spent on obits at Tenterden should be somewhat down-graded when compared with expenditure elsewhere. Tenterden's testators paid from 2s to 33s 4d a year for their obits, with the majority giving 13s 4d or less.[106] They were therefore similar to will-makers in Bury and Colchester, and to a lesser extent, to those living in London in this period, in the amounts they devoted, and tended to spend more on obits than will-makers in Hull and Bristol. So although generally shorter than obits arranged elsewhere, these commemorations were unusually common and well funded in Tenterden, to an extent comparable with larger, and in some cases, very wealthy urban centres.[107] These bequests are testimony to the increasing prosperity of Tenterden's leading families in this period, as well as, for many of them, the strength of their orthodox piety. Many of Tenterden's families were it seems devoutly orthodox, but if the evidence of their wills is to be trusted, theirs was a peculiarly restrained and sombre form of traditional religion.

Special masses and new devotions

The character of traditional religion at Tenterden is further delineated by information on the impact of special or new devotional forms in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. One of these was the trental, which in its simplest form consisted of thirty masses celebrated on thirty consecutive days, usually immediately after death. By the early fifteenth century, a particular type of trental, with an attendant legend, called the trental of St. Gregory, had developed a good deal of popular appeal, and tacit acceptance among the church hierarchy in England. This seems to have developed from the longer, more elaborate and theologically controversial Gregorian or Pope Trental. Duffy argues that the longer form of the devotion owed its appeal "to the fact that it contained a supernaturally authenticated scheme of intercession guaranteed to bring the

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[105] *Kent Obit and Lamp Rents*, ed. A. Hussey (Kent Archaeological Society: Kent Records, vol. xiv, 1936), pp. 113-4. William Preston, 1493, CKS: PRC 17/6/10; Thomas Wode, 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/158.

[106] Fourteen did not specify an amount. 49 gave up to 13s 4d, 10, from 15s to 20s, and 1, 33s 4d.

[107] Dinn, 'Popular Religion', Table 14.8, pp. 569, 568 (for London data); Higgs, 'Lay Piety', p. 228; Heath, 'Urban Piety', p. 218; Burgess, 'By Quick and by Dead', p. 847.

torments of Purgatory to a swift and certain end". However, it was not without its critics among theologians and more popular writers, particularly because of a general disquiet about its reliance upon claims of the special efficacy of certain masses, large numbers of masses, or sequences of masses, and its focus upon the spiritual welfare of the individual, somewhat to the exclusion of the Body of Christ as a whole.[108]

There are no bequests for the longer Pope Trental in the Tenterden wills. Three testators requested the shorter St. Gregory's Trental, and a further seven left money or arranged for non-specific trentals. These bequests only appear in the wills from 1493 onwards.[109] With only eleven of the 263 known will-makers requesting trentals, and only three of these specifically asking for St. Gregory Trentals, it appears that this devotion, and in particular, the more controversial form of it, had much less of an impact on the parishioners of Tenterden, than in some other centres in England.[110] It has been suggested that the mendicant orders may have helped to popularize the trental. Sir John Guldeford and also possibly Thomasina Piers requested that their trentals be celebrated at friaries, but this was probably as much to do with gaining sufficient personnel to carry out the celebrations more easily, and with not disrupting parochial services, as anything else.[111] All that can be said is that this type of celebration, and especially that deriving from the legend of Pope Gregory, was not popular at Tenterden, and certainly failed to gain the degree of adherence found elsewhere.[112] This was perhaps due to a general

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108 Pfaff distinguishes between these two different devotional forms which sprang from the same legend: R.W. Pfaff, 'The English Devotion of St. Gregory's Trental', *Speculum*, xlix (1974), pp. 75-90. However, Duffy refers only to the Pope Trental and also calls it St. Gregory's Trental, whilst it is clear that in late medieval wills, the same names could be used for both types of celebration: Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 43, 293-4, 369-75, cit. at 373; Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 576, n.137. See also, Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, p. 105, who identifies a conventional mentality at Norwich which deemed that the merit gained from masses "would be proportional to the number said".

109 St. Gregory Trentals: Robert Clerk, 1495, CKS: PRC 17/6/156; Joan Gerves, 1504, CKS: PRC 17/10/19; John Preston, 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/83. Other trentals: Sir John Guldeford, 1493, PRO: P.C.C. 29 Dogett, fol. 223; William Holme, 1501, CKS: PRC 17/9/180; Robert Swoffer, 1507, CKS: PRC 17/13/260; Thomasine Piers, 1508, CKS: PRC 17/12/73; Galfridus Shorte, 1508, PRO: P.C.C. 31 Bennett, fol. 48v; William Newlond, 1510, CKS: PRC 17/11/188; Joan Easton, widow, 1512, CKS: PRC 32/11/41; Robert Bisshopynden, 1523, CKS: PRC 17/15/258. Only one testator in the bottom-band of selected families, compared to three across the middle and top-bands requested trentals, an absence which is perhaps significant.

110 In Norwich, 8 per cent of lay testators from 1440 to 1532 requested Trentals of St. Gregory; in Bury St. Edmunds, 33 per cent of lay and clerical will-makers (1449-1530) made bequests for trentals, whether of either type of St. Gregory or not; in Hull, 11 per cent of testators arranged for less than an average of three trentals each, 24 of the total of 102 trentals being of St. Gregory; and in Colchester, 10 per cent asked for this form of celebration in the parish church, and many more requested trentals at the Grey Friars: Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, Appendix 11, p. 221; Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 576-8; Heath, 'Urban Piety', p. 219; Higgs, 'Lay Piety', Table 18, pp. 231, 242.

111 Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 578. This is also suggested by Joan Easton's request for her trental to be performed at Battle Abbey, and John Preston's stipulation that a St. Gregory Trental be celebrated in Tenterden parish church "if it will please the vicar of Tenterden so to suffer Iytt to be done for I will that it shall be at his plesuyre": see above for references.

112 In Bury, for example, by the 1520s, 55 per cent of all wills contained bequests for trentals: Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 718.

dislike of intense and excessive displays of piety, disquiet about some of the doctrinal problems involved, and possibly also, the lack of influence of the friars in Tenterden.

Another "unequivocal manifestation of the full-blown doctrine of Purgatory", the "*Scala Coeli*" indulgenced mass, appears in six Tenterden wills from 1516. Compared to other places for which there is data, this mass appears to have been more popular at Tenterden than the St. Gregory Trental. This may be because it was not as theologically problematic. Another factor may have been Tenterden's proximity to London. Two testators actually requested that masses "at *Scala Coeli*" be celebrated in St. Peter's, Westminster, where the indulgence was first licensed in England, in 1500. The rest were not so specific about the location of their celebrations, just so long as the altar was specially licensed. Perhaps also of importance, was the relative modesty of these masses, which cost 6d apiece. The largest number requested was nine, one for each of Thomas Wode's immediate family, costing a total of 4s 6d. The other testators secured eight, six, three, and the remaining two, a pair each. This was hardly extravagant, but it was orthodox religion at its most fashionable. It is possible that clerical influence may have played a part in the inclusion of these bequests, as four of the wills were either witnessed by or contain references to clergy. Thomas Austen, who appears to have been one of the busiest notaries in Tenterden, also acted as witness for four of these testators, and may himself have had an influence on their bequests.[113]

Neither trentals nor masses at "*Scala Coeli*" were as popular in Tenterden as the Jesus mass, the third new devotion which can be found in the wills, which is discussed in detail in Chapter Five. It seems that the townsfolk were not wholly comfortable with the more controversial devotion of the St. Gregory Trental, and preferred the less financially demanding, but thoroughly orthodox "*Scala Coeli*" indulgenced mass.[114]

Gifts to religious

Monastic or mendicant religious houses only rarely entered the preoccupations of Tenterden will-makers. Only fifteen testators made bequests to religious houses, sometimes in return for masses, especially trentals, but usually without such a specification. Strikingly, only three of these were made after 1500, and the last to do so

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113 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, cit. at, p. 364, also, pp. 375-6; Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, Appendix 11, p. 221; Higgs, 'Lay Piety', pp. 243-5.; John Donet, 1516, CKS: PRC 17/12/566; Robert Brekynden, 1517, CKS: PRC 17/13/263; Thomas Smyth, 1518, CKS: PRC 17/14/7; Dionisie Davy, widow, 1520, CKS: PRC 17/14/285; Thomas Wode, 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/158; Thomas Syre, 1531, CKS: PRC 17/19/54. See also, Chapter Three.

114 Masses at "*Scala Coeli*" were aggresively attacked by Latimer in the 1530s, representing as they did, one of the most popular aspects of traditonal religion centred around the doctrine of Purgatory and Papal authority: Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 391, 393.

was William Couper, in 1518.[115] With only 5 or 6 per cent of will-makers mentioning religious houses, and such a marked decline in the sixteenth century in these bequests, attitudes to the religious orders in Tenterden appear to have been very different compared to in other towns in this period. For example, in Sandwich, just under a third of lay men and women gave to religious houses, with only a small decline in bequests in the sixteenth century. In Colchester, Bury, Hull, Norwich and London between a quarter and a half of lay testators remembered monks, nuns or friars, and only in Colchester did gifts to all orders begin to decline by the 1520s. In the rural Blackbourne Deanery, north of Bury, around a third of will makers gave to religious houses.[116] The lack of popularity of the religious orders in Tenterden, can only to a small extent be attributed to the fact that the nearest houses lay around ten to fifteen miles from the town at Bilsington, Winchelsea, Mottenden and Lossenham. It is more plausible that there was a general indifference, or even hostility in Tenterden, to the religious orders.

The distribution of bequests to religious houses across families, follows the same pattern as other religious elements. Four testators from the top-band, two from the middle-group of families and two from the bottom-band mentioned them. This further reinforces the pattern of piety already identified across these families, and shows that whilst not all testators ignored monks, nuns and friars, those that mentioned them, were largely concentrated within the more traditionally orthodox families of the parish.[117] Secular clergy were more popular, but mainly because they received numerous bequests to celebrate masses. Only nine testators left money to secular clergy (usually the vicar of Tenterden) for no specified purpose, although of course the vicar, curate or parochial chaplains sometimes acted as executors and often as witnesses to wills.

The houses which were mentioned the most were those of the Carmelite Friars of Lossenham in the parish of Newenden, and the Trinitarian Friars of Mottenden in the parish of Headcorn, both situated about ten miles to the south-west and north-west of Tenterden respectively. The brothers of Lossenham were mentioned by six testators, and those of Mottenden, by four. Two testators gave to friaries in Winchelsea, one to the Observant friars in Canterbury, one to the Grey friars of Beaulieu, in the New Forest, one to the Grey Friars and the Charter House in London and one to "the brothers of Canterbury". In addition, one testator mentioned the Benedictine Nunnery of the Holy Sepulchre in Canterbury, one gave to Battle abbey and three made bequests to St.

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115 CKS: PRC 32/12/174.

116 Higgs, 'Lay Piety', p. 218; Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 447-50, 460-2, 464-5; Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, pp. 119, Appendix 12, p. 222; Heath, 'Urban Piety'pp. 220-1; Thomson, 'Piety and Charity', pp. 189-90.

117 It may be significant that William Couper, who, in 1518, was the last testator to mention the regular clergy, was the only will-maker to leave money to the Observant Friars of Canterbury, who were to emerge as a force for religious orthodoxy in the 1530s behind Elizabeth Barton, the Nun of Kent, in opposition to the Royal Divorce: Clark, *English Provincial Society*, pp. 34-6.

Augustine's abbey, Canterbury. As in other places in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the mendicant orders appear to have been more popular than the possessioners. However, in Tenterden, there was not the continued or even increasing support of the friars up to the Reformation, as there was in Sandwich, Colchester, Bury St. Edmunds, the parishes of rural northern Suffolk, Norwich, Hull and London.[118]

Devotion to saints

Tenterden's will-makers were also relatively sparing in their devotion to saints. As demonstrated in Chapter Five, bequests to saints' lights, images, altars, chapels and fraternities are far less common than gifts to the Jesus mass and brotherhood from around 1513, when these were established. Over the whole period, only thirty-nine (15 per cent) of testators made gifts to lights, and five of these gave only to lights which honoured Christ, such as the Rood Light, the Light before the Sacrament, and "les Torches". These types of lights were mentioned in seventeen wills, making them second only to devotions to St. Mary in popularity.[119] Bequests to all types of lights reached a peak during the years 1500-1519, being found in about one-fifth of all wills, but they seem to have been waning again by the 1520s. (Table 4.3) Gifts to lights were less than half as popular in Tenterden as they were at Sandwich over a similar period,[120] and the frequency and pattern of bequests in Tenterden, is in stark contrast to such devotions in Norwich, where almost half of all testators were leaving money to lights by 1518-1532.[121] However, Tenterden is not the first example of a late medieval town where lights were relatively marginal to testamentary piety, and it is unlikely to be the last; from 1518 to 1532 in Colchester, only 6.5 per cent of wills contain bequests for votive lights.[122] Here, as in Tenterden, one of the "more superstitious forms" of devotion to saints does not appear to have been as prominent an element in orthodox religion as it was elsewhere.[123]

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118 *VCH, Kent*, vol. ii, pp. 142-3, 203-7. Higgs, 'Lay Piety', p. 218; Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 447-50, 460-2, 464-5; Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, pp. 119, Appendix 12, p. 222; Heath, 'Urban Piety', pp. 220-1; Thomson, 'Piety and Charity', pp. 189-90. For general comments about the unpopularity of the monastic orders in the late middle ages in England, see Dickens, *English Reformation*, pp. 52-6; C. Cross, *Church and People, 1450-1660: The Triumph of the English Church* (Fontana, 1976), p. 52; J.C. Dickinson, *The Later Middle Ages: An Ecclesiastical History of England* (London, 1979), ch. 10.

119 For lights in honour of Christ in Norwich wills, which attracted bequests slightly outnumbering those to St. Mary, see Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, p. 84. For comments on the primacy of Rood lights, see Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 157-8.

120 This is without including a number of testators who made gifts to unnamed lights in Sandwich.

121 Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, Appendix 12, p. 222.

122 Higgs, 'Lay Piety', p. 222.

123 Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, cit. at, p. 118.

Table 4.3 *Testators making bequests to lights*

Date Range	Total number of wills	Number of testators making bequests	Percentage of all testators
1449-79	41	3	7
1480-99	49	5	10
1500-19	84	18	21
1520-35	89	13	15
1449-1535	263	39	15

The images themselves, which were lit by many of the parish's lights, are mentioned even less frequently in the Tenterden wills. Only fourteen testators (5 per cent) left money or objects for the adornment or making of images. Significantly, the last mention of images was in 1522, thirteen years before the final will of the period studied here was made, and a decade before veneration of images came under widespread attack outside the circles of Lollardy.[124] In Sandwich, gifts to specific altars and images were at least twice as popular as in Tenterden, and remained so into the 1530s. Tenterden may have been host to reforming attitudes concerning the veneration of images found in other places by the late 1520s.[125]

Bequests involving devotion to saints provide an effective way of distinguishing between different pious traditions in Tenterden. This is partly because the cult of saints was an especially traditional element of orthodox religion. In addition, gifts to lights in particular, were often as small as 4d or 6d, and so were less dependent on available resources at death than other expressions of orthodox devotion. When references to saints cults are compared across the twenty-three selected families, it emerges that devotion to saints follows the spectrum of testamentary piety described above. So, the nine most religiously generous families, show a greater attachment to saints than the other two bands of families. Eight testators spread between five of the most orthodox families gave to saints' lights, images, altars etc.[126] In the middle-band, seven testators, across four families made these types of bequests,[127] and in the bottom-band, only two individuals in two separate families showed devotion to saints.[128] Adherence to the cult of saints was modest at Tenterden, with no mention of pilgrimage in the wills of the most devoted, for example.[129] And, within the developing religious culture of the parish, there were marked differences in the degree of adherence to saints between different families.

After the cult of Jesus, devotion to St. Mary appears to have been predominant, with twenty-five individuals mentioning her chapel, image, light or fraternity at Tenterden, or

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124 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 379-81. Perhaps connected with the absence of references to images after 1522, is the lack of chantry bequests to be carried out at named saints' altars or in chapels, or any mention of saints' chapels within the parish church after 1505.

125 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 166-8.

126 Anne Stonehouse, 1513, CKS: PRC 17/12/182; William Stonehouse, priest, 1528, CKS: PRC 17/18/180; Katherine Carpynter, 1510, CKS: PRC 17/11/182; William Preston, sen., 1493, CKS: PRC 17/6/10; John Preston, 1507, CKS: PRC 17/11/54; John Davy, 1467, PRO: P.C.C. 25 Godyn, fol. 193v.; Robert Davy, 1494, CKS: PRC 17/6/110; Stephen Couper, 1513, CKS: PRC 17/12/229.

127 Joan Piers, 1471, CKS: PRC 17/2/29; Godlena Piers, 1495, CKS: PRC 17/6/111; Thomasyne Piers, 1508, CKS: PRC 17/12/73; John Pette, 1489, CKS: PRC 17/5/152; Thomas Pette, 1495, CKS: PRC 17/6/108; Robert Brekynden (I), sen, 1483, CKS: PRC 17/3/450; Agnes Hylles, 1472, CKS: PRC 17/2/67.

128 Robert Bisshopynden, 1523, CKS: PRC 17/15/258; Katheryn Castelyn, 1510, CKS: PRC 17/11/183.

129 In Norwich, for example, a small but not insigificant number of testators left bequests for others to make pilgrimages on their behalf: Tanner, *Church Norwich*, p. 85.

in neighbouring parishes.[130] Religious devotion in the parish, as across medieval Europe, attributed a special status to the Virgin Mary, who was considered to be the most powerful intercessor between man and God.[131] St. Mary is the only saint for which there is evidence of a fraternity at Tenterden. There is very little information on this brotherhood, it being mentioned in only a small number of wills, all dated earlier than the sixteenth century. It had probably existed, for some time before 1449, as in that year, William Cok, left 3s 4d to the "light of the fraternity of St. Mary" (in addition to the separate "light of St. Mary"), and bequeathed 3s 4d, each year for six years, to the finding of a chaplain for the brotherhood.[132] The altar of this brotherhood was probably situated in the chapel of St. Mary (otherwise referred to as the "Lady Chancel"), which formed the south chancel aisle of St. Mildred's, built at the latest in the thirteenth century.[133] However, when in 1461 Henry Easteagh left ten marks for a year's temporary chantry before the altar of St. Mary, he did not mention the fraternity, suggesting that there may not have been a brotherhood priest at this time.[134]

The fraternity is not mentioned again in surviving wills until 1479, and then appears in two bequests in 1489.[135] John Pette, a clothier, left his best cow to the maintenance of the chaplain of the fraternity of Blessed Mary, to be disposed at the advice of the vicar. Less than three months later, on Palm Sunday 1489, the vicar, John Morer, wrote his will, in which he also remembered the brotherhood. He bequeathed 5 marks in total, to be paid in parcels of 6s 8d a year for ten years, out of lands inherited by Moyse Pette, son of Thomas Pette, which the latter had purchased from Laurence Haffenden. This was provided the brethren maintain an honest priest in a good standard of living and death ("*pro bono statu suum vivorum et defunctorum*"), to celebrate continuously for the benefit of the brotherhood. Morer was careful to ensure his money achieved its desired purpose by stipulating that if for any quarter of a year the priest did not celebrate fully and completely by way of his own fault, then that year's money was to

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130 In 1464, Thomas Franke left 6s 8d to the image of St. Mary at Ebony (CKS: PRC 17/1/99), in 1495, Robert Clerk gave 3s 4d to the light of St. Mary at Woodchurch (CKS: PRC 17/6/156), and in 1500, John Spert left 4d to the fraternity of St. Mary in Woodchurch (CKS: PRC 17/8/41). In all the churches of east Kent, devotion to Christ and Mary superceded that to any other saints: Draper, *et al.*, 'Fitting of the Altars'.

131 Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 205; Carpenter, 'Religion of the Gentry', p. 63; Bossy, *Christianity in the West*, p. 8.

132 CKS: PRC 17/1/7.

133 CCAL: Z.3.2, fol. 136v., 1502 (Translated in C.E. Woodruff, 'An Archidiaconal Visitation of 1502', *Arch. Cant.*, xlvii (1935), p. 26); H.V.R, *The Parish Church of St. Mildred* (no date), p. 10.

134 CKS: PRC 17/1/271.

135 In 1479 Thomas Wormeslee left 40s in the event of his son dying before inheriting, to the priest of the brotherhood of St. Mary: CKS: PRC 32/2/480. However, in 1483, John Brekynden senior requested burial in the chapel of St. Mary, left a silver chain to the image of the saint and requested a temporary chantry in the same chapel, making no reference to the fraternity: CKS: PRC 17/3/450.

go to the chapel of St. John the Baptist in Small Hythe - a proviso which suggests that the fraternity was not, as yet, successfully maintaining a permanent celebrant.[136]

The brotherhood of St. Mary is not mentioned again in the wills, whilst the chapel or chancel of St. Mary appears another two times in the 1490s, but this is the last reference to it.[137] There is no doubt however, that the fraternity survived right through to the Reformation years, albeit with less than adequate endowment. It was listed alongside Tenterden's obit and lamp rents in 1548, as "The Fraternytie called our Ladyes Brotherhed founded within the parishe churche of Tenterden by whom it is not known". Attached lands worth 8s a year, provided the fraternity with 7s 4d, after rent.[138]

Despite the seeming failure of the St. Mary brotherhood to mobilize widespread participation within the parish, devotion to the Virgin continued throughout the period. In 1507, Robert Swoffer left 16d to "repairs of ornaments pertaining to the altars of our lady and Saint Katherine", and numerous other individuals gave to the St. Mary light, including Katherine Carpynter, who in 1510 gave a candle weighing three pounds to burn before the image of "our blyssed lady".[139] By 1501, it appears that devotion to St. Mary had diversified, with some testators leaving money or wax to the light before the image of "our lady of pity".[140] The cult of Our Lady of Pity, involving artistic representations of the *Pietà* (the dead Christ and the Virgin), became increasingly popular in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries in England. The veneration of these images came under particular attack from reformers by the late 1530s, and not least in Kent where, in the east of the county alone, at least sixty-two parishes fostered the cult. It seems to have become established in Canterbury, Sandwich, Folkestone, Ashford and a few smaller centres nearby, in the late 1450s and 1460s, and spread west across the county over subsequent decades, not appearing in wills in most parishes until after 1500. By 1474 and 1497, some parishioners in Cranbrook and Bethersden respectively, were supporting the cult, and it seems to have become established in Tenterden at about the same time as in Rolvenden, before the neighbouring parishes of Appledore, Benenden, Biddenden, Hawkhurst, High Halden, Staplehurst, Stone in Oxney and Wittersham.[141] Its attraction in Tenterden may have been linked to the increasingly Christocentric element within the town's piety outlined below, as it focussed upon Mary's experience of Christ's passion.

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136 CKS: PRC 17/5/152; PRO: P.C.C. 20 Milles, fols. 164/161v.

137 William Preston requested that a priest celebrate in "our lady chancel" for half a year (1493, CKS: PRC 17/6/10); Thomas Pette wanted to be buried in the "chapel of the blessed virgin Mary" (1495, CKS: PRC 17/6/108).

138 *Kent Obit and Lamp Rents*, p. 113.

139 CKS: PRC 17/13/260; PRC 17/11/182.

140 William Tobill, 1501, CKS: PRC 17/9/70; Thomasyna Adam, 1519, CKS: PRC 17/14 12; Alice Godard, 1521, CKS: PRC 17/14/295.

141 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 38, 260-2, 332. 382, 419, 436; *Testamenta Cantiana: East Kent*, pp. vii, 4, 7, 14, 16, 18, 43, 72, 75, 88, 130, 154, 160-1, 166, 189, 209, 259, 288, 319, 325, 369.

Overall though, Marianism seems to have been on the decline in Tenterden by the sixteenth century, and was certainly not as popular here as it was in some other urban centres.[142] To some extent it was eclipsed by other, new cults - in particular the Jesus Mass - but Marianism was already showing signs of recession from the religious culture of the parish before the end of the fifteenth century.

The cult of St. Mary was in some places associated with childbirth in the late middle ages. There is no evidence that either of the altars with images of Our Lady in St. Mildred's attracted offerings or candles in connection with the rite of churching however.[143] St. Katherine, the second most popular saint in the Tenterden wills , was also associated with childbirth, along with protection from sudden and unprepared death. (Table 4.4) There is evidence to suggest that she was also perceived and called upon as an agent for good marriage by young women beneath the level of the gentry and wealthiest townsfolk.[144]

St. Katherine was universally popular in Kent and was widely venerated throughout late medieval England. It therefore comes as no surprise to find her third in line behind Christ and St. Mary in the parochial hierarchy of devotion.[145] St. Katherine, like St. Margaret and St. Barbara (who were much less popular in Tenterden), has been identified as one of a group of virgin saints, which were seen in this period as especially powerful intercessors, as well as suitable exemplars, due to their sexual purity and devout piety under extreme temptation and physical suffering.[146] Given her particular association with women, it is surprising to find that only one of the wills which makes reference to her cult was not made by a man. As will be explained in Chapter Five, it was probably the influence of Katheryn Castelyn's parents, as well as her own name which led her to leave 2d to the light of St. Katherine. In addition, the fact that she was a relatively young woman, whereas most of the others who mentioned saints' cults were older, may have been influential.[147]

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142 For example, Bury St. Edmunds: Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 205-217.

143 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 181; See also *L & P*, vol. xviii (ii), p. 302, for an insight into this practice in the Canterbury diocese prior to the Reformation.

144 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 179. I would like to thank Katherine Lewis of the University of York for allowing me to read the section of her doctoral thesis which deals with the evidence of St. Katherine as a marriage broker.

145 St. Katherine was the most popular saint after St. Mary, in the Marsh, Wealden and Chart areas of east Kent: Draper, *et al.*, 'Fitting of the Altars'.

146 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 171-7, 179, 182, and, *idem.*, 'Holy Maydens, Holy Wyfes: the Cult of Women Saints in Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century England', *SCH*, vol. xxvii (1990), pp. 175-96.

147 1510, CKS: PRC 17/11/183; and see Chapter Five.

Table 4.4 *References to saints' cults in Tenterden wills (outside of preambles)*

Saint/s	Number of testators mentioning
St. Mary	25
St. Katherine	11
St. Mildred	9
St. Nicholas	6
Ss. Stephen/Erasmus	3
Ss. Christopher/ George/Margaret/ Mark	2
Ss. James/Clement/ Barbara/John Baptist/ Crispian & Crispianus/ Peter/Mary Magdalene	1

Plate 4.1 *St. Mildred as depicted on the reverse of the Tenterden common seal, 1449.* *Reproduced from H. Roberts, Tenterden. The First Thousand Years. (York, 1995).*

Of course, St. Katherine was an attractive advocate regardless of gender or age. *The Golden Legend* was a sufficient reminder of Christ's promise to St. Katherine, that "them that shall hallow thy passion", "be it at death or in any other necessity" would have "the comfort of heaven that they require".[148] Her popularity at Tenterden is attested to by the fact that the north chancel aisle of St. Mildred's (the present day Lady Chapel), built in the fifteenth century, was known as the chancel of St. Katherine. In his will of 1463, Thomas Petlesden, who had served as Tenterden's first bailiff in 1449-50, requested burial in St. Katherine's chancel and instituted a chantry and yearly obit before her altar there for the next twenty years.[149] Petlesden, may have had a special identification with Katherine, which would have been shared by other townsmen in Tenterden, particularly from the late fifteenth century. Voragine tells us that she was "marvellous in wisdom" which among other things, made her an ideal teacher and patron of two types of men: those that had retinues to govern, and "governers of cities, for she teacheth to govern the peoples, the cities, and the commons."[150] As a member of a local gentry family, and Tenterden's first bailiff, Petlesden had good reason to choose Katherine as his special patron. Moreover, at a time when the borough of Tenterden had only recently gained a large degree of self-government, her cult had special resonance for those involved in the wise administration and representation of the town's affairs and interests.

This notwithstanding, none of the other men who mentioned the cult of St. Katherine in their wills served as bailiffs. A saint's legend as rich as St. Katherine's offered a whole host of symbols for the creation of identity. What is apparent is that her image was in need of repair by 1501 and in 1505 a new image was being made, William Claydishe leaving 12d to this end in that year. The re-embodiment of the saint appears to have been part of, or sparked off, a small resurgence in devotion, with four more bequests for lights or to Katherine's image in four years.[151] It is perhaps significant that these were the same years during which Small Hythe chapel's status was officially enhanced and its relationship with St. Mildred's codified. The cult of St. Katherine may have represented something of an oppositional reiteration of identity for the townsfolk of Tenterden at this time, with its strongly urban symbols and links with the first bailiff.

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148 *The Golden Legend*, vol. vii, p. 25.

149 CCAL, Z.3.2, fol. 136v., 1502 (Translated in Woodruff, 'An Archidiaconal Visitation', p. 26); H.V.R., *Parish Church of St. Mildred*, p. 11; CKS: PRC 17/1/141; Tenterden Custumal, CKS: Te/C1 fol. 140r.

150 *The Golden Legend*, vol. vii, p. 28.

151 In 1501, William Holme left 6d for repairs to the image (CKS: PRC 17/9/180). CKS: PRC 17/10/20; John Preston, 1507, CKS: PRC 17/11/54; Robert Swoffer, 1507, CKS: PRC 17/13 260; Richard Lucas, 1508, CKS: PRC 17/11/41; Katheryn Castelyn, 1510, CKS: PRC 17/11/183. The final bequest was in 1523 by Stephen Felip (CKS: PRC 17/16/46).

Even more intimately associated with the identity of the town, was the patron saint of the parish church, St. Mildred. Tenterden was the only parish in the Kentish Weald to have St. Mildred as patron, and together with another six churches in the county, shared a dedication which was peculiar to Kent.[152] This was because of the especially local nature of her cult. Mildred was one of the saints of the royal house of Kent, whose mother had built the Abbey of Minster-in-Thanet of which she was consecrated abbess at the end of the seventh century. Due to her sanctity, after her death a cult quickly grew up around Mildred, the Abbey being re-dedicated in her name and her shrine there becoming a popular pilgrimage site. When the Abbey was destroyed by the Danes, the manor of Minster within which it lay appears to have reverted to the crown, and in 1027 Canute granted it to St. Augustine's in Canterbury together with the body and relics of St. Mildred. The manor remained with St. Augustine's until the Dissolution.[153]

Tenterden's connection with St. Mildred arose from it being, in its original smaller pre-Hundredal form, the possession of the manor of Minster, Tenterden literally meaning "the den of the men of Thanet".[154] There may have been a forest chapel in Tenterden as early as the eighth century, but the first documentary evidence of the existence of a church there dedicated to St. Mildred, is found in the *White Book of St. Augustine's*, dated to the early thirteenth century. Depending on one's interpretation of the evidence, Tenterden's parish church was dedicated for the first time or was re-dedicated to St. Mildred sometime between the death of the saint in the early eighth century and its appearance in the records of St. Augustine's. Either Mildred's successors at the Abbey of Minster or St. Augustine's was responsible for the dedication, which was due to the settlement's early links with Thanet. Either way, St. Mildred's and the manor appendant to it, were finally fully appropriated to St. Augustine's in 1259.[155]

For the people of Tenterden, St. Mildred was then, a symbol of the origins and ancient allegiances of their town and parish. Before the fifteenth century these had more than a niggling economic reality in the form of the rights exercised by the Abbots of St. Augustine's, as well as Christ Church Priory, and the Archbishop, over the dens in the parish which were attached to their manors in east Kent. By the thirteenth century these

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152 Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, pp. 228, 235.

153 Gordan Ward, 'Saxon Records of Tenterden', *Arch. Cant.*, xlix (1938) pp. 241-3; H.V.R., *Parish Church of St. Mildred*, pp. 2-3; Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, pp. 239-40, 248. For a full discussion of the cult of St. Mildred, see D.W. Rollason, *The Mildrith Legend: a Study in Early Medieval Hagiography in England* (Leicester, 1982).

154 Wallenberg, *Place Names of Kent*, pp. 355, 356; Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, pp. 38, 123; Witney, *Jutish Forest*, pp. 45, 93.

155 Whereas Ward argued for an early dedication between Mildred's death and the destruction of Minster Abbey, Witney has questioned his reasoning, arguing that St. Augustine's could have dedicated Tenterden's church to St. Mildred, given its early links with Thanet: Ward, 'Saxon Records of Tenterden', pp. 241-3; Witney, *Jutish Forest*, pp. 116, 125-6. On the manor attached to the church and the final appropriation by St. Augustine's, see Furley, 'Early History of Tenterden', pp. 45-6; Hasted, *History of Kent*, vol. vii, p. 216; Taylor, 'Rectors and Vicars of St. Mildred's', pp. 207-8.

largely concerned rights to timber rather than to pannage. Due to the great ecclesiastical lords' dual policy of encouraging settlement in the Weald at the same time as attempting to protect their timber stocks, a fundamental conflict of interests developed between them and their tenants which came to a head in the early fourteenth century. Timber stocks were being rapidly reduced, by both the clearing of land for cultivation and the increasingly lucrative market for timber, fuelled by easy access to river transport in the eastern Weald. Up until the Black Death, the ecclesiastics pursued a vigorous, but only moderately successful policy of enforcement of their timber-rights, but in the later fourteenth century this gave way to a slow but inevitable process of commutation for fixed low money rents. By the fifteenth century, dens and manors were being leased on long leases of as much as sixty to a hundred years. This change in the administration of lordship in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries fostered a land-market which allowed local families with the necessary resources to accumulate holdings and build up estates. This was not least the case in Tenterden.[156]

In the late fifteenth century, Tenterden gained even greater independence from one of its major ecclesiastical lords. In 1478, Christ Church Priory effectively transferred all its jurisdictional rights within its own lands lying within the hundred, to the bailiff and commons of Tenterden.[157] However, St. Augustine's had similar jurisdictional rights in the manor appendant to St. Mildred's and in other lands in the parish. Not only were these confirmed in the late fourteenth century, but they were held until the Dissolution.[158] Nonetheless, the overall trend was of the relaxation of lordship in Tenterden in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, so that by this period, landholders in Tenterden were enjoying "a climate of confidence in which" they were "free to capitalise not only on the potential of the soil itself but on the economic value of the timber".[159]

Everitt convincingly argues, that paradoxically, it was partly because the Weald was "essentially a tributary or dependent region in origin", that the society which developed there "was one with a good deal of individual freedom from manorial control, and with a notably independent yeoman class". This can be explained in part by the process of commutation of rights by distant landlords in the late middle ages, but it was also precisely because distant manors retained their rights that jurisdictional control in

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156 Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', pp. 16-20; Witney, *Jutish Forest*, pp. 85, 99-100, 163, 183; Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, chs. 3 and 8; F.R.H. Du Boulay, 'Dens, Droving and Danger', *Arch. Cant.*, lxxvi (1961), pp. 75-87; Furley, 'Early History of Tenterden', pp. 52-3; Furley, *History of the Weald*, vol ii, pt. 1, pp. 201-2, pt. 2, pp. 695-7.

157 These jurisdictional rights comprised all claims to profits previously owed to St. Augustine's by reason of the "lawday" within the Town and Hundred, and income from fines and forfeitures, on condition of an annual payment of 6s 8d: indenture, copied in english in BL: Stowe Mss., 850, fols. 111r.-112v. Another copy of this indenture can be found in CCAL: Church Commissioners Deposit 70485 (reference given by Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', p. 20).

158 Hasted, *History of Kent*, vol. vii, p. 217.

159 Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', p. 20.

the Weald remained weak.[160] It is against the history and development of this relationship with their ancient origins and links, that Tenterden's parishioners would have viewed their patron saint. In this way, St. Mildred could be identified as the embodiment of an identity derived from distant and unthreatening landlords. For some, she may even have become a symbolic representation of freedoms gained through long-term negotiation and struggle.

The symbolism of St. Mildred for the parishioners of Tenterden became all the more important, when in 1449, the town was incorporated and annexed to Rye as a limb of the Cinque Ports. This was essentially a consequence of Tenterden's new found prosperity in the fifteenth century from stock raising and commerce, and Rye's economic difficulties.[161] Whilst incorporation meant the realisation of a large degree of political autonomy for the town, and brought with it considerable commercial benefits, the process of annexation to Rye, and the hammering out of an agreement as to what Tenterden's precise contribution was to be to the Cinque Ports Confederation, was not without what seem to have been considerable difficulties. From the start, it appears that the relationship between the two towns was a troubled one, and that the leading townsmen of Tenterden needed a good deal of persuading to enter into a binding agreement with Rye.[162] "Serteyn stryves and contraversies" over the nature of the "composition" between the two towns continued over the next four decades, as they negotiated over the size of Tenterden's contribution to the Cinque Port's benevolence to the crown.[163] These differences were settled, albeit temporarily, in 1492 with a Composition, which made a number of additions to Tenterden's original charter of incorporation in the area of the town's contribution to the benevolence.[164]

Throughout these years, St. Mildred seems to have offered the townsfolk of Tenterden a powerful symbol by which to stress an independent identity, as they strove to negotiate their position in an uncomfortable and perhaps unwelcome alliance. St. Mildred represented Tenterden's otherness from Rye and the Cinque Ports, the independence and freedoms its people had gained by the fifteenth century, and may have provided a focus for anxieties that these would be lost through annexation.This can be

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160 Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, p. 56.

161 Witney, *Jutish Forest*, pp. 146-8.

162 H.T. Riley, suggested that Tenterden was united with Rye, "not improbably, much against the will of its inhabitants": *idem*, 'The Corporation of Tenterden', in *Sixth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, Appendix i (1877), p. 569. Hasted, *History of Kent*, vol. vii, pp. 200-202; Furley, 'Early History of Tenterden', pp. 43, 53-4. In 1449 and 1451 it appears that Rye was taking pains to salvage "the franchise of Tenterden": Taylor, 'Municipal records of Tenterden, Part I', pp. 283-4; Riley, 'Mss. of the Corporation of Rye', p. 491. For a detailed account of the relationship between Rye and Tenterden in the late fifteenth century, see Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand years*, pp. 40-3.

163 Riley, 'Mss. of the Corporation of Rye', pp. 491, 493-4; *A Calendar of the White and Black Books of the Cinque Ports*, pp. 101, 106.

164 CKS: Te/C1, fols. 17r.-22r.

seen most clearly in Tenterden's Common Seal, which dates from the charter of 1449. On the obverse is a large vessel with a sail, on which is the Cinque Ports' arms, and a flag displaying St. George's cross. The inscription reads: "*Sigillum commune ville et hundrede de Tenterden*". On the reverse, is a figure of St. Mildred with a coronet on her head, a book in one hand and a staff in the other, standing under a rich canopy. At the base she is named: "*Sancta Mildreda*", and around the verge, is a Latin inscription, translated here: "Pray for us blessed Mildred that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ". Beneath the figure is a shield, upon which are the arms of Thomas Petlesden, the first bailiff, which were adopted as Tenterden's corporate arms.[165] (See Plate 4.1)

Mildred's legend contained elements which lent themselves to political confrontation, and may have worked to emphasize community among the townspeople, and the oppositional identity of outsiders - especially Rye. Mildred was tempted and persecuted away from home by foreigners, and was rescued from her enemies with the help of the miraculous turning of the tide and the self-destruction of her pursuers. It may not be stretching the symbolism of her legend too far, to suggest that the people of Tenterden drew a parallel between the turning of the tide which saved St. Mildred, and the redirection of the Rother past Small Hythe which brought increasing prosperity to Tenterden, at the same time as Rye's economic difficulties in the mid-fifteenth century. These developments were the chief reason for annexation in 1449. The leading burgesses of Tenterden may have found comfort in the story of their patron saint, through their aspirations and anxieties after 1449.[166] By any standards the name 'Mildred' was unusual in this period in Kent, and it is probably due to the dedication of Tenterden's parish church to the saint, and what her life offered in terms of the structuring of identity, that more than a handful of women were named after her, including some of the Castelyn family, discussed in Chapters Five and Six. (See Fig. 5.2)

The light, or image of St. Mildred is mentioned in nine Tenterden wills from 1449 to 1523. In 1472, Sarra Daye left 5s to the making of a candlestick to burn before her image, and in 1493, Sir John Guldeford requested in his will, that his "body be buried in the churche of Saint Mildred of Tentirden before the Image of the same where the resurrection of our Lord is made".[167] This has strong parallels with his kinsman Thomas Petlesden's request to be buried in the chancel of St. Katherine, the other embodiment of Tenterden's corporate identity. Significantly, Guldeford chose to be buried before St. Mildred (as well as the Easter sepulchre), only a year after the 1492 Composition between Tenterden and Rye. As a member of the most important gentry family in the

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165 Taylor, 'The Municipal Records of Tenterden. Part II', *Arch. Cant.*, xxxiii (1918), pp. 110-1.
166 Rollason, *The Mildrith Legend*, pp. 12-3.
167 CKS: PRC 17/2/93; PRO: P.C.C. 29 Dogett, fol. 223.

parish he may have been particularly concerned to maintain Tenterden's independent identity in its future relationship with the Cinque Ports.

None of the other saints which attracted devotion by Tenterden's testators were as unusual as St. Mildred. St. Nicholas, whose cult seems to have been the next most popular after Mildred's, was well within the top ten saints in Kent.[168] St. Nicholas offered a number of identifications, especially with children, but he was also known, amongst other things, for his protection of mariners, his guardianship of honest business dealings, and as a maker of good marriages for the children of the poverty-stricken.[169] The cult of St. Stephen also appears to have had some significance at Tenterden, with three testators requesting chantries before his altar in the parish church. St. Stephen was more popular in the Marshes and the Weald than elsewhere in Kent, and references to his cult in east Kent wills, stretch in a distinct band between Dover and Hawkhurst, together with a scattering of places between Canterbury and Maidstone. This geographical pattern is unlikely to have had anything to do with Stephen's association with headaches. A better explanation might lie in his special relationship with widows, and demographic differences across the county. However, there is no identifiable connection between this cult and widows in Tenterden.[170]

A number of the more popular saints mentioned by testators had associations with travel, especially sea-faring and/or fishing. These include St. Christopher, St. Peter, St. Nicholas and St. John the Baptist who was the most popular saint around the coast of Kent. Intrinsically linked with their purely religious elements, these cults offered allusions to Tenterden's commercial role and sea-borne trade activities.[171] St. Barbara, whose cult in the Chapel of St. John the Baptist is the only one mentioned by a testator living in Tenterden's port of Small Hythe, was known for protection from sudden and unprepared death, and most especially from the perils of lightning, making her particularly attractive to mariners.[172]

Although the evidence of devotion to many of the saints whose cults became established in Tenterden is at best fragmentary, there does appear to have been an overall pattern of change over the period.The decline of Marianism by the sixteenth century has been noted already. Other saints such as Stephen, Nicholas and Christopher do not

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168 Draper, *et al.*, 'Fitting of the Altars'.

169 *Mirk's Festial*, pp. 11-15; *The Golden Legend*, vol. ii, pp. 106-22.

170 Draper, *et al.*, 'Fitting of the Altars'. See the parishes with references to St. Stephen in *Testamenta Cantiana: East Kent*; John Davy, 1467, PRO: P.C.C. 25 Godyn, fol. 193v; Joan Piers, 1471, CKS: PRC 17/2/29; William Claydishe, 1505, CKS: PRC 17/10/20.

171 Draper, *et al.*, 'Fitting of the Altars', For comments on these types of identifications with saints, and particularly among sea-borne trades, see: Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 160-3.

172 George Harryson, 1527, CKS: PRC 17/17/334. This association stems from the fact that in her legend, Barbara's merciless pagan father was reduced to ashes by a bolt of lightning after he had tortured and beheaded her: *The Golden Legend*, vol. vi, p. 204.

appear to have been as important to testators after around 1510.[173] In their place came the new cults of Mary Magdelene, St. George, St. James, St. Mark, St. Clement, St. Erasmus and Ss. Crispin and Crispianus.[174] Some of these, like St. George, already England's national patron, and Ss Crispin and Crispianus, enjoyed widespread growth in their cults in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The latter were patrons of shoemaking, which with Tenterden's involvement in the leather industries, must have made them highly applicable to local crafts and tradesmen. In 1522, Thomas Hicks bequeathed 6s 8d for the purchase of two images of these saints, and in 1513, Stephen Couper, left 20d to the making of a new image of St. George, and 20d "to the giltyng of the image of St. Mark if no new image is made". In contrast to the first, these last two bequests express the rising popularity of exiting cults rather than the arrival of a wholly new devotion.[175]

St. Erasmus was another saint who drew increasing national devotion at this time. His cult was already established at Tenterden, with an image in the parish church by 1517. A classic "helper saint", otherwise known as St. Elmo, like many of the other holy figures honoured by parishioners, his patronage was especially poignant for sailors. His cult does not however, appear to have been popular around the coast of Kent, but was concentrated on the Weald. This may have been because his legend was used by the clergy to encourage Sunday observance, his passion having been suffered entirely on that day. The Weald was after all, notorious for Lollardy, and the cult of Erasmus may have been part of a campaign by clergy to reinforce orthodoxy.[176]

The cult of saints in Tenterden may have been declining in overall popularity by the 1520s, but it was also developing, with older figures receding in favour of new, sometimes nationally popular movements. This innovation was not an isolated phenomenon. After 1500, new cults were more likely to first appear in the Weald than in any other region of the county apart from the chartlands. It has been tentatively suggested that "this may reflect a changing balance in cultural and economic vitality", from the older to the newer settled lands of Kent.[177] This seems very probable, but it may also point to the multiplication of identities under demographic and economic pressures from the turn of the century, and a consequent need for a greater variety of symbols for their articulation.

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173 The last reference to St. Stephen was in 1505, to Nicholas, in 1510 and to St. Christopher, in 1505.

174 First or only references to these cults were in 1523, 1505, 1528, 1513, 1525, 1517 and 1522 respectively.

175 Hutton, *Rise and Fall of Merry England*, pp. 26-7; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 163; *Testamenta Cantiana: East Kent*, p. xi. CKS: PRC 17/15/228; PRC 17/12/229.

176 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 163-4, 170, 177-8, 180-1, 187, pl 65; Draper, *et al.*, 'Fitting of the Altars'. For Wealden Lollardy, see Chapter Six.

177 Draper, *et al.*, *ibid.*

Church building

Tenterden's parish church, the chapel of St. John the Baptist in Small Hythe, and neighbouring churches attracted a relatively large number of bequests. Beyond payments for forgotten tithes, 102, just under two-fifths of testators left money, goods or stock to church building, repairs or fittings.[178] However, this masks a considerable and steady decline in this type of giving over the period, which accelerated in the 1520s, so that less than a fifth of testators made bequests to churches or chapels in the fifteen years up to 1535, compared to almost three-fifths before 1479. (Table 4.5) Whereas the overall level of testamentary giving to churches was similar or even considerably higher than that found in other towns, its marked decline is indicative of a particular trend in pious giving, as well as the evolution of church building and maintenance in Tenterden.[179]

Post obit gifts to church building and upkeep represent only a proportion of the overall amounts of money left by testators to these ends; on-going building projects and the need for maintenance presumably attracting gifts throughout an individual's lifetime.[180] Most of the bequests in the Tenterden wills were to St. Mildred's or the chapel of St. John the Baptist at Small Hythe, reflecting the obligation that parishioners had to provide for the upkeep of the main body of their parish church and Small Hythe chapel.[181] However, the wide variation in the amounts given by testators, illustrates that there was a strong voluntary element to these gifts. Of those that left money, the median amount was 6s 8d, but sums ranged from 4d up to £25 16s. To put the latter sum in perspective, about three-quarters left 20s or less.

The size of bequests, or whether a testator gave at all, seems to have been connected to other elements of his or her family's piety, suggesting that these types of

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178 Bequests to church building, repairs, decoration, to altars or images are included in this category but gifts to lights are not.

179 In Colchester, Higgs found that 40 per cent of the testators she studied made this type of bequest, with the largest decline being in the period 1500-1519, and a subsequent recovery after 1520 (a very small number of these were gifts for lights): *idem.*, 'Lay Piety', pp. 220-223, Table 16, p. 218. At Bury St. Edmunds, only 19 per cent of lay and clerical testators between 1380-1399 and 1439-1530 left money for church repairs or furnishings, but the total amount left per decade increased markedly in the early sixteenth century: Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 405, 408, Table 9.2. The proportion of testators mentioning church building or repairs in Sandwich was similar to that in Tenterden, and also fell over the period, but not as sharply.

180 Burgess and Kümin, 'Penitential Bequests and Parish Regimes', pp. 610-30; Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, pp. 104-127.

181 A.H. Thompson, *The English Clergy and their Organization in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1947), p. 117, n.2; S. Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300* (Oxford, 1984), p. 92; E. Mason, 'Role of the English Parishioner', pp. 23-5.

Table 4.5 *Gifts to church fabric[1], images and altars*

Date Range	Total number of wills	Number of testators making bequests	Percentage of all testators
1449-79	41	24	59
1480-99	49	23	47
1500-19	84	38	45
1520-35	89	17	19
1449-1535	263	102	39

1. Excluding payments for forgotten tithes

Table 4.6 *Giving to St. Mildred's*

Date Range	Total amount bequeathed in wills
1449-69	£6 6s 8d
1470-79	£39 11s 6d
1480-89	£5 11s 8d
1490-99	£5 4s 8d
1500-09	£6 13s 10d
1510-19	£22 5s 8d
1520-35[1]	£26 13s 4d

1. Only three small bequests in 1530s (totalling 16s 8d)

bequests cannot easily be separated from traditionally religious sentiments. Across all twenty-three selected families, a median of two in every five will-makers made this type of bequest. In contrast, the most religiously generous families gave to churches in a median of every one out of two of their wills, whereas among the most religiously parsimonious will-making families, a little less than one in four testators did so. In between these two extremes, the middle-group of families gave in a median of just over two out of every five of their wills. There was a similar pattern to the amounts of money left. Testators in the top-group of families gave a median of 10s, those in the middle, 6s 8d and those in the bottom-group, only 2s 4d. This type of giving therefore appears to have been an integral part of parochial piety, driven by the same motivations, or avoided for the same reasons as other aspects of religious expression in wills, rather than having an obligatory or communal character which was somehow separated in the minds of parishioners from religious devotion and provision as a whole.[182]

Examination of the total amounts bequeathed to St. Mildred's in each decade, reveals something of the fluctuating level of building, maintenance and furnishing activity within Tenterden's parish church. The 1470s, 1510s and 1520s stand out as times of noticeable activity (Table 4.6), although what these sums do not reveal is the fact that the higher amounts left in these decades were to a large extent due to one or two exceptionally large bequests. Identification of the major building projects over the period helps to add detail to figures.

There were a number of large scale endeavours to which a number of testators contributed. The construction of St. Mildred's almost oversized Perpendicular bell tower in the third quarter of the fifteenth century was the most ambitious of these collective building projects. The tower's lower stages are made of Bethersden marble, and due to its height, and the church's position on a ridge of high ground running east-west through the parish, it can be seen from ships at sea, now nearly sixteen miles inland, but then only a short distance from the Rother estuary. (See Plates 4.2 and 3.1) The tower was fitted with a peal of eight bells and set of musical chimes, presumably designed to match its visual impression with an audible one. The crenellations along the south side of the exterior of the nave, clearly intended for the purposes of display and to add to the imposing frontage facing the High Street, were probably added in the late fifteenth century. (Compare Plates, 4.3 and 4.4) The townspeople may have consciously copied Lydd, where a similarly impressive tower, also with a double west doorway, was built in the 1440s, and Ashford in turn, may have followed suit, erecting theirs from 1475 to 1483.[183] The well known legend linking the rise of Tenterden steeple to the destruction

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182 For this latter suggestion, see Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, p. 126.

