
Occupation patterns in six Kentish parishes 1841–81

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to examine and analyse the occupations of men and women in six Kentish parishes 1841–81, particularly in regard to the balance of rural and industrial characteristics in an area part of which underwent striking changes. It also relates the subject to two questions. The first is the balance between the benefits and problems associated with the use of census returns. The second is the effects for men and women of location and communications, particularly in connection with migration as related to employment opportunities.

Introduction

The characteristics of an area, to a large extent, both determined and were determined by the occupations of its inhabitants. The traditional distinction between rural and industrial areas has recently been challenged by Barry Reay, in *Rural Englands*, the plural title of which suggests a complex world of great variety, rather than the old simplistic dichotomy between rural and industrial.¹ In considering the criteria on which the contrast is based, both Reay and Edgar reject the distinction between village and town in favour of a 'sphere of influence' including both.² Reay also rejects the distinction based on totally agricultural or totally industrial occupations, since many rural inhabitants engaged in industrial occupations. The criteria defining industry indicate large-scale operations supplying a market outside the local area, as against 'the level of provision realistically required to serve the local economy',³ or 'catering in the main for local and everyday needs'.⁴ An associated question concerns the factors leading to the development of industry in any particular area. James Preston, considering the Medway Valley, writes of 'a fortuitous collection of factors, geological, entrepreneurial and locational', the last including the availability of effective transport.⁵

This article, focusing on six parishes in Kent (see Figure 1, p. xxx), considers both male and female employment patterns. The big locational differences in female employment have

1 Barry Reay, *Rural Englands: labouring lives in the nineteenth century* (Basingstoke, 2004).

2 M.J D. Edgar, 'Occupational diversity in seven rural parishes in Dorset 1851', *Local Population Studies*, 52 (1994), 48–54.

3 Edgar, 'Occupational diversity', 51.

4 James Preston, 'Industry 1800–1914', in Alan Armstrong ed., *The economy of Kent 1640–1914* (Woodbridge, 1995), 110–23. Here at 118.

5 J.M. Preston, *Industrial Medway* (Rochester, 1977), preface.

been discussed by Leigh Shaw-Taylor, who notes a particular lack of opportunities in the south-east, which is supported by Reay's reference to oral sources complaining that there was no alternative to domestic service for women.⁶ Since the essential sources for any study of nineteenth-century occupations are census returns, it is important to assess their reliability: the snapshot given by the decennial census can be misleading. Women's work has been shown, especially by Edward Higgs, Nigel Goose, Alun Howkins and Nicola Verdon among others, to suffer from some degree of under-enumeration, partly because it was often seasonal and partly because of the stereotyping attitude which saw women's work as connected only with home and family, especially for married women.⁷ The connection between marital status and employment has been analysed by Jones, who is particularly concerned that so many women returned only their husbands' occupations.⁸

The availability or lack of employment opportunities (the 'pull' and 'push' factors) have long been associated with migration, and the fact that migration to newly industrialised areas took place in small stages over short distances has long been recognised.⁹ In the south-east a study of the rural parish of Brenchley by Bogusia Wojciechowska showed the very local nature of the catchment area and also found a lack of mobility among those with responsibilities, either of marriage (implying an age factor) or of ownership of land or business.¹⁰ The provenance of immigrants is also commented on by Preston, who notes that 'much of the labour for brickmaking was recruited from among local agricultural workers'.¹¹ W. A. Armstrong, also focusing on Kent, writes of the immigration into the brickmaking areas that 'the likelihood is that these places drew in local migrants attracted by the offer of relatively high wages for predominantly unskilled work'.¹²

The six parishes considered in this article illustrate the characteristics of a rural area that became partially industrialised during the period 1841 to 1881. The area's 'sphere of influence' might even be considered to include London itself. Geology provided for the

6 Reay, *Rural Englands*, 55; Leigh Shaw-Taylor, 'Diverse experience: the geography of female employment in England and the 1851 census', in Nigel Goose ed., *Women's work in industrial England* (Hatfield, 2001), 29–50 (see Figures 2.2–2.17, especially 2.3).

7 Edward Higgs, *Making sense of the census: census records for England and Wales 1801–1901, a handbook* (London, 1989), 81–2; Nigel Goose, 'Working women in industrial England', in Goose, *Women's work*, 1–28; Alun Howkins, *Reshaping rural England: a social history 1850–1925* (London, 1991), 100–101; Nicola Verdon, 'Hay, hops and harvest: women's work in agriculture in nineteenth-century Sussex', in Goose, *Women's work*, 76–96; Reay, *Rural Englands*, 55–6.

8 Christine Jones, 'From Hartland to Hartley: marital status and occupation in the late nineteenth century', in Goose, *Women's work*, 289–313.