183 Kaye-Smith, *Weald of Kent and Sussex*, p. 28; H.V.R., *Parish Church of St. Mildred*, p. 14; Hasted, *History of Kent*, vol. vii, p. 214. In 1476, William Iden left 5 marks for the making of "one chyme" for the bell tower (CKS: PRC 17/3/20), and in 1471, John Godday left £10 for a new bell, but

Plate 4.2 *The fifteenth century bell tower of the parish church of St. Mildred, Tenterden, viewed from the west*

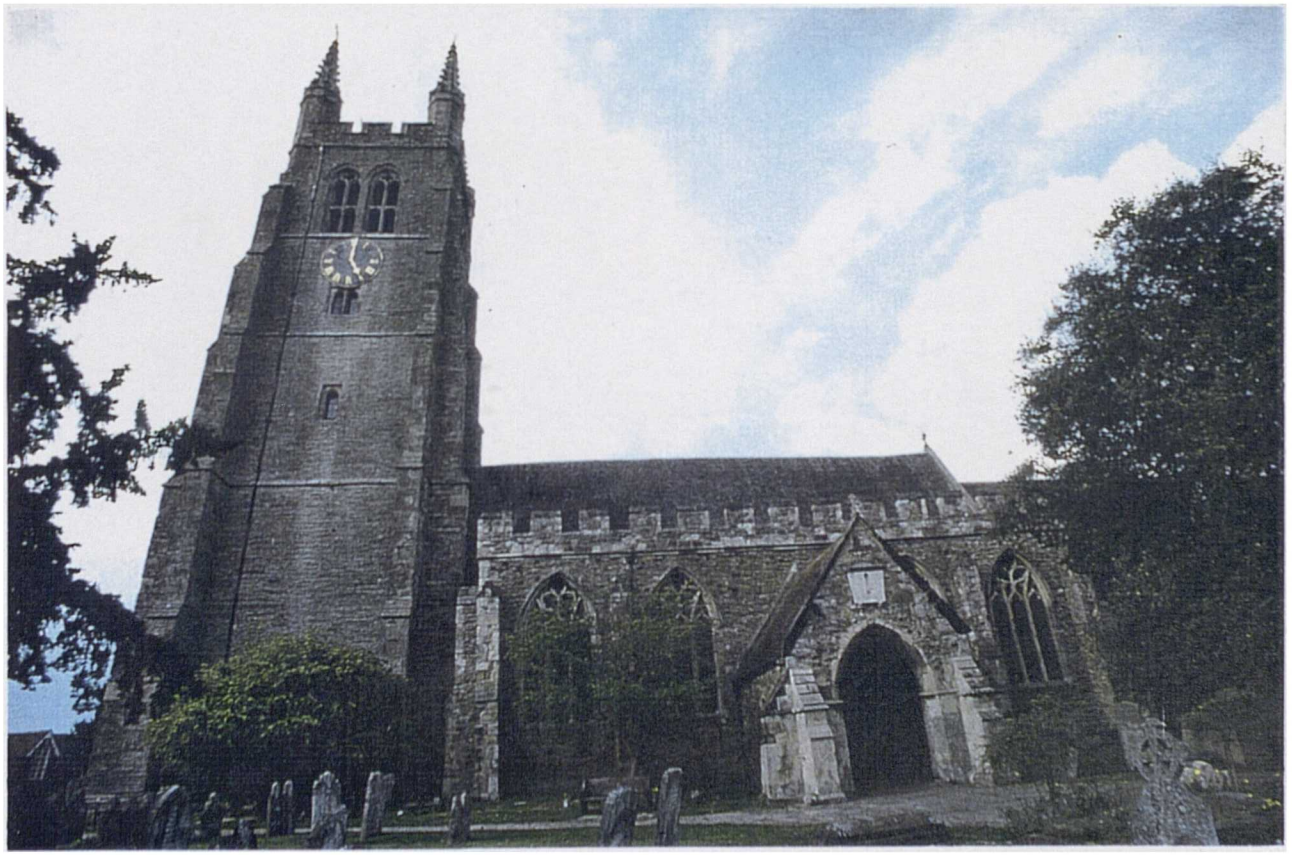

Plate 4.3 *The parish church of St. Mildred, Tenterden, from the south*

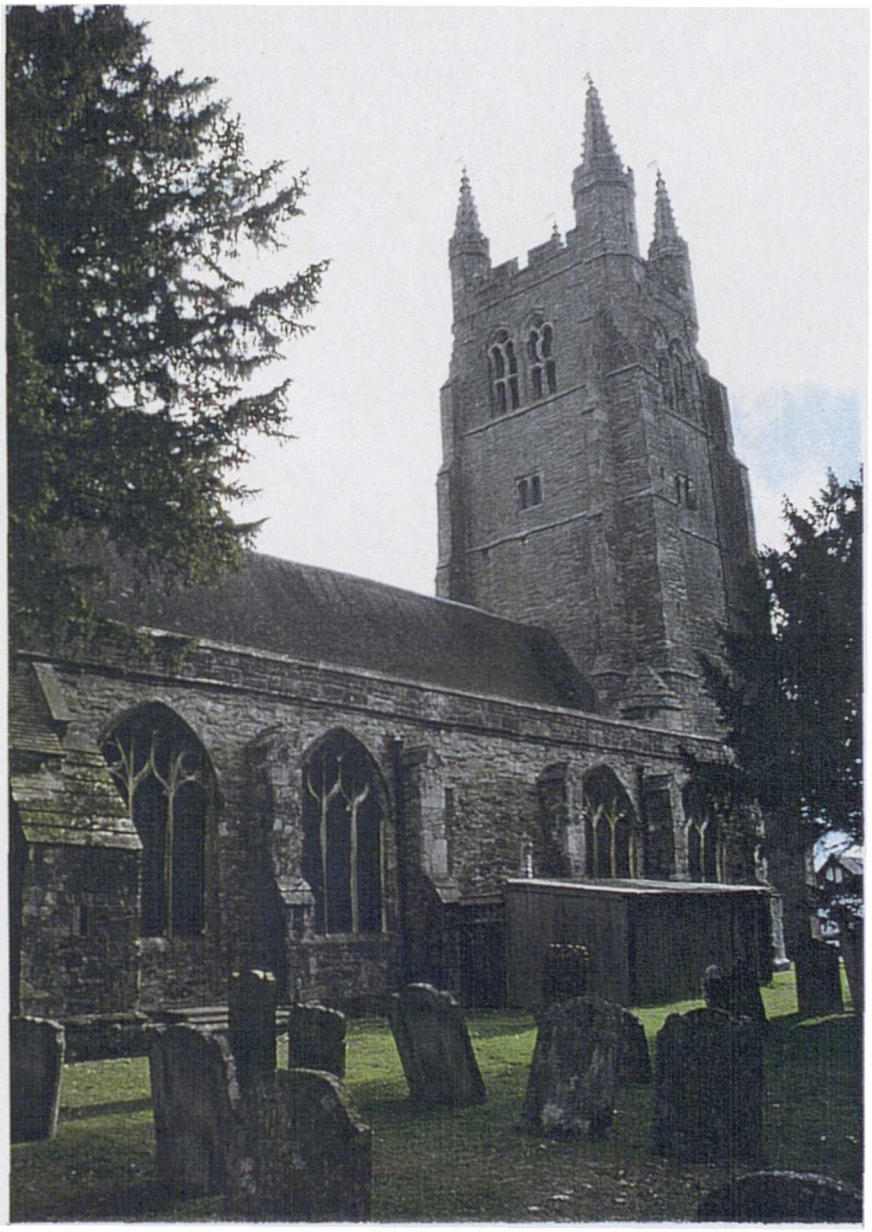

Plate 4.4 *The north side of the parish church of St. Mildred, Tenterden*

of Sandwich haven through the emergence of the Goodwin Sands, suggests that either the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Rochester, or the Abbot of St. Augustine's played a part in the building project. If any, it was more likely to be the last, being the rector of the parish; a possibility supported by the fact that the arms of St. Augustine's can be seen on the front of the tower.[184] Notwithstanding outside involvement and money, the construction of Tenterden's new bell tower was very much a collective urban effort.[185]

As such, it is evidence of growing prosperity among leading Tenterden families in the second half of the fifteenth century, comparable to other towns at this time, although extensive church building cannot always be explained in terms of growing collective urban wealth.[186] Rather than being purely an expression of new-found wealth however, the construction of such a grandiose new tower, was probably another symbolic manifestation of urban identity arising out of the town's uneasy alliance with Rye and the Cinque Ports. The earliest surviving will, dated 1449, the year of the borough's incorporation, contains a bequest to the building of the steeple, and another eight testators contributed to the project up until 1476. Significantly, the largest bequest was made by Thomas Petlesden, Tenterden's first bailiff, who himself appears to have become a symbol of the town's evolving identity. In 1463 he left a hundred marks to the building of the new tower - an impressively large sum in itself, but probably only a small fraction of the total cost of this exercise in civic posturing.[187]

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only in the event of his daughters not inheriting (CKS: PRC 17/2/66). Over a hundred church towers were rebuilt in Kent, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, p. 185

184 For conflicting accounts of the Legend of Goodwin Sands, see: Kilburne, *Topographie*, pp. 262-3; Harris, *History of Kent in Five Parts*, pp. 311-2; Rev. W.W. Skeat, 'Proverbs Relating to Kent', *Arch. Cant.*, ix (1874), pp. 141-2.

185 Although there is no direct evidence of monastic or archiepiscopal involvement, the project appears to have gained support from across the county, as Richard Berne of Canterbury left 6s 8d to the new tower in 1461, and John Chevening of Chatham, 40s, in 1457: *Testamenta Cantiana: East Kent*, p. 336; CKS: DRb/Pwr 2/84 (I owe this latter reference to Paul Lee).

186 See for example, Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 407, and Higgs, 'Lay Piety', pp. 104-5. For church building and refurbishment in a range of towns and more rural areas in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, see: D. MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors: Politics and Religion in an English County, 1500-1600* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 139-40; Thompson, *English Clergy*, pp. 128-30; Heath, 'Urban Piety', pp. 216-7; D.H. Jones, *The Church in Chester, 1300-1540* (Remains Historical and Literary connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancaster and Chester, 3rd series, vii 1957), pp. 113-5; J.I. Kermode, 'The Merchants of Three Northern English Towns', in C.H. Clough, ed., *Profession, Vocation and Culture in Later Medieval England* (Liverpool, 1982), pp. 33-5; Fleming, 'Charity, Faith and the Gentry of Kent', pp. 47-8; Scarisbrick, *Reformation and the English People*, pp. 12-15; J.R. Lander, *Government and Community: England 1450-1509* (London, 1980), p. 148; Burgess, 'A Fond Thing', pp. 78-9.

187 William Cok, 1449, CKS: PRC 17/1/7; Henry Easteagh, 1461, CKS: PRC 17/1/271; Thomas Petlesden, 1463, CKS: PRC 17/1/141; John Hoore, 1469, CKS: PRC 17/2/18; Joan Piers, 1471, CKS: PRC 17/2/29; John Tyler, 1471, CKS: PRC 17/2/27; Agnes Hylles, 1472, CKS: PRC 17/2/67; Thomas Cok, 1473, CKS: PRC 17/2/148 (funding "the whole of a new window, fully glazed, in the west part of the tower of Tenterden"); William Iden, 1476, CKS: PRC 17/3/20.

There were other collective building programmes upon St. Mildred's, the most notable being work on the nave around the turn of the century, attracting five bequests from 1492 to 1505, and the purchase of a pair of new organs, to which five testators contributed from 1510 to 1513. The installation of organs reflects the adoption of an increasingly popular taste in polyphonic music rather than plainsong in the liturgy, and seems to have been a preliminary to the adoption of the Jesus mass at St. Mildred's.[188] In the late 1460s and early 1470s repairs were being made to the "great cross", presumably the rood, and a little later, work was done on the north wall of the church. Around the turn of the century a handful testators contributed to the mending of the font called "cherchewell".[189]

Not all collective work on St. Mildred's involved building. In fact it appears that as the sixteenth century progressed, there was a growing tendency for collective giving to turn from the building itself, to concentrate more on the furnishings of the church. From 1504 to 1522 nine testators left either money or decorative objects to the adornment of the high altar or the host. Six of these gifts took the form of good quality pieces of cloth, such as table-cloths or coverlets, many it seems made of "dyaper towell". Four of these pieces of cloth were given by women, probably because these most domestic of objects were transmitted within the family between women, and to some extent they reflected their gendered role within the household.[190] More generously, John Fletcher left 16s 8d for the purchase of a velvet cloth to hang before the high altar, and Joan Easton stipulated in her will that Richard Piers was to pay the £3 that he owed to her, to St. Mildred's for the buying of a "cristmatory" made of silver.[191] This tendency for testators to concentrate upon the high altar and the host in these years may reflect an increasing trend within Tenterden's religious culture, towards concentration upon the central elements of orthodox devotion.

The wills provide only glimpses of collective building works and refurbishment, and there were at least two major projects in this period which are not mentioned in

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188 For a brief summary of this trend, see Burgess, 'Divine Service', pp. 54-9. Testators making bequests to work on the nave: John Davy, 1492, CKS: PRC 17/5/330; Thomas Gibbon, 1495, CKS: PRC 17/8/2; Thomas Pette, 1495, CKS: PRC 17/6/108; William Preston, 1497, CKS: PRC 17/7/50; John Strekynbold, 1505, PRO: P.C.C. 39 Holgrave, fol. 308. Testators contributing to the purchase new organs: Laurence Felip, 1510, CKS: PRC 32/10/124; John Pellond, 1511, CKS: PRC 32/10 154; Thomas Bisshopynden, 1512, CKS: PRC 17/12/236; Rycharde Aylond, 1513, PRO: P.C.C., 8 Holder, fol. 59v; Stephyn Couper, 1513, CKS: PRC 17/12/229.

189 John Davy, 1467, and Joan Piers, 1471; Savra Daye, 1472, CKS: PRC 17/2/93 and Stephen Smyth, fuller, 1482, CKS: PRC 17/3/450; John Spert, 1500, CKS: PRC 17/8/41 and Richard Baker, 1504, CKS: PRC 17/10/92.

190 Katherine Carpynter, 1510, CKS: PRC 17/11/182; Philip Harynden, 1513, CKS: PRC 17/12/312; Thomasyna Adam, 1519, CKS: PRC 17/14/12; Katherine Foule, 1519, CKS: PRC 17/15 64; Deonys Davy, 1520, CKS: PRC 17/14/285; John Donne senior, 1522, CKS: PRC 17/15/129.

191 1510, CKS: PRC 17/17/20; 1512, CKS: PRC 32/11/41. In 1504, Joan Gerves left 6s 8d to repairs upon the altar table of the high altar: CKS: PRC 17/10/19.

probate evidence. However, this is probably because they fell under the responsibility of the rector, namely the Abbot of St. Augustine's. The first was the extension of the north aisle to make the chancel of St. Katherine, which was completed some time before 1463, and the second was the building of the vestry onto the east end of the Lady Chapel in the south chancel aisle. The latter project appears to have been undertaken at the demand of the parishioners and churchwardens, articulated in the return to an Archidiaconal visitation in 1502:

> The copes, vestments, books and other goods of the church, are in bad condition through lack of a good place to keep them in; wherefore the parishioners and wardens say that a vestry should be provided for the safe custody of the said ornaments, according to the ordinal, and that such a vestry should be built and newly erected at the eastern end of the chancel of blessed Mary, which is annexed to the aforesaid church.[192]

If there can be less certainty that the Abbot of St. Augustine's built the vestry in the early sixteenth century, it is apparent that William Welde, Abbot in the late fourteenth century, commissioned a window in the central chancel. Archidiaconal visitations from the 1580s record that the chancel windows contained an image of the crucifix and of St. Mildred, and "a certayne superstitious salutations" reading: "Praye for me William Wealde sumtyme Abbot of St. Augustynes".[193]

There were some significant building projects commissioned by individual laymen in this period, two of whom belonged to the most religiously unsparing families.[194] In his will of 1496, Thomas Strekynbold stipulated that within three years after his death, his son was to have built an enclosed vice (staircase) on the exterior of the north side of the Church wherever the parishioners felt was most convenient, which would enable easy inspection of the lead. This most practical of projects was duly completed in a nevertheless impressive and rather idiosyncratic style.[195] (See Plate 4.5)

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192 CCAL: Z.3.2, fol. 136v. (translation taken from, Woodruff, 'An Archidiaconal Visitation', p. 26.

193 *Lost Glass From Kent Churches*, ed. C.R. Councer (Kent Archaeological Society: Kent Records, xxii, 1980), p. 125.

194 In addition, Thomas Wode, bequeathed £20 to the scaling of the roof in the body of the church or to the making of a new window on the north side of the high altar near to the image of St. Mildred (1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/158).

195 CKS: PRC 17/6/158.

Plate 4.5 *Thomas Strekynbold's 'vice' on the north side of St. Mildred's*

In 1528, William Couper ordained that his executors were to make at his cost and charge within a year of his death,

> "one convenient parclause or seelyng behynde the high Rode or crucyfix..betwyxt the Archys devyding the bodye of the seid churche and the high chancell", and "make and prepare And substancyally sett upp And fynyshe one convenyent wyndawe monyelyd and glasyd with all other what form therto necessarye and expedient uppon and in the Roofe one the southesyde of the seid churche next unto the seid Roode and crucyfix as hit can be thought most necessary by the curat and other honest men of the paryshe."[196]

There is no sign of such a window today, and Couper's aspirations may not have been fulfilled before the Reformation made such image-centred alterations to churches less possible. Perhaps more realizable, was John Tyler's gift of £20 in 1471 for new vestments, as well as bequests to the bell tower and general repairs, or Margaret Fynch's bequest of five marks from the sale of lands, for repairs to the processional cross.[197]

Despite considerable building work, refurbishment and ornamentation throughout the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, it appears that the ongoing upkeep of the parish church was not without its crises. As shown in Chapter Three, this seems to have been especially the case around the turn of the century, when a series of visitation returns dated from 1498 to 1508 describe, in a no doubt deliberately dramatic tone, the extent of decay. The chancel roof needed repairing, as did the shingles on the chancel of St. Katherine. In addition, the stone in the great east window in the chancel was broken - all due to the negligence of the rector. The copes and vestments appear to have been in a less than satisfactory state, and the books, including antiphoners, were damaged and unreadable in places. On one occasion, the churchwardens reported that the font and christmatory were unlocked. More obviously the responsibility of parishioners, the roof of the nave and some of its windows were in need of work and the churchyard lay open on its west side, allowing pigs to enter and graze. Finally, revealing a degree of conflict between the parish church and commercial activities in the town, the wardens complained in 1502 that "the doors of shops and stalls on the south side of the churchyard in which business is carried on, open on the said churchyard and cause inconvenience and loss to the said church and churchyard".[198] Some testators clearly attempted to alleviate these problems. For example, in 1505, John Strekynbold left 6s 8d

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196 CKS: PRC 32/12/174.

197 CKS: PRC 17/2/27; CKS: PRC 17/3/448. In 1534, John Lowdewell gave 6s 8d for the purchase of a banner cloth of silk for the processional cross (CKS: PRC 17/20/68).

198 CCAL: X.8.2, pt. 2, fol. 13r., 1498; Z.3.2, fol. 4r., 1501x8, fol. 9r., 1507, fol. 82v., 1508, fol. 136v., 1502. To put these problems in perspective, in the Archidiaconal Visitation returns of 1498, a total of 18 churches out of around 220, reported neglect to repair of fabric, furniture and vestments, and to fences and other church buildings: Woodruff, 'An Archidiaconal Visitation', p. 15.

for much needed repairs to books.[199] Indeed, by the second decade of the sixteenth century, it appears that much of the required work had been done. However, this may not have been so much the result of the specific and sometimes very individualistic bequests of some testators, or the more grandiose collective projects, but the mass of more general and less specific lifetime and post-obit collections and gifts. After all, fifty, by far the largest number of testamentary gifts to St. Mildred's, were simply intended for the "fabric", "repair", or "work" of the church.

Giving to the poor

Besides being a way of securing the prayers of the poor, and a pious act in itself,[200] charitable giving also provided a means of defining and creating community and identity, and of emphasizing differences in social status between givers and receivers.[201] Thirty-six testators gave to the poor from 1449 to 1535, a similar proportion as in other towns.[202] What this, and other studies cannot measure of course, is the level of giving to poor neighbours and kin who are named in wills but are not identified, or identifiable, as being poor. Judging by the Brekyndens, gifts to young adults either recently married or on the verge of marriage, who were on the edge of poverty or at risk of becoming poverty-stricken, may have been very common.[203]

There was no appreciable change in the level of posthumous charitable giving over time, and it was certainly not falling by the 1520s. With such small numbers of wills it is not possible to say whether there were short term fluctuations in bequests due to short term economic crises. There were though, noticeable differences in the level of giving to the poor, between families, which conform to the general spectrum of testamentary piety outlined and elaborated so far. So, whereas a median of one in four testators in religiously generous families remembered the poor, one in six of the moderately traditional, and only one out of twenty-nine testators belonging to more

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199 PRO: P.C.C. 39 Holgrave, fol. 308.

200 *Dives and Pauper*, ed., P.H. Barnum, EETS, cclxxx, 1980, p. 289; Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 655-7, and ch. 16; S. Brigden, 'Religion and Social Obligation in Early Sixteenth-Century London', *P & P*, ciii (1984), pp. 102-3; Rubin, *Charity and Community in medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 83; C. Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 236.

201 For the argument that charity worked to maintain social difference, see Dyer, *Standards of Living*, p. 236, and Dinn, 'Popular Religion', ch. 16, esp. p. 699. For contrasting views, see Galpern, *Religions of the People*, p. 42; Burgess, 'A Fond Thing', p. 69, and Rubin, *Charity and Community*, p. 289.

202 Very similar proportions of lay testators gave to the poor in Sandwich (not including gifts to hospitals), Colchester and Bury: Higgs, 'Lay Piety', p. 218; Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 657. Giving to the poor appears to have been more common in the wills of the townsfolk of Hull and Norwich: Heath, 'Urban Piety', p. 224; Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, Appendix 12, p. 223.

203 See my discussion of the Brekynden wills in Chapter Two.

religiously parsimonious families did so. This tends to suggest that giving to the poor was largely part and parcel of a traditional religious mentality, which placed a premium on acts and devotions which were seen directly to benefit the deceased's soul in purgatory.[204] Bequests which dispensed charity at the testator's funeral, month day or at obits, or on religiously significant occasions like Good Friday, are a good indication of the perceived intercessory value of these gifts. Most will-makers who gave to the poor did so at least in part in this way, and there was a growing trend towards funerary charitable giving by the second decade of the sixteenth century, which was probably a result of the growing elaboration and lay control of funerary ritual as a whole.

However, motives for charitable giving were by no means homogeneous and may have varied across the pious spectrum. All but one of those testators belonging to the most religiously open-handed families who gave to the poor, incorporated their charitable bequests into arrangements for funerals and obsequies. In contrast, among families in the lower two pious bands, two out of the eight testators who gave to the poor did so wholly in this way, but the rest made bequests less obviously linked with aspirations for intercessions. These latter gifts were more specific than funeral doles, and seem to have been given a good deal more thought. For example, in 1471, John Piers left a "second best" kirtle and a pair of shoes to each poor woman "with Augustin Gilmyne". In 1519, Moyse Pellond bequeathed "to one pouer mayden of Tenterden called Iden and to Joan Cheseman three yards of russet cloth equally divided", and four years later, his aunt, Margaret Pellond left clothing to "Poure Eden of Tenterden", probably the same woman. Agnes Hylles wished her best dish sold and the proceeds to be distributed among poor boys.[205] For these families, charitable giving may have been motivated less by traditional ideas about purgatory, than by social need and equally traditional pious notions about the intrinsic goodness of charity.

Aside from funeral and obit doles, the ways in which charity was dispensed tells us something about attitudes to the poor and to poverty in Tenterden. Relatively few bequests were general and unspecific in terms of whom they were to benefit. Only a handful of testators left money simply to be given in alms or to be distributed among "poor people".[206] This suggests that as in other places by the late fifteenth century, attitudes about charity were rather discriminatory, with care being taken to ensure that

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204 For a similar pattern in Colchester, see Higgs, 'Lay Piety', p. 216. For comments about the spiritual and intercessory elements of charity, see Heath, 'Urban Piety', p. 224, and Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 665-6, 698-9; Rubin, *Charity and Community*, pp. 74, 264; S. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300-1500* (Chicago, 1948), p. 179; Fleming, 'Charity, Faith and the Gentry of Kent', p. 44; Brigden, 'Religion and Social Obligation', pp. 102-3.

205 CKS: PRC 17/2/29; PRC 17/14/47; PRC 17/16/179; 1472, CKS: PRC 17/2/67.

206 Richard Baker, 1504, CKS: PRC 17/10/92; John Lynche, 1524, CKS: PRC 17/16/152; Robert Hovynden, 1527, CKS: PRC 17/17/324.

only the "honest" poor, or those perceived to be most in need, received help.[207] John Lilly willed that clothing be sold to buy cloth to make two robes for two "*pauperibus honestis*" (were his own garments considered to be too fine these individuals?), and John Tyler gave 11s to eleven poor folk at the discretion of his executors.[208] This preoccupation can be seen in those bequests which stress that the recipients of charity had to be dwelling within the parish, and so were presumably housed, rather than being vagrants. Thomas Cok, for example, left 20s to twenty poor "*manentibus*" (dwellers) in Tenterden, where help was seen to be necessary by his executors, in addition to six robes and six kirtles.[209] Often though, it is apparent that communities and identities were being symbolically set out in these geographically specific gifts. The most striking example of this, is Sir John Guldeford's wish to have a large amount of money distributed in alms to "pouer men and whemen knowen and dwelling in the vij hundreds", these being the Wealden hundreds which made up a single administrative unit, of which Tenterden had no longer officially been a part since incorporation in 1449. Guldeford owned lands across a number of these hundreds and appears to have been stressing his identification with a political community over which his family held great sway.[210]

Certain social groups were picked out by some testators as being especially worthy of aid. John Tyler left ten marks to the maintenance of twenty poor boys, and a number of individuals gave to poor maidens, or the marriages of poor maidens; concern for poor young people and for their marriages being a strong element within charity.[211] Vulnerability seems to have been a strong criterion in the assessment of need, Stephen Felip, for example, leaving 3s 4d to the daughter of John Saunder of Smarden "which is lame".[212]

Moralising and discriminating attitudes to the poor and to charity in Tenterden, can be seen most clearly in the will of William Stonehouse, a priest and member of one of the more religiously orthodox families in the parish. Stonehouse left a house and half a garden to his niece, Katheryn Couper and stipulated that when she died this property was to go,

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207 Vale, 'Piety, Charity and Literacy', p. 26; Fleming, 'Charity, Faith and the Gentry of Kent', pp. 44-6; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 179; Galpern, *Religions of the People*, p. 40; Rubin, *Charity and Community*, p. 70; Dyer, *Standards of Living*, pp. 238-9, 244-5; Marjorie K. McIntosh, 'Local Change and Community Control in England, 1465-1500', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, xlix (1986), pp. 227-9.

208 1504, CKS: PRC 17/10/21; 1503, CKS: PRC 17/9/211.

209 1473, CKS: PRC 17/2/148. Cf. Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 690.

210 See Chapter Six, for details on the Guldeford's landholdings and political networks. 1493, PRO: P.C.C., 29 Doggett, fol. 223.

211 1471, CKS: PRC 17/2/27. Those who gave to poor maidens or to their marriages were: Sir John Guldeford, (see n.210); Robert Clerk, 1495, CKS: PRC 17/6/156; John Tyler, 1503, CKS: PRC 17/9/211; Moyse Pellond, 1519, CKS: PRC 17/14/47; William Gerves, 1525, CKS: PRC 17/16/274.

212 1523, CKS: PRC 17/16/46.

> to the next of my kyn that is yn poverte and necessite. And the other house and half gardyn to an other honest pouer bodye of the next of my kyne. And they to have their dwellyng free for time of liff. And so to praye for all xyen soules. And if it shold happen the saide kateryne or any other that shall happen to dwell at Jerico be not honeste of their bodye or of tong, then I will that ether the said feoffees or executors or their assignes putt out the said evil disposed persone And sett yn an other wele disposed persone.[213]

The evidence relating to poverty and charity in Tenterden is at best patchy, but there can be reasonable confidence that giving to the poor was conducted on an informal basis only, and that much of it was explicitly religious in motivation and form. There do not seem to have been any almshouses or hospitals in the parish, and no testator gave to such institutions elsewhere. Although the level of lifetime giving is hidden, from wills alone it seems unlikely that charity in Tenterden made any real impact upon the condition or number of the poor.

Public works

Giving to public works can be seen as just another form of charity, albeit one which benefited a large number of people and a wider cross-section of society than gifts to the poor. Unlike the last activity however, public works involved notions about the nature of community expressed in rhetoric about civic pride and need.[214] About the same proportion of testators (thirty-four out of 263) who gave to the poor, left money for public works in their wills, chiefly for repairs to roads or footways, but there appears to have been something of a decline in bequests of this type after 1520. This may have been due to decreasing need after a period of intensive building and maintenance.[215]

Seven out of forty testators in the top pious band of families gave to public works, five out of forty-five in the middle-band and one out of twenty-nine in the bottom-band, indicating that as with gifts to the poor, civic giving was part of a coherent set of pious attitudes, with strong religious connotations. This said, none of the bequests used explicitly religious language by claiming efficacy for the testator's soul.[216] Some were however, motivated by religious sentiment in that they called for repairs to crosses positioned at important points within the town and its suburbs. Both William and

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213 1528, CKS: PRC 17/18/180.

214 Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 683.

215 The proportion of testators who gave to public works in Tenterden was similar to that for Sandwich and London, but higher than in Norwich and Bury: Thomson, 'Piety and Charity', pp. 187-8; Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, p. 137; Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 673

216 For these more religious works, see Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 684-5.

Katherine Foule left money for repairs to the cross near to where they lived at West Cross, the significant junction between Tenterden High Street and the road to Small Hythe surrounded by a relatively built up residential area by the late fifteenth century.[217] Other gifts were indirectly religious. A number of testators left money for repairs to footways or roads between the testator's house or a named point in the parish, and the parish church. Although St. Mildred's lay at the centre of the town and so provided a useful reference point, it is probable that these gifts were also intended to improve the approaches to the church, to practically aid and encourage church attendance by family, kin and neighbours and to symbolically tie the testator to the community of regular church-goers. Strikingly, all but one of the testators belonging to the more religiously generous families who made bequests for public works, left money for repairs to crosses or mentioned the parish church, and only one testator in the other two pious bands made this type of gift.[218] As with giving to the poor, the orthodox religious intensity of public works appears to have varied between families in line with the overall character of their testamentary piety.

Chapter Three showed how residents of Small Hythe were almost wholly responsible (at least in terms of testamentary gifts) for repairs and improvements to the Small Hythe to Tenterden road, and it was argued that this was one way in which they reinforced and expressed their emerging identity within the parish. Other bequests have an intensely local character which may speak of the influence of neighbourhood upon identity. A number of testators contributed to road repairs between their own house and another point, usually the parish church. Katherine Foule left 3s 4d to repairs of the cross "next my house" called westcrosse, and William Claydishe gave 6s 8d for repairs to a causeway above his house.[219] Not all gifts were as discriminate as this however, with many not stipulating the roads to be repaired, suggesting a wider service to the whole parish or town, rather than the expression of neighbourhood identity alone. Thomas Wode, for example, left £10 "to noyes wayes and footeways and carrying wayes".[220]

Few of these bequests were very ambitious, or departed from the normal formula of repairs to roads or footways. Exceptional in this regard were the projects envisaged or alluded to by John Tyler in 1503. He ordained ten marks "to the makyng of a good and sufficient way to go and to ride in the kyngs strete toward the Watermill by yond the iij leggid crosse ayenst the land of William Claydishe and the land of the heires of John

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217 1496, CKS: PRC 17/6/281; 1519, CKS: PRC 17/15/64; Roberts, *Tenterden Houses*, p. 44. West Cross may date from as early as the late tenth century: Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, p. 5.

218 Those mentioning the parish church in road bequests were: Robert Stonehouse, 1472, CKS: PRC 17/2/65; William Preston sen., 1493, CKS: PRC 17/6/10; William Preston, 1497, CKS: PRC 17/7/50; William Davy, 1501, PRC 17/8/222; Stephen Blossom, 1522, CKS: PRC 17/15/128.

219 1519, CKS: PRC 17/15/64; 1505, CKS: PRC 17/10/20.

220 1526, CKS: PRC 17/17/158.

Pett". He also left 20s "to the makyng of a greate dike toward the watermill, a karyeng way of brede ayenst the land of the heires of John Pett so that that (sic) the water rynnyth twarte the strete downward so depe that the water may ryn downe by the saide dike by the este side of the strete and no more ryn twarte the strete".[221] This latter bequest was probably a contribution to a collective project designed to ease communications between Tenterden town and the string of watermills along the valley to the north-west which served its domestic requirements.[222] The only other legacy to depart from the norm was George Strekynbold's stipulation in 1524, that if a school house was being built in Tenterden within seven years of his death, then 20s was to go to its construction. It may be of some significance that George's father John Strekynbold, was the only testator for whom there is a surviving will, who left money for repairs to the books of the parish church.[223]

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The Tenterden families for whom a sufficient number of wills survive to allow us to assess the continuities of their piety, can be convincingly placed on a testamentary spectrum ranging from the sparse to the richly elaborate. In terms of their piety, individual testators formed polythetic groups within families, and in turn, families can be grouped together polythetically into reasonably distinct bands.

There was no straightforward positive relationship between available wealth and the value or elaboration of religious bequests. Available wealth set limits to religious giving, but aside from this, the character of a family's testamentary piety and their commitment to orthodox forms of devotion appears to have been dependent upon the degree to which testators prioritized the religious, vis-à-vis other concerns and pressures upon resources. Family circumstances at death were one of the most influential factors affecting testamentary strategies, and they were largely determined by the stage in the life cycle at which death occurred. The influence of family circumstances on individual testamentary strategy can be clearly seen in wills made by widows, which tended to follow a fairly predictable pattern in the way they apportioned resources. However, it is also apparent that the degree to which widows had access to disposable resources, and to some extent, the way they employed them, was mediated by family attitudes to the use of wealth. The overriding influence of family sentiment can also be seen in the positive relationship between the number of dependent children mentioned in a family's wills and the degree to which they prioritized religious concerns. Also, whilst strategies might vary

221 CKS: PRC 17/9/211.

222 For comments on the development of Watermill Valley in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, see Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', pp. 45-6.

223 CKS: PRC 17/16/269.

between individuals within the one family due to circumstantial differences, there was nevertheless a distinctive character to a family's testamentary piety.

On the basis of a statistical analysis of testamentary evidence, piety at Tenterden was different in several ways from religious culture in most urban centres and the one rural area, for which there are comparable descriptions. Chantries were comparatively unpopular and generally, were poorly endowed, and their founders may have been less outward-looking in their intercessory provisions than in other places. On the other hand, arrangements for funerals, and obsequies, and in particular, obits, were unusually common, attracting expenditure to a level seen in larger towns, although obits tended to be rather short-lived and in general, funeral rites at Tenterden appear to have been unelaborate and restrained. The religious orders hardly featured in testators' preoccupations, although as found elsewhere, the mendicants attracted more positive attention than the other orders. Whilst there was a good number of saints' cults in the parish church, devotion to them was sparse, with fewer gifts to lights and images than in most other centres. Marianism was also lacking in popularity in Tenterden, and the brotherhood of Mary never seems to have been a major force within the religious life of the parish.

Significant as these differences are, they are more of degree than of form. Most of the religious institutions and devotions found in other places in this period, can be found at Tenterden. So, for example, the saints' cults which were most popular across the Weald, the rest of Kent and sometimes the nation, also attracted the greatest following in the parish. As in most other urban centres in this period, the townsfolk poured money, energy and creativity into extending and enhancing their church buildings, and at the same time, struggled to meet all the requirements of maintenance; giving to the poor was at a similar level in wills as in other places, and seems to have been as discriminating and as religiously motivated as elsewhere. Gifts for public works were neither abnormally common nor unusually rare. This said, similarities in form, do not necessarily point to congruence in meaning.

In terms of changes in devotional form and fashion over time, Tenterden may well have been unusual. A rapid decline in chantry provision together with a marked rise in funerary ritual in the early sixteenth century has been found elsewhere, but not to such a noticeable degree. Belief in purgatory appears to have remained strong right up until 1535, and the change in fashion was probably motivated by a combination of economic and cultural factors, with a desire for greater lay participation and control. The greater collective aspect of funerary ritual and perhaps an increasing lay interest in liturgy and devotional texts, also possibly played their parts.

New fashions in devotion which became nationally popular, differed in their impact upon religious culture in Tenterden. The most theologically controversial of

these, the Pope Trental, and its shorter derivative may have been viewed with suspicion, and failed to become established. Masses at "*Scala Coeli*" faired little better. On the other hand, as will be shown in Chapter Five, the Jesus mass was a spectacular success. Probably in connection with this last devotion, the adoption of music in the liturgy also appears to have won favour among parishioners and a number of new saints' cults which appear elsewhere by the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries, caught on in Tenterden.

Two changes in testamentary piety suggest that reforming attitudes may have been at work in Tenterden as early as before the 1520s. The first of these was the cessation of gifts to religious orders in 1518, and the absence of any ongoing popularity of the Friars found in other towns up to the Reformation. The second, is the lack of bequests to images from the early 1520s onwards. The significance of these negative trends will be returned to in the following chapters.

The overall character of piety in Tenterden was, with some notable exceptions, parsimonious, unelaborate and rather reserved, compared to religious practice in many other towns or villages. Nonetheless, there were dramatic contrasts in piety between families and individuals within the parish. A chantry endowment which might appear paltry in London or Bristol, would have seemed lavish in the context of parochial experience and tradition. There were consistent and clear differences between families, in the intensity, form and substance of bequests for chantries, funerals and obsequies; in giving to the religious orders and in devotion to saints; in contributions to collective and individual church building projects; in charity to the poor and in public works. Throughout this period, some families displayed a greater religious motivation and commitment to orthodox devotions and structures in their wills than others. Whilst there was a good deal of overlap in the character of testamentary piety around the centre of the pious spectrum, the differences between the testamentary preoccupations of say, the Chapmans, Castelyns and the Blossoms on the one hand, and the Strekynbolds, Stonehouses and Prestons on the other, would probably have been even more apparent at the time than they are now. In subsequent chapters it is argued that these differences reflected, and helped to form contrasting traditions in family piety in Tenterden, which were of substantial and lasting significance in terms of heresy and reform.

Forms and structures of religion, were employed in the ongoing symbolic construction of identity and community in Tenterden. This can be seen most clearly in the adoption of St. Katherine and St. Mildred as symbols which spoke of Tenterden's unique origins, special status and freedoms during the years of negotiation with Rye in the late fifteenth century. Certain key political figures in the town appear to have seized upon these saints and used them as counter-weights to the perceived power of the Cinque Ports Confederation. Most of the other saints venerated in Tenterden, lent themselves to

the town's material culture, their appeal, at least in part, being derived from their everyday relevance, and agency for the construction of identity.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Social Origins of Parsimonious Piety

But beyond this, it is only recently that historians (ourselves among them) have begun more fully to realize how much information the study of "ordinary" people living in "ordinary" communities can bring to the most fundamental historical questions. (Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed. The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge Mass., 1974), pp. xi-xii)

Description of the traditionally orthodox elements of piety, necessitates concentration upon individuals and families who tended to prioritize the religious in their giving. However, just as valid an aspect of testamentary piety in Tenterden, was a tradition conspicuous for its lack of explicitly religious acts, and propensity to concentrate on the concerns of family and kin. Families such as the Castelyns, Bisshopyndens, Pellonds and Chapmans, in the middle and bottom bands of the pious spectrum, made wills of this character. Here, the priority is to investigate the nature and tenor of their pious traditions and the possible roots from which they sprang.

As with the exploration of the Brekyndens' family piety in Chapter Two, much of what follows involves the detailed reconstruction of family, occupation, wealth and status, together with a close reading of last wills and testaments, in order to put piety into something approaching its proper context. Two families were chosen for detailed examination, mainly for reasons which will become clear in Chapter Six. Apart from frugality in religious giving, one of the features of their wills by the early sixteenth century was patronage of the Jesus mass. This is examined in detail, and interpreted for what it can tell us about the direction in which orthodox religion in Tenterden was heading by the second decade of the century; the implications of which, have general application to our understanding of the development of piety in the pre-Reformation years.

The second part of this chapter attempts to reconstruct the social, economic and to some extent, political contexts and roots of frugal piety. In so doing it owes a considerable debt to much pioneering work, on the possible social origins and appeal of Lollardy in late medieval England, in addition to religious Nonconformity in the early

modern period.[1] A great deal of inspiration was gained from other quarters, in particular, Boyer and Nissenbaum's compelling reconstruction of the social origins of witchcraft in Salem, Massacheusets.[2] For a number of reasons, not least the lack of social and economic evidence which is comparable with other places, suggestions as to what forces and factors shaped pious traditions in Tenterden before the Reformation, are on the whole, tentative. It is hoped that they will lead on to further investigations in the future.

Part one: the characteristics of parsimonious piety

Religiously sparse will-making

Parsimonious testamentary piety was neither simply characterized by unelaborate religious bequests of relatively low monetary value, nor by an absence of large numbers of different types of traditional elements in the one will. Some families produced one, and often more wills which were in want of any explicitly religious provisions whatsoever. Before continuing, it is important to define what is meant by "explicitly religious provisions". All but a dozen testators made payments to the high altar of the parish church for so-called "forgotten tithes", and whenever cash was available these bequests appear to have been obligatory. Although sometimes having a voluntary and religious aspect to them, within this present context, these gifts have therefore been ignored. Bequests to the poor and for public works, which do not employ openly religious language, have also been excluded.[3] So too, have formulaic and vague requests for the disposal of residue, which in any case usually fail to stipulate what executors were actually meant to do with the remainder of the estate, if in fact, there was any. Lastly, reversionary bequests of a religious nature, which were only to come into effect in default of inheritance of part or all of the testator's estate by a beneficiary, are not counted. This is because they were second in order of priority after the first set of stipulations in a last will and testament, and so had the character of after-thoughts.[4] All wills containing any one or combination of the above, but no other religious elements, were identified and grouped by family.

The spread of these wills across the twenty-three selected families is, not surprisingly, uneven. The greatest concentration was among the lowest band of families,

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1 See Chapter Six.

2 Boyer and Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed.*

3 For a discussion of these types of giving, see Chapter Four.

4 There are in fact only 9 wills which lack "explicitly religious provisions" and contain reversionary arrangements of this type. Four were for chantries, and the rest were for such things as gifts to church fabric, the poor, or for general distribution.

with a median of just over two in every five of their wills being of this type. A median of two in every seven written by middle-band families conformed to these same characteristics, but that is as far up the testamentary spectrum as they tended to go. Only one was made by a more generously religious family, compared to twelve and eleven by the middle and bottom bands respectively. As will be shown in more detail below, the testamentary traditions of some families were almost typified by an absence of traditionally religious expression; sometimes as many as three out of five, two out of four or three out of seven of their wills were of this nature.[5]

Examination of the frequency and familial spread of this type of testamentary strategy among all the surviving Tenterden wills, reinforces the impression that it was concentrated and to some extent, continuous within certain families and, just as importantly, absent from others. A total of fifty-two out of 263, or 20 per cent lack explicitly religious elements, a proportion similar to that found among the probate materials for Colchester, but perhaps larger than in some other places.[6] (See Figure 5.1a) These fifty-two wills are distributed between forty different testator-surnames, and a total of ten surnames appear more than once as makers of these wills. The wills bearing three of these surnames have been established as belonging to three distinct families. In the remaining seven cases there is nothing to rule out family connections, but neither can they be wholly proved. For the sake of convenience, these groups of individuals shall be termed families, whilst bearing in mind the approximate nature of this description.[7]

The concentration and continuity of this type of testamentary strategy within the ten families, can be shown in two ways. Firstly, these families represent only a quarter of the forty surnames mentioned above, and yet together they made twenty-two, or 42 per cent of this type of will. Secondly, although they only produced just under a fifth of all wills (fifty out of 263), they made over two-fifths of those lacking religious provisions.

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5 The Gibbons, Chapmans and Castelyns respectively.

6 Twenty-four per cent of Colchester's wills surviving from 1485 to 1529 left no money, goods, or land for religious or charitable purposes: Higgs, 'Lay Piety', p. 219. Contrastingly, from a survey of over 2,500 wills mainly from the Midlands, and made in the first decades of the sixteenth century, it has been estimated that only 3 to 4 per cent contain no religious bequests: Scarisbrick, *Reformation and the English People*, pp. 3 n.2, 6. See also, Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, p. 104, which suggests that wills of this type are rare among those surviving for Norwich.

7 The problems of establishing family connections between individuals can be considerable, and the successful reconstruction of a family over two or more generations often depends on whether sons are named in wills, or on explicit references to relationships by blood or marriage, in these or other sources. It is important to note however, that in all six cases, at least two of the wills out of all those bearing the same surname have been successfully linked by a relationship of parenthood or marriage. It is much harder to establish relationships between brothers, the greatest difficulty being connecting different branches of the one family. This of course, is not to mention the problems involved in establishing affinal connections. It is not surprising that the successfully reconstructed families have on the whole, left more wills (the Assheryndens, 5 wills; the Castelyns, 7; and the Pellonds, 7) than the others (The Blossoms, 5 wills; the Gibbons, 5; the Pettes, 5; the Hylles, 5; the Chapmans, 4; the Jans, 3; and the Westes, 3).

(See Figures 5.1b and 5.1c) Together with the very uneven spread of these wills across the twenty-three families, this suggests that whilst a testamentary strategy which excluded religious concerns might be employed from time to time by individual testators for a variety of reasons, certain families tended to return to such an approach, perhaps out of a common motive and within a shared tradition.

What combination of circumstances and attitudes gave rise to these wills? In many cases limitations on available resources, especially cash, appear to have played their part. Five testators bequeathed no money at all, and a further nineteen seem to have had access to only enough to make relatively small payments for "tithes forgotten", usually of around 12d. Because religious gifts were more likely than other types of bequests to take the form of cash legacies, they may have been the first aspect of testamentary arrangements to be curtailed by financial strictures. Significantly, no family for which there are only two wills, wholly followed this testamentary strategy, meaning that all those families who made more than one will in want of religious provisions, produced at least three surviving testaments in total. This suggests that in most families, given enough time and the making of enough wills, the demographic lottery of life-cycle, household economics and kinship, ensured that once every so often, someone would make a will without having access to enough cash to attend to religious bequests.

Nonetheless, this does not fully explain the spread of sparse wills. For one thing, there are numerous examples of Tenterden wills which make sometimes extensive cash bequests, either wholly or in part, on the strength of goods, lands or stock to be sold by executors, leased to feoffees or held by heirs. For example, William Stonehouse stipulated that his ploughs, wains and harrows be sold to perform his testament, which included cash bequests for his funeral, month mind and year's mind, to church fabric, and to family, kin and friends. Thomas Hicks arranged for lands in the neighbouring parish of Rolvenden, to be sold for £23 in order to fulfil his extensive testamentary bequests. William Preston senior hoped to secure a number of religious bequests from the sale of some of his lands and tenements, and also expected his wife to fund a yearly obit costing at least 3s 4d from lands and tenements in the parish. When she died, this property was to be held in trust and the obit to continue in perpetuity. Such arrangements allowed for the conversion of household and family resources into disposable wealth, to be passed outside the family.[8] As discussed in Chapters Three and Four, others gave items of household goods, stock and sometimes even lands to the parish church or Small Hythe

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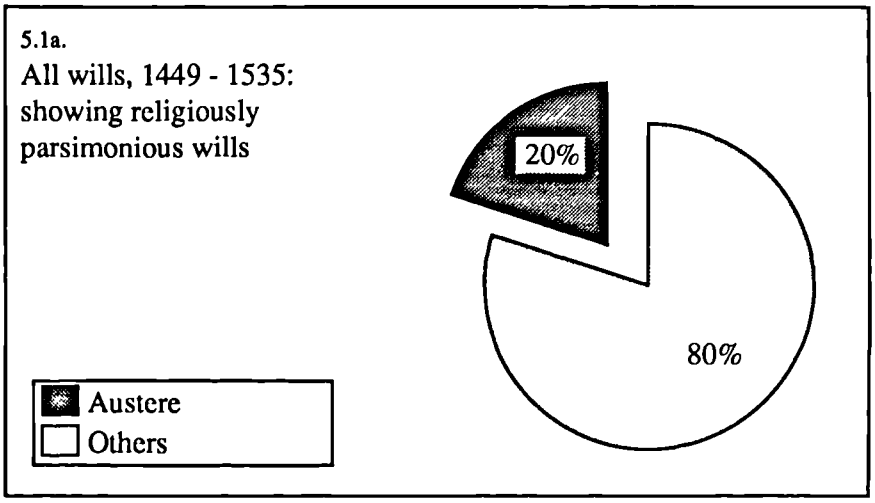
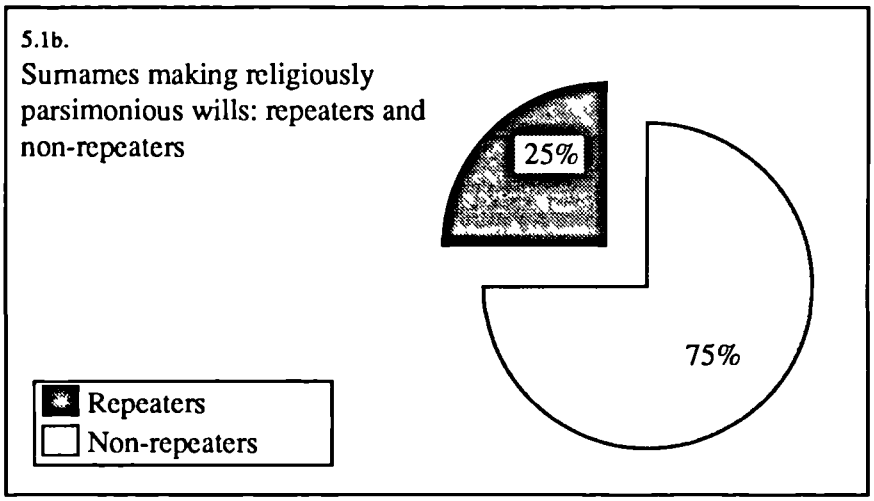
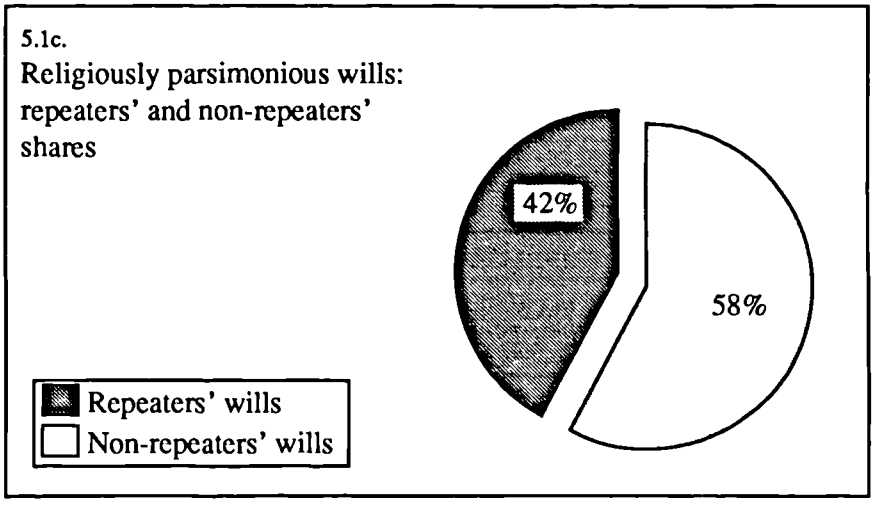
8 1513, CKS: PRC 17/12/227; 1522, CKS: PRC 17/15/228; 1493, CKS: PRC 17/6/10. Other testators who followed this practice of converting household goods or lands into cash bequests include, Nicholas Assherynden, 1484, CKS: PRC 16/1; Richard Baker, 1504, CKS: PRC 17/10/92; Thomas Blusshe, 1473, CKS: PRC 17/2/291; Stephen Blossom, 1522, CKS: PRC 17/15/128; Thomas Chapman, 1487, CKS: PRC 17/5/9; John Herwardyng, 1506, CKS: PRC 17/9/245; Philip Harynden, 1513, CKS: PRC 17/12/312; Godlena Piers, 1495, CKS: PRC 17/6/111; Stephen Smyth, 1482, CKS: PRC 17/3 450; William Tobill, 1501, CKS: PRC 17/9/70.

Figure 5.1 *The spread of religiously parsimonious wills*







chapel, sometimes in return for priestly intercessions. A particularly popular way of doing this was to bequeath one or two cows to the use or fabric of St. Mildred's, or one of the parish fraternities.[9] The making of religious bequests was not always dependent upon the possession of money - there were numerous ways of utilising moveables and realty to fulfil spiritual aspirations.

A fair number of the testators who did not attend to religious provisions and left only minimal amounts of cash, made very cursory wills. This suggests they had relatively little property at their disposal. These testators were probably less well-off than most, and the majority belonged to families which do not appear to have endured in Tenterden, as only one or two wills survive for them.[10] Others however, devised lands and tenements, bequeathed more substantial amounts of household goods, and occasionally, livestock. John Assherynden's wife and daughter were each left a cow, and his two goddaughters a heifer each. John also gave lands to his wife. Richard Jan devised lands in High Halden and Tenterden to his wife, which were to pass to his son on her death. He also provided for two daughters. Joan Pette, a widow who made her will in 1497, left household goods to as many as sixteen different individuals, including her three daughters and two sons.[11] These were clearly wealthier individuals, some of whom belonged to enduring Tenterden families. That they made no efforts at all in their wills to fund religious bequests from moveables or realty, suggests that such concerns were not as important to them as they were to some of their fellow parishioners.

Twenty-eight of the fifty-two testators who did not attend to religious provisions, nevertheless made cash bequests. In nine cases these amounted to only 10s or less, but twelve of these will-makers left at least 5 marks. In 1466, William Blossom left 20d to the high altar of St. Mildred's, 6s 8d to each of his godchildren, and 10 marks to his brother Richard. To Richard's daughter Thomasina, he bequeathed 40s, on the condition that she remain with William's wife until her marriage. He also requested that the residue of his estate be distributed in works of charity. Philip Blossom, in 1471, gave 3s 4d for his forgotten tithes, and entrusted the residue of his goods to his wife Roberta. To his

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9 Rycharde Aylond, 1513, PRO: P.C.C. 8 Holder, fol. 59v; William Beche, 1518, CKS: PRC 17/14/50; Thomas Blusshe, 1473, CKS: PRC 17/2/291; Stephyn Couper, 1513, CKS: PRC 17 12/229; John Lilly, 1504, CKS: PRC 17/10/21; Thomas Pedill, 1507, CKS: PRC 17/9/322; John Pette, 1489, CKS: PRC 17/5/152.

10 Harry Bate, 1520, CKS: PRC 17/14/192; Robert Benchelyn, 1495, CKS: PRC 17/6 164; John Braynford, 1523, CKS: PRC 17/16/26; John Blusshe, 1497, CKS: PRC 17/6/278; John Denton, 1517, CKS: PRC 17/13/99; Henry Iden, 1488, CKS: PRC 17/5/54; Thomas Lawles, 1520, CKS: PRC 17/14/110; Hewgh Parker, 1518, CKS: PRC 17/14/33; Agnes Whitehead, widow, 1514, CKS: PRC 17/12/345. Others belonged to more successful families: John Hylles, 1484, CKS: PRC 32/3/21; William Pellond, 1508, CKS: PRC 17/11/36; Thomas Weste, no date, CKS: PRC 17/14/304.

11 1505, CKS: PRC 17/9/137; 1495, CKS: PRC 17/6/133; CKS: PRC 17/6/211. Similarly: Robert Assherynden, 1527, CKS: PRC 17/17/277; Alexander Bregge, 1476, CKS: PRC 17/3/36; William Foule, 1532, CKS: PRC 17/19/273; Rychard Hoore, 1516, CKS: PRC 17/20/222; Thomas Hylles, 1534, CKS: PRC 17/20/94; Thomas Piers, CKS: PRC 17/8/31; Robert Weste, 1535, CKS: PRC 17/20/218.

sons he devised all his lands and tenements, to be divided equally between them at the age of twenty. After making arrangements for his wife in her old age, he stipulated that his sons give 40s to each of his five daughters for their dowries. Religious concerns were only to be met in the event of all of Philip's daughters dying before marrying or inheriting at the age of twenty. Isak Chapman made a similar will in 1522, leaving 40s to each of four of his daughters and 10s to a fifth, as well as lands and tenements in Tenterden and Great Chart to his two sons. Lastly, John Holnest, paid 12d for tithes forgotten, bequeathed £4, a cow and goods to one daughter, and £3 6s 8d and goods to another daughter. He also left goods and property to his son; a cow, some household items and 20s in cash or goods to his servant William Glover, and entrusted the residue to his wife. The examples go on, most of them being members of families who produced at least three wills, and who lie within the middle or bottom pious bands.[12]

Given that wills were supposed to be religious documents (as well as legal documents dealing with problems of inheritance), those which omit religious concerns altogether, or relegate them to second place behind clearly more pressing concerns, are most conspicuous when they also reveal that the testator had access to adequate resources to make, if they so chose, at least some gesture, if only minimal, toward the conventions of traditional piety.[13]

Clive Burgess offers a sceptical view-point of these frugal wills, writing, "It is daunting..to realize that a meagre will may be indicative more of the fact that the testator died with his wishes and estate well in order and with widow and parish prepared for what was to be done, rather than suggesting lack of funds or apathy toward religion".[14] This may well apply to some more cursory testaments, but it is difficult to imagine that those which mention moderate or large amounts of cash, were written by individuals who went to the trouble to arrange all their religious bequests in advance, and yet left the small issue of providing for family and kin to the deathbed. Moreover within a familial context these wills are shown to be much more than inadequate sources of post-obit piety. Their continuity within certain families, and the fact that other family testators who did attend to religious concerns rarely did so in an generous or elaborate fashion,

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12 CKS: PRC 17/1/218; PRC 17/2/54; PRC 17/19/145; 1522, CKS: PRC 17/15 120. Others leaving at least 5 marks: John Bisshopynden, 1496, CKS: PRC 17/7/157; John Castelyn, 1507, CKS: PRC 32/9/65; Thomas Dod, 1495, CKS: PRC 17/6/198; Giles Fordman, 1522, CKS: PRC 17/14 337; Thomas Gerves, 1496, CKS: PRC 17/6/164; Thomas Gibbon, 1460, PRO: P.C.C. 21 Stokton, fols. 161/3; Stephen Jan, 1471, CKS: PRC 17/2/131; Thomas Pellond, sen., 1477, CKS: PRC 17/3/156.

13 Much has been written about the religious nature of the late medieval last will and testament, and the following list of references is by no means exhaustive: Christopher Marsh, 'In the Name of God?', *passim*; M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 319-343; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 311-355; Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, pp. 116-8; Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (London, 1981), pp. 188-92; Sheehan, *The Will*, pp. 3-4. Tanner notes how "in a few cases the absence or paucity of such bequests is conspicuous": *Church in Norwich*, p. 104.

14 Burgess, 'Late medieval Wills', p. 21, and *passim*. See also, Burgess, 'For the Increase of Divine Service', pp. 46-65, and *idem*., 'By Quick and by Dead', *passim*.

strongly suggests that they express shared attitudes and traditions passed down from one generation to the next.

There is one final observation which points to the importance of the roles of family tradition and sentiment in the maintenance of distinctive testamentary strategies. Only one out of a total of forty testators belonging to the most open-handedly religious families, adopted this type of approach. This is obviously partly because the method used in Chapter Four to classify selected families took these sparse wills into account, but nevertheless the fact that eight out of twenty-three families for whom there are at least three wills did not once fail to attend to religious provisions, defies the law of averages. Neither can the superior wealth of some of these families offer an explanation, as some appear to have been no better off than families in the lower two pious bands. In contrast to families like the Castelyns, Gibbons, Chapmans and Pellonds, those such as the Strekynbolds, Stonehouses, Prestons and Coupers seem to have made a habit of ensuring that their last wills and testaments were exemplary representations of traditionally orthodox piety. Perhaps without fully perceiving it themselves, these two sets of families formed opposing traditions in Tenterden, albeit with a large grey area in between, but nonetheless clearly differentiated over three or four generations.

What had created these two different pious traditions in Tenterden? It is probably easier to answer this question by asking why a substantial proportion of the borough's leading families seem to have been relatively indifferent to the opportunities which will-making offered for the expression of orthodox religious sentiment. It seems that to some extent they were indifferent to orthodox belief and practice itself, but at the same time it is important to remember the positive side of their testamentary piety - its emphasis upon family and kin, which may actually have been just as important as detachment, in pushing traditional religious concerns into the background. As suggested below, this emphasis may have stemmed from certain attitudes about family wealth and its appropriate uses.

The incidence of the most religiously parsimonious wills (that is those which lack traditionally orthodox religious bequests) did not remain constant over time. They fell from over a quarter of all wills in the late fifteenth century to just over a tenth by 1520-1535, and began to decline in frequency around 1500. (See Table 5.1) The corollary of this, is that more wills contained explicitly religious bequests by the early sixteenth century and to some extent testamentary piety became more detailed and elaborate.[15] This may have been due to a growth in the importance of the will as a vehicle in the articulation and arrangement of post-obit piety, albeit only really reflected in the religious sphere, by the increasing number of wills which included arrangements for funerals and obsequies. Such developments more than likely also had something to do with the rising prosperity of many of those families for whom there are wills.

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15 Bury's wills also became more detailed from around 1500: Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 538.

Table 5.1 *Religiously parsimonious wills over time*

Date range	Number	All wills	Percentage
1449 - 1479	11	41	27
1480 - 1499	14	49	29
1500 - 1519	16	84	19
1520 - 1535	11	89	12
1449 - 1535	52	263	20

One of the families who were particularly parsimonious in the religiously orthodox elements of their testamentary piety, at least that is, before the 1520s, were the Castelyns. The surviving evidence which relates to this family is relatively plentiful, in particular comprising seven last wills and testaments dated from 1473 to 1532. These represent four generations of the family, and it is partly because of their survival, that the Castelyns have the appearance of being one of the more enduring families in the parish.[16]

These begin with the last will and testament of Robert Castelyn senior, the first surviving representation of Castelyn piety, dated 21 September 1473.[17] (See Figure 5.2) The preamble is entirely orthodox and Robert senior left a relatively small sum of 4d for tithes forgotten to the high altar of Tenterden parish church, which in itself does not necessarily reflect low social status or lack of wealth. Payments to high altars for tithes forgotten seem to have arisen from the difficulties of assessing personal tithes during life. When it came to death, it was probably a matter of individual conscience stimulated by some clerical coercion as to how much should be bequeathed. It is more than likely that local customs developed whereby a certain proportion of one's available resources at death, came to be considered as adequate recompense for any deliberate or unknowing negligence during life. At the same time, it would be wrong to exclude the possibility of a voluntary element within these bequests. In other words, some gave more than would normally have been expected, and some gave less.[18] Robert senior's occupation and

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16 Only three other families left as many surviving wills as this between 1470 and 1535, namely the Brekyndens (7), the Davys (8) and the Pellonds (7).

17 CKS: PRC 17/2/347.

18 Thirty-three out of 263, or 13 per cent of testators left 4d or less for forgotten tithes. Thirteen of these omitted to make any such payment altogether, and one left 2d. Such bequests have been used by Gottfried as a rough index of wealth, although he provides no basis for his assertion that the amount given was fixed by legal statute as a certain proportion of the testator's liquid wealth: see R.S. Gottfried, *Bury St. Edmunds and the Urban Crisis: 1290-1539* (New Jersey, 1982), pp. 125-9, 260; *idem.*, *Epidemic Disease in Fifteenth Century England* (Leicester, 1978), p. 31. See also, Higgs, 'Lay Piety', pp. 200-2, where Gottfried's method is followed. For criticism of this, see R.H. Hilton's review of Gottfried's *Bury St. Edmunds*, in *Urban History Yearbook* (1983), p. 185. Dinn, who has also worked on Bury St. Edmunds, compared the high altar payments of 32 testators to their 1523-4 lay subsidy assessments and found a broad but consistent correspondence, payments rising with the assessed wealth of testators. As a result, he suggests that payments "may have been linked to the wealth or income of the testator" in a similar way to tithes, although he does provide examples of cases where this correspondence would appear to have broken down: Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 64-8. Whether this was a formalized system, regulated or at least prompted by parish clergy, or an informal practice motivated more by the piety of testators, either way, the size of payments, in the majority of cases and in a broad way, could have been dictated by the amount of disposable wealth available at the time of writing the will. The prevalence and size of bequests for tithes forgotten varied from place to place and from time to time in late medieval England. In Norwich, the inclusion of "for tithes forgotten" in the wording of bequests to high altars, only regularly appears from the 1490s, and Tanner cautions that this may have had as much to do with a change in scribal fashion, as with the growing scruples of parishioners: Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, pp. 5-6. For details about the assessment of personal tithes and the voluntary element within these payments: J.A.F. Thomson, 'Tithe Disputes in Later Medieval London', *EHR*, lxxviii (1963), p. 2; Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, p. 185. Also, Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 356-7; Heath, *English Parish Clergy*, p. 153.

status is hinted at by his bequest of "*omnia instrumenta artificioli mei*" to his son Robert, and later Castelyn wills provide further information as to the nature of this family trade. He left the residue of his estate to his wife Alice, whom he appointed his executor. Alice also received his messuage and garden for life, as long as she remained a widow. If she married it was to pass to his son Robert, once he was twenty-one, and if he died before reaching this age, then the property was to revert to Robert senior's other two sons Thomas and John, providing they pay 5 marks to their sister, Margaret. With this, his bequests finish.

We are not totally ignorant of Robert Castelyn senior's social position in Tenterden. He is recorded in 1463 as a witness, along with four other men, to a grant of two acres of land in Tenterden by Thomas Petlesdon esquire, Thomas Carpynter and Thomas Jan junior, to Robert Donne all residents of the parish.[19] The seat of the Petlesdon family was on the manor of the same name in Tenterden, just west of the town, and Thomas Petlesden served as the borough's first bailiff in 1449-50. He went on to serve as bailiff again in 1450-1, and 1458-9.[20] Thomas Carpynter was another leading figure in the town who was bailiff in 1478-9, 1488-9 and 1495-6.[21] The Jans do not appear to have been prominent in town government but held what appear to have been not insubstantial lands in Tenterden and High Halden.[22] Robert Donne to whom the grant of land was made, served as bailiff in 1455-6.[23] Carpynter and Donne belonged to unsparingly religious will-making families.

Robert Castelyn's name appears last in the list of witnesses to this grant, which leads with Thomas Haymes, followed by William Harynden, William Wygge and Thomas Baynden. Thomas Haymes was possibly the same individual or of the same family as Thomas Heynes, a chaplain, who in 1498 held and granted lands in Tenterden together with, among others, Sir Richard Guldeford.[24] Harynden was bailiff in 1457-8, and he and Wygge acted in tandem as *rentiers*, leasing the whole or half of a parcel of property comprising a messuage, gardens, arable and woodland totalling 15 acres, between 1449 and 1450. Wygge held lands in his own right as early as 1451, and as late as 1474.[25] These glimpses of political and economic activity suggest that Harynden and Wygge belonged to leading middling families in Tenterden; the sort of men of good reputation and of enough weight and standing, to have witnessed such a land transaction. That Robert Castelyn senior acted alongside and on behalf of such leading figures in the town, including Thomas Petlesdon, a member of a local gentry family, and a key figure in

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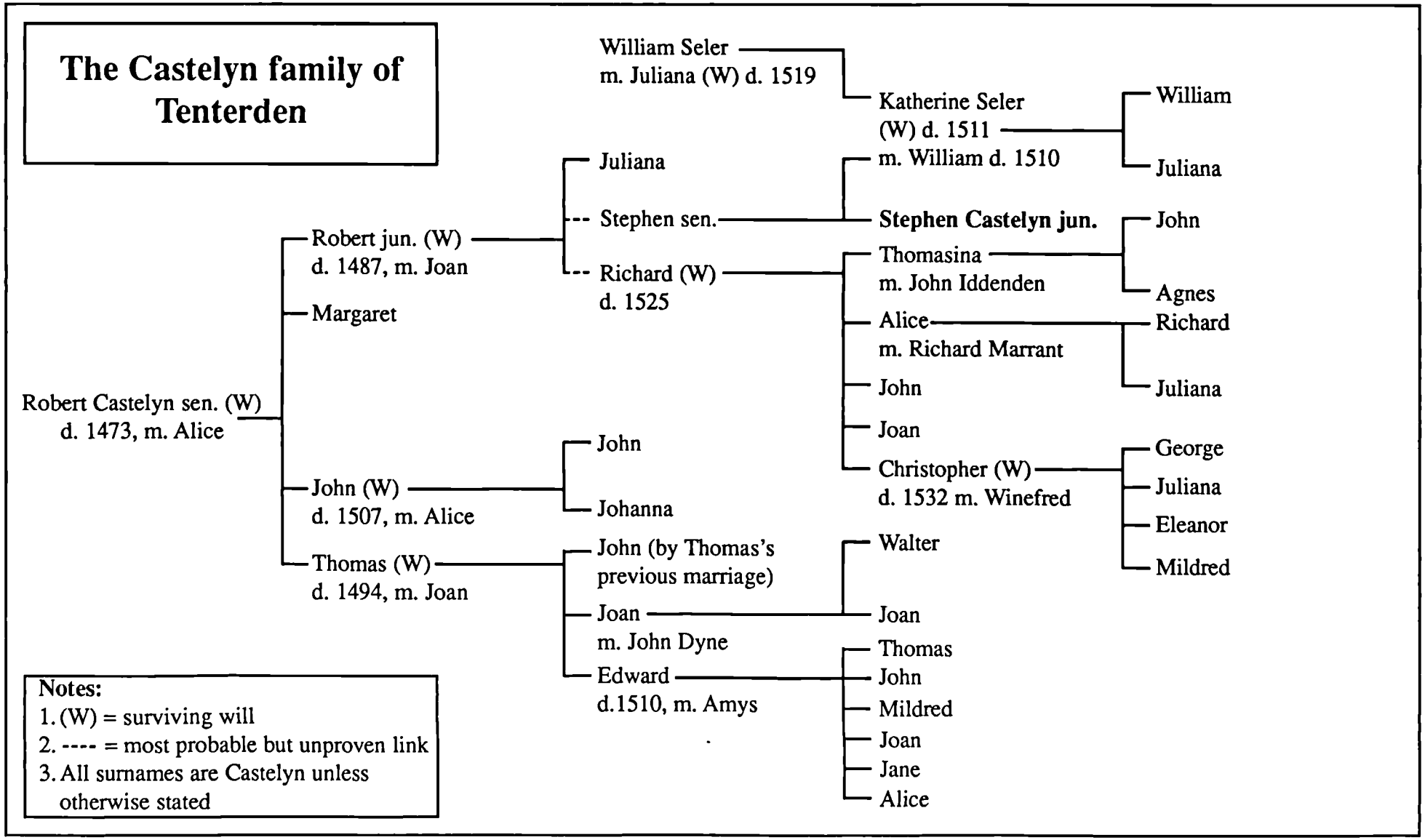
19 CKS: U410/T21.
20 Hasted, *History of Kent*, vol. vii, p. 206; CKS: Te/C1, fols. 13r.-16v., 140r.
21 CKS: Te/C1, fols. 140r.-v.
22 Stephen Jan, 1471, CKS: PRC 17/2/131; Richard Jan, 1495, CKS: PRC 17/6/133.
23 CKS: Te/C1, fol. 140r.
24 CKS: U410/T12.
25 CKS: Te/C1, fol. 140r.; BL: Add. Chs., 16319, 56976, 56977, 16322, 16326.

Figure 5.2


The Castelyn family of Tenterden
William Seler
m. Juliana (W) d. 1519
Katherine Seler
(W) d. 1511
m. William d. 1510
William
Juliana
Juliana
Stephen sen.
Stephen Castelyn jun.
John
Robert jun. (W)
d. 1487, m. Joan
Richard (W)
d. 1525
Thomasina
m. John Iddenden
Agnes
Margaret
Alice
m. Richard Marrant
Richard
Juliana
Robert Castelyn sen. (W)
d. 1473, m. Alice
John
John
Joan
Christopher (W)
d. 1532 m. Winefred
George
Juliana
Eleanor
Mildred
John (W)
d. 1507, m. Alice
Johanna
Thomas (W)
d. 1494, m. Joan
John (by Thomas's
previous marriage)
Walter
Joan
m. John Dyne
Joan
Thomas
John
Edward
d.1510, m. Amys
Mildred
Joan
Jane
Alice
Notes:
1. (W) = surviving will
2. ---- = most probable but unproven link
3. All surnames are Castelyn unless otherwise stated

Tenterden town's political life, sheds at least some light on his social status.[26] It appears that from at least the 1460s the Castelyns were one of the more established families in Tenterden, and yet from the 1470s their testamentary piety has the appearance of self-conscious frugality, with family as the only preoccupation.

Fourteen years later, at the end of August 1487, Robert Castelyn junior made a will which closely adhered to the tenor of testamentary piety set by his father.[27] An orthodox preamble and payment for tithes forgotten once again of 4d, is accompanied by bequests to family. Robert junior left his messuage and gardens to his wife Joan, and ensured that Alice, his mother, could remain for life in the house and gardens left to her by her husband, Robert senior. On their deaths all this was to go to his sons, who are most satisfactorily identified as Richard and Stephen Castelyn.[28] At the same time, 20s were to be paid to his daughter Juliana. If Robert's heirs died before his wife, then she was to pay his sister Margaret or her heirs, 40s, but if his wife then died, his messuages and gardens were to be sold and 5 marks to go to his sister or her heirs. Only then, if there was then any residue, was family wealth to be distributed for his soul, his parents' souls and all the Christian faithful.

When it came to making their wills, tradition - or at least transmitted values - seems to have provided some important guiding principles for the Castelyns, whilst the range of choices available dictated the ways in which these values were applied. John Castelyn, one of Robert senior's other sons, is a good example of how Castelyn family piety was passed on and moulded in new ways by changing fortunes and circumstances. He made a will in January 1507, with an orthodox preamble, and in which he left 2s 2d to the high altar of St. Mildred's for his forgotten tithes.[29] This relatively large sum is confirmation of Castelyn family wealth and status and suggests that at least in one branch of the family, by the early sixteenth century, Castelyn fortunes were improving.[30] John had rented a shop on the north side of Tenterden High Street from which he had probably traded up to the time of his death, and his heirs took up the lease until the 1530s. He may also have invested in other spheres: *The John Castelyn*, an armed merchantman, was one of the ships listed in the Teller's Rolls as being hired by the

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26 As he comes last in the order of precedence in the list, he may not have shared such high social status as Harenden and Wygge, but nevertheless, that Castelyn is named at all, suggests that he was not far beneath them. For an example of how witness lists in deeds have been used in this way in other contexts, see C. Dyer, 'The Rising of 1381 in Suffolk: its Origins and Participants', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History*, xxxvi (1985), Appendix xi, p. 285.

27 CKS: PRC 17/5/5.

28 Robert Castelyn junior did not name his sons in his last will, but by establishing all the relationships which one can be sure about for the family as a whole, it was possible to come to the most likely conclusion as to their identities. This method admittedly, does leave room for error.

29 CKS: PRC 32/9/65.

30 Sixty-eight out of a total of 263, or 26 per cent of Tenterden wills contain payments of 2s or more to high altars.

crown in 1497.[31] He appears to have had greater access to cash than his father and brother, the majority of which, 66s 8d, he devoted to his daughter Joan's dowry. He also bequeathed goods to his wife Alice and son John. In his last will, John made provision - but only in the event of his daughter not marrying - for 20s to go towards repairs of Tenterden parish church, 20s to be left to Thomas Weldysh and the residue to go to poor maidens and other works of charity. If John departed in any way from the tenor of testamentary piety laid down and followed by his forbears, it was only in terms of the strategy he employed for dispensing with different types of resources. He still concentrated almost wholly upon providing for immediate family and only then in the form of secondary measures did he attend to more obviously religious matters.

Just as transmitted values were mediated by the nature of available resources, so they were also be moulded in their expression through the variety of pressures brought to bear by social relationships. This is true of Joan Castelyn, the widow of Thomas Castelyn, the third of Robert senior's sons. Her will, written in December 1494, shares the character of the other Castelyn wills, but her bequests reflect her own particular social network and sense of obligation and responsibility.[32] She left 4d in tithes forgotten and gave 4d to repairs of the parish church - the first definite gift to church fabric in the surviving Castelyn wills. The rest of her testament is devoted to bequeathing household goods to a total of eighteen individuals. Eleven of these gifts were to close relatives: her daughter and her daughter's family, grandchildren, a nephew's children (Stephen Castelyn senior's daughters) and *"filio mariti mei"*. She also made bequests to the daughters of Robert Eastlyng, and six gifts to women. Whilst not noticeably departing from family tradition, Joan included a wider circle of people within the compass of her bequests than her father-in-law or brothers-in-law. This is best seen as mediation of family piety through a particular set of social relationships, in part to do with her being a woman and a widow.[33]

We also have the testament made by Katherine Castelyn who died in 1511, the widow of William, great grandson of Robert Castelyn senior. Her husband had died late the previous year, and it appears that they both lived only to their late twenties or early thirties. Two children are mentioned in Katherine's testament, and her parents, William and Juliana Seler of the neighbouring parish of Ebony, were beneficiaries, her father an executor, and her mother a witness. Parental influence provides the best explanation for the divergence of Katherine's testamentary piety from the pattern of earlier Castelyn wills. She left 2d to each of the lights of the Rood, the blessed virgin Mary, St. Mildred and St. Katherine. In 1519, her mother Juliana made a much more impressively orthodox

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31 Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', Fig. 43, p. 335; Oppenheim, 'Naval Accounts', p. xlv.

32 CKS: PRC 17/6/96.

33 For comments on women's testamentary strategies, see for example, Cullum, 'And Hir Name was Charite', p. 185. See also, Chapter Two.

testament in which she gave to a total of seven lights, three of which were of the Rood, St. Mary and St. Katherine. Katherine's testamentary piety was closer to her mother's than her Castelyn kinsfolk's, perhaps because of a combination of early widowhood, untimely death and pressures exerted at the deathbed.[34]

There are further hints of the family's economic activities, which were possibly passed down from Robert Castelyn senior. Katherine left her husband's brother Stephen Castelyn, "half of my husband's remaining steel and a hundred weight of iron". Stephen may have practised the same craft as his brother, being himself described as "cutler" in the 1511 heresy trials, in which he was involved.[35] This type of craft activity is further evidence of the Castelyns' middle-to-upper social status and wealth in the early sixteenth century.[36] William's son, also named William, may have been the same individual as the William Castyllen who wrote to Cromwell in 1536, regarding a dispute he was having with the Governor and Merchant Adventurers of Flanders over a shipment of kerseys there from England.[37]

The 1520s and 1530s saw what appears to have been the ongoing consolidation of Castelyn wealth and influence, together with something of a shift in testamentary piety. Katherine's uncle, Richard Castelyn died in 1525. From evidence both in and outside his will it seems that he was at least around fifty years old at his death. Richard left 3s 4d in tithes forgotten followed by a gift of 8d every quarter for three years after his death, to the Jesus mass. He apportioned 20s to his funeral, 20s to his month mind, and arranged for a yearly obit for seven years at 6s 8d a year. He went on to leave 4d to each of his godchildren, and 6s 8d to each of four of his grandchildren. From his last will, it is apparent that he held lands and tenements in Tenterden and Rolvenden. Most of his lands were situated in a more or less consolidated bloc, on or near to the den of Castweasle between the Rolvenden and Cranbrook roads, and this family estate was further aggregated and added to by his son and grandson. Compared to earlier family wills, Richard's is conspicuous for its numerous cash bequests, and traditionally orthodox religious arrangements.[38]

Richard's son Christopher Castelyn, who acted as his father's executor, died only seven years later in 1532. In terms of religious bequests, his will closely resembles his

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34 CKS: PRC 17/11/183; PRC 3/3/77; PRC 16/1/100. For some thoughts on deathbed pressures, see Marsh, 'In the Name of God?', pp. 230-233; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 315-323; M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 319-343.

35 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 161v.-162r, 168r. William Seler of Reading, probably Katherine's father, was supplying sea-coal to the Clerk of the King's ships in Portsmouth in 1495, indicating something of his trade activities and common sphere of interest with the Castelyn family, into which his daughter married: Oppenheim, 'Naval Accounts', p. 150.

36 Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, pp. 132-4, 138; McIntosh, *Community Transformed*, pp. 130, 167.

37 *L & P*, vol. xii (1537), 415.

38 CKS: PRC 17/16/293. Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, pp. 73-4.

father's. He left 2s in tithes forgotten, 6s 8d in wax to the light before the sacrament in St. Mildred's, 4d every quarter for six years to the Jesus mass, 26s 8d divided equally between his funeral and month mind, and 10s to his year's mind. His wealth is attested to not only by these bequests but, in addition, a dowry of £10 for his daughter Juliana. In his last will he made an arrangement for 6s 8d a year to be paid for "masses and diriges" in St. Mildred's for seven years. As well as cash gifts, he bequeathed portions of his estate to his wife, son, two other daughters and three individuals who were possibly kinsmen.[39] Like the earlier Castelyn wills, a strong continuity from father to son is evinced in Richard and Christopher's testamentary strategies. Both gave 8s to the Jesus mass, and both left similar amounts for obsequies, including an exactly duplicated arrangement for a seven year obit. Christopher was executor of his father's will, and so may have been carrying out his father's wishes by including the obit in his own, or alternatively he was following family tradition by renewing an endowment which, since it was seven years after Richard's death, would only just have lapsed. The latter possibility was a common phenomenon of late medieval wills.[40]

In their provision for masses and prayers and patronage of the Jesus mass, Richard and Christopher's wills represent something of a rupture from earlier family traditions, a dynamic made visible only by placing their testamentary piety within a familial context. The change from the religiously sparse wills of their forbears to their own more elaborate bequests, was probably partly the result of the Castelyn's increasing status and wealth. Richard's standing is illustrated by his involvement in the making of other families' wills as a witness or executor, on five recorded occasions from 1498 to 1519.[41] He served the parish community in a more formal capacity, as one of the two or four named *parochiani* (presumably the parishioners sworn in to make presentments to visitations) in Tenterden, in 1505, 1506, and 1515.[42] He stood among the wealthier townsfolk: in 1512/13 as a baron of the Confederation of the Cinque Ports, a fifteenth of Richard's goods and chattels in the hundred of Tenterden were assessed at 10s, which can be compared to an average of 15s for all those combarons who owned property in the hundred, assessed at the same time.[43] Christopher may have surpassed his father in prestige and status, serving as Churchwarden for two consecutive years in 1521 and

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39 CKS: PRC 17/21/58.

40 For examples and discussion of the continuity of anniversary and chantry endowments within families, see Burgess, 'By Quick and by Dead', pp. 837-858.

41 John Symme, 1498, CKS: PRC 17/8/41; Agnes Bocher, 1500, CKS: PRC 17/7/250; Joan Gerves, widow, 1504, CKS: PRC 17/10/19; Philip Harynden, 1513, CKS: PRC 17/12/312; Katherine Foule, widow, 1519, CKS: PRC 17/15/64.

42 CCAL: Z.3.2, 1501-8, 2nd section, fols. 4v., 25v.; Z.3.3, 1514-16, fol. 51v. Brown, *Popular Piety*, p. 78.

43 CKS: PRC 17/16/293; PRO: E179, 231/228.

1522.[44] He was feoffee to a will in 1513, and then again in 1518 and 1524, and was witness to a will in 1532, just two months before he wrote his own.[45] His son George Castelyn, lived in considerable prosperity until 1592, the goods in his inventory being valued at £184 7s 8d, and Christopher's daughter Mildred had married Peter Shorte, tying the Castelyns to one of Tenterden's very wealthiest yeomen families.[46]

Although Richard and Christopher appear to have boosted Castelyn family fortunes since the last decades of the fifteenth century it is easy to over-emphasize their rise in influence, wealth and status. To begin with, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, only a minority of richer families were likely to succeed in one parish for over four generations as the Castelyns did.[47] It is unlikely that Richard and Christopher's wealth was all 'new money' and probably owed much to the economic achievements of their forbears. Moreover, their apparent rise in prosperity and status is probably more noticeable to us than it was to them, as Tenterden as a whole was benefiting from industrial and agricultural developments which took place across the Kentish Weald from the end of the fifteenth century.[48] In relative terms, when compared to their contemporaries, Richard and Christopher may have been no wealthier than Robert Castelyn senior. Nevertheless, the growing diversification of Castelyn economic interests which could be legitimately transformed into symbolic gifts, and the family's developing role within the institutions of parish, town and region, appear to have brought with them a change in testamentary practice. This is not to deny Richard and Christopher any intensity in piety, but rather to see the expression of their beliefs as part and parcel of their social relations and range of available resources. This accords with what is known about lay piety in larger urban centres in this period. That is, the religion of leading townsmen was of a peculiarly civic character, they were expected and aspired to set a good pious example in their actions and devotions, and the higher their social and political aspirations, the more obvious was their piety.[49] This said, at Tenterden, leading families like the Castelyns were more conspicuous for their reserved stance to pious expression, than for generosity.

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44 CCAL: Z.3.4, 1520-23, fols. 20r., 68r. Service as churchwarden usually indicates that an individual fell within "broad middling status": Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, pp. 37-40; Eric Carlson, 'The office of churchwarden', pp. 193-9.

45 Philip Harynden, 1513, CKS: PRC 17/12/312; William Couper, 1518, CKS: PRC 32/12/174; George Strekynbold, 1524, CKS: PRC 17/16/269; William Foule, 1532, CKS: PRC 17/19/273.

46 Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', pp. 169-70, 205, 217, 248-51.

47 See Chapter One.

48 Clark, *English Provincial Society*, pp. 7-8, 14; Zell, 'Wood-Pasture Regime', pp. 69-93; Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, pp. 147-50.

49 See for example, Higgs, 'Lay Piety', pp. 266-74, esp. p. 273, and Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 138.

The Pellonds were another family whose testamentary strategy was overwhelmingly parsimonious in its religious provisions, and yet became more explicitly pious in the sixteenth century. As well as being established landholders in and around Tenterden from as early as the late fourteenth century, the Pellonds seem to have been engaged in brewing by the 1470s, and were involved in tailoring or drapery by the sixteenth century.[50] Like many other families, they also had a hand in the water-borne trade of Wealden goods, John Pellond being paid by Brekynden, Clerk of the King's Ships, for the carriage of timber to Portsmouth for *The Mary Fortune* in 1496-7. At least one branch of the family was still engaged in this trade by the late sixteenth century, although probably on a much smaller scale.[51] They were perhaps of higher status and older pedigree in Tenterden than the Castelyns. As early as 1464, in an assessment on the men of the Cinque Ports, Thomas Pellond senior, paid 5s 4d as a fifteenth on his goods and chattels in the hundred.[52] In 1524, a William Pellond was named among the men of the Cinque Ports who belonged to the Retinue of Sir Edward Guldeford, Lord Warden. Some time between 1530 and 1532 the same man, or a relative was admitted as a freeman of Tenterden.[53] In addition, Adam Pellond served as the Common Mace Bearer of the Corporation from 1538 to 1542, as well as acting as attorney to parties in numerous common recoveries of lands and tenements in these years.[54] At the same time, four members of the family are recorded in four transactions, as buying or leasing small parcels of property in the parish.[55]

Thomas Pellond senior, who made his will (the first of seven for the family) in 1477, had a large family of at least five sons and four daughters who, along with at least

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50 Thomas Pellond senior left several tuns in his will (CKS: PRC 17/3/156, 1477), and his son, Henry Pellond mentioned an apple mill in his (CKS: PRC 17/3/217). A glimpse of the family's later trade and business activities is provided in the will of Moyse Pellond, dated 1519, in which a substantial amount of clothing and cloth is bequeathed (CKS: PRC 17/14/47), and by a reference to "William Pellond, taylor", who witnessed a will of 1501 (CKS: PRC 17/9/70). See also, Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, p. 97. Information on Pellond landholding in Tenterden has been gleaned from the family wills, and a number of deeds: CKS: U55/T414; U36/T1454; U442/T99; U410/T21; BL: Add. Ch. 56982; Add. Ms. 48022, fols. 26r., 27r., 34r.

51 Oppenheim, 'Naval Accounts', p. 313. In 1576/7, a William Pellond, who was working as a lighterman on the Rother, operating from Reading, is recorded as carrying billets from "Dawesmill" to Rye. His efforts to carry a heavy cargo ran into trouble "through lack of water" and he had to borrow another boat in order to split the load and finish the job. His endeavours on this occasion landed him before Edward Hales, bailiff of Tenterden: Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', p. 349, Appendix B.

52 The average payment made by the 30 men of the Cinque Ports assessed on goods and chattels in Tenterden hundred on this occasion was 8s: PRO: E179, 230/182.

53 *L & P*, iv, 459. William Pellond is found in the list of freemen beginning in 1529 and probably compiled *c.* 1558 as part of the Tenterden Custumal: CKS: Te/C1, fol. 116r. The dating of this entry is reached by comparison with the list of bailiffs: CKS: Te/C1, fol. 141r. Because it is unlikely that a man would be mentioned as a baron of the Cinque Ports before being made a freeman of Tenterden, it is probable that these were different individuals: the first being the William Pellond who abjured heresies in 1511, and the second being his cousin Moyse Pellond's son who died in 1540 (CKS: PRC 3/8/47).

54 CKS: Te/S1, fols. 1r., 2r., 3r., 21v., 23r., 27r., 32r., 39r.

55 CKS: Te/S1, fols. 2r.-v., 28r., 42v., 43v.-r.

ten grandchildren, dominate his testament and last will. (See Figure 5.3) Thomas left a total of 20s, various household and industrial goods to family and kin, as well as 5 marks in cash and moveables to his daughter Margaret's dowry; 3s 4d to each of his executors who were his sons John and Adam, and 4d to each of his godchildren. In addition, he devised lands to his wife and one of his sons, and six acres to another son, from which his bequests were to be funded. He paid 12d in tithes forgotten and made no bequests for masses or prayers. In his last will however, he made a detailed arrangement for the paving of a footway in the parish - a conspicuously isolated element of a testamentary strategy which focussed upon the distribution of a range of resources over a large number of family and kin.[56]

Thomas's is one of two among the seven surviving Tenterden Pellond wills for the period which lack explicitly religious bequests. His son, William Pellond senior made the other, in 1508. This consisted of an extremely brief testament which, like his father's left 12d for forgotten tithes, and went on to bequeath the residue of the estate to his wife Margaret to dispose for the health of his soul. How this was to be done is not specified. These two sparse wills speak of continuity from father to son in a similar way to the frugal pious tradition of the early Castelyns. The other early Pellond wills, although containing some religious provisions, are far from lavish in these.

Henry Pellond, another of Thomas senior's sons, made his in 1478, in which he distributed lands, an apple mill, messuages, cattle, wood and goods to his wife and two children. He also stipulated that a parcel of wood be sold to pay for his funeral, month mind and anniversary, "for my soule and all cristens". Only if his son did not live to inherit his portion of the estate, were additional sums to be employed to procure further masses, to fund a gift to the parish church and in "almesse giving". John Pellond, the last of Thomas senior's sons for whom there is a will, was a little more attentive to religious concerns. He left 40d for repairs to St. Mildred's as well as 16d towards the purchase of a new pair of organs, which, as suggested below, was probably in preparation for the establishment of the Jesus mass and anthem in the parish church. In terms of ritual and intercessory arrangements, he apportioned 13s 4d to his funeral, 16s 8d to his month mind and 6s 8d to his anniversary. Finally he wished "an honest prest to syng syng(sic) for my soule by the space of a month, 10s". He also gave 6s 8d to the "emendyng of the foote way betwix Tenterden and Smalhith". John Pellond's not insubstantial wealth is attested to less by the dowries of 33s 4d for his daughters, than by the £20 which was to be used to buy lands which would pass to his son at the age of twenty. None of these early Pellond wills could be described as religiously full, and yet it appears that resources for the expression of traditional piety were not in short supply.[57]

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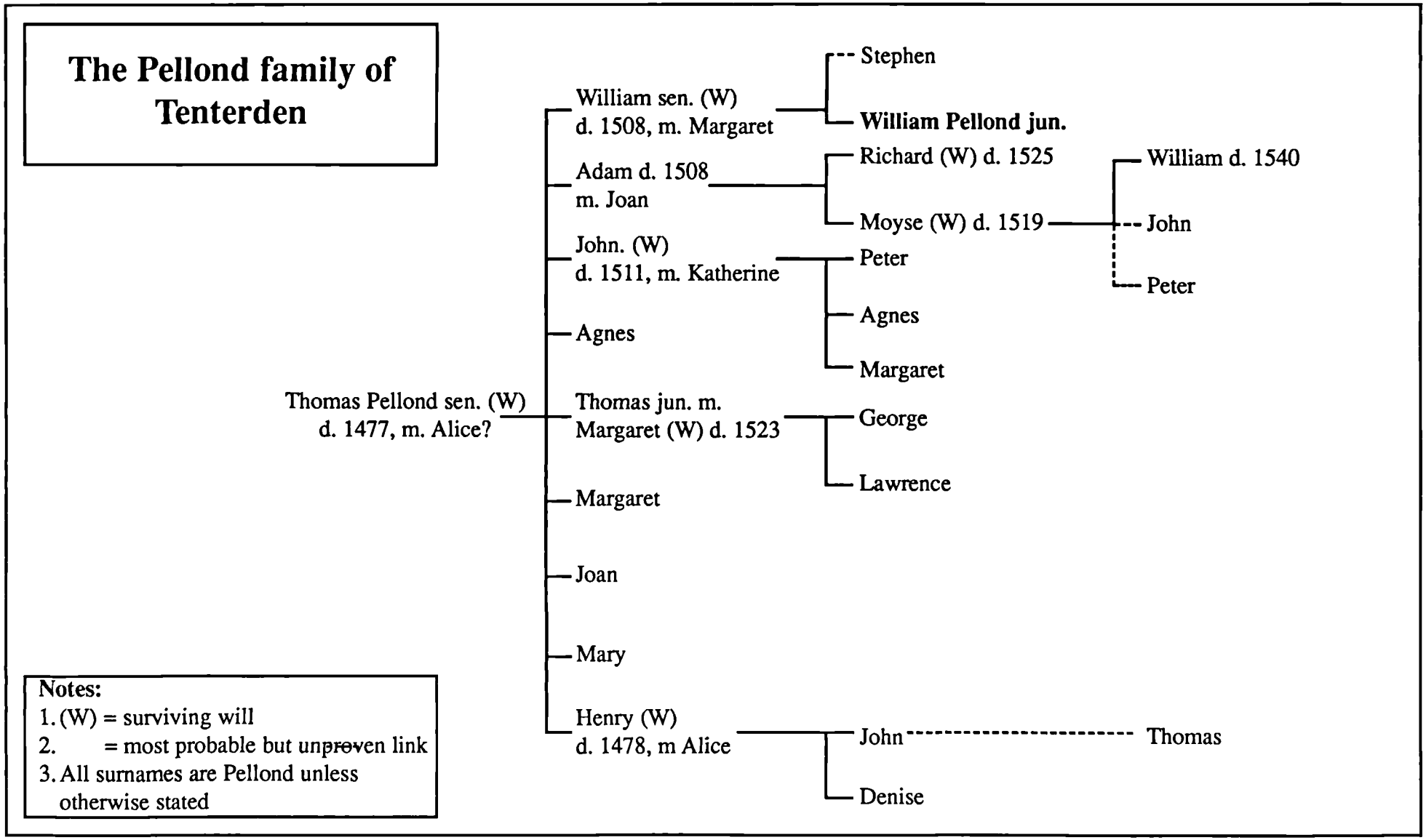
56 CKS: PRC 17/3/156.

57 CKS: PRC 17/11/36; PRC 17/3/217; PRC 32/10/154.

Figure 5.3


The Pellond family of Tenterden
Thomas Pellond sen. (W) d. 1477, m. Alice?
William sen. (W) d. 1508, m. Margaret
Stephen
William Pellond jun.
Adam d. 1508 m. Joan
Richard (W) d. 1525
Moyse (W) d. 1519
William d. 1540
John
Peter
John. (W) d. 1511, m. Katherine
Peter
Agnes
Margaret
Agnes
Thomas jun. m. Margaret (W) d. 1523
George
Lawrence
Margaret
Joan
Mary
Henry (W) d. 1478, m Alice
John
Thomas
Denise
Notes:
1. (W) = surviving will
2. = most probable but unproven link
3. All surnames are Pellond unless otherwise stated

By the end of the second decade of the sixteenth century, in a similar fashion to the Castelyn family, the Pellonds became more unsparing in their testamentary piety. In 1519 and 1525 respectively, the brothers Moyse and Richard Pellond made wills of matching character, which in terms of their place in the tenor of Pellond family piety, are best compared to those of Richard and Christopher Castelyn. Moyse Pellond's religious provisions comprised a gift of 6s 8d to the chapel of St. John the Baptist at Small Hythe; 13s 4d to be distributed to priests, clerks and poor people, and for a drinking for the health of his soul on his burial day; 6s 8d at his month mind; and, unique among the Tenterden wills for its position beneath the witness list at the end of the text, is a bequest of 12d to the maintenance of the Jesus mass within the parish church. Among a series of bequests of cloth to a number of individuals, is a gift of a portion of russet "to one power mayden of Tenterden called Iden".[58] Until all his children reached the age of twenty, Moyse, who appears to have died a widower, left his lands under the charge of Stephen Aace of Wittersham, one of his executors.[59] Richard Pellond began his testament where, six years earlier, his brother's had left off. Namely, he gave 20d a year for sixteen years to the Jesus mass. For the same length of time, he willed that 40d be given to poor people in the parish every Good Friday, and stipulated that a yearly obit be conducted for his soul in St. Mildred's within "the twelve days", at 3s 4d a year. These arrangements were to be funded by the farm from lands in Wittersham and Heronden for sixteen years. To each of his burial and month mind, Richard apportioned 20s to priests, clerks and in meat and drink, and 10s to poor people, and at his anniversary, 20s were to be given to priests, clerks and poor folk. He also left 20s to the mending of each of a footway and a "streetway" between Tenterden and Small Hythe. Lastly, a house and garden at Eastgate were to be sold, 10 marks of the proceeds to be used to pay for a year's temporary chantry in St. Mildred's, and the residue to be distributed to poor people. Richard Pellond does not appear to have been married or to have had any children, but left at least £1 17s 4d in seven separate bequests to kin, including godchildren.[60] His will throws some light on the wealth of the Pellond family by the 1520s, who, like the Castelyns and other leading Tenterden families were growing in prosperity at this time.[61] The religious arrangements in his testament which were to be funded by lands at farm, indicate the growing complexity of a moral and religious economy, within which a wider

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58 Margaret Pellond, widow of Thomas Pellond of Small Hythe, one of the sons of Thomas Pellond senior, made her will in 1523 and bequeathed clothing to "poure Eden of Tenterden": CKS: PRC 17/16/179.

59 CKS: PRC 17/14/47.

60 CKS: PRC 17/16/244.

61 Both Moyse and Richard Pellond left only 12d for their tithes forgotten. Especially given the amount of money bequeathed in Richard's will, this further undermines any notion that at Tenterden, these payments offer a reliable index of wealth. This notwithstanding, by the late sixteenth century one member of the Pellond family was not at all wealthy by contemporary standards: Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', p. 166.

range of strategies was employed for the conversion of resources into pious gestures. Elsewhere in England at this time, the transmission of such endowments between family members seems to have involved an awareness of the symbolic value of specific parcels of property.[62]

These later Pellond wills share an unusual emphasis upon charity to the poor and public works, which in terms of civic giving alone can also be found in two of the earlier family wills.[63] To some extent this may be a reflection of a moral, rather than religious element to their piety, which was not shared by more traditionally generous will-makers, but then again, Moyse and Richard both incorporated some, if not all of their charitable provisions into undeniably religious obsequies. The other more revealing continuity within Pellond testamentary piety by the second and third decades of the sixteenth century, which was also shared by the later Castelyn wills, is patronage of the Jesus mass. Because the Jesus mass appears to have been a new devotion in Tenterden from the early sixteenth century and because of its subsequent unparalleled popularity among will-makers, this cult provides one of the most revealing clues as to the development of religious devotion in the parish.

The Jesus mass

The Tenterden wills only ever refer to the "Jesus mass", in the parish church of St. Mildred, but this was probably the mass of the Holy Name of Jesus. The votive mass of the Holy Name existed in England from the middle of the fourteenth century, but did not become widely popular until after 1450. It is generally believed that it was the grass-roots popularity of the mass, which led to the development of a fully established fixed feast of the Holy Name of Jesus in 1457, which received the patronage of Lady Margaret Beaufort sometime shortly before 1488. Even by this later date, observance of the mass was not ubiquitous across the countryside, many centres only adopting it, like Tenterden, by the first or second decades of the sixteenth century. It is not yet clear how many places ever adopted the cult of Jesus, whether in the form of the Feast of the Holy Name or the Jesus mass, but by the late fifteenth century it had become one of the most popular votive masses in England, and enough parishes had their own Jesus altars, gilds or brotherhoods by the turn of the century to make the cult one of the most important devotional developments of the pre-Reformation period.[64]

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62 See for example, Burgess, 'By Quick and by Dead', pp. 841-5.

63 Thomas Pellond, CKS: CKS: PRC 17/3/156; John Pellond, CKS: PRC 32/10/154.

64 R.W. Pfaff, *New Liturgical Feasts in Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 62-83; E.G.C.F. Atchley, 'Jesus Mass and Anthem', *Transactions of the St Pauls Ecclesiological Society*, v (1905), pp. 163-9; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 45, 109, 113-6, 120, 224, 370; Lander,

In Kent, the Jesus mass was established in Sandwich and Lydd by the 1460s, and was being celebrated in at least one of the parish churches of Canterbury within a decade. It appears to have taken a further thirty years to reach the Weald, appearing in Cranbrook wills from 1501, a few years before it was adopted in Tenterden, and subsequently spreading to the neighbouring parishes of Bethersden, Biddenden, Staplehurst and Rolvenden.[65] The cult was much less popular in west Kent, which is surprising given its propinquity to London, where the famous Jesus gild in the Crowds of St. Paul's was established. In late fifteenth and early sixteenth century Dartford for example, only three out of nearly 250 testators mentioned the Jesus mass, and neither does it appear to have attracted bequests from will-makers in the villages around Dartford.[66] Over the border into Sussex, and significantly, in the precociously Protestant town of Rye, there was a Jesus altar in the parish church in the early 1540s. Given Tenterden's strong links with Rye in this period, it may have been from the Cinque Port that the Jesus mass was adopted.[67] Bequests begin in the Tenterden wills in 1513, run to the end of the period in 1535, and usually consist of sums of money ranging from 4d to 3s 4d. These occur in forty-two of the 117, or 36 per cent of wills made between these two dates. (See Figure 5.4a) Although relatively late in its introduction into the parish, once established, the Jesus mass was much more popular than other cults.[68] It was more favourably received by the people of Tenterden than in any other place for which there is comparable information. For example, at Bury St. Edmunds the cult began in 1456 and 9 per cent of lay and clerical testators mentioned the mass or gild of Jesus from 1449-1530. At its most popular, in the years 1459-68 and 1479-82 it only appeared in just under two fifths of wills. In Norwich the Jesus mass was the most popular of votive and indulgenced masses mentioned by testators from 1440 to 1532. Even so, only 11 per cent of lay and clerical will-makers mentioned it.[69] At Sandwich (the first place in Kent to

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Government and Community, p. 114; Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 195-200; C.M. Barron, 'The Parish Fraternities of Medieval London', in Barron and Harper-Bill, eds., *Church in Society*, pp. 32, 59; Higgs, 'Lay Piety', pp. 237-40; Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, pp. 94, 103, Appendix 11, p. 221.

65 *Testamenta Cantiana: East Kent*, pp. 285, 202, 48, 90, 336, 14, 19, 321, 260. The pattern of dissemination of the cult in Kent was remarkably similar to its spread in the diocese of Salisbury, namely, more urbanized parishes adopted it earlier and more wholeheartedly than rural centres: Brown, *Popular Piety*, pp. 86-7. In the different context of funerary and commemorative ritual in Suffolk, Dinn notes how there was a "flow of beliefs and practices from Bury, the local centre of education where new cults first appeared to nearby villages": 'Popular religion', p. 590. See also, G. Duby, 'Diffusion of Cultural Patterns', pp. 3-10.

66 *Testamenta Cantiana: West Kent*, ed. L.L. Duncan, (London, 1906), pp. 2, 40-1, 52, 67, 84. Information on Dartford and its hinterland is kindly supplied by Paul Lee. *Registrum Statutorum et Consuetudinum Ecclesiae Cathedralis Sancti Pauli Londensis*, ed., W. Sparrow Simpson (London, 1873), pp. 435-462, 483-4.

67 Mayhew, 'Progress of the Reformation', p. 54.

68 For details of these cults, see Chapter Four.

69 Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 195-200; Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, pp. 94, 102-3, 220-1 (percentage figure is adapted from Appendix 11). See also, Higgs, 'Lay Piety', pp. 236-40, and Brown, *Popular Piety*, pp. 138-42.

adopt the cult), less than a tenth of lay testators from 1466 to 1539 gave to the Jesus mass or mass of the Five Wounds, or mentioned the Jesus chancel or altar in St. Mary's church, and of these, only a handful did so after 1500.[70] In Tenterden, the devotion retained its popularity into the early 1530s (Figure 5.5), although of course it only arrived there long after its heyday in Sandwich.

Analysis of the Tenterden bequests by surname reveals that nine out of thirty-one, or 29 per cent of the surnames which are represented by bequests to the cult, accounted for a total of twenty out of forty-two, or 48 per cent of gifts made. Their disproportionate share of gifts was due to the fact that these surnames appear at least twice within the names of testators who gave to the devotion. (See, Figures 5.4b and 5.4c) In seven out of nine of the cases of repeating surnames, all those wills bearing the same surname were made by people of the same family. In the other two instances this cannot yet be proven but is not unlikely. It is therefore, on the whole, legitimate to think of these nine groups of wills as belonging to nine distinct families. Thought of in this way, the spread of bequests reveals a general tendency for patronage of the Jesus mass in Tenterden to be specific to particular families. In other words, to an unquantifiable, but nevertheless significant degree, the cult was formed and sustained by bonds of family and household, rather than being purely to do with individual choice or independent expression of religious sentiment.[71]

Significantly, the spread of bequests to the Jesus mass across the pious spectrum represented by the twenty-three families, is the only aspect of religious expression in the Tenterden wills which does not follow the pattern described in Chapter Four. That is to say, patronage of the cult was not concentrated among the most unsparingly religious families. Eight out of the nineteen wills made by top-band families after 1512 (the first bequests to the Jesus mass appear in 1513) mention the new devotion, a slightly smaller proportion than the six out of thirteen from the most religiously sparse families. The families in the middle of the pious spectrum were responsible for seventeen wills after 1512, and six of these - about a third - mention the Jesus mass. The slightly lower incidence of gifts among these families can probably be accounted for by the presence in

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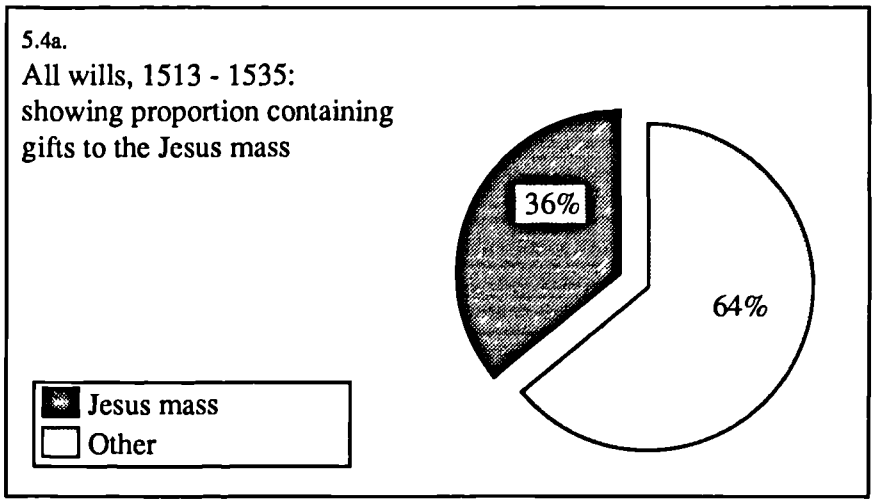
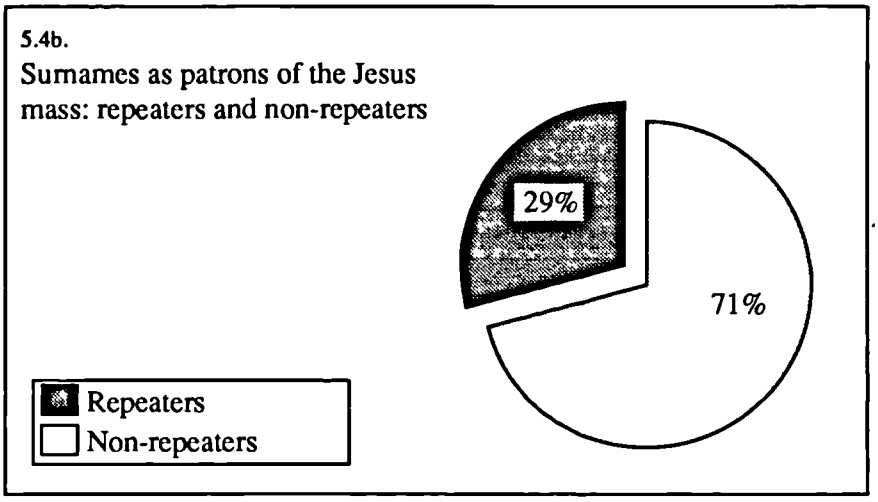
70 Information kindly supplied by Sheila Sweetinburgh (see Chapter Four for details about the numbers of Sandwich wills from which this data is taken).

71 It might be argued that this is due to the relatively abundant survival of wills made by members of these 9 families, compared to those of the families which are represented by the remaining 23 bequests. Such an argument does not however, adequately explain the distribution of gifts. All the wills - whether they contain bequests to the Jesus mass or not - made by those nine families between 1513 and 1535, in fact constitute only 23 per cent (27 out of 117) of all wills made between these two dates, and this may be compared to their share of 48 per cent of bequests to the Jesus mass. By taking only those surnames for which there are at least two surviving wills made from 1513 to 1535, the transmission of affiliation to the Jesus mass within certain families becomes even more apparent: a total of 21 surnames repeat at least once in terms of will making during the period in question, and these account for 55 wills. Of these 55, the 9 families were responsible for 27, or 47 per cent, and yet the same 9 families made 20 out of 24, or 83 per cent of the bequests to the Jesus mass.

Figure 5.4 *The spread of bequests to the Jesus mass*





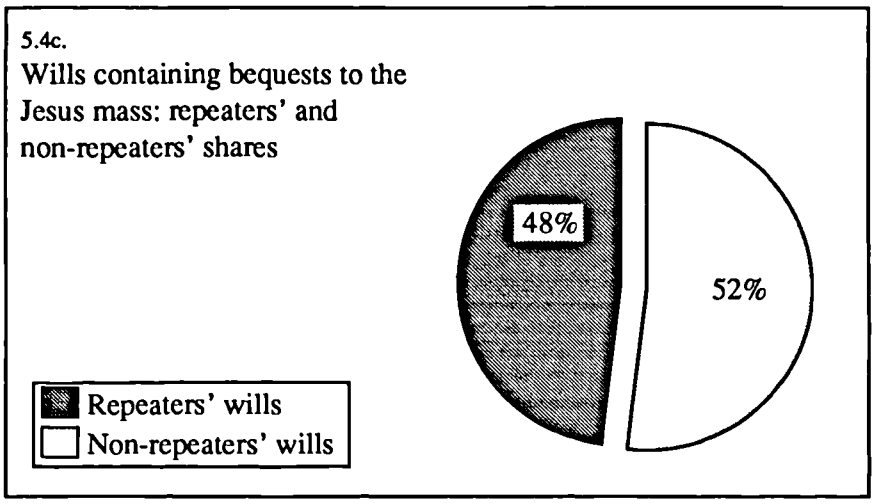
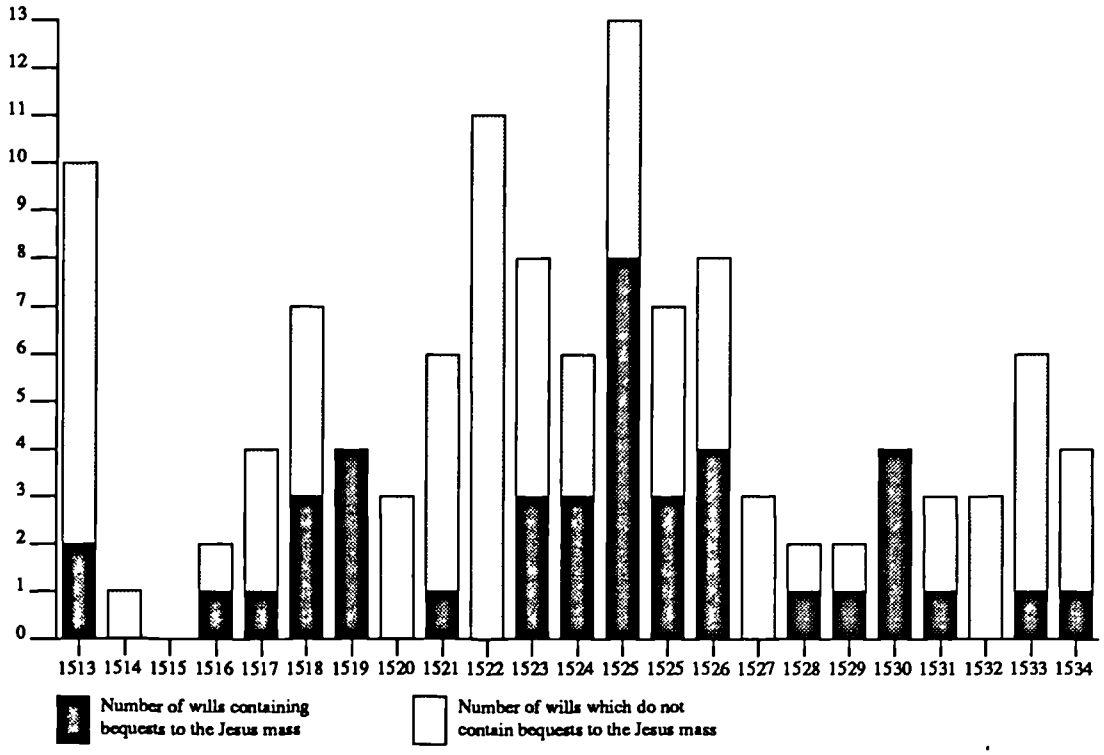


Figure 5.5 *The frequency of bequests to the Jesus mass over time.*



their ranks of the Brekyndens and Assheryndens, who have left us with three and two wills written after 1512 respectively, and none of which mention the cult. As residents of Small Hythe they were not involved in parochial religion to the same extent as other families.[72] Apart from them, on the whole, right across the pious spectrum, the number of will-makers in each family who gave to the Jesus mass seems to have been partly dependent upon the number of wills which each family produced after 1512. So, for example, the Donnes made five such wills and three of these mention the cult, and for most of those families who produced three wills or more after 1512, at least two of them gave their support. This said, the only selected families which supported the mass in all of their wills after 1512 were the Gerveses (one will), the Bisshopyndens (three wills) and the Castelyns (two wills), lying in the middle and bottom pious bands. Patronage of the Jesus mass at Tenterden does not therefore fit into the overall pattern of testamentary religious expression. Families who since the mid-fifteenth century had produced often markedly sparse or rather moderate wills in explicitly religious terms, adhered to this new devotion to the same or even greater extent, than those who had previously surpassed their contemporaries in all areas of traditional devotion.