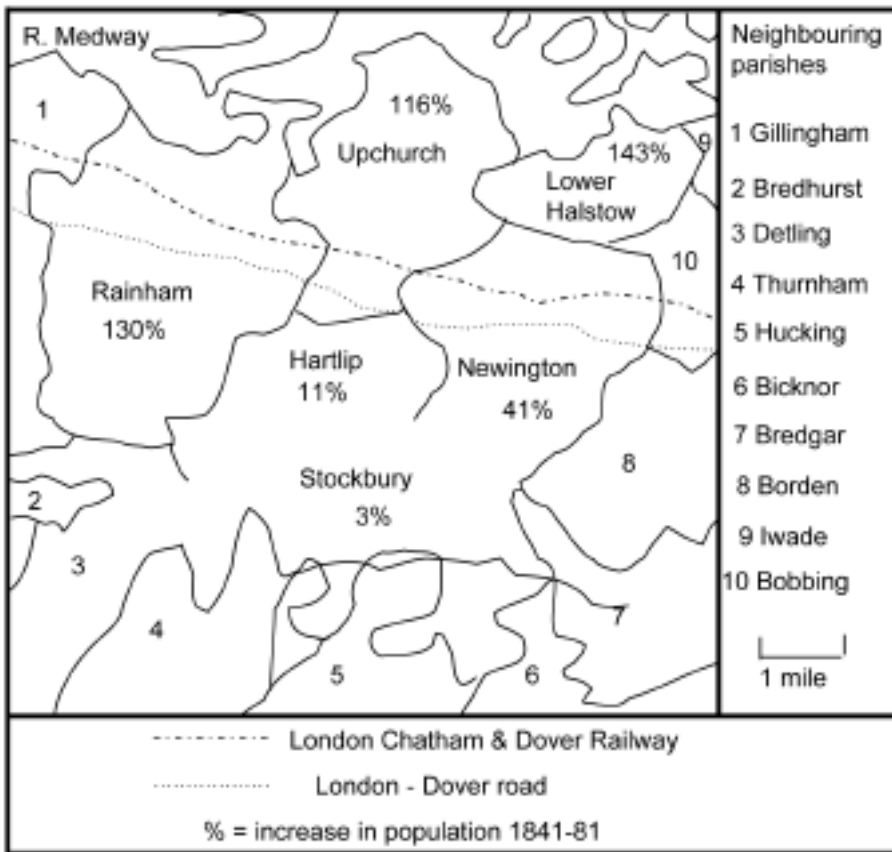
9 Arthur Redford, *Labour migration in England 1800–1850*, 2nd edn (Manchester, 1964).

10 Bogusia Wojciechowska, 'Brenchley: a study of migratory movements in a mid-nineteenth-century rural parish', *Local Population Studies*, 41 (1988), 28–40. Here at 36.

11 Preston, *Industrial Medway*, 91–3.

12 W.A. Armstrong, 'The population of Victorian and Edwardian Kent', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 112 (1993), 1–16. Here at 14.

Figure 1 Location of the six parishes



continuation and even extension of agriculture and also for the raw materials for bricks and cement. Location was a crucial factor both within and beyond the six parishes; it determined the difference that developed between the northern and southern parishes and the ability to satisfy the London market for both agricultural produce and building materials, in that transport by road, rail and water was more readily available in some of the parishes than others.

The six parishes also illustrate the problems related to the inadequacies of census data, both in under-enumeration and in its failure to capture seasonal and temporary phenomena. As far as women are concerned, enumeration problems aside, the parishes illustrate the real dearth of employment opportunities for women in this area. Finally, the parishes exemplify the 'pull' and 'push' factors in the difference between the in-migration of men and the out-migration of women; and, by the end of the period, the attraction of distant migrants. This study also examines the extent to which non-migrants changed their occupations.

The six parishes

Figure 1 shows the location of the six parishes, to the east of the urban cluster of the Medway towns (Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham), and to the south of the River Medway, not far above its confluence with the Thames estuary. The London to Dover road runs through the middle parishes, and from 1859 the London, Chatham and Dover Railway. In 1841 the area was purely agricultural. It was a mainly arable area, producing wheat, hops and fruit, with Stockbury having a large area of woodland and the northernmost parishes marshes. Quite a few families would have considered themselves gentry, but there were no very great men; the major landowners were absentees. In all the censuses from 1841 to 1881 inclusive, only seven households are shown as having more than four servants. Of all those returning acreages, just over half occupied over 100, the maximum being 800.¹³ Some census returns show relatives working farms in partnership, under the custom of gavelkind, which remained in operation until 1926. The two major features of this form of tenure were partible inheritance and the right to alienate; by the nineteenth century the former rarely split the holding and the latter created a free market in land.

By 1881 there had been significant changes in the northern parishes as a result of the demand from London for building materials, combined with the existence of the raw materials for bricks and cement; their location on the river, with cheap transport by barge to London, was also an important factor. Meanwhile, the southern ones remained agricultural backwaters. The difference is shown by the percentage increases in population between 1841 and 1881 shown in Figure 1. While this affected male occupations, women were more affected by the railway, which facilitated the search for employment elsewhere, since little was available at home.

Methodology

The seminal work on nineteenth-century occupations was developed by Armstrong from the work of Charles Booth,¹⁴ and his system of classification has been used here, the major categories being as follows:-

AG	Agriculture	M	Mining ¹⁵
B	Building	MF	Manufacturing
D	Dealing	PO	Property owning/independent
DS	Domestic service	PP	Public and professional
IS	Industrial service	T	Transport

13 Barry Reay, *Microhistories: demography, society and culture in rural England 1800–1930* (Cambridge, 1996), 17. Reay notes that in his three parishes, only 11–17 out of 70 acreages returned were over 100; he characterises 100–800 acres as large but not huge by Kentish standards.

14 W.A. Armstrong, 'The use of information about population', in E.A. Wrigley ed., *Nineteenth-century society: essays in the use of quantitative methods for the study of social data* (Cambridge, 1972), 191–310.

15 Mining includes brickmaking, since the raw material is dug out of the ground.

The use of the Booth-Armstrong classification is justified partly because it is so thoroughly researched and developed. Dennis Mills and Kevin Schürer, considering the advantages of different schemes of classification, regard Tillott's scheme as most appropriate for rural areas, but as the six parishes became partly industrialised during this period, it has not been preferred here.¹⁶ Mills and Schürer criticise the Booth-Armstrong scheme for its failure to distinguish between 'traditional' and 'modern' manufacturing, giving blacksmiths and wheelwrights as examples.¹⁷ However, an analysis of these two trades in the six parishes shows that the deficiency lies, not in the system of classification, but in the census returns, which fail to supply the relevant data. Only one wheelwright specified that he worked in a brickfield. The only partial clues lie in the probability that those still working in the purely agricultural parishes, or masters with apprentices in 1881, were 'traditional', while those who had moved to an industrial parish were 'modern'. The Booth-Armstrong scheme is sufficiently flexible and detailed to meet the requirements of an area with 'traditional' and 'modern' areas insofar as the census returns allow. Census data has been the primary source, in conjunction with parish registers, poor law records and deeds.