That the Jesus mass was especially appealing to families which had tended to neglect other forms of institutional religious devotion in their testamentary piety, is not difficult to demonstrate. The Castelyns and Pellonds were not the only families who left wills devoid of explicitly religious bequests and also lent their support to the Jesus mass. (See Figure 5.6) In fact, nine out of eighteen, or 47 per cent of those families who made at least one religiously sparse will (lacking religious bequests), and for whom there is at least one other will made after 1512, also gave to the Jesus mass. Put the other way round, nine out of sixteen, or 56 per cent of those families who supported the new cult and for whom there are other wills, also left at least one sparse will. This suggests that there was a tendency for families which made one or more wills lacking specifically religious bequests, also to patronize the Jesus mass. What is more, the overwhelming pattern, as was the case with the Castelyns and the Pellonds, was of movement over time, from sparse testamentary piety to support of the new cult.

What was it about the Jesus mass which made it appealing to families which otherwise seem to have lacked engagement with the devotional forms of orthodox religion? It cannot have been its novelty alone, as a number of other new cults attracted occasional bequests in the early sixteenth century, but none of them drew the same level and spread of support. A number of historians have sought to explain the significance of

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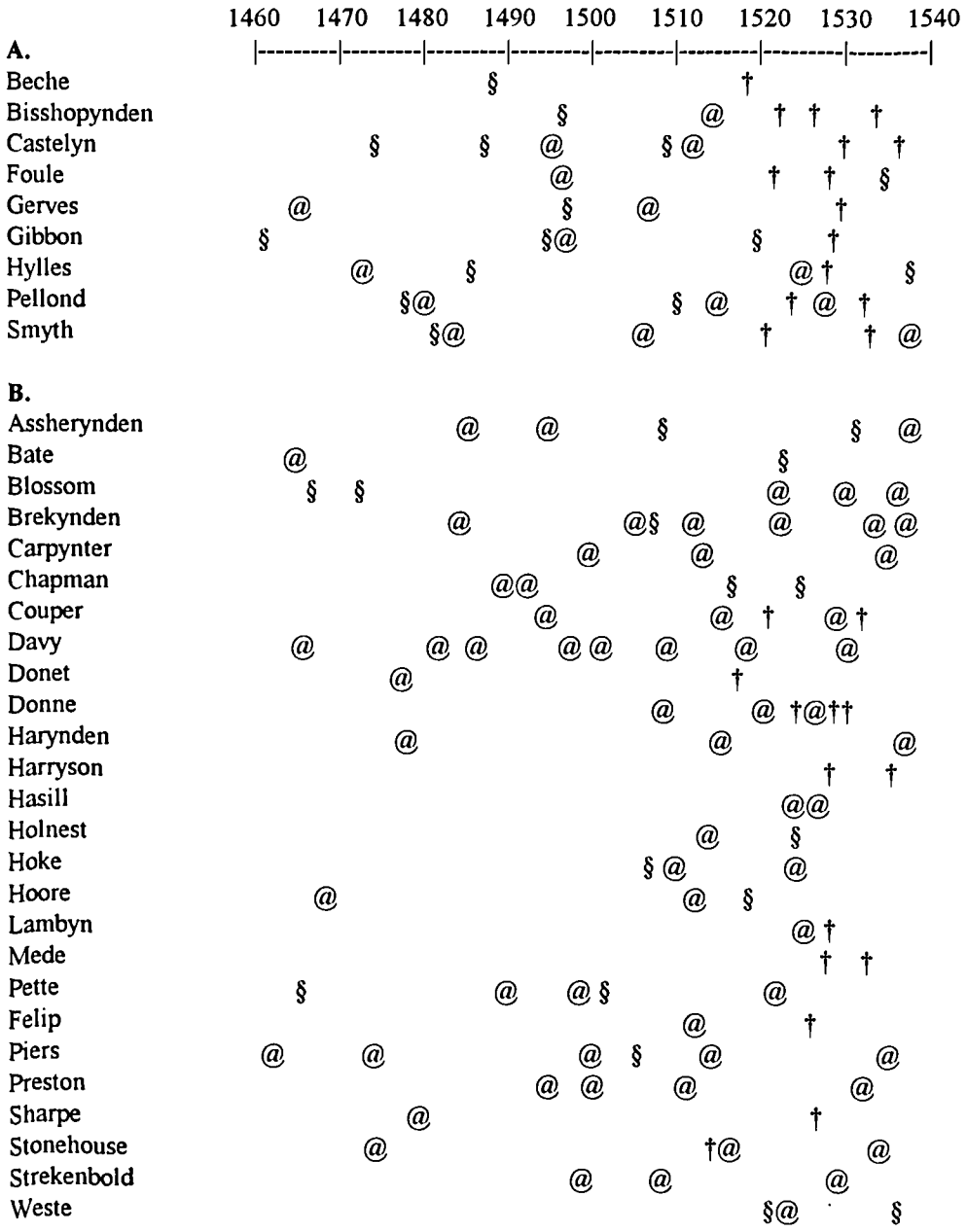
72 The Blossoms of Small Hythe, in the lowest band of families, failed to mention the Jesus mass in all three of the wills which they produced after 1512. The overall pattern of comparatively low support for devotions at St Mildred's, by inhabitants of Small Hythe, is noted in Chapter Three.

Figure 5.6 *Spread of religiously parsimonious wills and bequests to the Jesus mass, among families, 1513-1535*



Key: §: parsimonious wills.
†: Jesus mass wills.
@: wills which have neither of these features.
A: surnames for which there are both religiously parsimonious wills, and wills containing gifts to the Jesus mass.
B: others.

Note: Only those surnames for which there is at least one surviving will dated 1513 (the date at which gifts to the cult began) or later, and which repeat as will-makers at least once, are included.

the cult of Jesus, usually in the context of other types of Christocentric devotion in England and Europe prior to the Reformation. It is generally agreed that the Jesus Mass heralded a more personal form of devotion, and formed part of the *devotio moderna* which characterized one strand of late medieval English spirituality. There is less unanimity as to the way in which the personal aspect of devotion was heightened. Bossy argues that the new movements such as the cult of the Holy Name, gave greater prominence to Christ's naming and birth, and by so doing, emphasized his human nature, in particular by focusing upon his relationships with family and kin. This was, he contends, a move away from the emphasis upon Christ's suffering and sacrifice, epitomised in the cult of *Corpus Christi*, to preoccupation with the Holy Family and its figures with which the individual could more easily identify. Duffy, on the other hand, places the cult of the Holy Name very much in an imaginative and liturgical tradition, which remained primarily concerned with Christ's passion. By emphasizing the Christian's kinship with Christ, the devotion allowed for closer proximity to his suffering. There is a good case for both of these interpretations; the important point being that both stress the concentration upon Christ's humanity and the way in which this allowed for a closer identification of the individual with his or her saviour.[73]

Quite apart from its specific form, the growth in popularity of the Jesus mass is in itself, indicative of an increasing focus upon Christ, to some extent to the exclusion of the saints. This was especially true in Tenterden, where the cult of saints appears not to have fired the imaginations of the pious to the extent that it did in other places. The wording of the Jesus mass and anthem, which were almost without exception celebrated on a Friday in parish and cathedral churches across England, laid great emphasis upon the supremacy as well as the humanity of Christ. There is no sense here, contrary to Higgs's assertion, that the "humanity of Jesus was foremost" in the popular piety of the pre-Reformation period, and that it was only "the Jesus of the Reformers" who "was a Divine Saviour fulfilling a high office in the plan of salvation".[74] The anthem, identified by Atchley as a form of the song *Salve Rex*, was sung after Compline, and this posited Christ very much as supreme mediator and saviour of humble sinners. The following version of the anthem, found by Atchley in *The Prymer in Englyshe and Latyn*, dated 1542, reveals the intensity of its Christocentric devotion.

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73 Lander, *Government and Community*, p. 114; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 236; Bossy, *Christianity in the West*, pp. 6-10. Dinn follows Bossy by stressing how the mass of the Holy Name emphasized Christ's humanity and birth: 'Popular Religion', pp. 195, 200, 204. See also, Higgs, 'Lay Piety', pp. 332-3.

74 Higgs, 'Lay Piety', pp. 332-3.

Oratio ad Christum

Salue rex Jesu Christe, rex misericorde, vita
nostra, suavitas nostra ac spes nostra te salutamus. Ad te clamauimus exules filii Eve. Ad te suspiramus gementes & flentes in hac lachrimarum valle. Eia ergo aduocate noster, illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte. Patremque tuum (O Jesu omni laude dignissime) post hoc nostrum exilium ostende. O clemens, o misericors, o suavis Jesu christe.

Versus. *In omnibus tribulationibus & angustiis.*
Respon. *Jesu Christe succurre nobis.*

Oratio.

Domine Jesu Christe, fili Dei ac redemptor noster, qui temetipsum in vilissimam nostram naturam transformasti, ut nos filios ire in filios gratie patri reconciliares. Concede quesumus domine, ut possimus certa fide confiteri, te esse redemptorem nostrum ac apud patrem solum mediatorem nostrum pro omnibus bonis spiritualibus. Qui es deus eternus viuens & regnans cum patre & spiritu sancto : per infinita seculorum secula. Amen.

A Prayer to chryste

Hayle, Jesu Chryst, Kynge of mercy, our lyfe, our swetnes, & oure hope, we salute the : unto the we cry, which are the banyshed children of Eve : unto the we syghe sobbynge, and wepyng in thys vayle of wretchedness : hast y^{e} therfore our medyator, turne unto us those thy mercyful eyes. O Jesu, all prayse worthy, shew us the presence of thy father after thys outlawry. O gentel, O mercyfull, O swete Jesu Chryste.

The versicle. In al our trouble and heuynes.
The answer. O Jesu, oure healthe and glorye, socoure us.

The Prayer.

O Jesu Chryst, the sonne of God, our redemer, which deiectedst and humbledst thy selfe from the gloryous state and shape of thy godhed, unto the shap of our vile seruitude, because thou woldest reconcyle us the chyldren of wrathe unto the father, and so make us thy chyldren of grace, we beseech the graunte us that we mought ever fele even the by thy very self to be our present medyator before our father for all ghostly giftes, whom we knowledge with perfecte

fayth to be our sauyoure : whych art the lyvely God, wyth the father and the holy ghost, lyuynge, and raygning into the world of worldes. So be it.[75]

Atchley suggests that the word *solum*, claiming Christ to be the only mediator, may have been "an amendment due to Lutheran influence".[76] There is not however any explicit emphasis upon faith as the agency of salvation in the wording of the anthem, which one would expect from a Lutheran-inspired interpolation; rather, the stress is laid upon Christ as the object of faith, which was arguably a peculiarly English preoccupation, with its roots in the pre-Reformation period.[77] Whatever the inspiration of its precise wording, the anthem could have been in circulation in this form long before the 1540s. In any case, there is no certainty that the inclusion of *solum* was an amendment to an earlier form. The rest of the *Prymer*, although containing Protestant elements, is generally orthodox and there is plenty within it which contradicts the notion of Christ as sole mediator. This suggests that the *Salve Rex* anthem came to be included in the *Prymer* with its current wording already in place, and as such, was derived from an earlier edition or manuscript. Examples of earlier Primers on which this edition of 1542 is based, containing versions of the *Salve Rex*, or other possible Jesus anthems might serve to settle the matter.[78]

However early the radical wording of the anthem, the Epistle for the Feast of the Holy Name, included in the appended section of this same *Prymer*, carried enough radical potential of its own, and may itself have inspired the notion of Christ as only intercessor. It consists of *Acts 4:8-12*, containing the words of the apostle Peter about Christ, spoken before the priests and Saducees: "this is the stone caste asyde of you buylders whiche is sette in the chefe place of the corner, neyther is there salvacion in any

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75 Atchley, 'Jesus Mass and Anthem', p. 168. The extract can be found in the aforementioned Primer, in St Paul's Cathedral Library (38. D7, p. 60). Its full title is: *The Prymer in Englyshe and Latyn wyth the Epystles and Gospelles of euery Sonday & Holyedaye in the yere, and also the exposycion upon Miserere mei deus wyth many other prayers* (RSTC, 16026), printed in London by William Bonham, and in the possession of Margaret Charde in the 1540s. For information on Bonham, see *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475-1640*, 2nd edn, revised and enlarged (1976-86), vol. ii, p. 25. I owe a debt of thanks to Jo Wisdom, the Librarian at St Paul's and his assistant Maurice Sills, for kindly letting me see this book. See also, Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 282-5, for rather different insights into the Feast of the Holy Name.

76 Atchley, 'Jesus Mass and Anthem', pp. 168-9.

77 Higgs, 'Lay Piety', pp. 332-3.

78 *The Prymer in Englyshe and Latyn*, was based on an edition of 1536 (RSTC, 15993), which in turn was a revision of, *This prymer of Salysbury use bothe in Englyshe & in Laten* (etc), printed in 1535 (RSTC, 15986.3). Duffy claims that the *Salve Rex* prayer or anthem was a Protestant adaptation of the *Salve Regina* prayer first printed in 1538, but the possibility that it pre-dated Protestantism and evolved out of the Jesus mass in the late fifteenth century has yet to be fully explored: Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 445. See also, E. Hoskins, *Horae Beatae Mariae Virginis, or Sarum and York Primers* (1901), p. 176.

other, nor yet also is there any other name gyuen to menne wherin we muste be saued".[79]

There is no doubting that traditional Catholic orthodoxy urged the believer to trust first and foremost in Christ as saviour, whilst at the same time encouraging reliance upon a panoply of saints.[80] What this text, and the Jesus mass represents however, is perhaps the most widespread and easily accessible devotional form, of a movement within orthodox religion toward greater emphasis upon Christ alone. It was this intensification of Christocentricism encapsulated within the cult of Jesus and the mass of the Holy Name, which gave it its radical potential. As is demonstrated in Chapter Six, there is good reason to believe that the Jesus mass was seized upon as a radical devotion by families who were not unfamiliar with dissent from more traditional orthodox religion, and its radical simplicity may in part explain its appeal to families which tended to frugality in their testamentary piety.[81]

The mass of the Holy Name contained other elements apart from its Christocentricism, which may have attracted religiously frugal families. Its emphasis upon the Holy Family and Jesus' human kinship, has been noted already. The Holy family, with its concentric circles of kin, supplied a model for the pious householder to emulate, and the cult of the Holy Name arguably re-incorporated Joseph as an archetypal spiritually sensitive figure at the head of the family unit.[82] The value which the cult placed upon the human family in its own right, and its confirmation of that institution as the primary environment for religious and moral instruction, may have made it especially appealing to testators who belonged to pious traditions which prioritized provision for family and kin, over and above public acts of religious devotion. In Colchester during the 1540s and 1550s, once the necessity to procure masses and prayers had been doctrinally undermined, testators turned to a much greater extent to the proper upbringing of their children and to providing for family and kin in their wills. The wider shift in attitudes which this involved, may have been occurring in Tenterden from as early as the mid-fifteenth century.[83]

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79 *The Prymer in Englyshe and Latyn*: 'The Epistles and Gospels', fol. xlr.-v.

80 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 507-8, 519.

81 Andrew Brown, in his recent work on piety in the diocese of Salisbury has also drawn attention to the radicalism of the cult of Jesus, and importantly here, to its continuity with later acceptance of reform: *idem*, *Popular Piety*, p. 248. Writing on the Jesus mass in Cranbrook church, in 1925, L.L. Duncan, remarks: "The support of the Jesus Mass was a favourite object of devotion, and there are many bequests thereto. It had nothing to do, as Mr. Cave-Browne imagines it had, with Lollardism." (*idem.*, 'Notes on Cranbrook Church', *Arch. Cant.*, xxxvii (1925), p. 29. I owe my knowledge of this last reference to Andrew Hope.

82 Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 200; Bossy, *Christianity in the West*, p. 10; J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth, 1968), pp. 170-2.

83 Higgs, 'Lay Piety', pp. 338-340. One recent essay attempts to reconstruct the Protestant conception of the godly and Christ-centred family from the pages of Foxe, and argues that in the reforming community, the family became all the more important as a model for biblically-based relationships: D. Andrew Penny, 'Family Matters and Foxe's Acts and Monuments', *The Historical Journal*, xxxix (1996), pp. 599-618.

Dinn has shown that the cult of Jesus, and Christocentric devotion in general "seems to have been a largely urban phenomenon in late medieval Suffolk". He rejects however, any notion of "the existence of a national urban spirituality, reproduced in each community", preferring instead to view the spread of Christocentricism as "probably related to a higher level of education in towns than in the country".[84] It is unlikely however, that adherence to the Jesus mass required a higher than average level of education. Education and literacy were important parts of urban culture, but only alongside a diverse set of factors which differentiated townsfolk from people living in more rural areas. In some senses, education offered one way of expressing urban identities which arose from differences in everyday patterns of life. The adoption of new skills was largely necessitated by growing lay confidence in civic government and matters of religion in many towns by the fifteenth century, and it was probably more the impulse to fashion a piety which they could call their own, than an ability to understand Latin which focussed townspeople's attention on the cult of Jesus.[85]

This said, it still leaves the question unanswered, of why increasing Christocentricism appears to have been an especially urban phenomenon. Perhaps the answer lies in suggestions which have been made as to why Lollardy and dissent were also more prevalent in towns; that is to say, "the intensity of orthodox devotional activity in certain places (*namely, towns*) encouraged a heretical reaction".[86] The pattern of support for the Jesus mass at Tenterden marries easily with the notion that Christocentricism was in part a reaction to lavish and more traditional religious devotion. At least, it would explain why religiously parsimonious families patronized it as much, if not more than the generous. This does not mean that the former were more urban than their counterparts, but that both belonged to a culture which was characterized by sharply drawn contrasts and divergences.

Also of relevance to this question of urban piety, Duffy argues that although "genuinely popular", the Jesus mass "was also emphatically an observance seized on by élites in every community as a convenient expression, and perhaps an instrument, of their social dominance". He sees the Court's patronage of the cult under Lady Margaret Beaufort, as providing an important social incentive for the leading parishioners in many towns to set up their own Jesus gilds. At the same time as holding on to the strong

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84 Dinn, 'Popular Religion', pp. 203-4. See also, Barron, 'Parish Fraternities', pp. 32, 59, and, Brown, *Popular Piety*, pp. 86-7.

85 For example, Higgs, 'Lay Piety', pp. 341-3.

86 Brown, *Popular Piety*, pp. 222, 259. An element of conflict between the cult of Jesus and devotion to the saints can be seen in the episode concerning the cult of St. Sidewell in the religiously conservative Exmoor parish of Morebath. In 1520 the parish priest gave a statue of the saint to the parish and it was set up on the Jesus altar. By 1523 the parishioners had begun to adorn her, and by the mid-1530s the altar was no longer known as the Jesus altar but as St. Sidewell's altar. Was this an instance of conservative reaction to perceived radicalism?: Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 168.

element of exclusivity in the Jesus gilds, Duffy presents a process whereby the Jesus mass became "the possession of the community at large", through its prominent celebration at nave and side-chapel altars in parish churches. In Colchester, the Jesus gild appears to have drawn its members from across the economic strata of the town, but paid considerably more attention to middling and upper ranking adherents.[87] The social profile of patronage of the cult of Jesus at Tenterden, is explored in detail below, but for now it is worth noting that families like the Castelyns and Pellonds may have been part of the most socially mobile group in the town, and that with its aristocratic and court credentials, the devotion may have been seized upon most readily by those who had most to gain.

The details of the Jesus mass in Tenterden furnish further clues in the search for its religious and cultural significance in the parish. The devotion has been linked elsewhere with the development of liturgical music and song, and it seems no coincidence that the five bequests in the Tenterden wills for the purchase of new organs were made in the years 1510-13, and the first references to the Jesus mass appeared in wills made in 1513. In his elaborate endowments to the cult in 1518, William Couper described how the mass of Jesus was "said and sung" every Friday. As elsewhere, music therefore seems to have played an important part in the devotion at Tenterden.[88]

There is in general however, very little detail in the gifts to the Jesus mass in the Tenterden wills. For the most part, testators simply leave money "to the Jesus mass" or "to the maintenance of the Jesus mass", either in lump sums or in instalments over a period of time. Anne Stonehouse's gift of 4d "to the boxe ordenyned to dyverse gatherers in the said parishe for the masse of Jhesu ther to be contynued" was, in 1513, one of the first two references to the cult and provides a clue as to one of the ways in which money was raised.[89] From 1516 some testators specifically state that their gifts were intended for "the fyndyng of the brothred priste celebratyng the masse of Jhesus every fryday in the parishe churche", suggesting that as in other places in this period, a Jesus brotherhood was quickly established, which permanently supported its own priest.[90] In Kent however, Tenterden was the exception rather than the norm, as Jesus

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87 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 115-16; Higgs, 'Lay Piety', p. 239. See also Atchley, 'Jesus Mass and Anthem', *passim*, for numerous examples of high status initiations of the cult in urban centres.

88 Atchley, 'Jesus Mass and Anthem', p. 164, and *passim*. The Jesus gild in the Crowds of St. Paul's not only ensured that masses and anthems were sung to organ accompaniment by an array of clergy and choristers, but employed "wails" in livery to go through the streets of London and its suburbs, before the feasts of the Transfiguration and Holy Name, playing musical instruments and carrying banners emblazoned with the monogram "Jh's", "to gif warnyng and knowledge to the people of the seid ffestys": *Registrum Statutorum*, pp. 447-50. See Chapter Four. CKS: PRC 32/12/174.

89 CKS: PRC 17/12/182.

90 Example given: Thomas Smyth, 1518, CKS: PRC 17/14/7. For Jesus mass fraternities see: Atchley, 'Jesus Mass and Anthem', *passim*; Brown, *Popular Piety*, pp. 138-42; Duffy, *Stripping of the*

brotherhoods are mentioned in wills for a total of only seven or eight other parishes.[91] In 1526, Thomas Wode made a substantial endowment to the Jesus brotherhood which reveals that it may have maintained two priests at the same time. Wode ordained that within four years of his death, £20 were to be given to his feoffees with which they were to buy lands and tenements, which were then to be delivered to eight or more honest persons of Tenterden parish, who in turn were to give the profits to the churchwardens of the parish church, "and the same churche wardens for the tyme beying to pay and delyver all suche issues revenues and profetts to suche preest or preests as the parishones of the seid parishe of Tenterden shall have at there charge celebratyng yn the said churche/ As a brotherhed preest or Jhesus preeste for the time that any suche preeste shalbe ther/ so celebrate and serve as parcell of his salary or stypend".[92] Tenterden appears therefore, to have been an important centre in the maintenance and development of the cult of Jesus in Kent.

One of the notable features of the new Christocentricism at Tenterden, was the apparent absence of the votive masses or feasts which were more closely bound up with the suffering of Jesus; namely, the cults of the Five Wounds and the Crown of Thorns. Neither are there any references in the wills to the cult of the Transfiguration.[93] In Kent, and across the country as a whole these did not tend to be as popular as the mass of the Holy Name, but nevertheless, the mass of the Five Wounds in particular, often accompanied it. One cannot be certain that this was not also the case at Tenterden, but the striking popularity of the cult of the Holy Name there, lends significance to their absence. It is perhaps an indication of peculiarly local and idiosyncratic appropriation of new devotions. With its emphases upon family, and the conquering and saving Christ, rather than the suffering servant, the cult of the Holy Name seems to have been most suited to the attitudes of many of Tenterden's townsfolk.[94]

In most other places where the cult of the Holy Name became popular, there is evidence of Jesus images which stood on designated Jesus altars. This usually takes the form of bequests for lights before the image, or for its decoration or repair. They were either made of silver or most probably wood, were painted and sometimes gilded. In the

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Altars, pp. 115-6, 120, 224; Galpern, *Religions of the People*, p. 54; Dinn, 'Popular Piety', pp. 195-9; Higgs, 'Lay Piety', pp. 237-40; Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, p. 94.

91 Namely, Holy Cross, Canterbury; St. Mary Bredman, Canterbury; St. Mary's Northgate, Canterbury; All Saints', Maidstone; Newington next Sittingbourne; Nonington; and Herne: *Testamenta Cantiana: East Kent*, pp. 48, 55, 57, 208, 234, 235, 160. Stephen Stonard of Sandwich, in his will of 1530, mentioned "the wardens of Jesus", suggesting that there was a fraternity there: *ibid.*, p. 285.

92 CKS: PRC 17/17/158.

93 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 45-6, 238-48; Pfaff, *New Feasts*, *passim*.

94 In Sandwich for example, the mass of the Wounds of Jesus appears in wills from the early 1490s to the late 1520s: CKS: PRC 17/5/344; PRC 32/4/24; PRC 17/17/140; PRC 17/18/8. For this and the other new devotions adopted elsewhere in England, see: Dinn, 'Popular Religion', p. 204; Atchley, 'Jesus Mass', pp. 165-6; Tanner, *Church in Norwich*, Appendix 11.

neighbouring parish of Rolvenden, in 1517, one John Hubbard willed that "the diadem which I ordered for the same image of Jesus be gilt, and set upon the same Image". These images of Christ were different from crucifixes, but there is little evidence of what they actually looked like, and most importantly, how they portrayed Christ. The clues that remain suggest a depiction which emphasized his identity as victorious conquering king. Only two Tenterden testators made bequests to the "Jesus light" or for lights to be set up on the Jesus altar, and none mention an image. Although it cannot be concluded from this, that there was no image of Jesus in St. Midlred's, it is apparent that Christocentric devotion at Tenterden was not centred upon visual representation. This accords with the general profile of attitudes to images over the period and their early disappearance from wills.[95]

One of the two will-makers who attended to lights was William Couper. He made the most elaborate bequests to the Jesus mass out of all those who gave to the cult, and his is the only will which contains arrangements for the decoration of the Jesus altar. Couper willed that his "executors do prepare and make redye in as shorte tyme as they convenyently maye all and every suche auter clothis and torches curteynd as I of late dyd put to payntyng to one paynter of hedcrone (Headcorn) whiche I will and bequethe to the use of the seid churche and to be hanged there aboute and uppon auter where the masse of Jhesus is usyd to be celebrated". He also gave 6s 8d "to buying of one pair of laten candylstiks continually to stand uppon the seid auter", and stipulated that 2s was to be regularly given to maintain "two tapers continually upon altar where mass of Jesus is celebrated to burn during said masses" from lands and tenements at farm. Once his son Stephen was twenty-four and inherited this property, he was to renew the tapers at the Feasts of the Annunciation and St. Michael, and set them "on seid auter to burn every fryday when mass of Jhesus is said and sung". Decoration with cloths, banners and lights were common elements in the cult of Jesus up and down the country, and they obviously formed part of the devotion in Tenterden. However, Couper was one of the most lavish will-makers in this period and belonged to one of the most religiously generous families. His arrangements are not typical for the parish, and serve to remind us that the same set of religious observances could be interpreted and symbolically employed in quite different ways by individuals and families following contrasting pious traditions.[96]

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95 *Testamenta Cantiana: East Kent*, pp. 7, 44, 84, 126, 153, 217, 225, cit. at p. 260. See also, *Registrum Statutorum*, p. 460; Atchley, 'Jesus Mass', pp. 164-7; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 115-116. Stephen Felip, 1523, CKS: PRC 17/16/46; William Couper, 1518, CKS: PRC 32/12/174.

96 CKS: PRC 32/12/174. This by no means rules out the possibility that the brotherhood at Tenterden followed the lead of older and more prestigious gilds, of which the greatest was that in the Crowds of St. Paul's. Here, a rich display of ceremony and decoration included impressive processions of specially robed clergy, bell ringing, music and choral singing, garnishing of the Crowds and altar "with boughes and herbes, after the old custume", gild feasts, a bonfire on the eve of the feast of the Holy Name, liveries for the brothers and sisters, the employment of "wails" to announce the feasts throughout

The final thing to note is that there was not a single bequest for masses and prayers to be sung and said before the Jesus altar in St. Mildred's specifically for the testator's and others' souls. Such arrangements can be found elsewhere, for instance in Sandwich.[97] It is almost certainly the case, that those who gave to the maintenance of the devotion expected to benefit spiritually along with the rest of its patrons. They may have hoped to be prayed for by name as did Robert Fraunces of Colchester, when he left 5 marks to the wardens of the Jesus gild with which to buy four sheets of parchment "to be set in the mass book of Jhus & in that to be set all the brethern & sisterne that hath give unto the said mass".[98] Nevertheless, none of the gifts to the devotion at Tenterden even specify that they were for the health of the testator's soul. This suggests, that compared to other places, the Jesus mass in Tenterden was more intensely inspired by a desire to worship Christ for his own sake, than for the benefits that accrued from priestly intercessions.

Part Two: the social origins of parsimonious piety

Wealth and status

Unfortunately, Tenterden does not have the types of evidence which allow for detailed reconstruction of social structure, such as court rolls and extensive taxation materials. This is partly because of a seventeenth-century fire which destroyed the Court Hall and most of the borough's late medieval records within it. It is also because as a member of the Cinque Ports Confederation, Tenterden was exempt from most forms of central government taxation, and so, for example, its inhabitants were not liable to assessment under the Lay Subsidy of 1523-4, which has been used so fruitfully by historians of early sixteenth-century English society.[99] This notwithstanding, what does survive in addition to last wills and testaments, is a relatively broad range of evidence which sheds enough

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London and the sponsoring of friars to preach at Easter at Paul's Cross andSt. Mary Spittle: *Registrum Statutorum*, pp. 447-60; *Testamenta Cantiana: East Kent*, pp. 107, 127, 160, 260, 285.

97 CKS: PRC 32/9/137; PRC 17/14/206. See also, *Testamenta Cantiana: East Kent*, pp. 19, 127; Atchley, 'Jesus Mass and Anthem', pp. 163-66.

98 Higgs, 'Lay Piety', p. 208.

99 Taylor, 'Municipal Records of Tenterden, Part I', p. 285. Those works which have employed the 1523-5 Subsidy, court rolls and other materials to reconstruct both rural and urban local and regional communities, societies and economies, include: McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community*; McIntosh, *Community Transformed*; Howell. *Land, Family and Inheritance*; Searle, *Lordship and Community*; M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*; Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*; W.G. Hoskins, *The Midland Peasant. The economic and social history of a Leicestershire village* (London, 1957); J.C.K. Cornwall, 'English Country Towns in the Fifteen Twenties', *EcHR*, 2nd series, xv (1962-3), pp. 54-69; Cornwall, *Wealth and Society*; W.G. Hoskins, *The Age of Plunder. King Henry's England* (London, 1976); Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*; Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*.

light on wealth, status, occupation and economic activity; involvement in the land-market and land-holding; municipal and parochial office holding; unofficial social roles such as witnessing, supervising and executing of wills; and affinal and fictive kinship, to allow for a comparative social and economic analysis of the twenty-three families.

An approximate judgement on relative family wealth provides a starting point for these explorations. The records of central government taxation which do survive for Tenterden amount to a handful of assessments on the "barons of the Cinque Ports". These were fifteenths or tenths on goods and chattels belonging to the freemen of the Ports, which were in fact assessed by the Cinque Ports Confederation itself and an overall allowance was negotiated with the crown.[100] The most complete assessments on Tenterden men which are extant, on moveables in Tenterden hundred, and in two cases, pertaining to other additional hundreds, fall at convenient chronological intervals across the period, in 1464, 1512-13 and 1542-3. The first is described as a fifteenth on the barons of Rye with goods and chattels in the hundred of Tenterden, but the thirty-three listed names bear such a close resemblance to Tenterden householders in the 1460s, that it appears safe to assume that these were in fact Tenterden men, only referred to as barons of Rye because Tenterden was a limb of that Cinque Port. The average of all thirty-three assessments in 1464 was 8s 8d, and their median, 8s 3d. The twelve individuals from the nine selected families which were taxed, can be grouped according to testamentary piety. From the top-band of families, Stephen Couper, William Preston and Thomas Strekynbold paid a median of 11s 1d. In the middle-band, three members of the Brekynden family, William and John Piers, John Pette, Henry Gerves and Thomas Pellond were assessed at a more moderate median of 7s 9d. Robert Bisshopynden alone, rated at a solid 9s 4d, represents bottom-band families. Two sets of conclusions may tentatively be drawn from this distribution. Firstly, at this early date, individuals in the most religiously open-handed families appear also to have been some of the most wealthy, and whilst there were equally wealthy individuals from middle-band families, there were others who were less well-off. Incidentally, Robert Bisshopynden, from a family which adhered to sparing testamentary piety, had above average moveable wealth. Secondly, middle-band families dominate, and if the selected families are anything to go by, seem to have provided the substantial majority of tax-paying freemen in 1464; an impression, which significantly, is created in part by one or two large and successful families. Low band families are not well represented, suggesting that they did not have the same degree of access to the franchise as their more religiously generous contemporaries, probably because of lower levels of wealth.[101]

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100 *A Calendar of the White and Black Books of the Cinque Ports*, p. xxvi.

101 PRO: E179, 230/182.

The 1512-3 listings portray a similar, albeit less defined distribution of wealth. The nineteen men assessed on moveables in Tenterden hundred were rated at an average of 14s 11d and a median of 10s, indicating a considerable increase in burgess wealth from the 1460s, albeit apparently concentrated in fewer hands (the decrease in the number of men assessed could also have been due to political changes which narrowed the franchise). George and Bartholomew Foule and John Preston, assessed at 10s, 40s and 3s respectively, represent top-band families. Robert Brekynden (II or III) who paid 40s and Thomas Assherynden 11s, belonged to middle-band families, and at the bottom of the pious spectrum, Richard Castelyn was rated at 10s. Additional members of middle and bottom-band families, paid much smaller amounts. William, John and Robert Brekynden (possibly the same Robert who was assessed on moveables in Tenterden hundred) and Richard Piers, were assessed at 3s, 2s, 12d and 20d respectively, on goods and chattels assessed separately under Bewsborough hundred, because of their location within lands in Tenterden parish, belonging to the distant manor of Temple. John Hoke and Robert Bisshopynden owned moveables in Barkley hundred to the north of Tenterden, on which they paid 16d and 2s respectively. As in the 1460s, wealth appears to have been concentrated toward the top end of the testamentary spectrum.[102]

In 1542-3 there were less really large assessments of 20s or over, but nevertheless the average amount paid by the nineteen men taxed on moveables in Tenterden was 15s 6d and the median, 13s 4d; an increase on 1512-3, albeit in real terms tempered by inflation. Only three individuals from two selected families can be found in the list, namely William Gerves, rated at 20s and William and Thomas Smyth assessed at 7s 8½d and 16s 8d respectively. All three belonged to middle-band families. However, a further four individuals, who also all belonged to middle-band families, namely, William and John Brekynden (V) and Peter Pellond, were assessed on moveables in the parish, pertaining to the Hundred of Bewsborough, at 3s 6d, 3s 1d and 2s 10d respectively. A search through assessments for the same date on goods and chattels belonging to men of Tenterden in other hundreds , turns up Stephen Couper who paid 8d, and George Smyth, who paid 3½d on moveables in the nearby Hundred of Aloesbridge. Although providing no really meaningful information on the distribution of wealth between families, the 1542-3 assessments do underline the ongoing dominant position of middle-band families in the town's franchise. They also add to the impression that the makers of the most religiously sparse wills were not on the whole among the wealthy freemen.[103]

Any one of these assessments is at best fragmentary, and at no point do they provide a full picture of the distribution of wealth between individuals or families, even

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102 PRO: E179, 231/228. See Chapter Two for an explanation of the separate assessment of personalty within Temple manor under Bewsborough Hundred.

103 PRO: E179, 234/7.

that is, moveable wealth alone. However, they do afford a rough and preliminary outline of differences in wealth between pious groups in the town. Those individuals from the most religiously generous families who are listed, tend to be among the most wealthy, and many of those who followed less open-handed traditions were equally affluent, but also among their ranks were individuals who were not so well-off. In addition, apart from the odd individual who was assessed at an average level, religiously parsimonious families appear to have been the least wealthy group. Certain families stand out for their economic and biological success over the period: far ahead of the rest were the Brekyndens, but the Gerveses, Prestons, Pierses, Bisshopyndens and Coupers all display a degree of long-term continuity.

A little less fragmentary, and providing a complementary insight into the relative wealth of families, are the records of land and property transfers, comprising deeds from 1449-1549, as well as a number of common recoveries of realty recorded in a surviving Tenterden Corporation Minute Book dated 1538-43.[104] These provide information on around 120 property transfers over a hundred year period. To assess the relative involvement of families in the land-market and the extent of their landholding, a count was made of the number of transfers in which a family was involved or mentioned, and these were plotted over time. So, if a family surname occurred as a buyer or seller, lessor or lessee, past-owner or tenant, owner or occupier of neighbouring lands, feoffee of the given property, or as a witness to the transfer, that record was counted against the surname. It was felt that this method made the best use of a rich source of evidence, and whilst it is acknowledged that the act of witnessing a deed does not necessarily tell us anything about landholding, it often denotes that the witness held property adjacent or near to the land in question. It should be noted, that this method moderates the level of activity and extent of landholding of the families which were most involved in the land-market, by deliberately failing to count all the references to separate individuals who belonged to the same family, in a single transaction.

Middle-band families display the highest level of land market activity over the period, with the Pierses, Pettes, Pellonds and Brekyndens all being involved in more than ten property transfers. Moreover, the Pierses and Brekyndens are mentioned in twenty or more transactions. All seven religiously moderate families appear in a median of 8.5 deeds or recoveries. In contrast, the nine unsparingly religious families were involved in a median of only four, and whilst the Foules, Carpynters and Davys are recorded on ten or more occasions, none of them were as active as the Brekyndens or Pierses. The most

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104 BL: Add. Chs: 16319; 16320; 16322; 16324; 16328-16331; 41799; 56976; 56977; 56979-56985; 58708; Add. Ms. 48022, fols. 23r., 25v.-34v. CKS: U455/T84-T88; U455/T88; U455/T90; U410/T12; U410/T21; U410/T178-9; U442/T99; U55/T414; U36/T1453-4; U1044/F1; Te/S1.

religiously parsimonious appear to have been the least active, appearing in a median of only three transfers and the Blossoms alone being involved in more than ten.

A number of families who otherwise appear to have been wealthy with moderate or large estates, hardly feature in the deeds and recoveries. This applies to the Stonehouses, Prestons, Coupers, Gerveses, Bisshopyndens and Castelyns. In part this is probably due to the accidence of survival of often highly localised evidence, but in some cases it may be due to the fact that the bulk of a family's landed interests lay outside the parish. This may well apply to the Stonehouses for example.[105] It is also important to remember that the degree of involvement of a family in property transfers, whether as an active party or not, does not necessarily accurately reflect its landed wealth. It may indicate as much about the pace or degree of change and reorganization in a family's landed resources, as its relative landed assets. On this basis, middle-band families, and to a lesser extent, those in the top-band, may have been the greatest accumulators of realty over the period, and so have been the most socially mobile. However, land market activity can also indicate loss, and the possibility of downwards social mobility among these groups, should not be ruled out. By definition, a middling group is composed of families and individuals moving either up or down the social hierarchy.

One measure of the degree to which a family's involvement in the land market changed over time, is provided by somewhat arbitrarily dividing the period into two at the year 1500. In the top-band of families, only the Foules increased or maintained their level of activity after 1500, and three families which appear prior to 1500, disappear from the records after that date. In contrast, among the more religiously moderate, the Smyths, Pellonds, Brekyndens, Gerveses and Assheryndens all either increased their degree of involvement, or sustained it at roughly the same level, and all eight families continue to appear in transactions. This suggests that in comparison to their more religiously unsparing contemporaries, these families became increasingly engaged in the land market in the early sixteenth century, which may have translated into social mobility. Judging by the evidence relating to families like the Brekyndens, Pellonds, and Smyths, this mobility was upwards. Finally, underlining their generally less robust economic position, the Blossoms were the only religiously parsimonious family to appear at all in property transfers after 1500. Whilst it is shown above that the Castelyns were growing in wealth and status by the early sixteenth century, generally, these families do not appear to have been making the economic advances enjoyed by those in the middle and top groups.

Assessment of the social status of these families by the end of the period, is made much easier by the survival in the Tenterden custumal of a list of freemen of the borough, compiled c 1558 and beginning in 1529. From time to time a freeman is also described as

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105 See Chapter Four.

bailiff of Tenterden, and from comparison with the list of bailiffs, it appears that the document is a record of admissions to the franchise, in rough chronological order. In all, the names of 124 freemen are recorded, twenty-two of whom belonged to selected families.[106] Following the same pattern as the distribution of tax payers and land market activity, fourteen of these were members of families lying in the middle of the testamentary spectrum, namely, Robert Piers, three members of the Assherynden family, three Pellonds, four Brekyndens, two Smyths, and William Gerves. Represented to a much lesser extent were the most religiously active families, with only six individuals on the list - four drawn from the Foules and two from the Coupers. Religiously frugal families are represented by George Castelyn and William Hoke (Hooke). To some extent, admissions to the franchise from 1529 provide an indication of not just the composition of the leading urban families by the end of the period, but those which were climbing the fastest socially, so as to be gaining access to freeman status. The list of freemen may also show those which were to quickly fall again. As will become apparent, with the exception of the Brekyndens, the Pierses, and to some extent, the Foules, the above-mentioned families only appear to have gained this degree of status by the early sixteenth century. Importantly, most of them could not be described as adhering to orthodox generosity in their will-making, and so if there was a predominant pious tenor to the emerging group of leading town families by the 1530s, it was religiously moderate or parsimonious.

Examination of municipal and parochial office holding only serves to add weight to the above observations. A list of Tenterden's bailiffs from incorporation in 1449 to the early 1550s, which was compiled and written into the custumal in c 1558, reveals a definite pattern to the involvement of the twenty-three families in the highest level of town government.[107] (See Table 5.2) The fact that six top-band families provided bailiffs who served for a total of twenty-one terms of office underlines the high status of this religiously generous group. However, middle-band families were not far behind them, providing bailiffs on twenty separate occasions, albeit mostly from the Brekyndens and the Pettes. The absence of a single individual from the most religiously sparse will-making group further confirms their comparatively lower status. The chronology of service is also revealing. The Foules were the only religiously lavish family to continue to enter office after the last decade of the fifteenth century. The political careers of their more temperate fellows on the other hand, tended to endure into the sixteenth century, and in the case of the Assheryndens, only began in 1522. Although the number of families dealt with here is small, together with the evidence already assembled, the

106 CKS: Te/C1, fols. 116r.-117v.
107 CKS: Te/C1, fols. 140r.-141r.

Table 5.2 *Selected families and their service as Tenterden bailiffs*

Family	Terms in office	First year in office	Last year in office	Range of service
Davy	4	1452	1495	43
Donne	1	1455	-	1
Preston	4	1464	1487	23
Strekynbold	3	1476	1486	10
Carpynter	3	1478	1489	11
Foule	6	1480	1540	60
Brekynden	7	1453	1549	96
Gerves	4	1465	1551	86
Pette	7	1472	1502	30
Piers	1	1474	-	1
Assherynden	1	1522	-	1

Source: Tenterden Custumal, CKS: Te/C1, fols. 140r.-141r.

politically, and presumably, economically successful families which held or improved their position in the urban hierarchy, tended towards moderation in their piety.

A brief look at other offices adds both breadth and strength to the impression that the religiously moderate and parsimonious had moved to, or remained in, the social and political centre-stage by the fourth decade of the sixteenth century, whilst, with some notable exceptions, the more traditionally convinced were receding into the wings. In addition to the lists of bailiffs and freemen, there is full information on the names of the twelve jurats, and twelve or thirteen taxors of the scott (assessors of the annual levy granted by the commonalty of the borough to the bailiff and jurats) nominated and elected annually, from 1538 to 1542.[108] The now familiar Foules were the only top-band family to be named among the jurats, John Foule serving in 1538 and 1540-2 (he was bailiff in 1539), and only the Coupers supplied a taxor of the scott, namely Stephen Couper, in 1541 and 1542. In contrast, six middle-band families are represented in either one or both of the two offices. As expected, leading the middle-band families, the Brekyndens filled seven terms of office as jurats and two as tax assessors. William Gerves was elected as a taxor in 1540 and as a jurat in 1541-2. In 1538 George Smyth served as a taxor, and in 1539-40 and 1542 William Smyth, and in 1541, Thomas Smyth were also elected as assessors. In addition, in 1541, Richard Assherynden, and in 1542, Peter Pellond and William Piers are named as taxors. Adam Pellond filled the role of Common Mace Bearer from 1538-1542. Finally, and not surprisingly, none of the jurats over these years belonged to religiously frugal families. Christopher Blossom alone, elected taxor in 1538 and 1539, represents this group.

Parochial office holding also conforms to the same increasingly clear pattern. There is a full record of the names of the two annually appointed churchwardens for fourteen years within the period 1498-1523. Only the Davys and the Foules from the top-band of families supplied churchwardens, on two and three occasions respectively (the Davys in 1498 and 1499). This may be compared to the total of five terms shared by the Brekynden, Pette, Gerves and Assherynden families. The only member of a bottom-band family to be named as churchwarden was Christopher Castelyn, in 1521 and 1522.[109]

Less formal social roles which are accessible in the surviving evidence, comprised the executing, supervising and witnessing of last wills and testaments. Although low status neighbours or associates were sometimes called upon to witness wills, it was usually the case that more substantial men and sometimes women performed this task. If respectability and good social standing were not always necessary for witnessing wills,

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108 CKS: Te/S1, fols. 1r., 19r., 27r., 32r., 39r.

109 CCAL: Z.3.1; Z.3.2; Z.3.3; Z.3.4; Z.3.37; X.8.2. Thomas Assherynden was one of the churchwardens in 1527: U410/T179.

they were prerequisites to executing or supervising them, that is, if these roles were not taken by immediate family.[110] In fact, increasingly over the period, and especially by the 1520s, testators called upon spouses, sons, fathers, sons-in-law and other family members to execute their wills, perhaps because of increasing anxiety about their non-execution and the belief, rightly or wrongly, that family offered the most dependable option. In the following comparisons executors, witnesses and supervisors were not counted if they were acting on behalf of a family member. Affinal relationships were included however, and to some degree, the level of a family's activity in these semi-official roles, probably reflects the density of its affinal kinship network.[111] Also influential was the existence of a scribe or clerk in a family's ranks, although only one individual from one of the twenty-three families is described as "clerk", namely John Piers, who acted as executor to Thomas Jan's will in 1470.[112] On the whole though, a family's level of involvement in these roles provides an impression of their standing in the community; the extent to which they were held in trust by neighbours, kin and associates, and even, in the case of executing wills, their financial solvency.

From 1449 to 1535, individuals in the nine religiously unsparing families are recorded as executors to wills, a median of two times per family. More moderate families also acted as executors on a median of two occasions, and the most religiously sparing, only on a median of one (only four out of six of these families are recorded at all as executors). There were outstanding families, namely the Foules, the Pierses and the Brekyndens, who were executors nine, ten and eight times respectively. Middle-band families appear to have been increasingly more likely to be given this role after 1500. However, because testators tended to rely on immediate family by the third decade of the sixteenth century, it is not possible to tell if this was an ongoing trend.

Witnessing of wills is more enlightening in this respect, as more and more testators relied upon extra-familial witnesses as the period wore on. Once again, the spread of activity was significantly uneven between pious groups. Top-band families acted as witnesses a median of only two times each, whereas those in the middle of the spectrum did so on a median of five occasions. Outstandingly active families included the Foules and Donnes, as well as the Pierses, Brekyndens and Assheryndens. Whereas three religiously unsparing families do not appear at all as witnesses, none of their more moderate contemporaries failed to be recorded in this role. The comparatively lower social status of the most parsimonious families is again reflected by the fact that they are mentioned a median of only two times each. By 1520-1535, middle-band families were much more likely to act as witnesses than the rest. Only three out of nine most generous

110 Marsh, 'In the Name of God?', pp. 231-3; Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 103-4.

111 For the meanings of these terms, see: Houlbrooke, *English Family*, pp. 39-44; Wrightson, 'Kinship', pp. 313-22.

112 CKS: PRC 17/1/304. See below for further comments on this profession.

families are mentioned from 1520, whereas six of those in the centre of the pious spectrum continued to be called upon to witness wills. Six middle-band families are also recorded as supplying supervisors to wills over the whole period, compared to four in the top-group and none in the bottom.

The evidence of taxation, land market activity, municipal and parochial office holding and of important social roles in the parish, cumulatively and consistently points to a link between wealth and social status, and family piety. Religiously frugal families were not as well-off, as involved in town and parochial government, or held in the same esteem as their more religiously moderate or lavish contemporaries. However, as shown in Chapter Four, this was not simply to do with differences in the availability of resources in the process of will-making. In addition, there appears to have been no straightforward causal link between status and piety further up the religious spectrum. This is shown by the very wealthy and influential families who were not nearly as open-handed as other high status families. The most religiously generous did tend to be the most consistently wealthy, but there were a number of equally wealthy and high status families in the centre of the spectrum, together with others of lower standing.

Just as apparent, is the connection between social mobility and increasing influence and status, and moderate or parsimonious piety. Most of the selected families which succeeded in economic and social life over the period, tended to be reserved in their testamentary religious giving. There were some exceptions to this rule, most obviously the Foules and Coupers, which act as a reminder that generally, increasing family resources and political responsibility did lead to greater orthodox generosity in piety. However, moderate or parsimonious families which rose to the top of the urban hierarchy by the early sixteenth century chose to symbolize their status in less traditionally orthodox and lavish ways than some of the leading families of the late fifteenth. Moderation or economy in will-making, formed part of an ethic shaped by the imperatives of material and social success for families like the Brekyndens, Pierses, Pellonds and Castelyns. Just as their social mobility and entry into urban government is mapped out by the evidence assembled above, their strategies for advancement by which individual resources were ploughed back into the family and the household, rather than expended in traditionally orthodox acts, is visible in the wills and other sources. There also seems to have been a dimension to their pious reserve by the early sixteenth century which was close to, or embraced ideas of religious reform and dissent.

Kinship

The relatively large numbers of wills which have survived for selected families, provide albeit limited opportunities for the exploration of kinship. A total of eleven affinal, or marriage connections between the twenty-three selected families were identified from wills, and in one case, from a title deed. Whilst it is fully recognised that by no means all of the marriages between members of selected families have been discovered, it is very likely that their 114 extant wills provide us with a representative impression of the distribution of affinal links. However, on the whole, only endogomous marriage within Tenterden is examined here, and around 60 per cent of families probably married outside the parish.[113] For this reason, differences in the density of affinal kinship networks between selected families, probably show variations in the resort to exogamous marriage, more than contrasts between families, in their absolute numbers of affinal links.

There are only three references to marriage connections involving religiously lavish families - three families in all. One of these links was between two families within this pious group, namely the Stonehouses and the Coupers. Alice, the sister of William Stonehouse, priest, had married into the Couper family some time in the second or third decade of the sixteenth century.[114] The Foules were responsible for the other two bonds, one with the Gerves family, in the middle of the pious spectrum and the other with the more parsimonious Bisshopyndens. As early as 1464, Margerie, the sister of Thomas Gerves, was married to a Foule (Fougheler), but neither family mentioned one another in their wills after this date. In the late fifteenth century, Joan, one of the daughters of William Foule was married to Thomas Bisshopynden, for whom she had produced at least two children by 1496. Thomas made his will in 1512, and left £4 to each of his daughters, Elizabeth and Wenefride, provided they were married by the goodwill and advice of their mother and uncles, Bartholomew and George Foule; an indication of the continuing strength of relationships between the two families.[115]

The families in the middle of the testamentary spectrum appear to have had a greater density of marriage connections, there being evidence of seven such links, involving seven of these families. Three of these were within this same pious group, namely between the Brekyndens and Assheryndens as shown in Chapter Two, the Gerveses and the Pettes, and the Pierses and the Hylleses. In 1518, Margaret Pette, widow of John Pette, left the residue of her estate to her brother William Gerves, as well as household goods to Joan and Agnes Gerves. She married into the family some time

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113 Diana O'Hara, 'Sixteenth-Century Courtship in the Diocese of Canterbury', (University of Kent at Canterbury, Ph.D. thesis, 1995), pp. 125-48.

114 William Stonehouse, priest, 1528, CKS: PRC 17/18/180.

115 Thomas Gerves, 1464, CKS: PRC 17/1/97; William Foule, 1496, CKS: PRC 17/6/281; Thomas Bisshopynden, CKS: PRC 17/12/236.

before 1504, as in that year her mother referred to her in her will as Margaret Pette.[116] In 1522, Thomas Hylles left 10s to his daughter Agnes Piers, but there is insufficient evidence to tell who her husband was. One of the remaining four affinal connections shared by middle-band families, as mentioned above, was between the Gerveses and the Foules, but the other three were with religiously frugal families.

Two of these marriages were between the Smyths and the Bisshopyndens. Probably before the turn of the century, both branches of the Bisshopynden family were connected by the marriage of two Bisshopynden cousins to two Smyth brothers. Agnes, one of the two daughters of John and Lucia Bisshopynden, married Thomas Smyth, to be widowed by his death in 1518, and Katherine, one of the three daughters of Thomas and Joan Bisshopynden, married Thomas's brother William Smyth. From 1512 to 1531 there are a total of thirteen bequests to members of the Smyth family in the Bisshopynden wills, many of them stretching across their affinal kin, beyond the boundaries of sons-in-law and grandchildren. Robert Bisshopynden was godfather to his nephew, Thomas Smyth, son of Katherine Smyth, Robert's sister.[117] The other affinal link between middle and bottom-band families appears to have been less intense or enduring, and involved the Assheryndens and the Blossoms. In 1471, Roberta Blossom was widowed by her husband Philip Blossom's death, and sometime between then and 1491, she married Stephen Assherynden, but neither family made any bequests to the other in their wills.[118]

Three of the most religiously reserved families were tied through six separate marriages to other families selected here. The Bisshopyndens' links with the Smyths and the Foules, and the Blossoms' with the Assheryndens, have been touched on already. In addition, the Bisshopyndens and the Blossoms both had affinal kin in the Gibbons. Agnes, the wife of Robert Bisshopynden had it seems, been previously married to one of the Gibbons, perhaps John Gibbon who made his will in 1518, naming his wife, Agnes. Robert Bisshopynden left 20s to "John Gebbon my wife's son", in his own testament in 1523. By the 1520s the Gibbons were also connected by marriage to the Blossom family; Stephen Blossom and his widow Lore, both making bequests to Margery Gibbon their "cousin" in their wills, and Stephen also mentioning his cousin, Stevyn Gibbon.[119]

It appears therefore that religiously generous families were the least likely to forge marriage alliances with the other families, and as a natural consequence of this, the higher affinal kinship density of their more frugal contemporaries tended to be

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116 Margaret Pette, 1518, CKS: PRC 17/14/26; Joan Gerves, 1504, CKS: PRC 17/10/19.

117 Thomas Bisshopynden, 1512, CKS: PRC 17/12/236; Lucia Bisshopynden, 1519, CKS: PRC 17/14/33; Robert Bisshopynden, 1523, CKS: PRC 17/15/258; Joan Bisshopynden, widow, 1531, CKS: PRC 17/19/235; Thomas Smyth, 1518, CKS: PRC 17/14/7.

118 Thomas Atte-Hell, 1522, CKS: PRC 17/14/338. BL: Add. Ms. 48022, fol. 26v., 1498; Philip Blossom, 1471, CKS: PRC 17/2/54; Stephen Assherynden, 1491, CKS: PRC 17/5/275.

119 Robert Bisshopynden, 1523, CKS: PRC 17/15/258. Stephen Blossom, 1522, CKS: PRC 17/15/128; Lore Blossom, widow, 1532, CKS: PRC 17/19/365.

concentrated within and between the two lower pious groups. Bearing in mind the fact that the twenty-three families represent some of the most enduring and influential families in the parish, this pattern suggests that top-band families were less interconnected by kinship with other leading Tenterden lineages than their more religiously moderate fellows. Presumably top-band families were marrying just as much as the others. They either had comparatively more links with families outside the parish, or tended to marry into families which had recently arrived in Tenterden, and so do not have such a presence in the records. Both of these possibilities are reinforced once all affinal links with the twenty-three families are examined. These include connections with families not selected for special study here, many of which have left no surviving Tenterden wills. Top-band families had a total of fourteen affinal links, of which only about a fifth were with the other selected families. Middle-band families had fourteen, half of which were with the rest of the twenty-three families, and bottom-band families had sixteen, of which six were within the selected group. With the exception of the Foule family, the most religiously active families were not inter-marrying with other leading Tenterden families by the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries to the extent that their contemporaries were. This, at the same time as they were receding from important political and social roles and from activity in the land market. This notwithstanding, through their marriages Tenterden's leading families, to some extent regardless of their piety, had spun a remarkably dense web of kinship by the third decade of the sixteenth century. Of the twenty-three families examined here, seventeen were connected by first or second order affinal links to at least one of the other families, and eleven were bound, however distantly to one another.

This cumulative evidence suggests that the families who devoted the largest proportion of their disposable wealth at death to traditional religious concerns, and who also appear to have been the most consistently wealthy, with one or two exceptions, were by no means at the centre of the emerging community of leading urban families in the early sixteenth century. They were more isolated in terms of kinship within the parish, becoming less involved in municipal and parochial government, not as active in witnessing, executing and overseeing their neighbours' wills, and not so involved in the commercial land market, as families which were more moderate in their testamentary strategies. They do not seem to have shared the ethos which characterized the wills of the likes of the Brekyndens, Smyths, Pierses, Pellonds and Castelyns, their piety being rather different from that which underlay the social identity of the town's ruling group by the 1520s. Neither did they share the ethos of the families, which due to their comparatively lower status, had little share in local power structures.

It is probable that this was because, predominantly, these families belonged to a social group which was to some extent set apart from the others, that is, short of

qualifying for gentry status (and indeed at least one of these families was styling itself in this mould by the end of the period), they were among the most substantial landholders among will-makers; what have been termed very large farmers or more substantial yeomen. Householders within this social group, have been found to have been less active in parish or town affairs in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in English communities than their more middling counterparts, who formed ruling oligarchies. The extent to which they were less commercially minded, and more purely involved in farming than their more politically active and socially connected fellows, is investigated below. In the Liberty of Havering in the late sixteenth century, men who can be identified as landholders and rural yeomen made far fewer testamentary bequests to kin beyond the immediate family and to friends, than what McIntosh has described as urban yeomen, those individuals who arose out of the commercial world of the 1520s and 30s, who on the whole acted as middlemen in local markets, and who dominated politically.[120]

There are however, some important qualifications to these notions of social determinism. After all, the Brekyndens and Assheryndens and perhaps other families in the centre of the pious spectrum, were among the largest non-gentry landowners in the parish, and their own approach to testamentary piety may have had more to do with their residence in Small Hythe, than any distinct socially defined ethos. Nevertheless, moderate families have all the appearances of middling-to-upper status householders described elsewhere, who formed the core of leading burgesses, were relatively closely interrelated by marriage, and who relied upon mutual assistance to sustain their position, in what were usually increasingly polarized local societies by the mid-sixteenth century. As suggested below, Tenterden may have been becoming more polarized than most small towns by the 1530s.[121]

Perhaps finding it more difficult to hold their own, were the most religiously frugal families, most of whom do not appear to have had much of a say in urban or parochial affairs, and who probably spanned the ranks of the middling husbandmen, lesser tradesmen and craftsmen on the one hand, and the more prosperous farmer-tradesmen on the other.[122] Their propensity to rely on kinship among their own ranks and with their better enfranchised and resourced neighbours, may in part have been a strategy of social survival, an attempt to prevent their own downward mobility.[123]

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120 Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 34, 103-9; McIntosh, *Community Transformed*, pp. 167, 86, 139-141.

121 Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 34, 103-9; McIntosh, *Community Transformed*, pp. 86, 107-20, 139-41, 167.

122 See for example, McIntosh, *ibid.*, pp. 120, 167, and Wrightson and Levine, *ibid.*, pp. 34, 103-9.

123 R.M. Smith found that middling tenants in thirteenth century Redgrave, had the highest kinship densities and were most likely to draw on ties with kin and neighbours of a similar social and economic status in their pursuit of economic viability, in a time of downward social mobility and population growth: 'Kin and Neighbours in a Thirteenth Century Suffolk Community', *Journal of Family History*, iv (1979), pp. 219-256.

Finally, the higher density of affinal kinship between moderate and parsimonious families, points to the possible reciprocal influence of like-minded piety upon the formation of kinship bonds, and of kinship upon piety. This cannot be conclusively proved for Tenterden, but the evidence warrants further investigation of these questions, notwithstanding that at least one early modern community study argues that there was no correlation between kinship and religious affiliation.[124]

The generation of wealth and changing social structure

The barons of the Cinque Ports were assessed for taxation in this period, but were then exempted from payment. For this reason, there are no comprehensive tax listings from the Tudor subsidies, which survive for other centres in the early sixteenth century. It is therefore not possible to reconstruct Tenterden's social structure as has been achieved for other communities and regions in the late medieval and early modern periods.[125] The best that can be achieved is a survey of the 1524-5 subsidy returns for the Wealden hundreds surrounding Tenterden. These lists are generally regarded as the most comprehensive of the sixteenth century, providing a record of every household but the very poorest, as well as the wealthiest members of society.[126] Together with other types of evidence from Tenterden, from both the first and second halves of the sixteenth century, they provide an indication of Tenterden's social hierarchy, the range of occupations of its inhabitants, the growth and generation of wealth in the town and its more rural hinterland, and changes in the distribution of that wealth.

The hundreds of Blackburn, Barclay, Rolvenden, Selbrittenden and Oxney, all adjacent to Tenterden, together with the returns for Cranbrook and East Barnfield hundreds to the west of this cluster, and the vill of Newenden, comprise the selected area of study. These seven hundreds describe an area of roughly twenty miles from east to west and ten from north to south, with Tenterden situated in the centre. Within their boundaries lay low Wealden centres such as Bethersden and Biddenden, and high Wealden parishes like Cranbrook, Hawkhurst and Benenden. They represent a large part of a cohesive economic region, which practised a predominantly pastoral form of agriculture, of which Tenterden was very much a part.[127]

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124 Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 169-70.

125 See above.

126 M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, p. 31; Hoskins, *Midland Peasant*, p. 177; Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, p. 32; Cornwall, 'English Country Towns', p. 54.

127 PRO: E179, 125/324. Zell, 'Wood-Pasture Regime', pp. 69-93, in revised form in *idem.*, *Industry in the Countryside*, pp. 5-7, 88-112.

All of the lists identify a significant minority of individuals as 'servants'. Most were assessed on wages totalling between 20s to 40s a year, although a handful across the region earned more than 40s. In addition, one was assessed on lands and another on £8 worth of goods. Unusually, the assessors appear to have gone to the trouble of separating this group from other tax-payers who paid on wages, some of whom were described as "labourers". It is reasonable to assume that many of them were live-in servants. However, the odd individual described as "labourer" and "servant", casts some doubt upon notions of hard and fast classification. This said, servants did not constitute a distinct and permanent social group, and only with a certain amount of rough treatment of the documents, can they be lumped together with those other people paying on 40s or less. Nevertheless, for the sake of comparison with other regions and centres, the distribution of Wealden assessments presented here includes servants among the lowest strata of tax-payers.[128]

In their own right servants formed an important section of the population, and life-cycle service was an integral element of the late-medieval economy and demographic regime. This was clearly the case in the seven Wealden hundreds where 314 out of a total of 1,855 listed tax-payers were named as servants - a proportion of 17 per cent.[129] This is similar to the estimated 20 per cent of the population in service at any one time in Havering in the sixteenth century, but markedly different from rural Cambridgeshire, where Margaret Spufford suggested that "servants who appeared to live in were still in a fairly small minority".[130] The relatively high proportion of servants in the Weald, was one aspect of a social structure characterized by a large proportion of reasonably wealthy households reliant upon the added labour of one or more individuals.[131]

Servants were mentioned in only a few of the wills made by the twenty-three families, and then only among the top and middle pious bands. In 1518, William Couper left 6s 8d to his servant Thomas Harden, over and above the 40s which he owed to him, presumably in wages. He also remembered Richard Pycham, another servant, and

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128 Only Wrightson and Levine, in their analysis of the lay subsidy of 1524-5 for Terling, have separated resident household servants from what they assumed to be wage labourers, and excluded them from the distribution of assessments, because they did not constitute a distinct social stratum. They did this, however, without having the term 'servant' in the Terling list to rely upon: *Poverty and Piety*, pp. 32-4. McIntosh on the other hand, in her study of the royal manor of Havering, grouped servants together with cottagers and labourers assessed on 40s or less in wages, goods or lands: *Autonomy and Community*, p. 233. Whilst pointing out the social distinctions between labourers, cottagers and in-servants, Margaret Spufford classified them all as 'wage-earning'. However, this seems largely to do with the fact that, unlike those for the Kentish Weald, the subsidy returns for Cambridgeshire fail to identify servants, and she did not consider the method used by Wrightson and Levine to distinguish in-servants from wage-labouers to be very reliable: *idem, Contrasting Communities*, pp. 32-33.

129 The 1,855 listed tax payers represent all those entries which are legible on the subsidy rolls. This said, less than twenty individuals have been lost, all from the list for Cranbrook hundred.

130 McIntosh, *Community Transformed*, p. 56; M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communties*, p. 33.

131 Zell, 'Population and Family Structure', pp. 249-253, re-published with minor revisions in *idem, Industry in the Countryside*, pp. 76-80; see also, Cornwall, 'English Country Towns', pp. 66-7.

William Chapman, who by this date, was no longer working in Couper's household. The Coupers were tanners, William included, judging by the "leather, rynde and tanne" which he left to his son Stephen. These were probably industrial servants, whose labour was a vital element of a family trade. Stephen Couper senior, William's uncle, also gave to a servant in his will in 1527.[132] Practising a different but related trade, John Piers "bocher", left an old sheep to his servant John Reynold in 1461.[133] John Pette, clothier/draper ("*pannarius*") , left a cow to each of his servants John and Joan Baker (the latter was described as "my maid servant" ("*ancille mee*"). Almost thirty years later, when his widow Margaret Pette made her will, she bequeathed two "kene" and 40s worth of household goods to Joan Baker, who may have remained working in the same household all that time.[134] Margaret's brother-in-law Thomas Pette, also had at least one servant working in his household when he made his will in 1495.[135] It is apparent from his father's will, that John Brekynden (II) employed at least one servant in 1483.[136] And, finally, William Gerves, another member of a wealthy and influential family gave household goods to his servant, Joan Baker, in 1525.[137] It is probably no accident that bequests to servants can only be found among some of the more wealthy and successful Tenterden families' wills.

The distribution of assessments in the seven Wealden hundreds is presented in Tables 5.3, and in Table 5.4 the hierarchy of wealth is expressed in percentage terms and compared with the subsidy returns for the manor of Havering, three country towns of similar size and nature to Tenterden, the rural parish of Terling, and rural Cambridgeshire.[138] Assessments on lands were judged to be worth roughly twice those on goods or wages and ranked accordingly.[139] A number of points can be made about social structure and the distribution of wealth in the hundreds around Tenterden. Forty-five per cent of tax payers were assessed on over £2 in mainly goods, or land. For a

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132 CKS: PRC 32/12/174; PRC 17/17/277.

133 CKS: PRC 17/1/269.

134 CKS: PRC 17/5/152; PRC 17/14/26.

135 CKS: PRC 17/6/108.

136 Robert Brekynden senior, 1483, CKS: PRC 17/3/450.

137 CKS: PRC 17/16/274.

138 My table is fundamentally an extension of McIntosh's, showing the distribution of wealth in the subsidy lists for Havering compared with other places, with some modification: McIntosh, *Community Transformed*, p. 167. The three country towns are Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Petworth, with figures taken from Cornwall, 'English Country Towns', p. 62, for the first two, and from, *idem*, *Wealth and Society*, p. 56, for the third. For Terling, see Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, p. 34; for Cambridgeshire, see M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, pp. 28-36.

139 The values for lands were ranked on a similar basis as that used by Michael Zell in his analysis of three subsidy lists for the Kentish Weald. However, unlike Zell, an assessment of £10 in lands has been judged as equivalent to £20 on goods, mainly because of the number of gentlemen who paid on realty to the value of between £10 and £20. For widespread instances of this elsewhere, see Cornwall, *Wealth and Society*, pp. 140-9.

largely rural area, with Cranbrook town being the only urban centre lying within the seven hundreds of the chosen area, this is relatively high, reflecting the considerable wealth of the Kentish Weald, and the amounts of money to be made from pastoral agriculture in combination with the cloth industry in particular.[140] In terms of the distribution of wealth, the region compares most closely with the exceptionally wealthy manor of Havering, which was dominated by the urban prosperity of Romford.[141]

These were the broad features of social structure and distribution of wealth in neighbouring hundreds, but it is very probable that in a number of significant ways, Tenterden's economy and social distribution of wealth varied somewhat from this pattern. Michael Zell's work on the Kentish Weald in the sixteenth century, and in particular, his analysis of probate inventories, from 1565 to1599, from a total of twelve Wealden parishes, many of which either partly or wholly lay within the seven selected hundreds, tells us a good deal about how Tenterden differed economically and socially from its neighbours by the late sixteenth century. In turn this suggests ways in which Tenterden was in possession of its own peculiar social and economic features by the second quarter of the century.

To begin with, Tenterden could not be termed a clothing parish on the scale of Cranbrook, Hawkhurst, Biddenden and Benenden. The absence of a cloth industry of any significance is reflected in the very few references to looms, cloth or dye-stuff, in the wills up to 1535, as well as a good deal of later comparative evidence. Even when the Tenterden industry was at its largest after the 1550s, it was dwarfed by operations in the cloth parishes proper.[142] Occupational analysis of the late sixteenth century probate inventories reveals farming as the main pursuit of more than 40 per cent of recorded individuals in the parish, not far off the levels for "predominantly agrarian" Rolvenden and High Halden. It is likely that the proportion of farmers would have been greater earlier in the century. The parish had a broad range of trades (almost as many as Cranbrook, but relatively few in textiles), but only 20 per cent of the inventories indicate trade or craft activity as the main occupation, compared to 31 per cent for the twelve Wealden parishes studied by Zell. He summarizes, "The inventories show that there was considerable diversity of occupations in Tenterden parish, which suggests an urban core which offered a moderately large variety of goods and services".[143]

The nature and scale of farming in Tenterden was peculiarly affected by the exceptional amount of marshland located in the southern half of the parish. The pasture

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140 Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, pp. 134-146.

141 McIntosh, *Community Transformed*, pp. 165-9; *idem*, *Autonomy and Community*, pp. 233-5.

142 Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, pp. 117, 154-5, 172, 183-4; Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, ch. 11.

143 Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, pp. 119, 121, 149. The importance of farming in Tenterden, is further underlined by the fact that "a significant share of artisans and tradesmen were also working farmers": *ibid.*, p. 117.

Table 5.3 *Subsidy assessments in seven Wealden hundreds and the vill of Newenden, 1524-5*

Level of assessment	East Barnfield	Barclay	Selbrittenden	Blackborne	Rolvenden	Cranbrook	Oxney	Newenden	All seven hundreds and vill of Newenden
Up to 39s goods/wages; under £1 p.a. lands	55	99	37	142	69	179	17	11	609 (32.8%)
From 40s goods/wages; £1 p.a. lands	31	39	39	66	28	184	22	3	412 (22.2%)
£3-£4 19s goods/wages; over £1-£2 19s p.a. lands	32	31	35	52	34	74	26	3	287 (15.5%)
£5-£9 19s goods; £3-£5 19s p.a. lands	22	40	34	45	38	55	18	1	253 (13.6%)
£10-£19 19s goods; £6-£9 19s p.a. lands	10	27	19	17	17	48	20	1	*159 (8.6%)*
£20-£39 goods; £10-£39 p.a. lands	3	9	7	24	5	30	6	-	84 (4.5%)
£40 or more goods/p.a. lands	-	8	3	10	3	22	5	-	51 (2.7%)

Source: PRO: E179, 125/324.

Table 5.4 *Subsidy assessments: Wealden hundreds and elsewhere, 1524-5*

Level of assessment on land, goods or wages	7 Wealden hundreds and vill of Newenden	Havering	Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Petworth	Rural areas	
				Terling	Cambridgeshire
£1	33%	29%	34%	28%	55%
£2	22%	23%	30%	24%	27% (£2-4)
£3-9	29%	29%	22%	37%	10% (£5-9)
£10-19	9%	9%	8%	12%	5%
£20+	7%	10%	6%		3%

Sources: PRO: E179, 125/324; McIntosh, *A Community Transformed;* Cornwall, 'English Country Towns'; Wrightson & Levine, *Poverty and Piety*; Spufford, *Contrasting Communities.*

that this provided was used by specialist graziers who lived in Tenterden itself, or was hired as summer grazing for the herds and flocks of large-scale farmers in neighbouring parishes.[144] This seems to have ensured that more than any of its neighbours, Tenterden was increasingly geared to relatively specialised and large-scale commercial live-stock farming. This is suggested by the high ratio of livestock to corn in the late sixteenth century probate inventories. As Zell explains: "In general, as the size and value of farms moved upwards, so the ratio between livestock and corn grew larger. The big commercial farms in the Weald were notable for the size of their herds, while their cereal acreage was only two or three times that of the typical small farmer's". This, in turn implies a somewhat diminished number of small family farms, represented in the subsidy lists by a substantial proportion of those assessed on £3-£9 in goods, or between £1 and £6 *per annum* in lands.[145]

That lower-middling farmers were declining in numbers by the second half of the century, is also indicated by the distribution of inventoried wealth. Out of all twelve parishes, Tenterden produced the lowest proportion of middling inventories listing goods worth from £20 to £60, a large number of which belonged to those small family farmers and trades-people who in the 1520s fell within the central band of tax-payers assessed on £3 to £9.[146] This suggests a relatively small lower-middling social group as early as the 1520s, akin to, or even more depleted than in Cranbrook (see, Table 5.3), or the small country towns of Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Petworth (Table 5.4). As Cornwall argues: "What, more than anything else, distinguished towns of all sizes was a narrow £3-£9 band which, with a relatively high proportion of assessments upwards of £10, left something of a gap between, on the one hand, the upper tradesmen, and, on the other, artificers and labourers at 40s or less".[147]

Tenterden was also extraordinary for having the largest proportion of inventories listing personalty worth £60 and over: 43 per cent, even more than prosperous Cranbrook. This wealthy group roughly corresponds to those medium and large-scale farmers and wealthier crafts- and trades-people assessed on £10 and upwards in goods, or £6 and over in lands in 1524-5. However, the heights of Tenterden's prosperity can be no better demonstrated than by the forty inventories valued at £100 or above, more than for any other parish (Cranbrook with a larger population, produced only 28; Hawkhurst

144 *Ibid.*, pp. 100, 106-7.

145 The summer livestock to corn ratio in Tenterden was 5.3:1, the highest out of 12 Wealden parishes. The average for other mainly rural east Wealden parishes was about 3.5:1; *ibid.*, pp. 101-103.

146 31 per cent of the Tenterden inventories valued goods worth from £20 to £60, compared to an average of 40 per cent for all twelve parishes: *ibid.*, p. 147.

147 Cornwall, *Wealth and Society*, pp. 60-1.

with similar population in the 1560s, only 12).[148] Twenty-five of these were valued at £150 or above, and of these at least eighteen were of large-scale graziers and farmers, indicating the extent to which semi-urban Tenterden's wealth was based upon pastoral farming. These substantial graziers reared their own cattle as well as fattening stock brought in from elsewhere. Four more very wealthy inventories were of wealthy shop-keepers (mainly woollen drapers), along with one clothier and one tanner, both of whom also farmed. The parish's "ruling élite was tied as firmly to the rural hinterland (via their own large farms) as it was to the business life of the town". Tenterden's "wealth was that of a traditional market town, not unlike many others in all parts of lowland England".[149] However, unlike most small market towns, at least by the second half of the century and probably a good deal earlier, Tenterden had a good number of very rich inhabitants, who certainly by the later period, outnumbered the merely wealthy (those who roughly correspond to the upper-middling group of tax-payers assessed on £10 to £19 in 1524-5).[150]

The distribution of inventoried wealth in the second half of the century suggests that an exceptionally large proportion of Tenterden's inhabitants were worthy of assessment on at least £10 in goods or £6 in lands in 1524-5. The subsidy list for Cranbrook (see, Table 5.3) provides what should probably be taken as a floor of 17 per cent for these two top groups in Tenterden. Judging by Tenterden's outstanding prosperity later in the century, it is also very likely that without diminishing the group paying on £10-19, Tenterden's very wealthiest constituted something over 10 per cent of all would-be tax-payers in the 1520s.

If, "by the late sixteenth century Tenterden seems to have become dominated by a small number of big farmer/graziers in alliance with some successful merchants and shopkeepers who lived in the town",[151] before the 1540s, although divisions of wealth were not so sharply drawn, and political power was shared between a larger section of the population, the economic foundations for accumulation and dominance by leading families can be broadly perceived. It is also possible to discern occupational differences between the pious groups which offer some suggestions as to the roots of religious diversity in Tenterden.

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148 These wealthiest 40 inventories even outnumbered the 27 which valued goods from £60 to £100. Even so, this latter group amount to 17 per cent of all the Tenterden inventories, only one percentage point behind the largest proportions in Biddenden, Cranbrook/Frittenden and Goudhurst.

149 Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, pp. 147-50. There were a number of substantial woollendrapers in Tenterden town in the late sixteenth century, purchasing whole broadcloths and selling them on to retail woollendrapers and general shopkeepers, only matched by their counterparts in Maidstone and Ashford: *ibid.*, p. 217.

150 Cornwall classifies most small towns of the 1520s as having a good "diffusion of wealth amongst a solid bloc of merchants and master craftsmen worth upwards of £10, and" an "absence of very rich people": *idem*, *Wealth and Society*, pp. 60-1.

151 Zell, from personal correspondence.

Agriculture was important to all families and individuals, whatever other occupations and activities they were engaged in. There are not many wills which do not allude to farming in one way or another, even if a trade or craft appears to have dominated a household's economic activities. For example, John Piers, who described himself as a butcher in his will of 1461, devised livestock and substantial lands in Tenterden, Rolvenden, Biddenden and elsewhere in Kent, suggesting that he was also a substantial grazier. The Piers family's Tenterden lands appear mainly to have lain in the west part of the parish. John Pette, a clothier, also devised livestock and lands.[152] The extent of some families' landholdings and farming operations was quite considerable, even by the late fifteenth century. The Brekyndens worked and probably farmed out to rent, a sizeable share of the land, along with a number of houses and attached properties in the southern half of the parish around Small Hythe, as well as having interests elsewhere.[153] The Davys were another Small Hythe family with substantial resources in land in this part of Tenterden. According to A.H. Taylor, John Davy, who died in 1467, "apportioned nearly all Smallhythe (sic) between his four sons".[154] If family consolidation of land and houses in localities within the parish can be seen at its most intense level around Small Hythe before the middle of the sixteenth century, there is evidence to suggest that many leading families were pursuing active policies of geographical consolidation elsewhere in Tenterden which become more visible by the third quarter of the century. By 1566, Thomas Smyth for example, had built up a small but diverse estate comprising wood, land, a shop and houses in the north-west of the parish centred around a principal messuage at Boresisle. The Castelyns and the Pierses also followed a policy of geographical consolidation in the north-west of the parish.[155]

An impression of the nature and extent of relatively large-scale commercially oriented pastoral and arable farming in the 1530s, as a basis for outstanding wealth by the 1570s, is provided by two separate insights into the career of William Gerves. An Early Chancery Case in which Thomas Harlakenden esquire, of Woodchurch (directly to the east of Tenterden), called for a writ of *sub poena* to be issued against William Gerves, yeomen, of Tenterden, provides the first. Harlakenden had held the farm of all the tithes of the parsonage of Woodchurch since 16 June 1534, and had on a number of occasions been unsuccessful in collecting them from Gerves who was in possession of lands and stock within Woodchurch. Harlakenden claimed that in 1537, Gerves had,

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152 CKS: PRC 17/1/269; 1489, CKS: PRC 17/5/152. Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, pp. 74-5.

153 See Chapter Two.

154 Taylor, 'Municipal Records of Tenterden, I', pp. 300-1.

155 Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', pp. 196, 202-4, 214-5, 227; Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, ch. 9.

within the parishe of Wodechurche all the somer season the seid yere, iiij fat oxen, x Rydd bests of the age of iij yeres, xviij Rydd bests of the age of ij yeres and above, xxx^{ti} Rydd bests of the age of one yere and above, xviij horses geldyng and mares of the aige of ij yeres and above, x coltes, x calves, xxxiij acre of marsh medow, iij acre of medow callid upland medow.[156]

Harlakenden also protested that in 1538, Gerves "had lx acre of whete and xiiij acre of barly within the seid parishe of Wodchurch", upon which he had paid no tithes.[157] Gerves appears to have been leasing lands in Woodchurch on a short-term basis, in part to fatten cattle and graze horses for the market, but also to grow grains on a not insubstantial scale by Wealden standards. It may have been the transitory nature of this particular venture which led Gerves to attempt to side-step his tithes, and the repercussions of this dispute would not have lacked religious significance. It was this "ability to take up large amounts of lands on lease" which Roberts has identified as the crucial element in his accumulation of wealth by the likes of Gerves later in the century. By his death in 1574, sheep dominated Gerves's pastoral operations, mainly because the cloth industry was increasing in Tenterden. His inventoried wealth put him and his family among the very wealthiest of the parish. One quarter of this wealth was in two leases, one of Frenchay Farm on the Tenterden to Reading road, including 134 acres of marshland, and the other, of seventy acres of marshland, partly in his own occupation, and presumably used for the grazing of livestock. As was the case with most of these successful men, Gerves operated very much within an "extended family network", owning "a cluster of houses for family and tenant use". By the early seventeenth century it was the likes of Gerves who became the "major employers and perhaps even proto-capitalists" in Tenterden.[158]

The process of consolidation of lands and buildings and the accumulation of capital which allowed for the type of commercial enterprise conducted by William Gerves, had its roots back in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when the large ecclesiastical landlords with interests in the Weald were forced to relax control of their interests and so enable acquisitive farmers and farmer-tradesmen to begin to build up an increasingly diverse range of family resources.[159] Similar developments have been documented for Battle in Sussex, in this same period, and in Havering, although in the latter case, accumulation and increasing commercialisation took place over a longer period, seigneurial control being minimal from as early as Domesday. Even so, Havering's economic development was similar to Tenterden's in that agricultural commercialisation and specialization, coupled with increasing polarization of wealth,

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156 PRO: C1/825, 57.

157 PRO: C1/825, 57.

158 Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', pp. 207, 220; Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, p. 78.

159 See Chapter Four.

accelerated from the 1460s, after Havering was established as a Liberty. The prosperity of other small urban centres which supplied the growing London market, was ensured by the activities of commercial farmers and traders investing capital in animal and wood production.[160]

Similarly, as in other small market towns by the first few decades of the sixteenth century, commercial farmers like Gerves acted as *rentiers* of tenements in the centre of the town which were used as shops by tradesmen. William Gerves's ownership of a plot on the north side of the High Street in the 1560s was probably an investment intended to generate income from rents, and was pre-dated by another member of his family's possession of a shop just a few doors down from it in the 1530s.[161] Similarly, among the properties held or owned by Thomas Smyth in 1566 was a shop at Castlyn's Cross, near Eastgate, which he probably let.[162]

A number of the selected families appear to have been overwhelmingly engaged in agriculture, which in many cases seems to have been conducted on a commercial footing, as well as being involved in industrial activities such as brewing and ship-building, ship-ownership or marine trade. By the late fifteenth century the Foule family lived at West Cross, a primarily residential area which became more populated about this time. William Foule who died in 1496/7 may have been a fuller, judging by the dyehouse which he devised with other property to his son Bartholomew. He also owned a number of parcels of land and wood, and a house on the den of Heronden, not far from West Cross. As early as 1411, one Thomas Foule owned a ship at Sandwich which was to be brought up the Rother by order of the crown. By the sixteenth century there are no indications that the Foules were engaged in industrial or craft activities. Their burgeoning status is indicated by the fact that John Foule was describing himself or was being described as *generosus* by 1541, and perhaps also by the bow and shafts left by George Foule junior in his will of 1525. John Foule's wealth is attested to by the five sales of land and tenements made by himself and his wife Elizabeth, from May 1542 to August 1543 which are detailed in the Tenterden Minute Book. This property comprised at least seventy-seven acres of land and pasture, two messuages and two gardens, scattered around the north-western part of the parish, which the family had lived and operated in for a number of decades. The sales raised a total of £201 13s 4d.[163]

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160 Searle, *Lordship and Community*, pp. 324-337, 352-406; McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community*, pp. 136-78, 221-35; Douglas Moss, 'The economic development of a Middlesex village', *Agricultural History Review*, xxviii (1980), pp. 104-14.

161 Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', pp. 328, 335, Fig. 43. Searle, *Lordship and Community*, pp. 352-66; McIntosh, *Community Transformed*, pp. 139-40.

162 Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', pp. 214-5.

163 Katherine Foule, widow, 1519, CKS: PRC 17/15/64; Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', pp. 43-4; CKS: PRC 17/6/281; *Cal. Close Rolls*, Hen. IV, 1409-13, p. 167; CKS: U455/T87; CKS: PRC 17/16/239; Te/S1, fols. 35v., 36r., 40v.-41r., 42r., 43v.-44r.; *L & P*, xxi, 1280, fol. 41, 1546.

Most of the religiously generous families appear to have been first and foremost involved in agriculture, supplemented with some industrial or mercantile pursuits. Testamentary and other evidence suggests that the Strekynbolds, Stonehouses, Prestons and Jamyns were all successful pastoral farming families. The same applies to the Carpynters, although along with extensive lands Thomas Carpynter devised a dyehouse in his will of 1498.[164] The Davys owned a large part of the lands around Small Hythe, but by the late fifteenth century, also possessed a brewhouse. In 1494 Robert Davy had stocks of grain in the parsonage barn of St. Augustine's Abbey at East Cross. Around this time, the Davys were profiting from the king's wars by supplying timber for the construction of royal navy ships at Small Hythe, and had personal connections with Robert Brekynden (III), Clerk of the King's Ships. One member of the family, Stephen Davy was conducting a tailoring business in 1498.[165] In the early fifteenth century one of the Donnes was described as a "shipman", and it is possible that the master Carpenter Robert Denny, employed by Brekynden at Portsmouth Dock in 1495 along with other Tenterden men, belonged to the same family. These fragments of evidence notwithstanding, none of the family's wills suggest anything other than farming as their main economic activity.[166]

The Coupers were something of an exception among their religiously lavish counterparts, and it should perhaps be remembered that they and the Foules were the only families in the top pious band to hold or advance their position in the urban hierarchy by the end of the period. The impetus for accumulation and economic diversification provided by the withdrawal of direct ecclesiastical lordship from the Weald in the fifteenth century, is neatly illustrated here, by the grant to Stephen Couper, in 1463, of the lease of 8 acres of land belonging to Christchurch Priory for ninety-nine years at an annual rent of only 4s.[167] In 1486, William Couper (who may have been Stephen's grandson) and his "grete bote," were hired by the Clerk of the King's Ships for the conveyance of guns and other stuff out of the *Mary of the Tower*.[168] By his death in 1518, William not only held lands in various parts of the parish, but conducted a tanning business at his principal holding situated at East Gate. This was a family concern, in which his uncle Stephen Couper (twice described as "tanner" in wills in 1513 and 1522) was also engaged. William left leather, "rynde" and "tanne" to his son Stephen in 1518, who was then still a minor and so his father entrusted him into the custody of Stephen senior. Stephen junior continued the family business at East Gate, his inventory listing a

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164 CKS: PRC 17/7/48.

165 CKS: PRC 17/6/110; U455/T85; Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, p. 46; Oppenheim, 'Naval Accounts', p. 313; *L & P*, Addenda I, 8; BL: Add. Ms. 48022, fols. 32v.-33r.

166 *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Henry V, ii, 1416-22, p. 165; Oppenheim, 'Naval Accounts', pp. 144, 146, 149.

167 Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', p. 19.

168 Oppenheim, 'Naval Accounts', pp. 15, 17-8.

"letherd house" and a "tannhouse" there. East Gate, like West Cross, was one of the newly developing suburbs to the town, but unlike the latter, appears to have been more of an industrial than residential area, and may have contained many of the houses of lower status townspeople.[169] By 1538 Stephen was being described as yeoman; along with his wife Margaret, was able to purchase his mother-in-law's estate in Essex which she had inherited from John Boxer, and a year later was writing to Thomas Cromwell requesting the rangership of Halden Park in Tenterden.[170]

Whilst there was not a large cloth industry in Tenterden, there was a diverse range of crafts and trades being practised in the town by the late sixteenth century, although these were conducted by a smaller share of the population than in Cranbrook for instance. Of the families studied in detail here, those in the middle of the testamentary spectrum appear to have been especially representative of this sector of the local economy. Seven out of eight of these families, were engaged at one stage or another in crafts or some form of industrial activity.

Stephen Smyth was described as "fuller" in 1482, perhaps a family pursuit combined with the commercial farming of animals and wood. In 1512 Henry Smith supplied over three hundred loads of elm to the Clerk of the King's Ships for the fortification of Calais. When Thomas Smyth died in the 1560s, he had built up a reasonably consolidated estate in the north-west of the parish, with a principal messuage in the suburb of Boresisle - a largely industrial area which contained a number of mills for both grain and cloth - and was one of the lesser "parish landlords".[171] William Gerves, who made his will in 1525, mentioned a forge among his estate, indicating that a family whose later wealth was accumulated largely through commercial agriculture, was earlier in the century, partly derived from industrial activity.[172] The Piers family may have descended from early fifteenth century immigrants to Tenterden, as one William Pers, of Issilstayne in Holland, was one of a number of aliens licensed to dwell in England in 1436, who were living in Small Hythe.[173] By the late fifteenth century the Pierses appear to have been living at Mensden, a den on the western edge of the parish adjacent to Rolvenden, about halfway between Small Hythe and Tenterden town. However, possibly in the late fifteenth century, one member of the family held the farm of the den of Castweasle, in the north-west of the parish, from Christchurch Priory's manor of Brook. The family's trade activities are represented by John Piers who died in 1471, was

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169 CKS: PRC 32/12/174; PRC 17/12/227; PRC 17/15/242; Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', p. 45.

170 'Mss. of the *Custos Rotolorum* and justices of the peace of the County of Essex, at the Shire-Hall, Chelmsford, Essex', in *Tenth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Mss.*, Appendix, iv (1885), p. 494; *L & P*, xv, 542.

171 CKS: PRC 17/3/450; *L & P*, vol. i, 3496; Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', pp. 196, 202-4, 214-5; Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, p. 99.

172 CKS: PRC 17/16/274.

173 *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Hen. VI, vol. ii, 1429-36, p. 576.

described as a butcher in his own and other wills, as well as elsewhere, and owned considerable lands in and around the parish. That the family continued in at least one related trade is indicated by the appearance of William Piers, cordwainer in a will dated 1477.[174]

One of the Pettes, John, to be precise, who died in 1489, described himself as *"pannarius"* (clothier/draper) in his will. He also mentioned two servants, and was probably one of the wealthier tradesmen of the late fifteenth century, which explains in part why the family continued to be prominent by the end of the period. Some of his lands lay near to King's Street and the watermill which stood next to it, to the north-west of the town.[175] The Pellonds, as mentioned already, had a tailoring business by the early sixteenth century, had held a number of parcels of property and lived in a number of the suburbs and smaller settlements in the parish, including Leigh Green, West Cross, Small Hythe and East Gate, and appear to have had a hand in water-borne trade in wood from the late fifteenth to the late sixteenth centuries.[176] The early Assherynden wills are all entirely agricultural in content, and the family were one of the larger landowners at Small Hythe, but evidence that they also engaged in craft or industrial activities by the early sixteenth century, is provided by Robert Assherynden's sale of his "tools of occupation" to his son, for 3s 4d in 1527.[177] The Hylles leave few clues as to their economic activities. However, in 1472, Agnes Hylles left all her "Andwork and all the instruments to this pertaining" to one William Harry. In 1522, Thomas Hylles devised a mill and millhouse with other realty to his heirs.[178]

We already know a good deal about the remaining middle-band family, namely the Brekyndens. Although they do not appear to have engaged in industrial or craft activities to the extent of their religiously moderate and politically dominant counterparts, but relied on their large landholdings and herds, interests in property, and mercantile pursuits to further their incomes, it should not be forgetten that the other branch of the family was famous for at least one exceptionally skilled shipwright.[179] Among the religiously sparse will-making families, only the Castelyns evince any overtly commercial or industrial activities. although the Bisshopyndens appear to have had strong connections with Boresisle, an especially industrial district in the parish.[180] Given that the Castelyns were exceptional in this group for their rise in status and influence by the early sixteenth century, this is perhaps an indication of the moderate fortunes to be

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174 CKS: PRC 17/9/245; BL: Add. Chs. 56976, 16320; CCAL: Dcc/C, fol. 228v.; *Cal. Close Rolls*, Hen VI, vol. vi, 1454-61, p. 388; CKS: PRC 17/1/269; PRC 17/3/208.

175 CKS: PRC 17/5/152; PRC 17/9/211.

176 See above.

177 CKS: PRC 17/17/272.

178 CKS: PRC 17/2/67; PRC 17/14/338.

179 See Chapter Two.

180 CKS: PRC 17/15/258.

made in a diverse range of crafts and trades which took advantage of expanding domestic and continental markets. Indeed, it should be remembered that it was on the whole, the more religiously moderate families who had held or enhanced their social and economic position in the urban hierarchy by the end of the period, and from the evidence presented above, it seems that this may have had something to do with the fact that they tended to be engaged in crafts or trades to a greater extent than their more religiously active fellows. The Foules and especially the Coupers, who were exceptional among this latter group for their continuing influence and prosperity, also appear to have been more commercially minded as well as more involved in industry, than the likes of the Prestons, Stonehouses, Carpynters and Strekynbolds. Of course it should be remembered that even those individuals whose main occupations were industrial, nearly always farmed, and some of them did so on a large scale.

Religiously moderate families also appear to have been more likely to foster professional occupations, than either their more lavish or parsimonious fellows. A John Piers, clerk, appears a number of times in wills and other records from 1459 to 1473.[181] By the late 1530s the continuity of this profession within the family is attested to by Richard Piers, an attorney mentioned in relation to a property transaction registered in the Corporation court.[182] More than one member of the Pette family entered this profession, namely John Pette, mentioned in 1471, and possibly Moyse Pette, who in 1489, acted as executor to the will of John Morer, vicar of Tenterden, and was bequeathed the latter's best quill.[183]

The occupational profile of these families invites some tentative suggestions concerning their bearing upon the diversity of religious orthodoxy in Tenterden. With some exceptions, religious moderation characterized the testamentary strategies of prominent families which were either predominantly industrial or engaged in crafts or trades to a greater extent than other wealthy families. Leaving aside most of the truly frugal will-making families (which were probably not of the same social standing as the rest), those which were engaged in farming to a greater extent than anything else, were on the whole, much more generous and traditionally orthodox in their religious gestures. This suggests that differences in piety were shaped in a broad and by no means ultimately deterministic way, by differences in material culture and lifestyle, by variations in approaches to the use of family resources, and perhaps by geographical patterns in domicile.

Such a suggestion is rendered more convincing when one remembers that the inhabitants of Small Hythe to some extent followed their own pious traditions, and

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181 *Cal. Close Rolls*, Hen. VI, vol. vi, 1454-61, p. 388; CKS: PRC 17/1/304; PRC 17/2/148.

182 CKS: Te/S1, fol. 23r.

183 CKS: PRC 17/2/27; PRO: P.C.C. 20 Milles, fols. 164v.-165r.

showed relatively little enthusiasm for many of the elements of religion adhered to by parishioners at St. Mildred's. It was emphasized in Chapter Three that these differences were not just due to the geographical isolation experienced by Small Hythe residents, but a combination of material culture, the impression of landscape upon sentiment, the influence of Continental ideas and the desire to forge an identity which was other to Tenterden town. What forces could have made the piety of craftsmen and tradesmen different in degree and tenor to that of yeomen farmers? Whilst not explaining them, the differences may be located at least in part in social differentiations. From the evidence presented above, and from studies of other small market towns in this period, it is apparent that craftsmen and tradesmen were spread throughout the upper and middling social bands, whereas larger farmers tended to form the solid sub-gentry section of society. It is testimony to the growing industrial wealth of Wealden society however, that by the late sixteenth century, one of the features of the Wealden economy, was "that manufacturers - of cloth, leather and metalwares - were at the top of the hierarchy of wealth" alongside "wealthier farmers and landowners".[184]

Quite independently of occupation, it has already been suggested that parsimonious piety was a product of the efforts of middling individuals and families to stabilize their fortunes in a time of increasing stratification of wealth. On the other hand, occupation may have acted to shape piety, because at least in Tenterden, craftsmen and tradesmen were some of the most upwardly socially mobile families, and this mobility was more than likely fuelled by intensive capital investment, particularly in the more industrial pursuits. Coupled with the fact that estates were made up of agricultural, industrial and commercial resources pooled together in family networks, this meant that increasing capital investment in specialized activities like butchery, tanning, fulling, metal-working, and trades such as tailoring and drapery, demanded that a larger share of an individual's resources be redistributed within the family. This worked its way out most clearly in inheritance practices, in the propensity to expend available funds on family and kin, and a subsequently diminished attention to traditionally religious bequests in last wills and testaments.[185] This ethos reversed the detrimental effects of late medieval piety on long-term familial social mobility and estate building as described by Higgs, writing on Colchester:

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184 McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community*, pp. 152-6, 233; McIntosh, *Community Transformed*, pp. 130, 167, 174; Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and Piety*, p. 34; Cornwall, 'English Country Towns', p. 63; Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance*, p. 60; Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, ch. 5, cit. at, p. 138.

185 McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community*, pp. 228-9, 235; Searle, *Lordship and Community*, pp. 365-6, 432-3. Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', pp. 204-8, 229-30, 304-5. For discussion of the commercial activities of clothiers in the Weald, see Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, ch. 7.

> Economically, piety spread money around the community; rather than keeping it within the family, the pious gave money to the church, to the poor, and to the community as a whole. Furthermore, the wide distribution of money had political implications for the community, since each generation in Colchester had to prove itself. Very few families in Colchester were wealthy enough to perform pious works and still leave enough money for their sons to become leaders without having to work for it themselves. Political power was therefore less concentrated and was dispersed among a larger number of families. The diffusion of the family's money meant, too, that each generation had to develop its own confidence and self-reliance; each generation had to remain viable, or the family quickly declined.[186]

It is also possible that the desire to further family fortunes may have manifested itself in a switch from legacies in kind to those in cash, as occurred in Kibworth Harcourt in the sixteenth century; a development which may have especially encroached upon religious giving in wills.[187]

In addition, religiously moderate and sparing families are more easily identified as living and operating in Tenterden town itself, in its more industrial suburbs of Boresisle and East Gate, or in Small Hythe, than the religiously generous. Probably because they were predominantly farmers, the latter tended to dwell in the rural and rather isolated settlements in the southern half of the parish where the best arable and pasture lay.[188] Whilst the notion that a simple rural-urban divide created diverging tenors in piety begs more questions than it answers, it would not be the first time that religious divisions were drawn along these sorts of geographically expressed cultural lines. It is possible to identify divergent cultural trends in town and countryside in this period, not least to do with towns' more intense connections with markets and the information networks attached to them, which rendered urban-dwellers more exposed to dissenting ideas about religion.[189] The formation and symbolic expression of local identity at Small Hythe, should of course make us wise to the possibility that town-dwellers and rural-dwellers in Tenterden sought to distinguish themselves one from another. Not just this, but that individual suburbs and settlements, boroughs, quarters and even dens could be employed for the creation of identities. It is not difficult to imagine what Robert Bisshopynden meant when he left a penny "to every child in the *parish* of Borsile" in 1523.[190]

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186 Higgs, 'Lay Piety', p. 273.

187 Howell, *Land, Family and Inheritance*, pp. 264-9.

188 The Carpynters, for example, lived at the Weld, at Morghew, in the rural suburbs of Tenterden: Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, p. 46; Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', p. 49.

189 In the Liberty of Havering for example, more urbanized Romford and Hornchurch became more Protestant than the rural village of Havering-Atte-Bower which retained a strong Catholic identity throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: McIntosh, *Community Transformed*, ch. 3.

190 CKS: PRC 17/15/258. Italics my own.

Differences in settlement, when combined with those of an occupational and social nature, could have led to divergent pious priorities.

Hand-in-hand with these forces, went the influence of emerging political identity. The families which had dominated politically in the late fifteenth century tended to be lavish in their religious giving. Those that rose to prominence or sustained their position into the sixteenth, may have sought a different pious niche, a way of forging their own religious identity, as against that of the old governing order. In one sense theirs was a less ceremonial and communal piety, perhaps because of a more rationally minded attitude to individual and familial profit and advancement.[191] Tenterden was after all becoming more urbanized by the sixteenth century, and it was in crafts, trade and commerce that some of the largest gains in wealth could be made. With their economic success bringing political dominance, those who followed the more urban occupations may have sought to express their emerging identity in what they perceived to be their own, new ways.[192]

Finally, it should be said that those theories which seek to connect religious dissent and nonconformity with artisanal activity, industrialization and proto-capitalism in the late medieval and early modern periods, by way of notions about a distinct ethos arising from these economic and social developments, have been deliberately omitted here. These issues will be dealt with in part, in the final chapter and the overall conclusion to this study. It is hoped that by concentrating here on the evidence for Tenterden itself and by exploring it for clues to the formation of religious heterodoxy, that a more satisfactory basis has been provided for some albeit rather circumspect conclusions.

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Parsimonious testamentary piety was not simply a product of insufficient disposable resources, but often formed part of a tradition transmitted within families. At the other end of the spectrum, other families followed pious traditions which predisposed individual family members to self consciously avoid economy in religious bequests. The

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191 This forms something of a variation on McIntosh's explanation for a lack of ceremonial life in Havering in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community*, pp. 176-7. This however is not to say that communal involvement was inherently irrational, but rather in the specific context dealt with here, the inducements for communal ceremony were insufficient to redirect resources which were considered to be best expended on the individual and the family. For a very helpful discussion of these issues, see: Calhoun, 'Community', pp. 105-129.

192 In Battle, by the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the politically prominent were those engaged in industrial and commercial occupations: Searle, *Lordship and Community*, pp. 432-3. In Tenterden, whilst crafts and tradesmen rose in status and influence, the largest commercial yeoman farmers also dominated local government, but this may have been to the exclusion of many lesser rural yeomen.

clearest continuities in frugal piety can be seen between fathers and sons and between brothers, suggesting that patrilineage was the dominant route for cultural transmission of this type. Traditions were however, mediated depending on the stage in the life cycle at which an individual died, his or her circumstances at death, and gender. Individual piety was shaped and constrained by the sometimes competing and contrasting pious traditions of blood and affinal kin.

The Castelyns and Pellonds are examples of enduring and comparatively wealthy families, which nevertheless made largely parsimonious wills. However, as they increased in prosperity and status, becoming more prominent in town and parish government, their testamentary piety became more elaborate, although never as traditionally orthodox as more generous families. This change was probably due to a combination of the increasing complexity of disposable family resources, and a greater public character to their pious outlook. This can be seen in the Pellonds' attention to public and charitable works.

A common aspect of the wills made by these families in the early sixteenth century was their patronage of the Jesus mass, a devotion which was exceptionally popular in Tenterden. Adherence to this cult was not simply a matter of individual choice, but was adopted by families. Bequests to the Jesus mass are the only element in the wills which defy the overall religious pattern across families, meaning that the cult was as much an aspect of the direction of sparse and moderate testamentary piety by the early sixteenth century, as it was of lavish will-making. The appeal of the Jesus mass to parsimonious families, no doubt partly lay in the intensified personal devotion to Christ which it encapsulated. Paradoxically, its Christocentricism and emphasis upon Christ as supreme saving mediator and king, may have diverged into more radical ideas of Christ as sole mediator, independently of the influence of Lutheran solifidianism, which were especially appealing to townsmen largely indifferent to the cult of saints by the 1520s. In addition, that the cult's exemplification of the godly family may have been appealing to families whose piety already emphasized these values, suggests that the roots of the post-Reformation stress upon the godly family, particularly amongst Protestants, lay in the fifteenth century. The urban nature of the Jesus mass suggests that it formed part of a fashioning of new forms of piety for new forms of society, that it provided an outlet for reaction against what were perceived as excesses in the traditional orthodoxy of town religion, and that it offered an ideal way of asserting rising urban social status. At Tenterden, the apparent simplicity of the Jesus mass and lack of more traditionally orthodox elements, underlines not only its possible radical potential but the idiosyncratically local assimilation, of a new devotional form.

There was a link between social status and wealth, and testamentary piety, as well as between social mobility and religious mentality in Tenterden in this period. The religiously parsimonious appear to have been the least wealthy among enduring leading

families, and were not so involved in municipal or parochial office holding, or in more informal social roles which called for high social status and prestige, to the same extent as their moderate and unsparing counterparts. Whilst higher levels of wealth tended to be equated with more lavish testamentary bequests, some very wealthy families were more reserved in their pious gestures. With one or two exceptions, over the whole period, but especially after 1500, religiously reserved families formed the core of freemen, increasingly dominated in town and parish affairs, and probably made the greatest gains in wealth and status. This meant that the predominant pious tenor of leading urban families by the 1530s was relatively moderate and parsimonious, compared to the more generous character of piety followed by many of the dominant families in the late fifteenth century. The latter it seems, were giving way to the former after 1500; familial success being interlinked with pious reserve. Also, generous families were less likely to marry into other Tenterden families than their moderate and less open-handed fellows, a dense network of affinal kinship being mostly concentrated within these last two groups. This suggests they formed a relatively coherent social group within the parish, which shared a distinctive piety.

By the early sixteenth century, in social structure and distribution of wealth, all the indications are that Tenterden already closely resembled other exceptionally wealthy small market towns. Tenterden was not dominated by a single industry as were the major cloth centres in the Kentish Weald, but rural and urban wealth in the parish was principally based on pastoral farming, together with a diverse but not especially large industrial and trade sector. The growth in economic and political dominance of a small number of commercial yeoman farmers in alliance with larger crafts and tradesmen, was accompanied by a decline in the numbers of middling to small farmers and less wealthy craftspeople, giving Tenterden a typically urban dynamic by the sixteenth century. Where Tenterden may have been unusual as a market town, was in its exceptional number of very wealthy inhabitants by the mid-sixteenth century.

Although pastoral farming underpinned the operations of just about all of the families studied in detail above, there were clear differences in the extent to which families were engaged in industrial, trade and commercial pursuits which suggest that there was an occupational profile to piety in Tenterden. Excluding all but one or two of the most religiously frugal families, who seem to have been predominantly engaged in farming, the families with the greatest involvement in, and reliance upon industry, trade and commerce, tended to be more parsimonious in their religious bequests than those who predominantly farmed. These differences most probably arose from a combination of factors, including contrasting lifestyles and material cultures, developing attitudes to the uses of family wealth in the context of intensive investment in both increasingly diverse and specialized familial enterprises, emerging sub-parochial geographical

identities which were linked to urbanization, and last but by no means least, the creation and expression of a distinctive identity by an especially urban element within the town, which by the early sixteenth century appears to have been gaining greater social and political influence.

CHAPTER SIX

Religious Dissent and Currents of Reform

By these articles and abjurations...thou hast to understand, christian reader, what doctrine of religion was here stirring in this our realm of England, before the time that the name of Martin Luther was ever heard of here amongst us. (John Foxe's appeal to his readers, following his summary of the 1511-12 Kentish heresy trials: *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe: A New and Complete Edition*, ed. Rev. S. Reed Cattley, (Seeley, Burnside and Seeley, London, 1838), vol. v, p. 652.)

Of all the places in Kent associated with Lollardy, Tenterden is deservedly the most famous. It is principally because of the town's importance in the history of Wealden religious dissent, that it is the subject of this present study. What follows is an interpretation of Lollardy against all that goes before in earlier chapters, together with an assessment of what it can tell us about the more general course of orthodox piety by the early sixteenth century.

Heresy was a feature of religious culture in the Tenterden area by the 1420s and remained so until the Reformation. Its early origins, agencies, extent and doctrines are the first questions to be dealt with here. Lollardy seems to have disappeared without trace in the Weald from around 1450 until its re-emergence in the records in the form of a burgeoning sect in 1511. Lack of evidence makes it very difficult to demonstrate the existence of an unbroken tradition of heresy, but it is very unlikely that its reappearance was accidental. One of the main concerns will therefore be to chart the geographical, familial, and doctrinal continuities and changes between the earlier and later traditions of Lollardy, at Tenterden and in neighbouring parishes.

Questions of how the early sixteenth century Wealden Lollards organized and conducted themselves, how they practised their dissent and ensured its ongoing survival, concern the roles of the family, household and kinship, along with other mechanisms by which ideas were transmitted, including the part played by leading literate figures. There is reason to believe that most of the heretical groups and households across central Kent, were interconnected into a loose community within which Tenterden retained a central role.

The relationship of Lollardy to local society as a whole, its degree of openness, extent of involvement in, or withdrawal from, the practices of orthodox religion, are issues which have an immediate bearing upon the perception and reception of heresy by the more orthodox. That Tenterden was a centre of dissent for so long, suggests that sympathy, or at least tolerance rather than hostility, tended to typify reactions to heretical beliefs.

Effort has been made to make the most of the available evidence, which has a bearing upon the detailed reconstruction of the social and economic profile of earlier and later Lollardy in and around Tenterden. This, together with Lollards' involvement in town and parish life and government, is set against old and new theories and findings about the social confines and roots of late medieval English heresy. In particular, two individuals who abjured heresies in 1511 and who can be placed within families whose histories and piety are reconstructed in Chapter Five, allow us to locate Lollardy within a microhistorical context. This not only provides some very detailed insights into the social background of Lollardy at Tenterden, but the relationship of heresy to orthodox piety. This opens up a whole range of questions about the heterogeneous nature of religion at Tenterden, and the role of family sentiment in making dissent appealing to certain groups within the parish.

This paves the way for an assessment of the various explanations which have been proposed for the ongoing appeal and survival of Lollardy in the Weald of Kent and other regions. These theories are judged according to their applicability to the evidence of heresy in the Tenterden area, and whilst some are shown to be less persuasive than others, they are mostly complementary and to one degree or another can be combined into a complex set of favourable conditions for the appeal and survival of dissent. This said, some new suggestions are put forward as to why Tenterden remained an increasingly important heretical centre over a number of generations. These seek to incorporate Lollardy into the dramatic social, economic and religious changes which were taking place in Tenterden from the early fifteenth century onwards, and which gathered a pace in the early sixteenth.