This study considered the five censuses from 1841 to 1881. It was possible to trace the occupational history of individual males over all the years they resided in the parishes, until their death or departure. This was made possible by the previous total reconstitution of families, and the cross-referencing of all census, register, family and workhouse files. All males over the age of 15, and all those under 16 who returned an occupation, were considered. For female occupations, numbers were too small to justify a similar procedure. Some records were included for men who would normally have been resident in the parishes, but were absent on the night of the census and whose occupations were returned by their wives. A high proportion of these were at sea on census night, and their absence from this enquiry would have distorted the proportion of the population engaged in transport. In eight of the ten occupation categories absentees represent less than 2 per cent of the total, in transport they represent 31 per cent, and in public/professional 6 per cent (though 6 per cent of very small numbers). In the AG category the overall percentage is 1.6, but for fisherman (AG4) it is 23.5 (again of fairly small numbers). The total number added for this reason is 104 out of a grand total of 7,375. A second category of absentees relates to the 154 out of 468 records missing (destroyed) from Upchurch in 1861. Quite a few of these can be identified with some certainty from parish registers. In these cases occupations have been allocated according to such other data. The total added to the files is 42. There is a third category where information has been interpolated for a very few present but not returning an occupation even with the addition of 'unemployed' (13 in 1851, five in 1861, two in 1871 and 13 in 1881). This is justified by the fact that most are farmers' sons who

16 Dennis Mills and Kevin Schürer, 'Employment and occupations', in Mills and Schürer eds, *Local communities in the Victorian census enumerators' books* (Oxford, 1996), 136–60, esp. 142–4.

17 Mills and Schürer, 'Employment and occupations', 147–8.

Occupation patterns in six Kentish parishes 1841–81

Table 1 Percentage of total male population in each occupational category, 1841–1881, all six parishes

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
Agriculture	67.7	69.8	61.1	42.9	41.8
Building	2.8	2.9	3.2	2.9	4.2
Dealing	3.2	3.7	4.8	6.4	5.4
Domestic service	1.2	2.1	1.7	2.4	1.6
Industrial service	0.6	4.7	11.2	22.9	10.0
Mining	0.3	2.2	4.7	6.0	22.2
Manufacturing	7.1	8.2	7.3	7.6	7.6
Property/independent	1.9	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.3
Public/professional	2.3	2.5	2.7	1.7	1.9
Transport	2.0	2.2	2.2	4.2	4.0
Blank return	10.9	0.9	0.8	2.7	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	1107	1201	1388	1669	2210

Source: (for all tables): census returns

Note: All those included were aged over 15, or younger if returning an occupation.

appear elsewhere as working on the family farm. Possibly heads of households, especially in 1851, followed the pattern of 1841, when only heads returned an occupation.

Male occupations

Partial industrialisation

Table 1 shows the percentages of the male population returned in each occupation category from 1841 to 1881 for the six parishes combined. Table 2 shows these percentages, but for selected occupations and for parishes paired by location. Hartlip and Stockbury were similar in being entirely agricultural, remote from brickearth and from communications by major road, rail or water. Upchurch and Halstow were similar in that they were very small parishes situated by the river and with brickearth deposits; they started as totally agricultural and with a large increase in population changed to an industrial economy based on brickmaking and water transport. Newington and Rainham are less comfortably paired; they shared the main Dover road and railway and fertile soil, but Rainham was by far the biggest of the six and had brickearth and river wharves also. There was a transition from a totally agricultural economy to one in which brickmaking and transport played an increasingly important part. This exemplifies the fact that even in such a small area as these six parishes geography, geology and communications were crucial factors in determining occupational patterns.

One notable phenomenon is the sudden surge in the proportion of general labourers in 1871 and the corresponding effect on the size of the agriculture and mining categories. The

Table 2 Percentage of all male workers engaged in each employment category, 1841–1881, by paired parishes

Hartlip and Stockbury						
Year	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	All
Agriculture	87.3	81.3	79.5	56.1	76.8	75.6
Building	0.8	0.3	1.6	1.9	3.5	1.7
Dealing	3.4	4.0	4.6	5.4	3.9	4.3
Domestic service	1.3	2.3	3.6	5.4	3.9	3.4
Industrial service	0.0	0.3	0.3	20.8	1.0	4.8
Mining	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.2
Manufacturing	3.4	8.7	8.1	8.0	6.4	7.1
Property/independent	2.5	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.8
Public/professional	1.3	2.0	1.3	1.9	3.2	2.0
Transport	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	236	299	307	312	311	1465
Newington and Rainham						
Year	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	All
Agriculture	69.7	70.0	57.0	45.6	43.8	54.2
Building	4.9	4.7	4.7	4.1	6.0	5.0
Dealing	3.8	4.3	5.6	7.8	7.2	6.1
Domestic service	1.7	2.5	1.3	2.4	1.5	1.8
Industrial service	0.9	2.7	12.4	18.6	6.3	9.0
Mining	0.2	0.9	4.3	4.7	18.6	7.5
Manufacturing	11.7	9.3	8.4	8.9	8.9	9.2
Property/independent	2.3	1.1	0.6	0.6	0.3	0.8
Public/professional	3.2	3.0	3.7	2.1	2.2	2.7
Transport	1.7	1.4	1.9	5.2	5.2	3.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	531	633	783	935	1202	4084
Upchurch and Halstow						
Year	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	All
Agriculture	79.4	59.5	55.2	30.5	23.3	41.7
Building	1.4	1.5	0.7	1.1	1.5	1.3
Dealing	3.2	2.3	2.4	4.2	3.1	3.1
Domestic service	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.3	0.7	0.6
Industrial service	0.9	15.1	19.9	37.9	21.0	21.1
Mining	0.9	7.3	10.5	14.9	39.4	20.6
Manufacturing	4.1	5.0	3.8	5.0	6.2	5.2
Property/independent	1.4	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.3
Public/professional	2.3	1.5	1.4	0.5	1.0	1.2
Transport	79.4	59.5	55.2	30.5	23.3	41.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	218	259	286	377	677	1817