Finally, it is suggested that local and county gentry played an important part in creating and sustaining the right conditions for unorthodoxy, as well as acting as channels for the introduction of new ideas which may have helped Tenterden to be drawn towards Protestantism by the 1520s. In addition, the will of the humanist scholar John Morer, who was vicar of Tenterden in the 1480s, not only sheds light on Wealden culture, but hints at links between the New Learning, the development of orthodox devotion in the parish, the presence of dissent, and the townsfolk's precocious acceptance of Reform.

Early Lollardy

The first visible stirrings of heresy in the Tenterden area, and signs of the Wycliffite teachers who laid down a local tradition of Lollardy which was to last into the middle of the next century, can be dated to 1422. It was in this year that Thomas Drayton, an early Wycliffite, from the Chilterns and then Bristol (where he had been associated with the academic heretic William Taylor), became rector of Snave on Romney Marsh, some eight miles from Tenterden. He was already a twice-tried Lollard when called before Convocation in 1425, but the charges that he had approved of heretical books and supported heretics since his last abjuration, could not be made to stick. Shortly afterwards he exchanged Snave for the benefice of Herne, north of Canterbury, and in 1428 renounced his Lollardy, but the three years he spent in the Tenterden area, probably helped to sow the seeds of early dissent.[1]

The more obvious, and much better known heresiarch of Tenterden, was William White, a priest, and probably an academic, who wrote one or more Wycliffite texts.[2] He was chaplain in Tenterden when caught preaching without a licence in the parish church in July 1422. He admitted teaching in Gillingham and Tenterden, against the eucharist, the mendicants and temporal goods of the church, among other points, along lines very similar to Wyclif, but by no means halted his evangelizing efforts in the locality.[3] That is until around the summer of 1425, when action against Drayton may have caused White to move to the diocese of Norwich, where he continued, with great success to win converts to Lollardy.[4] White had been gone for almost three years when Bartholomew Cornmonger, a Lollard teacher also from the Tenterden area was hauled in for questioning. Cornmonger informed on his accomplices and sparked off archbishop Chichele's 1428 anti-heresy drive in the south-east of England.[5]

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1 Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 125; M. Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London, 1984), pp. 30; J.A.F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards 1414-1520* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 173-5; J.F. Davis, 'Lollard Survival and the Textile Industry in the South-east of England', in G.J. Cuming, ed., *SCH*, iii (Leiden, 1966), p. 197; *Register of Henry Chichele*, ed. E.F. Jacob, (Canterbury and York Society), vol. iii, pp. 107-9.

2 McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, p. 17: Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, pp. 71-100; Davis, 'Lollard Survival', p. 197.

3 Davis, 'Lollard Survival', p. 197; *Fasciculi zizaniorum Magistri Johannis Wyclif cum tritico*, ed. W.W. Shirley, Rolls Series (London, 1858), pp. 418-420. Compare with the points listed by Foxe: *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe: A New and Complete Edition*, ed. G. Townsend (Seeley, Burnside and Seeley, London, 1844), vol. iii, p. 591; Thomson, *Later Lollards*, p. 173.

4 *Fasciculi zizaniorum*, pp. 420-1; Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, p. 87.

5 Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, pp. 29, 78-80; *Reg. Chichele*, vol. iii, 199; iv, 297-301; for references of Cornmonger's activities in the diocese of Norwich, see index of *Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich, 1428-31*, ed. N.P. Tanner, Camden Society, 4th series, xx (London, 1977). The chronology of the interrogation of some of the early Kentish heretics is confused in the 1684 edition of Foxe, with both Cornmonger's and William Henry/Harry's first encounters with the authorities misdated

The archbishop did not move quickly enough to prevent the dispersal of the Lollard group which had probably been built up by White. Nineteen of the twenty-three named individuals who were summoned before Chichele's officials on suspicion of heresy in May 1428 had not been found by 31 July, when all, excluding Cornmonger, were excommunicated. Of the twenty men and three women who were named, Cornmonger, William White "parochial chaplain", Thomas Grenestede "alleged chaplain", John Waddon and his wife Joan, Thomas and William Everden, Stephen Robyn, William Chyvelyng and John Tame were all from Tenterden. Of the rest, most lived in the immediate vicinity: three individuals were said to come from Woodchurch, there was one from each of Wittersham, Benenden and Stapleherst, and three were of Romney. Not named among the initial group, four individuals were apprehended in their parishes on 23 May 1428. Two of these men, namely Henry Esteghe and Peter Attewyde were from Tenterden, the other two being from nearby High Halden and Rolvenden.[6] From the beginning, Lollardy in the Weald of Kent, would appear to have been centred on Tenterden.

Cornmonger's confession revealed a new Lollard plot, but there is only the slightest hint of corroborative evidence of anything so ambitious.[7] Nevertheless the rumour no doubt gave archbishop Chichele a greater sense of urgency, and after capturing a number of Lollards in the summer of 1428, some of whom were hanged and others imprisoned, went on in the following year to arrest and imprison at least thirty. Even so, some of those first named in 1428 were never found.[8] A few may have gone to ground in Kent, and others in East Anglia, after fleeing there with or after William White.[9] Six or seven of the suspects summoned by Chichele in Kent in 1428, were already, or went on to be, leaders of the East Anglian movement uncovered in bishop Alnwick's trials of 1428 to 1431; namely, William White, John Waddon, John Fowlyn, Thomas and William Everden, Bartholomew Cornmonger and possibly John Abraham. It is likely that at least some of them had visited the Norwich diocese before, that Lollardy in East Anglia pre-dated their arrival between 1425 and 1428, and that their teaching

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to 1416: John Fox, *Acts and Monuments*, (ninth edn, London, 1684), vol. i, p. 730. I would like to thank Margaret Aston for bringing this last point to my attention.

6 *Reg. Chichele*, vol. iv, pp. 297-301; Thomson, *Later Lollards*, p. 175; Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, pp.78-80. Following Foxe, Clare Cross misdates this episode to around 1416: Cross, 'Great Reasoners in Scripture', p. 361; *Acts and Monuments*, (1684), vol. i, p. 731.

7 Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, pp. 79-80; Thomson, *Later Lollards*, p. 175. For a possible hint of the uprising reported by Cornmonger, see *Heresy Trials*, p. 47.

8 Thomson, *Later Lollards*, p. 175; Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, p. 29; *Reg. Chichele*, vol. i, p. cxxxvii.

9 At least one individual, who was not among the original twenty-three, William Harry of Tenterden, fled to London. He was suspected of possessing English books, and confessed and abjured his heresies, after which he was imprisoned during pleasure due to lack of surety for good behaviour: *Reg. Chichele*, vol. i, p. cxxxix; Thomson, *Later Lollards*, p. 176; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 124 n.; Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, p. 79.

added considerable impetus to the heretical conventicles meeting there. Likewise, Lollardy in Tenterden probably benefited from these links over the course of the century.[10]

It seems that the foundations of early Lollardy that were laid in Tenterden were reasonably solid. White was both extremely active and successful until his capture, being one of two men cited most often in the Norwich trials as a teacher of heresy. Many of the suspects who mentioned him also named Thomas and William Everden, Fowlyn and Commonger as teachers.[11] On a number of occasions heretical books are mentioned in relation to White and some of these other men. Most, if not all of them were probably literate, a possibility which applies also to the "alleged chaplain" Thomas Grenestede, mentioned above.[12] William Everden and John Fowlyn were among those who took part in the 'Lollard mass' allegedly conducted by White, at Bergh Apton, in April 1428, and the fact that they were sought for a month later in Kent, but not found, not only underlines the possibility of active links between the two heretical groups, but also that some of those who had fled Kent may have returned there, once things had calmed down, to build on their earlier work.[13]

The heretical beliefs attributed to, and allegedly taught by White and his Kentish accomplices in East Anglia, albeit stereotyped and filtered by the set of questions put to suspects, should in a broad way, correspond with the general character of Lollard ideas disseminated in Tenterden and its environs.[14] Beliefs about the sacraments were the most important and most generally held. Tanner sums these up as being a denial of "the value of the sacraments as they were then administered by the Church and about a positive alternative to them. The heart of the alternative was the belief that man could reach God directly and that he might therefore bypass intermediary things and persons, particularly priests". However, no generally held alternative to the Eucharist accompanied denial of

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10 *Heresy Trials*, pp. 29-30. John Waddon/Wadnon, left Kent with his wife, Joan and was burnt with White in Norwich in September 1428: Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, p. 81; Thomson, *Later Lollards*, pp. 175-6; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 121. Curiously, he is described as "priest" by Furley in his, *Weald of Kent*, vol. ii, pt. i, p. 415, but is elsewhere only ever referred to as a layman. John Abraham, may be the cordwainer of that name who held schools of heresy in Colchester, and who may have been executed there in 1428-9: Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, pp. 81, 86-7; *Heresy Trials*, p. 45, n.44, p. 152; Thomson, *Later Lollards*, pp. 121-2. Hudson stresses the benefits of repeated contact between Lollard groups such as those in Kent and East Anglia: Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 139-40.

11 McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, p. 78. See for example: *Heresy Trials*, pp. 71, 73, 81, 85-6, 93-6, 138-42, 146-8, 164-6, 175-80, 209.

12 *Heresy Trials*, pp. 29, 30, 39, 41, 47-8, 60; *Reg. Chichele*, vol. iv, p. 297.

13 *Fasciculi zizaniorum*, pp. 423-4; *Heresy Trials*, p. 33, n.14; Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, pp. 81, 86-7.

14 For a discussion of the stereotypical and distorted nature of the trial materials, which nevertheless concludes that they are valuable for what they reveal about the main areas of agreement between individuals and conventicles, see *Heresy Trials*, pp. 10-22. See also: A. Hudson, 'The Examination of Lollards', *BIHR*, xlvi (1973), pp. 145-59.

transubstantiation. Similarly, rejection of prayers to saints, veneration of images and pilgrimage featured strongly among the suspects' views. Other important beliefs entailed a rejection of fasting,[15] observance of Sundays and feast-days, and the payment of tithes, offerings and mortuary fees. Underpinning all of these ideas was a strong element of anti-clericalism and desire for reform of the clergy. Most of these opinions, taught by White and others in the conventicles, can be traced to Wyclif.[16]

Whilst there is no evidence that Kent played any part in the Lollard rising of 1431, prosecutions of suspected heretics in the Tenterden area continued on after 1428. John and Thomas Glover, of Wittersham, who abjured erroneous opinions in 1431, were probably connected with the 1428 group, and had been present at the reading of heretical books. Just over the county border at Salehurst, John Boreham was accused in 1438 of teaching heresies in the parish church for twenty years. Although he denied all Wycliffite charges, he admitted to owning books by Wyclif, including four vernacular gospels. However, because some of the charges were to do with magic, he may not have been a convinced Lollard.[17]

In the same year, heretical ideas appear to have played a part in a revolt at Tenterden. A royal writ of 5 June found in the register of Abbot Curteys of Bury St. Edmunds, which has been convincingly dated to 1438 by J.A.F. Thomson, addresses an uprising of "mysgoverned men" especially of Kent, "aswel lollardes as other robbers and pillers of oure peple" led by Sir Nicholas Conway, knight. A commission of 'oyer and terminer' of 1 June, refers to "Lollardies and insurrections, rebellions and felonies", and one continuation of the *Brut*, records that five men "of the cuntre of Tynderden" were "founden and taken for heresyes and destroyers of the Kinges peple" and hanged drawn and quartered at Maidstone on 13 June.[18] A number of others were imprisoned in London on suspicion of heresy and treason, including, Thomas Denys, John Pette, John Elnoth, William Brewer and Thomas Harry "laborer" of Tenterden; Thomas Harry, of High Halden; another three men from High Halden, one from Frittenden and four from Biddenden. By November they had been released to attend the Kent sessions and the rising appears to have been crushed.[19] Even so, sometime shortly before May 1440, Alan Elys of Tenterden had been executed for treason, his head placed on a pike in the town and quarters displayed at Cranbrook and Appledore. Sir Nicholas Conway was more fortunate, receiving a grant of pardon in May of the same year.[20]

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15 Aston suggests that objection to fasting, which is not found in Wyclif, originated with William White: McShreffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, p. 220, n.40: Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, p. 93n.

16 *Heresy Trials*, pp. 10-22, cit. at p. 20.

17 Thomson, *Later Lollards*, pp. 177, 176, 179-80.

18 Thomson, 'A Lollard Rising in Kent: 1431 or 1438?', *BIHR*, xxxvii (1964), pp. 100-102; *The Brut*, ed. F.W. Brie, EETS, (1906-8), ii, p. 472.

19 Thomson, *Later Lollards*, p. 178; *Cal. Close Rolls, Hen VI*, iii, 1435-41, pp. 117-8.

20 *Cal. Close Rolls, Hen. VI*, iii, 1435-41, p. 313; *Cal. Pat. Rolls, Hen. VI*, 1436-41, p. 398.

Ten years on, in 1450, a Tenterden woman was accused of holding that offerings should not be made in churches or at saints' shrines, and of eating meat at Lent, and in the years immediately following Cade's Rebellion, charges of heresy were raised against some of those involved in the disturbances who lived in Wealden parishes. John Glover of Wittersham who had abjured in 1431, and Thomas Harry of High Halden who had been imprisoned in 1438, both received a royal pardon in 1450 following their parts in the revolt.[21] In the disorders of April 1456, many of those involved came from parishes around Tenterden, and some of them were described as Lollards, but this may only have been a convenient label for anti-clerical statements. The last extant piece of direct evidence of investigations into heresy in the Tenterden area before the sixteenth century, concerns a man of Wittersham, summoned to give account for alleged errors in 1455.[22] Over twenty-five years since William White and his disciples were scattered by Chichele, Lollardy was by no means extinguished in the Tenterden area, and given its scale and pedigree by 1511, it was probably still very much alive. Heresy also appears to have gone hand in hand with rebellion in these early days, even after the failure of the 1431 revolt, perhaps precisely because it had not involved Kent, and probably to some extent, because Lollardy was seen as the natural accompaniment of the unrest which came to a head in the county under Cade.[23]

Later Lollardy

For almost the entirety of the second half of the fifteenth century, the records are silent on the question of Lollardy in the Weald. Not until the investigations into heresy led by archbishop William Warham from 28 April 1511 until 28 June 1512, is it possible to gain any further insights into heretical beliefs and activities in the area.[24] The records of Warham's visitation to the Deanery of Charing on 26 September 1511, also provide a handful of references to reported heretical individuals.[25] Fifty-three suspects were involved in the trials, although one or possibly two of these were cleared of any charges or escaped prosecution, and a number were found guilty of only assisting and concealing

21 I.M.W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450* (Oxford, 1991), p. 30.

22 Thomson, *Later Lollards*, pp. 180-2. Elsewhere in the county, particularly around Maidstone, convictions of heresy began to re-emerge in the 1490s, and Foxe records that in 1498 a priest was burnt for heretical beliefs which he only recanted after persuasion from the King. His execution suggests he was a relapsed heretic; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 157, 168; Thomson, *Later Lollards*, p. 184; Fox, *Acts and Monuments*, (1684), vol. i, p. 829.

23 Thomson, 'A Lollard Rising', p. 102; Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion*, pp. 23-30.

24 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 159r.-167v., 168r.-175v.

25 *Kentish Visitations*, p. xxiv.

heretics rather than holding to errors themselves.[26] Another five individuals (two of them being deceased), were presented to the visitations of 1511-12, as suspected or known heretics.[27]

The continued importance of Tenterden as a centre of heretical activity is emphasized by the fact that twenty-three of these suspects, lived either in Tenterden itself or in the adjacent parishes of Benenden, High Halden, Rolvenden and Wittersham.[28] (See Map 6.1) The strikingly similar spread across these parishes in 1428 and 1511, suggests the likelihood of an unbroken tradition of heresy in the district. Not far away, seven individuals came from Cranbrook. Another group, of eight dwelt at Staplehurst, lying on the Cranbrook to Maidstone road on the northern edge of the Weald, about eight miles from Tenterden. About the same distance away on the route from Tenterden to Canterbury was a cluster of five suspects; one from Ashford, one from neighbouring Great Chart, and three from Godmersham, further up the road to Canterbury. Five suspects were named who had lived, or still did live, in the city itself. Out on a limb, one came from Waldershare, near Dover and Deal.[29] Finally, there was an important cluster of heretics living in the Maidstone district: two at Maidstone itself, three in Boxley, two at Bearsted and one in East Farleigh. All the indications are that these groups had been established for some considerable time, in some cases from at least as early as the 1470s or 1480s. Robert Hilles of Tenterden, John Grebill senior and Agnes Grebill his wife of Tenterden/Benenden, Agnes Ive of Canterbury, William Olberde senior of Godmersham

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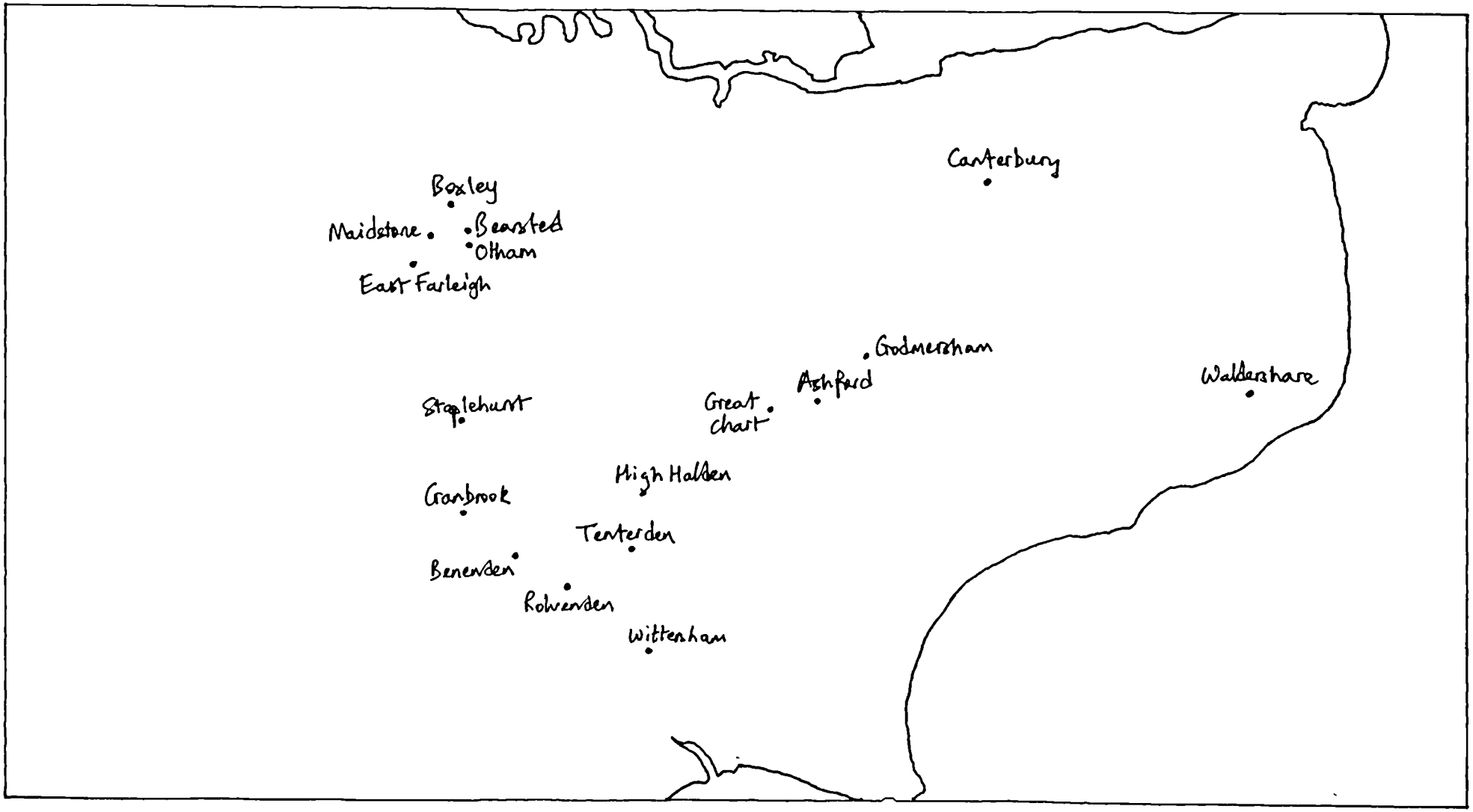
26 James Buckherst, and possibly William Buckherst for whom there is no indication of the outcome of his trial: LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 167r.-v. John Dodde and Joan Bukherst were both found to have merely concealed their spouses' beliefs: Reg. Warham., vol. i, fols. 167r-168r. I would like to thank Norman Tanner for sensitively putting me right on the precise number of individuals involved in the trials. See his article in M. Aston and C. Richmond, eds., *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 229-249, and the forthcoming published trial proceedings edited by Tanner in the Kent Records series. Where my figures still differ from Tanner's, is in the geographical placement of suspects, which involves a certain amount of interpretation of the evidence. So, I have placed John Grebill jun. in Tenterden, whereas Tanner appears to have him at Benenden, and John Grebill senior and his wife Agnes, in Benenden by the time of the trials, rather than Tenterden whence they had moved. In addition, I count only three individuals at Boxley compared to Tanner's four, discounting the "John Bampton of Boxley" as a scribal confusion of Richard Bampton of the same place, with his brother, John Bampton of Bearsted/Otham (LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 161v., 174r.-v.). As a result whereas Tanner appears to have placed only one individual (presumably Joyce Bampton, wife of John Bampton) at Bearsted, I have both John and Joyce Bampton as residents of that village.

27 Alice Raynold, Kateryne Cardar and Anges (sic) Roche deceased, all of Tenterden; John Baylis of Rolvenden, who successfully purged himself on 20 April 1512; and John Ive deceased, of the parish of St George, Canterbury: *Kentish Visitations*, pp. 207-11, 72.

28 Fourteen were from Tenterden; one from High Halden; one from Wittersham; four from Benenden and four from Rolvenden.

29 Simon Piers of Waldershare appears to have no connection with the other groups, and his belief that Christ was incarnate from the beginning of the world suggests Continental, rather than Lollard influences. Also possibly isolated from the rest, was the Staplehurst group, among which John Bukhurst shared seemingly Lollard opinions with three other individuals, but also denied the Incarnation, that Christ suffered to redeem mankind, and that he rose from the dead: LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols, 175r.-v., 167v.-168r; Thomson, *Later Lollards*, pp. 189-90.



Map 6.1 *Places in Kent associated with heresy in the 1511-12 trials*

and Robert Bright of Maidstone were all at least sixty years old at the time of the trials, and Thomas Harwode of Rolvenden was a sprightly seventy-four.[30]

A hint of the deep roots which the heretical groups had in and around Tenterden is provided by John Grebill senior's deposition against William Carder. Grebill told how "the said William Cardar aboute xx^{ti} yeres past in the house of this deponent at Tenterden werkyng in his lome the said William Carder began first to rede in a booke of ij evangelists and teche this deponent of the said belyves". Carder may have been employed as Grebill's servant, and the latter went on to relate "that he thynketh that the said (Carder) was borne in Lincolnshyre, and that the said Carder shewed to this deponent that his fader and moder were of the same secte, and he saith that the moder of the said Carder fled from Tenterden about xl yeres past for fere of the saide heresies but whether he knoweth not".[31] J.A.F. Thomson suggests that the story of Carder's mother's flight from Tenterden is suggestive of an anti-heresy drive in the late fifteenth century by archbishop Bourchier, whilst on its own, it is a reminder of the continuing Lollard presence in the area over those years.[32] Grebill also told how his wife "Agnes hath holden and belived sithe thesaid terme aboute thende of kyng Edward the iiijth dayes till this tyme of deteccion"; that is, since the early 1480s.[33] John Lynche of Tenterden admitted to holding to heretical opinions for more than twenty years, Robert Hilles for more than twelve, and his wife Juliana, for more than six years.[34] John Browne of Ashford's confession that twelve years before, he had abjured before archbishop Morton at Maidstone, opinions which he had learnt from John Rich, who was buried at High Halden, resulted in his execution as a relapsed heretic.[35] John Bans of Boxley and Robert Bright of Maidstone admitted to holding heresies for sixteen and fourteen years respectively; William Olberde junior of Godmersham and Robert Reignold of Cranbrook confessed to believing in heresies for more than seven years, and William Riche of Benenden, admitted that he had met and talked with Carder on numerous occasions over a period of some eight years.[36] The impression given by the depositions is that the Wealden groups were part of a tradition of heresy dating from the 1480s or perhaps

30 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 169v., 170v., 172v., 173v., 174v.

31 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 169v.; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 136.

32 Thomson, *Later Lollards*, p. 187; Hudson suggests that the seeming lull in Lollardy in these years is probably due to less documentation, the inability of the church authorities to sustain their investigations, and the civil struggles which embroiled the likes of Archbishop Bourchier: *idem*, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 447-8.

33 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 171r.

34 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 165r., 161r.-v., 168r.

35 Thomson, *Later Lollards*, pp. 184-5.

36 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 166r., 167r., 162v., 169v.

earlier, which had been gathering momentum by winning new converts from around the turn of the century.[37]

It is probable, but as yet unproved, that some of the Lollards of the late fifteenth century were descended, or at least received their heresies, from the groups of the 1420s and 1430s. There are two possible family continuities. Robert Herward of Rolvenden was arrested in 1428 on suspicion of heresy, and in 1511, Thomas and Joan Harwode and their son Philip, all of Rolvenden, confessed to heretical opinions. That they claimed their divergence from orthodoxy was only around three years' old, does not necessarily rule out the transmission of heterodoxy within the family. For one thing, Thomas Harwode was seventy-four in 1511, old enough to make him a direct descendent of Robert Herward's generation, and it is right to treat with suspicion, such claims of only recent conversion.[38] Secondly, John Bukherst of Frittenden was among those arrested and imprisoned in London after the 1438 Tenterden rising, and in 1512, a John Bukherst of Stapleherst (only two miles from Frittenden), abjured heretical opinions. His wife, although apparently not a heretic herself was also examined, as were James and William Bukherst who were probably also of Staplehurst and may have been related to them.[39]

It is also clear that a number of fresh converts had been made in the area. Some of these were the children of already established heretics, such as Christopher Grebill, who was finally convinced by the teaching of John Ive, only three years before the trials, and his brother, John Grebill junior, who not for want of any effort by his parents, claimed to have been won over only a year before his arrest.[40] Others had recently been brought into the sect through other means. Stephen Castelyn of Tenterden, twenty-three years of age in 1511 "saith that William Carder of Tenterden taught hym first to belive ayenst the sacrament of thaulter that it was not godds body flesshe and bloode but oonly brede in maydestone aboute a iij yeres agoo".[41] Robert Bright, a cordwainer of Maidstone, who was sixty years old, had moved to the district more than twenty years earlier from the Ipswich area, and claimed that he first believed against the sacrament of the altar after being taught by John Bampton in the latter's house in Bearsted, about midsummer 1510.[42] Bright also mentioned a seventeen year old youth who had come with William Riche of Benenden to John Bampton's house for an heretical meeting, at Christmas 1509. Riche said that the young man came with Bampton, and agreed with all

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37 On this question, Hudson comments, "Though reinfestation remains a possibility, it seems less likely than survival": *Premature Reformation*, p. 121.

38 *Reg. Chichele*, vol. iv, pp. 298-9; LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 161v.

39 *Cal. Close Rolls, Henry VI*, vol. iii, 1435-41, pp. 117-8; LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 166r.-168r.

40 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 171r.

41 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 169v.

42 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 174v.

those present against the orthodox doctrine of the Eucharist.[43] Whichever account is correct, it adds to the impression of the ongoing appeal of heterodoxy to some of the inhabitants of the region, and that whether or not the early sixteenth-century groups originated in those of the early fifteenth, they were enjoying something of a small revival.

The heretical beliefs abjured in 1511-12 were less wide-ranging and sophisticated than those purportedly taught by William White and his followers in the Norwich diocese, which probably reveal the general character of opinions among the Kent groups in the early fifteenth century. This is partly because, compared to bishop Alnwick's trials, Warham's involved a shorter list of charges and perhaps a smaller degree of freedom for the expression of idiosyncratic personal opinion.[44] To what extent this was due to actual differences in belief between the two sets of suspects, rather than variations in procedure is another question, but it could equally be argued that the greater simplicity of the later abjurations reflects a process of distillation over time of a fairly complex spread of heresies into a few key beliefs. This is made all the more likely by the fact that, broadly speaking, the most generally held views in 1511, concord with the main themes of White's reported teachings.[45]

A standard list of ten charges concerning doctrine, and further accusations concerning meeting and talking with others about heresies, and the possession of heretical books, seems to have been put to all the defendants. Each individual abjured their own particular errors from among this list of charges, many only confessing to holding to as few as three, others admitting to more. In a number of cases unspecified "other damnable opinions" are mentioned, which may have corresponded to other charges on the list, or alternatively, to additional unorthodox views which were left unrecorded in the course of the trials, or in the copying up of the records into the register.[46]

On the basis of the trials of thirty individuals predominantly from the Tenterden and Maidstone areas, it is apparent that views about the sacraments formed a major component of the content of abjurations, and most important of all, were opinions on the Eucharist. (See Table 6.1) The charge to which all but one of the thirty suspects admitted was for holding that the sacrament of the altar was not truly the body of Christ but material bread.[47] William Baker of Cranbrook added the traditional Lollard justification

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43 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 174v.

44 See above. That trial records provide "a fair picture of the views of the accused", is argued by Thomson, in his, *Later Lollards*, p. 239.

45 See Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 468-72.

46 See by way of comparison, Tanner's discussion of procedures in bishop Alnwick's trials: *Heresy Trials*, pp. 19-20. See also, Davies, 'Lollardy and Locality', p. 203.

47 The exception was Joan Colyn of Tenterden: LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 160v.-161r.

Table 6.1 *Beliefs abjured by thirty suspects in the 1511-12 Kentish heresy trials*

Charges concerning	Number of suspects
Eucharist	29
Pilgrimage	29
Saints' images	29
Prayers to saints	7
Confession/ absolution/penance	14
Baptism and confirmation	9
Priesthood	8
Matrimony	8
Holy water & bread	8
Extreme unction	7
All sacraments	2
Indulgence and pardons	2
All teachings of the church	1
Ownership of suspect books	2

Source: LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 159r.-167v., 168r.-175v.

"that god made man but man coude not make gode".[48] As was the case with William White, there is nothing to suggest that these heretics believed in a Wycliffite real presence, but rather, they went further to a sacramentarian view of the Eucharist as only a memorial.[49] Depositions against Edward Walker of Maidstone reveal the thinking on this central issue, of a group of heretics from the Maidstone and Tenterden areas as well as Cranbrook, who met together on a number of occasions in 1509 and 1510. The notion "that the sacrament of thaulter was but oonly brede doon in a mynde to call people togider, and god was oonly in heven", underlines its conception as a memorial only, albeit a worthwhile one. Similar logic and the same justification for a reformed doctrine of the Eucharist is found in the conception: "a thing made in mynde and for the remembraunce of criste for the people, for crists owne body was in heven and his worde was in erthe". The biblical inspiration of these ideas, pitched against the teachings of the church can be seen in the opinion, "that the sacrament of thaulter was not the body of god flesshe and bloode as preests said it was but it was oonly brede and geven from god, for criste hymself in his owne body gave brede to his disciples and not his owne body, and so do preests in lykewise geve brede that commeth from god in rembraunce of the brede geven by criste in his maundy".[50] If anything, this was closest to a Zwinglian rather than a Wycliffite or Lutheran formulation of the doctrine of the Eucharist, and it formed part of an extreme sacramentarianism continuous with White's teachings in East Anglia, and most probably the Tenterden region in the early fifteenth century.[51]

A much smaller number of suspects abjured the common Lollard opinion that the sacraments of baptism and confirmation were unnecessary for the profit of a person's soul.[52] According to her son Christopher, Agnes Grebill believed "that baptisme was nothing worth for a childe putt into the founte was nomore better then if he had be putt into other water, and that confirmacion ys avayn thing and of noon effecte".[53] Wycliffite opinions about confession, absolution and in one case, penance, were relatively common among the suspects. The general article was that confession ought not to be made to a priest, but occasionally this was expanded upon. So, the Harwodes of Rolvenden held to the positive alternative that confession "shuld be made oonly to god in mynde", and on the same day of the trials, Stephen Castelyn of Tenterden abjured the opinion "that a prest was not sufficient to here a mannys confession and absoile hym of his synnes for

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48 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 162r.-v.

49 Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 282-4.

50 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 174r.-v.

51 See for example, Dickens, *English Reformation*, pp. 58, 95-6. For the strong tradition and continuity of sacramentarianism among Lollards and Protestants in Kent, see Davis, *Heresy and Reformation*, pp. 2, 4, 70-101.

52 Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 291-292. Foxe omitted this article from the two lists of charges which he included in his account of the 1511-12 trials, perhaps because it did not fit with his portrayal of the Kent heretics as precursors to Lutheranism: *Acts and Monuments*, vol. v, pp. 648, 652.

53 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 171r.

suche absolucion of a prest was nothing profitable for a mannys soule, but that confession was to be made oonly to god by mynde".[54] The Grebills held to a fundamentally Wycliffite view that "confession made to a preest beying the folowar of peter and beyng pure and clene in life was good & profitable, and no confession was good that was made to a preest not beyng clene life for he had no power to assoyle any manne of his synnes".[55]

A smaller number of individuals considered solemnization to be an unnecessary part of the marriage contract. At one meeting, John Bampton, William Riche, Edward Walker and an unnamed young man, read Matthew's Gospel together in English and "were wele contentid and pleasid saying that it was pitie that it might not be knowen openly the whiche redyng in the said booke, as they understood it was agenst the sacraments of thaulter, baptisme, matrymony and presthode". Rather than initially gaining their Wycliffite opinions from Scripture, these men appear to have looked for confirmation of them there.[56] About the same number rejected Extreme Unction, and Orders, also common Lollard positions found in Wyclif. In the case of the latter doctrine, they were charged with the belief that God gave no more power to a priest than to a layman. This hints at the idea of the priesthood of all believers, developed within some Lollard circles, especially White's followers in East Anglia.[57] Anti-sacerdotalism probably informed the view that Holy Water and Blessed Bread remained the same after the priest's benediction as before it. Putting this belief into action, John Grebill senior and his family "brought home holy brede deverse tymes to his house and ete it and had noone other regard unto it but as to other brede".[58] This, incidentally, reveals that the Grebills continued to attend church whilst disagreeing with much that went on there. Only Robert Harryson of Canterbury was said to have held the opinion that indulgences and pardons "have no effect nor profit".[59]

Beliefs about pilgrimage, images and saints were, alongside views on the Eucharist, the most generally held and fully articulated. In this respect, Warham's investigations fit the pattern of most other trials of Lollards.[60] Nearly all abjurations included the beliefs that pilgrimages "to holy and devoute places bee not profitable nother meritorious for mannys soule", and "that images of seynts be not to be worchipped".[61] A number of suspects added "that labor and money spent therabout (in

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54 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 161v-162r; Alice Hilles of Tenterden held to a similar view: *ibid.*, fol. 164r.

55 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 170v.; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 294-7.

56 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 174v.; *Heresy Trials*, p. 11; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 292.

57 *Heresy Trials*, pp. 11-12; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 325-7.

58 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 171r.

59 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 172r.

60 Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 302; *Heresy Trials*, pp. 12-14.

61 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 159r.

pilgrimage) ys but lost and doon in vayne", and one had reportedly said it was "but a lost labour".[62] An alternative to expenditure upon pilgrimage was acted out by William Baker after meeting and agreeing with other heretics on May Day 1509, in Edward Walker's house at Maidstone, against pilgrimage and the worship and giving of offerings to saints. Baker told how, "aftir the said communicacion this deponent whiche was mynded to goo and offer to the Roode of grace outdrewe his mynde and went not thider but gave his offeryng to A poore man".[63] This was an idea commonly found in Wycliffite texts, as well as cropping up in other trials.[64]

Attacks on images included the crucifix as well as representations of Our Lady and other saints. Joan Riche of Wittersham elaborated that they "ought not to be worshipped bicause they were made with mannys hands and that they were but stokks and stonys".[65] Robert Harryson had apparently said to Christopher Grebill that candles to images in church were not profitable to man's soul.[66] Far fewer suspects admitted to holding to the allied opinion, but distinct article, that prayers should not be made to saints but only to God, a view propounded by Wyclif, and which was by no means marginal among the heretics of East Anglia in the early fifteenth century.[67]

Although the recorded trials in Warham's register never mention Lollards or Lollardy, but refer only to "heresy" or "heretics", the abjurations and depositions can leave us in little doubt of the origins of the beliefs.[68] There is not a single point among them which cannot be found in Lollard literature or other trials, and many of them were wholly Wycliffite. Importantly, the dominant opinions, concerning the Eucharist, pilgrimage and images, accord with some of the more central teachings of William White and his circle, who may well have laid the basis for later Lollardy in Kent. In fact, all of the beliefs recorded among the thirty heretics examined here, can be found in Alnwick's register, whilst many others abjured in the East Anglian trials could have either failed to survive into the sixteenth century or were not uncovered by Warham's officers.[69]

It should be stressed that there were no outright attacks on the Church in the course of the trials, or at least if there were they were not recorded. Neither apparently, was an aggressive position adopted toward the sacraments, images and cult of saints. Apart from the views that confession should not be made to a priest but privately to God and that prayers should not be addressed to saints, the general position appears to have

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62 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 162r.-v., 165r.-v., 172r.

63 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 174v.

64 Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 307; *Heresy Trials*, p. 14.

65 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 161v., 162v., 163v., 165r.; also, fol. 168r.

66 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 172r.

67 Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 302; *Heresy Trials*, pp. 11-12.

68 Tanner is reticent about how to properly describe the heretics of Kent: *idem*, in *Lollardy and Gentry* (forthcoming).

69 See the more general comments, in Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 468-72.

been that these things were unnecessary and unprofitable, rather than downright harmful. In this sense, in their articulation of what were nevertheless serious heresies, the Kent Lollards were relatively moderate.[70] The story of a conversation between John Bayly and his wife, of Rolvenden, reported by Bayly's servant and recorded in the visitation presentments of 1511, serves to illustrate how close in their opinions convinced Lollards may have been to those who considered themselves to be religiously orthodox, but who were not beyond questioning certain aspects of Catholic religion. Bayly's wife had made a pilgrimage (presumably to Canterbury) on Relics Sunday (the Feast of St Thomas the Martyr, next after 7 July) and on returning home, when he asked her where she had been, she answered, "At pilgrymage at the reliques for the parson declarid and said for every foote that a man or a woman sett to the reliques ward he shal have great pardone." John reportedly responded, "he said soo bicause he wille have folks money," to which his wife replied, "Nay, for the parson said that when the churche was brennyd the silke with the reliks closid and the fyre had noo power on theym." John, clearly doubting the veracity of this dramatic claim, declared, "Whan I shalle see theym bifore me putt betwene ij faggots brennyng & they not perysshed, then wille I beleve that they bene holy reliks". Bayly denied he had ever said this, and successfully purged himself on 20 April 1511. From this it appears he was no heretic, but nevertheless, from the detail of the presentment, it seems that he had questioned the power imputed by the Church to saints' relics.[71]

The importance of the family for the survival, sustenance and organisation of Lollardy by the late fifteenth century has been argued for by Anne Hudson (not least in relation to the Kentish heretics uncovered in 1511-12), and more recently, in terms of the continuity of dissent in general in late medieval and early modern England, by Margaret Spufford and others following in her footsteps.[72] The family and the social arena of the household,

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70 An exception to this is found in William Riche's deposition against Agnes Grebill, which states that Agnes and her husband believed that the sacraments of matrimony, baptism, confirmation, extreme unction, in addition to pilgrimage etc, "were not to be allowed but to be damned as nothing worth": LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 171v.

71 *Kentish Visitations*, p. 211. Although McSheffrey does not include Bayly among her list of suspects investigated in 1511-12 by Warham, elsewhere she nevertheless assumes he was a Lollard: McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, p. 163 cf. p. 94. Compare Bayly's wife's story of the relic surviving the flames, with the indulgence published by Cardinal Wolsey after the arson at Rickmansworth: Margaret Aston, 'Iconoclasm at Rickmansworth', p. 524, 552.

72 Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 121, 134-7, 456-64. "Dissent as a phenomenon transmitted within the family", has recently been given more attention in M. Spufford, ed., *World of Rural Dissenters*, see esp. pp. 23-9, and articles therein, by, Derek Plumb and Nesta Evans. Before any of these endeavours W.H. Summers argued for the importance of familial continuity to Nonconformism: Summers, *Our Lollard Ancestors*; *idem*, *Lollards of the Chiltern Hills*. See also, Hill, 'Lollards to Levellers', *passim*; and more recently, McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, ch. 4. See also, Chapter One.

seems to have played a particularly important role in Lollard survival and activity in the Tenterden area, and in the other groups elsewhere in Kent.

To begin with, from information contained in the trials themselves, it is apparent that no fewer than twenty-six individuals were related to at least one other suspect, and eighteen to two or more. These couples or families comprised William and Margaret Baker of Cranbrook; John and Joyce Bampton of Bearsted and John's brother, Richard Bampton of Boxley; John and Rabage Benett of Staplehurst; John and Joan Bukherst and John and Joan Dodde of Staplehurst[73]; the four Grebills of Benenden, Tenterden and Cranbrook; the Harwodes of Rolvenden; Robert and Juliana Hilles and their daughter Alice Hilles of Tenterden; Robert Hilles's sister Agnes Ive and her late husband, John Ive of Canterbury; and William and Joan Olberde and their son, of Godmersham. A further fifteen shared the same surname with at least one other suspect, namely: John Browne of Ashford and Thomas Browne of Cranbrook; James and William Bukherst of Staplehurst; Katherine Carder and William Carder of Tenterden; John Franke and Robert Franke of Tenterden; John Lynche of Tenterden and Vincent Lynche of Halden; Agnes Reignold and Robert Reignold of Cranbrook, and Alice Raynold of Tenterden; Joan Riche of Wittersham and William Riche of Benenden.[74] This means that as many as two thirds of the suspected heretics of 1511-12 may have been related to others who were investigated at the same time.

Of the above, from investigation into available local sources, it emerges that John Lynche of Tenterden and Vincent Lynche of Halden were probably brothers.[75] Less certain, is the possibility that Robert and John Franke were two of the sons of Thomas Frank of Tenterden, who made his will in 1464, and that Robert Franke was the individual of the same name who died in Tenterden in 1522.[76] Family connections between any of the other suspects who shared surnames, have not as yet, been established. This notwithstanding, the density of family relationships was exceptionally high among these Lollard groups, making them similar to the very stable communities in the Chilterns.[77] An explanation for this might be sought for in relatively low levels of

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73 Joan Bukherst and John Dodde may however, not have been Lollards themselves, as they were both only found guilty of concealing their spouses' opinions: LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols, 167r.-168r. See also, McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, pp. 94-5.

74 This is not to mention John Rich, buried at High Halden, who had reportedly taught heresies to John Browne of Ashford, over twelve years before the trials: Thomson, *Later Lollards*, pp. 184-5.

75 Surviving wills: John Lynche, Tenterden, 1524-5, CKS: PRC 17/16/152; Vincent Lynche, High Halden, 1527, CKS: PRC 17/17/294. Given the likelihood that they were the same individuals as those involved in the trials, the strong probability that they were brothers, stems from Vicent's bequest of 13s 4d to the marriage of Wylmyne Lynche the daughter of John Lynche, and John's reference to his daughter Wylmyne in his own will.

76 CKS: PRC 17/1/99; PRC 3/5/33.

77 See 'Appendix: The Lollard Communities', in McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, pp. 156-60; Davies, 'Lollardy and Locality', pp. 193-7; Evans, 'Descent of dissenters', pp. 288-308; Plumb, 'A gathered church?', pp. 132-63.

out-migration from the Kentish Weald and the other areas from which the groups came, as has been suggested was the case in the Chiltern Hundreds.[78] Equally as likely however, was a tendency for convinced Lollards to remain close to their heretical groups, which could be centred on, or comprised their natal household, perhaps combined with the practice of Lollard endogamy.[79] The relatively large number of two generation Lollard families in Kent was probably also partly a function of the maturity and longevity of the Lollard groups there.[80]

In this respect, the number of known family relationships which stretched across parish boundaries, and sometimes much greater distances raises a number of points. John and Christopher Grebill are good examples of children who had left their natal home and yet who remained in close contact with their parents, calling at the family house in Benenden from time to time, although living in Tenterden and Cranbrook, respectively. Part of the motivation for these visits, may have been the opportunity which they afforded for discussion of heresies with their parents and others who met at the house.[81] Agnes Ive appears to have kept in touch with her brother Robert Hilles of Tenterden, even while she lived at Canterbury, and whatever their precise relationship, John and Vincent Lynche remained close up until their deaths, living a few miles apart in adjacent parishes. For them as for John and Richard Bampton of Bearsted and Boxley respectively, the common cause of Lollardy probably strengthened the family bonds which had led to their shared dissent and the spread of the heretical network in the first place.[82] It should be remembered that in early modern England, kinship bonds, however latent due to distance of blood, marriage, geography or social status, could be reactivated when required.[83]

Other adult sons and daughters were either still living with their parents, or had established their own households in their home parishes. Alice Hilles, the daughter of Robert and Juliana Hilles of Tenterden, was only around twenty at the time of the trials and so not surprisingly does not seem to have left home. Philip Harwode however, was twenty-nine, and is recorded as living in Rolvenden, the same parish as his parents. What is more, the three Harwodes made a joint abjuration, suggesting that they were at least

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78 P. Spufford, 'Mobility and immobility', pp. 309-331; Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, pp. 52-60, 85.

79 P. Spufford, 'Mobility and immobility', pp. 330-1. Patrick Collinson draws attention to the conundrum of whether continuities of dissent within families were caused by unusual social stability in certain areas, or whether they in themselves contributed towards that stability: Collinson, 'Critical conclusion', p. 393. On endogomy within Lollard groups, see McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, pp. 95-7, 103-6; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 169; Plumb, 'A gathered church?', pp. 132-63; Hope, 'Lollardy: The Stone the Builders Rejected?', p. 11.

80 A point made by, McSheffrey, in her, *Gender and Heresy*, p. 100, with particular reference to the Lollards of the Chilterns.

81 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 170r., 171r.

82 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 169v., 174v.; see above.

83 Cressy, 'Kinship', pp. 38-69.

treated as a single family unit.[84] Agnes Reignold of Cranbrook, who may have been related to either or both of Robert Reignold of the same parish and Alice Raynold of Tenterden, may have learnt her heresy within William Baker of Cranbrook's household, as she was in service with him before the trials, but had since gone to serve in the house of one Jervis Henley.[85]

The importance of the family unit and of the household for the transmission of dissent within the Kentish groups, is no better illustrated than by the Grebill family, although paradoxically, it seems to have been the betrayal of close family bonds which led the elderly Agnes Grebill to take such an uncompromising and ultimately tragic stand.

John Grebill, with the help of one of his own teachers, the literate Lollard John Ive, had first taught and convinced his wife Agnes, of errors concerning the Eucharist, pilgrimage and worshipping and the giving of offerings to saints, sometime in the early 1480s. William Carder, who had taught Ive and Grebill, also appears to have been influential in her instruction. On many occasions since then, Agnes had affirmed that these opinions were good and "comyned and defended" them in the presence of her husband and two sons in their house in Benenden.[86] According to John Grebill senior, he had taught his two sons, Christopher and John, that the sacrament of the altar was not the fleshly body of Christ but only bread, from when they were only about seven years old. Agnes had not only been in agreement with this teaching, but was "well contentid that hir children aforsaid were of the said opynyons".[87]

A different picture is painted by Christopher and John junior. According to the former, who was twenty-two in 1511, his parents had first taught him his errors, discussing them many times with him at his father's house in Benenden, "but he saith he hath no felyng in that maters of errors tyll he herd John Ive teche hym and till he sawe in John Ives bookes" about three years before the trials. Since then he had had many discussions about these ideas with his parents, who had been "comfortyng hym in the same". According to his father, Christopher had also met and talked with William Carder in the family house. Twenty-one at the time of the trials, John Grebill junior at first claimed that his parents had initially taught and counselled him against the sacrament of the altar, pilgrimage, offering to and worshipping of saints' images, with the affirmation of his brother, only twelve months before. However, he went on to reveal that his

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84 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 164r., 161v.

85 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 163v.

86 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 169v., 170v.-171r. There is no suggestion in the depositions that Agnes had initiated her family into heresy as is argued by Clare Cross: 'Great Reasoners in Scripture', pp. 364-5. A more accurate portrait of Agnes's role, albeit tending to go too far in the opposite direction, can be found in McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, pp. 68, 92, 99, 110-12, 114, 207, nn. 7, 14.

87 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 170v. William Riche mentioned a third child, a "distrawght yong woman, doughter to the said John and Agnes Grebill" who was present when he went there to discuss heresy (Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 171v.) She was probably mentally ill, rather than emotionally distressed. See McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, p. 203, n.115.

parents had taught heresies and discussed them with him many times when he was fourteen or fifteen years old, and many times since, "but he never coude perceyve their teching nor geve any hert ther unto tyll this yere last past".[88]

The Grebill's perseverance with their sons paid off in the end, making it difficult to construe the story of Christopher's and John's eventual assent to heresy as a clear "case of rebellion against Lollard parents", as one recent writer has done.[89] There is no suggestion in the depositions that they struggled against their parents' teachings, but rather that they only grasped them at a certain point of conversion, expressed by them in the emotional terms, "felyng" and the "hert". The sudden significance of errors which they had heard since their youth may well have come with adulthood, together with, in Christopher's case, exposure to the written word and a literate expositor. John Grebill senior stated that all four of them "were agreed to gider by all the said tymes in his house never to make confession of these aforsaid errors", a pact also mentioned by Christopher.[90] In the event of her sons' and husband's testimony against her, Agnes denied the veracity of their claims, and declared that she regretted ever bearing her sons. This outburst was probably an understandable expression of bitter emotion, rather than a clever ploy designed to convince her examiners that her sons were falsely accusing her.[91]

There is no doubting that the family was the most important unit for the transmission and survival of Lollardy, and if the evidence were available there would be other stories of husbands converting wives, parents who had persuaded and taught their children, and *vice versa.* Agnes Ive, for one, was probably taught by her husband or brother, Robert Hilles, in combination with William Carder.[92] The density of family relationships within the Lollard groups in and around Tenterden and beyond, is testimony to the central roles of the family and household in the transmission of dissent, but it was probably only a reflection of the importance of the family in the transmission of piety in general.

A number of households appear to have been key meeting places for the heretical groups, where connections were made, hospitality was given, discussion, teaching, and communal reading of the scriptures took place. The Grebills' house in Benenden was one such place, as was Edward Walker's house in Maidstone, John Bampton's in Bearsted/Otham, John's and Agnes Ive's in Canterbury, Robert Harryson's home beside

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88 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 169v., 171r.

89 McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, p. 99.

90 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 171r.; Davies, 'Lollardy and Locality', p. 195. On the Lollard advocation of a personal inward conversion, see W.R. Jones, 'Lollards and Images: The Defense of Religious Art in Later Medieval England', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, xxxiv (1973), p. 34.

91 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 170v. For Foxe's passionate account of Agnes's trial and fate see *Acts and Monuments*, vol. v, pp. 649-50. Contrary to his opinion, Agnes remained unrepentant until the end: McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, p. 110.

92 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 169v.

St. John's Hospital in Canterbury, John Browne's house in Ashford, and perhaps to a lesser extent, the Hilles's in Tenterden, William Riche's home in Benenden and William Carder's dwelling in Tenterden. For obvious reasons these were the safest and most natural places to meet, discuss and teach dangerous doctrines. Whilst women did not have a leading role among the Kentish groups, it was here in the domestic sphere, within normal socialized boundaries that they appear to have played their most important function.[93]

Just as important as the family and the household for the dissemination of heresy, were the teachers who went about in and between the districts where the Lollard groups were established, or actually planted new clusters in fresh areas. William Carder is the best example of one such literate book owning Lollard teacher from the trials of 1511-12, but others such as John Ive and Robert Harryson may have been just as important.[94] All in all, the depositions allege that William Carder converted, or helped to convert, at least nine individuals to heretical views, and directly or indirectly, through family and other connections, was instrumental in proselytizing over twenty.[95] Whilst Carder resorted to people's homes to teach them, he also took whatever opportunities came his way to spread his ideas. Before Robert Hilles met with him in his own home about two years before the trials, he had talked with Carder at ale houses, in Carder's own house, in church and in other places, always Hilles claimed, in private and alone.[96] That he travelled about over quite large distances, is apparent from Stephen Castelyn's allegation that Carder had first taught him to believe against the sacrament of the altar at Maidstone, in about 1508.[97] His infamy was all too apparent to another young convert, Christopher Grebill, who said that,

> Carder hath been the myschief and destruccion of many men by bringyng theym unto the said mysbeleves ayenst the sacrament of thaulter, that it is but oonly brede, and that all other sacraments be not profitable for mannys soule, in bryngyng of (sic) Reignold therto, and also

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93 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 169v.-171v., 174r.-v., 172r.-v., 173r.-v. On this aspect of women's involvement in Lollardy, and a perhaps slightly too pessimistic and unrealistic discussion of their limited activities and overall lack of status within the sect, see McSheffrey, *Heresy and Gender*, *passim*, and esp. pp. 52-3, 110-112.

94 Although Ive owned reprobate books and was literate, there can be no certainty that Harryson had the same resources. Harryson had formerly lived in High Halden: See for example, LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 171r., 172r.-v. On Harryson, see Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 136; Thomson, *Later Lollards*, p. 187.

95 Contrary to the assertions otherwise of Davies, Carder does appear to have been a "group leader". Thomson, Hudson and Cross all rightly see him as one of the ringleaders in the area: Davies, 'Lollardy and Locality', p. 203; Thomson, *Later Lollards*, p. 187; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 136; Cross, 'Great Reasoners in Scripture', p. 364.

96 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 169v. For the parallel story of Robert Harryson speaking in private to Christopher Grebill, against pilgrimage, indulgences, pardons and lights before images, as they made their way together from Great Chart to Bethersden, see Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 172r.

97 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 169v.

William Baker which William shewed to this deponent that he was brought to the said errors...by the said Carder but that it was long er the said Carder coude bring hym to it so to belive.[98]

Carder was wise to persevere in his discipleship of Baker, as not only was the latter literate, but he became a zealous advocate of heresy. Baker admitted to having read from "a book of Mathewe where yn was conteyned the gospell in Englisshe" to the Bearsted and Maidstone group at Christmas 1509, in Edward Walker's house in Maidstone, and may have taken an important role within this conventicle which involved as many as twelve individuals. Baker also had connections with the circle of suspects comprising the Harwodes of Rolvenden, John Browne of Ashford, and Thomas Mannyng of Benenden. He may have taught heresies also to Agnes Reignold of Cranbrook when she was a servant in his household.[99] It is possible that Carder himself taught the Maidstone and Bearsted group, and that it was in this setting that Stephen Castelyn had first learnt his heresy. It is established that Carder taught Robert Hilles of Tenterden, and that he probably also converted William Riche of Benenden and Robert Reignold of Cranbrook (and possibly formerly of Tenterden), who had all from time to time, met with the Maidstone group.[100] Finally, Agnes Ive told how her husband John Ive, a long-standing heretic, had always declared that Carder was his "techer and reder".[101]

There is a strong case for viewing Carder as the source of heresy for a good number of the suspects involved in the trials of 1511-12. Others probably learnt their opinions elsewhere, or had perhaps had them handed down by family from the 1420s and 1430s onwards. It is important to remember that although Carder had come to Tenterden from Lincolnshire sometime in the 1480s or 1490s, his parents were themselves Lollards originally from Tenterden area, and his mother had fled the parish only perhaps a decade before for fear of persecution.[102] Carder's success as a Lollard evangelist in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, probably depended on an existing network of safe heretical households, coupled with a general receptivity to his teachings among elements of the local population, which if anything, had grown since the early fifteenth century.