problem of the undifferentiated ‘labourer’ is well known to historians.¹⁸ From 1861 onwards there was always a much higher proportion of males in this category than in England and Wales as a whole (11.2 per cent versus 3.4 per cent in 1861, 22.9 per cent versus 5.0 per cent in 1871, and 10.0 per cent versus 5.0 per cent in 1881).¹⁹ One possible explanation is that, where industry was gradually overtaking agriculture, and where many of the skills required were not of a high order, men could switch between them as occasion required. Higgs suggests that ‘thoroughly rural areas might be justified in assuming these to be agricultural labourers, but there will be problems in doing so elsewhere’.²⁰ Preston writes of the recession in the brick industry in the late 1880s, consequent on the London building cycle, that ‘in hard times the farmers could always fall back upon agriculture, as could the workers’.²¹ However, this seems insufficient to explain the extraordinary hike in numbers in the six parishes in 1871. One possibility is the unusually harsh winter of 1870–1871, affecting the whole country, and possibly the reason why the Preliminary Report for the 1871 census noted a national decrease in the number of brickmakers.²² Young men in the northern parishes, coming from all counties of eastern England, are described as general labourers in 1871, probably because brickmaking had yet to start because of the weather. This was one of only two occasions between 1835 and 1885 when the Milton Union applied to the Poor Law Board for an Outdoor Labour Test Order to cope with the large number of unemployed young men. The minutes of the Milton Guardians show that they were still arguing with the Poor Law Board until the end of February about continuing the Order.²³ Once the worst of the snow had gone, a lot of work could be resumed, but as long as the ground remained frozen it was impossible to dig for brickearth, which is why brickmaking was not possible between November and March. It seems likely that normality had not returned by the census date (3 April) and that if the weather had permitted these men to do the work they were there to do they would have been described as brickmakers.

The local use of some of the bricks and cement produced in the six parishes is seen in the percentage increase in the number of households between 1841 and 1881, which again illustrates the differences between the parishes. The increase was 13.0 per cent in Hartlip, 20.6 per cent in Stockbury, 47.9 per cent in Newington, 137.3 per cent in Rainham, 151.8 per cent in Upchurch and 152.8 per cent in Halstow. Preston quotes the *Chatham News* for 17 December 1864, where a report on Rainham noted that ‘Much building—principally of

18 See for example Higgs, *Making sense of the census*, 89; Joyce M. Bellamy, ‘Occupation statistics in the nineteenth century censuses’, in Richard Lawton ed., *The census and social structure: an interpretive guide to nineteenth-century censuses for England and Wales* (London, 1978), 165–178. Here at 168, 170.

19 Mills and Schürer, ‘Employment and occupations’, 148, quoting Booth-Armstrong.

20 Higgs, *Making sense of the census*, 89.

21 Preston, *Industrial Medway*, 92.

22 ‘Occupations of the People’, Parliamentary Papers 1871 [c.381] LIX.659, liii.

23 Minutes of the Board of Guardians of the Milton Union, Centre for Kentish Studies (CKS), G/Mi, Am, book xi.

Table 3a Male population: birthplaces by distance (percentages), 1851 and 1881

1851	Hartlip	Newington	Rainham	Stockbury	Upchurch	Halstow	Total
Same parish	50.5	41.7	45.0	50.5	37.2	24.1	42.8
Within 5 miles	34.0	32.9	29.9	28.0	43.2	50.0	34.1
Elsewhere in Kent	12.6	20.0	19.8	19.0	16.2	23.2	19.0
Outside Kent	2.9	5.0	5.3	2.5	3.4	2.7	4.1
Not known	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Numbers	103	240	398	200	148	112	1201

1881	Hartlip	Newington	Rainham	Stockbury	Upchurch	Halstow	Total
Same parish	34.2	28.5	34.9	39.7	16.6	25.0	29.5
Within 5 miles	19.7	34.4	28.3	23.1	34.5	42.2	31.1
Elsewhere in Kent	38.5	27.6	24.7	31.7	25.6	23.0	26.5
Outside Kent	7.7	9.6	11.7	5.5	21.3	9.8	12.3
Not known	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Numbers	117	355	854	199	441	244	2210

Note: All males over 15, and working males under 15, are included.