The meetings and interconnections between the different Lollard groups and households which were spread over a wide area of the county, are testimony to the work

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98 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 170r.

99 See above.

100 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 173r.-v., 174r.-v., 169v. Carder's own curious account of a meeting he had with Robert Reignold is as follows: "Robert Reignold of Tenterden the friday of the first weke in Lent last past came and dyned at this deponents house and there redde in a booke a sermon of Seynt Austyn spekyng ageynst the sacrament of baptisme, and aftir that he had redde it he askid of this deponent how say ye nowe of the opinion of heretik what avayleth to cristen a childe in colde water, and this deponent aunswered agayn ye be full of questyons, beleve ye as ye will. I well beleve as a cristen man shuld doo" (Reg. Warham, vol. i, 169v.).

101 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 169v.

102 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 169v.; and see above.

of teachers like William Carder, Robert Harryson and John Ive, and other individuals like William Baker who were prepared to travel considerable distances to meet with other members of the sect.[103] The extent to which existing trade networks provided the basis for this network of contacts, will be considered below. In the meantime, it is apparent that not only did many of the Lollards of Tenterden, Benenden and Cranbrook know and meet with each other, but that these groups had links with suspects in Ashford and so indirectly with others in Rolvenden; close ties to a group in Canterbury through which, and in one case independently of these relationships, they had links with the Olberdes of Godmersham; and numerous active ties with the conventicle based in the Maidstone area. From the evidence of the trial records alone, thirty-two of the fifty-eight suspects investigated therein, along with those presented to the visitation of 1511, were all interconnected by either family or through heretical meetings, albeit often distantly in individual cases.

This web of interconnected groups and households can in no wise be termed "a 'gathered' church", as Derek Plumb has attempted to define (not altogether successfully) the early sixteenth-century Lollards of the Chiltern Hills.[104] Most of the Kentish Lollards do however, appear to have formed a fairly loose community which traded in a common currency of heretical ideas, and came together in small groups for teaching, reading, discussion and affirmation. As McSheffrey has pointed out, "the thread that bound a community together was contact with its leaders", whilst if it were possible to uncover them in their fullness, pre-existing ties of real and fictive kinship might take on equal importance.[105] To call this web of relationships a community, is not to deny however, that different individuals and households gained and created variable senses of identity from their heretical activities, and even perceived different meanings in commonly held beliefs.[106]

The evolution of Kentish Lollardy fits very well with the general pattern of change across the sect, described by Hudson as a shift "from dominance of the individual, peripatetic preacher to the centrality of the community as a whole", made up

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103 For some examples of these movements between centres, see McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, pp. 51-3. These links suggest that geography did not hamper the spread of heresy in Kent and that close locality did not define its influence. This is in contrast to Davies's portrayal of the Lollards of the Chiltern Hills: 'Lollardy and Locality', pp. 206-7. But see also: Plumb, 'A gathered church?', *passim*.

104 Plumb, 'A gathered church?', *passim*. On the vagueness and inapplicability of this term, see Collinson, 'Critical Conclusion', pp. 395-6.

105 McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, pp. 15-6. I, like McSheffrey, am indebted in these comments, to the conceptualisation of community found in Calhoun, 'Community', pp. 105-29. On the importance of kinship in the creation of Lollard communities, see Plumb, 'A gathered church?', *passim*; Davies, 'Lollardy and Locality', pp. 195, 212; M. Spufford, 'The Importance of Religion', p. 13.

106 Cohen, *Symbolic Construction of Community*, *passim*. McSheffrey, like myself, is indebted to the theoretical underpinnings provided by Cohen, for her albeit rather limited exploration of the varying perceptions of meaning within Lollardy, and ways in which individuals and groups seized upon heresy to fashion identities for themselves: McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, pp. 17, 173 n.58, 142-9, and ch. 5.

of a "host of lesser figures, men and women, who in the course of their everyday activities proselytized, encouraged and upbraided the wavering, and fostered the faithful".[107] Carder was an important leader and teacher, but his sphere of influence appears to have been restricted to Kent, and the community had no apparent active links with other heretical groups outside the county by the early sixteenth century. There are a number of reasons for seeing Tenterden as the paramount centre of this community. As mentioned above, the largest number of suspects from any one place in 1511, lived in the town; most of the interconnections between the geographically isolated groups were through individuals from there or neighbouring Benenden; Carder used Tenterden as his base, and four of the six persons who were sentenced to imprisonment in 1511, and so were probably considered to be especially dangerous, came from the parish, namely Stephen Castelyn, Robert Franke, William Pellond and Juliana Hilles.[108]

As demonstrated below, the heretics tried in 1511-12 do not appear to have been ostracized by their neighbours, and neither did they withdraw from everyday life. At least some of them were reasonably prominent members of their local communities. Similar integration of the Lollards of the Chiltern Hills has led Derek Plumb to claim that their beliefs "must have been known to their orthodox neighbours", and to infer that they were not very vigilant in hiding them. In Kent on the other hand, there is every indication that Lollards were very careful not to reveal their heresy to strangers or the unsympathetic. Admittedly, this does not prove that their activities or views always remained hidden from outsiders.[109]

To begin with, there was the pact made between the Grebills, not to confess their errors - presumably that is, to the unsympathetic, as they were in regular contact with other members of the sect.[110] In all their meetings together, which were sometimes outside in public places, including ale houses and even a church, the deponents stressed how they "wold never make any body privey nor of counseill when they went aboute suche maters", and meetings in the privacy of suspects' homes were seen as occasions "where they myght be secretly togider".[111] Most of the recorded meetings seem to have taken place at major festivals and saints' days, perhaps because these were the normal

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107 Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 449-50.

108 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols, 168r., 168v.-169r., 175v. I owe this last point to Norman Tanner: in *Lollardy and Gentry* (forthcoming).

109 Plumb, 'A gathered church?', pp. 132-3, and, *idem*, 'Social and economic status', *passim*. For the view that Lollards generally maintained a veil of secrecy over their activities, albeit sometimes without success, see: Davies, 'Lollardy and Locality', p. 203; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 142-3. However, see also, Thomson, *Later Lollards*, p. 190.

110 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 170v.-171r. Hudson appears to have wrongly interpreted this as meaning confession to anyone, but there is no evidence for her assertion that it was Agnes who broke the vow "in her efforts at proselytization": Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 143.

111 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 169v., 172r.

times to make social visits, not to mention pilgrimages, and so heretically inspired journeys and meetings might go unnoticed. These were of course also holidays, which offered an ideal opportunity for Lollards to subvert the orthodox religious practice of honouring saints, by engaging in what they saw as more worthwhile activities, whilst seeming to abide by Canon Law.[112]

One episode in particular illustrates the care taken to hide heretical opinions from threatening quarters. At Christmas 1510, Robert Bright, John Bampton, Richard Bampton, Thomas Feld, William Baker, Stephen Castelyn and William Riche, met together in John Bampton's house in Bearsted, from where all but Castelyn travelled the two miles or so to Edward Walker's house at Maidstone by night. There, with Walker and his wife they agreed together against the sacrament of the altar

> and as they were so commynyng (sic) the wif of ye said Walker said, sires it is not good that ye talke moche here of thies maters for the Jaylours will take hede to you uf ye comme huder, and also beware for some folkis will commyn hider anon, and therupon furthwith came yn the Jaylors wife, and they cessed of their communicacion.[113]

According to William Riche, when the jailer's wife arrived, "Edward Walker beying aferde to be suspectid and espied spake to that other iij saying, Sirs drynke ye and make ye mery and high you from hens agayne and so they departid agayn".[114]

Notwithstanding these efforts at secrecy, some members of the community withdrew from certain aspects of orthodox religion, or may even have actively opposed them. John Grebill senior deposed that "from hir first belive" his wife Agnes "never dide offer to seynts Images nor yet wold goo to pilgremages". They had also on a number of occasions, as a family, brought the consecrated bread home from church and ate it as if it were like any other - a symbolic act of nullification and defiance which could not have been without its dangers.[115] After talking against the giving of offerings and worship to images as well as pilgrimage, with Edward Walker, Stephen Castelyn and Robert Reignold, William Baker "was mynded to goo and offer to the Roode of grace" but "outdrewe his mynde and went not thider but gave his offeryng to a pore man".[116] The

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112 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 169v.-175r. Christmastide, St. Stephen's Day (26 December), Childermas Day (28 December), Shrovestide (the few days either side of Shrove Tuesday), May Day, St. Bartholomewstide (around 24 August), Midsummer Day (24 June), St. Marks Day, the eve of the Translation of St. Thomas (3 July) and the Feast of All Saints' (1 November) are all mentioned as occasions of meetings, although they did not always take place at such times. See also, M. Aston's 'Corpus Christi and Corpus Regni: Heresy and the Peasants' Revolt', *P & P*, cxliii (1994), pp. 3-47, which links revolt and religious dissent in the context of the feast of *Corpus Christi*.

113 Deposition of Robert Bright against Edward Walker: LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 174v.

114 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 174v.

115 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 170v., 171r.

116 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 174v.

very fact that the Lollard groups were making converts in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries means that they could not have remained entirely closed.[117]

There is only the slightest indication however, that Lollards in Tenterden or elsewhere in the county withdrew from normal church attendance. The Grebills must have attended in order to have brought home blessed bread, and according to Robert Hilles, William Carder had talked about heresy in church. They probably followed a pattern of behaviour found throughout many Lollard communities, which is described by Anne Hudson as a "superficial conformity to the normal practices of orthodoxy". Therefore, as well as passively opposing the cult of saints, they may have ignored prohibitions to work on holidays and rules about fasting, but it appears that they continued, where obliged, to attend church services, make annual confession and receive the Eucharist. Although they rejected transubstantiation, the Kentish Lollards retained a belief in the value of the sacrament of the altar as a commemorative service, and as J.A.F. Thomson argues, "they could easily attend mass and receive communion devoutly, believing that it was of spiritual benefit to them, while having mental reservations about the official doctrine". Continued involvement in orthodox religion at the level of the parish, may have been less superficial than proprietorial and voluntary.[118]

The presentment from Tenterden to the visitation of September 1511, mentions four individuals who had not kept their rites or attended services, but none of these were reported either here or in the trial proceedings as heretics, and three of them had good reasons for not fulfilling their religious duties. Non-attendance does not appear to have been a Lollard trait at Tenterden, that is, excepting the interesting case of John Franke. According to the visitation presentments,

> Johan Frank with diverse other eville disposid persones use in the tyme of divine service to be in the churcheyard comenyng & talkyng and many other use to sitt stille in the churche atte processione tyme.

When questioned, Franke admitted to sometimes walking "in the churchyard during divine service and sometimes between matins and high mass, but not habitually", and was ordered to be in church during services.[119] He was probably the same man as the John Franke of Tenterden who abjured opinions on the Eucharist, pilgrimage and images on 16 August 1511, but who is not connected in the depositions with any other suspect, although he may have been related to Robert Franke of Tenterden who was imprisoned

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117 Thomson, *Later Lollards*, p. 190.

118 Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 451; Thomson, *Later Lollards*, p. 247; Hope, 'Lollardy: The Stone the Builders Rejected?', p. 14.

119 *Kentish Visitations*, pp. 207-10.

for his errors and activities.[120] Were Lollards in Tenterden going so far as to gather in the churchyard during mass in some sort of oppositional open-air conventicle, or were these merely malcontents? Who were the people who sat still in the church at the procession, no doubt in passive protest? If these were Lollards, then they had adopted a most public form of tacit confession, which is not incompatible with concealment of heretical beliefs and activities, but which would not have been possible in a climate of fear and incrimination. One cannot help imagining that while there may have been Lollards among these resolute parishioners, many of them would not have thought of themselves as members of the sect.

In all the places from which Lollards came in Kent, including Tenterden, it seems that either the orthodox were reluctant to incriminate their heterodox neighbours, or that very few people actually knew about the heretical activities which had been going on around them. These not entirely incompatible possibilities are both suggested by the fact that none of the witnesses mentioned in the trials came from outside the heretical community, or the households of heretics.[121] The authorities appear to have had to rely heavily upon inside informers, who, although unnamed, can be guessed at.[122] At Tenterden, parishioners did admittedly, present three individuals to the visitation of September 1511 as heretics, but all three were women and one was already dead and buried, while John Franke was not labelled a heretic.[123] None of the major Lollard figures mentioned in the trial proceedings were indicted, and neither are there any references to heresy in the Tenterden visitation returns for 1498, 1499, 1500, 1502, 1505, 1506, 1507, 1508, 1514, 1515, 1516, 1521, 1522 and 1523.[124] There were very few presentments of heretics in 1511-12 in other parishes within the archdeaconry of Canterbury in which it is established that Lollards lived.[125]

It is over thirty years since J.A.F. Thomson stated with regard to Tenterden: "Even although there is nothing to show that the Lollards were anything other than a

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120 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 165v., 168v.-169r.

121 A point made by Norman Tanner at the 'Lollardy and Gentry Conference', Newnham College, Cambridge, 1994.

122 One possible individual is Christopher Grebill, who was quick to name a number of other suspects, and whose abjuration is entered first in the record of proceedings in Warham's register. Even though he did not abjure until 2 May, a few days after the first trials, including his mother's, it is possible that he had already furnished the authorities with a good deal of information, by which they were able to apply pressure to a number of other individuals and set the ball of incrimination rolling: LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 159r.

123 Alice Raynold and Kateryne Cardar were named as unexamined heretics, and another, Agnes Roche, "commenly knowene as heretike" was said to be buried in the churchyard: *Kentish Visitations*, pp. 207-10.

124 CCAL: X.8.2, pt. 2, fol. 13r.; Z.3.1, fol. 41r.; Z.3.37, fol. 83r.; Z.3.2, fols. 4r., 136v., 4v., 25v., 55r., 9r., 82v.; Z.3.3, fols. 15v., 51v., 83v.; Z.3.4, fols. 20r., 48v., 68r., 94v., 108r.

125 Apart from the case of John Bayly of Rolvenden, the only other reference relates to the parish of St. George, in Canterbury, where John Hale was indicted for burying the heretic John Ive in the churchyard: *Kentish Visitations*, pp. 211, 72.

minority, the majority does not appear to have been vindictive towards them".[126] A number of immediate suggestions can be offered as to why Tenterden was such a breeding ground and (for most of the time) safe-haven for Lollardy. As shown below, Thomson's hunch that this may have had something to do with sympathetic churchwardens, appears to be correct. Sympathy or even active pressure from town or parochial leaders was just one possible source of protection, and anti-clericalism, resistance to outside authority and the "group solidarity" of the "small, tightly meshed world" of the local community were others.[127] These questions, together with the major underlying problem of why sympathy and susceptibility to heresy was a continued feature of Tenterden's and the Weald of Kent's religious culture, occupy the remainder of this chapter.

Heresy in context

The old orthodoxy which sees Lollardy after Oldcastle's revolt as the preserve of the socially and economically insignificant, and of little contribution to the Reformation,[128] has suffered a number of increasingly damaging assaults in recent years. In particular, Derek Plumb has demonstrated that in the Chiltern Hundreds, Lollardy was spread throughout all strata of rural society, and had a tendency to be better represented among its wealthiest than its poorest members, including a limited number of gentry.[129]

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126 Thomson, *Later Lollards*, p. 191.

127 On protection by social superiors and the use "of wealth and position to sustain..beliefs", see Plumb, 'Social and economic status', *passim*; Hope, 'Lollardy: The Stone the Builders Rejected?', pp. 3-6; McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, pp. 44-5, 125-8. This last aspect of local resistance to outside interference, is suggested by Aston, in her impressively subtle, 'Iconoclasm at Rickmansworth', p. 551.

128 See for example, James Gairdner, *Lollardy and the Reformation in England* (London, 1908-13), 4 vols.; K.B. McFarlane, *John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Nonconformity* (London, 1952), pp. 180, 184; Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants*, p. 8, although Dickens sees Lollardy as making an important contribution to the English Reformation: see *idem*, *English Reformation*, pp. 56-62; Davis, 'Lollard Survival', pp. 191-201; M.D. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from Bogomil to Hus* (1977), pp. 240-62. For some recent reiterations of this long standing view, see Christopher Haigh, ed. *Reformation Revised*, p. 5; Haigh, review article: 'The English Reformation: A Premature Birth, a Difficult Labour and a Sickly Child', *Historical Journal*, xxxiii (1990), pp. 449-59; Scarisbrick, *Reformation and the English People*, pp. 6, 46; Margaret Bowker, *The Henrician Reformation: The Diocese of Lincoln under John Longland, 1521-1547* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 38; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, p. 150 (see however, MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England, 1547-1603* (Basingstoke, 1990), pp. 68-9, 126, 154-5, and Plumb, 'Social and economic status', p. 109 n.26); Joyce Youings, *Sixteenth-Century England* (Harmondsworth, 1984), p. 180; and Peter Clark's *English Provincial Society*, p. 31, which refers to the Lollards of Kent as "poorer folk".

129 See for example, Imogen Luxton, 'The Lichfield Court Book; a Postscript', *BIHR*, xliv (1971), pp. 120-5; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 128-34, 466-7; Hope, 'Lollardy: The Stone the Builders Rejected?', pp. 2-6; Davies, 'Lollardy and Locality', pp. 197-8. Plumb, 'Social and Economic Spread', pp. 111-29; Plumb, 'Social and economic status', pp. 103-131 (see Margaret Spufford's comments on this work: *idem*, 'The importance of religion', pp. 12-13); Brown, *Popular Piety*, pp. 217-8. For a

Importantly, not only does this work show that many Lollards were found among the 'better' or 'chiefer' sort of the middling and upper social levels, but that they were fully integrated into the political life of the parish, village and town, being "dominant members of their society, with contacts throughout the region, and with substantial estates". Accepted as such by their more orthodox neighbours, and exercising their own local influence, the ongoing healthy survival and geographical stability of Lollard families and groups in districts like the Chiltern Hundreds, is in part explained.[130]

This revision, whilst welcome, is not without its problems. For one thing, assessments of personal wealth in the Subsidy Rolls are not an altogether reliable index of economic and social standing, particularly at the lower end of valuations. As Margaret Aston puts it, "In the close-knit world of village relationships, the subtle gradations of local standing are crudely reflected in the figures of the subsidy return and seem still opaque when viewed through the more detailed, but yet formalised, words of wills".[131] The Lay Subsidy materials have not always been used with sufficient care or subtlety, or for that matter, proper attention to the context of local variations in social structure and distribution of wealth. There has also been a readiness to favour more questionable statistics over firmer ones, in an effort to emphasize Lollardy's appeal across all levels of society, including those mostly or wholly dependent on wage-earning. On this point, Plumb appears to fail to grasp the significance of his own comment that "at the lower economic levels, many (Lollards) were widowers, widows, or younger sons who had enjoyed, or would later enjoy, greater wealth, and had kinship links with their families".[132]

It is paradoxical that despite Derek Plumb's and Margaret Spufford's declarations to the contrary, the revisionism of recent work on the later Lollards may yet still demand that they be regarded as possessing above average status.[133] For this reason,

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useful, if rather pessimistic section on gentry involvement, see McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, pp. 125-8.

130 Plumb, 'Social and economic status', pp. 113, 130-1; *idem*, 'A gathered church?', esp. pp. 133, 162-3; M. Spufford, 'The importance of religion', pp. 63-4.

131 She mentions William Creke (*generosus*) of Rickmansworth, whose moveable wealth was valued at only 40s in 1524-5: Aston, 'Iconoclasm at Rickmansworth', pp. 542-3.

132 See Plumb, 'Social and economic status', *passim*, and pp. 110-114, Tables 3 and 4, on statistics, cit. at p. 113. Especially troubling is Plumb's assessment that "individuals in the middling and upper social levels were *just a little better* represented among Lollards than their economic peers in society in general" (italics my own). In fact, on the basis of all possible Lollards investigated by Plumb, 18 per cent of them paid on £10 or more of valued wealth in 1524-5, compared to 13 per cent of all tax-payers. When restricted to definitely identified Lollards only, 29 per cent of them - two-times the proportion of all tax-payers -were assessed in this top wealth bracket. At the other end of the scale, whereas about a fifth of *known* Lollards paid on 30s and under, almost two fifths of all tax-payers did so. Margaret Spufford refers to these statistics as representing "a slant, but no more than that, toward the top of rural society" in the distribution of heretical beliefs: *idem*, 'The importance of religion', p. 13. See also, for example, McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, ch. 5.

133 M. Spufford, 'The importance of religion', p. 13.

the question of the economic and social determinism of late medieval dissent should by rights, for now at least, be left open. Patrick Collinson, commenting on the work of the Spuffordians, writes: "Gone are those contradictory notions, with their shallow polemical and ideological roots, which on the one hand connected Nonconformity with the lowest of the low and on the other made it the possession of a burgeoning bourgeoisie, a monopoly of the industrious and thriving sort of people".[134] He is probably right, but not because there is no longer any need to consider the social profile of dissent as a significant factor in its appeal. Rather, in the context of Lollardy, dissent does appear to have been a feature of the emergent middling and upper ranks of village and town society. The findings set out below, although far from conclusive, tend to confirm this.

One of the problems with pre-revisionist descriptions of Lollards, is their use of confusing and ill-defined terms. Chief among these is 'artisan', which is employed all too often as a means to slide from descriptions of craft and trade activity, to blanket classifications of class, which imply an impregnable social and economic ceiling, above which individuals are presumed to have been unable to rise.[135] If the term artisan is to be used, then it should be in the correct sense, as a description of engagement in craft or trade activity, or of "skilled manufacturers, processing goods for sale" where "some might have their own workshops, others be paid piece-rates or a daily wage". By no means all artisans were economically marginal.[136] Because of its connotations I have tried to avoid using the term, preferring instead, craftsman or tradesman.

Due to the relative scarcity of local sources for the early fifteenth century, resort has to be made to a handful of details mostly drawn from later in the century, to make only tentative judgements about the identity and status of early heretics in the Tenterden area. Henry Esteghe of Tenterden who was apprehended on 23 May 1428 with Peter Attewyde, also of the town, may have been the Henry Esteagh who made his will on the last day of October 1461. If so, his bequests show nothing of any previous heresy, as they were enthusiastically orthodox by Tenterden's standards. He left 6s 8d to each of the rectors of High Halden and Woodchurch, devoted a total of 66s 8d to obsequies, left 10 marks for a year's temporary chantry before the altar of the Virgin Mary in St.

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134 Collinson, 'Critical conclusion', p. 390.

135 See for example, Davis, 'Lollard Survival', *passim*; Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, pp. 259, 262; Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants*, p. 8; Clark, *English Provincial Society*, pp. 30-31, 42; and more recently, McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, p. 136. Hudson also tends to underestimate the material and social resources of the artisan or craftsman: *idem*, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 132.

136 Heather Swanson, *Medieval Artisans: An Urban Class in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 1989), p. 2; B. Sharp, *In Contempt of All Authority. Rural Artisans and Riot in the West of England, 1586-1660* (California, 1980), pp. 1-7; Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, ch. 5; McIntosh, *Community Transformed*, p. 130; Searle, *Lordship and Community*, pp. 432-4. For a somewhat different definition of the artisan in late medieval England, which nevertheless rejects any notion of a socially homogenous artisan 'class', and emphasizes the wealth and political dominance of the artisanry in many towns, see S.H. Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Class, Status and Gender* (Hampshire and London, 1995), pp. 18-19, 40, 152-55, 191, 274-5, and see references, p. 154, n.8.

Mildred's and gave twelve pieces of his best timber to the building of the new bell tower. His cash bequests alone indicate considerable wealth, and in addition to them, he held lands and tenements in Tenterden, High Halden, Woodchurch and elsewhere in Kent. There is no mention of immediate family, and he devised a footway, lands, woodland and buildings in Tenterden to the heirs of Thomas Austyn and sixteen pieces of land in Tenterden and Halden to William Preston and his wife, Preston being his executor. Two things in this will suggest that he had been involved in Lollardy in the 1420s: one of his feoffees was Thomas Harry of Redyng (Reading Street in the parish of Ebony) who may have been either one of the two men of the same name of Tenterden and High Halden, who were arrested after the 1438 disturbances, and he left 10 marks to a John Browne, who may have been the John Browne of Ashford tried for heresy in 1511, although this seems less likely.[137] If this is the Lollard Esteghe's will then he died a wealthy man, but appears to have turned his back on his heretical past.

Also among the 1428 group was Stephen Robyn of Tenterden, whose descendants were mentioned in at least twenty-five Tenterden wills from 1476 to 1535, often as feoffees, executors and witnesses as well as legatees. In 1453-4, a Thomas Robyn was among a group of men (including Thomas Kaxton, town clerk of Tenterden, and possibly brother to the printer William Caxton), who travelled to Rye to settle disputes between the two towns. Finally, the will of Thomas Robyn, perhaps the same man, made in 1513, the only one for the family in this period which has survived, speaks of considerable agricultural wealth, including "six workyng oxen, thre workyng mares, ij stagges, a geldyng, two cowes, six kene, vij two yerings, vij twelmonythyngs, a bull, iij hogges, all my gese and hennes, all my wenys, ploughes, harrowes and all that belongith therto" not to mention land, stock, a barn and household goods. Robyn's sole religious bequest consisted of 16d each year for four years to "the masse", possibly the Jesus mass which had just been established in St Mildred's. Robyn served as a churchwarden in 1498, at a time when the parish church was reported to archiediaconal visitations as being in a bad state of repair, in part because of the negligence of the vicar, Master William Marshall.[138] Finally, he had connections with the Sorells, one of which, namely John Sorell was indicted for missing church services in 1511.[139]

John Pette was involved in the 1438 rebellion, and the family of the same name which has been mentioned already, maintained their considerable status throughout the

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137 See above; CKS: PRC 17/1/271.

138 CCAL: X.8.2, pt 2, fol. 13r. Thomson, *Later Lollards*, p. 191.

139 Riley, 'Mss. of the Corporation of Rye', p. 491; CKS: PRC 17/12/218; *Kentish Visitations*, pp. 207, 210. See also, CKS: U442/T99; BL: Add Ms. 48022, fol. 27r; Add Ch. 56980, for some of the family's property holdings. Perhaps also of significance is the fact that Thomas Hicks's sister Agnes had married into the Robyn family. Hicks made his will in 1522, leaving his "body to be buried where it pleasith God", money for the purchase of images of Ss. Crispine and Crispianus for St. Mildred's, and 10s to a neice, which were in the hands of Robert Castlyn of Lydd: CKS: PRC 17/15/228.

period. Thomas Pette, who was possibly John's brother, was also involved in disturbances sometime before 7 July 1471, receiving a royal pardon for "rebellion and offences" in December of that year. This did not stop him from becoming the first member of the family to serve as bailiff in 1472-3, and again in 1482-3 and 1487-8. What appears to be John Pette's will is dated 1489, in which he is described as "pannarius", or clothier. As well as mentioning two servants and providing for his daughter's education, he left £20 for one John Bregghar's children, at the discretion of John Hychecoke, vicar of Tenterden. The dedicatory clause of this will is unusually brief and phrased: "*lego animam meam deo omnipotenti corpusque meum sepeliendem in cimiterio sancti Mildrede*", and his religious gifts comprised 3s 4d to the fabric of the parish church and his best cow to the support of the chaplain of the fraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, neither of which rule out adherence to Lollard views.[140] The Pettes, it should be said, were one of the more religiously moderate influential families in Tenterden.[141]

There are traces of the activities of the possible relatives of three other participants in the 1438 rising, namely John Elnoth and Thomas Harry, "labourer" of Tenterden and Thomas Harry of Halden. 'Sentence of outlawry' was passed on a John Elnoth of Tenterden in 1398, for not appearing to answer for trespass on an action for assault; an Edward Elnoth, "fuller" of Tenterden was indicted for failing to answer an alderman of London touching a debt of 40s in 1467; and Thomas Elnoth, another fuller in this family, rented Sir John Guldeford's fulling mill in the late fifteenth century, and had a house and garden at West Cross, later occupied by John Pette, clothier. A Thomas Harry was one of the witnesses to a grant of lands in Reading, Ebony in 1478.[142] Notwithstanding the fragmentary nature of the evidence, at least some of these early heretics and agitators were far from poor. They belonged to what were, by the standards of local society, substantial politically active and enduring families, and may have had connections with other heretics and sympathizers. In at least two cases they had perhaps preserved a dissenting disposition to the end.

McSheffrey argues that because "little can be discovered about the social status of Lollards" in Kent, "it was probably low".[143] Essentially, this is an argument from

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140 See above; *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1467-77, p. 302; CKS: Te/C1, fols. 140r.-v.; PRC 17/5/152. See Aston, 'Iconoclasm at Rickmansworth', p. 542, for a similar suggestion about the lack of inherent contradiction between Lollardy and gild membership. See however, McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, p. 44.

141 See Chapter Five.

142 Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, pp. 30, 94; *Cal. Close Rolls,* 1435-41, pp. 117-8; *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1467-77, p. 9; CKS: U55/T414.

143 This judgement is based on what appears to be only a cursory investigation of the local and central government evidence of Lollardy in Kent, and in one case on a misconception. McSheffrey apparently interprets the list of freemen contained in the Tenterden Custumal as representing the whole franchise in 1529. However, from comparison with the list of bailiffs, it is clear that it is in fact a record of admissions to the franchise from 1529 until *c.* 1558 when the Custumal was first drawn up and the list was copied into it. Also, given that it contains over 120 names, this is the only possible interpretation

silence, undermined by the few individuals identified above, as well as those uncovered for the early sixteenth century which are discussed below. Although it is usually the case that low status individuals leave few traces in historical sources, it does not follow that high status persons leave enough for us to appreciate their material achievements.

The Grebills, for example, have provided us with no extant wills, and very few other indications of their wealth and social position. Nevertheless, the indications are that they were well-heeled. They may have taken their name from Gribble Wood and Gribble Bridge on the north west border of the parish of Tenterden, adjacent to Biddenden, suggesting that the family had an old and substantial pedigree in the area. In 1391, a John Grybell of Tenterden, yeoman, was pardoned of outlawry over a trespass. In 1460-1, the Thomas Grevill and his son (who is not named) mentioned in a Chamberlain's Account Book of Rye, may have belonged to the same family. Grevill and his son had been given supper at the Mayor of Rye's house on a Saturday, and dinner the next day, in an attempt to ensure that he worked hard at negotiations with Tenterden for the yearly payment which was owed to Rye. Grevill must have had considerable standing and influence, as "seeing that the same Thomas was great with them of Tenterden", Rye's civic leaders had pinned their hopes on him as an effective lever.[144]

Much closer to the Lollard Grebills themselves, is an Early Chancery case which ran from late 1514 to mid-1515. The complainant was Sir Thomas More, the defendants being Richard Babbe of Benenden and John Grebill junior of the Lollard family so thoroughly decimated in 1511. The dispute was over the identity of the rightful owner of a house and fifty acres of land, pasture and wood with appurtenances, which had been in the ownership of John Grebill senior. He had seised a number of feoffees in this property around Michaelmas 1511, to the use of the Prior of the monastery of St. Nicholas in Leeds, near Maidstone, presumably shortly before he was imprisoned for his heretical activities in September of that year. He may have done this to try and protect his family estate, although because he was apparently not found to be contumacious, there is no reason to think that the property would have been forfeited to the Crown. John Grebill senior probably intended that his son buy back the house and lands from the Prior, which is exactly what John junior claimed to have been in the process of doing, although admittedly, he did go on to pass seisin over to his associate Richard Babbe. More claimed that he had entered into purchasing the property and that money had changed

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of the list (CKS: Te/C1, fols. 116r.-117v.). It is not therefore surprising that only one name on the list matches that of a suspect involved in the 1511 trials, a fact which McSheffrey sees as indicative of the Lollards' generally low status in Tenterden: McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, p. 125.

144 Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, p. 30; Riley, 'Mss. of the Corporation of Rye', p. 493. The name has elsewhere been wrongly transcribed as Grevill. See for example, Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p. 136.

hands long before John Grebill junior ever approached the Prior, a claim which Grebill and Babbe denied. On the face of it, it looks as though the Prior was the guilty party in all this, but what concerns us here is the fact that John Grebill senior's estate placed him at the top end of the social stratum comprising the more substantial farmer-tradesmen, middling craftsmen, and lesser yeomen; what Cornwall calls the "substantial middle class" of the small town in the early sixteenth century. The property may have been in the family for some time, Grebill stating that he had offered to purchase it "for asmuch as hit had long tyme conteynid in his auncestours".[145]

Few other of the identified Lollard individuals or families yield as much information as the Grebills. For example, William Carder was left goods by Thomasina Piers in 1508, acted as witness to Thomas Fynch senior's will in 1504, and was one of the feoffees seised in a house and lands in Tenterden which had belonged to Thomas Elnode and was passed by will in 1495 to Elnode's son William. Thomasina Piers also left household stuff to "widow Reynolde" who may have been related to the Lollard family of that name of Tenterden and Cranbrook, and Thomas Elnode may have been a descendent of John Elnoth who took part in the 1438 rising.[146]

The name Reignold or Raynold appears in the 1523-5 Lay Subsidy Assessments in most of the hundreds around Tenterden, and those encompassing Cranbrook. None of the individuals listed appear to have been very wealthy, but the Raynolds of Tenterden seem to have been of higher status.[147] Confirming the Piers family's links with the Raynolds, John Piers butcher, mentioned his servant, John Reynold in his will of 1461. Another wealthy and influential family, but this time at the religiously generous end of the pious spectrum, with ties with the Raynolds, were the Prestons of Tenterden. William Preston senior left John Raynold 6s 8d in 1493, and in 1497, William Preston junior's sister, Joan Raynold was remembered in his testament. Interestingly, the Prestons also had affinal ties with the Selers who were in turn joined by marriage to the Castelyns, a family returned to below.[148] John Raynold was a jurat of Tenterden in 1507, Edward Reynolde became a freeman around 1529 and Richard Raynold served as a taxor in 1539 and 1542, so although neither Alice Raynold of Tenterden nor Robert and Agnes

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145 I am indebted to Andrew Hope for generously bringing this case to my attention. PRO: C1/336, 24-7; LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 168v. Compare however with the Hunne affair, which took place during these same years: Dickens, *English Reformation*, p. 134. See for example, McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community*, p. 233; Citation is from Cornwall, 'English Country Towns', p. 63. Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, pp. 10-44, 88-152.

146 CKS: PRC 17/12/73; PRC 17/9/49; BL: Add Ch. 16330. See above.

147 PRO: E179, 125/324: East Barnfield Hd., Roger Raynolde, goods, 20s; Barkely Hd., Richard Raynolde, goods, £5 6s 8d; Selbrittenden Hd., John Raynald servant, wages, 20s; Rolvenden Hd., John Raynolde, lands, 20s; Cranbrook Hd., Richard Raynold servant, wages, 40s; Oxney Hd., Richard Raynold, goods, 40s. See however, Aston, 'Iconoclasm at Rickmansworth', pp. 542-3, for a qualification of the use of Lay Subsidy Rolls to indicate social status.

148 CKS: PRC 17/1/269; PRC 17/6/10; PRC 17/7/50.

Reignold of Cranbrook can be identified, it is likely that the family at Tenterden were of high middling status. They were not however above reproach, as John Raynold of Reading Street (in the adjacent parish of Ebony but within the Liberty of Tenterden) and Marian, the wife of John Harry were presented to the archiediaconal visitation for adultery in 1498.[149]

None of the three possible entries for William Baker of Cranbrook in the 1523-5 Lay Subsidy, suggests more than average wealth.[150] The will of William Bakar of Cranbrook, dated 1530 may have belonged to the heretic, but if so, he had remarried, as the will-maker's wife is named Elizabeth, and Lollard's was called Margaret. Still, three things suggest this was the same man. Firstly, the absence of religious bequests, secondly the mention of looms and other equipment putting him in the same craft as his Lollard teacher William Carder, and thirdly, the fact that John Raynold was one of the witnesses.[151] Another will which does not match up in all its details, but which is nevertheless interesting, is the testament of John Ive of Canterbury, written on 24 January 1511. The date fits with the Lollard John Ive as he died only shortly before the heresy trials. However, whereas this testator was of St. Martin's parish and his wife is named as Silvestre, the heretic John Ive lived and was buried in the parish of St George in the City, and his wife was called Agnes. Still, this very brief testament contains only one, rather begrudging religious bequest: "Item, I will that Silvestre my wyf pay yerely to the church of Sainct Martyn to fynde a lampe yf it canne be provid of ryght that I were bownde to pay yt". Whilst he appears to have been a different individual, he seems to have shared some of his namesake's attitudes towards orthodox religion.[152]

Robert and Juliana Hilles and their daughter Alice Hilles, of Tenterden, have left no trace in the records. This is surprising given that they may have been related to the Hylleses, who were prolific will-makers. The latter, as shown in Chapter Five, followed a testamentary strategy, which comprised sparse or moderate religious bequests, and in one case, patronage of the Jesus mass.[153] Juliana Hilles was among the few suspects imprisoned for their beliefs and activities, probably because they attempted, unsuccessfully, to purge themselves. Robert Franke was another, and he and John Franke of Tenterden, are a little more visible.[154] There are a number of indications that they lived at Small Hythe. Joan Turnor of Small Hythe, mentioned Robergie the wife of Robert Franke in her testament of 1490, and a Robert Franke was one of the witnesses to a

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149 *A Calendar of the White and Black Books of the Cinque Ports*, p. 139; CKS: Te/C1, fol. 117r.; Te/S1, fols. 19r., 39r. CCAL: X.8.2, pt 2, fol. 13r.

150 PRO: E179, 125/324: East Barnfield Hd., goods, 20s; Rolvenden Hd., goods, £6; Cranbrook Hd., goods, 5 marks.

151 CKS: PRC 17/19/152.

152 CKS: PRC 17/11/12.

153 See above.

154 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 175v., 168v.-169r.

grant of a footway near Small Hythe by Robert Brekynden to Robert Davy in 1472. In addition, Thomas Franke, who was possibly Robert's and John's father, was executor to Thomas Gerves of Small Hythe's will of 1464, which was written only sixteen days before he wrote his own. Thomas Franke did not name his sons in his last will, but he did mention Richard Colyn who owed him 6s 8d, which Franke ordained to be given to the image of the Virgin Mary at Ebony. This suggests a link between the Frankes and Joan Colyn of Tenterden, who abjured errors concerning Baptism and Confirmation, Matrimony, Holy bread and water, pilgrimages and images in 1511.[155]

Much more promising are John and Vincent Lynche of Tenterden and High Halden respectively. The Lynches, as argued above, were probably brothers. They belonged to a large extended family which stretched across a number of Wealden parishes, and which in Cranbrook reached dizzying heights in wealth, through the cloth industry.[156] In High Halden, the Lynches were styling themselves as yeomen by the 1550s, and in 1523-5 Vincent Lynche's wealth was valued at £4 in lands *per annum*, and Thomas Lynche listed next to him in the Subsidy Roll paid on £24 in goods. Vincent was therefore probably one of the lower middling people whose agricultural and industrial activities typified the Wealden economy. On the whole, these were smaller farmer-tradesmen and crafts people who, if they possessed land, held between ten and around twenty five acres, mostly given over to the grazing of perhaps less than a dozen head of cattle, and maybe some sheep and pigs.[157]

John and Vincent Lynche abjured almost identical errors, that is against the Eucharist, pilgrimages and images.[158] Fortunately, both of their wills survive, John's dated 1524-5, and Vincent's, 1527.[159] Both are fairly ordinary and do not appear unorthodox. However, unusually, John's bequests begin with 12d to be distributed to poor people, followed by requests for 3s 4d to be bestowed upon his burial and month day for the health of his soul and all Christian souls. Gifts to the poor typified some wills made by Lollards in the Chilterns, were a feature of the Pellond family wills as seen in Chapter Five, and represented an alternative of humanitarian charity in place of offerings to saints in Lollard thinking, an attitude put into practice by William Baker of

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155 CKS: PRC 17/5/310; U442/T99; PRC 17/1/97; LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 160v.-161r. Robert Franke appears to have died in 1522: CKS: PRC 3/5/33.

156 See above. For example, PRO: E179, 125/324, Lay Subsidy 1523-5: Cranbrook Hd., William Lynche, goods, £160. See also, on the Cranbrook Lynches, Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, pp. 190-1, 195, 197, 220, 222.

157 Thomas Lynche yeoman, High Halden, 1557, CKS: PRC 17/30/289; PRO: E179, 125/324. Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, pp. 10-44, 88-152; Cornwall, 'English Country Towns', p. 63-7; McIntosh, *Autonomy and Community*, p. 233.

158 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 165r., 164v.

159 CKS: PRC 17/16/152; PRC 17/17/294. McSheffrey mentions only Vincent Lyche's will: *Gender and Heresy*, pp. 213 n.79.

Cranbrook.[160] John Lynche's testament hardly exudes wealth, being largely taken up with gifts of clothing, however, he did bequeath 12d to his maid, and forgave Thomas Weldisshe 10s owing on the farm of a house, actions which suggest he was not poor.

Vincent's testamentary bequests show a greater engagement with orthodox devotion, and perhaps a conscious effort to place himself under the authority and shelter of the Church. He requested that his body be buried in the belfry of the parish church of High Halden, bequeathing 20d to that end, with the humble proviso: "if the parishe wilbe content withall or else my body to be leid yn the Churcheyard ther". He gave 12d to the Lady Light and 12d to the Rood Light, and devoted 13s 4d to his burial, 20s to his month mind and 6s 8d to his year's mind. In the last will he devised three pieces of land to his son. Vincent had been thoroughly integrated into the parish before the 1511-12 trials, serving as a churchwarden or *parochianus* in 1501, and as a *parochianus* in 1506. He does not appear again after the trials, but in 1514 Thomas Lynche was churchwarden in High Halden.[161] As long as the full weight of ecclesiastical authority was withheld, it was this sort of local power which afforded Lollardy a good degree of protection. Finally, the Lynches of Great Chart appear to have been connected by marriage to Gerves Hendley of Cranbrook, with whom the Lollard Agnes Reignold had been in service in 1511.[162]

Stephen Castelyn of Tenterden's particular errors concerned the sacrament of the altar, pilgrimage, images, confession and absolution, which he abjured on 15 May 1511 and as a result, was sentenced to various penances. However, on September 11 in the same year, he was sentenced again without explanation, this time to perpetual imprisonment at the Augustinian Priory at Leeds. He may have failed to keep to his penitential regime or perhaps the authorities considered him too dangerous a heretic to be left at large.[163]

Together with a number of other suspects, Castelyn gave evidence against Edward Walker of Maidstone, who had often hosted the heretical meetings in the area, with which Castelyn had been involved from May 1509 at the latest. The depositions reveal that he had attended this conventicle on at least four occasions to Christmas 1510, one of which Castelyn related himself as having taken place at Shrovetide (on, or shortly before February 12) 1510, where,

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160 Plumb, 'Social and Economic Spread', pp. 116-7; see above; Jones, 'Lollards and Images', pp. 35-6.

161 CCAL: Z.3.2, fols. 105v., 26r.; Z.3.3, fol. 16r.

162 See the will of Robert Lynche of Canterbury, 1530, who appears to have formerly been of Great Chart and had family there, who mentioned his mother Joan Hendley and Gerves Hendley his "uncle": CKS: PRC 17/19/134. See also, Gerveas Hendley, 1534, PRO: P.C.C. 14 Hogen.

163 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 161v.-162r., 168r.

> in the house of the said Edward Walker at Maidston in the kechyn by the fyre on the evenyng the said Edward Walker, Robert Hylles and this deponent comyned togider ayenst the sacrament of thaulter and then and there they three and evry of theym concluded and said that the sacrament of thaulter was but oonly brede doon in a mynde to call people togider/ And god was oonly in heven/ And also as he remembreth they commyned agaynst pilgremag.[164]

Although Castelyn was not present at all of the group's meetings, it is apparent that he was far from peripheral. Significantly, John Bampton could not remember whether Castelyn or William Baker had read from a book at one meeting, and although Baker himself confessed to being the reader, Bampton's confusion suggests that Castelyn had read at other times.[165]

It seems that Stephen Castelyn did not learn his heresy directly from Edward Walker and his circle. His own abjuration states that he had held heretical opinions from around 1507, when he would have been about nineteen.[166] Insight into the earlier stages of his heresy is gained from evidence he gave against William Carder, that about three years previously once again in Maidstone, "William Carder of Tenterden taught hym first to belive ayenst the sacrament of thaulter that it was not godds body flesshe and bloode but oonly brede". Castelyn's relationship with Carder may have been the bridge to his involvement in the Maidstone group.[167]

Fortunately, it has been possible to reconstruct some of Stephen Castelyn's family relationships, whilst the tenor of his family's testamentary piety has been explored in detail in Chapter Five. Stephen's brother, William Castelyn died towards the end of 1510, for whom there is unfortunately no surviving will. (See Figure 5.2) The closest one can get to Stephen, is the will of his sister-in-law, William's wife Katherine, which contains what may be the only direct reference to him outside the records of the heresy trials. Katherine died shortly after William at the beginning of 1511, and Stephen was an executor and witness to her will. Katherine left Stephen "half of my husband's remaining steel and a hundred weight of iron", indicating that the brothers may have practised the same or at least similar trades, Stephen being described as a cutler in the trials.[168] As well as a brother, Stephen also had three sisters named Alice, Juliana and Joan.[169] Stephen appears to have been named after his father, who for the purposes of clarity can be called Stephen Castelyn senior. He in turn was most probably one of the two sons of Robert

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164 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 174r.-175r.

165 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 174v.

166 Stephen Castelyn's age at the time of the trials is twice given as 23 and he confessed to holding heretical opinions for four years: LPL: Reg, Warham, vol. i, fols. 169v., 174r., 161v.

167 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 169v.

168 CKS: PRC 3/3/77; PRC 17/11/183.

169 We know about Stephen's sisters because they were remembered in Joan Castelyn's testament of 1495: CKS: PRC 17/6/96.

Castelyn junior who died in 1487. Robert was one of the three sons of Robert Castelyn senior who died in 1473.[170]

To recap, the Castelyns had a hand in various craft and commercial enterprises as well as agriculture, and were one of Tenterden's more enduring and increasingly important families in this period. Until the 1520s, their testamentary piety was conspicuously parsimonious, and Stephen Castelyn's great grandfather and his father before him, made wills which were devoid of explicitly religious bequests. By the early sixteenth century the family's middling-to-upper wealth and status was confirmed by increasing local political involvement and power. This rise in fortune toward the heights reached later in the century, appears to have brought with it a closer engagement with orthodox religious devotion, seen in the wills made by Stephen's uncle and cousin, and expressed in more unsparing bequests, albeit by no means embracing all the trappings of Catholicism and the cult of saints adopted by some other influential testators. In particular, they displayed a keen adherence to the Jesus mass at Tenterden.

The implications of Stephen Castelyn's involvement in Lollardy in the early sixteenth century, are well illustrated by his family's role in parochial administration. In 1505, 1506 and 1515, Stephen's uncle Richard Castelyn, is listed among Tenterden's *parochiani* in visitation returns, and his cousin Christopher Castelyn was churchwarden in 1521 and 1522.[171] It was probably connections like these which enabled Lollardy to flourish unharmed until 1511, and the Castelyns' even greater hand in parochial government after the trials, suggests that the balance of power had by no means shifted against those in the town, who were sympathetic and susceptible to heresy.

We know much less about William Pellond's involvement in Lollardy, but the familial context of his divergence into heresy is strikingly similar to Stephen Castelyn's. Only the record of Pellond's sentence survives, dated 17 December 1511, which confined him to within two miles of the monastery of Boxley for the rest of his life, providing always that the archbishop might relax his sentence.[172] The Pellonds were also a long established family in Tenterden, with a hand in trade and craft activities, and considerable wealth by the late fifteenth century, which by the early sixteenth, coupled with professional skills, placed them firmly within the middling stratum of local society, and ensured them a share in minor office-holding.[173] Before the second decade of the century, like the Castelyns, their testamentary piety was frugal, or at most, modest in its religious arrangements. Significantly, William's father and grandfather made the most

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170 For this and what follows, see Chapter Five.

171 CCAL: Z.3.2, fols. 4v., 25v.; Z.3.3, fol. 51v.; Z.3.4, fols. 20r., 68r.

172 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 175v.

173 On this topic, it seems unlikely that the William Pellond who was imprisoned for heresy in 1511, became a freeman of Tenterden around 1529, as McSheffrey proposes (*Gender and Heresy*, p. 125). It was probably his cousin Moyse Pellond's son, William Pellond, who died in 1540: CKS: PRC 3/3/47.

religiously sparse wills of all among their kinsfolk. By around the early 1520s, they too developed a new approach to will-making which comprised a greater generosity of religious giving, which nevertheless held back from full-blown Catholicism, and noticeably, devotion to saints. Again, like the Castelyns, these wills display, from possibly as early as 1511, a marked continuity of affiliation to the Jesus mass. In addition, they contained a common strand of charitable and public works.

In the context of Stephen Castelyn's and William Pellond's involvement in Lollardy, the tenor of their families' testamentary piety takes on new significance. It allows us to appreciate the religious importance of attitudes which led to parsimoniousness in testamentary expression, and the social and economic changes which paved the way for these families to embrace what might be described as reformist tendencies within orthodox piety. In their most popular form, especially at Tenterden, these were encapsulated in a simple and possibly increasingly interiorised Christocentrism in the shape of the Jesus mass, rather than the cult of saints, and to a lesser extent, in humanitarian charity rather than religiously orthodox generosity.[174] There is still a lot of exploring to be done into the possible radical potential of the Jesus mass in late medieval England, and not least in terms of its appeal to families and groups in urban society which were also attracted to Lollardy.

The Castelyn and Pellond wills represent an extremity of orthodox piety which appears to have rendered its adherents particularly susceptible to Lollardy. They contain nothing which was contrary to the Lollard ideas which were in circulation at the time, and perhaps even much in concert with them. The absence of devotion to the saints matches the Wealden Lollards' own rejection of saints' cults, and the religious parsimony of the earlier family wills suggests their writers were distanced from the institutions, forms and structures of orthodox devotion. Such a tendency may in part have been inspired by, or may have had the potential of diverging into, scepticism of the traditional authority of the clergy in religious life, and so to a rejection of its sacramental basis. That Lollardy appealed to individuals in such families is hardly surprising; their piety made them ripe for conversion.

Larry Poos's work on rural Essex in this period provides a useful comparison to these developments in the Weald. He found signs that among "the broad middling range

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174 On the reformist nature of these trends see for example: Jones, 'Lollards and Images', pp. 28-9, 34, 49; W.A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1955), pp. 259, 189ff.; Dickens, *English Reformation*, pp. 31-7, 97-102. The reformer and humanist John Colet played an important role in the life and enhancement of the archetypal Fraternity of the Holy Name of Jesus, in the Crowds of St Paul's Cathedral: *Registrum Statutorum*, pp. 441, 484. Peter Clark uses the term *reformist* to classify wills made in Kent in the Tudor period, which omit mention of the saints from dedicatory clauses. It is used here in the broader sense, of those wills, and those families' wills, which in their entirety reflect reforming trends within orthodox religion: Clark, *Englich Provincial Society*, pp. 58-9. For problems with Clark's method and others like it, see Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 504ff.

of rural people", there existed a scepticism of secular and ecclesiastical authority, which produced a reactionary "desire for greater involvement in communal life", a growing parochial activism and an essentially conservative concern for the morality of local clergy. This would help to explain the dynamics of Castelyn and Pellond piety and of other families like them. Of equal pertinence is Poos's suggestion that in Essex, these attitudes were "reinforced by both theologically orthodox and Lollard-influenced lay piety".[175] The increasing presence of families like the Castelyns and Pellonds in communal life from the early sixteenth century, heralded a new involvement in structures of authority whose traditional claims had been questioned for some time by adherents to Lollard ideas in and around Tenterden, and which may well have been more openly and widely criticized within the orthodox community. Whilst the likes of Stephen Castelyn and William Pellond were attracted to Lollardy, and so became involved in active dissent, their kinsmen engaged in a different sort of activism - certainly more orthodox, and probably more integrated into the mainstream of religious life. It was nevertheless, a refashioning of traditional piety which had the same moral and intellectual roots as Lollardy at Tenterden.

The appeal of Lollardy

Historians have given a number of possible explanations for the continuity of Lollardy and what seems to have been a general susceptibility to religious dissent on the Weald and in other areas like the Chiltern Hundreds. One of the earliest of these explanations seizes upon the existence of a Wealden cloth industry which it is argued, created the networks along which textile middlemen spread Lollard ideas to economically insecure wage-earning artisans, who were the obvious audience for anti-clericalism and "chiliastic prophecies". The main proponent of this thesis is J.F. Davis, who after A.G. Dickens, argues that whilst it was from academics like White and Drayton "that the conventicles originated. Once established", they "were aided by the textile connection in which they had been planted".[176] Davis's thesis has recently been criticized for its lack of hard evidence, particularly in relation to the Tenterden area, and there are a number of reasons for rejecting the cloth industry as a significant factor in the appeal and survival of Lollardy there.[177]

To begin with, there is no evidence that Tenterden was ever a significant broadcloth centre comparable to Cranbrook, and its surrounding parishes of Goudhurst,

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175 Poos, *Rural Society*, p. 273.

176 Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants*, pp. 8-15, 48; Davis, 'Lollard Survival', pp. 191-201, cit. at p. 197.

177 McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, p. 194, n.201.

Hawkhurst, Staplehurst and Biddenden.[178] Any influence which Continental ideas had upon religious sentiments in the Weald through the influx of Flemish weavers into the Cranbrook district in the fourteenth century, seems to have been limited. There are signs of foreign doctrines among the Lollard suspects at Staplehurst, and the extreme sacramentarianism of Kentish Lollardy from the early fifteenth century may have owed something to these influences, but they played no obvious part in the conversions of the early sixteenth century.[179] It is partly the presumed mobility of cloth-workers which has made them appear such ideal carriers of Lollard ideas, but recent work on rural mobility in Essex, has shown that wage-earning cloth-workers were not as mobile as craftsmen and retailers, although textile middlemen were probably a different matter.[180] Finally, Wealden cloth workers have been portrayed as increasingly economically downtrodden and insecure in this period, giving them the psychological incentives for attraction to anti-clerical and millenarian doctrines. However, there is no evidence of millenarianism in the Tenterden area, and there is good reason to believe, as shown above, that Lollardy was not socially marginalised, but drew interested followers from well established and leading families, and was not restricted to an artisan under-class as proposed by J.F. Davis.[181]

This is not to rule out completely however, all possible connections between religious dissent and artisanal occupation. On the basis of this reconstruction of the social and economic context of Lollardy in Tenterden, there does appear to have been just such a link. To some extent, the families with the greatest involvement in craft or industrial activities adhered to pious traditions most akin to Lollardy, and they were more susceptible to conversion to its beliefs. The occupational profile of Wealden Lollardy, as in other areas, is also suggestive on this score.[182]

Foxe mentions that William Everden of Tenterden, who fled to East Anglia shortly before 1428, had "wrought" with a man called William Taylor for a month and had refused to be like "a scribe or a pharisee" by going to church one Sunday, but "did sit all day upon the table at work".[183] The occupations of nine male suspects in 1511-12

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178 See Chapter Five; Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, pp. 154-6; Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, ch. 11; Witney, *Jutish Forest*, p. 147; Kaye-Smith, *Weald of Kent and Sussex*, pp. 152-5; Furley, 'Early History of Tenterden', p. 53.

179 For suggestions of the possible importance of Continental ideas among cloth workers, see: Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants*, p. 14; Davis, 'Lollard Survival', p. 201; *idem*, *Heresy and Reformation*, p. 4. On foreign immigration, see Furley, 'Early History of Tenterden', p. 53; Witney, *Jutish Forest*, pp. 146-7. For the possible influence of Continental ideas at Staplehurst, see above.