Table 3b Percentage of males born outside Kent, 1881, by occupational category

	Hartlip	Newington	Rainham	Stockbury	Upchurch	Halstow	Total
Agriculture	44.4	38.2	33.0	45.5	12.0	0.0	24.5
Building	0.0	5.9	5.0	0.0	4.3	13.0	5.2
Dealing	0.0	8.8	10.0	9.1	1.1	0.0	5.6
Domestic service	0.0	0.0	2.0	9.1	0.0	0.0	1.1
Industrial service	0.0	0.0	10.0	0.0	52.2	8.7	22.3
Mining	0.0	5.9	18.0	0.0	17.4	43.5	17.1
Manufacturing	22.2	17.6	10.0	9.1	7.6	21.7	11.5
Private means	11.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.3	0.7
Public/professional	22.2	8.8	6.0	27.3	2.2	8.7	6.7
Transport	0.0	14.7	6.0	0.0	3.3	0.0	5.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Numbers	9	34	100	11	92	23	269
All birthplaces: no.	116	351	851	195	435	243	2191
% outside Kent	7.8	9.7	11.8	5.6	21.1	9.5	12.3

Note: table includes all males returning an occupation.

small houses—is going on in and about this pleasant village. The large amount of brickmaking in the neighbourhood causes such an increase in the number of working people at the place that now houses are engaged before they are half built.²⁴ There was a large increase in the number of lodgers and boarders by 1881, except in Hartlip and Stockbury. In 1881 Upchurch had one row of new houses headed by in-migrants, each with between four and seven lodgers. One of the Upchurch houses had 12 residents: their birthplaces were (head) Plumstead (Kent); (wife) Canterbury (Kent); son, 17, Sevenoaks (Kent); daughter, 12, Islington (Middlesex); sons (9) Settle, (7) Alfrith, (3) Lofthouse (all Yorkshire); the birthplaces of the five lodgers were Norfolk, Lincoln, Yorkshire, Surrey and Kent. The view of Preston and Armstrong, quoted in the introduction to this article, that most in-migrants were local, was based only on the 1851 census by Preston and mentioned only as a probability by Armstrong.

Table 3a shows the distance of the birthplaces of male workers in each of the parishes from 1851 to 1881. The proportion working in their birthplace had fallen considerably and of those born within five miles a little; but the proportion of those born more than five miles away had increased markedly, in all the parishes, a contrast to the large percentage of locally born whom Wojciechowska found in Brenchley.²⁵ Upchurch again proves remarkable for distant migrants. Of the adult male in-migrants in this parish in 1881 born outside Kent, 67 per cent were from eastern counties, 51 per cent from Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk, and the rest from Cambridgeshire, Durham, Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. Table 3b shows the proportions in each occupation category of migrants from outside Kent in 1881. Agriculture still tops the list in all except Upchurch and Halstow, where general labourers and brickmakers together account for over half.

The retention of rural characteristics

Table 1 shows that agriculture retained its predominance throughout the period, while Table 2 shows that this was true for all parishes except Upchurch and Halstow (pp. xxx, above). One feature that the six parishes shared with the three more rural parishes examined by Reay was that the numbers of employees returned by farmers there represents only 54 per cent of the total of agricultural labourers and servants returned by individuals; Reay concludes that there must have been a large number of casual labourers on the farms.²⁶ The corresponding percentages for the four censuses from 1851 to 1881 in the six parishes were 53, 63, 62 and 62, so the situation described by Reay presumably prevailed there too, except that the new industries provided additional opportunities. The number of farmers working on the land remained similar over the years, but the

24 Preston, *Industrial Medway*, 91–2.

25 Wojciechowska, 'Brenchley', 29.

26 Reay, *Microhistories*, 28.

percentage of market gardeners increased from 22 in 1851 to 55 in 1881: the railway facilitated the transport of perishable goods.

The characteristics of a rural society are to be seen in other categories than agriculture. Builders appear only in the early years; the large increase in housing later must have been the work of outside firms, probably with the cooperation of the carpenters, plumbers, decorators, bricklayers and thatchers found mainly in Newington and Rainham. Those in the building and manufacturing categories had few employees, five being the maximum. Wheelwrights and blacksmiths remained important, most apparently still operating as rural craftsmen supplying local needs. The fact that many men returned multiple occupations is again descriptive of a basically rural community, with many small village craftsmen. However, some of the old manufacturing jobs declined in numbers, especially those in clothing and wood. Boat-building increased, but the important boatyard in Halstow was taken over by a major brickmaking firm from outside. The only brick manufacturer (in Newington) employed 20 men and 6 boys in 1881. The big employers lived elsewhere, though there were quite a few men returned as managers, foremen or overseers.

Dealers too were mostly small men, such as village shopkeepers and innkeepers, though they ranged from hawkers to shipowners and substantial merchants of agricultural commodities. Of the larger innkeepers, 70 per cent were in Newington or, more especially, Rainham, situated on the Dover road, where their services were not entirely related to the local community.

Continuity of residence and occupation

Table 4 shows the proportion of men remaining in the six parishes from one census to the next, and the proportions of those still resident who were in the same or different occupations ten years later. The analysis confirms Wojciechowska's finding that 'responsibility hinders mobility', particularly responsibility in the form of marriage; this is linked to age, and a more detailed analysis has also shown that in most occupational categories the youngest were the most mobile.²⁷ The other kind of responsibility mentioned by Wojciechowska as hindering mobility was the ownership of a business, and this is found also in the six parishes among farmers, craftsmen and tradesmen. Among the dealers, grocers and landlords of inns tended to remain, while beershop keepers came and went. The high rate of mobility noted by Wojciechowska among public and professional occupations is also to be found in the six parishes, though the category includes the doctors who stayed while the police and clergy moved. Table 4 shows that if the PO class (whose members did not work) is excluded, apart from PP the highest rate of mobility is found among domestic servants. By contrast, a high proportion remained in agriculture, with younger men in later years moving chiefly to general labouring or brickmaking.

²⁷ Wojciechowska, 'Brenchley', 32, 34.

Table 4 Continuity of residence and occupation between successive censuses, by occupational category, all makes returning an occupation, 1851–1881

	AG	B	D	DS	IS	M	MF	PO	PP	T	Total
1851–61											
(a) Number in 1851	838	35	45	25	57	26	98	10	30	26	1190
(b) % still in six parishes 1861	58.5	51.4	46.7	40.0	47.4	50.0	57.1	30.0	36.7	69.2	56.1
(c) Number returning an occupation in 1861	487	18	21	10	27	13	56	3	11	18	664
(d) % of (c) in same occupation category in 1861	77.2	72.2	61.9	10.0	33.3	38.5	80.4	66.7	90.9	44.4	72.3
1861–71											
(a) Number in 1861	848	44	66	23	155	65	102	6	37	31	1377
(b) % still in six parishes 1871	52.0	47.7	48.5	43.5	51.0	58.5	48.0	33.3	35.1	64.5	51.2
(c) Number returning an occupation in 1871	432	21	32	10	75	38	48	2	13	20	691
(d) % of (c) in same occupation category in 1871	69.4	76.2	75.0	30.0	53.3	34.2	85.4	50.0	84.6	65.0	65.5
1871–81											
(a) Number in 1871	716	48	106	40	381	100	128	7	28	70	1624
(b) % still in six parishes 1881	53.6	56.3	53.8	25.0	57.7	62.0	50.0	28.6	39.3	51.4	53.8
(c) Number returning an occupation in 1881	381	27	57	10	219	62	63	2	11	36	868
(d) % of (c) in same occupation category in 1881	78.0	85.2	63.2	30.0	15.1	62.9	77.8	50.0	81.8	86.1	59.7

It is unsurprising that the highest rates of persistence in the same occupation are found in the public/professional, building and manufacturing categories, where continuity can be explained by professional qualifications or ownership of businesses. The figures for transport workers are more difficult to interpret. In the first decade there were no railway workers and in all decades the majority of workers in this category were concerned with water transport. The proportion of those who moved away is quite small in the first two decades, but seems inexplicably large in the last. A possible explanation is that while men at sea on census night were accounted for if they were married and their wives returned their occupation, there must have been an unknown number of younger, unmarried men who were also at sea but for whom there is no evidence in the local census returns. Table 4 shows a remarkable increase over the decades in the percentage of those who stayed in this occupational group, which is unsurprising, as the importance of their work had increased.

Across the four censuses from 1851 to 1881, only 203 men had no occupation (3.1 per cent of the total of men over 15 plus those under 16 with an occupation). They fell into four groups: those in the property owning/independent means category (PO); those returning a blank (excluding the few allocated an occupation as explained earlier); those who returned an occupation but added that they were unemployed; and those who returned an occupation but added that they were retired. Surprisingly few of the elderly described themselves as retired or unemployed. It was a society where everyone expected to go on working.

Female occupations

Employment opportunities and mobility

The lack of employment opportunities for women in the south-east is well exemplified in these parishes. Table 5a shows the proportions of employed females in each occupational category and Table 5b the percentage of the total female population of all six parishes returned as employed, as well as the proportions in each occupational category of those returned as employed (in total only 21 per cent of the female population). Of the female working population, more than two-thirds, 68.5 per cent, were in the domestic service category. There was no industrial employment here for women comparable to the straw plaiting industry in Hertfordshire or the gloving industry in the Blackmore parishes in Dorset.²⁸ Few women in the six parishes were in occupations other than agriculture or domestic service, and even in agriculture numbers were small. Farmers, market gardeners and their female relations represented 47 per cent of all female agricultural workers. Only one was returned as employed in transport and five in brickmaking (in 1881). Dealers,

28 Nigel Goose, *Population, economy and family structure in Hertfordshire in 1851, vol. 1, the Berkhamsted region* (Hatfield, 1996), 80; *vol. 2, St Albans and its region* (Hatfield, 2000), 40; Edgar, 'Occupational diversity', 52.

Occupation patterns in six Kentish parishes 1841–81

Table 5a Percentage of employed female population ages over 15 in each occupational category, 1841–1881: all six parishes

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	All
Agriculture	14.7	25.5	11.5	6.0	9.2	13.0
Domestic service	71.6	59.8	73.5	72.3	67.1	68.5
Building	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.1
Dealing	1.9	3.9	2.1	4.1	5.5	3.8
Labouring	4.7	0.4	0.4	1.1	0.3	1.2
Mining	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.4
Manufacturing	1.4	5.8	7.7	7.9	8.7	6.7
Public&professional	5.7	4.6	4.3	8.2	7.9	6.4
Transport	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Numbers	211	259	234	267	380	1351

Table 5b Percentage of total female population aged over 15 in each occupational category, 1841–1881

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	All
Agriculture	3.0	6.5	2.4	1.1	2.0	2.7
Domestic service	14.8	15.3	15.2	13.3	14.4	14.5
Building	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Dealing	0.4	1.0	0.4	0.8	1.2	0.8
Labouring	1.0	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.3
Mining	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.1
Manufacturing	0.3	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.9	1.4
Public&professional	1.2	1.2	0.9	1.5	1.7	1.3
Transport	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0
Total	20.7	25.5	20.7	18.4	21.5	21.2
Numbers	1019	1014	1130	1448	1766	6377

Note: the figure for Upchurch 1861 was increased by one third to cover lost records.

however, included 21 grocers and butchers, eight drapers, five general shopkeepers, one dealer in agricultural produce and 14 publicans or beershop keepers. Very few women were found in manufacturing, except in the various branches of clothing. Only one of these, who appeared in every census from 1851 to 1881, seems to have been a professional dressmaker. Almost all the rest appeared in only one census, which suggests that the occupation was regarded only as a comparatively genteel stopgap for those needing to support themselves and their families.