180 Davis, 'Lollard Survival', *passim*; Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants*, pp. 8-15, 48; Poos, *Rural Society*, pp. 280-1; M. Spufford, 'Importance of religion', p. 54.

181 Davis, 'Lollard Survival', pp. 198-200. Lambert argues against this sort of interpretation, in *Medieval Heresy*, pp. 240, 259.

182 Davis, 'Lollard Survival', *passim*, but esp. 193; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 128-33.

183 Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, vol. iii, pp. 596-7. This example is cited by Davis as an example of a Wealden Lollard clothworker, but McSheffrey is quite right to point out that it proves nothing more

are recorded in Warham's register, namely John Browne, Stephen Castelyn and Edward Walker, cutlers; William Carder, textor; Robert Bright and William Bukherst, shoemakers/cordwainers; William Riche, glover; John Dodde, fletcher, and Christopher Grebill, tailor. Whether or not the occupations of these men made them more open to heterodoxy, trade connections do appear to have provided some of the weak ties and everyday or occasional relationships which helped to hold the geographically disparate Kentish Lollard groups together, and drew new converts into the more closed circles of the conventicle or household meeting.[184]

For example, William Carder had first spoken to John Grebill senior while working at a loom in the latter's house.[185] Stephen Castelyn's more than occasional presence in the Maidstone area, suggests that he may have been apprenticed or regularly worked or traded there, away from his home parish and family in Tenterden. There is the tantalizing possibility that he was apprenticed to Walker, who like Castelyn, was a cutler. John Browne of Ashford was also a cutler, and he had links through William Baker of Cranbrook with the Maidstone group. "Upon seynt martis day" 1509, William Ryche of Benenden, glover, had talked about the sacrament of the altar with Robert Harryson of Canterbury at a fair held in Tenterden, a meeting which may have originated out of business.[186]

The increasing literacy of craftsmen and tradesmen is also seen as a factor in the appeal of an essentially book-centred heresy.[187] The slight bias to professional occupations among religiously moderate and frugal families suggests that this may also have been a factor in Tenterden.[188] However, those who seek to explain the attraction of Lollardy to so-called artisans, link literacy with what they see as certain predisposing attitudes. So, Michael Lambert argues that it was "Lollardy's appeal to independent judgement", which made it attractive "to a class in which literacy was incipient, and

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than that Everden was engaged in some sort of craft activity: Davis, 'Lollard Survival', p. 193; McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, p. 195, n.201.

184 On weak ties and Lollardy, see McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, pp. 47-8ff., who argues that the conventicle itself provided weak ties. For the theory of weak ties, see Mark Granovetter, 'The Strength of Weak Ties', *American Journal of Sociology*, lxxviii (1973), pp. 1360-80, and Granovetter, 'The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited', in Peter V. Marsden and Nan Lin, eds., *Social Structure and Network Analysis* (California, 1982), pp. 105-30. For discussion of the pre-existing social bonds along which heresy moved, see McSheffrey, *ibid.*, pp. 74ff.; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp. 130-1. See also, Davies, 'Lollardy ad Locality', pp. 194-200. On the importance of the mobility and connections of craftsmen and tradesmen, see Dickens, *English Reformation*, pp. 51-2; Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, pp. 257-8.

185 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fol. 169v.

186 LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 174r.-175r., 173r., 172r. For discussion of the trading links between leather workers and suppliers, and the importance of the shops of shoemakers, glovers and tailors as meeting places for the exchange of information, see M. Spufford, 'Importance of religion', p. 53; L.A. Clarkson, 'The Organization of the English Leather Industry in the Late Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *EcHR*, 2nd series, xiii (1960-1), pp. 245-56.

187 Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, pp. 242-3, 251; McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, pp. 143, 148.

188 See above.

which included hard-working, independent people anxious to learn and to form judgements for themselves". He goes on, "The assumptions and outlook of the craftsman, which made a minority susceptible to the Lollard mission, were what counted".[189] This thesis owes a great deal to A.G. Dickens's claims of the artisan's tendency to act and think as individualists, which he thought stemmed from "an old and fiercely independent tradition deriving from medieval town-life".[190] There is however, little evidence to suggest that craftsmen were especially individualistic, and in itself, individualism does not necessarily suggest a greater openness to heresy. If there was any such thing as an artisan mentality in late medieval and early modern England, it has yet to be adequately described or explained.

Leaving these more instinctive theories to one side, others have sought to explain the appeal of religious dissent, not merely in terms of the attitudes of artisans but in the wider context of the social and economic conditions in areas and regions identified as more or less continuous centres of nonconformity. One type of region first highlighted by Professor Everitt, as a breeding ground for dissent, was the forest, choosing Nonconformity in the Weald of Kent in the late seventeenth century as a case study. In seeking to look beyond the traditional association between dissent and the cloth industry, Everitt suggests that cloth making and Nonconformity were coincidental symptoms of "certain local characteristics peculiar to the society and settlement pattern of these areas".[191] It is now almost taken for granted that the exceptionally large parishes of the mid-Kent Weald and the scattered nature of settlement within and across their boundaries, hampered regular church attendance and encouraged independent religion.[192] In Tenterden in the late medieval period, it was just these sorts of conditions which led to the establishment of a degree of independence in religious life for the people of Small Hythe, who appear to have developed their own distinctive brand of orthodoxy. This may be one reason why Lollardy never seems to have gained a foothold in the township, and was largely concentrated in the northern half of the parish. In addition to this, and as already suggested in Chapter Five, scattered settlement may have helped foster divergent attitudes to religion through the fashioning of sub-parochial identities.

According to Everitt, the "comparative weakness of the local manorial structure", the absence of powerful gentry, and the Weald's isolation, which ensured its remoteness from ecclesiastical control, all helped to make it a safe haven for dissenters; a

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189 Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, pp. 243, 251, 259.

190 Dickens, *Lollards and Protestants*, p. 8. See also, Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York, 1971), p. 663.

191 For this and what follows: A. Everitt, 'Nonconformity in Country Parishes', in J. Thirsk, ed., *Land, Church and People, Essays presented to Professor H.P.R. Finberg* (The Agricultural History Review, xviii (1970), Supplement), pp. 178-99, cit. at p. 189.

192 Christopher Hill has also noted the existence of large parishes in dissenting areas: 'Lollards to Levellers', *passim*.

point also made by Christopher Hill with relation to the geographical spread of radical dissent in general.[193] To a certain extent Tenterden fits this model, but with its role in the Cinque Ports Confederation, domestic and overseas trade, and ancient ties with the great monastic houses of Kent, the town was far from dislocated from outside influences and authorities, whether religious or secular. In fact, in the early sixteenth century, some important county gentry families were thoroughly involved in local affairs and may have had a significant influence on the course of religion in the area. Nevertheless, there is something persuasive about Everitt's vaguely elucidated "restless individualism" and "freedom of the wold" which, he argues, was created by conditions of relative isolation. Andrew Hope may be approaching the truth in suggesting that "it was not difficult for the Weald to know what was going on in the outside world, but rather more difficult for the outside world to know what was going on in the Weald."[194]

A slightly different approach to these problems involves exploring the common social and economic features of industrialising regions for possible explanations of the continuity of their heterodoxy.[195] Joan Thirsk's pioneering work on 'Industries in the Countryside', and the endeavours of others after her, have given us a clearer understanding of the nature of the regional economies and societies, which were host to handicraft by-industries from the late middle ages onwards. Thanks to them, it has now been established that these regions had a number of things in common, the Weald of Kent being no exception. Chiefly: mixed pastoral agriculture of dairying, breeding and fattening, conducted by small farmers with relatively secure tenures, a high density of population, sufficient resources of pasture and/or wood to sustain partible inheritance and the absence or weakness of any manorial or co-operative farming framework.[196] What is less clear is why regions with these features were conspicuous for their traditions of dissent from the Lollards onwards. Margaret Spufford suggests three possible explanations. Where there was the time and necessity for by-employments and handicrafts, there was also time for reading; areas engaged in the sizeable export or import of cloth, cattle, leather, timber or grain were connected by regular trade to one another and to London, and in turn, they also had strong trade links with Protestant

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193 Everitt, 'Nonconformity in Country Parishes', p. 191; Everitt, *Continuity and Colonization*, pp. 221-2; Hill, 'Lollards to Levellers', *passim*. See also, Brown, *Popular Piety*, pp. 219-222, where dislocation from ecclesiastical control and certain social, economic and demographic features shared by the cloth towns of the claylands of Berkshire, Wiltshire and Dorset, are presented as important factors in creating susceptibility to heresy and dissent.

194 From private correspondence.

195 For an excellent, although perhaps overly sceptical survey and discussion of this approach, see M. Spufford, 'Importance of Religion', pp. 40-64, esp. references on pp. 40-1 nn.22, 128.

196 J. Thirsk, 'Industries in the Countryside', in F.J. Fisher, ed., *Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 70-88; M. Spufford, 'Importance of religion', pp. 40-64. On the Weald, in addition to Thirsk, see the recent, Zell, *Industry in the Countryside*, *passim*.

Europe. These factors ensured a steady flow of ideas and a moderate supply of books, both old and new.[197]

To a greater or lesser extent, Tenterden shared these features, and they probably played their part in fostering and sustaining dissent. Handicrafts were not as important in Tenterden as they were in cloth centres like Cranbrook, but it is possible that the bias to craft and industrial activities among those families involved in, and on the fringes of Lollardy, allowed them time to read and discuss heretical literature. The ways in which the trade connections of tailors, cutlers and glovers helped spread and nurture dissent within and beyond the Weald, have been touched on already. However, although Tenterden did have strong links with Europe, this does not explain the continuity of Lollardy from the early fifteenth to the early sixteenth centuries. Continental doctrines probably only became important from the eve of the Reformation onwards, although northern European sentiments may have had a much more enduring influence on the people of Tenterden and Small Hythe.

Notwithstanding the validity of these profiles of the favourable conditions for religious dissent, the reconstruction of piety and heresy in Tenterden and its hinterland, offers a number of additional explanations which it is hoped, can be investigated in different settings in the future. In a sense these involve a return to the notion of an artisanal bias to heterodoxy, albeit rather different to J.F. Davis's and A.G. Dickens's formulations. To begin with, it was not so much artisans *per se* who were attracted to Lollardy at Tenterden, as a group of upwardly mobile crafts and tradesmen, some of whom were advancing from positions of moderate status to new levels of wealth and influence by the sixteenth century, at least some of whom belonged to large, stable and successful families. More important than industrial or craft activity in itself, were attitudes to the disposal and redistribution of family wealth, commercial advance and the fashioning of newly emerging urban identities in a small country town. A pious mentality which was centred firmly on the family, consequently tended to neglect communal and personal expressions of orthodox religion, which so often involved considerable expenditure. These attitudes were an inevitable feature of a region of small and late enclosed farms, where, as Joan Thirsk suggested, the family rather than the hamlet or the village formed the "co-operative working unit".[198] Rapid commercial generation of wealth and upwards social mobility deserve much greater investigation, to see if these were noticeable features of other localities and regions with a continuity of Lollardy.

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197 M. Spufford, 'Importance of religion', pp. 40-64. Peter Clark puts the continuity between Lollardy and Lutheranism on the Weald down to good communication through trade with the rest of the country and abroad, together with "the absence of effective ecclesiastical policing". However, he also writes of "a strong tradition of multi-generational family loyalty to unorthodoxy" in Kent, which was "to be one of Lollardy's most valuable legacies to Kentish Protestantism": *idem*, *English Provincial Society*, pp. 30-31, 42.

198 Thirsk, 'Industries in the Countryside', p. 86.

Equally, very little work has been done on the links between Lollardy and emergent identities, especially in urban or semi-urban contexts.[199] As Professor Collinson suggests, "it seems unlikely that 'rural dissent' had a peculiarly rural character". At Tenterden it seems to have been especially urban, and may have been fostered by a culture which was defining itself in opposition to what was considered 'rural'. It is no accident that the core of the Spuffordians' recent work on heresy and Nonconformity in the countryside is centred on a market town and its commercial hinterland.[200]

Outside influences and currents of reform

In terms of the general complexion of local piety, long standing parish families of relatively high social status such as the Castelyns and the Pellonds, were most likely to have been among the trend-setters, and to have exerted a disproportionate influence upon patterns of religious devotion. It is also clear however, that they themselves were influenced by more powerful interest groups from both outside and inside the parish. Reconstruction of the Castelyns' and Pellonds' connections with parish and county gentry shows that the Weald was not as isolated as has been traditionally thought, that its distance from centres of authority may have been exploited by local gentry, and that their religious leanings by the early sixteenth century may have brought new and radical ideas to the area, as well as helping to provide a degree of protection from ecclesiastical scrutiny.

County and local power was especially in the hands of the gentry in Kent. Those large landowners which did exist were predominantly *rentiers* with estates concentrated in the east of the county. West Kent, the Weald included, was characterized by relatively small gentry estates of less than a thousand acres. By the mid-sixteenth century, Tenterden was typical of those large Wealden parishes which could "contain the estates - and the pretensions - of two or three gentry of the status of knight or esquire, as well as several smaller fry known only as 'gent'". These gentry landowners leased the vast proportion of their lands to a whole range of tenants, most of whom were relatively small men with no more than a hundred to a hundred and fifty acres and most twenty, thirty or fifty.[201] There was therefore much potential for the creation of complex relationships between townsfolk and local and county gentry.

199 Brown, *Popular Piety*, pp. 219-222.
200 Collinson, 'Critical conclusion', p. 390, and see Margaret Spufford's note on the same page.
201 Zell, 'Wood-Pasture Regime', p. 72.

By at least the beginning of the sixteenth century the Castelyns had seemingly strong connections with the Foule family.[202] The Pellonds also appear to have had frequent dealings with this family.[203] The Foules provided Tenterden with bailiffs on five separate occasions from 1480 to 1540 and by 1541, probably due to a combination of both office holding and aspiration, John Foule was describing himself, or was being described as *generosus*.[204] They were one of only two of the twenty-three selected families which were religiously generous in their testamentary piety, and which continued to rise in status and influence after 1500. They were also among those families who patronised the Jesus mass; a reminder that the devotion was not the preserve of one particular pious clique.[205] Equally, these links serve to stress that leading parish families following quite different pious traditions worked together in both official and unofficial contexts. Importantly in this context, the Foules probably represent the next notch up from the Castelyns and Pellonds in Tenterden's social hierarchy. They were one of those families who occupied the ambiguous grey area between yeomen-townsfolk and lesser gentry.

Another family, with whom the Castelyns, Pellonds and the Foules all had connections were the Haleses.[206] "By a combination of ruthless ambition, financial

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202 The wills of Joan, Katherine and Christopher Castelyn all reveal links with the Foules: CKS: PRC 17 6 96; PRC 17/11/183; PRC 17/21/58. Richard Castelyn witnessed Katherine Foule's will in 1519, and Christopher Castelyn witnessed William Foule's in 1532: CKS: PRC 17/15/64; PRC 17/19/273. There were also instances when Richard and Christopher acted as witnesses or feoffees for other testators in concert with members of the Foule family: Agnes Bocher, 1500, CKS: PRC 17/7/250; Joan Gerves, widow, 1504, CKS: PRC 17/10/19; Philip Harynden, 1513, CKS: PRC 17/12/312; George Strekynbold, 1524, CKS: PRC 17/16/269.

203 Thomas Foule witnessed Richard Pellond's will in 1525 and in the same year, Bartholomew Pellond acted as witness to George Foule junior's: CKS: PRC 17/16/244; PRC 17/16/239. In 1495, "William Pellond senior" is recorded as one of the witnesses to the handing over of a parcel of lands in which, among other persons, William Foule had been enfeoffed: BL: Add. Ch. 16330. In 1499, "William Pellond junior" and George Foule were feoffees for John at Hell (Hales): BL: Add. Ms. 48022, fols. 26r., 27v. Finally, in 1543, John Foule and his wife Elizabeth sold a messuage, garden and 24 acres of land in Heronden to William Pellond for £24: Te/S1, fols. 43v.-44r.

204 CKS: Te/C1, fols. 140r.-141r.: William Foule, 1480-81; Bartholomew Foule, 1514-16; George Foule, 1524-5 and 1525-6; John Foule junior, 1535-6, 1539-40 and 1540-1. CKS: U455/T87. Titles inferring gentry status were often used by civic officials and sometimes scribes working for town governments by the fifteenth century, but they nevertheless indicate a relatively high degree of social status: R. Horrox, 'The Urban Gentry in the Fifteenth Century', in J.A.F. Thomson, ed., *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century* (Gloucester, 1988), pp. 28-30.

205 Katherine Foule, widow, 1519: CKS: PRC 17/16/64; George Foule junior, 1525: CKS: PRC 17/16/239.

206 Richard Castelyn was executor with John Hales to John Symme's will of 1498: CKS: PRC 17/8/41. In 1500, he was witness with Christopher Hales and George Foule to Agnes Bocher's: CKS: PRC 17/7/250. In 1495, John Hales of Tenterden may have been attorney to the family of the late Thomas Elnode, when lands in which William Foule had been jointly enfeoffed, were passed to Elnode's son - the deed being witnessed by "William Pellond senior": BL: Add. Ch. 16330. In 1511, John Hales, gent., and Bartholomew Foule are recorded as two of William Newlond's feoffees in his will: CKS: PRC 17/11/188. They can be seen fulfilling their responsibilities to Newlond in a number of deeds dated up to 1521: CKS: U410/T21; U455/T88. In 1541, Edward Hales, *generosus*, was involved in land transactions with John Foule, *generosus*: CKS: U455/T87.

acumen and a sound marriage strategy the family had reached county gentry status by the mid-sixteenth century".[207] The Hales' original seat, Hales Place, was in the neighbouring parish of High Halden, but Henry Hales moved to Tenterden in the latter half of the fifteenth century and through marriage and purchase, the family estate was built up in Tenterden over three generations. Henry Hales died in 1464 and in his will devised most of his estate to his son John, but also provided for sons named Stephen and William, a monk of St Augustine's Canterbury and a canon respectively, a daughter Mildred who was it seems, soon to take religious orders, and Thomas and Henry who also appear to have been intended for holy orders, although the former subsequently married. His son John, made his will in 1498 which is largely taken up with arrangements for the family, although he did leave 20d to repairs of St. Mildred's and if they went un-inherited, lands to be sold to fund a chantry for two years. Neither of these wills are anything like as religiously generous as many others made by leading Tenterden families, although the family were clearly actively religious. In the early sixteenth century Sir John Hales, of the Dungeon, Canterbury and grandson of Henry, held the family seat and it was subsequently inherited by his third son, Edward Hales esquire.[208] John Hales served as bailiff in Tenterden in 1504-5, but his professional and political careers were to take him further afield.[209] After becoming a member of Gray's Inn he built up his reputation as a lawyer both in London and beyond, and was elected M.P. for Canterbury in 1514. In 1522 he was appointed third baron of the exchequer and was promoted to second baron in 1528, a position he held until his death in 1539. He was also Chief Steward to Christ Church Priory, and acted as Steward to the powerful Guldeford family, a relationship which brought many benefits including the opportunity to add a hundred acres of the Guldeford estate in Tenterden and Ebony to his own, by purchase, in the 1530's. Although his religious convictions cannot easily be separated from his political commitments, it would seem that by the late 1530's he tended towards the conservative in terms of attitudes to reform of the church. Not only his son-in-law Walter Hendley, but also his cousin, Christopher Hales, were among the conservative group of magistrates who reacted against Protestant reform in the late 1530s and early 1540s.[210]

Christopher Hales's career was however, far from unambiguous, and suggests that he and his kinsmen sought some degree of reform of the old religious order. Also a member of Gray's Inn, he became M.P. for Canterbury in 1523, Solicitor-general in 1525 and was appointed Attorney-general in 1529. His career was capped by becoming Master

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207 Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', p. 295; Rev. R. Cox Hales, 'Brief Notes on the Hales Family', *Arch. Cant.*, xiv (1882), pp. 61-64.

208 Hasted, *History of Kent*, vol. vii, pp. 200ff., 224; CKS: PRC 17/1/168; PRC 17/1/465.

209 CKS: Te/C1, fol. 140v.

210 *DNB*: Hales, Sir James (d. 1554); Clark, *English Provincial Society*, pp. 13, 41, 55; Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', p. 296.

of the Rolls in 1536. In 1533 he was actively involved in the investigation of Elizabeth Barton, the Nun of Kent, who had quickly become a focus of popular Catholic sentiment. In the 1530s he formed an important part of Thomas Cromwell's patronage network in the county, probably worked with him in drafting and enacting the early Reformation legislation, and benefited greatly in the process from grants of lands which had formerly belonged to the monasteries of Kent. In 1540 he paid over £670 for lands in Kent including woodland in the north of the parish. Once he was established politically - and perhaps once he had come out from under the shadow of Cromwell - his lack of sympathy for more sweeping reform, particularly at the level of parochial religion, meant that he took an essentially conservative line. His sense of antagonism toward popular Protestant radicalism is best illustrated by the quarter sessions of 1538, at which his own group of magistrates took the opportunity to persecute Protestants in the parishes of Kent.[211]

A third member of the family, Sir James Hales, the eldest son of Sir John Hales, was however, more committed to change. He earned a reputation as a leading Protestant lawyer, and among other things, drafted the Chantries Act of 1547. It was probably not just obstinacy or a zeal for the letter of the law which led to his clash with the Marian regime in 1553. His insistence that Catholics be prosecuted for nonconformity at the Kent assizes of that year landed him in prison. He may already have been imbalanced before this, but the experience of imprisonment and the arguments of a colleague and other men who visited him in the Fleet, appear to have driven him to try to take his own life. Shortly after his release in 1554, he was more successful, drowning himself in a stream outside Canterbury.[212]

The Hales family therefore represent something of a mixed reaction to the changes of the Reformation period. John and Christopher were it seems, willing to move with the times, especially when there were such great gains to be made in office and seigneurial lordship. Basically orthodox in their religious sentiments, they were it seems motivated by an anti-clericalism which was directed most forcibly against the monasteries. James moved much faster than his father and cousin, perhaps too readily for his own good. Whilst John and Christopher would have been hostile to Lollardy, their desire for limited Erastian reform was not incompatible with the sort of piety expressed by families like the Castelyns and Pellonds, from the teens and twenties of the sixteenth century. That the family still had a strong influence in Tenterden politics by the early 1540s, is shown by the fact that Edward Hales esquire, the successor to the family seat, served as bailiff on three occasions between 1538 and 1548.[213]

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211 *DNB*, Hales, Christopher; Clark, *English Provincial Society*, pp. 37, 40, 54, 57, 62, 63; Roberts, 'Tenterden Houses', p. 296; *L & P*, vol. xv, 942 (61)..

212 *DNB*, Hales, Sir James; Clark, *English Provincial Society*, pp. 41, 81.

213 CKS: Te/C1, fol. 141r.

The Guldefords were probably the most important gentry family with considerable influence in Tenterden. Connections between members of the Guldeford family, the Foules, the Castelyns, the Pellonds and the Haleses underline how the nature of landholding, the landmarket and local politics in the Weald, brought townsfolk and gentry into close contact.[214] The Guldefords were one of the two leading county gentry families in central and west Kent. They held perhaps three to four thousand acres centred on the manor of Halden in Rolvenden, and by the early sixteenth century they had acquired two manors in neighbouring Tenterden. By the late 1530s they possessed over a thousand acres of arable, pasture, wood, scrub land, park land and marsh, in addition to ten houses, two water mills and a large number of hen-houses, mainly situated in the south and east of the parish as well as in Ebony.[215] The Weald was very much within the Guldeford sphere of influence, and Tenterden perhaps their greatest power-base in their struggles with the Nevilles in the early sixteenth century, to the extent that in 1505 Sir Edward Guldeford was able to close Tenterden market as an act of retaliation against Neville aggression. Edward Guldeford's correspondence with Wolsey in 1528 reveals a positively proprietorial attitude to the Weald and adjacent Marsh during a time of acute dearth and disorder. Control of the Cinque Ports was a cherished prize in the conflict with the Nevilles, and by the early 1520s, the Lord Wardenship was in Guldeford hands, further adding to their influence at Tenterden. The long-running conflict between these two families was expressed in religious terms, the Nevilles becoming identified with Catholic opposition to Henrician reform, whilst the Guldefords built up a reputation for unorthodoxy.[216]

When Sir John Guldeford made his intensely orthodox will in 1493 and wished his "out beryng to be made not pomposely" and that at his year's mind a plain stone with epitaphs rather than a tomb be laid on him, he left a portent of his family's radical stance in the future.[217] In the late 1520s when anti-clericalism had gathered pace in Kent, the Guldefords led the attack on Church Court fees. They were also intellectually important, as Sir Henry Guldeford was a friend and correspondent of Erasmus, and the family were instrumental in circulating humanist ideas among the government circle of the county,

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214 In 1524 Christopher Castelyn, George Guldeford esquire, and George Foule senior are recorded as three of George Strekynbold's feoffees in his will in which John Hales, "third baron of the king, esquire", is mentioned: CKS: PRC 17/16/269. In 1526, George Guldeford esquire, John Hales and Christopher Hales were all included in Thomas Wode's will: CKS: PRC 17/17/158. Interestingly, in a feoffment of 1475 lands in Tenterden passed from John Guldeford, knight, to John Seler of Reading Street, Katherine Castelyn's father: CKS: U55/T414. Lastly, Edward Hales, *generosus*, John Foule, *generosus* and George Guldeford, *armiger*, appear together in property indentures in 1541: CKS: U455/T87.

215 Clark, *English Provincial Society*, pp. 6-7. Hasted, *History of Kent*, vol. vii, pp. 183ff., 206ff. For details of the Guldeford estate in Tenterden, are found in CKS: U455/T87; Te/S1, fols. 5r.-15v.

216 Clark, *English Provincial Society*, pp. 14-20, 51-4; *L & P*, vol. iv, 4334, 4414, 4455, 4627, 5031.

217 PRO: P.C.C. 29 Dogett, fol. 223.

ideas which may have provided one of the main sources of inspiration for the radical Protestant group centred on Canterbury, which emerged over the next decade. At the same time, Lutheranism began to take root on the Weald and in the Medway valley, the areas where the Guldeford clan held greatest sway.[218]

Especially because of their struggles with the religiously conservative Nevilles, the Guldefords may have found it convenient to provide a safe environment for some of their less than orthodox neighbours in and around Tenterden in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. Political motives may have been mixed with pragmatism to cause Sir Edward Guldeford to write to Wolsey in 1528, asking him to release Nicholas Whyte of Winchelsea who had been arrested on suspicion of heresy, in order for him to attend to sea defences on Walland Marsh.[219] There was after all at this time an alliance between Tenterden as a rising urban centre, and the interests of gentry families who sought to take advantage of new industrial developments on the Weald. Good relations with leading parish and town families like the Castelyns, Pellonds and Foules would have been the very building blocks of sound policy and economic advancement. For example, among the names of the men of the Cinque Ports in the Retinue of Sir Edward Guldeford in 1524 was one William Pellond.[220] It was perhaps through connections like these, that families which had previously erred into heresy, learned new and radical ideas which appealed to their own moralising piety. It is possible that the ease with which new converts were made to Lollardy in the early sixteenth century, and the subsequent precocious development of Protestantism in the region, owed something to the Guldeford's political ambitions and patronage networks. The Guldefords took advantage of the vacuum created by the Weald's isolation from those structures of government which worked to shore up traditional religion elsewhere in the county, and had a vested interest in keeping things that way. As a result they may have helped to maintain the cohesion of a regional culture which fostered dissenting mentalities.

The Guldeford's interest in humanism suggests that Wealden culture was richer and more diverse than previously thought. Their local influence may have provided a passage for new ideas to enter the minds of townsfolk already predisposed to intellectual novelty. Moreover, it was not the first time that the New Learning had had a presence in Tenterden. John Morer (or Moeer), vicar of Tenterden from 1479 to 1489 made a will which not only reveals that he was "active in humanistic studies" but "is perhaps unique in its suggestion of the personality of the author and of the intellectual milieu of a country vicar at the beginning of Henry VII's reign - certainly not a typical vicar, but

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218 Clark, *English Provincial Society*, pp. 29-30, 42.

219 *L & P*, vol. iv, 4627; *ibid.*, vol. vi, 7 (most probably misdated to 1533). I would like to thank Andrew Hope for kindly bringing this reference to my attention.

220 *L & P*, vol. iv, 459.

probably not a unique one either."[221] Morer bequeathed a total of fifty books to friends, including laymen as well as clergy and religious, to churches, grammar schools and colleges. Many of these were Latin works firmly rooted in medieval traditions of liturgy, pastoral care and theology, but a number were humanistic, and some of these were in Greek. He left five books and £10 to the humanist Thomas Linacre, who was at that time studying in Florence but who would become famous for his Greek scholarship and service as royal physician to Henry VII and Henry VIII. Two of these are unnamed Greek texts, and the other three in Latin, of which two fell within the scope of humanism. Perhaps the most significant of the books which Morer bequeathed, was by Laurentius Valla, which Josephine Bennett supposes was the *Elegantiae Linguae Latinae*. He gave it to Master John Williamson, Rector of the Church of St. George in Canterbury. Valla was one of the most crucial building blocks in Erasmus's development of New Testament scholarship, although it is thought that he did not discover him until 1504. Morer and Williamson may therefore have been important figures in the formulation of humanist thinking in the late fifteenth century. Indeed, Morer may have taught Linacre his Greek.[222]

It is probably nothing more than a coincidence but nonetheless worth noting, that Tenterden and the parish of St. George were linked in a different, although perhaps not altogether unrelated context. The Lollards, Agnes Ive, sister to Robert Hilles of Tenterden, her late husband John Ive, and Agnes Chetynden all lived in Williamson's parish. It is possible that around the same time as Williamson received the books bequeathed to him by Morer, Agnes and perhaps also John arrived there from the Weald.[223]

Morer's bequests not only reflect the course of his academic career, but his part in the intellectual life of the county, Oxford and London. In addition to Canterbury and Magdalen Colleges, Oxford, and Eton, he remembered the grammar schools at Christ Church and St. Augustine's, Canterbury, and the schools at Wye and Ashford. He also left books to the master of St. Thomas of Acon, one of London's most important grammar schools. Even with these connections, Morer was far from removed from local life. For one thing, he requested burial in the chancel of St. Mildred's, which suggests a certain attachment to Tenterden. The tombstone which can still be seen in the floor on

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221 Taylor, 'Rectors and Vicars of St. Mildred's', pp. 215-6; PRO: P.C.C. 20 Milles, fols. 161v.-162v. See also H.R. Plomer, 'Books Mentioned in Wills', *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, vii (1904), pp. 118-9. Citation is from: Josephine W. Bennett, 'John Morer's Will: Thomas Linacre and Prior Sellyng's Greek Teaching', *Studies in the Renaissance*, xv (1968), p. 70. This last reference and the thoughts which follow regarding the significance of Morer's ownership of the work by Valla were supplied to me by Andrew Hope.

222 Bennett, 'John Morer's Will', pp. 70-1, 86-7; Taylor, 'Rectors and Vicars of St Mildred's', pp. 215-6; Dickens, *English Reformation*, p. 76; Jerry H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ: New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1983), pp. 33, 34, 54, 49, 161-2.

223 See above.

the north side of the high altar bearing an indent of a figure in priestly vestments, may be Morer's. The range of bequests to local friends, neighbours and associates "suggests that he was a warmly gregarious individual and shows that he shared his enthusiasm for books with the rectors of neighbouring parishes." Bennett continues, "I know of no other document which indicates a similar community of interest among the secular clergy of England" in the fifteenth century.[224] Among others, he deliberately selected volumes to be left to the Rectors of Biddenden, Sandhurst and Chartham, as well as other clergy in Maidstone and Canterbury and the Masters of the Friars Minor of Winchelsea, the Carmelites of Lossenham and the Trinitarian Friars of Moddenden. Significantly, to Sir John Guldeford he bequeathed a book of divers chronicles and histories. Perhaps Morer was responsible for the Guldeford's first introduction to humanist ideas, within a local intellectual environment which, although clearly having a lot to do with his own arrival at Tenterden, may have survived his death among neighbouring clergy and local parish families.

It is hard to believe that Morer did not exercise an influence over religious and intellectual culture in Tenterden in the 1480s. The presence of these types of books in the parish, and their circulation among clergy in the Weald, may have excited and fed the interests of townsfolk who had an interest in doctrine and the written word. Priests are known to have read religious texts to laypeople in this period, and so as was the case with Lollardy, literacy was not a pre-requisite for introduction to novel ideas.[225] Apart from the common link with St. George's parish in Canterbury, there is one other reason to connect Morer and Lollardy. One of Morer's executors was Moyse Pette, to whom he left his best quill. Pette belonged to a religiously moderate and influential Tenterden family which had been involved in the Tenterden rebellion of 1438, and in disturbances in 1471. From this it is feasible to conclude that some members of the family had at one stage been involved in heresy, or had at least been sympathizers. Moyse Pette's seemingly close relationship with Morer suggests that families which were drawn to radical dissent, were also attracted by intellectual radicalism.[226] Humanist influences at Tenterden may also partly explain the success of the Jesus mass there. John Colet, Dean of St Paul's was after all, one of the cult's greatest publicists and patrons. The traditional view that Colet was unsound towards heresy, is not demolished by the fact that he was present at the trials of John Brown of Ashford and Edward Walker of Maidstone, on 8 May 1511, and gives faint assent to the notion that Lollardy and the Jesus mass were each expressions of the same cultural changes.[227]

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224 Bennett, 'John Morer's Will', p. 87.

225 Swanson, *Catholic England*, p. 22.

226 See above.

227 Dickens, *English Reformation*, p. 100; John B. Gleason, *John Colet* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1989), pp. 239-40; LPL: Reg. Warham, vol. i, fols. 173r., 174r.

Families like the Castelyns and Pellonds are representative of a whole section of an emerging urban group in Tenterden which had been involved to some measure in Lollard heresy, and by the 1520s appear to have fashioned their own orthodox radicalism, which may well have been injected with new ideas from their social superiors. Another obvious continuity through families like these, not explored in depth here, is that between Lollardy and Protestantism. Firstly, Stephen Castelyn's and William Pellond's social status goes some way to bridging the social gulf set by Peter Clark, between Lollard "artisans" and "small peasant farmers" on the Weald, and converts there to Lutheranism who, in his opinion, tended to be "substantial men or clergy". If the Castelyns and the Pellonds are anything to go by, then any notion of social distinction between Protestants and Lollards needs to be revised. Secondly, the few available indications of these families' attitudes to radical reform, confirm these continuities. For example, in 1549, George Castelyn, the son of Christopher, gave evidence against the retention of Small Hythe chapel, and shortly afterwards, helped pull down the rood loft in St. Mildred's.[228] The religiously moderate or parsimonious in Tenterden, seem to have been especially susceptible and ideally placed to lean toward radicalism, whatever form it took.[229] Once the pace of reform had quickened in the 1530s, they may have found much to seize upon in Protestantism, and with their dominance in town affairs it is hardly surprising that Tenterden was quick to embrace the changes of the Reformation.[230] This marks an important qualification of Peter Clark's portrayal of the growth of Protestantism in Kent. It is clear that growing support for reform, was in part a product of political manipulation from the top down by Cromwell and his increasingly powerful party of opportunists and idealists. A change of perspective however, reveals the crucial role of local men beneath the level of the gentry, largely unknown to us, but who were nonetheless central in the execution of reform within their parishes. In Tenterden and the Weald, Protestantism was as much an expression of long-standing radicalism as careful party-building, and it is probable that the two were mutually dependent. Moreover, piety was already too pre-disposed to reform in Tenterden, and sympathy for dissenting ideas too widespread and long-standing, for us to think, *pace* Colin Richmond, that those who aided religious change, were "moles" within their own communities, acting on behalf of socially superior "wolves".[231] The likes of George Castelyn did not need to be recruited, they were already shaping their worlds to their own self-conscious ideals.

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228 Roberts, *Tenterden. The First Thousand Years*, p. 73.

229 This may accord with Professor Collinson's notion of "a kind of religious voluntarism which contrived to remain in some sense and degree within the religious establishment" but which nevertheless rendered its adherents especially open to new and unorthodox ideas: *idem*, 'Critical Conclusion', p. 396.

230 Clark, *English Provincial Society*, pp. 30-31, 42. For the zeal of Tenterden's leading townsmen in prosecuting cases of resistance to reform, see *L & P*, vol. xiii, 1015; *ibid.*, vol. xiv, 107., vol. xiv, 1074; *ibid.*, vol. xviii, p. 296; *ibid.*, Addenda, 1353.

231 Clark, *English Provincial Society*, pp. 34-107; Richmond, 'The English Gentry', pp. 149-50.

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A strong and prestigious Wycliffite tradition was established in Tenterden and a number of neighbouring parishes by the 1420s. It is probable that the central beliefs of these early Lollards were sacramentarian, anti-sacerdotal and hostile to the cult of saints. Chichele's and subsequent purges do not appear to have eradicated Lollardy from the area by around 1450, and there is good reason to believe that heretical opinions were kept alive locally throughout the second half of the fifteenth century. Tenterden and its hinterland remained the most important centre for dissent in Kent throughout the period, and all the indications are that the sect which was uncovered in 1511-12 was well-established with documented origins back to the 1470s, and with some possible familial continuities from as early as 1428. At the same time, if anything, the sect was gaining in numbers and influence by the turn of the century. The general character of opinions abjured in 1511-12 suggests that White's teachings in the early fifteenth century had been paired down to their chief tenets. These were against the sacramental, sacerdotal and cultic nature of the late medieval Church. This was probably partly because they had been passed down in an unbroken tradition over sixty or seventy years, and also because of the ongoing appeal of these same views to elements of the local populace.

The family played a crucial part in Wealden Lollardy, and family relationships provided the first and foremost mechanism for the transmission of dissent within and between generations. This may be no more than a reflection of the general importance of the family in the formation of pious tradition. Households were the main meeting places, but other factors cut across these social institutions; most especially, the activities of Lollard teachers and relationships made in the everyday world of trade. The majority of the Kentish Lollards tried in 1511-12 were interconnected by family, or through conventicles and other less formal heretical meetings, so that the geographically scattered adherents to heretical opinions found themselves within a loosely bound community of dissenters.

These Lollards were not open with orthodox neighbours about their heresy, but neither are they likely to have kept their views and activities entirely hidden. Some withdrew from involvement in the cult of saints, but the impression is that most still attended church when it was expected of them, and remained integrated members of society. There are hints that at Tenterden, there was a significantly extensive and entrenched sympathy with Lollard calls for reform, which afforded heretics a degree of protection, and ensured that they would not be ostracized from town or parish affairs.

Indeed, most of the fifteenth and sixteenth century Lollards in the Tenterden area, who can be traced in the local sources, appear to have been moderately wealthy

themselves, or belonged to families which were reasonably well-to-do by the standards of small town society. They seem predominantly to have been crafts and tradespeople or small farmers, with a hand in parochial and urban government. Although the evidence does not afford conclusive judgements on this issue, contrary to the most recent arguments, it would appear that dissent was socially specific, that is largely confined to the upper-middling, politically dominant stratum.

Whilst being representative of the upwardly mobile urban families which gained an increasing dominance in town and parish affairs by the early sixteenth century, the Castelyn and Pellond families may also be typical of the type of people who were being drawn to dissenting opinions in Tenterden. The reconstruction of the testamentary traditions of these families, suggests that an individual's familial piety was an important deciding factor in whether or not he or she diverged into heresy. It also tells us something about the sort of orthodox pious tradition which was closest to Lollard concerns and attitudes. There may not have been much between the parsimony of the late fifteenth century wills produced by these families, and outright heresy. Equally, the move toward more outward and engaged piety by the early sixteenth century by the likes of the Castelyns and the Pellonds, remained aligned with Lollardy in a number of ways, and may have had the effect of incorporating a number of previously marginalized elements of local religion into the mainstream. Firstly, there was a certain radicalism and doctrinal purity to their neglect of the cult of saints and adherence to the Jesus mass. There was secondly, a continuing moderation to expenditure on religious ceremony and display, and thirdly, there was an emphasis upon humanitarian charity. In this context religious dissent is revealed as an outgrowth and expression of long-standing sentiments. Its success was made and sustained by an evolving religious culture which was common to what was probably a sizeable minority of leading parish families.

This sort of detailed contextualization of Lollardy moves us on a bit further in unravelling the more precise meaning of its concerns and tenets for individuals and families in a late medieval small country town. In this way it allows us to test the more general theories for Lollard survival and appeal in certain areas, against a particular case-study. In some cases, such as the attempts to find a causal link between the cloth industry and dissent, these theories appear either inapplicable or somewhat lacking in explanative power. Other claims about attitudes specifically connected to artisan activity tend to be either based on inaccurate notions of artisanal status and identity or are derived from unexplained, ideologically informed instincts. Many of the environmental and socio-economic explanations for dissent correspond to some extent with findings here, but it is hoped that the above investigation demonstrates that if one is to properly explain traditions of heterodoxy and to begin to understand their bearing upon the broad shifting swathe of orthodox piety prior to the Reformation, then the goal must be the detailed

reconstitution of the social, economic and religious lives of individuals and families who were involved in, or were touched by heresy.

In this case, such an approach reveals that dissent was related to the ethos of a roughly definable group of emerging middling-to-upper status families in Tenterden and to redefinitions in identity. It is suggested that these stemmed from rapid social and economic changes in the fifteenth, and more especially, in the early sixteenth century. The generation of wealth on a considerable scale and pace, through a combination of pastoral farming, and an increasingly diverse range of craft and industrial pursuits, fostered an already ingrained family-centred piety, and attitudes to family wealth which contributed to a frugality toward matters of religion. Upwards social mobility and urbanization produced changes in approaches to the religious expression of identity, which incorporated radical elements of orthodox piety not far removed from Lollard concerns. Dissent and orthodox radicalism also appear to have developed within favourable political conditions in the Weald deriving from the influence of powerful gentry families, and from the impression which intellectuals left upon local culture. These were probably important factors in the growth of Protestantism in Tenterden.

CONCLUSION

One of the central strands of this thesis is the cumulative demonstration of a more adequate theory and method, than those generally adopted in the reconstruction of late medieval piety. To a large extent, for reasons of necessity, this has been to do with testamentary analysis. Within this field of study, large-scale quantitative methods and subsequent pessimism toward the value of last wills and testaments, have been equally unhelpful. Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five, showed that the merit of using testamentary sources lies in the close and comparative reading of these documents, within appropriate units of analysis, together with detailed linkage to other materials, where they are available. It has been argued that pious bequests are not ideally subject to treatment as "anonymous traces" of belief, and that they should be read as fundamentally social and personal acts. In the above chapters, analysis has been on a microscopic, small, and larger scale, and in each case, every effort has been made to contextualize testamentary practices, and to combine the qualitative with the quantitative.

Chapters Two and Four demonstrated how the interplay between familial, social, and individual piety and conventions, is sometimes revealed in the continuities and discontinuities of testamentary practice, within households, families and social groups. They have also shown how comparative analysis of these sources, to some extent provides access to the relative intensity of testamentary piety, and how considerable commitment sometimes lay in the most seemingly insignificant of acts. It is axiomatic of, and in turn, underlined by this study, that the making of a will in this period, should be viewed as a deeply significant and symbolic act, firmly rooted within the traditional practice of the moral economy. Will-making was often self-conscious and had its own vocabulary by which the individual testator expressed his or her preoccupations. Pious bequests derived their meaning from their relationship to the past practices of family, kin and the wider community, and were therefore largely relative in meaning. This thesis has demonstrated, that to begin to identify the competing interests of the will, it is necessary to locate the testator socially. For example, the range and nature of decisions to be made in the making of a will, and the significance of a religious bequest, varied according to whether an individual lived in Small Hythe or Tenterden town, the stage in the life-cycle at which he or she died, and the availability of surplus resources.

This thesis has called for the application of now generally accepted theories concerning the multi-generational transmission of religious dissent within families, to the transmission of late medieval piety. As has been shown for other regions, Lollardy in Tenterden, its hinterland and Kent as a whole, was to some extent continuous within

families, perhaps over as many as three generations in some cases, and the household provided the primary arena for heretical activities. Similarly, parsimony or generosity in piety, affiliation to saints' cults, new devotions or local religious institutions, attitudes to the uses of surplus wealth, giving to the poor, successful marriage and household formation, were all continuous, to some extent, within families. In Tenterden, patrilineage appears to have been the most important route for the transmission of mentality, but this is not least because of the male bias of probate materials. However, a large enough number of women's wills survive, to have shown in Chapters Two and Four, that testamentary piety was distinctively gendered within the constraints of household and family conventions. Presumably life-time belief and practice were similarly gendered.

Marriage might create a distinctive household piety, but affinal and biological kinship also worked to constrain, or change testamentary strategies. It was suggested in Chapter Five, that there was a preponderance of affinal links between families that followed similar traditions of will-making, and this kinship network may have helped to sustain distinctive tenors in piety at Tenterden. The strength of continuities in cultural transmission at Tenterden, goes against what is known about the considerable discontinuities in family stability in England as a whole in this period. This is partly because this study concentrated upon a stable core of enduring families, for which enough wills survive to gain an impression of their sensibilities over time. These families were probably exceptional, but, they demonstrate that a flexible kinship system, and ample opportunities for sons and daughters within the locality, allowed a minority of families to sustain coherent traditions in religious belief and practice. Given that these were the most socially dominant among non-gentry families, their pious traditions to some extent speak for the essential ethos and tenor of piety of the community as a whole. However, this is not to deny that the beliefs and practices of the less stable labouring classes, may have been quite different; they are simply invisible in this period. The family may have been an especially important social institution in Tenterden and the Weald of Kent, and it is probable that in other regions with different economies and demographic features, it had less of a central role in the transmission of piety. Nonetheless, the findings presented here, have general implications for areas that were more like the Weald.

As a case-study of religious belief and practice at Tenterden, Chapter Four challenges revisionist notions about the vigour and harmony of traditional orthodoxy before the Reformation. There were consistent quantitative differences within the testamentary piety of leading families in the parish. Approaches ranged from generosity in religious giving to parsimony. There was much subtlety to these gradations in the centre of the pious

spectrum, but a real contrast between the most sparing and the most lavish. Qualitative differences followed the same pattern: the more generous tended to be the most diverse and elaborate in their religious bequests; the moderate or sparing, were generally more conservative and restricted. Without taking Lollardy into account, orthodox religious belief and practice at Tenterden, contained divergent traditions, and for some, underwent a subtle, but potentially radical redefinition in this period.

Of equal implication for current thinking on the dynamics of lay piety before the Reformation, is the fact, as demonstrated in Chapter Five, that the tenor of piety adhered to by the leading burgess families of the early sixteenth century was not generously orthodox. In particular there was a marked absence of references to saints' cults, certain devotional forms, and religious orders, in their wills. This was despite the very substantial wealth of many of these more moderate or frugal families. The discovery that religious belief and practice in Tenterden, was on the whole by the sixteenth century, narrow, sparse and less richly orthodox than in other small towns, larger urban centres or more rural areas which have been studied, has important implications. A unique combination of particular economic, social and cultural dynamics in Tenterden, produced an equally singular piety. Nonetheless, its wider significance, to some extent will rest in comparison with attitudes and practices in other similar centres in this period.

Chapter Three argued, that neither the notion of the late medieval parish as an essentially harmonious expression of community, nor as a flexible framework or idiom for the negotiation of the choices of the individual or group, in matters of orthodox religion, are appropriate with regard to the parish of Tenterden. Investigation of piety and identity in Small Hythe, revealed that there were conflicting conceptions of the parish, which entailed religious divergences, and the symbolic employment of physical and jurisdictional boundaries, which restricted freedom of action in parochial religious practice. The desire among the inhabitants of Small Hythe to emphasize their otherness from Tenterden town, their distinctively austere piety, the enhancement of their chapel and its rebuilding, does not appear to have sprung from aspirations for increased choice or diversity in religious practice. The choices which Small Hythe chapel offered to the parishioners of Tenterden and Small Hythe, were almost exclusively only taken advantage of by better resourced testators in the latter community. Rather, these developments appear to have been part of Small Hythe's attempts to redefine its collective identity in relation to Tenterden town. The inhabitants could adopt and hold in tension increasingly complex and overlapping identities, even within the context of a conflict of interests between the two communities. This, together with the fact that parishioners living beyond the immediate vicinity of Small Hythe appear to have almost wholly ignored the chapel in their wills, suggests that pious expectations and conventions constrained diversity and choice in religious practice.

A major preoccupation of this thesis has been to root the interpretation of piety in its material and social context. Small Hythe, as suggested in Chapters Two and Three, offers a particularly coherent and vivid illustration of the origins of shifts in piety. Commercial and industrial growth and development, at an intensely local level, and concentrated estate building by certain leading families, had a pious dimension within the moral economy. Land, houses, cash and material goods were employed in the expression of identity, in provision for local religious services and a new chapel. This building expressed cultural links that sprang from commercial success, and in its austerity and attention to fashion, a distinctive ethos, which had religious implications, not least in terms of a general absence of saints' cults in the Small Hythe wills. Paradoxically, a sense of Small Hythe's distinctive mentality can also be gained from symbols and motifs within the life of St. John the Baptist, the dedicatee of the chapel. These accord with the way a particular economic formation shaped the inhabitants' perceptions of the physical environment of their locality. They also lent themselves to emphasis upon the township's otherness from Tenterden town. These findings have general implications for other 'wilderness' foundations in this period, and the type of mentality that developed in such rapidly developing centres.

Saints' cults, as shown in Chapter Four, also appear to have been appropriated in the recreation of identity by the burgesses of Tenterden town, firstly in terms of defining their relationship with Rye and the Cinque Ports, and secondly, in the redefinition of the municipal community after incorporation in 1449. Most of the cults that are mentioned in the wills of parishioners, had a distinctly material basis, which emphasizes the intimate relationship between the quotidian and religious belief and practice in this period.

The social origins of parsimonious piety were explored in Chapter Five. To some extent, generosity and diversity in religious giving was dependent on wealth and relatively high status. However, although the availability of disposable wealth set limits to religious generosity, attitudes varied between families across the testamentary spectrum as to the correct uses of surplus resources. Parsimonious and moderate families appear to have been less inclined to employ cash and capital in religious giving, and more concerned to further household formation, and the consolidation of family estates. Additionally, differences in wealth do not explain qualitative distinctions between testamentary traditions. For example, the Castelyns and the Pellonds became more generous and diverse as they rose in wealth and status, but they broadened their giving in a selective and deliberate fashion, concentrating on certain aspects of orthodox practice.

Chapter Five argues, that generally, the rate of upwards social mobility was in an inverse relationship to generosity and elaboration in testamentary piety. This was probably because rapid social mobility involved intensive investment in industrial and

commercial enterprise, and estate building by households tied together by biological, affinal, and fictive kinship. These families were also most involved in fashioning an urban identity, tending to live within the more industrial and commercial sectors of the parish. For them, social mobility involved risk and hence possible material insecurity. Coupled with this, were the psychological effects of passing from one social group to the next. These factors may have helped foster an ideology which emphasized their distinctive identity in relation to other leading families, many of which were religiously generous. In addition, as a rule, business failure often quickly followed business success, which in some instances may explain the frugal testamentary piety of these families. Their mentality appears to have had an essentially materialistic and acquisitive quality, was centred on the family, and was unsparing in religious giving.

It was also argued in Chapter Five, that because Tenterden was exceptionally wealthy by the mid-sixteenth century, it is probable that there was rapid accumulation of wealth and considerable social restructuring from the late 1400s. It was suggested that a materialistic and religiously parsimonious mentality went hand in hand with these changes. However, the chronology of wealth formation over the period as a whole was not established, and it may be the case that despite an economic down-turn in the middle of the fifteenth century, Tenterden was wealthy from the late 1300s. This might place the origins of restricted and frugal piety some decades earlier, implying that this mentality was deep-rooted and enduring in Tenterden. It is to the implications of this for the continuity of religious dissent in the Tenterden area from the early fifteenth century, that this study now finally turns.

An important tradition of Lollardy dating from the 1420s in the Tenterden area, was described and analysed in Chapter Six. While it was suggested that this was continuous to the Reformation, it was also emphasized that the sect enjoyed a revival from the late fifteenth century. Memory perhaps as much as familial descent sustained dissent in the Tenterden and the Weald. Tenterden was aware of its radical history, and long-standing families that met with heretical ideas again in the late 1400s, would have remembered grandparents who were hounded out of Kent by Archbishop Chichele. This resurgence in heterodoxy coincided with renewed economic and demographic growth.

The evidence has suggested, that on the whole, members of the sect appear to have continued to participate in collective orthodox religious practices, and some of them, or their kinsfolk, were involved in parish administration and local government. It was argued that as appears to have been the case in other areas of long-term continuity in dissent, there was widespread sympathy for, or at least toleration of Lollardy in Tenterden and surrounding villages. Finding somewhat against recent work on the social profile of dissent, all indications point to the conclusion that Lollards in the Tenterden

area, tended to be of middling to upper social status, and many belonged to enduring local families. The case-studies of the Castelyns and the Pellonds not only suggested that Lollardy may have been similarly socially placed to parsimonious piety, but that the long-term appeal of heterodoxy in the Weald was intrinsically linked with this religiously frugal and materialistic mentality. From this, in Chapter Six, a number of qualifications and additions have been made to the theories which have been put forward regarding the appeal and survival of heresy in regions such as the Weald of Kent.

Developing this connection, it was emphasized that the sacramentarian, anti-sacerdotal and anti-cultic continuities in Lollard doctrines and opinions, accorded with the general tenor of religious practice seen in the wills of frugal and socially mobile families, and with significant changes in devotional practice in the parish over the period. It is curious that Small Hythe, which was so apparently austere and forward-looking in its pious traditions, does not seem to have fostered any noticeable presence of dissent. This may have been because local piety within Small Hythe, was sufficiently vibrant and idiosyncratic to render heterodoxy unappealing, but the evidence has not allowed for any firm conclusions on this point. More generally, lack of affiliation to saints' cults; a comparative absence of gifts to religious orders; a shift from provision for chantries to funerary and commemorative ritual that may have involved greater lay participation in liturgy and ceremony; an absence of new, more traditionally orthodox devotional forms, and lack of gifts to images from the second decade of sixteenth century, all suggested that the general direction in which religious practices were heading by the early sixteenth century, was not markedly out of line with the Lollard call for reform of the church.

In particular, where the families of individuals who became involved in Lollardy could be identified and their testamentary piety reconstructed, it was found that they became noticeably preoccupied with the Jesus mass and to a lesser extent, with humanitarian charity. It was argued in Chapter Five, that the Jesus mass had radical potential, not least because of its focus upon the saving work of Christ at the expense of the panoply of saints, and was bound up with urban identity and an ideology of the family and household. The piety of parsimonious families like the Castelyns and the Pellonds was therefore, frugal but intense by the early sixteenth century. Although having much in common, it was not suggested that this tenor in piety amounted to the same thing as adherence to Lollard opinions. The boundary between orthodoxy and heterodoxy probably rose and fell over the period, with the crystallizing effect of persecution being an important factor in its delineation, but it may have become increasingly and irreversibly blurred by the 1520s and 1530s. Nonetheless, Christocentric devotion was quite different from the definite step into heresy. What has been suggested, is that both of these phenomena were symptomatic of the engagement of an entrenched mentality, with radical, or potentially radical religious ideas.

Finally, it was proposed in Chapter Six, that by the late fifteenth century, political and intellectual influences were beginning to bring a new degree of sophistication to potentially radical shifts in orthodox piety in the Weald, and that these may also have flowed into, and helped to sustain religious heterodoxy. It was suggested that these developments possibly provided the channels for Lollardy and divergences within orthodoxy, to contribute to, and mould, the religious radicalism of the Reformation period. One of the lasting impressions of this reconstruction of heterodox and orthodox piety at Tenterden, is that questions concerning the grass-roots anticipation of religious reform are far from closed.

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