The other category with more than one or two women was public and professional. There was only one PP1 (central administration), a worker in a Post Office (combined with a draper's shop) in 1871. There were two in PP14 (religion): a Bible Christian missionary in

1861 and a parish clerk's wife in 1881 (since her husband had been recorded as a blind parish clerk in all censuses since 1851 she had probably done all the work for him). Apart from these few the only PP classes in which women were found was nursing and teaching. There was a handful of nurses and nursemaids, although it is likely that married women who worked as nurses when required would not have declared this in a census return. The teaching category included a total of 68 over the five censuses, rising from nine in 1841 to 23 in 1881; of the 68, 21 called themselves governesses, though about half of these were not resident with employers. The general picture is of a lack of opportunity and of few women staying in an occupation for long. Under-enumeration is likely, but this does not explain the main feature of women's experience in this period: as Verdon points out, familial and domestic responsibilities kept women from work for much of the time.²⁹

The considerable mobility of female workers can be largely explained by lack of opportunities, probably combined with the unpopularity of much of the work available. In agriculture only ten individuals are to be found in more than one census, mostly farmers, which suggests that the possession of land or a business reduced mobility for women as it did for men. The situation of servants at the next census is interesting. Of the 473 under 26, eight had died and 344 had disappeared, leaving 121. Of these, 95 had married and returned no occupations while they were looking after young families; ten were living with older relations, usually as housekeepers to widow(er)s, six were living with their parents and unemployed; only eight were still servants to unrelated employers, four to the same ones. Of the 202 over 25, 11 had died, 124 had disappeared, leaving 67. Of these 12 were living with younger relations, sometimes as housekeepers, and 21 returned no occupation (mostly elderly widows but a few with young children); nine were still working from their own homes as laundresses or charwomen. Only one had changed her occupation (and become a seamstress). The remaining 24 were still servants, 19 with the same employer. Most of those in the same households are found there over three to five censuses, loyal retainers to well-to-do employers. Overall, though, it is clear that the majority of women in employment had disappeared before the next census, and the increased ease of travel no doubt facilitated this.

Under-enumeration and misrepresentation

The problem of the census under-enumeration of women's work has always been significant in the case of agriculture, including the important part of that which was seasonal. Howkins points out that evidence to the commissioners on employment of women and children showed that they regarded their work as essential to maintain their families; Verdon shows from Sussex evidence that hop growing involved a great deal of seasonal work for women but the census returns give little evidence of this in the central parishes of the six, an important hop-growing area.³⁰ There was probably also

29 Verdon, 'Hay, hops and harvest', 94.

30 Howkins, *Reshaping rural England*, 104; Verdon, 'Hay, hops and harvest', *passim*.

underestimation in brickmaking and transport: as one writer notes, ‘women often worked in the brickfields, or sailed as mates to their husbands’.³¹

Misrepresentation has been suspected among the census returns of servants. Higgs stresses the importance of distinguishing between servants working for an unrelated employer and those who were related to the head of the household and thus probably doing domestic work within their own families.³² An assessment for these six parishes over all census years shows that 75.6 per cent were living in their employers’ households and not related; 17.6 per cent were working in a household where they were related to the head; and 6.8 per cent (almost all laundresses and charwomen) were wives or widowed heads living in their own homes and working from there. So in the case of these six parishes the fear that many returned as servants were not employees of an unrelated employer seems unjustified, and the data confirm the caution advised by Anderson about condemning the census data too harshly.³³

Marital status and occupation

Verdon calls for local studies of marital status.³⁴ Over all female workers, Table 5c shows the relationship between marital status and occupation status. It confirms the established view that married women were least likely to be employed; they formed 64.7 per cent of the whole female population, but 77.5 per cent of the blank returns, though in the agricultural category there were almost equal proportions of widowed, married and unmarried women, over half the married women returned being farmers’ wives. Married women were also far less likely to have private means.³⁵

Among married women who worked in the six parishes, 78 per cent had jobs that could be done while they lived at home. Nearly half of these worked in the family business. Most of the rest were laundresses or charwomen and there were also a few teachers, dressmakers and agricultural workers. Seventeen were living in their employers’ households, of whom six were temporarily separated from their families living elsewhere in the same parish, for example as monthly nurses. In four cases the whole family was living in the employer’s household, the husband acting, for instance, as farm bailiff, and sometimes a daughter as a servant. Five were housekeeping for relations, often where there was a new baby. There were also at least three cases where the ‘servant’ was clearly the partner of her employer and they had children.

31 D.L. Sattin, *Just off the Swale* (Rainham, 1978), foreword.

32 Higgs, *Making sense of the census*, 82.

33 Michael Anderson, ‘What can the mid-Victorian censuses tell us about variations in married women’s employment?’, in Goose ed., *Women’s work*, 181–5.???

34 Verdon, ‘Hay, hops and harvest’, 76.

35 The first Married Women’s Property Act to grant full rights of ownership did not come into force until 1882.

Table 5c Percentage of female population aged over 15 employed, with private means, or making blank return, in all six parishes 1851–1881 by marital status

	Widowed	Married	Unmarried	Total	N=
Employed	21.1	14.4	64.5	100.0	978
Private means	53.9	4.5	41.6	100.0	89
Blank return	6.6	77.5	15.9	100.0	4245
Total	10.1	64.7	25.3	100.0	5312

	Widowed	Married	Unmarried	Total
Employed	38.5	4.1	47.0	18.4
Private means	9.0	0.1	2.8	1.7
Blank return	52.0	95.8	50.2	79.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	535	3435	1342	5312

Christine Jones, in her article on marital status and the occupations of women over 44, expresses concern about the numbers of women returning only the occupations of their husbands.³⁶ In the six parishes from 1851 to 1881 there were 125 such cases. Of these, 26 were participating in their husbands' businesses. As for the other 99, in every single case the wife was returning her husband's occupation only when he was temporarily absent: the vast majority were at sea (mariners, bargemen, fishermen, etcetera), a few were in the army or navy and the few others covered a wide variety, from the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of the County to a general labourer. So it does look as if there was a good reason for the practice, possibly on instructions from the enumerator, and it is certainly a vital source of information for male occupations.

It is unsurprising that the single formed 25.3 per cent of the population but 64.5 per cent of the employed, generally in temporary rite-of-passage jobs as a prelude to marriage. Although those with private means represent only 2.8 per cent of all the unmarried, the unmarried formed 41.6 per cent of the female population with private means: quite a few genteel ladies of all ages living with their parents or other relations or alone with servants.

Widows formed only 10.1 per cent of the female population but 53.9 per cent of those with private means, and 38.5 per cent of them were employed, though over half returned a blank, mostly elderly, but also a few younger ones with children. Widows were often found in households headed by widowers with children, some of these probably as a result of private arrangements, but the fact that some were in households headed by poor men suggests a possible arrangement by the Poor Law authorities, since this was a recognised method of solving the problems of both parties.³⁷

³⁶ Jones, 'From Hartland to Hartley', 292–3.

³⁷ The National Archives, MH 12/5280. When the Milton Guardians applied for permission for out-relief to a widower left with eight children to care for, the central authority refused permission and said they could compel a widow whom they were supporting to act as his housekeeper.

Lack of opportunity dominated the scene for women, but there were glimpses of something brighter. Above all, widowhood provided opportunities, as the following three examples show. In 1841 Caroline Bleeze was the wife of a baker; he died in 1850, leaving her with four children. From 1851 to 1871 (aged 43 to 63) she ran the bakery, with the assistance of her sons and a few other apprentices and employees. Sarah Watkins in 1851 was the wife of a builder employing one man as well as their two sons. He died in 1854 and in 1861 she was running the business, employing seven men as well as her sons; by 1871 she had retired as a house proprietor. Mary Wakeley was the wife of Thomas, who with his only brother shared the inheritance of a yeoman farmer. Thomas died in 1850, and the brother died childless in 1851. Mary, aged 44, was left with three daughters and three sons, and was the principal executor of her husband's will.³⁸ From 1851 to 1871, Mary appeared as farmer and landowner of a substantial acreage, by 1871 employing 25 people, and saving a prosperous business for her descendants to carry on for several generations.

Conclusion

This portrait of a small rural area, which saw partial industrialisation in the late nineteenth century, has revealed a number of interesting points relating both to the character of the process and to the utility of the sources available for studying it. The area illustrates the difficulties, which Reay notes, of defining any area as 'rural' or 'industrial'. Alongside the brick and cement industries supplying a big outside market, small-scale industries also remained, meeting local needs, and agriculture continued, even in the most industrialised parishes. In the southern parishes agricultural pursuits remained much as before, whereas in the middle ones agricultural production actually increased, alongside the new sectors, especially fruit growing and market gardening, assisted by modern transport facilities. Of Preston's four criteria for the development of industry, three were found within the six parishes, namely raw materials, location and market. The fourth, entrepreneurs, are not found: most ownership and top management was from outside, but within one of Reay's 'spheres of influence'. The effect of location is clear both within and outside the six parishes: in the contrast between the northern and southern parishes, in the proximity of a huge market in London and in the availability of transport facilities by road, rail and water.

Any conclusion is only as valuable as the evidence which points to it, and the census data on which a study of occupations is largely dependent has been shown to be suspect in certain instances. The problem of the under-enumeration of women's input into the economy is demonstrated by evidence from the six parishes for the probable under-estimation of the number of women who made bricks or sailed barges. However, Higgs's concern about misrepresentation in the census returns, especially the suspicion that many women returned as servants were in fact working for their families, has been shown to

38 Centre for Kentish Studies, U991 T77A.

apply only to a small number here. A different problem was revealed in the case of coastal and estuarine parishes, in the absence of many heads of households who were at sea on census night. These would all have been counted somewhere, but not in the place where they would have considered themselves resident; thus the occupational data for the whole country would not have been affected, but the data relating to such matters as gender balance and family structure within a parish would be distorted. The fact that their wives revealed their occupations is useful, though the absence of a similar revelation for unmarried men creates problems.

As far as women's employment is concerned, the dearth of opportunities has been amply demonstrated, also the fact that married women were much less likely to return an occupation than single or widowed women, though, as Verdon points out, many of them would have been looking after children. Jones's concern about wives who returned their husbands' occupations seems inappropriate in the six parishes, since, with a very few exceptions, it applied only to those who worked in the family business or whose husbands were temporarily absent, mostly at sea. It seems clear also that the jobs that were available for women were unpopular, and used only as stopgaps, since hardly any women in the two main areas of employment—agriculture and domestic service—were found in similar work in two consecutive censuses.

The lack of employment opportunities, together with the increased ease of travel, explain the extent of women's out-migration, as the increased opportunities for men explain the in-migration of men into the industrialised areas; and the contrast between the types of occupation in different areas explains the difference in the percentage growth in population between 1841 and 1881. Although many local people changed their occupation, the assertions of Preston and Armstrong that that the influx into the newly industrialising areas was probably fairly local is challenged by the birthplace data on immigrants in later censuses, revealing that the incomers came mostly from the eastern counties of England, and this shows up the contrast with the localised movements in and out of Wojciechowska's entirely rural parish of Brenchley. The immobility of those with the responsibilities of marriage or business is found here too, also the fact that the young are most mobile. These six parishes, then, contribute something to our understanding of the processes of change from a purely agricultural to a partly industrialised society.

Acknowledgement

The author is grateful for the assistance of the *Local Population Studies* editorial board in the preparation of this article.